



Workforce Demographics & Job Satisfaction

Barth, R. P., Lloyd, E.C., Christ, S.L., Chapman, M.V., & Dickinson, N. (2008). Child welfare worker characteristics and job satisfaction: A national study. *Social Work, 53*(3), 199-209.

WHAT IS THIS RESOURCE?

This article discusses the results and implications of a study examining the relationship between worker characteristics and job satisfaction in a geographic context. This study was conducted with a national sample of child welfare workers and provides the first set of national data on this topic. This article reviews literature and similar, smaller-scale studies that were previously conducted.

WHAT ARE THE CRITICAL FINDINGS?

The table below shows the reported characteristics of child welfare workers in this study:

CHARACTERISTICS OF CHILD WELFARE WORKERS

- Majority are white females, under 40 years of age
- Majority have 5 years of child welfare experience
- Average income is in low to mid \$30,000 range
- On average, public-sector employees earn more than private sector
- Less than half have BSW or MSW degrees
- Workers with MSW/BSW reported stronger feelings of self-competence
- Results suggest a trend moving away from child welfare workers having social work degrees

The table below shows the elements that lead to high and low levels of job satisfaction:

HIGH LEVEL OF JOB SATISFACTION



Non-Urban Settings
MSW or BSW degrees
Quality supervision (helpful and supportive)
Two or more hours of supervision per week
Recognition, feeling of accomplishment
Opportunities for advancement
Appreciation for value of child welfare work
Supportive/Positive organizational climate

LOW LEVEL OF JOB SATISFACTION



Urban Settings
No social work education
Lack of quality supervision
Low prestige, lack of recognition
Little room for advancement
Conflicts over policy implementation
Role conflict
Negative organizational climate

The results of this study were found to be similar to those of earlier studies. Characteristics such as gender, race, and income were not strongly correlated with satisfaction.

Workers as a whole reported their level of satisfaction between “undecided” and “somewhat satisfied”. Job satisfaction predicts intent to leave and turnover.

*Limitations exist in sampling and data collection, including rare variables; missing values; larger-than desirable standard error; inflated estimates of average satisfaction; over representation of public-sector workers; and lack of generalizability of data.

WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS FOR OUR WORK?

- Efforts should be made to increase social work education and supervisory training. There is a need for helpful, supportive supervision, particularly in urban settings, with a suggested 2 hours each week as a minimum amount.
- Agencies should strive to diversify their child welfare workforce in gender, race, and ethnicity. Understanding satisfaction levels of both male and minority workers would assist in developing appropriate recruitment and retention strategies.