

LICENSED SOCIAL WORKERS SERVING OLDER ADULTS, 2004

Chapter 4 of 7

Where Social Workers Work

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Washington, DC**

March 2006

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Chapter 4. Where Social Workers Work

Summary of the Findings

- Social workers are employed across employment sectors and settings. This demonstrates the broad need for social workers, but presents challenges in terms of formulating practices and policies that address varied missions, resources, and funding available to support social work services.
- The private non-profit sector is the most common employment sector for social workers who see older adults. BSWs are more likely than MSWs to work in the private non-profit sector (48% v 36%), public sector (32% versus 22%), and private for-profit sectors (20% versus 17%). MSWs are more likely to work in private practice (25% versus 1%).

The distribution of social workers serving some older adults across sectors differs from the distribution of social workers overall and those not providing services to older adults. Social workers overall are more likely to work in the public sector, or the private for-profit sector. Social workers with no older clients are much more likely to be in public agencies, and less likely to be in private practice or for-profit settings.

- Social workers 55 years of age and older are more likely to be in private practice and less likely to work in private for profit and public agencies.
- Social workers in Aging are most likely to work in nursing homes (29%). Private practice (23%) and hospitals (17%) are the most common settings for social workers serving some older adults overall.

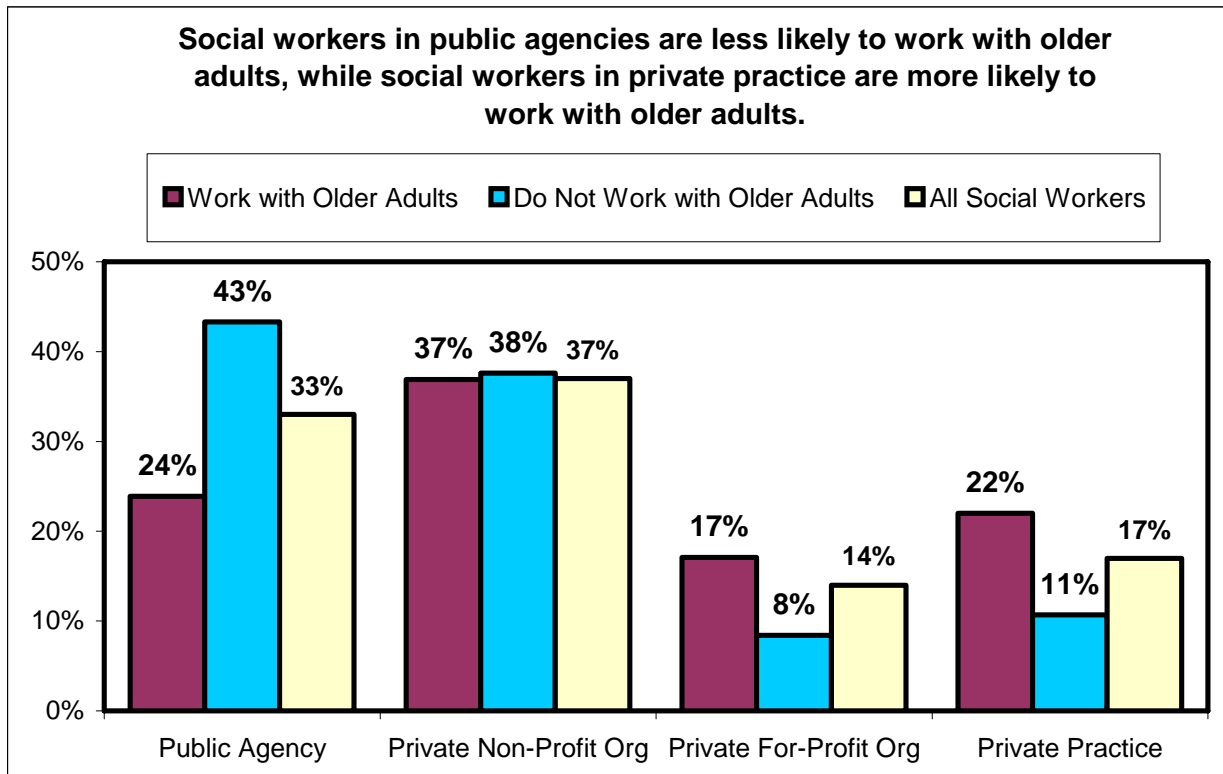
Employment Sector

Figure 1 shows that the private non-profit sector is the most common employment sector for social workers who see older adults (37%), followed by the public sector (24%)¹, private practice (22%)² and the private for-profit sector (17%). Social workers working with some older adults are much less likely to work in the public sector and are more likely to work in private for-profit and private practice than licensed social workers overall, or those who do not work with clients 55 years of age or older.

¹ Public sector includes agencies in the Federal government, state government, local government and the military.

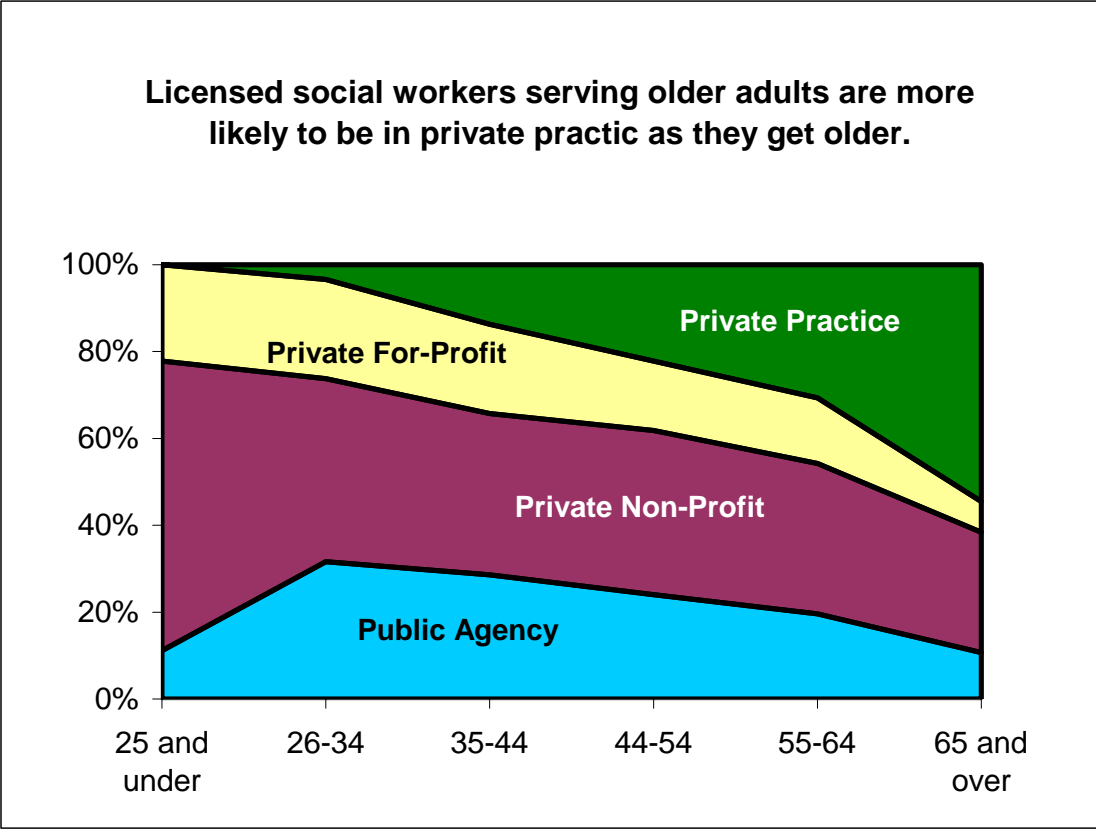
² In the 2004 social work workforce study, private practice is separated from the for-profit sector. This permitted distinguishing experiences and trends of those who are self-employed from those who are employees of organizations.

Figure 1. Percentages of Licensed Social Workers in Selected Employment Sectors Who Work With Older Adults



As can be seen in Figure 2, licensed social workers age 34 years and younger are most likely to work in private non-profit organizations (43%). Those 55 years and older are most likely to be in private practice (35%).

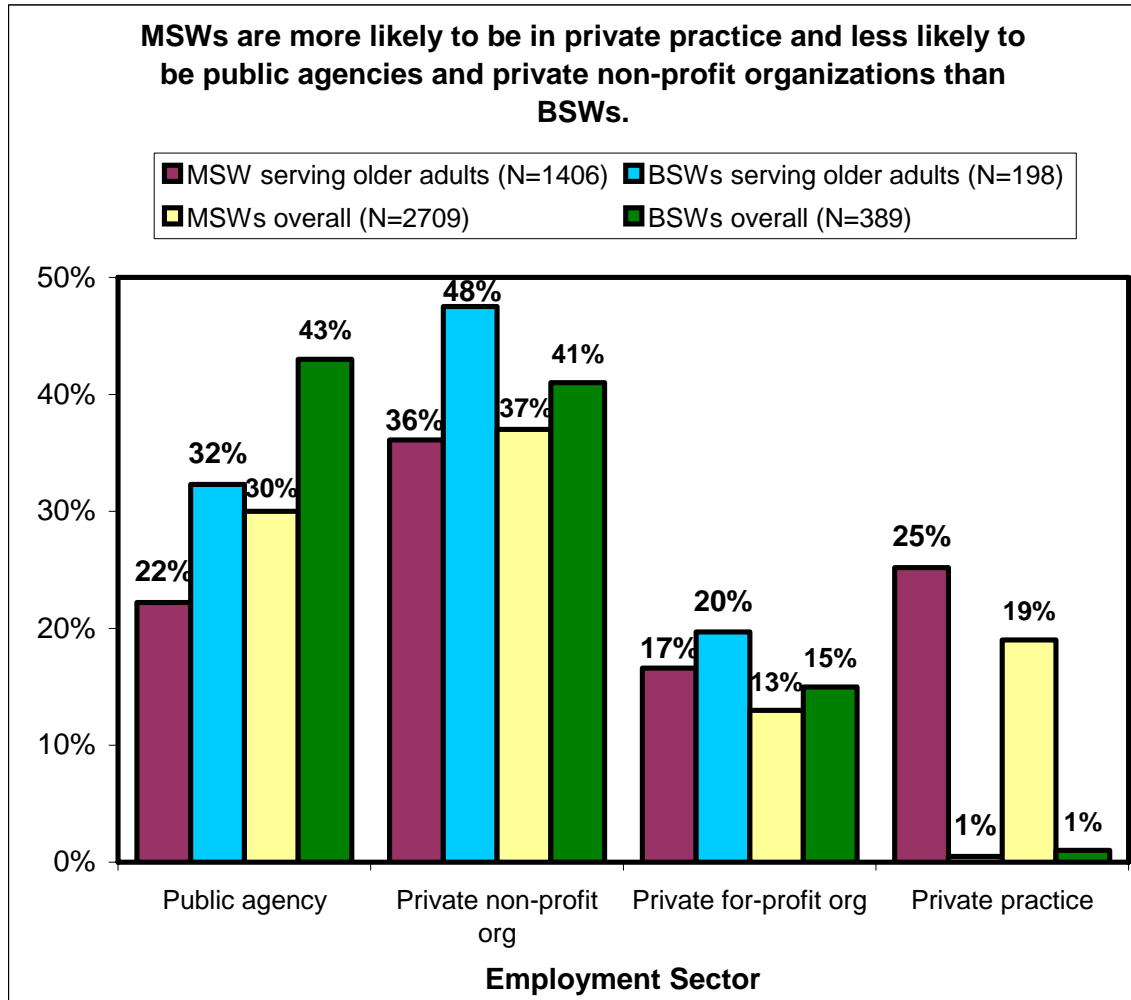
Figure 2. Percentages of Licensed Social Workers Serving Older Adults in Different Employment Sectors, by Age Category



The distribution of employment sectors in which social workers are employed varies by highest social work degree (Figure 3). BSWs are more heavily concentrated than MSWs in the private non-profit sector (48% of BSWs versus 36% of MSWs), public agencies (32% of BSWs versus 22% of MSWs), and the private for-profit sector (20% of BSWs versus 17% of MSWs). MSWs are substantially more likely than BSWs to be in private practice (25% of MSWs versus 1% of BSWs).

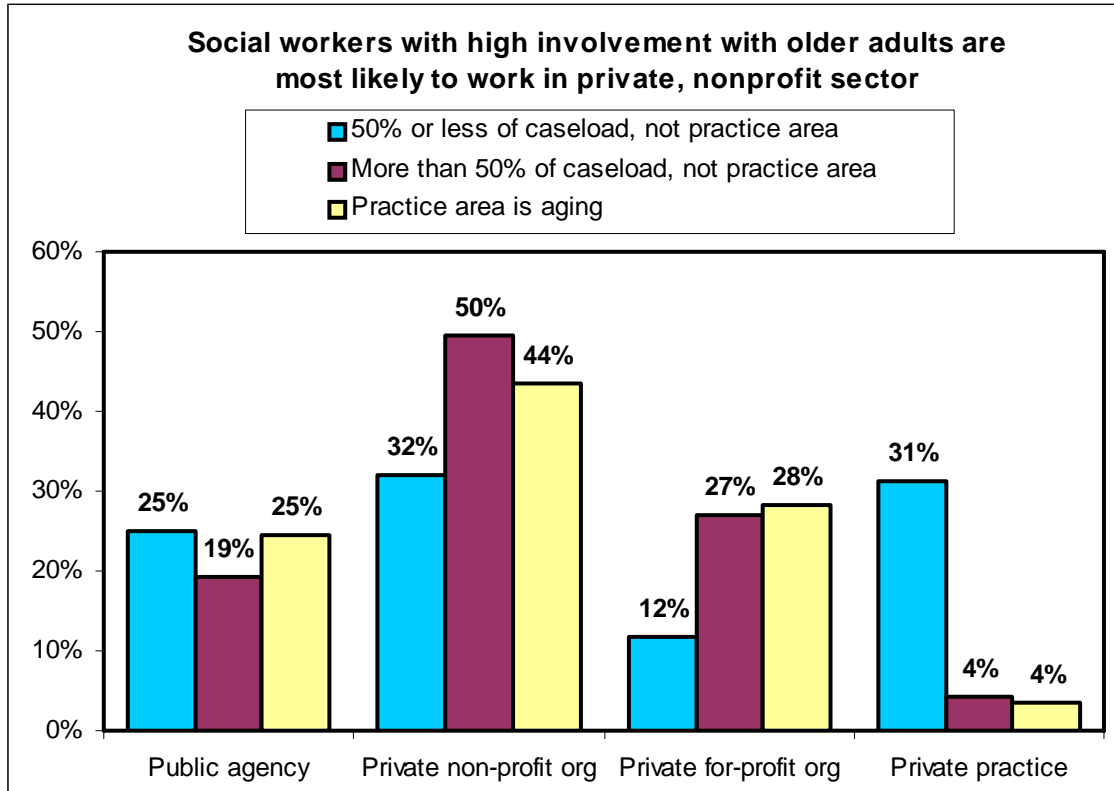
BSWs in Aging are more likely than MSWs to work in the nonprofit sector (56% versus 40%). MSWs are more likely to work in all other sectors: for-profit (31% versus 22%), public (24% versus 22%), and private practice (5% versus 0%).

Figure 3. Percent of Licensed Social Workers Serving Older Adults, by BSW and MSW, by Employment Sector



Forty-four percent of social workers in Aging and 36% of those in other practice areas work in private non-profit agencies (Figure 4). Social workers in Aging and those with caseloads of more than 50% older adults are substantially less likely to be in private practice than colleagues carrying caseloads of 50% or fewer older adults (4% and 4% versus 31%).

Figure 4. Percentage of Licensed Social Workers Serving the Elderly with Different Elderly Case Loads, by Employment Sector

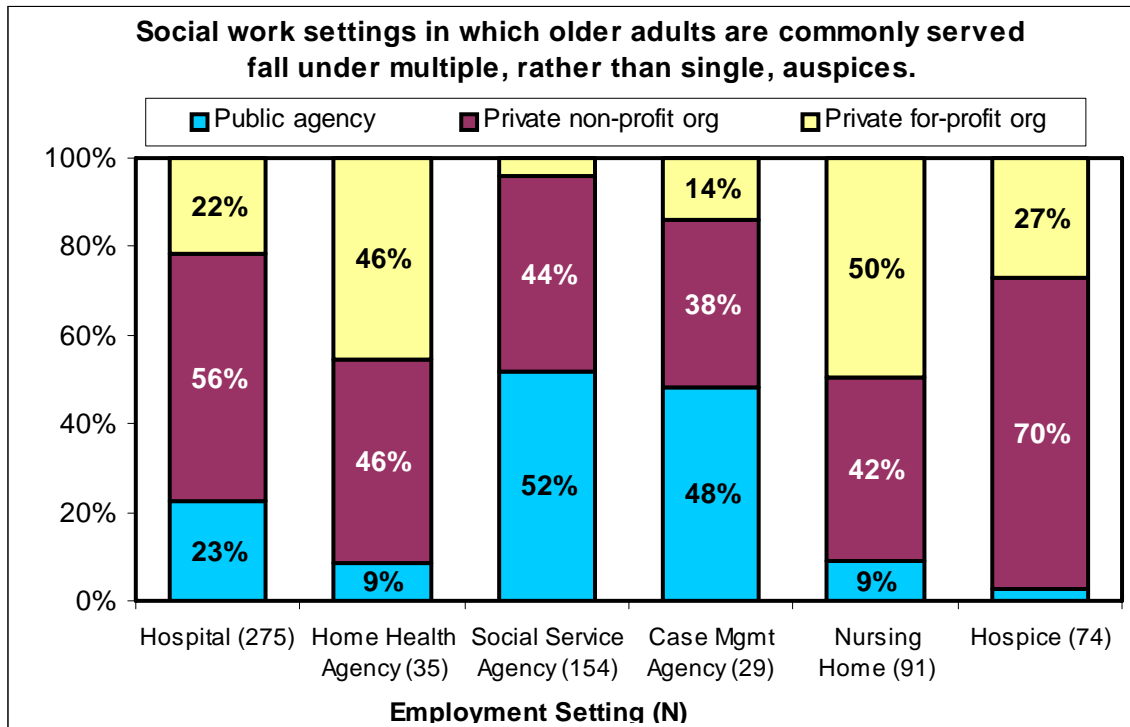


Settings

Sectors

Setting types cross sectors, complicating the understanding of the distribution of licensed social work employment across sectors. For example, Figure 5 shows that the majority of hospitals are private nonprofit organizations, but they can also be public (23%) or for profit organizations (22%). Forty-six percent of home health agencies fall into both the private for-profit and the private nonprofit sectors. The fact that settings in which social workers work fall into multiple sectors demonstrates the expanse of the profession.

Figure 5. Sector of Employment of Licensed Social Workers Serving Older Adults, by Employment Setting



Employment Setting

Licensed social workers are employed in diverse settings. The largest percentage of those serving older adults (29%) reported working in “other” settings. Private practice (21%) and hospitals (16%) were the next most frequent employment settings.

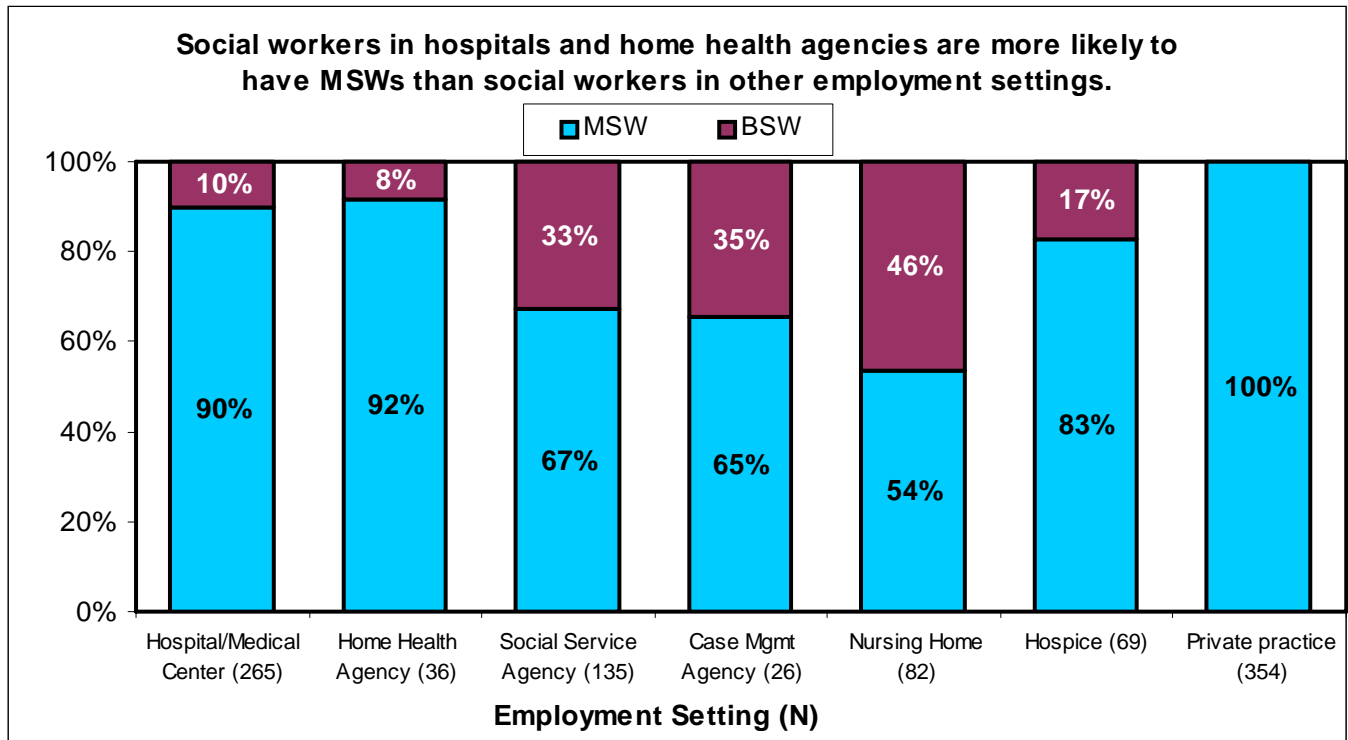
Table 1 shows that social workers who don’t work with older adults were much more likely to be employed in “other” settings, and much less likely to work in hospitals or private practice. They were also more likely to work in social service agencies.

Table 1. Employment Settings of Licensed Social Workers by Practice Emphasis on Older Adults

Employment Setting	Works with Any Older Adults (N=569)	Works with No Older Adults (N=1693)	All Social Workers
Private Practice	21%	10%	18%
Hospital	16%	7%	12%
Social Service Agency	9%	18%	14%
Behavioral Health Clinic	8%	12%	9%
Health Clinic	6%	4%	6%
Nursing Home	5%	0%	3%
Hospice	4%	0%	3%
Home Health Agency	2%	0%	1%
Other	29%	49%	34%

Figure 6 shows that there are notable variations in the mix of MSWs and BSWs in different employment settings. A higher proportion of MSWs can be found in hospitals and home health agencies and a higher percentage of BSWs can be found in nursing homes.

Figure 6. Mix of MSWs and BSWs Employed in Selected Employment Settings



Social workers in Aging were most likely to work in nursing homes (29%), hospitals (12%) and social service agencies (12%) (Table 2). Those with more than 50% older adults in their

caseloads were most likely to work in hospitals (39%) and hospices (17%). Social workers with 50% or fewer older adults in their caseloads were most likely to be in private practice (32%).

Table 2. Percentages of Licensed Social Workers Employed in Selected Settings by Practice Emphasis on Older Adults

Primary Employment Setting	Any Older Adults	50% or Less of Caseload, Not Practice Area (N=1129)	More Than 50% of Caseload, Not Practice Area (N=298)	Practice Area is Aging (N=266)
Private Practice	23%	32%	4%	4%
Hospital	17%	12%	39%	12%
Social Service Agency	9%	10%	3%	12%
Hospice	4%	1%	17%	5%
Home Health Agency	2%	1%	3%	8%
Case Mgmt Agency	2%	0%	1%	9%
Nursing Home	5%	0%	4%	29%
Other	38%	44%	29%	21%

MSWs are most likely to work in “other” settings (41%) followed by private practice. The work settings of BSWs vary substantially depending on whether they are in the Aging practice area.

Table 3. Percentages of Licensed Social Workers Working in Selected Employment Settings, by Earned Degrees

Primary Employment Setting	All Who Serve Older Adults	MSW		BSW	
		Not Practice Area (N=1186)	Practice Area (N=172)	Not Practice Area (N=128)	Practice Area (N=61)
Private Practice	23%	29%	5%	1%	0%
Hospital/Medical Center	17%	18%	15%	17%	8%
Home Health Agency	2%	1%	11%	1%	3%
Social Service Agency	9%	6%	9%	24%	21%
Case Mgmt Agency	2%	0%	9%	2%	10%
Nursing Home	5%	0%	23%	5%	53%
Hospice	4%	4%	6%	8%	3%
Other	38%	41%	23%	42%	2%

Social workers practicing in rural areas are much less likely than other social workers providing services to older adults to work in hospitals; they are more likely to work in social service

agencies and nursing homes (Table 4). Social workers in metropolitan areas are more likely to work in private practice, and less likely to work in nursing homes and social service agencies.

Table 4. Percent of Licensed Social Workers Serving Older Adults Working in Selected Employment Settings, by Location

	Metropolitan Area (N=1236)	Micropolitan Area (N=154)	Small Town (N=94)	Rural Area (N=38)
Hospital/Medical Center	18%	12%	20%	8%
Home Health Agency	2%	1%	1%	0%
Social Service Agency	9%	13%	9%	16%
Case Mgmt Agency	2%	3%	2%	3%
Nursing Home	5%	7%	9%	13%
Hospice	4%	7%	6%	3%
Private Practice	24%	21%	7%	13%
Other	36%	36%	46%	44%