DIVERSE, ENGAGED, AND PRECARIOUSLY EMPLOYED: AN IN-DEPTH LOOK AT YOUNG WORKERS IN CANADA
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INTRODUCTION AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This research paper provides a broad landscape of the social and economic realities of young workers in Canada. As we prepare to gather in Ottawa this coming October at the CLC Young Worker’s Summit, this paper offers factual evidence surrounding the issues we face, aiming to inform discussions and support the development of strategies and concrete steps for tackling these issues and advocating for a future of work that is progressive, equitable and sustainable for all Canadian workers and their communities.

Political-Economic Context: The past few decades have been challenging for young workers. In 2008/09 the world faced a financial crisis, followed by a lingering recession. During this period Canada’s youth employment rate dropped drastically and, unlike the core-age population whose employment rate has been steadily recovering, the youth employment rate has remained below 56 percent ever since. Although the recession has clearly impacted young Canadians, the challenges we face predate this crisis. Workplaces in Canada, and globally, are undergoing significant transformations like the surge of non-standard working relationships, the expanding informal economy, the growing service sector, globalization and trade liberalization, and increasing technological change. Alongside these transformations has been the unprecedented expansion of precarious work. As companies grow increasingly powerful, the drive for labour market flexibility and de-regulation has placed downward pressures on wages and working conditions. Young workers are especially vulnerable to these changes and have been hit disproportionally hard. In this context strong labour laws, employment standards and targeted investments are vital to improving the conditions of work, reducing inequalities and advancing social justice. Yet, over the past decade Canada’s federal government not only systemically attacked unions, but also refused to work collaboratively with the provinces and territories to improve working conditions for all Canadians, and especially not for young workers.

Young workers have taken notice and are coming together to fight back against government legislation and employer policies that have been corrosive to decent work in Canada. And young workers are perfectly positioned to do so.

Who Are Young Canadians: Young Canadians make up about a third of the Canadian population, although this portion has decreased over the years as the median age of Canadians continues to grow. Canadian youth are more diverse than any generation before them, with a growing population of Aboriginal, immigrant, and visible minority youth. Although there’s limited data on youth who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) and on youth with disabilities, these groups make up a significant portion of the population.

Despite this diversity, not all young Canadians are treated equally in today’s workplace. Although not as pronounced as within the core-age population, the wage gap between young women and men is still present. Young women only earn, on average, 71 percent of a young man’s weekly income. Young women are less likely to qualify for employment insurance (EI), are more likely to work in precarious jobs, and are underrepresented in the sciences and trades.
Young visible minorities and immigrants have higher university graduation rates, yet still have lower employment rates, pointing to racial discrimination in hiring and in the workplace. Compared to their non-aboriginal counterparts, young aboriginal workers have higher unemployment rates, lower employment rates, lower rates of post-secondary education (PSE) attainment, and are more likely to live in poverty.

There is a growing awareness, and in turn conversation, of homophobia and the discrimination that LGBTQ Canadians face in their workplaces. Workers with disabilities, and especially young workers with disabilities, earn less than workers without disabilities and are more likely to earn lower-incomes later into life. Despite gains, there is still a ways to go to make Canadian workplaces safe, inclusive and equitable for LGBTQ youth and youth with disabilities.

Despite the inequity that has been passed down, young Canadians hold strong values of inclusivity and their diversity, adaptability and vision show that they have the capacity to work collectively to put an end to the sexism, racism, Islamophobia, homophobia, transphobia, ableism and xenophobia that we witness in the world of work. One piece to solving this is equal access to education and, in turn, the opportunities that it brings.

**Education & Economic Independence:** Canadians are some of the most highly educated people in the world, ranking first among OECD countries for PSE attainment. Enrollment in PSE, including apprenticeships, continues to rise. Unfortunately so do tuition fees, which have, on average, increased over five times the rate of inflation in the past 15 years. In response, the number of students who balance school and work has also steadily increased since the mid-70s. Still student unemployment rates remain high, as does student debt. The percentage of Canadians who owe large amounts of student debt, as well as the average amount of debt, has ballooned over the last decade. Despite high rates of educational attainment, the job market is failing young Canadians and the picture is bleak for young educated workers. Young workers are not finding good jobs and are instead stuck with high levels of student debt and precarious work for which they are overqualified.

In turn, the transition from school to work is being pushed back and young workers are not attaining economic independence until later in life. This is partly due to the increase in PSE enrolment, rather than entering the workforce after high-school, but it’s also connected to fewer quality job opportunities, as well as larger levels of debt after leaving school. Canadians are also more likely to transition back and forth between school and work, and although upgrading skills can result in better job opportunities, this is not always the case and, for some, it only extends the transition to work with little payoff.

**Employment, Income and Job Quality:** Young workers have not fared well over the past three decades in terms of employment and income. The youth unemployment rate is persistently double that of the core-age population and young workers’ hourly and weekly wages are far below those of the core-age population. Although this can be expected to a degree, since young Canadians may have fewer developed skills and are less likely to be as advanced along their career path, low wages combined with the degradation of job quality raises concerns. Workplaces are changing and although
trends like the growth of non-standard working relationships, the growing service sector, globalization and trade liberalization, and technological change present new opportunities, they also threaten to undermine labour laws, employment standards and other safeguards that are in place to protect workers and their communities.

What were once entry-level positions are now becoming long-term or “career-jobs.” Precarious work is quickly becoming the norm for young workers and several indicators demonstrate this trend. We’re seeing a shift in the types of jobs available, with an increase in jobs that are less likely to offer full-time hours and decent wages. Today over half of young workers work in sales and services. There has also been an increase in part-time work, unpredictable scheduling, temporary jobs, “self”-employment, and young workers who hold multiple jobs. Driven by the drive to gain labour market flexibility, employers are increasingly misclassifying employees as independent contractors, whether inadvertently or deliberately. This enables employers to skirt regulations on hours of work and wages and avoid paying benefits and other costs, as well as undermining the ability of workers to organize and bargain collectively.

The shift to precarious work has not been felt evenly across demographics. Young workers are particularly affected, especially young women, who are more likely than young men to work part-time and hold multiple-jobs. Alongside these shifting workplace trends, young workers have less access to social protections, including EI and workplace pension plans. This limited access is not being compensated for in private savings or public protections, pointing to the need to strengthen and expand public programs.

Without a change in direction, poverty rates for young Canadians will remain above that of the overall population and debt will continue to soar. Income inequality has only gotten worse over the past two decades, threatening to seriously expand the number of Canadians considered to be the “working poor.” Young Canadians who work full-time hours will continue to live below the poverty line and struggle to make ends meet. The impacts of this growing social and economic inequity are not only felt by young Canadians, but have corrosive impacts on society as a whole. Fortunately, this generation is engaged in these issues and mobilizing through unions and other forms of civic activity.

**Unions, Civic Engagement and Activism:** The benefits of unions for young workers is clear. Beyond increased equity and fairness in the workplace, young workers who belong to a union make, on average, 27 percent more than non-unionized young workers. Yes, young workers do have lower rates of unionization than core-age workers, however, while the unionization rate for core-age workers has decreased over the past two decades, the unionization rate for young workers has risen slightly over the same time period. Although young men are more likely to be unionized than young women, this gap has narrowed drastically since the late 90s.

This presents many opportunities for young workers in the labour movement. Overall young workers are interested in joining unions and support for unions is growing. Yet, there is some resentment among non-union workers of the gains that have been made by unionized workers. Negative misperceptions about unions that have been perpetuated by employers and anti-union groups have affected how new generations
engage with the labour movement. Still, core union principles of empowering workers, social justice and fairness, and collaboration resonate with young Canadians. Young workers are active and even take lead roles in union campaigns and actions, especially those that target some of the most precarious workplaces. Digital activism is becoming increasingly central to union campaigns as non-standard forms of employment, technological change, and globalization places limitations on traditional organizing tactics.

Beyond unions, young Canadians are engaging in a large variety of other forms of political and civic activities, and at levels that far exceed those of the overall population. Yes, young Canadians have low voter turnout rates, but this does not mean that they are apathetic. Alongside addressing the barriers that prevent youth from voting, decision makers must take stock of the wide variety of other forms of activism and engagement that the Millennial generation applies. Young workers are ready for change, and are committed to working collaboratively, within the labour movement and with other social partners, to address the challenges ahead and to create a world of work that is progressive, equitable and sustainable for all Canadians.
POLITICAL-ECONOMIC CONTEXT

The past decade has been a challenging one for young workers both in Canada and globally. In 2008/09 we faced one of the worst financial crises the world has seen, followed by a lingering recession. During the first phase of the crisis (2008-09) at least 48% of high and middle-income countries put in place stimulus packages totalling US$2.4 trillion. These investments acted as a stabilizer and helped economies regain balance and protect unemployed and vulnerable workers. But during the second phase (2010-onwards) many countries, including Canada, reversed course prematurely, embarking on austerity measures and fiscal consolidation, despite the strong need to continue supporting vulnerable workers and to stabilize consumption. North America has seen very slow economic recovery and this has posed challenges for all Canadians, especially young Canadians who were impacted particularly hard.

During the recession Canada’s youth employment rate dropped drastically by almost four percentage points, or 174,200 jobs. Unlike the core-age population, whose employment rate has steadily been recovering, the youth employment rate has remained below 56 percent ever since. To add to this challenge, many jobs available to young workers are increasingly falling into the precarious or underemployed categories.

Alongside the recession, workplaces in Canada, and globally, are undergoing significant transformations like the surge of non-standard working relationships (eg. temporary jobs, involuntary part-time work, and “self”-employment), the expanding informal economy, the growing service sector, globalization and trade liberalization, and increasing technological change. These trends, which include the rapid growth of the “gig” or “sharing” economy, are transforming the world of work. As companies grow increasingly powerful, the drive for labour market flexibility and de-regulation has placed downward pressures on wages and working conditions. Young workers are especially vulnerable to these changes and have been hit disproportionally hard.

In this context strong labour laws, employment standards and targeted investments are vital to improving the conditions of work, reducing inequalities and advancing social justice. To be effective laws and regulations must have an inclusive scope of coverage, sufficient levels of protection, and full compliance and enforcement. Yet, over the past decade Canada’s federal government not only refused to speak with the provinces and work collaboratively to improve working conditions for all Canadians, especially for young workers, but also systemically attacked workers’ rights and unions by pushing through legislation like bills C-377, C-4 and C-525. If implemented, these bills would have infringed on Canadians’ freedom of association and imposed significant and unwarranted costs on labour organizations (C-377), would have taken away some government union bargaining rights, reworked the arbitration process and changed the rules around worker safety (C-4), and would have made it more difficult for Canadians in federally-regulated workplaces to join a union (C-525).

Last fall, after ten years under the Conservative government, Canadians elected a new Liberal government. Within months of being elected, the new federal government tabled legislation to repeal bills C-377 and C-525. Only time will tell whether we are able to reverse some of the damage inflicted over the last ten years and whether we are able to
tackle some of the significant workplaces transformations that are underway in Canada and globally. How we approach these transformations will be vital to supporting young workers and shaping the future of work for all Canadians. This paper looks at the landscape and world of work for young Canadians within this political-economic context.

WHO WE ARE - DEMOGRAPHICS

Young Canadians make up about a third of the Canadian population, yet this portion has decreased over the years as the median age of Canadians continues to grow. This shift has an impact on both the job market for young Canadians, as well as on retirement security. Canadian youth are more diverse than older Canadians, with an expanding population of aboriginal, immigrant, and visible minority youth. Although there is limited long-term data on youth who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) or youth with disabilities, it’s clear that they make up a significant portion of the youth population.

Young Canadians\(^1,2\): There are currently about 6.8 million young people, aged 15 to 29, living in Canada. This number rises to 9.3 million when including youth aged 30 to 34 (Graph: Population of Canadian Youth).

Today, young people, aged 15 to 29, make up 29 percent of Canada’s working age population (15 to 64 years). This portion has decreased over the past 40 years as the median age of Canadians continues to increase from 27.4 years in 1975 to 40.5 years in 2015 (Graph: Median Age of Canadians).

While the portion of Canadians aged 15 to 29 has decreased over the past 40 years, from 28.2 percent in 1975 to 19.6 percent in 2015, the number of Canadians aged 65 years and older has almost doubled, from 8.5 percent in 1975 to 16.1 percent in 2015 (Graph: Young & Old as Percentage of Population).

Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) has estimated that by 2060, over 25 percent of Canada’s population will be 65 years and over. This not only has a major impact on the job market for young Canadians (eg. rise in services such as home care), but also has an impact on the retirement security of all Canadians, as will be discussed further below.
There has not only been a shift in the number of young Canadians, especially compared to older age brackets, but there has also been a shift in who these young people are, as the population is becoming increasingly diverse.

**Aboriginal Youth:** The number of aboriginal youth in Canada is rising. Since 2007 the population of aboriginal youth, aged 15 to 24, has grown by 26.8 percent, whereas the population of non-aboriginal youth has stayed relatively the same, only increasing by 0.3 percent in the same time period. In 2015, aboriginal youth, aged 15 to 24, made up 22.4 percent of the aboriginal labour force, 4.3 percent of Canada’s youth labour force, and 0.6 percent of Canada’s total labour force.

**Young immigrants:** Canada is also seeing a rise in the number of landed immigrants aged 15 to 24. Since 2007, the number of young immigrants has increased by 14.4 percent, from 537,100 in January 2007 to 614,600 in January 2016. This is a stark contrast to the population of youth who were born in Canada, which has actually decreased by 1.5 percent during the same time period, from 3,713,700 in January 2007 to 3,659,000 in January 2016. Young immigrants make up 7.1 percent of the total landed immigrant labour force, 12 percent of Canada’s youth labour force, and 1.7 percent of Canada’s total labour force.

**Visible minorities:** Statistics Canada uses the term “visible minority” to refer to a person belonging to a visible minority group as defined by the Employment Equity Act. The Employment Equity Act defines visible minorities as ‘persons, other than Aboriginal peoples, who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour.’ The visible minority population consists mainly of the following groups, as termed and grouped by the Employment Equity Act: South Asian, Chinese, Black, Filipino, Latin American, Arab, Southeast Asian, West Asian, Korean and Japanese. As of 2011, there were nearly 6.3 million Canadians who identified as a visible minority, making up 19.1 percent of the Canadian population. This number has increased by 16.2 percent, from 5,068,100 in 2006.

Canada’s visible minority population is younger than the overall population, with a median age of 33.4 compared to 40.1, respectively. “Black” Canadians are the youngest visible minority group (median age of 29.5 years) and “Arab” Canadians are the second youngest group (median age 30.2). “South Asian” Canadians make up Canada’s largest visible minority group (median age of 32.8) and “Chinese” Canadians make up the second largest visible minority group (median age 38.6). Of the 6.3 million Canadians who identify as a visible minority, 30.9 percent were born in Canada, compared to 65.1 percent who immigrated to Canada.
**LGBTQ:** Recent research found that 10 percent of Canadians aged 18 to 34 identified as LGBTQ, compared to only two percent or three percent in four age categories of older Canadians. Despite the recent inclusion of questions on LGBTQ Canadians in Statistics Canada’s surveys, data is still limited and reliable information is hard to come by due to reasons such as under/self-reporting and fear of stigmatization.

**Youth with disabilities:** There are over 195,000 youth aged 15 to 24 with disabilities, and over 238,000 people aged 25 to 34 with disabilities, making up 4.4 percent of youth aged 15 to 24, and 5.2 percent of people aged 25 to 34, respectively. Similarly to LGBTQ Canadians, data on Canadians with disabilities is limited.

**Language:** Canadians are very linguistically diverse with more than 200 languages spoken at home or as a mother tongue. In the 2011 Census, nearly 6.6 million people reported speaking a language other than English or French at home, making up 20 percent of Canada’s population. Not only are Canadians linguistically diverse, but the number of people who report speaking more than one language is on the rise, from 4.5 million people (14.2 percent) in 2006, to 5.8 million (17.5 percent) in 2011.

Although 1 in 5 Canadians speak a language other than English or French at home, 98.7 percent of workers in Canada use English or French most often or on a regular basis at work. In 2011, 84.7 percent of the population used English at work and 25.3 percent used French. After English and French, the family of Chinese languages were the next most commonly used languages in the workplace.
EDUCATION

Canadians are some of the most highly educated people in the world, ranking first among OECD countries of the portion of adults with a tertiary education. Enrollment in postsecondary education (PSE) is on the rise, as is the number of graduates. Enrollment in registered apprenticeships is also on the rise, yet they still make up a very small portion of the Canadian workforce and completion rates remain low.

The number of students who balance school and work has been steadily increasing since the mid-70s, with between a third and half (depending on the age bracket) of full-time students working. Despite the need to work while in school, student unemployment rates remain high, as does student debt. The percentage of Canadians who owe large amounts student debt has increased over the last decade, as has the average amount of debt.

Put together, the picture is bleak for young educated workers. Despite high rates of educational attainment, alongside record levels of debt, the job market is failing young Canadians. Young workers are not finding good jobs and are instead stuck with high levels of student debt and precarious work for which they are overqualified.

University & College: The number of Canadians enrolled in PSE is on the rise. Since 2000, the number of students enrolled in PSE has increased by 48.4 percent (or 650,922 students) from 1.4 million in the 2000-01 school year, to 2.0 million in the 2013-2014 school year. During this timeframe the number of Canadian students has increased by 55.8 percent, whereas the number of international students has more than tripled, with a 312.7 percent increase, from 59,586 international students in 2000-01 to 194,964 in 2013-2014. (Graph: Post-secondary Enrolments)

The ratio of women to men enrolled in PSE has remained relatively the same during this time period. In the 2013-2014 school year, 43.3 percent of enrolled students were men, compared to 56.1 percent who were women.

Graduation rates are up. Alongside enrollment in PSE, there has been an even steeper rise in PSE graduates each year. Since 2000, the annual number of PSE graduates has increased by 68.1 percent (or 180,915 graduates) from 317,844 in 2000 to 498,759 in 2013. The increase in the number of international student graduates has been especially pronounced, reaching almost eight times the number in was in 2000. That's a 787 percent increase, from 8,439 international graduates in 2000 to 47,370 in 2013. Although the increase was not as drastic for Canadian graduates, their number
still more than doubled (122.8 percent increase) during the same time period, from 237,804 in 2000 to 451,272 in 2013.\textsuperscript{14} (Graph: Postsecondary Graduates)

The ratio of women to men PSE graduates has remained relatively stable during this time period. In 2013 41.9 percent of graduates were male, compared to 57.9 percent who were female.

**Apprenticeship Training:** The number of Canadians enrolled in registered apprenticeship training is on the rise, yet the total number still makes up a very small portion of the Canadian workforce. Since 1991, the number of Canadians in registered apprenticeships has more than doubled from 192,948 in 1991 to 469,680 in 2013. Yet this number still only represents 2.5 percent of the Canadian labour force.\textsuperscript{15} (Graph: Registered Apprenticeship Training)

There are far fewer women in registered apprenticeships than there are men. In 2013, there were only 66,111 women in registered apprenticeships, compared to 403,572 men, meaning that women only make up 14.1 percent of apprenticeships in Canada, and only 4 percent of apprenticeships in the construction and industrial trades workforce.\textsuperscript{16}

It’s clear that apprenticeships are not the first choice for youth in Canada and, unlike university enrollment, rather than enrolling in apprenticeships directly after high school, they may wait a few years or even enroll after completing a university education or later in life. In 2010, the average age of apprenticeship registrants was 30 years.\textsuperscript{17} Still, the majority (56 percent) of Canadians are under the age of 30 when they enroll in registered apprenticeships. Nevertheless there is a still a sizable number entering later in life, with 9.6 percent of registered apprenticeships enrolling between the ages of 35 and 39, 6.6 percent between the ages of 40 and 44, 5.1 percent between the ages of 45 and 49, and 7.7 percent that are 50 years and over when they register. (Graph: Registered Apprenticeships by Age)
Despite increasing levels of enrollment in registered apprenticeship training, completion rates remain very low. The national average completion rate for apprentices is only 56 percent, which is far below completion rates for university and college. It is also below that of international competitors, such as France (79 percent), Germany (75 to 80 percent), Switzerland (79 percent) and Austria (85 percent).\(^\text{18}\) There are a number of reasons for such low completion rates, including the costs of training and tools, lower wage rates during training, separation from family and community during classroom training, and difficulty finding an employer that supports an apprentice’s training.\(^\text{19}\) This last challenge is one of the biggest barriers to completion. Although apprentices need a certain amount of hours to complete their program, employers are not doing their part to support apprentices, with only 1 in 5 employers who employ skilled trades (19 percent) actually hiring and training apprentices.

This low completion rate is problematic because it means workers are not benefiting from the wage premium that comes alongside completion and certification. Those who complete an apprenticeship and become certified earn, on average, 20.4 percent more than those who neither complete nor achieve certification.\(^\text{20}\) It should be noted that union apprenticeship programs report higher completion rates, partly due to financial support, more mentoring, and more promising job opportunities upon completion.

**Costs of post-secondary education:** Alongside rising enrollment rates, are the rising costs of post-secondary education. Tuition fees are one of the largest expenses for post-secondary students and costs only continue to increase. In the past 15 years tuition fees have, on average, increased over five times the rate of inflation. These high costs are partly due to federal funding cuts, which have reduced the amount of an institution’s operating budget that is covered by government grants from 80 percent 30 years ago to about 50 percent today. The difference has been passed on to students, but does not impact all students equally. Statistics Canada has estimated that students from low incomes households are less than half as likely as students from high-income households to pursue a university education.\(^\text{21}\)
Balancing school and work: Many students today are balancing school and work. A third (33.3 percent) of full-time students under 20 years old are employed and almost half of full-time students aged 20 to 24 years (44.5 percent) and 25 to 29 years (46.4 percent) are employed. Part-time students are much more likely to be employed, with the employment rate for part-time students aged 25 to 29 years sitting at 85.1 percent.\(^2\)\(^2\) (Graph: Student Employment Rates (September 2015))

The employment rate for students, especially full-time older students, has increased steadily since the mid-70s. The number of employed full-time students aged 20 to 24 years, has increased by 22 percentage points, from an employment rate of 22.6 percent in 1976 to 44.5 percent in 2015. Similarly, the number of full-time students aged 25 to 29 years has increased by 20 percentage points, from an employment rate of 26.8 percent in 1976 to 46.4 percent in 2015.\(^2\)\(^3\) (Graph: Full-Time Student Employment Rate (1976-2014 – September))

It should be noted that the increased employment rate does not necessarily translate into students having an easier time finding work, but merely that students are more likely to be balancing school and work. During the same time period, students’ unemployment rate also increased. For teen students (15 to 19 years) the unemployment rate increased from 10.3 percent in 1976 to 17.7 percent in 2015. During the same time period, the unemployment rate for students aged 20 to 24 years increased from 5.9 percent to 9.3 percent and for students aged 25 to 29 years, it increased from 4.9 percent to 6.0 percent.
Student Debt: Although the percentage of students who owed debt at the time of graduation decreased very slightly between 2010 and 2015, the percentage of students who owed large amounts of debt ($25,000 and over) has increased, as has the average amount of debt.

In 2000, a third (33 percent) of graduates with a Bachelor’s degree owed $25,000 or more, this percentage increased to 41 percent by 2010. Similar trends are recognizable for graduates with a Master’s degree. By 2010 almost half (49 percent) of graduates with a Doctorate owed debt of $25,000 or more.24 (Graph: Percentage of Graduates with Large Debt ($25,000 and over) at Graduation)

The average amount of student debt has also increased in recent years. In 2000, graduates with a Bachelor or Master’s degree owed, on average, just over $20,000. By 2010 this amount increased to just over $26,000. For graduates with a Doctorate, the average debt owed at the time of graduation increased from just under $24,000 to just over $41,000.25 (Graph: Average Debt Owed at the Time of Graduation)

ECONOMIC INDEPENDENCE & FAMILY LIFE

For a number of reasons, the transition from full-time school to full-time work has been increasingly pushed back and young workers are not attaining economic independence until later in life. This is partly due to the increase in the number of young people enrolling in PSE, rather than entering the workforce after high-school, but it is also connected to fewer quality job opportunities, as well as larger levels of debt after leaving PSE. Canadians are also more likely to transition back and forth between school and work, and although upgrading skills can result in better job opportunities, this is not always the case. For some, it only extends the transition from school to work, with little payoff.
Young workers living in parental homes: One indicator of a later transition to economic independence is the number of young adults still living in their parental homes, which has increased drastically since the 1980s. Young men are more likely to live in their parental homes than young women. In 2011, 63 percent of men aged 20 to 24 years lived with their parents, compared to only 55 percent of women in the same age group. These percentages increased from 51 percent and 33 percent, respectively, in 1981. Looking at young adults aged 25 to 29 years, the percentage still living with their parents has more than doubled since 1981. In 2011, 30 percent of men aged 25 to 29 years and 21 percent of women of the same age lived in their parental homes.\(^26\) (Graph: Young Adults Living in Parental Homes)

Marriage: Overall the marriage rate has decreased steadily since the 1970s from 9.2 in 1972, to less than half that level in 2008, at 4.4 marriages per 1,000 people. This represents a historic low. Although there is a range of reasons for the decreasing marriage rate, looking specifically at the age of first marriage is more telling of a later transition to economic independence. The age at first marriage has increased steadily since the 1970s from just over 22 years for women and 25 years for men, to 29 years for women and 31 years for men in 2008.\(^27\) (Graph: Age at First Marriage)

Children: Alongside a rising number of young people still living in their parental homes and getting married later in life, young people are also delaying having children until later in life. In 2010 the average age of mothers who gave birth was 29.6 years, this number has climbed steadily from the mid-70s, where the average age was 26.7 years in 1975.\(^28\) (Graph: Average Age of Mother at Childbirth)
EMPLOYMENT AND INCOME

Young workers have not fared well over the past three decades. Young Canadians have a higher unemployment rate and a lower employment rate than core-age Canadians. In fact, the youth unemployment rate is persistently double that of the core-age population and although young workers only make up 14.8 percent of Canada’s workforce, they make 28.2 percent of Canada’s unemployed. In contrast to the core-age population, young women have slightly higher employment rates than young men.

Young workers’ hourly and weekly wages are also far below that of the core-age population. Although this can be expected, since young Canadians may have fewer developed skills and are less likely to be as advanced along their career path, concerns arise when combining this information with data presented below on job quality and economic independence. Jobs that were once seen as “port” or “entry-level” are becoming increasingly normalized and young workers are not transitioning into better jobs, nor are they finding work that makes use of their education or skills. Although young women still earn less than young men, the wage gap is less pronounced than that of the core-age population.

Employment\(^\text{29}\): The past three decades have presented a challenging job market for Canadian youth, aged 15 to 24. The youth employment rate was at its highest in 1989 at 63.4 percent, before dropping below the rate of the core-age labour force in 1990, where it has remained ever since. Compared to the core-age labour force, young workers were hit disproportionately hard by the 2008/09 financial crisis and the subsequent recession. During this period the employment rate dropped by almost 4 percentage points (that’s 174,200 fewer jobs) and has yet to recover, remaining below 56 percent ever since. (Graph: Employment Rates for Canadian Youth (1985-2015))
Access to employment is not even for all young workers. Young workers aged 20 to 24 and aged 25 to 29 are doing much better than teen workers (Graph: Employment Rate (2015)). It should be noted that, as discussed below, although young workers 20 years and over have higher employment rates, this does not necessarily correspond to better job quality (eg. scheduling predictability, stability, etc.).

Young women (aged 15 to 24) are performing slightly better than men of the same age bracket, with an employment rate of 57.2 percent compared to 54.4 percent, respectively.

**Unemployment**: Since the mid-80s, the unemployment rate for Canadian youth, aged 15 to 24, has consistently remained above that of Canada’s core-age population. During this time period, youth unemployment never fell below 11 percent, reaching its lowest in 1989 (11 percent), and it’s highest in 1993 at 17.2 percent. In 2009, after the global financial crisis, youth unemployment spiked drastically to 15.3 percent and has yet to fully recover, remaining above 13 percent ever since. Comparing teens aged 15 to 19 to youth aged 20 to 24, prospects have been slightly better for young workers aged 20 to 24, whose unemployment rate reached its lowest in 2007 at 8.7 percent and its highest in 1992 at 15.9 percent. After the financial crisis of 2008/09, the unemployment rate for workers aged 20 to 24 spiked to 12.2 percent (2009) and has remained above 10 percent ever since. (Graph: Unemployment Rates for Canadian Youth (1985-2015))

Young workers are disproportionately represented when it comes to unemployment. Although young workers aged 15 to 24 only make up 14.8 percent of Canada’s workforce, they make up 28.2 percent of Canada’s unemployed.

Youth unemployment (aged 15 to 24) is persistently double that of the “core age” workforce (aged 25 to 54). In 2015
the youth unemployment rate was 13.2 percent, whereas the “core age” unemployment rate was only 5.8 percent.

Youth unemployment rates vary by age category, with the younger brackets experiencing higher rates of unemployment. In 2015 the teen unemployment rate was 18.1 percent compared to 10.4 percent for those aged 20 to 24, and 7.4 percent for those aged 25 to 29 (Graph: Unemployment Rate (2015)).

Young women are less likely to be unemployed than young men. In 2015, the unemployment rate for men aged 15 to 24 was 15.1 percent, compared to 11.2 percent for young women of the same age group.

**Income**: Young workers (aged 15 to 24) earn far less than core-age workers. Comparing median hourly wages, in 2015 young workers earned only half the hourly wage of core-age workers, earning $12.25 an hour compared to $24.50 an hour, respectively. *(Graph: Hourly Wages)*

Looking at weekly income, the wage gap between young workers and core-age workers becomes even more pronounced. In 2015 the median weekly income for young workers was $364.80, which is far lower than that of core-age workers whose median weekly income was $923.20 *(Graph: Weekly Income)*. This difference is partly due to a higher likelihood that young workers are working fewer hours.

Although in some cases youth work fewer hours by choice (eg. balancing school and work), in other cases young workers find themselves under-employed non-voluntarily (see section below).
JOE QUALITY AND LABOUR & SOCIAL PROTECTIONS

Workplaces in Canada and around the world are changing. Trends like the increase in non-standard working relationships, the rising prominence of the service sector, globalization and trade liberalization, accelerating technological change, and greater workplace diversity are significantly transforming the world of work. On the one hand, these trends present new opportunities. On the other hand, they threaten to undermine labour laws, employment standards and other safeguards that are in place to protect workers and their communities.

Precarious jobs are far too rampant and what were once termed “port-jobs” are becoming “career-jobs.” Several indicators demonstrate this trend including the shift in the types of jobs available, with an increase in job types that are less likely to offer full-time hours and decent wages, and an expansion of low-wage, low-skilled jobs in private services. Trends also show an increase part-time work, unpredictable scheduling, temporary jobs, self-employment, and workers who hold multiple jobs.

These trends have been partly driven by an increased pressure from employers to gain labour market “flexibility,” which has been used as a tactic to control hours, maintain low wages, avoid paying benefits and other costs, and undermine the ability of workers to organize and bargain collectively.

The shift to precarious work has not been felt evenly across demographics. Not only are young workers particularly affected, but women have also been disproportionately impacted, being more likely to work part-time and hold multiple jobs than their male counterparts.

Alongside these shifting workplace trends, has been the decrease in social and labour protections (beyond wages and hours of work), including access to employment insurance, and workplace pension plans. This limited access is not being compensated for in private savings or public protections, pointing to the need to strengthen and expand public programs, such as the Canada Pension Plan, for which the government recently announced an expansion.

Job Type: Over the past two decades there has been a shift in the type of jobs generally held by young workers compared to core-age workers, with a demonstrable increase in jobs that are more likely to be lower-skilled and offer

![Young & Core-age Workers by Job Type (2015)](image)
lower wages. Young workers are far more likely than core-age workers to be working in sales and services, with over half (51.0 percent) working in sales and service occupations compared to only one in five (20.6 percent) of core-age workers. As a percentage of their labour force, young workers are twice as likely than core-age workers (4.7 percent vs. 2.2 percent) to work in occupations in art, culture, recreation and sport, and are also twice as likely (3.2 percent vs. 1.6 percent) to work in occupations unique to primary industries, which includes agriculture, forestry, mining, oil and gas, and fishing.\textsuperscript{32} (\textit{Graph: Young & Core-Age Workers by Job Type})

Young women are more likely than young men to work in management, occupations in business, finance and administration, health services, occupations in social science, education, government & religion, occupations in art, culture, recreation and sport and sales and service occupations. Conversely, young men are more likely to work in natural and applied science and related occupations, trade, transport and equipment operators and related occupations, occupations unique to primary industries, and occupations unique to processing, manufacturing and utilities.\textsuperscript{33} (\textit{Graph: Job Type – Young Workers by Sex})

Over the last two decades, young workers have seen the largest increase in occupations in sales and service, from 910,000 jobs in 1997 to 1,219,900 in 2015. As a percentage of the youth workforce, sales and service
occupations have increased by 2.5 percentage points.\textsuperscript{34} (Graph: Young Workers in Sales & Service)

Beyond, occupations in sales and service, young workers have seen a shift in most other job types over the last two decades. Young workers are now less likely to work in management, business, finance and administrative occupations, and occupations in primary industries, processing, manufacturing, and utilities. Conversely, young workers are more likely to work in health, occupations in social science, education, government and religion, and occupations in art, culture, recreation and sport.\textsuperscript{35} (Graph: Change in Job Type for Young Workers – excl. sales and service)

**Non-standard work relationships:** Beyond specific job types, across Canada and globally we are witnessing a drastic rise in the prevalence of non-standard work relationships. This includes self-employment and temporary jobs (discussed below), the informal economy, and the “gig” or “sharing” economy. The gig-economy, whereby new technologies and business models facilitate the connection between buyers and sellers, can be grouped into the following 5 main sectors: transportation (eg. Uber, Lyft), retail (eg. Etsy, eBay, Craigslist, Kijiji), accommodation (eg. Airbnb, VRBO), service and labour (eg. Handy, TaskRabbit, Mechanical Turk, UpCounsel), and finance (eg. Kickstarter, Indiegogo, Lending Club). Based online, these “platform business” have very little need for infrastructure, enabling them to grow at an extremely rapid pace compared to other business models. Revenues from these five sectors were estimated at USD $15 billion in 2014 and projected to grow to USD $335 billion by 2025\textsuperscript{36}.

One of the defining features of these new business models has been their tendency to categorize workers as independent-contractors rather than employees, placing workers outside of the realm of many social and labour protections, while simultaneously exempting employers from the liability and risk that comes with formerly employing workers. This raises many concerns on how this will impact the relevance of laws and regulations concerning working hours, health and safety, minimum wages, dismissal, employment insurance, and retirement security. In many ways, these new technologies and new, or the expansion of old, business models are growing faster than regulators can adapt to and there is very limited data on the working conditions in these new economies. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that the “gig” or “sharing” economy will increasingly impact the world of work and both government and the labour movement must work in collaboration to ensure that fundamental labour rights are protected into the future.

**Permanent vs. Temporary Jobs:** Not only are young workers, aged 15 to 24, far less likely to be in permanent employment than core-age workers, but the percentage of young workers in permanent employment compared to temporary employment has decreased over the past two decades,
whereas the percentage of core-aged workers in permanent employment has stayed relatively the same. In 2015, only 68.7 percent of employed youth held permanent jobs (31.3 percent in temporary jobs), whereas 90.2 percent of employed core-aged workers were in permanent positions (9.8 percent in temporary jobs). The number of young workers in permanent employed has decreased by 6.2 percentage points in that last two decades from 74.9 percent in 1997.\(^{37}\) (Graph: Permanent Employment (1997-2015))

The type of temporary employment also varies by age group. Compared to core-aged workers, young workers are more likely to be in seasonal jobs and casual jobs, whereas core-aged workers are more likely to be in term or contract jobs.\(^{38}\) (Graph: Type of Temporary Employment (2015))

**Part-time vs. Full-time Work:** About half of young workers, aged 15 to 24, are working part-time (48.0 percent) compared to only about one in ten (11.9) core-aged workers. In total about 1.2 million young workers work part-time and 1.3 million work full-time.\(^{39}\) (Graph: Part-time vs. Full-time (2015))

Young women are more likely to work part-time than young men. Over half (55.7 percent) of young women work part-time, compared to only 40.3 percent of young men. This difference between young men and women (15.4 percentage points) is roughly equivalent to the difference among the core-age population. Within the core-age population, 18.9 percent of women work part-time, compared to only 5.5 percent of men, marking a difference of 13.4 percentage points.\(^{40}\) (Graph: Part and Full-Time by Sex (2015))

Over the last three decades the percentage of young workers working full-time has decreased by 24.4 percentage points from 76.4 percent in 1980 to 52.0 percent in 2015. During the same time period the percentage of core-age workers holding full-time jobs has remained relatively stable, only decreasing by 1.6 percentage points.\(^{41}\) (Graph: Full-Time Work (1980-2015))
As shown in the section on education, some have pointed to the fact that the rise in young workers in part-time work corresponds with the rise in post-secondary enrollments, arguing that young workers are working part-time solely by choice. Although this is certainly the case for some, there is still a large number of part-time workers who are working part-time involuntarily and this type of under-employment is on the rise.

Reasons for working part-time vary greatly between young workers and core-age workers. The large majority (71.9 percent) of young workers who work part-time do so voluntarily because they are going to school. A small minority of young workers are also voluntarily working part-time because of personal preference, illness, caring for children, or other personal or family obligations. Unfortunately, this still leaves one in five young part-time workers (19.4 percent) who are working part-time for non-voluntary reasons, such as business conditions (13.6 percent) or because they could not find full-time work (5.8 percent).\(^{42}\)

Comparatively, core-age workers provide a more diverse range of reasons for working part-time. Those who are working part-time voluntarily cite reasons such as personal preference (22.2 percent), caring for children (19.7 percent), going to school (8.5 percent), illness (5.3 percent) or other personal or family responsibilities (4.4 percent). This still leaves over one third of part-time core-age workers who are working part-time for non-voluntarily for reasons such as business conditions (26.2 percent) or...
they could not find full-time work (10 percent).43 (Graph: Reasons for Part-Time Employment (2015))

Variable and Unpredictable Scheduling: Alongside the decrease in young workers who hold full-time jobs has been the rise in unpredictable and erratic scheduling, especially in the restaurant and retail sector. Unpredictable scheduling can take a number of different forms. In some cases, employees are kept “on-call” and asked to stay available for a given period of time, but there is no guarantee that they will be called in for a shift. In other cases, shifts are scheduled but the employee must call in the day-of to find out if they are actually working. In other cases still, employees may be given a set schedule, but with very little advanced notice or too few hours.

Whichever form it takes, unpredictable scheduling is on the rise and is very challenging for young workers both financially and personally. Part-time workers may receive insufficient hours, yet because of unpredictable schedules are prevented from holding a second job. It also presents challenges for students who must balance school and work, and for parents who need to secure child care.

Unfortunately Canada is lacking sufficient and reliable data on the prevalence of unpredictable scheduling, although it can be looked at within the broader category of precarious work in Canada.44 As noted above, of young part-time workers, 19 percent would prefer full-time hours. In Ontario alone, 63 percent of all workers who work in minimum wage jobs have to deal with shift schedules and work-times that change week-to-week, meaning that unpredictable hours have become the norm for most minimum wage workers.45

Multiple Jobholders: Young workers, aged 15 to 24, are slightly more likely to hold multiple jobs than core-aged workers. In 2015, 6.6 percent of young workers held multiple jobs, compared to only 5.5 percent of core-aged workers. The number of multiple jobholders has increased slightly over the past three decades from 4.6 percent and 4.2 percent, respectively, in 1987. Women are about twice as likely as men to hold multiple jobs, with 8.7 percent of employed young women holding multiple jobs, compared to only 4.4 percent of employed young men.46 (Graph: Multiple Jobholders (2015))

“Self”-Employment: Canada has seen a drastic rise in self-employed workers vs. workers in an employer-employee relationship in the last three decades. While the number of employees increased 53.9 percent between 1985 and 2015, the number of self-employed workers saw an even steeper increase, by 66.0 percent during the same time period.
Although in some cases self-employment can be positive, looking more closely at the type of self-employment that has increased draws concern. Self-employed workers with no paid help tend to be more precarious than self-employed workers with paid help, especially when unincorporated. When looking at the rise in self-employed workers, the most drastic rise has been in these precarious categories. By 2015, the number of incorporated self-employed workers with no paid help was over 5 times what it was in 1985, marking a 587.3 percent increase. Although not as drastic of an increase, the number of unincorporated self-employed workers with no paid help also rose faster than the overall rate of employed and self-employed workers, increasing by 73.8 percent during the same time period.47 (Graph: Self-Employed by Type)

Young workers are far more likely to work in these two forms of self-employment that tend to be more precarious, also known as “own-account” self-employment. By 2015, 90 percent of self-employed workers aged 15 to 24 were in own-account self-employment, compared to 75 percent of workers aged 25 to 34, 67% of those aged 35 to 54, and 69 percent of those aged 55 and over. (Graph: Own Account Self-Employment as % of All Self-Employment by Age).

This drastic rise in self-employment points to concerns over what has been termed “false” self-employment, whereby employers are increasingly (either inadvertently or deliberately) misclassifying workers as self-employed or independent-operators to avoid taxes and engage workers without having to respect employment standards and workers’ rights. This places workers outside of the scope of certain social and labour protections related to health and safety, working hours, minimum wages, dismissal, employment insurance and retirement security. In other cases, unemployed Canadians
may identify as self-employed, due to an inability to find better work and a perceived stigma surrounding unemployment.

**Unpaid internships:** Internships can be of great benefit to young workers, enabling them to gain valuable skills and experience, on the other hand, one of the biggest barriers for young workers entering the workforce has been the prevalence and abuse of unpaid internships. In some cases unpaid internships replace paid work and have even been used to exploit free labour from a vulnerable workforce.

Although there are few laws in Canada defining or regulating internships directly, internships are regulated through provincial employment standards legislation, regulations and/or guidelines. Unfortunately exclusions, exemptions, and a lack of enforcement can leave interns unprotected.

Without proper safeguards, basic labour protections, such as minimum wages, hours of work, and health and safety are not applied or are undermined, putting the financial and physical well-being of young workers at risk.

There is limited data surrounding interns in Canada and Statistics Canada does not document the number of unpaid interns. Yet, the most commonly cited figure estimates that annually, in Ontario alone, there are approximately 100,000 unpaid internships.

**Health and Safety:** One of the most critical aspects of job quality is the right to a healthy and safe workplace. Although awareness and education about workers’ rights, employers’ obligations and best practices has improved over the years, the rate of workplace injuries and fatalities still remains far too high. In 2015, 902 workplace deaths were recorded in Canada and, of these fatalities, 8 were teenagers aged 15 to 19, 22 were young workers aged 20 to 24 years, and another 41 were aged 25 to 29. Workplace injuries are also far too rampant. In 2014, 239,643 claims were accepted for lost time due to a work-related injury or disease, and of this number 7,998 were young workers aged 15 to 19. These numbers only include fatalities and claims that were reported and accepted by compensation boards, but in reality the number of injuries and deaths is much higher.

For young teenage workers, many injuries are reported by food counter attendants and kitchen helpers, whereas for 20 to 24 year olds, many were labourers in processing, manufacturing and utilities. The labour movement has made great progress to improve health and safety in the workplace, with some major wins including the right to refuse unsafe work, the right to be informed about hazards in the workplace and the right to participate in health and safety discussions. Still there is a ways to go to ensure that no young workers die on the job and that they have a healthy and safe workplace.
**Employment Insurance:** Young workers are less likely to qualify for employment insurance (regular benefits) (EI) than older workers and the situation has only worsened in the last 15 years. In 2015, only 3.4 percent of unemployed teens, 24.6 percent of unemployed 20 to 24 year olds, and 40.9 percent of unemployed 25 to 29 year olds received EI. Older unemployed workers are more likely to receive EI, ranging from 47.3 percent to 61.8 percent, depending on the age category. Fifteen years earlier young workers were more likely to receive EI with 5.6 percent of unemployed teens, 35.9 percent of unemployed 20 to 24 year olds, and 55.8 percent of unemployed 25 to 29 year olds receiving EI in 2000.50 (Graph: Percentage of Unemployed Receiving Employment Insurance)

Young women are far less likely to receive EI (regular benefits) than young men. In 2015, only one percent of unemployed female teens received EI compared to five percent of unemployed males. Young women aged 20 to 24 years were only half as likely as young men in the same age category to receive EI (16 percent vs 30 percent, respectively). Finally, only 31 percent of unemployed young women aged 25 to 29 years received EI, compared to 48 percent of young men in the same age group.51 (Graph: Percentage of Unemployed Receiving EI by Sex (2015)).

There are a number of reason why women are less likely to receive EI than men. One reason is due to the hour requirements needed to qualify for EI. Women are more likely than men to move in and out of the labour market, to handle caregiving responsibilities, and are more likely to work fewer hours than men. Although young (and core-age) men have a higher unemployment rate than women, women are more likely to be under-employed in precarious jobs (part-time, casual, term or contract, or multiple jobs), impacting not only whether or not they qualify for EI, but also the level of benefits they receive when they do qualify. Recent changes to the EI program that came into force July 1st 2016 will eliminate the higher entrance requirement for
new entrants and re-entrants and are likely to help young workers and women who have moved in and out of the job market.

**Retirement Security:** Canada's population is aging rapidly and it's estimated that by 2060 over one quarter of Canada’s population will be aged 65 years and over.\(^{52}\) This highlights the importance of having strong systems in place to ensure that all Canadians can retire in dignity. Unfortunately, there are over 11.6 million Canadians without a workplace pension plan (registered pension plan – RPP) and this number has increased over the last four decades, coinciding with the decrease in unionization rates. The alternative to workplace pensions, registered retirement savings plans (RRSPs) have been an epic fail since they have low participation rates, are only useful to those who can afford to contribute, have high mutual funds fees, which slash returns, and depend on the stock market, making them very risky. Although public pensions (CPP/QPP) are vital, benefits are too low and the average monthly benefits remain below the poverty line in Canada’s big cities. This not only impacts low-income seniors today, but puts a serious burden on young workers, who fret for their retirement security.

**Workplace Pension Plans (registered retirement savings /pensions plans – RPPs):** Over the past four decades there has been an overall decrease in the percentage of employed Canadians who have a workplace pension plan. Furthermore there has been a shift in the type of workplace pension plans offered, with a rising number of defined contribution plans, alongside a decrease in defined benefit plans. Young workers are the least likely to have a workplace pension plan.

Since 1976 the portion of workers with a workplace pension has decreased by 5.3 percentage points from 40 percent in 1976 to 34.7 percent in 2014.\(^{53}\) (Graph: Percentage of Employed with Workplace Pension Plan (RPP))

Employers today are also less likely to offer defined benefit plans and are instead increasingly offering defined contribution plans, which transfers the risk onto workers. Since 1976, the percentage of workers covered by a defined benefit plan has decreased from 37.4 percent to 24.7
percent in 2014. During this same time period, the number of workers with a defined contribution plan has increased from 2.1 percent to 5.8 percent.\(^5\) (Graph: Defined Benefit vs. Defined Contribution)

Young workers are far less likely to be covered by a workplace pension plan than older workers. In 2013, only 1.5 percent of workers under the age of 20 and only 9.4 percent of workers between ages 20 and 24 had a workplace pension. About one in five (22.4 percent) young workers aged 25 to 29 had a workplace pension, but this portion is still far lower than older age categories, where about a third of workers had a workplace pension in 2013.\(^5\) (Graph: % of Workers with a Workplace Pension (RPP) (2013))

**Personal Retirement Savings - Registered Retirement Savings Plan (RRSP):** Although registered retirement savings plans (RRSPs) are being promoted as alternatives to workplace pension plans, as discussed above, they are simply not working for the vast majority of Canadians. Since 2000 the total number of Canadians contributing to an RRSP has dropped from 6.3 million to 6.0 million in 2014. During this same time period, the median employment income of RRSP contributors has steadily increased, demonstrating that it is primarily wealthier Canadians that are able to contribute. In 2000, the median income of RRSP contributors was $39,400, but this income rose to $59,740 by 2014. It should be noted that the median income of contributors in 2014 is far above the median income of young workers.\(^5\) (Graph: Median Income of RRSP Contributors)

It’s clear that RRSPs are not benefitting young Canadians and it’s mostly older Canadians who are contributing. Between 2000 and 2014 young people increasingly made up a smaller portion of RRSP contributions. In 2000, only two percent of contributions were made by contributors under the age of 25 and only 16 percent were made by those aged 25 to 34. By 2014 this portion had decreased to even lower levels, making up only one percent and 11 percent of contributions,
respectively. Conversely, older Canadians’ increasingly make up a larger portion of RRSP contributors. In 2000, four percent of contributions were made by contributors aged 65 years and older and 18 percent were from those aged 55 to 64. By 2014 these age brackets made up nine percent and 30 percent of total contributions, respectively.57

(Graphs: RRSP Contributions by Age (2000) and RRSP contributions by Age (2014))

Other non-wage benefits: Beyond workplace pensions plans, young workers are also the least likely to have access to other non-wage benefits such as life and disability insurance plans, supplemental medical insurance plans, and dental plans. Statistics Canada’s Workplace and Employee Survey (2005) found that 53.2 percent of young workers, under the age of 25, had no non-wage benefits, which is about double the percentage of core-age workers without benefits. Only 21 percent of young workers had access to a life/disability insurance plan, only 21.7 percent had access to a supplemental medical insurance plan, and only 23.9 percent had access to a dental plan. This compares to 61.1 percent, 54.6 percent, and 60.2 percent, respectively, of workers aged 25 to 44.

POVERTY & DEBT

Poverty rates for young Canadians have increased only slightly over the past two decades, yet youth are still more likely to live below the poverty line than older Canadians. The amount of debt that young Canadians are carrying has seen a sharp increase, with debt from student loans and lines of credit seeing the most drastic increases.

Low-income measure after tax: Young Canadians are more likely to live in poverty than older Canadians. Using the low income measure (LIM) after tax, 16.5 percent of Canadians under the age of 20 and 14.5 percent of Canadians aged 20 to 34 live below
the low-income cut off. This compares to only 12.2 percent of Canadians aged 35 to 64 and 11.1 percent of Canadians aged 65 and over (Graph: Canadians Living in Poverty).

Over the past two decades there has only been a slight increase in the number of young Canadians living below the poverty line. Between 1993 and 2013 the number of Canadians under the age of 20 living below the poverty line only increased by half a percentage point and by 2 percentage points for those aged 20 to 34 years (Graph: Canadians Living in Poverty 1993-2013).58

Debt: Young Canadians are carrying more debt than ever before. By 2012 the total amount of debt carried by Canadians under the age of 30 had reached just over $300.3 billion, almost double the total in 1999, $156.4 billion (Graph: Total Debts of Canadians Under 35). The number of family units carrying this debt had also increased from 2.5 million families in 1999 to 2.6 million in 2012.59

Beyond the amount owed through mortgages, which has more than doubled from $119.1 billion in 1999 to $240.2 billion in 2012, the number young Canadians (family units) who owe other types of debt has also increased. The type of debt that saw the most drastic increase is the amount owed through lines of credit, which has almost quadrupled from $4.8 billion in 1999 to $16.2 billion in 2012.60 (Graph: Debts Carried by Canadians Under 35)
Although the total amount of debt has increased in all categories, the increase in the total number of families or individuals who carry this debt is not as stark. The percentage of Canadians under 35 years with mortgages and credit card debt has only increased slightly since 1999, whereas the number carrying a line of credit, student loan, or a vehicle loan has increased more drastically during the same time period. The largest increase is in the number of young Canadians carrying a student loan, which increased from 24.0 percent to 28.6 percent between 1999 and 2012, and the number carrying a line of credit, which increased from 14.0 percent to 21.9 percent during the same time period. (Graph: Percentage of Families/Individuals Under 35 Holding Debt)

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**DIVERSITY, INCLUSIVITY & EQUITY**

Canada is seeing growing populations of young aboriginals, visible minorities and landed immigrants. There is increased recognition of discrimination towards these groups, as well as towards young women, LGBTQ and disabled workers. Despite this diversity and awareness of discrimination, not all young Canadians are treated equally in today’s workplace. This calls for stronger policy, regulation and action to make workplaces more inclusive and equitable for all.

**YOUNG WOMEN WORKERS**

Canadians can be proud to say that we have come a long way to make workplaces more equitable for women. Although still present, the wage gap between young women and
men is less pronounced than that of the core-age population. Nevertheless this gap still needs to be closed, as does the difference between young men and women in areas such as access to EI, job stability (part-time and multiple jobholders), employment in certain sectors, and enrollment in apprenticeships. Furthermore, sexism and sexual harassment are still far too rampant in Canadian workplaces.

**Wage Gap:** Young female workers make less than their male counterparts, yet the gender wage gap is less pronounced among young workers than within the core-age population. Looking at hourly wages, the median hourly wage for young women is $1 less than that of young men. This means that, based on hourly wages, young women only make 92 percent of what young men earn. This wage gap is nevertheless less pronounced than that of the core-age population, where the median hourly wage of women is only 84 percent of that of men.\(^62\) (Graph: Hourly Wages by Sex)

Looking to weekly income, the wage gap is more pronounced. This is partly due to the higher likelihood that women will work fewer hours than their male counterparts. The median weekly income for young women is only 71 percent that of young men. This wage gap is actually more pronounced than that of the core-age population, where women’s median weekly income is 76 percent that of men.\(^63\) (Graph: Weekly Income by Sex)

It should be noted that for both hourly wages and weekly income the difference between the average and median is significant as it demonstrates inequity within these groupings. Median incomes are lower than the average because there is a larger portion of the population in lower income brackets.
YOUNG VISIBLE MINORITIES AND IMMIGRANTS

The population of young immigrants and visible minorities in Canada is growing, yet racism and xenophobia are still far too present in the job market and Canadian workplaces. Because young visible minorities and immigrants have higher PSE graduation rates than non-visible minorities and Canadian born and don’t face some of the same barriers as adult immigrants (language, foreign credential recognition) one would expect better opportunities, yet employment rates are still lower than average. These conflicting trends point to racial discrimination in hiring and in the workplace.

Population: Canada is seeing a rise in landed immigrants aged 15 to 24. As of January 2016, there were 614,600 young immigrants in Canada, a 14.4 percent increase from 2007. Young newcomers make up 7.1 percent of the landed immigrant labour force, 12 percent of Canada’s youth labour force, and 1.7 percent of Canada’s total labour force.64

By 2011, there were nearly 6.3 million Canadians who identified as a visible minority65, making up 19.1 percent of the Canadian population. This number has increased by 16.2 percent from 5,068,100 in 2006. Canada’s visible minority population is younger than the overall population, with a median age of 33.4 compared to 40.1, respectively. 66

Educational Attainment: Visible minorities in Canada tend to be more highly educated than non-visible minorities. In 2006, 29.7 percent of men and 26.3 percent of women who identify as a visible minority had a university degree, compared to only 16.2 percent of non-visible minority men and 16.6 percent of non-visible minority women. Conversely, non-visible minority men and women are more likely to have a college or apprenticeship certificate or diploma.67 Similarly, immigrants in Canada are more likely to hold a university degree than Canadians born in Canada. In 2011, immigrant adults aged 25 to 64 represented just below one-quarter (24.6 percent) of Canada’s adult population, yet over one-third (34.3 percent) of adults with a university degree.68 (Graph: Educational Attainment of Visible Minorities (2006))
Employment & unemployment: Alongside higher rates of university attainment, one would suspect that workers of colour and newcomers would have higher employment rates, but this is not the case. Both young immigrants, aged 15 to 24, and core-age immigrants have a lower employment rate than workers that are born in Canada. The employment rate for young newcomers is 8.5 percent less than youth born in Canada. (Graph: Employment Rate of Immigrants vs. Canadian Born (Jan 2016)). Similarly, the unemployment rate for both young and core-age immigrants is slightly higher than that of workers born in Canada. (Graph: Unemployment Rate of Immigrants vs. Canadian Born (Jan 2016)).

Similar to the situation of landed-immigrants, although visible-minorities tend to be better educated, they still have lower employment rates than non-visible minorities. The employment rate for young women who identify as a visible minority is 14.1 percentage points lower than non-visible minority young women. The situation is slightly worse for young men who identify as a visible minority, with an employment rate that is 15.2 percentage points lower than young men who do not identify as a visible minority. This gap in employment rates between visible and non-visible minorities is less pronounced within the core-age population, although the gender difference reverses itself, with visible-minority men faring better than visible-minority women. (Graph: Employment Rate of Racialized Men and Women (2006))

Experiences of racial discrimination in the workplace: Although more reliable and updated data is needed, reports show that
racial discrimination in hiring and within the workplace is far too rampant. The *Ethnic Diversity Survey* conducted by Statistics Canada in 2003 found that one in five visible minority workers reported experiencing racial discrimination. Each year many complaints related to racial discrimination are filed before human rights tribunals.

**YOUNG ABORIGINAL WORKERS**

*The aboriginal population is growing and young aboriginals make up a large portion of the aboriginal population. Compared to their non-aboriginal counterparts, young aboriginal workers have higher unemployment rates, lower employment rates, and lower rates of PSE attainment. These trends, combined with discrimination and other factors, mean that the aboriginal population is more likely to live in poverty than the non-aboriginal population.*

**A Young Population:** The population of aboriginal youth is growing much faster than that of non-aboriginal youth. Overall, Canada’s aboriginal population is much younger than that of non-aboriginal Canadians. In 2011, the median age of the aboriginal population was only 28 years, compared to Canada’s non-aboriginal population whose median age was 41 years.⁷¹

**A Growing Population:** Canada is seeing a rising number of aboriginal youth. Since 2007 the population of aboriginal youth, aged 15 to 24, has grown by 26.8 percent, whereas the population on non-aboriginal youth has stayed relatively the same (increased by 0.3 percent). In 2015, aboriginal youth, aged 15 to 24, made up 22.4 percent of the aboriginal labour force, 4.3 percent of Canada’s youth labour force, and 0.6 percent of Canada’s total labour force. The population growth rate for Aboriginal people is much higher than for non-aboriginal people in Canada. Between 2006 and 2011 the Aboriginal population grew by 20 percent, or 232,385 people, whereas the non-aboriginal population only grew by 5 percent during the same time period. It is projected that the aboriginal population will continue to grow at a faster rate than the non-aboriginal population. Several factors contribute to this increase, including higher fertility rates and an increasing tendency for people to identify as Aboriginal.⁷² *(Graph: Population Growth of Aboriginal Youth)*
An Increasingly Urban Population: The population of aboriginal people in Canada is increasingly shifting off of reserves and into urban areas. By 2011, 56 percent of Aboriginal people lived in urban areas, compared to only 49 percent in 1996. Canadian cities with the largest Aboriginal populations are Winnipeg (78,420), Edmonton (61,765), Vancouver (52,375), Toronto (36,995), Calgary (33,370), Ottawa-Gatineau (30,570), Montreal (26,280), Saskatoon (23,895) and Regina (19,785).

Employment and Unemployment: Young aboriginal people, aged 15 to 24, have lower employment rates and higher unemployment rates than their non-aboriginal counterparts. The employment rate for aboriginal youth is 6.2 percentage points less than non-aboriginal youth and their unemployment rate is 5.8 percentage points higher. (Graph: Aboriginal & Non-Aboriginal Unemployment Rates (2015))

Wages: When looking hourly wage rates, aboriginal youth are performing slightly better than their non-aboriginal counterparts, making, on average, 3 percent more. This trend reverses itself for the core-age population, whereby the non-aboriginal population earns, on average, 5 percent more per hour than the aboriginal population. (Average Hourly Wages, Aboriginal & Non-Aboriginal (2015))

When looking at average weekly wage rates aboriginal youth, perform even better, earning, on average, 9 percent more than non-aboriginal youth. Similar to findings when looking at hourly wage rates, this trend reverses itself with core-age non-aboriginal workers making 4 percent more than core-age aboriginal workers. (Graph: Average Weekly Wages, Aboriginal & Non-Aboriginal)

The difference between hourly and weekly wage rates can be partly attributed the
difference in hours worked. The aboriginal population, on average, works more hours per week than the non-aboriginal population. (Graph: Average Usual Weekly Hours, Aboriginal & Non-Aboriginal (2015))

**Occupations:** When looking at type of occupation, there is a difference in how the portion of the aboriginal and non-aboriginal workforce is distributed. Aboriginal workers are more likely to have jobs in sales and service occupations, trades, transport and equipment operations, and natural resources and agricultural occupations. Conversely the non-aboriginal population is more likely to work in occupations that require higher levels of education, such as management, business, finance and administration, and natural and applied sciences. (Graph: Occupation: Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal (2015))

**Education:** The difference in type of occupation can be partly linked to the difference in educational attainment between the aboriginal and non-aboriginal labour force. In 2015, 18.8 percent of the aboriginal labour force had not completed high school, compared to only 9.6 percent of the non-aboriginal labour force. Aboriginal people are also less likely to have completed post-secondary education than non-aboriginal people. Only 48.2 percent of the aboriginal labour force has completed post-secondary education, compared to 64.2 percent of their non-aboriginal counterparts. (Graph: Educational Attainment of Aboriginal Labour Force (2015))

**Poverty and Food Insecurity:** Factors discussed above combined with discrimination and other factors leading to inequity mean that the aboriginal population is more likely to live in poverty than the non-aboriginal population. Food insecurity is far too rampant among Canada’s aboriginal population. A household is considered food insecure when one or more members do not have access to the variety or quantity of food that they
need due to a lack of money. In 2012, 17.9 percent of aboriginal youth, aged 15 to 24 years, and 19.6 percent of core-age aboriginal people were found to either have low or very low food security, that’s almost one in five aboriginal people who face food insecurity.80

YOUNG LGBTQ WORKERS

There is very limited data on LBGTQ youth in Canada’s workforce, although recent polling has shown that one in ten youth identify as LGBT. There’s a growing awareness, and in turn conversation, of homophobia and the discrimination that LBGTQ Canadians face in their workplaces. Unions have been, and continue to be a strong voice for LBGTQ rights in Canadian workplaces and beyond, making significant gains in collective agreements and government legislation.

There is a growing awareness, and in turn conversation, of the discrimination that lesbian, gay, bisexual, two-spirited, trans* and queer (LGBTQ) Canadians face in their workplaces. This discrimination can surface through hostility, unequal treatment, social isolation, homophobia, transphobia and violence.81

Despite this growing awareness, there is unfortunately very limited data on LBGTQ youth in Canada’s workforce. The Canadian Community Health Survey (2003) was the first Statistics Canada survey to include a question on sexual orientation. Since then other surveys, such as the General Social Survey on Victimization (2009), have included questions on sexual orientation.82 In 2003, one percent of Canadians, aged 18-59, reported that they consider themselves to be homosexual and 0.7 percent considered themselves bisexual. By 2014 1.7 percent of Canadians, aged 18-59, self-reported as homosexual and 1.3 percent self-reported as bisexual.83 Some sociologists have cautioned that this rate is likely under-reported, because of a suspicion of how the government will use the data, among other reasons.84

A Forum Research poll commissioned by the National Post in 2012 found that 5 percent of Canadians identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT) and a third of LGBT people said they were in a same sex marriage. Compared to Statistics Canada’s figures, these findings are more in line with latest numbers from the Williams Institute, a well reputed University of California Los Angeles think tank. The Forum poll also found that younger Canadians are far more likely to identify as LGBT than older Canadians, with 10 percent of Canadians aged 18 to 34 identifying as LGBT, compared to only two or three percent in four older age categories.85

Alongside insufficient data on the number of young LGBTQ Canadians, there is also a lack of data on the prevalence of workplace homophobia and discrimination and its impact on the economic success and stability of young LGBTQ workers. Nevertheless, reported incidents of discrimination are far too common.

Fortunately, unions and the labour movement have been, and continue to be, a strong ally and voice for LGBTQ rights in Canadian workplaces and beyond. Unions have made significant gains for LGBTQ workers in Canada in both specific collective agreements
and government legislation, including marriage leave and other leaves of absence, spousal, pension plan and other benefits, recognition of gender identity and expression, and other forms of employment equity. However, there are still improvements to be made to make Canadian workplaces safe, inclusive and equitable for LGBTQ youth.

**YOUNG WORKERS WITH DISABILITIES**

*About one in twenty young Canadians identify as a person with a disability. Persons with disabilities, and especially young workers with disabilities, earn less than persons without disabilities and are more likely earn low-incomes later into life. Although there is still a ways to go, the labour movement has made significant gains for workers with disabilities.*

Canada has come a long way in recognizing the barriers and special needs that Canadians with disabilities face in workplaces. In 2012, 4.4 percent of youth aged 15 to 24 years and 5.2 percent of those aged 25 to 34 years identified as a person with a disability.⁸⁶

Persons with disabilities, and especially young workers with disabilities earn less than persons without disabilities. In 2012, three quarters (75.8 percent) of young workers, aged 15 to 24, with disabilities earned under $15,000 a year, compared to only 65.7 percent of young workers without disabilities. Young workers with disabilities are more likely than those without disabilities to remain in low income work later into their life, with two in five (42 percent) young adults, aged 25 to 34, with disabilities earning below $15,000, compared to only one in five (19.5 percent) of young adults without disabilities. Overall about a third (30.4 percent) of Canadians with disabilities earned below $15,000 a year, compared to only a quarter (25.2 percent) of Canadians without disabilities.⁸⁷

(Graph: Income Distribution of Persons With & Without Disabilities (2012))
The Canadian labour movement has made significant gains for workers with disabilities by lobbying federal, provincial and territorial governments for labour market strategies and for improved income and support services for disabled persons. Unions also provide educational resources and conduct public awareness campaigns on disability rights.

**UNIONS & YOUNG WORKERS**

Young workers have lower rates of unionization than core-age workers. While young men are more likely to be unionized than young women, this gap has narrowed drastically since the late 90s. Young workers who belong to a union on average make more than non-unionized young workers. Overall young workers are interested in joining unions and support for unions is growing, although there is some resentment among some non-union workers of unionized workers. Union principles of empowering workers, social justice and fairness, and collaboration resonate with young Canadians. Young workers are active and even taking lead roles in union campaigns and actions, especially those that target some of the most precarious workplaces. Digital activism is becoming increasingly central to union campaigns as non-standard forms of employment, technological change, and globalization has placed limitations on traditional organizing tactics.

**Union coverage:** Only 15.0 percent of young workers, aged 15 to 24 years, are unionized compared to 33.5 percent of core-age workers. Yet, over the past two decades, the unionization rate of young workers has risen slightly from 13.1 percent in 1997, whereas the unionization rate of core-age workers has decreased from 37.8 percent in 1997.88 (Graph: Unionization Rates 1997 vs. 2015)

**Union Coverage by Sex:** Two decades ago men were more likely to be unionized than women, although this trend has reversed itself for the core-age population and has narrowed drastically for young workers. By 2015, 15.3 percent of young men and 14.7 percent of young women were covered by a union, compared to 14.1 percent and 11.9 percent in 1997. Although the union gender gap for young workers was 2.2 percentage
points in 1997, by 2015, it was only 0.6 percent.\textsuperscript{89} (\textit{Graph: Unionization Rates by Sex (1997-2015)})

**Union Coverage by Public & Private Sector:** Both young and core-age workers are more likely to be covered by a union in the public sector compared to the private sector. While private sector unionization rates for young workers have increased slightly over the past two decades from 10.8 percent in 1997 to 11.1 percent in 2015, the largest increase is in the public sector, where unionization rates for young workers have increased from 35.7 percent to 50.4 percent during the same time period. The trend looks very different for core-age workers whose private sector unionization rates have dropped by 5.9 percentage points during the same time period and public sector rates have remained relatively stable.\textsuperscript{90} (\textit{Graph: Public and Private Sector Unionization Rates (1997-2015)})

**Union Coverage by Sector:** Rates of union coverage vary greatly for young workers depending on the sector. Young workers, aged 15 to 24, have the highest rates of unionization in the utilities sector (47.5 percent), followed by health care and social assistance (42.1 percent) and public administration (41.4 percent). Unionization for young workers in public administration, health care and social assistance have risen steadily over the past two decades, whereas rates in utilities have varied considerably over the years. Young workers are least likely to be unionized in accommodation and food services (3.5 percent) and in professional, scientific and technical sectors (4.4 percent). These sectors have had low rates of unionization since the late 90s. Unionization rates for young workers in the construction sector have risen steadily from 14.9 percent 1997 to 19.6 percent in 2015.\textsuperscript{91} (\textit{Graph: Young Workers’ Unionization Rates by Sector (1997-2015)})

**Impact of unionization on income of young workers:** Being a union member has a positive impact on the income of Canadians, especially for groups that are more likely to face discrimination and barriers to employment, such as young workers and women.
Young workers, under the age of 25, who belong to a union make, on average $3.74 more an hour, or about 27 percent more than non-unionized young workers.\textsuperscript{92}

**Young workers’ perceptions of unions:** The perception of unions among young workers is mixed. Overall young workers are interested in joining unions and support for unions is growing, although there is some resentment among non-union workers of unionized workers. Recent polling by Vector Research in July of 2015 found that 28 percent of non-union members are interested in joining a union and that this number
increased to 40 percent if the person knew that management wouldn’t object or interfere. This is the highest level of support for unions in the last 12 years. Young workers, under 35 years, show even more interest in joining a union, with half stating that they would vote for a union.93

Young union members are more loyal to their union than older union members. The same Vector poll found that 57 percent of union members would vote to have union if they were non-unionized and this number increased to 66 percent if they knew the employer would show no disapproval. Among young workers, aged 18 to 34, support is even higher, with 70 percent of young union members stating that they would vote to have a union. This number increased to 81 percent if they knew the employer would show no disapproval.94

In 2015, research was also commissioned by the Canadian Labour Congress on the public’s perceptions of unions. Looking specifically at the 18-34 age category, the research found that there are some misperceptions about unions and some young people have a limited understanding of what unions do. The perception of some Canadians is that unions are confrontational, that they have not adapted over time, and that they are limited to exclusive groups of workers, not the average worker. The research also found that some non-union workers resent union members for having better working conditions and benefits. However, union principles of empowering workers, social justice and fairness, and collaboration still resonate with Canadians and focus group participants expressed that by fostering these principles, perceptions of unions could be shifted in a more positive direction.

**Young workers in the labour movement:** Although there is limited data on rates of youth participation in specific union activities, young workers are clearly active and even taking lead roles in union campaigns and actions. Young workers play leading roles in campaigns such as “Baristas Rise-Up”95 and the “Fight for $15,”96 which focus on labour rights, better working conditions, and higher wages in some of the most precarious sectors. Young workers’ groups and committees have formed in most major unions, federations of labour, and in several labour councils. These groups are youth driven and work to empower young Canadians to make changes in their workplaces and beyond. The CLC’s Young Workers Advisory Committee has been active since 1997. There is also a growing presence of digital activism that engages young workers online and through social media and uses new and exciting mobilization and pressure tactics. Digital activism also holds a growing importance as non-standard forms of employment, technological change, and globalization has placed limitations on traditional organizing tactics that are unable to reach workers in the gig-economy or within more diverse and regionally dispersed workforces.

**CIVIC ENGAGEMENT & ACTIVISM**

*Young Canadians, aged 18 to 34 years, are less likely to vote in federal elections than older Canadians, but this does not mean that young workers are not engaged in politics. Young Canadians are engaging in a large variety of other forms of political and civic activities, and at levels that far exceed those of the overall population.*
Electoral participation in federal elections: Young Canadians, aged 18 to 34 years, are less likely to vote in federal elections than older Canadians. In the 2011 federal election, only 55 percent of young people aged 18-24 voted and only 59 percent of young people aged 25 to 34 voted. In the 2015 federal election, the voter turnout rates of these two age groups increased to 67 percent and 70 percent, respectively. Despite the increased number of young voters in the most recent federal election, this rate still remains below that of the total population, which was 70 percent in 2011 and 77 percent in 2015.97 (Graph: Voter Turnout in Federal Elections)

Reasons for not voting: Although voter turnout is lower among youth, compared to the overall population, this does not necessarily mean that young workers are not engaged in politics. Elections Canada’s National Youth Survey, which was conducted after the 2011 federal election, found that the most common reasons for which young Canadians did not vote were related to personal circumstances, such as being too busy with work, school, or family, or travelling at the time, or because they felt that they didn’t have sufficient knowledge about the parties, candidates, and issues.

Inclusion in the electoral process: Further to having personal circumstances prevent young Canadians from voting, those aged 25 to 34 years, are the least likely to be able to vote in federal elections. Statistics Canada’s General Social survey found that far more young Canadians were not eligible to vote in the 2011 federal election, compared to older Canadians. In the 2011 federal
election, 13.3 percent of young Canadians were not eligible to vote, compared to only 6.8 percent of the total population, age 15 years and over.98 (Graph: Not Eligible to Vote in 2011 Federal Election by Sex)

The gender gap for eligible voters is the least pronounced among younger Canadians, with virtually no difference between young men and women. Among older Canadians, in all but one age bracket (55 to 64 years), men are less likely to be eligible to vote than women.99

**A Diversity of Types of Civic Engagement:** Although young Canadians are not showing up at the ballot box at the same level as older Canadians, they are engaging in a large variety of other forms of civic engagement, and at levels that far exceed those of the overall population. A study conducted by Samara Canada shows that when looking at rates of participation in political and civic life beyond voting, young Canadians rate 11 percent higher, on average, than older Canadians across 18 different forms of political participation. For example, compared to Canadians aged 30 years or older, young people are more likely to:

- Attend a political meeting or speech;
- Volunteer for a candidate or campaign;
- Give a political speech in public;
- Organize a public event about politics;
- Sign a petition;
- Boycott or buy products for ethical, environmental or political reasons;
- Protest or demonstrate;
- Volunteer for a charitable cause;
- Be active in a group or organization;
- Work with others to solve a community problem;
- Discuss politics and political issues face-to-face or over the phone;
- Discuss via email or text message;
- Circulate, report or comment; or
- Follow a politician or political group on social media.

This study shows that, despite some suggestions that lower voter turnout translates into being politically apathetic, that the reality is far from that. Youth are very engaged, and much more so than the overall population.100

**CONCLUSIONS & NEXT STEPS**

It’s been a tough decade for young Canadians. Between the financial crisis and changing workplaces, young workers are increasingly finding themselves in precarious work, despite high levels of educational attainment. Economic conditions have increased business competition and employers’ push for labour “flexibility” has put a downward pressure on working conditions, wages, and other labour and social protections. Young workers have been especially vulnerable to these conditions and have been impacted
disproportionately hard. As young Canadians find themselves stuck in precarious work for which they are overqualified, levels of debt and poverty continue to rise.

This generation of young people is more diverse than older generations of Canadians. Unfortunately sexism, racism, homophobia, xenophobia and other forms of discrimination are still present in Canadian workplaces, yet the impacts are less pronounced among the younger generation. Although, young workers have lower rates of unionization and are less likely to vote in federal elections, they are far more active in other forms of civic and political engagement where advocacy is centered on strong values of social justice, fairness and collaboration.

Looking forward, the increasingly precarious nature of work, combined with strong support for unions, creates an opportunity for the labour movement to organize and build a network of young leaders to take on the challenges ahead. Especially important will be ensuring that policies and programs address changing workplaces, including non-standard forms of work, a more globalized job market and issues related to diversity, equity and discrimination. The existing infrastructure of young workers committees, alongside socially progressive advocacy groups, serves as a vehicle for youth to develop and implement solutions in political and civic realms.

This research paper provides a broad landscape of the social and economic realities of young workers in Canada. The next step will be to develop an action-oriented paper, in collaboration with the CLC young workers committee, that will outline strategies and concrete steps for tackling some of these issues and advocating for a future of work that is progressive, equitable and sustainable for all Canadian workers and their communities.
GLOSSARY OF TERMS

*Unless otherwise indicated, definitions used in the glossary are consistent with those used by Statistics Canada*

**Aboriginal identity:** Refers to whether the person identifies with the Aboriginal peoples of Canada. This includes those who reported being an Aboriginal person, that is, First Nations (North American Indian), Métis, or Inuk (Inuit) and/or those who reported Registered or Treaty Indian status, that is, registered under the Indian Act of Canada, and/or those who reported membership in a First nation or Indian band. Aboriginal peoples of Canada are defined in the Constitution Act, 1982, Section 35 (2) as including the Indian, Inuit and Métis peoples of Canada.

**Civic engagement:** “Civic engagement results when citizens acquire behaviours and attitudes that express their will to get involved in their society or community in a manner consistent with democratic principles. This can include involvement in community and volunteer organizations. Civic engagement is broader than political engagement in that it can include services to the community through involvement in health, in education and in charitable organizations. Political engagement is a more targeted aspect of civic engagement and is expressed through voting, demonstrations, signing petitions and work with political organizations.”

**Defined Benefit Pension Plan:** A defined benefit plan provides members with a defined pension income when they retire. The formula used to determine a member’s benefit usually involves factors such as years of membership in the pension plan and the member’s salary, and is not dependent on the investment returns of the plan fund.

**Defined Contribution Pension Plan:** In a defined contribution plan, the employer and employee contribute a set or defined amount and the amount of pension income that the member receives upon retirement is determined by, among other things, the amount of contributions accumulated and the investment income earned. These contributions are often a fixed percentage of an employee’s annual earnings and are deposited monthly in an individual account in the member’s name. Investment earning are credited to this account.

**Discrimination:** As defined by the Canadian human rights commission, discrimination is an action or a decision that treats a person or a group negatively for reasons such as their race, age or disability. These reasons are known as grounds of discrimination and include the following eleven grounds that are protected under the Canadian Human Rights Act: race; national or ethnic origin; colour; religion; age; sex; sexual orientation; marital status; family status; disability; a conviction for which a pardon has been granted or a record suspended.

**Employment Rate:** The employment rate refers to the number of persons employed, expressed as a percentage of the total population 15 years and over. The employment rate for a particular group (age, sex, marital status, geographic areas, etc.) is the number of employed persons in that group, expressed as a percentage of the total population of that group. Employed persons are those who: a) did any work at all at a job or business, that is, paid work in the context of an employer-employee relationship, or self-
employment. It also includes unpaid family work, which is defined as unpaid work contributing directly to the operation of a farm, business, or professional practice owned and operated by a related member of the same household; or b) had a job but were not at work due to factors such as own illness or disability, personal or family responsibilities, vacation, labour dispute or other reasons (excluding persons on layoff, between casual jobs, and those with a job to start at a future date).

**Family unit:** Family units include both economic families of two persons or more, and unattached individuals

**Food insecurity:** A household is considered food insecure when one or more members do not have access to the variety or quantity of food that they need due to lack of money.

**Full-time (work hours):** Employed persons who usually work 30 hours or more per week, at their main or only job.

**Immigrant:** A person who is or who has ever been a landed immigrant/permanent resident. A landed immigrant/permanent resident is a person who has been granted the right to live in Canada permanently by immigration authorities. Immigrants are either Canadian citizens by naturalization (the citizenship process) or permanent residents (landed immigrants) under Canadian legislation. Some immigrants have resided in Canada for a number of years, while others have arrived recently.

**LGBTQ:** An acronym that stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and queer, and is used to designate a community of people whose sexual or gender identities can create shared political or social concerns. People often use LGBTQ to mean all of the communities included in the LGBTTTQQIAA (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, transsexual, two-spirited, queer, questioning, intersex, asexual, ally). 105

**Low-income measure after tax:** The low-income measure after tax (LIM-AT) is a fixed percentage (50%) of median adjusted after-tax income of households observed at the person level, where ‘adjusted’ indicates that a household’s needs are taken into account.

**Part-time (work hours):** Employed persons who usually work less than 30 hours per week, at their main or only job.

**Permanent job:** A permanent job is one that is expected to last as long as the employee wants it, given that business conditions permit. That is, there is no pre-determined termination date.

**Person with disabilities:** Adults aged 15 and over who had an activity limitation or a participation restriction associated with a physical or mental condition or health problem.

**Pooled Registered Pension Plan:** A pooled registered pension plan (PRPP) is a type of pension plan that is similar to a defined contribution plan; however, employer contributions are not mandatory. A PRPP pools contributions together to achieve lower costs in relation to investment management and plan administration. PRPPs can be offered to employers and to self-employed persons under federal jurisdiction. 106
**Precarious work:** According to the International Labour Organization “In the most general sense, precarious work is a means for employers to shift risks and responsibilities on to workers. It is work performed in the formal and informal economy and is characterized by variable levels and degrees of objective (legal status) and subjective (feeling) characteristics of uncertainty and insecurity. Although a precarious job can have many faces, it is usually defined by uncertainty as to the duration of employment, multiple possible employers or a disguised or ambiguous employment relationship, a lack of access to social protection and benefits usually associated with employment, low pay, and substantial legal and practical obstacles to joining a trade union and bargaining collectively.”

**Recession:** Although there is no official definition of recession, it is generally recognized that the term refers to a period of decline in economic activity, excluding very short periods of decline. Most analysts use two consecutive quarters of decline in a country’s real GDP as the basis for a recession.

**Temporary job:** A temporary job has a predetermined end date, or will end as soon as a specified project is completed. This includes seasonal jobs; temporary, term or contract jobs including work done through a temporary help agency; casual jobs; and other temporary work.

**Unemployment Rate:** The unemployment rate refers to the unemployed expressed as a percentage of the labour force. The definition of unemployment is based primarily on the activity of a job search and the availability to take a job. Unemployed persons are those who: a) were on a temporary layoff during the reference week with an expectation of recall and were available for work; or b) were without work, had looked for work in the past four weeks, and were available for work; or c) had a new job to start within four weeks from reference week, and were available for work.

**Visible minority:** Refers to whether a person belongs to a visible minority group as defined by the Employment Equity Act and, if so, the visible minority group to which the person belongs. The Employment Equity Act defines visible minorities as “persons other than Aboriginal peoples, who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour”. The visible minority population consists mainly of the following groups: Chinese, South Asian, Black, Arab, West Asian, Filipino, Southeast Asian, Latin American, Japanese and Korean.

**Wages:** Wages and salaries are the income earned by working for a wage, a salary, tips and/or commissions. This refers to gross wages and salaries before deductions for such items as income tax, pensions and Employment Insurance. Included in this source are military pay and allowances, tips, commissions and cash bonuses, benefits from wage-loss replacement plans or income-maintenance insurance plans, supplementary unemployment benefits from an employer or union as well as all types of casual earnings.
ENDNOTES

1 Statistics Canada (2016) Labour force survey estimates, by sex and detailed age group, unadjusted for seasonality, monthly. CANSIM 282-0001
2 Statistics Canada (2015) Estimates of population, by age group and sex for July 1, Canada, provinces and territories, annual. CANSIM 051-0001
3 Statistics Canada (2016) Labour force survey estimates, by Aboriginal group, sex and age group, Canada, selected provinces and regions. CANSIM 282-0226
4 Statistics Canada (2016) Labour force survey estimates, by immigrant status, sex and detailed age group, Canada, 3-month moving average, unadjusted for seasonality. CANSIM 282-0103
7 Information for this section is derived from Statistics Canada’s Canadian Survey on Disability (CSD), which aims to provide information about Canadian adults whose daily activities are limited because of a long-term condition or health-related problem. This includes all adults aged 15 and over who had an activity limitation or a participation restriction associated with a physical or mental condition or health problem. The population living on First Nations reserves is excluded, as are people living in collective dwellings.
13 Statistics Canada (2015) Postsecondary enrolments, by student status, country of citizenship and sex. CANSIM 477-0031
14 Statistics Canada (2015) Postsecondary graduates, by student status, country of citizenship and sex. CANSIM 477-0032
15 Statistics Canada (2015) Registered apprenticeship training, registrations, by age groups, sex and major trade groups. CANSIM 477-0053
16 Statistics Canada (2015) Registered apprenticeship training, registrations, by age groups, sex and major trade groups. CANSIM 477-0053
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Visible minority refers to whether a person belongs to a visible minority group as defined by the Employment Equity Act and, if so, the visible minority group to which the person belongs. The Employment Equity Act defines visible minorities as ‘persons, other than Aboriginal peoples, who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour.’ The visible minority population consists mainly of the following groups: South Asian, Chinese, Black, Filipino, Latin American, Arab, Southeast Asian, West Asian, Korean and Japanese.

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