

# The BASW Annual Survey of Social Workers and Social Work: 2022

A summary report



# BASW

The professional association for  
social work and social workers

# FOREWORD



Welcome to the summary report of the British Association of Social Workers' second Annual Survey of Social Workers and Social Work. It captures the views of more than 1600 social workers, at all levels of the profession, across the UK.

This year, we explore opportunities for career progression, experiences of bullying, harassment and discrimination, the impact of the cost-of-living crisis, and political engagement. We continue to collect data on both positive and adverse influences on social work practice, public perception, and workload. Establishing long-term trends is crucial to understanding the health of the profession.



The voices of social workers inspires our campaign work, and shapes our discussions with politicians, employers, and regulators. With these findings we will reach out to wider audiences, both those who share our concerns and, crucially, those who need to be persuaded that such issues should be high on their agenda.

Effective and well-supported social work is essential for the health and wellbeing of society. Our survey and supporting evidence points to the urgent need for attention to and investment in social work roles, working conditions and morale to recruit and retain current and future practitioners. It suggests most social workers value their role and choice of profession, but working circumstances and pressures are undermining the sustainability of work for too many.

I would like to thank everyone who took the time to respond to this survey, both members and non-members alike. Thank you for sharing your views and experiences with us – and please continue to do so.

**Julia Ross**  
Chair, BASW

**Ruth Allen**  
Chief Executive, BASW

# KEY FINDINGS

In this summary report, the British Association of Social Workers (BASW) presents the findings of its 2022 Annual Survey. The report provides insight into the views and feelings of social workers, present and future, across a range of topics. These include: workload, professional and career development, challenges facing the profession, experiences of bullying, discrimination and harassment and the impact of the cost-of-living crisis. The survey was conducted in December 2022, allowing respondents to reflect on their experiences of the year as it came to a close.

The 2021 Annual Survey explored experiences of working and studying during the pandemic. The 2022 Annual Survey has taken the opportunity to follow up on some of the findings of the previous survey, to explore some issues in greater depth. Some questions were repeated – and will be repeated again in future years – allowing BASW to track changes in views and feelings over time, with the aim of identifying emerging trends in the data. The findings also offer a snapshot of how social workers felt about core issues affecting the profession and their workplace experiences in 2022.

BASW has a role to champion social workers and improve the conditions in which social work takes place. This survey therefore investigates the challenges and pressures on the workforce, whilst not ignoring the positives of the profession. Many of those who responded to the survey are passionate about their work but recognise the challenges that they face as individual practitioners, and that confront the profession as a whole. This was reflected in the qualitative comments submitted by respondents, some of which you will find in this report.

The survey was conducted across the four nations of the UK. It was hosted on the BASW website between 8 December 2022 and 9 January 2023 and was open to both member and non-member social workers. 1602 social workers and student social workers based across the UK took part. We are grateful to the participants who gave their time to complete the survey.

## Key findings from the survey:

- **57.24%** say peer support has the most positive impact on their workplace experience – an increase on last year.
- **75.78%** report that the cost-of-living crisis has driven people they work with into deeper poverty.
- **79.08%** report that the cost-of-living crisis causes more problems for people using social work services.
- Recruitment and retention is now considered to be one of the biggest challenges facing the profession currently and in the immediate future (**54.18%**)
- **74.91%** of respondents reported feeling unable to complete their work during their contracted hours – an increase on last year.
- More social workers feel unable to manage their workload (52.19%), those who do work additional hours go unpaid (**90.27%**).
- **49.56%** have been verbally abused whilst working and **24.03%** threatened with physical violence.
- Respondents' views on how the public perceive social work and social workers, already negative last year, has worsened slightly.

# A NOTE ON STRUCTURE

The summary report contains the main findings of the BASW Annual Survey 2022. These findings take the form of descriptive statistics calculated based on the responses of all those who answered each question. More than half of respondents reported that they were experienced social workers, more than half reported working with children and families and almost two-thirds of respondents identified themselves as employees.

A full breakdown of the professional profile of respondents is available in Appendix A. Appendix B contains questions that were specific to particular professional arrangements – agency social worker, independent social worker and student social worker. A discussion of the way in which the survey was conducted, including the limitations of the methods used, can be found in Appendix C – How we conducted this survey.

## The BASW Annual Survey of Social Workers and Social Work 2022

BASW members please [log in here](#) prior to completing the survey.

### About you

Which best describes your current (or most recent) professional role? **\*Required field**

Select one option only.

- Newly qualified social worker
- Experienced social worker
- Practice leader/ consultant/ principal
- Manager
- Social work educator/ academic
- Other

Which best describes your current professional arrangement? **\*Required field**

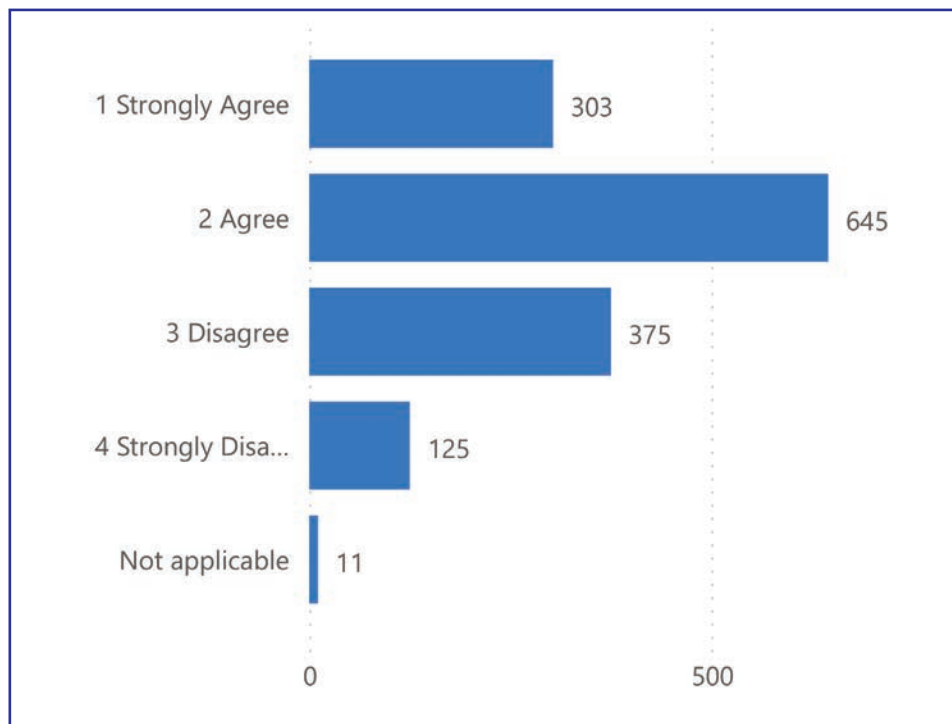
Select one option only.

# SUMMARY REPORT

Building on BASW's first annual survey in 2021, the 2022 survey sought to take stock of the current state of the social work profession across the UK. Some of the 2021 questions were repeated. Over time, this will allow trends in responses to be identified. Questions covered issues such as workload, career progress and prospects, experiences of bullying, discrimination and harassment and the impact of the cost-of-living crisis.

## FEELINGS ABOUT BEING A SOCIAL WORKER

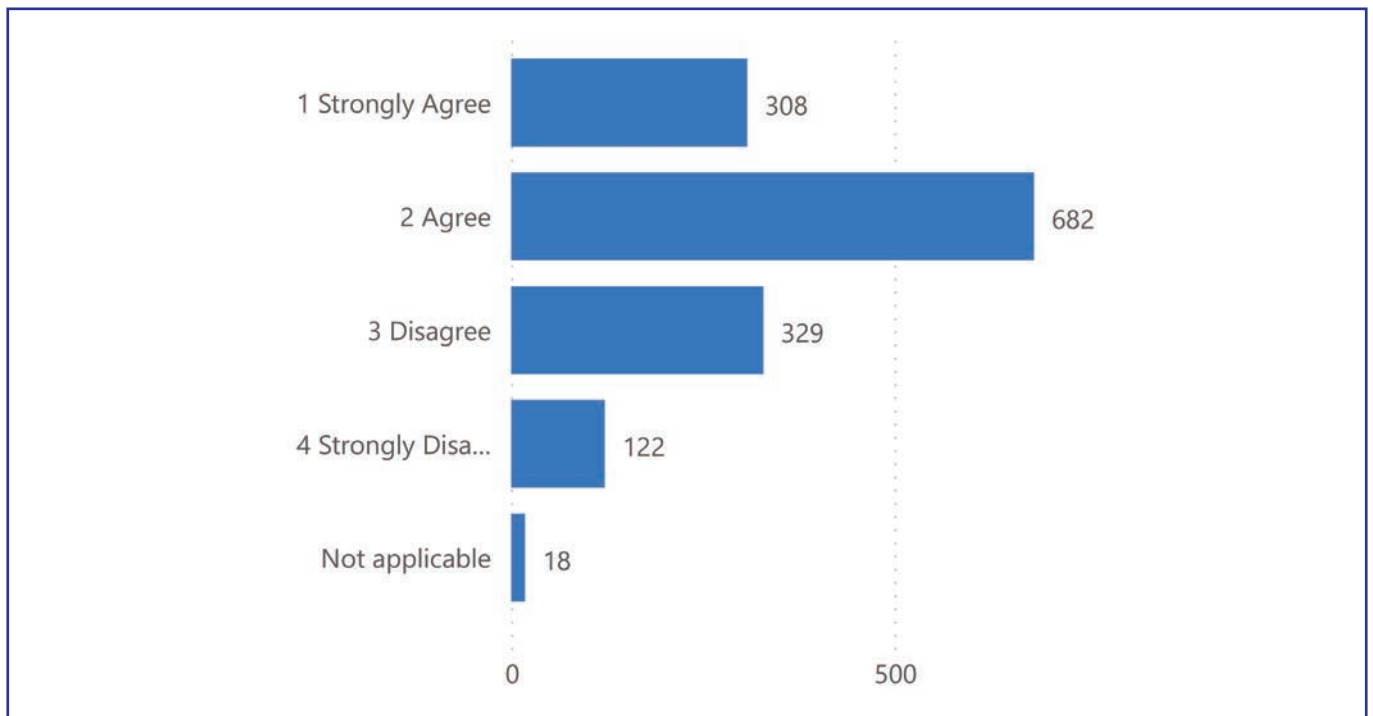
Figure 1: "I am happy in the social work profession"



In a question repeated from last year, respondents were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with the statement that they were happy in the social work profession. Almost three-fifths (59.17%) reported that they agreed or strongly agreed, a very similar proportion to the 2021 survey. Almost one-third disagreed or strongly disagreed (31.21%). However, last year's survey allowed for a 'neither agree nor disagree' option which was not available here. This suggests that when asked to decide, respondents have tended to take a more negative view of the profession.

**59.17%**  
ARE HAPPY IN THE  
SOCIAL WORK  
PROFESSION

Figure 2: "I am happy in my current role"



Another repeated question looked at whether respondents agreed or disagreed that they were happy in their current role. Again the 'neither agree nor disagree' option has been removed. Just over three-fifths of respondents (61.8%) agreed or strongly agreed that they were happy in their current role, slightly up on last year. However, almost three-tenths (28.16%) disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement, an almost 10% increase from last year. Against this indicates a more negative view if the option to take a neutral position is removed.



I RECEIVE THANK YOU FROM MOST FAMILIES THAT I WORK WITH BECAUSE I SUPPORTED THEM, THEIR LOVED ONES OR THEIR CARERS TO STAY SAFE AND HAVE A QUALITY OF LIFE."

## PUBLIC PERCEPTION

*On a scale of 1-10, where 1 is 'poor' and '10' is excellent, how would you rate the public's current perception of social workers?*



PEOPLE DON'T OFTEN HEAR ABOUT THE POSITIVE IMPACT WE HAVE."

As in 2021, respondents were asked to rate public perception of social workers. The average score was 3.3, slightly lower than the 2021 score of 3.6. This makes clear that there is ongoing concern within the profession about the negative public perception of what social work is and what social workers do. It also suggests that the low average of 2021 was not a one-off influenced by negative media coverage of social work in relation to several high-profile child protection cases in the news at the time of the 2021 survey. Respondents expressed frustration that social work is "misunderstood" by the majority of the UK public, or is "misrepresented", and would welcome a positive campaign to highlight the diversity in social work: "people don't often hear about the positive impact we have."

## BENEFITS AND CHALLENGES OF DOING SOCIAL WORK

The questions in this section are repeated from last year (see Appendix C for details on how this survey was conducted and changes in the way statistics were calculated from last year). Their focus lies upon those factors that are perceived to have the most positive impact on workplace experience, sources of challenge in the immediate workplace and broader challenges across the profession. In general, there has been little change in the most commonly selected options for these three areas over the last 12 months.

**Figure 3: Of the following options, please choose 3 that have the most positive impact on your workplace experience:**

Option	Number of times selected	As % of Respondents
Peer support	917	57.24%
Appropriate level of management & supervision	517	32.27%
Effective multi-agency and/or partnership working	475	29.65%
Training and learning opportunities	357	22.28%
Space and time for reflective practice	227	14.17%
Research and knowledge sharing opportunities	208	12.98%
Trade union membership, knowledge, advice, and support	144	8.99%
Engage in rights-based practice	142	8.86%
Service development and improvement opportunities	139	8.68%
Sufficient resources for people I work with	114	7.12%
Effective workplace policy on anti-discriminatory practice	95	5.93%
Career progression	83	5.18%

As in 2021, peer support was the most selected option as a positive in the workplace and in fact showed a marked increase from the previous survey, now being chosen by almost three-fifths of respondents (57.24%) compared with fewer than half last year. This may reflect a move back towards office or hybrid ways of working with colleagues now able to work in the same physical space more frequently. The other three most-selected options also remained the same: appropriate level of management and supervision; effective multi-agency and partnership working (these two options had switched places in terms of the frequency with which they were selected from 2021); and training and learning opportunities. It is, however, to be noted that these three options were chosen less frequently as a proportion of the overall selection than was the case in 2021.


**THERE ARE AMAZING PEOPLE IN SOCIAL WORK WHO DO FANTASTIC WORK AGAINST THE ODDS. AND RESILIENT CHILDREN AND FAMILIES WITH WHOM IT IS A PRIVILEGE TO WORK.”**

**Figure 4: Of the following options, please choose 3 that you consider to be the biggest challenges to you in your workplace**

Option	Number of times selected	As % of Respondents
Workload demand	726	45.32%
Demands of administrative tasks	662	41.32%
Adequacy of staffing levels	559	34.89%
Access to resources for the people I work with	493	30.77%
Inadequate reflective time, space and/or practice supervision	305	19.04%
Inadequate managerial support	243	15.17%
Management of change in organisation	165	10.30%
Lack of progression	162	10.11%
Keeping up with professional development and/or mandatory training	159	9.93%
Bullying and/or harassment	83	5.18%
Discrimination	57	3.56%
Support and induction for Newly Qualified Social Workers	51	3.18%
Autonomy in my work	46	2.87%
Relationships with colleagues	34	2.12%

For the 2022 survey, the same three issues were identified as the biggest challenges as in 2021, albeit in a different order: ‘workload demand’ (last year’s third most selected option); ‘demands of administrative tasks’ (last year’s most selected option); and ‘adequacy of staffing levels’ (last year’s second most selected option). The fourth and fifth most selected options remained the same – ‘access to resources for people I work with’ and ‘inadequate reflective time, space and/or practice supervision’. These findings reflect the sense that little has been done to adequately address these core concerns in the twelve months between the surveys.



**I LOVE MY PROFESSION, I’VE BEEN IN SOCIAL WORK FOR OVER 20 YEARS AND I DON’T WANT TO LEAVE BUT IT’S GETTING SO DIFFICULT, I’M NOT SURE I’LL BE ABLE TO CONTINUE IN THE PROFESSION FOR MUCH LONGER.”**



**Figure 5: Of the following options, please choose 3 that you consider to be the biggest challenges for the social work profession now and in the immediate future**

Option	As % of Respondents
Failure to adequately fund social care	68.35%
Recruitment & Retention	54.18%
Cuts to local services	42.38%
Not enough time to spend with people using services	38.39%
Cost of living crisis	26.03%
Widening/ deepening poverty	23.66%
Privatisation and profit driven models in health and social care	18.48%
Media/ TV/ news perception	6.99%
Meeting the requirements of the regulators	6.43%
Hybrid and/or home working	4.99%
Encouraging/ promoting social worker activism and campaigning	3.81%
Abuse or violence at work	3.75%
Poverty perception	2.25%
Communicating digitally with the people I work with	2.12%
Recruiting and encouraging social workers to be active trade union members	1.87%

Respondents were also asked to identify what they considered to be the biggest challenges for the social work profession now and in the immediate future. More than two-thirds (68.35%) of respondents chose the failure to adequately fund social care as one of their three biggest challenges. This was followed by recruitment and retention which was chosen by more than half of respondents (54.18%), a marked increase on last year when it was chosen by fewer than one-third of respondents. There was then something of a gap to the third and fourth most-chosen options – ‘cuts to local services’ (42.38%) and ‘not enough time to spend with people using services’ (38.39%). The fifth most chosen option was ‘cost of living crisis’ (26.03%), a new option introduced to capture economic developments in 2022.

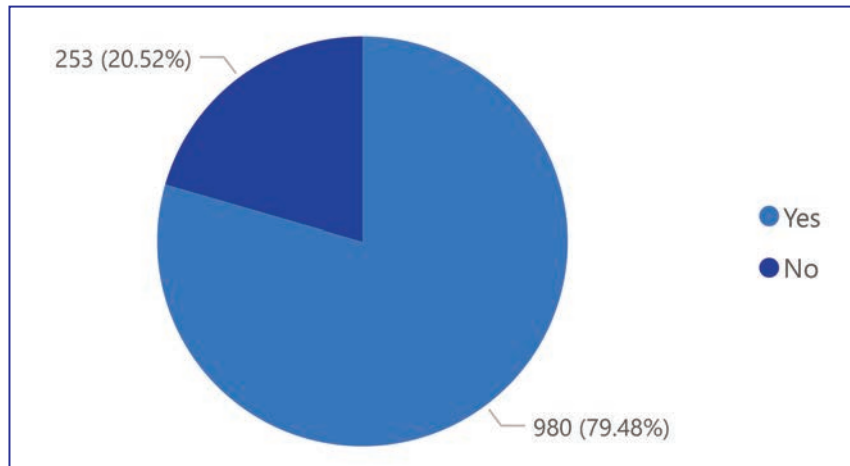


Despite the low average score for public perception of social work, the number of respondents choosing ‘media/TV/news perception’ as one of their three biggest challenges for the profession decreased markedly from the 2021 survey. The introduction of a new option on the ‘cost of living crisis’ has drawn selections away from other ranked options and is likely to account for at least some of the changes in selections.

## CURRENT ROLE AND OPPORTUNITIES

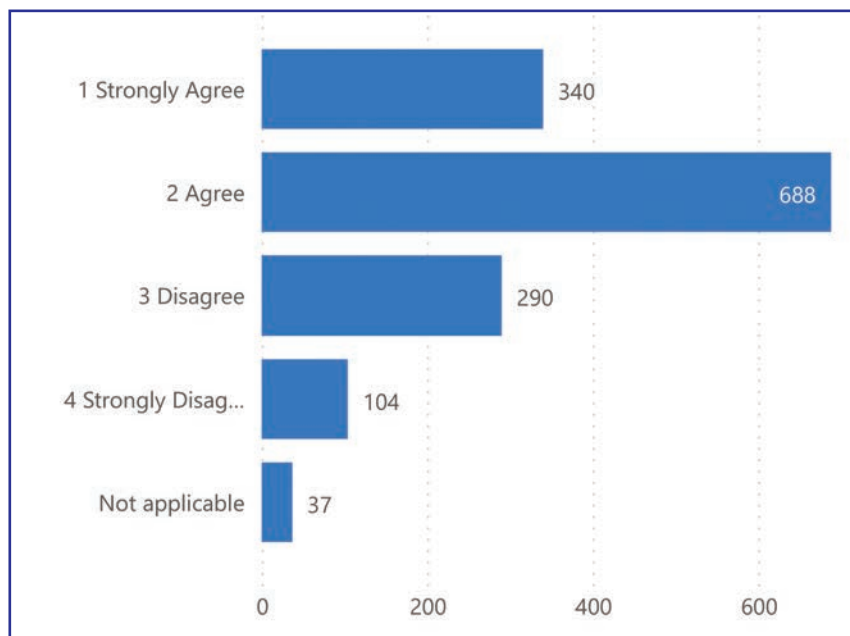
The 2022 survey asked respondents about their current role and associated opportunities for both career and professional development.

**Figure 6: Are you currently working at a higher pay band or grade than when you first started?**



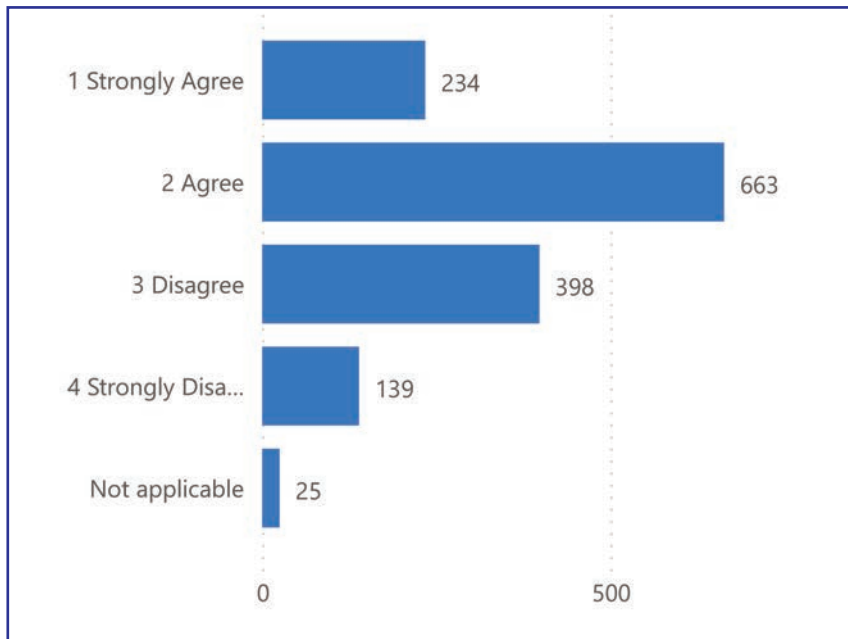
When asked whether they were now working in a higher pay band or grade than when they joined the profession, almost four-fifths of respondents (79.48%) reported that they were. 7% of the total respondents described themselves as Newly Qualified, which will account for a proportion of those not yet working at a higher pay band or grade.

**Figure 7: "I feel secure in my current role"**



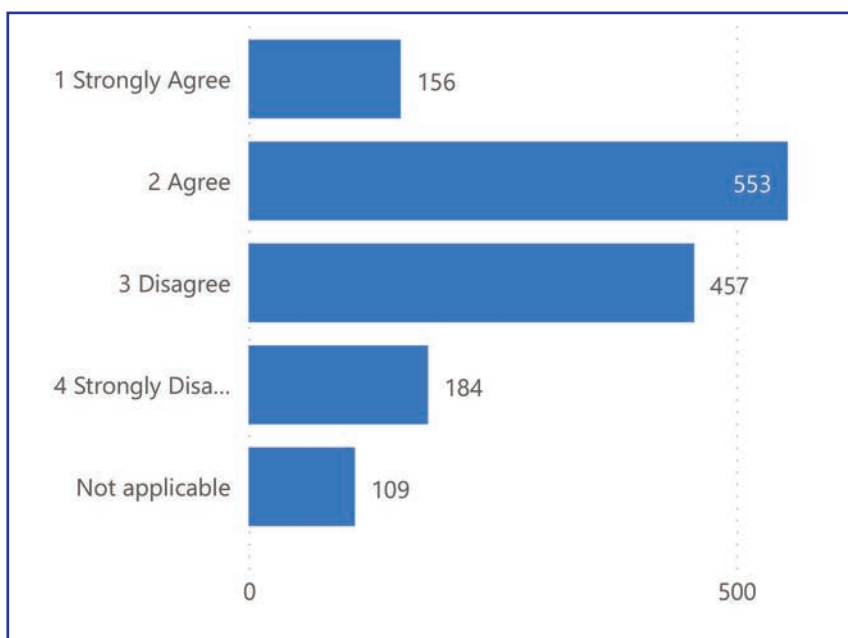
Almost two-thirds of respondents (64.15%) agreed or strongly agreed that they felt secure in their current role. Worryingly, almost one-quarter (24.59%) disagreed or strongly disagreed. There was no subsequent question investigating why respondents may feel insecure in their role.

**Figure 8: "There are sufficient opportunities for me to develop my professional skills and/or experience"**



When asked whether they felt they had sufficient opportunities to develop their professional skills and experience, over half of respondents (56%) agreed or strongly agreed. However, one-third of respondents (33.52%) disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement. A further question on perceived barriers to professional and career development appears below.

**Figure 9: "There are sufficient opportunities for me to advance my career in social work"**



Asked whether they agreed or disagreed with this statement, the results produced a fairly even split – with just over two-fifths (44.26%) agreeing or strongly agreeing and two-fifths (40.02%) disagreeing or strongly disagreeing.

**Figure 10: Of the following possible barriers to progressing your career and/or professional skills, please choose the ones most applicable to you and your current situation**

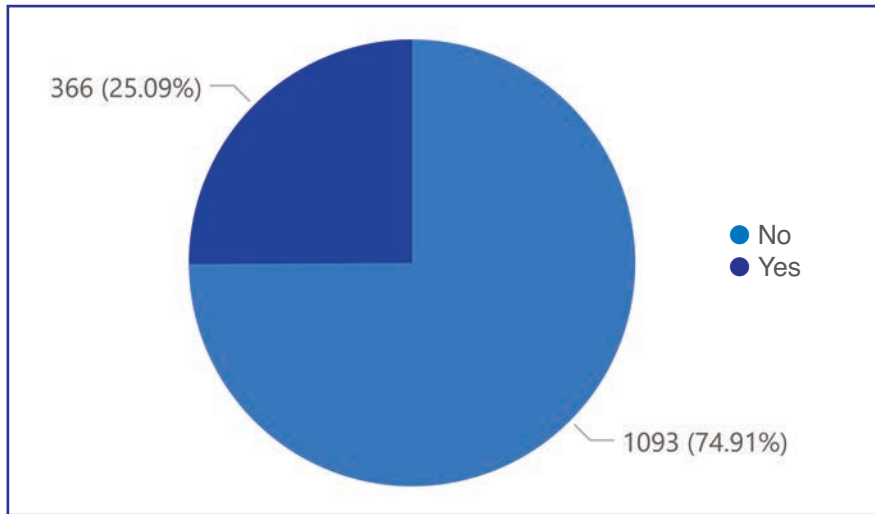
Option	Number of times selected	As % of Respondents
Limited number of promotional positions available	508	31.71%
Not enough opportunities to advance in my particular area of work or specialism	419	26.15%
I am unable to take time off for training and development	327	20.41%
My responsibilities outside of work	280	17.48%
Too few opportunities to access training and development	279	17.42%
I don't feel confident enough right now	223	13.92%
Not enough opportunities to advance in my geographical area	212	13.23%
I don't feel supported by my manager	208	12.98%
No other career opportunities within social work interest me	199	12.42%
Loss of earnings	188	11.74%
Other	173	10.80%

In order to better understand what might be preventing respondents from developing either their career or professional skills, respondents were asked to select from a list of options those that they felt were most applicable to their situation. Of the options provided, just over three-tenths (31.71%) reported that there were only a limited number of promotional opportunities available. The next most selected option (26.15%) was 'not enough opportunities to advance in my particular area of work or specialism'. The third most selected option, chosen by just over one-fifth of respondents (20.41%) was being 'unable to take time off for training and development'.

## WORKLOAD

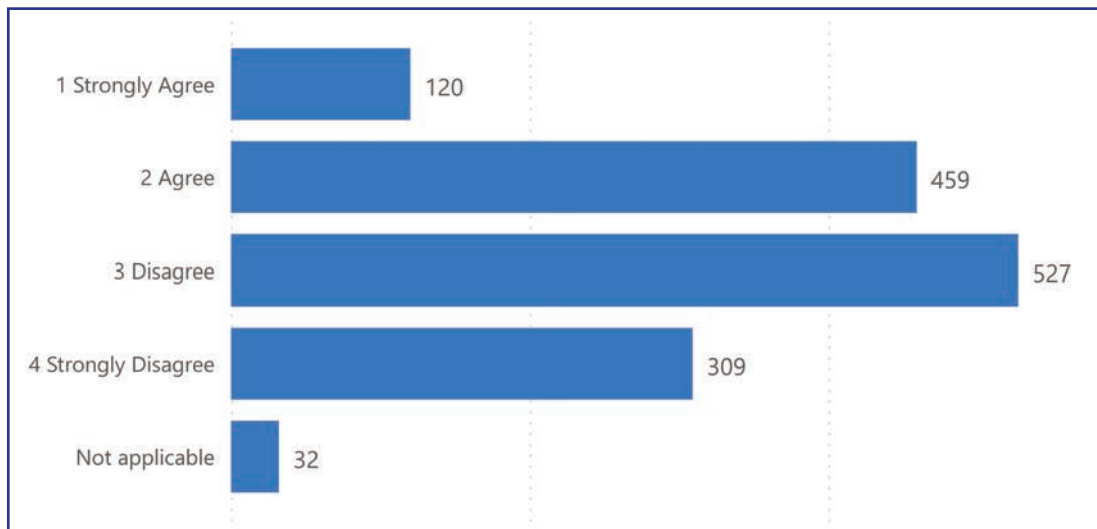
Building upon the 2021 survey, respondents were once again asked about their workload and whether or not they worked additional hours.

**Figure 11: Are you able to complete all your work within your contracted hours?**



Almost 75% of respondents reported that they are currently unable to complete all of their work within their contracted hours.

**Figure 12: "I feel able to manage my current workload"**



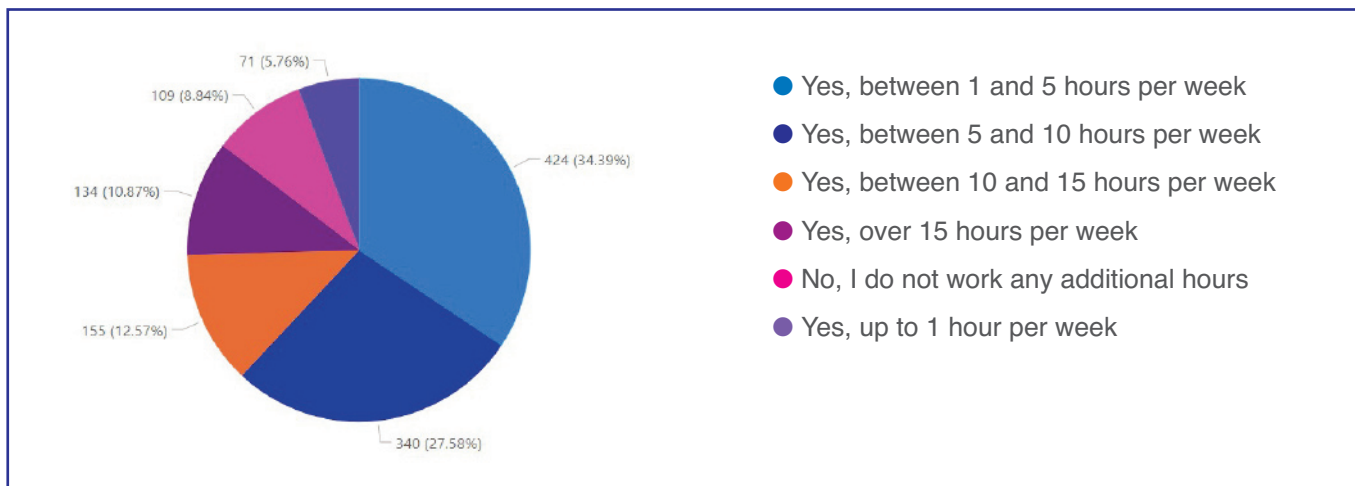
Just over half of respondents (52.19%) felt unable to manage their current workload, a significant increase on 2021 findings of 37.78% disagreeing or strongly disagreeing with this statement. The 2022 survey removed the option to 'neither agree nor disagree'. Again, a tendency to choose the negative option is visible.

Self-reported independent social workers were more likely to feel able to manage their current workload, with almost three-quarters (73.3%) of independent or self-employed social workers agreeing or strongly agreeing, and less than one-fifth (18%) disagreeing or strongly disagreeing.



**I EXERCISE CONTROL OVER MY WORKLOAD AND TYPE OF WORK. I LOVE MY PRACTICE, THE WORK AND TRAINING THAT I DO (WHICH I SOURCE AND PAY FOR MYSELF). HOWEVER, IT CAN BE ISOLATING.” – INDEPENDENT SOCIAL WORKER**

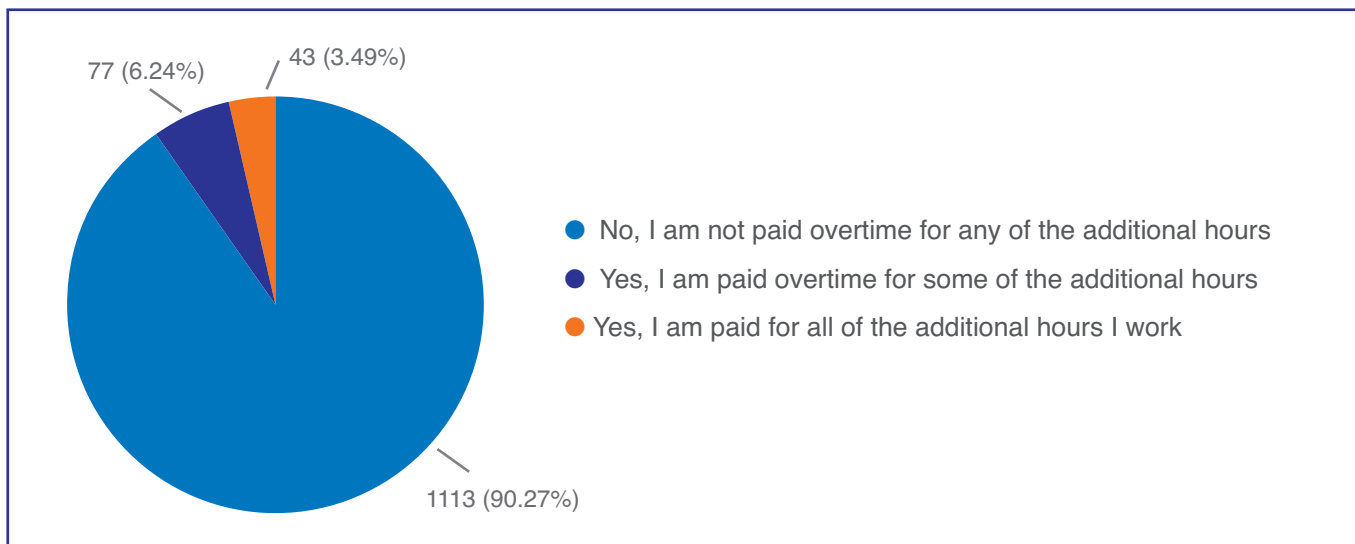
**Figure 13: In an average week, do you work any additional hours to complete your work?**



Almost three-quarters of respondents (74.91%) reported that they were unable to complete their work within their contracted hours. Those responding 'No' were then asked whether, in an average week, they worked additional hours in order to complete their work. Almost three-quarters reported working between 1 and 15 additional hours (74.54%) in an average week. Just over 10% reported working more than 15 additional hours a week.

**74.91%**  
UNABLE TO COMPLETE  
WORK WITHIN  
CONTRACTED HOURS.

**Figure 14: Are you paid overtime for the additional hours you work?**

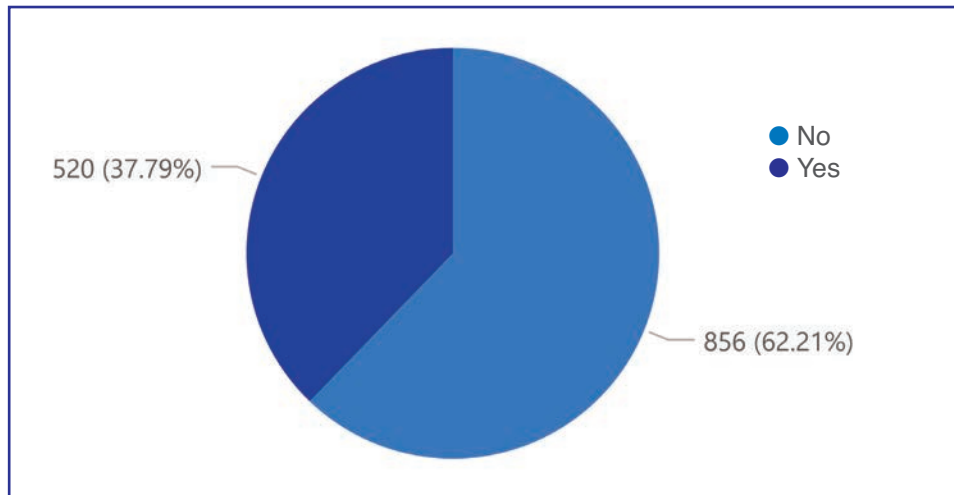


Compared with last year, a slightly greater proportion of respondents reported receiving payment for at least some of the overtime worked. It is unclear whether there is a relationship between this slight shift and the use of agency social workers.

## BULLYING, HARASSMENT, DISCRIMINATION

In the 2021 survey, one of the most concerning findings was that around two-fifths of respondents had either personally experienced or been aware of someone experiencing bullying, discrimination or harassment in their workplace. The 2022 survey contained further questions around these experiences.

**Figure 15: Have you experienced bullying, harassment and/or discrimination in your place of work or study over the past 12 months, or are you aware of someone who has?**



Again, almost two-fifths of respondents (37.79%) reported that they had either personally experienced bullying, harassment and/or discrimination in the workplace, or were aware of someone who had.

The following three questions were asked only of those who responded 'yes' to the preceding question. We found that a higher percentage of respondents who were Black or Asian reported having personally experienced, or being aware of someone who had experienced, bullying, harassment and/or discrimination in the workplace than for the sample as a whole – 48.31% and 45.83% respectively.

**37.79%**  
PERSONALLY  
EXPERIENCED BULLYING,  
HARASSMENT AND/OR  
DISCRIMINATION IN THE  
WORKPLACE, OR AWARE  
OF SOMEONE WHO HAD.

**Figure 16: Please indicate which of the following you have experienced in your place of work or study in the past 12 months:**

Option	Number of times selected	As % of Respondents
I have personally been a victim of bullying harassment and/or discrimination	320	61.54%
At least one person has confided in me about their experience of bullying, harassment and/or discrimination	288	55.38%
I have witnessed at least one person do or say things that I consider to be bullying, harassment and/or discriminatory	220	42.31%
I have witnessed at least one person experience bullying, harassment and/or discrimination	210	40.38%

Respondents could choose as many of the options as applied. More than three-fifths (61.54%) reported having been the victim personally. This represents almost one-quarter of the overall sample. However, all of the options were chosen by at least two-fifths of respondents.

**Figure 17: What do you think was the reason for the bullying, harassment and/or discrimination?**

Option	Number of times selected	As % of Respondents
Professional grievance	193	37.12%
Ethnicity	172	33.08%
Other	104	20.00%
Gender	96	18.46%
Don't know	94	18.08%
Age	72	13.85%
Disability	69	13.27%
Socio-economic background	54	10.38%
Sexuality	20	3.85%

The survey followed up by asking respondents what they thought the reason(s) for the bullying, harassment or discrimination were. More than one-third reported that they thought it involved a professional grievance (37.12%). One-third (33.08%) selected ethnicity as the reason. Just under one-fifth (18.46%) chose gender and a similar percentage reported not knowing the reason (18.08%)





**Figure 18: What relationship does/did the person responsible for bullying, harassment and/or discrimination have with the person receiving it?**

Option	Number of times selected	As % of Respondents
They manage or supervise the victim	304	58.46%
They are more senior than the victim	234	45.00%
They are colleagues of equal or similar seniority	85	16.35%
They are from an external organisation	52	10.00%
They are managed or supervised by the victim	37	7.12%
They are less senior than the victim	32	6.15%



**I LOVE SOCIAL WORK. I'VE NEVER WORKED IN SUCH A TOXIC ENVIRONMENT. IT'S HAD AN ACTUAL IMPACT ON MY MENTAL HEALTH."**

Respondents were also asked to identify the nature of the relationship between the person responsible and the victim of the bullying, harassment, or discrimination. More than one option could be selected. Almost three-fifths reported (58.46%) that the person responsible managed or supervised the victim with 45% reporting that the person responsible was more senior to the victim (there is overlap between these categories).

## EXPERIENCE OF ABUSE IN SOCIAL WORK SETTINGS

The survey included questions about whether respondents had experienced abuse from people who were using social work services during the last 12 months, reflecting upon the risks that social workers may face from unpredictable and potentially dangerous behaviour on the part of others.

**Figure 19: Please indicate which (if any) of the following you have experienced whilst working with people using social work services in the last 12 months (including placement experience)**

Option	Number of times selected	As % of Respondents
Verbal abuse	794	49.56%
None of the above	686	42.82%
Threats of physical violence	385	24.03%
Harassment whilst working with them (EG belittling, offensive jokes, inappropriate comments)	341	21.29%
Harassment outside of my time working with them (EG persistent attempts to make contact, or stalking)	113	7.05%
Other	80	4.99%
Actual physical violence	53	3.31%
Sexual harassment	26	1.62%

More than two-fifths (42.82%) reported having experienced none of the negative behaviour listed. However, almost one half (49.56%) reported having been verbally abused whilst working and almost one quarter (24.03%) reported having received threats of physical violence. Alarming, 3.31% of respondents had been victims of physical violence whilst doing their job.

Amongst those who identified themselves as independent or self-employed social workers, more than three-fifths (62.39%) reported not having experienced any of the negative behaviour listed and less than a third (32.30%) reported having been verbally abused.

Capturing the impact that negative behaviour can have, one comment submitted says:



**I ABSOLUTELY LOVE BEING A SOCIAL WORKER, HOWEVER FEEL WE HAVE NO PROTECTION AT ALL AS FRONTLINE WORKERS”**

**Figure 20: What do you think was the reason for the behaviour?**

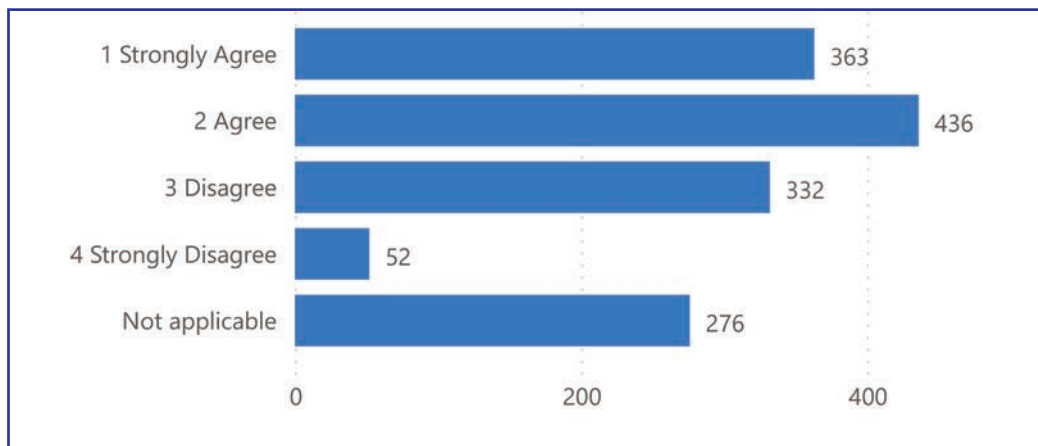
Option	Number of times selected	As % of Respondents
Frustrated at the situation for which I am providing support	564	35.21%
They have a history of violent and/or abusive behaviour	454	28.34%
Dissatisfied with the work I am doing	229	14.29%
Health related problems	228	14.23%
Discriminatory (in relation to gender, ethnicity, sexuality, age, disability or other factor)	196	12.23%
Intoxication	167	10.42%
Other	110	6.87%

Respondents were also asked to identify what they believed to be the reason(s) for the abusive behaviour. The most commonly selected option (35.21%) was the frustration people were experiencing with the situation they were in. Almost three-tenths (28.34%) also identified that the person involved had a known history of violent and/or abusive behaviour.

## COST OF LIVING CRISIS

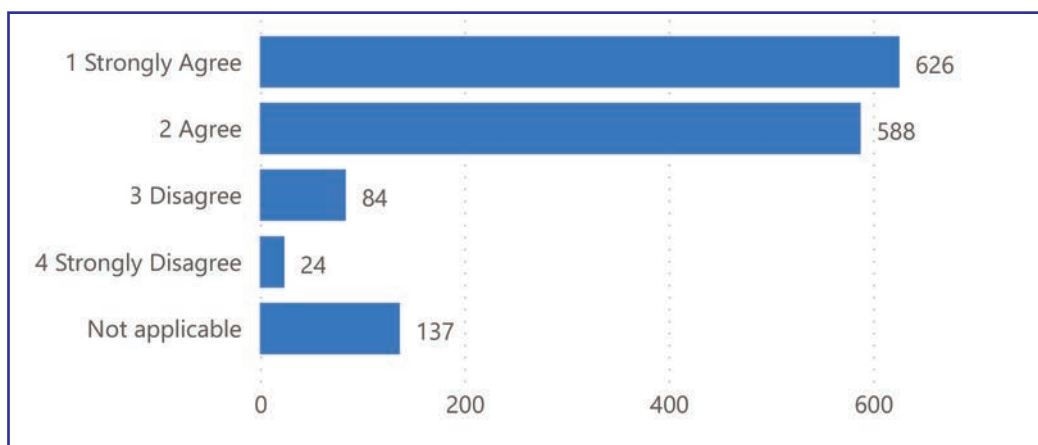
With increasing rates of poverty being experienced across the UK in 2022, and a growing squeeze on the income of families and individuals as a consequence of the rising cost of living, the 2022 survey introduced a new section on the impact of the cost-of-living crisis. Respondents were asked to decide whether they agreed or disagreed with a series of statements (Likert scale responses).

**Figure 21: The number of people I work with has increased as the cost of living has increased**



Almost half of respondents (49.88%) agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that the number of people they worked with had increased as the cost of living had increased. Almost one-quarter of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed (23.97%) although within that, only a small number strongly disagreed (3.25%).

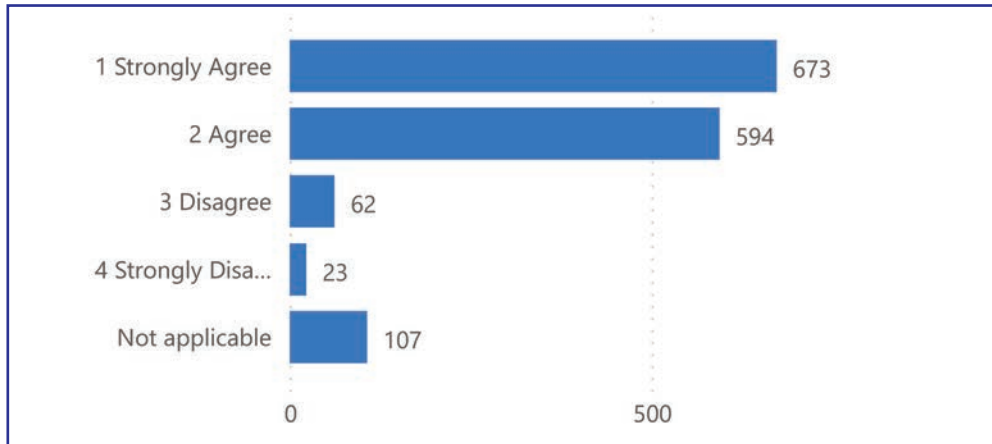
**Figure 22: The cost-of-living crisis has driven people I work with into deeper poverty**



**75.78%**  
AGREE THE COST-OF-LIVING  
CRISIS HAS DRIVEN THE  
PEOPLE THEY WORK WITH  
INTO DEEPER POVERTY

The survey also asked whether, in the experience of respondents, the people they worked with were being driven deeper into poverty as a consequence of the cost-of-living crisis. This produced a striking result, with three-quarters of respondents (75.78%) agreeing or strongly agreeing with this statement. Unusually for this type of question, more respondents were in strong agreement than in agreement. Only 5.5% disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement.

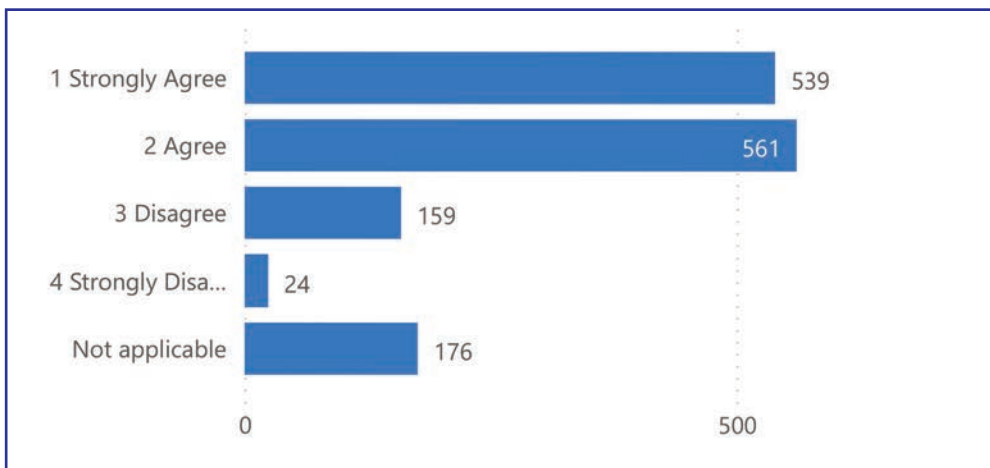
**Figure 23: The cost-of-living crisis has brought about additional problems for the people I work with**



Respondents were asked whether the cost-of-living crisis was causing additional problems for the people with whom they work. Again, the response was overwhelmingly in agreement with the statement, and again, more people strongly agreed than agreed. Almost four-fifths (79.09%) agreed or strongly agreed, with only 5.31% disagreeing or strongly disagreeing.

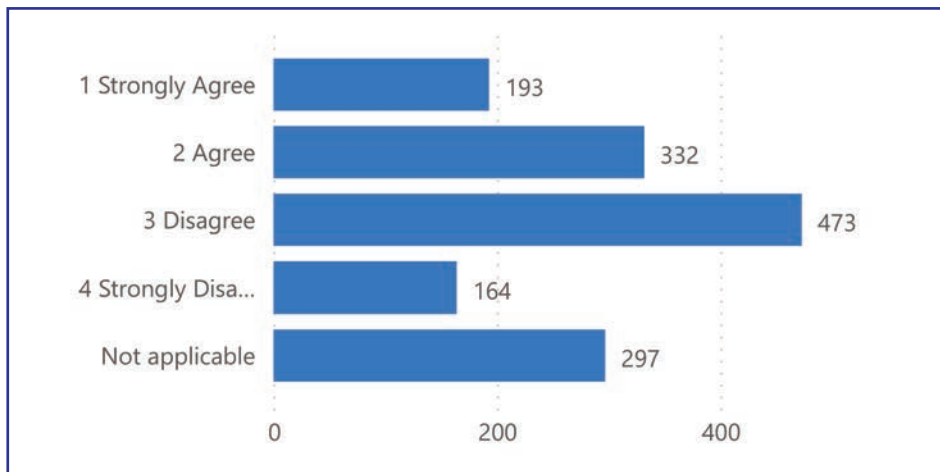
**79.09%**  
**AGREE THE COST-OF-LIVING CRISIS HAS BROUGHT ABOUT ADDITIONAL PROBLEMS FOR THE PEOPLE THEY WORK WITH**

**Figure 24: I work with more people living in poverty now than before the cost-of-living crisis**



When asked whether or not they agreed with the statement that they were working with more people living in poverty now than had been the case before the cost-of-living crisis, more than two-thirds of respondents (68.67%) agreed or strongly agreed that this was the case. Just over one-tenth (11.42%) disagreed or strongly disagreed. This suggests that although just under half reported an increase in the number of people with whom they are working, a large majority of respondents have found that the situation of these families and individuals is getting worse.

**Figure 25: *I am supporting more people with my own resources as the cost of living has increased***

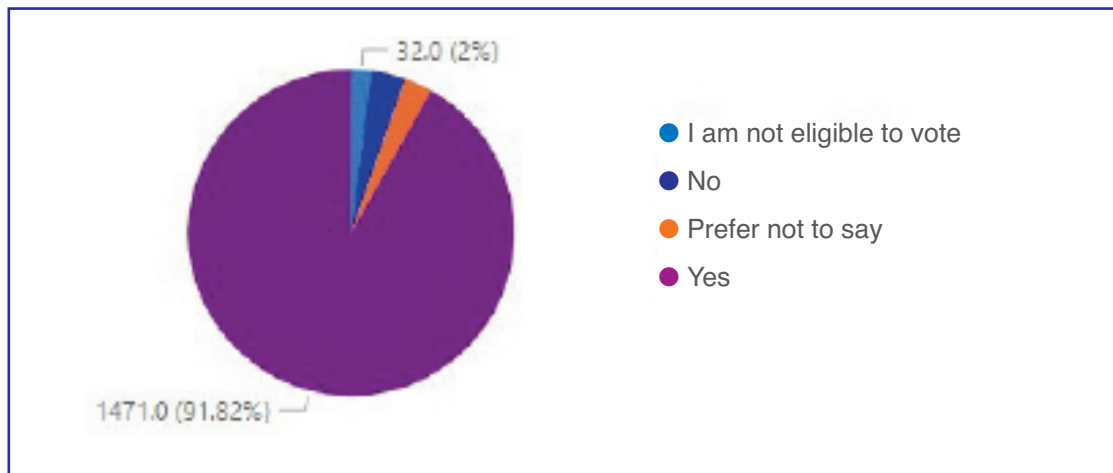


Finally, respondents were asked whether they were supporting more people with their own resources as the cost of living has increased, a trend that can also be seen with other professions such as teachers in the shared concern for those with whom they work. Whilst almost two-fifths (39.77%) reported that they disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement, almost one-third (32.77%) reported that they agreed or strongly agreed with this statement.

## POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT

The final set of questions for 2022 looked at the political engagement of respondents. Political decisions and policy-making are crucial to the environment in which social workers carry out their daily work. Such decisions shape the legislative framework, funding decisions, decisions on who receives different welfare payments and the value of those payments, and, as experienced in 2022, can dramatically influence the economic circumstances of a country and its inhabitants.

**Figure 26: Do you vote in UK general elections?**



More than nine-tenths of respondents (91.82%) reported that they voted in UK general elections (elections to the Westminster Parliament).

A similar pattern is seen from respondents who live in Northern Ireland, Scotland or Wales when asked if they voted in devolved elections. The vast majority of respondents vote.

*“On a scale of 1 - 10 how much confidence do you have that UK government will improve conditions for social work practice (where 1 is ‘none at all’ and 10 is ‘complete’)”*

Respondents were also asked to rate their confidence in the UK Government to improve conditions for social work practice. Whilst this largely applies to England, as decisions on health and social care are devolved to Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, there are some policy areas relevant to social work, such as immigration and human rights, that are largely reserved to the UK government which makes decisions on those issues for the whole of the UK. With 1 being ‘poor’ and ‘10’ being excellent, the average rating of confidence in the UK Government was **1.71**.

The same question was also asked for respondents from Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales with regard to their respective devolved governments.

*“On a scale of 1 - 10 how much confidence do you have that your national government will improve conditions for social work practice (where 1 is ‘none at all’ and 10 is ‘complete’)”*

The Scottish and Welsh Governments fared somewhat better in this exercise, with the **Scottish Government** returning an average confidence rating of **3.59** and the **Welsh Government** a rating of **3.09**. The **Northern Ireland Executive** returned a rating of **1.62**. As a consequence of the complicated politics of Northern Ireland and their impact on executive formation, there was no sitting Northern Ireland Executive in power during the period when the survey was live, nor had there been for most of 2022. It must be noted that the number of respondents in each case, especially Northern Ireland, was relatively small.

**Figure 27: In the last 12 months, have you engaged in any of the following activities?**

Option	Number of times selected	As % of Respondents
Signed a petition (email, online or in person)	1166	72.78%
Voted in the last local election (if there were any)	1081	67.48%
Boycotted certain products or businesses for political reasons	634	39.58%
Contacted a politician, government or local government official	481	30.02%
Posted or forwarded political content on social media	480	29.96%
Provided input or feedback on government policy, law or document	445	27.78%
Wrote to a local government official using a template provided by organisers of a campaign	341	21.29%
Worn or displayed a campaign badge or sticker	237	14.79%
Attended a meeting of a trade union, political party or political action group	210	13.11%
None of these	204	12.73%
Taken part in a public demonstration	176	10.99%
Stood for election to public office (EG local government councillor)	16	1.00%
Participated in a Citizen Assembly, Citizen Dialogue or Citizen Jury	13	0.81%

A final question on political engagement asked members to select which, if any, of a number of options they had engaged in, in the previous 12 months. Only one-eighth of respondents (12.73%) reported not having engaged in of the activities listed (slightly more than those who reported not voting). Almost three-quarters (72.78%) reported having signed a petition and more than two-thirds (67.48%) reported having voted in the local elections, where these had been held.

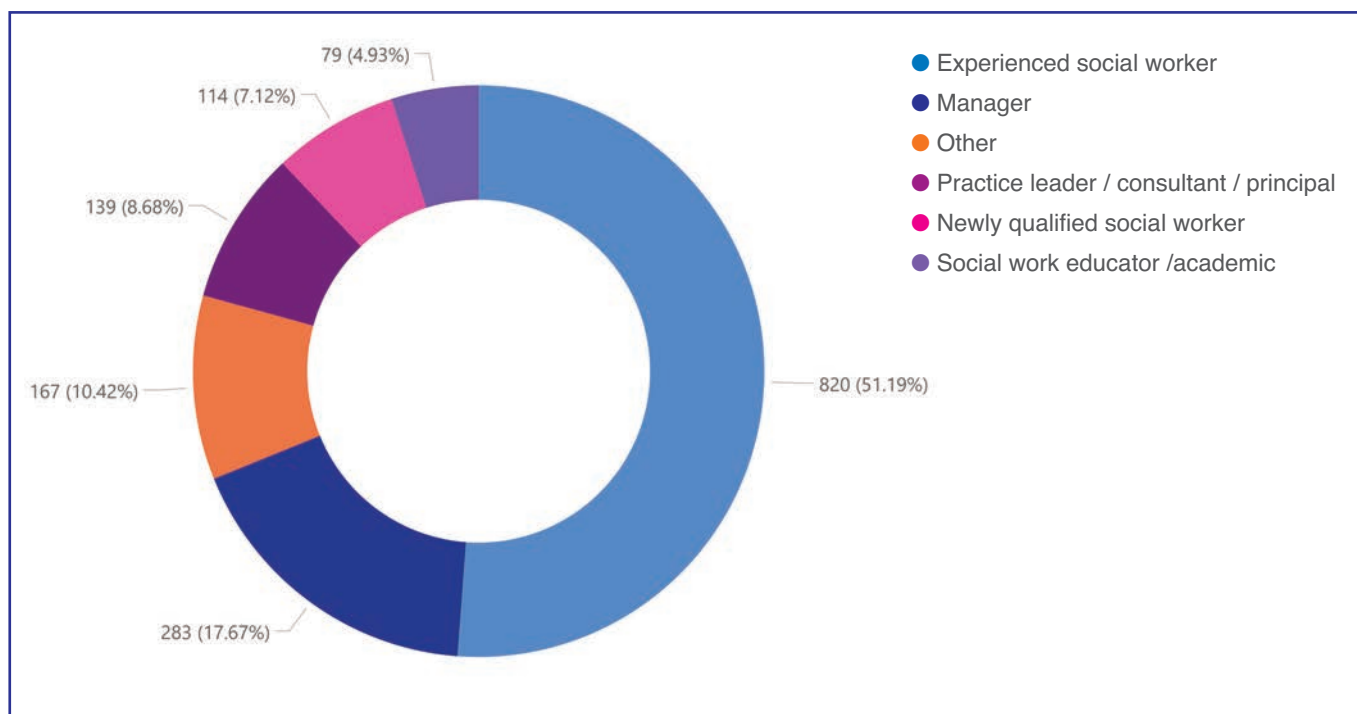


## APPENDIX A: WORKFORCE PROFILE

This section contains the data from the introductory questions to the survey which collected information about the nation of the UK in which the respondents worked, their current (or most recent) professional role, current professional arrangement, current or most recent area of practice and whether they qualified in or outside the UK. For some of these questions, respondents had the opportunity to specify something other than one of the options listed. For the respondents who chose to do this, it was often because they either combined two different roles or because they had a role which covered more than one area of practice.

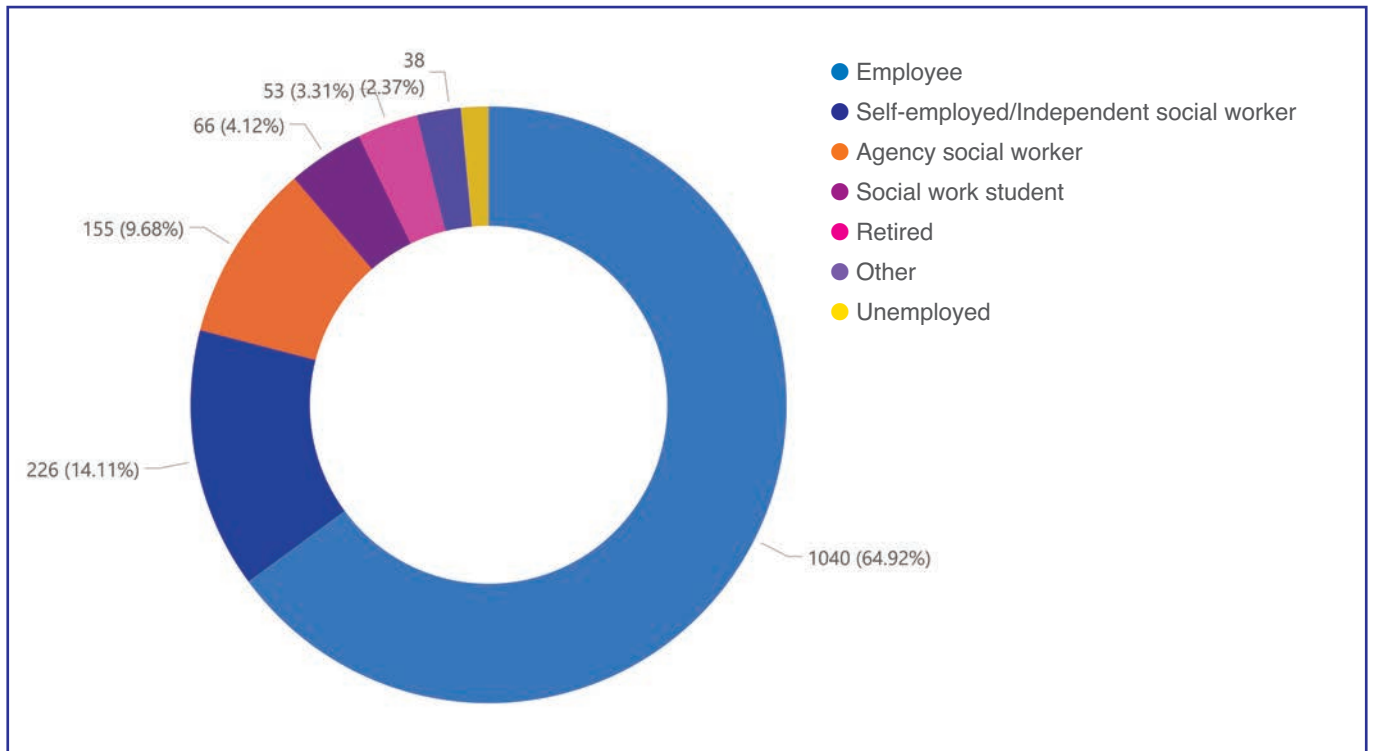
The largest number of respondents were working in England. This is unsurprising given that England is the largest constituent part of the UK, containing around 85% of the UK's total population. This unequal demographic distribution is reflected in both the social work population and the BASW membership and as a result, the largest percentage of respondents come from England.

**Figure 28: Which best describes your current (or most recent) professional role)**



More than half of respondents reported being an experienced social worker, with a further one quarter identifying as managers or practice leaders/consultants or principal social workers. These represent slight increases on those who reported being experienced or working at a senior level in responses to the 2021 annual survey. Options were updated this year to reflect role titles currently being used in practice. The option to select student social worker was transferred to the question on current professional arrangement.

**Figure 29: Which best describes your current professional arrangement?**



Nearly two-thirds of respondents report being employees, with a further quarter reporting being either independent/self-employed practitioners or being agency social workers.

**Figure 30: Please specify your current (or most recent) area of practice**

Option	Number of times selected	As % of Respondents
Children & Families	877	54.74%
Adults	566	35.33%
Mental Health	290	18.10%
Social work educator/ Academic	132	8.24%
Youth/ young adults	103	6.43%
Other	73	4.56%
Emergency Duty	67	4.18%
Justice	38	2.37%
Immigration	26	1.62%

Respondents were allowed to choose more than one option in response to this question, reflecting the overlapping nature of the issues faced by the people with whom social workers work and the multiple ways in which social workers divide their time. Over half of respondents reported working in Children and Families, with over one-third working in Adult social care.

*Where did you (or will you) qualify as a social worker?*

A new question was introduced this year to ask where respondents qualified as social workers. Its introduction reflects the fact that growing numbers of social workers who are now working in one of the four UK nations qualified outside the UK. 5% of respondents reported having qualified outside the UK.

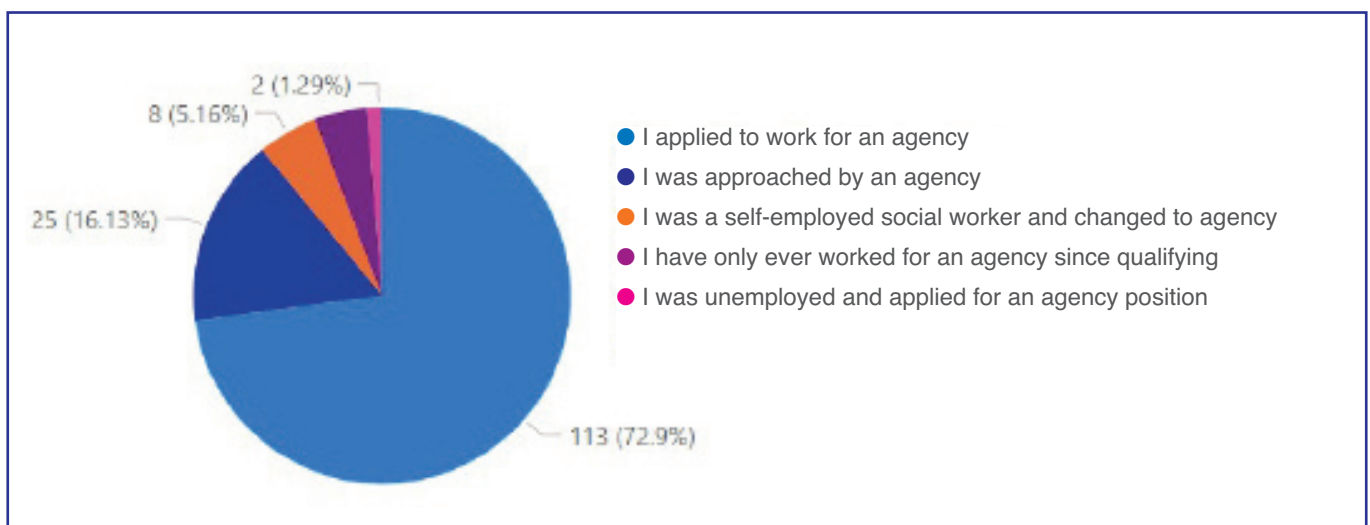
## APPENDIX B: DIFFERENT PROFESSIONAL ARRANGEMENTS

Whilst almost two-thirds of respondents to the survey reported being employees, respondents also included agency social workers, independent/self-employed social workers and student social workers. This appendix contains results for questions that were targeted specifically at these three groups to capture aspects of their experiences specific to their current role or status.

### AGENCY SOCIAL WORKERS

These questions were introduced to explore the role of agency social workers within the profession as the use of agency staff has grown in recent years. 155 respondents, almost 10% of the total, reported being agency social workers.

**Figure 31: How did you enter agency employment?**



Almost three-quarters of agency respondents reported that they had applied to work for an agency. A further 16% reported having been approached by an agency.

This group of respondents were also asked about what they perceived to be the possible advantages and disadvantages of working for an agency. They were able to choose as many options as they felt applied to them.

**Figure 32: Of the following possible advantages of working for an agency, please indicate which (if any) are most applicable to you:**

Option	Number of times selected	As % of Respondents
Pay	109	70.32%
Flexibility/control over hours worked	88	56.77%
Greater choice of role	80	51.61%
Greater choice of location	66	42.58%
Other	30	19.35%

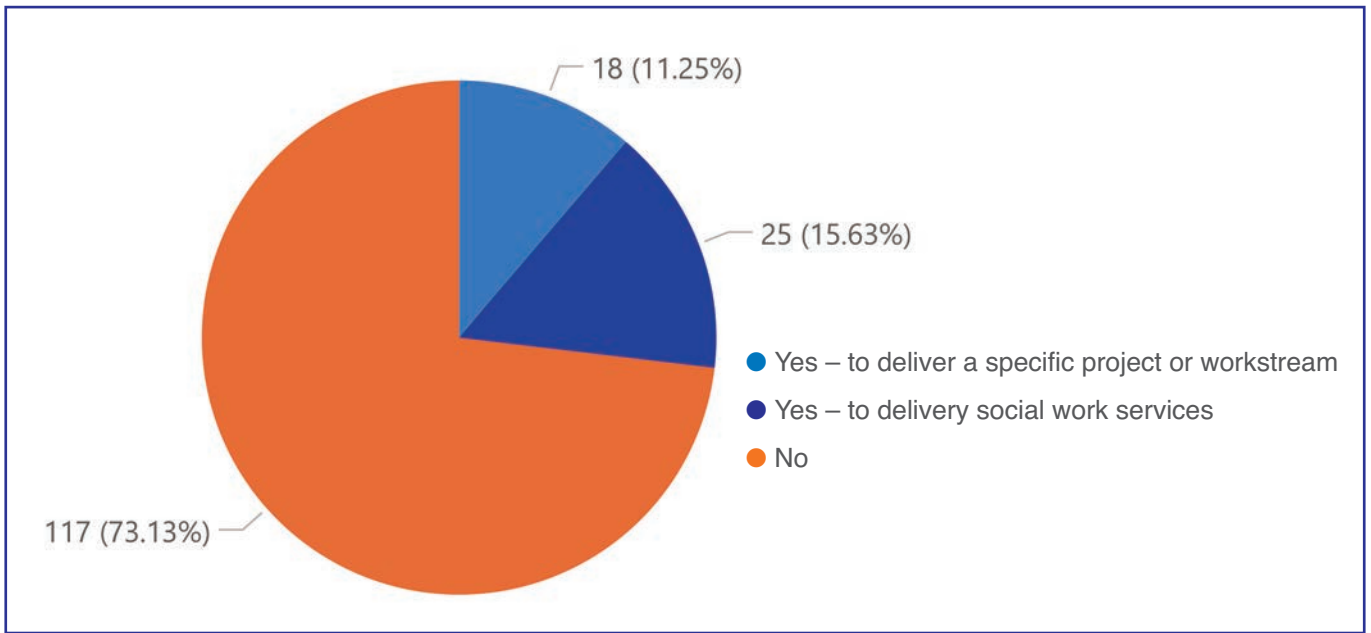
When it came to advantages, the most chosen option by respondents was 'pay', selected by 70%. The next most selected option was 'flexibility/control over hours worked' which 56.77%. This was closely followed by 'greater choice of role' with 51.61%.

**Figure 33: Of the following possible disadvantages of working for an agency, please indicate which (if any) are most applicable to you:**

Option	Number of times selected	As % of Respondents
Lack of job security	85	54.84%
Fewer employment rights	76	49.03%
Less access to training and professional development	72	46.45%
Lack of career development opportunities	64	41.29%
Less well treated by managers than permanent employees	57	36.77%
Obligation or pressure to accept any role	25	16.13%
Other	25	16.13%
Barriers to completing ASYE	9	5.81%

When it comes to potential disadvantages of working for an agency, the most selected option was the lack of job security, chosen by more than half of respondents (54.85%). This was followed fairly closely by 'fewer employment rights' at 49.03%. 'Less access to training and professional development' was selected by more than two-fifths of respondents (46.45%), with just over two-fifths also selecting 'lack of career development opportunities. (41.29%).

**Figure 34: Have you (in the last twelve months) been deployed as part of a complete team supplied by the agency?**



Almost three-quarters of respondents reported that they had not been deployed as part of a team supplied by their agency. A further 11.25% reported having been deployed as part of a team to deliver a specific project. Just over 15% (25 of 155) reported having been deployed as part of a team that delivered social work services rather than being engaged upon delivery of a specific project. Concerns have been raised about the practice of some agencies deploying entire teams for reasons other than delivering on a specific project.

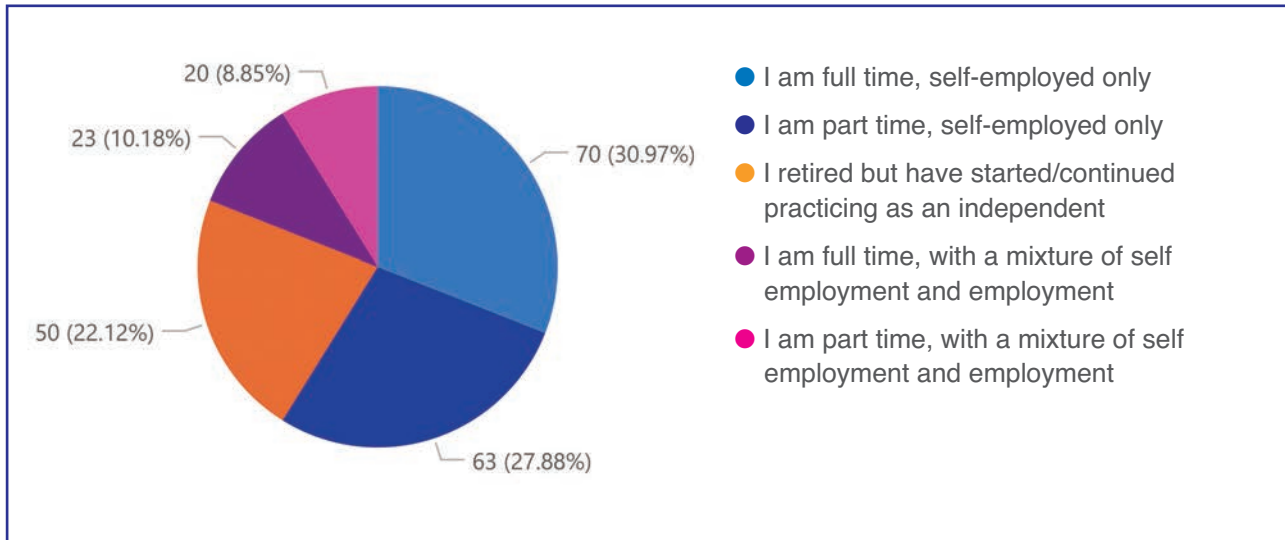
*Are you considering leaving agency employment?*

Almost three quarters (74.84%) reported that they are not considering leaving agency employment, leaving one-quarter of respondents who would consider doing so.

## INDEPENDENT/SELF-EMPLOYED SOCIAL WORKERS

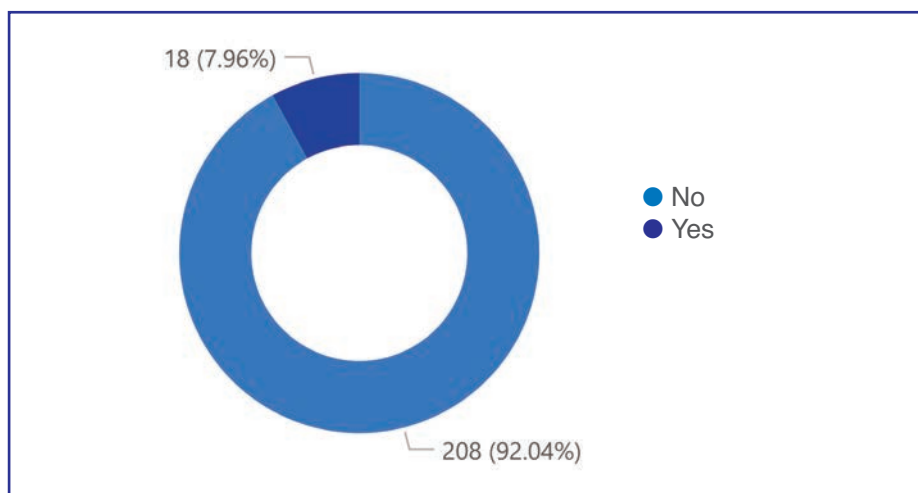
Questions were also introduced specifically for those who reported being independent/self-employed. There were 226 respondents in this sub-sample. These questions were introduced to explore whether and how independent social workers divide their time between different roles and their experience of working with contracting bodies.

**Figure 35: What proportion of your time is spent as an independent social worker?**



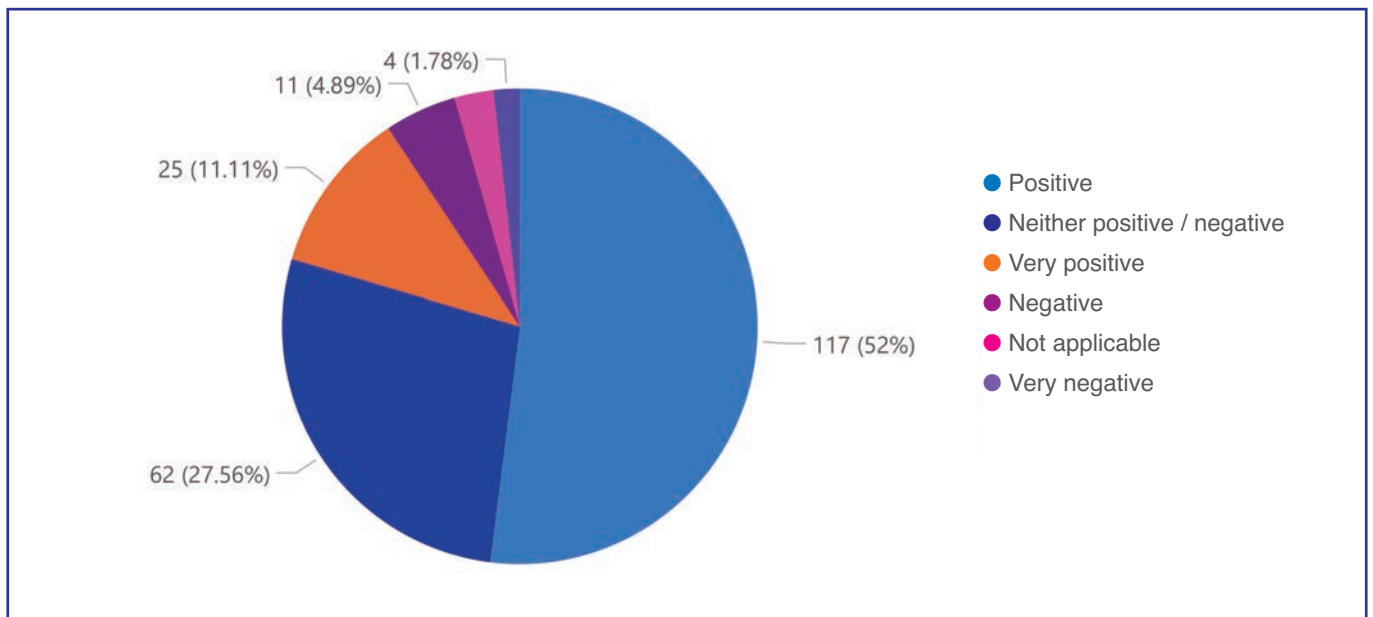
The results for this question reflect the variety of ways in which independents work and divide their time between different roles. Almost one-third of respondents work full-time as independent social workers. Just under three-tenths reported working only as part-time independents. Just over one-fifth had come back into working as independents following retirement and the remaining respondents combined working as an independent with an employed role, either full-time or part-time.

**Figure 36: Are you considering returning to permanent employment?**



When asked about whether respondents were considering returning to permanent employment, the results were clear. The vast majority of independents had no intention of returning to being employees on a permanent basis, with more than nine-tenths (92.04%) reporting that they were not considering this option.

**Figure 37: Overall, how would you describe your experience of working with contracting bodies**



The final question in this section asked respondents about their experiences of working with contracting bodies, rating those experiences on a Likert-type scale from very positive to very negative. The above chart shows that most respondents ranked their experiences of working with contracting bodies positively (combined 63.11% for positive/very positive). Almost three-tenths reported that their experience had been overall neither negative nor positive (27.56%) with fewer than 7% combined (6.67%) reporting negative or very negative experiences.

## STUDENT INTENTIONS

Those who reported being student social workers were asked to choose the statement which most closely resembled their intentions upon graduating/qualifying. Out of 66 respondents, more than three-quarters reported that they were planning to apply for a social work role with an employer (e.g. a local authority).

## APPENDIX C: HOW WE CONDUCTED THIS SURVEY

The survey was conducted on-line through the BASW website. It opened on 8 December 2022 and closed on 9 January 2023. The survey was designed to allow social workers to reflect on their role and the profession during 2022 and is thus the 2022 BASW Annual Survey. Although hosted on the BASW website, it was open to non-member social workers to respond.

The survey used mostly closed questions. For some questions, respondents were able to select more than one response. Some questions included the option to include a free-text response to provide an alternative answer or expand upon the option chosen.

Some of the questions used Likert scale responses, which are commonly used in questionnaires. The Likert scale is used as a way of establishing respondents' attitudes on an issue as the scale indicates the extent to which respondents agree or disagree with a given statement. In this instance, an option to indicate that the statement did not apply to their situation was also included. Whilst Likert responses can include a 'neither agree nor disagree' option, this was not available for the questions here. This means that some responses cannot be directly compared with the same question last year where respondents were able to choose 'neither agree nor disagree'.

Respondents were asked whether they wished to be included in a free draw to receive a discount code for Continuing Professional Development (CPD) training with BASW. Five discount codes were available. Five recipients were selected by random generator in January 2023.

As an on-line survey, there are caveats that should be noted. Respondents represent a self-selecting sample, being those social workers and students who felt motivated to respond. Consequently, this may result in bias if those with particular types of experiences were more likely to respond.

In total, the survey received 1602 responses from across the UK. Descriptive statistics have been produced from the results. Not all respondents replied to all questions. Not all questions were asked of all respondents. Some questions

applied only to those with specific professional arrangements e.g. agency social worker. Some questions created skips allowing respondents to bypass questions that were not relevant to their situation based upon their earlier responses.

Compared with the 2021 BASW survey, more questions were made mandatory this year. This led to a change in the method of calculating the descriptive statistics as the number of those responding to a question would be the same as the sample size. This has created some discrepancies when comparing results for questions asked in both years, as 2021 descriptive statistics in the summary report were calculated based upon the number of people responding to a question, not the overall sample. For some questions this creates the impression that percentages have dropped. However, if the calculation of last year's statistics as a proportion of the overall sample is used, the findings are much more closely aligned. The exception is where there has been a marked change in the number of respondents selecting an option. Some response options were also changed from last year in order to reflect new issues that have emerged on the agenda. More questions being mandatory this year has also impacted as respondents were unable to skip those questions.

In the results, percentages have been calculated to two decimal places. Percentages may not total 100% due to non-responses and the rounding process. Where respondents were allowed to select more than one option in response to a question, percentages will not total 100%. Where respondents were allowed to select more than one option, tables show the ranking of results in highest to lowest order, not the order in which options were presented in the survey.



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