

# **IASW CPD SURVEY 2023**

## **Background and Context**

In September 2023, a survey was circulated to members to inform CPD planning for 2024. 118 social workers completed the survey and the information provided has been used on an ongoing basis to provide supports to the professional development of IASW members.

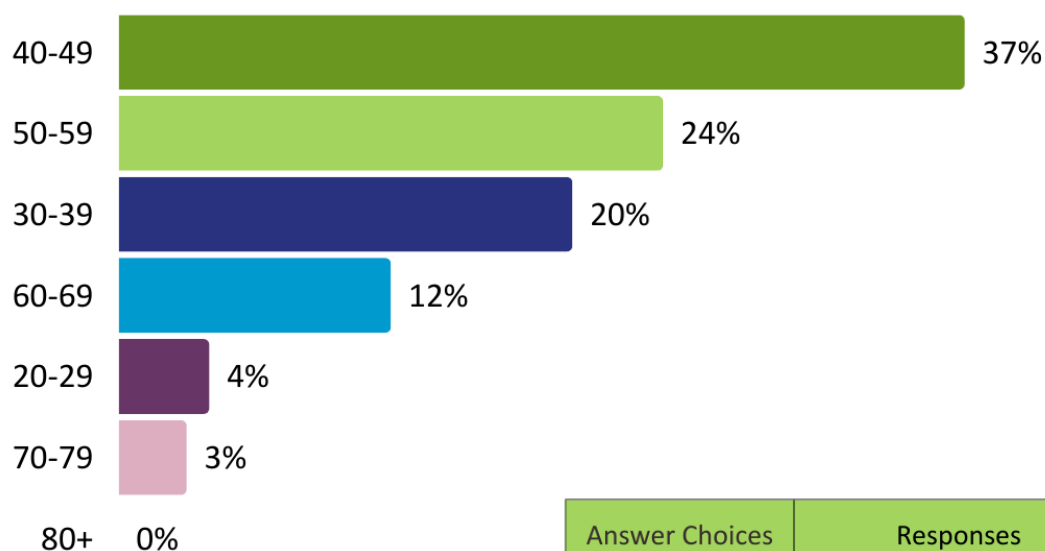
This report is the feedback to members on the key findings of that survey.

Prepared by :  
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## The Respondents

### What age range are you in?

The vast majority of respondents were in the 40-49 age range (37%) followed by the 50-59 range (24%). Only 4% were in the 20-29 age range.

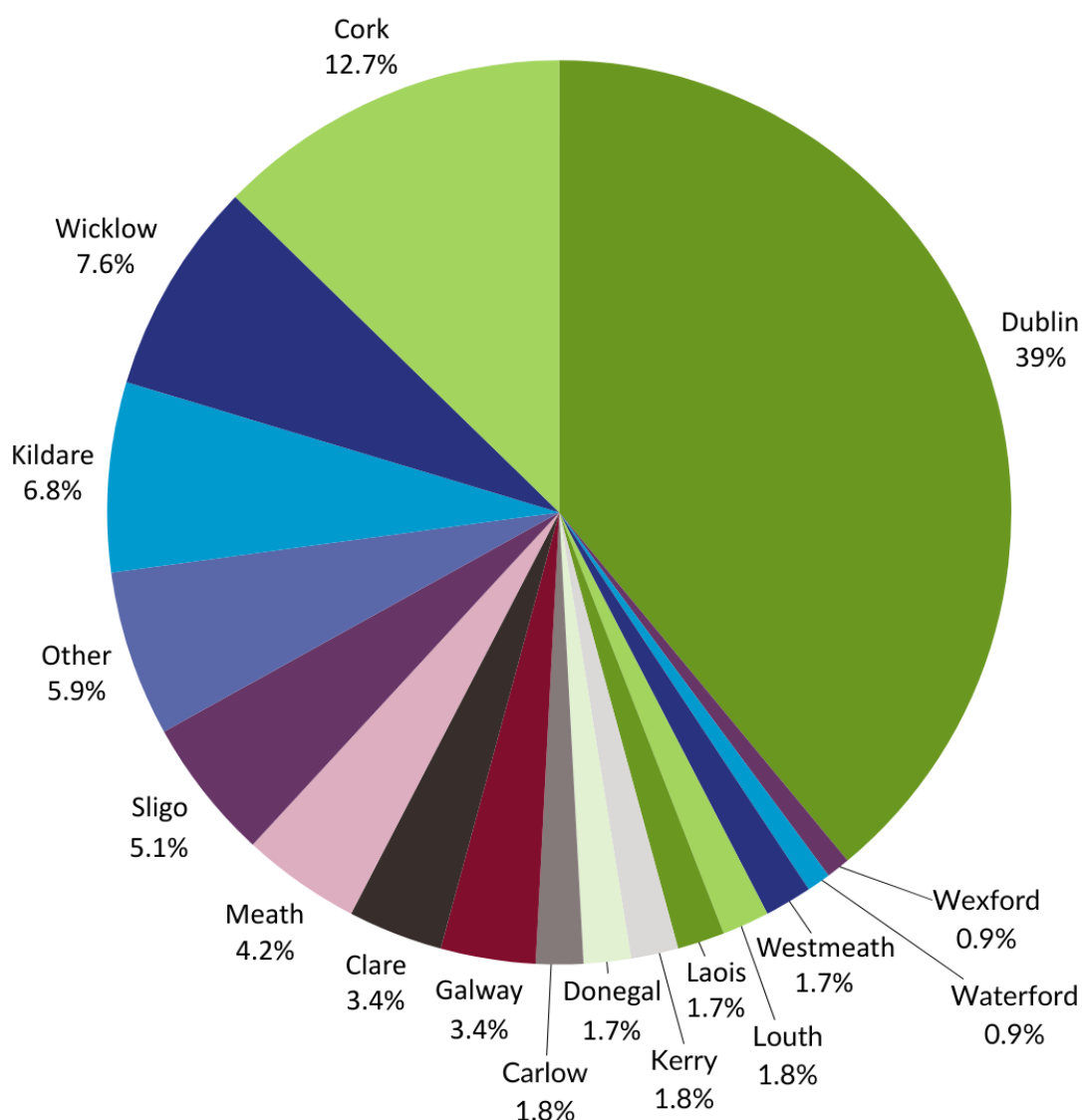


Answer Choices	Responses	
40-49	44	37.29%
50-59	28	23.73%
30-39	24	20.34%
60-69	14	11.86%
20-29	5	4.24%
70-79	3	2.54%
80+	0	0.00%

## Where do you live?

Respondents were asked in which county they live. As can be seen from the pie chart, 39% live in Dublin. Cork has the second highest proportion of respondents at 13%, followed by Wicklow (8%), Kildare (7%) and Sligo (5%).

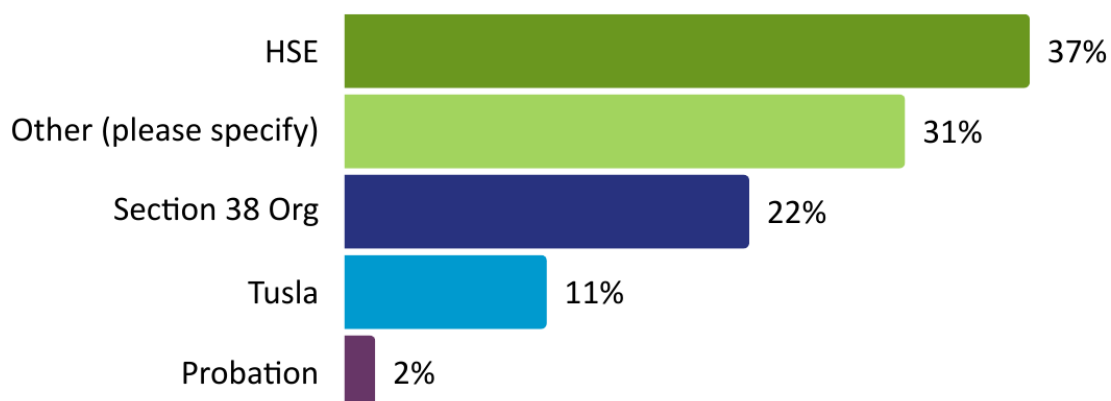
When the Dublin category is collapsed with surrounding counties Kildare, Wicklow, Louth and Meath, we find that 59% respondents live in Dublin and surrounding counties, showing a strong Leinster focus in the findings.



### Who is your employer?

Most respondents were employed by the HSE at 37%. *Other* was the next category chosen by respondents.

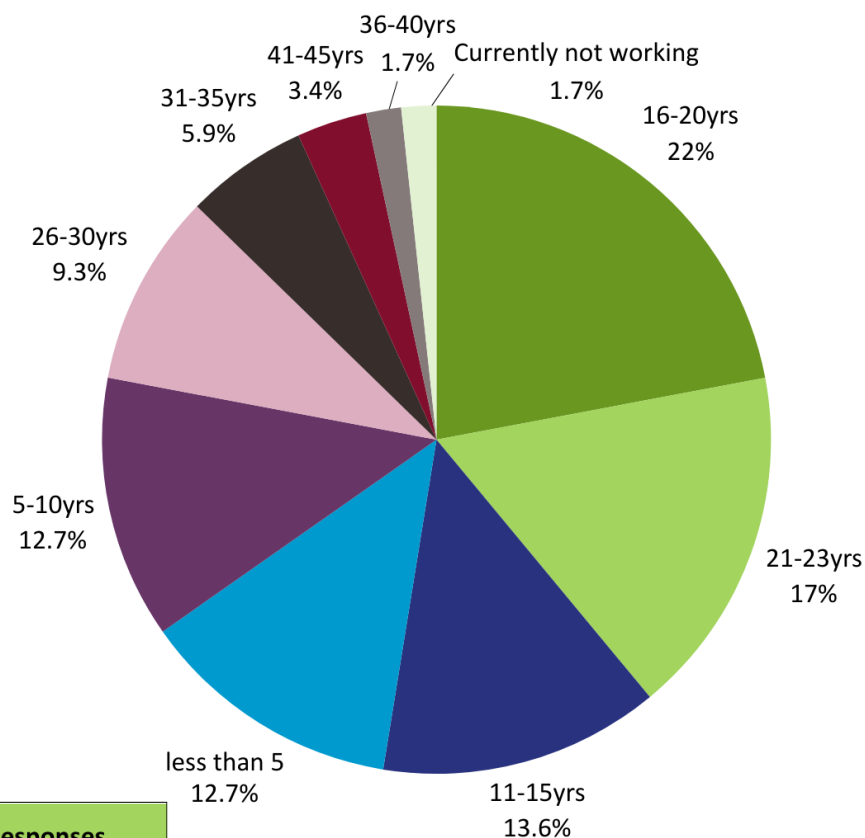
Proportionately, there was low engagement by social workers employed by Tusla. Engagement by probation services employees was also low.



## How many years have you worked in social work?

When the age range of respondents is taken into account, it's no surprise that respondents have long careers in social work with 22% working in social work for 16 - 20 years and 17% 21 - 25 years. 11% worked 31+ years in social work.

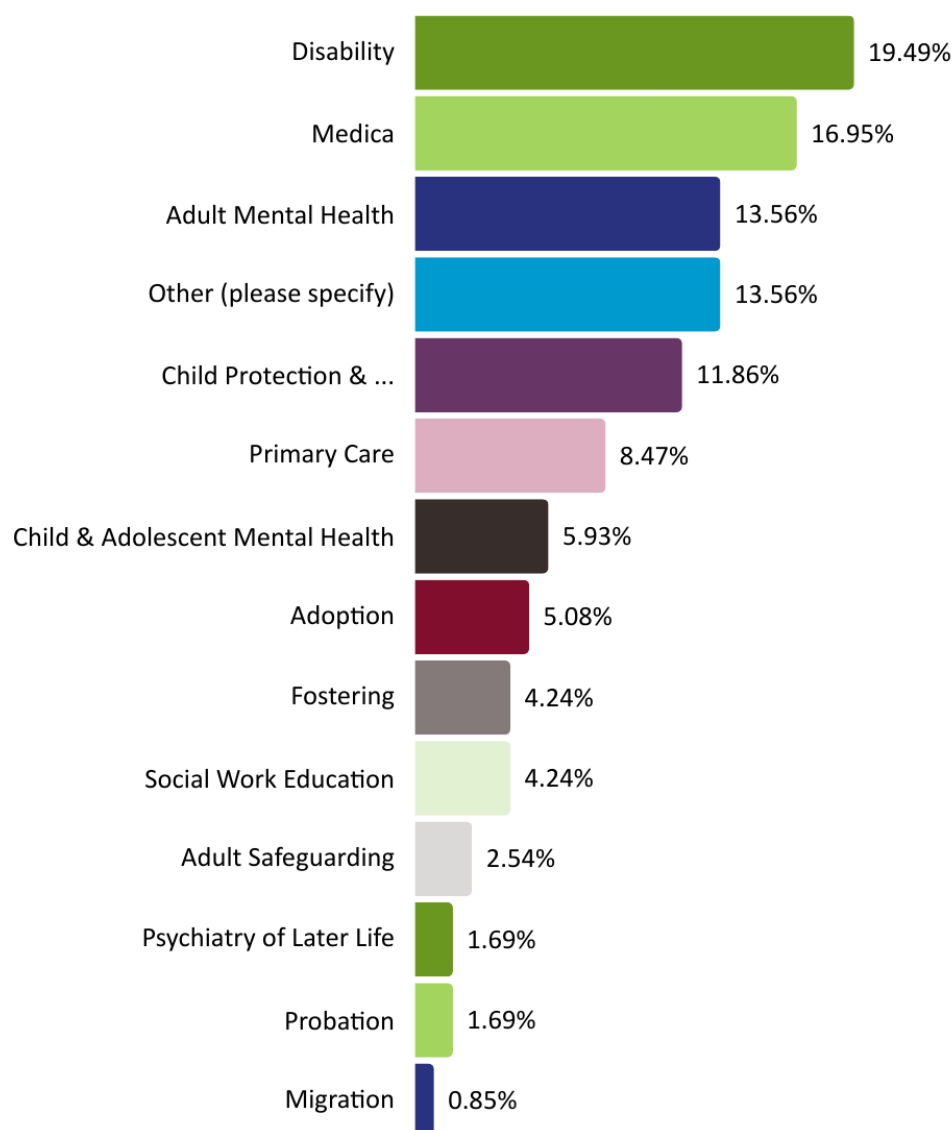
13% of respondents have been in social work less than five years.



Answer Choices	Responses	
16 - 20	22.03%	26
21 - 23	16.95%	20
11 - 15	13.56%	16
less than 5	12.71%	15
5 - 10	12.71%	15
26 - 30	9.32%	11
31 - 35	5.93%	7
41 - 45	3.39%	4
36 - 40	1.69%	2
I don't currently work as a social worker	1.69%	2

## Which area of social work best describes the one you currently work in?

Respondents were also asked which area of social work best describes the one they currently work in. The majority of respondents chose the category of disability (19%), followed by medical (17%). Adult mental health was the third area chosen at 14% with Child Protection and Welfare at 12%.



## What CPD supports do you need from the IASW? Select all relevant.

### Continuing Professional Development Supports

Respondents were invited to choose as many supports as relevant from a list of options of CPD supports needed from the IASW.

Skills development was overwhelmingly the top need identified by 92% respondents while 62% chose conferences. Personal/professional development planning was chosen by 58% while 55% chose reflective practice workshops.



## Skills Development Workshops

Those who chose skills workshops were asked to specify their top three themes in order of preference. A very broad spread of themes emerged across the responses. The top themes identified were

1. Counselling
2. ADMCA
3. Working with Children and Young People
4. Trauma
5. Macro/Inclusion/Advocacy<sup>1</sup>

## Top Three Themes Conferences

Those who chose conferences as an option were then asked to specify their top three themes in order of preference. There was a very broad spread of themes across the responses again with quite a few entering n/a as a response. The top themes were

1. Children and Families Work
2. Macro/Inclusion/Advocacy
3. Adult Safeguarding

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<sup>1</sup> Examples of responses in this category include advocacy, social inclusion, anti-racist practice, human rights, poverty, housing, social, economic and environmental sustainability, and systemic practice.



## Impact of CPD

Three questions asked about the impact of CPD.

**If you attended an IASW CPD event in the past 12 months, can you please describe the impact of your learning on your professional self and your professional practice? If there was no impact, please record 'no impact'.**

98 responded to this question, 17 of whom recorded 'no impact'.

42 said the event they attended impacted and detailed a range of impacts including:

- Increased knowledge and understanding (about complex behaviours, team dynamics, anti-poverty practice, leadership)
- Additional tools and skills (SFBT, Decider Skills, managing conflict)
- Increased confidence and motivation
- Increased ability to manage and respond to conflict
- Increased reflective practice
- New ideas and practices (e.g., Grand Rounds, groupwork)
- More planned, solution focused, reflective approaches to meeting CPD requirements of registration
- Increased networking, connection and sharing of learning in peer supervision, across teams, disciplines and organisations, as well as in supervisory relationships.

Respondents were also asked to describe **impact on those you work with, whether colleagues or service users**

92 answered, 11 of whom recorded no impact.

43 said the CPD event they attended impacted. It was interesting to note that a number of respondents reflected on how the learning impacted on their ability to manage stress which in turn impacted on their practice and the service they provided. The theme of taking more time with clients also emerged in responses to this question. Respondents described how they shared their new found resources, learning and connections with colleagues, amplifying the benefits for a wider range of service users.

Respondents were also asked whether there an **impact on their profession/social work community**

There were 88 responses, 19 stating that there was no impact.

25 respondents said the event had an impact in this area, many giving examples relating to vindicating rights under the ADMCA 2015, adult safeguarding and self neglect. Respondents gave examples of sharing their often specialist learning from more complex work with social work colleagues as well as other disciplines and service users themselves. The shift from the medical model to a focus on rights and wishes was a strong theme across responses.

## **Interprofessional Learning Needs**

Two questions were asked about interprofessional learning needs.

### **Interprofessional learning needs in the workplace**

(98 Responses)

Many of the 98 respondents did not identify a learning need. The top needs identified are as follows

1. Assisted Decision Making
2. Trauma
3. Stress/Burnout
4. Teamwork

### **Enhancing collaborative learning with other Health & Social Care Professionals in your workplace**

(94 Responses)

Three key themes emerged:

1. Joint conferences and events
2. Team building/learning
3. Understanding roles

### **Additional CPD supports and resources you would you like the IASW to provide**

(98 respondents)

Two key areas of support/resources were identified and they were:

- Resources/articles/exemplars/website
- CPD guidance/information

The suggestion was also made to provide regional opportunities and to record CPD events.

## **Summary**

Learning from the survey findings has been used on an ongoing basis to shape and inform the CPD programme for the IASW with a number of CPD conferences and skills workshops already in place to meet the CPD needs identified by members. Planning and further consultation is underway to develop IASW CPD opportunities to address those outstanding needs identified in the second half of 2024 and into 2025. The member survey findings will also be shared with key stakeholders with a role in the development of the profession.

Thank-you to the social workers who took the time to share their experiences and feedback and shape the CPD provided by the IASW, supporting the Association to better respond to its members' professional development needs. Thanks also to Sarah Donnelly (UCD) and Niamh Flanagan (Maynooth University) who helped design the 2019 survey on which the 2023 survey design was based.

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