

In 2016, 47% of general-purpose law enforcement agencies in the United States had acquired body-worn cameras (BWCs). In comparison, 69% had dashboard cameras and 38% had personal audio recorders.

The main reasons (about 80% each) that local police departments and sheriffs' offices had acquired BWCs were to improve officer safety, increase evidence quality, reduce civilian complaints, and reduce agency liability. Other reasons agencies gave for acquiring BWCs included improving accountability (73%), making cases more prosecutable (70%), improving officer professionalism (60%), improving community perceptions (57%), and reducing use of force (34%).

Deployment of BWCs

Among agencies that had acquired BWCs, 60% of local police departments and 49% of sheriffs' offices had fully deployed their BWCs. About two-fifths of local agencies had either partially deployed their BWCs (19%) or had deployed them on a pilot basis (18%). Among agencies that had not fully deployed their acquired BWCs, 63% reported it was due to insufficient funding.

Policies for BWCs

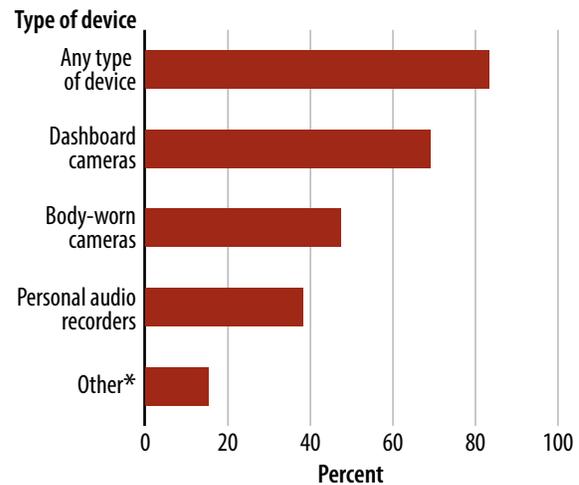
About 86% of general-purpose law enforcement agencies that had acquired BWCs had a formal BWC policy or one in draft form. Among agencies with a BWC policy, more than four in five included guidelines on what specific events to record (84%) and on video transfer, storage, and disposal (87%).

Among agencies with a policy that included what events to record, the vast majority required officers with BWCs to record traffic stops (93%), officer-initiated citizen contacts (85%), and the execution of arrest or search warrants (85%). In addition, 50% required officers with BWCs to record the transporting of offenders.

Access to footage

Nearly 9 in 10 (88%) law enforcement agencies that had BWCs in service allowed the chief executive (such as the police chief, sheriff, or commissioner) to have direct

General-purpose law enforcement agencies with recording devices, by type of device, 2016



*Includes devices for interview rooms, building surveillance, and other agency-specified responses.

Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics, Law Enforcement Management and Administrative Statistics - Body-Worn Camera Supplement, 2016.

access to BWC video recordings without having to file a formal request. About 60% of agencies allowed the officer who made the recording to have direct access to the footage.

In 2016, about 63% of agencies that had acquired BWCs had, on average, no public requests for video footage per month or had never received a request from the public to obtain video generated from BWCs. A fifth of agencies (21%) received an average of one to five public requests for BWC footage per month.

Agencies without BWCs

Among agencies that had not acquired BWCs, the primary reason given was costs, including video storage/disposal (77%), hardware (74%), and ongoing maintenance/support (73%) costs. About 39% of law enforcement agencies without BWCs had not acquired them due to privacy concerns.

The full report (*Body-Worn Cameras in Law Enforcement Agencies, 2016*, NCJ 251775), related documents, and additional information about the Bureau of Justice Statistics can be found at www.bjs.gov.