



# *The Hidden* **Workforce**

*Perceptions of the security officer - survey results*

Prepared by

**YouGov**<sup>®</sup>

## Our mission

To position the role of the security industry and those operating in the sector as **respected, valued** and **professional**; contributing to and creating **a safe and secure** environment, recognised as **critical** to protecting people, places, and property – a **key service that is acknowledged and embedded** in our daily lives as UK essential workers.



## *The Hidden* **Workforce**

*Resetting the perception* **of the security officer**

[www.bsia.co.uk/hidden-workforce](http://www.bsia.co.uk/hidden-workforce)



# Perceptions of the security officer - **survey results**



The **British Security Industry Association** (BSIA) along with the **Security Institute** (Syl), the **Security Commonwealth** (SyCom), **City Security Council** (CSC) and **Cross-Sector Safety & Security Communications** (CSSC) are leading on a national campaign on resetting the perception of security professionals and the industry as a whole and building on the recent classification by the Government of Key Worker status for those operating in the security industry.

Entitled *The Hidden Workforce - resetting the perception of the security officer*, the campaign's mission is to position the role of the security industry and those operating in the sector as respected, valued and professional; contributing to and creating a safe and secure environment, recognised as critical to protecting people, places, and property – a key service that is acknowledged and embedded in our daily lives.

Part of this campaign has been the commissioning of a **YouGov** report to gauge the public's current perception of the security officer, starting prior to and during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The survey's objective is to understand the current perception of security officers amongst the British public and to understand the extent of the key issues they face, namely potential lack of respect, recognition and underestimation of their role.

The results of the survey, *The perception of the security officer*, highlight that, whilst a good level of the general public feel safe and reassured in the presence of a security officer, **they do not see their services as essential and even less so during the recent pandemic**. Although security officers were recognised by the UK Government as key workers during this time, it seems that the perception of the role they play in our daily lives is still at a low level and this needs to be addressed urgently.

**Mike Reddington**

British Security Industry Association

**Guy Matthias**

Security Commonwealth

**Rick Mounfield**

The Security Institute

**Don Randall**

Cross-Sector Safety & Security Communications

**David Ward**

City Security Council

## Research objectives

To understand the perception of Security Officers amongst the British public

To understand the extent of the key issues facing Security Officers, namely:

- Lack of recognition for their contribution to society and public safety, in particular when compared to the police and other key worker groups
- Lack of respect for Security Officers
- Lack of understanding/underestimation of their role, knowledge and skillsets

## Demographic overview

### RESPONDENTS

**2,119**

### MALE

**49%**

### FEMALE

**51%**

### SOCIAL GRADE\*

**ABC1: 57%**

**C2DE: 43%**

### AGE

**18-34: 27%**

**35-54: 34%**

**55+: 39%**

### WORKING STATUS

**FT: 37%**

**PT: 11%**

**UE: 6%**

**RETIRED: 24%**

\* ABC1: Higher managerial, administrative or professional, or clerical and junior managerial, administrative C2DE: Skilled manual workers, semi-skilled and unskilled manual workers, non-working, state pensioners, casual and lowest grade workers, unemployed with state benefits only.

## Executive summary

Security officers *not* mentioned as **playing an important role** during COVID-19

Security officers ranked **9th out of 10** in 'vital' pre-COVID-19 roles

### Characteristics of a security officer:

Honest/tough/confident/reliable/trustworthy

Rigid/authoritative/bullying/threatening/unintelligent/unskilled

When asked whether that security officers are **fundamental** to keeping the UK safe and secure **31%** of those polled agreed, with **41%** indicating they respected and a felt safe due to the work that security officers carry out.

However when asked about where the role of the security officer in a pre-COVID-19 society ranked respondents placed it **9th out of 10** as an essential services behind postal workers and pharmacists, and just ahead of traffic wardens, who were ranked 10th.

When asked about these roles during COVID-19, security officers were not mentioned at all as an essential service.

Respondents also felt that the crimes that security officers help prevent are **shoplifting, anti-social behaviour and petty crime.**



When asked if officers should only work closely with the police if asked, the majority of respondents (**33%**) agreed, with **25%** believing that security officers should have a role in supporting police in managing public spaces.

## Survey results

**YouGov**<sup>®</sup>

**Q1. During the recent COVID-19 crisis and whilst emerging from lockdown, which groups of key workers do you believe played an important role for the country?**

*Open answer – security officers NOT mentioned*

### Top 3

NHS workers **45%**

Nurses/doctors/GPs **32%**

Carer/careworkers **31%**

*Note: **18%** believed that the Police were important key workers.*

**Q2. Thinking about your community during normal times, which of the following organisations or workers are vital for public safety and security?**

*Tick all that apply.*

### Top 3

NHS **83%**

Ambulance Service **82%**

Police **77%**

Security Officers **15%** (9th out of 10)

*Note: nearest comparison of role (Police) **77%**. Only traffic wardens at **11%** score lower.*

**Q3. When you think of private security officers, what 3 characteristics would you use to describe their personality?**

*Open answer*

### Top 3

Honest/strong/tough **4%**

Confident **3%**

Arrogant/rude/cocky/alert/brave/reliable/trustworthy **2%**

*Note: of the respondents, **75%** were 'other' and **21%** 'don't know'.*

## Survey results

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### Q4. To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

Security Officers are fundamental to keeping the UK safe and secure

**37% net agreement**

I have a lot of respect for Security Officers and the work they do

**41% net agreement**

I feel safer in public areas when I know there are security staff on duty

**41% net agreement**

*Note: a net total of **28%** of respondents 'strongly disagreed' with these statements.*

### Q5. Which of the following crimes do you think Security Officers help prevent?

*Tick all that apply*

#### Top 3

Shoplifting **64%**

Anti-social behaviour **46%**

Petty crime **44%**

*Note: **32%** agreed officers prevent 'COVID non-compliance' and **21%** 'didn't know'*

### Q6. How closely do you think Security Officers should work with the Police force?

#### Top 3

Security officers should help police if asked **33%**

The two should be completely separate **21%**

Officers should have an active role in supporting them in managing public spaces **19%**

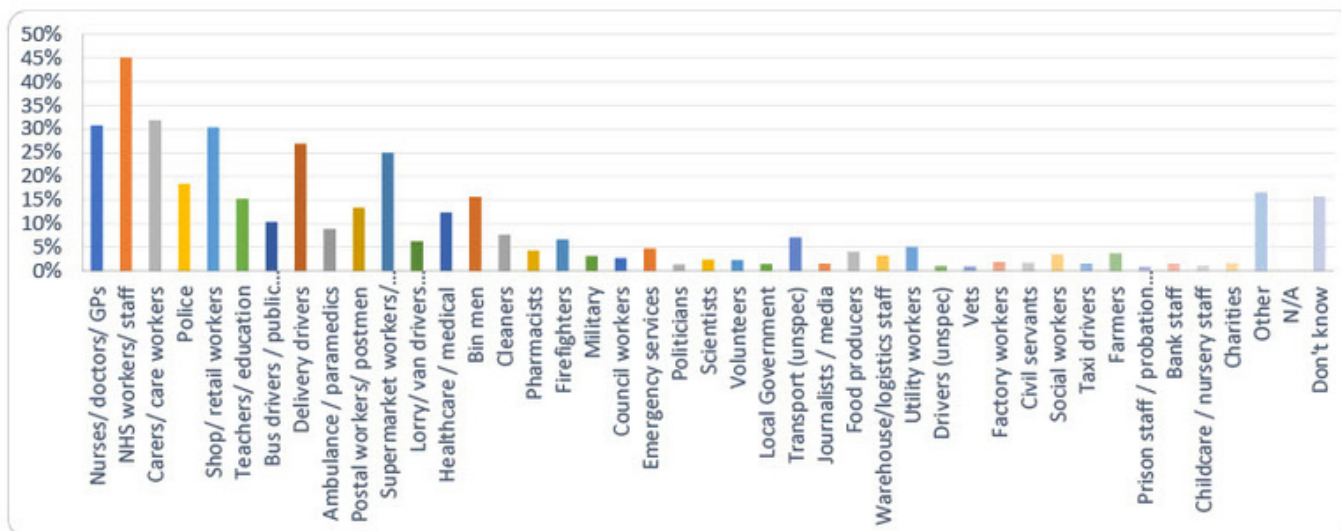
*Note: **18%** 'didn't know' and **3%** 'none of these'.*

**A full breakdown of the survey can be found in APPENDIX A**

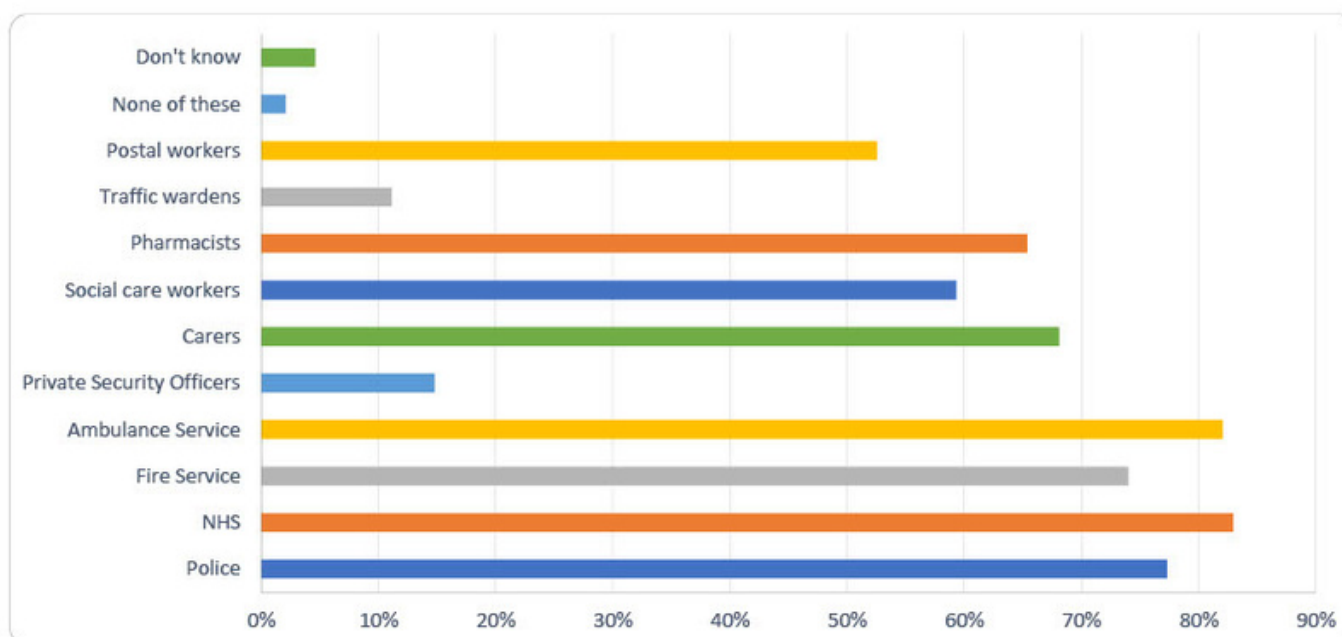


## APPENDIX A: survey in graphs

**Q1. During the recent COVID-19 crisis and whilst emerging from lockdown, which groups of key workers do you believe played an important role for the country?**



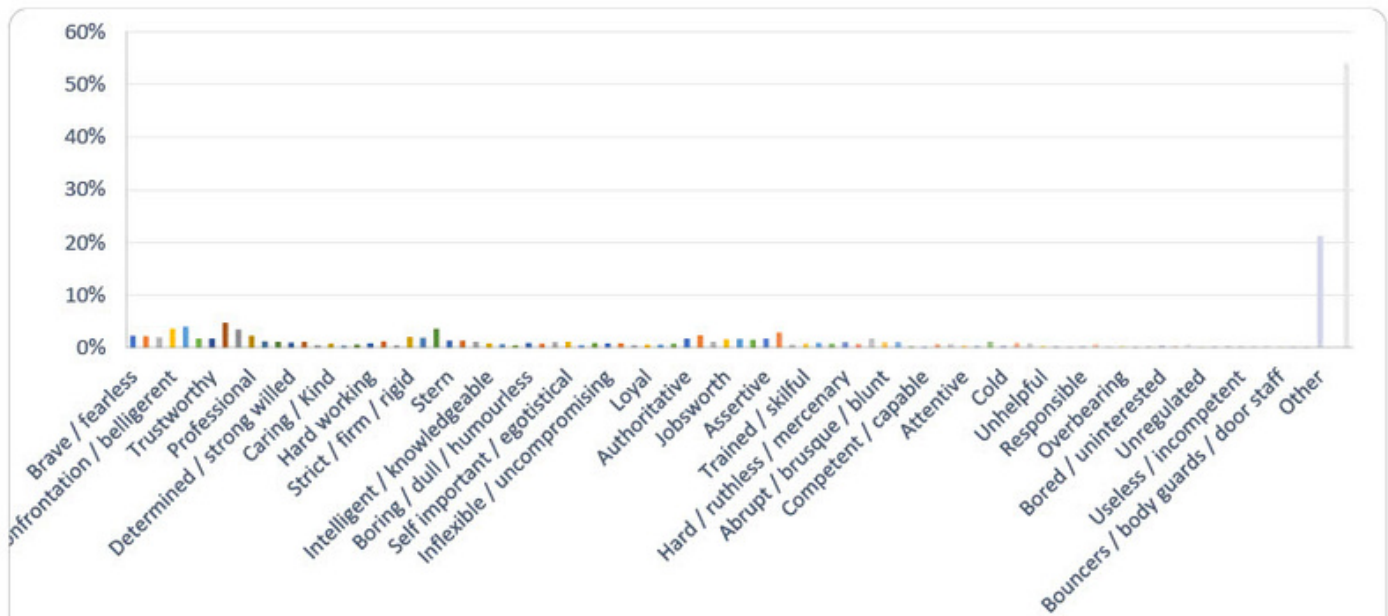
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## APPENDIX A: survey in graphs

**Q3. When you think of private security officers, what 3 characteristics would you use to describe their personality?**

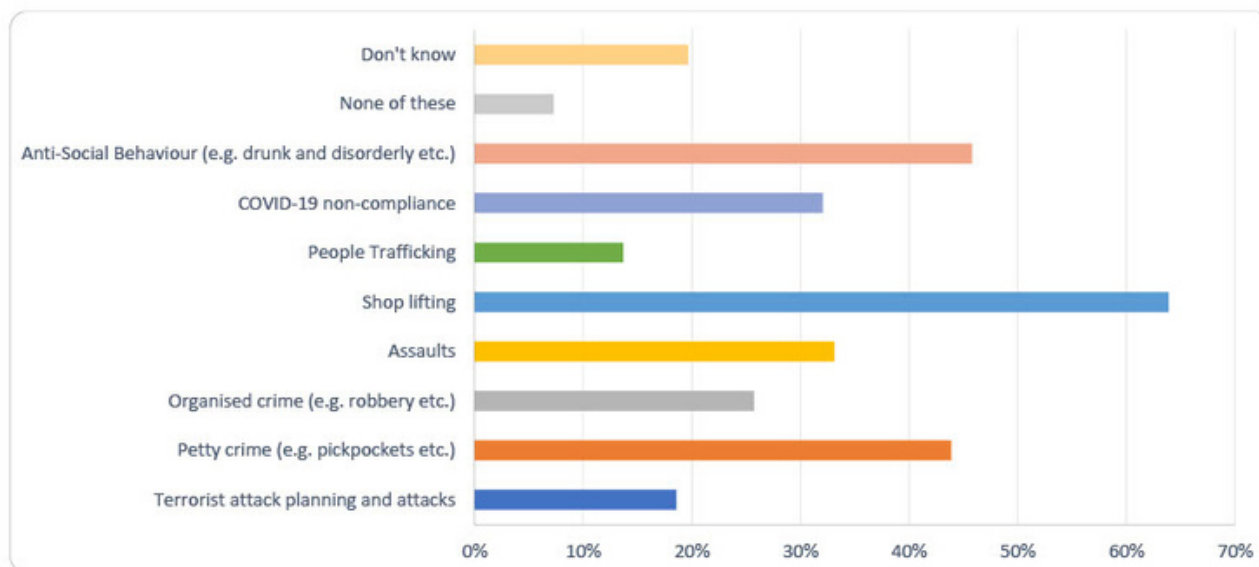


**Q4. To what extent do you agree with the following statements:**

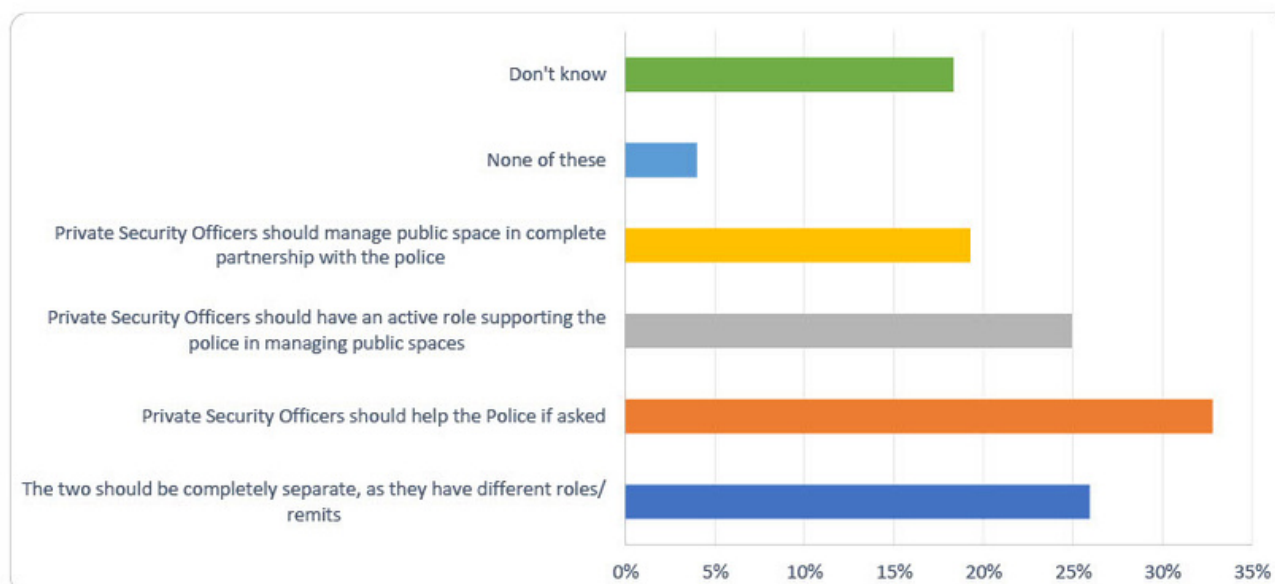
Security officer agreement statements								
Security officer agreement statements	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know	Net: Agree	Net: Disagree	Unweighted N
Private Security Officers are fundamental to keeping the UK safe and secure	6%	31%	23%	11%	29%	37%	34%	2119
I have a lot of respect for Private Security Officers and the work they do	8%	34%	21%	8%	29%	41%	29%	2119
I feel safer in public areas when I know there are Private Security Officers on duty	7%	34%	23%	9%	27%	41%	32%	2119

## APPENDIX A: survey in graphs

### Q5. Which of the following crimes do you think Security Officers help prevent?



### Q6. How closely do you think Security Officers should work with the Police?



## Why perception is important



The security sector is vast with specialisms, from cyber and engineering to protective services including both technical measures and Security Officers.

The latter engages with society more than the rest but is often overlooked and unappreciated. Great effort has been invested in the professional standards and capabilities of frontline officers and they have proven their worth during the COVID-19 crisis in the UK.

Security Officers, along with the wider security sector deserve to be recognised, respected and appreciated for the safety and security they provide across the UK.

**Rick Mounfield, Chief Executive, the Security Institute**

The recognition of Security Officers as key workers is the start of a re-appraisal of what service they provide to the community in keeping the public safe and secure.

As we exit lockdown and have to navigate public spaces again, they will have a crucial role in supporting public confidence.

We are working closely with the Police and all other public bodies to find the best way to achieve this.

**Mike Reddington, Chief Executive, BSIA**



SyCom is committed to the following objectives; building professionalism, raising standards and sharing best practice in order to help develop a more effective security response to keep people safe and secure.

It is vital that the industry raises awareness of this work which in turn makes more people recognise the changes we have all made and continue to make.

**Guy Matthias, Chairman, Security Commonwealth**





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