

# Precarious Employment and Daily Commutes

Stephanie Premji  
Assistant Professor  
School of Labour Studies  
Department of Health, Aging and Society  
McMaster University

Presented in the “Precarious Work” session

Canadian Association for Work and Labour Studies  
2016 Annual Meeting, Congress 2016.

Calgary, AB. May 28 - June 3, 2016.

# Context

- In the GTA, 50% of workers are precariously employed.
- The impact of precarious employment on commuting is poorly understood.

# Objective

- To document the relationship between precarious employment and daily commutes in Toronto.

# Methods

- Community-based study conducted with Access Alliance in 2014.
- Recruitment of interviewees with flyers, peer researcher networks and partner agencies.
- Interviewees were immigrants, had experienced precarious employment and commuting difficulties.
- Semi-structured interviews with 15 women and 12 men.
- Interviews recorded, transcribed, coded and analysed with NVIVO.

# Results

- 17/27 in Canada for more than 5 years
- 8/27 from Bangladesh (11 countries of origin in total)
- 18/27 between 31-50 years of age
- 20/27 married
- 18/27 had children
- 24/27 had university degree
- 18/27 had a household income of less than \$25K

Far away location

Multiple locations

Unfamiliar location

Nonstandard schedules

Low income



Long, complex, unfamiliar, unsafe and expensive commutes

And he [temporary agency representative] said “I’m telling you to go if you want to get a job just go” and I said ok because I needed a job. Then I went and it takes 1 hour and 45 minutes and there I worked for 2 hours with seniors...After two hours finished and I came back it also take 1 hour and 45 minutes. Then that guy again phoned me “Next Tuesday you have to go” and I say ok but I don't know how much I will get and he said “For 1 hour you will get \$14”. So \$28...To go and come back I have to spend on the way more than 3 hours and I will work 2 hours. It is almost I will get paid less than ah ... normal wage.

Maria, 44 years old, from Mexico



# Labour and Mobility

“{s]tudies of work have engaged with the growing body of mobility theory in limited ways; by the same token, mobility studies have taken a somewhat narrow and sometimes uncritical view of work, labour, and employment”

(Cresswell, Dorow and Roseman 2016, p. 1).

# Policy Implications

- Public transportation
- Employment
- Housing

# Ask ourselves...

---

What happens when individuals are unable to live anywhere close to where they work?

The On the Move Partnership is a project of the SafetyNet Centre for Occupational Health & Safety Research at Memorial University. It is supported by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council through its Partnership Grants funding opportunity (Appl ID 895-2011-1019), RDC, CFI, and multiple universities and community partners.



Social Sciences and Humanities  
Research Council of Canada

Conseil de recherches en  
sciences humaines du Canada

Canada 

