

DATA SNAPSHOT: Social Workers

Identifying and analyzing available data resources is a crucial step in assessing the supply and distribution of allied health occupations, their demographic and socioeconomic characteristics, and the adequacy of the supply to meet industry and population needs. The report *Leveraging Data to Monitor the Allied Health Workforce: National Supply Estimates Using Different Data Sources*¹ (the background report for this Data Snapshot) compared national estimates of the supply and characteristics of nine allied health occupations using four national data sources: the American Community Survey (ACS) and the Current Population Survey (CPS), both data from the U.S. Census Bureau; the Occupational Employment Statistics (OES) from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, and the National Provider Identifier (NPI) Registry from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services' National Plan and Provider Enumeration System. Using the most recent comparable data available from these sources, this Data Snapshot summarizes the national supply size and demographic, educational attainment, and employment information for social workers.

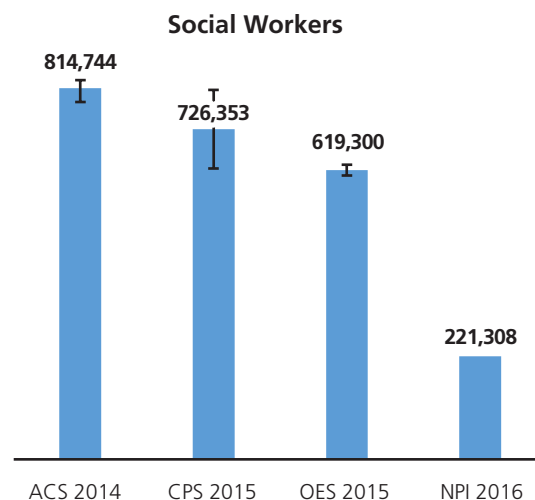
Who are social workers? Social workers provide help to individuals to solve or cope with day-to-day issues.² Social workers' roles may vary widely depending on education, credentials, specialty, and the configuration of the integrated behavioral health/primary care practice. Some social workers who are licensed to provide clinical counseling may work directly with patients to provide therapy while others might work with patients and families and coordinate treatment between patients, psychiatrists or psychologists, and primary care providers. While clinical social workers are most frequently mentioned as providing these services, other master's trained social workers might work under the consultation of a licensed clinical social worker, and bachelor's level social workers may provide care coordination or referral support.

How are social workers identified across data sources?

Social workers, in the ACS and CPS data sources, were identified by the four-digit SOC code, 2010, and in the OES dataset by the occupation code 21-1020, or could be pulled directly from the OES website, data section. In the NPI Registry, social workers were identified using the following taxonomy code: Social Worker - 104100000X, Clinical - 1041C0700X, School - 1041S0200X.

National estimates of social workers across data sources: Data to estimate the supply of social workers were available in the ACS, CPS, and NPI Registry. Demographic and socioeconomic data are available only in ACS and CPS. The NPI Registry has information only on the sex of the providers. The figure shows the supply estimate of social workers from the ACS was 814,744 ($\pm 21,422$), from the CPS was 726,353 ($\pm 80,222$), from the OES was 619,300 ($\pm 8,566$), and from the NPI Registry was 221,308. Because the NPI Registry represents the entire population of providers in the Registry, margins of error are not relevant. As described in the background report, lower supply estimates from the NPI Registry are to be expected because they represent the providers who obtain NPIs for billing or information exchange purposes.

Estimated national supply of social workers from the ACS, OES, CPS, and NPI data sources



Data sources: American Community Survey (ACS), Current Population Survey (CPS), Occupational Employment Statistics (OES), National Provider Identifier Registry (NPI)

Demographic and socioeconomic characteristics: The table below provides information on the demographic and socioeconomic characteristics of social workers from the ACS, CPS and OES data sources. The mean age of social workers was in the range 42.7 to 44.1 years, with a slightly older mean age reported from the CPS. High proportions of social workers were women, between 79.9 to 84.5%. In terms of racial and ethnic composition, 61.0 to 61.7% of social workers were White, not Hispanic, and 20.3 to 20.9% were Black, not Hispanic (in the ACS and CPS, respectively). Both ACS and CPS data sources showed approximately 13% of social workers to be Hispanic. Slightly over half of social workers were married. Similar proportions of social workers held bachelor's degrees (41.2% in the ACS and 42.2% in the CPS) and master's degrees or higher (36.9% in the ACS and 34.0% in the CPS). The mean annual earnings, adjusted to 2015 U.S. dollars, was lowest as estimated from the CPS (\$40,575) and highest from the OES (\$49,670). The estimated mean hours worked per week was about 36 hours in both ACS and CPS. The percent of social workers working full-time as estimated from the ACS was 89.8%, and was 83.9% from the CPS.

REFERENCES:

1. Skillman SM, Dahal A, Frogner BK, Stubbs BA. Leveraging Data to Monitor the Allied Health Workforce: National Supply Estimates Using Different Data Sources. Center for Health Workforce Studies, University of Washington, Dec 2016.
2. Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, *Occupational Outlook Handbook, 2016-17 Edition, Social Workers*. <http://www.bls.gov/ooh/community-and-social-service/social-workers.htm> Accessed November 04, 2016.

Demographic and socioeconomic characteristics of social workers

	ACS 2014	CPS 2015	OES 2015
Age (mean years)	42.7	44.1	--
Female	79.9%	84.5%	--
Race/Ethnicity			
White, not Hispanic	61.0%	61.7%	--
Black, not Hispanic	20.3%	20.9%	--
Other, not Hispanic	5.8%	3.8%	--
Hispanic	12.9%	13.4%	--
Marital Status			
Married	52.1%	53.4%	--
Divorce/Separated/Widowed	18.9%	18.1%	--
Single	29.1%	28.5%	--
Educational Attainment			
High school or less	6.6%	7.7%	--
Some college	15.3%	16.1%	--
Bachelor's degree	41.2%	42.2%	--
Master's degree or more	36.9%	34.0%	--
Employment			
Annual earning (mean)*	\$42,674	\$40,575	\$49,670
Usual hours worked per week (mean)	36.4	36.1	--
Full-time workers**	89.8%	83.9%	--

* ACS 2014 earnings were adjusted to 2015 real dollar values based on the Consumer Price Index. ACS and CPS wage and salary earnings include reported income from all sources. OES wage earnings are annualized to represent a full-time average wage.

**Full-time indicates 32 or more weekly work hours.

Data sources: American Community Survey (ACS), Current Population Survey (CPS), Occupational Employment Statistics (OES)

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SUGGESTED CITATION

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