

Taser Survey 2016 Headline Report 26 January 2017

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Summary points

- **82% of federated rank officers said Taser should be issued to a wider group of front-line officers. In 2014 the figure was 74%.**
- **94% of those officers wanting Taser issued to a wider group of front-line officers said they were more in favour of this now than when Taser was first introduced.**
- **Officers working in inner city locations are most likely to be in favour of issuing Taser to a wider group (85%) whilst those primarily office based (78%) or in rural areas (77%) are least likely to be in favour.**
- **Younger officers under 25 (93%) are more likely to be in favour of issuing Taser to a wider group of front-line officers than older officers 55 or over (73%).**
- **Officers with under 5 years' service are also more likely to be in favour (89%) than those with 15 years or more service (81%), although the gap between the two groups has narrowed since 2014.**
- **Officers in Neighbourhood Policing (86%), Roads Policing (86%), Custody (84%) and Response (82%) are most likely to be in favour of issuing Taser to a wider group of front-line officers.**
- **25% of officers say they are currently trained to carry Taser, and 82% of these officers say they routinely carry it.**
- **66% of officers trained to carry Taser have had to use it, with 65% saying the last time they used it was to avoid danger to themselves.**
- **68% of those using Taser said they did not need to actually fire their Taser.**
- **96% of officers currently trained to carry Taser say it is beneficial in their current role.**

2016 findings compared to 2014

- The Taser survey was sent to all federated rank officers on the 1st December 2016, except for Merseyside officers who were surveyed one month earlier from 8 November due to local requirements. This repeated a previous survey of officers in 2014. On completion of the national survey all responses were merged before the final analysis.
- The total number of responses was 6,220, which represents 5% of all federated rank officers.¹ Statistically, this sample size is large enough that

¹ The 2014 (May) survey had a slightly higher response rate of 9%.

percentages quoted can be considered to be accurate within the normal bounds of academic rigor.²

- The demographic composition of the sample was similar to last time, allowing direct comparisons.³

Table 1: Demographic composition of 2014 and 2016 surveys (rounded figures)

Rank	2014	2016	Age	2014	2016	Length of Service	2014	2016
Constable	82%	81%	18-34	38%	34%	Under 5 years	15%	20%
Sergeant	14%	15%	35-54	60%	65%	5-10 years*	30%	19%
Inspecting ranks	4%	4%	55+	1%	2%	10 years+	55%	62%

*The difference here reflects a decline in numbers with 5-10 years' service. The Home Office figure for 2014 was 25% but only 18% in 2016.

Ethnicity	2014	2016	Gender	2014	2016
White	97%	96%	Male	83%	85%
Non-white	3%	4%	Female	17%	15%

- When asked if Taser should be issued only to authorised firearms officers, to a further increased number of specially trained officers, or to a wider group of front-line officers, **82% said it should be issued to a wider group of front-line officers.**⁴ In 2014 the comparable figure was 74%, so there has been a

² (Margin of error well below 2% at 95% confidence level (academic standards are 5% margin of error, with lower being better, and 95% confidence level).

³ Given a lower response than in 2014 we considered weighting by force size to ensure that the survey was as representative of officers as possible. However, as in 2014 the survey responses appear fairly representative of the officer workforce (actual England and Wales force percentages in brackets*) with the possible exception of gender, whereas in 2014 female officers are under-represented – constables 81% (79%), sergeants 15% (15%), inspecting ranks 4% (6%); 18-34 year olds 34% (27%), 35-54 year olds 65% (71%), aged 55+ 2% (2%); under 5 years' service 20% (14%), 5-10 years' 19% (18%), over 10 years' 62% (67%); BMEs 4% (6%); female officers 15% (28%).

The demographic characteristics of the current survey and the 2014 survey are very similar, especially after allowing for evitable demographic shifts over the last two years due to workforce changes (see table 1).

⁴ Response to the following question:

Assuming appropriate training is available, should Conducted Energy Devices (Taser) be issued only to authorised firearms officers, to a further increased number of specially trained officers, or to a wider group of front-line officers?

If the file had been weighted by force size this figure would still have been very similar at 84%.

noticeable increase in support for this option since then. Table 2 shows the breakdown by rank (2014 response in brackets).

- Of those wanting a wider group of front-line officers to be issued with Taser, about 94% now say they are more in favour of this option than when Taser was introduced (compared to 92% in 2014).
- Support for this wider roll-out option has increased among all ranks since 2014, but especially so among higher ranks.

Table 2: Taser should be issued to:

	Constable (N=4720)	Sergeant (N=892)	Inspectors (N=201)	Chief Inspectors (N=42)	All (N=5942)
Only authorised firearms officers	2% (1)	0% (2)	2% (1)	0% (0)	1% (2)
A further increased number of specially trained officers	18% (24)	14% (23)	13% (26)	19% (28)	17% (24)
A wider group of front-line officers	81% (74)	85% (75)	86% (73)	81% (72)	82% (74)

p-value = 0.04

- As in 2014 there continues to be a difference in response depending upon the type of area where officers regularly work. Those working in inner city areas are more likely to support issuing Taser to a wider group of front-line officers (85%) than those primarily office based (78%) or in rural areas (77%) (table 3). However, once again there has been increased support for wider roll-out among all groups since 2014, such that the gap between inner city and office based officers has narrowed from 17% to 7% now.

Table 3: Taser response by type of Area

	Inner city (N=1817)	Urban (N=1840)	Rural town (N=682)	Rural (N=196)	Primarily office based (N=516)
Only authorised firearms officers	1% (2)	1% (2)	1% (2)	1% (2)	1% (3)
A further increased number of specially trained officers	14% (18)	17% (23)	20% (26)	22% (24)	21% (34)
A wider group of front-line officers	85% (80)	82% (75)	79% (72)	77% (75)	78% (63)

p-value = 0.001

- Responses also vary by age (table 4) and length of service (table 5) with younger officers (93%) and those shorter in service (89%) still more likely to be in favour of issuing Taser to a wider group of front-line officers than those older (73%) and longer in service (81%). Although the gap between older and younger officers in favour of wider roll-out has been maintained at 20% since 2014, the gap has narrowed slightly in respect of length of service from 13% to 8%.

Table 4: Taser response by age

	18-24 (N=276)	25-34 (N=1683)	35-44 (N=2128)	45-54 (N=1618)	55+ (N=91)
Only authorised firearms officers	0% (0)	1% (2)	1% (2)	1% (3)	4% (5)
A further increased number of specially trained officers	7% (9)	16% (22)	18% (24)	19% (28)	23% (25)
A wider group of front-line officers	93% (90)	84% (77)	82% (74)	80% (69)	73% (70)

p-value = 0.001

Table 5: Taser response by length of service

	0-5 years (N=1226)	5-10 years (N=1055)	10-15 years (N=1508)	15 years or more (N=2144)
Only authorised firearms officers	1% (1)	1% (2)	1% (2)	1% (3)
A further increased number of specially trained officers	11% (17)	21% (23)	18% (24)	18% (28)
A wider group of front-line officers	89% (82)	79% (75)	81% (74)	81% (69)

p-value = 0.001

- Since 2014 there have been some changes to the Home Office's official classification of police officer functions, which resulted in a change to some of the options provided to respondents in the 2016 survey. However where there has been a change, it is still possible to match 2014 roles to 2016 roles and table 6 reports the current role with the closest match to that role in 2014 (where applicable equivalent roles are in brackets). The table reports the response to the Taser question by officers' main role.

- As in 2014 officers in certain roles are more likely to favour extending the use of Taser to a wider group of front-line officers, but again the gap between roles in respect of this support is now far narrower than before. However, officers in response (82%), Neighbourhood Policing (86%), Road Policing (86%), Custody (84%), Investigations (79%) and Operational Support (78%) are still more likely to favour this option than those in Administrative Support (74%), Investigative Support (71%) and Training (69%).

Table 6: Taser response by officers' main role

	N	Only authorised firearms officers	A further increased number of specially trained officers	A wider group of front-line officers
Investigation (CID)	624	1% (5%)	20% (28)	79% (67)
Investigation support (CID operational support)	48	0% (3)	29% (25)	71% (72)
Custody	104	0% (2)	16% (25)	84% (73)
Response (Patrol/Specialist Patrol)	2841	1% (1)	17% (23)	82% (76)
Neighbourhood Policing (including community liaison)	896	1% (2)	13% (19)	86% (79)
Roads Policing	297	0% (3)	14% (26)	86% (71)
Training	93	2% (2)	29% (32)	69% (65)
Administrative Support (HQ/Admin.)	31	3% (1)	23% (31)	74% (68)
Operational Support (Specialist Support)	305	1% (4)	20% (30)	78% (67)
Intelligence*	157	1% (-)	18% (-)	81% (-)
Central Communications Unit*	48	0% (-)	13% (-)	87% (-)
Criminal Justice*	11	0% (-)	18% (-)	82% (-)
National Policing*	29	0% (-)	17% (-)	83% (-)

Equivalent roles in 2014 in brackets.

** These roles were not included in the list of options in 2014.*

p-value = 0.01

- There continues to be a slight difference in response by gender with more male officers (83%) supporting a wider roll-out than female officers (76%). However, both male and female officers are now more in favour of greater roll-out of Taser than in 2014 (table 7).

Table 7: Taser response by gender

	Male (N=4946)	Female (N=838)
Only authorised firearms officers	1% (2)	1% (3)
A further increased number of specially trained officers	16% (23)	24% (30)
A wider group of front-line officers	83% (76)	76% (67)

p-value = 0.001

- About 25% of officers say they are currently trained to carry Taser, and 82% of these officers say they routinely carry it. 96% think it is beneficial in their current role. These responses are similar to those in 2014.
- 66% of officers trained to carry Taser have had to use it, which is again similar to 2014.
- 65% said that the last time they used Taser was to avoid danger to themselves, although 68% of those using Taser said they did not need to actually fire it. Again this is in line with responses last time.

* Demographic breakdowns for gender, rank and ethnicity based on Home Office figures (*Police Workforce, England and Wales*, Statistical Bulletin, March 2016) <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/police-workforce-england-and-wales-31-march-2016>; Length of service breakdown based on Police Force Annual Data Returns to the Home Office as reported by HMIC <http://www.justiceinspectors.gov.uk/hmic/data/value-for-money-data/>; Age breakdown based on unpublished *Workforce Census 2015-16 Supplementary tables Main Set* (Home Office).