

# Polish Police in the Era of the Contemporary Means of Direct Coercion

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**Abstract.** *The aim of this article is to show the importance of means of direct coercion in the era of modern threats. Undoubtedly, an important role in this regard is played by the Police, as a body established to ensure security and public order. It is the responsibility of police officers, both in Poland and in other countries, to take care of the safety of citizens. Therefore, police officers should be prepared in an appropriate way, through the training process, to take up actions, including dangerous ones. It is also essential that these people are adequately equipped with 'tools' to enable them to be safe both personally and in relation to the people they take action against. The means of physical coercion that are available to police officers undoubtedly fulfil this role. The following article presents the results of research conducted among police officers in Poland within the framework of a research task financed by the Ministry of Science and Higher Education within the framework of statutory activity. The aim of the research was to determine, among other things, which of the individual means of direct coercion available to police officers in the course of their official duties is in their opinion the most useful, and at the same time allows them to maintain safety during official interventions. The respondents clearly assessed that this was the electric taser, i.e. the latest means of direct coercion introduced for the use of the Polish Police in 2007. However, it is only from 2013 that the electric taser, in the form of three models — the Taser X26, Taser X2, and Taser X26P — has been widely introduced into this uniformed formation.*

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## Introduction

The police were appointed to perform the tasks specified by the law in the state. These tasks were defined in various legal acts, mainly in the Act on the Police<sup>1</sup>. Their implementation would not be possible without equipping the Police with legal powers to perform them with specific means. Article 1(1) of the Act on the Police states that the Police is a uniformed and armed formation serving the society and designed to protect the safety of persons and to maintain safety and public order. This means that the activities of the Police are assessed from the point of view of the protection of life and health of individuals and their property. The Police consists of the following types of services: forensic, investigative, internal affairs, preventive, and supporting the activities of the Police in organisational, logistic and technical terms. It also includes the judicial police and the Police Academy, training centres and police schools, separate riot and counter-terrorist units, as well as research institutes<sup>2</sup>. The above division enables structural assignment of the penal prosecution function to the forensic service, the protection and order function to the prevention

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<sup>1</sup> Ustawa o Policji z dnia 6 kwietnia 1990. Dz. U. 2020, item 360.

<sup>2</sup> Art. 4 ustawy z 6 kwietnia 1990 r. o Policji, (further: Ustawa z 6 kwietnia 1990 o Policji).

service<sup>3</sup>. Within the limits of its tasks, the Police performs the following activities: operational and reconnaissance, investigation and prosecution, and administrative.

It follows from the essence of the means of direct coercion that their use or exploitation involves interference in the sphere of constitutionally guaranteed freedoms and rights. However, the task of a democratic state governed by the rule of law is to ensure security and public order even at the cost of restricting certain rights and freedoms. It should be noted that the Police is the largest uniformed unit operating in Poland. The employment rate amounts to 98737 police officers. Taking into account the fact that the officers belong to particular services, the largest group are the police officers of the preventive service (61,631 officers). The second largest group in terms of size are the police officers of the forensic service (29667 officers). However, only 1848 police officers belong to the investigative service. The support service includes 2867 officers<sup>4</sup> (the figures do not include managerial staff).

It is a truism to say that to carry out various tasks, appropriate forces and resources are needed. The police have been equipped with appropriate means of physical coercion, but the mere possession of such means does not yet ensure the security of the society. Police officers must both improve their knowledge of the regulations concerning the means of direct coercion possessed by them, and be able to use them skillfully.

The importance of means of direct coercion has been evaluated over the years. Legislative provisions in force in this respect were introduced on May 24, 2013<sup>5</sup>. An earlier legal act regulating the use of means of direct coercion was the Regulation of the Council of Ministers of September 17, 1990 determining the cases, conditions and methods of using means of direct coercion by police officers<sup>6</sup>. Due to incompatibilities with the constitutional provisions, the provisions contained therein required comprehensive and detailed regulation at the level of the Act.

## Methods

The units to be sampled were selected randomly within a framework based on the criteria adopted, as this ensures that a representative sample is obtained.

The criterion for the selection of the sample in the study was professional belonging and the nature of the activities performed. Due to the specific nature of the issues involved in this research, it has been assumed that the target group will consist exclusively of police officers authorised to use the equipment during their official tasks. This had an impact on the assessment of the means of direct coercion available in the equipment during the performance of official tasks.

<sup>3</sup> Zaborowski J, Rozważania nad przyszłością Milicji Obywatelskiej, [in:] Walichnowski T (Ed.), Kierunki możliwych zmian i reform w resorcie spraw wewnętrznych w aktualnej i przewidywanej rzeczywistości społeczno-politycznej w Polsce. Warsaw 1989, p. 41.

<sup>4</sup> *Electronic source*: <http://www.info.policja.pl/inf/organizacja/stan-zatrudnienia/120032,Stan-zatrudnienia-na-dzien-1-stycznia-2018-r.html>, accessed: 16.07.2018.

<sup>5</sup> Ustawa z 24 maja 2013 o środkach przymusu bezpośredniego i broni palnej. Dz. U. 2019, item 2418 (further: Ustawa z 24 maja 2013 o środkach przymusu bezpośredniego i broni palnej).

<sup>6</sup> Rozporządzenie Rady Ministrów z 17 września 1990 r. w sprawie określenia przypadków oraz warunków i sposobów użycia przez policjantów środków przymusu bezpośredniego. Dz. U. 1990, No. 70, item 410, as amended. (archive act).

Variables such as the place of service, and the category of a unit were taken into account in the selection of the sample. A representative sample of all police officers using electric tasers was selected, specifying the number and type of units, as well as the quantitative composition of the respondents. The quantitative selection of the research sample, in order to select an appropriate group of respondents constituting the sampling frame, was based on the data available to the Prevention and Traffic Office of the Police Headquarters<sup>7</sup> (letters ref. no. EP-3229/2015 of 16 November 2015, ref. no. EP-773/16 of 29 November 2016). This data made it possible to assume that the actual number of police officers having user rights with respect to the use of electric tasers, employed both in the structures of regional, municipal (county) police headquarters, and police stations, and in the Warsaw Metropolitan Police Headquarters is 4200. Knowing that the size of the general population was 4200 police officers, with a confidence level of 0.95 and an estimated fraction size of 0.5, a sample size of 352 and a maximum error of 0.05 were calculated. Therefore, it was assumed that 372 questionnaires would be sent to police units. For a test size of 372, the maximum error shall be reduced to 0.049.

The questionnaire used to survey officers of the police (and other selected services) consisted of a main part (core questions) and a statistical part. The main part contained 27 questions, while the statistical part contained 5 questions. Some of the questions (12) were semi-open, i.e. apart from the list of possible answers, the respondent could propose their own, and thus express their own opinion. Such data make it possible to carry out not only statistical, but also qualitative analyses. The remaining 15 questions were of a closed nature. These were questions of choice, categorised, with a multi-part alternative. These questions were supplemented by lists of answers for to choose from. Due to the multi-faceted nature of the examined phenomenon, the survey also included questions that anticipated the possibility of selecting more than one answer, i.e. equivocal questions. The questions specified the request for choice and the claim for completeness, i.e. an indication of how many answers the respondent should indicate for their answer to be considered complete<sup>8</sup>.

The statistical analysis of the research results was performed using the IBM SPSS Statistics software. For this purpose, the following tests and statistical coefficients were used:

- the Chi-2 test was used to check whether there is a statistically significant link between nominal variables, or between nominal (dependent) and ordinal (independent) variables; in the tables, N — numbers, % — percentages, and on graphs — % are given, and in relation to the test results: Chi-2 — Chi-2 test statistic and the key value 'p'; if  $p < 0.05$ , then the relationship is statistically significant (\*), if  $p < 0.01$ , then the relationship is statistically highly significant (\*\*);
- the Spearman rho correlation factor was used to check if there are statistically significant correlations between the ordinal variables; statistically significant results at the level of  $p < 0.01$  were marked with \*\* and statistically

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<sup>7</sup> Currently, the name of the Prevention Office of the Police Headquarters is in use.

<sup>8</sup> Data obtained within the framework of the conducted research task financed from the funds of the Ministry of Science and Higher Education allocated for the implementation of the research task entitled 'Electric taser as a means of direct coercion used by police officers' as part of statutory activity.

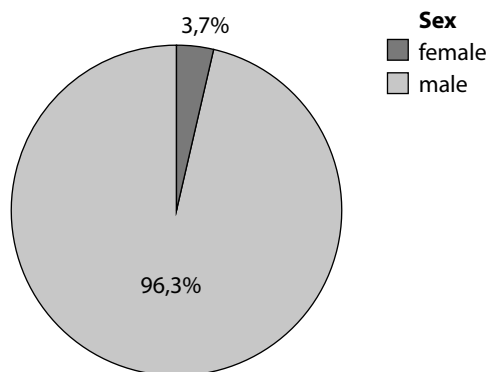
- significant results at the level of  $p < 0.05$  were marked with \*; if the correlation is statistically significant, the factor in the table should be interpreted; it can range from -1 to 1; the further it is from 0, the stronger the correlation is; positive values mean that as the value of one variable increases, the value of the other variable increases, and negative values mean that as the value of one variable increases, the value of the other variable decreases;
- the Mann-Whitney U-test was used to check if there is a statistically significant difference in respect of ordinal variables between the two groups; in the tables, M — arithmetic mean, Me — median, SD — standard deviation, Z — test statistic, and key value 'p' — significance of the test are given; statistically significant differences at the level of  $p < 0.05$  were marked with \* and statistically significant differences at the level of  $p < 0.01$  were marked with \*\*;
  - the Kruskal-Wallis test was used to check whether there is a statistically significant difference with respect to ordinal variables between more than two groups; in the tables, M — arithmetic mean, Me — median, SD — standard deviation, H — test value, and key value 'p' — significance of the test are given; statistically significant differences at the level of  $p < 0.05$  were marked with \* and statistically significant differences at the level of  $p < 0.01$  were marked with \*\*; averages of groups significantly different from each other were marked with the same editorial standard, e.g. underlining, bold or italic.

As a result, findings were obtained from 409 police officers, because so many questionnaires were returned to the researcher. This is a result of changes that have occurred since the time of preparing the statistical data on electric tasers remaining at the police officers' disposal and the actual state of their disposal as at the date of conducting the research, as well as staff changes.

## Results

The vast majority of respondents (96.3%) were men. Women constitute the remaining 3.7% of the surveyed group. This is illustrated on Figure 1.

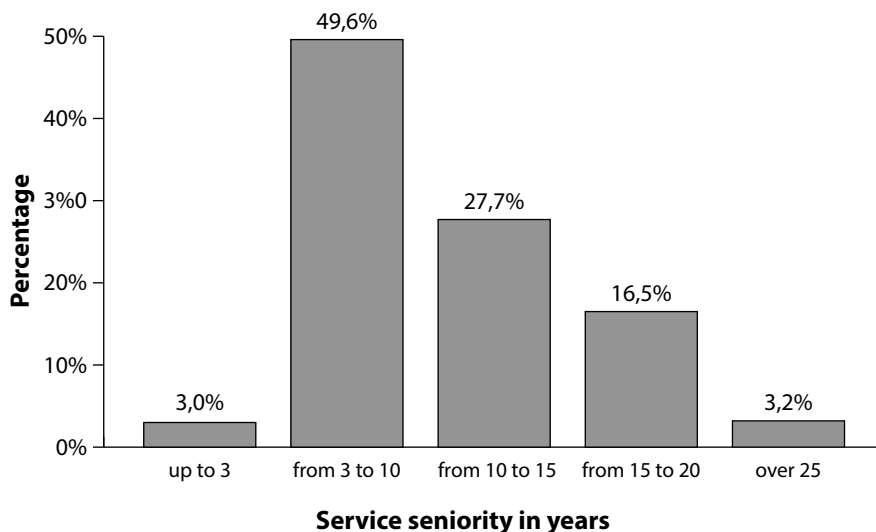
**Figure 1. Sex of taser users**



Source: own elaboration

Nearly half of the respondents (49.6%) were serving in the Police for 3 to 10 years, 27.7% of respondents were serving in the Police for 10 to 15 years, and 16.5% for 15 to 20 years. Definitely the least numerous group were persons with the shortest — up to 3 years (3%), and the longest — over 25 years (3.2%) in-service experience. Categories of seniority in service are illustrated on Figure 2.

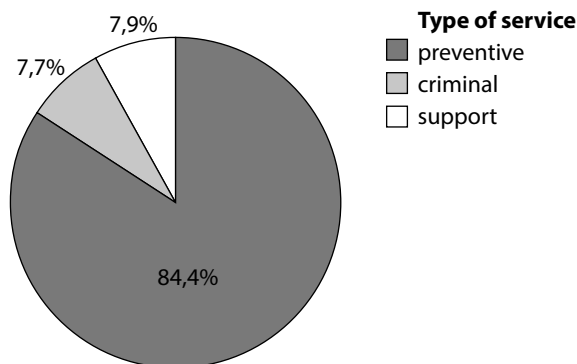
**Figure 2. Categories of seniority in service in years**



Source: own elaboration

The vast majority of respondents (84.4%) perform preventive services. Only 7.9% are people performing support service, and 7.7% criminal service. The type of service performed by users is presented on Figure 3.

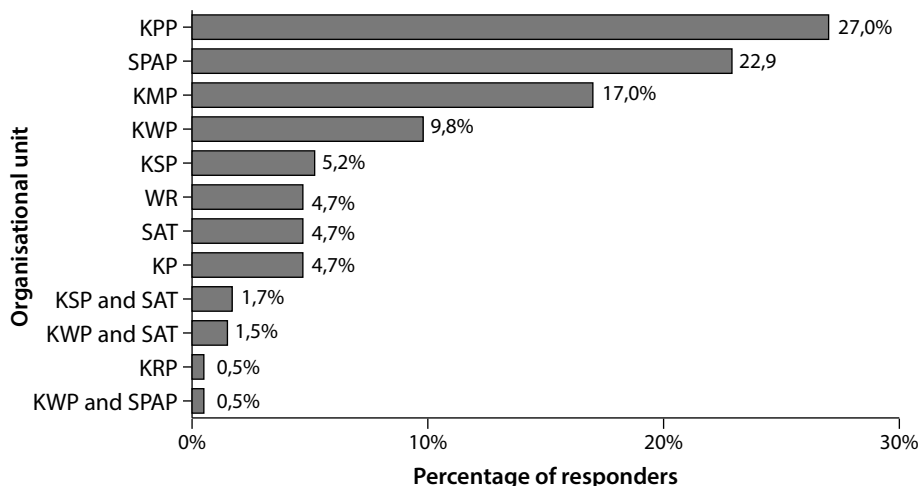
**Figure 3. The type of service performed by users**



Source: own elaboration

The largest number of respondents (27%) serve in county police headquarters. A less numerous group are persons serving in independent counter-terrorist police squads (22.9%), municipal police headquarters (17%), and regional police headquarters (9.8%). The remaining organisational units are represented by a maximum of 5% of the surveyed persons (Figure 4).

**Figure 4. Users' organisational units**



*Legend:*

- KPP County Police Headquarters
- SPAP Independent Counter-Terrorist Police Squad
- KMP Municipal Police Headquarters
- KWP Regional Police Headquarters
- KSP Warsaw Metropolitan Police Headquarters
- WR Arrest Team
- SAT Counter-Terrorist Section
- KP Police Station
- KRP District Police Headquarters

Source: own elaboration

The legal basis for the use of means of direct coercion is a set of regulations that give the Police the right to use specific types of means. These regulations also specify detailed cases and procedures of using the abovementioned means<sup>9</sup>.

In accordance with Article 16 of the Act on the Police, which refers to means of direct coercion by referring to the Act of 24 May 2013 on means of direct coercion and firearms, a catalogue of means that may be used by a police officer is available. However, in order to ensure the security of citizens and to take appropriate actions, the resources available to the police officer while performing their official duties are essential.

<sup>9</sup> Plumbaum K, Przedmioty przeznaczone do obezwładniania osób za pomocą energii elektrycznej. Słupsk, 2015, p. 9.

In accordance with Article 16(1) of the Act of 6 April 1990 on the Police<sup>10</sup>, when it may be necessary to take one or more of the following actions:

- enforcing legally required behaviour in accordance with an order issued by the entitled person,
- defending against direct and unlawful assault against the life, health, or freedom of the entitled person or other person,
- counteracting actions aiming directly at an attack on the life, health, or freedom of the entitled or other person,
- counteracting a violation of public order or public security,
- counteracting a direct assault on protected areas, facilities or devices,
- protecting order or security in areas or facilities protected by the entitled person,
- counteracting the damaging of possessions,
- ensuring the safety of the convoy or escort of persons,
- capturing a person, preventing their escape, or chasing after that person,
- detaining a person, preventing their escape, or chasing after that person,
- overcoming passive resistance,
- overcoming active resistance,
- counteracting actions aimed at self-harm.

Police officers may use<sup>11</sup> the following means of direct coercion<sup>12</sup>:

- 1) physical force in the form of the following techniques:
  - transport,
  - defence,
  - attack,
  - incapacitation.
- 2) handcuffs:
  - put on hands,
  - put on feet,
  - cuffs for hands and feet.
- 3) straitjacket,
- 4) body belt,
- 5) restraining net,
- 6) protective helmet,
- 7) truncheon,
- 8) liquid incapacitating agents,
- 9) police dog,
- 10) police horse,
- 11) non-explosive bullets,
- 12) chemical incapacitating agents in the form of:
  - hand-held throwers of incapacitating substances,
  - backpack throwers of incapacitating substances,
  - tear grenades,
  - other devices intended for expelling incapacitating agents.

<sup>10</sup> Ustawa z 6 kwietnia 1990 o Policji.

<sup>11</sup> Art. 11 pkt 1–6 i 8–14 Ustawy z 24 maja 2013 r. o środkach przymusu bezpośredniego i broni palnej.

<sup>12</sup> Art. 12 pkt 1–13 i 17–20 Ustawy z 24 maja 2013 r. o środkach przymusu bezpośredniego i broni palnej.

- 13) devices intended to incapacitate persons by means of electrical energy,
- 14) road spikes and other means used to stop and immobilise motor vehicles,
- 15) duty vehicles,
- 16) means intended to overcome building closures and other obstacles, including explosives,
- 17) pyrotechnic agents with a deafening or dazzling effect.

Taking into account such a wide range of means of direct coercion, the respondents were asked which means of direct coercion in their opinion performs its function best in the course of their duty tasks.

**Table 1. Assessment of the usefulness of particular means of direct coercion**

Means of direct coercion	M	Me	Mo	SD
electric taser	1.92	2	1	0.84
hand-held thrower of incapacitating substances	2.47	3	3	0.77
handcuffs	2.47	3	3	0.77
firearms	2.66	3	3	0.68
truncheon	2.89	3	3	0.41

Source: own elaboration

The respondents evaluated the usefulness of particular means of direct coercion, indicating one that performs its function very well during the performance of duty tasks (score 1) and one that is good during the performance of duty tasks (score 2). The remaining ones were assigned a score of 3 by default. On this basis, M — arithmetic means, Me — medians, Mo — modal values, SD — standard deviations for each means of direct coercion were calculated. The lower the arithmetic mean, the median (the value dividing the group into two halves) and the modal (the value appearing most often), the more useful the means is.

As shown in Table 1, according to the respondents, the most useful means is an electric taser. Much lower scores were given for hand throwers of incapacitating substances, handcuffs, and firearms, and the lowest scores for service truncheons.

Means of direct coercion are characterised by an orderly and preventive character. They cannot be seen from the point of view of repression, because they are not, by their very nature, synonymous with punishment, and do not punish the person to whom they have been applied. It should be noted that these means lead to the imposition of a specific procedure that will comply with the law and to the subordination of the entity<sup>13</sup>.

A condition for applying or using a given means of direct coercion is that there is a precondition for its application, including the entity's possession of statutory rights and the use of the most lenient means possible<sup>14</sup>. The necessary precondition for the correct application of a means is to ensure that there is no material

<sup>13</sup> Stefański R, Środki przymusu bezpośredniego. Wybrane zagadnienia. Słupsk, 2012, p. 8.

<sup>14</sup> Ławrynowicz-Mikłaszewicz M, Istota środków przymusu bezpośredniego. *Policja*, 2014, No. 2, p. 22.



or personal prohibition to use or exploit it<sup>15</sup>, and that the proceedings are in accordance with the procedure adopted before and after the use of means of direct coercion. It follows from the above considerations that these means may be used after a person has been unsuccessfully summoned to behave in accordance with the law and after informing the person about the intention to use them. However, it should be noted that a person entitled to use a means of direct coercion may omit a summon and a warning in a situation where there is a direct threat to life, health, or freedom of the entitled person or another person, or where a delay would threaten to endanger the good protected by law, and the means of direct coercion are used in a preventive manner<sup>16</sup>. An important legal aspect is that the legislator has provided that more than one means of direct coercion may be used or applied simultaneously if the circumstances of a specific event so require<sup>17</sup>. However, it should be remembered that the decision to use a means of direct coercion can undoubtedly not be influenced by nervous stimulation or immediate impulse caused by the behaviour of the person committing a crime or an offence. In such a case, even the existence of a legal basis in a specific case does not always determine the advisability and the real need to use it<sup>18</sup>.

One of the means of direct coercion defined by the legislator in Article 12 of the Act on means of direct coercion and firearms is an item intended to incapacitate persons by using electric energy, commonly referred to as electric taser. In the opinion of the respondents, this means is the most useful during the performance of their duties. In accordance with the provisions of article 25(1) of the Act, items intended to incapacitate persons by means of electrical energy may be used or applied by police officers, if necessary, to take one or more of the following actions<sup>19</sup>:

- defending against direct and unlawful assault against the life, health, or freedom of the police officer or other person,
- counteracting actions aiming directly at an attack on the life, health, or freedom of the police officer or other person,
- counteracting a direct assault on areas, facilities or devices protected by a police officer,
- counteracting the damaging of possessions,
- ensuring the safety of the convoy or escort of persons,
- capturing a person, preventing his or her escape, or chasing after that person,
- detaining a person, preventing his or her escape, or chasing after that person,
- overcoming active resistance.

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<sup>15</sup> Article 3 of the Act on means of direct coercion and firearms contains only material prohibitions to which the provisions of the Act do not apply. Article 9(1) sets out personal exceptions to which means of direct coercion or firearms are applied in accordance with strict rules (for women with a visible pregnancy; for persons whose appearance indicates an age of up to 13 years, and for persons with visible disabilities; the person entitled may use only physical force in the form of incapacitation techniques).

<sup>16</sup> Piąt W, O ustawie o środkach przymusu bezpośredniego i broni palnej jeszcze kilka słów. *Przegląd Policyny*, 2014, No. 2, p. 134.

<sup>17</sup> Art. 8 ustawy z 24 maja 2013 r. o środkach przymusu bezpośredniego i broni palnej.

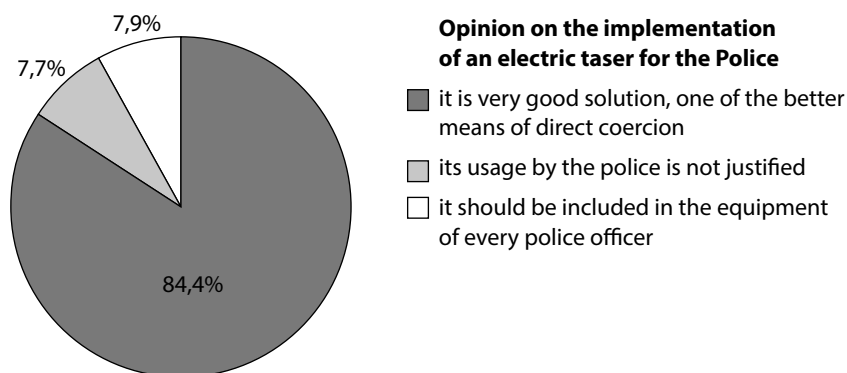
<sup>18</sup> Peplowski J, Środki przymusu bezpośredniego. Legionowo, 1989, p. 6.

<sup>19</sup> See art. 11, pkt 2, 3, 5, 7–11 i 13 Ustawy z 24 maja 2013 o środkach przymusu bezpośredniego i broni palnej.

In addition, items intended to incapacitate persons by means of electric energy shall be used to incapacitate a person for a short time, or shall be used to incapacitate an animal for a short time where the use of other means of direct coercion is impossible or likely to be ineffective. It should be noted that electric tasers are not used on persons for whom handcuffs, a straitjacket, an incapacitating belt, or an incapacitating net have been used. When using items designed to incapacitate persons with electric energy, the head is not targeted.

Undoubtedly, an electric taser is currently the newest means of direct coercion introduced into the police weaponry. It perfectly bridges the gap between existing means of direct coercion and firearms, significantly improving not only the efficiency of performed actions, but also the safety of the intervening police officers. However, it must be remembered that an electric taser is only a device used by a human being<sup>20</sup>.

**Figure 5. Opinion on the implementation of an electric taser for the Police**



Source: own elaboration

More than half of the respondents (62.8%) believe that the implementation of an electric taser for the use of the Police is a very good solution. On the other hand, 36.7% believe that a taser should be included in the equipment of every police officer, and only 0.5% claim that a taser is not justified in the activities of the police.

In connection with the use of electric tasers by the Polish Police, it is impossible to not mention the advantages of such devices over other means of direct coercion, which include:

- the ability to incapacitate an attacker from a safe distance while reducing the likelihood of causing serious injury or death to the person to whom the device is applied,
- the possibility of reducing the need for the use of more severe means of direct coercion (e.g. the use of firearms<sup>21</sup>),

<sup>20</sup> Zubrzycki W, Truchan J, Elementy taktyki i techniki posługiwania się paralizatorem elektrycznym Taser X26. *Policja*, 2008, No. 2, p. 34.

<sup>21</sup> The use of firearms shall be understood as shooting at a person using penetrating ammunition. Art. 7 ustawy z 24 maja 2013 r. o środkach przymusu bezpośredniego i broni palnej. The use of service weapons by police officers in: 2010 — 224, 2011 — 140, 2012 — 134. This

- reduction of injuries suffered by officers during interventions,
- reduction of costs resulting from accusations of misuses.

At this point one can risk a claim that the abovementioned advantages of electric tasers indicate a significant role of this device as a means of direct coercion in the equipment of police officers. The device provides physical protection by maintaining a distance to the opponent, which is not provided by other means except firearms. However, the decision to choose the use of a firearm or electric taser against the attacker should be made by the police officer in favour of the less severe means, i.e. an electric taser.

**Table 2. Assessment of the advantages of an electric taser in relation to other means of direct coercion**

<b>What are the advantages of an electric taser in relation to other means of direct coercion?</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>Me</b>	<b>Mo</b>	<b>SD</b>
possibility of incapacitating the attacker from a safe distance	3.35	4	4	0.91
the possibility of reducing the need for the use of more severe means of direct coercion, e.g. the use of firearms	3.23	4	4	1.04
reduction of injuries suffered by officers during interventions	2.85	3	3	1.06
reduction of costs resulting from accusations of misuses	2.10	2	1	1.08

Source: own elaboration

The respondents evaluated the advantages of an electric taser in relation to other means of direct coercion on a scale of 1–4, where: 1 — definitely not, 2 — no, 3 — yes, 4 — definitely yes. On this basis, the M — arithmetic means, Me — medians, Mo — modal values, SD — standard deviation for every advantage were calculated. The higher the arithmetic mean, the median (the value dividing the group into two halves), and the modal (the value appearing most often), the more important the advantage is.

As illustrated in Table 2, according to the respondents, the two most important advantages over other means of direct coercion are the possibility to incapacitate an attacker from a safe distance, and the possibility to reduce the need for the use of more severe means of direct coercion, e.g. the use of firearms. It is also quite important to reduce the injuries suffered by officers during intervention, while the least significant reduction in costs resulting from accusations of misuses.

is the total number of cases of justified use of weapons. Since 2013, the method of qualification of service weapons events has changed. In 2013, there were 29 cases of the use of service weapons, and 117 cases of the exploitation of service weapons. In 2014, there were 25 cases of the use of service weapons and 115 cases of the exploitation of service weapons, in 2015, 18 cases of use of service weapons occurred, as in 2017. In 2016, there were 24 such incidents. *Electronic source:* <http://statystyka.policja.pl/st/wybrane-statystyki/bron/bron-uzycie-przez-poli/51797,Uzycie-broni-sluzbowej-przez-policjantow.html>, accessed: 31.07.2018. It should be noted that the use of firearms can result in the death of a person or permanent disability. On the other hand, the use of a direct coercive means should be understood as the application of a direct coercive means (specified in Article 12 of the Act) against a person.

**Table 3. Assessment of the advantages of an electric taser in relation to firearms**

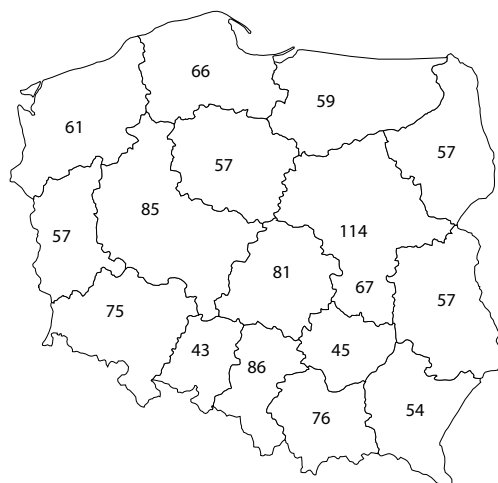
What are the advantages of electric tasers in relation to firearms?	M	Me	Mo	SD
a reduction in the likelihood of causing serious injury or death to the person on whom the device was used	3.42	4	4	0.92
can be used indoors without fear of causing gunshot wounds or accidental death of a random person	3.02	3	4	1.15
a firm and quick reaction of the use (application) in an emergency situation without worrying about the health condition of the person on whom the device is used (applied)	2.89	3	3	1.06
further consequences in terms of service and law related to the use (application) of an electric taser	2.31	2	1	1.14

Source: own elaboration

According to the respondents, the most important advantage in relation to firearms is the reduction of the probability of causing serious injury or death to the person on whom the device was used. It is also quite important to be able to use the device indoors without fear of causing a gunshot wound to, or the accidental death of a person, and to react quickly and firmly to the use (application) in an emergency situation without worrying about the health condition of the person on whom the device is applied. However, further consequences in terms of the service and law related to the use (application) of an electric taser are the least important.

At this point, it is impossible not to mention the number of electric tasers available. In 2017, the Polish Police had 1230 electric tasers.

**Picture 1. The number of devices intended to incapacitate persons with the use of electric energy in particular Regional Police Headquarters and Warsaw Metropolitan Police Headquarters in 2017.**



Source: own elaboration based on letter No. EP-554/2018 of 31 January 2018 from the Preventive Bureau of the National Police Headquarters concerning information on the use (application) of electric tasers in 2017.

The equipment of the largest uniformed formation in Poland includes three types of electric tasers: Taser X26, Taser X26P and Taser X2<sup>22</sup>.

**Photo 1. The electric tasers that are included in the Police equipment (Taser X26, Taser X26P, and Taser X2).**

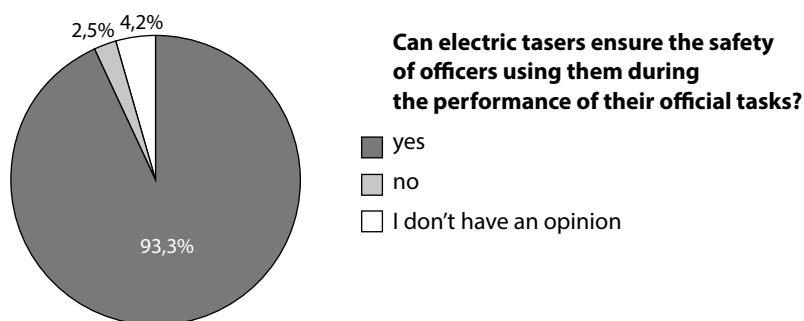


Source: author's archive.

## Conclusion

Means of direct coercion affect the proper functioning of officers of many services in society due to their purpose. In order to ensure the security of citizens, and to protect security and public order, these means must be applied within the limits of the powers and laws required. In the case of the individual equipment of police officers, the type and number of means of direct coercion depend, among other things, on the type of tasks they are assigned to perform, and the circumstances in which they will carry them out<sup>23</sup>.

**Figure 6. Opinion on whether electric tasers are sufficient to ensure the safety of officers using them while performing their official tasks**



Source: own elaboration

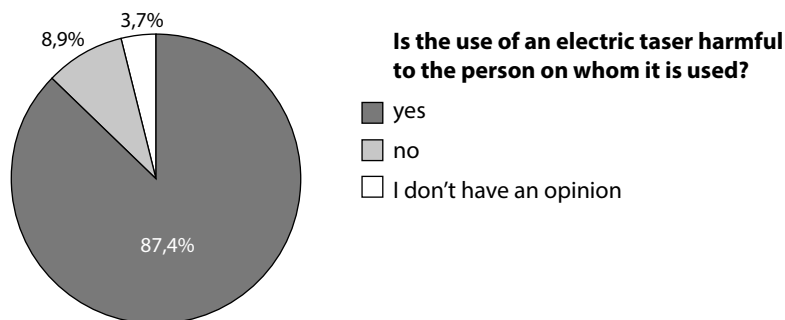
<sup>22</sup> Zarządzenie nr 73 komendanta głównego Policji z 31 grudnia 2014 w sprawie ustalenia wzorów i typów uzbrojenia Policji. Dz.Urz. KGP z 2015, item 2. The binding legal act is ordinance No. 11 of the Police Commander in Chief of 20 July 2016 repealing the ordinance on determining the patterns and types of police weaponry. Dz. Urz. KGP 2016, item 48.

<sup>23</sup> §26ust.1 pkt6zarządzenianr768komendanta głównegoPolicjiz14sierpnia2007wsprawie form i metod wykonywania zadań przez policjantów pełniących służbę patrolową oraz koordynacji działań o charakterze prewencyjnym. Dz. Urz. KGP 2007, No. 15, item 119, as amended.

The vast majority of respondents (93.3%) are of the opinion that electric tasers are sufficient to ensure the safety of the officers using them while performing their official tasks. Only 2.5% of respondents think otherwise, and 4.2% have no definite opinion.

Issues related to the use of means of direct coercion have always been a controversial factor. Accusations by the public and the media concerning the misuse of means of direct coercion available in the officers' equipment led the authorities to 'fight' for fair sentences. Undoubtedly, the cases related to the use of means of direct coercion are also financial issues concerning the compensations for both officers and suspects who have been subjected to electric tasers.

**Figure 7. Opinion on whether the use of an electric taser is harmful to the person on whom it is used**



Source: own elaboration

Only 3.7% of respondents believe that using an electric taser is harmful to the person on whom it is used, while 87.4% believe that it is not harmful, and 8.9% have no opinion on this issue.

In summary, the means of direct coercion are a key 'tool' for ensuring the personal safety of a police officer, combined with the ability to handle these means and their physical fitness. Taking into account the results of the presented research, an electric taser is the dominant means of direct coercion regarding the safety of police officers. Taking into account its characteristics and its applicability, it is appreciated by officers of other uniformed services having it in their equipment. Undoubtedly, the growing number of tasers being purchased by the Polish Police is an essential factor. This has a significant impact on the equipping of each police unit with this means of direct coercion.

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**Streszczenie.** Celem niniejszego artykułu jest ukazanie znaczenia środków przymusu bezpośredniego w dobie współczesnych zagrożeń. Niewątpliwie ważną rolę w tym aspekcie zajmuje Policja, jako organ powołany do zapewnienia bezpieczeństwa i porządku publicznego. To na funkcjonariuszach Policji — zarówno w Polsce, jak i w innych krajach — spoczywa obowiązek dbania o bezpieczeństwo obywateli. Dlatego też należy przygotować policjantów w odpowiedni sposób, poprzez proces szkolenia

do podejmowania interwencji, w tym również tych niebezpiecznych. Kluczowe jest również odpowiednie wyposażenie tych osób w „narzędzia”, które umożliwią im bezpieczeństwo w aspekcie osobistym, jak i osób wobec których podejmują czynności. Środki przymusu bezpośredniego znajdujące się na wyposażeniu policjantów bez wątpienia spełniają taką rolę. Poniższy artykuł przedstawia wyniki badań przeprowadzone wśród funkcjonariuszy Policji w Polsce w ramach prowadzonego zadania badawczego finansowanego ze środków Ministerstwa Nauki i Szkolnictwa Wyższego w ramach działalności statutowej. Celem badań było między innymi ustalenie, który z indywidualnych środków przymusu bezpośredniego posiadanych przez policjantów w czasie realizowanych obowiązków służbowych jest w ich ocenie najbardziej użyteczny a zarazem pozwala zachować bezpieczeństwo w czasie interwencji służbowych. Jednoznacznie respondenci ocenili, że jest to paralizator elektryczny czyli najnowszy środek przymusu bezpośredniego wprowadzony na użytek polskiej Policji od 2007 roku. Jednakże dopiero od roku 2013 paralizator elektryczny w postaci trzech modeli — Taser X26, Taser X2 i Taser X26P — szeroko został wprowadzony do tej formacji mundurowej.

**Zusammenfassung.** Ziel dieses Artikels ist es, die Bedeutung direkter Zwangsmaßnahmen im Zeitalter der gegenwärtigen Bedrohungen aufzuzeigen. Zweifellos spielt die Polizei, die zur Gewährleistung der öffentlichen Sicherheit und Ordnung berufen wurde, in diesem Aspekt eine wichtige Rolle. Es ist die Pflicht der Polizeibeamten und -beamtinnen — sowohl in Polen als auch in anderen Ländern — sich um die Sicherheit der Bürger zu kümmern. Daher ist es notwendig, die Bediensteten durch den Prozess der Ausbildung in geeigneter Weise auf Einsätze vorzubereiten, auch auf gefährliche Einsätze. Es ist auch entscheidend, sie mit geeigneten „Werkzeugen“ auszustatten, die ihre persönliche Sicherheit und die der Personen, gegen die Maßnahmen ergriffen werden, ermöglichen. Die direkten Zwangsmaßnahmen, mit denen Polizisten und Polizistinnen ausgestattet sind, erfüllen zweifellos diese Rolle. Der folgende Artikel stellt die Ergebnisse einer Forschung vor, die unter Polizeivollzugsbeamten und -beamtinnen in Polen im Rahmen einer Forschungsaufgabe durchgeführt wurde, die vom Ministerium für Wissenschaft und Hochschulwesen im Rahmen seiner satzungsgemäßen Aktivitäten finanziert wurde. Ziel der Untersuchung war es unter anderem zu ermitteln, welches der einzelnen direkten Zwangsmittel, über die Bediensteten während ihrer dienstlichen Tätigkeit verfügen, ihrer Meinung nach am nützlichsten ist und es ihnen gleichzeitig ermöglicht, die Sicherheit bei Einsetzten zu gewährleisten. Die Befragten bewerteten eindeutig, dass es sich um einen elektrischen Elektroschocker handelt, was die jüngste direkte Zwangsmaßnahme ist, die seit 2007 für die polnische Polizei eingeführt wurde. Doch erst seit 2013 ist der Elektroschocker in Form von drei Modellen — Taser X26, Taser X2 und Taser X26P — in dieser uniformierten Formation weitgehend eingeführt.

**Резюме.** Цель данной статьи заключается в наглядном представлении значения специальных средств принуждения с точки зрения современных угроз. Несомненно, важную роль в этом аспекте играет полиция, как орган, созданный для обеспечения общественной безопасности и порядка. Обязанностью сотрудников полиции, как в Польше, так и в других странах, является обеспечение безопасности граждан. Поэтому, необходимо подготовить сотрудников полиции к принятию соответствующих мер, в том числе и в опасной ситуации, в процессе их профессиональной подготовки. Крайне важно также, чтобы сотрудники полиции были оснащены средствами, которые позволят им обеспечить свою личную безопасность, а также безопасность граждан, в отношении которых они предпринимают какие-либо действия. Несомненно, специальные средства принуждения, находящиеся на оснащении сотрудников полиции выполняют эту функцию. В статье представлены результаты исследований, проведенных среди сотрудников полиции в Польше в рамках исследовательского задания, финансируемого Министерством науки и высшего образования в соответствии с его статутной деятельностью. Цель исследования состояла, в частности, в том, чтобы определить, какие из личных спецсредств, имеющихся на оснащении сотрудников полиции при исполнении служебных обязанностей, являются, по их мнению, наиболее полезными и одновременно позволяют обеспечить необходимую личную безопасность во время выполнения служебных заданий. Respondенты однозначно оценили, что именно электрошокер, т.е. новейшее спецсредство, используемое польской полицией с 2007 года, является самым эффективным спецсредством. Следует отметить, что только с 2013 года электрошокеры трех видов: Taser X26, Taser X2 и Taser X26P, широко начали использоваться полицией.