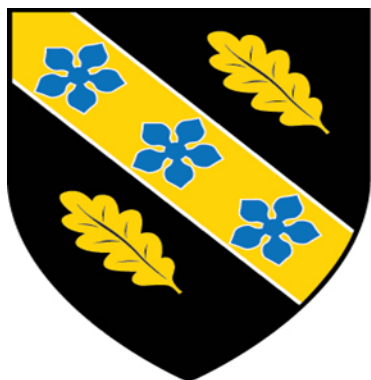




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**Navigating Taser Training: Understanding the Impact of Scrutiny on Police Officer
Decision-Making**

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BSc (Hons) Professional Policing

Acknowledgments

I would like to take this opportunity to thank my family, partner and friends who have helped me throughout my journey as a police officer and getting to this point in my career.

Declaration

This work has not previously been accepted in substance for any degree and is not being concurrently submitted in candidature for any degree.

Signed: Elinor Isaac

Date: 06/07/24

STATEMENT 1

This dissertation is being submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of BA.

Signed: Elinor Isaac

Date: 06/07/24

STATEMENT 2

This dissertation is the result of my own independent work/investigation, except where otherwise stated.

Other sources are acknowledged by footnotes giving explicit references. A bibliography is appended.

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Abstract

The use of Tasers by police forces has become a topic of significant debate and scrutiny in recent years.

This dissertation examines the impact of Taser deployment within UK police forces, focusing on its effectiveness, training protocols, and the influence of public scrutiny on officer decision-making.

The research begins with a comprehensive review of existing academic literature and official guidelines pertaining to Taser use in law enforcement. While there is substantial literature on Tasers and their technical aspects, limited research specifically addresses their broader impact on policing demands and officer preparedness.

To address this gap, the researcher conducted an online survey to gather primary data directly from police officers across various ranks and roles. The survey aimed to assess officers' perceptions of Taser deployment, their confidence in training programs, and how the fear of scrutiny influences their operational decisions.

Based on both primary and secondary research findings, the researcher has formulated recommendations to address key issues identified throughout the project.

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1.0 Introduction

Tasers have become a focal point in discussions surrounding police officer tactics, particularly their impact on officer training, safety, and within the community. These devices, which are designed to incapacitate individuals with electrical currents, provide police officers with an alternative in handling potentially volatile situations. However, their use raises significant questions about officers training effectiveness and the broader implications on policing and their use of non-lethal weapons.

This dissertation explores the landscape of Taser training within law enforcement, examining how current protocols prepare officers for real scenarios and addresses the challenges police officers face after discharging a taser. By combining primary and secondary research, the study aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of Taser training practices, officers' competence, and the factors influencing decision-making during Taser deployments.

Key areas of investigation include the structure of Taser training programs, officers' confidence levels in using Tasers, and the impact of external factors like public scrutiny on officer's decisions. The research seeks to identify opportunities for improving Taser training to inform and support police officers in their use.

By evaluating current practices and exploring potential improvements, this dissertation aims to contribute practical insights and recommendations.

The researcher has chosen to focus on Taser training because of their direct experience and strong belief in confrontational training methods within the police service. Having firsthand knowledge of Taser deployment challenges, they are personally invested in exploring how training can better prepare officers and improve safety in volatile situations. This dissertation aims to analyse current practices, and suggest possible enhancements on effective Taser training.

1.1 Aims and Objectives

1. To critically research the support for taser deployment within UK police forces.

The aim of this dissertation is to critically investigate the support for Taser deployment within UK police forces, exploring factors influencing its implementation and the public's perception.

2. To assess a police service's Taser training suitability and competence.

This study aims to assess the suitability and competence of Taser training programs within a South Wales Police, evaluating their effectiveness in preparing officers for volatile critical incidents.

3. Explore how the fear of potential scrutiny after discharging a Taser influences officers' decision-making and willingness to use it.

The objective of this research is to explore how the fear of potential scrutiny after discharging a Taser impacts officers' decision-making and their willingness to utilise this tool in the field. Police officers will be provided a survey where they will answer questions in relation to this topic.

4. To provide a conclusion and recommendations based on the findings of the key issues regarding the topic of Taser training and demand on policing.

Lastly, this dissertation seeks to provide conclusions and recommendations based on findings related to key issues surrounding Taser training and its impact on policing demands, aiming to contribute to training development and improvements within the police service.

2.0 Literature Review

This chapter aims to conduct a comprehensive review of the current literature available globally on the topic of this dissertation. The review will cover an examination of various sources, including academic books, journals, and other online resources. By methodically analysing the material, the chapter will provide a thorough understanding of the existing knowledge, theories, and findings related to the dissertation's subject matter.

2.1 Police use of Non-Lethal Weapons

The background and context of police weapon use in the UK is rooted by the country's unique approach to policing, which traditionally emphasises minimal use of force. The British model of policing is often characterized by the principle of "policing by consent," a concept established by Sir Robert Peel, who founded the Metropolitan Police Service in 1829. This principle suggests that the legitimacy of the police force is derived from public approval and cooperation, rather than fear of power. Cram, F. (2023).

Historically, British police officers have been largely unarmed. The rationale behind this is the belief that an unarmed police force is more approachable and less likely to provoke violent confrontations. Yesberg, J.A. and Bradford, B. (2018)

However, due to changing societal dynamics and increasing threats, such as terrorism and organized crime, there has been a gradual shift towards arming specialised units within the police force. This including firearms units, withing the UK, regular police officers do not carry firearms. However, should there be a specific threat that necessitates the use of firearms the authorisation of firearms officers (AFO) may be deployed. These officers undergo rigorous training and must adhere to strict guidelines regarding their use of lethal force. Furthermore, over the last decade, response police officers have had access to tasers and Non-Lethal Weapons. Tasers (CED) defined by the College of Policing as “a less lethal weapon system designed to temporarily incapacitate a subject through use of an electrical current that temporarily interferes with the body’s neuromuscular system and produces a sensation of intense pain”. College of Policing (2022). Their use has been a subject of debate, balancing the need for officer safety and public protection against concerns of misuse and excessive force.

2.2 Legislation and Accountability

The use of weapons by the police in the UK is governed by a framework of legislation and strict guidelines. The key legislative act is the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 (PACE), which outlines the powers and duties of police officers. Additionally, the Criminal Law Act 1967 provides the legal basis for the use of reasonable force by police officers in the execution of their duties. Reasonable force used by police officers is used in accordance with the National Decision-Making Model (NDM) and the policing Code of Ethics. This is reinforced throughout a

police officers' training to assess the current threat, risk and harm at an incident should a Taser incident be deployed.

Police officer's accountability is maintained through oversight by independent bodies, such as the Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC), which investigates incidents involving police use of force, including shootings and the use of Tasers. This ensures that any misuse of power is scrutinised and addressed.

2.3 Incident and Controversies Related to Use of Taser

Within recent years there has been an increase in the deployment of Tasers and a corresponding increase in public and media scrutiny. Statistics show a rise in the number of incidents where Tasers were used, which has prompted discussions about the training and guidelines governing their use. For example, a report by the Home Office indicated that the number of police officers authorized to carry Tasers increased significantly between 2017 and 2020, reflecting concerns about officer safety in the face of increasing threats. However, this has also raised questions about the potential for over-reliance on such devices and the need for comprehensive training to ensure their appropriate use. Lu, Y.-F. and Petersen, K. (2023b).

The IOPC investigated and reviewed 101 separate incidents where Tasers were used on 108 people, 94 of whom had a Taser discharged against them. The demographics showed that 71% were White, 22% were Black, less than 4% were Asian, and less than 2% were of mixed ethnicity, with an average age of 35 years, including six individuals under 18. The findings indicated that in 26 cases, officers' conduct might justify disciplinary action or legal referral. Additionally, four inquests concluded that Taser use, combined with other factors, contributed to deaths, and one case led to an officer's conviction for unlawful manslaughter. IOPC (2021).

Their investigation findings concluded with 17 recommendations were made to the College of Policing and National Police Chief Council. Two of the recommendations were regarding how efficient police officers training is in managing conflict emphasising the use of de-escalation techniques, the importance of managing risk and vulnerability of the subject at hand. It also included to ensure Taser training for officers includes awareness of racial disproportionality in Taser use, emphasising its impact on public confidence and community relations.

The training should also educate officers on how this disproportionality relates to broader historical contexts and the police's relationship with Black, Asian, and minority ethnic communities. This has become a significant topic amongst society and within the media.

In March 2023, Baroness Casey produced a comprehensive report that explicitly labelled the Metropolitan Police (Met Police) as institutionally racist. The report highlighted systemic issues within the police force, citing patterns of racial discrimination, disproportions in treatment towards ethnic minorities, and historical injustices that have eroded trust and confidence in the Met Police among minority communities. Baroness Casey's findings emphasised the need for urgent reforms to address deep-rooted biases, improve accountability mechanisms, and foster a more inclusive and equitable approach to policing in London and beyond. Blackstock (2023).

2.4 Current Taser Training Protocols

Police officers in the UK must undergo rigorous training before they are authorized to carry and use a Taser. This training is mandatory and includes theoretical and practical components.

Theoretical Training: Officers receive instruction on the legal framework surrounding the use of Tasers, including when and how they can be deployed. This includes understanding the principles of necessity, proportionality, and justification under the law. The use of Tasers by police forces is authorised and governed by a comprehensive legal framework:

1. Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 (PACE): Section 117 grants police officers the authority to use reasonable force, including Tasers, when necessary to achieve a lawful objective, such as preventing harm.
2. Code of Practice on Police Use of Firearms and Less Lethal Weapons: Issued under PACE, this Code provides detailed guidance on Taser use, emphasizing necessity, proportionality, and accountability.
3. College of Policing Authorised Professional Practice (APP): Sets operational standards and guidelines for Tasers, ensuring consistency and compliance across police forces in England and Wales.
4. Human Rights Act 1998: Tasers must comply with human rights principles, ensuring their use is justified and proportionate in relation to the threat posed.
5. Home Office Guidance: Provides additional policies and best practices for the deployment of Tasers, supporting lawful and effective use.

Together, these frameworks ensure that Tasers are used lawfully and responsibly, balancing the need for force with respect for human rights and public safety.

Officers are taught the effects on a person after discharging a taser, how to provide immediate Care of Persons Who Have Been Subject to a Taser Discharge, transportation of persons who have been subject to discharge of taser, and post incident management.

Practical Training: Practical training involves hands-on exercises where officers learn how to handle and operate a Taser safely and effectively. This includes familiarisation with the Taser's functions, aiming techniques, and deployment procedures.

Scenario-Based Training: Officers participate in scenario-based training exercises designed to simulate real-life situations where the use of a Taser may be necessary. These scenarios help officers practice decision-making under pressure, assessing the threat, risk and harm and determining the appropriate level of response.

Annual Refresher Training: Officers undergo annual refresher training to maintain their proficiency with Tasers. This includes reviewing new legal policies, practicing techniques, and participating in scenario drills to reinforce skills and decision-making abilities.

Assessment and Certification: Officers must successfully pass assessments during initial training and refresher courses to demonstrate their competence in Taser use. Certification is required to ensure officers meet established standards before being permitted to carry and deploy Tasers in the field.

Continued Evaluation and Oversight: The use of Tasers by police is subject to ongoing evaluation and oversight. Incidents involving Taser use are reviewed to ensure compliance with protocols and to identify opportunities for further training or improvements in practice.

If any incident involving the use of a Taser, including firing, drive stun, or unintentional discharge, occurs, the officer's authority to use a Taser will be suspended immediately. The Response Bronze Inspector will conduct an initial investigation and document the incident. During duty hours, the incident will be escalated to the relevant Taser single point of contact;

outside of duty hours, to the on-duty silver commander. Based on the nature of the incident, a decision will be made either to reinstate the officer's Taser authority or to refer the matter to the Authorising Officer or Professional Standards for further scrutiny. This protocol ensures command oversight, promptly identifies issues needing review, and manages the reinstatement process effectively.

These protocols aim to ensure that Taser deployment by police officers in the UK is conducted safely, lawfully, and in accordance with established guidelines. They emphasise the importance of training, competence, and accountability to maintain public trust and uphold standards of professional conduct within policing.

2.5 The Dual Impact of Tasers on Police Officers

Tasers have become a valuable piece of equipment for serving police officers. It offers a non-lethal alternative to control a volatile situation. It allows police officers to incapacitate a suspect thus reducing the risk of injury to officers, the public and the suspect. Home Office, (2020).

However, officers who discharge a taser may endure significant mental and emotional repercussions. This may affect their mental well-being, causing stress particularly in cases where the suspect has endured physical injury or death. Furthermore, the scrutiny on that officer's decision to discharge at that given time is significant thus, an officers poor mental well being will have an impact on their professionalism and ability to carry out their role effectively, leaving themselves and the public potentially at risk should it not be addressed. Purba, A. and Demou, E. (2019).

A study was conducted by Cambridge University between 15 October – 16 December 2018 across 22 UK police forces collating 18185 responses from police officers. The study found that nearly 17,000 serving police officers and staff were screened for trauma exposure, PTSD, and Complex Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (CPTSD). Ninety percent reported trauma exposure, with 98% of these incidents being work-related. Among those exposed, 12% showed symptoms of CPTSD and 8% of PTSD in recent weeks. However, only 31% of these individuals self-reported post-traumatic stress in the past year, and just 27% of those with CPTSD or PTSD had ever been told they have PTSD. This indicates that out of every 100 police officers or staff who experienced trauma, 20 are likely to have PTSD or CPTSD, but only 5 will have been informed of their condition, and only 1 or 2 will have been clinically diagnosed. University of Cambridge (2018).

2.6 Consequences of Inadequate Training

Inadequate training in the use of Tasers for police officers in the UK can have severe consequences, impacting both the safety of the public and the well-being of the officers. Here are some key consequences: Paoline, E.A., Terrill, W. and Ingram, J.R. (2012).

Increased Risk of Injury or Death:

Incorrect use of Taser can lead to serious injuries or fatalities. For example, misuse or overuse can result in severe medical complications for suspects, especially those with underlying health conditions. Symonds, T. (2021).

Legal and Financial Implications:

Inadequate training can lead to improper use of force, resulting in lawsuits against police forces. These legal battles can be costly and damage the reputation of the police force.

Incidents of excessive force have historically led to significant legal settlements. Clarke KC, S. (2017).

Erosion of Public Trust:

Public confidence in the police can be severely damaged when officers misuse Tasers. High-profile cases of inappropriate Taser use can lead to public outcry and diminished trust in law enforcement agencies Hooper, R. (2021).

Psychological Impact on Officers:

Officers who are not adequately trained may experience increased stress and anxiety related to Taser deployment. This can lead to mental health issues, including PTSD, as they may fear repercussions from improper use Lu, Y.-F. and Petersen, K. (2023).

Lack of Compliance with Human Rights:

Inadequate training may result in violations of human rights, particularly the right to life and the prohibition of inhumane treatment. The European Court of Human Rights has emphasized the importance of proper training to comply with human rights standards. July 2013, S.K. (2013).

Operational Inefficiency:

Poorly trained officers may be less effective in safely de-escalating situations, leading to an over-reliance on Tasers instead of other conflict resolution techniques. This can reduce overall policing efficiency and effectiveness IOPC Author (2020).

3.0 Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction

The use of Tasers by police officers has become a significant aspect of law enforcement practice worldwide. In the United Kingdom, Tasers are employed as a less-lethal option to subdue individuals who pose a threat to themselves or others. However, the deployment of these devices has sparked considerable debate concerning their effectiveness, safety, and the adequacy of the training provided to officers. This research aims to investigate the current Taser training protocols in the UK, examining whether these protocols meet the necessary standards for safe and effective use. Additionally, the study seeks to explore the perspectives of both Taser-carrying officers and their non-Taser-carrying counterparts regarding the adequacy of training and potential areas for improvement.

The methodology for this research is designed to provide a comprehensive analysis of current training practices and gather valuable insights from police officers. By employing a mixed-methods approach, this study will combine quantitative data on training outcomes with qualitative feedback from officers to assess the strengths and weaknesses of existing protocols. A survey will be conducted to capture a wide range of views, ensuring that the findings reflect the diverse experiences and opinions within the police force.

Through this research, we aim to identify key areas where Taser training can be enhanced to ensure better outcomes for both officers and the public. By understanding the practical challenges faced by officers and incorporating their feedback, the study will provide actionable recommendations for improving Taser training programs, ultimately contributing to safer and more effective law enforcement practices.

3.2 Research Strategy

Within this research project it is aimed to use both secondary and primary sources of information. The secondary research has been completed in the above chapter 2.0 literature review. This has included using information from specialist books and journals, as well as online public access articles to research current available literature. Although secondary research has been used earlier on in this project, the project will focus its data analysis on primary research conducted by the means of an online survey.

This research project employs both secondary and primary sources of information to provide a comprehensive analysis of current Taser training protocols and their potential areas for improvement. The secondary research has been addressed in Chapter 2.0, the literature review. This chapter includes a thorough examination of information sourced from specialist books, academic journals, and online public access articles. These sources have been meticulously selected to offer a robust overview of the existing literature on Taser use, training practices, and associated outcomes in law enforcement.

While secondary research has provided a solid foundation and contextual background, the primary focus of the data analysis will be on the primary research conducted through an online survey. This survey aims to gather first-hand information from police officers, both those who carry Tasers and those who do not. By directly capturing the views and experiences of officers, the research seeks to gain nuanced insights into the practical implications of current training programs.

The online survey will include a range of questions designed to elicit detailed responses about the adequacy of Taser training, the perceived effectiveness of Tasers in various situations, and suggestions for potential improvements. The survey will also explore any differences in perspectives between Taser-carrying officers and their non-Taser-carrying counterparts, providing a balanced view of the training's impact on the police force.

By combining the insights gained from secondary research with the data collected from primary research, this project aims to present a well-rounded analysis of current Taser training protocols. The goal is to identify key areas where training can be enhanced, ensuring that it meets the needs of officers and promotes the safe and effective use of Tasers in law enforcement.

This project will collect primary data by online survey for serving police officers who are on the front line. Focusing on closed questions with multiple choice. Expand on why online survey is used and benefits to using online surveys. I will ask officers of all rank and officers who carry a taser and those that don't. It is crucial to use serving police officers for the survey because their direct experience with Taser use and training provides valuable insights. These officers have firsthand knowledge of the practical applications and challenges associated with Tasers, making their feedback essential for an accurate assessment of current training protocols. By drawing on the real-world experiences of those who regularly encounter situations requiring the use of force, the survey can better identify strengths and weaknesses in the existing training framework.

Incorporating the perspectives of serving officers ensures that the data collected reflects the realities of frontline policing. This focus on experienced officers is key to understanding how effectively current Taser training prepares them for actual scenarios, how it impacts their decision-making processes, and what improvements might be needed to enhance both safety and efficacy in the field. Including members of the local community in this research could skew the results, as they lack the direct experience and practical insights that serving police officers possess. While community perspectives on Taser use are important for broader discussions about public trust and police-community relations, this specific research aims to evaluate the effectiveness and adequacy of Taser training protocols.

The research utilises qualitative data analysis to convert the data into numerical form, ensuring that the findings are both comprehensive and measurable. This qualitative data, obtained through structured survey responses, is then analysed and transferred into numerical data to facilitate a statistical analysis.

Utilising qualitative data analysis in this way allows the research to identify trends, patterns, and correlations within the data. This dual approach enhances the depth and reliability of the findings, ensuring that they are grounded in real-world experiences and can be interpreted to apprise improvements in Taser training protocols. <https://researchmethod.net/qualitative-data/>

An inductive method of research will be used during this research. The data that has been collected from the online survey will be analysed and tested against the hypothesis that this research was aimed at investigating.

3.3 Data Collection

The research will utilise Google Surveys, which will be distributed via email to a selected group of police officers. Responses collected through these surveys will be compiled and presented in charts and graphs. This method aims to gather data on officers' experiences and perspectives regarding Taser training. This will facilitate clear representation of trends and insights from the survey findings.

3.4 Limitations and Potential Problems

By carrying out an online survey, this may experience several limitations and potential issues that may impact the quality and consistency of the collected data. One of the main challenges to face is achieving a high response rate. There could be a low participation rate as the role of a response officer is demanding they may not have the time or interest to complete the survey. Furthermore, non-response bias could occur if those who choose not to respond have different opinions from those who do, this could lead to skewed results.

There is also possibility that technical issues may arise. Emails containing the survey may end up in spam folders or be overlooked, therefore reducing the number of participants. These technical issues can hinder the overall effectiveness of the survey, resulting in low completion rates.

Some officers may have concerns over anonymity which may affect the survey's success. Officers may be hesitant to provide honest feedback if they are worried about the confidentiality of their responses. A lack of trust in the survey's purpose and anonymity could result in a less truthful and a less accurate response by those completing it.

The design of the survey may present possible problems. As it is multiple choice without having the ability to clarify the question officers may misinterpret them which may lead to an inaccurate response. Multiple choice does not allow officers to provide their full opinion and experience therefore this limits the ability of the survey thus limiting what data could be captured.

The survey may present itself in favour to those who are interested and have strong opinions on taser. This could lead to a bias result if they are more likely to respond therefore not capturing a full representation of the force officers.

There is a risk that individuals may submit multiple responses, either intentionally or unintentionally. Respondents also may not complete the entire survey leading to incomplete data. The concern here is that it may compromise the validity of the findings.

Using an online survey limits interaction with the officer completing it. By not having the ability to ask follow up questions to their responses it limits the depth of this investigation. By asking closed questions with yes, no or somewhat responses it does not allow the investigation to fully investigate the cruxes of the matter.

Further consideration should be considered to timing and engagement. Due to many other students completing surveys amongst South Wales Police, officers may be inundated with surveys. This poses the issue of a phenomenon known as survey fatigue. As officers also may have the opinion that as a result of their survey the findings will not be acted on. DiLeonardo, A., Lauricella, T. and Schaninger, B. (2021).

By stipulating at the beginning of the survey what it is addressing and what will happen with the results it allows further clarification for officers, hoping that this will instil trust in the survey and officers may provide a more honest response. Ensuring anonymity, simplifying its design and sending a follow-up email reminder, this research can maximise its participation. By using this approach, it ensures that the survey provides a reliable insight into the current opinion of officers on taser training and the ripple effect it has on officers.

4.0 Analysis of Results

4.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to analyse the results of the primary research which was conducted through the online survey detailed in the previous chapter. Within this chapter it will present the data in a clear format using graphs to highlight the main findings. The online survey was sent to current serving local police officers, as mentioned prior. The survey has received 35 responses so far. This sample size is sufficient to obtain the primary data required for this chapter to provide an analysis of the data captured.

A copy of the online survey sent to the police officers is included in Appendix A.

4.2 Data Analysis

within this chapter, the data analysis will involve categorising and interpreting the information that was gathered from the primary data collected through the online survey. This process will assist in identifying any emerging patterns. This research will not only present the survey results but also discuss how the findings relate to current literature. It will highlight any similarities or differences. The data analysis will be categorised in correspondence in which the survey was presented, allowing for a thorough review of each area covered by the survey.

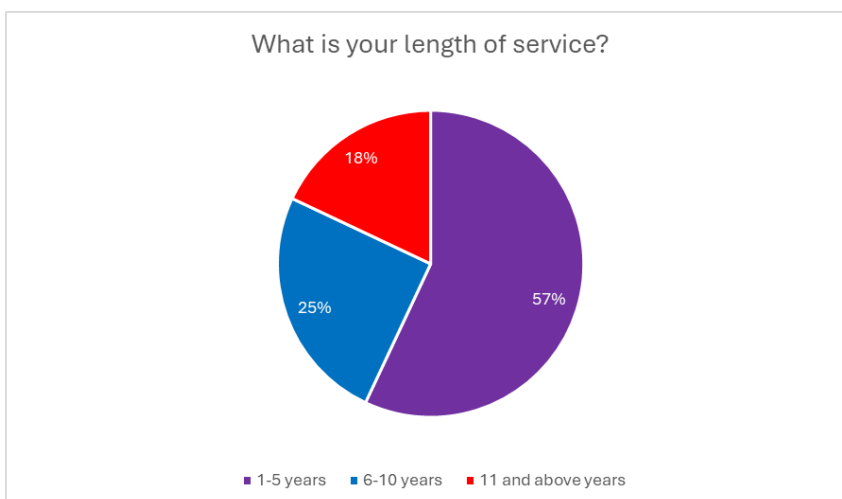
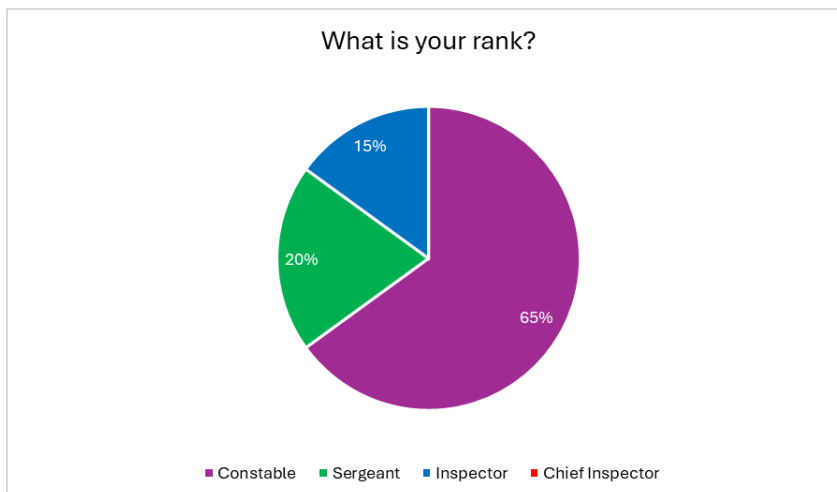
4.3 Method of Analysis

The survey was conducted online via Google Forms, which allows the creation and quick dissemination of the survey to the required sample group. The survey consisted of simple multiple-choice questions, which allowed each participant to remain anonymous. As explained in the earlier chapter this helps encourage more officers to participate and respond more honestly. It was stipulated within the survey that all officers are to answer each question and not leave any unanswered. Therefore, all 35 respondents answered every question, ensuring that the data collected is of high quality.

The survey included responses from both officers who carry Tasers and those who do not, which gives the survey a broad view of the perspectives within the police force. However, some limitations of using an online form were stated in the previous chapter. Due to limited time, this survey was not available for as long as would be ideal for this method of research. Additionally, there is the potential for biases to affect the results. It is not possible to know this for sure, however, this point will be discussed when the data is analysed.

4.4 Online Survey Findings

The first two questions of the online survey were aimed to identify the demographic of the sample group used.

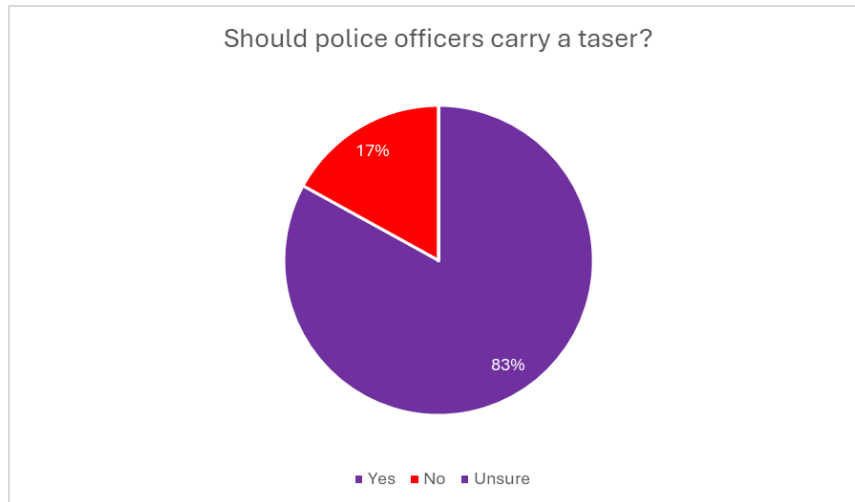


The data reveals that approximately 65% of the sample group were constables, about 20% were sergeants, and the remaining participants were inspectors or higher ranks. This aligns with expectations, as constables make up most of the police force and are usually the officers carrying and using Tasers on the frontline.

The second question, which focused on the length of service, this aims to gather information on how perspectives might differ between more experienced officers and those with less service time regarding use of Taser. Most officers who completed the survey had between 1-5 years of

service, followed by those with 6-10 years of service. This result was expected, as officers with more experience often transition from frontline duties to other departments.

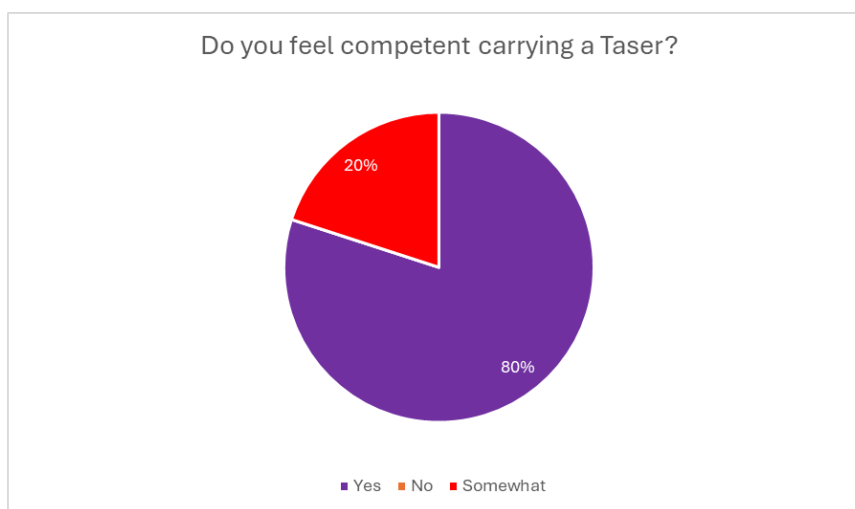
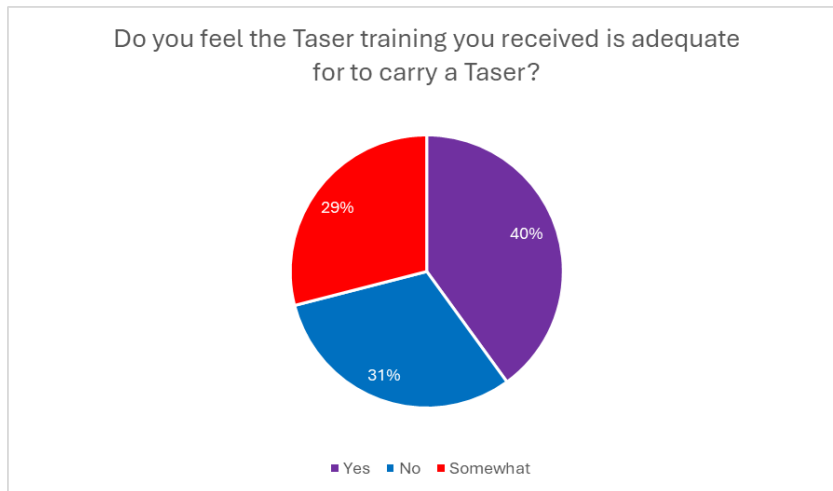
4.4.1 Theme 1- Should police officers carry a Taser?



The above question was used to determine whether police officers believe all officers should carry a Taser. This information is crucial to understanding the consensus among various ranks and service lengths within the force. This provides insight into the general viewpoint toward Taser deployment across the police force.

83% of respondents stated that police officers should carry Tasers, while 17% responded that they should not. These results imply that while the majority of officers support Taser deployment, there is a significant minority of those that believe that there are other tactical approaches to handling incidents. This highlights differing opinions within the force regarding the most effective methods for ensuring safety and managing critical incidents.

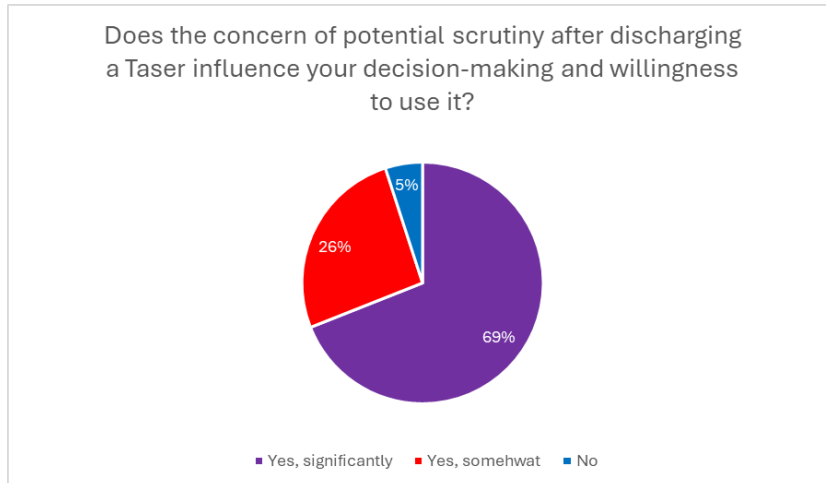
The next two questions were designed to assess officer's perceptions of the adequacy of Taser training they have received and their own competence following this training. These questions aim to measure whether the current training protocols are meeting the needs of the officers and whether they feel suitably prepared and confident to use a Taser in the line of duty.



The survey results indicate that 40% of respondents believe their Taser training is adequate, while 31% do not, and 29% somewhat believe it is adequate. This response suggests there is a varying perception amongst officers regarding the effectiveness of the current Taser training.

This variation in responses emphasises potential gaps or areas for improvement in the training that is provided. It highlights that a significant portion of officers may not feel fully confident in their training, which may have an impact in their ability and effectiveness in using Tasers during incidents. By addressing these perceptions and improving training programs it could help ensure that officers feel better prepared and more competent in handling situations that require Taser deployment.

4.4.2 Theme 2- Does the concern of potential scrutiny after discharging a Taser influence your decision-making and willingness to use it?

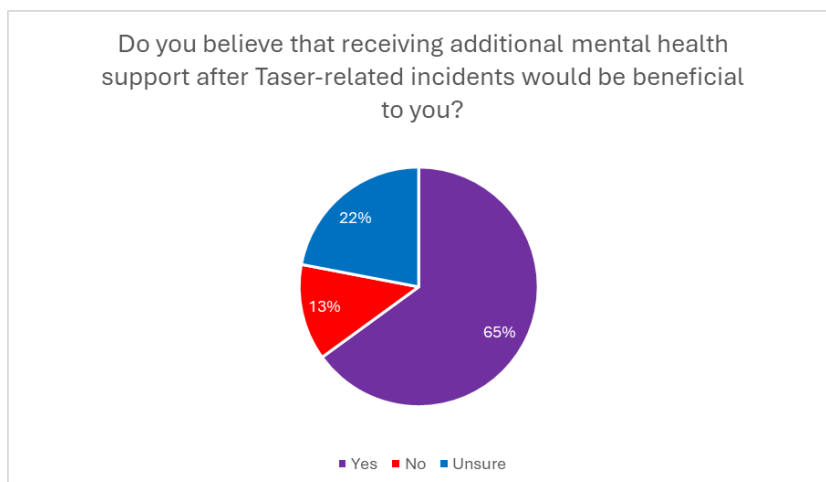


The survey results show that 69% of respondents stated that the concern of potential scrutiny after discharging a Taser influences their decision-making and confidence to use it, 26% said it somewhat influences them, and only 5% said it does not influence them at all.

The results following the survey indicate that a substantial number of officers completing the survey are significantly affected by the fear of scrutiny when it comes to using a Taser. This concern can lead to hesitation and officers second-guessing their decision making at critical incidents. The 26% of respondents that feel somewhat influenced this suggests that, while not overwhelmingly impacted, still a large portion of officers still have some level of apprehension that could affect their decision making.

The small percentage, 5% of officers who state they are not influenced by the potential scrutiny indicates that only a handful of officers feel confident and unaffected by the possibility of being scrutinised after using a Taser. This difference in confidence levels can contribute to inconsistent responses to incidents across the force, potentially affecting overall safety.

These findings highlight the need for further support systems, clearer guidelines, and more effective training to ensure officers feel adequately prepared and supported. By making changes and improving on these areas it has potential to help mitigate the fear of scrutiny, ensuring that officers can use Tasers confidently and appropriately when necessary.



The survey results indicate that 65% of respondents believe that receiving additional mental health support after their Taser-related incidents would be beneficial, 13% said no, and 22% said they are unsure.

The fact that a significant majority 65% supports the idea of additional mental health support suggests a recognised need for enhanced mental health support following Taser deployments. This reflects the potential mental and emotional toll these incidents can have on officers, emphasising the importance of mental health services in maintaining officers' well-being.

The 13% of respondents who do not believe additional support is necessary might feel that current support systems are adequate, or they may not perceive an impact on their mental health from Taser-related incidents. Understanding their perspective may help identify what aspects of current support systems are working well.

The 22% who are unsure indicate a level of uncertainty or lack of awareness about the benefits of mental health support. This may stem from a lack of experience or knowledge about available mental health resources. They may benefit from better communication and education regarding the importance and benefits of mental health support.

Overall, these results highlight a clear demand for enhanced mental health support within the police force, especially after Taser-related incidents. Implementing a more mental health programs and increasing awareness about these resources could significantly benefit officers, helping them to cope better with the potential psychological impacts that their duties may form.

5.0 Findings, Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1 Main Findings

The primary research results provided valuable insights into the perspectives of police officers regarding Taser use, training adequacy, and mental health support. The data revealed that 86% of the respondents were constables, 8% were sergeants, and the remaining participants were inspectors or higher ranks. This aligns with the typical structure of the police force, where constables form the majority and are usually the officers carrying and using Tasers on the frontline. Additionally, most officers who participated in the survey had between 2-5 years of service, with the second-largest group having 1-2 years of service. This trend reflects that officers with more experience often transition from frontline duties to other departments.

When asked whether police officers should carry Tasers, 83% of respondents agreed, showing a strong support for Taser deployment within the force. However, 17% of officers disagreed,

40% of officers felt that their training was adequate, while 31% did not, and 29% were somewhat satisfied with their training. These varied responses highlight gaps in the current training programs and suggest that there may be areas needing development to ensure all officers feel competent and confident in using Tasers.

Following this research, it highlights a significant number of officers who have concerns of potential scrutiny after discharging a Taser. 69% of respondents indicated that this fear affects their decision making, while 26% felt somewhat influenced, and only 5% said it did not affect them at all. This finding underscores the importance of addressing the fear of scrutiny, as it can

lead to hesitation and second-guessing during critical situations, potentially affecting officer and public safety.

Finally, the survey explored the need for additional mental health support following Taser-related incidents. 65% of officers believed that receiving extra support would be beneficial, while 13% did not see the need, and 22% were unsure. A large proportion of officers recognising the need for improved mental health support highlights the psychological impact of Taser use and the importance of providing mental health resources. Increasing officer awareness and communication about these resources could further support them in managing the emotional and mental well-being.

Overall, these findings suggest general support for Taser use among police officers can be improved, and revealed concerns about training adequacy, the impact of potential scrutiny, and the need for better mental health support. Addressing these issues could help improve officer competence and well-being, ultimately enhancing their effectiveness and safety in the field.

5.2 Completion of aims and Objectives.

1. To critically research the support for taser deployment within UK police forces.

The first aim was addressed in chapter two of the dissertation, the literature review. This chapter enabled the researcher to gather existing literature and discuss the current information on taser use, the demand on policing, and importance of weapon use within the police service. By reviewing these areas, the researcher was able to establish a foundation of knowledge that would inform the analysis of the primary data gathered from the survey.

2. To assess a police service's Taser training suitability and competence.

Analysis was conducted through secondary research in chapters two and four, complemented by a primary research survey. The survey aimed to gauge officer's perceptions of the adequacy of their Taser training and to measure the level of competence they feel following their Taser training. This approach provided a comprehensive understanding of the issues by combining existing literature with direct feedback from serving officers.

Identify Concerns About Scrutiny and Decision-Making:

3. Explore how the fear of potential scrutiny after discharging a Taser influences officers' decision-making and willingness to use it.

This objective was completed in chapters three and four. Chapter three detailed the methodology for conducting primary research, outlining the approach taken by the researcher. Chapter four presented the findings of the primary research, including an analysis of how these factors, alongside officers mental health support, and how this influence officers competence and confidence in using Tasers.

4. To provide a conclusion and recommendations based on the findings of the key issues regarding the topic of Taser training and demand on policing.

This objective was achieved in the final chapter of this research project by providing the key findings from the primary data and offering recommendations based on the research outcomes.

5.3 Limitations

There were several limitations and weaknesses within this research project. The biggest challenge was the limited time available to conduct research and collect primary data. By completing this project alongside full-time duties as a police officer on response shifts it came with significant time constraints. Despite these challenges, the survey managed to gather 35 responses, providing useful quantitative data. However, more time for data collection could have potentially generated a more accurate result and potentially identified different trends.

Another limitation was the lack of qualitative data. Qualitative insights would have offered a deeper understanding of police officers' personal opinions and experiences. This type of data may have encouraged officers to share their views more honestly about the training and support they are provided with.

5.4 Further Research

Due to the small scale of this project, there is a potential for more extensive research with a larger sample size. This study was conducted in a single force area. However, by expanding it to multiple police forces would have allowed a broader analysis across different areas. Gathering insights from forces that may have a more robust Taser training program could offer valuable information and valuable insights.

5.5 Conclusion

In conclusion, this research has explored important aspects of Taser training and its impact on policing practices. The survey revealed varied opinions among officers about the effectiveness of their training and their confidence in using Tasers. It raises concerns about potential scrutiny after using Tasers were found to significantly influence police officers' decision-making abilities.

These findings highlight the need for continuous evaluation and improvement of Taser training programs to ensure officers feel well-prepared and supported. By addressing these concerns, the police service can enhance operational effectiveness and promote officer and public safety.

1. To critically research the support for taser deployment within UK police forces.
2. To assess a police service's Taser training suitability and competence.

3. Explore how the fear of potential scrutiny after discharging a Taser influences officers' decision-making and willingness to use it.
4. To provide a conclusion and recommendations based on the findings of the key issues regarding the topic of Taser training and demand on policing.

This dissertation examined how Taser training has significant influence on policing by exploring its impact on officers' ability to use Tasers effectively and feel competent in their deployment. Through both primary and secondary research, it was clear that the quality of Taser training significantly shapes officers' confidence and competence in handling Taser-related incidents. This shows the importance of a comprehensive and effective Taser training program to ensure officers are well-prepared and supported within their role.

5.6 Recommendations

As a result of the research conducted throughout this project, I believe there are a few recommendations that should be addressed regarding taser training. I will outline these below:

1. **Improve Taser Training:** By improving Taser training programs, it is vital for police departments to ensure officers are prepared for the significant challenges they may encounter in the field. This includes training units to incorporate the latest tactics, updated policies, and safety protocols related to Taser deployment. By providing comprehensive and up-to-date training, police services can increase officers' confidence and competence in using Tasers responsibly and effectively during critical incidents.
2. **Use Realistic Scenarios:** By Integrating more scenario-based training sessions into training, this can significantly benefit officers. These simulations should replicate diverse real-life situations where Taser use may be necessary, such as encounters with individuals experiencing a mental health crises or de-escalating confrontations. By exposing officers more frequently to realistic scenarios, they can practice making split-second decisions under pressure. Further improving their situational awareness and hone their de-escalation techniques. This practical training approach not only improves officer technical skills but also promotes critical thinking and problem-solving abilities thus allowing officers to come to a more informed decision. Jenkins, B., Semple, T. and Bennell, C. (2020).
3. **Provide Support Services:** providing robust support services to address the psychological and emotional impact of Taser use on officers. This includes ensuring access to confidential counselling services. Due to the potential scrutiny and legal implications associated with Taser deployments, officers may experience stress, anxiety, or PTSD. Regular mental health support and understanding of the potential impact incidents may have on one's mental health may help mitigate these challenges and help maintain officers' overall well-being.

4. **Foster Collaboration:** To strengthen collaboration between law enforcement agencies, and healthcare providers, is crucial for effective response in incidents involving Taser. Training initiatives involving other agencies could improve better understanding of how an officer may approach a taser deployable incident. By providing joint training exercises, agencies can help coordinate officers within complex situations, such as incidents involving individuals in mental health crises, therefore reducing potential risks and enhancing outcomes for all involved.

5. **Evaluate and Adapt:** To regularly evaluate taser training programmes I believe is crucial so officers can remain effective and aligned with protocol and guidelines. Analysing incident reports can provide officers and those higher valuable insights into the training strengths and areas which can be improved. Following this feedback adjustments should be made, as police officers are the people dealing with critical incidents daily their feedback is vital. This allows the higher ranks to have further insight into what works and what does not.

Word Count 7,148

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Appendix 1- Survey Questions

1. What is your rank?

Constable

Sergeant

Inspector

Chief Inspector

2. What is your length of service?

Less than 1 year

1-5 years

6-10 years

11-15 years

More than 15 years

3. Should police officers carry a Taser?

Yes

No

Unsure

4. Do you feel Taser training is adequate to carry a Taser?

Yes

No

Somewhat

5. Do you feel competent carrying a Taser?

Yes

No

Somewhat

6. Do you feel you will be emotionally supported after discharging a Taser?

Yes

No

Unsure

7. Does the concern of potential scrutiny after discharging a Taser influence your decision-making and willingness to use it?

Yes, significantly

Yes, somewhat

No

8. Do you believe that receiving additional mental health support after Taser-related incidents would be beneficial to you?

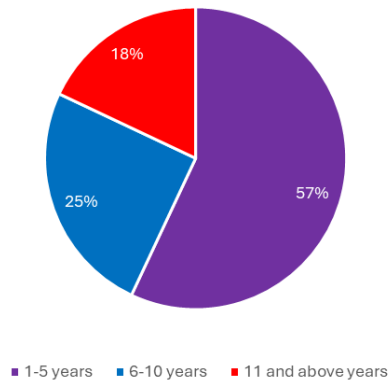
Yes

No

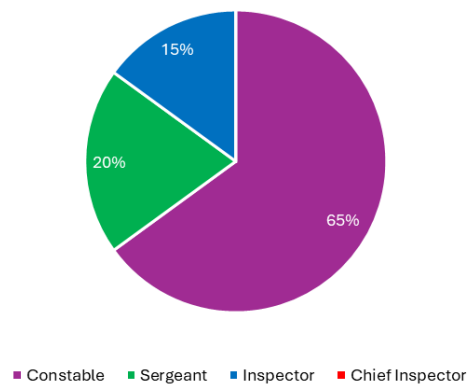
Unsure

Appendix 2 – Survey Results

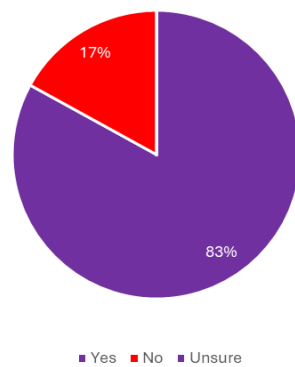
What is your length of service?



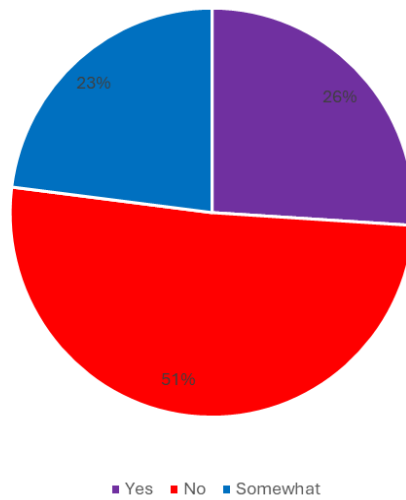
What is your rank?



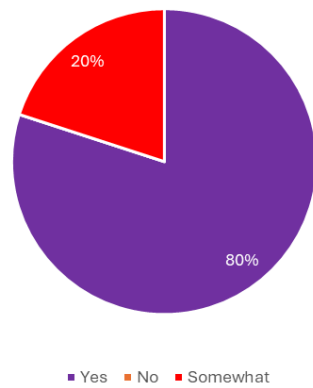
Should police officers carry a taser?



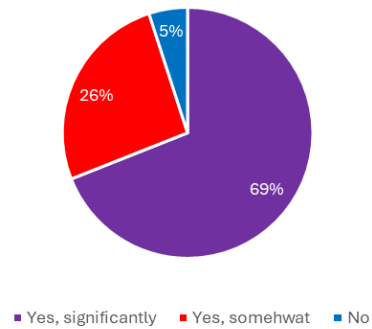
Do you feel you will be emotionally supported by your organisation after discharging a Taser?



Do you feel competent carrying a Taser?



Does the concern of potential scrutiny after discharging a Taser influence your decision-making and willingness to use it?



Do you believe that receiving additional mental health support after Taser-related incidents would be beneficial to you?

