

THE SOCIAL WORK PROFESSION

FINDINGS FROM THREE
YEARS OF SURVEYS OF
NEW SOCIAL WORKERS





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A Report to

The Council on Social Work Education
and
The National Association of Social Workers

From

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The views and findings in this report reflect the work of the George Washington University Fitzhugh Mullan Institute for Health Workforce Equity and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Council on Social Work Education, The National Association of Social Workers, or the George Washington University.

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Executive Summary

From 2017 to 2019, the Fitzhugh Mullan Institute for Health Workforce Equity¹ surveyed a sample of social workers completing their master of social work (MSW) degrees. With nearly 3,400 responses, representing an estimated 4.3% of all MSW graduates over those 3 years, and with the benefit of postsurvey weighting of the response sample to more closely resemble all new MSWs completing training in the United States, the results provide a good picture of the new social work workforce in America. This includes their demographic and educational backgrounds, the types of jobs they are taking, the populations they are serving, their experience in the job market, and their satisfaction with their new jobs.

As documented by the survey, social workers are providing services in a wide array of settings to a wide variety of population groups. Regardless of their focus or the setting they are working in, social workers provide extensive services to high-need, low-income populations. The job market for new social workers is generally good, and new social workers are satisfied with their jobs other than their compensation, which is relatively low for people with master's degrees.

The following presents some high-level findings from the 3 years of surveys.

¹ The Fitzhugh Mullan Institute for Health Workforce Equity was previously known as the GW Institute for Health Workforce Studies when the studies of the social work workforce began in 2017.

Demographics and Educational Backgrounds

- **New social workers are predominantly women and are racially and ethnically diverse.** Nearly 90% of MSW graduates in 2017–2019 were women. More than 22% of new social workers were Black/African American, and 14% were Hispanic/Latino. These percentages are much higher than in most health professions.
- **Many new social workers are the first generation in their families to graduate college.** Overall, more than 46% of the 2019 MSW graduates were the first ones in their families to graduate college; this was particularly true for Blacks/African Americans (57%) and Hispanic/Latinos (73%).
- **About two-thirds of new MSWs had bachelor’s degrees in non–social work fields.** The remainder had bachelor’s degrees in social work.
- **MSW programs equally attract younger, less experienced students and older, more experienced students.** Twenty-six percent of the MSW graduates had less than 1 year of work experience and an average age of 26 years; 27% of the new MSWs had 6 or more years of work experience and an average age of 40 years.
- **Although there are a variety of sources of financial support for MSW students, their educational debt at graduation is substantial. Among the 2019 graduates the mean educational debt was \$66,000, of which \$49,000 was from their social work education.** About a third of the 2018 and 2019 MSW graduates received support from school-based scholarships and a third from their families (respondents could indicate more than one source of support). More than 11% received some form of government support, and 15% received support from an employer. Thirty-three percent indicated they had not received any support.

Debt from their social work education was substantially higher for Black/African Americans than for Whites (mean debt \$66,000 vs. \$45,000) and for Hispanics compared with non-Hispanics (\$53,000 vs. \$48,000). Mean total debt for all education was \$92,000 for Black/African Americans and \$79,000 for Hispanics. This is quite high given that mean starting salary for new MSWs was only \$47,100. MSW graduates of private, nonreligious schools had substantially higher social work education debt (mean of \$61,000) than graduates of public or religiously affiliated social work programs (\$33,000 for each).

What New Social Workers Do and Whom They Work For

- **The majority of new graduates were working by the September after spring graduation. Of the graduates who had searched for a job, more than 80% had secured a job or received a job offer.** More than two-thirds (66.8%, 1,968 respondents) had accepted a job offer, and 13.4% had a job offer but were still searching for a job; 2.5% had accepted a non-social work position and 17.3% had not received any job offer. In addition to the respondents who had searched and accepted a job, another 798 MSWs had secured a job without searching. More than a third of those who had secured a job did so through one of their field placements; many others were returning to a previous job.
- **Of those who had a job (including those who had searched and those who secured a job without looking), two-thirds were in jobs that required an MSW or social work license; another 11.5% were in other social work positions. Importantly, 17% were in positions using their social work skills but not defined as social workers; another 5.8% were in non–social work positions.** As a result, 23% of the new MSWs with positions would be lost from data systems tracking the workforce, such as the federal Department of Labor’s occupational statistics, within a few months of graduation (Table 1).

Table 1. Social Work Content of Postgraduation Jobs

Which of the following best describes your principal position (or the position you are about to start)?	Total	
	%	N
Actively working in a job that requires a social work degree or license	65.7	1,842
Actively working in a job as a social worker that does not require a social work degree or license	11.5	288
Actively working not as a social worker but in a job for which you believe a social work education has provided relevant preparation	17.0	433
Actively working in a job for which a social work education was not a necessary or relevant preparation	5.8	158
Total	100	2,721

- **More than four out of five respondents who were working in social work or social work–related positions were in direct (or clinical) work with individuals, families, or groups (82.0%).** Only 5.7% were in direct work with communities, and only 7.5% were in indirect or macro social work (Table 2).

Table 2. Type of Job Taken for Those Working in Social Work or Social Work–Related Positions

In your principal position, what best describes your role (select only one)?	%	N
Direct (or clinical) work with individuals, families, or groups	82.0	2,145
Direct work with communities	5.7	136
Indirect (or macro) social work	7.5	204
Social work higher education	0.8	26
Other social work position	0.6	14
A position for which you believe a social work education provides relevant preparation	3.4	75
Total	100.0	2,600

Note: Figures are for respondents working as social workers or in social work-related positions.

- The most common organizations respondents were working in were private, not-for-profit, tax-exempt, or charitable organizations (33.3%), with 17.3% in outpatient healthcare services, 15.1% in state, local, or federal government agencies, and 9.6% in hospital inpatient facilities (Table 3).

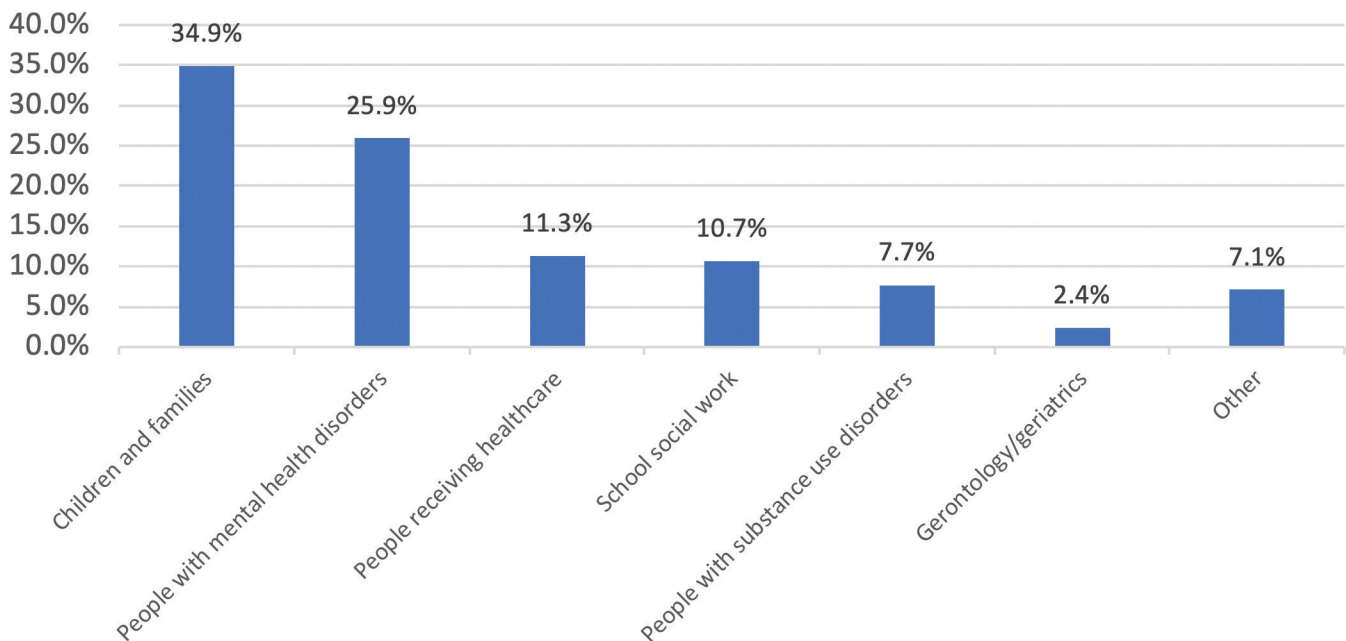
Table 3. Practice Settings for Respondents Working as Social Workers

In your principal position, who are you (or will you be) working for?	%	N
Private, not-for-profit, tax-exempt, or charitable organization	33.0	447
Outpatient healthcare services	17.3	257
State, local, or federal government agency	15.1	184
Hospital inpatient facility	9.6	128
Educational establishment outside higher education	6.7	99
Private social work practice	4.5	58
Other private, for-profit facility or business	4.5	61
Long-term care facility	2.3	35
Any other employer not described above	7.0	98
Total	100.0	1,367

Note: Figures are for respondents working as social workers in direct work with individuals, groups, or communities, including those not requiring a social work degree or license, 2018 and 2019 only.

Figure 1. Population Served: Main Client Focus of MSWs Working as Social Workers

Main Client Focus (N = 1,401)



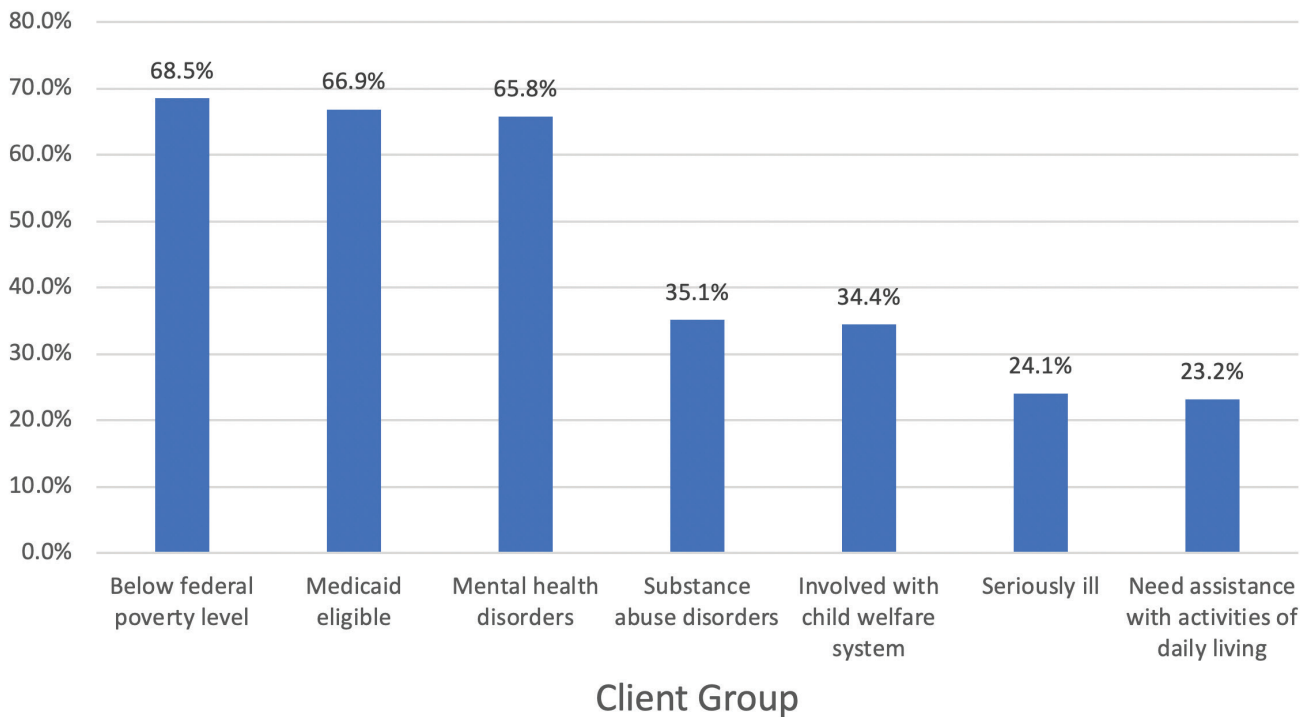
Note: Figures are for respondents working as social workers in direct work with individuals, groups, or communities, including those not requiring a social work degree or license, 2018-2019 only.

- **The most common focus of their work in terms of population served was children and families, which was cited by more than one-third of the respondents (34.9%). The second most common practice focus was people with mental health disorders, which was cited by more than a quarter of the respondents (25.9%).** This was followed by people receiving healthcare, cited by 11.3% of the respondents (Figure 1).

Serving High-Need Populations

- **The majority of MSWs were serving high-need populations regardless of the overall focus or setting of their practice.** Two-thirds (68.5%) of new MSWs in direct social work positions reported that more than 50% of their clients were people below the federal poverty level. Similar proportions of respondents indicated that a majority of their clients were Medicaid eligible and with people with mental health disorders (66.9% and 65.8% of respondents, respectively). One-third were working with people with substance abuse disorders and with people involved with the child welfare system (35.1% and 34.4%, respectively), and almost a quarter were working with people seriously ill and people in need of assistance with activities of daily living (24.1% and 23.2%, respectively) (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Percentage of Direct Service Respondents with More than Half of Their Clients in Category



Note: Figures are for respondents working as social workers in direct work with individuals, groups, or communities, including those not requiring a social work degree or license, 2018-2019 only.

- **New MSWs who were Black/African American were more likely to be serving high-need populations than new MSWs who were White** (Table 4).
- **Black/African American MSWs were more likely than Whites to work in large cities with populations of more than a million (40.3% vs. 17.2%), and Hispanics were more likely than non-Hispanics to work in large cities (39.2% vs. 21.4%).** On the other hand, Whites were more likely to work in suburbs, small cities, and semirural areas than Black/African Americans (52.4% vs. 31.3%).

Income

- **The mean income for all respondents in full-time positions as social workers providing direct services was \$47,100 (inflation-adjusted to 2019 dollars), similar to the median income of \$47,500.** Men reported a mean income on average \$2,900 more than that of women, but both reported a median income of \$47,500. Those working in large cities reported the highest average earnings by population density (\$50,800), and those working in rural areas reported the lowest (\$44,100).

Table 4. Percentage of Direct Service Respondents with More than Half of Their Clients in Category, by Race

Client Group	Race	
	Black/African American (%)	White (%)
Below federal poverty level	80.8	64.7
Medicaid eligible	73.9	65.6
Mental health disorders	68.3	65.0
Substance abuse disorders	42.0	33.3
Involved with child welfare system	43.1	32.4
Seriously ill	30.3	22.8
Need assistance with activities of daily living	22.5	23.5

Total respondents to any part of this question: 1,233

Note: Figures are for respondents working as social workers in direct work with individuals, groups, or communities, including those not requiring a social work degree or license, 2018 and 2019 only.

Table 5. Reason for Difficulty Finding a Job

What would you say was the single most important reason for having a difficult time finding a job?	% ^a
Inadequate salary/compensation offered	13.6
Lack of jobs/opportunities in desired setting (e.g., hospital, hospice, school)	8.8
Lack of jobs/opportunities in desired locations	5.2
Available job responsibilities not a good match to my interests	4.8
Overall lack of jobs/opportunities	4.4
Absence of supervision for licensure	1.1
Other	6.6
Total	44.5

Note: N = 2,894.

^a Percentages are of all those who searched for a job.

Table 6. Assessment of Local and National Job Markets

Assessment of Social Work or Related Job Opportunities Locally (Within 50 Miles)	Local % ^a	National % ^a
No jobs	0.3	0.3
Very few jobs	4.4	1.5
Few jobs	8.4	4.1
Some jobs	42.6	28.0
Many jobs	38.3	52.0
Unknown	6.0	14.2
Total	100.0	100.0
N	2,889	2,886

^a Percentages are of those who searched for a job.

The Job Market

- The job market for new social workers was mixed.** Although the majority of new MSWs found jobs, 44.5% reported having a difficult time finding a job they were satisfied with. The most common reason cited was inadequate salary/compensation, which was cited by 13.6% of all of those who searched for a job. The second most cited reason was the lack of jobs in desired settings. Only 4.4% cited an overall lack of jobs as the most important reason they had a difficult time finding a job (Table 5).
- The general availability of jobs can be seen in the responses to the questions on the job market locally (within 50 miles) and nationally.** Whereas 13.1% of the respondents indicated there were “no,” “very few,” or “few” jobs locally, only 5.9% gave those responses regarding the national job market (Table 6).

- When asked about which jobs were much more available than others, case manager and case worker positions were cited by nearly 90% of the MSWs who responded to this question. On the other hand, more than three-quarters of the respondents indicated that indirect (or macro) social work, advocacy, policy, research, administrative, and management positions were much less available (Tables 7 and 8).

Satisfaction

- The majority of respondents (90.4%) were very or somewhat satisfied with their new positions, and 82.6% were very or somewhat satisfied with their benefits. Satisfaction with salary was lower, with 72.8% being very or somewhat satisfied. Only 25.6% were very satisfied with their salaries, compared with 47.8% very satisfied with their positions and 49.6% very satisfied with their benefits (Table 9).

Table 7. Types of Job Much More Available

Job Type	% ^a
Case managers and case workers	88.2
Licensed positions	76.3
Mental health and behavioral health positions	73.4
Clinical and direct services, counselors, and therapists	70.1
Child welfare and child protective services	69.6
Substance use disorder treatment positions	61.7
Total respondents to any part of this question	836

^a Percentages are of all respondents who searched for any job and answered any part of this question, 2019 only.

Table 8. Types of Job Much Less Available

Job Type	% ^a
Indirect (or macro) social work: advocacy, policy, research, administration, management	76.8
Unlicensed or leading to license positions	68.4
Jobs with Veterans Affairs	68.0
School social work	67.9
Community organizing, outreach, and planning positions	66.0
Total respondents to any part of this question	797

^a Percentages are of all respondents who searched for any job and answered any part of this question, 2019 only.

Table 9. Satisfaction Levels Compared

Level of Satisfaction	Position (%)	Salary (%)	Benefits (%)
Very satisfied	47.8	25.6	49.6
Somewhat satisfied	42.6	47.2	33.0
Somewhat dissatisfied	7.7	18.1	11.2
Very dissatisfied	1.9	9.1	6.2
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
<i>N</i>	2,034	2,028	2,001

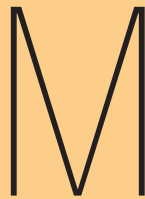
Note: Figures are for respondents working in a position as a social worker, including those not requiring a social work degree or license.

-
- **Nearly 80% of new MSW graduates intended to become licensed clinical social workers in the next 5 years, and an additional 2.4% indicated they were already licensed.**

Key Observations

- New MSWs are serving high-need populations regardless of the setting they are working in.
- Although new social workers are overwhelmingly female (90%), they are diverse in terms of race and ethnicity. Furthermore, overall 46% of new social workers are the first person in their families to graduate college. This percentage is even higher for Black/African American and Hispanic graduates (57% and 73%, respectively).
- Graduates are generally satisfied with their jobs and profession, but there is frustration with the low salaries for new social workers. This frustration is probably heightened by the high levels of educational debt. The mean starting salary was \$47,100, and the median debt was \$66,000.
- The overall job market is mixed in that a range of jobs are available, but nearly 45% said they had a difficult time finding a job they were satisfied with; about a third cited low wages as the cause of the difficulty.
- More than 17% of the graduates took jobs that used their social work skills but were not considered social work positions. On one hand, this finding is encouraging because it shows that their social work skills can be used in many positions. On the other hand, their contribution to society and the value of their social work education cannot be tracked and credited to their social work education because occupational data reporting will not record these people as social workers.
- An additional 5.8% of graduates took non-social work jobs that did not use their social work skills. This finding is worth further study given the investment these graduates and their schools have made in their social work education.
- Social workers are major providers of mental health services: 26% of new MSWs indicated that people with mental health issues was the main focus of their jobs, and nearly 66% said they provided mental health services to a majority of their clients.
- Although many in the social work community would like to see a greater share of graduates go into macro social work positions, few graduates seem to be taking this path, and the job market appears limited at the present time.

Methods

A large, black, stylized letter 'M' is centered within an orange square. The 'M' is composed of simple black lines and is the first letter of the word 'Methods'.

Methods

The Fitzhugh Mullan Institute for Health Workforce Equity conducted annual surveys of social work graduates between 2017 and 2019; this report combines the 3 years of survey findings for MSW graduates. Each year's survey was conducted in early fall to allow time for spring graduates to have searched for employment and for the majority to have started jobs. The survey captured students graduating between January and August each year. All accredited social work programs in the United States were invited to participate in the survey.

When fielding its surveys, the Fitzhugh Mullan Institute used REDCap survey software (Harris et al., 2009), which establishes a unique survey link for each participant via e-mail in order to prevent duplicate responses and enable the sending of survey reminders only to those who have not yet responded. Although a few schools provided e-mail addresses from their records, in most instances schools forwarded an invitation with a REDCap public web link to their students in the spring and early summer of each year. This link enabled interested students to sign up for the survey in advance and provide an e-mail address that would still be valid when the survey went live.

Incentives were offered each year to students taking the survey in order to maximize the number of responses. Lists of survey registrants were sent to the schools from which they graduated for confirmation of graduation status. REDCap was then used to conduct the survey via unique web links e-mailed to each confirmed registrant. The surveys, launched at the end of August each year, were kept open for 4 weeks. Data cleaning and exclusion of graduates who did not enter their degree program information was carried out before the final response rate was calculated for each year (Table 10).

The survey responses were weighted for this analysis. Results were weighted based on auspice, region, race, and ethnicity based on data from Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) on students in accredited social work programs. The weighting method is described in the Appendix.

The survey instrument was slightly revised each year to further investigate areas of particular interest. As a result, 3 years of data are not available for all questions. The actual years covered are indicated in each table where less than 3 years of data is used.

The 2019 Survey

The 2019 survey was limited to students graduating with a master's degree in social work, including MSW and

equivalents such as MSS, MSSA, or MSSW. CSWE and the Mullan Institute reached out to social work programs in the spring of 2019 and asked that they send information on the survey to the students scheduled to graduate in 2019. Students could then sign up for the survey. A total of 1,412 students from 47 social work programs signed up for the survey.

The incentive for the 2019 survey was a \$20 gift card for all graduating MSWs who completed the survey. The survey launched at the end of August 2019 and closed after 4 weeks with 1,068 responses. Data cleaning and exclusion of graduates who did not enter their degree program information reduced the final figure to 1,045 valid responses, for a response rate of 74.0% of those who had signed up, representing an estimated 3.8% of all MSW graduates in 2019 (Table 10).

The 2019 survey introduced new questions on student educational debt, whether the respondent was a first-generation college graduate, how long part-time students took to complete their degree program, and whether respondents were working in teams in their new positions. Also, the questions on types of financial support for education and types of job more and less available were precoded for 2019, and the question on practice setting was recoded.

All results that follow are based on a weighted analysis unless otherwise stated.

Table 10. Overall Responses and Response Rates

Survey Year	Invitations to Participate	Number of Respondents (Programs)	Response Rate ^a (%)	Response Rate Among Participating Schools ^b (%)	Proportion of Total MSW Graduates Nationally ^b (%)	Number of Respondents in Weighted Analysis (Programs)
2017	1,559	1,088 (37)	69.8	17.7	4.0	1,080 (34)
2018	2,022	1,403 (53)	69.5	14.9	5.1	1,317 (45)
2019	1,412	1,045 (46)	74.0	12.8	3.8	995 (42)
Total	4,993	3,536	70.8	14.9	4.3	3,392

^aResponse rate reflects the percentage of confirmed registrants who responded.

^bBased on data supplied by the Council on Social Work Education on 2017 social work graduation numbers nationally. See the Appendix for details on the methods, including weighing of responses.

Findings

Several different denominators are used in the exhibits in this and the following sections, depending on the nature and purpose of the questions asked. Where the denominator is not all respondents to the surveys, this is indicated in the relevant table. A summary of the various denominators used in deriving percentages is provided in Table 11 to provide further clarity. There is some variation in denominators depending on whether every respondent asked a particular question actually answered it.

Table 11. Overview of Data

Denominator	Survey Year			Total
	2017	2018	2019	
	<i>N</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>N</i>
All respondents	1,088	1,405	1,045	3,538
Respondents in weighted analysis	1,080	1,317	995	3,392
Those who searched for a social work or social work-related job	927	1,138	846	2,911
Those who accepted a job offer after searching	623	787	558	1,968
Those working in any job (whether searched for it or not)	849	1,099	818	2,766
Those indicating working in a social work or social work-related job (whether searched for it or not)	799	1,040	768	2,607
Those indicating working in a direct (clinical) social work job (whether searched for it or not), including social work-related jobs ^a	709	913	659	2,281
Those indicating working in a social work job (whether searched for it or not) ^a	677	867	622	2,166
Those indicating working in a direct (clinical) social work job (whether searched for it or not), excluding social work-related jobs ^a	638	822	582	2,042
Those indicating working full-time in a direct (clinical) social work job (whether searched for it or not), including social work-related jobs ^a	571	729	535	1,835

Note: All significance tests by gender, race, ethnicity, and age in the report were carried out while controlling for the other three factors.

^aSome respondents described themselves as in direct (clinical) social work while also saying they were in social work-related rather than social work positions.

Demographics of Respondents²

Nine out of ten respondents (89.9%) were female (Table 12).

Table 12. Birth Sex of Respondents

What sex were you assigned at birth?	%
Female	89.9
Male	9.7
Decline to answer	0.4
Total	100.0
<i>N</i>	3,385

Note: Because this is a weighted analysis, *N* refers only to the numbers of respondents in the underlying data group and does not correspond to the percentage of survey respondents in individual categories. Except where otherwise indicated, this is the case for all *N*s in this report.

² Percentages and means given in the remainder of this report use weighted data.

Table 13. Age of Respondents, by Sex

	Birth Sex		Total
	Female	Male	
Mean age (y)	30.7	33.1	31.0
Median age (y) ^a	27	30	28
<i>N</i>	3,044	326	3,370

^aMedian age from unweighted analysis.

Table 14. Race of Respondents, by Sex

Race	Birth Sex		Total	
	Female (%)	Male (%)	%	<i>N</i>
American Indian/Alaska Native	1.3	0.4	1.2	23
Asian or Pacific Islander	4.8	7.9	5.1	162
Black/African American	22.4	21.2	22.3	402
White	66.2	66.4	66.2	2,391
Other or decline to answer	5.4	4.1	5.3	368
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	3,346

Table 15. Race of Respondents, by Mean Age

Race	Mean Age (y)	<i>N</i>
Black/African American	32.9	408
White	30.5	2,409
Other	29.9	525

Table 16. Ethnicity of Respondents

Ethnicity	%
Hispanic	14.0
Non-Hispanic	86.0
Total	100.0
<i>N</i>	3,384

The mean age of respondents was 30.9 years, with a median age of 28, implying a skewed age distribution with some respondents considerably older than the mean. Men were on average more than 2 years older than women (mean age 33.1 years vs. 30.7 years for women, $p < .001$) (Table 13). The median age for men was 3 years higher than for women (30 years vs. 27 years). Black/African Americans were older than others (32.9 years vs. 31.0 years over all races, $p = .001$).

Two-thirds of respondents (66.2%) identified as White, with another 22.3% identifying as Black/African American (Table 14). Black/African Americans were more than 2 years older on average than Whites (mean age 32.9 years vs. 30.5 years for Whites, $p = .001$) (Table 15). There were no significant differences between races by sex.

About one in seven respondents (14.0%) identified as Hispanic (Table 16). There were no significant associations of gender or age with ethnicity.

More than four out of five respondents (83.9%) identified as straight or heterosexual. Those reporting themselves to be lesbian, gay, or homosexual were much more likely to be male (21.0% of men vs. 2.7% of women, $p < .001$) (Table 17). Overall, 15.2% identified as lesbian, gay or homosexual, bisexual, or “something else.”

Table 17. Sexual Orientation of Respondents, by Birth Sex

Do you think of yourself as	Female (%)	Male (%)	Total (%)
Straight or heterosexual	85.6	69.7	83.9
Lesbian, gay, or homosexual	2.7	21.0	4.5
Bisexual	8.1	5.3	7.8
Something else	2.8	3.7	2.9
Decline to answer	0.8	0.3	0.9
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
<i>N</i>	3,041	326	3,381

Note: Totals include 14 respondents who declined to state their birth sex.

Table 18. Whether a First-Generation College Graduate, by Race, 2019 only

When you attended college for your bachelor’s degree, were you a first-generation college student (i.e., your parents did not graduate college)?

Race			Total	
	No (%)	Yes (%)	%	<i>N</i>
Black/African American	43.1	56.9	100.0	135
White	57.6	42.4	100.0	703
Other	50.8	49.2	100.0	127
Total	53.6	46.4	100.0	965

Table 19. Whether a First-Generation College Graduate by Ethnicity, 2019 only

When you attended college for your bachelor’s degree, were you a first-generation college student?

Ethnicity			Total	
	No (%)	Yes (%)	%	<i>N</i>
Hispanic	26.6	73.4	100.0	138
Non-Hispanic	56.7	43.3	100.0	855
Total	52.4	47.6	100.0	993

Table 20. Whether a First-Generation College Graduate, by Age, 2019

Whether First-Generation College Graduate	Mean Age (y)
Yes	31.3
No	29.1
Total	30.1
<i>N</i>	995

Table 21. Whether Non-Social Work Prior Degree Held, by Birth Sex

Other than an MSW or other social work degree, do you hold any other degrees?	Birth Sex		
	Female (%)	Male (%)	Total (%)
Yes	65.4	75.6	66.4
No	34.6	24.4	33.6
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
<i>N</i>	3,018	323	3,341

Almost half (46.4%) of respondents identified as first-generation college graduates. Black/African Americans were more likely to be first-generation college graduates (56.9% of Black/African Americans identified as first-generation graduates vs. 42.4% of Whites, $p < .01$). Hispanics were also more likely to be first-generation graduates (73.4% of Hispanics identified as first-generation students vs. 43.3% of non-Hispanics, $p < .001$). First generation graduates were also older on average (mean age 31.2 years vs. 29.2 years for others, $p < .001$) (Tables 18–20).

Education and Experience

Experience and Education Before Embarking on a Social Work Degree Program

Two-thirds (66.2%) of respondents held degrees other than degrees in social work. The remainder are assumed to have received bachelor's degrees in social work. Men were more likely to hold a non-social work degree than women (75.6% of men held a non-social work degree vs. 65.4% of women, $p < .01$) (Table 21).

Almost three-quarters (73.7%) of respondents had a year or more of prior work experience before embarking on their MSW programs. Men were more likely to have more years of prior employment than women (23.2% of men had more than 10 years of prior work experience vs. 12.5% of women, $p < .05$). Those with more work experience were also generally older (mean age of those with 1–2 years of prior work experience was 27.5 years vs. 35.2 years for those with 6–10 years of prior work, $p < .001$). More than two-thirds of respondents (68.6%) had 1 year or more of their prior employment in social work positions (Table 22). Those with more years of prior social work employment were more likely to be older (mean age of those with 6–10 years of prior working in social work was 38.0 years vs. 28.2 years for those with 1–2 years of prior working in social work, $p < .001$).

Social Work Degree Educational Experience

One in five respondents (21.1%) were enrolled part-time for some or all their MSW program. Hispanics were more likely to study part-time than non-Hispanics (26.5% of Hispanics were part-time vs. 20.2% for non-Hispanics, $p < .05$). Those studying part-time were also older (mean age 35.0 years vs. 29.9 years for those only enrolled full-time, $p < .001$) (Tables 23 and 24).

Table 22. Working Before Embarking on MSW Degree Program

How many years were you working before entering the MSW program?	Total Years Worked (%)	Years in Social Work or Other Social Services Work (%) ^{a,b}
Less than 1	26.3	31.4
1-2	22.3	29.4
3-5	23.9	22.1
6-10	13.9	11.1
More than 10	13.5	6.0
Total	100.0	100.0
<i>N</i>	3,343	1,689

^a 2018 and 2019 only.

^b Percentage of those who worked for at least one year before their MSW program.

Table 23. Whether Studying Full-Time, by Ethnicity

Were you enrolled as a full-time student throughout your program?	Are you Hispanic/Latino?		Total (%)
	No (%)	Yes (%)	
Yes	79.8	73.5	78.9
No	20.2	26.5	21.1
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
<i>N</i>	2,934	437	3,371

Table 24. Whether Studying Full-Time, by Age

Were you enrolled as a full-time student throughout your program?	Mean Age (y)	<i>N</i>
Yes	29.9	2,611
No	35	768
Total	31	3,379

Table 25. Online and In-Person Study, by Birth Sex

Outside of your field placements, how was your program mainly taught?	Birth Sex		Total (%)
	Female (%)	Male (%)	
Primarily in-person (90% or more)	71.8	78.4	72.5
Primarily online (90% or more)	17.2	9.7	16.5
Blended online and in-person	11.0	11.9	11.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
<i>N</i>	3,035	326	3,361

Table 26. Online and In-Person Study, by Age

Outside of your field placements, how was your program mainly taught?	Mean Age (y)	<i>N</i>
Primarily in-person (90% or more)	29.9	2,424
Primarily online (90% or more)	34.9	620
Blended online and in-person	32.0	339
Total	31.0	3,383

Those studying online were more likely to be female and older (mean age 34.9 years vs. 29.9 years for those studying primarily in person, $p < .001$) (Tables 25 and 26). It appears that online education offers opportunities for older students to obtain their MSW. There was a sharp downward trend in in-person study over time, from 79.9% of respondents in 2017 to 70.7% in 2018 and 66.5% in 2019 ($p < .01$).

More than three-quarters of respondents (77.8%) graduated within 3 years. Among part-time students, those studying primarily online tended to graduate faster than those studying primarily in person, with 25.9% graduating within 2 years compared to 7.5% of those studying primarily in person (Table 27). Those taking more years to graduate were likely to be older (mean age of those taking more than 2 years to graduate was 34.7 years or older vs. 32.8 years for those graduating in 1–2 years, $p = .001$).

Four out of five respondents (79.8%) had an educational focus on direct work with individuals, families, or groups, with another 9.2% focused on direct work with communities, and 7.7% focused on indirect (or macro) social work (Table 28). Those focusing on indirect or macro social work were likely to be younger than those focusing on direct or clinical work (29.3 years vs 31.2 years, $p < .01$).

Table 27. Time Taken by Part-Time Students to Complete MSW Degree,

How many years did it take you to earn your degree?	Outside of your field placements, how was your program mainly taught?		Total	
	Primarily in Person (90% or More) (%)	Primarily Online (90% or More) (%)	%	N
1 year or less	1.0	2.6	1.4	2
More than 1 but not more than 2 years	6.5	23.3	15.0	32
More than 2 but not more than 3 years	73.2	45.8	61.4	135
More than 3 but not more than 4 years	15.4	27.2	19.1	39
More than 4 but not more than 5 years	1.4	1.1	1.1	4
More than 5 years	2.5	0.0	2.1	3
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	215

Note: Figures are for respondents who were not full-time throughout their MSW program.

Table 28. General Focus of MSW Educational Program

Which of the following best describes the general practice focus of your program?	%
Direct (or clinical) work with individuals, families, or groups , including in institutions: including counseling and therapy; child welfare; general support to individuals and families or connecting them with services; healthcare support, case management, or coordination; school social work; group therapy or other group work	79.8
Direct work with communities , including community social work, community organizing, advocacy, or development; community health work; social and community service management	9.2
Indirect (or macro) social work , including public policy and advocacy; administration, management; planning; program evaluation; research (excluding higher education teaching positions); or environmental health or public health work	7.7
None of the above	3.3
Total	100.0
N	3,315

Table 29. Educational Concentration if in Direct Social Work, 2018–2019

Which of the following best describes your declared specialization or concentration?	Total		Birth Sex	
	N	%	Female (%)	Male (%)
Mental health or behavioral health	749	35.1	33.6	49.7
Children, youth, or families	502	25.6	26.4	17.8
Generalist practice	320	15.2	15.8	9.8
Health	125	6.5	6.7	4.7
Aging or gerontology	83	4.2	4.3	3.3
Substance use and addiction	41	1.6	1.3	4.4
Military	27	1.5	1.4	2.5
Criminal justice	18	0.9	1.0	0.0
Other	178	9.4	9.7	7.8
Total	2,043	100.0	100.0	100.0

Females were more likely than men to have an educational focus on children and families were more likely to be female (26.4% of women vs. 17.8% of men, $p < .05$). Black/African Americans were more likely than Whites to have an educational concentration on children and families (27.4% of Black/African Americans vs. 23.3% of Whites, $p = .001$); and Hispanics were more likely than non-Hispanics (32.7% of Hispanics vs. 24.3% of non-Hispanics, $p < .01$). Those with a concentration in health were less likely to be Hispanic (2.1% of Hispanics had a concentration in health vs. 7.4% of non-Hispanics, $p = .001$). A higher percentage of men than women had an educational concentration in mental or behavioral health (49.7% of men vs. 33.6% of women, $p = .001$) (Table 29).³ A higher percentage of Whites than of other races were working in mental or behavioral health (36.5% of Whites vs. 32.7% of Black/African Americans, $p < .01$). Those with a concentration in generalist practice were more likely to be female (15.8% of women vs. 9.8% of men, $p < .05$), White (17.6% of Whites vs. 12.2% of Black/African Americans, $p < .01$), and older (mean age 32.2 years vs. 31.0 years overall, $p < .05$).

³ To be clear, although men had a higher likelihood of selecting mental or behavioral health than women, given that women represented 89.9% of all social workers, women are still the vast majority of mental or behavioral health social workers.

There were numerous sources of funding for MSW respondents, and many respondents were receiving more than one type of financial support. School-based scholarships and family support (31.8% and 32.1%, respectively) were the most common types of financial support for respondents' MSW programs, although most respondents reported receiving no financial support at all (33.2%). Other common types of support were work study and employer support (13.3% and 15.3%, respectively) (Table 30). Government sources of support were less common, with none being reported by more than 5% of respondents (Table 31).

Respondents had a high level of debt from their social work education, which was on top of other educational debt, such as from their bachelor's degree. The mean educational debt of respondents was \$66,000, of which \$49,000 was debt from their social work degree program. Those with higher levels of educational debt were more likely to be female (mean debt for women \$68,000 vs. \$57,000 for men, $p < .05$) and Black/African American (mean debt for Black/African Americans \$92,000 vs. \$57,000 for Whites, $p < .001$). The highest levels of debt were among 31- to 35-year-olds (mean debt \$84,000 vs. \$73,000 for 36- to 40-year-olds, \$69,000 for 26- to 30-year-olds and \$48,000 for 21- to 25-year-olds, $p < .05$) (Tables 32–35).

Table 30. Nongovernment Financial Support for Social Work Education, 2018 and 2019 Only

Support Type	% ^a	N
None	33.2	754
Family ^b	32.1	314
School-based scholarship	31.8	722
Employer	15.3	348
Work study	13.3	302
Other	17.0	386
Total respondents to any part of this question		2,269

^a Percentages are of all respondents who answered any part of this question (respondents may have more than one source of funding, so percentages do not sum to 100%).

^b 2019 only.

Table 31. Government Financial Support, 2018 and 2019 Only

Support Type	% ^a	N
HRSA programs ^b	4.7	107
GI Bill or Veterans Affairs	3.6	81
Other government programs ^c	2.7	62
Total respondents to any part of this question		2,269

^a Percentages are of all respondents who answered any part of this question (respondents may have more than one source of funding, so percentages do not sum to 100%).

^b Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) programs include the Behavioral Health Workforce Education and Training Grant and the Scholarship for Disadvantaged Students.

^c Other government programs include the Minority Fellowship Program and the Title IV-E Child Welfare stipend.

Table 32. Educational Debt, by Birth Sex, 2019 Only

Birth Sex	Total Educational Debt		Debt from MSW Degree		N
	Mean Debt ^a	Median Debt ^b	Mean Debt ^a	Median Debt ^b	
Female	\$68,000	\$65,000	\$49,000	\$45,000	886
Male	\$57,000	\$55,000	\$48,000	\$55,000	103
Total	\$66,000	\$65,000	\$49,000	\$45,000	989

^a Values rounded to the nearest \$1,000.

^b Median debt is from unweighted analysis in \$10,000 increments.

Table 33. Educational Debt, by Race, 2019 Only

Race	Total Educational Debt		Debt from MSW Degree		N
	Mean Debt ^a	Median Debt ^b	Mean Debt ^a	Median Debt ^b	
Black/African American	\$92,000	\$85,000	\$66,000	\$65,000	135
White	\$57,000	\$55,000	\$45,000	\$45,000	703
Other	\$70,000	\$65,000	\$44,000	\$45,000	127
Total	\$66,000	\$65,000	\$49,000	\$45,000	965

^a Values rounded to the nearest \$1,000.

^b Median debt is from unweighted analysis in \$10,000 increments.

Table 34. Educational Debt, by Ethnicity, 2019 Only

Ethnicity	Total Educational Debt		Debt from MSW Degree		N
	Mean Debt ^a	Median Debt ^b	Mean Debt ^a	Median Debt ^b	
Hispanic	\$79,000	\$75,000	\$53,000	\$55,000	138
Non-Hispanic	\$64,000	\$55,000	\$48,000	\$45,000	855
Total	\$66,000	\$65,000	\$49,000	\$45,000	993

^a Values rounded to the nearest \$1,000.

^b Median debt is from unweighted analysis in \$10,000 increments.

Table 35. Educational Debt, by Age Group, 2019 Only

Age Group (y)	Total Educational Debt		Debt from MSW Degree		N
	Mean Debt ^a	Median Debt ^b	Mean Debt ^a	Median Debt ^b	
21-25	\$48,000	\$45,000	\$30,000	\$25,000	345
26-30	\$69,000	\$75,000	\$42,000	\$45,000	352
31-35	\$84,000	\$75,000	\$44,000	\$45,000	107
36-40	\$73,000	\$65,000	\$46,000	\$45,000	62
41 or older	\$67,000	\$65,000	\$43,000	\$45,000	112

^a Values rounded to the nearest \$1,000.

^b Median debt is from unweighted analysis in \$10,000 increments.

Job Search

Two-thirds of those who searched for a job had received an offer and accepted it (66.8%), 10.8% had received an offer but were still searching, and 17.3% had not yet received any job offers (Table 36). Whites were more likely to have been offered a job and accepted it (69.4% of Whites vs. 61.3% of Black/African Americans, $p < .05$). Those who had been offered a social work job but were still searching were more likely to be older (mean age 32.1 years, $p = .05$), as were those who had not yet been offered any job (mean age 32.6 years, $p < .001$).

Table 36. Job Search Success for Those Who Searched for a Job

Have you been (or were you) offered a social work-related position?	%
Yes, and I accepted the offer.	66.8
Yes, but I am still searching.	10.8
No, I have an offer of a non-social work-related position but am still searching for a social work one.	2.6
No, I have an offer of a non-social work-related position and have accepted it.	2.5
No, I have not yet been offered any position.	17.3
<i>N</i>	2,893

More than a third of respondents (34.7%) who had secured any job did so through one of their field placements. Those obtaining a job through a field placement were more likely to be older (mean age 31.3 years vs. 29.9 years for those who obtained their job in another way, $p < .01$) (Table 37).

Those who did not search for a job were more likely to be older (mean age 34.1 years for those who did not search vs. 30.4 years for those who did search, $p < .001$), at least partly because those returning to a job were older on average than those who were not (mean age of job returners 32.5 years vs. 20.5 years for those not returning) (Table 38).

Table 37. Whether Obtained Job Through Field Placement, by Age, 2018 and 2019 Only

	Is this job with an organization where you had a field placement as part of your MSW program?		
	No	Yes	Total
Mean Age	29.9	31.3	30.4
<i>N</i>	1,293	671	1,964

Note: Figures based on numbers who secured any job.

Table 38. Whether Searched for a Job, by Age

Did you search for a job before (or since) graduating this year?	Mean Age (y)	<i>N</i>
Yes	30.4	473
No	34.1	2,911
Total	31.0	3,384

Table 39. Why Not Searched for a Job

Why have you not searched for a job?	% ^a	All Grads (%)
I already had a job while I was at school and I am staying in it for the present.	50.4	6.8
I was offered a job without needing to search for one.	21.0	2.8
I'm continuing my education.	7.4	1.0
I'm taking a break from work.	6.9	0.9
Other (please explain below)	14.3	1.9
Total	100.0	13.5
<i>N</i>	471	3,392

^a Percentages are of those who did not search for a job.

Half of those who did not search for a job (50.4%) had a job while at school and were staying in it for the moment; the other main reason for not searching for a job was being offered a job without needing to search for one (21.0%) (Table 39). Those who did not search for a job because they were taking a break from work were less likely to be Black/ African American (2.1% of Black/ African Americans vs. 7.1% of Whites, $p < .05$). Those who did not search because they were offered a job without needing to search were more likely to be younger (mean age 30.9 years vs. 34.1 years for all those not searching for a job, $p < .001$), as were those who did not search because they were continuing their education (mean age 30.4 years, $p < .05$).

Employment

M

ore than two-fifths (41.9%) of those who had obtained a job reported that the position was one they went back to (or stayed in) after graduating with their MSW (Table 40). Those returning to a job in a previous organization were more likely to be older (mean age 32.5 years vs. 29.5 years for others, $p < .001$).

Table 40. Whether Returning to a Job in a Previous Organization After

Was this work with an organization you went back to (or stayed in) after graduation?	%
Yes	41.9
No	58.1
Total	100.0
<i>N</i>	2,520

Note: Percentages are of those who worked during their MSW course.

Almost two-thirds (65.7%) of respondents with current positions were in jobs that required a social work degree or license. Few social work jobs (11.5%) did not require a social work degree or license. One in six (17.0%) were in jobs for which a social work education provided relevant preparation though not in a position as a social worker. The 5.8% of jobholders taking jobs not related to social work represent a

small but not negligible loss to the profession. Those taking jobs requiring a social work degree or license were less likely to be Black/African American (55.8% of Black/African Americans vs. 68.8% of Whites, $p < .001$), and the reverse was true for those taking social work-related jobs (22.6% of Black/African Americans vs. 15.2% of Whites, $p < .01$) (Table 41).

Table 41. Social Work Content of Postgraduation Jobs, by Race

Which of the following best describes your principal position (or the position you are about to start)?	Race			Total	
	Black/African American (%)	White (%)	Other (%)	%	N
Actively working in a job that requires a social work degree or license.	55.8	68.8	67.2	65.7	1,842
Actively working in a job as a social worker that does not require a social work degree or license.	15.7	10.4	9.8	11.5	288
Actively working not as a social worker but in a job for which you believe a social work education has provided relevant preparation.	22.6	15.2	16.8	17.0	433
Actively working in a job for which a social work education was not a necessary or relevant preparation.	5.8	5.7	6.2	5.8	158
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	2,721

Note: Percentages are of those currently working.

Table 42. Type of Job Taken for Those Working in Social Work or Social Work–Related Positions

In your principal position, what best describes your role (select only one)?	%	N
Direct (or clinical) work with individuals, families, or groups	82.0	2,145
Direct work with communities	5.7	136
Indirect (or macro) social work	7.5	204
Social work higher education	0.8	26
Other social work position	0.6	14
A position for which you believe a social work education provides relevant preparation	3.4	75
Total	100.0	2,600

Note: Figures are for respondents working as social workers or in social work-related positions.

Table 43. Type of Job Taken for Those Working as Social Workers

In your principal position, what best describes your role (select only one)?	%	N
Direct (or clinical) work with individuals, families, or groups	95.9	1,970
Direct work with communities	4.1	72
Total	100.0	2,042

Note: Figures are for respondents working as social workers in direct work with individuals, groups, or communities, including those not requiring a social work degree or license.

Table 44. Job Educational or Licensing Requirement for Those Working as Social Workers

What is the minimum educational or licensing requirement for your current principal position?	%
Social work license (either on appointment or within a fixed time period such as 2 years)	43.3
MSW but not license	34.6
BSW	8.6
Any bachelor's degree	9.9
High school diploma	0.6
Total^a	100.0
N	2,035

Note: Figures are for respondents working as social workers in direct work with individuals, groups, or communities, including those not requiring a social work degree or license.

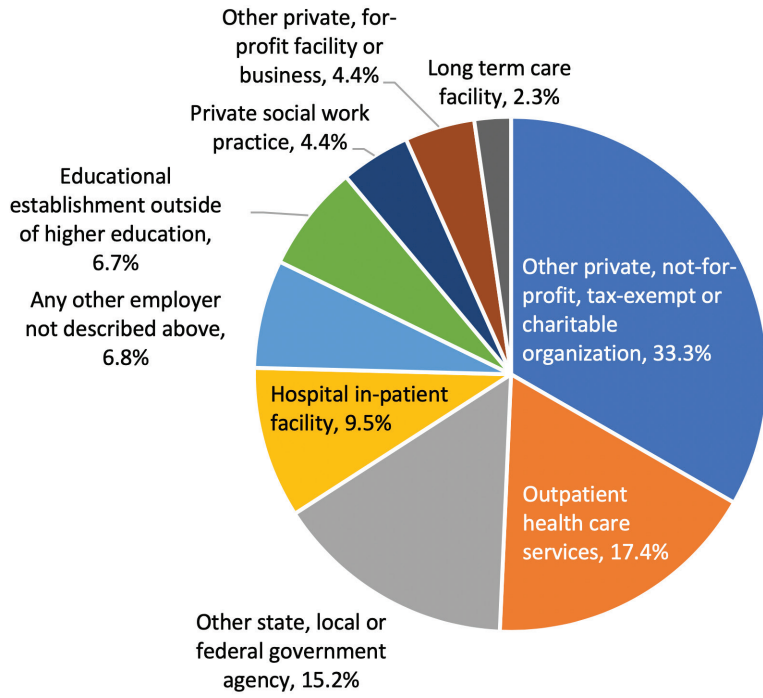
^aTable does not show 63 (3.1%) "other" types of requirement.

More than four out of five respondents who were working in social work or social work–related positions (82.0%) were in direct (or clinical) work with individuals, families, or groups. Only 5.7% were in direct work with communities, and only 7.5% were in indirect or macro social work (Table 42). Those working as social workers were almost all (95.9%) in direct (or clinical) work with individuals, families, or groups (Table 43). There were no significant associations by gender, race, ethnicity, or age in either case.

The most common type of job taken by those working as social workers in direct work with individuals, groups, or communities was jobs requiring a social work degree or license (43.3%), followed by jobs requiring an MSW but not a license (34.6%) (Table 44). However, this left 8.6% taking jobs requiring only a bachelor of social work (BSW) and 9.9% taking jobs only requiring any bachelor's degree. Those taking jobs requiring only a BSW were more likely to be female (8.6% of women vs. 3.6% of men, $p = .001$), as were those taking jobs requiring only any bachelor's degree (9.9% of women vs. 5.1% of men, $p < .05$). Black/African Americans were more likely than Whites to take jobs only requiring any bachelor's degree (13.6% of Black/African Americans vs. 7.9% of Whites, $p < .05$), whereas those taking jobs requiring a social work license were more likely to be White (47.3% for Whites vs. 44.1% for all races, $p < .01$).

The most common organizations respondents were working in were private, not-for-profit, tax-exempt, or charitable organizations (33.3%), with 17.4% in outpatient healthcare services, 15.2% in state, local, or federal government agencies, and 9.5% in hospital inpatient facilities (Figure 3). African Americans were more likely to work for the state, local, or federal government than Whites (20.5% of African Americans and 13.0% of Whites) (Table 45).

Figure 3. Practice Settings for Respondents Working as Social Workers



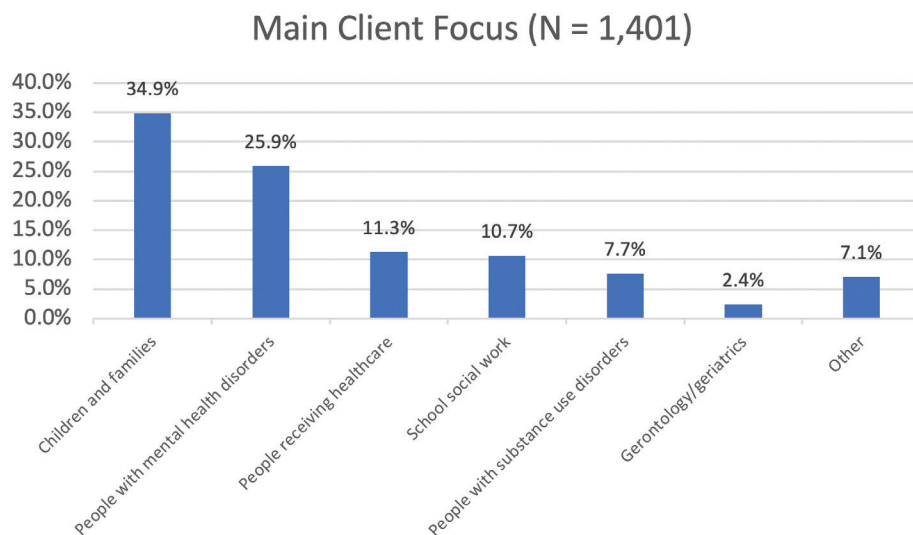
Note: Figures are for respondents working as social workers in direct work with individuals, groups, or communities, including those not requiring a social work degree or license, 2018-2019 only.

Table 45. Practice Settings for Respondents Working as Social Workers, by Race

In your principal position, who are you (or will you be) working for?	Race			Total	N
	Black/African American (%)	White (%)	Other (%)	%	
Private, not-for-profit, tax-exempt, or charitable organization	35.6	32.3	33.2	33.0	447
Outpatient healthcare services	13.7	18.4	16.9	17.3	257
State, local, or federal government agency	20.5	13.8	13.2	15.1	184
Hospital inpatient facility	7.4	10.5	7.8	9.6	128
Educational establishment outside higher education	6.3	7.2	3.7	6.7	99
Private social work practice	2.1	5.1	5.4	4.5	58
Other private, for-profit facility or business	5.3	4.4	3.4	4.5	61
Long-term care facility	2.1	2.5	1.7	2.3	35
Any other employer not described above	7.1	5.7	15.3	7.0	98
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	1,367

Note: Figures are for respondents working as social workers in direct work with individuals, groups, or communities, including those not requiring a social work degree or license, 2018-2019 only.

Figure 4. Population Served: Main Client Focus of MSWs Working as Social Workers



Note: Figures are for respondents working as social workers in direct work with individuals, groups, or communities, including those not requiring a social work degree or license, 2018-2019 only.

Populations Served

When asked the main focus of their work in terms of population served, the most common population groups cited were children and families, which were cited by more than one-third of the respondents (34.9%). The second most common practice focus was people with mental health disorders, which was cited by more than a quarter of the respondents (25.9%). This was followed by people receiving healthcare, cited by 11.3% of the respondents (Figure 4).

Women were more likely to work with people receiving healthcare (11.6% of women vs. 8.5% of men, $p < .05$), and those working in school social work were more likely to be younger (mean age 28.4 years vs. 30.2 years overall, $p < .001$). Those working with children and families were less likely to be White (32.0% vs. 34.8% overall, $p < .05$) and more likely to be Black/African American (42.9%, $p < .01$) or Hispanic (41.8% of Hispanics vs. 33.7% of non-Hispanics, $p < .05$) (Tables 46–48).

Table 46. Population Served: Main Client Focus of MSWs Working as Social Workers, by Sex

Which of the following do you consider to be the main focus of work in your primary position?	Birth Sex		Total	
	Female (%)	Male (%)	%	N
Children and families	35.5	28.7	34.9	469
People with mental health disorders	25.1	33.9	26.0	374
People receiving healthcare	11.6	8.5	11.3	159
School social work	11.0	8.7	10.8	148
People with substance use disorders	7.3	11.0	7.7	112
Gerontology/geriatrics	2.3	2.9	2.3	32
Other	7.2	6.1	7.1	101
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	1,395

Note: Figures are for respondents working as social workers in direct work with individuals, groups, or communities, including those not requiring a social work degree or license, 2018–2019 only.

Table 47. Population Groups Served, Main Client Focus of MSWs Working as Social Workers, by Race

Which of the following do you consider to be the main focus of work in your primary position?	Race ^a		
	Black/African American (%)	White (%)	Other (%)
Children and families	42.9	32.0	38.2
People with mental health disorders	26.2	25.3	29.9
People receiving healthcare	7.4	13.0	8.6
School social work	9.4	10.9	9.6
People with substance use disorders	6.4	8.9	3.3
Gerontology/geriatrics	1.4	2.7	2.5
Other	6.4	7.2	7.9
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
N	149	1,046	174

Note: Figures are for respondents working in a position as a social worker, including those not requiring a social work degree or license.

^aTable excludes those who declined to state their race.

Table 48. Population Groups Served, Main Client Focus of MSWs Working as Social Workers, by Ethnicity

Which of the following do you consider to be the main focus of work in your primary position?	Hispanic (%)	Non-Hispanic (%)
Children and families	41.8	33.7
People with mental health disorders	24.8	26.1
People receiving healthcare	11.3	11.3
School social work	12.4	10.5
People with substance use disorders	3.9	8.3
Gerontology/geriatrics	1.4	2.5
Other	4.3	7.6
Total	100.0	100.0
<i>N</i>	170	1,229

Note: Figures are for respondents working in a position as a social worker, including those not requiring a social work degree or license.

Going beyond the population focus of new MSWs, the most common type of practice setting for those working as social workers was healthcare (27.5%), followed by mental health and substance use disorders (23.4%), social services (15.2%), and educational settings (11.5%) (Table 49).

Table 49. Practice Setting for Those Working as Social Workers

Which of the following best describes the primary setting you are working in (or about to work in)?	%	N
Healthcare		
Hospital	8.0	43
Community health center or rural health clinic	4.7	28
Outpatient healthcare clinic	4.6	29
Residential treatment center	4.5	22
Long-term care facility	1.6	9
Rehabilitation facility	1.2	7
Hospice or palliative care facility	1.2	7
Health insurance or health plan	0.8	6
Other health	0.9	6
Subtotal	27.5	157
Mental Health and Substance Use Disorder		
Outpatient mental/behavioral health clinic	14.6	92
Inpatient psychiatric hospital	3.6	18
Addiction treatment center (including detox and methadone)	3.0	17
School-based mental health service	2.2	16
Subtotal	23.4	143
Social Services		
Child protection or child and family welfare agency	7.1	38
Adoption or foster care agency	4.1	19
Family therapy agency	4.0	27
Subtotal	15.2	84
Educational		
School (pre-K, elementary, middle, or high school)	9.8	60
Residential school	0.4	5
Other educational	1.3	4
Subtotal	11.5	69
Other		
Community-based nonprofit not described by other options	14.5	90
Criminal justice (including court services, victim services, correctional facility, prison health service, parole, and prison follow-up)	2.5	10
Other	5.4	29
Subtotal	22.4	129
Total	100.0	582

Note: Figures are for respondents working as social workers in direct work with individuals, groups, or communities, including those not requiring a social work degree or license, 2019 only.

Table 50. Whether Working Collaboratively

Do you work with other professions/occupations to serve your clients?	%	N
Yes, I work as a member of a multidisciplinary team that jointly serves clients' needs.	60.4	824
Yes, although not a member of a formal multidisciplinary team I do coordinate with other professions or occupations regularly so my clients are better served.	26.0	368
Yes, I sometimes have to communicate with people from other professions or occupations so my clients are better served.	10.1	157
No, I work only with my clients directly.	3.1	40
I do not work directly with clients.	0.4	5
Total	100.0	1,394

Note: Figures are for respondents working as social workers in direct work with individuals, groups, or communities, including those not requiring a social work degree or license, 2018-2019 only.

Table 51. Whether Adequately Prepared for Current Job

Do you think your social work education adequately prepared you for your current position?	%
Yes	88.9
No	11.1
Total	100.0
<i>N</i>	2,032

Note: Figures are for respondents working as social workers in direct work with individuals, groups, or communities, including those not requiring a social work degree or license.

The majority (60.4%) of those in direct work with individuals, groups, or communities were working in multidisciplinary teams, and another 26.0% were regularly coordinating with other professions (Table 50). Only 3.1% worked solely with their clients. Hispanics were more likely to be working in multidisciplinary teams than non-Hispanics (67.2% of Hispanics vs. 59.2% of non-Hispanics, $p < .05$).

Most (88.9%) of those working as social workers in direct work with individuals, groups, or communities reported feeling that their social work education adequately prepared them for their current positions (Table 51). The proportion of Black/African Americans feeling adequately prepared was even higher at 91.8%, but the difference was not statistically significant.

Consistent with the need for new MSWs to have supervised experience in order to become a licensed clinical social worker, almost two-thirds (65.1%) of those working as social workers in direct work with individuals, groups, or communities reported that their supervisors were social workers or social work qualified (Table 52). Those with a social worker for their supervisor were more likely to be younger (30.0 years vs. 31.1 years for others, $p < .05$).

High-Need Populations

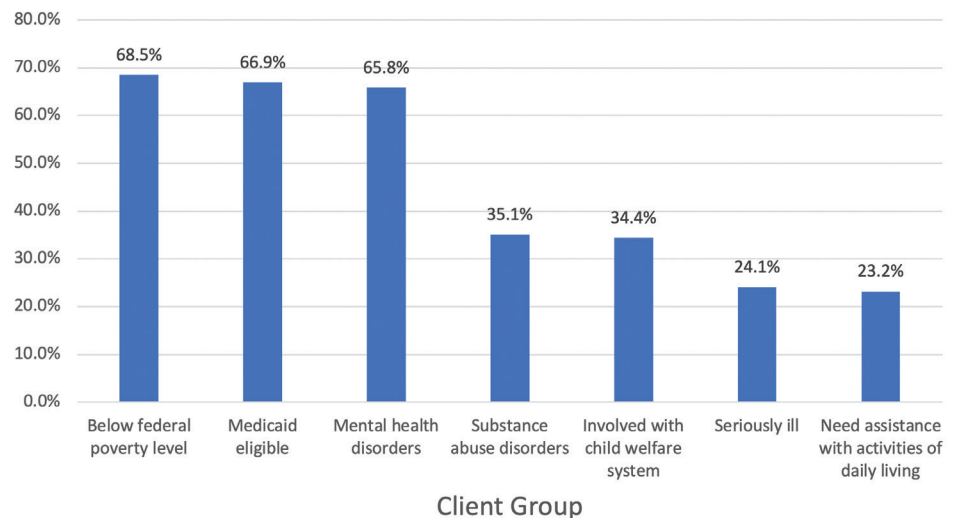
The 2018 and 2019 surveys included questions to elucidate the needs of the clients being served by new social workers. The responses clearly document the high needs of the population served by these social workers regardless of the overall focus or setting of their practice. Two-thirds (68.5%) of new MSWs in direct social work positions indicated that more than half of their clients were people below federal poverty level. Similar proportions of respondents said a majority of their clients were Medicaid eligible and people with mental health disorders (66.9% and 65.8% of respondents, respectively). One-third said a majority of their clients were people with substance abuse disorders and with people involved with the child welfare system (35.1% and 34.4%, respectively), and almost a quarter indicated a majority of their clients were seriously ill and people in need of assistance with activities of daily living (24.1% and 23.2%, respectively) (Figure 5).

Table 52. Social Work Immediate Supervisor

Is your immediate supervisor in this position a social worker (or social work qualified)?	%
Yes	65.1
No	32.3
Don't know	2.7
Total	100.0
<i>N</i>	2,039

Note: Figures are for respondents working as social workers in direct work with individuals, groups, or communities, including those not requiring a social work degree or license.

Figure 5. Percentage of Respondents with More than Half of Their Clients in Category



Note: Figures are for respondents working as social workers in direct work with individuals, groups, or communities, including those not requiring a social work degree or license, 2018-2019 only.

Regardless of practice focus, social workers are dealing with extensive mental health issues and with the poor (Table 53). Social workers indicating that more than 50% of their

clients had mental health disorders ranged from 36.5% of healthcare social workers up to 93.2% of substance use disorder social workers.

Table 53. Percentage of Direct Service Respondents with More than Half of Their Clients in Category, by Main Client Focus

Client Group	Which of the following do you consider to be the main focus of work in your primary position?				
	Children and Families (%)	School Social Work (%)	People Receiving Healthcare (%)	People with Mental Health Disorders (%)	People with Substance Use Disorders (%)
Substance abuse disorders	25.3	4.1	19.1	48.7	98.0
Mental health disorders	65.3	44.0	36.5	85.4	93.2
Seriously ill	10.6	1.6	75.6	23.3	18.2
Need assistance with activities of daily living	14.7	7.8	55.0	25.0	8.9
Medicaid eligible	71.0	58.4	60.9	69.5	67.1
Below federal poverty level	76.3	65.2	47.7	69.8	68.9
Involved with child welfare system	62.0	27.3	7.8	18.6	37.3

Note: Figures are for respondents working as social workers in direct work with individuals, groups, or communities, including those not requiring a social work degree or license, 2018-2019 only.

New MSWs with more than 50% of their clients seriously ill were more likely to be Black/African Americans (30.3% of Black/African Americans vs. 24.1% over all races, $p < .05$) and less likely to be White (22.8% of Whites vs. 24.1% over all races, $p < .05$). Those with more than 50% of their clients Medicaid-eligible were more likely to be female (68.1% of women vs. 55.0% of men, $p < .05$); those with more than 50% of their clients below poverty level were more likely to be Black/African American (80.8% vs. 68.5% over all races, $p < .001$) or Hispanic (78.2% of Hispanics vs. 67.0% of non-Hispanics, $p < .05$) and less likely to be White (64.7%, $p = .001$). Those with more than 50% of their clients involved in the child welfare system were more likely to be Black/African American (43.1% vs. 34.4% over all races, $p < .05$) (Table 54).

Those with more than 50% of their clients being children under 11 were more likely to be female (22.9% of women vs. 13.6% of men, $p < .05$). Black/African Americans were more likely than other racial groups to have teens as more than 50% of their clients (36.4% of Black/African Americans vs. 24.8% overall, $p < .01$) (Figure 6).

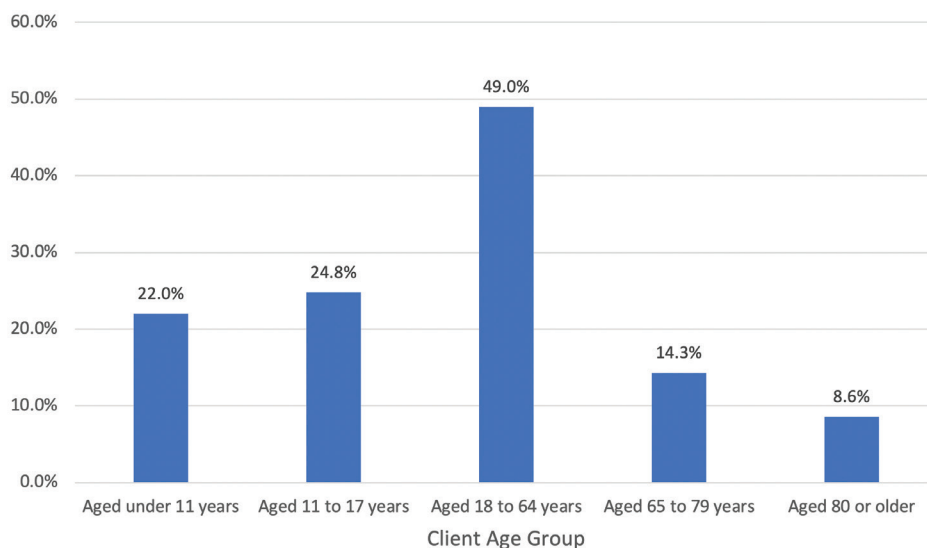
Table 54. Percentage of Direct Service Respondents with More than Half of Their Clients in Category, by Race

Client Group	Race	
	Black/African American (%)	White (%)
Below federal poverty level	80.8	64.7
Medicaid eligible	73.9	65.6
Mental health disorders	68.3	65.0
Substance abuse disorders	42.0	33.3
Involved with child welfare system	43.1	32.4
Seriously ill	30.3	22.8
Need assistance with activities of daily living	22.5	23.5

Total respondents to any part of this question: 1,233

Note: Figures are for respondents working as social workers in direct work with individuals, groups, or communities, including those not requiring a social work degree or license, 2018-2019 only.

Figure 6. Percentage of Direct Service Respondents with More than Half of Their Clients in Age Group



Note: Figures are for respondents working as social workers in direct work with individuals, groups, or communities, including those not requiring a social work degree or license, 2018-2019 only.

Table 55. Percentage of Direct Service Respondents Providing Mental Health or Behavioral Health Services to More than Half of Their Clients, by Race

Race	Percentage of respondents providing mental health or behavioral health services to more than half their clients		
	Less than or Equal to 50% (%)	More than 50% (%)	Total (%)
Black/African American	44.4	55.6	100.0
White	33.8	66.2	100.0
Other	34.4	65.6	100.0
Total	36.0	64.0	100.0
<i>N</i>	408	848	1,256

Note: Figures are for respondents working as social workers in direct work with individuals, groups, or communities, including those not requiring a social work degree or license, 2018-2019 only.

Table 56. Job Focus for MSWs Whose Main Focus Is Indirect Social Work

What is the main focus of your current position (or the one you are about to start)?	% ^a	Percentage of All Grads Taking Jobs
Administration	49.9	3.6
Policy or advocacy	19.5	1.4
Research	16.6	1.2
Other	14.1	1.0
Total	100.0	7.2
<i>N</i>	202	2,766

^aPercentage of those who were working in indirect social work.

Those who were providing mental/behavioral health services to more than 50% of their clients were less likely to be Black/African Americans (55.6% of Black/African Americans vs. 66.2% of Whites, almost significant, $p = .055$) (Table 55) and more likely to be older (mean age 30.6 years vs. 29.5 years for others, almost significant, $p = .061$).

Of those working in indirect or macro social work, half (49.9%) were working in administration and 19.5% were working in policy or advocacy and 16.6% working in research (Table 56). Among those taking up positions in macro social work, those working in policy or advocacy were more likely to be non-Hispanic (21.0% of non-Hispanics vs. 9.3% of Hispanics, $p < .001$).

Density of Area

Almost half of respondents were working in medium or large cities (population greater than 250,000 or greater than 1 million, 25.3% and 23.9%, respectively) (Figure 7). Only 15.3% described themselves as working in rural or semirural areas. Black/African Americans were more likely to work in large cities than all other settings (40.3% of Black/African Americans were working in large cities vs. 17.2% of Whites, $p < .001$ for all except rural settings) (Table 57). Hispanics were less likely to work in rural or semirural areas (6.0% of Hispanics vs. 16.9% of non-Hispanics, $p < .05$ for semirural areas) (Table 58).

Figure 7. Density of Area of Practice of Those Working as Social Workers, 2018–2019 Only

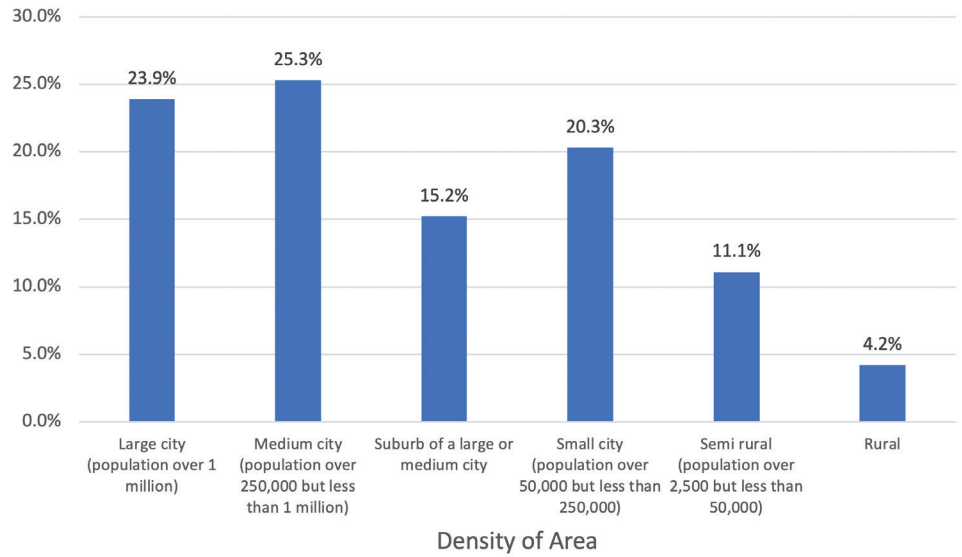


Table 57. Density of Area of Practice of Those Working as Social Workers, by Race, 2018–2019 Only

Which best describes the demographics of the principal area in which you are/will be working?	Race ^a			Total (%) (N = 1,356)
	Black/African American (%) (n = 145)	White (%) (n = 1,039)	Other (%) (n = 172)	
Large city (population over 1 million)	40.3	17.2	33.8	23.5
Medium city (population over 250,000 but less than 1 million)	24.5	25.8	22.2	25.2
Suburb of a large or medium city	9.8	16.1	21.8	15.4
Small city (population over 50,000 but less than 250,000)	14.3	23.1	11.5	20.2
Semirural (population over 2,500 but less than 50,000)	7.2	13.2	7.8	11.5
Rural	4.0	4.6	3.0	4.3
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Note: Figures are for respondents working in a position as a social worker, including those not requiring a social work degree or license, 2018–2019 only.

^aTable excludes those who declined to state their race.

Table 58. Density of Area of Practice of MSWs Working as Social Workers, by Ethnicity

Which best describes the demographics of the principal area in which you are or will be working?	Hispanic (%) (n = 169)	Non-Hispanic (%) (n = 1,217)	Total (%) (N = 1,386)
Large city (population over 1 million)	39.2	21.4	23.9
Medium city (population over 250,000 but less than 1 million)	26.3	25.1	25.3
Suburb of a large or medium city	12.1	15.7	15.2
Small city (population over 50,000 but less than 250,000)	16.4	20.9	20.3
Semi-rural (population over 2,500 but less than 50,000)	4.4	12.3	11.1
Rural	1.6	4.6	4.2
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

Note: Figures are for respondents working as social workers in direct work with individuals, groups, or communities, including those not requiring a social work degree or license, 2018–2019 only.

Income

The mean income for all respondents in full-time positions as social workers providing direct services was \$47,100 (inflation-adjusted to 2019 dollars), similar to the median income of \$47,500. Men reported earning on average \$2,900 more than women. Black/African Americans reported mean incomes of \$47,200, slightly above the mean of \$46,500 for Whites. However, although White and Black/African American women reported similar average earnings (\$46,400 and \$46,600), Black/African American men reported earning \$6,500 more on average than White men (\$54,000 vs. \$47,500), although their numbers are limited (Tables 59–61).

Table 59. Income by Sex

Birth Sex	Mean Income ^a	Median Income ^b	N
Female	\$46,800	\$47,500	1,665
Male	\$49,700	\$47,500	178
Total	\$47,100	\$47,500	1,843

^a Figures are for those working full-time in a position as a social worker providing direct services, including positions not requiring a social work degree or license. Figures are inflation-adjusted to 2019 dollars and rounded to nearest \$100.

^b Median income is from unweighted analysis, and figures are not inflation-adjusted.

Table 60. Income by Race

Race	Mean Income ^a	Median Income ^b	N
Black/African American	\$47,200	\$47,500	209
White	\$46,500	\$47,500	1,352
Other	\$49,500	\$47,500	242

^a Figures are for those working full-time in a position as a social worker providing direct services, including positions not requiring a social work degree or license. Figures are inflation-adjusted to 2019 dollars and rounded to nearest \$100.

^b Median income is from unweighted analysis.

Table 61. Income by Sex and Race

Race	Women			Men		
	Mean Income ^a	Median Income ^b	N	Mean Income ^a	Median Income ^b	N
Black/African American	\$46,600	\$47,500	186	\$54,000	\$52,500	23
White	\$46,400	\$47,500	1,222	\$47,500	\$47,500	123

^a Figures are for those working full-time in a position as a social worker providing direct services, including positions not requiring a social work degree or license. Figures are inflation-adjusted to 2019 dollars and rounded to nearest \$100.

^b Median income is from unweighted analysis.

Table 62. Income by Ethnicity

Ethnicity	Mean Income ^a	Median Income ^b	N
Hispanic	\$52,300	\$47,500	233
Non-Hispanic	\$46,200	\$47,500	1,598

^a Figures are for those working full-time in a position as a social worker providing direct services, including positions not requiring a social work degree or license. Figures are inflation-adjusted to 2019 dollars and rounded to nearest \$100.

^b Median income is from unweighted analysis, and figures are not inflation-adjusted.

Hispanics reported earning more than \$6,000 more on average than non-Hispanics (\$52,300 vs. \$46,200), with the difference being much greater for men (\$61,500 vs. \$47,800) than for women (\$52,300 vs. \$46,200) (Tables 62 and 63).

Table 63. Income by Sex and Ethnicity

Ethnicity	Women			Men		
	Mean Income ^a	Median Income ^b	N	Mean Income ^a	Median Income ^b	N
Hispanic	\$51,400	\$47,500	212	\$61,500	\$57,500	21
Non-Hispanic	\$46,000	\$47,500	1,433	\$47,800	\$47,500	156

^a Figures are for those working full-time in a position as a social worker providing direct services, including positions not requiring a social work degree or license. Figures are inflation-adjusted to 2019 dollars and rounded to nearest \$100.

^b Median income is from unweighted analysis. Figures are not inflation-adjusted.

Table 64. Income by Density of Area of Practice, 2018–2019 Only

Which best describes the demographics of the principal area in which you are/will be working?	Mean Income ^a	Median Income ^b	N
Large city (population over 1 million)	\$50,800	\$47,500	269
Medium city (population over 250,000 but less than 1 million)	\$46,400	\$47,500	322
Suburb of a large or medium city	\$46,400	\$47,500	200
Small city (population over 50,000 but less than 250,000)	\$44,900	\$47,500	258
Semirural (population over 2,500 but less than 50,000)	\$45,400	\$42,500	150
Rural	\$44,100	\$42,500	52

^a Figures are for those working full-time in a position as a social worker providing direct services, including positions not requiring a social work degree or license. Figures are inflation-adjusted to 2019 dollars and rounded to nearest \$100.

^b Median income is from unweighted analysis. Figures are not inflation-adjusted.

Those working in large cities reported the highest average earnings by population density (\$50,800), and those working in rural areas reported the lowest (\$44,100) (Table 64).

Those working in direct social work with individuals, families, or groups reported similar average earnings to those working in direct work with communities (\$47,100 vs. \$46,600), although the median earnings for the former were higher than for the latter (\$47,500 vs. \$42,500). However, there were only 66 respondents in the latter group, making it difficult to generalize.

The highest reported earnings by type of employer were in hospital inpatient facilities, at \$51,300. Higher earnings were also reported by those in educational establishments other than higher education, higher education institutions, and government agencies. The lowest reported earnings were in not-for-profit or charitable agencies, at \$44,200, but low earnings were also reported in rehabilitation facilities private social work practice and long-term care facilities (Table 65).

Table 65. Income by Type of Employer

In your principal position, who are you (or will you be) working for? ^a	Mean Income ^b	Median Income ^c	N
Hospital inpatient facility	\$51,300	\$52,500	168
Educational establishment other than higher education	\$50,300	\$47,500	121
Higher education institution	\$49,900	\$47,500	25
Other state, local, or federal government agency	\$49,300	\$47,500	266
Other private, for-profit facility or business	\$48,000	\$47,500	69
Outpatient healthcare service	\$47,200	\$47,500	351
Long-term care facility	\$45,900	\$42,500	43
Private social work practice	\$45,600	\$42,500	70
Rehabilitation facility	\$45,300	\$42,500	34
Other private, not-for-profit, tax-exempt, or charitable organization	\$44,200	\$42,500	629

^a Excludes 6 respondents from research and evaluation organizations and 4 from grant-making organizations.

^b Figures are for those working full-time in a position as a social worker providing direct services, including positions not requiring a social work degree or license. Figures are inflation-adjusted to 2019 dollars and rounded to nearest \$100.

^c Median income is from unweighted analysis. Figures are not inflation-adjusted.

Table 66. Income by Job Requirement

What is the minimum educational or licensing requirement for your current principal position?	Mean Income ^a	Median Income ^b	N
Social work license (either on appointment or within a fixed time period such as 2 years)	\$47,800	\$47,500	773
MSW but not license	\$47,800	\$47,500	698
BSW	\$44,100	\$42,500	136
Any bachelor's degree	\$44,000	\$42,500	155
Other	\$45,400	\$42,500	68

^a Figures are for those working full-time in a position as a social worker providing direct services, including positions not requiring a social work degree or license. Figures are inflation-adjusted to 2019 dollars and rounded to nearest \$100.

^b Median income is from unweighted analysis. Figures are not inflation-adjusted.

Average earnings for positions requiring a social work license and for those requiring an MSW but not a license were identical at \$47,800, while those requiring a BSW or any bachelor's degree were almost \$4,000 lower at (\$44,100 and \$44,000, respectively) (Table 66).

The Job Market for New MSWs

A

Almost half of respondents (46.2%) reported difficulty finding a position they were satisfied with. A higher percentage of Black/African Americans reported having a difficult time than Whites (49.1% of Black/African Americans vs. 43.9% of White respondents, $p < .05$) (Table 67).

Table 67. Job Search Difficulty, by Race

Race	Did you have difficulty finding a position that you were satisfied with?			Total N
	No (%)	Yes (%)	%	
Black/African American	50.9	49.1	100.0	340
White	56.1	43.9	100.0	2,059
Other	45.2	54.8	100.0	445
Total	53.8	46.2	100.0	2,844

Note: Percentages are of those who searched for a social work or social work-related job.

The most frequently reported reason for difficulty finding a satisfactory position was inadequate salary or compensation offered (30.6% of respondents), followed by lack of jobs or opportunities in desired settings (19.8%). Females were more

likely than men to cite inadequate salaries or compensation (32.4% of women vs. 13.4% of men, $p < .001$), which may reflect the fact that men were making more than women, as presented earlier (Tables 68 and 69).

Table 68. Main Reasons for Difficulty for Those with Difficulty, by Birth Sex

What would you say was the single most important reason (check one only)?	Among Those with Difficulty			Total Among Those Who Searched for a Job (%)
	Female (%)	Male (%)	Total (%)	
Inadequate salary or compensation offered	32.4	13.4	30.6	13.6
Lack of jobs or opportunities in desired setting (e.g., hospital, hospice, school)	20.0	18.4	19.8	8.8
Lack of jobs or opportunities in desired locations	11.4	13.4	11.6	5.2
Available job responsibilities not a good match to my interests	9.9	18.7	10.7	4.8
Overall lack of jobs or opportunities	9.2	16.9	9.9	4.4
Absence of supervision for licensure	2.3	3.8	2.4	1.1
Other	14.8	15.0	14.8	6.6
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	44.5
<i>N</i>	1,175	112	1,287	2,894

Table 69. Main Reasons for Difficulty for Those with Difficulty, by Race

What would you say was the single most important reason (check one only)?	Race			Total (%)
	Black/African American (%)	White (%)	Other (%)	
Inadequate salary/compensation offered	35.9	28.7	28.5	30.3
Lack of jobs/opportunities in desired setting (e.g., hospital, hospice, school)	13.4	22.6	18.5	20.0
Lack of jobs/opportunities in desired locations	10.5	11.2	15.9	11.6
Available job responsibilities not a good match to my interests	9.6	11.2	8.7	10.5
Overall lack of jobs/opportunities	8.3	10.9	8.5	10.0
Absence of supervision for licensure	2.8	2.2	3.3	2.5
Other	19.5	13.1	16.0	14.9
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
<i>N</i>	169	881	228	1,278

Table 70. Assessment of Local and National Job Markets

Assessment of Social Work or Related Job Opportunities Locally (Within 50 Miles)	Local Percentage	National Percentage
No jobs	0.3	0.3
Very few jobs	4.4	1.5
Few jobs	8.4	4.1
Some jobs	42.6	28.0
Many jobs	38.3	52.0
Unknown	6.0	14.2
Total	100.0	100.0
<i>N</i>	2,889	2,886

Note: Percentages are of those who searched for a job.

Less than two-fifths of job searchers (38.3%) reported finding “many jobs” in their local area (within 50 miles), compared with more than half (52.0%) reporting “many jobs” in the national job market. A lower number of job searchers (13.1%) reported finding no, very few, or few jobs in their local area, compared with only 5.9% reporting the same in the national job market (Table 70). There were no significant associations by gender, race, ethnicity, or age for these findings.

Black/African Americans were more likely to submit more than 10 job applications than others (37.5% of Black/African Americans submitted more than 10 job applications vs. 31.2% over all races, $p < .001$). Those receiving a greater number of job offers were less likely to be White ($p < .01$) and more likely to be Black/African Americans ($p < .05$) or younger ($p < .001$).

Among jobs reported as being much more available than others were case manager and case worker positions (88.2% of respondents); licensed positions (76.3%); mental health and behavioral health positions (73.4%); clinical and direct services, counselors, and therapists (70.1%); and child welfare and child protective services (69.6%). Among jobs reported as being much less available were indirect (or macro) social work (advocacy, policy, research, administration, management, 76.8%), unlicensed or “leading to license” positions (68.4%), jobs with Veterans Affairs (68.0%), school social work (67.9%), and community organizing, outreach, and planning positions (66.0%) (Tables 71 and 72).

Table 71. Types of Job Much More Available

Job Type	% ^a
Case managers and case workers	88.2
Licensed positions	76.3
Mental health and behavioral health positions	73.4
Clinical and direct services, counselors, and therapists	70.1
Child welfare and child protective services	69.6
Substance use disorder treatment positions	61.7
Hospital, medical social work, and healthcare positions	54.3
Jobs with nonprofits	51.6
Aging and gerontology positions	38.3
Total respondents to any part of this question	836

^a Percentages are of all respondents who searched for any job and answered any part of this question, 2019 only.

Table 72. Types of Job Much Less Available

Job Type	% ^a
Indirect (or macro) social work ^b	76.8
Unlicensed or leading to license positions	68.4
Jobs with Veterans Affairs	68.0
School social work	67.9
Community organizing, outreach, and planning positions	66.0
Aging and gerontology positions	48.1
Hospital, medical social work, and healthcare positions	40.0
Jobs with nonprofits	38.1
Total respondents to any part of this question	797

^a Percentages are of all respondents who searched for any job and answered any part of this question, 2019 only.

^b Public policy and advocacy; administration, management, planning, program evaluation, or research (excluding higher education teaching positions).

Table 73. Respondents Changing Plans as a Result of Difficulty Finding a Satisfactory Position, by Age

Did you have to change your plans because of limited social work-related job opportunities?	Mean Age	N
Yes	29.4	759
No	30.7	2,218
Total	30.4	2,977

More than a quarter of respondents (26.3%) reported having to change their plans because of limited social work-related job opportunities. Those who had to change plans because of job search difficulty were more likely to be younger (mean age 29.4 years vs. 30.7 years for those not changing plans, $p < .01$) (Table 73).

Satisfaction



The majority of respondents (90.4%) were very or somewhat satisfied with their new positions, and 82.6% were very or somewhat satisfied with their benefits. Satisfaction with salary was much lower, with 72.8% being very or somewhat satisfied. Only 25.6% were very satisfied with their salaries, compared with 47.8% very satisfied with their positions and 49.6% very satisfied with their benefits (Table 74).

Table 74. Satisfaction Compared

Level of Satisfaction	Position (%)	Salary (%)	Benefits (%)
Very satisfied	47.8	25.6	49.6
Somewhat satisfied	42.6	47.2	33.0
Somewhat dissatisfied	7.7	18.1	11.2
Very dissatisfied	1.9	9.1	6.2
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
<i>N</i>	2,034	2,028	2,001

Note: Figures are for respondents working in a position as a social worker, including those not requiring a social work degree or license.

Those very satisfied with their new position were more likely to be White (51.6% of Whites very satisfied compared with 47.7% overall, $p < .001$) and less likely to be Black/African American (37.0% very satisfied, $p = .001$) (Table 75).

Black/African Americans were less likely than other racial groups to be very satisfied with their salaries (18.7% of Black/African Americans vs. 27.8% of Whites, $p < .05$) or very or somewhat satisfied (66.4% of Black/African Americans vs. 75.9% of Whites, $p < .05$) (Table 76). Those very or somewhat satisfied with their salaries were likely to be younger (mean age 30.0 years vs. 31.1 years for others, $p < .05$).

More than four out of five respondents (82.6%) reported being very or somewhat satisfied with their benefits (Table 77). There were no significant associations by gender, race, ethnicity, or age.

Table 75. Satisfaction with Position, Very or Somewhat Satisfied, by Race

Race	Satisfaction with Position		Total	
	Somewhat or Very Dissatisfied (%)	Very or Somewhat Satisfied (%)	%	N
Black/African American	13.5	86.5	100.0	218
White	8.4	91.6	100.0	1,507
Other	10.4	89.6	100.0	276
Total	9.6	90.4	100.0	2,001

Note: Figures are for respondents working in a position as a social worker, including those not requiring a social work degree or license.

Table 76. Satisfaction with Salary, Very or Somewhat Satisfied, by Race

Race	Satisfaction with Salary		Total	
	Somewhat or Very Dissatisfied (%)	Very or Somewhat Satisfied (%)	%	N
Black/African American	33.6	66.4	100.0	218
White	24.1	75.9	100.0	1,502
Other	35.0	65.0	100.0	275
Total	27.1	72.9	100.0	1,995

Note: Figures are for respondents working in a position as a social worker, including those not requiring a social work degree or license.

Table 77. Satisfaction with Benefits, Very or Somewhat Satisfied

Satisfaction with Benefits	%
Somewhat or very dissatisfied	17.4
Very or somewhat satisfied	82.6
Total	100.0
N	2,001

Note: Figures are for respondents working in a position as a social worker, including those not requiring a social work degree or license.

Table 78. Willingness to Recommend a Social Work Degree to Others

Would you recommend a social work degree to others?	%
Yes	91.9
No	8.1
Total	100.0
<i>N</i>	3,301

More than nine out of ten (91.9%) respondents said they would recommend a social work degree to others (Table 78). Those who would recommend a social work degree were more likely to be younger (mean age 30.9 years vs. 32.0 years for those who would not recommend a social work degree, $p = .05$). There were no significant associations by gender, race, or ethnicity.

Future Plans

Four out of five respondents (79.6%) either already were or were planning to become clinical social workers in the next 5 years. These new grads were more likely to be older (mean age 31.2 years vs. 28.9 years for those not planning to become a clinical social worker, $p < .001$) There were also differences by race but the differences were not statistically significant. (Table 79).

Table 79. Whether Planning to Become a Clinical Social Worker in Next 5 Years, by Race, 2018 and 2019 Only

Do you intend to become a licensed clinical social worker within the next 5 years?	Race			Total (%)
	Black/African American (%)	White (%)	Other (%)	
Yes	84.1	77.8	81.7	79.6
No	15.1	19.3	16.0	18.0
I'm already a licensed clinical social worker	0.8	3.0	2.3	2.4
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
<i>N</i>	286	1,661	306	2,253

Most respondents (58.6%) had no plans to continue their social work education, but 13.9% planned to take a higher social work degree and 10.6% planned to take another degree not in social work. Those planning to take a higher social work degree were more likely to be Black/African American (16.9% if Black/African Americans vs. 13.9% overall, $p < .05$). Those planning to take another degree not in social work were more likely to be Black/African American (17.8% of Black/African Americans vs. 10.6% overall, $p < .001$), less likely to be White (7.9%, $p < .001$), and more likely to be younger (mean age 29.5 years vs. 30.8 years overall, $p < .05$). Those with other plans to continue their education were more likely to be older (mean age 32.6 years, $p < .001$), and those with no plans to continue their social work education were less likely to be Black/African American (50.4% of Black/African Americans vs. 58.6% overall, $p < .001$) or Hispanic (52.7% of Hispanics vs. 59.4% of non-Hispanics, $p < .05$) (Table 80).

Almost two-thirds (64.2%) of those planning to take a higher degree intended to take a PhD. Those planning to take a PhD were more likely to be White (68.1% of Whites vs. 63.9% over all races, $p < .05$) and less likely to be Black/African American (51.8%, $p < .05$) (Table 81).

Table 80. Plans to Continue Social Work Education, by Race

Do you plan to continue your education?	Race			Total (%)
	Black/African American (%)	White (%)	Other (%)	
I plan to get a higher social work degree	16.9	12.7	15.0	13.9
I plan to get another degree not in social work	17.8	7.9	12.5	10.6
I have other plans for continuing my education	14.9	17.1	19.5	16.9
I have no plans to continue my education at this time	50.4	62.2	53.0	58.6
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
<i>N</i>	397	2,367	507	3,271

Table 81. Plans to Continue Social Work Education, Further Degrees

Which higher social work degree to you plan to take?	%	% of All Respondents
DSW	34.0	4.6
PhD	64.2	8.6
Other	1.8	0.2
Total	100.0	13.4
<i>N</i>	454	3,392

Note: Percentages of are those who planned to take a higher social work degree.

Table 82. Willingness to Participate in Future Research, by Race

May we keep your e-mail address for future surveys (for up to 5 years)?	%
Yes	88.5
No	11.5
Total	100.0
<i>N</i>	3,352

Note: Table not weighted.

Almost nine out of ten respondents (88.5%) were willing to have their e-mail address retained for future research (Table 82). Those willing to have their e-mail address retained for future research were more likely to be White (90.5% of Whites vs. 84.5% of Black/African Americans and 86.3% of other races, $p < .05$) or older (mean age 31.0 years vs. 29.5 years for those not willing, $p = .001$).

Appendix: Survey Weighting and Representativeness

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Application of Survey Weights

Because it was not possible to survey a stratified random sample for the survey, post-stratification weights were used to approximate a representative sample of the national population of social work graduates for each year. Generally, post-stratification weights are constructed by calculating the ratio of the population proportion of the weighting variable and the sample proportion of the weighting variable. The sample proportion comes from each year of our survey of social work graduates, and the derivation of the national population proportions is described in Table A1.

Table A1. Derivation of Population for Weighting

- Auspice and region populations come from 2016, 2017, and 2018 CSWE data.
- Race, ethnicity, and gender populations come from 2016 and 2017 CSWE data; 2018 populations were carried forward from 2017 because of missing data.
- Survey year is the year of the social work survey (i.e., 2017–2019).
- Population year refers to the underlying CSWE population data (i.e., 2016–2018).

In the George Washington University survey we have multiple characteristics that we want to balance with the overall population. We therefore constructed weights using four variables:

- A. Auspice:** the institutional auspice or sponsorship (e.g., private school vs. public school) of the college or university containing the respondent's social work program
- B. Region:** the region where the social work program resides (e.g., Mid-Atlantic region, West Coast region)
- C. Race:** respondent's race (e.g., Black, White, Asian).
- D. Ethnicity:** whether respondent was Hispanic/Latino.

Given our desire to weight on four characteristics, we constructed survey weights by using a manual iterative strategy. In other words, we computed each weight separately, yet sequentially, by using six iterations. First, we computed the *auspice* weight (weight A), weight the data by using weight A, and then generated the weighted frequencies for *region*. Next, we computed the *region* weight (weight B), weighted

the data by using weight A * weight B, and then generated the weighted frequencies for *race*. Third, we computed the *race* weight (weight C), weighted the data by using weight A * weight B * weight C, and then generated the weighted frequencies for *ethnicity*. Finally, we computed the ethnicity weight D, and then generated the weighted frequencies for *auspice* for a second round of iterations. This process was repeated for 12 iterations overall (where all data is weighted by weight A * weight B * weight C * weight D * weight A' * weight B' * weight C' * weight D', etc.) until the weighted frequencies and population frequencies converged. The final survey weight was equal to the product of all 12 weights.

Weighting was carried out independently for each year of the MSW samples. Missing data on any of the four variables for any respondent dropped that respondent from the weighted analysis, hence the differences between the numbers of valid respondents in each year and the number included in the weighted analysis (Table A1).

Several cross-checks were carried out to assess the extent to which the survey respondents and the schools from which they graduated might be considered representative of the national population of social work graduates. Tables A2–A5 compare the known graduating population nationally with the survey respondents before and after weighting by school CSWE region, type of sponsorship, and graduates' race and ethnicity.

After weighting, the survey sample was found to be closely matched by region and program auspice or sponsorship to the MSW graduating population. By race and ethnicity there was underrepresentation of Hispanic/Latinos, and by sex there was underrepresentation among men (no weighting was done for gender).

Representativeness of Survey Respondents Compared with All Social Work Graduates Nationally

Table A2. Comparison of MSW Graduate Respondents to All MSW Graduates by Census Region and Institution Type

Region	Population (%)	Respondents ^a (%) (N = 3,392)	Respondents After Weighting (%)
Great Lakes	18.6	17.3	18.3
Mid- and North Central	7.0	7.6	7.2
Mid-Atlantic	9.8	10.7	9.6
New England	7.3	18.7	7.1
Northeast	16.4	13.8	17.0
Northwest	3.3	4.2	3.3
Southeast and South Central	24.0	12.9	24.4
West	12.8	14.7	13.1
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

Sponsorship Type

For-profit	0.6	0.2	0.5
Private-other	20.3	30.9	20.2
Private-religion affiliated	14.5	14.0	14.8
Public	66.8	54.9	64.5
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

^aRepresents respondents included in weighted analysis.

Table A3. Comparison of MSW Respondents to All MSW Graduates by Birth Sex

Birth Sex	Population (%)	Respondents (%) (N = 3,392)	Respondents After Weighting (%)
Female	80.1	89.7	89.9
Male	13.1	9.6	9.7
Unknown or other	6.2	0.7	0.4
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

Table A4. Comparison of MSW Respondents to All MSW Graduates by Race

Race	Population (%)	Respondents (%) (N = 3,392)	Respondents After Weighting (%)
American Indian/Alaska Native	1.2	0.7	1.2
Asian or Pacific Islander	5.1	4.8	5.1
Black/African American	22.5	12.0	22.4
White	67.1	70.9	66.1
Other race	1.2	4.9	1.2
More than one race	2.9	5.1	2.9
Unknown	n/a	1.6	1.1
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

Table A5. Comparison of MSW Respondents to All MSW Graduates by Ethnicity

Ethnicity	Population (%)	Respondents (%) (N = 3,392)	Respondents After Weighting (%)
Hispanic	16.0	12.8	14.0

Reference

Harris, P. A., Taylor, R., Thielke, R., Payne, J., Gonzalez, N., & Conde, J. G. (2009). Research Electronic Data Capture (REDCap): A metadata-driven methodology and workflow process for providing translational research informatics support. *Journal of Biomedical Informatics*, 42(2), 377–381.



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