NZ Police Biannual Tactical Options Research Report #7

1 July to 31 December 2014

Response and Operations: Research and Evaluation (RORE)

Introduction

This Biannual Tactical Options Research Report covers the last six months of the 2014 calendar year (1 July to 31 December), and has a particular focus on TASER deployment. It is part of an external tactical options reporting series produced by Response and Operations: Research and Evaluation, for monitoring and accountability purposes.

Tactical Options Reporting (TOR) data

The data in this report is derived from Tactical Options Reporting (TOR) data, which counts TOR events and tactical options used.

A TOR event is the reportable use of one or more tactical options, by one officer, against one individual. As some TOR events involve the use of more than one tactical option, the total number of TOR events is lower than the total number of tactical options used.

TASER data is presented by highest mode of deployment. Modes of TASER deployment are: shows (presentation, laser painting or arcing); and discharges (discharge with probes and/or contact stun).

View from the frontline…

"Because [the subject] was very close to police and [other people] it was imperative to act immediately to prevent any harm to persons… [The subject] had hold of one large piece of glass in each hand and had clearly harmed [self] prior to police arrival… There was nowhere for anyone to take cover if [the subject] had decided to attack the people in the room; and if [the subject] had escaped from the lounge with the glass [they] could have continued to harm [self] or others. I had no choice other than to present the Taser. I informed [the subject] I had a Taser [and] to look at the red dots on [their] chest… Once [they] saw the dots [they] complied with my order to place the glass down. [The subject] first placed the large piece in [their] right hand down on the table, and with further orders from Constable [Name], [the subject] eventually placed the two pieces of glass in [their] left hand down on the table as well."

Key findings

Police rarely used tactical options when engaging with the public.

- 99.8% of recorded face-to-face interactions with the public involved no use of tactical options.
- 3,736 tactical options were used at 2,524 TOR events.

Most of the tactical options used were lower levels of force.

- The main tactical options deployed were: empty hand tactics (44% of TOR events), handcuffs and restraints (40%), and OC spray (30%).
- Firearms (7% - all 'shows'), dogs (5%), baton (2%) and 'other' tactical options (1%) were used least frequently at TOR events.

TASER was deployed at a minority of events.

- TASER was deployed (ie, shown or discharged) at 19% of TOR events.
- TASER was deployed at 0.6% of apprehensions and 0.03% of recorded face-to-face interactions with the public.

Most TASER events did not involve TASER discharge.

- TASER 'shows' (ie, presentation, laser pointing and arcing) were the highest mode of deployment at 89% of TASER events.
- TASER was discharged (ie, contact stun or discharge with probes) at 11% of TASER TOR events (1% contact stuns, 10% discharges with probes), 2% of all TOR events, 0.07% of apprehensions, and 0.003% of face-to-face interactions with the public.
- Overall, this equates to a TASER 'show' to 'discharge' ratio of 8:1.

Threats, violence, and/or alcohol were common at TASER discharge events.

- At 60% of TASER discharge events, the subject was believed to be impaired by alcohol, while 55% had a history of violence towards non-police.
- At 51% of TASER discharge events, the subject had threatened Police, was violent towards police in 43% of events, and had used a weapon against police at 42% of events.

Injuries at TASER events were rare.

- 17% of TASER discharge events resulted in an injury to the subject. No 'serious' injuries were reported.
- Excluding superficial probe injuries, TASER had the second lowest subject injury rate of all tactical options, with 2% of TASER events resulting in a subject injury. Only firearm 'shows' had a lower injury rate.
- Staff were injured at 4% of TASER events. No 'serious' injuries were reported.

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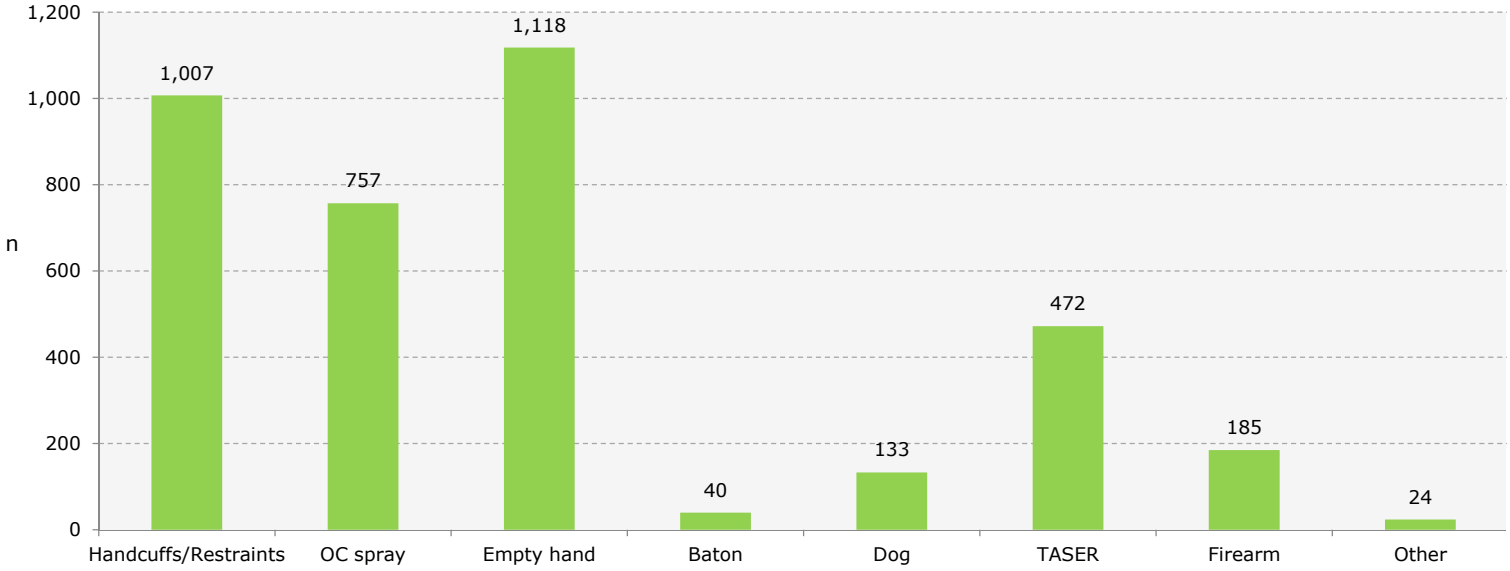
Table 1: Tactical options used at TOR events, by district, 1 July to 31 December 2014[1,2]

	Handcuffs/ Restraints	OC spray	Empty hand	Baton	Dog	TASER	Firearm	Other	Non-TASER to TASER use ratio
Northland	49	48	46	3	11	15	10	0	11:1
Waitematā	108	40	115	2	5	34	17	0	8:1
Auckland City	113	62	115	2	11	61	16	1	5:1
Counties Manukau	145	92	207	4	5	51	34	2	10:1
Waikato	51	68	46	7	6	29	11	2	7:1
Bay of Plenty	106	87	126	6	13	62	35	8	6:1
Eastern	69	92	67	5	11	23	2	2	11:1
Central	73	82	74	6	8	47	20	6	6:1
Wellington	102	52	107	1	33	33	13	2	9:1
Tasman	36	25	40	0	6	29	6	0	4:1
Canterbury	95	67	124	2	23	58	17	1	6:1
Southern	60	42	51	2	1	30	4	0	5:1
Total TOR events	1,007	757	1,118	40	133	472	185	24	7:1
National average	84	63	93	3	11	39	15	2	

[1] An officer may use more than one tactical option (eg, handcuffs, OC spray) at a TOR event.

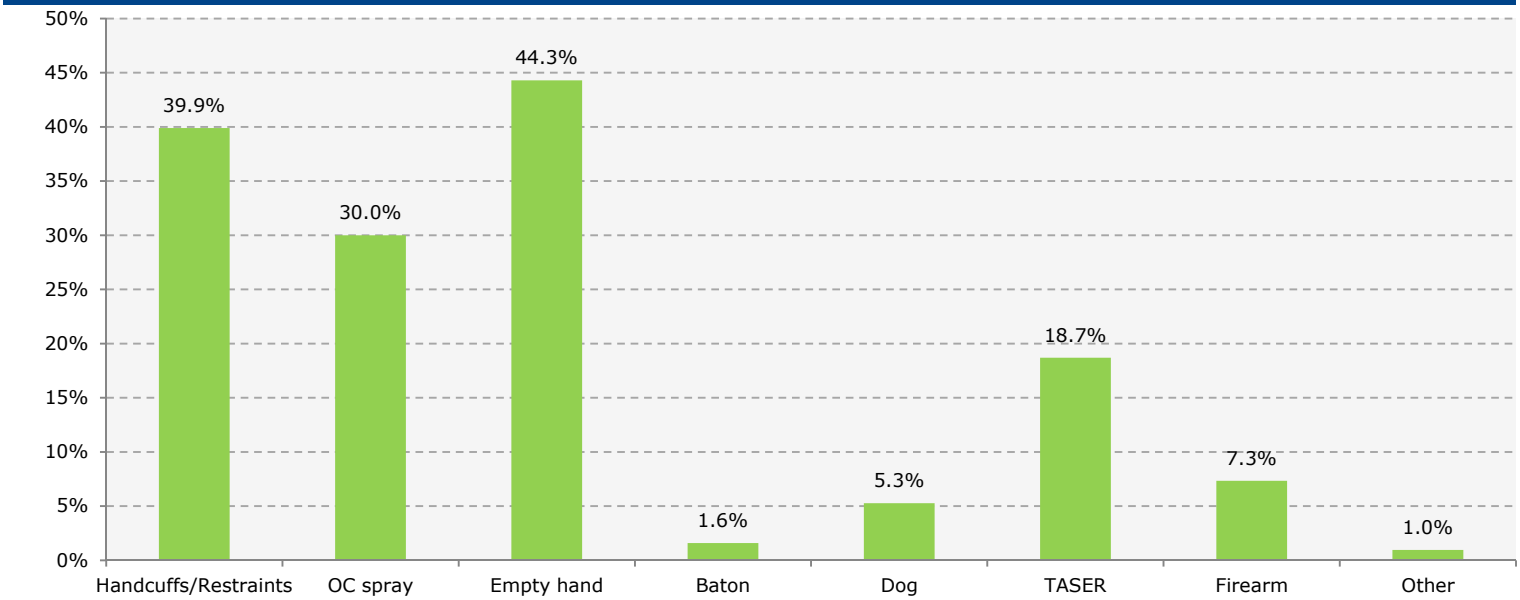
[2] Table 1, Figure 1, Figure 2 and Figure 3 count whether a particular tactical option was used at a TOR event, not the number of times that tactical option was used at the event. See page 9 for tactical options deployments that are reportable in a Tactical Options Report.

Figure 1: Number of tactical options used (n=3,736) at TOR events, nationally, 1 July to 31 December 2014[3]



[3] Officers may use more than one tactical option (eg, handcuffs, OC spray) at a TOR event, thus, the total number of tactical options used (n=3,736), shown in Figure 1, is higher than the number of TOR events (n=2,524) used in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Proportion (%) of TOR events (n=2,524) where a tactical option(s) was used, nationally, 1 July to 31 December 2014[4]



[4] For example, 39.9% of subjects at TOR events had handcuffs or restraints used on them. As officers may use more than one tactical option (eg, handcuffs, OC spray) at a TOR event, the total percentage exceeds 100%.

Figure 3: Tactical options used at TOR events, by district, 1 July to 31 December 2014

••••• National average

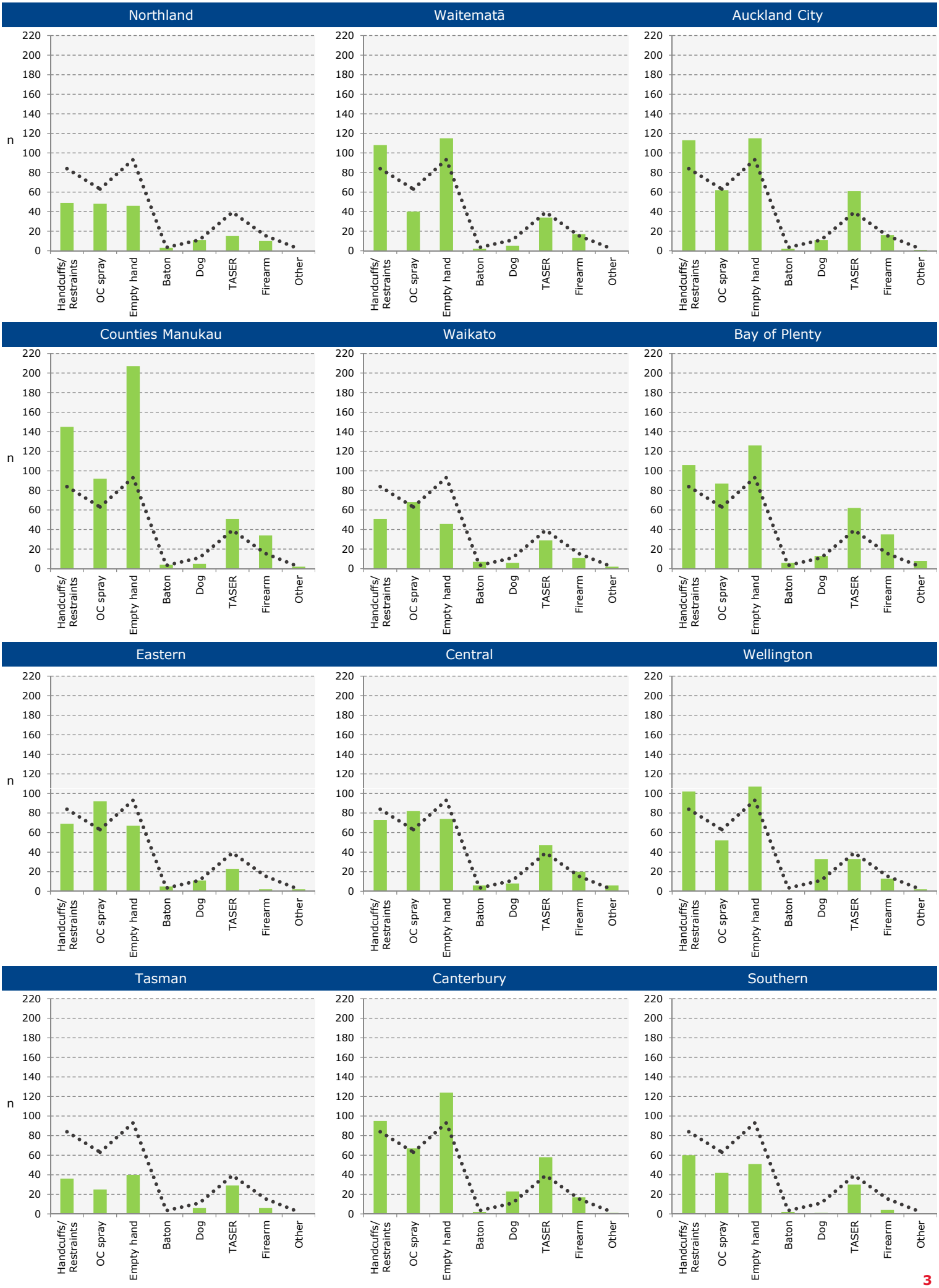


Table 2: TASER TOR events by highest mode of deployment[5], by district, 1 July to 31 December 2014

	Presentation	Laser painting	Arcing	Contact stun[6]	Discharge with probes[6]	Total TASER events	Per 10,000 apprehensions[7]
Northland	2	11	0	1	1	15	48
Waitematā	7	19	1	0	7	34	57
Auckland City	6	46	3	0	6	61	102
Counties Manukau	12	30	0	1	8	51	59
Waikato	10	17	0	0	2	29	47
Bay of Plenty	18	38	0	0	6	62	76
Eastern	5	15	0	0	3	23	41
Central	11	34	0	0	2	47	74
Wellington	5	27	0	0	1	33	52
Tasman	3	25	0	0	1	29	76
Canterbury	4	45	0	2	7	58	73
Southern	3	22	0	1	4	30	60
Total TASER events	86	329	4	5	48	472	65
National average	7	27	0.3	0.4	4	39	

[5] TASER data is presented by 'highest mode of deployment', and is shown from left (lowest) to right (highest). Thus, where TASER discharge with probes is the highest mode of deployment, any other mode of deployment that preceded the discharge with probes is excluded from the data. This caveat applies to Tables 2, 4 and 5, and Figure 4.

[6] TASER discharge (ie, contact stun and discharge with probes) data in Table 2 counts the number of TOR events at which a discharge occurred, but not the number of discharges. (which are shown in Tables 5 and 6). Discharge refers to all instances where a TASER was discharged in an operational setting, including discharges that made no or insufficient contact with the subject.

[7] Police apprehension data does not represent the number of offences or offenders, as one offender of may be apprehended for multiple offences, or multiple offenders may be apprehended for one offence. Thus, care should be used when interpreting this data as one apprehension does not necessarily refer to one individual.

Figure 4: TASER TOR events (n=472), by highest mode of deployment, by district , 1 July to 31 December 2014

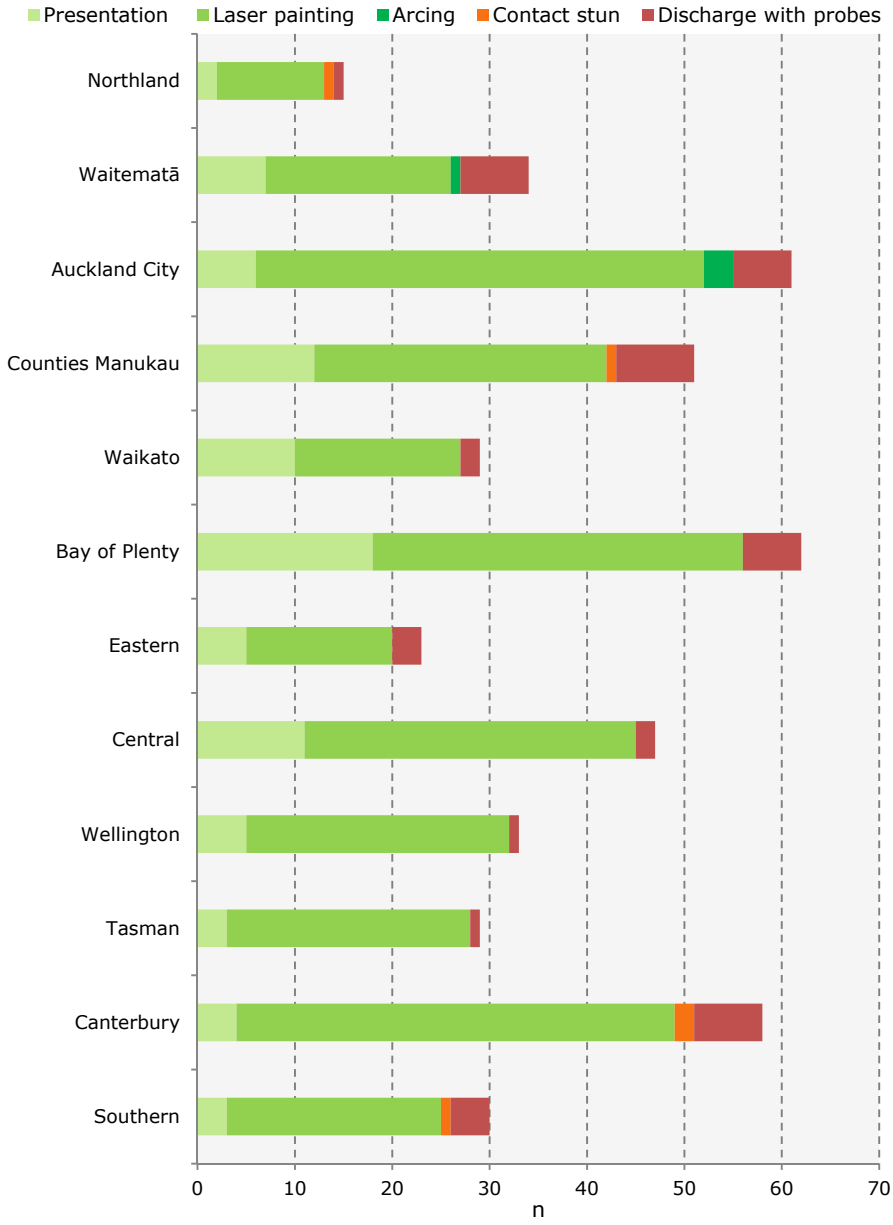


Table 3: TASER TOR events, by work group

Work group	n
GENERAL DUTIES BRANCH	**435**
General Duties Branch	419
General Duties Branch Rural	13
Team Policing/Tactical Policing Unit	3
Watchhouse	0
Prisoner Escort/Jailer	0
Other General Duties Branch	0
ROAD POLICING	**18**
Strategic Traffic Unit	8
Highway Patrol	7
Road Crime Unit	2
Traffic Alcohol Group	1
Other Road Policing	0
INVESTIGATION	**10**
Criminal Investigation Branch	10
Scene of Crime Officer	0
SPECIALIST	**5**
Dog Section	4
Armed Offenders Squad	1
Special Tactics Group	0
Protection Services	0
PREVENTION	**3**
Community Relations	2
Neighbourhood Policing Team	1
Youth Aid Services	0
Family Violence	0
OTHER	**1**
Tactical Crime Unit	1
Other	0
Total TASER events	472

Table 4: TASER TOR events, by highest mode of deployment, by area, 1 July to 31 December 2014						
	Presentation	Laser painting	Arcing	Contact stun	Discharge with probes	Total TASER events
NORTHLAND						
Far North	1	3	0	0	0	4
Whangarei	1	8	0	1	1	11
WAITEMATĀ						
Rodney	0	5	0	0	3	8
Waitakere	1	12	1	0	4	18
North Shore	4	2	0	0	0	6
Auckland Motorways	2	0	0	0	0	2
AUCKLAND CITY						
Auckland Central	3	15	2	0	2	22
Auckland East	2	20	1	0	2	25
Auckland West	1	11	0	0	2	14
COUNTIES MANUKAU						
Counties Manukau Central	3	12	0	0	2	17
Counties Manukau East	2	4	0	0	2	8
Counties Manukau South	4	4	0	0	0	8
Counties Manukau West	3	10	0	1	4	18
WAIKATO						
Hamilton City	2	10	0	0	0	12
Waikato East	0	3	0	0	2	5
Waikato West	8	4	0	0	0	12
BAY OF PLENTY						
Eastern Bay of Plenty	3	4	0	0	1	8
Rotorua	3	6	0	0	1	10
Taupo	7	11	0	0	3	21
Western Bay of Plenty	5	17	0	0	1	23
EASTERN						
Tairawhiti	1	3	0	0	0	4
Hawkes bay	4	12	0	0	3	19
CENTRAL						
Manawatu	5	19	0	0	1	25
Taranaki	4	7	0	0	0	11
Whanganui	2	8	0	0	1	11
WELLINGTON						
Hutt Valley	1	9	0	0	0	10
Kapiti-Mana	0	7	0	0	0	7
Wairarapa	1	5	0	0	0	6
Wellington	3	6	0	0	1	10
TASMAN						
Marlborough	2	7	0	0	0	9
Nelson Bays	1	12	0	0	0	13
West Coast	0	6	0	0	1	7
CANTERBURY						
Canterbury Metro	4	36	0	2	5	47
Mid South Canterbury	0	9	0	0	2	11
SOUTHERN						
Otago Lakes Central	0	4	0	0	0	4
Otago Coastal	1	11	0	0	2	14
Southland	2	7	0	1	2	12
Total TASER events	86	329	4	5	48	472

Table 5: Number of TASER discharges at each TASER TOR event, by district, 1 July to 31 December 2014[8]

	One	Two	Three	Four	Five	Total discharge events
Northland	2	0	0	0	0	2
Waitematā	5	2	0	0	0	7
Auckland City	3	3	0	0	0	6
Counties Manukau	4	3	2	0	0	9
Waikato	0	1	1	0	0	2
Bay of Plenty	5	1	0	0	0	6
Eastern	3	0	0	0	0	3
Central	2	0	0	0	0	2
Wellington	1	0	0	0	0	1
Tasman	1	0	0	0	0	1
Canterbury	6	2	1	0	0	9
Southern	4	1	0	0	0	5
Total discharge events	36	13	4	0	0	53

[8] TASER discharge data in Table 5 includes all TASER discharges with probes and contact stuns that occurred in an operational setting, including discharges that made no or insufficient contact with the individual. TASER may be discharged more than once at a TASER TOR event. In 36 TASER TOR events, TASER was discharged once, while in 17 events TASER was discharged two or more times. Thus, there were 74 discharges at 53 TASER TOR discharge events. Where multiple discharges occurred the TASER had no or insufficient effect on the subject 47% of time (ie, n=8 of multiple discharge events).

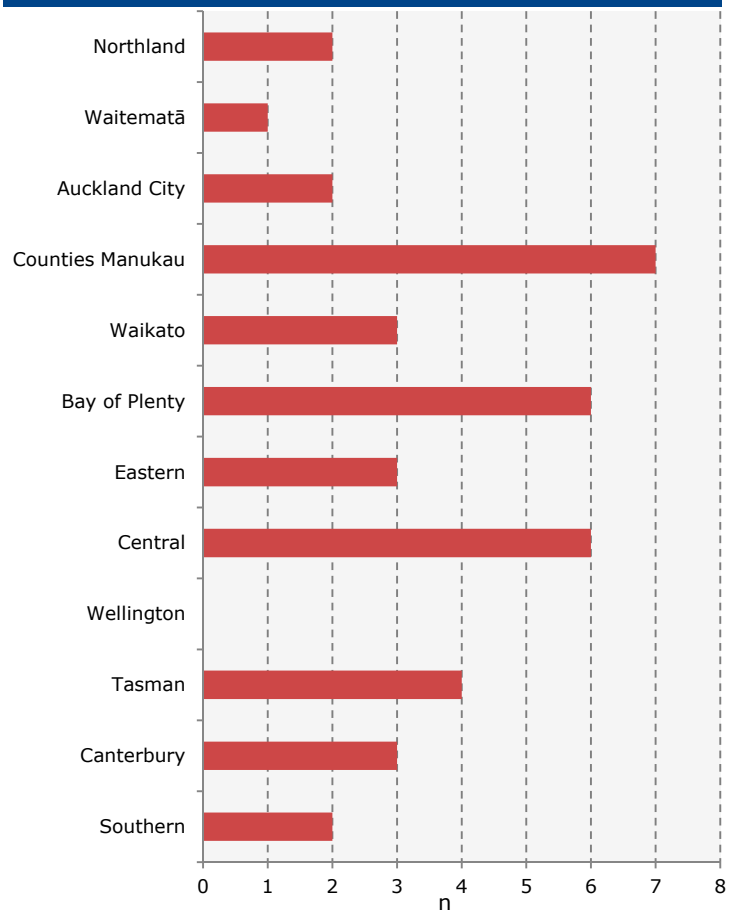
Table 6: Number of TASER discharges, by discharge mode and district, 1 July to 31 December 2014

	Contact stun[9]	Discharge with probes[10]	Total discharges
Northland	1	1	2
Waitematā	0	9	9
Auckland City	0	9	9
Counties Manukau	3	13	16
Waikato	0	5	5
Bay of Plenty	0	7	7
Eastern	0	3	3
Central	0	2	2
Wellington	0	1	1
Tasman	0	1	1
Canterbury	2	11	13
Southern	2	4	6
Total discharges	8	66	74

[9] Contact stun refers to discharges where probes were not deployed, ie, the TASER was activated while in contact with the subject, without deploying the probes.

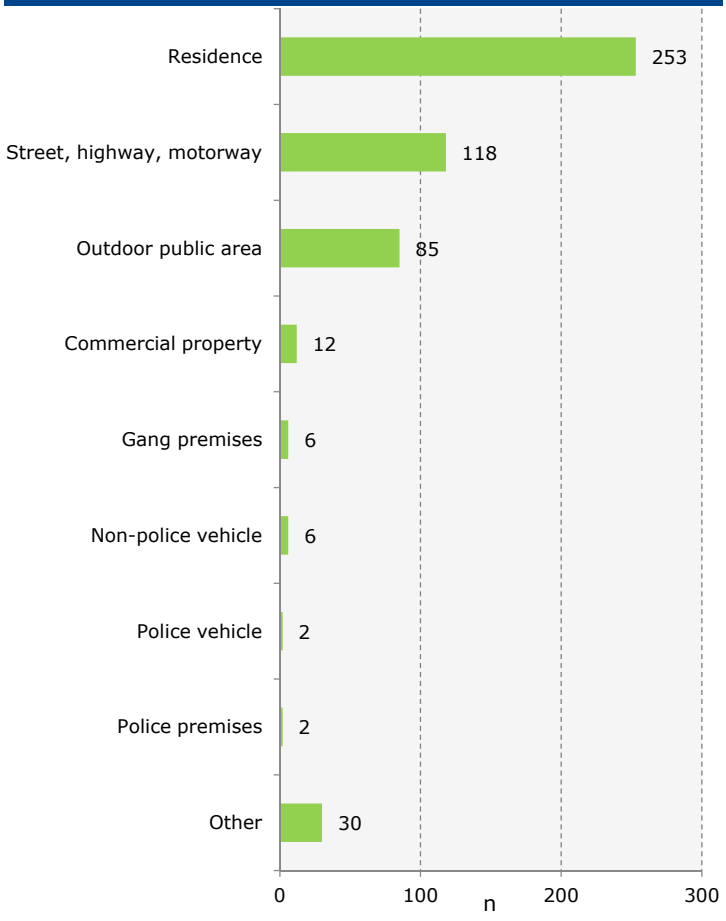
[10] Discharge with probes refers to discharges where probes were deployed, and to contact stuns that occurred after a discharge with probes, ie, where the probes were still in contact with the subject.

Figure 5: Number of unintentional discharges of TASER (n=39), by district[11]



[11] All 39 unintentional discharges of TASER occurred in non-operational settings.

Figure 6: TASER TOR events, by location type[12]



[12] More than one location type may be reported for each TOR event. Thus, the sum of the numbers in Figure 6 (n=514) exceeds the number of TOR events (n=472).

Table 7: Subject behaviours at TASER TOR events, by mode of deployment, 1 July to 31 December 2014[13,14]

	Shows[15]	% of shows	Discharges[15]	% of discharges	Total	% of TASER events
Threaten police	158	37.7%	27	50.9%	185	39.2%
Threaten non-police	101	24.1%	9	17.0%	110	23.3%
Violence towards police	54	12.9%	23	43.4%	77	16.3%
Violence towards non-police	64	15.3%	5	9.4%	69	14.6%
Had and used a weapon against police	52	12.4%	22	41.5%	74	15.7%
Had a weapon but did not use it	25	6.0%	2	3.8%	27	5.7%
Other aggressive behaviours	73	17.4%	4	7.5%	77	16.3%
Resist and/or obstruct police	38	9.1%	1	1.9%	39	8.3%
Evade and/or escape police	36	8.6%	3	5.7%	39	8.3%
Threatened or actual self-harm	22	5.3%	6	11.3%	28	5.9%
Other	17	4.1%	0	0.0%	17	3.6%
Total behaviours	640		102		742	

[13] Table 7 presents subject behaviours displayed at TASER TOR events; eg, in 50.9% of the 53 TASER TOR events where discharge was the highest mode of deployment, subjects had threatened police. Subjects may display more than one type of behaviour at a TOR event, thus total percentages exceed 100%.

[14] Individual subject behaviours and relevant factors may not be the sole reason for the use of TASER. This caveat applies to Tables 7, 8, 9 and 10 and Figure 7.

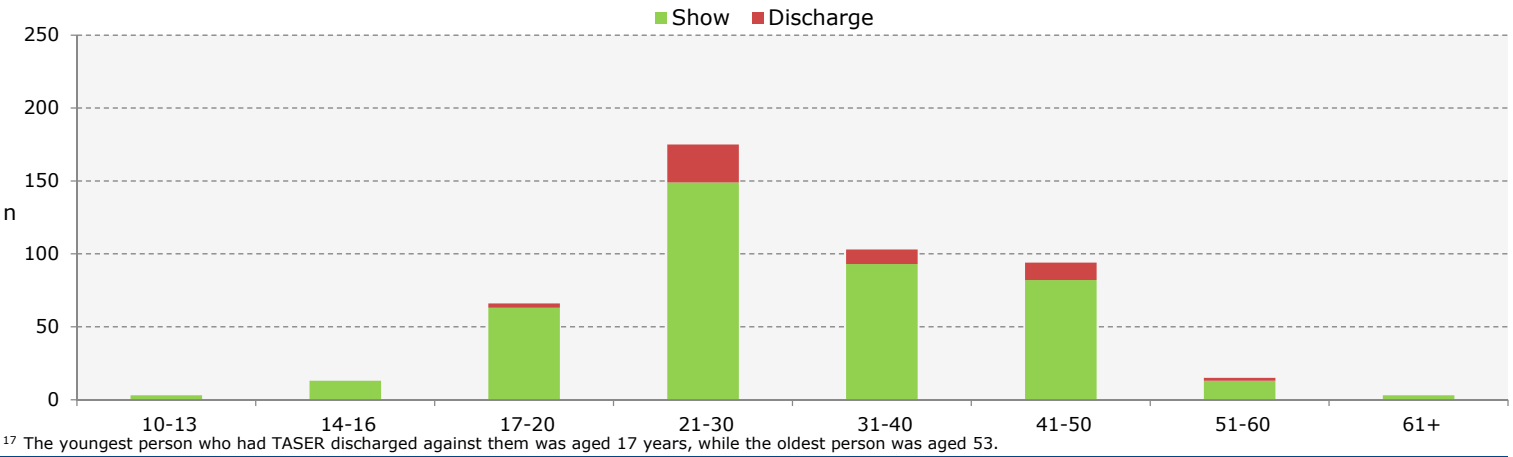
[15] TASER data is presented by highest mode of deployment. TASER shows = presentation, laser painting, or arcing. TASER discharges = discharge with probes or contact stun.

Table 8: Relevant factors at TASER TOR events, by mode of deployment,1 July to 31 December 2014[16]

	Shows	% of shows	Discharges	% of discharges	Total	% of TASER events
History of violence against police	124	29.6%	12	22.6%	136	28.8%
History of violence against non-police	222	53.0%	29	54.7%	251	53.2%
History of carrying weapons	131	31.3%	15	28.3%	146	30.9%
Alcohol	198	47.3%	32	60.4%	230	48.7%
Drugs	93	22.2%	13	24.5%	106	22.5%
Mental illness	84	20.0%	17	32.1%	101	21.4%
Distressed emotional state	103	24.6%	13	24.5%	116	24.6%
Suicidal	64	15.3%	12	22.6%	76	16.1%
Excited delirium	25	6.0%	8	15.1%	33	7.0%
Medical condition	19	4.5%	1	1.9%	20	4.2%
Other	48	11.5%	5	9.4%	53	11.2%
Total relevant factors	1,111		157		1,268	

[16] Table 8 presents broader factors relevant to TASER TOR events; eg, in 60.4% of the 53 TASER TOR events where discharge was the highest mode of deployment, the subject was impaired by alcohol. Subjects may display more than one relevant factor at a TOR event, thus total percentages exceed 100%.

Figure 7: TASER TOR events, by age and mode of deployment, 1 July to 31 December 2014[17]



[17] The youngest person who had TASER discharged against them was aged 17 years, while the oldest person was aged 53.

Table 9: TASER TOR events, by ethnicity and mode of deployment, 1 July to 31 December 2014

	Shows	% of shows	Discharges	% of discharges	Total TASER events	Per 10,000 apprehensions[18]
European	139	33.2%	16	30.2%	155	53
Māori	225	53.7%	27	50.9%	252	76
Pacific peoples	45	10.7%	10	18.9%	55	83
Other	10	2.4%	0	0.0%	10	-
Total TASER events	419	100.0%	53	100.0%	472	

[18] Police apprehension data does not represent the number of offences or offenders, as one offender may be apprehended for multiple offences, or multiple offenders may be apprehended for one offence. Thus, care should be used when interpreting this data as one apprehension does not necessarily refer to one individual. Note, the data in Tables 9 and 10 do not account for subject behaviours at TOR events.

Table 10: TASER TOR events, by sex and mode of deployment, 1 July to 31 December 2014

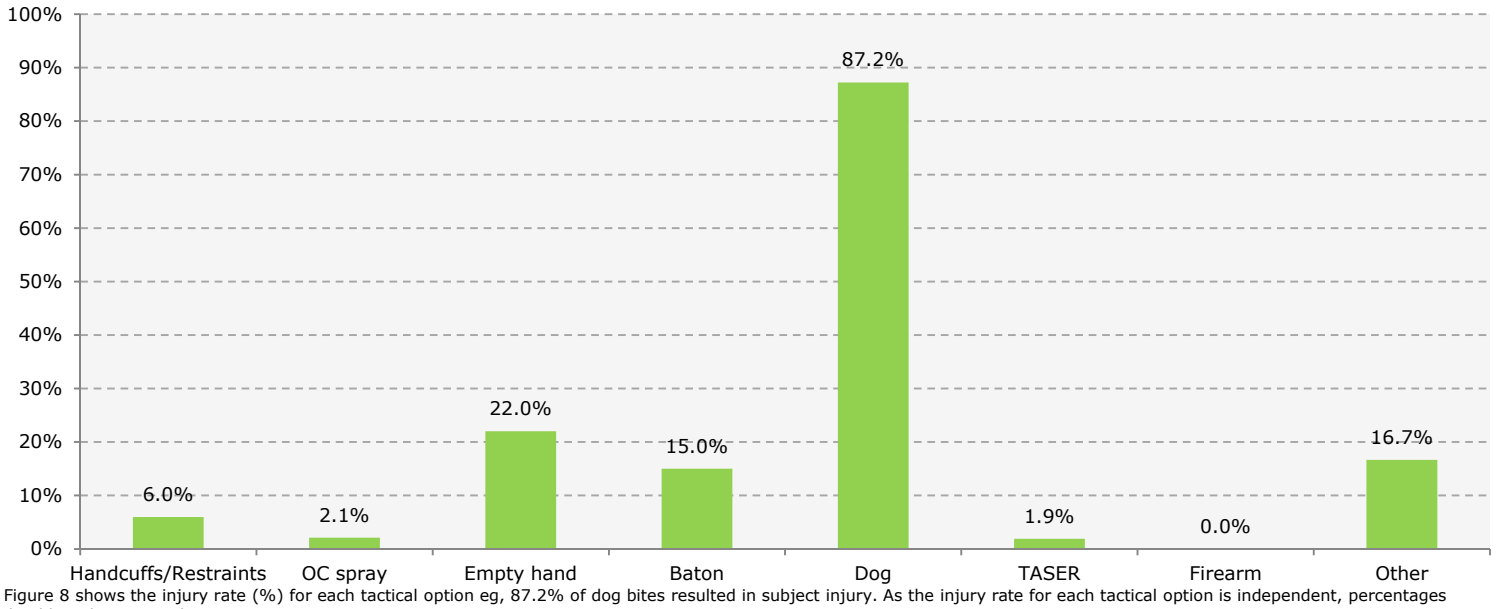
	Shows	% of shows	Discharges	% of discharges	Total TASER events	Per 10,000 apprehensions[18]
Male	394	94.0%	49	92.5%	443	77
Female	24	5.7%	4	7.5%	28	18
Unknown	1	0.2%	0	0.0%	1	-
Total TASER events	419	100.0%	53	100.0%	472	

Table 11: Number of subject injuries as a result of tactical options use, by district, 1 July to 31 December 2014[19]

	Handcuffs/ Restraints	OC Spray	Empty hand	Baton	Dog	TASER	Firearm	Other	Total injuries	% of all injuries
Northland	2	2	6	0	11	0	0	0	21	5%
Waitematā	8	1	20	0	5	0	0	0	34	7%
Auckland City	3	1	29	0	8	2	0	1	44	10%
Counties Manukau	10	0	26	1	2	1	0	0	40	9%
Waikato	2	4	11	3	6	0	0	0	26	6%
Bay of Plenty	12	4	27	0	11	0	0	0	54	12%
Eastern	2	1	18	1	9	0	0	1	32	7%
Central	4	0	12	1	7	1	0	2	27	6%
Wellington	4	3	36	0	30	0	0	0	73	16%
Tasman	5	0	10	0	5	1	0	0	21	5%
Canterbury	5	0	36	0	21	2	0	0	64	14%
Southern	3	0	15	0	1	2	0	0	21	5%
Total injuries	60	16	246	6	116	9	0	4	457	100%
% of all injuries	13.1%	3.5%	53.7%	1.3%	25.3%	2.0%	0.0%	0.9%	100.0%	

[19] More than one subject injury may be reported as a result of a TOR event. Table 11 presents injuries caused by each tactical option, as a proportion of all injuries caused by all tactical options. Thus, the 457 injuries shown in Table 11 represents the total injuries received as a result of tactical options use, rather than the number of TOR events at which one or more injuries occurred. Fatalities associated with a use of force are not reported in a TOR form, but are instead subject to internal and external investigations.

Figure 8: Injury rate (%) for each tactical option used at TOR events, nationally, 1 July to 31 December 2014[20,21]



[20] Figure 8 shows the injury rate (%) for each tactical option eg, 87.2% of dog bites resulted in subject injury. As the injury rate for each tactical option is independent, percentages should not be summed.

[21] TASER and firearm subject injury data includes shows and discharges (excluding fatalities).

Table 12: Subject injuries[22] resulting from TASER discharges, by severity[23], and district

	Minor	Moderate	Serious	Total injuries
Northland	0	0	0	0
Waitematā	0	0	0	0
Auckland City	1	1	0	2
Counties Manukau	1	0	0	1
Waikato	0	0	0	0
Bay of Plenty	0	0	0	0
Eastern	0	0	0	0
Central	1	0	0	1
Wellington	0	0	0	0
Tasman	0	1	0	1
Canterbury	1	1	0	2
Southern	1	1	0	2
Total injuries	5	4	0	9

[22] More than one subject injury may occur, and be reported, as a result of a TASER discharge. The n=9 in Table 12 counts individual injuries, rather than TASER events at which one or more injuries occurred. Superficial probe injuries are excluded.

Table 13: Staff injuries[24] at TASER TOR events, by severity[23], and district

	Minor	Moderate	Serious	Total injuries
Northland	0	1	0	1
Waitematā	1	1	0	2
Auckland City	2	0	0	2
Counties Manukau	0	2	0	2
Waikato	1	0	0	1
Bay of Plenty	1	0	0	1
Eastern	0	0	0	0
Central	0	0	0	0
Wellington	2	0	0	2
Tasman	1	0	0	1
Canterbury	6	2	0	8
Southern	0	0	0	0
Total injuries	14	6	0	20

[24] Officers can only report one injury and injury severity type received at a TASER TOR event. The n=20 in Table 13 counts TASER events at which one or more staff injuries occurred rather than individual injuries.

[23] 'Minor', 'moderate', and 'serious' are proxy indicators of severity. Minor injuries = 'nil, self, or staff treatment'; moderate injuries = 'medical treatment (but not hospital admission)'; serious injuries = 'treatment at a hospital'. Care should be taken in interpreting 'serious' injury data as injuries can be treated at hospital for practical reasons rather than necessity.

Response and Operations: Research and Evaluation (RORE)

This report was compiled by Response and Operations: Research and Evaluation (RORE) at Police National Headquarters. A key role of this team is to undertake research, analysis, monitoring and evaluation of police use of force, to provide accountability and assist evidence-based decision making, in support of police and public safety.

Tactical Options Reporting (TOR)

The following deployments of tactical options are reportable: handcuffs with pain compliance, or without pain compliance when used with another reportable tactical option; other restraints; OC spray bursts; empty hand tactics; baton strikes; dog bites or other dog-related deployment injuries; weapons of opportunity (reported in "other"); sponge rounds; shows and discharges of a TASER and/or firearm (noting the exemptions below).

The Armed Offenders Squads (AOS) and Special Tactics Group (STG) are exempted from reporting shows (but not discharges) of TASER and firearms. Fatalities associated with the use of force are also not reported in a TOR form, but are instead the subject of internal and external investigations. Accordingly, some use of force data is not included in this report.

Tactical Options Reporting (TOR) data limitations

TOR data presents a quantitative overview of deployment of tactical options; however, it does not provide a nuanced understanding of factors that influence the deployment of tactical options. Further, where the numbers in these reports are small, slight increases or decreases may result in large percentage differences. For these reasons, caution should be exercised when interpreting TOR data, including when comparing TOR data across biannual reports, districts, and areas.

Disclaimer

The TOR data reported in this publication is provisional, and is the most accurate available at time of extraction. Data entry errors were corrected where identified. While some data inaccuracies may remain (as with all large administrative databases), New Zealand Police is confident that the data is more than sufficiently accurate to monitor and describe reported deployment of tactical options by police. Police makes no warranty, expressed or implied, nor assumes any legal liability or responsibility, for the accuracy, correctness, completeness, or use of, the data or information in this publication. Further, Police shall not be liable for any loss or damage arising directly or indirectly from reliance on the data or information presented in this publication.

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