

# Citizen confidence in private security guards in Portugal

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## Abstract

Although private security guards are a visible presence and come into contact with the general public, very little is known about citizens' trust in and satisfaction with private security agents who act not only in the capacity of service providers but as agents of crime prevention. Given the rapid increase in the employment of security guards in Portugal in recent years, the goal of this study is to assess citizens' level of trust in and satisfaction with private security agents in Portugal and whether factors such as citizens' contact experience and their perceptions about the professionalism, imagery, civility and accountability of private security guards influence their confidence in them. Findings from a sample of 163 respondents from the city of Porto suggest that professionalism and accountability appear to be good predictors of citizens' confidence as measured by trust in and satisfaction with private security guards.

## Keywords

Citizen confidence in private security guards, perceptions of private security guards, private security guards, private security

## Introduction

Research on the growth of the private security industry and security guard employment suggests that there has been significant growth both in Europe and around the world. Portugal is no exception. De Waard (1999) noted that in 1996 in Portugal, there were 15,000 security personnel, representing a rate of 152 officers per 100,000 inhabitants. Comparatively, Portugal had 43,459 police officers, representing a rate of 440 officers

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per 100,000 population (De Waard, 1999). According to the Confederation of European Security Services (CoESS) and UNI-Europa, in 2004 the employment of security personnel expanded to 28,000, representing an increase of 87 percent, whereas the number of police officers had grown only to 46,000, a mere 6 percent increase (CoESS and UNI-Europa, 2004). The growth trends continued through 2011. The CoESS and UNI-Europa data in 2011 suggested that there were approximately 38,928 security personnel, representing a growth of 39 percent since 2004 and narrowing the rate of security officers (per 275 inhabitants) versus police officers (per 228 inhabitants) in the general population (CoESS and UNI-Europa, 2011).

Police officers outnumber security guards in Portugal as in most European countries (Van Steden and Sarre, 2007) unlike trends in other parts of the world, where security guards far outnumber public law enforcement officers. Though private security guards are primarily employees of other private entities, such as corporations, they come into contact with citizens because much of public life takes place on what Shearing and Stenning (1981) refer to as *mass private property*. In these work contexts, security guards perform many service-oriented functions and play an important proactive role as the eyes and ears of crime prevention, thus bringing them into contact with citizens, including those whom they are employed to serve and protect. Scholars in the field had noted with skepticism that such growth in the private security industry is tantamount to an expansion and shift of social control from the public to the private sector (Shearing and Stenning, 1983). However, we know little about how citizens view private security guards and what factors influence their trust in and satisfaction with private security guard services. In view of the limited research available on this topic, the goal of this research is to assess citizens' perceptions of private security officers in Portugal. More specifically, we seek to understand what factors determine their confidence in private security personnel, if any.

## Background and literature review

The service industry that comes closest to resembling law enforcement agencies and their work in law and order maintenance is the private security guard industry. Though private security officers differ from police officers in terms of licensing, training standards, and legal authority, some publicly visible functions that security officers perform resemble those of police officers (Nalla and Newman, 1990). For instance, they patrol, they wear uniforms, they are visible at entry and other access-control points, they are often first responders. Despite these 'police-like' functions performed by security officer companies, the fundamental philosophy applied to investigations, apprehensions, and prosecution differs from that of public police because of the 'defining characteristic' that they exist to serve private, not public, interests (Shearing and Stenning, 1981: 209–10).

Some suggest that private police mandates and strategies are similar to those of public police, given the increasing contact and interaction security officers have with the public, as well as the substantial authority they exercise (Sarre, 1998; Stenning, 2000). The role of security officers is continuously becoming more police-like in that they are taking on many roles traditionally handled by public police, though often unarmed: they patrol neighborhoods in marked vehicles and they wear uniforms that may be almost indistinguishable

from public police (Button, 2007). In fact, according to some research, some security guards fail to see any official or legal distinctions between their work and that of public police. This perspective may lead them to engage in police-like activity without proper training (Manzo, 2010). Rigakos (2002: 40) extends this argument based on his work in Canada and the US by suggesting that the public police are 'becoming not only institutional partners with private security . . . but also advocates for those firms.' What complicates this distinction is the extent to which public and private sectors collaborate on and jointly perform some policing tasks, such as investigations, that blur the boundaries between them (Marx, 1987; Shearing, 1992).

A second issue that complicates the distinction between the roles of public police and private security relates to the notions of democratic governance. Wood and Shearing (2007) argue that the state sphere is no longer a leader in developing governance practices, a phenomenon with implications for the future of democratic governance (Wood and Shearing, 2007). They propose that a 'governance deficit' in people's residential, work, and play spaces creates the need for 'democratic and effective nodal governance of security' (Wood and Shearing, 2007: 7). The rapid growth of private security, with its implications for democratic governance, has blurred the distinctions between public and private spaces and conceptions of public and private interests. These changes raise questions about the legitimacy of and procedural justice through public law enforcement (Sunshine and Tyler, 2003).

Regardless of the philosophical debates on what sets public policing apart from private regulation by security officers, the large increases in the employment of private security officers relative to public police and their increasing role in crime prevention suggest that the average citizen is likely to come into contact with private security officers as much as they do with public police, if not more (Sklansky, 2006). As with police services, the mixture of peace maintenance functions, which can be adversarial at times, with service functions, chores that security guards also perform, makes the experience of contact with citizens an important issue for understanding public confidence in private security because of its significance to policy and practice. Given these realities, it is important to ask whether as much attention has been paid to the nature of citizens' interactions with, experiences of, and trust in private security officers as to citizens' attitudes toward public police. Thus, the scope of this paper is not to explore the factors contributing to the expansion of the private security officer industry in Portugal relative to the public police. Instead, the focus is on citizens' views about the officer industry and their encounters with various dimensions of security work, and the impact of those views in determining their confidence in security officers, given the opportunities for greater citizen interaction with private security officers.

### ***Prior research***

Whereas research on citizen experiences with private security guards is limited, there is extensive research on the relationship between demographic and contact characteristics in determining citizens' trust in and satisfaction with police. Since the 1970s (for example, Bordua and Tiftt, 1971; Dean, 1980) and later (Bradford et al., 2009; Engel, 2005; Frank et al., 2005; Reisig and Parks, 2000), a wide range of studies have examined the

relationship of the nature of citizen–police contact, perceived effectiveness, professionalism, and other such attributes of police work to citizen satisfaction with police. The basic premise of this research is that citizens’ confidence in the police is primarily guided by their satisfaction with their interactions and experiences with the police. The various dimensions of these experiences include demographic attributes such as age and socio-economic status (Skogan, 2006), as well as the nature of the encounter experience and the evaluation of the manner in which the agent of social control interacted with the citizen’s attitudes toward public police (Tyler, 1990). More specifically, following on the work of Thibaut and Walker (1975) and Tyler (1990), scholars have argued that, if citizens are treated civilly with dignity and neutrality, people’s disposition toward police officers tends to be favorable. There is evidence to suggest that those who have positive experiences in their contact with police and feel the police have treated them fairly and politely (civility) view the police positively (Engel, 2005; Sunshine and Tyler, 2003; Tyler and Huo, 2002). For instance, Tyler (1990) in his forging case study in a large Midwest city in the US found that citizens’ confidence and satisfaction are guided more by perceptions of whether police treated them civilly and fairly. In other words, the primary goal of much of this work on police–citizen interactions has been to determine factors that predict citizen trust in and satisfaction with police and how these findings can help to foster trust and to build cooperative relationships between the two groups.

There is a considerable volume of research conducted globally on citizen attitudes toward public police. However, we find very few attempts to understand public perceptions of private security officers around the world considering that citizen interactions with security officers have grown steadily in recent decades (Johnston, 1992; Shearing and Stenning, 1983). Historically, private security professionals have been depicted in popular culture as incompetent, poorly paid, and inadequately trained, and they are often referred to as ‘wanna-be-cops’ and ‘rent-a-cops,’ etc. (Nalla and Heraux, 2003). Livingstone and Hart (2003), in their historical analysis of the evolution of the private security guard industry in the UK, argue that security guards endured a series of negative stereotypes before establishing themselves as the people responsible for law and order before the eventual establishment of the public police.

The first systematic study of citizens’ attitudes toward security officers in North America was conducted in Canada by Shearing and his colleagues (1985). In a survey of 209 citizens, they found that respondents did not hold cultural referents or stereotypes of security officers like those found in the US media and popular culture at that time. Shearing et al. (1985) noted that Canadian citizens assessed security officers based on their behavior rather than on any established professional imagery. Building on this work, Nalla and Heraux (2003) surveyed 631 US undergraduate students in 2002 to examine their perceptions of private security. Contrary to assumed negative perceptions (National Advisory Committee on Criminal Justice, 1976), their findings suggested that nearly half the respondents trusted security officers, though most of them did not believe that officers were well educated, trained, or very professional. The findings also suggested that, although about two-thirds of the respondents felt security officers in general were helpful, only about 40 percent felt that security work was stressful, dangerous, or similar to social work. Additional findings from the study suggest that differences in perception are based on demographic characteristics, most notably gender (females are

more likely to have positive perceptions), and having interacted with private security guards (those who had an encounter were less positive), with additional moderate support for perception differences based on family income, race/ethnicity, and employment (Nalla and Heraux, 2003). Interestingly, these findings resemble the findings from broader research on citizen attitudes toward public police.

In Asia, during the early to mid-2000s, two studies among students were conducted in two emerging markets, Singapore and South Korea. The Singaporean study (Nalla and Lim, 2003) consisted of a 260-student sample in 2003. Nearly 70 percent of the respondents were optimistic that security officers make society a better place and work with police to reduce crime. Over 60 percent felt that security officers not only perform a valuable service to their organizations but also help protect customers and are generally helpful. Overall, not only did the Singaporean students have a positive view of security officers but those who had had a positive interaction with a security officer were more likely to have a positive view of officers generally (Nalla and Lim, 2003).

Findings from a sample of students from the second study in South Korea (Nalla and Hwang, 2004) revealed a fairly positive view of security officers. The respondents noted that, for the type of work they do, security officers are not rewarded well enough. They believed security officers are polite and follow up by producing suspected offenders through formal channels that involve public police. Many viewed security officer work as strenuous and dangerous, although most agreed very little of security officers' time is spent apprehending offenders, a finding similar to the Singapore study. Relative to findings from the Singapore study, security officers in Korea appeared to enjoy a greater sense of acceptance by the public, especially among the younger population (Nalla and Hwang, 2004).

In a study conducted in Slovenia (Nalla et al., 2006), the results suggested that university students' perceptions of private security were not positive. The respondents felt that the security officers might be helpful to their employers but not to their clients or citizens. Further, most respondents believed that security officers are neither professional nor well educated (Nalla et al., 2006).

More recently, two studies have examined the general population – one in the Netherlands, a West European country (Van Steden and Nalla, 2010), and the other in India, an emerging market (Nalla et al., 2013). Findings from the Netherlands suggested that about half the respondents felt that security officers are generally helpful and handle calls for assistance with politeness; they were generally satisfied with officers' conduct. Only 20 percent, however, felt that they could trust officers to protect their lives and property, and about 30 percent of the respondents expressed a lack of confidence in the ability of officers to handle complex situations because they were perceived to lack education or training. Further analysis suggested that, although the overall findings were not overwhelmingly positive, younger respondents and those with more education and income tended to be less pessimistic about security officers (Van Steden and Nalla, 2010).

Whereas citizens of the Netherlands tended to have mixed perceptions, Indian citizens generally held positive views regarding the nature of security officers' work, professionalism, and collaboration with law enforcement, and they generally felt security officers to be trustworthy (Nalla et al., 2013). Overall, we conclude from the prior research that

younger and female respondents appear to have more positive views on various dimensions of security officers and their work (Nalla et al., 2013).

Though these findings are drawn from research that is exploratory in nature, it is unclear what factors are influential in shaping citizens' trust in and satisfaction with security officers. Understanding the reasons citizens hold certain attitudes toward private security officers will permit security officer organizations as well as policy makers to develop new strategies to improve public attitudes, to adopt policies that are instrumental to building positive attitudes, and to reinforce those behaviors that are responsible for positive views about security officers and the private security industry. There has been a general recognition, given the increased opportunities for citizens' interactions with security officers, that citizens possess information that may be valuable to security guard organizations as they assess officers' performance. Citizens, as recipients of security officer services, are in a preferred position to be able not only to evaluate their effectiveness but also to supplement the limited performance measures generally available to local and state policy makers engaged in regulating the security officer industry. Thus, this research fills the void by asking the question: What factors determine citizens' confidence in security officers in Portugal? To address this issue we begin by outlining the nature of the security officer industry in Portugal. Next, we examine how these findings compare with findings in research from other European countries. Finally, we assess whether variables such as demographics, contact, views on professionalism, imagery, civility, and supervision explain citizens' trust in and satisfaction with security officers.

## The present study

### Context

The first private security company in Portugal was established in 1965. However, it was only from the 1970s that there was a real impetus in this sector despite low crime rates (Rodrigues, 2011: 78). The Annual Report on Private Security (*Relatório Anual de Segurança Privada* – RASP) developed by a consultation body of the Ministry of Internal Affairs – Conselho de Segurança Privada (CSP) – provides annual data on the private security industry in Portugal.

The RASP data from 2011 suggest that in the previous decade there had been a sustained growth in private security services as well as in the number of private security personnel (CSP, 2012). More specifically, between 2005 and 2011, the number of companies providing private security services increased from 99 to 112, representing a 13 percent increase, and the number of private security guards increased from 34,461 to 40,287, representing a 17 percent increase. During the same period, however, entities with self-protection services (that is, organizations/companies that have their own security services, also known as 'in-house security') increased by 60 percent, while private security training entities grew by a whopping 140 percent.

In Portugal, Law No. 34/2013 of 16 May is the basic legislation that regulates the private security industry, its activities, scope, and the conditions under which it can operate and function. This law defines private security activity as the provision of services to third parties ('contract security') and the organization of self-protection services by any

entities for their own benefit ('in-house security'), both modalities having the purpose of protecting persons and property and preventing crimes. Further, training activity pertaining to private security personnel is also considered a private security function. The scope of private security comprises services such as monitoring movable and immovable assets; access control; personal protection; the operation and management of central receiving and monitoring alarms and video surveillance; the transportation, custody, protection, and distribution of valuables and cash; screening and inspection of luggage, cargo, and passengers at ports and airports; and inspection of tickets on public transport, among others.

The state not only allows the use of private security, but also in certain situations mandates bars and nightclubs, financial institutions, sporting venues, and commercial establishments with a gross area of over 20,000 square meters to adopt private security systems and measures. The law also mandates specific responsibilities and expectations of private security entities and their personnel. These include providing assistance to public authorities with human and material resources when requested by public forces; reporting criminal activities to judicial or police authorities; ensuring that their performance does not induce the public to confuse it with the public police forces; and maintaining and making available a log of all their activities.

The law places some limitations on certain duties of security guards. Examples include undertaking functions that are the exclusive jurisdiction of judicial or police authorities; threatening, inhibiting, or restricting the fundamental rights of citizens; and protecting goods, services, or persons involved in illegal activities.

Private security companies require prior authorization by the *Policia de Segurança Pública* (PSP), one of the Portuguese public police forces, which is responsible not only for the licensing and supervision of private security activities but also for the supervision of training of the private security personnel.

The profession of the private security guard comprises different specialties or professional categories whose functions are expressly defined by law. To be admitted to and to remain in this occupation, private security personnel must hold a professional card. This card denotes that the person has satisfactorily met the special requirements to perform the activity, namely, possessing the physical condition and psychological profile required for the performance of their duties and successfully completing the training courses legally required of them. The professional training of private security personnel comprises, in addition to the initial qualification training, updating and complementary training that can be conducted only by authorized entities. While on duty, private security guards must wear a uniform with a professional card affixed visibly to it; personal protection personnel, central alarm operators, and security consultants are exempt from this rule.

Illicit exercise of private security activity is considered a crime. Those providing private security services without the required authorization are punished with imprisonment from 1 to 5 years or a fine. A similar penalty is applicable to individuals who act as private security guards without being professional card-holders; the penalty is imprisonment of up to 4 years or a fine.

Given the increasing employment of private security guards in Portugal and the greater likelihood of citizens' contact with these personnel in their day-to-day activities, it is unclear how the public perceives security guards in particular and the industry in

general. It is precisely this gap that this study seeks to explore. More specifically, in this exploratory study we examine how citizens of Portugal perceive uniformed private security guards and their work and what factors influence their confidence in such guards.

## **Methodology**

The data for this research were collected from a pencil and paper survey administered during the period February to April 2013. The survey questionnaire developed by Nalla and Heraux (2003) and Van Steden and Nalla (2010) formed the basis of the survey instrument. The survey was first written in English and translated into Portuguese. The survey instrument was back translated into English to check for validity and reliability and administered to a small sample of five people of different ages and educational backgrounds. Short follow-up interviews were conducted in order to identify any problems in comprehension, and their feedback was adopted to tweak the survey instrument. Additional questions were added to the survey to meet the needs of the local context.

Data for this study are drawn from a sample of 163 respondents from the city of Porto in Portugal. Self-reported questionnaires were administered to adults only after their verbal consent to participate in the study. The sample was composed in two phases. In the initial phase, 103 individuals were recruited from various areas of Porto district. In the second stage, 60 university students were recruited.

## **Empirical specifications**

### ***Dependent variables***

As noted earlier, the goal of this research is to assess citizens' confidence in security officers. Drawing on the work of Jackson and Bradford (2010), we argue that trust and satisfaction are related and represent the larger dimension of confidence in general. We separate the two dimensions because one can have trust in security officers without being satisfied with their performance, or vice versa. Consistent with prior literature in policing, the dependent variables for the analyses are respondents' *trust* in and *satisfaction* with security officers. *Trust* is measured by a single question: 'Citizens can generally trust security guards to protect their lives and properties.' And *satisfaction* is measured by the item: 'Generally, I am satisfied with the way security guards conduct themselves.' Respondents are asked to respond on a Likert scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

### ***Independent variables***

In order to explore the possible predictor variables that could influence public trust in and satisfaction with security officers, the following independent variables were included: *characterization of experience, professionalism, imagery, accountability, and civility* of security guards. The possible answers for each question ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Drawing from prior literature in policing (Regoli et al., 1989), we measured *professionalism* by asking the respondents to show the level of their agreement with the

following questions: 'Security officers are well educated;' 'Security officers are well trained;' 'Security officers, in general, are able to handle complex situations.' Drawing from popular culture representations of the type of work security guards engage in (for example, they walk around and do nothing or watch monitors all day), we developed a variable *job imagery* (imagery for short), which consisted of three questions: 'Security officers run a high risk of getting injured in the course of their work;' 'Security work is dangerous;' and 'Security work is complex.' To measure *accountability*, we rely on Skogan's work (2009), in which he argues for accountability as a measure to assess citizens' confidence in police, a measure that broadly reflects both trust and satisfaction. This measure consisted of three questions: 'Existing laws are adequate to control the activity of security officers;' 'Existing supervision of the work of security guards is effective to prevent abuses of power and offenses;' and 'Security guards are held accountable when they abuse their power or commit offenses.' Finally, drawing from Sunshine and Tyler (2003), we included questions that tap into respondents' impressions of the sensitivity and politeness in security guards' interactions with citizens, which parallel research questions about citizen interactions with police. We called this variable *civility* and measured it through three questions: 'Security officers, in general, are sensitive to the public;' 'Security officers are generally helpful;' and 'Security officers handle calls for assistance with politeness.' All the variables loaded with values exceeding .60 and with Cronbach's alphas ranging from .73 to .88.

A set of demographic variables are included as control variables to assess whether relationships between various independent variables and confidence in security guards are valid irrespective of *age, gender, marital status, education, family income, area of residence, and property ownership*, if any. Finally, in order to determine which factors predict citizens' trust in and satisfaction with private security guards, Ordinary Least Squares analyses were performed.

## Analysis and findings

### *Demographic characteristics of the respondents*

In this study, a total of 163 participants completed the survey. Respondents' demographic characteristics and contact experience with security guards are presented in Table 1. The sample contained 107 females (66 percent) and 56 males (34 percent), with a mean age of 33 years. A majority of the respondents (67 percent) were single, divorced, separated, or widowed, and the remaining 33 percent were married and/or living with their partners. With respect to the education levels of the participants, nearly a quarter of all the respondents (23 percent) had completed 12 or fewer years of schooling, 43 percent were higher education students, and the remaining 35 percent had achieved a college degree.

In response to the economic variable, 21 percent reported that their family income level was below average, 13 percent reported an above-average income, and the remaining 66 percent of the respondents reported an average family income. A majority of the participants were urban dwellers (77 percent) and owned their own residences (81 percent). Finally, the respondents were asked about their encounters with security officers. Of those who had contact with security guards ( $N = 121$ ), 71 percent characterized their

**Table 1.** Respondents' characteristics and contact experience (N = 163).

Variables	Description	n	Percent
Age	Less than 35 years (0)	107	65.6
	35 years and over (1)	56	34.4
Gender	Female (1)	107	65.6
	Male (0)	56	34.4
Marital status	Single/Divorced/Separated/Widowed (0)	109	66.9
	Married/Living together (1)	54	33.1
Education	Up to 12 years of schooling (1)	37	22.8
	Attendance at higher education (2)	69	42.6
	Higher education completed (3)	56	34.6
Family income	Below average (1)	34	20.9
	Average (2)	108	66.3
	Above average (3)	21	12.9
Area of residence	Rural (0)	38	23.3
	Urban (1)	125	76.7
Property ownership status	Own (1)	130	80.7
	Rented (0)	31	19.3
Characterization of the experience	Neutral/Negative (0)	35	28.9
	Positive (1)	86	71.1

encounters as courteous and polite (that is, positive) and 29 percent noted a neutral or negative view of their experiences (only one person noted negative experiences with private security guards). Those who did not report contact are not reported in the table.

### *Findings on various attributes of security guards*

The descriptive statistics (Table 2) outline respondents' views on various dimensions of security work. These include the two dependent variables representing *trust* and *satisfaction*. The remaining attributes are *professionalism*, *imagery*, *accountability*, and *civility*. On the question of citizens' views on *trust* in security guards' ability to protect their lives and property, only 41 percent felt they could trust them to do so, and a little over one-third of the respondents (35 percent) were unsure. In comparison with these findings, prior research on this issue in Europe found that, in the Netherlands (Van Steden and Nalla, 2010), 20 percent expressed trust, whereas in Slovenia (Nalla et al., 2006), 54 percent noted a higher degree of trust in security guards. Regarding the issue of *satisfaction* with security guards, a majority of participants (61 percent) in the current study expressed satisfaction with the way in which security guards conduct themselves, a figure considerably higher than in the Netherlands (51 percent) (Van Steden and Nalla, 2010).

On the question of *professionalism*, nearly 43 percent of respondents felt that security guards are well educated, and about one-third (38 percent) considered that guards are able to handle complex situations. However, less than 20 percent of the respondents felt

**Table 2.** Citizen perceptions on various attributes of private security guards (N = 163).

	SD/D		Neutral		A/SA		X	SD
	n	%	n	%	n	%		
<i>Trust</i> (dependent variable)								
Citizens generally trust security guards to protect their lives and properties	39	24.1	57	35.2	66	40.7	3.14	0.94
<i>Satisfaction</i> (dependent variable)								
Generally, I am satisfied with the way security guards conduct themselves	14	8.6	49	30.2	99	61.1	3.57	0.75
<i>Professionalism</i> (Cronbach's alpha = .73)								
Security guards are well educated	14	8.6	79	48.8	69	42.6	3.35	0.65
Security guards are well trained	39	24.1	92	56.8	31	19.1	2.95	0.69
Security guards, in general, are able to handle complex situations	40	24.7	61	37.7	61	37.7	3.09	0.86
<i>Imagery</i> (Cronbach's alpha = .78)								
Security guards run a high risk of getting injured in the course of their work	17	10.4	49	30.1	97	59.5	3.58	0.91
Security guard work is dangerous	23	14.1	38	23.3	102	62.6	3.55	0.88
Security guard work is complex	56	34.4	55	33.7	52	31.9	2.96	1.00
<i>Accountability</i> (Cronbach's alpha = .75)								
Existing laws are adequate to control the activity of security guards	27	16.7	115	71.0	20	12.3	2.91	0.64
Existing supervision of the work of security guards is effective to prevent abuses of power and offenses	31	19.1	98	60.5	33	20.4	2.98	0.73
Security guards are held accountable when they abuse their power or commit offenses	22	13.5	68	41.7	73	44.8	2.31	0.70
<i>Civility</i> (Cronbach's alpha = .88)								
Security guards, in general, are sensitive to the public	35	21.6	68	42.0	59	36.4	3.17	0.82
Security guards are generally helpful	19	11.7	39	24.1	104	64.2	3.56	0.76
Security guards handle calls for assistance with politeness	17	10.5	54	33.3	91	56.2	3.48	0.73

Note: SD/D: strongly disagree/disagree; A/SA: agree/strongly agree; X: mean; SD: standard deviation.

that security guards are well trained. Interestingly, about half of the respondents were unsure about guards' educational qualifications or the amount of training they receive.

On questions relating to *imagery*, nearly two-thirds of the respondents felt that guards runs a high risk of getting injured in the course of their work (60 percent) and that security work is dangerous (63 percent). However, only 32 percent felt that their work is complex, with a similar distribution among those who disagreed or were unsure.

Comparatively, findings from Slovenia (Nalla et al., 2006) and the Netherlands (Van Steden and Nalla, 2010) suggest that views were fairly divergent on the issues of imagery of security work: 81 percent and 34 percent, respectively, felt the risk of injury was high; likewise, 61 percent and 35 percent felt it was dangerous. These numbers suggest that citizens of the Netherlands were less sure about these issues. Comparable data were not available for the question measuring citizens' opinions about whether security work is complex.

Regarding *accountability*, an overwhelming percentage of respondents (71 percent) were unsure about whether existing laws were adequate to control the activity of security guards, and a similar group of respondents (61 percent) were uncertain about whether existing supervision of the work of security guards is effective to prevent guards' abuse of power and or their commission of offenses. Slightly less than half of all the respondents (45 percent) thought that guards are held accountable when they abuse their power or violate rules and expectations.

Finally, on the issue of *civility*, a majority of the respondents felt that security guards are generally helpful (64 percent) and handle calls for assistance with politeness (56 percent). However, only about one-third of the respondents (36 percent) felt that they are sensitive to the public. Findings from the Netherlands suggest that 53 percent of the Dutch population felt that security guards are helpful, 50 percent felt they handle calls with politeness, and 42 percent felt they are sensitive to the public. These findings on civility are comparable to the findings from Portugal.

## Additional analyses

Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression has been employed in order to examine the relationship between the dependent and independent variables. For each dependent variable, a partial model with demographic variables and a full model with both demographic and key independent variables (*characterization of the experience, professionalism, imagery, accountability, and civility*) were analyzed. This approach has enabled us to examine the mediating effects of these variables in the association between the demographic variables and the dependent variables.

Table 3 shows the result of an analysis with *trust* and *satisfaction* regressed on the demographic variables and key independent variables.

### *A partial and a full model for trust*

The first column represents a partial model based on demographic characteristics regressed on the *trust* variable, which explains 6 percent of variance. The results demonstrate that most demographic characteristics do not have an influence on citizens' satisfaction with security guards, with the exception of *area of residence* and *gender*. Specifically, urban residents have a lower level of trust in security guards ( $b = -.67, p < .05$ ) whereas females have higher level of trust ( $b = .75, p < .01$ ).

The second column represents a full model in which the variance increased to 34 percent when the key independent variables were included. In the full model, none of the demographic variables reach statistical significance. The significance of *area of*

**Table 3.** Ordinary Least Squares models (trust in and satisfaction with security guards regressed on demographic and key independent variables).

Variables	Trust		Satisfaction	
	Partial model 1	Full model 2	Partial model 3	Full model 4
	B/Beta (SE)	B/Beta (SE)	B/Beta (SE)	B/Beta (SE)
Age (>36 years = 1)	-.10/-.03 (.35)	-.39/-.20 (.23)	-.02/-.01 (.16)	-.29*/-.19 (.14)
Gender (Female = 1)	.75**/.23 (.27)	.15/.08 (.16)	.26*/.17 (.13)	.09/.06 (.10)
Marital status (Married/ Living together = 1)	-.03/-.01 (.36)	.14/.07 (.23)	.13/.08 (.17)	.14/.09 (.14)
Education	.03/.02 (.17)	-.04/-.03 (.11)	.08/.08 (.08)	-.05/-.05 (.06)
Family income	.02/.01 (.22)	-.05/-.03 (.13)	-.09/-.07 (.11)	-.01/-.01 (.08)
Area of residence (Urban = 1)	-.67*/-.18 (.30)	-.25/-.11 (.19)	-.07/-.04 (.14)	.05/.03 (.11)
Property ownership status (Own = 1)	.02/.00 (.33)	.02/.01 (.21)	.20/.10 (.16)	.04/.02 (.12)
Characterization of the experience (Positive = 1)	–	.29/.14 (.17)	–	.00/.00 (.10)
Professionalism	–	.17***/.34 (.05)	–	.07*/.17 (.03)
Imagery	–	.07*/.17 (.03)	–	-.01/-.05 (.02)
Accountability	–	.10*/.21 (.04)	–	.07**/.19 (.03)
Civility	–	.01/.03 (.05)	–	.20***/.58 (.03)
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	.06	.34	.01	.59

Notes: B, SE, and Beta denote unstandardized coefficient, standard error, and standardized coefficient, respectively.

\* $p \leq .05$ ; \*\* $p \leq .01$ ; \*\*\* $p \leq .001$ .

*residence* and *gender* disappear, suggesting that the association between these two variables and the respondents' trust in security officers is mediated by the other independent variables.

Among the key independent variables, *professionalism* ( $b = .17, p < .001$ ), *imagery* ( $b = .07, p < .05$ ), and *accountability* ( $b = .10, p < .05$ ) had a significant relationship to *trust* in security officers. In other words, people who believe that security officers are professional, that they engage in stressful, difficult, and dangerous work, and that they are accountable for their actions express a higher level of trust in them than those who do not hold such perceptions. The variables *characterization of the contact experience* or *civility* did not have a statistically significant relationship to *trust*. That is, the nature of the

experience with both contact and civil treatment, which represents security guards being helpful, sensitive, and polite, did not influence their trust in security guards.

### *A partial and a full model for satisfaction*

Column 3 presents the OLS partial model for the dependent variable *satisfaction* with security guards. When satisfaction with security officers is regressed on the demographic variables, a result similar to the model with trust was observed. Thus, the results demonstrate that most demographic characteristics do not have an influence on citizens' trust in security guards, with the exception of *gender*. Females reported higher levels of satisfaction with security guards ( $b = .26, p < .05$ ).

Column 4 shows the full model for the dependent variable *satisfaction*. Whereas the partial model explains 1 percent variance, the full model explains 59 percent. In the full model, it is interesting to find that none of the demographic variables reaches statistical significance, with the exception of *age* ( $b = -.29, p < .05$ ), suggesting that younger people are more satisfied with security guards. For the key independent variables, *professionalism* ( $b = .07, p < .05$ ), *accountability* ( $b = .07, p < .01$ ), and *civility* ( $b = .20, p < .001$ ) are shown to shape people's satisfaction with security officers. Interestingly, *civility* emerges as a strong predictor of satisfaction with security guards.

## **Discussion and conclusion**

The focus of this exploratory study was to examine factors that determine perceived citizens' confidence (measured as trust and satisfaction) in security guards in Portugal. Findings from the partial models suggest that gender is the only demographic variable that is related to *trust* and *satisfaction*. In addition, the area of residence was found to be a good predictor of trust in but not of satisfaction with security guards. However, in full models that include our key independent variables, none of the demographic variables explains *trust* in security guards, and the only demographic characteristic that explains *satisfaction* with security guards is age, younger individuals expressing more satisfaction than older ones. This result contrasts with prior findings from the Netherlands where younger residents appeared to be less trusting of security guards. It is unclear if security guards appear to pay close attention to younger groups of people because they may anticipate more concerns arising from them as compared with those over 35 years of age. Further, it is also unclear if this is a function of assignment and placement of security guard services.

An interesting finding from this study is that contact characterization (that is, positive contact with security guards) is not a predictor of citizen satisfaction with and trust in security guards. This may suggest that positive experience by itself is not a good predictor of citizen satisfaction with and trust in security guards. This finding implies, that although security guards may be trained to be courteous in their interactions with citizens, other factors such as professionalism, accountability, imagery, and civility are more important.

Perhaps the most interesting finding from this study is that, although imagery is a significant predictor of trust, it does not necessarily translate into citizen satisfaction with

security guards. On the other hand, civility is a strong predictor of citizen satisfaction but does not explain trust. That is, to generate greater confidence in the security guard industry, projecting an appearance of complexity in the nature of the work is not sufficient in itself. Though the findings suggest that, when we measure citizen confidence as two separate components (that is, trust and satisfaction), citizens appear to react differentially to each of these dimensions: the two strongest predictors of citizen trust in and satisfaction with security guards are professionalism and accountability. That is, irrespective of the variations in the predictive ability of various factors, citizens' confidence in security guards is determined by how professional and accountable they are in discharging their responsibilities in their interactions with the public.

This study has some important implications given the changing nature of the roles security guards have begun to assume in functions relating to social regulation as witnessed in other parts of Europe and in the Americas (Manzo, 2009; Rigakos, 2002; Wood and Shearing, 2007). The results from this study highlight factors that are important for citizens' trust in and satisfaction with security guards. Interventions and policy measures aimed at improving citizens' trust in and satisfaction with security guards should consider these factors. Overall, in other words, our findings highlight the importance of the role that security guards' training, education, and regulation play in shaping citizens' confidence in them.

These findings are valuable to different actors. First among these is the government, which is not only the regulator of this sector but also its customer. As noted by Van Steden and De Waard (2013), in recent years governments increasingly have begun to contract security guards, who are thus playing a growing role in defending public interests. Second, these findings hold value for private security organizations, because they can be used to legitimize the increasing presence of their guards, to provide better services, and to train guards to act in a more reliable and satisfactory way. Our findings are an important contribution, both to policy makers and to private security organizations, since these offer insights for the development of new strategies to enhance public attitudes toward and views about security guards.

However, the present study has some limitations and shortcomings that need to be taken into account. The sample of the present study is not representative of the Portuguese population: on the one hand, it is a small sample and, on the other hand, the survey respondents have a level of education significantly higher than the Portuguese population average, and females and young individuals are overrepresented. Thus, the results should be interpreted with caution, and further research should include more extensive and diversified samples.

Future studies should examine specific population groups and contexts to obtain a different perspective on this phenomenon. Thus, we believe it would be interesting to explore the views of young people, minorities, or individuals with particular personal styles, who are not infrequently the main targets of security guards, that is, those categories of people who fit into risk profiles conceived by security guards and who are subject to greater surveillance and control (Löfstrand, 2013; Wakefield, 2003). Furthermore, we also indicate that future research should explore the views of security guards and their work in specific contexts, particularly in nightlife locales such as bars and clubs, where there is greater controversy regarding these professionals (Castro and Agra, 2007; Hobbs et al., 2003). Unlike in other countries, in Portugal there is no designation distinction

between these guards and the guards present in other contexts, and so, as Shearing et al. (1985) suggest, the public does not have a stereotype or cultural reference for private security guards. Instead, people perceive security guards in the context of their behavior, not based on a clearly defined professional image.

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