



SCHOOL OF
SOCIAL WORK

Summary Report

Graduate Retention in New Brunswick:
Supplementary Report on Graduates in
Social Work

May 2023



NB-IRDT
New Brunswick Institute for
Research, Data and Training

Project Title

Graduate retention in New Brunswick: Supplementary report on graduates in social work

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Project Number

P0049: Retention of New Brunswick Students

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Why is This Study Important?

Social workers and community service workers play a vital role in promoting and protecting the health, safety, and overall wellbeing of New Brunswickers. Together, they provide services in the areas of child and adult protection, disability support, mental health and addictions, long-term care, housing, social assistance, behavioural intervention, residential care, and more.

Thanks to our social and community service workers, many New Brunswickers are able to access the support they need when faced with life's most difficult challenges.

However, previous research suggests we are about to face a growing shortage of these workers in the near future. Projections from before the COVID-19 pandemic suggest New Brunswick may see a shortage of 272 social workers by 2030, and post-pandemic demand may cause this number to grow even higher.¹ At the national level, projections suggest that by 2031 there will be 51,900 social and community service worker job openings across Canada but only 51,300 new workers looking to fill them.²

To help meet this labour demand in New Brunswick, it's important to learn about the retention of social work graduates in the province: How many students graduate each year? What percentage stay in the province after they graduate? Where in NB do they choose to settle?

This report supplements previous graduate retention research³ by focusing specifically on the retention rates and demographics of university graduates in social work and college graduates in social services community work in NB - to help guide policy discussions around education and training strategies to retain social and community service workers in the province.



How Was This Study Completed?

To undertake this study, researchers at NB-IRDT used linked NB University Graduates data from the Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission with Student Data from the New Brunswick Community College (NBCC) and Citizen Data holdings at NB-IRDT. Post-graduation retention in NB is determined by Medicare eligibility status in the Citizen Data.

This report analyzes the retention rates of post-secondary graduates from the publicly funded colleges and universities offering credentials in social work and social services community work in NB for 2010-2020 graduation cohorts, when data are available. It presents results for social work graduates of Saint Thomas University (STU) and Université de Moncton (UdeM), and Social Service Community Worker graduates of NBCC, according to sex, level of education, educational institution, and intra-provincial mobility (post-graduation residence in NB).



Limitations

While reading the results on the next pages, it is important to remember that there are certain limitations to this study. For instance, many social work-related programs in NB were instituted very recently, and graduates of these programs do not appear in the data for this reason. Therefore, our results do not reflect retention rates for graduates of STU's Master of Social Work program or the Gestion des services de santé et des services communautaires program at Le Collège communautaire du Nouveau-Brunswick.

For the same reason, only 2019 and 2020 data are available for graduates of NBCC's Social Service Community Worker program.

Social Work and Related Programs in New Brunswick

Social Work - University Degree

Two public universities in NB offer bachelor degrees in social work: Saint Thomas University (STU) and Université de Moncton (UdeM).

Both schools now offer master's degrees as well, but as of 2020 only UdeM had students graduating with a Master of Arts in Social Work.

Social Service Community Worker - College Diploma

Two colleges in NB offer diplomas in social service community work: New Brunswick Community College (NBCC) and Collège communautaire du Nouveau-Brunswick.

As of 2020, only NBCC had students graduating with a diploma in social service community work.



In this study, we refer to graduates of each program (university and college) as "**social work graduates**."

Why is this called a supplementary report?

NB-IRDT regularly releases reports on post-secondary graduate retention in NB. This report expands upon the findings of our previous research by narrowing its focus to social work graduates specifically - while the previous research considers broad fields of study more generally.

You can read our earlier findings to learn more:



↳ [College & university graduate retention in New Brunswick: 2010 - 2018](#) (2021)

↳ [Graduate retention in New Brunswick: 2019 and 2020 cohort update](#) (2023)

Social Work Graduates: Counts & Retention Rates

On average, **over 200** social work students graduate from post-secondary institutions in NB each year:

- Approximately 105 from STU and UdeM combined.
- Approximately 115 from NBCC.



In NB, social work graduates have **higher retention rates** than post-secondary graduates overall.

1-Year Retention Rates

	University	College
Social Work Graduates =	72%	92%
Overall Graduates =	66%	89%

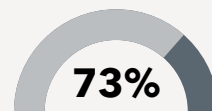
Ten years after graduation, more than half (**57%**) of social work university graduates remain in NB, versus **40%** of university graduates overall.

1-Year Retention Rates by Sex

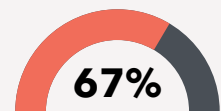
The majority of social work graduates in New Brunswick are female, and they have **higher retention rates** than their male counterparts.

Over 90%

of **university** social work graduates are female.



Female retention



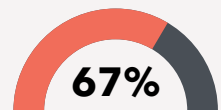
Male retention

87%

of **college** social work graduates are female.



Female retention



Male retention

Social Work Graduates: Retention Rates (continued)

1-Year Retention Rates by Post-Secondary Institution*

**Saint Thomas
University**

55%

**Université
de Moncton**

91%

**New Brunswick
Community College**

92%



The large difference between STU and UdeM retention rates could reflect their social work graduates' locations of residence before enrolling.

We know from previous research that STU has a much higher proportion of Out of Province graduates (21%) compared to UdeM (7%), and that graduates originally from NB are much more likely to remain in NB than graduates from Out of Province.⁴ It is possible these findings could help us understand social work graduates' mobility as well.

Where in NB Do Retained Social Work Graduates Live?*



- Saint John has the lowest proportion of university social work graduates (5%) and the second highest proportion of college social work graduates (26%).
- 34% of university social work graduates and 44% of college social work graduates live outside NB's more populated regions (its Census Metropolitan Areas and Census Agglomerations) and instead live in smaller regions of the province.

* **Remember:** University and college graduates receive different credentials and are qualified for different types of work.

Because they have different job profiles, and regions of NB have different demands for each level of education, university and college graduates' retention rates and location outcomes are not directly comparable.

Conclusions

We find that social work graduates have higher retention rates than the overall population of graduates in NB. However, this doesn't erase the need to boost retention, as we may face a shortage of social and community service workers in the coming years.

While NBCC and UdeM have relatively high 1-year retention rates, STU's retention rate of 55% is low compared to UdeM. This could reflect the student make-up at each university, as STU has a higher proportion of graduates from Out of Province, and students from NB are more likely to be retained than students originally from Out of Province.

This difference could also reflect language profiles, with graduates of STU more likely to be Anglophone and UdeM graduates more likely to be Francophone. Anglophone graduates may have more job opportunities throughout Canada, and may be more mobile, while Francophone work opportunities may be more centralised in NB and Quebec. Further research exploring where non-retained social work graduates settle could help shed light on this.

References

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2. Government of Canada. (2021, November 16). Canadian Occupational Projection System (COPS): Social and community service workers (4212).
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4. Bhuiyan, E. M., Daigle, B., McDonald, T., & Miah, P (2021). College & university graduate retention in New Brunswick: 2010 - 2018. Fredericton, NB: New Brunswick Institute for Research, Data and Training.