

Precarious Employment and Health: The Cumulative and Intersecting Effects of Work, Job Search, Caregiving and Commutes

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- In the GTA, 50% of workers are precariously employed.
- Few studies have examined the pathways between precarious employment and health.
- Information is also lacking on how gender, class and migration can structure these pathways.

Objective

- To examine the ways through which precarious employment impacts health and well-being among immigrant men and women in Toronto.

- Community-based studies conducted with Access Alliance.
 1. Study looked at the relationship between precarious employment and health. Interviews with 30 racialized immigrant women.
 2. Study looked at the relationship between precarious employment and daily commutes. Interviews with 15 women and 12 men who were racialized immigrants.

Results – Participants' Characteristics

In both samples, most participants:

- Had been in Canada for >5 years
- Were married and had children
- Had a university degree
- Reported a low household income

Results – Labour Market Experiences

- Frequent unemployment
- Work in low paid, low skilled jobs
- Work in jobs that are gendered and racialized
- Under-employment
- Work on call, temporarily, involuntarily part-time, through temp agencies
- Work in multiple jobs
- Work according to non-standard and unpredictable schedules
- Work far from home

Results – Pathways to Ill Health

Employment conditions:

- Insecurity
- Lack of benefits and protections
- Occupational hazards
- Lack of protective equipment and training
- Non-standard and unpredictable schedules

Results – Pathways to Ill Health

Intensification of job search:

- Skills training
- Education upgrading
- Volunteering

Intensification of household/caregiving:

- Spouse too busy or tired
- Spouse injured
- Spouses and children need for emotional support due to hardships

Difficult daily commutes

The places was too far for me...And it affect my foot. Because...I would stand, whole day. One day I sit down they complain. Next time they call me, the lady sent me to the daycare, 'Don't sit down, we don't sit down. We should stand up all day'. But I can't, 2 hours I went to work, 2 hours I come by bus. 7 hour I worked. It affect my foot, that's why I quit the job.

Afsoon, 54 years old, from Afghanistan

Difficult daily commutes

I would be concerned in winter because...you have to travel say an hour, hour and a half you have to leave home before it's dark. By the time you get home it's dark. So if you live in a dark street where it's isolated and some of the streets are residential streets. Many people don't walk, they have cars and if you have a low paying person that you don't have anybody to pick you up at the bus stop...then you have a concern because you have a lot of rapists that are walking on the street.

Lisa, 57 years old, from Jamaica

Conclusions

Precarious employment results in a cumulative physical and mental health burden through multiple, intersecting pathways.

Our data contribute new knowledge on mobility as a pathway between precarious work and health.

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