



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Four in five Americans have a favorable opinion of social workers

New National Association of Social Workers survey conducted by Ipsos also finds that social workers improve the situations of those that receive services from them

Washington, DC, February 17, 2023

Key Findings

1. Four in five Americans have a favorable opinion of social workers.
2. One in six Americans say they or a member of their immediate family have been helped by a social worker, and a majority of those helped by social workers say their situation was at least somewhat improved.
3. Mental health, social services/child welfare, and hospital settings are the most frequently cited settings by those that have received services from social workers. Likewise, these are also the settings Americans are most aware that social workers practice in.
4. Awareness of various facts about the profession, as well as programs that social workers have contributed to, peaks at around half of Americans. Those without a college degree, those earning less than \$50K, Hispanic Americans, and Republicans show lower awareness.
5. Half of Americans believe social workers are paid too little, while one in five say they are paid the right amount. Very few say that social workers are paid too much, and around one in four simply don't know enough to provide comment.
6. When shown the median salary for social workers, half of Americans agree that they should be paid more. Similarly, those without a college degree, those earning less than \$50K, and Republicans are less likely to agree.
7. A strong majority of Americans would support a bill that would provide agencies with a grant to help improve the safety of social workers.



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Detailed Findings

Favorability of social workers is high

Four in five Americans have favorable opinions of social workers, with one in four (26%) saying they view social workers **very favorably**.

Democrats (87%), those with a college degree (85%), those earning more than \$100K (84%) and independents (81%) have more favorable views of social workers. In contrast, Republicans (74%), those earning less than \$50K (74%) and those without college degree (71%) display views that are less favorable, but nonetheless high.

Social workers improve the situations of those they help

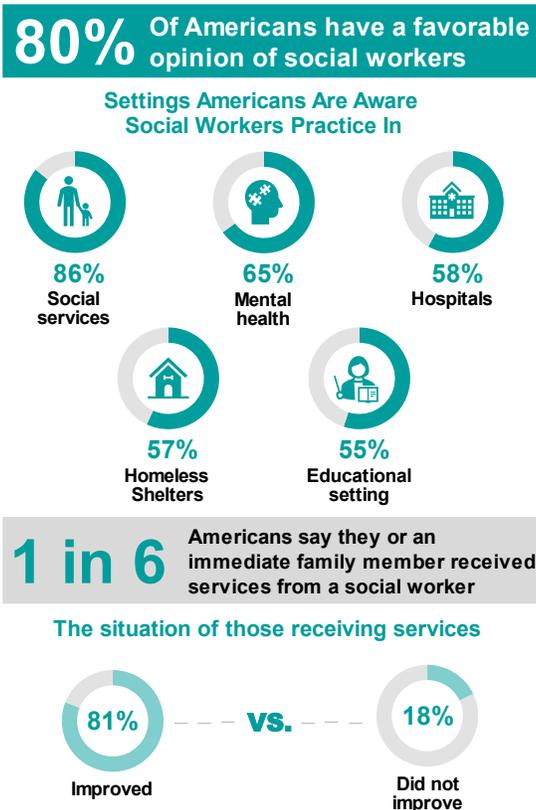
Around one in six Americans (17%) report that they or someone in their immediate family have received services from a social worker. Unemployed (23%), Hispanic (20%) and white (19%) Americans, as well as those living in the Northeast (22%), Midwest (21%), and West (19%) show higher levels of interaction with social workers than their counterparts.

A strong majority of those that have been helped by social workers say that their situation improved (81%). One in three (34%) report that their situation was greatly improved by the social worker's involvement.

Among those that received services from social workers, the most common setting was mental health (38%), followed by social services/child welfare (32%) and hospitals (29%). Second tier settings included educational settings (24%), financial benefits/support (19%) and home health (18%).

In the same vein, Americans are most aware that social workers practice in social services/child welfare (86%). A majority also report being aware that social workers are present in mental health (65%), hospitals (58%), homeless shelters (56%) and educational settings (55%).

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Americans are not highly aware of the contributions of social workers

While Americans do tend to view social workers favorably, they are not as highly aware of various facts about the profession, nor the accomplishments and contributions that social workers have made to society.

Just half of Americans are aware that social workers are active in community organizing, advocacy, and serve in local, state, and federal legislatures. Likewise, 50% are aware that social workers are often part of emergency response teams for mass casualty events such as hurricanes and floods.

Around two in five are aware that most social workers have an advanced degree (44%) and that social workers are one of the largest mental health providers in the United States (40%). Even fewer are aware that social work is one of the fastest growing professions in the country (22%), and that there were 23,000 workplace assaults of social workers between 2011 and 2013 (12%).

Awareness tends to be higher among the college educated, those making more than \$100K, Democrats, and Black Americans, and lower among the non-college educated, those earning less than \$50K, Republicans, and Hispanic Americans.



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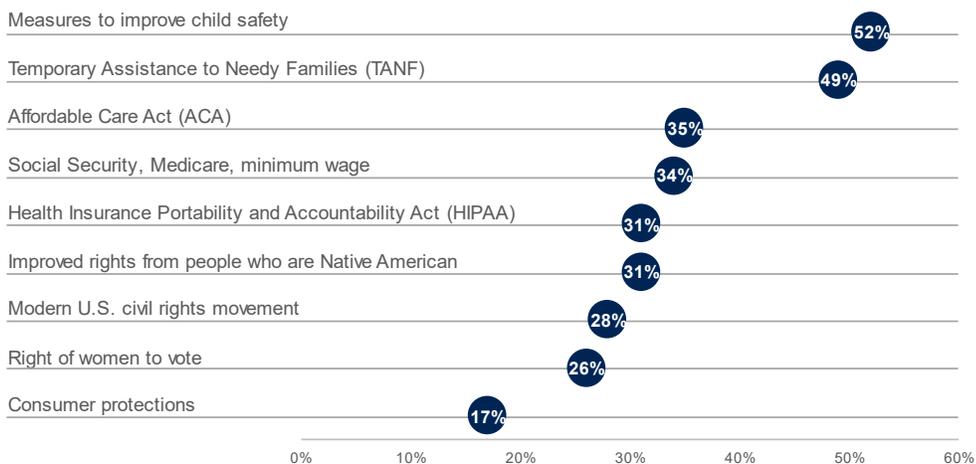
Similar to general awareness of the profession, when asked about the contributions of social workers to specific policies and initiatives, awareness peaked at around half of Americans. Fifty-two percent report knowing that social workers played a key role in creating the Children’s Bureau and other measures to help improve child safety. A similar percentage (49%) are aware of social workers contributions to Temporary Assistance to Needy Families, a federal program that provides cash assistance to indigent families.

About a third of Americans are aware of social workers efforts on the Affordable Care Act (35%), Social Security, Medicare, and the minimum wage (34%), HIPAA (31%), and improved rights from people who are Native American, including the Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978 (31%).

Less are familiar with their contributions to the modern U.S. civil right movement (28%), the right of women to vote (26%), and consumer protections such as the National Consumers League (17%).

Lastly, two in five Americans are aware that social workers have played a significant role in running the 988 call lines designed to help handle mental health crises. Many of the same demographic differences in awareness continue to hold true.

Percentage of Americans who are aware that social workers have contributed to the following



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Around half of Americans say that social workers are paid too little and should be paid more

When asked their opinion on the pay of social workers, nearly half (49%) of Americans say that social workers are paid too little. Eighteen percent believe they are paid the right amount, just 5% paid too much, and 27% don't know.

Democrats (63%), the college-educated (56%), and those earning more than \$100K (53%) are more likely to believe that social workers are paid too little than their counterparts. Additionally, those living



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in urban areas (56%) are more likely to say social workers are paid too little than those in suburban (47%) and rural (39%) areas.

After seeing the initial question on social worker pay, respondents were then told that the median pay for social workers is \$50,390. After seeing the median pay, 53% agree that social workers should be paid more than they currently are. Just 13% disagree with his sentiment, and one in three neither agree nor disagree. Many of the same demographic trends continue to hold.

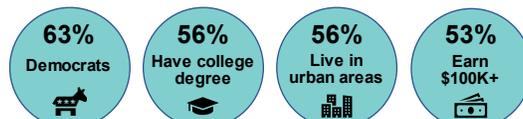
Majority of Americans would support legislation to improve the safety of social workers

Lastly, when asked if they would support a bill that would provide agencies with a grant to help improve the safety of social workers, 84% of Americans said they would support this type of bill. Just 13% would oppose this legislation.

A strong majority across all demographics show support for a bill to improve safety for social workers. However, Democrats (93%) and independents (86%) are more likely than Republicans (77%) to show support.

49% Of Americans believe social workers are paid too little

Who believes social workers are paid too little?



\$50,390 Median salary for social workers

After learning the median salary for social workers...



53% agree that social workers should be paid more than they currently are

84% would support a bill that provides agencies with a grant to improve the safety of social workers





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About the Study

This National Association of Social Workers poll, conducted by Ipsos, was conducted January 20 to January 22, 2023, by Ipsos using the probability-based KnowledgePanel®. This poll is based on a nationally representative probability sample of 1,016 adults age 18 or older.

The survey was conducted using KnowledgePanel, the largest and most well-established online probability-based panel that is representative of the adult US population. Our recruitment process employs a scientifically developed addressed-based sampling methodology using the latest Delivery Sequence File of the USPS – a database with full coverage of all delivery points in the US. Households invited to join the panel are randomly selected from all available households in the U.S. Persons in the sampled households are invited to join and participate in the panel. Those selected who do not already have internet access are provided a tablet and internet connection at no cost to the panel member. Those who join the panel and who are selected to participate in a survey are sent a unique password-protected log-in used to complete surveys online. As a result of our recruitment and sampling methodologies, samples from KnowledgePanel cover all households regardless of their phone or internet status and findings can be reported with a margin of sampling error and projected to the general population.

The study was conducted in English. The data were weighted to adjust for gender by age, race/ethnicity, education, Census region, metropolitan status, and household income. The demographic benchmarks came from the 2022 March Supplement of the Current Population Survey (CPS). The weighting categories were as follows:

- Gender (Male, Female) by Age (18–29, 30–44, 45-59 and 60+)
- Race/Hispanic Ethnicity (White Non-Hispanic, Black Non-Hispanic, Other, Non-Hispanic, Hispanic, 2+ Races, Non-Hispanic)
- Education (Less than High School, High School, Some College, Bachelor or higher)
- Census Region (Northeast, Midwest, South, West)
- Metropolitan status (Metro, non-Metro)
- Household Income (Under \$25,000, \$25,000-\$49,999, \$50,000-\$74,999, \$75,000-\$99,999, \$100,000-\$149,999, \$150,000+)

The margin of sampling error is plus or minus 3.2 percentage points at the 95% confidence level, for results based on the entire sample of adults. The margin of sampling error takes into account the design effect, which was 1.10. The margin of sampling error is higher and varies for results based on sub-samples. Sampling error is only one potential source of error. There may be other unmeasured non-sampling error in this or any poll. In our reporting of the findings, percentage points are rounded off to the nearest whole number. As a result, percentages in a given table column may total slightly higher or lower than 100%. In questions that permit multiple responses, columns may total substantially more than 100%, depending on the number of different responses offered by each respondent.



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About Ipsos

Ipsos is one of the largest market research and polling companies globally, operating in 90 markets and employing over 18,000 people.

Our passionately curious research professionals, analysts and scientists have built unique multi-specialist capabilities that provide true understanding and powerful insights into the actions, opinions and motivations of citizens, consumers, patients, customers or employees. We serve more than 5000 clients across the world with 75 business solutions.

Founded in France in 1975, Ipsos is listed on the Euronext Paris since July 1st, 1999. The company is part of the SBF 120 and the Mid-60 index and is eligible for the Deferred Settlement Service (SRD).

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