

May  
2018



# THE PERI REPORTS

The Status of Employment and Working  
Conditions in the Peterborough Area\*

## INFOBRIEF #1: Overview

### About PERI

The Precarious Employment Research Initiative (PERI) is a collaborative project among many community partners interested in better understanding the employment and working conditions of workers in our community. This project was initiated by [Peterborough Public Health](#) and expanded to include [City of Peterborough](#), [Peterborough and District Labour Council](#), [Literacy Ontario Central South](#), [Peterborough Workers' Action Centre](#), [Trent Community Research Centre](#), [United Way of Peterborough](#), [Workforce Development Board](#) and [Trent University](#) psychology professor and researcher, Dr. Fergal O'Hagan with support from the [Poverty and Employment Precarity in Southern Ontario](#) (PEPSO) research project.

This is the first in a series of InfoBriefs meant to be used to start conversations in our community, to help inform planning and development of programs and services, and to help shape public policies. The data, collected from a randomly selected, representative sample of working people in the Peterborough area, is available to anyone who would like to use it to answer other important research questions.

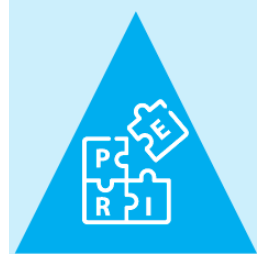
### Research Goal

To identify how employment and working conditions are impacting the economic, social, physical and mental health of workers and their communities in the Peterborough Area. The goal for this brief is to describe the sample, identify the level of vulnerable or precarious employment and relate those qualities to other sample demographics.

### Method

We commissioned Leger, a Canadian-owned polling and research firm, to conduct a random-dialed telephone survey between November and December 2016. The survey used was originally created by PEPSO<sup>i</sup>. Possible survey participants included all residents between the ages of 18 and 70 in the Peterborough area who had been employed in the three months prior to receiving the call. Responses were collected from 800 people who were a representative sample of the workers in our communities when compared to the Census Profile for Peterborough County<sup>ii</sup>. Funding for this portion of the study was

\* Peterborough Area includes Curve Lake and Hiawatha First Nations and the City and County of Peterborough.

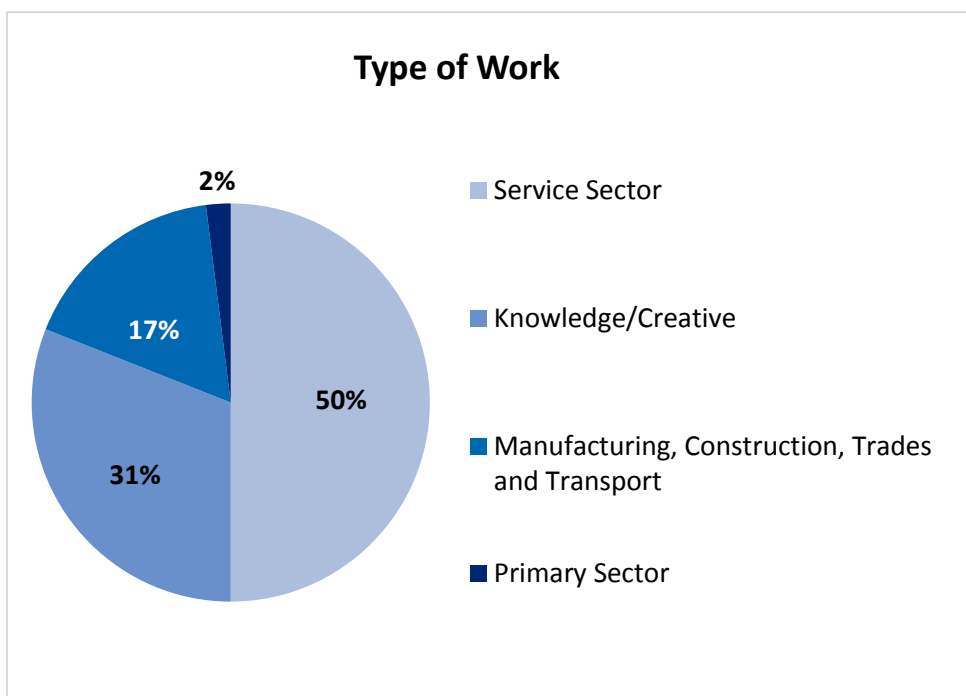


provided by Peterborough Public Health, City of Peterborough, Peterborough and District Labour Council and PEPSO.

## Sample

Of the 800 individuals who responded to the survey 388 identified as male and 412 identified as female and the average age of survey respondents was 43 years old. While 4% of respondents did not respond to this question, most respondents identified their race as white (88%) which was consistent with the 2016 Canadian Census which reported 92% of the population identifying as white.<sup>iii</sup> Other respondents identified as Indigenous (North American Indian, Metis, or Inuit) at 2%; Canadian at 2% and Visible Minority at 3%, all consistent with the Census data.

Respondents were asked to identify the sector that best captures the work they do from a list of four categories: 1) service sector; 2) knowledge/creative work; 3) manufacturing, construction, trades and transport, and; 4) primary sector (fishing, farming, natural resources). As can be seen in Figure 1, 50% of respondents identified as working in the service sector while 31% identified working in knowledge or creative work, 17% identified working in manufacturing, construction, trades and transport, and 2% worked in the primary sector.



**Figure 1.** Percentage of Respondents by Type of Work

## Employment Precarity Index

The Employment Precarity Index (EPI) is the primary measure used to characterize employment conditions. The measure is calculated based on the responses of 12 key questions in the survey. The EPI groups employment situations on a continuum with precarious employment at one end of the spectrum and secure employment at the other. Figure 2 summarizes the characteristics of different employment situations on a continuum from precarious to secure. For more details about this Index, visit: <https://pepso.ca/tools>.

Precarious →	Vulnerable →	Stable →	Secure
<p><b>Worker has:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• unstable and insecure employment</li> <li>• irregular work hours making time management difficult</li> <li>• unpredictable wages and no other benefits</li> <li>• less access to job training</li> </ul> <p><b>Usually characterized as temporary, part-time, limited term, and contract work</b></p>	<p><b>Worker has:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a little more employment security</li> <li>• unreliable work hours or permanence</li> <li>• lower earning and likely few, if any, benefits</li> <li>• less access to training and participation in the workplace</li> </ul>	<p><b>Worker has:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• more predictability</li> <li>• more reliable hours</li> <li>• more permanence in their position</li> <li>• more stable wage and maybe access to benefits</li> <li>• more access to professional development</li> <li>• more encouragement to voice concerns</li> </ul>	<p><b>Worker has:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• predictable and constant hours</li> <li>• job security and potential for a career path</li> <li>• stable wage</li> <li>• benefits such as medical, paid leaves, and pension</li> </ul> <p><b>Usually characterized as “standard employment relationship”</b></p>

**Figure 2.** Employment Precarity Index Description

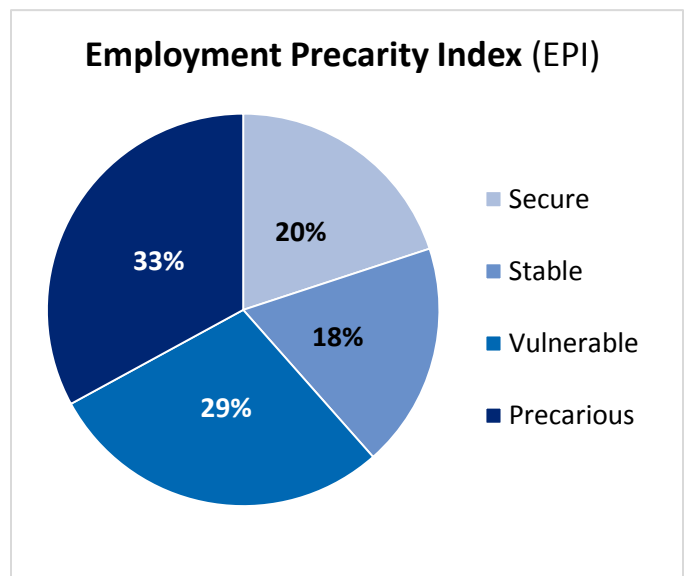
## Employment Precarity

Nearly two-thirds of the sample (62%) were identified as being in a precarious or vulnerable employment situation (Figure 3). The remaining respondents (38%) can be described as having secure and stable employment.

## Geographical Area

The geographical area was identified by postal code with 262 respondents (32.8%) from a KOL rural postal code area. The remaining respondents had urban postal codes of K9H (22%); K9J (33%); K9K (7.6%); and K9L (4.5%). The Employment Precarity Index when applied to respondents by urban and rural areas of Peterborough City and County were comparable.

Looking at precarity within each group, 64% of rural respondents (KOL) and 60% of urban respondents were categorized as being in vulnerable or precarious employment.



**Figure 3.** Percentage of Respondents by Employment Precarity Category

## Precarity, Gender, Age, and Income

Survey results indicated there was no difference between male and female respondents for employment precarity, however, females were more likely to have a standard employment situation; 23% compared to 16% of male respondents. Vulnerable and precarious employment was most prevalent among respondents under 34 years of age (64% of respondents in this age group) and over 55 (64%) (Figure 4) and is also most prevalent among those with an individual income of under \$30,000 per year (90%) (Figure 5).

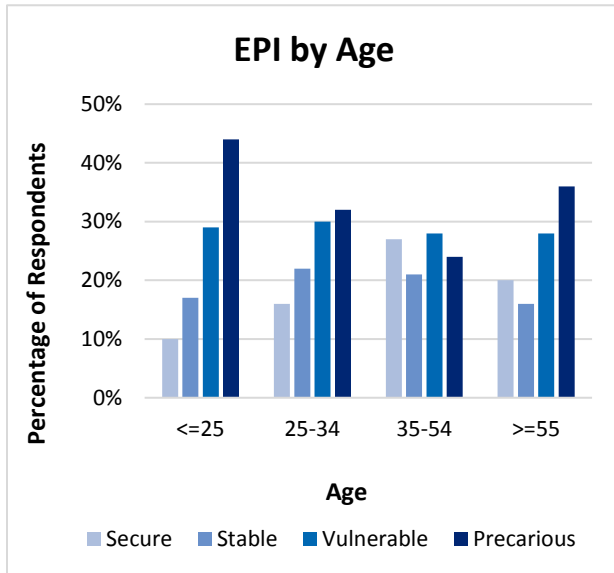


Figure 4. Employment Precarity Index by Age

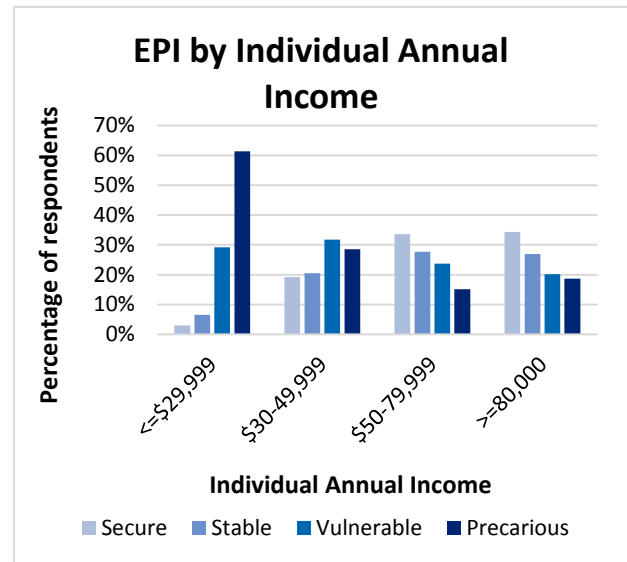


Figure 5. Employment Precarity by Individual Annual Income

## Precarity and Type of Work

Comparing EPI by work sector revealed that within the service sector, 64% of respondents are in vulnerable or precarious employment situations, which is comparable to 65% of respondents in manufacturing, construction, trades and transportation (Figure 6). In the knowledge and creative sector, 55% identified as vulnerable or precarious. Only 2% of respondents identified working in the primary sector which is too small of a sample for statistical inference. These findings illustrate how employment precarity affects respondents from all sectors.

## Precarity and the Standard Employment Relationship (SER)

The Standard Employment Relationship (SER) is an important element of employment precarity. Described as, “I have one employer, who I expect to be working for a year from now, who provides at least 30 hours of work a week, and who pays benefits,” the SER best characterizes secure employment. Once the cornerstone of the Canadian labour market, studies on precarious employment suggest the standard employment relationship has been declining in Canada for decades. Of the 461 respondents who reported not having a standard employment relationship, 95% fell into the vulnerable and precarious categories of the Index. While having a SER makes job security more likely, 13% of respondents with a SER still identify as being in a vulnerable employment situation (Figure 7).

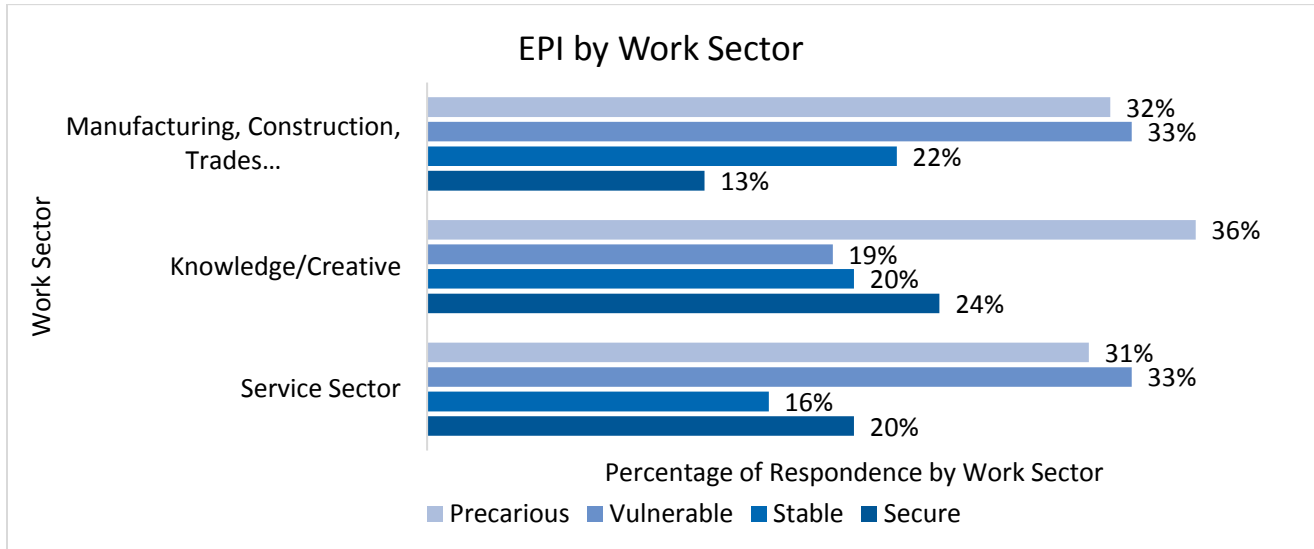


Figure 6. Employment Precarity Index by Work Sector

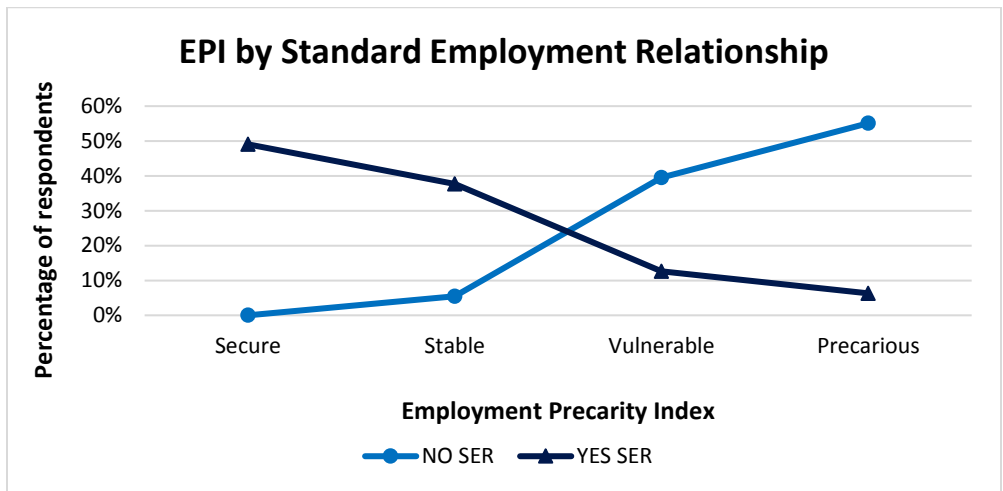


Figure 7. Employment Precarity Index by Standard Employment Relationship

More than half of respondents in every work sector did not have a standard employment relationship: 62% in the service sector; 58% in the knowledge and creative sector; 55% in the manufacturing, construction, trades and transportation sector, and; 68% in the primary sector.

## Takeaways

- Vulnerable and precarious employment represents almost two-thirds of the employment situation for survey respondents in our community.
- Precarious work exists in all industry sectors, is more common for younger workers, is associated with lower income levels and can be present even in standard employment arrangements.

## Strengths of this Study

- Sample is representative of the population in Peterborough City and County as well as Curve Lake and Hiawatha First Nations.
- Only data collected to date that focuses on precarious employment in our region.

## More Findings to Come

InfoBrief #1 provides an overview of the PERI study and is the first in a series of reports that will be released as the data is analyzed: <http://www.peterboroughpublichealth.ca/PERI/>. Future reports will focus on themes including:



Employment Security



The Employment Relationship: Working Conditions



Employment and Health



Employment and Work Stress



Employment Precarity, Income and Household Wellbeing



Employment Precarity, Income and Children



Employment Precarity, Income and Community Participation

## Suggested Citation

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<sup>i</sup> Poverty and Employment Precarity in Southern Ontario (PEPSO) <https://pepso.ca/>

<sup>ii, iii</sup> Canada, G. O. (2017, November 16). Census Profile, 2016 Census. Peterborough, County [Census division], Ontario and Northwest Territories [Territory]. Retrieved January 20, 2018, from <http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/dp-pd/prof/details/page.cfm?Lang=E&Geo1=CD&Code1=3515&Geo2=PR&Code2=61&Data=Count&SearchText=Peterborough&SearchType=Begins&SearchPR=01&B1=Population&TABID=1>