

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Evaluating the Impact of Police Officer Body-Worn Cameras (BWCs): The Orlando Police Department (OPD) Experience

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Project Summary:

Following completion of the 12 month USF OPD BWC Evaluation, which was based on a randomized experiment where 46 officers were randomly assigned to wear BWCs and 43 officers were randomly assigned to not wear BWCs, the results suggest that BWCs are an effective tool to reduce response-to-resistance (R2R) incidents and serious external complaints. This evidence is robust given the randomized experimental research design where group differences were equated prior to BWC implementation. Interestingly, although nearly all of the officers were skeptical about the (positive) impact that BWCs would have on their behavior in the pre-BWC implementation survey (and to some extent in the post-BWC implementation survey), wearing a BWC did positively influence their behavior and lead to significant reductions in R2R and serious external complaints. Profound agreement was found for the utility of BWCs to improve evidence collection, report writing, and as a tool to assist officers in improving their behavior and police work in general by having the opportunity to review their own BWC videos. Finally, the majority of the officers want to keep their BWC, believe the agency should implement a full scale adoption, and are willing to train their peers in BWC implementation and operation.

Research Questions:

- 1). *“Do police officers randomly assigned to wear BWCs differ from officers not randomly assigned to wear BWCs in their frequency and prevalence of response-to-resistance (R2R) incidents, serious external (citizen-generated) complaints, internal complaints and/or officer injuries at 12 month follow-up, and are there significant difference in the frequency and prevalence of these outcomes within groups in the 12 months prior to implementation of BWCs compared to the 12 months post-implementation of the BWCs?”*
- 2). *“What are officer attitudes and perceptions toward BWCs pre-implementation and the attitudes and perceptions of officers who wore BWCs post-implementation of BWCs at 12 month follow-up?”*
- 3). *“How do BWC study participants perceive the implementation process and overall BWC experience?”*

Project Phases:

- 1). Official Records (24 months; 12 months pre-BWC implementation and 12 months post-BWC implementation)
*Response-to-Resistance (R2R), External (citizen-generated) Complaints, Internal Complaints, and Officer Injuries
- 2). Officer Surveys (Baseline, Months 4, 8, 12)
*Attitudes and Perceptions of BWCs
- 3). Face-to-Face Interviews (Months 6-12+)
*Study Officer Participants

*Thoughts on the implementation of BWCs and the overall BWC experience

Project Results:

Phase 1: Official Records:

*No statistically significant pre-existing differences (demographics or outcomes of interest) were observed between the BWC and the No-BWC group.

*Post-BWC implementation, significantly fewer BWC officers were involved in R2R incidents and had less external complaints overall and fewer were subjects of external complaints relative to officers not wearing a BWC.

*BWC and no-BWC officers had fewer R2R incidents (although the total number of R2R incidents was lower for the BWC officers) when comparing outcomes within groups at 12 months pre-BWC implementation to 12 months post-BWC implementation.

*The number of BWC officers involved in R2R incidents also significantly declined as did the total number and prevalence of serious external complaints when comparing the outcomes at 12 months pre-BWC implementation to 12 months post-BWC implementation for the BWC officers, specifically.

*No significant post-BWC implementation between or within group differences were detected for internal complaints or officer injuries.

Phase 2: Officer Surveys:

Pre-BWC Implementation Survey Results:

*Most officers felt that their agency should adopt BWCs for all front-line officers and reported that they would feel comfortable wearing a BWC.

*Officers were relatively skeptical that wearing a BWC would have any influence on their R2R incidents, external complaints, or internal complaints.

*Officers were in greater agreement that BWCs would improve citizen behavior and reduce the R2R incidents, external complaints, and internal complaints among their fellow officers.

*Officers overwhelmingly reported that the BWCs would not reduce their willingness to respond to calls for service nor would it reduce their self-initiated subject contacts when a crime has been committed.

*Officers were largely in agreement that BWCs would help resolve citizen complaints.

Post-BWC Implementation Survey Results at 12-month follow-up:

*The noticeable majority of officers were in agreement that their agency should adopt BWCs for all front-line officers.

*Nearly all of the officers reported agreement that OPD was progressive and forward thinking in its decision to take part in the BWC research study and appreciated OPD's decision to take part in the BWC research study prior to full scale BWC implementation.

*Approximately, one in four officers reported agreement that the wearing of a BWC has impacted their behavior in the field, and 30-40% of officers were in agreement that

BWCs had impacted citizen behavior, de-escalated confrontations with citizens and themselves in the community, and had impacted the behavior of their fellow officers.

- *By and large, the officers overwhelming reported agreement that BWCs are capable of improving their evidence collection and their recollection of events, minimizing errors in their reports, and that reviewing BWC video after an incident would help them become a better officer, identify ways to improve interactions with citizens, and identify issues in general that they may need to improve on.

- *Two out of every three officers who wore a BWC reported that they would want to continue wearing one upon study completion.

- *Nearly 85% of officers were in agreement that OPD was effective in its implementation of BWCs.

Phase 3: Face-to-Face Interviews:

- *BWC & no-BWC officers “rarely” came into contact with other BWC officers.

- *BWC officers would like to keep BWCs after study concludes.

- *“Extreme” benefit in using BWCs in training scenarios (e.g. report writing, tactics, etc.).

- *BWC officers would be willing to help “educate” and “train” fellow officers during full scale implementation.

- *BWC officers experienced complaints resolved in the field.

- *Some technology problems remain (e.g. cord connection, video quality for quick play back, etc.).

- *For full scale implementation to occur, a larger “BWC-specific administrative” group should be in place.