

LIMITATIONS OF THIS DATASET

Although the data in this database represent an important contribution to knowledge about licensed social workers, there are limitations of the data which must be recognized.

- **Generalizability**

The study sample is not representative of all professionally trained social workers. The data cannot be generalized to non-licensed social workers, who may perform different functions and serve different populations than the respondents to this survey. Two groups of social workers are likely to be underrepresented among licensees: BSW-level social workers, who are not eligible for licensure in several states; and social workers who work in capacities other than direct service, who may not be required to hold licenses.

- **Response Bias**

There is also the potential for some response bias even within the universe of licensed social workers. NASW members may have been more likely than other social workers to respond to the survey, which featured the NASW name and logo prominently. Also, because much of the instrument concentrated on the provision of direct services, social workers working in other capacities may have been less likely to feel that the survey was relevant to their work.

- **Lack of Previous Data for Comparisons**

There are no data on the previous jobs held by social workers in the study which limits the use of the data for the purposes of analyzing employment-related trends such as supply, demand, and turnover. It is therefore not possible to estimate reliably whether social workers are leaving certain sectors, settings, or practice areas for others.

A few cautionary notes to potential users of this data file

- Question 30 (which asked for an estimate of the size of the caseload of the respondents) had two errors. First, a category (16 – 25) was omitted from the list of options. Second, the largest option was labeled “100%”, rather than 101+. For this reason, any tabulations based on this variable should be used with caution, if at all.
- Because approximately one-fifth of the survey respondents indicated they were not active as social workers, it is important to select out their responses from the tabulations generated from this data set. This can be done easily with Question 13.
- A number of respondents who marked in Question 15 that they had only one employer, responded to subsequent questions about secondary employers. Researchers concerned about secondary employers are advised to select only those cases for analysis for respondents indicating 2 or more employers in Question 15.
- In a similar manner, a number of respondents who indicated no hours spent providing direct services to clients in Question 20b, completed Questions 29 to 41. Researchers concerned about clients and caseloads are advised to select only those cases in which respondents indicated some hours devoted to direct client services in Question 20b and/or having a positive caseload (Question 30).

Signature

Date