

LICENSED SOCIAL WORKERS IN HEALTH, 2004

Chapter 2 of 7

Demographics

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Chapter 2. Demographic Profile of Social Workers in Health

Summary of Findings

- Health social workers are more likely to be female than social workers overall (89% v 83%).
- The percentage of men in the field of Health appears to be diminishing.
- Health MSWs and BSWs are similar in age (48 years verses 46.5 years) in contrast to social workers overall ((49 years verses 42 years).
- Health social workers are older than individuals in comparable professions or occupations.
- Licensed Health social workers are less racially and ethnically diverse than the U.S. the civilian labor force or the populations they serve.
- Eighty-six percent of Health social workers practice in metropolitan (86%) areas, while only 2% practice in rural areas.
- Licensed social workers in Health have a median of 15 years experience in the field. MSWs have more years experience in the field than BSWs (16 years verses 12.5 years).
- The MSW is the predominant social work degree among social workers in Health (82%). Thirteen percent have BSWs and 4% have no formal social work degree.
- The majority of those in Health report that they were well prepared for social work practice by their formal degree (60%) and post degree training (69%).
- The percentages of new graduates entering this practice area are lower regardless of degree than the percent of recent social worker graduates overall.
- Recent BSW graduates are less likely to enter Health practice than MSWs.
- Clinical practice (33%), trauma/disaster preparedness (29%), specialty practice area (28%) and professional ethics (21%) are the training topics most desired by Health social workers.
- A significant group of Health social workers practicing in micropolitan (33%) and small towns (21%) report that continuing education programs are unavailable.

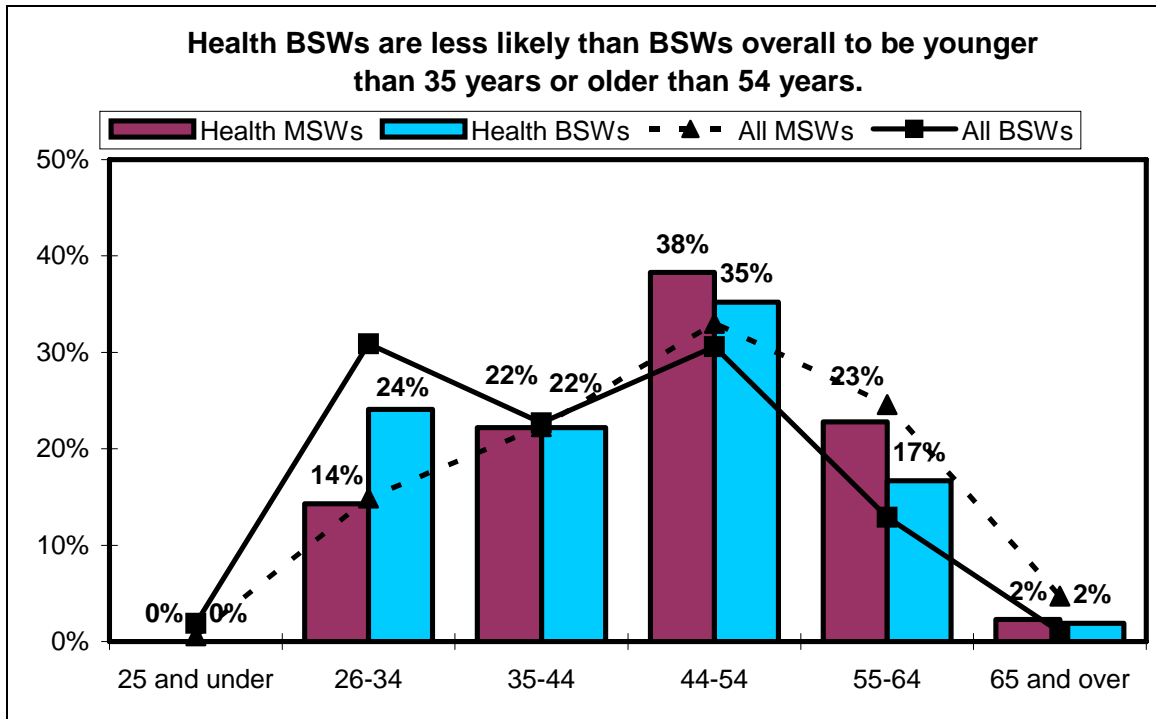
Demographic Profile

Age

The median age of social workers in Health is 48, similar to social workers overall. However, age distribution patterns between MSWs and BSWs in Health differ from licensed social workers overall. MSWs and BSWs in Health have similar median ages (48 years and 46.5 years respectively), while MSWs are substantially older than BSWs among social workers overall (49 years compared to 42 years).

As can be seen in the figure below, the distribution of social workers within Health shows fewer young BSWs in jobs in this arena as compared with licensed BSWs overall. Similarly, fewer BSWs ages 55 years or over work in this practice arena than licensed BSWs overall.

Figure 1. Age Distribution of Health Social Workers, by Degree



Gender

Figure 2 shows that social workers in Health are more likely to be women than men (89% versus 11%). Relatively small differences appear by degree: 11% of MSWs and 9% of BSWs are male. These distributions differ from patterns seen among social workers overall, where men constitute 18% of all social workers, 18% of MSWs and 10% of BSWs.

Figure 2. Gender of Health Social Workers

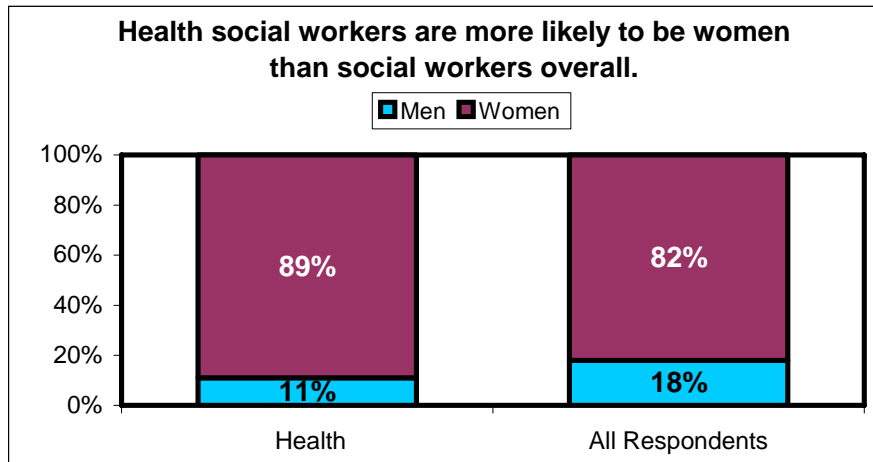
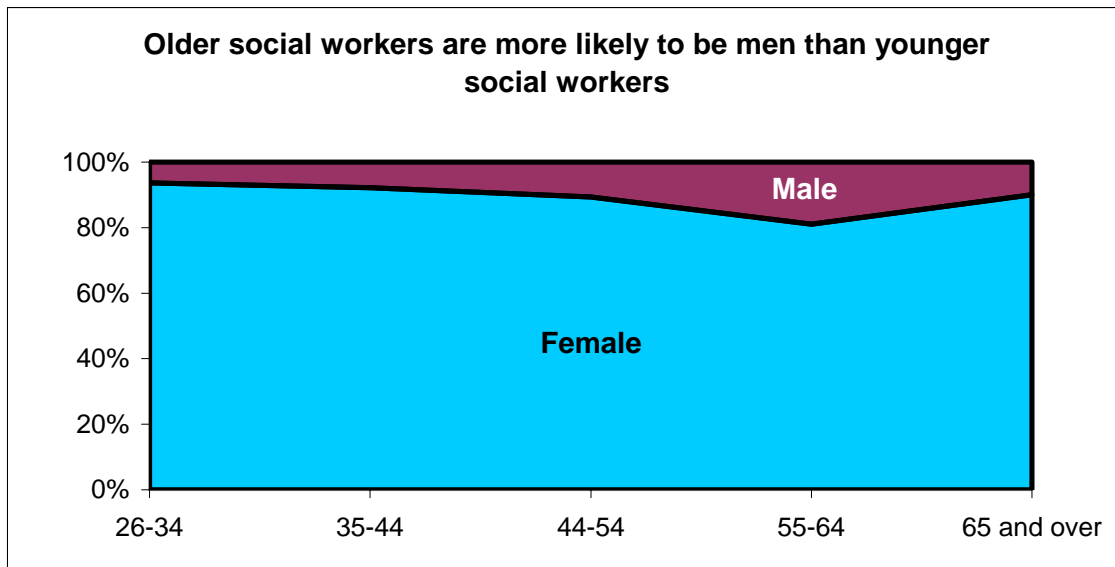


Figure 3 further suggests that the number of men in Health is diminishing among recent entrants.

Figure 3. Gender Mix of Licensed Social Workers in Health, by Age Group



Race/Ethnicity

Social workers in Health are predominantly non-Hispanic white (86%). As seen in Figure 4, they are less diverse than both the civilian labor force and the U.S. population. They are 7% Black/African-American, 4% Hispanic/Latino, and 3% Asian/Pacific Islander, similar to the racial/ethnic distribution of social workers overall.

Figure 4. Racial-Ethnic Distributions of Health Social Workers, the U.S. Population, and the U.S. Civilian Labor Force

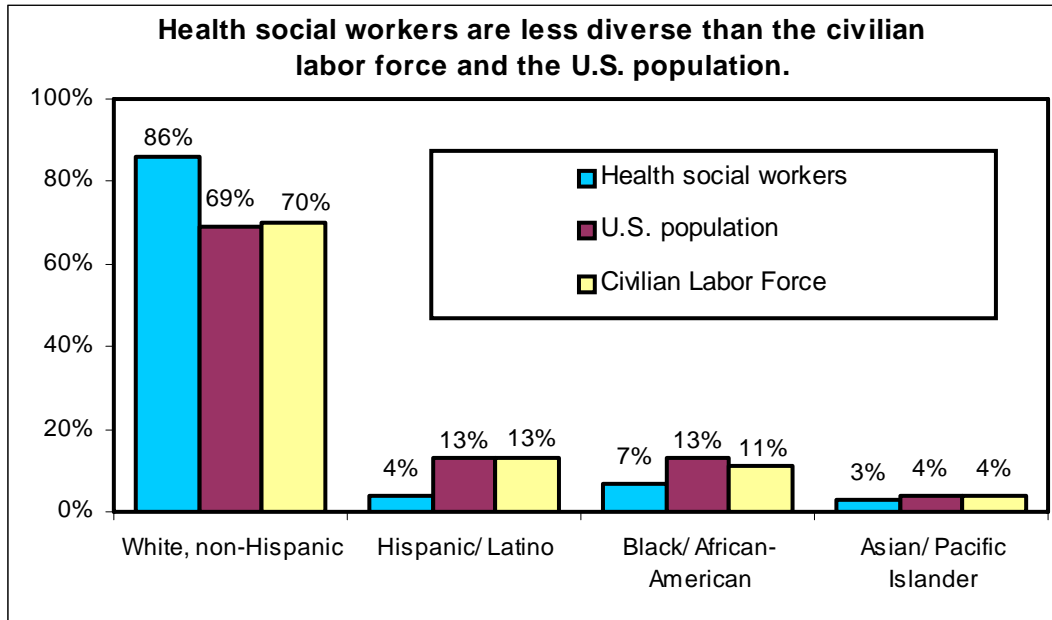
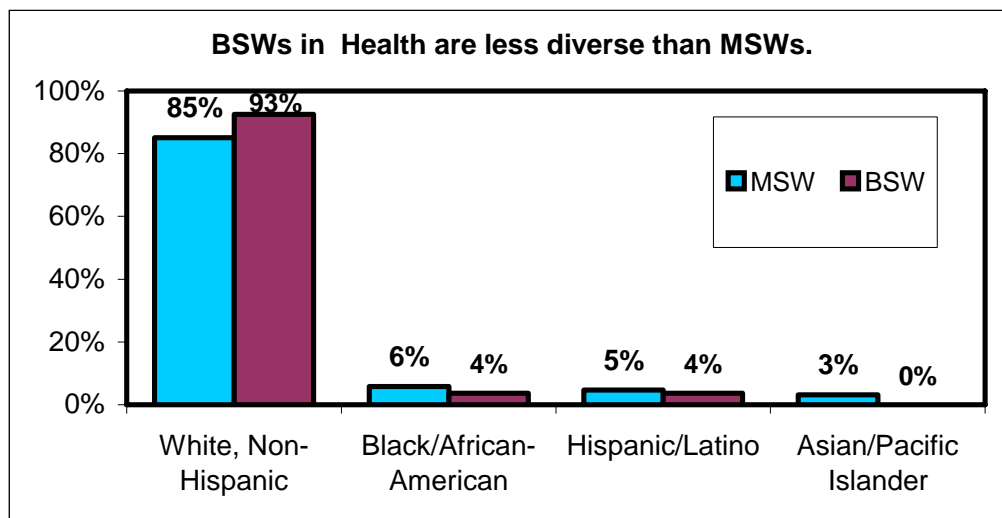


Figure 5 shows that, while little difference exists in race/ethnicity between Health social workers and licensed social workers overall, BSWs in Health are less diverse as a group than MSWs: 93% of BSWs are non-Hispanic white versus 85% of MSWs. This is different than the pattern observed among social workers overall, who differ little in race/ethnicity by degree.

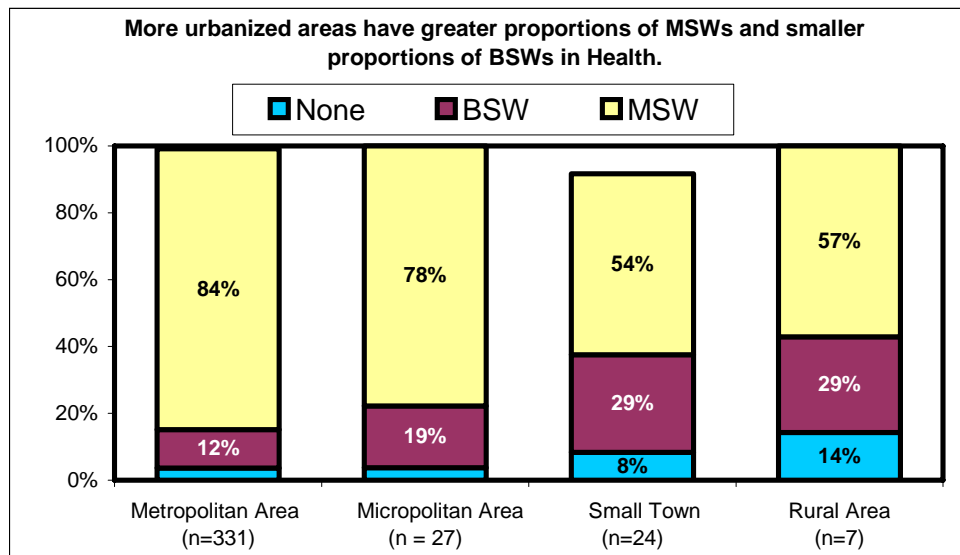
Figure 5. Racial-Ethnic Distribution of Health Social Workers by Degree



Geographic Location of Practice

Figure 6 shows that Health social workers are most likely to practice in metropolitan areas (85% versus 81% for social workers overall), while few practice in micropolitan areas (7% versus 10% overall), small towns (6% versus 6% overall), or rural areas (2% versus 3% overall). This pattern is similar to that for all licensed social workers. Social workers in rural areas and small towns together comprise 8% of social workers in Health. These social workers are much more likely to have BSWs (both 29%) than social workers in metropolitan or micropolitan areas (12% and 19%, respectively). This relationship between highest social work degree and rural/urban location is consistent with that observed for social workers overall.

Figure 6. Health Social Workers by Rural/Urban Area

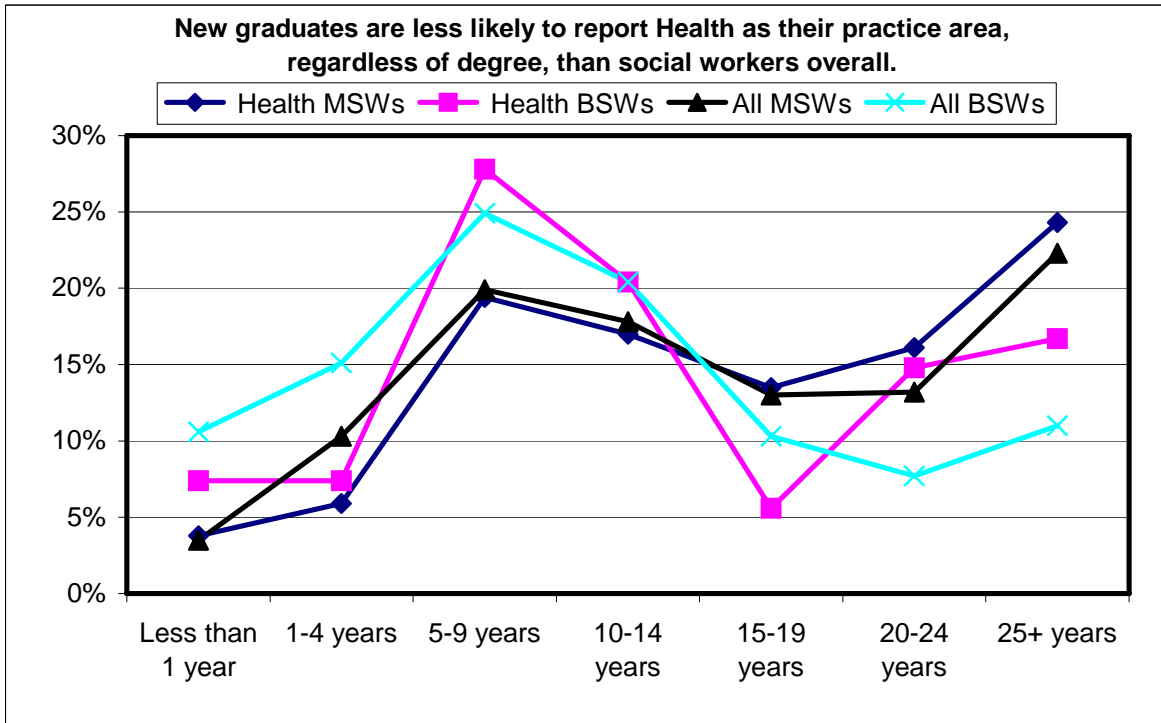


Years of experience

Licensed social workers in Health have a median of 15 years experience, compared to 13 years for social workers overall. MSWs in Health have a median of 16 years experience compared to 12.5 years for BSWs in this practice area. Figure 7 shows the distribution of years of professional experience for Health social workers.

Fewer new MSWs and BSWs appear to be in Health positions as compared to other new licensed social workers.

Figure 7. Years of Professional Experience of Health Social Workers, by Degree

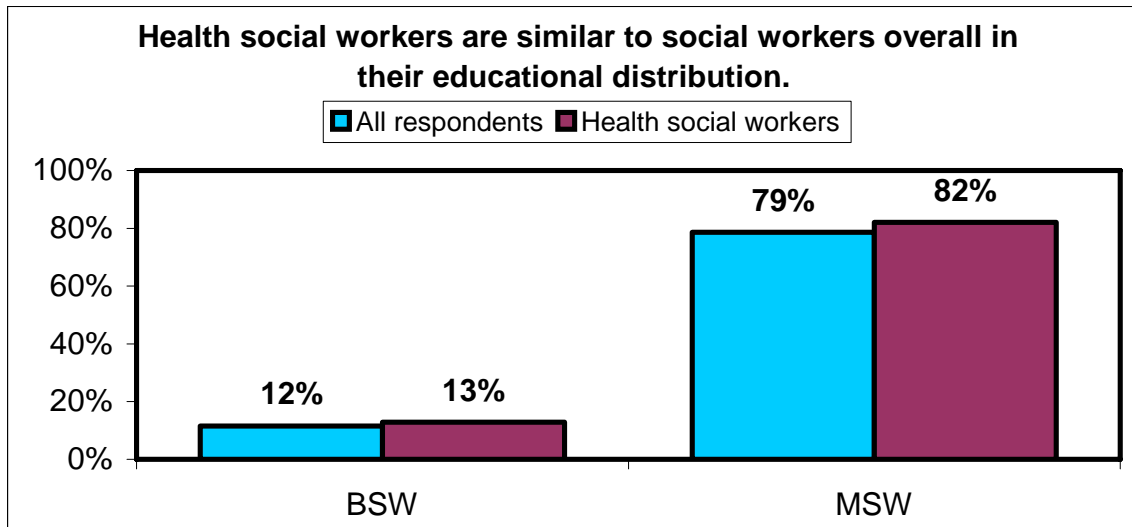


Education and Training

Highest Formal Degree

Figure 8 shows that the MSW is the predominant social work degree for licensed social workers in the practice area of Health (82%). Thirteen percent of social workers in Health have BSWs.

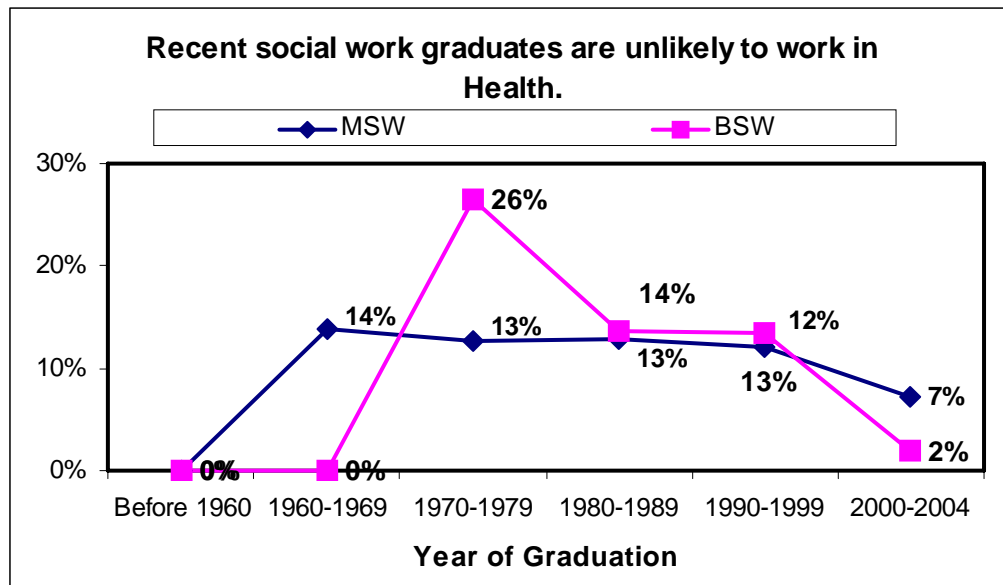
Figure 8. Educational Distribution of Health Social Workers and All Licensed Social Workers



Graduation Year and Work in Health Care

While 12% of all social workers report that Health is their practice area, this identification is much less common among recent graduates. This is particularly marked among BSWs, with only 2% of those graduating between 2000 and 2004 identifying Health as their practice area. In contrast, 7% of MSWs from this graduation cohort reported working in Health.

Figure 9. Year of Graduation of Health Social Workers, for MSWs and BSWs



Satisfaction with Education and Training

The majority of social workers in Health believe they were well prepared for social work practice by their social work degree program (60%) and post degree training (69%), comparable to social workers overall (60% and 71%, respectively). MSWs in Health are slightly more satisfied than BSWs with their degree program (61% versus 57%) and substantially more satisfied with post degree training (70% versus 55%).

Continuing Education (CE) and Training in Social Work

All social workers in Health reported that they participated in training/continuing education (CE) in the past two years (100%).

Sixty-one percent of social workers in Health report having “many” choices for continuing education programs related to social work practice. This varied by geographic location of practice, however, with those in metropolitan areas and small towns most likely to report “many” choices (64% and 63%), compared to social workers in rural areas (57%) and micropolitan areas (26%). These licensed social workers are more likely to work in hospices and less likely to work in hospitals than their peers in other geographic areas.

Figure 10. Percentages Reporting Having “Many” Choices for Continuing Education (4 or 5 on a 5-point scale)

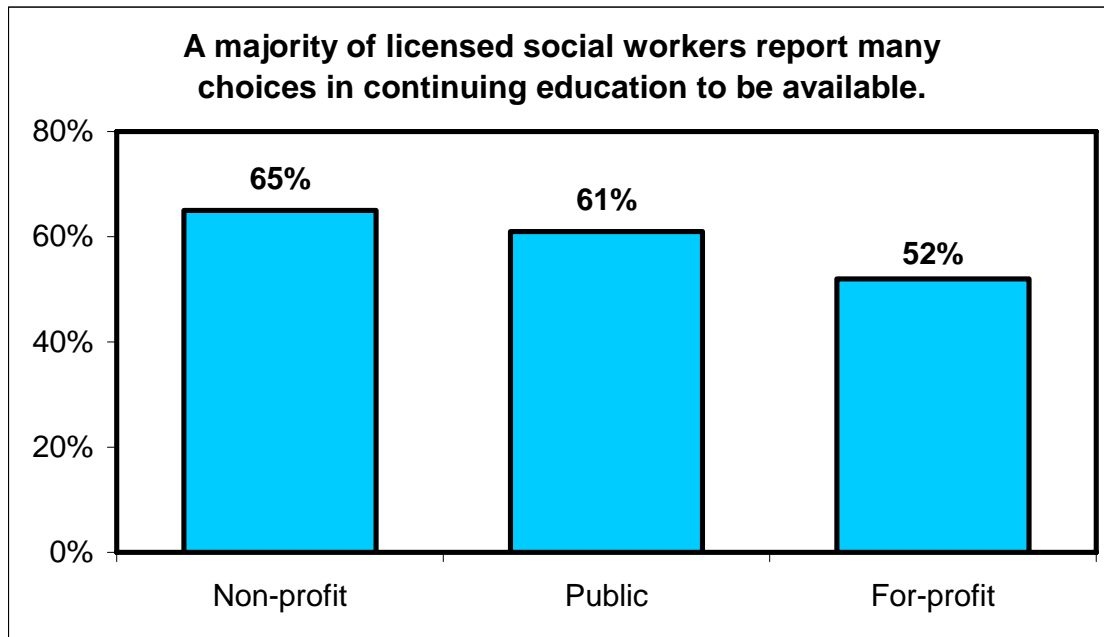


Table 1 identifies the percent of social workers by sector, practice location and settings that report that continuing education related to social work is unavailable.

Table 1. Percentages Reporting that Continuing Education Programs are “Unavailable” (1 or 2 on a 5-point scale), by Sector, Rural/Urban Location, and Setting

Sector		Rural/Urban		Setting	
Non-Profit	11%	Metropolitan	10%	Hospital	9%
Public	13%	Micropolitan	33%	Health clinic	13%
For-Profit	12%	Small Town	21%	Hospice	20%
Private Practice	N/A	Rural	0%	Other	13%

CE programs at conferences and short courses/workshops are the most common sources of training reported by licensed social workers in the Health practice area. Clinical practice (33%), trauma/disaster preparedness (29%), specialty practice area (28%), and professional ethics (21%) are the topics most desired for future training.

Table 2. Types Of Continuing Education/Training Programs Attended In The Past Two Years, By Degree

Type of Continuing Education	All	All Health	All MSWs	Health MSWs	All BSWs	Health BSWs
Conference CE Programs	81%	87%	79%	88%	83%	83%
Short Courses or Workshops	82%	79%	83%	80%	84%	74%
On-the-job Training	36%	41%	35%	42%	40%	33%
Professional Association Programs	31%	36%	31%	38%	24%	22%
Supervised Practice/Clinical Practice	33%	23%	39%	25%	13%	6%
Certificate Programs	23%	20%	22%	20%	29%	20%
Courses with Academic Credit	12%	10%	11%	10%	17%	9%
Distance Learning	8%	7%	8%	7%	9%	9%
Other CE	5%	3%	5%	3%	4%	4%