



User guide to ‘Police use of force statistics, England and Wales’

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1 Introduction

This user guide accompanies the second publication of Home Office '[Police use of force statistics, England and Wales](#)', which covers statistics on incidents in which police officers used force on individuals. These statistics were collected and published for the first time in 2018, through the Home Office Annual Data Requirement ([ADR](#)).

Experimental statistics and data quality

These new statistics are considered to have immediate value to users and help with the understanding of the level and nature of the police's use of force. However, given the current quality limitations, they are published as 'Experimental Statistics'. [Experimental Statistics](#) are statistics which are published in order to involve users and stakeholders in their development and as a means to build in quality at an early stage.

The quality limitations of these statistics, and other issues which users should be aware of, include: missing values; erroneous data; and inconsistencies in recording, within and across police forces. The [Data quality](#) section of this user guide provides a more detailed discussion of the current limitations and data quality issues of these new statistics.

Feedback and enquiries

To contact the Fire, Licensing & Public Order Analysis Unit, please email: PublicOrderStatistics@homeoffice.gov.uk.

2 Data collection and preparation

Purpose of the collection

The Government has committed to improving transparency and accountability on police use of force. In 2014, the then Home Secretary asked former Chief Constable David Shaw (Chief Constable for West Mercia until July 2016) to lead a review into what data should be recorded and published.

The [review](#) recommended that a range of core data should be recorded every time the police deploy a tactic categorised as a use of force¹. From April 2017, all police forces in the UK are required to record this data.

The purpose of the use of force data collection is to provide the public with greater information on the different types of force used and the context in which this occurs. This data should also help underpin future work by the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) and College of Policing to enhance tactics, training, and equipment to improve the safety of all.

Police forces in England and Wales provide a subset of their collected use of force data to the Home Office through the ADR, which is a list of all requests for data made to all police forces in England and Wales under the Home Secretary's statutory powers.

The collection of data through the ADR encourages greater consistency between police forces together with an expectation of higher quality as it should be signed off by individual Chief Constables. Furthermore, collecting use of force data through the ADR underlines the importance of the data to Ministers and the Home Office.

Data coverage

The data was collected, via the ADR, from the 43 Home Office police forces in England and Wales, for the year ending March 2019.

The statistics relate to 'use of force incidents'. A use of force incident is defined as a situation in which a police officer uses any of the following force tactics:

| Restraint tactics |
|--|
| Handcuffing (compliant or non-compliant) |
| Limb/Body restraints |
| Ground restraint |

¹ A 'use of force' incident is when a force tactic, as listed in the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) guidance, is used by an officer on an individual. See the [national guidance](#) on use of force recording from the NPCC for further information.

| |
|---|
| Unarmed skills |
| This includes distraction strikes with hands and feet; and pressure point and joint locks to help restrain subjects |
| Use of other equipment |
| Baton (including where it was drawn but not used) |
| Irritant spray (including where it was drawn but not used) |
| Spit and bite guard |
| Shield (e.g. subject struck or pushed with a shield) |
| Less lethal weapons |
| Conducted Energy Device (CED, e.g. TASER®) (including where it was used without being discharged) |
| Attenuating Energy Projectile (AEP) (including where it was aimed but not fired) |
| Firearms |
| This refers to the use of conventional firearms, including where the firearm was aimed but not fired |
| Other |
| Use of dogs (including where a dog was deployed but did not come into contact with (i.e. bite) the subject) |
| Other / improvised |

Not all police forces' recording systems are able to record the repeated use of the same tactic within an incident. In this release the tactics used in an incident are only counted once, even if they were reported multiple times within the same incident.

There were 1,700 incidents (0.4%) submitted by police forces to the Home Office in which no tactics were recorded. This is due to data being recorded in a different format to that requested during data collection. As many police forces have since implemented recording systems which comply with requirements, this issue should not affect future years' data

Officers must complete a 'use of force report' each time they use force tactics on an individual. The use of force reports also allow for other information to be recorded. As such, the statistics in the release cover various aspects of use of force incidents:

- the number of recorded incidents where force was used, and the type of force (tactic) used;
- the reason for using force, and other factors that impacted on the incident;
- details of the subject's age, gender, ethnicity, and disability (as perceived by the reporting officer);
- injury information for both officers and subjects, including injury level; and

- incident details such as location type and outcome.

This release does not include force used in designated public order events, where officers may use force over a period of time against a person(s) not subsequently apprehended. In these situations, it is not feasible for officers to provide the same level of detail as for individual use of force incidents.

Police forces may collect additional information at a local level, with further detail or including designated public order events. For more information on individual police forces' use of force data, see the [Related statistics and reports](#) section of this user guide.

Quality assurance

These statistics are compiled by Home Office statisticians who have worked closely with the NPCC and police forces to design and implement quality assurance checks. These checks include:

- ensuring the data provided is complete (or as close as possible, given the recording capacity of the submitting police force);
- querying missing or contradictory data (e.g. records where a subject has been reported as "Not injured", but descriptions of the subject's injury have subsequently been provided), and working with police forces to correct the data where possible; and
- variance checks on CED data – i.e. comparing the figures for the current year to the last collected year of CED data, and querying substantial changes.

The recording of police use of force incidents is the responsibility of each police force. As such, individual police forces may subject their use of force data to various quality checks prior to submitting the data to the Home Office, but the scope and rigour of these internal checks will differ across police forces.

As this is a new statistical collection, issues in recording and data quality issues (as described in the next chapter) are not uncommon. However, it is expected that the quality of the data will improve as the collection continues, as police forces develop their recording systems and practices.

3 Data quality

The 2018-19 statistical release is the second in the Home Office 'Police use of force statistics, England and Wales' collection, and covers the second year in which the recording of police use of force is a national requirement in England and Wales.

As the collection is newly established and subject to data quality issues (detailed below), these statistics are currently designated as Experimental Statistics². Statisticians in the Home Office are working with police forces to improve the quality of these statistics as the collection continues (see [Improvements to data quality](#) for more information).

For this release, all 43 police forces submitted a data return. However, due to discrepancies and constraints in recording, many submissions did not adhere to the full recording requirement. Therefore, the statistics presented in the release do not give a full, national picture of police use of force in England and Wales.

Although [national guidance](#) on the recording of police use of force has been developed by the NPCC and made available to all police forces, the actual recording of the data is the responsibility of each individual police force. As such, different recording systems, instructions, and quality assurance processes used by forces have resulted in differing levels of quality across the national dataset.

Home Office statisticians' preparatory and quality assurance exercises have shed light on various issues with the collection which limit how the data may be used or interpreted. The following section details the known issues with different aspects of the data collection.

Data quality issues - Recording practices

- Some **data was not collected** by some police forces. This occurred in certain cases where police forces' recording systems did not fully meet the new recording requirements (i.e. they did not collect certain information for each incident). Some forces' systems do not have the capacity to break down tactics into the type of use (e.g. was the baton drawn or used).
- There is **no central system** or software for recording use of force; police forces' recording systems differ in many ways, leading to differences in the data collected and the quality of the data. The ways in which the recording systems vary include:
 - The exact questions (or wording thereof) posed to officers about the incident, and the manner in which subsequent answers can be entered (such as free text responses, and selecting from drop-down menus or pick lists).
 - The level of data validation; for example, some systems may not prevent an officer from entering contradictory or incorrect information when recording their use of force, or may not force an officer to input details where a response should be mandatory.
 - Incidents may involve multiple locations, outcomes, impact factors and reasons for using force, but some recording systems do not allow for the recording of

² The UK Statistics Authority defines [experimental statistics](#) as 'newly developed or innovative statistics'.

multiple responses for these questions. Similarly, a certain tactic may be used repeatedly in an incident. Some recording systems allow for the recording of repeated tactics, whereas other systems do not.

- There will be **differences, within and across, police forces in reporting practices** while officers become familiar with the reporting requirements and the guidance (e.g. the need to submit a use of force report for an incident, or specific guidance on how to report certain aspects of an incident). It is the responsibility of individual police forces to provide training and guidance for officers in the reporting of use of force. Despite Home Office statisticians working with the NPCC to develop uniform reporting guidance for officers, the use of force reporting will remain reliant, to an extent, on the judgement and interpretation of the individual reporting officer.

Data quality issues – How a use of force incident is defined

- Police officers must record the details of any incident where they deployed force tactics through a 'use of force report'. Where a situation involved more than one subject or officer using force, **each officer who used force must complete one use of force report, per subject, detailing their own use of force.**
- In this release, one 'use of force incident' refers to **one officer's use of force involving one subject**. The 'number of incidents' reported in the release is therefore equal to the number of use of force reports that were completed by police officers, not the number of unique events or subjects involved in incidents.
- **The number of incidents reported does not tell us how many individual people experienced police use of force.** In a situation where three police officers restrain an individual on the ground, and one of those officers then handcuffs the individual, there would be three separate use of force reports submitted (one by each officer). These reports would be counted in the release as three 'incidents'. All three reports would include the details of the incident (location, for example) and the subjects' details (as perceived by the reporting officer). The reports would also include the tactics the reporting officer used (i.e. two reports would list ground restraint only, and one report would list both ground restraint and handcuffing). See also the following example:

In the following situation, both officers would submit use of force reports relating to the same subject at the same event, so the subject would appear twice in the dataset (thus accounting for two 'use of force incidents').

Example: A subject is in possession of a weapon and is physically threatening two officers. Both officers draw their CEDs and aim the CEDs at the subject. The subject continues to threaten the officers, so the first officer uses the laser sight on the device to place a red dot on the subject. The subject becomes compliant and neither officer discharges their CED. The subject places the weapon on the ground as instructed and is then handcuffed by the second officer.

The first officer would complete a use of force report, listing 'CED - Red dot' as the tactic used, and 'Possession of a weapon' as an impact factor. The second officer would also complete a

use of force report, listing ‘CED – Aimed’ and ‘Compliant handcuffing’ as tactics, and ‘Possession of a weapon’ as an impact factor.

- A report could include **multiple tactics, reasons for using force, impact factors, locations, and outcomes**, although it should only relate to one officer and one subject. It is not possible to determine from such reports, for example, the location in which each tactic was used (where multiple tactics and locations are reported), or which tactic (or combination thereof) caused a subject’s injuries. Data are collected in this way to ensure the reporting process isn’t excessively bureaucratic or burdensome to police forces – for example, through the completion of multiple use of force reports.
- Some use of force situations will be more complicated than others, and span different amounts of time – it is **at the discretion of the reporting officer** to decide whether they report the events as one incident or multiple.
- Not all police forces’ recording systems are able to record the repeated use of the same tactic within an incident. As such, in this release **the tactics used in an incident are only counted once**, even if they were reported multiple times within the same incident.

Data quality issues – CED

- As part of a previous ADR, all 43 police forces collected and submitted data on CED use to the Home Office. However, disruption was caused by the transition for recording CED use through one system to another system (i.e. a wider use of force recording system), affecting the quality and reliability of the data. All 43 forces submitted CED data for the full 12 month reporting period. However, where data recording systems had not been fully merged, 5 police forces had to submit two separate datasets: one containing record-level data relating to police use of force (excluding all or some police use of CED), and another containing separate, summary figures on CED use for the reporting year (i.e. in the format CED data was collected previously by Home Office). As such, the data presented in the release on the number of uses of CED in the year ending March 2019 could not always be linked to other incident information (e.g. subject details), as it was submitted in separate data returns.

Data quality issues – reasons, outcomes, impact factors

- **Incidents can involve multiple tactics, reasons for using force, impact factors and outcomes, and as such should not be interpreted as being directly linked or causal.** For instance, in an incident where restraint tactics were used and the outcome ‘hospitalisation’ was recorded, it does not follow that hospitalisation was caused by the use of restraint tactics, as other tactics may have been recorded in that incident which caused or contributed to the outcome. This also applies to reasons for using force and impact factors. See also the example below:

In an incident where ‘Spit and bite guard’ is a tactic used, and ‘Prevent escape’ is a reason for using force, this does not mean the officer used a spit or bite guard to prevent the subject from escaping, as other tactics/reasons may have been reported also.

Example: An officer uses handcuffs on a non-compliant subject, to prevent the subject escaping. The subject continues to behave aggressively and starts spitting at the officer. The officer places a spit and bite guard on the subject to protect themselves from any further spitting or biting.

The officer would complete a use of force report, listing 'Non-compliant handcuffing' and 'Spit and bite guard' as tactics, and 'Prevent escape' and 'Protect self' as the reasons for using force.

- **Not all recording systems allow officers to report multiple reasons, impact factors, and outcomes for an incident.** Only 4% of incidents reported multiple outcomes, whereas 81% of incidents reported multiple reasons for using force.
- **Impact factors may not apply in all use of force incidents.** However, some police forces' recording systems include impact factors as a mandatory field. As such, impact factors may be over-reported for some forces. Impact factors were reported in 92% of incidents.
- Around one in five incidents (19%) included the **outcome 'other'**, the majority of which listed 'other' as the only outcome. These could include instances where **a subject is cautioned, charged, restrained until they no longer pose a threat before being released, searched, released or de-arrested following further information, or transported home or into medical care.** However, the high reporting of 'other' for outcome may partially be as a result of incorrect categorisation of outcomes (i.e. outcomes mistakenly recorded under 'other' instead of under a specified outcome), or to provide further detail in instances where the outcome was more complex than the existing outcome categories.

Data quality issues – injuries and fatalities

- In addition to recording injury details, if the hospitalisation or death of a subject during an incident is caused by the reporting officers' use of force, officers should also record the outcomes 'hospitalisation' or 'fatality'.
- Data on injuries to the subject comes from two different parts of the use of force report – injuries (where the officer records whether the subject was injured, and to what level, as a result of use of force) and outcomes (where the officer reports whether hospitalisation or a fatality occurred).
- **Subject injuries, or the outcomes 'hospitalisation' and 'fatality' may be reported even when these outcomes were not caused by the officers' use of force.** This could be because the cause/level of the injury or cause of the outcome is unclear, e.g. in incidents where multiple officers were involved, or injuries were caused by other parties. This may account for many instances in the data where the outcome 'fatality' or 'hospitalisation' is recorded but the injury section of the report does not show the subject sustaining any injuries from the officers' use of force. This also means that **the number of incidents with the outcome 'fatality' may not reflect fatalities caused solely by police officers.**
- Injury information may also be contradictory because **accurately determining the severity of an injury may be difficult** for other reasons, such as the severity of an injury may be

affected by a pre-existing injury or medical issue, or it may be unclear from a visual/verbal assessment as to the severity of an injury.

- **Data on staff injuries include contradictory information;** for example, the officer did not report sustaining an injury but injury details were provided (e.g. the officer's injury was recorded as 'minor').
- **The injury and fatality incidents do not equate to individual subjects** This may also apply to incidents where officers reported the outcome as 'hospitalised' (i.e. multiple officers reporting the same hospitalisation).
- There were 4 incidents in which the injury level was recorded as 'death' and the outcome was recorded as 'fatality'. It should also be noted that officers are encouraged, for accuracy, to submit a use of force report as soon as possible after the incident. Therefore, any subject fatalities which occur after the 'incident', but are as a result of the force used during the incident, may not be recorded.
- It is possible that there is an **under-recording of fatalities in the police use of force dataset**. Although all police forces do keep records of all fatalities, a fatality caused by an officers' use of force may not have been recorded specifically on the police forces' use of force recording system. Where a fatality occurred and a use of force report was submitted, the officer involved may not have completed the report themselves (possibly due to welfare concerns i.e. they were involved in a traumatic incident). As such, these incidents often had little other information, as these reports were likely submitted by a third-party who was not present at the incident and could not provide more than the key information.
- Under the Police Reform Act 2002, forces in England and Wales have a statutory duty to refer to the Independent Office for Police Conduct's (IOPC) a death during or following police contact where there is an allegation or indication that police contact, directly or indirectly, contributed to the death. Therefore, **any deaths that occurred as a result of police use of force in the year ending March 2019 will form a subset of the deaths in the IOPC National Statistics [report](#)** which covers deaths during or following police contact in the same period. However, **it is not possible to ascertain which deaths occurred as a result of police use of force.**

Data quality issues – location

- **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 subject attempted to escape). However, some police forces' recording systems do not allow for multiple locations to be recorded for one incident. This may mean that officers may choose to record, for example, only the first location (where the incident began), or the primary location (where the majority of the incident took place). In instances where an officer uses force on the same individual in multiple locations, and most likely across an extended period of time, the officer may view parts of the event as separate incidents and record the details in separate reports.

Data quality issues – disability

- The term ‘disability’ refers to physical or mental disabilities. Use of force recording guidance provided by the NPCC states this includes, but is not limited to: sensory impairments; fluctuating or recurring impairments (e.g. epilepsy); developmental impairments (e.g. autistic spectrum disorders, or dyspraxia); learning disabilities; mental health conditions; and mental illness. However, we are aware some forces have included within this other mental or physical **conditions** such as diabetes.

Uses of the statistics

Due to the statistics being ‘experimental’ (newly developed) and subject to data quality issues, as discussed above, caution should be exercised when using the data.

These statistics should be used to give an initial indication of police use of force in England and Wales, which will become more accurate and reliable as the collection continues and recording practices become firmly established.

The data currently cannot be used for the following purposes:

- As a national picture of police use of force incidents, or to compare use of force across police forces, due to issues with consistent recording across forces and compliance (i.e. not all incidents were reported).
- To find out the number of unique events in which force was used – a single situation involving one officer and two subjects would result in two use of force reports being submitted (by the same officer), which means the incident would appear twice in the dataset.
- To find out the number of unique individuals upon which force was used – a single incident involving one subject and two officers, both of whom use force, would result in two use of force reports being submitted (one per officer), which means the subject would appear twice in the dataset.
- To ascertain details of a specific person/event – all subject details (age, gender, ethnicity, and disabilities) are reported as ‘perceived by the officer’, so should not be taken as ‘self reported’ by the subject; consequently, it is possible in some cases that multiple officers reporting the details of the same subject may report different subject details, due to their differing perceptions or judgement.
- In comparison with other, national figures (e.g. population figures), as the police use of force dataset is not representative of the total use of force across England and Wales in 2018-19, due to under-reporting. For the same reason, these figures cannot be used to provide an ‘average’ number of use of force incidents per day, for example.
- To compare CED use from April 2017 onwards to data on CED use recorded prior to April 2017 – the disruption caused by the transition for recording CED use through one system to another system (i.e. a wider use of force recording system) means that the data is not completely comparable.

- To determine direct links between tactics and the reasons they were used, the locations they were used in, or the outcome/injury resulting from the use of that tactic. This is because one use of force report can include multiple tactics, reasons for using force, locations, and outcomes. In these cases, a cause and effect relationship cannot be determined.

Please note that the above is not an exhaustive list.

Improvements to data quality

The 'Police use of force' collection is currently designated as Experimental Statistics, as it is newly established and subject to various data quality issues.

Statisticians in the Home Office will work with police forces and the NPCC to improve the quality of these statistics as the collection continues. This will include, for example, consulting individual police forces to address areas of their data collection to rectify errors or missing data. Home Office statisticians will also support the NPCC in exercises such as reviewing and updating the national guidance on police use of force data collection to ensure information is being recorded in a uniform manner across and within police forces.

One key area in which action will be taken to improve recording is that of fatalities. The NPCC will look to ensure that all fatalities occurring as a result of police use of force are recorded correctly on the use of force recording systems. This is in addition to the existing requirement under the [Police Reform Act 2002](#) for forces in England and Wales to refer to the IOPC a death during or following police contact where there is an allegation or indication that police contact, directly or indirectly, contributed to the death.

The second year of data collection was subject to under-recording of incidents, forces are encouraged to implement appropriate recording systems and practices to improve compliance

As the collection continues, Home Office statisticians will refine and add to the existing quality assurance checks. For example, from the second year of the collection onwards, year-on-year variance checks – such as those carried out for CED data, as described [earlier](#) – will be conducted on all data.

Improving the quality of the data and ensuring information is correctly recorded should allow further investigation of future years' data, as well as the potential to publish force level data in future. It may also be possible, for example, to review the order in which tactics were used, repeated use of tactics, and comparisons to existing data sources (e.g. population figures, demographics, crime statistics, etc).

4 Methodology

Rounding

Data are rounded in '[Police use of force statistics, England and Wales](#)' to simplify the presentation of the figures. However, all numeric and percentage calculations are based on unrounded data. Where data are rounded, they may not sum to the totals shown, or, in the case of percentages, to 100%, because they have been rounded independently.

The rounding conventions used in the release, unless otherwise stated, are as follows:

| Figure | Rounding convention |
|-----------------------------|--|
| Over 1 million | Presented as millions and rounded to two decimal places e.g. 2,121,582 = 2.12 million |
| 10,000 to 999,999 | Rounded to the nearest thousand e.g. 343,465 = 343,000 |
| 1,000 to 9,999 | Rounded to the nearest hundred e.g. 8,465 = 8,500 |
| 50 to 999 | Rounded to the nearest ten e.g. 147 = 150 |
| Less than 50 | Unrounded, whole numbers |
| Percentages greater than 1% | Rounded to the nearest percent e.g. 1.43% = 1% |
| Percentages less than 1% | Rounded to the nearest significant figure e.g. 0.43% = 0.4%, and 0.043% = 0.04% |

The figures in the [data tables](#) are unrounded to promote transparency and allow users to examine the data further. However, please note that the figures are subject to the inaccuracies inherent in any large-scale recording system, and, given the data quality issues detailed in the previous section, are not necessarily accurate to the last digit. Caution should be exercised when using these figures.

Revisions

The data in the '[Police use of force statistics, England and Wales](#)' collection may be revised in future years. It is standard practice across all Home Office statistical releases to incorporate revisions to previous years' data in the latest release. Corrections and revisions follow the Home Office's statement of compliance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics³.

³ See: [specifically, revisions and corrections section](#).

5 Tactics glossary

This section lists all the tactics that are collected in '[Police use of force statistics, England and Wales](#)'. To ensure all use of force is captured, it includes a category of 'Other/improvised'.

Further information relating to the tactics and equipment listed above can be found through the College of Policing [Authorised Professional Practice website](#)

Attenuating energy projectile (AEP)

An AEP is a soft nosed impact projectile fired from a single shot launcher. AEP is a form of less lethal weapon only available for use by specially trained officers, to give them (including those armed with conventional firearms) an additional means of dealing with threats of serious violence. It delivers an impact that is not intended to cause serious or life-threatening injury, but is of sufficient force to dissuade or prevent a violent or potentially violent person from their intended course of action, thereby reducing the threat. Police officers must record both when an AEP is aimed (even if not subsequently fired), and when fired.

Baton

A baton is a static or expandable stick. Batons can be used by appropriately trained officers to protect themselves or others, to demonstrate that force is about to be used (or may be used), and to facilitate dispersal and/or arrest. Frontline officers routinely carry a baton, and must record both when a baton is drawn (even if not subsequently used), and when used.

Conducted energy device (CED)

A CED (i.e. a TASER[®] X26 or TASER[®] X2) is a less lethal weapon system authorised for use by specially trained officers only. This is one of a number of tactical options available when dealing with an incident with the potential for conflict. When fired, it is designed to temporarily incapacitate a subject through the delivery of an electrical current which temporarily interferes with the body's neuromuscular system.

The different possible uses of CEDs are as follows:

| Non-discharge | |
|---------------|---|
| Drawn | Drawing of the device in circumstances where any person could reasonably perceive the action to be a use of force. |
| Aimed | Deliberate aiming of the device at a targeted subject. |
| Red-dot | The device is deliberately aimed and then partially activated so that a red laser dot is placed onto the subject. The device is not discharged. |
| Arced | Sparking of the device without aiming or firing it. |

| Discharge | |
|-------------------|---|
| Drive-stun | The device is held against the subject's body and the trigger is pulled with no probes being fired. Contact with the subject completes the electrical circuit which causes pain but does not deliver an incapacitating effect. |
| Fired | The device is fired with a live cartridge installed. When the trigger is pulled, the probes are fired towards the subject with the intention of completing an electrical circuit and delivering an incapacitating effect. |
| Angled drive-stun | The officer fires the device with a live cartridge installed. One or both probes may attach to the subject. The officer then holds the device against the subject's body in a different area to the probe(s), in order to complete the electrical circuit and deliver an incapacitating effect. |

These statistics present the 'highest' use of CED from each incident. For example, if a CED is drawn, aimed, red-dotted, and then fired, this use will appear under 'Fired' only.

The approved CEDs for use by officers in England and Wales are the TASER® X26 and TASER® X2, manufactured by Axon Enterprise.

Dog deployment

Police officers may use specially trained dogs in certain situations, for example to pursue a suspect who is attempting to evade officers. Police officers must record when a dog is deployed, as well as if the dog comes in to physical contact with (i.e. bites) an individual.

Firearms

The use of firearms by specially trained armed officers can sometimes be the most appropriate way of dealing with a violent situation. An officer carrying a firearm, or the presence of an armed officer, does not in itself constitute a use of force. The 'use' of a firearm does not necessarily mean the firearm was discharged (fired); the act of an officer drawing or deliberately pointing the firearm at another person may de-escalate a situation, meaning it is not necessary for the officer to fire the weapon.

Ground restraint

This refers to when a police officer restrains a subject on the ground. This does not include other tactics used to restrain individuals (not on the ground), which should be recorded in these statistics under 'Unarmed skills' if no specific restraint equipment was used. If an officer restrained an individual on the ground and then used specific limb/body restraint equipment, then 'Limb/body restraints' would also be reported as a tactic for that incident.

Handcuffing (compliant and non-compliant)

Frontline officers routinely carry handcuffs. Officers must record whether the handcuffing of an individual was compliant (i.e. the individual does not resist and follows requests) or non-compliant.

Irritant spray (CS and PAVA)

There are two different types of sensory irritant spray currently in use by police forces in England and Wales: CS and PAVA. Both types can be drawn and/or used (sprayed) during an incident. Frontline police officers routinely carry an irritant spray and must record both when an irritant spray is drawn (even if not subsequently used), and when used.

See [here](#) for a Home Office report comparing CS and PAVA sprays.

Limb/Body restraints

This refers to the use of specialist equipment to reduce the movement of arms and legs. This tactic does not cover when a police officer restrains a subject without using equipment (which may be recorded in these statistics as 'Unarmed skills' or 'Ground restraint', depending on how the individual was restrained).

Other/improvised

When an officer used tactics which are not otherwise listed, they record the tactic as 'Other/improvised'. These tactics may include the use of horses or vehicles, for example.

Shield

A shield may be used by an officer to protect themselves and others, and potentially to strike an individual.

Spit and bite guard

A spit and bite guard may be used by an officer to provide protection from spitting and reduce the worst effects of biting, as well as reducing the need for the officer to resort to other, potentially more injurious, forms of physical restraint.

Tactical communication

Tactical communication refers to an officer speaking to an individual, which includes the officer issuing orders such as asking them to move or stop/change their actions. A situation in which an officer used only tactical communication would not be recorded as a use of force incident. Tactical communication is only recorded when a use of force tactic has also been used by the officer as part of the same incident; for example, tactical communication followed by the use of a baton.

Tactical communication is not a use of force per se, this data is being collected to develop a better understanding of how it is used alongside other tactics in conflict management and resolution.

Unarmed skills

This tactic refers to physical contact, which can include: pushing; pulling; the use of pressure points; and knee, foot or hand strikes. This does not include police officers restraining a subject (which is recorded as 'Ground restraint' or 'Limb/Body restraints').

6 Related statistics and reports

Forthcoming publications for '[Police use of force statistics, England and Wales](#)' will be pre-announced on the [GOV.UK website](#).

Police force publications

Many police forces also publish their own use of force data on their respective websites.

These local publications may include additional information beyond what is included in the ADR and may not be comparable between all forces as a result of different information collected and different publication formats. Furthermore, due to data checks carried out by Home Office statisticians, there may be some discrepancies between the locally published police force data and the Home Office statistical publication.

The NPCC published a list of all available Use of Force publications from police forces [here](#). This list also includes use of force data from the British Transport Police and the Police Service of Northern Ireland, which are not included in the Home Office statistical publication on police use of force.

International comparisons

[New Zealand](#) has a national recording system for events in which tactical options were used: The [United States of America](#) does not have a national mandatory recording system, but select reports and reviews are available through the Bureau of Justice Statistics.

Canada has federal and provincial policing regulations which require reporting on use of force incidents, but reporting is not consistent across the country. Further information can be found in the [Public Safety Canada report](#).

Data for police use of CED prior to 2017-18

Statistics on police use of CED (i.e. TASER®) were previously collected on a calendar year basis by the Home Office until 2016 (inclusive). These statistics, for the years 2009 to 2016, can be found on [GOV.UK](#). These statistics do not include the use of TASER® X2 as the X2 model was not used in operational policing in England and Wales until after April 2017.

From April 2017, CED data has been collected on a financial year basis (April to March), for inclusion in the police use of force statistical collection. To bridge the gap between the 2016 collection and the 2017-18 collection, the Home Office collected police use of CED data for January to March 2017, and included it in [table 14](#) for 'Police use of force statistics, England and Wales, April 2017 to March 2018'. Revisions to the 2016 CED data can be found in [table 15](#) for 'Police use of force statistics, England and Wales, April 2017 to March 2018'.

Comparisons between historical CED figures to the data on police use of CED from April 2017 onwards is possible but may not represent to full CED use. For more information, see the [Data quality](#) section of this user guide.

Further statistics on police use of firearms

The Home Office separately publishes annual figures for each police force in England and Wales on firearms use, including the number of firearms operations, the number of armed officers and the number of incidents where police firearms were discharged.

Official Statistics on [police use of firearms](#) can be found on GOV.UK.

Statistics on the number of police officers assaulted

This collection includes figures on officer injuries, which include whether the injury was as a result of intentional assault by the subject. Statistics on [assaults](#) are available as part of the Home Office '[Police workforce](#)' statistical collection. Due to data quality concerns and differing sources/collection methods, these figures are not currently comparable to the number of incidents where officers were intentionally assaulted in this release.

HMICFRS PEEL: Police legitimacy report

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) publishes legitimacy reports on their inspections of police forces, focusing on whether forces treat people with fairness and respect, and ensure their workforces act ethically and lawfully. The [PEEL legitimacy report](#) published in December 2017 contains a section on police use of force.