

The  
Responsible  
Security  
Association

# WORKING CONDITIONS IN PRIVATE SECURITY COUNTRY REPORT: SOUTH AFRICA

Market research prepared for the International Code of Conduct Association by Consumers Options

ICoCA research paper series on working conditions in private security



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# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 About ICoCA

ICoCA, the Responsible Security Association, is the leading international organisation committed to improving human rights standards in the private security industry. ICoCA's mission is to promote responsible, transparent and accountable private security practices worldwide that respect human rights, international humanitarian law and the rule of law, safeguarding communities through robust oversight, collaboration and capacity building.

The Association serves as the governance and oversight body for the International Code of Conduct for Private Security Service Providers (the "Code"), which articulates the responsibilities of private security companies to raise private security standards, particularly in complex environments. ICoCA's work is grounded in international frameworks, including the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, international humanitarian law and the Montreux Document. It supports the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals, particularly Goal 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions) and Goals 5, 8 and 10 (human rights and labour standards).

With a global and diverse membership of governments, civil society organisations, private security providers and their clients, ICoCA mitigates risks associated with poor security practices in global supply chains and environments where abuses may occur.

## 1.2 The research project

ICoCA commissioned Consumer Options Limited, a market research company with the ability to do research across the African continent, to conduct a situational analysis of the private security sector in South Africa. The objective of this research was to collect data on the working conditions of security personnel working in the South African private security industry and contribute to the identification of areas of improvement.

The target respondents for the survey were security officers/guards working for private security companies, regardless of whether they were licensed. The survey did not include other categories of security personnel, such as those who are directly employed by establishments or private individuals.

The study was quantitative in nature with the security guards randomly selected in sampling points such as residential areas, malls, industrial areas and office buildings/schools. The study aimed at interviewing a sample of 1,000 security guards in five different regions:

- East Rand
- Johannesburg
- Pretoria
- Durban and
- Cape Town

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

- Contracts, salaries and social benefits
- Work schedules, overtime pay and access to amenities
- Gendered perspectives and discrimination cases
- Working conditions
- Training needs

The report presents the results from a survey conducted with 1015 nationally representative interviewees selected to be nationally representative, with a confidence level of 95% and a margin for error of 3%. As such, these findings provide insight into the perspectives of security guards and practices of employers in major cities throughout the country.

## 1.3 Data collection and analysis

Fieldwork commenced on 23 March 2023 and was completed on 31 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.

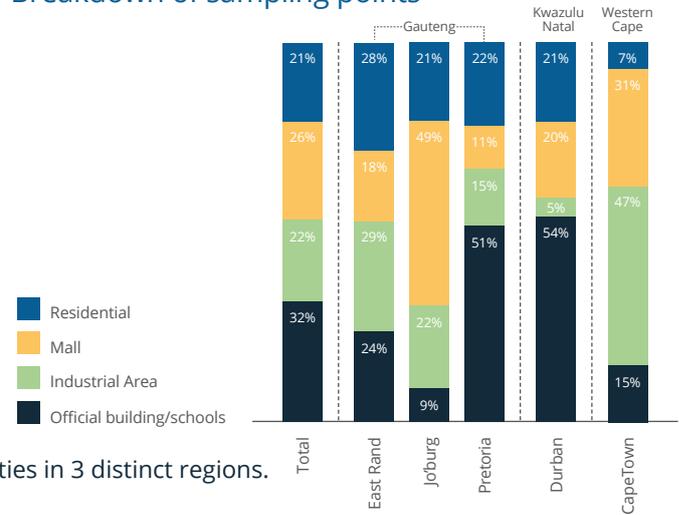
IBM' SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) software was used for data processing and analysis. The statistical software was used for data preparation and management to analyse and report and more importantly, extract actionable insights from the data.

# 1.4 Breakdown of sample profile

## Breakdown of sampling regions

Province	Region	Achieved Sample
Gauteng	East Rand	194
	Johannesburg	232
	Pretoria	183
Kwazulu Natal	Durban	256
Western Cape	Cape Town	150
	Total	1015

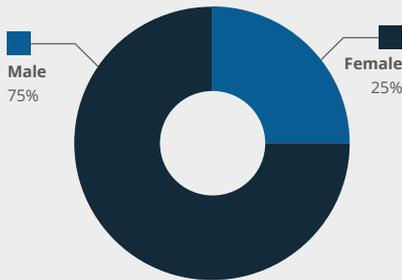
## Breakdown of sampling points



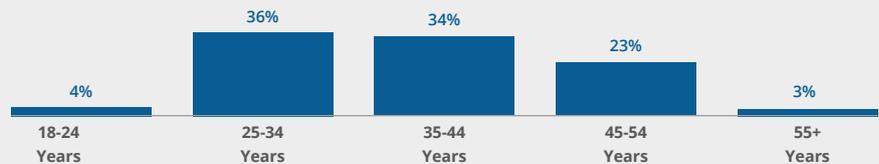
A total sample of 1,015 interviews were conducted across 5 cities in 3 distinct regions.

## Profile of the security guards interviewed

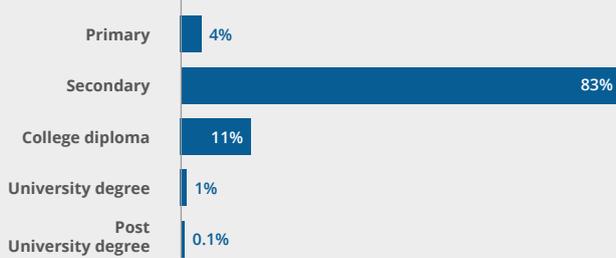
### Gender



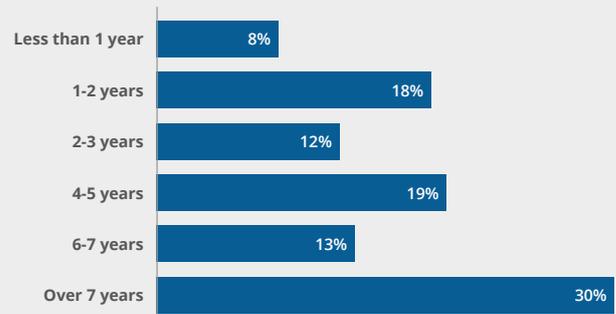
### Age



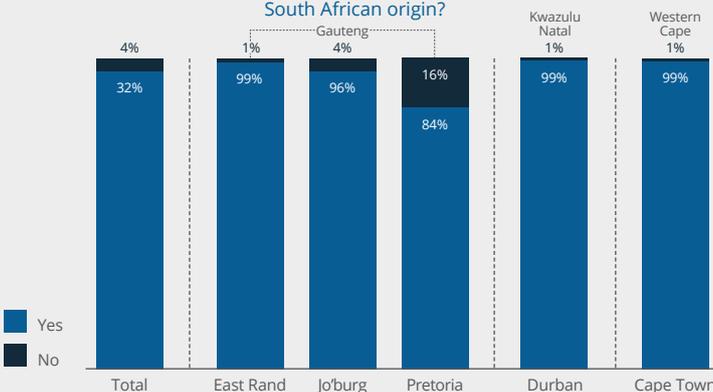
### Education



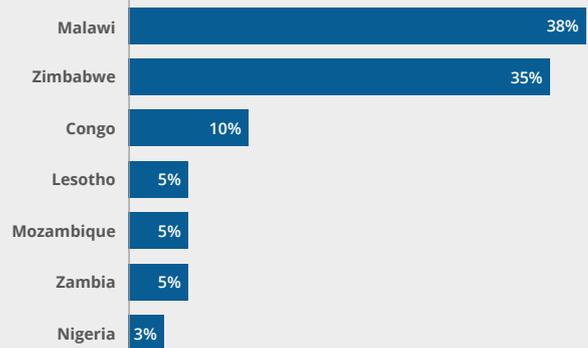
### Years in the industry



### Place of origin South African origin?



### Non-South African origin



## 1.5 Project objectives

The findings of this survey are a part of a broader research thread conducted by ICoCA titled *“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”*<sup>1</sup> published by ICoCA in 2023.

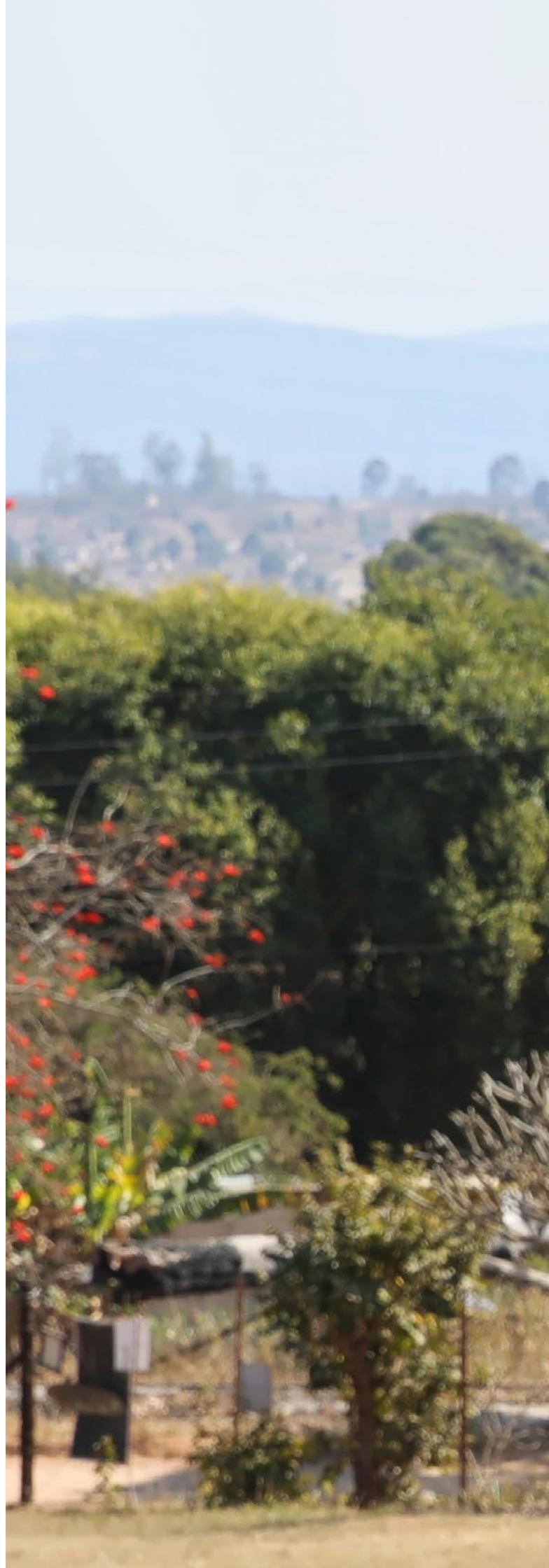
The research findings will inform civil society organisations, private security companies and authorities to contribute to their dialogue on improving working conditions in the private security industry.

### The findings are intended to:

- Inform clients’ procurement and contracting practices,
- Advocate for better working conditions in the private security industry and,
- Promote private security companies’ compliance with the Code.

Poor working conditions of security personnel can have far-reaching consequences. Apart from impacting their labour rights, the mental and physical health of the personnel is also affected. These consequences also extend to impact their families, people and the community they work with. The ability of private security companies to deliver protection and security that respects human rights and international humanitarian law is directly contingent on recruitment standards, the training they provide and the working conditions of their staff.

Despite the industry being closely intertwined with the upholding of human rights and humanitarian law, there has been very little research on the working conditions of the people it employs. Identifying that gap, this research will quantify a range of industry practices that affect the rights and welfare of security guards.



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<sup>1</sup> [ICoCA-Report-When-the-Abused-Becomes-the-Abuser.pdf](#)



## 2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### 2.1 Summary of findings

#### Contracts, salaries and social benefits

Most security guards (86%) operate under formal employment contracts, reflecting a largely structured employment framework within the industry. Earnings are evenly distributed across wage thresholds, with 35% earning above \$320, 30% earning the minimum wage and 35% earning below the minimum wage. Interestingly, guards without formal contracts are more likely to earn at least the minimum wage (77%), but only 19% earning above this threshold compared to 38% of those with contracts. Gender disparities remain evident, as 29% of female guards earn above the minimum wage compared to 37% of male guards.

It is interesting to note that despite lack of formal employment contracts, 58% of guards earn the minimum wage compared to only 25% of guards with formal contracts.

Just over half of guards (51%) report access to social security benefits, with longer-serving employees more likely to be covered. Guards without contracts face significant gaps, as 83% lack social security and only 36% have Unemployment Insurance Fund (UIF) coverage, compared to 77% among contract holders. While 52% of guards with contracts are permitted to join a union, overall union representation remains low at 32%.

The data underscores the role of formal contracting in improving wage outcomes, social protection and union access, while highlighting the need for stronger compliance with wage and benefit obligations, particularly for non-contractual workers.

#### Working conditions

Demanding work schedules remain common across the sector. Over a third (38%) of guards work six days a week and 69% work 12-hour shifts. Day shifts are most

common (54%), although 37% of guards alternate between day and night shifts, which may contribute to fatigue.

A majority (71%) receive overtime pay, though disparities persist between guards with contracts (75%) and those without (45%). Access to basic amenities such as shelter, toilets and drinking water is widespread (94%). Employer-provided accommodation remains limited, with 81% reporting no access. Among those accommodated, satisfaction levels are high (87%), while dissatisfaction is mainly linked to overcrowding and poor maintenance.

These findings suggest a need for improved scheduling practices, consistent overtime compensation and clearer standards for employer-provided accommodation.

#### Impact of working conditions

While a minority of guards (30%) report that working conditions affect their job performance, those who do point primarily to long working hours as a driver of fatigue, stress and reduced effectiveness at work. Poor conditions are linked to unlawful behaviour such as disputes and theft by 33% of guards, while reports of workplace corruption remain relatively low (14%).

A majority (61%) report negative impacts on physical health and safety, with extended working hours contributing to health issues and reduced concentration. In addition, more than half (54%) indicate that working conditions affect their mental health and personal relationships, reflecting the cumulative impact of fatigue, limited rest and work-life imbalance.

Gender-differentiated impacts are less commonly perceived, with 25% of guards reporting that working conditions affect women differently. Where differences are noted, they relate mainly to safety concerns, perceived physical vulnerability and heightened risks for women in certain working environments.

Overall, the data points to a pattern in which excessive working hours and limited recovery time affect not only performance, but also health, behaviour and well-being, underscoring the need for improved scheduling, rest periods and psychosocial support mechanisms.

### Harassment and discrimination

Workplace discrimination is reported by 13% of guards, mainly in the form of racism and favouritism. Other forms of harassment, including verbal abuse and employer threats, are observed by 8% of respondents. Reported cases of sexual harassment are low (2%), most commonly involving verbal abuse.

Incidents are typically reported internally to supervisors or managers, with only 13% escalated to the police. This points to the need for stronger internal reporting mechanisms and awareness of available remedies.

### Employee training

Most private security personnel (67%) have received employer-provided training, indicating a general emphasis on basic skills development within the sector. Guards without formal contracts are however less likely to be trained (52%) than those with contracts (70%). Guards express strong demand for further training, particularly in firearm handling and advanced health and safety practices.

The findings point to the need for more regular, standardised and inclusive training programmes. Supported by adequate tools and infrastructure, they remain essential for professional development and effective service delivery.

## 2.2 Regional differences

Formal contracting is most prevalent in Durban (93%) and East Rand (89%). Wage compliance varies considerably by location, with Cape Town recording the highest proportion of guards earning below the minimum wage (50%), while Johannesburg has the highest proportion earning the minimum wage (41%).

Access to social security benefits also differs regionally. Durban (66%) and Pretoria (59%) report the highest coverage, while access remains notably lower in Cape Town (40%). Permission to join a union is most common in Durban (81%), whereas guards in Cape Town face the highest rates of prohibition (75%). Union representation mirrors these trends, ranging from 46% in Durban to 13% in Cape Town.

Six-day workweeks are most common in Pretoria (48%) and Cape Town (40%). Long shifts are particularly prevalent in East Rand (89%) and Johannesburg (81%), compared to 26% in Cape Town reporting 12-hour shifts.

The impact of working conditions also shows clear regional variation. Only 5% of guards in Cape Town report that working conditions affect their job performance, compared to 46% in Pretoria. Guards in Pretoria are also more likely to link poor working conditions to unlawful behaviour, with 47% reporting such a link. Impacts on mental health and personal relationships are reported by over half of guards overall (54%), but less frequently in Cape Town (29%).

These regional patterns suggest that differences in wage compliance, work schedules and access to protections are shaped by local labour markets and operational contexts. Targeted, region-specific interventions are therefore needed to address distinct compliance gaps and working condition risks across locations.

# 3. RESEARCH FINDINGS

## 3.1 Security industry trends

South Africa's private security industry is one of the largest in the world. This is largely driven by extremely high crime rates and the resulting public concern over the effectiveness of the police.

South Africa's police (SAP) force is facing a personnel crisis, while private security guards continue to grow in number. There are 10,380 registered private security companies in South Africa. At the end of 2022, there were nearly 2.7 million registered security guards in the country, with 586,042 being actively employed. In contrast, there were only 140,048 officers employed in the SAP during the same year. This translates to four private security guards for every police officer in South Africa.

The growing demand for private security directly results from the constraints experienced in the SAP. Consequently, private security guards are taking up more of the roles and tasks originally mandated for the national police force.

The government is professionalising the private security sector, with draft regulations already being published to this effect.<sup>2</sup> However, challenges remain. For instance, ensuring compliance with standards across numerous private security companies and personnel is a complex task. Inadequate regulation enforcement means some companies operate without proper licensing.<sup>3</sup> Additional challenges include rampant corruption and criminal activity involvement in some security firms.<sup>4</sup>

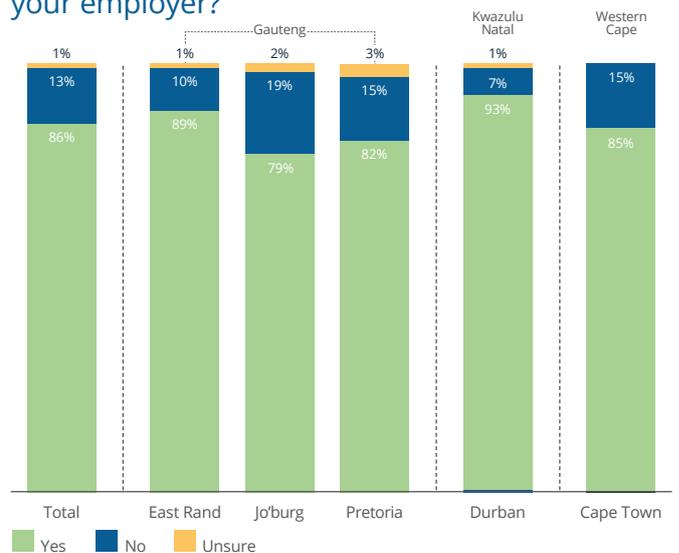
When it comes to the personnel, there are several issues to contend with. For one, most guards receive minimal compensation<sup>5</sup> and, in some cases, work extremely long hours. They also face significant risks, including

possible injury or even death in certain instances during confrontation with thieves or from prolonged exposure to the elements.

This research intends to provide a critical turning point to address the human rights issues faced by private security guards in South Africa.

## 3.2 Contracts, salary and benefits

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

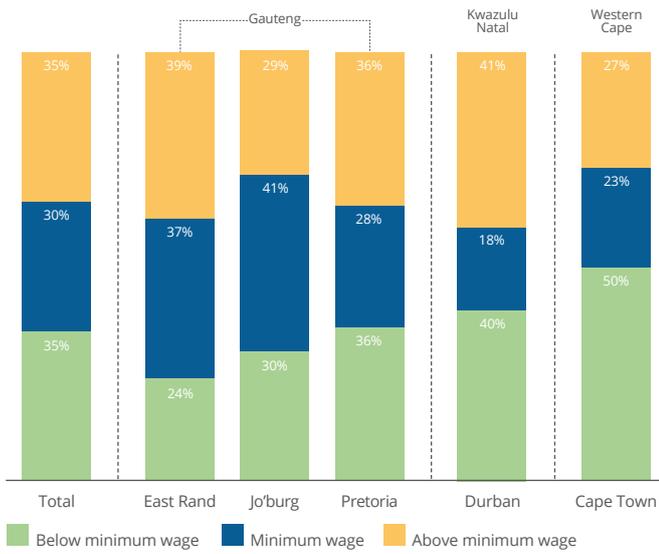


86% of the interviewed security guards reported having a formal contract with their employer. This reflects a significant trend of formal employment agreements in South Africa's private security sector, suggesting that employers value legal and structured employment practices.

This trend is not without its regional disparity. The prevalence of formal contracts was notably higher in the Durban region (93%) and East Rand (89%), while it was below the overall average in Johannesburg (79%).

2. <https://businesstech.co.za/news/lifestyle/605960/big-shake-up-to-hit-private-security-in-south-africa>  
 3. <https://cplo.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/BP-313-The-Private-Security-Industry-Dec-2012.pdf>  
 4. <https://cplo.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/BP-313-The-Private-Security-Industry-Dec-2012.pdf>  
 5. <https://www.southafricanlabourbulletin.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/4.-Security-guards-in-Gauteng.pdf>

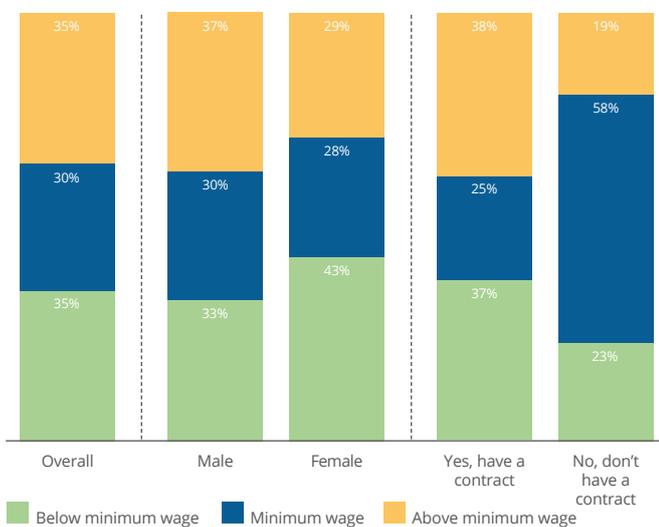
## 2. Salary levels compared to minimum wage



The earnings of South African private security guards in the sample are balanced across different income thresholds. About 35% earn above the minimum wage of \$320, 30% earn precisely the minimum wage and 35%, more than one third, earn less than minimum wage.

Once again, regional disparity is worth noting. In Cape Town, half of the guards' reported earnings are below the minimum wage, a higher proportion than other regions. In Durban, on the other hand, there is an equal percentage of guards earning above and below the minimum wage, both exceeding the proportion earning the minimum. Meanwhile, 41% of guards earn the minimum wage in Johannesburg, the highest percentage among all regions.

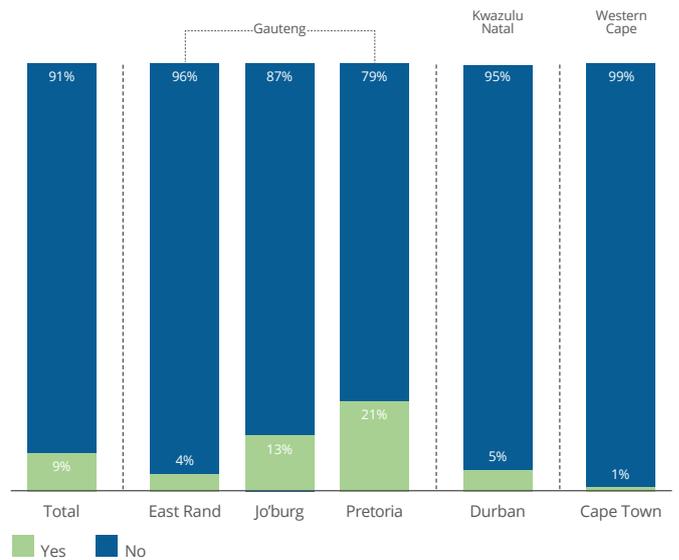
## 3. Salary levels and contractual status



It is interesting to note that despite lack of formal employment contracts, 58% of guards earn the minimum wage compared to only 25% of guards with formal contracts.

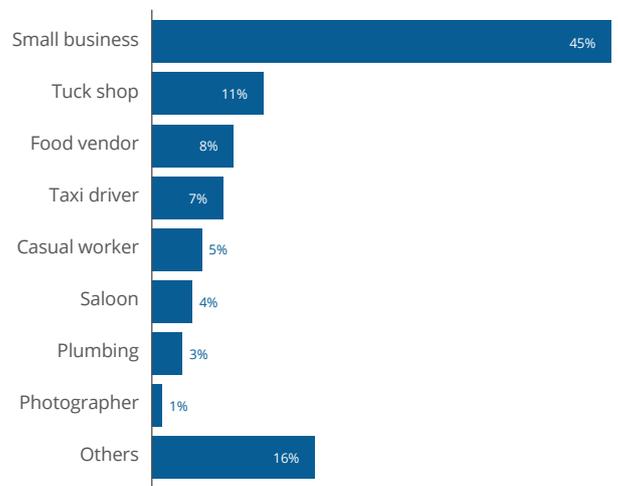
Gendered factors also contribute to the disparity. A higher proportion of female guards (43%) earn below the minimum wage compared to their male counterparts (33%). This may be driven by the perceptions that women are weaker than men, thus warranting lesser pay.

## 4. Do you have another activity to supplement your income?



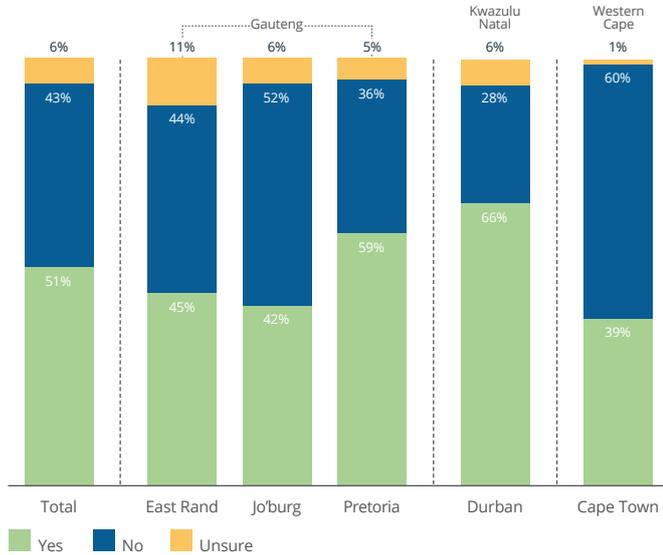
Only 9% of guards reported engaging in additional income-generating activities, with the highest incidence in the Pretoria region (21%). It is worth further investigating what are the considerations that drive engagement additional income generating activities.

## 5. Types of activity to supplement income



As illustrated in the bar graph, small businesses dominate the additional income-generating activities reported by the guards interviewed. Close to half (45%) reported engaging in these activities.

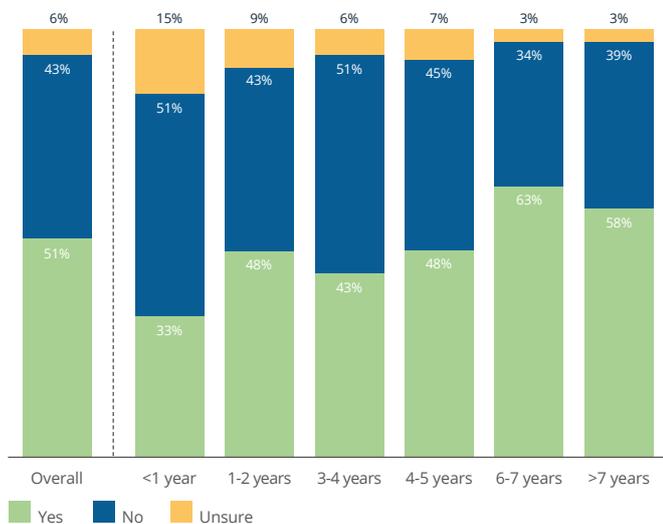
### 6. Do you receive social benefits such as National Social Security from your employer? (by region)



51% of the interviewed guards reported having access to social security benefits. This access is even more prevalent in the Durban (66%) and Pretoria regions (59%).

However, in the Cape Town region, 60% of the guards reported lacking access to these benefits, highlighting regional disparities in the provision of social security.

### 7. Do you receive social benefits such as National Social Security from your employer? (by length of service)

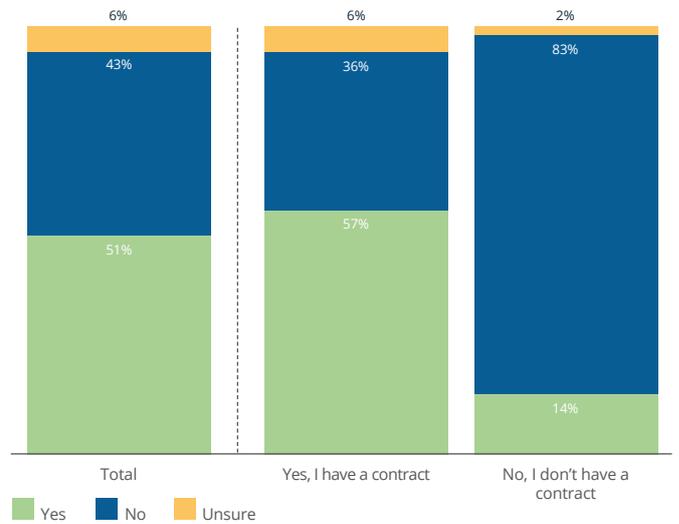


There's a direct correlation between access to social security benefits and length of private security service.

Security guards with over five years of employment are more likely to receive these benefits, with 63% of those with 6-7 years of service and 58% of those with more than seven years reporting coverage.

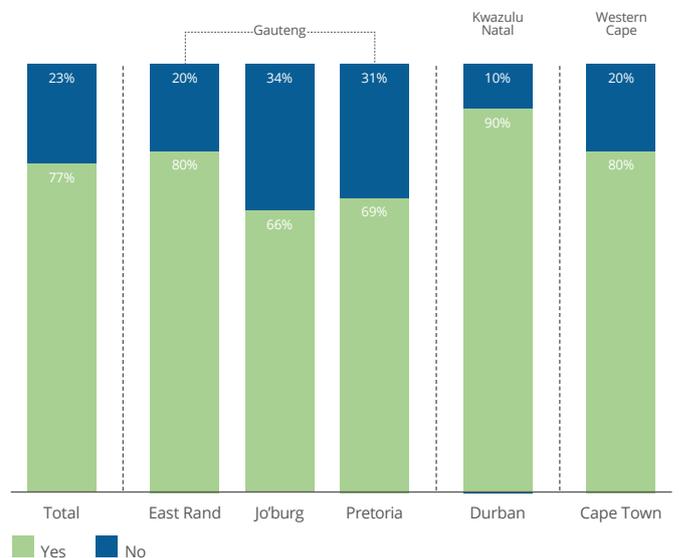
This suggests that longer employment tenure enhances access to social security within the South African private security industry.

### 8. Do you receive social benefits such as National Social Security from your employer? (by contractual status)



In exploring the correlation of access to social security and contractual status, it is possible to observe a significant disparity. However, while a substantial 83% of guards without formal contracts lack social security coverage, a lower proportion (36%) of their contracted counterparts also do not receive this benefit.

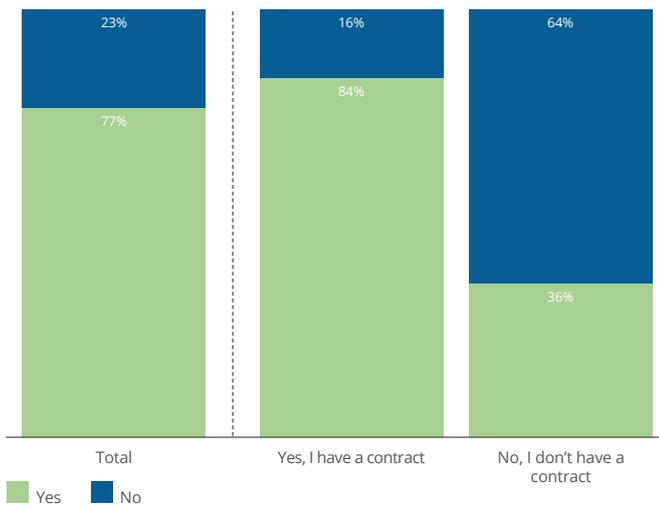
### 9. Do you receive Unemployment Insurance Fund (UIF)? (by region)



77% of the interviewed security guards reported having access to the Unemployment Insurance Fund (UIF). Coverage is particularly strong in the Durban region at 90%.

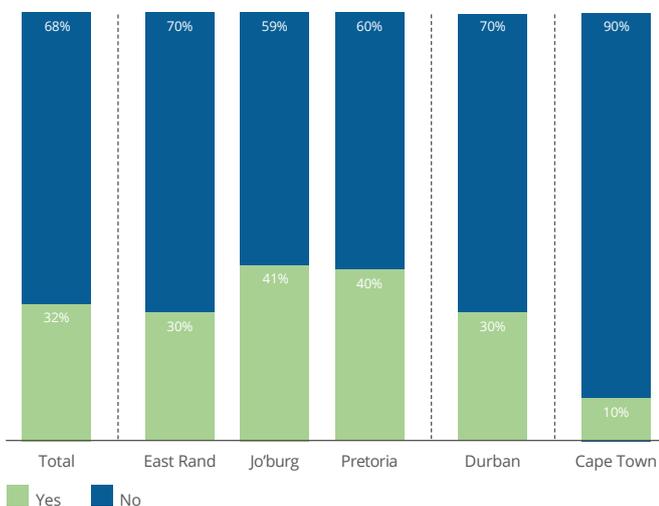
The UIF provides short-term relief to workers who become unemployed or are unable to work due to maternity, adoption, parental leave or illness.

### 10. Do you receive Unemployment insurance fund (UIF)? (by contractual status)



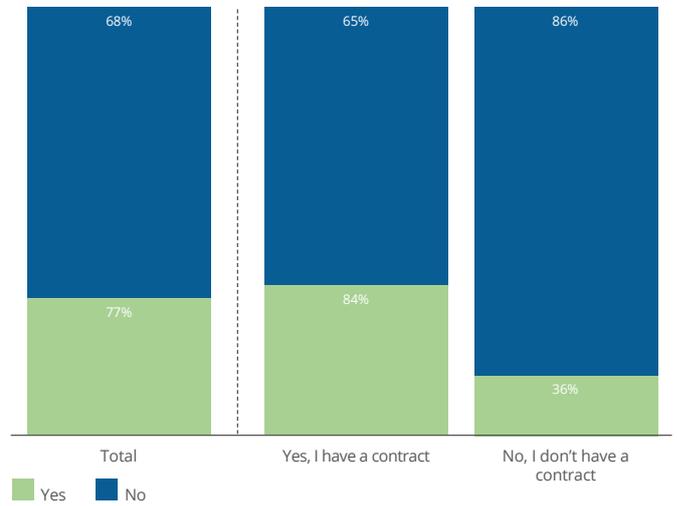
Access to UIF also varies significantly based on contractual status. Only 36% of the guards without formal contracts reported having UIF coverage, highlighting a major gap in benefits for those lacking formal employment contracts. Guards with contracts were more likely to have UIF benefits at 84%.

### 11. Do you receive any other benefits? (by region)



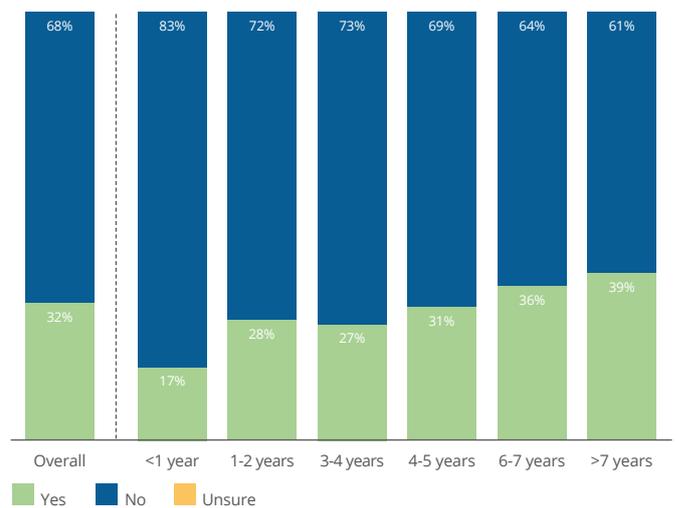
Less than half (32%) of the guards reported receiving additional perks. This benefit is noticeably lower in the Cape Town region, where only 10% cited access to such perks.

### 12. Do you receive any other benefits? (by contractual status)



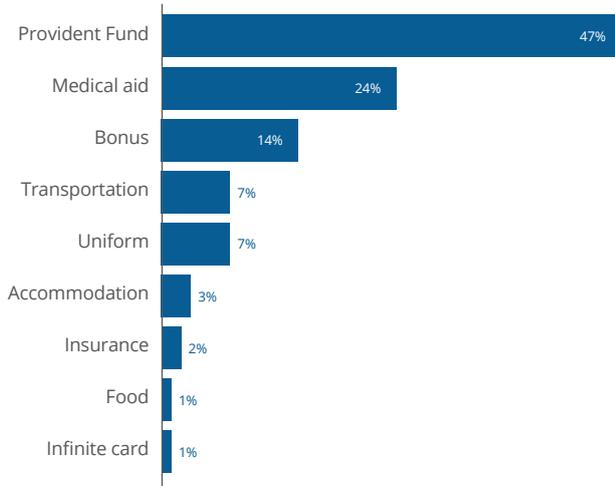
Guards with formal work contracts are more likely to receive additional benefits, with 35% reporting access to such perks. In contrast, only 14% of guards without formal employment contracts reported receiving similar benefits.

### 13. Do you receive any other benefits? (by length of service)



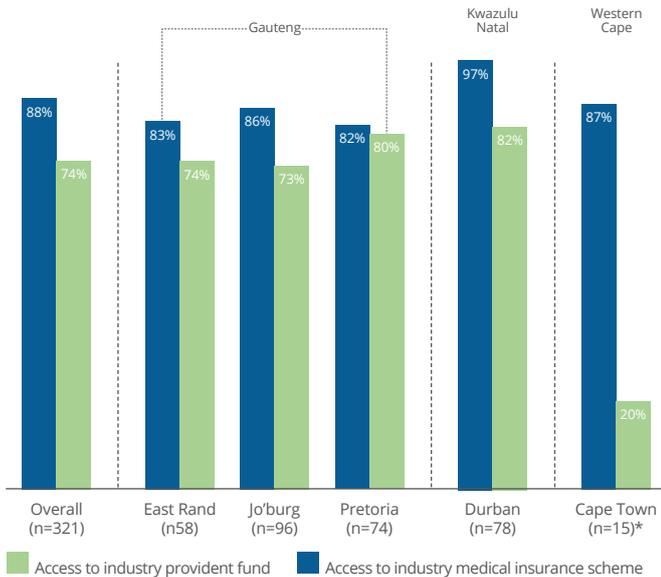
Access to additional perks and benefits increases with the length of service, as security guards with more years of employment are more likely to receive these extras.

## 14. Other benefits received



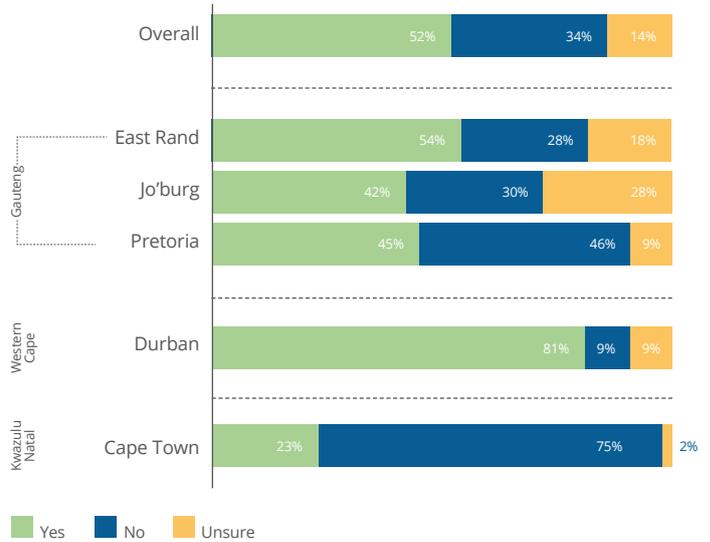
Among guards receiving additional benefits, 47% reported receiving an industry provident fund, while 24% cited access to an industry medical insurance scheme and 14% cited bonus.

## 15. Other benefits received (provident fund & medical insurance) by region



Among the guards receiving additional benefits, 88% reported receiving an industry provident fund, while 74% cited access to an industry medical insurance scheme.

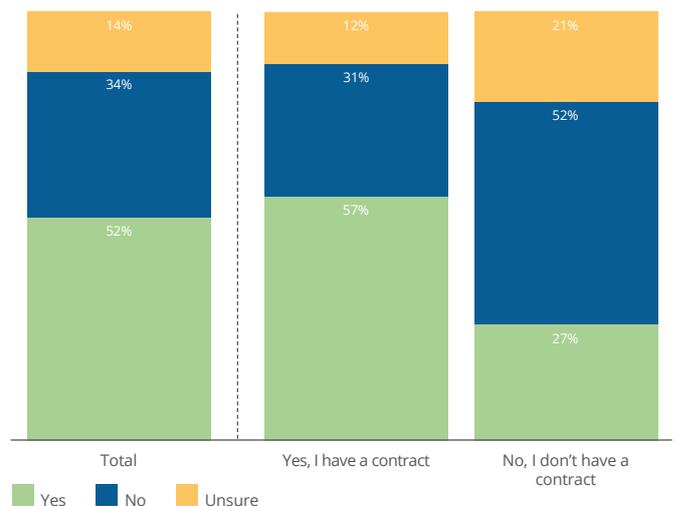
## 16. Are you allowed to join a union?



More than half (52%) of security guards reported being allowed by their employers to join a union, with the highest proportion in the Durban region (81%). In contrast, 34% stated their employers explicitly prohibit them from joining unions, with this restriction being most prevalent in the Cape Town region (75%).

Employers often discourage union membership among their employees because they fear being exposed for mistreating their staff. This issue is particularly prevalent in smaller companies that cannot afford to provide a decent working environment for their employees. Larger corporations generally do not face this problem.

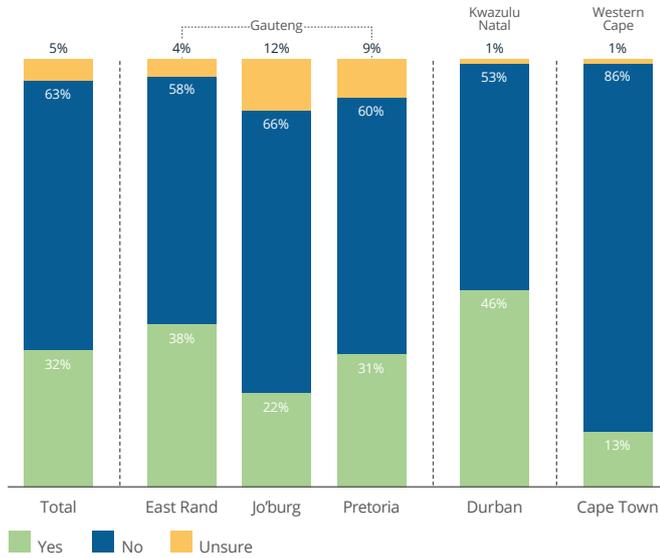
## 17. Union membership and contractual status



Notably, 52% of guards without formal contracts reported not being allowed to join unions, compared to only 31% of those with formal contracts. This confirms that having a

contract provides freedom for joining unions, setting the grounds for favourable employment conditions.

### 18. Are you represented by a union?



The results of the survey indicate that union representation remains low overall, with only 32% of guards having union representation.

Within the regions, union representation is much lower with 13% in the Cape Town region, while higher with 46% in the Durban region.

### Voice of guards

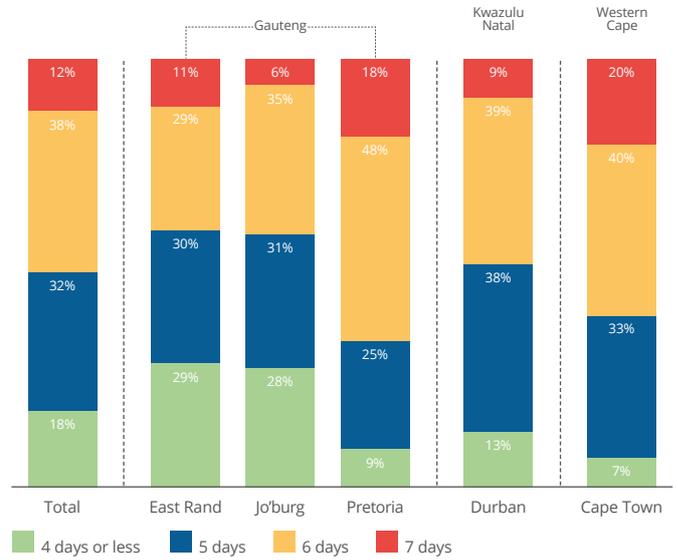
The guards reported grappling with the following key issues, with inadequate compensation ranking as the most pressing. Compensation issues include low wages, inconsistent pay and a lack of benefits such as paid leave, medical aid and pension contributions. Private security guards perceive this lack of financial security to significantly impact their well-being and livelihood.

The following verbatim responses indicate the concerns of the private security industry in South Africa:

- “We have a problem, the salaries don't have pay slips.”
- “We don't get paid equally even with same security qualifications and we don't know the basic hour rates.”
- “If only they paid more than we need, they should take the security industry seriously.”
- “The worst is that the company doesn't pay enough for the labour we provide.”
- “We don't get paid on time or at all.”

## 3.3 Working conditions

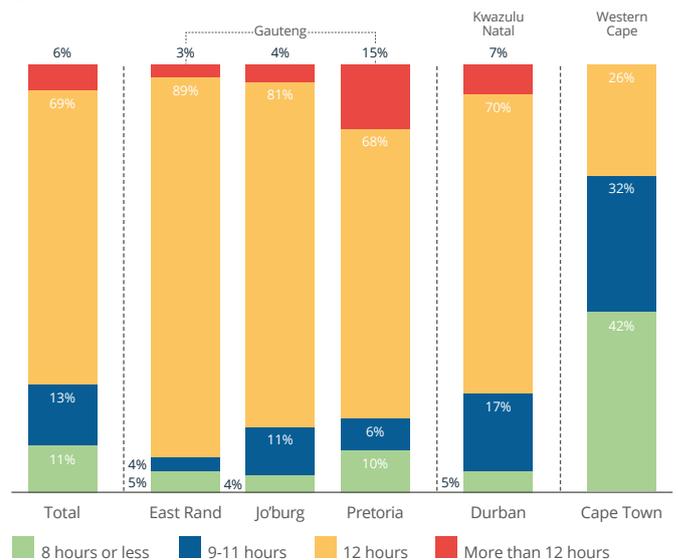
### 1. How many days do you and other security guards usually work in a week?



38% of the security guards reported working six days per week, a schedule particularly common among guards in the Pretoria (48%) and Cape Town regions (40%).

However, for the few who worked for 7 days a week, Pretoria and Cape Town recorded the largest percentages, at 20% and 18%, respectively.

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

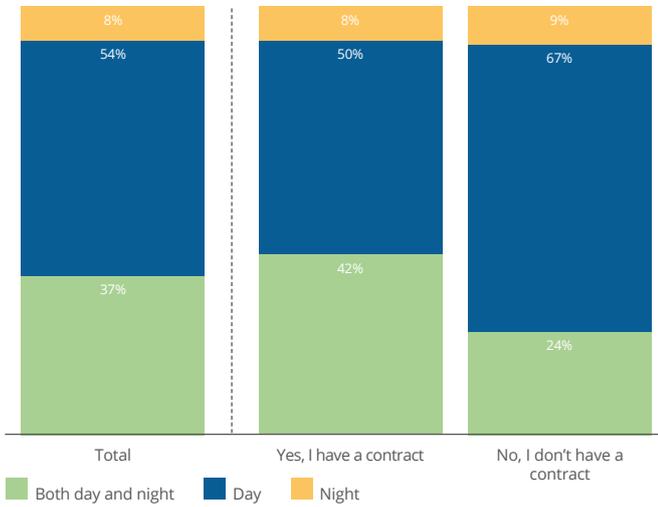


69% of the interviewed guards reported that they worked 12-hour daily shifts.

However once again, regional variations are evident, with significantly higher proportions in the East Rand (89%) and

Johannesburg (81%) working 12-hour shifts, compared to Cape Town (26%).

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



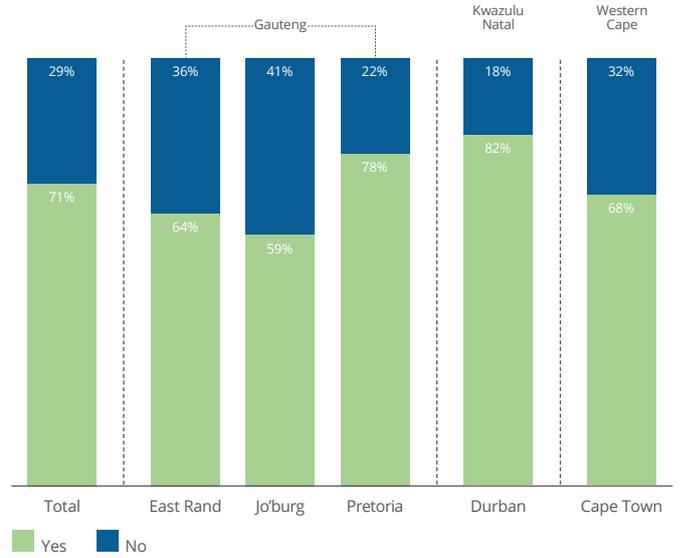
54% of the guards work on day shifts, while 37% reported working both day and night shifts, mainly due to shift changes.

### 4. Reasons for working both shifts



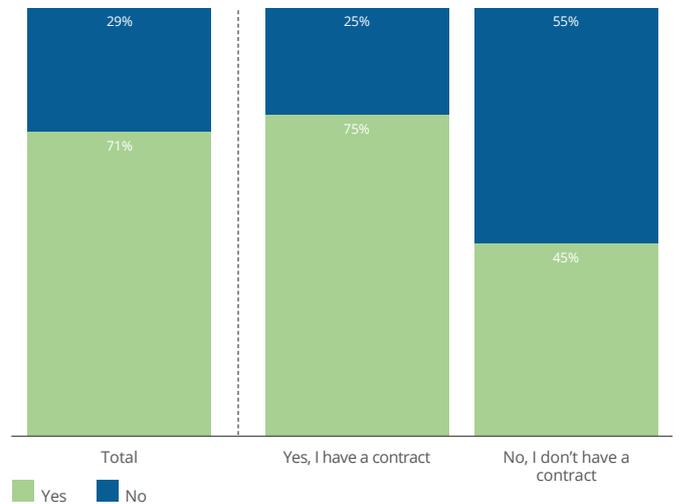
The main reason for working both shifts was changes in shift assignment. It is worth noting that 2% of the respondents said it was compulsory, while 3% put it down to company policy.

### 5. Are you and other security guards paid for working overtime? (by region)



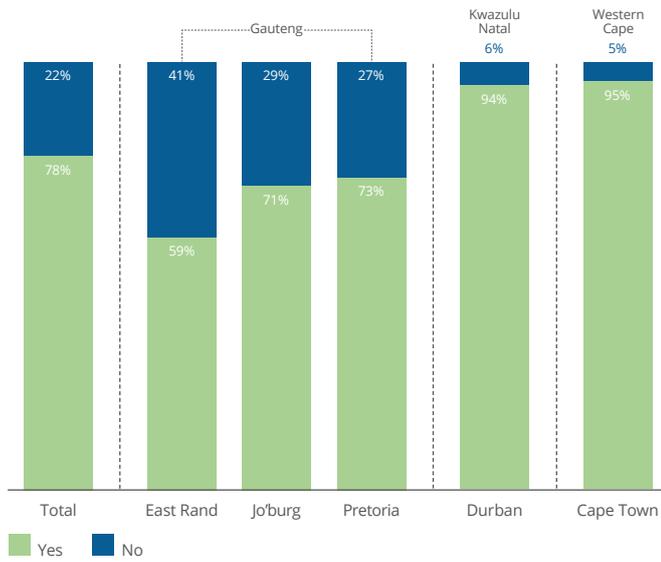
A sizeable proportion, 71% of all guards interviewed, reported that they are paid for working overtime. This statistic is consistently high across the regions.

### 6. Are you and other security guards paid for working overtime? (by contractual status)



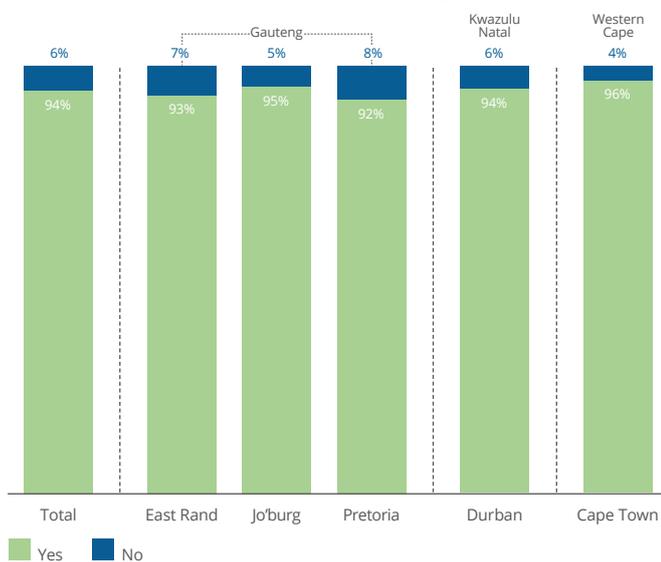
75% of guards with formal employment contracts, report receiving overtime pay compared to 45% of those without. It continues to be reiterated that if guards have contracts, they will most likely be treated better as their employers are compliant with employment laws. Guards without contracts, however, do not have the legal grounds to complain, allowing employment-related malpractices to occur.

## 7. Can you take breaks during working hours?



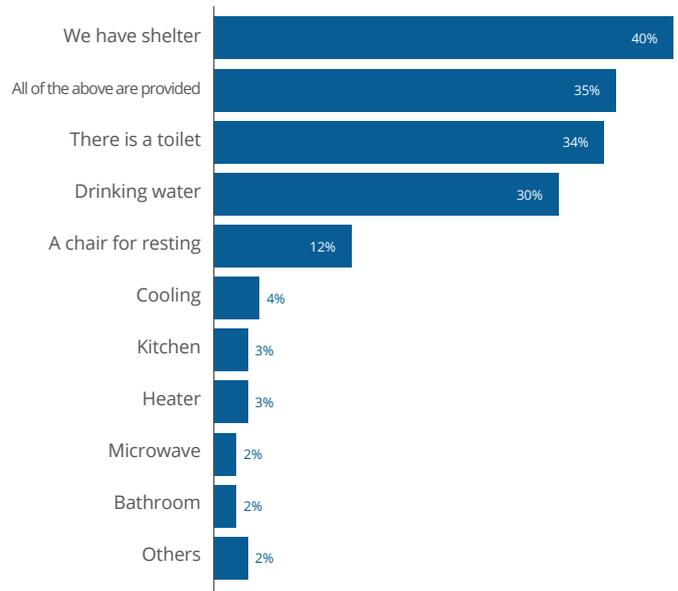
78% of the guards reported being allowed to take breaks during their shifts, with notably higher rates in Cape Town (95%) and Durban (94%). However, East Rand fell below the overall average, with only 59% of guards reporting the ability to take breaks.

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



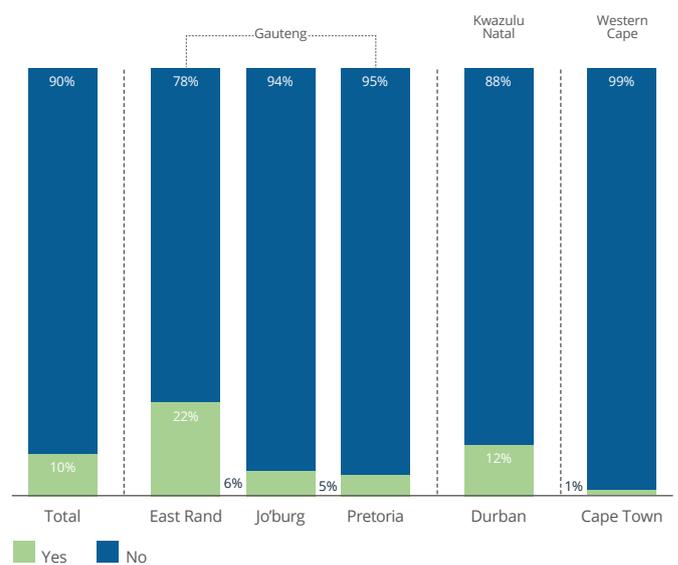
Access to amenities among guards is notably high, with 94% reporting having access to amenities. This statistic remains consistently high across the regions. For the 6% without amenities, their areas of concern were primarily not having toilets and chairs.

## 9. Specify what you have access to



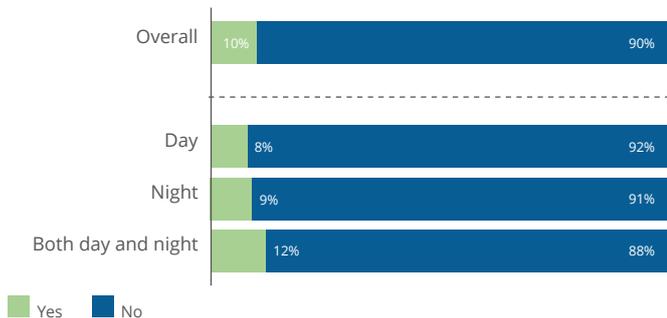
The essential facilities deduced from the survey data include shelter, toilet and drinking water.

## 10. Does your employer provide accommodation for you? (by region)



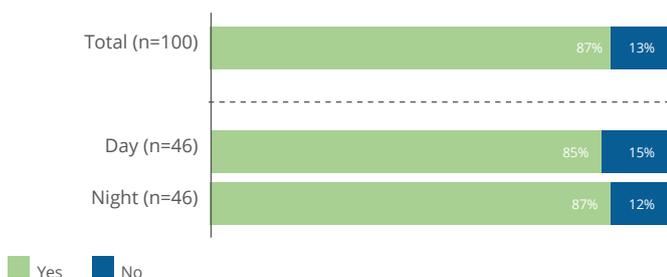
Access to accommodation is limited for security guards across regions. Overall, 81% reported that they do not have access to accommodation. Employers are not contractually required to provide accommodation and as a result, private security guards must arrange their own.

### 11. Does your employer provide accommodation for you? (by shift)



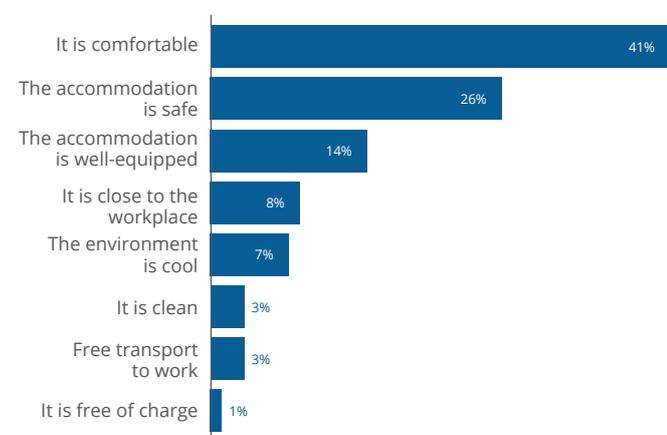
Only 10% of the guards receive accommodation from their employers. There seems to be no significant correlation between access to accommodation and the shift assigned.

### 12. Are you satisfied with the accommodation provided by your employer?



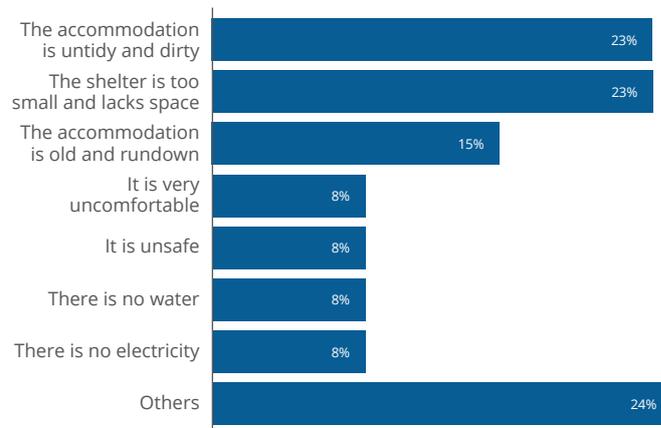
Despite the low access, a high satisfaction level was reported among those with accommodation, with 87% of guards expressing contentment with the quality and adequacy of their accommodations.

### 13. Reasons for satisfaction with the employer-provided accommodation



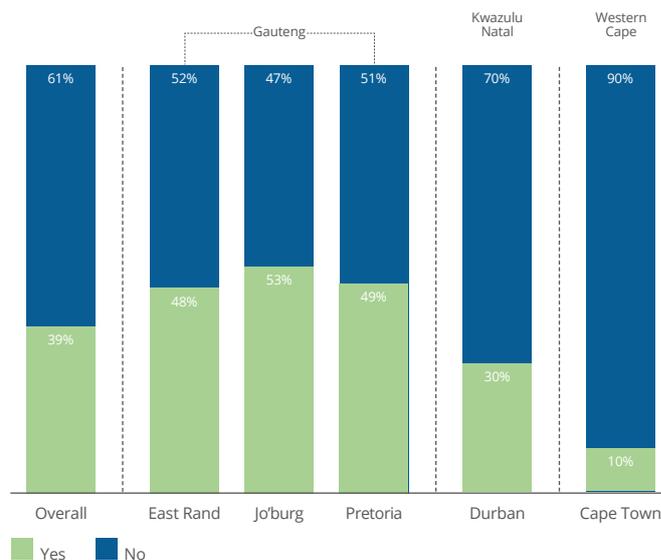
Additionally, the survey chose to investigate the factors that influenced employee satisfaction with the employer-provided accommodation. The primary factors guaranteeing satisfaction are the comfort and safety of the living quarters.

### 14. Reasons for dissatisfaction with the employer-provided accommodation



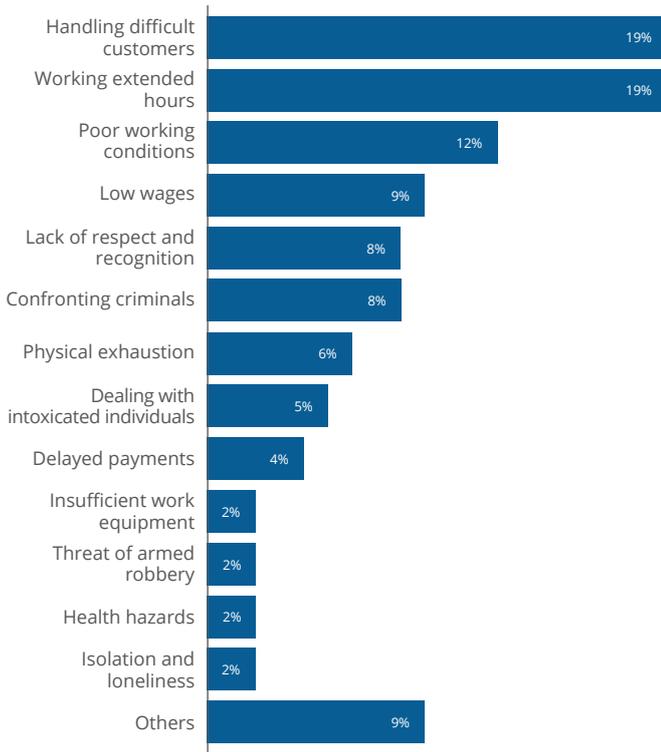
Responses indicate untidiness and lack of space to be significant barriers to overall satisfaction with employer-provided accommodation. There are also concerns around safety, lack of water and electricity as well as the rundown state of the accommodation.

### 15. Do you face other challenges at work?



Overall, 39% of the guards reported encountering challenges at work, with the highest incidence being in Jo'burg. It is interesting to note that only 10% of the workers in Cape Town admitted to facing any occupational challenges.

## 16. Specify other challenges at work



The challenges are primarily linked to circumstances of handling difficult clients and working long hours. The public remains a challenge to the private security guards. The interviewed guards raise the need of sensitising the public about how they should treat and interact with guards. Other challenges included poor working conditions, lack of respect, confronting criminals, physical exhaustion and delays in payments.

### Voice of guards

While some respondents expressed satisfaction with their immediate work environment, others highlighted concerns regarding inadequate facilities such as a lack of proper guardrooms, restrooms and access to clean water.

*“Primary factor is benefits such as toilets but water is not available. We work long hours with no breaks.”*

*“The condition is bad, there is no shelter, no access to water, no chairs.”*

*“No guard house, chair or water.”*

Another significant concern among security guards is excessive working hours. This often exceeds acceptable limits without appropriate compensation. This can lead to burnout, fatigue and other potential health issues.

*“We are working more hours that are not paid for.”*

*“I am new in the area, but I am working because I can't just stay home doing nothing. When working outside the shops, I stand for long hours which is tiring.”*

*“They don't pay our overtime shifts.”*

*“I have unprocessed paid leave and no overtime paid with long working hours.”*

While concerns about external threats were generally low, some guards expressed feeling unsafe within their workplace due to factors like inadequate security measures, exposure to hazardous situations and a lack of support from their employers.

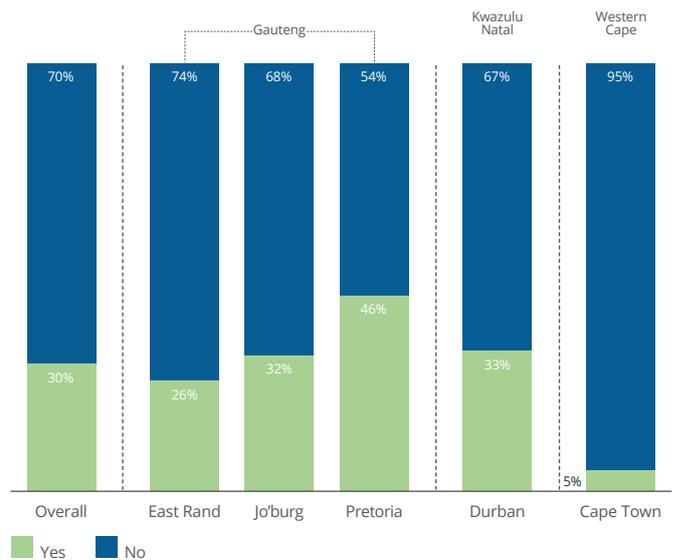
*“It's not safe for security guards because I work in a railway and I have to be alert all the time as there are people who want to steal railway cables.”*

*“The security guards don't have full uniform.”*

*“The site is not safe. I am working in a parking area inside the company, and thieves can come and try to steal the cars.”*

## 3.4 Impact of working conditions

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

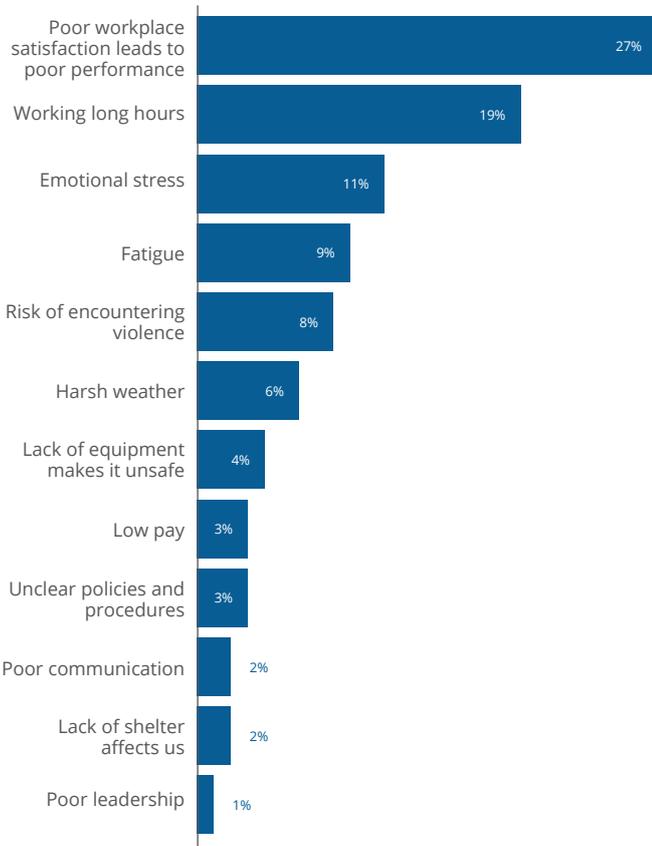


Less than half of the guards (30%) reported that their working conditions affected their job performance. However, perceptions do vary significantly across

regions. In the Cape Town region, only 5% of guards indicated that working conditions impact their performance. This may be explained by the fact that the 8-hour shift is much more common in Cape Town compared to other locations, with 42% of respondents there reporting they work an 8-hour day.

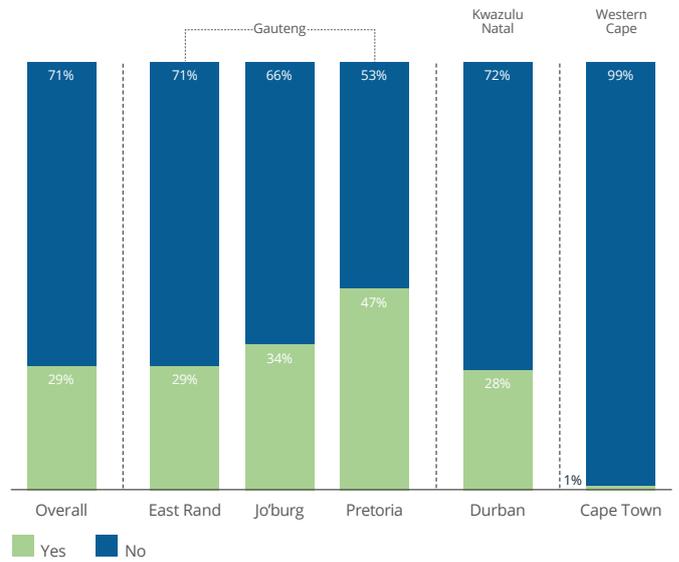
In contrast, 46% of guards in the Pretoria region reported that challenging working conditions hindered their job performance, where 83% of respondents reported working 12 hours or more per day.

## 2. Specify how working conditions affect performance



Poor working conditions, particularly the requirement to work long hours, are the main contributors to stress (11% of respondents) and fatigue (9%), which in turn lead to reduced performance. Unhappiness at work (27%) appears to be the main reason for poor performance.

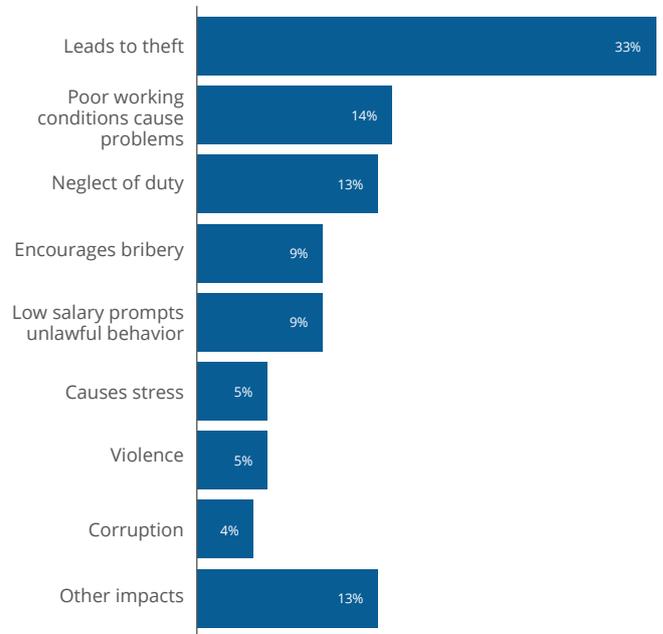
## 3. Have you noticed that guards are more likely to engage in unlawful behaviour if working conditions are poor?



29% of security guards expressed that experiencing poor working conditions contributed to the guards indulging in unlawful behaviour such as disputes and illegal activities.

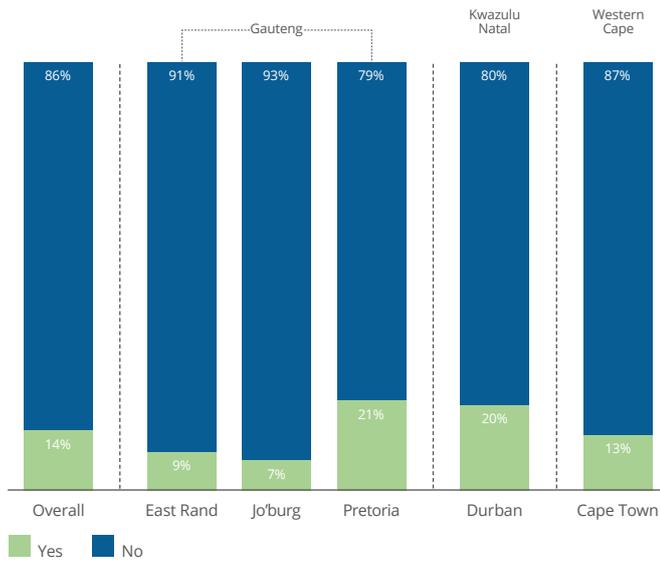
This observation was expressed more in Pretoria at 47%, higher than in any other region.

## 4. Specify the unlawful behaviour



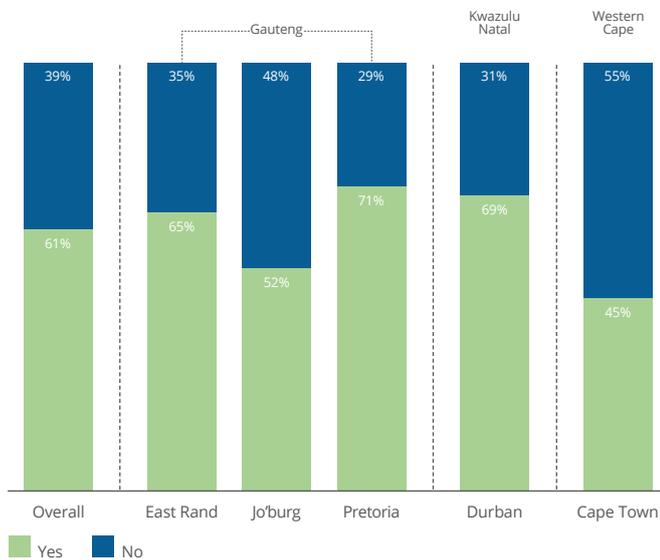
The most commonly reported unlawful behaviour was theft by guards. Other concerns included accepting bribes, neglecting duties and engaging in violence, all of which pose risks to clients' property and operations.

## 5. Have you ever observed corruption?



Only 14% of guards reported witnessing corruption within their workplace, with even lower rates observed in Johannesburg (7%) and East Rand (9%). Given the illicit nature of corruption and related activities, it is important to consider the possibility that the actual incidence may be higher than indicated in the survey.

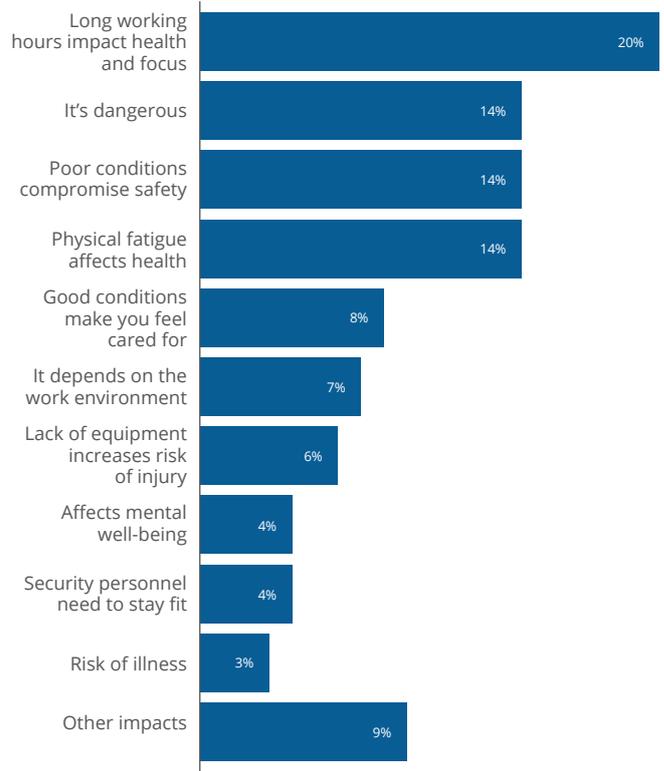
## 6. Do you think working conditions affect the physical health and safety of security guards?



Across regions, 61% of guards reported that poor working conditions negatively impacts their physical health and safety.

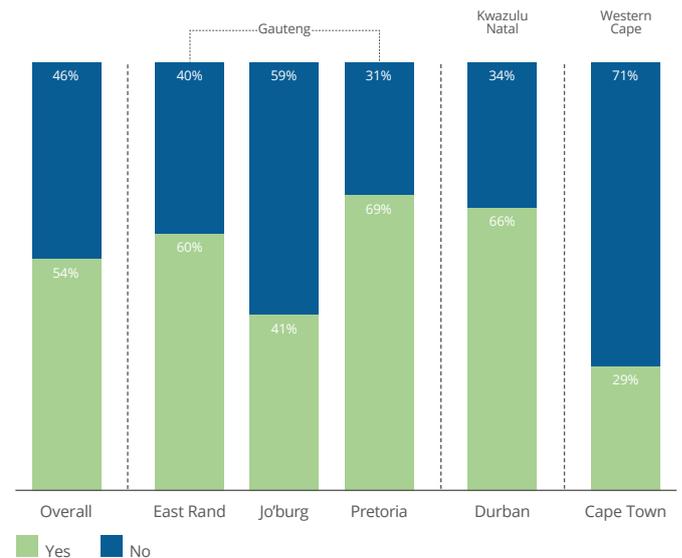
This widespread concern highlights how challenging workplace environments are perceived to directly affect well-being, indicating an industry-wide need for improved conditions to protect guards' health and safety.

## 7. Specify the impact on physical health and safety



Key factors negatively affecting guards' physical health and safety include health impacts and detriment to concentration levels caused by long working hours.

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

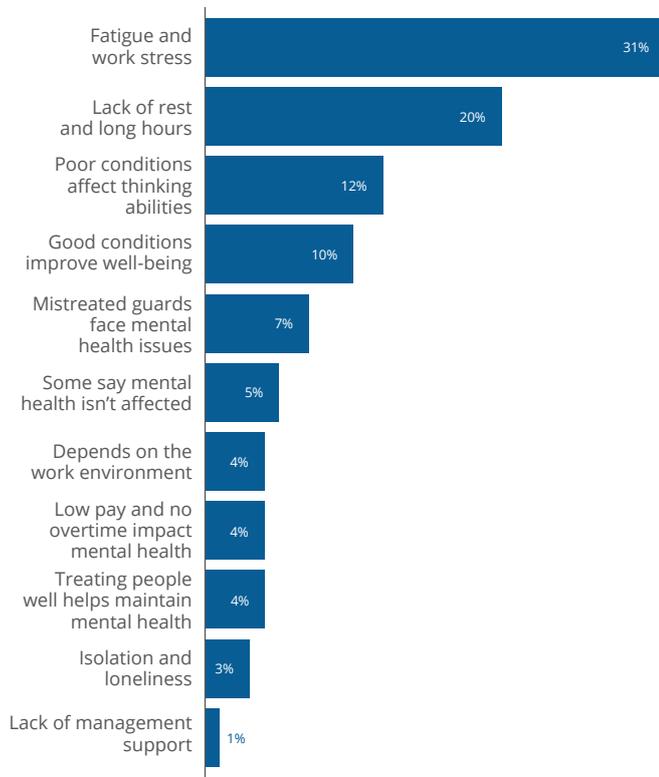


More than half of the guards (54%) reported that their working conditions have a noticeable impact on their mental health and personal relationships. In contrast, fewer guards (29%) in the Cape Town

region cited the same. This may again be due to the higher proportion of guards working an 8-hour day in Cape Town compared to other locations.

The overall perception of the broader influence of work environments on physical well-being and psychological and social aspects of guards' lives is observed in the survey findings. This should encourage the need for interventions that support mental health and work-life balance in the sector.

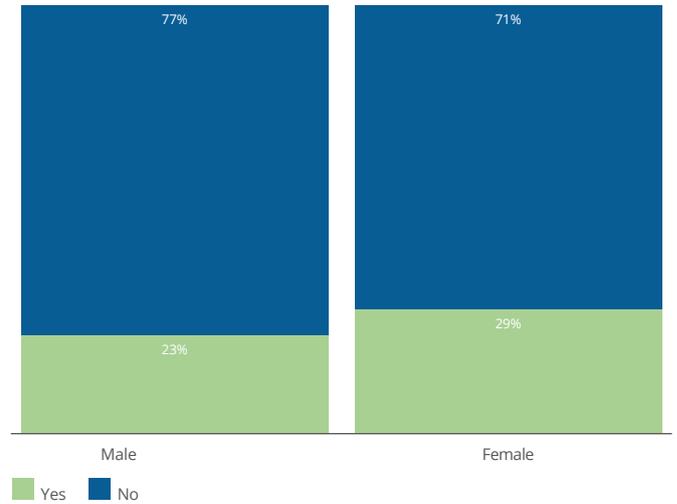
### 9. Specify the impact on mental health and relationships



Key factors contributing to negative mental health and personal relationships include work stress because of fatigue and lack of rest.

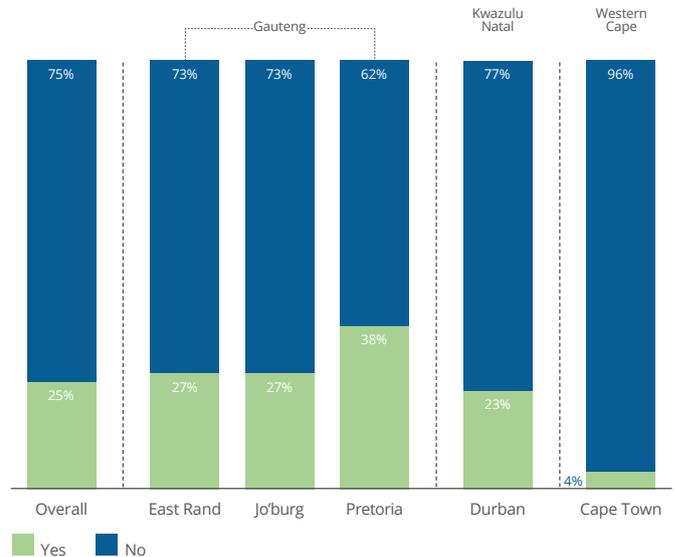
The guards also mentioned that mental health affects relationships by affecting thinking ability.

### 10. Do you think working conditions affect women and men differently? (by gender)

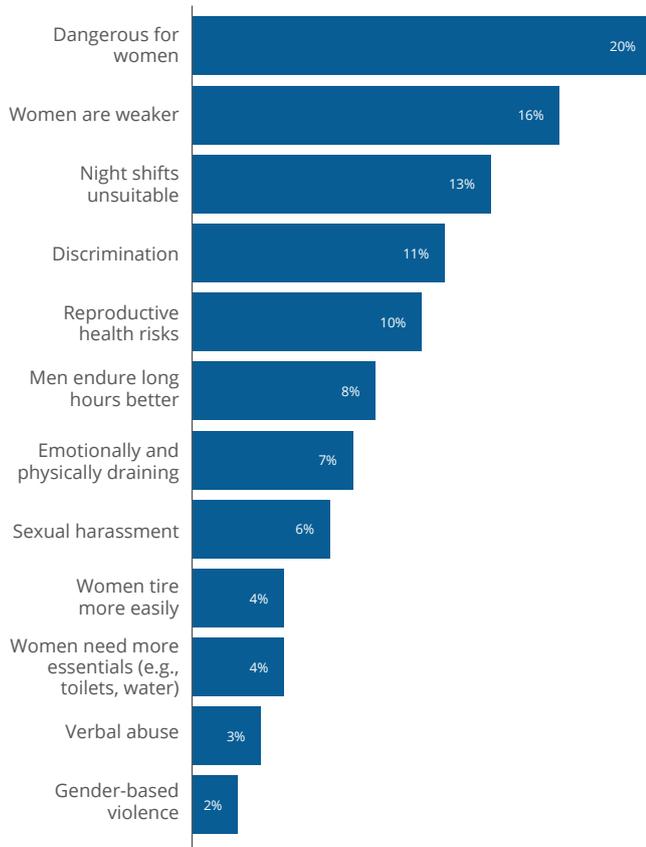


Only 25% of guards stated that working conditions affect women differently than men. There were no significant differences in this perspective between male and female guards.

### 11. Do you think working conditions affect women and men differently? (by region)



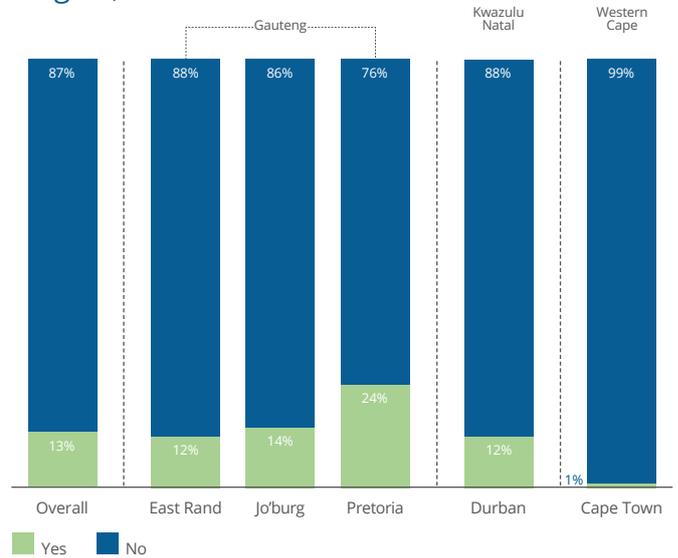
## 12. Specify in what way working conditions affect women and men differently



Among the few guards who noted that working conditions affect women differently, many highlighted that the work environment is considered dangerous for women. This stemmed from the perception of female guards to be less physically strong than male guards and perceived unsuitability to work at night.

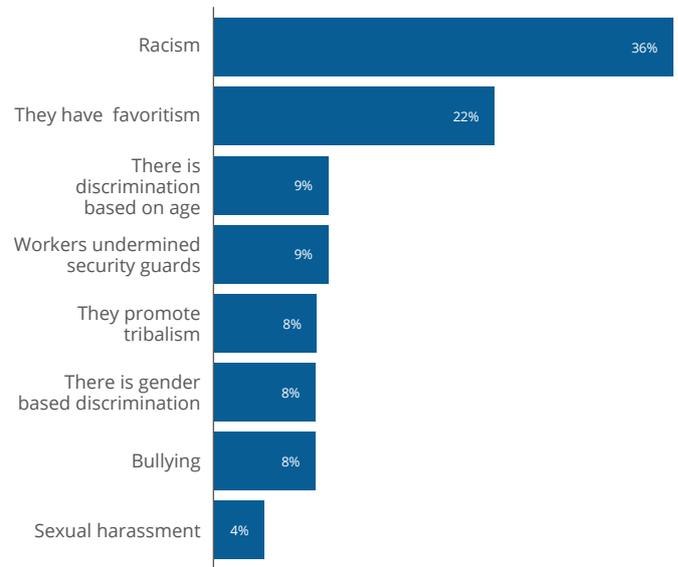
## 3.5 Harassment and discrimination

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



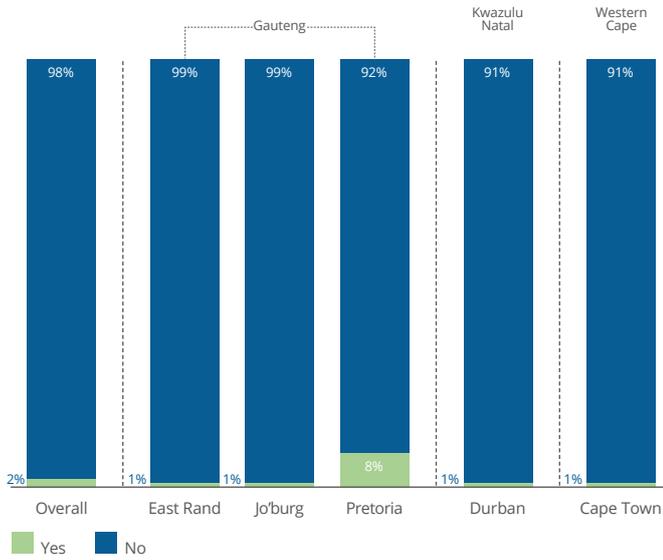
A relatively small proportion of guards (13%) reported experiencing discrimination at work. The highest incidence was in Pretoria at 24%.

### 2. Specify the types of discrimination noticed at work



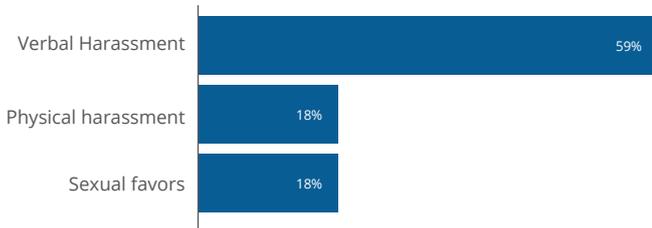
The primary forms of discrimination identified include racism and favouritism. Others included ageism, bullying, tribalism and sexual harassment.

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



Only 2% of security guards reported witnessing instances of sexual harassment. The incidence was highest in Pretoria at 8%.

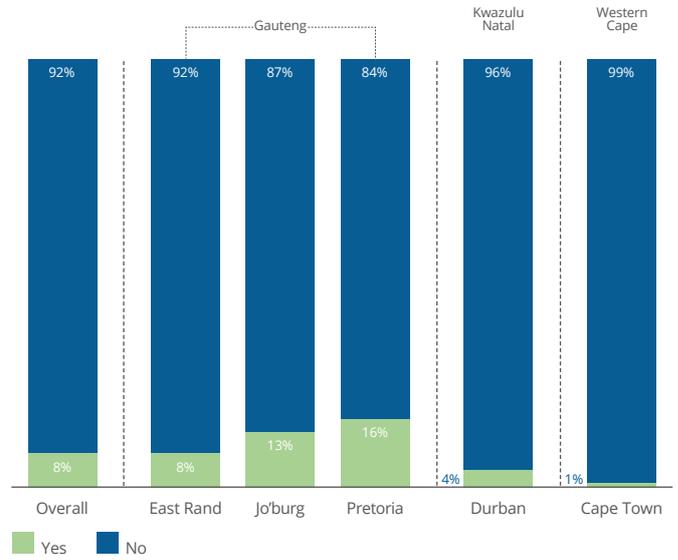
### 4. Specify the forms of sexual harassment observed at work



The predominant form of sexual harassment involved women being subjected to verbal abuse.

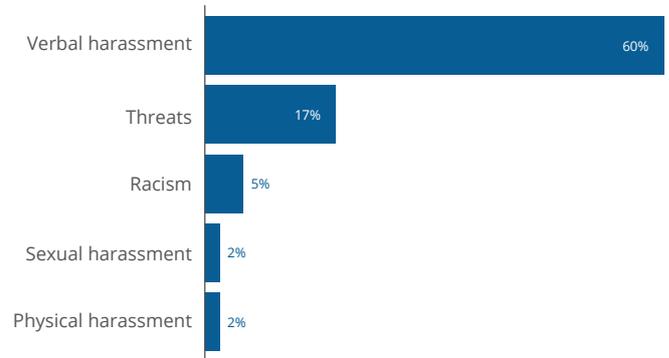
While less frequent, there were also cases reported of physical harassment and sexual favours.

### 5. Do you observe any other forms of harassment by employers or colleagues?

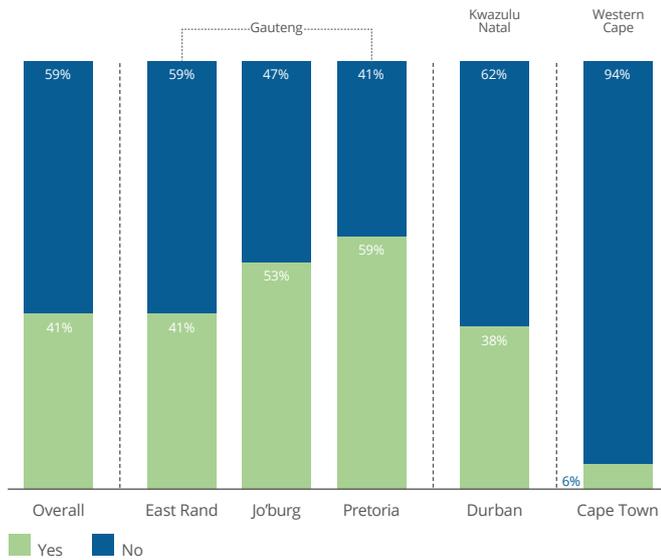


Only 8% of the guards reported witnessing other harassment by employers,' mainly verbal harassment and threats.

### 6. Specify the other forms of harassment observed at work

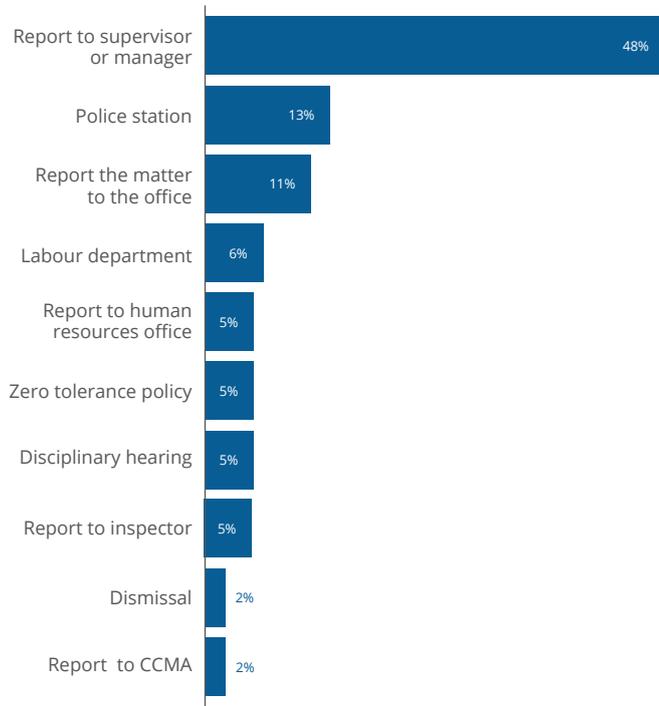


## 7. Do you know if/what preventative measures are in place?



While close to half (41%) of security guards are aware of existing preventative measures against harassment and discrimination, there is a regional disparity. While only 6% of guards in Cape Town region are aware, a much higher proportion in Pretoria (59%) are aware.

## 8. Specify the preventative measures in place



Regarding reporting incidents, the most common action taken by 48% of the guards is to inform their supervisor/manager. Some 13% and 11% report to the police station and office, respectively.

## Voice of guards

Some respondents reported experiencing discrimination or unequal treatment, particularly regarding salary and opportunities. This includes instances of gender-based discrimination and potential racial bias.

*"Sometimes female security guards get lower salaries compared to men."*

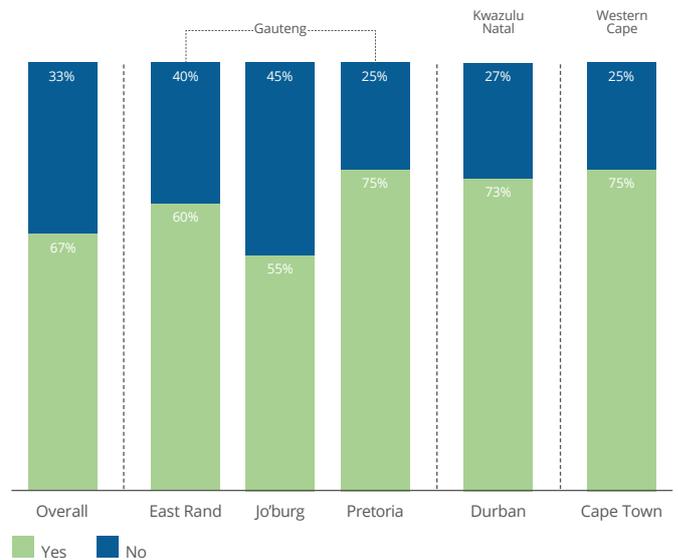
*"Primary problem is racist clients, but all conditions are good."*

*"It's not easy to be a guard in a foreign land because of the language barrier they don't respect us."*

*"All the black owned companies undermine their workers because they don't offer all the requirements that we need."*

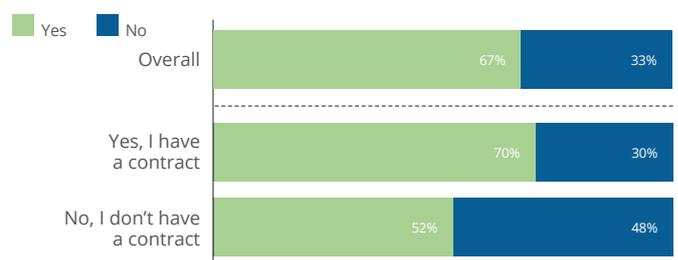
## 3.6 Employee training

### 1. Does your employer provide any training for security guards? (by region)



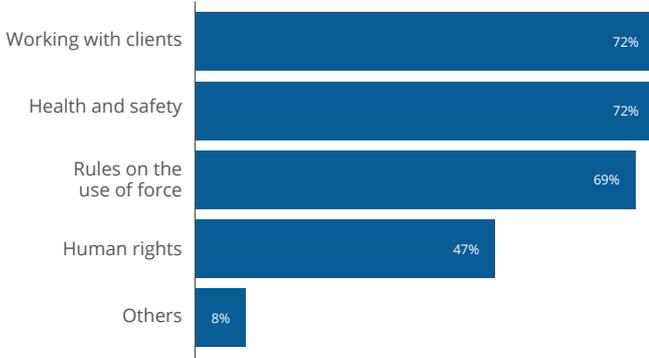
A large majority of security personnel have undergone employer-provided training.

### 2. Does your employer provide any training for security guards? (by contractual status)



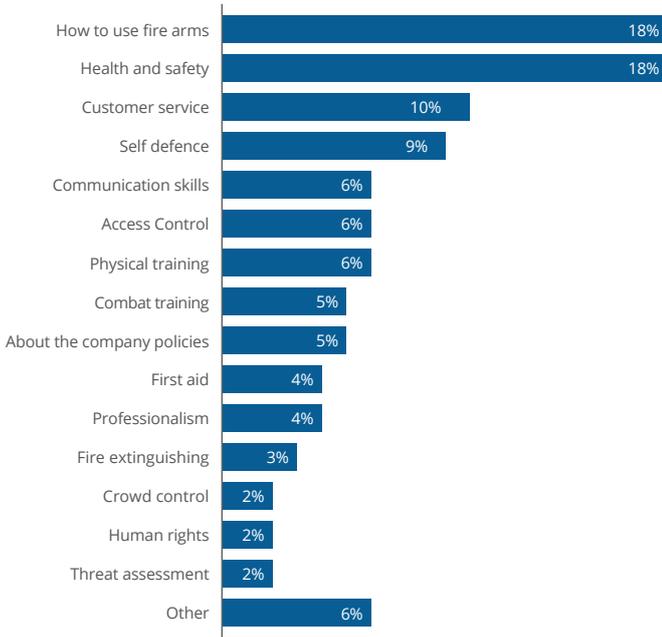
Notably, the incidence of training is lower at 52% among those without formal employment contracts than among contracted guards (70%).

### 3. What training do security guards receive?

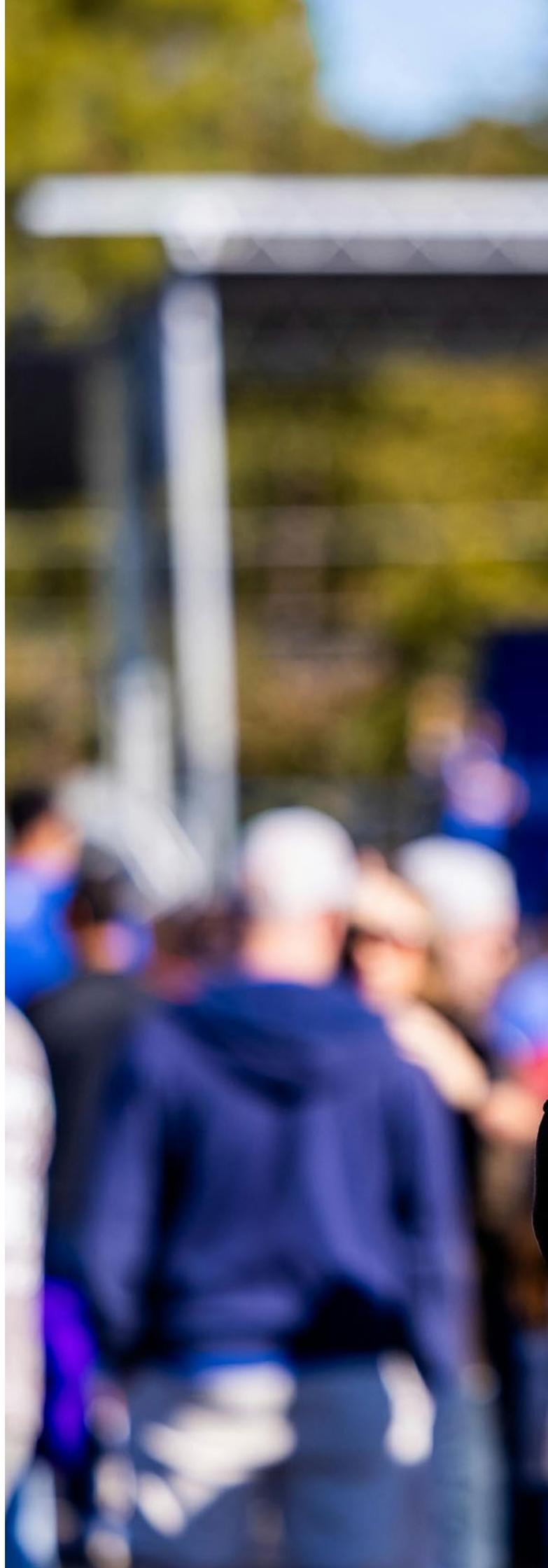


The trainings already in place primarily revolve around health and safety protocols, client relations and rules on using force.

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



The guards mentioned that the training areas they need most are firearms and health and safety. They requested that they be supported with firearms as crime had increased and they often felt that criminals were likely to overpower them.





**SECURITY**

# 4. SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## 4.1 Situational analysis metrics

The following key baseline metrics have been identified to track trends in future findings.

<b>Contracts, salary and benefits</b>	Employment contracts	86%
	Below minimum wage	35%
	Minimum wage	30%
	Above minimum wage	35%
	Social Security access	51%
	UIF access	77%
	Access to other benefits	32%
	Union representation	32%
<b>Working conditions</b>	Allowed to take work breaks during working hours	78%
	Work for 8-11 hours a day	24%
	Work for 12+ hours a day	76%
	Work 6 days a week	38%
	Work 7 days a week	12%
	Work both day and night shifts	37%
	Overtime payment	71%
	Access to amenities (i.e., toilets, drinking water, shelter)	94%
	Access to accommodation	10%
<b>Impact of working conditions</b>	Working conditions affect the performance of security personnel at work	30%
	If working conditions are poor guards are likely to engage in unlawful behaviour	29%
	Working conditions affect the physical health and safety of security guards	61%
	Working conditions affect the mental health and relationships of security guards	54%
	Working conditions affect women differently than men	25%
<b>Harassment and discrimination</b>	Notice any form of discrimination at work	13%
	Sexual harassment	2%
	Other forms of harassment	8%
	Awareness of preventative measures	41%
<b>Employee training</b>	Employer provides training	67%
	<i>Training accessed</i> - Health and safety	72%
	<i>Training accessed</i> - Client relations	72%
	<i>Training needed</i> - Health and safety	18%
	<i>Training needed</i> - Firearm training	18%

## 4.2 Conclusion and way forward

### Contracts, salaries, benefits

More advocacy is required to make private security guards in South Africa aware of the minimum wage. Private security companies must comply with minimum wage requirements for their workforce. It is crucial to ensure that the 35% of the sampled workforce currently earning below minimum wage are brought up to par with the wage rates of their minimum wage and above-earning counterparts.

Only 36% of private security guards employed without a contract enjoy access to the Unemployment Insurance Fund (UIF). It is critical to ensure that all guards, regardless of their contractual status, have access to social benefits including the UIF. As a result, industry stakeholders must raise awareness of these benefits among private security guards and their employers.

The responses collected indicate that it is important to provide medical insurance, provident funds and bonuses to improve job satisfaction and retention rates for guards. This is particularly important for private security guards working in higher-risk regions.

### Working conditions

It is of utmost importance for the industry to ensure that all security guards, especially those deployed in high-risk areas, have access to proper safety gear and facilities. Additionally, it is necessary to conduct regular health assessments, with priority being given to guards working extended hours and/or in dangerous environments.

Given the high-risk and stressful nature of the job, private security companies have a responsibility to look beyond physical health risks and consider what is needed to protect the mental health and wellbeing of their employees. Companies should introduce mental health programs involving counselling and other stress management resources to help guards combat occupational pressures. It is necessary to encourage open communication about mental health and provide the necessary support when required.

On that note, it is essential to improve breaks. Given the mental fatigue that accompanies long working hours,

employers should ensure regular, paid breaks and rest periods as well as shift rotation to mitigate health impacts.

Additionally, employers must improve or provide safe, comfortable living arrangements to address the concerns of guards who have limited access to accommodation.

Private security companies should also develop clear policies and procedures for resolving disputes and addressing unlawful behaviour in the workplace. Drawing from the responses, there is a need to train guards on conflict resolution and respect in the workplace. These reforms are important to initiate given that working conditions have far reaching consequences.

### Harassment and discrimination

Increase awareness of anti-discrimination and anti-harassment policies for private security companies. Introduce mandatory sensitivity and inclusivity training for all security personnel, including understanding unconscious bias, racism, and sexism.

Improve the visibility and accessibility of reporting channels for harassment or discrimination, ensuring that guards feel safe when reporting issues without fear of retaliation.

Advocacy towards implementing and enforcing a zero-tolerance policy towards harassment, including both verbal and physical forms. Provide immediate consequences for offenders to ensure a safe working environment for all employees, especially women.

### Employee training

Ensure that training covers not just health, safety, and client relations, but also specialised skills like firearms use and emergency response. This would better prepare guards for challenging scenarios they may face.

Increase training opportunities for guards without formal employment contracts, ensuring they have the same access to professional development as those with formal contracts. This could be achieved through partnerships or subsidies for informal contract holders.

## 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

**A. Please select one of the following for place of interview:**

1. Residential
2. Mall
3. Industrial area
4. Office building / Schools

**1. What is your gender?**

- a. Male
- b. Female
- c. Other

**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?**

Workers' protection and pay

**6. Do you have an employment contract with your employer?**

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

**7. Do you receive social benefits such as National Social Security from your employer?**

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

**8. Do you receive health benefits such as National Health Insurance from your employer?**

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

**9. Do you receive Unemployment Insurance Fund (UIF)?**

**10. Do you receive any other benefits?**

**If yes, please specify.**

- a. Industry provident fund Yes/No
- b. Industry medical insurance scheme

**11. The minimum monthly salary in South Africa for areas 1 & 2 (urban and peri urban) is R6096.00 per month. Is your salary...?**

- 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 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, 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 observe other forms of harassment by employers or colleagues?**

- a. If so, in what ways? >

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

- a. If so, in what ways? >

**27. Do you know if/what preventative measures are in place against harassments or discriminations?**

- a. If yes, please explain.

**28. What are the other challenges you face at work?**

- a. If so, in what ways?

## Impact of working conditions

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

- No
- If yes, how so?

### 30. Have you observed that guards are more likely to engage in unlawful behaviour if working conditions are poor?

- Yes
- No
- If YES, please specify.

### 31. Have you ever observed corruption (been offered bribes to enter the premises or for any other purpose?) »

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

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

### 34. Do you think working conditions affects women and men differently, and if yes in what way?

## Living conditions

### 35. Does your employer provide accommodation for you?

- Yes
- No

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

### 37. Are you South African?

- Yes
- No

### 38. If no, which country are you from?

- please specify. Write in

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

Province	Main Place	Sub Place	Area Type	Target
Gauteng	Johannesburg	Protea Glen	Residential/Malls	10
	Johannesburg	Midway	Industrial	10
	Johannesburg	Johannesburg CBD	Mixed	20
	Johannesburg	Meadowlands	Residential/Malls	10
	Johannesburg	Dobsonville	Residential/Malls	10
	Johannesburg	Florida	Industrial	10
	Johannesburg	Roodepoort CBD	Mixed	20
	Johannesburg	Mofolo	Residential/Malls	10
	Johannesburg	Diepkloof	Residential/Malls	10
	Johannesburg	Aeroton	Industrial	10
	Johannesburg	Southdale	Mixed	10
	Johannesburg	Jabavu	Residential/Malls	10
	Johannesburg	Industria	Industrial	10
	Johannesburg	Jabulani	Mixed	10
	Johannesburg	Braamfontein	Mixed	16
	Johannesburg	Southagete	Mall	15
	Johannesburg	Cleveland	Business	10
	Johannesburg	Rossetenvile	Mixed	10
	Johannesburg	Randburg	Mixed	10
	East Rand	Johannesburg	Sandton	Mixed
East Rand		Alrode	Industrial	10
East Rand		Thokoza	Residential/Malls	10
East Rand		Palm Ridge	Residential/Malls	15
East Rand		Springs	Residential	15
East Rand		Boksburg	Mixed	15
East Rand		Reiger Park	Residential/Malls	10
East Rand		Primrose	Mixed	10
East Rand		Bedford view	Mixed	10
East Rand		Edenvale	Mixed	10
East Rand		Kempton Park	Mixed	10
East Rand		Voslorus Ext 24	Residential/Malls	10
East Rand		Brakpan	Industrial	10
East Rand		Alberton	Mixed	10
East Rand		Ramokonopi	Residential/Malls	10
East Rand		Likole	Residential/Malls	10
East Rand		Germiston	Industrial	10
Pretoria		East Rand	Katlehong	Residential/Malls
	Pretoria	Centurion Central	Mixed	10
	Pretoria	The Reeds	Mixed	6
	Pretoria	Rooihuskraal	Mixed	10
	Pretoria	Midstream	Mixed	10
	Pretoria	Zwartkop	Mixed	5
Pretoria	Highveld	Mixed	10	

Province	Main Place	Sub Place	Area Type	Target
	Pretoria	Pretoria Central	Business	10
	Pretoria	Sunnyside	Mixed	10
	Pretoria	Brooklyn	Mixed	10
	Pretoria	Mukleneuk	Mixed	10
	Pretoria	Pretoria West	Mixed	10
	Pretoria	Proclamation Hill	Residential	10
	Pretoria	Wonderboom	Residential/Malls	10
	Pretoria	Gezina	Mixed	5
	Pretoria	Hamanskraal	Mixed	10
	Pretoria	Montana	Residential/Malls	10
	Pretoria	Menlyn Maine	Mixed	10
	Pretoria	Silverton	Mixed	10
	Pretoria	Lynwood	Mixed	5
	Pretoria	Watloo	Industrial	10
<b>Kwazulu Natal</b>	Durban	Durban central	Mixed	10
	Durban	South Beach	Mixed	10
	Durban	North beach	Mixed	10
	Durban	Point	Mixed	10
	Durban	Berea	Offices	10
	Durban	Illovo North	Residential/Malls	10
	Durban	Isipingo	Offices	10
	Durban	Umlazi	Residential/Malls	10
	Durban	Cato Manor	Residential/Malls	10
	Durban	Bluff	Offices	10
	Durban	Mobeni Heights	Residential/Malls	10
	Durban	KwaMashu	Residential/Malls	10
	Durban	Umngeni	Industrial	10
	Durban	St George	Mixed	10
	Durban	Glenwood	Mixed	10
	Durban	Clairwood	Mixed	10
	Durban	Prospecton	Industrial	10
	Durban	Lotus Park	Residential/Malls	10
	Durban	Southgate Business park	Offces?Industrial	9
	Durban	Chatsworth	Mixed	10
	Durban	Lamontville	Mixed	10
	Durban	Umbilo	Residential	10
	Durban	Shallcross	Residential	10
	Durban	Queenburgh	Residential	10
	Durban	Westville	Mixed	10
	Durban	Northdene	Residential	10

Province	Main Place	Sub Place	Area Type	Target
<b>Western Cape</b>	Cape Town	Cape Town CBD	Mixed	10
	Cape Town	Mitchell's Plain	Residential/Malls	10
	Cape Town	Houtbay	Business	10
	Cape Town	Ottery	Industrial	10
	Cape Town	Capricorn	Business	10
	Cape Town	Watergate	Business	10
	Cape Town	Wynberg	Mixed	10
	Cape Town	Plumstead	Mixed	10
	Cape Town	Diep River	Residential/Malls	10
	Cape Town	Steenberg	Industrial	10
	Cape Town	Retreat	Mixed	9
	Cape Town	Mandalay	Residential/Malls	10
	Cape Town	Khayelitsha	Residential/Malls	10
	Cape Town	Blue downs	Residential/Malls	10
	Cape Town	Kirtenhof	Residential/Malls	10
			<b>Total</b>	<b>1015</b>

## 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 South Africa to contribute to the identification of possible areas of improvement.

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

These include guards working in companies that are registered, e.g. G4S, KK and smaller companies.

We are looking at interviewing private security guards within Malls, office blocks, industries.

**Primary use:** The research findings will be used to inform civil society organisations, private security companies and authorities in South Africa with a view to advocate for better working conditions in private security, inform clients' procurement/contracting practices and promote the adhesion to the Code by private security companies.

Areas to be covered in the study will include wages, treatment in the workplace, training, gender issues and facilities at work.

**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;
  - Office blocks
  - Residential
  - Industries
  - Malls

### **DO NOT INTERVIEW;**

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

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 (soft quarter of 70 or 80: 30 or 20)

**Working hours:** If they tell you the time they get in and come out, just use your fingers to count. Please do not approximate. Put the exact hours.

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## For questions, comments

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