

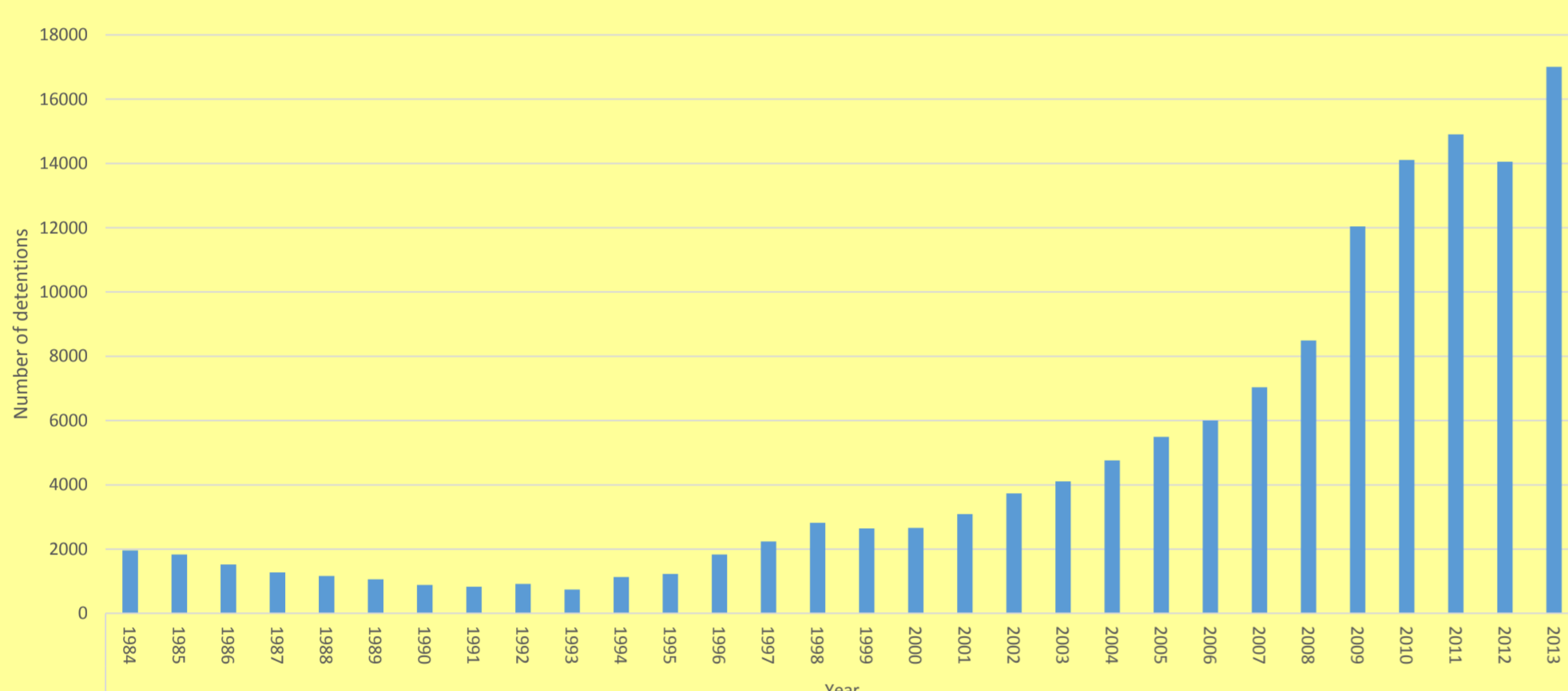
## Introduction

In England on 53,176 occasions in 2013/14 a person was detained without their consent and compelled to receive treatment for their mental illness under the Mental Health Act (MHA) 1983 (as amended). As part of this Act the Police also have the power to detain people:

*“If a constable finds in a place to which the public have access a person who appears to him to be suffering from a mental disorder and to be in immediate need of care or control, the constable may, if he thinks it is necessary to do so in the interests of that person or for the protection of other persons, remove that person to a place of safety .....”s136 (MHA)*

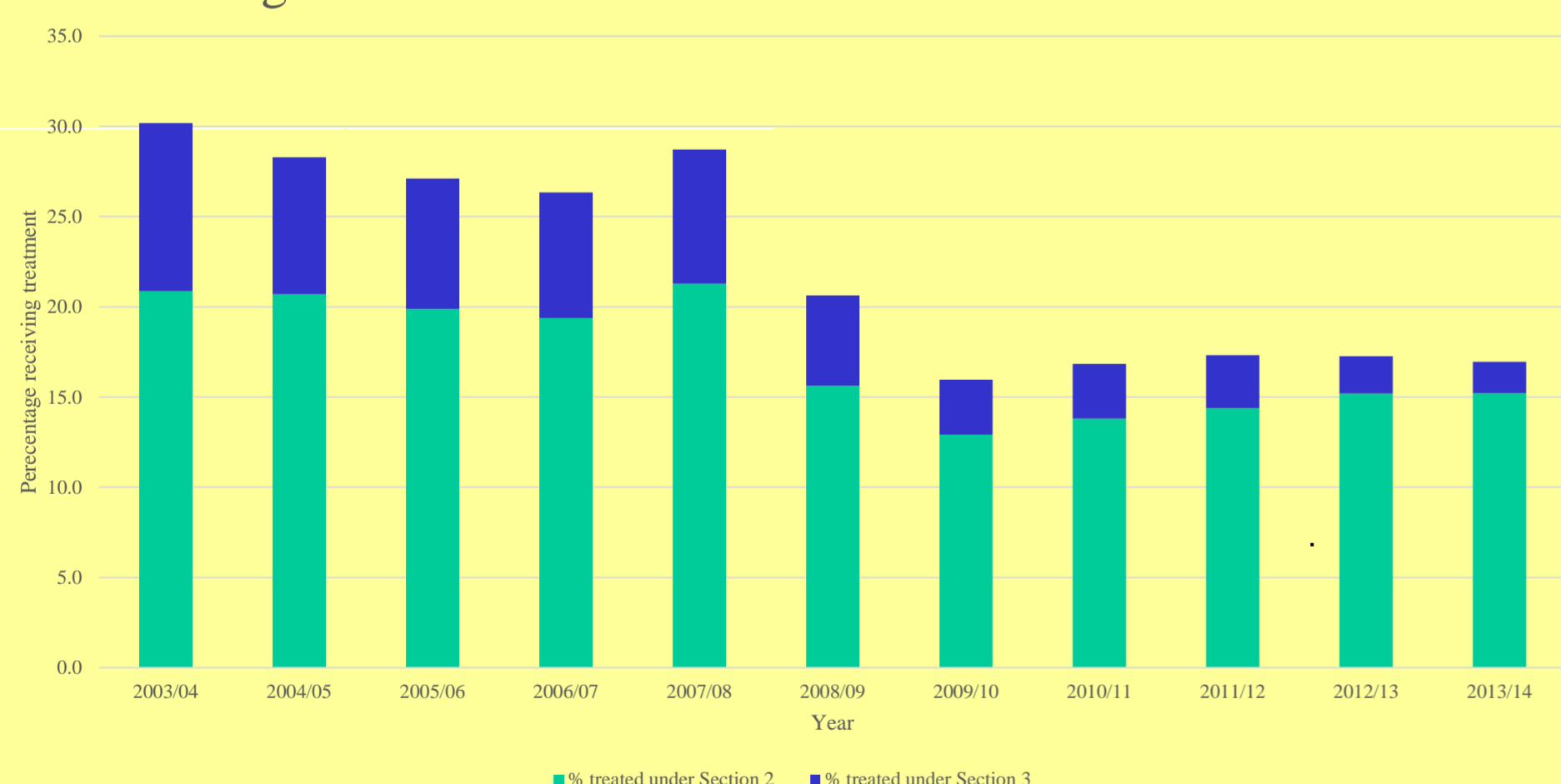
The use of this power has substantially increased over recent years as shown in Fig 1 below:

Figure 1. Section 136 detentions in hospital in England per year



Whilst the rate of psychiatric treatment of those detained has declined from over 90% in the 1980s and even further in the last 10 years (Fig 2):

Figure 2. Treatment rates after detention under S. 136



Recent reviews by Her Majesty’s Inspectors of Constabulary, the Home Office, the Care Quality Commission, the Centre for Mental Health and the House of Commons Health Committee have expressed dissatisfaction and disquiet about the operation of this power. There is also significant ‘public interest’ in this apparent abuse of Human Rights and mental health legislation.

Only a small number of published studies exist which have examined the behaviour of individuals leading to their detention by constables and the subsequent diagnosis of disorder.

There is no clear analysis to account for the changing patterns of detention over time and the apparent disproportionality in the use of this power.

## Aims

The **aims** of this project are to:

- Record and quantify the different types of encounters between the police and those members of the public whom they consider to be mentally disordered.
- Map the types of behaviours of individuals which lead the police to believe them to be disordered.
- Explore how and in what ways the police perceive and/or socially construct mentally disordered behaviours likely to lead to the detention of members of the public.
- Map the demographic data on the police to identify their level of experience and understanding of mental disorder.
- Analyse the options available in each interaction to determine, from the factors above, those that result in detention under s136 as opposed to other outcomes.

The **objectives** are to:

- Determine possible ways to improve the outcomes of encounters between the police and the mentally disordered and so improve the operation of s136.
- Identify opportunities for the wider range of Agencies and partners who support the mentally disordered to benefit from the improved operation of s136 and in so doing help to improve the outcomes for the mentally disordered.

## Methods

*Participants:*

Approximately 200 interviews with uniform police officers and police staff who have face to face public contact, in each of three police forces.

*Method*

A semi-structured telephone interview (lasting approximately 15 minutes) designed specifically for this project using previously published literature and *Patient and Public Involvement* (informal discussions with officers in two police stations). The interview will chart participant demographic data and capture their experiences of encounters with people who may be mentally disordered that they refer on, as well as their views and opinions about s136 and mental disorder. Their understanding of the organisational cultures and pressures underlying their decision making processes will be explored.

*Analysis*

Quantitative data will be subjected to statistical analysis, identifying any correlations between variables relating to the police and the mentally disordered people they encounter, in order to establish mechanisms of cause and effect. The qualitative data will be subjected to thematic analysis.

## Project status

- The study gained ethical approval from the UoK in March 2015
- A range of Police Forces have agreed to participate including West Midlands, Essex and Gwent.
- Data will be collected from volunteers amongst the 400 Gwent Police officers and staff eligible to participate, between the 15<sup>th</sup> June and 15<sup>th</sup> July 2015. Data collection from other Forces is likely to start in September 2015.