

Social Worker

Help people through crisis, illness, poverty and family breakdown. Meaningful, in demand, and emotionally heavy.

TYPICAL PAY

\$75,000

a year, full time

PAY RANGE

\$58k to \$95k

starting to experienced

TIME TO QUALIFY

4 to 6 years

after high school

DEMAND

Good

job outlook

LICENCE NEEDED

Yes

regulated job

WHERE YOU WORK

Hospitals, child protection agencies, schools, community ag...

How you get there

- 1 High school** Grades 11 and 12
English and social sciences. Volunteer experience matters as much as marks.
- 2 BSW (bachelor of social work)** 4 years
Four years, with 700 or more hours of supervised placement in real agencies. Some schools admit from high school; others take you after 1 or 2 years of general arts.
- 3 MSW (master of social work), optional but common** 1 to 2 years
Two years, or one year if you already hold a BSW. Needed for most hospital jobs and for private counselling practice.
- 4 Register with your provincial college** A few weeks
In Ontario that is the OCSWSSW (Ontario College of Social Workers and Social Service Workers). Registration protects the title social worker.
- 5 First job** Right after registration
Child protection agencies and hospitals hire constantly. Expect a police check and a heavy caseload from month one.

Pros and cons

- + Strong demand in every province
- + Pension, union and regular hours in public jobs
- + Many settings: hospitals, schools, courts, addiction, seniors, private therapy
- Pay is modest for the training and the stress
- Vicarious trauma is real and burnout rates are high
- Heavy documentation and court work

Optional boosts

MSW (master of social work). Child protection authorization. Private counselling practice. Supervision and management.

Good to know

Canada's first social work school

The University of Toronto opened the country's first social work program in 1914, more than a century ago.

Mostly women

Most Canadian social workers are women, by a wide margin. It is one of the most female-dominated professions in the country.

Where these numbers come from

Job Bank: Social workers, wages (updated Nov 2025)
Canadian Association of Social Workers
Ontario College of Social Workers and Social Service Workers

Numbers checked September 2026. Pay figures are typical full-time annual amounts in Canadian dollars, based on Government of Canada Job Bank wage data and published salary grids. They vary by province, employer and experience. Tuition is for domestic students. Sources, links and the click-through version: <https://career.help/ca/careers/social-worker>



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