

**RESISTING
PRECARITY:
BUILDING COLLECTIVE
STRATEGIES**

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PRECARITY IN LIBRARIES

The Precarity in Libraries research project was started in 2017 by 4 precariously employed librarians. Our goal is to provide information on the extent and effects of precarious work in Canadian libraries.

Published works available at <https://osf.io/ybczx/>

Thanks and acknowledgement to our research collaborators Ean Henninger and Crystal Yin.

AGENDA

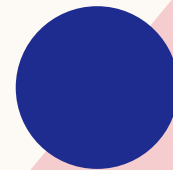
What is precarity?

Effects of precarity

Actions and strategies

Activity

Questions/Wrap up



The background features a vertical line that divides the space. To the left of this line, there are concentric white circles on a light green background. To the right, there are solid colored shapes: a light blue semi-circle at the top, a light green rectangle in the middle, a light pink triangle at the bottom left, and a light red triangle at the bottom right.

WORD CLOUD:

WHAT DOES PRECARITY MEAN TO YOU?

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WHAT IS: PRECARIOUS EMPLOYMENT

STANDARD VS. NON-STANDARD EMPLOYMENT

- Standard employment is “access to a full-time, permanent job with a single employer and that includes at least some benefits” (“But is it a good job,” 2023)
- Non standard work includes:
 - Part time
 - Variable hours
 - Temporary/contract
 - Auxiliary
 - Gig work

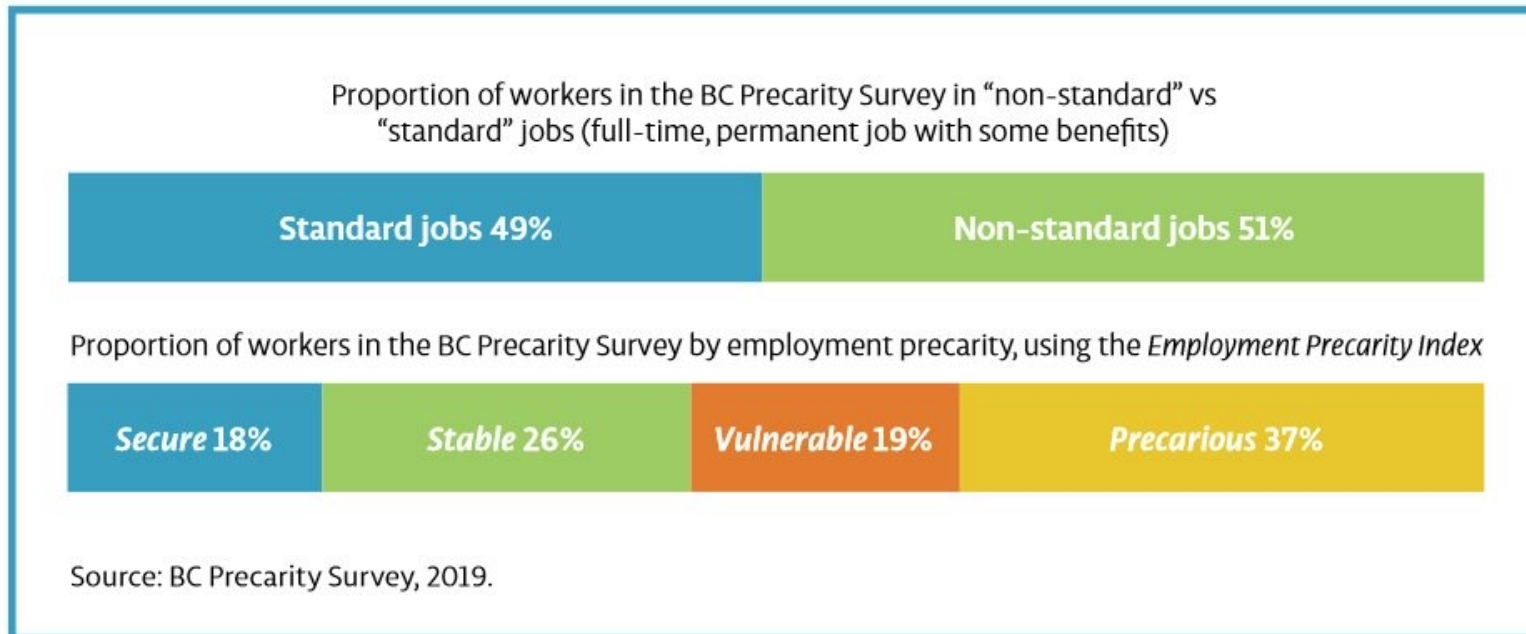
WHAT IS: PRECARITY?

WORKING CONDITIONS CHARACTERIZED BY:

- (Lack of) access to employment protections
- (Lack of) access to collective representation
- Income variability
- Scheduling variability
- (Lack of) access to employer-provided benefits
- (Lack of) ‘voice’ at work
- Conditions of “material or psychological vulnerability” (Topp & Lubowiz, 2019)

PREVALENCE OF PRECARIETY

FIGURE A Two ways to examine precarious employment



PREVALENCE OF PRECARIETY

In Libraries and Archives:

- 42.8% of jobs posted to the Partnership Job Board were precarious (2017-2019)
 - 29% Contract, 6.9% On Call, 22.7% Part-Time
- Precarious jobs not more likely in one type of library than any other
- BC libraries 45.7% of jobs were precarious - higher than Canada average (42.8%)
- Library assistant and technician postings most likely to be precarious; manager positions the least likely

Henninger, Ean, Adena Brons, Chloe Riley, and Crystal Yin. "Factors Associated with the Prevalence of Precarious Positions in Canadian Libraries: Statistical Analysis of a National Job Board." *Evidence Based Library and Information Practice* 15, no. 3 (September 15, 2020): 78–102.
<https://doi.org/10.18438/eblip29783>.

IN THE ROOM:

**ARE YOU CURRENTLY PRECARIOUSLY
EMPLOYED IN LIS?**

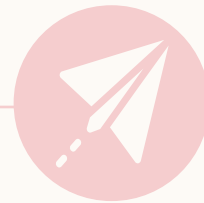
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EFFECTS OF PRECARITY



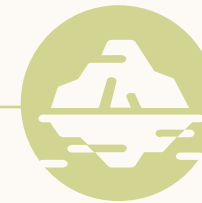
ON LIBRARY WORKERS

- Increased stress
- Financial vulnerability
- Negative physical and mental health effects
- Reduced ability to make long term plans
- Less likely/able to report harassment



ON LIBRARY WORKERS

- Harming or slowing career development
 - Unequal access to professional development
 - Minimal employee investment, retention
- Compounds existing inequities



ON OTHERS

- Reduction in extracurricular or volunteer activities
- Reduction in political engagement
- Lower service quality



IN THE ROOM:

**DUE TO PRECARITY, HAVE YOU
EXPERIENCED...**

***SELECT ALL THAT APPLY**

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RESISTING PRECARITY

What can be done? (in libraries)

ACTIONS & STRATEGIES

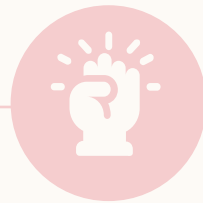


SURVIVAL

- Individualized
- Self care

Eg: Financial Instability

- Budgeting
- Additional job

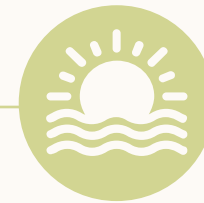


RESISTANCE

- Small groups / local communities

Eg. Financial Instability

- Mutual aid groups
- Financial planning advice



CHANGE

- Professional / Societal
- Collective efforts

Eg. Financial Instability

- Bargaining for higher pay
- Pay gap analysis & adjustments

ACTIVITY

We now want to facilitate an opportunity for you to share your experiences and thoughts about precarity in libraries, and strategies for how we can address its harmful effects.

What is shared in this session should be treated as confidential. Please don't share beyond the session.

SMALL GROUP ACTIVITY

Work together at your table. You will be assigned a theme related to precarity, which will include several examples of harmful effects.

- Select one person to report back to the room
- Review the effects associated with your theme, and identify strategies or actions to address these examples (or other effects related to your theme).
- Considerations:
 - If your answer is "more pay" or "more benefits" – yes, we agree! But dig a bit deeper, and consider the mechanisms for how to make this happen.
 - Think about the different circles of influence and levels of action (individual, small groups of colleagues, our profession, societal change). Some effects may have strategies at multiple levels.
- Use your post-its to write down strategies (we'll collect them!)
- Timing:
 - 2. minutes for private reflection / thinking
 - 10 minutes to discuss as a group at your table
 - 10 minutes to share back to the whole room (1 idea per group!)

Theme 1: Burnout & mental load

- Learning and applying workplace policies and procedures at new (or multiple) jobs
- Scheduling on-call shifts or juggling multiple positions (on own time)
- Constant job seeking (on own time)
- Constant orientations / onboarding of employees
- Unrealistic expectations for scope of activities in a limited contract

Theme 2: Career development

- Lack of access to professional development funds, or time to engage
- No consistency (changing jobs, supervisors, etc.) can stagnate development of skills
- Burn-out results in less time and energy
- Lack of ability to build, plan, or participate in long-term initiatives or relationships

Theme 3: Isolation

- Regular staff don't take time to get to know contract or temporary staff
- On-call staff members not invited to collegial events or holiday parties
- Disengaged, unsupported, or unrepresented by the union
- Scheduled for weekend or evening shifts – little or no contact with supervisor or colleagues

Theme 4: Workplace morale & service

- Reduced opportunities to be consulted or give feedback
- Achievements of precarious employee can be unrecognized
- Weaker connections to community and regular users
- Lower trust in, and greater antagonism towards, employer
- Stress as a factor of low-morale work environments

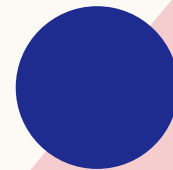
WHAT ACTION WILL YOU TAKE?

Taking action can make a difference to resisting precarity and building solidarity among our library colleagues. Take a moment to privately write down some next steps you can take:

- Something you can do on your own?
- Something you can do with a colleague?
- Something you can do within / for the broader profession?

WHAT'S NEXT

Follow along with our research at our
Open Science Framework project page:
<https://osf.io/ybczx/>



QUESTIONS?

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- Henninger, Ean, Adena Brons, Chloe Riley, and Crystal Yin. “Factors Associated with the Prevalence of Precarious Positions in Canadian Libraries: Statistical Analysis of a National Job Board.” *Evidence Based Library and Information Practice* 15, no. 3 (September 15, 2020): 78–102. <https://doi.org/10.18438/eblip29783>.
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