



In Hot Pursuit: Georgia's Police Pursuit Crashes and Crash Fatalities



Charles A. Warnock, B.S. and Carol Cotton, PhD; Traffic Safety Research and Evaluation Group
University of Georgia College of Public Health

Introduction

- Vehicular pursuit is a commonly used high-risk policing activity that puts the lives of law enforcement officers, suspected fleeing criminals, and the general public at risk.
- Georgia's state laws allow officers to engage in pursuits as long as they "exercise due regard for the safety of all persons in pursuits".
- Individual departmental policies may also allow or disallow vehicular pursuits.

Purpose

- To determine the number of fatal injuries in 2018 related to vehicular pursuit by law enforcement officers in Georgia.
- To determine the level of involvement in the pursuit to whom the fatal injury occurred (i.e. fleeing suspected criminal, passenger of pursued vehicle, non-occupant bystander, and law enforcement officer).

Results

In 2018:

- **70 people lost their lives in the course of police vehicle pursuits.**
- **Most fatal injuries (53%) were neither the suspect nor the officer. 11% were minors under the age of 16 years.**
- **10% of fatal injuries related to vehicular pursuits were bystander pedestrians or bicyclists.**
- **16% of all vehicular pursuits in which a fatal injury occurred were multi-fatality crashes.**

Discussion

- Vehicular pursuit should only be used when the fleeing criminal suspect presents a clear and present danger to others.
- Law enforcement departments should utilize technology endorsed by the National Institute of Justice to manage vehicular pursuits.

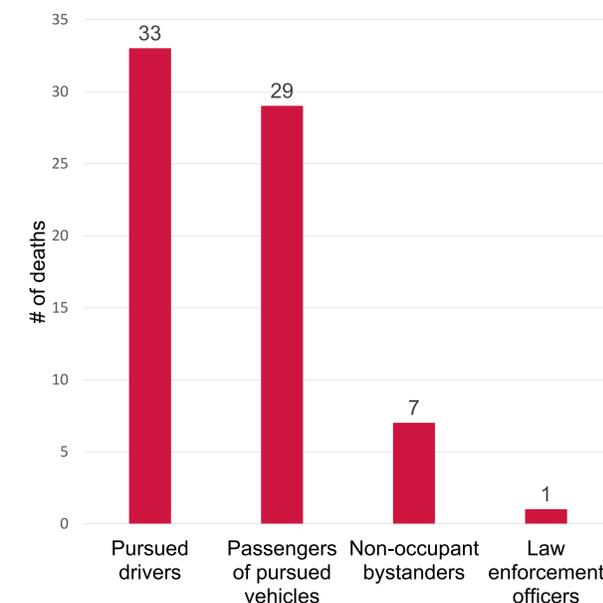
Methods

All data collected from the Georgia Electronic Accident Reporting System (GEARS). GEARS serves as Georgia's state repository for traffic accident reports completed by Georgia law enforcement.

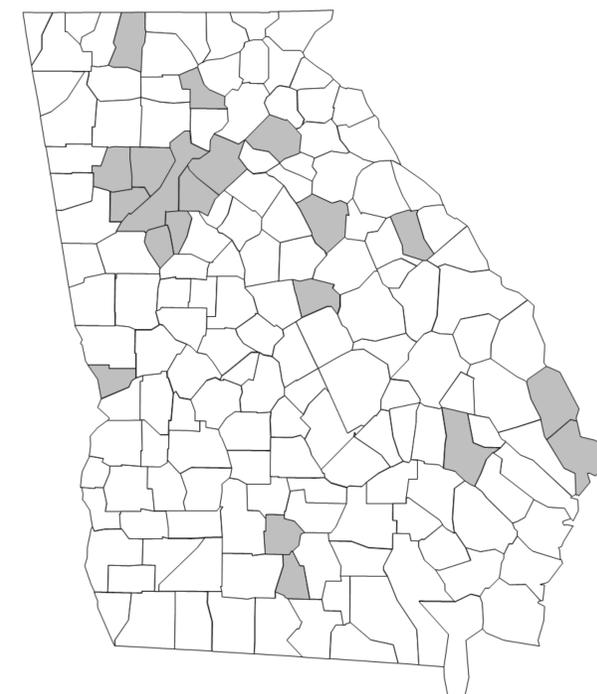
A small proportion (4.6%) of Georgia's 1,515 roadway deaths in 2018 involved a vehicular police pursuit.

Most deaths (53%) related to vehicular police pursuits in 2018 were neither the fleeing suspect nor the officer.

Pursuit-involved Fatalities by Person Type



Counties with Pursuit-involved Fatalities



Traffic Safety Research And Evaluation Group
141E Wright Hall, Health Sciences Campus
100 Foster Road, University of Georgia
Phone: (706)542-2804
Email: warnock1@uga.edu

