

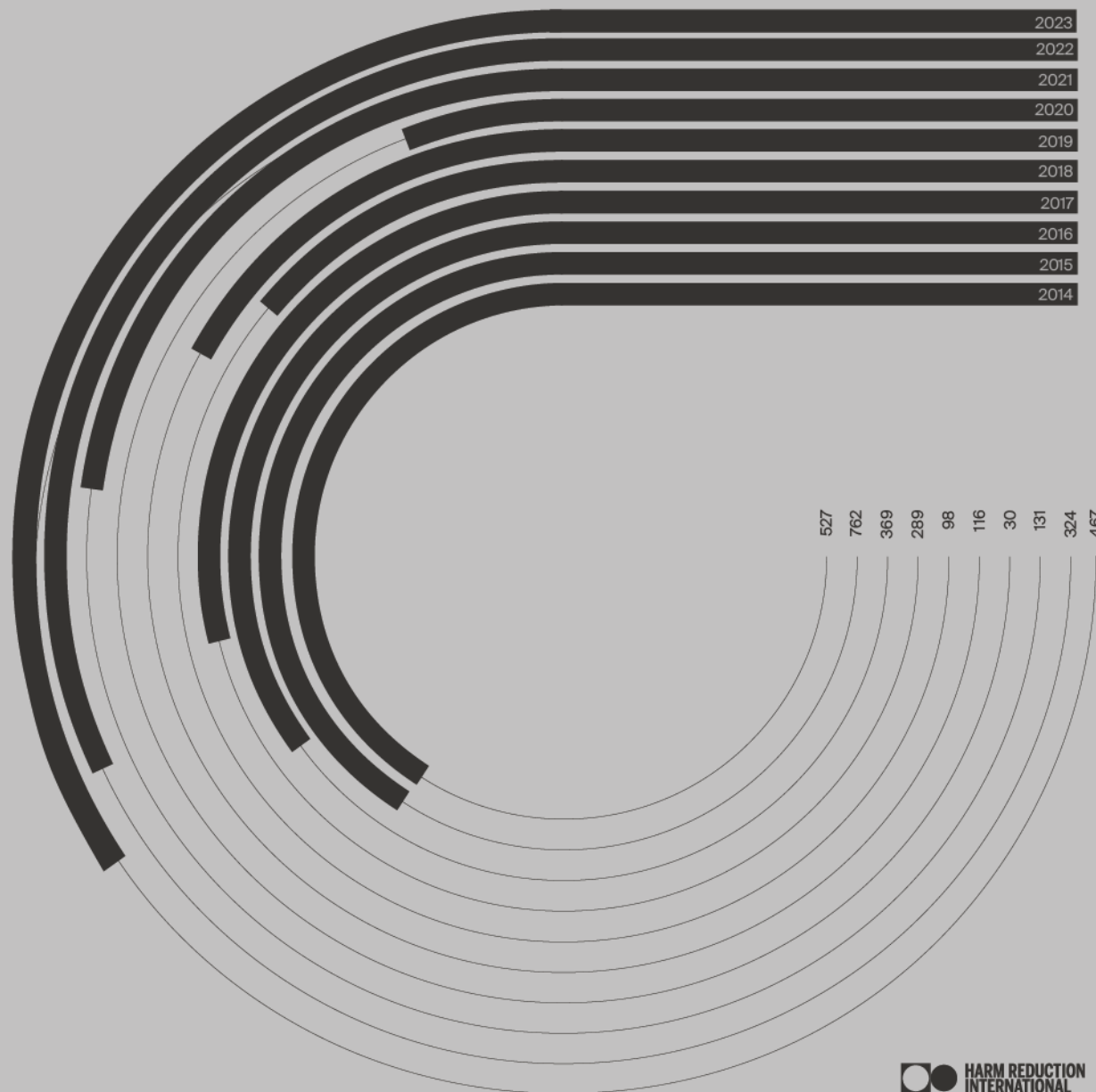
# THE DEATH PENALTY FOR DRUG OFFENCES: GLOBAL OVERVIEW 2023



MINIMUM CONFIRMED EXECUTIONS  
FOR DRUG OFFENCES (2014–2023)

- By the end of 2023, **34 countries retained the death penalty** for a range of drug offences worldwide, one less than in 2022.
- In July 2023, **Pakistan** abolished the death penalty for drug offences, the first country to do so in over a decade.
- Drug-related executions were confirmed in **five countries** (China, Kuwait, Iran, Saudi Arabia and Singapore). Executions are assumed to have been carried out in North Korea and Vietnam but state secrecy and censorship in these countries prevent confirmation of a minimum figure.
- At least **467 drug-related executions** were carried out (excluding figures from China, Vietnam, and North Korea). This represents a 44% increase from 2022, and a staggering 1450% increase from 2020 (the year with the lowest number of executions since HRI started monitoring this practice).
- Drug offences were responsible for roughly **42% of all executions confirmed globally**. This is the highest recorded figure since 2016.
- A significant step backwards was witnessed in **Kuwait**, where one drug-related execution took place, the first since 2007.

- **375 death sentences** for drug offences were confirmed in 16 countries (see tables on High Application States and Low Application States below). This represents a 20% increase in reported sentences from 2022.
- At least **3000 people are currently on death row** for drug offences in 19 countries.<sup>1</sup>
- Confirmed figures may be a gross underestimate of the scope of the phenomenon due to a **persistent lack of transparency** and censorship on information pertaining to the use of the death penalty. Dozens, if not hundreds, more drug-related death sentences are likely to have been imposed and executed throughout the year.



1. Bahrain, Bangladesh, China, Egypt, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Pakistan, State of Palestine, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Thailand, United Arab Emirates, Vietnam, Yemen.