

# **Body Worn Cameras and Its Effects on Police Use of Force Incidents and Citizen Complaints**

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## ***Abstract***

*The development and expansion of the Body Worn Camera (BWC) in the field of law enforcement has forever transformed how officers interact in their communities. While proponents of the technology argue that the BWC will hold officers accountable, others argue that the technology is an invasion of privacy and a violation of their rights. In Florida, a survey was conducted amongst several law enforcement agencies to determine the effects of the BWC. The results of the survey are telling of a tool that has been welcomed by many. Although many agencies reflected positive changes after using the BWCs, further research is still needed as there is uncertainty as to whether BWCs can contribute to the reduction of uses of force incidents.*

## **Introduction**

Law enforcement agencies across the world are tasked with enforcing laws, maintaining order, and providing a wide array of services, from responding to emergency 911 calls to ensuring the safe and expeditious flow of traffic. As the world is continuously shifting and evolving, innovation, training and other aspects of a law enforcement organization are in a race to keep up with the endless demands to get the job done. One sector that is becoming increasingly critical to the profession in helping to meet these demands effectively and efficiently, is the field of technology.

From the development of fingerprinting in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, to the creation of the two-way radio and most recently the expansion of the BWC, each of these tools have transformed police work in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. As technology develops, policing agencies across the country continue to implement an array of technological advancements in hopes of improving operational efficiency and achieving key agency goals.

In particular, the development and expansion of the BWC concept occurred in 2014, after an incident occurred in Ferguson, Missouri. Michael Brown, a then 18-year-old resident of Ferguson, was shot and killed by a police officer. An altercation had ensued between the officer and Mr. Brown. Ultimately, the officer fired upon Mr. Brown, who was unarmed, and Mr. Brown did not survive the encounter. According to many in the law enforcement profession, the events in Ferguson were a watershed moment which led to the expanded use of the BWC. In the aftermath of the Ferguson shooting, police agencies across the country commenced BWC pilot programs.

According to the Miami-Dade Police Department, a BWC can be defined as a portable electronic recording device that is worn by an officer which records audio and video data during the performance of official law enforcement duties and responsibilities. The BWC has become an extremely important part of the police work that is being done in today's "need to know now" world. They are instruments that can be used to collect

evidence in a criminal investigation; they can prevent and resolve complaints brought by members of the public; they can strengthen relationships with communities by providing transparency along with accountability; and they can help communities measure performance from a police agency and its officers. However, opponents of the BWC technology fear these tools come with risks not yet fully explored.

The obstacles police agencies face with the use of the BWC is that in many communities, there is a lack of trust and confidence in law enforcement. Incidents such as the Los Angeles Riots, the death of George Floyd and the continued narrative of systemic racism in law enforcement have all contributed to the continued decline in trust of police agencies across the country. This lack of confidence is intensified by questions when encounters between police officers and the community involve the use of force or worse deadly force. These incidents require extensive investigations that take time; resulting in BWC footage that is not readily available. It can become more complicated in incidents where there is no video available. Often, the automatic assumption by many in the community is that the agency is covering up or fabricating details of the incident.

As police agencies across the country continue to search for ways to strengthen strained relationships with communities and provide accountability for their agencies, the following questions arise: Has the implementation of BWC caused a decline in use of force incidents? Have citizen complaints diminished because of the implementation of this technology? And lastly, have these tools affected the findings in Internal Affairs investigations? These are the questions we seek to answer through our research and analysis.

## **Literature Review**

### ***Stakeholders Perspectives of the BWC***

After the incident in Ferguson, a lack of confidence in law enforcement spread and agencies across the country searched for new and innovative solutions that would improve public trust for law enforcement officers. As a result, the implementation of the BWC became the new solution; a tool viewed by many as a possible method to address the growing mistrust the public felt. Additionally, agencies anticipated that the technology would prevent similar use of force scenarios as the one that occurred in Ferguson. (Fallik, Deuchar and Crichlow, 2018)

As interest initially grew with the adoption of the new technology, there was resistance and opposition by the law enforcement community. Officers were concerned that because they were wearing the BWC, it would cause them to hesitate in their decision regarding using necessary force in certain situations. Officers were also worried that the agency would use the footage captured to punish them for minor administrative violations. As a result, these fears created officer safety concerns as they began to worry more about what was being recorded. While those in command staff positions felt that the technology would expose their agencies and humiliate its officers. (Fallik, Deuchar and Crichlow, 2018)

Besides the external issues, officers also grew frustrated with the data management. The BWC footage required officers to “tag” the footage they recorded. This was the tedious method of associating the footage with a specific case. To compound matters officers were concerned with writing consistent reports. They found themselves

reviewing the footage to ensure accuracy in their reports. Conversely, command staff felt that the time officers spent on data management took time away from their other functions. However, as their use became more prevalent the law enforcement perspective progressed. (Fallik, Deuchar and Crichlow, 2018)

As officers began to work with the BWC, the sentiment for its use became positive. They found that with using the BWC, they were able to improve the process of collecting evidence and other tasks such as interviewing individuals on scenes. These responsibilities became easier to do and the outcomes became more accurate. As a result, most officers expressed how prepared and poised they felt, when they were getting called in for court proceedings. Additionally, officers felt that the presence of the BWC assisted them in diffusing situations as they dealt with citizens on scenes. Furthermore, it was their belief that the BWC was the best evidence they had to defend themselves in the event a complaint was made against them by members of the public or a detainee. (Clare et al., 2019)

Generally, detainees perceived the use of the BWC as a positive tool. They suggested the BWC provided an enhanced version of the events that lead to the police encounter. They believed that the recordings provide more accurate details of the events versus the use of the officer's recollection of the events or another person's account. Detainees also explained that the BWCs afforded them a layer of protection against officers using excessive force against them. It was their belief that the cameras soften the encounter and potentially reduced violent encounters between officers and the public. Equally, they saw the BWC as a means of providing officer accountability for their actions. (Taylor, Lee, Willis, Gannoni, 2017)

As interactions are captured, detainees argue that they provide an avenue of proof for citizens if they believed officers acted inappropriately. Additionally, they believed that the BWC helped discourage dishonest behavior by officers and prevented them from falsely accusing them of criminal behavior. Detainees believed that the BWC encouraged those involved to behave correctly and follow rules and regulations, allowing for unbiased outcomes for both officers and detainees. (Taylor et al., 2017)

Although detainees expressed favored opinions for the use of the BWC, they were concerned with privacy. They were worried that officers might not inform the public that the interactions were being recorded without their consent. Additionally, they had concerns that officers would overstep their right to record non-law enforcement matters thus violating their right to privacy. The other concern detainees had was the discretion officers had on when they could activate their BWC. Detainees feared that officers could manipulate recordings by turning them off when they acted inappropriately and would activate them to show unfavorable behavior by those being detained. (Taylor et al., 2017)

The public's perception of the law enforcement profession has become very critical after recent incidents involving use of force. As a result, police agencies around the country have introduced various new tools and methodologies in an attempt to regain the public's trust. Many people in society feel that equipping officers with BWC would allow them to feel safer in their communities by having an additional layer of accountability. Many believe that cameras would compel officers to act professionally and respectful towards them. (Clare et al., 2019)

Proponents of the technology argue that the BWC would allow for transparency from police agencies, especially when controversial issues arise. As these incidents occur

and the requests pour in from the public, judicial system, and the media to quickly see the interactions captured on video; many believe that this would cause agencies to hold their officers' accountable for their behavior and further promote adopting a policy of transparency with the community they serve. Additionally, there are thoughts that officers that are equipped with the cameras, would be less likely to get involved in use of force incidents. They believe that because officers are recording their interactions with the people they encounter, it would directly affect their behavior and attitude towards the public thus affecting the likelihood of an incident getting out of control. As proponents argue for the positive uses of the technology, there are sectors of society that do not approve their use. (Sousa, Miethe, Sakiyama, 2017)

Opponents of the technology fear the lack of policy against intrusion of citizen privacy as one of the most important reasons why they are against the BWC. Many believe that their privacy is extremely important and if officers are recording their interactions with the public without their permission, then the result is an invasion of their privacy. They also fear that when officers respond to a residence to take a report, the officer's BWC could potentially record the inside of their home. This, in their opinion could be a constituted a violation of the law, especially if they did not want to be recorded. Due to these fears, adversaries have asked that policies be set in place so that the cameras can be used appropriately to minimize these concerns. Consequently, opponents believe the risk to the invasion of privacy outweigh the unproven accountability this device brings to police agencies. (Bud, 2016)

### ***Challenges with the Implementation of the BWC***

As recent events involving the law enforcement community have been highly publicized, there has been a push by the public and government to implement the use of the BWC. In their opinions, the footage captured can memorialize a record of events that can tell a story and most importantly can debunk any unmerited accusations. However, as the push exists, there are still concerns surrounding the implementation of this technology. There is apprehension from members in the community, as agencies embrace these tools without fully understanding its implications. One major concern with the BWC, is the lack of privacy that members of society feel when they encounter officers. (Macari, 2015)

When officers are working in the community and speaking with individuals, these interactions are being recorded without their consent, and many feel like this is an invasion of their privacy. This becomes an even bigger concern when officers are interacting with victims of certain crimes. Many victims must relive their traumas as they explain their stories to officers, and do not want to have their personal information recorded to then be viewed by unknown people. As a result, they are reluctant to speak to officers and provide information as it can feel invasive when they are being recorded. (Mateescu, Rosenblat, Boyd, 2016)

Another avenue of concern is the integrated use of facial recognition technology that comes with the BWC. Police agencies can use these cameras in furtherance of their investigations without letting the public know and in turn these images can be processed into criminal databases. According to Hood (2020), "with the integration of this software into BWCs, faces can be scanned, analyzed and categorized in real-time without the

consent (or knowledge) of the recorded subject.” This is a fear of many and if allowed it can lead to continued distrust from the community. (Mateescu, et al., 2016)

After listening to the public outcries of the facial recognition technology, the City of San Francisco was the first major city in the United States to ban the use of this technology by law enforcement agencies in its city. Additionally in 2019, Axon the largest BWC supplier in the country, announced that they would ban the use of facial recognition with their systems. Axon cited the false identifications and privacy concerns as just some of the reasons that they would ban the facial recognition interface with their BWCs. (Hood, 2020).

The acceleration of technology has made the possibility of the BWC a reality for many police agencies across the country. However, as agencies embrace this tool, the costs and implementation associated with it have been extremely high. For many agencies, insufficient funding has been the main reason for not committing to the use of the BWC. (Mateescu et al., 2016)

There are significant costs associated with the purchasing of the cameras, the storage of massive amounts of data and finally the processing of public records requests that come from members of the community, attorneys, and the media for these videos. Aside from the hardware, agencies must also hire and train additional personnel to meet the demands that come with reviewing and redacting all requested video footage. Additionally, agencies must all manage and find a way to store all these videos for the time needed per departmental and state statute mandates. (Mateescu et al., 2016)

### ***BWC Evidence for Court Proceedings***

The use of the BWC has proven to be beneficial to different stakeholders in the criminal justice system. Prosecutors are now working diligently to introduce this new form of evidence in courtrooms across the country. Prosecutors have found that these videos can be used to assess a victim, witness or even an officers’ reliability during their initial statements regarding the events of a case. Additionally, when used during trial, prosecutors found that the footage captured on scenes, bring crime scenes to life, and help validate the events that led to them being in court. (Mosler, 2021)

During court proceedings, prosecutors also acknowledged how powerful an officer’s initial encounter with victims of certain crimes would be when captured by the BWC. They described these encounters to be more significant and convincing to a courtroom than the testimony or a report could provide especially months and in some cases years after an incident had occurred. (Mosler, 2021)

In a study conducted by the University of Leeds, research showed the positive effects that the BWC had during criminal proceedings. According to the study, in many of the cases involving victims of domestic crimes, prosecutors had a difficult time prosecuting these cases because victims were reluctant to speak out against their accusers. The introduction of these videos captured by responding officers is beginning to change the outcomes of these cases. Officers and prosecutors argued that the BWC evidence obtained during the investigation of these cases had more of an impact than the testimony of many involved. Officers explained that these videos had the ability to provide a more powerful image of the effects of domestic abuse than the testimony of some of the actual victims. (‘Tipping the Balance’, 2018)

The footage obtained would show the victims as they were at the time the incident occurred, their demeanor and what their surroundings appeared to be at the time of the officer's arrival. All these factors provided an image that could never be described in a report. In many of these cases, the BWC footage also acted as an additional independent witness. As a result, prosecutors found that in some cases victims were gaining the confidence they needed to proceed with their cases and consequently more cases were being prosecuted. Additionally, many offenders would plead their cases out rather than take their chances in court after learning of the availability of the BWC footage. ('Tipping the Balance', 2018)

While the BWC had positive implications in the courtroom, there are issues that come with their use in court. Redaction is a major drawback for the prosecuting team. They must be cognizant in protecting the safety of victims, witnesses, and adhere to court orders all while creating excerpts for trials and fulfilling public records requests. Additionally, prosecutors must be cautious that classified police tactics are not released. Completing these tasks can be daunting as they can become very expensive in terms of the staff needed, resources, time and technology used to achieve these assignments. (Blitz, 2015)

Although BWC videos are reliable sources of evidence they may also be limited in the information that they provide. This can come from something as simple as the officer's placement of the BWC. The camera may be affixed to the chest of the officer's uniform; however, the officer may be looking over a fence or an object that may not capture the officer's point of view. Lighting and objects that obscure the BWC can also diminish the quality of the recording. The BWC may also capture something that the officer did not see because they were focused on something else, and this could lead to more questions from the jury or an attorney. (Blitz,2015)

## **Methods**

The purpose of this research paper was to identify whether there was a direct correlation between the implementation of the body worn camera and the number of uses of force incidents officers were involved in as well as the number of citizen complaints filed by members of the public. Lastly, questions were also asked about the number of investigations internally initiated to determine if through the review process of the video recordings, agencies found violations that needed to be addressed through formal investigations. As a result, a quantitative approach was used to gather the most objective and accurate information available.

Data was gathered through surveys that were sent to fourteen agencies across the state of Florida encompassing all seven Florida Department of Law Enforcement assigned regions. Seven police departments and seven sheriff's offices were selected throughout the state. Most of the agencies selected represented the largest sample size available within that specific region to keep the sample size as consistent as possible. The questions asked were intended to determine the actual number of uses of force incidents and number of citizen complaints before and after the implementation of the body worn camera. Additionally, agencies were also asked about the number of

investigations internally initiated by the agency before and after the introduction of the cameras.

The information collected through the survey responses were accurate and provided the best empirical data available. However, a weakness with the information collected was that not all agencies captured the requested information. In addition, some of these agencies were relatively new to the complicated process of capturing such extensive data.

## **Results**

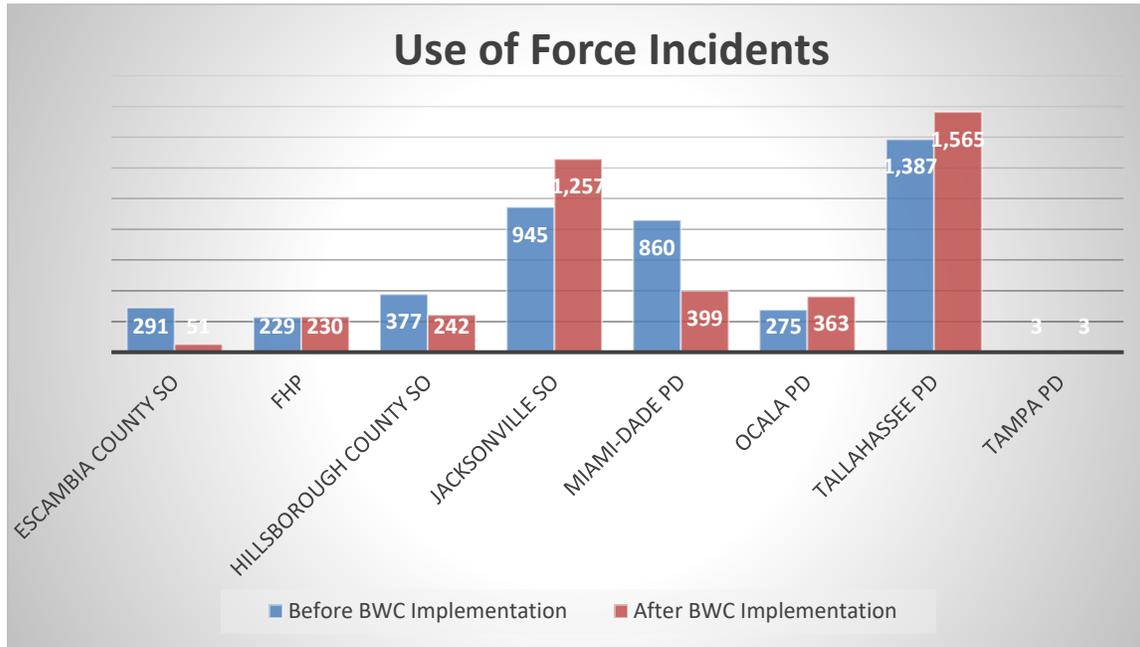
The survey was sent to 14 law enforcement agencies across the state of Florida. One Sheriff's Office and one Police Department were selected in each of the seven regions identified by the Florida Department of Law Enforcement. I received 10 responses, for a response rate of 71%. Of those 10 responses, two law enforcement agencies had not adopted the use of BWC in their agencies.

The first question on the survey asked participants to identify the year in which their agency adopted the use of BWC. Twelve and a half percent of the respondents implemented the use of the BWC in 2014, 12.5% of the respondents implemented the use of the BWC in 2016, 37.5% of the respondents implemented the use of the BWC in 2018, while 25% of the respondents implemented the use of the BWC in 2018 and most recently 12.5% of the respondents implemented the use of the BWC in 2021. It should be noted that one of the participating agencies, Florida Highway Patrol, only has 50 BWC which are assigned to their motorcycle units; however, the agency has in-car camera program for all their vehicles assigned to lieutenants and below. These vehicles are equipped with five cameras for a 360-degree view around the vehicle that capture their officers' interactions with the public.

The second question asked participants to identify the number of uses of force incidents their agency had reported in the two years prior to the implementation of the BWC system. The Escambia County Sheriff's Office indicated that their officers had been involved in 291 incidents, the Florida Highway Patrol indicated 229 incidents, the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office indicated 377 incidents, the Jacksonville Sheriff's Office indicated 945 incidents, the Miami-Dade Police Department indicated 860 incidents, the Ocala Police Department indicated 275 incidents, the Tallahassee Police Department indicated 1,387 incidents, and the Tampa Police Department indicated 3 incidents prior to the implementation of the BWC.

The third question asked participants to identify the number of uses of force incidents their agency had reported in the two most recent years after the implementation of the BWC system. The Escambia County Sheriff's Office indicated that their officers had been involved in 51 incidents, the Florida Highway Patrol indicated 230 incidents, the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office indicated 242 incidents, the Jacksonville Sheriff's Office indicated 1,245 incidents, the Miami-Dade Police Department indicated 399 incidents, the Ocala Police Department indicated 363 incidents, the Tallahassee Police Department indicated 1,565 incidents, and the Tampa Police Department indicated 3 incidents since the implementation of the BWC.

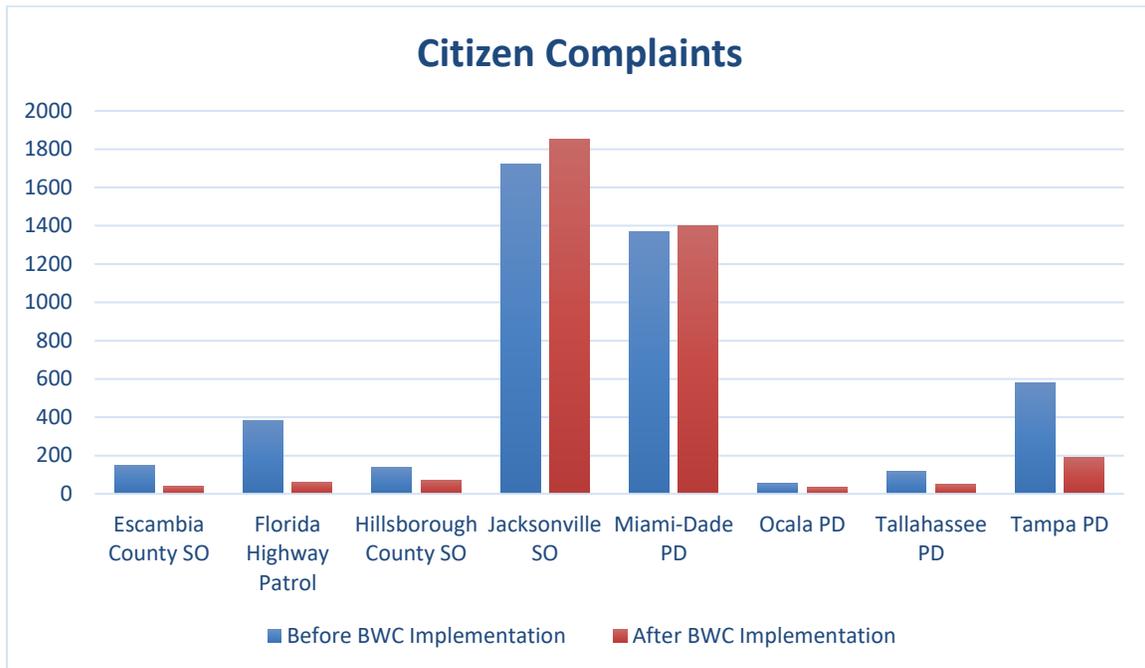
Table 1: Number of Uses of Force Incident before and after BWC:



The fourth question asked participants to identify the number of citizen complaints their agency had reported in the two years prior to the implementation of the BWC system. The Escambia County Sheriff’s Office indicated that they had received 151 complaints, the Florida Highway Patrol indicated 384 complaints, the Hillsborough County Sheriff’s Office indicated 140 complaints, the Jacksonville Sheriff’s Office indicated 1,720 complaints, the Miami-Dade Police Department indicated 1,371 complaints, the Ocala Police Department indicated 53 complaints, the Tallahassee Police Department indicated 116 complaints, and the Tampa Police Department indicated 580 complaints, prior to the implementation of the BWC.

The fifth question asked participants to identify the number of citizen complaints their agency had reported in the two most recent years after the implementation of the BWC system. The Escambia County Sheriff’s Office indicated that they had received 39 complaints, the Florida Highway Patrol indicated 62 complaints, the Hillsborough County Sheriff’s Office indicated 73 complaints, the Jacksonville Sheriff’s Office indicated 1,851 complaints, the Miami-Dade Police Department indicated 1,398 complaints, the Ocala Police Department indicated 33 complaints, the Tallahassee Police Department indicated 48 complaints, and the Tampa Police Department indicated 192 complaints since the implementation of the BWC.

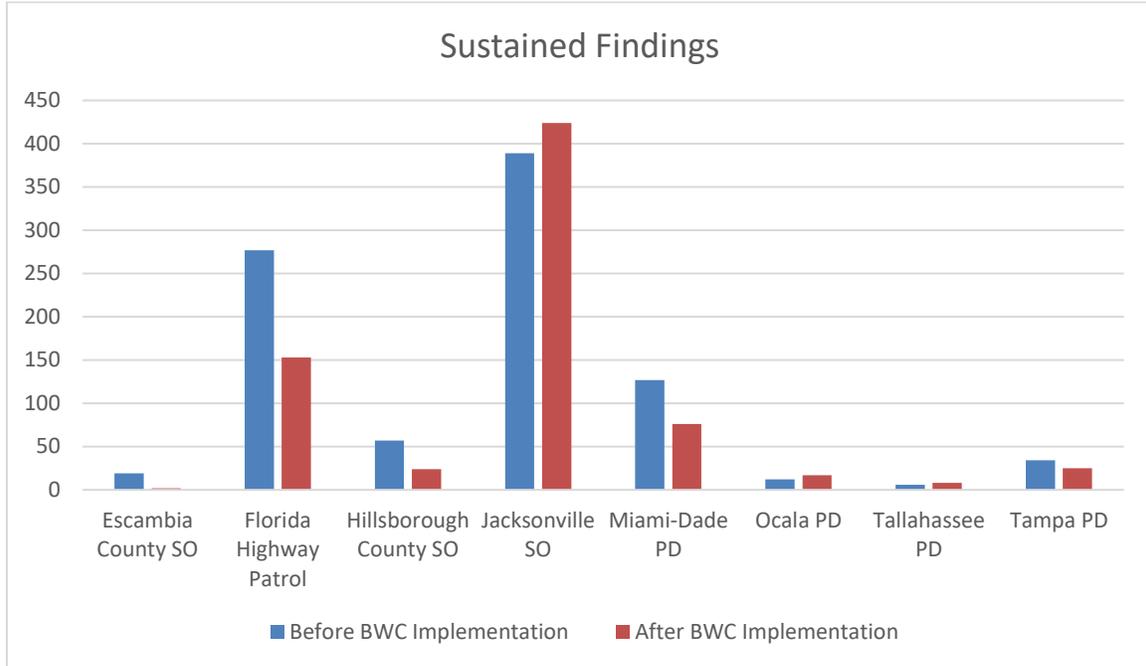
Table 2: Number of Citizen Complaints before and after BWC:



The sixth question asked participants to identify the number of sustained findings/allegations their agency had reported as the outcome of an Internal Affairs investigations in the two years prior to the implementation of the BWC system. The Escambia County Sheriff’s Office indicated that their internal affairs investigations had resulted in 19 sustained allegations, the Florida Highway Patrol indicated 277 sustained allegations, the Hillsborough County Sherriff’s Office indicated 57 sustained allegations, the Jacksonville Sheriff’s Office indicated 389 sustained allegations, the Miami-Dade Police Department indicated 127 sustained allegations, the Ocala Police Department indicated 12 sustained allegations, the Tallahassee Police Department indicated 6 sustained allegations, and the Tampa Police Department indicated 34 sustained allegations prior to the implementation of the BWC.

The seventh question asked participants to identify the number of sustained findings/allegations their agency had reported as the outcome of an Internal Affairs investigations in the two most recent years after the implementation of the BWC system. The Escambia County Sheriff’s Office indicated that their internal affairs investigations had resulted in 2 sustained allegations, the Florida Highway Patrol indicated 153 sustained allegations, the Hillsborough County Sherriff’s Office indicated 24 sustained allegations, the Jacksonville Sheriff’s Office indicated 424 sustained allegations, the Miami-Dade Police Department indicated 76 sustained allegations, the Ocala Police Department indicated 17 sustained allegations, the Tallahassee Police Department indicated 8 sustained allegations, and the Tampa Police Department indicated 25 sustained allegations since the implementation of the BWC.

Table 3: Number of Sustained Findings before and after BWC:

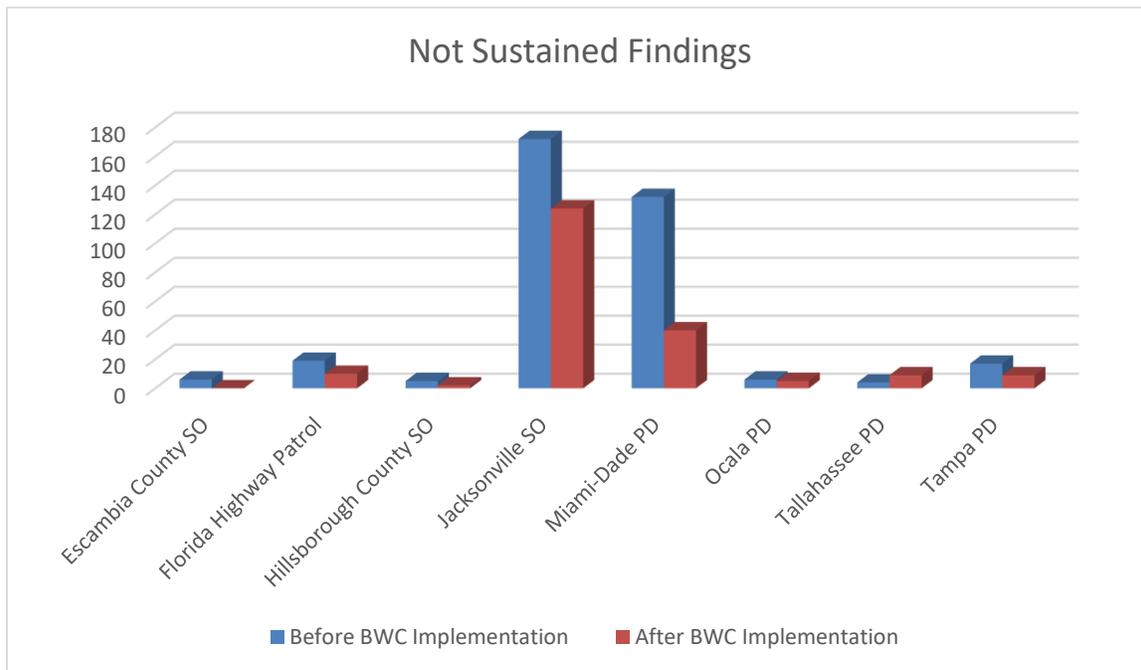


The eighth question asked participants to identify the number of not sustained findings/allegations their agency had reported as the outcome of an Internal Affairs investigations in the two years prior to the implementation of the BWC system. The Escambia County Sheriff's Office indicated that their internal affairs investigations had resulted in 6 not sustained allegations, the Florida Highway Patrol indicated 19 investigations had resulted in not sustained allegations, the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office indicated 5 investigations had resulted in not sustained allegations, the Jacksonville Sheriff's Office indicated 172 investigations had resulted in not sustained allegations, the Miami-Dade Police Department indicated 132 investigations had resulted in not sustained allegations, the Ocala Police Department indicated 6 investigations had resulted in not sustained allegations, the Tallahassee Police Department indicated 4 investigations had resulted in not sustained allegations, and the Tampa Police Department indicated 17 investigations had resulted in not sustained allegations prior to the implementation of the BWC.

The ninth question asked participants to identify the number of not sustained findings/allegations their agency had reported as the outcome of an Internal Affairs investigations in the two most years after to the implementation of the BWC system. The Escambia County Sheriff's Office indicated that their internal affairs investigations had resulted in zero not sustained allegations, the Florida Highway Patrol indicated 10 investigations had resulted in not sustained allegations, the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office indicated 2 investigations had resulted in not sustained allegations, the Jacksonville Sheriff's Office indicated 124 investigations had resulted in not sustained allegations, the Miami-Dade Police Department indicated 40 investigations had resulted in not sustained allegations, the Ocala Police Department indicated 5 investigations had resulted in not sustained allegations, the Tallahassee Police Department indicated 9

investigations had resulted in not sustained allegations, and the Tampa Police Department indicated 9 investigations had resulted in not sustained allegations since the implementation of the BWC.

Table 4: Number of Sustained Findings before and after BWC:

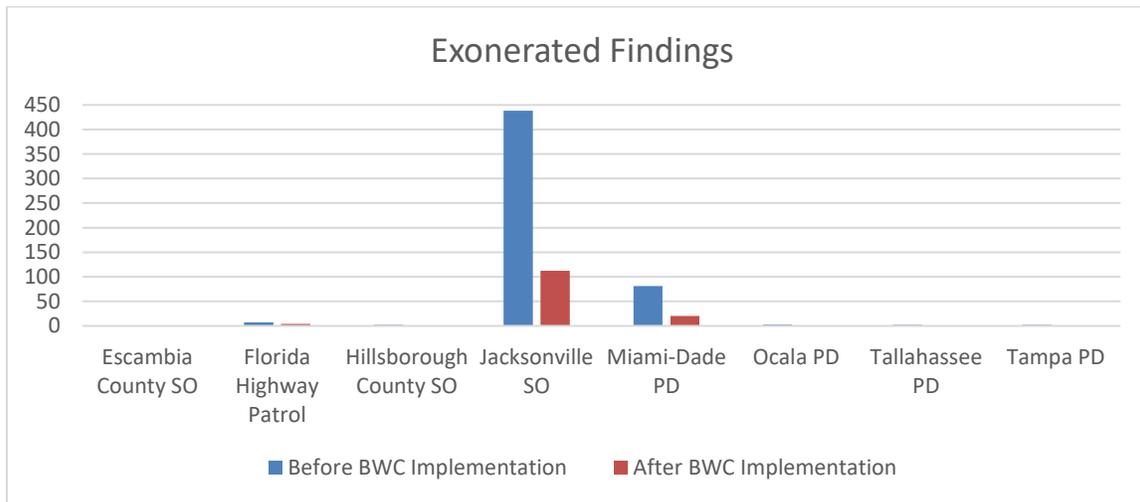


Question 10 asked participants to identify the number of exonerated findings/allegations their agency had reported as the outcome of an Internal Affairs investigations in the two years prior to the implementation of the BWC system. The Escambia County Sheriff's Office indicated that their internal affairs investigations had resulted in zero exonerated allegations, the Florida Highway Patrol indicated 7 investigations had resulted in exonerated allegations, the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office indicated 2 investigations had exonerated allegations, the Jacksonville Sheriff's Office indicated 438 investigations had exonerated allegations, the Miami-Dade Police Department indicated 81 investigations had exonerated allegations, the Ocala Police Department indicated 3 investigations had exonerated allegations, the Tallahassee Police Department indicated 2 investigations had resulted in exonerated allegations, and the Tampa Police Department indicated 2 investigations had exonerated allegations prior to the implementation of the BWC.

Question 11 asked participants to identify the number of exonerated findings/allegations their agency had reported as the outcome of an Internal Affairs investigations in the two most recent years after the implementation of the BWC system. The Escambia County Sheriff's Office indicated that their internal affairs investigations had resulted in zero exonerated allegations, the Florida Highway Patrol indicated 4 investigations had resulted in exonerated allegations, the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office indicated zero investigations had exonerated allegations, the Jacksonville Sheriff's Office indicated 112 investigations had exonerated allegations, the Miami-Dade Police

Department indicated 20 investigations had exonerated allegations, the Ocala Police Department indicated 1 investigation had exonerated allegations, the Tallahassee Police Department indicated 1 investigation had resulted in exonerated allegations, and the Tampa Police Department indicated 1 investigation had exonerated allegations since the implementation of the BWC.

Table 5: Number of Exonerated Findings before and after BWC:

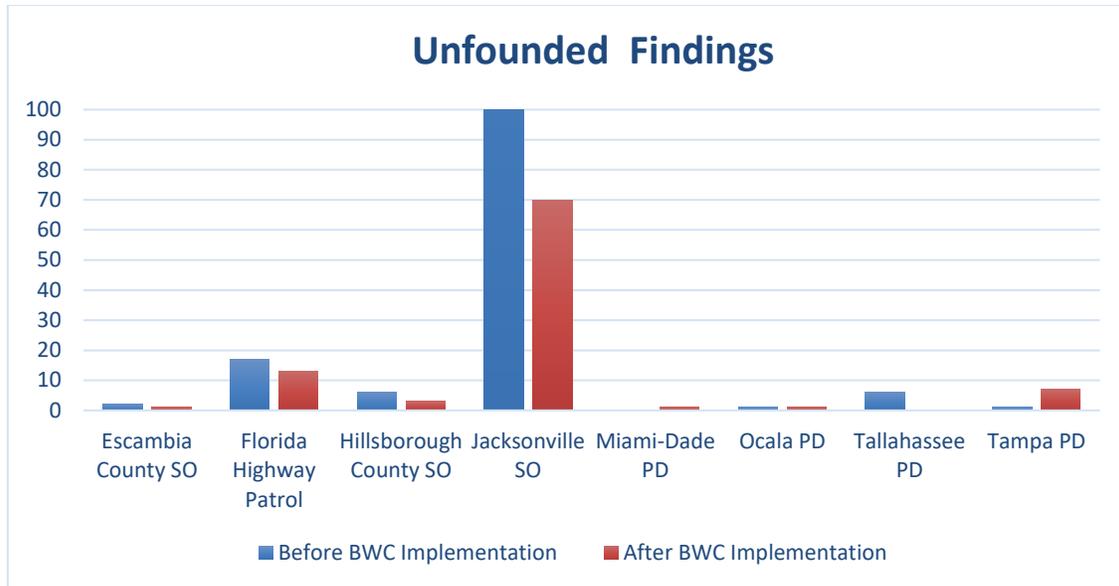


Question 12 asked participants to identify the number of unfounded findings/allegations their agency had reported as the outcome of an Internal Affairs investigations in the two years prior to the implementation of the BWC system. The Escambia County Sheriff's Office indicated that their internal affairs investigations had resulted in 2 unfounded allegations, the Florida Highway Patrol indicated 17 investigations had resulted in unfounded allegations, the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office indicated 6 investigations had unfounded allegations, the Jacksonville Sheriff's Office indicated 428 investigations had unfounded allegations, the Miami-Dade Police Department indicated zero investigations had exonerated allegations, the Ocala Police Department indicated 1 investigation had unfounded allegations, the Tallahassee Police Department indicated 6 investigations had resulted in unfounded allegations, and the Tampa Police Department indicated 1 investigation had unfounded allegations prior to the implementation of the BWC.

Question 13 asked participants to identify the number of unfounded findings/allegations their agency had reported as the outcome of an Internal Affairs investigations in the two most recent years after the implementation of the BWC system. The Escambia County Sheriff's Office indicated that their internal affairs investigations had resulted in 1 unfounded allegation, the Florida Highway Patrol indicated 13 investigations had resulted in unfounded allegations, the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office indicated 3 investigations had unfounded allegations, the Jacksonville Sheriff's Office indicated 70 investigations had unfounded allegations, the Miami-Dade Police Department indicated 1 investigation had exonerated allegations, the Ocala Police Department indicated 1 investigation had unfounded allegations, the Tallahassee Police Department indicated zero investigations had resulted in unfounded allegations, and the

Tampa Police Department indicated 7 investigations had unfounded allegations since the implementation of the BWC.

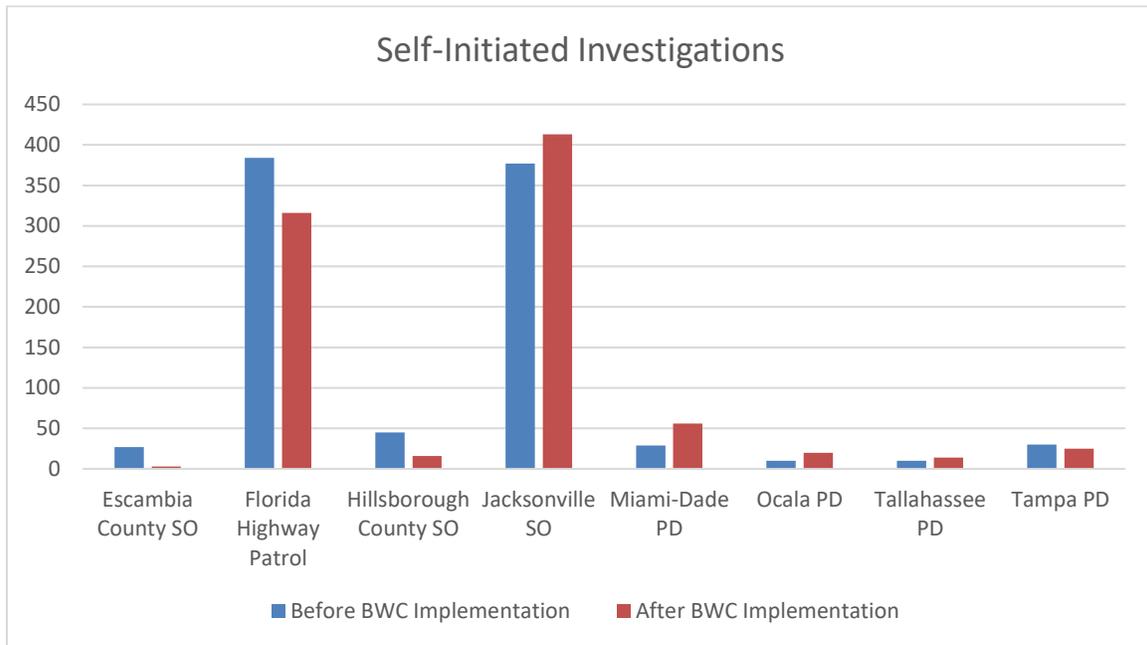
Table 6: Number of Unfounded Findings before and after BWC:



Question 14 asked participants to identify the number of internal affairs investigations internally initiated by their agency in the two years prior to the implementation of the BWC system. The Escambia County Sheriff’s Office indicated that they had initiated 27 investigations, the Florida Highway Patrol indicated they had initiated 384 investigations, the Hillsborough County Sheriff’s Office indicated that they had initiated 45 investigations, the Jacksonville Sheriff’s Office indicated that they had initiated 377 investigations, the Miami-Dade Police Department indicated that they had initiated 29 investigations, the Ocala Police Department indicated that they had initiated 10 investigations, the Tallahassee Police Department indicated that they had initiated 10 investigations, and the Tampa Police Department indicated that they had initiated 30 investigations prior to the implementation of the BWC system.

Question 15 asked participants to identify the number of internal affairs investigations internally initiated by their agency in the two most recent years after the implementation of the BWC system. The Escambia County Sheriff’s Office indicated that they had initiated 3 investigations, the Florida Highway Patrol indicated they had initiated 316 investigations, the Hillsborough County Sheriff’s Office indicated that they had initiated 16 investigations, the Jacksonville Sheriff’s Office indicated that they had initiated 413 investigations, the Miami-Dade Police Department indicated that they had initiated 56 investigations, the Ocala Police Department indicated that they had initiated 20 investigations, the Tallahassee Police Department indicated that they had initiated 14 investigations, and the Tampa Police Department indicated that they had initiated 25 investigations after the implementation of the BWC system.

Table 7: Number of Self-Initiated Investigations before and after BWC:



Question 16 asked participants if their agency performed any audits or quality control checks utilizing the BWC system to ensure that their officers/deputies were following their department’s policies and procedures during their tour of duty. Eight (100%) answered “yes” to the question. All participants answered this question.

Question 17 asked participants whether they felt that the BWC system has had a positive or negative effect on the performance and efficiency of their agency. Eight (100%) answered “yes” to the question. All participants answered this question.

Question 18 asked participants whether they felt that the BWC system had a positive or negative effect on your agency’s relationship with the community they serve. Seven agencies (88%) answered “yes” to the question. The Hillsborough County Sherriff’s Office advised that they did not know the answer to this question as they were still in the process of developing a community survey to gather this information. All participants answered this question.

## Discussion

The results of the survey indicate a clear correlation between the literature review and the answers provided by the participating agencies. As the literature suggests, the use of the BWC had a direct effect on both the officers and the community they serve. Most of the law enforcement agencies that participated in this survey adopted the use of this technology within the last four years. The Ocala Police Department and the Miami-Dade Police Department adopted their use in 2014 and 2016, respectively. Through the survey it was revealed that all the participating agencies (100%) performed audits or quality control checks utilizing the BWC system to ensure that their officers were following their department’s policies and procedures during their tour of duty.

When asked about the number of uses of force incidents before and after the implementation of the BWC, the results were mixed. While 37.5% of the agencies had a decline in the number of incidents, 50% of the agencies reported a rise in the number of uses of force incidents since the implementation of the technology. This data shows that unlike the literature suggested, the addition of the BWC did not decrease the uses of force that officers were involved in but in fact the opposite occurred, and it rose for half of the agencies. The rise in uses of force incidents could also be attributed to other factors such as a policy change affecting the documentation of a use of force incident, the deployment of additional officers with the BWC or officers responding to large-scale protests where there is a propensity for officers to be involved in volatile situations. Further research is needed in this area to examine what factors contributed to the rise in these incidents. Twelve percent of the agencies did not have in the number of incidents. As to the question that was raised during the introduction, the research showed that the implementation of the BWC did not cause a decline in incidents where force was used by members of a law enforcement agency.

When agencies were asked about the number of citizen complaints received, 75% of the respondents had a significant decline in the number of complaints, while 25% had a slight rise in the number of complaints, after the implementation of the BWC system. These results may suggest that citizens were conscientious during their interactions with law enforcement as they were cognizant of the technology or as the literature suggested, that because officers were recording their interactions with the people they encounter, it directly affected their behavior and attitude towards the public thus affecting the likelihood of an incident escalating and a complaint arising as a result.

Agencies were also asked about the varying outcomes resulting from an internal affairs investigation. 75% of the respondents had a decline in the number of investigations with sustained allegations, while 25% had a rise in the number of sustained allegations after the implementation of the BWC. When asked about the number of investigations with not sustained allegations, 88% of the respondents had a decline in these findings, while one agency, the Tallahassee Police Department had an increase in this category. Nearly 88% of the agencies reported that there was also a decline in exonerated allegations, while one agency the Escambia County Sheriff's Office remained the same prior to the implementation of the BWC with no investigations resulting in exonerated allegations. Lastly, agencies were asked about investigations resulting in unfounded allegations. 63% of the agencies saw a decrease in the number of unfounded allegations, 12% of the agencies did not see a change in the number of investigations with unfounded allegations, while 25% of the respondents reported an increase in the number of investigations with unfounded allegations.

The varying results in the different disposition categories involving the outcomes of internal affairs investigations demonstrate how the addition of this tool for law enforcement agencies has affected their investigative process. Agencies now have an additional resource when conducting an audit of their officers' actions thus allowing for a more transparent and conclusive avenue to determine whether actions were within reason. The drastic decline in both sustained and not sustained allegations present a clear picture of the technology promoting both accountability and transparency for an officer's behavior through these different outcomes.

The last statistical question that was asked of the participants dealt with the number of internal affairs investigations that were internally initiated before and after the implementation of the BWC. 50% of the agencies saw an increase in the number of self-initiated investigations, while 50% of agencies saw a decrease in the number of self-initiated investigations. Overall, all the respondents believed that the implementation of the camera system had a positive effect on the performance and efficiency of their agency, additionally most of the agencies also believed that the BWC had a positive effect on their agency's relationship with the community they served.

## **Recommendations**

The survey results indicate that the implementation of the BWC has had an overall positive impact with both law enforcement agencies and the public. These results are consistent with what the literature review suggested. Although cautious during the early stages of the implementation process, most agencies have grown to recognize the importance of having the BWC. While an analysis of the data revealed that the number of incidents where police officers have "used force" may have risen for half of the respondents, the number of complaints from the public declined exponentially.

For many agencies, insufficient funding has been the main reason for not committing to the use of the BWC. The demanding costs associated with both the introduction and maintenance of the technology can be expensive for agencies. Additionally, for many smaller agencies this burden can be extremely taxing given their limited financial resources and potential for lawsuits against them due to an officer's actions. However, the results of this research may suggest that for those agencies who have seen a rise in complaints from citizens in the community, migrating to the use of this technology may assist them in addressing these issues.

A recommendation for agencies who may not have the necessary funding, is to look for assistance from a federal agency such as the Department of Justice (DOJ). The DOJ has numerous assistance programs that an agency may use to request any available grants and funding to establish a BWC program. Additionally, agencies can also explore the idea of outfitting their police vehicles with cameras like the current practice that FHP has. This can be used as an economical alternative to capture interactions with the community. The results gathered from the alternative can then be used to garner the additional funding necessary to outfit the agency and its personnel with the BWC.

Participating agencies also saw a significant decline in the dispositions associated with their internal affairs investigations. Seventy-five percent of the respondents had a decline in the number of investigations with sustained findings, while 88% of the respondents had a decline in non-sustained findings. In the literature, it was the belief of officers that the BWC would be the best evidence they had to defend themselves in the event a complaint was made against them by members of the community. This data appears to support their belief and these results demonstrate that the internal complaint process with this technology can provide another layer of transparency to both the public and employees of the agency.

The reduction in such findings can be used for agencies struggling to get "buy in" from their officers. These results show that the BWC is a great tool to assist officers in

proving they were not violating departmental policies and procedures. While the decline in non-sustained findings assist agencies in their attempt to legitimize their promise of transparency and accountability from their employees to the different stakeholders in the community. Additionally, slightly more than half of the respondents denoted a 63% decrease in the number of unfounded allegations. These results illustrate another positive resource for agencies, as the use of the BWC has provided investigators with an additional instrument to arrive at a disposition as footage is now available to show an officer's interaction with members of the community.

Another recommendation that can be explored is establishing a pilot program with the assistance from the agency's local government and leaders. Law enforcement agencies and elected officials have a duty to the community they represent to equip their employees with the best tools to achieve successful outcomes. To adopt new processes, it should be championed and prioritized from the agency head and reinforced on the ground by local government. Presenting to local leaders the benefits of using such technology in addition to the results with data collected from these pilot programs can be convincing to local leaders of the need for the implementation of the technology.

The mission of law enforcement agencies across the nation centers around strengthening community relationships and re-building trust through the performance of the agency and its officers. The introduction of this technology has provided the numerous stakeholders in the community with an avenue to gauge these efforts. When it comes to accomplishing these tasks, the survey results speak for themselves as all the participating agencies described a process whereby audits or quality control checks have been established utilizing the BWC system to ensure that their officers were following their department's policies and procedures during their tour of duty. Additionally, they are being used by supervisors to give feedback on performance prior to any issues arising or praising a job well done. It is evident from their many uses and the results of this survey, that law enforcement agencies using the BWC have been successful in implementing a strategy that has assisted in creating improved transparency, accountability, and measure in the performance of its agency.

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## Appendix

### Survey Questions

#### Introduction:

Please take a few moments of your time to complete this important survey. The questionnaire itself is brief; however, I appreciate that it may require some time to research data specific to your agency regarding the number of actual incidents officers may have been involved in.

Thank you for taking time to assist me with this survey. Participation is voluntary and under no circumstances are you obligated to answer any of the questions in the survey. Nevertheless, your participation will assist me significantly in completing my research and help to further understand the impact of this technology affecting law enforcement agencies across the state.

Thank you for your participation.

1. In what year was the Body Worn Camera (BWC) system implemented in your agency?
2. How many Use of Force incidents did your agency report in the two years **prior** the implementation of the BWC system?

3. How many Use of Force incidents did your agency report in the two most recent years **after** the implementation of the BWC system?
4. How many total citizen complaints did your agency report in the two years **prior** the implementation of the BWC system?
5. How many total citizen complaints did the agency report in the two most recent years **after** the implementation of the BWC system?
6. How many Internal Affairs investigations with Sustained Findings/Allegations did your agency report in the two years **prior** to the implementation of the BWC system?
7. How many Internal Affairs investigations with Sustained Findings/Allegations did your agency report in the two most recent years **after** the implementation of the BWC system?
8. How many Internal Affairs investigations with Not Sustained Findings/Allegations did your agency report in the two years **prior** to the implementation of the BWC system?
9. How many Internal Affairs investigations with Not sustained Findings/Allegations did your agency report in the two most recent years **after** the implementation of the BWC system?
10. How many Internal Affairs investigations with Exonerated Findings/Allegations did your agency report in the two years **prior to** the implementation of the BWC system?
11. How many Internal Affairs investigations with Exonerated Findings/Allegations did your agency report in the two most recent years **after** the implementation of the BWC system?
12. How many Internal Affairs investigations with Unfounded Findings/Allegations did your agency report in the two years **prior** to the implementation of the BWC system?
13. How many Internal Affairs investigations with Unfounded Findings/Allegations did your agency report in the two most recent years **after** the implementation of the BWC system?
14. How many Internal Affairs investigations were internally initiated by your agency in the two years **prior** to the implementation of the BWC system?
15. How many Internal Affairs investigations were internally initiated by your agency in the two most recent years **after** the implementation of the BWC system?

16. Does your agency perform any audits or quality control checks utilizing the BWC system to ensure that your officers/deputies are following your department's policies and procedures during their tour of duty? If so, how is the system being used to accomplish this task?
17. Do you feel that the BWC system has had a **positive** or **negative** effect on the performance and efficiency of your agency?
18. Do you feel that the BWC system has had a **positive** or **negative** effect on your agency's relationship with the community it serves?