

The Precarity Penalty

The impact of employment
precarity on individuals,
households and communities
—and what to do about it



POVERTY AND
EMPLOYMENT PRECARITY
IN SOUTHERN ONTARIO



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“We’re just giving you jobs or work as it comes. . . . You don’t have benefits. . . . If you get assigned work, great; if you don’t, you don’t get any. . . . That was stressful because you could get a month without work and then suddenly work a long weekend, twelve hour shifts. . . . You get all this money, but you have to make it last because who knows when they’re going to call you again.”

-Rafael



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It's More than Poverty

Employment Precarity
and Household Well-being



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The Study

- Random survey of 4,193 individuals by Leger Marketing
- Covers Hamilton and the GTA
- 28 interviews with individuals in precarious employment

How to measure precarious employment?

- Form of the employment relationship
 - Is it temp agency work, short-term, casual, own account self-employed?
- Characteristics of the employment relationship
 - Employment Precarity Index

The Employment Precarity Index

What is included?

- ⦿ Not paid if miss work
- ⦿ Not in standard employment relationship
- ⦿ Weekly income not stable
- ⦿ Hours worked not stable
- ⦿ Work on-call
- ⦿ Don't know work schedule in advance
- ⦿ Paid in cash
- ⦿ Temporary employment
- ⦿ No benefits
- ⦿ Weak voice at work

What is not included?

- ⦿ Income

Many people can be trapped in precarious jobs that make it hard to build a stable, secure life.

“I’ve done so much temporary work, and no one’s ever made me permanent or extended the contract. . . and it’s really frustrating because I’m tired of temping. I just want some stable employment, and it’s so frustrating.”

-Tanvi

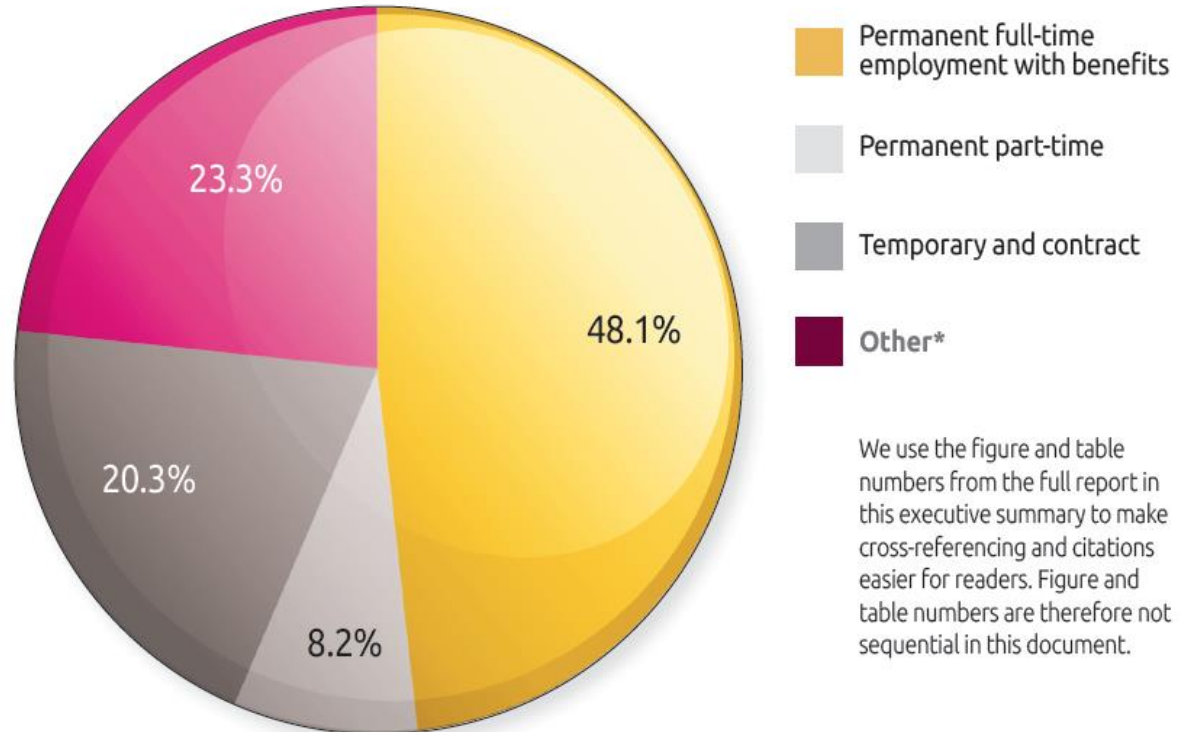


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Fewer workers are in permanent full-time employment in the 2014 sample

Figure 1: Employment categories in the GTHA, 2014(%)



* In the "Other" category, 70% are in full-time employment but either receive no benefits beyond a wage or are unable to confirm they would be with their current employer for at least 12 months. 15% are self-employed with employees and 14% are in full-time employment but their hours varied from week to week and in some cases could be less than 30 hours.

Source: PEPSO survey 2014. This figure is a revised version of Figure 1 in the full report.

We use the figure and table numbers from the full report in this executive summary to make cross-referencing and citations easier for readers. Figure and table numbers are therefore not sequential in this document.

Many people in precarious jobs have a hard time moving into better opportunities.

“I’ve never been at a job where they were offering that kind of training. They actually wanted you to know the stuff already. . . . They’re not going to say “Oh, we’re going to be willing to train.” All they see is a bunch of applicants in front of them and they’re not going to take somebody on that doesn’t have the training or the experience.”

-Francesca

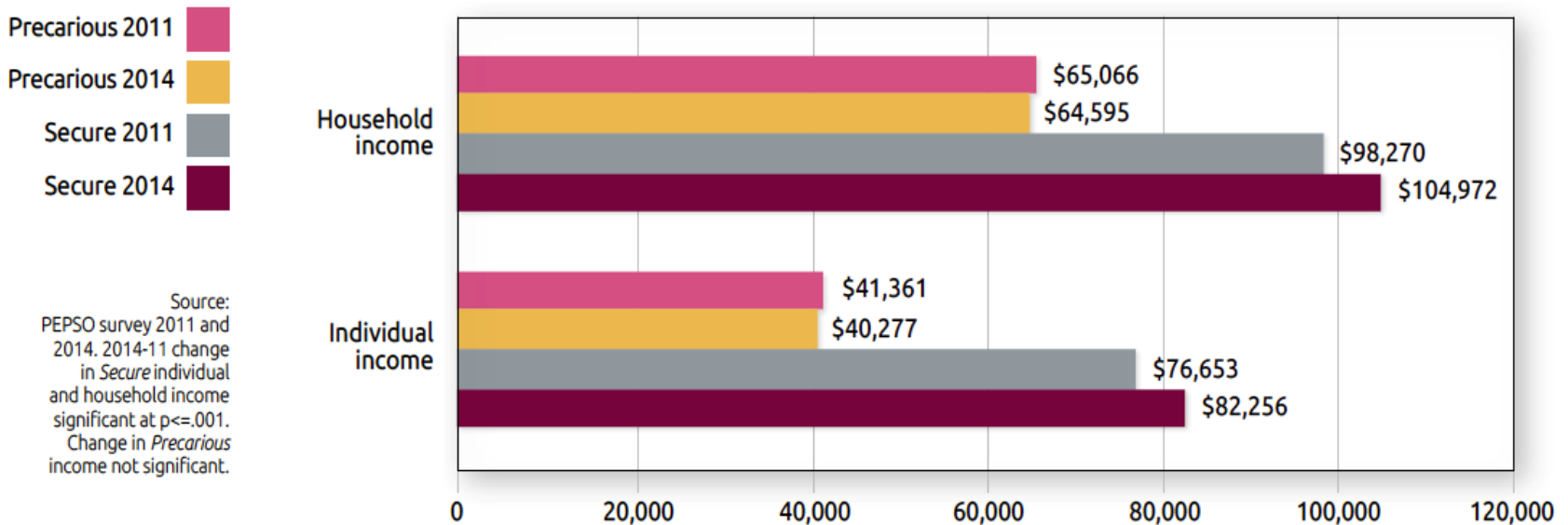


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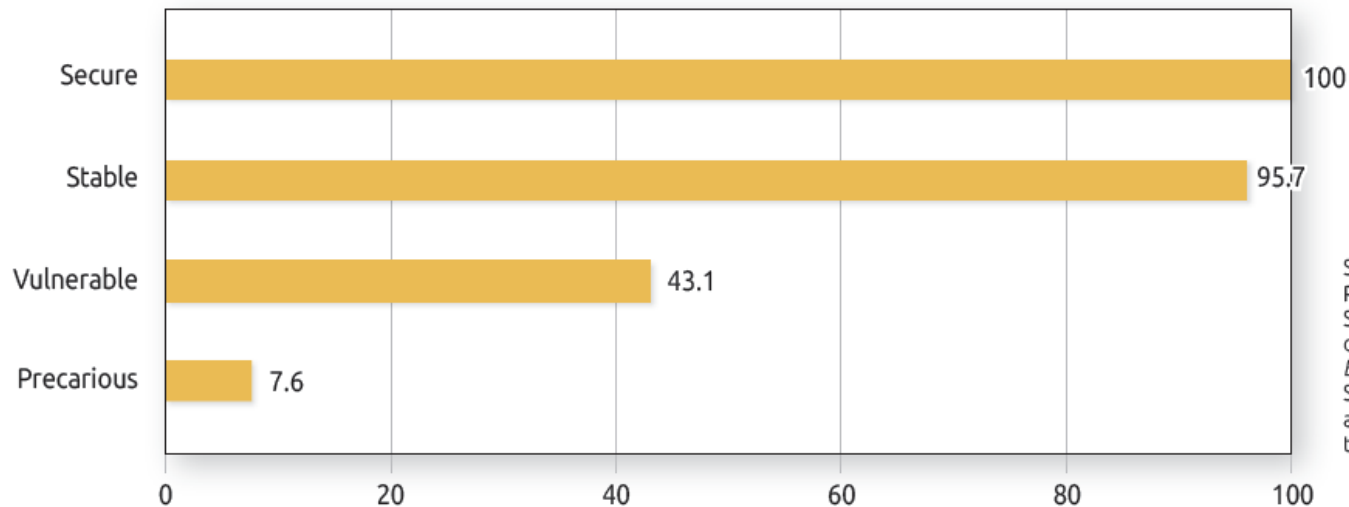
They earn less income and live in households with less income

Figure 14: Average individual and household income by employment security: 2011–2014 GTHA (\$)



Workers in precarious employment do not receive supplemental health benefits.

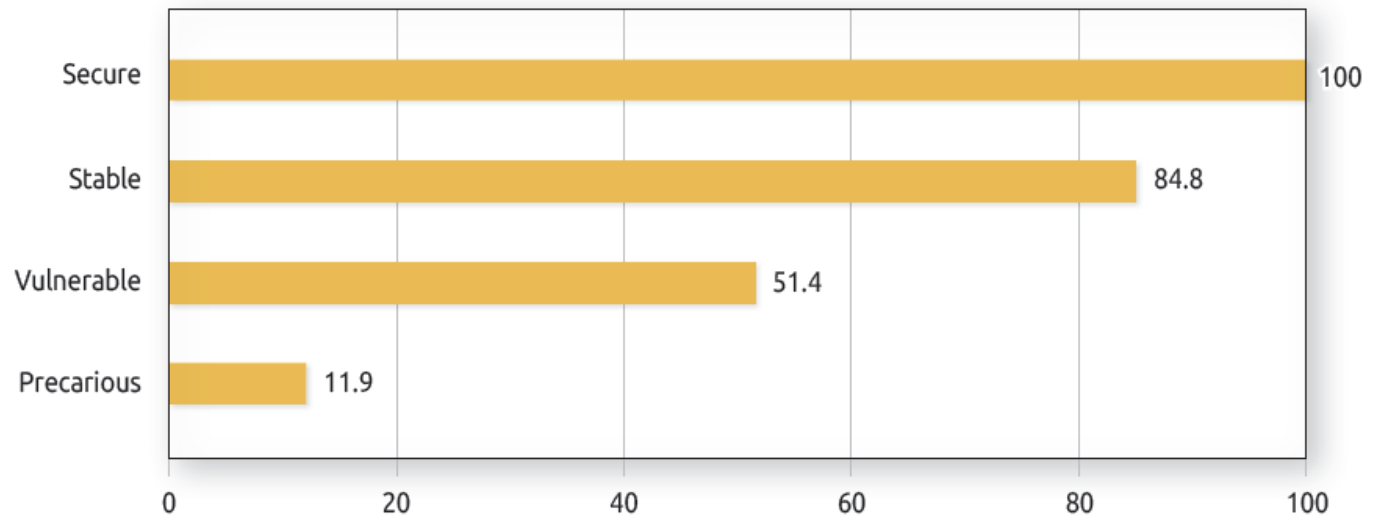
Figure 33: Employer funds drug, vision and/or dental benefits by employment security (%)



Source: PEP SO survey 2014. Significant at $p < .001$. This question is included in the *Employment Precarity Index*. Survey respondents were asked if they have any of these benefits.

Workers in precarious employment do not get paid if they miss work.

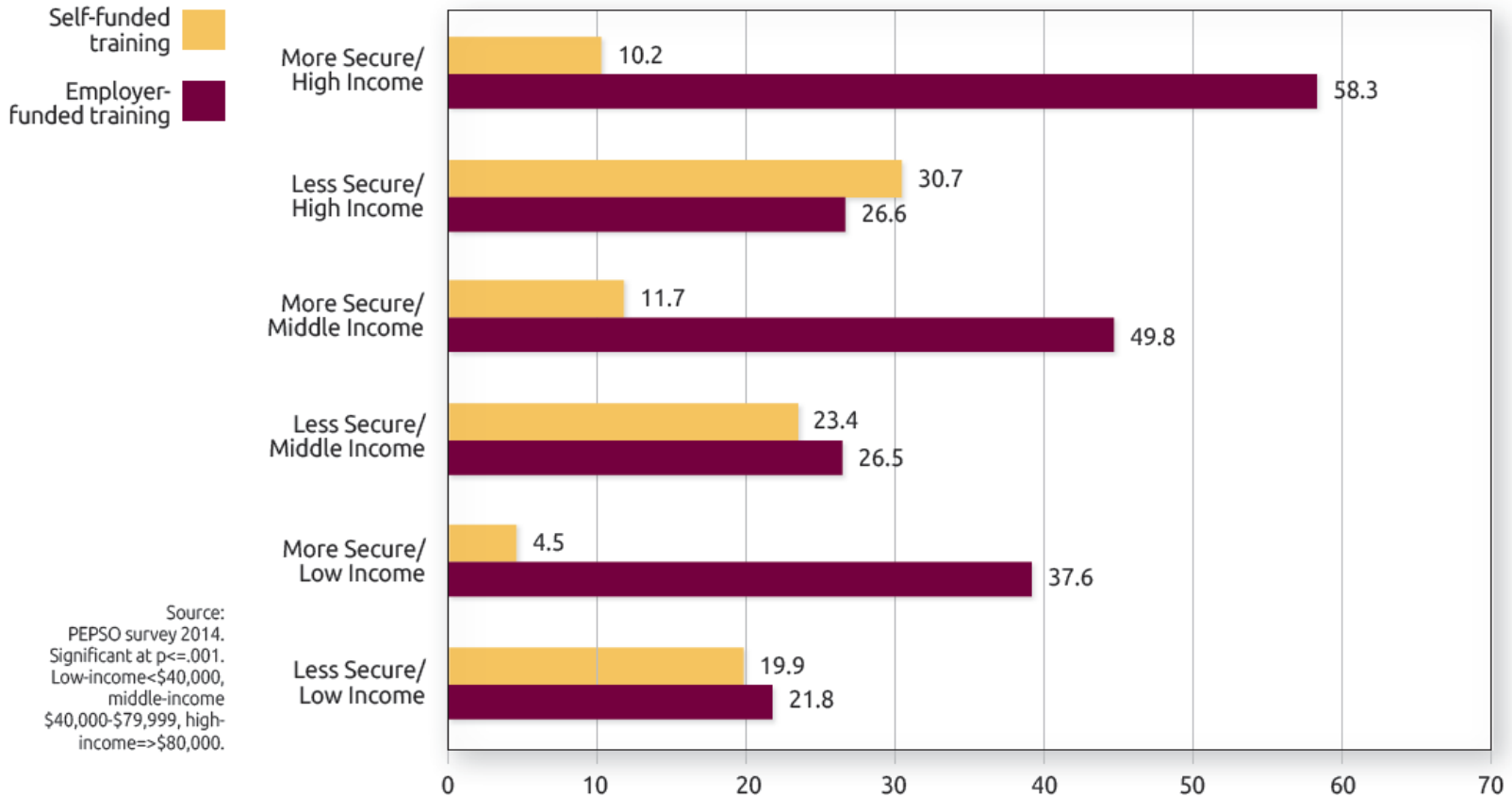
Figure 35: Paid if misses a day's work by employment security (%)



Source:
PEPSO survey 2014.
Significant at $p < .001$. This
question is included in the
Employment Precarity Index.

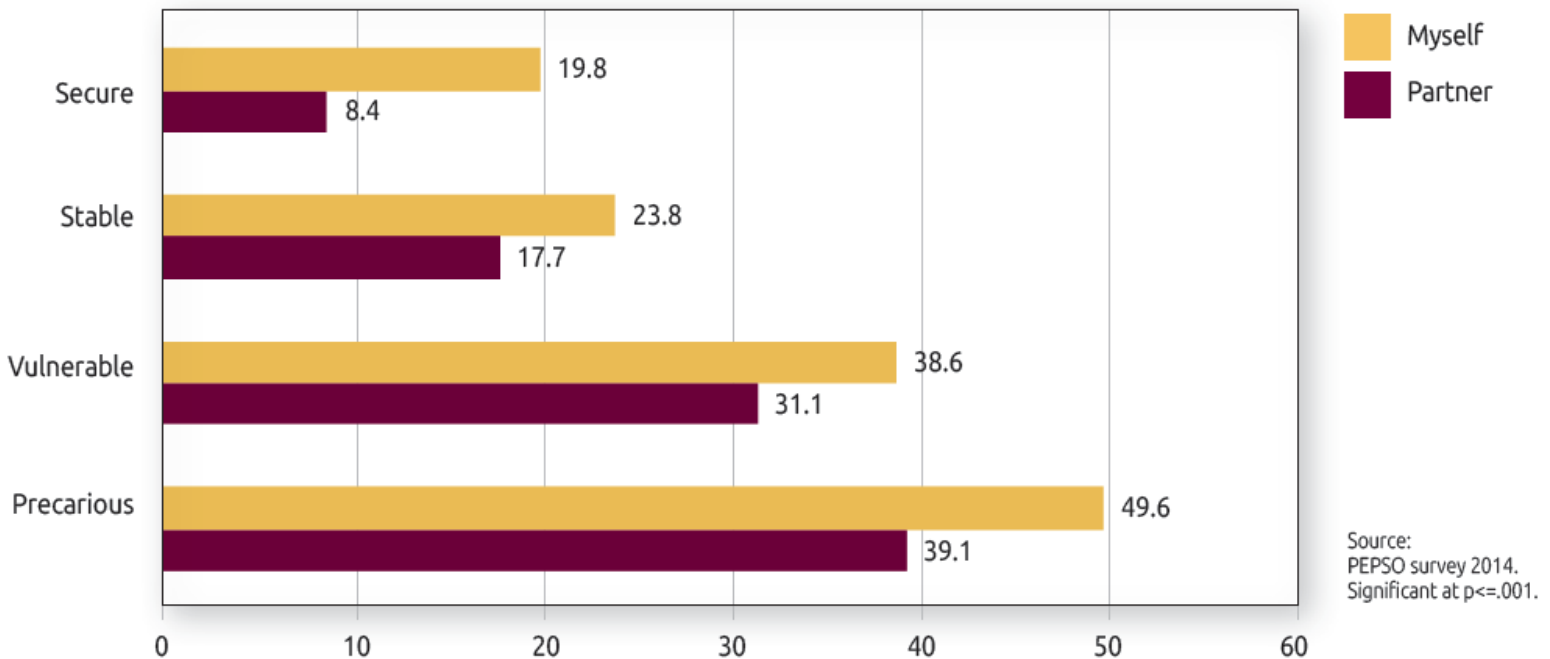
They have less access to training.

Figure 38: Self-funded versus employer-funded training by employment security and individual income (%)



Lack of childcare is an issue for workers in precarious employment.

Figure 85: Lack of access to childcare limits ability to work by employment security (%)



Precarious employment has a major impact on the health and well-being of individuals and their families.

“You’re just constantly fighting for work; you’re constantly trying to find work. . . . But the way that my brain is going right now is like I just need a steady income because this is just getting ridiculous. Where I’m at right now is, financially, really precarious; it’s really precarious.”

-Eva

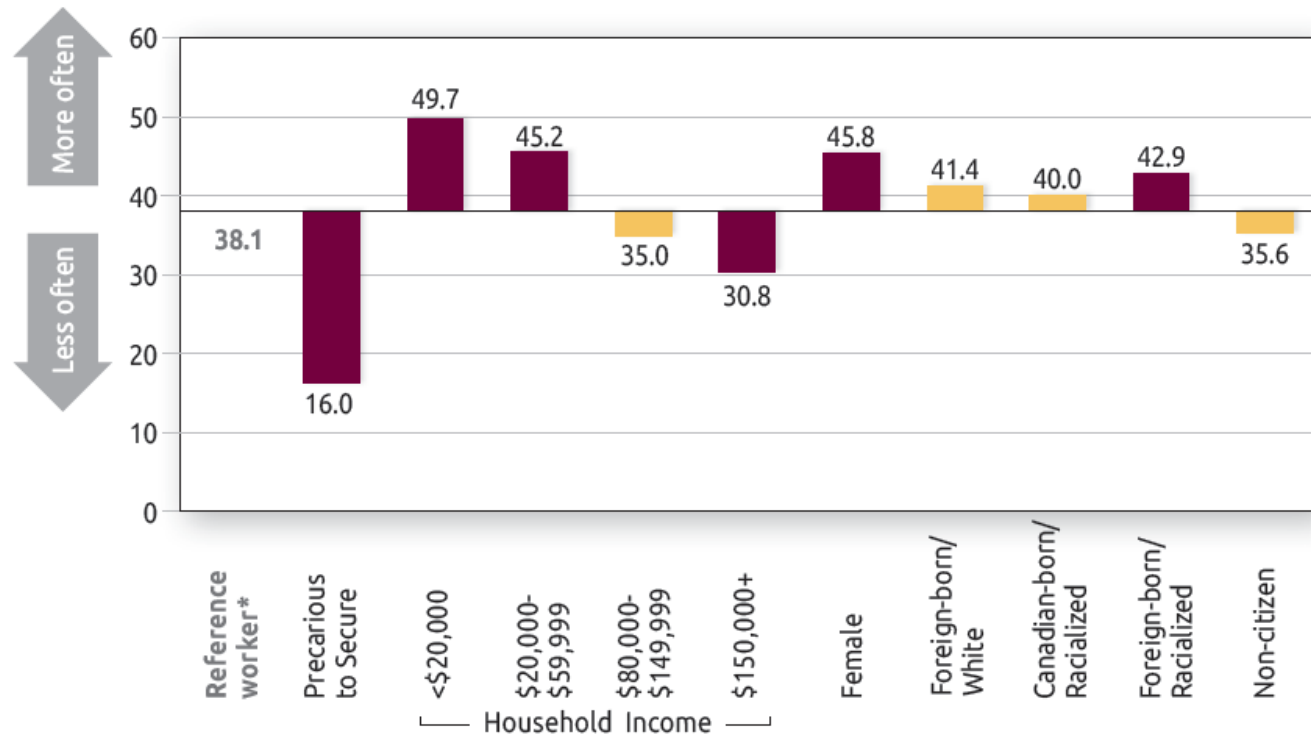


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Precarious employment is associated with increased anxiety at home.

Figure 67: Percentage reporting anxiety over employment interferes with personal or family life (Reference worker=38.1%*)

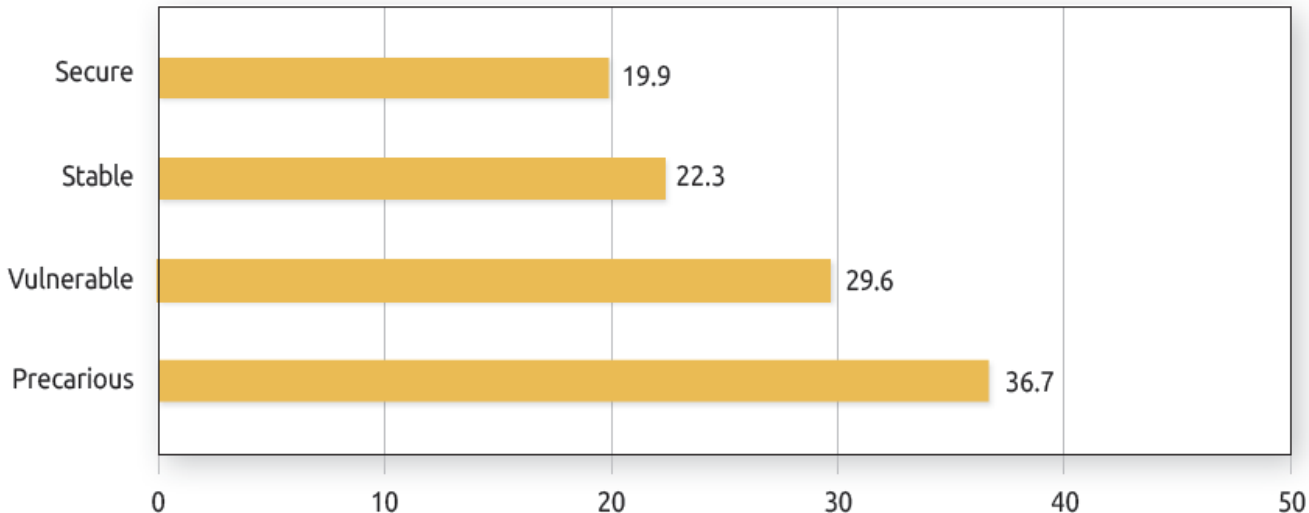


* Reference worker: Canadian-born, white male in *Precarious* employment, household income \$60,000-\$79,999, aged 35-44. The analysis also controls for living alone, children in household.

Source: PEPSO survey 2014. Maroon bars significant at the 5% level. Analysis based on logistic estimations. The non-citizen category included 219 workers of whom about two-thirds are racialized.

Precarious employment is associated with increased risk of mental health issues.

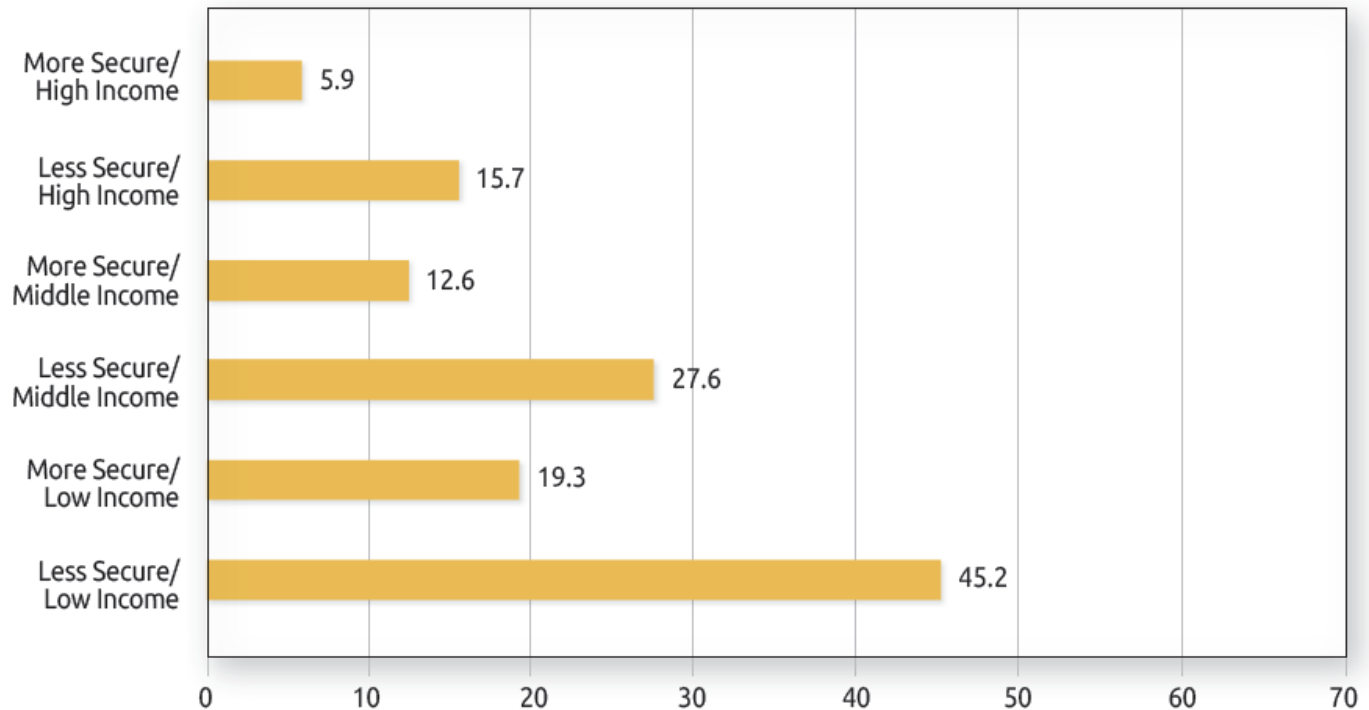
Figure 58: Mental health is less than very good by employment security (%)



Source:
PEPSO survey 2014.
Significant at $p \leq .001$.

Precarious employment is associated with increased income stress.

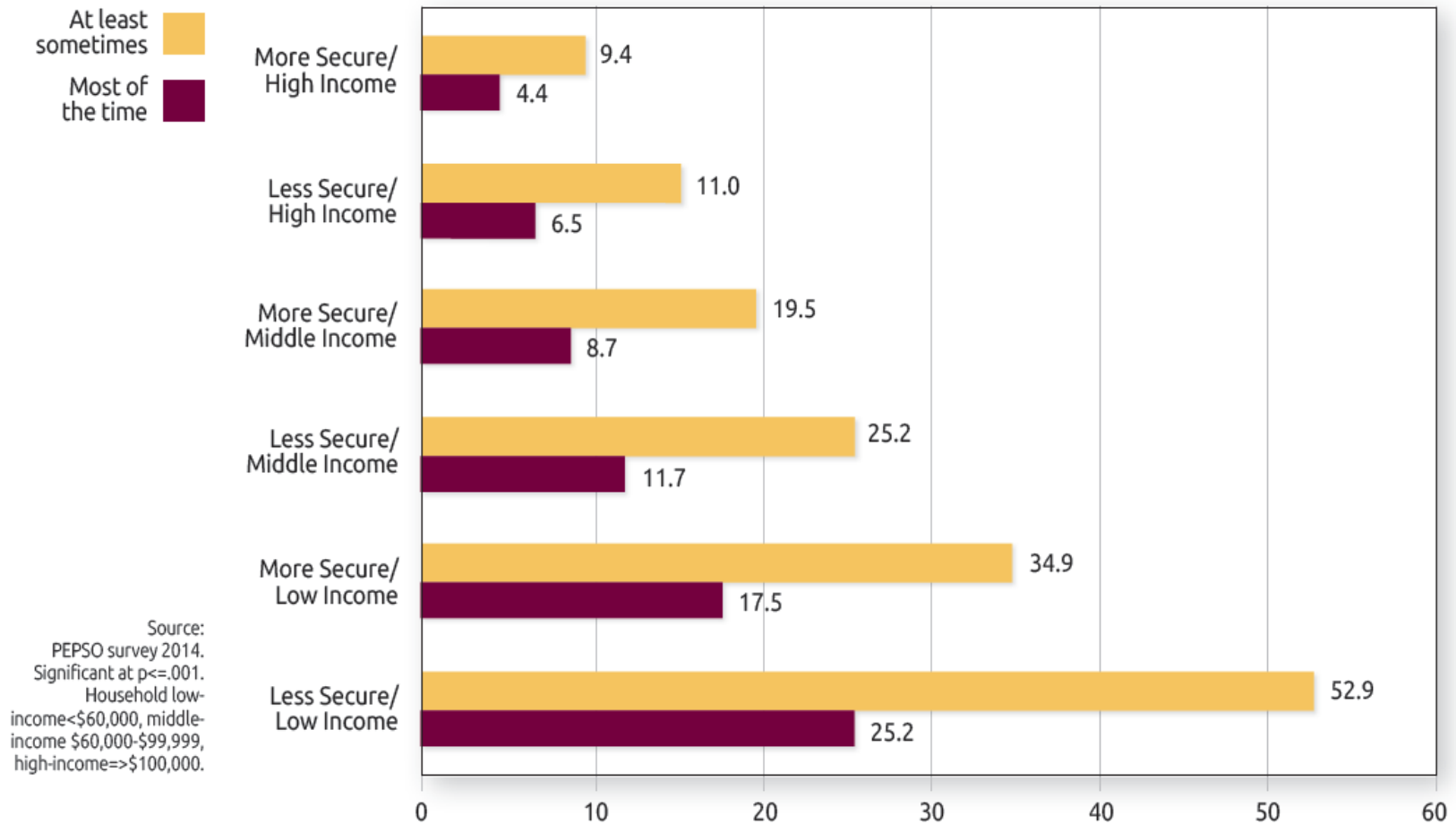
Figure 74: Concerned about maintaining standard of living in the next 12 months by employment security and household income (%)



Source:
PEPSO survey 2014.
Significant at $p < .001$.
Household low-income < \$60,000, middle-income \$60,000-\$99,999, high-income \geq \$100,000.

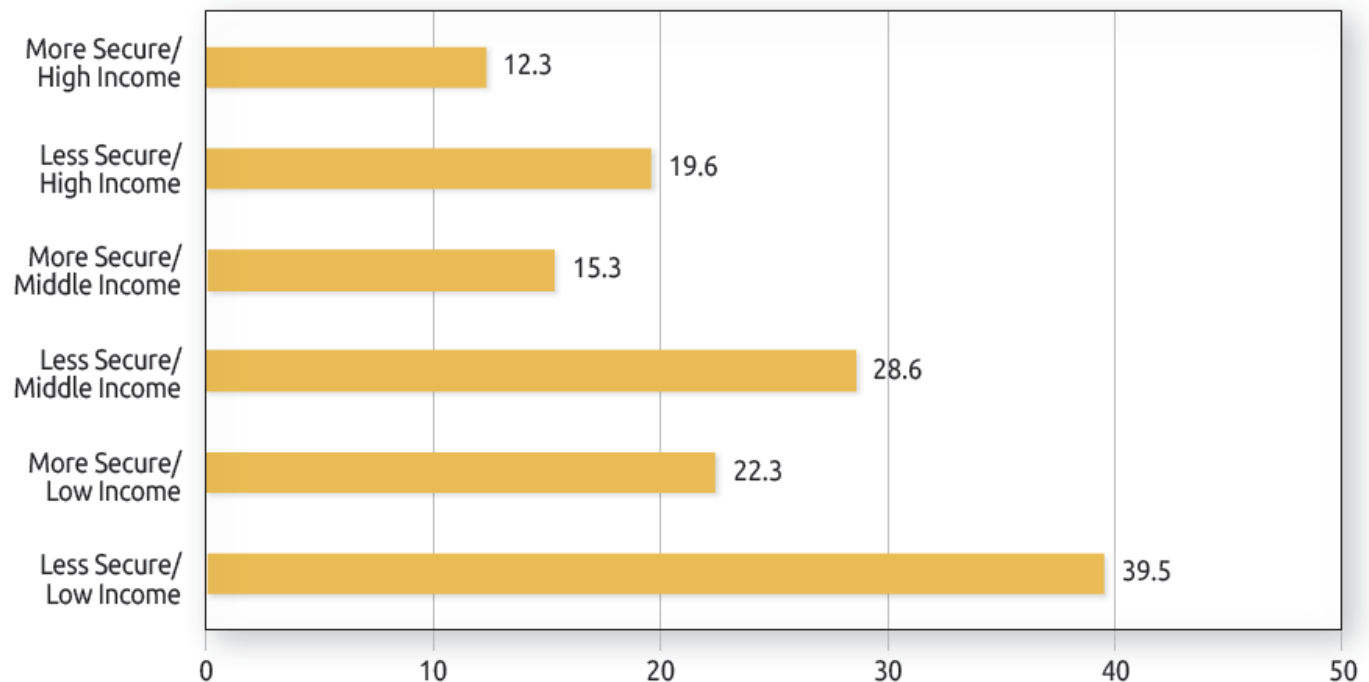
Precarious employment can affect children.

Figure 82: Unable to pay for activities outside of school by employment security and household income (%)



Workers in precarious employment can be more isolated.

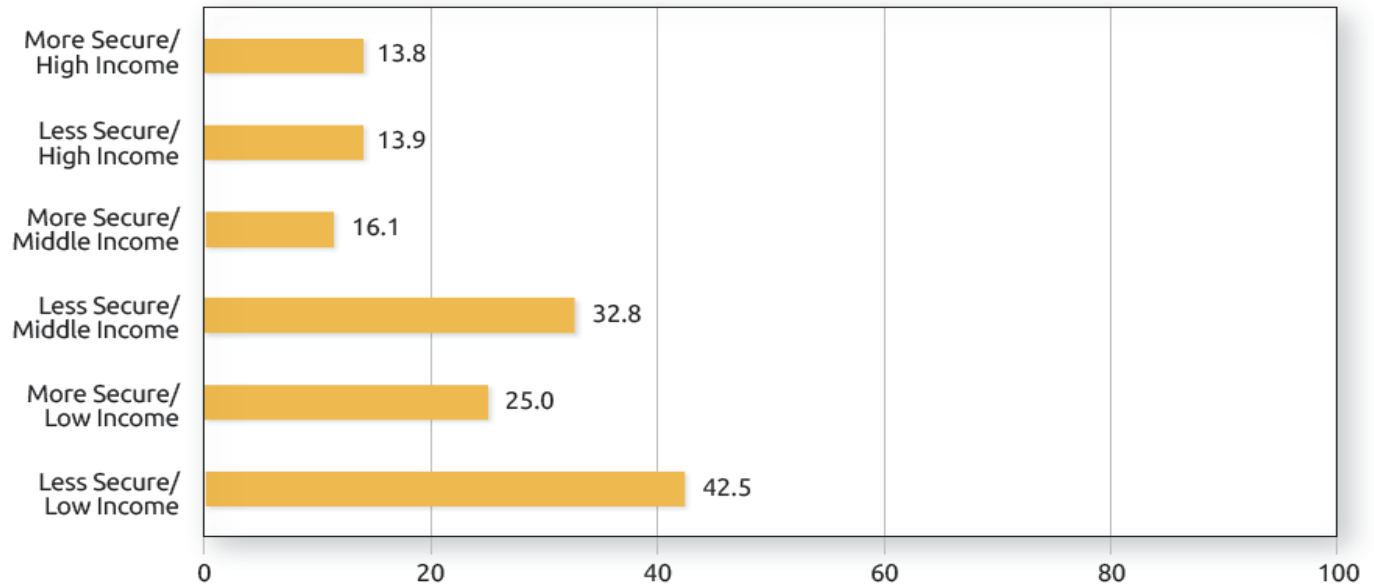
Figure 102: Does not have a friend at work to ask a favour of by employment security and household income (%)



Source:
PEPSO survey 2014.
Significant at $p < .001$.
Household low-
income < \$60,000, middle-
income \$60,000-\$99,999,
high-income \geq \$100,000.

They volunteer more for job opportunities.

Figure 95: Volunteers to improve job opportunities by employment security and household income (%)



Source:
PEPSO survey 2014.
Significant at $p < .001$.
Household low-income < \$60,000, middle-income \$60,000-\$99,999, high-income \geq \$100,000.

Precarious employment is bad for everyone—but your race, gender and where you were born can make things worse.

“I couldn’t find job. I looked and looked . . . so I said “you know what? It is not there”. . . This is very, it’s very degrading, it’s very humiliating. . . . It makes me feel like “okay, I’m not doing well here, so maybe I had to go back to where I come from, because I’m just getting by in this country.”

-Sofia



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Workers in precarious employment face more discrimination

Figure 46: Discrimination is a barrier to getting work by employment security (%)

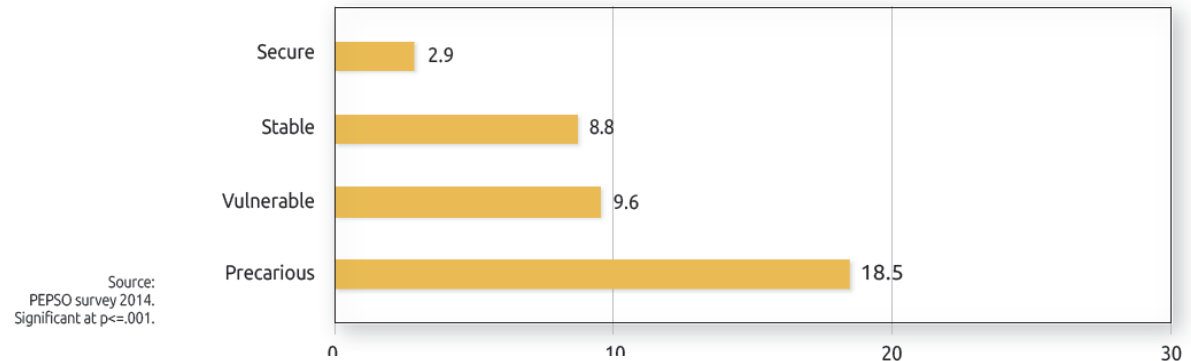
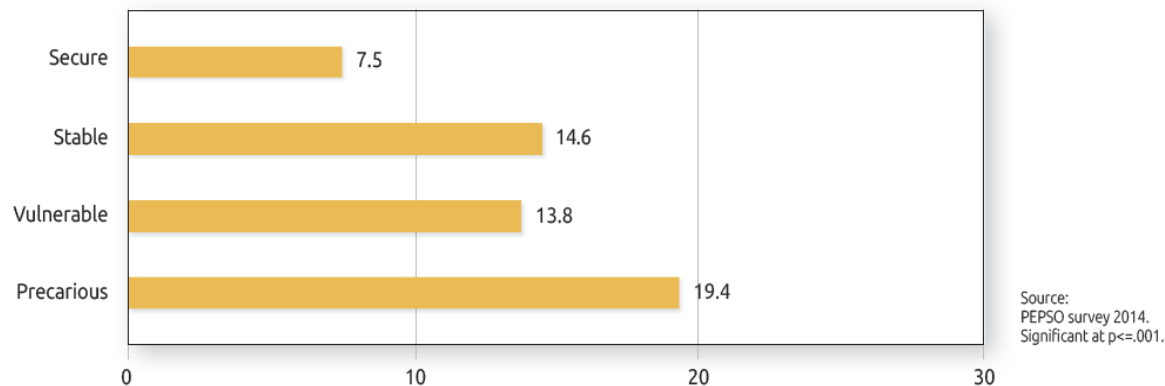


Figure 52: Discrimination is a barrier to advancement by employment security (%)

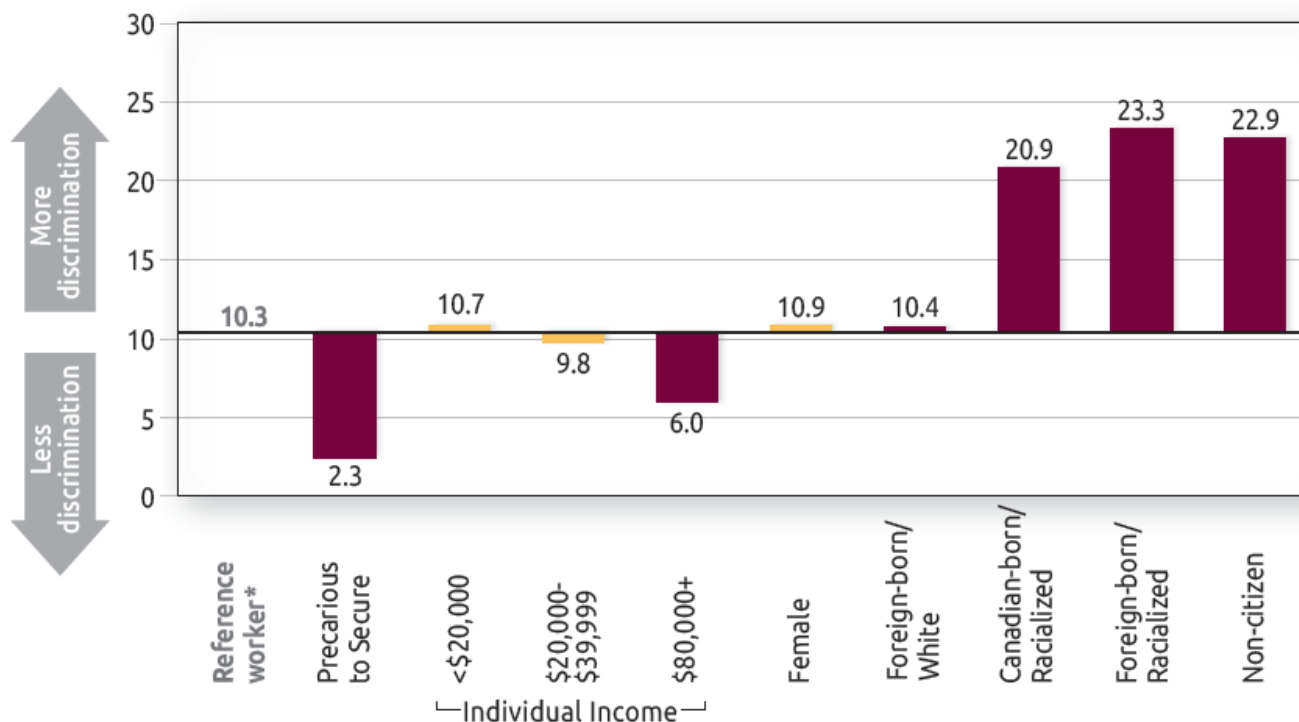


Racialized workers report more discrimination

Figure 48: Percentage for whom discrimination is a barrier to getting work (Reference worker=10.3%*)

* Reference worker: Canadian-born, white male in *Precarious* employment, individual income \$40,000-\$79,999, aged 35-44.

Source: PEPSO survey 2014. Maroon bars significant at the 5% level. Analysis based on logistic estimations. The non-citizen category included 219 workers of whom about two-thirds are racialized.



There are practical solutions that will give people in precarious jobs a pathway to more stability and security

1. Building a dynamic labour market that supports workers in precarious employment
2. Ensuring that jobs are a pathway to income and employment security
3. Enhancing social and community supports for a new labour market

1. Building a dynamic labour market that supports workers in precarious employment

- Building a workforce-development plan for a changing labour market
- Providing training opportunities for those in insecure employment
- Enabling more secure employment
- Addressing discrimination in hiring, job retention and advancement

2. Ensuring that jobs are a pathway to income and employment security

- Modernizing employment standards
- Reducing the impacts of irregular work schedules for workers
- Improving income security for workers in precarious jobs
- Enhancing access to benefits for workers in insecure jobs
- Supporting voice at work

3. Enhancing social and community supports for a new labour market

- Enabling flexible, quality childcare
- Improving access to community services
- Creating accessible opportunities for children and youth
- Ensuring meaningful volunteer opportunities

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Internal Pre-publication Briefing
14 & 15 May 2015



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