



Activating BWCs: The Importance of Policy

How important is it to activate body-worn cameras and to have a BWC policy that specifically defines when to turn on the camera?

A recent study of Phoenix police officers found that activation rates increased from 40% to 73% when officers were mandated to activate their cameras upon being mobilized for a call for service. In addition, characteristics of individual incidents also influenced officer decisions to activate their cameras. That is, officers were less likely to turn on the cameras during self-initiated calls and for traffic/civilian stops (60%) compared to 75% of violent and property-related incidents that were called in by the public.

Drs. Charles Katz and Jessica Huff who conducted the study said that,

“[police officer] decisions to activate their BWCs are related to a wide variety of individual, situational, organizational, and neighborhood factors.” For example,

- Male and non-White officers activated their BWCs in about 70 percent of incidents; more frequently than did female (59 percent) and White (67 percent) officers.
- Officers’ precinct assignments were also significantly related to their BWC activation, suggesting that workgroup culture might affect activation rates.

Importantly, the researchers said that prior research that does not account for activation rates may have critical shortcomings. Studies that do not look at the impact of activation may have misleading findings as they “understate the impact of the technology” or may not include important events like traffic or civilian stops that have the potential to be contentious. Because BWCs are activated at different rates depending upon different situations, officers,

SRT Webinar: Making the Match

May 18, 2022 at
11am PDT / 1pm CDT / 2pm EDT

Tomorrow is the webinar that will discuss the match requirement of the micro-grants. Real-life examples will be provided to show what’s needed in making the one-to-one match with Federal monies. Micro-grantees are required to attend the webinar

Register [here](#).

neighborhoods, and organizational policy, “prior studies that do not account for these factors could suffer from omitted variables bias.”

The research was based on more than 146,000 police-citizen incidents in the Phoenix Police Department (PPD) from May 2017 to November 2018. During this time period, PPD changed its BWC policy from activating at the time of contact with someone to activating at the time that they were mobilized for a call for service.

Read the report [here](#).



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