

Precarious Work Research (PWR): Preliminary Results

You helped us recruit precarious employees across Ontario. Below are some findings from our survey and in-depth interviews.

Survey Results

We conducted a survey of over 400 precarious workers across aged 25-55 years across Ontario to learn about the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on their employment, health and well-being:

- 18% were furloughed or lost their jobs due to the COVID-19 pandemic
- 51% experienced difficulties covering their housing expenses
- 38% were not provided with personal protection equipment such as masks or visors or only provided with such equipment only sometimes
- 20% suffered from severe or extreme anxiety or depression

In-depth Interview Results

We conducted 40 in-depth interviews among a sub-sample of those surveyed and learned more about their experiences.

The reasons participants gave for entering into precarious employment were constraints of labour market opportunities and conditions, needing to balance work with family (including caregiving obligations), and needing money to support a family.

Participants described lack of access to employer-based benefits as a constant stressor.

Precarious workers used coping strategies used including drawing on savings, seeking out social support from social circles, relying on or generating resilience, modifying their perspectives or attitudes toward the hardships, and self-care strategies including physical activity.

The COVID-19 pandemic intensified precarity and its impacts on health and well-being of workers' and families. The pandemic also caused an increased need for additional social and health supports and services, while decreasing access to them.

Precarious workers identified numerous employment, health, and social policies, as being essential for improving their employment conditions and supporting their well-being along with that of their families. These policies include adequate paid sick days, and affordable and comprehensive health benefits including dental, ophthalmological, and mental health services.