



**Body-Worn Cameras in South Carolina:  
Law Enforcement Executives' Views Concerning Use, Policies, and Outcomes**

2015 South Carolina Law Enforcement Census

Kyle McLean, M.A.  
Scott E. Wolfe, Ph.D.  
Margaret M. Chrusciel, M.A.  
Robert J. Kaminski, Ph.D.

University of South Carolina

November 2015

## Executive Summary

Below is a brief overview of the key findings on body-worn cameras (BWCs) described in this report. The findings are organized by the specific section of the report from which they come.

### *Current BWC Use in South Carolina Law Enforcement Agencies*

- Approximately 50% of agencies in our sample reported currently using BWCs on a daily basis.
- Most (81%) executives reported that BWCs were assigned to individual officers (i.e., they were not shared by multiple officers).

### *Financial Considerations*

- Over 70% of respondents in the sample indicated that their agency received a cost estimate for BWCs.
- Within the sample, the average estimated cost for purchasing BWC equipment was \$63,284 per agency (i.e., among respondents that indicated their agency received an estimate). Data storage, on average, was estimated at \$21, 216 per agency. Both estimates, however, include wide variation across the sample given differences in agency size.
- Based on information provided by 79 agencies regarding the estimated cost of BWC equipment, it would cost the state of South Carolina nearly \$5 million dollars to implement BWCs in these agencies. This figure represents only a small portion of agencies in the state and, as such, the actual cost of BWC equipment purchase would be much higher.
- Based on information provided by 68 agencies regarding the estimated cost of BWC data storage, it would cost the state of South Carolina more than \$1.4 million dollars annually to store BWC data in these agencies. Again, this figure represents only a small portion of agencies in the state and, as such, the actual cost of BWC data storage would be much higher.
- Based on available data obtained in our sample, the average price for BWC equipment is about \$910 per officer. The average price for data storage is about \$315 *per officer per year*.
- Within our sample, we estimate that more than 5,300 officers in responding agencies are not currently wearing a BWC on a daily basis. Accordingly, we estimate that it would cost about \$4.9 million to outfit these officers with BWCs. This would then lead to an estimated yearly cost of about \$2.1 million to maintain data storage capabilities of these BWCs.
- 21% of respondents indicated that their agency would need to hire (or has hired) new personnel to manage BWCs.
- Over 62% of executives indicated that sworn officers would have duties reallocated (or have had duties reallocated) to manage BWCs.

- Over 68% of respondents indicated that administrative personnel would have duties reallocated (or have had duties reallocated) to manage BWCs.

### *BWC Policies*

- Across the entire sample, about 40% of respondents indicated that their agency developed one or more policies related to BWCs.
- About 11% of agencies that *do not currently use* BWCs reported having some type of policy concerning BWC use.
- About 32% of respondents in agencies that *currently use* BWCs indicated that their agency does not currently have a BWC policy.
- Among the agencies that reported having a BWC policy, only 6% indicated that policy required officers to *always* have their BWCs recording.
- All agencies that reported having a BWC policy indicated that policy specifies certain situations in which BWC are required to record.
- More than 76% of the agencies that reported having a BWC policy indicated that there are some situations in which policy prohibits recording.
- Traffic stops, emergency and routine calls for service, foot pursuits, vehicle pursuits, and suspect interviews were the situations most likely to have BWC recordings take place among agencies that reported having specific BWC policies.
- Among agencies with BWC policies dealing with who can access footage ( $N=41$ ), more than 90% of respondents indicated that officers are allowed to review BWC footage prior to filling out reports or making official statements.
- Among agencies with policies concerning how long they should store BWC footage, more than 70% indicated that non-evidentiary recordings are kept for less than one year. Conversely, evidentiary recordings are kept indefinitely by nearly three-quarters of responding agencies.

### *BWC Outcomes*

- Questions were asked regarding respondents' perceptions of BWC outcomes generally (global perceptions, which tap into views regarding BWC impact on law enforcement in general), as well as in their specific jurisdiction (jurisdiction-specific perceptions, which tap into views concerning how BWCs will impact the respondent's own jurisdiction).
- With regards to the global perceptions of BWC outcomes:
  - o Respondents most commonly agreed that BWCs would result in positive outcomes for several commonly measured metrics such as fewer use-of-force incidents, fewer citizen complaints, fewer instances of officer misconduct, and fewer civil settlements regarding officer misconduct.
  - o Additionally, respondents most commonly agreed that BWCs would also protect officers from frivolous complaints, improve officer interactions with the public, improve the public's trust in the police and help law enforcement be more accountable to the public.
  - o On the other hand, respondents most commonly disagreed that BWCs would make citizens more likely to comply with officers' orders and reduce assaults on officers.

- Respondents also disagreed that BWCs would cause officers to be less proactive, more hesitant to use force when necessary, or less willing to interact with the public.
  - Overall, there was positive support for the potential outcomes of BWCs globally.
- With regards to jurisdiction-specific BWC outcomes:
  - Similar to the global perceptions, respondents had overall positive views of the potential outcomes of BWCs in their jurisdiction.
  - Counter to the findings of the global perceptions, however, respondents most commonly disagreed that BWC use would reduce use-of-force incidents or make their officers less likely to use force in their jurisdiction.
- Scales were constructed to compare global perceptions of BWC outcomes with jurisdiction-specific perceptions of BWC outcomes. The analysis revealed that:
  - While respondents believed BWCs would have beneficial outcomes for law enforcement agencies, they also believed that these benefits would be somewhat less in their own jurisdiction.
  - Respondents whose departments currently used BWCs had more positive global perceptions of BWC outcomes than respondents whose departments did not currently use BWCs.

## **Acknowledgements**

We would like to thank all of the South Carolina law enforcement executives and staff members that took the time to complete this year's Census survey. We realize that their schedules are busy and that filling out a questionnaire is very time consuming. However, it is the data from these surveys that makes reports such as this possible. Our hope is that the information contained in the 2015 Census report is useful to the South Carolina law enforcement community. Their willingness to participate in the annual Census is much appreciated.

**Table of Contents**

Introduction..... 7

Survey Description..... 10

Current BWC Use in South Carolina Law Enforcement Agencies ..... 12

Financial Considerations..... 13

BWC Policies..... 17

BWC Outcomes ..... 26

Other Considerations ..... 34

Conclusion ..... 35

## **Introduction**

Each year a team of researchers in the Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice at the University of South Carolina (USC) conducts the South Carolina Law Enforcement Census (hereafter referred to as the “Census”). As part of the Census we ask law enforcement executives throughout the state to participate in a survey that centers on contemporary topics of interest to our police agencies. We also periodically conduct a census to collect information on the number of sworn and civilian personnel, equipment usage, salary structures, and related issues. This year’s Census focused on body-worn cameras (BWCs) in South Carolina law enforcement agencies. Specifically, the questionnaire attempted to capture information on the current use of BWCs in South Carolina agencies and executives’ perceptions concerning policies and potential outcomes.

Our focus on BWCs for the Census was precipitated by two important events. First, the past 18 months or so has witnessed one of the most sustained periods of intense public and media scrutiny of law enforcement in recent memory. The death of Michael Brown in Ferguson, MO and a string of other similar events in various locations throughout the United States sparked civil unrest, political debate, and dangerous times for law enforcement officers. Indeed, many observers—officers, researchers, and policy makers alike—have discussed the so-called “Ferguson effect.” In short, the incessant negative media attention directed at the police function has led to de-policing whereby officers withdraw from some duties as a method of avoiding being the next target in the media’s crosshairs and being accused of excessive force or racial profiling (MacDonald, 2015; Nix & Wolfe, 2015; Rosenfeld, 2015; Wolfe & Nix, 2015). One consequence of this situation is increased discussion of the role of BWCs in law enforcement. To be sure, members of the public, media, government, and even law enforcement communities

have discussed the potential role of BWCs in helping prevent Ferguson-type incidents (or, at the very least, minimize civil unrest stemming from such incidents). While it is safe to say that BWCs will never be the “silver bullet” some claim they will be, there is no debate that BWCs are at the center of police policy discussions across the country.

This brings us to the second catalyst behind this year’s Census topic. The state of South Carolina was thrust into the national spotlight with the death of Walter Scott in North Charleston. In many ways, some pundits used this incident as the tipping point in debates surrounding the need for BWC use in South Carolina law enforcement agencies. The legislature quickly passed a law stipulating that, in general, every law enforcement officer in the state will be required to wear a BWC (S.C. Code § 23-1-240). The act also instructed all agencies to develop a policy concerning BWCs that must be approved by the South Carolina Law Enforcement Training Council (SCLETC). The act also creates a “Body-Worn Camera Fund” for assisting agencies with the purchase and maintenance of BWCs but, curiously, does not specify how it will be funded. Indeed, such legislation will have a tremendous impact on the South Carolina law enforcement community and taxpayers.

The problem, however, is that little empirical research was conducted prior to the approval of this legislation. In fact, the act itself stipulates that within 180 days of the effective date of the legislation the SCLETC is responsible for conducting “a thorough study of the use, implementation, procedures, costs, and other related aspects associated with body-worn cameras in jurisdictions with body-worn cameras currently in use or which begin their use during this period.” With this year’s Census, we wanted to provide South Carolina law enforcement executives the opportunity to voice their viewpoints on the issue of BWCs. Ideally, this would have taken place *prior* to the passing of the BWC legislation. However, it is our hope that the



results contained in this report will help inform the implementation of BWCs and policy development. Additionally, we hope the results will assist in providing a reasonable picture of the likely positive (or negative) outcomes that may be realized with the use of BWCs (from the standpoint of police executives). In short, BWCs will not end police misconduct, completely stop citizens from acting aggressively toward officers, or eliminate the filing of false complaints against officers. Although we might speculate about the potential pros and cons of adopting BWCs, it makes more sense to survey the law enforcement executives in the State who are or will be responsible for the implementation of BWCs about their opinions to help avoid making hasty policy decisions.

## Survey Description

*“Not nearly enough study done before passing the law.  
No one knows at this point all the costs & ramifications of the technology.”  
(Survey Respondent)*

To address the lack of information on law enforcement executives' perceptions regarding the implementation of BWCs, we conducted a survey of 264 law enforcement executives across South Carolina. A cover letter, survey, and return envelope were mailed to each of South Carolina's law enforcement agencies in June 2015. A follow-up letter was sent two weeks later, followed by a final mailing of a cover letter, survey, and return envelope two weeks after that. The cover letter informed executives of the need to gather information on their perceptions of BWC implementation and policies, as well as the current status of BWC use in South Carolina. We requested that the executive at each agency (e.g., Chief or Sheriff) complete the survey. If this was not possible, we asked the executive to pass along the survey to the employee most capable of answering the survey questions. The cover letter also assured executives that responses to the survey would be kept confidential. The cover letter also included a website address where the survey could be completed electronically in lieu of returning the survey in the postage-paid envelope. Data collection was completed on August 24, 2015. A total of 142 complete surveys were returned for a response rate of 53.8%.

### *Sample Characteristics*

The characteristics of respondents in the sample are presented in Table 1. Most responding executives worked in agencies that were municipal or county police departments ( $N=95$ , 66.9%) followed by full service sheriff's offices ( $N=23$ , 16.2%), and university/college campus police departments ( $N=15$ , 10.6%). Respondents were fairly evenly distributed across age categories representing those 45-49 ( $N=31$ , 21.8%), 50-54 ( $N=26$ , 18.3%), and 55-59 ( $N=24$ ,

Table 1. Description of Respondents

	<i>N</i>	%
<u>Agency Type</u>		
Municipal or County Police Department	95	66.9
Sheriff's Office (Full service)	23	16.2
Sheriff's Office (Primary service is running the jail)	1	0.7
Department of Public Safety	5	3.5
University/College Campus Police	15	10.6
Airport Police	2	1.4
State Constable	1	0.7
<u>Respondent Age</u>		
39 years or younger	17	12.0
40-44 years	19	13.4
45-49 years	31	21.8
50-54 years	26	18.3
55-59 years	24	16.9
60-64 years	15	10.6
65 years or older	8	5.6
Missing	2	1.4
<u>Respondent Gender</u>		
Male	129	90.9
Female	12	8.5
Missing	1	0.7
<u>Respondents' Years of Law Enforcement Experience</u>		
9 years or less	3	2.1
10-14 years	10	7.0
15-19 years	23	16.2
20-24 years	34	23.9
25 or more years	70	49.3
Missing	2	1.4
<u>Respondents' Position in Agency</u>		
Chief/Sheriff	107	75.4
Other Sworn Officer	31	21.8
Other Nonsworn Personnel	3	2.1
Missing	1	0.7
Total	142	100.0

16.9%). The vast majority of respondents were male ( $N=129$ , 90.9%) and nearly half ( $N=70$ , 49.3%) had over 25 years of law enforcement experience. Most ( $N=107$ , 75.4%) of the respondents to the survey were either the Chief of Police or Sheriff, the intended target of the survey. The respondent was a non-sworn employee in the department in only three cases (2.1%). Finally, the average number of sworn officers in each agency was 48.4 with agency size ranging from one officer to 600 officers.

### **Current BWC Use in South Carolina Law Enforcement Agencies**

We begin our examination with the first section of the survey that asked respondents to answer a series of questions related to the current use of BWCs in their agency (see Table 2). Approximately half ( $N=71$ , 50.7%) of respondents indicated that their agency currently uses BWCs on a daily basis. Among these agencies only 19% ( $N=13$ ) shared the cameras among multiple officers, with the rest assigning BWCs to specific officers. Agencies currently using BWCs have been using them for an average of two years with an average of 20 officers using them on a daily basis.

The average number of officers using BWCs, while informative, tells us little about the prevalence of BWC usage within these agencies. To address this, the number of officers using BWCs on a daily basis was divided by the respondent's earlier response regarding the number of sworn officers currently employed by his/her agency. This allowed us to obtain a percentage of sworn officers using BWCs on a daily basis in the respective agencies. The results showed that, on average, respondents who indicated that they currently use BWCs had 67.7% of their sworn officers wearing BWCs on a daily basis. In sum, there are a total of 1,337 officers currently using BWCs in agencies responding to our survey.

Table 2. Current Use of Body Worn Cameras

	Mean or %	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Agencies Using Cameras (N=140)	51.0%	--	0	1
Cameras are Shared Among Officers (N=67)	19.0%	--	0	1
Number of Officers Using BWCs (N=67)	20.0	32.0	1	200
Percentage of Officers Using BWCs (N=67)	67.7%	31.6	2.3	100
Years Agency Has Used BWCs (N=67)	2.0	1.9	0.1	9

### Financial Considerations

*“We would like to have cameras for everyone, assigned to each officer, but it is not financially feasible right now.” (Survey Respondent)*

*“We had full implementation of Body Cameras before anyone knew there was a Ferguson, Missouri. But we couldn’t have done it without \$47,000 in grant funds.” (Survey Respondent)*

*“The problem with our small town is affording the cameras for all officers and storage. Our budget’s small and (we) have just a little money for equipment.” (Survey Respondent)*

Within the open-ended response section provided at the end of the survey, many respondents suggested that they were seriously concerned about the financial implications of implementing a widespread BWC program. Within the survey we asked respondents about the financial costs they have experienced in efforts to implement BWCs in their agency. To begin, we asked respondents if their agency had received an estimate for BWCs and whether the financial cost of BWCs had previously prevented the agency from purchasing them (see Table 3). Over 70% (N=97, 71.3%) of respondents indicated that they had received an estimate for BWCs. A smaller majority (N=87, 63.0%) indicated that the financial cost of BWCs had previously prevented their agency from purchasing them. Thus, the financial cost of BWCs merits further examination as a potential hurdle to the widespread implementation of BWCs in South Carolina.

Table 3. Financial Considerations of BWC Implementation

	Yes <i>N</i> (%)	No <i>N</i> (%)
Received Estimate for BWCs ( <i>N</i> =136)	97 (71.3)	39 (28.7)
Financial Cost Prevented Purchase ( <i>N</i> =138)	87 (63.0)	51 (37.0)

To address this issue, we asked respondents for information regarding any estimates they had received for BWCs in the past, regardless of whether or not the estimate led to an eventual purchase. The data obtained from these estimates is presented in Table 4. On average, BWC equipment was estimated to cost an agency \$63,284.03 (minimum = \$120; maximum = \$1,200,000) with data storage costing an additional \$21,215.99 (minimum = \$0; maximum = \$500,000) per year. Across the sample, the average estimate covered about 40 officers. Similar to the average number of officers carrying BWCs on a daily basis, these averages are interesting but not particularly meaningful for estimating the expected cost of implementing BWCs within an agency.

Table 4. Body Worn Camera Estimates

	Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Price of Equipment ( <i>N</i> =79)	\$63,284.03	\$17,0714.00	\$120	\$1,200,000
Price of Data Storage per year ( <i>N</i> =68)	\$21,215.99	\$70,671.89	\$0	\$500,000
Officers Covered By Estimate ( <i>N</i> =86)	39.55	61.62	1	350

To address this limitation, several other statistics were estimated to create a more detailed picture of BWC costs in South Carolina. First, we totaled all of the estimates for BWCs obtained in the survey. We received BWC equipment estimates from 79 agencies totaling \$4,999,439. We received BWC data storage estimates from 68 agencies totaling \$1,442,687. Finally, 86 executives responded that they had received quotes for a total of 3,401 officers. Given the

varying number of responses for each category, comparisons of these numbers is difficult. However, we obtained information on both equipment and officers covered by the quote for 77 agencies and information on both data storage and officers covered by the quote for 66 agencies. By looking at only those agencies for which information on both price and officers covered by the quote was available a more meaningful average can be obtained. Specifically, the data show that the average price of BWC equipment is \$910.86 per officer.<sup>1</sup> The average price for data storage is \$315.55 per officer *per year*.<sup>2</sup> As shown previously, 1,337 officers represented in our sample currently use BWCs on a daily basis. The agencies responding to our survey represent coverage of 6,721 officers in the state of South Carolina. Thus, among respondents to our census there are currently an estimated 5,384 sworn officers not wearing BWCs on a daily basis. Using the average prices from the quotes obtained above, it would cost an estimated \$4,904,070.20 to outfit those officers employed in agencies in our sample that are not currently wearing BWCs with such equipment. Once all officers within agencies in our sample (not currently wearing BWCs) were outfitted with BWCs, there would then be a recurring estimated cost of \$2,120,811.60 every year to maintain data storage on all of the cameras.

It is important to note here that these costs only cover the 53.8% of agencies that responded to our survey. It is nearly impossible to estimate the cost of BWCs for those agencies not responding to the survey as their size and current use of body worn cameras may not be the same as agencies who did respond.

In addition to examining actual estimates of the financial cost of BWCs, we also asked respondents about their perceptions of the financial burden different aspects of BWCs would

---

<sup>1</sup> To get these estimates, we identified only those agencies who supplied both a number for officers covered by the quote and a price for equipment. Then, using only these agencies, we summed all of the price estimates and the number of officers covered by the quote. The summed price was then divided by the summed number of officers.

<sup>2</sup> This estimate was calculated the same way the equipment per officer estimate was calculated substituting the storage price for the equipment price in the calculations.

place on their agency (see Table 5). Respondents most commonly indicated that a large financial burden would be placed on their agency by the initial cost of BWCs ( $N=59$ , 42.5%), hardware for storage of BWC footage ( $N=68$ , 49.3%), software for storage of BWC footage ( $N=64$ , 46.4%), and management of recorded videos ( $N=56$ , 40.3%). For both the maintenance of BWCs ( $N=55$ , 39.6%) and IT support for BWCs ( $N=50$ , 36.0%) respondents most commonly indicated that a moderate financial burden would be placed on their agency.

Table 5. Perceived Financial Burden of BWCs

	Not Much of a Burden $N$ (%)	A Slight Burden $N$ (%)	A Moderate Burden $N$ (%)	A Large Burden $N$ (%)
Initial cost of BWCs ( $N=139$ )	10 (7.2)	22 (15.8)	48 (34.5)	59 (42.5)
Maintenance of BWCs ( $N=139$ )	10 (7.2)	37 (26.6)	55 (39.6)	37 (26.7)
Hardware for storage of BWC footage ( $N=138$ )	8 (5.8)	17 (12.3)	45 (32.6)	68 (49.3)
Software for storage of BWC footage ( $N=138$ )	10 (7.3)	17 (12.3)	47 (34.1)	64 (46.4)
Management of recorded videos ( $N=139$ )	8 (5.8)	25 (18.0)	50 (36.0)	56 (40.3)
IT Support for BWCs ( $N=139$ )	12 (8.6)	28 (20.1)	50 (36.0)	49 (35.3)

While the costs of BWC equipment and storage can be discussed in terms of estimates and perceived financial burdens, the implementation of a BWC program might also cause important personnel changes as well. Table 6 presents the results from questions regarding the need to hire or reassign personnel to implement a BWC program. Importantly, these questions were worded so that respondents could indicate either personnel changes their agency *did make* as a result of implementing BWCs or personnel changes they *thought their agency would have to make* if they implemented BWCs. Twenty-nine (21.8%) respondents indicated that their agency



would need to hire new personnel to manage BWCs. Over half ( $N=83$ , 62.4%) of respondents indicated that sworn officers would have duties reallocated to manage BWCs. An even larger number of respondents ( $N=90$ , 68.2%) indicated that administrative personnel would have duties reallocated to manage BWCs. While the percentage of agencies who would have to make personnel changes remains below 70% in each of the three types of personnel changes, overall 121 agencies (89.0%) indicated that to manage BWCs at least one of these three types of personnel changes would have to occur or did occur. Thus, implementing a BWC program would, in a large percentage of situations, necessitate significant personnel changes.

Table 6. Personnel Changes Required to Manage BWCs.

	Yes <i>N</i> (%)	No <i>N</i> (%)
New personnel would need to be hired ( $N=133$ )	29 (21.8)	104 (78.2)
Sworn officers would have duties reallocated ( $N=133$ )	83 (62.4)	50 (37.6)
Administrative personnel would have duties reallocated ( $N=132$ )	90 (68.2)	42 (31.8)

### **BWC Policies**

In addition to the financial considerations and personnel changes discussed above, implementing a BWC program requires careful consideration of policies guiding their use. Table 7 begins our investigation into the present status of BWC policies in South Carolina by presenting the number of agencies whose executives indicated that they had developed policies related to four different categories – activation of BWC, access to BWC footage, length of time footage is kept, and method by which footage is downloaded. The percentages reported in Table 7 represent the portion of respondents that indicated having a policy in the given category

regardless of whether or not they currently used BWCs.<sup>3</sup> As will be seen in Table 8, there were several agencies that reportedly did not use BWCs at the time of the survey that had already developed policies regarding their use in anticipation of adopting a BWC program. Overall, less than half ( $N=55$ , 39.8%) of the respondents' agencies had developed any type of BWC policy. The percentage of agencies reporting that they had a policy for each individual area was relatively consistent at around 30%.

Table 7. Development of Body-worn Camera Policies ( $N=138$ )

	<i>N</i>	%
Developed Any Policies	55	39.8
Developed Activation Policies	50	36.2
Developed Access Policies	41	29.7
Developed Policies on How Long Footage is Kept	40	29.0
Developed Policies on How Footage is Downloaded	48	34.8

While respondents were asked about the development of BWC policies regardless of whether or not their agency currently used BWCs, it is likely that there is some type of relationship between the current use of BWCs and the development of policies. Table 8 presents results that speak to this relationship. Only 11% ( $N=7$ ) of agencies who do not currently use BWCs have policies guiding their use compared to 68% ( $N=47$ ) of agencies who currently use BWCs. However, 32% ( $N=22$ ) of respondents whose agencies currently use BWCs on a daily basis indicated that their agency had not developed policies to guide their use.

<sup>3</sup> Table 7 has a smaller respondent pool ( $n=138$ ) than what we started the study with ( $N=142$ ). Four respondents did not fill out the section immediately prior to the policy section or any sections following. Thus, there is sufficient reason to believe that their non-responses are truly skips and not negative responses to the questions asked.

Table 8. Development of Policies and Current Use of BWCs (N=138)

	Currently Use BWCs	
	No N (%)	Yes N (%)
Developed Any Policies	7 (10.5)	47 (68.1)
Has Not Developed Any Policies	60 (90.0)	22 (31.9)
Total	67 (100.0)	69 (100.0)

To examine BWC policies in more detail, specific questions were asked concerning each of the four categories identified previously. Table 9 presents specific policies that agencies may have regarding the activation of BWCs. Only 3 respondents indicated that their agencies' BWCs are always recording when an officer is on shift. All agencies that responded (N = 45) indicated that their policies specified the situations in which officers were required to record and 33 (76.7% of those responding to this question) agencies indicated that their policy specified situations in which officers were prohibited from recording.

Table 9. Activation Policies

	N	%
BWC always records (N=49)	3	6.1
Required to record certain situations (N=45)	45	100.0
Prohibited to record certain situations (N=43)	33	76.7

Table 10 presents further analyses of the 45 respondents employed at agencies that require BWC recording of certain situations. The vast majority (N=43, 95.6%) of respondents whose agencies require BWC recording in some situations require BWC recording of traffic stops. More than 75% of the respondents whose agencies require BWC recording in specific situations required recording of routine calls for service (N=37, 82.2%), emergency calls for service (N=41, 91.1%), foot pursuits (N=40, 88.9%), vehicle pursuits (N=34, 75.6%), and suspect

interviews ( $N=40$ , 88.9%). Four agencies in the “Other” category indicated BWC recording is required during searches.

Table 10. Situations Officers Are Required to Record ( $N=45$ )

	<i>N</i>	%
Traffic stops	43	95.6
Routine calls for service	37	82.2
Emergency calls for service	41	91.1
Foot pursuits	40	88.9
Vehicle pursuits	34	75.6
Suspect interviews	40	88.9
Citizen interviews	28	62.2
Informal conversations with citizens	4	8.9
Other	7	15.6

*Note:* The sample size (used in the percentage calculation) comes from the number of respondents indicating that recording is required in certain situations from Table 9 ( $N= 45$ ).

Table 11 presents a similar investigation into the situations that respondents’ agencies prohibit officers from recording with a BWC. A large majority ( $N=28$ , 84.9%) of respondents whose agencies had policies prohibiting recording in certain situations prohibited BWC recording of informal conversations with fellow officers. A smaller majority ( $N=21$ , 63.6%) prohibited BWC recording of conversations with confidential informants. There was a nontrivial ( $N=7$ , 21.2%) number of respondents that indicated their policies prohibited recording in “other” situations, including recording in private areas, inside locker rooms, inside the police department, inside dwellings, inside medical facilities and in one case, prohibiting the recording of any town employee or council member.

Table 11. Situations Officers are Prohibited from Recording (*N*=33)

	<i>N</i>	%
Interviews with juveniles	7	21.2
Interviews with victims of sexual assault	11	33.3
Informal conversations with fellow officers	28	84.9
Conversations/interviews with confidential informants	21	63.6
Other	7	21.2

*Note:* The sample size (used in the percentage calculation) comes from the number of respondents who indicated they did prohibit recording in certain situations in Table 9 (*N* = 33).

In addition to policies outlining when officers should and should not activate their BWC, it is important to examine who can view the BWC footage that is recorded. We asked respondents who indicated that their agency had considered this issue whether officers were allowed to view video of incidents they recorded prior to filling out official police reports or making official statements (see Table 12). Most (*N*=37, 90.2%) respondents indicated that officers were allowed to review such BWC footage. However, several (*N*=7, 21.2%) respondents indicated that there were exceptions to this policy. The most common exception identified was that an officer could not review footage if he/she was involved in an internal affairs investigation surrounding the incident or if the officer used deadly force in the incident.

Table 12. BWC Footage Access Policies

	<i>N</i> (Yes)	% (Yes)
Are officers allowed to review video of incidents before filling out reports or making official statements? ( <i>N</i> =41)	37	90.2
Are there exceptions to the policy allowing officers to review video? ( <i>N</i> =33)	7	21.2

Another important BWC policy issue to consider is the storage of BWC footage. It was previously shown that many respondents considered the cost of hardware and software for storage to be a large financial burden on their agency. This burden is necessarily influenced by how long BWC footage must be stored by the agency. If an agency had considered the issue of

how long BWC footage should be stored, we asked such respondents how long both non-evidentiary and evidentiary recordings were kept (see Table 13). Response options for this question were “less than 1 year”, “1 year”, “2 years”, “3 years” or “Other”. All respondents who indicated “Other” proceeded to indicate that the recordings were kept indefinitely. Thus, “Other” responses are recoded in Table 13 as “Indefinitely.” For non-evidentiary recordings, most respondents ( $N=28$ , 71.8%) indicated that footage was kept for less than one year. For evidentiary recordings, the majority of respondents ( $N=29$ , 74.4%) indicated that BWC footage was kept indefinitely. Further examination of the “Other” responses that were recoded to “Indefinitely” reveals that agencies indicated that they frequently kept evidentiary BWC recordings until court cases were resolved, however, there were a small number of agencies that truly kept BWC footage for an undetermined amount of time. This variation is not reflected in Table 13.

Table 13. How Long BWC Footage is Stored ( $N=39$ )

	Less than 1 year <i>N</i> (%)	1 year <i>N</i> (%)	2 years <i>N</i> (%)	3 years <i>N</i> (%)	Indefinitely <i>N</i> (%)
Non-evidentiary recordings	28 (71.8)	7 (18.0)	1 (2.6)	0 (0.0)	3 (7.7)
Evidentiary recordings	1 (2.6)	1 (2.6)	1 (2.6)	7 (18.0)	29 (74.4)

Tables 14 and 15 present the results of questions regarding specific policies on how BWC footage is downloaded. Most commonly ( $N=21$ , 44.7%), footage is manually downloaded by the officer. A smaller, but still sizeable ( $N=14$ , 29.8%) portion of respondents indicated that BWC footage was downloaded automatically when the camera is being charged. About 19% of respondents ( $N=9$ ) indicated that some other personnel (e.g., supervisors, evidence technicians, or administrative personnel) were responsible for downloading BWC footage.

Table 14. Method BWC Footage is Downloaded (*N*=47)

	<i>N</i>	%
Footage is automatically downloaded at the end of every shift when the camera is charged.	14	29.8
Footage is automatically downloaded when the BWC gets within range of a download station.	3	6.4
Footage is manually downloaded by the officer periodically.	21	44.7
Footage is manually downloaded by some other personnel.	9	19.2

We previously examined the amount of time BWC footage was stored by categories of evidentiary or non-evidentiary. Table 15 presents information on policies regarding who classifies video into these categories. A majority (*N*=25, 56.8%) of respondents indicated that video was categorized by the officer who recorded it. Twelve (27.3%) respondents indicated that administrative personnel categorized the footage. Three departments noted that videos were not classified.

Table 15. Personnel Responsible for Categorization of BWC Footage (*N*=44)

	<i>N</i>	%
The officer who recorded the video	25	56.8
The officer's supervisor	3	6.8
Administrative personnel	12	27.3
All of the above	2	4.6
Other personnel	2	4.6

Before finishing our discussion of current BWC policies in South Carolina we would be remiss to not mention the small number of responses to the questions we have just analyzed.

While our survey received 142 responses, the number of responses include in Tables 9 through 15 ranged from a minimum of 33 to a maximum of only 49. This underscores the importance of these analyses for law enforcement in South Carolina. If BWCs are to be implemented by every

agency across the state, each will need to develop a comprehensive policy for their BWC program. As it stands, however, only a limited number of agencies have considered this issue and have recommendations to give regarding what should or should not be included in a comprehensive BWC policy.

### *Policy Perceptions*

Knowing there was a possibility that only a few agencies would have existing BWC policies, we also asked all respondents a series of questions about their *perceptions* regarding what BWC policies should contain. Respondents were asked to provide answers to these questions regardless of whether their agency currently uses BWCs or has policies concerning BWCs. Table 16 presents the results from these questions. Responses were mixed on whether officers should be able to turn on and off BWCs at their discretion with “Agree” and “Strongly Agree” receiving 67 (51.1%) responses and “Disagree” and “Strongly Disagree” receiving 64 (48.9%) responses. Overall, the respondents tended to lean towards policies requiring BWC recording of certain situations with just two exceptions. Specifically, responses were mixed regarding a requirement to record all citizen interviews with “Agree” and “Strongly Agree” receiving 79 (58.1%) responses and “Disagree” and “Strongly Disagree” receiving 57 (41.9%) responses. Respondents had a much more negative view of a requirement to record informal conversations with citizens with “Disagree” and “Strongly Disagree” receiving 119 (87.5%) responses.



Table 16. Perceptions of BWC Policies

<b>Officers should be...</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree N (%)</b>	<b>Disagree N (%)</b>	<b>Agree N (%)</b>	<b>Strongly Agree N (%)</b>
...able to turn on or off their BWC at their discretion. (N=131)	25 (19.1)	39 (29.8)	55 (42.0)	12 (9.2)
...required to record all traffic stops. (N=136)	1 (0.7)	6 (4.4)	72 (52.9)	57 (41.9)
...required to record all routine calls for service. (N=135)	1 (0.7)	27 (20.0)	63 (46.7)	44 (32.6)
...required to record all emergency calls for service. (N=136)	0 (0.0)	8 (5.9)	77 (56.6)	51 (37.5)
...required to record all suspect interviews. (N=136)	2 (1.5)	18 (13.2)	76 (55.9)	40 (29.4)
...required to record all citizen interviews. (N=136)	7 (5.2)	50 (36.8)	53 (39.0)	26 (19.1)
...required to record all foot pursuits. (N=136)	1 (0.7)	8 (5.9)	82 (60.3)	45 (33.1)
...required to record all vehicle pursuits with their BWC. (N=135)	5 (3.7)	30 (22.2)	61 (45.2)	39 (28.9)
...required to record informal conversations with citizens. (N=136)	34 (25.0)	85 (62.5)	8 (5.9)	9 (6.6)
...prohibited from recording interviews with juveniles. (N=135)	21 (15.6)	79 (58.5)	29 (21.5)	6 (4.4)
...prohibited from recording interviews with victims of sexual assaults. (N=135)	15 (11.1)	64 (47.4)	39 (28.9)	17 (12.6)
...allowed to not record informal conversations with fellow officers. (N=134)	3 (2.2)	4 (3.0)	67 (50.0)	60 (44.8)
...allowed to not record conversations with confidential informants. (N=136)	3 (2.2)	19 (14.0)	63 (64.3)	51 (37.5)
...allowed to review BWC video before making statements about incidents they were involved in. (N=134)	4 (3.0)	10 (7.5)	72 (53.7)	48 (35.8)

While the overall tendency to support requirements on recording certain situations seems to indicate that the respondents favored less discretion for police officers, responses to questions regarding the prohibition of recording in certain situations suggest the opposite. “Disagree” was the most common response when asked about a prohibition on recording interviews with

juveniles ( $N=79$ , 58.5%) and sexual assault victims ( $N=64$ , 47.4%). Similarly, respondents supported discretion in allowing officers to not record informal conversations with fellow officers (“Strongly Agree” and “Agree”,  $N=127$ , 94.8%) and confidential informants (“Strongly Agree” and “Agree”,  $N=114$ , 83.8%). Finally, respondents clearly favored allowing officers to review BWC footage before making statements about incidents they were involved in with “Strongly Agree” and “Agree” receiving 120 (89.6%) responses.

### **BWC Outcomes**

*“Since our department started our program we have seen a reduction in citizen complaints and the complaints that have been filed, the video footage has supported the officers’ account of the event.” (Survey Respondent)*

*“BWC would certainly protect the citizen as well as the officer.” (Survey Respondent)*

*“I’m somewhat concerned that regular citizens avoid officers because they don’t want to be recorded...” (Survey Respondent)*

Many claims have been made by people from a variety of backgrounds (e.g., policymakers, media, and civil rights organizations) on the outcomes that will be produced when BWC programs are implemented. However, little is known about what law enforcement executives expect to happen when a BWC program is implemented. To address this, we asked survey respondents a series of questions about their global perceptions of outcomes produced by BWCs, as well as their expected jurisdiction-specific outcomes. That is, we first asked the respondents a series of questions about the impact BWCs would have on policing anywhere (hereafter referred to as global perceptions). We then asked the respondents the same set of questions, but asked them to indicate the impact the BWCs would have *in their jurisdiction* (hereafter jurisdiction-specific perceptions). Both sets of questions were presented to *all* survey respondents regardless of whether they reported their agency currently using BWCs.

Table 17 presents the results from the first series of questions regarding global perceptions of potential BWC outcomes. A majority of respondents agreed that use of BWCs will lead to fewer use-of-force incidents ( $N=75$ , 54.7%), lead to fewer citizen complaints ( $N=72$ , 52.2%), make officers less likely to use force ( $N=68$ , 50.0%), reduce instances of officer misconduct ( $N=87$ , 63.5%), protect officers from frivolous complaints ( $N=69$ , 50.4%), decrease the number of civil settlements regarding officer misconduct ( $N=91$ , 65.9%), improve officer interactions with the public ( $N=80$ , 58.8%), improve the public's trust in the police ( $N=84$ , 61.3%), communicate to citizens that the police strive to make the right decisions for their community ( $N=99$ , 71.7%), help law enforcement be more accountable to the public ( $N=100$ , 72.5%), help officers be held accountable to their agency ( $N=106$ , 76.8%), and improve transparency of police actions in the eyes of the public ( $N=91$ , 65.9%). Respondents most commonly disagreed that BWC use would make citizens more likely to comply with officers' orders ( $N=65$ , 47.5%), cause officers to be less proactive on the job ( $N=79$ , 57.7%), cause officers to be more hesitant to use force when it may be necessary ( $N=58$ , 42.0%), make officers less willing to interact with the public ( $N=80$ , 58.8%), and reduce assaults on officers ( $N=93$ , 68.9%). A majority of respondents agreed that BWCs would improve citizens' perceptions that the police are a legitimate authority ( $N=78$ , 56.5%).

Overall, Table 17 demonstrates that law enforcement executives do not have strong views in either direction on the potential outcomes of BWCs. For almost every question, the majority of responses lie in the "Agree" or "Disagree" as opposed to the "Strongly Agree" or "Strongly Disagree" categories. The perception that BWCs will protect officers from frivolous complaints had 56 (40.9%) responses in the "Strongly Agree" category. Despite the lack of strong feelings

Table 17. Global Perceptions of BWC Outcomes

Generally, the use of BWCs will...	Strongly Disagree <i>N</i> (%)	Disagree <i>N</i> (%)	Agree <i>N</i> (%)	Strongly Agree <i>N</i> (%)
...lead to fewer use-of-force incidents. ( <i>N</i> =137)	3 (2.2)	41 (29.9)	75 (54.7)	18 (13.1)
...lead to fewer citizen complaints. ( <i>N</i> =138)	1 (0.7)	42 (30.4)	72 (52.2)	23 (16.7)
...make citizens more likely to comply with officers' orders. ( <i>N</i> =137)	5 (3.7)	65 (47.5)	59 (43.1)	8 (5.8)
...make officers less likely to use force. ( <i>N</i> =136)	1 (0.7)	60 (44.1)	68 (50.0)	7 (5.2)
...cause officers to be less proactive on the job. ( <i>N</i> =137)	10 (7.3)	79 (57.7)	35 (25.6)	13 (9.5)
...cause officers to be more hesitant to use force when it may be necessary. ( <i>N</i> =138)	5 (3.6)	58 (42.0)	48 (34.8)	27 (19.6)
...reduce instances of officer misconduct. ( <i>N</i> =137)	2 (1.5)	29 (21.2)	87 (63.5)	19 (13.9)
...make officers less willing to interact with the public. ( <i>N</i> =136)	16 (11.8)	80 (58.8)	33 (24.3)	7 (5.2)
...reduce assaults on officers. ( <i>N</i> =135)	13 (9.6)	93 (68.9)	25 (18.5)	4 (3.0)
...protect officers from frivolous complaints. ( <i>N</i> =137)	1 (0.7)	11 (8.0)	69 (50.4)	56 (40.9)
...decrease the number of civil settlements regarding officer misconduct. ( <i>N</i> =138)	1 (0.7)	22 (15.9)	91 (65.9)	24 (17.4)
...improve officer interactions with the public. ( <i>N</i> =136)	1 (0.7)	41 (30.2)	80 (58.8)	14 (10.3)
...improve the public's trust in the police. ( <i>N</i> =137)	4 (2.9)	36 (26.3)	84 (61.3)	13 (9.5)
...communicate to citizens that the police strive to make the right decisions for their community. ( <i>N</i> =138)	0 (0.0)	19 (13.8)	99 (71.7)	20 (14.5)
...improve citizens' perceptions that the police are a legitimate authority. ( <i>N</i> =138)	3 (2.2)	57 (41.3)	66 (47.8)	12 (8.7)
...help law enforcement to be more accountable to the public. ( <i>N</i> =138)	1 (0.7)	15 (10.9)	100 (72.5)	22 (15.9)
...help officers be held accountable to their agency. ( <i>N</i> =138)	1 (0.7)	5 (3.6)	106 (76.8)	26 (18.8)
...improve transparency of police actions in the eyes of the public. ( <i>N</i> =138)	1 (0.7)	12 (8.7)	91 (65.9)	34 (24.6)

in either direction, the results do appear to show an overall support for positive BWC outcomes. Most notably, 122 (88.4%) respondents indicated they either strongly agreed or agreed that BWCs would help law enforcement be more accountable to the public and 132 (95.7%) respondents indicated they strongly agreed or agreed that BWCs would help officers be more accountable to their agency.

Table 18 presents the same analysis with the questions directed towards the respondents' specific jurisdiction. Overall, the results were very similar with respondents not demonstrating strong feelings regarding most of the questions, but having overall positive views of BWCs. Despite the apparent similarities between global and jurisdiction-specific perceptions of BWC outcomes, a pattern of differences can also be detected. The most common response category for the question about reducing use-of-force incidents moved from the "Agree" category for global perceptions ( $N=75$ , 54.7%) to the "Disagree" category for the jurisdiction-specific perceptions ( $N=67$ , 49.7%). Additionally, for the item "make citizens more likely to comply with officers' orders" only 65 (47.5%) respondents disagreed with respect to their global perceptions. When asked about their jurisdiction-specific perceptions the same item had 88 (64.2%) respondents disagree. A similar shift can be seen in the item regarding officers being less likely to use force with 68 (50.0%) respondents indicating "Agree" for global perceptions, but only 56 (41.5%) indicating "Agree" for jurisdiction-specific perceptions. These initial observations provide reason to formally test the differences between these perceptions.

In order to test for differences between global perceptions and jurisdiction-specific perceptions of BWC outcomes, scales were created. To construct the scales, responses to the individual items were given a value on a four point scale (1=Strongly Disagree to 4=Strongly Agree). The items "cause officers to be less proactive on the job," "cause officers to be more

Table 18. Jurisdiction-Specific Perceptions of BWC Outcomes

Using BWCs in my jurisdiction would/does...	Strongly Disagree <i>N</i> (%)	Disagree <i>N</i> (%)	Agree <i>N</i> (%)	Strongly Agree <i>N</i> (%)
...reduce use-of-force incidents. ( <i>N</i> =136)	1 (0.7)	67 (49.3)	59 (43.4)	9 (6.6)
...reduce citizen complaints. ( <i>N</i> =137)	0 (0.0)	54 (39.4)	66 (48.2)	17 (12.4)
...make citizens more likely to comply with officers' orders. ( <i>N</i> =137)	3 (2.2)	88 (64.2)	42 (30.7)	4 (2.9)
...make our officers less likely to use force. ( <i>N</i> =135)	2 (1.5)	72 (53.3)	56 (41.5)	5 (3.7)
...make our officers less proactive on the job. ( <i>N</i> =136)	13 (9.6)	78 (57.4)	37 (27.2)	8 (5.9)
...cause officers to be more hesitant to use force when it may be necessary. ( <i>N</i> =137)	4 (2.9)	65 (47.5)	47 (34.3)	21 (15.3)
...reduce instances of officer misconduct. ( <i>N</i> =137)	1 (0.7)	36 (26.3)	88 (64.2)	12 (8.8)
...make officers less willing to interact with the public. ( <i>N</i> =137)	14 (10.2)	84 (61.3)	32 (23.4)	7 (5.1)
...reduce assaults on officers. ( <i>N</i> =135)	12 (8.9)	91 (67.4)	30 (22.2)	2 (1.5)
...protect officers from frivolous complaints or accusations. ( <i>N</i> =136)	0 (0.0)	19 (14.0)	79 (58.1)	38 (27.9)
...decrease the number of civil settlements regarding officer misconduct. ( <i>N</i> =137)	1 (0.7)	24 (17.5)	94 (68.6)	18 (13.1)
...improve officer interactions with the public. ( <i>N</i> =137)	1 (0.7)	47 (34.3)	78 (56.9)	11 (8.0)
...improve the public's trust in the police. ( <i>N</i> =137)	1 (0.7)	38 (27.7)	84 (61.3)	14 (10.2)
...communicate to citizens that the police strive to make the right decisions for their community. ( <i>N</i> =136)	0 (0.0)	18 (13.2)	104 (76.5)	14 (10.3)
...improve citizens' perceptions that the police are a legitimate authority. ( <i>N</i> =137)	1 (0.7)	56 (40.9)	72 (52.6)	8 (5.8)
...help my agency to be more accountable to the public. ( <i>N</i> =137)	0 (0.0)	23 (16.8)	96 (70.1)	18 (13.1)
...help our officers be more accountable to the agency. ( <i>N</i> =137)	0 (0.0)	11 (8.0)	105 (76.6)	21 (15.3)
...improve transparency of our actions in the eyes of our residents. ( <i>N</i> =136)	0 (0.0)	17 (12.5)	91 (66.9)	28 (20.6)

hesitant to use force when it may be necessary,” and “make officers less willing to interact with the public” were reverse coded (1=Strongly Agree to 4=Strongly Disagree), so that higher values were indicative of more positive BWC outcomes throughout the scales. After coding the individual questions, the items were summed into two scores, one corresponding to global perceptions and one to jurisdiction-specific perceptions. These summated scores were then divided by the number of items the individual responded to within the respective scales.<sup>4</sup> This created two BWC outcome scales, general perceptions and jurisdiction-specific perceptions, with possible ranges from one to four.

The descriptive statistics for these scales are presented in Table 19. Both the general perception scale ( $\alpha=0.86$ )<sup>5</sup> and the jurisdiction-specific perception scale ( $\alpha=0.85$ ) demonstrated strong reliability. Thus, we can reasonably conclude that the items within each scale are capturing the overall concepts of global perceptions of BWC outcomes and jurisdiction-specific perceptions of BWC outcomes, respectively. Consistent with earlier observations in Tables 17 and 18, jurisdiction-specific perceptions (mean=2.71) have a lower average value than global perceptions (mean=2.77).

Table 19. BWC Outcome Scale Descriptive Statistics

	Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Global Perceptions ( $N=125$ )	2.77	.35	1.29	3.59
Jurisdiction Perceptions ( $N=131$ )	2.71	.32	1.76	3.76

While there is an apparent difference in the means of these two scales it is relatively small (.06). However, it is important to recognize that the scales can only have possible scores

<sup>4</sup> Dividing by the number of responses weights the responses so that individuals who skipped items did not automatically have lower scores than individuals who answered all items. For both scales, at least 16 out of the 17 items had valid scores for all individuals whose overall scale score was calculated.

<sup>5</sup>  $\alpha$  is a measure of how well several items measure the same underlying construct. Specifically, it measures how well several items vary together.  $\alpha$ 's above 0.7 are generally considered reliable.

ranging from one to four and the standard deviation for each scale is relatively small – around .3. To determine whether or not this difference is statistically significant a paired *t*-test<sup>6</sup> was run to compare the means. The results demonstrated that the difference was statistically significant,  $t(117)=4.28, p<.01$ , with general perceptions of BWC outcomes being more favorable than jurisdiction-specific perceptions of BWC outcomes. In short, executives believe that BWCs will provide beneficial outcomes for law enforcement agencies. However, respondents believe that the benefits of BWCs will be realized somewhat less in their own jurisdictions.

In addition to overall differences between global perceptions of BWC outcomes and jurisdiction-specific perceptions of BWC outcomes, there may be important differences in the perceptions of BWC outcomes when considering whether or not an agency currently uses BWCs. That is, using BWCs on a daily basis may make an agency more or less likely to believe that they are effective at achieving the outcomes we have been examining. To test this possibility, a two-sample *t*-test was run on both global perceptions of BWC outcomes (Table 20) and jurisdiction-specific perceptions of BWC outcomes (Table 21).

Table 20. Global Perceptions of BWC Outcomes by Current BWC Use

	Mean
Currently Use ( <i>N</i> =64)	2.84
Do Not Currently Use ( <i>N</i> =61)	2.71

The difference in global perceptions of BWC outcomes between respondents whose agencies currently use BWCs on a daily basis and respondents whose agencies do not is statistically significant,  $t(123)=-2.05, p<.05$ . Specifically, respondents whose agencies currently

<sup>6</sup> A paired *t*-test examines the differences between two mean values (in this case the scale scores) for the same sample. Using the differences in the means and their standard deviations (how much the scale score varies for different individuals) the test determines whether or not the difference is large enough to determine that it did not happen by random chance.



use BWCs on a daily basis had more positive perceptions of BWC outcomes. The difference in jurisdiction-specific perceptions of BWC outcomes is not significant,  $t(129)=-1.72$ ,  $p=.09$ , though the difference is in the same direction as the global perceptions. Thus, using BWCs on a daily basis is associated with law enforcement executives having more positive beliefs regarding the potential outcomes from BWC use generally, but not within their own jurisdiction.

Table 21. Jurisdiction Specific Perceptions of BWC Outcomes by Current BWC Use

	Mean
Currently Use ( $N=65$ )	2.76
Do Not Currently Use ( $N=66$ )	2.67

The analyses of these scales reveals a relatively unsurprising finding that law enforcement executives tend to have more positive perceptions of BWC outcomes globally than in their jurisdiction. This is not necessarily a problematic finding as one would expect the leader of any organization to have pride in that organization and believe it is doing the best job that it can. In other words, executives may not necessarily believe that BWCs can improve outcomes in their own jurisdiction (as much as they would improve law enforcement *in general*) because they may believe their agency is already doing a good job. More intriguing is the finding that respondents in agencies who currently use BWCs have more positive perceptions of BWC outcomes than respondents in agencies who do not currently use BWCs. Law enforcement executives may be more likely to believe that BWCs result in positive outcomes after their agency begins using BWCs, or law enforcement executives who believe that BWCs result in positive outcomes may be more likely to use BWCs. The data in the present study are unable to speak to which assertion is more accurate. It should be noted, however, that overall perceptions of BWC outcomes were positive and many of our respondents commented that finances and

budget concerns – as opposed to BWC outcomes – were the driving factor in decisions to not implement BWCs in their agency.

### **Other Considerations**

*“What expectation of privacy do you have in your own home?...What expectation of privacy do my officers have?” (Survey Respondent)*

*“I am concerned that citizens will be worried about calling police into their home to an incident and have it recorded...” (Survey Respondent)*

*“FOIA is a huge concern but the new SC body-cam law may alleviate that, unless challenged in court and found to be a violation of the FOIA.” (Survey Respondent)*

Beyond the financial considerations, policy considerations, and the potential outcomes from BWCs, other concerns have also been voiced regarding widespread BWC use. Among these concerns are considerations of privacy, citizen cooperation, and the micro-management of officers. Table 22 presents a series of questions asked to address these various concerns. While respondents most commonly indicated that they disagreed that BWCs posed a concern for officers’ privacy ( $N=63$ , 46.0%), most agreed that BWCs would pose a concern for citizens’ privacy ( $N=55$ , 40.2%).

The present BWC law that was passed by the South Carolina State Legislature included a provision excluding BWC footage from Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests. Some executives, as indicated by one quote at the beginning of this section, felt that this issue was not settled until a court ruled on the matter. Further reinforcing this concern, 61 (44.9%) respondents strongly agreed that FOIA requests would be a burden on their agency. Finally, a majority ( $N=70$ , 51.5%) of respondents disagreed that supervisors should be required to have adequate justification for accessing an officer’s BWC footage.

Table 22. Other Considerations for BWCs

	Strongly Disagree <i>N</i> (%)	Disagree <i>N</i> (%)	Agree <i>N</i> (%)	Strongly Agree <i>N</i> (%)
BWCs pose a concern for officers' privacy ( <i>N</i> =137)	11 (8.0)	63 (46.0)	49 (35.8)	14 (10.2)
BWCs pose a concern for the public's privacy ( <i>N</i> =137)	11 (8.0)	52 (38.0)	55 (40.2)	19 (13.9)
BWCs reduce the likelihood of citizens allowing voluntary searches ( <i>N</i> =137)	6 (4.4)	66 (48.2)	48 (35.0)	17 (12.4)
FOIA requests for BWC footage will be/is a burden ( <i>N</i> =136)	5 (3.7)	26 (19.1)	44 (32.4)	61 (44.9)
Supervisors should have justification for accessing an officer's BWC footage ( <i>N</i> =136)	24 (17.7)	70 (51.5)	33 (24.3)	9 (6.6)

## Conclusion

In 2013, the Police Executive Research Forum (PERF) surveyed 500 law enforcement agencies across the country to determine the proportion that adopted BWCs and to identify major issues surrounding their adoption and use by line personnel. Based on information supplied by 254 agencies (a 51% response rate), the survey found that only 63 (25%) used BWCs and of these about one-third had no written policies governing BWC use (Lindsay, Toliver, & Police Executive Research Forum, 2014).

Although the PERF findings<sup>7</sup> are revealing and highly informative, much has changed since 2013 regarding police-minority relations as a result of several high-profile, controversial use-of-force incidents captured on video and widely broadcast throughout the U.S. (Wolfe & Nix, 2015). This resulted in increased pressure on state and local law enforcement agencies to outfit their officers with BWCs and develop written policies governing their use.

In the wake of the fatal April shooting of Walter Scott in North Charleston, on June 10<sup>th</sup> Nikki Haley became the first governor to sign into law a bill requiring law enforcement officers

<sup>7</sup> The full report as well as other useful documents (e.g., model policies, research on BWCs) can be found here: <https://www.bja.gov/bwc/Topics-Policy.html>.

to wear body cameras and agencies to develop relevant written policies and procedures governing their use based on guidelines to be established by the South Carolina Law Enforcement Training Council.<sup>8</sup>

Given these and other developments, the research team at USC decided that this year's Census should focus on the use of BWCs by law enforcement and executives' perceptions regarding policies and potential outcomes. We learned that 51% of South Carolina agencies adopted BWCs for at least some of their officers or deputies (double the proportion reported in the PERF study). We also learned that among South Carolina agencies that adopted BWCs, 68% developed one or more written policies governing their use (a percentage similar to that reported by PERF).

Other findings based on the Census survey are that the estimated purchase costs of BWCs and related equipment (e.g., hardware for the storage of video footage) is substantial. Although some agencies have already purchased BWCs, it is unlikely that most agencies could afford to equip every officer/deputy with a BWC without federal funding or funding from the State. As it stands now, the bill requiring agencies to outfit their sworn personnel with cameras is an unfunded mandate. Thus, we are unlikely to observe large-scale deployment of BWCs until lawmakers approve the funding, which is estimated to cost nearly \$23 million over the first two years.<sup>9</sup>

The survey revealed substantial variability regarding executives' opinions regarding certain aspects of policies or proposed policies governing the use of BWCs. This included whether or not officers should have the discretion of deciding when to turn BWCs on or off, under which circumstances the cameras must or must not be recording (traffic stops, foot

---

<sup>8</sup> See [http://www.scstatehouse.gov/sess121\\_2015-2016/bills/47.htm](http://www.scstatehouse.gov/sess121_2015-2016/bills/47.htm) and [http://www.cjr.org/united\\_states\\_project/south\\_carolina\\_police\\_camera\\_public\\_records.php](http://www.cjr.org/united_states_project/south_carolina_police_camera_public_records.php).

<sup>9</sup> See <http://www.wistv.com/story/29289442/south-carolinas-body-camera-bill-is-now-law>.

pursuits, interviews of sexual assault victims, discussions with confidential informants, and so forth).

Our survey also captured executives' opinions on perceived potential positive and negative outcomes associated with the adoption of BWCs. Examples of potential positive benefits included *reductions* in the incidence of use of force, suspect resistance, assaults on officers, citizen complaints, officer misconduct, and increases in public trust in the police, accountability to the public, and transparency. Examples of negative outcomes included officers being more hesitant to use force when it is necessary, officers being less proactive on the job, and less willing to interact with the public. Interestingly, the general pattern of responses indicate that executives' opinions of the potential benefits of BWCs are more likely to be greater in jurisdictions other than their own while the potential drawbacks of BWCs are more likely to be greater in their own jurisdiction. The reasons for these differences warrant further investigation.

While several items on our survey asked concrete questions, such as the number of agencies that adopted BWCs and types of policies developed, many questions were based on perceptions. While informative, we encourage law enforcement agencies that adopt BWCs to evaluate carefully the impact of their adoption. Although evaluations of the effects of the adoption of BWCs in several agencies suggest that they are associated with reductions in the incidence of use of force, assaults on officers, and citizen complaints (Barak, Farrar, & Sutherland, 2015; White, 2014), research on BWCs is in its infancy and additional studies are needed before firm conclusions regarding their effects – whether positive or negative – can be reached.

## References

Barak, A., Farrar, W. A., & Sutherland, A. (2015). The effect of police body-worn cameras on use of force and citizens' complaints against the police: A randomized controlled trial. *Journal of Quantitative Criminology*, 31(3), 509-535.

Miller, L., Toliver, J., & Police Executive Research Forum. (2014). *Implementing a Body-Worn Camera Program: Recommendations and Lessons Learned*. Washington, DC: Office of Community Oriented Policing Services.

White, M. D. (2014). *Police officer body-worn cameras: Assessing the evidence*. Washington, DC: Office of Community Oriented Policing Services.

Wolfe, S. E., & Nix, J. (2015). The Alleged " Ferguson Effect " and Police Willingness to Engage in Community Partnership. *Law and Human Behavior* DOI: 10.1037/lhb0000164.