

# Do Security Cameras Really Make Campuses Safer?

The vast majority of K-12, higher ed and hospital campuses have security cameras installed. CS' latest study finds out if they are worth it. *By Robin Hattersley*

According to *Campus Safety* magazine's 2016 Video Surveillance Survey, more than nine out of 10 schools, universities and hospitals deploy security cameras on their campuses. Because video surveillance systems are so popular, this year CS has drilled down deeper into this topic to find out if cameras are worth the investment.

Most people want to know once and for all if video surveillance systems actually help campus protection professionals do their jobs. They also want to know just how important are things like system reliability and video clarity. CS got the answers to these and several other interesting questions in our 2018 Video Surveillance Survey.

MORE THAN 9 OUT OF 10 USE THEIR CAMERAS DAILY OR WEEKLY  
It turns out that 96 percent of survey respondents that have video surveillance

systems installed on their campuses say these systems frequently (58 percent) or sometimes (38 percent) provide evidence for investigations. Four in five say their security cameras frequently (24 percent) or sometimes (56 percent) prevent crime, and 86 percent say these systems frequently (50 percent) or sometimes (36 percent) help their departments monitor their campus during other situations when safety or security issues could arise. Nearly three out of four respondents (74 percent) say their video surveillance systems frequently or sometimes act as force multipliers.

These results show that security cameras are a valuable tool for most school, university and hospital public safety and security departments.

That's probably why 94 percent of all of this year's survey respondents say their campuses use their security cameras daily or weekly. That's also most likely why

they believe factors like clarity of video and system reliability are so important. More than four out of five respondents rate image quality and reliability as extremely important. On a scale from 1 to 5 (with 1 being not important at all and 5 being extremely important), both clarity and reliability have an average rating of 4.8.

When drilling down further into reliability, 76 percent of respondents say they want their cameras to work consistently for more than three years. Nearly four in five respondents (79 percent) replace their cameras when needed.

Some of the ways campuses uses their video surveillance systems include monitoring after-hours activities, parking lots, employees, helicopter pads and sealed roof-top areas, traffic, school bus fleet parking lots and bus arrival times, doors and access points, residence halls, event crowds, weather, at-risk pa-



tients who require a sitter, perimeters, hallway traffic and use of bathrooms. Security cameras are also used in lost-and-found investigations, to verify the facts about incidents, to determine the number of officers needed to respond to a situation, in training, to locate missing persons, to back-up or refute children's versions of incidents and in conflict resolution. Additionally, campuses use their video surveillance systems for live tracking, scanning the campus for patients who walk out, maintenance documentation, class size assessment, license plate reading and policy enforcement.

**ED INCIDENTS, THEFT AND VISITOR MANAGEMENT ARE TOP CONCERNS**  
New to this year's survey is a ranking of the various security issues facing healthcare and education.

For higher education, on a scale from

one to five, theft ranks as the most challenging problem (3.4), followed closely by "crime from the community coming onto campus" and "incidents during the evening or after hours" (both receiving a 3.2 average score from respondents).

Hospital and K-12 campuses rate after-hour incidents as one of their top issues (3.4 and 2.9 respectively). Parking lot security ranks as the No. 4 challenge for colleges and hospitals.

Interestingly, 28 percent of college and university respondents say their institutions highlight their video surveillance systems in the marketing materials targeting prospective students and faculty members.

K-12 respondents say visitor management is their biggest challenge, rating it at 3.2. General student misbehavior comes in second place with an average score of 3.0.

Overall, hospitals rate their top two

problems as much more challenging than K-12 and higher ed rate their most difficult security issues. Healthcare respondents give 3.9 average scores to "emergency department incidents" and "incidents involving behavioral health patients." That's a big jump from higher ed and K-12 respondents, who rank their top security issues at 3.4 and 3.2, respectively.

Other issues that survey participants mentioned include sporting event management, cyber bullying, truancy, incarcerated patients, wild animals, illegal vending, smoking, and slips and falls.

The following five pages include charts that break down the data, as well as comments from many of the participants.

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*CS would like to thank the more than 700 school, university and hospital security professionals who participated in this survey. We truly appreciate your input!*

**Does having a video surveillance system:**

|   | All | K-12 | Higher Ed | Hospital |
|---|-----|------|-----------|----------|
| Frequently  |     |      |           |          |
| Provide evidence for your investigations?   | 58% | 59%  | 53%       | 67%      |
| Prevent crime?  | 24% | 26%  | 22%       | 24%      |
| Help your department monitor the campus during other situations where safety or security issues could arise, such as storms, athletic events, concerts, protests, etc.? | 50% | 44%  | 52%       | 59%      |
| Act as a force multiplier?  | 37% | 39%  | 33%       | 41%      |

More than half of all respondents (58%) and two-thirds of healthcare respondents (67%) say their video surveillance systems frequently provide evidence for investigations. Four out of five respondents from all three sectors say security cameras frequently (24%) or sometimes (56%) prevent crime. More than eight in 10 respondents say their video surveillance systems frequently (50%) or sometimes (36%) help their department monitor the campus during other situations where safety or security issues could arise, including storms, athletic events, concerts, protests, etc.

**SURVEY PARTICIPANT COMMENTS**

*The campus protection professionals who participated in this survey were asked to provide additional commentary on their video surveillance systems. Here is what some of them said:*

"I definitely maintain that cameras used properly are not just an 'after the fact' information gathering tool. Used properly they are a preventive tool that can also assist security in how they should/should not approach a situation."

"We utilize a hybrid system allowing us to use both analog and digital cameras. As the analog units need to be replaced, digital is installed."

"Working with smaller companies has shown great benefits due to some of the larger companies having no interest in follow up after installation."

"Plug-and-play units that can be moved to hot spots when needed would be nice. Something we can replace in-house rather than waiting for a vendor to show up."

"The camera systems on each of our 22 school sites have been invaluable."

"While we desire surveillance cameras that are durable, it would also be beneficial if the quality of customer service is high in case cameras break down, malfunction or become otherwise destroyed."

"90% of our cameras are non-functioning and those remaining do not record video, so our system is very challenging."

"Camera data storage and producing and disseminating copies must be user friendly and compatible with standard MS10 programs."

"Security cameras are definitely one of our most valuable tools to maintaining a safe campus and district."

"We have cameras in all schools and several of our administrative buildings within our jurisdiction, for a total of 116 buildings. Our biggest issue is not having enough cameras. Some of the students know where cameras are located and avoid them so stealth or secretly placed cameras would be a bonus. We also do not have cameras in the classrooms, which many times is a problem in prosecuting a criminal case or the school system having to justify their administrative discipline in the he-said-she-said situations. Audio would also prove beneficial, which we do not have."

| Sometimes |      |           |          | Rarely |      |           |          | Never |      |           |          |
|-----------|------|-----------|----------|--------|------|-----------|----------|-------|------|-----------|----------|
| All       | K-12 | Higher Ed | Hospital | All    | K-12 | Higher Ed | Hospital | All   | K-12 | Higher Ed | Hospital |
| 38%       | 39%  | 41%       | 31%      | 3%     | 2%   | 4%        | 2%       | 1%    | 0%   | 2%        | 0%       |
| 56%       | 52%  | 57%       | 62%      | 17%    | 18%  | 18%       | 14%      | 3%    | 3%   | 3%        | 0%       |
| 36%       | 39%  | 35%       | 29%      | 11%    | 14%  | 8%        | 10%      | 4%    | 2%   | 5%        | 3%       |
| 37%       | 34%  | 40%       | 35%      | 18%    | 18%  | 18%       | 15%      | 9%    | 9%   | 8%        | 9%       |

Some of the ways campuses use their video surveillance systems include monitoring after-hours activities, parking lots, employees, helicopter pads and sealed roof-top areas, traffic, school bus fleet parking lots and bus arrival times, doors and access points, residence halls, event crowds, weather, at-risk patients who require a sitter, perimeters for unauthorized individuals, hallway traffic and use of bathrooms. Security cameras are also used in lost and found investigations, to verify incidents are real and determine the number of officers needed to respond to a situation, in training, to locate missing persons, to back-up or refute children's versions of incidents and in conflict resolution. Additionally, campuses use their video surveillance systems for live tracking, scanning the campus for patients who walk out, maintenance documentation, class size assessment, license plate reading and policy enforcement.

**"We are a K-12 school with a minimum response time of 30 minutes from law enforcement. These cameras are very important!"**

**"The majority of cameras on our system are so antiquated they cannot be repaired as parts are unavailable. As always, cost makes replacing the system very challenging and almost prohibitive."**

**"We are evaluating several options to integrate a facial recognition capability and to integrate the camera surveillance system with our visitor management system."**

**"Surveillance systems in a tropical climate may not last as long as three years. You have to budget for this as the sea blast is a major factor. The other challenge is securing cameras so that they are not vandalized. You should also have some cameras available for under-cover work."**

**"For a smaller institution with limited resources, cameras have been a great resource for crime activity prevention."**

**"Affordability is an issue on our small campus. Although we desire better coverage, finances are just not there at this time. We install more up-to-date cameras as we can, but still have uncovered areas."**

**"Cameras have their uses, but students and others are not deterred by them. Most of what we catch is fairly low-level activity inside the dorm, a few things in the parking lots that have cameras, very little in classroom buildings."**

**"Our camera system would be more effective if someone monitored the system and we had better camera placement."**

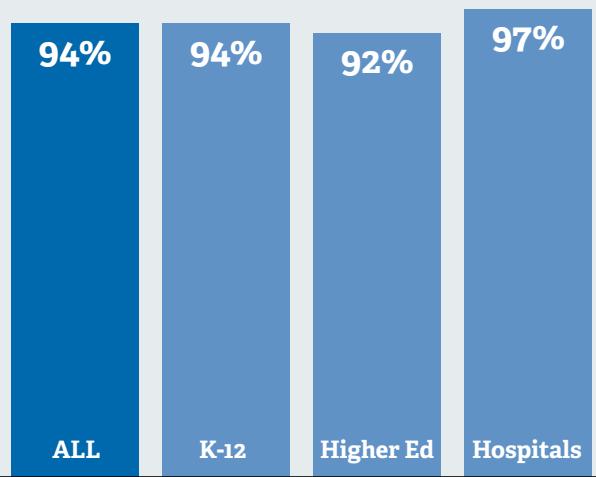
**"We have developed our own in-house video server system to reduce cost while still maintaining over 90 days of storage for over 400 IP cameras."**

**"Half of our cameras are out of service and there is no immediate plan to replace them. Current Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design research seems to indicate that cameras by themselves do not deter or prevent crime, including violent crime and robberies. Cameras have never prevented school shootings. They are useful only after the fact. We do not currently have the training or policies in place to make our cameras work for the security of our students and facility."**

**"With the latest technology out there, it's important that any camera system use cameras that always record the entire viewable area. While PTZ cameras are cheaper, they are extremely limited in their capabilities and miss a lot, even if things happen right next to the camera."**

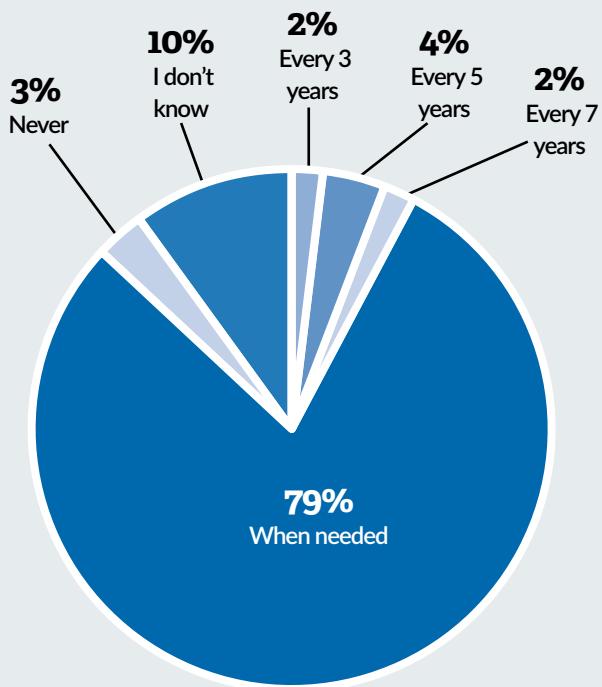
### Percentage of institutions/campuses/districts that use their video surveillance systems daily or weekly:

Campuses use their security cameras extensively, with 94% reporting that they use them daily or weekly.



### How often does your campus or institution replace its cameras?

An overwhelming majority (79%) of all respondents say that their campus or district replaces their cameras when needed.



## BY THE NUMBERS

**30%** of higher ed institutions monitor 10 or more on-campus residence halls

**43%** of colleges/universities monitor 1-5 parking facilities

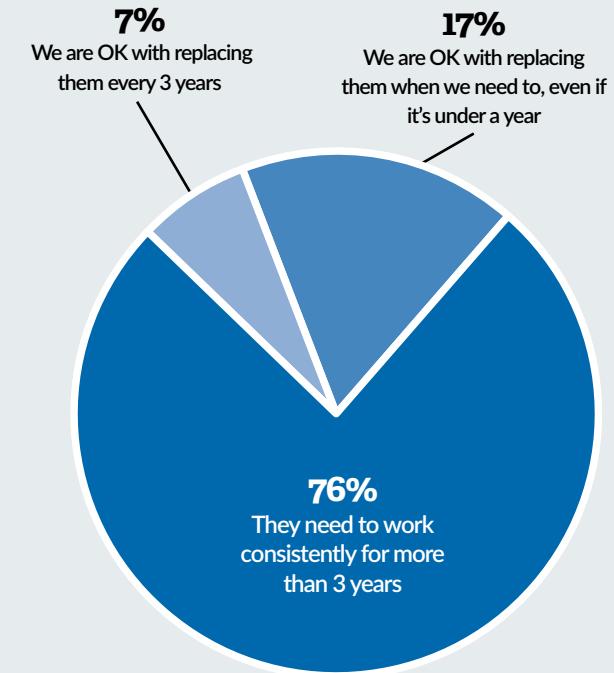
**28%** of higher ed respondents say their campuses highlight their video surveillance systems in their marketing materials targeting prospective students and faculty members

**32%** of hospitals monitor 10 or more parking facilities

**61%** of K-12 schools/districts monitor 1-5 parking lots

### How important is camera reliability to you?

Breaking down the reliability issue even further, it's clear that schools, universities and hospitals want their security cameras to last a long time. More than three out of four (76%) say their cameras must work consistently for more than three years.



**How do you rate the following security camera capabilities and features in terms of importance, on a scale from 1 to 5 (with 1 not being important at all and 5 being extremely important)?**

Image quality and reliability are rated the most important capabilities and features, with more than four out of five rating them as "extremely important." Cybersecurity is rated the least important.

|   | 1<br>Least important | 2  | 3   | 4   | 5<br>Most important | Average Score |
|---|----------------------|----|-----|-----|---------------------|---------------|
| Quality: being able to see the perpetrator or being able to clearly see an incident | 0%                   | 0% | 3%  | 11% | 85%                 | 4.8           |
| Reliability   | 0%                   | 0% | 3%  | 16% | 80%                 | 4.8           |
| Wide dynamic range: being able to identify subjects in all lighting conditions      | 0%                   | 1% | 12% | 25% | 61%                 | 4.5           |
| Low light capability: being able to see what is happening on campus after 4 p.m.    | 1%                   | 3% | 9%  | 29% | 59%                 | 4.4           |
| Range of view   | 1%                   | 3% | 17% | 36% | 44%                 | 4.2           |
| Cost/affordability  | 2%                   | 4% | 22% | 24% | 49%                 | 4.1           |
| Cybersecurity   | 5%                   | 9% | 23% | 21% | 43%                 | 3.9           |

**K-12: Please rank the following security challenges on and around your campus or district.**

Schools say visitor management is their top challenge, rating it at 3.2. General student misbehavior comes in second place with an average score of 3.0. Overall, hospitals rate their top two problems as much more challenging than K-12 and higher ed rate their most difficult security issues. Healthcare respondents give 3.9 average scores to "emergency department incidents" and "incidents involving behavioral health patients." That's a big jump from college and K-12 respondents, who rank their top security issues at 3.4 and 3.2, respectively.

|  | 1<br>Not challenging | 2   | 3   | 4   | 5<br>Extremely challenging | Average Score |
|--|----------------------|-----|-----|-----|----------------------------|---------------|
| Visitor management   | 12%                  | 18% | 31% | 20% | 19%                        | 3.2           |
| General student misbehavior (drinking, drug use, bullying, harassment) | 15%                  | 19% | 30% | 22% | 14%                        | 3.0           |
| Incidents during the evening or after hours                            | 14%                  | 25% | 33% | 14% | 13%                        | 2.9           |
| Vandalism  | 27%                  | 25% | 28% | 13% | 7%                         | 2.8           |
| Bullying   | 15%                  | 27% | 29% | 18% | 11%                        | 2.8           |
| Student-on-student violence  | 26%                  | 19% | 27% | 15% | 13%                        | 2.7           |
| Traffic issues   | 28%                  | 21% | 25% | 17% | 9%                         | 2.6           |
| Theft  | 19%                  | 24% | 29% | 22% | 5%                         | 2.4           |
| Crime from the community coming onto campus                            | 29%                  | 26% | 27% | 8%  | 10%                        | 2.4           |
| Non-custodial parent issues  | 29%                  | 34% | 23% | 10% | 5%                         | 2.3           |
| Student-on-teacher/administrator violence                              | 59%                  | 17% | 13% | 5%  | 7%                         | 1.9           |
| Sexual assault   | 50%                  | 28% | 17% | 3%  | 3%                         | 1.8           |
| Gangs  | 62%                  | 24% | 8%  | 5%  | 2%                         | 1.6           |

**Higher Ed: Please rank the following security challenges on and around your campus.**

|  | 1<br>Not challenging | 2   | 3   | 4   | 5<br>Extremely challenging | Average Score |
|--|----------------------|-----|-----|-----|----------------------------|---------------|
| Theft  | 4%                   | 20% | 26% | 31% | 18%                        | 3.4           |
| Crime from the community coming onto campus                              | 11%                  | 18% | 28% | 27% | 15%                        | 3.2           |
| Incidents during the evening or after hours                              | 5%                   | 16% | 39% | 32% | 8%                         | 3.2           |
| Parking lot security (students and staff walking to and from their cars) | 16%                  | 24% | 30% | 17% | 13%                        | 2.9           |
| General student misbehavior (drinking, drug use, harassment)             | 15%                  | 25% | 30% | 24% | 7%                         | 2.8           |
| Vandalism  | 15%                  | 31% | 36% | 12% | 7%                         | 2.6           |
| Sexual assault   | 26%                  | 27% | 24% | 12% | 11%                        | 2.6           |
| Trespassing by the homeless  | 30%                  | 20% | 25% | 15% | 10%                        | 2.5           |
| Traffic issues   | 30%                  | 25% | 22% | 20% | 3%                         | 2.4           |
| Student-on-student violence  | 37%                  | 33% | 17% | 9%  | 4%                         | 2.1           |
| Hazing   | 54%                  | 25% | 14% | 4%  | 4%                         | 1.8           |
| Workplace violence   | 53%                  | 30% | 11% | 4%  | 2%                         | 1.7           |
| Student-on-faculty/administrator violence                                | 60%                  | 28% | 7%  | 5%  | 1%                         | 1.6           |

**Healthcare: Please rank the following security challenges on and around your campus.**

|  | 1<br>Not challenging | 2   | 3   | 4   | 5<br>Extremely challenging | Average Score |
|--|----------------------|-----|-----|-----|----------------------------|---------------|
| Emergency department incidents   | 8%                   | 6%  | 15% | 32% | 38%                        | 3.9           |
| Incidents involving behavioral health patients                                     | 9%                   | 7%  | 13% | 29% | 41%                        | 3.9           |
| Incidents during the evening or after hours  | 6%                   | 6%  | 39% | 34% | 14%                        | 3.4           |
| Parking lot security (patients, visitors and staff walking to and from their cars) | 5%                   | 9%  | 39% | 31% | 16%                        | 3.4           |
| Theft  | 2%                   | 22% | 37% | 23% | 15%                        | 3.3           |
| Patient/visitor on patient/visitor violence  | 9%                   | 14% | 34% | 24% | 19%                        | 3.3           |
| Patient/visitor on clinician/employee violence                                     | 8%                   | 19% | 32% | 23% | 17%                        | 3.2           |
| Visitor management   | 12%                  | 19% | 27% | 21% | 20%                        | 3.2           |
| Crime from the community coming onto campus  | 15%                  | 16% | 34% | 16% | 19%                        | 3.1           |
| Trespassing by the homeless  | 20%                  | 11% | 26% | 21% | 22%                        | 3.1           |
| Illicit drug use, alcohol use and/or overdoses by patients and visitors            | 16%                  | 20% | 33% | 13% | 18%                        | 3             |
| Drug diversion by staff  | 24%                  | 26% | 28% | 14% | 7%                         | 2.5           |
| Vandalism  | 30%                  | 26% | 29% | 8%  | 7%                         | 2.4           |
| Traffic issues   | 27%                  | 29% | 26% | 12% | 6%                         | 2.4           |
| Employee-on-employee violence  | 37%                  | 29% | 22% | 6%  | 6%                         | 2.2           |