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THE PERI REPORTS

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

INFOBRIEF #2: Employment Security

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 second in a series of InfoBriefs meant to be used to start conversations in our community, to 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

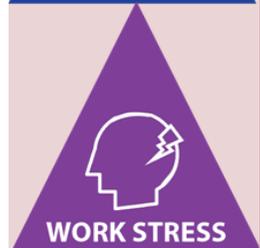
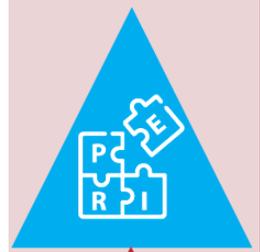
The project goal is to identify how employment and working conditions are impacting the economic, social, physical and mental health and lives of workers and their communities in the Peterborough area. The goal for InfoBrief #2 is to explore protective factors that can contribute to better levels of employment security and to describe the relationship between education and employment.

About the Respondents

Data was collected with the assistance of Leger, a Canadian-owned polling and research firm, which conducted a random-dialed telephone survey between November and December 2016. Our sample consisted of 800 respondents (49% male; 51% female), employed during the previous three months between 18 and 70 years old (average age 43). Some additional information on respondents:

- **Race:** White (88%), Indigenous (2%); Canadian (2%); Visible Minority (3%); (no response: 4%).
- **Marital status:** married (65%); single (25%); separated (7%); and widowed (3%).

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



- **Education level:** secondary school diploma or other (22%); non-university certificate or diploma, trades certification or apprenticeship (43%); bachelor degree (21%); certification above a bachelor degree (14%).
- **Union rates:** union membership (36%); no union membership (64%)
- **Employment sector:** service (50%); knowledge or creative (31%); manufacturing, construction, trades and transport (17%) and the primary sector which includes farming and forestry (2%).

Employment Precarity

The Employment Precarity Index (EPI) is a measure used to characterize employment conditions. The measure is calculated based on the responses of 12 key questions in the survey. The Index classifies employment situations on a continuum with precarious employment at one end of the spectrum and secure employment at the other. (For a description of the categories, please refer to InfoBrief #1.) Participants in this study were in the following EPI groups: precarious (33%); vulnerable (29%); secure (20%), and; stable (18%). For more details about this Index, visit: <https://pepso.ca/tools>.

Precarity and Union Membership

Union membership is a protective factor for employment security. In the current sample, 64% of respondents reported not being a member of a union. When the Employment Precarity Index (EPI) was assessed by union membership, respondents who were a part of a union were more likely to have stable (28%) and secure (35%) employment situations versus precarious or vulnerable employment (Figure 1). Conversely, respondents without union membership were more likely to be in a vulnerable (33%) or precarious (31%) employment situation versus a stable or secure employment situation.

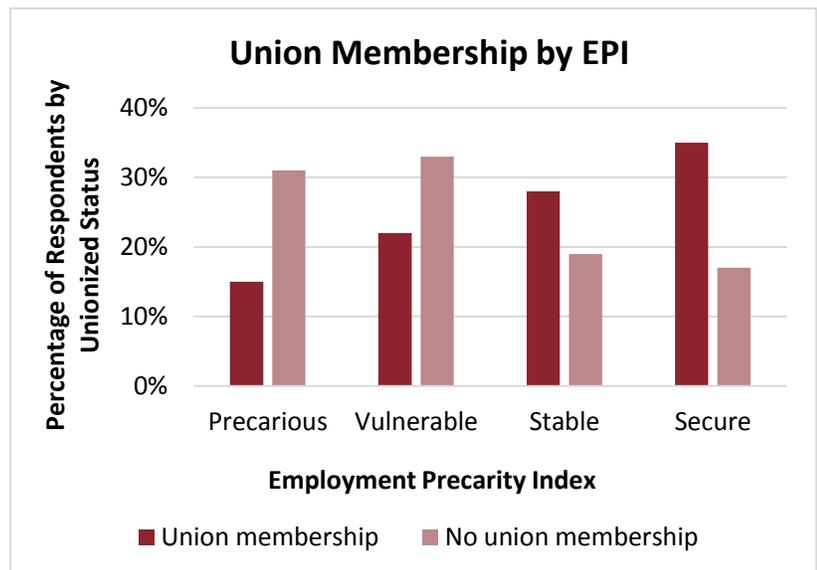


Figure 1. Union Membership by Employment Precarity

Precarity and Education

Respondents were asked to report their educational attainment. The highest percentage of respondents indicated having a non-university certificate or diploma, trades certification or apprenticeship (43%) (Figure 2). The next largest group reported having a secondary school diploma or other (22%), followed by a university bachelor degree (21%), and some respondents had certification above a bachelor degree (14%). When we look at employment precarity by educational attainment, respondents with secondary education or less than secondary school education were most likely to be in vulnerable (35%) or precarious (45%) employment. Increased educational attainment was affiliated with more stable and secure employment with 48% of respondents with a bachelor degree, and 53% of those with a degree beyond a bachelor degree, reporting employment in one of those categories.

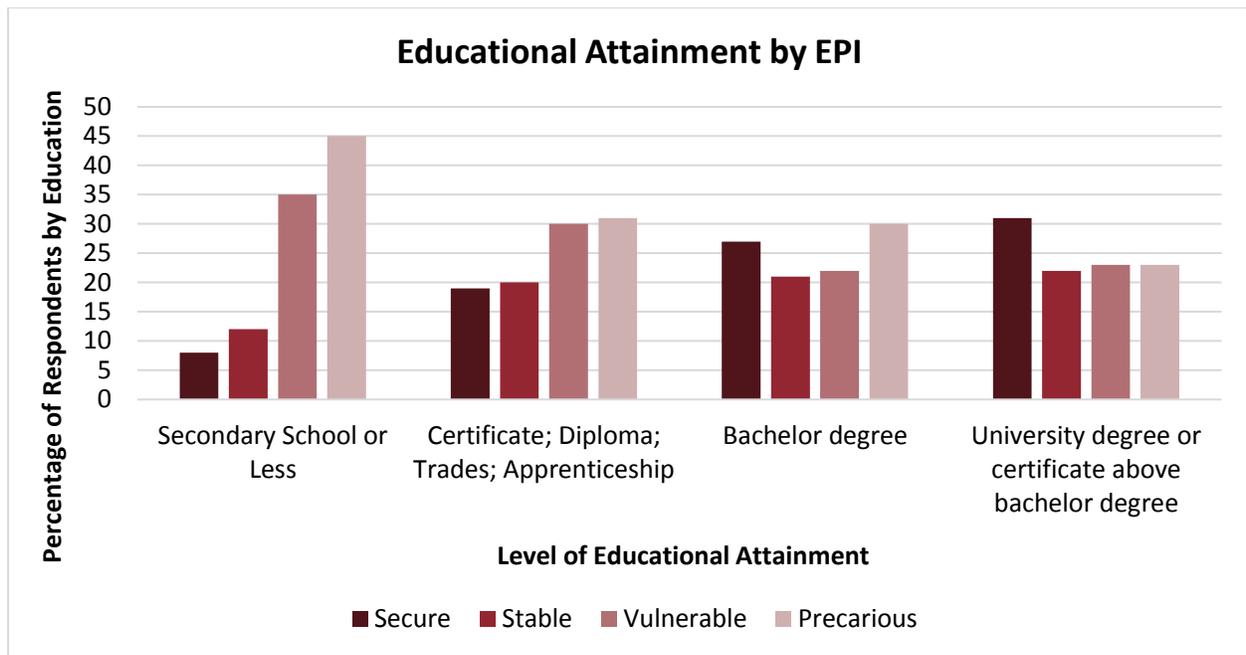


Figure 2. Educational Attainment by Employment Precarity

Education Requirements for Employment

In addition to reporting educational attainment, respondents were also asked about the education or training typically required for their current or most recent job. Most of the responses about educational attainment align with job requirements. For example, 79% of respondents with a bachelor degree, or university certification above a bachelor degree, had a position that required that level of education. For respondents with college level education (i.e., certificate, diploma, trades, or apprenticeship training), 70% were in positions that required that level of education. Respondents with a bachelor degree held 14% of the jobs requiring a college education and 11% of the jobs requiring on-the-job training. Finally, respondents with college education held 37% of the positions requiring on-the-job training (Figure 3).

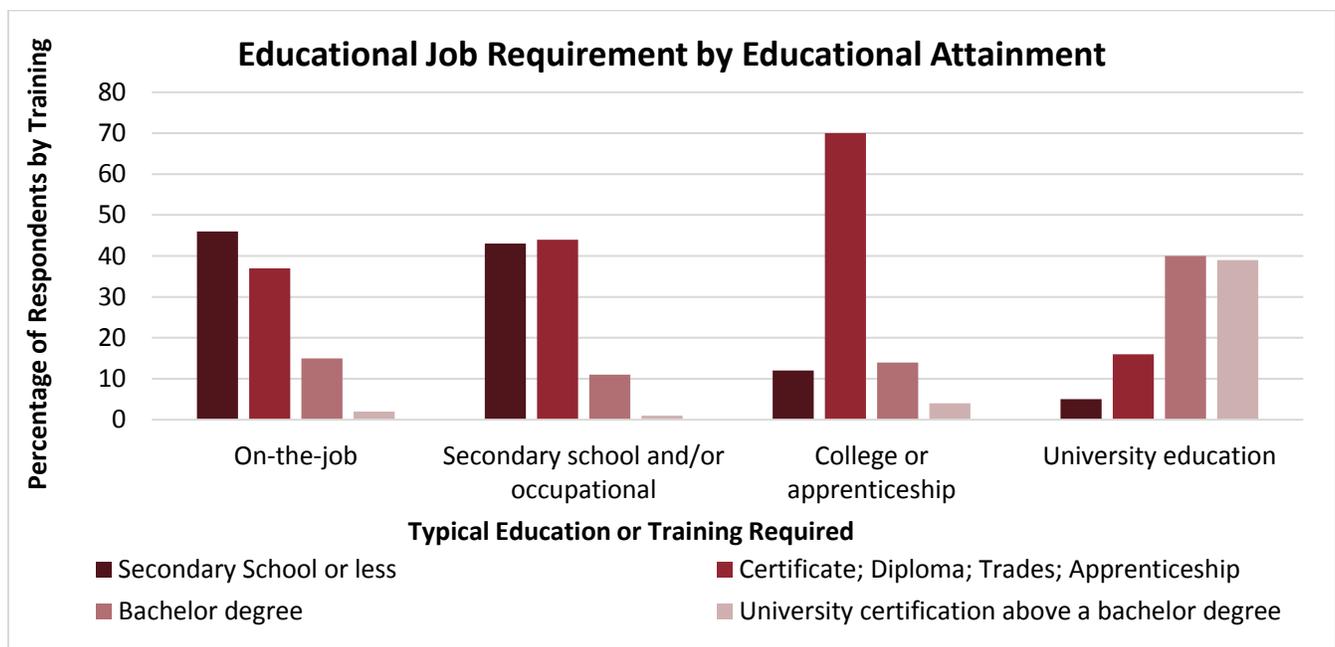


Figure 3. Education Required for Job by Educational Attainment

Takeaways

- Union membership and higher educational attainment were both associated with lower levels of precarity. Union membership and educational attainment appear to be protective factors for more secure employment in our sample.
- Previous research has documented union membership as a protective factor. Of concern here is the declining trend in unionization rates. Since Statistics Canada began tracking unionization in 1981 unionization rates have dropped from 37.6% to 28.8% in 2014ⁱ. As a protective factor for job security, unionization appears to be threatened.
- Educational attainment aligned reasonably well with the educational requirements of work reported by participants.

More Findings to Come

You can find this InfoBrief as well as *InfoBrief #1: Overview* at <http://www.peterboroughpublichealth.ca/PERI/>. Future reports will focus on themes including:



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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ⁱ Statistics Canada. (2016, November 24). Long term trends in unionization. Retrieved March 5, 2018, from <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/75-006-x/2013001/article/11878-eng.htm>