

# New Zealand Police TASER Reports – Key Findings

22 March 2010 to 30 June 2013

Tactical Options Research Team

## Introduction

This report presents key findings on TASER and other tactical options deployment by New Zealand Police (Police) from 22 March 2010 (TASER national roll-out to all districts) to 30 June 2013 (the most recent data available), a 39 month period approximately.

## Tactical Options Reporting (TOR) data

The data in this report presents Tactical Options Reporting (TOR) events. A TOR event is the reportable use of one or more tactical options, by one officer, against one individual. TASER data is presented by highest mode of deployment, ie, the highest mode of use is reported. Modes of TASER deployment are: shows (presentation, laser painting or arcing); and discharges (discharge with probes and/or contact stun).

## Key findings

- In the context of the millions of face to face interactions police had with the public, the use of force by police was rare. Reported use of force incidents accounted for less than 1% (approximately 0.2%) of such face to face interactions.
- TASER was deployed, most often in show mode, in a very small minority of Police apprehensions. There were 35 TASER show events per 10,000 Police apprehensions, and 5 TASER discharge events per 10,000 Police apprehensions (ie, 40 TASER events per 10,000 Police apprehensions).
- The most commonly used tactical options involved lesser degrees of force. Physical force/empty hand tactics were used at 37% (n=5,975) of TOR events, handcuffs 34% (n=5,458), and OC spray 32% (n=5,181).
- There were 2,646 TASER events, 87% of which were TASER show events (laser painting 69%, presentation 17% and arcing 1%). This equates to an average of 59 TASER show events and 9 TASER discharge events per month.
- The TASER show to discharge ratio was 7:1; that is, for every 7 shows of TASER there was 1 TASER discharge. Overall, since the TASER trial, the proportion of discharges has decreased, from 6:1 to 7:1.
- The majority (69%, n=241) of TASER discharge events involved one TASER discharge, with 22% (n=77) involving two discharges, 6% (n=22) three discharges, 2% (n=7) four discharges, and 1% (n=2) five discharges. Thus, there were 499 TASER discharges at 349 discharge events. Note, that multiple TASER discharges may occur where a discharge, or discharges, had no or insufficient effect on the person.
- TASER contact stun deployments comprised 22% (n=110) of all TASER discharges (n=499). Put another way, for every 4 TASER discharge with probes, there was 1 TASER contact stun (4:1).
- Officers reported that TASER was effective in about 80% of TASER show and discharge events. TASER shows may be deemed ineffective because the presentation, laser painting, or arcing of the TASER did not de-escalate the person's behaviour. TASER discharges may be deemed ineffective because the TASER probes did not attach eg, due to a fast moving target and/or environmental factors.
- TASER discharge events were typified by verbal threats (53%; n=184) and physical violence towards police (44%; n=153). Officers were assaulted with weapons in 21% (n=72) of TASER discharge events. Threats towards police (34%; n=776) and non-police (22%; n=503), violence towards non-police (16%; n=366), and violence towards police (11%; n=256) were also common issues at TASER show events. Note, people may display more than one type of behaviour at a TASER event.
- TASER was deployed against Pacific Island peoples, Maori, and European, at 56, 46, and 34 TASER events per 10,000 Police apprehensions, respectively. This data does not account for people's behaviour at TOR events.
- The vast majority of the thousands of mental health incidents that police dealt with did not involve the use of TASER. Of 36,440 mental health (1M) incidents Police attended, TASER was deployed (shown or discharged) in 2%, and discharged in only 0.3%.
- Most (about 80%) use of force incidents did not involve injury to the public involved.
- Excluding minor probe injuries, TASER had one of the lowest injury rates of all tactical options, with injuries resulting from 1% of all TASER events. There were 31 TASER-related injuries. Half (52%; n=16) were of moderate injury severity, requiring medical treatment (but no hospitalisation). Severe injuries ie, those resulting in hospital admission, were rare (there were four severe injuries, against three people).
- In the vast majority (96%) of TASER events, officers did not report sustaining any injuries. There were 114 staff injuries. Three quarters (75%; n=86) were of minor injury severity.