



NASW Annual Practice Conference

The Aging Boom: Is Your Clinical Practice Ready?

March 15-16, 2009 • Las Vegas, Nevada



Where the Rubber Meets the Road
Is Our Workforce Sufficient for the Aging Boom?

Tracy Whitaker, DSW, ACSW

NASW Center for Workforce Studies

Create a repository for information about the social work labor force

Identify trends

Forecast shifts in the needs of social service populations

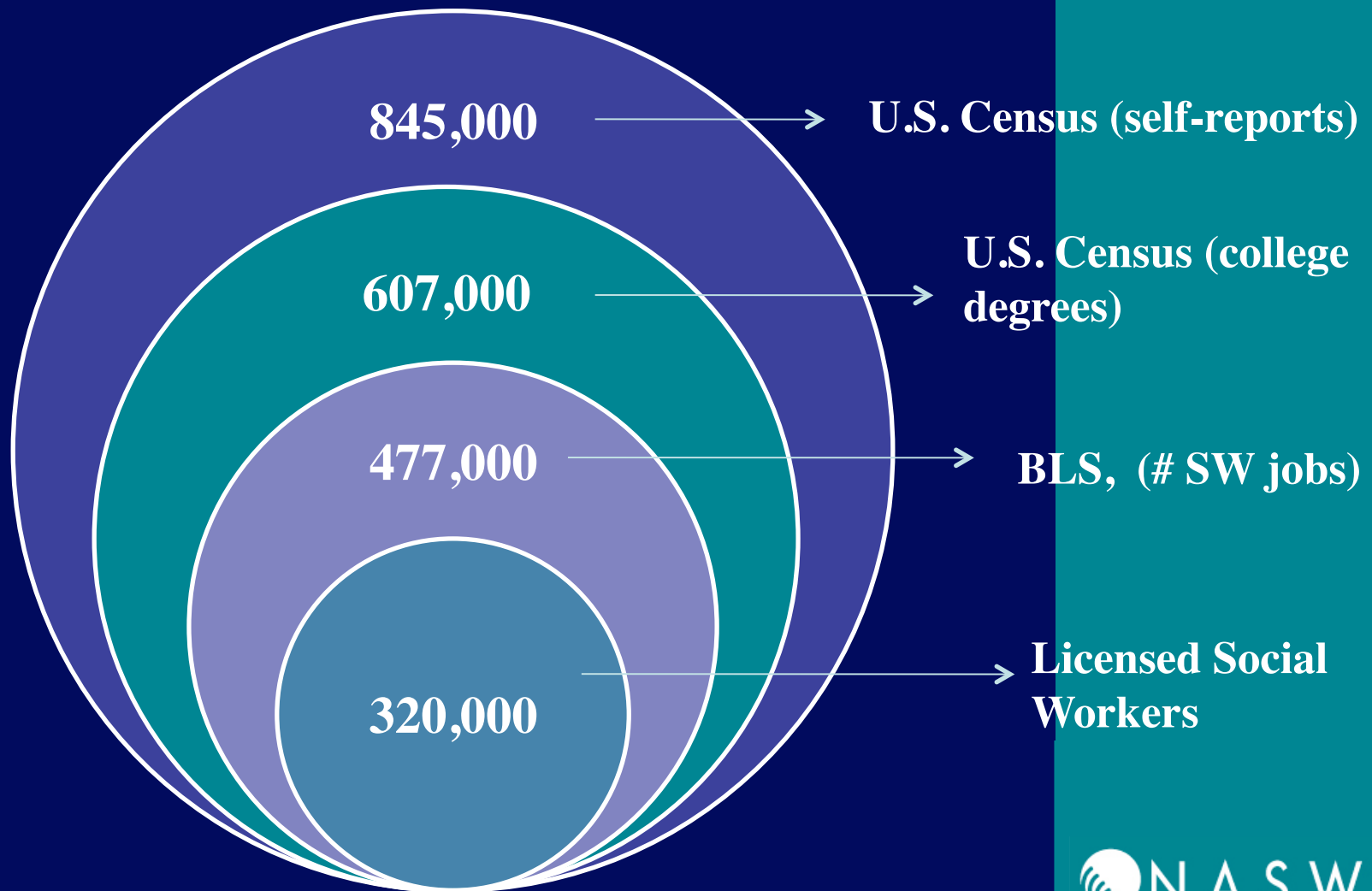
Cultivate a responsive workforce

Need for Workforce Data

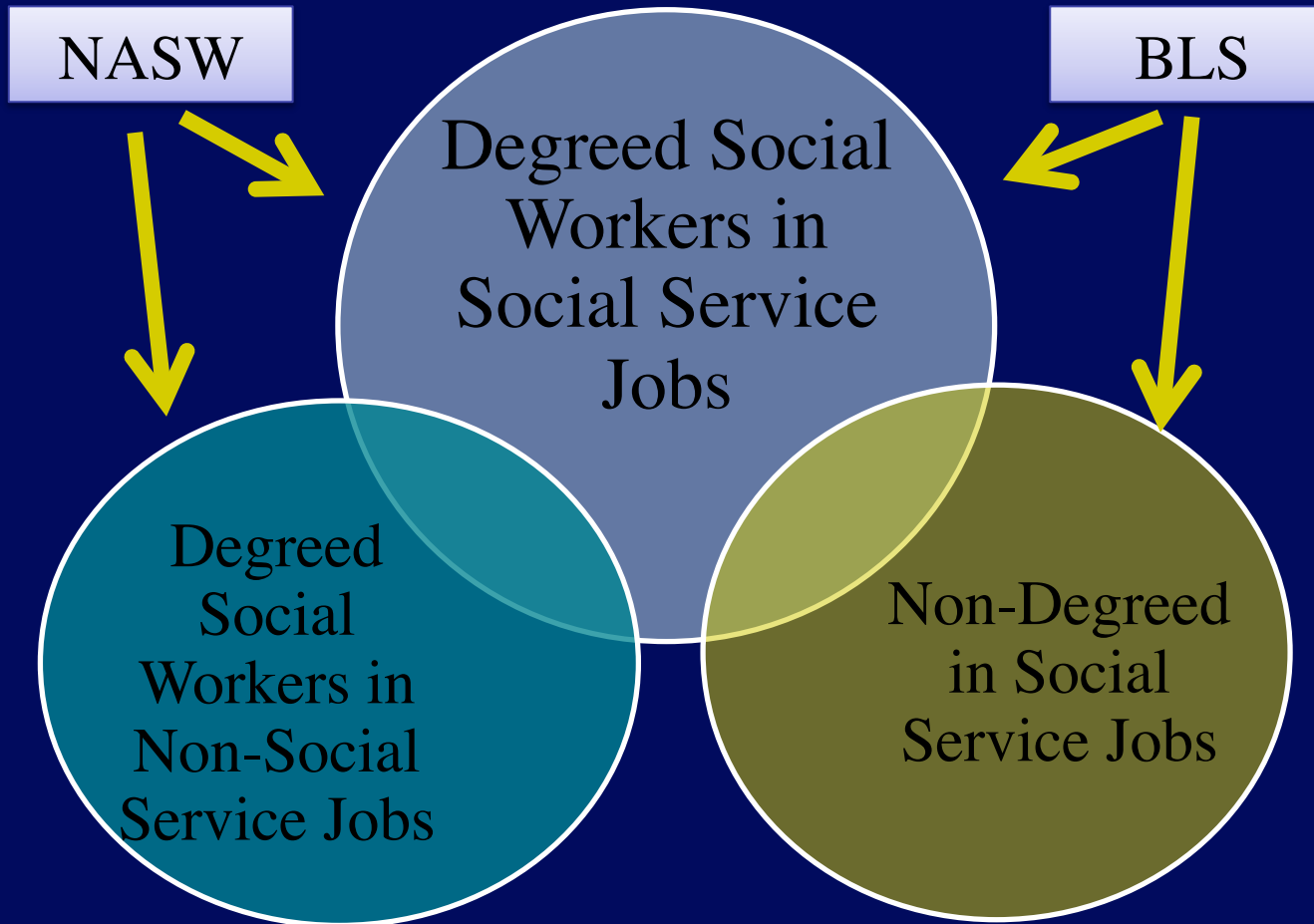
Existing data sets were inadequate for making accurate predictions

- Census Bureau
- Bureau of Labor Statistics

How Many Social Workers Are in the U.S.?



Counting Social Workers



Need for Workforce Data

Accurate data inform efforts to

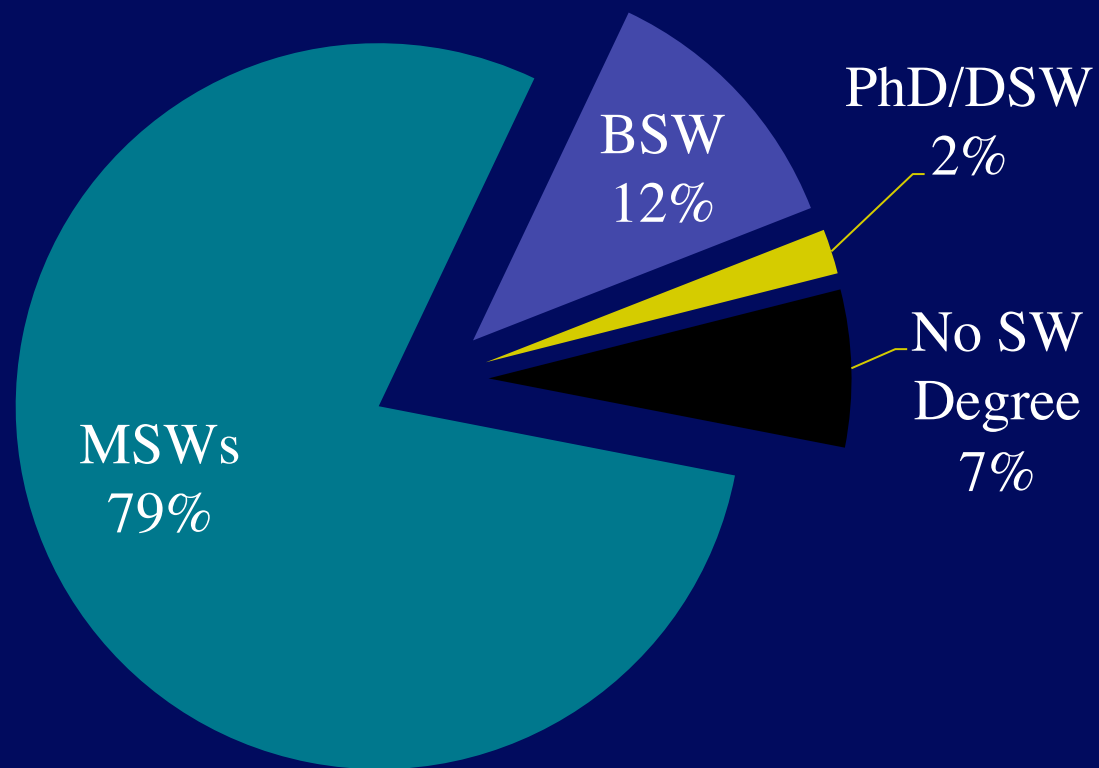
- *Recruit* new social workers
- *Retain* current social workers
- *Replace* retiring social workers

NASW Benchmark National Study of Licensed Social Workers (2004)

Stratified, national, random sample of 10,000 licensed social workers

Response Rate ~ 50%

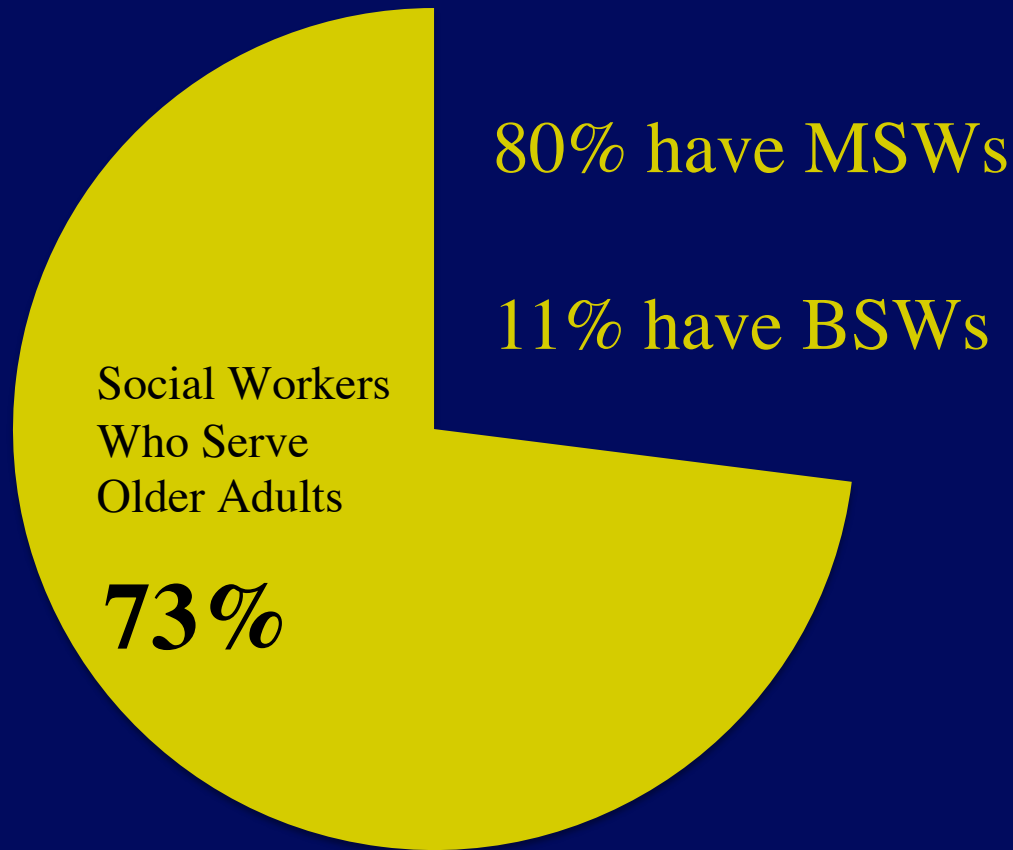
Social Work Education



Study Findings:

The Frontline Social Work Workforce & Older Adults

Most Licensed Social Workers Provide Services to Older Adults

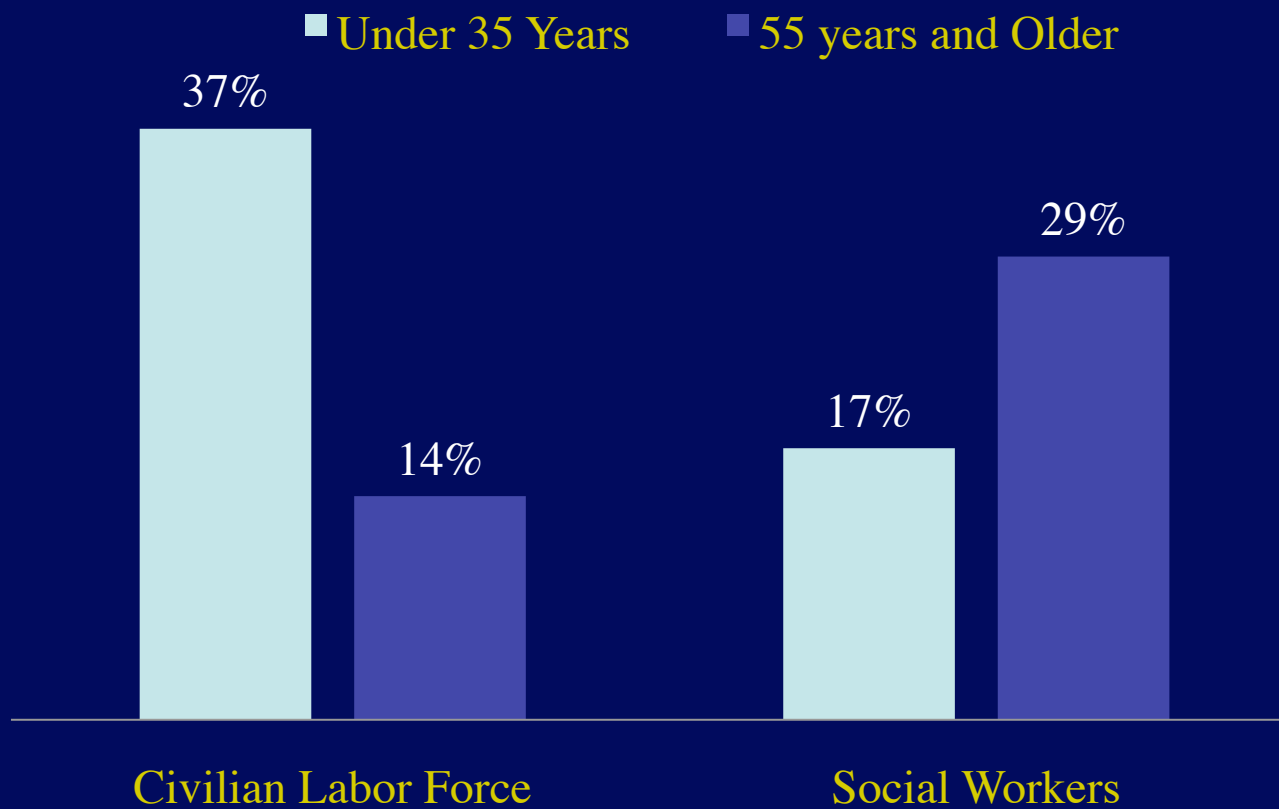


Challenges to Sufficiency of Current Social Work Labor Force

Profession's Demographics

Age

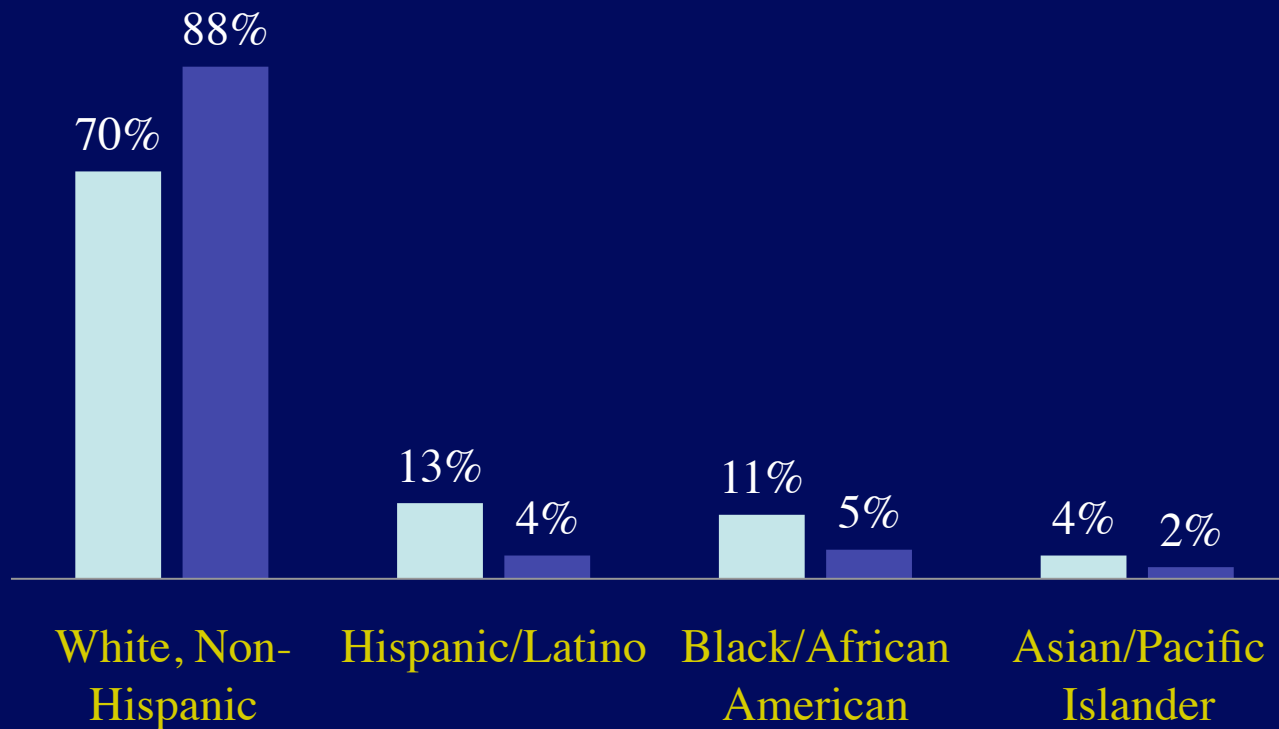
Social workers are older than the civilian labor force.



Race/Ethnicity

Social workers are less diverse than the civilian labor force.

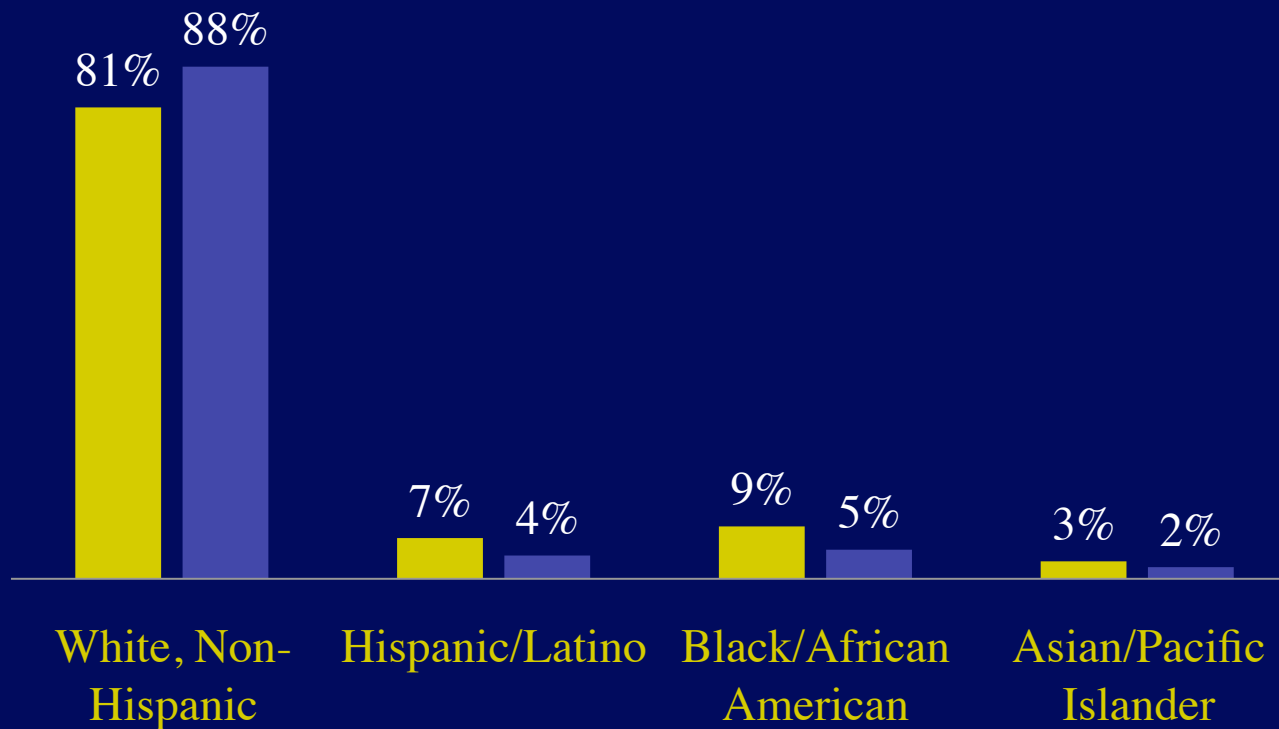
■ Civilian Labor Force ■ Social Workers



Race/Ethnicity

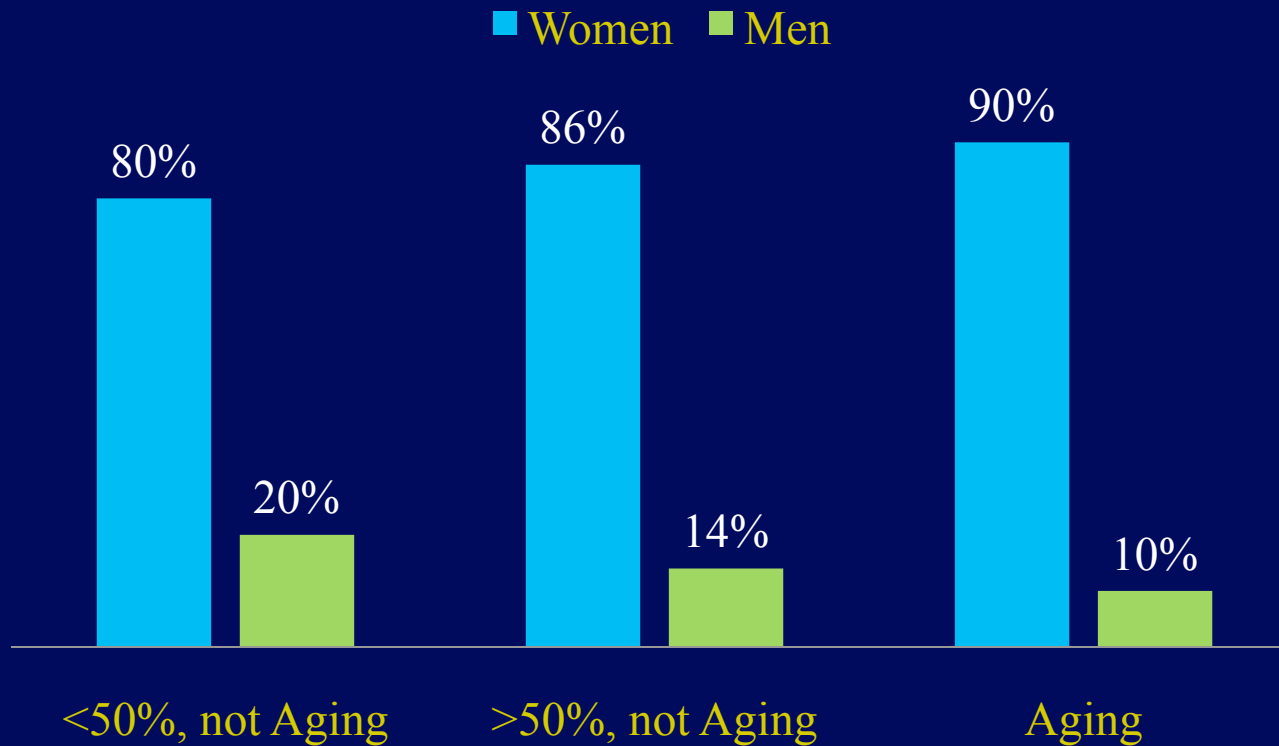
Social workers are less diverse than the older adults they serve.

■ Older Adults ■ Social Workers



Gender

The more involved social workers are with older adults, they more likely they are to be women.

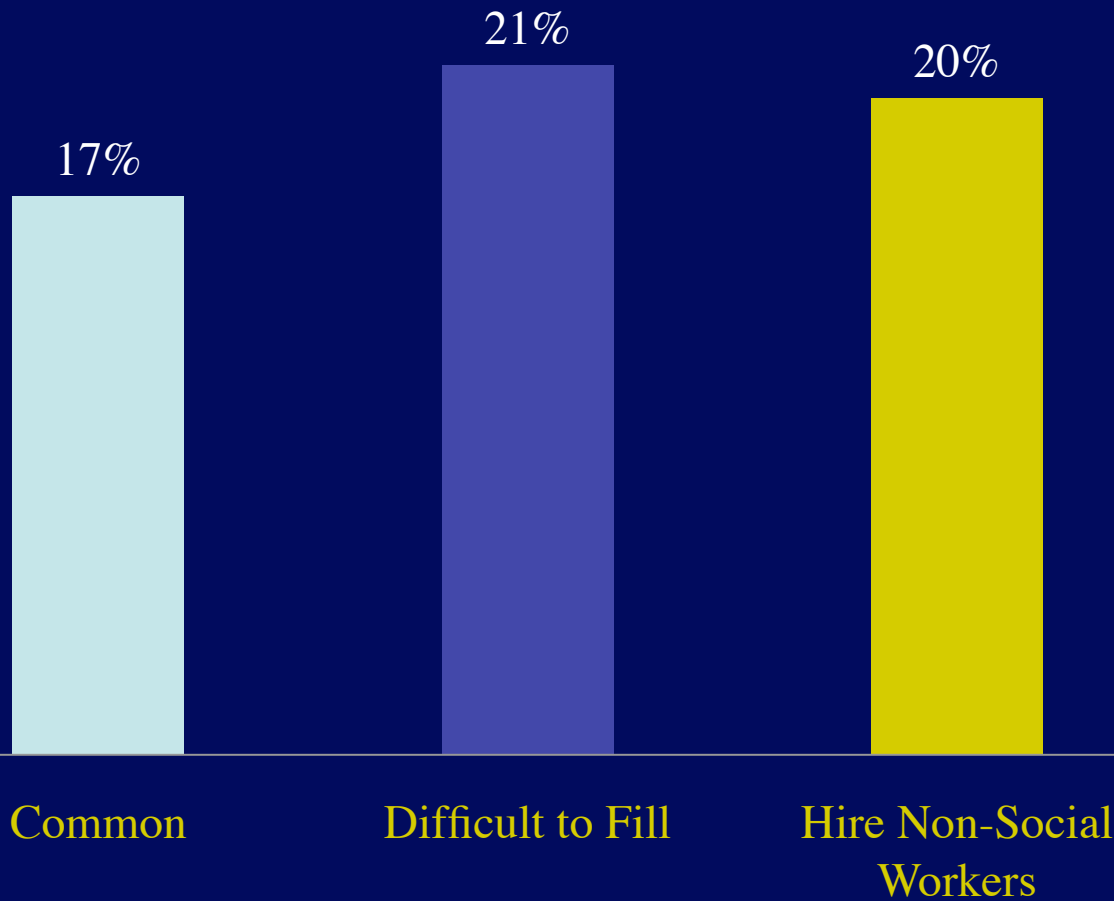


Challenges to Sufficiency of Current Social Work Labor Force

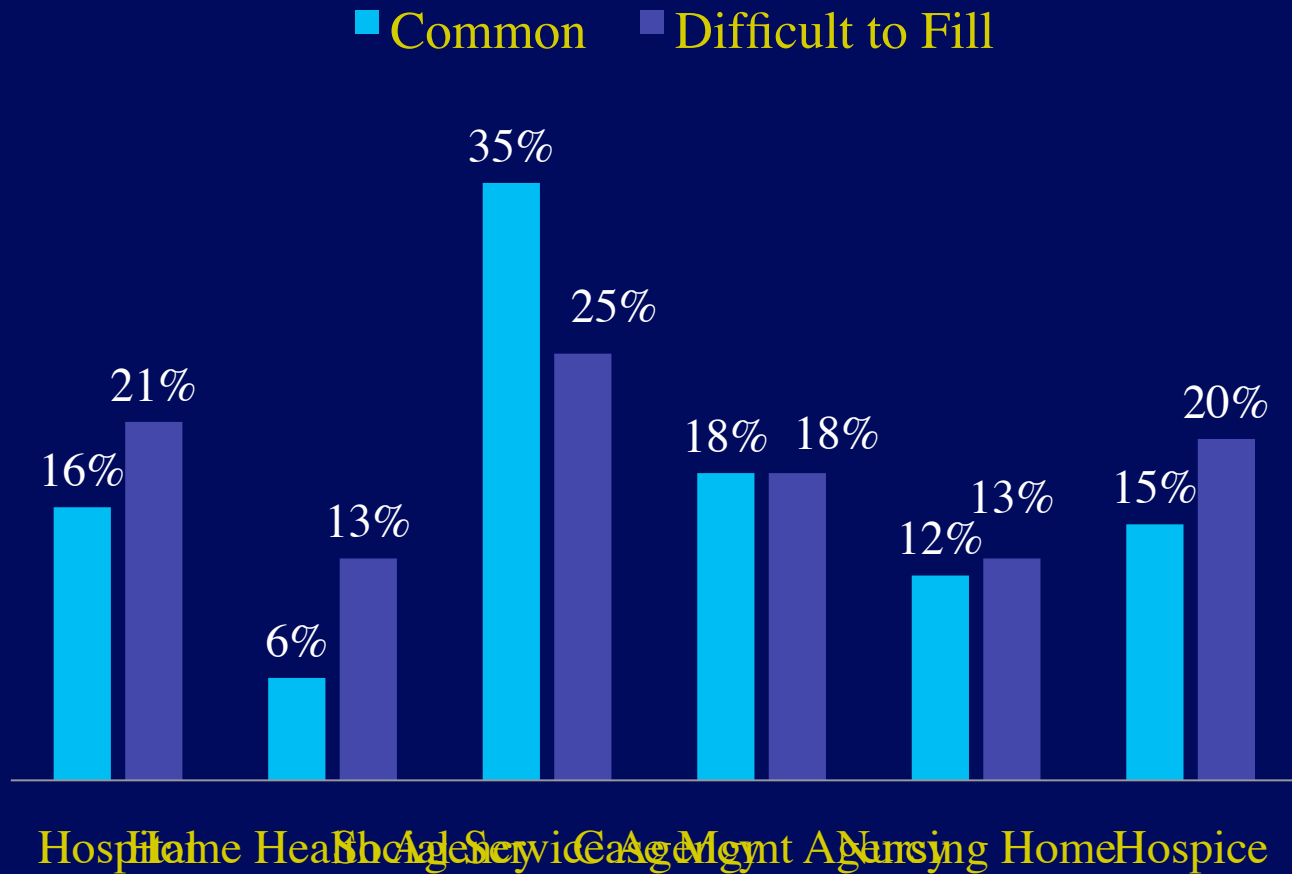
Profession's Demographics

Vacancies

Social Work Vacancies



Social Work Vacancies Across Agency Settings



Challenges to Sufficiency of Current Social Work Labor Force

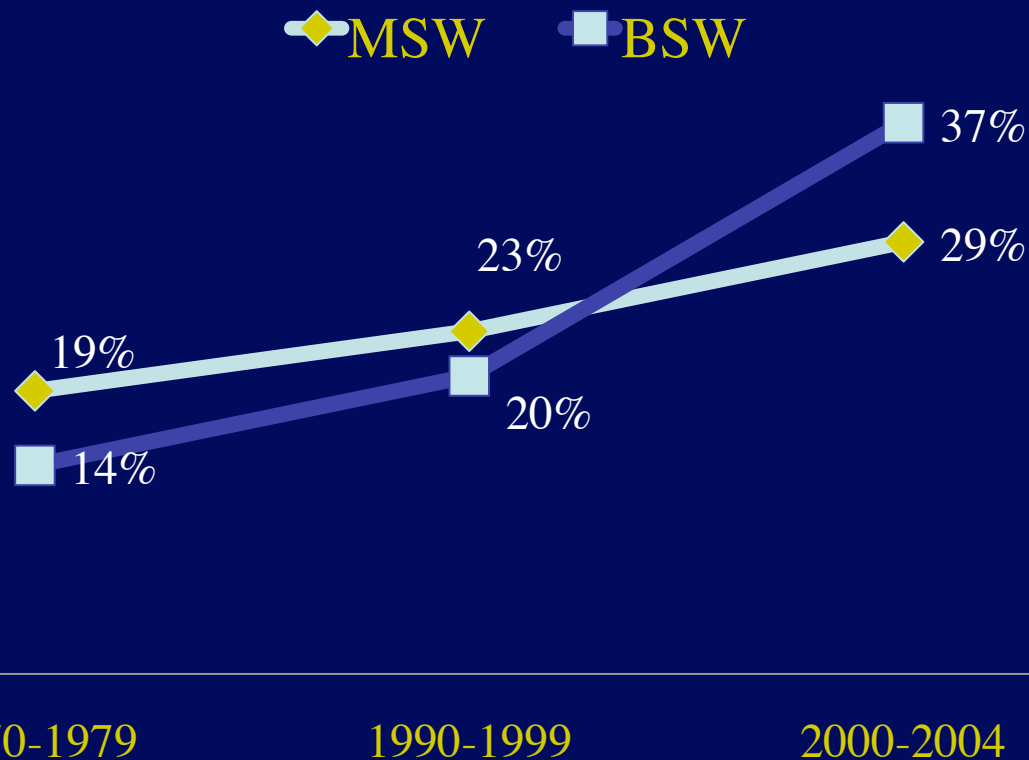
Profession's Demographics

Vacancies

New Graduates

Recent Grads are Less Likely to Work with Older Adults

Social workers who do not have any older adult clients.



Challenges to Sufficiency of Current Social Work Labor Force

Profession's Demographics

Vacancies

New Graduates

Working Conditions

Increases in Workload



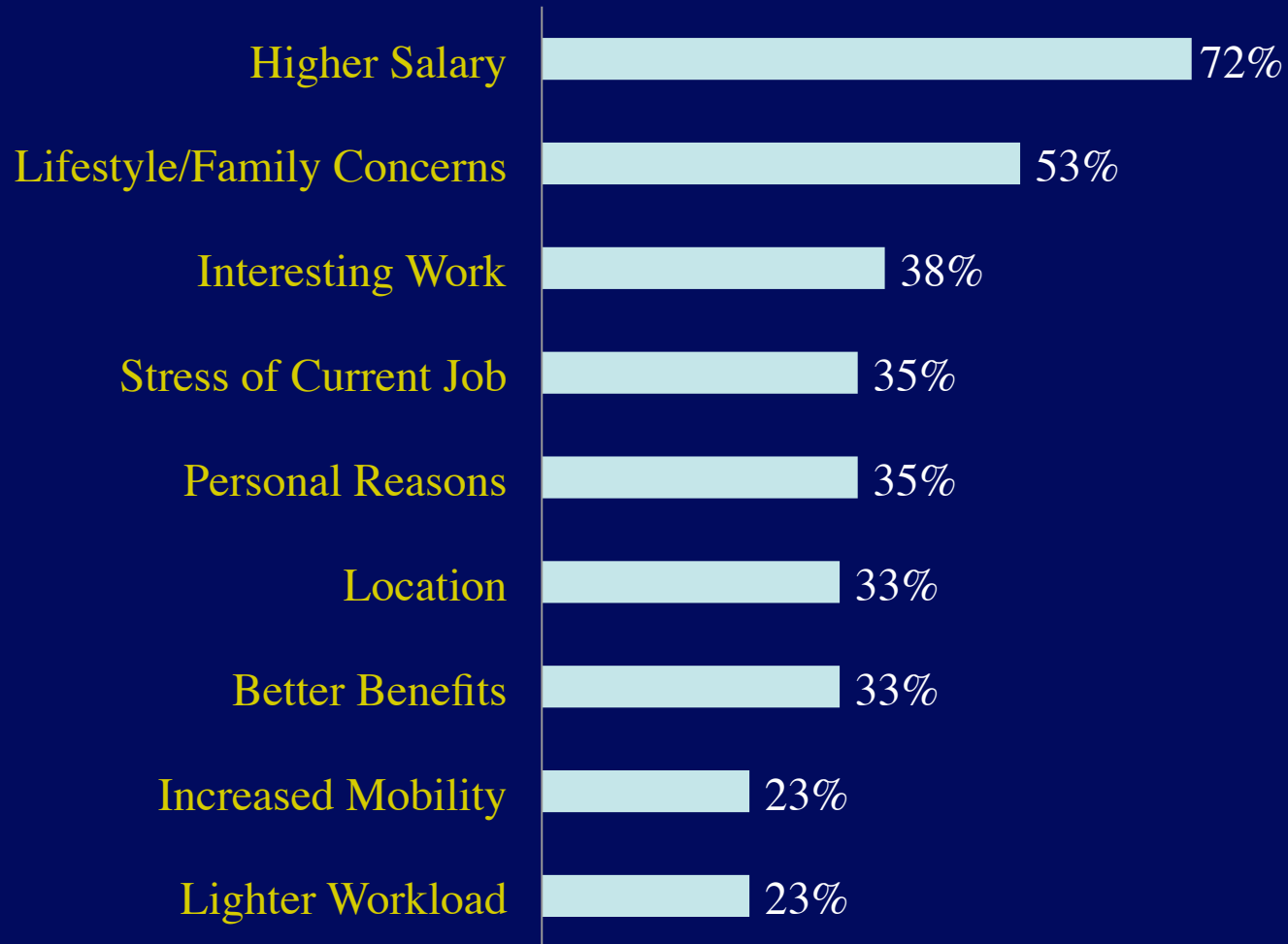
- Paperwork
- Severity of Client Problems
- Caseload
- Assignment of Non-SW Tasks
- Waiting Lists for Services
- Eligibility Requirements
- Level of Oversight
- Coordination with Community Agencies
- Court-Mandated Clients
- Availability of Professional Training
- Number of Clients Eligible for Services

Decreases in Support



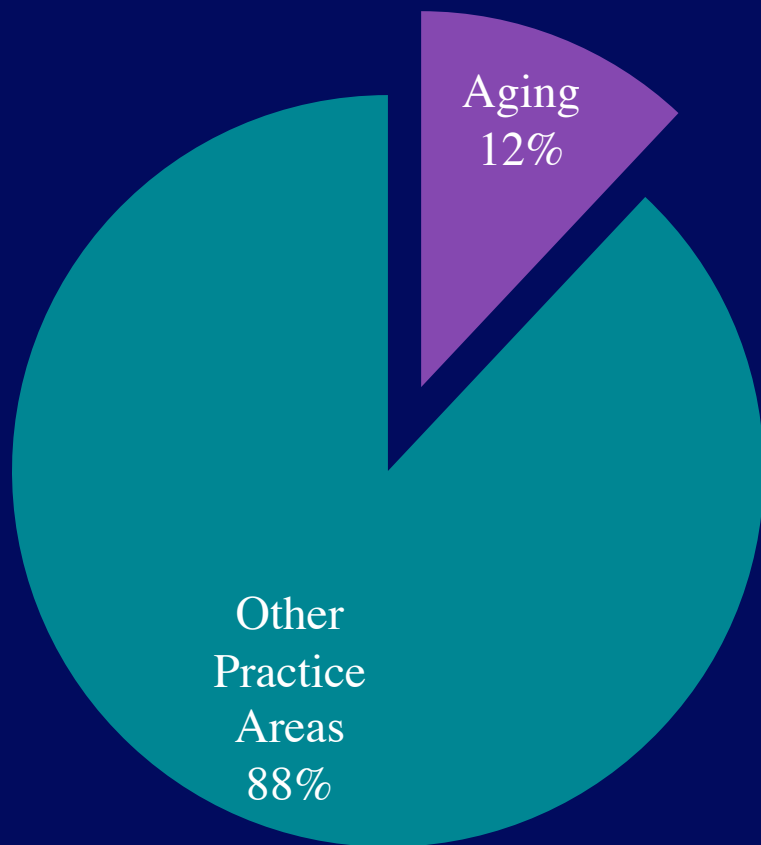
- Services Eligible for Funding
- Levels of Reimbursement
- Number of Services Available
- Availability of Supervision
- Range of Services Available
- Staffing Levels-Other
- Staffing Levels-Social Workers
- Job Security

Factors Influencing Desire to Change Job



Gerontological Social Workers

Gerontological Social Workers

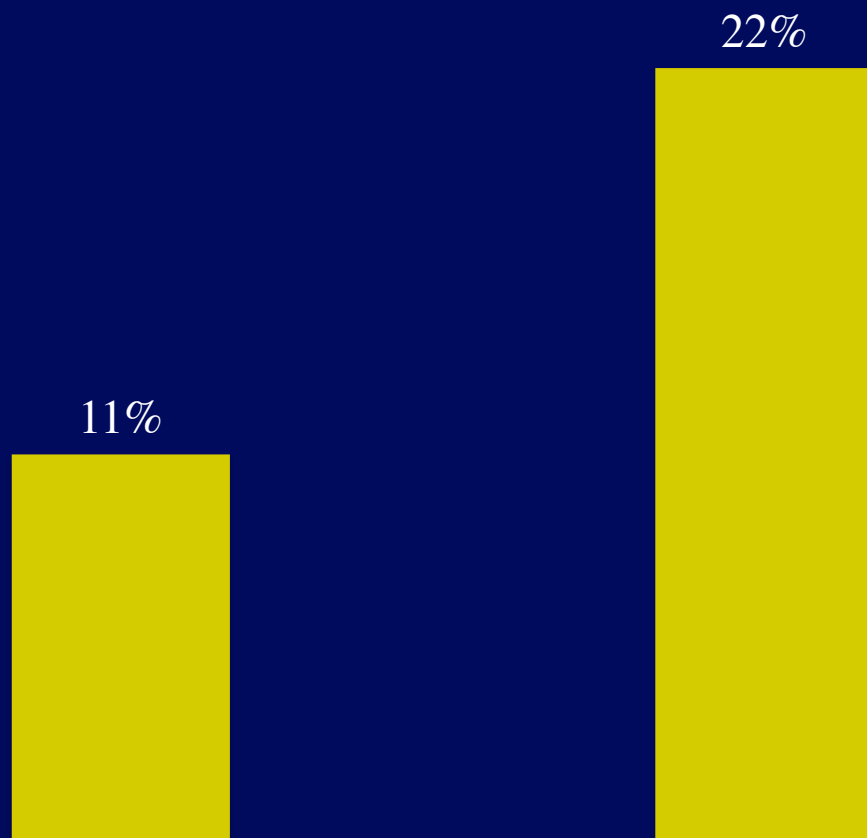


Gerontological Social Workers

Significant Role As Safety Net Providers

- More experienced
- More likely to perform “advocacy”
- Client insurance more likely to be from public programs
- More likely to work in rural areas

BSWs Serving Older Adults



Workforce Serving Older Adults Gerontological Social Workers

BSW Gerontological Social Workers

BSWs Are Significant Providers Of Services To Older Adults

- More likely to work in nursing homes, case management agencies and social service agencies
- Serve the “oldest old”

Challenges to Retaining Gerontological Social Workers

Lower Salaries

Lower Salaries

- Gerontological Social Workers
- All Social Workers

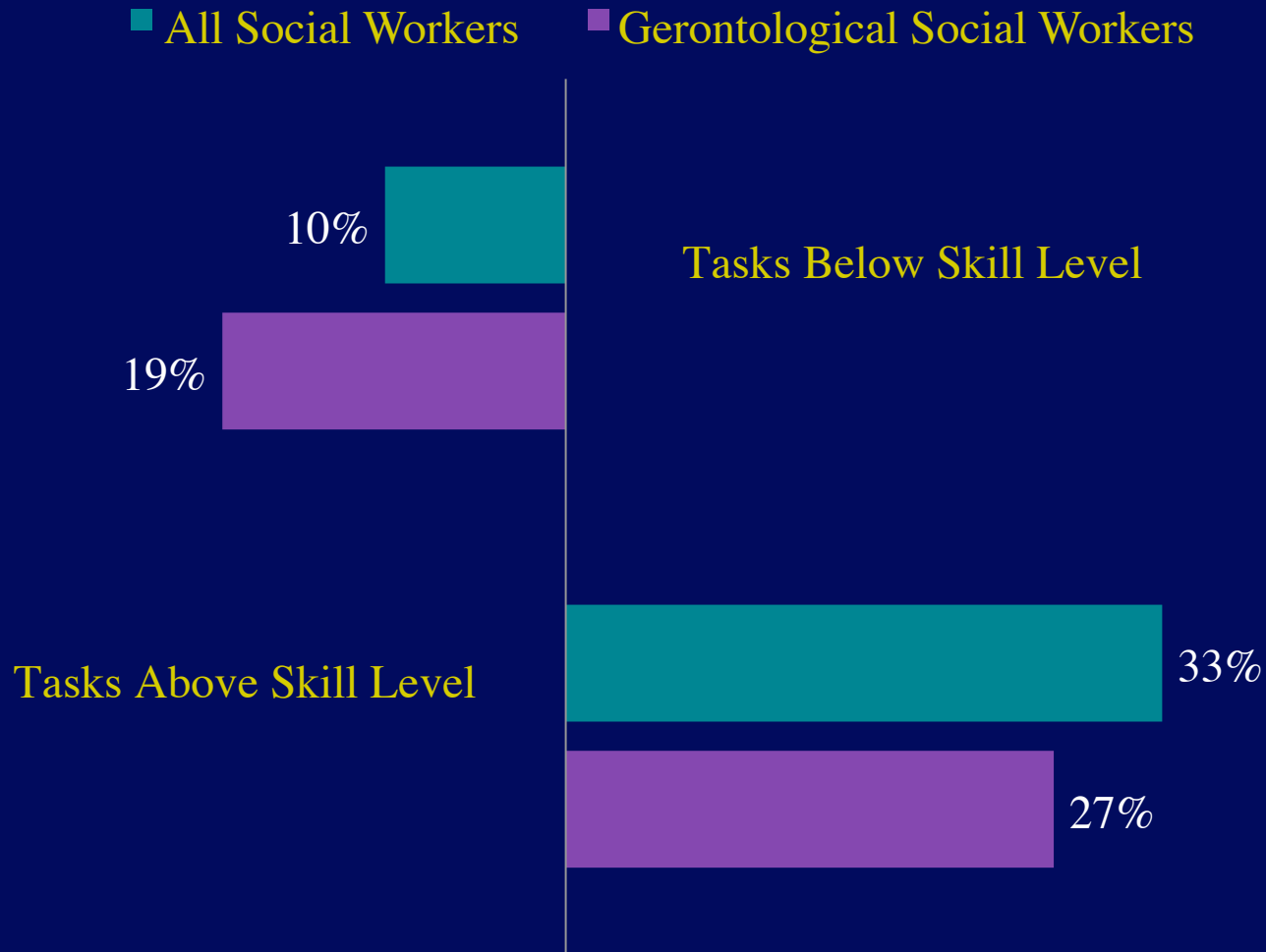


Challenges to Retaining Gerontological Social Workers

Lower Salaries

Task Fit to Skills

Task Fit to Skills



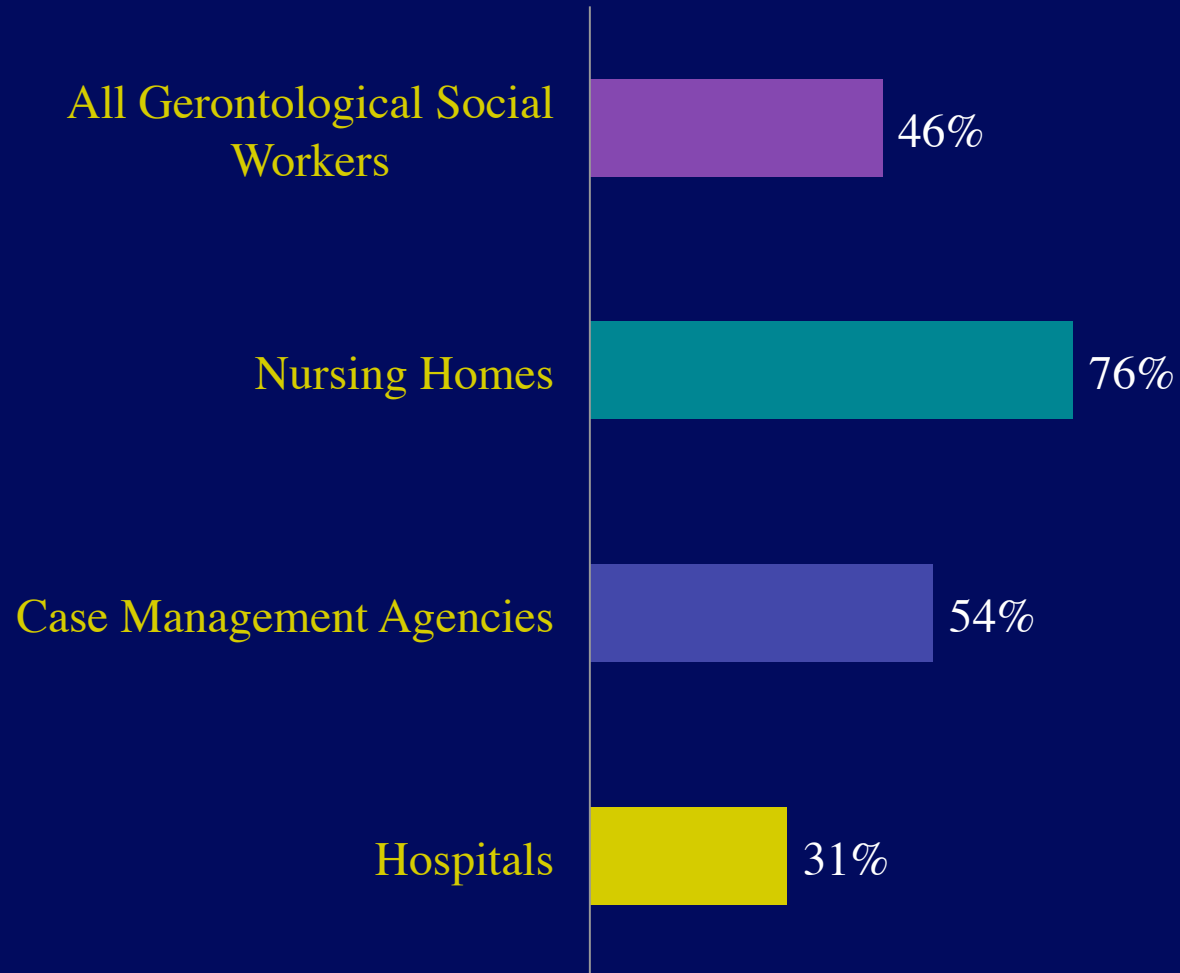
Challenges to Retaining Gerontological Social Workers

Lower Salaries

Task Fit to Skills

Caseload Size

Caseloads of More Than 50 Clients



Challenges to Retaining Gerontological Social Workers

Lower Salaries

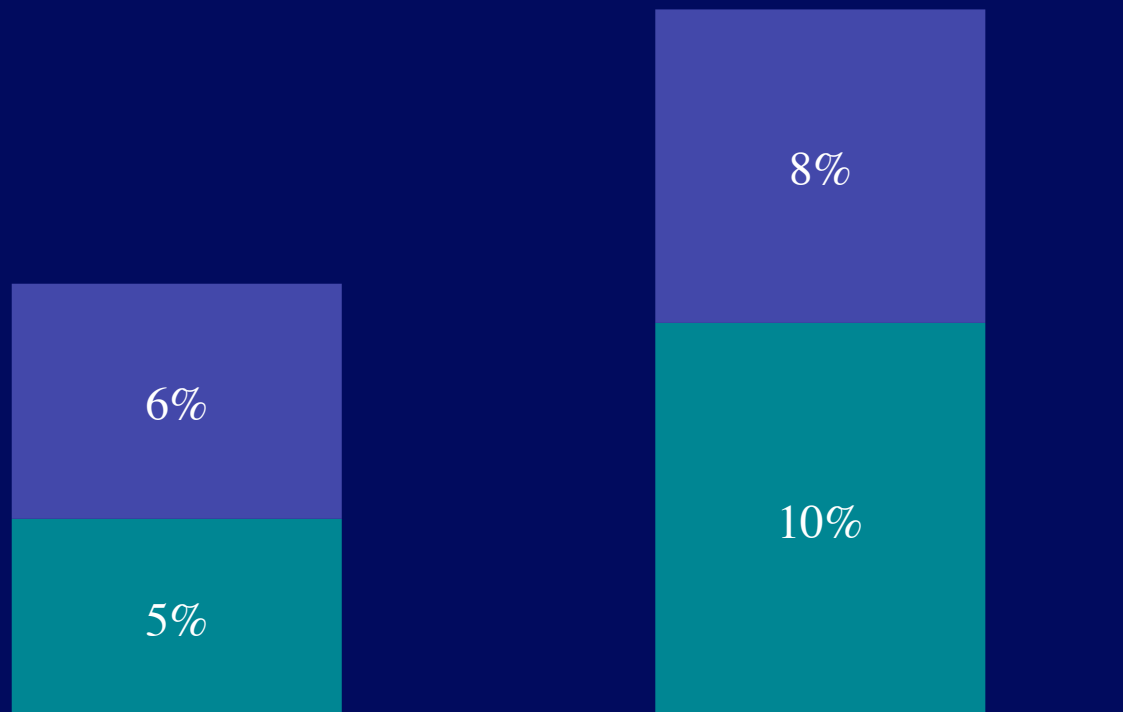
Task Fit to Skills

Caseload Size

Retirement Plans

Gerontological Social Workers are More Likely to Plan to Retire Soon

■ MSW ■ BSW



Other Practice Areas

Practice Area is Aging

The Double Squeeze



Summary

Social workers are significant providers of services to older adults.

The profession needs to actively recruit new professionals to serve older adults.

Work environment challenges will need to be addressed to improve the retention of the current workforce, particularly gerontological social workers.

NASW Center for Workforce Studies

<http://workforce.socialworkers.org>

About the Presenter

Tracy Whitaker, DSW, ACSW, is the Director of the NASW Center for Workforce Studies. Dr. Whitaker received a BA in Political Science, an MSW and a DSW from Howard University. She also holds certification from NASW's Academy of Certified Social Workers. As Director of the NASW Center for Workforce Studies, Dr. Whitaker is leading the development of a national repository for consolidated and comprehensive social work labor force information. Her career has also included work with individuals, organizations, and community systems.

For more information . . .

Please visit the NASW Web site at
www.socialworkers.org/agingconference

