

MONTGOMERY COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF POLICE



**ANNUAL PURSUIT REPORT
2019**

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A MESSAGE FROM THE CHIEF

The number of motor vehicle pursuits by Montgomery County police officers in 2019 rose from the year earlier, to a level more in line with the past few years. As in past years, however, the image of what a police pursuit entails does not always conform to the public's impression. Of the 50 pursuits in 2019, 19 lasted one to two minutes, and another 12 were from three to four minutes. These are all officers in pursuit of someone suspected of a serious crime.



Under MCPD policy, a 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 observes someone suspected of driving under the influence of alcohol or narcotics, if there is a hit and run, or personal injury collision when an officer has reasonable cause to believe a serious injury has occurred.

The MCPD carefully reviews every vehicular pursuit to make certain these policy guidelines are followed. In addition, a supervisor will monitor pursuits in real-time and decide whether to allow the pursuit to continue. Safety is the primary concern, whether it's 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. However, 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 accountability that the MCPD brings to each police pursuit we engage in.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. G. Jones', written over a horizontal line.

Marcus G. Jones
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 a supervisor, an executive, and the Assistant Chief of the respective bureau.

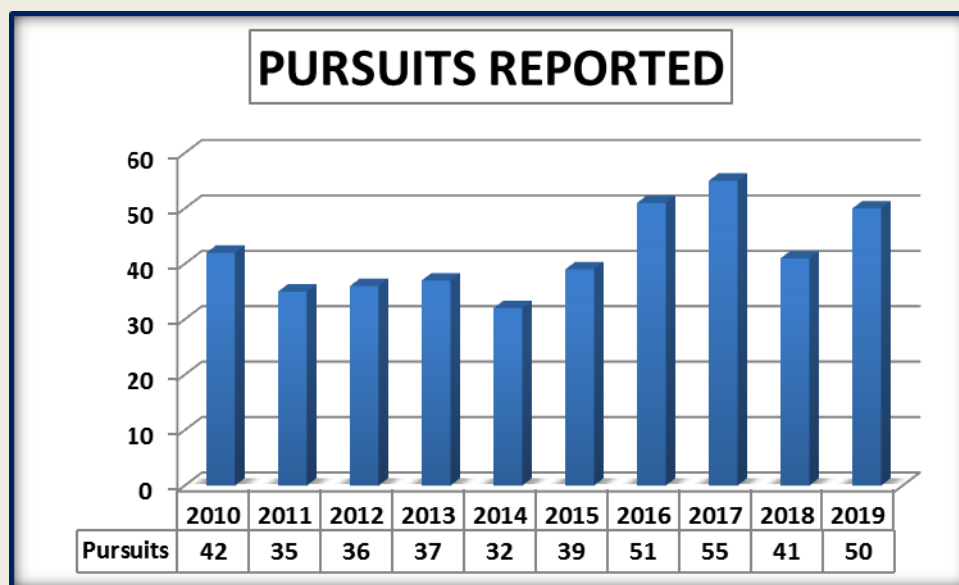
A vehicular pursuit is defined by policy as *an active attempt by an officer in a vehicle to apprehend an occupant of a moving motor vehicle who exhibits a clear intention to avoid apprehension by maintaining elevated speed, increasing speed, and/or using evasive tactics.*

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*).

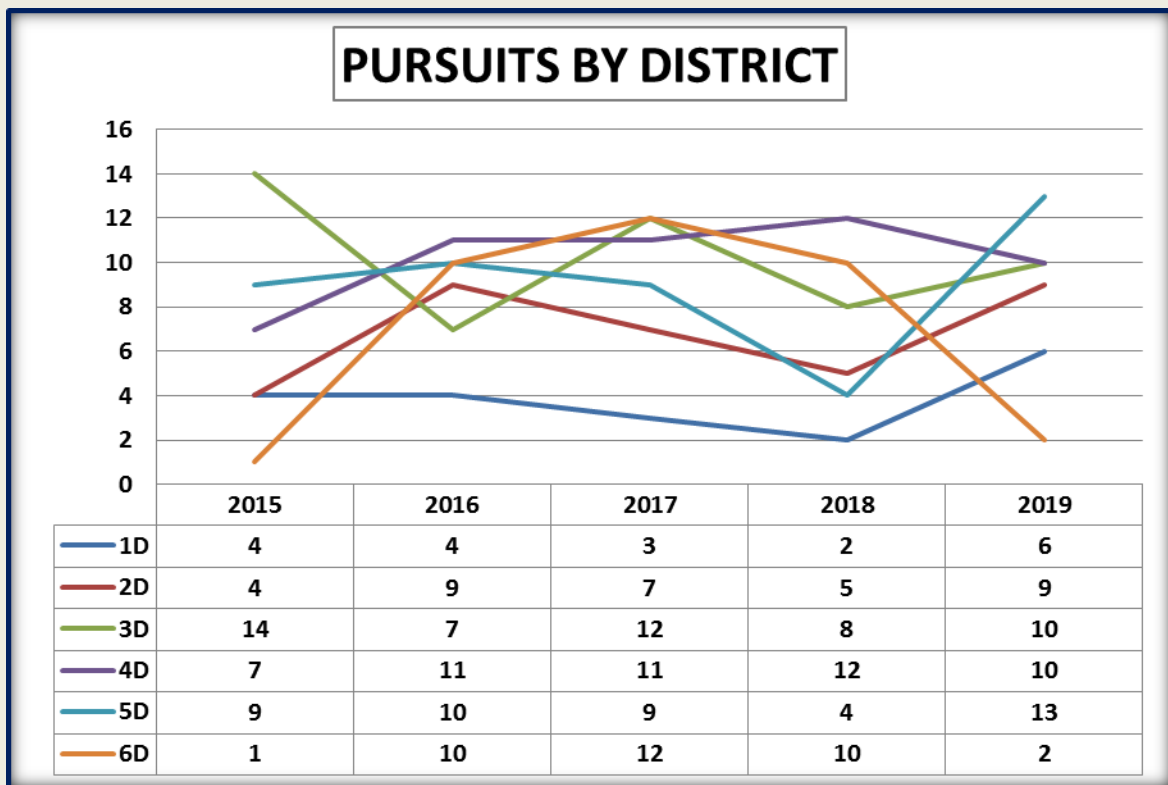
In 2019, there were 50 pursuits, nine more pursuits than reported in 2018, or an increase of 22.0%. The number of pursuits remains higher than the department’s 10-year pursuit average of 41.8 pursuits per year. In 2019, there were four pursuits for reasons that were deemed to be non-compliant with FC 135.



2019 PURSUIT ANALYSIS

By District

The graph below illustrates the frequency by district in which Montgomery County police officers initiated a pursuit in 2019 and highlights trends over the last five years. In 2019, the number of pursuits increased in all districts except *Wheaton* (4D) and *Gaithersburg* (6D). The largest decrease in pursuits (80%) occurred in *Gaithersburg* (6D). The *Rockville* (1D), *Bethesda* (2D), and *Gaithersburg* (6D) districts recorded totals higher than their five year averages in 2019, while *Germantown* recorded a 30.8% decrease and the *Silver Spring* (3D) and *Wheaton* (4D) district totals remained consistent with their five-year pursuit averages. Four of the pursuits initiated in 2019 crossed into other districts. Since 2016, the total number of pursuits has increased 28.2%.

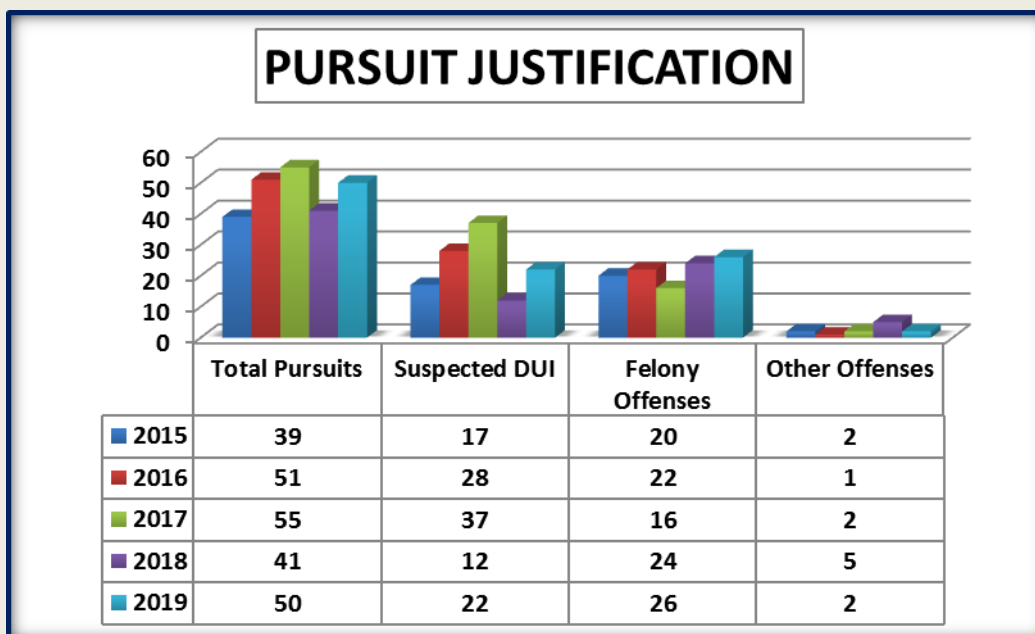


The following table shows the five-year pursuit averages (2015–2019) for all districts.

DISTRICT	AVERAGE NUMBER OF PURSUIT
Rockville (1D)	4
Bethesda (2D)	7
Silver Spring (3D)	10
Wheaton (4D)	10
Germantown (5D)	9
Gaithersburg (6D)	7

By Justification

In 2019, apprehension of suspects engaged in a variety of *felony offenses* and suspected of *driving under the influence* (DUI) were the primary reasons that officers initiated pursuits (52% and 44% respectively). Two other pursuits (4%) were initiated for *traffic offenses* only and were determined to be in violation of policy.



Since 2015, 49.2% of pursuits by officers were for individuals suspected of *driving under the influence*, 45.8% were for subjects eluding police who were involved in *felony offenses* such as stolen vehicles, and the remaining percentage were for other offenses or violations such as *weapons offenses* and *narcotics-related offenses*.

By Location

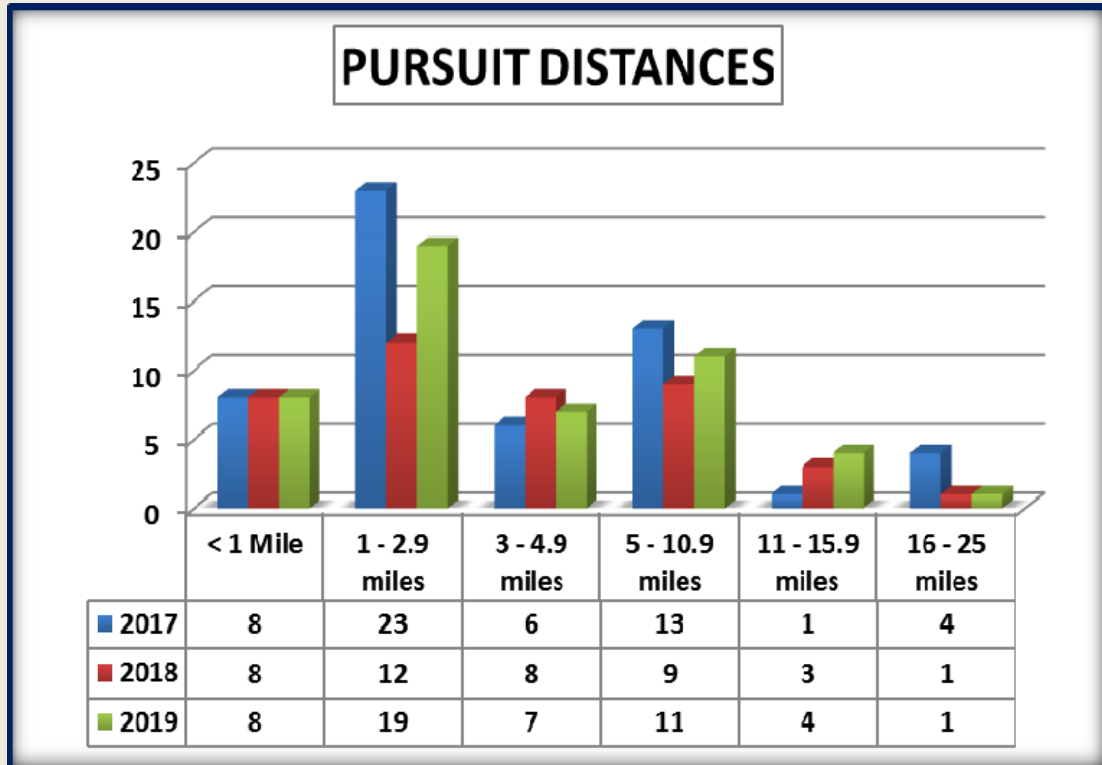
In 2019, Montgomery County police officers pursued suspects outside the county's jurisdictional boundaries in three incidents (6%) compared to one incident (2.4%) the previous year. Function Code 135 states that "*Officers may pursue into a neighboring jurisdiction only when an officer has probable cause to believe the crime committed was a felony of a violent type.*"

These incidents involved pursuits for a group of robbery suspects identified to be responsible for a number of commercial robberies in the area, a pursuit for a stolen vehicle, and a pursuit for a suspect involved in a drug-related transaction.

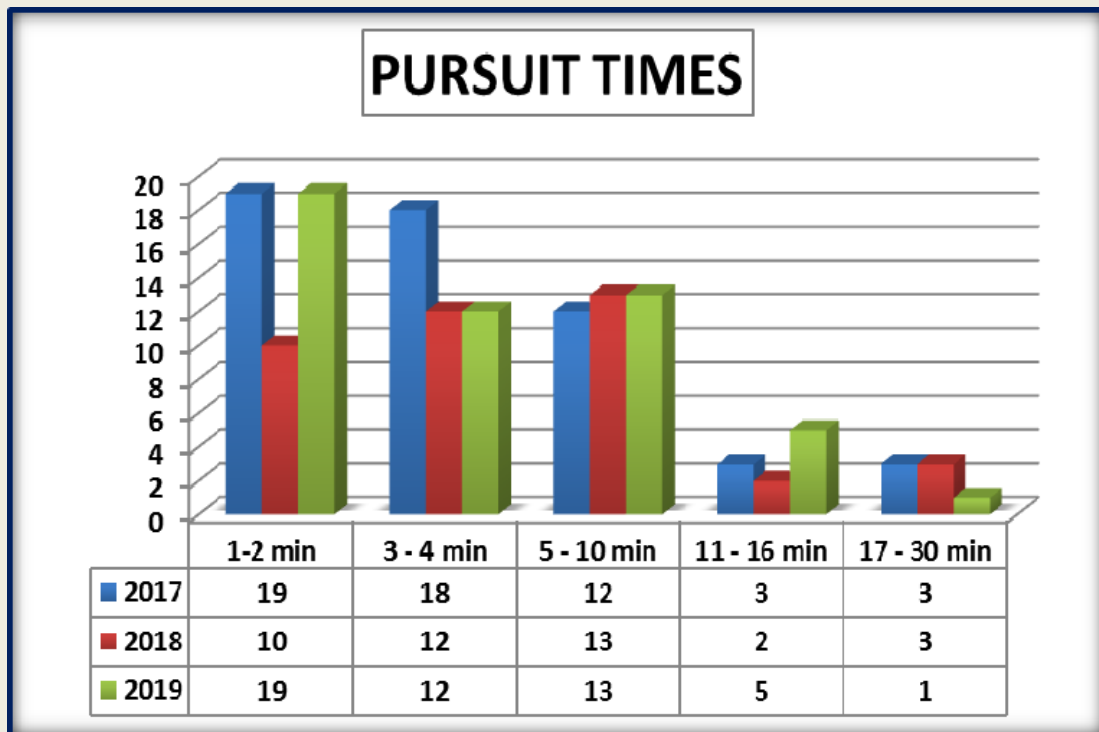
By Distance & Duration

The frequency of pursuit *distances* and *times* in 2019 were generally similar compared to the previous year. In 2019, approximately 68% of the pursuits in Montgomery County lasted less than five minutes, compared to 68.3% in 2018. There were only five pursuits that lasted longer than 10 minutes in 2019, which were the same number of pursuits reported in 2018. The longest pursuit in 2019 was 19 minutes long and traveled a distance of 21 miles.

The *distances* and *times* for all pursuits reported in 2019 are reflected in the following charts.



The data shows that on average from 2017-2019, most vehicle pursuits ranged from *one to three miles* or *five to 11 miles*.



The data shows that on average for the three-year period, most pursuits (62.1%) ended within *one to four* minutes.

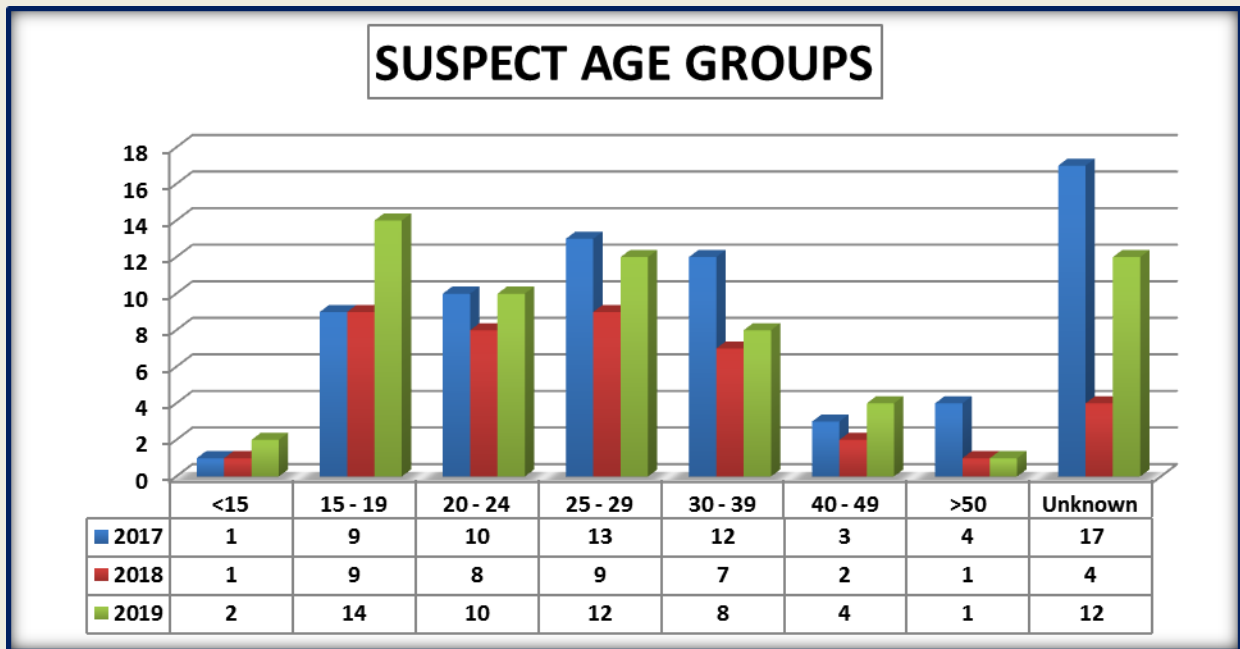
SUSPECT ANALYSIS

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

In 2019, suspects were able to successfully evade police officers in 13 of the 50 pursuits (26% of the time) compared to 26.8% of the time in 2018 by driving at extremely high rates of speed, fleeing on foot once the vehicle stopped or was involved in a collision, or the pursuits were terminated by supervisors for various reasons, generally due to crossing jurisdictional boundaries, traffic conditions, or public safety concerns.

The demographic data in the chart 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 escape.

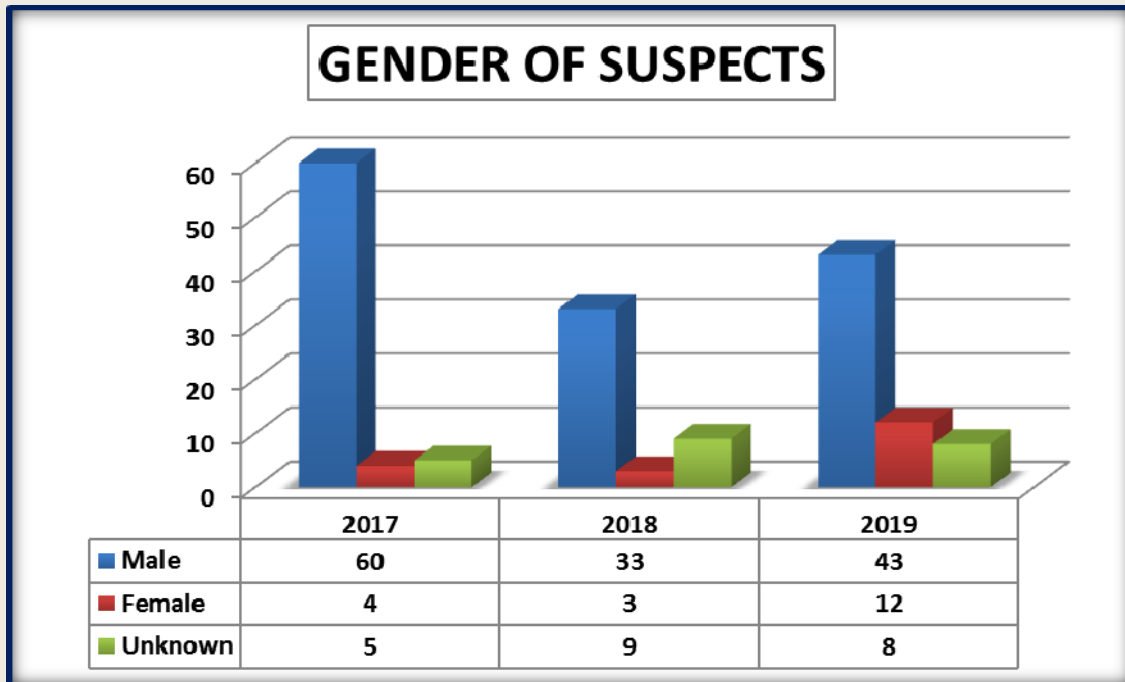
Suspect Age Groups



In 2019, the number of suspects ages 15 to 29 increased 38.5% compared to 2018. Suspects in the other age groups over the three-year period generally remained consistent. Historically, suspects ages 15 to 29 account for approximately two-thirds of the individuals involved in police pursuits.

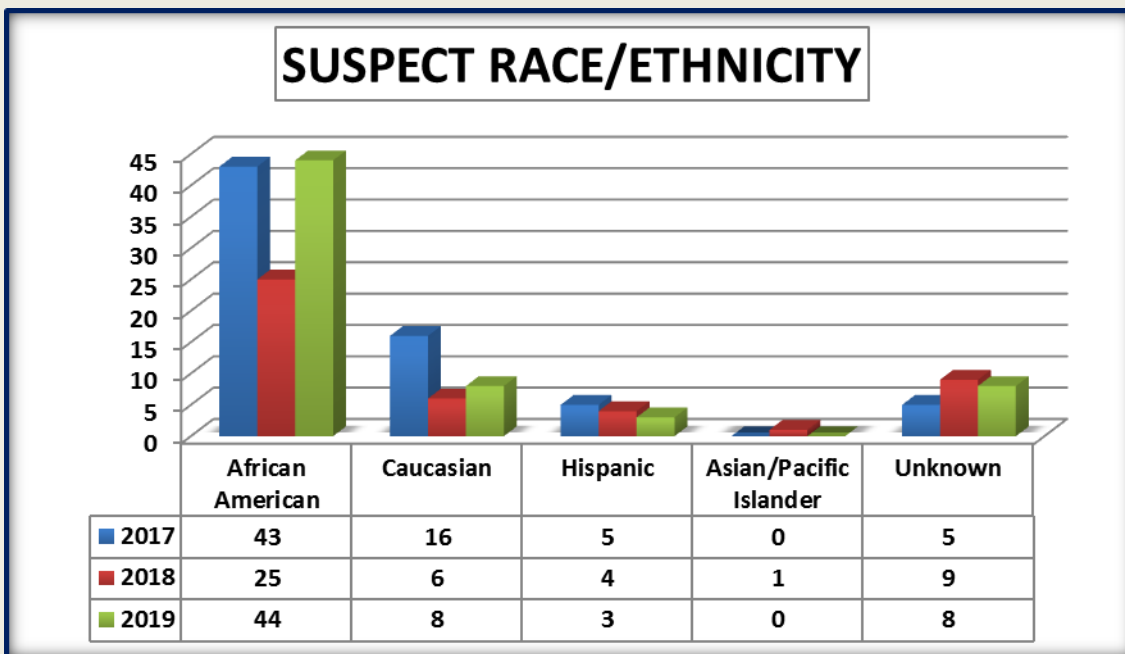
The charts on the following page summarize the *gender* and *race/ethnicity* of the *suspects* involved in pursuits over the past three years.

Suspect Gender



Male suspects accounted for the majority of individuals involved in pursuits (68.3%) in 2019, compared to 73.3% of pursuits in 2018. From 2017–2019, males accounted for 76.8% of the suspects involved in pursuits.

Suspect Race/Ethnicity



In 2019, 69.8% of the suspects involved in police pursuits were African American compared to 55.6% in 2018. Caucasian suspects accounted for 12.7% of the individuals involved in pursuits in 2019 compared to 13.3% in 2018.

Hispanic suspects accounted for 4.8% of the suspects involved in pursuits in 2019 compared to 8.9% in 2018. For the three-year period from 2017–2019, the data shows the following:

- African American suspects were involved in 63.3% of police pursuits.
- Caucasian suspects were involved in 16.9% of police pursuits.
- Hispanic suspects were involved in 6.8% of police pursuits.

Note: In 12.4% of police pursuits, the suspect's race/ethnicity was 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 88% of the pursuits in 2019, there were no special tactics or additional resources used, compared to 80.4% in 2018.

Four of the pursuits reported in 2019 (8%) involved the use of other resources, including other agencies, K9 teams or aircraft, and in three incidents (6%), 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 was still able to evade the police in one of these instances, while all other suspects were apprehended. Collisions occurred in two of the pursuits in which stop sticks were deployed, which resulted in injuries to two suspects and damage to suspect vehicles.

Supervisors terminated eight of the 50 pursuits (16%) in accordance with Function Code 135, 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. This was the same number of pursuits that were terminated for similar reasons in 2018.

Use of Force in Response to Resistance

Overall, there were 10 pursuits in 2019 (20%) in which force was used by police officers in response to resistance by suspects, compared to 39% of pursuits in 2018.

Eighteen of the 50 pursuits (36%) in Montgomery County in 2019 resulted in a *bailout*, which occurs when the suspect(s) stop or crash the vehicle and flee on foot, compared to 41.5% of the pursuits reported in 2018. Suspects were subsequently apprehended in approximately one-third of these instances. Twelve incidents involving bailouts (66.7%) also involved collisions compared to 10 incidents (58.8%) in 2018. These collisions involved damage to suspect vehicles, civilian vehicles and department vehicles, which also caused injuries to suspects, civilians, and police officers, as well as related property damage.

Collisions

Of the 50 pursuits that occurred in 2019, 27 (54%) resulted in a collision, compared to 21 collisions (51.2%) reported in 2018. A detailed breakdown by district of the 27 collisions related to pursuits in 2019 is provided in the table on the next page.

PURSUIITS INVOLVING COLLISIONS SUMMARY							
DISTRICT	COLLISIONS	DAMAGED SUSPECT VEHICLES	SUSPECTS INJURED	DAMAGED CIVILIAN VEHICLES	CIVILIANS INJURED	DAMAGED MCPD VEHICLES	POLICE OFFICERS INJURED
1	2	2	1	4	0	1	0
2	4	4	4	5	1	0	0
3	5	5	1	2	1	0	0
4	7	9	3	4	2	4	0
5	8	5	0	11	0	1	0
6	1	1	0	1	0	0	0
TOTALS	27	26	9	27	4	6	0

Of the 27 pursuits that ended in a collision in 2019, the suspect’s vehicle was involved in nearly all (96.3%), compared to 90.5% of the collisions reported in 2018. Nine people (suspects/passengers) were injured in collisions in 2019, compared to two people in 2018. Twenty-seven privately-owned civilian vehicles were damaged and four civilians were injured in 2019, compared to one civilian injury and 12 privately-owned vehicles damaged in 2018. Six police vehicles sustained damage and there were no police officers injured during the pursuits in 2019, compared to five police vehicles damaged and injuries to two officers in 2018.

SUMMARY

Although more than one million people live in Montgomery County, and thousands more travel through the county each year, pursuits rarely occur. There were more than 106,000 traffic stops made in 2019, yet only 50 pursuits resulted from these encounters, an occurrence rate of 0.05%, compared to 0.03% reported in 2018, when there were more than 121,000 traffic stops made and 41 pursuits.

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. The Public Service Training Academy (PSTA) increased staffing in 2019 to include a full-time Driving Training Program Manager to coordinate emergency vehicle operator course training and refresher training to increase and reinforce safe driving habits and skills for safe vehicle operation. The department has also taken measures to focus on more in-depth data collection and analysis to identify root causes of collisions so targeted intervention and preventive measures can be instituted to reduce the potential for collisions and injuries in general.

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 prudent on an operational level.



MONTGOMERY COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF POLICE

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