

BODY-WORN CAMERAS

What is it?	Body-worn cameras (BWCs) are a video recording technology that can be worn on an officer's uniform and record video and audio of events near the officer. Police and community groups were enthusiastic about the technology, hoping that it would improve police conduct, improve accountability, and record shootings and other use of force incidents.
Does it work?	There is no clear or consistent effect on the behavior of the public or police when police where cameras. No reliable results have been found in relation to self-initiated behaviors, arrest decisions, or incidences of use of force by or towards officers. Some reduction in citizen complaints has been seen but the mechanism is unclear.
How should it work?	The idea is that if officers know that their behavior is being recorded, they will improve their conduct and interactions with police. The same is hypothesized about the public.
Mechanism?	As stated above, proponents argue that recording will increase accountability and increase the awareness of officers to moderate their responses. Similarly, at incidents, the public are often in an anxious state, and it is hoped that by being aware they are being recorded, they will moderate their behavior.
Why are the results ambiguous?	Most of the studies are conducted in single jurisdictions with a single police department. It may be that agency-level factors more heavily influence the impact of BWCs through existing policies and practices of the agency. For example, already 'good' agencies may not need to moderate officer behavior.
How's the research?	The most thorough Campbell systematic review to date examined 30 eligible studies across 12 outcomes and 116 different effects. All studies were at least level 3 on the Maryland Scientific Methods Scale, and most occurred in the US.
Caveats?	Little research from outside of the US, and little comparative research examining outcomes between agencies. Few studies discuss whether officers should have the discretion to turn cameras on or off, a factor that might be influential.
Other considerations?	BWCs are focus of federal government research and funding, therefore expect regular updates to systematic reviews for the next few years.
Source?	Lum, C., C. S. Koper, D. B. Wilson, M. Stoltz, M. Goodier, E. Eggins, A. Higginson and L. Mazerolle (2020). Body-worn cameras' effects on police officers and citizen behavior: A systematic review. <i>Campbell Systematic Reviews</i> , The Campbell Collaboration. 16: e1112. https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.1002/cl2.1112
And finally?	Standard disclaimer: This is a one page summary based on an individual's reading of the literature. It shouldn't be a replacement for your own thorough review of the research. That's why there are links above, and why this is free. Also, your mileage may differ. Experiment, evaluate, learn, share.
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