

SECURITY GUARDS & BUILDING SERVICES OCCUPATIONS IN NYC TRENDS AND ISSUES

A LABOR MARKET PROFILE PREPARED FOR THE
NYC EMPLOYMENT & TRAINING COALITION BY THE FISCAL POLICY INSTITUTE
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Employment trends

The most common jobs in facilities management are found in building service and security guard occupations. Building service and security guard positions in New York City are found in residential and commercial buildings, and public institutions, such as schools, airports and hospitals. Over 160,000 New Yorkers are employed in building service and security guard occupations, making this one of the larger employment segments in the city.

Occupation	1998 Employment	Projected 2008 Employment	Projected Annual Openings	Wage Range (Middle 50%)	Median Wage
Guards	61,920	75,140	2,870	\$6.75-\$12.39	\$8.46
Janitors & cleaners	84,970	92,140	2,560	\$9.16-\$15.29	\$12.84
Cleaning & building service workers, n.e.c	18,530	17,930	390	\$10.43-\$14.34	\$12.72

Source: 1998 Occupational Employment Survey data/NYS DOL

Security Guards

As indicated in the table above, the NYS Department of Labor projects that the number of security guard positions will grow by 21% between 1998 and 2008. Note that this 1998 projection might turn out to be on the low side, given heightened security concerns in New York City. During the current recession, the industry containing security guard businesses increased employment by 8.7% from December of 2000 (the peak month for total NYC employment) to January of 2003. In this period when NYC has lost nearly 6% of its total job base, the investigation and security services industry had the largest employment gain (+3,500) of any private industry other than health, social or educational services.

Security guards in New York City made a median hourly wage of \$8.46 in 1998, with the middle half of all workers earning between \$6.75 and \$12.39 an hour.

The most significant single employer of security guards is the real estate industry, which employs guards in commercial and residential buildings. In addition, over half of the security guards in New York City are employed by firms that provide contractual protective services throughout the economy (public and private sector). In the Standard Industrial Classification system, these firms were included in the *miscellaneous business services* industry group. This is significant in the sense that over half of the security guards in New York City do not work directly for the institution in which they are placed, but instead work for contractors who in turn place them in retail and other settings.

Top 5 Employers of Security Guards/1998

Industry	Employment
Miscellaneous business services	37,232
Real estate operators	7,539
General government	2,997
Hospitals	2,120
Real estate agents & managers	1,387
Subtotal	51,275
All other	11,944
Grand total/all security guards	63,219
Top 5 as % of Grand Total	81%

Source: OES data/NYS DOL

Building service occupations

The two main building services occupational categories¹, as defined by the New York State Department of Labor, are *janitors/cleaners* and *cleaning & building services workers not elsewhere classified*. This second occupational category includes window cleaners, carpet & upholstery cleaners, air purifier and light fixture changers.

The number of janitors/cleaners is projected to grow by 8% between 1998 and 2008, according to the NYS Department of Labor. Janitors/cleaners in New York City made a median hourly wage of \$12.84 in 1998. The number of cleaning & building services workers not elsewhere classified is expected to decline between 1998 and 2008.

It's worth noting that certain kinds of janitorial and cleaning jobs can be more accessible to people with limited English skills than other occupations.

¹ The other building services occupational categories are maids & housekeeping cleaners (28,440 in NYC), pest controllers & assistants (200 in NYC), and elevator operators (2,100 in NYC).

Top 5 Employers of Janitors & Cleaners/1998

Industry	Employment
Services to dwellings & other buildings	24,591
Real estate operators	20,053
Elementary & secondary schools	7,811
General government	4,590
Colleges, universities & professional schools	4,001
Subtotal	61,046
All other	26,369
Grand total/all janitors & cleaners	87,415
Top 5 as % of Grand Total	70%

Source: OES data/NYS DOL

Building services firms and real estate operators are the largest employers of janitors/cleaners. A large number of janitors/cleaners are also employed in educational institutions of all levels.

The impact of unionization

Well over half of building service workers in New York City are unionized. SEIU Local 32B-32J, which largely represents janitors and other building service workers in commercial and residential buildings, has by far the largest building service membership. Other unions representing over 2,000 building service workers include Teamsters Local 237, AFSCME Local 1579, and SEIU Local 74.

Unionized building service workers earn wages that are higher than those of non-union workers and they uniformly receive health and other fringe benefits. Both the wages and benefits received by unionized building service workers are considered very good for workers with comparable educational levels. Total annual wages and benefits for the average SEIU 32B-32J unionized commercial building service worker in New York City is \$45,119. For the average unionized residential building service worker, the comparable figure is \$43,085².

To obtain unionized building service employment, SEIU Local 32bj recommends that prospective employees pick up a list of unionized employers by coming to their office at 101 Avenue of the Americas and asking at the front desk. The local does not maintain a hiring hall or referral system, so it is up to the applicant to make contact with individual employers.

Unionized building service workers also provide value to building owners and managers. Building service workers are the frontline representatives of building management and are in day-to-day contact with tenants. Well-trained and well-compensated workers are more likely to provide consistent, quality service. Industry observers report that as building owners grow more dependent on real estate managers to add value to their investments, service quality becomes more important relative to cost. For example, a March, 1998 article in the *National Real Estate Investor* quoted an executive of a national property management company as stating: "Our clients see the value of our services. We don't want to be the cheapest; we want to be the best at the services we provide."³

² This estimate was calculated by FPI in April, 2002. It assumes a total of 2080 annual hours (40 hours/week, 52 weeks/year).

³ Richards, Geoffrey. "Downsizing Slows, Space Efficiency Remains a Virtue," *National Real Estate Investor*, vol 40:3 (March 1998), pp. 66-80.