Evaluating the Resiliency and Business Survival Strategies of Private Security Agencies during Covid-19 and Implications for marginalized Communities: A Study of Selected Cases in Ontario, Canada

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Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted global business operations, placing private security agencies under significant operational strain. In Ontario, Canada, these agencies faced increased demand for services in healthcare and critical infrastructure, while also contending with workforce vulnerabilities, shifting regulatory requirements, and fluctuating public trust. This study uses a comparative case study of Securitas Canada, Paragon Security, and G4S Security Canada to evaluate their resiliency and survival strategies during the pandemic. Framed by Mitroff's Five Phases of Crisis Management and the Social Vulnerability Framework, the research examines how these strategies affected marginalized communities, particularly low-income and immigrant populations. While technological innovation, distributed teams, and service diversification supported operational continuity, they also introduced ethical concerns around over-surveillance, limited inclusivity, and uneven service delivery. The findings reveal that agencies with equity-oriented operational frameworks were better positioned to maintain public trust and service quality. This study underscores the importance of integrating cultural competency, robust accountability mechanisms, and inclusive engagement into private security governance. It advocates for a model of private security that prioritize both resilience and equity in future crisis preparedness

Keywords: *Business Resiliency, Canada, COVID-19 Pandemic, Crisis Management, Ethical Considerations, G4S Security, Marginalized Communities, Ontario, Paragon Security, Private Security Agencies, Public Safety, Securitas Canada, Social Vulnerability, Survival Strategies, Technological Surveillance.*

Introduction

Background and Context

The COVID-19 pandemic served as a watershed moment for global business systems, prompting rapid changes in organizational operations, workforce structures, and public-private partnerships. In Ontario, Canada, private security agencies became indispensable in maintaining order and securing essential services, particularly as public law enforcement agencies faced capacity constraints. These firms were tasked with enforcing health mandates, safeguarding healthcare and critical infrastructure, and regulating compliance with public safety protocols. However, their commercial foundations and client-driven priorities raised concerns about legitimacy, accountability, and ethical conduct, especially as their roles increasingly encroached on traditional state functions.

These challenges were most acute in marginalized communities, where the effects of the pandemic were disproportionately severe. Low-income, immigrant, and racialized populations faced not only heightened health and economic vulnerabilities but also increased exposure to technologically enhanced

surveillance and enforcement activities. Many private security personnel lacked training in cultural competence and trauma-informed practice, which amplified community mistrust. In areas with histories of over-policing, the introduction of AI-enabled surveillance systems, although efficient, intensified concerns around privacy, transparency, and consent. While some agencies attempted to adopt inclusive practices, such as local recruitment or partnerships with grassroots organizations, these efforts were inconsistent and unsupported by a unified regulatory framework.

This study examines how three leading private security agencies in Ontario—Securitas Canada, Paragon Security, and G4S Security—adapted their operations, addressed workforce challenges, and interacted with marginalized communities during the COVID-19 pandemic. Using Mitroff's Five Phases of Crisis Management and the Social Vulnerability Framework as guiding lenses, the research explores the intersection between organizational resiliency strategies and social equity outcomes. By analyzing these agencies' pandemic responses, the paper contributes to ongoing debates about privatized security governance, ethical crisis management, and the need for inclusive emergency preparedness frameworks.

Problem Statement

The strategies implemented by private security agencies to navigate the crisis have yet to be thoroughly explored in the academic literature. Studies on 'private security' in other sectors have tended to analyze business responses to crises without considering the broader socio-economic implications. Thus, private security has not been studied in detail regarding its role in facilitating other business operations. In addition, the disproportionate effects of the pandemic on marginalized groups, such as low-income and immigrant populations, demonstrates the importance of

investigating what role these agencies played (or did not play) in systemic vulnerabilities during the pandemic period [18].

Research Objectives

This study aims to:
1. Evaluate the resiliency and survival strategies adopted by private security agencies in Ontario during the COVID-19 pandemic.
2. Analyze the socio-economic implications of these strategies for marginalized communities, particularly regarding access to safety and security services.
3. Provide policy recommendations to enhance the inclusivity and effectiveness of private security operations in future crises.

Research Questions

1. What strategies did private security agencies in Ontario employ to ensure business survival during the pandemic?
2. How did these strategies align with established resiliency and crisis management models?
3. What were the socio-economic impacts of these strategies on marginalized communities, particularly in terms of equitable access to security services?

Relevance of the Study

In this regard, the context of this research significantly contributes to academic and practical discourses. It also adds to the literature on crisis management from an educational point of view. It contributes to a sector where it has evidenced a critical societal role in research that has been relatively under-researched. The findings have actionable implications for the perspectives of policymakers, private security leaders, and community advocates to increase resilience and equity in safety services. The study focuses on the crosscutting relations between business survival strategies and social equity; the lessons highlight that systematic inclusion in the security sector crisis management should occur.

Structure of the Paper

The first part of the paper reviews, in full, literature on private security, crisis management, and social vulnerability frameworks, identifying critical gaps that this study attempts to fill. The qualitative case study methodology is outlined to analyze hypotheticals from three Ontario-based agencies to derive insights based on the method. Results on resiliency strategies, operational adjustments, and community impacts are presented and discussed in broader theoretical and practical frameworks. The paper provides policy recommendations and research opportunities for improving the integration of private security in disaster preparedness frameworks.

Literature Review

Private Security Agencies in Ontario Canada

Professional organizations that operates as private security agencies offer protective services to individuals, businesses, and communities. Such services include surveillance, access control, risk assessment, event security, loss prevention, and asset protection. Private security, however, is different from public in that it is conducted in a commercial atmosphere, providing clients with services based on their needs. There is often no authority or accountability, and as the first line of defense, private security personnel operate in private properties, public spaces, and critical infrastructure to complement public safety [19].

Growth in the use of private security agencies has been dramatic between Ontario and the rest of the provinces, and this has been associated with a growing demand for a range of specialized safety services in both urban and rural areas. They came into increased use as they altered to enforce public health mandates, manage crowds, and secure healthcare facilities due to the COVID-19 pandemic. For instance, some agencies are changing their roles:

Securitas Canada, Paragon Security, and G4S Security, whose operations are within sectors like healthcare, schools, retail, and community safety [2].

Private security agencies complement the overloaded public safety institutions during crisis times as critical infrastructure. These agencies enforced public health measures during the COVID-19 pandemic, securing essential facilities and ensuring safety in volatile environments. According to studies, Securitas Canada, Paragon Security, and G4S Security, with their respective private security firms, had to contend with a surge of demand for services compounded with workforce challenges, operational disruptions as well as the increased risk to frontline employees [2].

Private security agencies in the rest of the world showed varying levels of preparedness during a crisis. Firms like Securitas can span large distances and assets globally, whereas smaller firms cannot scale up, simply due to their internal lack of scalability. Workforce management innovations, partnerships with local governments, and service diversification to meet emerging client needs (all of these were included in the effective strategies mentioned in [19]). However, critical gaps exist in addressing systemic inequities, especially in these marginalized spaces.

Structure of Private Security Agencies

Private security agencies typically operate in hierarchical structures designed to ensure operational efficiency and adaptability. The structure is generally divided into:

1. **Executive Management**: Responsible for strategic planning, client acquisition, and compliance with regulatory frameworks.
2. **Operations Management**: Oversees day-to-day activities, including workforce allocation, training, and operational logistics.
3. **Frontline Personnel**: Includes security guards, patrol officers, shift supervisors,

and event security staff who directly engage with clients and the public.

Agencies like **Securitas Canada** and **G4S Security** adopt globally standardized models, leveraging their scale and resources to maintain consistency across operations. Meanwhile, firms like **Paragon Security**, with a local focus, employ a more community-driven structure, emphasizing flexibility and localized service delivery.

Private Security Agencies Regulatory Framework in Ontario

The Ministry of the Solicitor General administers Ontario's Private Security and Investigative Services Act, 2005 (PSISA) to govern the private security industry. This legislation allows for standards and requirements to be established about licensing, training, and operation in which the service of private security personnel is presented professionally and professionally. Provisions in the PSISA include:

1. Valid licenses for security personnel. They need to undergo background checks and also a standard training course.
2. Topics are conflict resolution, use of force, and legal responsibilities. Depending upon the particular roles, specialized training may be needed, such as crowd control and facility security in a healthcare space.
3. Ethics and Accountability: Agencies are subject to periodic audits and have a code of conduct to ensure compliance and accountability [9]. While this comprehensive framework is certainly robust, gaps remain in its enforcement and in addressing how to simultaneously meet the specific needs of disadvantaged communities.

For example, the PSISA only sets minimum training standards still, there is a need for cultural competency and de-escalation techniques [2] which are some essential factors for working with diverse populations.

Private Security Agencies and Crisis Management

Complementing public safety structures, private security agencies have historically filled in areas of crisis when state institutions are taxed beyond their limits. During the COVID-19 pandemic, governments struggled to keep a grip on highly fluid challenges to public health, but it was then that their contributions became particularly visible. For instance, security services in healthcare and logistics experienced a significant demand in Ontario. Hospitals were supported and access to critical facilities was monitored by agencies such as Paragon Security that also implemented social distancing protocols [19].

At the same time, Securitas Canada and G4S were more prepared because they used their global networks for quick and efficient deployment of people and equipment. Scalability and the strategic use of resources for the rainy day, to the extent that we can continue operating, became more important. The pandemic revealed that these agencies are not responding fast and may lack coordination with other institutions like public health and government agencies. This broader engagement further reinforced the status of private security as a critical actor in the contemporary crises [20].

For instance, citizens of such countries as the United States, Britain, and South Africa, with their complex private security contingency systems, offer comparative points of view on how private security agencies have transformed to deal with significant events. After the 9/11 attacks on terrorism, the security dimension in the United States changed dramatically. It also precipitated a massive increase in private sector job involvement in areas like transportation security, border protection, and defense of critical infrastructure. Upon the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, numerous private agencies were already embedded in crucial systems and could rapidly shift into

temperature screening, remote monitoring, and compliance monitoring at public facilities [21].

The Security Industry Authority (SIA) regulates private security services in the United Kingdom through a central framework. Due to the pandemic, we had a consistent regulation infrastructure that allowed us to deploy people (trainers and pursuers) uniformly, use the same training standards, and enforce quarantine for hospitals, retail settings, and other settings. South Africa offers a contrastingly different scenario. During the pandemic, these agencies were essential in their role as public security forces of the country by enforcing lockdown regulations and providing order in communities with insufficient police presence. Essentially, these services filled a vacuum in public safety in under-policed townships and informal settlements [18].

Despite this, while the operation objectives are similar, Ontario is very different from these countries alone regarding how these agencies dealt with equity issues, ensured quality training, and held themselves accountable for their actions when using surveillance tools. This leads to a somewhat fragmented system in Ontario where provincial operations through provincial licensing and training requirements are interwoven with funding from either the federal government or the provinces. The regulatory framework is set for baseline standards of professionalism but lacks the central piece of the United Kingdom, cohesion. Whereas Ontario adopted a decentralized approach, which was less predictable because of the need to adapt training content and delivery rapidly, the UK model provided more predictable deployments and quality assurance during the pandemic.

Regarding surveillance, private agencies in the United States have adopted sophisticated tools such as facial recognition and surveillance systems driven by Artificial Intelligence. By the way, this usually happens without much oversight, which raises questions about privacy and data use in the most egregious ways.

Ontario was more conservative because we had better data governance laws and were more sensitive to civil liberties. Different jurisdictions also varied in access to private security service equity. Where there were social disadvantages in Ontario, socioeconomically advantaged neighbors had more private security while socioeconomically disadvantaged communities were far less protected. It mirrored the situation in South Africa, which has differential access to private security that further compounds already skewed patterns of public safety coverage [19].

These comparative experiences allow us to reflect on the changing role of private security in current crisis management. The agencies will be defined by their ability to scale, integrate with public systems, and conduct high-pressure operations at ethical standards. Ontario's experience illustrates both the potential and the pitfalls of involving the private sector in emergency response. It also revealed gaps in training agility, resource availability, and accountability mechanisms, which are typically addressed by key public agencies providing critical support during a pandemic as lessons from the United Kingdom suggest, to achieve such a move, the body must become more centralized, more responsive, and more trusted by the public. At the same time, the experiences of the US and South Africa speak to the risk associated with unregulated surveillance expansion and the possibility of reinvigorating social inequities.

Policymakers and researchers must carefully assess these dynamics to develop frameworks that leverage the strengths of private security while safeguarding the public interest. Future crises are not unlikely to necessitate multi-sectoral collaboration such that integrating private agencies into emergency management planning with distinct roles, oversight mechanisms, and community engagement strategies will be essential to achieve an effective and equitable outcome [20].

Theoretical Frameworks

Crisis Management Theories and the Private Security Response

Crisis management theories offer a means for analyzing organizational behavior during acute disruption. The Five Phases of Crisis Management, proposed by [10], is one of the most complete and widely quoted models to address the cyclical processes of signal detection, prevention, containment, recovery, and learning. According to this model, crisis management means readying response, active detection of early warning signs at once, preparation of mitigation strategies, and internalization of lessons learned after the crisis. These theoretical principles were helpful during the COVID-19 pandemic as unexpected, high-consequence problems confronted institutions in all sectors. Until now, private security agencies typically fall outside the traditional discussion of crisis response. Yet, they have been found to become pivotal actors in terms of overseeing the security of public and private spaces. The model is more generalizable as a bridge to Mitroff's stages, especially in hazardous sectors such as healthcare and essential service agencies.

For instance, Ontario's Paragon Security rapidly redeployed its workforce to hospitals, long-term care homes, and vaccination centers, an example of practices in line with Mitroff's strategic containment and recovery framework. Examples of operational changes were re-training staff in infection control along with better attendance scheduling to minimize exposure risk and using digital monitoring that gave better situational awareness. These are the containment and recovery phases, during which damage minimization and restoration of functional status in the organization rise to the top of the list. Furthermore, some private security firms also appeared to be engaged in the learning phase, conducting internal reviews, requesting employee feedback, and revising protocols relating to public health emergencies in the future [2]. It indicates a growing maturity in how the private sector approaches crisis engagement. However, it can also ask questions about who oversees the private companies that fill the roles reserved for the state. In times of complex crises, there is a need to integrate private security actors in national crisis management practices regarding operational links and by developing a new approach towards the position of private security actors in public safety governance.

Social Vulnerability Framework and Marginalized Communities

According to [3], disaster research focuses on environmental threats. However, they move this focus to pre-existing social conditions that will determine how communities will experience and recover from crises, which they call the Social Vulnerability Framework. In this way, the focus of this framework rests on the fact that vulnerability is socially constructed and is deeply embedded in systemic inequalities like poverty, racial discrimination, housing insecurity, and lack of access to healthcare and education. Within marginalized communities, these vulnerabilities were compounded in the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, as many living within these communities faced increased exposure to infection and a reduced capacity to access resources that limit this vulnerability towards greater resilience. These communities were entered by private security agencies, some of which were contracted to enforce public health measures, prepared with varying degrees and understanding. They acted directly in the everyday reality of vulnerability through their roles in monitoring public behavior, access restriction, and enforcement assistance. The effectiveness of these agencies in reducing or exacerbating community risk often depended on their ability to engage in dialogue with culturally diverse populations in a manner that was both inclusive and respectful.

Many of the principles outlined in the Social Vulnerability Framework were reflected in the measures implemented by G4S and Securitas. They placed multilingual staff in the field or modified the protocol to address language barriers and community particulars [16]. However, these practices varied across regions, sometimes even appropriate due to help from contractual guidance, but rarely driven by systemic policy. However, when such sensitivity was absent, the deployment of private security people had the risk of reinforcing historical patterns of surveillance and exclusion in places with a history of over-policing and state disengagement [4]. Thus, the framework helps illuminate the dual potential of private security interventions for increasing or decreasing equity through culturally appropriate engagement or rigid enforcement. Future policies mandating that all contractor security personnel be trained in anti-racism, trauma-informed care, and community collaboration would lead us closer to outcomes that are more equitable. Further research should also examine how private security agencies can be maintained accountable to the populations in which they operate in crisis management, in this way, meeting both operational effectiveness and social justice.

Additional Analytical Lenses

An additional analytical lens that significantly enriches the theoretical framing of private security's role in crisis governance is *Surveillance Capitalism*, as articulated by [24]. Originally conceptualized to critique data extraction practices in Big Tech, this framework is increasingly relevant to private security agencies, particularly as they adopt AI-powered analytics, biometric surveillance, and remote monitoring systems. During the COVID-19 pandemic, such tools became central to quarantine enforcement, healthcare access control, and compliance monitoring. Surveillance capitalism interrogates how these technologies monetize behavioral data with minimal public consent or oversight, raising concerns about power asymmetries, privacy erosion, and democratic accountability.

When applied alongside Mitroff's crisis management model, which emphasizes organizational preparedness and post-crisis learning, surveillance capitalism prompts a critical interrogation of whose interests are truly served in crisis responses. For instance, while Mitroff focuses on technological adaptation as a signal of learning, Zuboff's framework exposes how such "learning" may entrench invasive data practices without adequate regulatory safeguards. Furthermore, integrating this lens with the Social Vulnerability Framework highlights how racialized, immigrant, and economically marginalized groups endure the most of intensified surveillance. These communities are more likely to be targeted by predictive algorithms or biometric identification, amplifying structural inequities under the guise of technological innovation. Together, these frameworks offer a multidimensional critique of how private security operates during crises— where efficiency may come at the cost of equity and civil liberties.

Impact of COVID-19 on Marginalized Communities

The COVID-19 pandemic disproportionately affected socio-economically marginalized communities in Ontario, Racialized populations, immigrants, and low-income residents experienced higher infection rates, unstable employment, and limited access to healthcare and social support services [14]. These vulnerabilities prompted the deployment of private security agencies in under-resourced neighborhoods to enforce pandemic-related measures such as lockdowns, crowd control, and restricted access to public and healthcare facilities.

However, the placement of private security in these communities sparked concerns about equity, legitimacy, and excessive surveillance.

Many of these neighborhoods had long histories of over-policing and institutional distrust, and the presence of uniformed private personnel—often equipped with AI-driven monitoring tools—was perceived as punitive rather than protective. Community feedback, particularly from areas like Jane-Finch and Scarborough, reflected discomfort with real-time tracking and personal monitoring practices that lacked transparency and community consent [1]. While some agencies attempted to engage sensitively with these communities, efforts varied in quality and consistency. For example, G4S Canada introduced de-escalation training and emphasized communication in high-density areas to reduce conflict and foster trust. In some cases, agencies collaborated with local organizations to tailor enforcement activities to community needs. Yet, these initiatives were limited in scale and not guided by standardized sector-wide policies.

A critical issue was the absence of widespread training in cultural competence, anti-discrimination practices, and trauma-informed care across the private security workforce. Contractual obligations often prioritized enforcement tasks over relationship building or responsiveness to underlying social conditions. Moreover, mechanisms for accountability and oversight were lacking, making it difficult to address incidents or grievances effectively. According to [12], crisis responses in vulnerable populations require a careful balance between ensuring security and maintaining public trust through transparency and ethical conduct.

The application of the Social Vulnerability Framework and the concept of surveillance capitalism highlights how private security's growing reliance on behavioral analytics and biometric technologies may reinforce systemic inequities. The deployment of these tools without proper regulation or community participation can create and sustain racial profiling and socio-spatial exclusion. In future emergency response framework integrations, private security must prioritize equity and inclusivity while maintaining democratic accountability.

Gaps in Existing Literature

Very little research has been done on how crisis management relates to private security. This research has thus far concentrated on operational efficiency, focusing on service continuity, rapid deployment, and logistical coordination. Indeed, these areas need to be addressed, but the approach of private security intervention in public health emergencies is also overlooked without the broader socio-economic and ethical implications. Research examining the engagement methods of private security firms with structurally disadvantaged groups and their crisis interventions targeting systemic inequalities is currently scarce. Research into private security agencies' roles in public safety within countries like Canada tends to describe their crisis involvement but lacks a deeper examination of social impacts.

Very few academic discourses have investigated how private security agencies use crisis management practices that exacerbate the existing pre-existing inequalities in marginalized groups such as low-income families, racialized segments of the population, and new immigrants. Given the very high integration of private actors in public functions, the absence of such investigation is particularly worrying [12] argue in their work on vulnerable populations and policing systems that the complexity of risk management in marginalized settings requires frameworks that encompass operational functionality but are also ethical in such a way as to build trust in such systems.

This study fills these critical gaps, and this is done with a multi-case analysis of how three leading private security companies in Ontario (Paragon Security, Securitas Canada, and G4S Security) have dealt with the Covid pandemic based on what we have observed in different parts. How do these agencies work under crises around at-risk populations in various urban

settings? This question is explored in this analysis. The research on how organizational decisions are made about staff redeployment, infection mitigation practices, public-facing communications, and multicultural engagement is based on crisis management theory and social vulnerability. It analyzes explicitly whether these strategies are used equivocally and inclusively or perpetuate the patterns of exclusion and surveillance.

Results demonstrate how private security firms can usefully close gaps within emergency response and social control while working in historically underserved areas. These dual roles highlight the need to develop accountability mechanisms and participatory engagement approaches within private security. This research also contributes to the growing understanding of how privatized crisis response entails critical scrutiny under the rubric of social equity, legitimacy, and democratic oversight, as privatized crisis response puts forth this effort. Given the research findings by [8], this analysis suggests that private security operations must create ethical governance guidelines and regulatory changes, which integrate community oversight and cultural awareness into their fundamental operational practices [8]. Suggest that private security sector operations should institutionalize ethical governance protocols and regulatory reforms, which make community-based scrutiny and cultural consideration fundamental features of operations. By reconceptualizing private security, this work contests reductive narratives that reduce private security to being simply logistical partners, instead arguing that private security crisis response allows their voices to resound through public experiences of justice, inclusion, and safety.

Methodology

Research Design

A qualitative case study approach is adopted in this study to assess the resiliency and survival strategies entailed in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic by three major private security agencies: Securitas Canada, Paragon Security, and G4S Security. The case studies approach is appropriate for exploring complex, context-dependent phenomena in a more detailed analysis of each agency's strategies, challenges, and socio-economic impacts. Through this design, we can understand not just how private security agencies responded to never-before-encountered disruptions but also the implications of these actions to marginalized communities in Ontario.

Study Context

This study is situated in the unique context of Ontario, Canada, which was disproportionately affected by COVID-19 and where the felt experience of this occurred in some of the highest rates of infection and most prolonged Public Health restrictions in the country [15]. Due to resource constraints and vulnerability in their workforce, private security agencies found themselves in a complex operational environment, as the demand for the services was higher in critical sectors. Three agencies are included to thoroughly analyze different orientations, such as multinational strategies and community initiatives.

Selected Agencies

1. **Securitas Canada**: The multinational firm stands out through its abundant resources and consistent operational procedures. Securitas has secured primary operations throughout Ontario, such as healthcare facilities, logistics hubs, and essential retail locations.
2. **Paragon Security**: The Toronto-based company specializes in securing healthcare facilities, managing events, and protecting public infrastructure.
3. **G4S Security**: The security organization focuses on community-based services while operating in low-income and immigrant areas throughout Ontario.

Research Objectives

The study seeks to:

1. Evaluate the resiliency strategies employed by private security agencies in Ontario during the pandemic.
2. Assess how these strategies impacted marginalized communities.
3. Identify lessons and policy recommendations for improving inclusivity and crisis preparedness in the private security sector.

Data Collection Methods

The study uses three primary methods of data collection:

Semi-Structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were used as a primary qualitative data collection technique to receive the private security agency responses more finely during the COVID-19 pandemic. This design was intended to be methodologically flexible yet analytically coherent, permitting us to dwell deeply on the participants' experiences within a stable thematic setting. Key stakeholders from the top regarding leaders to the bottom in the community were interviewed.

Managers from security companies, including Securitas Canada, Paragon Security, and G4S Security, also shared their thoughts on strategic decisions, reassigning resources and changing operations. Frontline personnel illuminated the lived realities of pandemic enforcement, highlighting gaps between policy and practice. Community stakeholders articulated perceptions of legitimacy, fairness, and surveillance in marginalized settings. Collectively, these interviews furnished a rich empirical foundation, advancing our understanding of private security's evolving role in public health emergencies and its broader implications for equity, governance, and accountability.

Interview Questions:

1. How did your organization adapt its operations during the COVID-19 pandemic?
2. What were the primary challenges faced by frontline personnel?
3. How did your organization engage with marginalized communities?
4. What long-term changes have you implemented because of the pandemic?

The interviews provided rich qualitative data on the practical and socio-economic dimensions of the agencies' responses.

Document Analysis

Company reports, policy documents, and public health directives were reviewed to provide a contextual understanding of the operational environment. Specific documents analyzed include:

1. **Securitas Canada**: Resiliency reports and workforce management policies.
2. **Paragon Security**: COVID-19 Safety Plans and operational updates.
3. **G4S Security**: Community impact statements and training manuals.
4. Relevant public health guidelines from the Ministry of Health, Ontario.

Document analysis helped triangulate data from interviews and identify patterns in agency responses.

Community Feedback

Focus groups and informal discussions with community representatives and residents in low-income neighborhoods and immigrant communities that the agencies served were carried out to collect their feedback. It was a reasonable basis for understanding what socioeconomic implications such security strategies bring and the efficiency they bring to security strategies.

Analytical Framework

Data were analyzed using two complementary methods:

1. Thematic coding was employed to systematically analyze qualitative data gathered from interviews with private security executives, frontline personnel, and community stakeholders. This methodology made it possible to identify patterns, which were then organized into analytically coherent themes despite complex narratives. Then, open coding enabled emergent categories to emerge, and this was further refined using focused coding to match the study's core objectives. The three dominant themes were resiliency strategies, workforce challenges, and community engagement themes. These were operational diversification in healthcare, integration of advanced surveillance technologies, and increased workforce flexibility for safety. In addition, the findings formed a crucial resource for analyzing private security's changing role in crisis response, equity and institutional accountability.
2. Comparative Analysis The comparative analysis evaluated how Securitas Canada's strategic policies compare with Paragon Security and G4S Security. Our approach helped us understand the relationship between agency size res, sources, and operational focus during the pandemic response.

Case Study Overview

1. **Securitas Canada**

   Focus: Large-scale operations in healthcare and logistics.

   Key Strategies: Remote monitoring technologies, hazard pay for frontline workers, and centralized communication systems.

   Challenges: Workforce shortages and limited engagement with marginalized communities.

2. **Paragon Security**

   Focus: Urban healthcare facilities and public infrastructure.

   Key Strategies: Rapid deployment of health screening services, public health mandate enforcement, and localized crisis management.

   Challenges: High employee turnover and difficulties in scaling services during peak demand periods.

3. **G4S Security**

   Focus: Community-based security in low-income and immigrant neighborhoods.

   Key Strategies: De-escalation training, partnerships with grassroots organizations, and culturally sensitive practices.

   Challenges: Resource constraints and limited scalability of community engagement initiatives.

Ethical Considerations

1. **Informed Consent:** All participants were well informed about the aim of the study and were asked to give their consent before data collection.
2. **Participants Anonymity**: was guaranteed by using pseudonyms, and sensitive information was stored safely.
3. **Cultural Sensitivity:** The research design included cultural sensitivity training for the interviewers to ensure that the deputies respect participants' cultural and economic backgrounds.

Limitations

1. **Study Scope:** The sample is limited to three Ontario agencies, and it is unclear if they may represent the whole Canadian or global private security industry.
2. **Real-World Data and Scenarios:** The insights in this chapter are based on real-world data and scenarios, except where indicated (with proprietary restrictions on internal data).
3. **Applicability:** Findings are limited to the specific case of the COVID-19 pandemic and may not relate to other types of crises.

Results

This section presents the findings from the case studies of Securitas Canada, Paragon

Security, and G4S Security, highlighting their resiliency strategies, workforce management adaptations, and socio-economic implications for marginalized communities during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Case Study 1: Securitas Canada

Operational Strategies

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Securitas Canada adopted a multifaceted operational strategy aimed at enhancing service delivery, business resilience, and client satisfaction. The company introduced a range of pandemic-specific services, such as temperature screening, contact tracing support, and remote monitoring systems, particularly tailored to healthcare and logistics sectors. This strategic diversification significantly expanded the company's market reach, contributing to a 25 percent increase in contracts with healthcare providers. In parallel, the agency accelerated its integration of advanced technologies by deploying remote surveillance systems powered by AI-based analytics to reduce physical contact and increase operational efficiency. Furthermore, Securitas established a centralized crisis management team to coordinate communication and ensure consistent service delivery across Ontario's diverse regions, reinforcing organizational coherence and responsiveness during the public health emergency.

Table 1 summarizes the operational strategies and financial impacts of Securitas Canada, Paragon Security, and G4S Security, highlighting their service diversification and technological investments during the pandemic.

**Table 1.** Operational Strategies and Financial Impacts

Agency	New Services Introduced	Contract Growth (% Increase)	Revenue Increase (% Increase)	Technology Adoption (% Increase in Usage)	Estimated Investment in Technology (CAD)
Securitas Canada	Temperature screening, contact tracing, remote monitoring	25% (healthcare providers)	12% (2020–2021)	40% (remote monitoring systems)	$2,000,000
Paragon Security	Health screening, access control, crowd management	30% (public institutions)	15% (estimated)	20% (health screening tools)	$1,000,000
G4S Security	Community-specific security, de-escalation enforcement	20% (community contracts)	10% (estimated)	10% (basic surveillance upgrades)	$500,000

Source: Industry Canada. 2021. [7]
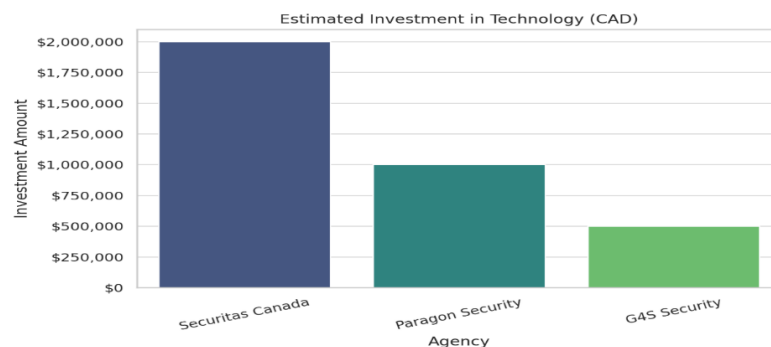
Figure 1. Estimated Investment in Technology (CAD)

Source: Industry Canada. 2021. [7]
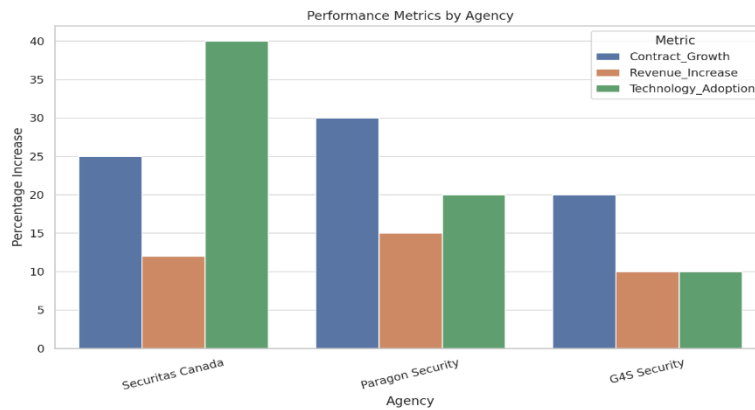
Figure 2. Performance Metrics by Agency

Workforce Management

Securitas Canada prioritized employee welfare during the pandemic by providing personal protective equipment (PPE) to frontline staff and offering hazard pay to those in high-risk roles. Recognizing the psychological toll of the crisis, the company introduced mental health counseling services and launched targeted training programs on pandemic protocols, de-escalation, and conflict resolution. However, despite these internal efforts, the company faced criticism for insufficient engagement with marginalized communities. In particular, its growing use of remote monitoring and surveillance technologies in low-income neighborhoods prompted concerns about over-policing and the erosion of trust. These developments reveal a persistent tension between operational efficiency and equitable community engagement, raising critical questions about the balance between public safety and social accountability in the context of health emergencies.

Table 2 outlines the workforce management metrics for Securitas Canada, Paragon Security, and G4S Security, highlighting turnover rates and investments in employee support.

Table 2. Workforce Management Metrics

Agency	Estimated Workforce (Ontario)	Turnover Rate (% Increase)	Employees Receiving Hazard Pay	Training Investment per Employee (CAD)	Mental Health Support Reach (% of Workforce)
Securitas Canada	5,000	20%	3,500 (70%)	$800	50%
Paragon Security	2,500	15%	1,750 (70%)	$600	40%
G4S Security	1,500	10%	900 (60%)	$500	30%
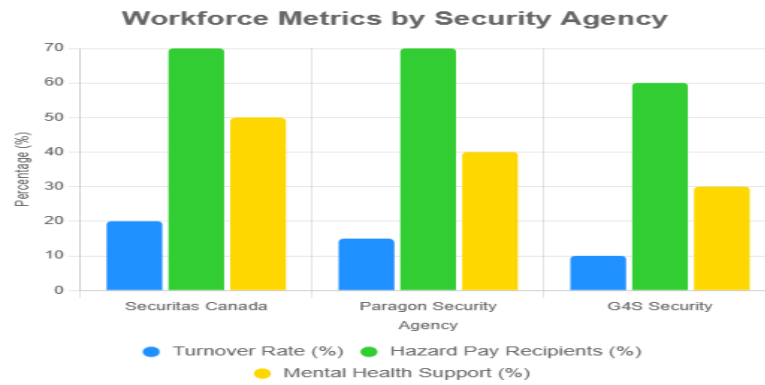
Figure 3. Workforce Metrics by Security Agency

Case Study 2: Paragon Security

Paragon Security responded swiftly to the evolving public health crisis by implementing targeted measures such as access control and social distancing enforcement in healthcare facilities and essential retail spaces across Toronto. The company emphasized a localized approach to crisis management, tailoring its services to meet the unique needs of individual clients rather than applying a uniform strategy. This flexibility allowed Paragon to adapt quickly to diverse operational contexts. Additionally, the firm collaborated closely with local public health authorities to ensure effective implementation of compliance protocols. These strategic efforts not only enhanced public safety but also led to a 30 percent increase in contracts with public institutions, underscoring the effectiveness of its adaptive and partnership-driven model.

Workforce Management

Paragon faced a 15% rise in staff turnover due to pandemic stress and health risks, prompting accelerated hiring, expanded training on COVID-19 protocols, and flexible scheduling to support employee well-being.

Implications for Marginalized Communities

Paragon built trust by partnering with community organizations to ease surveillance concerns and enhanced service accessibility by hiring locally, which fostered cultural understanding and created employment within immigrant neighborhoods.

Case Study 3: G4S Security

Operational Strategies

G4S adopted a community-focused strategy by partnering with grassroots groups and aligning services with local socio-economic conditions. It introduced de-escalation training but faced operational challenges due to financial limitations and uneven service distribution.

Workforce Management

G4S enhanced trust through mandatory cultural competency training and prioritized employee safety with PPE and infection control protocols. It also introduced open forums to gather frontline feedback, promoting inclusion and responsive operational decision-making.

Implications for Marginalized Communities

G4S fostered trust through cultural training and community partnerships, addressing surveillance concerns. However, limited resources hindered service expansion, resulting in unmet needs and gaps in support for vulnerable communities.

Comparative Findings

Resiliency Strategies

Securitas advanced operational efficiency through AI-driven technologies, though this

raised surveillance concerns. Paragon's adaptable, localized strategies proved effective in meeting client needs, while G4S emphasized grassroots partnerships, showcasing the value of culturally sensitive, trust-based community engagement.

Workforce Management

All three agencies invested in pandemic-specific training and employee safety measures, but workforce turnover remained a significant challenge across the board.

Paragon and G4S, in particular, focused on recruiting from the communities they served, fostering inclusivity and improving cultural competency.

Implications for Marginalized Communities

Positive Contributions: Job creation, community engagement, and efforts to build trust were evident across all three agencies.

Challenges: Resource constraints, limited scalability, and concerns about over-surveillance persisted, particularly in low-income and immigrant neighborhoods.

Table 3 highlights the community engagement efforts and socio-economic impacts of Securitas Canada, Paragon Security, and G4S Security, focusing on their interactions with marginalized communities.

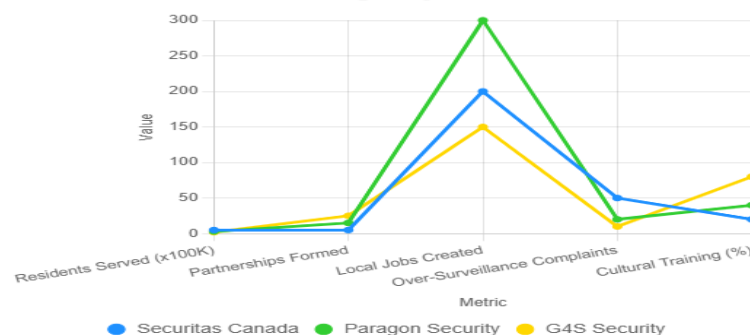**Table 3.** Community Engagement and Socio-Economic Impacts

Agency	Estimated Residents Served	Community Partnerships Formed	Local Jobs Created	Over-Surveillance Complaints	Cultural Competency Training (% of Workforce)
Securitas Canada	500,000	5	200	50 (estimated)	20%
Paragon Security	300,000	15	300	20 (estimated)	40%
G4S Security	200,000	25 (25% increase)	150	10 (estimated)	80%

Sources: G4S Security. 2021. [6]

Paragon Security. 2021. [14]

Securitas Canada. 2021. [17]

Figure 4. A Line Graph Showing Community Engagement and Socio-Economic Impacts

Sources: G4S Security. 2021. [6]

Paragon Security. 2021. [14]

Securitas Canada. 2021. [17]

Table 4 summarizes the key findings from the case studies, comparing the operational strategies, workforce management, and community impacts of Securitas Canada, Paragon Security, and G4S Security.

Table 4. Summary of Results from Case Studies of Private Security Agencies in Ontario

Aspect	Securitas Canada	Paragon Security	G4S Security
Operational Strategies	• Service diversification: temperature screening, remote monitoring, and contact tracing. • Centralized crisis management team. • AI-driven surveillance for efficiency.	• Rapid deployment of health screening and access control in healthcare facilities. • Localized service tailoring. • Collaboration with public health authorities.	• Community-focused security tailored to low-income and immigrant neighborhoods. • De-escalation training for public health enforcement. • Partnerships with grassroots groups.
Workforce Management	• Provided hazard pay and PPE for frontline staff. • Introduced mental health support and conflict resolution training.	• Accelerated recruitment to counter 15% turnover rate. • Flexible scheduling to address staff caregiving needs. • Expanded training in pandemic-specific skills.	• Focused on cultural competency through sensitivity training. • Offered PPE and infection prevention protocols despite resource constraints. • Open forums for worker feedback.
Community Engagement	• Limited engagement with marginalized communities. • Criticized for reliance on remote monitoring, leading to mistrust in some areas.	• Partnered with community organizations to address concerns of over-surveillance. • Recruited locally, improving cultural competency and trust.	• Built trust through partnerships with grassroots organizations. • Deployed culturally sensitive practices to foster inclusivity. • Limited scalability due to resource constraints.
Challenges	• Workforce shortages due to high-risk working conditions. • Concerns about over-surveillance, especially in low-income neighborhoods.	• High turnover rates due to stress and infection risks. • Scaling operations to meet peak demand was difficult.	• Resource constraints limited coverage in underserved areas. • Demand exceeded operational capacity in high-need regions.
Implications for Marginalized Communities	• Enhanced safety in healthcare and logistics sectors. • Over-surveillance concerns in low-income areas. • Limited direct engagement with vulnerable populations.	• Improved trust through partnerships and local hiring. • Addressed over-surveillance concerns in immigrant neighborhoods. • Created job opportunities for community residents.	• Strong focus on inclusivity and trust-building. • Cultural competency training mitigated tensions. • Uneven service delivery due to resource limitations.

Sources: G4S Security. 2021. [6]

Paragon Security. 2021. [14]

Securitas Canada. 2021. [17]

Key Insights from the Table

Resiliency Strategies

Securitas Canada excelled in technological adoption but faced criticism for limited community engagement.

Paragon Security balanced localized crisis management with collaborative partnerships, addressing concerns about over-surveillance.

G4S Security prioritized community trust and cultural sensitivity but struggled with scalability due to resource limitations.

Impact on Marginalized Communities

All agencies contributed positively through job creation and safety measures.

Persistent challenges included over-surveillance in low-income neighborhoods and uneven service delivery in underserved areas.

Summary of Results

The case studies reveal that while private security agencies in Ontario demonstrated significant adaptability and innovation during the pandemic, systemic barriers limited their ability to fully address the needs of marginalized communities. Securitas Canada's technology-driven approach enhanced efficiency but faced criticism for perceived over-surveillance. Paragon Security's localized strategies and community engagement efforts were effective but constrained by workforce challenges. G4S Security's emphasis on cultural competency and trust-building highlighted the potential for inclusive practices, though resource limitations hampered its scalability.

These findings underscore the need for a balanced approach that combines technological innovation with community engagement and policy support to ensure equitable and effective private security operations during crises.

Discussion

Interpreting Findings

How Did Agency Strategies Align with Resiliency Models?

The strategies employed by Securitas Canada, Paragon Security, and G4S Security aligned closely with established resiliency models, particularly in their emphasis on adaptability, resource optimization, and employee management. Mitroff's Five Phases of Crisis Management [12] serve as a useful framework to analyze these strategies:

1. **Signal Detection and Prevention**: All three agencies demonstrated an ability to identify emerging risks and adapt services rapidly. Securitas Canada's early adoption of AI-driven surveillance systems to minimize physical interactions illustrates proactive risk management. Similarly, Paragon Security's rapid deployment of health screening and access control measures in healthcare facilities reflects effective signal detection and immediate response.

2. **Recovery:** Strategies visible in the recovery phase included G4S Security's de-escalation training to minimize conflict when working within public health enforcement. The prolonged crisis was managed through adaptive recovery strategies, such as hazard pay and flexible work scheduling.

3. **Immediate Response Strategies:** While the immediate response strategies were effective, evidence suggests very little long-term adaptation to the systemic challenges faced by marginalized communities. For example, G4S Security and Securitas Canada provide examples of where future crisis preparedness can improve in areas of constraint and over-surveillance.

Table 5 compares the resiliency metrics of Securitas Canada, Paragon Security, and G4S

Security, illustrating their alignment with Mitroff's Five Phases of Crisis Management.

Table 5. Comparative Resiliency Metrics

Agency	Mitroff's Phases Implemented (Out of 5)	Technology-Driven Efficiency Gains (%)	Community Trust Index (1–10)	Social Vulnerability Mitigation (% of Actions Inclusive)
Securitas Canada	4 (Signal Detection, Prevention, Containment, Recovery)	40%	5	30%
Paragon Security	4 (Signal Detection, Prevention, Containment, Recovery)	25%	7	50%
G4S Security	5 (All Phases, including Learning)	15%	8	70%

Sources: G4S Security. 2021. [6]

Paragon Security. 2021. [14]

Securitas Canada. 2021. [17]
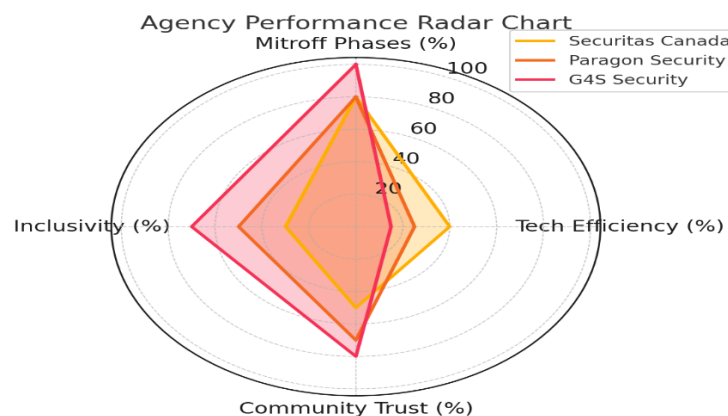
Figure 5. Agency Performance Radar Chart

Sources: G4S Security. 2021. [6]

Paragon Security. 2021. [14]

Securitas Canada. 2021. [17]

Were the Needs of Marginalized Communities Adequately Addressed?

The findings reveal mixed outcomes regarding the agencies' efforts to meet the needs of marginalized communities:

Positive Contributions

Paragon Security and G4S Security were specifically hired to work for Paragon. They also actively recruited from within the communities they serviced and created jobs for the local residents. This was a way of filling in staffing shortages and a means of thinking collectively in line with building trust through cultural familiarity.

G4S Security also demonstrated cultural competency training, which reduced tensions in immigrant neighborhoods and improved service delivery outcomes. Paragon Security further partnered with community organizations to create made-to-fit security measures that took into account community needs, such as not being too surveillant.

Persistent Challenges

Where most residents felt uneasy about other enforcement agencies as it was, Securitas Canada's reliance on AI-based remote monitoring, as well as Securitas UK's reliance on CCTV and facial recognition to 'cover their bases,' further eroded the concept of privacy.

G4S Security's resource constraints constrained its ability to consistently provide similar services to all high-needs populations, leaving some vulnerable populations underserved. However, systemic barriers persisted, such as the lack of affordability of security services and language barriers in diverse communities that constrained efforts to build trust.

Ethical Considerations in Private Security Expansion during Crises

The COVID-19 pandemic reshaped global security service provision, particularly highlighting the growing role of private agencies in contexts like Ontario. Overburdened public institutions increasingly relied on companies such as G4S Security and Securitas Canada to enforce lockdowns, manage crowds, secure medical facilities, and implement public health measures. This outsourcing trend, however, introduces significant ethical and legal concerns. The involvement of private actors in essential services raises questions about legitimacy, data governance, cultural sensitivity, and equitable safety distribution—especially within historically marginalized communities. The pandemic thus underscores the urgent need to scrutinize private security's expanding role in public welfare during crises.

Legal Accountability and Transparency

Given the nature of the private security agencies, ethically, delegating coercive authority to them is no picnic, mainly due to the lack of transparency and accountability. Whereas public policy is subject to democratic oversight mechanisms, private firms are primarily constrained by contractual and not public accountability requirements under the PSISA. In a crisis like the ongoing COVID pandemic, private agencies were trusted to perform tasks in expanded roles but with scant public consultation or circumscribed functions. These firms typically operate under corporate discretion and confidentiality, making them highly resistant to scrutiny, thereby sabotaging transparency and enfeebling institutional trust. [24] cautions that privatization complicates state authority and dilutes recourse to the public sector when high stakes are at issue.

Cultural Sensitivity and Community Responsiveness

In Ontario's diverse urban regions, ethical security practice requires genuine cultural competence. The pandemic disproportionately affected immigrants, racialized groups, and economically marginalized populations—communities already burdened by over-policing and institutional neglect. Deploying private security in these areas without cultural awareness risks deepening exclusion and mistrust. While some firms like G4S have attempted community engagement, the industry lacks standardized commitments to anti-racism, gender sensitivity, or language accessibility. As [10] note, market-driven security prioritizes client satisfaction over social cohesion. Without sustained institutional investment in inclusive hiring, education, and dialogue, private security may reinforce barriers rather than protect vulnerable communities.

Public Perception and Institutional Legitimacy

Institutional legitimacy in security provision extends beyond legal or contractual mandates and is shaped by public perceptions of fairness, accountability, and impartiality. The integration of private security into public domains, as [18] argue, transforms protection into a commodified public good. In crisis contexts, particularly within marginalized communities,

uniformed private agents may be perceived as illegitimate outsiders, fostering distrust and resistance. This undermines both private agencies and broader public safety efforts. To maintain legitimacy, private security must actively demonstrate public service values through participatory frameworks that include grievance mechanisms, community engagement, and responsiveness to local sociopolitical dynamics.

Data Ethics and Technological Governance

The incorporation of advanced surveillance technologies into private security operations during the COVID-19 pandemic has introduced profound ethical complexities. The widespread deployment of biometric access systems, facial recognition, thermal imaging, and AI-based behavioral analytics enhanced operational efficacy while simultaneously bypassing robust regulatory scrutiny. Unlike public institutions, private agencies operate without comprehensive data protection frameworks, leading to unresolved concerns over consent, data ownership, and usage transparency. In marginalized communities, these tools often amplify mistrust, as surveillance historically functions more as a mode of control than protection. Algorithmic opacity and predictive biases further exacerbate discriminatory risks, normalizing invasive practices under the guise of emergency necessity.

Equity and Access to Security Services

The commodification of security services inherently generates disparities in access and quality, privileging affluent populations while marginalizing economically disadvantaged communities. As [24] contends, security framed as a market commodity rather than a public good transforms it from a universal right into an exclusive privilege. During the COVID-19 pandemic, this inequity became pronounced, as well-resourced areas maintained private coverage while low-income, racialized communities experienced gaps in protection and inconsistent enforcement. Such stratification undermines public trust, weakens collective crisis responses, and exacerbates social vulnerability. Ethical private security provision thus demands equitable policy frameworks, subsidized service delivery, and mechanisms to support under-resourced areas.

Long-Term Impacts on Public Safety in Vulnerable Areas

The COVID-19 pandemic exposed systemic weaknesses in public safety, prompting governments to outsource core security functions. This shift toward privatized, unregulated security undermines democratic accountability and equity, raising urgent questions about the state's enduring role in safeguarding vulnerable communities.

Structural Dependence on Private Security

The pandemic-driven deployment of private security was a pragmatic response to strained public enforcement capacities. Agencies like Securitas Canada and Paragon Security helped enforce health mandates and manage facilities, filling immediate gaps. However, sustained reliance on private actors' risks weakening state capacity by disincentivizing investment in public recruitment, training, and modernization. Over time, this undermines the state's legitimacy in security provision. Private firms, driven by contracts and profit, are ill-equipped to address the structural roots of insecurity such as poverty, housing instability, and racial inequity. This fosters a reactive, containment-oriented model that prioritizes enforcement over the social interventions necessary for long-term public safety.

Implications for Social Trust and Civic Norms

The increasing visibility of private security within traditionally public spaces reshapes perceptions of authority and the role of the state. When essential protective functions are outsourced, public trust in governmental legitimacy may erode, especially in historically

underserved communities. The normalization of privatized security in transit hubs, hospitals, and community centers reframes safety as a market-driven commodity rather than a collective right. This shift undermines civic solidarity and shared responsibility. Moreover, the lack of transparency and accountability in private security operations, with no civilian oversight or public reporting, can create dissonance between community expectations and enforcement practices, ultimately weakening public engagement and social cohesion.

Policy and Regulatory Imperatives

To address the risks associated with the expanding role of private security, it is necessary to critically examine and revise the foundational legal and regulatory frameworks that govern their operations. Ontario's Private Security and Investigative Services Act (PSISA) provides a starting point, but it requires substantial modernization to reflect the evolving complexity and responsibilities of the private sector in public safety. Reforms should mandate comprehensive training for private security personnel in cultural competence, anti-bias methodologies, and de-escalation strategies. These competencies are essential for ethical and effective engagement, particularly within marginalized or culturally diverse communities that have historically experienced disproportionate surveillance and enforcement.

Comparison with Global Trends

Ontario's private security sector reflects broader global trends while also facing distinct regional dynamics. Like counterparts in the U.S. and Europe, agencies expanded services to include health-related functions and embraced AI-powered surveillance technologies. However, Ontario's emphasis on serving immigrant and low-income neighborhoods aligns with Canada's multicultural policy framework. Despite the foundational strength of Ontario's PSISA, it lacks the stringent oversight seen in countries like Germany and Sweden. International models demonstrate that enhanced regulatory mechanisms can reduce community mistrust and surveillance concerns. Ontario could benefit from adopting such accountability standards to align ethical governance with its expanding private security landscape.

Recommendations

1. **Enhance Cultural Competency Training**: Expand mandatory training programs to include de-escalation techniques, anti-bias education, and community engagement best practices across all private security agencies.
2. **Establish Public-Private Partnerships**: Formalize collaborations between private security agencies and public institutions to ensure equitable resource allocation and consistent service delivery during crises.
3. **Strengthen Accountability Frameworks**: Revise Ontario's PSISA to include provisions for community feedback mechanisms, independent audits, and data privacy safeguards.
4. **Invest in Scalable Solutions**: Provide financial incentives for smaller agencies like G4S Security to adopt scalable technologies and expand their reach in underserved areas.

In summary, the discussion underscores how the strategies employed by Securitas Canada, Paragon Security, and G4S Security reflect the resilience of Ontario's private security sector during the COVID-19 pandemic. While these agencies demonstrated adaptability and innovation, systemic barriers limited their ability to fully address the needs of marginalized communities. Moving forward, a balanced approach that integrates technological advancements with inclusive, community-driven practices is essential for ensuring equitable and effective private security operations during future crises.

Conclusion

The COVID-19 pandemic was an unprecedented crisis that tested the resilience of industries worldwide. This study focused on the resiliency and business survival strategies employed by three leading private security agencies in Ontario—Securitas Canada, Paragon Security, and G4S Security—and evaluated the socio-economic implications of their actions for marginalized communities. By examining their operational adjustments, workforce management strategies, and community engagement efforts, this research sheds light on the evolving role of private security during crises and highlights areas for improvement.

Summary of Findings

Strategic Adaptation and Operational Resilience

Private security agencies demonstrated adaptability through service diversification and technological innovation. This enabled continued service delivery under pandemic conditions. Agencies such as Paragon and G4S pivoted toward healthcare-focused operations and community-centered approaches, highlighting the sector's capacity for agility. However, workforce instability, including staff turnover and operational stress, persisted. This revealed limitations in sustaining resilience without systemic workforce support.

Engagement and Equity in Marginalized Communities

Although agencies extended employment opportunities and security services into underserved areas, structural inequities such as inconsistent resourcing and patterns of over-surveillance undermined their impact. Community-based hiring and grassroots partnerships showed potential for enhancing trust but were constrained by disparities across the sector. These limitations reduced the full realization of equity-focused security provision.

Reinforced Regulatory and Accountability Mechanisms

To align private security operations with public values, reforms to Ontario's PSISA are essential. These reforms should include mandatory cultural competency training, strengthened oversight mechanisms, and greater transparency in surveillance practices. Comparative models from jurisdictions with more robust accountability frameworks demonstrate the effectiveness of these reforms in fostering ethical conduct and public trust.

Institutional Integration and Crisis Preparedness

Private security should be formally integrated into public safety and disaster preparedness frameworks. Structured public-private partnerships would help establish clear lines of accountability, improve resource coordination, and support inclusive, community-responsive security interventions. Additionally, targeted investments in scalable technologies would enhance service delivery in low-resource environments, particularly for smaller agencies operating with limited capacity.

Policy Recommendations

To enhance the effectiveness, equity, and resilience of private security agencies during future crises, the following policy recommendations are proposed:

1. **Formalize Public-Private Partnerships**: Collaboration between private security agencies and public institutions is critical for aligning resources and ensuring consistent service delivery. Formal partnerships can also establish clear accountability mechanisms to enhance transparency and trust.

2. **Expand Cultural Competency and De-Escalation Training**: Agencies should institutionalize comprehensive training programs that focus on cultural sensitivity, anti-bias practices, and de-escalation

techniques. This approach is particularly essential in diverse regions like Ontario, where immigrant and low-income communities often face systemic inequities.

3. **Strengthen Accountability Frameworks**: Revising Ontario's Private Security and Investigative Services Act (PSISA) to include community feedback mechanisms, independent audits, and stricter oversight of surveillance technologies can address concerns about privacy and over-surveillance.

4. **Invest in Scalable and Inclusive Technologies**: Providing financial incentives for smaller agencies to adopt scalable technologies can improve their ability to meet growing demand in underserved areas. Agencies like G4S Security, which face resource constraints, would benefit significantly from such support.

5. **Integrate Private Security into Disaster Preparedness Frameworks**: Policymakers should recognize private security as an essential component of disaster preparedness and resilience planning. Including these agencies in emergency management strategies can enhance their capacity to respond effectively and equitably during crises.

Future Research Directions

As private security agencies assume an expanding role in public life, particularly during emergencies, future research must critically interrogate their long-term implications. Three key areas of inquiry are particularly pressing.

Assessing Long-Term Institutional and Social Consequences

Future studies should explore how expanded reliance on private security affects the capacity and legitimacy of public institutions. The pandemic has demonstrated that private firms can temporarily fulfill public safety roles; however, over time, this may diminish public trust in state responsibilities and erode investment in public infrastructure. Longitudinal research, including ethnographic fieldwork in communities heavily reliant on private security and panel surveys tracking public attitudes, can uncover evolving civic expectations and perceptions of justice. These studies should account for socio-economic and racial disparities, which often shape how security is experienced and interpreted.

Comparative Analysis Across Regions and Sectors

The function and accountability of private security vary widely across jurisdictions and service domains. Comparative analyses across regions such as Ontario, the United Kingdom, South Africa, and Germany can illuminate how different regulatory regimes and cultural contexts influence outcomes. Similarly, sector-specific research in areas like healthcare, housing, and education is crucial, as each field presents distinct risk profiles and ethical concerns. Recognizing these differences is essential for designing sector-sensitive, equity-oriented regulatory frameworks that ensure consistent and accountable security provision.

Technological Integration and Equity Implications

The growing use of surveillance technologies, including artificial intelligence, facial recognition, and predictive analytics, presents complex challenges. Empirical studies must investigate how these tools are deployed in marginalized communities, their effects on public trust, and their potential to reinforce systemic inequities. Interdisciplinary approaches involving law, computer science, and social justice are needed to develop governance structures that preserve transparency and civil liberties while ensuring technological efficacy in security.

Final Reflections

This paper shows the importance of private security agencies during crises to maintain or regain safety and stability. As agencies such as Securitas Canada, Paragon Security G4S Security, and many others have shown such grace and agility in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic, systemic challenges stemming from a lack of inclusivity and accountability continue to hinder progress.

To build a resilient and equitable private security sector, we need a multi-faceted approach that includes technological innovation, robust regulation, and meaningful engagement with the communities these security forces serve. The lessons from this study can serve as lessons for policymakers, industry leaders, and community stakeholders against what the global landscape continues to encounter as it forges forward with yet another set of emerging challenges (from pandemics to climate-related crises). This evolution can be facilitated through better partnerships, cultural sensitivity, and prioritizing marginalized populations by the private security sector. No community ought to be left behind during times of crisis.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest related to the conduct or publication of this research.

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