

June 2019



# THE PERI REPORTS

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

## INFOBRIEF #7: Employment Precarity, Income and Children

### 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 seventh 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.

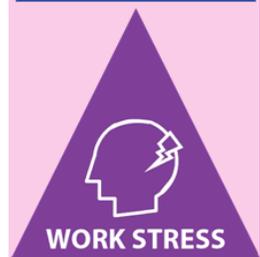
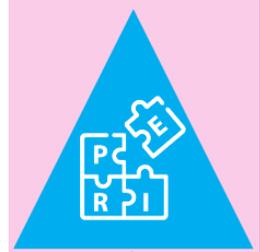
### Research Goal

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 City, County and First Nations of Peterborough. The goal of InfoBrief #7 is to understand how children are impacted by employment precarity.

### 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:

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



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

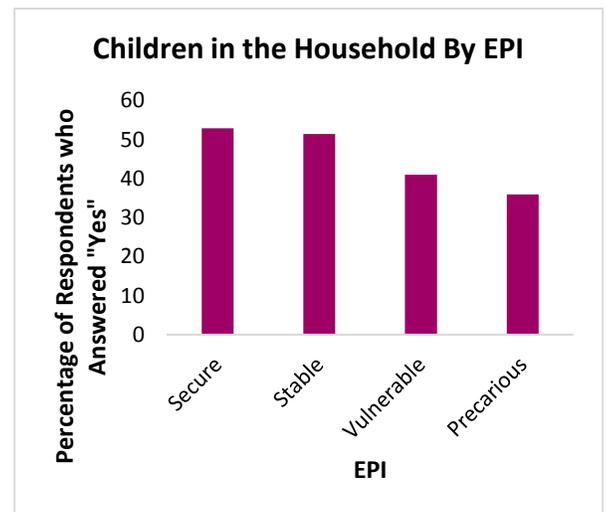
## Employment Precarity

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>.

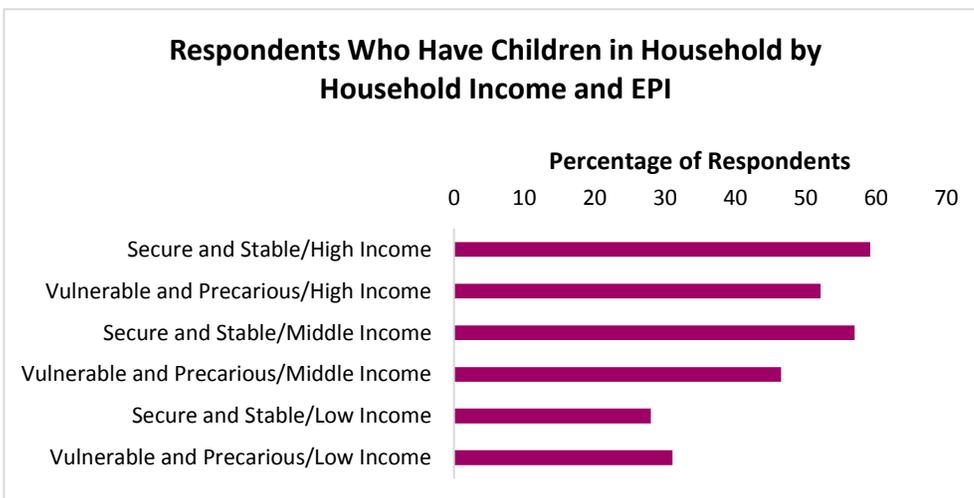
## Households with Children

Respondents were asked whether or not they had at least one child living in their household. Figure 1 shows that just over half of respondents in the secure and stable employment categories had children in their households compared to just over one-third of respondents in the precarious and vulnerable employment categories.

When combining both the level of job precarity and household income, the results showed that for respondents in the secure and stable employment categories, as income increased, so too did the likelihood of having children in the household (Figure 2).



**Figure 1.** Percentage of Respondents by EPI Who Had at Least One Child in the Household



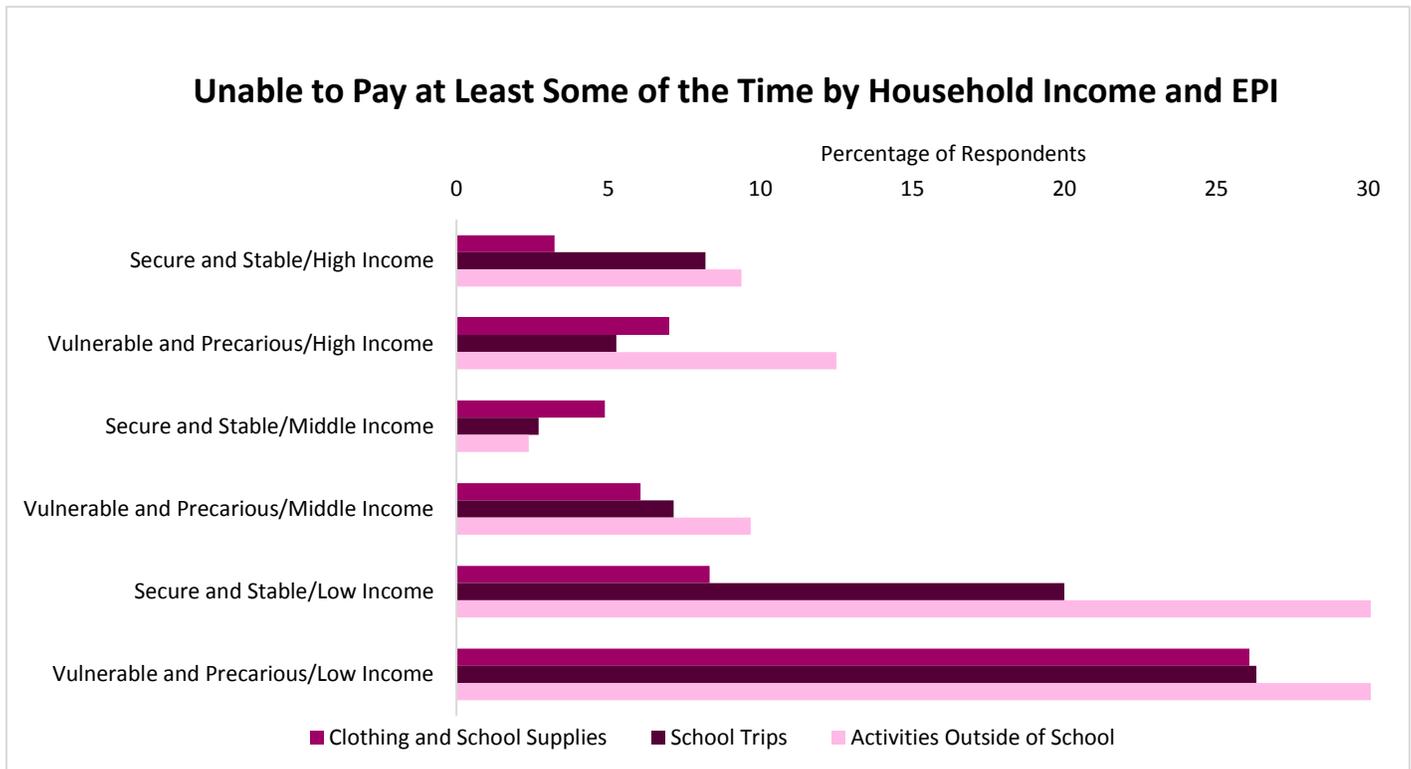
**Figure 2.** Percentage of Respondents Who Had at Least One Child in the Household by Household Income and EPI

For respondents in the vulnerable and precarious employment categories, those with middle and high incomes were also more likely to have children in the home. On the other hand, respondents with low incomes in the vulnerable and precarious employment categories were the least likely to have children in the home.

## Investing in Children

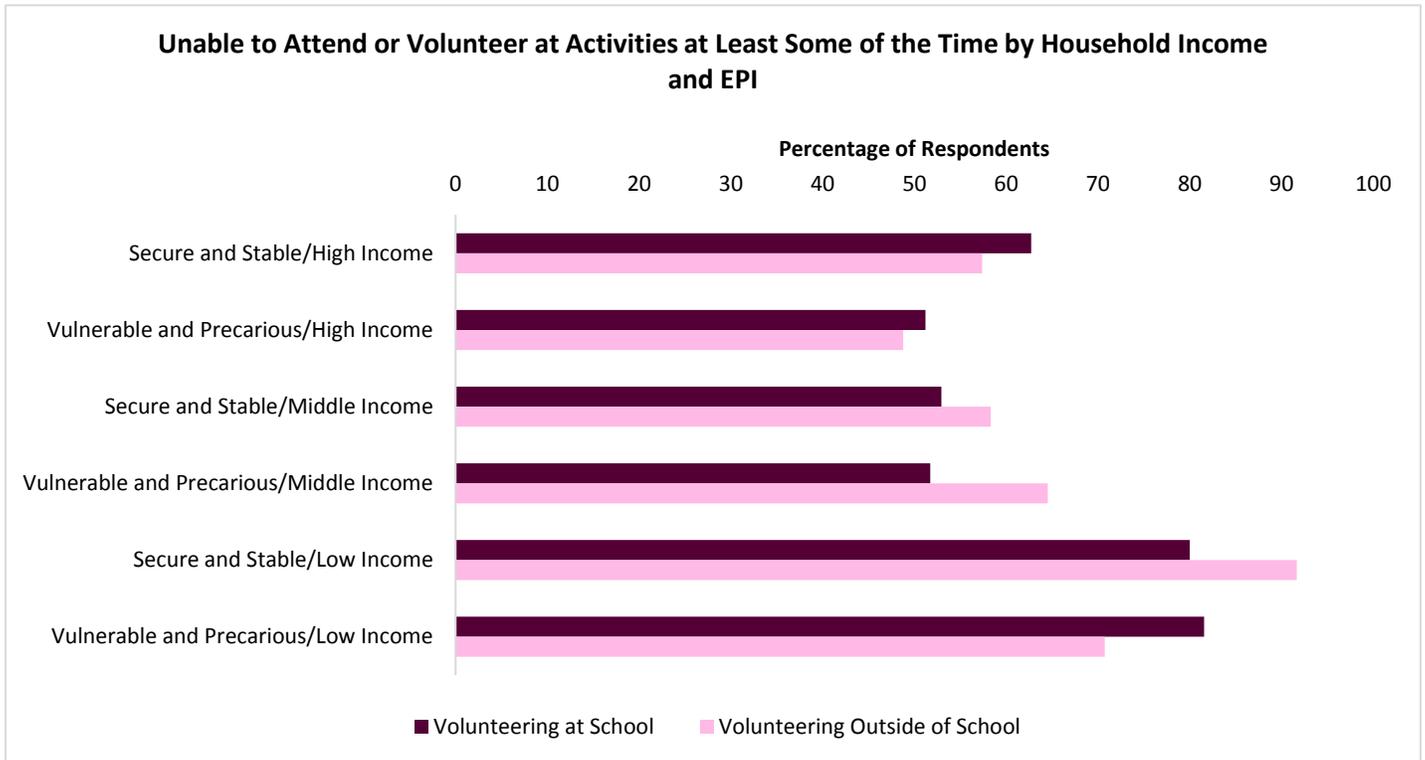
This section examines the effect that precarity and household income have on the ability of workers to support their children.

Figure 3 shows the percentage of respondents who reported that they were unable to pay for clothing and school supplies, school trips, or activities outside of school at least some of the time. Vulnerable and precarious workers with household incomes under \$60,000 were the most likely to have difficulty paying for these items. It is important to note, however, that respondents in the stable and secure employment categories with household incomes less than \$60,000 also reported a greater likelihood of being unable to pay for these items. It appears that income level is a greater barrier to being able to cover school and extracurricular expenses than the level of job precarity.



**Figure 3.** Percentage of Respondents Unable to Pay Children’s School and Extracurricular Expenses at Least Some of the Time by Household Income and EPI

In addition to school expenses, respondents were asked whether or not they were able to volunteer at or attend their children’s activities. On average, at least 50% of all respondents expressed difficulty in attending or volunteering in their children’s activities (Figure 4). Level of employment precarity did not have an effect whereas household income level did. Those respondents in the lower income category attended activities and volunteered less than the respondents in the higher household income levels.

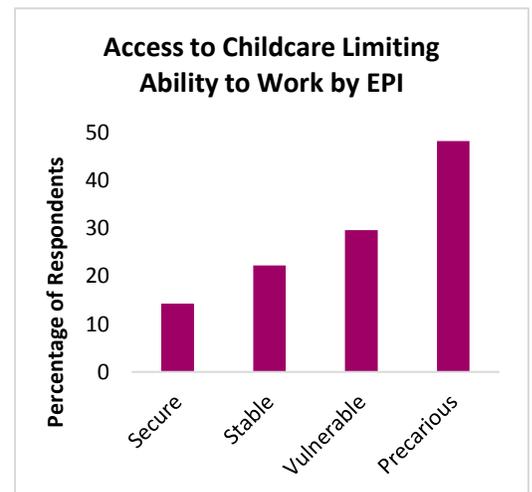


**Figure 4.** Percentage of Respondents Unable to Attend or Volunteer at Activities at Least Some of the Time by Household Income and EPI

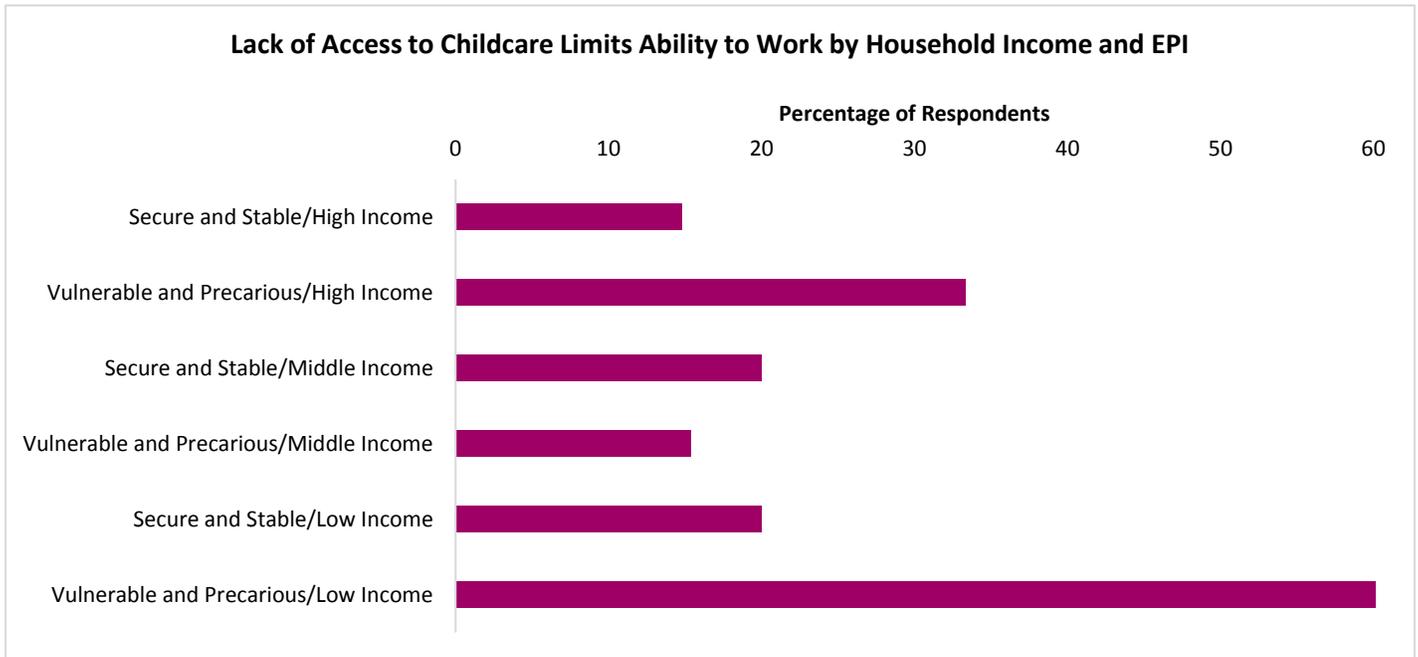
## The Challenge of Childcare

This section looks at childcare and how it relates to precarity and income. Overall, the trend is clear: the more precariously employed the respondent was, the more likely childcare limited their ability to work. Specifically, 14% of respondents in the secure employment category reported having a limited ability to work due to childcare issues whereas almost half (48%) of the respondents in the precarious employment category faced those challenges (Figure 5).

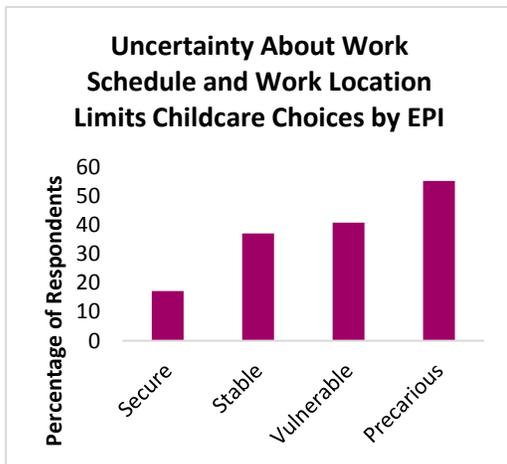
When household income is introduced into the analysis, it becomes clear that respondents in the vulnerable and precarious employment categories with the lowest incomes have the least access to childcare (Figure 6). Even those respondents in the vulnerable and precarious employment categories at the highest income levels face barriers more than those in the middle income bracket and all respondents in the stable and secure employment categories. Having said that, one in five respondents in the stable and secure employment categories with household incomes of less than \$99,000 reported that childcare limited their ability to work.



**Figure 5.** Percentage of Respondents Who Reported that Access to Childcare Limited Ability to Work by EPI



**Figure 6.** Percentage of Respondents where Lack of Access to Childcare Limits Ability to Work by Household Income and EPI



**Figure 7.** Percentage of Respondents where Uncertainty about Work Schedule and Location Limits Childcare Choices by EPI

Work schedules and location of employment are two factors to consider when arranging childcare.

The results show that the level of employment precarity has a large effect on whether or not work schedule and work location limit childcare choices. Over half of respondents in the precarious employment category (55%) reported that uncertainty about work schedule and work location limited their childcare choices whereas only 17% of respondents in the secure employment category reported the same (Figure 7). It is important to note that more than one-third of respondents in the vulnerable and stable employment categories also stated that uncertainty with their work schedules and location of work impacted their childcare choices.

## Takeaways

- Low income, rather than level of precarious employment, impacted the respondents' ability to pay their children's expenses (i.e., clothing and school supplies, school trips and extracurricular activities).
- More than 50% of all respondents reported that they were sometimes unable to attend or volunteer in their children's activities. This was especially true for respondents in the low income categories, regardless of the level of precarious employment.
- When considering income level and employment precarity, lack of access to child care was a greater problem for respondents in the precarious employment category, most notably for respondents in the lowest income category and to an extent for those in the highest income category.
- The uncertain work schedules and work locations for respondents in the precarious employment category had the greatest negative impact on accessing child care.

## More Findings to Come

You can find this InfoBrief as well as *InfoBrief #1: Overview*, *#2: Employment Security*, *#3: The Employment Relationship: Working Conditions*, *#4: Employment and Health*, *#5: Employment and Work Stress*, and *#6: Employment Precarity, Income and Household Wellbeing* at <http://www.peterboroughpublichealth.ca/PERI/>. Our last report will focus on:



Employment Precarity, Income and Community Participation

## Suggested Citation

Peterborough PERI. (2019). *The Status of Employment and Working Conditions in the Peterborough Area: Employment Precarity, Income and Children*. InfoBrief #7. Peterborough Public Health, Peterborough, ON.

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