

# Law enforcement officers urged to wear body armor to decrease mortality rates

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New research published in the *Journal of Occupational and Environmental Hygiene (JOEH)* found that law enforcement officers who wear body armor when shot by a firearm in the torso were 77 percent less likely to die from their injuries than those who did not wear armor.

Authors Weiwei Liu and Bruce Taylor note that 12 percent of officers in the United States opt not to wear [body armor](#), despite many [law enforcement agencies](#) have a mandatory policy to do so. This study is intended to help [law enforcement agencies](#) address weaknesses in current policies and encourage officers to wear armor.

Using data from the Law Enforcement Officers Killed and Assaulted (LEOKA) database, the authors examined the association between officers' individual characteristics and the likelihood of wearing body armor and the conditional association between wearing body armor and the likelihood of dying from a shooting to the torso.

Liu and Taylor cite a number of factors that influence officers' armor-wearing behavior, including age, [body mass index](#) (BMI), rank, geographic region, and type of assignment. In general, officers who are older or overweight, or who work in a region with more gun attacks against police such as the southern United States, are least likely to survive gunshot wounds. Those officers are also the least likely to wear body armor, the researchers point out.

Liu and Taylor noted "Police agencies need to target older, overweight officers, and those assigned to detective and undercover assignments when enforcing armor related policies... Agencies in the [southern U.S.] need to pay special attention to mandatory wearing policies."

"The investigation of factors that influence police officers' chance of surviving a gun shooting will have important implications for policies related to

sending backup officers to police shootings, emergency response, and other critical areas."

Law enforcement agencies can use these findings to develop new programs and awareness campaigns to increase the use of body armor among officers. Agencies can also pay closer attention to officers in higher-risk groups when performing inspections for compliance with policies on wearing armor.

**More information:** Weiwei Liu et al. The effect of body armor on saving officers' lives: An analysis using LEOKA data, *Journal of Occupational and Environmental Hygiene* (2016). [DOI: 10.1080/15459624.2016.1214272](#)

Provided by Taylor & Francis

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