

Northern Territory Police

Tracking Use of Force

Jeanette Kerr & Joanne Foley





Problem?

This study details a method for tracking police UoF outputs, with the aim of identifying the impact of the UoF by police at 3 levels:

1. individual incidents & officers
2. trends & profiles
3. the impact of training & policy interventions



Outcomes of UoF/Assumptions

These are complex, numerous & include:

- complaints against police
- alleged assaults against police
- costs awarded against police for excessive/unnecessary force
- injury to subjects & police
- negative perceptions of police legitimacy



Aims of Tracking UoF

1. Do no harm
1. Encourage the agency to adopt a strategic approach to the identification of trends & to gather evidence to inform continuous improvements in training, practice & policy
1. Influence ANZ practice



Is this Evidence Based Policing?

“Evidence-based policing is the use of the best available research on the outcomes of police work to implement guidelines and evaluate agencies, units and officers. Put more simply, evidence-based policing uses research to guide practice and evaluate practitioners. It uses the best evidence to shape the best practice. It is a systematic effort to parse out and codify unsystematic “experience” as the basis for police work, refining it by ongoing systematic testing of hypotheses.”

Lawrence W. Sherman (1998)



1st Level

- Individual incidents – evaluated
- Individual officers – not tracked



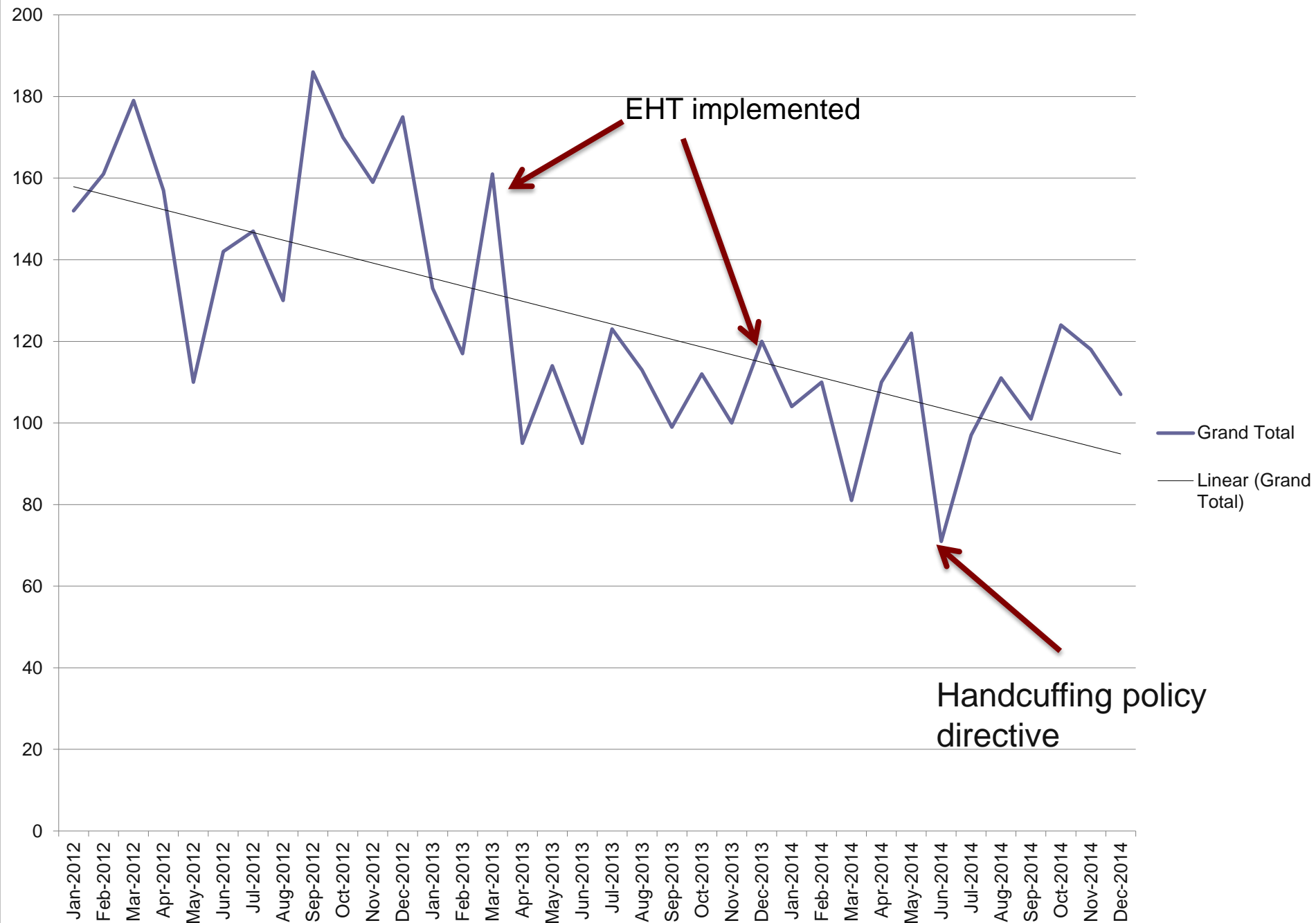
Tracking longitudinal data by month with previous three year comparisons to:

- identify trends
- seasonal patterns
- geographic
- behavioural trends
- cultural & demographic profiles of subjects & police



- Training & policy implementation to determine the impacts
- Track data for two years pre and post the implementation of UoF innovations, including the introduction of:
 - aerosol subject restraint
 - Taser
 - empty hand tactics (EHT)
 - policy

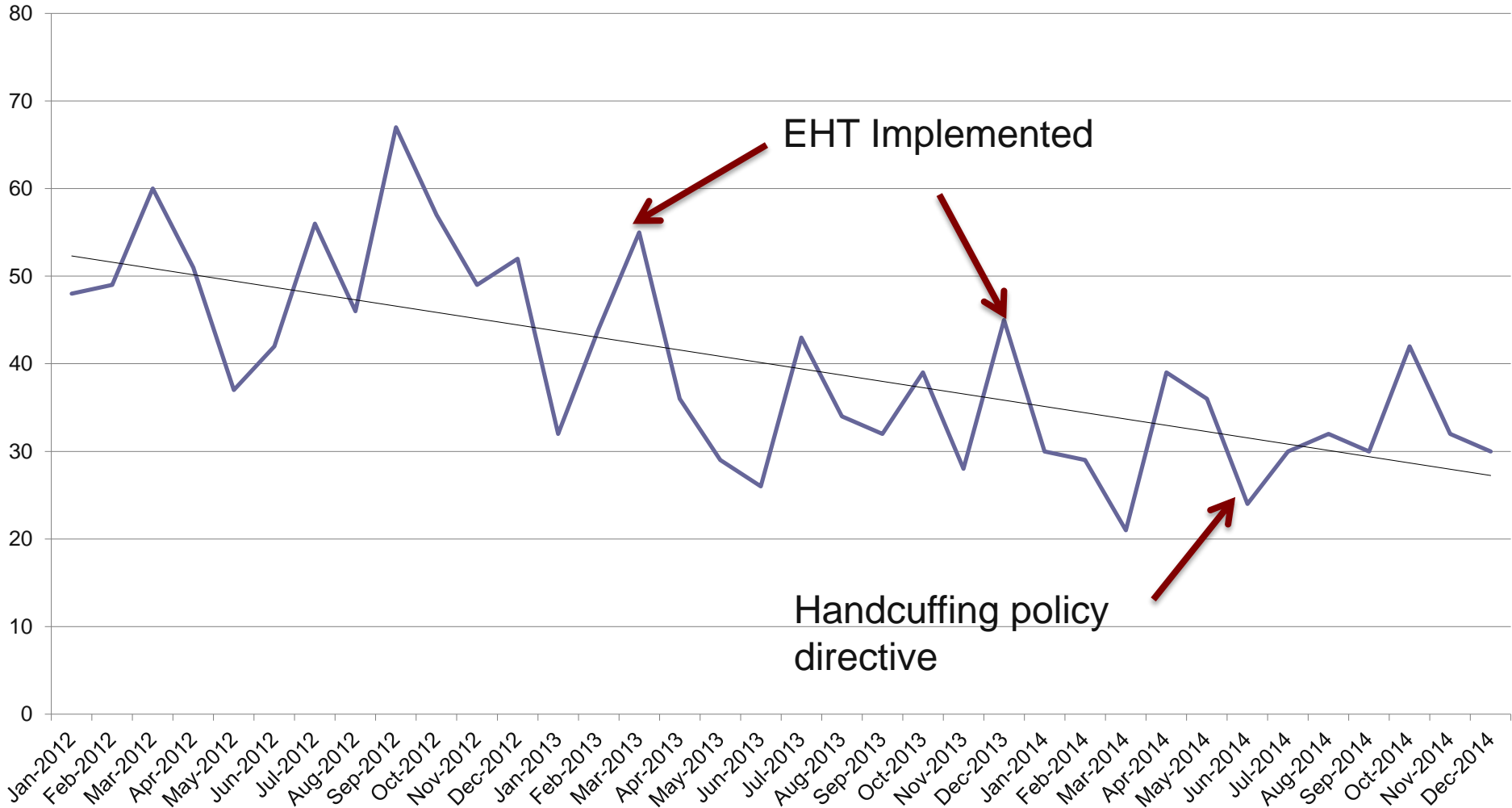
TOTAL UOF BY MONTH - ALL COMMANDS





38%

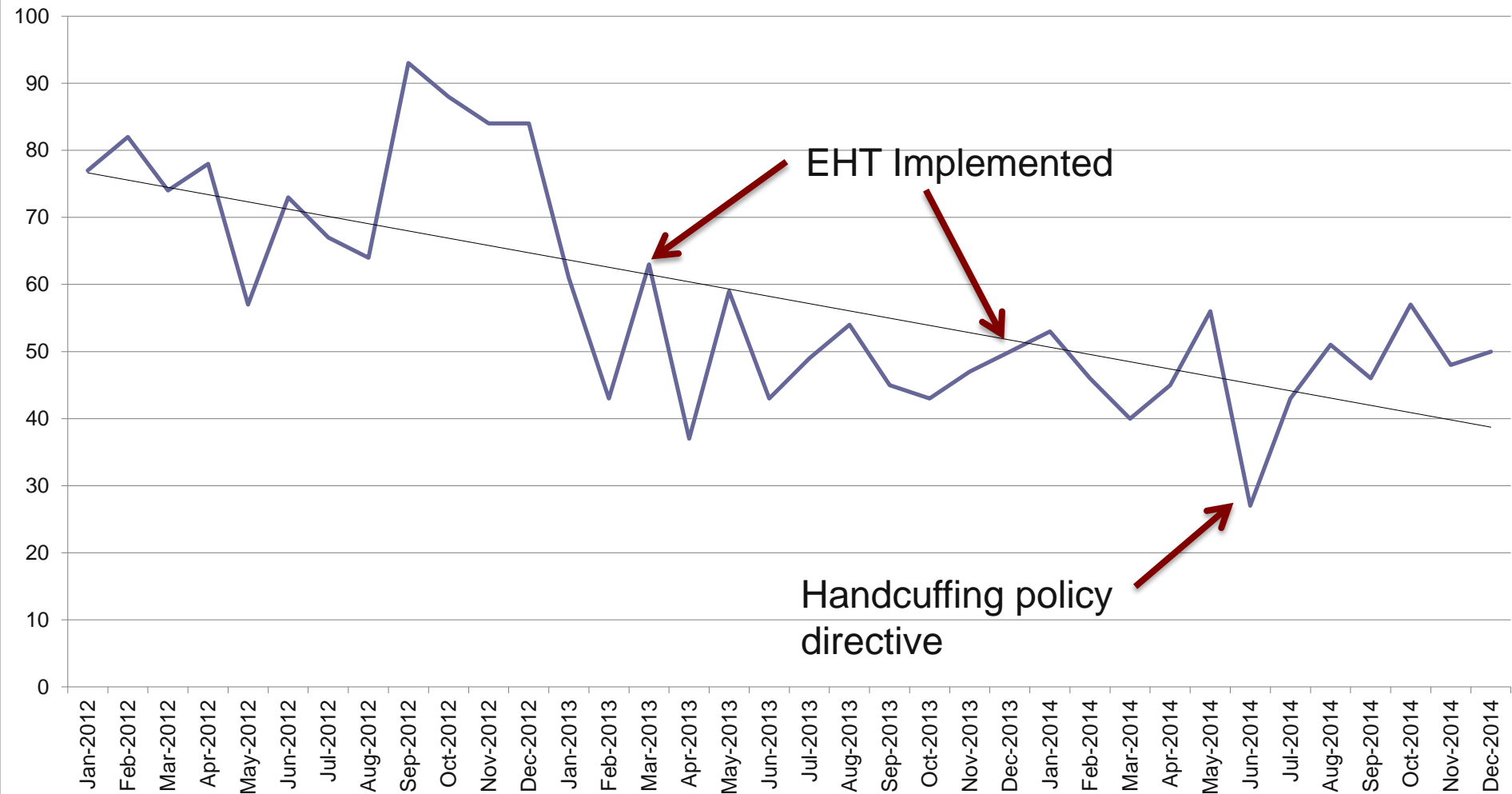
EHT





35%

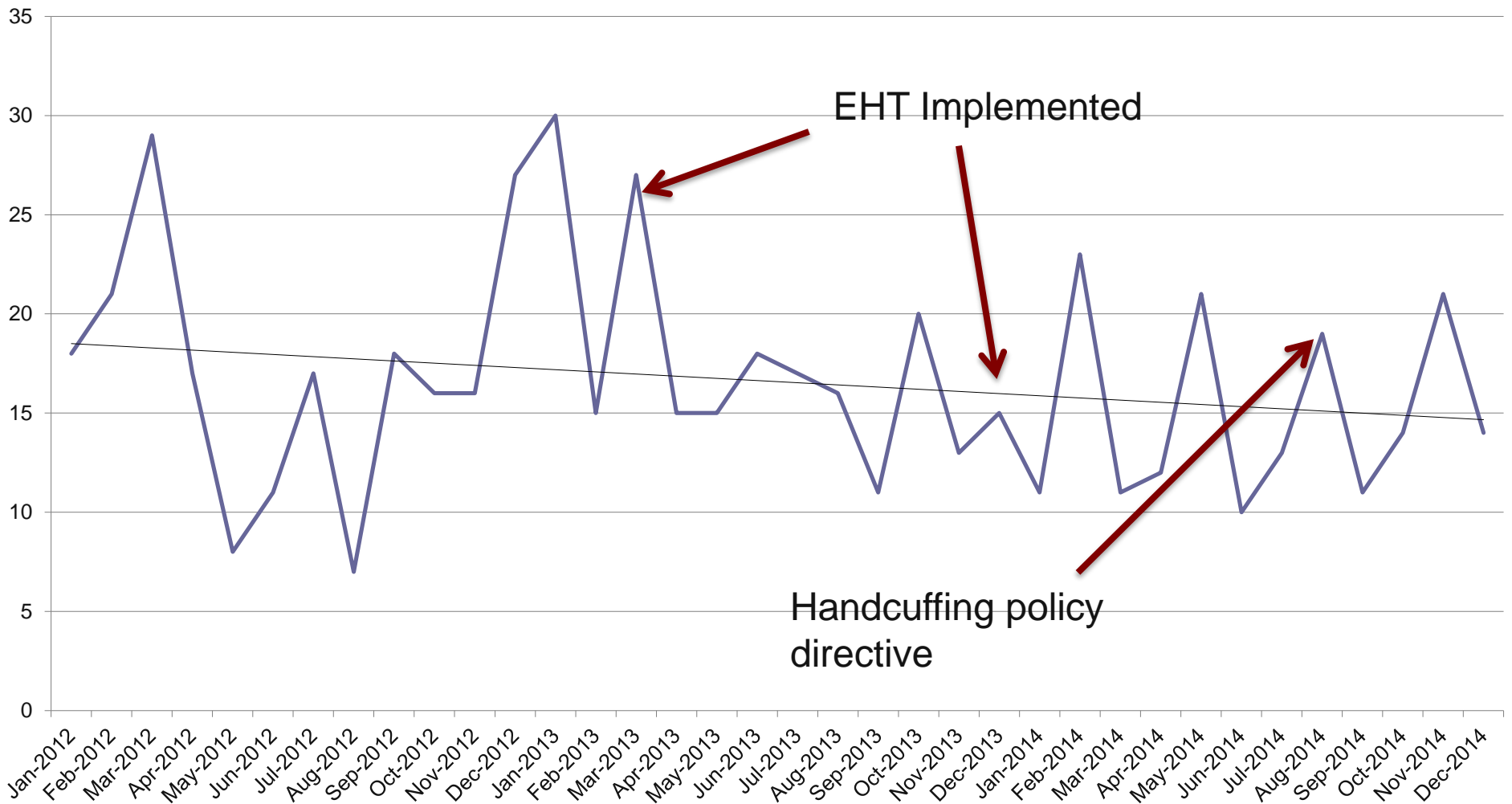
Restraints





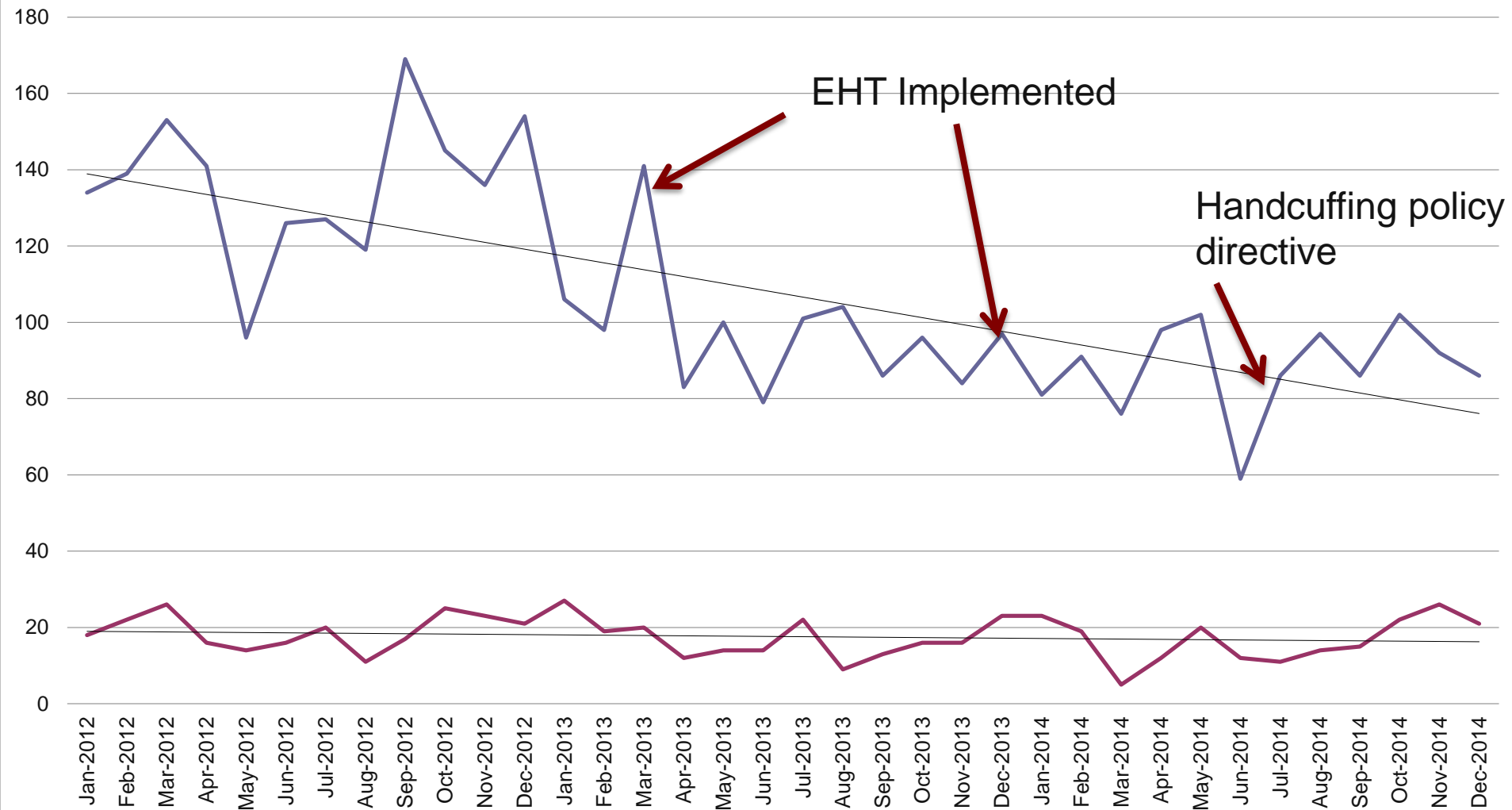
22%

Chemical Spray





WEAPON USED OR PRESENTED BY SUBJECT





Individual Officers

To identify what Sherman (2006), refers to as the ‘power few’:

- the small percentage of officers who:
 - have greatest number of UoF reports
 - attract the greatest number of complaints for unnecessary or excessive force
 - use higher levels of force
 - have harmful outcomes from UoF



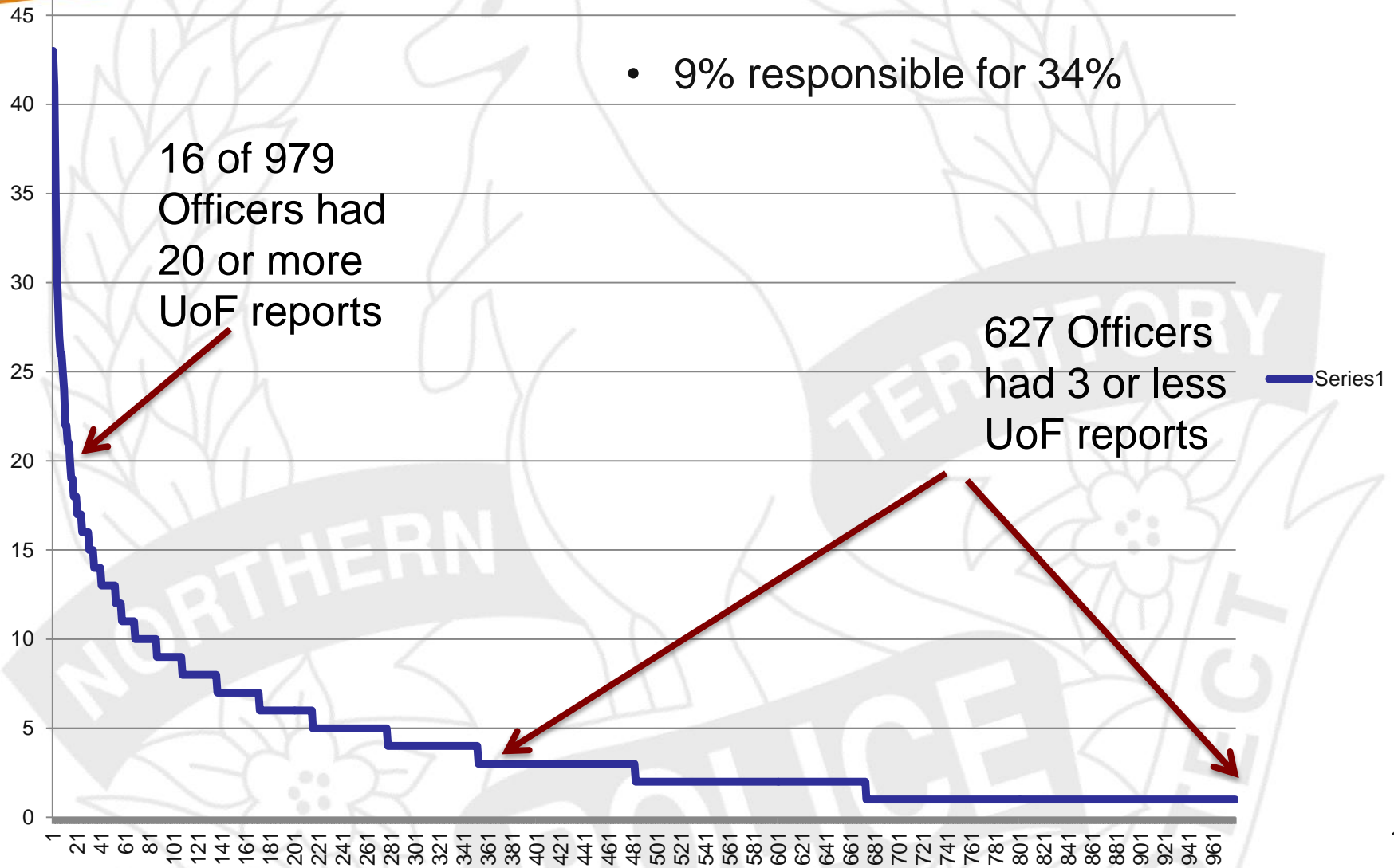
Individual Officers

Threshold levels for these factors must be determined so that officers are flagged for closer analyses.

Researchers (Bazley et.al. 2009) have identified that frequency of UoF, intensity of force relative to resistance and a 'force factor' where UoF types are weighted are promising for identifying problematic officers.

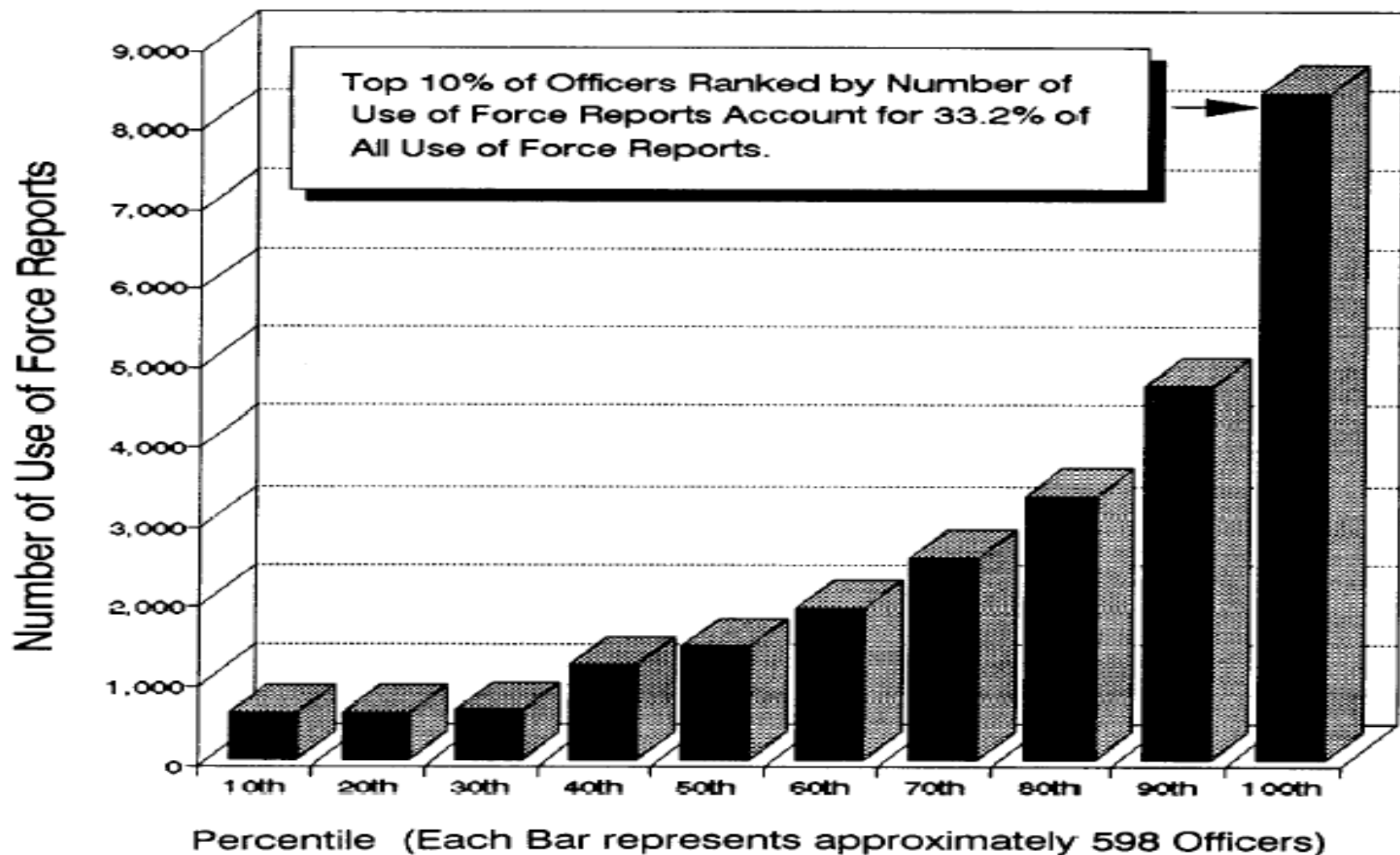


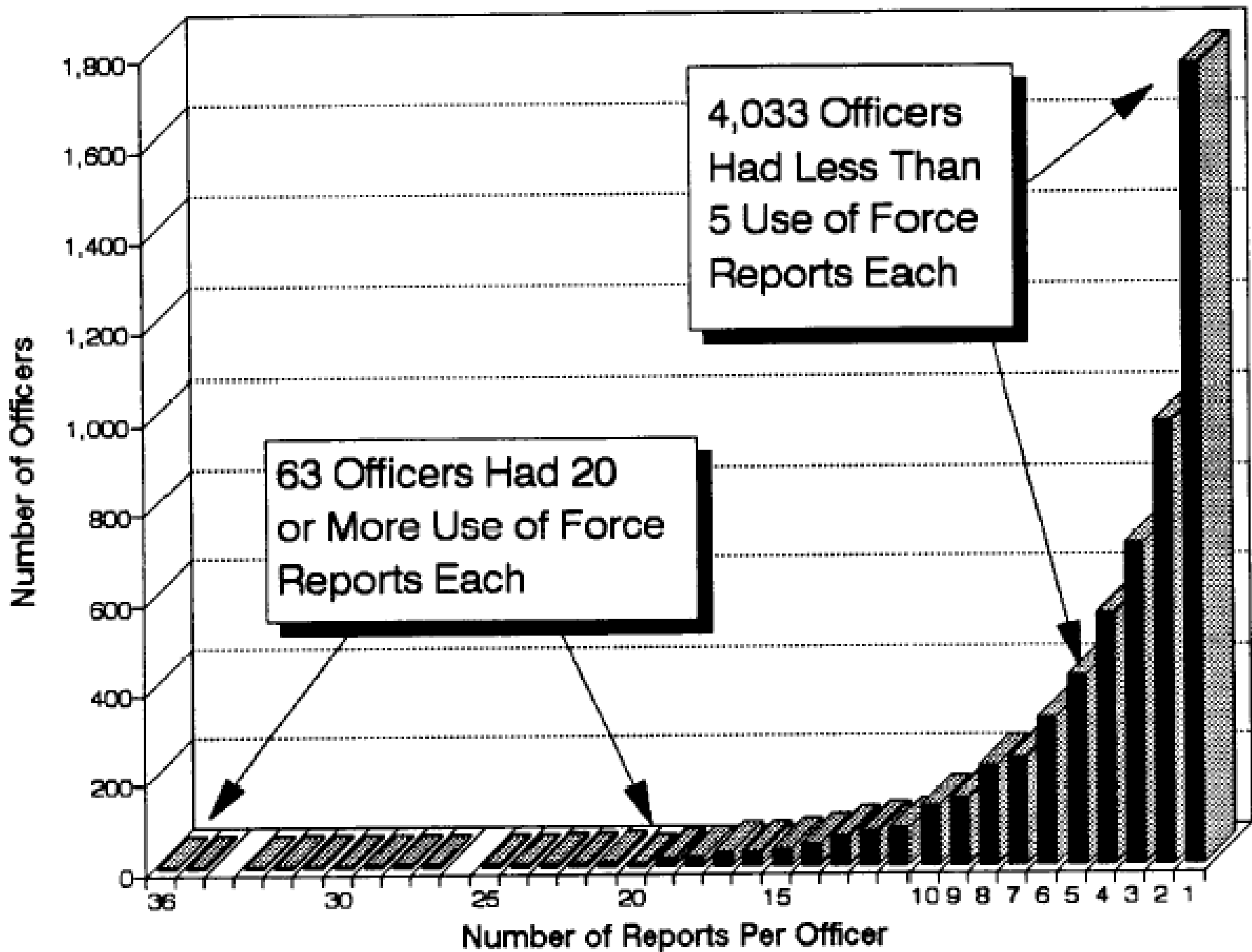
- 1.6% responsible for 10% of the UoF
- 9% responsible for 34%



CONCENTRATION OF LAPD OFFICERS LISTED IN USE OF FORCE REPORTS

5,976 OFFICERS LISTED IN AT LEAST ONE USE OF FORCE REPORT FILED FROM JANUARY 1987 THROUGH MARCH 1990







Challenges to Tracking Methodology

Major implementation challenges are:

- the issues of officer perceptions of surveillance & limits on their professional autonomy (Wain and Ariel, 2014)
- the belief that punitive action will result either from the UoF itself or failure to adequately comply with the reporting requirements
- tensions that exist between officer suspicions about any form of tracking & the need for robust accountability & governance systems

∞ The end ∞