

Police Service of Northern Ireland

# Use of Force Statistics

1<sup>st</sup> April 2014 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2015

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## Data Quality

When police officers use force in the course of their duties they are required to self report this on a specially designed intranet database within PSNI. The PSNI's Statistics Branch then undertakes various completeness and accuracy checks of the submitted data before completing this statistical report. Whilst every effort is made to ensure that all incidents of use of force by the police are reported on this system, there is the possibility that some under-reporting exists and this should be borne in mind when using these statistics.

## Overview of Police Use of Force

Recommendation 21 of the Northern Ireland Policing Board's Human Rights Annual Report (2008) requires the PSNI to, "provide the Policing Board with statistics on all categories of uses of force recorded on the PSNI electronic use of force monitoring system on a six monthly basis." This report outlines the occasions of Police Use of Force up to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2015. This report will be updated every six months via pre-announced dates on the PSNI website with the next update due in December 2015. Further information is available on request from the PSNI Security Statistician, whose contact details are provided above.

- A total of 3 AEPs were discharged on 3 occasions as a less lethal option between 1<sup>st</sup> April 2014 and 31<sup>st</sup> March 2015. No AEP rounds were fired during public disorder throughout this period. There were an additional 39 occasions between 1<sup>st</sup> April 2014 and 31<sup>st</sup> March 2015 when the AEP was pointed only (all as a less lethal option).
- There were 518 occasions where batons were either drawn or used during the twelve-month period. The baton was drawn only on 353 occasions and on the remaining 165 occasions the baton was drawn and used.
- There were 382 reported uses of CS spray, 170 of these resulted in the CS spray being drawn but not sprayed while on the remaining 212 occasions the CS spray was drawn and sprayed.
- Firearms were drawn or pointed on 265 occasions. There were no reports of a firearm being discharged during this period.
- Officers reported the use of a police dog on 51 occasions.
- TASERS were drawn<sup>1</sup> on 104 occasions and were fired on a further 22 occasions between 1<sup>st</sup> April 2014 and 31<sup>st</sup> March 2015.
- There were no reported uses of water cannon during serious public disorder in Belfast between the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2014 and 31<sup>st</sup> March 2015. Water cannons were deployed on 45 occasions during this period without being used.

### Summary Table for Police Use of Force: 1<sup>st</sup> April 2014 – 31<sup>st</sup> March 2015 compared to the same period last year

Use of Force	1 <sup>st</sup> April 2013 – 31 <sup>st</sup> March 2014			1 <sup>st</sup> April 2014 – 31 <sup>st</sup> March 2015			% change in Total between 13/14 and 14/15
	No. of occasions pointed / drawn	No. of occasions discharged /used	Total	No. of occasions pointed / drawn	No. of occasions discharged /used	Total	
AEP	38	34 <sup>2</sup>	72	39	3 <sup>3</sup>	42	-42%
Baton	485	352	837	353	165	518	-38%
CS Spray	154	274	428	170	212	382	-11%
Firearm	419	0	419	265	0	265	-37%
TASER <sup>1</sup>	223	16	239	104	22	126	-47%

Police Dog Used	49	51	4%
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	No. of occasions deployed	No. of occasions used	Total	No. of occasions deployed	No. of occasions used	Total	
Water Cannon	130	12	142	45	0	45	-68%

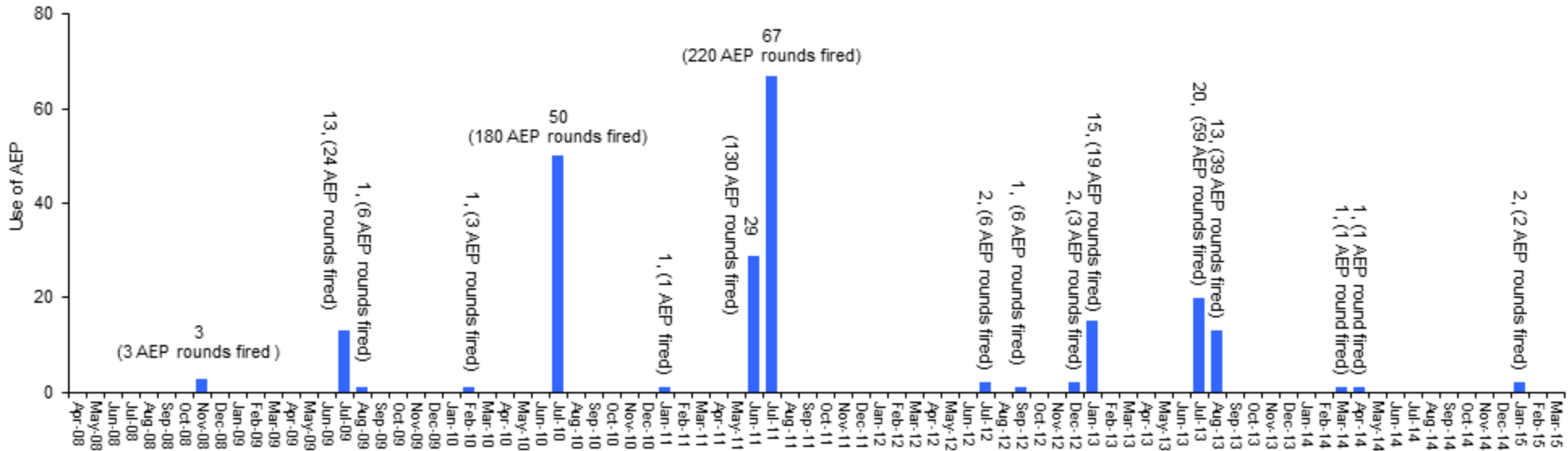
<sup>1</sup> Includes drawn/ aimed and red-dot. <sup>2</sup> 99 AEPs were fired by 34 officers. <sup>3</sup> 3 AEPs were fired by 3 officers.

## Longer Term Trends

### (i) Attenuating Energy Projectile (AEP): April 2008 – March 2015

The AEP has been designed for use as a less lethal option in situations where officers are faced with individual aggressors whether acting on their own or as part of a group. It discharges less-lethal kinetic energy projectiles (impact rounds) and has two purposes. It can be used by a limited number of specifically trained officers in serious public order situations to fire at selected individuals. Secondly, it can be used by a small number of specifically trained firearms officers as a less-lethal option at firearms incidents (e.g. suspect wielding a knife or sword).

Figure A1: Number of occasions AEP discharged (number of rounds fired) trend information - April 2008 to March 2015

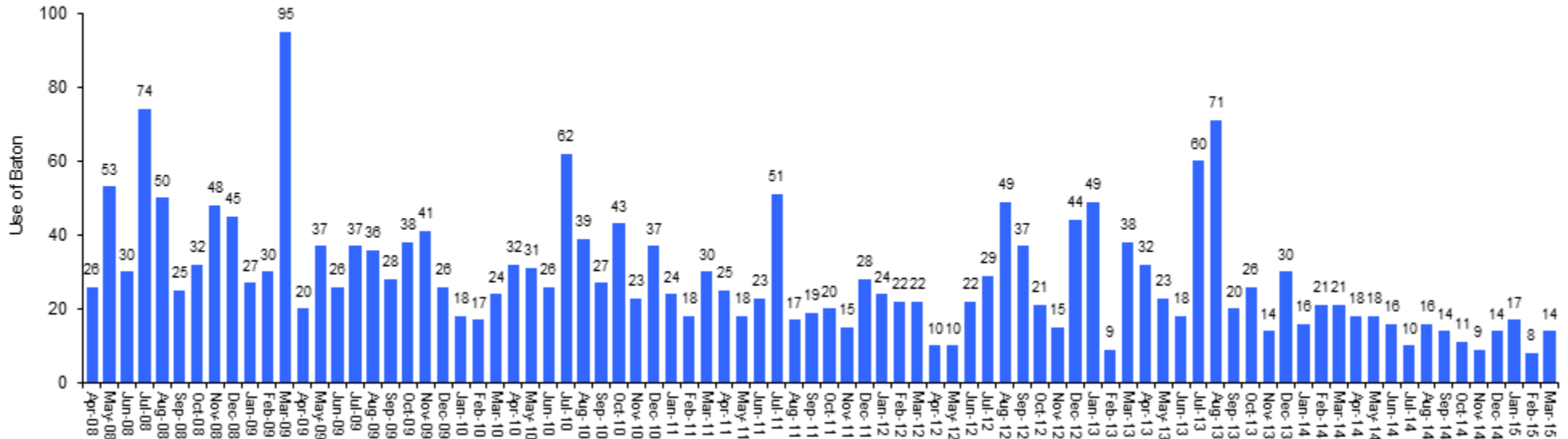


**(ii) Use of Police Baton: April 2008 – March 2015**

Officers will report any use of batons to their immediate supervisors as soon as practicable and submit an electronic use of force form, making their baton available for inspection. In addition, in circumstances where a baton has been drawn but not used, officers will submit a report (electronic use of force monitoring form) where it is reasonable to expect that a person (or persons) have anticipated a threat of force being used against them.

There may also be occasions where a supervisory officer gives a direction to other officers to draw their batons. This would most likely occur during serious public order situations. In such circumstances only the officer giving the direction is required to complete an electronic use of force monitoring form. However, if any officer has occasion to strike an individual(s) then they must submit an electronic use of force monitoring form to indicate 'baton used'.

**Figure A2: Number of occasions Baton drawn & used trend information - April 2008 to March 2015**

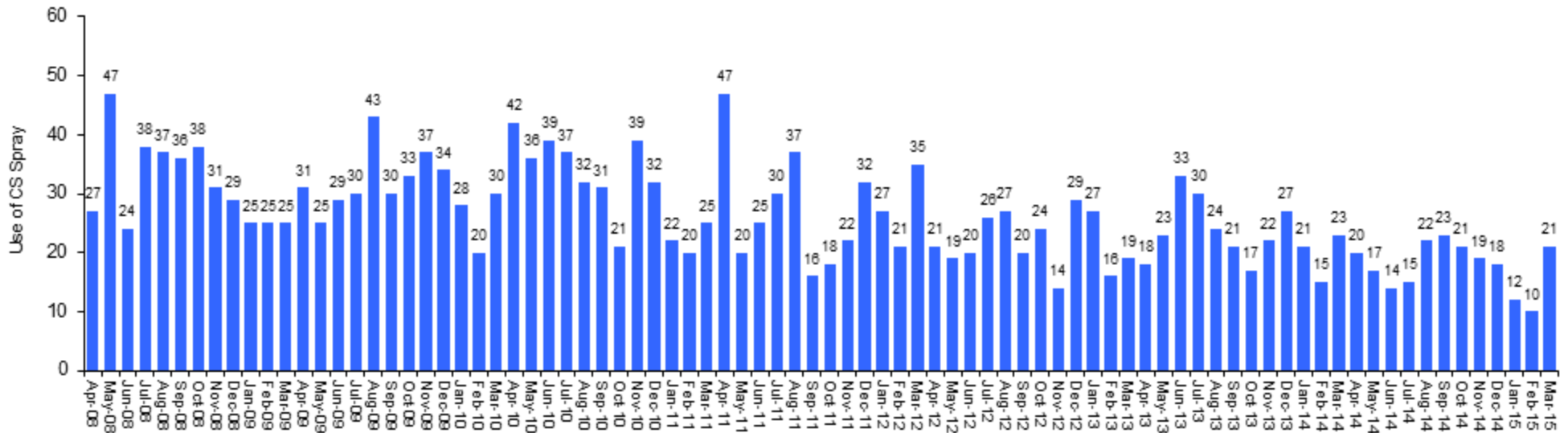


**(iii) Use of CS Spray: April 2008 – March 2015**

The PSNI uses a CS irritant spray that has a 5% concentration of CS in the solvent MIBK (Methyl Isobutyl Ketone). CS spray is issued to officers who have been trained in the Personal Safety Programme and is worn as part of the normal patrol equipment. Plain-clothes officers are also trained and issued with CS spray. Service policy states that I is not to be used during serious public order situations as a crowd dispersal tactic.

Upon impact the solvent evaporates rapidly leaving CS particles to gain compliance of the subject. Effects last on average for about 20 minutes. A person who has been sprayed with CS spray will be classified as 'injured' and police officers will if possible administer aftercare advice. An officer drawing or discharging the device, or once drawn, subsequently points the device at any individual or group, must record this use and any warning given.

**Figure A3: Number of occasions CS Sprayed trend information - April 2008 to March 2015**



**(iv) Use of Firearms: April 2008 – March 2015**

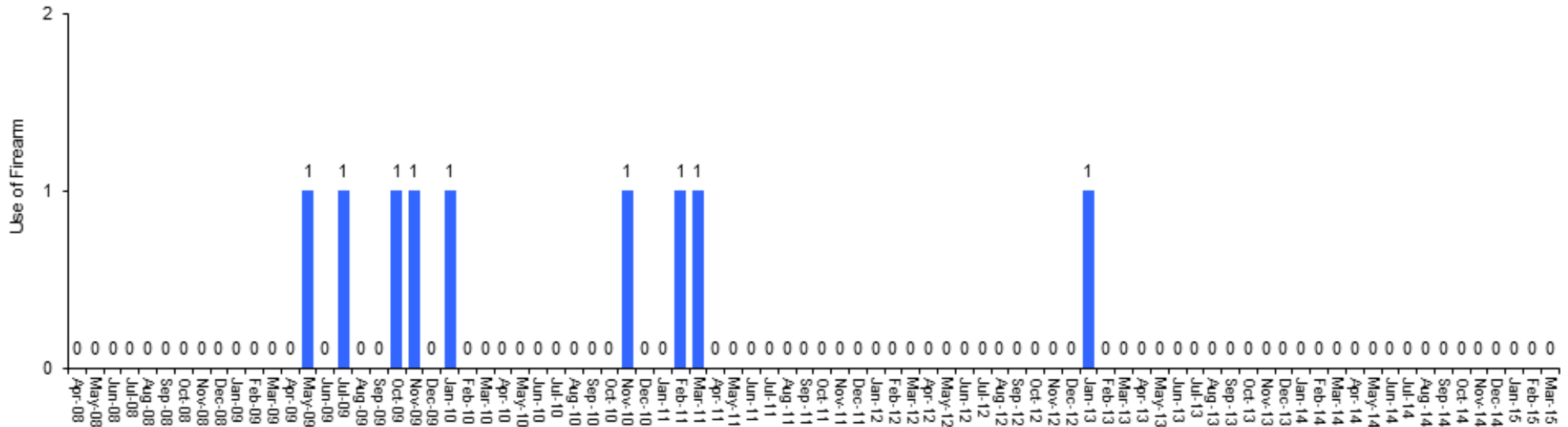
In recognition of the special circumstances prevailing in Northern Ireland, the Chief Constable has given standing authority for all officers, subject to successful training, to be issued with a personal issue handgun. This standing authority is kept under regular review. A police officer is deemed to have used a firearm when it is:

- (i) Pointed at another person;
- (ii) Fired at another person in self defence or in defence of another, whether or not injury or death results;
- (iii) Discharged in any other operational circumstances.

In addition officers are required to report any instance when they have occasion to draw their personal issue handgun.

District Commanders/Heads of Branch ensure that an appropriate number of officers are trained in order to meet locally identified needs, based upon an evaluation of the prevailing security situation and risk assessment. There are also a number of specifically trained firearms officers to deal with pre-planned and spontaneous firearms incidents. These officers deploy with H&K weapons and the Glock personal issue handgun but also have available other less lethal options including Taser and the Attenuating Energy Projectile (AEP) system.

**Figure A4: Number of occasions firearm discharged trend information - April 2008 to March 2015**

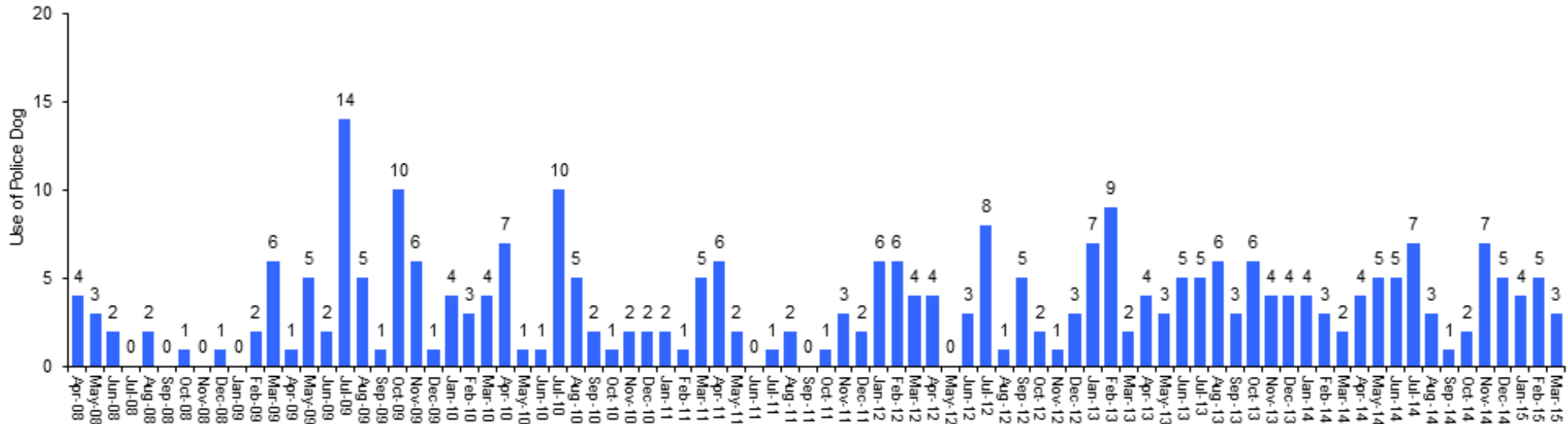


**(v) Police Use of Force involving Police Dogs: April 2008 – March 2015**

All Police dogs are under the control of Operational Support Department and can be used for a variety of purposes. Use of force only reflects a very small proportion of the overall work that police dogs carry out. The main types of force that are recorded for dog use include:

- when the dog is deployed to achieve control of an immediate threat to the handler, other officers, innocent persons or the dog itself whether or not the dog bites or causes injury
- when the dog is deployed to apprehend a fleeing offender/subject, whether or not it bites or causes injury
- when the dog bites at the direction of the handler and there is no injury
- when the dog bites not at the direction of the handler and there is no injury

**Figure A5: Number of occasions Police Dog Used trend information - April 2008 to March 2015**





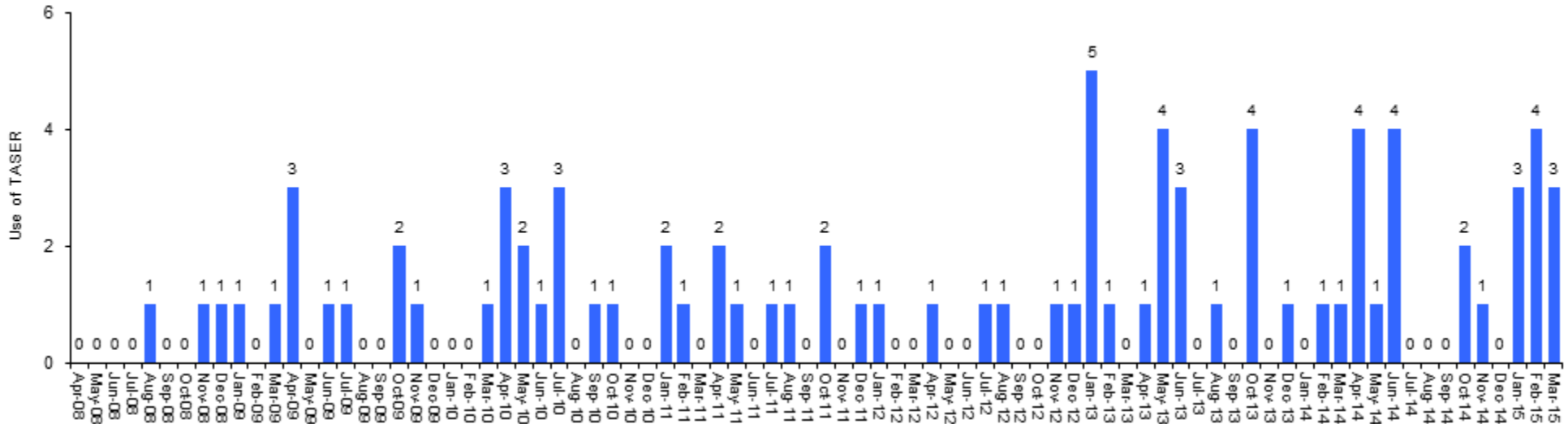
**(vi) Police Use of TASER: April 2008 – March 2015**

The TASER is a single shot weapon designed to temporarily incapacitate a subject through the use of an electrical current, which temporarily interferes with the body's neuromuscular system. Use of the TASER is one of a number of tactical options available to an officer who is faced with violence or the threat of violence, which may escalate to the point where the use of lethal force would be justified. Its purpose is to temporarily incapacitate an individual in order to control and neutralise the threat that they pose.

TASERS were introduced to PSNI in a limited pilot on 25<sup>th</sup> January 2008. They were issued to specialist firearms officers and have also been made available to authorised firearms officers attached to Armed Response Vehicles (since 19<sup>th</sup> December 2008) who have completed ACPO approved accredited training in the use of the device.

In terms of use of force, the TASER can be drawn/aimed, red dotted (at which stage a red dot appears on the subject indicating where the TASER would hit) or fired/discharged.

**Figure A6: Number of occasions TASER Fired trend information - April 2008 to March 2015**



**(vii) Police Use of Water Cannon: April 2008 – March 2015**

The PSNI has 6 water cannons at its disposal which are kept at different police locations within Northern Ireland to ensure that they can respond quickly to any incident. Water cannon vehicles are deployed and used only when authorised by appropriate officers in accordance with the ACPO manual of guidance, public order, standards, tactics & training.

**Figure A7: Number of occasions Water Cannon activated - April 2008 to March 2015**

