



# Body Worn Camera Program

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OFFICE OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE SERVICES

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# Studies on Body Worn Cameras (BWC)

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Few studies have been conducted on BWC, and those studies vary in rigor.

Site	Study Date	Independent Researcher?	Comparison Group?	Cameras/Officers
Plymouth, England	2006-2007	Yes	No	50 cameras, 300 officers
Victoria, BC	2009	No	No	4 cameras
Aberdeen & Renfrewshire, Scotland	2011	Yes	No	56 total cameras
Rialto, CA	2012-2013	No	Yes	54 cameras
Mesa, AZ	2012-2013	No	Yes	50 officers
Phoenix, AZ	2013-2014	Yes	Yes	56 officers

# Plymouth, England (2007)

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Focus of study was to identify impacts on:

- Bureaucracy and the criminal justice process
- Challenges to police officer evidence in court
- Guilty pleas
- Malicious complaints made against officers
- Incidence of violent crime

# Plymouth

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## Findings:

- Increased evidentiary quality
  - Increase in charges/summons from 10% to 15%
- Decreased time spent on paperwork
  - 22% less time spent on paperwork
- Decreased citizen complaints
  - 14% reduction in citizen complaints during the first 6 months, compared to same time period in previous year
- Crime victim perceptions upon encounter with BWC officer
  - 72% felt the BWC was beneficial
  - 81% felt safer as a result of the cameras

Despite these advantages, the BWC system proved to be too costly for the department to continue and expand.

# Victoria, British Columbia, Canada (2009)

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Feasibility study conducted by the Victoria Police Department.

Evaluated the use of four cameras available for voluntary use primarily by foot and bicycle patrol.

# Victoria, British Columbia

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## Findings:

- Officers spent more time completing paperwork involving video footage
- 80% of officers reported the BWC evidence provided a more accurate account of the incident
- 87% of officers reported the video improved the quality of evidence
- Approval rate for submitted charges increased from 84% to 93%

The VPD determined the benefits outweighed the limitations, so they adopted the BWC technology.

# Aberdeen and Renfrewshire, Scotland (2011)

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38 cameras were deployed for 8 months in Renfrewshire and 18 were initially deployed for 3 months in Aberdeen.

Focus of study was to identify impacts on:

- Citizen attitudes
- Criminal justice processing (e.g., guilty pleas)
- Citizen complaints
- Assaults on officers

# Aberdeen and Renfrewshire

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## Findings across the two sites:

- Decrease in various types of crimes, such as breach of peace, vandalism, minor assaults, and serious assaults
- Decrease in citizen complaints
- Decrease in assaults on officers
- High citizen support for the technology
- Quicker resolution through guilty pleas

# Rialto, CA (2012-2013)

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Half of the department's 54 patrol officers were randomly assigned by shift on a weekly basis to either wear or not wear the cameras.

Focus of study was to identify impacts on:

- Citizen complaints
- Police use of force incidents

# Rialto

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## Findings

- Decrease in citizen complaints
  - Decrease of 88%, from 24 complaints to 3 complaints
- Decrease in use of force by police
  - Decrease of 60%, from 61 incidents to 25 incidents
  - Shifts without cameras experienced twice as many use of force incidents as shifts with cameras
  - Officers without cameras were more likely to use force without having been physically threatened
- No adverse impact on the frequency of police-public contacts

# Mesa, AZ (2012-2013)

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Fifty officers received cameras and were compared to 50 demographically similar officers who did not receive the cameras.

Focus of study was to identify impacts on:

- Civil liability
- Departmental complaints
- Criminal prosecution
- Officer perceptions of BWC technology

# Mesa

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## Findings

- Decrease in citizen complaints
  - Nearly 3 times more complaints in the control group than the camera group (23 vs. 8)
  - Pre-BWC: 30 complaints for the year; Post-BWC implementation: on track for 12 complaints for the year
  - 75% fewer use of force complaints for officers with cameras
  - Officers held generally positive views about the potential impact of BWCs
  - 77% believed the cameras would cause officers to behave more professionally
  - 80% of officers believed that cameras will improve evidence quality, and 76% believed that video evidence will facilitate the prosecution of domestic violence cases

# Mesa

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## Findings (continued)

- Administrative policy influences camera usage
  - When a discretionary BWC policy is in place, camera use declined 42%
  - Officers who volunteer to wear the technology are more likely to record encounters than officers who are required to wear it
- Substantial impact on the agency
  - There were 3-4 requests for video redaction over the study period, which required an average of 10 hours of labor per request, which was an unanticipated resource cost

By the end of the study period, 23% of BWC users believed the cameras should be permanently adopted department-wide.

# Phoenix, AZ

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56 officers received cameras and were compared to officers in a demographically similar area who did not receive cameras.

Focus of study was to identify impacts on:

- Police accountability
- Response to crime in general and domestic violence in particular

Researchers also conducted an extensive process evaluation to look at implementation of the BWC program and assess officer perceptions of the technology.

# Phoenix

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## Findings:

- Less than half of incidents were recorded, and the percentage varied depending on crime type.
- Officer productivity was impacted.
  - 17% increase in arrests among BWC officers, vs. 9% increase in comparison group
- Complaints declined significantly.
  - 23% decrease for BWC officers vs. 11% increase for comparison officers
  - BWC officers who received a complaint were significantly less likely to have the complaint sustained versus the comparison group.
- Cameras did not appear to have an impact on suspect behavior as measured through resisting arrest charges.
- Following implementation of body cameras, DV cases were significantly more likely to be initiated, result in charges filed, and result in a guilty plea or guilty verdict.

# Phoenix

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- Officer perceptions:
  - Technology easier to use than expected
  - Dissatisfaction with long download times
  - Did not decrease the time officers spent on paperwork
  - Video submitted to court was difficult to process because of logistical problems associated with the chain of custody and length of time it took the prosecutors to review video
  - Dissatisfied with the possibility that video recordings might be used against them by the department
  - Fear that camera use would lead to decreases in their contact with citizens, but after implementation, they were less likely to agree with this statement
- These concerns likely resulted in the low compliance rates for turning on cameras.

# Phoenix

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- Initial results suggested officers' attitudes were either ambivalent or negative to the use of BWCs. Over time, however, officers were more likely to agree that:
  - Camera usage should be expanded into other departments (24% vs 32%)
  - Camera usage should be adopted throughout the city (19% vs 33%)
  - The advantages of BWCs outweigh the disadvantages (13% vs 35%)
- These figures still suggest that the majority of officers in Phoenix who wear cameras are dissatisfied with the fact that they wear them.

# Perceived and Real Benefits of Implementing a BWC Program

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Increased transparency and citizen views of police legitimacy

Improved police behavior

Improved citizen behavior

Expedited resolution of complaints or lawsuits by improving the evidence

Opportunities for police training

# Perceived and Real Challenges of Implementing a BWC Program

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Citizen privacy concerns

Officer privacy concerns

Officer health and safety

Investment in terms of training and policy development

Substantial commitment of finances, resources, logistics

# Challenges

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(continued)

Limitations of BWCs from the officer's perspective:

- A camera does not follow your eyes or 'see' as the officer sees it.
- Some important danger cues cannot be recorded. Tactile cues, as well as history and experience play a role that will not be recorded.
- Camera speed differs from the speed of life—millisecond gaps between frames can happen. Also, officer reactions take time and lag behind the action, but this is not evident when the action is captured on video.

# Challenges

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(Continued)

- Cameras may see better than the officer does in low light, and cameras do not do well with lighting transitions.
- How much of a scene a camera captures is highly dependent on where it is positioned and where the action takes place.
- A camera records in 2D, so judging distance on footage can be difficult.
- The absence of precise time stamping can be problematic.
- One camera may not be enough to fully capture an event.
- A camera encourages second-guessing.
- A camera cannot replace a thorough investigation.

“Independent research is urgently needed because most of the claims of advocates and critics are untested. Research is needed to look at its perceived civilizing effect, evidentiary benefits, and impact on citizen perceptions of police legitimacy as well as its consequences for privacy rights, the law enforcement agency, and other outside stakeholders. Impact evaluations and experimental research designs are needed. Most studies rely on surveys asking about perceptions and attitudes rather than behaviors.”

--Michael D. White, Ph.D.

# Current and Future BWC Studies

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## Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department

- NIJ award for \$546,429
- Purpose is to examine the impact of BWCs in the LVMPD on negative police interactions with citizens. Process and outcome evaluations are being conducted.

## Los Angeles Police Department

- NIJ 2-year award for \$2,000,000
- Purpose is to examine how cameras are used in the field, with a focus on five areas: using cameras, privacy concerns, police legitimacy and changes in police services, crime reduction, and use of advanced analytics.

# Future BWC Studies

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## BJA Smart Policing Initiative

- Purpose is to study the impact of BWCs on citizen complaints, internal investigations, privacy, community relationships, and cost effectiveness.
- Awards given to Miami, Milwaukee, and Phoenix.

## Bureau of Justice Statistics

- BJS is collecting data on BWC use through surveys of law enforcement agencies.
- BJS is also designing data collection forms for future surveys of prosecutors and public defenders to measure how video is used by courts in criminal cases.