

[REPORT]

National Association of Social Workers  
**MEMBERSHIP WORKFORCE STUDY**

# **OVERVIEW OF SURVEY PARTICIPANTS**

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SOCIAL WORKERS

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SUGGESTED CITATION:

Arrington, P. and Whitaker, T. (2008). *Overview of Survey Participants*. NASW Membership Workforce Study. Washington, DC: National Association of Social Workers.

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# INTRODUCTION

The 2004 benchmark national study of licensed social workers provided a wealth of information about social workers' roles and work environments. The study also raised new questions about the social work workforce that required further exploration. Although the 2004 findings pointed to a looming shortage of licensed social workers, there was still much to learn about why this was the case. In what ways did career decision points, educational debt, workplace stressors, and other factors influence the recruitment and retention of this professional workforce? The NASW Membership Workforce Study was an effort to respond to such remaining questions and to gain more insight into the social work workforce.

## METHODOLOGY

The NASW Membership Workforce Survey was administered online from August 30, 2007, to November 30, 2007. NASW members were invited to participate through electronic *Memberlink* newsletters, Specialty Practice Section alerts, mailed copies of the *NASW NEWS*, and the NASW Web site. Survey responses were anonymous. The survey received a total of 3,653 responses.

Survey respondents volunteered to participate in the survey and were not randomly selected from the total NASW membership. Due to the sample being based on those who self-selected to participate, estimates of sampling error cannot be calculated. The findings are based solely on the responses and are not generalizable to the entire population of NASW members.

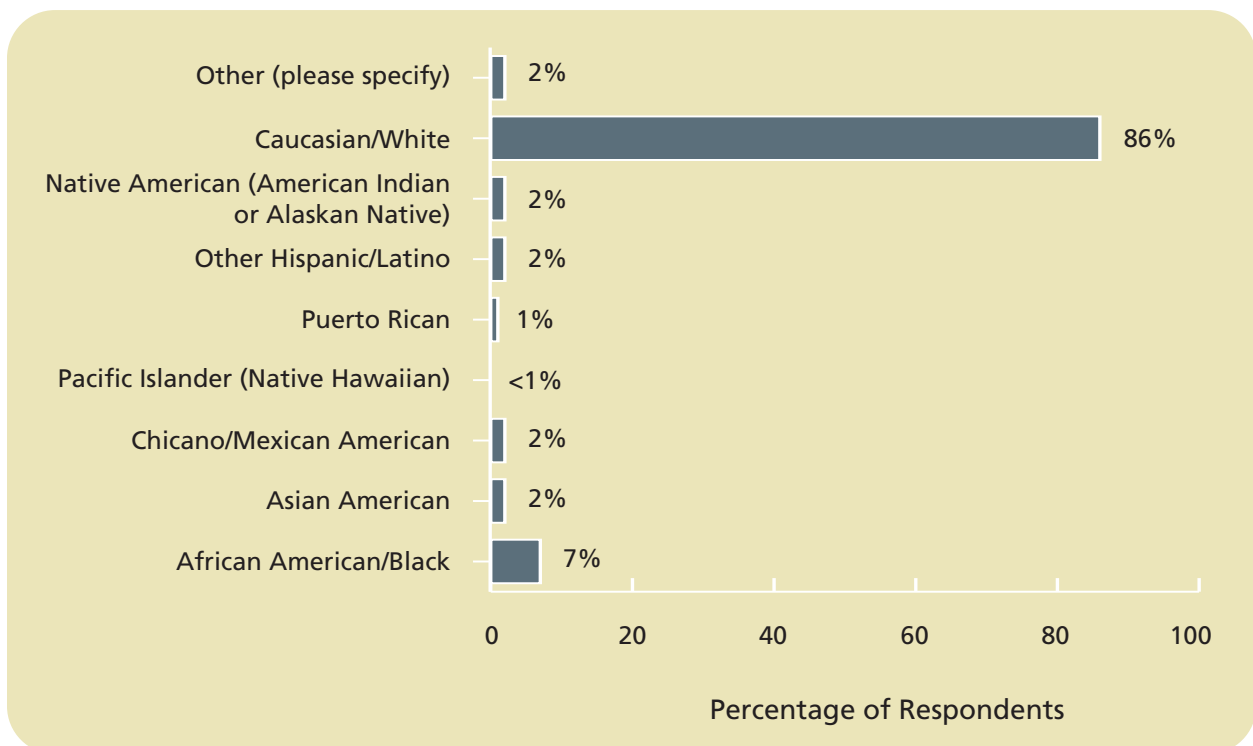
## RESIDENCE

Of the 3,653 NASW members who participated in the Membership Workforce Study, most states and/or territories were represented. The largest percentage of respondents said they resided in New York (10%), followed by California, New Jersey, Illinois, Texas, and Massachusetts, each of which had slightly more than 5 percent of the total participants. Members from Puerto Rico, Guam, and Bermuda also responded.

## DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

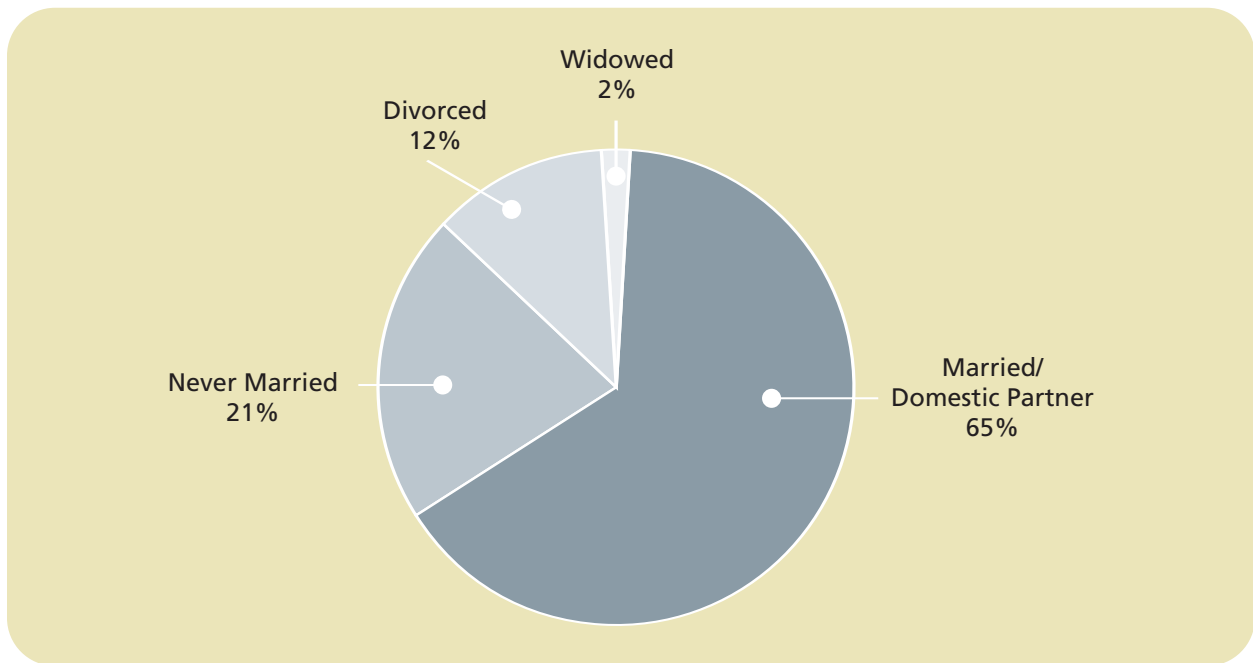
The participants identified their demographic characteristics. The average age of respondents is 45 years old. Eighty-three percent of the respondents are female; 17 percent are male. When asked to identify ethnic/racial origin, the majority of the participants indicated that they are Caucasian/White (86%), followed by those who identify as African American/Black (7%), Asian American (2%), Chicano/Mexican American (2%), Native American (2%), and Other Hispanic/Latino (2%) (Figure 1). Most respondents indicated that they are married or have a domestic partner (65%); 21 percent stated that they have never been married; 12 percent are divorced; and two percent are widowed (Figure 2).

FIGURE 1. ETHNIC/RACIAL ORIGIN



*\*Some participants identified more than one ethnic/racial category, therefore, the total exceeds 100%.*

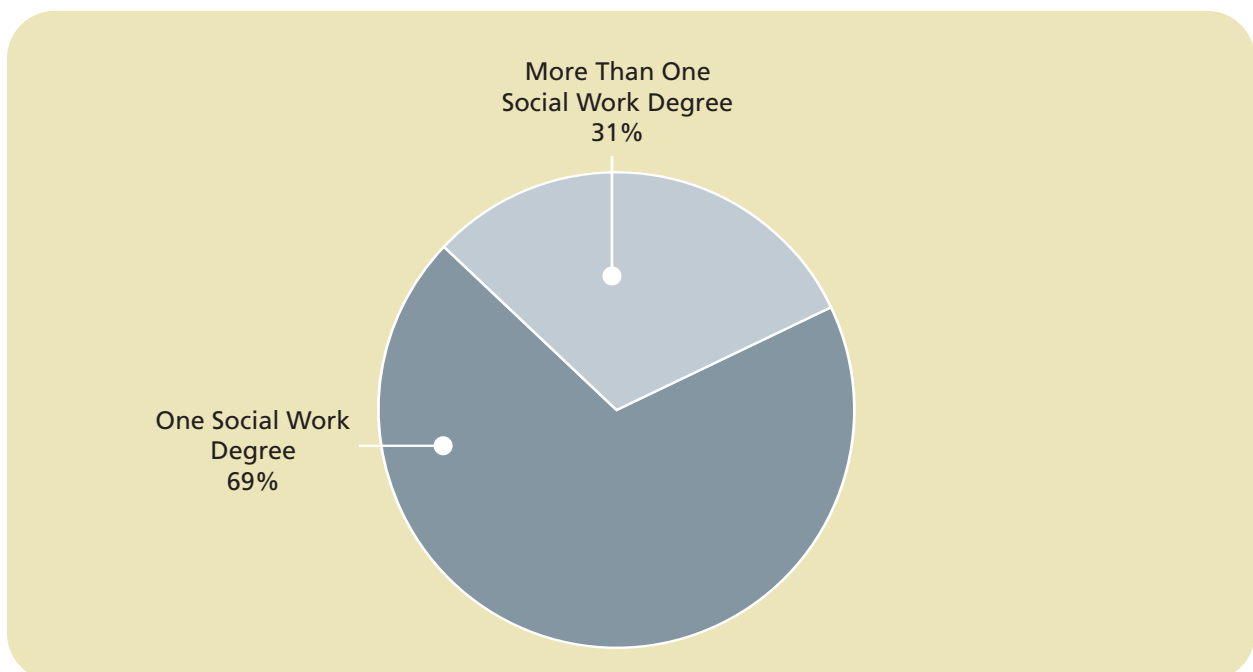
FIGURE 2. MARITAL STATUS



### SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION AND EXPERIENCE

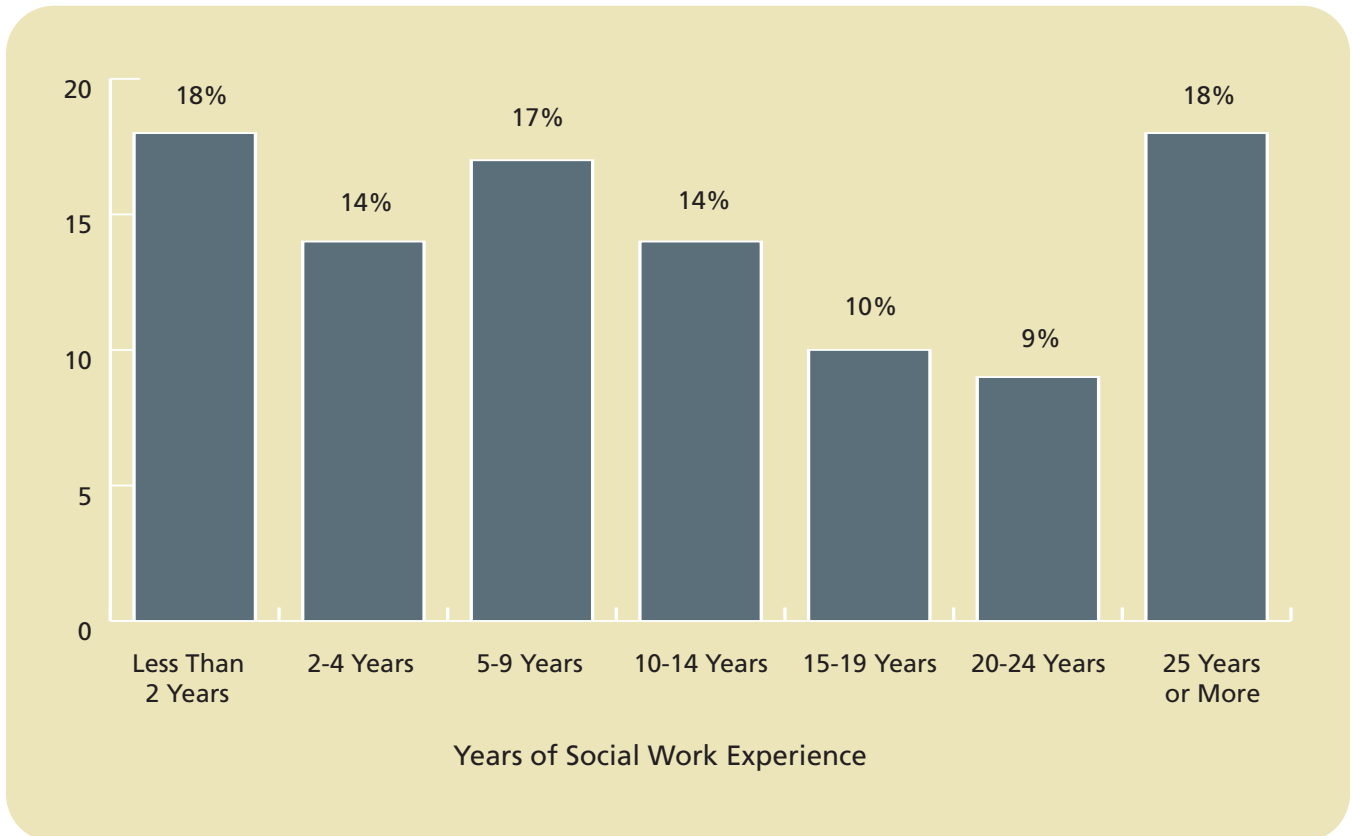
The vast majority of respondents indicated that they already have a degree in social work (94%), the exception being study participants who are social work student members. Of social work degree-holders, 69 percent hold one degree, and 31 percent hold more than one social work degree (Figure 3).

FIGURE 3. NUMBER OF SOCIAL WORK DEGREES HELD BY PARTICIPANTS



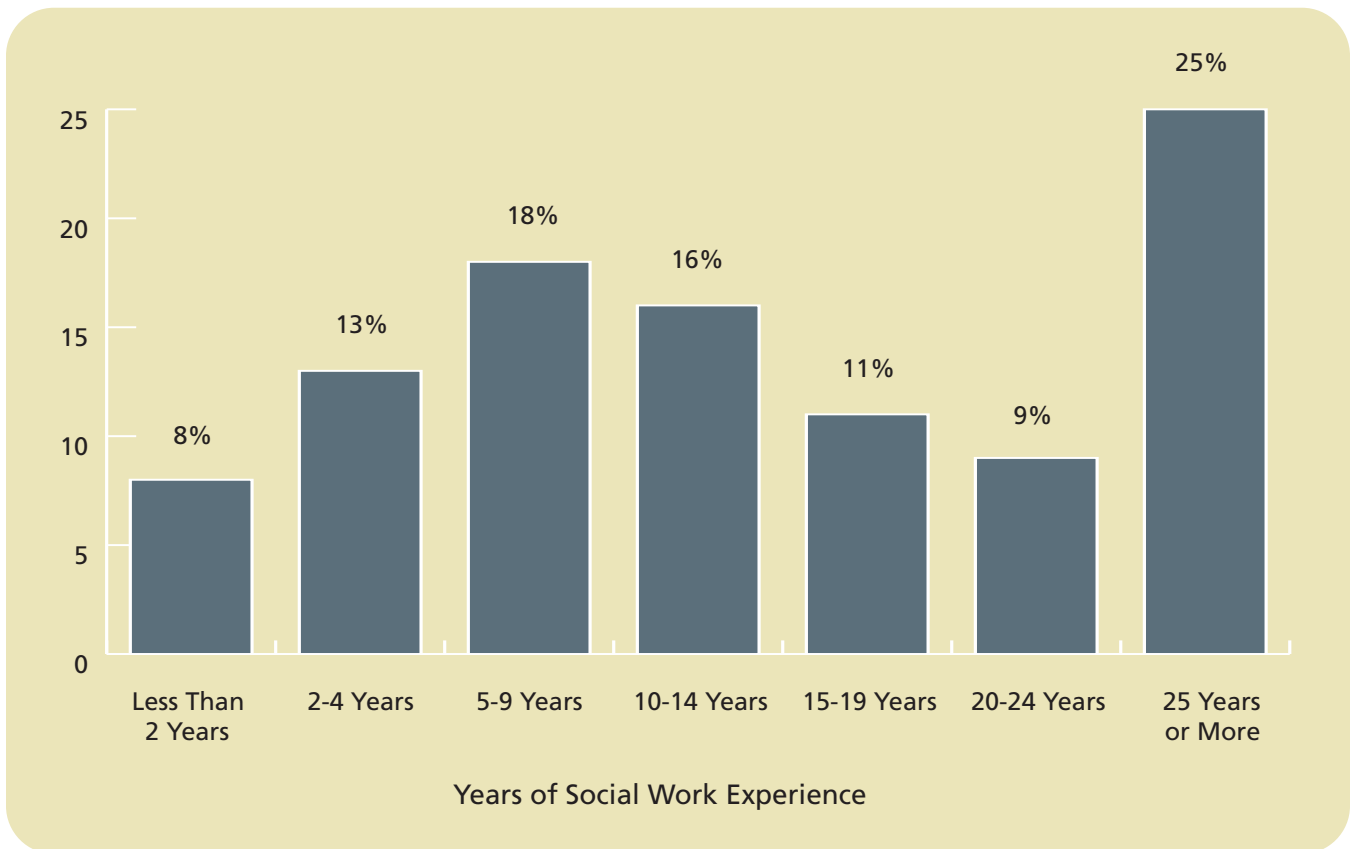
Of the respondents who hold only one social work degree, 89 percent hold an MSW, a little more than 10 percent hold a BSW, and fewer than one percent hold doctorates. Notably, of the 43 percent who earned degrees since 2000, nine percent earned degrees in 2007. Eighteen percent noted having fewer than two years of experience since earning their degrees and another 18 percent indicated having 25 years or more experience since that time (Figure 4).

FIGURE 4. YEARS OF EXPERIENCE SINCE EARNING SOCIAL WORK DEGREE



Of respondents who hold more than one social work degree, 83 percent earned a BSW as their first social work degree, and 17 percent earned an MSW as their first degree. Of these participants, 89 percent earned MSWs and 11 percent earned doctorates in social work as their most recent degrees. Interesting, more than one-quarter of respondents (27%) earned their first social work degrees in 2000 or later. When asked about the number of years of experience in social work since earning their first degree, one-quarter of those with more than one social work degree (25%) reported having 25 years or more of practice experience (Figure 5).

FIGURE 5. YEARS OF EXPERIENCE SINCE EARNING FIRST SOCIAL WORK DEGREE

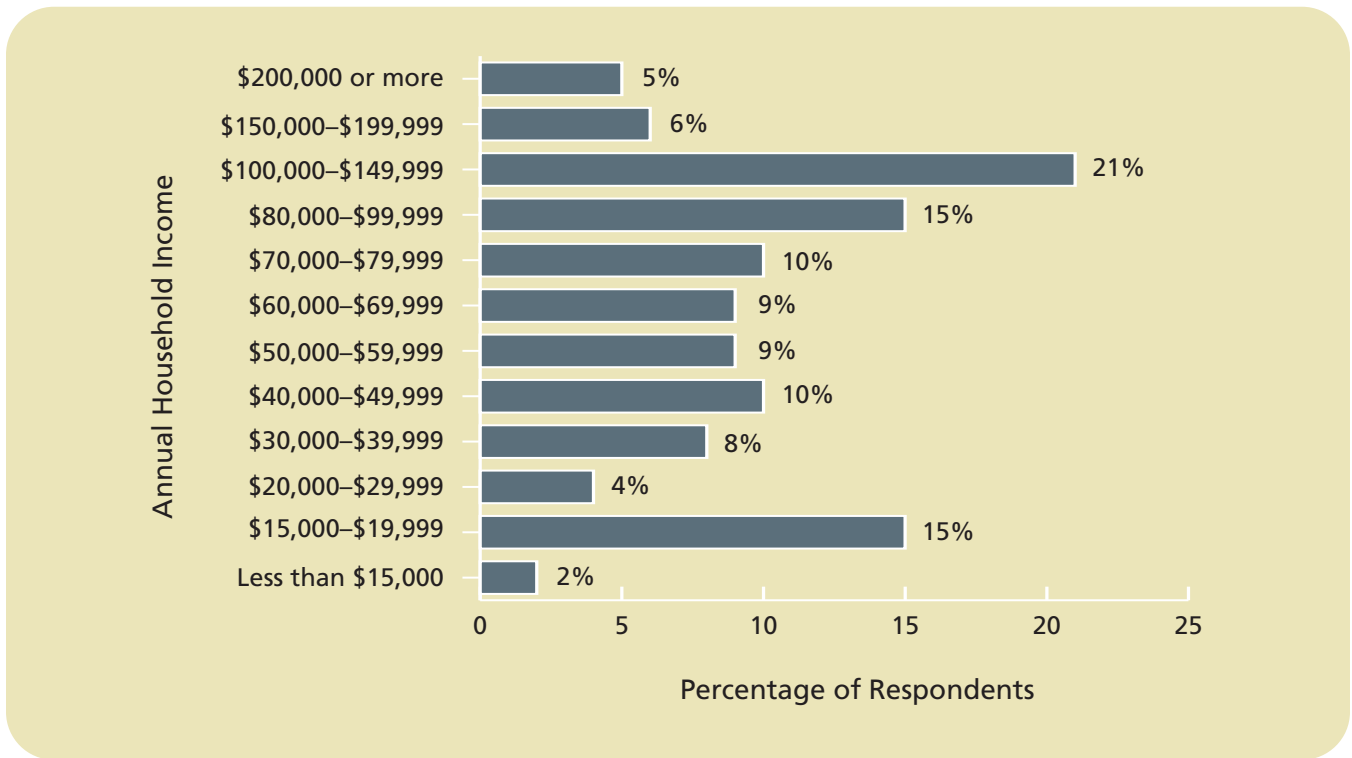




## HOUSEHOLD INCOME

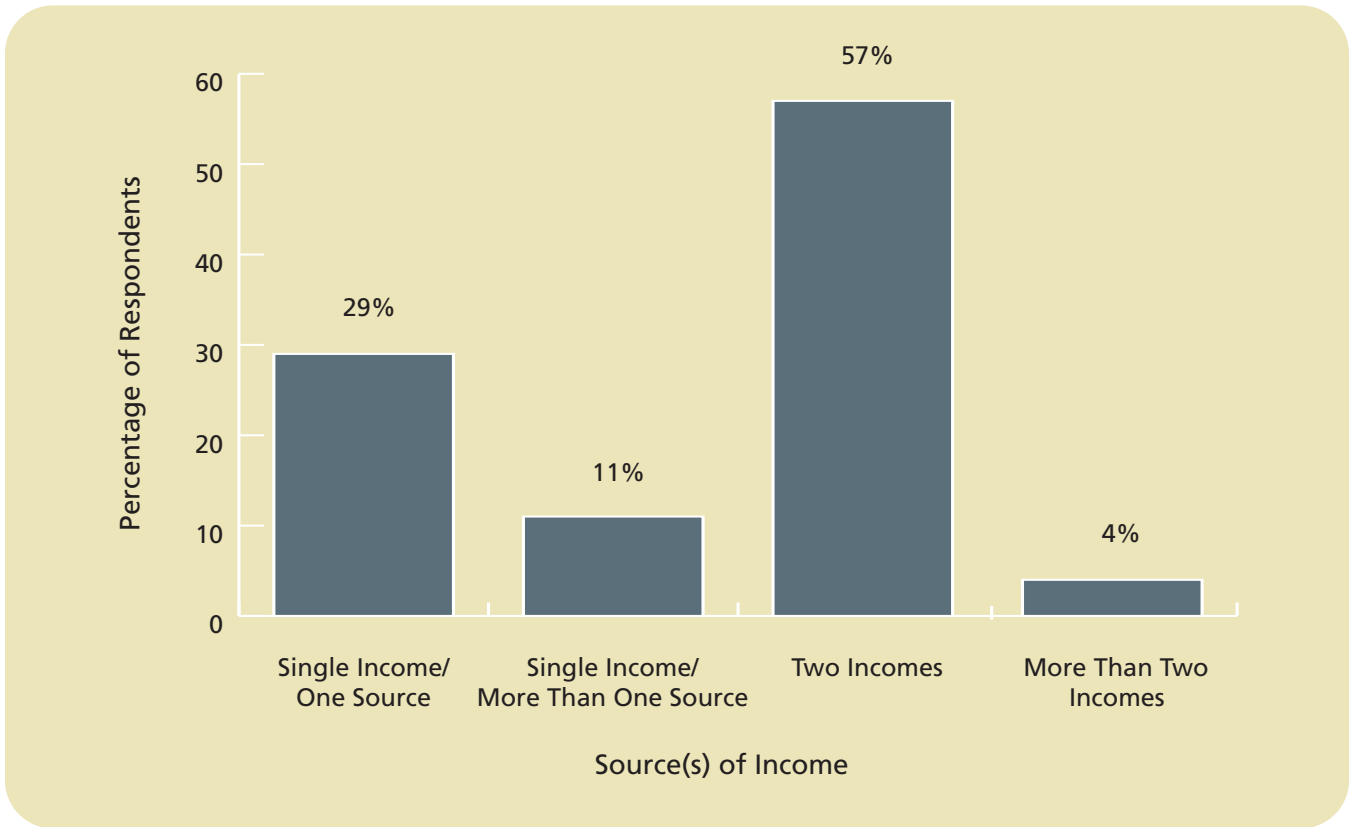
Twenty-one percent of respondents estimated their gross annual household income as \$100,000 to \$149,999; 15 percent calculated an income of \$80,000 to \$99,999; and 10 percent estimated their income at approximately \$40,000 to \$49,999 (Figure 6).

FIGURE 6. ESTIMATED GROSS HOUSEHOLD INCOME



More than half of the participants (57%) reported that their gross household income is derived from two incomes; 29 percent reported a single income from one source; and four percent reported more than two incomes (Figure 7).

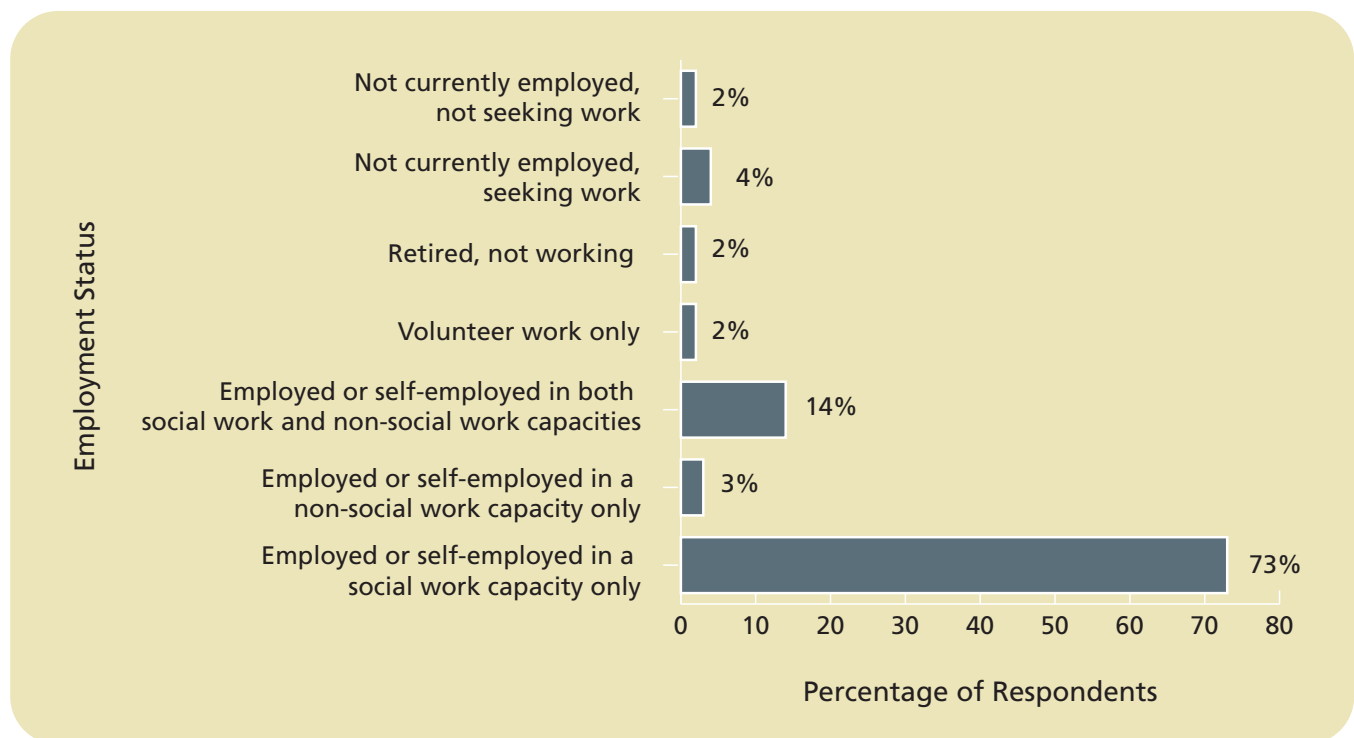
FIGURE 7. SOURCE(S) OF GROSS ANNUAL HOUSEHOLD INCOME



## PARTICIPATION IN THE SOCIAL WORK WORKFORCE

The social work *labor force* includes people who are employed and unemployed within the profession, whereas the *workforce* includes people who are actively employed. Ninety-one percent of respondents are involved in the social work labor force; 87 percent are active in the social work workforce. Employment or self-employment in a social work capacity accounted for the largest percentage of respondents (73%). Fourteen percent of participants indicated that they are employed or self-employed in both social work and non-social work capacities. Four percent are not employed currently but are seeking work. Nine percent are volunteers, retired, not seeking employment or employed only in a non-social work capacity (Figure 8).

FIGURE 8. CURRENT EMPLOYMENT STATUS



## SUMMARY

The findings of the Membership Workforce Study contribute to the larger pool of resources that describes the issues facing the social work workforce. This report provides the foundation for analysis of the Membership Workforce Study. Subsequent reports will examine factors that guide people into and away from the social work profession as well as explore social workers' perspectives on a range of workforce topics.



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