Security Services Training Board

Manpower Update Report
Security Services Industry
2021

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Contents

Introduction

Background

The Security Services Training Board (SSTB) of the Vocational Training Council (VTC) is tasked to determine the manpower demand of the sector, assessing whether the manpower supply matches the manpower demand, and recommending to the VTC the development of vocational and professional education and training (VPET) to facilitate the assessed training needs.   A new approach for collecting manpower information is adopted to enhance the effectiveness and to better reflect the dynamics of the manpower situation in various industries.

Under the new approach, one full manpower survey, which collects companies' manpower data through questionnaires, is conducted every four years and is supplemented by two manpower updates through desk research and focus group meetings. The SSTB completed its latest full manpower survey in 2018.   Two manpower updates were conducted in 2020 and 2021.

The contents of the manpower update reports are based on two information sources:

(i)   A focus group meeting collecting the views of industry experts on the latest development of the sector, its manpower and training needs, recruitment and retention issues, and suggested solutions

for the challenges; and

(ii) Desk research analysing
      recruitment advertisements,
      including the offered salaries,
      qualifications, experience and skill
      requirements of different
      principal jobs of the industry.

Objectives

The objectives of the manpower update
are as follows:
(i)   To examine the latest trends and
       development;
(ii)   To explore the job market and
       training needs;
(iii) To recognise recruitment
       challenges; and
(iv)   To recommend measures to meet
       manpower and training needs.

Methodology

Overview

With reference to the 2018 full manpower survey of the security services industry, this update report aims to provide qualitative descriptions of the recent development of the sector through a focus group meeting, supplemented by quantitative findings from desk research.

Focus Group Meeting

The focus group meeting is intended to collect the industry's view on the latest trend in manpower development, training needs, and recruitment difficulties, etc.   Members participating in the focus groups are representatives from the following types of companies:

(i)   Type I- Security Guarding Services;
(ii) Type II- Armoured Transportation Services; and
(iii) Type III- Security Systems Installation/Maintenance/Repair/ Design/Others.

A focus group meeting, moderated by the SSTB Secretary, was held on 8 October 2021.   The moderator initiated the discuss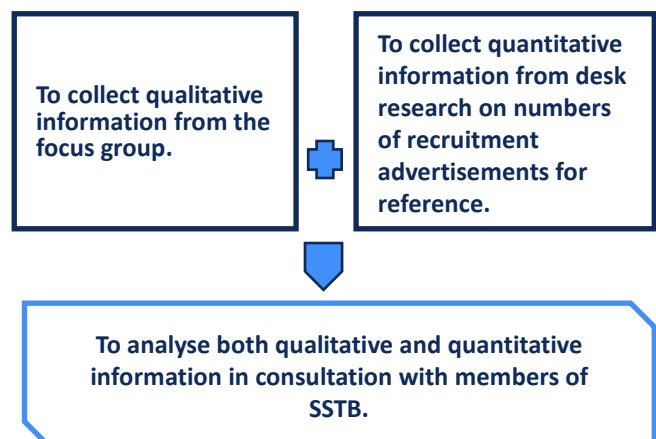ion with general questions and probed into a more specific context to collect in-depth information on relevant topics in the discussion guide.

Desk Research

An employment information system was developed to capture recruitment advertisements from CPjobs, CTgoodjobs and other major online recruitment portals.   Recruitment records were collected between June 2020 and June 2021 for the industry. Information was mapped against the list of related companies under the Security and Guarding Services Industry Authority (SGSIA) and duplicated records were removed during the process.   As a result, some 14,600 relevant recruitment records were used for analysis.

Data Analysis

The analysis consists mainly of the following three steps:

To collect qualitative information from the focus group.

To collect quantitative information from desk research on numbers of recruitment advertisements for reference.

To analyse both qualitative and quantitative information in consultation with members of SSTB.

Limitations

As this is not a full manpower survey, the findings and recommendations of the focus group meeting provide qualitative information; hence the manpower update report focuses mainly on the manpower trends.   The information on job advertisements was collected from major recruitment websites and the Labour Department. Other channels, such as social media and referrals by friends, were not covered.   As a result, a clear correlation between the number of recruitment advertisements found and the number of employees recorded in the full manpower survey could not be identified.   Since the data collected was a snapshot of a particular period without referencing any historical data, this can only serve as reference information supplementary to the findings of the focus group meeting. The data should not be directly compared with the figures recorded in the full manpower survey.

Findings

To facilitate the discussion during the focus group meeting, the SSTB has identified several possible areas affecting the manpower situation of the security services industry.   The focus group members were invited to give their views in relation to those areas and among others in order to collect and to understand the qualitative information of the industry.

Recent Development

Manpower Situation

In the early days of the COVID-19 epidemic, Hong Kong's economy faced severe challenges.   Many industries suffered downturns, especially retail, catering, tourism and hospitality, which led to business closures, layoffs or unpaid leave for workers.   Some of these workers joined the security services industry, and the long-term manpower shortage for the industry was temporarily eased.

In the context of the HKSAR Government's epidemic prevention and control, the increasing number of citizens vaccinated, and the disbursement of consumption vouchers to boost consumer sentiment, Hong Kong's economy has recovered.

According to figures provided by the Census and Statistics Department, the unemployment rate dropped from 7.2 per cent in December 2020 to 4.7 per cent in August 2021.

Type I licensed security companies

With the improvement of the economy and unemployment situation, many newly joined security personnel had left and returned to their original industries; therefore, Type I licensed security companies once again have faced the manpower shortage problem.

Type II licensed security companies

In general, potential talents prefer to take up the general security guarding work than the armoured security work as:

(i)   the monthly salaries of general security guards and armoured security guards are comparable;

(ii)   armoured security guards are required to possess a valid arms licence;

(iii) the upper age limit for armoured security guards is 55 years; and

(iv) armoured security personnel shall not engage in part-time work other than their own companies.

Therefore, the Type II licensed security companies have experienced difficulties in recruiting armoured security guards as the face-to-face firearms training courses were suspended during the peak period of confirmed COVID-19 cases in Hong Kong.

Type III licensed security companies

During the social incidents, the demand for sophisticated security systems rose sharply, but it slowed down amid the threat of COVID-19.   As Hong Kong has turned a corner in its battle against the pandemic, the demand for installing and upgrading security systems has increased again.

Many Type III licensed security companies have experienced difficulties in recruiting skilled workers and technicians as only a few people are willing to join the sector to undertake the 24-hour on-call duty.   On the other hand, some trainees under the indentured apprenticeship scheme cannot join the sector to install and to maintain security systems as the minimum age requirement for a Security Personnel Permit (SPP) holder is of 18 years.

Advanced Technology

In today's digital era, many industries use emerging technologies to enhance work efficiency and effectiveness and to reduce the stress amongst workforces; the security services industry is no exception.

Social Media Platforms

Social media is a digital tool that allows the sharing of information, ideas and interests through virtual communities and networks.   Security services companies have utilised social media platforms to disseminate information to their clients and the public; meanwhile, security personnel have used the platforms to establish a temporary social group to complete designated tasks.   Although the platforms can improve effective communication, they may increase the psychological stress of frontline security personnel; for example, constant monitoring of every move of a security guard that pictures and videos can be captured and uploaded to the platforms easily. Any misbehaviour of security guards may tarnish the image of their employer.

Robots

Despite the fact that robots have been used in shopping malls to scan the body temperature of visitors, answer shoppers' inquiries, provide shopping information and serve as mobile surveillance cameras, it is still difficult to deploy robots in multi-storey buildings to perform patrol, emergency and complaint handling and crowd control tasks.   Therefore, security guards undoubtedly still have the value that cannot be replaced by robots.

Advanced Security System

Advanced surveillance and access control systems have been widely used in residential, commercial and industrial buildings to tackle the problem of manpower shortage.   Some security systems have incorporated motion detection, artificial intelligence and facial recognition technologies to prevent crime and to detect unauthorized access.   Recently, many new buildings have integrated sophisticated security systems into the Building Management Systems (BMS) to safeguard the buildings.

Smart Safes for Cash Deposit

At present, Type II licensed security companies need to collect cash from many locations every day, which is a very time consuming and manpower demanding operation. To manage resources of Type II licensed security companies more effectively, a Type II licensed security company has been exploring to deploy pilot smart safes at designated locations for clients to deposit cash themselves. The smart safes can automatically verify, count and deposit cash safely. Once clients have deposited cash into the smart safe, their bank accounts will be updated instantly.

Part-time Security Guards

Many security guards prefer to work part-time as they can have more autonomy to arrange their working hours to fit personal needs and preferences. Also, part-time security guards can receive cash income instantly and a better hourly wage than full-time security guards; hence, many full-time security guards have been changed to work part-time. Security services companies that could not recruit enough full-time security guards to meet their manpower needs have been required to pay relatively high wages to manpower agencies for part-time security guards.

Government Policy

Travel Restrictions

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Government has tightened its border control measures for Hong Kong residents and non-Hong Kong residents entering Hong Kong. These measures have influenced the manpower supply, business opportunities, skills and technology exchanged of the industry.

Reopening Hong Kong's border with Mainland China and overseas countries will increase the number of events, exhibitions and trade shows held in Hong Kong, which in turn may lead to a higher demand for security guards to safeguard the activities; however, it may worsen the manpower shortage for the industry.

Ordinances and Regulations

Recently, the HKSAR Government promulgated the Hong Kong National Security Law, gazetted the Small Unmanned Aircraft Order, and updated the Personal Data (Privacy) Ordinance. These legislations are closely related to the daily operations of security personnel. At present, there are no

general guidelines on how the security services industry should comply with these legislations.   Security companies may have different interpretations, policies and regulations to handle different situations; for example, security companies have different guidelines in dealing with people who display anti-government banners in shopping malls/estate areas.

Ageing Workforce

The industry has faced the challenge of the ageing workforce.   According to the figures provided by the SGSIA, as of 30 June 2021, 60.3% of valid SPP holders were within the age range of 51 to 80 years old, while only 39.7% of them were under 50 years old.   The details of the age distribution of the valid SPP holders as of 30 June 2021 is shown below:

Age Distribution of Valid SPP Holders as at 30 June 2021
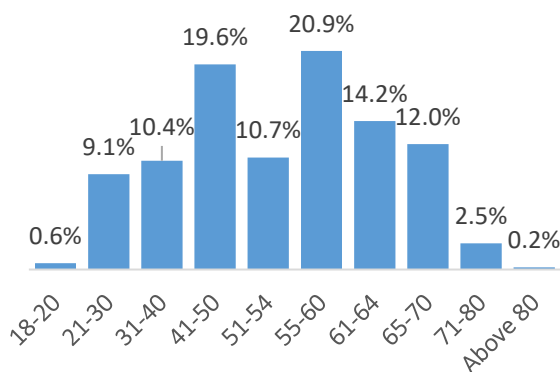

Wave of Emigration

The Government of the United Kingdom introduced a new immigration route for Hong Kong residents who have British National (Overseas) (BNO) passports in early 2021.   The impact of this emigration wave on the security services industry is minimal.   Only a very small number of security personnel at the professional/managerial level have considered emigration to another country.

Future Manpower Demand

According to the projections of the Long-Term Housing Strategy Steering Committee, the total housing supply target for the 10-year period from 2021-22 to 2030-31 is 428,000 units. The increasing number of housing supplies over the coming years will result in the creation of numerous security services related jobs.
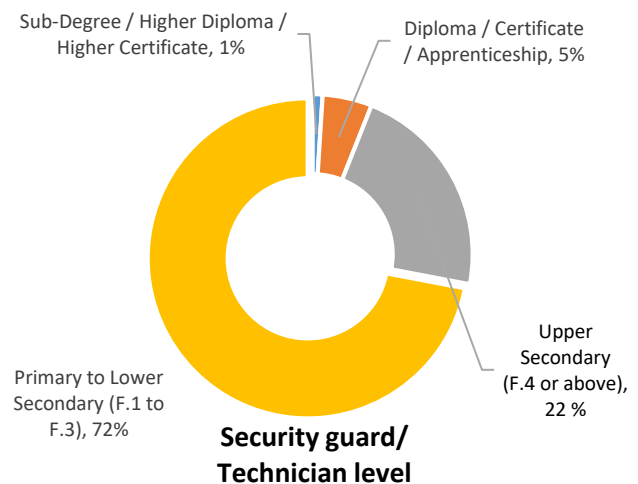
The number of security services related recruitment advertisements captured by the desk research from June 2020 and June 2021 by job level is shown as below:
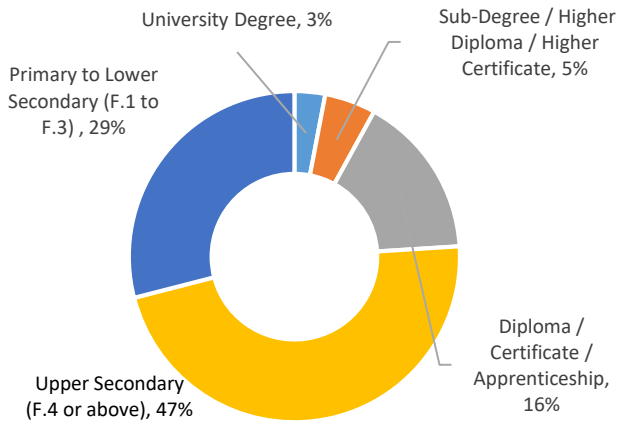
Recruitment Advertisements Captured
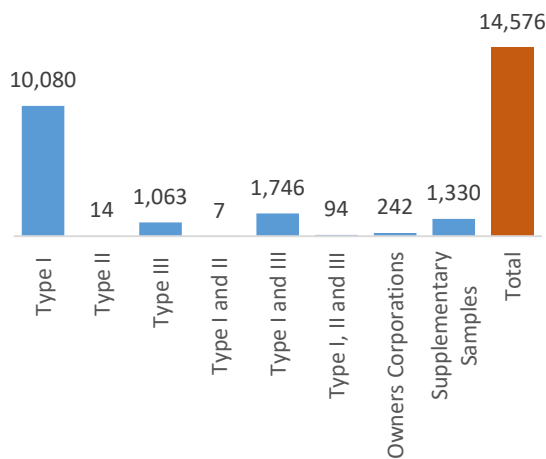
their security guards/technicians and supervisors to have lower secondary and upper secondary school qualifications respectively. In addition, security services companies preferred their security guards/technicians and supervisors to have less than one year and three to five years of relevant work experience respectively. The percentages of recruitment advertisements with specified qualification and experience requirements for the period between June 2020 and June 2021 by job level are shown below:

The Qualification Requirements for Security Services Personnel

Sub-Degree / Higher Diploma / Higher Certificate, 1%

Diploma / Certificate / Apprenticeship, 5%

Upper Secondary (F.4 or above), 22 %

Primary to Lower Secondary (F.1 to F.3), 72%

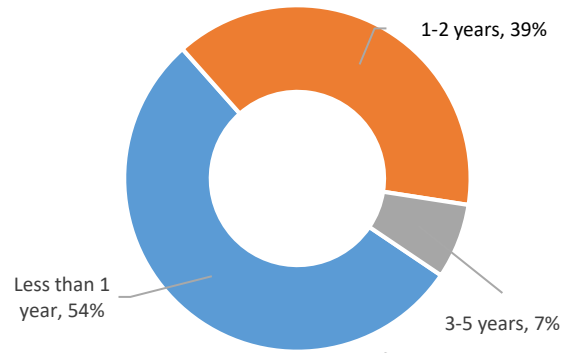**Security guard/ Technician level**

Required Qualifications and Work Experience

The desk research revealed that most security services companies preferred

Supervisory level
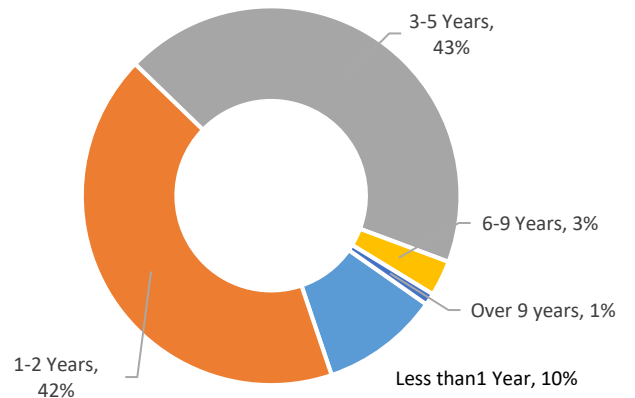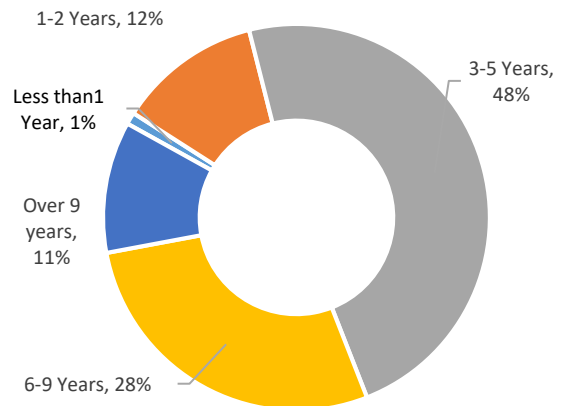
- University Degree, 3%
- Sub-Degree / Higher Diploma / Higher Certificate, 5%
- Primary to Lower Secondary (F.1 to F.3) , 29%
- Upper Secondary (F.4 or above), 47%
- Diploma / Certificate / Apprenticeship, 16%

Supervisory level

Security guard/ technician level

- 1-2 years, 39%
- Less than 1 year, 54%
- 3-5 years, 7%

Security guard/ technician level

Managerial level

- Diploma / Certificate / Apprenticeship, 24%
- Upper Secondary (F.4 or above), 16%
- Sub-Degree / Higher Diploma / Higher Certificate, 26%
- University Degree, 35%
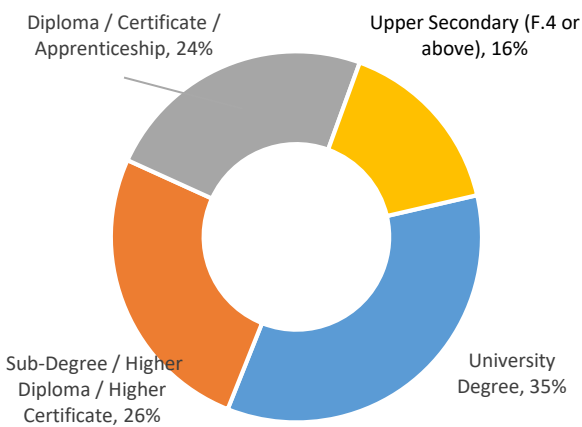
Managerial level

Supervisory level (work experience)

- 3-5 Years, 43%
- 6-9 Years, 3%
- Over 9 years, 1%
- Less than1 Year, 10%
- 1-2 Years, 42%

Supervisory level

The work experience requirements for security services guards

Managerial level (work experience)

- 1-2 Years, 12%
- 3-5 Years, 48%
- Less than1 Year, 1%
- Over 9 years, 11%
- 6-9 Years, 28%

Managerial level

Training Needs

Technological Knowledge and Skills

Like other industries, the security services industry has widely used advanced technologies to improve operational efficiency and strengthen clients' security and safety.   Security services personnel should have relevant technological knowledge and skills to meet their operational needs.

Advanced surveillance devices and drones have been used to detect and to prevent various security threats. However, these devices should be operated by well-trained security personnel.

Communications and Customer Services Skills

Nowadays, security guards should serve more than protection.   Security personnel interact with the same individuals who reside or work at the property regularly; therefore, good communication and customer service skills are essential for security personnel to maintain a good relationship with clients and to create a harmonious environment.

Ordinances and Regulations

Currently, the security training courses under the Quality Assurance System for Recognition Scheme (QASRS) cover the following essential ordinances, Criminal Procedure Ordinance (Cap. 221), Road Traffic (Parking on Private Roads) Regulations (Cap. 374) and Prevention of Bribery Ordinance (Cap. 201).   The industry suggested the new Hong Kong National Security Law, the Small Unmanned Aircraft Order (Cap. 448G) and the Summary Offences Ordinance (Cap. 228) should also be included in the courses.

Recruitment Difficulties

In general, security services companies have encountered difficulties in recruiting security guards, armoured security guards and security systems technicians. The reasons are summarised below:

Low Social Image

Some people have the negative image of security guards that they are low-skilled workers. The reality is that security guards are well-trained personnel who are the first responders to resolve various safety and emergency issues before enforcement officers arrive. In addition, armoured security personnel are required to undergo more stringent training and must obtain a valid license in order to carry firearms at work.

Statutory Minimum Wage

After the implementation of Statutory Minimum Wage (SMW) in Hong Kong, many low-skilled workers have received comparable wages regardless of their industries. As a re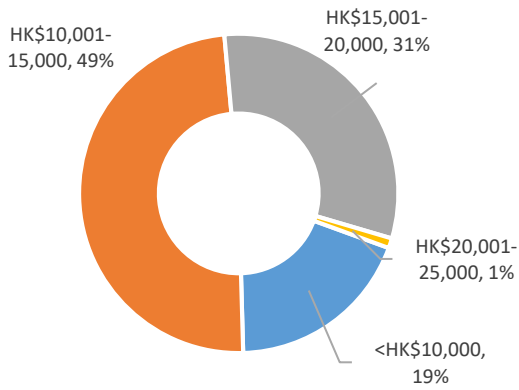sult, people have tended to choose easy jobs with shorter working hours, less physical activities and non-shift work. Therefore, security guarding work has not been their preference.

In addition, many tenders for the provision of security services make reference to the SMW and, in turn, successful tenderers could only pay somewhat higher than the SMW to their security guards. The low wage of the industry is another factor discouraging newcomers from entering the industry.
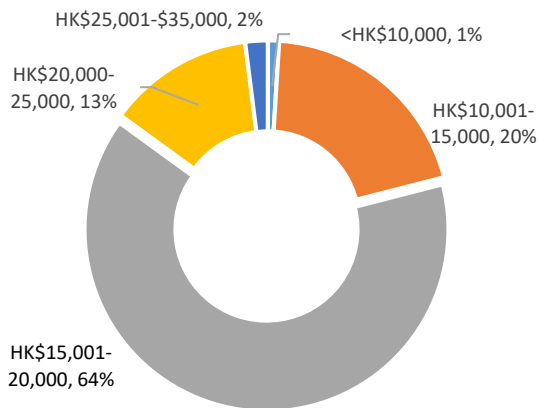
The desk research revealed that the average monthly salary range of the security guard/technician and supervisory levels of the industry was from HK$10,001 to HK$15,000 and HK$15,001 to HK$20,000 respectively, while security personnel at the professional/managerial level could receive HK$20,001 to HK$45,000 per month.

The percentages of salary offered in the recruitment advertisements for the period between July 2020 and June 2021 by job level are shown below:
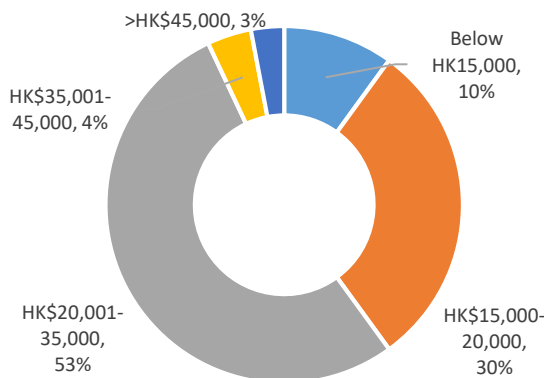
Security Guard/Technician level

HK$10,001-15,000, 49%

HK$15,001-20,000, 31%

HK$20,001-25,000, 1%

<HK$10,000, 19%

Supervisory level

HK$25,001-$35,000, 2%

<HK$10,000, 1%

HK$20,000-25,000, 13%

HK$10,001-15,000, 20%

HK$15,001-20,000, 64%

Professional/Managerial level

>HK$45,000, 3%

Below HK15,000, 10%

HK$35,001-45,000, 4%

HK$20,001-35,000, 53%

HK$15,000-20,000, 30%

Manpower Shortage of Disciplined Services

In addition to the security services industry, disciplined services have also faced the problem of manpower shortage. Compared with the security services industry, potential talents are more willing to join the disciplined services that provide better working conditions and remuneration. Given this, the industry has cooperated with the Employees Retraining Board and training institutions to provide tailor-made safety training courses under the "Squad S3 Program" to attract young people to join the industry. However, most of the students joined the disciplined services after graduation.

Long Working Hours

In general, working in the security services industry requires enduring longer working hours. Many security services companies require their security guards to work 12 hours and six days a week. This working model may discourage potential talents from joining the industry.

The Desk Research revealed that 74 per cent recruitment advertisements required security guards to work on the 2-shift system and the details are shown as below:

Number of security guards recruitment advertisements by shift system

74%

26%

■ Security Guard (on 2-shift system)

■ Security Guard (on 3-shift system)
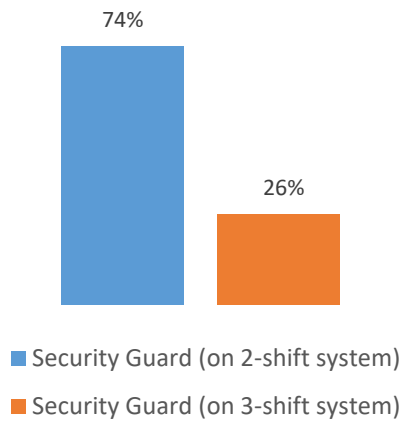
Most of the security guards prefer to work near where they live to save travelling time and transportation expenses.   Security services companies have experienced difficulty in engaging security guards to work across districts even though the companies offer extra wages and travel allowance.

Income and Total Net Asset Limits of Government Funds and Supports

Many security guards prefer to earn less and work part-time so that they are eligible to apply different government funds and support to subsidise their lives.   For example, security guards may intend to earn less than HK$12,800 so that they can apply for public rental housing.

Cross-district Work

RECOMMENDATIONS

To cope with the future development of the industry, the Government, educational institutions and employers must work together to promote the career prospects of the industry and provide suitable training opportunities for employees and the younger generations.

Government

Ordinances and Regulations relevant to Security Services Personnel

The Government should provide more educational kits and training packages for security services personnel to ensure compliance with the new laws and regulations that are closely related to their daily operations. The Government bureaux and departments and related organisations should come up a standardised operational guideline for the security services industry for easy reference.

Armoured Security Guard License

To tackle the manpower shortage in Type II licensed security companies, the industry recommends the Government to extend the age limit of armoured security guards to 60 years old. In addition, the Government should provide more firearm training venues for the security companies to train the new entrants.

Public Recognition

The Government should promote the public image of security services personnel that they are skilled workers as they must receive pre-employment and on-the-job training. It is suggested that the Government could take the lead in removing the term of "non-skilled workers" in its security services provision contracts.

Manpower Shortage

Support from the Government should be sought for tackling the long-term problem of manpower shortage for the industry.

Qualifications Framework

The Qualifications Framework (QF) of the security services industry has been implemented for a while. The QF, without a doubt, can promote the professionalism of the industry. The QF Secretariat should continue to promote the QF to all stakeholders and to foster more education institutes to offer relevant training courses to meet

the industry's needs.

Education Institutions

Relevant Skills Training

To meet the skills requirements of the security services industry, education institutions should offer training programmes in the following areas:

(i) Information Technology skills;
(ii) Communications and customer service skills;
(iii) Skills for Advanced security system; and
(iv) Relevant ordinances and regulations.

Industry Briefing and Career Talks

Education institutions should facilitate students to have a deeper understanding of the security services industry and its progression pathway by inviting senior practitioners to share their professional experience and the latest development of the industry with students.

On-line Training

Education institutions should offer more online training courses for security services personnel to acquire new skills

and to help individuals to gain sustainable competitive advantages at their own pace. In addition, a mechanism should be developed to recognise these online training courses.

Specification of Competency Standards (SCS)-based security training courses

The Specification of Competency Standards (SCS) of the security services industry comprises the key competency standards required by the practitioners. It covers eight functional areas from level one to level seven. Education Institutes should offer more SCS-based security training courses to meet the training industry needs of the industry.

Employers

Attractive Remuneration Package

Employers should offer financial and/or time support to employees in pursuing lifelong learning to enhance their competitiveness. They should also offer attractive remuneration packages to attract new blood and retain staff. For example, employers could offer meal breaks and paid rest days for their employees.

Promotion Opportunities

Employers should offer more promotion opportunities to retain staff and facilitate staff to acquire knowledge of

emerging technologies to meet their operational needs.

Employees

Employees should enhance their competitiveness by taking the initiative to upgrade their trade-specific skills and knowledge.   They are encouraged to make use of different subsidies provided by the Government, such as the Continuing Education Fund and the Skills Upgrading Scheme Plus, for lifelong learning and career development.