But is it a *good* job?

Understanding employment precarity in BC

BY IGLIKA IVANOVA & KENDRA STRAUSS

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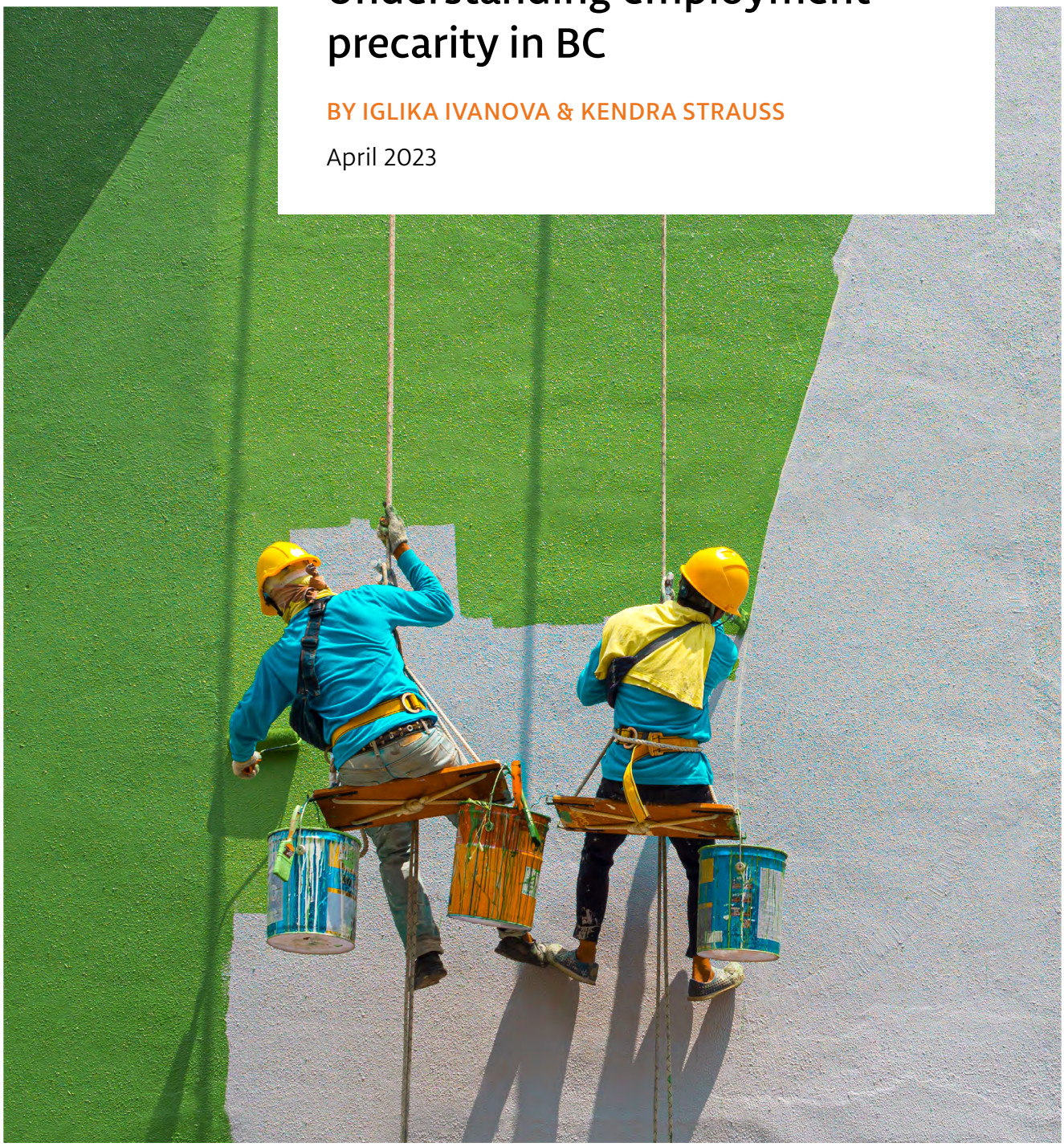

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Understanding PRECARITY in BC

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Iglika and Kendra are Co-Directors of the Understanding Precarity in BC (UP-BC) Project.

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Contents

Summary

The rise of the 'gig economy' and on-demand work using online platforms like Uber and Skip the Dishes has ignited public debate about precarious work and what makes a "good job." Precarious work is not a new phenomenon, nor is it limited to the gig economy — but we don't know just how widespread a problem it has become, mainly because Statistics Canada does not collect timely data on many of its dimensions.

We conducted a pilot BC Precarity Survey — the first of its kind in BC — to address this gap and collect new evidence on the scale and unequal impacts of precarious work in our province.

The pilot survey builds on research by an earlier research initiative called the Poverty and Employment Precarity in Southern Ontario (PEPSO) project.[1] Our survey was completed by over 3,000 workers aged 25 to 65 in BC in the late fall of 2019. It provides a unique snapshot of the provincial labour market at a time of historically low unemployment and relative labour market strength just before the COVID-19 pandemic hit.

How we defined and measured precarious employment

In the post-WW2 era many workers spent their entire careers in permanent, full-time jobs with one or two employers who provided benefits. Those jobs were more likely than today to be unionized, especially in the private sector. Canada's system of workplace rights and protections — including access to workers' compensation, employment insurance and parental leave, pensions, extended health coverage, paid sick time, etc. — is still largely designed around this model of the "standard job" or "standard employment relationship."

1 https://pepso.ca/

Standard jobs were never universally accessible, however, and the BC and Canadian labour markets have always included many "non-standard" jobs, which were filled largely by women, Indigenous, Black, racialized and migrant workers. Since the 1980s, major economic and policy shifts led to fewer people having access to standard jobs and ushered in an increase in temporary and insecure forms of employment in Canada and elsewhere. Researchers began to document the rise of "precarious employment" and raise concerns about its impacts on workers and communities.

Precarious employment is challenging to define, not least because it is shaped by the ever-changing realities of local labour markets and therefore looks different in different places and time periods.

In this study, we measured precarious employment in two different ways:

Even workers with standard jobs may experience aspects of precarity.

First, we looked at whether survey respondents had standard or non-standard employment — standard employment is defined as access to a full-time, permanent job with a single employer and that includes at least some benefits.

Even workers with standard jobs may experience aspects of precarity not captured by the definitions of standard versus non-standard employment, such as unpredictable scheduling, low pay or lack of access to an extended health care plan. So, we used a second approach called the *Employment Precarity Index*, which allows us to look at precarity on a continuum.

The *Index* combines 10 direct and indirect measures of employment quality and security, including the type of employment relationship, income variability, scheduling uncertainty, access to employer-provided benefits and 'voice' at work. Based on their answers, survey respondents were assigned a score between 0 and 100 and categorized into one of four employment security categories: *Secure, Stable, Vulnerable and Precarious*.

Extensive demographic questions allowed us to learn who is most affected by precarious work, while other questions provided insights into the consequences of precarity on individuals, families and society more broadly.

Key findings: Standard versus non-standard jobs

Using our first measure of precarity — whether a worker had access to a full-time, permanent job with a single employer and that included at least some benefits — we found:

The "standard job" was not all that common and was unequally available.

- Only 49% of BC workers surveyed had standard jobs.

- Women (especially racialized and Indigenous women), younger workers aged 25 to 34 and recent immigrants were less likely to have a standard job.
- Nearly 60% of Indigenous men, racialized women and Indigenous women were in non-standard jobs.
- Just over 60% of recent immigrants were in non-standard employment, compared to half of non-immigrants.
- Standard jobs were more common in Metro Vancouver than elsewhere in the province and least common in the BC Interior.

Non-standard jobs were more likely to be low-paid and less secure in a variety of additional ways.

- Almost half (44%) of survey respondents in a non-standard job earned less than $40,000 per year, compared to only 10% of those in standard jobs.
- Workers in non-standard jobs were far more likely to see their incomes vary significantly from week to week (29%), experience unexpected scheduling changes (50%), be in casual or temporary employment (19%), work on call half or more of the time (31%), work multiple jobs at the same time (40%) and be concerned that raising a health or safety issue in the workplace would negatively affect their employment (24%).
- These workers were also far less likely than their counterparts in standard jobs to receive employer-provided training, or health and pension benefits.

A significant number of standard jobs included characteristics often associated with precarity.

- A significant minority of people in standard jobs reported frequent, unexpected scheduling changes (21%) and/or working multiple jobs at the same time (18%).
- Many workers in standard jobs did not have access to important workplace benefits, such as extended health coverage (15%) or retirement benefits (30%).
- Less than half (43%) received employer-provided training within the last year.

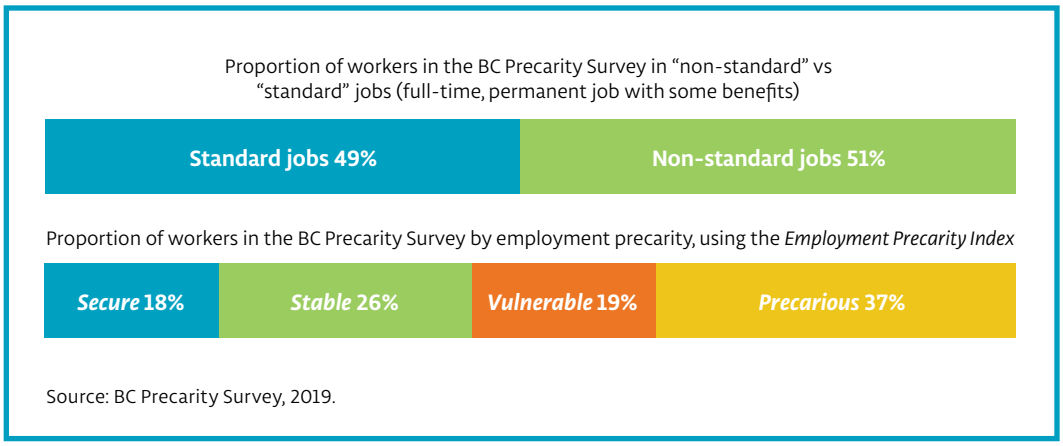
Many workers in standard jobs did not have access to important workplace benefits.

Key findings: The *Employment Precarity Index*

The *Employment Precarity Index* allowed us to measure a broader range of dimensions of precarity and then categorize workers' employment experiences on a continuum from *Secure* to *Stable, Vulnerable* and *Precarious*. We found:

BC's job market was quite polarized — 37% of survey respondents had *Precarious* jobs and only 18% were in *Secure* jobs.

FIGURE A Two ways to examine precarious employment



Source: BC Precarity Survey, 2019.

Precarious employment was strongly associated with low incomes, but not all precarious jobs were low-paid.

- Nearly two-thirds of workers earning less than $40,000 per year had *Precarious* jobs — 64%, compared with only 23% of those earning above $80,000.
- However, not all *Precarious* jobs were associated with low employment incomes — about a third (34%) had middle incomes and 18% had higher incomes.
- The vast majority of workers in our sample with *Secure* jobs earned either middle (54%) or high (40%) incomes.

Secure jobs were unequally available to different groups of British Columbians.

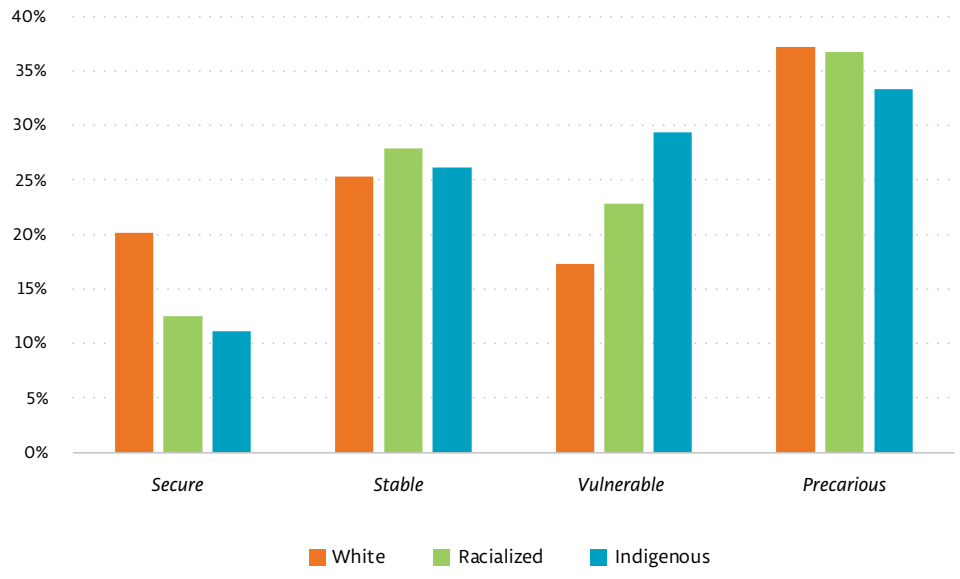
- Racialized and Indigenous workers were significantly less likely than white workers to have *Secure* jobs (see figure B on page 9).
- More than half of recent immigrants were in *Precarious* jobs (55%), the highest proportion of any group in our survey.
- Established immigrants were only slightly less likely to have *Secure* or *Stable* jobs than non-immigrants.
- Younger workers (aged 25 to 34) were more likely to be in *Precarious* jobs.
- *Secure* jobs were slightly less common in Northern BC and the Interior than in Metro Vancouver and Vancouver Island.

Employment precarity had negative effects on individuals, families and communities.

- Workers in *Precarious* jobs — especially those with low incomes — were more likely to report poorer physical and mental health than those in *Secure* jobs.

- Workers in *Secure* employment were more likely to have a spouse in a permanent full-time job. In contrast, those in *Precarious* jobs were more likely to have a spouse who was not working at all. This indicates that labour market inequalities compound at the family level.
- Among caregivers of children, those in *Precarious* employment were far less likely to be able to afford school supplies and trips. They were also much less likely to have time to attend or volunteer at school and community-related events and activities. This was true for workers in less secure jobs across income groups, suggesting that employment precarity impacts children's experiences and opportunities, as well as their parents' ability to be fully engaged in their school or extracurricular activities.
- Caregivers of children in *Precarious* jobs were four times more likely to report that lack of access to child care impacted their ability to work (39%) compared with those in Secure jobs (10%).
- Recent immigrant parents were particularly impacted by caregiving responsibilities — 60% reported that access to child care negatively affected their own and/or their spouse's ability to work (compared to 37% of non-immigrants). They were also much more likely to report that caring for an adult (e.g., an elder) negatively affected their or their spouse's ability to work.
- For a considerable proportion of survey respondents, work demands and job strain interfered with family responsibilities on a weekly basis (or multiple times a week), impacting not only the workers themselves but also their families.

FIGURE B Employment precarity, by racialization and Indigenous identity



Source: BC Precarity Survey, 2019.

Conclusion: Precarious work is a widespread problem in BC, contributing to socio-economic and racial inequalities and putting strain on families

The results of the pilot BC Precarity Survey illustrate that, for many workers in our sample, job quality and job security remain tied to the so-called standard employment relationship, as does access to benefits and training. Yet just over half of workers we surveyed were in non-standard work, and 37% were in *Precarious* jobs.

Such high levels of precarity amid the strong pre-pandemic labour market suggest that the problems are likely worse today. Since 2019, rising inflation has eaten into wages, a problem that is made worse when workers and their families face unpredictable, insecure employment and/or do not have access to employer-provided benefits.

Moreover, our analysis confirms what the COVID-19 pandemic made abundantly clear — that the burden of precarity falls more heavily on racialized and immigrant communities, Indigenous peoples, women and lower-income groups. In other words, precarious employment compounds systemic, intersecting inequalities in our province.

Precarious jobs mean workers are experiencing insecurity, instability, low pay, a lack of access to benefits and negative impacts on physical and mental health, all of which have consequences not only for them but also for their families, their communities and our society.

This first-of-its-kind study on multiple dimensions of employment precarity in BC highlights the need for more research on these important issues. At the same time, the findings suggest that the time to act is now to tackle the significant and uneven burden of precarious work.

The good news is that the BC government has the power to improve the lives of workers and families by strengthening workplace rights and protections, enforcing them proactively and regularly reviewing legislation to keep up with rapidly changing labour markets. Strengthening worker voices, such as by making it easier to unionize and using sectoral bargaining models, can improve working conditions and reduce wage and gender/racial pay inequities. Expanding access and portability of benefits, addressing unpaid care work and access to child care and bringing in pay equity legislation are additional ways to reduce precarity in BC while supporting family and community wellbeing. The recent introduction of five days of paid sick leave in BC and federal efforts to extend dental coverage and reduce child care fees will help many precarious workers, but more action is needed.

The pilot BC Precarity Survey was undertaken as part of the creation of the Understanding Precarity in BC (UP-BC) partnership. The survey will be repeated several times over the coming years, allowing us to study changes over time, including the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic as well as public policy changes.

Introduction

Precarity is a concept that describes pervasive forms of uncertainty, insecurity and instability that were on the rise in many economies, including high-income countries like Canada, before the COVID-19 pandemic. Precarious employment is one dimension of this precarity, which affects workers, their families and communities across the country. Precarious employment—jobs that are insecure, short-term or on-demand, less than full-time, lacking in benefits and often poorly paid—is frequently associated with gig work and work mediated through online platforms like Uber and Skip the Dishes. However, precarious employment is found in all sectors of the economy.

As we demonstrate, defining precarious employment is complex. A recent article on the Canadian Library of Parliament blog argued, "There is no universally accepted definition for precarious work, since precarious work is often a group of interconnected problems."[2] Nevertheless, precarious work is an issue that is increasingly recognized by policy-makers. During British Columbia's 2020 election, the New Democratic Party (NDP) platform promised a precarious work and gig economy strategy. After they formed the government in November of that year, the Ministry of Labour's mandate letter affirmed that strategy and committed to exploring employment standards targeted at precarious and gig workers. However, a significant problem is that we do not have good evidence about the prevalence and impacts of precarious employment in BC. The Statistics Canada Labour Force Survey (LFS) is one of the main sources of data on employment in Canada, but there are dimensions of precarious employment that it does not capture.

Precarious employment is found in all sectors of the economy.

To start to address this data gap, in 2019 we piloted an online survey of employment characteristics, the BC Precarity Survey, which built on research by the Poverty and Employment Precarity in Southern Ontario (PEPSO) project (https://pepso.ca). Administered to over 3,000

2 Cahill, "Understanding Precarious Work."

The findings from the BC Precarity Survey suggest that many workers in BC experienced dimensions of precarious employment before COVID-19 hit the economy.

British Columbians provincewide in November 2019, before the COVID-19 pandemic was declared, the survey provides a unique snapshot of the provincial labour market at a time of historically low unemployment and relative labour market strength. While low unemployment is undoubtedly positive, the findings from the BC Precarity Survey suggest that many workers in BC experienced dimensions of precarious employment before COVID-19 hit the economy, and that more research is needed to understand the multiple dimensions of employment precarity and their impacts.

This report presents the key findings of the pilot BC Precarity Survey. We first contextualize these findings by discussing relevant academic and policy literature on the dimensions of precarity in Canada and beyond. We then present the survey methodology and our analysis of the survey data, and conclude by discussing the implications of our findings.

The goals of this study are threefold. First, to explore ways of building on previous research in Canada to define and measure precarious employment in BC. Second, to explore the strengths and weaknesses of our survey instrument and data, and to identify areas for further research in the future. Third, and perhaps most importantly, to spur a more informed public conversation about precarious employment in BC and how to address it. This debate is even more urgent in the current environment of rising living costs and higher interest rates. These are not only putting increased pressure on the already stretched family budgets of many workers but also threatening to precipitate a recession, which could easily deepen the workplace inequalities the COVID-19 pandemic exposed.

Research on precarious employment

This section provides an overview of the academic and policy research that forms the background to the BC Precarity Survey pilot project. It is a large body of work stretching back several decades, so we can only provide a summary of the literature most relevant to our project and the BC context.

Defining precarious employment

The concept of precarious employment first emerged in the 1980s to describe changes to the employment regime that emerged in the Global North in the 20th century.[3] As Leah Vosko argued in one of the first Canadian studies of the "precarious employment relationship," "In the aftermath of the First World War, states involved in crafting the postwar settlement ushered in the modern labour market by, among other things, advancing the maxim 'labour is not a commodity' in the founding charter of the International Labour Organization (ILO)."[4] After World War II, the same states created the conditions for the dominance of the standard employment relationship (SER).[5] The SER "came to be characterized as a lifelong, continuous, full-time employment relationship where the worker has one employer and normally works on the employer's premises or under his or her direct supervision."[6] Other aspects of the SER include

3 Strauss, "Precarious Work."

4 Vosko, *Temporary Work*, 14.

5 Vosko, 15.

6 Vosko, 24. As Vosko argues, the SER was not the norm for most women in Canada and elsewhere in this period. Nor was it available to many racialized and Indigenous workers, regardless of gender. It is in this sense that Vosko and others describe the SER as normative.

collective representation (unionization) and employment-related benefits and entitlements (as part of the related social wage model in many postwar welfare states).

The SER is also associated with the concept of "industrial citizenship" in industrial relations and labour law, which refers to the rights of workers within the employment relationship that are external to markets and moderate market forces. These include individual rights to protective standards and terms and conditions of employment, and collective rights to representation.[7] Guy Standing, an influential theorist of precarity, identified seven forms of labour security under industrial citizenship, which include income adequacy, income stability, security of employment, opportunities for upward mobility, protections against accidents and illness at work, opportunities to gain skills, and collective voice in the labour market.[8] Together, the SER and industrial citizenship defined the male breadwinner model of secure employment in the post–World War II period and were interrelated with the development of postwar welfare states and regulatory regimes.

The standard employment relationship's coverage was thus always uneven, even within wealthy industrialized nations: women, Indigenous and many Black and racialized workers were excluded.

Capitalist economies are shaped by and reinforce structural inequalities related to race and racialization, class, gender, sexuality and ability, among others. In BC, for example, settler colonialism and racist immigration policies have been foundational to the development of labour markets (and continue to be today). The SER was thus always uneven, even within wealthy industrialized nations: women, Indigenous and many Black and racialized workers were excluded, as were entire occupations—for example, agricultural and domestic work. These occupations were, and remain, gendered, racialized and linked to migrant and immigrant statuses. As such, the SER needs to be understood as a normative model as much as a description of actually existing employment relations in the postwar era. This model started to come under sustained pressure in the late 1970s, the period associated with the rise of what we now call neoliberalism.[9] Research in the last three decades "points to fundamental shifts starting around 1980 in how workers were employed, and the spread of precarious employment"; Canada is among the countries that have seen a decline in the SER and increases in temporary and insecure forms of employment.[10] More than 20 years ago, Vosko's research on the expansion of temporary employment in Canada identified the increasing prevalence of non-standard forms of employment and associated these trends with what she and other researchers call the feminization of employment: increasing casualization in which more jobs (including those that employ men) come to resemble the low-paid and insecure jobs historically available to women[11] and to "immigrants, people of colour, and other marginalized groups."[12]

7 Fudge, "After Industrial Citizenship," 632; Condratto and Gibbs, "After Industrial Citizenship."

8 Standing, *The Precariat*.

9 Lambert and Herod, *Neoliberal Capitalism and Precarious Work*.

10 Procyk, Lewchuk and Shields, *Precarious Employment*, 3.

11 Armstrong, "Feminization of the Labour Force"; Vosko, *Temporary Work*, 39.

12 Cranford and Vosko, "Conceptualizing Precarious Employment," 44.

During this period, according to Standing, firms and many governments pursued "labour market flexibility" out of fear that without it, increased labour costs would lead to more offshore investment and outsourcing of work as corporations sought to compete in a globalized world.[13] This "flexibilization" took many forms, including changes in wage structures, terms of employment and the labour process. Researchers started to note the increasing prevalence of "atypical" or "non-standard" work arrangements: jobs that are temporary, on-demand or with no fixed schedule, and that offer few, if any, occupational benefits.[14] Cross-national research in the 1980s, under the auspices of the International Labour Organization (ILO), introduced the concept of precarious employment to describe these forms of employment, a concept that was built on a history of theorizing precarious work and the position of workers in France.[15] In this vein Gerry and Janine Rodgers' 1989 volume established a set of characteristics of precarious employment that has remained influential. Gerry Rodgers described precarious employment situations as being defined by:

Canada is among the countries that have seen a decline in the SER and increases in temporary and insecure forms of employment.

- A short time horizon, being of limited duration or having a high risk of termination;
- A lack of control over working conditions, the pace of work, and wages;
- A lack of protections in employment (including legislative protections, collective-agreement-based protections or customary protections, or those embedded in systems of social security); and,
- Low incomes at or near defined poverty lines.[16]

Rodgers highlighted the need to look at multiple dimensions to understand precarious work: "the concept of precariousness involves instability, lack of protection, insecurity, and social and economic vulnerability."[17]

This multidimensional approach has resulted in wide-ranging academic and policy research that attempts to define precarious employment and precarious work (which include increasingly common employment relationships other than employee, such as self-employed or independent contractor) across national and subnational contexts.[18] There is, consequently, no single accepted definition of precarious employment or precarious work. A 2020 article

13 Standing, *The Precariat*.

14 Standing; Lewchuk, "Precarious Jobs."

15 Bourdieu, "Précarité Est Aujourd'hui"; Casas-Cortés, "Genealogy of Precarity"; Barbier, "Précarité"; Vosko, MacDonald and Campbell, *Gender and the Contours*; Rodgers, "Precarious Work in Western Europe."

16 Rodgers, "Precarious Work in Western Europe." See also Rodgers and Rodgers, Precarious Jobs; Vosko, MacDonald and Campbell, *Gender and the Contours*, 7.

17 Rodgers, "Precarious Work in Western Europe," 4.

18 See, for example, Burgess and Campbell, "Nature and Dimensions"; Puig-Barrachina et al., "Measuring Employment Precariousness"; Blyton, review of *Good Jobs, Bad Jobs*"; Vosko, *Precarious Employment*; Fudge and Owens, *Precarious Work*.

"Understanding Precarious Work in Canada" on the Canadian Library of Parliament blog did note that:

> An Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) report and the European Union have advanced frameworks to better understand precarious work. These frameworks organize characteristics of precarious work into three broad dimensions related to security, income and opportunity.[19]

In a similar vein, the authors of a 2020 systematic review of research on precarious employment identified three common dimensions of precarious employment—employment insecurity, income inadequacy and lack of rights and protections.[20] Note that the definitions have insecurity and inadequate income in common, but that the OECD and EU's emphasis on "opportunity" over rights and protections signals differences in the way the issue has been framed by policy-makers and researchers.

At the same time, multidimensional approaches that built on and expanded Rodgers's characteristics of precarious work have been influential in Canada, incorporating, for example, self-employed workers.[21] Vosko defined precarious employment as encompassing "forms of work involving limited social benefits and statutory entitlements, job insecurity, low wages, and high risks of ill-health." Such work is shaped by:

- Employment status (i.e., whether a worker is self-employed or an employee);
- The form of employment (e.g., full- or part-time, or temporary or permanent);
- Dimensions of labour market insecurity (e.g., lack of regulatory protections or low pay);
- The particular social context of employment (e.g., the occupation, industry or geography); and
- The social locations of workers (how social relations and identities, such as the social construction of gender and race, relate to political economic conditions).[22]

In recent research, Procyk, Lewchuk and Shields included an even broader set of dimensions that implicate not only employers but a range of labour market institutions (like Canada's system of employment insurance, or EI) in the definition of precarious work:

- Temporary and contract employment;

19 Cahill, "Understanding Precarious Work."

20 Kreshpaj et al., "What Is Precarious Employment?"

21 Vosko, "Precarious Employment." This work informed the further development of the Comparative Perspectives on Precarious Employment Database (CPD) (http://www.genderwork.ca). The project's conceptualization of precarious employment is aimed at "overcoming a simple dichotomy between 'standard' and 'non-standard' jobs and the conflation of the former with job security and the latter with job insecurity" while developing the four main dimensions of labour market insecurity identified by Rodgers.

22 Vosko, "Precarious Employment," 3.

- Irregular or on-call hours;
- Irregular work (piecing together multiple jobs at the same time, or consecutively, to make up year-round full-time work);
- A lack of employer-provided health or retirement benefits;
- Little to no access to training;
- Less or no protection from existing employment and labour law frameworks;
- Less access to employment insurance or full state pensions; and
- Less voice at work or access to collective representation.[23]

Spatial dimensions of precarity—its spatial and geographical distribution and characteristics—have also been explored in recent research in Canada, examining the distribution of "precarious forms of employment" (PFEs) across different scales (the national, provincial, census metropolitan area (CMA), and urban/rural scale).[24] The PFEs are also conceptualized in relation to Rodgers's definition of non-standard employment.

Precarious work is found across a broad range of sectors and occupations in Canada and elsewhere.

Finally, the emergence (or resurgence) of gig work, especially in relation to companies like Uber and SkipTheDishes, has led to the identification of additional characteristics of precarious work and the concept of platform labour.[25] Stanford, for example, elaborated the dimensions of duration, control, protection and income in identifying the following characteristics of gig work:

- Work is performed on demand;
- Work is compensated on a demand basis;
- Workers supply their own equipment;
- There is distance between the worker, customer and organizing entity; and
- Digital intermediation is required to commission, supervise and deliver work.[26]

While gig work has garnered significant attention in recent debates about insecure work and its regulation, precarious work is found across a broad range of sectors and occupations in Canada and elsewhere.

23 Procyk, Lewchuk and Shields, *Precarious Employment*.

24 Ali and Newbold, "Gender, Space, and Precarious Employment"; Ali and Newbold, "Geographic Variations", 157.

25 Van Doorn, "Platform Labor."

26 Stanford, "Resurgence of Gig Work."

Measuring precarious employment

While the concept of precarious employment has increased in use among both researchers and policy-makers, the lack of a commonly accepted definition creates challenges when seeking to measure and analyze its prevalence and impacts. Researchers employ a range of methods and methodologies to study precarious employment, both qualitative and quantitative. In the social sciences, Vosko, MacDonald and Campbell identified two main approaches. One approach identifies precarious work with specific forms of non-standard work (especially temporary employment), in a binary between standard and non-standard work. The second approach defines precarity "in terms of a deficit in multiple forms of labour security,"[27] which translates into a multidimensional approach that identifies indicators of insecure work and measures their prevalence. Both "treat precariousness as predominantly to do with job characteristics, but in effect they differ in terms of the range of characteristics that are included in the concept."[28]

Quantitative and statistical methods allow for incorporating indicators of multiple dimensions of precarious employment to study trends among groups, within different sectors of the economy, across different spatial scales and over time. Researchers use government statistics and/or may collect primary data, but in both cases the most common type of data are survey data. For example, Statistics Canada's Labour Force Survey (LFS) gathers monthly data on a number of job characteristics relevant to definitions of precarious work, including part-time work, job permanency, self-employment and the holding of multiple jobs.[29] Using part-time work, job (non-)permanency and more recently self-employment to measure the prevalence of precarious employment in Canada is based on the first approach (as identified by Vosko, MacDonald and Campbell), in which precarious employment is associated with specific forms of non-standard employment.[30]

Based on the indicators from the LFS, there is limited evidence that precarious employment is on the rise; "standard" jobs remain the norm in Canada and in BC.[31] In 2020, the final report of the BC Basic Income Panel argued that trends in the prevalence of the standard employment relationship for men and women in Canada from 1989 to 2019 showed a marked decline in the early 1990s (a reduction of almost 10 per cent in the proportion of permanent full-time employees for both men and women) but were relatively stable after that.[32] In BC, rates of "unstable" employment (self-employed, contract, part-time or job tenure of less than one year) remained fairly constant between 1997 and 2019, although the proportion of people in BC in part-time and contract work was higher than in the rest of Canada[33] (and the proportion in

27 Vosko, MacDonald and Campbell, *Gender and the Contours*, 6; Fudge and Owens, *Precarious Work*.

28 Vosko, MacDonald and Campbell, *Gender and the Contours*, 6.

29 Vosko, Zukewich and Cranford, "Precarious Jobs."

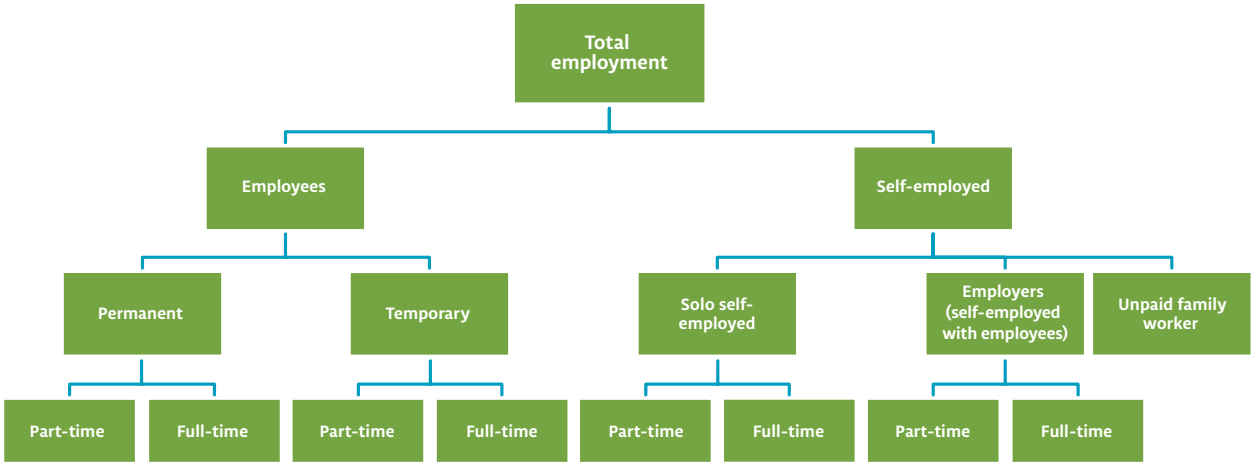
30 Vosko, Zukewich and Cranford.

31 Green, Kesselman and Tedds, *Covering All the Basics.*

32 Green, Kesselman and Tedds, 115.

33 Green, Kesselman and Tedds, 116.

FIGURE 1 Mutually exclusive typology of total employment



Source: Adapted from Vosko, "Precarious Employment."

permanent full-time employment lower). Precarious employment may also be particularly associated with certain sectors. A 2018 report, for example, used LFS data to demonstrate that precarious employment in Canada (associated with part-time and temporary work) is concentrated in just three sectors: accommodation and food services; information, culture and recreation; and educational services.[34]

Other research, however, has followed the second approach—applying more fine-grained categorizations of non-standard employment using existing statistical sources. Working with mutually exclusive forms of employment measured by the LFS, Canadian researchers developed a typology that first distinguishes employees and self-employed workers; then breaks down employees into categories of temporary and permanent, and self-employed into the solo self-employed, those with employees, and unpaid family workers; and finally distinguishes between part-time and full-time workers within each subcategory (as illustrated in Figure 1). This allowed for the examination of trends during the 1990s beyond the relatively limited binary between full-time and part-time, or permanent and temporary work, demonstrating that solo self-employment and full-time temporary work grew most sharply during that decade.[35]

Crucially, it also enabled explorations of the interaction of social location and intersecting dimensions of precarity: for example, trends in part-time temporary work and solo self-employment among women and men, and among racialized workers; and the further breakdown of temporary work into seasonal, term/contract and casual/other to examine the gendered dimensions of

34 Fong, *Navigating Precarious Employment*.

35 Vosko, "Precarious Employment," 21.

different types of non-permanent employment.[36] As Vosko argued, statistical definitions and analyses can "enable researchers to paint a portrait of the phenomenon [of precarious employment] in Canada sensitive to the social locations of gender, 'race,' immigration status, age, (dis)ability, and region, as well as to changes at the firm, industry, and occupational levels."[37] In their extension of the mutually exclusive typology of total employment, Cranford and Vosko examined indicators of precariousness—earnings, social wage,[38] regulatory protection and control, and contingency—in relation to both social locations and occupational context, concluding that the broad concept of precarious employment masks the uneven distribution of precarity.[39] "A contextual examination of precarious employment," they argued, "shows that this phenomenon is best understood as a racialized gendering of jobs," which is "a process shaped by occupational context."

Building on these studies, researchers in Canada have also grappled with the problem that multiple dimensions of precarious work identified in the broader literature may not be captured in government statistics. The researchers involved in the Poverty and Employment Precarity in Southern Ontario (PEPSO) initiative, for example, argued that the LFS fails to capture:

- Scheduling variability week to week;
- How much advance notice of the schedule is given;
- Access to employer-provided benefits;
- Whether a temporary contract is less than a year, or one year or more;
- Whether temporary work is direct employment or intermediated by a temp agency;
- Whether people expect their hours to be reduced in the future or their employment to end;
- Work that is done "on call"; and
- The workers' voice in the workplace.[40]

PEPSO researchers identified four ways to measure precarious employment in Canada.[41] The first two, as described above, are the narrowest: they measure, using LFS data, the number of employees in part-time or temporary employment; and after 1996, the number of self-employed workers as well.[42] The third way instead measures the prevalence of the standard employment

36 Vosko, "Precarious Employment," 26.

37 Vosko, 13.

38 In research on welfare states, the "social wage" usually refers to the total income of workers after allowing for redistribution through taxes and transfers, and including public goods and services (such as health care and education) that the state provides.

39 Cranford and Vosko, "Conceptualizing Precarious Employment."

40 Poverty and Employment Precarity in Southern Ontario, *It's More Than Poverty.*

41 Procyk, Lewchuk and Shields, *Precarious Employment*, 10–11.

42 "One crucial distinction among the self-employed is whether or not they hire other employees. Self-employed people can be employers who employ other workers or they can be own account, which means that they do not hire anyone else." Fudge, "Labour Protection," 39.

relationship (SER), and anyone not included in this category is identified with some degree of employment precarity; however, in the same way that the LFS does not measure multidimensional precarity, it does not measure all dimensions of the SER (such as access to benefits). The fourth way, adopted by the PEPSO team, seeks to identify a set of dimensions informed by previous approaches to research, and generate data to create a precarity index. The project team developed a bespoke survey instrument and used 10 questions from the survey to construct the PEPSO *Employment Precarity Index*.

There remains some debate, in recent work by researchers using quantitative methods to measure precarious employment in BC and Canada, about whether precarious employment has increased in the new millennium and for whom, while acknowledging the limits to existing data. Ornstein, for example, wrote, "Unfortunately, no ongoing Statistics Canada survey provides the detailed information on the multiple job characteristics linked to precarious employment. In particular, we lack measures of job benefits, work tasks and working conditions."[43] Based on analysis of three job characteristics measured by the LFS—contractual status, full- versus part-time hours and levels of pay (low wages)—the research found a small *increase* in permanent employment between 1997 and 2018 and troubled the idea of increasing precarious employment in the Canadian economy, in line with other studies using the LFS described above.

There is consensus that "binary" approaches to standard and non-standard work do not capture the complexity of the dimensions of job quality and security.

These quantitative approaches help advance our understanding of the prevalence, distribution and complexity of precarious employment in Canada, but all have limitations: a reliance on LFS data excludes dimensions of precarity not measured by the survey, while the index method creates cut-offs for employment security categories that may be somewhat arbitrary.[44] How we define precarious employment relates to whether we have data that capture the phenomena we are seeking to measure. There is consensus that "binary" approaches to standard and non-standard work do not capture the complexity of the dimensions of job quality and security that are important to most current research on precarious work, even if data to construct such binary measures are more available.

Statistical insights "gain greater precision and meaning in dialogue with analyses of laws, legislation, and policies, original survey research, and qualitative case studies."[45] While empirical research to measure precarious employment has focused on quantitative indicators, research in Canada has also sought to add nuance to understandings of *how widespread* precarious employment is by exploring the *impacts* of employment precarity. This is done through multiple and mixed methods, including qualitative methods like interviews and focus groups. A 2018 study of job precariousness among professional workers, for example, employed the third way of studying precarity described by the PEPSO researchers Procyk et al.: a national survey of 1,000 professionals, designed to measure the prevalence of the SER; and focus groups to

43 Ornstein, "Precarious Employment," 221.

44 Cranford, Vosko and Zukewich, "Precarious Employment."

45 Vosko, "Precarious Employment," 29.

generate qualitative data on how the lack of security impacted participants.[46] Another example is "Case Study 1: Precarity and Its Impacts on Household and Community Well-Being," where PEPSO researchers conducted two population-based surveys to generate original primary data on precarity among working-aged adults in the Greater Toronto-Hamilton Area (GTHA), *and* conducted two rounds of interviews in 2010 and 2015 involving more than 100 participants.[47] Mixed methods and qualitative research have been important in exploring the impacts of precarious employment and its uneven distribution in Canada, including among specific groups like millennials and racialized immigrant and migrant workers.[48]

Impacts of precarious employment in Canada

Research on precarious work in Canada has demonstrated that its uneven distribution creates unequal impacts on individuals, households and communities, in particular for racialized and immigrant workers, women, lone parents (the majority of whom are women) and younger people.[49] Indigenous, immigrant and racialized workers and workers with precarious legal status often live with higher rates of overcrowding, precarious housing and food insecurity that may be related to precarious employment. These structural inequalities also shape access to "standard" employment in the context of ongoing impacts of settler colonialism and systemic racism in Canada and in BC. Dimensions of precarious employment such as low income, short-term and on-demand work, uncertainty over hours and scheduling, a lack of access to benefits and a lack of voice at work are thus unevenly distributed in the "colour-coded labour market" in ways that impact communities as well as individual households.[50] Understanding precarious employment in BC is thus an important way of understanding the unequal distribution of economic risks and rewards in our society and how to tackle inequality both within and beyond paid work.

Structural inequalities also shape access to "standard" employment in the context of ongoing impacts of settler colonialism and systemic racism in Canada and in BC.

These findings provide evidence not only of the racialized gendering of precarious work described by Cranford and Vosko, but of the consequences of precarious employment increasing within the Canadian labour market since the 1980s for younger workers seeking to establish economic and social stability. They affirm the utility of intersectional approaches to understanding precarity in the context of social locations shaped by multiple categories of social difference and identity.[51] They also point to areas where not enough research has been conducted—for example, on

46 Hennessey and Tranjan, "No Safe Harbour."

47 Research projects, Poverty and Employment Precarity in Southern Ontario, accessed 22/09/2022, https://pepso.ca/research-projects/case-study-1.

48 Worth, "Making Sense of Precarity"; Premji, "'It's Totally Destroyed Our Life.'"

49 Premji, "'It's Totally Destroyed Our Life'"; Wyn and Andres, "Navigating Complex Lives"; Cohen and Pulkingham, *Public Policy for Women*; Vosko, MacDonald and Campbell, *Gender and the Contours*.

50 Block and Galabuzi, *Canada's Colour Coded Labour Market*.

51 Liu, "Precarious Nature of Work."

precarious employment among Indigenous workers, workers who identify as having a disability and 2SLGBTQIA+ workers.[52]

Impacts of precarious employment are also multidimensional: they include financial insecurity (or economic fragility),[53] material insecurity (e.g., precarious housing and food insecurity)[54] and impacts on health and well-being.[55] Financial insecurity related to low or irregular income is fundamental to the definition of precarious employment, and perhaps its most obvious outcome. Financial insecurity impacts individual workers, households and families, but also has effects on local and regional economies and at the national level.[56] Unpredictable income and low income do not always coincide but can be related. Whilst high income can offset some of the anxiety associated with the affordability of household needs,[57] high income is not an indicator of the absence of precarious employment. It is not only low income but also income irregularity and fluctuations that are associated with material hardship, as research on financial insecurity among casual workers in BC has shown.[58] However, higher incomes may provide a buffer against severe material hardship, even when irregular, that lower income workers do not have.

Financial insecurity or economic fragility are compounded by the ways that government programs like federal employment insurance exclude workers in non-standard jobs.

Financial insecurity or economic fragility are compounded by the ways that government programs like federal employment insurance (EI) exclude workers in non-standard jobs (e.g., part-time workers, who may fail to meet the threshold for hours worked within the qualifying period), and by the decline in the social wage.[59] Precarious workers are often ineligible for programs to protect employee health and income security, such as WorkSafeBC's Wage-Loss Benefit for workers who miss work owing to injury or illness on the job. To qualify, a worker must provide a work schedule,[60] which a precarious worker may not have (e.g., if they are employed on a casual basis or work on call). Finally, precarious employment also limits financial security over the life course.[61] Many precarious workers do not have access to an occupational pension, and intermittent periods of earning, combined with typically lower wages, mean lower benefits from the Canada or Quebec Pension Plan and less accumulated retirement savings.[62]

52 Two-spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning, intersex, asexual and additional sexual orientations and gender identities.

53 Duffy, Corman and Pupo, "Family Finances."

54 Wellesley Institute, *Precarious Housing in Canada*.

55 Lewchuk et al., "From Job Strain"; Lewchuk, Clarke and de Wolff, *Working without Commitments*; Clarke et al., "'This Just Isn't Sustainable,'" 2007; Premji and Shakya, "Pathways between Under/Unemployment and Health."

56 Standing, *The Precariat*.

57 Poverty and Employment Precarity in Southern Ontario, *It's More Than Poverty*.

58 McCarthy et al., "Poverty, Material Hardship, and Mental Health"; MacPhail and Bowles, "From Casual Work."

59 Grundy and Rudman, "Deciphering Deservedness."

60 WorkSafe BC, "Wage-Loss Benefits."

61 Townson, "Impact of Precarious Employment."

62 Townson.

Building on frameworks for understanding social and structural determinants of health, a growing body of research examines the relationships between precarious employment and negative health outcomes.

Building on frameworks for understanding social and structural determinants of health, a growing body of research examines the relationships between precarious employment and negative health outcomes. Benach et al.'s influential framework identified three mechanisms that transmit negative health impacts through precarious employment: exposure to hazardous working conditions, psychosocial stress induced by limited control over circumstances, and social and material consequences of precarious employment.[63] Evidence is mounting of the prevalence and nature of these impacts in Canada from studies by social scientists and health sciences researchers. For example, a study in BC examined data on returning to work post-injury and found that those with multiple jobs pre-injury were both at greater injury risk and less likely to return to work.[64] Holding multiple jobs was associated with precarious work situations, where a worker must hold more than one job to gain sufficient hours and/or income to meet their needs.

Multiple job holding and other dimensions of precarious employment, such as working in casual jobs or without a fixed schedule (or a schedule that is known in advance), also have impacts on journeys to and from work and commute times—an emerging area in research on the impacts of precarious employment.[65] Commutes to precarious jobs can be long, complex, hazardous and reliant on public transport at non-standard times—prolonging work journeys, associated with negative health outcomes for precarious workers and their families.[66]

63 Benach et al., "Precarious Employment."

64 Maas, Koehoorn and McLeod, "Return-to-Work for Multiple Jobholders."

65 Premji, "Precarious Employment."

66 Premji, "'It's Totally Destroyed Our Life.'"

BC Precarity Survey: How we collected the data

Because research to date on precarious employment acknowledges that existing Statistics Canada surveys do not currently collect data on many of the important dimensions and indicators highlighted in the literature, we elected to pilot our own survey instrument. The pilot questionnaire for the BC Precarity Survey was based on the PEPSO questionnaire and developed in consultation with an advisory group comprising representatives from labour organizations (BC Federation of Labour, Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) BC, BC General Employees' Union (BCGEU), Hospital Employees' Union (HEU) and Federation of Post-Secondary Educators of BC (FPSE)), the Vancity credit union, the BC Employment Standards Coalition, the BC Poverty Reduction Coalition, the Living Wage for Families Campaign, and academics from SFU, UBC and UNBC.

The BC Precarity Survey was commissioned in September 2019 by the CCPA–BC in partnership with SFU's Labour Studies Program. Because it was not possible to partner with Statistics Canada for this pilot survey, we contracted the polling firm Insights West to administer the questionnaire as an online panel-based survey. The growth of internet panels to collect surveys is increasing in popularity "because it is cost-effective, enables access to large and diverse samples quickly, takes less time than traditional methods to get data back for analysis, and the standardization of data collection process makes studies easy to replicate."[67] However, non-probability internet panels[68] do have some drawbacks. Their composition is known to differ from the underlying population. One factor is variable levels of internet access (the non-coverage problem). BC, however, does have among the highest rates of home internet

67 Hays, Liu and Kapteyn, "Use of Internet Panels," 685.

68 Non-probability panels, also known as "convenience panels," are panels constituted using a non-random method of selecting people from a population and thus may not be fully representative of the population.

access in Canada: in 2020, 95 per cent of British Columbians had access to the internet at home, although differences remain between urban, rural and on-reserve communities.[69] Another issue is the self-selection problem: internet convenience panels are not based on probability sampling, meaning people self-select into them.[70] While caution therefore needs to be exercised in inferring from the study sample to the BC population, we believe that this increasingly common data collection method is robust enough for a pilot study seeking to address gaps in existing government-collected data.

To match the PEPSO survey sample of workers who are more likely to have completed their schooling, fully entered the labour market and established families of their own, the BC Precarity Survey was administered to adults aged 25 to 65 who had worked for pay in the last three months. The initial target sample size was 3,000, demographically balanced to reflect the makeup (by gender and age) of the BC population of core-aged workers. Within that sample, we targeted a subsample of workers who self-identify as Chinese balanced by age, gender, country of birth and time in Canada. Recognizing that race, like gender, is a complex social construct, we also asked participants about their racial, ethnic and Indigenous identities. In our analysis, we break out into different categories workers who self-identify as white, racialized and Indigenous. Uniquely, the BC Precarity Survey sample was regionally balanced to include participants from all parts of the province and therefore included regional quotas for Metro Vancouver, Vancouver Island, Northern BC and the rest of BC.

As Table A1 in Appendix 1 shows, the BC Precarity Survey sample was fairly close in composition to provincial census demographics for gender and age, although our sample includes slightly fewer workers in the 25 to 34 age bracket (24 per cent, compared with 26 per cent in the 2016 census for BC). Our sample overrepresents workers in Metro Vancouver (63 per cent, compared with 56 per cent in the census), and underrepresents racialized workers and Indigenous workers relative to white workers. In addition, only 15 per cent of core-aged workers have an education level of "High school or less" in our sample, compared with 33 per cent in the 2016 census; and 79 per cent of our sample identify as non-immigrants, compared with 68 per cent in the 2016 census. Given that those workers with lower levels of education were more likely to be in the *Vulnerable* and *Precarious* clusters in the PEPSO study, and higher levels of precarity were found among racialized workers, these variations in our sample may mean that precarious workers are underrepresented in our study. This may be the case even though we included a targeted subsample to prevent the undersampling of workers who self-identify as Chinese. The undersampling of this group was encountered in both the 2011 and 2014 waves of the PEPSO survey, which resulted in the underrepresentation of racialized workers in their samples relative to the census. Finally, possibly because of the Metro Vancouver bias, renters are overrepresented in our sample relative to homeowners, which could skew the results in the opposite direction (toward the overrepresentation of precarious workers).

69 Statistics Canada, "Access to the Internet."

70 Svensson, "Web Panel Surveys."

The survey included 52 questions in total, and the average completion time was just over 14 minutes. More information about the survey is available in Appendix 1. Fieldwork was completed between November 19 and December 8, 2019. A total of 3,117 qualified respondents completed the survey. Weighting was applied to the data according to Statistics Canada 2016 census figures on region, age, gender and ethnicity, and among respondents who self-identified as Chinese, country of birth and time in Canada. The final weighted sample size was 3,576. The weighting of convenience samples does not always yield complete comparability of measures with a target population. In addition, ordinary estimates of sampling error and confidence intervals, which assume probability sampling, may not be applied in the same way to non-probability samples.

Not all socio-demographic characteristics or identities associated with precarious employment in the broader literature were captured by our pilot survey. In particular, we did not ask respondents whether they self-identify as having a disability. We also did not ask about sexual orientation. Questions that help gather data on the prevalence of non-standard and precarious employment among BC workers who identify as having a disability and who identify as 2SLGBTQIA+ are important to understanding precarity in BC and should be included in future research.

Finally, our pilot survey did gather data on the sector in which respondents worked but not detailed data on industry or occupation. This is a limitation because some recent studies using LFS data have argued that industry is a more significant predictor of precarious employment than, for example, gender or visible minority status. Given that those industries may also be highly feminized or racialized, more research is needed to understand the nature of the relationships between industry, occupation, job characteristics and worker characteristics.

Analysis

Our analysis of the pilot BC Precarity Survey explores the data through the frameworks offered by three of the approaches to definition and measurement discussed in the previous section "Measuring precarious employment" (page 18). We start with the approaches that define precarious employment in relation to the idea of "standard" employment, first using a simple conceptualization of the standard as permanent employment (versus non-permanent forms of employment and/or self-employment), followed by a mutually exclusive typology of total employment into "standard" and "non-standard" that incorporates both class of worker and job type in addition to job permanency.

We then build on the PEPSO research project's enhanced definition of the standard employment relationship (SER) that encompasses multiple dimensions of employment security, and use that definition to explore the prevalence and distribution of the SER in our sample. In this framework, precarious work is understood as employment that does not fit the definition of the "standard" employment relationship. Finally, we use the BC Precarity Survey data to construct an index of precarity using the method developed for the PEPSO *Employment Precarity Index*, which allows us to delve deeper into the impacts of precarious employment on workers in our sample and their families.

Measuring standard and non-standard employment in the BC Precarity Survey sample

The simplest approach to defining standard and non-standard employment uses job permanency as the key indicator.

According to Labour Force Survey data, in November 2019, 92 per cent of employees in BC were in permanent jobs.[71] In the BC Precarity Survey sample, 84 per cent of employees sampled identified

71 Statistics Canada, "Job permanency (permanent and temporary) by industry, monthly, unadjusted for seasonality (x 1,000)," table 14-10-0071-01, accessed September 27, 2022, https://doi.org/10.25318/1410007101-eng. The Labour Force Survey data is for employees aged 25 to 64. It is missing employees aged 65, who are included in the BC Precarity Survey figures, and therefore may slightly overestimate the population of permanent employees compared with our sample.

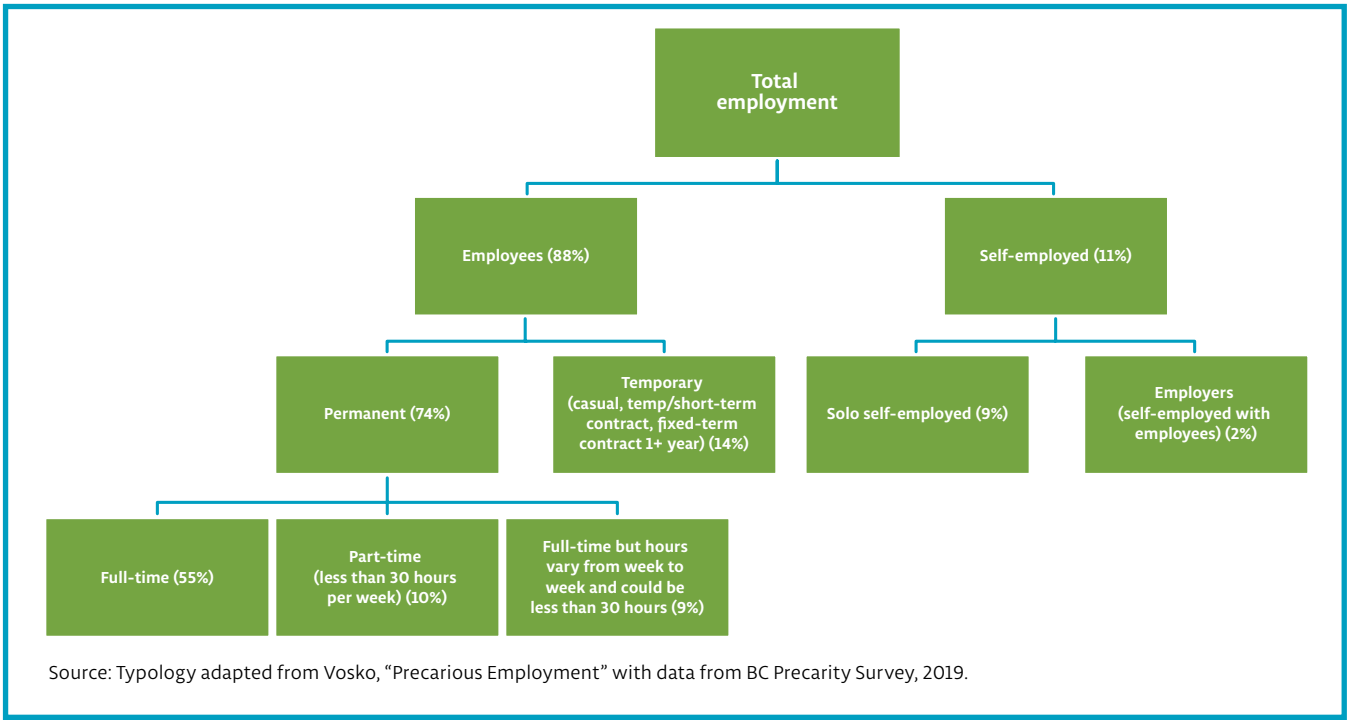
as being in a permanent job. These figures suggest that there are differences between LFS and BC Precarity Survey data, which may be because of how questions were asked, because of the non-probability sampling method we used (those not in permanent employment may be more likely to self-select into a convenience panel) and because of differences in sample sizes. Nevertheless, the proportion of those in the BC Precarity Survey sample and the LFS sample who are not in an SER according to the binary definition is significant enough to signal the need for more detailed analysis of those categories.

BEYOND THE SIMPLE BINARY OF STANDARD AND NON-STANDARD EMPLOYMENT

The simple binary of standard and non-standard work, based solely on job permanency, is limited in what it tells us about how workers experience a range of dimensions that combine to produce precarious employment in many analytical approaches. We can add nuance to this approach by using a modified version of the mutually exclusive typology of total employment developed by Vosko and colleagues, who defined "standard" work as direct employment that is full-time and permanent (Figure 2).

In our sample, only 55 per cent of those surveyed were in a "standard" job according to Vosko and colleagues' definition of direct permanent employment with full-time hours.

FIGURE 2 BC Precarity Survey sample total employment, by type of employment relationship and selected job characteristics



Source: Typology adapted from Vosko, "Precarious Employment" with data from BC Precarity Survey, 2019.

However, focusing only on a typology of total employment still does not capture the range of Rodgers's characteristics of precarious employment."[72] We therefore extend Vosko et al.'s approach to add access to at least one employer-provided benefit (such as extended health and dental coverage or a workplace pension) to the definition of the standard employment relationship (SER) we use for our analysis in the remainder of the report.

Thus, our definition of the SER includes all of the following:

- There is an expectation of continuity of employment (job permanency), which indicates a certain level of employment security.
- There is a direct employment relationship (the worker is an employee, as opposed to self-employed), which indicates access to employment protections and (in most cases) access to collective representation.
- The job is full-time (defined as 30 hours per week or more), which makes access to adequate income and government benefits such as Employment Insurance (EI) in the event of unexpected job loss more likely.
- The job offers access to at least some employer-provided benefits (such as an extended health and dental plan, paid sick leave or a workplace pension), which indicates access to necessary services and income during a health crisis or in retirement.

This framework for measuring the prevalence of standard and non-standard employment in BC does not include low pay, because it applies the insights of the *It's More Than Poverty* report of the PEPSO project that found that workers in jobs with low pay, but which otherwise had characteristics associated with the SER (employee status, permanence, full-time hours), experienced less severe impacts of employment precarity than those with higher levels of pay but more employment insecurity.[73] We do, however, explore the relationship between precarious employment (as defined above) and low pay in the section "The standard employment relationship, job quality and earnings" on page 37.

THE PREVALENCE OF NON-STANDARD EMPLOYMENT

Using the enhanced definition of the SER described above, we find that the SER is not actually the standard for most workers in the BC Precarity Survey sample; only 49 per cent of workers aged 25 to 65 were in an SER as we define it (Table 1).

Some groups of workers were less likely to be in an SER than others, including women (especially racialized and Indigenous women), younger workers aged 25 to 34 and recent immigrants. Indigenous men in our sample were least likely to be in an SER, followed closely by

72 Rodgers, "Precarious Work in Western Europe," 3. See also Vosko, MacDonald and Campbell, *Gender and the Contours*, 7; Rodgers and Rodgers, *Precarious Jobs*.

73 Poverty and Employment Precarity in Southern Ontario, *It's More Than Poverty*.

TABLE 1 Percentage of workers in the BC Precarity Survey sample in a standard employment relationship (SER), by selected worker characteristics

	In a standard employment relationship	Not in a standard employment relationship
All BC workers	49%	51%
Women	45%	55%
Men	53%	47%
White	49%	51%
Racialized	49%	51%
Indigenous	43%	57%
White women	45%	55%
Racialized women	42%	58%
Indigenous women	43%	57%
White men	52%	48%
Racialized men	55%	45%
Indigenous men	41%	59%
Metro Vancouver	50%	50%
Vancouver Island	47%	53%
Northern BC	47%	53%
Interior	45%	55%
Aged 25–34	45%	55%
Aged 35–65	50%	50%
Canadian citizens	49%	51%
Permanent residents	34%	66%
Temporary status*	37%	63%
Non-immigrants (Canadian by birth)	49%	51%
Recent immigrants (<10 years in Canada)	38%	62%
Established immigrants (10+ years in Canada)	49%	51%
Live in housing owned by a member of the household	51%	49%
Live in rented housing	43%	57%

Source: BC Precarity Survey, 2019.

* Workers who had temporary immigration status in Canada (e.g., temporary foreign workers, those on student visas and others with temporary visas and work permits) reported a higher prevalence of non-SER and thus a higher vulnerability to employment precarity. However, the number of workers with temporary status in the BC Precarity Survey sample was very small (weighted count of 48 workers), and any results for this group need to be interpreted with caution. That is why the subsequent analysis excludes this group of workers.

racialized and Indigenous women, while racialized men were most likely to be in an SER (followed closely by white men). If we look at all the categories, workers with permanent resident (PR) status and recent immigrants (those who had been in Canada less than 10 years) had the lowest levels of standard employment in our sample. These two groups overlap, as immigrants with PR status who are not citizens are more likely to be those who have arrived in Canada in the last decade.

Geographically, workers in our sample in Metro Vancouver were more likely to be in "standard" jobs than those elsewhere in the province, while those in the Interior of BC were the least likely. Workers not in an SER were more likely to be renters than to live in housing owned by a member of the household.

JOB QUALITY, JOB SECURITY AND ACCESS TO BENEFITS

Multidimensional definitions of precarious employment include a variety of job characteristics that relate to job quality and job security. Little, if any, data are available on the prevalence of many of those job characteristics in BC (or Canada) through Statistics Canada surveys or other secondary sources, which hinders researchers and policy-makers' understanding of precarity. The BC Precarity Survey pilot therefore aimed to begin addressing these data gaps and gathered original data on various job characteristics related to job quality and job security among a sample of core-aged workers in BC (ages 25–65). Tables 2 and 3 show similarities and differences in the job quality and job security experienced by workers in different demographic and geographic groups in our sample. While some of the variations among groups are quite small, workers aged 25 to 34 were more likely than other groups to work on call and work multiple jobs, and less likely to have access to an employer pension. Indigenous workers reported lower levels of access to paid sick days than all other groups.

Indigenous workers reported lower levels of access to paid sick days than all other groups.

The BC Precarity Survey also reveals important regional differences in job quality in our sample (Table 3). For example, sampled workers in the Interior and Northern BC were more likely to experience income variability week to week and unexpected scheduling changes, and were slightly less likely to know their schedule a week in advance. Rates of casual, temporary or short-term work and having multiple jobs didn't seem to vary regionally, nor did the ability to raise workplace concerns without fear for one's job. Workers in the Interior were less likely than other workers to receive training or benefits from their employer, with the gaps being particularly pronounced in access to paid sick leave. These workers were also more likely to be working on call, while workers on Vancouver Island were the least likely to report on-call work.

TABLE 2 Prevalence of selected job characteristics related to job quality and job security among workers, by gender, racialization, Indigenous identity and age

	All workers	Women	Men	White workers	Racialized workers	Indigenous workers	Workers aged 25–34	Workers aged 35–65
Income varies from week to week (a lot or a great deal)	17%	16%	19%	19%	13%	11%	23%	15%
Schedule changes unexpectedly (sometimes or often)	36%	33%	39%	37%	33%	34%	40%	35%
Usually knows work schedule at least one week in advance (half the time or more)	87%	87%	87%	87%	86%	88%	87%	87%
Employment type is casual, temporary or short-term	10%	11%	8%	10%	11%	6%	11%	9%
Working on call (half the time or more)	20%	15%	24%	20%	21%	13%	26%	18%
Worked multiple jobs at any time in the last 3 months	30%	27%	31%	28%	33%	26%	39%	26%
Received employer-provided training within the last year	31%	28%	35%	32%	28%	29%	36%	29%
Receives employer-provided health benefits	54%	53%	55%	55%	53%	49%	51%	56%
Receives employer-provided pension benefits	43%	43%	43%	44%	42%	40%	35%	46%
Receives employer-provided paid sick leave	48%	49%	47%	49%	48%	37%	46%	49%
Concerned that raising health and safety or workplace issues will likely negatively affect employment (likely or very likely)	17%	15%	19%	17%	20%	14%	23%	16%

Source: BC Precarity Survey, 2019.

TABLE 3 Prevalence of selected job characteristics related to job quality and job security among workers, by region and immigrant status

	All workers	Workers in Metro Vancouver	Workers in Vancouver Island	Workers in Northern BC	Workers in Interior	Recent immigrants (<10 years in Canada)	Established immigrants (10+ years in Canada)	Non-immigrants (Canadian by birth)
Income varies from week to week (a lot or a great deal)	17%	16%	16%	21%	22%	16%	12%	18%
Schedule changes unexpectedly (sometimes or often)	36%	35%	36%	40%	39%	43%	33%	36%
Usually knows work schedule at least one week in advance (half the time or more)	87%	88%	86%	84%	85%	81%	86%	87%
Employment type is casual, temporary or short-term	10%	9%	10%	9%	11%	19%	7%	10%
Working on call (half the time or more)	20%	20%	15%	20%	23%	33%	16%	20%
Worked multiple jobs at any time in the last 3 months	30%	29%	30%	31%	28%	48%	28%	28%
Received employer provided-training within the last year	31%	31%	32%	35%	28%	27%	31%	32%
Receives employer-provided health benefits	54%	55%	54%	57%	51%	41%	53%	56%
Receives employer-provided pension benefits	43%	44%	44%	46%	40%	35%	45%	44%
Receives employer-provided paid sick leave	48%	51%	48%	43%	38%	40%	47%	49%
Concerned that raising health and safety or workplace issues will likely negatively affect employment (likely or very likely)	17%	18%	16%	18%	18%	31%	20%	16%

Source: BC Precarity Survey, 2019.

Finally, our analysis of the BC Precarity Survey sample finds differences in job quality experienced by recent immigrant workers compared with established immigrants and non-immigrants (Table 3). Recent immigrants in our sample were more likely to be in less secure, poorer quality jobs than established immigrants and non-immigrants. A higher proportion of recent immigrants reported experiencing more frequent scheduling changes and last-minute scheduling; doing casual, temporary and short-term work; working on call; and working multiple jobs. Recent immigrants also had much less access to employer-provided training and benefits, and nearly one in three recent immigrants worried that raising health and safety or workplace rights issues on the job would negatively impact their employment, compared with one in six non-immigrants.

Employer-provided benefits are very important to workers in BC, especially workers who have lower earnings from employment.

Access to benefits is another important dimension of job quality. However, Canada and BC lack timely and reliable data on access to workplace benefits, which is why our Precarity Survey set out to collect data on benefits specifically.[74] Employer-provided benefits are very important to workers in BC; without them, many cannot access affordable dental care, prescriptions or vision care—especially workers who have lower earnings from employment. In addition, access to an employer-provided pension is vital to many workers' ability to save for retirement.

Figure 3 shows the proportion of BC workers in our sample who had access to various types of employer-provided benefits. The most common benefits for workers in BC were dental and extended health benefits, but even there a large minority of workers sampled—close to half of all workers—did not get these benefits from work. A total of 41 per cent of all BC workers aged 25 to 65 did not have dental plan coverage, 47 per cent did not have coverage for vision or extended health services and 48 per cent did not have prescription drug coverage.

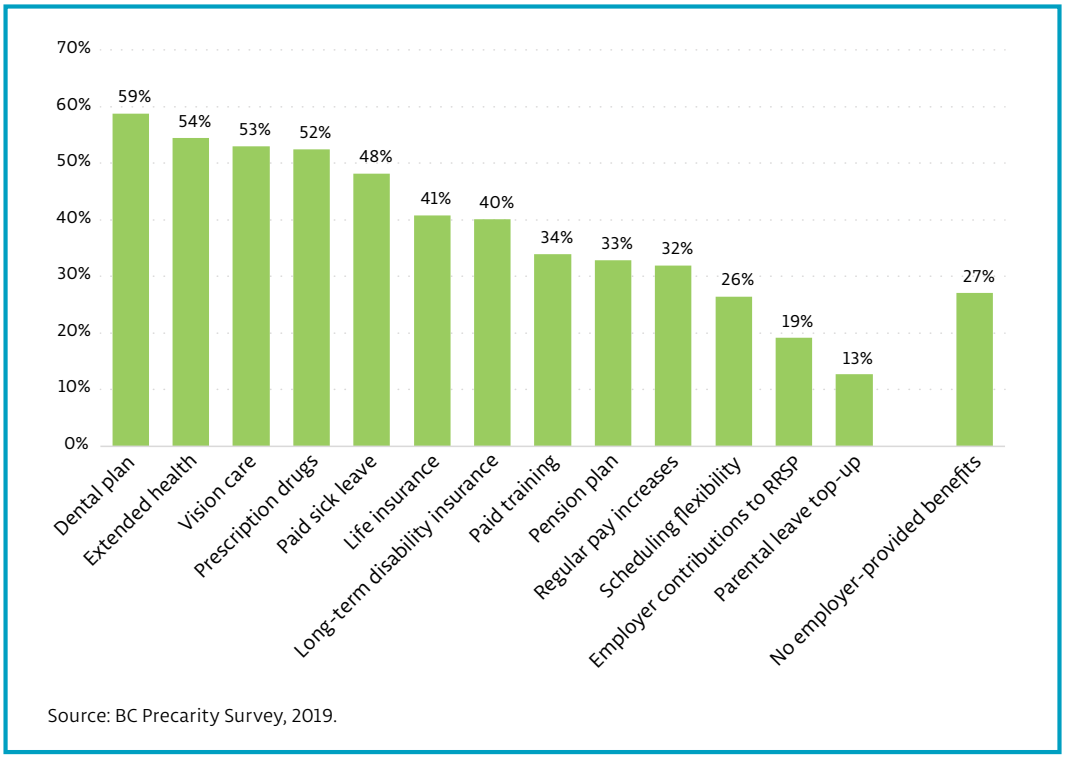
Further, only about 40 per cent of workers had long-term disability insurance or life insurance through their employer, while one in three workers had access to employer-paid training (34 per cent), a pension plan (33 per cent) or regular pay increases (32 per cent) at work. Scheduling flexibility, employer contributions to RRSPs and parental leave top-ups were less common.

Notably, nearly a third of workers, 27 per cent, received no benefits from their employer. That includes some workers in permanent full-time jobs, 8 per cent of whom do not receive any employer-provided benefits, and are thus excluded from our definition of the standard employment relationship (but included in traditional definitions of SER).

The majority of workers in our sample did not get access to these benefits through a family member's employment either. In fact, workers whose employer provided benefits were more likely to also have benefit coverage through a family member than workers who did not receive employer-provided benefits (Figure 4). This suggests that precariousness associated with

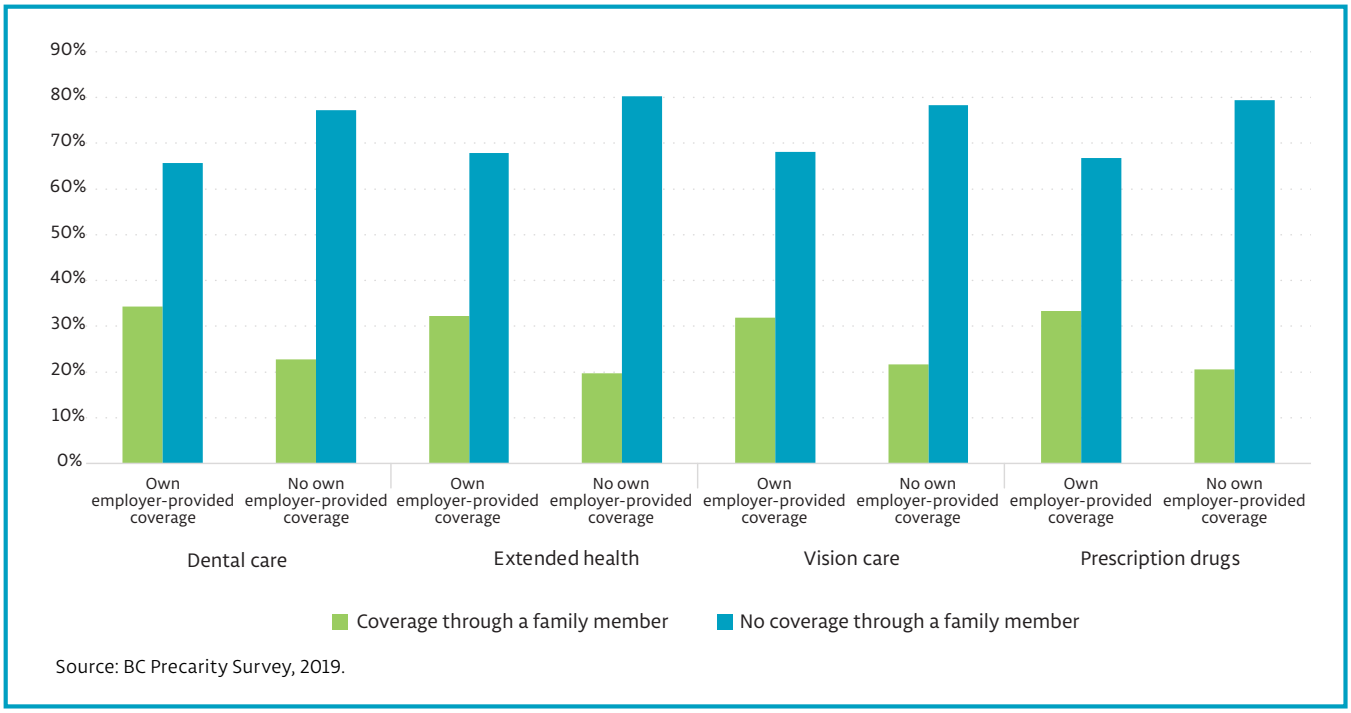
74 In contrast, the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics collects annual data on employee benefits and publicly reports it disaggregated by industry and income level.

FIGURE 3 Percentage of workers who received benefits from their employer, by type of benefit



Source: BC Precarity Survey, 2019.

FIGURE 4 Benefit coverage through a family member's employer, for workers who get their own employer-provided benefits and those who do not



Source: BC Precarity Survey, 2019.

non-standard employment may be compounded at the household level rather than offset by having benefits coverage through another household member.

The BC Precarity Survey analysis thus shows that a significant share of workers in our sample did not have extended health and dental benefits through their own employment or through a family member, and are having to pay out of pocket for these important health services, purchase individual insurance plans or forgo seeking dental and preventive care.

THE STANDARD EMPLOYMENT RELATIONSHIP, JOB QUALITY AND EARNINGS

Using our definition of the standard employment relationship (SER), we can also examine the prevalence of different job quality characteristics among workers in our sample who were in an SER and those who were not. As Table 4 shows, workers in an SER in our sample were three and a half times more likely to have access to benefits, including health benefits, a pension and paid sick leave, than those not in an SER. They were also four times less likely to work on call, two times more likely to receive training from their employer, and half as likely to be concerned that raising a health and safety issue at their workplace would negatively impact their employment. In addition, those in an SER had more control over their time as they were much less likely to report unexpected scheduling changes or last-minute scheduling practices. As a result, those in an SER tended to experience more stable incomes, with only 5 per cent of workers in an SER reporting that their income varies a lot from week to week (compared with 29 per cent of workers in other employment relationships).

Workers in an SER were half as likely to be concerned that raising a health and safety issue at their workplace would negatively impact their employment.

Still, it is notable that although our definition of the SER includes having access to at least one employer-provided benefit, it is no guarantee of getting all key benefits (extended health, pension and paid sick leave). A significant proportion of jobs that meet the definition of an SER do not provide health benefits (15 per cent), pensions (30 per cent) or paid sick leave (23 per cent).

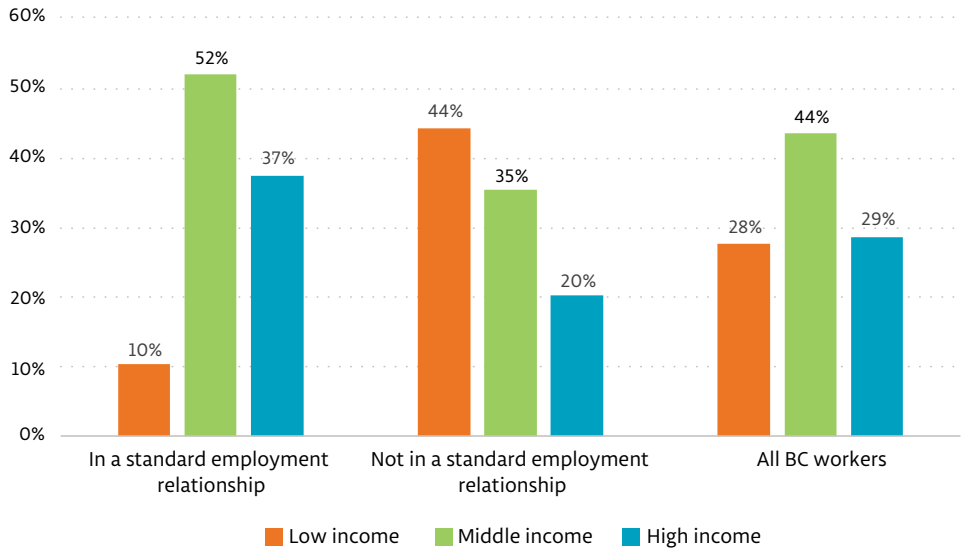
Earnings adequacy is another important dimension of job quality. In the BC Precarity Survey sample, the SER is associated with higher earnings, as Figure 5 shows. Workers not in an SER are four times more likely to have low employment income (less than $40,000 per year) than workers in an SER. However, an SER is not necessarily a guaranteed path to higher earnings—one in 10 workers sampled who were in an SER earned less than $40,000 per year.

TABLE 4 Prevalence of selected job characteristics related to job quality and job security among workers in standard and non-standard employment relationships

	In a standard employment relationship	Not in a standard employment relationship	All workers
Income varies from week to week (a lot or a great deal)	5%	29%	17%
Schedule changes unexpectedly (sometimes or often)	21%	50%	36%
Usually knows work schedule at least one week in advance (half the time or more)	96%	79%	87%
Employment type is casual, temporary or short-term	0%	19%	10%
Working on call (half the time or more)	7%	31%	20%
Worked multiple jobs at any time in the last 3 months	18%	40%	30%
Received employer-provided training within the last year	43%	21%	31%
Receives employer-provided health benefits	85%	26%	54%
Receives employer-provided pension benefits	70%	19%	43%
Receives employer-provided paid sick leave	77%	21%	48%
Concerned that raising health and safety or workplace issues will likely negatively affect employment (likely or very likely)	10%	24%	17%

Source: BC Precarity Survey, 2019.

FIGURE 5 Individual employment income of workers in standard and non-standard employment relationships



Source: BC Precarity Survey, 2019.

NON-STANDARD EMPLOYMENT VERSUS PRECARIOUS EMPLOYMENT

So far in this report we have built on previous research to define standard and non-standard employment, measured it using binary and multidimensional approaches and examined its prevalence in our sample as a whole and among different groups. We also analyzed indicators of job quality for each category.

However, the concepts of standard and non-standard employment are only one way of defining and assessing precarious employment. Some workers in an SER can experience dimensions of precarious employment related to job quality, like a lack of access to important benefits, even when employed in continuing or full-time jobs. Therefore, in the next section, we use the *Employment Precarity Index* methodology developed in Ontario for the PEPSO project. This offers a different lens on the BC Precarity Survey data, allowing us to incorporate a wider range of indicators of precarity into categories that capture a continuum of employment relations, from secure to precarious.

Some workers in an SER can experience dimensions of precarious employment related to job quality.

Applying the PEPSO *Employment Precarity Index* to the BC Precarity Survey sample

Another way to define precarious employment is by incorporating key employment characteristics into an index that captures the multiple aspects of precarity at work. In Canada, the PEPSO team developed an *Employment Precarity Index* from their PEPSO survey to assess precarity in the Greater Toronto-Hamilton Area (GTHA).[75] We have used the same *Index* to measure precarity in our sample from the BC Precarity Survey in 2019. This allows us both to incorporate more dimensions of precarity into our definition of precarious employment than a definition of SER includes, and to compare the results from our sample with the findings from the Ontario research in 2014.

There are some differences in the methodologies of the PEPSO and BC Precarity Surveys, however. The PEPSO survey was conducted in two waves in 2011 and 2014; it was a telephone survey, and participants were randomly selected using random digital dialing. The sample size of the 2014 survey was 4,193 and was representative by sex, age and the different regions that make up the GTHA study area, based on the 2006 census.[76] The PEPSO survey was not representative of racialized workers based on the 2006 census: in the 2006 census, 43.9 per cent of workers in the GTHA were from racialized groups, while in the 2014 PEPSO sample racialized workers represented only 36.4 per cent of the sample (an improvement from 31.2 per cent in 2011). As noted above, much of this difference was attributed to the undersampling of respondents who self-identify as Chinese.

75 Poverty and Employment Precarity in Southern Ontario, *It's More Than Poverty.*

76 Poverty and Employment Precarity in Southern Ontario, 164.

METHODOLOGY

The *Employment Precarity Index* was developed for the PEPSO project and used data from their survey of workers in the GTHA. The *Index* incorporates 10 direct and indirect measures of employment security derived from the PEPSO survey to capture key dimensions of precarity, including the type of employment relationship, income variability, scheduling uncertainty (and expected changes in hours of employment), access to employer-provided benefits and voice at work. This approach thus includes a wider range of indicators than measures of precarious employment just based on the type of employment relationship (standard vs non-standard), and is able to capture more fine-grained dimensions of precarious employment such as the stress and uncertainty associated with variable hours and scheduling and the inability to raise health and safety concerns at work.

Respondents were assigned a score ranging from 0 (low precarity) to 100 (high precarity), based on their responses (yes/no questions were scored as 0 or 10, while questions with more than two choices could have values between 0 and 10).[77] The *Index* was then used to construct four categories of employment: *Secure*, *Stable*, *Vulnerable* and *Precarious*. Where these terms are capitalized and italicized in the text or in tables and figures below, they refer to these four employment security categories based on the *Employment Precarity Index*.

In the analysis of their 2011 survey, PEPSO researchers used the Index to divide the sample into four clusters or categories of relatively equal size: *Secure* (the cluster with the lowest scores), *Stable*, *Vulnerable* and *Precarious*. The cut-offs for each category, which can be found in Appendix 1, were then replicated in the analysis of the 2014 wave of the PEPSO survey in order to keep employment insecurity scores in each category constant across time; we use the same cut-offs in our analysis below.

While there are limitations to the index approach—any cut-off above which a worker is considered precarious may be seen as arbitrary,[78] and the creation of four equal clusters in the sample on which the *Index* was originally based may not represent the "actual" distribution of workers across the continuum of precarious employment relations—we do adopt the *Index* in the analysis of our pilot survey. It is a fruitful way of exploring multidimensional work-based precarity in BC that can shed light on its impacts and signal directions for future research. Even if the cut-offs for the initial four categories were somewhat arbitrarily assigned, holding them constant allows us to track changes in employment insecurity, exploring for example whether labour markets on the whole produce jobs that offer more or less employment security over time and across different regions of Canada, and whether and how the distribution of more and less secure employment differs over time and across regions.

The PEPSO research group has produced a manual for researchers and evaluators with a full description of the methodology employed to construct the *Employment Precarity Index* (see https://pepso.ca/tools).

77 Poverty and Employment Precarity in Southern Ontario, *It's More Than Poverty,* 106.

78 Poverty and Employment Precarity in Southern Ontario, 27.

In this report, we use the four PEPSO employment security categories (*Secure*, *Stable*, *Vulnerable* and *Precarious*) to document how employment security is distributed across regions and groups of workers in our sample, and how it affects the experiences of workers at work and outside of work. In some sections, we draw attention to the particularly striking differences between the two end points—*Secure* (the most secure jobs) and *Precarious* (the least secure jobs). Elsewhere, we explore the complex interactions between employment security and income by combining self-reported individual employment income and total family income with the *Index* categories to split the respondents into six income and employment security groups, as was done in the PEPSO studies.

Income data is used to divide the sample into three income categories: low, middle and high income. For individual employment income, low income is defined as annual income up to $40,000; middle income, between $40,000 and $80,000; and high income, over $80,000. For total family income, low income is defined as annual income up to $60,000; middle income, between $60,000 and $100,000; and high income, over $100,000.

The *Employment Precarity Index* is then used to further split each of the three income categories into two employment security groups: "less secure" and "more secure." Less secure includes the *Index* categories *Precarious* and *Vulnerable* employment, while more secure includes the categories *Secure* and *Stable* employment.

The resulting six income/employment security groups are used to explore how income and employment precarity interact to shape the experiences and outcomes of BC workers. As in the PEPSO research, the survey sample using the income/employment security categories is smaller than the total sample because some respondents declined to report their income.

EMPLOYMENT PRECARITY CATEGORIES IN THE BC PRECARITY SURVEY SAMPLE

Like the PEPSO team, we used the *Employment Precarity Index* to divide survey respondents into the same four categories of employment, from least to most precarious: *Secure*, *Stable*, *Vulnerable* and *Precarious*.[79] In doing so, we found that our sample of the BC job market in late 2019 was more polarized than the Greater Toronto-Hamilton Area (GTHA) job market in 2014. The percentage of BC workers in our sample in *Secure* employment was lower, and the percentage of BC workers in *Precarious* employment much higher, than what researchers found in the GTHA job market in 2014. The share of workers in *Stable* employment in the BC sample was similar to that in the GTHA market, but a lower share of workers were in *Vulnerable* employment in the BC sample than in the GTHA.

While those with permanent full-time jobs were more likely to be in the *Secure* and *Stable* categories, over a quarter of BC workers sampled who were in permanent full-time jobs

79 For more information on how the Employment Precarity Index was applied in this study, see Appendix 1.

TABLE 5 Comparison of workers in the BC Precarity Survey and the PEPSO survey using the *Employment Precarity Index* categories

Employment Precarity Index category	Sample of BC workers, 2019	Sample of GTHA workers, 2014
Secure	18%	22%
Stable	26%	25%
Vulnerable	19%	24%
Precarious	37%	29%

Source: BC Precarity Survey, 2019; and PEPSO survey, 2014.

pre-pandemic fell in the *Vulnerable* and *Precarious* categories—fully one in 10 were *Precarious* (11 per cent).[80] This suggests that the common assumption that permanent full-time jobs are good jobs with benefits isn't true for some workers in BC. Unionized jobs were a lot more likely than non-unionized jobs to be *Secure* (27 per cent versus 18 per cent) and less likely to be *Precarious* (28 per cent versus 41 per cent for non-unionized). However, a significant proportion of unionized jobs, more than one-quarter, were *Precarious*.

We found that workers in private sector jobs were much less likely to be *Secure* and more likely to be *Precarious*.

The BC Precarity Survey gathered data on respondents' sector of employment. Using the Employment Precarity Index, we found that workers in public sector jobs in our sample were more *Secure* (31 per cent) and less *Precarious* (27 per cent) than the average, while those in private sector jobs were much less likely to be *Secure* (only 11 per cent) and more likely to be *Precarious* (42 per cent). Non-profit sector jobs matched the BC average: 38 per cent were *Precarious* (compared with an average of 37 per cent).

To further explore the characteristics of precarious jobs, the BC Precarity Survey asked respondents about the education level required for their job. We found that while most jobs that only require on-the-job training are *Vulnerable or Precarious*, and only 7 per cent of them are *Secure*, jobs that require university education are not necessarily good jobs. Nearly one in three jobs that required university education were *Precarious* (29 per cent).

Jobs in manufacturing and primary industry (resource-based) sectors in our sample were less likely to be *Secure* and more likely to be *Precarious* than those in the broad service sector and in the knowledge or creative sectors. However, significant differences in job quality were found among occupations within each sector, and all sectors include a significant share of *Precarious*

80 Detailed data tables are available in Appendix 2.

jobs, between 35 per cent and 45 per cent. In other words, *Precarious* jobs were found across the main sectors of the economy in BC in our sample.

EMPLOYMENT PRECARITY AND INCOME

Although research in the last decade in Canada has emphasized that precarious employment must be understood as distinct from low pay, we find a strong association between job precarity and low individual employment and household incomes in our sample (Table 6). Nearly two-thirds of workers with low employment income—those earning less than $40,000 per year—had *Precarious* jobs (64 per cent), compared with only 29 per cent of middle-income workers (incomes between $40,000 and $80,000) and 23 per cent of high-income workers (incomes above $80,000). Workers with low employment income were much less likely to have *Secure* or *Stable* jobs than middle- or high-income workers.

Nearly two-thirds of workers with low employment income had *Precarious* jobs.

The majority of workers in our sample with *Secure* jobs (54 per cent) earned middle incomes, while a significant minority (40 per cent) reported high incomes. Only 6 per cent of workers in *Secure* jobs reported having low employment incomes over the past year. Similarly, just over half (51 per cent) of workers in *Stable* jobs earned middle incomes, and 38 per cent had high incomes. In contrast, about half (48 per cent) of *Precarious* workers had low incomes. However, not all *Precarious* jobs were associated with low employment incomes: about a third (34 per cent) had middle incomes and 18 per cent had higher incomes.

Our study found that job security in our sample was frequently associated with higher family income, not just higher individual earnings. For example, the majority of workers in *Secure* jobs

TABLE 6 Individual and family income of workers, by employment precarity category

	Individual employment income				Total family income			
	Low income	Middle income	High income	Total	Low income	Middle income	High income	Total
Secure	6%	54%	40%	100%	13%	32%	55%	100%
Stable	11%	51%	38%	100%	22%	36%	42%	100%
Vulnerable	31%	42%	27%	100%	29%	37%	34%	100%
Precarious	49%	34%	18%	100%	46%	30%	23%	100%
Total	28%	43%	29%	100%	31%	33%	36%	100%

Source: BC Precarity Survey, 2019.

Note: For individual employment income, low income is defined as annual income up to $40,000; middle income, between $40,000 and $80,000; and high income, over $80,000. For total family income, low income is defined as annual income up to $60,000; middle income, between $60,000 and $100,000; and high income, over $100,000.

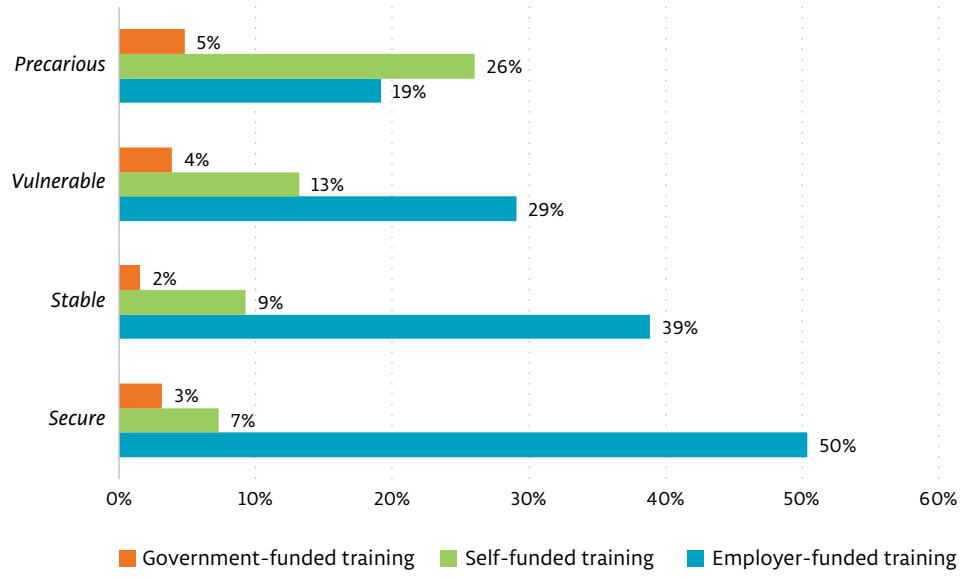
(55 per cent) lived in high-income families (with annual total incomes over $100,000), and only 13 per cent were in low-income families (less than $60,000 per year). Nearly half of *Precarious* workers had low family incomes (46 per cent), and only 23 per cent of *Precarious* workers lived in families with high incomes (Table 6).

EMPLOYMENT PRECARITY AND ACCESS TO TRAINING

Our findings reveal that just over half of the workers in our sample did not receive any training over the past year (53 per cent). Interestingly, the share of workers not receiving training was slightly smaller among *Secure* workers (45 per cent) than among *Precarious* workers (54 per cent), suggesting that lack of access to training is an issue across the employment spectrum (see Table A5 in Appendix 2). Most workers with low individual income (less than $40,000 per year) in 2019 did not access any training in the previous year (70 per cent) compared with only half of workers with middle income ($40,000 to $80,000) and 40 per cent of workers with high incomes (over $80,000).

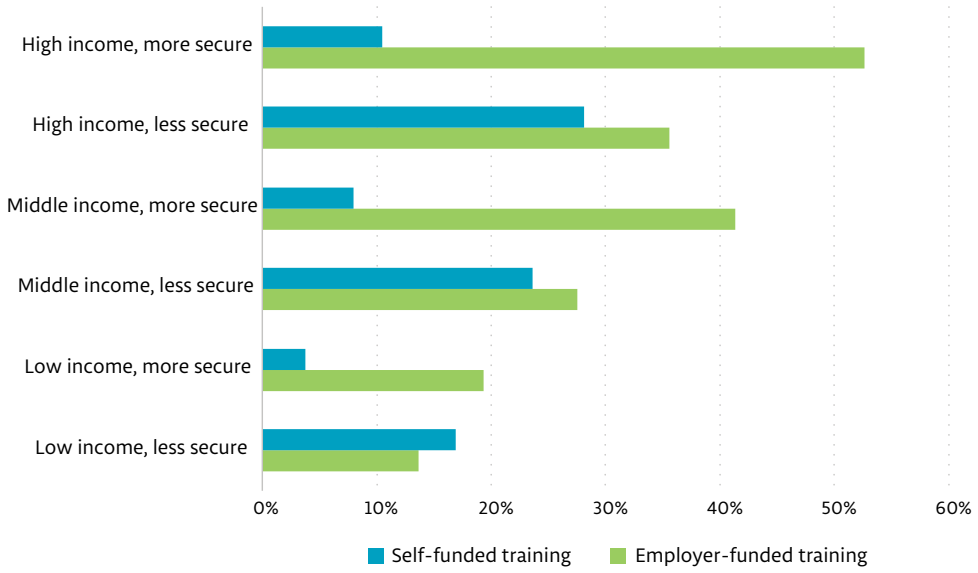
Workers in less secure employment arrangements in our sample were considerably less likely to receive employer-funded training (Figure 6). Workers in *Precarious* employment in our sample were almost four times more likely than their peers in *Secure* jobs to pay for their own training, despite the association between *Precarious* jobs and low incomes. A minority of workers in *Precarious* employment had access to employer-funded training (19 per cent) compared with

FIGURE 6 Access to training by employment precarity category



Source: BC Precarity Survey, 2019.

FIGURE 7 Access to training, by individual employment income and employment precarity category



Source: BC Precarity Survey, 2019.

Note: More secure includes *Secure* and *Stable* jobs, while less secure includes *Vulnerable* and *Precarious* jobs. Low individual employment income is defined as annual income up to $40,000; middle income, between $40,000 and $80,000; and high income, over $80,000.

half of workers in *Secure* employment. Interestingly, despite rapid technological change, access to employer-funded training—even for workers in *Secure* and *Stable* jobs—was somewhat lower than what the PEPSO research team found in the GTHA in 2014.

Income levels didn't seem to have large effects on workers' access to government-funded training and self-funded training, but they were strongly associated with access to employer-funded training (Figure 7). Higher-income workers were three times as likely to have received employer-funded training than lower-income workers (46 per cent versus 15 per cent).

Higher-income workers were three times as likely to have received employer-funded training than lower-income workers.

The limited access to training for more vulnerable workers has important social implications at a time when automation and technological change are rapidly changing the future of work. People in *Vulnerable* and *Precarious* employment categories are likely to have fewer opportunities to transition to better jobs with higher wages, benefits and increased security. The lack of access to training for more precarious workers could also exacerbate future skill shortages.

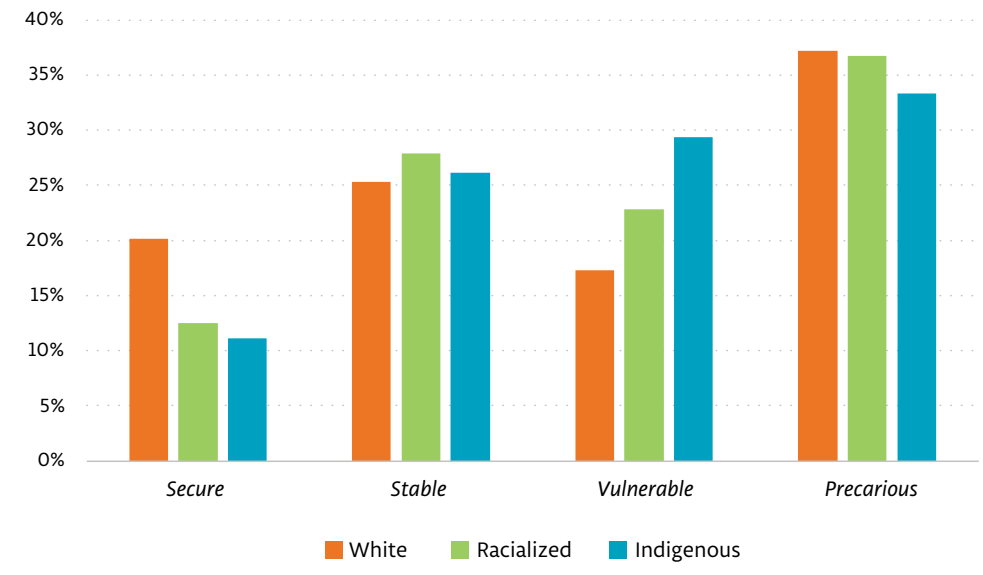
THE UNEQUAL DISTRIBUTION OF *PRECARIOUS* AND *SECURE* JOBS

Given associations between employment security and indicators of job quality like income adequacy and access to training, the distribution of precarious employment matters for wider social and economic equality. The BC Precarity Survey sample allows us to examine whether particular groups of workers may be more likely to be in more secure or more precarious employment situations. We find little gender difference in employment precarity but significant differences for racialized and Indigenous workers in our sample (Figures 8 and 9). Racialized and Indigenous workers are much less likely than white workers to have *Secure* jobs, and more likely to have jobs categorized as *Vulnerable*. Indigenous men in our survey were much less likely to be in *Secure* or *Stable* employment than other groups.

Racialized and Indigenous workers are much less likely than white workers to have *Secure* jobs.

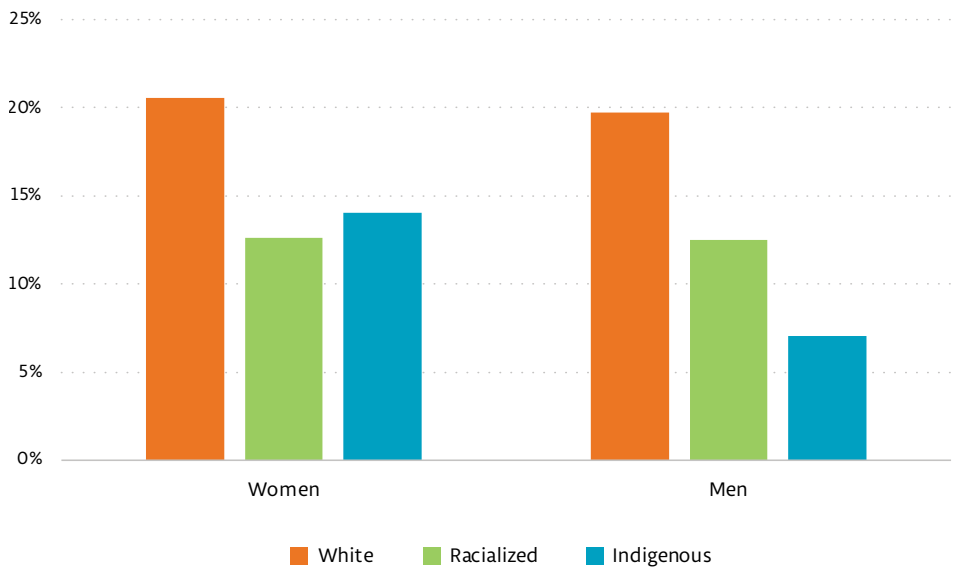
This analysis helps highlight the differences between the two ways of understanding work-based precarity: in a binary way (being in a standard employment relationship (SER) or not—a binary measure of precarious employment, even when multiple indicators are used) compared with an index-based approach. In Table 1, for example, 42 per cent of racialized women in our sample were in an SER, whereas Figure 9 reveals that fewer than 15 per cent of racialized women in our sample were in jobs in the *Secure* employment category, suggesting that even those in an SER experience different levels of employment security.

FIGURE 8 Employment precarity, by racialization and Indigenous identity



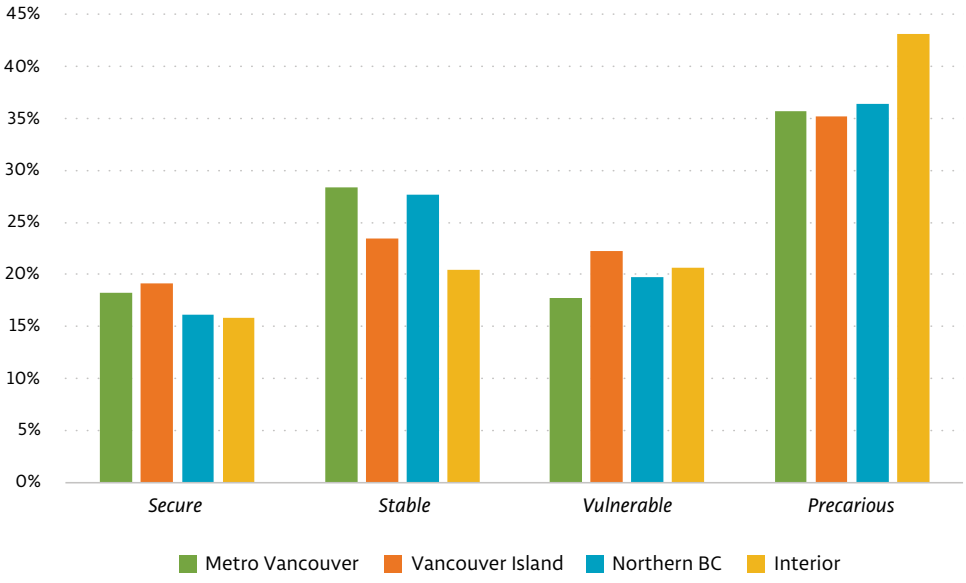
Source: BC Precarity Survey, 2019.

FIGURE 9 Percentage of workers in *Secure* jobs, by gender, racialization and Indigenous identity



Source: BC Precarity Survey, 2019.

FIGURE 10 Employment precarity, by region



Source: BC Precarity Survey, 2019.

More than half of recent immigrants were in *Precarious* jobs, the highest proportion of any group we examined.

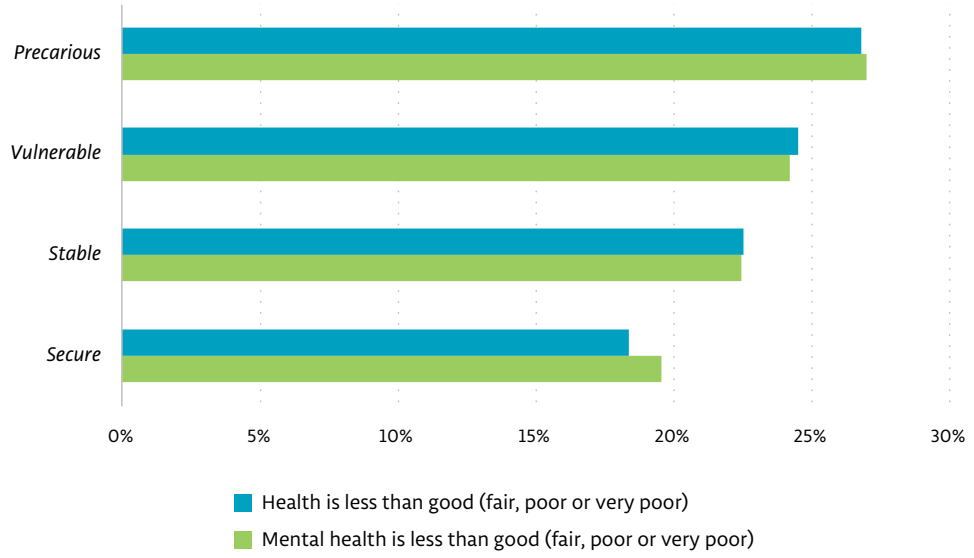
Not surprisingly, younger workers aged 25 to 34 were more likely to be in *Precarious* jobs and less likely to be in *Secure* jobs than older workers (see Table A4 in Appendix 2). More than half of recent immigrants were in *Precarious* jobs (55 per cent), the highest proportion of any group we examined. Recent immigrants were much less likely to have either *Secure* or *Stable* jobs than non-immigrants, while established immigrants were only slightly less likely to have *Secure* or *Stable* jobs than non-immigrants, and slightly more likely to be in *Vulnerable* employment arrangements.

Finally, employment security and precarity not only vary among social groups, but also vary geographically across BC. Our survey reveals that *Secure* jobs are slightly less common in Northern BC and the Interior. Further, the Interior of BC has higher levels of *Precarious* work and lower levels of both *Secure* and *Stable* jobs (Figure 10).

IMPACTS OF PRECARIOUS EMPLOYMENT ON HEALTH AND MENTAL HEALTH

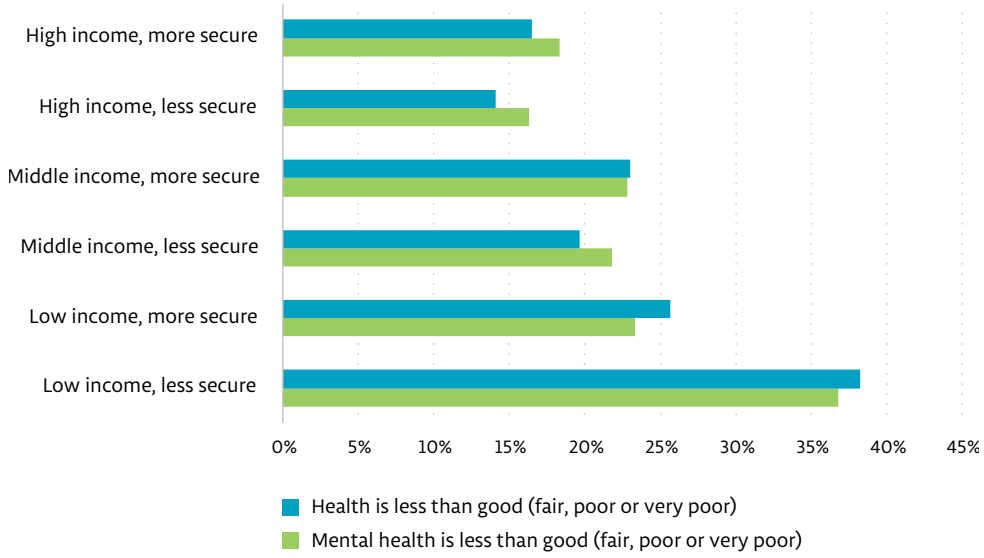
The BC Precarity Survey allows us to begin to examine not only who is most impacted by precarious work, but also the impacts of employment precarity on physical and mental health (Figure 11). We found that employment precarity is associated with poorer self-reported physical and mental health among workers in our BC sample.

FIGURE 11 Prevalence of poorer health among workers, by employment security category



Source: BC Precarity Survey, 2019.

FIGURE 12 Prevalence of poorer health, by individual employment income and employment precarity category



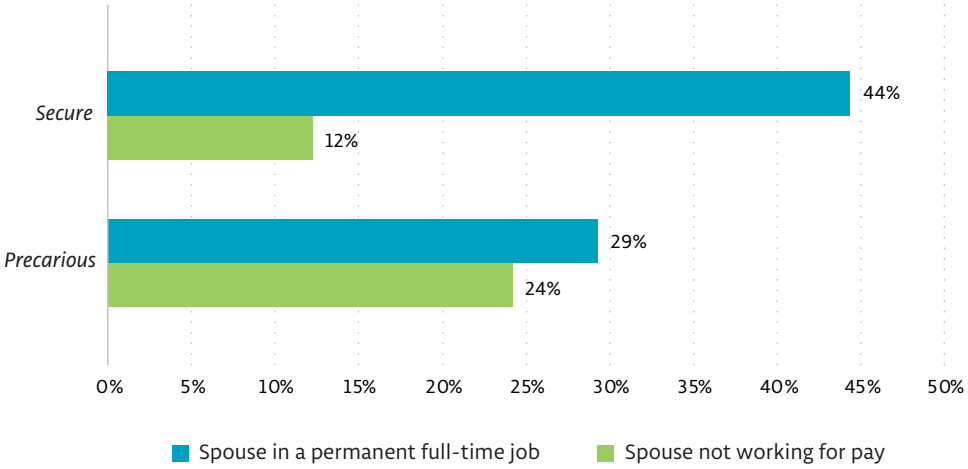
Source: BC Precarity Survey, 2019.

In our sample, having low individual incomes further increases the likelihood of poorer physical and mental health among workers in less secure employment (Figure 12). Workers in low-income, less secure employment were more than twice as likely to report poorer physical and mental health than their peers with high income (including those in high-income but less secure jobs). In the high- and middle-income categories, less employment security did not seem to substantially increase the likelihood poorer mental or physical health. In fact, it is interesting to note that the group with the lowest reported levels of fair, poor or very poor mental or physical health were high-income, less secure workers—around half as many reported poorer mental or physical health compared with low-income, less secure workers—although the differences between more secure and less secure groups with high income are not large. The same is true of more secure and less secure groups with middle income. In our sample, employment security seems to have the strongest relationship to reported health among workers with low income.

IMPACTS OF EMPLOYMENT PRECARITY ON FAMILIES

Precarity impacts not only individual workers, but their households and communities in BC. The *Employment Precarity Index* helps us delve deeper into these impacts. Looking first at employment within households in our sample, we find that workers in *Secure* employment are more likely to have a spouse in a permanent full-time job and less likely to have a spouse who is not working for pay (Figure 13). In contrast, workers in *Precarious* jobs are more likely to have

FIGURE 13 Employment situation of the worker's spouse for workers in *Secure* and *Precarious* employment



Source: BC Precarity Survey, 2019.

Note: In our survey, 29 per cent of *Precarious* workers and 27 per cent of *Secure* workers did not have a spouse. The remaining 17 per cent of *Precarious* workers and 16 per cent of *Secure* workers had a spouse in an employment relationship that wasn't permanent full-time.

a spouse who is not working at all, or not working in a permanent full-time job. This indicates that labour market inequalities in our sample compound at the family level, with inequalities among families becoming larger than inequalities among individuals.

Employment precarity and caregiving

Inequities in employment security among families and households are compounded by uneven care burdens. The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted just how much our economy depends on unpaid labour, and caring for children and the elderly is work that is mostly shouldered by women. Given the realities of unpaid care work, it is perhaps unsurprising that the BC Precarity Survey data show that lack of access to child care and elder care services was a significant barrier to secure work in BC for many households in our sample in late 2019, prior to the pandemic. About one-third (33 per cent) of BC workers in our sample aged 25 to 65 surveyed reported having at least one child under 18 in their care. Among them, 39 per cent reported that lack of access to child care negatively affects their own and/or their spouse's ability to work (see Table A7 in Appendix 2). This equates to 12 per cent of all workers in our sample.

Parents in *Precarious* jobs in our sample were four times more likely to report that lack of access to child care negatively affected their own ability to work or both their own and their spouse's ability to work (39 per cent) compared with those in *Secure* jobs (10 per cent).

Notably, our survey only included British Columbians who worked for pay in the last three months. Parents who had to drop out of the workforce because of lack of access to child care would not have been included in our survey, meaning that it likely underestimated the actual impact of lack of access to child care on British Columbians' ability to work.

Importantly, caregiving demands on families extend beyond child care. A large share of British Columbians provide care for an adult, whether elder care, care for a person with a disability or care for somebody who is ill. Our survey reveals that caring for an adult negatively affected the ability to work for a significant number of people in our sample. Fifteen per cent of BC workers surveyed reported that their own and/or their spouse's ability to work was negatively affected by caregiving for an adult. Workers in *Precarious* jobs were much more likely to report that their own ability to work was negatively affected by caring for an adult compared with workers in *Secure* jobs.

Caregiving demands on families extend beyond child care. A large share of British Columbians provide care for an adult, whether elder care, care for a person with a disability or care for somebody who is ill.

Racialized workers in our sample were more likely to be burdened by adult care responsibilities, with 23 per cent reporting negative impacts on work for them and/or their spouse, compared with 13 per cent of white workers and 10 per cent of Indigenous workers. Recent immigrants were particularly impacted by caregiving responsibilities, with 36 per cent reporting that these negatively affect their and/or their spouse's ability to work compared with 14 per cent of non-immigrants and 16 per cent of established immigrants (see table A8 in Appendix 2). Given the composition of the BC Precarity Survey sample, the figures likely underestimate the burden of care on racialized workers.

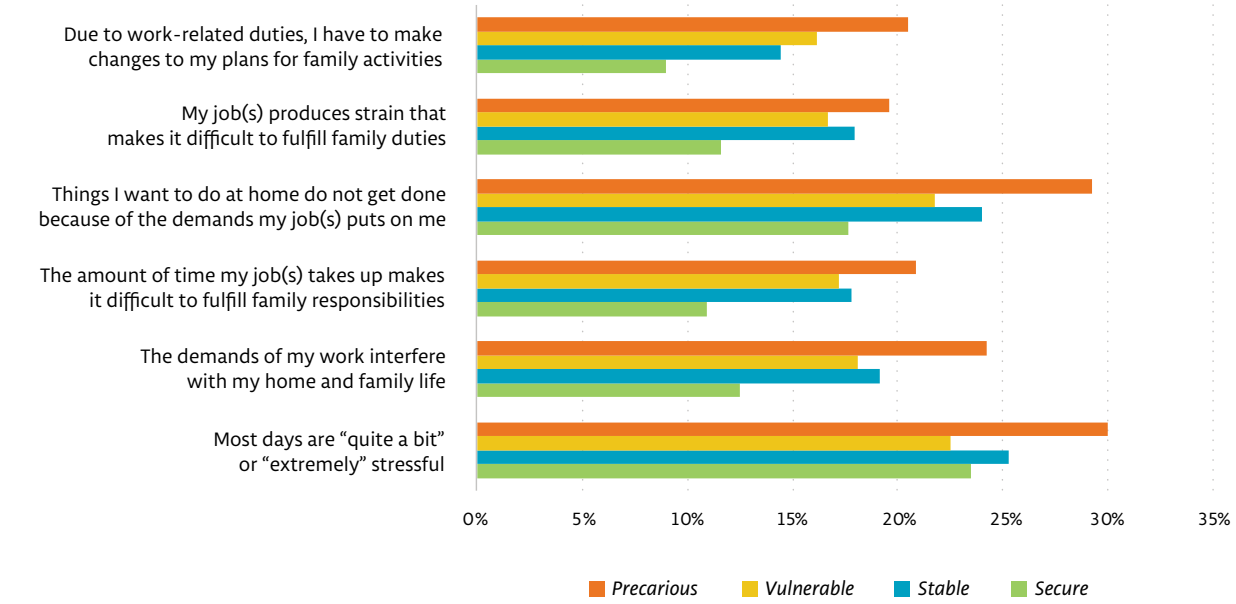
Stress and work-family balance

In the BC Precarity Survey sample, more precarious employment arrangements are also associated with higher reported stress and with work strain or time commitments causing more frequent disruptions to family life. Figures 14 and 15 illustrate how analysis using the *Employment Precarity Index* demonstrates generally higher levels of stress and interference of work with family life among both men and women in the *Precarious* category in our sample.

Notably, 25 per cent of workers in our sample reported that they experience most days as "quite a bit" or "extremely" stressful, including 20 per cent of workers in *Secure* jobs and 30 per cent of workers in *Precarious* jobs. Women and men in *Precarious* employment in our sample were the most likely to report that most days are quite or extremely stressful, but men in *Precarious* employment had the highest reported incidence overall of work interfering with family life. Given that stress is a known determinant of health, these findings could indicate high levels of stress and work-family conflict among BC workers that should be a concern for policy-makers (and subject to further study).[81] For a considerable proportion of the BC

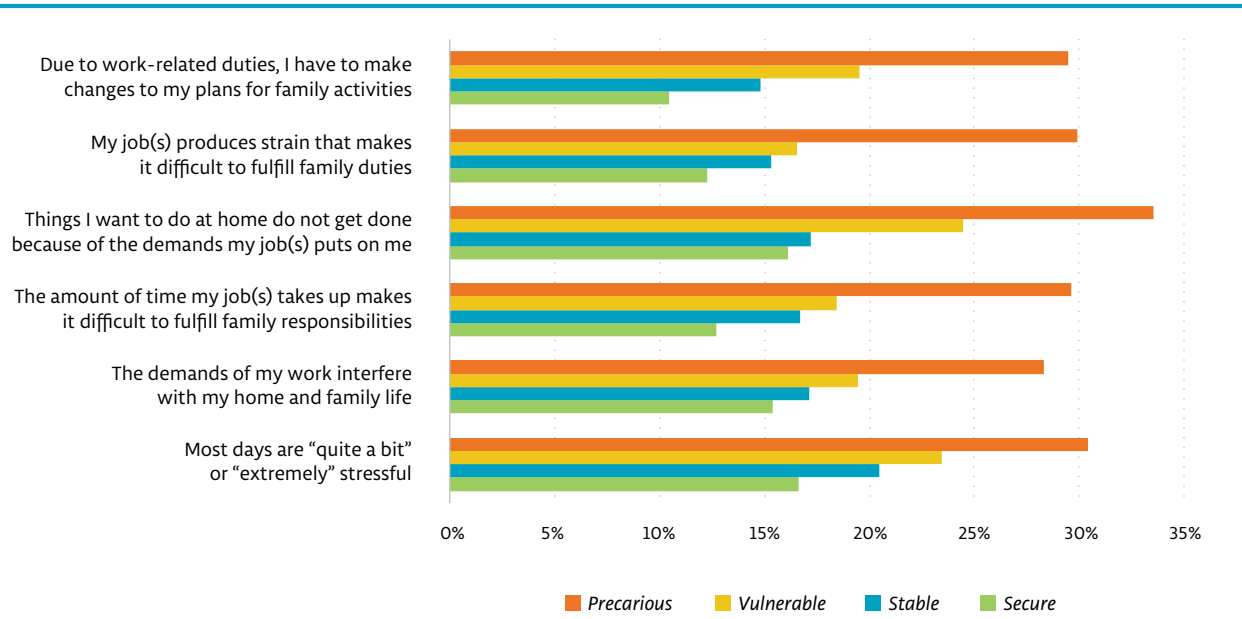
81 Clarke et al., "'This Just Isn't Sustainable.'"

FIGURE 14 Percentage of women who experience high stress or report that work interferes with family life once a week or more, by employment precarity category



Source: BC Precarity Survey, 2019.

FIGURE 15 Percentage of men who experience high stress or report that work interferes with family life once a week or more, by employment precarity category



Source: BC Precarity Survey, 2019.

TABLE 7 Percentage of workers caring for children who report they were always or often not able to pay for school supplies and activities or participate in children's activities because of their employment situation or income, by employment precarity category

	Buy school supplies and clothing	Pay for school trips	Pay for activities outside of school	Attend or volunteer at school-related meetings and activities	Volunteer at activities outside of school (sports, arts, etc.)
Secure	6%	6%	11%	17%	14%
Stable	9%	5%	11%	17%	16%
Vulnerable	15%	11%	17%	18%	18%
Precarious	32%	29%	30%	29%	27%
Total	18%	15%	19%	21%	20%

Source: BC Precarity Survey, 2019.

workers sampled, work demands and job strain interfere with family responsibilities on a weekly basis (or multiple times a week)—impacting not only the workers themselves, but also their families.

Ability to pay for school supplies and participate in children's activities

As analysis of our sample indicates, precarity impacts family life in more ways than stress and work-family conflict: families of workers in *Precarious* employment in our sample were also less likely to be able to afford school supplies and trips, or to attend or volunteer at school and community-related events and activities (Table 7). The gap between the proportion of those in *Secure* or *Stable* and *Precarious* jobs who can buy school supplies and pay for school trips is particularly glaring.

Families of workers in *Precarious* employment in our sample were also less likely to be able to afford school supplies and trips.

The results seem to be driven by employment precarity, rather than income alone (Table 8). Workers in lower-income families were more likely than those in higher-income families to not be able to afford school supplies and activities or attend and volunteer at children's activities in and outside school. However, within each income category it was workers in less secure jobs who were much more likely than those in more secure jobs to not be able to do these things. This suggests that employment insecurity impacts children's experiences and opportunities, and their parents' ability to be fully engaged in their school or extracurricular activities, regardless of income level.

TABLE 8 Percentage of workers caring for children who report they were always or often not able to pay for school supplies and activities or participate in children's activities because of their employment situation or income, by family income and employment precarity

	Buy school supplies and clothing	Pay for school trips	Pay for activities outside of school	Attend or volunteer at school-related meetings and activities	Volunteer at activities outside of school (sports, arts, etc.)
Low income, less secure	30%	25%	30%	30%	30%
Low income, more secure	12%	13%	19%	12%	14%
Middle income, less secure	27%	26%	25%	27%	22%
Middle income, more secure	9%	6%	16%	9%	17%
High income, less secure	22%	19%	23%	22%	23%
High income, more secure	5%	5%	6%	5%	14%
Total	18%	16%	19%	18%	20%

Source: BC Precarity Survey, 2019.

Note: More secure includes *Secure* and *Stable* jobs, while less secure includes *Vulnerable* and *Precarious* jobs. Family income refers to total income from all sources before tax. Low family income is defined as annual income up to $60,000; middle income, between $60,000 and $100,000; and high income, over $100,000.

EMPLOYMENT PRECARITY AND FINANCIAL STRESS

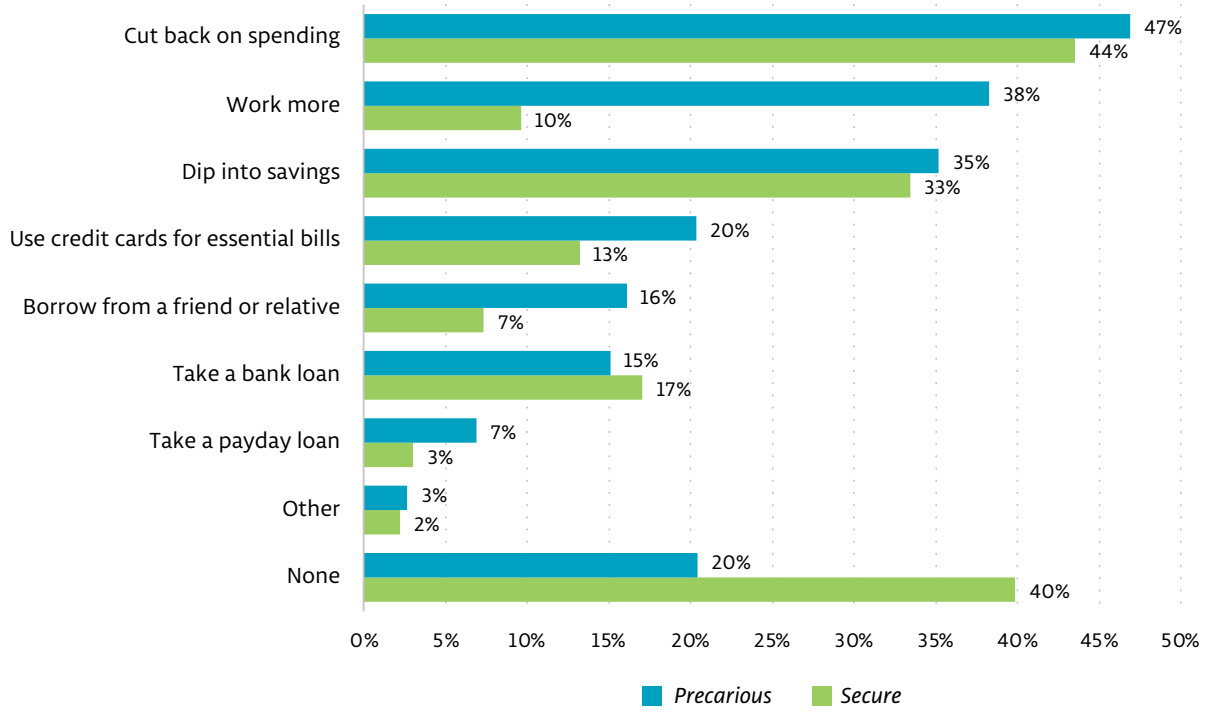
Employment precarity is also related to both financial insecurity and how households manage financial stress.

Difficulties affording education-related costs are only one aspect of the financial insecurity experienced by workers in our sample in the *Precarious* category. Employment precarity is also related to both financial insecurity and how households manage financial stress. In our sample, workers in *Secure* jobs were twice as likely to be able to keep up with bills without changing any of their usual activities, compared with workers in *Precarious* jobs (40 per cent versus 20 per cent) (Figure 16).

The most common way to manage financial stress for both these groups was cutting back on spending (Figure 16). Dipping into savings was another common go-to strategy for keeping up with bills for both *Secure* and *Precarious* workers. However, we also observed some important differences between these two groups. For *Precarious* workers, the second-most common strategy for keeping up with bills was to work more, which was much less likely among *Secure* workers. *Precarious*

workers were also much more likely to put essential bills on a credit card, borrow from a friend or relative or take a payday loan than workers in *Secure* jobs. Those in *Secure* jobs were more likely to take a bank loan (or use a line of credit) than to put bills on a credit card or borrow from friends and relatives.

FIGURE 16 ***Precarious*** **and** ***Secure*** **workers responding to "Have you had to do any of the following to keep up with bills in the last 12 months?"**



Source: BC Precarity Survey, 2019.

Conclusion and policy implications for tackling employment precarity in BC

While the concept of precarious employment has increased in use among both researchers and policy-makers, the scale and impact of precarity within and beyond the workplace remain poorly understood in Canada, especially at regional and local levels and outside of urban areas. The lack of an accepted definition of precarity and the lack of data on important dimensions of employment security and employment quality (such as access to benefits, income variability and scheduling uncertainty) present a significant barrier to understanding precarity in BC and developing effective public policy solutions and community-based responses to the problems it creates.

The lack of an accepted definition of precarity and the lack of data present a significant barrier to understanding precarity in BC.

To begin addressing this research and data gap, we piloted an online province-wide survey of detailed employment characteristics, the BC Precarity Survey, to collect and make available new evidence on the scale and unequal distribution of precarious work in our province. The survey, which builds on research by the Poverty and Employment Precarity in Southern Ontario (PEPSO) project (https://pepso.ca/), was completed by over 3,000 British Columbians in the late fall of 2019, before the COVID-19 pandemic started, and provides a unique snapshot of the provincial labour market at a time of historically low unemployment and relative labour market strength.

This report presents the key findings of the pilot BC Precarity Survey and builds on previous research in Canada to define and measure precarious employment in BC and its impacts.

The data we collected through the BC Precarity Survey point to the significant scale of the challenge. Only 49 per cent of workers in the BC Precarity Survey sample, aged 25 to 65, had full-time continuing employment with a single employer that provided at least some work-related benefits. These findings are concerning because job quality and job security remain tied to the so-called standard employment relationship, as does access to benefits.

Further, the BC Precarity Survey data found evidence of important geographical differences in the prevalence and experiences of precarious employment, and confirmed what the COVID-19 pandemic made abundantly clear—that the burden of precarity falls most heavily on workers who experience intersecting inequalities, including racialized communities, Indigenous peoples, women and lower-income groups. Precarious jobs mean workers experience insecurity, instability, low pay, a lack of access to benefits, and negative impacts on physical and mental health, all of which have consequences not only for workers but also for their families, their communities and our society.

The burden of precarity falls most heavily on workers who experience intersecting inequalities, including racialized communities, Indigenous peoples, women and lower-income groups.

Concerningly, our survey captured high levels of precarity in BC in the strong labour market environment immediately prior to the pandemic and their uneven burden across the province. They highlight the importance and urgency of our work on this issue. Since our survey was conducted, rising inflation over the last year has meant that many workers' wages have not kept pace with the cost of living in BC communities, a problem that is made worse when workers and their families do not have access to employer-provided benefits such as extended health care and dental plans or a pension. Our findings also suggest that labour market inequalities compound at the family level, with inequalities among families becoming larger than inequalities among individuals. In addition, employment precarity appears to interact with other forms of precarity that extend into workers' households and communities and limit their participation in non-work spheres and activities. This is an important dimension of inequality that is not currently captured by labour and employment statistics and warrants more research and policy attention in BC.

Taken together, our analysis confirms that our systems of labour law and employment standards do not guarantee employer-provided benefits coverage, adequate income, certainty of hours of work or scheduling, or a voice at work for many. Existing government-provided or mandated work-related benefits at the provincial and federal levels hardly add up to an adequate social safety net. Federal programs like Employment Insurance (EI), and provincial regulations like employment standards, were designed when a permanent full-time job with a single employer that provides benefits was the norm—and have been weakened since the 1990s. These programs and regulations urgently need to be strengthened to reflect current labour market realities and ensure that all workers, and not only those in secure and well-paid jobs, are able to access benefits and protections related to employment.

The BC government has the power to significantly improve the lives of many BC families by strengthening workplace rights and protections, proactively enforcing them, and mandating regular review processes so that workplace rights legislation keeps up with rapidly changing labour markets. This would include reviewing the large number of exclusions from the rights and protections provided by the Employment Standards Act, addressing misclassification of employees as independent contractors[82] and setting a floor of a minimum set of rights for workers who are not considered employees.

We need mechanisms to strengthen the voice of workers in the workplace, including making it easier to unionize, in particular for workers in lower-paid and precarious jobs.

In addition, we need mechanisms to strengthen the voice of workers in the workplace, including making it easier to unionize, in particular for workers in lower-paid and precarious jobs. Unionization has been linked to reducing wage inequalities and improving working conditions, reducing gender and racial pay inequities and promoting opportunities for people with disabilities. However, the current requirement to unionize by worksite rather than sector creates significant barriers to unionization in many precarious workplaces. Sectoral bargaining models of union organizing could provide precarious workers in small worksites with a collective voice and viable access to union representation.[83]

Expanding access and portability of benefits is another way to reduce precarity in BC, as is addressing the burden of unpaid care work through expanding the public provision of care services, such as child care, seniors' care and support for people with disabilities and those with serious illness. The recent federal efforts to extend access to dental coverage more broadly and reduce fees in child care are commendable, but a lot more is needed.

A comprehensive policy agenda to tackle precarity is beyond the scope of this report, and should be developed with ongoing meaningful engagement with those directly affected, but the policy directions outlined above can get us started. And while more research is clearly needed to generate robust data on multiple dimensions of employment precarity and their impacts in BC, the findings of the BC Precarity Survey suggest that the time to act is now to tackle the significant and uneven burden of precarious work in our province, which has likely only worsened with the COVID-19 pandemic. Otherwise, the BC economy will continue to leave behind too many workers and their families.

82 BC Federation of Labour, "Worker Rights."

83 Sectoral bargaining means that a union and/or a collective agreement will cover workers in a labour market sector across a number of worksites within a specific geographic area. Sectoral bargaining models are currently used for BC workers in the construction industry and in certain public sectors, such as health care. Hastie and Mare, "Three Ways."

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Additional details about the BC Precarity Survey

THE SURVEY INSTRUMENT

The BC Precarity Survey pilot was designed to collect more information on job quality and workers' experiences of insecure and precarious employment than what Statistics Canada's Labour Force Survey covers. We built on and adapted the survey instrument used by the PEPSO project team to survey workers in Southern Ontario, replicating some elements and modifying others. The BC Precarity Survey pilot questionnaire is available online understandingprecarity.ca/but-is-it-a-good-job.

The questionnaire included the following modules:

- **Socio-demographic questions:** Age, gender, region, ethnicity/race, citizenship status, country of birth, years of living in Canada, education level, student status, marital status, presence of children, household living arrangements, basic characteristics of the spouse's employment situation, housing tenure (rent/own), individual employment income and household total income.
- **Characteristics of main job:** Type of employment contract, unionization, broad sector, education requirements of the job, frequency of pay.
- **Overall work characteristics:** Number of jobs worked at the same time, location of work and type of employment contract for each job; frequency of on-call work, temp agency work, work paid in cash; scheduling variability; advance notice of one's schedule;

perceived ability to raise a health and safety concern or an employment rights concern with the employer; expectations of reduced hours in the future; access to benefits and paid time off; income variability; access to training.

- **Potential impacts of precarious work:** Self-reported health and mental health, stress, job strain, concerns about work and family life balance, ability to pay for and attend children's activities in and outside of school, work-related decisions to delay having children, financial insecurity.
- **If requiring child care or elder care:** Does access to care negatively impact your or your spouse's ability to work?

THE BC PRECARITY SURVEY SAMPLE

A total of 3,117 qualified respondents completed the survey. Regional quotas were used to ensure samples were large enough to do some regional analysis.

To minimize underrepresentation of racialized respondents (which was a problem with the PEPSO survey sample), the BC Precarity Survey questionnaire was translated into simplified and traditional Chinese. The translated questionnaire was used to generate a subsample of workers who self-identify as Chinese balanced by age, gender, country of birth and time in Canada.

Weighting was applied to the data according to Statistics Canada 2016 census figures on region, age, gender and ethnicity, and among respondents who self-identified as Chinese, country of birth and time in Canada, to ensure the figures are representative of the working BC population between the ages of 25 and 65. A true probability sample of this size would have a margin of error of plus or minus 1.8 per cent 19 times out of 20.

TABLE A1 Demographic composition of the BC Precarity Survey sample and a comparison with 2016 census data

	BC Precarity Survey, 2019		Comparable sample from census 2016
	Percentage of respondents	Weighted total	Percentage
Gender			
Men	51%	1,841	52%
Women	48%	1,720	48%
Non-binary or other	0%	16	n/a
Age			
25–34	24%	870	26%
35–44	25%	897	25%
45–54	28%	1,011	28%
55–65	22%	799	22%
Region			
Metro Vancouver	63%	2,241	56%
City of Vancouver	25%	906	n/a
Rest of Metro Vancouver	37%	1,335	n/a
Vancouver Island	15%	549	n/a
Northern BC	4%	152	n/a
Interior BC	18%	635	n/a
Racialization and Indigenous identity			
Racialized	26%	903	29%
Indigenous	3%	113	5%
White	71%	2,513	66%
Education level			
High school or less	15%	544	33%
Trade, vocational or post-secondary certificate below a bachelor's degree	36%	1,292	35%
University degree	48%	1,709	32%
Immigrant status			
Recent immigrants (<10 years in Canada)	5%	173	8%
Established immigrants (10+ years in Canada)	16%	561	24%
Non-immigrants (Canadian by birth)	79%	2,760	68%
Home ownership status			
Renters	34%	1,184	29%
Owners	66%	2,296	71%

Source: BC Precarity Survey, 2019 and Census 2016 Public Use Microdata File, Individuals (https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/catalogue/98M0001X).

Note: The comparable sample from census 2016 includes BC workers aged 25-64 who were employed at some point in the five months prior to completing the census. This is not exactly identical to the BC Precarity Survey sample, which also includes workers aged 65 and who worked for pay at some point in the 3 months prior to completing the survey but it is as close as we can get with the census public use microdata files. Sub-provincial regional statistics are only available at the Census Metropolitan Area level in the census 2016 public use microdata files.

TABLE A2 Comparison of white, Indigenous and racialized men and women in the BC Precarity Survey sample

	White men	Racialized men	Indigenous men	White women	Racialized women	Indigenous women
Aged 25–44	46%	57%	58%	46%	59%	49%
Aged 45–65	54%	43%	42%	54%	41%	51%
University degree	47%	66%	31%	38%	66%	21%
Recent immigrants (<10 years in Canada)	1%	15%	0%	2%	17%	1%
Established immigrants (10+ years in Canada)	9%	39%	1%	9%	39%	2%
Non-immigrants (Canadian by birth)	90%	45%	99%	89%	44%	97%

Source: BC Precarity Survey, 2019.

CONSTRUCTING THE *EMPLOYMENT PRECARITY INDEX*

The *Employment Precarity Index* developed by the PEPSO research team is one of the most comprehensive measures of precarious employment in Canada to date. It combines 10 measures of employment insecurity, including the type of employment relationship, income variability, scheduling uncertainty, lack of access to benefits and paid time off, weak voice at work and uncertainty about future employment prospects. Each measure is scored from 0 to 10, and is weighted equally to produce an index with values between 0 (low precarity) and 100 (very high precarity). The PEPSO research team used the Index to construct four categories of employment (*Secure*, *Stable*, *Vulnerable* and *Precarious*) by dividing their original 2011 PEPSO survey sample into four quartiles. The quartile cut-off values were then used to construct these categories of employment in subsequent surveys, including the 2014 PEPSO survey and the 2017 Hamilton Millennial Survey.

We replicated the PEPSO methodology exactly, using the same questions in the BC Precarity Survey and the same index cut-off values to construct the four categories of employment precarity to ensure data comparability. The methodology can be found on the PEPSO website (https://pepso.ca/documents/precarity-penalty.pdf, appendix B, p. 170).

TABLE A3 The *Employment Precarity Index* **quartiles, PEPSO survey (2014) and BC Precarity Survey (2019)**

Precarity level	Index range	Number in each category, PEPSO, 2014	Number in each category, BC Precarity Survey, 2019
Secure	0–2.5	910	590
Stable	5–17.5	1,025	864
Vulnerable	20–37.5	965	629
Precarious	40–97.5	1,156	1,222

Source: BC Precarity Survey, 2019; and PEPSO Survey, 2014.

Appendix 2: Additional data tables from the BC Precarity Survey

TABLE A4 Prevalence of employment precarity among different groups of workers

	Secure	*Stable*	*Vulnerable*	*Precarious*
All workers	18%	26%	19%	37%
Gender				
Women	18%	25%	20%	37%
Men	17%	27%	18%	37%
Racialization and Indigenous identity				
White	20%	25%	17%	37%
Racialized	13%	28%	23%	37%
Indigenous	11%	26%	29%	33%
White women	21%	25%	18%	37%
Racialized women	13%	25%	26%	37%
Indigenous women	14%	31%	22%	33%
White men	20%	26%	17%	37%
Racialized men	13%	31%	20%	36%
Indigenous men	7%	21%	37%	34%
Region				
Metro Vancouver	18%	28%	18%	36%
Vancouver Island	19%	23%	22%	35%
Northern BC	16%	28%	20%	36%
Interior	16%	20%	21%	43%
Age				
Aged 25–34	12%	26%	19%	44%
Aged 35–65	20%	26%	19%	35%
Immigrant status				
Non-immigrants (Canadian by birth)	19%	27%	18%	36%
Recent immigrants (<10 years in Canada)	8%	17%	19%	55%
Established immigrants (10+ years in Canada)	15%	25%	23%	36%

Table A4 continued	*Secure*	*Stable*	*Vulnerable*	*Precarious*
Selected job characteristics				
Permanent full-time work, 30+ hours	32%	42%	15%	11%
Non-unionized	14%	25%	20%	41%
Unionized	27%	28%	18%	28%
Public sector (includes all levels of government, public schools, colleges, universities, hospitals and other facilities, Crown corp., etc.)	31%	28%	14%	27%
Private sector	11%	26%	21%	42%
Non-profit sector	19%	25%	18%	38%
Job requires university education	23%	33%	15%	29%
Job requires college or apprenticeship training	17%	24%	21%	38%
Job requires high school or occupation-specific training	19%	25%	21%	35%
Job requires only on-the-job training	7%	18%	23%	52%
Job industry or sector				
Knowledge/creative work	18%	28%	15%	39%
Service sector work	19%	25%	20%	35%
Manufacturing, construction, trades and transport	11%	24%	23%	41%
Primary sector work (fishing, farming, natural resources)	13%	22%	20%	45%
Other sectors	20%	28%	18%	34%
Spousal employment characteristics				
Spouse not employed for pay	12%	21%	18%	49%
Spouse working in a permanent full-time position	22%	28%	19%	30%
Spouse in another employment type (part-time, temporary, etc.)	17%	25%	20%	38%
No spouse	17%	28%	19%	36%
Home ownership status				
Owner	21%	25%	18%	35%
Renter	13%	27%	21%	39%
Employment earnings				
Low income (<$40,000)	4%	10%	21%	64%
Middle income ($40,000–$80,000)	23%	30%	18%	29%
High income (>$80,000)	26%	34%	18%	23%

Source: BC Precarity Survey, 2019.

TABLE A5 Percentage of workers who did not get any training in the last year, by employment precarity and individual employment income

	No training in the past year
Employment precarity category	
Secure	45%
Stable	54%
Vulnerable	59%
Precarious	54%
Total (all workers)	53%
Employment earnings	
Low income (<$40,000)	70%
Middle income ($40,000–$80,000)	51%
High income (>$80,000)	40%
Employment precarity and individual employment income	
Low income, less secure	70%
Low income, more secure	74%
Middle income, less secure	48%
Middle income, more secure	53%
High income, less secure	35%
High income, more secure	42%

Source: BC Precarity Survey, 2019.

Note: More secure includes *Secure* and *Stable* jobs, while less secure includes *Vulnerable* and *Precarious* jobs. Low individual employment income is defined as annual income up to $40,000; middle income, between $40,000 and $80,000; and high income, over $80,000.

TABLE A6 Employment situation of the worker's spouse, by worker's employment precarity category

Precarity level	Spouse not employed for pay	Spouse working in a permanent full-time position	Spouse in another employment type (part-time, temporary, etc.)	No spouse
Secure	12%	44%	16%	27%
Stable	14%	38%	16%	32%
Vulnerable	17%	36%	18%	30%
Precarious	24%	29%	17%	29%

Source: BC Precarity Survey, 2019.

TABLE A7 Percentage of workers with children under 18 who report that lack of access to child care negatively affects the ability to work

	It affects their ability to work	It affects their spouse's ability to work	It affects both their and their spouse's ability to work	Does not affect their ability to work
All workers with children under 18	17%	13%	9%	61%
Gender				
Women	21%	6%	10%	64%
Men	14%	19%	8%	59%
Region				
Metro Vancouver	16%	15%	9%	60%
Vancouver Island	18%	7%	9%	65%
Northern BC	11%	11%	10%	68%
Interior	19%	12%	7%	62%
Racialization and Indigenous identity				
White	17%	13%	6%	64%
Racialized	16%	14%	15%	55%
Indigenous	18%	5%	13%	64%
Immigrant status				
Non-immigrants (Canadian by birth)	18%	12%	7%	63%
Recent immigrants (<10 years in Canada)	22%	22%	16%	40%
Established immigrants (10+ years in Canada)	8%	11%	14%	67%
Employment precarity category				
Secure	3%	16%	7%	74%
Stable	10%	11%	7%	72%
Vulnerable	17%	11%	8%	64%
Precarious	29%	14%	11%	47%
Age of children				
No children under 5	9%	8%	5%	77%
Children under 5	25%	17%	14%	45%
No children under 12	3%	3%	1%	93%
Children under 12	21%	16%	12%	51%

Source: BC Precarity Survey, 2019.

TABLE A8 Percentage of workers who report that caring for an adult negatively affects ability to work

	It affects their ability to work	It affects their spouse's ability to work	It affects both their and their spouse's ability to work	Does not affect their ability to work
All workers	8%	3%	4%	85%
Gender				
Women	7%	2%	3%	89%
Men	10%	5%	5%	81%
Region				
Metro Vancouver	9%	3%	5%	83%
Vancouver Island	6%	4%	2%	87%
Northern BC	4%	1%	3%	92%
Interior	10%	2%	3%	85%
Racialization and Indigenous identity				
White	8%	3%	2%	87%
Racialized	10%	4%	9%	77%
Indigenous	6%	2%	2%	90%
Immigrant status				
Non-immigrants (Canadian by birth)	8%	3%	3%	86%
Recent immigrants (<10 years in Canada)	18%	6%	13%	64%
Established immigrants (10+ years in Canada)	9%	3%	4%	84%
Employment precarity category				
Secure	2%	2%	2%	94%
Stable	4%	2%	3%	92%
Vulnerable	7%	2%	6%	85%
Precarious	16%	6%	5%	73%

Source: BC Precarity Survey, 2019.

TABLE A9 Percentage of workers who experience low stress or report that work rarely interferes with family life (a few times a year or never), by employment precarity category

	Most days are "not at all" or "not very" stressful	The demands of my work rarely interfere with my home and family life	The amount of time my job(s) takes up rarely makes it difficult to fulfill family responsibilities	Things I want to do at home rarely do not get done because of the demands my job(s) puts on me	My job(s) rarely produces strain that makes it difficult to fulfill family duties	Due to work-related duties, I rarely have to make changes to my plans for family activities
Secure	26%	61%	64%	55%	64%	67%
Stable	29%	58%	60%	53%	60%	63%
Vulnerable	29%	58%	60%	49%	57%	57%
Precarious	33%	47%	48%	42%	48%	46%
Total	30%	54%	56%	48%	56%	56%

Source: BC Precarity Survey, 2019.

TABLE A10 Percentage of workers who experience low stress or report that work rarely interferes with family life (a few times a year or never), by employment precarity category and gender

	Most days are "not at all" or "not very" stressful		The demands of my work rarely interfere with my home and family life		The amount of time my job(s) takes up rarely makes it difficult to fulfill family responsibilities		Things I want to do at home rarely do not get done because of the demands my job(s) puts on me		My job(s) rarely produces strain that makes it difficult to fulfill family duties		Due to work-related duties, I rarely have to make changes to my plans for family activities	
	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men
Secure	25%	28%	63%	60%	66%	62%	55%	55%	67%	62%	70%	65%
Stable	29%	29%	60%	57%	61%	60%	53%	53%	61%	60%	66%	60%
Vulnerable	28%	30%	62%	54%	67%	55%	53%	45%	62%	53%	63%	52%
Precarious	30%	35%	50%	44%	52%	44%	44%	41%	53%	44%	50%	42%
Total	29%	31%	57%	52%	60%	53%	50%	47%	59%	53%	60%	53%

Source: BC Precarity Survey, 2019.

Understanding PRECARITY in BC

This report is part of Understanding Precarity in BC (UP-BC), a research and public engagement initiative investigating precarious work and multi-dimensional precarity in British Columbia. UP-BC is jointly led by Simon Fraser University's Morgan Centre for Labour Research and the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives – BC Office, and brings together four BC universities, 26 community-based organizations and more than 80 academic and community researchers and collaborators. The partnership is supported by the Social Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC). For more information visit understandingprecarity.ca.

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