

# What Can Unions Do? Precarious Employment and Union Power

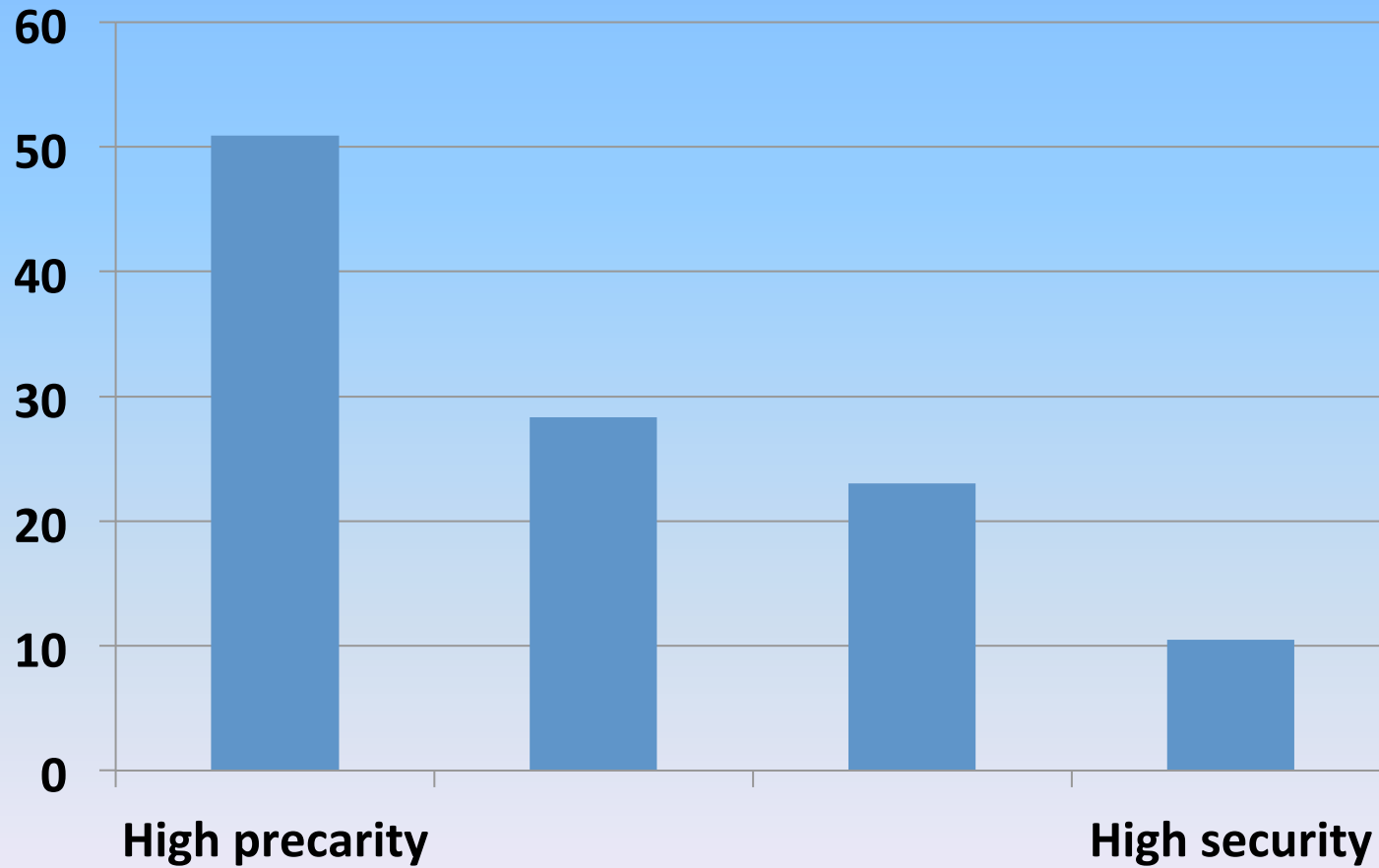
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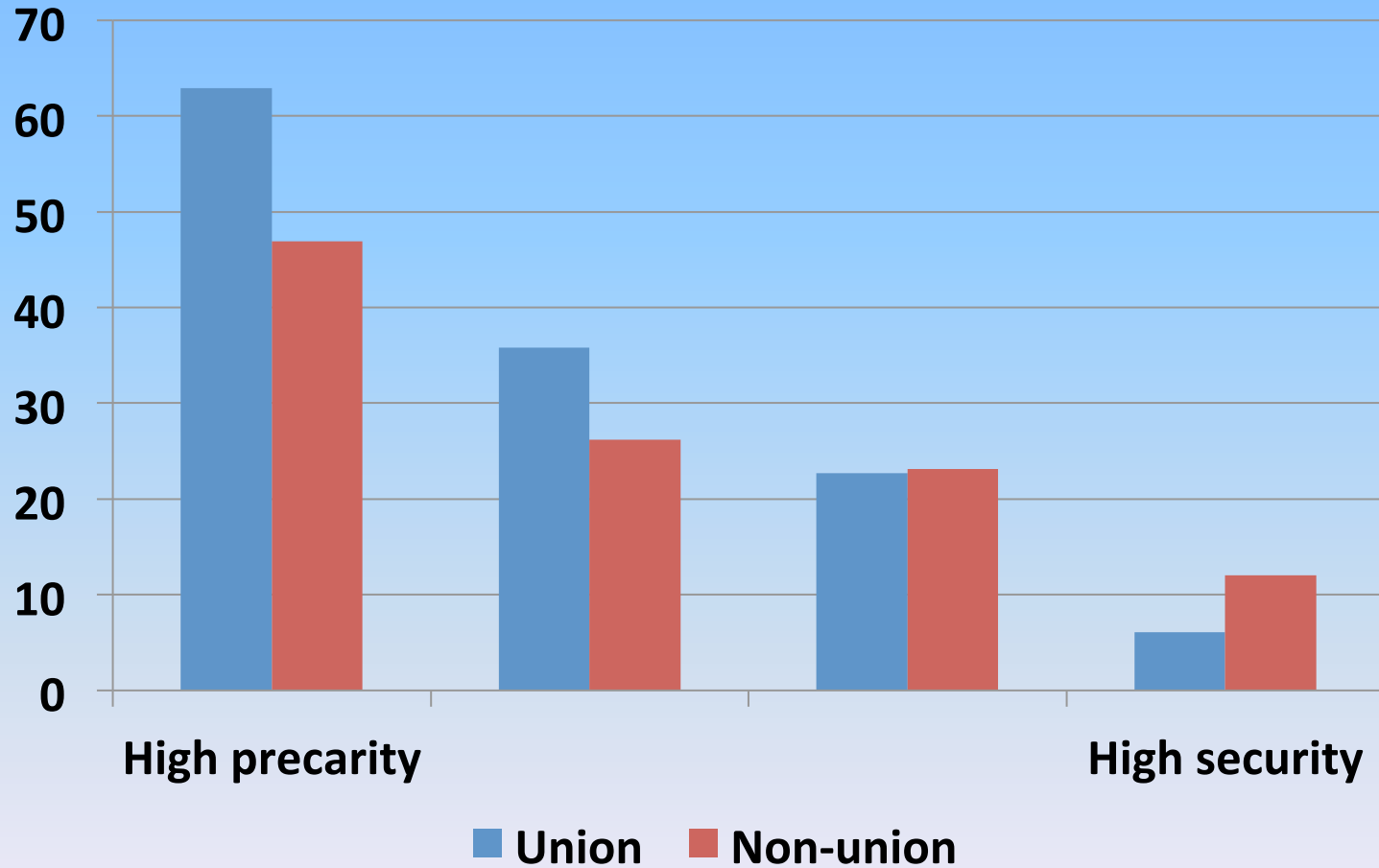
McMaster University



# Chart 1: Raising Health and Safety Concern May Negatively Affect Future Employment with Current Employer (%)



## Chart 2: Raising Health and Safety Concern May Negatively Affect Future Employment with Current Employer (%)



# **The Poverty & Employment Precarity in Southern Ontario (PEPSO) Study**

- **How does precarious employment affect household wellbeing and community participation?**
- **Survey data from 4018 employed individuals age 25-65**
- **Data collected in the fall of 2011 by Leger Marketing**
- **GTA-Hamilton labour market**

# **Measuring Union Power and Precarious Employment**

- **Develop an index of precarity from 10 questions**
- **Precarious employment = 25% of sample with the highest scores on the index of precarity**
- **Compare the economic and social outcomes of unionized and non-unionized workers in precarious employment**

# Unionization by levels of employment insecurity

	n	% union
Secure	932	33.8
Stable	1,097	28.1
Vulnerable	876	26.7
Precarious	1,008	18.3

# **Characteristics of union/non-union workers in precarious employment**

- **equally likely to be women**
- **union sector less likely to be born in Canada**
- **equally likely to be white**
- **no differences in sector (know; service; manu.)**
- **no differences in education job requires (degree; college; on the job)**

# Impact of Unions in the Precarious Sector on Economic Benefits

	Union better	No difference	Non-union better
Income			X
Pension	X		
Benefits	X		
Benefits for family	X		
Make ends meet			X



# Impact of Unions in the Precarious Sector on Employment Security

	Union better	No difference	Non-union better
Paid in cash	X		
Paid if miss work		X	
Income varies		X	
Plan of same income		X	
Unpaid wages		X	
Weeks without work		X	
Know work schedule in advance		X	
Work schedule changes		X	

## Impact of Unions in the Precarious Sector on Employment Characteristics

	Union better	No difference	Non-union better
Training provided by employer	X		
Career prospects		X	
Satisfied with current employment			X
Voice at work		X	
Impact of on the job performance evaluation		X	

# Impact of Unions in the Precarious Sector on Social Relations

	Union better	No difference	Non-union better
Belong to community			X
Uncertainty prevents doing things with family			X
Uncertainty conflicts with family responsibilities		X	
Anxiety about employment interferes with family life		X	
Harassed at work		X	
Discrimination at work			X

# **Alternative Forms of Unions for Workers in Precarious Employment**

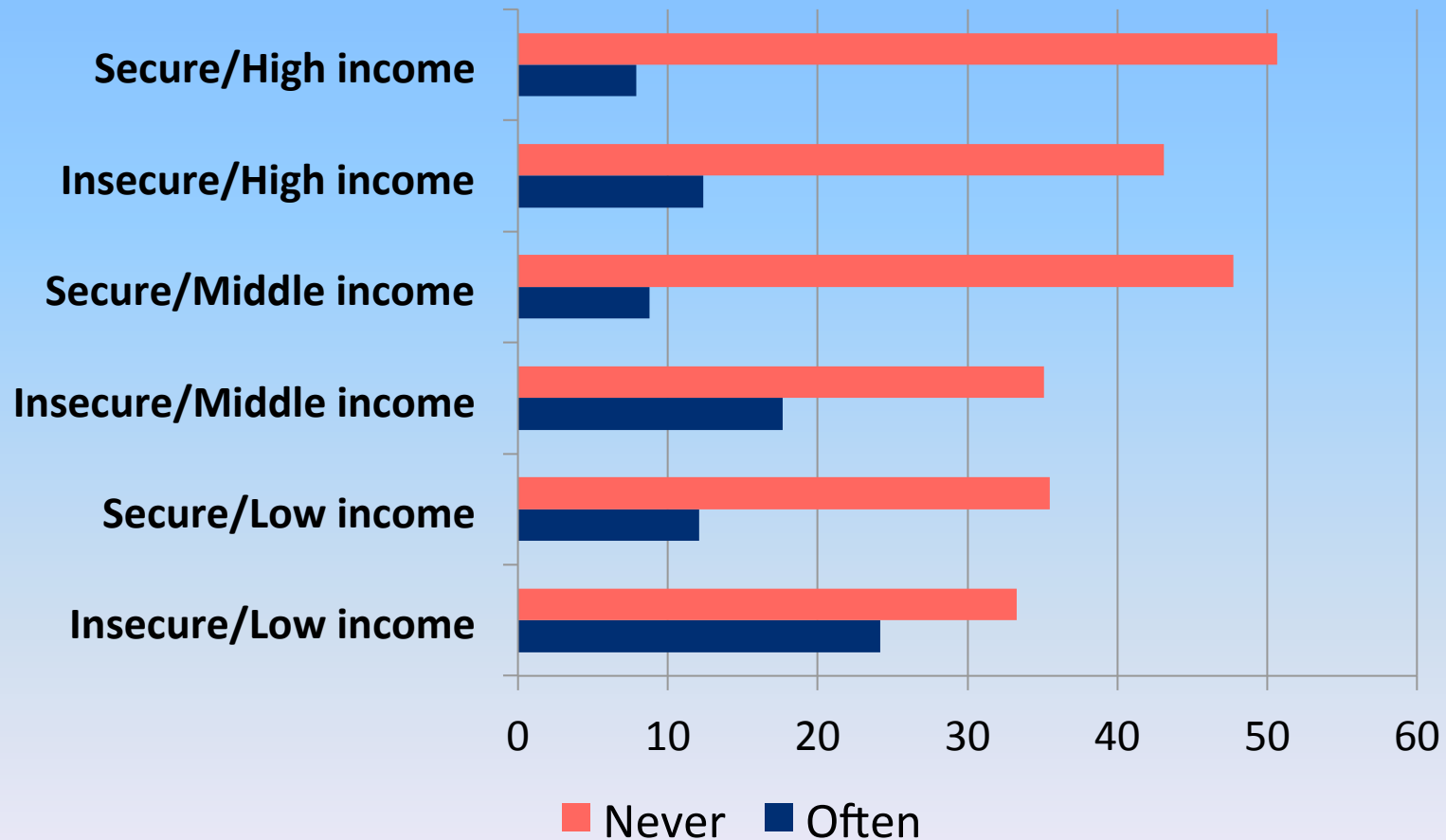
**Workers in precarious employment enjoy  
limited benefits from collective bargaining**

**Can unions fill a different role? (Stone,  
Heery)**

**Unions as mutual aid societies**

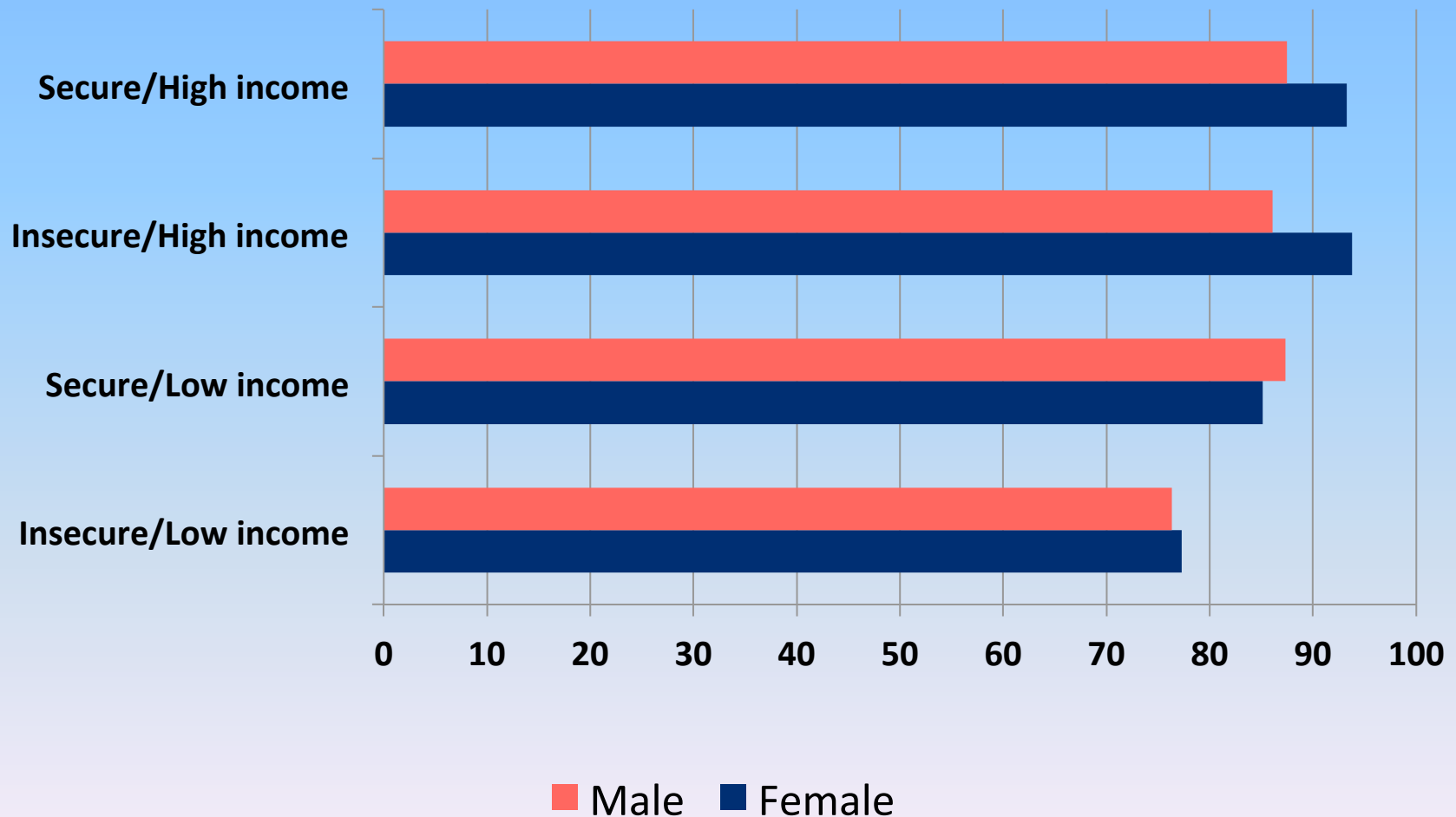
**"Unions must reclaim their mutual assistance role . . . . Unions in the nineteenth century were not merely service providers. They functioned as a community, providing mutual assistance to ease the strains of immigrant life. Unions members aided each other with personal problems, family emergencies, alcohol dependency, and personal crisis." Katherine Stone (2000) p. 219**

# Figure 1: Anxiety about Employment Interferes with Personal and Family Life (% of each category)



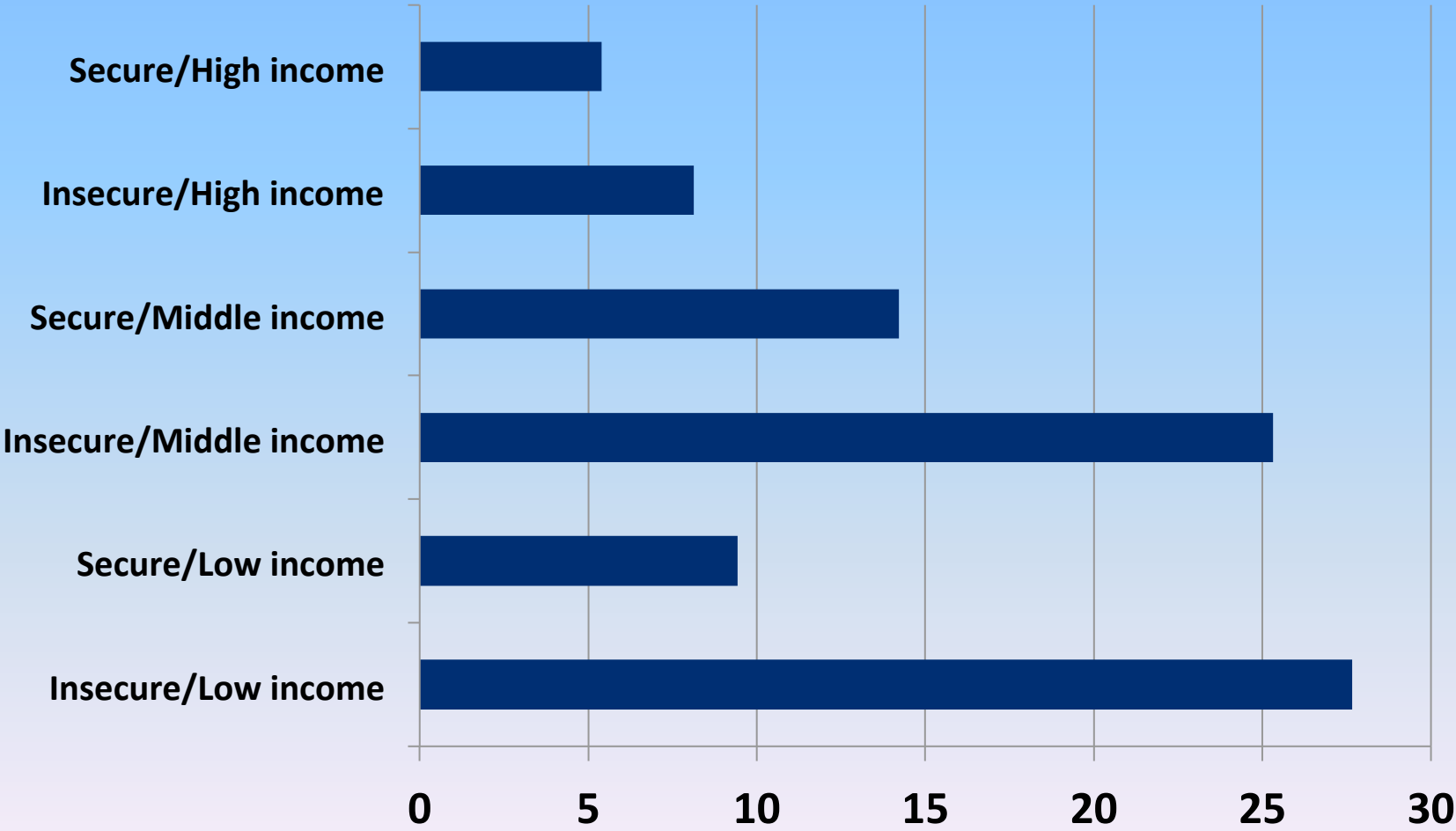
Source: PEPSO Survey.  $p \leq .001$

## Figure 2: Have Close Friend to Talk to by Income and Precarity (% of each category)



Source: PEPSO Survey. male  $p \leq .01$  female  $p \leq .001$

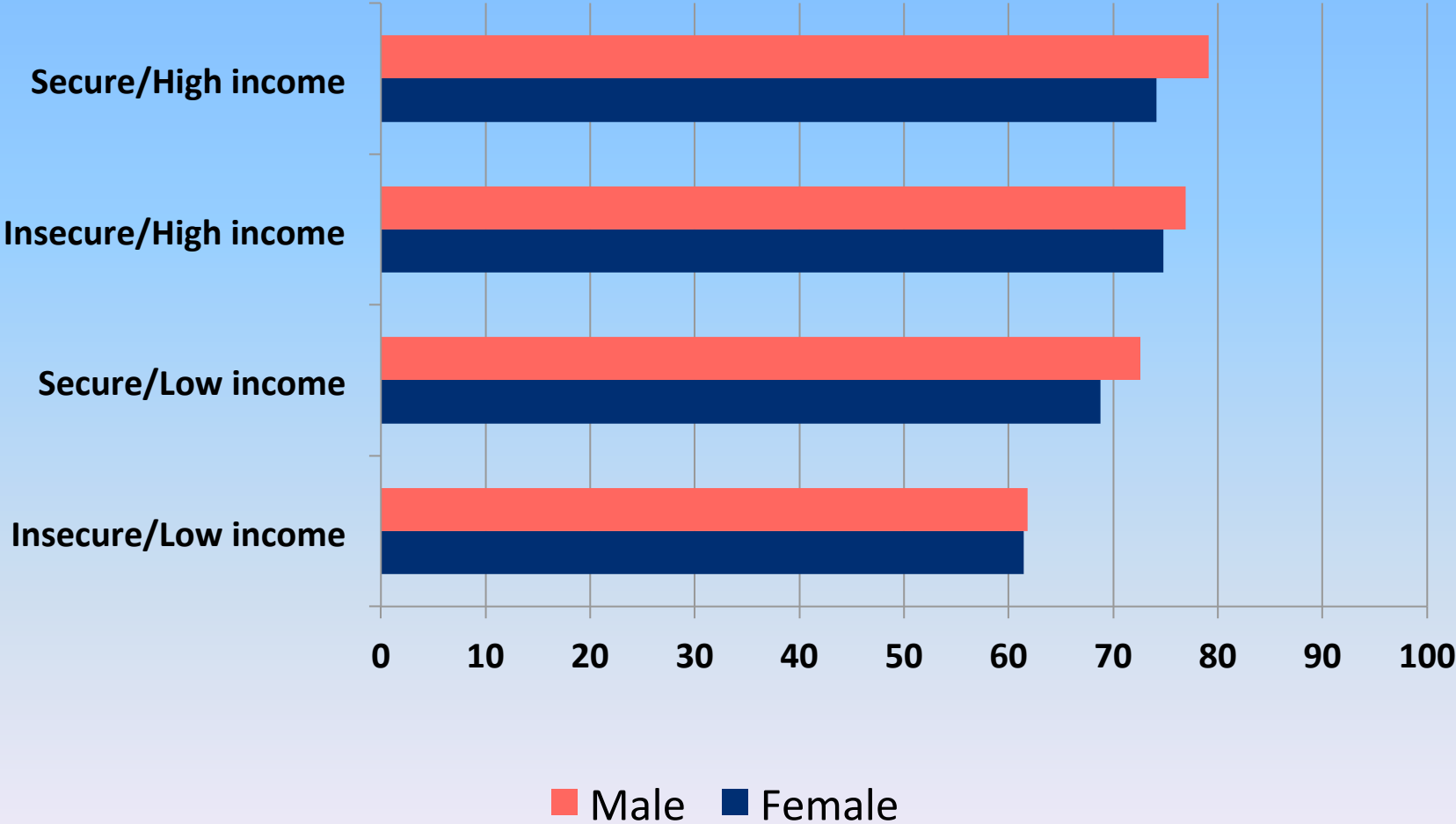
# Figure 3: Employment Situation Makes it Difficult to Access Appropriate Child Care (% of each category)



Source: PEPSO Survey.  $p \leq .001$

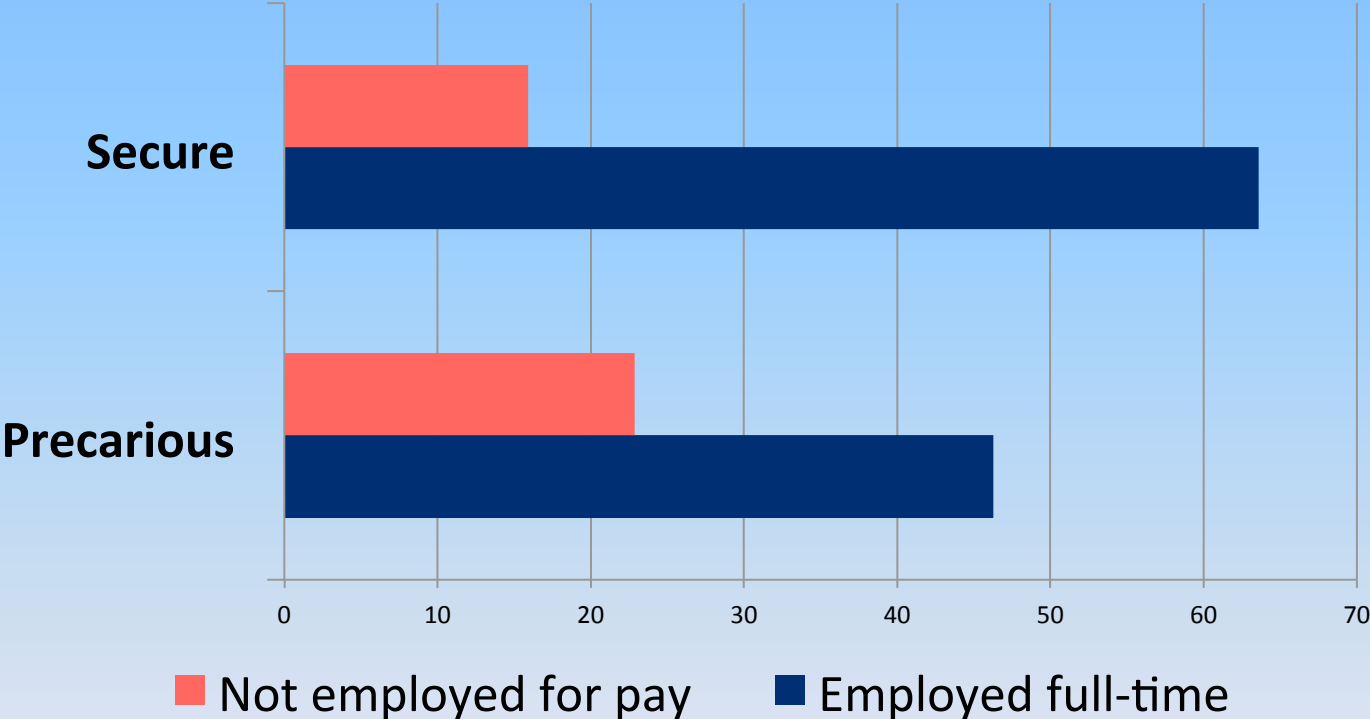


# Figure 4: Mental Health Very Good (% of each category)



Source: PEPSO Survey. male  $p \leq .01$  female  $p \leq .001$

# Figure 5: Partner's Employment by Precarity (% of each cluster)



Source: PEPSO Survey,  $p < .001$

# **Can Unions Play a Support Role for Workers in Precarious Employment?**

- **Issues outside of the workplace**
- **Model of mutual aid**
- **Lobby policy makers (work and social concerns)**
- **Employment support**
  - **training**
  - **job lists**
  - **bargaining**

