



# Use of Force by the Police in Northern Ireland

# 1 October 2022 to 30 September 2023

### Date of Publication:

15th December 2023

### Frequency of Publication:

Six monthly

### Issued by:

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### **Key Statistics**

Between 1 October 2022 to 30 September 2023:

- there were 20,537 uses of force reported by PSNI officers, an increase of 18% on the number reported during the previous year (17,382).
- use of handcuffs/limb restraints, unarmed physical tactics, police dog, firearms and spit and bite guards increased compared to the previous year while baton, conductive energy device (CEDs) and irritant spray usage decreased.
- the most common type of force used was unarmed physical tactics, accounting for 59% of all uses of force.
- the most common reason an officer used force was to protect themselves (82% of the time).
- Belfast District accounted for one-third of the use of force (33%), followed by Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon and Derry City and Strabane (both 10%).
- alcohol was the most common perceived impact factor when force was used (62% of the time).

In relation to those persons\* on whom force was used:

- 81% were perceived to be male
- 36% were perceived to be between 25 and 34 years old
- 94% were perceived to be white.

\*Figures do not represent a unique count of the number of people who were subject to use of force, but rather how many times force was recorded by police officers, disaggregated by gender, age and ethnicity.

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### Coverage

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 for the period 1 October 2022 to 30 September 2023. The next report, covering the 12 month period April 2023 to March 2024, will be published in June 2024.

Police officers must record the details of any incident where they deployed force tactics through a 'use of force report'. Where an incident involved more than one person or officer, each officer who used force must complete one use of force report, detailing their own use of force. As such, a singular event or individual may feature in multiple use of force reports.

In Sections 2 - 9 of this report, one 'use of force' refers to one officer's use of force involving one or more persons. As such, the number of uses reported is not equal to the number of unique incidents/events or people involved in incidents. If one officer points their firearm at three persons this will be counted as one use of force. If two officers point their firearms at the same three persons during the same incident, two use of force reports should be completed and this will be counted as two uses of force.

### **Data quality**

The figures in Section 10 of this report reflect how many times force was recorded by police officers, however it does not tell us how many individual people experienced police use of force. As explained above, if two officers used force on one individual, each officer would submit a use of force report and the person's details would be reported by both for each type of force used.

In some cases, the person's information e.g. age, gender, ethnicity are recorded as perceived by the reporting officer, therefore should not be considered as reliable as self-reported data. On other occasions, such details are known or reported by the person.

Whilst every effort is made to ensure that all incidents of use of force by the police are reported on the use of force monitoring system, there is the possibility that some under-reporting exists and this should be borne in mind when using these statistics. However, PSNI have recently implemented an automated solution, which should significantly reduce any under-reporting, primarily by prompting officers automatically when a use of force form is required.

### Users and uses of the statistics

Uses of the statistics, based on user engagement, information requests and satisfaction survey feedback include policy making and policy monitoring, performance monitoring and public interest, by a range of users including PSNI, the Policing Board, media and academics. Full details can be found in the <u>Use of Force User Guide</u>.

PSNI Statistics Branch welcomes any user feedback on these statistics, which can be provided via the email address on the cover page.

### **Official Statistics**

This bulletin is an Official Statistics publication meaning it complies with the <u>Code of Practice for Official Statistics</u> as follows:

- Trustworthiness: the statistics are impartial, independent and released in an open and transparent manner in accordance with a pre-announced publication schedule
- Quality: the statistics are produced using robust and relevant data sources which undergo continuous quality improvement and assurance checks
- Value: the statistics strive to meet user needs informed by ongoing feedback, providing sufficient detail which is widely accessible.

### 2. Summary statistics

### Notes for sections 2 - 9:

- 1) An officer may have used force on more than one member of the public in a single occasion of using force.
- 2) 'CED drawn' includes drawn, aimed, arced and red-dot.
- 3) 'CED fired' includes drive stun.
- 4) Unarmed physical tactics include blocks/strikes, take downs, pressure points, physical restraint and other/improvised tactics. Each type of tactic used is counted in the figures in these sections; for example, if an officer took down and physically restrained an individual, both of these tactics will be counted.

Table 1 summarises police use of force between 1 October 2022 and 30 September 2023 compared to the same period last year. Further information in relation to each type of force can be found in the <u>Use of Force User Guide</u>.

# Table 1: Police use of force between 1 October 2022 and 30 September 2023 compared to the same period last year

Use of Force	Oct 21 – Sep 22	Oct 22 – Sep 23	% change <sup>(1)</sup>
AEP pointed	73(2)	<b>74</b> <sup>(2)</sup>	1%
AEP discharged	<b>7</b> <sup>(2)</sup>	6 <sup>(2)</sup>	-14%
AEP Total	80	80	0%
Baton drawn only	202	175	-13%
Baton drawn & used	99	102	3%
Baton Total	301	277	-8%
Irritant spray drawn only	259	255	-2%
Irritant spray used	244	238	-2%
Irritant spray Total	503	493	-2%
Firearm drawn or pointed	470	528	12%
Firearm discharged	1	0	-100%
Firearm Total	471	528	12%
Police dog <sup>(3)</sup>	110	182	65%
CED drawn <sup>(3)</sup>	301	276	-8%
CED fired	16	21	31%
CED Total	317	297	-6%
Handcuffs / limb restraints	5,344	6,370	19%
Unarmed physical tactics	10,143	12,151	20%
Spit and bite guard	113	159	41%
Water cannon deployed	0	0	-
Water cannon deployed and used	0	0	-
Water cannon Total	0	0	-
Total	17,382	20,537	18%

(1) Percentage figures are rounded to the nearest integer.

(2) During both October 2021 – September 2022 and October 2022 – September 2023 AEP was pointed and discharged only as a less lethal option.

(3) Further disaggregation of police dog and CED drawn can be found in Table 1a.

Use of Force	Oct 21 – Sep 22	Oct 22 – Sep 23	% change <sup>(1)</sup>
Indirect Deployment	7	11	57%
Interim Deployment	56	78	39%
Direct Deployment	42	83	98%
Direct Deployment (Bite- Command)	4	4	0%
Direct Deployment (Bite- Provoked)	0	4	-
Direct Deployment (Bite- Accidental)	1	2	100%
Police dog Total	110	182	65%
CED drawn	51	73	43%
CED aimed	13	23	77%
CED red dot	234	178	-24%
CED arced	3	2	-33%
CED fired	16	21	31%
CED drive stun	0	0	-
CED angled drive stun	0	0	-
CED Total	317	297	-6%

# Table 1a: Disaggregation of use of police dog and CED between 1 October 2022 and 30September 2023 compared to the same period last year

(1) Percentage figures are rounded to the nearest integer.

### **Direction to draw batons**

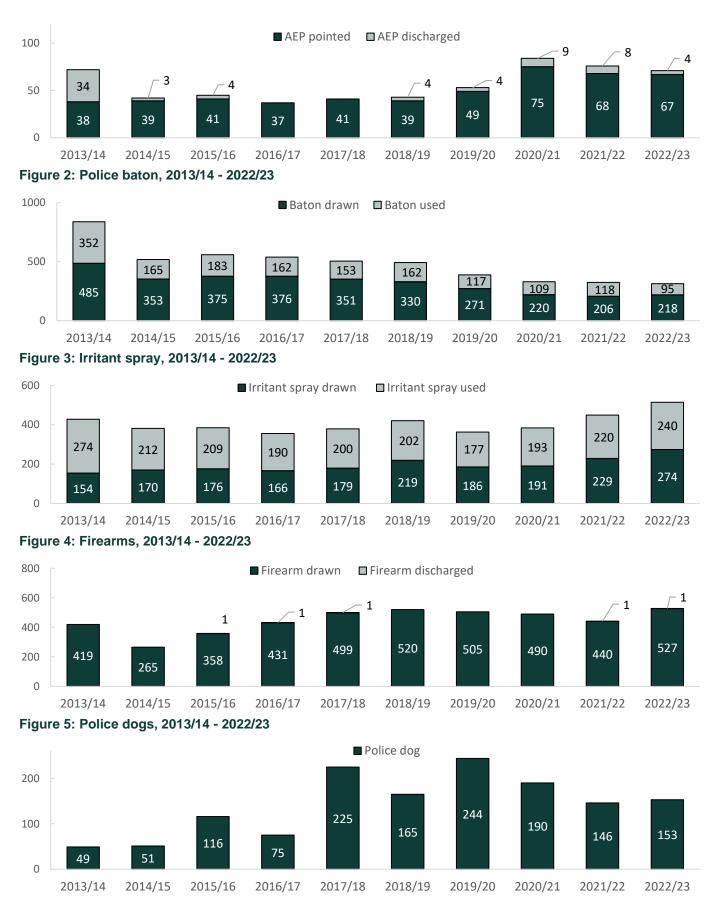
• A supervisory officer directed officers to draw their batons on a further 5 occasions between 1 October 2022 and 30 September 2023, which are not included in the 'Baton drawn only' statistics in this report. If an officer used his baton as a result of being directed to draw it, this use will be included in the 'baton drawn and used' statistics throughout this report.

### Firearms drawn with no persons present

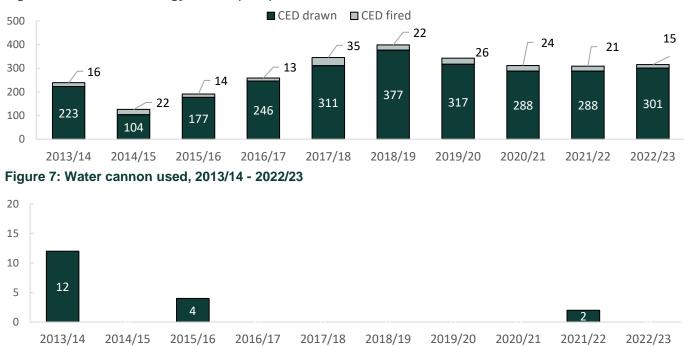
 There were 183 occasions between 1 October 2022 and 30 September 2023 when officers drew their firearms for operational reasons due to a perceived threat when no members of the public were present. This type of force is primarily used by Authorised / Specialist Firearms Officers during methodical and reactive search operations. These occasions are not included in the 'firearms drawn or pointed' statistics in this report.

## 3. Long-term trends (based on financial year)

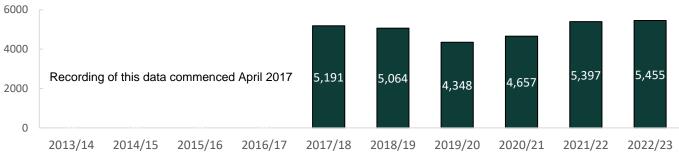
### Figure 1: Attenuating Energy Projectile (AEP), 2013/14 - 2022/23



### Figure 6: Conductive Energy Device (CED), 2013/14 - 2022/23







#### Figure 9: Unarmed physical tactics, 2017/18 - 2022/23

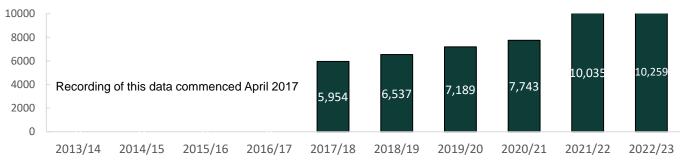


Figure 10: Spit and bite guards, 2020/21 - 2022/23 (1)



(1) Spit and bite guards were introduced as a temporary measure at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in September 2020. Recording of the use of spit and bite guards commenced in October 2020.

## 4. District

### Table 2: Use of force by Policing District, 1 October 2022 – 30 September 2023 <sup>(1)</sup>

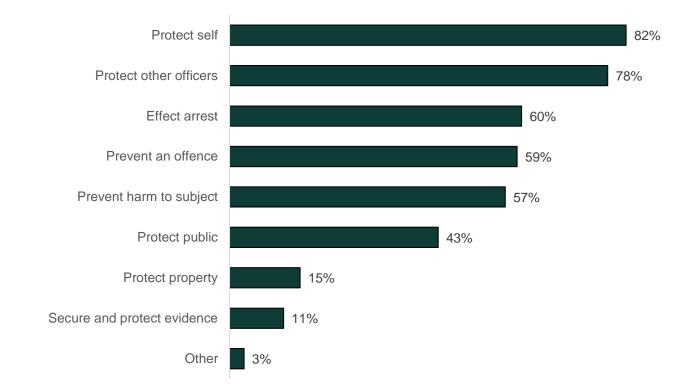
Use of Force	Belfast City	Lisburn and Castlereagh City	Ards & North Down	Newry, Mourne & Down	Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon	Mid Ulster	Fermanagh & Omagh	Derry City & Strabane	Causeway Coast & Glens	Mid & East Antrim	Antrim & Newtownabbey	Total
AEP pointed	21	3	3	3	6	7	1	5	9	9	7	74
AEP discharged	2	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	6
Baton drawn only	55	7	6	14	13	16	6	24	14	7	13	175
Baton drawn & used	41	5	2	11	8	6	4	11	5	4	5	102
Irritant spray drawn only	77	13	19	24	23	31	16	18	9	16	9	255
Irritant spray used	71	12	6	21	21	27	17	22	16	10	15	238
Firearm drawn or pointed	213	25	43	24	64	38	15	43	20	24	19	528
Firearm discharged	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Police dog	64	9	9	9	18	3	1	40	13	5	11	182
CED drawn	128	11	41	17	15	16	5	10	13	11	9	276
CED fired	7	1	4	1	3	2	0	1	1	1	0	21
Handcuffs / limb restraints	1,899	433	338	525	645	423	335	742	324	336	370	6,370
Unarmed physical tactics	4,122	752	600	1,023	1,164	971	659	1,160	454	543	703	12,151
Spit and bite guard	61	7	1	13	16	9	9	13	9	3	18	159
Water cannon deployed	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Water cannon deployed and used	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	6,761	1,278	1,073	1,686	1,996	1,549	1,068	2,089	889	969	1,179	20,537
% of Use of Force	33%	6%	5%	8%	10%	8%	5%	10%	4%	5%	6%	100%
Uses per 1,000 population <sup>(2)</sup>	19	9	7	9	9	10	9	14	6	7	8	11

(1) Guidance notes regarding these statistics have been provided at the start of section 2.

(2) Rates per 1,000 population are calculated using NISRA's mid-2022 population estimates.

## 5. Reason for use of force





### Table 3: Use of force by reason, 1 October 2022 – 30 September 2023 <sup>(1, 2, 3)</sup>

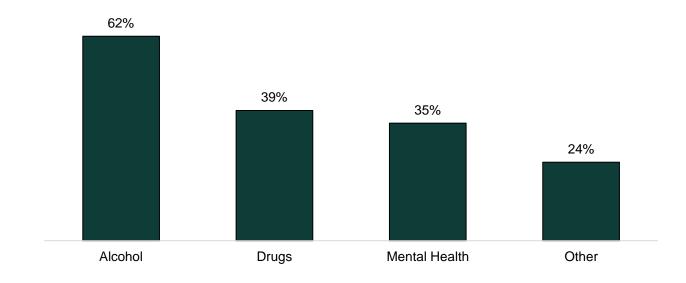
Use of Force	Protect self	Protect other officer	Effect arrest	Prevent an offence	Prevent harm to subject	Protect public	Protect property	Secure or protect evidence	Other
AEP	93%	93%	64%	71%	91%	73%	26%	28%	0%
Baton	88%	70%	57%	63%	29%	57%	17%	13%	3%
Irritant spray	92%	84%	63%	63%	40%	48%	13%	9%	2%
Firearm	96%	95%	66%	76%	50%	81%	16%	36%	2%
Police dog	77%	80%	79%	61%	37%	71%	18%	36%	2%
CED	95%	96%	56%	78%	87%	66%	15%	25%	2%
Handcuffs / limb restraints	80%	76%	67%	56%	57%	43%	15%	12%	2%
Unarmed physical tactics	81%	77%	56%	60%	58%	40%	14%	9%	4%
Spit and bite guard	95%	96%	28%	62%	24%	43%	23%	1%	2%
Total	82%	78%	60%	59%	57%	43%	15%	11%	3%

(1) Guidance notes regarding these statistics have been provided at the start of section 2.

(2) An officer may report more than one reason for using each type of force.

(3) Reason is not recorded on the use of force form when using the water cannon.

## 6. Impact factors



### Figure 12: Impact factors relating to use of force, 1 October 2022 – 30 September 2023 <sup>(1, 2)</sup>

### Table 4: Use of force by impact factor, 1 October 2022 – 30 September 2023 (1, 2)

Use of Force	Alcohol	Drugs	Mental health	Other
AEP	63%	48%	79%	23%
Baton	63%	39%	23%	30%
Irritant spray	62%	38%	36%	20%
Firearm	39%	35%	48%	45%
Police dog	49%	31%	27%	41%
CED	44%	43%	69%	30%
Handcuffs / limb restraints	59%	36%	31%	25%
Unarmed physical tactics	64%	41%	37%	22%
Spit and bite guard	70%	62%	36%	11%
Water cannon deployed	-	-	-	-
Total	62%	39%	35%	24%

(1) Guidance notes regarding these statistics have been provided at the start of section 2.

(2) Impact factors are officer perceived. An officer may report more than one impact factor relating to each type of force.

## 7. Location of use of force

### Table 5: Use of force by location, 1 October 2022 – 30 September 2023 (1, 2)

Use of Force	Roadway	Dwelling	Custody suite/dock	Hospital	Garden / driveway	Other <sup>(3)</sup>	Car park	Motor vehicle	Public park	Total
AEP pointed	8	41	0	0	15	5	0	0	5	74
AEP discharged	0	5	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	6
Baton drawn only	102	31	0	0	9	17	11	1	4	175
Baton drawn & used	59	19	2	0	8	6	5	2	1	102
Irritant spray drawn only	95	84	1	9	36	17	9	2	2	255
Irritant spray used	98	69	2	3	30	16	14	4	2	238
Firearm drawn or pointed	157	258	1	0	65	27	9	2	9	528
Firearm discharged	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Police dog	78	29	0	0	52	14	6	0	3	182
CED drawn	27	201	0	2	34	6	1	0	5	276
CED fired	0	18	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	21
Handcuffs / limb restraints	2,596	1,597	341	471	376	393	294	198	104	6,370
Unarmed physical tactics	4,558	2,365	1,805	894	648	629	462	580	210	12,151
Spit and bite guard	40	18	24	25	7	5	13	26	1	159
Water cannon deployed	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Water cannon deployed and used	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	7,818	4,735	2,176	1,404	1,284	1,135	824	815	346	20,537
% of Use of Force	38%	23%	11%	7%	6%	6%	4%	4%	2%	100%

(1) Guidance notes regarding these statistics have been provided at the start of section 2.

(2) A use of force incident may involve multiple locations (e.g. an incident could begin in a dwelling but finish on the street outside if the person attempted to escape). However, the recording system does not allow for multiple locations to be included for one incident, so the primary location is likely to be recorded.

(3) Locations where force is less frequently used, for example, public buildings, trains and 'other' locations.

# 8. Type of incident

Table 6: Use of force by type of incident, 1 October 2022 – 30 September 2023 <sup>(1)</sup>

Use of Force	Crime	Domestic	Other	Custody	Public order	Firearms	Traffic	Terrorism	Total
AEP pointed	5	0	0	0	0	69	0	0	74
AEP discharged	0	1	0	0	0	5	0	0	6
Baton drawn only	73	15	12	1	56	3	14	1	175
Baton drawn & used	52	17	2	2	18	1	10	0	102
Irritant spray drawn only	133	32	41	1	37	5	5	1	255
Irritant spray used	111	48	20	4	35	10	9	1	238
Firearm drawn or pointed	97	24	25	0	2	360	1	19	528
Firearm discharged	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Police dog	73	20	9	0	28	48	1	3	182
CED drawn	33	9	5	0	0	227	1	1	276
CED fired	0	0	4	0	0	17	0	0	21
Handcuffs / limb restraints	3,386	884	716	391	496	269	200	28	6,370
Unarmed physical tactics	5,567	1,425	1,333	1,722	1,348	438	275	43	12,151
Spit and bite guard	89	20	9	14	22	3	2	0	159
Water cannon deployed	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Water cannon deployed and used	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	9,619	2,495	2,176	2,135	2,042	1,455	518	97	20,537
% of Use of Force	47%	12%	11%	10%	10%	7%	3%	<1%	100%

(1) Guidance notes regarding these statistics have been provided at the start of section 2.

## 9. Officer duty type

### Table 7: Use of force by officer duty type, 1 October 2022 – 30 September 2023 <sup>(1)</sup>

Use of Force	Local/Neighbourhood Policing	Armed Response Vehicle	Custody	Tactical Support Group	Other	Dog Handler	Specialist Firearms Officer	Traffic	Total
AEP pointed	0	74	0	0	0	0	0	0	74
AEP discharged	0	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	6
Baton drawn only	123	5	0	36	6	2	0	3	175
Baton drawn & used	82	5	0	11	2	0	0	2	102
Irritant spray drawn only	248	0	0	3	4	0	0	0	255
Irritant spray used	225	8	0	1	3	0	0	1	238
Firearm drawn or pointed	105	363	0	2	3	0	55	0	528
Firearm discharged	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Police dog	0	1	0	0	0	171	10	0	182
CED drawn	0	262	0	0	0	0	14	0	276
CED fired	0	21	0	0	0	0	0	0	21
Handcuffs / limb restraints	5,406	305	209	164	176	18	31	61	6,370
Unarmed physical tactics	9,383	553	1,383	491	190	50	41	60	12,151
Spit and bite guard	147	2	5	2	3	0	0	0	159
Water cannon deployed	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Water cannon deployed and used	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	15,719	1,605	1,597	710	387	241	151	127	20,537
% of Use of Force	77%	8%	8%	3%	2%	1%	1%	1%	100%

(1) Guidance notes regarding these statistics have been provided at the start of section 2.

### 10. Gender, age group and ethnicity

The figures in this section do not represent the number of people who were subject to use of force, but rather how many times force was recorded by police officers, disaggregated by gender, age and ethnicity.

More than one use of force report may be completed for the same individual. If two officers used force on one individual, each officer would submit a use of force report and the person's details would be recorded on both reports. Additionally, one officer may have used more than one type of force on the same individual and the person's details would be reported for each type of force used by the officer.

However, the exception to this is in the case of handcuffs / limb restraints and the various types of unarmed physical tactics. If handcuffs and limb restraints are used, or multiple types of unarmed physical tactics are used on an individual by the same officer, the person details will only be counted once.

In some cases, the person's information e.g. age, gender, ethnicity are recorded as perceived by the reporting officer, therefore should not be considered as reliable as self-reported data. On other occasions, such details are known or reported by the person.

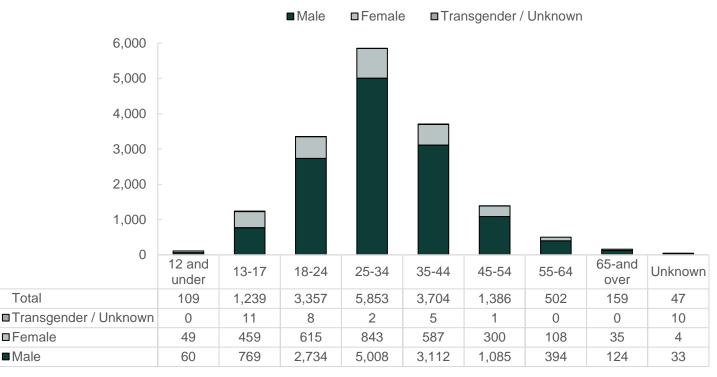


Figure 13: Gender and age of those individuals on whom force was used, 1 October 2022 – 30 September 2023 <sup>(1,2)</sup>

(1) Guidance notes regarding these statistics have been provided at the start of section 10.

(2) Gender and age may be officer perceived.

# Table 8 Gender of those individuals on whom force was used by type of force, 1 October 2022 – 30 September 2023 $^{(1, 2, 3)}$

Use of Force	Male	Female	Unknown	Total	Total number
AEP pointed	96%	4%	0%	100%	79
AEP discharged	100%	0%	0%	100%	6
Baton drawn only	94%	4%	2%	100%	180
Baton drawn & used	99%	1%	0%	100%	105
Irritant spray drawn only	94%	6%	0%	100%	269
Irritant spray used	96%	4%	0%	100%	250
Firearm drawn or pointed	89%	11%	0%	100%	603
Firearm discharged					0
Police dog	92%	6%	3%	100%	200
CED drawn	88%	12%	0%	100%	300
CED fired	86%	14%	0%	100%	21
Handcuffs / limb restraints	82%	18%	<1%	100%	5,873
Unarmed physical tactic	78%	21%	<1%	100%	8,311
Spit and bite guard	77%	23%	0%	100%	159
Total	81%	18%	<1%	100%	16,356

Guidance notes regarding these statistics have been provided at the start of section 10.
Gender may be officer perceived.
Percentage figures are rounded to the nearest integer and as a result may not sum to 100%.

# Table 9: Age of those individuals on whom force was used by type of force, 1 October 2022 – 30 September 2023 <sup>(1, 2, 3)</sup>

Use of Force	12 and under	13- 17	18- 24	25- 34	35- 44	45- 54	55- 64	65+	Unknown	Total	Total number
AEP pointed	0%	1%	11%	43%	30%	13%	1%	0%	0%	100%	79
AEP discharged	0%	0%	0%	50%	33%	17%	0%	0%	0%	100%	6
Baton drawn only	1%	5%	23%	32%	24%	6%	3%	0%	6%	100%	180
Baton drawn & used	0%	4%	16%	44%	27%	5%	4%	1%	0%	100%	105
Irritant spray drawn only	0%	4%	19%	41%	26%	6%	3%	0%	<1%	100%	269
Irritant spray used	0%	4%	17%	44%	27%	4%	2%	1%	<1%	100%	250
Firearm drawn or pointed	0%	3%	15%	38%	27%	12%	4%	1%	<1%	100%	603
Firearm discharged					•						0
Police dog	0%	2%	24%	42%	19%	7%	1%	1%	6%	100%	200
CED drawn	0%	1%	15%	38%	27%	13%	4%	1%	<1%	100%	300
CED fired	0%	0%	10%	43%	38%	10%	0%	0%	0%	100%	21
Handcuffs / limb restraints	<1%	7%	20%	36%	23%	9%	3%	1%	0%	100%	5,873
Unarmed physical tactics	1%	9%	21%	34%	22%	8%	3%	1%	<1%	100%	8,311
Spit and bite guard	0%	9%	33%	38%	12%	4%	3%	1%	0%	100%	159
Total	1%	8%	21%	36%	23%	8%	3%	1%	<1%	100%	16,356

(1) Guidance notes regarding these statistics have been provided at the start of section 10.

(2) Age may be officer perceived.(3) Percentage figures are rounded to the nearest integer and as a result may not sum to 100%.

### Table 10: Ethnicity of those individuals on whom force was used, 1 October 2022 – 30 September 2023 <sup>(1,2,3)</sup>

Use of Force	White	lrish Traveller	Other Ethnic Group	Black	Mixed	Asian	Unknown	Total	Total number
AEP pointed	97%	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%	1%	100%	79
AEP discharged	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%	6
Baton drawn only	91%	4%	2%	2%	0%	0%	2%	100%	180
Baton drawn & used	96%	1%	1%	0%	0%	2%	0%	100%	105
Irritant spray drawn only	94%	4%	1%	1%	0%	0%	0%	100%	269
Irritant spray used	94%	3%	0%	1%	0%	2%	<1%	100%	250
Firearm drawn or pointed	91%	3%	1%	2%	1%	1%	1%	100%	603
Firearm discharged							•		0
Police dog	91%	4%	1%	1%	0%	1%	3%	100%	200
CED drawn	97%	<1%	1%	1%	<1%	<1%	1%	100%	300
CED fired	95%	0%	5%	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%	21
Handcuffs / limb restraints	94%	2%	1%	2%	<1%	<1%	<1%	100%	5,873
Unarmed physical tactics	95%	3%	1%	1%	<1%	<1%	<1%	100%	8,311
Spit and bite guard	92%	3%	1%	1%	1%	0%	2%	100%	159
Total	94%	3%	1%	1%	<1%	<1%	<1%	100%	16,356

Guidance notes regarding these statistics have been provided at the start of section 10.
Ethnicity may be officer perceived.
Percentage figures are rounded to the nearest integer and as a result may not sum to 100%.

### 11. Background notes

Further information on how these statistics are collated, reported and used is included in the <u>Use of</u> Force User Guide.

### Use of force

A use of force is counted as when a police officer uses any of the following force tactics:

- Attenuating Energy Projectile (AEP) pointed or discharged
- Baton drawn only or drawn and used
- Irritant spray drawn only or used
- Firearm drawn or pointed, or discharged
- Police dog
- Conducted Energy Device (CED) drawn (including aimed, arced, red-dotted) or fired (including drive-stun)
- Handcuffs / limb restraints (including flexi-cuffs)
- Unarmed physical tactics (including blocks/strikes, take downs, pressure points, physical restraints, other / improvised)
- Spit and bite guard (introduced as a temporary measure at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in September 2020)
- Water canon deployed or used

These are explained in more detail in Section 3 of the Use of Force User Guide.

### **Useful links**

The most recent statistics for police use of force in England and Wales and can be found at: <u>https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/police-use-of-force-statistics</u>