

Highly Mobile Large Polarons in Black Phase CsPbI₃

Heng Zhang,^{II} Elke Debroye,^{II} Julian A. Steele, Maarten B. J. Roeffaers, Johan Hofkens, Hai I. Wang,* and Mischa Bonn



Cite This: *ACS Energy Lett.* 2021, 6, 568–573



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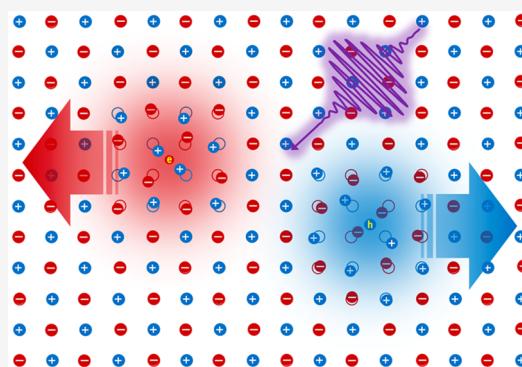
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ABSTRACT: We report the band-like transport of photogenerated charge carriers within all-inorganic black γ -phase CsPbI₃ (γ -CsPbI₃) thin films, with local mobilities up to $270 \pm 44 \text{ cm}^2 \text{V}^{-1} \text{s}^{-1}$ recorded using terahertz (THz) spectroscopy at room temperature. Temperature-dependent, high-frequency photoconductivity measurements indicate that large polaron formation governs charge carrier transport, following the Feynman polaron model. The mobility values derived using THz spectroscopy are nearly 1 order of magnitude higher than that reported for hybrid organic–inorganic lead halide perovskites and approach the theoretical limit for polarons scattering from longitudinal optical (LO) phonons. Our results identify γ -CsPbI₃ as a fascinating all-inorganic perovskite semiconductor with high charge carrier mobility for optoelectronics and reveal the effect of polaron formation on charge transport properties.



Low-cost, solution-processable lead halide perovskites (LHPs) have attracted tremendous attention in recent years owing to their superior photovoltaic performance with the reported single-junction solar cell power conversion efficiency beyond 25%.¹ Such high photovoltaic efficiency originates from the excellent optoelectronic properties of LHPs, including high absorption coefficients,² large carrier diffusion lengths,^{3,4} and inherent defect tolerance.^{5,6}

Despite their great promise, the volatility of organic cations in organic–inorganic hybrid LHPs (e.g., APbX₃ with A = methylammonium (MA) or formamidinium (FA), with X = Cl, Br, or I) imposes severe thermal and chemical instability, which impedes the practical realization of hybrid LHP-based applications.^{7–10} Within this context, cesium-based all-inorganic LHPs (e.g., CsPbX₃) are promising alternatives for efficient photovoltaics with improved chemical stability.^{7,11,12} In particular, the optically active black phase of CsPbI₃ possesses both a solar-friendly bandgap ($\sim 1.7 \text{ eV}$) and strong optical absorption in the UV–vis regime, holding great promise for the development of efficient all-inorganic perovskite photovoltaics.¹³ Despite the high chemical stability, the black phase CsPbI₃ perovskite is thermodynamically unstable at room temperature (RT), energetically preferring the formation of its optically inactive yellow phase. Concerted efforts have been made to stabilize the black phase at RT,^{7,14–18} yet its photophysical details remain largely unexplored. Initial optical studies focused on understanding the evolution of charge carriers (charge separation and recombi-

nation, carrier multiplication, etc.) on the picosecond (ps) time scale following photoexcitation.^{19–22} While the inferred carrier lifetimes in these reports are of great interest for developing efficient devices, the charge transport properties, such as the mobility of photogenerated carriers, a vital figure of merit for photovoltaic applications, are yet to be revealed.

Due to the “soft” and polar nature of lead halide perovskite crystals, photogenerated charge carriers have been shown to polarize the lattice and induce atomic displacement of the ions from their equilibrium positions.^{23,24} The charge carriers, together with the associated local lattice deformation, can be described as a polaron quasi-particle.²⁵ Several recent experiments have provided spectroscopic evidence of polaron formation in perovskites,^{26–32} by, e.g., probing subpicosecond lattice or vibrational dynamics. Polaron formation has been reported to be responsible for several of the fascinating optoelectronic properties in LHPs, including long-lived hot carriers and slow carrier recombination processes.^{33,34} Exploring the influence of polaron formation on the photo-generated charge carrier transport will be essential for

Received: November 27, 2020

Accepted: January 13, 2021

Published: January 20, 2021



ACS Publications

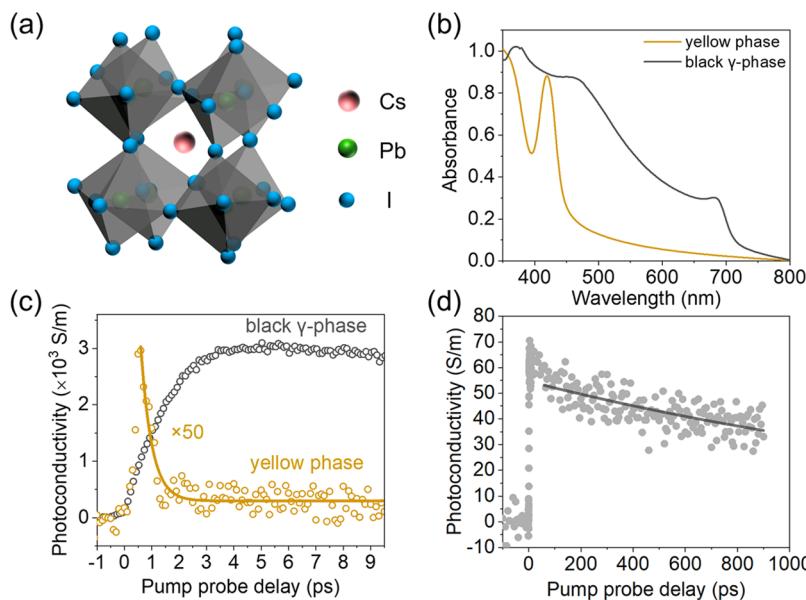


Figure 1. (a) Schematic representation of the black γ -CsPbI₃ crystal structure. (b) Absorption spectra of yellow phase and γ -CsPbI₃. (c) THz photoconductivity comparison for γ -CsPbI₃ and yellow phase at the same absorbed photon density of $5.81 \times 10^{13} \text{ cm}^{-2}$. The solid line represents a single exponential fit with an offset. (d) Photoconductivity dynamics of γ -CsPbI₃ at the absorbed photon density of $1.67 \times 10^{12} \text{ cm}^{-2}$. The solid line is an exponential fit that yields a decay time of $\sim 2 \text{ ns}$.

fundamentally understanding CsPbI₃-based optical device design and function.

Here, we report on the temperature-dependent transport properties of photogenerated charge carriers in black phase γ -CsPbI₃ thin films employing ultrafast terahertz spectroscopy. The remarkably high charge carrier mobility in γ -CsPbI₃ of $\sim 270 \pm 44 \text{ cm}^2 \text{ V}^{-1} \text{ s}^{-1}$ at room temperature approaches the theoretical limit, based on the Feynman polaron model of charge–LO phonon interaction. This result indicates that grain boundaries and defects do not play critical roles in determining the charge mobility in our samples. As such, we expect the mobility reported here for a polycrystalline sample to be that in single γ -CsPbI₃ crystals. Furthermore, this value is almost an order of magnitude higher than that for hybrid LHPs.

Recently, Steele et al.⁷ examined the thermal phase relations of polymorphic CsPbI₃ thin films and demonstrated the formation of a metastable, strained γ -CsPbI₃ perovskite thin film at RT. Hence, RT γ -CsPbI₃ polycrystalline thin films were prepared following the reported method (see details in SI).⁷ The γ -CsPbI₃ persists at RT long enough to finalize the spectroscopic study when maintained under a nitrogen atmosphere or under vacuum conditions—supported by stable photoconductivity properties. A schematic illustration of the orthorhombic crystal structure of the γ -CsPbI₃ is shown in Figure 1a. The RT UV–vis absorption spectra of the same sample before (yellow phase) and after (black γ -phase) the thermal-driven phase transition are shown in Figure 1b. Compared to the yellow phase, the γ -CsPbI₃ exhibits much stronger absorption across the UV–vis spectrum with a direct bandgap around the expected 1.75 eV (Figure S1).

To investigate the dynamics and transport properties of photogenerated carriers in polycrystalline γ -CsPbI₃ thin films, we employed ultrafast optical pump–THz probe (OPTP) spectroscopy.³⁵ In a typical OPTP measurement, a 400 nm, ~ 50 fs (fs) laser pulse promotes electrons from the valence to the conduction band. After a specific delay time, a collinearly propagating THz pulse with ~ 1 ps duration probes the

photoconductivity σ of the sample. The photogenerated free charges can be accelerated by the oscillating THz electric field (E), resulting in the attenuation of E . The relative change of the THz field, defined as $-\Delta E/E$, is proportional to σ which is determined by the carrier density, n , and charge mobility, μ , following: $\sigma = ne\mu$ (e the elementary charge).

In Figure 1c, the photoconductivity dynamics at the same absorbed photon density are compared for yellow phase and γ -CsPbI₃ thin films. The photoconductivity rise in γ -CsPbI₃ in the first 2–3 ps is attributed to hot carrier cooling.³⁶ Relative to the yellow phase, the charge carriers in the black phase possess a much longer lifetime (ns vs subps, see Figure 1c and d) and a ~ 50 times higher peak conductivity. The yellow phase's fast photoconductivity decay is assigned to ultrafast charge trapping due to the high defect density. This high defect density may be partially responsible for the low photoconductivity of yellow phase CsPbI₃. The comparative study demonstrates the superior photophysical and charge transport properties of γ -CsPbI₃ and its suitability for photovoltaics. The data in Figure 1d were recorded at sufficiently low excitation fluence to avoid higher-order recombination effects. Detailed fluence-dependent results (Figure S2) and analysis can be found in the SI, including the corresponding charge recombination fitting by the rate equation and a comparison of the rate constants with previous reports. On the basis of the analysis (see SI), we find that the monomolecular trapping rate is enhanced (~ 40 times higher) compared to MAPbI₃ samples reported by Herz.³⁷ This indicates a relatively high defect density present in our samples.

To determine the charge carrier mobility, an important figure of merit within photovoltaic devices, we conduct a time-domain spectroscopic (TDS) analysis for the γ -CsPbI₃ thin film at a given pump–probe delay time. TDS provides frequency-resolved complex conductivity spectra as exemplarily shown in Figure 2a: 4 ps, 124 ps, and 524 ps after photoexcitation (for TDS measurement and data analysis details, see SI). Both the real and imaginary parts are positive

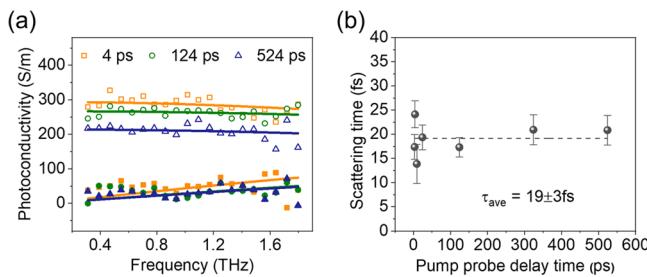


Figure 2. (a) Real (open symbols) and imaginary (solid symbols) components of the THz frequency-domain conductivity measured 4 ps, 124 ps, and 524 ps after photoexcitation with a photon density of $5.9 \times 10^{12} \text{ cm}^{-2}$ at RT in a vacuum. The solid lines represent Drude model fits. (b) Scattering times measured at different pump–probe time delays. The dashed line is the average of all scattering times.

and show negative and positive dispersion within the 0.25–1.8 THz bandwidth of the THz pulse, respectively. The Drude model (lines in Figure 2a) provides a quantitative description of the data:^{35,38}

$$\sigma(\omega) = \frac{\omega_p^2 \epsilon_0 \tau_s}{1 - i\omega \tau_s} \quad (1)$$

Here, ω_p is the plasma frequency, ϵ_0 the vacuum permittivity, τ_s the scattering time and ω the angular frequency. From the good agreement, we infer the mean charge scattering time τ_s to be 19 ± 3 fs based on measurements spanning time delays from 3 to ~ 550 ps, as shown in Figure 2b. Remarkably, despite the relatively high defect density (manifested by the large first-order recombination constant k_1 , see SI), the obtained charge scattering time in black phase CsPbI₃ is found to be ~ 5 times longer than that in hybrid LHP samples with the same polycrystalline nature in the film as our γ -CsPbI₃. For example, a scattering time of 4 ± 0.5 fs in MAPbI₃ films has been reported previously.³⁹

To gain additional insight into the charge carrier transport, we conducted temperature (T) dependent THz conductivity measurements between 77 K and RT. Previous THz-based measurements on hybrid perovskites found a $T^{-1.5}$ -dependence of the mobility, which was interpreted by free electron-acoustic phonon scattering.^{39–42} Meanwhile, the formation of large polarons (i.e., with lattice distortion beyond several lattice constants) has shown to occur on subpicosecond time scales in all-inorganic perovskites, including CsPbI₃.^{36,43} Large polarons undergo band-like transport, with the mobility decreasing with increasing temperature, i.e., $d\mu/dT < 0$. Frost²⁴ has calculated the charge mobility in perovskites, including all-inorganic CsPbI₃, based on the Feynman polaron model, assuming the dominant role of LO phonon scattering for polaron transport. In addition, the polaron mobility is found to increase nonlinearly with lowering T . For the T range studied here, Frost predicts that $\mu \propto T^{-\beta}$, with $\beta \sim 0.5$.²⁴ As shown in Figure 3, we present both the photoconductivity of charge carriers based on the OOPT study, and the charge scattering time extracted from the Drude model, as a function of temperature. The general trend for both parameters is consistent with the transport of large polarons. For the experimental data in Figure 3, we find $\beta \sim 0.40$ for the scattering time and $\beta \sim 0.77$ for the photoconductivity. This reasonable agreement between our experimental results and theoretical predictions supports the notion of large polaron transport, limited by polaron-LO

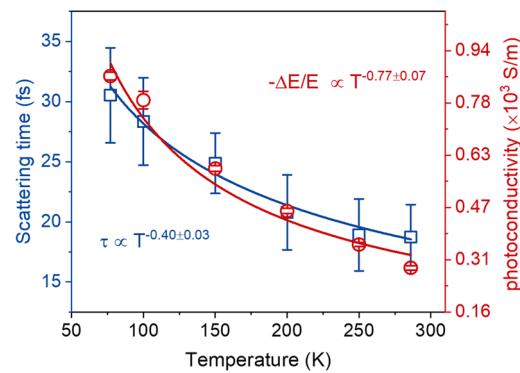


Figure 3. Temperature-dependent scattering time and photoconductivity (proportional to $-\Delta E/E$). In this study, the incident photon density and wavelength for the optical excitation pulse is fixed ($5.9 \times 10^{12} \text{ cm}^{-2}$ for 400 nm excitation). The solid lines are power-law fits.

phonon scattering in γ -CsPbI₃. The large polaron formation can also explain the observed high defect tolerance in our sample.^{33,34}

To quantify the charge carrier mobility, μ , from the scattering time using the relation $\mu = \frac{e\tau_s}{m^*}$, we need knowledge of the effective mass of the photogenerated charge carriers m^* . This can be obtained from band structure calculations, but other renormalization factors, e.g., polaron formation, need to be considered. Large polarons can exhibit band-like transport with an increased effective mass, m^* , relative to the bare band mass, m_b^* , of the solids,⁴⁴ following:⁴⁵

$$m^* = m_b^* \left(1 + \frac{\alpha}{6} + \frac{\alpha^2}{40} + \dots \right) \quad (2)$$

Here, α is the dimensionless Fröhlich electron–phonon coupling constant, defined as⁴⁶

$$\alpha = \frac{e^2}{4\pi\hbar} \left(\frac{1}{\epsilon_{opt}} - \frac{1}{\epsilon_s} \right) \sqrt{\frac{m_b^*}{2\hbar\omega_{LO}}} \quad (3)$$

where ϵ_{opt} and ϵ_s are respectively the optical and static dielectric constants (in units of vacuum permittivity ϵ_0), ω_{LO} is the effective LO phonon angular frequency of the coupled modes, and \hbar is the reduced Planck constant. Notably, previous theoretical calculations have reported very similar properties for α - and γ -black phases in terms of electronic structure and electron–phonon coupling strength.^{47,48} Therefore, here, we estimate the Fröhlich electron–phonon coupling constant of the γ -phase, using the widely reported dielectric properties and vibrational modes of the α -phase ($\epsilon_{opt} = 6.1 \epsilon_0$, $\epsilon_s = 18.1 \epsilon_0$, $\omega_{LO} = 16.15$ THz, respectively), based on theoretical studies.²⁴ These values are in line with previously reported experimental results for black phase CsPbI₃.^{49,50} We calculate α to be 1.23. The small value of α is consistent with the formation of large polarons ($\alpha < 6$) in the γ -CsPbI₃ as well.⁵¹ Using the band effective mass, m_b^* , from DFT calculations ($\sim 0.1 m_0$, in which m_0 is the rest mass of an electron^{48,52}), m^* is calculated to be $0.124 m_0$.⁵³ With this value, the charge carrier mobility amounts to $\sim 270 \pm 44 \text{ cm}^2 \text{ V}^{-1} \text{ s}^{-1}$, which is nearly an order of magnitude higher than other hybrid LHP polycrystalline thin films, as summarized in Table 1. The high mobility of the large polaron originates primarily from the long charge scattering time. Previous

Table 1. Comparison of the Mobility Measured in γ -CsPbI₃ With That from Calculations and Measurements in Other Reports for Hybrid LHPs

material (polycrystalline thin film)	mobility ($\text{cm}^2 \text{ V}^{-1} \text{ s}^{-1}$)	technique
CsPbI ₃ (this work)	270 ± 44	THz
CsPbI ₃	344	calculation ²⁴
MAPbI ₃	~ 27	THz ³⁹
MAPbI ₃	$\sim 20\text{--}75$	TRMC ^{54,a}
MAPbI ₃	~ 25	THz ⁵⁵
FAPbI ₃	~ 75	THz ⁵⁶
FAPbI ₃	~ 27	THz ⁵⁷
MAPbI ₃ (single crystal)	~ 620	THz ³⁸

^aTRMC = time-resolved microwave conductivity.

theoretical studies by Zheng et al. revealed that dynamic disorder caused by the organic cations can cause localization of charge carriers and thus reduce the mobility of large polarons in LHPs.²³ Our observation of a substantial enhancement in charge carrier mobility in all-inorganic perovskites compared to their organic–inorganic hybrid counterparts supports this conclusion. Furthermore, based on the lifetime inferred from the dynamics and the estimated mobility, the diffusion length of photogenerated polarons exceeds 1 μm (see the SI for more details). This result illustrates the great potential of the γ -CsPbI₃ for photovoltaic applications.

To further verify the high mobility of charge carriers in γ -CsPbI₃, we conducted a second estimate of the mobility from the amplitude of the OPTP data as exhibited in Figure 1c,d (see SI for more details). This is distinct from the first method, which relies on the dispersion (frequency dependence) of the complex photoconductivity. Briefly, $-\Delta E/E$ is proportional to the photoconductivity, σ , of the free charge carriers, and $\mu = \sigma/(en)$. The photogenerated carrier density, n , can be obtained from the Drude model, since $\omega_p^2 = \frac{e^2 n}{\epsilon_0 m^*}$. This estimate reveals a mobility of $258 \pm 6 \text{ cm}^2 \text{ V}^{-1} \text{ s}^{-1}$. This value is in good agreement with the polaron-based mobility estimation made from the TDS dispersion analysis, supporting the estimates of the electron–phonon coupling constant and polaron effective mass giving rise to highly mobile large polarons in black phase CsPbI₃.

Furthermore, based on the code developed by Frost and using the band effective mass ($0.1 m_0$) given by previous DFT studies,⁴⁸ we calculate the maximum polaron mobility to be $344 \text{ cm}^2 \text{ V}^{-1} \text{ s}^{-1}$ at RT for γ -CsPbI₃. Thus, the experimentally determined mobility in our sample reaches $\sim 80\%$ of the theoretical limit. The remaining difference between the experimental and theoretical results may be due to the contributions from defect scattering or dielectric drag effects in perovskites.⁵¹

In conclusion, we have performed a systematic THz spectroscopic study of γ -CsPbI₃ and revealed a remarkably high charge carrier mobility in the material, up to $270 \pm 44 \text{ cm}^2 \text{ V}^{-1} \text{ s}^{-1}$, which is nearly 1 order of magnitude higher than that of conventional hybrid lead halide perovskites. We further provide evidence for large polaron formation dictating the transport properties and T -dependent conductivity of the photogenerated carriers. Our results highlight the black phase CsPbI₃ as a fascinating all-inorganic perovskite material class for efficient optoelectronics.

■ ASSOCIATED CONTENT

SI Supporting Information

The Supporting Information is available free of charge at <https://pubs.acs.org/doi/10.1021/acsenergylett.0c02482>.

CsPbI₃ film preparation, estimation of the direct bandgap energy in black phase CsPbI₃, optical pump-THz probe spectroscopy, recombination rate equation fitting to the photoconductivity transient dynamics, comparison of recombination rate constants, determination of charge carrier lifetime and diffusion length, mobility estimation from optical pump-THz probe measurement (PDF)

■ AUTHOR INFORMATION

Corresponding Author

Hai I. Wang — Max Planck Institute for Polymer Research, 55128 Mainz, Germany;  orcid.org/0000-0003-0940-3984; Email: wanghai@mpip-mainz.mpg.de

Authors

Heng Zhang — Max Planck Institute for Polymer Research, 55128 Mainz, Germany;  orcid.org/0000-0002-5175-7367

Elke Debroye — Department of Chemistry, KU Leuven, 3001 Leuven, Belgium;  orcid.org/0000-0003-1087-4759

Julian A. Steele — cMACS, Department of Microbial and Molecular Systems, KU Leuven, 3001 Leuven, Belgium;  orcid.org/0000-0001-7982-4413

Maarten B. J. Roeffaers — cMACS, Department of Microbial and Molecular Systems, KU Leuven, 3001 Leuven, Belgium;  orcid.org/0000-0001-6582-6514

Johan Hofkens — Department of Chemistry, KU Leuven, 3001 Leuven, Belgium; Max Planck Institute for Polymer Research, 55128 Mainz, Germany;  orcid.org/0000-0002-9101-0567

Mischa Bonn — Max Planck Institute for Polymer Research, 55128 Mainz, Germany;  orcid.org/0000-0001-6851-8453

Complete contact information is available at: <https://pubs.acs.org/10.1021/acsenergylett.0c02482>

Author Contributions

^{||}Contributed equally to this work.

Notes

The authors declare no competing financial interest.

■ ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We thank Keno Krewer, Wenhao Zheng, Shuai Fu, and Lucia Di Virgilio for their help and discussions on the data analysis. The authors acknowledge financial support from the Research Foundation - Flanders (FWO) through postdoctoral fellowships to E.D. and J.A.S. (FWO grant nos. 12O3719N and 12Y7221N) and research projects to J.H. and M.B.J.R. (FWO grant nos. S002019N, G098319N, 1514220N, and ZW15_09-GOH6316), the Flemish government through long-term structural funding Methusalem (CASAS2, Meth/15/04), the Hercules Foundation (HER/11/14), the Belgian Federal Science Policy Office (IAP-PH05), the KU Leuven Research Fund (C14/19/079), and the MPI financial support to J.H. as an MPI fellow.

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