

# Portraits 2017: Economic Security and the Social Safety Net

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A decade after the financial crisis of 2008, many Ontarians remain somewhat uncertain about the future, expressing concerns about job security and opportunities for economic mobility, and mixed views about their social safety net. This is the main finding from a new Mowat report analyzing our *Portraits 2017* survey data.

The key findings of the report are:

- A majority of Ontarians (61 per cent) are worried about themselves or an immediate family member getting and keeping a stable, full-time job. Among those who are currently employed full-time, the figure is 63 per cent.
- Three in five Ontarians say that they believe both the quality of life and standard of living for young Canadians will be worse than their parents' generation – a much higher proportion than in 2003. This response does not vary significantly by age – meaning that younger and older generations are equally pessimistic.
- The majority of Ontarians have doubts about whether talent and hard work are enough to get ahead in today's economy. Overall, 78 per cent of Ontarians agree that “what counts today is not what you can do, or how hard working you are, but whom you know and how much influence you have.”
- Overall, most Ontarians have confidence in Canada's public pension system, with 64 per cent saying it is absolutely certain or very likely that they will receive benefits through the Canadian Pension Plan (CPP) when they retire. The proportion of Ontarians who report feeling certain that they will receive CPP upon retirement dramatically increases with age. For example, 89 per cent of those aged 60 and over, and 87 per cent of those who are retired, say it is absolutely certain or very likely that they will receive CPP; at the other end of the spectrum, only one in two of those in their 20s feel it is absolutely certain or very likely that they will receive CPP benefits when they retire.
- Ontarians are fairly certain that they would receive Employment Insurance (EI) benefits should they fall out of work. When asked how likely it would be that they would receive benefits through Canada's EI program if they lost their job, 51 per cent of all Ontarians and 42 per cent of Ontarians employed part-time or self-employed say they felt it was absolutely certain or very likely. Given that fewer than one in three unemployed Ontarians actually receive regular EI benefits, with most part-time and self-employed workers struggling to qualify, it would appear that at least some Ontarians are overestimating their chances of receiving EI in the event that they should lose their job.
- Overall, relatively few Ontarians expect to receive non-repayable financial support to assist themselves or a young person in their family to pursue postsecondary education. More importantly, parents in lower-income families with children under the age of 18 are no more likely than their higher income counterparts to say that they or a young person in their family are absolutely certain or very likely to receive non-repayable student financial assistance.
- Few Ontarians feel confident that they would qualify for government subsidies to help pay for childcare and preschool education for a new baby in their family. Respondents from lower-income households with children aged 18 or under, however, are more certain than higher income households that they could benefit from subsidies.
- Ontarians appear uncertain about whether they would benefit from a government

pharmacare program to cover drug costs in the event of a long-term illness. Overall, one-third of Ontarians feel absolutely certain or very likely to benefit, and one-third feel unlikely to receive such coverage. The other third lies somewhere in the middle. Results

do not differ significantly between age groups (seniors, for instance, are not more likely to expect to receive a benefit to assist with the cost of prescription drugs) or between those with higher and lower household incomes.