

# OCCUPATIONAL VIOLENCE: workplace injury rates of security, police, and all workers

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

*The full scholarly article has been submitted for publication. A pre-publication draft is available from the author. When published, this Executive Summary will be updated with a link to the article.*

*The latest version of this document is available at [www.CASP.ca](http://www.CASP.ca)*

### Purpose

Private security personnel are increasingly being assigned roles that were previously the purview of the police: patrolling high-risk areas, walking beats, enforcing bylaws, issuing parking and transit tickets, trespassing individuals, responding to alarms, etc. These roles place security guards in increasingly challenging and dangerous situations. The belief within the security industry is that injuries and violence towards security guards is higher than for other workers. This study examined Workers' Compensation Board (WCB) injury data from Canadian jurisdictions to compare injury patterns among security guards, police officers, and the general workforce.

### Key findings

1. Security guards experience increased rates of workplace injuries.
  - 41 % higher rate of physical trauma than police officers
  - 19 % higher rate of musculoskeletal injuries than police officers
  - 20 % higher rate of assault-related injuries than police officers
2. When adjusted for workforce size, security guards are five times more likely to be assaulted than the average worker, and half as likely to be assaulted than a police officer. In other words:  
***For every worker assaulted, five security guards are assaulted, and ten police officers are assaulted.***
3. While provincial reporting was incomplete, the trends were consistent across reporting jurisdictions, and the findings consistent with industry expectations.

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## Implications

The findings indicate that occupational injuries through trauma and violence are significant safety issues for security guards. A plausible hypothesis is that issues of *role suitability* and *training deficiencies* hinder security guards' ability to manage the challenging and dangerous environments they are expected to engage in. Prior to joining the police, candidates must pass physical and psychological testing. Recruits then receive 10 – 12 months of classroom and field training, and have continuing education and recertification requirements. There is no screening of security candidates, who then receive between zero and one week of classroom training, with no field training or recertification requirements.

As the scope of security work expands, risks and liabilities increase.

## Policy considerations

Based on the findings of this study, public safety agencies, labour ministries, policymakers, regulators, employers, and industry stakeholders should work collaboratively to:

1. improve data collection on occupational injuries and assaults of security guards
2. support the development of enhanced role-based training requirements
3. support the development of a national training framework and accreditation standards to professionalize the security industry
4. promote reporting of occupational injuries and violence
5. support future research to monitor the security industry during professionalization
  - expand research to include all emergency-service occupations
  - evaluate the effectiveness of training and workplace safety interventions
  - monitor long-term trends in occupational injuries affecting security personnel

## Conclusion

This study provides the first comparative study of workplace injuries amongst Canadian security guards, police officers, and the general workforce. The findings indicate that security personnel face elevated rates of occupational violence and assault-related injuries compared with police officers and the general workforce.

While this study did not seek to identify the causes of these differences, the hypothesis that issues of role suitability and training deficiency explain much of the increased occupational injuries of and violence towards security personnel. Increased and standardized training would address the deficiencies and workplace safety issues.