RESULTS OF THE NATIONWIDE SURVEY OF 2017 SOCIAL WORK GRADUATES

THE NATIONAL SOCIAL WORK WORKFORCE STUDY

NEW SOCIAL WORKERS

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A Report to

The Council on Social Work Education
and
National Workforce Initiative Steering Committee

From
The George Washington University
Health Workforce Institute

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Preface

Social workers play a significant role in providing health and social services to populations in need. As one of the largest professions in the health and social services sectors, they also serve in various roles in administration, community organizing, evaluation, teaching, and policy. Yet despite the size of the profession and its contribution to society, our knowledge and understanding of the social work workforce are remarkably limited. Additional data are needed to understand social work roles and responsibilities and how these may be changing. Data are also needed to inform the social work education community about the need for continued expansion in capacity and whether the current curricula are appropriate for current and future roles.

In recognition of the need for and importance of better data, organizations representing the social work profession came together to form the National Workforce Initiative Steering Committee to initiate and guide a major study of the social work workforce. Following a competitive process, the George Washington University Health Workforce Institute was selected to conduct the study. The goals of the study included informing the social work community about the supply, demand, distribution, and use of social workers and developing a plan for ongoing data collection and analysis.

A major component of the study was a survey of a sample of 2017 graduates of social work degree programs. This report presents key findings from the Survey of 2017 Social Work Graduates. A series of briefs delving into detail on graduates by specific demographic and educational backgrounds, such as by focus of practice, race/ethnicity, sexual preference, and institution sponsorship, will be available in 2018.

The organizational members of the National Workforce Initiative Steering Committee were as follows:

- American Academy of Social Work and Social Welfare
- Association of Baccalaureate Social Work Program Directors
- Association of Social Work Boards
- Council on Social Work Education
- Group for the Advancement of Doctoral Education in Social Work
- National Association of Deans and Directors of Schools of Social Work
- National Association of Social Workers
- Society for Social Work and Research

This study received generous support from the University of Southern California, Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work. ■

Background and Rationale

The Survey of 2017 Social Work Graduates included questions about the demographic and educational background of the graduates, who are the future social work workforce. It also gathered information about the jobs the graduates planned to take and their experience in the job market. The survey, which captured information on graduates at all levels (BSW, MSW, DSW, and PhD), thus provides a picture of how the social work workforce moves through education and into practice by type of education, demographic, educational background, location, and so forth. It also captures information on social work graduates who may not practice in positions clearly identified as social work and who would otherwise be missed by existing sources of data on social workers.

This survey provides a snapshot of social workers in terms of

- where they come from;
- which jobs they find;
- marketplace demand;
- satisfaction; and
- future career, education, and licensing/ certification plans.

The survey complements other parts of the George Washington University Health Workforce Institute (GW HWI) study including the Social Work Profile, which presents current supply, distribution, and work setting. Monitoring supply and demand for social workers through the survey of recent graduates provides valuable information that can help align education and practice.

Conducting the survey on an on-going basis will provide valuable insights on the trends in the profession and marketplace.

GW HWI has several years' experience conducting surveys of physicians completing their training and moving into their first jobs. It adapted a tested survey instrument to address the particular characteristics of the social work career and the key questions of interest to the Steering Committee. ■

Executive Summary

n the spring of 2017, GW HWI, working through a sample of social work programs, recruited graduating students to participate in a survey of their work plans and experience in the job market. The survey was designed to obtain information on the characteristics of new social workers, the jobs they were entering, and the marketplace demand for social workers. Nearly 2,000 social workers from 84 social work programs signed up for the online survey, which was launched at the end of August 2017 and closed 4 weeks later with more than 1,400 responses. Data cleaning reduced the final figure to 1,348 valid responses, for a response rate of 70% of those that signed up to participate. Table 1 lists the responses by degree and the estimated proportion of all U.S. social work graduates.

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 based on Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) data on accredited social work education programs. MSW and BSW respondents were overrepresented from the Northeast and West census regions and underrepresented in the Midwest and South regions compared to the CSWE data. In terms of sponsorship, public schools were underrepresented and private schools overrepresented among MSW programs, but public and private schools were evenly distributed among BSW programs. Regarding race and ethnicity, there was underrepresentation of African Americans, whereas the Hispanic proportion in the sample more closely mirrored the

Table 1: Overall Responses and Response Rates

Degree Awarded	Number of Respondents	Number of Programs	Response Rate by Degree[a] (%)	Proportion of National Graduates With Each Degree[b] (%)
BSW	195	24	62.5	1
MSW	1,107	37	69.8	5
PhD	34	19	72.3	12
DSW	12	4	80.0	21
Total	1,348	84	70.0	N/A

[a] Response rate reflects the percentage of confirmed registrants who responded.

[b] Based on data supplied by the Council on Social Work Education on 2016 social work graduation numbers.

national proportion among both MSW and BSW graduates.

Regarding BSW respondents, graduates of schools that had BSW and MSW programs were overrepresented compared to BSW graduates nationally (78% to 59%).

Hence, the survey results are not necessarily representative of all social work graduates. The more than 1,100 MSW respondents—5% of the total MSW graduates—allows for a more robust analysis of new MSWs; although there were 195 BSW respondents, they represent only 1% of graduating BSWs, giving reason for caution in interpreting the findings as representative. Although the responses for PhDs and DSWs represent 12% and 21% of all 2017 graduates, respectively, the low overall number of those

graduates prevents in-depth analysis of their experiences. Although a high percentage of all graduates by degree type is not needed to draw statistically valid conclusions, analysis of subgroups is limited if the overall number of respondents is not of sufficient size. For this reason, this report provides a more in-depth analysis of MSW respondents than of the other types of degree awardees.

Key Findings

1. According to CSWE, in 2016 there were 27,659 MSW graduates. Based on the Survey of 2017 Graduates, the majority are entering social work jobs.

Seventy-one percent (71%) of new MSWs reported that they were going into positions that required an MSW or a social work license while 9% took positions as social workers that did not require a degree or license (see Figure 1). Another 14.3% took jobs they did not consider to be in the field of social work but felt that their social work education was relevant to their work. Only 5.7% of MSWs took jobs unrelated to their education. At the MSW level, there is very little attrition from the field at the point of graduation.

The figures do not include respondents who were still looking for a job or who were not looking for work at the time of the survey.

2. The majority of BSW graduates were either enrolled in an MSW program or expected to enroll in the next 2 years.

For most BSW graduates the bachelor's degree is the first step on their social work

Figure 1: Types of Principal Position After Graduation (MSWs)

MSWs (*n*=874), Percentage

- 71.1% Job requiring social work degree and/or license
- 8.9% Job as a social worker not requiring social work degree or license
- 14.3% Job not as a social worker but for which social work education relevant
- 5.7% Job where social work education not necessary or relevant
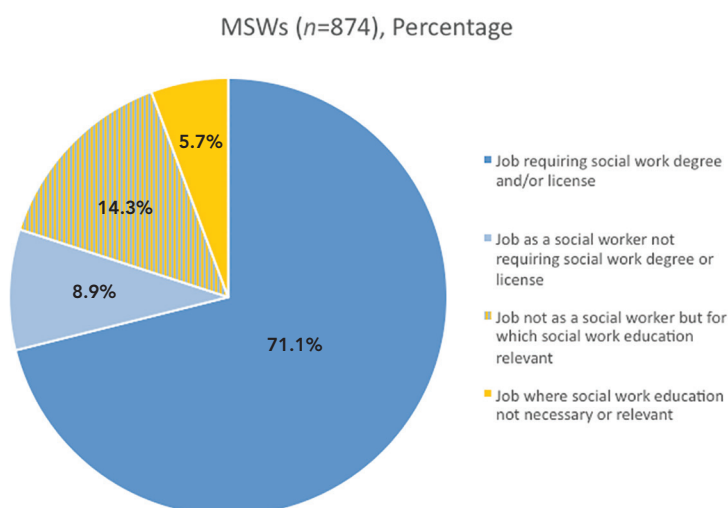
Table 2: BSWs Planning to Obtain an MSW	
Do you plan to obtain an MSW in the future?	(*n*=194) %
Currently enrolled in an MSW program	49.5
Expect to enroll in an MSW program in the next 2 years	23.2
Hope to enroll in an MSW program in the future	19.1
No plans to enroll	8.2
Total	100

career pathway. As seen in Table 2, the majority were already enrolled in an MSW program or were planning to enroll in the next 2 years. It should be noted that respondents were more likely to have graduated from BSW programs that were in schools with MSW programs than shown in the CSWE data on all BSW programs: 78.3% vs. 58.1%. This may have contributed to the high percentage of BSW respondents going on to an MSW.

3. For those BSWs going on to work, most were going into positions that did not require a BSW or license.

Although the majority of BSW graduates entered or were planning to enter MSW programs, many were also taking jobs. As seen in Figure 2, of those entering jobs only 31.7% were going into positions requiring a social work degree or license. Another 16.8% were entering positions in which they considered themselves to be social workers although no degree or license was required; and 30.7% were entering positions not as social workers but for which they considered their social education to be a relevant preparation.

4. Many MSW and BSW graduates are entering positions using the skills and competencies gained through their social work education but are not formally identified as social work jobs. Unlike individuals with other degrees, such as nursing, who are clear about their identities regardless of setting or role, this is not the case for some individuals with a social work degree.

The survey included questions related to the jobs that graduates were entering, including setting, function, and job title. For MSWs

8.9% indicated they were in positions that did not require a degree or license but for which they felt they were working as social workers. Another 13.4% were in jobs that were not considered social work positions but for which their social work education provided relevant preparation. Examples of the job titles reported by this group include case manager, community outreach counselor, day shelter supervisor, human resource specialist, program manager, and volunteer coordinator.

Because social workers are well qualified for many diverse positions, some of which can also be filled by individuals with different educational pathways, the boundaries and definition of the profession are fuzzy. This creates issues of identity as well as difficulties counting and tracking the profession and documenting its contribution to society.

Figure 2: Types of Principal Position After Graduation (MSWs)

BSWs (*n*=101), Percentage

- Job requiring social work degree and/or license
- Job as a social worker not requiring social work degree or license
- Job not as a social worker but for which social work education relevant
- Job where social work education not necessary or relevant

31.7%
16.8%
30.7%
20.8%
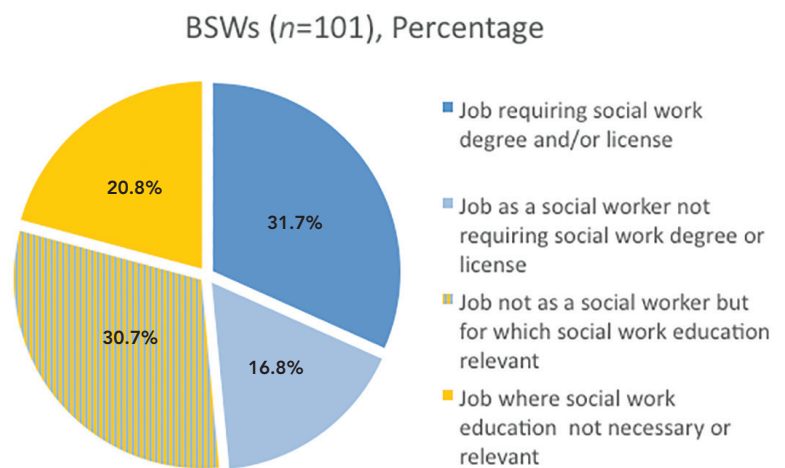
Table 3: Types of Jobs Taken by Those Working as Social Workers

In your principal position what best describes your role?	BSW (*n*=48) %	MSW (*n*=696) %
Direct work with individuals, families, or groups	77.1	92.0
Direct work with communities	12.5	2.6
Indirect social work[a]	8.3	3.7
Social work higher education	0.0	0.3
Other social work position	0.0	0.1
A position for which you believe a social work education provides relevant preparation	2.1	1.3
Total	100	100

Note. Percentages are of those who entered positions as a social worker, including positions not requiring a social work degree or license but described as a social work position by the respondent.

[a]*Indirect social work* was defined as including public policy and advocacy; administration, management; planning; program evaluation; research (excluding teaching positions); or environmental health or public health work.

5. Based on the number of new graduates at the BSW and MSW level and on the results of the survey, we estimate that in 2016 between 26,500 and 30,200 new social workers entered the field with about four of five entering with an MSW. Because a majority of BSWs go on for their MSW, MSW programs play a central role in helping social work-educated individuals enter the workforce.[1]

Based on the 2017 Survey of Social Work Graduates, we estimate that 95% of the MSW graduates go on to employment, of which 80% to 94% go into positions requiring an MSW and/or social work license or positions that they define as social work. (The 94% includes graduates going into positions not as social workers but in which they believed their social work education to be relevant preparation for the job.) The other 6% go into other non-social work jobs. According to CSWE, in 2016 there were 27,659 MSW graduates and 20,348 BSW graduates. We estimate that about 27% of new BSWs go directly into social work positions after their BSW graduation without a likelihood of going on to take an MSW and so

should be independently counted as new entrants into the profession alongside the MSW numbers.

6. New social workers are diverse in terms of age, race/ethnicity, and sexual orientation; the field continues to be predominately female. The majority of social workers enter the field with work experience.
   • **Sex**: All degree types were overwhelmingly female, with

Figure 3: Population Groups Served, Main Client Focus of MSWs Working as Social Workers

Client Focus (MSWs, *n*=697)

- Children and families 39%
- People with mental health issues 21%
- People receiving health care 15%
- Other 12%
- School social work 7%
- People with substance abuse issues 6%

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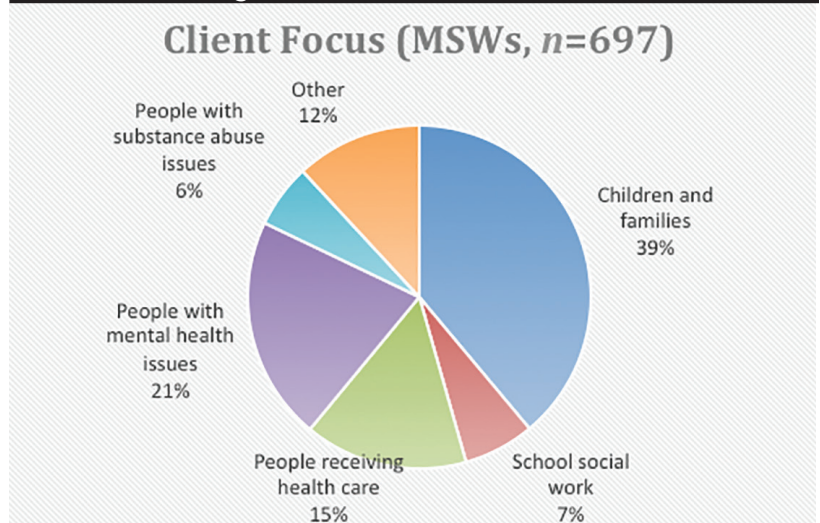
[1] This calculation of new social workers includes only those receiving a social work degree. According to the American Community Survey, approximately 24% of self-identified social workers do not have a bachelor's degree or above in social work. See "Profile of the Social Work Workforce"; GW Health Workforce Institute, October 2017.

Table 4: Practice Settings for Those Working as Social Workers (MSWs Only)

In your principal position who are you (or will you be) working for?	(n=696) %
Other private, not-for-profit, tax-exempt, or charitable organization	34.6
Outpatient health-care services	17.8
Other state, local, or federal government agency	13.6
Hospital inpatient facility	12.2
Educational establishment outside of higher education	6.0
Private social work practice	5.5
Other private, for-profit facility, or business	4.3
Higher education institution	2.0
Nursing or residential care facility	1.6
Rehabilitation facility	1.4
An organization that primarily does research and evaluation	0.6
Grant-making organization	0.3
Total	100

Note. Percentages are of those who were working in a position as a social worker, including jobs not requiring a social work degree or license.

nearly 90% of MSW respondents being female. DSWs were entirely female and PhDs a little less so than other degrees. This is generally consistent with data on all social work graduates.

- **Age**: The median ages of BSW, MSW, PhD, and DSW respondents were 23, 28, 39, and 41, respectively, a progression which is not surprising. It is worth noting that although the median age for MSWs was 28, nearly 13% were more than 40 years old and had significant work experience.
- **Race**: About two-thirds of respondents in any degree program were White (excluding DSWs, of which there were only 12 respondents). Nearly 11% of the BSW and MSW respondents were Black/African Americans. American Indian/Alaska Natives represented 2.6% of the BSW respondents and 0.8% of the MSW respondents. Asian Americans/Pacific Islanders represented 7.8% of the BSW and 6.6% of the MSW respondents.

- **Ethnicity:** Proportions of respondents who identified with Hispanic origin were similar between BSWs and MSWs at around 13% to 14%. Considerably lower proportions of Hispanics were graduating with a PhD or DSW.
- **Sexual Orientation**: Approximately 80% of respondents identified as straight or heterosexual in each degree categories. The proportion identifying as lesbian, gay, bisexual, homosexual, or transgender was higher among PhD and DSW respondents than among BSW and MSW respondents, whereas the proportion identifying as bisexual was lower.
- **Work History**: Among MSW graduates, 78.6% had work experience before entering MSW programs.

7. The majority of new social workers are providing direct or clinical services.

The majority of MSWs (92.0%) and BSWs (77.1%) were working in direct practice with individuals, families, or groups (see Table 3). Some BSWs were practicing with communities (12.5%) or indirect social work (8.3%).

8. New MSWs have many career options, including health care, mental health/ behavioral health, education, and government.

Master's graduates with a practice focus on children and families (see Figure 3) represented the largest concentration of social workers. This was consistent with the focus of their MSW education. The second highest focus was treating individuals with mental health issues. Interestingly, there were differences based on sex: More men with MSWs were focused on mental health and substance abuse (34.8%) than children and families (31.8%); but women were more likely to focus on children and families (39.9%) than mental health/substance abuse (26.4%).

Almost a third of MSWs were working in health-care settings, with 17.8% serving in outpatient health services and 12.2% in inpatient facilities (see Table 4). Another third (34.6%) were serving in private and not-for-profit organizations not captured by the questionnaire precoding, and 13.6% were working in state, local, or federal agencies not captured by the questionnaire precoding.

Table 5: Practice Settings for Those Working as Social Workers, by Race (MSWs Only)

In your principal position who are you (or will you be) working for?	Black/African American (n=76) %	White (n=497) %	Total (n=689) %
Outpatient health-care services	11.8	18.9	17.9
Hospital inpatient facility	7.9	13.1	12.3
Educational establishment outside of higher education	5.3	6.2	6.0
Private social work practice	5.3	5.4	5.5
Higher education institution	1.3	1.6	2.0
Nursing or residential care facility	0	2.0	1.6
Rehabilitation facility	2.6	1.4	1.5
An organization that primarily does research and evaluation.	1.3	0.2	0.6
Grant-making organization	0	0.2	0.3
Other private, not-for-profit, tax-exempt or charitable organization	32.9	35.4	34.3
Other state, local or federal government agency	25.0	10.9	13.8
Other private, for-profit facility or business	6.6	4.6	4.4
Total	100	100	100

Note. Percentages are of those who were working in a position as a social worker, including jobs not requiring a social work degree or license.

Table 6: Job Educational or Licensing Requirement for Those Working as Social Workers

Minimum educational or licensing requirement for your current principal position	BSW (n=49) %	MSW (n=695) %
Social work license	16.3	36.0
MSW, but not license	2.0	44.5
BSW	42.9	7.6
Any bachelor's degree	28.6	8.2
High school diploma	6.1	0.6
Other	4.1	3.2
Total	100	100

Note. Percentages are of those who were working in a position as a social worker, including jobs not requiring a social work degree or license.

Table 7: Salary by Degree and Sex

	Female			Male			Total		
Degree	Mean Income	Median Income (in thousands)	n	Mean Income	Median Income (in thousands)	n	Mean Income	Median Income (in thousands)	n
BSW	$30,064	$30–$34	39	$37,188	$35–$39	8	$31,327	$30–$34	49
MSW	$44,309	$40–$44	622	$45,524	$45–$49	62	$44,418	$40–$44	687
PhD	$71,500	$70–$74	20	$64,375	$65–$69	8	$69,464	$70–$74	28
DSW	$66,500	$65–$69	10	NA	NA	NA	$66,500	$65–$69	10

Note. Data for those working in positions as social workers, including jobs not requiring a social work degree or license. There were no males receiving a DSW among the respondents. NA=not applicable.

9. Social workers from historically underrepresented groups appear to have some different patterns than those not from historically underrepresented groups.

A quarter of African American MSWs were working for government agencies (see Table 5) compared to only one in 10 (10.9%) White MSWs (*p*=.0014). Conversely, fewer than one in five African American MSWs reported working in inpatient or outpatient facilities, compared to almost one third (32%) of White MSWs (*p*=.0321).

10. The majority of MSW graduates are entering social work positions that require an MSW or a social work license.

The plurality of new social workers are entering positions requiring a social work degree (44.5% of the MSWs); and many (36%) are going into positions requiring a social work license (see Table 6). This may reflect timing of the survey and the need for experience in some states to obtain a license.

11. Salaries for new social workers are relatively low, with the mean income for MSWs being $44,418 and for BSWs $31,327.

In terms of mean income for graduates going into social work positions, MSWs earned $13,000 more than BSWs, with PhDs and DSWs earning some $20,000 to $25,000 more than MSWs (see Table 7). MSW males were earning around $1,200 more than females, whereas among PhDs

the positions were reversed, with females earning around $7,000 more than males (although there were only eight male PhDs reporting income data). Income for female BSW graduates was very low and $7,000 less than males (although there were only eight male BSWs in the sample). All DSW respondents were female.

The same relationships exist when considering median income, that is, males make more than females at the MSW and BSW level but not at the PhD level, and PhDs/DSWs make more than MSWs, who make more than BSWs.

12. Jobs for new MSWs appear to be plentiful covering a wide range of activities and settings.

The overall job market appears a bit tighter for BSWs than MSWs: 15.3% of MSWs and 27% of BSWs who searched for jobs reported finding no, very few, or few jobs locally (see Table 8). Those who found some or many jobs in their

Table 8: Assessment of Local Job Market

What is your overall assessment of social work or social work-related jobs/opportunities locally (within 50 miles of where you graduated)?	BSW (n=115) %	MSW (n=941) %
No jobs	0.9	0.1
Very few jobs	12.2	4.6
Few jobs	13.9	10.6
Some jobs	47.8	41.7
Many jobs	21.7	39.1
Unknown	3.5	3.9
Total	100	100

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

local areas were 80.8% MSWs and 69.5% BSWs. MSWs who indicated they had a difficult time finding a satisfactory position most often cited inadequate salary/compensation or inadequate jobs in desired settings. For BSWs, the most cited reason was overall lack of jobs/opportunities.

The survey also included an open-ended question asking the respondents' impressions of jobs that were most available and unavailable. In some job categories the message was unambiguous: Case manager/case worker jobs were seen as plentiful, as were child welfare/child protective positions and positions requiring a license. Jobs not requiring a license and indirect social work jobs were seen as scarce. Given the diversity of needs across communities and the various backgrounds of graduates, it is not surprising that some job types, such as clinical and direct practice positions, appear on both lists; further analysis may reveal whether there are

patterns to the responses, such as high demand in some regions but low demand in others or differences by social work degree of the respondent.

13. New social workers were generally satisfied with their new jobs and their benefits; they were less satisfied with their income. The majority of new social workers would recommend the profession to others.

"As indicated in Tables 9 and 10, the majority of MSWs and BSWs were very satisfied or satisfied with their current position overall; with only 6% to 8% being dissatisfied. While a majority of both MSWs and BSWs were satisfied with their salary, less than 27% and 29% for MSWs and BSWs were "very" satisfied and 20% of the BSWs and 25% of the MSWs were dissatisfied.

Table 9: Satisfaction With Position		
What is your overall level of satisfaction with your current position?	BSW (*n*=49) %	MSW (*n*=692) %
Very satisfied	46.9	50.3
Somewhat satisfied	46.9	41.6
Somewhat dissatisfied	0	6.1
Very dissatisfied	6.1	2.0
Total	100	100

Note. Percentages are of those who were working in a position as a social worker, including jobs not requiring a social work degree or license.

Table 10: Satisfaction With Salary		
What is your level of satisfaction with your current (or expected) social work salary?	BSW (*n*=49) %	MSW (*n*=693) %
Very satisfied	28.6	26.6
Somewhat satisfied	51.0	48.1
Somewhat dissatisfied	14.3	17.2
Very dissatisfied	6.1	8.2
Total	100	100

Note. Percentages are of those who were working in a position as a social worker, including jobs not requiring a social work degree or license.

Table 11: Views of the Profession		
Would you recommend a social work degree to others?	BSW (*n*=192) %	MSW (*n*=1,091) %
Yes	92.2	92.7
No	7.8	7.3
Total	100	100

Findings on the Methodology and Next Steps

The survey was distributed in late August 2017 and the majority of respondents had completed their social work education in May or June. At the time of the survey, 86.4% of MSWs had searched for a job, and most of the remainder had a job without searching or were not planning to search at the time of the survey. Although the percentage of BSWs who had searched was lower (63.5%), this reflects the high numbers going straight to an MSW program or returning to a prior job. Overall, the use of a survey of new graduates a few months after graduation appears to be a good approach to learning about the supply and demand for social workers. Most of the survey respondents (87.9% of MSWs and 83.2% of BSWs) expressed willingness to have their e-mail addresses retained by GW HWI and CSWE for future surveys (see Table 11). This opens the possibility of longitudinal study of their social work career paths.

The Survey of New Social Work Graduates appears to be an effective way to obtain valuable information on roles of social worker graduates as well as the future supply of and demand for social workers. Collecting this data consistently over time will provide even clearer insights into how the job market for social workers and supply and demand are evolving. In addition, follow-up surveys several years after graduation will provide valuable information on adequacy of preparation and career paths. This information will be valuable to social work programs, prospective students, and policy makers.

Method

The target group for the survey was students graduating with a social work degree in 2017, including BSW and equivalent degrees such as BASW; MSW and equivalents such as MSS, MSSA, or MSSW; PhD; and DSW. The survey was conducted in late August and September to allow time for spring graduates to have searched for employment. The survey captured students graduating between January and August 2017, with 83% of them graduating by the end of May.

The initial plan was to survey the graduates of a nationally representative sample of social work schools for each degree type, reaching out to deans and program directors in April 2017 to elicit their cooperation in collecting student e-mail addresses to invite students to participate in the survey. However, due to a low initial response rate from social work schools selected and a high level of interest from some schools not included in the proposed sample, participation was opened to any interested program. This had the benefit of increasing the numbers surveyed, but it probably makes the responses less representative of all social work graduates.

When fielding its surveys GW HWI uses REDCap survey software, which has the capability of establishing a unique survey link for each participant via e-mail to prevent duplicate responses and enable the sending of survey reminders only to those who have not yet responded. A few schools provided GW HWI with e-mail addresses from their records. However, in most cases student e-mail addresses were obtained by having schools forward an invitation with a REDCap public Web link

Table 12: Overall Responses and Response Rates

Degree Awarded	Number of Respondents		Response Rate by Degree[a] (%)	Proportion of National Graduates With each Degree[b] (%)
	Individuals	Programs		
BSW	195	24	62.5	1.0
MSW	1,107	37	69.8	5.0
PhD	34	19	72.3	12.0
DSW	12	4	80.0	21.0
Total	1,348	84	70.0	NA

Note: NA=not applicable.

[a] Response rate reflects the percentage of confirmed registrants who responded.

[b] Based on data supplied by CSWE on 2016 social work graduation numbers.

Table 13: Comparison of MSW Graduate Respondents to All MSW Graduates by Census Region and Institution Type

Census Region	Population[a] (n=23,299) %	Respondents (n=1,088) %
Region 1 (Northeast)	30.6	37.6
Region 2 (Midwest)	23.1	16.5
Region 3 (South)	28.2	16.5
Region 4 (West)	18.1	29.4
Sponsorship Type		
Public	66.8	45.8
Private—religious	14.0	23.7
Private—other	19.2	30.5
Total	100	100

[a] *Source.* Council on Social Work Education (2017), *2016 Statistics on Social Work Education in the United States,* retrieved from https://www.cswe.org/CMSPages/*GetFile*. aspx?guid=6e8bc9e7-ebd6-4288-bc7a-d2d427d68480

Table 14: Comparison of MSW Respondents to All MSW Graduates by Birth Sex

Birth Sex	Population[a] (n=27,659) %	Respondents (n=1,104) %
Female	79.7	88.9
Male	13.6	9.9
Not Known	6.7[b]	0.3

[a] *Source.* Council on Social Work Education (2017), *2016 Statistics on Social Work Education in the United States,* retrieved from https://www.cswe.org/CMSPages/GetFile.aspx?guid=6e8bc9e7-ebd6-4288-bc7a-d2d427d68480

[b] In CSWE's statistics *Not Known* represents incomplete returns from programs. In the survey data it represents respondents who declined to answer the question about their birth sex.

to their students in May, June, and July 2017 that allowed interested students to sign up for the survey in advance and provide e-mail addresses that would still be valid when the survey went live in late August. To maximize the number of responses, a $25 incentive was offered to the first 500 MSWs, the first 500 BSWs and the first 100 PhDs and DSWs to complete the survey. 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 of almost 2,000 confirmed registrants. The survey launched at the end of August 2017 and closed after 4 weeks with more than 1,400 responses from 84 social work programs. Data cleaning and exclusion of individuals who did not enter degree program information reduced the final figure to 1,348 valid responses, for a response rate of 70%.

Table 12 lists the responses by degree and as a proportion of the national social work graduating population.

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 graduations. Tables 13–20 compare the graduating population (based on CSWE data for 2016) and the survey respondents by school census region, type of sponsorship, and graduate's race/ethnicity. Northeast and West census regions were overrepresented, and Midwest and South regions were underrepresented for MSWs and BSWs; by institution sponsorship, there was underrepresentation of public schools and overrepresentation of private schools among MSW programs, but an even distribution of public and private schools among BSW programs. By race/ethnicity, there was underrepresentation of African Americans, whereas the Hispanic proportion in the sample more closely mirrored the national proportion among MSW and BSW graduates.

Table 15: Comparison of MSW Respondents to All MSW Graduates by Race

Race	% of Graduates	
	Population[a] (n=23,435) %	Respondents (n=1,095) %
American Indian/Alaska Native	1.2	0.8
Asian or Pacific Islander	4.4	6.6
Black/African American	17.8	11.0
White	53.5	68.5
Other race	14.8	7.7
More than one race	2.7	5.5
Unknown	5.5	0
Total	100	100

[a] *Source.* Council on Social Work Education (2017), *2016 Statistics on Social Work Education in the United States,* retrieved from https://www.cswe.org/CMSPages/GetFile.aspx?guid=6e8bc9e7-ebd6-4288-bc7a-d2d427d6848

Table 16: Comparison of MSW Respondents to All MSW Graduates by Ethnicity

Ethnicity	% of Graduates	
	Population (*n*=23,435) %	Respondents (*n*=1,095) %
Hispanic/Latino	13.6	13.8

[a] *Source:* Council on Social Work Education (2017), *2016 Statistics on Social Work Education in the United States,* retrieved from https://www.cswe.org/CMSPages/GetFile.aspx?guid=6e8bc9e7-ebd6-4288-bc7a-d2d427d68480

Table 17: Comparison of BSW Respondents to All BSW Graduates by School Census Region, Sponsorship, and Co-Location With MSW Program

Census Region	Population[a] (*n*=16,977) %	Respondents (*n*=190) %
Region 1 (Northeast)	21.0	26.3
Region 2 (Midwest)	31.9	16.8
Region 3 (South)	34.9	37.4
Region 4 (West)	12.2	19.5
Sponsorship		
Public	78.8	78.4
Private—religious	16.5	13.7
Private—other	4.7	7.9
Total	100	100
Co-Location of BSW Program With MSW Program		
	59.1	78.3

[a] *Source.* Council on Social Work Education (2017), 2016 Statistics on Social Work Education in the United States, retrieved from https://www.cswe.org/CMSPages/GetFile.aspx?guid=6e8bc9e7-ebd6-4288-bc7a-d2d427d68480

Table 18: Comparison of BSW Respondents to All BSW Graduates by Birth Sex

Birth Sex	Population[a] (*n*=20,348) %	Respondents (*n*=194) %
Female	81.8	86.6
Male	11.6	12.4
Not Known	6.6	1.0

[a] *Source.* Council on Social Work Education (2017), 2016 Statistics on Social Work Education in the United States, retrieved from https://www.cswe.org/CMSPages/GetFile.aspx?guid=6e8bc9e7-ebd6-4288-bc7a-d2d427d68480

Table 19: Comparison of BSW Respondents to All BSW Graduates by Race

Race	% of Graduates	
	Population (*n*=16,229) %	Respondents (*n*=193) %
American Indian/ Alaska Native	1.2	2.6
Asian or Pacific Islander	2.4	7.8
Black/African American	20.8	10.9
White	55.5	65.8
Other race	14.3	6.2
More than one race	2.3	6.7
Unknown	3.5	0
Total	100	100

[a] *Source.* Council on Social Work Education (2017), *2016 Statistics on Social Work Education in the United States,* retrieved from https://www.cswe.org/CMSPages/GetFile.aspx?guid=6e8bc9e7-ebd6-4288-bc7a-d2d427d68480

Table 20: Comparison of BSW Respondents to All BSW Graduates by Ethnicity

Ethnicity	% of Graduates	
	Population[a] (*n*=16,229) %	Respondents (*n*=193) %
Hispanic	14	13

[a] *Source.* Council on Social Work Education (2017), *2016 Statistics on Social Work Education in the United States,* retrieved from https://www.cswe.org/CMSPages/GetFile.aspx?guid=6e8bc9e7-ebd6-4288-bc7a-d2d427d68480

DEMOGRAPHICS OF RESPONDENTS

For all degree types, birth sex was overwhelming female, with DSWs entirely female (see Table 21). The ratio of females to males was a little lower for PhDs than for other degrees.

Table 21: Birth Sex of Respondents

Birth Sex	BSW (*n*=194) %	MSW (*n*=1,104) %	PhD (*n*=34) %	DSW (*n*=12) %
Female	86.6	89.9	73.5	100.0
Male	12.4	9.9	26.5	0
Decline to answer	1.0	0.3	0	0
Total	100	100	100	100

Table 22: Mean and Median Age of Respondents (Graduates), by Degree

Degree Awarded	Mean Age	n	Median Age
BSW	27.5	191	23
MSW	31.1	1,084	28
PhD	38.6	34	39
DSW	43.6	12	41

Figure 4: Age Groups of Respondents, For MSWs and BSWs
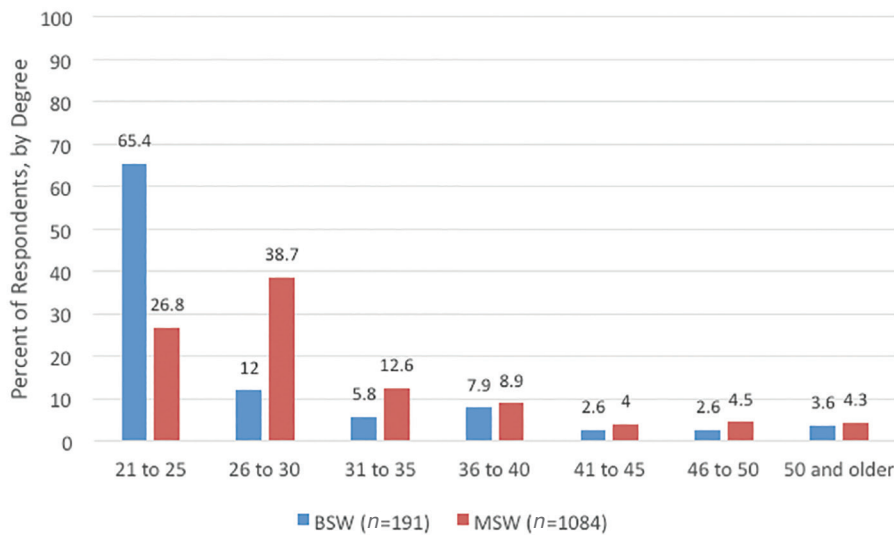
Graduating BSWs were younger by more than 3 years on average than MSWs, who were in turn more than 7 years younger than PhDs (see Table 22). All degree types had lower mean than median ages, indicating skewed distributions, with some respondents substantially above the mean.

Approximately two-thirds of respondents in each degree program were White (except DSW, in which there were only 12 respondents). See Table 23.

Table 24 shows that proportions of respondents who identified with Hispanic origin were similar between BSWs and MSWs at around 13% to 14%. Considerably lower proportions of Hispanics were graduating with a PhD or DSW.

Approximately 80% of respondents identified as straight or heterosexual in each degree category (see Table 25).

The proportion identifying as lesbians, gays, bisexual, and homosexuals were higher among PhD and DSW respondents than among BSW and MSW respondents, whereas the proportions identifying as bisexual were lower. Very few respondents declined to answer this question (less than 3% of BSWs and less than 1% of MSWs), and less than 5% identified as Something Else.

Approximately one in five respondents reported being fluent in a language other than English, without much variation by degree type (see Table 26). Not surprisingly, Hispanic/Latino respondents were far more likely than non-Hispanics to be fluent in a language other than English (65.6% vs. 13.1%, $p<.001$; see Table 27).

Table 23: Race of Respondents

Race	BSW (*n*=193) %	MSW (*n*=1,095) %	PhD (*n*=34) %	DSW (*n*=12) %
American Indian/ Alaska Native	2.6	0.8	0	0
Asian or Pacific Islander	7.8	6.6	17.6	0
Black/African American	10.9	11.0	8.8	50.0
White	65.8	68.5	67.6	41.7
Other race	6.2	7.7	0	0
More than one race	6.7	5.5	5.9	8.3
Total	100	100	100	100

Table 24: Ethnicity of Respondents

Are you Hispanic/ Latino?	BSW (*n*=193) %	MSW (*n*=1,093) %	PhD (*n*=34) %	DSW (*n*=12) %
Yes	13	13.8	5.9	8.3
No	87	86.2	94.1	91.7
Total	100	100	100	100

Table 25: Sexual Orientation of Respondents

Do you think of yourself as…	BSW (*n*=191) %	MSW (*n*=1,106) %	PhD (*n*=34) %	DSW (*n*=12) %
Straight or heterosexual	82.7	83.5	79.4	83.3
Lesbian, gay, or homosexual	4.2	5.4	11.8	16.7
Bisexual	6.3	7.8	2.9	0
Something else	4.2	3.0	5.9	0
Decline to answer	2.6	0.4	0	0
Total	100	100	100	100

Table 26: Fluency in Other Languages

Are you fluent in a language other than English?	BSW (*n*=195) %	MSW (*n*=1,106) %	PhD (*n*=34) %	DSW (*n*=12) %
Yes	20.5	20.7	20.6	16.7
No	79.5	79.3	79.4	83.3
Total	100	100	100	100

Table 27: Fluency in Other Languages, by Ethnicity

Are you fluent in a language other than English?	Are you Hispanic/Latino?	
	No (*n*=941) %	Yes (*n*=151) %
Yes	13.1	65.6
No	86.9	34.4
Total	100	100

Several different denominators are used in the tables in this and the following sections, depending on the nature and purpose of the questions asked. When the denominator is not *all respondents to the survey*, this is indicated in the relevant table. However, to aid clarity a summary of the various denominators used in deriving percentages is provided in Table 28. (There is also small additional variation in denominators question-by-question depending on whether all respondents gave answers to each question they were asked.)

Table 28: Denominators for Tables

	BSW	MSW	PhD	DSW	Total
Registered & confirmed to take the survey	312	1,586	47	15	1,960
All respondents	195	1,107	34	12	1,348
Those who searched for a job	122	949	25	7	1,103
Those who accepted a job offer	56	640	19	6	721
Those working in any job (whether they searched for it or not)	101	874	31	12	1,018
Those working in a social work job (whether they searched for it or not)	49	699	28	11	787

EXPERIENCE AND EDUCATION PRIOR TO EMBARKING ON A SOCIAL WORK DEGREE PROGRAM

Given that PhD and DSW response numbers are low overall, reporting in this section is limited to those graduating with BSWs or MSWs.

Not surprisingly, MSWs reported more prior non-social work degrees than BSWs, with almost two-thirds of the MSWs reporting prior degrees not in social work (see Table 29). Almost a third of BSWs reported a prior degree not in social work, with about two-thirds of those with a prior degree not in social work having an associate degree and those reporting prior associate degrees being generally older than those reporting prior bachelor's degrees.

Table 29: Non-Social Work Prior Degrees Held

Besides your social work degree(s) do you hold any other (non-social work) degrees?	BSW (*n*=194) %	MSW (*n*=1,101) %
Yes	26.3	66.1
No	73.7	33.9
Total	100	100

Table 30: Working Prior to Embarking on Social Work Degree Program

Were you working before your social work education?	BSW (*n*=195) %	MSW (*n*=1,101) %
Yes	59	78.6
No	41	21.4
Total	100	100

Table 31: MSW Students Entering in Advanced Standing

Did you enter your MSW program as an advanced standing student (because you already had a BSW)?	MSW (*n*=1,098) %
Yes	22.4
No	77.6
Total	100

Table 32: Full- and Part-Time Study

Were you enrolled as a full-time student throughout your degree program?	BSW (*n*=195) %	MSW (*n*=1,099) %
Yes	95.4	75
No	4.6	25
Total	100	100

Almost four of five MSWs and three of five BSWs reported working prior to their social work degree course (see Table 30). This indicates that most social workers are coming to their social work education with work experience.

Less than a quarter of MSWs entered their degree program in advanced standing, with a prior BSW (see Table 31). Because 33.7% of MSW grads indicated they had a prior BSW (or equivalent), it would appear that around two-thirds of BSWs entering MSW programs enter with advanced standing.

SOCIAL WORK DEGREE EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCE

One quarter of MSW students were not enrolled full-time throughout their social work education, as shown in Table 32. An even smaller percentage of BSWs (4.6%) were not enrolled full-time throughout their social work education.

Three quarters of Whites (75.7%) and 87.1% of Asian/Pacific Islanders were enrolled full-time throughout their MSW study (see Table 33), compared to fewer than two-thirds (65.5%) of African Americans (p=0.0234).

Table 33: Full- and Part-Time Study, by Race/Ethnicity (MSWs Only)

Full-Time Student	American Indian/Alaska Native (n=9) %	Asian or Pacific Islander (n=70) %	Black/African American (n=119) %	White (n=746) %	Other Race (n=84) %	More Than One Race (n=59) %	Total (n=1,087) %
Yes	55.6	87.1	65.5	75.7	77.4	69.5	75
No	44.4	12.9	34.5	24.3	22.6	30.5	25
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Note. Comparisons by race are limited to MSWs and to African American and White respondents, responses from members of other groups being too few to permit firm conclusions.

Table 34: Online and In-Person Study

Apart from your field placements how was your program mainly taught?	BSW (n=195) %	MSW (n=1,105) %
Primarily in-person (90% or more)	88.7	79.3
Primarily online (90% or more)	1.0	13.9
Blended online and in-person	10.3	6.8
Total	100	100

Table 35: Online and In-Person Study by Race/Ethnicity, MSWs Only

Outside of your field placements how was your program mainly taught?	Primarily in-person (%)	Primarily online (%)	Blended online and in-person (%)
American Indian/Alaska Native (n=9)	88.9	11.1	0
Asian or Pacific Islander (n=71)	76.1	18.3	5.6
Black/African American (n=120)	70.0	25.8	4.2
White (n=749)	81.3	10.9	7.7
Other race (n=84)	82.1	13.1	4.8
More than one race (n=60)	70.0	25.0	5.0
Total (n=1,093)	79.2	14.0	6.8

Note. Primarily online is defined as 90% or more.

Table 34 shows that fully online program completion was more common for MSWs (13.9%) than for BSWs (only 1%). Nevertheless, one in 10 BSWs had a significant online component with in-person teaching.

As shown in Table 35, a quarter of African Americans received the non-field placement components of their MSWs primarily online compared to 18.3% of Asian/Pacific Islanders and only one in 10 whites (*p*<.0001).

Almost four of five MSWs taking their degree part-time (78.9%) completed it in 3 years, whereas almost all BSWs studied for their degrees full-time (Table 36).

Participants were asked about the general methods focus

Table 36: Time Taken to Complete Degree, Part-Time Students Only

How many years did it take you to earn your degree?	MSW (*n*=275) %
1 year or less	0.4
More than 1 but not more than 2 years	17.8
More than 2 but not more than 3 years	60.7
More than 3 but not more than 4 years	17.5
More than 4 but not more than 5 years	3.6

Note. Percentages are of those who said they had studied for their degree part-time.

Table 37: Practice Focus During Program

Which of the following best describes the general practice focus of your educational program?	BSW (*n*=194) %	MSW (*n*=1,102) %
Direct (or clinical) practice	70.1	82.1
Community organizing/advocacy	16.5	10.7
Indirect practice	1.5	2.5
None of the above	11.9	4.6
Total	100	100

Table 38: Educational Concentration if in Direct Social Work

Which of the following best describes your concentration in this program?	BSW (*n*=190) %	MSW (*n*=1,069) %
Health	13.7	9.4
Mental health/behavioral health	23.7	45.1
Children/youth/families	36.8	30.0
Aging	7.4	4.6
Military	2.1	1.6
Immigrant	0.5	0.7
International	0	0.3
Criminal justice	0.5	0.9
Other (please specify)	15.3	7.3
Total	100	100

Note. The BSW is a generic degree. The data on BSWs represents respondents' perceptions of their program's focus and/or their particular interests.

of their program, followed by a more detailed question about specialization. As shown in Table 37, more than eight of 10 MSWs and seven of 10 BSWs reported that their program's general practice focus was on direct or clinical practice. Community organizing or advocacy was a less common focus at the MSW level (around one in 10, or 10.7%) than at the BSW level (approximately one in six graduates, or 16.5%).

The most common program concentration for MSWs was mental and behavioral health (45.1%), followed by children, youth, and families work (30%); see Table 38. Among BSWs the two most common concentrations were reversed, with 36.8% in children, youth, and families work, followed by 23.7% in mental and behavioral health.

Female MSW graduates were more likely than males to identify children, youth, and families as their concentration (31% to 22.4%). On the other hand, males were more likely to identify mental health/behavioral health as their concentration than female graduates (55.1% to 44%); see Table 39.

JOB SEARCH

Some 86.4% of MSW graduates and 63.5% of BSW graduates reported searching for a job before or following graduation (see Table 40). The primary reason for BSWs not searching for a job was that they were going on to take a higher degree. That the majority of graduates had searched for a job at the time of the survey in September indicates that it is a reasonable time to conduct the survey to learn about the experience of graduates in the job market.

With only 63.5% of the BSW graduates having searched (*n*=122), it is more difficult to draw conclusions about the BSW job market nationally. The job market is discussed in a later section.

More than two of five (43.6%) MSWs who had not searched for a job gave their reason as having a job during their degree course that they were staying in for the present, compared to one in eight BSWs (12.9%); see Table 41. More than a quarter of MSWs (28.2%) not searching for a job reported they had been offered a job without needing to search for one (28.2% vs. 8.6% for BSWs). For BSWs the predominant reason for not searching was that they were going back to school (74.3%).

Approximately one in six MSWs were returning to prior jobs, as shown in Table 42. Among BSWs, 22.1% were returning to prior jobs, many of whom were probably being sponsored or supported in some way by their employers to attend the degree course.

Table 39: Social Work Educational Concentration by Sex

Which of the following best describes your concentration in this program?	Female (*n*=956) %	Male (*n*=107) %
Health	9.3	10.3
Mental health/behavioral health	44.0	55.1
Children/youth/families	31.0	22.4
Aging	4.8	2.8
Military	1.5	2.8
Immigrant	0.7	0.9
International	0.3	0
Criminal justice	1.0	0
Other (please specify)	7.3	5.6
Total	100	100

Table 40: Whether Searched for a Job

Did you search for a job before (or since) graduating this year?	BSW (*n*=192) %	MSW (*n*=1,098) %
Yes	63.5	86.4
No	36.5	13.6
Total	100	100

Nearly half of all BSWs indicated they were currently enrolled in MSW programs (96 of 194), and almost a quarter more were expecting to enroll in the next 2 years (see Table 43). This is significantly higher than the number who did not look for a job because they were going back to school (*n*=52). This may reflect those going to school but looking for part-time work or individuals who had looked for jobs but then decided to go back to school.

Two thirds of the MSWs (67.7%) and about half of the BSWs (48.7%) who searched for a job had accepted a social work job offer (see Table 44). Ten percent of MSWs and just under 15% of the BSWs who had searched had been offered a social work job but not yet accepted. The percentage of the searching MSWs accepting a non-social work job was lower than the percentage of the searching BSWs (2.1% versus 7.8%, respectively).

Table 41: Why Some Graduates Had Not Searched for a Job

Why have you not searched for a job?	% of BSW Graduates not Searching (n=70)	% of BSW Graduates (n=195)	% of MSW Graduates not Searching (n=149)	% of MSW Graduates (n=1,107)
I've gone back to school.	74.3	26.7	5.4	0.7
I already had a job while I was at school, and I am staying in it for the present.	12.9	4.6	43.6	5.9
I was offered a job without needing to search for one.	8.6	3.1	28.2	3.8
I'm taking a break from work.	2.9	1.0	12.1	1.6
Other (please explain below)	1.4	0.5	10.7	1.4
Total	100	35.9	100	13.5

Table 42: Whether Returning to Prior Job Following Social Work Degree Program

Did you return to this job after graduating?	BSW (n=195) %	MSW (n=1,107) %
Yes	22.1	17.3
No	36.4	60.4
Did not have a prior job	41.5	22.3
Total	100	100

Note. Percentages are for all respondents.

Table 43: BSWs Planning to Obtain an MSW

Do you plan to obtain an MSW in the future?	(n=194) %
Currently enrolled in an MSW program	49.5
Expect to enroll in an MSW program in the next 2 years	23.2
Hope to enroll in an MSW program in the future	19.1
No plans to enroll	8.2
Total	100

Table 44: Job Search Success for Those Who Searched for a Job

Have you been (or were you) offered a social work-related position?	BSW (*n*=115) %	MSW (*n*=945) %
Yes, and I accepted the offer.	48.7	67.7
Yes, but I am still searching	14.8	10.2
No. I have an offer of a non-social work-related position but am still searching for a social work one.	5.2	3.2
No, I have an offer of a non-social work-related position and have accepted it.	7.8	2.1
No, I have not yet been offered any position.	23.5	16.8
Total	100	100

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

Table 45: Social Work Content of Postgraduation Jobs

Which of the following best describes your principal position?	BSW (*n*=101) %	MSW (*n*=874) %
A job that requires a social work degree and/or license	31.7	71.1
A job as a social worker not requiring a social work degree or license	16.8	8.9
Subtotal: Social Work Jobs	48.5	80.0
Working not as a social worker but in a job for which you believe a social work education has provided relevant preparation	30.7	14.3
A job for which a social work education was not a necessary or relevant preparation	20.8	5.7
Total	100	100

Note. Percentages are of all those who had jobs, whether they had searched for them or not.

JOBS SOCIAL WORKERS ARE ENTERING

An important goal of the survey is to better understand the types of jobs social workers are entering. This section presents data on the jobs that the 2017 graduates were entering, including those who had searched for a position and those who had not, for example, a social worker who returned to a former employer or to an employer where he or she had done an internship.

More than 70% of MSWs took jobs requiring a social work degree or license (71.1%), whereas only 5.7% took jobs for which a social work education was not necessary or relevant. A much lower proportion of BSW job accepters took social work jobs, some of which required a social work degree or license (31.7%) and some of which did not (16.8%). Approximately 30% had taken jobs that were not in social work but for which social work education had been relevant preparation. The remaining 20% had taken jobs for which a social work education was not necessary or relevant.

As shown in Table 46, the majority of MSWs (92.0%) and BSWs (77.1%) were working in direct work with individuals, families, or groups. Some BSWs were working in direct work with communities (12.5%) or indirect social work (8.3%).

Table 46: Type of Job Taken for Those Working as Social Workers

In your principal position what best describes your role?	BSW (*n*=48) %	MSW (*n*=696) %
Direct work with individuals, families or groups	77.1	92.0
Direct work with communities	12.5	2.6
Indirect social work[a]	8.3	3.7
Social work higher education	0	0.3
Other social work position	0	0.1
A position for which you believe a social work education provides relevant preparation	2.1	1.3
Total	100	100

Note. This data includes individuals who entered positions requiring a license or social work degree or that were described as social worker positions by the respondent in Table 45. Percentages are of those who entered positions as social workers, including jobs not requiring a social work degree or license.

[a] *Indirect social work* is defined as public policy and advocacy; administration, management; planning; program evaluation; research (excluding teaching positions); or environmental health or public health work.

Table 47: Job Educational or Licensing Requirement for Those Working as Social Workers

Minimum educational or licensing requirement for your current principal position	BSW (*n*=49) %	MSW (*n*=695) %
Social work license	16.3	36.0
MSW, but not license	2.0	44.5
BSW	42.9	7.6
Any bachelor's degree	28.6	8.2
High school diploma	6.1	0.6
Other	4.1	3.2
Total	100	100

Note. Percentages are for those who were working in positions as social workers, including jobs not requiring a social work degree or license.

Four of five MSWs (80.5%) had taken jobs requiring either a social work license or at least an MSW (Table 47). Only about three of five BSWs (59.2%) had taken jobs requiring either a social work license or at least a BSW, and 28.6% had taken jobs accepting any bachelor's degree.

Table 48: Practice Settings for Those Working as Social Workers (MSWs Only)

In your principal position who are you (or will you be) working for?	(n=696) %
Outpatient health care services	17.8
Hospital inpatient facility	12.2
Educational establishment outside of higher education	6.0
Private social work practice	5.5
Higher education institution	2.0
Nursing or residential care facility	1.6
Rehabilitation facility	1.4
An organization that primarily does research and evaluation	0.6
Grant-making organization	0.3
Other private, not-for-profit, tax-exempt, or charitable organization	34.6
Other state, local, or federal government agency	13.6
Other private for-profit facility or business	4.3
Total	100

Note. Percentages are of those who were working in positions as social workers, including jobs not requiring a social work degree or license.

Almost a third of MSWs were working in health settings, with 17.8% serving in outpatient health services and 12.2% in inpatient facilities; see Table 48. A further third (34.6%) were serving in private and not-for-profit organizations not captured by the questionnaire precoding, and 13.6% were working in state, local, or federal agencies not captured by the questionnaire precoding.

Table 49 shows that a quarter of African American MSWs were working for government agencies compared to only one in 10 (10.9%) of White MSWs (p=.0014). Conversely, fewer than one in five African American MSWs reported working in inpatient or outpatient facilities, compared to almost one third (32%) of White MSWs (p=.0321).

Table 49: Practice Settings for Those Working as Social Workers, by Race (MSWs Only)

In your principal position who are you (or will you be) working for?	American Indian/Alaska Native (n=7) %	Asian or Pacific Islander (n=36) %	Black/ African American (n=76) %	White (n=497) %	Other Race (n=46) %	More Than One Race (n=27) %	Total (N=689) %
Outpatient health care services	28.6	5.6	11.8	18.9	21.7	22.2	17.9
Hospital inpatient facility	28.6	13.9	7.9	13.1	0	25.9	12.3
Educational establishment outside of higher education	0	2.8	5.3	6.2	8.7	3.7	6.0
Private social work practice	14.3	8.3	5.3	5.4	4.3	3.7	5.5
Higher education institution	0	2.8	1.3	1.6	6.5	3.7	2.0
Nursing or residential care facility	0	2.8	0	2.0	0	0	1.6
Rehabilitation facility	0	0	2.6	1.4	2.2	0	1.5
An organization that primarily does research and evaluation.	0	2.8	1.3	0.2	2.2	0	0.6
Grant-making organization	0	0	0	0.2	2.2	0	0.3
Other private, not-for-profit, tax-exempt or charitable organization	28.6	33.3	32.9	35.4	28.3	29.6	34.3
Other state, local or federal government agency	0	25.0	25.0	10.9	23.9	7.4	13.8
Other private, for-profit facility or business	0	2.8	6.6	4.6	0	3.7	4.4
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Note. Percentages are of those who were working in positions as social workers, including jobs not requiring a social work degree or license.

Table 50: Density of Area of Practice of Those Working as Social Workers

Demographics of the principal area in which you are/will be serving	BSW (*n*=49) %	MSW (*n*=691) %
Large city (population more than 1 million)	22.4	26.5
Medium city (population more than 250,000 but fewer than 1 million)	40.8	29.7
Small city (population more than 50,000 but fewer than 250,000)	16.3	25.9
Urban cluster (population more than 10,000 but fewer than 50,000)	12.2	10.9
Rural	8.2	7.1
Total	100	100

Note. Percentages are of those who were working in a position as a social worker, including jobs not requiring a social work degree or license.

Table 51: Density of Area of Practice of Those Working as Social Workers, by Race (MSWs Only)

Demographics of the principal area in which you are/will be serving	American Indian/Alaska Native (*n*=7) %	Asian or Pacific Islander (*n*=33) %	Black/African American (*n*=76) %	White (*n*=495) %	Other Race (*n*=46) %	More Than One Race (*n*=27) %	Total (*n*=684) %
Large city (population more than 1 million)	14.3	39.4	34.2	22.6	43.5	18.5	25.9
Medium city (population more than 250,000 but fewer than 1 million)	42.9	30.3	25.0	30.1	30.4	33.3	29.8
Small city (population more than 50,000 but fewer than 250,000)	14.3	24.2	22.4	27.9	13.0	33.3	26.2
Urban cluster (population more than 10,000 but fewer than 50,000)	28.6	3.0	11.8	11.7	6.5	7.4	11.0
Rural	0	3.0	6.6	7.7	6.5	7.4	7.2
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Note. Percentages are of those who were working in a position as a social worker, including jobs not requiring a social work degree or license.

Table 52: Density of Area of Practice of Those Working as Social Workers, by Ethnicity (MSWs Only)		
Demographics of the principal area in which you are/will be serving	Are you Hispanic/Latino?	
	No (*n*=592) %	Yes (*n*=91) %
Large city (population more than 1 million)	23.8	40.7
Medium city (population more than 250,000 but fewer than 1 million)	29.4	33.0
Small city (population more than 50,000 but fewer than 250,000)	27.9	15.4
Urban cluster (population more than 10,000 but fewer than 50,000)	11.0	9.9
Rural	7.9	1.1
Total	100	100

Note. Percentages are of those who were working in a position as a social worker, including jobs not requiring a social work degree or license.

MSWs were evenly spread among large, medium, and small cities, whereas BSWs were mainly serving in medium or large cities (see Table 50). Approximately one in five MSWs or BSWs was serving in a small urban cluster or rural area.

More than a third of African American MSWs and almost two of five Asian/Pacific Islanders were working in large cities compared to fewer than a quarter of Whites (22.6%, *p*=.0315); see Table 51.

Hispanics/Latinos were more likely than non-Hispanics to be working in large cities (40.7% vs. 23.8%, *p*=.0012) and less likely to be working in rural communities (1.1% vs. 7.9%); see Table 52.

Figure 5: Population Groups Served, Main Client Focus of BSWs Working as Social Workers

Note. n=49. Percentages are of those who were working in a position as a social worker, including jobs not requiring a social work degree or license.

POPULATION SERVED AND SETTING

Another way of looking at what new social workers are doing is to look at the main population groups they are serving in their new positions regardless of the setting (see Figures 5 and 6). The group served by the highest proportions of MSWs and BSWs was children and families (38.9% and 42.9%, respectively), followed by people with mental health issues (21.1% and 20.4%, respectively) and people receiving health care (15.4% and 10.2%, respectively). However, almost a quarter of BSWs were serving groups not included in the precoded classification offered in the survey questionnaire. Only MSWs were serving in schools.

Tables 53a–53j report on MSWs only because of the small numbers of BSWs falling into each subcategory of employment.

Hispanics/Latinos were more likely than non-Hispanics to be working with children and families (52.7% vs. 37.0%, p=.0054), and they were less likely to be working with people with mental health or substance abuse issues (19.8% vs. 28.0%, p=.127, not significant).

Consistent with their educational focus, women were more likely to be working with children and families, whereas men were more likely to be working with people with mental health issues and substance abuse issues.

Approximately a quarter of MSWs working with children and families were doing so in a family therapy setting, and

about one in six were doing so in a child protection agency. One in 10 was working in a fostering agency, and another one in 10 in a residential facility. 39.1% were working in some other, or combination, or settings.

More than twice as many African American MSWs were working in child protection agencies as White MSWs (25% vs. 11.9%, p=.0448).

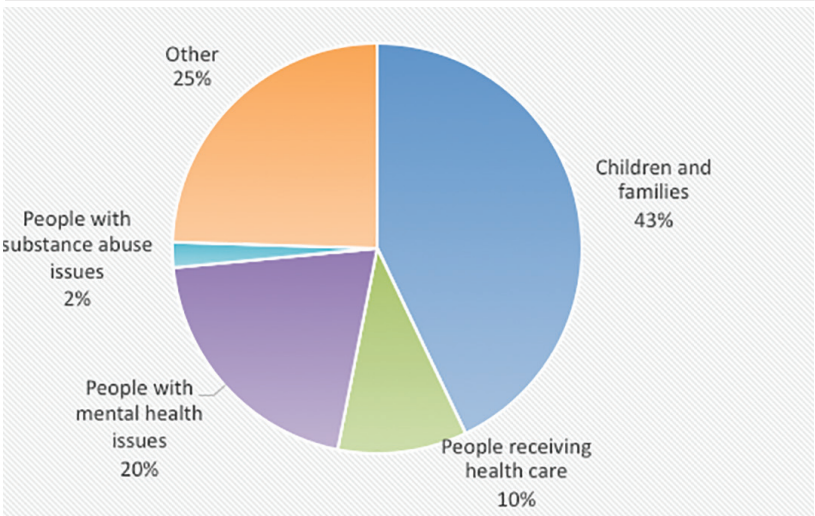### Figure 6: Population Groups Served, Main Client Focus of MSWs Working as Social Workers
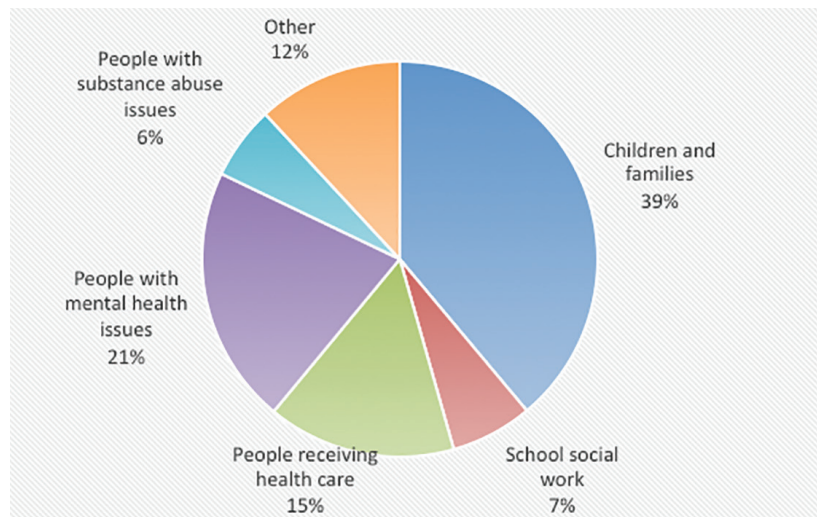
Note. n=697. Percentages are of those who were working in a position as a social worker, including jobs not requiring a social work degree or license.

Table 53a: Population Served by MSWs, Main Focus by Ethnicity

Which of the following do you consider to be the main focus of work in your principal job?	Are you Hispanic/Latino?	
	No (*n*=598) %	Yes (*n*=91) %
Children and families	37.0	52.7
School social work	6.9	6.6
People receiving health care	15.6	13.2
People with mental health issues	21.6	16.5
People with substance abuse issues	6.4	3.3
More choices	12.7	7.7
Total	100	100

Note. Percentages are of all MSWs who were working in a position as a social worker, including jobs not requiring a social work degree or license.

Table 53b: Population Served by MSWs, Main Focus by Sex

Which of the following do you consider to be the main focus of work in your principal practice?	Female (n=626) %	Male (n=66) %
Children and families	39.9	31.8
School social work	6.7	7.6
People receiving health care	15.2	12.1
People with mental health issues	20.8	24.2
People with substance abuse issues	5.6	10.6
More choices	11.8	13.6
Total	100	100

Note. Percentages are of all MSWs who were working in a position as a social worker, including jobs not requiring a social work degree or license.

Table 53c: Setting for MSWs Whose Main Focus Is Children and Families

What setting are you working in (or about to work in)?	MSWs Entering Children & Families Work (n=271) %	All MSWs Entering Social Work Jobs (n =697) %
Family therapy agency	23.2	9.0
Child protection agency	16.2	6.3
Foster care agency	10.0	3.9
Residential facility for children	9.2	3.6
Adoption agency	1.5	0.6
Court services agency	0.7	0.3
Other, or combination	39.1	15.2

Note. Percentages are of MSWs working with children and families.

Table 53d: Setting for MSWs Whose Main Focus Is Children and Families, by Race

What setting are you working in (or about to work in)?	American Indian/Alaska Native (n=3) %	Asian or Pacific Islander (n=12) %	Black/African American (n=40) %	White (n=176) %	Other Race (n=27) %	More Than One Race (n=10) %	Total (n=268) %
Adoption agency	0	0	5	1.1	0	0	1.5
Fostering agency	0	8.3	12.5	8.0	11.1	20	9.3
Child protection agency	0	25.0	25.0	11.9	33.3	10	16.4
Court services agency	0	0	0	1.1	0	0	0.7
Residential facility for children	0	0	10.0	10.8	3.7	10	9.3
Family therapy agency	66.7	16.7	17.5	23.9	29.6	20	23.5
Other, or combination	33.3	50.0	30.0	43.2	22.2	40	39.2

Note. Percentages are of MSWs working with children and families.

Table 53e: Setting for MSWs Whose Main Focus Is Mental Health

What setting are you working in (or about to work in)?	MSWs Entering Mental Health Care (*n*=147) %	All MSWs Entering Social Work Jobs (*n*=697) %
Community mental health center	53.1	11.2
Psychiatric hospital	13.6	2.9
Residential treatment center	4.8	1.0
Prison health service	0.7	0.1
Other	27.9	5.9
Total	100	21.1

Note. Percentages are of MSWs working in mental health.

Table 53f: Setting for MSWs Whose Main Focus Is Mental Health, by Race

What setting are you working in (or about to work in)?	American Indian/Alaska Native (*n*=1) %	Asian or Pacific Islander (*n*=9) %	Black/African American (*n*=12) %	White (*n*=111) %	Other Race (*n*=5) %	More Than One Race (*n*=6) %	Total (*n*=144) %
Psychiatric hospital	0	11.1	41.7	9.9	0	50.0	13.9
Residential treatment center	0	11.1	0	5.4	0	0	4.9
Community mental health center	100	33.3	50.0	53.2	80	33.3	52.1
Prison health service	0	0	0	0.9	0	0	0.7
Other	0	44.4	8.3	30.6	20	16.7	28.5
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Note. Percentages are of MSWs working in mental health.

Table 53g: Setting for MSWs Whose Main Focus Is Mental Health, by Ethnicity

What setting are you working in (or about to work in)?	Are you Hispanic/Latino?	
	No (*n*=129) %	Yes (*n*=15) %
Psychiatric hospital	14.7	6.7
Residential treatment center	5.4	0
Community mental health center	48.8	80.0
Prison health service	0.8	0
Other	30.2	13.3
Total	100	100

Note. Percentages are of MSWs working in mental health.

More than half (53.1%) of MSWs serving people with mental health issues were serving in community mental health centers. Another 13.6% were serving in psychiatric hospitals.

African American MSWs were much more likely than White MSWs to be working in psychiatric hospitals (41.7% vs. 9.9%, p=.009).

Hispanic/Latino MSWs with a mental health focus were much more likely than non-Hispanics to be working in community mental health centers (80% vs. 48.8%, p=.0284).

Half of the MSWs serving people receiving health care were working in a hospital setting. Another 14% were working in outpatient facilities, and 9.3% were working in a hospice setting.

More than half (52.3%) of MSWs serving people with health-care issues were serving those with chronic, acute, or terminal diagnoses. A quarter (26.2%) were serving older adults. Most of the remainder were serving in community health (5.6%) or serving veterans or the military (4.7%).

Of the small number of MSWs who were going to be working in indirect social work, most reported they would be working in an administrative position, with 7.7% reporting they would be working in research and only 3.8% reporting working in policy or advocacy.

Table 53h: Setting for MSWs Whose Main Focus Is Health Care

What setting are you working in (or about to work in)?	MSWs Entering Health Care (n=107) %	All MSWs Entering Social Work Jobs (n=697) %
Hospital	50.5	7.7
Outpatient facility	14.0	2.2
Hospice	9.3	1.4
Rehabilitation facility	4.7	0.7
Health insurance or health plan	2.8	0.4
Home health	2.8	0.4
Rural health clinic	0.9	0.1
Other community health clinic	6.5	1.0
Other	8.4	1.3
Total	100	15.4

Note. Percentages are of MSWs working in health care.

Table 53i: Groups Served for MSWs Whose Main Focus Is Health Care

What groups of people receiving health care are you mainly working with (or about to)?	% of MSWs Entering Health Care (n=107)	% of All MSWs Entering Social Work Jobs (n=697)[a]
Patients with chronic, acute, or terminal diagnoses	52.3	8.0
Older adults/gerontology	26.2	4.0
Community health	5.6	0.9
Military or veterans	4.7	0.7
People with physical disabilities	1.9	0.3
People with developmental disabilities	0.9	0.1
Other	8.4	1.3
Total	100	15.4

[a] Includes jobs not requiring a social work degree or license.

Table 53j: 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)?	As % of MSWs Entering Indirect Social Work (n=26)[a]	As % of All MSWs Entering Social Work Jobs (n=697)
Administration	69.2	2.6
Research	7.7	0.3
Policy or advocacy	3.8	0.1
Other	19.2	0.7
Total	100	3.7

[a] Percentages are of MSWs working in indirect social work.

Almost two-thirds (65.2%) of MSWs had an immediate supervisor who was a social worker or social work qualified, only slightly more than for BSWs (63.3%). These figures indicate that most graduates are providing social work services in their positions (see Table 54).

Table 54: Social Work Immediate Supervisor

Is your immediate supervisor in this position a social worker (or social work qualified)?	BSW (n=49) %	MSW (n=695) %
Yes	63.3	65.2
No	28.6	33.2
Don't know	8.2	1.6
Total	100	100

Note. Percentages are of those who were working in a position as a social worker, including those not requiring a social work degree or license.

INCOME

In terms of mean income, MSWs gained an earnings premium of more than $13,000 more than BSWs, with PhDs and DSWs earning some $20,000 to $25,000 more than MSWs (see Table 55). Female BSWs in particular were earning at a very low level, approximately $7,000 less than males (although there were only eight male BSWs in the sample). Among MSWs, males were earning around $1,200 more than females, whereas among PhDs the positions were reversed, with females earning approximately $7,000 more than males (although there were only eight male PhDs reporting income data). All DSW respondents were female.

The same relationships exist when considering median income, that is, males make more than females at the MSW and BSW levels but not at the PhD level, and PhDs/DSWs make more than MSWs, who make more than BSWs.

Although MSWs were earning most in large cities or urban clusters, BSWs were earning more in medium and small cities (see Table 56). The low average incomes of BSWs seem to be driven by very low pay in urban clusters and rural areas as well as in large cities (though the BSW numbers are not large enough to be considered reliably representative).

Earnings differences between MSWs in differing roles were small (see Table 57). The mean income for the largest MSW group (direct work with individuals, families and groups) was around $44,400.

MSWs were earning most in research organizations, government agencies, and hospital inpatient facilities (see Table 58). BSWs were earning most in nursing/residential care facilities and government agencies.

Table 55: Salary by Degree and Sex

Degree	Female			Male			Total		
	Mean Income	Median Income (in thousands)	*n*	Mean Income	Median Income (in thousands)	*n*	Mean Income	Median Income (in thousands)	*n*
BSW	$30,064	$30–$34	39	$37,188	$35–$39	8	$31,327	$30–$34	49
MSW	$44,309	$40–$44	622	$45,524	$45–$49	62	$44,418	$40–$44	687
PhD	$71,500	$70–$74	20	$64,375	$65–$69	8	$69,464	$70–$74	28
DSW	$66,500	$65–$69	10	NA	NA	NA	$66,500	$65–$69	10

Note. Data for those working in positions as social workers, including jobs not requiring a social work degree or license. There were no males receiving a DSW among the respondents. NA=not applicable.

Table 56: Mean Income by Density of Area of Practice

Demographics of the principal area in which you are/will be serving	BSW			MSW		
	Mean Income	Median Income (in thousands)	*n*	Mean Income	Median Income (in thousands)	*n*
Large city (population more than 1 million)	$30,000	$30–$34	11	$46,154	$45–$49	182
Medium city (population more than 250,000 but fewer than 1 million)	$34,125	$35–$39	20	$43,719	$40–$44	203
Small city (population more than 50,000 but fewer than 250,000)	$35,000	$30–$34	8	$43,051	$40–$44	177
Urban cluster (population more than 10,000 but fewer than 50,000)	$23,750	$25–$29	6	$46,199	$45–$49	73
Rural	NA	NA	NA	$43,980	$40–$44	49

Table 57: MSW Income by Role

In your principal position, what best describes your role?	BSW			MSW		
	Mean Income	Median Income (in thousands)	*n*	Mean Income	Median Income (in thousands)	*n*
Direct work with individuals, families, or groups	$29,392	$30–$34	37	$44,412	$40–$44	633
Direct work with communities	$43,333	$35–$39	6	$45,588	$40–$44	17
Indirect social work	NA	$35–$39	NA	$45,385	$40–$44	26
A position for which you believe a social work education provides relevant preparation	NA	$30–$34	NA	$40,278	$35–$39	9

Table 58: Income by Type of Employer

In your principal position, who are you (or will you be) working for?	BSW			MSW		
	Mean Income	Median Income (in thousands)	*n*	Mean Income	Median Income (in thousands)	*n*
Outpatient health–care services	$31,500	$30–$34	5	$44,556	$40–$44	124
Hospital inpatient facility	NR	NR	NR	$47,232	$45–$49	84
Educational establishment outside of higher education	NR	NR	NR	$44,329	$40–$44	41
Private social work practice	NR	NR	NR	$40,203	$40–$44	37
Higher education institution	NR	NR	NR	$46,429	$45–$49	14
Nursing or residential care facility	NR	NR	NR	$42,500	$40–$44	11
Rehabilitation facility	NR	NR	NR	$41,000	$40–$44	10
Other private, not–for–profit, tax–exempt, or charitable organization	$27,717	$30–$34	23	$41,878	$40–$44	237
Other state, local, or federal government agency	$35,909	$35–$39	11	$48,579	$45–$49	95
Other private, for–profit facility or business	NR	NR	NR	$48,167	$45–$49	30

Note. NR=not reportable. Results not reported if less than 5 respondents in the category.

Table 59: Income by Job Educational or Licensing Requirement

Which of the following best describes your principal position?	BSW			MSW		
	Mean Income	Median Income (in thousands)	*n*	Mean Income	Median Income (in thousands)	*n*
A job that requires a social work degree and/or license	$34,609	$30–$34	32	$45,041	$40–$44	612
A job as a social worker that does not require a social work degree or license	$25,147	$25–$29	17	$39,416	$35–$39	77

Table 60: Mean Income of MSWs by Sex and Race

Sex	Mean Income			
	Black/African American	*n*	White	*n*
Female	$45,147	68	$43,764	449
Male	$50,000	8	$43,171	41
Total	$45,658	76	$43,704	494

Table 61: Mean Income of MSWs by Sex and Ethnicity

Sex	Mean Income			
	Non-Hispanic/Latino	*n*	Hispanic/Latino	*n*
Female	$43,762	535	$47,932	81
Male	$44,861	54	$49,643	7
Total	$43,853	593	$48,068	88

Note. Percentages are of MSWs who were working in positions as social workers, including jobs not requiring a social work degree or license.

A requirement for a social work degree or license came with a substantial earnings premium of more than $5,000 for MSWs and approximately $9,500 for BSWs; see Table 59.

African American MSWs were earning almost $2,000 a year more than White MSWs; the difference was even larger for males (almost $7,000); see Table 60. These differences may be driven by a small number of African Americans reporting high salaries (averaging $74,000) for direct work with communities, although also by the higher proportion of African Americans working in well-paid state and local jobs in large cities.

Hispanic/Latino MSWs reported earning approximately $4,000 a year more than non-Hispanics (see Table 61). The difference was greater for males (more than $5,000) than for females, although the number of male Hispanic/Latinos in the sample was very small.

The Job Market for New Social Workers

The Survey of 2017 Social Work Graduates included a series of questions for those who had searched for a job regarding their difficulty or ease finding a position. The responses to these questions provide a picture of the demand for social workers by education type, region, and setting. Some of these questions are subjective, such as "Did you have a difficult time finding a job you were satisfied with?". In the short term, they can be compared with responses from other surveys using this question; however, these other surveys are of physicians completing training and may not be comparable. These questions are more informative when used over several years when changes can become apparent.

As with the similar question on changing plans, the job market appears slightly better for MSWs. Nearly half of MSWs (44.2%) and BSWs (48.7%) reported having difficulty finding positions they were satisfied with (see Table 62).

As Table 63 shows, for MSWs the most cited main reasons for difficulty finding a job they were satisfied with were inadequate salary (25.7%) and a lack of jobs/opportunities in desired settings (21.6%). For BSWs the most cited reason was an overall lack of jobs/opportunities (25.5%) followed by inadequate salary/compensation and a lack of jobs/opportunities in desired locations (16.4% for each).

As with the reason for having a difficult time finding a job, the overall job market appears tighter for BSWs than MSWs: 15.3% of MSWs and 27% of BSWs reported finding no, very few, or few jobs locally (see Table 64). Some or

Table 62: Job Search Difficulty

Did you have difficulty finding a position that you were satisfied with?	BSW (*n*=115) %	MSW (*n*=942) %
Yes	48.7	44.2
No	51.3	55.8
Total	100	100

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

Table 63: Reasons for Difficulty for Those With Job Search Difficulty

What would you say was the SINGLE MOST IMPORTANT reason?	BSW (*n*=55) %	MSW (*n*=412) %
Inadequate salary/compensation offered	16.4	25.7
Lack of jobs/opportunities in desired setting (e.g., hospital, hospice, school, etc.)	12.7	21.6
Available job responsibilities not a good match to my interests.	7.3	12.4
Lack of jobs/opportunities in desired locations	16.4	11.9
Overall lack of jobs/opportunities	25.5	11.7
Lack of employment opportunities for spouse/partner	0.0	0.2
Lack of leadership opportunities	1.8	0.5
The other reason you described in the previous question	20.0	16.0
Total	100	100

Note. Percentages are of those who said they had difficulty finding a job they were satisfied with.

Table 64: Assessment of Local Job Market

What is your overall assessment of social work or social work-related jobs/opportunities locally (within 50 miles of where you graduated)?	BSW (*n*=115) %	MSW (*n*=941) %
No jobs	0.9	0.1
Very few jobs	12.2	4.6
Few jobs	13.9	10.6
Some jobs	47.8	41.7
Many jobs	21.7	39.1
Unknown	3.5	3.9
Total	100	100

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

many jobs in their local area were reported by 80.8% of MSWs and 69.5% of BSWs.

As is common in many health professions, the national job market is often better than the local job market. Finding some or many jobs nationally was reported by 80.2% of MSWs and 79.1% of BSWs (see Table 65). Just 7% of MSWs and 8.6% of BSWs reported finding very few, few, or no jobs nationally.

To better understand the job market and opportunities for new social workers, the survey included open-ended questions asking for the types of jobs that were more and less available. The majority of participants provided responses to these questions, which have been categorized and summarized below.

Given the diversity of needs among communities and the various backgrounds of graduates, it is not surprising that some job types, such as clinical and direct social work positions, appear on both lists; further analysis may reveal patterns to the responses, such as high demand in some regions but low demand in others or differences by social work degree of the respondent. However, in some categories of jobs the message was unambiguous and universal: Case manager/case worker jobs were seen as plentiful, as were child welfare/child protective positions and positions requiring a license (and, conversely, jobs not requiring a license were not); indirect social work jobs were seen as scarce (see Tables 66 and 67).

Most MSWS and BSWs applied for four or fewer jobs (see Table 68). More MSWs than BSWs applied for more than 10 jobs (31.1% vs. 21.1%).

Table 65: Assessment of National Job Market		
What is your overall assessment of social work or social work-related jobs/opportunities nationally?	BSW (*n*=115) %	MSW (*n*=939) %
No Jobs	0	0
Very few jobs	4.3	1.5
Few jobs	4.3	5.5
Some jobs	36.5	32.9
Many jobs	42.6	47.3
Unknown	12.2	12.8
Total	100	100

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

Table 66: Jobs More Available		
Type of Job	BSW (*n*=100) %	MSW (*n*=876) %
Clinical & direct services, counselors, and therapists	15.0	28.0
Hospital, medical social work and health-care positions	2.0	16.9
Case managers and case workers	17.0	16.8
Mental health & behavioral health positions	11.0	11.0
Child welfare & child protective services	13.0	8.0
Substance abuse positions	4.0	5.5
Licensed positions	5.0	4.9
School social work	3.0	4.3
Jobs with nonprofits	3.0	3.8

Note. Percentages are of all who gave any response to this question and do not add up to 100%.

Table 67: Jobs Less Available

Type of Job	BSW (*n*=95) %	MSW (*n*=841) %
Hospital, medical social work and health-care positions	6.3	21.8
Clinical & direct services, counselors, and therapists	13.7	20.2
Indirect social work: Advocacy, policy, research, administration, management, supervisory and leadership positions	13.7	16.2
Mental health & behavioral health positions	8.4	5.0
Unlicensed or leading-to-license positions	2.1	5.0
Jobs with the Veterans Administration	3.2	3.4
Community organizing, outreach, and planning positions	3.2	3.4
Aging and gerontology positions	3.2	1.8

Note. Percentages are of all who gave any response to this question and do not add up to 100%.

Table 68: Job Applications

How many social work or social work-related jobs did you apply for (excluding education and training positions)?	BSW (*n*=114) %	MSW (*n*=943) %
None	10.5	3.7
1	10.5	13.8
2	15.8	9.5
3	10.5	9.1
4	6.1	8.3
5	8.8	8.1
6 to 10	16.7	16.4
More than 10	21.1	31.1
Total	100	100

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

More than four out of five MSWs (82.8%) and almost four out of five BSWs (77.2%) had received at least one job offer (see Table 69). Two or more job offers were received by 40.9% of MSWs and 33.6% of BSWs.

Differences in the Job Market by Sex

There were some interesting but inconsistent experiences and views of the job market by sex. A higher percentage of men reported they had not yet been offered a job than women (21.9% compared to 16.3%), and for those who had difficulty finding a satisfactory job, men were more likely to cite an overall lack of jobs/opportunities (15.3% vs. 11.3%). On the other hand, men were less likely to report having a difficult time finding a position (41.1% vs. 44.6%) and that they had to change their plans (24% vs. 26.3%), and more men than women thought there were "many jobs" in the local (42.7% vs. 38.7%) or the national job market (52.6% vs. 46.7%). Yet men were less likely to say they would recommend the social work profession than women (88.6% vs. 93.1%), perhaps because they were less likely to have received a job offer.

SATISFACTION

The survey included a series of questions about satisfaction. Generally, BSWs and MSWs were satisfied with their positions (see Table 70), although less so with their salaries (see Table 71). The level of satisfaction undoubtedly contributes to the very high percentage of social workers—more than 92%—who would recommend the profession to others.

Table 69: Job Offers Received

How many social work or social work-related job offers did you receive (excluding education and training positions)?	BSW (*n*=101) %	MSW (*n*=907) %
None	22.8	17.2
1	43.6	41.9
2	21.8	22.1
3	7.9	12.9
4	2.0	3.2
5	0	1.7
6 to 10	1.0	0.8
Over 10	1.0	0.3
Total	100	100

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

Table 70: Satisfaction With Position

What is your overall level of satisfaction with your current position?	BSW (*n*=49) %	MSW (*n*=692) %
Very satisfied	46.9	50.3
Somewhat satisfied	46.9	41.6
Somewhat dissatisfied	0	6.1
Very dissatisfied	6.1	2.0
Total	100	100

Note. Percentages are of those who were working in positions as social workers, including jobs not requiring a social work degree or license.

More than 90% of MSWs (91.9%) and BSWs (93.8%) were somewhat or very satisfied overall with their current positions. This is a very strong endorsement for the profession.

Somewhat surprisingly, given how low their average salaries were, most MSWs and BSWs were satisfied with their salaries. More than a quarter of the respondents in either group were very satisfied with their salaries, and about three quarters were somewhat or very satisfied.

The majority of MSW and BSW graduates were satisfied with their job benefits. There was clear differentiation between MSWs and BSWs regarding satisfaction with benefits, with 55.2% of MSWs very satisfied compared to 41.7% of BSWs; see Table 72.

Table 71: Satisfaction With Salary

What is your level of satisfaction with your current (or expected) social work salary?	BSW (*n*=49) %	MSW (*n*=693) %
Very satisfied	28.6	26.6
Somewhat satisfied	51.0	48.1
Somewhat dissatisfied	14.3	17.2
Very dissatisfied	6.1	8.2
Total	100	100

Note. Percentages are of those who were working in positions as social workers, including jobs not requiring a social work degree or license.

Table 72: Satisfaction With Benefits

How satisfied are you with the benefits in your principal job?	BSW (*n*=48) %	MSW (*n*=688) %
Very satisfied	41.7	55.2
Somewhat satisfied	43.8	29.9
Somewhat dissatisfied	6.3	10.3
Very dissatisfied	8.3	4.5
Total	100	100

Note. Percentages are of those who were working in positions as social workers, including jobs not requiring a social work degree or license.

VIEWS OF THE PROFESSION

More than 92% of MSWs and BSWs said they would recommend a social work degree to others (see Table 73). Less than 8% said they would not do so. The most frequent reasons given for recommending a social work degree are listed below along with actual comments of respondents.

- Flexibility in job opportunities
  - "Even though the pay is not great, there are many job opportunities and different directions one can take with a social work degree. It is both fulfilling and stressful but when you know you want to work in the helping field you just know." (BSW)
  - "I would recommend a social work degree to others because of the diversity that it provides in the work force and educational path to an advanced degree." (BSW)
  - "To anyone who wants to help others; this profession is eclectic in nature and allows opportunities to work in diverse settings with diverse populations." (MSW)
  - "With a social work degree, someone has a wide range of job opportunities. They can work in child protection, schools, hospitals, mental health facilities, etc." (MSW)
  - "Versatility, availability of jobs, opportunities for growth and advancement, helping others." (MSW)
  - "Meaningful work; numerous job opportunities; opportunities to change career paths as desired within the field; however, social workers do not currently receive the financial compensation they desire, given contributions to society. In terms of a PhD, I would highly recommend that career path as PhD prepared social workers are important to the field as leaders,

scholars, educators, and researchers contributing to the evidence base of the field." (PhD)
  - "A degree in social work is a professional degree. It is a diverse degree that prepares the graduate to do many different types of responsibilities." (DSW)

- Good knowledge base
  - "I feel like a social work degree is versatile whether or not you actually want to hold the title of a social worker. The degree gives you a lot of the skills needed to work in service related organizations. Getting my social work degree is the best decision I could have ever made." (MSW)
  - "The perspective it fosters is unique and invaluable when working with people, whether one-on-one or in administration. It views the individual in the context of their environment, which is how we exist. Other disciplines focus more on one element, whether the social world or inside an individual's mind, but, while important to understand, these paint an incomplete picture. In order to fully understand people, we must view them holistically, in all dimensions and on all levels." (MSW)
  - "I would recommend a degree in social work to anyone considering psychology, sociology, or any other professional social field. The reason being is that social workers get to do all of the same activities as those professions and more. Social workers can accumulate greater experience sooner than psychology majors looking to become clinical but attain the same practice hours for licensing. Those interested in the field of sociology might be interested in social work, like I was, because of the greater

Table 73: Views of the Profession

Would you recommend a social work degree to others?	BSW (n=192) %	MSW (n=1,091) %
Yes	92.2	92.7
No	7.8	7.3
Total	100	100

amount of control over your research including advocacy. Social work is a field that not only works with individuals, groups, and communities in one on one settings, but advocates for, educates, and helps them attain their goals. It is a fulfilling profession for passionate people." (MSW)

– "A very broad education with a humanistic philosophy." (MSW)

– "We tend to narrow our focus by saying that if we earn a degree in social work we will/should become a social worker. I think that social work skills are applicable to a lot of professions. The ability to actively listen, reflect, de-escalate conflict, and facilitate dialogue are the skills used by gifted leaders regardless of discipline." (PhD)

– "I have both my MSW and my DSW. My MSW was clinically focused. I was able to take that and work for almost a decade as a direct practice worker seeing clients and managing a SW department in a hospital. My DSW was more focused on research, policy and theory. I loved the two things combined as now I feel confident in my abilities in any of those areas and I feel it makes me a more well-rounded social worker. I recommend a degree in SW over LPC, etc. to my interns because it is a broader degree, there are more ways to flex it to fit what you want to do, whereas LPC, LMFT is just direct practice." (DSW)

• Social justice orientation
– "The MSW prepares the student for many career opportunities. I would recommend a social work degree to individuals who are interested in promoting social justice, serving and assisting individuals or communities, entering politics, or creating policy." (MSW)

– "Social Justice and Advocacy is in high demand for marginalized populations in this society." (MSW)

– "Because you didn't give me the option to choose 'maybe' or 'it depends.' I would never offer a blanket recommendation for anyone to do any degree (I would reconsider the wording of the previous question). I got an MSW for three reasons: 1) I worked with several macro social workers in my previous role and they helped to educate me on what you can do with a social work degree, about which my prior understanding was very limited; 2) I needed a master's degree to

advance in my (then) chosen career; 3) as opposed to education, which I had considered, I liked that social work was broad and interdisciplinary and at my institution there was a stated commitment to social justice. I also felt the practicum was a really important learning experience (although I would design that requirement very differently if I were at CSWE). If you are an independent learner, social work provides enough room to shape your education in interesting ways. It's not for everyone, though." (MSW)

– "Social work provides a unique orientation to the world, one that has the potential to make great change." (PhD)

– "Social work in macro and micro settings is necessary to help vulnerable people improve their situations. Proper training is necessary to truly be effective as a social worker. We are not just nice people who show compassion. we are change-agents who help others figure out solutions to their problems and when needed, we provide linkage. Everyone needs help as some point in their lives, and it is not uncommon to meet and receive aid from a social worker during these challenges." (PhD)

– "I would recommend a social work degree to those individuals interest in improving the quality of life for others and for those wanting to connect client systems to community resources. I would recommend a DSW for those in academia that have taught for a few years and need the doctorate degree to elevate them to the next level." (DSW)

• Promotes self-growth
– "It taught me how to see the world in a clearer and more informed way. I critically think about society, community, and personal needs and issues. I also engage my interpersonal relationships better as a result of my social work program. It teaches you skills needed to be a better human being, who lives for the sake of others." (BSW)

– "It is a versatile degree that allows the potential for finding employment throughout the country, and the process of earning a social work helps students to build empathy, become aware of their own privileges and biases, and contribute to changing their communities for the better." (MSW)

– "It's a degree where you learn about yourself and are humbled through the multiple perspectives necessary to carry out the work. It is extraordinarily rewarding work to help someone navigate the difficulties of their experiences." (MSW)

Of the 8% who reported they would not recommend the degree, the most frequent reasons given for not recommending a social work degree were as follows:

- Low pay (many referenced the difficulty of repaying student loan debt incurred in taking the degree)
    - "A lot of work with little recognition of appreciation and low pay." (BSW)
    - "I would recommend that people do their research before applying. The program is not for everyone and I feel that some have false expectations about salary or types of work available upon graduating college." (BSW)
    - "I would and I wouldn't recommend a MSW. I would recommend it because I think it's made me a more humble, respectful, and inclusive person. However, I would encourage someone to take social work classes but choose a degree that is better compensated/respected." (MSW)
    - "The career is very undervalued (does not pay well). Entry levels jobs can be done without a degree, yet those are the only jobs available to an MSW unless you have '1–2 years experience.'" (MSW)
    - "The pay after graduation is horrible and isn't enough to pay back student loan debt." (MSW)
    - "With the nuance of the 4+1 programs there are too many people flooding the profession and not enough jobs that allow for financially sustainable employment." (DSW)
- Low prestige (especially in nonclinical jobs)
    - "While I support the practice and values of social work, the profession has suffered. The profession lacks a healthy ego and has narrowed what 'social workers can do' in a way that has allowed nurses and MBAs—two professions not suffering from the same lack of self-esteem—to assume roles social workers have and should do. Social work is now associated in the job market with mental health direct service and this actually worked against me in my job search. Additionally, I have found the skill set

may be appreciated outside of direct service but is not compensated. Employers see an MSW and take $15,000 off the salary they're likely to offer the MBA who applied to the same job." (MSW)
    - "Unless one can get in with federal or state gov position, the pay is too low to provide for oneself and the work load is too great to be able to get part-time job and observe any level of self-care. It is not a respected profession and you are literally completely on your own for getting a job after an internship (unlike MBA programs). Also, getting a degree means very little, every employer wants licensing-which is an additional expense and time. Additionally, no state has the same process, which makes looking for work more difficult." (MSW)
- Difficulty finding jobs or too few jobs
    - "Low pay, limited job opportunities for MSW, difficult to find a position that allows graduates to work toward licensure." (MSW)
    - "I believe programs are graduating too many social workers and the job market is flooded. I relocated because of the difficulty I have had finding work." (MSW)
    - "I have had little luck in getting interviews in the areas I wish to work in and feel that my training does not match up with the kind of work I want to do. I was told that the degree of MSSA is a diverse degree with which you could get a multitude of jobs, but thus far I have been told by employers I lack the necessary experience to be hired by a hospital or a health care organization, which was my focus in school. I am extremely disappointed by this and feel that I will not find employment in this field and that I wasted my money and time on this degree." (MSW)
- Lack of entry-level job opportunities
    - "I would never recommend this degree. It is difficult to make a living wage without minimal work experience and just internships. Most jobs do not care about your internships. I could have replaced the internships with real work experience. I truly believe getting a MSW was a waste of my time. Finding a job has been difficult. A MSW means nothing without 3 or more years of experience." (MSW)

FUTURE PLANS OF GRADUATES

Not surprisingly, BSW graduates were far more likely to indicate they were planning to continue their social work education given the high percentage planning to go on for an MSW. On the other hand, the 42% of MSWs who indicated they, too, planned on continuing their social work education is also high (see Table 74).

Continued education was planned by 42.1% of MSWs, with more than a third of these planning to take a higher social work degree, as shown in Table 75. About a third of MSWs planning a higher social work degree (34.3%) intended to

seek a DSW, and almost two thirds (63.3%) intended to seek a PhD (see Table 76). Meanwhile, almost one in five MSWs planning to continue their education (18.1%) intended to seek another degree not in social work. Four out of five BSWs were planning to continue their education, principally through a higher social work degree, with 90% of BSWs in this category intending to take an MSW.

African American MSWs were more likely than White MSWs to be planning to continue their social work education (52.6% vs. 38.6%, p=.0054); see Table 77.

Table 74: Whether Planning to Continue Social Work Education

Do you plan to continue your social work education (or seek education that will assist you in a social work or social-work related career)?	BSW (*n*=186) %	MSW (*n*=1,055) %
Yes	80.6	42.1
No	19.4	57.9
Total	100	100

Table 75: Plans to Continue Social Work Education

How do you plan to continue your education?	BSW[a] (*n*=150) %	BSW[b] (*n*=195) %	MSW[a] (*n*=442) %	MSW[b] (*n*=1,107) %
I plan to take a higher social work degree	87.3	67.2	38.9	15.5
I plan to take another degree not in social work	4.7	3.6	18.1	7.2
I have other plans for continuing my education	8.0	6.2	43.0	17.2
Total	100	76.9	100	39.9

[a] Percentages are of those saying they planned to continue their social work education.
[b] Percentages are of all respondents.

Table 76: Plans to Continue Social Work Education

Which higher social work degree to you plan to take?	BSW[a] (n=131) %	BSW[b] (n=195) %	MSW[a] (n=172) %	MSW[b] (n=1,107) %
MSW or equivalent	90.1	60.5	1.7	0.3
DSW or equivalent	3.1	2.1	34.3	5.3
PhD	6.9	4.6	62.2	9.7
Other	0	0	1.7	0.3
Total	100	67.2	100	15.5

[a] Percentages are of those saying they planned to take a higher social work degree.
[b] Percentages are of all respondents.

Table 77: Whether Planning to Continue Social Work Education, by Race (MSWs Only)

Do you plan to continue your social work education?	Yes (%)	No (%)
American Indian/Alaska Native (n=2)	22.2	77.8
Asian or Pacific Islander (n=32)	47.8	52.2
Black/African American (n=59)	52.6	47.4
White (n =278)	38.6	61.4
Other race (n =35)	48.0	52.0
More than one race (n =31)	53.4	46.6
Total (N=437)	42	58

SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS FOR PHD SOCIAL WORKERS

Thirty-four PhD graduates completed the survey in 2017. This was equal to 12% of the number of graduates in 2016. (The number of 2017 graduates was not available when this report was prepared.) Not surprisingly, the majority (60.7%) indicated their role was primarily in higher education; a further 21.4% were going to be providing direct services with individuals and families, and 17.9% were going to be providing indirect social work services. Overall, 67.9% were going to be working in higher education institutions. In terms of population focus, 25% indicated children and families, 17.9% mental health, 14.3% substance abuse, and 28% indicated "other."

The PhD graduates made substantially more than BSWs and MSWs, with a mean salary of $69,464, with women averaging $71,500 compared to $64,375 for men. For those working in higher education, the mean salary was $71,029. It should be noted that PhDs were substantially older and more experienced than BSW and MSW graduates.

The job market for social work PhDs appears strong. Although 26.5% did not have to search because they were returning to a prior job or received an offer without searching, those who did search were generally successful; only 12% did not receive an offer and were still looking. Twenty-eight percent indicated there were no, very few, or few positions available in the local job market (within 50 miles); only 8% thought there were very few or few jobs nationally. Only 4 of the 34 (12%) indicated they had to change their plans because of limited job opportunities.

The PhDs were generally very satisfied or satisfied with their jobs, their salaries, and their job benefits, and only 2 of the 34 graduates indicated any dissatisfaction. Furthermore, 97% said they would recommend social work as a profession.

NEXT STEPS FOR RESEARCHING RECENT SOCIAL WORK GRADUATES

Plans are underway to survey the 2018 social work graduates with a goal of increasing the number of respondents, which would allow more in-depth analysis and identification of possible trends. The 2017 results will provide an important benchmark because trends in the supply and demand will be measured.

In addition, GW HWI plans to resurvey the 2017 graduates. On the 2017 survey, we asked a specific question regarding willingness to participate in follow-up surveys.

Willingness to have their e-mail addresses retained for future surveys was expressed by 87.9% of MSWs and 83.2% of BSWs, opening up the possibility of longitudinal study of their social work career pathways (see Table 78).

Table 78: Willingness to Participate in Future Research		
The GW HWI, in consultation with social work organizations, may undertake future surveys. May we keep your e-mail address on file and contact you again for these surveys?	BSW (*n*=190) %	MSW (*n*=1069) %
Yes, I am willing to participate in future studies and authorize the GW HWI and CSWE to keep my e-mail address securely for up to 5 years. My e-mail address may not be used for any other purpose than for future social work workforce surveys.	83.2	87.9
No	16.8	12.1
Total	100	100

Appendix A: Method of Estimating Annual Flow Into Social Work

Our estimate of the annual flow into the social work workforce is derived from the distribution of responses to the question, "Which of the following best describes your principal position?" as shown in Table A1.

According to the CSWE, in 2016 there were 27,659 MSW graduates and 20,348 BSW graduates. Based on the 2017 Survey of Social Work Graduates, we estimate that 95% of the MSW graduates go on to employment. Of these, 80%–94% go into positions requiring an MSW and/or social work license or positions not requiring a social work degree or license but which they nevertheless define as social worker positions. (The 94% includes graduates going into positions not as social workers but for which they believed their social work education to be relevant preparation for the job, the majority of whom provided a job title that would be widely regarded as describing a social work position, even if not carrying the title *social worker*.) The other 6% go into clearly non-social work jobs.

For the 20,348 BSW graduates, we know from Table 43 that nearly half go directly into an MSW program, and that almost another quarter expect to go on to an MSW within 2 years. Some of these graduates also obtain jobs while pursuing their MSW. This leaves about 27% of new BSWs going directly into social work positions after their BSW graduation without a clear likelihood of going on to take an MSW, which we interpret to mean that, in terms of flow into the social work workforce, they should be independently counted as new

Table A1: Types of Principal Position After Graduation

Which of the following best describes your principal position?	BSW (*n*=101) %	MSW (*n*=874) %
A job that requires a social work degree and/or license	31.7	71.1
A job as a social worker not requiring a social work degree or license	16.8	8.9
Subtotal: Social work jobs	(48.5)	(80.0)
Working not as a social worker but in a job for which you believe a social work education has provided relevant preparation	30.7	14.3
A job for which a social work education was not a necessary or relevant preparation	20.8	5.7
Total	100	100

Note. Percentages are of all those who had a job, whether they had searched for it or not.

Figure A1: Flow Diagram of New Entrants Into the Social Work Workforce
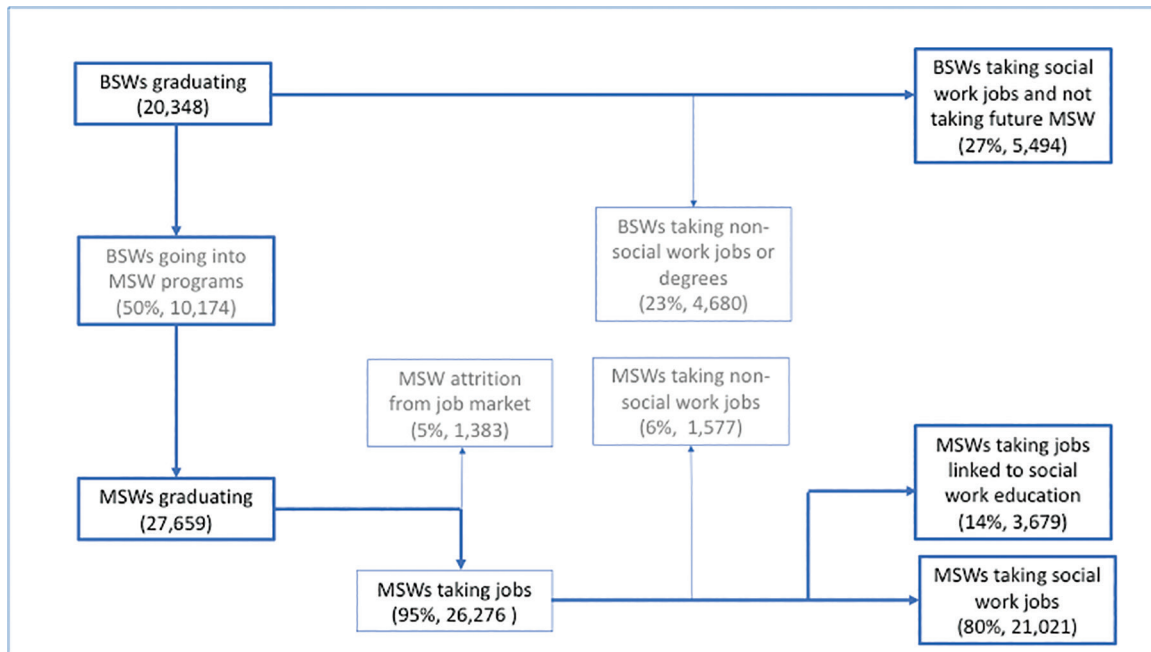
Note. These estimates are based on 2016 figures from CSWE's *2016 Statistics on Social Work Education in the United States.*

entrants into the profession alongside the MSW numbers. Figure A1 illustrates these estimates in the form of a flow diagram.

Therefore, based on the number of new graduates at the BSW and MSW levels and the results of the survey, we estimate that in 2016 between 26,500 and 30,200 new social workers entered the field, with about four out of five entering

with an MSW. Because a majority of BSWs go on for their MSW, MSW programs play the central role in preparing the social work-educated workforce.[2]

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[2] This calculation of new social workers includes only those receiving a social work degree. According to the American Community Survey, approximately 24% of self-identified social workers do not have a bachelor's degree or higher in social work.

Appendix B: 2017 Participating Social Work Programs

Baylor University
Binghamton University, State University of New York
Boise State University
Boston College
Boston University
Bryn Mawr College
Case Western Reserve University
Florida Atlantic University
Fordham University
Howard University
Indiana University
Loyola University Chicago
Millersville University of Pennsylvania
Millersville University of Pennsylvania and Shippensburg
    University Collaborative
Missouri Western State University
New York University
North Carolina A&T State University / University of North
    Carolina at Greensboro Collaborative
Ohio State University
Roberts Wesleyan College
Salem State University
San Francisco State University
Simmons College
St. Catherine University and University of Saint Thomas
    Collaborative
State University of New York at Stony Brook
Thomas University

Touro College
Tulane University
Universidad Central de Bayamon
University at Albany, State University of New York
University of Arkansas at Monticello
University of Connecticut
University of Denver
University of Georgia
University of Hawaii at Manoa
University of Houston
University of Indianapolis
University of Iowa
University of Kansas
University of Maryland, Baltimore
University of Minnesota-Twin Cities
University of Missouri
University of Montana
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
University of North Carolina at Greensboro
University of North Carolina at Wilmington
University of Oklahoma
University of Pennsylvania
University of Southern California
University of Southern Mississippi
University of Washington
University of Wyoming
Walden University