

## **New Paper Finds Body-Worn Cameras Can Reduce Police Use-of-Force, Are Cost-Effective Tool to Improve Policing**

*Updated review of available data for Council on Criminal Justice's Task Force on Policing finds benefits of body-worn camera outweigh costs by a factor of four*

CHICAGO—The University of Chicago Crime Lab released a paper today demonstrating that body-worn cameras (BWCs) can reduce police use of force incidents by nearly 10% and civilian complaints against law enforcement by over 15%. Against a national backdrop of calls for increased police transparency and oversight, the paper finds BWCs can provide a significant return on public investment, with the benefits of BWCs outweighing the costs by a factor of approximately four.

Financial barriers are often cited by law enforcement departments as a key concern with BWC adoption, and previous reviews of BWCs have argued the evidence is too uncertain to draw conclusions about whether the technology is a cost-effective way to change policing outcomes. Led by a team of the world's leading economists and public safety experts, the paper, *Body-Worn Cameras in Policing: Benefits and Costs*, provides the clearest evidence to date of not only the efficacy, but the cost-effectiveness of BWCs.

“While body-worn cameras are not a panacea, they are likely worth the cost in terms of the benefits they provide residents and taxpayers,” said **Jens Ludwig, Edwin A. and Betty L. Bergman Distinguished Service Professor at the University of Chicago and Pritzker director of the University of Chicago Crime Lab**. “We hope the findings inform how law enforcement agencies across the country use resources to increase transparency, accountability and trust, and improve how police interact with the communities they serve.”

The paper comes as a growing number of law enforcement agencies have integrated – or are considering integrating – BWCs into their policing practices. In 2013, 32% of local police departments employed some form of BWC technology with nearly a quarter of patrol officers receiving BWCs on average. By 2016, 47% of law enforcement agencies were using some form of BWC technology.

“As more states consider requiring officers to wear body-worn cameras, our research indicates they can help reduce police use of force incidents and reduce civilian complaints against officers,” said **Morgan C. Williams, Jr., Assistant Professor/Faculty Fellow at the NYU Robert F. Wagner Graduate School of Public Service**. “Integrating the technology into policing practices can be an important step towards making policing fairer and more accountable.”

In finding BWCs are cost-effective, the study considered a range of factors, including the cost to law enforcement agencies for purchasing cameras, maintaining equipment, storing data, and training officers; the value to society of averted fatal and non-fatal police use of force incidents; and the reduction in citizen complaints to the police. The study estimates that one-quarter of the benefits from BWCs accrue to government budgets, versus to the rest of society, so it is possible that BWCs might even pay for themselves.

The paper was developed as part of the Crime Lab's partnership with the [Council on Criminal Justice](#), which has launched an independent [Task Force on Policing](#) to identify the policies and practices most likely to prevent police use of excessive force, reduce racial biases, increase police accountability, and improve the relationship between law enforcement agencies and communities. The Crime Lab is serving as research partner for the Task Force, evaluating the empirical evidence that guides its recommendations.

The full study can be read [here](#).

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