

# Understanding influences on security as a career/job choice: what those working in the security sector think

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*Security Research Initiative (SRI)*

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## SRI Members



M&S



# Executive Summary

## Proposals for rethinking the promotion of security careers

Security work is involved with protecting people in particular, but also organisations, communities and the national infrastructure. There is a very real benefit in being involved in keeping people safe; undertaking something worthwhile in serving the public; undertaking a responsible job; and helping to solve problems that matter to people. These need to be much more salient in discussions about security careers.

There is a very definite career available in the security sector. The widely held belief there isn't one is erroneous. There are many opportunities and lots of different careers available that take a different form than say the police and military with their much referred to rank structure. That is just one type of career structure and security is far too diverse for that.

The security sector incorporates a wide array of skill sets, so vast, there is a wide pool of people to attract from. While security offers excitement in some roles, including responding directly to offenders and or conflict, most security work does not involve danger. Respondents emphasised being an effective communicator; customer service skills; and at the highest level of security management, business skills were seen as at least as important as security ones.

It can be lucrative. The widespread perception security is low paid – and sadly all too often, it is in the lower frontline roles - disguises the fact that many people find commercial security work more lucrative than alternatives and including some public sector roles. The fact that security is seen as low paid is an inhibitor in attracting experienced workers but also in igniting the interest of those who are embarking on their first career steps.

The security sector needs to update its image. There are many myths about security work that needs to be challenged and the benefits more widely promoted.

One of the main reasons people don't enter a security career is because they don't know about it; the vast majority end up in security by chance. There is a need to identify the points at which people receive advice and informing them about the world of good opportunities the security sector offers.

The security sector needs to address its limitations. A significant minority are not happy with their lot. While perceptions of security are to some extent out-dated, there are also valid criticisms to be addressed. The battle for better conditions is an on-going one.

We were pointed to some good work being undertaken by some companies, a range of security associations and the regulator in the UK. The revitalised

Skills for Security offers potential to act as focal point. Organising a meeting/conference to harness the interest and potential has much to commend it.

## Key findings

Respondents came to think about entering security in the following ways:

- 35% via a suggestion from a family member/friend/business colleague
- 16% researched the options for themselves
- 15% via a job advert
- 12% via observing colleagues transitioning to security
- 4% via a careers talk at school/college/university

Among the half of the sample (52%) that indicated they had joined security as a second/subsequent career (having previously undertaken a career in a different sector):

- 64% had come from a public sector background, most often the military and then the police
- 49% indicated they were passionate about pursuing their first career and never considered anything else (especially the former military and police)
- 24% had been unaware of the opportunities security could offer at the time they were developing a first career
- 85% agreed or strongly agreed that security has a lower status in business compared to other professional groups

Survey respondents were generally positive about working in security:

- 57% indicated that they had a more positive or much more positive perception of security now than prior to working in security
- 22% had a more negative or much more negative view
- 62% indicated that they would recommend a career in security to others, but 19% said they would not
- 74% indicated that they intend to remain in security for as long as they are working but this dropped to around half among younger professionals

Attractions to security

- The areas most commonly deemed attractive to potential recruits were: security consultancy; investigation and cyber security; the least was guarding
- 84% joined security because it enabled making the most of existing skill sets
- 84% indicated the work itself in terms of the challenges presented was a significant attraction
- 78% highlighted the commitment to protecting other people and organisations
- 63% referred to the possibilities for progression
- pay (48%) and working hours (34%) were the least significant

- 81% indicated that they were not attracted to security as a means of gaining experience to then leave security and pursue another career
- 11%, were and this was predominantly in preparation for the police or a commercial role
- Of all those that indicated they entered security to gain experience for another career, 68% indicated that they now intend to remain in security

#### Reasons why people do not join security:

- 88% felt potential recruits might be put off entering security because some roles are seen as unskilled
- 83% believed that security is thought of as an 'industry' rather than a 'profession'
- 70% because of its association with harassment/violence
- 73% highlighted the problem that security struggles with a negative image
- 38% referred to the lack of diversity
- 74% agreed with the notion that the trouble with the security sector is that there is no clear career path
- 74% thought other roles such as the police/military make more effort to attract people
- 79% thought that the security sector is very poor at selling itself to potential recruits
- 73% thought that not enough people know about the security sector to consider it

#### Relevant skills:

- 94% agreed or strongly agreed that a security career is as much about being an effective communicator as it is about protection/investigation
- 88% felt that customer service skills were significant
- 87% believed recruiters should focus on potential, not just experience
- 71% felt business skills were as important as security skills at highest level of security management
- 15% thought business skills were more important.

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## Section 1. Setting the Scene

- 1.1. Although much good progress has been made on presenting a better image of security we know that it is a struggle. Previous Security Research Initiative (SRI) reports, for example, have noted the mixed views of other business professionals<sup>1</sup>; the somewhat jaundiced view of police officers and varied view of senior police officers<sup>2</sup>; while those who have focussed on presenting security as a career choice sometimes lament the preference of potential recruits to pursue other forms of public service or uniformed work.
- 1.2. This report explores what can be done to better present security as an attractive career choice. It does this by assessing the views of security professionals on how the sector is perceived, what impacted on their career choices, and what makes security attractive on the one hand and negative on the other. Based on experiences, the report moves on to consider the views of the sample on the methods needed to attract the next generation of security professionals.
- 1.3. It incorporates the views of different groups including new/young security professionals. The specific aim here was to understand their goals, the factors that attract them to security, and those that will encourage them to stay, or cause them to leave. Those who enter security as a second/subsequent career are considered. There has been much discussion about the preponderance of former state uniformed personnel making their way into security, but a little less on why they originally chose another career, what if anything would have made them consider security sooner, and their thoughts on security now. And the views of those in charge of promoting security careers are considered. The aim here was to gain insights on how attitudes to career development can be improved, and the types of incentives needed to encourage investment in career development.
- 1.4. Only by understanding the factors that influence career choices; those that impinge on career changes; and by gaining the insights of those involved can a more informed approach be taken to promoting security as a sector. To emphasise, the aim was not to develop a strategy, rather to provide the foundation for thinking about how this can best be developed. Not only is this fundamental, strangely, it is a largely neglected area of work.

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<sup>1</sup> Gill, M., Howell, C. & Randall, A. (2015) *Beyond the Protection of Assets: The Broader Benefits of Security*, Perpetuity Research

<sup>2</sup> Howell, C. & Gill, M. (2017) *Police Views on Private Security*, Perpetuity Research

## Section 2. Understanding Security Careers

2.1. The work of those in security roles is crucial to protecting the public, economies and national and global infrastructures. Further the security sector is a major employer of people – there are an estimated 20 million private security workers worldwide, and in most countries private security operatives outnumber the police.<sup>3</sup> Despite this, rather than a well-known career that people actively consider joining, research has suggested that people often join security by chance, or as a route to something else (such as law enforcement).<sup>4</sup> In other words it is often a fall back choice rather than a preferred choice. The security sector faces a number of challenges that suggest greater efforts to actively attract individuals to a security career are needed. One piece of research summarises a number of challenges impeding workforce development and cohesiveness<sup>5</sup>:

- industry segmentation – such a wide variety of jobs and specialties results in a lack of industry-wide data to guide development and results in resistance to ‘uniformity and convergence’;
- aging workforce - due to not attracting sufficient volume of qualified individuals to meet demand there are concerns about developing the next generation of talent to secure the future of the sector;
- management issues and limited resources – a lack of ‘business literacy’ among security professionals, meanwhile a need to work across a large number of departments while competing for resources from limited budgets;
- and a lack of standardised education and certificates – which are thought to be needed to ensure organisational standards are met and well-qualified candidates are attracted.

2.2. In this section of the report, consideration is first given to the barriers to security being recognised as a career choice, focusing on studies on security careers (albeit studies of this type are scarce and part of the reason for undertaking the research). It then moves on to examine the factors that are important to attracting candidates and the barriers to doing so drawing on the general literature on careers where relevant and incorporating, briefly, similar struggles faced by other sectors. While this section is intended to set a context to the findings, it is not

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<sup>3</sup> See for example Forbes (2017) *Private Security Outnumbers The Police In Most Countries Worldwide* - <https://www.forbes.com/sites/niallmccarthy/2017/08/31/private-security-outnumbers-the-police-in-most-countries-worldwide-infographic/#6197557e210f>

<sup>4</sup> Gabiddon, S. (2002) ‘A Preliminary Study of Black American Security Executives’, *Security Journal*, Volume 15, Issue 3, pp 47–57. For an interesting follow up on this work see, Smith, C. & Choo, T. (2016) *Security Journal*, 29: 198. <https://doi.org/10.1057/sj.2013.7>

<sup>5</sup> University of Phoenix | ASIS Foundation (2013) *Enterprise Security Risks and Workforce Competencies: Findings from an Industry Roundtable on Security Talent Development* - <https://www.securitasinc.com/globalassets/us/files/knowledge-center/asis-foundation-security-risks-and-competencies-report.pdf>

intended as an evaluation of 'what works' in recruitment or a 'how to' guide.

### Perceptions of security 'careers'

- 2.3. Security is a rapidly evolving sector, but research suggests that public perception of the available careers is somewhat limited. This may in part explain why a career in security is not something that is generally aspired to.
- 2.4. At the entry level, security roles are generally perceived to be a 'stop-gap' measure<sup>6</sup> to meet immediate financial needs as opposed to a chosen 'career'.<sup>7</sup> These roles are perceived to be poorly paid, low status and unskilled<sup>8</sup> (there are notable exceptions such as information security and cyber security roles). What emerges is a lack of respect, generally attributed to the relative lack of roles that require a dedicated period of study; that are highly regulated; and/or meet the high standards generally expected of roles that garner respect<sup>9</sup> such as parallel areas of work like policing. This lack of respect for security officers exists among various audiences and key among these is the police themselves.<sup>10</sup>
- 2.5. At the higher level, that of 'management', the general perception is that security roles are for those which fit a somewhat limited profile both in demographics and career background; that is older white males, on a second or subsequent career (having moved to security predominantly following service in the police or military).<sup>11</sup> While perception of these roles is considerably more positive than at the entry level, it is sometimes viewed as a career with upper limits. It is an area of specialism not typically seen to produce people likely to aspire to be Chief Executives<sup>12</sup>; managers are often seen as generalists lacking a specific technical expertise in any one area;<sup>13</sup> disadvantaged because it is not dedicated or recognised as a revenue generating role which

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<sup>6</sup> Garrett, D. (2016) *Private Security Career Paths: Establishing the Foundations of a Structured Progression Model for the Manned Guarding Sector* (Doctoral Thesis) Available online: [https://researchportal.port.ac.uk/portal/files/7175072/Thesis\\_Submitted\\_Version\\_Minor\\_Ammendments\\_Post\\_VIVA\\_Final\\_Version.pdf](https://researchportal.port.ac.uk/portal/files/7175072/Thesis_Submitted_Version_Minor_Ammendments_Post_VIVA_Final_Version.pdf), cites a number of examples of groups for which 'manned guarding' is a stop-gap such as for: students looking for work to help pay their way through university; retirees from other occupations, redundant or otherwise unemployed individuals working in security until a preferred opportunity becomes available; those hoping to gain experience to apply to the police.

<sup>7</sup> IFF Research for the Security Industry Authority (2018) *The Provision of Industry Skills*

<sup>8</sup> IFSEC GLOBAL (2004) *Is security seen as a profession?* Available online: <https://www.ifsecglobal.com/uncategorized/is-security-seen-as-a-profession/>

<sup>9</sup> See for example: <https://home.kpmg/xx/en/blogs/home/posts/2019/11/cyber-security-a-profession-really.html>

<sup>10</sup> Howell, C. & Gill, M. (2017) *Op cit.*

<sup>11</sup> Garrett, D. (2016) *Op cit.*

<sup>12</sup> Gill, M., Taylor, E., Bourne, T. & Keats, G. (2008) *Organisations perspectives on the value of security*, Perpetuity Research

<sup>13</sup> Brooks, D., and Corkill, J. (2014) 'Corporate Security and the Stratum of Security Management'. In *Corporate Security in the 21st Century: Theory and Practice in International Perspective*, 1st ed., 216–234. Palgrave Macmillan.

attracts the best career prospects;<sup>14</sup> nor focussed on activities which clearly and neatly support corporate business objectives;<sup>15</sup> and without a seat in the boardroom.<sup>16</sup> The point is perhaps best made with reference to an interesting study in Australia,<sup>17</sup> in four different organisations, which was designed to test whether there was a ceiling to security careers. It observed:

*The aspiration for Corporate Security to be present at the higher stratum of organisational structures is understandable; however, specialisation, paired with the limited exposure to profit-making activities, severely limits opportunity for progression and its overall impact at the strategic level.*<sup>18</sup>

- 2.6. There are those that would dispute these perceptions and highlight that security has and is changing, and now encompasses a far greater number and variety of roles. Here there are pointers to roles for security in broader organisation initiatives, integrating and collaborating with other departments, helping organisations to achieve profits, the current emphasis on Enterprise Security Risk Management is a case in point. Yet, while the negatives are well known<sup>19</sup>, it seems relatively little is known about the benefits of a security career. There are indications that those, particularly at the higher level earn good salaries and enjoy the nature of the work<sup>20</sup> but the specific attractions and benefits to security careers are not well articulated to those outside the sector.
- 2.7. So on the one hand, awareness and perceptions of security careers are limited. And on the other, as we will now consider further, research suggests that a simultaneous issue is that efforts to appeal to and recruit a wider range of individuals have been lacking; at least on a sector wide basis.

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<sup>14</sup> Sammarra, A., Profili, S. and Innocenti, L. (2012) 'Do External Careers Pay Off for Both Managers and Professionals? The Effect of Inter-organizational Mobility on Objective Career Success', *The International Journal of Human Resource Management* 24 (13): 2490–2511

<sup>15</sup> Coole, M.P., Brooks, D. and Minnaar, A. (2017) The Physical Security Professional: Mapping a Body of Knowledge. *Security Journal* 30 (4): 1169–1197.

<sup>16</sup> Ludbey, C. (2016) *The Corporate Security Stratum of Work: Identifying Levels of Work in the Domain*. Perth: Edith Cowan University; Ludbey, C., and D. Brooks. (2017) 'Stratum of Security Practice: Using Risk as a Measure in the Stratification of Security Works', *Security Journal* 30 (3): 686–702; see also for a more general discussion: Speer, J.D. 2017. Pre-Market Skills, Occupational Choice, and Career Progression. *Journal of Human Resources* 52 (1): 187–246.

<sup>17</sup> Ludbey, C.R. Brooks D.J. Coole, M. (2019) 'Corporate security career progression: a comparative study of four Australian organisations', *Security Journal*, published on line (subscription only, <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1057/s41284-019-00189-3#CR67>).

<sup>18</sup> Ludbey, C.R. Brooks D.J. Coole, M. (2019) *Op cit.*

<sup>19</sup> Tancredi, N. (2013) *Improving the Image and Reputation of the Security Profession*. International Foundation for Protection Officers. Available Online: [https://www.ifpo.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/Tancredi\\_Reputation.pdf](https://www.ifpo.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/Tancredi_Reputation.pdf)

<sup>20</sup> Gabiddon, S. (2002) *Op cit.*

## Limited approaches to recruitment

- 2.8. The literature suggests a number of ways in which a lack of effort to appeal to and recruit individuals is resulting in a lack of awareness of and attraction to security careers. The issues of: drawing from a limited talent pool; failure to target young people; lack of apprenticeships; the barriers posed by predominantly focusing on experience; and the lack of well-defined career pathways are considered in turn.
- 2.9. A key criticism of security is that it has traditionally drawn employees from a somewhat limited talent pool and that a shift away from the perception that the industry is white, male and dominated by former police and military officers is needed.<sup>21</sup> The link between security and ex police and military professionals has been much discussed over time and certainly there is a range of accounts of individuals who have made the move from public to private sector and discussed the very different challenges that confronted them.<sup>22</sup>
- 2.10. There is increasing recognition that diverse educational and professional backgrounds better enable success in the industry than homogeneity. Backgrounds such as business management are considered increasingly valuable in the continued professionalisation of security<sup>23</sup>, and recruiting candidates with knowledge related to cultural sensitivity and human resources can be as important as knowledge on, say, technology and current events.<sup>24</sup>
- 2.11. Recruiting more young people is also considered a crucial objective.<sup>25</sup> It has been suggested that there is a talent shortage in security<sup>26</sup> and with an aging workforce, there is a particular need to recruit young people to ensure a 'talent pipeline'.<sup>27</sup>
- 2.12. However, it has also been observed that there are barriers to recruiting young people into the security sector. One of the most common elements that employers focus on is previous work experience, yet many people leave education with little to no work experience.<sup>28</sup> While this of course is not unique to the security sector, in the context of security, it has been argued that, for entry-level positions, employers

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<sup>21</sup> Garrett, D. (2016) *Op cit.*

<sup>22</sup> See for example, Quilter, J D (2013) *From one winning career to the next: transitioning public sector leadership and security expertise to the business bottom line*, Elsevier

<sup>23</sup> IFF Research for the Security Industry Authority (2018) *Op cit.*

<sup>24</sup> ASIS | Security Industry Association (2018) *Security Industry Career Pathways Guide*, Prepared by McKinley Advisors - <https://www.asisonline.org/globalassets/professional-development/careers/documents/careerpathwaysguide.pdf>

<sup>25</sup> IFF Research for the Security Industry Authority (2018) *Op cit.*

<sup>26</sup> See for example: Security Boulevard (2019) *Skills Gap Affects Cyber Security, Physical Security*, available online: <https://securityboulevard.com/2019/03/skills-gap-affects-cybersecurity-physical-security/>

<sup>27</sup> Apollo Education Group | University of Phoenix in partnership with the ASIS Foundation (2014) *Operational Security Industry Competency Model*, p3.

<sup>28</sup> British Security Industry Association (2019) *Security: a career of choice. How the industry is taking radical steps to redefine the role of security in the 21st century*. Spectrum, Available Online: <https://www.bsia.co.uk/Portals/4/Spectrum%20IFSEC19%20201>

should consider what qualities their employees actually need: is it a wealth of work experience? Or is it more motivation, enthusiasm, and good communication skills?

- 2.13. It has also been lamented that there has been a lack of focus within the security sector on the value of apprenticeships and therefore a missed opportunity to channel individuals into security. While these are more common on the technical side of security, they are thought to have wider applicability and potential. It is suggested that apprenticeships are extremely useful for employers – offering a cost-effective way of training and enabling employers to better understand what skills they need in their employees for certain roles.<sup>29</sup> Further, they facilitate a more loyal workforce<sup>30</sup> and apprentices reportedly yield a productivity gain of more than £10,000 per year<sup>31</sup>. Apprenticeships can be valuable for young people and therefore provide an attractive option, which may help overcome some of the problems discussed here. They can enable individuals to gain workplace experience and a qualification, and help set them on a career path. It has been suggested they should not be limited to the young, as they can assist a range of individuals whose life experience may otherwise be overlooked<sup>32</sup>. Apprenticeships have been found to improve career prospects and result directly in employment or further training.<sup>33</sup>
- 2.14. It appears that the issue of what characteristics and skills are necessary is a key one, not just for young people who may lack work experience, or those from other sectors that may lack the police/military experience valued by some. Despite the public perception, security careers are in fact diverse<sup>34</sup> and in many ways this is a positive facet that can help attract individuals – because rather than a very limited or restrictive career path, there are many routes that security professionals can follow to suit their skills and interests.<sup>35</sup>
- 2.15. But this diversity of options also has a downside. There is a lack of clarity on the skills, qualifications and experience needed to navigate and progress in a security career. It has been suggested that greater clarity is needed on the skills required and roles and responsibilities involved for careers at all levels of the industry. This is seen as a prerequisite to forming clear career pathways that are attractive to potential recruits, and that will enable employees to see security as a credible long-term career choice instead of more of a short-term job.<sup>36</sup> This is also important because professionals are often not aware that

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<sup>29</sup> British Security Industry Association (2019) *Op cit.*

<sup>30</sup> British Security Industry Association (2019) *Op cit.*

<sup>31</sup> The Centre for Economics and Business Research (2015) *The Benefits of Apprenticeships to Businesses*, A report for the Skills Funding Agency. Available online: <https://cebr.com/wp/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/The-Benefits-of-Apprenticeships-to-Businesses.pdf>

<sup>32</sup> See for example British Security Industry Association (2019) *Op cit.*

<sup>33</sup> British Security Industry Association (2019) *Op cit.*

<sup>34</sup> See for example <https://security-institute.org/about/nextgen/>

<sup>35</sup> ASIS | Security Industry Association (2018) *Op cit.*

<sup>36</sup> City Security Magazine. (2018) Security career pathways. Available online: <https://citysecuritymagazine.com/security-careers/security-career-pathways/>

their skillset is suited to a career in security.<sup>37</sup> There is a general lack of awareness of the types of jobs available and the kinds of qualities employers are looking for.<sup>38</sup>

- 2.16. Some efforts in this regard have already been made. For example, a report prepared by McKinley Advisors for ASIS international and the Security Industry Association provides a guide to career pathways<sup>39</sup>, noting competencies, courses of study, experience and other credentials for security management practitioners and security industry suppliers. While this is an important reference point it appears to have been under-used. In Australia, the state of Queensland has identified a need to develop a security workforce plan and an initiative is underway for a five year project (2020-2025) between Jobs Queensland and the security industry to highlight the pathways to employment.<sup>40</sup>
- 2.17. In terms of how the skills and characteristics required translate to the recruitment process, the literature highlights the importance of distinguishing characteristics that are beneficial in employees<sup>41</sup> (such as good conflict management, customer service, and communication skills)<sup>42</sup> with the job specific skills that can more readily be taught through training (such as first aid, physical intervention, and emergency response)<sup>43</sup>. It is suggested that by changing application questions to focus on showing potential as opposed to limiting it to experience provides a foundation for employers to recruit loyal and driven (young) people.<sup>44</sup>
- 2.18. Similarly, until relatively recently, the security sector did not have a competency model defining roles and qualifications and how these relate to training and education, and this was noted to contribute to the growing skills gap and misalignment of available education to support career pathways for operational security.<sup>45</sup> One recent model<sup>46</sup> breaks down the competencies in a security context into: foundational competencies; industry related competencies; and occupation-related competencies. While this is a positive step, competency based models are far from universally adopted.

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<sup>37</sup> Matthews, K. (2018) Most U.S. Adults Never Consider Cybersecurity Careers: Why That's a Problem. Global Sign, Available Online: <https://www.globalsign.com/en/blog/us-adults-never-consider-cybersecurity-careers/>

<sup>38</sup> Matthews, K. (2018) *Op cit.*

<sup>39</sup> ASIS | Security Industry Association (2018) *Op cit.*

<sup>40</sup> Jobs Queensland (2020) *Security Industry Workforce Plan* – online: <https://jobsqueensland.qld.gov.au/projects/security/>

<sup>41</sup> British Security Industry Association. (2015) *Securing a better future: A BSIA guide to careers in the private security industry.* <https://www.bsia.co.uk/Portals/4/Publications/148-securing-a-better-future.pdf>; British Security Industry Association (2019) *Op cit.*

<sup>42</sup> IFF Research for the Security Industry Authority (2018) *Op cit.*

<sup>43</sup> IFF Research for the Security Industry Authority (2018) *Op cit.*

<sup>44</sup> SME Magazine. (2018) *Overcoming the challenges of recruiting cyber security experts.* Available Online: <http://www.smeweb.com/2018/04/09/overcoming-challenges-recruiting-cyber-security-experts/>

<sup>45</sup> Apollo Education Group | University of Phoenix in partnership with the ASIS Foundation (2014) *Op cit.*

<sup>46</sup> Apollo Education Group | University of Phoenix (2015) *Competency Models for Enterprise Security and Cybersecurity*, Available online: [http://www.apollo.edu/content/dam/apolloedu/microsite/security\\_industry/AEG-UOPX%20Security%20Competency%20Models%20report.pdf](http://www.apollo.edu/content/dam/apolloedu/microsite/security_industry/AEG-UOPX%20Security%20Competency%20Models%20report.pdf)



- 2.19. There is a further challenge that high turnover rates in some roles can create an effect where it is difficult (for some employers) to justify investments in training and professional development programs. Therefore, a focus on candidates having existing experience and training is prioritised. Resolving issues that result in high turnover needs to go hand in hand with a shift in the approach to recruitment.<sup>47</sup>
- 2.20. Clearly then there are a number of ways in which approaches to recruitment are limited which are worthy of further exploration and indeed are considered subsequently in this research. For now though, we turn our attention to factors that attract candidates to a particular career.

## Career attractions

- 2.21. The general literature in relation to careers was examined, particularly in relation to young people, in order to gain a general sense of the factors that are important in attracting recruits. This provides a context on what is needed to present security careers as attractive, and identifies a number of themes for further exploration in our subsequent survey and interviews. Unsurprisingly there are a range of considerations for attracting candidates to any role, in particular: the hiring process, the culture of the organisation, the expectations of candidates, the significance of job satisfaction, and the value given to a candidate's 'potential'. These are explored below.
- 2.22. Effective methods of attracting candidates<sup>48</sup> are evolving; approximately 90% of job seekers now look for new opportunities on their mobile devices<sup>49</sup> with social media platforms becoming increasingly significant.<sup>50</sup> The hiring process, that is, one that is easy to navigate and relatively quick, is also important<sup>51</sup>. In an employer, young people typically look for effective leadership structures that offer flexible work arrangements,<sup>52</sup> opportunities for professional development and career advancement, as well as financial reward.<sup>53</sup> Developed

<sup>47</sup> IFF Research for the Security Industry Authority (2018) *Op cit.*

<sup>48</sup> Young people seek work through a variety of different formal and informal mechanisms (e.g. LinkedIn and mobile apps, local meet-ups, conferences), and employers can create unintentional barriers if they do not engage in recruiting via these mechanisms. See for example: INFOSEC (2019) *Can I Start A Career in Cybersecurity with No Experience?* Available Online:

<https://resources.infosecinstitute.com/can-i-start-a-career-in-cybersecurity-with-no-experience-2/#gref> ; British Security Industry Association (2019) *Op cit.*

<sup>49</sup> Costello, A. (2019) *18 Recruitment Industry Trends for 2019*. Digital Media Stream, Available Online: <https://content.digitalmediastream.co.uk/blog/recruitment-industry-trends-2018>

<sup>50</sup> Costello, A. (2019) *Op cit.*

<sup>51</sup> Bika, N. (not dated) *The most common recruiting challenges and how to overcome them*, Workable, Available Online: <https://resources.workable.com/tutorial/common-recruiting-challenges>

<sup>52</sup> Costello, A. (2019) *Op cit.*

<sup>53</sup> Accenture (2015) *Recruiting and Retaining Talent in the Public Sector: The Differences that Make the Difference*, Available Online: [https://www.accenture.com/t20170411t142500z\\_w\\_/in-en/\\_acnmedia/accenture/conversion-assets/dotcom/documents/global/pdf/dualpub\\_20/accenture-804116-talent-retention-pulse-survey-v06-lr-no-crops.pdf](https://www.accenture.com/t20170411t142500z_w_/in-en/_acnmedia/accenture/conversion-assets/dotcom/documents/global/pdf/dualpub_20/accenture-804116-talent-retention-pulse-survey-v06-lr-no-crops.pdf) ;

processes of employee engagement are also important such as formal feedback programmes, a strong learning culture, and recognition initiatives.<sup>54</sup>

- 2.23. Candidates are increasingly making judgement about the culture of an organisation<sup>55</sup> (will they enjoy the environment, will they have individual responsibility, are hours flexible, are tasks varied and interesting, will they receive feedback on their performance?). In practice some are more motivated by intrinsic factors (job satisfaction, learning experiences, etc) and others more external ones (job prestige, financial remuneration) or some combination thereof. Add to this the often important influence of interpersonal factors such as the opinion of family members, and it can be seen, the picture is complex.<sup>56</sup>
- 2.24. It has been observed that there are also important differences in the expectations that Millennials and Generation Z have for their careers which may be significant in any strategy to attract young people. While older generations would expect to work at a company for many years before getting promoted, the younger generations want opportunities and mobility from the start.<sup>57</sup>

*Boomers wanted to make sure they weren't losing their job. Gen Xers wanted to know 'How am I doing?' at my job. Now Gen Y wants to know 'Why am I doing this job?'*

*(Quote from Roberta Chinsky Matuson, president of Human Resource Solutions)<sup>58</sup>*

- 2.25. Job satisfaction is influenced by the existence of effective mentoring programmes and other types of professional development are important.<sup>59</sup> Job security is one of the largest factors that contributes to job satisfaction.<sup>60</sup> While the job market is ever more insecure, paradoxically, employers are demanding more than ever from their employees. To counter the negative effects of job insecurity, research finds that companies should focus on improving the perception of

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Hember, S (2019) *How can HR handle demand for cyber security jobs in 2019?* HR Zone, Available Online: <https://www.hrzone.com/talent/acquisition/how-can-hr-handle-demand-for-cyber-security-jobs-in-2019>

<sup>54</sup> O'Mara, D. (not dated) *Physical Security Industry Tips And Best Practices For Recruiting And Retaining Top Security Officers*, Security Informed, Available Online: <https://www.securityinformed.com/insights/physical-security-industry-tips-practices-recruiting-co-9699-ga.19446.html>

<sup>55</sup> See for example: Economics Help. (not dated) *Factors affecting choice of job/occupation*. Available Online: <https://www.economicshelp.org/blog/glossary/factors-affecting-choice-of-job-occupation/>; and Centre for the Protection of National Infrastructure. (not dated) *Motivation within the security industry*. Available Online: <https://www.cpni.gov.uk/system/files/documents/52/73/guard-force-motivation.pdf>

<sup>56</sup> Akosah-Twumasi, P., Emeto, T., Lindsay, D., Tsey, K., & Malau-Aduli, B. (2018) *A Systematic Review of Factors That Influence Youths Career Choices—the Role of Culture*. *Frontiers in Education*, Available Online: <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/feduc.2018.00058/full>

<sup>57</sup> Goodchild, J. (2008) *How to Recruit and Retain the Best Young Security Employees*, CSO Online, Available Online: <https://www.csoonline.com/article/2138389/how-to-recruit-and-retain-the-best-young-security-employees.html>

<sup>58</sup> Goodchild, J. (2008) *Op cit*.

<sup>59</sup> Goodchild, J. (2008) *Op cit*.

<sup>60</sup> I/O At Work. (2015) *When Does Job Security Affect Job Performance?* Available Online: <https://www.ioatwork.com/when-does-job-security-affect-job-performance/>

organisational justice (i.e. fairness) that their employees hold. This involves helping employees manage uncertainties with high quality human resource processes while involving employees in decision making.<sup>61</sup>

- 2.26. Beyond job satisfaction, job seekers compare the job's attractiveness to alternatives in terms of the wages, qualifications and skill required.<sup>62</sup> All else being equal, candidates will select a higher paying position.<sup>63</sup> Non-wage factors, however, matter too. Moreover, research has shown that while challenging qualifications may be an inhibitor, explicit recognition of potential can enhance interest.<sup>64</sup>
- 2.27. This brief summary highlights that there are a wide array of factors that employers need to consider and address to attract the most appropriate candidates. So too it is apparent that a number of these issues are ones that the security sector has struggled with.

### Learning from other sectors

- 2.28. The security sector of course is not the only one to face specific challenges that impact on recruitment. Parallels are often drawn between private security and public policing<sup>65</sup> (albeit the differences are also often highlighted) and despite policing having a stronger image as a 'vocation' or 'profession', it also struggled at some points to recruit appropriate candidates. Challenges largely reflect those seen within security albeit with some differences:<sup>66</sup>

- Inflexible schedules
- Long hours
- Low pay
- Salaries that have not kept pace with inflation
- Opportunities elsewhere and increased competition
- Changing generational preferences
- Perception of law enforcement

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<sup>61</sup> I/O At Work. (2015) *Op cit.*

<sup>62</sup> Economics Help. (not dated) *Op cit.*

<sup>63</sup> Economics Help. (not dated) *Op cit.*

<sup>64</sup> Geary, A. (2018) *How to recruit the best cybersecurity professionals*, Computerworld, Available Online: <https://www.computerworld.com/article/3412310/how-to-recruit-the-best-cybersecurity-professionals.html>; SME Magazine. (2018) *Overcoming the challenges of recruiting cyber security experts*. Available Online: <http://www.smeweb.com/2018/04/09/overcoming-challenges-recruiting-cyber-security-experts/>

<sup>65</sup> Sarre, R. & Prenzler, T. (2000) 'The relationship between police and private security: Models and future directions', *International Journal of Comparative and Applied Criminal Justice*, 24:1, 91-113, DOI: 10.1080/01924036.2000.9678654, p. 91

<sup>66</sup> See for example: RAND (2009) *Police Recruitment and Retention in the Contemporary Urban Environment*, Available online: [https://nccpsafety.org/assets/files/library/Police\\_Recruitment\\_and\\_Retention\\_Urban\\_Environment.pdf](https://nccpsafety.org/assets/files/library/Police_Recruitment_and_Retention_Urban_Environment.pdf) and Wilson, J., Dalton, E., Scheer, C. & Grammich, C. (2010) *Police Recruitment and Retention for the New Millennium | The State of Knowledge*, RAND, Available online: [https://nccpsafety.org/assets/files/library/Police\\_Recruitment\\_and\\_Retention\\_for\\_the\\_New\\_Millennium.pdf](https://nccpsafety.org/assets/files/library/Police_Recruitment_and_Retention_for_the_New_Millennium.pdf)

- Complexities and length of the hiring process
- 2.29. In the USA the police identified a need to make a raft of changes to attract, recruit and retain employees.<sup>67</sup> These changes encompass what they offer employees, particularly in relation to education and development, but also in terms of pay. Consideration has also been given to the branding of police recruitment, selling the police as the employer of choice and focuses on:
- Why policing is a great career;
  - Examples of the diversity of organisations and employment opportunities;
  - Personal accounts of what it is like to be a police officer;
  - An overview of the hiring, selection, and training processes.
- 2.30. In the USA, the New York Police Department paid their own officers \$1,000 if they recruited and mentored candidates for the duration of the hiring and probationary periods.<sup>68</sup> Many forces, in fact, find that their own employees are one of the greatest sources of recruiting (via friends or relatives)<sup>69</sup> as they can convey the benefits while acknowledging the realities of the work involved.
- 2.31. The security sector may similarly benefit from a strategy to sell security as an attractive 'brand' and to overcome existing limitations in approaches to recruitment and the limited perceptions of careers in security. To add further depth and examine the issues raised by the literature, we now move on to consider the findings of a survey of security professionals.

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<sup>67</sup> See RAND (2009) *Op cit.* and Wilson, J., Dalton, E., Scheer, C. & Grammich, C. (2010) *Op cit.*

<sup>68</sup> RAND (2009) *Op cit.*

<sup>69</sup> RAND (2009) *Op cit.*

## Section 3. Survey Findings

### The sample

- 3.1. A survey of security professionals was conducted in order to gain a better understanding of: how and why individuals enter a security career; their overall perception of the profession; what makes a career in security attractive; and what factors may be off-putting. The overall aim was to inform how security careers can better be promoted. The survey was promoted widely and specific attempts were made to engage with young/new security professionals to ensure their views were included. The findings are based on 386 responses<sup>70</sup>.
- 3.2. In the introduction to the survey it was noted that – *We use the term ‘career’ interchangeably with ‘job’ and ‘role’ to mean employment within the security sector. We have used the word ‘security’ to apply to the private security sector (i.e. the work of security companies providing security services and equipment to clients; and of security teams within corporate and public sector organisations).* The majority of questions were multiple choice, some of which posed statements which respondents were invited to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement with. Additionally, a small number of questions invited open text responses. All of the topics covered are condensed and summarised below.
- 3.3. In addition to the frequency responses to questions, analysis was undertaken to assess whether views differed by specific characteristics/sub-groups of respondents. Only those issues that were statistically significant are included in the discussion, evidencing a relationship between the variables (i.e. not occurring by chance). Key points are integrated into the main findings, and include perspectives by:
- Role (i.e. operative, in-house management/buyer, supplier etc);
  - Length of time working in security;
  - Age;
  - Whether a first or second career security professional;
  - Intention to leave or remain working in security;
  - Whether entered security to gain experience for a different career.
- 3.4. Just over half of the respondents (54%, n=211) worked for a supplier; while close to a third (30%, n=115) indicated they worked for a buyer/customer.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> The number of responses to each question varies as some respondents dropped out part way through and some chose not to answer certain questions.

<sup>71</sup> It is unknown to what extent this reflects practice across the security sector. Determining this would be insightful.

- 3.5. The remaining respondents were other security experts (e.g. academic, regulator, etc.) at 9% (n=34) of respondents, or other interested party linked to security at 7% (n=26). Table 1 displays these roles.

Table 1: Breakdown of respondents by role % (n=386)

Role	Type	% , N	Total
Supplier	Director, Manager, Consultant	28%, n=110	54%, n=211
	Contracted operative	26%, n=101	
Buyer/ Customer	Security Manager	11%, n=43	30%, n=115
	Intermediary	1%, n=2	
	In-house operative	18%, n=70	
Other	Other security expert	9%, n=34	16%, n=60
	Other interested party	7%, n=26	

- 3.6. Respondents were asked a number of demographic questions to enable more detailed analysis of variation in responses by characteristics. Full details are provided in Appendix 2. Additional Data Tables. In summary:

- Nearly two thirds of the respondents worked for organisations based in the UK (66%, n=247);
- Just over half of respondents (54%, n=209) were aged 36 to 55, a quarter (26%, n=100) were over 55, and a fifth (20%, n=77) were under 36;
- The ratio of male to female respondents was 81% (n=311) to 19% (n=72);<sup>72</sup>
- The majority of respondents indicated their ethnic background was White (85%, n=327);
- Just over half (53%, n=204) had been working in private security between 11 and 30 years, a third (34%, n=133) less than 11 years and an eighth (12%, n=47) for more than 30 years. Generally speaking there was a correlation between age and length of time working in private security – younger respondents tended to have been engaged for less time, however a third of the 26-35 year olds had been working in private security for at least 11 years.

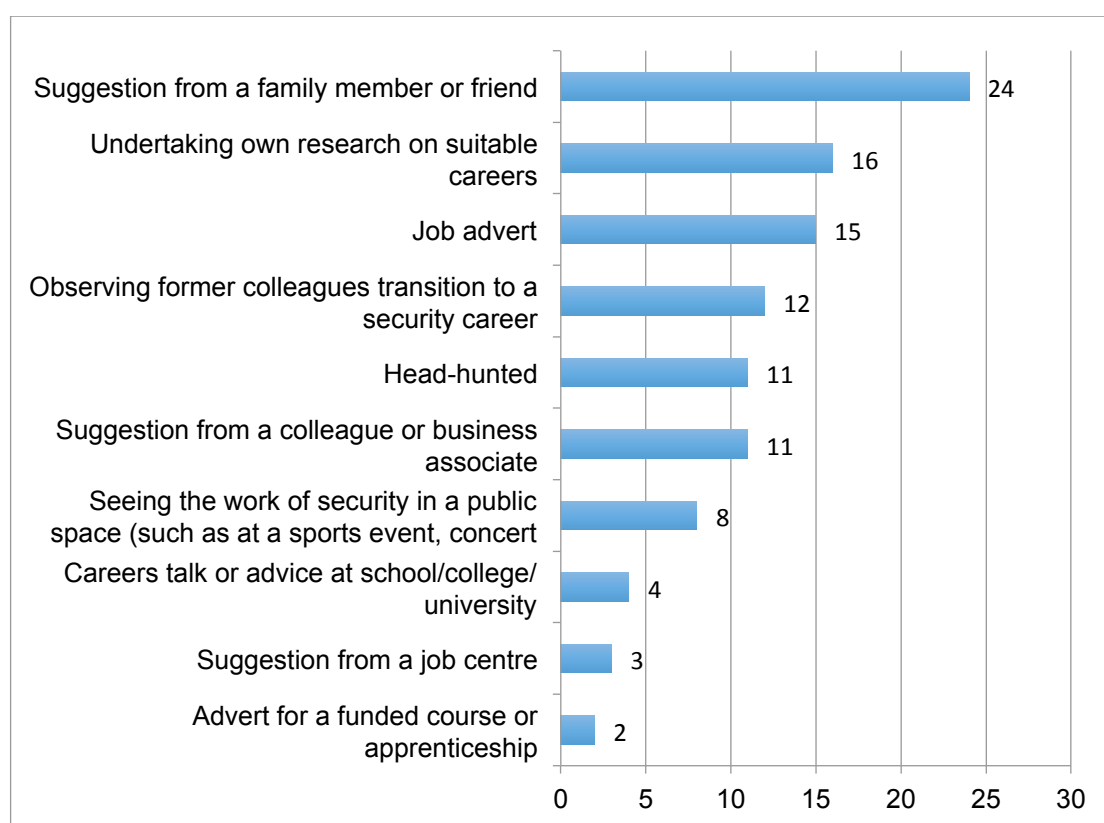
## Journey to a career in private security

- 3.7. Respondents were asked to indicate the main way(s) in which a career in security had come to their attention as something that may be a serious consideration. Respondents could tick all options that applied (and offer their own explanations). There was quite a mix of routes, suggesting that there is no dominant way that careers in security come

<sup>72</sup> One respondent indicated 'prefer not to state' and another indicated an 'other' gender.

to the attention of individuals. The single most prevalent route was via a suggestion from a family member or friend (24%, n=93). The numbers that had heard of security through a careers talk at school/college/university were notably low (4%, n=17) although this was more common among younger respondents<sup>73</sup> and also those that had only ever worked in security.<sup>74</sup> The full results are shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Main route of hearing about a private security career % (n=386)



3.8. Among respondents that offered an 'other' explanation (n=89) the most common route was that it was known to be a natural progression after a military, law enforcement or government career (n=29). A smaller number just needed a job and ended up staying (n=11) and some had evolved into it from another position – either that position changed over time or they were asked to cover tasks or become more involved (n=10). For a small number they thought it would be a steppingstone to a career in law enforcement (n=7).

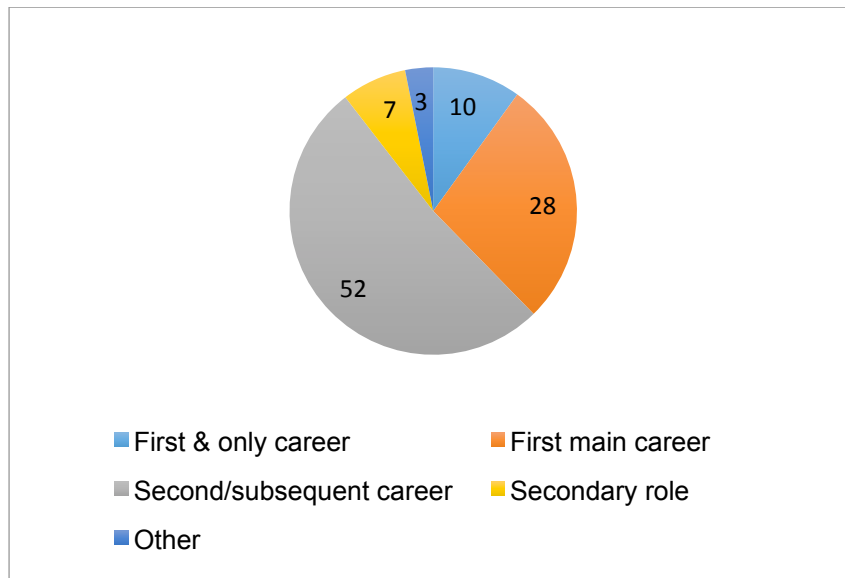
3.9. Respondents were also asked to indicate how their role in private security fits in to their overall career, specifically whether for them security represents a first career choice or a second/subsequent career choice. For more than half of the respondents (52%, n=198) private

<sup>73</sup> 22% of 16-25 year olds had heard about security via a careers talk, 9% of 26-35 year olds, and less than 4% of all the remaining age categories.

<sup>74</sup> 21% of first/only career professionals had heard via a career talk at school/college/university; compared with 3% of first main career professionals, 2% of second/subsequent career professionals, and 0% of those for who security is a secondary role.

security was their second/subsequent career i.e. they had developed a career in another area (or areas) and subsequently moved into private security. For close to two fifths (38%, n=144) private security was their first career (made up of 10%, n=38 who had only ever worked in security and 28%, n=106 who had held some jobs but considered security their first main profession). Figure 2 displays the full breakdown.

Figure 2: Career type % (n=382)



## Second career respondents

- 3.10. Respondents indicating private security was a second/subsequent career were asked a small number of additional questions to better understand their specific choices and views.
- 3.11. Close to two thirds of respondents (64%, n=120) were from a public sector background, most often the military<sup>75</sup> and police<sup>76</sup>. More than a third (35%, n=67) had come from a commercial background – the vast majority of which were from a tertiary (services) sector background - most commonly retail, banking/finance and sales & marketing. Table 2 shows the full results.

<sup>75</sup> 26%, n=50

<sup>76</sup> 19%, n=35



Table 2: Career type prior to private security (n=189)

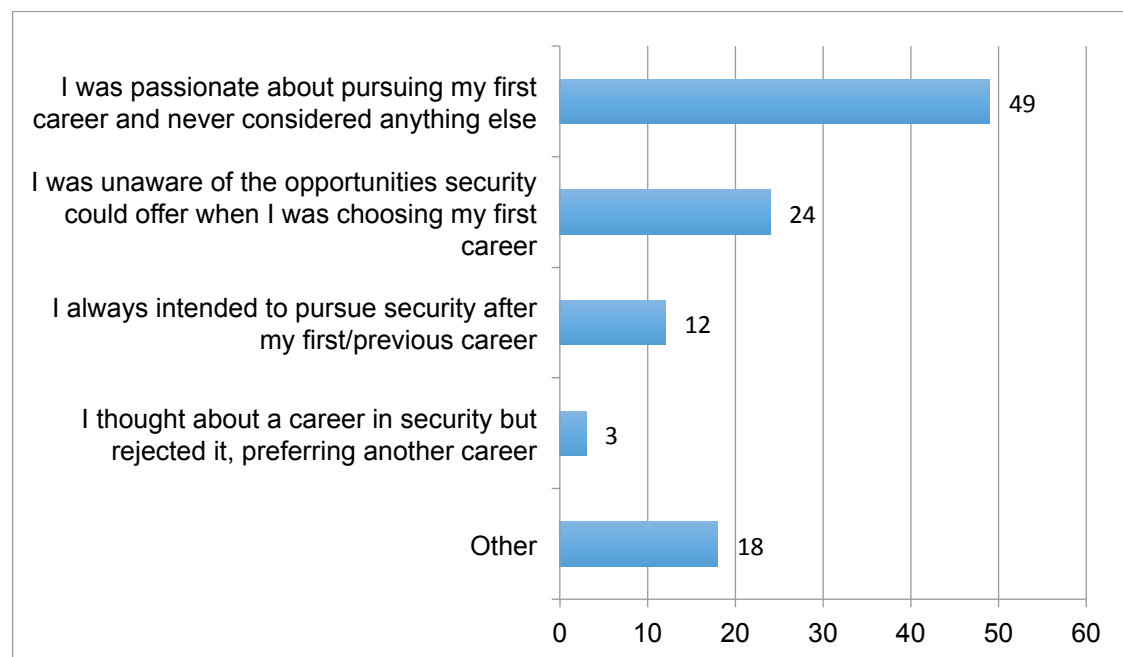
Sector	Type	% , N	Total
Private	Primary	0.5%, n=1	35%, n=67
	Secondary	0.5%, n=1	
	Tertiary	33%, n=62	
	Quarternary	1%, n=3	
Public	Military	26%, n=50	64%, n=120
	Police	19%, n=35	
	Government	6%, n=11	
	Other public sector	13%, n=24	
Third/voluntary			1%, n=2

3.12. Second career respondents were also asked to clarify why they had not selected private security as their primary career (and could select more than one option and/or offer their own explanation). The most common reason, close to half of respondents (49%, n=93) indicated they were passionate about pursuing their first career and never considered anything else; and this was much more common among those with a police and military background than those with an other public sector or commercial background<sup>77</sup>. Taken in the context of the whole sample this equates to nearly a quarter of security professionals that would never have considered security as a primary career (24%).

3.13. A notable figure, close to a quarter of second/subsequent career respondents (24%, n=45) had been unaware of the opportunities security could offer when developing a first career, and for an eighth (12%, n=23) security was part of a longer term plan, as they had always intended to pursue a security career after their first/previous career. Very few respondents (3%, n=6) had previously considered security but rejected it; suggesting perhaps that the thought of a career in security is not off-putting, just not sufficiently attractive, although the point about many not knowing about the options features prominently here. Table 3 displays these findings.

<sup>77</sup> 74% of former police and 60% of former military indicated 'yes' they were passionate about pursuing their first career and never considered anything else; compared with 42% of other public sector, 37% of commercial sector and 18% of government (e.g. civil service).

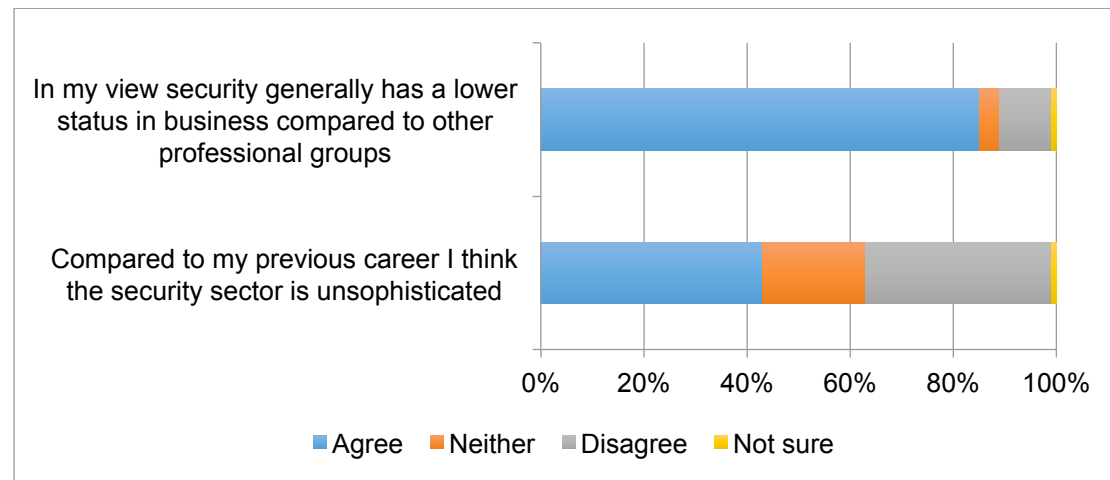
Table 3: Reasons security was not a first career % (n=189)



- 3.14. There was a variety of other reasons (18%, n=34) for not choosing a security career sooner, most commonly respondents reiterated that it was not something they were aware of or thought about, although it was also notable that a small number of respondents (n=4) reflected that when they were first entering the workplace decades ago, security was very different to now, and would not have been a viable option.
- 3.15. Responses were somewhat mixed in terms of whether second career respondents view the security sector as unsophisticated in comparison to their previous career. More than two fifths (43%, n=80) agreed or strongly agreed with this statement, but a little less (36%, n=68) disagreed or strongly disagreed. Agreement varied depending on background. It was more common among those with an other public sector, government and commercial background, and less common among those with a police and military background.<sup>78</sup>
- 3.16. In contrast, respondents were largely unified in their view that security has a lower status in business compared to other professional groups – 85% (n=160) agreed or strongly agreed.

<sup>78</sup> 50% of other public sector agreed or strongly agreed; compared with 46% of government (e.g. civil service), 45% of commercial sector, 40% of police and 38% of military.

Figure 3: Level of agreement with statements about working in security as a second career % (n=187-189)



## Overall perceptions of security

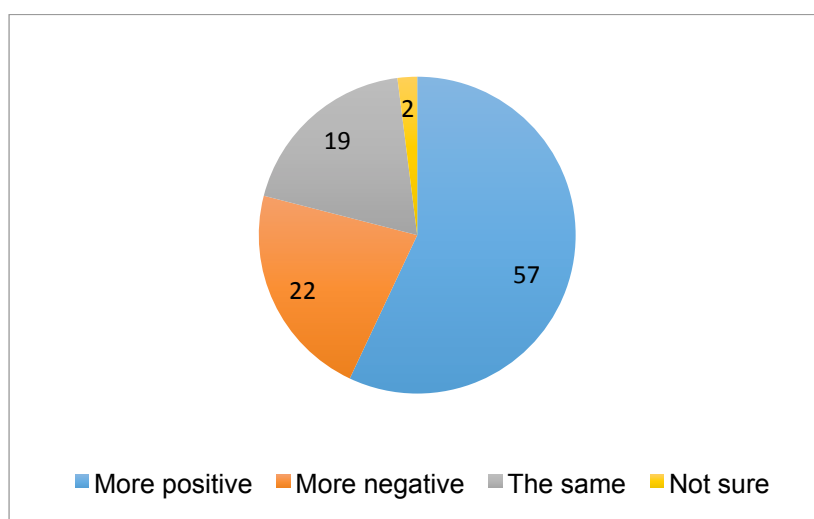
- 3.17. All survey respondents were asked about their general perceptions of working in security and their intentions to remain in the profession.
- 3.18. More than half (57%, n=207) indicated that they had a more positive or much more positive perception of security now than prior to working in security. Just over a fifth (22%, n=82) had a more negative or much more negative view, and just under a fifth (19%, n=70) indicated their perception had stayed the same. Buyers and in-house operatives more commonly held an improved perception than suppliers and contracted operatives.<sup>79</sup> A slightly greater proportion of those that were attracted to security as a route to another career had an improved perception of security.<sup>80</sup> Unsurprisingly, those who expressed intention to leave the profession were much less likely to indicate an improved perception than both those intending to stay and those unsure about staying.<sup>81</sup>
- 3.19. Figure 4 displays the results.

<sup>79</sup> 67% of buyers has a more positive or much more positive perception; compared with 58% of in-house operatives, 56% of suppliers and 45% of contracted operatives.

<sup>80</sup> 63% of route to other respondents indicated their perception of security is more positive or much more positive, compared with 57% of those that answered no (it was not a route to another career) and 41% of those that were unsure.

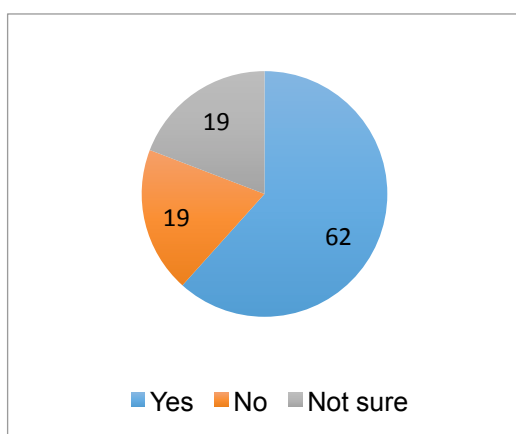
<sup>81</sup> 16% of intended leavers indicated they had a more positive or much more positive perception of security since working in it, compared with 48% of those that were unsure about remaining and 65% of those intending to remain.

Figure 4: Change in perception of security % (n=366)



- 3.20. A majority of respondents, three fifths (62%, n=225) indicated that they would recommend a career in security to others, but close to a fifth (19%, n=70) said they would not, and the same were unsure (19%, n=70). Buyers and Suppliers more commonly indicated they would recommend a security career than in-house and contracted operatives<sup>82</sup>. Those who had only ever worked in security more commonly indicated they would recommend a career in security than those who had had other jobs or careers prior.<sup>83</sup>

Figure 5: Whether respondents would recommend a security career to others % (n=365)



- 3.21. All respondents were invited to explain their response.
- 3.22. Of those that provided an explanation for why they would recommend security (n=68, out of 225 that responded 'yes') the most common reasons were that they felt security is a rewarding career; there are a

<sup>82</sup> 70% of buyers indicated 'yes' they would recommend a security career; compared with 65% of suppliers, 59% of in-house operatives and 45% of contracted operatives.

<sup>83</sup> 68% of first/only career professionals would recommend a security career; compared with 59% of first main career professionals, 57% of second/subsequent career professionals, and 61% of those for who security is a secondary role.

number of opportunities; and that it is evolving and presenting a number of exciting challenges. Some illustrative examples include:

*'Security is becoming ever more sophisticated and widely considered as a wanting as opposed to an unwanted necessity.'*

*(Supplier)*

*'The sector has come on leaps and bounds over the last 15 years in particular and there are growing opportunities for those who want a career to have one.'*

*(Other Security Expert)*

*'There is so much more to the industry than just manned guarding.'*

*(Supplier)*

*'With the standards and training, you can really achieve goals and have a settled career.'*

*(Buyer/Customer)*

*'I think there are lots of opportunities and recognised business qualifications.'*

*(Buyer/Customer)*

*'The industry is on a curve to professionalisation.'*

*(Buyer/Customer)*

*'Lots of innovation, lots of possibilities.'*

*(Supplier)*

- 3.23. Of those that provided an explanation for why they would not recommend security (n=42, out of 70 that responded 'no'), this was most commonly due to the view that wages and employment conditions are poor; that the industry is not respected; and that it can be hard to progress within the industry, particularly for those coming in at entry level. Some illustrative examples include:

*'An entry level security guard does not have much chance of furthering his career. Higher level security employment, such as investigations, risk assessment, has a better profile and opportunities to advance.'*

*(Other security expert)*

*'I've done all the courses but because I'm not ex police or military I can only get very low paid employment.'*

*(Other interested party)*

*'It is not a career. It is a temp job that everyone can do as only a licence is required and there are no restrictions.'*

*(Contracted security operative)*

*'Low wages, no respect from others, no protection in law, no respect from authorities.'*

*(Contracted security operative)*

*'Poor wage, not all companies are regulated, not all companies pay holiday pay, no progression, bullying by employers.'*

*(Contracted security operative)*

- 3.24. Of those that provided an explanation for why they were not sure whether they would recommend security (n=54, out of 70 that responded 'not sure') the most common reason was that whether they would recommend security would depend on factors such as the personality and capabilities of the individual (that they may make the recommendation to), and that they would recommend some roles but not others. Some noted that there were both pros and cons to the industry and therefore it was difficult to settle on whether to recommend it or not. Some illustrative examples include:

*'All depends on a person's attitude, approach and how serious they are about making a career of it.'*

*(Contracted security operative)*

*'It would depend on the person, their personality, their motivation, their willingness to learn.'*

*(Buyer/Customer)*

*'Depends on area and company they will go to and their personality.'*

*(Other security expert)*

*'It has both positive and negative points, the industry is under paid for the situations that you face, there is very little support following injuries or traumatic events.'*

*(Contracted security operative)*

*'Security work can be great, but simultaneously it can be incredibly unstable with poor working conditions.'*

*(Other interested party)*

*'You have to be ready for what you get, it's not for everyone.'*

*(Contracted security operative)*

*'You have to love it, financially it is a bad move.'*

*(Supplier)*

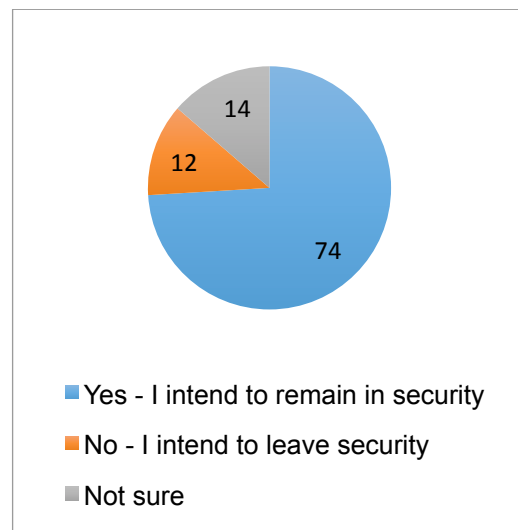
- 3.25. Close to three quarters of all respondents (74%, n=271) indicated that they intend to remain in security for as long as they are working (a higher proportion than the 62% that said they would recommend security to others), but this dropped to around half among younger professionals.<sup>84</sup> An eighth of all respondents (12%, n=45) intended to leave and slightly more were undecided (14%, n=50). Buyers and suppliers more commonly indicated an intention to remain than in-house and contracted operatives.<sup>85</sup>

<sup>84</sup> 48% of 16-25 years olds and 54% of 26-35 year olds indicated 'yes' they intend to remain in security; compared with 68% of 36-45 year olds, 74% of 46-55 year olds, 80% of 56-65 year olds, 81% of 66-75 year olds and 100% of over 75s.

<sup>85</sup> 81% of buyers and 81% of suppliers indicated 'yes' they intend to remain in security; compared with 66% of in-house operatives and 60% of contracted operatives.

3.26. The results are displayed in Figure 6.

Figure 6: Whether respondents intend to remain in security % (n=366)



### Attractions to private security

3.27. Accepting that the relative attractiveness of a given role will depend on many factors, in order to gain a general indication of the relative attractiveness of roles within private security, respondents were asked their views on 10 distinct aspects of private security work. The purpose was not to attempt to define which are actually 'preferable', rather the perception, and therefore to understand what areas of private security, if any, may face more challenges in attracting candidates.

3.28. Notably, all areas were seen as more attractive than unattractive to potential recruits with the exception of security officer/guarding, viewed by just over half (52%, n=188) as unattractive or very unattractive, and by a fifth (22%, n=81) as attractive or very attractive.

3.29. The areas most commonly perceived to be attractive to potential recruits were:

- Security consultancy (76%, n=275) – more commonly among suppliers, buyers and in-house operatives than contracted operatives;<sup>86</sup>
- Investigation (72%, n=261) – most commonly among buyers, then suppliers, then in-house operatives then contracted operatives;<sup>87</sup>
- Cyber security (70%, n=254) – most commonly by buyers, then suppliers, then in-house operatives, then contracted operatives.<sup>88</sup>

<sup>86</sup> 80% of suppliers, 79% of buyers and 77% of in-house operatives indicated security consultancy is attractive or very attractive to potential recruits; compared with 55% of contracted operatives.

<sup>87</sup> 84% of buyers indicated investigation is attractive or very attractive to potential recruits, compared with 73% of suppliers, 67% of in-house operatives and 55% of contracted operatives.

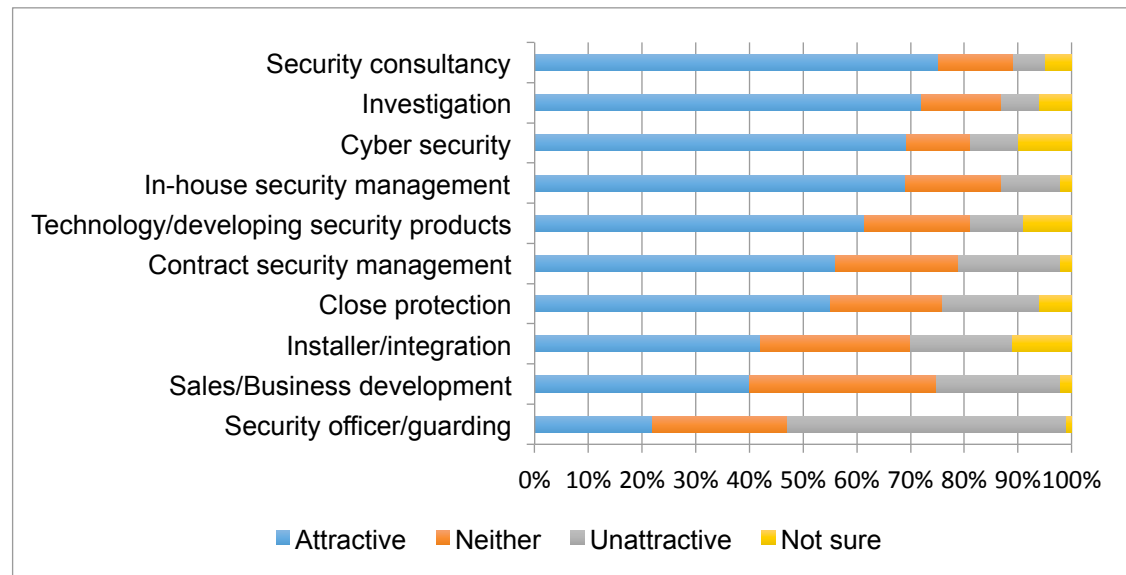
<sup>88</sup> 79% of buyers indicated cyber security is attractive or very attractive to potential recruits, compared with 72% of suppliers, 69% of in-house operatives and 52% of contracted operatives.

3.30. In-house security management was viewed as attractive to potential recruits (69%, n=251) more commonly than contract security management (56%, n=203). Unsurprisingly, buyers and in-house operatives more commonly viewed in-house security management as attractive or very attractive to potential recruits than suppliers and contracted operatives.<sup>89</sup>

3.31. Generally, those intending to remain working in security were more positive about the perceived attractiveness of the different areas of work than those intending to leave.<sup>90</sup>

3.32. The full responses are shown in Figure 7.

Figure 7: Views on the attractiveness of different areas of security work to potential recruits % (n=363-365)



3.33. In terms of the particular attractions to careers in security, respondents were asked how significant a number of factors had been in attracting them to the profession.

3.34. It was unsurprising to find that making the most of existing skill sets was a significant reason for working in security (84%, n=296) and slightly higher among second/subsequent career professionals<sup>91</sup>; the same proportion (but slightly more individuals) indicated the work itself in terms of the challenges presented was a significant attraction (84%,

<sup>89</sup> 79% of buyers and 77% of in-house operatives indicated in-house security management is attractive or very attractive to potential recruits; compared with 60% of suppliers and 56% of contracted operatives.

<sup>90</sup> For example: 27% of those intending to remain in security indicated security officer/guarding was attractive or very attractive to potential recruits, compared with 12% of those unsure about remaining and 2% of intended leavers. A similar trend was found across all of the roles explored in the survey.

<sup>91</sup> 81% of second/subsequent career professionals indicated making the most of existing skill sets was significant or very significant; compared with 75% of those for whom security is a secondary role, 74% of first main career professionals, and 71% of first/only career professionals.



n=302), particularly so among those who had only ever worked in security.<sup>92</sup> Close to four fifths (78%, n=278) indicated the commitment to protecting other people and organisations was significant to them.

- 3.35. Less often selected as a significant reason for working in security, but still indicated by a majority, was the possibility security offers for progression (63%, n=226) – and this was a little less common among contracted operatives<sup>93</sup>, but considerably less common among those for whom security is a secondary role.<sup>94</sup> Similarly, over half (56%, n=199) marked the number of career options available within security as significant in attracting them.
- 3.36. The pay (48%, n=172) and working hours (34%, n=121) were the least significant in terms of attracting respondents into the industry. Further work needs to explore the extent to which there was a specific concern about these as opposed to other issues being a bigger priority. Pay was however least significant among those who had only ever worked in security. It was most significant to those joining security as their first main career (having undertaken some other jobs but viewing security as their first main profession), and those for whom security was a secondary role.<sup>95</sup> Meanwhile, working hours were indicated as significant more often among in-house operatives<sup>96</sup> and for both those for whom security is a secondary role and for whom security is their first main career.<sup>97</sup>
- 3.37. Across all of the reasons explored, those who indicated an intention to remain in security for the rest of the time they are working, more commonly indicated these were significant or very significant than those intending to leave.<sup>98 99 100 101 102 103 104 105</sup>

<sup>92</sup> 90% of first/only career professionals indicated the work itself was significant or very significant; compared with 79% of first main career professionals, 79% of second/subsequent career professionals, and 61% of those for whom security is a secondary role.

<sup>93</sup> 54% of contracted operatives indicated the possibility security offers for progression was significant or very significant in attracting them to a role in security, compared with 62% of suppliers, 63% of buyers and 64% of in-house operatives.

<sup>94</sup> 68% of first/only career professionals and 68% of first main career professionals indicated the possibility offered for progression was significant or very significant; compared with 57% of second/subsequent career professionals, and 36% of those for whom security is a secondary role.

<sup>95</sup> 35% of first/only career professionals indicated the pay was significant or very significant; compared with 44% of second/subsequent career professionals, 46% of those for whom security is a secondary role, and 51% of first main career professionals.

<sup>96</sup> 44% of in-house operatives indicated the working hours were significant or very significant in attracting them to a role in security, compared with 32% of contracted operatives, 28% of suppliers and 26% of buyers.

<sup>97</sup> 29% of first/only career professionals and 29% of second/subsequent career professionals indicated the hours were significant or very significant; compared with 37% of first main career professionals, and 39% of those for whom security is a secondary role.

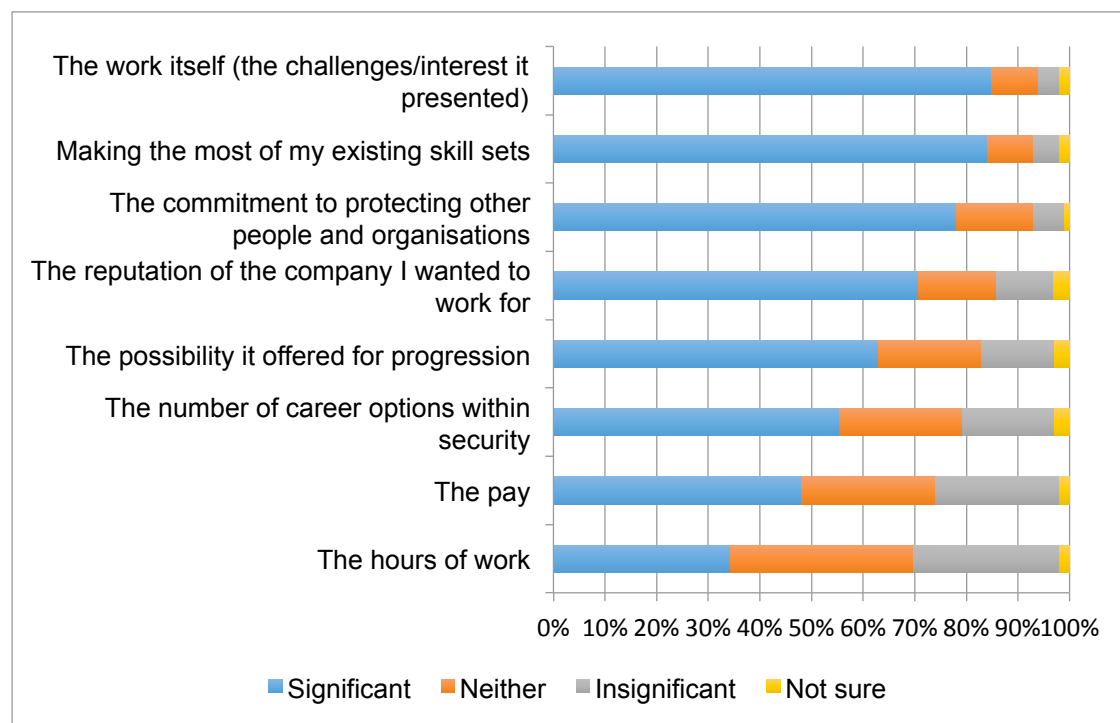
<sup>98</sup> 56% of those unsure about remaining indicated pay was significant or very significant in attracting them to work in security, compared with 46% of remainers and 42% of intended leavers.

<sup>99</sup> 38% of those unsure about remaining indicated the hours of work was significant or very significant in attracting them to work in security, compared with 34% of remainers and 20% of intended leavers.

<sup>100</sup> 67% of remainers indicated the possibility offered for progression was significant or very significant in attracting them to work in security, compared with 56% of those unsure about remaining and 38% of intended leavers.

3.38. The full results are shown in Figure 8.

Figure 8: Views on how significant factors are in attracting respondents to work in security % (n=353-358)



3.39. The majority of respondents indicated that they were not attracted to security as a means of gaining experience to then leave security and pursue another career (81%, n=291). A tenth had (11%, n=38) and this was predominantly preparation for the police (n=17) or a commercial role (n=15). Younger professionals more commonly indicated that this was a reason for pursuing a security role.<sup>106</sup> This was also more common among first and first main career professionals than

<sup>101</sup> 80% of remainers indicated the commitment to protecting other people and organisations was significant or very significant in attracting them to work in security, compared with 68% of those unsure about remaining and 62% of intended leavers.

<sup>102</sup> 59% of remainers indicated the number of career options within security was significant or very significant in attracting them to work in security, compared with 42% of intended leavers and 42% of those unsure about remaining.

<sup>103</sup> 88% of remainers indicated the work itself was significant or very significant in attracting them to work in security, compared with 78% of those unsure about remaining and 56% of intended leavers.

<sup>104</sup> 73% of remainers indicated the reputation of the company they wanted to work for was significant or very significant in attracting them to work in security, compared with 60% of those unsure about remaining and 51% of intended leavers.

<sup>105</sup> 85% of remainers indicated making the most of their existing skill sets was significant or very significant in attracting them to work in security, compared with 78% of those unsure about remaining and 58% of intended leavers.

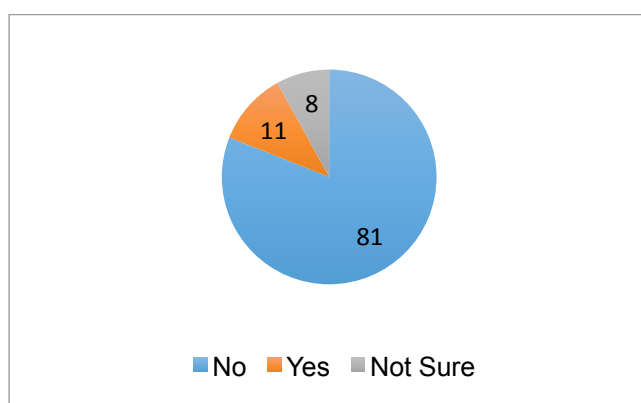
<sup>106</sup> 30% of 16-25 years olds and 19% of 26-35 year olds indicated 'yes' they were attracted to security to gain experience for another career; compared with 5% of 36-45 year olds, 8% of 46-55 year olds, 9% of 56-65 year olds, 0% of 66-75 year olds and 0% of over 75s.

second/subsequent career professionals or those for whom security is a secondary role.<sup>107</sup>

- 3.40. Of all those that indicated they entered security to gain experience for another career (n=38), more than two thirds (68%, n=26) indicated that they now intend to remain in security, so clearly in some cases, what was intended as a stop-gap becomes a long term career.<sup>108</sup>

- 3.41. The main results are shown in Figure 9.

Figure 9: Whether respondents were attracted to security as preparation for another career % (n=358)



### Reasons not to pursue a security career

- 3.42. Based on existing criticisms of security from previous research and discussions, a number of statements were offered to gauge to what extent respondents thought these criticisms may result in people not joining the security sector.
- 3.43. Taking some of the starker unfavourable perceptions of security – that it is violent, unprofessional and lacking diversity, it was evident that the association of some roles with suffering harassment/violence (70%, n=244)<sup>109</sup>, and the more general concept that security struggles with a negative image (73%, n=257), were more commonly viewed as off putting than any lack of diversity that may exist (38%, n=131).
- 3.44. However, the statements most commonly identified as off putting included that some roles in security are seen as unskilled (88%, n=308) and that security is thought of as an ‘industry’ rather than a ‘profession’ (83%, n=290). This suggests that more effort is needed to present

<sup>107</sup> 13% of first career professionals and 16% of first main career professionals indicated ‘yes’ they were attracted to security to gain experience for another career, compared with 7% of second/subsequent career professionals and 7% of those for whom security is a secondary role.

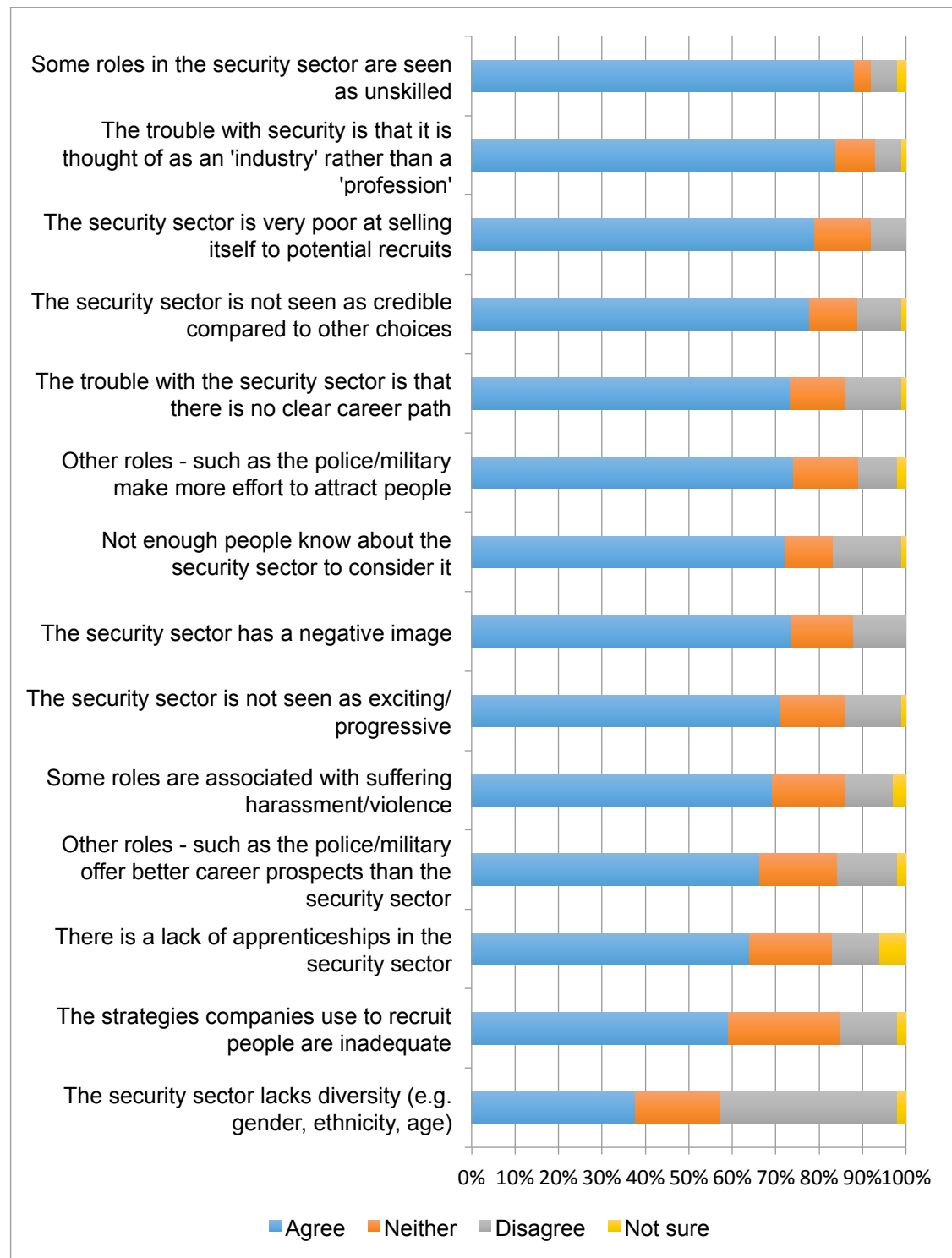
<sup>108</sup> Of all respondents that joined security as a route to another career, 68% indicated they intend to stay in security, 21% indicated they intend to leave and 11% were unsure.

<sup>109</sup> A view most common among contracted operatives (76%), followed by suppliers (61%), in-house operatives (60%) and buyers (51%).

security as a skilled activity and later we explore key issues that may help here.

- 3.45. Thinking specifically about the impact of how security careers are presented, nearly three quarters (74%, n=258) agreed with the notion that the trouble with the security sector is that there is no clear career path. The same proportion (74%, n=259) thought other roles such as the police/military make more effort to attract people, and close to four fifths (79%, n=276) thought that the security sector is very poor at selling itself to potential recruits. Further a similar proportion (73%, n=254) thought that not enough people know about the security sector to consider it. In short, it seems another key issue is that individuals may not join security because it is not being 'advertised' effectively.
- 3.46. The full results are displayed in Figure 10.

Figure 10: Level of agreement with statements about why people may not join the security sector % (n=348-350)



3.47. Second/subsequent career professionals more commonly agreed with the majority of reasons presented that may be why people do not join security while those that had only ever worked in security typically least commonly agreed.<sup>110</sup>

<sup>110</sup> For example: 78% of second/subsequent career professionals agreed or strongly agreed that the security sector is very poor at selling itself to potential recruits; compared with 70% of first main career

- 3.48. There could be a number of explanations for this. Since second/subsequent career professionals had also typically been in the security sector for longer, they may have had more exposure to negative perceptions. In contrast, first career professionals who were typically younger and had entered security more recently, may be facing a different, more positive scene than was the case previously. In short, although negative associations with security are still thought to exist, they may be reducing over time.
- 3.49. Those that joined security as a route to another career more commonly agreed or strongly agreed that:
- The security sector has a negative image<sup>111</sup>
  - The security sector is very poor at selling itself to potential recruits<sup>112</sup>
  - Other roles – such as the police/military offer better career prospects than the security sector<sup>113</sup>
  - The security sector is not seen as credible compared to other choices<sup>114</sup>
  - The security sector is not seen as exciting/progressive<sup>115</sup>
  - Some roles are associated with suffering harassment/violence<sup>116</sup>

## Relevant skills

- 3.50. Recent research has suggested that security is no longer just about good protection skills. To test this a number of statements were explored about the relative importance of a number of skills. The overwhelming majority of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that a security career is as much about being an effective communicator as it is about protection/investigation (94%, n=326). Nearly as many felt that customer service skills were significant (88%, n=303) and that

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professionals, 64% of those for whom security is a secondary role and 55% of first/only career professionals.

<sup>111</sup> 92% of those attracted to security as a route to another career agreed or strongly agreed that the security sector has a negative image, compared with 70% of those that did not join security as a route to another career.

<sup>112</sup> 89% of those attracted to security as a route to another career agreed or strongly agreed that the security sector is very poor at selling itself to potential recruits, compared with 75% of those that did not join security as a route to another career.

<sup>113</sup> 82% of those attracted to security as a route to another career agreed or strongly agreed that other roles – such as the police/military offer better career prospects than the security sector, compared with 63% of those that did not join security as a route to another career.

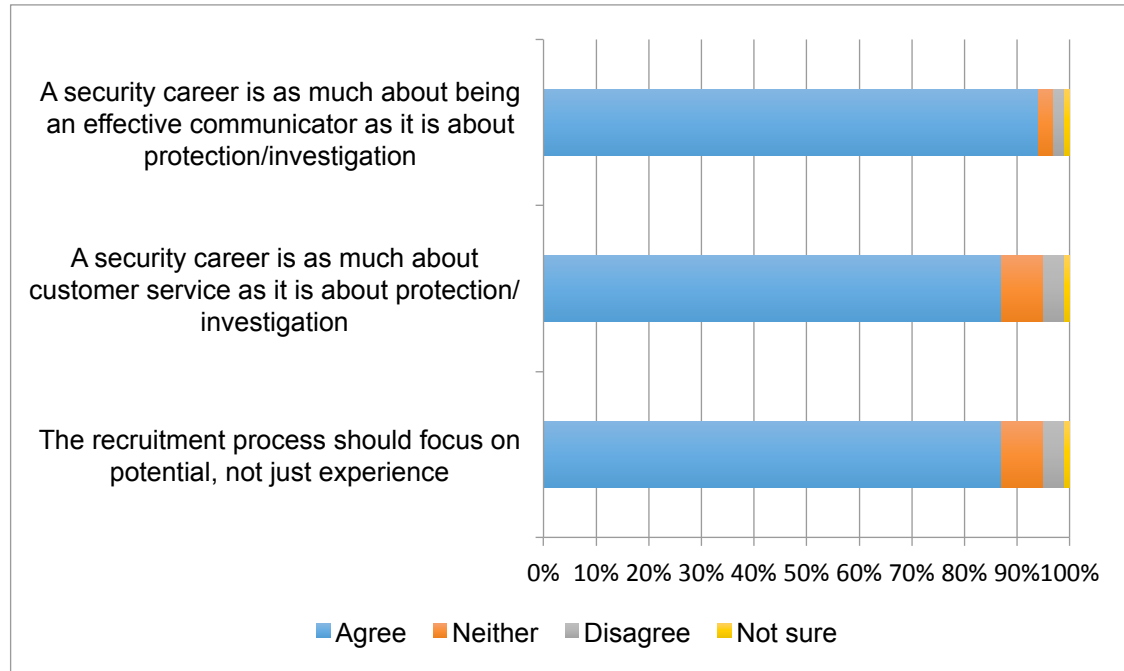
<sup>114</sup> 87% of those attracted to security as a route to another career agreed or strongly agreed that the security sector is not seen as credible compared to other choices, compared with 73% of those that did not join security as a route to another career.

<sup>115</sup> 79% of those attracted to security as a route to another career agreed or strongly agreed that the security sector is not seen as exciting/progressive, compared with 67% of those that did not join security as a route to another career.

<sup>116</sup> 90% of those attracted to security as a route to another career agreed or strongly agreed that some roles are associated with suffering harassment/violence, compared with 65% of those that did not join security as a route to another career.

recruiters should focus on potential, not just experience (87%, n=301). The results are displayed in Figure 11.

Figure 11: Level of agreement with statements about the skills and experience needed for a career in security % (n=345-346)



3.51. Over a number of years and in previous research we have heard about the increasing importance of security managers understanding not just security, but business, and ensuring that the security provided supports business objectives. To determine how prevalent this view is, respondents were asked how important business skills are within the highest level of security management. More than two thirds (71%, n=245) felt business skills were as important as security skills, and more than an eighth (15%, n=53) thought they were more important.

3.52. The view that business skills are as important, was:

- A little more common among buyers than suppliers and operatives;<sup>117</sup>
- More common among older than younger security professionals;<sup>118</sup>
- More common among those that did not join security to move on to another career, than those that did;<sup>119</sup>
- Much more common among those intending to remain in security than those intending to leave the profession.<sup>120</sup>

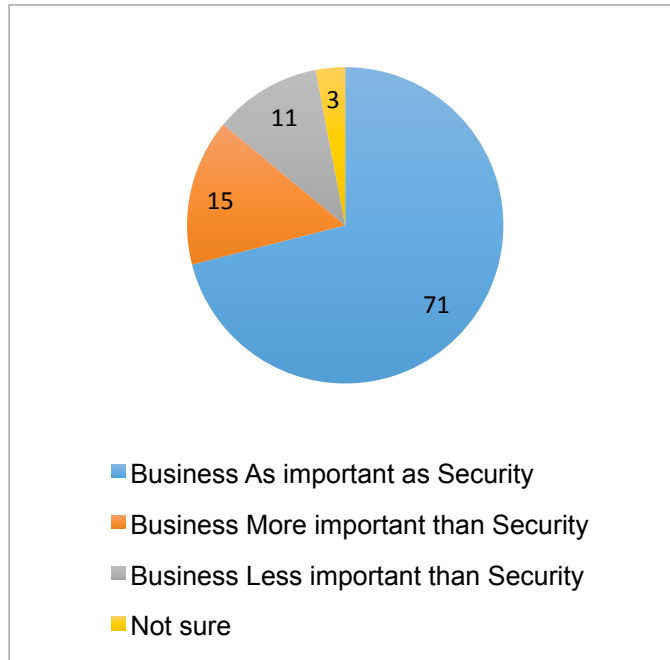
<sup>117</sup> 74% of buyers indicated business skills are as important as security skills; compared with 66% of suppliers, 63% of in-house operatives and 59% of contracted operatives.

<sup>118</sup> 48% of 16-25 year olds and 54% of 26-35 year olds thought business skills are AS important as security skills among the highest level of security management; compared with 61% of 36-45 year olds, 69% of 46-55 year olds, 68% of 56-65 year olds, 63% of 66-75 year olds and 100% of over 75s.

<sup>119</sup> 70% of those that did not join security to move on to another career indicated business skills are as important as security skills; compared with 55% of those that joined security as a route to another career.

3.53. Figure 12 displays the main results.

Figure 12: Views on the importance of business skills within the highest level of security management % (n=346)



### How to make a security career more attractive

- 3.54. In total, 303 respondents commented on an open question asking what needs to be done to make a security career more attractive. Where respondents described more than one action, these were rearranged in to different themes and each action suggested was counted as a unique response (n=429).
- 3.55. The issue mentioned most frequently (n=93) was in relation to the conditions of individuals' contracts – most predominantly pay. Many respondents flagged that to make security careers more attractive they need to be better paid and, a related issue here is to change the perception that all security work is low paid. We return to this later.
- 3.56. Indeed, concern here was greatest in relation to security officer frontline roles. Issues included that what was the most accessible job in the industry i.e. what should be a key entry point into a career in security, is not attractive; that pay and contractual arrangements were seen by some as not being conducive to a 'career'; and that the current wage was not commensurate with the skills required and threat faced and did not reflect the true value of security:

<sup>120</sup> 71% of those intending to stay in security indicated business skills are as important as security skills; compared with 62% of those that were unsure about remaining, and 49% of those intending to leave.



*'Currently, the most widely accessible position within the industry is that of a security officer on minimum wage.'*

*(Supplier)*

*'More secure work/less zero hour contracts. Better wages. Maternity leave. Personally, I'm a woman who works in event security. I really enjoy my work and I would really like to do it long term, but unfortunately I don't feel like the industry is for people like me. For example, in the next 10 years I would like to buy a house and start a family. The lack of stable wages, maternity pay and regular hours would prevent me from doing these things. As a result, I'll likely leave the industry in a few years in favour of a more typical desk job that I'll probably enjoy far less.'*

*(Security operative)*

*'Better pay structure as sometimes the pay per hour after travel and reports etc it is not even minimum wage. Not good enough to provide for a family or attract capable persons to the industry for a full career, leaving the industry full of students and people with few skills, especially in customer service and clear communication. Add to this the risk of physical assault and abuse at minimum wage and the industry is unappealing for me as a full time career.'*

*(In-house security operative)*

*'Have better benefits and more staff, less hours, better rate of pay around all security. We are classed as key workers right now [at the time of lockdown in a number of countries due to covid-19] and I don't feel like it at all. We are just shadows of what everyone else is.'*

*(Contracted security operative)*

*'I think pay should be attractive. Now-a-days clients ask more from security rather than doing physical security they [also] ask [them to undertake] reception [duties] and other stuff too.'*

*(Contracted security operative)*

- 3.57. Another key theme in respondents' answers was that to make security careers more attractive, clearer career and development pathways need to be presented (n=66). There were two main points here – that at all levels development needs to be thought through and offered; and that the available pathways need to be better communicated so that potential recruits and existing employees can see that they can progress in the industry if they are capable and willing to work for it:

*'Employers should provide more development opportunities for all levels of the business.'*

*(Other security expert)*

*'Clearer goals and objectives for individuals to work towards, indicating what they could achieve if they*

*actually achieved the goals/objectives. Assisting those willing to do the hard-yards to achieve their personal objectives.'*

*(Supplier)*

*'Firstly create an educational platform to support lowest level entry and then show potential career pathways i.e. physical, technical, cyber and provide professional qualifications to support the progression. The industry is perceived as a "stop gap" to many but it should be considered as a career with opportunities to progress in your chosen field.'*

*(Supplier)*

- 3.58. At the security officer level, where there can be a lot of individuals compared with the number of opportunities for promotion, it was suggested that more is needed to recognise personal progression and experience in order to keep good employees motivated, for example:

*'Give a new recruit incentive to stay in security, by recognition for the knowledge they achieve in this industry as they progress. For example some sort of pin indicating rank and experience.'*

*(Contracted security operative)*

- 3.59. Respondents also highlighted that to make security careers more attractive there is a need to further 'professionalise' security and increase standards and credibility (n=63) for example:

*'Get rid of job centres giving out SIA badges to everyone and weakening the industry.'*

*(Contracted security operative)*

*'Licences should not be as easy to get, far too many staff who can barely speak English never mind know how to act in a manner expected of a 'professional'. Agencies will take on staff in less than a day - how on earth they can be vetted in that timescale I don't know.'*

*(Contracted security operative)*

- 3.60. And a need for consistent regulation across the industry and recognised professional standards for individuals, for example:

*'Professionalise the industry with further regulation and licensing for supervisors, managers, consultants.'*

*(Supplier)*

*'Have professional status. Less reliance on police and military backgrounds as credibility.'*

*(In-house security operative)*

*'Treat as a trade with required schooling, apprentice period, and on-going training requirements industry/association driven or alternatively government driven. Not company driven.'*

*(In-house security operative)*

- 3.61. Respondents also commonly highlighted a need to better promote careers in security (n=62). There were a number of overlapping points here. It was noted that the diverse range of roles and also the opportunities for advancement need to be highlighted in order to attract people, for example:

*'More awareness of the range of roles available. Typically when security is discussed it's the doormen, [supermarket] security guard or a bodyguard that first comes to mind! This would largely be due to this is what is seen the most by the public eye but is clearly just the tip of the iceberg.'*

*(Contracted security operative)*

*'Case studies to show success stories. Wider opportunities to be widely shared.'*

*(Supplier)*

*'Colleges/ universities in the Netherlands are only focused on the students and how they can help them in their period as a student. They lack the attention of preparing them for the real deal. Such as networking opportunities to get to know people and get a better view of the security 'world' and professions. They need to understand that there are people who are willing to help them achieve their career goals or something like that. Furthermore, media and business need to understand that not only one domain of the security is important, for example only cyber security or physical security.'*

*(Contracted security operative)*

*'Find a way to reach out earlier to youth (middle school and up) to make them aware of the diversity of roles within security and how their innate skills lend themselves to the profession.'*

*(In-house security operative)*

- 3.62. Generating better publicity was also thought to be needed in terms of presenting security as a collaborative, worthwhile, valuable role:

*'Adverts, promoting the benefits of teamwork and camaraderie of the role and the progression one can achieve.'*

*(Buyer)*

*'Build a core of "pride" - similar to what the military does around their marketing to youth.'*

*(In-house security operative)*

*'Focus on the specialist, technology and risk driven careers. Push the people's button to protect and serve.'*

*(In-house security operative)*

*'Get away from the 'bouncer' image and have more emphasis on communication skills.'*

*(Other security expert)*

*'Increasing the awareness of the importance of security and it being a profession not just a job.'*

*(In-house security operative)*

*'More effort to recognise the profession is integral to public, community safety and increasingly national security.'*

*(Other security expert)*

- 3.63. Further, respondents felt that better promotion could be achieved by addressing the methods used to attract people to security careers and this included the language used in recruitment, the channels used to communicate and the need to challenge negative and limited portrayals of security work:

*'I also think some of the language used to describe the licenses, 'door supervisor' implies the typical bouncer and the skills linked to that one role. This licence can open many opportunities within the industry and maybe the name should reflect this.'*

*(Contracted security operative)*

*'Pitch roles at the people you want to attract, not the usual types that apply. Consider how to frame the wording to appeal to women, for example. Don't recruit people in your own image/from your own networks or you'll get groupthink. An innovative company is diverse. Under-educated security practitioners simply don't know what they don't know, and have no idea of the skills that new graduates can bring them. Don't complain that it's women's/minorities' fault for not applying. Direct your recruitment to where you can find them - in colleges and universities.'*

*(Other security expert)*

*'Publish and advertise information regarding security job roles and descriptions in other industries specialist magazines, newsletters and increase information at job centres and with employment agencies.'*

*(Contracted security operative)*

*'The industry should promote more at schools / colleges and universities. Should also be part of structured career discussions.'*

*(Supplier)*

*'Better portrayal of security in the media, as in, more diverse portrayals and portrayals of security officers as people who are genuinely trying to help people and not just harass them.'*

*(Contracted security operative)*

- 3.64. Other themes mentioned less often included the need to improve the image of security (n=31); better provision of training (n=29); better management (n=15) including a willingness to not just recruit ex police and military; the need for diversity of skills (n=12); the importance of

recognition and support from the police (n=9); demonstrating the value of security (n=7); and the importance of business skills (n=6).

## Summary

- 3.65. From a sample of respondents the majority of which intend to remain in the profession, would recommend security to others, and have a more positive perception since entering, it was clear that the industry is a place that holds a number of attractions, including possibility for progression for those that are capable. However the overall sense emerging is that there is a lack of awareness of security, generally as a possible career, but also specifically of what security work is really like. Views suggest that security has moved beyond purely 'protection' to encompass a broader range of skills, and that it has also moved on significantly from the former associations of 'bouncers' and 'lazy' 'guards', but public perception is all too often stuck in the past. The findings suggest that there is a need to better promote security roles highlighting their importance and the challenges involved; and more effort is needed in how roles are advertised – the wording used, the methods for advertising, the routes for reaching the right types of candidates.
- 3.66. While those with experience of the public sector (particularly former police and military) remain a dominant source for the recruitment of security professionals, the diversity of career backgrounds of second/subsequent career security professionals highlights the potential that the security industry holds. While the advantages of this type of diversity of experience are increasingly being recognised, the findings also suggest there are merits to attracting individuals to security as a first career, an approach which seems to have been somewhat neglected. Those who had only ever worked in security would more commonly recommend it and were a little more likely to intend to stay. They were less likely to agree with the negatives, and they were more commonly attracted to the challenges of the work than second/subsequent career professionals. It is important to note that the possibility of progression is most important to first career professionals suggesting a solid pathway for this is important to retaining them. Making use of existing skillsets is less important to them (presumably because of their relative lack of experience) than others further highlighting the need to look for potential, not just experience (something respondents indicated was important).
- 3.67. One of the main obstacles to entering a security career is that people just don't know about it. Indeed, one of the main findings from this work is just how important it is to find ways to highlight what is attractive about security, and to raise awareness of it to the public generally and in recruitment strategies specifically. What is clear, is that once in, the majority of people are positive about security. The next section examines these issues in more detail.

## **Section 4. Interview Findings**

- 4.1. The survey was supplemented by interviews with 46 professionals working in different areas who in different ways expressed views on security careers. This included those in a management role (at either supplier or client organisations), operatives (including security officers), recruiters and individuals with another specific interest/area of knowledge related to careers in security. Young security professionals were represented, as were both those that came to security as a first career and those for whom security was a second/subsequent career. Direct quotes are included, with anonymised information about the individual's role/perspective after each quote to provide context.
- 4.2. The aim of the interviews was to explore in more detail opinions and experiences to inform our understanding of how individuals come to be involved in security, decide whether to stay or leave and the ways in which they choose whether to carve a career. Here we have treated security in a rather general way for as will become clear, across different sectors of work, there are a common set of themes that reinforce points made in the previous section.
- 4.3. The analysis here starts by looking at what led to people joining the security sector, it features the thoughts of former police/military personnel and then moves on to consider others. The value of prior experience and skill sets is then discussed. The section moves on to look at any concerns people had about working in security; barriers that might need to be tackled to attract the best talent. A key issue here is advice on security careers, which is so often seen to be wanting. The benefits and drawbacks to a career in security are considered incorporating a discussion of why people stay and leave security work. It ends with some insights on what needs to change.

### **The route into security**

- 4.4. There has been much discussion about the fit of former police/military personnel to commercial security work. The fact that police work and military work are also seen as 'security' work meant a second career in the private security sector was a natural and sometime obvious route to consider. Some had worked in areas labelled as 'intelligence', 'operations' or 'security' and so saw a natural link, although police/military experience in general were considered 'similar'. There is nothing new in this finding of course, although experience of one type of work in the police/military was not always mirrored when joining the security sector. One interviewee for example had worked in military 'intelligence' but found the type of intelligence work being undertaken in a private security role was quite different. One interviewee who worked in the military in cyber security ended up being more interested in physical security.

- 4.5. What is perhaps a more interesting finding is that for some former police/military personnel, joining private security was far from inevitable. Indeed, in some cases - particularly at the lower levels - the link was often incidental or there was no obvious link at all:

*'I was in the military for 5 years, and fell into security. My brother knew someone who had a small contract, and I was just an ex soldier working in a pub, and my brother wanted me out of the pub game and he got me a job in security, only as a guard.'*

*(Interviewee 1, Management, Former Military)*

*'It was quite by accident – I was working in catering on motorway service area and it was getting a bit uneconomical with travel ... I wanted to stay in catering but needed something to supplement the job.'*

*(Interviewee 4, Operative, Former Military)*

- 4.6. A key factor here was the well-trodden path by others in this direction. One Canadian interviewee argued that those with a career in policing would look to former colleagues who had entered security for advice and recommendations, and that this was 'normal':

*'I had let it be known I was interested in security to former colleagues and there are lots of people like me doing this, it is very normal over here, a lot have been in security from school and they are good, but when Canadian police leave, a lot join security, they are generally thought highly of.'*

*(Interviewee 5, Management, Former Police)*

- 4.7. Those who entered security as a second career from somewhere other than the police or military also pointed to an element of chance; that they had been exposed to it in their previous work (e.g. one interviewee was formerly a police civilian); were invited by a colleague who had moved into security and then recruited them; or had been prompted to think about security by a third party, or a combination of these. Sometimes this was encouraged by an interest in the work having tried and failed to enter some aspect of security-related work in the past:

*'One day [my manager] said to me after being in hospitality for 10 years, restaurants etc, he said, do you know someone who can manage security? And I said let's have a chat.'*

*(Interviewee 10, Management, Former Hospitality)*

*'I started as a management trainee in hospitality ... I really enjoyed that. [It] gave me those skills for managing financials, people to manage, [a] good training piece ... we weren't involved in security then, but other soft services ... [then I] became a facilities manager and then started managing sub-contractors for security. That's where I first touched on security.'*

*(Interviewee 11, Management, Former Hospitality)*

*'I actually applied to the police 20 years ago, and so it was always in my mind, but I didn't get in.'*

*(Interviewee 13, Operative, Former Event Management)*

*'It was recommended by a friend.'*

*(Interviewee 42, Operative, Former Fork Lift Driver, Young Professional)*

- 4.8. Sometimes it had simply progressed from their former role because of some overlap in skills, and not something they were specifically attracted to:

*'I fell into it. I had £1,100 in my bank and I thought what qualification can I get with that? So I did my HGV licence and pulled trailers and lorries for [a security company]. I became a service delivery manager within 6 months, then went to [another security company] and on from there.'*

*(Interviewee 15, Management, Former HGV)*

*'Thinking back when I had graduated from university, security was not on my mind. It just didn't even occur to me as a career option.'*

*(Interviewee 41, Operative, Former Operations Specialist, Young Professional)*

- 4.9. That said, some young security professionals had made a determined effort to join the security sector. One student with a degree studied criminology and was influenced by a lecturer to consider private security. Others took security-related courses and then sought an opportunity but often had to make adjustments:

*'I came out of university studying computer science ... [I was] contacted by ... an IT company do a bit of security and cyber security. I went to [the] interview and [it] turned out to be more physical security than cyber – they said cyber to attract graduates ... I did apply for graduate schemes for all of the big companies ... [I] got to the final stage at a couple of the big ones and didn't get in – a bit disheartened.'*

*(Interviewee 34, Management, First Career, Young Professional)*

*'I studied safety and security management, to a degree level, so security was obvious. I went into the IT side because there were not jobs for juniors in corporate security.'*

*(Interviewee 36, Management, First Career, Young Professional)*

*'It started off when one of my lecturers at university who teaches crowd management encouraged us to help and run festivals which seemed fun. As I was conscientious, and I was really interested I got more work and interesting jobs. When it became apparent that jobs existed outside festivals which I can do well it was appealing, I thought why not?'*

*(Interviewee 37, Operative, First Career, Young Professional)*



- 4.10. When asked why they had not considered security as a first career, three reasons were prominent. Either because they had a specific interest in whatever was their first career choice; because they were unaware of the possibilities that the security sector offered; and/or to a lesser extent because it was not realistic often for personal reasons:

*'I always wanted to be a soldier, growing up I was always going to be a soldier.'*

*(Interviewee 1, Management, Former Military)*

*'Most of my family have been in the army – grandparents and uncle so they were the influence. I'm from a small town – a lot of people I grew up with would join RAF or navy – from a coastal area.'*

*(Interviewee 4, Operative, Former Military)*

*'I was not aware of security as a career option.'*

*(Interviewee 8, Management, Former Police)*

*'It was not really doable as I was in a small city. There was nothing there really and I didn't know anything about it then.'*

*(Interviewee 12, Management, Former Energy)*

*'Yes I would have liked, but no it was not appropriate as I had a child.'*

*(Interviewee 13, Operative, Former Event Management)*

- 4.11. For those who were interested in and sought a specific first career it is perhaps not surprising that they tended not to wish they had joined security instead of their first career. That said, one interviewee noted that while there had always been an interest in law enforcement had security been more visible, had there been more awareness, then it may have been attractive too.

- 4.12. Many felt that with the benefit of hindsight there would have been advantages to joining the security sector earlier. One of the main reasons offered by interviewees on this point is that it would have enabled them to learn and experience more and build up more credibility:

*'[it would have been] nice to formalise the knowledge earlier on.'*

*(Interviewee 9, Management, Former Retail)*

*'I would have probably done it sooner ... If [I had] done it earlier, I would have felt more credible.'*

*(Interviewee 11, Management, Former Hospitality)*

## **Prior experience and skill sets**

- 4.13. There was a mixed view from former police/military interviewees as to whether their experience had been good preparation for their private security work. On the one hand was the view that a military way of life

is very different to anything in civilian street, not just private security. The culture and the discipline were mentioned here (as they were for the police). Moreover, some private security roles are very much about community service and that can differentiate them more. An alternative view offered was that the police/military offered familiarity with discipline, wearing uniforms and understanding the ethos of public service, in providing links to relevant networks; and the development of specific skills sets. Here some pointed to more operational issues such as searching vehicles, while others pointed to experience in dealing with major threats such as people trafficking, and in a different way some referred to their management skills.

- 4.14. One interviewee noted that prior police/military experience facilitated entry into the security world in a higher paid role, and some noted that it was still a credibility stake with some companies/clients. Indeed, some not from this type of background felt at a disadvantage, although the value of this divided opinion and it cut across the type of background a person had, in the following examples the first one had police/military experience and the next two did not:

*'Police don't make good security people. Nor does being HM Forces either. These people are not experts.'*

*(Interviewee 2, Management, Former Military)*

*'Because I don't have the more technical experience in security – things that police and military folks are inherently trained in, in their career, that's where I'm lacking.'*

*(Interviewee 41, Operative, Former Operations Specialist, Young Professional)*

*'I don't believe military or police give you a good grounding in security. In those roles, in a very simplistic way, told what to do, how and when. Coming to private sector and having to think for themselves is a different skill set.'*

*(Interviewee 9, Management, Former Retail)*

- 4.15. One interviewee was scathing, *'most cops are not very smart. They have a low IQ, they are power hungry and reactive'*. Overall, experience in the police/military and the skills sets that are developed can be very relevant for some types of security roles, indeed people are recruited precisely for that purpose. But there was agreement, that the transition from public sector to the commercial sector required adjustment:

*'I've seen people come from police/forces and fail because they failed to adapt – have to be quite agile to adapt to any change of career.'*

*(Interviewee 8, Management, Former Police)*

- 4.16. Dealing with the commercial realities, the focus on profit, was one key aspect here, and the rather different culture this generates compared to

the public sector. There was considerable comment about this; one senior manager neatly summed up some differences this way:

*'In policing a lot of responsibility and a lot of authority is delegated from the state, for example to arrest people, in high level corporate security you have a lot of responsibility but very little authority. You are confined to just your property or just your recommendations, really you are just a consultant.'*

*(Interviewee 5, Management, Former Police)*

- 4.17. In an industry as diverse as security, there are probably few if any business or personal skill sets that won't be relevant somewhere. But there is an important point for career managers to note: in some roles and at some levels security knowledge is not required. Later this will be covered but to give two examples. A recruiter for a security integrator/installer who needs engineers frequently recruited outside the sector as it was easier to teach security than the core skill set, many made this point. In a different way a senior manager for a supplier or a corporate security department may be more valued for business knowledge and acumen, security can be learnt later (providing the individual has the ability and is prepared to work to cover gaps):

*'You don't need extensive security knowledge at the top. I have close experience of this. Many I deal with have no security knowledge.'*

*(Interviewee 15, Management, Former HGV)*

- 4.18. In other words, in some security roles, especially perhaps the most senior, security knowledge can be secondary to business know-how. Further research would be useful to identify whether there are particular sectors (such as those that excel at customer service) likely to have the types of skills that are increasingly held in high regard within security. One other point about transitioning from working in the public sector to private security. One interviewee highlighted the skills those working at senior levels in the public sector offered, noting: managing budgets, leading and organising teams, making decisions etc, but, *'I realised people coming out of public sector did not have a good understanding of business'*. He set up a company specifically to help people make the transition although this was focussed on senior personnel.
- 4.19. The security sector employs a wide variety of professionals. Security companies, bigger ones anyway, may employ experts trained in human resource, sales and marketing, finance, to name but a few. While not a specific focus of this study an attempt was made to garner their thoughts on the security sector. The reasons offered for joining security mirrored those noted above, some fell into it, some brought in by people they had worked with before. Similarly, once they were exposed to it saw its good points which were generally invisible before, some

thinking it compared favourably from the industry from which they came:

*'I would say more professional than the recruitment world which can be a numbers game ... we expect sales, of course, but we take a long term view, so safety is key and working from there we get to sales ... it is changing and fast pace, and I like the idea of keeping people safe, the industry is about that and I really appreciate that.'*

*(Interviewee 30, Recruiter)*

## **Concern about joining the security sector**

- 4.20. Given that many had not joined the security sector at the earliest opportunity the interviews focussed on any concerns they had and a few emerged. Echoing a point raised above, some were concerned about low pay and others about making the transition from public to private. Here concerns focussed on being able to adapt to the profit motive; coping with the hours; the job insecurity; for example:

*'You hear about the negatives, some said I would be made redundant in 6 months. I was never worried I could not survive the pace, I backed myself, I knew I could work the hours.'*

*(Interviewee 43, Management, Former Police, Young Professional)*

*'Was it right for me? Would I know enough?'*

*(Interviewee 44, Management, Former Police Staff, Young Professional)*

- 4.21. Some had witnessed security work to know what they were getting into, others joined security but away from dealing with conflict situations. Those that had served in the police/military generally felt they had encountered (more) dangerous situations in their previous working life and so that was rarely an issue. Of course many did not know much about security in advance but some were concerned that what they did know, or what they had heard was that it lacked competence and professionalism, albeit this was rarely based on direct personal experience of such.
- 4.22. Some however were concerned about working on the front line and there were examples both where this was not borne out in reality and where it was. One interviewee who had witnessed door supervision work prior to the regulation of the sector had considered it 'petrifying' and others raised concerns:

*'Yes, absolutely, the reputation of bouncers being big strong guys, and I am really weak, I was only 22, at the time it was intimidating. But with the right mentor I realised soon that it was not like that. I thought security equals violence, but that is not it.'*

*(Interviewee 38, Management, Former Graphic Design, Young Professional)*

*'The aggression we get quite a lot of the time. Not something you really want to deal with. We're not there to ruin people's lives but to keep people safe. If they act like a dick, you do have to get rid of them. For the abuse we get, sometimes life threatening – the pay is crap – it is awful.'*

*(Interviewee 39, Operative, Former Engineer & Mechanic, Young Professional)*

*'I had doubts about door work, staff getting assaulted. It happens all the time. The last door I was on I got assaulted all the time, I mean punched, if you include verbal abuse it happened every shift, but physical assaults too, every week. The venue was run by friends so I didn't want to leave them, but it was not good.'*

*(Interviewee 42, Operative, Former Fork Lift Driver, Young Professional)*

- 4.23. Perhaps unsurprisingly amongst those who had only ever worked in security this concern featured too:

*'They prepare you for a lot of conflict and stuff. I was always a bit hesitant. I'm more of a peacekeeper ... slightly concerned about being in crowds and being responsible for a lot of people, that was a new concept to me.'*

*(Interviewee 31, Operative, First Career, Young Professional)*

*'I was worried about how dangerous it could be ... I was worried I wouldn't be a strong enough personality, I am not aggressive or physically imposing, I am just average size ... being smaller was an issue occasionally but there are plenty of things I have been able to do well by being me, by being reasonable and not being confrontational.'*

*(Interviewee 37, Operative, First Career, Young Professional)*

- 4.24. Generally, those starting security as their first jobs, voiced a broader range of concerns. Some of these related to general aspects of the work like pay levels (albeit some were attracted by the pay) and others to aspects of the work itself, some focussing on points raised already, about the management of conflict and the military bias, levels of responsibility and whether security really offered a career (albeit the fears were not generally realised).
- 4.25. Another interviewee was expressively positive about the dangers, he had been involved in dealing with shop thieves and saw the threats and intimidation he faced as a form of excitement. Another noted, *'I was aware of the aggression but never concerned by it'*.

## **Getting advice on careers in security**

- 4.26. Getting security career advice, for those who wanted it anyway, seems to have been difficult and it was widely lamented. The general inhibiting factor to attracting more and better people it seems is the widespread

view that private security is invisible, coupled with the reality that when people think about security they either have an image of a security officer (and often not a very competent one at that), or the police or military. This lack of awareness serves to hide or at least disguise the existence of a wide world of opportunities. The lack of visibility applies to security advisors in most settings and certainly schools and universities. This is why then so many drift into a career in security.

- 4.27. Young security professionals in particular noted that security careers advice was in short supply. If knowing someone was a key to getting involved in security in the first place, then jerrying up on careers advice was often down to being personally industrious:

*'I only found that out once I'd spoken to a few people. I went to the Security & Policing event in Farnborough ... and that really opened my eyes to different routes you can take in security.'*

*(Interviewee 33, Operative, First Career, Young Professional)*

*'I had a bit of a vision. I did research for myself. I want to be head of security in 15 years for a multinational, that is my goal.'*

*(Interviewee 36, Management, First Career, Young Professional)*

- 4.28. The lack of career advice applied not just at the point of joining but as they progressed, which some found daunting. Many companies it seems are not geared up to promoting security careers. On the supplier side some also mentioned the rapid turnover of staff at the lower levels which impede efforts there although more commonly links were made to a perception that the focus is on getting the job done and the general lack of promotion opportunities, it is 'bottom heavy'. One interviewee lamented the focus in the manned guarding world of managers forever being focussed on meeting (financial) targets and preferring able people to continue in their current role rather than risk losing them via a promotion; the interviewee suggested it is still worth the investment:

*'Over the years I have paid for all sorts of courses or agreed with the provider we go half each. It is about investing and some say the problem is that they then move on. But that is a part of the contribution and we have good use out of them while they are with us, and they move on, fair enough and I have no qualms with that. Some do though.'*

*(Interviewee 3, Management, Former Military)*

- 4.29. On the corporate side the small teams and the fact that security was often not seen as central to operations within the broader organisation mitigated against career foci. There were references to opportunities existing but being poorly promoted, but also to there being limited opportunities because the sector is bottom heavy:

*'Definitely there is a career path within my current company, but there are also limited opportunities, I am a*

*manager but next one up there are only 6 of them and they will be around for ages.'*

*(Interviewee 44, Management, Former Police Staff, Young Professional)*

*'There is a path to progress, it's not very well advertised ... It's a bit murky for most of it ... Progression is there but can be limited as to who gets it, it's not what you know, it's who you know.'*

*(Interviewee 39, Operative, Former Engineer & Mechanic, Young Professional)*

*'There has never been a dull moment, and career progression for driven people with a good work ethic in security is very good.'*

*(Interviewee 43, Management, Former Police, Young Professional)*

- 4.30. As noted with regards to young security professionals above, this appears to force people to take the matter into their own hands in seeking career opportunities themselves once they are in post; they plan their own path and rely on their own efforts to meet their aims. The following quotes, representing a similar view are from someone who faced the dilemma decades ago and another more recently:

*'I thought there was. I made it my business to get to know people. Others had done what I had done and that helped.'*

*(Interviewee 2, Management, Former Military)*

*'Last year I decided I would further my career myself, there was no security manager giving me advice about how to get to the next level ... I found the course myself, and I got in on a Diploma level 5 with the Security Institute. That is only in the last 18 months. I am 40 now. So it took me a while, no one gave me that helping hand, telling what to do and not to do.'*

*(Interviewee 1, Management, Former Military)*

- 4.31. That said, some individuals ended up in private security because they sought and received good career advice. One interviewee, unsatisfied with his role in an offshore industry decided to seek help, his account is quoted more fully here because it illustrates the value of good careers guidance (the individual has ended up in a high-profile position in the security sector):

*'I took some career placement tests and the results all came back that I will do well in military, law enforcement or security, but I knew little about them and my thought was negative. There was not enough money for being in the military and by now I had two young children. For law enforcement there was a hiring freeze which lasted quite a few years. So I enrolled on a criminology diploma, and one of my teammates on that course was a loss prevention officer for a retailer who wanted staff, and I got a job part time ... I came to see good career potential.'*

*ASIS had chapters and the more I worked with law enforcement I was less impressed even though I had applied and got in. But I kept working in security and decided to go for it. I took more courses.'*

*(Interviewee 12, Management, Former Energy)*

- 4.32. And others spoke glowingly of having a clear plan for progression, sometimes a condition of accepting a job especially at more senior levels:

*'There was a chap who interviewed me as public sector development manager, I understood the public sector, and it was then said it was part of a succession plan [that has already been prepared and included me], so I knew there was a role and it took only 6 months [to progress this]. I always backed myself, and the company looked after me, I cannot fault the company, I was supported.'*

*(Interviewee 43, Management, Former Police, Young Professional)*

## **Attractions of a security career**

- 4.33. What is clear, interviewees typically could see benefits to a career in security. It afforded the opportunity to: serve the public; protect people; be undertaking a responsible job; help solve problems that matter to people; provide a variety of experiences; it can be exciting; there is an opportunity to work in some testing environments; there is a camaraderie amongst security people; there is always the opportunity to learn new skills:

*'The good points being honest, for people like me, are wearing a uniform, putting on a shirt and tie, a type of uniform to me, it is a sense of pride, you are protecting people.'*

*(Interviewee 1, Management, Former Military)*

*'The variety and surprise of not knowing what security will bring you. That is exciting. It is interesting. And there are so many criminals and chancers ... If I had my time I would do it again. I have been so successful.'*

*(Interviewee 2, Management, Former Military)*

*'Variety. I deal with a dozen things every day. I have been dealing with a road traffic accident in the Congo and staff needed evacuation; and then a secretary is being stalked and the ex-boyfriend is making threats; the chairman has received some angry emails and they need attending to. Today we have had a [road barrier] go up as a bank has had an incident up north and we are 200 yards away. The variety is huge. It depends on the individual and how much they explore that variety, but we also need to let them know.'*

*(Interviewee 3, Management, Former Military)*



*'Interaction with customers, teamwork. Being able to deal with different situations and succeeding. Resolving situations well. Also, we have lots of roles, searching, risk assessment and keeping people safe, and it is customer service really. It is quite varied, and I like that, it is never the same.'*

*(Interviewee 13, Operative, Former Event Management)*

*'The main benefit is that I provide a service to the community. I still have that affiliation and that is massive.'*

*(Interviewee 44, Management, Former Police Staff, Young Professional)*

*'The major difference with security is that it is predominantly about the emergency response ... you always get a focus with the emergency response. You look at any site, and the cleaner and they say hope she is in tomorrow, probably not bothered too much, but if security is missing then someone is screaming and shouting, the others don't matter. When recruiting you need to attach importance to the sense of ownership you get from working at a site, and the leadership role is attractive too.'*

*(Interviewee 17, Other interest)*

- 4.34. We interviewed those who were involved specifically in aspects of recruitment and made similar points not least about its moral compass and variety:

*'The diversity, it is so diverse, the opportunities are so extensive, it provides an opportunity to progress academically and professionally .... it has to be seen as an industry that provides opportunities. It does do that and we need to say so.'*

*(Interviewee 23, Recruiter)*

*'When thinking about security there is a moral connection, you keep people safe ... It is ever changing, which makes people more agile, and I think it mirrors my personal values. Not just profit, there is a purpose beyond that.'*

*(Interviewee 30, Recruiter)*

*'Strong moral compass, ethics, can be relevant to security perhaps.'*

*(Interviewee 26, Recruiter)*

- 4.35. For some security was lucrative. This is important because much of the conversation about pay in the security sector revolves around what security officers receive which is notoriously low, but there is very definitely another side to this. Sometimes people were collecting a pension that supplemented private sector incomes, although to be clear some left the public sector to join the private security sector because at least in part it was more lucrative.

*'Then finances, could not afford a house, so left police and joined security.'*

*(Interviewee 44, Management, Former Police Staff, Young Professional)*

- 4.36. Certainly, the commercial security sector can substantially reward those who make a positive impact. Some started a business and made good money that way.
- 4.37. Further insights into the attractions of security careers emerged from discussions with interviewees about reasons for staying involved with the sector. One specific point merits comments here, and that is the intellectual challenge security provided. Not only is security – in some roles at least – a highly skilled task, potentially drawing upon a range of knowledge domains, but in terms of competition for key jobs, there is a lack of highly able people as the sector has not meaningfully sought to engage them. Others noted that keeping people safe is a much misunderstood skills set, with a distinct knowledge base, that was undersold and served to undermine the value of security. Some comments on this issue included:

*'Intellectually one of the most challenging occupations out there, the more courses I take the more I realise this ... You can make good money, you interact with a lot of people, you work in hostile environments with risks ... This [covid-19] pandemic is an example, security is leading the charge, telling the future, and there is chance to be high profile, albeit we will get kicked to the curb when it's over. That is the problem.'*

*(Interviewee 12, Management, Former Energy)*

*'In my opinion there are not many heavyweights in our industry. If you have anything about you, you will fly. There is a huge opportunity and no one to plug the gap.'*

*(Interviewee 15, Management, Former HGV)*

*'I may have to sound snobby, if you have a brain, commercial astuteness, problem solving ability, you will go far, it has not attracted the best talent. Although it is a massive industry it is a small town, with not a lot of good people, so if you are good you can go up the ranks quickly.'*

*(Interviewee 43, Management, Former Police, Young Professional)*

*'I think where it can take you, is definitely one of the most attractive parts to it – you can start at the very bottom, doing something very basic and go quite far with it.'*

*(Interviewee 33, Operative, First Career, Young Professional)*

- 4.38. Amongst young security professionals primary reasons for staying in security, at least for the time being, were enjoyment of the job and hopes that there would be progression, job security and/or varied work, but not all were sure. There was a sense that commitment to security was often dependent on continuing to enjoy it – even for someone who had started his own business – than anything more. One interviewee

noted that the company was investing in training and development and while that happened the interest was secure.

- 4.39. Amongst the sample there were some glowing comments from interviewees on why they were going to stay involved in security work:

*'I would have joined sooner. I love it.'*

*(Interviewee 39, Operative, Former Engineer & Mechanic, Young Professional)*

*'I definitely prefer security. My military stretch – always the same locations, [it was] a lot more dangerous than now. [I] got to see a lot more of the world in the last 12 months ... meet a lot of people and broaden my knowledge on security and how [it is] implemented in top companies.'*

*(Interviewee 40, Operative, Former Military, Young Professional)*

### **Thinking about overcoming the drawbacks to security career**

- 4.40. A range of negatives were mentioned: the poor pay (and sometimes conditions) in particular for frontline security officers; the weak management practices in some companies; and overlapping these and a commonly mentioned problem, is the poor perception people have of security work, albeit most agreed that the reality – if not always the perception – has changed dramatically. Part of the problem is that so much good security work is invisible to most people. And a common lament was that security people have not been good at highlighting the progress the sector has made and the benefits it has generated:

*'Even internally I say what we need is our own marketing person to tell others what we do. I mean the stakeholders; it is about day to day blowing your own trumpets. Finding the time to do it is one thing, but I am not good at it either. I struggle.'*

*(Interviewee 3, Management, Former Military)*

*'Private security brings a lot to society and interfaces much more than the military, it is part of civil life ... if I look at healthcare, it provides private health and it is better than public service, but private security is almost the inverse, police are seen as the pinnacle, and private security is not. They don't feel the need to shout, not like advertising. Also, another part of it is that if you feel society does not value you then you are less likely to recommend it to your children.'*

*(Interviewee 10, Management, Former Hospitality)*

- 4.41. Frequently discussions on drawbacks focussed on structural issues endemic to the way security has typically operated. For example, the buying process was seen as a drawback, where buyers don't

understand their own requirements, and/or where they buy on price with a lack of awareness of the consequences.

- 4.42. Other points raised included: the way tenders specify requirements and leave little scope to suppliers to articulate how they might do it differently (or when they are asked the responses are not obviously considered sometimes because buyers lack the knowledge base to make effective judgements); overlapping this the willingness of some buyers to pay for a substandard service and for some suppliers being willing to bid and provide it; the tendency to buy security at an hourly rate rather than on value (on input measures rather than output focussed ones); a lack of an industry wide strategy to promote good security (compared to bad) and seek to attract the best people; the lack of thought given to careers by companies and associations (many were applauded for individual work but the lack of joined up approach was sometimes lamented); the lack of diversity and sexism was raised here and some young security professionals felt the age profile was an inhibitor; the low entry point for security officers gave the impression that anyone can enter security (and job centres were criticised for referring people who would struggle to get a job elsewhere):

*'There is a fear around security, the media put it in the news. It is about disasters ... It would be very nice to put security good stories in the press, but everything is bad, good stories don't sell. Bad stories make people pick up the paper. It is all around privacy and security and all these matter but no one wants to talk about good security.'*

*(Interviewee 29, Recruiter)*

*'The biggest problem is the job centre and the people they are sending across, they don't care to be honest, the real dregs, and they are not good to work with.'*

*(Interviewee 42, Operative, Former Fork Lift Driver, Young Professional)*

*'For me and other younger guys at the company, no disrespect to the older generation, when we go to networking events, people make jokes about us being kids. Some people talk about an old boys club. In security 40 is young. A lot of the guys are in their 60s. When you're a graduate, you want people of a similar age and common interest to be around, you spend a lot of time with them.'*

*(Interviewee 34, Management, First Career, Young Professional)*

- 4.43. Those leaving had typically seen security as a job rather than as a career and were often keen to move onto or back to whatever their real love was. Some were disillusioned, often with an employer and/or clients and saw that as characteristic of security, some wanted more money or job security (with zero hours contracts or the lack of regular work cited as an inhibitor). For some the concern related to the nature of duties with the requirement to work shifts at the lower levels being highlighted. Others felt there were endemic problems with the security

sector. One individual had had to overcome reservations about security:

*'I have lost faith in whole FM sector generally and security specifically. They are not valued. Many are not paid well, the focus is on reducing costs, and in guarding 85% is labour, pay, well it is not increasing from a low base. A lot of customers are arseholes, they outsource because they want to manage just a contract so they disconnect from the people element and it incenses me. I think now I should go to a business that looks after people. But that would mean taking a pay cut. Or I can change that negativity.'*

*(Interviewee 43, Management, Former Police, Young Professional)*

- 4.44. There was a call to focus on the good points about security and promote them to different audiences. For those already in security there was a call to educate managers and prepare them for supporting people who want careers; providing mentorships, engaging associations (who were often seen as the focal point of good advice) but acting in isolation; accepting that the shift system is a barrier and taking initiatives to manage this where possible; tackling the lack of diversity.
- 4.45. Some young security professionals suggested highlighting attractions that might appeal to their peers. Age, which can be an inhibitor noted above also can be an opportunity for the more technology savvy young. And making people more aware of what is available was emphasised although the need to create more attractive schemes was deemed important:

*'Apart from our company, I've not seen any other graduate jobs within the security industry – maybe I've not looked hard enough – big manufacturers within industry – you would think they would have graduate roles. It seems they only want people with experience ... This industry is crying out for young people – there's hardly any.'*

*(Interviewee 34, Management, First Career, Young Professional)*

*'There is no effort by the security sector to attract recruits, and they do not work together and push on a marketing strategy and educate people. People need security, it is essential.'*

*(Interviewee 35, Management, First Career, Young Professional)*

- 4.46. While many of the comments here overlap those made above the distinctiveness and importance of attracting young talent merits a focus on how they viewed ways forward:

*'I knew I would be working with people a lot older than me. And also the fact that some people I work with coming from military background. I thought they might be*

*quite stern and strict. As I got into it I overcame it and realised they are normal people ... I definitely feel my age gives me an advantage now – I can pick up technology quite quickly.'*

*(Interviewee 33, Operative, First Career, Young Professional)*

*'There is a lot of emphasis on security as a back-up career if you don't get in to police. A lot actually say that. Some jobs police have are less exciting than our job ... I would emphasise the amount of opportunity and diversity that you have and a bit more freedom as well.'*

*(Interviewee 32, Management, First Career, Young Professional)*

*'People in the past joined military or police and they are not so readily available and so here is the next best thing, my original avenue was closed and I got in by that route. So as there are fewer police opportunities security can be that alternative.'*

*(Interviewee 45, Other interest)*

*'I'd say more exposure of what the industry, what is really within the industry that you can do, but its quite hard to do that ... I think its about showing someone what there is – most people don't know.'*

*(Interviewee 33, Operative, First Career, Young Professional)*

*'Know that every day might not be the same, things may happen, add spice to your life.'*

*(Interviewee 35, Management, First Career, Young Professional)*

*'There are so many different things that can happen. No one day is the same. You just have to be aware what is going on. It appeals to me the different things going on.'*

*(Interviewee 37, Operative, First Career, Young Professional)*

- 4.47. The key seems to be promoting what is good, via many different channels, one interviewee had a different take:

*'It would be good for Martin Gill to get a channel 5 documentary bringing to light security careers; that's what is missing, public awareness.'*

*(Interviewee 9, Management, Former Retail)*

- 4.48. Some recruiters pointed to the lack of graduate programmes. Here the tendency not to incorporate security in business related degrees, and business principles on security degrees was lamented. Others spoke about the lack of placements; the lack of a figurehead in security who can spearhead interest, one interviewee highlighted the need for an 'Ambassador'; the lack of 'good stories' to refer to about the good points of working in security; the need to tackle the diversity issue, 'bring in more females, lose perception of grey male 50 plus'; provide a clearer career structure; related to this is the need to clarify what skills sets, qualifications etc are needed in different job roles.

- 4.49. A final point on this issue emerges from interviews with individuals involved in different ways in the recruitment of security personnel. Their

insights were instructive. Some felt that getting applications is easy; it depends on the role. One representative from a security technology company felt the bigger problem was 'diversity issues and getting the right people', which can be addressed to some extent by focussed recruitment strategies; by clear representation of the roles and skills required for each one (eliminating any unnecessary bias against for example those who could not work unsociable hours). That said a barrier according to at least two recruitment consultants, is that companies often don't understand the security role, therefore adverts, job descriptions, and the interview process are poor:

*'Positions are poorly put together ... they have a lack of understanding of the job, (they) don't understand what is required, often the clients don't have skills to interview, job descriptions are wordy.'*

*(Interviewee 24, Recruiter)*

*'A client gave me a job description and called it 'security officer' but reading the job description actually what they were looking for is a highly educated computer literate individual with knowledge in evacuation ... I am curious to see if they get any applications for that role. I would have called it say operations coordinator.'*

*(Interviewee 46, Other interest)*

## Thinking about recruiting

- 4.50. Some companies noted that they had started to think differently about security recruitment. One security supplier noted how it had forged a relationship with a local university providing its students with work experience, something they lacked and providing the supplier with an opportunity to help attract and develop people for a career in security, and facilitate access to individuals who could emerge as potential recruits. This initiative, still in its early days, has made a promising start, an interviewee noted that the students *'have blown us away with their reliability and work ethics'*. It emerged because of an awareness that so called entry level positions frequently required some experience, and *'so they are not really entry level'*, and that there had been little emphasis placed on bridging the gap between schools/colleagues/universities and the world of security in areas where there were not apprenticeships.
- 4.51. Another company spoke about a scheme it had developed to help guide potential recruits as well as their staff on the requirements needed to progress people at different levels within the company. Operating a bronze/silver/gold label, each defined, meant that those looking to progress and managers seeking to guide them had an approved framework to work to. These are important. The different approaches to manage security personnel merit independent evaluation; that was beyond the scope of this project. While good

schemes of course are to be welcomed, there was little evidence of a joined-up approach, albeit, there is an initiative that moves to rectifying that, at least in the UK.

### **The development of a Skills body: progressing from apprenticeships**

- 4.52. At the time of the research, the UK security sector skills body, Skills for Security, which had become dysfunctional, was beginning to re-establish itself having been restructured, which included the appointment of a new Director. Its broad aims are to develop National Occupational Standards (or variations of them) and make training more accessible; in short to become a focal point for skills development in the security sector in the UK. It should be noted that others, and the regulator, the SIA is a case in point, have been involved in developing skills in different areas of security. Indeed the SIA Skills Strategy and Skills Summit are major developments.
- 4.53. A key focus for progress has been apprenticeships. These are most pronounced for fire, emergency and security systems although they are being expanded to other areas, indeed there is funding available for them. The plans are for a security officer apprenticeship for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. A Trailblazing group actively facilitated by the SIA with assistance from Skills for Security, has been working initially on a level 2 security apprenticeship for England with plans to develop a career pathway up to level 7 (with one interviewee drawing parallels with a scheme that has been initiated for police officers arguing that many skills/requirements are similar). There is a requirement that this is employer led, and it is perhaps encouraging that there were 40 employers at the first meeting. Although security is diverse, work has been classified into four areas: events; licenced premises; CCTV; and security officers. The point here is that this is work in progress, but Skills for Security has both the potential and ambition to act as a focal point for new entrants to security and upskill others.
- 4.54. One large UK company working in the area of security incorporates its own education provider offering apprenticeships in areas other than security. Spurred on by the regulator (and building on the content of SIA licensing in the UK), it has sought to provide an apprenticeship for non-technical staff. The central tenet has been about customer service. Once again it is still in early stage development although there has been a lot of staff interest, one interviewee described the benefits as:

*'You get engaged people. You get a formalised career opportunity. You can manage and assess people on it. You also provide staff with regular training ... as part of the pitch to buyers it can be a differentiator.'*

*(Interviewee 14, Management)*



- 4.55. Moreover, it provided a focus on training that encouraged those who were not eligible for funding (for example because they had a degree) to consider other courses for development. And it is paid for from the levy<sup>121</sup>. There are limits to it which may be considered drawbacks in some circumstances (and advantages in others): the requirement for some classroom-based teaching can add costs; so can the requirement for the ratio of trainers to pupils; and it is more attractive when an organisation has staff on long client contracts as the turnover on shorter ones complicates commitment. The key point here is to note that apprenticeships are in the spotlight nationally and the security sector, somewhat belatedly perhaps, is beginning to engage and it has enormous potential to enhance the attractiveness of the security sector to people seeking a new career or to enhance the one they have.

## Summary points

- 4.56. While moving from police/military to security has often been seen as something of an obvious step, for many the link is incidental. True, their prior experience may facilitate the transition, but not all of those leaving police/military considered themselves destined to take this route and some did not even consider it until later and then only when prompted. Indeed, few of the interviewees pursued a career in security as a first and obvious choice. By and large they had never considered it, no one suggested it, they were not aware of it; it could never have been an option.
- 4.57. While it can sometimes be true that police/military personnel bring skill sets that enable them to thrive in some security roles, and some without that background felt it to be a disadvantage, so it is also true that there are distinct characteristics of the commercial security world that differentiates it completely from that of the police/military. As a consequence the transition between them can be far from easy. Amongst the key factors here was the emphasis on the profit motive and the different culture governing commercial operations, and not all were and are able to adjust. But it needs to be emphasised that a career in security does not require a security background. The skill sets required, and the range of job roles are so vast there is inevitably a place somewhere. And crucially, for some roles, including the most senior ones, business acumen may be preferable.
- 4.58. Recruits did not join private security at the earliest opportunity mostly because they did not know about it; it had not appeared as an option. Overall there were few fears. Some raised concerns relating to having to make the transition to a new sector, or from the public to the private sector. But the main worries related to its reputation: for acting immorally and illegally and in tolerating sexism. If the first has been tackled by regulation – to a considerable extent anyway – the second is

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<sup>121</sup> More details available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/apprenticeship-levy/apprenticeship-levy>

more emphatically work in progress. Losing an image for being incompetent is proving hard to shift, and while much progress is being made, it is undermined completely if the experience (and not just the perception) is that female workers suffer discrimination and/or harassment at work.

- 4.59. There is very little advice about security careers available to people, certainly at the early stages in life when key decisions are being made, at school and university for example, or when making a career change, but that continues. It is true to say that there is very little advice available to people about a career in security full stop; some felt that things were clear once inside the sector but not all did. Unsurprisingly then much depends on one of two things: personal initiative or chance. That is, either people are industrious to seek out opportunities, and/or by chance they discover them. This is true once people join companies too, by and large it seems that the security sector as a whole has not been good at managing careers even if some companies are.
- 4.60. Unquestionably, security has undersold itself, massively. People see a host of benefits to a security career. These have been outlined and three points are important. First, while some of the attractions of a security career have a more general application to many if not all areas of work (e.g. the opportunity to learn new skills), others reflect the distinct characteristics of security work such as providing an opportunity to serve the public, to protect people, to undertake a responsible job; to help solve problems that matter. These need to be promoted. The second point is it is important to challenge an engrained perception that security is not lucrative. Sadly this may often be true for security officers but it is far from a universal truism. And the variety security offers is extensive, very broad indeed. These have been massively underplayed. Third, security is intellectually challenging, particularly in some areas and highly skilled. And the very fact the security sector has not systematically sought the most talented people only serves to underline the opportunities available for the most able and applied people.
- 4.61. Young security professionals expressed broadly similar concerns as others but emphasised the need to enjoy the job and a belief that they would be invested in and progress. These should be heeded. Recruiters meanwhile emphasised that while the attractions of security are positive the sector suffers from recruitment approaches that fail to highlight these, and are too often undertaken by those not sufficiently knowledgeable about how security works.
- 4.62. While there is a lot to be done, perhaps the good news from this work is that the security sector is thriving. It has much to offer people and can be and often is a rewarding career. It just has to tell more people and engage with them better; traditionally it has not been good at that.

## **Section 5. Proposals for Rethinking the Promotion of Security Careers**

- 5.1. The security sector offers a broad range of career opportunities. The majority of its workers reflect positively on their engagement with security; nearly three quarters indicated that they intend to remain in security for as long as they are working; and more than 6 in 10 said that they would recommend a career in security to others. It incorporates a wide variety of skills sets; many thrive in security having worked in other sectors previously. Yet it has undersold itself, in fact it has barely tried to sell itself. Here we set out, based on the findings in this research, what needs to happen to maximise its potential to attract and retain the best talent.
- 5.2. First, the security sector needs to highlight that security work is involved with protecting people in particular, but also organisations, communities and the national infrastructure. There are two somewhat obscure and yet distinct characteristics of security that are highly attractive to workers; it is a public benefit and people enjoy what they do. There is a very real benefit in being involved in keeping people safe; undertaking something worthwhile in serving the public; undertaking a responsible job; and helping to solve problems that matter to people. We found 78% of our sample highlighted the commitment to protecting other people and organisations and this was reiterated in one to one interviews.
- 5.3. Second, the security sector needs to promote the reality that there is a very definite career available in security. This research has consistently found that the perceived lack of this has been a barrier; 74% agreed with the notion that the trouble with the security sector is that there is no clear career path. Here the myth has got in the way of the bigger point, that there are so many opportunities and lots of different careers available. These take a different form. They are not in the style of the police and military with their much referred to rank structure; that is just one type of career and security is far too diverse for that. Our research found that 84% stated that the work itself in terms of the challenges presented was a significant attraction, and 63% referred to the possibilities for progression. Moreover, of all those that indicated they entered security to gain experience for another career, 68% indicated that they now intend to remain in security. That said work is being undertaken to provide for a clearer security pathway. This can only help to increase its attraction. In any event the message from this research is clear (if not to the wider population), there is a career for many people in security and it has multifarious forms.
- 5.4. Overlapping this, and third, the security sector needs to promote another of its distinguishing characteristics which rarely get a mention: the skill sets required, and the range of job roles in existence, are so

vast, there is inevitably a place where a person's current skill sets can be welcomed and thrive. While some respondents felt it could be difficult to compete at a high level with those with police/military backgrounds, it was certainly clear that a background in security is not a necessary requirement for many roles. It was a striking finding that 84% of the sample joined security because it enabled them to make the most of their existing skill sets. To-date the focus has typically been on former police and military having the most appropriate skill sets (not always correctly) but it is much broader than that, and at all levels, this needs to be promoted. To support this, there would be merit in encouraging the further development of competency based models and of documented career pathways across the array of security roles available; and particularly in encouraging their use among recruiters and those responsible for developing employees, so that the sector can find those with suitable talents, and talented people can see there is a place for them and understand how they can progress.

- 5.5. Fourth, while security offers excitement in some roles, including responding directly to offenders, most security work does not involve danger. In our sample 70% felt people might be put off entering security because of its association with harassment/violence, and yet experience is that it more generally revolves around other skills. Thus 94% agreed or strongly agreed that a security career is as much about being an effective communicator as it is about protection/investigation, and 88% felt that customer service skills were significant; 71% felt business skills were as important as security skills at the highest level of security management.
- 5.6. Fifth, it can be lucrative. It is true that the pay was frequently referenced as a negative aspect of security work, and so it often is, but especially at the lowest levels. Our interviews show that many people found security work lucrative, at least compared to some public sector jobs. This is not just because some join with pensions (often having retired from public sector roles), it is also because pay and incentives and benefits can compare favourably. Some who started businesses had thrived reflecting again the point that the security sector offers enormous opportunities. The link between security and low pay is too often made as a general characteristic and this is misleading and must be challenged. Linked to this is a need to identify the right role models in security and how they can best engage with young people in the process of making career choices.
- 5.7. This overlaps a sixth point; the security sector needs to update its image. In our sample 79% thought that the security sector has been very poor at selling itself to potential recruits. The majority of our sample, 73%, highlighted the problem that security struggles with a negative image and it was reiterated in interviews. There were several elements to this and each would need a focus of its own. Certainly, as stated above, it suffers from the perception that security is about guarding, enough examples of bad practice stick in the memory; the

image of the incompetent officer persists. It is not just about publicising that role is changing and improving and the work that has been done to achieve this. There is a real need to improve the lot of front-line staff. Perhaps, and we speculate here, that is why 88% of our sample felt potential recruits might be put off because some roles are seen as unskilled.

- 5.8. Seventh, one of the main reasons people don't enter a security career is because they don't know about it; the vast majority end up in security by chance. In our sample, 73% thought that not enough people know about the security sector to consider it. What is clear is that by and large people drift into a career in security. Over a third of our sample joined security because of the influence of a family member/friend/business colleague, and 16% because of the results of their own personal application and diligence, 15% responded to a job advert. And just 4% via a talk about careers at school/college/university. Identifying the points at which people receive advice and informing them about the world of opportunities that good security sector offers will be key.
- 5.9. An eighth need, and one that overlaps and underpins all these, is the security sector needs to address its limitations. As noted in the previous section, a part of promoting the good is to challenge the bad, correcting people where it is wrong or out-dated, presenting alternative, more positive views and evidence. More fundamentally though this research has uncovered a significant minority who are not happy with their lot. It is striking that nearly a fifth would not recommend a security career to someone else; and over a fifth had a negative view of the security sector based on having worked in it. In addition to the issues already noted emphasis must be placed on addressing the perceived lack of diversity and prime here is the lack of women, and the reality that some women suffer harassment. The battle for better conditions is an on-going one.
- 5.10. These recommendations beg the question, who should do this work and how?

### **Who will promote security careers and how?**

- 5.11. Although the purpose of this study did not include an aim to prepare a strategy for career development in the sector, the findings merit a comment on where the UK sector might look to develop and co-ordinate this, and to explore what this research has found to be some of the key approaches that might be considered.
- 5.12. Already a lot of work has been and is being undertaken by a wide variety of security associations and interest groups reinforcing much of the good work that some companies are spearheading. Add to that the work in this regard being undertaken by the regulator, the SIA, and

there is an impressive range of initiatives in the UK. This is to be encouraged. While these initiatives tend to be independent of each other - sometimes understandably because they appeal to different parts of the security sector – it is important to be aware of the benefits that this research has highlighted and hopefully these can become a reference point for enhancing the messages.

- 5.13. Part of the difficulty though, reiterating points made in previous SRI reports, is that security does not speak or act with a united voice. Umbrella groups have a role to play in spearheading the benefits of security. But there is an intriguing possibility that the sector's own skills body, Skills for Security, offers very real opportunities to be a focal point. It has very good links already established with World Skills (<https://www.worldskillsuk.org>) and already undertakes a similar role for the electronics sector; it manages a partnership website advertising careers and provides guidance on how to enter apprenticeships (<https://www.a4fs.org/>). This becomes a more realistic possibility once it has seen through its development of the apprenticeships as discussed earlier.
- 5.14. As noted, a key role here will be for Skills for Security to develop a strategy and implement it. While that takes us beyond the scope of this report many ideas were offered which suggest consulting with other sectors about approaches may pay dividends. One young security professional emphasised the potential for security work to be featured in fiction. This could be an important and largely unexplored dimension. To take but one example, how powerful might it be if a plot in a major soap (recurring television drama based on everyday life) - Coronation Street or EastEnders say – included a security officer and/or other security professionals making a positive contribution to managing a difficult incident? It would not be enough on its own of course, it is merely intended to be illustrative.
- 5.15. In a different way, other respondents emphasised the need for promotional campaigns generally as well as recruitment strategies specifically to focus on the opportunities offered by security, some feeling that all too often the emphasis has been on experience. Food for thought.
- 5.16. A good vision for the private security sector is to ensure that work now will enable those leaving education in the future to consider it as a career in the same way that other forms of security do. The police, military and the security officer dominate perceptions of what security is, at least in terms of jobs and careers. Yet the broader private security sector offers much, maybe considerably more to those leaving education.
- 5.17. That is not enough though. Beyond the initial entry stage, for those who are talented and working in other sectors, security offers no less opportunity. Those individuals are attractive to many employers and the

sector needs to play itself into a context where it is a known and recognised entity. Both for all the good points noted above, and the observation from one to one interviews that the sector is one in which those who are able can thrive; there may be less competition because the talent pool is less established.

- 5.18. There is arguably a place for training/preparation/mentorship programmes to prepare people for security roles when they come from outside the sector. One interviewee had made a business of this, preparing senior public sector personnel for a role in the commercial environment with all its different requirements.

## **Final comments**

- 5.19. This study has sought to shed light on the range of factors that influence people's choices when considering a security career, and similarly those that impinge on people who make career changes and who do or could consider a move to working in the security sector. It has shown that security undersells itself, or perhaps the real finding is that it actually makes little effort to sell itself at all. We have seen that the main barrier is that people just don't know about it, but there was often pleasing feedback from those that do. They have highlighted the many ways in which the security sector offers something that is, in its own way, distinct and dynamic. The aim now, is just not to keep it a secret.

# **Appendix 1. Methodology and Sample**

## **The approach**

The study involved a review of existing literature on what recruits look for in careers; what security careers looks like and how they are perceived; and how they compare with other relevant careers. These elements were used to identify key issues and themes to explore in the consultation with security professionals.

The review of the literature was followed by two main approaches: 1) an online survey on security professional views of security careers; and 2) extensive discussions including semi-structured interviews with a range of security professionals to gain a more in-depth understanding of the topic.

## **Survey**

The survey examined the personal experiences of security professionals in pursuing a career in security and their perceptions of the attractions and negatives of working in security, and comments on how security could be presented as an attractive option. The sample was, self-recruited and clearly those with an interest in the topic were most likely to respond. While no claims are made that the survey is representative of the security industry as a whole, responses were received from a range of roles and countries. Attempts were made to publicise the survey widely, including via participants from previous research who had elected to be contacted for future research; links in the Perpetuity newsletter and social media; security associations; security press; announcements made at conferences and other security events; and personal contact with a range of organisations who were informed about the survey and invited to publicise it and pass on the details to their members. We cannot be sure of the manner in which adverts were disseminated by these groups, but their contribution greatly enhanced the reach of our survey.

The survey ran from 5<sup>th</sup> March to 6<sup>th</sup> April 2020.

A total of 386 replies were received although not every respondent completed every question in the survey. The data was analysed using SPSS. The data are categorical; therefore, it is not possible to assess the normality of data. It is important that this is borne in mind.

## **One-to-one interviews**

The approach in this work was to engage with security professionals and to include key groups that may be able to add insight, such as young security professionals (classed as anyone under 36), first career security professionals, second/subsequent security professionals, recruiters and those with specific knowledge on training and skills. We informally and formally engaged a wide range of professionals in conversation about the issues



covered in this report. This included at conference and trade shows, at meetings of security personnel, over professional dinners and other meetings and at different networking events. We contacted specific people by word-of-mouth and they sometimes referred us to others. We drew upon personal contacts and their networks; and some individuals who volunteered to offer more details after taking part in the survey.

Obtaining the sample in this way allows for potentially more valuable responses as those taking part are more likely to be knowledgeable about the research. The interviews typically lasted thirty minutes and semi-structured interview schedules were used. The schedules were based on the information taken from the literature review as well as previous research. An advantage of a semi-structured schedule is that it gives the flexibility for interviewers to probe the issues raised.

We formally interviewed 46 professionals. Of these:

- 21 were in a management role at either a supplier or client organisation; 9 were security operatives (including security officers); 8 were recruiters (mostly from supplier organisations); and 8 had an other specific area of knowledge or interest (such as on security careers and/or engaging with young security professionals);
- Most interviewees were UK based, 8 were based in another country;
- 8 interviewees were female.

Some interviews were conducted to draw on the individual's specific/unique area of knowledge of the topic and therefore not all were asked about their own career and route in to security, however among those that were:

- 16 were 'young' professionals (under 36 years of age);
- 21 had come to security after first working in another sector (of which 5 were former military and 6 were former police);
- For 7 interviewees, security was their first career.

## Appendix 2. Additional Data Tables

Table 4: Country where the respondent conducts the majority of their work (where they are based) (n=377)

Country	N	%
UK	247	65.5
Belgium	24	6.4
USA	16	4.2
Ireland	9	2.4
Australia	8	2.1
Canada	8	2.1
Nigeria	7	1.9
Germany	5	1.3
Netherlands	5	1.3
South Africa	5	1.3
United Arab Emirates	5	1.3
Norway	4	1.1
China	3	0.8
France	3	0.8
Romania	3	0.8
Switzerland	3	0.8
Malaysia	2	0.5
Thailand	2	0.5
Algeria	1	0.3
Austria	1	0.3
Botswana	1	0.3
Denmark	1	0.3
Finland	1	0.3
Ghana	1	0.3
Greece	1	0.3
Hungary	1	0.3
Jordan	1	0.3
Kenya	1	0.3

Lithuania	1	0.3
Philippines	1	0.3
Russian Federation	1	0.3
Singapore	1	0.3
Somalia	1	0.3
South Sudan	1	0.3
Turkey	1	0.3
Zimbabwe	1	0.3

Table 5: Age of respondents (n=386)

<b>Age range</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
16-25	23	6
26-35	54	14
36-45	82	21
46-55	127	33
56-65	81	21
66-75	3	1
Over 75	3	1

Table 6: Ethnic background of respondents (n=385)

<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
Asian	14	4
Black	19	5
Mixed heritage	13	3
White	327	85
Other	6	2
Prefer not to state	6	2

Table 7: Length of time working in private security (n=384)

<b>Years</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
Less than 1 year	13	3
1-5 years	70	18
6-10 years	50	13
11-20 years	118	31
21-30 years	86	22
31-40 years	36	9
More than 40 years	11	3

Table 8: Perception of attractiveness to potential candidates of different aspects of security, broken down by when in their working career the respondent joined security %

<b>Aspect of security</b>	<b>Attractive or very attractive %</b>			
	<b>First/ only career</b>	<b>First main career</b>	<b>Second/ Subsequent career</b>	<b>Secondary role</b>
Security officer/guarding	32%	30%	15%	18%
In-house security management	71%	68%	66%	54%
Contract security management	66%	56%	50%	46%
Sales/business development	40%	42%	35%	36%
Installer/integrator	42%	38%	42%	43%
Investigation	71%	67%	69%	68%
Cyber security	76%	69%	66%	57%
Close protection	53%	52%	53%	50%
Security consultancy	71%	73%	72%	64%

## About Perpetuity Research

Perpetuity Research is a leading research company with wide expertise in both quantitative and qualitative approaches. We have been extensively involved in evaluating 'what works' (and what does not). Our work has involved helping our clients to understand people's behaviours, perceptions and levels of awareness and in identifying important trends. Our mission statement is 'committed to making a difference', and much of our work has a practical application in terms of informing decision making and policy formulation.

We work closely with our clients. This includes businesses, national and local governments, associations and international organisations as well as charities and foundations. Our aim is to exceed their expectations and it speaks volumes that so many have chosen to work with us repeatedly over many years. We are passionate about our work and we would welcome the opportunity to work with you.

## About the SRI

The Security Research Initiative (SRI) started 17 years ago. It involves a rolling program of research; each year a separate study is conducted on the security sector to generate new insights, help develop the response and role of security and act as a guide to improving practice. The SRI is supported by the British Security Industry Association, The Security Institute, and ASIS International (UK Chapter), and includes membership from leading security suppliers and corporate security departments who share the commitment to the development of new knowledge.

Previous studies have focused, for example, on police views on private security; tackling cyber crime – the role of private security; the broader benefits of security; aspiring to excellence; the relative benefits and drawbacks of buying security as a single service or as part of a bundle; an industry wide survey; a study of the value of security. We have developed two toolkits, including one on developing a security strategy. The findings from the research are made available free of charge to all. More information on the SRI is available at: [www.perpetuityresearch.com/security-research-initiative/](http://www.perpetuityresearch.com/security-research-initiative/)

# About the Authors

## Professor Martin Gill

Professor Martin Gill is a criminologist and Director of Perpetuity Research which started life as a spin out company from the University of Leicester. He holds honorary/visiting Chairs at the Universities of Leicester and London. Martin has been actively involved in a range of studies relating to different aspects of security, private policing and business crime on topics including: organised crime and fraud; why offenders offend; the (in)effectiveness of different security measures; and the scope of security management. Martin has been extensively involved with evaluation research and with the offender's perspective looking at how they target certain people and premises and aim to circumvent security measures. He has published 14 books and is currently working on the third edition of the 'Handbook' of Security'. Martin is a Fellow of The Security Institute, a member of the Company of Security Professionals (and a Freeman of the City of London). He is a Trustee of the ASIS Foundation. In 2002 the ASIS Security Foundation made a 'citation for distinguished service' in 'recognition of his significant contribution to the security profession'. In 2009 he was one of the country's top 5 most quoted criminologists. In 2010 he was recognised by the BSIA with a special award for 'outstanding service to the security sector'. In 2015 and 2016 he was nominated and shortlisted for the Imbert Prize at the Association of Security Consultants and in the latter he won. In 2016 ASIS International awarded him a Presidential Order of Merit for distinguished service. In annual IFSEC listings he is regularly recorded as one of the world's most influential fire and security expert. In 2016 he was entered onto the Register of Chartered Security Professionals. Martin is the Founder of the Outstanding Security Performance Awards (the OSPAs) and Tackling Economic Crime Awards (the TECAs).

## Charlotte Howell

Charlotte Howell joined Perpetuity in January 2009, and is currently the Research Manager – responsible for managing the delivery of research contracts, and our team of research staff. She also manages the Secured Environments scheme run by Perpetuity Research on behalf of Police CPI. Charlotte is an accomplished project manager with experience of working with a range of clients including businesses, associations, police forces, government organisations and charities. Charlotte's knowledge and experience spans the range of our areas of expertise – including crime prevention and community safety, security research, and the social aspects of health research. Charlotte is also actively involved in delivering fieldwork and has consulted with a range of individuals, including stakeholders (such as individuals from the police, local authorities, service commissioners and staff), offenders (both in prison and in the community) and clients accessing services (such as drug and alcohol treatment services, domestic abuse services and support services for sex workers). Charlotte is adept at quantitative analysis

and has a wealth of experience analysing survey responses, client data and performance/outcomes data.

Prior to working for Perpetuity, Charlotte graduated from the University of the West of England with a first class LLB (Hons) in Law. Following this she received an MSc in Criminology from the University of Leicester. After graduating, Charlotte worked for the Leicester Criminal Justice Drugs Team, analysing and reporting on Class A drug misuse and treatment information, to maintain and improve performance.

## **Caitlyn McGeer**

Caitlyn works as a Researcher, having joined Perpetuity Research after earning an MSc in Criminology and Criminal Justice from the University of Oxford with distinction. During her MSc, Caitlyn focused on criminal justice monitoring and evaluation protocol, cultivating an expertise in quantitative platforms such as SPSS and GIS. Caitlyn is equally skilled in qualitative methodology: interview, ethnographic, and visual methods. Caitlyn is currently completing a DPhil in Criminology at the University of Oxford.

Caitlyn has extensive research experience in both domestic and international projects, specifically focusing on facilitating strategic public sector development and the establishment of the rule of law. Beyond academia, her professional background has centred on public-sector communications, risk management, and project development, coupled with advocacy and campaigning capacities. She is a communications specialist and an intuitive project manager.

Caitlyn has worked with community development initiatives in Ecuador, Ghana, and Guatemala.



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