



“Not Ready for Prime Time:
The Needs of Sandwich Generation Women,
A National Survey of Social Workers”

A National Survey with Social Workers who Provide
Professional Services to Sandwich Generation Women

Conducted by Pursuant, Inc. for:
The National Association of Social Workers & The New York Academy of Medicine



Embargoed until 12:01 a.m., March 20, 2008



Research Goals

Research Overview and Objectives





Research Overview

- The National Association of Social Workers (NASW) and the New York Academy of Medicine (NYAM) wished to use original, primary research to build awareness of the work of social workers.
- For this research, a quantifiable survey was completed online by social workers to measure their experiences working with sandwich generation women.
- The survey data will be used for media outreach purposes, to raise awareness of social workers among sandwich generation women.



Methodology

Research Process





Methodology

- Online surveys were completed by 1,489 social workers who work with sandwich generation women (SGW)—defined as women between the ages of 35 and 64 who are a parent to at least one child and have at least one living parent.
- The survey sample, provided by National Association of Social Workers and the National Association of Professional Geriatric Care Managers, consisted of member names and email addresses.
 - A random selection of members provided by the National Association of Social Workers was used, along with the complete membership roster of the National Association of Geriatric Care Managers.
- A total of 2,862 social workers began the survey, but a number were screened out prior to commencing the substantive questions because they did not qualify for the survey.
- The survey was fielded online from November 19, 2007 to December 17, 2007. The survey's margin of error is +/- 3 percent.



Social Workers' General Experiences with Sandwich Generation Women

Motivations/Barriers for Sandwich Generation
Women's Help Seeking





General Happiness

Last year when we surveyed sandwich generation women, only 20% reported being very happy, as compared to 34% in the general population. In your professional opinion, what are the top reasons that may explain sandwich generation women's lack of happiness?

[CODED RESPONSES] [RESPONDENTS COULD PROVIDE MORE THAN ONE RESPONSE]

The top-three survey responses to this question included:

- Overwhelmed/too many responsibilities (46.8%)
- Little of time for self (28.8%)
- Financial worries (21.2%)

Additional responses included:

- Stress for caring for both parents and children (19.3%)
- Emotional issues (e.g., stress, anxiety, worried, depressed) (14.5%)
- Lack of support or help (e.g., familial, friends, general) (12.8%)
- Employer/work issues (12.2%)
- Lack of/not enough knowledge of community resources (8.3%)
- Expectation caregiving is female responsibility (7.2%)



General Happiness, Cont.

***Last year when we surveyed sandwich generation women, only 20% reported being very happy, as compared to 34% in the general population. In your professional opinion, what are the top reasons that may explain sandwich generation women's lack of happiness?
[VERBATIM RESPONSES]***

“One, they lack the time to pursue outside interests due to caregiving to the parent and raising the child. Two, they do not feel successful at either pursuit.” – Michigan social worker

“Financial stress possibly constitutes one of the biggest reasons, but I believe it is also the lack of time for themselves and poor socialization opportunities outside of the family.” – Missouri social worker

“Feeling like they are unable to fulfill expected responsibilities. This could be their own expectation or the expectation of others.” – California social worker

“Financial stressors, high number of responsibilities at home and work, parenting special needs children (huge factor at my agency), marital discord, single parent household, mental health challenges, physical health challenges.” – Illinois social worker

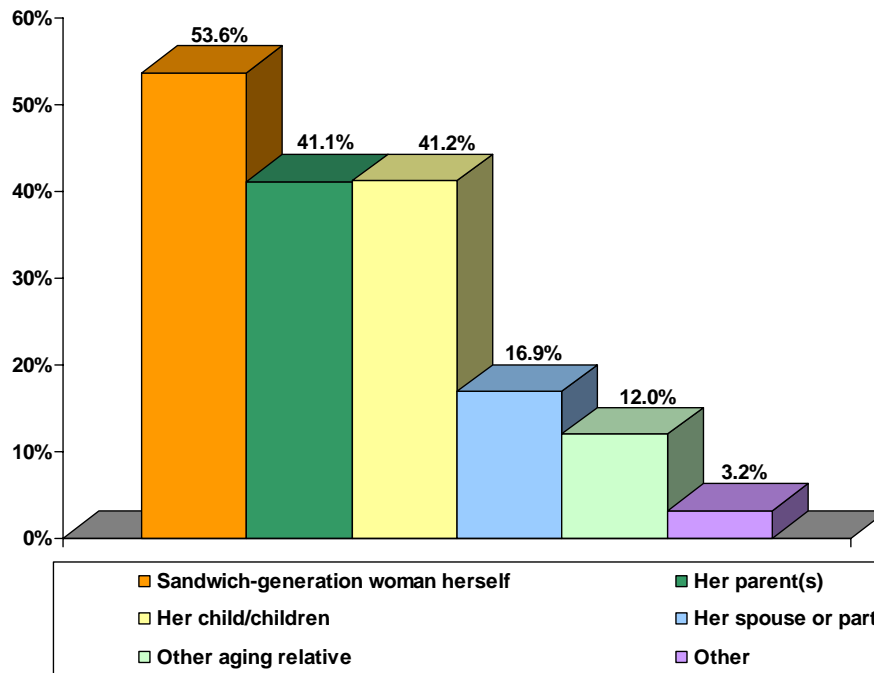
“They have multiple stressors in their lives and often have financial stressors trying to support their children, save for their own retirement, and make sure their parents are secure in their old age.” – New York social worker

“Too many responsibilities. Work/career, home/family, elderly parents/in-laws, etc., etc. Gender equity has not been achieved, so women are feeling the burden of an inequitable distribution of labor, primarily on the home front.” – Ohio social worker

“The disconnect between what makes them happy and amount of time they are doing for others in efforts to make others happy.” – West Virginia social worker

Family Member for Whom Assistance is Sought

Generally speaking, when a sandwich generation woman comes to you for help, for whom is she most frequently requesting help? [RESPONDENTS COULD PROVIDE MORE THAN ONE RESPONSE]



More than half of the SGW (53.6%) are seeking help for themselves, according to social workers, followed by a fairly equal number that are seeking help for either their children (41.2%) or their parents (41.1%).

Initial Reasons for Contacting a Social Worker

Which of the following describes the primary or initial reason you hear most frequently from sandwich generation women for seeking your assistance as a social worker?

Reasons for seeking assistance	Percentage
<i>Counseling/therapy/mental health services <u>for the sandwich generation woman herself</u></i>	36.9%
<i>Family/child crisis</i>	23.6%
<i>Care management/care coordination for parent(s) or other aging relative</i>	18.3%
<i>Chronic health issue support for parent(s) or other aging relatives</i>	6.9%
<i>Referral information</i>	6.0%
<i>Counseling/therapy/mental health services <u>for parent(s) or other aging relative</u></i>	3.0%
<i>Personal health issues</i>	1.9%
<i>Other</i>	3.4%

Social workers say they are most often contacted by sandwich generation women to provide counseling/therapy/mental health services to the women themselves (36.9%). A family/child crisis was the second most popular reason (23.6%).

Additional Services or Assistance Provided

What other additional services or assistance, if any, do you provide to sandwich generation women? [RESPONDENTS COULD PROVIDE MORE THAN ONE RESPONSE]

Additional Services or Assistance	Percentage
Referral information	71.4%
<u>Counseling/therapy/mental health services for the sandwich generation woman herself</u>	53.7%
Family/child crisis	47.0%
<u>Counseling/therapy/mental health services for parent(s) or other aging relative</u>	28.0%
Personal health issues.	26.7%
Care management/care coordination for parent(s) or other aging relative	26.3%
Chronic health issue support for parent(s) or other aging relative	25.9%
Other	10.2%
None of the above	2.0%

With 71.4% choosing it, providing referral information was by far the number one additional service/assistance that social workers say they provide to sandwich generation women.

Frequency of Help for Different Issues

How frequently have you helped sandwich generation women with the following?

	1 Very frequently	2 Somewhat frequently	3 Somewhat infrequently	4 Not at all
<i>Improve marriage/partnership</i>	24.9%	32.2%	26.8%	16.1%
<i>Improve relationships with siblings</i>	9.5%	30.5%	40.8%	19.1%
<i>Handle issues with children in household</i>	37.4%	30.2%	22.4%	9.9%
<i>Ease caregiving burden/responsibilities for parent(s) or other aging relative</i>	29.8%	29.9%	26.4%	13.9%
<i>Manage stress of daily life (e.g., on the job, at home, etc.)</i>	58.4%	29.6%	9.1%	2.9%
<i>Get access to health care for themselves or for parent(s) or other aging relative</i>	28.7%	33.5%	26.8%	10.9%
<i>Manage feelings of depression/anxiety</i>	55.7%	29.2%	11.9%	3.2%

Social workers help sandwich generation women “manage stress of daily life” (58.4%) most frequently, followed by “manage feelings of depression/anxiety” (55.7%).

Reasons for Not Seeking Help from a Social Worker

There are a number of reasons sandwich generation women may have for not getting the help they may need from a social worker. How frequently do you hear the following from sandwich generation women as reasons for not getting help sooner?

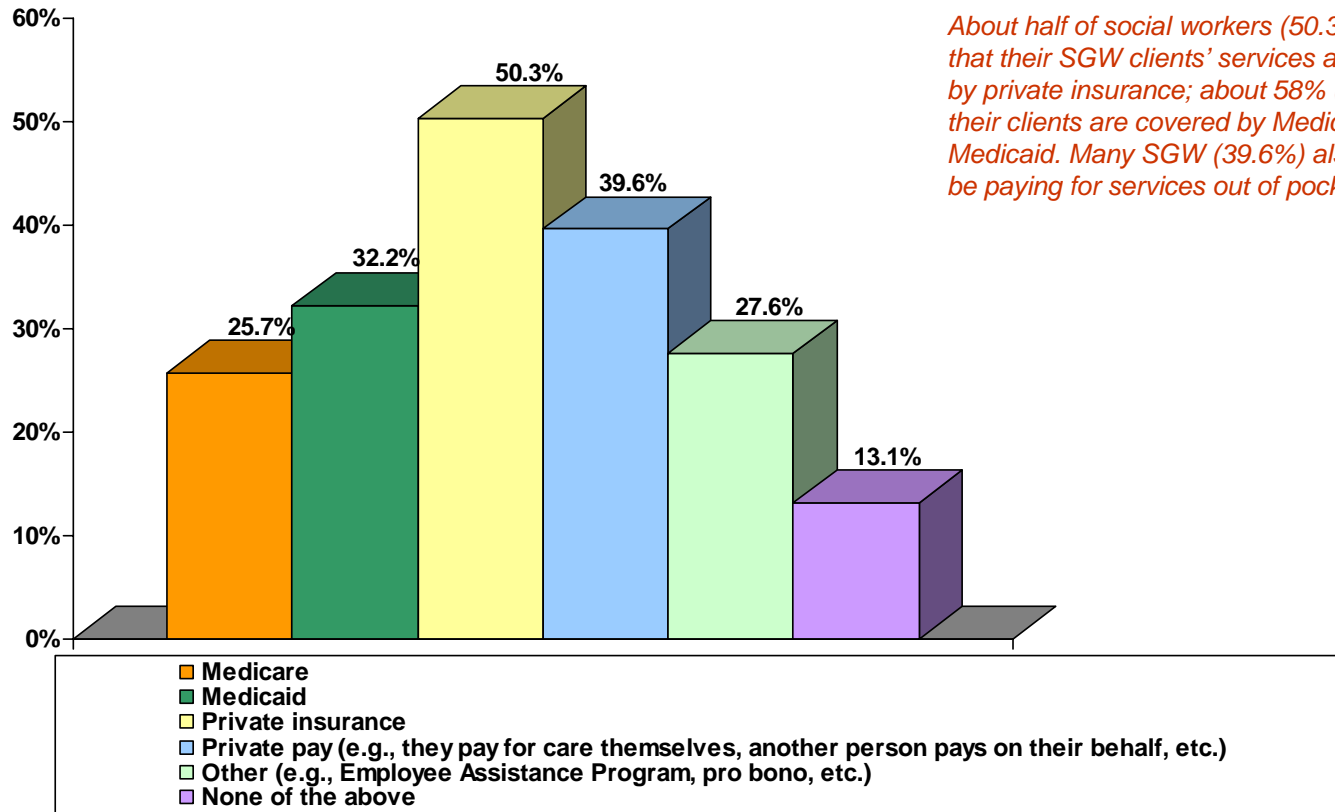
	1 Very frequently	2 Somewhat frequently	3 Somewhat infrequently	4 Not at all
<i>Service was not covered by private insurance, Medicare, or other insurance</i>	33.6%	30.7%	20.6%	15.0%
<i>Perception that social work services are too expensive</i>	8.7%	22.0%	31.3%	38.0%
<i>Lack of awareness that social workers could help with their issue or concern</i>	23.5%	33.7%	25.6%	17.1%
<i>Perception that they could handle the concern on their own</i>	47.2%	39.4%	10.3%	3.1%
<i>Getting help for themselves was not a priority</i>	52.0%	32.8%	11.3%	3.9%
<i>Stigma associated with going to a professional for help</i>	17.9%	31.7%	33.8%	16.5%

Among those listed, there are two top reasons sandwich generation women do not seek help sooner, according to social workers.

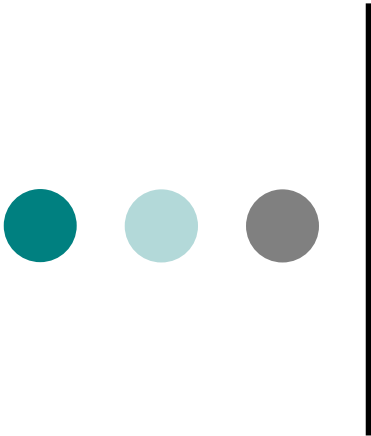
One, getting help for themselves is not a priority (52.0% cited they hear this “very frequently” from SGW); two, SGW believe they can handle their concerns on their own (47.2% hear this “very frequently”).

Paying for Social Work Services

Generally speaking, how are your sandwich generation women clients paying for your services?
[RESPONDENTS COULD PROVIDE MORE THAN ONE RESPONSE]



About half of social workers (50.3%) report that their SGW clients' services are covered by private insurance; about 58% (57.9) say their clients are covered by Medicare or Medicaid. Many SGW (39.6%) also appear to be paying for services out of pocket.



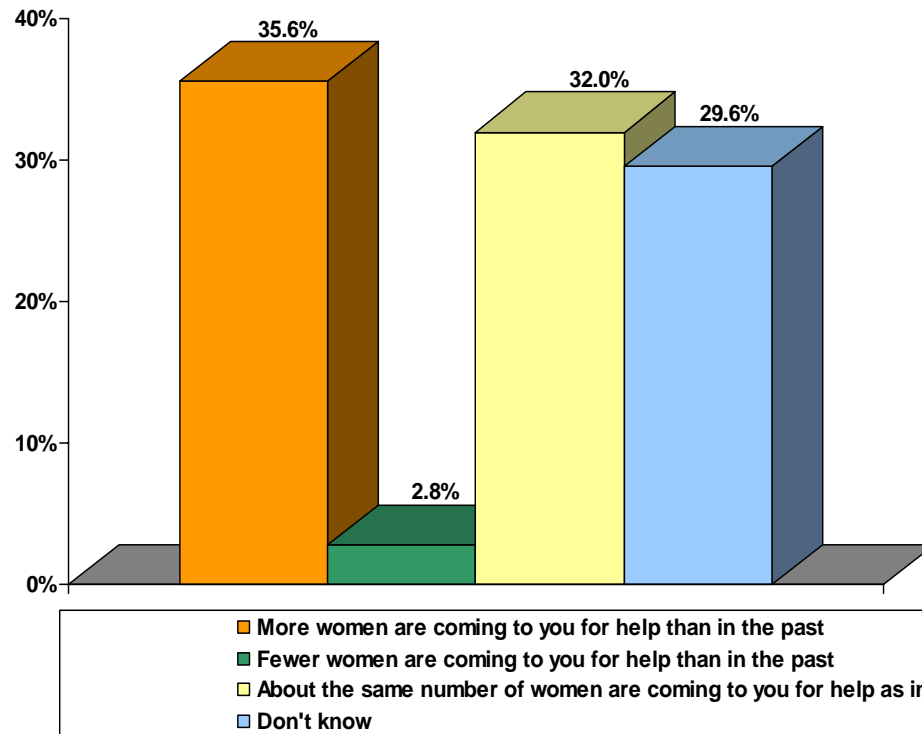
Experiences with SGW Caring for Aging Relatives

A closer look at social workers' experiences with sandwich generation women caring for aging relatives



Trends in Frequency with which Help is Sought

In terms of issues related to caregiving for their parent(s) or other aging relative, would you say... ?



While most social workers (35.6%) report that they are seeing more SGW who need help with caregiving responsibilities than in the past, nearly an equal number (32.0%) say the number has not changed. In addition, about 30% (29.6) say they don't know whether they are seeing more or fewer SGW for this particular issue.

Preparedness for Caregiving Responsibilities

As their parents age, how prepared do you believe most sandwich generation women to be regarding the following?

Aspect of Caregiving	1 Very Prepared	2 Somewhat prepared	3 Not at all prepared	4 Don't know
<i>End-of-life planning for parent(s) or other aging relative (e.g., a living will, health care proxy)</i>	1.1%	38.4%	52.7%	7.8%
<i>Planning for parent(s) or other aging relative's care (e.g., long-term care insurance, care coordination, etc.)</i>	0.5%	28.3%	63.3%	7.9%
<i>Cost of paying for parent(s) or other aging relative's care</i>	0.5%	16.8%	73.9%	8.8%
<i>Onset of illnesses or disability of parent(s) or other aging relative</i>	0.7%	42.5%	50.0%	6.8%
<i>Juggling responsibilities of home, work, and caregiving for a parent(s) or other aging relative(s)</i>	1.5%	47.0%	46.6%	4.8%

A majority of social workers report that most SGW are “not at all prepared” for a number of caregiving responsibilities. The caregiving areas in which SGW are least prepared are shouldering the cost of paying for care (73.9%), and in care and end-of-life planning (63.3% and 52.7%, respectively).

Estimations of Caregiving Responsibilities

In caring for their parent(s) or other aging relative, in your experience do most sandwich generation women overestimate, underestimate, or correctly estimate the following?

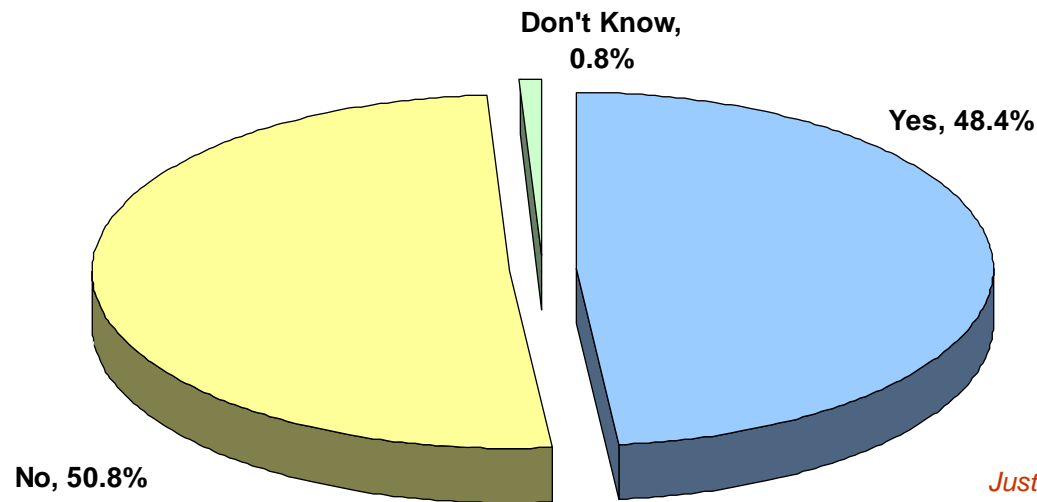
Aspect of Caregiving Responsibility	1 Overestimate	2 Correctly estimate	3 Underestimate	4 Don't know
Cost of receiving help from a social worker	15.9%	21.9%	25.1%	37.1%
Availability of resources for assisting with care	17.3%	9.9%	61.6%	11.2%
Emotional toll associated with the care	1.3%	7.7%	85.7%	5.3%
Improved bond with parent(s) or other aging relative	14.3%	25.4%	36.4%	23.9%
Increased stress on the job	1.3%	16.8%	74.1%	7.9%
Impact on their own health	0.4%	3.1%	91.2%	5.3%
Missed opportunities with their families	2.4%	20.1%	62.5%	15.0%
Financial toll of caring for parent(s) or other aging relative	1.5%	11.9%	76.3%	10.3%
Stress on their marriage or partnership	0.9%	11.3%	79.8%	8.0%

An overwhelming majority of social workers report that SGW underestimate a number of aspects of their caregiving responsibilities.

Most notably, 91.2% say that SGW underestimate the toll on their own health, followed by the emotional toll of providing care (85.7%).

Care Management/Coordination

Do you assist sandwich generation women with care management or coordination for their parent(s) or other aging relative?



Just about one-half of social workers (48.4%) assist sandwich generation women with care management or coordination for their parent or other aging relative.

Care Management/Coordination by Social Workers

*How frequently, if at all, do you provide sandwich generation women the following care management or coordination for their parents or other aging relative.**

Activity	1 Very frequently	2 Somewhat frequently	3 Somewhat infrequently	4 Not at all
<i>Assess needs and make referrals to health and social services.</i>	51.3%	33.7%	12.0%	3.1%
<i>Assess and make referrals to mental health services.</i>	31.3%	40.0%	24.7%	4.0%
<i>Coordinate community-based care services such as transportation and food delivery.</i>	30.8%	28.0%	23.9%	17.3%
<i>Screen and manage in-home help.</i>	17.5%	15.4%	24.7%	42.4%
<i>Assist with transition to retirement, assisted care, or nursing home.</i>	34.7%	26.6%	26.8%	11.9%
<i>Act as liaison for long-distance care.</i>	18.0%	17.2%	33.3%	31.5%
<i>Advise and assist with financial management and benefits.</i>	21.4%	29.4%	29.1%	20.1%
<i>Provide support to families and caregivers.</i>	55.8%	32.9%	9.8%	1.5%

In the area of helping SGW with care management/coordination, a majority of social workers report that the services they most provide very frequently are one, giving support to families and caregivers (55.8%), and, two, assessing needs and making referrals to health and social services (51.3%).

**Asked of the (n=721) social workers who say they assist SGW in care management and coordination.*



Social Workers' Perceptions of their Field

Attitudes Toward the Field of Social Work



Attitudes Toward the Field of Social Work

For the next set of questions, we would like to learn more about your attitudes toward working in the field of social work. Please tell us your level or agreement with the following:

Attitudes about social work	1 Strongly agree	2 Somewhat agree	3 Somewhat disagree	4 Strongly disagree
<i>I make a positive difference in the lives of others</i>	80.1%	19.5%	0.5%	0.0%
<i>The general public is often not aware of the variety of services that social workers provide</i>	76.3%	21.0%	1.9%	0.7%
<i>There are not enough social workers to provide care for our aging population</i>	53.7%	36.3%	8.0%	1.9%
<i>My education has prepared me for my work with the aging population</i>	23.2%	46.6%	23.6%	6.6%
<i>My on-the-job training and experience has prepared me for my work with the aging population</i>	39.9%	38.0%	15.4%	6.7%

About eighty-percent (80.1) of social workers strongly agree with the statement that they make a positive difference in the lives of others, and nearly all agree with that statement to some extent. About 76% (76.3) strongly agree with the statement that the general public is often not aware of the variety of services social workers provide.



Research Conclusions

Summary of Research





Research Conclusions

- **Sandwich generation women more frequently seek help for themselves than they do for a family member when they seek the services of a social worker.**
 - About 53% (53.6) of surveyed social workers say SGW seek help for themselves personally.
 - Parents and their children are the family members for which SGW most frequently seek help (parents, 41.1%; children, 41.2%).
 - Only about 17% (16.9) of social workers say SGW most frequently request help for their spouses or partners
- **Among different reasons for seeking assistance, SGW primarily or initially contact social workers most frequently for counseling/therapy/mental health services (for themselves).**
 - A family/child crisis is the second-most frequently-cited reason by social workers (23.6%), followed by care management/coordination for a parent or other aging relative (18.3%).
 - The least-cited reasons are referral information (6.0%); counseling/therapy/mental health for an aging relative (3.0%); chronic health issue support for an aging parent or relative (6.9%); and personal health issues (1.9%).



Research Conclusions

- **Social workers more frequently help SGW manage daily-life stress and feelings of depression/anxiety than they help SGW with issues involving SGW’s immediate family members.**
 - About 58% (58.4) of surveyed social workers say they “very frequently” help SGW with managing the stress of daily life; that figure is nearly 56% (55.7) for helping SGW manage feelings of anxiety/depression.
 - In contrast, about 25% (24.9) of social workers say they “very frequently” help SGW to improve their marriage/partnership; about 43% (42.9) say they “somewhat infrequently” or never help SGW with this issue .
 - About 37% (37.4) say they “very frequently” help SGW handle issues with children in the house; that figure is nearly 30% (29.8) for helping to ease caregiving responsibilities for parents or other aging relatives.

- **There are two primary reasons SGW do not seek help they might need from a social worker. The first is that getting help for themselves is not a priority; the second is that they believe they can handle their concerns on their own.**
 - In addition, about 57% (57.2) of social workers say that SGW lack of awareness that social workers could help them is “very” or “somewhat frequently” a reason that these women do not pursue help.
 - Several potential obstacles to SGW seeking help are not, in fact, obstacles for many SGW, according the surveyed social workers. These include the perception that social-work services are too expensive (about 69% (69.3) of those surveyed say this is an obstacle “somewhat infrequently” or “not at all”), and the stigma associated with going to a professional for help (50.3% say they hear this “somewhat infrequently” or “not at all”).



Research Conclusions

- **Most SGW seeking the social-work services pay for these services with private insurance or Medicare/Medicaid; 57.9% of surveyed social workers say their SGW clients are covered by Medicare or Medicaid, and half say their SGW clients are covered by private insurance (50.3%).**
 - A sizable portion (39.2%) of the surveyed social workers say clients pay for their services out of pocket, suggesting that some social-work services for which SGW are seeking help are not covered by insurance.
 - Such a financial burden could discourage some SGW from continuing to seek social-work services or might turn them off from seeking them in the first place.
- **There does not appear to be consensus among surveyed social workers about whether they are seeing more SGW in need of help with caregiving responsibilities for elders than in the past: slightly more (35.6%) say they are seeing more, while 32.0% say current numbers are about the same as the past.**
 - Nearly an equal number (29.6%) say they don't know whether they're seeing an increase.
 - Only 2.8% say they're seeing fewer SGW than in the past for this issue.



Research Conclusions

- **A majority of surveyed social workers say that most SGW they see are not at all prepared for many aspects of their aging parents' or relatives' care.**
 - SGW are least prepared to deal with the cost of their parents' or other aging relatives' care: about 74% (73.9) of surveyed social workers say their SGW clients are “not at all prepared” for this.
 - Other top areas where social workers say a large majority of SGW are “not at all prepared” are in planning for care (e.g. long-term care insurance, care coordination) and in end-of-life planning.

- **Overwhelmingly, SGW underestimate much of the financial, emotional, and physical challenges of providing care to their aging parents/relatives: 66% or more of surveyed social workers say a majority of SGW underestimate these challenges.**
 - The challenges SGW most underestimate are the impact of elderly caregiving on their own health (91.2%); the emotional toll associated with providing care (85.7%); and the stress on their marriage or partnership (79.8%).



Research Conclusions

- **Nearly half of surveyed social workers (48.4%) assist SGW with care management or coordination for their aging parents or other relatives; 50.8% say they do not provide this kind of assistance**
 - Among the social workers who do provide these services, the services they provide most frequently are giving support to families and caregivers (55.8% say they “very frequently” provide this service) and assessing needs and making referrals to health and social services (51.3% “very frequently” provide this service).
 - Services they provide most infrequently are screening and managing in-home help, and serving as a liaison for long-distance care.
- **Social workers feel that they make a positive difference in the lives of others, as 80.1% of those surveyed strongly agree with that sentiment. That said, the majority believe that the general public is often not aware of the variety of services they provide.**
 - Ninety percent of surveyed social worker “strongly” or “somewhat agree” with the statement that “there are not enough social workers to provide services to the aging population.”
 - Only 23.2% “strongly agree” with the statement that their education has strongly prepared them for their work with the aging population; in contrast, about 39.9% say that their on-the-job training and experience has prepared them for work with the elderly
- **An overwhelming number of social workers predict that the field of aging does not have enough social workers to care for the aging population.**
 - Ninety-percent of social workers “strongly” or “somewhat” agree that this is the case.



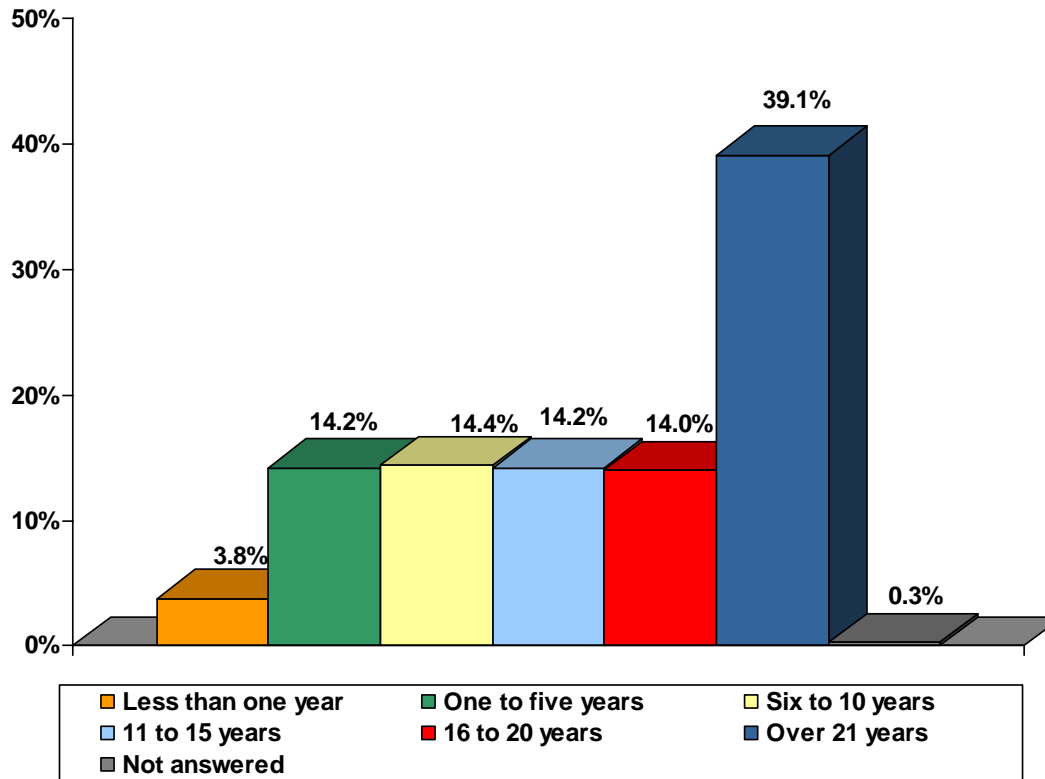
Demographics

Characteristics of the Surveyed Social Workers



Number of Years as a Social Worker

Which of the following best describes how long you have been a practicing social worker?



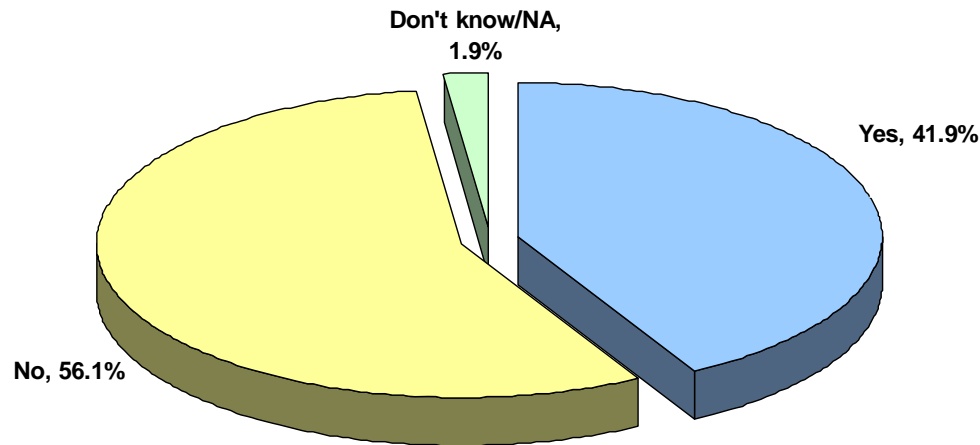
A plurality (39.1%) of surveyed social workers have been practicing social work for more than 21 years. About 28% (28.2%) have been practicing 11 to 20 years, and about the same number (24.6%) 1 to 10 years.



Training

Do you have any special training or coursework specializing in the aging field?

Nearly 42% (41.9) of social workers have specialized training or coursework in the aging field.



Areas of Professional Specialty

*Which best describes your area of specialty as a social worker?
(Respondents could choose up to two specialties)*

Specialty	Percentage
<i>Addictions</i>	8.8%
<i>Administration</i>	6.4%
<i>Adolescents</i>	7.3%
<i>Aging</i>	16.9%
<i>Child welfare/family</i>	18.7%
<i>Community development</i>	1.8%
<i>Criminal justice</i>	1.6%
<i>Developmental disabilities</i>	1.6%

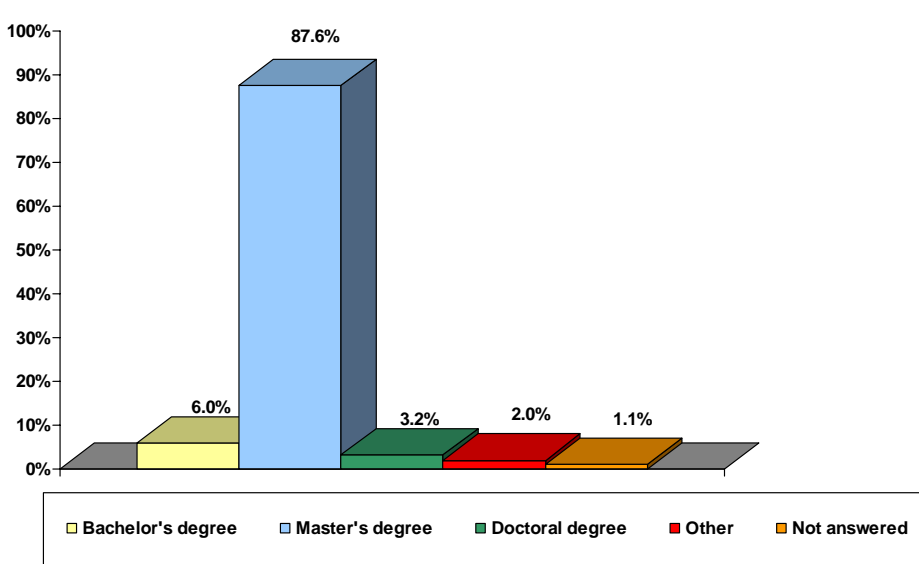
Specialty	Percentage
<i>Health</i>	19.5%
<i>Higher education</i>	2.8%
<i>Homeless/displaced persons</i>	2.8%
<i>Income assistance</i>	.08%
<i>Mental health</i>	57.3%
<i>Occupational social work/EAP</i>	3.2%
<i>School social work</i>	5.4%
<i>Not Answered</i>	2.1%

Of the specialties listed, social workers most frequently (57.3%) cited mental health as their top specialty, followed by health (19.5%), child welfare and family (18.7%), and aging (16.9%).

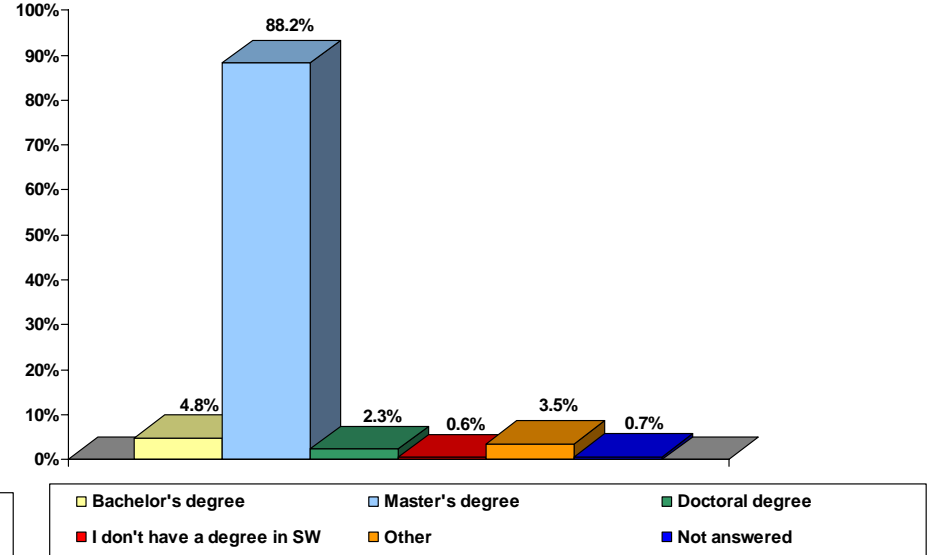


Education

What is your highest level of educational attainment?

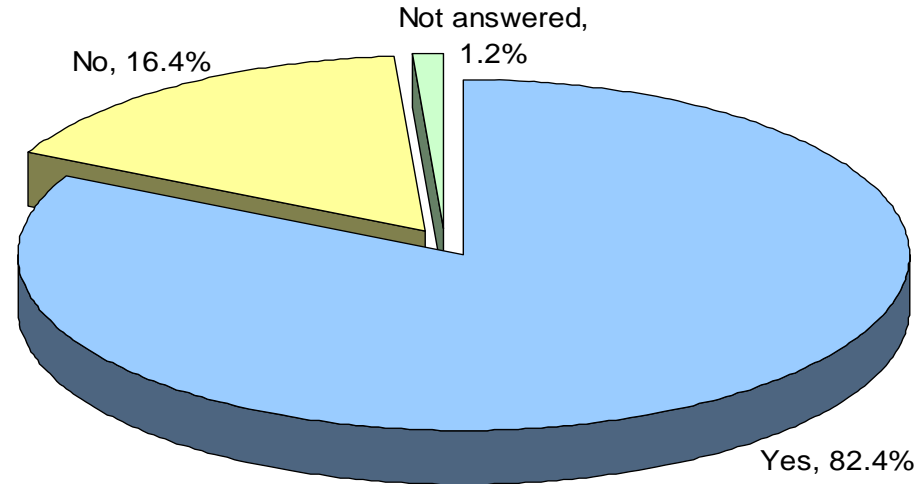


What is your highest level of educational attainment in social work?



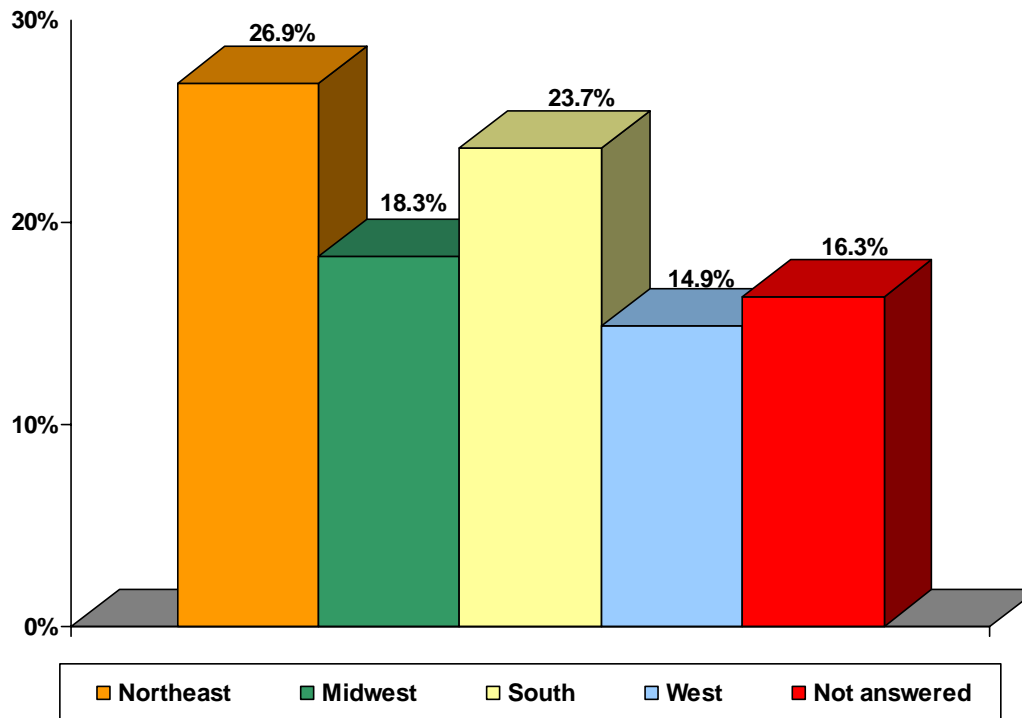
Professional Status

Are you licensed as a social worker in the state where you currently work?



Region of Residence

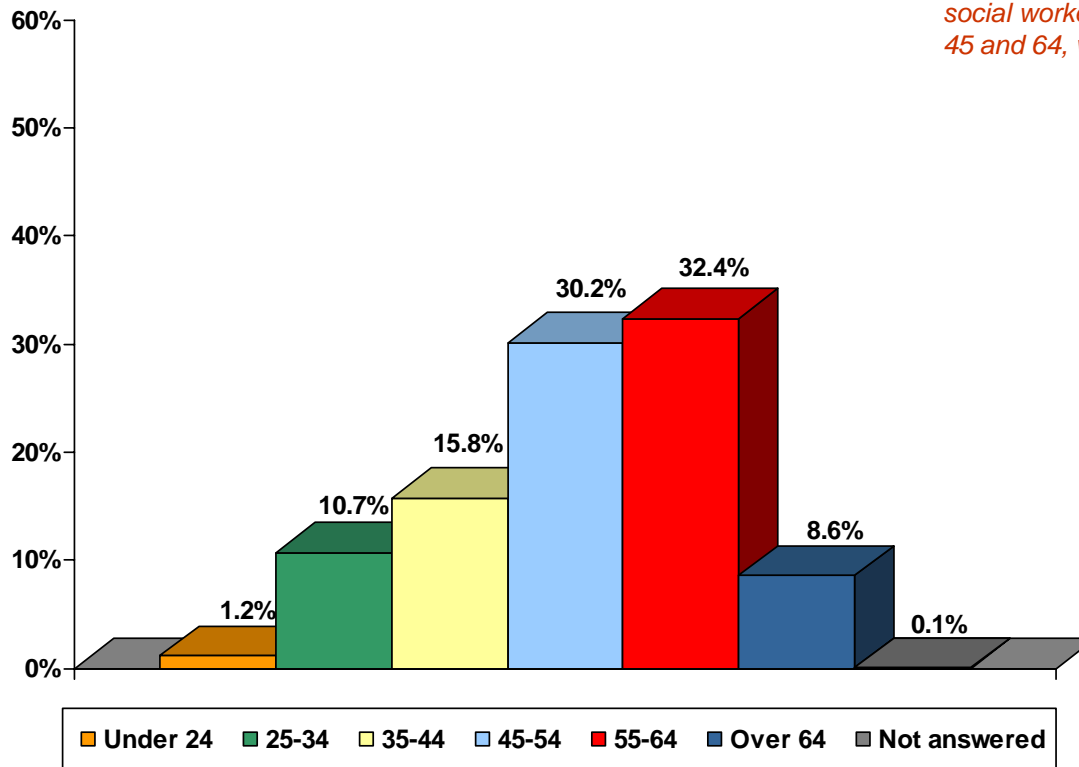
Regional Distribution of Social Worker Respondents



Social workers in forty-nine states plus the District of Columbia completed the survey.

How old are you?

The majority (about 63%) of the surveyed social workers were between the ages of 45 and 64, while about 27% were 25 to 44.





Gender

What is your gender?

