

# **MONTGOMERY COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF POLICE**



**ANNUAL PURSUIT REPORT  
2016**



## A MESSAGE FROM THE CHIEF

This report serves to provide information to the public regarding Police pursuits in the County.

With over 600,000 vehicles daily on our roadways, we generate relatively few vehicular pursuits—approximately one per week. Despite the low frequency, the overall number of pursuits in 2016 increased from previous years. The leading cause of pursuits was based on an officer's suspicion that the vehicle's operator was intoxicated (54.9%). This was followed by an officer's belief that the suspect committed a felony (43.1%). Because of the inherent dangers of these suspected crimes, Officers are required to immediately notify their supervisor so the pursuit may be monitored. Furthermore, all pursuits are documented in a Vehicle Pursuit Report. We have safeguards in place to end pursuits that place an undue risk to the public.



Vehicle pursuits are short-lived events, with most lasting under three miles. The majority are contained within Montgomery County, usually resulting in the apprehension of a suspect. The MCPD is pleased to present this information as a measure of our commitment to remaining accountable to our community.

J. Thomas Manger  
Chief of Police

## OVERVIEW

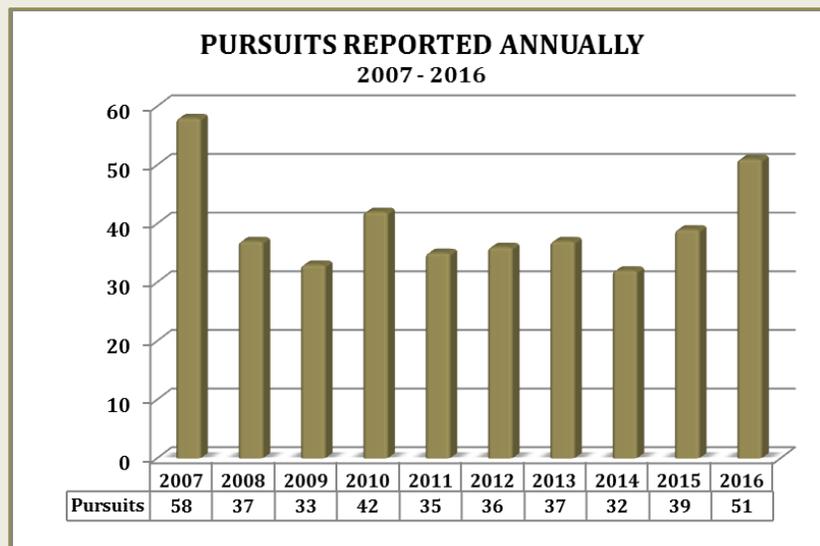
The information contained in this report is obtained from the MCP 610, *Motor Vehicle Pursuit Report*, the form completed by a supervisor from the district where a police pursuit originated. A vehicular pursuit is defined by policy as ***an active attempt by an officer in a vehicle to apprehend an occupant 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 2<sup>nd</sup> 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).

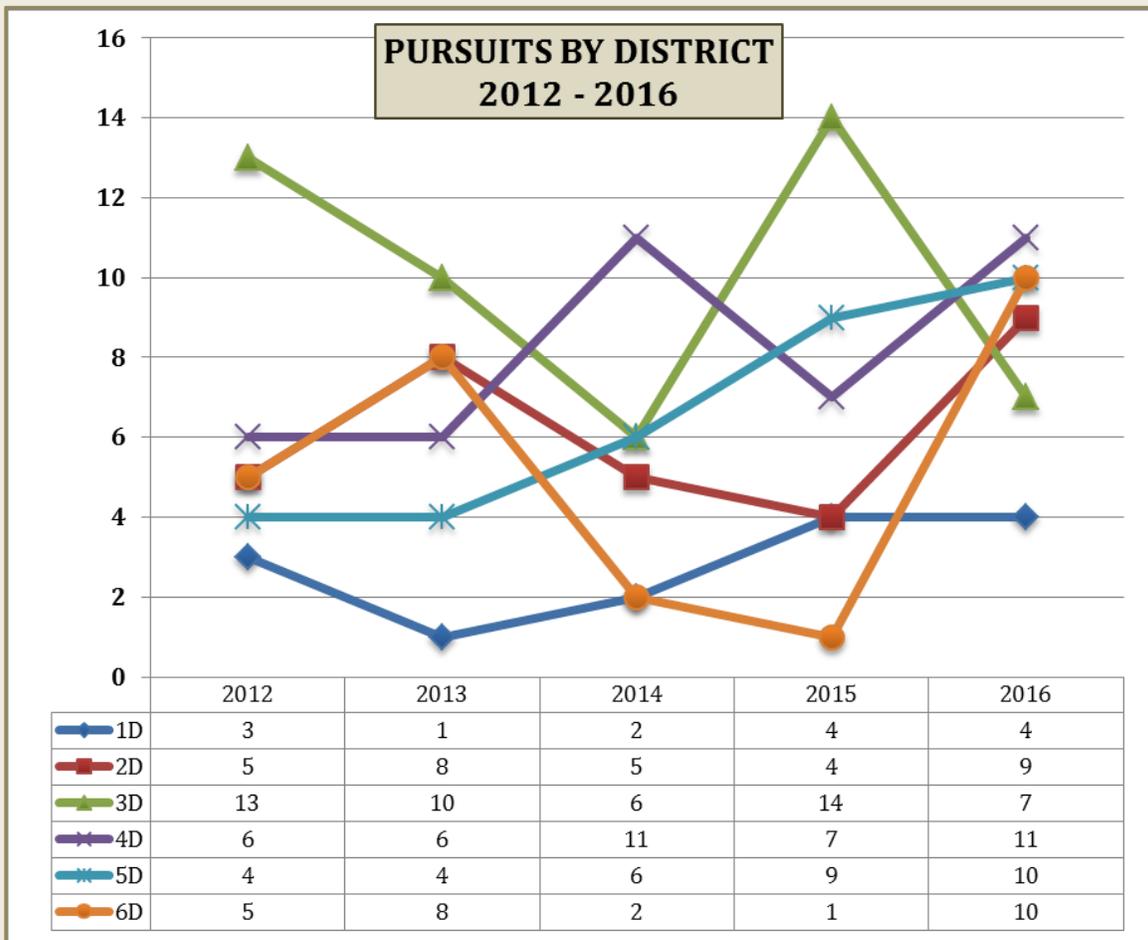
In 2016, there were 51 pursuits, twelve more pursuits than 2015, or an increase of 30.8%. This is the highest number of pursuits that the department has had since 2007, and is higher than the department’s 10-year pursuit average of 40 pursuits per year.



## 2016 PURSUIT ANALYSIS

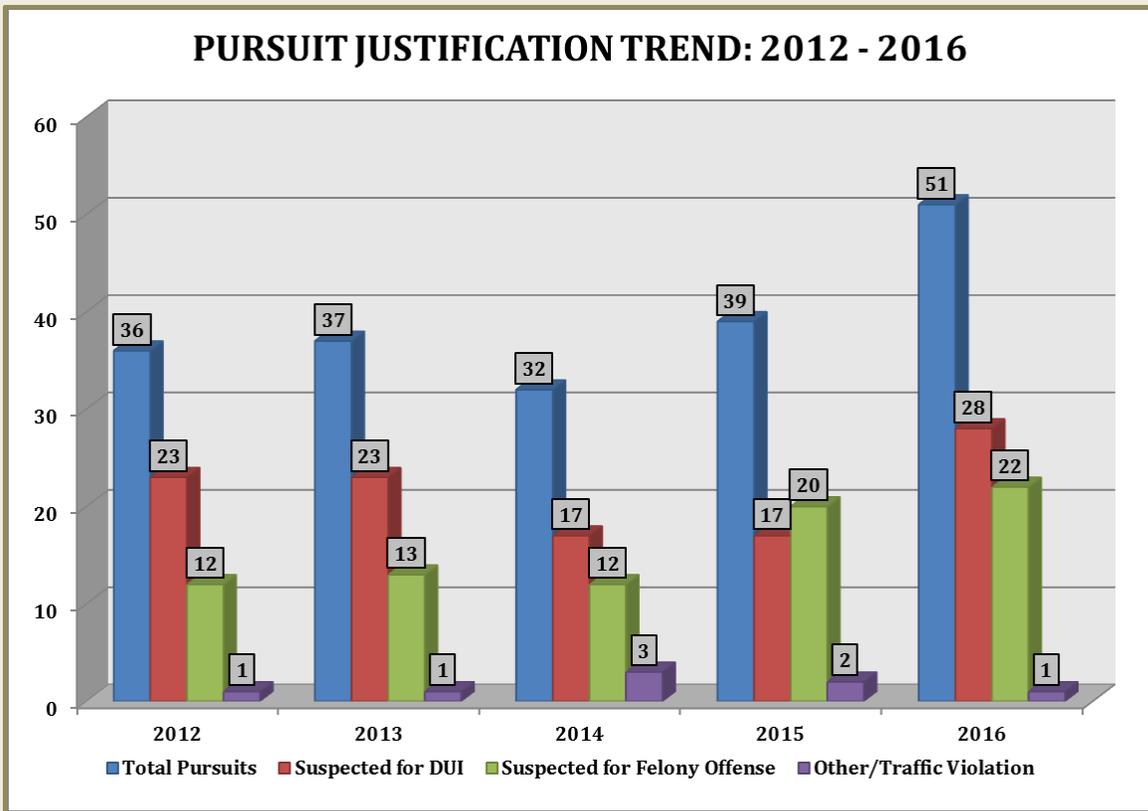
### By District

The graph below illustrates the frequency by district in which Montgomery County police officers initiated a pursuit in 2016 and highlights trends over the last five years. The 6<sup>th</sup> District experienced the most significant increase from 2015 to 2016; a total of 10 pursuits were initiated in this district in 2016, an increase of 900% over 2015. The 2<sup>nd</sup> District also experienced a considerable change in the number of pursuits in 2016; five more occurred (125% increase), the most since 2010. After spiking in 2015, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Police District was the only area to have fewer pursuits in 2016. In fact, the 3<sup>rd</sup> District appears to be the only district with a declining pattern of pursuits, while all of the other districts appear to be increasing, especially the 5<sup>th</sup> District, which has trended steadily upward 150% since 2012.



### By Justification

In 2016, suspicion of a subject driving under the influence was the primary reason for initiating a pursuit; 28 of the 51 pursuits (54.9%) started for this reason. Twenty-two pursuits (43.1%) were initiated for apprehension of a felony suspect. In 2016, only one pursuit was initiated as a result of *other* reasons (i.e., traffic charges, a violation of the department's policy).



The last five years have a similar trend: suspected impaired driving is the primary reason for the initiation of a pursuit. 55.4% of pursuits occurring during the past five years were initiated for this reason, while 40.5% were initiated for reason to believe a felony had occurred, and 4.1% were initiated for other reasons.

### By Location

In 2016, Montgomery County police officers pursued subjects outside the county’s jurisdictional boundaries in three separate incidents. 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.” In all three of the incidents, the officers pursued beyond the county’s boundaries for felonies, including a robbery/carjacking and two aggravated assaults. Two of the three pursuits that went beyond the county’s boundaries were initiated in the 3<sup>rd</sup> District. The suspect(s) were apprehended in two of the pursuits, and a third was identified and apprehended a few weeks later.

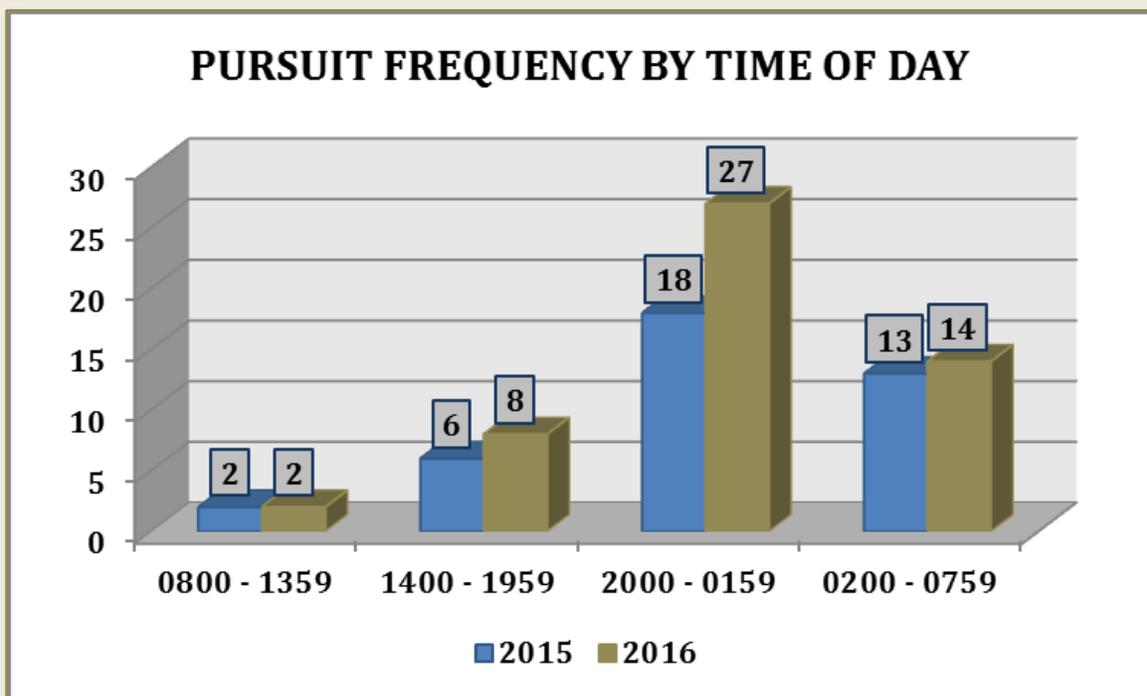
- The pursuit for the suspect in the robbery/carjacking began in the 4<sup>th</sup> District and traveled 15 miles and lasted for 20 minutes, traveling through the District of Columbia and into northern Virginia. The pursuit ended when the suspect crashed and was taken into custody.
- After a suspect was involved in a crash in the 3<sup>rd</sup> District, and attempted to strike responding officers with his vehicle, officers pursued him for approximately 10 minutes into Prince George’s County. The suspect came to a stop when he encountered a vehicle in

his lane of travel, but he refused to exit the vehicle. Officers were able to remove the suspect from the vehicle and made the arrest.

- A 3<sup>rd</sup> District Officer conducted a traffic stop on a vehicle for a traffic violation. However, upon approaching the vehicle, the officer detected an odor of marijuana and noticed the driver began to reach towards his console. The officer reached into the window to grab his arm, but the driver accelerated and fled, striking the officer's hand with the pillar of the vehicle. The officer believed the suspect's intent was to cause serious injury, so the officer pursued the suspect and his passenger into Prince George's County. Due to the heavy volume of traffic, the vehicle was able to evade the police temporarily. Acting on a tip from a witness, the officers located the car in front of a residence, and a short time later, the passenger, who had pleaded with the driver to be dropped off. The passenger identified the driver to officers, who obtained a warrant for first degree assault and several other charges; the subject was picked up a few weeks later by the MCPD Fugitive Unit.

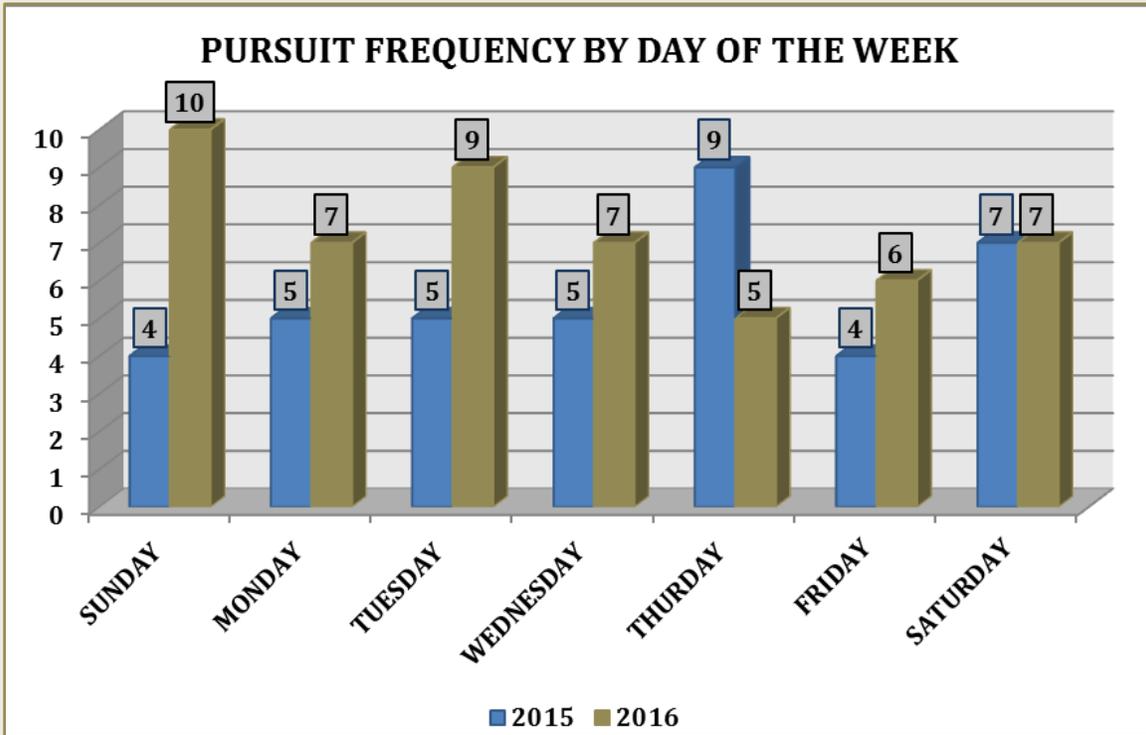
### By Time of Day & Day of Week

The pattern identified in 2015 related to the time of day when pursuits occur continued in 2016 as well. Pursuit data in 2016 indicated that most pursuits continue to occur during the overnight hours. In 2016, 80.4% of the pursuits occurred overnight, while only 19.6% of the pursuits occurred between the hours of 8:00am and 8:00pm.

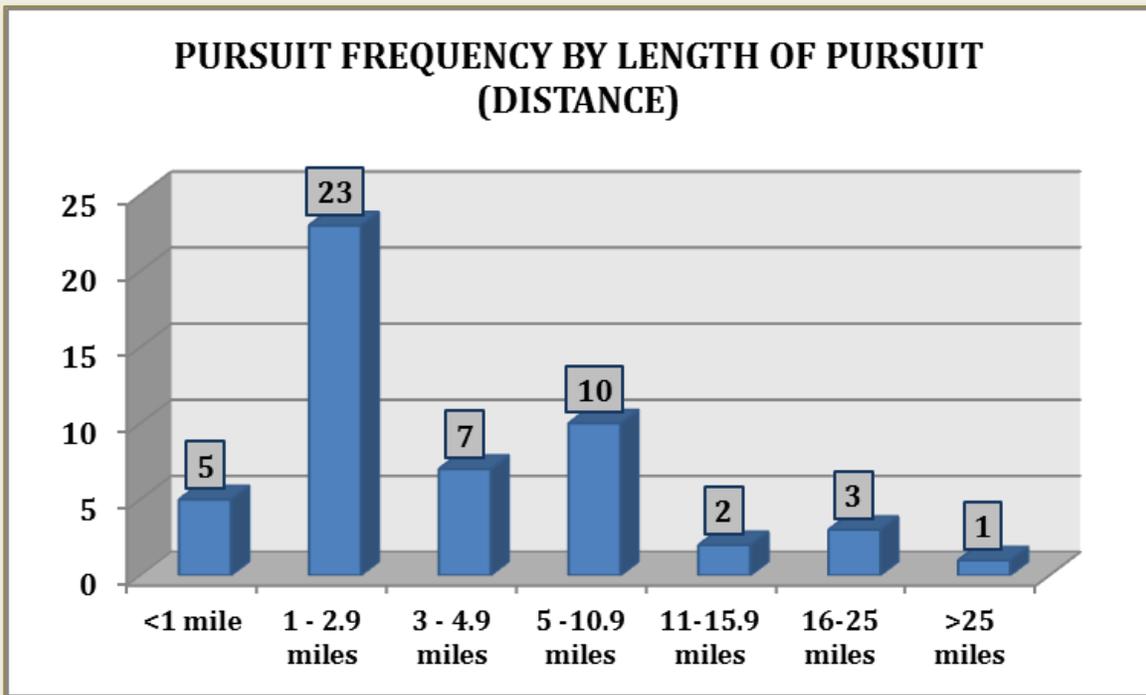


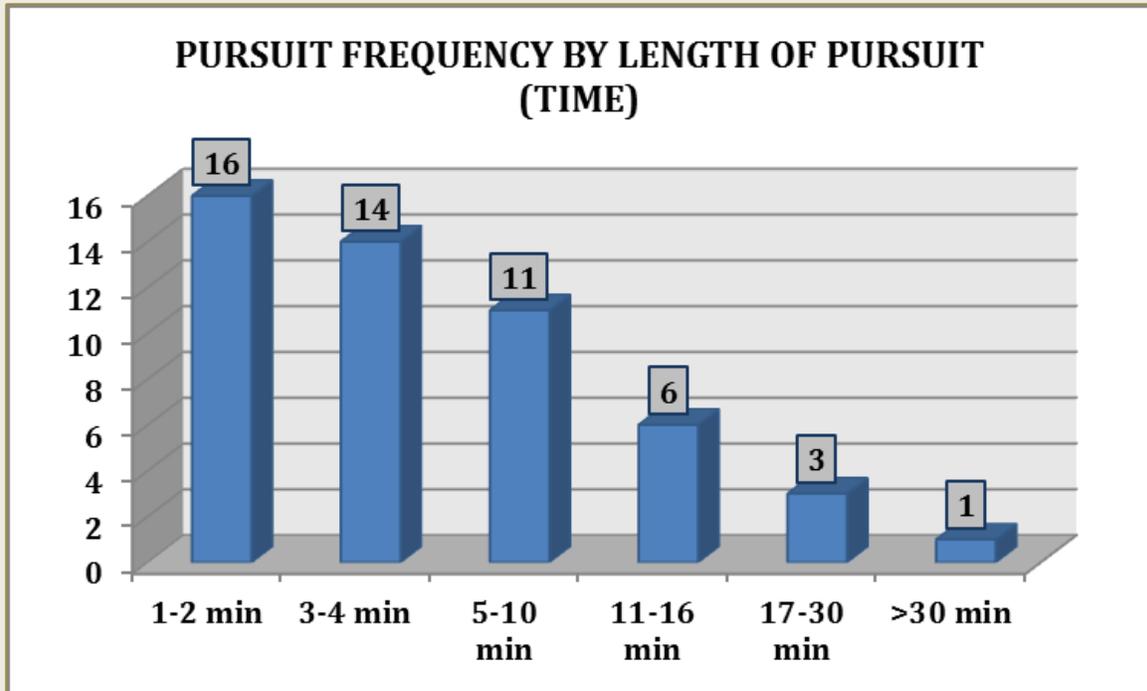
There was a shift in the frequency trends according to the day of the week on which the pursuits occurred. In 2015, most pursuits occurred on Wednesday, Thursday, and Saturday. In fact, 54% of the pursuits in 2015 occurred on one of these three days. In 2016, Thursday had the fewest

pursuits occur (5), and Sunday and Tuesday had the most pursuits (37% occurred on Sunday or Tuesday).



### By Distance & Duration





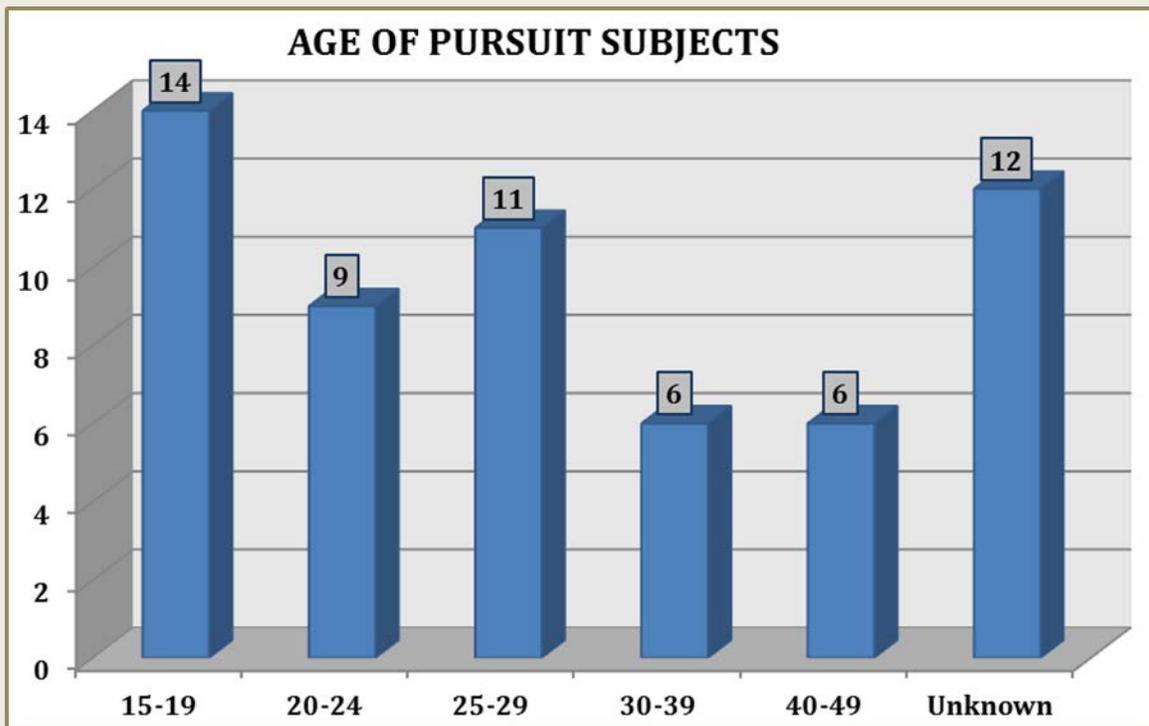
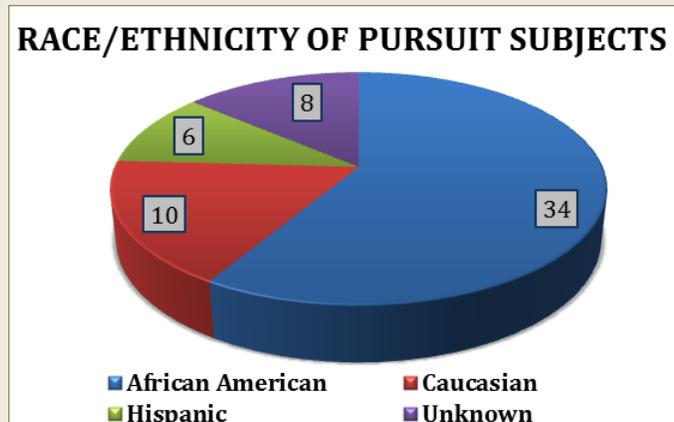
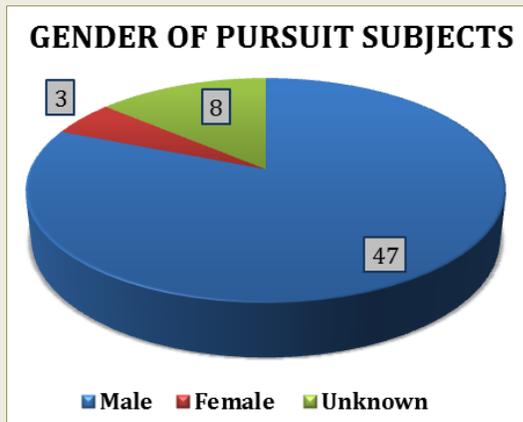
The frequency of pursuit distances and times is similar to last year. In 2016, approximately 58.8% of the pursuits in Montgomery County lasted less than five minutes. There were 10 pursuits that lasted longer than 10 minutes in 2016, four of which lasted more than 20 minutes.

## 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; the risks are high for all involved. Officers and supervisors must balance the safety risks with the urgency to apprehend the driver. In 2016, suspects were able to successfully evade police officers in 17 of the 51 pursuits (33.3% of the time). In two incidents, the suspect(s) evaded the police by driving at extremely high rates of speed. In five other incidents, the suspect(s) bailed out of the vehicle and evaded apprehension by the police. And in the ten remaining incidents, the pursuits were terminated by the supervisors for various reasons, generally due to crossing jurisdictional boundaries or traffic conditions. In two incidents, the suspects that escaped apprehension by the Montgomery County Police by crossing jurisdictional boundaries were apprehended by police departments in Virginia.

Officers were unable to identify the suspects in 13 of these pursuits, but were able to provide some demographic details in several of the incidents. In one incident in which the subject initially evaded the police, the officer was able to submit an application for an arrest warrant because the officer had gained knowledge of the driver's identity through the circumstances of the traffic stop. A few weeks later, the MCPD Fugitive Squad was able to make the arrest of that suspect.

The demographic data below reflects information for the 44 subjects that were apprehended during pursuits, as well as the random data that was known about six of the suspects who were able to make good their escape.



Although there are still several subjects' identities unknown (which could potentially impact the breakdown of the ages) it is striking that 50% of the known subjects' that fled from the police were under the age of 24, a trend that is similar to other crime trends throughout the county.

## 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. Montgomery County Police Department policy prohibits the use of rolling roadblocks and tactical vehicle intervention, but does allow tire deflating devices to be used by officers trained in the use of such devices. In 68.6% of the pursuits, there were no special tactics or additional resources used. Sixteen pursuits involved the use of other resources, including other agencies or aircraft, and in seven incidents, the police department deployed stop sticks in an attempt to end the pursuit. The suspect(s) was still able to evade the police in two of these instances, and crashes occurred in three of the incidents, without injury to those involved or nearby.

Supervisors terminated ten of the 51 pursuits, 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

Eighteen of the 51 pursuits (35.3%) in Montgomery County resulted in a “bailout”, which occurs when the subject(s) stop or crash the vehicle and flee on foot. Subject(s) were consequently apprehended in 13 instances. Officers consequently used force during or after only **two** of these pursuits/bailouts, in which the subjects refused commands or resisted arrest when officers were able to catch them. A police canine was used by officers in one incident to apprehend a subject that had bailed out, resulting in a use of force report for a canine bite.

There were six separate pursuits in which the suspect did not bailout, but did resist arrest, so officers had to use force (hands/feet) in those incidents to remove the subjects from the vehicle and place them in handcuffs. Overall, there were only eight pursuits in which force was used by officers, or only 15.7% of all pursuits in 2016.

### Collisions

Of the 51 pursuits that occurred in 2016, 27 (52.9% of pursuits) resulted in a collision, an increase over the 14 collisions (35.8% of pursuits) that occurred in 2015. The 27 collisions were distributed across the following districts:

District	Collisions	Damaged Suspect Vehicles	Suspects Injured	Damaged Civilian Vehicles	Civilians Injured	Damaged MCPD Vehicles	Police Officers Injured
1D	3	3	3	2	2	0	0
2D	4	4	1	1	0	1	0
3D	3	2	2	5	1	4	0
4D	6	5	3	3	0	4	0
5D	5	5	1	0	0	2	0
6D	6	6	3	1	0	3	2
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>2</b>

Of the 27 pursuits that ended in collision, the suspect's vehicle was involved in nearly all (92.6%) of the collisions and a total of 13 people (suspects/passengers) were injured in those collisions. Damage was occurred upon 12 privately owned civilian vehicles during the course of seven pursuits, and three civilian bystanders were injured during the course of two pursuits. Fourteen police vehicles sustained damage during 12 pursuits, and there were two police officers injured during the pursuits in 2016. None of the injuries sustained by the bystanders or the police officers during any of these pursuits were severe.

## SUMMARY

With more than one million people living in Montgomery County and thousands more travelling through the county, pursuits rarely occur. There were more than 120,000 traffic stops in 2016, yet only 51 pursuits, a .04% occurrence rate.

The Montgomery County Police Department 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 Montgomery County Police Department continues the **Arrive Alive** initiative: Buckle Up, Slow Down, Pay Attention, Arrive Alive. Last year, the Training and Education Division instituted an additional block of instruction on clearing intersections during emergency response situations to better prepare all officers, including the recruits.

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**

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