WORKING PAPER

CANADA: GENDERED PRECARIOUSNESS AND SOCIAL REPRODUCTION[1]

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Precarious employment is a significant phenomenon in the Canadian labour market that is deeply gendered. Studies show that women made up a higher percentage of those in precarious jobs than men in the early 2000s (Cranford *et al.* 2003). They also show that certain events, such as the birth of a child or migration, can increase workers' exposure to forms of employment characterized by insecurity (Fuller; MacDonald, this volume).

This chapter explores the relationship between precarious employment, gender and social reproduction by examining the situation of women and men of prime working-age (25–44 years).[2] Looking at workers in this age group offers insight into some of the forces contributing to gendered precariousness that are under-explored in the scholarly literature, namely, the distribution of unpaid work and the design of public policies extending supports to workers outside employment. Although prime working-age is a period in the life course when men and women are expected to be engaged actively in the labour force and when young children are likely to be present in households, many public policies still assume a male model of a standard employment relationship and perpetuate norms of female caregiving (paid and unpaid).

The chapter unfolds in three sections, beginning with an introduction to the concepts and methodological approach guiding the analysis. The second section paints a portrait of precarious employment in Canada, focusing on the situation of prime working-age women and men. The third section considers some supply-side forces shaping gendered precariousness in the prime working-age group by examining the distribution of unpaid work among men and women and developments in Employment Insurance (EI) and child-care policy. This twofold analysis highlights a correspondence between prime working-age women's considerable participation in precarious forms of part-time and temporary employment and unequal sex/gender divisions of unpaid work. It also shows how the restrictive conditions for obtaining support through Canada's EI program and the dearth of affordable, quality child care limit prime working-age women's ability to move out of these jobs.

ORGANIZING CONCEPTS AND METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

Four analytic concepts guide this investigation – precarious employment, the standard employment relationship, social reproduction, and the related notion of the gender contract. *Precarious employment* is characterized by uncertainty, lack of control, low income, and limited access to regulatory protections. It is shaped by employment status (that is, self-employment or paid employment), the form of employment (for example, temporary or permanent, part-time or full-time), social location and social context (Vosko 2006).

Studies of precarious employment in Canada often equate it with ‘non-standard’ forms of employment and employment statuses, such as part-time and temporary paid employment and solo self-employment (Economic Council of Canada 1990; Krahn 1995). This is understandable since non-standard forms of employment and precarious employment are often correlated. However, they are not synonymous. Their correlation stems from the security associated historically with the *standard employment relationship* (SER), defined as full-time continuous employment where the worker has one employer and normally works on the employer’s premises under direct supervision.

In Canada, the SER was first limited to adult male blue-collar workers, but it eventually extended to white-collar workers, also primarily men. However, as a normative model of employment, or governance mechanism linking work organization and the labour supply (Deakin 2002: 179), it existed and continues to exist independently of individuals and encompasses prescriptive and descriptive elements. From its inception, the social wage model integral to the SER assumed that statutory and social benefits and entitlements are best distributed to workers and their dependants, normally presumed to reside in one dwelling, via a single male earner. The SER thus shaped and continues to shape familial obligations and household forms as well as the organization of the labour force, especially the design of labour and social policies (Fudge and Vosko 2001a; 2001b).

Historically, the Canadian variant of the SER was linked to a series of gendered practices related to the organization of *social reproduction* – the daily and intergenerational reproduction of the working population – contributing to a *gender contract* assigning men a

primary role in breadwinning and women central responsibility for (largely unpaid) caregiving (on the parallel notion of the reproductive bargain, see Gottfried, this volume). Institutions connected to social reproduction include, but are not limited to, the state, the education system, the public sector, the family, firms, and trade unions. Social reproduction occurs at the level of the household through unpaid work, at the level of the state through government policies and programs and at the inter-state level via processes such as immigration (Picchio 2000; Bezanson and Luxton 2006), although immigration is not a focus in this chapter.

The type and level of responsibilities that individuals have for the different aspects of social reproduction vary by social location (for example, sex/gender relations and age). Due to the legacy of the male breadwinner/ female caregiver gender contract in Canada, prime working-age women have considerable responsibility for daily aspects of social reproduction, such as unpaid caregiving obligations for dependent children. This responsibility persists despite women's rising employment rates,[3] the growing inadequacy of male wages for supporting dependents, and the changing composition of households.

To probe the relationship between precarious employment, the SER, and social reproduction, the next section develops a statistical portrait whose point of departure is that all kinds of work for remuneration can be precarious, while acknowledging the historical legacy of the SER as a model of employment common among white male citizens, sustained partly by prime working age women's responsibility for key aspects of daily and intergenerational reproduction. Due to data and space limitations, the analysis focuses on

social relations of gender and age. However, previous research exploring relationships between gender, race, immigration status and precarious employment shows that gendered precariousness is also racialized and shaped by immigrant status in Canada (see Cranford and Vosko 2006; Fuller and Vosko 2008).

GENDER AND THE CONTOURS OF PRECARIOUS EMPLOYMENT[4]

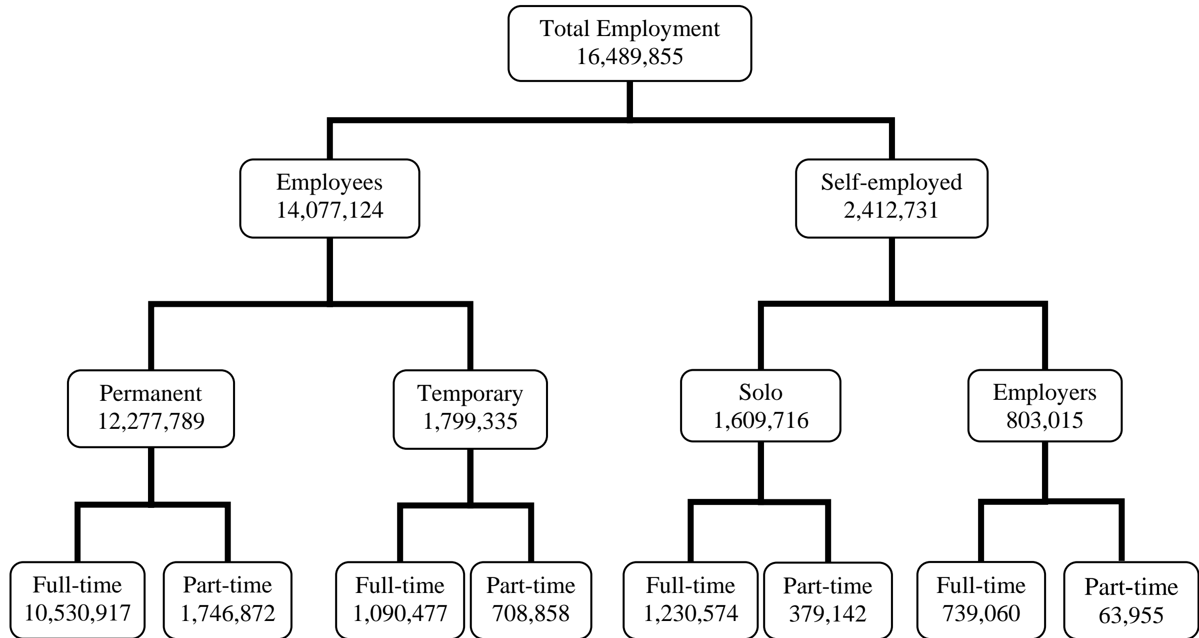
Developing a portrait of precarious employment in the Canadian labour force requires a breakdown of total employment into mutually exclusive categories and an identification of the dimensions of labour market insecurity.[5] Accordingly, Figure 2.1 first elevates employment status by differentiating between paid employees and the self-employed. It then divides the self-employed into those without employees (solo self-employed) and those who employ others (employers). In parallel, it separates permanent and temporary employees. Finally, it splits each subgroup of employees and the self-employed by full-time and part-time[6] status.

Breaking down total employment in this way exposes linkages between forms of employment and dimensions of labour market insecurity. The first order of distinction in Figure 2.1 (between employees and the self-employed) is linked to workers' capacity to exercise control over the labour process and their degree of regulatory protection. This is because, in Canada, labour and social protections extend most fully to workers with an identifiable employment relationship. Furthermore, few self-employed people have access to collective representation through a union.

The second order of distinction is tied to the degree of certainty of continuing employment, by grouping employees according to job permanency and distinguishing between the solo self-employed and employers. In Canada, the solo self-employed are more vulnerable to uncertainty than employers (Fudge *et al.* 2002). Among employees, the category 'permanent' signifies durability in the employment relationship, indicated typically by an indefinite contract of employment, while the category 'temporary' approximates uncertainty. The third order of distinction relates to access to regulatory protection, since eligibility for, and level of, certain social benefits is often pegged to hours of work.

Broadly, the utility of this typology is that it overcomes the tendency to lump forms of employment differing from the full-time permanent job into a single catch-all category of 'non-standard work' common in Canada (Krahn 1991; 1995) and elsewhere (for example, the US) (Polivka and Nardone 1989). This exercise makes possible finely grained analyses of different forms of employment and their associated insecurities.

*Figure 2.1 Typology of mutually exclusive employment forms, Canada, 2007**



Source: Statistics Canada, *Labour Force Survey* 2007, Public-use Microdata Files.
Note: *Total employment ages 15 to 64 years. Total employment does not include unpaid family workers.

Applied to the Canadian case, this approach illustrates that full-time permanent employment, the form of employment corresponding most closely to the SER, accounted for 64 per cent of total employment in 2007 (down from 68 per cent in 1989) (Table 2.1). In contrast, forms of temporary employment and solo self-employment grew, respectively, from 7 to 11 per cent and from 7 to 10 per cent of total employment between 1989 and 2007.

The partial eclipse of full-time permanent employment is widely recognized (Economic Council of Canada 1990). Less well-documented is how sex and age interact with changes in Canadian employment.

Full-time permanent employment declined as a percentage of both total male and total female employment between 1989 and 1997, and increased slightly in subsequent years. Between 1989 and 2007, temporary employment (full and part-time) and solo self-employment (full and part-time) grew among women and men. Men's participation in part-time permanent employment remained relatively stable, although over three times as many women as men still held this form of employment in 2007. Women outnumbered men in the categories of part-time employment. For example, in 2007 around 1.3 million part-time permanent employees were women, whereas less than half a million were men; almost half a million part-time temporary employees were women whereas just over a quarter of a million were men. Women are thus more likely than men to lack access to social and labour protections extended on the basis of hours of work.

*Table 2.1 Distribution in select forms of employment by sex and selected age groups, Canada, 1989, 1997, 2007**

	1989				*1997*				*2007*			
	25–44		*15–64*		*25–44*		*15–64*		*25–44*		*15–64*	
Form of employment	*'000*	*%*	*'000*	*%*	*'000*	*%*	*'000*	*%*	*'000*	*%*	*'000*	*%*
Full-time permanent												
Men	2,971.7	77	4,958.3	72	2,889.2	73	4,847.5	66	2,969.6	74	5,759.3	67
Women	2,067.7	68	3,491.2	64	2,172.5	64	3,560.0	58	2,426.7	67	4,771.7	61
Both sexes	5,039.5	73	8,449.5	68	5,061.7	68	8,407.5	63	5,396.3	71	10,530.9	64
Full-time temporary												
Men	143.3	4	266.4	4	230.1	6	457.1	6	260.0	6	594.5	7
Women	93.5	3	187.7	3	173.7	5	317.3	5	238.1	7	496.0	6
Both sexes	236.8	3	454.1	4	403.8	5	774.4	6	498.1	7	1,090.5	7
Part-time permanent												
Men	60.4	2	325.3	5	94.5	2	397.1	5	93.7	2	465.2	5
Women	466.8	15	1,045.9	19	534.9	16	1,166.7	19	448.5	12	1,281.7	16
Both sexes	527.2	8	1,371.2	11	629.4	9	1,563.8	12	542.1	7	1,746.8	11
Part-time temporary												
Men	20.7	1	123.6	2	52.4	1	185.6	3	48.8	1	266.2	3
Women	114.0	4	219.9	4	120.9	4	305.5	5	121.2	3	442.6	6
Both sexes	134.7	2	343.5	3	173.3	2	491.1	4	170.1	2	708.9	4
Self-employed employers												
Men	377.0	10	675.8	10	294.3	7	588.7	8	243.4	6	586.0	7
Women	120.6	4	217.3	4	105.2	3	193.8	3	95.6	3	217.0	3
Both sexes	497.6	7	893.1	7	399.5	5	782.4	6	339.1	4	803.0	5
Solo self-employed												
Men	276.8	7	526.0	8	422.6	11	823.9	11	416.0	10	980.3	11
Women	189.4	6	320.2	6	300.9	9	565.8	9	289.1	8	629.4	8
Both sexes	466.2	7	846.1	7	723.6	10	1,389.7	10	705.2	9	1,609.7	10
Total												
Men	3,849.9	56	6,875.4	56	3,983.1	54	7,299.8	54	4,031.6	53	8,651.5	52
Women	3,052.1	44	5,482.2	44	3,408.1	46	6,109.0	46	3,619.2	47	7,838.3	48
Both sexes	6,902.1	100	12,357.6	100	7,391.3	100	13,408.9	100	7,650.8	100	16,489.9	100

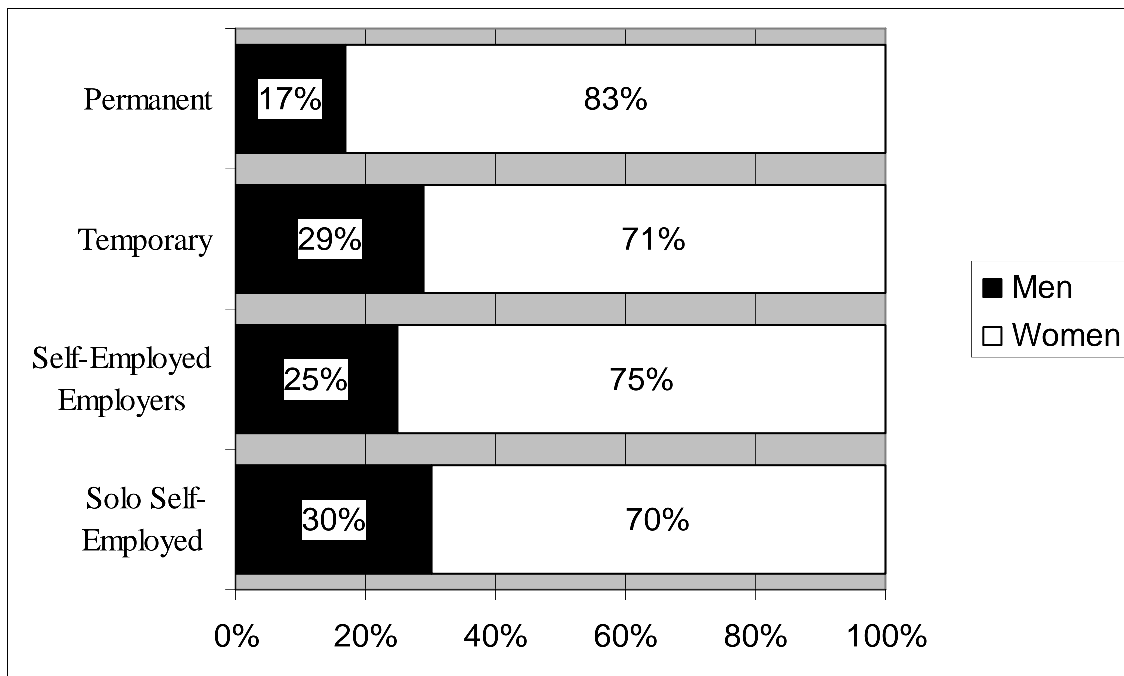
Source: Statistics Canada, *General Social Survey* 1989; *Labour Force Survey* 1997, 2001, 2007, Public-use Microdata Files.

Prime working-age women and men in focus

Although differences in the number of men and women holding full-time permanent jobs in 2007 narrowed in the prime working-age group compared to differences in 1989, approximately 3 million men, as opposed to about 2.4 million women, held these types of jobs in 2007 (Table 2.1). Gendered patterns are also evident within part-time and temporary forms of employment; in the prime working-age group, women held much larger shares of

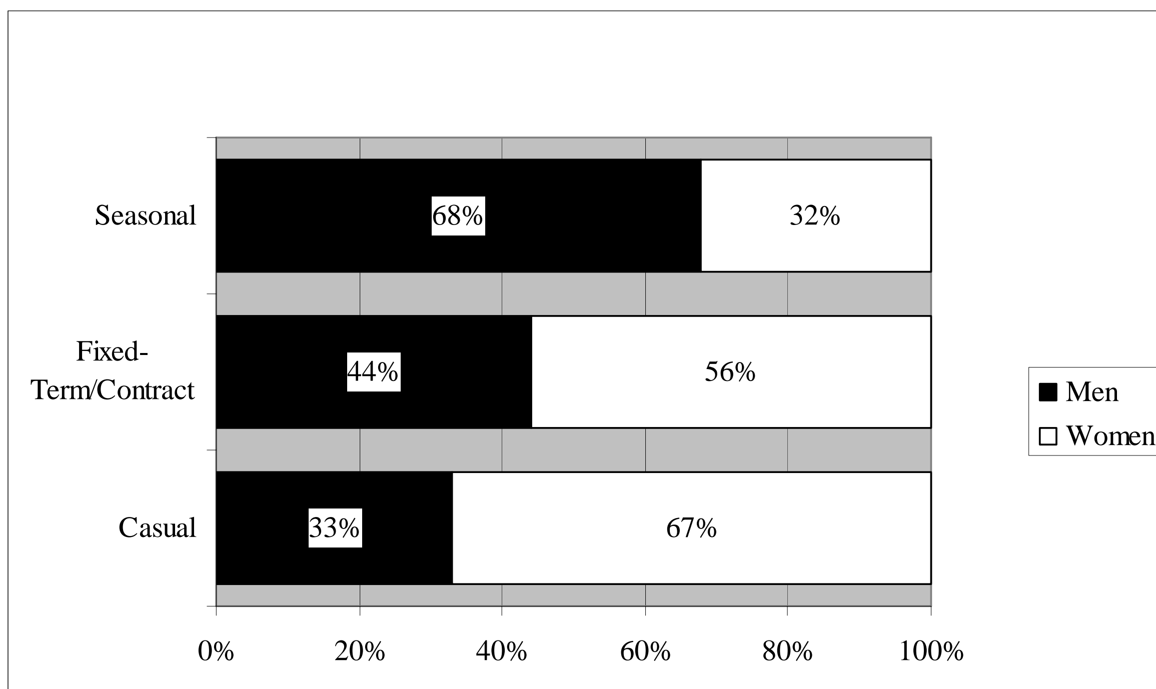
all part-time forms of employment than men (Figure 2.2). Furthermore, Figure 2.3 shows that when temporary forms of employment are broken down by type, a set of additional gendered patterns surfaces. Among the prime working-age group, men were the majority of those in seasonal employment (mostly full-time), segments of which have historically been more protected than other types of temporary employment. In contrast, women dominated in casual employment, much of which was part-time and characterized by high levels of income and time insecurity (McPhail and Bowles 2008). Fixed-term/contract work is the only type of temporary employment in which prime working-age men and women held relatively equal shares.

Figure 2.2 Prime working-age men's and women's shares of selected forms of part-time employment, Canada, 2007



Source: Statistics Canada, *Labour Force Survey* 2007, Public-use Microdata Files.

Figure 2.3 Prime working-age men's and women's shares of casual, fixed-term/contract and seasonal employment, Canada, 2001



Source: Statistics Canada, *General Social Survey* 2005, Public-use Microdata Files.

Part-time and temporary forms of employment are in certain respects insecure by definition that is, by virtue of their shorter-than-typical daily or weekly hours and their lack of certainty. However, other dimensions also make these forms of work insecure. Income inadequacy is arguably a central dimension of labour market insecurity. In Canada, among employees, earning less than $10 an hour represents an inadequate wage; this measure is consistent with the poverty line defined by Canada's official Low Income Cut-Off (LICO) for an individual in a large city working 35 hours a week. Firm size, in turn, is a good indicator of access to regulatory protection among employees; workers in firms of fewer than twenty employees are less likely than those in large firms to have a full range of

protections since some labour laws do not apply in small firms, and those that do are often ill-enforced (Fudge 1993).[7] Finally, union coverage, encompassing workers that are unionized and those covered by a collective agreement, is a good indicator of both regulatory protection and control over the labour process. Unionized workers have a higher degree of protection written into collective agreements, and grievance procedures as well as job-based solidarities allow them to influence the level and speed of their work.

Putting these indicators of dimensions of labour market insecurity together for the prime working-age group reveals that workers in forms of part-time and temporary employment are more likely than their full-time permanent counterparts to be in small, non-union firms, and to earn low wages. Looking within these forms of employment also reveals gendered patterns; for example, over four times as many women as men in part-time permanent jobs and almost three times as many women as men in part-time temporary jobs earned less than $10 per hour in 2007. Similar points apply in relation to firm size and union coverage. Over five times as many women as men in part-time permanent jobs and twice as many women as men in part-time temporary jobs worked in small firms in 2007. Almost five times as many women as men in part-time permanent jobs and almost three times as many women as men in part-time temporary jobs lacked union coverage (see Table 2.2).

Table 2.2 Distribution of prime working-age men and women in select forms of employment, by dimensions of precariousness in thousands, Canada, 2007

Form of employment		Firm size less than 20	No union coverage	Less than $10/hour	All three
		Number			
Full-time permanent					
	Men	498.1	2,069.3	102.0	30.6
	Women	414.6	1,651.9	192.5	65.5
	Both sexes	912.7	3,721.2	294.5	96.2
Full-time temporary					
	Men	64.4	167.7	22.8	5.8
	Women	41.0	142.1	32.6	10.4
	Both sexes	105.4	309.7	55.4	16.2
Part-time permanent					
	Men	23.6	67.0	19.9	6.0
	Women	128.1	304.2	83.1	27.6
	Both sexes	151.8	371.2	103.0	33.6
Part-time temporary					
	Men	13.1	32.6	8.2	2.3
	Women	27.2	74.7	22.2	8.5
	Both sexes	40.2	107.3	30.4	10.8

Source: Statistics Canada, *Labour Force Survey* 2007, Public-use Microdata Files.

The gendered distribution of forms of employment across industries and occupations in the prime working-age group helps contextualize these patterns. In 2007, the largest percentage of prime working-age men in full-time permanent employment worked in goods-producing industries[8] (37 per cent compared with just 14 per cent of women). In contrast, health care and social assistance, a category encompassing the health-care industry and large segments of the public sector, was the most common industry of employment for prime working-age women in all forms of paid employment except part-time temporary, where it was a close

second to education. Across all forms of paid employment, but especially part-time forms, prime working-age women were concentrated in clerical and sales and services occupations, whereas men were spread more evenly across occupations. These patterns of concentration among men and women, particularly the gendered (female) character of caregiving work in the labour force, together with prime working-age women's significant shares of part-time and temporary forms of paid employment, highlight the importance of probing linkages between gender, precarious employment, and social reproduction.

FORCES SHAPING GENDERED PRECARIOUSNESS IN THE PRIME WORKING-AGE GROUP

There is a large body of literature on precarious employment in Canada focusing on demand-side forces. In Canada, processes of economic restructuring tied to globalization have led to the privatization of state enterprises, the removal of trade barriers, the deregulation of the economy, the decline of manufacturing and resource sectors, and the growth of the service sector, contributing to deteriorating labour market conditions. Much of the literature on the concomitant rise of precarious employment thereby focuses on firm-level initiatives to adjust the size of their workforces to match demand (that is, numerical flexibility) and to reduce labour costs by limiting employment-related responsibilities (for example, statutory and supplementary employment benefits) through the use of fixed-term, casual, and temporary agency work as well as work arrangements characterized by sufficiently low hours to disqualify workers from entitlements (Duffy *et al.* 1997; Stanford 1996; Vosko 2000; Bernstein *et al.* 2006). However, few scholarly interventions examine

supply-side forces. One avenue for pursuing this angle involves examining the distribution of men's and women's unpaid work (Picchio 2000). Another entails analyzing the design and application of public policies extending supports to workers outside employment.

The distribution of unpaid work[9]

In 2005, the daily hours devoted to unpaid work activities among prime working age men and women differed considerably. On average, men performed 3.5 hours a day of unpaid work compared to 7.3 hours for women. For those with a child under six years of age, the unpaid hours of work increased to 6.1 for men and 12.6 for women.[10] The differences in the distribution of hours of unpaid work between men and women remain substantial in the employed prime working-age sub-group. Overall, employed men reported doing 3.3 hours of unpaid work, while women reported 5.1 hours. While employed men and women both reported more unpaid hours with a child under six, the increase for women was greater in both absolute and percentage terms, with women reporting 9 hours compared to 5.6 hours for men.

Breaking down the unpaid work activities also shows that the average hours of prime working-age women with a child under age six exceeded those of men in every form of unpaid work (Figure 2.4), despite men's increased participation in unpaid work over the last twenty years (Marshall 2006). Prime working-age women with young children still spent more than twice as many hours per day on child care as their male counterparts. Similar trends are apparent among the employed sub-group: employed prime working-age

men with a child under six spent only 60 per cent as much time on unpaid child care as their female counterparts. Differences were even more pronounced amongst those employed part-time, with men who worked for pay on a part-time basis reporting 7.6 hours of unpaid work (4 hours of child care), compared to 13.3 hours (7.9 hours of child care) for women employed part-time.

Figure 2.4 Unpaid work activities (hours per day), prime working-age men and women with a child under six, Canada, 2005

Source: Statistics Canada, *General Social Survey* 2005, Public-use Microdata Files.

There is a correlation between prime working-age women's high levels of unpaid work, especially caring for children – a component of unpaid work that is negotiable among

parents but whose quantum is relatively fixed – and their large share of part-time forms of employment and varieties of temporary employment, such as casual employment. High levels of responsibility for unpaid work, particularly child care, impede women's ability to engage in full-time and permanent employment, because such activities take up a significant number of hours per day and their timing and performance are non-negotiable (MacDonald *et al*. 2005: 69). Still, neither labour force structures nor the organization of unpaid work are independent or autonomous. Rather, they are shaped by public policies. Thus, social and labour policies can help exacerbate or alleviate precariousness.

Employment Insurance

In Canada, social security programs that took shape in the interwar and post-World War II periods were organized around the SER. Unemployment insurance (UI) is a case in point (Vosko 1996; Pulkingham 1998). It was constructed to protect breadwinning men from the ills of unemployment (Pierson 1990; Porter 2003). The earliest legislation introduced a classification system based on age and sex. Supports were geared exclusively to working-age adults, and women were divided into two categories – female worker and wife-mother.

Despite the embrace of formal equality, contributing to the repeal of explicitly discriminatory measures such as a married women's regulation, UI remained gendered through the 1960s (Vosko 2003: 39–43). It took until 1971 for coverage to be extended to all paid workers (except the self-employed, other than fishers, workers 70 years and older,

and individuals below a minimum hours or earnings threshold) and for maternity benefits to be introduced.

Marking the end of Keynesian expansion, in 1989–90 Canada changed UI's financing from a tripartite arrangement to one financed by workers and employers and administered by government. Following a social security review in 1994–5, initiating a shift to a neo-liberal policy orientation, the government replaced Unemployment Insurance with Employment Insurance (EI) in 1996 (Vosko 1996; MacDonald 1999; Pulkingham 1998).

In place of a system based on weeks worked (subject to minimum hours or earnings per job per week), EI introduced a system that used total hours worked to determine coverage and eligibility for benefits. The switch extended EI coverage to more part-time and multiple jobholders, in keeping with the emergence of a gender contract characterized by dual earning. However, access to benefits deteriorated for many part-time jobholders because the eligibility levels were organized around the SER, making it more difficult for those who had worked fewer than 35 hours per week to qualify for regular benefits (Vosko 2003; Townson and Hayes 2007; MacDonald 1999). Furthermore, the effective minimum hours of work required of 'new entrants' (largely young people) and 're-entrants' to the labour force (mainly women who have taken time out of employment for caregiving) have tripled. With the introduction of EI, maximum benefit levels and duration have also been reduced and the hours-based formula for calculating benefit duration dramatically impacts part-time workers. Finally, changes to the benefit formula have negatively affected those with intermittent earnings, such as seasonal and temporary workers.[11]

Together, these program changes reduce protection for workers falling outside the SER. They make it difficult for workers in part-time and temporary employment, many of whom are women, to qualify for regular EI benefits or to access the training supports provided under the program,[12] which could improve their quality of employment. Furthermore, despite changing household forms, while EI retains a low-income supplement, the formula for receipt is means-tested based on family income, not individual earnings. Consequently, workers (mainly women) in precarious part-time and temporary low-paying jobs married to higher-earners lose protection.

Maternity and parental benefits, introduced in 1971 and 1990 respectively, were also negatively affected by the shift from UI to EI, though the maximum weeks of benefits remained unchanged. Because the hours system also applies to these benefits, workers in part-time and temporary employment have more trouble qualifying and those who do qualify face lower income-replacement rates (Phipps 2001).[13] Women were initially required to have worked for pay for 700 hours in order to qualify, as opposed to the previous requirement of 20 weeks with a minimum of 15 hours per week (the equivalent of 300 hours). Like regular benefits, EI maternity and parental benefits take the SER as a norm, penalizing workers who lack full-time continuous employment. Self-employed workers also lack coverage. In 2000, the number of hours of paid employment needed to qualify was reduced to 600 hours and parental benefits were extended to 35 weeks (raising the combined maximum maternity/parental leave from 30 to 50 weeks). However, with little change in the maximum benefit level, the weekly replacement rate has effectively

declined (MacDonald forthcoming: 402–3). Low replacement rates and the low cap for maximum insurable earnings also create an incentive for the lower earner in a couple, normally the woman, to take the leave, reinforcing women's socially assigned responsibility for child care and undermining future labour market prospects.

Child care

The dearth of affordable, high-quality child care compounds patterns of gendered precariousness in the prime working-age population. In 2006, there were only enough child-care spaces to cover 19.3 per cent of children aged 0–5 (Friendly *et al*. 2007a: 6; OECD 2004: 25). Whereas countries such as Denmark, Finland and Sweden are able to meet all of the demand for child-care services, Canada's system of child-care provisions is best labeled a 'patchwork of services' (Prentice 1999), which meets only a fraction of the demand for quality child care.

Attempts to address the growing need for universally accessible child care accelerated after the 1970 report of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women. Since then, the Canadian federal government, along with the provinces, has made several attempts to launch a pan-Canadian child-care system to increase the affordability and accessibility of child care to Canadian families. However, with the exception of Quebec, which established its own universal child-care system in 1997, now a model program according to several measures, these attempts have been unsuccessful.[14] The most recent major attempt at universal child care took place in 2003, when the federal government and provinces and

territories outside Quebec reached a multilateral cost-sharing agreement and the Liberal Government committed 5 billion dollars over five years to fund the Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) program. However, the agreement was dismantled by the 2006 Conservative Government, who instead implemented a universal child-care benefit amounting to an additional payment of $100 per month to parents with children from 0–6, which the government argued ‘places choice in the hands of parents’ (Government of Canada 2007).

As a consequence of these failed attempts to create a universal child-care system, supports for child care in Canada consist of a series of tax credits and deductions, a child tax benefit tied to income, publicly funded services for low-income families and public funds for a mixture of public, privately run, and increasingly for-profit child-care centres. Although total provincial and territorial spending on child care (including Quebec) increased by 71 per cent from 1992 to 2006, contributing to the creation of approximately 500,000 new regulated child-care spaces fully 45 per cent of all child-care spaces are currently situated in Quebec (Friendly *et al.* 2007a: 6), Furthermore, despite the increase in spaces, child care overall is neither more affordable nor of higher quality than in the past. Considering indicators such as ratios of staff to children, training, wages, funding, and space, the quality of Canadian child-care services remains ‘mediocre to poor’ (Friendly *et al*. 2007b: 1). The many private and for-profit centres across the country, but especially outside of Quebec, rely largely on women workers in precarious jobs, in an effort to keep rates low. Yet child-care costs remain high and unaffordable for many parents. Full-time child care can cost the average Canadian family (outside Quebec) between $5,000–12,000 per year (Battle 2006:

9). Quality and costs, specifically the high cost of quality care, are key factors shaping parents' decisions to place their children in market-based care or to pursue alternatives that typically involve part-time and temporary paid work for one parent (Campbell 2006). For women in part-time or temporary employment who also earn low wages, high-quality child care is often out of reach due to its high costs and inflexible hours of operation (many spaces are only full-time, within standard hours). Paradoxically, child care delivery in Canada often functions best for high-wage earners in SERs. While the division of child-care responsibilities continues to be cast as a matter of parental 'choice', the supply of child care reinforces prime working-age women's socially prescribed responsibilities for caregiving work (paid and unpaid), perpetuating gendered precariousness in households and the labour force.

CONCLUSION

Precarious employment is indeed a gendered phenomenon in Canada. Even during the prime working age, when both men and women are assumed to be fully engaged in the labour force, women continue to represent the majority of workers in part-time and temporary forms of employment characterized by low wages and limited access to regulatory protections. This tendency is no doubt related to employer demand, as numerous studies demonstrate. Yet it is also correlated with supply-side forces – on the one hand, the persistence of socially prescribed norms and realities of female caregiving, and on the other hand, public policies premised on the outmoded male model of the SER (for other contributions presenting similar findings, see Gottfried; Kwon, this volume).

Even though men's share of unpaid work in the household is increasing, prime working-age women with young children continue to perform a larger share of unpaid work than their male counterparts, even when they are employed. In turn, women in precarious part-time and temporary jobs are disadvantaged not only inside the labour force but also when attempting to access EI or find affordable, high-quality child care. For unemployed workers formerly in part-time and temporary employment who cannot qualify for EI benefits, or qualify only for meagre support, it is particularly difficult to overcome this disadvantage. For parents unable to access high-quality child care, it is nearly impossible. The Canadian case highlights the importance of complementing studies of the demand forces that shape gendered precariousness with greater attention to the organization of social reproduction.

NOTES

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[1] Thanks to Iain Campbell and Martha MacDonald for their helpful comments on earlier drafts of this chapter, and to Heather Krause for her helpful research assistance.

[2] In this chapter the term 'prime working-age' refers to workers aged 25–44 years, in order to encompass the period in an individual's life in which one is most likely to have a young child. Given that the average woman in Canada gave birth to her first child at age 29.6 years in 2005, 25–44 is a suitable age range.

[3] Between 1989 and 2007, the employment rate of women aged 15–64 rose from 51.8 to 66.3 per cent whereas men's declined from 79.4 to 76 per cent.

[4] Data sources for figures cited in this section are drawn from Statistics Canada's Labour Force Survey (LFS) public-use micro data files for the years between 1997 and 2007, with the exception of the figures pertaining to temporary employment in the years 1989 and 1994, which are derived from data from its General Social Survey (GSS) public-use micro data.

[5] This statistical approach was first developed by Vosko *et al.* (2003).

[6] Statistics Canada defines part-time employment as a main or only job in which a person works less than 30 hours per week.

[7] Employment in a small firm is a good indicator of precarious employment because larger firms are more likely to pay higher wages, have higher unionization rates, pension plan coverage and other fringe benefits, and have lower risks of permanent layoffs (Cranford *et al.* 2003; Morrisette 1991).

[8] The goods-producing industries cover the following industrial categories from the North American Industrial Classification System (2002): Agriculture, Forestry/Fishing/Mining/Oil Extraction, Utilities, Construction, Manufacturing (durables and non-durables).

[9] The data source for figures cited in this subsection is the GSS 2005. The definition of unpaid work is derived from six variables: looking after children in the household, looking after children outside the household, housework/yard work/maintenance for household, housework/yard work/maintenance outside household, care/assistance to seniors inside household, and care/assistance to seniors outside household. Hours of unpaid work activities reported in this section include activities performed concurrently.

[10] Previously published figures on unpaid work performed by men and women based on data from the GSS 2005 (see Marshall 2006) show that the amount of unpaid work that men perform has dramatically increased over the last 20 years, in comparison with the hours women spend on unpaid work activities. In Marshall's study, specific unpaid work variables deemed to be core unpaid work activities were chosen to be included in the calculations, while other unpaid work tasks, such as caring for seniors inside and outside the home were not included in unpaid work figures. The unpaid work variables included in the calculations for this chapter cover all unpaid work activities directly related to care (child care, senior care, food preparation) and housework (household chores, shopping for goods). As a result, our findings differ from those presented by Marshall.

[11] The EI formula for calculating weekly benefits averages total insurable earnings over actual weeks worked in the past 26 weeks, unless the number of weeks worked is less than a 'minimum divisor', which ranges from 14 to 22, depending on the unemployment rate in the region (see Human Resources and Social Development Canada's website: <http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca>). In such cases the earnings are divided by this (larger) number, rather than the actual weeks worked, lowering benefits. The divisor rule disadvantages temporary workers.

[12] EI also introduced Employment Benefit Support Measures (ESBMs), where training is addressed under the program, initiating a shift from direct-purchase-of-training, financed by the government, to individualized loans and grants. The turn away from direct-purchase-of-training limits access to decent training opportunities for many EI recipients, especially for women in precarious jobs, since EI funds now cover only 25–40 per cent of program costs. One result is a return to less costly training in traditionally female-dominated fields. Another is that those unable to access EI are effectively shut out of training.

[13] The deterioration of maternity/parental benefits for workers in part-time and temporary jobs is not, however, universal across Canada. Nor is it necessary even in the face of fiscal restraint (Phipps 2006). After securing federal EI funds for a provincially administered program, in 2006 Quebec introduced a program offering parents either higher income replacement rates for shorter duration or lower rates for longer duration, and raising maximum insurable earnings. It also extended maternity/parental benefits to self-employed workers.

[14] Quebec instituted its own managed and inspected child-care facilities in 1997 and put a price cap on the services (initially $5 per day, $7 per day in 2003). However, issues of accessibility and quality assurance continue to challenge Quebec's universal system of delivery (see Campbell 2006; Luffman 2006; and Lefebvre 2004).