



The
Responsible
Security
Association

WORKING CONDITIONS IN PRIVATE SECURITY COUNTRY REPORT: UGANDA

A Market Research Prepared for the International Code
of Conduct Association by Consumers Options

ICoCA Research Paper Series on Working Conditions in Private Security

WORKING CONDITIONS IN PRIVATE SECURITY COUNTRY REPORT: UGANDA

A Market Research Prepared for the International Code
of Conduct Association by Consumers Options

ICoCA Research Paper Series on Working Conditions in Private Security

CONTENTS

1	INTRODUCTION	6
1.1	About ICoCA	6
1.2	The research project	6
1.3	Data collection and analysis	6
1.4	Achieved sample profile	7
1.5	Intent of the project	8
2	EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	10
2.1	Summary of findings	10
2.2	Regional differences	11
3	RESEARCH FINDINGS	12
3.1	Security industry trends	12
3.2	Contracts, salary and benefits	12
3.3	Gender and discrimination	16
3.4	Health, mental health, safety, work time	18
3.5	Employee training	24
4	SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS	26
4.1	Situational analysis metrics	26
4.2	Conclusion and way forward	27
5	APPENDICES	28
5.1	Data collection tool	28
5.2	Sampling areas	30
5.3	Briefing notes	31



1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 About 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 human rights 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”).

The Code articulates the responsibilities of private security companies (PSCs) under human rights and international humanitarian law to ensure the responsible provision of private security services, particularly when operating in complex environments.

1.2 The research project

ICoCA commissioned Consumer Options Limited, a full market research company with the ability to do research across Africa, to conduct a survey on private security working conditions and human rights in Uganda.

The target respondents for the survey were security officers/guards working for private security companies (licensed or not). The survey did not include other categories of security personnel (directly employed by establishments or private individuals).

The study was quantitative in nature with the security guards randomly selected in sampling points selected in urban set ups including malls, schools, government facilities, private facilities, churches, hospitals and commercial warehouses, among others. The study aimed at recruiting and interviewing a sample of 1000 security guards in nine main towns in Uganda namely:

- Kampala
- Wakiso
- Gulu
- Mbale
- Mbarara
- Mukono
- Jinja
- Mpigi and
- Entebbe

This research covered a range of industry practices that can affect the rights and welfare of security guards, including:

- Recruitment fee payment
- Access to healthcare and advocacy channels
- Mental and physical health hazards
- Safety risks as well as
- Wages, working hours, and benefits

The report presents the results from a survey conducted with 861 interviewees selected to be nationally representative, with a confidence level of 95% and a margin of error of 3.269 %. As such, these findings provide insight into the perspectives of security guards in major cities and employers throughout the country.

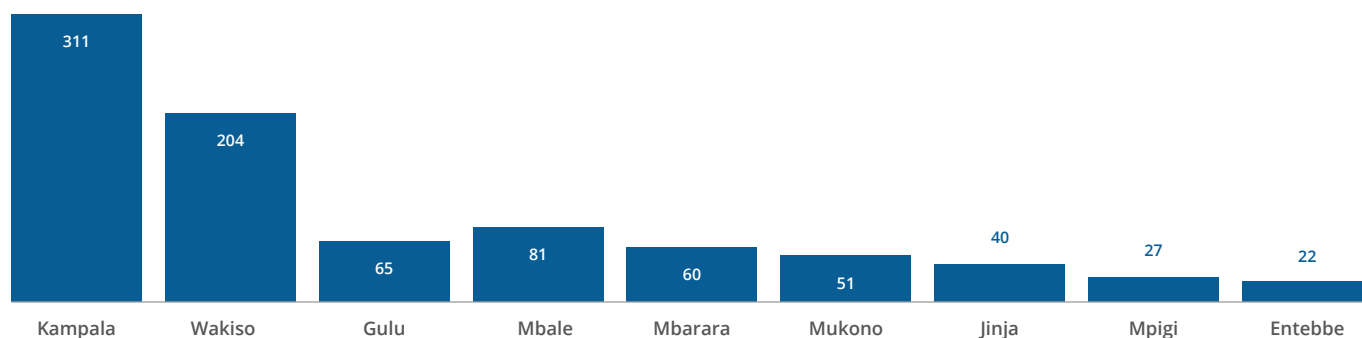
1.3 Data collection and analysis

Fieldwork commenced on 23rd March 2023 and was completed on 31st March 2023. Data collection ran concurrently across all the regions.

Computer aided personal interviews (CAPI) were conducted where interviewers used hand held devices to collect and submit data in real time. SurveyToGo platform was used to deploy surveys to tablets in the field and conduct surveys offline or online.

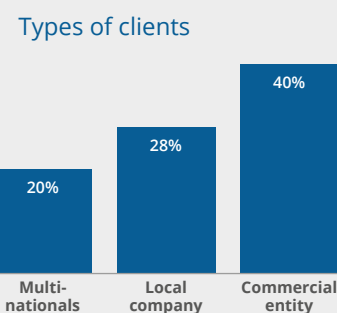
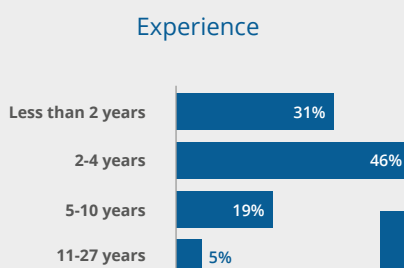
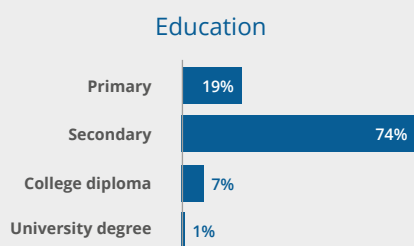
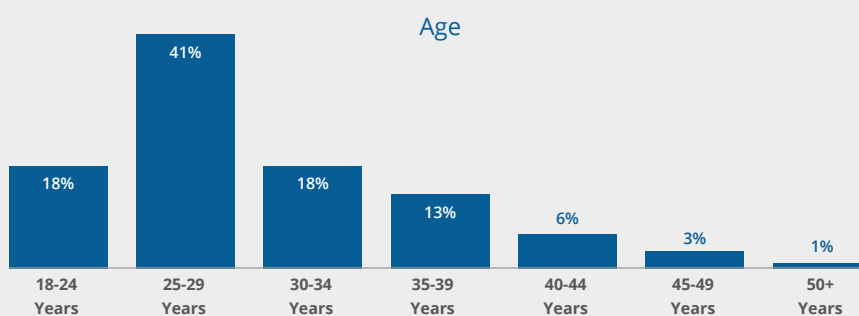
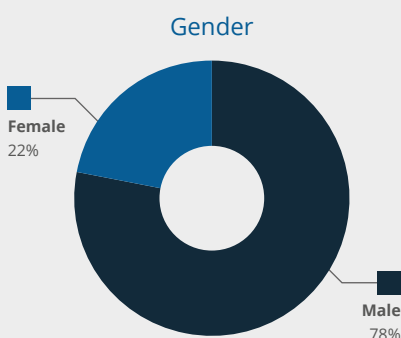
IBM’ SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) software was used for data processing and analysis. The statistical software was used for data preparation and management to analyse and report and more importantly, extract actionable insights from the data.

1.4 Achieved sample profile

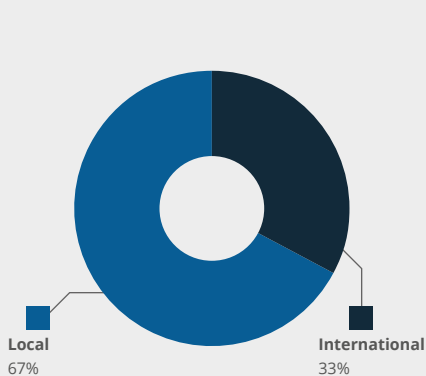


Purposive sampling design was adopted to allow for the selection of guards across 9 towns and cities. A total sample of 861 interviews was achieved. Mpigi and Entebbe had significantly low sample achieved thus the report includes bases (the sample) during analysis/reporting.

Profile of the security guards interviewed



Employer business registration



	International	Local
Kampala	36%	64%
Mukono	12%	88%
Wkakiso	44%	56%
Mpigi	30%	70%
Entebbe	55%	45%
Mbale	16%	84%
Jinja	28%	73%
Gulu	18%	82%
Mbarara	33%	67%

	Public Authorities	Multinational Companies	Local Companies	Commercial Entity
Kampala	10%	21%	29%	40%
Mukono	8%	0%	6%	86%
Wkakiso	22%	16%	29%	33%
Mpigi	4%	48%	48%	0%
Entebbe	0%	18%	23%	59%
Mbale	21%	25%	25%	30%
Jinja	0%	0%	20%	80%
Gulu	3%	9%	46%	42%
Mbarara	12%	40%	28%	20%

A total of 275 employees working for international employers (about 33%) and 566 working for local employers (67%) were interviewed. Commercial entities form the larger market, employing about 40% of the market force. Entebbe and Wakiso have a high number of international employers; Mukono and Jinja have more commercial entities.

Local companies refer to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) either in service and trade thus their security needs are basic to moderate. Commercial entities are large scale enterprises e.g. in manufacturing where they run warehouses or large farms, thus security needs are in scale.

1.5 Intent of the project

This research project is part of a broader research thread conducted by ICoCA on *"People in Security"*. It complements the report *"When the Abused becomes the Abuser; Poor working conditions in the private security industry undermine human rights compliance"*¹ published by ICoCA in 2023.

The research intends to inform civil society organisations, PSCs and authorities with a view to contribute to their dialogue on the improvement of working conditions in private security, inform clients' procurement/contracting practices and promote PSCs' adhesion to the Code.

This is against a backdrop of key stakeholders, including donors, investors, banks and insurance companies becoming progressively aware of the need for private security companies to operate to internationally recognised industry standards.

¹ <https://icoca.ch/2023/12/14/when-the-abused-becomes-the-abuser-policy-brief-report/>





2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2.1 Summary of findings

Contracts, salary and benefits

The findings indicate about 47% of the guards in Uganda have an employment contract. About 88% of these guards are paid above the minimum wage of USh 130,000, though it is considered low. Key challenges with contracts, salary and benefits include income inequalities across different guards, low access to benefits like medical cover by security guards since the employers don't provide the benefits and the majority cannot afford it with their low income, guards working for long hours since the firms employ few guards, a lack of staff coordination, a lack of clear career growth plan for guards and a lack of employer protection of their rights in times of crisis.

The study demonstrates the need for key stakeholders to structure income groups and wage structures for different categories of guards, adopt strategic partnerships with private medical cover providers and underwriters to develop a package that fits the needs of security guards. The study also demonstrates the need for the establishment of a resource management framework for strained employers to better manage and deploy their resources efficiently, the development of an employee growth plan and mobilising stakeholders to establish career programmes as well as establishing teamwork and a supportive culture between management and the guards.

Gender and discrimination

The country has significant cases of discrimination and sexual harassment at 17% and 6% respectively. Only about 25% of the security guards are aware of preventative measures in place to address issues of discrimination and harassment at work. Key challenges identified include bias in the deployment of guards based on one's ethnic group, female guards being at risk of sexual harassment by supervisors and clients, a perception that security jobs are not fit for women and a low opinion of security guards by clients and the general public.

These findings call for collaboration between stakeholders to establish clear rules on deployment, holding supervisors accountable for incidences of discrimination and harassment, driving awareness of various reporting mechanisms, changing the perception around female guards and demonstrating their ability to deliver on their duties, endorsing a merit-based employment model where guards have an equal chance of being employed as well as building a positive image by shifting public perception.

Health, mental health, safety, work time

About 71% of the security guards in Uganda work 7 days a week while 65% cannot take breaks at work. About 67% of the guards have access to clean toilets, 64% have access to chairs and tables, 43% have access to guard's shelter and 42% have access to drinking water.

63% of the security guards think that poor working conditions affect their performance, 66% their mental health, 74% their physical health and security. 39% of the guards think that poor working conditions are likely to influence guards in engaging in unlawful acts.

Key challenges identified include security guards working without a day off and not being allowed to take a break while working. There are also gaps in access to amenities with more than half of the guards not having access to water and shelter. Poor working conditions lead to low motivation and productivity, stress and depression, health problems like back aches, headaches, pneumonia and malaria as well as fatigue due to working for long hours.

The study demonstrates the need for sensitisation of the employers on the risks of guards' fatigue and encourages them to have systems to better manage work shifts. It advocates for a collective effort by employers, clients and industry stakeholder to facilitate basic amenities for their security guards, the establishment of staff feedback platforms and the conduct of guards' satisfaction surveys. It recommends creating forums to address mental health and partnering with renowned experts in the mental health sector as well as creating a wellness day/staff health check initiative supported by industry stakeholders. The study also demonstrates the need for the establishment of employee forums with employers to address their concerns.

Employee training

There's a very high incidence of training, with 93% of the guards trained by employers. About 86% of staff are trained on working with clients, 95% on rules on the use of

force, 66% on health and safety and 66% on human rights. However, the guards feel the trainings are inadequate. The challenge with employee training is that they are not up to date and not easy to comprehend. Employers recruit qualified guards so that they don't have to conduct training and employers do not provide equipment after training.

The study demonstrates the need for more trainings and allocation of more time for training, motivating the guards to attend trainings with incentives like free transport, training allowance, provision of equipment after training as well as training on soft skills like how to present and express yourself.

2.2 Regional differences

Generally, Mukono has the highest number of guards working for commercial entities while Mpigi has the highest number of guards working for local companies.

Employment terms: Mpigi, Wakiso and Entebbe are the top three regions paying above average (minimum or above minimum) wages. Mbale employers are least likely to have contracts.

Work environment: Mukono and Jinja have the most guards working 7 days a week. Mpigi stands out for higher number of employers not training guards.

Impact of poor work environment: Mukono stands out for lowest incidence of guards likely to engage in unlawful behaviour. Gulu has the highest incidence of guards likely to have mental health problems due to poor work environment.

3. RESEARCH FINDINGS

3.1 Security industry trends

Overview

The police play a big role in monitoring private security firms including the deployment of guards and management of guns² (cases of faulty gun deployment). Despite the high level of supervision, the private security firms still breach contracts due to unprofessionalism. This implies the sector is not fully regulated.

The private security organisations (PSOs) department and private firearm ordered employers to remit National Social Security Fund (NSSF) contributions for their guards.

There are security guards engaging in unlawful activities as well as a rise in guards committing suicides,³ an indication of a lack of financial, mental and physical wellness.

Ambulance services

There's increasing competition for manned security services even in the medical sector. KK Security provides first aid for non-life-threatening injuries.

Guard monitoring system

Security firms have introduced Guard Monitoring System (GMS) that monitors guards and other caretakers while at work.

Technology

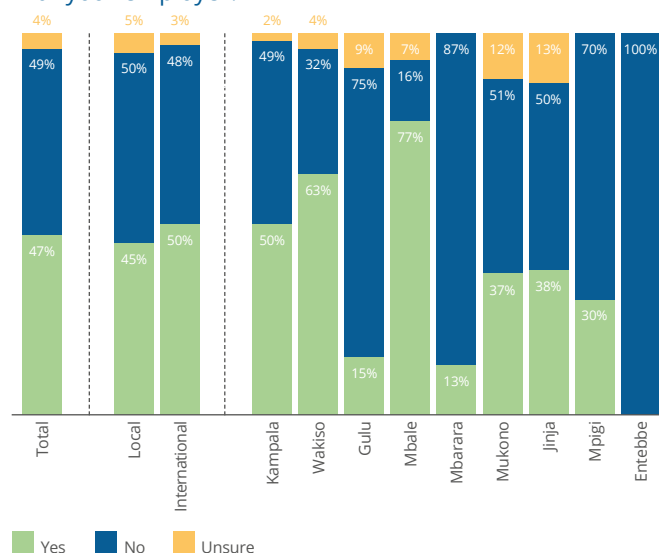
Security firms are moving to preventive methods like access control, intruder alarm systems and CCTV Cameras and thus are using fewer guards and more technology.

With the panic button in place, clients may not need guards 24/7 and may only contact them when the need arises.

3.2 Contracts, salary and benefits

3.2.1 Key findings on contracts, salary and benefits

1. Do you have an employment contract with your employer?



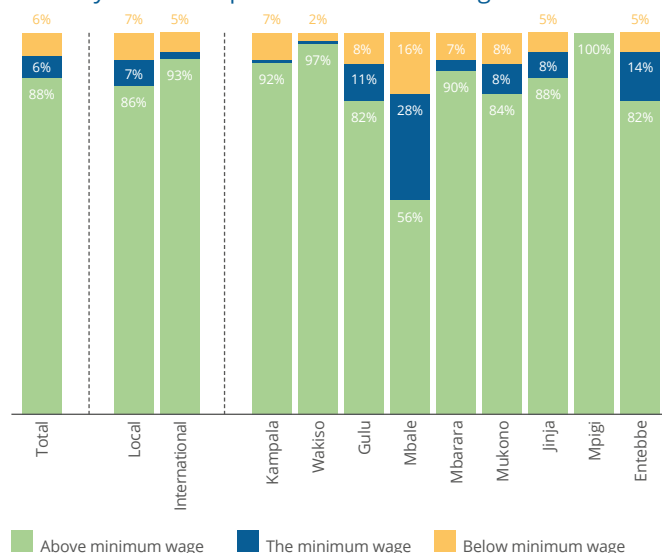
About 49% of the guards interviewed do not have a contract with their employer. The high incidence cuts across both local and international employers. Mbale stands out for a high number of guards with contracts

2. See for instance: <https://www.monitor.co.ug/uganda/news/national/security-firms-grapple-with-police-order-to-deploy-guards-1801086>

3. See for instance: <https://www.monitor.co.ug/uganda/news/national/lira-security-guard-shot-himself-police-4240670>

while Gulu and Mbarara are the laggards. There's a need for awareness and sensitisation in regions like Mukono and Jinja with a high number of guards unsure whether they have a contract or not.

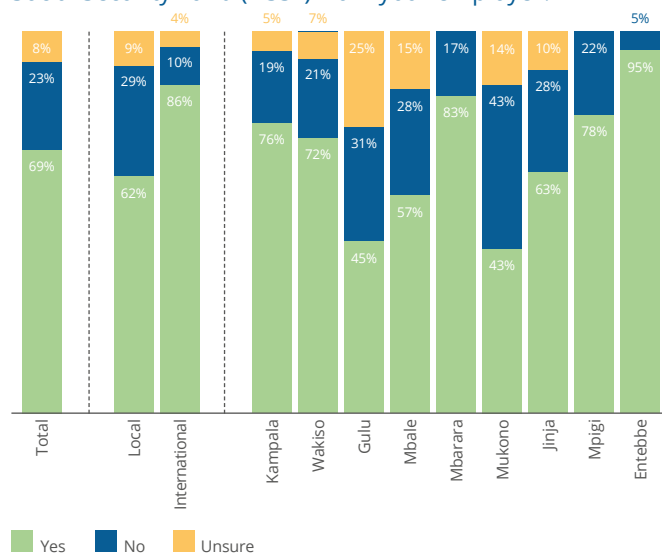
2. Salary levels compared to minimum wage



Only about 6% of the guards are paid a salary below a minimum wage of US\$ 130,000. International employers are more likely to pay a higher salary. **Mbale has the lowest paying employers** across the regions with about 16% paid below a minimum wage while 31% are paid the minimum wage.

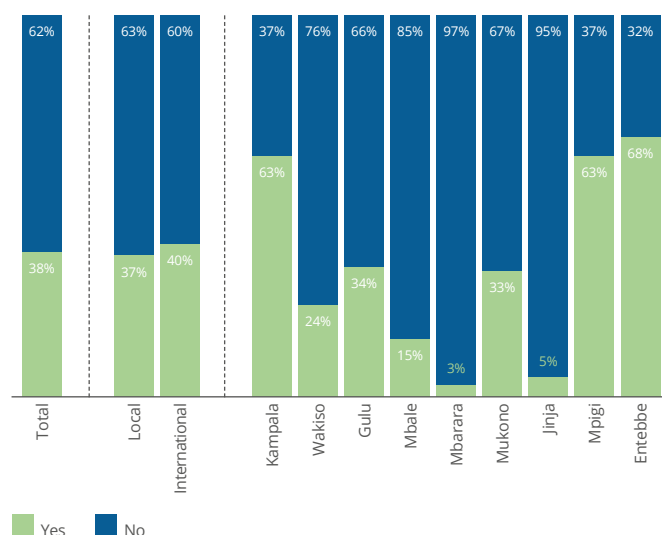
Gulu, Entebbe, Mukoro are other regions that need advocacy for minimum wage.

3. Do you receive social benefits such as the National Social Security Fund (NSSF) from your employer?

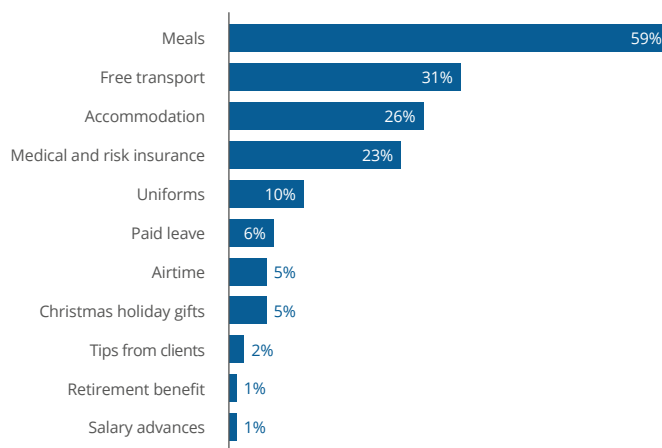


About 7 in every 10 security guards in Uganda have a national security fund with their employer. The security fund is a core benefit security guards get from their employers considering the national health fund is not well structured. International employers and employers in Mbarara are more likely to provide national security fund benefits for their guards.

4. Do you receive any other benefits?

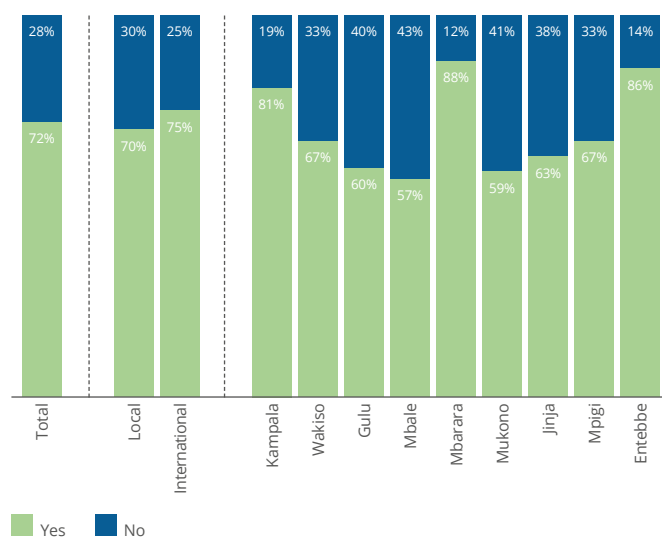


More than a third of the guards receive other social benefits from their current employer. The incidence is highest in Entebbe at 68%, Mpigi at 63% and Kampala at 63%. Regions with low incidence of employers providing other benefits are Jinja at 5% and Mbarara at 3%.



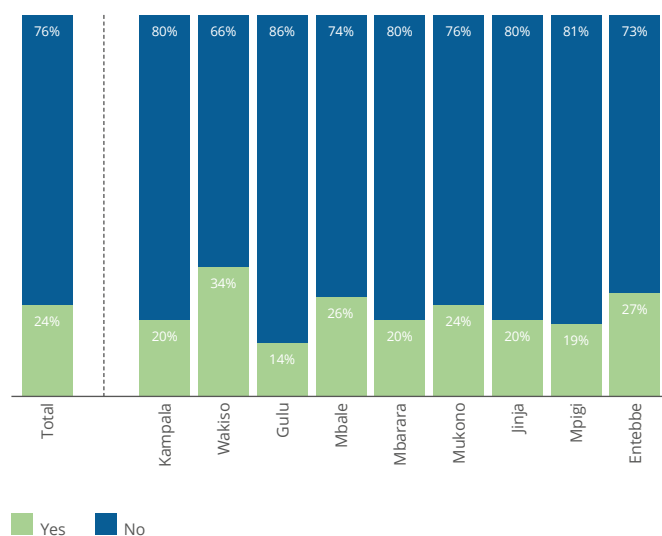
About 59% of the security guards receive meals from the employer. Other benefits include **transport** to work station, **accommodation** and salary advance to pay for **medical** bills. A few security guards mentioned mobile phone calling credit, festive seasons packages and bonuses, a daily allowance of US\$ 1500, extra payment for public holidays and festive season, joining a SACCO (savings and credit cooperative) and paid leave once a year.

5. Are you and any other guards paid for working overtime?



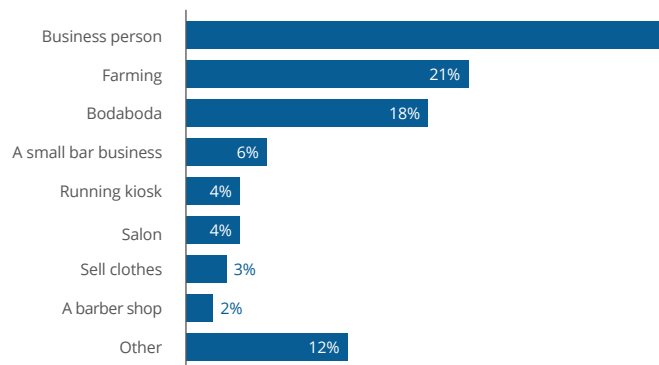
Overtime payment is common in Uganda with **72% of the guards getting paid for working overtime**. Regionally, Mbarara, Entebbe and Kampala have the highest incidence of guards receiving pay for working overtime. To most guards, overtime payment means they can take care of their day to day expenses like food and transport without expecting such benefits from the employer.

6. Do you have another activity to supplement your income?



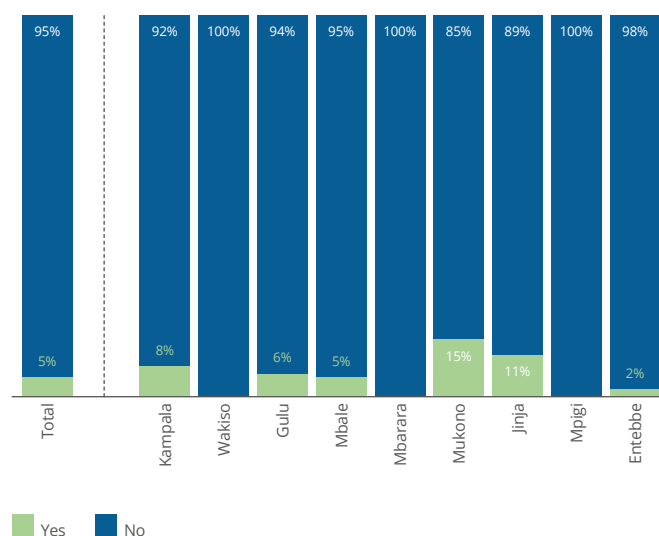
While 72% of the guards get paid for working overtime, only 24% have another income generating activity. These security guards **engage in other activities mainly to supplement their income**.

7. Types of activity to supplement income



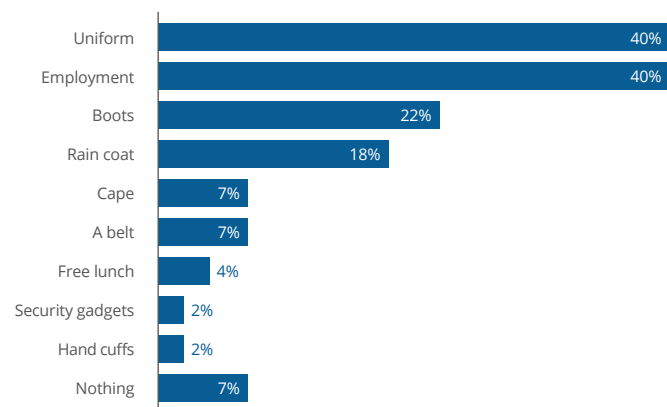
Key activities the guards engage in include: small businesses at 36%, farming at 21% and boda boda (motorcycle taxi) at 18%. A few guards mentioned other activities like taxi driving, bar business, road side shop, chapatti making, popcorn machine, building and construction, hair salon, mobile money, selling shoes, etc. These businesses are either run alone during non-working hours or in partnership with spouses.

8. Did you have to pay recruitment fees?



Only about 5% of the security guards in Uganda pay a recruitment fee to be hired. The incidence is higher in Mukono at 15% and Jinja at 11%. None of the security guards in Wakiso, Mbarara and Mpigi regions paid a recruitment fee when they were employed. Some guards part with about a month's salary for recruitment.

9. What do you receive for the recruitment fee?



About 40% of the security guards who pay a recruitment fee do so to be assured of getting employed. Other benefits of paying the recruitment fee may include a uniform (which is deducted from their salaries), boots, coat, belt etc. Only 7% of the guards who paid the recruitment fee did not receive any benefits.

3.2.2 Key challenges with contracts, salary and benefits

The main challenges security guards face are low salaries and delays in salary payments. Salary delays means the guards lack money to sustain their needs like transport to work, meals and more importantly to pay for bills. Some guards feel that there are irregular and frequent transfers disrupting their schedules and expenses. The Government tax is also decreasing the amount of income they take home.

There is a belief that security guards' salaries are not standardised, with some being paid higher even though the job descriptions are similar. Banyankole guards are believed to be paid better than others while security guards from the East and the North are highly underpaid.

Access to social benefits like medical coverage is low. Low salary is the core barrier to accessing these benefits along with rising costs of accommodation and food. The security guards feel that their employers would not care if they get sick.

Resources are a key challenge for the majority of the employers. Many employers have few staff deployed thus the guards feel that they are overworked. Ignorance is also a key challenge, with staff lacking experience and knowledge. Also, there is limited coordination between colleagues which leads to inefficiency due to a lack of a collaborative environment.

The security guards are concerned that the nature of their job doesn't offer career growth plans. The majority

have secondary school education, so they have limited opportunities for career advancement which leads to low job satisfaction and motivation at work.

Lastly, despite having contracts with employers, there are no employer protection policies in place. In case of a dispute or a loss, the guard is held liable since the employers defend the clients. Absence from work without approval is penalised, some are fined and pay is deducted from their monthly salaries.

3.2.3 Gaps and opportunities for contracts, salary and benefits

The research findings indicate that the average pay guards' take home is not enough to meet their expenses with a majority earning a minimum wage of US\$ 130,000. These salaries are also delayed or some deductions are made, lowering the wages further. There are also income inequalities across different guards. The opportunity lies in working with employers to structure income groups and wage structures for different categories of guards.

The findings also showed that there is low access to benefits like medical cover by security guards since the employers don't provide any coverage and the majority cannot afford it with their low income. The opportunity lies in strategic partnerships with private medical providers and underwriters to develop a package that fits the needs of security guards.

Capacity is also a key gap as where the guards feel that they are overworked since the firms employ few guards. Staff coordination is also a challenge. The opportunity is in establishing a resource management framework for strained employers to better manage and deploy their resources efficiently.

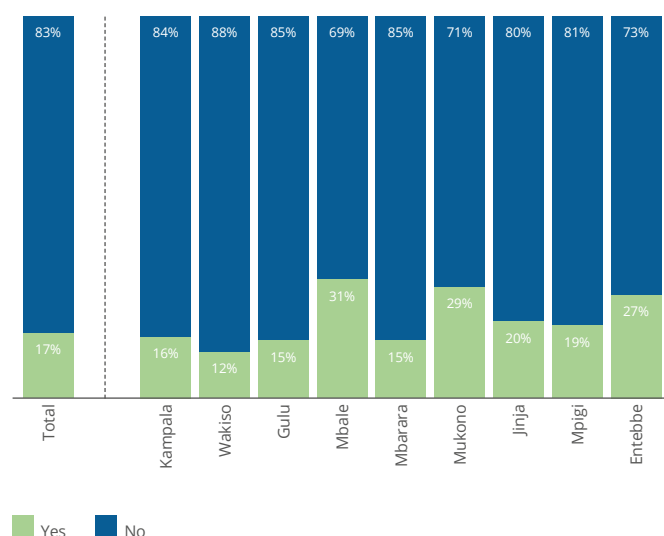
Security guards feel that they don't have a clear career growth plan. Thus, they stagnate without growth opportunities. The majority have a secondary school education, which is a barrier to career advancement. The opportunity lies in sensitising private security firms to craft an employee growth plan and mobilising stakeholders to establish career programmes.

Without employer protection, the security guards feel the employers are not doing enough to support them in times of crisis. The employers are often biased in favour of the clients. The opportunity is in establishing teamwork and a supportive culture between management and the guards.

3.3 Gender and discrimination

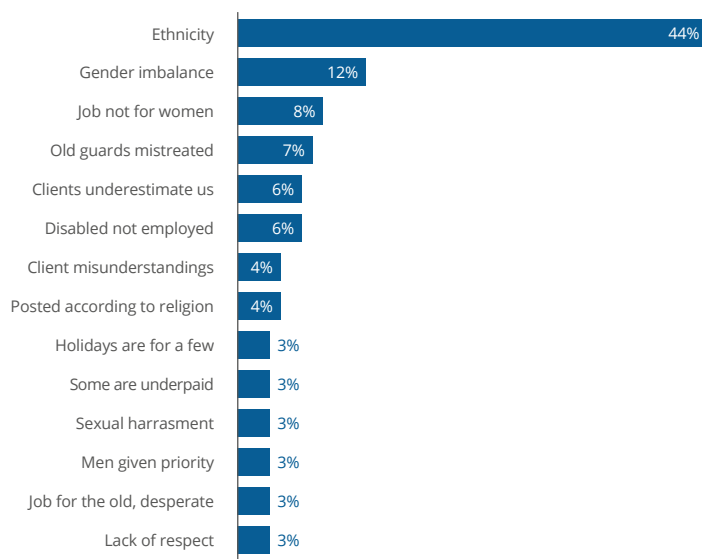
3.3.1 General findings on gender and discrimination

1. Do you notice any discrimination at work because of age, gender, race, ethnicity, nationality, sexual orientation, disability, religion, etc.?



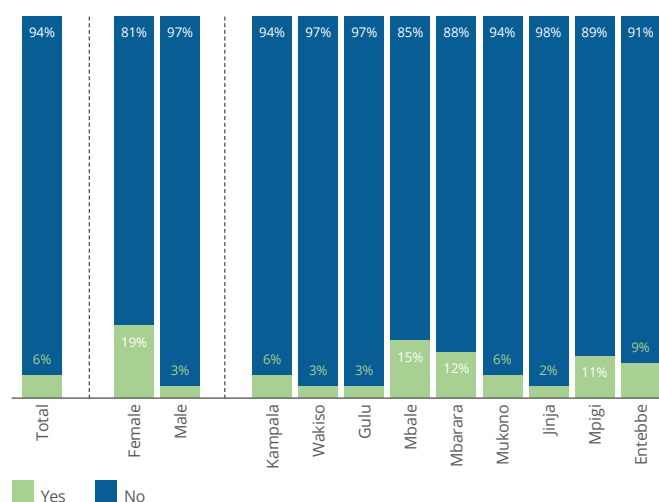
About 17% of the guards have noticed cases of discrimination at their workplace. The incidence is highest in Mbale (31%), Mukono (29%) and Entebbe (27%). The cases of discrimination are mostly linked to job allocation and placement at the workplace.

2. Specify the types of discrimination noticed at work



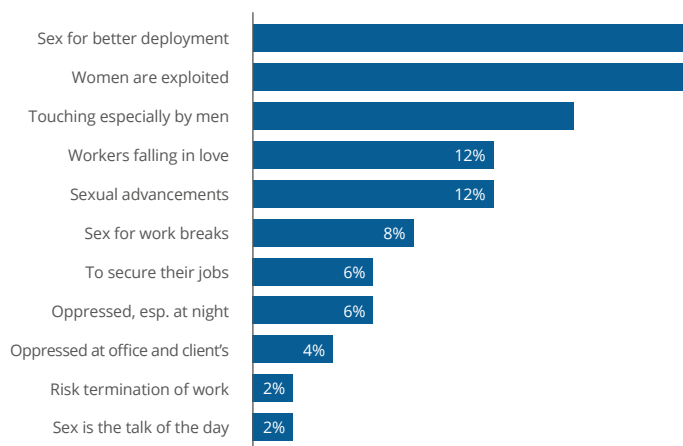
Tribalism is a core challenge for 44% of the security guards. Other cases of discrimination include gender discrimination, age discrimination (e.g. young and female guards not being allowed to touch guns) while disabled job seekers are not recruited.

3. Do you observe any forms of sexual harassment at work?



About 19% of the female guards have observed sexual harassment at their workplace. Regionally, Mbale has a 15% incidence, Mbarara has 12%, Mpigi has a 11 % incidence. As these three regions have higher incidences, there is a need to prioritise them through a regional strategy.

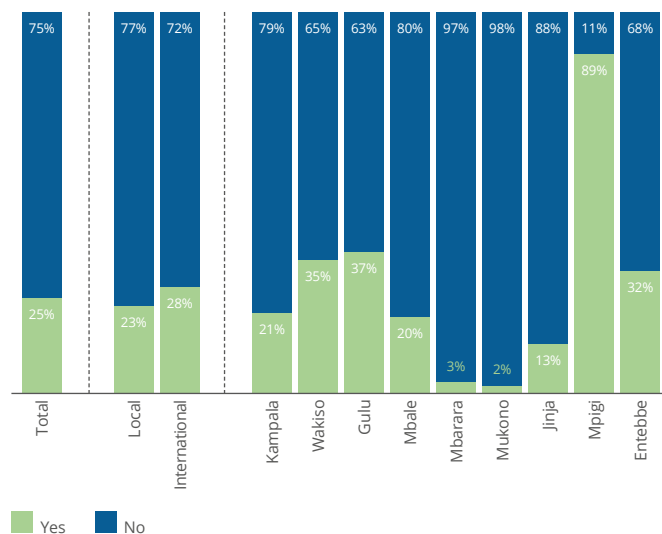
4. Specify the forms of sexual harassment observed at work



Sexual harassment often occurs when women are trying to secure their job in the industry or ask for better deployment. Most cases of sexual harassment are by senior staff, however, the general public and clients also sexually harass female guards.

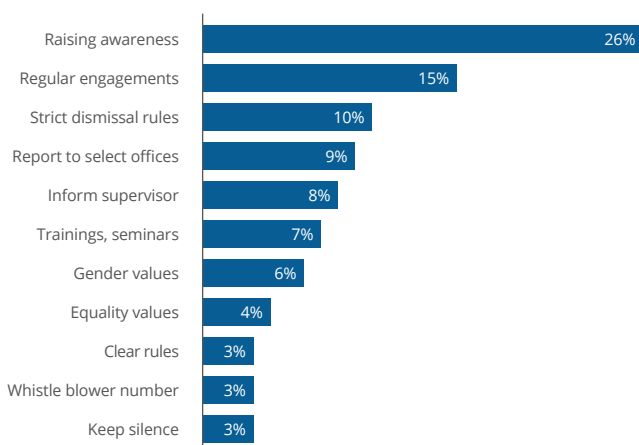
“Some of our clients ask for sexual favours from us.”

5. Do you know if/what preventative measures are in place?



25% of personnel are aware of preventative measures in place to counter cases of discrimination and sexual harassment at work. The incidence is lowest in Mbarara and Mukono at 3% and 2% respectively. Mpigi region has the highest incidence of employers with preventative measures put in place, an opportunity to benchmark with regions with low incidences.

6. Specify the preventative measures in place



About 26% of the employers drive awareness of preventative measures while 15% have regular engagements to address the issues. About 10% have strict rules where a supervisor caught advocating for any form of discrimination is immediately fired. During training, guards are encouraged to disclose discrimination by their supervisors.

3.3.2 Key challenges with gender and discrimination

The issue of ethnic discrimination in posting and job allocation is a key challenge for security guards. It is believed that some clients request guards from a specific tribe and if a different tribe is deployed they decline and ask for a change. Also, the bosses tend to recruit based on tribe or security guards from their tribe are taken to good sites. The guards believe the Acholis (tribe) are not allowed to be in offices but should rather be kept in the field.

It is evident that there are cases of sexual harassment at the workplace. Sometimes the employers demand sexual favours from women in exchange for work benefits and promotion. The superiors tend to demand sexual favours from female guards, and if they refuse they are taken to an unfavourable post. Clients and members of the public, especially male, want to touch female guards.

Gender bias is also noticed in some workplaces. There's also a mentality that women are a weaker gender and cannot be allocated the same jobs as male guards. In Uganda, male guards are taught and allowed to use guns while female guards are not allowed.

Age is also a factor driving discrimination at work. Young guards are seen as incompetent, yet they are qualified and able to deliver services. Old aged guards are hardly recruited by most employers.

3.3.3 Gaps and opportunities for gender and discrimination

The findings indicate that there is a bias in deployment of guards based on one's ethnic group. Some clients want guards from a certain region or ethnicity. There's an opportunity to collaborate with sector stakeholders to establish clear rules on deployment, communicate and create awareness for employees. The employers also need to hold supervisors accountable when such incidences are noticed at the workplace.

Sexual harassment is also a key gap in private security firms. Female guards are vulnerable to sexual harassment from supervisors and clients who may seek favours in exchange for workplace benefits. The opportunity is in driving awareness of various reporting mechanisms and processes put in place and ensuring speedy responses to such complaints.

Another aspect of discrimination is the bias against female security guards. This is driven by a perception that security jobs are not fit for women and that some jobs/posts are

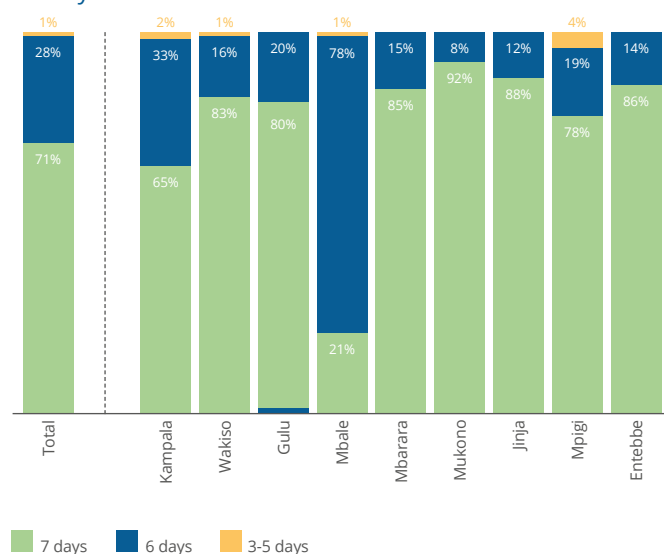
reserved for men. The opportunity lies in changing the perception around female guards and demonstrating their ability to deliver on their duties.

Age discrimination is also a challenge where younger guards are seen as incompetent while old guards are regarded as unemployable. The opportunity lies in endorsing a merit-based employment model where guards have an equal chance of being employed and acknowledging the benefits of a balanced work group.

3.4 Health, mental health, safety, work time

3.4.1 General findings on health, mental health, safety, work time

1. How many days do you and other security guards usually work in a week?



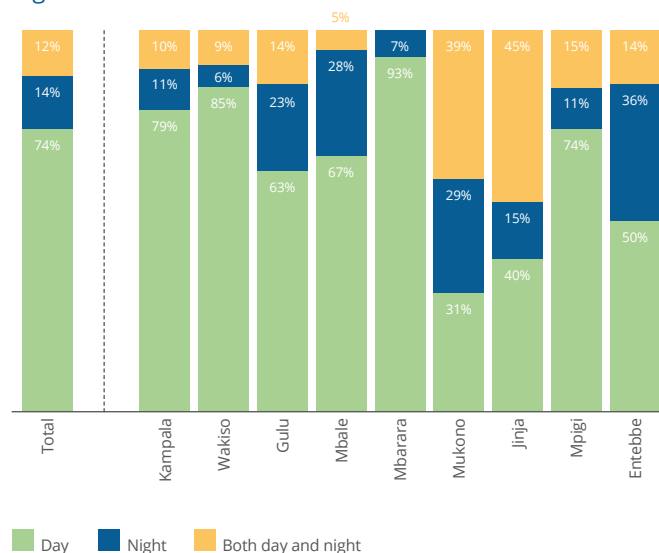
The findings show 71% of the guards in Uganda work for 7 days a week. This implies that about 3 in every 4 guards are not getting enough rest. The incidence is lowest in Mbale at 21%, which is an opportunity to adopt it as a benchmark region to inspire the other regions.

2. How many hours do you and other security guards usually work in a day?



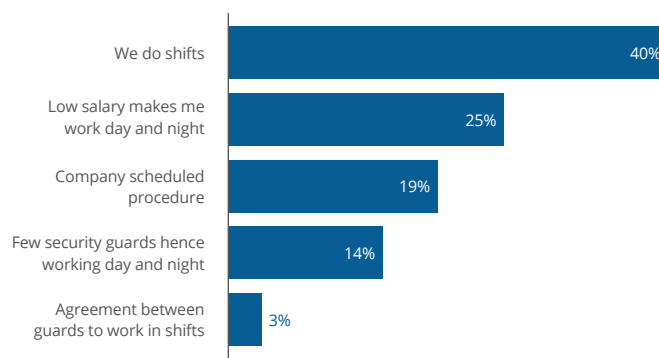
Despite 71% of the guards working 7 days a week, about 78% work for 12-hour shifts. About 6% work for more the 12 hours a day, an indication that the security guards are overworked and are fatigued especially if they do not have shelter, tables and chairs. Some guards stand for long hours during their shifts.

3. Are you working during the day, during the night or both?



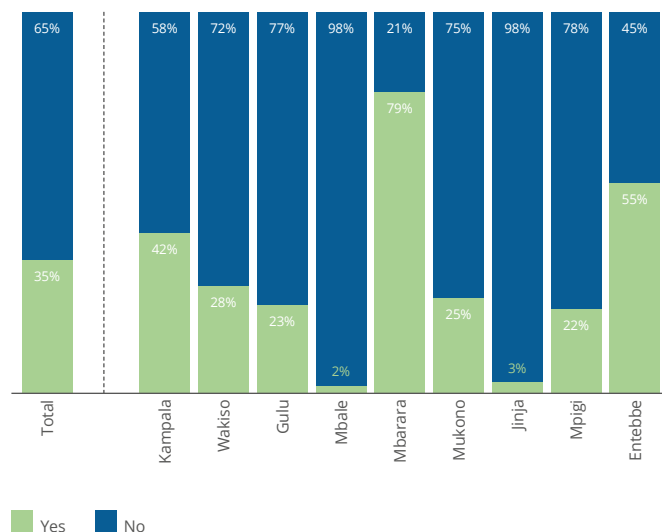
A larger number of security guards in Uganda work on a day shift. However, about 39% of employers in Mukono and 45% in Jinja have guards working on either shift depending on deployment. Working double shifts disrupts the work-life balance of guards, as some are required to fill in for absent colleagues.

4. Reasons for working both day and night



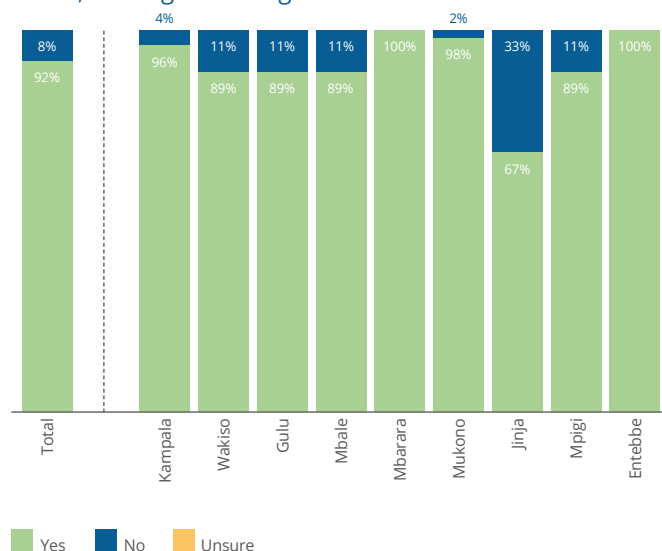
40% of the employers use rotational shifts where the guards are made to work for certain days in a week on the day shift and the other days on the night shift. About 25% of the guards take double shifts because they need more money to take care of their needs. Working double shifts implies the security guards are time-strained and are not able to attend to their personal errands and engagements.

5. Can you take breaks during working hours?



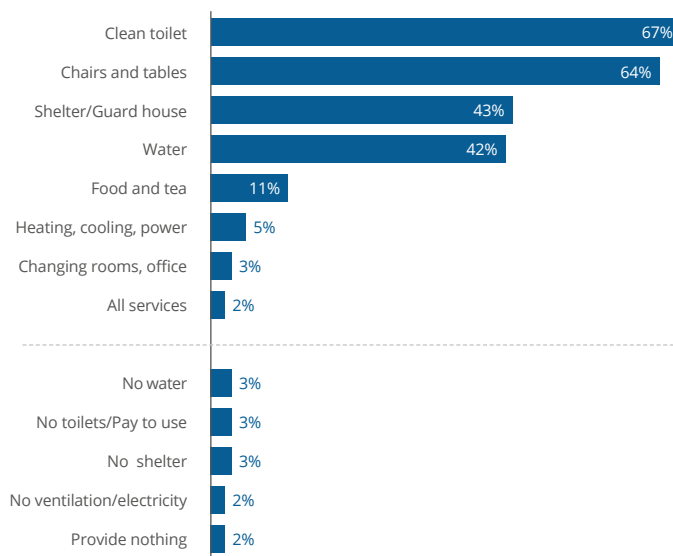
About **65% of the security guards work without breaks**, yet the majority work 12-hour shifts. Mbale and Entebbe employers are more likely to allow for work breaks while Mbarara and Jinja have the lowest likelihood. To manage employee fatigue there is a need for employers to embrace better work schedules that allow for sufficient rest.

6. Do you have access to toilets, drinking water, shelter, chairs, heating or cooling?



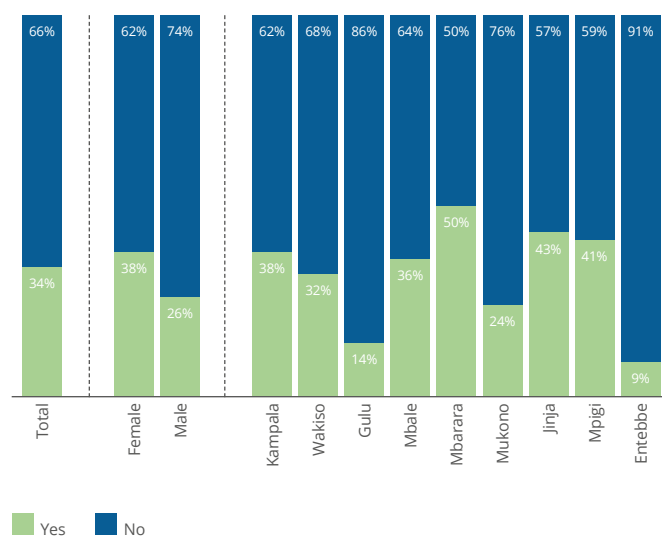
92% of the guards have access to facilities provided by the employer. The incidence is driven by security guards working in indoor work stations like banks and enjoy the benefit of using the same facilities as other staff and customers.

7. Specify what you have access to



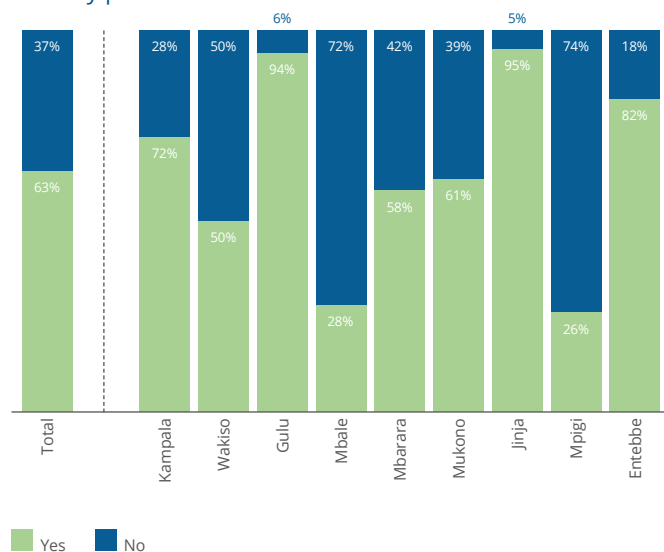
The most accessed amenities are toilets at **67%** and **chairs and tables at 64%**. About 43% have access to a security guard shelter/house, while 42% have access to clean drinking water. However, all of these facilities are accessible to employees working in the employer's office.

8. Does your employer provide accommodation for you?



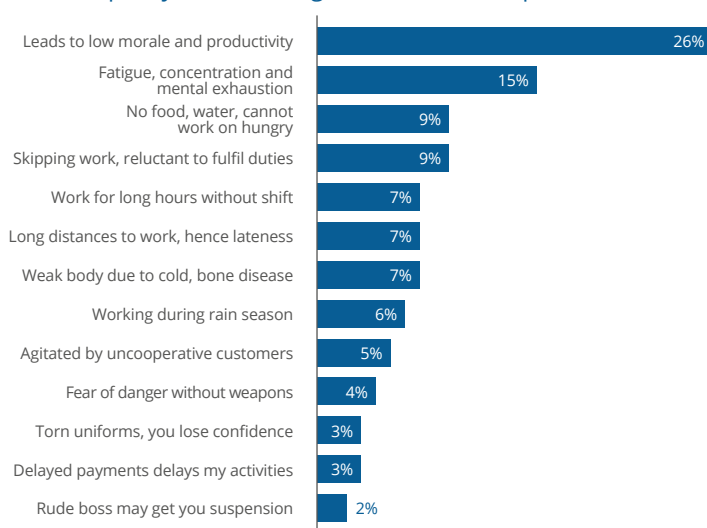
About a third of Uganda's guards have access to employer's accommodation. However, the employers only offer shelter for the first three months to allow for new guards to settle at the new workplace. About 67% of the guards are satisfied with free (no deductions), convenient (near work) and sufficient (not shared) kind of accommodation.

9. Do working conditions affect the performance of security personnel at work?



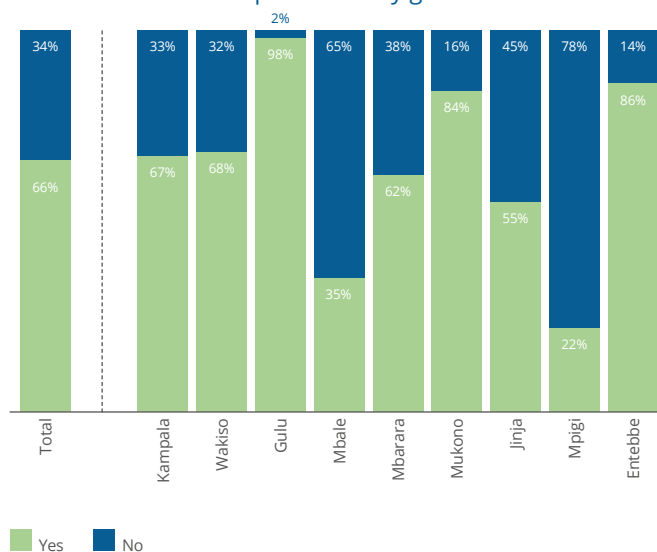
About 63% of the guards observe that performance is affected by working conditions. The incidence is highest in Jinja at 95%, Gulu at 94%, and Entebbe at 82%. Key regions ideal for benchmarking are Mbale and Mpigi at 28% and 26% incidence respectively.

10. Specify how working conditions affect performance



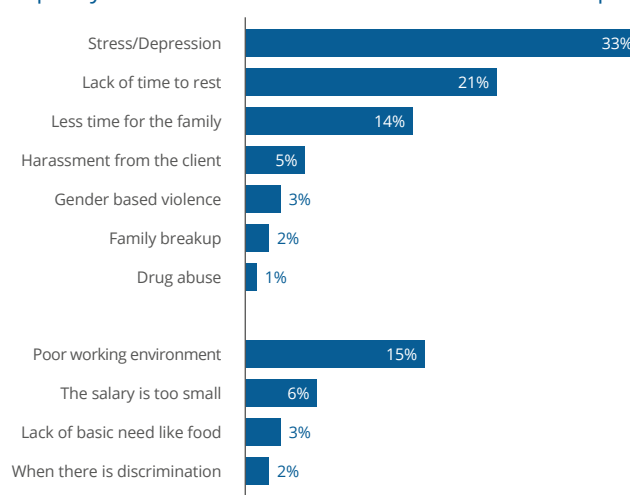
Lack of proper shelters exposes security guards to bad weather. Guards also don't receive new uniforms, face hunger, thirst and fatigue from standing and have no days off, leading to conflict at home. These are some of the harsh working conditions security guards endure at their workplace. Low morale, lack of motivation and low attitude are some of the risks – some hate their jobs.

11. Do you think working conditions affect the mental health and relationships of security guards?



About two-thirds of the security guards think working conditions affect their mental health and relationships at work and at home. Gulu, Mukono and Entebbe have higher rates, and thus should be priority regions when addressing issues of mental health and relationships due to poor working conditions.

12. Specify the effects on mental health and relationships

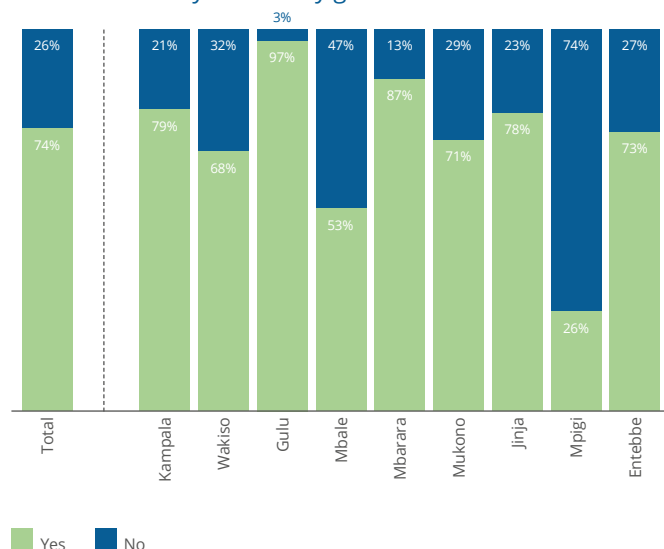


A third of the security guards are stressed and depressed by poor working conditions. Other aspects of mental health are fatigue due to working for long hours, less time spent with family, harassment by clients. In some cases the tension leads to gender-based and domestic violence. A mentally depressed employee is a big risk not only to the employer but also to the clients.

74% of security guards reported that working conditions impact their physical health and safety. The incidences

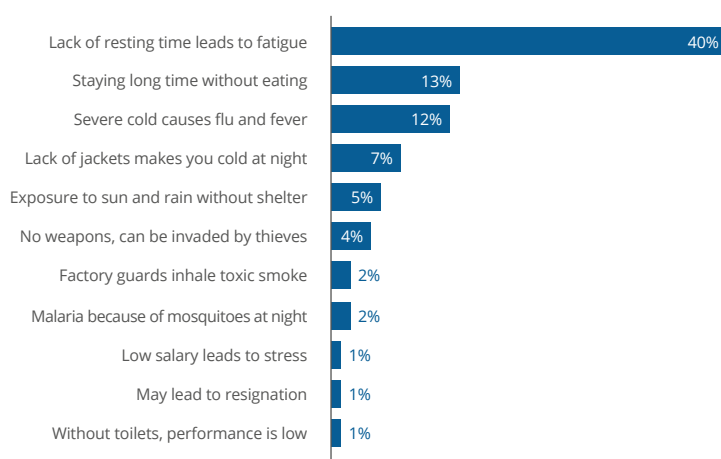
are significantly high across all regions except Mbale and Mpigi with 53% and 26% incidence respectively. Employers should prioritise addressing the working conditions leading to poor physical health and safety of the security guards they employ.

13. Do you think working conditions affect the physical health and safety of security guards?

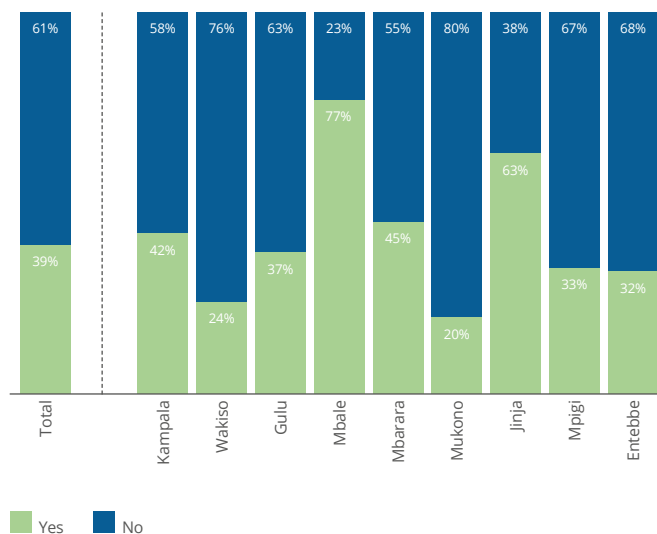


Lack of shelter can increase the likelihood of contracting diseases such as cold, pneumonia and malaria; working without a break leads to fatigue and back aches; some guards lack food yet have long commutes; the guards working in factories are exposed to noise and pollution leading to health issues.

14. Specify the effects on physical health and safety

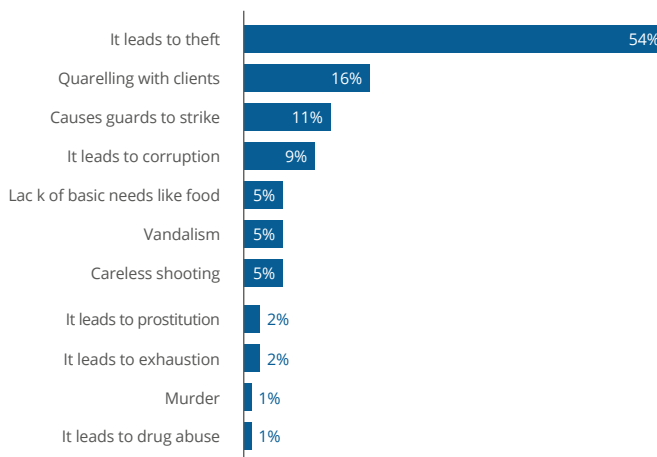


15. Have you noticed that guards are more likely to engage in unlawful behaviour if working conditions are poor?



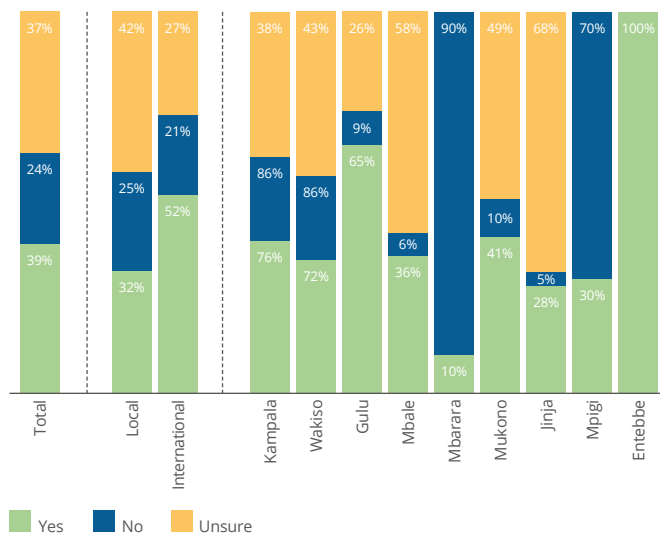
39% of the guards reported that guards are more likely to engage in unlawful behaviour due to poor working environment. Key regions to prioritise in addressing unlawful behaviour are Gulu and Jinja at 77% and 63% incidence respectively.

16. Specify unlawful behaviour



Over half of the guards observe that the most common unlawful behaviour by guards would be stealing from their employer and/or clients. Other guards quarrel with clients, take bribes, drink alcohol and at worst vandalise client or employer property. These behaviours affect the reputation and image of the profession. Thus, there is a need to address work environment gaps.

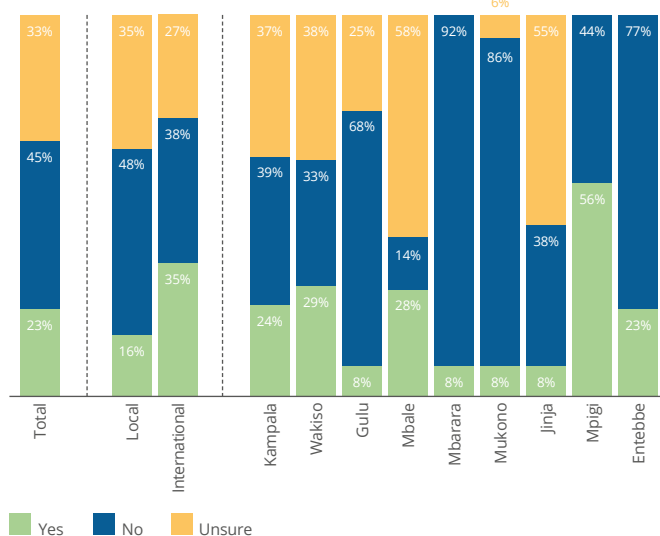
17. Are you allowed to join a union?



About 37% of the guards are not aware if they are allowed to join a union. The lack of awareness is higher among local companies (42%) and employers in Mukono (49%), Mbale (58%) and Jinja (68%). The 24% of the guards whose **employers are against unions** can mostly be found in Mbarara at 90% and Mpigi at 70%.

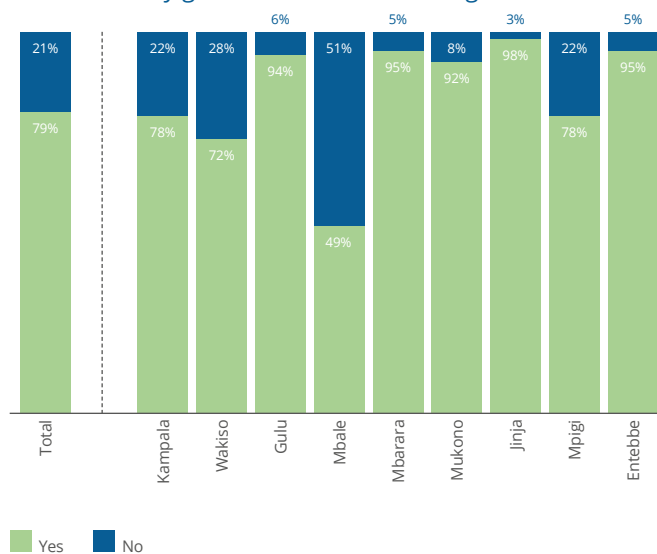
"I feel the trade unions should have worked but we are restricted from joining."

18. Are you represented by a union?



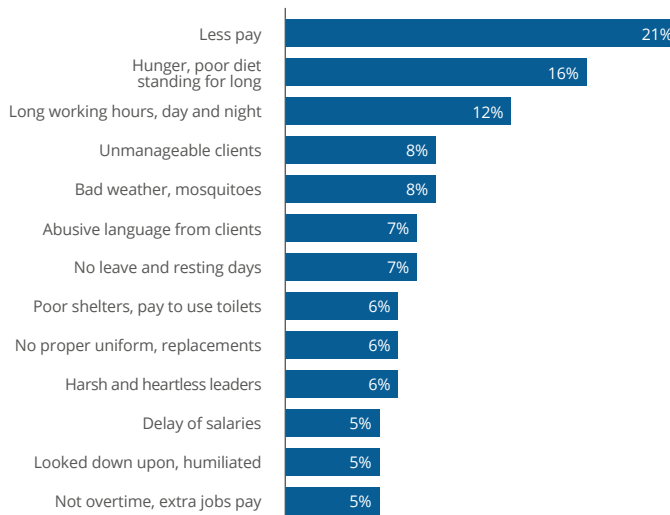
Only about 23% of the 39% of the guards who are allowed to join a union are represented by one, which indicates a 59% conversion based on guards' interest to join. This implies that **encouraging employers to allow their guards to join unions** would spark a high interest. Regionally, sensitisation should prioritise Mbale and Jinja, the regions with higher ignorance levels regarding awareness on joining a union.

19. Do security guards face other challenges at work?



Generally, about 79% of the guards face other challenges that affect their mental and physical health as well as guard performance. The incidence is highest in Jinja at 98% and Entebbe and Mbarara both at 95%. It is lowest in Mbale at 49%. These challenges are significantly affecting guards' satisfaction and motivation.

20. Specify other challenges at work



The **key challenge for most guards is low pay.**

Other challenges include lack of facilitation (food, transport), income being low and delayed, poor work culture (rude clients, bosses), frequent transfers and improper protection gear, among others. The bigger issue is that there are no forums to share these challenges with their employers.

3.4.2 Challenges with health, mental health, safety, work time

The research identified mental health as a key gap in private security firms in Uganda. According to the guards, there is too much stress with low and late payments of salary and not having enough money to get medical attention when sick. The guards are also depressed due to long working hours without any rest. At times, the guards go back home angry due to the way they are mistreated at work.

Physical health and safety are a key challenge for the guards. Access to little or no food, standing most of the day and bad weather all make the guards' bodies weak. At times, the security guards have to report to work while sick due to fear of losing their job. The fact that some guards don't have weapons for protection and only have a baton, and lack of proper shelters puts them at risk of being attacked and harmed physically.

Guards performance at work is also significantly affected. The poor work environment decreases motivation. Some of the security guards are demotivated, even to the level of wanting to quit their jobs.

The findings indicate that the guards are not allowed to take breaks during working hours even when an event/incidence of importance requires their attention. The majority of the security guards are required to work long hours and irregular shifts. This makes it difficult for the guards to balance work and personal responsibilities.

There are gaps in access to basic amenities. Some security guards use the garage for shelter, use tap water for drinking which is not always considered safe and have wooden benches for sitting. Some have a veranda as shade and shelter from the rain and direct sunlight. Accommodation is provided for new employees and is usually short-lived.

"For (accommodation) shelter they provide for the first three months only."

Guards' facilitation is also a challenge where items like uniforms are only given when employed and are hardly replaced. The majority of the guards have one old pair of uniforms. To get a replacement, the security guards must 'beg' for a new/replacement uniform. Even then, it is still deducted from their monthly wage.

3.4.3 Opportunities for health, mental health, safety, work time

The findings identified gaps in work time and breaks where the majority of the security guards work without a day off and cannot take a break while working. The guards are at risk of fatigue. The opportunity lies in sensitising the employers on the risks of guards' fatigue and encouraging them to have favourable work shifts.

There are gaps in access to amenities with more than half of the guards not having access to water and shelter. The few security guards with access to employer's accommodation have it for a short while and in most cases the accommodation is shared. There's an opportunity in establishing a movement for collective effort by employers, clients and industry stakeholders to facilitate basic amenities for their security guards.

The majority of the security guards' performance is affected by the poor working environment. Poor working conditions lower guards' motivation resulting in a number of guards considering quitting and exploring other work opportunities. The opportunity is in establishing staff feedback platforms and conducting guards' satisfaction surveys to constantly check on their performance.

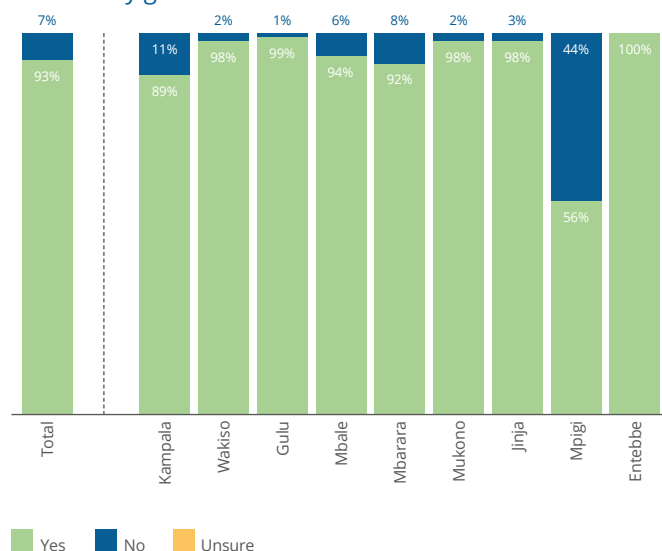
Mental health and relationships are also affected by poor working conditions. Stress and depression are key challenges and are affecting relationships at work and at home with cases of break ups and drug abuse. There's an opportunity in creating forums to address mental health as well as partnering with renowned experts in the mental health sector.

Lastly, physical health and safety is a key factor when considering the working environment for the security guards. There are complaints of back aches due to fatigue, headaches from working in the sun, cold and pneumonia from working at night and malaria during rainy seasons. In the absence of medical cover, there is an opportunity to create staff health check initiatives supported by industry stakeholders.

3.5 Employee training

3.5.1 General findings on employee training

1. Does your employer provide any training for security guards?



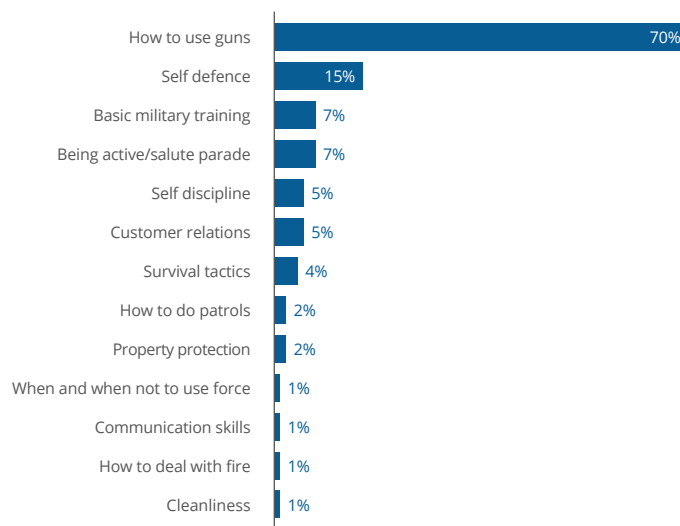
93% of security guards receive training from their employer. Incidences of training are high across all regions except Mpigi (56%), which has the highest number of guards employed by local companies. This suggests that local companies are less likely to provide training for their security guards compared to multinational corporations.

2. What training do security guards receive?

	Bases	Working with clients	Rules on the use of force	Health and safety	Human rights
Total	785	86%	85%	66%	66%
Kampala	278	84%	86%	59%	57%
Wakiso	202	87%	85%	62%	69%
Gulu	64	94%	95%	92%	92%
Mbarara	59	100%	100%	92%	97%
Mbale	56	54%	77%	54%	43%
Mukono	50	94%	94%	90%	86%
Jinja	39	100%	38%	56%	49%
Entebbe	22	95%	91%	73%	36%
Mpigi	15	87%	67%	20%	73%

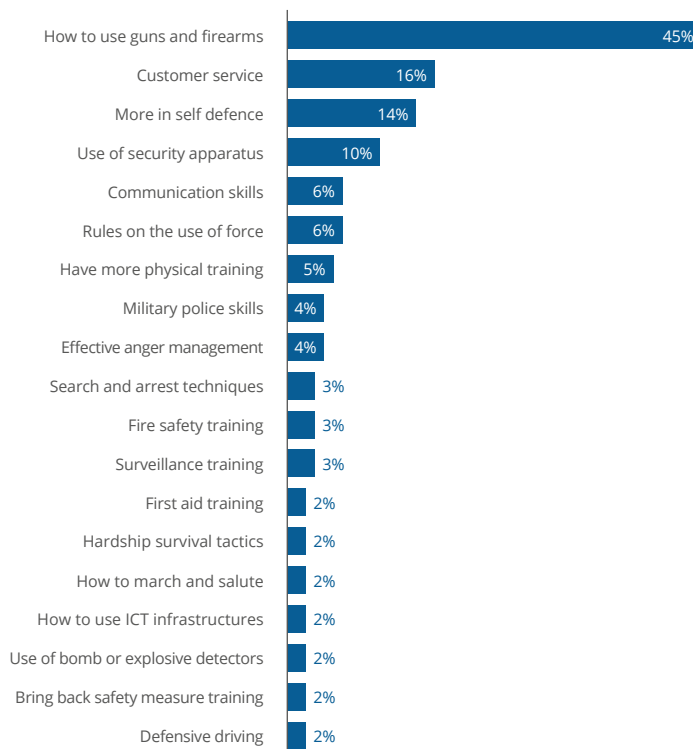
The majority of the guards are trained on working with clients and rules on use of force with 86% and 85% incidences respectively. Health and Safety as well as Human rights trainings are common in Gulu and Mbarara regions only.

3. What other training do security guards receive?



In Uganda **training on how to use guns is common** with 70% of the guards having received the training. Other beneficial trainings include crowd control, conflict management, human intelligence, how to man sniffer dogs, safety measures as well as how to maintain security records as a security guard.

4. In your opinion, what training do security guards need to perform their role?



Despite 70% having received the training on use of guns, about 45% would want more training on the subject. Customer service, self-defence and use of security devices are also key. Other advantageous trainings include swimming, supervision of guards, how to respond to a terrorist attack, how to use security dogs, how to disarm a law breaker, protection and how to efficiently use facilities.

3.5.2 Challenges and opportunities for employee training

Key Challenges

The core challenge with employee training is that they are not up to date while others are not easy for the security guards to comprehend. Therefore, there is an opportunity to simplify the trainings for ease of understanding and implementation by the security guards.

The findings also show that there are employer challenges in conducting the employee trainings. Some employers recruit qualified guards so that they don't have to conduct training once the guard is employed. Other employers fail to provide weapons after training. Thus, the training become irrelevant without the right tools and equipment.

Also, there are gaps in training facilitation wherein security guards are promised many benefits during training but the employers don't provide these benefits. During the trainings, the accommodation provided is shared thus denying one privacy.

Gaps and opportunities

There is a need for more trainings of the security guards and new recruits should be allocated more time for training. Currently, the new guards are trained for two weeks which the guards feel is insufficient.

"It should take about 3 months to train their guard on what to do."

There's also an opportunity to motivate the guards to attend trainings with incentives like provision of free transport to the training centre, allocating training allowance (KK gives USh 70000 after training), provision of weapons like batons and provision of accommodation for a couple of months after training.

Other areas of trainings to consider include bomb handling, law, leadership and conflict resolution at work. Also, considering most guards are not well educated, there is an opportunity to teach the guards how to read and write, more so for those who have not completed their education working as security guards.

"Some guards cannot express themselves in public."

4. SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Situational analysis metrics

To allow for future trending of the study findings, the following metrics have been identified as key baseline metrics for the study.

Contracts, salary and benefits	Have an employment contract	47%
	Paid minimum wage	6%
	Paid below minimum wage	6%
	Paid above minimum wage	88%
	Receive NSSF benefit	69%
	Employers pay on time	69%
Gender and discrimination	Paid for working overtime	72%
	Noticed discrimination at work	17%
	Observed sexual harassment at work	6%
Health, mental health, safety, work time	Preventative measures in place	25%
	Working days – 7 in a week	71%
	Can take breaks during working hours	35%
	Have access to amenities	92%
	Have access to accommodation	34%
	Work conditions affect performance	63%
	Work conditions affect mental health	66%
	Work conditions affect physical health and safety	74%
	Work conditions lead to unlawful behaviour	39%
Employee training	Employer provides training	93%
	Working with clients training	86%
	Rules on use of force training	85%
	Health and safety training	66%
	Human rights training	66%

4.2 Conclusion and way forward

Contracts, salaries, benefits

More than half of the guards don't have a contract with their employer. The study recommends the involvement of government authorities to streamline the private security sector in Uganda.

Though only 6% of the security guards in Uganda receive an income below minimum wage, their salaries are still low. The study demonstrates the need for the establishment of income groups and wage structure for different categories of guards to prevent income inequalities among the guards.

The study revealed that access to social benefits like medical covers are low. The study recommends cooperation with private medical cover providers and underwriters to develop packages that can benefit security guards. There's also a need for advocacy on the importance of the social benefits to the guards.

The study also found that employers are often biased in favour of clients. This leaves security guards vulnerable. Thus, there needs to be employer protection and the study recommends establishing a supportive and cooperative relationship between the management and the security guards.

Discrimination

The survey indicates there are cases of discrimination, especially ethnic discrimination when it comes to job postings. The study recommends establishing clear rules on deployment, communication and creating awareness for employees and holding supervisors accountable when such cases are noticed.

There are cases of sexual harassment with sexual favours being demanded of female guards. There is also a bias that women are a weaker gender and not fit for the job. The research team recommends an in-depth study to understand the magnitude of the issue and establish gender mainstreaming and training for security firms to allow both male/female guards be aware of how to identify gender issues.

Health, mental health, working hours

The research indicates close to half of the guards work without a day off. These guards are strained and may not have family and personal time. Some do not have access to basic facilities. At times, guards get so demotivated, even to the point of quitting due to how mistreated they are at work. One-third of the guards are not even aware if they can join a union.

The study revealed that poor working conditions are likely to affect security guard's performance, mental health and relationships and that they are more likely to engage in unlawful behaviour like stealing. The research team recommends establishing a staff feedback platform and satisfaction surveys. The study also recommends an employer sensitisation campaign to ensure the basics needs are met. The campaign should also include advocacy on importance of the sector, offering support and care, educating the public on the importance of the guards. Employers can set up wellness day/check to check up on the health of security guards.

Employee training

While majority of the employers offer training like handling customers, rules on use of force and health/safety, the guards need much more technical training and soft skills training. The research team recommends a balanced training on customer service, crowd control, conflict management, terrorism attacks and more. The research team also recommends that the employers offer certification after the trainings to build the sector and provide incentives to motivate guards to attend trainings. Additionally, more time should be allocated for training new recruits.

Appendices

5.1 Data collection tool

Draft Survey on Working Conditions of Guards

INTRODUCTION

Greetings from Consumer Options. Thank you for participating in our survey. The aim of the research is to understand the working conditions of guards across different regions of the world.

This survey is anonymous and confidential.

This survey will ask questions about the working conditions of security guards. In your answers, you can write about (i) your own experience, (ii) the experiences of other security guards in your company, (iii) the experiences of other security guards in other security companies.

This will take approximately 20 minutes of your time, your response will be kept confidential and will be analysed collectively with other responses from other participants.

Would you like to participate in the survey?

☐ YES > PROCEED

☐ NO > TERMINATE AND ASK FOR CONTACTS

Respondent's full names:

Contacts:

Date of the survey: _____

Start time: _____

Introduction

1. What is your gender?

- a. Male
- b. Female

2. What is your age?

3. What is your level of education?

- a. Primary
- b. Secondary
- c. College diploma
- d. University degree
- e. Post university degree

4. Which company do you work for?

5. How long have you been working as a guard?

6. What type of client you are currently working for?

- a. Public Authorities
- b. Multinational Company
- c. Local Company
- d. Commercial Entity
- e. For private individuals – Close
- f. Directly employed by establishments – Close

Workers Protection and Pay

7. Do you have an employment contract with your employer?

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. Unsure

8. Do you receive social benefits such as National Hospital Insurance Fund (NHIF) from your employer?

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. Don't know

9. Do you receive social benefits such as National Social Security Fund (NSSF) from your employer?

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. Don't know

10. Do you receive any other benefits? If yes, please specify.

11. The minimum wage in Uganda is USh 130,000. Is your salary at.....?

- a. The minimum wage
- b. Below minimum wage
- c. Above minimum wage

12. Are you allowed to join a union?

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. Don't know

13. Are you represented by a union?

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. Don't know

Training

14. Does your employer provide any training for security guards?

- a. Yes
- b. No

15. If yes, what training do security guards receive? (tick all that apply)

- a. Human rights
- b. Working with clients
- c. Rules on the use of force
- d. Health and safety
- e. Others, please specify

16. In your opinion what kind of training do security guards need to perform their role?

Working Conditions

17. How many hours do you and other security guards usually work in a day?

- a. Dropdown menu 1-16

18. How many days do you and other security guards usually work in a week?

19. Are you working during the day or during the night

or both?

- a. Day
- b. Night
- c. Both day and night. If so, why?

20. Do you have another activity to supplement your income? If so, please specify

21. Are you and other security guards paid for working overtime?

- a. Yes
- b. No

22. Do you have access to toilets, drinking water, shelter, chairs, heating or cooling? Please specify.

23. Can you take breaks during working hours?

- a. Yes
- b. No

24. Do you notice any discrimination at work because of age, gender, race, ethnicity, nationality, sexual orientation, disability, religion, etc?

- a. If yes, please specify.

25. Do you know if/what preventative measures are in place?

- a. If yes, please explain.

26. Do you observe any forms of sexual harassment at work?

- a. If so, in what ways?

27. Do security guards face other challenges at work?

- a. If so, in what ways?

Consequences of Working Conditions

28. Do working conditions affect the performance of security personnel at work?

- a. No
- b. If yes, how so?

29. Have you noticed that guards are more likely to engage in unlawful behaviour if working conditions are poor?

- a. Yes
- b. No
- i. If YES, please specify.

30. Do you think working conditions affect the physical health and safety of security guards? If so, in what ways? If not, why not?

31. Do you think working conditions affect the mental health and relationships of security guards? If so, in what ways? If not, why not?

Living Conditions

(Skip to next section if not applicable)

32. Do employers provide accommodation for you?

- a. Yes
- b. No

33. Are you satisfied with the accommodation? Why or why not?

Recruitment

(Skip to next section if not applicable)

34. Did you have to pay recruitment fees? (Paying a fee to be hired)

- a. YesContinue
- b. No.....Close

35. If yes, how many months of salary did you pay in recruitment fees?

36. What do you receive for the recruitment fee?

Please write in any observations or comments noted or related to a question:

Thank you for your participation in our research survey. Please be assured that the information provided will be handled in a confidential and anonymous manner. Your name and contact details will not be communicated.

5.2 Sampling areas

Central Region

Town	Urban SP	No. of interviews
Entebbe	Entebbe	22
Kampala	Central	56
	Kabalagala	9
	Kansanga Makindye	51
	Katwe	8
	Kawempe	60
	Lubaga	53
	Nakawa	61
	Nakulabye	5
	Nateete	8
Mpigi	Mpigi	27
Mukono	Mukono	30
	Seeta	21
Wakiso	Kira Municipality	27
	Nansana	92
	Wakiso	85
Total		615

Eastern Region

Town	Urban SP	No. of interviews
Jinja	Jinja	40
Mbale	Mbale	61
Total		101

Northern Region

Town	Urban SP	No. of interviews
Gulu	Gulu	65
Total		65

Western Region

Town	Urban SP	No. of interviews
Mbarara	Mbarara	60
Total		60

5.3 Briefing notes

Objective: The objective of the research is to collect data on the working conditions of security personnel working for private security companies in order to contribute to the identification of possible areas of improvement.

Key target: Security officers/guards working for private security companies (whether licensed or not). The survey will not include other categories of security personnel (directly employed by establishments or private individuals)

Primary use: The research findings will be used to inform civil society organisations, private security companies and authorities with a view to contribute to their dialogue on the improvement of working conditions in the private security industry.

This research will cover a range of industry practices that can affect the rights and welfare of security guards, including (i) recruitment fee payment, (ii) access to healthcare and advocacy channels, (iii) mental and physical health hazards, (iv) safety risks as well as (v) wages, working hours, and benefits.

Approach: The research should allow to compare conditions in:

- Licensed vs non-licensed companies -
- Large vs small companies
- International vs local companies
- Type of clients;
 - Extractive industry – Extraction of oil, metals, minerals
 - Manufacturing companies
 - Public institutions
 - Commercial entities

DO NOT INTERVIEW;

- **The survey will not include other categories of security personnel (directly employed by establishments or private individuals or Maasais)**

The research should explore the possible links between working conditions and violations of the law (misbehaviour or crime)

While names of companies may be collected during the surveys, the results of the research should be anonymised (names of individuals and companies surveyed)

Time for interviewing

- We need both day and night guards in the sample, thus some interviews will have to be done after 6pm when shifts have changed.
- In each of the locations, we must have day guards and night guards.

Gender balance – Women and Men

For questions, comments

Contact: Jael Amara, Director, Consumer Options Ltd
jael@consumeroptions.co.ke
info@consumeroptions.co.ke
www.consumeroptions.co.ke

Acknowledgments

The project was led by Jael Amara, Director, Consumers Options and Vincent Bernard, Senior Policy Advisor, ICoCA. Special thanks to Anne Lauder and Shilpa Suresh.

The survey was made possible thanks to a grant from the UK FCDO.

This research is part of a series conducted by ICoCA on working conditions in private security, based on the findings of the ICoCA report *“When the Abused Becomes the Abuser”*, published in December 2023.



The
Responsible
Security
Association

**International Code of
Conduct Association**

Geneva, Switzerland

e. secretariat@icoca.ch

w. icoca.ch