

PROFILE OF THE  
SOCIALWORK  
WORKFORCE





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*A Report to*

Council on Social Work Education  
and  
National Workforce Initiative Steering Committee

*From*

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# Executive Summary

This report uses available sources of data to present a profile of the current social work workforce defined according to the jobs social workers hold. This includes the size of the workforce, its demographic and educational background, its work setting, its compensation, and its geographical distribution. The profile uses data from three sources: the American Community Survey (ACS), conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau; the Federal Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS); and the Integrated Post-Secondary Data System (IPEDS), managed by the U.S. Department of Education.

## Key Findings

- The analysis of the ACS reveals there is a large number of individuals in positions they consider to be social work but who do not have a degree in social work. It is also likely a large number of individuals with bachelor's or master's degrees in social work have jobs that are not considered or counted as social work by existing data collection instruments.
- If all individuals who self-define as social workers regardless of educational attainment are included, there were about 850,000 such social workers in 2015, according to the ACS. If limited to those individuals with at least a bachelor's degree, an estimated 650,000 individuals were employed as social workers in 2015. The number of licensed social workers is far less, probably in the range of 350,000.

- Social workers are predominantly female (83% overall, 85% of MSW degrees and above); women are likely to continue to dominate the profession, as 86% of the MSW graduates in 2015 were female.
- The number of active social workers has been growing steadily. Between 2004/2005 and 2014/2015, the number of practicing social workers grew by 15.5%, according to the BLS and by 22.8% according to the ACS. Among types of social workers, according to the BLS, the most common were child, family, and school social workers (305,000 in 2014), followed by health care social workers (160,000); however, health care social workers were the fastest growing group over the decade, with an increase of 45%.
- The BLS projects that social work jobs will grow by 11.5% between 2014 and 2024.
- There has been substantial growth in the social work educational pipeline. Between 2005 and 2015, the number of MSWs awarded grew from 16,956 to 26,329, an increase of 55.3%. Over the same period, the number of BSWs awarded grew from 13,939 to 21,164, an increase of 51.8% (IPEDS).

This growth in the pipeline will lead to growth of the social work workforce in coming years.

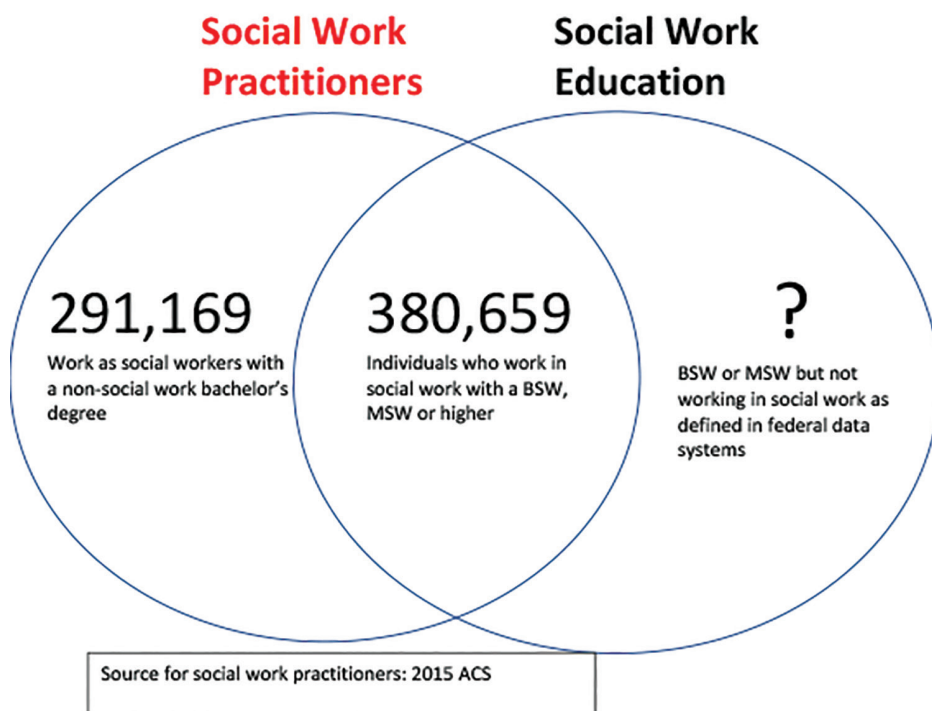
- Neither the number of BSW graduates who go on to obtain an MSW nor the number of new BSW and MSW graduates who obtain employment as social workers is known; therefore, it is not possible to determine the size of the total pipeline of social workers with a formal social work education.
- The ACS describes the following three main educational pathways to working as a social worker: a master's degree or higher (45% of social workers), a BSW (12%), and a bachelor's degree in a subject area other than social work (43%). (According to the ACS, there were also 212,000 self-defined social workers without at least a bachelor's degree. This profile only describes social workers who have at least a bachelor's degree.)
- The most common type of employer is a private, nonprofit, or charitable organization (34.3% of all social workers); however, 41% of social workers work for government when combining federal, state and local governments. Private, for-profit companies and businesses employ 22.3% of social workers, leaving just 2.5% self-employed or working in a family business.

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- In terms of the settings, the greatest concentration of social workers is found in individual and family services (36.6%), followed by 11.4% in administration of human resource programs, 10.6% in hospitals, and 8.3% in outpatient care centers.

- Although there are similarities in the distribution of work settings in each educational pathway, there are some notable differences; for example, a higher percentage of bachelor's graduates work in individual and family services than those with a master's degree and above (41% vs. 31%). This category includes child and youth services, services for older adults

**Figure 1. Social Workers by Degree**



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and persons with disabilities, and other individual and family services. Bachelor's-level graduates are also more likely than master's and above to be in administration of human resource programs (14% for bachelor's and 8% for MSWs and above).

- On the other hand, social workers with master's degrees and above are far more likely than those with bachelor's degrees to be employed in hospitals (17% vs. 4% of non-social work bachelor's and 6% of BSWs) and to be employed in elementary and secondary schools (9% of MSWs and above compared to 1.5% for non-social work bachelor's and 3% for BSWs).
- There is considerable variation in compensation by type of education and setting based on the ACS. For individuals with a master's degree or higher, the highest median incomes are in national security and international affairs (\$69,000), elementary and secondary education (\$60,000), executive offices and legislative bodies (\$57,500), insurance carriers (\$57,000), hospitals (\$56,000), and other health care settings (\$56,000). The average salary in individual and family services, the largest single setting where MSWs work (31%), was \$45,000.
- For individuals with a BSW, the highest paying settings were executive offices and legislative bodies (\$55,000), insurance carriers (\$53,000), hospitals (\$50,000), elementary and secondary schools (\$46,000), and justice, public order, and safety (\$42,300). The average salary in individual and family services, the largest single setting for bachelor's majoring in social work (41%), was \$39,000.
- For individuals with bachelor's degrees that are not social work degrees, the highest paying settings were insurance carriers (\$59,000), other health care settings (\$51,000), national security and international affairs (\$50,000), hospitals (\$47,000), and real estate (\$42,400). The average salary in individual and family services, the largest single setting of individuals with bachelor's not in social work (41%), was \$37,000.
- BLS data for 2016 show a median compensation for social workers of \$46,890, far higher than reported by individuals in the ACS in 2015 (\$40,000). According to the BLS, the median pay for social workers is far less than that for teachers and nurses.
- There is great disparity across the country in the ratio of social workers to populations, ranging from 80 per 100,000

people in Arkansas to 572 per 100,000 in the District of Columbia. Northeast states tend to have high numbers of social workers per capita, and the southern states have fewer social workers per capita.

- The mix by education type varies greatly across states. In some states more than 60% of the social work workforce holds master's degrees or higher (Rhode Island, 70.9%; New Mexico, 63.8%; Washington, DC, 60.5%; Delaware, 60.4%). In contrast, in some states a very small share of the social work workforce holds master's degrees or above (North Dakota, 4.1%; South Dakota, 9.1%; Montana 13.9%; Iowa, 14.9%). In 13 states, more than 50% of the social work workforce holds only non-social work bachelor's degrees.

### The Need for Better Data

Although this profile provides a picture of the social work workforce, major gaps and limitations remain. One of the most significant is the lack of data on individuals with a social work education who are not employed in a position defined as social work by either the ACS or the BLS. In some cases, this may reflect promotion and broader responsibility in organizations providing social work services, for example, program managers; in other cases, it may reflect other social work-related responsibilities, such as social work educators who may be reported as teachers, or social workers working as community organizers in advocacy organizations. Unfortunately, the current federal data collection systems do not capture the data needed to analyze this part of the workforce. The new 2017 Survey of Social Work Graduates is designed to shed light on the different career pathways of recent graduates including positions that might not be classified as social work by existing data systems.

Unlike many health professions, there is no unduplicated master listing of social workers, not even of those who are licensed by the states. The absence of a clear definition of a social worker, and variations across states in requirements for licensure, further complicates analysis and understanding of the social work workforce. The lack of a national system for collecting data on social workers also makes it very difficult and costly to track career pathways and variations in supply and demand for social workers. This information would be of great value to social work leaders and educators to inform their planning for the future. ■

# Preface

Social workers play a major role in providing health and social services to populations in need. As members of 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 education community about the potential for expansion in capacity and whether the current curriculum is appropriate for current and future roles.

In recognition of the need and importance of better data on the social work workforce, the major 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.

An early component of the study has been a review of existing data sources to describe the social work workforce. The report on this review presented here will be supplemented later in 2017 with a report on the results of a survey of a sample of 2017 graduates of social work degree programs.

Organizational Members of the National Workforce Initiative are the following:

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



# Introduction

This report provides a preliminary profile of the social work workforce in the United States based on existing sources of data. Relying primarily on three federal sources of data, this report presents basic data on demographics, education, work settings, income, and geographical distribution of the social work workforce.

One major challenge in describing this workforce is the lack of a generally accepted definition of exactly who should be considered part of the social work workforce. In some professions, entry is limited to those who complete a specific education or pass an exam or obtain licensure by a state. This is not the case for social work. Although several hundred thousand social workers have passed an examination and are licensed, hundreds of thousands of others who define themselves as social workers or are defined by their employers as social workers have not completed a formal social work education, have not passed a social worker examination, and are not licensed as a social worker. At the same time, there may be several hundred thousand individuals who have completed

a formal education in social work at the bachelor's or master's level who do not call themselves social workers and who are not reported in existing data systems as social workers. These individuals may be working as administrators, supervisors, educators, or policy analysts in health and social service organizations. This lack of consensus on who is to be considered a social worker along with the limitations of available data make it a challenge to describe and track the social work workforce.

The approach of this profile is to present the best available data and to cast as wide a net as possible in terms of who is included in the profile based on the current workforce regardless of one's education and training.

A major second phase of describing the social work workforce will come from the Survey of 2017 Social Work Graduates. This survey is designed to provide some basic data on individuals completing a social work education regardless of where they work and what they do. A separate report on the new graduates will be completed in late fall 2017. ■

# Estimated Number of Active Social Workers in the United States

There are an estimated 650,000 to 672,000 active social workers in the United States; significantly fewer are licensed. No single, unduplicated master file of all social workers in the United States exists. However, three sources of data can give us a picture of the social work workforce: the BLS, the ACS, and state licensure data. Each source uses a different definition for a social worker, and each collects data in a different way. The BLS data are gathered via employer surveys and reflect job titles used by employers. The ACS data are collected through household surveys and reflect how individuals describe their job and the jobs of family members. State licensure data are collected by state licensure boards that each have different requirements for who can and who must be licensed. Although clinical social workers generally have to be licensed, other social workers generally do not.

As shown in Table 1, estimates for the number of social workers in the United States in 2015 range from 650,000 to 672,000. The Association of Social Work Boards reports there were about 440,000 state social work licenses in 2016, calculated by adding all individual state counts of active licenses. However, some social workers have licenses in more than one state, and at this point it is unknown how many. If one quarter of the social workers have licenses in two states, then there would be only 352,000 licensed social workers.

## The Supply of Social Workers Is Growing

The total number of social workers has grown over the past decade and is likely to continue to grow in the coming years. The ACS reported a 22.8% increase in social workers between 2005 and 2015; although the BLS reported a 15.5% increase between 2004 and 2014 (see Table 2). This is a strong rate of growth, particularly considering the 2008 recession.

According to the BLS, most of the growth came in the earlier part of the period between 2004 and 2014 (Figure 2). Furthermore, as shown in Table 3, almost all the growth was due to the increase in what the BLS and the ACS define as health care social workers.

Even with this strong growth in health care social workers, nearly twice as many social workers were categorized as child, family, and school social workers compared to health care social workers in 2014.

## Future Supply and Demand for Social Workers

In addition to reporting current employment, every 2 years the BLS estimates the number of jobs by occupation 10 years in the future, calculating retirements and the number of new jobs in each occupation. The BLS projects that all social work jobs will grow 11.5% between 2014 and 2024 with health care social workers continuing to lead the way (Table 3).

**Table 1. Estimated Number of Social Workers in the United States, 2015**

Bureau of Labor Statistics	649,300 (2014) <sup>a</sup>
American Communities Survey	671,800 (2015) <sup>b</sup>
State licensed (estimated)	352,000 individuals (2016)

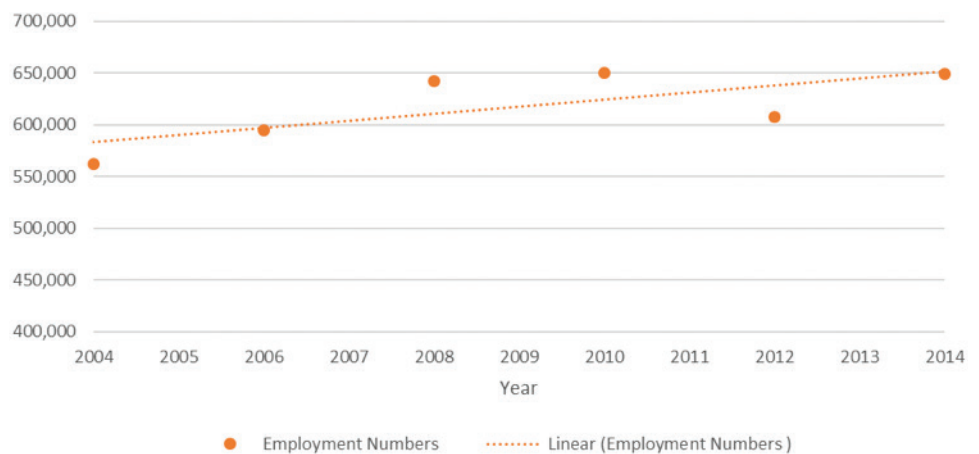
<sup>a</sup> This includes only individuals who reported having at least a bachelor's degree (regardless of major area of study). If individuals with less than a bachelor's degree are included, there were about 850,000 social workers in 2015.

<sup>b</sup> This is only an illustrative figure, reflecting what the unduplicated count would be if one quarter of the licensed social workers have licenses in two states. The actual number of social workers with a license in more than one state is not known.

**Table 2. Growth in the Number of Social Workers**

	2004-05	2014-15	%
Bureau of Labor Statistics	562,400	649,300	15.5
American Communities Survey	546,968	671,828	22.8

**Figure 2. Number of Employed Social Workers, 2004–2014**



Note. From "Employment Projections," Bureau of Labor Statistics, n.d., <https://www.bls.gov/emp/#tables>. The Bureau of Labor Statistics publishes 10-year projections of job growth on a biennial basis.

**Table 3. Change in Number of Social Workers by Type, Bureau of Labor Statistics 2004–2014 (in Thousands)**

	2004	2008	2014	Actual % Change 2004-14	Projected Growth 2014-24 (%)
Child, family, and school social workers	272	292.6	305.2	12.2	6.2
Health care social workers	110.4	138.7	160.1	45.0	19.3
Mental health and substance abuse social workers	116.1	137.3	117.8	1.5	18.9
Social workers, all others	63.9	73.4	66.4	3.9	3.8
All social workers	562.4	642	649.5	15.5	11.5

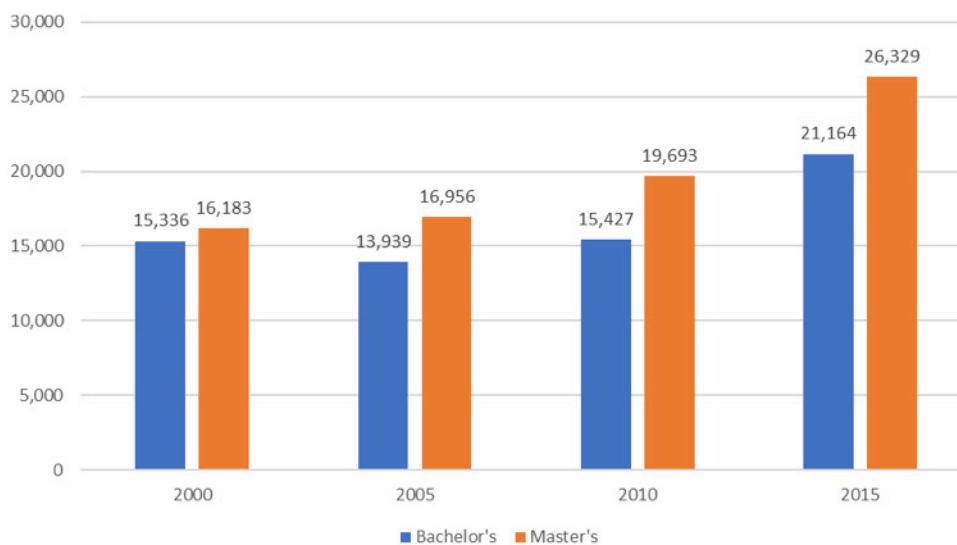
Note. From “Employment Projections,” Bureau of Labor Statistics, n.d., <https://www.bls.gov/emp/#tables>.

**Table 4. Growth in Social Work Graduates, 2005–2015**

	2005	2010	2015	Change in Numbers 2010-15	% Change 2010-15	Change in Numbers 2005-15	% Change 2005-15
Bachelor’s	13,939	15,427	21,164	5,737	37.20	7,225	51.80
Master’s	16,956	19,693	26,329	6,636	33.70	9,373	55.30

Source. IPEDS.

**Figure 3. Number of Social Work Degrees Awarded, 2000–2015**



Source. IPEDS.

Although the BLS projections reflect expected demand for social workers, there are indications that the supply will also be growing. The federal IPEDS tracks all higher education enrollment and graduations. As indicated in Table 4 and Figure 3, the number of individuals with degrees in social work has grown over the past decade, with master’s graduates rising 55.3% and bachelor’s rising 51.8%. Most of the growth has occurred in the past five years: 33.7% for MSWs and 37.2% for BSWs. With this level of growth in the pipeline, the supply of social workers will be rising in the coming years. ■

# Description of the 2015 Social Work Workforce

A large, bold, black letter 'B' is centered within a light green square background.

## **Background on the ACS Data**

The ACS is an annual survey of about 1% of the U.S. population. It includes questions on sociodemographics, educational background, employment, and geographical location, among others. Although the ACS provides a good picture of the field of social work, there are several important limitations. Most important for this analysis are the questions concerning occupation and education.

In regard to occupation, the ACS contains several questions including the following:

- “What kind of work was this person doing?” (For example: registered nurse, personnel manager, supervisor of order department, secretary, accountant)
- “What were this person’s most important activities or duties?” (For example: patient care, directing hiring policies, supervising order clerks, typing and filing, reconciling financial records)

The U.S. Census Bureau determines which occupation best fits the answers provided.

For this report, we rely on the self-definition as recorded by the U.S. Census Bureau. However, individuals recorded as social workers but who did not have at least a bachelor’s degree were excluded from the analysis.

Regarding education, respondents are asked the following questions:

- “What is the highest degree or level of school this person has COMPLETED?” This is followed by such choices as high school, bachelor’s degree, master’s degree, and so on.
- “This question focuses on this person’s BACHELOR’S DEGREE. Please print below the specific major(s) of any BACHELOR’S DEGREES this person has received.” (For example: chemical engineering, elementary teacher education, organizational psychology.)

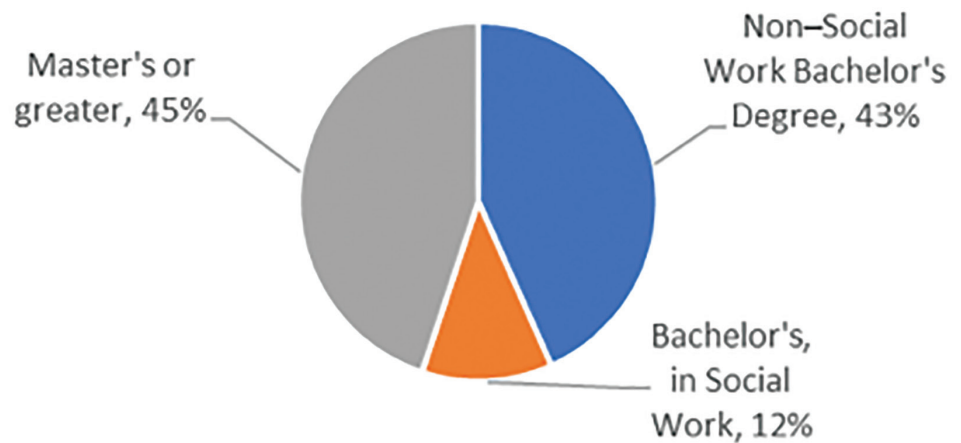
It is important to note that the ACS defines social workers based on their response to the occupational questions and not by degree attained. Although it asks for first and second subject majors of bachelor’s degrees, it does not ask for majors for master’s, professional, or doctoral degrees. We separate those whose highest degree is a bachelor’s into those with a bachelor’s in social work (first or second major) and those with a bachelor’s in other subjects. However, we cannot similarly separate those with a master’s degree or higher (because they are only asked for a major at the bachelor’s level). It is possible (indeed likely) that many individuals who did not have a bachelor’s in social work went on to earn an MSW. It is also possible that some individuals

**Table 5. Educational Attainment, 2015**

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT	%
<b>Bachelor’s degree</b>	<b>55.1</b>
Bachelor’s in social work	11.8
Non-social work bachelor’s	43.3
<b>Master’s degree and higher</b>	<b>44.9</b>
Master’s degree	42.6
Professional degree beyond a bachelor’s	1.3
Doctoral degree	1.0

Note. N=671,828.  
Source. ACS, 2015.

**Figure 4. Active Social Workers by Degree Type Grouping**



Source. ACS.

**Table 6. Major Field of Study for Bachelor's Degrees:  
First Field of Study (Top 20 Degrees)**

FIRST FIELD OF DEGREE	%
Social work	25.3
Psychology	17.9
Sociology	7.6
Criminal justice and fire protection	4.7
Family and consumer sciences	2.9
Business management and administration	2.4
Nursing	2.3
English language and literature	2.2
General education	1.9
General business	1.7
Human services and community organization	1.5
Political science and government	1.5
Elementary education	1.4
Liberal arts	1.2
History	1.1
General social sciences	1.1
Communications	1.0
Biology	0.9
Miscellaneous health medical professions	0.9
Multidisciplinary or general science	0.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>80.4</b>

Note. N=671,828.  
Source. ACS.

with master's degrees or higher may have advanced degrees in other fields.

In 2015 there were 6,630 respondents who were recorded as social workers.<sup>1</sup> Based on the weighting recommended by the U.S. Census Bureau, there were 671,828 active social workers in the United States in 2015. The distribution by type of education is presented in Table 5.

For most of the analyses that follow, the data are presented for three groups based on highest degree attained: master's degree and higher combined, bachelor's in social work, and all other bachelor's degrees (Figure 4).

As noted earlier, the ACS only asks for the major for an individual's bachelor's degree. Table 6 presents the most frequently first cited major field of study for all respondents who were defined as social workers. Table 7 shows the second field of study for about 10% of social workers who listed a second field of study.

### Demographics

The vast majority of social workers are female. BSWs have the highest percentage of females (88.3%, see Table 8), whereas the group with the highest ratio of men (20.4%) is that with non-social work bachelor's degrees.

As shown in Table 9, the field appears to have become more

<sup>1</sup> For this analysis, individuals reported as social workers but who did not have a bachelor's or higher degree were excluded. Also excluded were those who had not worked in the previous 12 months.

female over time: The older age groups have a higher percentage of males than younger age groups. This is consistent with data from IPEDS on new MSW graduates in 2015; that is, only 13.8% of new social workers were male.

The largest 5-year cohorts of social workers are under the age of 35 (Figure 5). This may be the result of the increasing number of graduates entering the field each year (Table 4), although it will also reflect attrition of social workers as they get older.

Above age 40, the single largest group by educational type is social workers with master's degrees, and their numbers have been relatively stable over time (Figure 6). This may reflect greater longevity or retention in the field at the master's level as well as the higher level of master's graduates each year. There are more bachelor's graduates below the age of 30 than master's graduates. With recent increases in graduates at the master's and bachelor's levels, the number of social workers in the younger age categories is likely to increase in coming years.

### Attrition

Using the ACS data from year to year, we can calculate the number of active social workers by age by year. By comparing year-to-year changes as each cohort ages, we can calculate the rate of attrition. For example, if in one year an estimated 20,000 social workers are at age 50, and the next year

**Table 7. Field of Study for Bachelor's Degrees: Second Field of Study (Top 20 Degrees)**

SECOND FIELD OF DEGREE	%
Psychology	14.0
Sociology	9.4
Social work	6.7
Criminal justice and fire protection	5.1
French, German Latin & other foreign languages	4.4
Human services and community organization	3.8
Nursing	2.5
Family and consumer sciences	2.5
English language and literature	2.4
Business management and administration	2.2
Political science and government	2.1
Special needs education	1.9
History	1.9
Fine arts	1.6
Communications	1.6
Counseling psychology	1.5
Philosophy and religious studies	1.6
Community and public health	1.6
Area ethnic and civilization studies	1.4
General social sciences	1.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>69.2</b>

Note. N=64,221.

<sup>a</sup> Less than 10% of social workers as defined by the American Community Survey reported a second field of study (source: ACS).

**Table 8. Distribution of Active Social Workers by Education and Sex**

Sex	Non-Social Work Bachelor's Degree (%) <sup>a</sup>	Bachelor's in Social Work (%) <sup>b</sup>	Master's or Greater (%) <sup>c</sup>	Total (%) <sup>d</sup>
Male	20.4	11.7	15	17
Female	79.6	88.3	85	83

<sup>a</sup>N=291,169; <sup>b</sup>N=78,915; <sup>c</sup>N=301,744; <sup>d</sup>N=671,828.

Source: ACS.

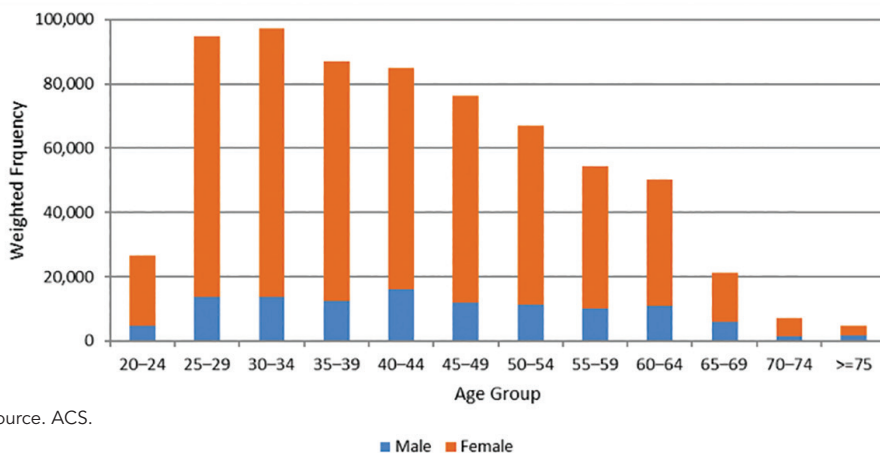


**Table 9. Males and Females by Age Group, All Social Workers**

Age Group	Number Female	Number Male	% Male
20–24	21,846	4,680	17.6
25–29	81,186	13,790	14.5
30–34	83,447	13,715	14.1
35–39	74,364	12,596	14.5
40–44	68,958	16,072	18.9
45–49	64,513	11,890	15.6
50–54	55,864	11,261	16.8
55–59	44,473	10,073	18.5
60–64	39,334	11,041	21.9
65–69	15,245	5,820	27.6
70–74	5,565	1,503	21.3
>=75	2,936	1,656	36.1

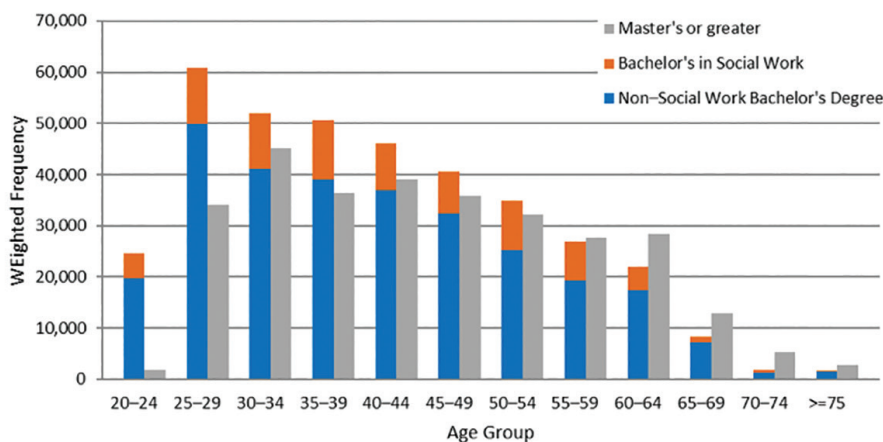
Source. ACS

**Figure 5. Age Distribution by Sex**



Source. ACS.

**Figure 6. Age by Degree Type**



Source. ACS.

an estimated 19,800 are at age 51, we could conclude that 1% of the social workers had left the field. This is analyzed over several years. A confounding factor for social work is that individuals enter at a variety of ages including some who are in their 40s; thus, the reality from year to year is there are additions and subtractions. With those caveats, as shown in Figure 7, it appears that by age 60 at least a third of social workers have left the field, and by age 65 at least 60% have left.

### Citizenship

As shown in Table 10, more than 90% of social workers are U.S. citizens, and nearly 10% were foreign born. This percent of social workers that are foreign born is highest for those with a non-social work bachelor's degree.

### Race and Ethnicity

More than 12.5% of social workers with non-social work bachelor's degrees are Hispanic or Latino; this is significantly ( $p=0.0048$ ) more than those with master's degrees or higher (Table 11).

Social workers with bachelor's degrees are more likely to be Black or African American than social workers with a master's degree or higher (Table 12).

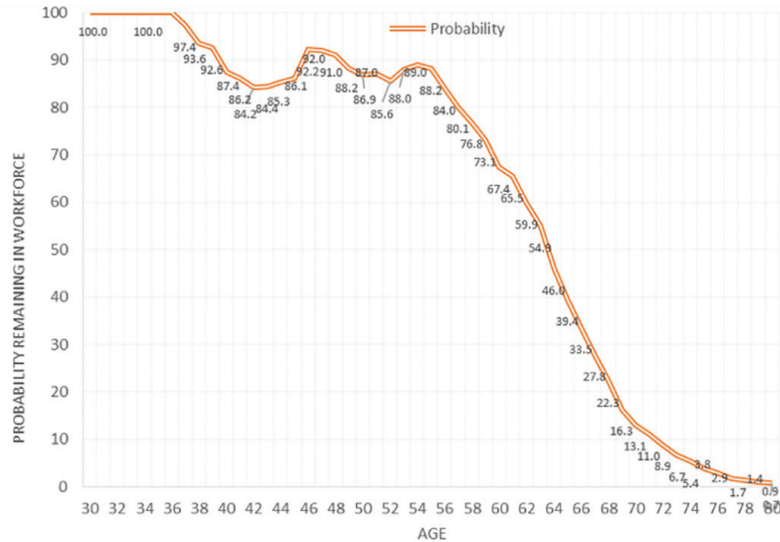
Although data on race and ethnicity of new graduates are compiled in a different manner by IPEDS on new graduates and by the ACS, the comparison can provide a picture of the diversity of the pipeline of those

graduating from a social work education program as defined by IPEDS and the practicing social worker workforce.

Comparing the diversity of the practicing social work workforce and the pipeline of new social workers is challenging because the ACS separates race and ethnicity into two variables, whereas IPEDS combines the two. Furthermore, the definitions used by the two data sources for bachelor's and master's social workers are different; the ACS includes master's and above with some being in non-social work fields, and the IPEDS data include only individuals receiving a master's in a field that resembles social work.

Given those limitations, it is noteworthy that the ACS finds that 9.5% of active social workers with a master's degree or higher were Hispanic or Latino, whereas IPEDS reported that 13.5% of new MSWs were Hispanic or Latino. Although this could reflect a higher attrition rate for Hispanics and Latinos, it is more likely to reflect an increasing number entering the profession. In fact, IPEDS data show that Hispanic or Latino graduates represented 8.8% of the MSWs in 2000 and 10.3% in 2005, indicating clear growth over the years. Similarly, although the ACS reports Hispanic or Latino BSWs at 10.7%, IPEDS reports new BSW graduates at 15.6% Hispanic or Latino in 2015. According to the 3-year ACS file for 2010–12, 15.5% of the working

**Figure 7. Estimated Attrition From Social Work Based on 2010–2015 American Community Survey Data**



Source. ACS.

**Table 10. Citizenship of Active Social Workers**

	Non-Social Work Bachelor's Degree (%) <sup>a</sup>	Bachelor's in Social Work (%) <sup>b</sup>	Master's or Greater (%) <sup>c</sup>	Total (%) <sup>d</sup>
Born in the United States	88.2	91.6	90.3	89.5
Born in U.S. territories	0.7	1.3	0.7	0.8
U.S. citizen by naturalization	8.6	6.6	6.7	7.5
Not a U.S. citizen	2.5	0.5	2.2	2.2

<sup>a</sup>N=291,169; <sup>b</sup>N=78,915; <sup>c</sup>N=301,744; <sup>d</sup>N=671,828; eIncludes individuals born to U.S. citizens living abroad.

Source. ACS.

**Table 11. Hispanic or Latino Active Social Workers by Degree Type**

	Non-Social Work Bachelor's Degree (%) <sup>a</sup>	Bachelor's in Social Work (%) <sup>b</sup>	Master's or Greater (%) <sup>c</sup>	Total (%) <sup>d</sup>
Hispanic or Latino				
Not Spanish, Hispanic, Latino	87.4	89.3	90.5	89.0
Spanish, Hispanic, Latino	12.6	10.7	9.5	11.0

<sup>a</sup>N=291,169; <sup>b</sup>N=78,915; <sup>c</sup>N=301,744; <sup>d</sup>N=671,828.

Source. ACS

**Table 12. Race by Education Type: Active Social Workers**

Race	Non-Social Work Bachelor's Degree (%) <sup>a</sup>	Bachelor's in Social Work (%) <sup>b</sup>	Master's or Greater (%) <sup>c</sup>	Total (%) <sup>d</sup>
White	65.3	67.4	72.6	68.8
Black or African American	23.2	25.7	19.1	21.6
American Indian and Alaskan Native	0.9	1.2	0.5	0.8
Asian	4.5	1.8	3.2	3.6
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	0.3	0	0.1	0.2
Some other race	3.0	1.9	2.0	2.4
Two or more races	3.0	2.1	2.5	2.7

<sup>a</sup>N=291,169; <sup>b</sup>N=78,915; <sup>c</sup>N=301,744; <sup>d</sup>N=671,828.

Source. ACS.

**Table 13. Race and Ethnicity of New Social Work Graduates, 2015**

Race and Ethnicity	Bachelor's (%) <sup>a</sup>	Master's (%) <sup>b</sup>
White	53.6	57.1
Black or African American	21.1	16.5
American Indian or Alaska Native	0.8	0.6
Asian	2.1	2.9
Hispanic or Latino	15.6	13.5
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	0.2	0.1
Two or more races	2.4	2.4
Race or ethnicity unknown	3.5	5.4
Nonresident alien	0.6	1.5

<sup>a</sup>N=21,164; <sup>b</sup>N=26,329.

Source. IPEDS.

age population was Hispanic or Latino.<sup>2</sup>

It is also important to note for active social workers (ACS) and new social workers (IPEDS), African Americans are far better represented at the bachelor's than master's level. For active social workers, 25.7% of the BSWs and 19.1% of the MSWs were African American; among 2015 graduates, 21.1% of new BSW graduates compared to 16.5% of new MSWs (excluding Hispanic or Latino graduates) were African American. All these are well above the representation of African Americans or Blacks among the working age population in 2010–2012, which was 13.6%. ■

<sup>2</sup> "Sex, Race, and Ethnic Diversity of U.S. Health Occupations (2010–2012): Technical Documentation," Health Resources and Services Administration, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2015, [https://bhwh.hrsa.gov/sites/default/files/bhwh/nchwa/diversityushealthoccupations\\_2012.pdf](https://bhwh.hrsa.gov/sites/default/files/bhwh/nchwa/diversityushealthoccupations_2012.pdf)

# Where Do Social Workers Work?

The ACS has several questions on the type of work and the setting where people work. From the answers to these questions we can get a partial picture of where social workers work as well as the similarities and differences by type of education.

As seen in Table 14, the most common type of employer is a private, nonprofit, or charitable organization (34.3% of all social workers); however, 41% of social workers work for government when combining federal, state, and local governments. Private for-profit companies and businesses employ 22.3% of social workers, leaving just 2.5% self-employed or working in a family business.

It is interesting to note that bachelor's degree social workers are far more likely to work in state government, and those with master's degrees and above are more likely to work for the federal government and to be self-employed; otherwise the distribution is similar by education type.

The ACS also collects data on the type of setting of employment based on the federal government's North American Industry Classification System for classifying business establishments. In terms of major groupings of individual industries, the single largest setting is social assistance agencies with nearly 40% of all social workers; the second largest grouping is health care settings with 29% of all social workers.

In terms of the detailed settings in Table 15, the greatest concentration of social workers is in individual and family services (36.6%), followed by 11.4% in administration of human resource programs, 10.3% working in hospitals, and 8.3% in outpatient care centers.

There are some significant differences by type of education, with far more bachelor's graduates than master's degree and above in individual and family services (41.3% and 41.1% for non-social work bachelor's and social work bachelor's vs. 30.9% for master's and above). This category includes child and youth services, services for the elderly and persons with disabilities, and other individual and family services. Bachelor's-level graduates are also more likely than master's and above to be in administration of human resource programs (14.0% for non-social work bachelor's and 14.4% for BSWs vs. 8% for MSWs and above).

On the other hand, social workers with master's degrees and above are far more likely than those with bachelor's degrees to be employed in hospitals (17.2% vs. 4.4% non-social work bachelor's and 6% for BSWs) and to be employed in elementary and secondary schools (9.4% of MSWs and above compared to 1.5% for non-social work bachelor's and 2.6% for BSWs).

The group with bachelor's degrees not in social work are far more likely than the group with a

**Table 14. Type of Employment by Degree Type, 2015**

	Non-Social Work Bachelor's Degree (%) <sup>a</sup>	Bachelor's in Social Work (%) <sup>b</sup>	Master's or Greater (%) <sup>c</sup>	Total (%) <sup>d</sup>
Private for-profit company or business, or an individual, with wages, salary, or commissions	21.4	22.9	23.1	22.3
Private nonprofit, tax-exempt, or charitable organization	34.1	32.5	34.9	34.3
Local government employee (city, county, etc.)	17.9	20.3	18.6	18.5
State government employee	22.7	22.7	14.5	19.0
Federal government employee	3.0	1.4	4.5	3.5
Self-employed	1.0	0.3	4.2	2.4
Working without pay in family business	0	0	0.2	0.1

<sup>a</sup>N=291,169; <sup>b</sup>N=78,915; <sup>c</sup>N=301,744; <sup>d</sup>N=671,828.  
Source. ACS.

bachelor's in social work to be in residential care facilities, except skilled nursing facilities (5.2% to 3.2%), whereas the reverse is true in skilled nursing facilities with 8.4% BSWs compared to only 1.7% for those with other bachelor's degrees. ■

**Table 15. Employment Setting by Degree Type, Top 17 Responses**

North American Industry Classification System	Industry Code	Non-Social Work Bachelor's Degree (%) <sup>a</sup>	Bachelor's in Social Work (%) <sup>b</sup>	Master's or Greater (%) <sup>c</sup>	Total (%) <sup>d</sup>
Social Assistance	Individual and family services	41.3	41.1	30.9	36.6
	Community food and housing and emergency services	1.9	2.6	1.3	1.7
	Vocational rehabilitation services	1.1	0.3	0.6	0.8
	Child day care services	1.0	0.7	0.5	0.7
	Total	45.3	44.8	33.2	39.8
Administration	Administration of human resource programs	14.0	14.4	8.0	11.4
	Justice, public order, and safety activities	4.0	2.5	2.2	3.0
	Executive offices and legislative bodies	2.3	1.6	1.1	1.7
	Total	21.1	18.5	11.9	16.6
Medical	Hospitals	4.4	6.0	17.2	10.3
	Outpatient care centers	7.8	6.0	9.5	8.3
	Residential care facilities, except skilled nursing facilities	5.2	3.2	2.3	3.7
	Nursing care facilities (skilled nursing facilities)	1.7	8.4	3.4	3.3
	Home health care services	1.8	0.7	1.9	1.7
	Other health care services	1.0	1.2	0.9	1.0
	Offices of physicians	0.1	0.6	0.8	0.7
	Total	22.1	26.1	36.0	29.0
Education	Elementary and secondary schools,	1.5	2.6	9.4	5.2
	Colleges, universities, and professional schools, including junior colleges	0.6	0.5	1.1	0.8
	Total	2.1	3.1	10.5	6.0
Service	Civic, social, advocacy organizations, and grant-making and giving services	3.3	2.7	2.3	2.8
	Total	3.2	2.8	2.8	3.0
Grand total		96.9	98.1	96.7	97.1

<sup>a</sup>N=291,169; <sup>b</sup>N=78,915; <sup>c</sup>N=301,744; <sup>d</sup>N=671,828.

Source. ACS.

# Compensation

The ACS collects data related to compensation, which can be assessed by demographic and educational factors as well as employment setting. Overall in 2015, social workers had a mean income of \$43,467 and a median income of \$40,000 (Table 16). There is a significant ( $p < 0.001$ , effect size = 0.187; see Table 17) difference in income by sex, with men making a median income of \$4,000 (10%) more per year than female social workers.

Not surprisingly there were also significant ( $p < 0.001$ ) differences in income by type of education. Master's degree graduates had a median income \$11,000 higher than social workers with a bachelor's degree; those with a doctoral degree had a median income \$12,000 more than those with a master's degree and \$23,000 more than those with a bachelor's degree (Table 17).

Interestingly, the difference in income for those with a bachelor's degree in social work and those with a bachelor's degree in other areas shows a higher mean income for the non-social work bachelor's, but the reverse is true for median income, though the effect size is very small (Table 18).

Further analysis of income by sex and level of education (Table 19) reveals that the median income of men was more than for women in three of the four categories. The exception was for those with professional degrees, but the

numbers in that category were small. The difference was greatest at the PhD level with women in social work making nearly 30% less than men with a PhD; females with a master's degree made 12% less than men with the same degree.

Females are slightly more likely to work less than 40 hours per week (Table 20).

Nevertheless, when comparing income by hours worked (Table 21), females still make less than males (except for social workers working between 10 to 29 hours per week), although the difference in median income for males and females working between 30 and 59 hours is less than observed when looking at overall income.

As shown in Table 22, even when comparing female and male income by type of education and limiting the comparison to individuals working more than 30 hours per week, the differences by sex continue and are greatest at

**Table 16. Income by Sex, 2015**

Income by Sex	<i>n</i>	Mean Wage	Median Wage
Male	1,134	\$47,233	\$44,000
Female	5,496	\$42,690	\$40,000
Total	6,630	\$43,467	\$40,000

Source. ACS

**Table 17. Income by Type of Education**

Wage by Educational Attainment	<i>n</i>	Mean Wage	Median Wage
Bachelor's degree	3,525	\$39,119	\$37,000
Master's degree	2,947	\$48,025	\$48,000
Professional degree beyond a bachelor's degree	95	\$52,180	\$45,000
Doctoral degree	63	\$60,412	\$60,000

Note. Bachelor's versus master's ( $p < 0.001$ , effect size=0.38877); master's versus professional ( $p = 0.1467$ , effect size=0.151); master's versus doctoral ( $p < 0.001$ , effect size=0.47413). Effect sizes are typically classified as 0.2=low, 0.5=medium, 0.8=large. The measure of effect size used in this report is Cohen's *d*.

Source. ACS.

**Table 18. Income by Type of Bachelor's Degree**

Wage by Degree Status	<i>n</i>	Mean	Median
Non-social work bachelor's degree	2,807	\$39,294	\$36,400
Bachelor's in social work	718	\$38,436	\$38,000

Note. Non-social work bachelor's versus social work bachelor's ( $p = 0.3044$ , effect size=0.043).

Source. ACS.

**Table 19. Median Income by Education Attainment and Sex**

Income by Education and Sex	<i>n</i>	Male Median Wage	<i>n</i>	Female Median Wage	Difference in Wages	% Difference
Bachelor's degree	639	\$39,000	2,886	\$36,000	-\$3,000	-8.3
Master's degree	448	\$51,500	2,499	\$46,000	-\$5,500	-12.0
Professional degree beyond bachelor's	26	\$44,000	69	\$45,000	\$1,000	2.2
Doctoral degree	21	\$72,000	42	\$55,500	-\$16,500	-29.7

Source. ACS.



**Table 20. Work Hours by Sex**

Hours Per Week	Male (%)	Female (%)
<10	1.1	1.4
10–19	1.9	2.2
20–29	3.2	5.2
30–39	13.6	15.0
40–49	70.0	66.4
50–59	6.7	7.4
60–69	2.8	1.6
>=70	0.8	0.8

Note. Male:  $n=1,134$ ; female:  $n=5,496$ .

Source. ACS.

the master's level.

Consistently, social workers with a master's degree or higher make substantially more than social workers with only a bachelor's degree. For all three groups, those who are federal employees have the highest income, with federal employees with a master's degree or higher

**Table 21. Income by Sex and Hours Worked**

Hours	<i>n</i>	Male Median	<i>n</i>	Female Median	Difference in Wages	% Difference
<10	12	\$4,000	77	\$2,000	-\$2,000	-100.00
19–10	21	\$5,600	122	\$8,400	\$2,800	33.33
20–29	36	\$15,500	284	\$20,000	\$4,500	22.50
30–39	154	\$41,000	822	\$40,000	-\$1,000	-2.50
40–49	794	\$45,000	3650	\$42,000	-\$3,000	-7.14
50–59	76	\$50,000	407	\$48,900	-\$1,100	-2.25
60–69	32	\$57,500	90	\$44,700	-\$12,800	-28.64
>=70	9	\$65,000	44	\$50,000	-\$15,000	-30.00

Source. ACS.

**Table 22. Income by Sex and Education Type When Working 30 or More Hours per Week**

Degree Status	<i>n</i>	Male Median	<i>n</i>	Female Median	Female \$ - Male \$	% Difference
Bachelor's not in social work	548	\$40,000	2,096	\$37,000	-\$3,000	-8.1
Bachelor's in social work	67	\$40,000	598	\$39,750	-\$250	-0.6
Master's or greater	450	\$55,000	2,319	\$50,000	-\$5,000	-10.0%

Source. ACS.

**Table 23. Income by Type of Work or Setting**

Class of Worker	Non-Social Work <i>n</i>	Bachelor's Median	<i>n</i>	BSW Median	Master's and Above <i>n</i>	Median
Employee of private for-profit with wages, salary, or commissions	507	\$38,000	134	\$40,000	556	\$50,000
Employee of private nonprofit, tax-exempt, or charitable organization	907	\$33,000	226	\$35,000	1,017	\$45,000
Local government employee	536	\$44,500	154	\$43,750	548	\$57,000
State government employee	606	\$40,000	144	\$40,000	411	\$50,000
Federal government employee	66	\$53,000	6	\$47,250	149	\$68,000
Self-employed	22	\$3,100	1	0	85	\$7,000

Source. ACS.

averaging \$68,000 per year. The lowest pay for all the groups was for employment in a private nonprofit, tax-exempt, or charitable organization (Table 23).

There is considerable variation in compensation by setting in each level of educational attainment and further variation of setting between levels of educational attainment (Table 24). For individuals with a master's degree or higher, the highest median incomes are in national security and international affairs (\$69,000), elementary and secondary education (\$60,000), executive offices and legislative bodies (\$57,500), insurance carriers (\$57,000), and hospitals (\$56,000) and other health care settings (\$56,000). The average salary in individual and family services, the largest single setting where MSWs work, was \$45,000.

For individuals with a bachelor's majoring in social work, the highest paying settings were: executive offices and legislative bodies (\$55,000); insurance carriers (\$53,000); hospitals (\$50,000); elementary and secondary schools (\$46,000); justice, public order, and safety (\$42,300); and skilled nursing facilities (\$40,000). The average salary in individual and family services, the largest single setting for BSWs majoring in social work, was \$39,000.

For individuals with a bachelor's not in social work, the highest paying settings were: insurance carriers (\$59,000); other health care settings (\$51,000); national security and international affairs (\$50,000); hospitals (\$47,000), and executive offices and legislative bodies (\$41,500). The average salary in individual and family services, the largest single setting for individuals with bachelor's not in social work, was \$37,000.

### Social Work Compensation Compared With Other Professions

The BLS also reports compensation by occupation, although, as noted earlier, the definitions of social work are based on reports by employers not individuals. Thus, the BLS is likely reporting income for a slightly different population than the ACS. BLS data for 2016 show a median compensation of social workers of \$46,890, far higher than reported by individuals in the ACS in 2015. As indicated in Table 25, the median pay for social workers is far less than that of teachers and nurses. ■

**Table 24. Income by Education Type and Setting**

NAICS Category	Non-Social Work Bachelor's <i>n</i> <sup>a</sup>	Median	BSW <i>n</i> <sup>a</sup>	Median	Master's and Above <i>n</i> <sup>a</sup>	Median
Individual and family services	1,068	\$37,000	268	\$39,000	824	\$45,000
Administrator of HR programs	381	\$41,000	94	\$38,000	239	\$51,000
Outpatient care centers	216	\$32,000	53	\$32,500	279	\$50,000
Residential care facilities, except SNF	133	\$32,000	20	\$37,000	71	\$40,000
Justice, public order, and safety	125	\$41,000	16	\$42,300	70	\$50,000
Hospitals	119	\$47,000	49	\$50,000	483	\$56,000
Civic, social, advocacy organizations	83	\$33,000	18	\$32,500	58	\$41,700
Insurance carriers and related activities	76	\$59,000	13	\$53,000	62	\$57,000
Comm. food, housing, and emergency services	61	\$30,000	12	\$32,500	32	\$36,000
Executive offices and legislative bodies	60	\$41,500	6	\$55,000	32	\$57,500
Nursing care facilities (skilled nursing)	53	\$39,000	51	\$40,000	105	\$46,300
Elementary and secondary schools	39	\$40,000	22	\$46,000	263	\$60,000
Home health care services	35	\$40,000	6	\$41,200	51	\$44,000
Vocational rehabilitation services	29	\$33,000	3	NR	14	\$39,400
Other health care services	23	\$51,000	5	NR	24	\$56,000
Child day care services	23	\$33,000	7	\$30,000	14	\$42,000
Real estate	16	\$42,400	5	NR	12	\$38,500
Legal services	16	\$32,000	1	NR	7	\$41,500
Employment services	14	\$31,900	3	NR	4	NR
Colleges, universities, and professional schools	12	\$30,200	3	NR	25	\$47,000
National security and international affairs	9	\$50,000	0	NR	14	\$69,000
Offices of other health practitioners	4	NR	2	NR	23	\$50,000
Offices of physicians	3	NR	4	NR	22	\$52,500

Note. This table refers to wage by industry code and degree status when 30 or more hours are worked. HR=human resources; NAICS=North American Industry Classification System; NR=not reportable; SNF=skilled nursing facilities.

<sup>a</sup>Number of respondents: unweighted.

Source. ACS.

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**Table 25. Incomes of Social Workers Compared With Selected Other Professions**

	Median Pay in 2016
Social workers	\$46,890
Kindergarten and elementary school teachers	\$55,490
High school teachers	\$58,030
Postsecondary teachers	\$75,430
Registered nurses	\$68,450

Source. <https://www.bls.gov/ooh/>

# Distribution of Social Workers

Figure 8 presents the range in numbers of social workers in each state by deciles. Not surprisingly, the range is enormous with larger states having more social workers. Although these data provide helpful information on how the supply of social workers is distributed, as expected larger states tend to have more social workers, and smaller states tend to have fewer. Comparing the number of social workers to a standard population size, such as 100,000 people, provides a better picture of the supply relative to the population.

There is great disparity across the country in the number of social workers per 100,000, ranging from 80 per 100,000 in Arkansas to 572 per 100,000 in the District of Columbia. Figure 9 divides the states into quintiles with an equal number of states in each quintile. It shows that the northeast states tend to have high numbers of social workers per capita, and the southern states have fewer social workers per capita.

As noted earlier, individuals who were identified as working in social work can be divided into three groups: those with at least a master's degree, those with a bachelor's degree but not in social work, and those with a bachelor's degree in social work. Each state is divided into these three groups. Figures 11, 12, and 13 show the percentage of all

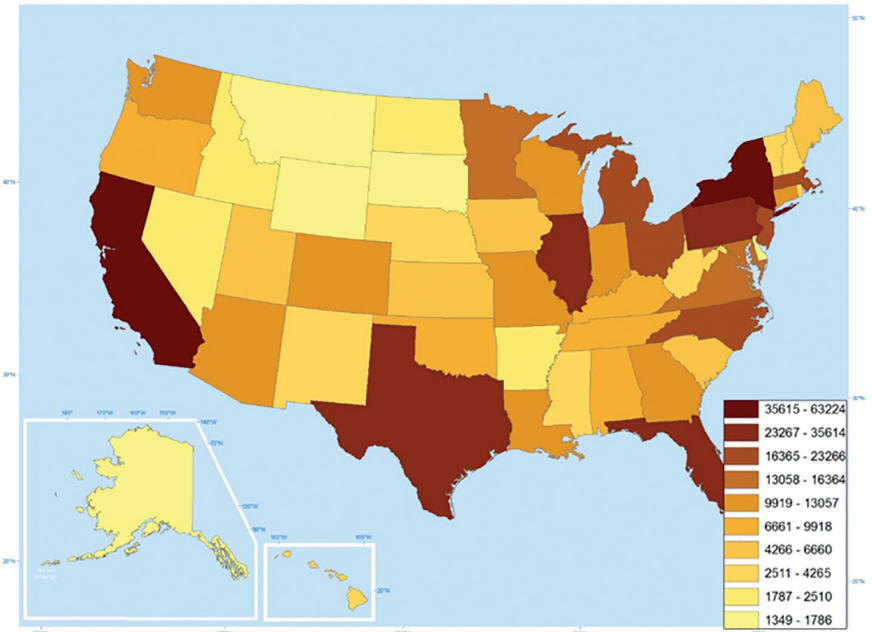
**Figure 8. Number of Social Workers by State (Weighted Frequencies)**

the social workers in the state according to group.

As Figure 10 shows, the mix by education type varies greatly across states. In some states more than 60% of their social work workforce has a master’s degree or higher (Rhode Island, 70.9%; New Mexico, 63.8%; District of Columbia, 60.5%; Delaware, 60.4%). At the same time, in some states a very small share of their social work workforce has a master’s degree or above (North Dakota, 4.1%; South Dakota, 9.1%; Montana 13.9%; Iowa, 14.9%). On the other hand, in 13 states more than 50% of their social work workforce are individuals with non-social work bachelor’s degrees.

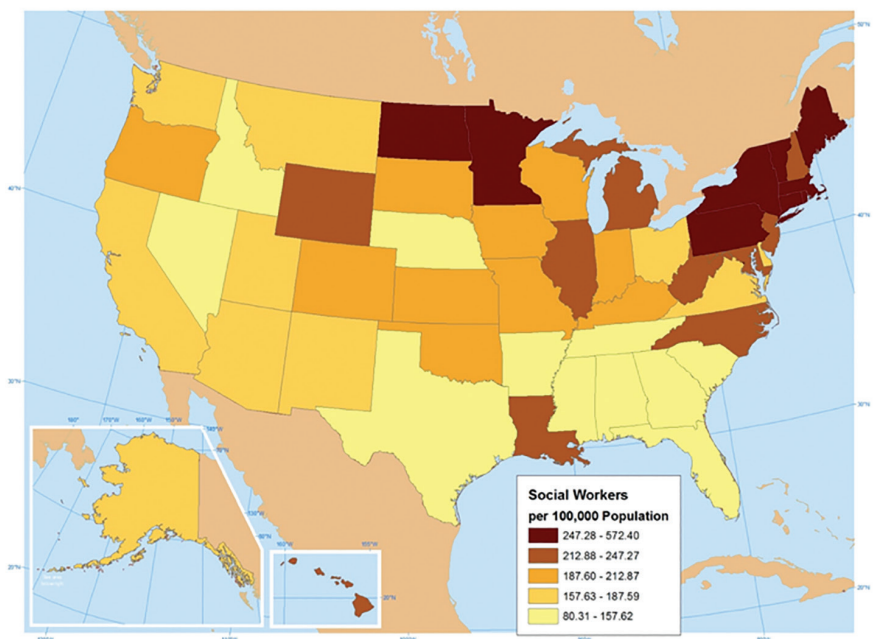
Figures 11, 12, and 13 show the relative percentage of each state’s social work workforce with an MSW or higher, a BSW, and a non-social work bachelor’s degree.

As indicated in Figures 14 through 17, social work programs are not evenly distributed around the nation. Many programs are on the east coast. ■



Source. ACS.

**Figure 9. Social Workers per 100,000 Population, 2015**



Note. Based on weighted frequency numbers and 2016 estimates of population from the U.S. Census Bureau.

Source. ACS.

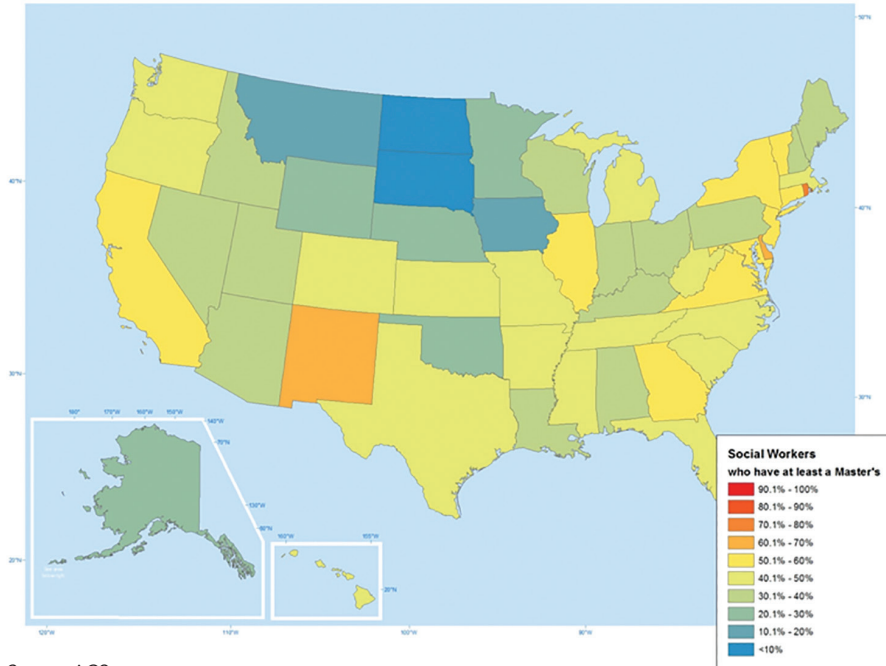
**Figure 10. Social Workers by Type of Education by State**

State	Non-Social Work Bachelor's (%)	Bachelor's in Social Work (%)	Masters or Greater (%)	n
Alabama	33.5	35.1	31.4	8,091
Alaska	70.1	7.2	22.6	1,621
Arizona	53.2	9.0	37.8	12,642
Arkansas	38.0	19.0	42.9	2,466
California	42.6	6.4	51.0	68,351
Colorado	48.2	4.4	47.4	12,395
Connecticut	34.1	10.1	55.7	10,695
Delaware	36.6	3.1	60.4	2,245
DC	39.5	0	60.5	1,979
Florida	43.0	7.9	49.1	31,396
Georgia	35.6	10.5	53.9	12,803
Hawaii	50.7	3.1	46.2	3,217
Idaho	37.3	24.4	38.4	2,659
Illinois	37.3	8.1	54.6	31,096
Indiana	58.0	10.1	31.9	13,570
Iowa	56.8	28.3	14.9	7,001
Kansas	40.2	19.6	40.3	5,638
Kentucky	43.4	24.1	32.5	10,916
Louisiana	47.4	14.1	38.5	11,026
Maine	61.1	6.4	32.5	5,653
Maryland	33.7	10.0	56.2	16,920
Massachusetts	46.0	8.1	45.9	25,060
Michigan	35.0	21.7	43.3	24,788
Minnesota	43.2	29.0	27.8	17,677
Mississippi	47.8	11.8	40.4	3,537
Missouri	42.8	10.6	46.7	12,253
Montana	59.1	27.0	13.9	2,357
Nebraska	70.5	7.1	22.3	3,079
Nevada	50.4	10.7	38.9	2,983
New Hampshire	61.6	0	38.4	3,274
New Jersey	40.9	8.3	50.8	23,105
New Mexico	18.1	18.1	63.8	3,791
New York	39.6	7.7	52.7	66,060
North Carolina	37.4	13.3	49.3	22,594
North Dakota	42.1	53.9	4.1	1,699
Ohio	38.5	22.0	39.5	20,184
Oklahoma	69.2	3.0	27.8	9,923
Oregon	57.6	1.5	40.9	9,598
Pennsylvania	53.7	10.9	35.3	36,931
Rhode Island	29.1	0	70.9	3,590
South Carolina	39.5	19.0	41.6	7,456
South Dakota	55.2	35.6	9.1	1,939
Tennessee	46.1	7.4	46.4	10,571
Texas	45.4	12.5	42.1	33,472
Utah	53.1	8.6	38.4	5,076
Vermont	38.7	4.2	57.1	3,295
Virginia	38.7	7.2	54.1	14,765
Washington	43.6	8.2	48.2	12,118
West Virginia	37.9	14.8	47.3	4,584
Wisconsin	35.9	27.1	37.0	12,237
Wyoming	19.0	56.5	24.5	1,452
<b>Total</b>	<b>43.3</b>	<b>11.7</b>	<b>44.9</b>	<b>671,828</b>

Note. DC=District of Columbia.

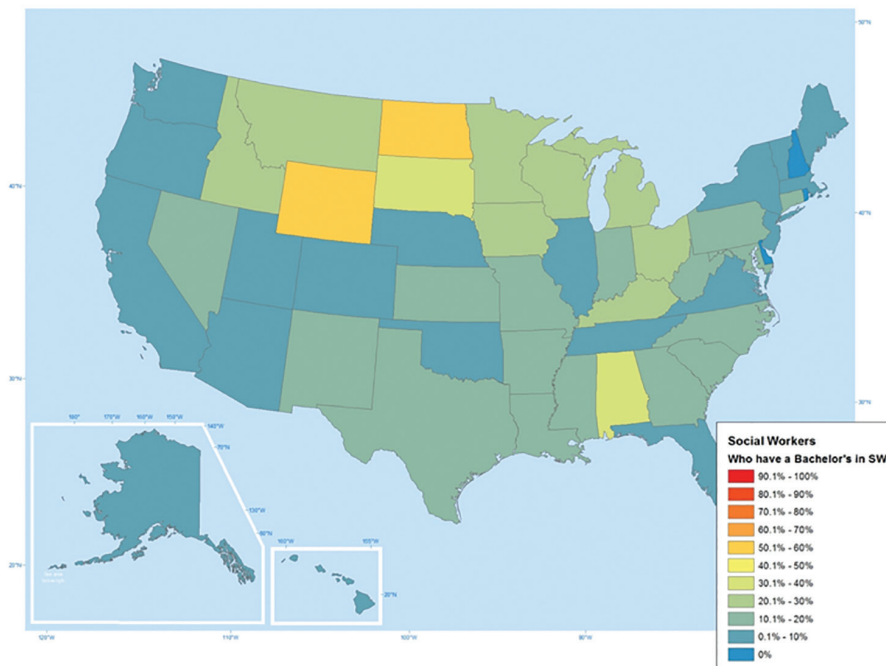
Source. ACS.

**Figure 11. Percentage of Those Working in Social Work in a State With an MSW or Higher**



Source. ACS.

**Figure 12. Percentage of Social Workers in Each State With a BSW**

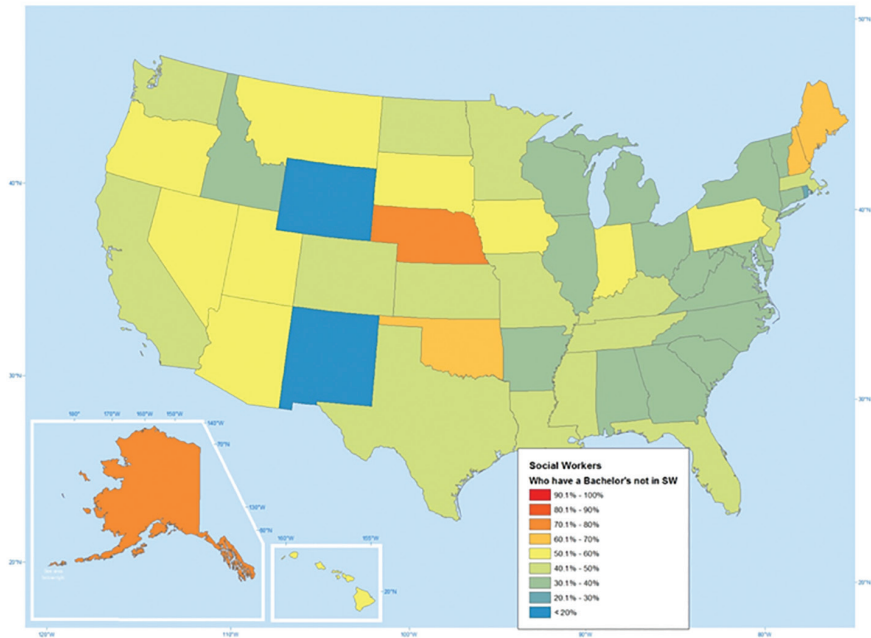


Note. SW=social work.

Source. ACS.

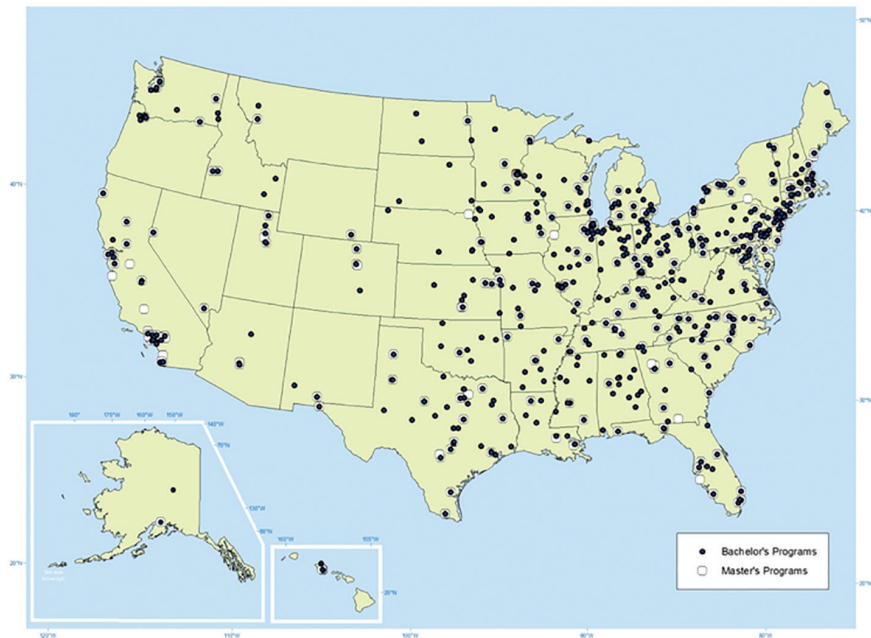


**Figure 13. Percentage of Social Workers With a Bachelor's Degree not in Social Work**



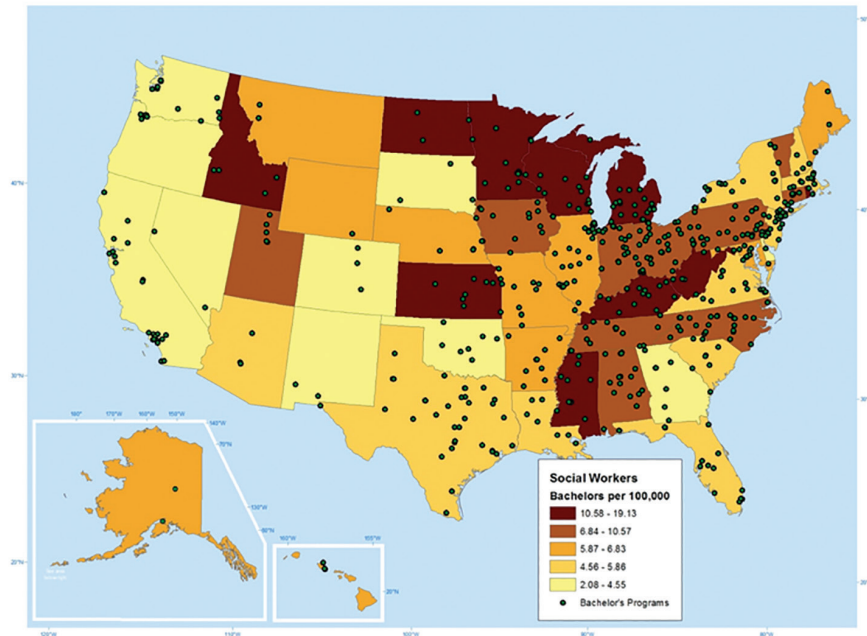
Note. SW=social work.  
Source. ACS.

**Figure 14. Distribution of Bachelor's and Master's Social Work Programs, 2015**



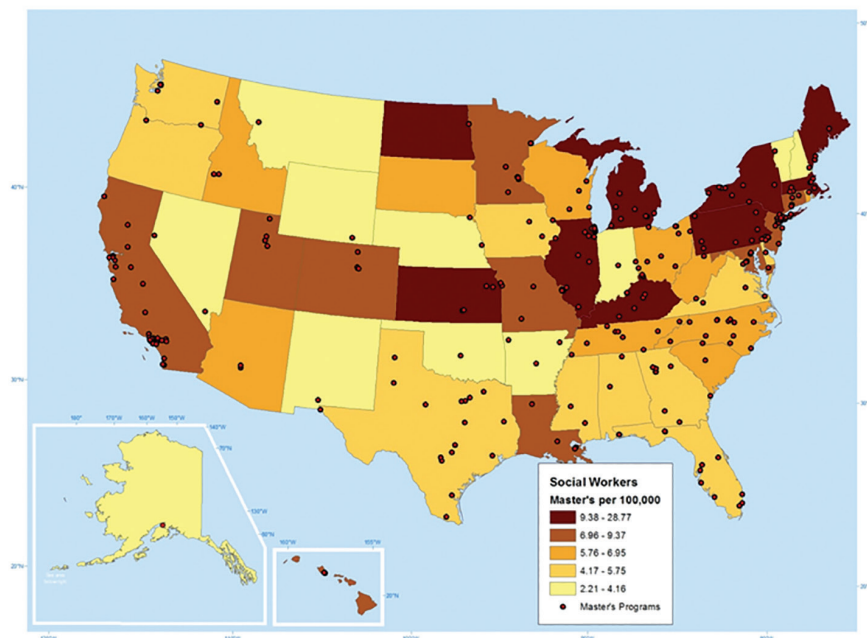
Source. IPEDS.

**Figure 15. Distribution of BSW Programs in Social Work and BSWs Awarded 2016 per 100,000 Population by State**



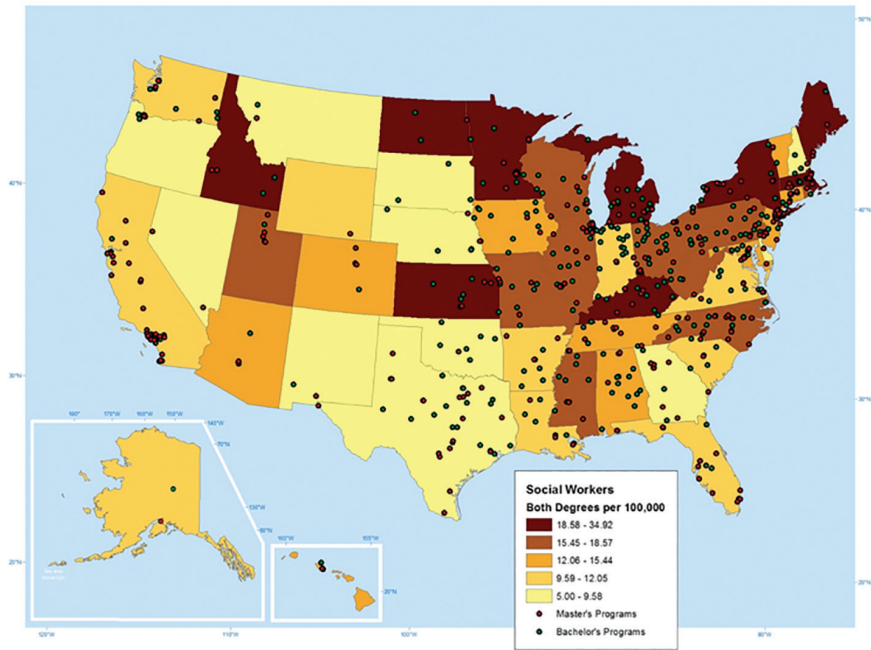
Note. Location of social work programs and degrees are based on IPEDS data, degree numbers, and 2016 estimates of populations.

**Figure 16. Master's Degree Programs in Social Work and Number of MSWs Awarded per 100,000 Population by State**



Source. IPEDS and U.S. Census Bureau.

**Figure 17. BSW and MSW Programs in Social Work and Bachelor's and Master's Degrees Awarded in Social Work per 100,000 Population by State, 2016**



Source. IPEDS and U.S. Census Bureau.

# Appendix: Data Sources

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## Definition of Social Worker

The ACS and the BLS define *social worker* according to the Standard Occupational Classification (SOC). The category of social worker (SOC code 21-1020) is a subcategory of community and social service occupations (SOC code 21-0000) and is subdivided further into Categories 21-1021 (child, family, and school social workers), 21-1023 (mental health and substance abuse social workers), 21-1022 (medical and public health social workers), and 21-1029 (social workers, all other). Similar occupations excluded from the social worker group in this classification include counselors, probation officers, and social and human services assistants.

For the ACS the classification of social worker is assigned by trained staff on the basis of responses to the ACS, an annual questionnaire of a sample of 3.5 million household units nationally. The questionnaire asks a household member about the kind of business or industry employing each individual in the household, the kind of work the individual is doing, and the person's most important activities or duties. The person classified as a social worker may not therefore be the person filling out the questionnaire, and the questionnaire responses may or may not include the term social worker.

For the BLS the classification is assigned based on responses to the Current Employment Statistics (CES)

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survey of a sample of 390,000 business establishments nationwide. The CES report is voluntary under federal law but mandatory in three states and Puerto Rico. Initial enrollment of each firm is carried out by telephone (or in person for large firms), with data collected for several months through Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing, then where possible, transferring respondents to a self-reporting mode such as Touchtone Data Entry, fax, or the Internet.

### **ACS: 2015**

Data was downloaded from the U.S. Census Bureau website, <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/data/pums.html>, using the 2015 1-year data set.

We included only individuals classified as social workers who had worked in the past 12 months. The resulting data set was further reduced to include only individuals who had at least a bachelor's degree. These individuals were further classified into three mutually exclusive groups. The first group included those who had only a bachelor's degree in social work. The second group included those who had only a bachelor's degree but not in social work. The last group included anyone from our data set who had a master's degree, professional degree beyond a bachelor's degree, or a doctorate degree; it was not possible to determine whether the advanced degree was in social work.

### **BLS: 2004 to 2014**

Data were provided by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, on request for historical data.

Tables provided are the National Employment Matrix, employment by occupation, industry, and percentage distribution for the following groupings: 21-1020 (social workers), 21-1029 (social workers, all other), 21-1021 (child, family, and school social workers), 21-1023 (mental health and substance abuse social workers), and 21-1022 (medical and public health social workers).

Information on educational attainment is not available from the BLS.

### **IPEDS: 2000, 2005, 2010, 2015**

The IPEDS is a data system maintained by the U.S. Department of Education. It is based on survey data from schools delivering postsecondary education. The survey is mandatory for all institutions that participate in, or are applicants for participation in, any federal financial assistance program authorized by Title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965.

Data were downloaded from <https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/datacenter/DataFiles.aspx>. Specifically, the two files that were downloaded for each year are "Institutional Characteristics: Directory Information" and "Completions: Awards/degrees conferred by program (6-digit CIP code), award level, race/ethnicity, and gender: July 1, 2014 to June 30, 2015".

Data were taken from Cipcode for Social Work (44.0701, a subcategory of 44 Public Administration and Social Service Professions), according to bachelor's or master's degree. Similar degrees excluded are services and administration, counseling, and psychotherapy. ■



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