



# UNIONS: A DRIVER FOR GENDER EQUITY

Unions and the Response to Precarious Work Series



POVERTY AND  
EMPLOYMENT PRECARIETY  
IN SOUTHERN ONTARIO



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### **Unions and the Response to Precarious Work Series**

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This report was proudly produced with unionized labour.

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## UNIONS: A DRIVER FOR GENDER EQUITY

Unions and the Response to Precarious Work Series

Unions: A Driver for Gender Equity is the second in our 4-part series on Unions and the Response to Precarious Work. In our first report, The Union Advantage, our analysis demonstrated that unionized settings mitigated precarious employment and several of its adverse effects. In the current report, we explore the findings with a focus on how union advantage is experienced by women and men, and consider policy implications for promoting gender equity in the face of widespread precarity.

This report series draws on survey data from the Poverty and Employment Precarity in Southern Ontario (PEPSO) project collected in 2011-12 and 2014. Our analysis is based on a sample of 2,741 workers, aged 25-65, living in the city of Toronto. It also incorporates findings from a literature review and key themes identified from a focus group discussion with labour unions and worker advocacy organizations.

## SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS

Key findings from our analysis include:

- Union membership is an important driver for gender equity
- Unionization is associated with several positive work-related outcomes for women and men including having stable and secure employment, higher and more stable incomes, greater access to pensions, benefits and paid time off, and full-time work hours, even after taking into account age, race, immigration status and education level required for the job
- Women and men in full-time union jobs do not differ in their individual income levels, while a gender pay gap is evident among non-unionized workers<sup>1</sup>
- Non-unionized women are least likely to have standard employment and have the lowest individual income levels compared to unionized women, unionized men and non-unionized men
- Non-unionized women report higher levels of income and household stress based on several measures compared to women in unions

<sup>1</sup> Our individual income data is based on income categories using increments of \$20,000 rather than exact hourly wages or weekly earnings; using weekly earnings for individuals working the same number of hours, the Canadian Labour Congress found unionized women make 16% less than unionized men, on average, while the gender gap is much larger for non-unionized workers where women make 29.4% less than men, on average.

- In unionized settings, women and men have similar rates of workplace discrimination that act as a barrier to advancement at work; in contrast, non-unionized women are more likely than non-unionized men to report workplace discrimination acting as a barrier to advancement at work

While unionization provides clear benefits for women and men, most workers are not in unionized positions and face barriers to accessing unionization.

- Over the past 35 years, unionization rates in Canada have declined from 38% to 30.3%, and for Ontario from 33.7% to 26.7%
- Trends in unionization have differed for women and men; while men's rates have declined, falling from 42.1% in 1981 to 28.5% in 2012 in Canada, women's rates have remained fairly constant, hovering around 30%; similar trends have been found in Ontario
- Women have higher rates of unionization than men in Toronto, Ontario and Canada; in Toronto, one quarter of women are in unionized jobs compared to just over one in five men
- Researchers have attributed women's stable unionization rates to their relatively high representation in the largely unionized public sector; in contrast, men's falling rates have been understood as a consequence of changing labour markets, including declining unionization in male-dominant sectors such as goods-producing and distributing

industries where traditionally unionization rates were higher

- Despite the documented benefits of unionization and its capacity to improve gender equity, the majority of workers are not in unionized jobs; inadequate labour laws have created barriers for workers who wish to join a union

Based on our analysis and related research, we put forward the following recommendations:

- Reform the Labour Relations Act to enable workers to organize and get the benefits of unionization including — reintroduce one-step card-based certification for all workers; establish models for broad-based organizing across sectors and franchises; expand successor rights to protect a broader range of unionized workers against contract flipping
- Amend the Employment Standards Act to provide access to key benefits for workers outside of unions and engaged in precarious work including — deliver on the commitment to raise the minimum wage to \$15 per hour; provide workers with 7 paid days off (up from the 2 paid days proposed in Bill 148); implement the equal pay for equal work provision included in Bill 148; expedite plans to hire 175 employment standards officers and strengthen fines for employers who violate the ESA
- Create a comprehensive system of high quality, affordable child care to facilitate greater access to employment, including full-time work for parents, with all orders of government working together to fully fund

the system

- Properly resource the Pay Equity Commission to allow it to fulfill its mandate of pay equity education and enforcement, and introduce a pay transparency act to support gender pay equity in Ontario

The Ontario government has the opportunity to make meaningful change in realizing the goal of gender equity, substantially narrowing the gender pay gap, and dramatically improving the lives of Ontarians. Through Bill 148 and other measures, we encourage the Province to act now.



## INTRODUCTION

This report is the second in Social Planning Toronto's 4-part series, Unions and the Response to Precarious Work. The first report, *The Union Advantage*, demonstrated broad advantages of unionization in mitigating precarious employment and its adverse effects.<sup>2</sup> It considered the role unions play in addressing issues within a labour market where precarious employment is on the rise, and the importance of legislative intervention where unionization alone is limited in addressing the adversities of precarious work.

In the current report, we explore the role of unions in responding to precarious employment and its negative impacts for women and men, and consider policy implications for promoting gender equity in the face of widespread precarity.

This series draws on survey data from the Poverty and Employment Precarity in Southern Ontario (PEPSO) project, a 7-year Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council Community-University Research Alliance led by United Way Toronto & York Region and McMaster University. Social Planning Toronto is a community partner on the PEPSO project.

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<sup>2</sup> Social Planning Toronto, 2017

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## RESEARCH METHODS

In this report, we used cross-tabulations to compare four groups of workers defined by union status (union and non-union) and gender<sup>3</sup> (male and female) on a series of work-related and quality of life indicators across the following categories: income; form of employment & workplace benefits and conditions; income, workplace and household stress; health; workplace discrimination.

We also conducted multivariate analyses to examine the relationship between unionization and work-related and quality of life outcomes for women and men. These analyses allowed us to examine the extent and degree of union advantage for women and men after taking into account (i.e. controlling for) demographic factors and education level required for the job.

Rates of unionization are based on Statistics Canada's Labour Force Survey. The remainder of our quantitative research findings are based on PEPSO survey data collected in 2011-12 and 2014 using a sample of 2,741 workers, aged 25-65, living in the city of Toronto.<sup>4</sup>

In addition to the analysis of survey data, we conducted a literature review and organized a roundtable with representatives from the labour movement and worker advocacy groups. At the roundtable, we presented our initial findings and with participants, explored labour's role in reducing or mitigating precarious employment, addressing emerging challenges and identifying opportunities for change. The results of the literature review and key issues from the roundtable discussion are reflected in the report.

Due to sample size limitations, we were not able to examine issues of intersectionality between gender and other demographic and social categories such as age, race and immigration status. Future reports in this series will examine unionization and work-related and quality of life outcomes for groups of workers defined by age, race and immigration status.

For a full description of the research methods and sample description, please see Appendix A.

<sup>3</sup> Due to methodological limitations, gender is categorized as male and female only

<sup>4</sup> The PEPSO data includes responses from workers living across the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTHA). However, the current report is based on a subset of this dataset. It uses the PEPSO data from workers living in the City of Toronto only.

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*This report series draws on survey data from the Poverty and Employment Precarity in Southern Ontario (PEPSO) project collected in 2011-12 and 2014. Our analysis is based on a sample of 2,741 workers, aged 25-65, living in the city of Toronto. It also incorporates findings from a literature review and key themes identified from a focus group discussion with labour unions and worker advocacy organizations.*

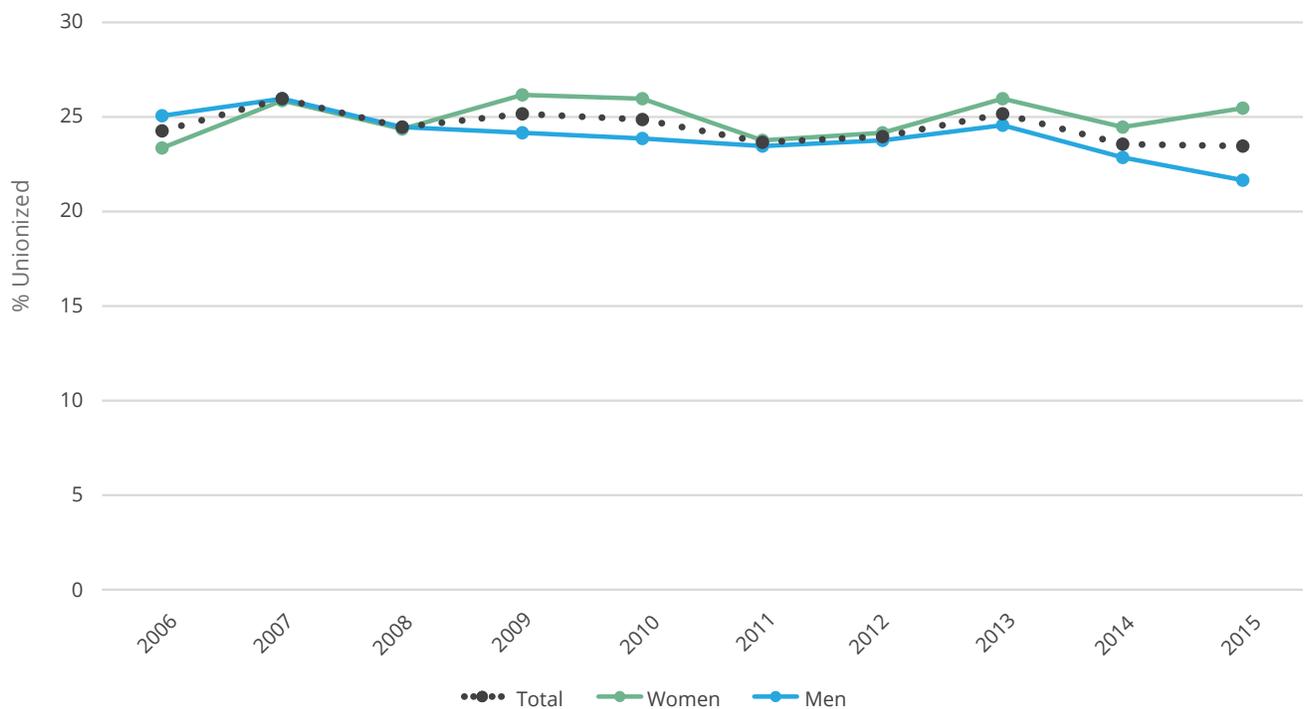
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## FINDINGS

### A. UNIONIZATION RATES

As shown in **Figure 1**, unionization rates for men and women in the City of Toronto have fluctuated modestly over the past decade. In 2015, women had a higher unionization rate at 25.4% compared to 21.6% for men.<sup>5</sup>

Figure 1. Unionization Rates by Gender for the City of Toronto: 2006-2015



Source: Statistics Canada's Labour Force Survey, 2006-2015.

<sup>5</sup> Unionization rates presented are based on annual data from Statistics Canada's Labour Force Survey. Unionization rates based on the PEPSO sample used in this report are slightly higher because our analysis excluded individuals for whom unionization was not an option. The differences in the rates of unionization between women and men were similar for both the LFS and PEPSO samples.

## B. COMPARING UNIONIZED AND NON-UNIONIZED WORKERS BY GENDER

### 1. INCOME

Consistent with existing literature, comparing male and female workers, we found that unionization mitigates the gender pay gap.

Figure 2 shows a small pay gap between male and female workers in unions and a larger gap between male and female workers not in unions. However, looking at full-time workers only, there is no statistically significant pay gap between unionized male and female workers, while a gap remains between non-unionized male and female workers.

Male and female workers in unions are both more likely to have higher incomes than their respective non-unionized counterparts.

Figure 2. Unionized and Non-Unionized Male and Female Workers: Individual Income



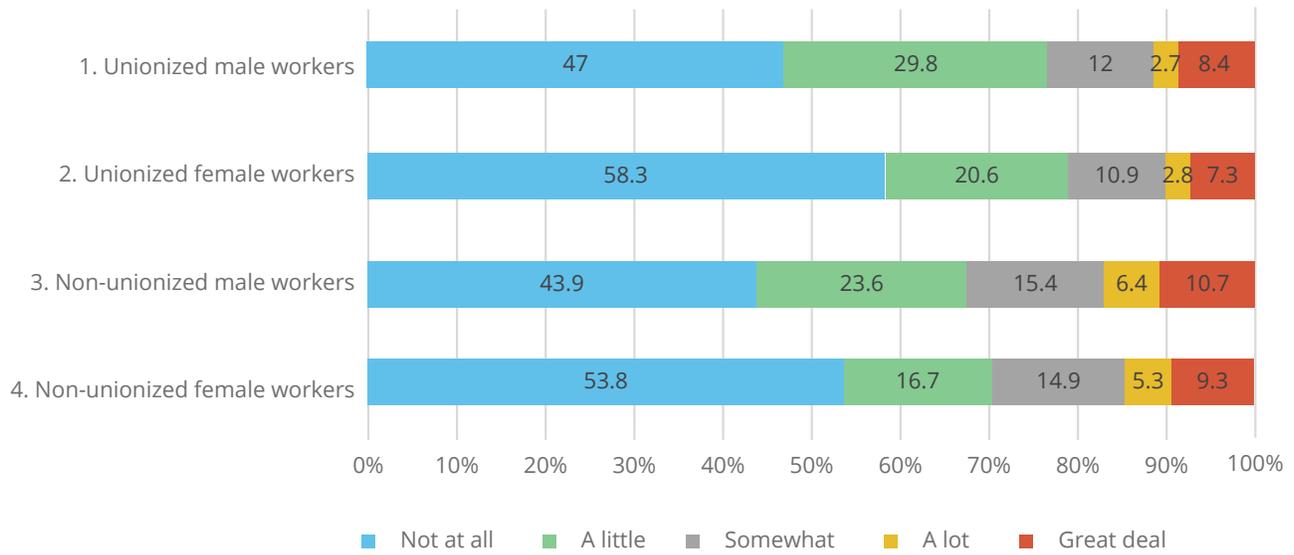
Source: PEPSO Surveys 2011-12 & 2014.

The statistical significance of the difference between categories: 1 vs 2 p<.10, 3 vs 4 p<.001, 1 vs 3 p<.001, 2 vs 4 p<.001

**Figure 3** shows that unionized and non-unionized female workers are more likely to have stable incomes in the 12 months preceding the surveys compared to their male counterparts. We also

found that unionized male and female workers are more likely to have stable incomes than their non-unionized counterparts.

Figure 3. Unionized and Non-Unionized Male and Female Workers: Income Varied in Last 12 Month



Source: PEPSO Surveys 2011-12 & 2014.  
 The statistical significance of the difference between categories: 1 vs 2 p<.05, 3 vs 4 p<.001, 1 vs 3 p<.01, 2 vs 4 p<.05

## 2. FORM OF EMPLOYMENT & WORKPLACE BENEFITS AND CONDITIONS

As shown in **Figure 4**, unionization is associated with secure and stable employment regardless of gender. This includes workers in a Standard Employment Relationship (i.e. permanent full-time work with employer-provided benefits beyond a wage) and permanent part-time work. Whether members of unions or not, men and women differ in their employment type. This is largely driven by

the high proportion of women in permanent part-time work.

The PEPSO survey did not include a question on whether individuals are working part-time by choice or are working part-time but would prefer full-time work. However, Labour Force Survey data from 2016 shows that almost 30% of Toronto workers employed part-time would prefer full-time work.<sup>6</sup> This is true for both women and men.

<sup>6</sup> Statistics Canada, 2016a

While permanent part-time work may offer an important degree of stability, a portion of these workers are likely to prefer full-time employment.

Both unionized male and female workers are more likely than non-unionized workers, regardless of gender, to be in a Standard Employment Relationship.<sup>7</sup> Non-unionized female workers are least likely to be in a Standard Employment Relationship.

Figure 4. Unionized and Non-Unionized Male and Female Workers: Form of Employment



Other category includes workers who may be employed full-time but experience certain aspects of precarity, including uncertainty about keeping their jobs in the next 12 months or work without any employer-provided benefits other than a wage.

Source: PEPSO Surveys 2011-12 & 2014.

The statistical significance of the difference between categories: 1 vs 2 p<.01, 3 vs 4 p<.01, 1 vs 3 p<.001, 2 vs 4 p<.001

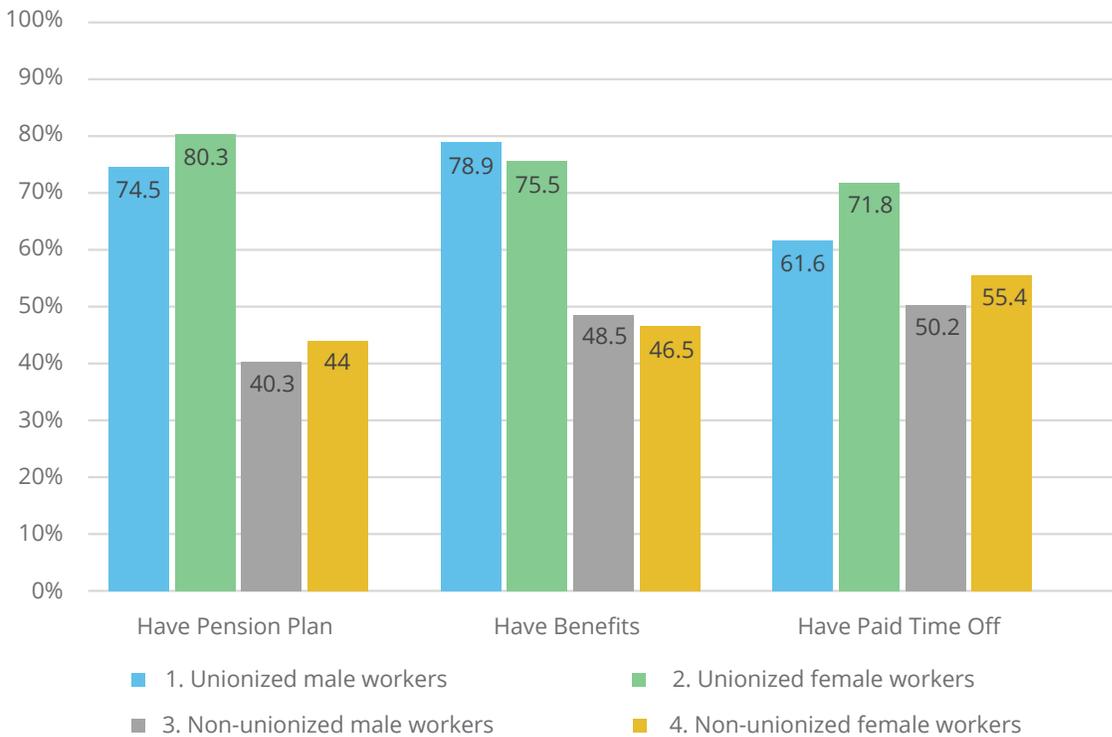
<sup>7</sup> Based on crosstabs shown in Figure 4 and logistic regression analysis: 2 vs 3 significant at p<.001

Figure 5 shows that unionized female workers are more likely to have an employer-provided pension and paid time off compared to all other groups.<sup>8,9</sup> We also found that male workers in unions are more likely to have a pension and paid time off compared to their non-unionized counterparts. Among non-unionized workers, women are marginally more likely than men to have paid time off. Non-unionized men and women have similarly low rates of access to

pensions.

Access to employer-provided benefits, such as health, dental and vision care, is associated with union status but not with gender. Unionized men and women have similarly high rates of access to benefits with over three-quarters of both groups having access. Non-unionized men and women have similarly low rates of access to benefits with less than 50% of both of these groups having access.

Figure 5. Unionized and Non-Unionized Male and Female Workers: Pension, Benefits and Paid Time Off



Source: PEPSO Surveys 2011-12 & 2014. The statistical significance of the difference between categories:  
 Pension: 1 vs 2 p<.10, 3 vs 4 not significant, 1 vs 3 p<.001, 2 vs 4 p<.001  
 Benefits: 1 vs 2 not significant, 3 vs 4 not significant, 1 vs 3 p<.001, 2 vs 4 p<.001  
 Paid time off: 1 vs 2 p<.01, 3 vs 4 p<.05, 1 vs 3 p<.001, 2 vs 4 p<.001

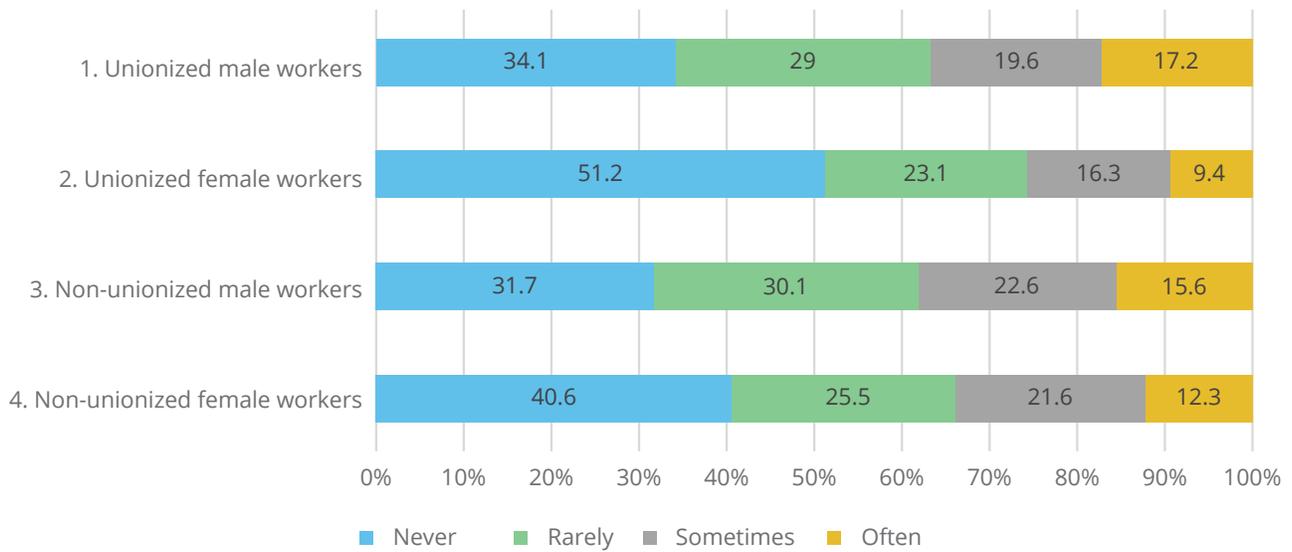
8 Pension: based on crosstabs shown in Figure 5 and logistic regression analysis: 2 vs 3 significant at p<.001

9 Paid time off: based on crosstabs shown in Figure 5 and logistic regression analysis: 2 vs 3 significant at p<.001

**Figure 6** shows that unionized female workers are more likely than all other groups to have predictable work schedules with over 50% reporting that their schedule never changes unexpectedly.<sup>10</sup> In comparison, just over 40% of non-unionized women, and only about a third

of men, regardless of union status, report never experiencing unexpected schedule changes. Non-unionized men are significantly more likely to report schedule change problems compared to their female counterparts.

Figure 6. Unionized and Non-Unionized Male and Female Workers: Schedule Changes Unexpectedly



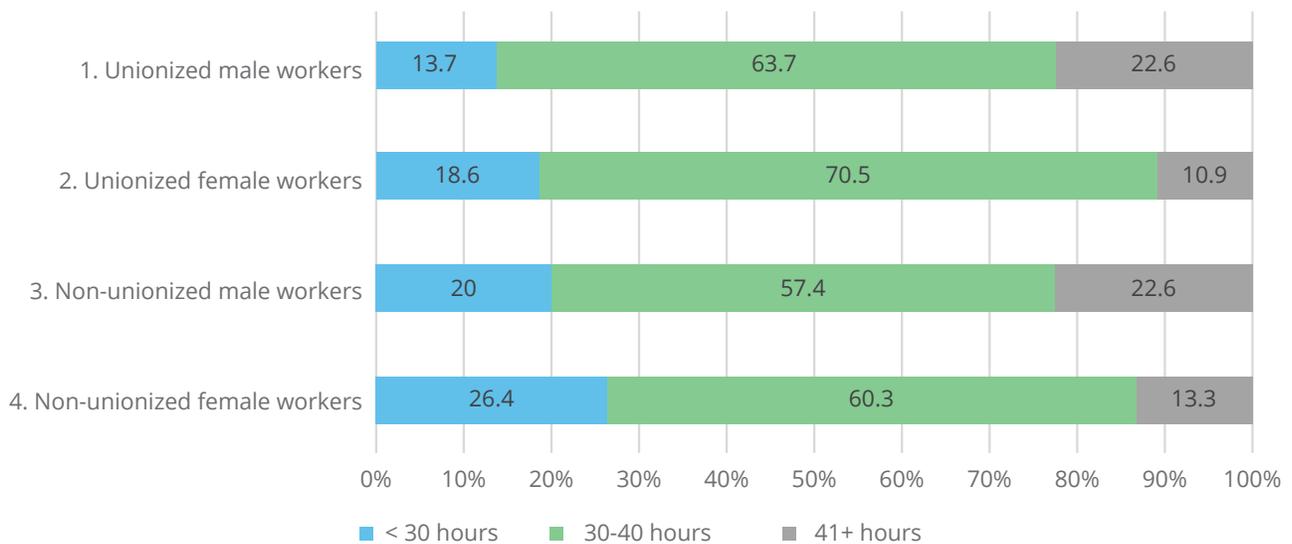
Source: PEPSO Surveys 2011-12 & 2014.  
 The statistical significance of the difference between categories: 1 vs 2 p<.001, 3 vs 4 p<.001, 1 vs 3 not significant, 2 vs 4 p<.01

<sup>10</sup> Based on crosstabs shown in Figure 6 and logistic regression analysis: 2 vs. 3, p<.001

**Figure 7** shows that the number of hours that people work per week differs based on whether they belong to a union or not, and their gender. Unionized men and women are more likely to report working 30 or more hours per week compared to their non-unionized counterparts.

Unionized women are more likely to work part-time hours (under 30 hours per week) than their male counterparts. Among non-unionized workers, men are more likely to work longer hours (41+ hours per week) compared to women, and women are more likely to work part-time hours compared to men.

Figure 7. Unionized and Non-Unionized Male and Female Workers: Number of Hours Worked Per Week in Last 3 Months



Source: PEPSO Surveys 2011-12 & 2014.

The statistical significance of the difference between categories: 1 vs 2 p<.001, 3 vs 4 p<.001, 1 vs 3 p<.05, 2 vs 4 p=.001

### 3. INCOME, WORKPLACE AND HOUSEHOLD STRESS

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Women and men in unions do not differ on most measures of income, workplace and household stress. However, we found that anxiety about employment interfering with personal and family life and concern over keeping financial commitments is more prevalent among unionized women than unionized men.

Unionized and non-unionized men report similar levels of income, workplace and household stress on almost all measures. In contrast, non-unionized women are more likely than unionized women to report struggles paying bills, lower incomes compared to the preceding year, employment situations negatively affecting large spending decisions, anxiety about employment interfering with personal and family life, and uncertainty over work schedules preventing them from doing things with family and friends.

Non-unionized women and men do not differ on most measures of income, workplace and household stress. However, non-unionized women are more likely than their male counterparts to struggle with bills.

### 4. HEALTH

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There are no statistically significant differences between unionized male and female workers on self-reported health or mental health. In addition,

unionized male and female workers had similar rates of self-reported health and mental health compared to their non-unionized counterparts. Among non-unionized workers, men and women also did not differ on self-reported health or mental health.

While our research did not find an association between unionization and self-reported health for men or women, U.S. research has demonstrated the link between unionization and self-reported health.<sup>11</sup> Utilizing a national dataset and a complex model that takes into account a worker's industry and occupation, Reynolds and Brady found that unionization is associated with higher self-reported health ratings.

### 5. WORKPLACE DISCRIMINATION

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The PEPSO study found that women are more likely than men to experience workplace discrimination that presents a barrier to advancement at work.<sup>12,13</sup> Our analyses also showed that women who are not in unions are more likely to experience workplace discrimination that acts as a barrier to advancement at work compared to non-unionized men. However, no statistically significant difference was found between

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11 Reynolds & Brady, 2012

12 United Way Toronto, McMaster University & PEPSO, 2015

13 According to PEPSO research (2015), workers with less secure employment have higher rates of workplace discrimination. Workplace discrimination based on race is the most common, followed by discrimination on the basis of age and gender.

unionized male and unionized female workers in their experience of workplace discrimination as a barrier to advancement at work.

Unions may mitigate workplace discrimination that acts as a barrier to advancement at work for women through the processes and protections put in place within collective agreements. Clear rules and structures for filling vacant positions within a bargaining unit may reduce the potential for workplace discrimination and provide women with more opportunities for upward mobility. As the union movement is rooted in social justice values, the presence of unions in the workplace may also work to promote anti-discriminatory practices in general.

Consistent with the PEPSO report, no statistically significant differences were found between unionized women and unionized men on experiences of workplace discrimination interfering with getting or keeping a job. This was also the case for non-unionized workers.

Unionized and non-unionized women did not differ in their experience of workplace discrimination. This was also the case comparing unionized and non-unionized men.

## C. EXAMINING UNION ADVANTAGE USING MULTIVARIATE ANALYSES

In *The Union Advantage*, we conducted a series of multivariate analyses.<sup>14</sup> Our findings showed that, even after accounting for gender, age, race, immigration status and education level required for the job, unionization is associated with several positive outcomes. Specifically, unionization is associated with having: standard employment; an individual income over \$40,000 per year; a stable income; employer-provided pension, benefits and paid time off; full-time work schedules (30-40 per week); and an individual income that did not decline since the previous year. In the following section, we examine the extent and degree of union advantage for women and men, after taking into account age, race, immigration status and education level required for the job.

Our findings demonstrate a clear union advantage for women and men across several indicators, even after taking into account demographic and education differences. As shown in **Table 1**, based on multivariate analyses, women and men in unions shared the same degree of union advantage across several employment aspects with one exception. For women workers only, unionization is associated

<sup>14</sup> Social Planning Toronto, 2017

with having an individual income that did not decline since the previous year. For men, there is no association between unionization and

individual income change since the previous year, based on the multivariate analysis.

**Table 1. Significant Associations between Unionization and Work-Related Measures for Women and Men, Controlling for Age, Race, Immigration Status and Education Level Required for Job**

	Women	Men
Standard employment	★	★
Individual income above \$40,000	★	★
Pension	★	★
Benefits	★	★
Paid time off	★	★
Stable income	★	★
Regular number of hours worked (30-40 per week)	★	★
Had an individual income that did not decline since the previous year	★	

Source: PEPSO Surveys 2011-12 & 2014  
Please see Appendix B for odds ratios and confidence intervals.



## DISCUSSION

### 1. UNION MEMBERSHIP: A DRIVER FOR GENDER EQUITY

Our analysis found unionization is associated with several positive outcomes for women and men, including having stable and secure employment, higher and more stable incomes, greater access to pensions, benefits and paid time off, and full-time work hours. Multivariate analyses, taking into account demographic factors and education levels required for the job, showed that women and men enjoy a similar degree of union advantage across several work-related indicators.

Our findings also showed no statistically significant differences between the individual income levels of unionized women and unionized men for full-time workers. In contrast, the gender pay gap was evident among non-unionized workers. Unionized women also showed lower levels of income stress and household stress compared to women without union representation. In contrast, non-unionized women had the lowest rates of standard employment and lowest individual incomes of all three groups. Non-unionized women were also more likely to report workplace discrimination that acted as a barrier to advancement compared to non-unionized men, while no statistically significant difference was found comparing unionized women and unionized men. Few

differences were found comparing women and men in unions on measures of work-related stress.

These results are consistent with the broader research literature on union advantage.<sup>15,16,17,18</sup> Through collective bargaining, unions raise the wages of workers, increase access to pensions, benefits and protections for workers, and provide a vehicle for collectively addressing the issues of workers in the workplace.<sup>19</sup> Wage improvements particularly benefit those who are low paid, women, racialized workers and young workers. Collective bargaining results in greater gender equality including a narrowing of the gender pay gap among unionized workers.

Our results show no statistically significant difference in the individual incomes of unionized women and unionized men working full-time. However, this analysis is based on income categories using increments of \$20,000 rather than exact hourly wages or weekly earnings. Using average weekly pay for individuals working the same number of hours, the Canadian Labour Congress found unionized women make 16% less than unionized men, on average.<sup>20</sup> The gender gap is much larger for non-unionized workers where women make 29.4% less than men, on

<sup>15</sup> Jackson, 2013

<sup>16</sup> Jackson, 2004

<sup>17</sup> Jackson, 2003

<sup>18</sup> Canadian Labour Congress, 2015

<sup>19</sup> Jackson, 2013

<sup>20</sup> Canadian Labour Congress, 2015

average.

Published in 2004, Jackson's analysis on the impact of unions on women's pay and pay inequality between women and men provides important insights on issues surrounding the gender pay gap and the role of unions.<sup>21</sup> His work demonstrated that unions are better able to improve wages and reduce the gender wage gap in sectors where there are high rates of unionization for women.

Jackson found that unions raise wages for women and narrow the gender pay gap in the public sector which has a high union density including a high rate of unionization for women. In contrast, women in the private sector have much lower rates of unionization compared to men in the private sector. While unions in the private sector have a positive impact on women's wages, especially for part-time workers, Jackson's study found that union coverage does not reduce the gender pay gap in the private sector overall. However, within female-dominated occupations in the private sector, unions do increase wages for lower-paid women and reduce the gender pay gap. This work has implications for policies that can improve women's access to unionization and increase union density in sectors where women work.

<sup>21</sup> Jackson, 2004

## 2. ACCESS TO UNION MEMBERSHIP

In Toronto, unionization rates are higher among women at 25.4% compared to men at 21.6%. Current unionization rates in Canada and Ontario also show higher rates for women than men.<sup>22</sup> Over the past 35 years, unionization rates in Canada have declined from 38% to 30.3%, and for Ontario from 33.7% to 26.7%.<sup>23</sup> However, trends in unionization have differed for women and men. While the unionization rate for men in Canada fell from 42.1% in 1981 to 28.5% in 2012, the rate for women remained fairly constant at about 30%. Provincial data shows similar trends in Ontario.<sup>24</sup>

Women's higher unionization rates have been attributed to their relatively high representation in the largely unionized public sector.<sup>25</sup> Researchers have also pointed to the changing labour market as a source for the decline in men's unionization rates, including decreased unionization in male-dominated industries such as goods-producing and distributing industries where traditionally unionization rates were higher.<sup>26</sup>

Despite women's relatively higher rates of unionization, the benefits of unionization in Toronto and across the country are available to only a minority of workers. Legislative change that makes it easier for workers to unionize and facilitates greater union density in the private sector is critical to realizing gender equity, narrowing the pay gap, and improving the wages, working conditions and protections for all workers.

<sup>22</sup> Statistics Canada, 2017

<sup>23</sup> Galarneau & Sohn, 2013

<sup>24</sup> Statistics Canada, 2017

<sup>25</sup> Moyser, 2017

<sup>26</sup> Morissette, Schellenberg & Johnson, 2005



## RECOMMENDATIONS

In our first report, *The Union Advantage*, we set out a series of policy recommendations based on our research findings, aimed at reducing precarious employment, mitigating its negative effects, and improving working conditions for workers in an increasingly precarious labour market.<sup>27</sup> Among these policy recommendations, two emerge as critical to supporting gender equity:

- Reforming the Labour Relations Act to enable workers to organize and get the benefits of unionization
- Amending the Employment Standards Act to provide access to key benefits for workers outside of unions who are also engaged in precarious work

The Ontario government's Bill 148, Fair Workplaces, Better Jobs Act offers an important opportunity to make meaningful change to Ontario's outdated labour laws. The bill proposes changes to Ontario's two key pieces of labour legislation, the Labour Relations Act (LRA) and the Employment Standards Act (ESA).<sup>28</sup>

<sup>27</sup> For a complete discussion on these policy recommendations, as well as, opportunities for the labour movement, please see pages 27 to 36 of *The Union Advantage* at [www.socialplanningtoronto.org/the\\_union\\_advantage](http://www.socialplanningtoronto.org/the_union_advantage)

<sup>28</sup> At the time of the publication of this report, Bill 148 had not yet become law. The bill had passed Second Reading.

While the provincial government is proposing important advances including a \$15 minimum wage by 2019<sup>29</sup>, expansion of employment standards enforcement and stiffer penalties for employers who violate the law, and improved access to unionization for some precarious workers, Bill 148 does not realize the full range of opportunities to increase the benefits of union access for the majority of Ontario workers and doesn't go far enough to protect non-unionized workers.

### 1. REFORMING THE LABOUR RELATIONS ACT

In Bill 148, the provincial government proposes to reintroduce one-step card-based certification but only for some groups of precarious workers. Specifically, the bill proposes card-based certification for workers in the building services industry, home care and community services industry, and the temporary help agency industry. Many precarious workers, such as fast food or retail workers, are excluded in the provision.

The bill also fails to introduce new models for union certification such as sector-wide or franchise-wide certification. For example, it will not be possible for workers employed by a single franchise, such as McDonalds, Wendy's or Tim Hortons, to certify under a single union local.

<sup>29</sup> The proposal for a \$15 minimum wage excludes students under age 18 and liquor servers, though their lower minimum wage is also set to rise.

Bill 148 does propose changes that would protect unionized workers in the building services industry if the service contract covering their worksite changes hands. Government could also extend these successor rights to unionized workers affected by contract flipping for publicly-funded services but the legislation would not require it to enact these protections. It's a step in the right direction but should be expanded to protect all unionized workers from contract flipping.

Facilitating greater access to unionization, including building union density in the private sector and in female-dominated sectors, is important to promoting gender equity. Given the demonstrated benefits of union membership, we urge the Province to reduce barriers to unionization. We recommend that one-step card-based certification be provided for all Ontario workers, rather than only a small subgroup as currently proposed. The establishment of models for broad-based organizing (across sectors and franchises) and the inclusion of successor rights to protect a broader range of unionized workers against contracting flipping should also be included in the legislation.

A one-step card-based certification process would allow workers to form a union once a majority of eligible workers in a workplace had signed union cards. Presently, the certification process includes a requirement that at least 40% of

eligible workers in a workplace sign union cards.<sup>30</sup> Then, a ballot vote is organized where a majority of bargaining unit members must vote in favour of union certification in order for the workers to form of union. The current certification process was introduced in 1995, rescinding one-step card-based certification that had been the law of the land in Ontario for over forty years.<sup>31</sup> The current process provides employers with greater opportunities to dissuade employees from joining unions. Academic researchers have documented a broad range of anti-certification tactics adopted by employers and suggest that the return of a simpler process would dramatically reduce these actions by employers.<sup>32</sup>

Bill 148 offers an important opportunity to ensure greater access to the benefits of unionization for all.

## 2. AMENDING THE EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS ACT

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As shown in our research, most workers in Ontario do not have the benefit of union representation. These workers rely on the employment protections set out in Ontario's ESA. Proposed improvements to the ESA are critical for the majority of workers in Ontario, including the large population of low wage women workers, young workers, recent immigrant workers, and

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30 CUPE Ontario, no date

31 Mitchell & Murray, 2016

32 Slinn, 2007, December 7

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racialized workers who are disproportionately in non-unionized and precarious work.

Our study found that non-unionized women had the lowest individual income levels of all four groups with almost half earning less than \$40,000 per year. A raise in the minimum wage will be especially important for women, and may reduce the income stress faced by many women. In Ontario, a \$15 minimum wage is expected to improve the wages of 27% of women and a staggering 42% of recent immigrant women.<sup>33</sup> In contrast, the minimum wage increase is likely to benefit 19% of men. This move toward a living wage in Ontario is critical for the well-being of millions of workers and will also support the broader goals of reducing economic inequality and promoting gender equity.

The bill also proposes providing workers with up to 10 personal emergency days with at least 2 being paid days off.<sup>34</sup> This proposal moves the bar forward but is inadequate for most workers, particularly women who often do double duty as workers and primary caregivers to children and elderly parents. Individuals who bear the responsibility of social care in families require more paid days off to meet the multiple demands on their time.

As women are more likely to have part-time work and non-unionized women are least likely to have standard employment, Bill 148's proposal to ensure equal pay for equal work is an important provision in support of gender equity. Under this provision, employers must ensure that casual, temporary, part-time and seasonal employees are paid equally to full-time workers doing the same job for the same employer.<sup>35</sup>

In conjunction with Bill 148, the provincial government has committed to hiring up to 175 employment standards enforcement officers by 2020-21 and through the bill proposes to introduce stiffer fines for employers that break the law under the ESA.<sup>36</sup> Once the full complement of staff is in place, the Ontario government states that the program will resolve all claims filed within 90 days and will inspect 10% of Ontario workplaces. This is a long overdue and welcome change to the current environment where lack of enforcement of employment standards has been the rule rather than the exception in Ontario.<sup>37,38</sup>

<sup>33</sup> MacDonald, 2017

<sup>34</sup> Ontario Ministry of Labour, 2016

<sup>35</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>36</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> Gellatly, 2015

<sup>38</sup> Gellatly, 2007

### 3. CHILD CARE & PAY EQUITY: ESSENTIAL TOOLS FOR GENDER EQUITY

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Bill 148 provides an important opportunity to improve wages, working conditions and protections for workers in Ontario and to advance the goal of gender equity. Essential tools in this work also include the development and full funding of a comprehensive high quality, affordable child care system and action on pay equity.

Our study found that women, whether in a union or not, are more likely than men to work in permanent part-time jobs. Labour Force Survey data for Toronto shows that 22.8% of employed women were in part-time employment in 2016 compared to 13% of employed men.<sup>39</sup> In Toronto, women make up almost two-thirds of part-time workers. Among part-time workers, almost 30% would prefer full-time work.<sup>40</sup> This is true for both women and men. Lack of access to affordable child care tops the list of reasons that women work part-time.<sup>41</sup> Access to high quality, affordable child care would facilitate access to employment and full-time employment for many women.

In Toronto, we have a severe lack of high quality, affordable child care. Recent research shows

that Toronto has the highest child care costs for infants, toddlers and preschool-age children in the country.<sup>42</sup> For a family with one infant child, the median cost of child care is almost \$20,000 per year. Fees for infant, toddler and preschool children are unaffordable for over 75% of families.<sup>43</sup> For low income families, more than 15,000 children are on the waiting list for subsidized child care.<sup>44</sup> Lack of access to out-of-school time programs is also a serious problem for families with children between 6 and 12 years of age. Toronto's middle years programs only serve 14% of children between 6 and 12 years of age.<sup>45</sup> Lack of access reduces parents' availability for work in the before- and after-school hours, during holidays, and in the summer time.

Access to child care is an essential component for achieving gender equity, as women are often the primary caregivers in families. After decades of underfunding, there is some good news on the horizon for families in need of child care. All three orders of government have renewed their commitment to child care. In 2017, the City of Toronto adopted a child care growth strategy and reiterated its commitment to contribute 20% of child care costs.<sup>46</sup> In 2016, the provincial government committed to creating 100,000 new child care spaces in Ontario in the next five years,

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39 Statistics Canada, 2016b

40 Statistics Canada, 2016a

41 McInturff, 2017

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42 MacDonald & Friendly, 2016

43 City of Toronto, 2017

44 *ibid.*

45 City of Toronto, Children's Services, 2015

46 City of Toronto, 2017

and in 2017, announced that it would spend \$1.6 billion to build 45,000 of those spaces this year.<sup>47,48</sup> The federal government committed \$500 million for a new child care and early learning framework for children up to age 12, and recently promised an additional \$7 billion over 10 years to create 40,000 new spaces across Canada in the next three years.<sup>49</sup> Making good on these commitments is essential for families with children and a key element in achieving gender equity.

Introduced in 1987, the Pay Equity Act requires employers to address gender discrimination in employment compensation, including to ensure that the wages of workers in female job classes are at least equal to the wages of workers in male job classes where the work is of equal value in terms of required skills, effort, responsibilities and working conditions.<sup>50</sup>

Despite having pay equity legislation in force in Ontario for 30 years, the gender pay gap has barely budged over that period. After 30 years of pay equity, the gender pay gap has narrowed by just 6%, leaving the current gender pay gap at 30%.<sup>51</sup> It's much worse for indigenous women at 57%, immigrant women at 39% and racialized women at 32%.<sup>52</sup> The Pay Equity Commission

which is tasked with education and enforcement of the Act has seen a staff reduction from about 70 employees in the 1990s to 25 today.<sup>53</sup> The Act can't be effective if it's not being enforced.

Advocates with the Equal Pay Coalition are calling on the provincial government to take a page out of Iceland's book. On International Women's Day, March 8, 2017, Iceland became the first country in the world to introduce pay transparency legislation requiring employers to demonstrate that they compensate their employees equally.<sup>54</sup> The coalition is calling for a similar pay transparency act in Ontario that would "require reporting based on job classifications; set out employees' right to know about their employer's pay structure; protect employees from punishment for discussing pay structure; require employers file transparency reports with the Ministry of Labour and with their shareholders annually; apply to government procurement processes."<sup>55</sup>

In 2015, the Ontario government set up the Gender Wage Gap Strategy Steering Committee to research, consult and put forward recommendations for addressing Ontario's gender wage gap. In September 2016, the committee released its final report which includes a series of recommendations for government to

47 *ibid.*

48 Government of Ontario, 2017, June 6

49 City of Toronto, 2017

50 The Pay Equity Commission, 2017

51 Mojtehdzadeh, 2017, April 11

52 Ramkhalawansingh, 2017, April 11

53 Mojtehdzadeh, 2017, April 11

54 Chapman, 2017, March 8

55 Equal Pay Coalition, 2017

take action on the gender wage gap. Among its recommendations, the committee called for the development of an early child care system, as well as intermediate actions to respond to the urgent child care needs of families. It also recommended that government should “encourage the broader public sector, Ontario businesses and other organizations to develop pay transparency policies and to share organizational pay information with their employees; develop and adopt pay transparency policies for the Ontario Public Sector; set an example by publicizing information or data on the Ontario Public Sector’s compensation or salary ranges by gender; consider legislation to include protection against reprisal for employees sharing their personal pay information.”<sup>56</sup>

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56 Gender Wage Gap Strategy Steering Committee, 2016

Though the committee’s report was released a year ago, the Ontario government’s working group on the gender pay gap has only met once since the report was released.<sup>57</sup> We urge the provincial government to move forward on this critical issue. Proper resourcing of the Pay Equity Commission and the introduction of a pay transparency act should be part of its plan of action.

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57 Mojtehdzadeh, 2017, April 11





## CONCLUSION

As discussed in *The Union Advantage*, the results of the PEPSO study show that there are clear advantages for unionization, and that this is true when factors such as age, gender, racialization, immigration status, and education requirements for the job are accounted for. When taking a closer look at the research with a focus on gender, our findings suggest that unionized work settings have a positive impact on women and men, promote gender equity, and reduce the gender pay gap, particularly in sectors with high union density and high rates of unionization among women.

The Ontario government has the opportunity to make meaningful change in realizing the goal of gender equity, substantially narrowing the gender pay gap, and dramatically improving the lives of Ontarians. Through Bill 148 and other measures, we encourage the Province to act now to increase access to unionization, improve wages, working conditions and protections for non-unionized and precarious workers, ensure access to high quality, affordable child care, and take action on pay equity.



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# APPENDIX A

## RESEARCH METHODS

### 1. QUANTITATIVE DATA

Rates of unionization are based on Statistics Canada's Labour Force Survey. The remainder of our research findings are based on PEPSO survey data collected in 2011-12 and 2014 using a sample of 2,741 workers, aged 25-65, living in the city of Toronto. As our analysis focuses on the role of unionization in mitigating precarious employment and its effects, we excluded two groups of respondents where union membership is not an option or is unlikely: a) self-employed individuals with employees and b) workers with incomes over \$100,000 who also required a degree for their job, as these respondents are likely in management positions. The analysis does include self-employed workers without employees and those with incomes over \$100,000 who did not require a degree for their jobs.

In the analysis for this report, we ran cross-tabulations to compare workers on several work-related and quality of life indicators (described below). In the first series of cross-tabulations, the data was disaggregated by gender. Due to methodological limitations, gender is categorized as male and female only. In the second series, the data was split by union status to compare the degree of union advantage for women and men.

Using the disaggregated data, we conducted a series of multivariate logistic regression analyses to examine the relationship between unionization and the work-related and quality of life indicators, taking into account age, race, immigration status, and education level required for the job.

Work-related and quality of life indicators:

#### 1) Income

- Individual income, income variability

#### 2) Form of Employment & Workplace Benefits and Conditions

- Form of employment, employer-provided pension, benefits and paid time off, scheduling instability, hours of work

#### 3) Income, Workplace and Household Stress

- Income stress: concern about maintaining standard of living, employment situation negatively affects large spending decisions, challenges paying bills, concern about meeting financial obligations in next 12 months, income change compared to past year
- Workplace stress: experiencing anger as a result of work, experiencing depression as a result of work
- Household stress: anxiety about employment interfering with personal and family life, uncertainty over work schedule preventing doing things with family and friends

#### 4) Health

- Self-reported health and mental health

#### 5) Workplace Discrimination

- Experience of discrimination getting work, keeping work, and advancing at work

This report presents findings based on gender. Unfortunately, it was not possible to incorporate a broader intersectional analysis including social categories such as race, immigration status and age group due to methodological limitations and inadequate sample size. Where possible, we have discussed related literature to address this limitation of the research. Also, future reports in this series will examine findings based on each of those social categories.

## 2. QUALITATIVE DATA

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We convened a roundtable with representatives from the labour movement and worker advocacy groups to discuss our initial findings and implications for organizing and public policy. In this roundtable, we explored organized labour's role in reducing or mitigating precarious employment, emerging challenges and opportunities for change.

Participants in this roundtable represented both private and public sector unions as well as worker advocacy groups. Groups represented included: Workers' Action Centre, Parkdale Community Legal Services, Ontario Public Service Employees Union (OPSEU), Urban Alliance on Race Relations (UARR),

UNITE HERE, Unifor, Workers United Canada Council, and Sheet Metal Workers' and Roofers' Local 30 Toronto. Participants were selected based on their experience in organizing and working on the front-line with precarious and vulnerable workers.



**Study Sample: Demographics and Education Levels**

	Union Men (n=333) (25.7% of men)	Union Women (n=425) (29.4% of women)	Non-union Men (n=961)	Non-union Women (n=1,022)
<b>Age</b>				
25-34	32.1	21.6	36.5	26.7
35-44	23.4	29.4	28	31.3
45-54	27.9	28.2	21.2	25.2
55+	16.5	20.7	14.3	16.7
<b>Race</b>				
White	67.7	62.4	56	63.5
Chinese	2.1	2.1	7.7	5.7
South Asian	8.8	12.5	13.8	8.9
Black	8.2	10.4	7.9	8
Filipino	2.1	4.3	2.3	4
Latin American	3.4	2.1	2.9	3
Southeast Asian	1.8	1.4	3.1	2.1
Arab+West Asian	2.1	2.1	2.9	1.6
Other Groups	3.8	2.7	3.4	3.2
<b>Immigration Status</b>				
Newcomer (10 years or less)	8.4	7.8	12.5	11.3
Longer-term Immigrant (> 10 years)	27.6	36.7	30.7	32.4
Born in Canada	64	55.5	56.7	56.3
<b>Highest Educational Attainment</b>				
< High School	3	2.1	2.6	2.3
High School	15	11.4	14.2	11.6
Trade/College/Some University	36.3	29.4	32.9	35.2
Bachelor's Degree	26.1	28	31	33.5
Graduate Degree	19.5	29.1	19.3	17.3
<b>Degree Required for the Job</b>				
Yes	36.1	48.2	33.9	34.2
No	63.9	51.8	66.1	65.8

# APPENDIX B

## RESULTS OF MULTIVARIATE ANALYSES

The following chart shows statistically significant results from a series of multivariate logistic regression analyses. In the multivariate analyses, we controlled for age, race, immigration status

and education level required for the job. After controlling for these factors, we examined the relationship between union status and each of the outcome measures. The table shows the odds ratios and 95% confidence intervals associated with being in a union and the outcome measures identified in the first column, after controlling for other factors.

	Women		Men	
	OR	95% CI	OR	95% CI
Standard Employment	1.971	1.553-2.501	2.402	1.838-3.140
Individual income over \$40,000	1.996	1.502-2.652	1.683	1.226-2.310
Pension	4.950	3.742-6.548	4.495	3.362-6.009
Benefits	3.185	2.451-4.137	4.137	3.052-5.607
Paid time off	1.798	1.390-2.328	1.581	1.206-2.072
Stable income	1.451	1.002-2.100	1.668	1.134-2.452
Hours 30-40 per week	1.474	1.144-1.898	1.325	1.015-1.728
Did not have lower income this year vs. last year	2.196	1.256-3.837		



