

## **Summary of current research being conducted at the University of Minnesota regarding police pursuits – Provided by Dr. Nichole Morris**

The research study is employing a mixed methods approach to collect data from a number of sources with an aim to capture a holistic view of the issue at hand. The study can be divided into two main parts: Qualitative and Quantitative analyses.

This quantitative analysis leveraged three primary data sets to examine what patterns or associations may exist between the documented pursuits in the state and other known factors including crime, population demographics, crashes, and citations, among others. The primary data sets include the Minnesota Statewide Pursuit Data, Minnesota State Patrol Citation Data, and Minnesota State Patrol Pursuit Data. Secondary data sets leveraged data pulled from the U.S. Census Bureau, the Minnesota Department of Public Safety (DPS) Bureau of Criminal Apprehension's (BCA) annual Uniform Crime Report, and the Minnesota DPS Office of Traffic Safety's Annual Crash Facts.

One of the primary outcomes of interest across all datasets was how stolen vehicles played a role in pursuits in the state. In the non-State Patrol data looking at local agencies, stolen vehicles were associated with an increased pursuit rate. Within the State Patrol data sets, the pursuit rate was not impacted by stolen vehicles, but stolen vehicle violations were associated with also having a violation for fleeing in a motor vehicle, along with pursuit termination being ended for reasons other than by the violator stopping. The pursuit rate was not associated with stolen vehicles for pursuit districts, which may indicate a need to utilize the proxy measure of stolen vehicles reported by other agencies in the counties they patrol. While it does show trends within the area, it may not accurately reflect how State Patrol is impacted by stolen vehicles within the districts they cover. Stolen vehicles being associated with pursuits not being terminated by the violator/driver is consistent with prior literature.

In a qualitative study that interviewed car thieves about why they fled the police, and the dichotomy of "flee/don't flee" was less of a concern but more so when in a stolen vehicle the thought process was reportedly "escape or get caught". One of the observed consistent associations that is present in both the State Patrol's Citation data statute violations and Pursuit data reasons for pursuit provided by the State Patrol is that if the violator has multiple reasons for fleeing, whether this is represented by other statute violations listed or other reasons for pursuit, the more likely there were to flee and not stop on their own. This is reflected in the results in the regression models and within the breakdown of co-violations of traffic/vehicle regulation violations. Further, 82% of the fleeing violations had a traffic/vehicle regulation and at least one additional "high risk" violation. These analyses are being updated with more recent data collected since the time that this analysis was completed at the start of the year.

In the qualitative analysis, the research team has employed three separate data collection methods to gather qualitative information regarding the current state of police pursuits in Minnesota. The three approaches included surveying the public regarding police pursuits, interviewing public defenders in Minnesota, and interviewing law enforcement officers in Minnesota. These populations were sought in an attempt to capture the diverse viewpoints and perspectives on pursuits, why they occur, and the role that policy may have on changes in offender behavior.

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Of the survey data, few respondents believed the police never pursue fleeing drivers. The vast majority believed there are policy or jurisdictional considerations that determine their likelihood. Additionally, most respondents believed that drivers flee to avoid arrest for other crimes, flee in a panic, or flee due to distrust in police. The preliminary findings from the study show some congruence across each of the three communities that participated (public, officers, public defenders) but the communities have some differences. Additionally, these preliminary findings appear to support what previous studies have shown: 1) Officers' most common response to the reasoning for pursuits was for stolen vehicles and traffic and speed violations being second; 2) Public defenders conveyed that juveniles fleeing are often in stolen vehicles and adults often have warrants or some other background criminal reason. When it comes to why people are running, these initial findings start painting a picture of how the reasons behind why people flee from police are complex and multifaceted. The survey of the public and reports from public defenders show that panic, impulsivity, and other criminal factors may all be factors to contribute to why an individual might flee. An area that officers and public defender responses differed was around how things have changed over time. Officers reported frustration with offenders' charges for fleeing being commonly dropped and "plead down", while public defenders did not share the notion that this was a common occurrence.

The next steps, following ethics approval from UMN IRB, will be to conduct interviews with offenders at Anoka Co Jail. These will be individuals who self-report to have fled police in the past, but are not currently being held for any crimes relating to a pursuit.