

## Evaluation of Taser – Digest of Public Opinion Survey

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### Survey base

In April 2004, the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) commissioned PricewaterhouseCoopers to conduct a survey of the general public's opinion of Taser being used by police forces in England and Wales.

1164 interviews were conducted during April and May across five Taser trial force areas:

- Lincolnshire
- Northamptonshire
- North Wales
- Metropolitan
- Thames Valley

and two control, non-trial force areas:

- Greater Manchester
- Norfolk

### Awareness of Taser

Awareness of Taser is generally quite low:

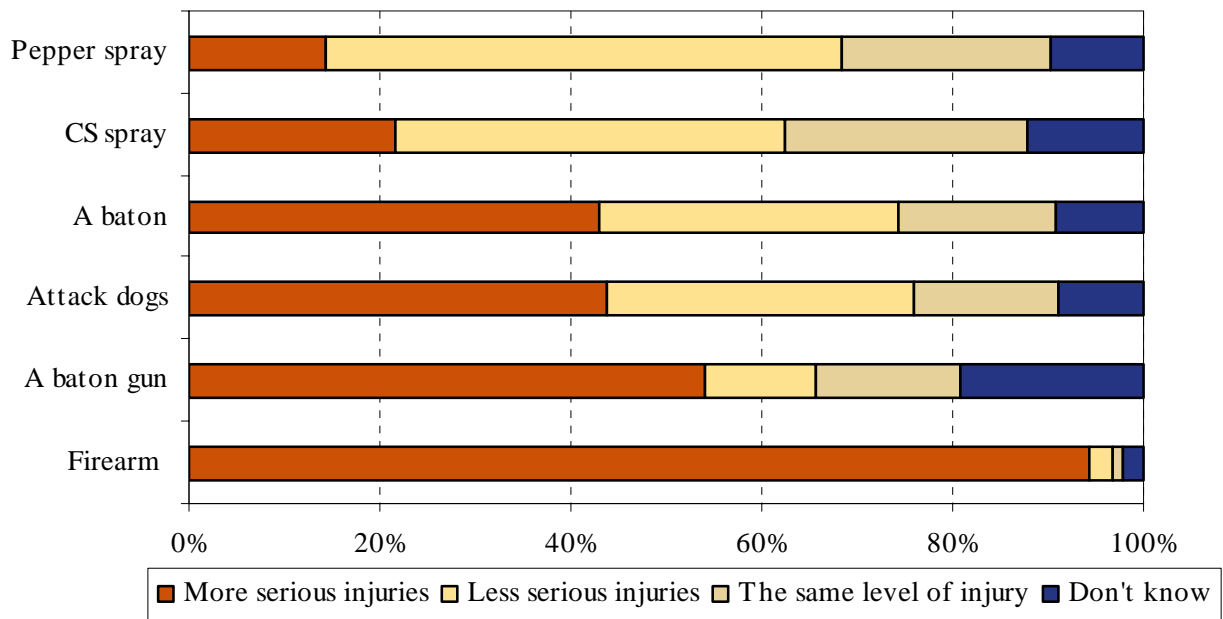
- Only 36% thought they knew what a Taser was, with the greatest awareness in Northamptonshire (c. 42%) and the lowest in Norfolk (c. 28%)
- More people thought that there was a trial in operation where there *wasn't* (42%) than where there *was* (26%)
- No respondents had actually witnessed a Taser being used
- The top three sources of information regarding Taser were:
  1. Local television
  2. National television
  3. Local newspaper
- Only a very small minority of respondents had seen or heard any official police information about the Taser trial

## Understanding of Taser

Having been told what a Taser was:

- The majority (64%) of respondents thought that Taser was a non-lethal weapon
- More respondents perceived baton guns, attack dogs and batons as a lethal weapon and fewer perceived CS spray as being likely to inflict serious injuries on a suspect than Taser

**Q. "Do you think the following weapons are likely to inflict more serious injuries, less serious injuries or the same level of injury as a Taser?"**

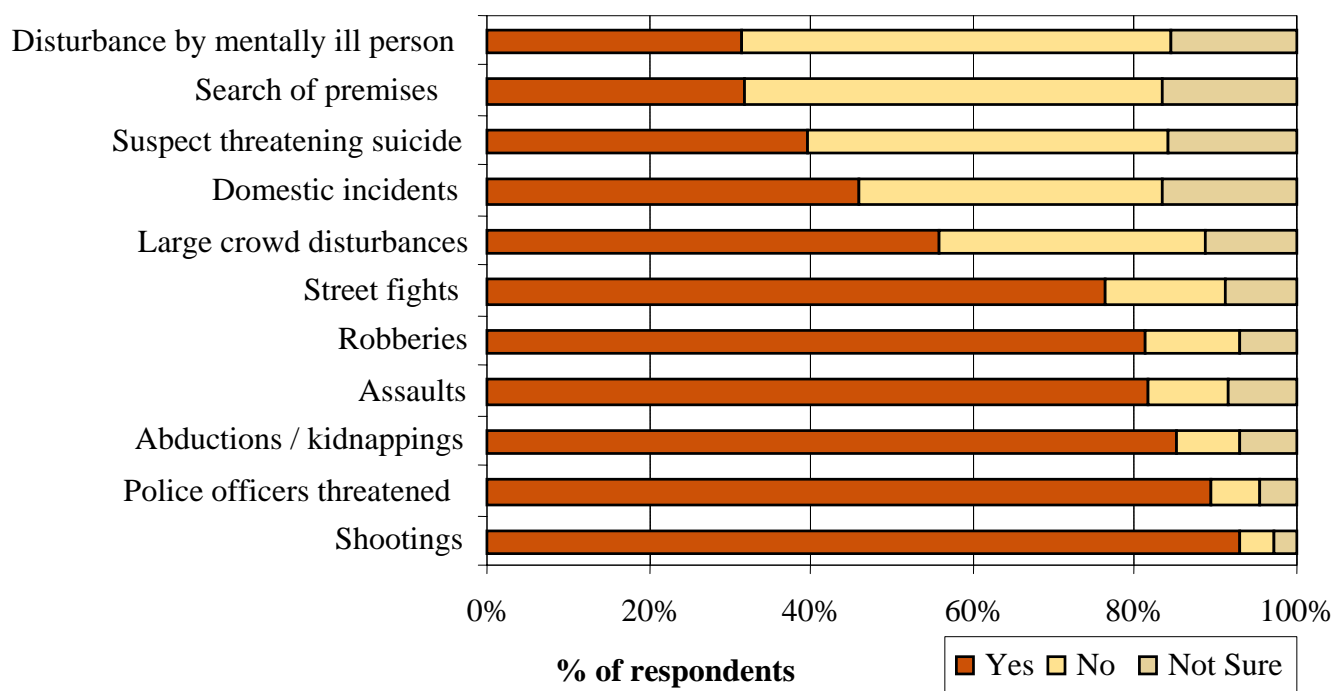


## Use of Taser

The majority of respondents thought that Taser should be used in specific circumstances:

- The highest percentage of respondents (94%) thought that Taser should be used to incapacitate suspects involved in shootings, followed by those threatening police officers (90%)
- The lowest percentage of respondents (31%) thought that Taser should be used to incapacitate mentally ill suspects

### Q. "Do you think that Taser should be used to help incapacitate suspects in the following incidents?"



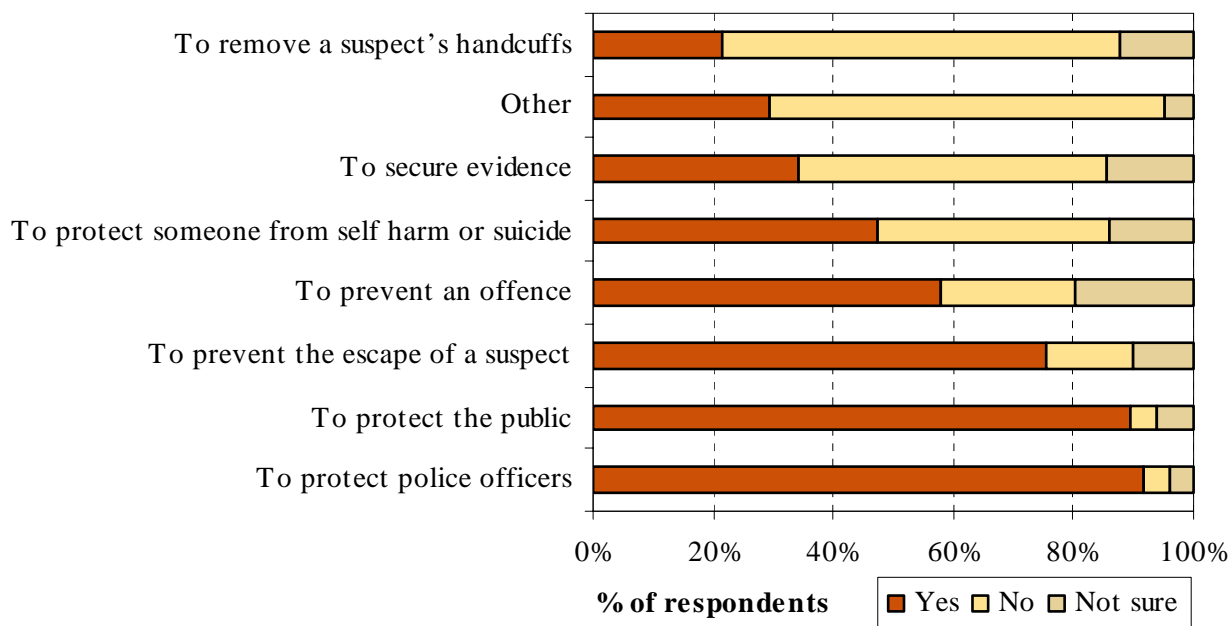
In most of the above situations:

- Respondents from Northamptonshire were less likely to think that Taser should be used than those from other areas
- Respondents from Norfolk and Greater Manchester (the control forces) were more likely to think that Taser should be used than those from other areas

The three top criteria for deciding whether to use a Taser were:

- To protect police officers (c. 92%)
- To protect the public (c. 90%)
- To prevent escape of a suspect (c. 76%)

## “Which criteria do you think should be used to decide whether or not to use Taser?”



## Future use of Taser

81% of respondents thought that the use of Taser should be extended to other police forces:

- The top two reasons given for this were that police need more protection and that violent crime has increased
- Of the 6% opposing the extension of Taser use, the top reason was general opposition to the Taser device in all circumstances

In terms who should be allowed to use Taser:

- 38% thought that all officers should be allowed to use Taser
- 90% thought that firearm and specially trained officers should be allowed to use Taser (this figure includes those who thought that all officers should be allowed to use Taser)
- Only 1% of respondents thought that no officer should be armed