

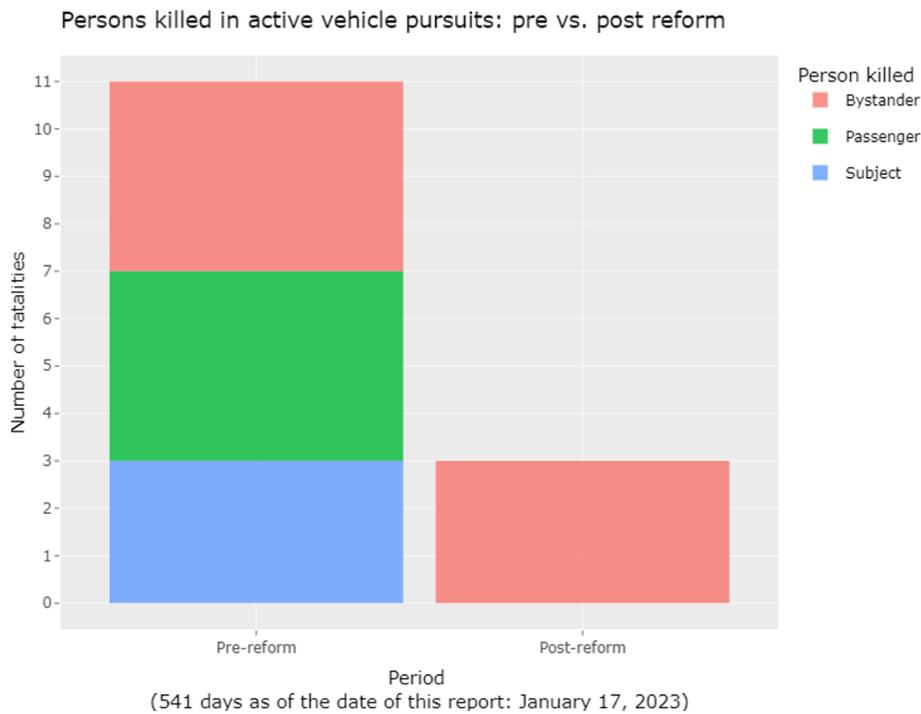


Common Sense Limits On Vehicular Pursuits Are Saving Lives

In 2021, the Washington State Legislature adopted a balanced statewide standard for police vehicular pursuits to address the growing risk that pursuits posed to the general public. At that time, pursuits were responsible for 10–20% of the fatalities from police activities each year. Half of those killed were uninvolved bystanders or passengers.

The 2021 law prioritizes public safety: police are allowed to engage in pursuits when there is an established threat to public safety – violent offenses (like carjackings, armed robberies), sex offenses, DUIs, and prison escapes – but not for misdemeanors or property crimes. The data show that the reforms have achieved their purpose: there have been 3 deaths due to pursuits since the reforms were passed, compared to 11 deaths in the same timeframe before, **a 73% reduction**.

The law is working. We are saving lives.



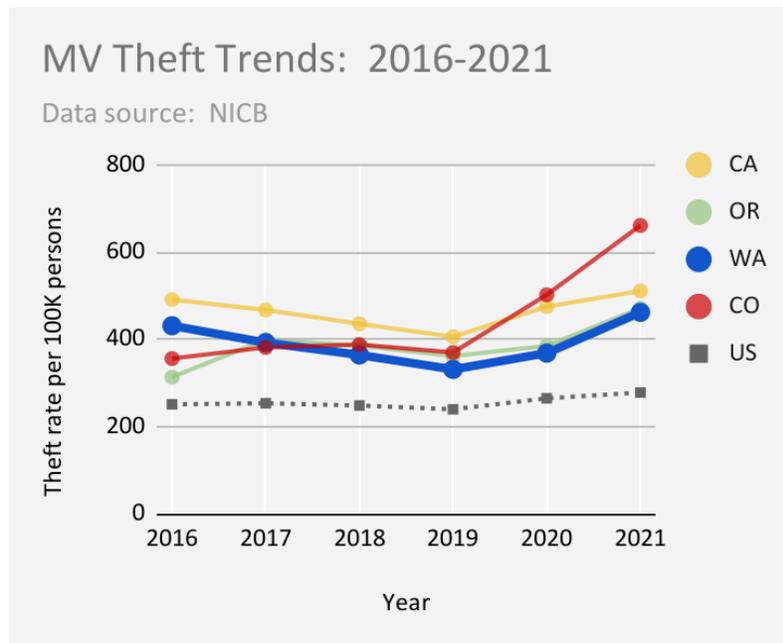
Officers still can, and do, pursue when necessary

Police pursuits continue to happen when there is an imminent threat to public safety. The current standard simply requires that the value of human life be placed above the immediate return of a stolen motor vehicle or enforcement of a low-level traffic offense.



There is no evidence that the 2021 laws increased crime rates

We have all seen headlines that crime rates have risen, but the evidence is clear that this is not related to our policy changes here in WA. Crime rates began to rise the year before the legislation, around the country. A good example is motor vehicle theft, shown in the chart. Thefts began rising in WA in 2020, 18 months before the reforms, and also rose in every state on the west coast (CA, OR and WA). Colorado had the steepest increase in thefts in the US. None of these states changed their statewide pursuit policy, but all saw increases like WA. *Our policy changes were designed to save lives while protecting public safety. The evidence shows they are doing both.*



What we need is better data on vehicular pursuits – both their costs and benefits

We have no statewide data on pursuits. Fatalities are the most important collateral damage from pursuits, but there are other costs – serious injuries and property damage, for both the public and law enforcement. These costs are currently hidden from us. On the benefit side, not all pursuits result in apprehension – rates in some jurisdictions are as low as 40%. There are other effective ways to solve property crimes and apprehend law-breakers, like the Washington Auto Theft Prevention Authority which provides resources and technical support to local agencies. Before changing a policy that has reduced fatalities by 73%, we need thoughtful collaboration with diverse stakeholders and a 360-degree assessment of the possible impacts. Washington should leave this law in place and require data collection on pursuits.