

De-Escalation Technology: The Impact of Body-Worn Cameras on Citizen-Police Interactions

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Abstract :

We provide experimental evidence that monitoring of police activity through body-worn cameras reduces use of force, handcuffs and arrests, and enhances criminal reporting by the police. Stronger treatment effects occur on events ex-ante classified as low risk. Monitoring effects are moderated by officer rank, which is consistent with a career concern motive by junior officers. We reconcile our estimates with the literature which has, to date, shown mixed results. We rule out the hypothesis that de-policing is occurring due to BWC. Overall, our results show that body-worn cameras robustly de-escalate citizen-police interactions, and we show the mechanisms as to why that happens.