

## ASWB Research Initiatives

ASWB supports a comprehensive program for assessment and regulatory research to meet the needs of state and provincial social work regulatory authorities and our shared public protection missions.

### ASSESSMENT RESEARCH

#### ➤ DETERMINANTS OF PASS/FAIL OF SOCIAL WORK LICENSURE EXAMINATIONS

The research identifies individual, school, and community factors that affect candidates' exam pass/fail outcomes and analyze the data to unveil the effects of those factors and assist with contextualizing examination pass rate data publication with additional research and insights. Pass rates in context: An exam report series includes three reports:

- Demographic profile of exam-takers
- Determinants of exam outcomes from other professions
- Net effects of race/ethnicity on ASWB exam outcome

**Researcher:**

*Rutgers University School of Social Work*

*Joy Kim, Ph.D.*

*Michael Joo, Ph.D.*

#### ➤ PASS/FAIL SUMMARY REPORTS

Summary reports published annually include aggregated exam pass rate data for all test-takers and for jurisdictions and schools of social work.

**Researcher:**

*Human Resources Research Organization*

*Jennifer Klafehn, Ph.D.*

*Jessie Harris*

#### ➤ SOCIAL WORK WORKFORCE CENSUS

The Social Work Census combines practice analysis with a workforce study to help ASWB and the social work profession understand the roles of social workers.

The 2024 Practice Analysis results will be presented in a report detailing the methodology, content outlines, and the exam blueprint for the 2026 licensing exams.

A two-part workforce study report is underway, to be released in early 2025.

The first part will analyze data from the US Census/BLS and state boards, comparing licensed vs. non-licensed social workers and providing rationales for the ASWB survey.

The second part will present detailed findings from the workforce survey, compare licensed social workers' characteristics with Census/BLS data, and set benchmarks for future studies.

**Researcher:**

*Human Resources Research Organization (practice analysis)*

*Joy Kim, Ph.D. (workforce study)*

## ➤ COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS

This independent study gathered insights from social workers across the United States and Canada on their professional journeys and licensure exam experiences through a series of Community Conversations. Many findings from this qualitative research are being implemented by ASWB. Notably, ASWB is exploring a plan for the next iteration of the exams, set to launch in January 2026, to include the ability to retake only the content area(s) that a test-taker was unsuccessful on.

### **Researcher:**

*Human Resources Research Organization*

*Jennifer Klafehn, Ph.D.*

*Soner Dumani, Ph.D.*

*Emily Borawski*

## ➤ TEST MASTERY INCLUSION

ASWB began providing support to unsuccessful test-takers through the Test Mastery Inclusion program in January 2023. The pilot program included a questionnaire, and customized materials designed to help test-takers achieve improved test preparation and readiness. Data collected offers important insights around success on the social work licensing exams. The success of the program led to ASWB offering it to all test-takers beginning in July 2024. ASWB is exploring a plan to conduct research that connects passing scores with completion of the TMI program to evaluate the effectiveness of the program for social work candidates.

### **Researcher:**

*FifthTheory*

## REGULATORY RESEARCH

## ➤ UNDERSTANDING THE IMPACT LICENSING POLICIES HAVE ON SCALING-UP THE SOCIAL WORK WORKFORCE AND MITIGATING HARM

The project addresses two main questions: (1) What are the long-term impacts of licensure changes on the size of the social work workforce? (2) What potential impact will these policies have on mitigating public harm?

### **Researcher:**

*Brigham Young University*

*Cole Hooley, Ph.D., LCSW,*

*Katherine Marcal, Ph.D., MSW,*

*Gabby Cunningham, Ph.D., MBA*

## ➤ THE EFFECTS OF SOCIAL WORK REGULATORY RULES ON PUBLIC SAFETY

The project looks at the effects of social work regulatory rules on indicators of public safety through a focus on the regulation of clinical supervision. The study examines national guidelines and best practices for how state boards should regulate clinical supervision and describes the variation in state regulations.

### **Researcher:**

*Rutgers University School of Social Work*

*Joy J. Kim, Ph.D., MSW*

*Michael M. Joo, Ph.D., MSW*

## ➤ IDENTIFYING OPPORTUNITIES TO ENHANCE EQUITABLE PATHS TO SOCIAL WORK LICENSURE

The study aims to address three research questions: (1) What factors impact disparity in pass rates for social work licensure? (2) What is the impact of disparity in licensure pass rate on the social work profession? (3) What are solutions to reduce disparity in pass rates for social work licensure?

### **Researcher:**

*Western Kentucky University*

*Erin Warfel, DSW, MSS, MLSP, LCSW*

*Whitney Harper, Ph.D., MSW*