

MONTGOMERY COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF POLICE



**ANNUAL PURSUIT REPORT
2018**

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A MESSAGE FROM THE CHIEF

The police chase is a staple of TV shows and movies that feature police officers. Often they go on for quite a few minutes over long distances, ending in some sort of dramatic conclusion. However, in real life, police chases are much different. Most don't last very long and most end without incident.

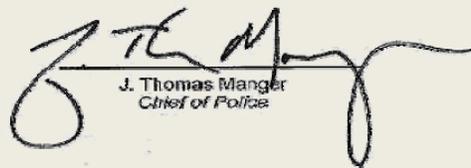
As you will see in this report, there were 14 fewer chases in 2018 than in 2017. Most were in pursuit of someone suspected of a serious crime, lasted less than five minutes, and covered three miles or less. Under MCPD policy, a criminal pursuit is justified if an officer believes a serious crime has been committed or is being committed. A traffic-related pursuit is justified if the officer sees someone driving under the influence of alcohol or narcotics, or if there is a hit-and-run or personal injury collision, or when the officer has reasonable cause to believe a serious physical injury has occurred.



The MCPD conducts an in-depth review of every vehicular pursuit to make certain those guidelines are followed, and if not, appropriate follow-up actions are promptly taken.

In addition, a supervisor will monitor and decide on whether to allow the chase to continue. Safety is the primary concern, whether the safety of the public, the safety of the officer, or the safety of the person(s) who are fleeing.

Again, as you will note in this report, most of our pursuits end without incident. But when a police pursuit ends with a crash or someone getting injured or killed, the public will ask questions and demand accountability. Rest assured; those are the same questions and the same level of accountability that the MCPD brings to each police pursuit we engage in.


J. Thomas Manger
Chief of Police

OVERVIEW

The information contained in this report is obtained from the MCP 610, *Motor Vehicle Pursuit Report*, the form completed by a supervisor from the district where a police pursuit originated. All reports are reviewed to verify compliance with department policy by the supervisor, a District executive, and the Assistant Chief of the respective bureau.

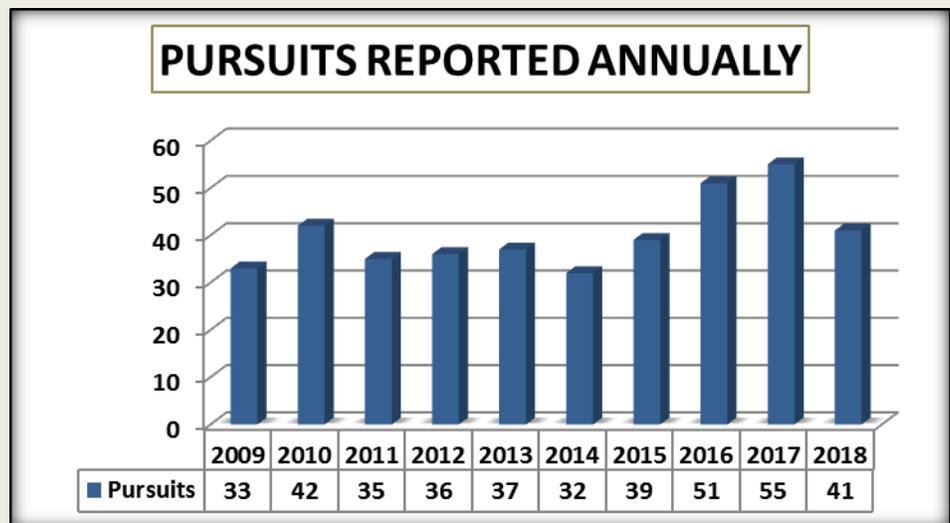
A vehicular pursuit is defined by policy as *an active attempt by an officer in a vehicle to apprehend an occupant of a moving motor vehicle who exhibits a clear intention to avoid apprehension by maintaining elevated speed, increasing speed, and/or using evasive tactics.*

On an annual basis, the Montgomery County Department of Police reviews and analyzes the data collected from the MCP 610 forms obtained in that calendar year and the pursuit policy (Function Code 135).

Per Function Code 135, *Vehicle Pursuits*, pursuit of a vehicle is authorized only when the offense for which the suspect is being pursued is one of the following:

1. **Criminal:** Felony or the officer has reason to believe a felony has occurred or is occurring. Note: In order for 2nd Degree Assault on a Police Officer to be a felony, physical injury means *“any impairment of physical condition, excluding minor injuries”*, and *“a person may not intentionally cause physical injury to another if the person knows or has reason to know that the other is a law enforcement officer engaged in the performance of the officer’s official duties.”*
2. **Traffic:**
 - a. Driving under the influence of alcohol or narcotics (*misdemeanor*).
 - b. Hit-and-run, personal injury collision when the officer has reasonable cause to believe serious physical injury has occurred (*felony*).

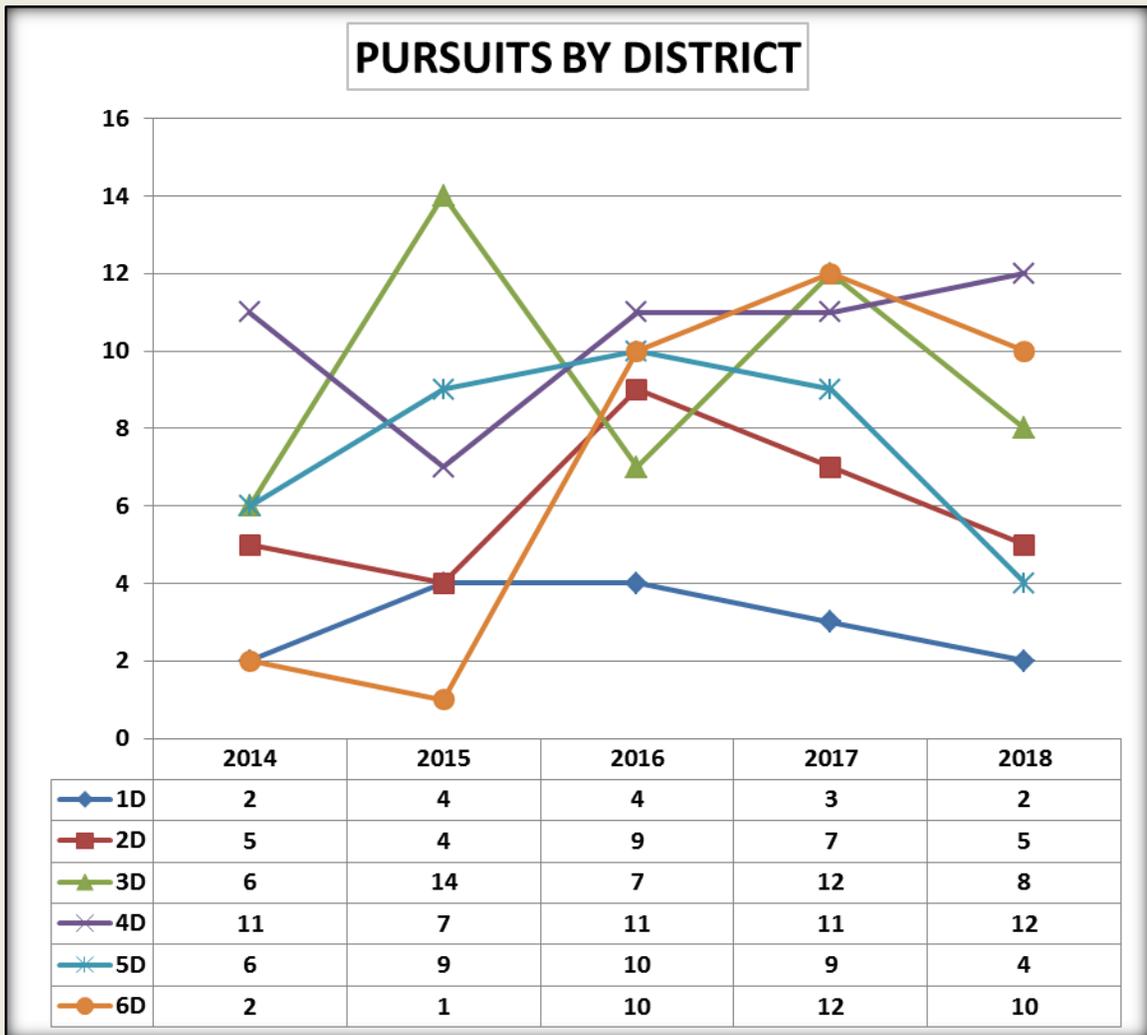
In 2018, there were 41 pursuits; 14 fewer pursuits than reported in 2017, or a decrease of 25.5%. The number of pursuits remains slightly higher than the department’s 10-year pursuit average of 40.1 pursuits per year.



2018 PURSUIT ANALYSIS

By District

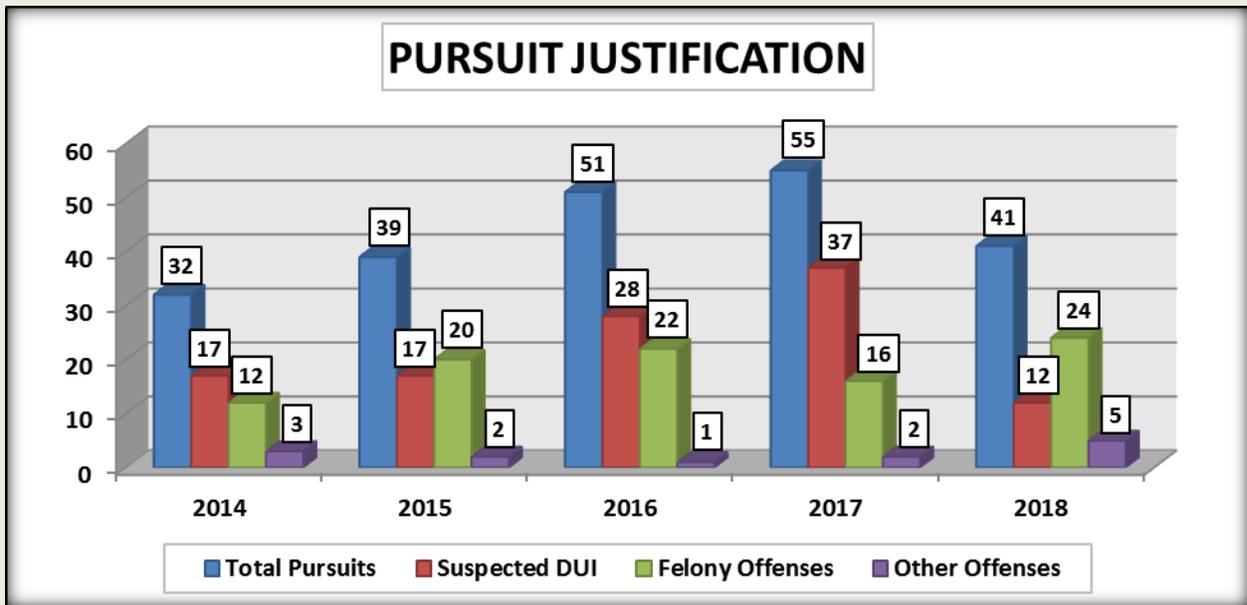
The graph below illustrates the frequency by district in which Montgomery County police officers initiated a pursuit in 2018 and highlights trends over the last five years. In 2018, the number of pursuits decreased in all districts except 4D (*Wheaton*), which reported an increase of 9.1%. The largest decrease in pursuits (55.6%) occurred in 5D (*Germantown*). All districts recorded totals lower than their five year averages in 2018, except for 4D and 6D (*Gaithersburg*) where the number of pursuits were higher than the five-year average for each of those districts. Since 2016, the total number of pursuits has declined 19.6%.



Note: One pursuit in 2017 began and ended in another county and is not reflected on this chart.

By Justification

In 2018, apprehension of suspects engaged in a variety of *felony offenses* was the primary reason officers initiated pursuits (58.5%). Suspicion of a subject *driving under the influence* (DUI) was the next leading reason (29.3%). Five other pursuits (12.2%) were initiated for other reasons.



Prior to 2018, *suspicion of driving under the influence* (DUI) was the primary reason for the initiation of a pursuit (55.9%), while 39.5% were initiated for *reason to believe a felony had occurred*, and 4.5% were initiated for other reasons. However, in 2018, pursuits for *felony offenses* were the primary reason accounting for double the number of pursuits for *suspicion of DUI*.

By Location

In 2018, Montgomery County police officers pursued suspects outside the county's jurisdictional boundaries in one incident compared to five incidents the previous year. Function Code 135 states that "*Officers may pursue into a neighboring jurisdiction only when an officer has probable cause to believe the crime committed was a felony of a violent type.*"

This incident involved a pursuit of a stolen vehicle from 3D (*Silver Spring*) into the District of Columbia. A patrol officer initiated a pursuit after receiving a computer confirmation that the vehicle had been reported stolen from Prince George's County, Maryland earlier in the day. The officer attempted to stop the vehicle, however it fled crossing into the District of Columbia. The vehicle stopped after making contact with a MCPD cruiser and the suspects fled, however, they were apprehended with the assistance of officers from the Metropolitan Police Department. The MCPD cruiser only sustained minor damage and there were no injuries to officers or suspects.

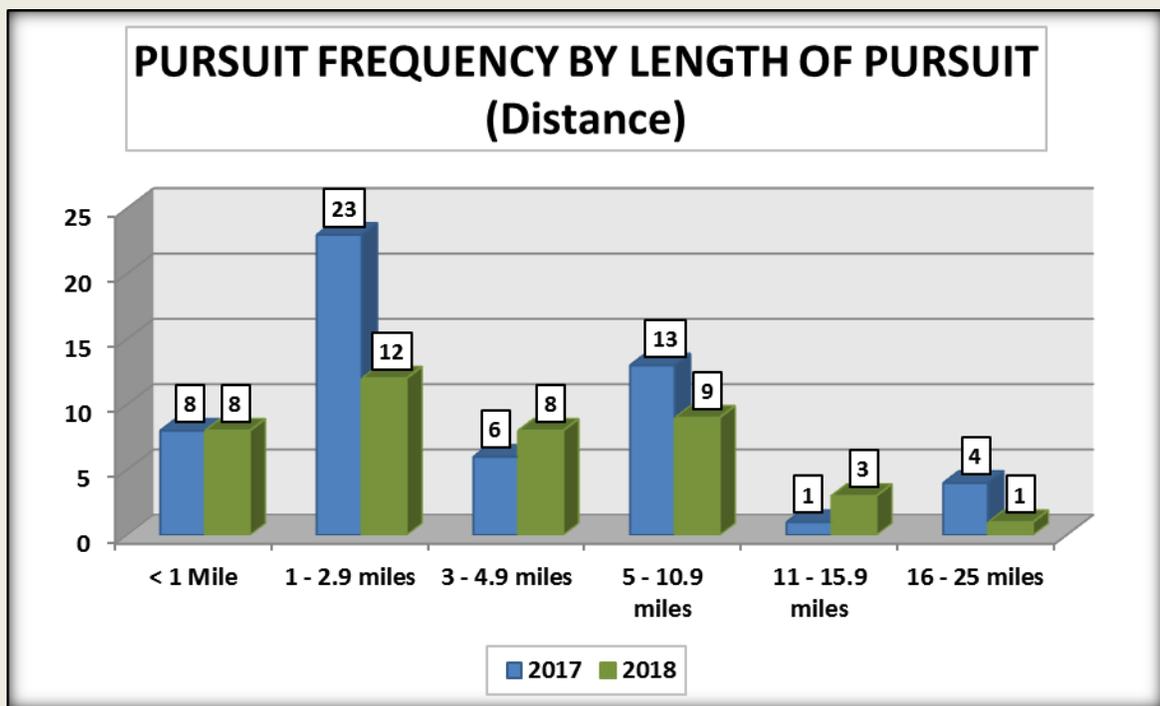
Although the pursuit was authorized and monitored by a supervisor, it was in violation of department policy since a stolen vehicle is not considered to be a *felony of a violent type*, and therefore, should have been terminated at the Montgomery County line.

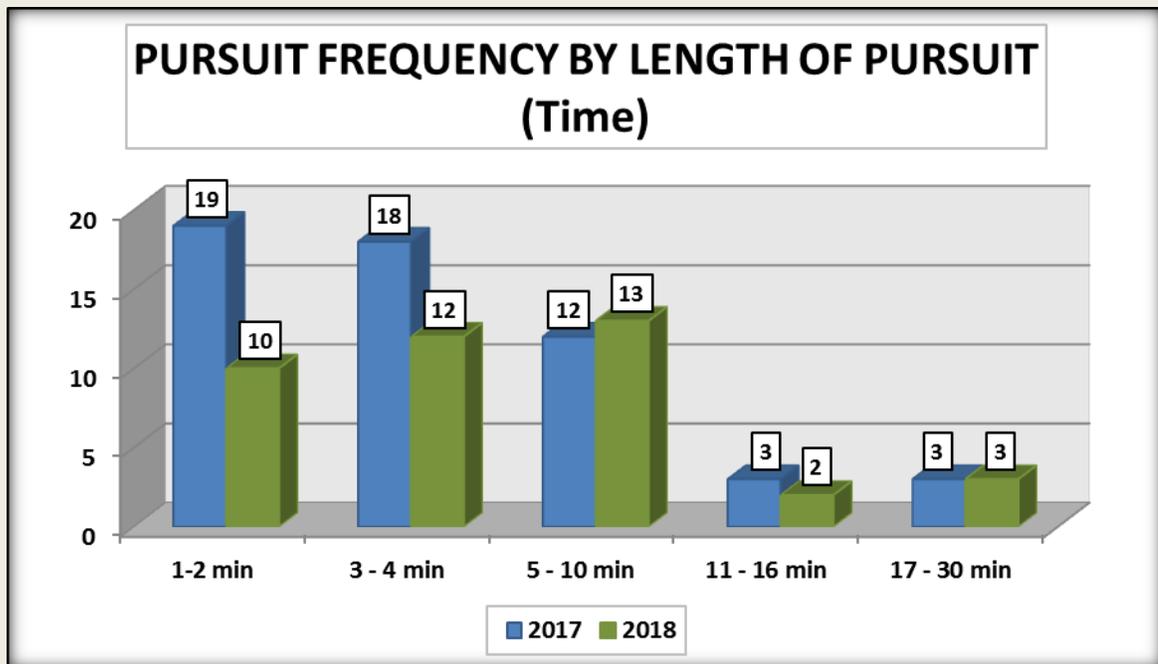
One other pursuit (in-county) was determined to be not in compliance with the department's pursuit policy and procedures. An officer initiated a short pursuit of a vehicle for traffic violations, which is not authorized. Appropriate disciplinary action was taken in this case.

By Distance & Duration

The frequency of pursuit *distances* and *times* in 2018 were generally similar compared to the previous year. In 2018, approximately 68.3% of the pursuits in Montgomery County lasted less than five minutes, compared to 67.3% in 2017. There were only five pursuits that lasted longer than 10 minutes in 2018, compared to six pursuits in 2017. The longest pursuit in 2018 was 18 minutes long and traveled 25 miles.

The *distances* and *times* for all pursuits reported in 2018 are reflected in the following charts.





Note: One pursuit in 2018 began which ended immediately and is not reflected on this chart.

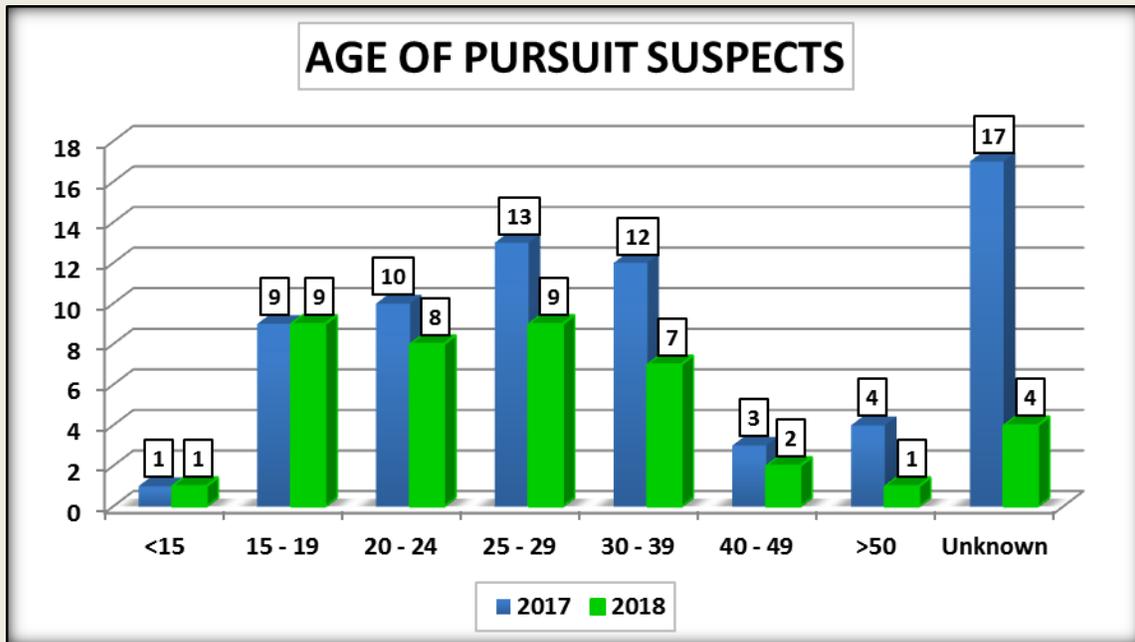
SUSPECT ANALYSIS

Apprehension is not the primary goal of a police vehicle pursuit; *the safety of the officer and the public are the most important aspects since the risks are high for all.* Officers and supervisors must balance the inherent safety risks with the urgency to apprehend the driver.

In 2018, suspects were able to successfully evade police officers in 11 of the 41 pursuits (26.8% of the time) by driving at extremely high rates of speed, fleeing on foot once the vehicle stopped, or the pursuits were terminated by supervisors for various reasons, generally due to crossing jurisdictional boundaries, traffic conditions, or public safety concerns. Officers were unable to apprehend the suspects in two of the pursuits, but through further investigation, were able to identify the individuals and arrest them at a later date. In one of these incidents, officers responded to a report of a suspicious situation in-progress involving a vehicle driving through a residential neighborhood in the early morning hours. Two subjects were observed exiting the vehicle and entering an open garage of a residence. The subjects were then seen exiting the garage carrying something and left the area in a vehicle.

A short time later, the same vehicle and subjects returned and were observed trying to open the doors of several parked vehicles, but they were unable to gain access and left. The calling party was able to provide officers with a description of the vehicle and subjects. As one of the responding officers circulated the area, a vehicle matching the description of the subject's vehicle was seen leaving the neighborhood. When the officer attempted to stop the vehicle, the driver fled at a high rate of speed for approximately two miles until it entered a dead end road, at which time the driver stopped and bailed out of the vehicle on foot. Officers placed the passenger in the vehicle in custody. A purse and cash, as well as two cell phones, and a driver's license were observed in plain view inside the passenger compartment of the vehicle. Through further investigation, it was determined that these same subjects were also responsible for another related burglary in the area. Based on evidence obtained at the scene and through interviews, an arrest warrant was obtained for the driver and he was arrested. The successful apprehension of these subjects resulted in recovering thousands of dollars in stolen property which was returned to the victims.

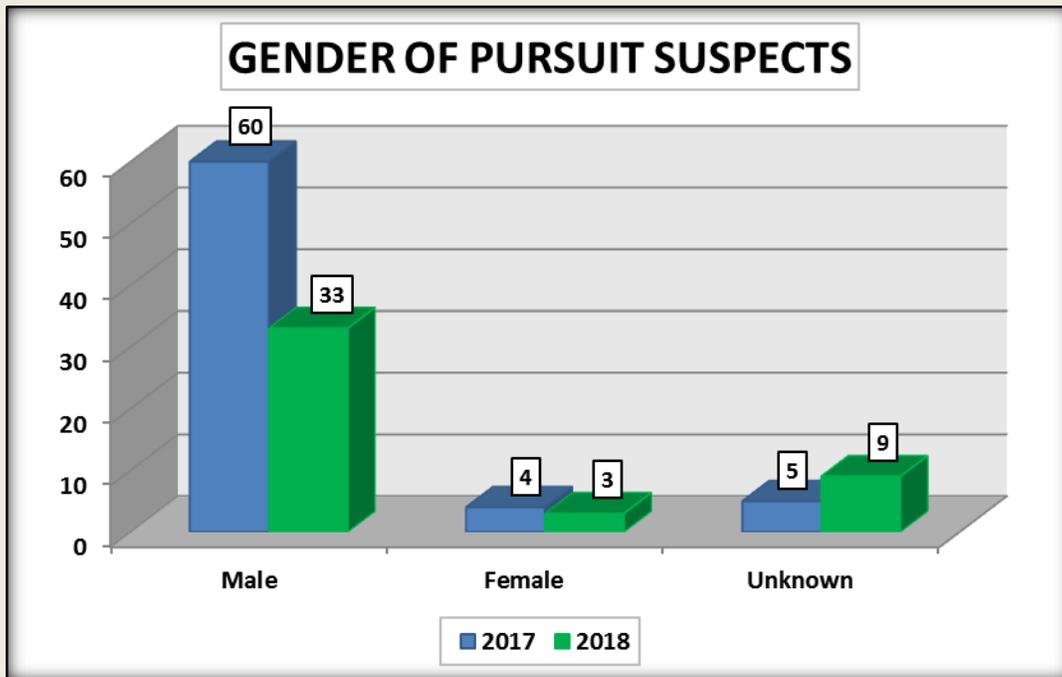
The demographic data for 2018 and 2017 below reflects information for the suspects that were apprehended during the pursuits, as well as the random data that was known about the suspects who were able to elude apprehension.



In 2018, suspects *under age 15* and *between 15 – 19 years of age* remained the same as the number reported in 2017. The number of suspects between the *ages of 20 – 39* were involved in 58.5% of the pursuits reported in 2018, compared to 50.7% in 2017.

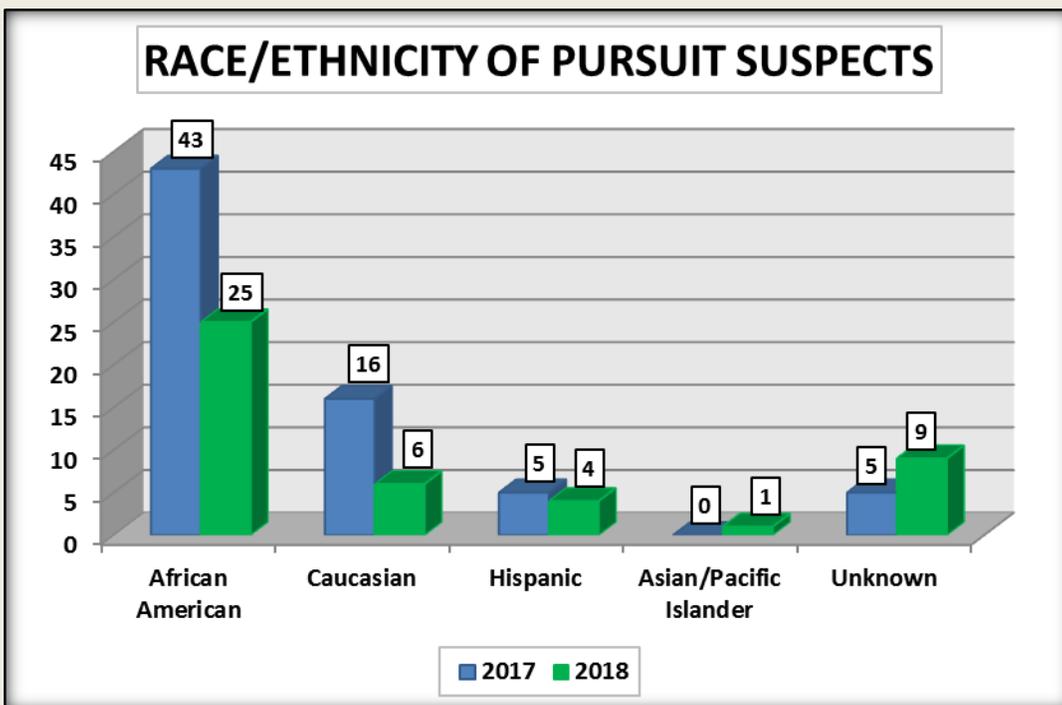
The charts on the following page summarize the *gender* and *race/ethnicity* of the *suspects* involved in pursuits in 2018 compared to 2017.

Suspect Gender



Male suspects account for the majority of individuals involved in pursuits as shown in the chart above. In 2018, males accounted for 73.3% of the suspects involved in police pursuits compared to 87% in 2017.

Suspect Race/Ethnicity



In 2018, 55.6% of the suspects involved in pursuits were *African American*; 13.3% were *Caucasian*; 8.9% were *Hispanic*; 2.2% were *Asian/Pacific Islander*; and the remaining percentage (20%) were *Unknown*.

NOTABLE ANALYSIS

Additional Resources

Police pursuits can be dangerous. In recent years, there has been an increased emphasis nationally on utilizing tactical maneuvers to end police pursuits. In 80.4% of the pursuits in 2018, there were no special tactics or additional resources used, compared to 72.7% in 2017.

Four pursuits involved the use of other resources, including other agencies, K9 teams or aircraft, and in four incidents, the police department deployed stop sticks to end the pursuit. MCPD policy prohibits the use of rolling roadblocks and tactical vehicle intervention, but does allow tire deflating devices (*e.g. stop sticks*) to be used by officers trained in the use of such devices. One suspect(s) was still able to evade the police in one of these instances, while all other suspects were apprehended. Collisions occurred in all four pursuits in which stop sticks were deployed, which resulted in injuries to one suspect, a suspect vehicle, and one civilian vehicle.

Supervisors terminated eight of the 41 pursuits (19.5%), primarily when the subject(s) left the county, but also when traffic conditions increased the risk associated with the pursuit, and the dangers to the officers and the public outweighed continuation of the pursuit, in accordance with Function Code 135.

Use of Force

Overall, there were 16 pursuits in 2018 (39%) in which force was used by Montgomery County officers on the suspects, compared to 16.4% of pursuits in 2017.

Seventeen of the 41 pursuits (41.5%) in Montgomery County in 2018 resulted in a “*bailout*”, which occurs when the suspect(s) stop or crash the vehicle and flee on foot, compared to 34.5% of the pursuits reported in 2017. Suspect(s) were consequently apprehended in 10 instances. Montgomery County police officers consequently used force during or after **three** of these pursuits/bailouts. Ten incidents involving bailouts also resulted in collisions, six of which involved civilian vehicles and three that involved MCPD vehicles. One of these collisions also resulted in civilian injuries.

Collisions

Of the 41 pursuits that occurred in 2018, 21 (51.2%) resulted in a collision, compared to 31 collisions (56.4%) that occurred in 2017.

A detailed breakdown of the 21 collisions by *district* is provided in the table on the next page.

DISTRICT	COLLISIONS	DAMAGED SUSPECT VEHICLES	SUSPECTS INJURED	DAMAGED CIVILIAN VEHICLES	CIVILIANS INJURED	DAMAGED MCPD VEHICLES	POLICE OFFICERS INJURED
1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
2	2	2	0	1	1	1	0
3	6	5	1	5	0	1	0
4	7	6	0	6	0	2	0
5	1	1	0	0	0	1	0
6	4	4	0	0	0	0	0
TOTALS	21	19	1	12	1	4	0

Of the 21 pursuits that ended in collision, the suspect's vehicle was involved in nearly all (90.5%), compared to 93.5% of the collisions reported in 2017; and two people (suspects/passengers) were injured in those collisions, compared to 10 people in 2017. Twelve privately-owned civilian vehicles were damaged and one civilian was injured in 2018. Four police vehicles sustained damage and there were no police officers injured during the pursuits in 2018, compared to two officers being injured in 2017. None of the injuries sustained by the civilians or the police officers during any of the pursuits in 2018 were severe in nature.

SUMMARY

With more than one million people living in Montgomery County and thousands more travelling through the county each year, pursuits rarely occur. There were more than 121,000 traffic stops made in 2018, yet only 41 pursuits, a 0.03% occurrence rate, compared to 0.05% reported in 2017, when there were more than 110,000 traffic stops made.

The Montgomery County Department of Police continues to be proactive in the area of driver safety, in an effort to reduce the number of law enforcement officer deaths, disabilities, and injuries caused by traffic-related incidents. Through the Public Safety Training Academy, the department continues the **Arrive Alive** initiative: *Buckle Up, Slow Down, Pay Attention, Arrive Alive*. The effectiveness of this training is also evident in the number of police vehicle collisions, which has declined 15.9% since 2015, while at-fault vehicle collisions have declined 18.2% over the same timeframe.

The Montgomery County Department of Police remains dedicated to creating a culture of safety and accountability. As such, a copy of this report will be distributed to all Patrol Services Bureau Commanders and the Director of the Training and Education Division for review and identification of any additional training or policy review which may be necessary on an operational level.



MONTGOMERY COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF POLICE

100 Edison Park Drive
Gaithersburg, MD 20878
<http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/pol/>

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