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WHEN THE ABUSED BECOMES THE ABUSER

Poor working conditions in the private security industry undermine human rights compliance

ICoCA Research on working conditions in the private security industry, 2023

Acknowledgments

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The International Code of Conduct Association (ICoCA)

The International Code of Conduct Association (ICoCA) is a multi-stakeholder initiative formed in 2013 to ensure that providers of private security services respect international human rights law and international humanitarian law. It serves as the governance and oversight mechanism of the International Code of Conduct for Private Security Service Providers (the "Code").

UNI Global Union

UNI Global Union is a global union for the skills and services sectors. It has affiliated unions in 150 countries representing 20 million workers and ratified over 50 with multinational corporations. Its Property Services section covers private security and cleaning bring together 170 unions in 65 countries around the world. UNI has signed global framework agreements with global PSCs, safeguarding the rights of over million employees.

CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Today, private security guards are everywhere, protecting companies, business operations, airports, shopping malls, embassies and private homes. Security is a dynamic, expanding economic sector that employs millions of people around the world and that grew by around 12% per year on average between 2005 and 2019 (International Labour Organization, 2022). It is also a highly competitive industry with low entry barriers, consisting of giant global players and many small and medium-sized enterprises.

While private security companies (PSCs) play an important role in protecting state and non-state clients alike, many allegations of human rights abuses and violations of international humanitarian law (IHL) by PSCs have surfaced over the years. This has led to the recognition of the possible adverse impact of private security if not properly managed and where oversight is lacking.

As a consequence, the international community has developed key frameworks and mechanisms in an attempt to regulate this industry and mitigate human rights abuses. Until recently, however, little attention has been paid to the working conditions of private security personnel themselves and the possible impact of working conditions on the likelihood of abuses and violations. The ways in which personnel's working conditions affect their well-being, behaviour, job performance and respect for human rights have rarely been considered.

While the sector offers a wide range of services, from intelligence to cybersecurity, this research project focused primarily on manned guarding. Guarding duties often expose PSC personnel to risks such as extreme weather conditions and physical or psychological abuse, particularly in complex situations and otherwise high-risk, unstable or fragile environments.

This low-margin business is driven by clients who are often not prepared to pay a fair price for the services they demand. As a result, PSCs may be unwilling or unable to provide their staff with decent benefits, training, basic amenities, equipment or even clothing. As in other industries, such labour conditions could be in breach of the workers' rights under national and/or international law. It should be emphasised that labour rights, as contained in core International Labour Organisation (ILO) conventions, are considered to be fundamental human rights.

However, unlike other sectors, security personnel are often in a position of power vis-à-vis the public. They may have access to sensitive information, valuable assets, weapons, etc. When they are abused, the risk is that they will in turn become abusers. Providing security personnel with decent working conditions may not only improve the lives of millions of workers and their dependents, but it can also have a major preventive impact on the security of communities and business enterprises.

In 2022–2023, the International Code of Conduct for Private Security Service Providers' Association (ICoCA), in partnership with UNI Global Union and the University of Denver, conducted research on the working conditions of private security personnel in a range of contexts.

Through interviews and surveys, researchers identified several findings related to working conditions and their consequences.

1. Private security personnel face poor working conditions in terms of pay, working hours and health risks.

2. Labour migrants are commonly subjected to exploitative practices.

3. Workplace stratification by factors such as gender, race and nationality affects recruitment practices and working conditions.

4. Training provided to private security personnel is critical but often substandard.

5. There is a direct link between working conditions and private security personnel's respect for the law.

6. PSC clients have a major impact on private security personnel's working conditions.

7. Governments are both the primary regulators and major procurers of private security, providing them with opportunities to implement, monitor and enforce minimum labour standards and lead by example as clients.

8. Other actors and mechanisms, including ICoCA, can drive change by raising awareness of and promoting compliance with legal standards relating to working conditions in the private security industry.

These findings should encourage:

- PSCs to abide by labour laws and implement positive working conditions.

- PSC clients to pay fair prices for security services and improve their procurement practices.

- Governments to enhance accountability and oversight of working conditions through legislation and enforcement, as well as engage in exemplary practices for other clients when procuring private security services.

- Collaboration with and between unions and/or representation bodies, civil society organisations (CSOs), non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and organisations like ICoCA, as well as a reliance on other mechanisms aimed at protecting personnel and improving their working conditions.

INTRODUCTION

In line with ICoCA's mission to advance the provision of responsible private security services around the globe, this report seeks to shed light on working conditions in the industry, identify related challenges faced by private security personnel and suggest pathways to improve working conditions. The findings enhance ICoCA's ability to raise standards in the private security sector by providing private security companies (PSCs), governments, PSC clients, workers' representation bodies, intergovernmental organisations (IGOs), non-governmental organisations (NGOs), civil society organisations (CSOs) and other stakeholders with relevant information on existing challenges and best practices, as well as with recommendations to increase the quality and efficacy of security services, improve respect for human rights and where relevant, international humanitarian law (IHL).

The private security industry: a changing landscape

Security companies and private security service providers (collectively "PSCs") vary in form, size and activities. They are defined in the International Code of conduct for Private Security Service Providers (the Code), which ICoCA oversees, as "any Company whose business activities include the provision of Security Services either on its own behalf or on behalf of another, irrespective of how such Company describes itself." The Code provides an indicative list of private security services (see box 1) to which the Code pertains.

Total employment in the private security industry has grown in recent years and thus the industry has become a ubiquitous feature of security provision. On a global scale, PSCs have surpassed government police services in terms of both the number of personnel and expenditures (Sarre & Prenzler, n.d.). While there are various estimates of the industry's size, there is no reliable data on the number of individuals employed in the sector.

Private security services are increasingly critical in many spaces, and alongside that growth, the types of clients contracting private security have undergone substantial

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Box 1: Security Services defined in the International Code of Conduct

- According to the Code, security services include but are not limited to:

- guarding and protection of persons and objects, such as convoys, facilities, designated sites, property or other places (whether armed or unarmed)

- guarding and transporting prisoners, operating prison facilities and assisting in operating camps for prisoners of war or civilian detainees

- the checking, detention or searching of persons, searching of premises or containers and seizure of objects

- counter-piracy services, armed or unarmed maritime escorts or onboard vessel protection

- operational and logistical support for armed or security forces, including training and advice, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance activities

- crowd management

- operating and maintaining weapons systems

- guard dog services

- the recruiting and training of security personnel, directly or as an intermediary, for a company that offers private security services

- any other protective activity for which the personnel of companies are required to carry or operate a weapon in the performance of their duties.

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1. A recent ILO report (2022) estimated that the industry had burgeoned to over five million employees in the 80 countries studied. The Confederation of European Security Services (COESS) survey from 2015 put the figure at two million workers in Europe alone. However, a well-documented but somewhat outdated mapping by the Guardian in 81 countries suggests a figure of at least 19.4 million.

shifts. Today, PSCs are contracted by a variety of clients, ranging from governments and NGOs to businesses and even individuals. Private security personnel today also perform a much wider range of functions than in past decades (Sklansky, 2011; Nalla & Crichlow, 2017), including those historically reserved for public police officers (UN Office on Drugs and Crime, 2014). Governments no longer monopolise security provision, nor are they the sole consumers of security services. The COVID-19 pandemic further underscored the diverse range of services that PSCs provide and the industry's significance, as personnel have been deployed as frontline workers whose task is to guarantee public safety and health (ILO, 2022). As the line between public and private continues to blur, private security governance requires ongoing and holistic attention to address the new opportunities and risks these changes engender.
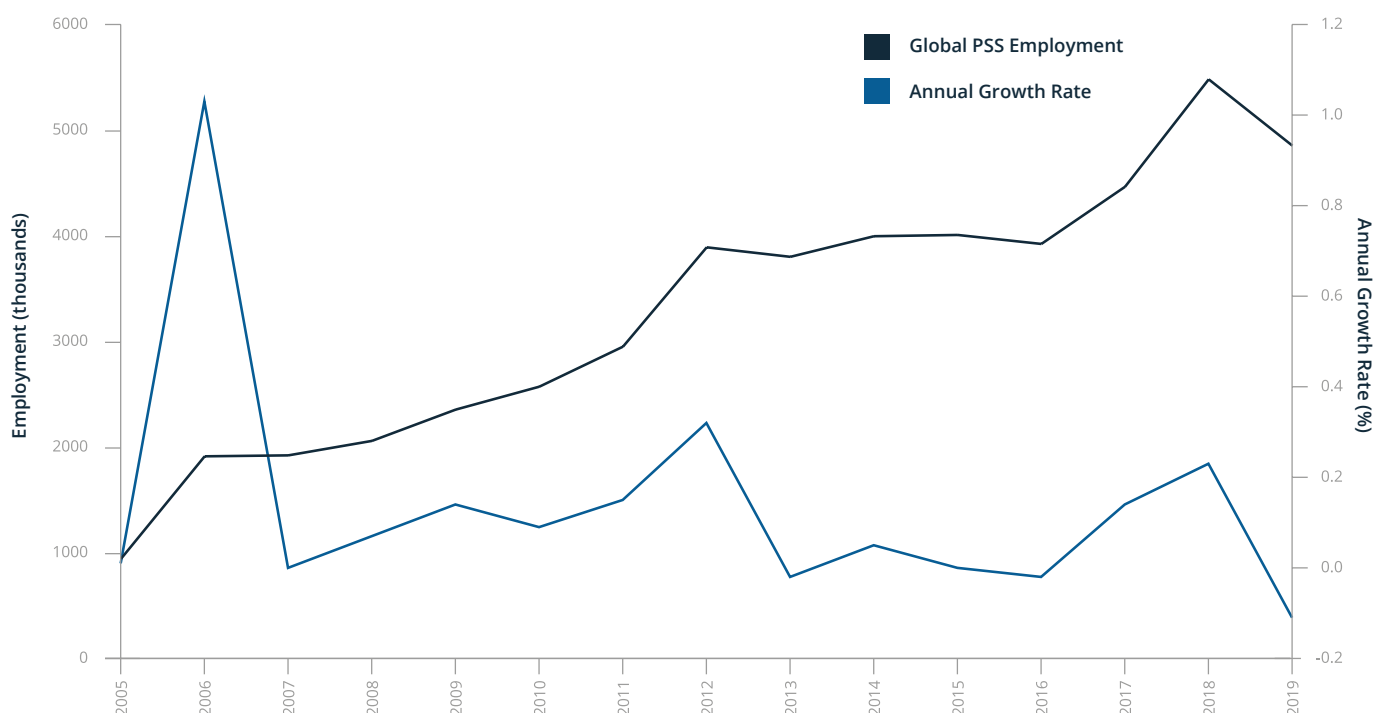

Figure 1: Employment in the private security industry (ILO, 2022)

According to an ILO (2022) study of 80 countries, the private security sector's compound annual growth rate was about 12% between 2005 and 2019, and the industry is predicted to continue growing (Future Market Insight, 2022; Technavio, 2022).

Despite the growth and evolution of the private security sector, comprehensive research on the working conditions of private security personnel, the challenges personnel may face and the subsequent consequences working conditions may have on the performance, effectiveness and respect for human rights of PSCs, has not been carried out. However, working conditions do indeed have a profound effect on PSCs, their personnel, their clients and the public they interact with.

Poor working conditions as a human rights issue

Poor working conditions may in and of themselves constitute a violation of security personnel's individual rights under domestic and international labour law and international human rights law.

In international law, labour rights, specifically freedom of association, the right to collective bargaining, the elimination of forced and compulsory labour, the abolition of child labour and the elimination of discrimination in employment (ILO core conventions), are commonly accepted as part of human rights. The ILO's International Labour Standards (ILS) are legal tools that specify rights at work. Though non-binding, these standards apply to all members of the ILO and signatories, guaranteeing workers the right to a safe and healthy workplace.

While the security industry may sometimes present inherent risks, these risks should be minimised whenever possible, and unethical practices such as asking personnel to go beyond their contractual obligations or failing to provide personnel with proper protection from illness or extreme weather should be abolished. Further, the ILO has also established the need for minimum wage to be enforced and adjusted in line with the cost of living and for wages to be paid regularly.

Under the 2011 UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs), all business enterprises have an independent responsibility to respect human rights. To do so, they are required to exercise human rights due diligence in order to identify, prevent, mitigate and account for how they remedy deleterious impacts on human rights, ensuring decent working conditions for workers along their supply chain. In recent years, several countries have adopted human rights due diligence laws and regulations, which are expected to have a cascading impact moving forward. The European Commission's proposed Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive, for instance, would require companies falling within its scope to conduct due diligence on and take responsibility for human rights abuses and environmental harm throughout their global value chains.

The Code lays out specific provisions on respect for human rights during private security operations. It includes provisions on working conditions, including those guaranteeing a safe and healthy work environment, protecting personnel from harassment and the importance of training. The Code includes most of the core labour rights set out under international law, with the exception of freedom of association (see box 2).

Poor working conditions as a catalyst for abuse

Although not ubiquitous in the industry, private security has been linked to human rights abuses, trade in conflict resources, corruption, organised crime and illicit trade (UN Office on Drugs and Crime, 2014). Working conditions cannot be divorced from personnel's well-being and their subsequent interactions with other personnel, clients and the public. Poor training, low pay and long hours, among other factors, harm officers' well-being and also affects their ability to perform their job effectively. They can have direct implications for personnel's compliance with human rights and the tools they rely on when interacting with the public. Furthermore, poor working conditions also have pernicious effects on the families of security

Box 2: Rules on working conditions in the International Code of Conduct for Security Providers

- Human trafficking *(section 39)*

- Prohibition of slavery and forced labour *(section 40)*

- Discrimination *(section 42)*

- Selection and vetting of personnel *(sections 45 to 49)*

- Selection and vetting of subcontractors *(sections 50 and 51)*

- Company policies and personnel contracts *(sections 52 to 54)*

- Training of personnel *(section 55)*

- Weapons training *(section 59)*

- Safe and healthy working environment *(section 64)*

- Harassment *(section 65)*

- Grievance procedures *(sections 67 and 68)*

officers. Consequences ripple within, and outside of, the supply chain, placing strains on families affected by low wages, increasing personnel's stress levels and potentially engendering health problems.

Research on policing captures the cascading nature of human rights problems that emanate from poor treatment of personnel. Overlap in the nature of the job has parallels with the private security sector. Working conditions in public police forces, including past work trauma, workplace subculture (Chappell & Piquero, 2004) and a lack of education and training have been suggested as contributing factors to police brutality (Stickle, 2016; Yakam, 2019). In Nigerian police forces, officer welfare was identified as a factor in brutality and misconduct among personnel (AllAfrica.com, 2019). The quality of training that police officers receive may also be associated with use of excessive force (Yakam, 2019). Commonalities between the public and private security sectors create a compelling

argument for analysing the state of working conditions and the consequences they may have, particularly as policing increasingly shifts its orientation toward social services (Millar, Saxton, Øverlien & Ellifee, 2021). If this evolution continues, it is likely private security will interact even more with the public. This further highlights the need for improved working conditions in order to prevent human rights abuses.

The need to continue developing standards to safeguard human rights in the private security sector has been recognised (UN Office on Drugs and Crime, 2014) but requires more comprehensive attention, particularly as private security personnel sometimes work in potentially volatile settings (Bennett, Eby, Richardson & Tilley, 2008; Novac, Hermer, Paradis & Kellen, 2009; Kennedy et al., 2015; UN Office on Drugs and Crime, 2014). With reports of private security personnel committing violence against those in vulnerable situations, such as detainees (Bennett, Eby, Richardson & Tilley, 2008; Novac, Hermer, Paradis & Kellen, 2009; Kennedy et al., 2015), the need to address the drivers of such rights violations becomes all the more pressing. Yet working conditions have been generally overlooked, even while they affect personnel's well-being and their ability to deliver high-quality services.

ICoCA's focus on working conditions

At the 2021 ICoCA General Assembly, the working conditions of private security personnel and the associated human rights risks were identified as a priority area for further analysis. Research was conducted throughout 2022 and in the first quarter of 2023. ICoCA carried out semi-structured interviews with private security practitioners, personnel, professionals, CSO members and academics. ICoCA, in partnership with UNI Global Union, also solicited the perspectives of guards themselves through an online survey that garnered responses from nearly 400 private security personnel working and living in six regions around the world. Interviewees and survey respondents were based in Latin America, North America, the Middle East, Africa, Asia and Europe, though most of the private security officers surveyed were based in Europe, followed by Latin America and then North America.[2] In order to complement this global survey, three country-specific surveys were

commissioned and conducted in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda. Over 1,000 personnel were surveyed each in Kenya and Tanzania, and over 800 personnel were surveyed in Uganda. While not representative of every context or experience, surveys are valuable in unpacking the unique perspectives of many security officers and they corroborate interviewee's insights.

Working in private security: different experiences and situations

Security services consist of a variety of roles, including static day and night guarding, patrols, monitoring CCTVs and other sensors, and intervention on-call activities. Each role is associated with unique working conditions and needs for personnel.

Working conditions are shaped not only by the employer but also by the client and the location where personnel are posted. Working as a security officer guarding a bank or shopping mall in a capital city presents different risks from being posted at an extractive site in a remote area or patrolling the perimeter of a military base in a crisis zone. Interviewees also noted that larger multinational companies tend to provide better working conditions for their security providers than local ones.

Some sites may be more dangerous relative to others or may demand tasks that are more dangerous than roles adopted at other sites. This engenders the need for different protections, depending on where the personnel are stationed and what clients ask them to do. Private security officers working in crisis zones are also exposed to additional risks and unique challenges in the workplace.

In some countries, the private security workforce may draw largely from migrant populations. Personnel may also be hired abroad and stay in the country only for the duration of their assignment. These personnel are labeled third-country nationals (TCNs). Some countries make widespread use of TCNs, such as the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries. TCNs have also been heavily employed in recent multinational operations in Iraq, Afghanistan and Somalia. They are generally hired from a limited number of countries of origin (such as Nepal, because of the international reputation of Gurkha fighters). Employers tend to provide housing for TCNs.

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2. The sample size from the surveys is relatively small and unbalanced between and within regions, presenting limitations in interpretation. Interviews are leveraged as a primary source of data, while the surveys provide supplementary evidence that supports, but does not replace, the interviews. Please see the appendix for the sample size, country of work, and home country of personnel for each survey iteration. While many of the same questions were asked in all the surveys, some surveys included additional questions. If a survey with additional questions is referenced in this report, it is noted that this response is not from the primary list of questions, and a footnote will indicate the survey iteration from which this question can be found.

Evolution of working conditions in the industry

"We do need to acknowledge that some clients and some companies are beginning to take more responsibility. It's just not widespread."

All interviewees noted that working conditions in private security are poor: Salaries are low, for example, and working hours are long. In some regions, however, conditions have improved, particularly as security work has become more complex. This offers the promise of progress. Interviewees also identified some best practices that some industry players are implementing, and that can be used as a model. Some PSCs have demonstrated a commitment to the well-being of personnel and of the public, implementing protections to deliver high-quality, responsible security.

There has been an increasing focus on training private security personnel on topics such as human rights and the use of force, on providing personnel with better uniforms, and in some contexts, regulation of the industry. Simultaneously, human rights sensitivity and due diligence have reportedly improved in some regions, and increasing emphasis has been placed on respect for human rights, with such instruments as The Code (2010), the UNGPs, the Voluntary Principles on Security and Human Rights (2000) and the Montreux Document (2008). These instruments have attracted the attention of some PSCs, clients, governments and CSOs.

That, though, is not a ubiquitous experience. In some areas, especially conflict-affected countries such as Iraq and Afghanistan, interviewees reported that salaries have decreased as the supply of private security services has increased over the years. Moreover, unethical recruitment practices and debt bondage remain a persistent feature of the industry in some places. Addressing working conditions creates avenues for mitigating human rights risks and capitalising on the ability of PSCs to protect people effectively.

Advances in working conditions are also attenuated by a series of factors, such as the availability of a large number of low-skilled workers with little bargaining power, high employee turnover, competition, which drives down prices, and a prevailing military culture among PSC managers. The shadow of military culture in some contexts may restrict access to unions, discourage personnel from speaking out and even affect personnel's willingness to access mental health services, each of which are consequences documented in state militaries (Sharp et al., 2015; Jacob, 2022; O'Brien, Keith & Shoemaker, 2015[3]). The industry also remains marked by racial and gender stratification, which stymies meaningful and holistic participation in the sector across identity lines. Furthermore, there is little awareness on this issue and a general lack of public pressure on companies to improve working conditions, cultivating a permissive culture that undermines personnel's well-being. In a sector that employs millions of people, the value of investing in working conditions ranges from the individual to the economy and society at large.

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3. Keith & Shoemaker (2015) focus on the prevailing military culture and how it inhibits men from speaking out about experiencing sexual assault.

MAIN FINDINGS

FINDING 1

Private security personnel face poor working conditions in terms of pay, working hours and health risks.

The private security industry, while dynamic in many ways, is plagued by regressive working conditions. Generally, poor public perception, low salaries, high turnover, a lack of overtime pay, few career prospects and low standards define the industry (Kitteringham, 2017; UN Office on Drugs and Crime, 2014).

Poor pay sets the tone for working conditions

Personnel often receive low pay, work long hours and in some countries, receive no overtime pay (UN Office on Drugs and Crime, 2014). This was reiterated throughout interviews and survey responses. Interviewees understood pay as one of the most important – and oftentimes the single most important – aspect of working conditions, reporting that living wages are a central determinant of work satisfaction. Despite its centrality to personnel's livelihood, interviewees stressed the thin margins that low wages force personnel to survive on, with some reporting that many private security officers are forced to take on additional jobs to make ends meet. 22% of personnel surveyed in Tanzania reported a second income-generating activity. One interviewee in West Africa reported that some personnel are paid below minimum wage, adding that when contracts are negotiated with clients, labour costs may not be taken into consideration. Another interviewee stated that, in order to cut costs in the sector, an unfair but legal practice under domestic law in some North African countries requires officers to be available for a certain number of hours while only being paid for the time they actively work. Personnel may also be required to pay for necessary and basic supplies, such as their uniforms, which drains an already low salary.

Further, minimum wage laws are not always respected, as limited oversight in the private security sector may exacerbate gaps in accountability. In some contexts, respecting the minimum wage can still leave workers vulnerable to poverty (Schact & Argueso, 2019; Drexel University, 2021). About 11% of the respondents in the

> **Box 3:** Selected key figures on salaries
>
> In Kenya, 68% of those surveyed reported being paid below minimum wage. Minimum wages for private security guards in Kenya are defined according to the type of work and location: It ranges from 100 US dollars a month for a day guard in a rural area to 205 US dollars a month for a night guard in a major city.
>
> In Uganda, 24% of security personnel admitted to having another income-generating activity. Some of the main activities are motorbike transportation, taxi driving, bar business, a road-side shop and farming. When guards are paid for overtime work they are less likely to engage in other income-generating activities. In Kenya, some guards working night shifts earn extra income during the day, and some work two shifts in two different security companies.
>
> Nearly half of the global survey respondents who worked in a country with minimum wage laws received pay at or below minimum wage.

global survey[4] were not on their employer's payroll, while a few personnel were on the payroll inconsistently. Also in the global survey, some personnel reported lacking an employment contract with their employer. Particularly in regions with a large number of developing countries, minimum wage standards may be more commonly dismissed. An interviewee in Nigeria stated that, even when personnel are paid, the salary payments often come two to three months late, placing a significant strain on personnel's livelihoods and their ability to meet basic needs. Low wages have reverberating effects on personnel within and outside the workplace, eroding motivation, undermining health and increasing financial strain on households (see box 3).
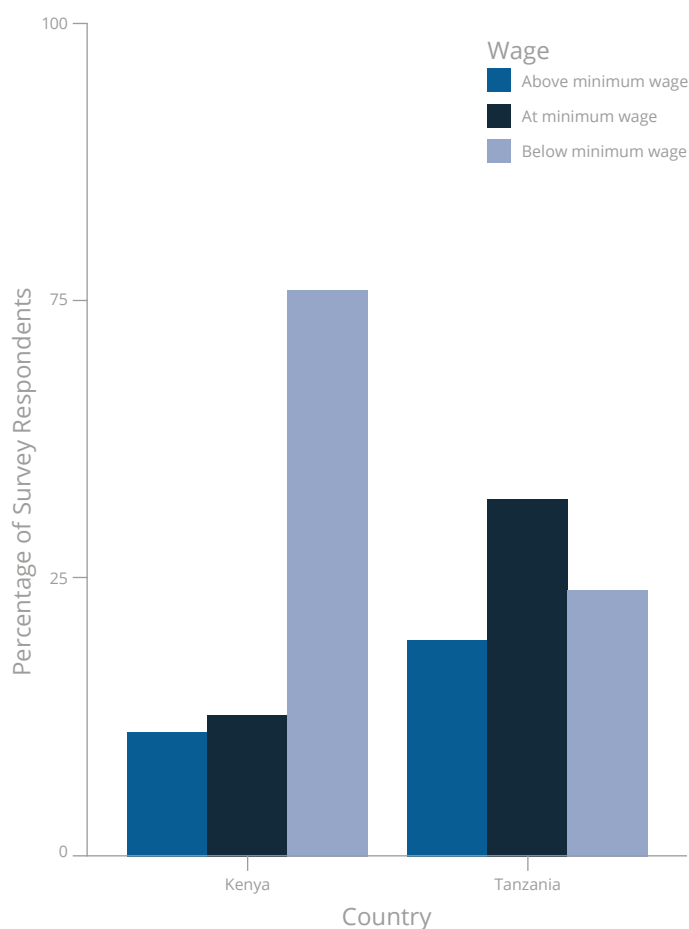
Figure 2: Wages in Kenya and Tanzania[5]

The 'protectors' are left unprotected

Low levels of transparency in the sector can not only exacerbate poor working conditions but also create gaps in accountability that inhibit the industry's progress. According to one interviewee, some PSCs in Africa may not provide comprehensive contracts or may not provide written contracts at all. This complicates the process of holding companies accountable if labour rights violations do occur. The lack of proper documentation can subsequently leave personnel unprotected or minimally protected, exposing them to a greater risk of experiencing labour rights violations. Without a contract, employees have little recourse when it comes to seeking redress. In the Middle East, the terms agreed upon in the country of origin may not match the reality on the ground in the destination country; according to one interviewee, this type of misinformation is a problematic trend. Employment agreements may also be terminated without warning, as reported in Africa.

Over one-third of global survey respondents did not receive any benefits, such as a pension plan or health insurance, from their employer.

Box 4: Key figures on contracts and social protections

While more than half received some form of benefits, several respondents noted that they received partial or limited benefit schemes, such as only life insurance. A few respondents were unsure whether they received benefits.

Only 56% of the guards surveyed in Tanzania said they had a contract with their employer. Only 13% of the guards received health and social security benefits (NHIF) and 38% received retirement benefits (NSSF).

In Kenya, three out of every four security guards have NHIF cover. That figure is lower among unlicensed firms. Some guards mentioned that the deductions are made from their salaries, but that it does not appear in their account. Penalties then accrue, making access to treatment difficult.

Many personnel also lack adequate healthcare coverage and other social security benefits, and this tends to vary not only by locale but also by company. In Myanmar, some PSCs provide healthcare coverage while the majority of employers in Africa and many parts of Asia & the Pacific reportedly do not offer comprehensive healthcare packages. Although these personnel often engage in dangerous work, social protection and compensation in the case of injury are typically insufficient. PSCs may deny documentation to injured personnel in an attempt to block their compensation claims. Interviewees in Australia and Latin America called for more legal protections, stressing the vulnerable position security officers were placed in as a result of working in high-risk environments.

The domestic law in some countries may not even require that workers are provided with adequate social protections or may face gaps in enforcement. According to interviewees, domestic law in most West African countries does not require compensation, so coverage depends on the strength and comprehensiveness of the employment contract alone.

However, several international instruments guarantee workers' compensation for illnesses. These instruments include ILO conventions, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International

Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (Human Rights Watch, 2005). However, not all states are members of the organisations that govern these instruments or signatories to these agreements. Further, violations of these laws are not unique to the private security sector (Human Rights Watch, 2000; Devereux, 2019), as governments may be unable or unwilling to implement international instruments across sectors. Unregistered companies and ad hoc security services further complicate protection mechanisms. In West Africa, security officers are unlikely to have protection and are not adequately covered by the law. Interviewees reported that in some cases personnel are self-employed, which means they lack the protections generally afforded by company employment. This undermines already limited oversight systems. These personnel lack remote support, for instance, whereas those working for registered companies often have access to emergency response forces or can rely on other emergency plans in place. While some individuals have established informal networks in the case of emergency, a lack of formal systems heightens physical risk.

According to comments about Nigeria, employees commonly work without a formal contract: health and safety standards are not specified, termination conditions are excluded and pension payments are deducted from wages but never transferred to personnel after contract termination. This breeds exploitative practices among employers and as stressed by one interviewee, indicates the need for more comprehensive legislation that requires employers to meet basic employment standards. The absence of paid sick leave in many contexts also reportedly disincentives personnel from taking time off due to health concerns, potentially exacerbating health issues.

Under-resourced and overworked

The ILO Hours of Work (Industry) Convention (No. 1) of 1919 introduced a maximum standard working time of eight hours per day and 48 hours per week as an international norm. Working hours for private security personnel around the world tend to be longer, with 12-hour shifts being an industry-standard in many countries. Some interviewees also reported that personnel do not receive adequate breaks during working hours, even though many of them are likely to spend long hours standing on duty without pause or sanitary breaks. In West Africa, for instance, one interviewee reported that personnel who leave their duty post without authorisation

may be sanctioned. In some regions, it is not uncommon for security officers to work 24-hour shifts. An interviewee in West Africa also remarked that personnel may lack a suitable resting place during work breaks.

Box 5: Key figures on hours and overtime

- Over half of the global survey respondents reported working 12-hour shifts or more, while some reported working 16 hours or more.

- 50% of respondents in Kenya reported working seven days a week, and only 22% noted that they could take a break during working hours.

- In Kenya, 96% of respondents reported working 12-hour days.

Long working hours significantly affect family life and other outside obligations. Working more than 40 hours per week has been linked to health-related productivity loss (Lee, Lee, Kim & Kang, 2020). In the case of countries like Kenya, where the industry standard is 12-hour shifts, seven days a week, this adds up to more than 80 hours per week. Long working hours also increase the likelihood of occupational injuries, which is not merely a product of spending more time at risk or of working in inherently dangerous jobs (Dembe, Erikson, Delbos & Banks, 2005). Long hours have also been linked to cardiovascular disease, fatigue, depression, a deterioration in general health and other issues (Iwasaki et al., 1998; Buell & Breslow, 1960; Chung & Kwon, 2013; Hong et al., 2022). One private security client in Chad stated that the company shifted from a two-shift to a three-shift system with eight-hour workdays, which was important for people's overall well-being and ability to recover between shifts. The interviewee added that working for 12 hours in tough conditions is effectively impossible and that more frequent shift changes make the job more appealing and reduce attrition.

Total weekly working hours across regions were long but varied. A number of standards, oversight models and enforcement mechanisms are at play. The number of hours security officers worked weekly hovered above 60 in Africa as of 2019 and slightly below 60 in the Americas and Asia & the Pacific (ILO, 2022). Personnel in Europe and Central Asia worked the least number of hours per week, hovering around 40 in 2019 (ILO, 2022). Many survey respondents indicated that they worked at least five days a week, but interviewees also stated that in some places, such as in the Gulf region, people are required to work seven days a week.

In some areas, long hours are coupled with an absence of overtime or holiday pay. In Myanmar, for instance, this depends on the company. While the majority of those who completed the global survey were paid for overtime work, many were not, and a few personnel were not paid consistently for overtime work. However, some of those who received overtime pay reported receiving the standard rate for the additional hours instead of a higher rate (calculated at time and a half, for example).
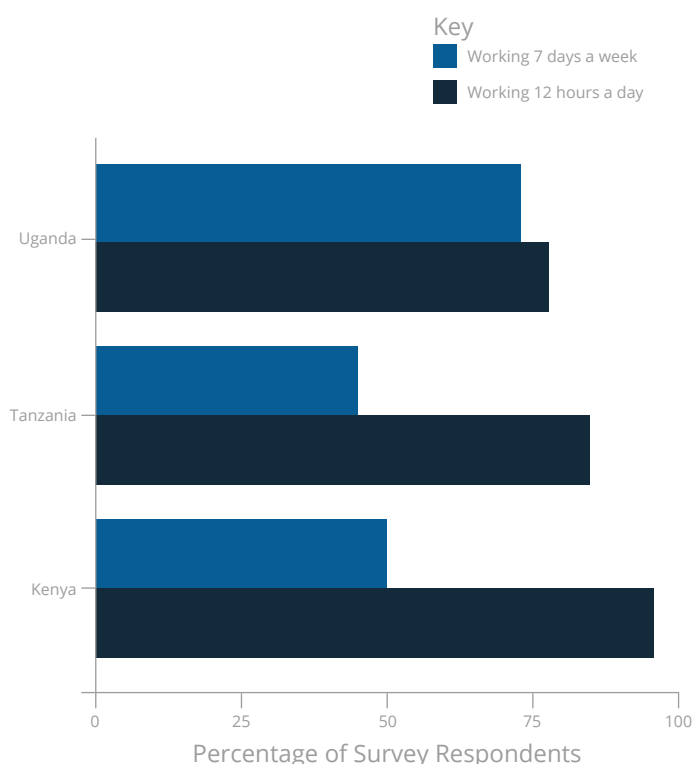

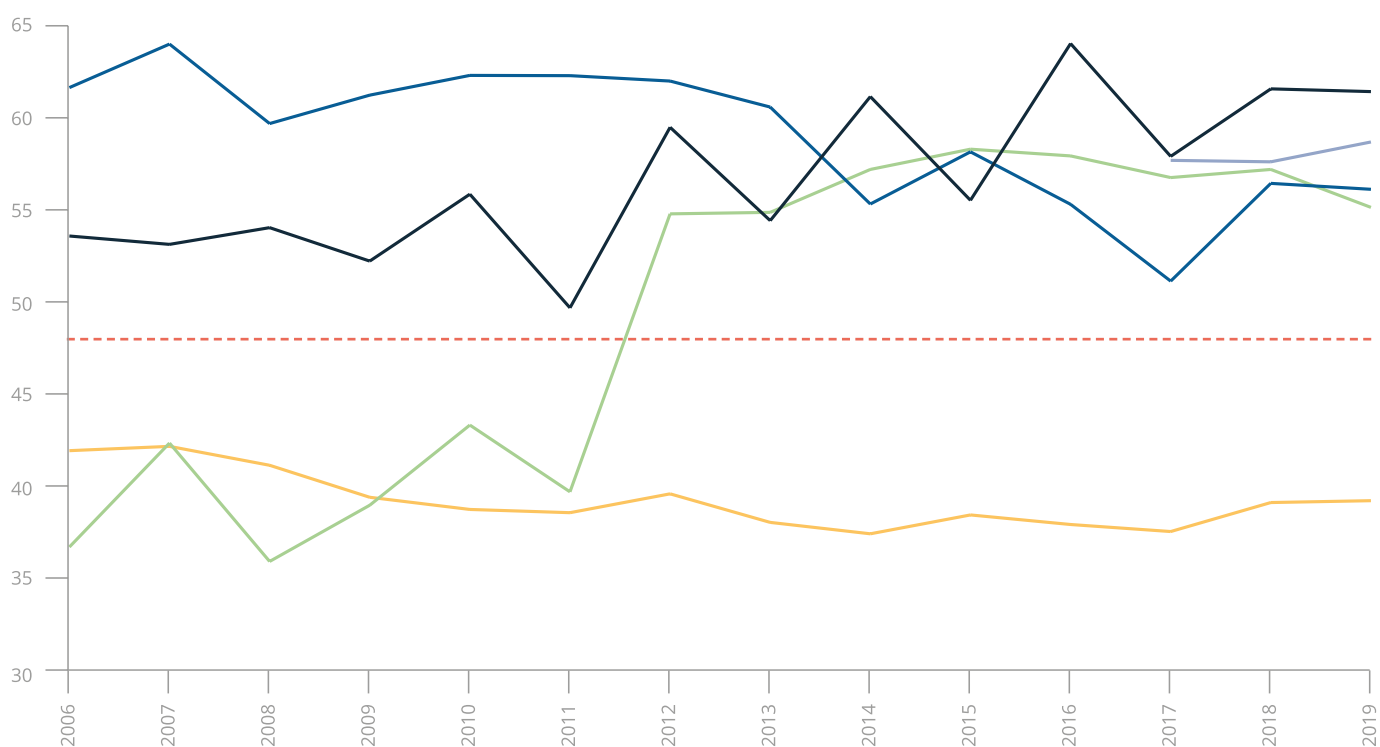**Figure 3:** Hours and days worked per week in East Africa

Figure 4: Mean weekly hours per employee (ILO, 2022)

A culture of silence is *emboldened* by restrictions on freedom of association

The ability of private security personnel to organise also tends to be restricted, often limiting opportunities for personnel to elevate their working conditions-related needs. Interviewees reported various measures aimed at limiting the creation of unions. In some countries, the legal frameworks required to create private security unions do not exist, while in other contexts personnel are contractually prohibited from joining a union. A lack of awareness among private security personnel about their right to unionise was also reported as an obstruction to greater mobilisation. Reportedly, unions are discouraged or banned, particularly in the Middle East and Africa, while private security personnel in Europe enjoy relatively strong representation. The military culture centred around hierarchies and obedience of lower ranking staff present in many PSCs with former military personnel in senior positions was also reported as a primary driver of anti-unionisation sentiment in many contexts.

International law guarantees workers freedom of association and the right to form trade unions and bargain collectively. At the same time, unions may not serve a uniform purpose or engage in uniform activity across every locale, so their ability to protect workers and promote positive working conditions is shaped in part by context. This can encourage ongoing cycles of silence around poor working conditions, where it becomes increasingly challenging to advocate for better working conditions, reproducing low standards.

Box 6: Key figures on freedom of association

- Nearly half of the global survey respondents were not permitted to join a union and, in a survey mostly distributed to private security personnel in Latin America and North America, less than a third of respondents were represented by a union.

- A disproportionately high number (over half) of those barred from joining unions work in Latin America, while nearly half of those working in North America are not allowed to join unions.

- Only 39% of security guards in Tanzania said they were allowed to join a union. 18% said they were represented by a union.

- In Kenya, about 48% of respondents reported that they were not allowed to join a union, while another 16% were unsure. This implies an information gap, especially with unlicensed security firms. Respondents reported that, at some companies, employees were likely to be fired if they were heard discussing unions.
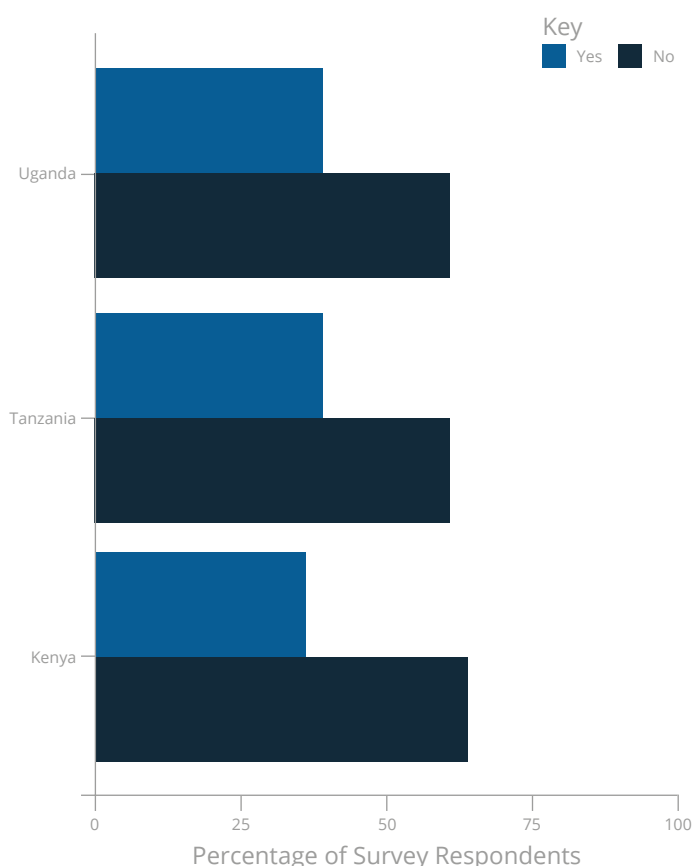
Figure 5: Ability to join unions in East Africa[6]

The job can be dangerous, but company and client policies don't reflect the risk

Interviewees, while reporting challenges, also emphasised positive developments in the sector. Accommodations had reportedly improved in Iraq and Afghanistan while the US-led coalition was present, and some PSCs and their clients have focused more on working conditions and raised their standards. One interviewee acknowledged that, in Iraq, "a lot of us were living in inappropriate accommodation

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6. East Africa survey.

in the early days because it was the early days, and then gradually that seems to have improved." While reported improvements are a promising development, other health and safety gaps persist.

Personnel sometimes lack access to basic facilities, such as restrooms and water. In Myanmar, most officers reportedly have access to toilets, rest areas, drinking water and other basic amenities, while in Ghana, a story emerged of personnel living in extremely hot conditions without fans or drinking water. A fifth of those surveyed replied "it depends" or "somewhat" when asked if they had access to facilities at the workplace, such as toilets and drinking water, while some did not have access to any facilities. This varied not only by PSC but also by client. Particularly for personnel working under extreme weather conditions, a lack of access to basic amenities can create serious health risks, which has reverberating consequences on operational output, liability and general well-being. Interviewees in Africa and the Middle East highlighted that personnel often lack adequate protection against extreme heat despite standing for long hours in the direct sun. Measures that some PSCs and clients have reportedly adopted to mitigate this risk include reducing working hours and providing climate-appropriate uniforms, drinking water and shelters with cooling systems. Positively, 87% of personnel surveyed in Tanzania and Kenya and 92% of officers in Uganda reported having access to basic amenities.

At the same time, the health and safety of private security personnel are notoriously overlooked and relatively poor. However, this varies by site and location, contracting entity and the officer's employer. In Southeast Asia, access to personal protective equipment (PPE) was reported to depend on the PSC that employed them and the PSC's clients.

Guards were particularly exposed to health risks during the COVID-19 pandemic. A 2020–2021 report from the UK statistics office noted that male private security guards experienced one of the highest death rates among various occupational categories during COVID.[7] The onset of COVID-19, however, also encouraged PSCs and clients in some locales to prioritise health and safety. In Europe, for instance, more focus has been directed toward this area, according to interviewees.

At the same time, ongoing vulnerabilities exposed gaps in health and safety protocols. One security officer interviewed in North America reported that security personnel were not given protection, such as sanitiser, face masks or gloves. While other frontline workers and first responders received PPE, private security personnel working on the frontlines of the pandemic and interacting with clients and the public were not always guaranteed these basic protections.

Though self-perceptions and functions carried out indicate that personnel are frontline workers, this is often not reflected in the corresponding level of care given to them, which relegates their health and safety to the sidelines. Many PSC personnel also operate in high-risk or conflict-affected environments, reportedly alone, and without adequate protective gear. In West Africa, some interviewees reported that personnel may not be able to protect themselves, especially since, in many places, they are not allowed to carry firearms. This is not to suggest that arming security personnel will necessarily heighten their safety, but it does indicate the need for a greater effort to provide personnel with the tools and skills they need to protect themselves and others at work sites.

In addition to these risks, personnel may be asked by clients to perform duties outside of their contractual obligations. Clients may require personnel to perform work that is more dangerous than stipulated in the contract. In one such instance, after an empty fuel truck had been hit by a rocket that did not detonate, a contracted fuel operator was asked to climb into the truck to inspect if the rocket could be removed; when he declined, he was threatened with termination (Coburn, 2018). The failure of clients or PSCs to abide by agreed-upon terms can heighten the risks personnel face. This indicates a glaring disregard and negligence among some clients for the safety of personnel. However, personnel may have little recourse to prevent and respond to these kinds of breaches. Personnel are reportedly not always well-informed of their legal rights and responsibilities and generally may lack access to the legal system in order to seek recourse. Legal systems in some places may also be dysfunctional or particularly slow to address grievances. Legal remedies are often expensive, making them a luxury that personnel are unlikely to be able to afford given their low salaries. The asymmetrical power relationship between private security personnel – who may be underpaid and have no savings – and more powerful clients and employers can limit security officers' leverage in seeking better conditions. The fear of reprisal might also discourage personnel from seeking recourse.

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7. The rate was 93.4 deaths per 100,000 males. Source: UK Office for National Statistics: Coronavirus (COVID-19) related deaths by occupation, England and Wales: deaths registered between 9 March and 28 December 2020. Provisional analysis of deaths involving the coronavirus (COVID-19), by different occupational groups, among men and women aged 20 to 64 years in England and Wales.

Another challenge that emerged among interviews was personnel's lack of access to work sites. Some companies may not provide transportation to work sites and personnel may spend long hours commuting alone, a cost rarely accounted for in their wages. In the GCC, one interviewee stated that long commutes and long hours can monopolise personnel's time, thus limiting their activities and livelihoods outside work. This was corroborated on a recent mission to Nigeria, where ICoCA was informed that many private security personnel make informal arrangements with colleagues so that they can work multiple, back-to-back shifts in order to minimise their commuting expenses.

Some interviewees reported that personnel's mental health is impacted by poor working conditions. Nascent attention is now being paid to the mental health of security officers, particularly in certain regions. Interviewees in North America and Europe remarked that the industry has begun to grapple with mental health concerns. While at its incipient stage, this notably positive development creates opportunities for PSCs and clients to develop relevant support systems. However, mental health often continues to be overlooked and its importance downplayed. One interviewee emphasised the need for more support given the challenging environments PSCs operate in, noting that many personnel they've interacted with suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). This is not generalisable, but it does indicate some of the consequences related to low levels of support received from companies, clients and governments. Interviewees continued to call for more attention to be paid to this aspect of health in the industry.

In the GCC, for instance, interviewees reported that many officers have indicated the need for support to process traumatising events or treat physical problems. Generally, the industry has been rather slow to recognise the negative mental health impacts that private security work can entail, although this finding is attenuated by regional specificities. Long hours, low pay, a lack of respect and support from employers and others, and sometimes limited benefits have pernicious effects on personnel, clients, the public and the industry. Poor working conditions can also affect morale (Gill et al., 2021), ultimately eroding job performance. They also undermine operational effectiveness, threatening to negate the benefits private security services.

> **• Box 7:** Key figures on health, safety and remedies in the workplace
>
> • Nearly all global survey respondents reported that working conditions affected employees' mental health and personal relationships.
>
> • In a survey conducted primarily in Latin America and North America, over half of respondents reported increased levels of stress since they started working in the private security industry. Other consequences, according to the survey results, include poor mental health, frustration, a lack of teamwork and low morale.
>
> • Nearly all survey respondents indicated that working conditions affected employees' physical health and safety.
>
> • 74% of the guards in Uganda reported that they faced health and safety risks at work. 64% of them noted that this affected their performance.
>
> • About two thirds (66%) of survey respondents felt that working conditions affected their mental health and relationships: They reported stress, depression and moodiness. In the worst-case scenario, this could lead to domestic violence.

This also likely contributes to the high turnover rates that have become a common feature of many PSCs. One interviewee referred to the "revolving door" of personnel transferring in and out of the sector. An industry marked by fluidity, PSCs face labour shortages and challenges in staff retention (Finkel, 2021; Thorpe, 2023). High turnover increases costs in the industry, urging that working conditions be improved to retain staff and fill vacant industry needs. Some individuals may view the work as temporary given the challenging working conditions and the unclear or limited career development pathways. Addressing working conditions is important to ensure not only personnel's health and safety in the workplace but also to enhance the professionalism of the industry and its operational effectiveness. The UN, in fact, has stressed that poor working conditions might preclude security from

being perceived as a valued service (UN Office on Drugs and Crime, 2014). The costs of poor working conditions affect personnel both within and outside the workplace, as well as their dependents and the general public.

When respect is low and opportunities are scarce, exit from the industry is high

These regressive features also fail to foster positive public perceptions of the industry. In many contexts, interviewees also stressed limited (if any) opportunities for career planning and growth. These issues are also reiterated in the public's perception of private security personnel and in the lack of respect for security personnel – sometimes by employers and sometimes by the public – that plagues the industry. In Europe and North America, for instance, private security is perceived as a low-level profession, although its level of professionalism continues to vary from country to country. Interviewees added that demeaning portrayals of private security personnel in North America, for instance, may cyclically perpetuate the belief that the job is of low status and low value, which is reflected in the treatment of security officers.

During the pandemic, when private security officers around the world served as frontline workers, this seems to not have registered in the collective psyche. In the UK, a YouGov poll demonstrated that, while private officers took on frontline roles, their contribution was not recognised by the public and their presence did not elicit clear feelings of security, safety and respect, particularly compared to public police officers (White, 2022). Generating respect in and for the industry will require a shift in perspective towards one that values the private security industry and its personnel.

Organisational culture can also contribute to a process that sidelines personnel's concerns and belittles their needs, often undermining the level of attention paid to working conditions. For example, interviewees reported incidents of verbal abuse towards officers by clients or employers. Unsurprisingly, many aspects of military culture and its deleterious consequences are readily reproduced in the private security sector in many contexts. PSCs reflect state militaries not only in personnel fluidity with many former military personnel transferring to the private sector, but also in terms of operational output, performing many of the same tasks carried out by state security apparatuses. In the GCC, one interviewee acknowledged that military structures often have little respect for human rights, a characteristic replicated in

some PSCs. Other cultural elements, such as unspoken rules that personnel stay silent on working conditions, also mitigates the extent to which officers are able, or willing, to rally around common concerns. In West Africa, rule enforcement was described as punitive, while in Nigeria, retaliation from employers has reportedly instilled fear in many personnel, preventing them from speaking out or talking to employers about poor working conditions.

Poor public perception also cyclically reinforces poor working conditions and low levels of respect for the work. In Kenya, for instance, two notable incidents of public harassment toward private security officers (BBC, 2012; Wambui & Onyango, 2019) evidence this dynamic. Public indifference fosters minimum-wage services, which limits confidence in the industry and perpetuates poor perception (Button, 2008). While some personnel do receive living wages, work reasonable hours, receive benefits and protections, and enjoy freedom of association, market pressures can drive down working conditions, contributing to generally high turnover, limited loyalty and low levels of commitment – all of which have pernicious effects on operational output. In Europe, interviewees reported that poor working conditions make it increasingly difficult to attract young people to the sector. Officers may feel isolated, frustrated and anxious as a result of poor working conditions (Nalla & Wakefield, 2022). Personnel suffer, PSCs suffer, clients suffer, communities are harmed and the industry as a whole is affected, both reputationally and operationally.

FINDING 2

Labour migrants are commonly subject to exploitative practices.

Labour migrants, defined as foreign recruits in this context, have become an important labour pool for the private security industry. In countries such as Afghanistan and Iraq, the United States and its allies relied increasingly on private security personnel from third countries to sustain their military activities, while many countries in the GCC also increasingly employed labour migrants in private security positions. However, these personnel tend to face some distinct challenges from those faced by Western expatriates and local hires, sometimes resulting in significant rights violations. The exploitation of labour migrants is not unique to the private security industry. The ILO (2013) suggests that migrant workers in general are more likely to experience violations of their fundamental rights in terms of forced labour, child labour, discrimination, equal treatment, freedom of association and collective bargaining and are more likely to work long hours under unsafe conditions while being paid below minimum wage. The experiences of labour migrants are undergirded by pervasive economic and racial inequalities. In Latin America for instance, migrants from Venezuela and Haiti typically move into entry-level positions in the private security industry where they face very poor treatment, are more likely to be abused, are not always paid or are fired without having a proper contract in the first place.

The problems begin with recruitment

Interviewees reported that many labour migrants working in private security experience particularly poor working conditions. This is often connected to the vulnerable situations they may face as many take on loans to pay their recruitment fees and consequently face debt bondage, which the United nations (UN) considers a form of modern slavery (United Nations, 2016). However, in many labour migrants' origin countries, the private security industry is considered a lucrative economic sector promising well-paying jobs, thereby motivating many prospective security workers to pay recruitment fees. Many, though, do not possess capital and are likely to borrow money to cover these costs. In the GCC, debt bondage was reported to weaken their position if they brought complaints forward. This debt also creates

pressures for individuals to remain in the sector in an attempt to repay loans. Companies also may not issue visas for labour migrants.

Interviewees stressed the role of intermediaries, such as recruitment agencies, in the hiring process of labour migrants and noted the subversive practices that occur under this framework. Many PSCs outsource the recruitment of personnel to specialised agencies to increase efficiency. This also conveniently creates a cover for the trafficking of workers through the safeguards of plausible deniability afforded by indirect complicity. Interviewees reported that some PSCs willingly collude with unethical recruitment agencies, which require labour migrants to pay for recruitment services, health screenings, flights, etc. This tactic reduces costs for PSCs and allows them to brush violations under the rug by nudging scrutiny surrounding the source of their labour pool "conveniently outside the purview of the private security firm." One interviewee explained that while companies emphasise their lack of action in the labour procurement process to shirk responsibility for harmful practices, they are actually "creating the economic conditions" under which trafficking takes place. PSCs' complicit, but unspoken, support for a trafficked labour pool bolsters the demand for recruitment agencies' harmful practices and perpetrates abuses of migrants entering the security sector.

PSCs' and clients' alleged failure to monitor recruitment agencies' supply chains does not relieve them of their responsibility to hire ethically. To ensure ethical recruitment practices, some PSCs reportedly employ migrant workers in very few places, carry out recruitment in-house, do not retain migrant workers' passports and provide migrants with good accommodations. Clients can also exercise due diligence. In Malaysia, Ikea stores have terminated their relationship with their security provider, committed to conducting future audits and hired a new supplier that does not subcontract for recruitment after an internal investigation revealed that many security personnel had to pay recruitment fees, in a breach of Ikea's labour policy (Telling, 2023). Due diligence during the recruitment phase

is a key factor in respecting labour migrants' rights throughout the hiring and contracting process.

Disparity on what's promised and reality

"Migrants must have the right to refuse and to leave if the contract terms don't match expectations."

Several interviewees reported that migrants often receive inaccurate information about the exact terms of their contracts, about their workplace and about their responsibilities, accommodations and salaries. This deception has deleterious consequences on personnel, on retainment and on the entire industry. One interviewee reported that "when the worker is not adequately informed about the working and living conditions and when they're not paid the wages that they're promised, for instance [...] that leads to high turnover." Conversely, transparency can foster loyalty. When a construction company reportedly improved migrant workers' working and living conditions and provided these workers with accurate information about the job, for example, the interviewee stated that turnover rates decreased dramatically.

Migrant workers may face a higher level of danger when they're assigned to particular areas. During the presence of the US-led coalition in Afghanistan, for instance, less experienced personnel reportedly tended to be posted in more dangerous environments. Interviewees added that labour migrants working in conflict zones typically receive very little information on their terms of employment. Any withholding of information mismatch between those terms and the reality on the ground is not only deceptive but outright harmful to personnel. One interviewee stated that "migrants must have the right to refuse and leave if the contract terms don't match expectations." However, their positionality as labour migrants might limit opportunities for work and therefore their ability to refuse work.

When conditions in the destination country are poor, what next?

Debt bondage and general socio-economic inequalities may compel migrants to accept substandard conditions. Accommodations in the GCC have often been described as "abysmal," with many people crammed into small spaces, low levels of sanitation and hygiene, and no air conditioning. In conflict-affected environments in Iraq and Afghanistan, labour migrants from the Global South were often reported to be housed in less secure dorms than contractors from Western countries. Secondly,

the freedom of movement and association of labour migrants in the GCC and Myanmar has repeatedly been described by interviewees as severely limited, particularly as employers may confiscate their passports to prevent them from leaving. In Afghanistan, labour migrants have reportedly been flown directly to military bases without passing through Afghan immigration, which made those leaving their compounds vulnerable to arrest.

Interviewees called for more transparency in the hiring process of migrant workers, denouncing deceptive practices that harm workers. One interviewee highlighted one such positive practice: In Afghanistan, Nepali security officers contracted by one client reportedly had a positive experience, in that "even though their passports were centrally held for security reasons, they knew that they could access their passports, [...] they did not pay any recruitment fees and they had a very extensive contract that was also translated to Nepali and given to them. So they had contracts which they could understand in the language that they could understand." Language barriers can obfuscate individuals' abilities to interpret and understand their work contracts. Translation offers the opportunity for personnel to comprehend their work assignments prior to departure.

In the global survey,[8] migrant workers were reported to face challenges in the areas of "recruitment, deportation, breach of contract, a failure to pay overtime, [...] and inequality in promotions." The fear of deportation can also act as an instrument of power and control, perhaps encouraging migrants to accept substandard conditions and contractual violations. Survey responses also corroborated interviews, reiterating that migrant workers may not receive days off, may face racism and may experience issues with pay. Other forms of discrimination that migrant workers face are related to gender, colour and skin, and religious affiliation. These labourers also reported that they were denied health insurance and financial rights, worked longer hours, received less pay than non-migrant employees and lived in poor accommodations. They also face the challenge of being generally "misused" by their superiors – an indication of broad mistreatment. The many forms of discrimination that migrant labourers endure indicate the intersectional nature of discriminatory practices: Harm is inflicted in multiple and overlapping ways. Subversive practices undermine the health and well-being of labour migrants, and protections in place should also respect the agency of migrant personnel. Private security can be an inherently risky industry, yet it often escapes oversight, exacerbating the vulnerable situation of labour migrants.

8. Survey: Sheet 6

FINDING 3

Workplace stratification by factors such as gender, race and nationality affects recruitment practices and working conditions.

> *"If we continue to have this narrow kind of understanding and assumption about who is the best security contractor, then we're going to reinforce these gendered and racial hierarchies."*

Underlying social dynamics can perpetuate discrimination in the private security industry, creating distinct hierarchies within PSCs. This happens across the globe, a finding that has been confirmed in the private military and security industry more broadly (Joachim & Schneiker, 2021). Some interviewees emphasised that white men may be in positions of power, particularly in crisis zones where Western powers and international organisations are present. While diversity is increasingly present and visible in the sector, that diversity is not consistent throughout all ranks of private forces.

Race and nationality can inform risk and set the stage for working conditions

Interviewees reported that, in the Middle East, much of the higher-risk work, the "guarding, the convoy protection the static guarding" is offset to those born in non-Western countries. Western expatriates are perceived to face fewer safety risks, receive better pay and be given high-level managerial roles with greater protection. In Latin America, too, expatriates have reportedly taken on management roles. The uneven concentration of Western expatriates in these roles tends to delegate potential harm and poorer working conditions to individuals from non-Western nations. Gurkhas, for instance, who have significant military training, are often paid one-third that of Westerners in Afghanistan. In complex environments, clients typically do not trust nationals due to racist biases or perceptions associating nationals with terrorism. According to one interviewee, clients often fail to recognise that the white Westerner is not always best suited for certain work. Contractors from India and Nepal may speak the local languages of Afghanistan, for instance, which is an important asset for information-gathering. Another interviewee with experience in the Middle East said that nationality-based stratification and subjugation happens in Iraq, Afghanistan, Somalia, Sudan and Yemen, among other countries.

Those who fall near the bottom of this hierarchical structure are more likely to be employed in dangerous environments but have fewer social protections in their home countries in the event of injury, while many also leave behind families dependent on their work. One interviewee explained the consequences of discrimination underscoring the sector, stating that "There's this really perverse outsourcing of risk to the most economically, socially and politically vulnerable, where we're making them absorb the most risk and we're paying them the least." A trend reiterated more widely in the private military industry, the working conditions of Western military contractors are often far superior to those of TCN military contractors, indicating that Western contractors may suffer less exploitation than TCN personnel (Swed & Burland, 2022).

> *"There's this really perverse outsourcing of risk to the most economically, socially and politically vulnerable people, where we're making them absorb the most risk and we're paying them the least."*

Racial stratification sometimes seems to be justified in the industry by invoking arguments that rely on hierarchical position within PSCs as a determinant of pay, treatment and safety. As one interviewee remarked, within PSCs in conflict zones such as Afghanistan, white expatriates tend to be the safest and paid the most, adding that "There's usually at least four [layers of security] and the outermost ring is the most dangerous. [The outer ring] is also highly racialised and the least well-compensated" – and often consists of Afghan locals. The interviewee described an "inverse relationship" in which risk, compensation and race are all linked. Though these disparities may occur as a product of roles and tasks given to TCNs in the industry, this does not relieve PSCs and clients of their culpability in replicating cycles of exclusion, even while that stratification may be a product of broader social dynamics.

Discrimination on the basis of nationality and/or ethnicity appeared most often in survey responses,[10] followed by gender discrimination, then discrimination on the basis of race, then sexual orientation and/or gender identity
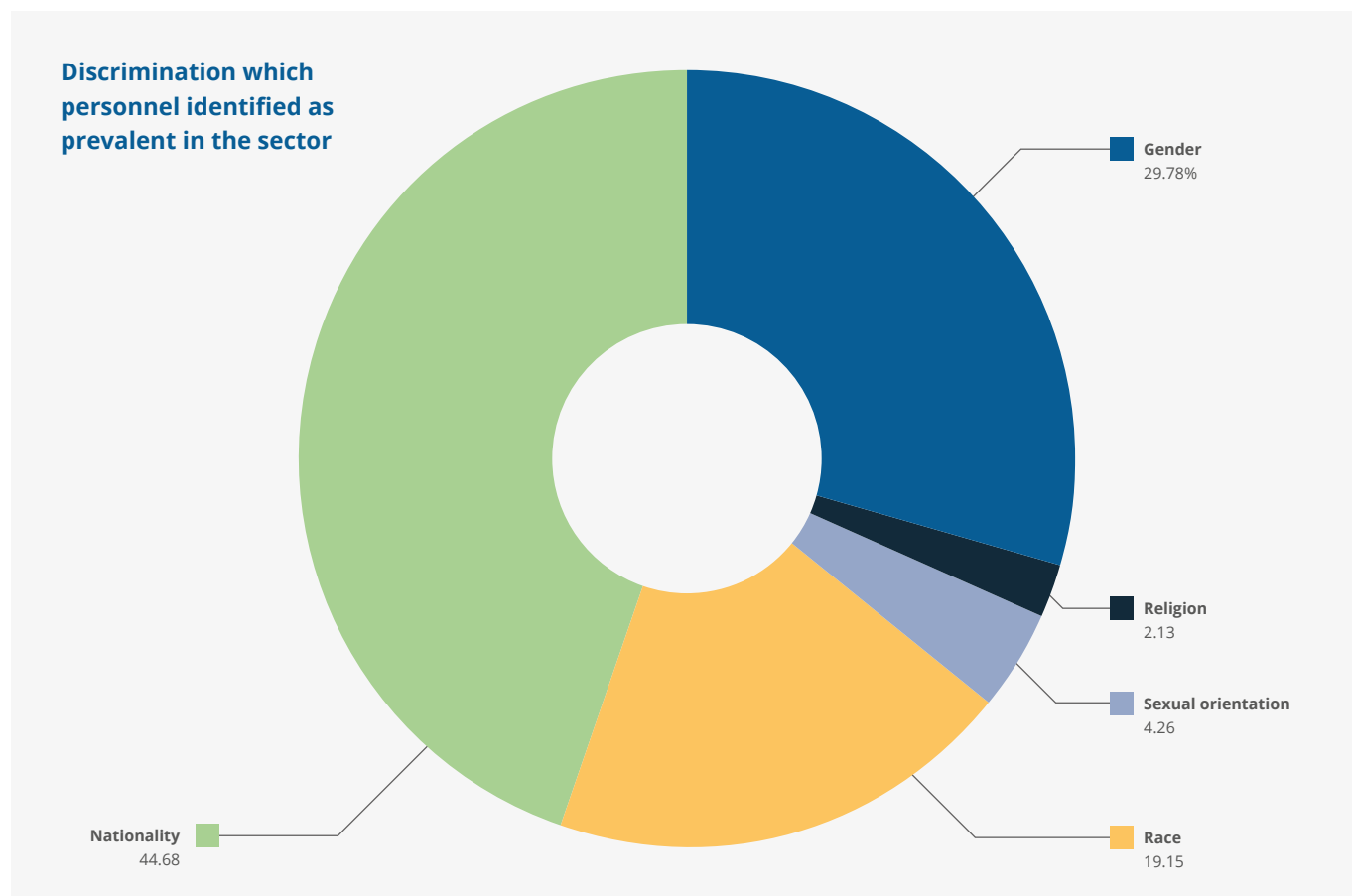
Discrimination which personnel identified as prevalent in the sector

Gender 29.78%
Religion 2.13
Sexual orientation 4.26
Race 19.15
Nationality 44.68

Figure 6: Global Survey[9] and discrimination in the private security industry

and, finally, religion. Two respondents also simply stated that discrimination within the industry was present in "all" its forms. Over one-third of respondents stated that they had experienced or witnessed discrimination in the workplace.[11] The remaining survey respondents stated they had not witnessed or experienced any discrimination, although this is likely in part related to the roles and positionality or specific identities of the respondents. Men, for instance, might be more reticent to discuss gendered harm or less likely to experience sexual harassment than women in the private security industry, thus affecting perceptions of its prevalence. This does not suggest that men do not experience harm, but that predominant perceptions of masculinity may both discourage men from discussing harm (O'Brient, Keith & Shoemaker, 2015) and make them less likely to be the targets of gendered harm such as sexual harassment. Discrimination can also be highly discreet – often overlooked but no less harmful for those it affects. In addition, companies may not institute preventive or remedial measures or their personnel may be unaware of such mechanisms.

Box 8: Awareness among guards of preventive mechanisms against discrimination and sexual harassment in East Africa

- 25% of personnel surveyed in Uganda reported being aware of preventive measures regarding discrimination and sexual harassment.

- In Kenya, 20% reported awareness of such measures.

- In Tanzania, only 16% mentioned the existence of preventive mechanisms.

9. Survey: Sheet 7.

10. Survey: Sheet 7. See the appendix for information on survey.

11. Unclear responses, such as those that mentioned discrimination but did not provide information with a discriminatory basis (i.e. race, gender, nationality, ethnicity, religion) were excluded to avoid misinterpretation of results.
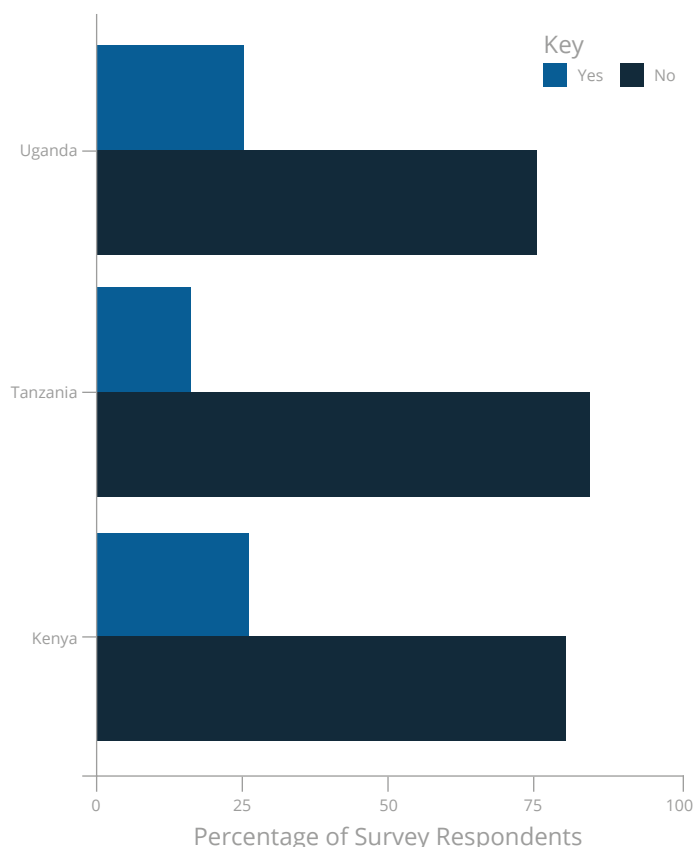
Figure 7: Are you aware of mechanisms to prevent harassment and discrimination?

In the private security sector, closed spaces can create a culture of silence around new ideas and provide few opportunities for tangible gains toward equitable representation. The presence of racial stratification developing alongside diversity within the industry suggests both that (1) structural barriers continue to limit the extent to which PSCs can successfully integrate diversity throughout their ranks and (2) opportunities for individual personnel and growth in the field are stymied by the industry's selective openness. Ultimately, innovation in service delivery suffers as a result. Gendered dimensions are also interlaced with the racialised nature of the sector. A feature documented in the PMSC industry more broadly, gendered concepts tend to undermine the masculinity of TCNs, subordinating them along racial lines to white Western expatriates (Joachim & Schneiker, 2021). As one interviewee reported, "I see logics of race and gender that are being used to explain why these men are being paid significantly less and why the contracts themselves are also different." Although these logics operate covertly, perhaps being justified by language preferences or other features, in some places, TCNs' masculinity may be questioned. These logics tend to reserve well-paid work and more positive working conditions to white Western expatriates by valuing varying identities differently in the industry.

Women might have found a place in the industry, but where, when and to what extent?

Most PSCs *"try as much as possible to employ female security guards, but they don't really do a risk assessment. They've not quite struck that balance between providing equal opportunities for male and female workers while ensuring that they protect their female workers."*

While interviewees stressed that more women are working in the field today than in the past, that companies are making attempts to embrace gender diversity and equality, and that conditions for women are "improving," interviewees also attenuated these changes with reports that very few women are in leadership positions in the industry. Further, even in light of consistent efforts to integrate more women into the workforce, they continue to comprise only a small share of private security personnel relative to male participation in the sector (UN, 2019; MacLeod & van Amstel, 2020). In Myanmar, it was reported that PSCs do not implement policies to recruit more women.

"The cultural context often doesn't help as well. It's part of the problem."

Some interviewees also stressed that private security remains a "macho" field in terms of the work environment. The connotation is one that continues to prioritise stereotypical ideas of masculinity in the industry, restricting the types of identities welcome in specific roles and subordinating women who are assumed to inherently possess stereotypical feminine qualities.

PSCs and their clients may also be reluctant to welcome diversity into new spaces. As one interviewee reported, "They do have women in the security forces, but [...] they're always in administrative positions. They're never on the front line." This was justified by the sentiment that diversifying women's participation in private security "is more likely to harm the individual than it is to have an impact on people's attitudes." Cultural norms, such as those discouraging women from working in "dangerous" environments, were also identified as a barrier to women's participation in some locales. The safety and well-being of women on the frontline should not be overlooked, but this framing can also obfuscate the harm that women already face in the sector, urging protection by limiting their participation in the industry rather than addressing the dynamics that already undergird the sector. Instead,

risk assessments can identify and mitigate harm while providing opportunities for female participation in a variety of security roles. One interviewee in West Africa reported that some companies may hesitate to employ female officers while others will hire female officers without carrying out a risk assessment, adding that companies have "not quite struck that balance between providing equal opportunities for both male and female [personnel] and also ensuring that they protect their female workers." Protection and equal opportunity, though, are not mutually exclusive. Innovation in private security that welcomes a wide variety of backgrounds in diverse roles can better serve clients and communities.

> Female personnel *"are being silenced. They don't always have a say and they aren't even listened to. They face intimidation and discrimination on so many levels, and they don't even have a voice. They have to stomach it simply because they don't want to get demoted."*

Despite consistent efforts to increase gender diversity, women continue to face harassment and gender-based violence (GBV) and remain sidelined in the sector. GBV perpetrated by employers, colleagues and clients emerged as a pressing concern in some regions. In Tanzania, an interviewee reported that women are often asked for sexual favours to be promoted or relocated to new environments and that women's contracts may be terminated if they become pregnant. In West Africa, male officers may refuse to listen to female supervisors and women sometimes lack access to separate changing rooms. Women may also lack access to health services in the GCC. Female personnel are reported to be paid less because they receive lower-paying roles as a product of their gender identity, a logic reminiscent of explanations for the lower pay received by TCNs. As one interviewee stated, "Notions of women being unable to take on night shifts in the security industry, for example, preclude them from advancing and receiving the salary they need."

In one iteration of the global survey,[12] well under one-third of respondents were female, though women made up over one-third of those respondents who stated they had noticed sexual harassment in the workplace, comprising a much higher share than the percentage of personnel they account for. Further, over three-fourths of female survey respondents stated that they were more stressed since they started working as a security officer, compared to just about half of male respondents who stated the same.[13] Women's encounters with sexist behaviour in the workplace make the working environment itself more difficult (Gill et al., 2021). Despite increased diversity, female personnel may continue to face a higher risk of harm.

When women do experience harassment or violence in the workplace, there may be little in the way of redress. In Myanmar, most companies reportedly have not implemented a reporting system in the case of GBV or harassment. While some companies across the globe have established a grievance process through which personnel and members of the public can report violations, many of these mechanisms may be inaccessible, unknown or both. Implementing grievance mechanisms without ensuring they effectively serve their intended purpose, are accessible to the public and personnel, protect those harmed and provide necessary services in the aftermath ticks the box on a checklist without encouraging substantive change to gender dynamics or introducing genuine accountability for harm. Preferred access points for redress may also vary by locale and grievance mechanisms must be rooted in the local context to meet the needs of personnel and the public.

Not only has gender diversity failed to prevent harm to female-identifying personnel, but it has also perhaps begun to obfuscate the existence of sexual harassment and gender discrimination in the industry. One respondent stated that sexual harassment had all but disappeared "after the MeToo movement." The assumption here is that visibility of the issue equates to accountability, redress and to the prevention of its recurrence. By muting harm, there is little incentive to implement measures outside of hiring more women. PSCs, clients and others should continue to account for the ongoing harms women face while also advocating for diversity.

Moreover, some interviewees relied heavily on stereotypes of women to advocate for their inclusion in private security, describing women as a benefit to the field for their innate skills in "conflict resolution," their ability to make clients "smile," their cordial attitudes and the "calming influence" they bring to private security workplaces. Many PSCs and clients may place women in low-risk jobs or areas so that while participation increases, it is notoriously siloed, stymieing opportunities for women's holistic participation. While interviewees reported that clients are beginning to recognise the "value" of women in the workplace, descriptions of female personnel indicate that their value is reliant on their

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12. Survey: Sheet 9.
13. Survey: Sheet 8.

presumed skill sets, thus limiting their potential contributions outside a narrowly defined perspective. This reductionist framework can place undue pressure on female personnel, a dynamic that has been documented in peacekeeping operations (Wilen, 2020). The strategic and problematic inclusion of women in the workforce also has implications for the members of the public that PSCs interact with. Private military and security operations, for instance, often put women and girls in particular at risk of facing violence and feelings of insecurity (DCAF, 2020; MacLeod & van Amstel, 2020).
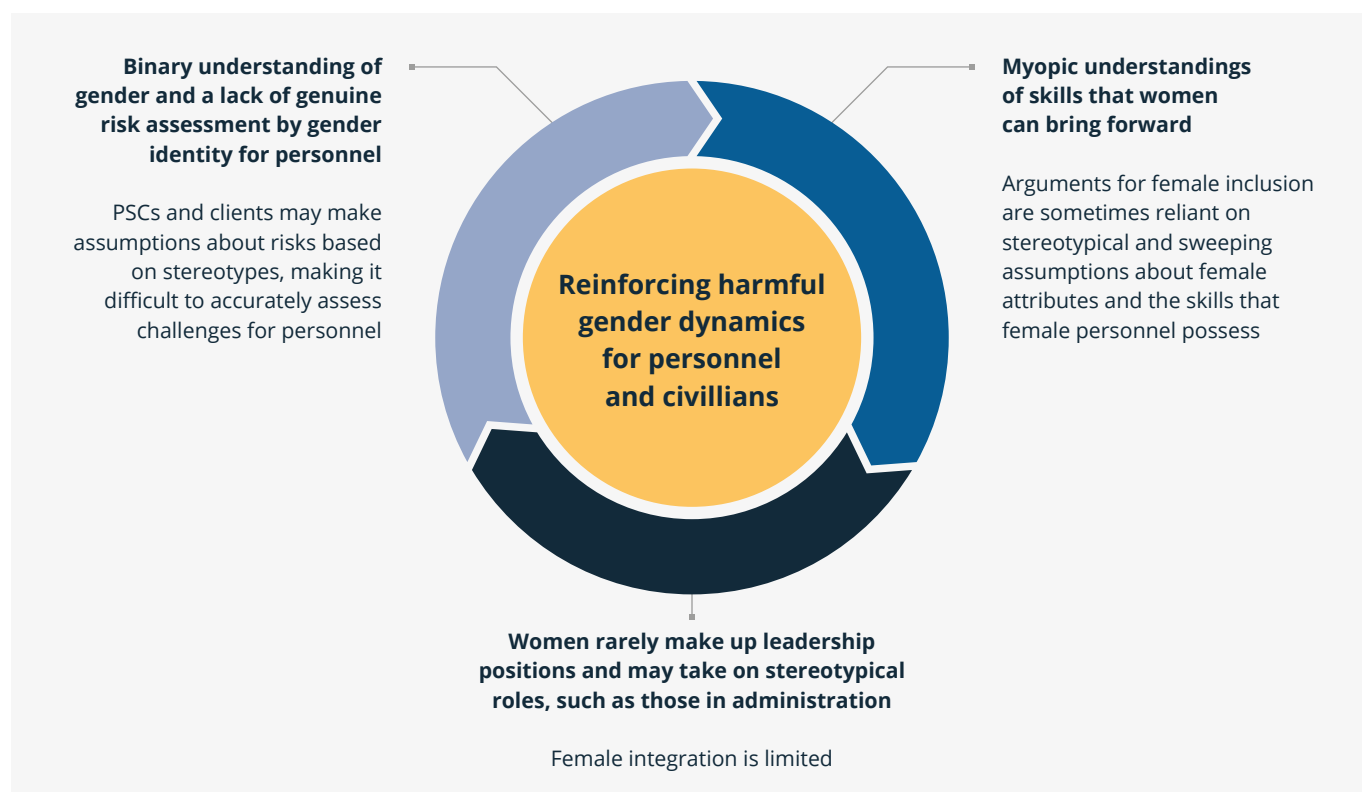
Binary understanding of gender and a lack of genuine risk assessment by gender identity for personnel

PSCs and clients may make assumptions about risks based on stereotypes, making it difficult to accurately assess challenges for personnel

Reinforcing harmful gender dynamics for personnel and civillians

Myopic understandings of skills that women can bring forward

Arguments for female inclusion are sometimes reliant on stereotypical and sweeping assumptions about female attributes and the skills that female personnel possess

Women rarely make up leadership positions and may take on stereotypical roles, such as those in administration

Female integration is limited

Figure 8: Factors that reinforce harmful gender dynamics

For some interviewees, the use of surveillance technology was perceived as an avenue to increase female participation by placing less emphasis on physical strength. While PSCs should indeed leverage the benefits of technology, they must also be aware that this framing may perpetuate the same stereotypes that discourage women from working in security spaces in the first place by assuming female physical inferiority. Private security work requires a myriad of skills and the industry benefits from a complementary approach to security work that includes women throughout the ranks of PSCs, while also leveraging technology wherever it can improve personnel's safety and well-being. Another interviewee was sceptical of the benefits of technology, warning that it simply reproduces the logic of gender and racial discrimination.

The interview results also indicated that the public and personnel understand far less about the experiences of LGBTQ+ personnel in the industry, in particular,

because the understanding of gender identity and its manifestations vary vastly from one place to the next.[14] Interview questions were not primarily geared toward LGBTQ+ communities because of the presentation of gender in the global private security industry. The LGBTQ+ workforce's low visibility, though, may undermine the extent to which gender transformative responses are able to address the risks and needs of various identities in the private security workforce. While diversity is promising, existing limitations may actually reinforce harmful gender dynamics while stymieing the extent to which gender diversity can be harnessed to achieve equity in the workplace.

Still, the private security industry remains heterogenous in this regard. Some ICoCA companies have introduced gender-segregated amenities, female-specific uniforms and female-targeted recruitment ads. CSOs, too, are reportedly carrying out training and empowerment

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14. Interview questions did not focus explicitly on LGBTQ+ experiences; they were often more general with respect to gender diversity.

workshops. Other companies in Tanzania have begun to offer maternity leave, implemented reporting mechanisms in the case of gender-based discrimination and introduced training on the rights of female security officers. One interviewee in Iraq reported that their company carries out training on sexual harassment as well. The ICoCA's new training course, Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse, is now used by about 44 member companies across 64 countries and has been completed by about 1,500 personnel (ICoCA, June 2023). It is also worth identifying that not all female personnel stated that they had experienced or noticed sexual harassment in the field, reiterating that women do not have uniform experiences, even while gender discrimination is a pervasive feature of private security.

> *"Some of our clients ask for sexual favours from us,"* noted a female guard in Uganda.

The construction of gender in the industry contributes to a narrow understanding of the ways female, and likely LGBTQ+ personnel, can participate in the field, which limits the roles diverse personnel are likely to take on and relegates them to the sidelines. This, then, may prevent a critical examination of gender in the field and continue to perpetuate the same dynamics that can place members of the public at risk. Security operations present unique risks for men, women (Myrttinen, 2019) and likely LGBTQ+ individuals.

These findings are not intended to discourage gender integration, although they do indicate that additional measures need to be taken to prevent gender-based harm. Policies surrounding gender should be additive, and ongoing efforts to incorporate women into the ranks of PSCs are promising so long as they are supplemented by other measures. While the influx of women in the field alone does not guarantee the introduction of particular characteristics, it does signal a more open security space that might encourage new ideas. At the same time, it also creates space for men to approach security work in innovative ways by relieving some pressure to adopt a "macho" attitude.

The problem in the current iteration of gender diversity in private security is that attempts to change the sector tend to both start and end at gender-sensitive approaches,, falling short of gender-transformative actions aimed at eliminating harmful gender dynamics. Security operations pose unique risks for varying identities

along racial, gendered and nationality-based lines. The sector has become more adaptive and responsive and has taken action toward redressing discrimination, but it continues to be influenced by discriminatory tendencies. This calls for targeted responses to the root causes of unequal treatment and, in the process, attempts to create a more open security sector that welcomes new forms of innovation and opportunity.

Box 9: Sexual harassment as observed by male and female guards in East Africa

- In Uganda, 19% of female guards and 2% of male guards observed sexual harassment at work. Sexual harassment is commonly linked to hiring decisions and better deployment. Most cases involved superiors, but clients also sexually harass female guards.

- In Kenya, 11% of female security guards and 3% of male guards said they had observed sexual harassment at work. In 73% of those cases, female guards were harassed by their supervisor or male colleagues for favours; in 22% of cases, clients harassed female guards after a mistake had been made; in 8% of cases, superiors posted guards far away or terminated their service.

- In Tanzania, 10% of female guards and 7% of male guards said they had observed sexual harassment at work.

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12. Survey: Sheet 9.
13. Survey: Sheet 8.

FINDING 4

Training provided to private security personnel is critical but often substandard.

The value of high-quality training has been reinforced and emphasised in the private security field. Mandatory training is valuable in mitigating the risk of harm and increasing the quality of security services (UN Office on Drugs and Crime, 2014). Despite the fact that private security work presents the potential for conflict with others, training is either not provided (Kitteringham, 2020) or insufficient (Kitteringham, 2017). This is reiterated in public policing too, in which the quality of training may contribute to officer's use of excessive force (Yakam, 2019). The substance of training is also critical in determining the behaviour of personnel and their ability to carry out their work effectively.

In recent years, notably in the US, increasing attention has been paid to the need for a shift to "guardian-style" approaches in public policing and for training aimed at demilitarising policing and procedural justice, crisis intervention and de-escalation (Helfgott, Strah, Atherley & Neidhart, 2021). Guardian-style approaches shift away from the conception of forceful policing found in many places, providing an alternative emphasis on interpersonal communication instead of commands; communication and de-escalation instead of control through force; and tactical restraint, when necessary, instead of force (Strah, Pollock & Becker, 2022). As private security personnel take on increasingly public-facing roles, a baseline of general training, site-specific training and role-specific training, in conjunction with an improvement in the quality of training offered and a focus on de-escalation and addressing behavioural crises, are also needed. Interviewees reported that while personnel are expected to handle dangerous situations and that they are hired to manage tense situations, they often lack relevant training, which intensifies job-related stress.

Choosing quantity over quality and vetting (or not) of personnel

In addition to substandard training, interviewees stressed that training tends to vary dramatically between clients, companies, countries and even municipalities. Personnel then enter the workforce with extremely different levels of preparation. An interviewee in Nigeria, for instance, reported that personnel typically don't receive any orientation training prior to starting their position, and that if they do, it may consist of one or two days of training before they are deployed to the client. Once personnel arrive at the site, clients may not take responsibility for training programmes either. One client, however, reported that they conduct training on voluntary principles for security officers in addition to providing refresher training every six months and that these trainings improve personnel's respect for the law. In Alberta, Canada, while security officers receive training, one interviewee stressed that a focus on the quantity of training over the quality of that training, while meeting legal requirements, "does not prepare [them] for work in the industry, [...] setting security officers up for failure." In Uganda, although 93% of personnel reported that their employer provides training, that may not preclude egregious behaviour. A fixation on whether personnel have received training dilutes the importance of substance in preparing private officers for their work. Despite this training, many personnel in Uganda reported that it was inadequate. Further, standards vary. In Tanzania, for instance, 70% of respondents reported that their employers provide training.
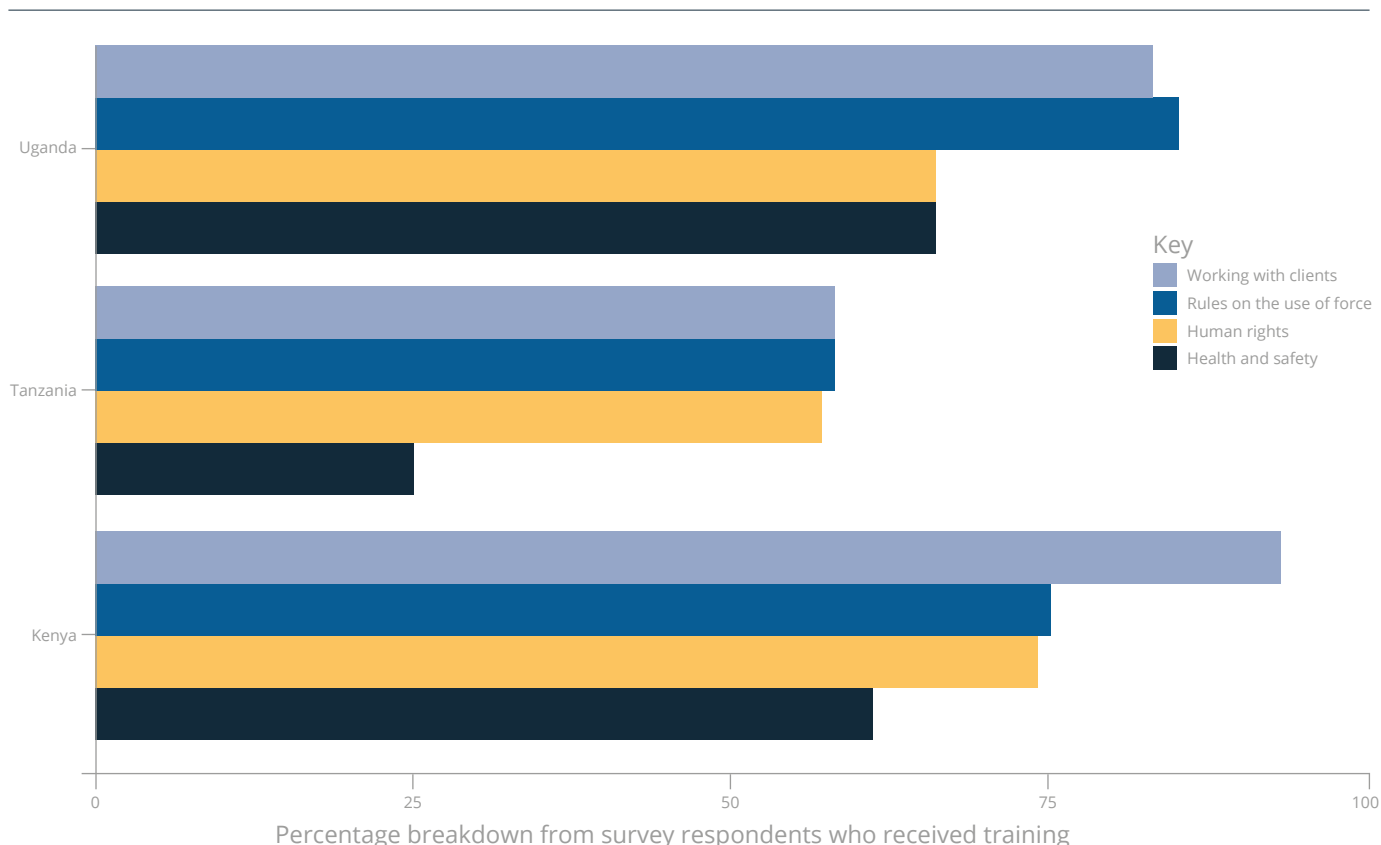

Substandard or no training **+** Expectation to manage dangerous situations **=** Increase in job related stress

Figure 9: Training areas in East Africa

A lack of quality training has severe consequences on the ability of personnel to perform their job-related duties, leading to "role confusion," as one North American interviewee remarked. For instance, security personnel may be uncertain of their role and the tools they can rely on during a burglary or while managing crowd control. Poor training can result in a murky understanding of what they are protecting and how they are supposed to protect it. Others emphasised that many security officers are unaware of their legal rights, powers and limitations, which can lead personnel to take actions that breach their legal responsibilities, thus increasing their exposure to legal repercussions. Additionally, media attention highlighting the negligence of security officers also reflects poorly on their employers and increases negative publicity, which may have consequences for business. High-quality training that mitigates negligence and confusion, which may affect personnel's ability to carry out their jobs, has a high return on investment.

Interviewees also emphasised the physical risks personnel face on the job. They may interact with individuals who threaten them or they may work in dangerous areas, facing threats of terrorism or crime. Without high-quality training, personnel face heightened risks yet lack the tools they need to protect themselves, their clients and the public. While over three-fourths of personnel in the survey received training,[15] others had not received any training from their employers. Latin America hosted the highest share of workers who had not received training from their employer --over 50%-- relative to the percentage of respondents working in this region. Europe had a much higher share of personnel that had received training. Most personnel working in Africa, Asia, the Middle East and North America had also received training, although the small sample sizes, particularly in Africa, Asia and the Middle East, indicate that these findings should be interpreted cautiously.

Of those global survey respondents who had received training, a subset of the global survey[16] was asked to identify the topics covered, choosing from four options: (1) use of force, (2) working with clients, (3) health and safety and (4) human rights. Training on health and safety was the most prominent, followed by working with clients; over half of personnel had received training on both of those topics. This was then followed by training on human rights and, finally, rules on the use of force. Slightly over one-third had received training in all four areas, indicating that the training offered often lacks comprehensiveness. It also varies to a great degree between PSCs.

15. Survey: Sheet 9
16. Sheet 9. Please see the appendix for sample size and demographic information.
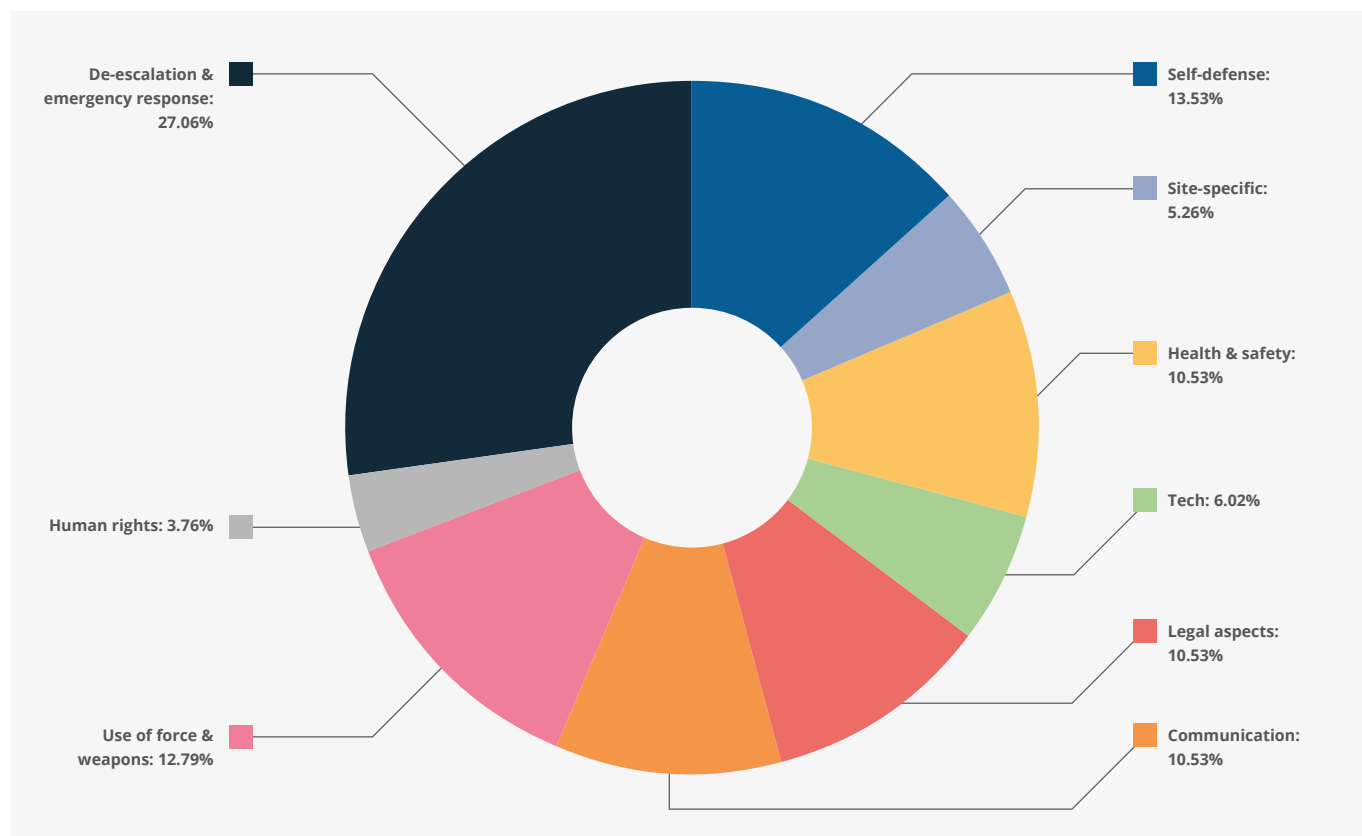
Figure 10: Global Survey: Training needs, as identified by private security officers

Legal uncertainty and training limitations have been reported to make the job challenging (Gill et al., 2021). One interviewee contended that the more educated personnel are, the more "efficient" they are. Personnel may enter the field without formal schooling in some locales, so training on skills such as reading and writing was also identified as having the potential to benefit the communities in which officers live by equipping personnel with skills that are transferable outside of the workplace. This may also ease barriers to understanding contracts, codified rules and other written arrangements. Personnel may in turn educate their own communities about human rights and leverage this knowledge when interacting with police and other companies.

In addition to substantive lapses in many training programmes, PSCs may not always properly vet their staff prior to hiring, potentially increasing the risk of poor behaviour on an individual level. One interviewee in North America stated that in hospitals, for instance, "there's a number of cases where officers, because they haven't had the appropriate background screening or training, are conducting theft," undergirding the permissive environment enabled in part by subpar or non-existent training and vetting mechanisms.

What training do personnel need?

Some training topics that interviewees identified as valuable include training on the use of force, health and safety, training in technology and skills development. Some employers are reported to have taken the initiative to conduct more risk-assessment training and environment-specific health and safety training. The need for tech training was identified as a mechanism to improve working conditions, such as relying on CCTV instead of active patrols. Interviewees also emphasised that training in skills development is likely to increase the company's retainment rates and provide opportunities for personnel's career development. More investment in PSCs' workforce brings long-term benefits to the quality of work and increases the attractiveness of a career in private security. In Europe, interviewees identified the need for new training in counterterrorism. The need for appropriate tools in handling crowds and fending off intruders was mentioned in the African context. In Myanmar, an interviewee reported the need for training on human rights issues, including gender and labour rights, adding that most officers are unaware of their own rights in the workplace. Personnel should also receive certificates upon training completion, which will ensure

they have met certain requirements and can be leveraged to catalyse career progress and present opportunities for personnel to advance in the industry.

The substandard nature of many programmes is reiterated in the training needs that personnel identified. These include conflict management and resolution, working with clients and communication, relevant laws, the use of force, human rights, first aid and emergency response, self-defence, health and safety, firearms and weapons-handling, site-specific training and technology. The training needs of private security personnel are far more diverse than the stereotypical conceptions of security work, particularly as the functions of personnel become increasingly complex. This appears to complement and be reinforced by training needs in the public policing field, which indicates the need for a reallocation of training hours that prioritise guardian-style policing, including stress management (Sloan & Pauline, 2021).

While the majority of private security personnel are unarmed (UN Office on Drugs and Crime, 2014), the use of firearms continues to be a problem in training programmes, if they are offered at all. Among those who reported carrying deadly weapons in the global survey,[17] slightly over three-fourths had received training on how and in what situations to use them, which continues to leave a sizable portion armed but untrained. Split-second decisions can cost lives, and armed security personnel without training present a significant threat to themselves and those they interact with. Related to wider working conditions, some interviewees also stressed the difficulty of training amid high turnover and personnel fluidity in and out of the sector. Poor working conditions that contribute to high turnover may then cyclically reproduce substandard training practices.

Limited or no training can undermine security rather than improve it. In Latin America, interviewees reported that officers are commonly armed. Yet one interviewee explained that personnel typically lack training on the use of firearms, which may cause injuries and sometimes death. In Latin America, personnel were reported to "have no clue how to address an emergency or different types of incidents. And in many cases, they are even condemned for doing their work or they don't have any backup from their own employers." In some instances, personnel are reported to have used force or used their firearms as a result of having no training on when and how to deploy weapons while at the same time having no other tools to respond to threats. As a consequence, they are often held criminally responsible for their actions and abandoned by companies. This interviewee estimates that hundreds or even thousands of personnel are now in jail as a product of a lack of training. Not only does this contribute to high turnover, but it may also reduce trust in private security. Headline-grabbing stories of officer "negligence" threaten to stain the industry's reputation and that of its clients. Better training also reduces the likelihood of error, benefitting personnel, members of the public, clients and the industry at large.

Mandatory training can curb inappropriate behaviour by personnel, including the abuse of authority, the excessive use of force, low professional standards and non-compliance with the law (Button & Stiernstedt, 2018; UN Office on Drugs and Crime, 2014). Training can improve the quality of services delivered (UN Office on Drugs and Crime, 2014), a feature that engenders reputational benefits and can secure future engagements with clients.

> **Box 9:** Training needs in East Africa
>
> - In Kenya, about nine out of every ten guards are trained. The majority are trained on customer care, rules on the use of force and health and safety, but guards complain that companies generally do not provide certificates that would improve their career development and opportunities.
>
> - In Uganda, 93% of guards receive training. Training courses include the use of firearms (70% of the guards), self-defence (15%) and basic military skills (7%). When asked about their training needs, 45% would want more training on the use of firearms. Other additional training needs include customer service, self-defence and use of security devices.
>
> - In Tanzania, 70% of the guards received training. Core areas of training are client service, rules on the use of force and health and safety. Physical fitness, handling firearms and defence are the top skills that guards need training on.
>
> - In all three countries, guards did not mention the need for training on human rights or on the prevention of sexual violence and abuse.

ICoCA's findings and experience in training

Based on its own observations from field monitoring missions, ICoCA has identified training as a major need in the industry. Together with poor working conditions, a lack of adequate training represents a major concern related to private security operations in many countries visited. ICoCA observations in recent field missions in 2021 and 2022 in Libya, Nigeria, Somalia and South Sudan include the following:

- Company training mostly focuses on basic operational matters, such as how personnel should man their posts, how to search visitors and perform access controls, when and how to use force, how to identify threats, respond to emergencies and report incidents.

- Training requirements for private security personnel are inconsistent. Beyond ICoCA members, few companies have human rights training in place.

- In Somalia, some clients directly provide training to personnel on topics such as the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA) and the organisation's code of conduct – this is the case for some UN agencies.

- Some companies would benefit from the adoption of minimum training requirements for private security personnel in countries in order to create a level playing field among companies (ICoCA internal reports).

ICoCA began to develop training materials for its members and affiliates in 2019 (ICoCA News Highlights 04/01/2019). Training courses focus on issues related to human rights and IHL (see annex 1 "ICoCA training courses") and are geared towards private security personnel (managers or personnel) as well as civil society and humanitarian organisations. Trainings are accessible in up to nine different languages.

The role of the training is to establish the parameters of acceptable conduct that are compliant with the Code of Conduct; many trainees may simply not be aware that what they are doing is not compliant with human rights and humanitarian law or they may be afraid to speak up about human rights violations. The training courses should be used to supplement existing training, both initial and recurrent. The findings of this research project support the issues and approaches identified by ICoCA in its effort to develop its training offer.

During ICoCA field visits, member companies expressed positive feedback regarding ICoCA's online training. A number of members have already made certain training modules mandatory for personnel. Some did not foresee any particular difficulty with this training being online; others expressed concern about the literacy rate and low levels of education among personnel or the lack of internet access in remote locations and the need to supplement online courses with illustrated materials that are accessible offline. The development of additional training material was seen as being of high value by both existing and prospective members. Among the topics suggested, training on bribery and corruption was cited as a priority for various companies.

FINDING 5

There is a direct link between poor working conditions and private security personnel's respect for the law.

> *"There is a direct link, I will say, when a guard is poorly paid, poorly trained, when the guard does not see that their employer cares about him or her, well, then there is no incentive for professional work."*

The effects of poor working conditions ripple throughout the supply chain during private security operations, affecting the quality of services delivered and perhaps more broadly, trust in the industry at large. Personnel are deeply affected, as are the individuals that they work alongside, which can undermine the safety of private officers and the general public. PSCs may incur heavy reputational costs when personnel exhibit negligent behaviour, as evidenced by condemnation of the harm committed by PSCs that provide military services, which has heightened the reputational cost of poor behaviour among international PMSCs in particular (Akcinaroglu & Radziszewski, 2020).

Poor working conditions stand diametrically opposed to the goals of PSCs and their clients by inadvertently or directly undermining their ability to improve security and sometimes by decreasing the level of security despite the presence of private forces.

Poor working conditions are the crux of poor behaviour

Many interviewees identified a link between working conditions and personnel's behaviour. Poorer treatment was associated with a higher likelihood that officers would engage in unlawful conduct while more positive conditions were associated with salubrious effects on personnel's behaviour. One interviewee stated, that "The worse you treat somebody, the more likely they are to engage in unlawful acts." In most accounts, poor working conditions were tied to acts of corruption or theft by poorly paid officers or a decrease in the quality of security services provided. Poor conditions were reported to affect motivation and loyalty and decrease personnel's investment in their work, leading to gaps in work ethic and undermining the efficacy of services provided. In public-facing roles, the consequences reverberate throughout the

industry itself and are also experienced by members of the public interacting with PSC personnel.

> *"There's an absolutely direct correlation. Bad practice begets bad practice."*

When personnel are paid little and treated poorly, they are more likely to engage in non-compliant behaviour and the quality of security services they provide is likely to be lower. One interviewee added that, in poor conditions, personnel are "much less likely to be respectful of the workplace and [of] people in the workplace." Interviewees reported that personnel may engage in corruption or burglary to meet basic needs. They may also be less likely to intervene and protect clients. One interviewee stated that officers are more likely to neglect their work if they are unmotivated as a product of poor working conditions. Low pay has negative consequences on the effectiveness of PSCs.

If personnel are mistreated, they are also more likely to exploit those in vulnerable circumstances under their control. As one interviewee explained, personnel "can pass on their aggression to the public" when working conditions are poor. Interactions with the public and with individuals in vulnerable settings are commonplace. Personnel's role in maintaining order and protecting assets or people may place them in a position of power, which they are more likely to exploit when working conditions are poor. One interviewee stated that, "If you are exploited as a guard, you may exploit other vulnerable people." In Papua New Guinea and Nauru, for instance, private security officers were tasked with managing a refugee detention centre. Officers were reportedly treated very poorly and little was invested in the camps. Personnel, for instance, did not have adequate healthcare. An interviewee argued that this contributed to violence perpetrated by personnel toward migrants on a number of occasions. Risks of abuse vary depending on a variety of factors, including the level of power and access to the public, the valuable resources that personnel have and the consequences for behaviour, among other factors. The fear of repercussions in the GCC was reported to discourage personnel from violating rules, for example.

Interviewees also identified pay as a driver of interactions with the public. One interviewee in Nigeria reported that if remuneration is low, personnel may display more aggressive behaviour towards the public when engaged in certain tasks, such as maintaining public order. Low pay and other poor conditions contribute to frustration in the workplace, exhaustion, and mental and physical stress, all of which heighten the potential for personnel to ignore or overlook protocols and behave poorly. These factors deeply affect personnel's investment in the company, the client and their job. They also shape personnel's ability to perform their job and may foster aggression that is then aimed at the communities they interact with. Although previous research on this topic is somewhat rudimentary, insufficient training , for example, has been linked to fraud, incompetence, poor standards, exploitation of security staff, corrupt practices, violence, false arrests and detention, trespassing and invasion of privacy, discrimination and harassment, and weapons misuse (Prenzler & Sarre, 2008).

Some interviewees expressed a high level of concern with the limited training received by armed personnel, noting that the risk of harm to both personnel and the public is particularly high. One interviewee in North America remarked that a lack of training, for instance, deeply affects security officers' ability to protect people. They may turn to certain behaviours as a protection mechanism or to meet the needs of the job, harming the public in the process. This is particularly problematic when personnel are armed. Over half of the global survey respondents[18] observed that personnel were more likely to engage in unlawful behaviour when working conditions were poor. Low pay and low levels of investment in personnel may foster low levels of loyalty and dedication to work, decreasing effectiveness on the job and increasing the likelihood of professional misconduct. Long hours can also decrease morale and lead to physical and mental exhaustion during which personnel's decision-making suffers, perhaps leading to lower-quality output, mistakes that inadvertently place personnel and the public at risk or reliance on forceful tactics against the public. A lack of training, too, can lead to role confusion and may exacerbate the potential for excessive use of force or other behaviour that also harms members of the public.

> **Box 11:** Behavioural consequences of poor working conditions in East Africa
>
> - In East Africa, more than a third of the security guards (between 35% and 41%) observed that factors such as low pay, late salary payments and poor working conditions are leading guards to engage in unlawful behaviour such as stealing, vandalizing client properties, corruption, drug abuse, sexual misconduct and fights. Some guards quit their jobs.

When asked about specific incidents that affected personnel's interactions with the public as a result of poor working conditions, one respondent in the global survey[19] stated that "assault" and "physical and verbal aggressions" had occurred. Others mentioned "constant fighting and aggressiveness towards each other," that service delivery generally became poor and that personnel might fail to comply with behavioural standards when working conditions are poor. Performance more generally is also affected, which may harm members of the public to a significant extent. With well over three-fourths of survey responses indicating that working conditions do affect the performance of security personnel, the impacts included frustration, psychological stress, low morale, aggression, lower levels of efficacy, decreased service quality, a lack of commitment, poor attitudes, fatigue and complacency. Over three-fourths of survey respondents in the global survey[20] identified working conditions as a driver of performance during private operations. This is a major tell of the ways that working conditions can directly and indirectly shape respect for human rights, human security and liability. Personnel's experiences and responses implore stakeholders not only to recognise the connection between working conditions and the industry's proclivity to protect --or harm-- people, but also to direct intentional effort toward improving working conditions.

In addition, poor working conditions and negative perceptions of private officers often foster the widespread presumption that personnel will misbehave. Following security incidents, police tend to assume that security officers are guilty or complicit, leading to their systematic and unfounded arrest. This dynamic has been observed in Kenya, for instance.

Increase in stress; increase in mental and physical health issues

Increase in unlawful behaviour and heightened risk of behaviour that violates human rights

Decrease in quality of services, including a reduction in morale, efficacy and observance of protocols

Clients make undue demands, but are personnel aware of their legal rights and *powers*?

Poorly informed personnel are more likely to face exploitation and violate the rights of others. Gaps in training, as it relates to upholding human rights and officer's understanding of their legal rights and powers, increase the likelihood that breaches will occur. Following riots on Manus Island, a former offshore Australian immigration detention centre, private security officers guarding the site filed a lawsuit against the PSC and the Australian government, arguing that both employer and client had failed to adequately train them and had not made PPE available, contributing to the personnel's failure to properly handle the riots in which one asylum seeker died and seventy-seven people were injured (Bucci, 2022). This can have repercussions for PSCs and clients who may face counter lawsuits and ultimately be implicated in outcomes that lead to the loss of life. Other cases have also held employers responsible. In Inspector Robinson v Chubb Securities, after a client was burglarized, the PSC was found guilty for inadequately training its staff, thereby increasing the site's vulnerability to robbery (Sarre & Prenzler, n.d.). In Knight v Tabcorp Holdings Ltd, the court found the PSC guilty of failing to train staff sufficiently, which led to the injury of a security officer (Sarre & Prenzler, n.d.).

Interviewees also identified that personnel may be ordered by PSCs or by clients to engage in illegal activities. One interviewee in Nepal reported that personnel may be instructed by clients to take an action that violates human rights. These concerns become all the more pressing as personnel increasingly interact with the public. As more citizens encounter security providers, personnel's

exposure to the risk of malpractice also increases, which can result in sub-standard security provision, violations of privacy or violence (Sarre & Prenzler, n.d.). Poor conditions exacerbate the likelihood of this misconduct as a result of a lack of awareness or training and/or the mental and physical harm related to substandard conditions. As reported by one interviewee in Latin America on the connection between working conditions and respect for human rights, "There is a direct link, I will say, when a guard is poorly paid, poorly trained, when the guard does not see that their employer cares about him or her, well, then there is no incentive for professional work." Personnel provide critical, frontline services. Unprofessional work often comes at a high cost, sometimes engendering abusive behaviour.

A familiar consequence: linking the private to the public

Many of the issues seen in some public policing forces regarding the use of force and other human rights violations risk replication in the private security sector as PSCs take on roles previously reserved for public officers (Israel-Trummel & Streeter, 2022; Hadebe & Gopal, 2020; Jones, 2017; Magaloni & Rodriguez, 2020; Jensen & Hapal, 2018).

Interviewees voiced concerns regarding police abuse and excessive use of force. Abuses by public forces are likely to be reproduced in the private sector when working conditions do not cultivate standards for human rights, provide tools for managing situations or foster the well-being of personnel. Improving the welfare of police officers was identified as key to reducing police brutality in Nigeria (AllAfrica, 2019). A lack of education and training has also been argued to contribute to police brutality (Stickle, 2016). Private security personnel, too, are deeply

affected by working conditions, which has direct implications for the public. The social services role of police has become a much larger part of routine police work (Millar et al., 2021), which, given the overlap with PSCs, has implications for the value of social service roles in private forces too. While the importance of addressing work-related conditions, such as stress levels, has been recognised in public policing (Arial, Gonik, Wild & Danuser, 2009; Cieślak et al., 2020), there is a gap in addressing these overlapping needs in the private security sector.
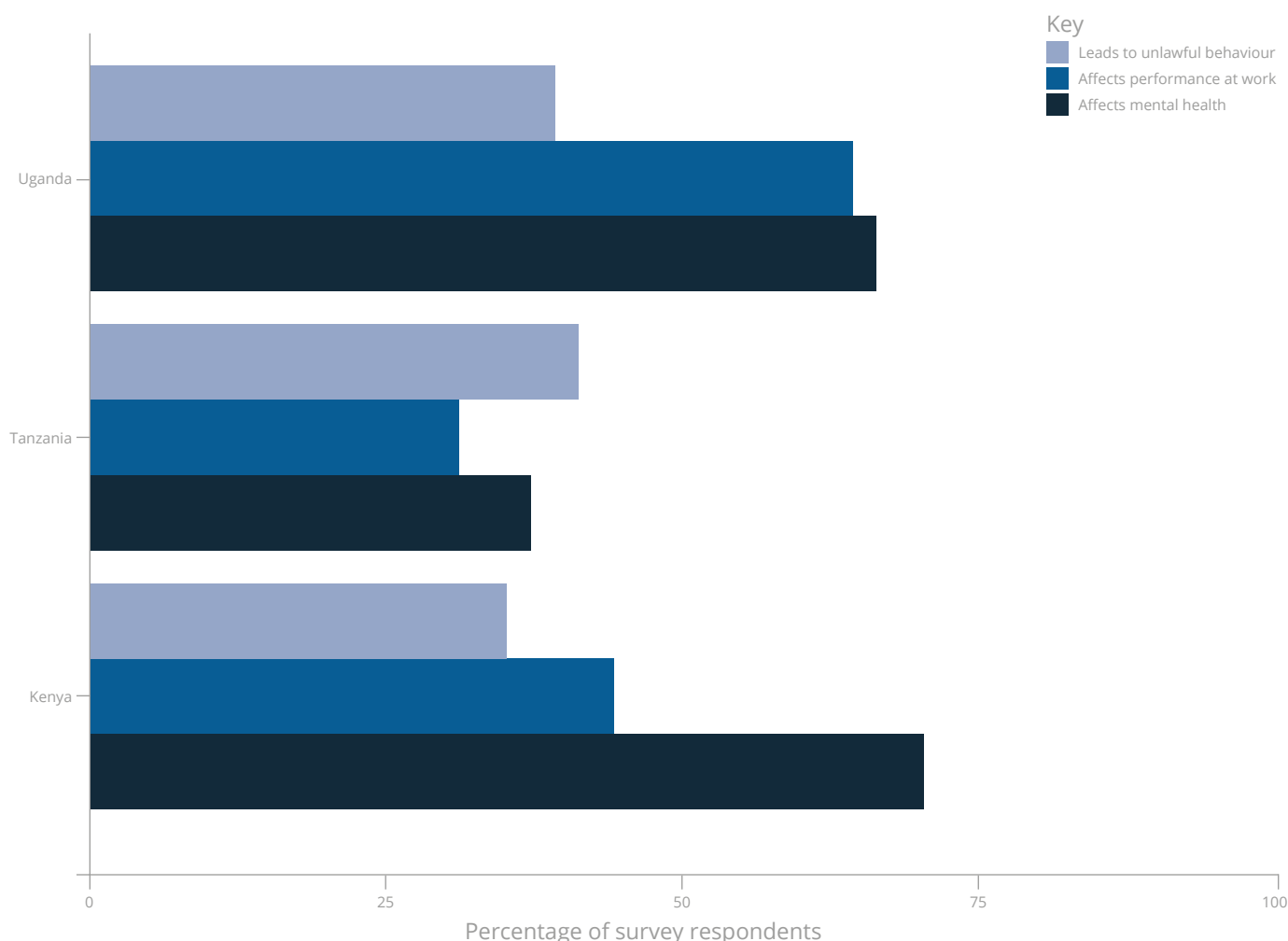
Figure 11: Impacts of poor working conditions in East Africa[21]

The links between the private and the public security spheres are clear, and so too is the need to take seriously the consequences of poor working conditions in private security on personal and public safety. Poor working conditions not only directly inhibit the ability of personnel to carry out their duties, undermining the industry's effectiveness but also contribute to and increase the risk of unlawful behaviour that violates human rights, subsequently decreasing security and not only compromising, but contradicting, the private security's missions and goals, as well as undermining those of clients. Attempts to mitigate human rights abuses must account for and respond to working conditions as a driver shaping PSC-public interactions, addressing the ways that the work environment can directly mould and remould personnel's behaviour.

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21. East Africa Survey.

FINDING 6

PSC clients have a major impact on private security personnel's working conditions.

PSCs serve a range of clients, from local businesses and governments, NGOs and international organisations to private businesses and private individuals who post personnel outside of private residences, as corroborated by interviews. Most personnel from the global survey[22] were contracted by public authorities or a public company, followed by local companies, multinational companies, private individuals and finally, "other" client types.

Private security services are predicated on a principal-agent relationship, and although that relationship is not unidirectional, clients do affect working conditions to a great degree by setting the price, and therefore the margins, of PSC operations. Interviewees reported that clients often seek low-priced services at the cost of decent working conditions. To receive business, managers and interviewees in the PSC sector often reported feeling pressure to meet client demands for lower prices and to cut costs. Working conditions are affected by the wider context in which PSCs operate, and clients, by demanding services, are influential in setting standards and expectations for those services when delivered. One interviewee remarked that "Companies and guards are on the same side [of wanting fair prices and quality services] because the clients are putting pressure on them for the prices." While some pressure has been placed on PSCs to make changes to the industry, many interviewees called for more pressure to be placed on clients and for more attention to be paid to the client-supplier relationship that influences the private security industry's bottom line.

Clients are driving a race to the bottom

One interviewee reported that, until recently, clients never carried out due diligence on working conditions, but that this is changing. Nonetheless, many interviewees referred to industry conditions as a race to the bottom, in which client's interests in minimising spending on security services, despite having become a central aspect of many operations, drive down prices. Market pressures from the supplier may encourage companies to consistently undercut each other on prices. The sheer volume of PSCs in

the contemporary climate leaves no shortage of suppliers among which clients can compare prices. One interviewee based in Latin America referred to the private security sector as a "pennies and cents industry."

A low-entry, poorly regulated and highly competitive environment coupled with clients driven by a low price tag fosters undercutting in the industry, inhibiting PSCs' ability to provide quality services and decent working conditions for their staff. Ultimately, personnel and the general public may bear the brunt of low-cost security services. Clients' unwillingness to pay fair prices leads to limited or no benefits, low pay and limited or no training, among other issues. This was also reported to encourage unethical (and low-cost) recruitment practices. To increase profit margins, one interviewee reported that PSCs are often inclined to accept these standards. Managers of PSCs felt restrained by some clients' pressure for low-cost services. They lamented the consequences of clients' focus on lowering costs but felt compelled to accept those standards and argued their survival as a business depended on undercutting competing companies' prices.

Some interviewees reported that the quality of clients has decreased in recent years, perhaps accelerating the race to the bottom and negatively impacting working conditions. Many interviewees identified clients as a driving force behind working conditions. One interviewee argued that because clients dictate the terms of the contract, they ultimately are at fault and bear responsibility for poor conditions, adding that he will not bid for contracts with certain clients because of poor working conditions accompanied by certain contractual stipulations. For instance, clients can require 12-hour shifts, an industry norm in many markets in the Global South, even when these demands violate labour laws. Other interviewees implied that clients demonstrated little regard for personnel and attempted to skirt responsibility for their well-being by redirecting personnel toward their private security employer in case of improper payment, illness and other concerns. Interviewees also advocated for greater investment in security services by clients, in terms of both

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22. Survey: Sheet 8.

payment and a substantive interest in officer's well-being, arguing that the behaviour of personnel, who in some contexts interact heavily with the public, is likely to also be reflected in public perceptions of the client. Reputational costs are likely to reverberate throughout the supply chain.

When clients don't pay attention, standards are brushed aside

> *"You will see some commercial clients, certain oil and gas companies, as an example, taking a real stand on their principles and codes of conduct, but you will equally see some companies that pay no attention to the protection of labour."*

Some clients may overlook substantive performance indicators, including the human rights records of PSCs, while others may carefully procure PSCs. One interviewee explained that clients fail to conduct in-depth due diligence assessments. Clients, like the industry itself, are not static, and one interviewee reported that some clients, such as international extractive companies, have begun to assume more responsibility, although this is primarily limited to the top tier of the security industry. Limited accountability and low levels of oversight regarding the hiring practices and contract conditions of many clients and the accommodations provided for personnel, among other aspects of security, provide little incentive for change and perpetuate poor conditions. Procurement practices are ungoverned and opaque, which lends itself to disparities in the ways in which private security is contracted and may also complicate efforts to raise industry standards. Interviewees also called for clients to take ownership over client-specific training, as expectations, needs, procedures and context vary not only by site, but also by client needs and demands. Clients reportedly may fail to vet the human rights records of PSCs before hiring, often contracting services without understanding the implications and value of high-quality security services focused on preventing abuses.

This problematic behaviour may encourage PSCs to accept poor working conditions, and PSCs may be unwilling and/or unable to denounce these practices and convince clients to properly invest in security services. Interviewees reported a disconnect between what clients perceive PSCs to provide and what functions PSCs actually perform. Clients' misconceptions may generate unrealistic expectations for personnel or demand that personnel step outside their designated role. Tension between the perception and reality of security services might foster a lack of clarity that could lead to role confusion, poor relations and poor communication between clients and

personnel. This ultimately creates more room for mistakes that undermine the effectiveness of security services or lead to overstepping that harms civilians. Misconceptions may also strain the client-supplier relationship and lead to a mismatch in expectations, reducing opportunities for collaboration to drive change in the industry. Ultimately, misunderstandings and unsupervised procurement practices perpetrate poor conditions and can contribute to personnel and civilian harm.

While many interviewees expressed concern over clients' behaviour, clients can also incentivise more positive working conditions by making more conscious hiring decisions that consider the fair treatment of private security personnel. One individual in the extractive industry reported hiring PSCs he was assured would pay their personnel on time and offered more positive working conditions than other PSCs. Clients have also reportedly placed pressure on PSCs to integrate women into the sector through gender quotas or other measures calling for gender diversity in the workforce, and PSCs have responded accordingly. Although there are limitations to the ways in which gender is included in the sector and gender quotas can relegate substantive integration to checklist items, clients can, and sometimes do, call for changes that can reshape the ways in which private security is envisioned, leading to a collaborative process geared toward innovation in the industry.

There are also opportunities for clients to drive positive change through commitments to respecting human rights, which would imply both mitigation of harm during private operations when clients contract out to PSCs and ensuring personnel are treated well and receive proper training. Clients also have the responsibility to properly screen the private providers they are hiring and place more weight on aspects such as pay, shift hours and other working conditions that affect the quality of services when considering contracts. The UNGPs, for instance, encourage both states and corporations to comply with standards relating to human rights and to respect human rights. Implicitly, this imbues responsibility upon clients for the practices of the PSCs they hire, obliging clients to procure high-quality private security services and meet the needs of personnel, mitigating the likelihood of human rights breaches during operations. While speculation of whether the normative environment has substantially affected the ways in which some companies understand and embody their human rights obligations is beyond the scope of this report, these norms are indicative of the role clients play in the working conditions of private forces they hire and the quality of security services provided.

While the UN promotes corporate responsibility, it does not always abide by its own recommendations. The UN, with its various departments and sometimes disparate interests, also has its own shortcomings in the procurement of private security. Procurement practices vary and are sometimes contradictory between various parts of the organisation (Østensen, 2011). This indicates that urgent attention needs to be paid to incorporating the contracting of private security into the fabric of human rights obligations of not only private businesses but of all those who contract out to private security. Clients must not only promote positive practices but actually embrace them.

Encouraging clients to conduct due diligence

PSCs too, may be able to capitalise on the principal-agent relationship within which the sector is framed. Private security providers offer services to clients, and clients rely on these services. The relationship between provider and client is multidirectional in that PSCs may also be able to exert pressure on clients. Although interviewees expressed the sentiment that PSCs may accept low pay and low standards from clients to survive in a competitive marketplace, the principal-agent relationship can be leveraged to run in both directions, affording some sway to the agent. PSCs offer a service that clients do not have, and private companies should leverage that position to catalyse change in the industry on the client side. However, PSCs may not coordinate their policies due to fierce competition, for instance, which negates the capacity for collective bargaining.

Good security prevents losses associated with crime, can reduce the likelihood of external threats, may provide clients with a competitive advantage, promotes business expansion, cultivates better business decisions, enables operations by providing an effective response when problems occur and generates trust, while poor security is likely to hamper operations and can undermine trust significantly (Gill, Howell & Randall, 2015). Clients and PSCs alike have a vested interest in the working conditions of personnel, particularly given its direct effect on the quality and efficacy of the security services provided.

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FINDING 7

Governments are both the primary regulators and major procurers of private security, providing them with opportunities to implement, monitor and enforce minimum labour standards and lead by example as clients.

In their role as regulators, governments can oversee, monitor and set basic standards that PSCs and clients must abide by. Their role as arbiters of working conditions is complicated by their position in the supply chain as procurers of private security services. Indeed, governments also hire PSCs to ensure the security of immigration detention centres, supplement or replace public security forces, provide military training and guard premises such as diplomatic missions. As clients, governments set important precedents for procurement processes, which other clients may follow. Similarly, some fund development programmes or humanitarian aid projects. As such, they can shape the requirements of their implementing partners by demanding responsible procurement of private security providers that respect the rights of their personnel.

While governments may demand low prices from suppliers, this practice harms workers by infringing on their basic labour rights. Although governments initially may benefit fiscally from chasing low prices, this harms personnel and reduces the quality of security services, which ultimately reflects poorly on the contracting body. Governments can raise the bar on the client side by intentionally engaging in ethical hiring practices that set a positive example of contractual engagements, thereby ensuring that personnel enjoy basic rights and benefit from basic labour standards. Their dual positionality as arbiter and client indicates that governments can play a major role in either encouraging other clients to engage in ethical recruitment practices or signalling a permissive environment where poor working conditions and procurement practices are acceptable.

Governments were encouraged by interviewees to implement national legislation that sets minimum labour standards and to cooperatively establish international laws and standards within international organisations. By doing so, governments can act as an effective regulator of the private security industry. Interviewees urged governments to implement stronger regulations that improve personnel's working conditions, invest in the necessary infrastructure to

protect labour rights and implement effective monitoring mechanisms, so as to ensure the successful adoption of such policies among both PSCs and clients. One interviewee urged governments to take a trifold approach to protecting employee rights: insisting, investing and inspecting.

Standards suffer from patchwork policy in an era of globalisation

Fragmentation in some regions and within some States can undermine working conditions by fostering wide variation in wages and other labour standards. Interviewees stressed that due to a lack of government regulation across the globe, rules overseeing the private security industry are not standardised. This is not just a feature in regions that lack integration either. Even within the European Union (EU), interviewees noted that training, for example, varies dramatically. While the EU is harmonised in many respects, the security industry has been largely excluded from these instruments, according to one interviewee. This allows companies to undercut each other in the area of working conditions, and this self-regulation has led to a high level of variation and the tacit acceptance of poor working conditions among some companies. A lack of continuity throughout the sector not only complicates regulation but may also lead to frustration among personnel, PSCs and clients, whose basic standards may vary dramatically. Fragmentation may also contribute to very different outcomes in terms of the effectiveness of security provided. This can not only sow confusion within the sector but also create conditions ripe for shortcuts and loopholes that are leveraged at the cost of personnel's well-being.

While regulation benefits from being rooted in context, which varies between locales, base standards, such as those set by international bodies and international law, may serve to harmonise industry practices. In the United States, for instance, variations within and between states shape disparate experiences and conditions for private officers. Further, while North American governments may

set regulations regarding training, for instance, there is no process that audits training or assesses the quality of training, leading to disparate levels of preparedness across companies engaged in similar tasks. In Europe, one interviewee reported that PSCs leverage freedom of movement norms in the EU to skirt basic standards by conducting operations in States with less active labour regulations. Even though EU member states do have regulations, most of those countries' regulations do not completely cover the primary activities of the private security industry (Button & Stiernstedt, 2018).

Without standardisation, responsibility for working conditions in the private security industry becomes individualised. This creates gaps in responsibility and accountability and perhaps making the industry harder to monitor and audit. One interviewee expressed the need for rules to be implemented uniformly across the industry within contexts. Issues of fragmentation may be most obvious when transnational companies operate in various regions and countries, as these PSCs may default to weaker domestic law and sidestep obligations enshrined in the home country, although this also reportedly occurs within countries.

When the operating country lacks or does not enforce domestic labour laws, companies are able to skirt core standards set by the country in which they are based, leading to opportunities for poor practices to be left unchecked. As PSCs fluidly move across borders, a disparity in laws and enforcement levels across the world complicates the task of regulating the working conditions of personnel. One interviewee based in Europe referred to the need within the EU and globally for "regulation to be more harmonised," adding that, even among different locales, "many of the issues [personnel] are facing are the same." Some basic working conditions are a universal need across the industry. Governments were identified as crucial actors in closing some of those gaps and partially culpable for some of these issues falling through the cracks.

Lack of security practitioners at the decision-making table

In the North American context, interviewees remarked that decision-makers in the private security industry often do not include private security practitioners. As such, the decision-makers typically have little hands-on experience in the sector and sometimes lack understanding of the functions that private security performs and the services it provides. Those in government positions establishing standards applicable to the private security sector may lack an understanding of security officers' needs and

the conditions they face, which may lead to legislation that is disconnected from lived experience. This leaves little opportunity for those directly affected by standards and legislation to voice their needs or have a seat at the decision-making table.

One interviewee lamented that many of those making decisions have "no clue on what to do in terms of changing our situation for our security personnel," adding that those appointed to oversee legislation and state licensing are "usually individuals that are brought in on a volunteer capacity." In describing government decision-making processes, the interviewee explained: "I've never sat on a [government agency] board where there have been security practitioners. It's always law enforcement and military personnel," referring to government agencies as typically "negligent" in their decision-making capacity for the private security sector as they lack a complete understanding of conditions and needs on the ground. Governments' failure to include security practitioners in policy-related decisions can cyclically reinforce substandard legislation that fails to meet needs and does not match the private security landscape.

Better legislation and enforcement, better working conditions

> "We could put in best practices, codes of conduct that people should adhere to, but if it's not backed by legislation, then private security companies [...] are not obligated to adopt best practices."

One interviewee in North America called for "meaningful" instead of "redundant" legislation to effectively oversee the industry. Regulatory mechanisms should be tailored to the specific risks that private security personnel face as well as the specific risks that PSCs pose to the public. Other interviewees, too, referred to the importance of legal regulations in improving working conditions. One interviewee also called for a police security liaison to be implemented by governments to assist government agencies in understanding security and establishing positive relations between police and private security agents. Negative relations may hamper the efficacy of operations.

This normative environment of 'hands-off' private security governance, though allowing for flexibility across the sector, has been adopted at the expense of working conditions. The absence of coherent approaches across different locales creates a permissive environment that lacks accountability and oversight and may foster a space in which violations are unnoticed and unchecked. Interviewees in Kenya and Nigeria reported that there is an interest

in introducing stronger regulations in these contexts, but implementation is falling short. In Tanzania, there are no domestic laws specifically governing the private security sector despite the fact that it employs several hundred thousand people. In South Asia and Southeast Asia, interviewees identified that while regulations exist, implementation is poor. In Myanmar, for example, the government has not established a registration system for PSCs, so the number of PSCs operating in the country is unknown. PSCs are reportedly both powerful and unregulated in the Pacific region, having ties to politicians and even warlords and surpassing the police and military in power and size. A parallel dynamic was identified in Costa Rica, where one interviewee highlighted that PSCs have close ties with government officials and may use these contacts to prevent human rights regulation in the industry.

Interviewees also stressed that scrutiny of the private security industry in relation to human rights compliance and working conditions, particularly compared to other sectors, is generally low. In a permissive environment, laissez-faire practices will be cyclically reinforced, harming personnel and allowing egregious practices to occur. In numerous countries, many private security officers are unregistered and lack adequate protection under the law. Private security, though crucial, is overlooked by many governments.

While governments have a responsibility and obligation to ensure that working conditions standards are met in the private security industry, there are obstacles to enforcement that undermine the extent to which they are able to effectively monitor it. A lack of enforcement in some contexts may be related to low state capacity, low political will or both. One interviewee stated, "I challenge the argument that companies find it difficult to be competitive when they have to invest in better working conditions for security personnel. In most

countries, labour laws require that workers do not pay [recruitment fees] and that migrant workers don't pay fees, there is just no enforcement of the laws." In complex operating environments, in particular, governments' attention may be diverted toward other, more visible, and perhaps seemingly immediate concerns. In some Latin American contexts, the capacity to monitor and enforce regulations is relatively low. Political will to regulate the industry is a prerequisite to implementing standards, but political capacity is a determinant of the ability to enforce regulations. States may require support and means of empowerment in attempting to improve working conditions in the private security sector. Collaboration and cooperation among a variety of stakeholders is likely to prove valuable.

One interviewee reported that some PSCs have increasingly begun to rely on evasive practices, such as subcontracting through other parties, reportedly "trying to find scapegoats" and added that PSCs "just don't want any liabilities for how the workers are being treated, how they are being recruited, so on and so forth." This diverts responsibility, which indicates the need for updated legislative frameworks that accurately reflect the sector and address existing loopholes that can undermine working conditions. Regulations should keep pace with the industry's evolution. Overlap between PSCs and public policing functions, for instance, may create new demands and require regulatory frameworks to oversee the public-private interaction.

Governments are crucial actors in overseeing the industry, regulating standards and signalling acceptable working conditions to PSCs and clients. Although capacity varies between governments, complicating the ability to oversee the industry across locations, a government's decision to leverage – or not – the tools at its disposal carries significant consequences for personnel's working conditions and well-being.

FINDING 8

Other actors and mechanisms, including ICoCA, can drive change by raising awareness of and promoting compliance with legal standards relating to working conditions in the private security industry.

ICoCA, CSOs, insurance mechanisms and, in some places, industry associations and unions, provide the opportunity for collaborative approaches that can encourage decent working conditions and adherence to human rights law. These initiatives may be particularly relevant in circumstances where governments may lack not the political will to enforce working conditions standards for the private security sector, but the political capacity. One interviewee advocated for organisations like ICoCA to find opportunities to advise governments and other actors in the private security space, adding that these mechanisms are influential in driving proper behaviour in the industry.

From the periphery to the focal point: highlighting standards in the industry

Interviewees generally welcomed this research and expressed the need for more attention to be directed toward private security and personnel's working conditions. Many expressed concern about the ways in which the working conditions of private security personnel had long been overlooked in the policy world. The invisibility of working conditions in the private security industry may also cyclically reinforce poor conditions, undermining standards and the industry's reputation more broadly. ICoCA and other organisations provide opportunities to draw attention to challenges personnel face and to highlight best industry practices that PSCs, clients and governments can model.

Interviewees also called on ICoCA to direct resources toward raising standards in the industry, perceiving a direct link between low standards, poor working conditions and personnel's behaviour as it relates to respect for IHL and human rights. Interviewees added that more attention needs to be paid to labour conditions and the many ways they deeply affect the private security industry. Interviewees also argued that the dissemination of information from these actors, including publicly available information ranking PSCs, highlighting best practices and publicly recognising PSCs and clients that

perform well, can engender better working conditions. However, it is important to acknowledge that stakeholders do not always operate in an environment conducive to speaking out. Clients' procurement practices, too, can be ranked if that is feasible within the local context. The initiatives of CSOs, unions, ICoCA and other human rights-oriented organisations can be a valuable tool for PSCs to demonstrate their commitment to human rights. Some industry professionals at ICoCA's 2022 Annual General Assembly also called on clients to be included in the ICoCA certification process, providing opportunities to hold both ends of the supply chain accountable.

A focus on working conditions complements ICoCA's mission to ensure respect for human rights during private operations. By offering certification to ensure compliance with domestic and international legal standards, ICoCA is well-positioned to address the factors that affect personnel's behaviour. Diverse stakeholders can also contribute to standardisation in the industry, bridging disparity to recognise certain universal attributes and rights that should be respected during security operations. ICoCA's guidelines on procurement practices and the Code describe basic working conditions and can elevate awareness of basic standards, including those that protect the physical health and safety of personnel, encourage sufficient training and foster job preparedness, all of which can improve reputation and service delivery. CSOs, unions and others active in the human rights space can and do provide guidance that elevates personnel's needs and promotes positive labour standards.

Collaborative advocacy is a building block of change

Optimism surrounding ICoCA's role is also linked to the space that exists for a variety of stakeholders, including worker representation bodies, industry associations, NGOs, IGOs and CSOs, among others, to supplement state efforts to regulate private security, incentivise positive working

conditions and encourage compliance with human rights. Interviews prove valuable in unpacking the initiatives of organisations and mechanisms that can drive change in the sector. Unions can provide a collective voice for workers, but they may also be prohibited in some countries, stifling their influence on working conditions in certain contexts. However, it may also be the case that unions do not always serve to improve working conditions. In Tabasco, Mexico, for instance, one interviewee cautioned that unions in this region do not always serve to protect workers, referring to them as "extortion."

Industry associations in Australia too, were reported to play an important role in regulating the private security industry, implying that they may be able to supplement government capacity by taking up regulatory functions. One interviewee identified the importance of establishing a collaborative partnership between governments and industry associations, adding that these associations' intimate knowledge of the industry can ensure that PSCs are meeting "not only a legislative standard but also an industry standard." Particularly given that some governments reportedly create laws that do not match the complexity of the security industry, industry associations can address these substantive gaps and move beyond checklist items toward standards more deeply rooted in the reality of private security. Key partners and trade unions have already developed tools that seek to set standards for private security activities (Button & Stiernstedt, 2017), and governments and others should not overlook the value of leaning on these partners' recommendations and supporting their work.

CSOs, NGOs, unions and industry associations can also place pressure on governments, PSCs and clients to enact positive working conditions.

Research indicates that trade unions are considered to have a positive effect on employee well-being (Blanchflower, Bryson, Green, 2022). Collective bargaining is a key means through which employers and their organisations and trade unions can establish fair wages and working conditions. It also provides the basis for sound labour relations. Typical issues on the bargaining agenda include wages, working time, training, occupational health and safety, and equal treatment. The objective of these negotiations is to reach a collective agreement that regulates terms and conditions of employment. Collective agreements may also address the rights and responsibilities of the parties, thus ensuring harmonious and productive industries and workplaces. Enhancing the inclusiveness of collective bargaining and collective agreements is a key means for reducing inequality and

extending labour protections (ILO Collective Bargaining and Labour Relations).

In Germany and the UK, unions, partly in conjunction with other actors, were influential in elevating exploitative working conditions of migrants to the political agenda in the meatpacking industry (Kuhlmann & Vogeler, 2021). In Cambodia's garment sector, unions played an important role in reducing labour standard violations, although the presence of multiple unions in a factory led to a competitive environment that decreased levels of compliance with labour standards (Oka, 2015). Research also suggests that the influence of unions can benefit from collaboration and support from public and private partnerships. Also in Cambodia, CSOs and unions cooperated to push for substantive changes that improved working conditions and fostered legislative changes (Li & Hu, 2023). Joint efforts by various stakeholders can be complementary and generate substantial pressure on the industry, clients and the government to protect workers.

Collective action among these actors can elevate and represent personnel's interests and may bring attention to issues that might otherwise be overlooked, downplayed or relegated to the sidelines of the industry. Poor standards in the industry harm the legitimacy, credibility and effectiveness of the private security sector at large, and ICoCA, as well as other initiatives, can not only reward those PSCs, clients and governments that aim to provide responsible security but also diffuse these norms across the globe.

Insurance too, was identified as a potential driver of better working conditions. One individual noted that insurance companies can inform PSCs of their compliance levels and, based on risk assessments, identify the level of insurance needed. This is important in encouraging PSCs to fulfil their duty of care toward personnel. At the 2022 ICoCA Annual General Assembly, individuals stressed the important role insurance could play in improving working conditions and encouraging compliance. Insurance focuses on reducing risk, which encourages PSCs and their clients to improve health and safety conditions that can better protect their personnel and address any glaring issues that might contribute to physical harm. Insurance brokers can inform PSCs of the level of insurance needed to protect personnel. Reportedly, clients with larger companies have sometimes enforced better standards, as they are more likely to stipulate a certain level of insurance coverage for employees.

Box 12: Global frameworks agreements

Global framework agreements (GFAs) have developed over the last two decades in response to economic globalisation. They reflect a growing need of organised labour and some multinational corporations (MNCs) for additional governance structures that build on labour relations. These agreements are negotiated between MNC's and global trade union federations. GFAs stipulate MNC responsibility for meeting certain standards with regard to fundamental labour and social rights, working conditions, industrial relations, health and safety conditions, training and environmental protection provisions in more than one country and often worldwide. GFAs are seen as a means for MNCs to use union networks as an ESG reporting and remedy platform for peripheral operations. In the private security sector, there are GFAs between UNI Global Union and G4S, Securitas and Loomis, which are designed to safeguard the core ILO conventions across operations. Scientific research show that GFAs in general are instrumental to global ESG policies (Egels-Zandén and Hyllman 2007, Hadwiger 2017).

The importance of various bodies in raising standards also speaks to the need for PSCs to foster partnerships with CSOs, NGOs and others that work to protect human rights and personnel's working conditions. One interviewee also reported that PSCs' dissemination of their standards and ties to these organisations may allow them to brand themselves as morally upstanding, contending that this can convince clients to pay more for private security services. ICoCA and others can capitalise on the wider normative environment to catalyse change. The development of norms applicable to PSCs, for instance, would contribute to professionalisation of the sector and discourage clients from hiring less professional PSCs that might be more likely to commit human rights abuses. The emergence of a variety of stakeholders in the private security industry presents opportunities to support state governance of the sector and improve working conditions.

CONCLUSION

Poor working conditions and the subsequent harm they can create for the private security sector, personnel, clients and communities are a disconcerting feature of the industry. At the same time, there are examples of PSCs, clients, governments and other stakeholders exercising their due diligence and ensuring decent working conditions for private security personnel.

Responsibility lies in multiple hands, but as reported by one interviewee in Costa Rica, some PSCs, clients and governments may attempt to "pass the buck" to other stakeholders. When responsibility lies among everyone, it may be assumed by no one, but the diffusion of responsibility among many stakeholders does not decrease the obligations of any one of them. Throughout interviews, it was clear that more robust and holistic approaches among all industry stakeholders are necessary to guarantee personnel's well-being. Responsible security provision centred on protecting personnel's rights fosters high-quality service delivery and engenders respect for human rights. Investing in personnel's working conditions is not a burden but rather an opportunity to elevate the delivery of private security services and protect the livelihoods of all those in and adjacent to the sector.

By focusing on the connection between working conditions and the human rights impacts of PSCs, an exploration of working conditions can catalyse innovation in the sector, increasing the quality of services provided. It is clear that clients, governments, CSOs and non-state governing bodies alike can each influence working conditions and that each has the responsibility to maintain standards that prevent against human rights violations during private security operations. Positive working conditions can have salubrious effects on the reputation, status and efficacy of private security services. A commitment to upholding the rights of both personnel and the public by PSCs, clients and governments is crucial to ensuring best practices. Private security is now a perennial feature of contemporary society, and its prevalence, as well as its high impact on communities, requires all stakeholders to invest in the well-being of PSC personnel.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Stakeholders should consider the following recommendations.

Recommendations for PSCs

1. Become a member of ICoCA.

- Third-party certification by ICoCA provides additional assurance to clients that they are working with ethical PSCs. It is also valuable for PSCs to foster partnerships with CSOs, NGOs and others that work to protect human rights and personnel's working conditions, when appropriate.

2. Respect the Code, ILO labour standards, domestic law and international norms protecting personnel and the public.

- All PSCs should design company policies and working conditions with reference to the Code, ILO labour standards, domestic law and international norms. In cases where domestic law does not require standards that match or exceed the Code, ILO standards and other international norms, PSCs should be guided by these outside instruments.

- PSCs should implement checks to ensure that these standards are upheld throughout the supply chain, including through subcontractors. PSCs should outline clear standards that must be followed, preventing deleterious practices throughout the supply chain.

3. Implement ethical recruitment practices.

- Carry out recruitment either in-house or by agencies that are credible and comply with basic standards that respect the rights of those recruited. Abolish recruitment fees and reimburse those who have paid recruitment fees (Quah, Nemerovski & Lam, 2021). Companies should only recruit through reputable agencies that they are confident do not engage in such practices.

- Reference the 11 ILO indicators of forced labour (ILO, 2012) as practices to avoid and prevent, including intimidation and threats when workers complain about conditions or wish to quit their jobs; the retention of identity documents or other valuable possessions; the withholding of wages to prevent personnel from leaving or changing employers; debt bondage, which forces workers to remain even when they may wish to leave; restriction of movement; and physical and sexual violence, which may be leveraged to force employees to take on tasks that fall outside the agreed scope of work.

- Translate contracts into the preferred language of those hired, particularly when employing labour migrants. Ensure labour migrants enjoy the same rights guaranteed to other personnel and equal conditions as other personnel, including accommodations, benefits, pay and proper breaks.

4. Diversify the workforce at all levels, not just at the rank-and-file level.

- Diverse identities, ideas and forms of participation should not only be welcomed but encouraged in all areas of security work. PSCs should be an open space along gender, racial, national-origin and other identity lines. New identities should be recognised as bringing value in a variety of roles, not just those that are administrative or rank-and-file, but also in management and other leadership positions. Decision-making tends to be limited in its diversity, potentially subverting the potential of new ideas, which may inhibit effectiveness. Presence in the workplace is not necessarily an accurate reflection of equality, and PSCs should continue to address underlying discriminatory tendencies that may silo women and other minorities in the sector or discourage their participation. Where personnel are hired in the security industry is just as important as whether they are hired at all.

5. Provide reasonable hours, fair wages, proper breaks, social benefits, access to facilities, suitable accommodations, proper uniforms and protection from illness, extreme weather or other harm, access or guidance to mental health resources and clear emergency systems in the event personnel need additional support.

- Shifts should be eight hours, and personnel should not be required to work more than six days per week. They should also be allowed to take breaks. PSCs should abide by minimum wage laws but adjust wages for the cost of living and pay above minimum wage if those wages are not enough to support personnel's needs. Personnel should be paid for overtime work at a rate no less than 1.25 times the regular rate. Accommodations, breaks and access to facilities should be location-appropriate, accounting for weather, safety and other needs. Proper uniforms should protect personnel from weather and match site-specific needs. Personnel should also have access to, knowledge of, and training on emergency protocols, including lines of communication if additional support is needed. Personnel should also receive health and retirement benefits.

- PSCs should integrate access to mental health into health insurance benefits, including counselling costs, or employ experts in-house to address personnel's mental health. Information on mental health resources should be disseminated to ensure personnel are aware of these resources and of opportunities for support.

6. Seek feedback from personnel and integrate that feedback into operations.

- While experiences and preferences will vary, personnel should have clear systems for giving feedback to their companies, and companies should account for their input in order to understand safety needs, respond to other workplace needs such as rest and access to facilities, and identify other support mechanisms that personnel require. Decision-making should be made in conjunction with personnel.

7. Recognise personnel for their work and provide them with opportunities for career growth.

- Provide personnel with opportunities to enhance their skills so that they can take on new roles and functions, which may also cultivate opportunities for further industry professionalisation. This can boost morale within the workforce and improve the public's perception of the professionalism of private security

personnel, contributing to attracting and retaining competent professionals in the sector.

8. Ensure that contractual arrangements set out decent working conditions, encourage clients to fulfil their contractual and legal labour obligations and reference relevant laws and instruments that encourage clients to pay fair prices for services.

- Rely on ICoCA's procurement guide to identify standards that contractual arrangements should contain and insist clients specify shift hours, pay, time off, accommodations (if needed), breaks during work hours, benefits, safety mechanisms, training and access to emergency support systems.

- Remind clients of the standards that must be met and the consequences that poor working conditions have on the quality of services delivered. PSCs should conduct a risk assessment of the site in advance of personnel's deployment to address any glaring health and/or safety problems. PSCs must also monitor whether clients fulfil their contractual obligations regarding working conditions and remind clients of their legal obligations under the contract.

9. Implement accessible reporting and grievance mechanisms for gender-based discrimination, racial discrimination and other forms of harm, whether experienced by personnel or the public.

- PSCs must clamp down on harassment and other misconduct, have an accessible and functioning grievance mechanism in place and implement consequences in the case of violations. Accessible grievance mechanisms are likely to vary by context and should be designed in keeping with preferred modes of reporting and redress. Multiple modes to report harm should also be available. Various emotional and mental support systems should be embedded to redress harm as well.

10. Implement measures to prevent gender-based discrimination, racial discrimination and other forms of harm, both within the workplace and during operations.

Preventive measures should include training and equal opportunities for promotion and hiring among diverse identities in the sector. Safety should be prioritised for all personnel irrespective of their position within the company. Additionally, to foster an innovative and welcoming environment, PSCs should respond

to gender-specific needs. This includes introducing gender-separated changing rooms and accommodations and implementing measures such as maternity leave so that women are not discouraged from joining the security sector due to these obligations.

11. Provide required training and focus on the quality of training provided.

- PSCs should identify whether the substance of training matches personnel's realities and provide them with tools reflective of the circumstances they face during operations. Training should not only be oriented toward traditional security aspects, such as defensive tactics and the use of force, for example, but also toward the de-escalation of violent situations and tensions, perhaps mirroring some preliminarily successful initiatives in public policing (Helfgott et al., 2021). PSCs must assess the unique risks that operations present for the various populations their personnel interact with and adapt their training accordingly. Areas that require attention include legal rights and responsibilities, human rights, de-escalation techniques and self-defence that prevents harm to the public, although this list is likely to need tailoring to specific countries, sites and tasks.

- PSCs should ensure that all personnel undergo weapons training for any weapon they are authorised to handle. Annual follow-up training should be held to reassess this authorisation. If personnel fail training, authorisation must only be given after they have successfully passed a re-assessment.

12. Leverage technologies that increase safety in the workplace.

For instance, CCTV can supplement traditional private guarding, particularly in places where the weather may be harsh or other circumstances may present challenges to security personnel.

Recommendations for private security users

1. Require contracted PSCs to become ICoCA-certified and pay contracted PSCs accordingly, fostering responsible security provision.

- Clients should require the PSCs they hire to join ICoCA if they are not already members and ultimately to become ICoCA-certified. ICoCA's third-party verification of PSCs includes an assessment of their adherence to a set of minimum labour standards, as articulated in various Code principles. Ideally, the costs for ICoCA affiliation/membership and certification should be factored into the contract price.

2. Carry out due diligence regarding respect for human rights and labour law.

- Clients must only hire companies that treat personnel fairly and willingly pay fair prices in exchange for high-quality security services. A fair price is one which is sufficient to implement decent working conditions and respects workers' labour rights. Clients should demonstrate a willingness to invest in responsible security providers at a price that ensures workers' rights are respected. Clients should build working conditions into contracts, including stipulations on salary, hours, breaks, accommodations (if necessary), travel support to and from work sites (if necessary), unethical recruitment, etc. Clients should refer to international labour law and build labour standards into their contracts accordingly.

3. Like PSCs, clamp down on harassment and other poor behaviour and implement accessible grievance mechanisms to supplement those of PSCs.

- Supplement PSCs' existing grievance mechanisms to provide additional avenues of recourse for personnel and the public. These should be rooted in local context by matching preferred modes and mechanisms at each particular location, while also providing additional points of access. Grievances should then be addressed with the PSC to collaboratively identify prevention and opportunities for redress.

4. Build training into contractual arrangements and provide site-specific training for personnel.

- In cases where PSC training may not meet site-specific needs, clients should implement additional training and ensure that the contract price allows for staff training.

5. Refer to ICoCA's Procurement Guide for Contracting Responsible Private Security Providers (2021) and contract private security accordingly.

- Design contractual engagements that build in labour standards and set out a clear scope of the work. Do not expect or ask personnel to work outside of contractual obligations, as this often decreases the safety of private security officers and can compromise operations.

- The documented procurement process should align with more detailed steps in the Procurement Guide, which are to:

    a. create clear and rigorous vetting processes that determine the competency of PSCs and ensure they are in compliance with ICoCA and other human rights obligations

    b. thoroughly outline the scope of the work and expected duties, which should also establish a supportive environment and meet basic working conditions in terms of workplace safety

    c. incorporate details on how security personnel are to manage the operating environment into the tender. This should include: site-specific and client-specific training programmes and education on the roles of security staff; whether and where weapons are permitted and can be used; appropriate policies and confidential reporting mechanisms for sexual exploitation and abuse,, GBV and other discriminatory behaviour that affect personnel and the public; and an avenue for ICoCA to monitor company activities and processes

    d. include details on the ongoing obligations of both parties throughout the contract period in the tender

Recommendations for governments

1. Become a member of ICoCA and sign onto and implement international (and regional, if available) labour standards, including those disseminated by the ILO. Implement domestic working conditions laws as well as private security-specific laws.

- Governments should become members of ICoCA and sign other instruments intended to prevent harm associated with private security operations, including the Montreux Document, which, while focused on actors performing military functions, is also crucial in signalling a commitment to promote responsible security provision.

- Governments should also sign existing international and regional instruments, including conventions from the ILO, such as the Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work (1983) and the 11 fundamental instruments,[23] as well as United Nations instruments, such as The Universal Declaration of Human Rights; the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; and the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families. Governments should also not only endorse these agreements but actively abide by them.

- As not only legal arbiters of working conditions standards and respect for human rights but also as clients, governments should oversee and enforce licensing programmes.

2. Collaborate and partner with organisations like ICoCA, industry associations, CSOs, NGOs, IGOs and worker representation bodies to supplement regulatory capacity. Consult security practitioners for technical expertise.

Include workers' voices and allow workers to actively influence decision-making. Seek input and advice from ICoCA, industry associations, CSOs, NGOs, IGOs and worker representation bodies. Additionally, governments should collaborate with other governments to set standards with some level of uniformity across the industry. Legislation to address the working conditions of private security personnel more holistically should be considered. The appropriate organisation may vary between locales, and governments should be cognizant of the relevant bodies in their jurisdiction.

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23. For a full list of ILO standards please see: International Labour Organization. Conventions and Recommendations. Available at https://www.ilo.org/global/standards/introduction-to-international-labour-standards/conventions-and-recommendations/lang--en/index.htm

- Governments should also actively incorporate people with hands-on experience in the industry in the decision-making and regulatory process. They are urged to create opportunities for those with the most knowledge of the sector to provide technical expertise for governing the industry. Policies that inaccurately reflect the security sector hinder the effectiveness of legislation and other regulatory tools. Additional regulatory tools should be tailored to the specific circumstances of the private security industry. While states typically have legislation and standards related to labour and working conditions, sometimes the private security industry may require additional and unique security-specific legislation (UN Office on Drugs and Crime, 2014).

3. Require transparency in the industry.

- Governments should require transparency in the industry regarding working conditions, training standards and human rights standards, and address any knowledge gaps. PSCs should be required to be open about breaches and human rights violations while protecting victims, and governments should seek to ensure their records are publicly available.

Recommendations for ICoCA, NGOs, CSOs, unions, industry associations and others

1. CSOs actively working on human rights and interested in the private security sector should become a member of ICoCA. They should spread awareness of the ICoCA complaint mechanism and use it whenever necessary.

2. In light of the findings of this research project, ICoCA should review the Code to assess the need for a possible revision.

3. Wherever and whenever appropriate, collaborate and partner with each other and with governments, clients and PSCs to promote positive working conditions and advocate for high standards in the industry.

- Organisations and worker representation bodies should work to establish relationships with governments, PSCs and clients and place pressure on these actors to implement, enforce and abide by higher standards. These parties can play a major role in holding governments, PSCs and clients accountable. These organisations should also foster relationships with personnel to better understand officers' lived realities and needs. Advocacy, research and policy recommendations should be informed by personnel's experiences and elevate their voices.

4. ICoCA and civil society actors should continue to document PSC performance, working conditions and human rights records. In some places, industry associations can encourage PSCs to meet industry standards and award certifications for PSCs that meet these standards.

- These bodies can recognise positive conditions by highlighting companies that implement high standards to incentivise PSCs and clients to focus on the quality of the security services provided and prioritise the treatment of personnel. Clients, too, should be assessed according to hiring practices and urged to vet PSCs more consciously and pay fair prices. Increased media exposure and attention to poor working conditions in recent years may be tied to driving improvement. ICoCA, NGOs, CSOs, unions, industry associations and other organisations can capitalise on issues in the

sector to draw attention to and advocate for improved working conditions by documenting challenges and best practices wherever possible. As unions exerted influence to improve poor working conditions in the UK and Germany, the role played by the media also suggests that employers may be amenable to improving working conditions as a consequence of public pressure (Kuhlmann & Vogeler, 2021).

5. Support PSCs' capacity to develop training programmes and best practices regarding working conditions.

- Organisations should support PSCs' capacity to deliver training and implement best practices, particularly regarding respect for human rights. This should also involve an analysis of the specific roles that personnel take on to adapt training to specific needs and account for the evolving role of private security. As many personnel take on tasks historically reserved for the police (UN Office on Drugs and Crime, 2014), these organisations should encourage PSCs to account for the tasks associated with such roles in contexts in which public officers are also being asked to take on more social service roles (Millar et al., 2021).

6. Leverage the capabilities of industry associations and worker representation bodies.

- Industry associations can provide a base standard that can extend beyond ticking legal boxes and highlight best practices, while unions are important worker representation bodies that can elevate personnel's voices, experiences and needs. These actors should work to exert pressure on PSCs, clients and governments. They can also standardise working conditions requirements when governments are unable or unwilling.

APPENDIX

Methodology

Annex 1: ICoCA training courses (2023)

The International Code of Conduct: Why private security companies must comply with it

This course is designed for managers of private security companies and those who set company policy. This short course explains where the Code comes from, how it relates to other international regulations and initiatives and why it must be followed.

The International Code of Conduct: Why security personnel must follow it

This course is designed for all staff who work for private security companies. It focuses on the behaviour and actions required for individuals to comply with the Code and avoid human rights abuses. The practical lessons are designed to raise awareness about the Code and enable private security personnel to apply the principles contained in the Code to their everyday work and lives. Using section F of the Code as its foundation, this course works through each of the specific principles regarding the conduct of personnel.

Online training course on the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse

This comprehensive online training on the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA) is tailored to those who work for private security companies – both frontline security personnel and managers who set policy. This course applies global best practices in PSEA to the private security industry, explaining key components of PSEA and using exercises to reinforce what has been taught. The course is available in English, French, Spanish, Arabic, Chinese (simplified), Portuguese, Russian, Somali and Swahili.

Use of force

This training course explains why the correct use of force matters in the everyday work of private security personnel and how force can be used appropriately. It also describes the role private security personnel can play in helping reduce the risk of human rights abuses and how they can apply internationally recognised standards in their day-to-day work. The course is available in English, with simultaneous interpreting into additional languages.

Using private security in humanitarian organisations

The focus of this course is on private security in humanitarian organisations. It looks at how to select, contract and work with PSCs. This unique training helps humanitarian organisations align their specific needs and mission with those of their private security providers.

These courses, free of charge, are currently only available to ICoCA Member and Affiliate Companies. ICoCA is considering offering them to non-ICoCA companies for a fee.

Interviews were conducted with 40 individuals with experience in North America (5), Europe (8), Latin America (5), Australia and the Pacific (2), Africa (11), Asia (7) and an unspecified or broad perspective (2).

Surveys were distributed and responded to in five languages: (1) Portuguese, (2) Spanish, (3) German, (4) French and (5) English,[24] although survey Sheet 8 was only distributed in English and Spanish. Non-English survey responses were all translated into English using Google Translate. There were some minor differences across surveys to target specific audiences. All survey responses were aggregated into four different versions based on matching questions across the different surveys. Sheet 7 is the master survey sheet and consists of all iterations of surveys and all survey respondents throughout this project (all personnel were asked all the questions on Sheet 7). Sheets 6, 8 and 9 are subsets that include additional questions to target specific contextual factors. For this study, only Sheets 6, 7, 8 and 9 were used.

Sheet Name	Sheet 6	Sheet 7	Sheet 8	Sheet 9
Languages	English	Portuguese, Spanish, German, French, English	English, Spanish	Portuguese, Spanish, German, French, English

Sheet 6 Respondent profile

Country	Number of respondents From the country[25]	Number of respondents working in the country[26]
Armenia	1	1
Canada	1	1
Costa Rica	0	1
India	1	1
Kenya	2	0
Libya	1	0
Nepal	2	1
Nigeria	1	1
Qatar	0	6
Saudi Arabia	1	1
Trinidad and Tobago	1	1
Uganda	3	0
United Arab Emirates	2	0
United Kingdom	1	0
United States	39	38
Multiple locations[27]	0	2

24. A survey was also distributed in Arabic but no personnel responded.

25. 20 blank responses.

26. 22 blank responses.

27. Responses were: "In France and internationally" and "Many."

Sheet 7 Respondent profile

Country	Number of respondents From the country[28]	Number of respondents working in the country[29]
Algeria	1	0
Argentina	1	1
Armenia	1	1
Austria	24	25
Bangladesh	2	0
Belgium	22	30
Bolivia	2	2
Bosnia	1	0
Brazil	11	11
Canada	1	1
Chile	3	3
Colombia	2	2
Costa Rica	9	10
Czech Republic	1	1
Ecuador	26	22
El Salvador	3	3
France	5	2
Germany	7	10
Greece	1	1
India	3	1
Iran	1	0
Ireland	2	2
Italy	2	0
Ivory Coast	2	2
Kenya	11	9
Libya	1	0
Luxembourg	0	1
Malta	1	1
Mexico	7	7
Morocco	5	0
Nepal	7	5
Nicaragua	1	0
Nigeria	1	2
North Macedonia	1	0
Northern Ireland	21	21
Norway	3	3
Panama	1	1

28. Blank responses (15) and two other responses – "car" (1) and "Spanish" – are not included in the home country list as no information can be extrapolated from these responses, but they are included in the report's descriptive statistics.

29. Blank responses (18) and 10 other responses – "Yes" (1), "Security" (3), "Security vigilant" (1), "security guard" (1), "Retired" (2), "car" (1), and "At the moment I am out of work" (1) – are not included in the country of work as no information can be extrapolated from these responses, but they are included in the report's descriptive statistics.

Country	Number of respondents From the country[28]	Number of respondents working in the country[29]
Peru	7	6
Poland	1	0
Portugal	2	0
Qatar	0	6
Romania	2	0
Saudi Arabia	1	1
Scotland	1	0
Spain	78	80
Trinidad and Tobago	1	1
Turkey	2	0
Uganda	3	0
UK	35	39
United Arab Emirates	2	0
United States	38	37
Uruguay	3	4
Venezuela	6	5
Zambia	1	1
Multiple locations[30]	0	2

30. Responses were: "In France and internationally" and "Many."

Sheet 8 Respondent profile

Country	Number of respondents From the country[31]	Number of respondents working in the country[32]
Argentina	1	1
Armenia	1	1
Austria	2	0
Bolivia	0	2
Canada	1	1
Chile	1	1
Costa Rica	0	2
Ecuador	12	12
El Salvador	1	1
India	1	1
Kenya	2	0
Libya	1	0
Mexico	7	7
Nepal	2	1
Nicaragua	1	0
Nigeria	1	1
Peru	3	3
Qatar	0	6
Saudi Arabia	1	1
Trinidad and Tobago	1	1
Uganda	3	0
United Arab Emirates	2	0
United Kingdom	1	0
United States	38	37
Uruguay	0	1
Venezuela	6	5
Multiple locations[33]	0	2

31. Blank responses (10) are not included in the home country list as no information can be extrapolated.

32. Blank responses (12) are not included in the country of work list as no information can be extrapolated.

33. Responses were: "In France and internationally" and "Many."

Sheet 9 Respondent profile

Country	Number of respondents From the country[34]	Number of respondents working in the country[35]
Algeria	1	0
Armenia	1	1
Austria	24	25
Bangladesh	1	0
Belgium	22	30
Bosnia	1	0
Brazil	15	15
Canada	2	1
Chile	2	2
Colombia	2	2
Costa Rica	9	9
Czech Republic	1	1
Ecuador	14	10
El Salvador	2	2
France	5	3
Germany	7	10
Greece	1	1
India	3	3
Iran	1	0
Ireland	2	2
Italy	2	0
Ivory Coast	2	2
Kenya	11	9
Libya	1	0
Luxembourg	0	1
Malta	1	1
Morocco	5	0
Nepal	7	5
Nigeria	1	2
North Macedonia	1	0
Northern Ireland	21	20
Norway	3	3
Panama	1	1
Peru	4	3
Poland	1	0
Portugal	2	0
Romania	2	0
Qatar	0	6
Saudi Arabia	1	1

34. Blank responses (73) and one other response – "car" – are not included in the home country list as no information can be extrapolated.

35. Blank responses (75) and eight other responses – "At the moment I am out of work" (1), "Security" (3), "security guard" (2), "Security vigilant" (1), and "Yes" (1) – are not included in the country of work list as no information could be extrapolated.

Country	Number of respondents From the country[34]	Number of respondents working in the country[35]
Scotland	1	0
Spain	78	80
Trinidad and Tobago	1	1
Turkey	2	0
Uganda	3	0
United Arab Emirates	2	0
United Kingdom	35	40
United States	38	37
Uruguay	3	3
Zambia	1	1
Many locations[36]	0	1

36. The response was "Many."

Interview questions

Interviews were semi-structured, and not every interviewee was asked every question. Phrasing also varied slightly depending on the interviewee's regional expertise and relation to the private security sector, but the questions below served as a guideline for the interview format.

1. What are the working conditions of guards across the industry today?

2. How have working conditions in the industry changed over the years?

3. What are the various challenges in working conditions faced by workers at different stages of their work? (e.g. recruitment, arrival, living conditions, working conditions, departure)

4. What are the key factors driving inadequate work conditions in the industry?

5. What are the country/region-specific challenges in the working conditions of guards across the industry?

6. What are the specific challenges faced by women and other gender-diverse guards at the workplace and at designated accommodations?

7. Are the challenges in the working conditions of guards different for various sectors? (e.g. mines, prisons, airports)

8. How do the working conditions of guards affect their personal safety and health?

9. How do the working conditions of guards affect the quality of their work and their respect for the human rights of their constituencies? (i.e. the impact of poor working conditions on the behaviour of guards and their respect for human rights)

10. What are industry best practices in terms of providing decent work conditions for guards?

11. What are examples of gender-responsive practices in the provision of decent work conditions and accommodation for guards?

12. What are the responsibilities of clients in ensuring decent working conditions?

13. What are the responsibilities of authorities in ensuring decent working conditions?

14. How can the industry be incentivised to enforce fair prices and fair treatment in exchange for quality and security?

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