

SWAAB ANNUAL REPORT 2023

For the year ended 31 December 2023

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MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRPERSON

Dear Social Workers, Social Service Practitioners, and Friends,

Looking back on the past year, I am deeply grateful and proud to share the progress we have made in raising the professional standards of Social Work in Singapore. These achievements are a testament to the Board's commitment to elevate the Social Work profession, enabling us to serve individuals, families, and communities with utmost dedication and capability.

Throughout the year, we reached significant milestones that have advanced our Social Work fraternity. Since the Accreditation Framework was first introduced on 1 April 2009, the Board accredited a record high of 2,833 Social Workers and Social Service Practitioners by the end of 2023. Notably, in 2023, there was a significant increase in the accreditation of new and renewing Registered Social Workers (RSWs) compared to previous years. This surge can be attributed to the deadline of 31 December 2023 to submit applications under the existing Accreditation Framework.

The Board also endorsed the Revised Accreditation Framework to foster greater accountability and credibility within the profession. This revised framework introduces an online ethics quiz for new applicants and those converting their accreditation status, mandates 1,000 hours of post-qualification supervised practice for RSW accreditation, and includes new Continuing Professional Education (CPE) activities. Furthermore, the Board improved the efficiency and user experience of the Online Accreditation System, in collaboration with the Singapore Association of Social Workers (SASW). I am delighted to report that the Revised Accreditation Framework and the Enhanced Online Accreditation System were finalised by 31 December 2023 and launched on 15 January 2024.

Upholding professional conduct within the Social Work profession remains a priority for the Board. The Board's Preliminary Investigation Committee, which handles feedback on practice-related concerns, refined its complaint management procedures. Additionally, the Board organised the 5th Social Work Supervision Seminar on 6 July 2023, focussing on the theme "Dilemmas and Harmony: Social Work Practice and Supervision". This biennial event, held since 2015, aims to enhance and standardise Social Work supervision in Singapore, recognising the pivotal role of Social Work supervision in supporting Social Workers in their practice.

In line with the Board's commitment to uphold and elevate professional standards of Social Work, the Board participated in events aimed at inspiring and reinforcing the importance of service excellence within the field. On 24 March 2023, we celebrated the invaluable contributions and achievements of Social Workers in Singapore during the annual Social Work Day. Themed "Respecting Diversity Through Joint Social Action", the event was graced by the Minister for Social and Family Development and Second Minister for Health, Mr Masagos Zulkifli, with over 300 Social Workers, family, and friends in attendance. On 17 November 2023, we also honoured three distinguished Social Workers, who made outstanding

contributions, at the Outstanding Social Worker Award Presentation Ceremony. These Social Workers received the Outstanding Social Worker Award and Promising Social Worker Awards, presented by President Tharman Shanmugaratnam and Minister Masagos Zulkifli.

As we approached the end of 2023, the Board underwent a renewal of its members as the two-year term drew to a close. We bid farewell to retiring Board members, Dr Katijah Dawood, Ms Julia Lee, Prof Seng Boon Kheng, and Ms Morene Sim, whose tenure and contributions have been invaluable. Concurrently, we warmly welcome Ms Katherine Baptist, Ms Chow Choy Yin, and Dr Sylvia Mun to the Board.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Ms Ang Bee Lian for her decade-long leadership as Chairperson from 1 November 2013 to 31 July 2023. I also extend my appreciation to all continuing Board members, the various Workgroups, and the Accreditation Secretariat for their unwavering support and active engagement in the accreditation process.

In closing, I call upon all accredited Social Workers and practitioners to continue upholding the highest standards of practice and ethics. By embodying these standards, we not only enhance the profession's reputation but also inspire others to join us in creating a more caring and compassionate society. Together, let us be champions of professionalism and positive change in the field of Social Work.

Yours sincerely,

Long Chey May (Ms)

Director-General of Social Welfare (wef 1 August 2023)

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 (RSW-Ps), 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. RSW-Ps and RSSPs can apply to be converted to RSWs upon achievement of the required supervised practice hours and recognised Social Work qualifications respectively.

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-year 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 2023.

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 1 January 2022 to 31 December 2023 are:

Position	Name	Designation	Organisation
Chairperson	Ms Ang Bee Lian*	Director-General of Social Welfare	MSF
Member	Ms Long Chey May**	Group Chief Patient Officer	National University Health System
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	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

*Ms Ang Bee Lian served till 31 July 2023 and stepped down as Chairperson. Replacing her is Ms Long Chey May, Director-General of Social Welfare, MSF from 01 Aug 2023. Ms Ang continued to contribute as Adviser to the Board.

**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 to 31 July 2023.

***A/P Esther Goh served till 31 December 2022. Replacing her is A/P Lee Geok Ling, Associate Professor, National University of Singapore from 01 January 2023.

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 (Till April 2023)	Head of Accreditation Executive Director	Singapore Association of Social Workers
	Ms Theresa Lee (From May 2023)	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
Member	Dr Chung You Jin	Senior Lecturer	Singapore University of Social Services

Secretariat	Ms Evelyn Lai	Head, Accreditation Executive Director	SASW
Secretariat	Ms Pearlyn Lee	Programme Executive	SASW

Accreditation Secretariat

Position	Name	Designation	Organisation
Head	Ms Theresa Lee (From May 2023)	Head of Accreditation Executive Director	SASW
	Ms Evelyn Lai (Till April 2023)	Head of Accreditation and Executive Director	SASW
Executive	Ms Pearlyn Lee	Programme Executive	SASW
Executive	Ms Sharon Song	Senior Executive	SASW
Executive	Ms Sahira Zulkifli (From May 2023)	Senior Executive	SASW
Executive	Ms Kamaljeet Kaur	Administrative Executive	SASW

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE YEAR

Outreach and Engagement

The Accreditation Secretariat engaged more than 400 social service practitioners, leaders, employers and the public at the following events:

- Workforce Singapore (WSG) Career Fair held at Suntec on 11 July 2023
- NCSS Career Conversion Programme Employers Engagement on 17 October 2023
- Announcement of the Revised Accreditation Framework held virtually on 3 November 2023

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 2023, the Board was appraised of the practices from the following sub-sectors:

- Community Eldercare Services
- Criminal Justice

Social Work Supervision Seminar

Themed “Dilemmas and Harmony: Social Work Practice and Supervision”, the 5th Social Work Seminar was held on 6 July 2023. Invited speakers, A/P Tham Kum Ying from Tan Tock Seng Hospital and Nanyang Technological University, and A/P Ferlin Jayatissa from Singapore University of Social Sciences shared their experience from their respective professional groups in their plenary sessions and took questions during the panel discussion.

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 (RSW-Ps)**

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 2023, there were 2,833 accredited professionals. 85% of the accredited professionals were RSWs, 12.4% were RSW-Ps and 2.6% were RSSPs. The numbers of RSWs increased by 15.4% while the number of RSW-Ps and RSSP decreased 7.2% and 17.6% from 2022 to 2023. 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 2023, 200 RSW-Ps and 2 RSSPs successfully applied for conversion to become RSWs.

Table 1: Number of Accredited Professionals by Accreditation Categories as of 31 December 2023

Category	Number	Percentage
RSW-Ps	350	12.4%
RSWs	2,408	85.0%
RSSPs	75	2.6%
Total:	2,833	100%

Table 2: Number of Accredited Professionals by Accreditation Categories over the Past Five Years (2019 to 2023)

Category	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
No. of RSW-Ps	347	349	347	377	350
YOY Change	3.9%	0.6%	-0.6%	8.6%	-7.2%
No. of RSWs	1,572	1,622	1,820	2,087	2,408
YOY Change	7.5%	3.2%	12.2%	14.7%	15.4%
No. of RSSPs	129	113	106	91	75
YOY Change	-6.5%	-12.4%	-6.2%	-14.2%	-17.6%
Total	2,048	2,084	2,273	2,555	2833
YOY Change	5.9%	1.8%	9.1%	12.4%	10.9%

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	RSW-P	RSW	RSSP	Total	Percentage
Social Service Agencies (i.e., charities or societies providing social services)	225	1,207	41	1,473	52.0%
Public Healthcare Agencies (e.g., restructured hospitals, polyclinics, specialist centres)	93	639	4	736	26.0%
Government Ministries and Statutory Boards (e.g., MSF, NCSS, MOE)	4	161	11	176	6.2%
Self Employed / Private Practice (e.g., private companies, freelance practice)	11	159	8	178	6.3%
Not in Employment	9	139	9	157	5.5%
Others (e.g., Educational Institutions, indirect practice agencies)	8	103	2	113	4.0%
TOTAL	350	2,408	75	2,833	100.0%

Overall, the majority of Registered Social Workers were employed in SSAs (52.0%). Most RSW-Ps were employed by SSAs and public healthcare agencies with 64.3% working in SSAs and 26.6% working in public healthcare agencies.

Majority of RSSPs were employed by SSAs and government ministries and statutory boards with 54.7% in SSAs and 15.4% in Government Ministries and Statutory Boards. About half of the remaining RSSPs were not in employment as of 2022, most of which were near or had reached retirement age.

Country of Social Work Qualifications

In 2023, 93.2% of the registered professionals had obtained their Social Work qualifications from local universities. 54.0% of the foreign qualifications were obtained from Australia, Hong Kong, and America. RSWs were more likely than RSW-Ps and RSSPs to hold a foreign Social Work qualification. 7.5% of RSWs had foreign qualifications as compared to 2.0% of RSW-Ps. No RSSP had a foreign Social Work qualification.

Table 4: Number and Percentage of RSW-Ps, RSWs and RSSPs by Country of Social Work Qualification

Country of Social Work Qualification	RSW-P		RSW		RSSP		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Singapore	343	98.0%	2,228	92.5%	1	100.0%	2572	93.2%
Australia	0	0.0%	80	3.3%	0	0.0%	80	2.9%
Hong Kong	3	0.9%	39	1.6%	0	0.0%	42	1.5%
America	1	0.3%	18	0.7%	0	0.0%	19	0.7%
India	2	0.6%	11	0.5%	0	0.0%	13	0.5%
Malaysia	1	0.3%	10	0.4%	0	0.0%	11	0.4%
Philippines	0	0.0%	8	0.3%	0	0.0%	8	0.3%
Taiwan	0	0.0%	6	0.2%	0	0.0%	6	0.2%
United Kingdom	0	0.0%	5	0.2%	0	0.0%	5	0.2%
China	0	0.0%	5	0.2%	0	0.0%	2	0.1%
Canada	0	0.0%	1	0.1%	0	0.0%	1	0.1%
Total:	350	100.0%	2,408	100.0%	1*	100.0%	2,833	100.0%

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

*Social Work Qualification not a requirement for RSSP.

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	RSW-P		RSW		RSSP		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Male	101	28.9%	574	23.8%	22	29.3%	697	24.6%
Female	249	71.1%	1834	76.2%	53	70.7%	2,136	75.4%
Total:	350	100.0%	2,408	100.0%	75	100.0%	2,833	100.0%

ii. By Age Groups

In 2023, the age of accredited professionals ranged from 22 to 75 years old, with a mean age of 38.3 years old and median age of 36 years old.

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

	RSW-P	RSW	RSSP	Overall
Mean Age	30.8	38.9	54.2	38.3
Median Age	28.0	37.0	53.0	36.0

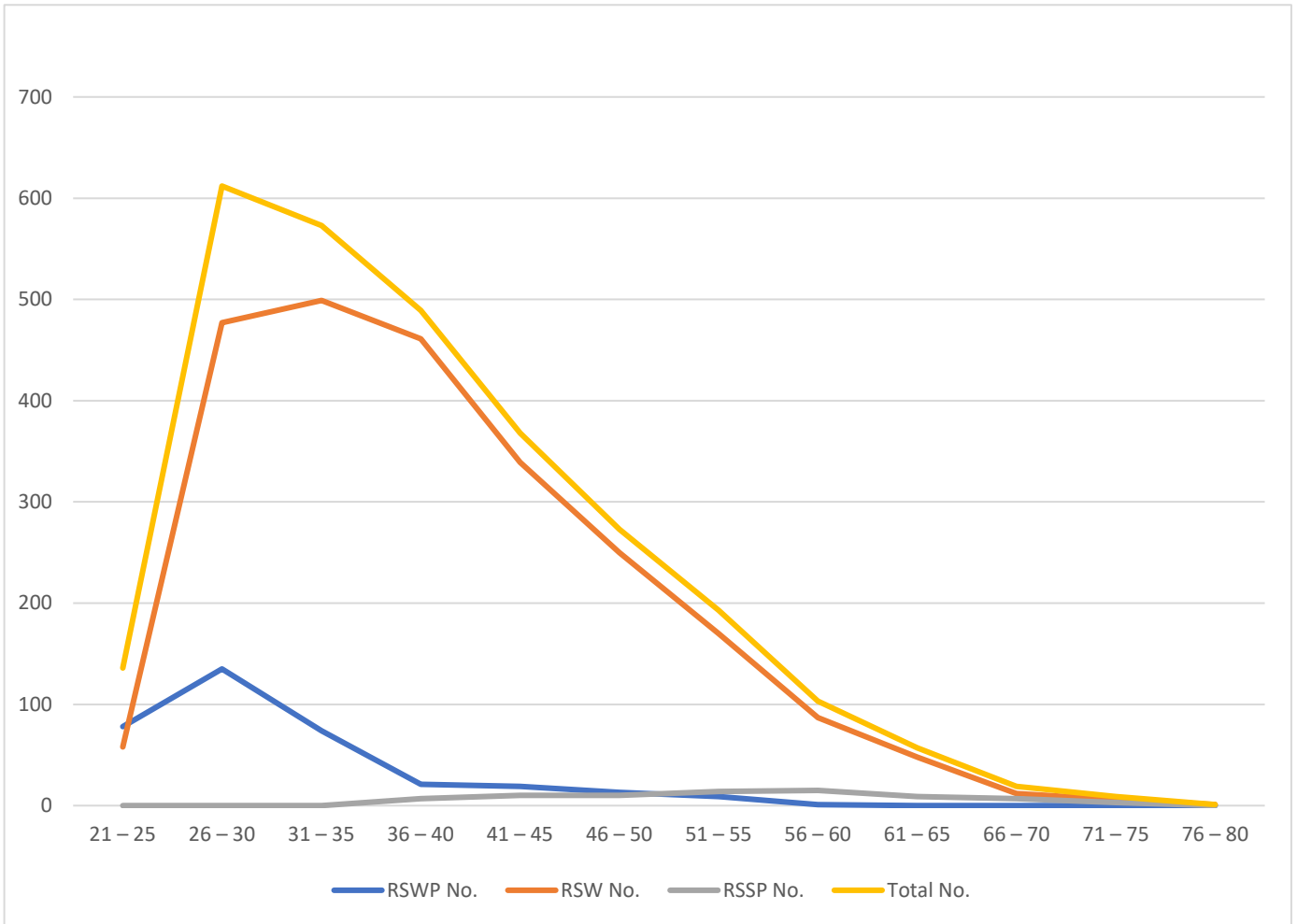
Consistent with the criteria for each accreditation categories, RSW-Ps tend to be younger than RSWs and RSSPs tended to be older. Most RSW-Ps were in their twenties, while the largest group of RSWs was in their thirties and RSSPs in their fifties.

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

Age Group	RSW-P		RSW		RSSP		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
21 – 25	78	22.3%	58	2.4%	0	0.0%	136	4.8%
26 – 30	135	38.6%	477	19.8%	0	0.0%	612	21.6%
31 – 35	74	21.1%	499	20.7%	0	0.0%	573	20.2%
36 – 40	21	6.0%	461	19.1%	7	9.3%	489	17.6%
41 – 45	19	5.4%	339	14.0%	10	13.3%	368	12.9%
46 – 50	13	3.7%	250	10.4%	10	13.3%	273	9.6%
51 – 55	9	2.6%	170	7.0%	14	18.7%	193	6.8%
56 – 60	1	0.3%	87	3.6%	15	20.0%	103	3.6%
61 – 65	0	0.0%	48	2.0%	9	12.0%	57	2.0%
66 – 70	0	0.0%	12	0.5%	7	9.3%	19	0.7%
71 – 75	0	0.0%	6	0.2%	3	4.0%	9	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. 64.2% of accredited professionals were aged 40 and below and only 13.3% of accredited professionals were aged above 50.

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



iii. By Citizenship

In 2023, 95.9% of accredited professionals were Singapore Citizens, 3.14% were Singapore Permanent Residents and 0.95% were foreigners.

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

Citizenship	RSW-P		RSW		RSSP		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Singapore Citizen	344	98.3%	2,303	95.6%	70	93.3%	2,717	95.9%
Singapore Permanent Resident	3	0.9%	81	3.4%	5	6.7%	89	3.1%
Foreign Citizen	3	0.9%	24	1.0%	0	0.0%	27	1.0%
Total:	350	100.0%	2,408	100.0%	75	100.0%	2,833	100.0%*

Almost half (45.7%) of the 116 accredited professionals who were not Singapore Citizens were Malaysians. 23.2% 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.

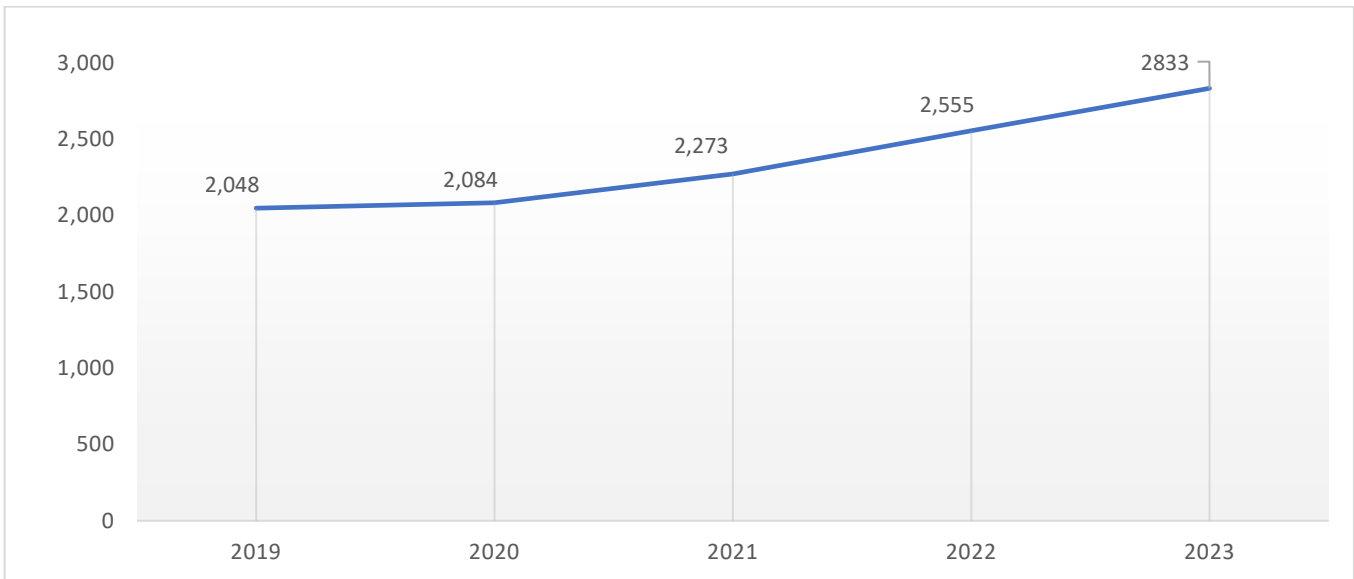
Table 5e: Citizenship of Accredited Professionals who were Singapore Permanent Residents and Foreigners

Citizenship	Singapore Permanent Residents				Foreigners				Total	%
	RSW-P	RSW	RSSP	Subtotal	RSW-P	RSW	RSSP	Subtotal		
Australia		1		1				0	1	0.9%
Hong Kong		9		9	1	5		6	15	12.9%
America		2		2	1	1		2	4	3.4%
India		9		9		3		3	12	10.3%
Philippines		2		2		6		6	8	6.96%
Malaysia	3	42	5	50		3		3	53	45.7%
Taiwan		4		4				0	4	3.4%
Macau				0	1			1	1	0.9%
China		8		8		4		4	12	10.3%
Germany				0		1		1	1	0.9%
Indonesia		3		3				0	3	2.6%
Portugal		1		1				0	1	0.9%
Vietnam				0		1		1	1	0.9%
Total	3	81	5	89	3	24	0	27	116	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 2023 was the highest since the inception of the accreditation system in 2009. From 2022 to 2023, the year-over-year (YOY) increase of 10.9% was also the second highest annual percentage YOY increase over the past five years. The total number of accredited professionals increased by 38.3% from 2,048 accredited professionals as of 31 December 2019 to 2,833 in 2023.

Chart 3: Number of Accredited Professionals from 2019 to 2023



The number of accredited professionals who did not renew their accreditation but were within the renewal grace period of three years increased by 5.3% from 540 in 2022 to 569 in 2023. Key reasons indicated for not renewing accreditation status included retirement, resignations, and re-location to another country. The number of accredited professionals who did not renew their accreditation status after the renewal grace period of three years and were archived decreased by 7.2% from 138 in 2022 to 128 in 2023, bringing the total number of archived accredited professionals to 1,027 as of 31 December 2023.

In 2023, 47 previously accredited professionals whose records were archived re-applied for accreditation as RSW.

Table 6: Accreditation Status as from 2019 to 2023

Status	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Accredited	2,048	2,084	2,273	2,555	2,833
Not Renewed*	506	696	596	540	569
Archived**	525	560	761	899	1027
Not Accredited	38	38	37	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 82% in 2023. The retention rates for RSW-P increased while that for RSSP decreased from 2022 to 2023.

Table 7: Retention Rates of Accredited Professionals from 2019 to 2023

Accreditation Category	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	Average
RSW-P	85%	73%	73%	76%	79%	79%
RSW	85%	80%	82%	86%	86%	84%
RSSP	73%	68%	79%	72%	69%	72%
Overall	85%	77%	81%	84%	85%	82%

PRELIMINARY INVESTIGATION COMMITTEE

In 2023, 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. Out of the three cases, two cases were issued advisory letters by SWAAB as recommended by the PIC. In the third case, the committee opined that the practice demonstrated to be reasonable and appropriate in managing the situation.

CONTACT OF ACCREDITATION SECRETARIAT

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

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