

SWAAB ANNUAL REPORT 2022

For the year ended 31 December 2022

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MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRPERSON

Dear social workers, social service practitioners, and friends,

Social work has been an important profession in Singapore since the early days of our nation's founding. The profession supported the people in enhancing their quality of life, promoted social cohesion and community development and contributing significantly to Singapore's economic success within a short period. Today, the social work profession and the social service sector are even more critical in ensuring the continued growth and prosperity of the country amid rapidly changing local and global conditions.

For the social work profession to be effective in improving lives and building strong communities in the changing practice environment, new capabilities and competencies are required. The Social Work Accreditation and Advisory Board (SWAAB) works to advance the capability of the social work profession, advance practice standards and enhance the professional growth and development of social workers and social service practitioners. The Board oversees the accreditation framework, a key mechanism for upholding good practice and professional standards. This report provides an overview of the accreditation system and other activities undertaken by the Board in the year 2022.

The Board, supported by the Accreditation Secretariat promotes accreditation of social workers through outreach and engagement of practitioners, agencies, employers and other stakeholders in the social service and healthcare sectors. As of 31 December 2022, there were 2,555 accredited social workers and social service practitioners. The number of accredited professionals in 2022 was the highest since the introduction of the accreditation system in 2009. The growing number of accredited professionals signifies the increasing recognition of the professionalism of social workers and the need to maintain good practice standards.

To ensure high standards of practice, the Preliminary Investigation Committee (PIC) also reviewed its complaint management procedures and processes and investigated three complaints and there was no need for disciplinary actions required.

The Board continued to work with the Singapore Association of Social Workers (SASW) in the upgrading of the online accreditation system to develop an integrated system to leverage on technology and digitalisation to enhance efficiency, promote data analytics and user experience.

We also celebrated the efforts and achievements of social workers in Singapore. On 15 March 2022, Board Members were invited to celebrate Social Work Day with a hybrid event graced by the Minister for Social and Family Development and Second Minister for Health, Mr. Masagos Zulkifli. In November 2022, three exemplary registered social workers who made outstanding contributions to the society were conferred the Outstanding Social Worker Award and Promising Social Worker Awards by the President of Singapore, Madam Halimah Yacob

I am grateful for the good support of my fellow Board members and thank them for their dedication to serve and active contribution to maintain high standards of social work practice in Singapore. I would also like to thank members of the various committees whose names are mentioned in this Report for contributing their expertise and time at the meetings of the committees and the Accreditation Secretariat for their support to the Board and various initiatives.

The Board will continue to advance the standards and integrity of the social work profession and practice and support the professional development of social work practitioners. I encourage all social workers and practitioners to continue your good work and commitment as accredited professionals so that we can collectively improve practice standards and service delivery, complying to the Social Work Code of Professional Ethics and upholding the good image of the profession.

Yours faithfully,

Ang Bee Lian (Ms)
Director-General of Social Welfare
Chairperson
Social Work Accreditation and Advisory Board

ABOUT SWAAB

The Social Work Accreditation and Advisory Board (SWAAB), formerly known as the Social Work Accreditation Board (SWAB), was formed on 1 January 2009.

SWAAB oversees the accreditation framework for social workers and social service practitioners (SSPs) in Singapore. SWAAB also reviews mechanisms to maintain professional social work practice, provide thought and professional leadership on the development of social work practice and professional development of social workers and SSPs in Singapore, and provide consultations and inputs to Government on issues affecting the profession.

The accreditation framework is owned by the Ministry of Social and Family Development (MSF). Since the accreditation system was launched on 1 April 2009, the system has been administered by the Accreditation Secretariat of the Singapore Association of Social Workers (SASW).

The accreditation system contributes to the longer-term goal of advancing the practice standards of social workers and SSPs in Singapore. The accreditation system aims to:

- a. Ensure professional standards of Social Work practice.
- b. Promote continuing education and training of social workers and social service practitioners.
- c. Uphold professional conduct and ethics.
- d. Improve the professional image of social workers and social service practitioners.

SWAAB sets accreditation requirements and provides leadership in the professional development of social workers. Eligible social workers and SSPs can apply for accreditation as Registered Social Worker-Provisional (RSWPs), Registered Social Workers (RSWs) or Registered Social Service Practitioners (RSSPs). The accreditation of RSSPs was introduced for a limited period of three (3) years up till 30 June 2012 to recognise experienced practitioners in the social service sector but who do not have a recognised qualification in Social Work. RSWPs and RSSPs can apply to be converted to RSWs upon achievement of the required supervised practice hours and recognised social work qualifications.

Each approved accreditation application has a validity of two years and may be renewed upon achievement of 60 Continuing Professional Education (CPE) credits within the two years period.

SWAAB promotes professional standards and good conduct of registered social workers and SSPs. Registered social workers and SSPs are issued with certificates of accreditation and expected to always exhibit professional conduct, upholding professional standards and positive public image of the profession. The Board maintains the register and may reprimand, suspend, or remove from the register a registered practitioner found to have breached professional conduct.

This SWAAB Annual Report documents the activities and highlights of SWAAB and the accreditation system for the year ended 31 December 2022.

SWAAB MEMBERS AND WORKGROUPS

The Chairperson and members of SWAAB are appointed by MSF. The Chairperson and members for the new term of office from January 2022 to December 2023 are:

Position	Name	Designation	Organisation
Chairperson	Ms Ang Bee Lian	Director-General of Social Welfare	MSF
Member	Ms Tan Sze Wee	Executive Director President (2021 – 2023)	Rainbow Centre SASW
Member	Ms Elaine Loo	Director, Service Strategy & Innovation	National Council of Social Service
Member	A/P Esther Goh*	Head, Social Work Department	National University of Singapore
Member	Ms Julia Lee	Senior Director, Social Work & Programme Development	TOUCH Community Services Ltd
Member	Dr Katijah Dawood	Divisional Director, Family Services	Thye Hua Kwan Moral Charities
Member	Mr Lee Seng Meng	Executive Director	SHINE Children & Youth Services
Member	Ms Lilian Mark	Head, Medical Social Work	Institute of Mental Health
Member	Ms Long Chey May**	Group Chief Patient Officer	National University Health System
Member	Mr Mohd Ali Bin Mahmood	Community Development & Social Work Consultant	BROMOHD – The Practice
Member	Ms Morene Sim	Director	Inlingua School of Languages
Member	Prof Seng Boon Kheng	Head, Master of Social Work Programme	Singapore University of Social Sciences
Member	Dr Vincent Ng	Chief Executive Officer	AMKFSC Community Service Ltd
Member	A/P Teo Poh Leng	Head, Bachelor of Social Work Programme	Singapore University of Social Sciences
Member	Ms Bridget Monica Das	Head, Psychosocial Services	Ren Ci Hospital
Member	Ms Tabitha Ong	Director, Adult Protective Service	MSF

*A/P Esther Goh served till 31 December 2022 and would be on sabbatical leave after which. Replacing her is A/P Lee Geok Ling, Associate Professor, National University of Singapore from 01 January 2023.

**Ms Long Chey May served as a member of SWAAB till 30 September 2022 and continued to contribute as Director, Professional Practice Development, MSF, from 01 October 2022.

Various workgroups and committees were formed to focus on specific areas and events to support the overall purpose of SWAAB. The workgroups and their members are as follow:

Preliminary Investigation Committee

Position	Name	Designation	Organisation
Member	Prof Seng Boon Kheng	Head, Master of Social Work Programme	Singapore University of Social Sciences
Member	Dr Vincent Ng	Chief Executive Officer	AMKFSC Community Service Ltd
Member	Ms Morene Sim	Director	Inlingua School of Languages
Member	Ms Agnes Chia	Chairperson	Professional Ethics Committee, SASW

Online Accreditation System Enhancement Steering Committee Member

Position	Name	Designation	Organisation
Member	Mr Lee Seng Meng	Executive Director	SHINE Children & Youth Services
Member	Ms Evelyn Lai	Head of Accreditation Executive Director	Singapore Association of Social Workers

Social Work Supervision Seminar 2023 Organising Committee

Position	Name	Designation	Organisation
Co-Chairperson	A/P Teo Poh Leng	Head, Bachelor of Social Work Programme	Singapore University of Social Services
Co-Chairperson	Dr Peace Wong	Senior Lecturer, Department of Social Work	National University of Singapore
Member	Ms Bridget Monica Das	Head of Psychosocial Services	Ren Ci Hospital
Member	Mr Mohd Ali Mahmood	Community Development & Social Work Consultant	BROMOHD – The Practice
Member	Ms Rafidah Binte Mohamed Ayob	Lead Specialist, Community Corrections Command	Singapore Prison Service
Member	Mr Udhia Kumar s/o Mukaya	Lead Social Worker	Kampong Kapor Community Services
Member	Ms Yogeswari Munisamy	Senior Principal Social Worker, Child Protective Service	MSF
Secretariat	Ms Evelyn Lai	Head, Accreditation Executive Director	SASW
Secretariat	Ms Pearlyn Lee	Programme Executive	SASW

Accreditation Secretariat

Position	Name	Designation	Organisation
Head	Ms Evelyn Lai (From March 2022)	Executive Director	SASW
	Ms Theresa Lee (Till March 2022)	Head of Accreditation and Programme Director	SASW
Executive	Ms Pearlyn Lee (wef April 2022)	Programme Executive	SASW
Executive	Ms Sharon Song	Senior Executive	SASW
Executive	Ms Kamaljeet Kaur (wef October 2022)	Administrative Executive	SASW
Executive	Ms Low Li Ming (Till April 2022)	Assistant Head of Accreditation	SASW
Executive	Ms Grace Teo (Till June 2022)	Programme Executive	SASW

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE YEAR

Outreach and Engagement

The Accreditation Secretariat engaged more than 600 social service practitioners, leaders, and employers at the following events:

- Principal Social Workers' Seminar on 23 September 2022
- NCSS Career Conversion Programme Employers Engagement on 14 October 2022
- Envisioning Psychosocial Care in Nursing Homes Virtual Symposium on 3 November 2022
- Chief Medical Social Workers Meeting on 11 November 2022

The Accreditation Secretariat also conducted engagement sessions with individual agencies.

Oversight of Sub-Sectors Professional Practice Standards

The Board invited representatives from different subsectors to present the respective professional development and practice standards framework and efforts in each subsector. In 2022, the Board was appraised of the practices from the following sub-sectors:

- Family Service Centres
- Medical and Mental Health Social Work

ASEAN Inter-Sectoral Regional Conference on Strengthening Social Work

Ms Madeleine Yeo, Senior Principal Social Worker, Office of the Director-General of Social Work, MSF and Ms Evelyn Lai, Head of Accreditation presented on the development of social work practice and standards in Singapore at the regional conference from 26 to 28 April 2022.

ACCREDITATION STATISTICS

Accreditation Categories

There are three accreditation categories to recognise the different qualifications and practice experience of social workers and social service practitioners. The three categories are:

- i. Registered Social Workers-Provisional (RSWPs)**

Social workers with less than a year of post qualification full-time practice in a social work position in Singapore and are employed in a social work position in Singapore at the point of application.
- ii. Registered Social Workers (RSWs)**

Social workers with at least a year of post qualification full-time practice in a social work position in Singapore, 80 hours of in-employment training and 1,000 hours of supervised practice from a qualified supervisor.
- iii. Registered Social Service Practitioners (RSSPs)**

Practitioners with significant years of relevant social service practice experience but who do not have a recognised social work qualification and registered for accreditation on or before 30 June 2012. Accreditation as Registered Social Service Practitioner ceased from 01 July 2012.

As of 31 December 2022, there were 2,555 accredited professionals. 81.7% of the accredited professionals were RSWs, 14.8% were RSWPs and 3.6% were RSSPs. The numbers of RSWPs and RSWs increased by 8.6% and 14.7% while the number of RSSP decreased 14.2% from 2021 to 2022. The decrease in number of RSSPs was expected and consistent with previous years since 2012 when SWAAB stopped accepting new applications for accreditation as RSSPs.

In 2022, 144 RSWPs successfully applied for conversion to become RSWs. There was no application for conversion of RSSP to either RSWP or RSW

Table 1: Number of Accredited Professionals by Accreditation Categories as of 31 December 2022

Category	Number	Percentage
RSWPs	377	14.8%
RSWs	2,087	81.7%
RSSPs	91	3.6%
Total:	2,555	100%

Table 2: Number of Accredited Professionals by Accreditation Categories over the Past Five Years (2018 to 2022)

Category	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
No. of RSWPs	334	347	349	347	377
YOY Change	21.5%	3.9%	0.6%	-0.6%	8.6%
No. of RSWs	1,462	1,572	1,622	1,820	2,087
YOY Change	2.1%	7.5%	3.2%	12.2%	14.7%
No. of RSSPs	138	129	113	106	91
YOY Change	-19.8%	-6.5%	-12.4%	-6.2%	-14.2%
Total	1,934	2,048	2,084	2,273	2,555
YOY Change	2.9%	5.9%	1.8%	9.1%	12.4%

Sector Distribution

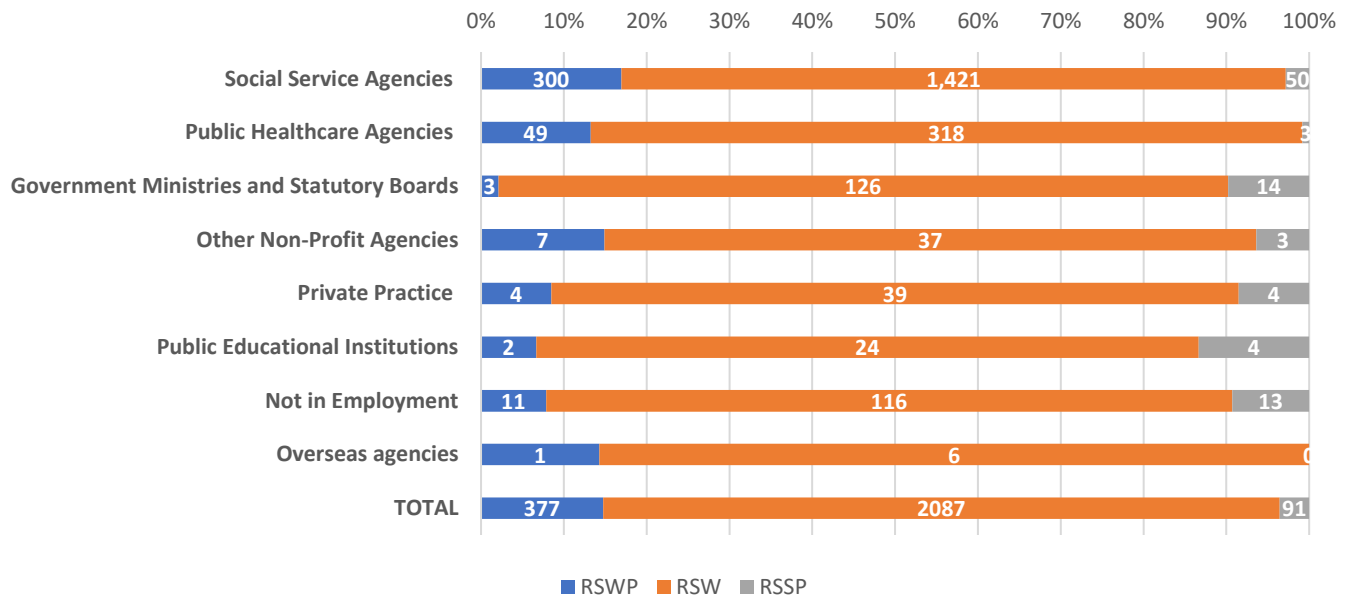
The top three types of employers of accredited professionals were social service agencies (SSAs), public healthcare agencies and government ministries and statutory boards.

Table 3: Number of Accredited Professional by Accreditation Categories and Sectors

Employment	RSWP	RSW	RSSP	Total	Percentage
Social Service Agencies (i.e., charities or societies providing social services)	300	1,421	50	1,771	69.3%
Public Healthcare Agencies (e.g., restructured hospitals, polyclinics, specialist centres)	49	318	3	370	14.5%
Government Ministries and Statutory Boards (e.g., MSF, NCSS, MOE)	3	126	14	143	5.6%
Self Employed / Private Practice (e.g., private companies, freelance practice)	4	39	4	47	1.8%
Not in Employment	11	116	13	140	5.5%
Others (e.g., Educational Institutions, indirect practice agencies)	10	67	7	84	3.3%
TOTAL	377	2,087	91	2,555	100.0%

Overall, the majority of registered social workers were employed in SSAs (69.3%). Most RSWPs were employed by SSAs and public healthcare agencies. 79.6% of RSWPs were working in SSAs and 13.0% of RSWPs were employed by public healthcare agencies. Government ministries and statutory boards employed only a small number of RSWPs.

54.9% and 15.4% of RSSPs were employed by SSAs and government ministries and statutory boards respectively. About half of the remaining RSSPs were not in employment as in 2022, most of which were near or had reached retirement age.

Chart 1: Distribution of Registered Professionals by Accreditation Categories in Different Sectors in 2022

Country of Social Work Qualifications

In 2022, 91.3% of the registered professionals had obtained their social work qualifications from local universities. 74.7% of the foreign qualifications were obtained from Australia, Hong Kong, and America.

RSWs were more likely than RSWPs and RSSPs to hold a foreign social work qualification. 9.8% of RSWs had foreign qualifications as compared to 2.1% of RSWPs. No RSSP had a foreign social work qualification.

Table 4: Number and Percentage of RSWPs, RSWs and RSSPs by Country of Social Work Qualification

Country of Social Work Qualification	RSW-P		RSW		RSSP		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Singapore	381	97.9%	2,194	90.2%	6	100%	2,581	91.3%
Australia	4	1.0%	104	4.3%	0	0.0%	108	3.8%
Hong Kong	1	0.3%	40	1.6%	0	0.0%	41	1.4%
America	1	0.3%	36	1.5%	0	0.0%	37	1.3%
India	0	0.0%	15	0.6%	0	0.0%	15	0.5%
Philippines	0	0.0%	14	0.6%	0	0.0%	14	0.5%
Malaysia	2	0.5%	8	0.3%	0	0.0%	10	0.4%
Taiwan	0	0.0%	8	0.3%	0	0.0%	8	0.3%
United Kingdom	0	0.0%	6	0.2%	0	0.0%	6	0.2%
China	0	0.0%	5	0.2%	0	0.0%	5	0.2%
Canada	0	0.0%	1	0.0%	0	0.0%	1	0.0%
New Zealand	0	0.0%	1	0.0%	0	0.0%	1	0.0%
Ukraine	0	0.0%	1	0.0%	0	0.0%	1	0.0%
Total:	389	100.0%	2,433	100.0%	6	100.0%	2,828	100.0%

Note: The total number does not equate to the total number of accredited professionals as some accredited professionals may have more than one social work educational qualification.

Demographic Profile of Accredited Professionals

i. By Sex

Consistent with previous years, there were more females than males across all accreditation categories.

Table 5a: Number and Percentage of Accredited Professionals by Sex

Sex	RSWP		RSW		RSSP		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Male	91	24.1%	503	24.1%	25	27.5%	619	24.2%
Female	286	75.9%	1584	75.9%	66	72.5%	1,936	75.8%
Total:	377	100.0%	2,087	100.0%	91	100.0%	2,555	100.0%

ii. By Age Groups

In 2022, accredited professionals were aged from 23 to 76 years old, with a mean age of 38.4 years old and median age of 37 years old.

Table 5b: Mean and Median Age of Accredited Professionals by Accreditation Categories

	RSWP	RSW	RSSP	Overall
Mean Age	30.0	39.3	53.1	38.4
Median Age	27.0	37.0	52.0	37.0
Age Range	23.0 to 50.0	24.0 to 76.0	37.0 to 74.0	23.0 to 76.0

Consistent with the criteria for each accreditation categories, RSWPs tend to be younger than RSWs and RSSPs tended to be older. Most RSWPs were in their twenties, while the largest group of RSWs was in their thirties and RSSPs in their fifties.

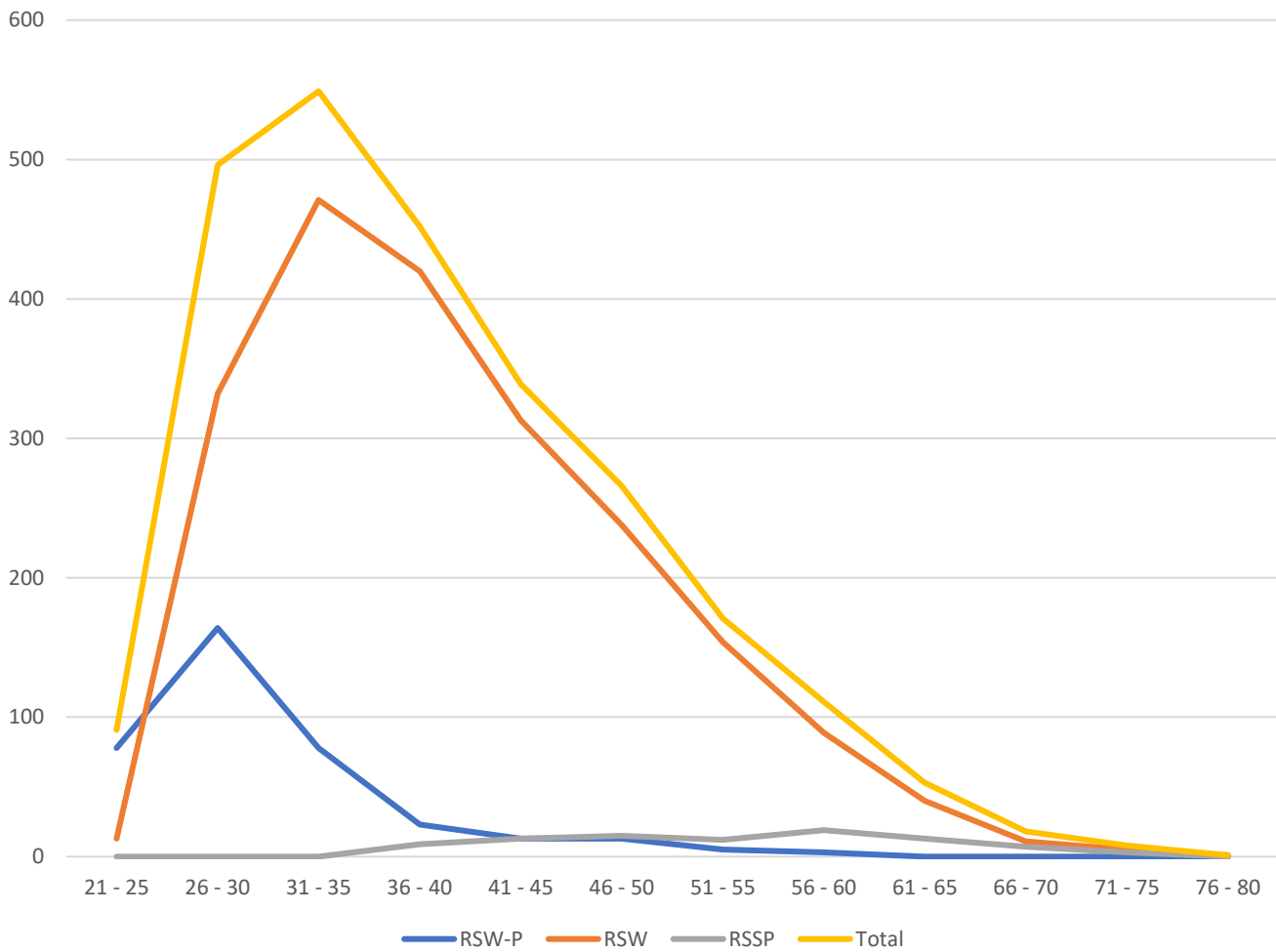
Table 5c: Number and Percentage of Accredited Professionals by Age Group and Accreditation Categories

Age Group	RSWP		RSW		RSSP		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
21 – 25	78	20.7%	13	0.6%	0	0.0%	91	3.6%
26 – 30	164	43.5%	332	15.9%	0	0.0%	496	19.4%
31 – 35	78	20.7%	471	22.6%	0	0.0%	549	21.5%
36 – 40	23	6.1%	420	20.1%	9	9.9%	452	17.7%
41 – 45	13	3.4%	313	15.0%	13	14.3%	339	13.3%
46 – 50	13	3.4%	238	11.4%	15	16.5%	266	10.4%
51 – 55	5	1.3%	154	7.4%	12	13.2%	171	6.7%
56 – 60	3	0.8%	89	4.3%	19	20.9%	111	4.3%
61 – 65	0	0.0%	40	1.9%	13	14.3%	53	2.1%
66 – 70	0	0.0%	11	0.5%	7	7.7%	18	0.7%
71 – 75	0	0.0%	5	0.2%	3	3.3%	8	0.3%
76 – 80	0	0.0%	1	0.0%	0	0.0%	1	0.0%

All three accreditation categories had a positively skewed age distribution. 62.2% of accredited professionals were aged 40 and below and only 14.1% of accredited professionals were aged above 50. The actual active labour force participation of accredited social workers in the sector could be lower.

In 2022, 114 RSWs were not in employment even though only 40 RSWs had reached the retirement age of 63. Similarly, 11 RSWPs reported that they were not in employment even though the oldest RSWP was 50 years old and was not of retirement age yet. These could signify high turnover or attrition rates of accredited professionals, aligned to the high turnover observed in the social service sector.

Chart 2: No. of Accredited Professionals by Age Group and Accreditation Categories



iii. By Citizenship

In 2022, 95.0% of accredited professionals were Singapore Citizens, 3.8% were Singapore Permanent Residents and 1.3% were foreigners.

Table 5d: Number and Percentage of Accredited Professionals by Citizenship

Citizenship	RSWP		RSW		RSSP		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Singapore Citizen	365	96.8%	1,978	94.8%	83	91.2%	2,426	95.0%
Singapore Permanent Resident	9	2.4%	79	3.8%	8	8.8%	96	3.8%
Foreign Citizen	3	0.8%	30	1.4%	0	0.0%	33	1.3%
Total:	377	100.0%	2,087	100.0%	91	100.0%	2,555	100.1%*

*Does not add up to 100.0% due to rounding off.

Almost half (44.2%) of the 129 accredited professionals who were not Singapore Citizens were Malaysians. 22.5% were from China and Hong Kong Special Administrative Region. There were also significant number of accredited professionals who were citizens of India and the Philippines.

Table 5e: Citizenship of Accredited Professionals who were Singapore Permanent Residents and Foreigners

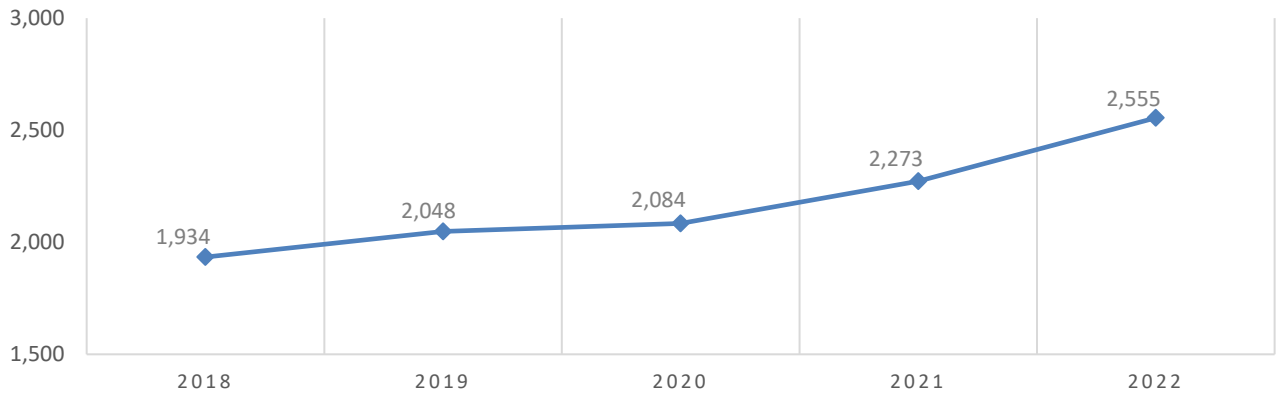
Citizenship	Singapore Permanent Residents				Foreigners				Total	%
	RSWP	RSW	RSSP	Subtotal	RSWP	RSW	RSSP	Subtotal		
Australia		1		1				0	1	0.8%
China		8		8	1	5		6	14	10.9%
Germany				0		1		1	1	0.8%
Hong Kong		8		8	1	6		7	15	11.6%
India		9	1	10		5		5	15	11.6%
Indonesia	1	3		4		1		1	5	3.9%
Malaysia	8	39	7	54		3		3	57	44.2%
Philippines		4		4		7		7	11	8.5%
Portugal		1		1				0	1	0.8%
Taiwan		4		4				0	4	3.1%
Ukraine				0		1		1	1	0.8%
United States of America		2		2	1	1		2	4	3.1%
Total	9	79	8	96	3	30	0	33	129	100.0%

Accreditation Status in the Past Five Years

The total number of accredited professionals has been increasing over the years. The number of accredited professionals in 2022 was the highest since the inception of the accreditation system in 2009. The year-over-year (YOY) increase of 12.4% from 2021 to 2022 was also the highest annual percentage YOY increase

over the past five years. The total number of accredited professionals increased by 32.1% from 1,934 accredited professionals as of 31 December 2018 to 2,555 in 2022.

Chart 3: Number of Accredited Professionals from 2018 to 2022



The number of accredited professionals who did not renew their accreditation but were within the renewal grace period of three years decreased 9.4% from 596 in 2021 to 540 in 2022. The number of accredited professionals who did not renew their accreditation status after the renewal grace period of three years and were archived also decreased 31.3% from 201 in 2021 to 138 in 2022, bringing the total number of archived accredited professionals to 899 as of 31 December 2022. Key reasons indicated for not renewing accreditation status included retirement, resignations, and re-location to another country.

In 2022, 23 previously accredited professionals whose records were archived re-applied for accreditation. 22 were re-accredited as RSWs and 1 was re-accredited as RSWP.

Table 6: Accreditation Status as from 2018 to 2022

Status	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Accredited	1,934	2,048	2,084	2,273	2,555
Not Renewed*	454	506	696	596	540
Archived**	419	525	560	761	899
Not Accredited	36	38	38	37	37

Note: Figures are as of 31 December of each year.

*These are members who have yet to renew their accreditation within the grace period of 3 years.

** These are members who have lapsed their 3 years grace period for renewal.

Retention Rates in the Past Five Years

The overall retention was 84% in 2022. The retention rates for both RSWP and RSW increased while that for RSSP decreased from 2021 to 2022.

Table 7: Retention Rates of Accredited Professionals from 2018 to 2022

Accreditation Category	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	Average
RSWP	89%	85%	73%	73%	76%	79%
RSW	87%	85%	80%	82%	86%	84%
RSSP	72%	73%	68%	79%	72%	73%
Overall	87%	85%	77%	81%	84%	83%

PRELIMINARY INVESTIGATION COMMITTEE

In 2022, Accreditation Secretariat received and handled three cases of feedback on concerns related to practice matters. The cases were presented to the Preliminary Investigation Committee (PIC) for investigation and assessment. The committee opined that the practice demonstrated in two cases to be reasonable and appropriate in managing the situations. Investigations into the third case received were still ongoing as of 31 December 2022.

CONTACT OF ACCREDITATION SECRETARIAT

For any further information or enquiry, please contact the Accreditation Secretariat at the following:

Email: accreditation@sasw.org.sg

Telephone: 6778 7922