Worker Behavior Under Optional Oversight: Theory and Evidence from Police Body-Worn Cameras

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December 13, 2025

Police officers with body-worn cameras may activate to prove good conduct, but they may not activate if they anticipate a high risk of misconduct. We model this optional oversight setting and study it using Chicago data on activation during arrests. Consistent with our model, we find evidence suggesting that cameras cause roughly half of officers to sometimes strategically fail to activate and make fewer arrests as a way to avoid being recorded in risky situations. The mix of officers who prefer and do not prefer cameras leads to important tradeoffs that are not present in non-discretionary oversight settings.

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1 Introduction

When employers cannot directly observe worker behavior, they may invest in monitoring technologies to mitigate the principal-agent problem. Standard economic models of monitoring assume employers choose the level of oversight through their investment (Holmstrom and Milgrom, 1991). Although this assumption likely holds in settings like manufacturing or retail, it is less plausible where privacy, legal, or practical constraints prevent employers from fully controlling when and how monitoring occurs. In some settings, workers retain discretion over when their behavior is observed. As a result, employers in these "optional oversight" settings choose not only the level of investment in monitoring but also monitoring rules and how to enforce them. Given that these choices can affect worker compliance and productivity, these settings may create different tradeoffs for employers seeking to monitor workers than those suggested under traditional economic models of monitoring.

With the growth of remote work and new monitoring technologies, optional oversight settings are becoming increasingly common in private and public organizations. For example, remote workers decide whether to avoid employer-managed platforms that automatically track their behavior by completing tasks offline, and university faculty decide whether to record their classes. Although optional oversight settings abound, perhaps the canonical and most widespread example is policing. There, officers are equipped with body-worn cameras (BWCs) that must be activated at their discretion. A rich theoretical and empirical literature studies the impacts of BWCs and the role of monitoring and incentives in policing more generally (e.g., Ba, 2017; Chalfin and Gonçalves, 2025; Prendergast, 2022; Ba and Rivera, 2024; Bollman, 2024; Harrington and Shaffer, 2025). However, no study of policing considers the optional oversight nature of activating BWCs. This is in part because of a lack of systematic evidence on officer- and arrest-level activation behavior.

In this article, we study the impact of optional oversight in the context of police BWCs. We model officers with BWCs as workers who can choose to activate a monitoring technology at their own discretion. This discretion creates opportunities for strategic behavior, not only in the activation decision but also in decisions about engagement and arrests.

Officers consider the risk of misconduct accusations when deciding whether to make arrests, and activation decreases the rate of both false negatives and false positives in misconduct investigations. Depending on which type of error officers care more about, they can view BWCs very differently—as either protective or compromising. "Protective activators" use BWCs to document good conduct when claims of misconduct arise, while "compromising activators" sometimes strategically fail to activate if they anticipate a high risk of misconduct.

The model has contrasting predictions for how BWCs affect activation and arrest behavior for these two types of officers. With respect to activation, officers who view BWCs as protective activate whenever possible, whereas officers who view BWCs as compromising are less likely to activate in riskier arrests. With respect to arrests, officers who find BWCs protective make more arrests because the recording protects them from false accusations, whereas officers who find BWCs compromising refrain from making some arrests when activation is required. These contrasting officer-level predictions about activation and arrest behavior provide the empirical tests we use to assess the validity of the model, and the resulting estimates of these predicted effects provide the key moments that we use to identify and calibrate our model.

Our model captures activation decisions for individual arrests. As such, to connect the model to data, we need to observe activation decisions at the arrest level—data that have not been used in academic research across a department before. To this end, we use novel administrative data from the Chicago Police Department (CPD) that identifies the activation of specific officers as they make specific arrests—encounters where officers have an unambiguous duty to activate. To construct our activation data, we link arrests to metadata that is automatically generated by BWCs when they are activated. We do this using a unique event identifier that Chicago's emergency services dispatch generates. This identifier is recorded in most activation and arrest records. To link records that do not contain this unique event identifier, we first estimate a statistical model of activation and arrest times using arrest events with direct linkages. We then use this model to link activation and arrest

records that do not have unique identifiers. In our final sample of 939,707 arrest-officer pairs in which the officer was equipped with a BWC between 2016 and 2020, the overall activation rate was 72%.

Our empirical analysis consists of three parts. In the first part, we investigate the model predictions on activation decisions—if some officers view BWCs as protective but others view BWCs as compromising, there will be large differences in activation rates across officers that reflect an officer-level component. We find that officers differ considerably in how often they activate during arrests, with one in five activating in more than 87% of arrests and one in five activating in less than 63% of arrests. To assess how much of this dispersion reflects a stable officer-level component rather than differential exposure to situations, we estimate how well an officer's activation behavior in one arrest, time period, or assignment predicts their activation behavior in other settings. We also control for a wide range of situational factors and aspects of the oversight environment—characteristics of the arrest, shift, managers, other officers involved in the arrest, and pending complaint investigations. We find that officer activation rates are stable and strongly predictable in different settings and that situational factors do not explain more than 11% of officer-level differences in activation rates. Most of this modest explanatory power is driven by whether an officer serves as the primary or an assisting officer on the arrest, where the latter may have a less legitimate need to record the portion of the arrest they are present for.

In the second part of the analysis, we investigate the model predictions on arrest behavior—compared to how the officers who view BWCs as protective respond to the introduction of BWCs, officers who view BWCs as compromising should respond to the introduction of BWCs by making fewer arrests. To do so, we estimate how BWCs differentially affect the arrest behavior by officer type by leveraging the staggered adoption of BWCs across Chicago's 22 geographic police districts between 2016 and 2017. In this analysis, we use activation rates as a proxy for whether an officer finds BWCs compromising. We find that BWCs decrease the number of arrests that compromising activators make compared to protective activators by 12% of the mean. We also find that the effects of BWCs on

arrests are concentrated among the officers who likely find BWCs the most compromising, as predicted by the model. We also explore the drivers for the relative decrease and find suggestive evidence that our results reflect changes in the decision of particular officers to engage in high-risk situations, as predicted by the model. In particular, we find that effects are primarily driven by the officers who initiate the arrest rather than those called as backup and by serious felony cases rather than lower-level offenses.

In the third part of the analysis, we consider how frequently officers strategically fail to activate and the resulting consequences for the design of BWC policies. To do so, we structurally estimate the theoretical model by matching the distribution of officer activation rates reflecting an officer-level component from the first analysis and the estimated effects of BWCs on arrests from the second analysis. We find that 55% of officers are compromising activators who strategically fail to activate in anywhere from a few arrests to over 40% of arrests. As a result, we find that up to 62% of differences in activation rates between officers can be explained by strategic non-activation.

To assess the consequences of optional oversight, we study counterfactual policies intended to increase activation. We consider two types of policies—an "enforcement" policy that is designed to detect and punish non-activation through enforcement of activation rules, and a "reminder" policy that aims to ensure that officers maintain functioning BWCs and remember to activate even in the heat of the moment. We find that optional oversight in the presence of both compromising and protective activators generates subtle policy tradeoffs. On the one hand, stricter enforcement policies have no effect on protective activators and reduce arrests by compromising activators, but the marginal arrests they eliminate are those with the highest probability of misconduct. On the other hand, reminder policies embolden protective activators to make riskier arrests while doing nothing to curb the arrest behavior of compromising activators. This can lead to higher overall arrest rates under optional oversight compared to when activation is non-discretionary. A perhaps surprising implication is that police departments can mix the two policies to increase activation and decrease misconduct without decreasing arrests. As a result, police departments may *prefer* an optional oversight

regime to either no oversight or non-discretionary oversight.

This article contributes to a growing literature studying police officer responses to oversight. Research examining officer activation decisions rely on limited data (Martain et al., 2020; Huff et al., 2024; Katz and Huff, 2023; Adams et al., 2021), and research studying the effects of police oversight on arrests, misconduct, and use of force has found mixed results (e.g., Prendergast, 2022; Ba, 2017; Ba and Rivera, 2024; Rozema and Schanzenbach, 2019, 2023; Jordan and Kim, 2024; Devi and Fryer Jr., 2020; Ferrazares, 2024; Lum et al., 2020; Kim, 2023; Barbosa et al., 2021). We advance this literature by building optional oversight into models of policing and using information on activation decisions when officers have an unambiguous duty to activate. Our results suggest that aggregate changes in arrest behavior following BWC rollout will depend on the mix of officer types in a department. This may help to explain the mixed evidence of the overall effect of BWCs when combining studies of several departments.

More generally, this article contributes to literatures on monitoring and the incentives of bureaucrats. The monitoring literature largely abstracts away from how the impacts of employer investment in oversight can be influenced by worker discretion in whether specific events are monitored (Holmstrom and Milgrom, 1991; Adhvaryu et al., 2022; Guiteras and Jack, 2018; Cai et al., 2025; Adhvaryu et al., 2022; Friebel et al., 2025; Hubbard, 2000; Kelley et al., 2024; Ber, 2012; Pierce et al., 2015). Our model and evidence suggest that in such optional oversight settings, the level of enforcement affects not only worker compliance but also productivity.

The literature on the incentives of bureaucrats starts with the premise that motivating government workers is more challenging than motivating private-sector workers due to difficulties in defining objective performance metrics and the limited contracts available (Prendergast, 2003, 2007; Khan et al., 2015). This is especially true in policing and other enforcement agencies, where intrinsic motivations to make good arrests rather than direct incentives like overtime pay are key to understanding police behavior (Prendergast, 2001; Chalfin and Gonçalves, 2025). Our model and evidence extend this literature into a sys-

tem of optional oversight that allows intrinsic arrest motivations to interact with intrinsic activation motivations.

The remainder of the paper proceeds as follows. Section 2 presents a model of BWCs and policing behavior under optional oversight. Section 3 describes how CPD is organized and the adoption of BWCs. Section 4 describes the activation data and reports descriptive statistics. Section 5 documents officer-level activation patterns and investigates the drivers of differences in activation rates between officers. Section 6 investigates how the introduction of BWCs affected arrest behavior. Section 7 structurally estimates the model to investigate the extent to which officers strategically fail to activate and the resulting consequences for the design of BWC policies. Section 8 concludes.

2 A Model of Worker Behavior Under Optional Oversight

2.1 Setup

An officer, j, must decide whether to make a given arrest, i. The officer-specific reward for making the arrest is $w_j > 0$ relative to a normalized payout of 0 for not making the arrest. If the officer makes the arrest and an investigation finds that they engaged in misconduct, they pay a cost $c > 0$. The arrest-specific probability that the officer engages in misconduct is $\theta_i \sim F(\theta)$.[1]

Misconduct investigations produce both false negatives and false positives. If the officer engages in misconduct, this is discovered with probability q_T (the true positive rate). If the officer did not engage in misconduct, an investigation nonetheless finds that they did with probability q_F (the false positive rate). We assume investigations are still informative: $\Delta = q_T - q_F > 0$, meaning actual misconduct is more likely to be detected than false accusations are to occur.

[1]We assume that misconduct is always unintentional on the part of an officer. We treat misconduct risk as an irreducible consequence of the complex and fast-moving circumstances that officers work in. Although there may in fact be some situations where officers intentionally engage in misconduct due to animus or corruption, we do not expect BWCs to strongly affect this kind of misconduct in settings where oversight is optional.

Officers wear BWCs that must be manually activated to record arrests.[2] Activation (denoted by m) improves investigation accuracy by increasing detection of actual misconduct ($\frac{\partial q_T}{\partial m} = q_T^{'} > 0$) and decreasing false accusations: ($\frac{\partial q_F}{\partial m} = q_F^{'} < 0$).[3] Define the change in probabilities as $\Delta^{'} = q_T^{'} - q_F^{'} > 0$.

Finally, there is a direct, idiosyncratic cost or benefit of activation in each arrest, $\epsilon_i \sim G(\epsilon)$. If $\epsilon_i < 0$, the officer faces some additional cost to activating, which we will interpret to include non-activation due to forgetfulness and equipment failures. If $\epsilon_i > 0$, the officer has an additional incentive to activate. These may include anticipated punishment for non-activation or a specific request from someone on the scene.

Officers in this model manage misconduct risk solely by choosing which arrests to engage in and whether to activate in them. Insofar as officers also exert costly effort to reduce misconduct risk, θ_i and w_j can be treated as the end products of this initial optimization step.[4]

2.2 Solution

We solve the model by looking first at the officer's decision to make an arrest when they do not have a BWC. In this case, the officer makes an arrest if the utility from doing so is greater than the utility from refraining:

$$w_j - c(\theta_i q_T + (1 - \theta_i) q_F) > 0 \tag{1}$$

Rearranging yields a threshold rule under which the officer arrests only when the

[2]We model activation as a binary decision that is made at some fixed point early in the encounter. Officers cannot delay activation and cannot de-activate in response to an evolving arrest situation. This restriction stems from our data, which are such that we can only label whether any kind of activation occurred during an arrest and not whether it captured all important aspects of the arrest.

[3]For notational simplicity, we will mark changes due to activation as if continuous, even though officers can only choose between two levels: off and on.

[4]In Appendix B, we consider an extension that models this effort decision directly. The implications of the model are unchanged, but it is now necessary to keep track of the benefits (or costs) of re-optimizing effort upon activation.

misconduct risk is below:

$$\theta_i < \frac{\frac{w_j}{c} - q_F}{\Delta} \equiv \theta^*_{arr} \tag{2}$$

Officers are willing to make riskier arrests (higher θ^*_{arr}) if the punishment for misconduct is small relative to their w_j or if the probability of being caught conditional on misconduct is low.

Next, we consider the decision to activate. Officers activate if it increases expected utility from making an arrest:[5]

$$\frac{\partial}{\partial m}[w_j - c(\theta_i q_T + (1-\theta_i)q_F) + \epsilon_i m] > 0 \tag{3}$$

Evaluating the derivative and rearranging yields another threshold rule in the probability of actual misconduct:

$$\theta_i < \frac{\frac{\epsilon_i}{c} - q_F^{'}}{\Delta^{'}} \equiv \theta^*_{act}(\epsilon_i) \tag{4}$$

If the misconduct risk, θ_i, is low, the decrease in false positives offered by activation is attractive because these pose the main threat of a misconduct finding. As θ_i increases, the increase in true positives becomes more salient until activation is no longer optimal.

Finally, how activation changes arrest behavior depends on how θ^*_{arr} changes with m:

$$\frac{\partial \theta^*_{arr}}{\partial m} = \frac{-\Delta q_F^{'} - (\frac{w_j}{c} - q_F)\Delta^{'}}{\Delta^2} = \frac{-q_F^{'}}{\Delta} - \frac{\theta^*_{arr}\Delta^{'}}{\Delta} = \frac{\Delta^{'}}{\Delta}(\theta^*_{act}(0) - \theta^*_{arr}) \tag{5}$$

The change in an officer's arrest is therefore dictated by the relationship between two thresholds: θ^*_{arr} (the riskiest arrest the officer makes without BWCs) and $\theta^*_{act}(0)$ (the riskiest arrest where activation is attractive, absent special incentives ϵ_i). If $\theta^*_{act}(0) > \theta^*_{arr}$, then activation makes an officer willing to arrest in riskier situations than they otherwise would. Conversely,

[5]We focus on the effect on an officer's arrest utility because activation does not change non-arrest utility, and we are not interested in activation behavior in cases when officers do not make an arrest.

if $\theta^*_{act}(0) < \theta^*_{arr}$, then activation makes the officer unwilling to arrest in situations where they would have previously.

Another way to express this is to contrast the officer's arrest threshold when the BWC is inactive, θ^*_{arr}, with the officer's arrest threshold when the BWC is active, which we denote θ^*_m. θ^*_m is the weighted average of θ^*_{arr} and $\theta^*_{act}(0)$, where the weights depend on the impact of BWCs on misconduct investigations: $\theta^*_m = \frac{\Delta'}{\Delta}\theta^*_{act}(0) + (1 - \frac{\Delta'}{\Delta})\theta^*_{arr}$. When $\theta^*_{act}(0) > \theta^*_{arr}$, the new threshold θ^*_m moves towards $\theta^*_{act}(0)$. In contrast, when $\theta^*_{act}(0) < \theta^*_{arr}$, θ^*_m moves away from $\theta^*_{act}(0)$.

2.3 Analysis of Officer Behavior

We separate officers into two different types based on θ^*_{arr} and $\theta^*_{act}(0)$. First, officers with $\theta^*_{arr} < \theta^*_{act}(0)$ are "protective activators" who activate whenever they can and where the ability to generate a record of their actions emboldens them to make additional arrests in risky situations. This attitude is illustrated by a post on an anonymous message board frequented by Chicago police officers from around the time BWCs were introduced: "I welcome these cameras whole heartedly. I am a pro active police officer. I know for a fact that if I do everything by the book then the Department HAS to back me up. I will continue to be proactive no matter what."

Second, officers with $\theta^*_{act}(0) < \theta^*_{arr}$ are "compromising activators" who strategically fail to activate in at least some arrests and where an obligation to generate a record of their actions will dissuade them from making some arrests. This attitude is illustrated by another post on the message board: "Handle jobs properly and do the bare minimum and you won't have any problems. Start being proactive with these cameras on and now you leave yourself open for lots of interpretations, second guessing and conflicts with offenders that will always look bad. Stay Fetal."

Figure A1 summarizes officer behavior under various conditions for θ^*_{arr}, $\theta^*_{act}(0)$, and ϵ_i. Panel A illustrates protective activators with no special incentive ($\epsilon_i = 0$). These officers activate in every arrest they make, and compared to having no BWCs, they make more arrests because activation expands the set of situations where they are comfortable arresting. Panels

B and C illustrate the effect of disincentivizing activation. Protective activators may not activate in all arrests, but, at a minimum, they still make all the arrests they would make without BWCs. For protective activators, added incentives to activate (positive ϵ_i) have no impact on their decision, since they already activate whenever possible.

Panel D turns to compromising activators facing no special incentive. These officers make the same arrests they would without BWCs but strategically fail to activate in their riskiest arrests to avoid creating records of those encounters. Panel E shows that giving compromising activators additional incentives to activate will cause them to withdraw from some arrests entirely. Adding disincentives to activate (negative ϵ_i) has no effect on compromising activators, since they already avoid activation in risky situations.

2.4 Implications

The model has three primary implications. First, the arrest behavior of compromising activators responds to BWCs differently than that of protective activators. Compromising activators reduce arrests and protective activators increase them. Second, protective activators have higher activation rates than compromising activators. Third, compromising activators will be those who received more complaints prior to the rollout of BWCs. We show the second two implications formally in Appendix B using variation in officer arrest incentives, $\frac{w_j}{c}$.

3 Background

In November 2015, the release of police footage of the shooting of Laquan McDonald triggered widespread protests throughout Chicago. In response to significant public and governmental pressure, CPD rapidly expanded its ongoing small-scale BWC pilot program and began a full-scale rollout of BWCs in June 2016. Chicago is broken up geographically into 22 police districts, and BWCs were rolled out at the district level between June 2016 and December 2017. Once BWCs were adopted in a district, all officers in the district were provided with one. Officers assigned to city-wide roles (e.g., detectives, vice, and SWAT) were never provided BWCs in our analysis period. Officers with BWCs received both hands-

on training and instruction on how to use them (CPD, 2016).

For officers with a BWC, CPD policy mandates that BWCs are worn on the front of the uniform and powered on at the start of each shift, and officers are required to verify that their BWC is working and charged at the beginning of each shift. Officers work in three primary shifts, referred to as watches, with the morning shift running from 6am to 2pm, the afternoon shift running from 2pm to 10pm, and the night shift running from 10pm to 6am.

CPD policy also mandates that officers activate at the start of any law-enforcement-related activity and record the entire duration of the incident. A law-enforcement related activity includes all arrests regardless of the officer's role in the arrest, responses to calls for service, investigatory stops, and any civilian encounter that becomes adversarial. If a victim or witness requests that an officer deactivate the BWC, officers may do so after providing a verbal justification on the recording before deactivating. At the end of the officer's shift, BWC footage is uploaded to a centralized digital management system.

BWCs may malfunction or lose power, preventing an officer from using them. If a BWC is not functioning properly, officers must contact a dedicated help desk that helps troubleshoot how to get the BWC functioning properly or helps get it replaced (Special Order 03-14).

According to CPD rules, BWC oversight falls to the watch operations lieutenants ("lieutenants") on duty in each shift. Their responsibilities include reviewing footage for every arrest to confirm probable cause and reviewing at least one randomly selected BWC recording per shift. Audits of this oversight system have found that some lieutenants perform these oversight duties rarely, if ever.[6]

If an officer does not follow activation rules, a superior officer can initiate a process for the officer to be punished through what is called a Summary Punishment Action Request. These requests are less serious and do not trigger the lengthier misconduct review process than formal complaints of misconduct. During our sample period (2016–2020), there was no separate category for BWC-specific violations, but the annual number of all

[6]In an audit of random reviews in seven districts, compliance was 85% in one district, 39% in another, 19% in another, and 0% in the remaining four districts (City of Chicago Office of Inspector General, 2019).

equipment-related requests ranged from 55 to 99, suggesting limited oversight response to BWC violations. This interpretation is consistent with contemporary investigations of CPD's BWC practices (e.g., the Chicago Civilian Office of Police Accountability's 2021 report on non-compliance with BWC regulations called for a re-evaluation of disciplinary protocols for BWC compliance failures).

4 Data and Descriptive Statistics

4.1 Data

We combine several datasets acquired from CPD through Freedom of Information Act requests. Across all datasets, we identify officers using a unique identifier based on their full name, year of birth, and date of appointment to CPD. Each dataset covers at least the time period before and after BWCs were adopted in all districts (2015-2020).

Arrest Data. We obtained data on adult arrests made by CPD officers containing the identity of the officer(s) making the arrest, the role of the officer in the arrest (e.g., assisting officer), the time and location of the arrest, the charges, and demographic information of the person arrested.[7] Many records also contain a unique "event identifier" on the specific event the officer is responding to that is generated by Chicago's emergency services dispatch after receiving a civilian call for service or a report from the officer in the field. Because all officers involved in an arrest have an obligation to activate their BWC, we organize the data at the officer-arrest level. We ignore arrests made by officers working in special units (e.g., detectives or SWAT), who did not have BWCs at any point in our sample period, as well as officers whom we never observed activating a BWC.

BWC Activation Data. We obtained data on every activation from July 2016 to December 2021. Each record contains the recording start and end time and the associated officer, and many records contain the same event identifier as in the arrest data.

[7]We keep arrests made by assisting officers in our primary analysis for several reasons. First, CPD regulations dictate that officers should activate their BWCs when participating in an arrest regardless of their role. Second, assisting officers must have been involved in the arrest itself; transport and booking are separate roles. Third, officer-level activation rates are highly correlated across their primary and assisting arrests, and the activation patterns we present below are not significantly impacted by dropping assisting officers from the sample.

Assignment Data. We obtained data on shifts worked for officers and lieutenants. Each record contains the date, the district, and the watch. We use this data to count the number of shifts an officer works in each calendar month. We also use this data to link each officer-shift to the lieutenant overseeing the shift. We exclude from our analysis arrests made while the officer was not on an identifiable shift.

Complaints Data. We obtained data on each complaint made to the civilian police oversight agency since 2000. Each record contains the date the complaint was made, the date the investigation ended, and whether the complaint was sustained. We use this data to construct officer-level complaint propensities before BWCs were adopted and to identify arrests that officers made during and after misconduct investigations.

BWC Help Desk Data. We obtained data on BWC help desk requests that we use to identify BWC equipment failures. For each help desk request, we observe the officer who made the request and the date.

Labeling BWC Activation in Arrests. Our first goal is to label each officer-arrest as either an activation or a non-activation. For officer-arrests where event identifiers are available in both the arrest data and BWC data, we can directly link arrests to activation and thus label the arrest as having an activation. Unfortunately, although officers are supposed to record event identifiers for each arrest and BWC recording, they often fail to do so.

When an arrest has a missing event identifier or does not match to the BWC data, we link them using timestamps for the arrest and activation. In the set of arrests that *can* be matched by event identifiers, arrest timestamps frequently fall significantly outside activation and de-activation timestamps. These gaps can arise when the arrest timestamp is given as the time a call was received or dispatched or the time an arrest was booked instead of the actual moment of arrest. Because arrest timestamps frequently fall outside the activation period, we do not attempt to identify cases where officers activated their BWC "too late" or deactivated "too early." Instead, we focus solely on the question of whether any activation can be associated with the arrest.

To do so, we use the arrests linked by event identifiers to estimate a Gaussian mixture

model of the relationship between arrest and activation timestamps. We then use the estimated model and a threshold for the proximity between arrest and activation timestamps to label unlinked arrests. We accept most such matches up to a 20-minute gap between the arrest timestamp and the activation window.[8] Appendix C sets out the details of our procedure, estimation, and validation exercises that reveal that the model performs well.

Our matching procedure inevitably produces some false negatives, cases where the BWC was truly activated but we mark it as having not been activated, and false positives, cases where the BWC was not activated but we mark it as having been activated. It is possible that officers are differentially exposed to the risk of these errors if they have different habits about writing down the event identifiers we use to assemble our set of more definite matches. However, our main interest is in each officer's activation rate, and this will be unaffected by false negatives and positives insofar as failing to write down event identifiers generates these problems in roughly equal proportion. Within the sample of matches using event identifiers, which we know to be true, our model rejects 6.7%. This provides an estimate for the false negative rate. We cannot easily estimate the false positive rate in our data because we do not have a sample of arrests we know are not activations. For an officer with a typical activation rate, 72.4%, at the 95th percentile of event identifier failure, 40%, the error in the measured activation rate ranges from -1.9 percentage points when the false positive rate is 0 to 0.3 percentage points when the false positive rate is 20%.

4.2 Descriptive Statistics.

For arrests made by officers with BWCs on patrol in the 22 districts, the activation rate at the officer-arrest level is 72.4%. Given that most arrests are made by multiple officers, a much higher share of arrests had at least one BWC activated (92.8%). And given that officers in units without BWCs also make arrests, the activation rate across all arrests in Chicago is much lower (62.3% at the officer-arrest level and 81.9% at the arrest level following full BWC adoption in 2018).

[8]The rule for accepting proximity matches is not a simple cutoff in time because our model allows for arrest characteristics to explain some of the observed discrepancy in timestamps.

Figure 1 reports activation rates across police districts, and Figure 2 reports activation rates across police districts over time. Activation rates differ between districts by up to 10 percentage points. Activation rates are typically higher on the North side of the city, which has a population that is on average whiter and wealthier than the South and West sides of the city, which have populations that are on average less white and poorer, but there are notable exceptions. For example, District 9, on the South side, has among the highest district-level activation rates. Activation rates are lower and more variable during the period when BWCs were rolled out but stabilized by 2018. Going forward, our analysis of activation rates therefore focuses on data from 2018 and later except when we study the rollout of BWCs.

5 Differences in Officer Activation Rates

Our model divides officers into two types, protective and compromising activators, whom we expect to activate BWCs at different rates. In this section, we investigate the importance of officers to activation in two ways. First, we investigate the extent to which differences between officer activation rates reflect a fixed officer-level component. Later sections will use this officer-level variation, first to test implications of the model using the rollout of BWCs, then to structurally estimate that model.

Second, we decompose the effect of observables on the variation in officer activation rates. Unlike many domains with a well-established baseline empirical model (e.g., the Mincer equation for wages), little is known about the basic drivers of BWC activation. We therefore devote more space than usual to this type of analysis, describing at some length the motivation for including different situational factors and reporting results on how well these factors explain both activation and variation in officer-level activation rates.

The question of whether activation has a strong officer-specific component bears on more than just the validity of our model of officer-level heterogeneity. Even in the absence of a particular theory of why some officers activate less than others, there is policy insight in understanding how much circumstances explain activation rates. If officers with particularly low activation rates were just disproportionately in situations that lead to less activation, then the apparent lack of discipline or remediation of officers with low activation rates would

represent proper enforcement of a reasonable policy. However, if meaningful differences remain even after accounting for situational factors, this calls into question the policy or its enforcement.

5.1 Officer Effects

Figure 3 reports the distribution of officer activation rates (and an adjusted distribution discussed below). In this distribution and subsequent analyses in this section, we drop officers who made 10 or fewer arrests in the period studied. We find large differences in activation rates between officers. For high-activating officers, while the activation rate is not perfect for any officers, it is more than 90% for 12% of officers and more than 75% for 58% of officers. In contrast, for low-activating officers, the activation rate is less than two-thirds for 20% of officers and than half for 10% of officers. The result is that the magnitude of the difference between officers is large. For example, the difference in activation rates between the 25th and 75th percentile officers is 19 percentage points.

Next, we investigate the extent to which these differences in officer activation rates reflect a fixed officer-level component. First, we document the within-officer stability of activation rates across policing environments. To do so, we regress each officer's activation in a particular environment on their leave-out activation rate elsewhere. We do this in terms of individual arrests, time (a quarter), geographic environment (district and beat), different times of the day (morning, day, and night watch), arresting role (primary, secondary, assisting officer), and under different lieutenants.[9] For example, for the analysis across quarters, we regress officer activation rates in a given quarter on the officer's leave-out activation rate in other quarters; and for the analysis across police districts, we regress an officer's activation rate in one district on their activation rate in other districts.

Second, we repeat the above two exercises but replace the officer's leave-out activation rates with an Empirical Bayes leave-out activation rate that shrinks noisy estimates towards the mean activation rate (Weisburst, 2024). For example, for the officer-level Empirical Bayes, we estimate $\hat{Y}_i^{\text{EB}} = \frac{y_i+a}{n_i+a+b}$, where y_i is the number of arrests by officer i with

[9]We drop 14% of officer-arrests where we do not observe lieutenant identifiers for the officer-shift.

activation, n_i is the total number of arrests by officer i, and a, b are the tuning parameters that define the priors on activation rates.[10] Because differences in leave-out activation rates between officers could be driven by noise but the amount of noise depends on the number of arrests officers make, measurement error in leave-out activation rates could attenuate the estimates towards zero, but the shrunken activation rate should correct for some of the noise and reduce attenuation bias. This shrinkage approach has been used in the policing setting (e.g., Rozema and Schanzenbach, 2019) and is a common approach in teacher value-added literature (Chetty et al., 2014).

Table 1 reports the results. We find strong evidence of a fixed officer component in each of the tests. In Panel A, we find that officers with a 1 percentage point higher activation rate are 0.71 percentage points more likely to activate in the current arrest and that activation rates are related across each of the environments we consider. In Panel B, we find that using Empirical Bayes improves the predictiveness of leave-out activation rates, suggesting that noise across the different situational domains is attenuating the estimates towards zero.

Third, we assess the extent to which the persistence of activation rates within officers across arrests, time, and situations can be explained by officers sorting to certain environments. One concern with assessing the stability of officer activation rate across different environments is that officers could select into environments, and it could be the environments rather than a fixed officer-level component that drives the stability of activation rates. If officers' activation rate is fixed, then officers switching into beats who have higher activation rates than officers already in the beat should witness an increase in overall activation rates in the beat even if the type of beat they switch to is endogenous to their activation rate, and the same holds in reverse for officers switching into beats who have lower activation rates. Switchers tests in this spirit were introduced in the teacher value-added literature

[10] Specifically, $a = \overline{p_i}\left(\frac{\overline{p_i}(1-\overline{p_i})}{\mathrm{var}_i(p_i)-\overline{p_i}(1-\overline{p_i})\,\overline{1/n_i}} - 1\right)$, is a parameter that added to each officers activation rate that pulls officers with fewer observations toward the overall activation rate at higher levels, and $b = (1-\overline{p_i})\left(\frac{\overline{p_i}(1-\overline{p_i})}{\mathrm{var}_i(p_i)-\overline{p_i}(1-\overline{p_i})\,\overline{1/n_i}} - 1, \right)$ is a parameter that allows the shrinkage to incorporate the overall activation rate and spread of activation rates across officers.

(e.g., Chetty et al., 2014) but have been also applied in policing (Rozema and Schanzenbach, 2019; Rivera, 2025). Appendix D describes the setup of the switchers test in detail. In Appendix Table D1, we find that the confidence interval of the 1:0.94 relationship between the actual impact of officers entering and departing a beat and the impact that would be expected if officers had a fixed activation rate includes 1:1.

Finally, we assess whether officers with low activation rates have higher complaint rates before the introduction of BWCs, as our theory predicts. Appendix Table A1 reports estimates from regressing officer activation rates on their annual complaint rate computed from all years between 1999 and 2015 where the officer was on the force. We repeat this using the discrete measures of low activation and high complaints that we will use below as proxies for officer type. We find that officers with a 10 percentage point higher activation rate have 2.2 percentage points higher annual complaint rate (6% relative to the mean complaint rate) and that the quarter of officers with the lowest activation rates are 5.4 percentage points more likely to be in the top quarter of officers with the highest complaint rate (23% more likely relative to the mean).

5.2 The Role of Situational Factors

We next consider how observable situational factors influence activation and how much they explain the variance of officer-level activation rates. We consider the conditions of the arrest—such as the time, location, and offense—that may affect activation. We also consider operational constraints that may prevent the officer from recording the arrest, such as arriving later in an assisting role or equipment malfunctions. Finally, we consider other aspects of the institutional and oversight environment—such as lieutenants, peers, and complaint investigations—that may affect how officers weigh the oversight implications of activation.

In the remainder of this section, we first describe the factors we consider in more detail. We then present our estimation strategy and results.

5.2.1 Measuring Situational Factors

(A) Conditions Surrounding the Arrest. Work Environment. Work environment can contribute to differences in activation rates due to differences in place and time-specific conditions, prevailing norms, and different types of interactions. We measure this with district by calendar month and hour of the week fixed effects.

Work Schedule. Work schedules can contribute to differences in activation rates between officers due to fatigue, disruptions to routine, and the challenges of adapting to unfamiliar assignments. We assess the contribution of work schedules by including indicators for whether the officer had a high recent workload (defined as working more than 5 of the last 7 days), for a double shift in a day, for transition shifts immediately before and after time off (defined as 5 days of not working), for atypical shifts where the officer works a different watch than the officer's recent pattern (defined as shifts where 0 or 1 of the officer's past 10 shifts were on the same watch), and beat transition for the first week and first two weeks following assignment to a new beat.

Encounter. Encounter characteristics can contribute to differences in activation rates between officers because certain encounters may carry greater perceived risk, complexity, or scrutiny. We assess the contribution of encounter characteristics by including indicators for violent crimes, police-related crimes, felony crimes, race, sex, and age ranges. Because we find that there are not large differences in activation rates between crime types and severity (Appendix Figure A2), our primary approach uses these three measures of crime type, but we find similar results if we include crime category fixed effects.

(B) Operational Constraints. Officer Role. Officers involved in the arrest are either the first arresting officer, the second arresting officer, or an assisting officer. The first two may be likely to activate before making the physical arrest, whereas assisting officers may not help make the physical arrest but instead may help with securing the area and interviewing witnesses. We assess the contribution of arresting roles by including indicators for second arresting officer and assisting officer, as well as measures of the number of officers involved

with the arrest: sole officer, 5 or more officers, and 10 or more officers.

Equipment Issues. Officers with equipment issues may not be able to activate their BWCs. We assess the contribution of potential equipment issues by including indicators for the officer filing a BWC help desk request the day the arrest was made and for the officer having made fewer than 20 and fewer than 50 arrests since first being assigned a BWC. The former captures the inability of the officer to activate due to BWC equipment failure, and the latter captures potential inactivation due to inexperience with BWCs.

(C) Institutional Pressures. Lieutenants. The lieutenant presiding over a shift may be expected to influence officer activation rates because they may set different expectations for activation and vary in how closely they supervise and discipline officers for failing to activate. We assess this contribution by including lieutenant fixed effects.

Peer Effects. Officer activation decisions could be influenced by other officers involved in the arrest through peer effects. We assess the contribution of peer effects by including indicators for low and high-activating peers, measured as being in the bottom and top quartiles of the peer activation rates within a given district and calendar month.[11]

Enhanced Oversight. Officers who have experienced recent misconduct investigations may feel a sense of enhanced oversight. We assess the contribution of enhanced oversight by including indicators for the officer having any ongoing misconduct investigations, the officer having multiple ongoing misconduct investigations, and the officer having a complaint sustained in the past 3 and 6 months.

5.2.2 Research Design

To investigate how much of the differences in officer activation rates can be explained by situational factors, we begin by estimating a series of regressions of the form:

$$Y_{ij} = \beta X_{ij} + \theta_j + \epsilon_{ij} \tag{6}$$

[11]If the officer is the only officer involved with the arrest, we set both indicators to 0.

where Y_{ij} is activation in arrest i by officer j, X_{ij} is some scalar environmental factor, θ_j are officer fixed effects, and ϵ_{ij} is a noise term.

Defining $\hat{\theta}_j^X$ and $\hat{\theta}_j$ as the estimated fixed effects when X_{ij} is and is not included in the regression, the difference in their variances is given by:

$$\text{Var}(\hat{\theta}_j) - \text{Var}(\hat{\theta}_j^X) = \beta^2 \text{Var}(\bar{X}_j) + 2\beta \text{Cov}(\bar{X}_j, \theta_j) \tag{7}$$

Equation 7 shows that the amount of variance explained by any given X_{ij} depends on how much X_{ij} directly affects activation (β), how much it varies across officers ($\text{Var}(\bar{X}_j)$), and how much it covaries with officer fixed effects ($\text{Cov}(\bar{X}_j, \theta_j)$). Situational factors that explain a meaningful amount of variation in activation rates across officers must have both a large effect and a large variance or covariance. Below, we will plot β, $\text{Var}(\bar{X}_j)$, and $\text{Cov}(\bar{X}_j, \theta_j)$ for several X_{ij} in order to better understand why they do or do not explain officer-level activation variance.[12]

To summarize the explanatory power of a vector of situational factors $\mathbf{X}_{ij}$, we estimate the fraction of the variance they explain collectively:

$$\gamma^{\mathbf{X}} = 1 - \frac{\text{Var}(\hat{\theta}_j^{\mathbf{X}})}{\text{Var}(\theta_j)} \tag{8}$$

5.2.3 Results

We present the results of the variance decomposition first for individual factors and then for their combination.

Figure 4 reports β^X, the variance of X_{ij}, and our imputed covariance effect for several covariates grouped according to the categories above. Each β^X comes from a regression that only includes X_{ij}. For covariates with more than two categories (e.g., lieutenant), we present an indicator for categories in the bottom quartile of activation rates. Note that bars in Figure 4 filled with black dots reflect factors that *decrease* activation.

[12] We cannot directly calculate $\text{Cov}(\bar{X}_j, \theta_j)$ because the true officer fixed effect, θ_j, is unobserved, but we can calculate it as a residual using $\frac{\text{Var}(\hat{\theta}_j) - \text{Var}(\hat{\theta}_j^X) - \text{Var}(\hat{\theta}_j - \hat{\theta}_j^X)}{2\beta}$.

From Equation 7, a covariate explains a substantial fraction of the cross-officer variation in activation rates only if both β^X and either the variance or covariance term is high. We find that this is rare. Some covariates have large effects on activation but do not vary substantially across officers. Examples of this include working a double shift and having made a help desk request that day. These factors affect the force-wide activation rate, but they cannot explain variation across officers. Likewise, covariance effects are typically quite small.

Other covariates meaningfully vary across officers but have only small effects on activation. Examples include experience with BWCs and oversight measures. For example, some officers are much more likely than others to be under a complaint investigation, but being under investigation is only associated with a 1.5 percentage point higher activation. These estimates do not control for selection into peers or oversight, but we suspect that a design that did would still be unlikely to find activation effects of sufficient size to explain much of the overall variance in officer-level activation rates.

Finally, a small number of covariates have meaningful activation effects and variation across officers. This includes whether the officer is in an assisting role (16 percentage points less likely to activate, and the variance of the share of arrests in assisting roles of 0.028) and whether the officer is in a low-activation work environment (16 percentage points less likely to activate, and the variance of the share of arrests that are for violent crimes of 0.02).

In Figure 5, we consider the total impact of each category of covariate by plotting $\gamma^{\mathbf{X}}$, the percentage of the overall officer variance explained by that $\mathbf{X}$. The covariate group that explains the most is officer role at 8.3%. Some situational factors, such as schedule, actually increase the measured officer-level variance due to the covariance term in Equation 7.

The light gray bar on the far right of Figure 5 simply sums the other bars while the dark gray estimates $\gamma^{\mathbf{X}}$ for our full set of covariates. The former is 14.9% while the latter is 10.8%. Some of the characteristics that explain officer-level activation rates are themselves correlated, so the model that includes all factors explains less than the sum of individual

models.

Overall, we find that very little of the officer-level variation in activation rates can be explained by observables. This leaves a large potential role for the strategic considerations described in our model. We turn our attention to this in the remaining sections.

For this analysis, we considered an expansive set of covariates in order to paint a clear picture of what did and did not explain variation in activation rate across officers. Moving forward, however, we must be sensitive to the possibility that certain controls will be endogenous to the activation and arrest decisions we are interested in. Thus, the adjusted activation distribution in Figure 3 includes only environment, encounter, and role controls. This is the distribution we will use as an input to our analyses in Sections 6 and 7. That said, adding the additional controls has little impact on the adjusted activation rates (Appendix Figure A3), with the adjusted activation rates without the endogenous controls explaining 93 percent of the variation in the adjusted activation rates with all the controls.

Although the controls do explain some differences in activation between officers, they do not change officer activation rates very much, with the unadjusted rates explaining 95.1 percent of the variation in the adjusted rates (Appendix Figure A4). Of course, we observe only an incomplete set of imperfect proxies for situational circumstances that could explain differences in activation rates between officers. Importantly, however, whereas some factors explain differences in activation rates between officers (e.g., arresting roles), other factors actually amplify differences for some officers and reduce differences for others (e.g., unusual shifts). This implies that the true differences in activation rates between officers that are attributable to officer disposition or strategic non-activation if all situational circumstances could be fully controlled could actually be greater than the officer activation rates adjusted for the situational factors we can observe.

6 Body-Worn Cameras and Arrest Behavior

The findings of a persistent officer-level component in activation rates are consistent with our model of officer activation types, but they do not themselves establish the mechanism suggested in the model. That mechanism is that introducing BWCs will cause

compromising activators to make fewer arrests but will cause protective activators to make more arrests. This section investigates this prediction by leveraging the staggered rollout of BWCs to different police districts.

6.1 Research Design

We are interested in how BWCs differentially affect arrest behavior for compromising activators compared to protective activators. Although whether a specific officer is a compromising or protective activator is an unobserved latent variable, our model implies that officer type is correlated with observable activation rates. We therefore use activation rates as a proxy to identify compromising officers. We specifically separate officers at the 25th percentile of adjusted activation rates. We calculate this percentile using data from 2018 and later, so it does not use the same time period as the rollout period we study here. The choice of the 25th percentile as a threshold is arbitrary, but we will show robustness to a wide range of thresholds below.

BWCs were rolled out in Chicago at the district-level in roughly three adoption periods: 6 districts from June 2016 to February 2017, 5 districts from March 2017 to July 2017, and 11 districts from October 2017 to December 2017.[13] We use this staggered adoption of BWCs across police districts in a difference-in-differences design. Given the negative weighting issues associated with two-way fixed effects (TWFE) approaches with staggered policy adoption, our primary specification uses the approach in Callaway and Sant'Anna (2021). This estimates treatment effects that are both district and time-specific using only comparisons between treated and not-yet-treated districts. We use data from 6 months before the first district adopted BWCs up to the last adoption in our data.

Callaway and Sant'Anna (2021) only allows for comparisons of the treated and control districts, but we are interested in how BWCs differentially affect arrest behavior by officer type within the same district in a triple-differences setting. To estimate the differential

[13]Appendix Figure A5 shows the full panel of data we use, marking the rollout dates of each district. Districts 2, 6, 9, 10, 14, and 15 adopted BWCs from June 2016 to February 2017. Districts 1, 4, 7, 11, and 18 adopted BWCs from March 2017 to July 2017. Districts 3, 5, 8, 12, 16, 17, 19, 20, 22, 24, and 25 adopted BWCs from October 2017 to December 2017.

impact of BWCs by officer type, we follow guidance in Roth et al. (2023) and define the outcome as the difference in the average arrests per shift per month between officer types:

$$y_{dt} = \frac{\sum_i A^c_{jdt}}{\sum_i S^c_{jdt}} - \frac{\sum_i A^p_{jdt}}{\sum_i S^p_{jdt}} \tag{9}$$

for officer j, district d, and calendar month t, where A^c_{jdt} and A^p_{jdt} are arrests and S^c_{jdt} and S^p_{jdt} are shifts worked by compromising and protective activators, respectively. We restrict to full-time officers assigned to a district.[14] The identifying assumption is that the differential arrest measure in a district that adopts BWCs evolves similarly to the control districts that have not yet adopted BWCs. We assess this assumption by reporting results from the event study specification from Callaway and Sant'Anna (2021).

6.2 Primary Results

Figure 6 reports the event study results and reveals that the difference of the differential arrest measure between the treated and control districts in the pre-period is stable and not statistically different from zero, consistent with parallel pre-trends.

Table 2 reports the regression results. In Column 1, we find that BWCs decrease arrests per shift by compromising activators relative to protective activators by 12% (0.026 relative to a baseline of 0.213 arrests per shift). Columns 2-3 report results by officer type and reveal results consistent with the model—a positive point estimate for protective activators and a negative one for compromising, but only the former is statistically significant.

Column 4 reports results on the overall effect of BWCs on arrests. We find that the changes in the two groups offset, combining to produce no significant overall effect. Because the fraction of compromising activators will determine the overall effect on arrests, these results illustrate how the officer heterogeneity highlighted by our model may explain

[14]For the full-time restriction, we exclude officer-months where the officer works fewer than 5 shifts. This drops 3.3% of officer-months in our data. Officers are assigned to one district at any time and typically work exclusively in that district until their assignment changes. However, officers occasionally work in another district, such as if they work overtime or on a special detail. We treat all arrests made by an officer as if they were made in this modal district. Modal districts account for 99.4% of all assignments within a given officer-calendar month.

the mixed evidence of the overall effect of BWCs on arrest behavior documented in the literature (e.g., Lum et al., 2020).

6.3 Heterogeneity

Persistent Officers. Our main results allow officers to move between districts over time. If officers respond to the presence of BWCs by seeking to move into or out of districts, and if these preferences are correlated with baseline arrest rates, this could drive the results. This would be a different mechanism than that suggested by our model, where individual officers change their arrest behavior in response to BWCs.

We assess the extent to which this mechanism drives the main results by focusing on officers who have a consistent assignment throughout the rollout period. Specifically, in one specification we focus on the 41% of officers who are in the same district in 12 of the 13 months around BWC adoption in their district (the month of rollout and 6 months on either side), and in another we focus on the 38% of officers who are in the same district in 20 of the 25 months considered in our analysis. Columns 1-2 of Table 3 report the results and reveal consistent results.

Initiating Arrests. Next, our model is primarily about the decision to initiate an arrest and is therefore more applicable for first or second arresting officers rather than assisting officers who may have been called to the scene only after the decision to make the arrest was made. We therefore consider alternate specifications that focus on either only primary or only assisting arrests. Columns 3-4 of Table 3 report the results and reveal that relative activation rates in both groups decline by approximately 12% (0.011 primary arrests per shift from a baseline of 0.095 and 0.014 assisting arrests per shift from a baseline of 0.119). However, the estimates for primary officers are substantially more precise, which suggests a more direct connection between overall activation behavior and arrests initiated by the officer.

Hassle Costs. Now we consider the possibility that BWCs change officer behavior primarily because they introduce added "hassle costs" from a perceived need to be more formal in the encounter or increased paperwork associated with logging the video itself.

BWCs may cause officers who are particularly sensitive to these hassle costs to reduce their arrest effort. For some marginal arrests, BWCs may leave officers with two less-than-ideal options: activate and pay the hassle cost, or do not activate and risk disciplinary costs. Officers in this position may activate less often and also opt not to make some arrests that they would have made in the absence of BWCs.

We test this possibility in two ways. First, note that if activation behavior is primarily driven by hassle costs rather than misconduct considerations, then we should expect that marginal arrests will be those with the lowest perceived return, such as misdemeanors and public order arrests. In these low-return arrests, the fixed hassle costs will be more likely to deter officers from making the arrest. Columns 5-7 of Table 3 thus report results separately for felony, misdemeanor, and public order arrests. We find that, relative to baseline arrests per shift of that kind, the estimated effects are largest for felony arrests (29%), followed by misdemeanor arrests (7%) then public order arrests (not statistically significant, but with a point estimate of 5%). These results are inconsistent with a hassle cost story and consistent with our model, where marginal arrests are those with the highest risk of misconduct accusations.

Second, we divide officers by a characteristic that our model also relates to the latent officer type but that is unrelated to hassle costs: complaints. Our proxy for compromising officers is at least the 75th percentile in the monthly complaint rate for each month an officer is active from 2015 the beginning of the rollout.[15] Column 8 of Table 3 reports the results and reveals that, if anything, using complaints to identify officer type leads to an even greater change in behavior, a differential decrease of 20% compared to 12% in the primary specification.

Intensive Margin. Our primary result focuses on the extensive margin between compromising and protective activators. However, compromising activators should differ across an intensive margin of how much they respond to BWCs. We therefore investigate the extent to which arrests differ more for the compromising officers at the extreme.

[15]We cannot calculate this rate for some officers who were appointed around the time of the BWC rollout, so they are excluded from this analysis.

We do this in two ways. First, we compare a constant comparison group of high-activating officers above the 50th percentile, with two different sets of low-activating officers. We specifically use a +/- 10 percentile range around each percentile from the 10th to the 40th. For example, the 10th percentile estimates compute the differential arrests per shift between officers in the 1st to 20th percentile to that of officers with above median activation rates, and the 40th percentile estimates compute the differential arrests per shift between officers in the 31st to 50th percentile to that of officers with above median activation rates, and so on.

Second, we study whether the power of this comparison can be enhanced by also using information about officers' prior complaint records. Specifically, we repeat this same exercise with a constant comparison group but instead impose rules on both the percentile of officer activation rates and the percentile of officer complaints. For example, the 10th percentile estimates compute the differential arrests per shift between officers in the 1st to 20th percentile for activation rates and between the 81st and 100th percentile of complaints (recall that we expect that compromising officers will have low activation rates and high complaint rates) to that of officers with both above median activation rates and below median complaints.

Figure 7 reports the results. We find evidence that the effects of BWCs are concentrated among the officers who likely find BWCs the most compromising. This is the case with using activation rates alone but it is the most pronounced when using both activation rates and complaints. For example, we find that BWCs decrease arrests per shift by the fifth most compromising activators relative to protective activators by 2.3 percentage points when using activation rates alone but by 7.9 percentage points when using both activation rates and complaints. These results are strongly consistent with the model predictions of which officers have a higher incentive for strategic non-activation.

6.4 Robustness

We next assess the sensitivity of the primary estimates to alternative estimators and specifications.

Alterative Estimators. We consider three types of alternative estimators. First, using the same basic setup in the primary specification, we use various alternative estimators from the recent literature on DD estimates in settings with staggered treatment adoption (Butts and Gardner, 2022; Goodman-Bacon, 2021; de Chaisemartin and D'Haultfœuille, 2020; Sun and Abraham, 2021; Borusyak et al., 2024; Dube et al., 2023; Arkhangelsky et al., 2021). Second, using a dataset at the officer-arrest level, we extend a simple two-way fixed effects (TWFE) specification to incorporate our triple-differences setting by including fixed effects for the interaction of the presence of BWCs and compromising activator. To draw on changes in arrest behavior within officers, we include officer fixed effects. This specification may have negative weighting issues but it has the advantage of estimating a triple-difference specification directly. Finally, we use a stacked event study design (Cengiz et al., 2019; Deshpande and Li, 2019). For each month that one or more districts adopted BWCs, we create a sub-dataset with treated districts that adopted BWCs in that month from 6 months before the event to 12 months after and control districts that did not have BWCs in the entire event window. Following the specification in Deshpande and Li (2019), we include event by district and event by calendar month fixed effects. To draw on within-officer variation, we conduct the analysis at the officer-arrest level and include officer fixed effects. Following Wing et al. (2024), we cluster standard errors at the district level and with their suggested weights, though our results are very similar without these weights. Appendix Table A2 reports the results and reveals largely consistent estimates.[16]

Noise in Officer Activation Rates. We use officers' observed activation rates as a proxy to identify officer type. However, observed activation rates are noisier for officers who make fewer arrests. This can lead us to misclassification of officer type, as both the group of high- and low-activating officers contains some officers in the other group. This in turn

[16]The two exceptions are Goodman-Bacon (2021) and de Chaisemartin and D'Haultfœuille (2020), both of which find small and statistically insignificant effects. In the former case, this is due to the inclusion of "reverse" comparisons where a district that has already rolled out is used as a comparison for one that has not yet rolled out. When we remove these comparisons, the point estimate rises to -0.027. We think that de Chaisemartin and D'Haultfœuille (2020) is a poor fit for our setting due to its focus on changes immediately around treatment and the fact that treatment typically happens midway through a period in our data.

introduces measurement error in our outcome and attenuates estimates towards zero.

One potential solution to address noise would be to use Empirical Bayes methods to shrink noisy estimates towards the mean as we did in Section 5 when studying only activation rates. This approach would be a good one to address the noise concern if noise was not correlated with officer type. The problem is that noise is correlated with officer type because different types of officers make arrests at different rates. Therefore, through the shrinkage, the activation rates of protective activators/high-activating officers who make fewer arrests will be pulled down toward the mean more than the activation rates of compromising activators/low-activating officers who make more arrests will be pulled up to the mean. This misclassification will be worse for low-arrest officers, causing the middle of the shrunken distribution to mix more protective activators with the true compromising activators. Thus, the shrinkage approach could introduce non-classical measurement error and bias the estimates.

Given this concern with shrunken activation rates, we prefer to use unshrunken activation rates as our primary specification. However, the concern with the shrinkage approach is not as strongly present at the tails of the distribution, as the tails will consist of high- and low-activating officers with many arrests. We therefore use the shrunken approach but focus on the tails by repeating the intensive margin exercise from Figure 7. Appendix Figure A6 reports the results and reveals slightly larger estimates at the tails that are not statistically different from our primary specification.

7 Differences in Officer Strategic Non-Activation

This section investigates strategic non-activation and the resulting consequences for the design of BWC policies. To do so, we estimate the model from Section 2 to match the distribution of officer-level activation rates from Section 5 and the arrest responses to the presence of BWCs estimated in Section 6. The results in this section are, of course, specific to CPD in the late 2010s and should not be generalized to all police departments with BWCs or to other optional oversight settings. But with that said, our setting is an important one—the second largest police department in the US—and our results illustrate

the novel tradeoffs involved with optional oversight settings.

7.1 Estimation

Appendix E describes in detail the estimation procedure that we summarize here. We begin by assuming distributions for key parameters. The arrest-level probability of misconduct, θ_i, is drawn from a uniform distribution bounded by 0 and A. Each officer's relative reward for an arrest, $\frac{w_j}{c}$, is drawn from a log-normal distribution. Idiosyncratic activation incentives, ϵ_i, are drawn from a distribution parameterized by p_l and p_h. With probability p_l, $\epsilon_i = -\infty$ and activation is impossible. With probability p_h, $\epsilon_i = \infty$ and activation is unavoidable. Otherwise, $\epsilon_i = 0$. This parameterization will make it easier to characterize different potential explanations for activation failure or disengagement due to a perceived need to activate.

Next, we compute summary statistics of the arrest and discipline environment to eliminate some parameters in the model. Following this, we are left with a vector of 7 parameters: $\{q_T, q_F, \theta^*_{act}(0), \delta_F, p_l, p_h, \sigma_u\}$. Here, $\delta_F = -\frac{q'_F}{q_F}$ captures the relative reduction in the probability of false positives achieved from activation, and σ_u adds mean-zero noise to officer-level activation rates.

Finally, we choose these parameters to match 11 moments: 9 moments of the distribution of adjusted officer-level activation rates (the 1st, 5th, 10th, 25th, 50th, 75th, 90th, 95th, and 99th percentiles), and the estimated effect of BWCs on arrests differentially by officer type and overall (Columns 1 and 4 from Table 2).

7.2 Strategic Non-Activation

Having found that differences in officer activation rates cannot be explained by observable covariates but are consistent with our model of optional oversight, we now leverage the estimated model to investigate the prevalence of compromising activators and how much of the variance in officer-level activation can be explained by strategic non-activation.

Panel A of Figure 8 reports simulated officer activation rate data that divides officers by their latent compromising or protective type (those with $\theta^*_m < \theta^*_{arr}$ and $\theta^*_{arr} < \theta^*_m$).

Panel B reports the share of non-activations due to strategic behavior among the compromising activators.[17] We find that 55% of officers are compromising activators, meaning they strategically fail to activate at least sometimes. These compromising activators activate less overall and have a greater spread of activation rates. This is because their activation decisions depend not just on idiosyncratic factors but also on their willingness to make risky arrests in which they prefer to keep the BWC off.

To estimate how much of the differences in activation rates between officers is explained by strategic non-activation, we calculate $\gamma^{\mathbf{X}}$ as we did with situational factors in Equation 8 but using simulated distributions with and without strategic non-activation. We find that strategic non-activation accounts for as much as 62% of officer-level activation variation after adjusting for environment, encounter, and role.[18]

These estimates assume that officer incentives for strategic non-activation are unrelated to idiosyncratic activation failures. It is not obvious that this assumption will hold. For example, the assumption may not hold if compromising activators who strategically fail to activate can select into certain districts, assignments, or arrest roles where expected activation is lower. We use officer activation rates that adjust for situational factors in order to account for this and related concerns, but there could still be unobserved factors that would cause officer strategic non-activation to be correlated (or inversely correlated) with inability to activate for idiosyncratic reasons. We assess the robustness of the results to a failure of this assumption by allowing idiosyncratic activation failure, p_l, to directly covary with the arrest incentives that shape whether an officer is a protective or compromising activator, $\frac{w_j}{c}$. Under conservative assumptions that allow a standard deviation for p_l of 0.1 and a correlation coefficient with $\frac{w_j}{c}$ of up to 0.5, we find that strategic non-activation still explains up to 24% of the variance across officers.

[17] Appendix Figure A7 reports the simulated distribution of officer activation rates overall and compares it against the data.

[18] The simulated distribution with strategic non-activation has a variance of 0.033. The simulated distribution without strategic non-activations has a variance of 0.012.

7.3 Policy Design with Strategic Non-Activation

In this section, we consider the effect of policies that encourage activation and how they interact with optional oversight. Throughout, we will consider effects on three outcomes: activation, arrests, and misconduct.[19] Police departments may care directly about a high rate of activation, both because it improves evidence gathering for downstream criminal justice proceedings and because it fulfills oversight promises made to the community. However, police departments also want officers to make justified arrests and not engage in misconduct. Our goal is to characterize the tradeoffs between these goals under different policies that encourage activation.

We will consider two types of policies. The first type of "reminder" policy aims to ensure that officers maintain functioning BWCs and remember to activate even in the heat of the moment. In our model, this corresponds to a reduction in p_l, the probability that officers do not activate even if it would be in their interest to do so. The second type of "enforcement" policy is more lenient or stricter enforcement of activation rules designed to detect and punish non-activation. In our model, this corresponds to an increase in p_h, the probability that officers must activate even if they would prefer not to. For each pair of policies $(p_l, p_h) \in [0,1] \times [0,1]$, we use our model to simulate activation rates, arrest rates per shift, and misconduct rates per shift for each simulated officer.

We begin our analysis by assessing the sets of outcomes that are reachable by police departments and how this set is shaped by optional oversight. We then show how each of the policies we consider affects these outcomes and why.

Outcomes Space. Figure 9 reports activation rate (x-axis), average arrests per shift (y-axis), and misconduct events per 10,000 shifts (shading) separately for protective activators and compromising activators as well as department-wide outcomes. The colored

[19]Note that we will rely on our model-based estimate of actual misconduct events, not reports of misconduct or sustained misconduct. The reason we do not estimate our model using moments of complaints or sustained complaints—common proxies for misconduct—is that BWCs are likely to directly impact the decision to file complaints and the investigation process. While we therefore do not place heavy trust in the magnitudes of these simulated misconduct figures, the comparisons of relative misconduct across policies are still informative.

region is feasible for some $(p_l, p_h) \in [0,1] \times [0,1]$, and the white region is not.

To understand the role that optional oversight plays, we first shut it down and consider the outcomes available only in scenarios where there is no role for officer discretion. In our model, these are settings where $p_l + p_h = 1$, and they form the bottom boundary of each shape in Figure 9, highlighted by a dashed line. A policy space of $p_l = 1$ and $p_h = 0$ corresponds to having no BWCs, a policy space of $p_l = 0$ and $p_h = 1$ corresponds to BWCs that are always on, and the line connecting these points corresponds to random monitoring with probability p_h. In the intermediate settings, officers know when they are being monitored, but activation may occasionally fail for idiosyncratic reasons.

Figure 9 reveals that compromising and protective activators have different reactions to increased non-discretionary oversight. Compromising activators respond to more consistent enforcement by reducing both arrests and misconduct while protective activators follow the opposite pattern. In both cases, the gradient for compromising activators is steeper, so they dominate department-wide outcomes. Note that this is not an inevitable feature of the model and may reverse in settings where compromising activators are rare.

Thus, without optional oversight, we find a clear department-wide tradeoff with arrests on one hand and activation and misconduct on the other. As enforcement becomes more consistent, activation increases, misconduct decreases, and arrests also decrease. In particular, departments can achieve lower misconduct rates only in conjunction with lower arrest rates.

Optional oversight, however, expands the set of outcomes available to the full shapes presented in Figure 9. In our model, these are settings where $p_l + p_h < 1$. As compared to the policing outcomes with non-discretionary oversight, the policing outcomes with optional oversight remain the same for protective activators because they always activate whenever they can but expand for both compromising activators and the department as a whole.

Under optional oversight, some available outcomes simultaneously increase activation, decrease misconduct, and hold arrests constant, even relative to the time before BWCs. This can be seen in Figure 9. Relative to the actual point in the outcome space that we observe, a

point directly to the right is achievable. Another achievable point lies directly above, which permits an increase in arrest rates relative to the time before BWCs, though at the cost of some misconduct. One perhaps surprising implication of this is that police departments may therefore *prefer* optional oversight to non-discretionary oversight, especially if they value maintaining high arrest rates.

Mapping Policy Space to the Outcomes Space. Finally, we investigate what policies interact with optional oversight to expand the space of outcomes available in favorable directions. To do so, Figure 10 reports the movement around the outcome space from changes in p_l and p_h.

We find stark differences in the effects of strengthening a reminder policy compared to an enforcement policy. As a department strengthens its reminder policy (through a decrease in p_l), activation rates increase for both officer types but the effect on arrests and misconduct differs by officer type. Protective activators make more arrests because they are more likely to be covered by the BWC, which increases their willingness to make arrests. This also produces a marginal increase in misconduct resulting from the additional arrests. Compromising activators make the same number of arrests because they were already willing to make their riskiest arrest without the BWC on, but this comes with no change in misconduct. At the department level, strengthening the reminder policy increases activation and arrests but marginally increases misconduct because protective activators make more arrests.

In contrast, as a department strengthens its enforcement policy (through an increase in p_h), it has no effect on protective activators because they already always activate whenever they are able, but for compromising activators it increases activation rates but decreases arrest and misconduct rates, a pattern that carries over into the department-wide outcomes.

Takeaways. These results have several general takeaways for the policies departments choose that encourage activation in a system with optional oversight. First, reminder and enforcement policies, which would be identical under a simple oversight model, behave very differently under optional oversight. Reminder policies are useful for increasing activa-

tion rates while maintaining or even increasing arrest rates without meaningfully affecting misconduct. Enforcement policies are useful for increasing activation rates while limiting misconduct but decreasing arrests.

Second, a policy of simultaneous reminders and enforcement can have the effect of increasing activation and trading the marginal arrests of compromising activators for the marginal arrests of protective activators. This holds the overall arrest rate constant, and because arrests marginal to compromising activators are riskier than those marginal to protective activators, overall misconduct decreases. This is how the rightward motion in Figure 9 is achieved. However, this approach is limited by the fact that eventually all barriers to activation will be removed (that is, p_l can be no lower than 0), so achieving large improvements in misconduct from BWCs eventually requires a decrease in arrests as well.

Finally, how police departments optimally choose BWC policies depends on how much departments prioritize activation, arrests, and misconduct. Adopting BWCs but with relatively relaxed enforcement of activation rules—what CPD seems to have done over the period we study—has the benefit of maintaining or even increasing arrest rates but does little to curtail misconduct. Adopting BWCs with stricter enforcement of activation rules may negatively impact arrest rates and put departmental priorities in conflict.

8 Conclusion

Privacy, legal, or practical constraints prevent many employers from fully controlling when and how they can monitor worker behavior. We studied a setting where workers retain discretion over when their behavior is observed: policing. Officer discretion creates opportunities for strategic behavior, not only in the activation decision but also in decisions about engagement and arrests. We modeled officers as protective activators who use BWCs to document good conduct when claims of misconduct arise or compromising activators who sometimes strategically fail to activate if they anticipate a high risk of misconduct. The model showed that how officers will respond to BWCs will differ depending on their type in terms of their activation and arrest behavior.

To connect the model to data, we used Chicago data on activation of specific officers as

they make specific arrests where they have an unambiguous duty to activate, which required linking arrests to BWC metadata using a statistical model of activation and arrest times. Using this setting and the staggered rollout of BWCs to police districts across Chicago, we found reduced-form evidence consistent with the two major model predictions—there are large differences in activation rates across officers that reflect that officer-level components exist, and compromising activators respond to the introduction of BWCs by making fewer arrests compared to protective activators.

Using these estimates as key moments to identify and calibrate our model of optional oversight, we built insight into how and why the optional oversight setting differs from simpler oversight regimes and the resulting implications for policy design. We found that policies designed to remove barriers to activation behave differently from policies designed to punish intentional non-activation, and the targeted combination of the policies has the potential to break tradeoffs between activation rates, arrest rates, and misconduct rates in ways that are not possible in a simpler model of non-discretionary oversight.

Future research should extend the optional oversight framework to other settings. These settings are becoming increasingly common, from university faculty recording classes to remote workers working offline to avoid being monitored. Although the classification of workers into protective and compromising activators will be a useful theoretical framing in other settings, the specific tradeoffs associated with monitoring technologies may differ for several reasons. For example, the detection of misconduct even in the absence of a recording may be considerably higher than with policing, such as in a university class where students can corroborate the professor's statements. Moreover, not all optional oversight is on a case-by-case basis as in policing, such as with university classes either being automatically recorded each session or not recorded at all. Finally, worker protections may be weaker, so strategically avoiding monitoring can have more severe employment consequences, such as a non-unionized remote worker being fired for working offline.

With police BWCs and in other optional oversight settings, measurement of oversight preferences is likely to be a limiting factor in understanding the impacts of monitoring poli-

cies. Future research on BWCs and in other settings should focus on measuring oversight preferences directly rather than relying, as this study does, on proxies based on other behaviors. More direct measurement can increase the precision of estimates and build evidence for the theory of optional oversight.

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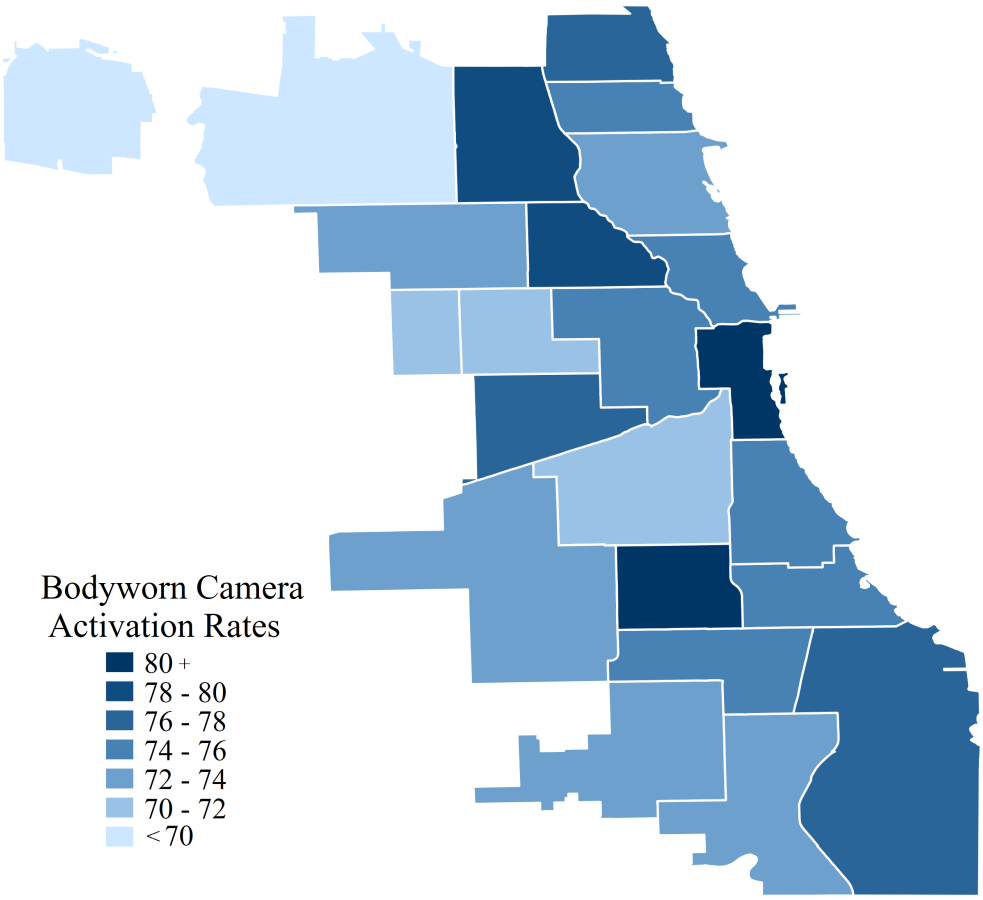
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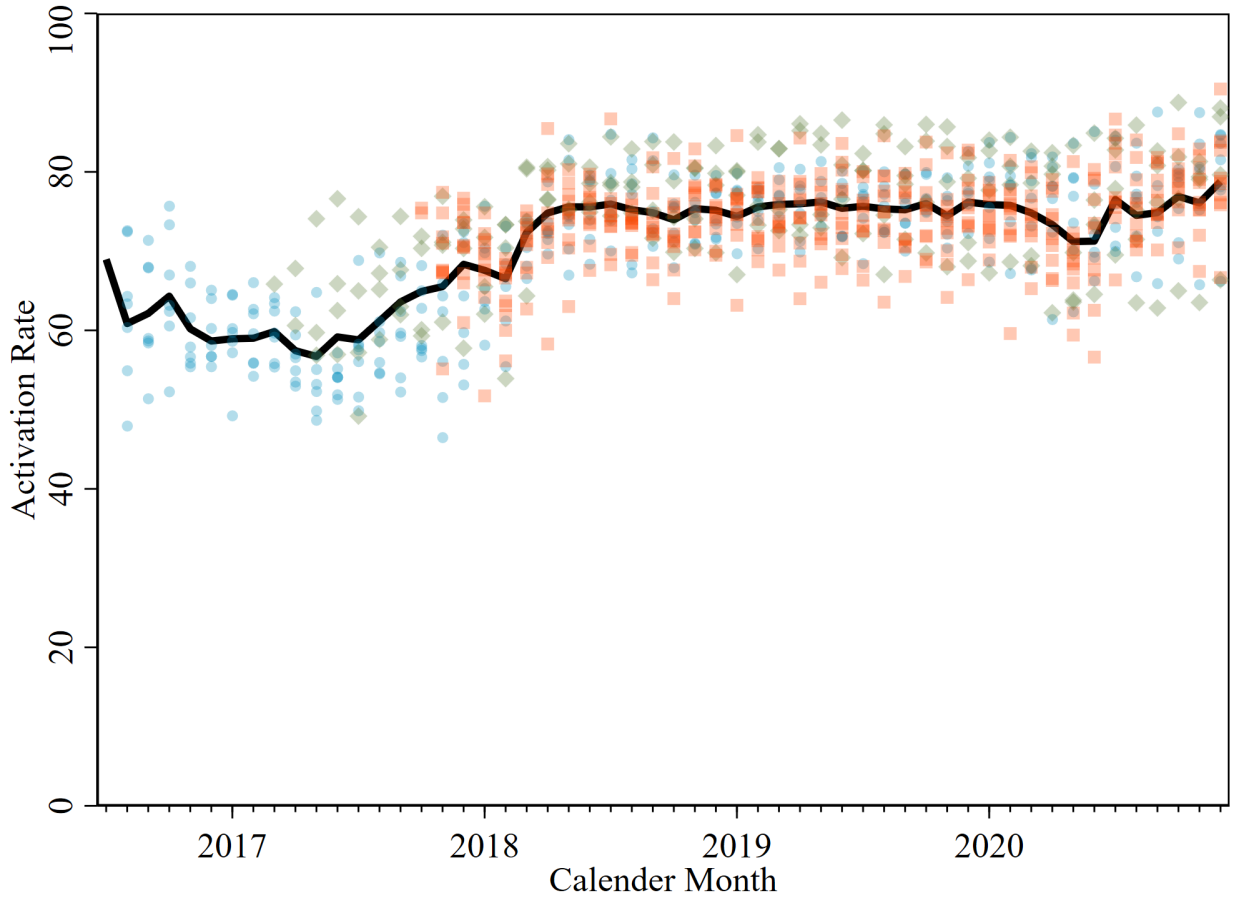
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Figure 1: Body-worn Camera Activation Rates Across Police Districts



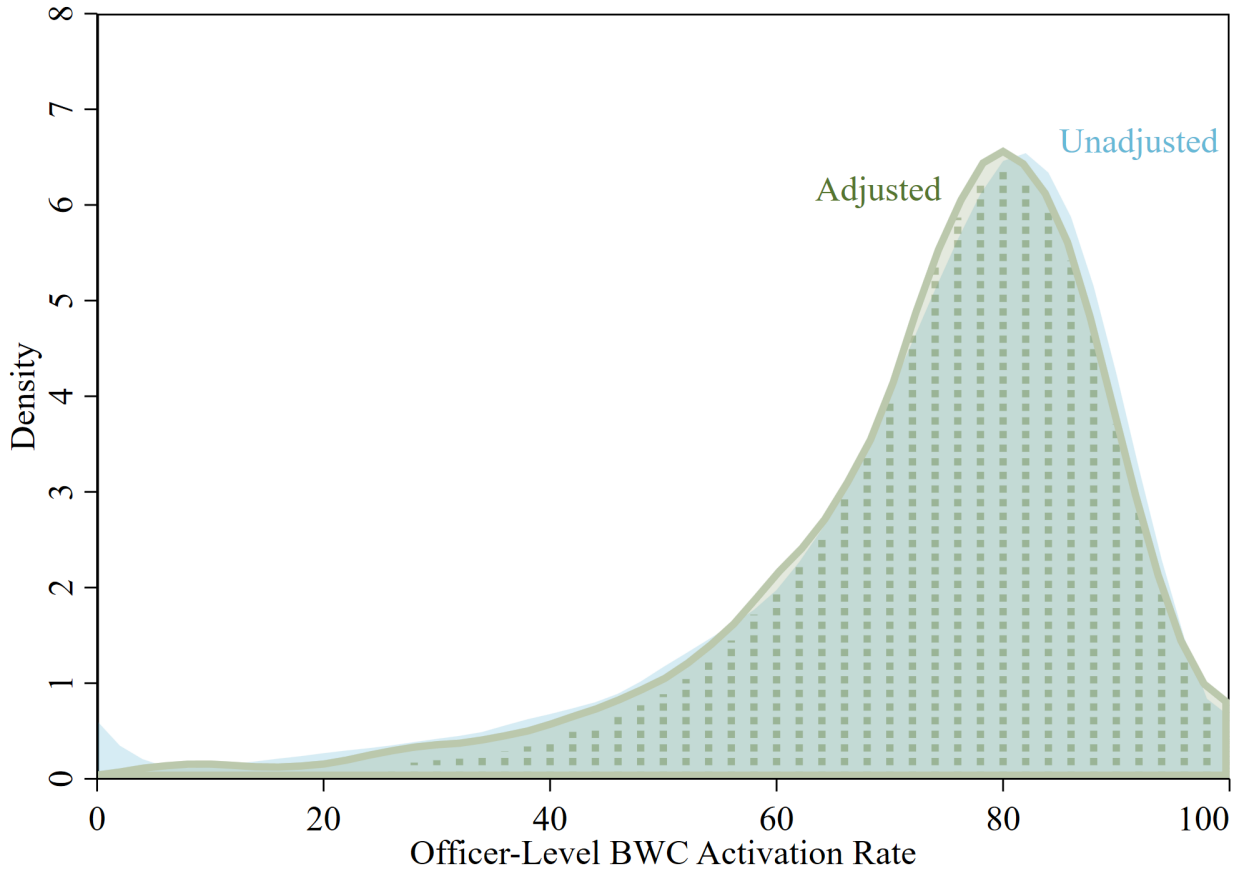
Note: This figure reports a heat map of activation rates across police districts. The rate is computed at the officer-arrest level for all arrests made after the district had body-worn cameras.

Figure 2: Body-worn Camera Activation Rate Over Time



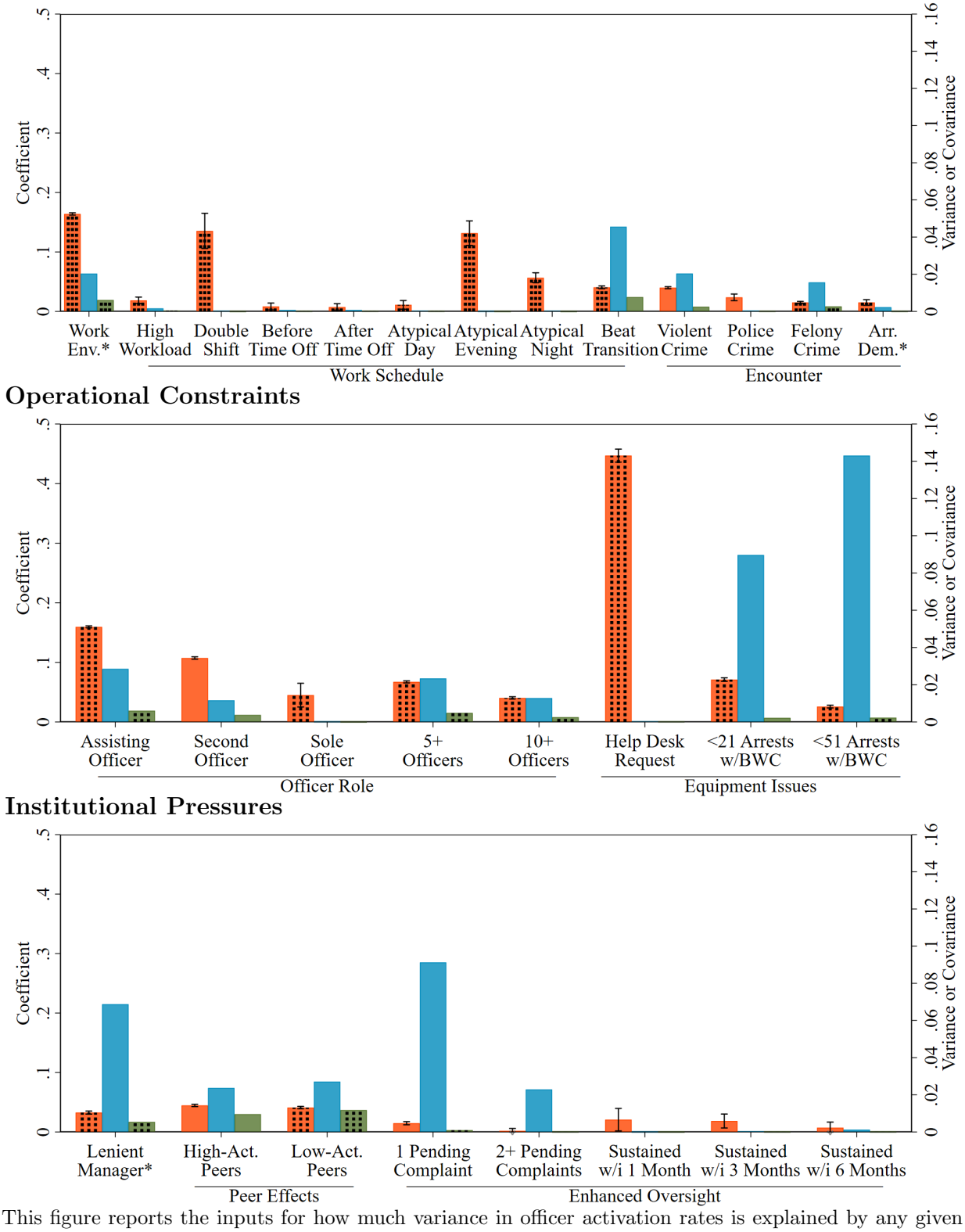
Note: This figure reports the activation rate over time across all districts that had body-worn cameras as of that month (black line) and separately by district (colored markers). The blue circle markers are for the six districts that adopted body-worn cameras from June 2016 to February 2017, the green diamond markers are for the five districts that adopted body-worn cameras from March 2017 to July 2017, and the square orange markers are for the eleven districts that adopted body-worn cameras from October 2017 to December 2017.

Figure 3: Distribution of Officer Activation Rates



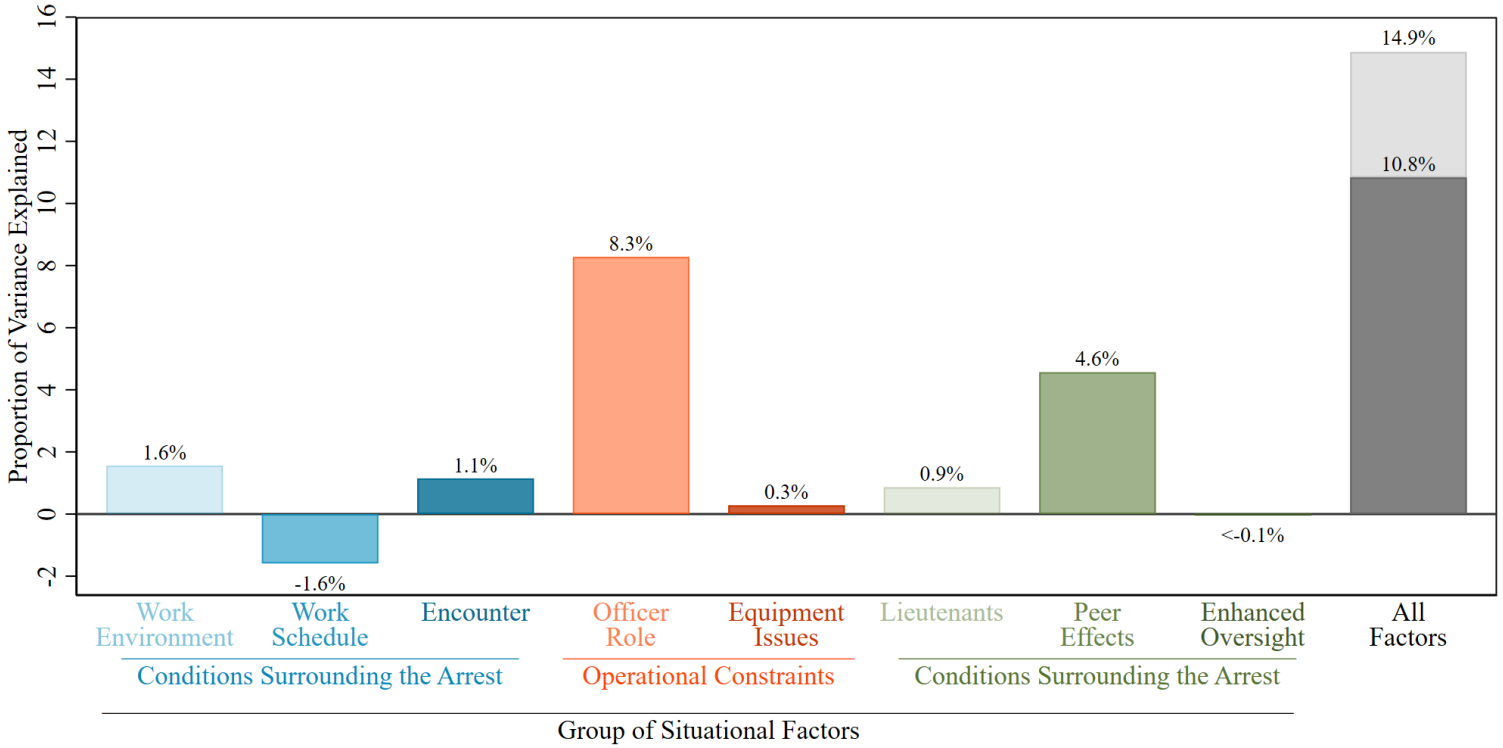
Note: This figure reports the distributions of officer activation rates (blue area labeled "Unadjusted") and officer activation rates after accounting for environment, encounter, and role controls (green area with dots labeled "Adjusted"). Officer activation rates are estimated using arrests after all districts had body-worn cameras (2018-2020). Officers with 10 or fewer arrests in this period are excluded.

Figure 4: The Role of Exposure to Different Situations in Body-worn Camera Activation



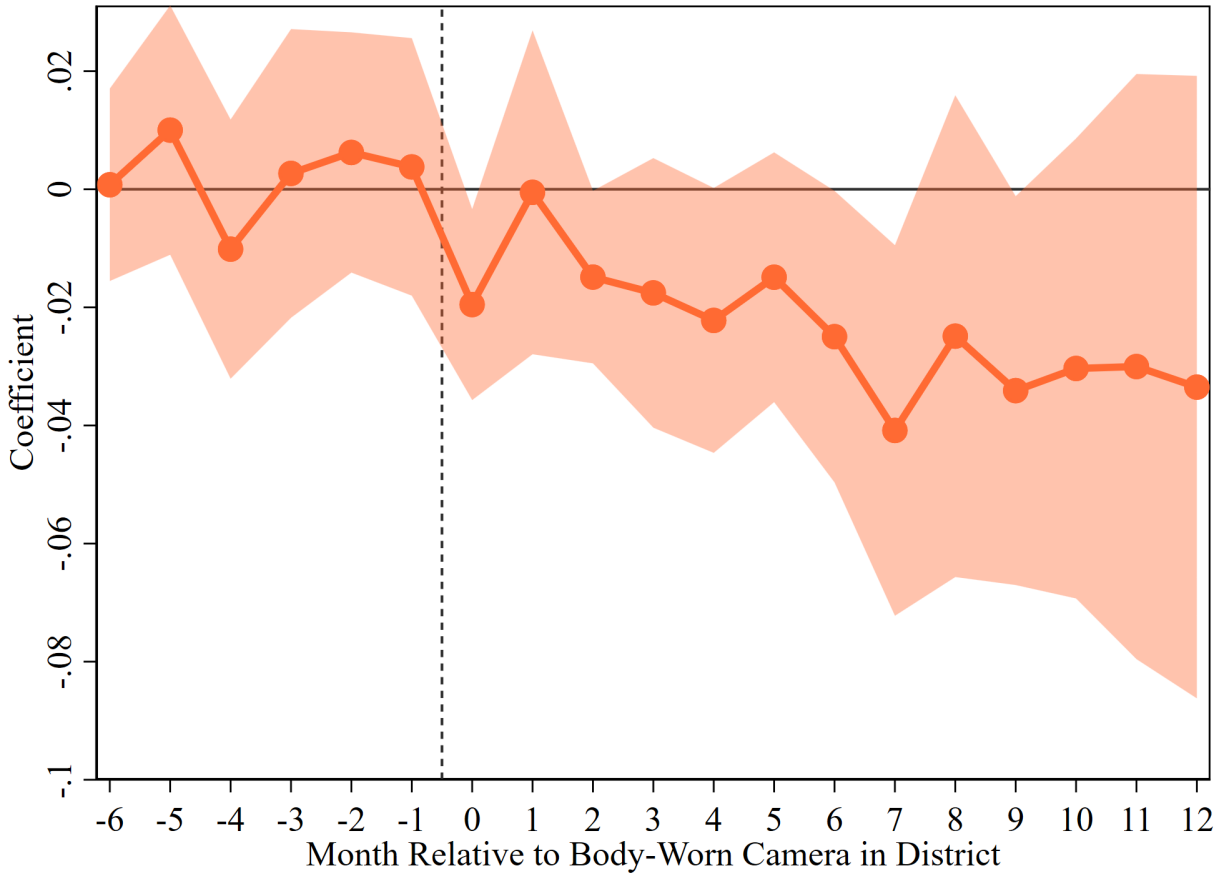
Note: This figure reports the inputs for how much variance in officer activation rates is explained by any given situational factor. In Equation 7, how much variance a factor X_{ij} explains depends on how much X_{ij} directly affects activation (β), how much X_{ij} varies across officers ($\text{Var}(\bar{X}_j)$), and how much X_{ij} covaries with officer fixed effects ($\text{Cov}(\bar{X}_j, \theta_j)$). The orange bars are β coefficients estimated from versions of Equation 6 that regress activation in an officer-arrest on different situational factors as indicated on the x-axis in the panels. The estimates for a given type of situational factors are estimated in a separate regression, but we draw horizontal lines underneath the labels on the x-axis to identify different categories of situational factors, such as "Work Schedule" and "Encounter" in Panel A. The blue bars labeled "Variance" captures how much the factor varies across officers, as measured by the variance of the variable ($\text{Var}(\bar{X}_j)$). The green bars labeled "Covariance" is the covariance of the factor with officer fixed effects ($\text{Cov}(\bar{X}_j, \theta_j)$). For the coefficients or the covariances, the bars have a black pattern if the estimates are negative. The estimated coefficients are reported on the left y-axis, and the variance and covariance estimates are reported on the right y-axis. The underlying variables for the factors that are labeled on the x-axis with stars (*) have multiple categories. The results shown compare categories with activation rates in the lowest quartile to all others.

Figure 5: Proportion of Variance in Officer Activation Rates Explained by Situational Factors



Note: This figure reports the results of the decomposition of differences in officer activation rates into three broad types of situational factors, with different groups within each type. The factors in the bars in shades of blue relate to the immediate conditions surrounding the arrest stemming from the officer's work environment, work schedule, and the encounter with the suspect which may affect activation. The factors in the bars in shades of orange relate to operational constraints during an arrest related to the officer's role and equipment which may affect activation. The factors in the bars in shades of green relate to institutional pressures due to officers' managers who enforce activation rules, the behavior of peer officers making the arrest, and enhanced oversight from the department may affect activation. Each bar summarizes the explanatory power of a group of situational factors by reporting the percentage of the overall variance in officer activation rates explained by those factors, as captured by $\gamma^{\mathbf{X}}$ in Equation 8. A group of situational factors with positive estimates implies that they explain some of the differences in officer activation rates, meaning that there would be smaller differences in officer activation rates once they are adjusted for those factors. A group of situational factors with negative estimates implies that they mask some of the true differences in officer activation rates, meaning that there would be larger differences in officer activation rates once they are adjusted for those factors. The bars differ by the group of situational factors included, where each of the colored bars estimates the portion of the variance in officer activation rates explained by those factors in isolation. The dark gray bar to the right labeled "All Factors" is the estimated portion of variance explained when all factors are considered, where the height of the light gray bar adds up the individual estimates.

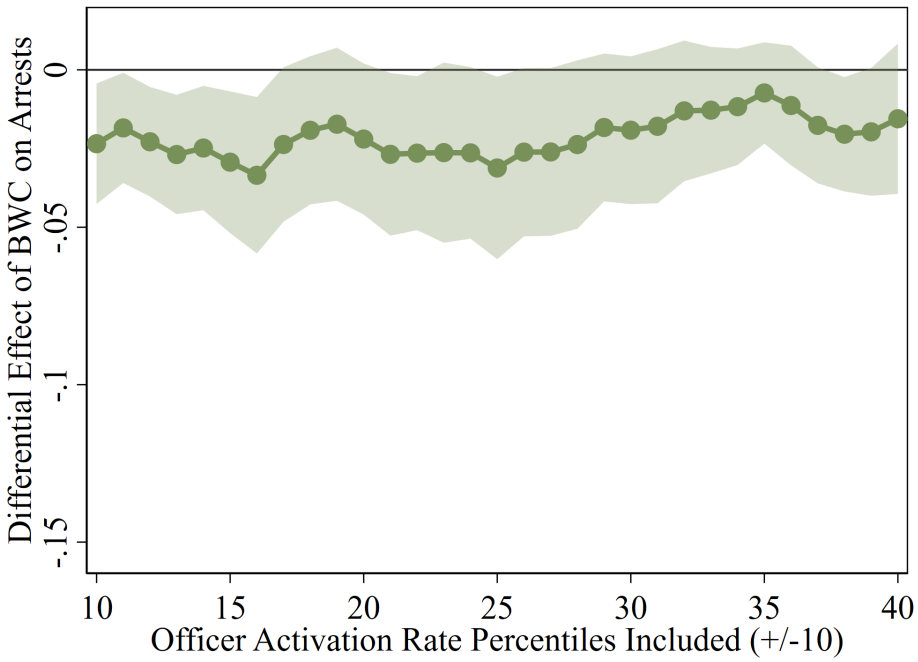
Figure 6: Differential Effect of Body-worn Cameras on Officer Arrest Behavior by Officer Type



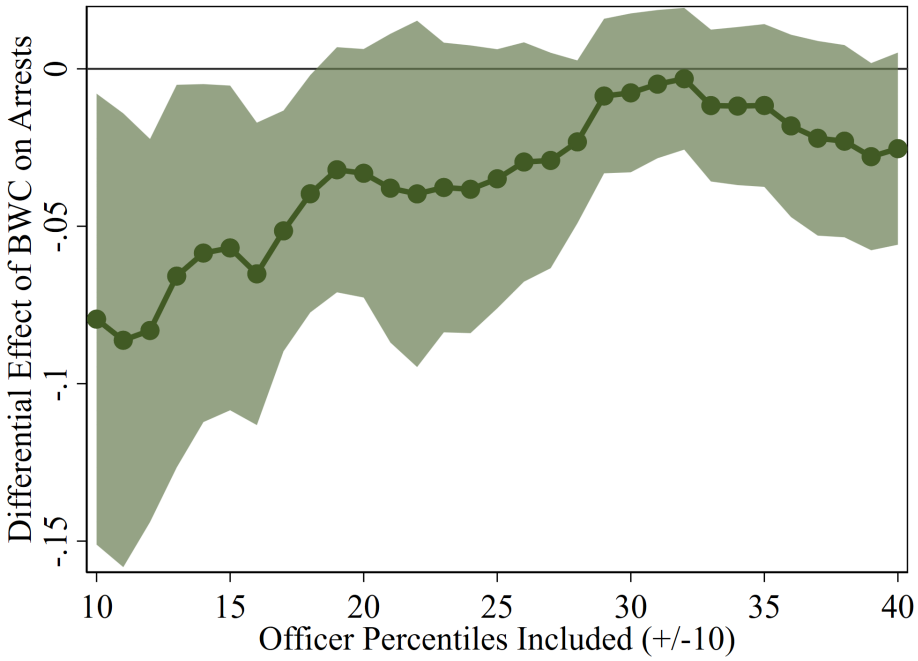
Note: This figure estimates the differential effect of body-worn cameras on arrests per shift between compromising and protective activators. We proxy for compromising activators using the 25th percentile of officer activation rates that account for exposure to different arrest situations using data after 2017. The estimates compare the differential number of arrests per shift in police districts that adopt body-worn cameras in the 6 months before and 12 months after adoption to the same outcome in districts that have not yet adopted in a difference-in-differences design in Callaway and Sant'Anna (2021). The line reports the estimated coefficients (under Callaway and Sant'Anna (2021), there is no leave-out period). The shaded region reports 95% confidence intervals. Standard errors are clustered at the district level.

Figure 7: Intensive Margin: Differential Effect of Body-worn Cameras on Arrests for Officers who Find Body-worn Cameras More or Less Compromising

A. Sorting Officers by Activation Rates



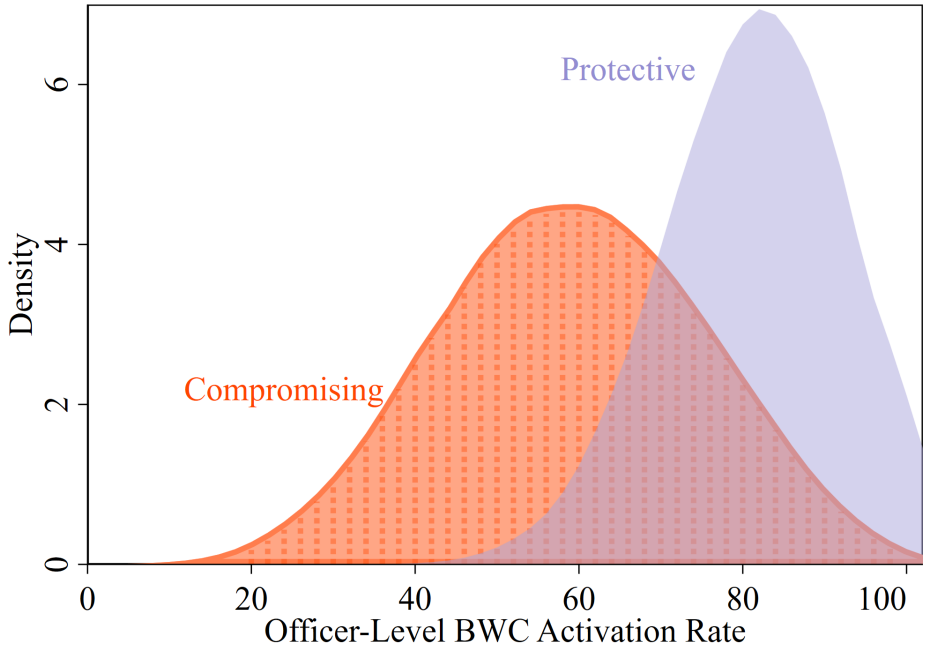
B. Sorting Officers by Activation Rates and Complaints



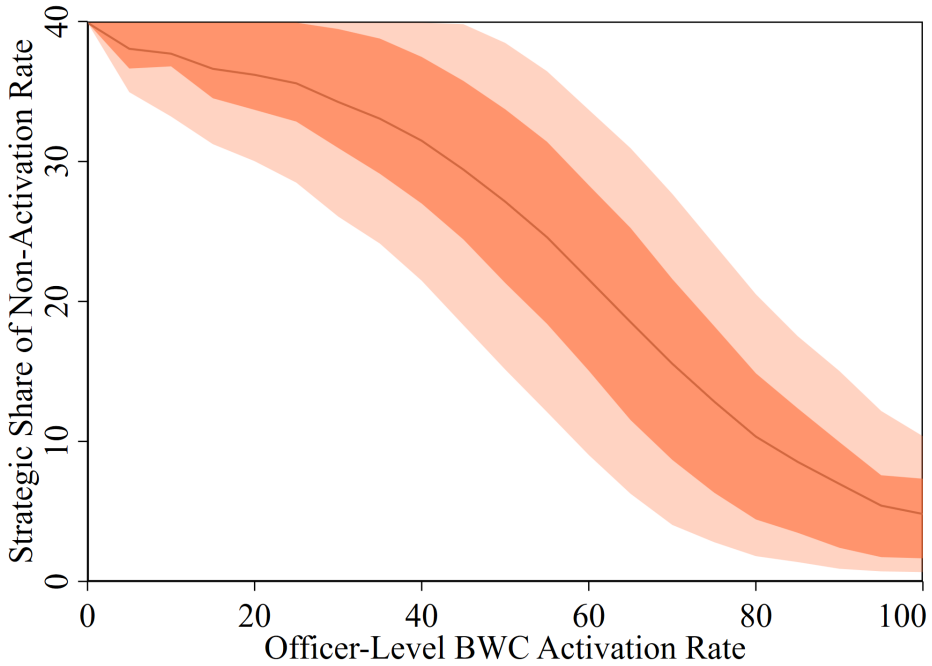
Note: This figure investigates the extent that the differential effect of body-worn cameras on arrests is stronger for the compromising officers who find cameras the most compromising by reestimating Column 1 of Table 2 using a constant comparison group of protective activators above the 50th percentile of the relative proxy for protective activators but with different sets of compromising activators. Panel A uses officer activation rates as a proxy for compromising versus protective activator. It reports a +/- 10 percentile range around each percentile of officer activation rates as indicated on the x-axis, from the 10th to the 40th percentile of activation. Panel B uses both officer activation rates and complaints as a proxy for compromising versus protective activator. It uses a +/- 10 percentile range around each percentile of officer activation rates and complaints as indicated on the x-axis, including only officers who meet both criteria. High complaints are associated with compromising activators, so we subtract the percentiles from 100 before making the restriction.

Figure 8: Strategic Non-Activation

A. Activation Rates by Officer Type

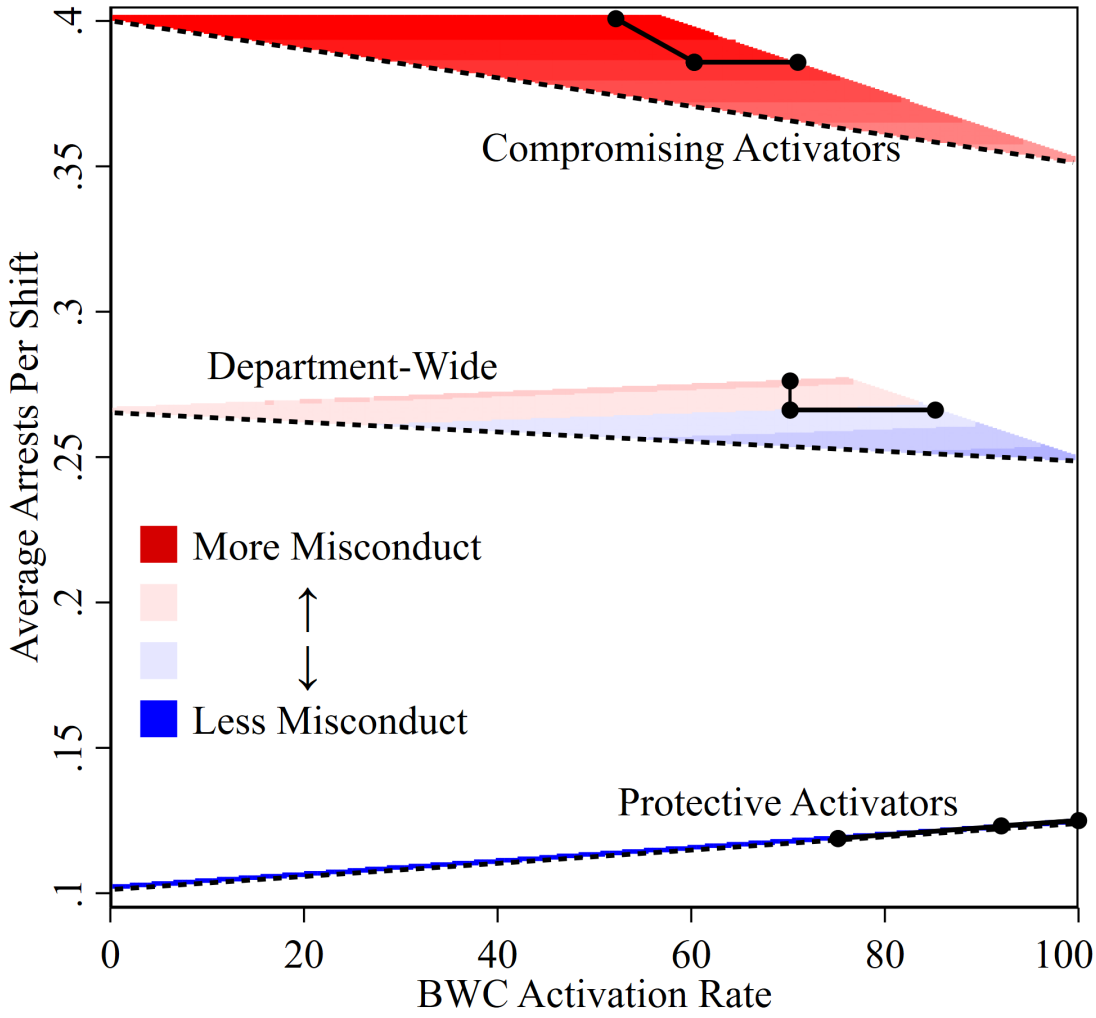


B. Strategic Non-Activation for Compromising Activators



Note: This figure uses the structural model to document strategic non-activation. Panel A reports the distribution of simulated officer activation rates separately for compromising activators and protective activators. Using notation from the model, compromising activators are identified by $\theta_{arr} < \theta_{act}(0)$, and protective activators are identified by $\theta_{arr} < \theta_{act}(0)$. Panel B focuses on compromising activators and reports the percentage of non-activations that are strategic for officers with different overall activation rates. The line is the average, the dark orange area is the 25th and 75th percentiles, and the light shaded orange area is the 10th and 90th percentiles.

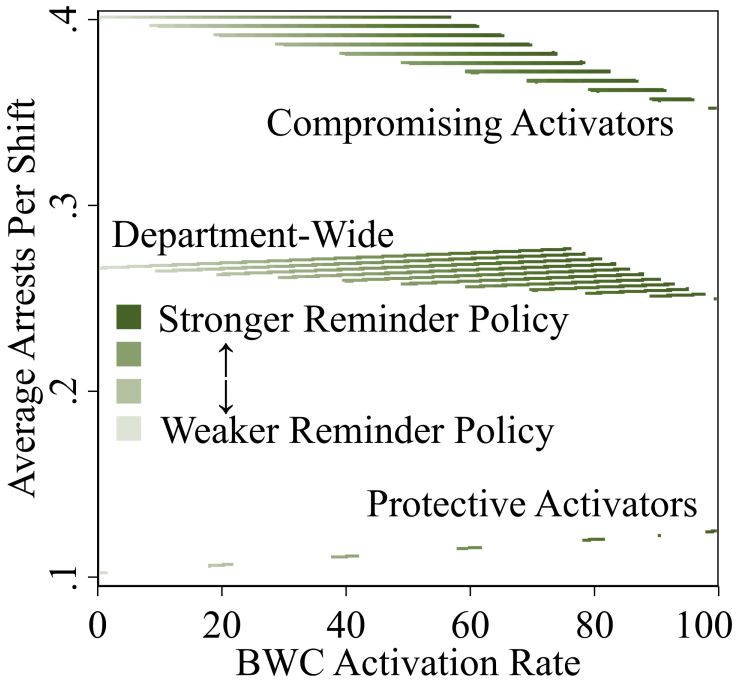
Figure 9: Counterfactuals: Activation, Arrests, and Misconduct with Optional Oversight



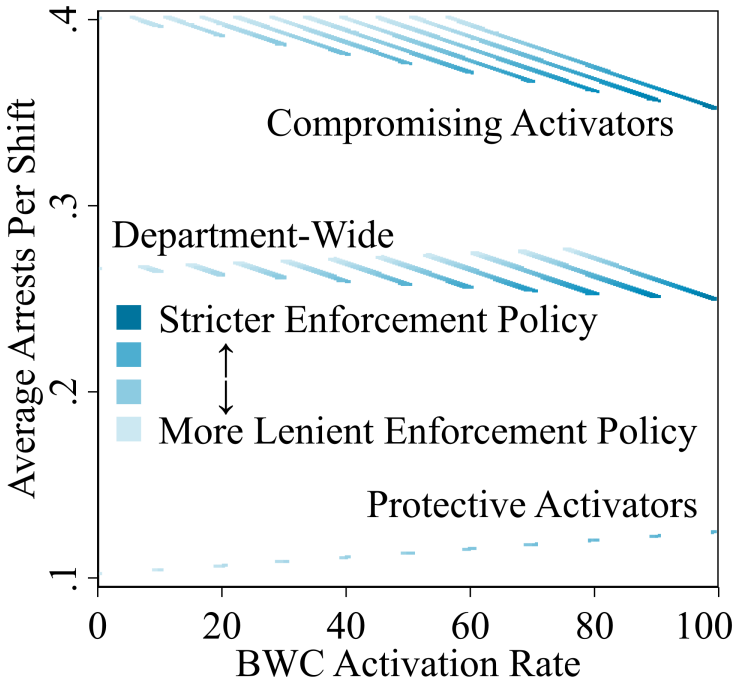
Note: This figure uses the structural model to construct counterfactual outcomes for different values of (p_l, p_h). The x-axis is the activation rate, the y-axis is the average arrests per shift, and the color of the shading is the normalized misconduct rate. The department-wide outcomes are the combination of the compromising and protective activator outcomes.

Figure 10: Counterfactuals: Effects of Polices to Encourage Activation on Activation, Arrests, and Misconduct

A. Strength of Reminders



B. Strength of Enforcement



Note: This figure uses the structural model to construct a counterfactual mapping of the strength of reminder and enforcement policies (p_l, p_h) onto the activation rate and arrests outcomes. Panel A reports the effect of changing p_l holding p_h fixed, where each line of points holds fixed p_h and the shading of each point reflects the value of p_l. Panel B reports the effect of changing p_h holding p_l fixed, where each line of points holds fixed p_l and the shading of each point reflects the value of p_h. In each panel, we visualize fixed values of the other parameter by excluding values of the other parameter.

Tables

Table 1: Stability of Officer-Level Activation Rates

	Subset Dimension						
	Arrest	Time	District	Beat	Watch	Role	Manager
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
A. Raw Leave-Out Activation Rate							
Leave-Out Officer	0.71***	0.60***	0.45***	0.61***	0.46***	0.40***	0.55***
Activation Rate	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.04)	(0.02)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.02)
R^2	0.25	0.24	0.19	0.20	0.20	0.13	0.21
Observations	6089	2608	697	4256	1138	1543	2617
B. Shrunken Leave-Out Activation Rate							
Shrunken Leave-Out	1.00***	0.69***	0.57***	0.79***	0.66***	0.57***	0.73***
Officer Activation Rate	(0.02)	(0.03)	(0.05)	(0.03)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.03)
R^2	0.31	0.30	0.25	0.27	0.27	0.17	0.31
Observations	6089	1229	404	1709	818	1169	1431

Note: This table investigates the extent to which differences in officer activation rates reflect a fixed officer-level component by documenting the within-officer stability of activation rates across policing environments. Panel A regresses each officer's activation rate in a particular environment on their leave-out activation rate elsewhere in terms of individual arrests (Column 1), time (a quarter, Column 2), geographic environment (district and beat, Columns 3 and 4), different times of the day (morning, day, and night shift, Column 5), arresting role (primary, secondary, assisting officer, Column 6), and under different lieutenants (Column 7, where the 14% of officer-arrests without lieutenant identifiers for the officer-shift are dropped). Panel B repeats Panel A but replaces the officer's leave-out activation rates with an Empirical Bayes leave-out activation rate that shrinks noisy estimates towards the mean activation rate. Standard errors are in parentheses and are clustered at the officer by subset dimension level. * p<0.1, ** p<0.05, *** p<0.01.

Table 2: Effect of Body-worn Cameras on Arrests

	Outcome			
	Difference	Arrests Per Shift		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Body-worn Camera in District	-0.026***	-0.009	0.017*	-0.003
	(0.01)	(0.011)	(0.009)	(0.008)
Officers in Sample				
Low Activation	✓	✓		✓
High Activation	✓		✓	✓
Outcome Mean	-0.046	0.181	0.227	0.213
Observations	528	528	528	528

Note: This table estimates the effect of body-worn cameras in a district on arrests per officer-shift using the staggered rollout of body-worn cameras to police districts in a difference-in-differences setting. The unit of observation is the district by calendar month. The sample is from 6 months before the first district adopted body-worn cameras up to the month that the last district adopted body-worn cameras. Each column uses the procedure from Callaway and Sant'Anna (2021) not-yet-treated districts as a control group for a given event. The columns differ by the outcome used and the sample. The outcome in Column 1 is the difference in arrests per officer-shift between officers by whether they are in the bottom quartile of activation rates. The outcome in Column 2 is the arrests per officer-shift for officers in the bottom quartile of activation rates. The outcome in Column 3 is the arrests per officer-shift for officers in the top three quartiles of activation rates. The outcome in Column 4 is the arrests per officer-shift for all officers. Standard errors are in parentheses and are clustered at the district level. * p<0.1, ** p<0.05, *** p<0.01.

Table 3: Heterogeneity of the Effects of Body-worn Cameras on Arrests

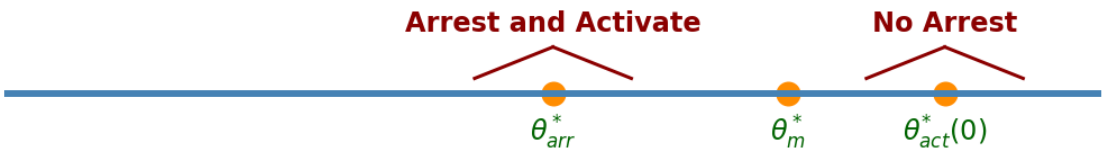
	Analysis							
	Mechanisms		Initiating Arrests		Hassle Costs			
	12/13 Months (1)	20/25 Months (2)	Primary Officer (3)	Assisting Officer (4)	Felony Arrest (5)	Misdem. Arrest (6)	Pub. Ord. Arrest (7)	Complaint Divide (8)
Body-worn Camera in District	-0.027**	-0.022*	-0.011***	-0.014*	-0.014**	-0.011*	-0.003	-0.044**
	(0.012)	(0.013)	(0.004)	(0.009)	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.005)	(0.02)
Outcome Mean	0.207	0.208	0.095	0.119	0.048	0.166	0.057	0.219

Note: This figure investigates heterogeneity in the differential effect of body-worn cameras on arrests per shift between compromising and protective activators. Columns 1 and 2 assess the extent to which the primary underlying mechanism of interest—individual officers change their arrest behavior in response to body-worn cameras—is driving the result as opposed to officers responding to body-worn cameras by switching districts. To do so, the columns focus on officers who have a consistent assignment throughout the rollout period. Column 1 focuses on officers who are in the same district in 12 of the 13 months around body-worn camera adoption in their district (the month of rollout and 6 months on either side), and Column 2 focuses on officers who are in the same district in 20 of the 25 months considered in our analysis. Columns 3 and 4 assess the extent to which the results are likely driven by decisions to initiate an arrest by focusing on either only primary arresting officers (Column 3) or only assisting officers (Column 4). Columns 5-8 assess the possibility that body-worn cameras change officer behavior primarily because they introduce added "hassle costs" from a perceived need to be more formal in the encounter or increased paperwork associated with logging the video itself. Columns 5-7 report results separately for felony, misdemeanor, and public order arrests, and Column 8 divides officers into types by complaints which are likely unrelated to hassle costs. Standard errors are in parentheses and are clustered at the district level. * p<0.1, ** p<0.05, *** p<0.01.

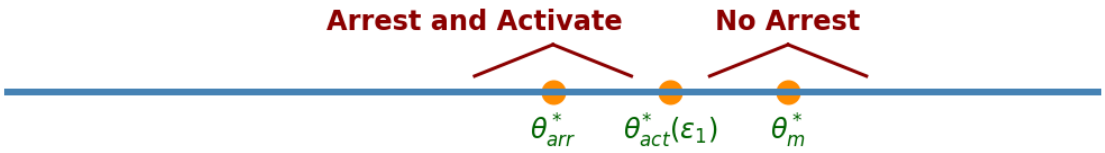
Supplemental Appendix A: Additional Results

Figure A1: Arrest and Activation Thresholds

A. Protective Activator with No Special Incentives



B. Protective Activator with Marginal Activations Disincentivized



C. Protective Activator with Inframarginal Activations Disincentivized



D. Compromising Activator with No Special Incentives



E. Compromising Activator with Marginal Activations Incentivized



Note: Panel A is for protective activators with no special incentives, defined as $\theta^*_{arr} < \theta^*_{act}(0), \epsilon_i = 0$. Panel B is for protective activators with marginal activations disincentivized, defined as $\theta^*_{arr} < \theta^*_{act}(0), \epsilon_1 < 0$. Panel C is for protective activators with inframarginal activations disincentivized, defined as $\theta^*_{arr} < \theta^*_{act}(0), \epsilon_2 < \epsilon_1$. Panel D is for compromising activators with no special incentives, defined as $\theta^*_{arr}(0) > \theta^*_{act}(0), \epsilon_i = 0$. Panel E is for compromising activators with marginal activations incentivized, defined as $\theta^*_{arr}(0) > \theta^*_{act}(0), \epsilon_3 > 0$.

Table A1: Relationship Between Activation Rate and Complaints

	Outcome	
	Complaint Rate	High Complaint Officer
	(1)	(2)
Body-worn Camera Activation Rate	-0.22***	
	(.0318)	
Low Activation Officer		0.054***
		(.0133)
Covariates		
Officer Demographics	✓	✓
Year Entered Police Force	✓	✓
Outcome Mean	0.36	0.23
Observations	4,261	4,261

Note: This table estimates the relationship between officer activation rates and complaints against the officer. The regressions are at the officer level. The officer activation rates are from arrests made between 2018 and 2020. The officer complaint measure is based on the annual complaint rate computed from all years between 1999 and 2015 during which the officer was on the force. Column 1 reports results regressing officer complaint rates on officer activation rates. Column 2 reports results regressing an indicator for officers in the top quartile of complaints on an indicator for officers in the bottom quartile of activation. Standard errors are in parentheses and are clustered at the officer level. * p<0.1, ** p<0.05, *** p<0.01.

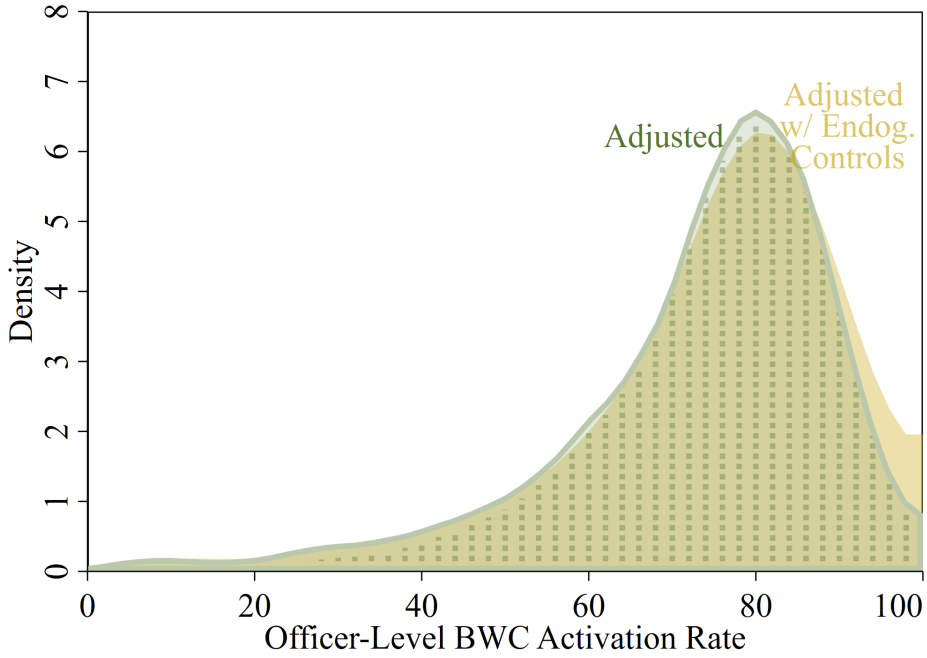
Figure A2: Activation Rates by Crime Type and Severity



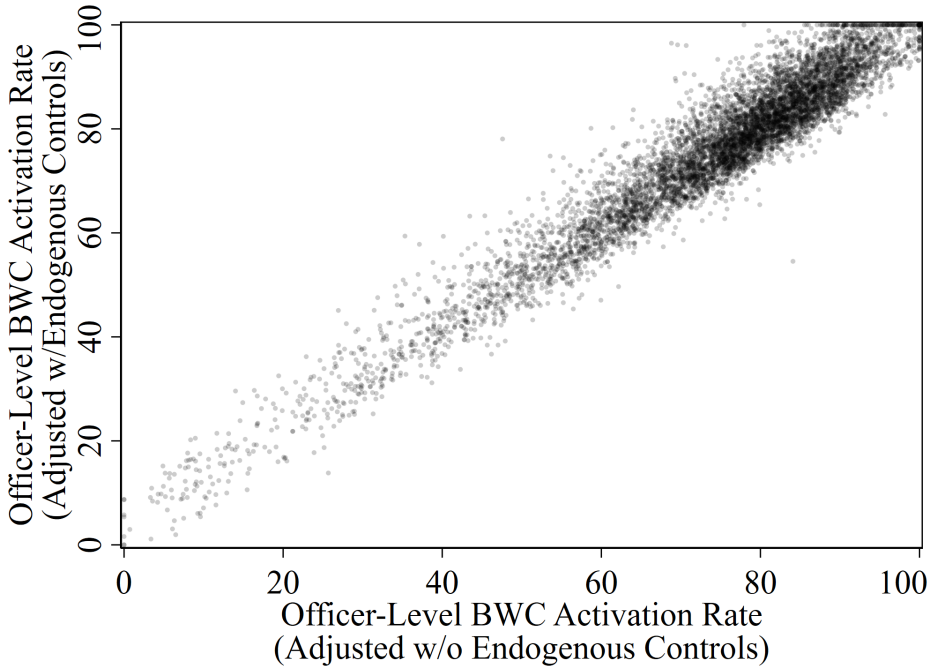
Note: This figure reports body-worn camera activation rates by crime types as listed on the x-axis and severity as indicated by the color of the bar. Misdemeanor is blue, and felony is orange.

Figure A3: Adjusted Officer Activation Rates with and without Endogenous Controls

A. Distributions

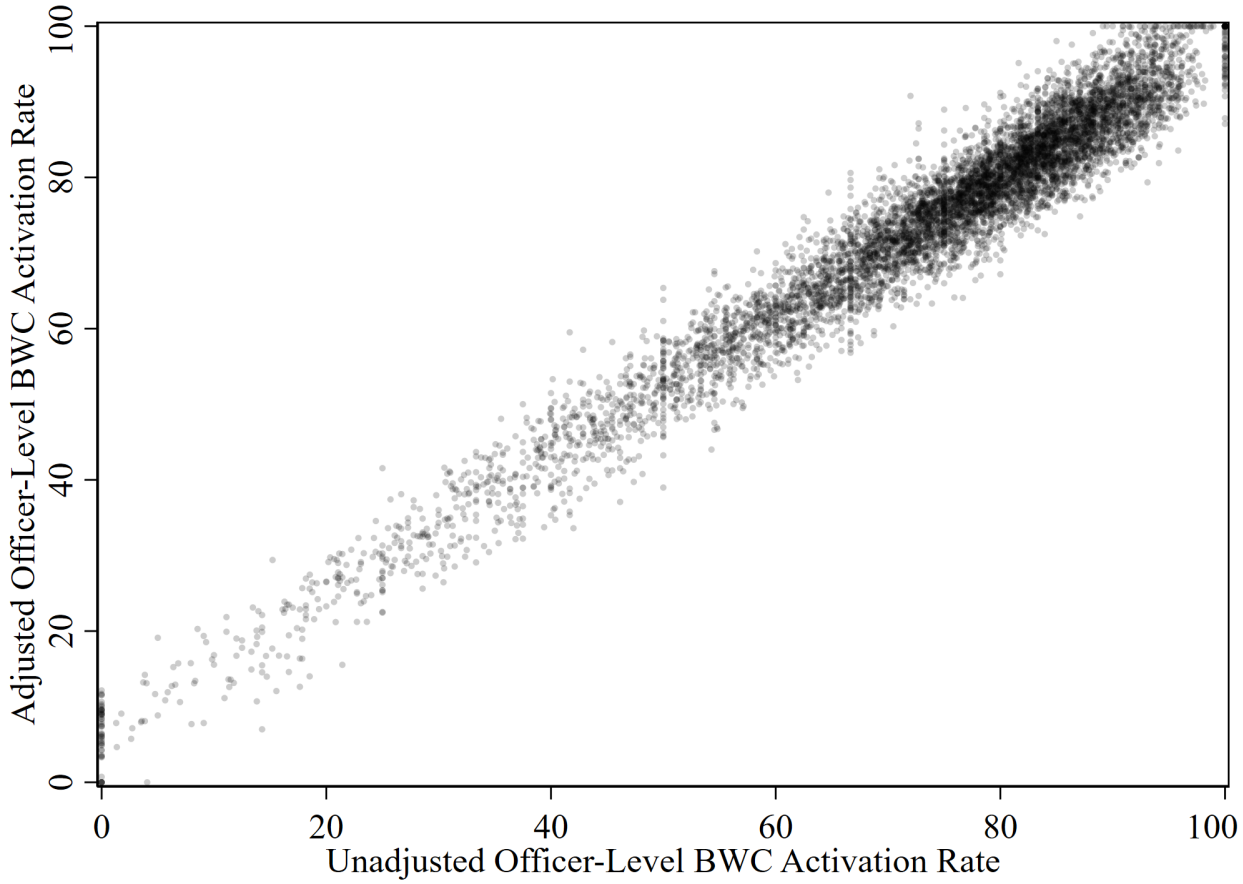


B. Relationship



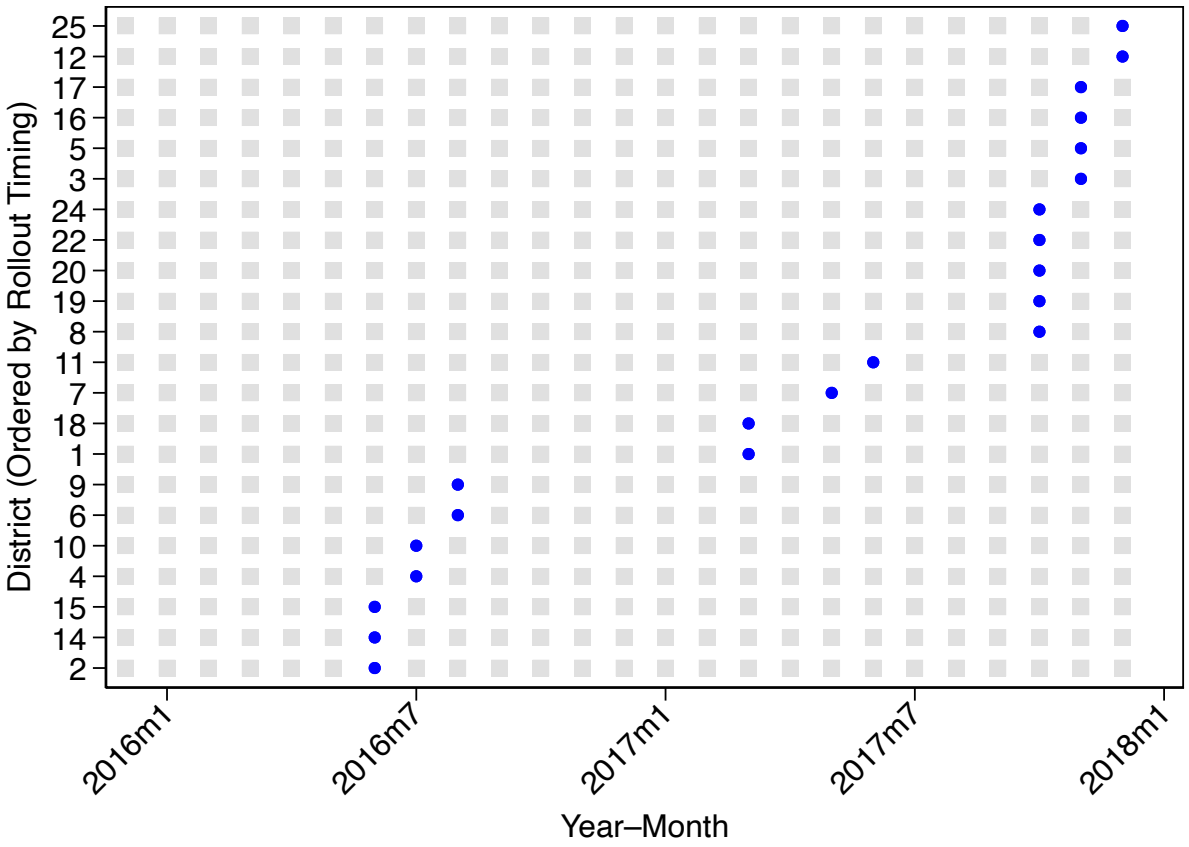
Note: This figure compares officer activation rates after accounting for environment, encounter, and role controls to officer activation rates that also control for factors that are potentially endogenous to activation and arrest decisions we are interested in (all other factors considered in Section 5). Panel A reports distributions of both rates, and Panel B reports a scatterplot of the fully adjusted rates on the rates adjusted without the endogenous controls.

Figure A4: Relationship between Unadjusted and Adjusted Officer Activation Rates



Note: This figure reports a scatterplot of officer activation rates after accounting for environment, encounter, and role controls on the y-axis and overall officer activation rates without any controls on the x-axis.

Figure A5: Body-worn Camera Rollout Across Police Districts in Chicago



Note: This figure reports the month that each police district in Chicago adopted body-worn cameras.

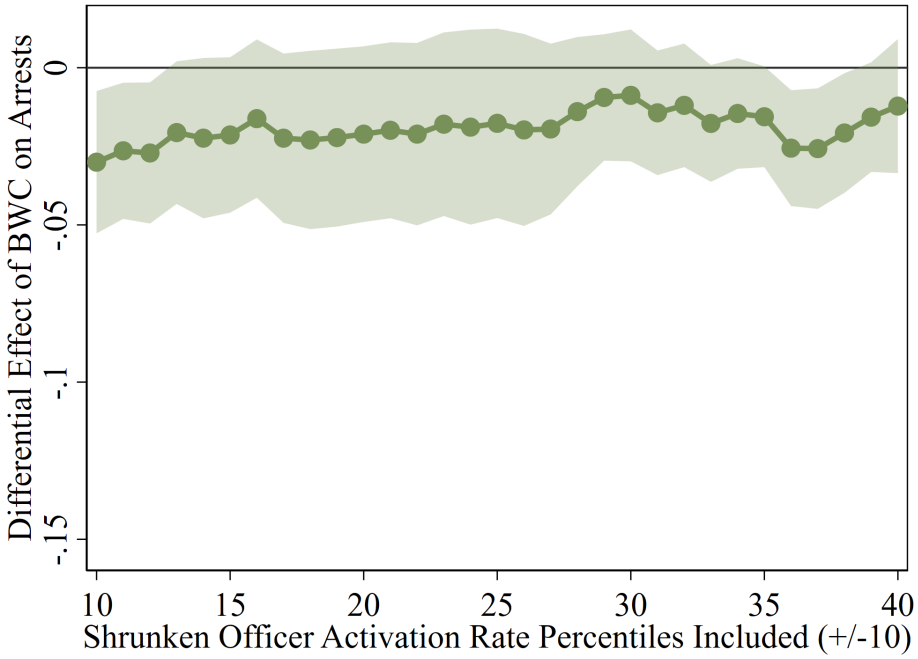
Table A2: Robustness of Effect of Body-worn Cameras on Arrests to Difference-in-Differences Specifications

Estimator (1)	Design (2)	Estimate (3)
Butts and Gardner (2022)	Triple Difference	-0.039***
Goodman-Bacon (2021)	Differenced Outcome	-0.003
de Chaisemartin and D'Haultfoeuille (2020)	Differenced Outcome	0.002
Sun and Abraham (2020)	Differenced Outcome	-0.02***
Borusyak et al (2024)	Differenced Outcome	-0.023**
Dube et al (2023)	Differenced Outcome	-0.017*
Arkhangelsky et al (2021)	Differenced Outcome	-0.015
TWFE	Triple Difference	-0.028***
Stacked Event Study	Triple Difference	-0.017*

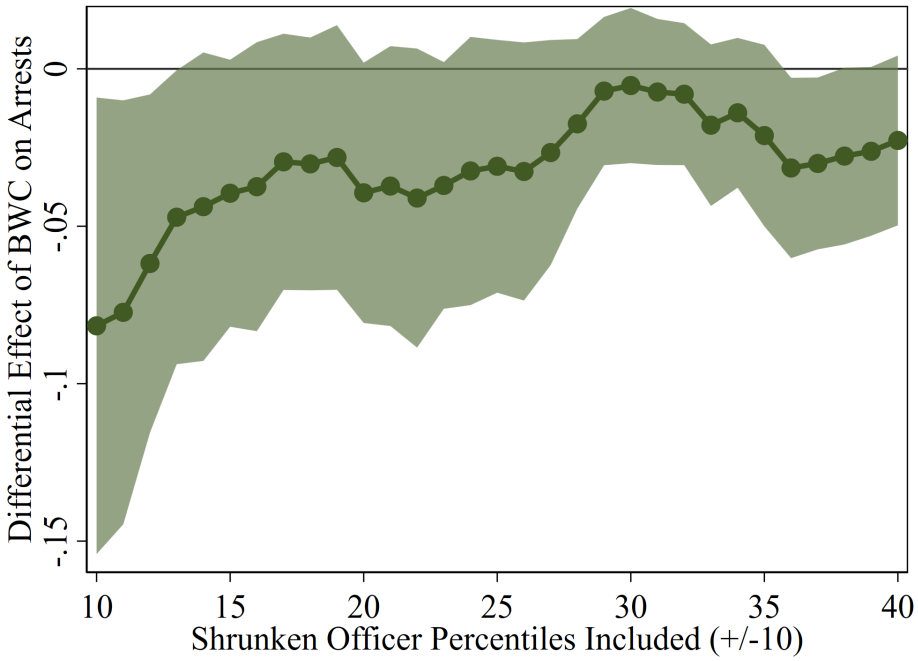
Note: This table reports estimates similar to Columns 1 and 4 of Table 2 using alternate difference-in-differences specifications. Column 3 corresponds to Column 1 of Table 2, and Column 4 corresponds to Column 4 of Table 2. Column 2 identifies the type of design used. "Triple Difference" is a design at the officer-month level where an indicator for body-worn camera in the district is interacted with either an indicator for officers who have activation rates at or below the 25th percentile with district by month fixed effects. "Differenced Outcome" is a design at the district-month level as in our primary specification. For specifications that require a never-treated group, we end the data in 10/2017, which leaves 11 districts never treated (Sun and Abraham, 2021; Arkhangelsky et al., 2021). * p<0.1, ** p<0.05, *** p<0.01.

Figure A6: Robustness: Addressing Noise in Officer Activation Rates by Estimating the Effect of Body-worn Cameras on Arrests using Shrunken Activation Rates

A. Sorting Officers by Activation Rates

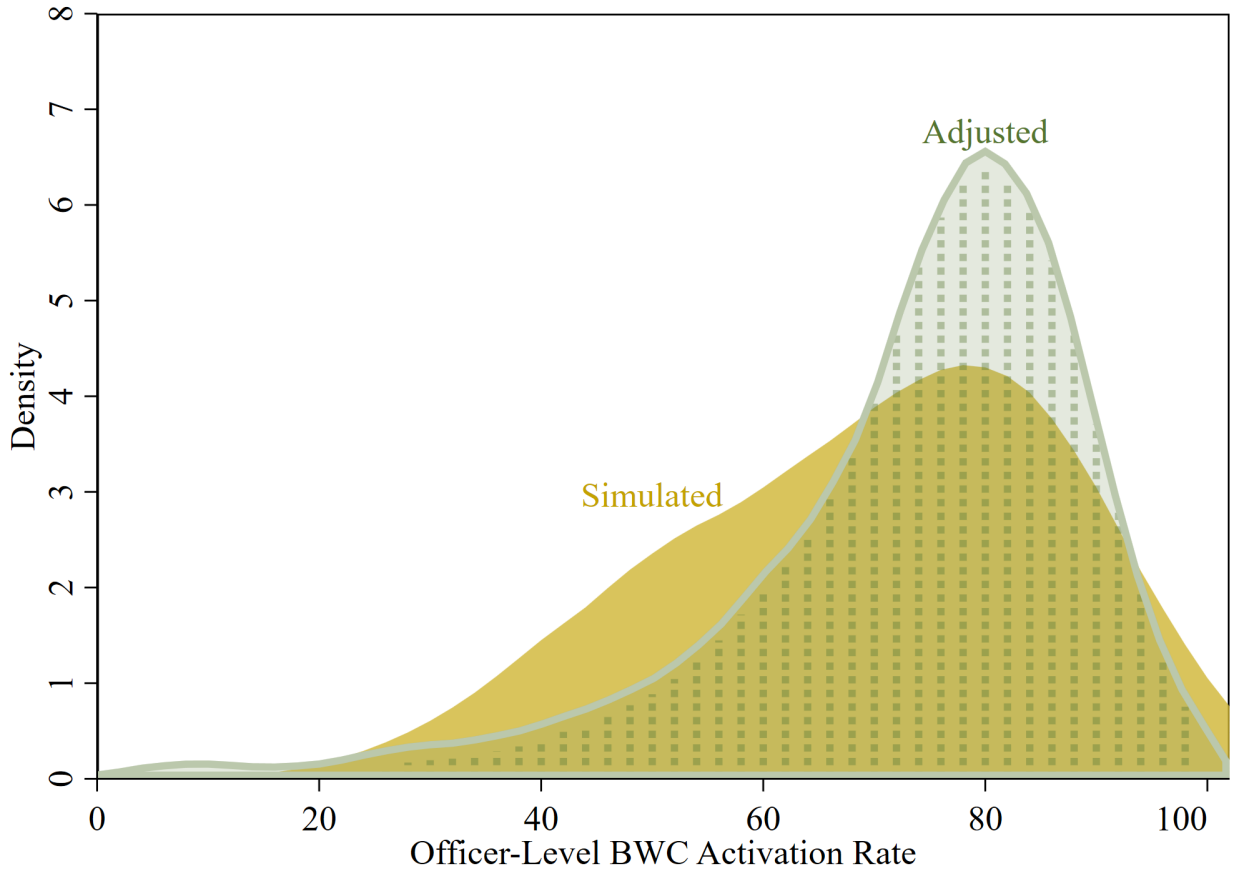


B. Sorting Officers by Activation Rates and Complaints



Note: This figure repeats the analysis in Figure 7 by sorting officers using shrunken adjusted officer activation rates instead of unshrunken adjusted officer activation rates.

Figure A7: Simulated Versus Actual Officer Activation Rates



Note: This figure reports the distribution of adjusted officer activation rates that is used to estimate the structural model and the resulting simulated distribution of officer activation rates from the structural model.

Supplemental Appendix B: Theoretical Model

This appendix provides formal proof of the last two implications of the model discussed in Section 2.4.

Implications of the Model

The second and third implications discussed in Section 2.4 deal with activation rates and complaint rates across protective and compromising activators. To discuss these, we must specify how officers differ from each other. We focus on variation in the relative reward for an arrest. $\frac{w_j}{c}$, which we will hereafter call R_j and allow to differ across officers according to a distribution $H(R)$. Note that $\theta^*_{arr}(R_j)$ and $\theta^*_m(R_j)$ depend by R_j but not ϵ_i while $\theta^*_{act}(\epsilon_i)$ depends on ϵ_i but not R_j.

Given an R_j, define $\epsilon_{arr}(R_j)$ to be the value that sets $\theta^*_{act}(\epsilon_{arr}(R_j)) = \theta^*_{arr}$ and likewise define $\epsilon_m(R_j)$ to be the value that sets $\theta^*_{act}(\epsilon_m(R_j)) = \theta^*_m$. Any value R^p such that $\theta^*_{arr}(R^p) < \theta^*_{act}(0)$ belongs to a protective activator, while compromising activators have values higher values of R^c such that $\theta^*_{arr}(R^c) > \theta^*_{act}(0)$

For a generic R^p and R^c, activation rates for various ranges of ϵ_i are given by:

ϵ_i	R^p	R^c
$(-\infty, \epsilon_{arr}(R^p)$	$\frac{F(\theta^*_{act}(\epsilon))}{F(\theta^*_{arr}(R^p))}$	$\frac{F(\theta^*_{act}(\epsilon))}{F(\theta^*_{arr}(R^c))}$
$(\epsilon_{arr}(R^p), \epsilon_m(R^c))$	1	$\frac{F(\theta^*_{act}(\epsilon))}{F(\theta^*_{arr}(R^c))}$
$(\epsilon_m(R^c)), \epsilon_{arr}(R^c))$	1	$\frac{F(\theta^*_m(R^c))}{F(\theta^*_m(R^c))+\theta^*_{arr}(R^c))-\theta^*_{act}(\epsilon))}$
$(\epsilon_{arr}(R^c), \infty$	1	1

Recalling that $\theta^*_{arr}(R^p) < \theta^*_{act}(0) < \theta^*_{arr}(R^c)$, the activation rate for R^p is greater than the activation rate of R^c for all draws of ϵ_i and all pairs of R^p and R^c. This establishes the second implication discussed in Section 2.4.

Finally, the facts that $\theta^*_{arr}(R^p) < \theta^*_{arr}(R^c)\ \forall R^p, R^c$ and $q_T > q_F$ imply that:

$$E[\theta q_T + (1-\theta)q_F | \theta < \theta^*_{arr}(R^c)] > E[\theta q_T + (1-\theta)q_F | \theta < \theta^*_{arr}(R^p)] \tag{10}$$

that is, in the absence of body-worn cameras, compromising activators will accumulate more complaints than protective activators. This shows the third implication in

Section 2.4.

Extension: Officer Effort

In this extension, we consider the case where officers can exert costly effort to reduce the probability of misconduct in an arrest.

Let this effort, $e \geq 0$, enter the officer's utility function both through the reward for an arrest, $w_j(e)$, and the probability of misconduct, $\theta_i(e) = \theta_i - \beta e$. We assume that $w_j'(e) < 0 \; \forall e$ and $w'(0) > -\beta c \Delta$ to ensure an interior solution to the effort problem. We also assume that the effect of e on θ_i is linearly separable in order to maintain threshold rules for arrest and activation that can be clearly expressed.

Now consider the problem of an officer choosing effort conditional on making the arrest:

$$\max_{e \geq 0} w_j(e) - c(\theta_i(e) q_T + (1 - \theta_i(e)) q_F) \tag{11}$$

This is solved by:

$$-\frac{w')j(e^*)}{\beta} = c\Delta \tag{12}$$

Then, the officer chooses whether to make an arrest given the optimal e^*, which gives a threshold rule:

$$\theta^*_{arr} = \frac{\frac{w_j(e^*)}{c} - q_F}{\Delta} + \beta e^* \tag{13}$$

This is isomorphic to the original model when $w_j = w_j(e^*)$ and $\theta_i = \theta_i(e^*)$. That is, we can simply define values of w_j and θ_i as those that result from the officer's effort maximization problem.

However, we should not expect the same isomorphism in the activation decision because BWC activation will change q_T and q_F and hence the optimal effort supplied by the officer. In particular, it will increase the LHS of Equation 12, so $\frac{\partial e^*}{\partial m} > 0$.

Turning to the activation decision, it is now:

$$\theta^*_{act}(\omega_j + \epsilon) = \frac{\frac{\omega_j+\epsilon}{c} - q'_F}{\Delta'} + \beta e^* \tag{14}$$

where we call ω the re-optimization shifter, $\omega_j = w'_j(e^*)\frac{\partial e^*}{\partial m} + \beta\frac{\partial e^*}{\partial m}c\Delta'$.[20] The sign of ω_j is ambiguous. Officers may appreciate the extra dividends paid by their increased effort being captured on camera, or they may be frustrated by the need to exert extra effort when monitored.

Finally, the change in the arrest threshold due to activation is given by:

$$\frac{\partial \theta^*_{arr}}{\partial m} = \frac{\Delta'}{\Delta}(\theta^*_{arr} - \theta^*_{act}(0)) + \beta\frac{\partial e^*}{\partial m} \tag{15}$$

Two things about this result are noteworthy. First, the change in the arrest threshold due to activation continues to include $\theta^*_{act}(0))$, but now setting $\epsilon_i = 0$, the no-idiosyncratic-incentive baseline, returns $\theta^*_{act}(\omega_j))$ instead. The reference incentive level is instead $\epsilon_i = -\omega_j$, just enough activation incentive to offset the re-optimization shifter. Second, the $\beta\frac{\partial e^*}{\partial m}$ puts upward pressure on $\frac{\partial \theta^*_{arr}}{\partial m}$ for all officers. This equation still allows the division of officers into protective and compromising on the basis of its sign, but that division no longer reflects the simple comparison of arrest thresholds to activation thresholds in the absence of additional incentives.

Overall, we expect that the ability to re-optimize in response to activation will make more officers protective activators because they can take better advantage of the changes in q_T and q_F that arise from activation. An increase in protective activators is a certainty when there is also a direct benefit of re-optimization, $\omega_j > 0$.

[20]For truly incremental changes in m, this re-optimization shifter will be 0 by the Envelope Theorem, but recall that we are primarily interested in discrete changes in m despite using notation for continuous changes.

Supplemental Appendix C: Activation Labels

This appendix documents the details of the procedure we use to label activations by matching arrest records to BWC metadata. Recall that this process is made difficult by the fact that only some arrests can be matched directly to the metadata using explicit event IDs recorded by CPD. To establish the remaining matches, we will compare the timestamps associated with arrests and BWC activations.

The set of arrests that does match cleanly to the BWC data by event ID provides a model for the range of these timing discrepancies. We call these the "event number matches." The event number matches demonstrate the necessity of considering timestamp-based matches where the arrest time falls outside the BWC activation window. Figure C1 plots the distribution of "gaps" between the arrest timestamp and BWC activation window. We calculate the gap in each case as the absolute value of the distance between the arrest timestamp and the endpoints of the BWC activation window, assigning 0 to timestamps that fall inside the window.[21] Positive values indicate that the arrest timestamp was recorded before the BWC recording ended. Negative values indicate the arrest timestamp was recorded after the BWC recording ended.

We see that in 45.2% of 425,460 event number matches, the arrest timestamp is outside the BWC activation window. Positive gaps are more common than negative gaps. This may be driven by arrest timestamps that default to when an officer was assigned to or arrived at a call for service, rather than the arrest itself. There are long tails on both ends of the distribution, which we collect in Figure C1 into those that exceed 20 minutes on either side. We therefore find that nonzero gaps are common and occasionally large in the event number matches, and this gives us reason to believe they will also be common among arrests that cannot be matched using the event number.

Our next step is to use the event number matches to model these timing discrep-

[21] Occasionally, more than one BWC activation is associated with a single event. In this case, the activation window is a disjoint interval, but the gap is still calculated as the distance to the nearest endpoint.

ancies in a more formal sense by building a statistical model of the difference between arrest time and activation window. We model the distribution of gaps as a mixed Gaussian where each component c has weight π_c. Within each component, the size of the gap is determined by a linear model in characteristics of the arrest:

$$Y_i = \alpha_c + \beta_c X_i + \epsilon_i \tag{16}$$

where i indexes the known matches, Y_i is the gap recorded in a given event number match, α_c and β_c are component specific constants and coefficient vectors, X_i is a vector of arrest characteristics, and ϵ_i is drawn from component-specific Gaussian with standard deviation σ_c. X_i consists of: defendant age and sex, recorded officer role (first officer, second officer, or assisting), year and month FEs, charge category FEs, and the size of the BWC recording in MBs.

We estimate the Gaussian mixture using the flexmix package in R, which allows it to choose the optimal number of components and π_c, α_c, β_c, and σ_c for each. Table C1 reports the estimated parameters for the four estimated components. Of these, three are associated with short gaps of no more than 15 minutes. Only the fourth component suggests the possibility of especially long gaps.

We then apply this model to the set of 488,523 candidate "proximity matches" from our primary analysis sample. These are arrests that do not match to the BWC metadata by event ID but do have a BWC activation associated with that officer within 4 hours of the arrest timestamp on either side. Another 145,948 arrests have no BWC activations within this range. Note that a single arrest can be prospectively matched to multiple activations. Taking $F(X_i)$ as the CDF of our estimated mixture, we mark an activation in an arrest if $1 - F(X_i) > 0.05$ for at least one of its candidate proximity matches.

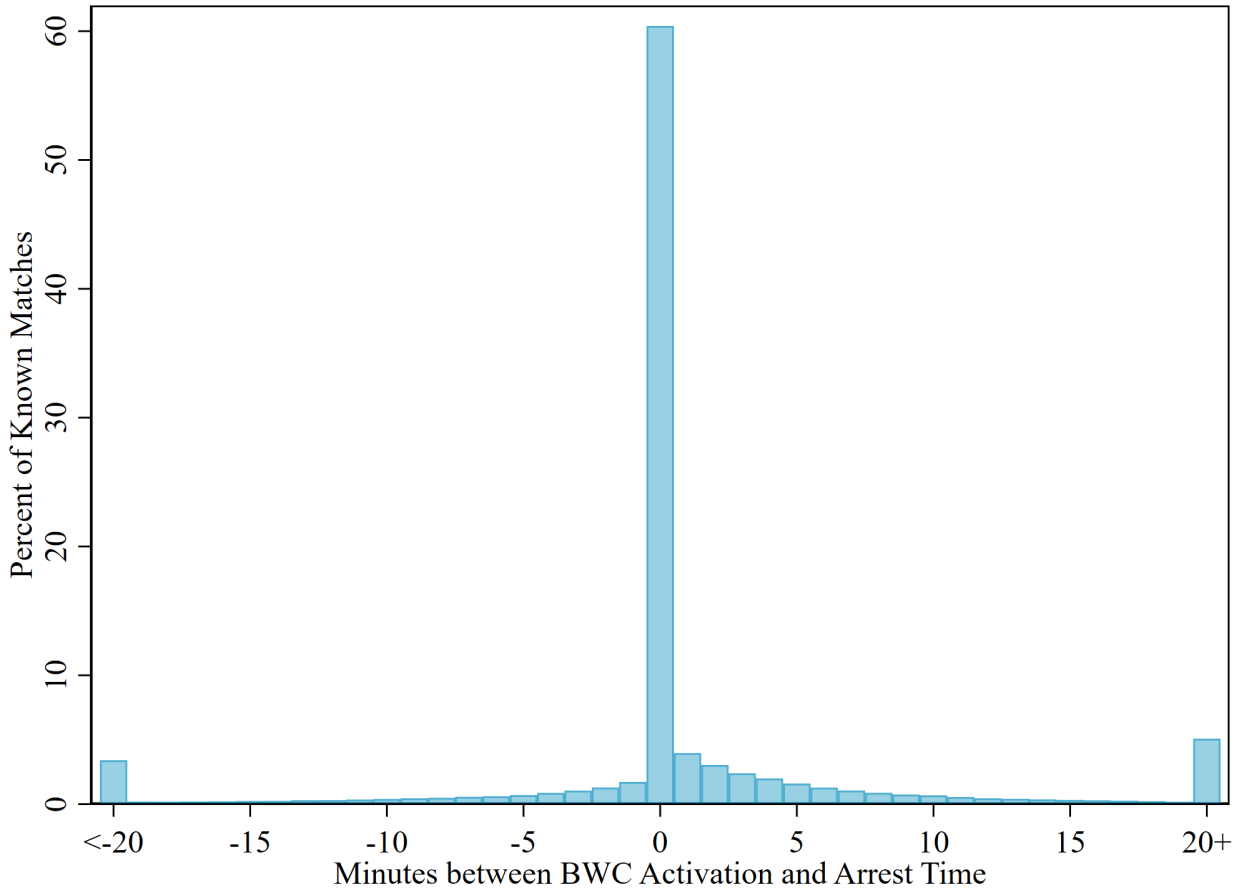
Figure C2 summarizes the results of this procedure. It is a histogram of measured gaps that stacks event number matches, accepted proximity matches, and rejected proximity matches. Observations with gaps of 0, of which there are 397,785, are omitted to preserve

scale, and gaps are topcoded at 100 minutes. Up to 20 minutes, event number matches are common and most proximity matches are accepted. The rule for accepting proximity matches is not a simple cutoff in time because our model allows for arrest characteristics to explain more or less of the observed gap. By 30 minutes, event number matches are nearly unheard of, and most proximity matches are rejected.

Figure C3 plots the distribution of arrests by the probability of a BWC activation assigned by this procedure. The vertical red line reports our standard 0.05 cutoff for accepting a match. From this graph, it is apparent that the distribution of probabilities created by our procedure is bimodal, with most arrests being assigned either a very high or very low probability. Our 0.05 cutoff divides a sizable set of arrests with a very low, but nonzero, activation probability from those with a more moderate probability. Importantly, loosening our standard to e.g. 0.01 would include many more of these low-probability matches, while tightening it to e.g. 0.1 would exclude only a small number of moderate-probability matches.

These moderate probability matches correspond to the 2nd and 3rd components in the mixed Gaussian model described in Table C1 with mean gaps of about 150 and 850 seconds, respectively. Our mixed Gaussian model puts a high weight on its 1st component, describing near-perfect matches, so the 2nd and 3rd components, even though they represent plausible gap lengths, can have no more than a score of approximately 0.4. Our threshold of 0.05, in essence, marks gaps that could have been generated by the first 3 components as activations and gaps from the 4th component as non-activations. Using the score directly in place of this binary application label has the effect of down-weighting activations with gaps in the 2nd and 3rd components.

Figure C1: Distribution of Arrest-Activation Gaps in Event Number Matches



Note: This figure reports the distribution of the number of minutes between the time of arrest and the closest endpoint of a BWC recording logged by the officer who made the arrest. Only arrest-BWC matches confirmed by event identifiers are included, where 0 indicates that the arrest timestamp fell within the BWC activation window. Positive values indicate the arrest timestamp was recorded before the BWC recording ended. Negative values indicate the arrest timestamp was recorded after the BWC recording ended.

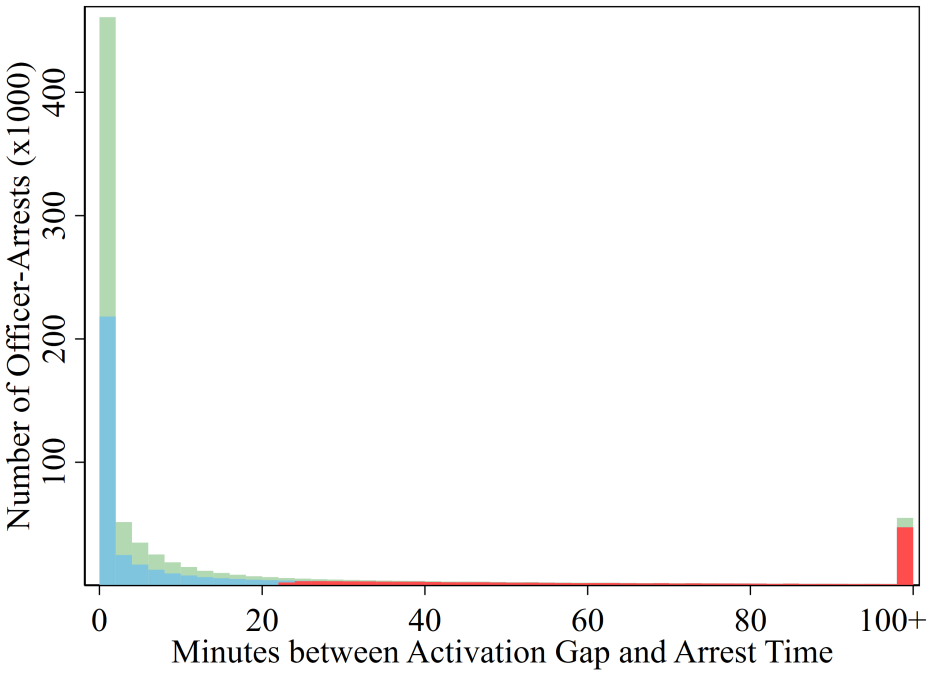
Table C1: Components of Activation Gap Model

Component (1)	Mean (2)	St. Dev. (3)	Weight (4)
1	0.1	1	0.56
2	149.3	99	0.24
3	845.7	408	0.15
4	5419.2	3120	0.05

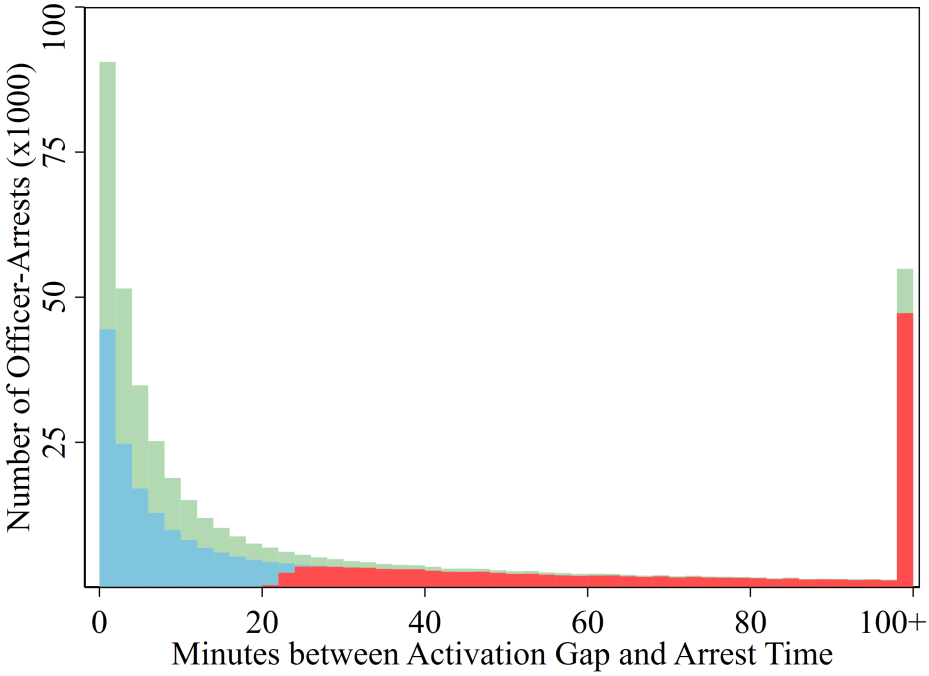
Note: This table reports information about the four components estimated in our Gaussian mixture model of the gaps between arrest and BWC timestamps. Column 1 identifies the component. Columns 2 and 3 report the mean and standard deviation of the component. Column 4 is the weight placed on that component in the mixture model.

Figure C2: Distribution of Arrest-Activation Gap Sizes by Match Type

A. All Officer-Arrests



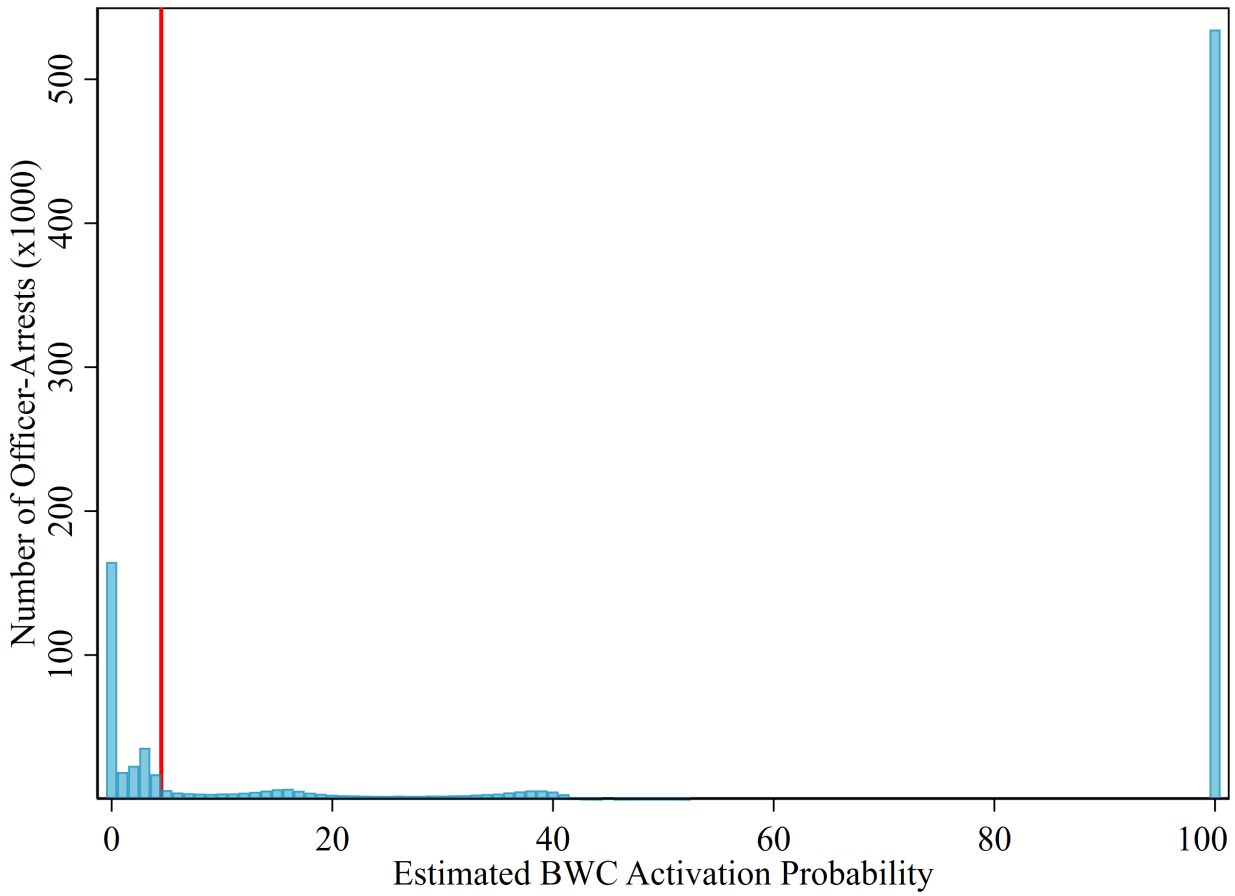
B. Officer-Arrests without Overlapping Activation and Arrest Times





Note: This figure reports the minutes between arrest time and the closest endpoint of a BWC recording logged by the officer who made the arrest. The unit of observation is the officer-arrest. Panel A includes all officer-arrests. Panel B excludes officer-arrests where the arrest time is within the time the BWC was recording. In each panel, the bars are stacked, so the total height of the bar is the total number of officer-arrests for a given bar. The green bars labeled "Confirmed Match" are officer-arrests where an event number matched the BWC activation directly to the arrest. The bars labeled "Proximity Match" are officer-arrests where an event number was not contained in either the activation data and/or the arrest data so that we cannot directly match the arrest to BWC activation and where we use the Gaussian mixture model of the gaps between arrest and BWC timestamps to label arrests as being associated with activation or not. The blue bars labeled "Proximity Match: Accepted" are officer-arrests that we label as having an activation, and the red bars labeled "Proximity Match: Rejected" are officer-arrests that we label as having no activation.

Figure C3: Distribution of Estimated BWC Activation Probabilities



Note: This figure reports the distribution of BWC activation probabilities estimated for arrests in our sample. BWC activation probabilities are 1 for arrests matched to an activation through event numbers, 0 for arrests with no activation within +/-4 hours of the arrest time, and are calculated using the CDF of the mixed Gaussian model fit to the event number matches for all other officer-arrests. The vertical red line at 0.05 reports our cutoff for labeling an officer-arrest as having an activation.

Supplemental Appendix D: Switchers Test

This appendix assesses the extent to which the persistence of activation rates within-officers across arrests, time, and situations can be explained by officers sorting to certain environments by using officers who switch beats in the spirit of switchers tests introduced in the teacher value-added literature (e.g., Chetty et al., 2014). The idea is that if officers' activation rates are fixed, then officers switching into beats who have higher activation rates than officers already in the beat should produce an increase in overall activation rates in that beat even if the type of beat they switch to is endogenous to their activation rate. The same holds in reverse for officers switching into beats who have lower activation rates.

Define an event, e, as an officer entering a new beat, b, and working in that new beat for at least 30 shifts over the next three months. Let Y_{et}^{Mover} be the activation rate of the officer entering the beat in event e in period t, where $t = 0$ is the three months before the move and $t = 1$ is the three months after the move. Let Y_{et}^{Peers} be the activation rate of the officers in the relevant beat but excluding the treated officer. Similarly, let $A_{et}^{\text{Mover}}, A_{et}^{\text{Peers}}$ be the number of arrests made. We estimate

$$\Delta_{et=1} = \alpha + \beta(\Delta_{et=0} s_{et=1}) + \epsilon_e \tag{17}$$

where where $\Delta_{et} = \frac{Y_{et=1}^{\text{Mover}} A_{et=1}^{\text{Mover}} + Y_{et=1}^{\text{Peers}} A_{et=1}^{\text{Peers}}}{A_{et=1}^{\text{Mover}} + A_{et=1}^{\text{Peers}}} - Y_{et=0}^{\text{Peers}}$ is the change in the activation rate in the beat that the mover is entering, where the first term is the activation rate in the new beat after the move (a weighted average of activation rate for the mover and the peers); $\Delta_{et=0} = Y_{et=0}^{\text{Mover}} - Y_{et=0}^{\text{Peers}}$ is the pre-move difference in activation rates between moving officers and peer officers in the new beat in the three months before the move; and $s_{et=1} \frac{A_{et=1}^{\text{Mover}}}{A_{et=1}^{\text{Mover}} + A_{et=1}^{\text{Peers}}}$ is the moving officer's share of arrests in the new beat in the three months after the move. This scales the differential activation rate by the moving officer's contribution to the overall activation rate after the move. β captures the moving officer's impact on the activation rate in the beat. If moving officers have a fixed activation rate and there are no peer effects,

we expect the relationship between their arrest-portion of the activation rate to have a 1:1 relationship with the activation rate in the new beat. If peer effects exist, then the relationship should be more than 1:1.

Appendix Table D1 reports the results for the 1,699 entry and departure events combined (Column 1) along with 302 entry events (Column 2) and the 1,397 departure events (Column 3). In Column 1, we find that the confidence interval of the 1:0.94 relationship between the actual impact of officers entering and departing a beat and the impact that would be expected if officers had a fixed activation rate includes 1:1. In Columns 2 and 3, we find effects that are almost three times larger for the 302 entry events than in the 1,397 departure events.

Table D1: Switchers Test: Officers Moving Beats

	Event Included		
	All	Entry	Departure
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Leave-Out Excess Activation Rate	0.94***	2.28***	0.79***
	(0.12)	(0.38)	(0.12)
Activation Rate without Moving Officer	0.72	0.72	0.72
Observations	1,699	302	1,397

Note: This table reports results of a switcher's test for events where an officer enters a new beat and works in that new beat for at least 30 shifts over the next three months. For a given event, the outcome is the change in the activation rate in the beat that the mover is entering, and the independent variable labeled "Leave-Out Excess Activation Rate" is the pre-move difference in activation rates between moving officers and peer officers in the new beat in the three months before the move. The estimates come from estimating Equation 17 and capture the moving officer's impact on the activation rate in the beat. Column 1 includes events for officers entering and departing a beat. Column 2 includes events only for officers entering a beat. Column 3 includes events only for officers departing a beat. Standard errors are in parentheses and are clustered at the event level. * p<0.1, ** p<0.05, *** p<0.01.

Supplemental Appendix E: Structural Estimation

Pre-BWC Environment

We first describe the arrest and discipline environment without BWCs. When an officer makes an arrest and commits misconduct, there is a probability q_T that this misconduct is detected and punished. When an officer makes an arrest and does not commit misconduct, there is a probability q_F that the officer is punished anyway. To relate the theory to observable statistics of complaints, we need a third possibility, which is the probability that misconduct is charged but not sustained when there is no misconduct.[22] Call this probability ψ.

Therefore, given a rate of complaints per arrests, C:

$$C = E[(1 - \theta_i)(q_T + \psi) + \theta_i | \theta_i < \theta^*_{arr}] \tag{18}$$

and given a rate of sustained complaints S:

$$S = \frac{E[(1 - \theta_i)q_T + \theta_i q_F | \theta_i < \theta^*_{arr}]}{C} \tag{19}$$

We assume that θ_i is uniformly distributed between 0 and A. Furthermore, we restrict our calculation of C and S to officers at or above the 95th percentile in arrests per shift to minimize selection from the requirement that θ_i fall below the arrest threshold θ^*_{arr}. Removing that conditioning entirely, we can calculate:

$$E[\theta_i] = \frac{CS - q_F}{q_T - q_F} \tag{20}$$

and:

$$A = 2E[\theta_i] \tag{21}$$

[22] We assume all actual misconduct is charged even if it is not sustained

Note that while ψ is not crucial to our analysis, it is given by:

$$\psi = C - E[\theta_i] - (1 - E[\theta_i])q_F \tag{22}$$

Next, we turn our attention to the officer-level distribution of arrest incentives, $\frac{w_j}{c}$. We assume this is log-normally distributed with mean μ and standard deviation σ. Given R, the mean of the distribution of observed arrests per opportunity and V, the variance of that distribution, we can make use of the following facts:

$$Pr\{\theta_i < \theta^*_{arr}\} = \frac{\frac{c}{w_j} - q_F}{q_T - q_F} \tag{23}$$

$$E[Pr\{\theta_i < \theta^*_{arr}\}] = \frac{\exp(\mu + \frac{\sigma^2}{2}) - q_F}{q_T - q_F} = R \tag{24}$$

$$Var[Pr\{\theta_i < \theta^*_{arr}\}] = \frac{(\exp(\sigma^2) - 1)\exp(2\mu + \sigma^2)}{(q_T - q_F)^2} = V \tag{25}$$

Where the last two equations can be solved for μ and σ.

Thus, given data for C, S, R, and V, only q_T and q_F are left as parameters that must be estimated.

Post-BWC Environment

In the model, body-worn camera activation increases the probability of punishment conditional on misconduct by an amount q'_T and decreases the probability of punishment conditional on no misconduct by q'_F. These combine in the activation threshold: $\theta^*_{act}(0) = \frac{-q'_F}{q'_T - q'_F}$. With activation data alone, these two parameters are not separately identified, so we will also match what we know about how arrest patterns differentially changed following the introduction of BWCs. To respect the inherent bounds that $q_F, q_T \in [0, 1]$ even after BWC

activation, we estimate a parameter $\delta_F = -\frac{q'_F}{q_F}$ with domain $(0, 1)$.[23] Given $\theta^*_{act}(0)$ and δ_F, we can back out both q'_F and q'_T.

The model allows for an arbitrary ϵ_i shifter to activation incentives. For the structural estimation, we allow only extreme values of ϵ_i. It is $-\infty$ with probability p_l, ∞ with probability p_h and 0 with probability $1 - p_l - p_h$. In essence, officers are randomly forced to not activate in proportion p_l of arrests and forced to activate in proportion p_h of arrests.

Given a draw from the distribution of $\frac{w_j}{c}$ and the parameters $\{q_T, q_F, \theta^*_{act}(0), \delta_F, p_l, p_h\}$ it is possible to estimate a resulting arrest and activation rate for a hypothetical officer. To the estimated activation rate, we add an ad-hoc noise term, u, which is normally distributed with mean 0 and standard deviation σ_u. This ad-hoc noise term accounts for variation in incentives across arrests within the same officer, non-extreme values of ϵ_i, and general finite sampling error. The final vector of 7 parameters to estimate is thus $\{q_T, q_F, \theta^*_{act}(0), \delta_F, p_l, p_h, \sigma_u\}$.

Estimation Procedure

Some aspects of the pre-BWC environment can be estimated directly from the data. We use data from the period 2013-2015. First, we estimate the distribution of arrests per shift among officers who worked at least 100 shifts in that period. We use the average arrest rate of officers above 95th percentile of this distribution (0.852 arrests per shift) as a baseline rate of *available* arrests per shift. This assumes that the 5% of officers who are most prolific are foregoing no arrests. Given this, we calculate that the average officer in 2013-2015 makes a proportion $R = 0.327$ of available arrests with a variance of $V = 0.088$. Restricting attention to just those 5% most prolific officers, to avoid selection into less risky arrests, we find a rate of $C = 0.0035$ complaints per arrest and $S = 0.011$ sustained complaints per complaint.

[23] This does not per se guarantee that $q_T + q'_T < 1$, but we find in practice that the bound on false positives always binds first.

We estimate the remainder of the model using the method of simulated moments, generating 200,000 observations per simulation. Each observation corresponds to an officer with their own draw from the distribution of $\frac{w_j}{c}$. Within an officer, individual arrest opportunities have different draws from the distribution of θ_i, but we do not simulate these draws directly, handling them instead with analytic expressions. For each officer, we estimate a body-worn camera activation rate as well as an arrest rate with and without body-worn cameras. We model sampling variance in activation rates in the following way: given an officer with an analytic activation rate, r_j, and who makes a number of arrests, n_j, which we draw from $U(50, 100)$, the observed activation rate for that officer is $b_j + u_j$. Here, b_j is drawn from $Binomial(n_j, r_j)$ and u_j is drawn from $N(0, \sigma_u)$. We are only interested in aggregate changes in arrest rates, so we do not model sampling variation in them.

Our goal is to select parameters in $\Omega = \{q_T, q_F, \theta^*_{act}(0), \delta_F, p_l, p_h, \sigma_u\}$ in order to match the distribution of adjusted officer-level activation rates shown in Figure 3 and our results on differential changes in arrest rates following the introduction of BWCs. We select 9 moments of the activation distribution: the 1st, 5th, 10th, 25th, 50th, 75th, 90th, 95th, and 99th percentiles and weight them equally in the objective function. Call these p_1 through p_{99} and their simulated equivalents $\tilde{p}_1$ through $\tilde{p}_{99}$. We emphasize extreme moments of the distribution to match the behavior in the tails of the officer-level activation rate distribution, which we find most distinctive.

To this objective function, we add: our estimate in Column 1 of Table 2 of the differential change in arrests among the lowest activators, d_{diff}; and our estimate in Column 4 of Table 2 of the aggregate change in arrests following BWC rollout, d_{agg}, which we simulate as $\tilde{d}_{agg}$, the difference in average arrest rates in the BWC and no BWC regimes. In the simulation, we calculate this as, $\tilde{d}_{diff}$, the differential change in arrest rates between the BWC and no BWC regimes of compromising activators (those with $\theta_{act}(0) < \theta_{arr}$) and protective activators (those with $\theta_{arr} < \theta_{act}(0)$).[24] Finally, we include a penalty term for

[24]We weight these two moment conditions higher than the others because even small deviations imply

having $p_h + p_l > 1$. Thus, our final objective function is:

$$O = \sum_{k=1...99} (p_k - \tilde{p}_k)^2 + 100(d_{agg} - \tilde{d}_{agg})^2 + 100(d_{diff} + \max(100(p_h + p_l - 1), 0) \quad (26)$$

We then minimize O with respect to Ω, first with a global optimization using multi-level single-linkage (Kucherenko and Sytsko, 2005), then "polishing" the result with a local simplex algorithm (Nelder and Mead, 1965).[25]

Sketch of Identification

This model can be seen as fitting an augmented Gaussian mixture to the distribution of officer-level activation rates with each component in the mixture corresponding to a type of officer, either those who find activation protective or those who find it compromising.

The distribution of θ_{arr} across officers is log-normal and parameterized by q_T and q_F, subject to their domain restrictions. Given any pair (q_T, q_F), $\theta^*_{act}(0)$ determines the fraction of officers who consider activation protective rather than compromising. Within the group of officers who find activation protective, all officers activate at a rate $1 - p_l$, and the noise term σ_u - along with the natural binomial variation - controls the spread of observed activation rates for this group. This distribution of protective activators centered on p_l is the first component of the Gaussian mixture.

The second component of the Gaussian mixture is made up of the compromising activators. It is augmented to allow a long tail in this group. The θ_{arr} distribution induced by (q_T, q_F) produces officers who find activation compromising and who have a range of effective activation rates. Furthermore, there is a mass of officers at the lowest activation rate. (q_T, q_F) together control the spread of this range and the relative size of the mass at the lowest activation rate. p_h can then shift the mean of this distribution as necessary.

The model as it is parameterized estimates $\theta^*_{act}(0)$ directly. Given that $\theta^*_{act}(0) = \frac{-q'_F}{q'_T - q'_F}$, the changes in misconduct detection induced by BWC activation are not separately

arrest responses that are qualitatively different from what we estimate.

[25]In both cases, the algorithm is as implemented in the NLopt R package

identified by the distribution of activation alone. However, $q_F^{'}$ also appears in the definition of θ_m, which in turn controls arrest rates and how they react to the introduction of BWCs. Including d_{agg} and d_{diff} in the model therefore helps to separately identify the changes in error rates via δ_F.

Estimation Results

Tables E1 and E2 report the actual moments of the officer-level activation distribution, our simulated moments, and the associated parameter estimates. The primary issue with the fit is that we cannot match the extent of the left tail. Our simulated 1st percentile, 0.268, is substantially above the actual 1st percentile, 0.126. Meanwhile, we undershoot the 10th and 25th percentiles of the activation distribution because our simulated distribution does not drop off quite as quickly as in the low-but-long left tail in the data. Making either the distribution of $\frac{w_j}{c}$ or θ_i more flexible in a way that allows some officers to have particularly high complaint risk could address these problems at the cost of degrees of freedom.

We include our estimate of A, even though it is not a free parameter, to emphasize the fact that misconduct is rare. Even the arrest with the highest θ_i has only a 0.05% chance of misconduct. Furthermore, our estimated values of q_T and q_F are consistent with the fact that punishment for misconduct is even rarer. Officers who commit misconduct have a 12.4% chance of facing a sustained complaint as a consequence. The probability of punishment given no misconduct is five orders of magnitude smaller, though it is still relevant to officer behavior because arrests without misconduct are quite common.

Our estimate of $\theta^*_{act}(0)$ is difficult to interpret directly, but it drives the division of officers between those who find BWC activation compromising, 54.8% of our simulated sample, and those who find it protective, the remaining 45.2%. In the former sample, the primary driver of activation rates is p_l. Officers who find activation protective will activate in every encounter unless there is some outside intervention. In the latter sample, p_h has the opposite effect, driving activation rates up. We find that $p_l = 17.5\%$, consistent with the fact that very few officers activate in all or even 90% of arrests. We find a value of $p_h = 31.2\%$,

which indicates that officers are not infrequently compelled to activate in situations where they otherwise would not. The ad-hoc noise parameter $\sigma_u = 0.103$ then smooths out the distribution of activation rates.

Finally, we find that BWC activation has a large effect on the probability of a false positive investigation, reducing it by 95%. On the other hand, the increase in the rate of true positive investigations, 3.3 percentage points, is meaningful relative to the baseline rate but still leaves the probability of accurate punishment substantially below 0.

Table E1: Structural Estimation Results for the Moments of Officer Activation Rates

Moment	Data	Simulated
1st Percentile	0.126	0.268
5th Percentile	0.391	0.381
10th Percentile	0.515	0.448
25th Percentile	0.672	0.576
50th Percentile	0.778	0.724
75th Percentile	0.852	0.84
90th Percentile	0.905	0.923
95th Percentile	0.936	0.967
99th Percentile	0.999	1.04
Arrest Change	-0.003	0.00
Low Activator Arrest Differential	-0.026	-0.034

Note: This table reports the fitted output of our structural estimation for the moments of the officer-level activation rate distribution in both our BWC data and the dataset simulated with our fitted parameters.

Table E2: Structural Estimation Results for Fitted Parameter Values

Parameter	Estimate
q_F ($\times$100k)	0.422
q_T	0.124
$\theta_{act}(0)$ ($\times$1000)	0.121
p_h	0.312
p_l	0.175
σ_u	0.103
q'_F ($\times$100k)	-0.399
q'_T	0.033
A ($\times$1000)	0.545

Note: This table reports the fitted output of our structural estimation for the fitted parameter values.