

# IN CRITICAL DEMAND: Social Work in Canada



Volume 1 - Final Report  
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# In Critical Demand: Social Work in Canada



## Volume 1 – Final Report

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The Social Work Sector Study Steering Committee

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Consulting Firm:  
Grant Thornton

Cover & Design:  
Hyperactive

**In Critical Demand:  
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ISBN — 0-920306-18-7

Full report available on Website  
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# From the co-chairs

The social work sector study is the result of a unique partnership of academic, professional and service sector organizations. The study was spawned from a common concern about the dramatic challenges facing all areas of the social work sector. It represents an unprecedented collaborative effort amongst these organizations and sets the stage for future collaboration. The report provides a great deal of information which will be useful to many of the groups and organizations within the sector. However, it raises as many questions as it answers. Also it presents some strategic directions which will challenge sector groups and organization and promote much needed future dialogue.

The study has never been seen as an end in itself but as a means for the promotion of dialogue amongst educators, employers, professionals and social service consumers. It is the sincere hope of the study sector advisory committee that this report can promote national and regional dialogue aimed at mapping out and taking action on common strategies which will assist the sector in addressing the formidable challenges it faces.

*Don W. Fuchs*

Cochair, Steering Committee  
Don Fuchs, Dean, University of Manitoba  
CCDDSSW / CASSW-ACCESS

This report offers social workers in Canada an opportunity to influence the future of the profession in this country. This product of several years of work gives us many challenges but it also provides encouragement and guidance for finding solutions.

The reflections of hundreds of people are contained in the pages of this report and these are presented in conjunction with many facts and figures. The reader may find, as did members of the steering committee, that it is possible to disagree with aspects of the report but be able to identify many useful pieces of information and conclusions that are reflections of the current reality of our profession.

It is my hope that as you review this report you will find yourself nodding in agreement, registering some surprise, developing your curiosity and considering your own role in the work that this report directs us to undertake in the future.

*Ellen Oliver*

Cochair, Steering Committee  
Ellen Oliver, Memorial University  
CASW-ACTS

## Acknowledgements

This project would have been impossible without the hundreds of hours of dedicated participation of those who spoke and those who listened. Thank you.

Thank you also to the Steering Committee (Appendix B) who brought their perspectives and expertise to the table six times over the past two years. Approximately 35 people from sea to sea; educator to employer found that there was more than enough in common to listen to each other and produce this project to look at the labour force of social work in Canada. It was a pleasure working with this dedicated, passionate group of people.

We would also like to acknowledge the contribution of Dr. Anne Westhues for her heroic efforts in working through the process of report preparation and redrafting of this final report to ensure that it represented the results of the study and wishes of the advisory committee.

Finally we would like to acknowledge Crystal Haché whose tremendous facilitation skills, commitment and perseverance have made this report a significant contribution to the social work sector in Canada.



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## FINAL REPORT

By: Marylee Stephenson

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In response to the interest of the social services sector in the development of a long-term human resources strategy, a consortium of academic and professional organizations partnered with each other and the sector Partnerships Initiative of Human Resources Development Canada to undertake a multi-stage sector study process. The partner organizations are:

Canadian Association of Schools of Social Work (CASSW)

Canadian Committee of Deans and Directors of Schools of Social Work (CCDDSSW)

Canadian Association of Social Workers (CASW)

Regroupement des Unités de formation universitaires en travail social (RUFUTS)

As an integral part of the sector study process, a Steering Committee was struck to guide and monitor all aspects of the endeavour. The Committee was composed of representatives from the consortium organizations as well as a number of other professionals from across the social services sector. The Steering Committee met regularly to review findings and develop the Strategic Directions document that concludes the research report.

The efforts of the consortium as a whole covered some five years, starting with the development of the consortium, then contracting two studies to assess the feasibility of subsequent research, and then contracting out the full-scale human resources study.

### Sector Study Methodology

The methodology for the final study relied on collection of data from an array of sources, both

qualitative and quantitative. Analytical techniques included extensive analysis of labour market statistics covering a 10 year period, projecting trends for the future, and content analysis of interview data.

The research was based on the following data sources:

- Literature review update (from preliminary feasibility studies)
- Labour Market Analysis of social services sector, including five occupational categories, two primary industries and six sub-industries. Data were drawn from the Census, Labour Force Survey, National Graduate Survey and other sources, include social work associations, government program administration records and educational institutions.
- Fax-back survey of 109 employers across Canada
- Supplementary telephone survey of 51 employers drawn from fax-back respondent pool
- 338 in-depth, open-ended interviews (largely in-person) with key stakeholders. These included: employers/managers from government social service and health ministries, educators at college and university levels, students, employers in the private and not-for-profit domains, employees, and a small number of consumers. In that some interviews were focus groups, the actual number of respondents is appreciably larger.

### Highlights of Research Findings

The social services sector is at the nexus of two opposing forces—an increase in the scope and intensity of service needs and an ever-shrinking resource base for those they serve. The structure



of service delivery is undergoing radical alteration, as the traditional primary service source, the public sector, devolves by contracting for services with private and/or not-for-profit organizations. At the same time that standards are raised for the certification and accreditation of workers, there is a concurrent, contradictory trend toward increased use of other professionals or even non-social service workers in "allied" fields for positions once held by social workers as a professional group. Decreasing job security, loss of autonomy in the name of multi-disciplinarity, lack of support for the stresses and demands of the job all contribute to a negative synergy in the workplace.

Part and parcel of this dynamic tension is the continued diffusion of the identity of the social work profession itself, and a perceived concomitant devaluation of social services as a whole. The widely reflected need to develop a coherent, clearly defined professional identity is seen as a crucial building block for strengthening the position of the social service sector as a whole.

In the face of this concatenation of change and its often daunting impacts, the labour market statistics show that in sheer employment terms, the social services are a relatively good place to be, if unemployment rates alone are considered. There was strong employment growth for much of the 1990's. The social services labour force also has one of the lowest unemployment rates of any sector in the country. However, earnings are lower than in many other professional fields. There is more to working than these basic numbers, and one of the strongest themes of the research is the on-the-job stress reported by the full range of respondents. Increased workloads, having to do more with less, and service users who are experiencing more intense, multi-dimensional challenges to their social, psychological and economic survival—all contribute significantly to making social service employment both extremely demanding and sometimes very dispiriting.

Future employment growth in the social services sector will continue to be a balancing act between societal needs and public policies as to how best to meet those needs. High growth of the geriatric population will require extensive, innovative health

and social services programming. The rapidly growing Aboriginal population, with its significant needs and commitment to developing appropriate service delivery models will account for even higher demand for social services. In some provinces, new areas of service need are emerging from the significant immigrant and/or visible minority populations. Policies to support social services are expected to be somewhat more expansive, but also to continue to emphasize cost-contained community-based responses. The sector is expected to show overall employment growth that at least matches the overall Canadian population growth rate. Within social services, the occupations that are expected to be higher than the overall population growth rate are social workers (usually defined as having a BSW) and—even more so—specialists in a range of counselling services.

### **Context of the Sector Study**

It appears that there will be enough of a supply of social service sector employees, based on the numbers being produced by the colleges and universities. However, sheer numbers on the supply side does not mean that there is always a match between the supply of workers and the demands of employers, in terms of skills and experience necessary to serve the evolving client profile well. The findings from employers and from the analysis of educational institutions indicates that more work remains to be done to prepare recent graduates—or to enhance the skills of existing workers—to respond to the demographic and cultural changes flagged in the research.

Relatively few universities provide courses at either an elective or required level in most of the subject areas identified in the research as high skill and/or service needs in future. This includes programming that focuses largely on Aboriginal peoples, poverty, youth at risk, immigrant groups, the aging, substance abuse, and child protection. The demand for high skill levels in child protection work continues. Need for employees to have enhanced computer skills and more of the "employability skills" of self-direction, communications, and teamwork are also identified by employers as an area for strengthening training of workers in the social services sector. These appear not to be explicitly addressed at a course level in university



social work programming. There is a sense that college courses tend to be more closely linked to meeting labour market demands, but the research did not pursue this issue in depth.

Whatever the limitations of course offerings in universities, the practicum component for the BSW and college courses was universally lauded for its value in helping students focus their career decision-making and for enhancing job-readiness. Employers draw heavily upon the practicum process for their own hiring of recent graduates.

### **In Sum**

All in all, the social services sector is a vibrant, dynamic field, occupied by dedicated individuals and organizations. Employment opportunities are good, but employment conditions are increasingly taxing and professional recognition is less robust than it has been. The societal support of the field is weakening, as a part of the weakening of societal commitment to support the most vulnerable in society. The link between labour market demand and the supply side as related to educational preparation of future workers is seen as not being as strong as it should be to sustain and even increase the sector's viability. The need for the profession to clarify its identity, its goals and objectives is evident. In doing so, it will enable the sector to meet changes from a position of well-founded, well-documented strength. This sector study should provide an important foundation for the strategies the sector will develop to meet the changes to come.







# I Context of the Sector Study

Social work as a function, as a calling even, has existed for at least a century. This has been so wherever there were organized efforts by dedicated individuals and groups to assist the socially disadvantaged by alleviating their immediate distress and by enabling them to find ways to effect permanent positive change in their circumstances. Social work was not charity. It was social action, and action based on a critique of inequities of society that contributed to the very needs that were being addressed. As a recent report on university level education in the social work profession pointed out:

*De comprendre que l'intervention qu'elle effectue comporte à la fois une dimension action (aide, service, promotion, défense, changement) et critique. La dimension service n'étant qu'une partie du travail social, celui-ci ne peut donc être réduit à cette seule fonction.<sup>1</sup>*

translated as:

*One must understand that the intervention that social work carries out involves an element of action (support, service, promotion, advocacy, change) as well as an element of criticism. Service represents only a part of social work as a whole. It does not represent its only function.<sup>1</sup>*

Social work as a profession increasingly was defined as just that—a distinct set of professional skills, based on an identified knowledge base, provided through formal education, and refined through years of practice with others in the profession. Social workers worked largely in an organizational context, whether it was delivering services as part of governmental mandates to assist those most in

need, or as employees of not-for-profit community-based organizations devoted to similar goals.

Over time however, the profession of social work has found itself operating within a much larger sea of social needs and of service response. What was once a more narrowly defined profession, serving a relatively circumscribed set of needs, has become one part of the vast complex of occupations, sectors and industries that fall within what is generally known as "social services." The range of needs that the social services address is staggering in its breadth and depth. Its functional and organizational boundaries are increasingly porous. The distinctiveness of the social work profession and its function have become diffused within this larger world. Thus, to address the human resources challenges which social work faces today, it is necessary to place the profession within the larger context of social services as the sector under consideration.

Therefore, the study defined the sector broadly, encompassing both the profession of social work and also extending to the much larger context of the other main occupational fields involved in providing social services. The reason for using this model is that human resources planning for social work as a profession and as an occupation cannot be done effectively without fully taking into account the context and trends of the social services sector as a whole. There are a few occupations that are closely linked in providing social services and the shifts in all these fields have implications for the employment of social workers. In fact, professional social workers are active in many of these occupations, illustrating the need for a full recognition of the diversity of roles that professional social workers

<sup>1</sup> Regroupement des unités de formation universitaire en travail social (RUFUTS), *Les orientations de la formation du travail social au Québec*. 2nd edition, September, 1997



are called upon to fill in today's rapidly changing labour market.

The social services sector as a whole finds itself in a time of dramatic change, of change that seems at times to be tearing the very fabric that comprises its *raison d'être*. At the same time as the demand for its knowledge, skills and dedication is increasing, at the same time as the preparation for social services occupations is increasingly professionalizing, there is a counter-current of devaluation of the social services function and of those performing it. These conflicting currents have direct and sweeping human resources impacts. These impacts fall not only on those who may be employed in the field, but also on those who set governmental and organizational policies, on those who employ social services workers, those who receive services—and the public at large.

Given this larger context in which the social services sector finds itself, substantial efforts are being made by leaders in the field to address these changes in a constructive, strategic manner.

### **The Development of the Occupational Study: Partnership and Terms of Reference**

The federal government, through the sector Partnerships Initiative program of Human Resources Development Canada, plays an active role in assisting interested labour force sectors in their human resources planning. This planning process relies on partnership among industries within the sector and between the sector and the government. Key elements of the process include not only the basis in partnership but careful research on the current and future human resources circumstances of the sector. The foundation block of the research is the Sector Study. A sector study is "national in scope and examines how various factors...impact on the labour force of a particular industrial sector. Labour force issues examined include:

- Future employment
- Occupational structure
- Labour demand and supply; and
- Training needs"<sup>2</sup>

The results of these are envisioned as a central tool for the sector itself to devise strategies for more effective human resource management in future.

<sup>2</sup> From the HRDC website, under: [sector/faq/faq.shtm1](http://sector/faq/faq.shtm1)

Human resource "management" is used in the broadest terms, to include:

- identification of trends in employment opportunities
- the identification of strengths and gaps in training and education,
- the enhancement of the effectiveness and efficiency of the recruitment and retention of workers (i.e., to better balance the supply and demand),
- the development of policies relating to effective human resource utilization,
- improvement of the ability of the sector as a whole to meet the mission and mandate that it sets for itself.

In response to the interest of the social services sector, a consortium of academic and professional organizations partnered with each other and the sector Partnerships Initiative of HRDC to undertake a multi-stage sector study process. The partner organizations are:

Canadian Association of Schools of Social Work (CASSW)

Canadian Committee of Deans and Directors of Schools of Social Work (CCDDSSW)

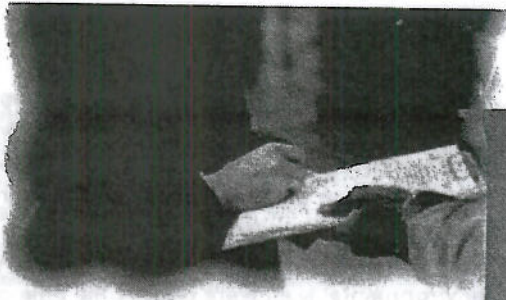
Canadian Association of Social Workers (CASW)

Regroupement des Unités de formation universitaires en travail social Québec (RUFUTSQ)

As an integral part of the sector study process, a Steering Committee was struck to guide and monitor all aspects of the endeavour. The Committee was composed of representatives from the consortium organizations, provincial governments, as well as a number of other professionals from across the social services sector. (See Appendix B for list of members.)

The sector study process is a multi-phase one, with the research itself beginning within HRDC as SPI staff undertake their own pre-study research, including interviews with key sector representatives, to define the terms of reference for the work to follow. Once this is done, and the Steering Committee is formed, research conducted through an independent contracting process commences—under the guidance of the Committee.

<http://hrdc-drhc.gc.ca/sector/faq/faq.shtm1>



# Research Methodology: History and Implementation

The rationale for the approach taken in the sector study and the multi-phase methodology are as follows.

## A. The Phases of the Social Services Sector Human Resources Study

The social services sector human resources study is a phased process because this is the optimal way of achieving at least several closely related goals. These are both process and content/informational goals.

For a sector study to be utilized in the long run there must be on going commitment from key stakeholders. This comes about when it is these very stakeholders who initially identify the need for such a study and who shape it and shepherd it throughout the process. Secondly, the research must meet the informational goals set by the stakeholders, by the sector itself. A balanced, representative and knowledgeable steering group is absolutely essential for setting the appropriate research framework. They also monitor quality and timeliness of any research.

Finally, the results of the research must not end up "sur la tablette," or in a drawer somewhere. The information and analysis must be used by the stakeholders to further their human resources planning, as a sector and in whichever social services occupational field they occupy. A top-down or post hoc approach will not achieve this. Only a process that has engaged essential participants from the beginning, and which reflects their needs and

their actions, will enable the sector to build upon what has been learned in the research enterprise. This stakeholder engagement will not guarantee subsequent uptake of the research results. However, just as social development depends on the meaningful participation of all concerned, so too does the development of a human resources strategy for any sector. The groundwork for research utilization has been firmly established through the process that has framed the social services sector study. The research findings themselves thus become a powerful tool for human resources strategic planning.

The first formal research components were essentially feasibility studies. The two studies were designed to clarify research issues and to scan the relevant research to see where there were informational resources or gaps that should be filled in a subsequent sector study. These studies were:

### Study 1: *"The Future of Social Work Practice and Education in Canada: Preparing for the Next Millennium"*

The aim of this study was to "...assess the impact of current societal pressures and changes on social work practice and education, to identify a vision for the social work profession in the light of these changes, and to identify actions which can be taken by the profession and social work educators to ensure that this vision is realized."<sup>3</sup> The research methodology was essentially a literature review, looking at methodologies for future studies; i.e., "...different approaches and reasons for looking

<sup>3</sup> From the report, Section 2, "Environment," page 2.



to the future.” The study also surveyed literature related to human resources issues in social work, with an emphasis on social work education. It concluded with recommendations as to the kind of study “...that will be useful and proactive in shaping the future of social work and social work education and that will be responsive to the community.”<sup>4</sup> The recommendations were closely followed in the next two phases of the sector study as a whole.

**Study 2: A Literature Review and Gap Analysis of the Social Worker Occupation**

The scope of the study was expanded beyond the social worker occupation per se, to the social services as a whole, with a focus on key occupations at the professional and paraprofessional levels.

The study was designed to:

- Assess current, on-going research and related activities addressing human resources issues in the social services;
- Prepare an environmental scan of the current and emerging business and work situations for the sector;
- Identify and highlight federal and provincial public policies affecting sector work skills, the working environment, and skills needed, as well as identify issues related to labour mobility and barriers to work in Canada; and
- Provide a descriptive overview of the current and future human resources situation in the sector.

The research methodology included: consultations with the Steering Committee for this Phase of the sector study; in-depth interviews with key respondents in the social services sector; fax-back survey of respondents about key human resources issues; comprehensive literature review of national and international sources; labour market database search and assessment of availability and utility for further study; and analysis and presentation of findings. The literature review included a wide range of both French language and English language sources and the respondents surveyed reflected both official languages and were drawn from across Canada.

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<sup>4</sup> Op. cit. page 13

There was considerable congruence among all of these sources as to the extremely demanding environment in which the social services sector finds itself and as to the human resources challenges it is facing and must address strategically in the future. The central themes that arose from this very wide environmental scan were clear at the time of the pilot study and remain the same at the time of this sector study. They are:

- Negative impacts of social policy and funding changes on the social work environment and on human resources utilization in particular; these included:
  - A changing “philosophical” basis for social welfare programming, with a growing sense that society does not see itself as having to take as large a role in assisting those in need as was once deemed appropriate;
  - Decreased funding in general for programming;
  - Expectations to do more the with same or less, yet needs for service are increasing, especially needs of children and families;
  - Raised requirements for licensure/ certification in some fields (eg. child protection), but lowering of requirements in others (eg. income assistance services);
  - High public profile of problems in child protection, relating to increased demands for accountability of workers has lessened appeal of this work, with associated difficulties in hiring and retention;
  - Major re-structuring of services, at all levels: ministry, industry (i.e., health, community services), organization/agency and client/need-specific services;
  - Trend toward devolution of services to First Nations agencies and individuals.

■ Impacts of technological change on social work, including:

- Increased expectations for the use of computer-based technology for record keeping; but not certain this is directly beneficial for service provision;
- Uneven application of technologies across departments and across regions, depending in part on financial resources;
- Potential for employers to use technology as a means of monitoring work performance of social workers;
- Potential benefit of allowing increasingly isolated workers to be in touch with each other, for sharing expertise, support, etc.;
- Confidentiality is an issue; much more information can be shared, but protecting people's privacy can become problematic, and could deter clients from accessing services;
- Difficulty in some instances of accepting the use of technology in the workplace.

■ Impacts of all of the above factors as they relate to education and training, with particular emphasis on human resource issues. The central themes that became evident are:

- Lack of concrete information on the scope and intensity of the range of impacts noted upon human resources patterns currently and in future (i.e., employment opportunities or losses, skills and knowledge needed, standards of certification, deployment of graduates);
- Difficulties in planning educational and training programming when none of the above are clearly known or documented;
- Difficulties for educational institutions in responding to changing employment environment;
- Importance of identifying competencies for certain roles, measuring performance and relating training/assessment of training to this;
- Educational/training institutions lag behind students in terms of technological expertise.

- Importance of including training that addresses changing client profile (multi-cultural, ethnic, Aboriginal, aging);
- Trends toward universities being asked to provide training and education outside of university context; sometimes a problem because this may support inequities of pay or work conditions, in some cases, where skills upgrading is provided for non-unionized workers, but occupational categories and pay levels may not be increased commensurately.
- Importance of acceptance of continuing education and life-long learning as an integral part of social work; institutions should respond accordingly.

The environmental scan was invaluable for confirming the key issues engaging the attention of the sector, but it also addressed whether further research was called for. It was clear from the study that in the Canadian context there is very little on-going or past research and reporting on human resources issues as such. There are no comprehensive studies or descriptions of the sector labour market, of trends in service needs, of current training or future training and education needs to meet identified needs. There is a great deal of research done on the nature of social work practice, on best practices, innovative approaches, etc. But it was clear from the second study (and from the previous study) that there is a definite gap in human resources research for the sector.

Thus, the second study also concluded with guidelines for the direction that the full-scale sector study should take. These recommendations were based on the findings of this research as to what was already known, what needed to be explored further, and what the data sources would be. A brief outline of a potential implementation strategy addressing the findings of the ultimate research study was included as well.

When the Advisory Committee assessed the results of the two studies, it was concluded that it would be appropriate to conduct a full-scale human resources study. Such a study would be fully justified because the literature indicated that there is very little empirical research on human resources issues in the



social work sector in Canada. This includes a lack of documentation of current labour market circumstances and trend analysis and little in the way of systematic research on the larger policy environment and its impacts on human resources in the field. There is agreement on the issues to be addressed, the challenges the sector faces, but it would be the work of the ultimate sector study to validate these through empirical research and analysis.

### **The Sector Study**

As the final phase of the sector study research began, a request for proposals was issued in November 1998. The terms of reference, in brief, were that the study would:

- Develop a current and comprehensive profile of the [social work] community in Canada;
- Provide a comprehensive analysis of elements of the current operating and public policy environment in the [sector];
- Identify emerging trends provincially, nationally, and internationally which will have an impact on the sector, particularly its human resources, and explore the likely impacts on the [sector] in Canada;
- Explore human resources issues of importance across the sector; specifically including management practices, the nature of recruitment and selection criteria used and any barriers to effective mobility and promotion;
- Develop a human resources profile of the [sector], including an estimate of future employment levels and changes in the occupational and skill mix;
- Provide a thorough analysis of the flow of potential and current social workers through the education and training system;
- Examine the linkages between the sector and social work training institutions; assess the appropriateness of current training programs/skill development activities to meet current and future skill needs; and
- Develop an understanding of the likely directions for the sector in the future, based on an analysis of findings; identify barriers and recommend actions to be taken to meet identified human resource challenges.

The research was conducted by a partnership of firms and associates from across Canada, with team members in Toronto, Montreal, Saskatoon, and Vancouver. Team members included social scientists in both the private sector and academia, and professional social workers and academics in social work. Among the team as a whole were included Aboriginal researchers and francophone researchers from Quebec.

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## **B. Methodology for the Sector Study**

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In keeping with the research maxim that “the question determines the method,” the research methodology has to be multi-faceted yet highly focused on the study issues. It is only in this way that the research can successfully address an array of questions about a complex and highly dynamic subject like human resources planning for the social work profession within the context of the social services sector as a whole.

In order to take into account fully these complexities, the scope of the study included both the profession of social work and closely related occupations. For the purposes of this research, five occupations (as defined by the National Occupational Classification and Statistics Canada) were identified as the primary units of analysis. These five occupations are:

**NOC 0314 Managers in Social, Community and Correctional Services**

**NOC 4152 Social Workers**

**NOC 4153 Family, Marriage and Other Related Counsellors**

**NOC 4155 Probation Officers**

**NOC 4212 Community and Social Service Workers**

Social workers are active in all of these occupations, and the analysis focused throughout on the social worker occupation, which is the occupation most closely linked to the professional field of social work.

All the occupations comprising the overall social services sector recruit graduates of social work studies to a significant extent at the bachelor’s and master’s levels as well as those with university and college-level diplomas and certificates (usually corresponding to two-year and one-year courses, respectively). Hence an understanding of the full



sector is necessary to assess emerging needs for social work education per se.

It is important to note that the above occupations are categorized in terms of their function; that is, according to the roles and responsibilities of those employed in them. These functions are described in the standardized groupings upon which national labour force data collection and analysis is based. The social work profession, which is found to varying degrees across all five occupations and functions, is distinguished by being defined by several closely related criteria. These include meeting accreditation standards set by regulatory bodies. These standards typically are based on requirements for: at least a bachelor's degree in social work from an accredited institution; a certain minimum amount of work experience in the field; and registration with a regulatory or governing body.

The methodology of the sector study drew on a number of different data sources (lines of evidence), with the research team utilizing a diverse set of data collection strategies. In turn, the data analysis techniques were matched to the various types of data—qualitative and quantitative data from documentary, statistical, and interview sources.

This methodological approach is what is referred to as "triangulation." Its value in applied research, is described in the literature as follows:

*...no single method ever adequately solves the problem of rival causal factors ...Because each method reveals different aspects of empirical reality, multiple methods of observations must be employed. This is termed triangulation. I now offer as a final methodological rule the principle that multiple methods should be used in every investigation.<sup>5</sup>*

**There are four basic types of triangulation in social science research. They are:**

- 1) *data triangulation—the use of a variety of data sources...;*

- 2) *investigator triangulation—the use of several different evaluators or social scientists...; [in our case, a team composed of several evaluators, including a senior statistical analyst];*
- 3) *theory triangulation—the use of multiple perspectives to interpret a single set of data; and,*
- 4) *methodological triangulation—the use of multiple methods to study a single problem or program, such as interviews, observations, questionnaires, and documents.<sup>6</sup>*

As can be seen, the sector study applied each of these strategies; i.e., using multiple data sources and appropriate data collection strategies and means of analysis.<sup>7</sup> The diverse but complementary expertise of the research team—along with the direct and continuous contributions of the Steering Committee, many of whom are researchers themselves—brought the triangulation of interpretation as well. Because of the nature of the sector study there was not a focus on theory development, however. This was not called for under the circumstances.

The research methodology was organized into five modules. Four dealt with particular research objectives and the fifth addressed a process arising out of the research findings.

The four research modules are:

- A. Sector Labour Force Profile (mainly statistical description)
- B. Factors Driving Change in the Sector (socio-economic and policy)
- C. Human Resources Profile (employment conditions, labour market trends)
- D. Assessment of Current Training: Resources and Gaps (education, training and workforce capacity)

The fifth module, which embodies a process, is:

<sup>5</sup> Denzin, N.K., *The Research Act: A Theoretical Introduction to Sociological Methods*, 1978, as quoted in Patton, M.Q., *Qualitative Evaluation and Research Methods*, Sage Publications, 1980, p.187.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> See also, the Phase 1 report on the future of social work practice and education, where in the recommendations it states that the called-for study "...will require...the use of multiple methods of inquiry and multiple methods for the development of action plans." Op. cit., p. 13.



E. Process of Strategy Development, undertaken by the Steering Committee. These activities formed an increasingly intensive element of the sector study as the research neared completion and preliminary findings became available to the Committee. Through a series of in-person meetings and extensive electronic consultations (facilitated by a strategic planner from the research team), a Strategic Directions plan was prepared and presented in documentary form.

The Plan comprises the final chapter of this sector study report.

In keeping with the principle of triangulation, and because of the complexity of the subject matter of each of the modules, the scope of the data sources and the means of data collection and analysis are diverse and extensive.

The study relied on five main research strategies. These are:

<i>Research Strategy</i>	<i>Descriptive Overview</i>
Follow-up literature review	Review of literature to identify any additions to the Pilot Study 2 review and to determine if any modifications of those findings were called for. (None identified; original findings confirmed. See bibliography in Appendix C)
Labour market analysis	Analysis of trends in the sector's labour market and detailed description of current status. This is on a Canada-wide and provincial basis. Trends are linked to anticipated supply and demand for the sector labour force.
Fax back survey of 109 employers across the country	Stratified probability design, across 10 provinces and three territories; regional distribution within each province/territory, distribution across main social services types (hospital, family service, mental health, child protection, official language, etc.) 21 French language interviews, 88 English, proportionate distribution of respondents by provincial population and language.
Supplementary telephone survey of additional 51 employers drawn from original fax-back respondent pool.	Stratified probability design, as above, except employer category by organizational type (government at federal, provincial or municipal levels, private/for-profit, not-for-profit, hospital)
In-depth, open-ended interviews (largely in-person) with key stakeholders. Most interviews were with individuals, but focus groups were held with student and employee respondents	Selection strategy designed to identify and interview those who could address one or more of three research modules (change drivers, human resources profile, and education/training). Respondents drawn from professional associations, government policy and programming, education (faculty and students), training, and service providers/employers/employees across a spectrum of services, including those focusing on Aboriginal and multi-cultural client services.  338 interviews conducted (focus groups with students, employees, clients are counted here as a one interview each, but the respondents in a given group could number from 1 to 10 people, so total numbers of individuals interviewed are greater than the 338 interviews)

Given the diversity of respondent groups for the stakeholder interview program, and the complexity of the data collection strategy for this segment of the research, the following summary table highlights the breadth of the respondent coverage.



**Table 1: Distribution of Key Stakeholder Interviews (Individual and Focus Groups)**

Province/Territory	Module B Change Drivers Interviews						Module C Human Resources Profile Interviews						Module D Assessment of Current Training Interviews						Focus Groups										
	Employer Interviews			Private Practice Interviews			Employee Focus Groups			Client Focus Groups			Educators/ Trainers Interviews			Deans/Directors/ Ass./Faculty Interviews			Student Focus Groups										
	G	F	M	A	G	F	M	A	G	F	M	A	G	F	M	A	G	F	M	A	G	F	M	A					
British Columbia	6	2	10	4	1			2	1								5	2	4										
Alberta	3	1	7	4	1	5		1									5		3	2									
Saskatchewan	1	6	6		1						1						3		3										
Manitoba	1	3	3		9	1		1									2							1					
Ontario	19	1	7	12	4	1	3	3	1	2	2	2	1	1	2	6	1	2	3	1	0	1	2						
Quebec	3	8	3	5	1	5	1		2		4				2	5	1	2					1						
New Brunswick	2	2	1	4	1	1		5	1	1									3	2	1	2	1	0					
Nova Scotia	2		1	2	1	4	1		1				1																
PEI	1		0	1					1										3		1			1					
Newfoundland and Labrador														1															
NWT				4	1			5											1										
Yukon				6				5												2									
Nunavut				2									1																
National	0	1																											
Sub-Section Total	38	11	14	61	24	7	9	36	7	3	0	5	8	4	3	4	2	2	2	0	5	29	7	6	21	7	2	1	8
Sub-Total	63			61	40			36	10			5	15	4	6	4	6	0	12	5	42	21	10	8					
Interview and Focus Group Totals				124				91				25		17		63		18											

Key: G = General F = French M = Multicultural A = Aboriginal

Because of the breadth of substantive research issues, there is no single data source that is sufficient to answer all of the questions raised in any individual module. It is the data in total that answer the questions that frame the study as a whole. Frequently a given module would be addressed through a primary data source, with complementary secondary sources drawn upon. For example, all categories of respondent were asked about training issues, but certain groups were asked many more—and more intensive—questions about these issues than others. Within certain common themes, like effectiveness of education and training, there were questions tailored to the particular respondent

category experience and situation. For example, educational institutions were asked how they decided on curriculum offerings while employers were asked if new hires were prepared for their jobs, and students were asked about the role of the practicum in their educational experience.

It is when all of these perspectives are put together and analyzed, then taken as an interrelated whole, that the findings achieve genuine validity. Thus they can be relied upon as a tool for strategic planning by the sector consortium and by other stakeholders within the social services community of interest.



# III

## Findings of the Sector Study

Because of the complexity of the sector study and the reporting of it, a description of the organization of the remainder of the report may be of use to the reader. The findings are divided into a Canada-wide overview of the human resources situation of the social services sector, then an overview of the Quebec circumstances, and then an overview of the Aboriginal social work services. These two chapters were researched and written by consultants from their respective Aboriginal and Quebec social services community. The Canada-wide overview does include description and analysis of the sector in Quebec and in relation to Aboriginal aspects of the sector. The Aboriginal and Quebec reports share the same methodology as the Canada-wide research, and in fact a number of the data sources are drawn upon for all three sets of analysis and reporting. However the Aboriginal and Quebec chapters focus more intensively on their respective circumstances and directions for the future.

Within the Canada-wide overview, there are five main sections. In order to focus for the reader the wide array of data and the interpretation of it, there

is a section at the beginning of each of the sections that highlights the "key findings" of the particular content area. It is these key findings that are most directly linked to the Strategic Directions section at the end of the report as a whole. Then the greater part of each section is the detailed findings for that subject. The Quebec and Aboriginal chapters follow the Canada-wide research findings. Then there are the conclusions to the study and the Strategic Directions document, prepared by the Steering Committee. Appendices contain provincial profiles, names of the Steering Committee, bibliography, grid of university social work courses offered in the defined demand areas, and the names and roles of the research team.

There is a separate Technical Report (Volume 2) that is available from the website ([www.socialworkincanada.org](http://www.socialworkincanada.org)). It contains a wide array of tables on the sector, and the data collection instruments used. From this extensive data source, the more sharply focused tables presented in the main document or report were constructed.





# PART 1

## CANADA-WIDE OVERVIEW

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### A. Environment and Demand for Social Services

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#### KEY FINDINGS

##### Demographics:

The overall population is getting older and therefore the proportion of children in the overall population is reducing. However the Aboriginal and immigrant populations have a very young age profile, and the number of children in these populations is still increasing. This means that there will be continued demand for child and youth services but with even greater emphasis on these more specific areas.

Family structure continues to change. Common law relationships have increased significantly and these tend to be less stable. The proportion of lone parent families is high, and still increasing. Females head most lone parent families and their incomes are typically only half of the average family income. The proportion of children living in poverty has increased over the past decade and this situation shows little sign of effectively changing. This will continue to increase demand for childrens' services.

The proportion of persons over 65 is increasing and the fastest increases are being seen in the 75 and over population. This, combined with health care

policies to reduce hospital stays for older persons, opens up a major new area for social programming.

High immigrant flows also places further demand on social services. This demand is both in numbers and in responding to cultural needs.

##### Trends in Social Programming Funding:

Despite population and growth and demographic trends noted, the proportion of federal and provincial government funding allocated for social services has declined slightly over 1991/1996 Census period. (Health care expenditures have similarly decreased).

- Indicators of programming usage/needs:
  - Numbers of children in care: 20% increase
  - Special care beds for adults in institutions: number has levelled off since mid-80's, after substantial increase from early '70s; (but note increase in proportion of 65+ and especially 75+)
  - Proportion of those on Guaranteed Income Supplement has remained static from mid-'80s.



The social work profession and other occupations in social services are involved in a variety of people related services where demand is driven by needs of the community and individuals as well as by policy which translates these needs into program responses and then allocates government funding. As such there is no clear cut economic, or market demand, measure that will provide the means of assessing total demand for services. This does not mean, however, that there are no measures, of demand or change drivers, that can be used to indicate major needs. Population numbers and demographic change provide the most basic indicators of needs and there are also trends in government expenditure, which provide some indication of shifting patterns of response in social programming.

Social services operate to meet the needs of people. Population, its size, growth and components therefore provide the bedrock of assessing the demand for social services.

### 1. Main Population Changes

Canada is a developed country that has an unusually high rate of population growth, largely due to high levels of immigration. Canada also has seen some gains in the number of young persons but like other developed countries it is the change in the age structure that is most notable. The proportion of children in the population is decreasing and there is a significant increase in the proportion of persons over 65 years of age.

The following table, with population numbers from the 1991 Census and the 1996 Census, illustrates recent changes seen in the Canadian population.\* Overall the population increased by over a million and a half in the inter-censal period, a gain of 5.7 percent. The number of children increased by 3.7 percent, of youth aged 15 to 24 only by 0.7 percent, while the number of persons over 65 years of age increased by over 350,000 or, more significantly, by about 11 percent. This table also gives the further detail on those over 75 years of age. While still a comparatively small proportion of the total population, the 75 plus population component grew by 15 percent from 1991 to 1996.

**Table 2: Population of Canada 1991 and 1996**

	1991	1996	Change 1991 to 1996	
			Number	Percent
Total—All Ages	27,296,860	28,846,760	1,549,900	5.7%
0–14 years of age	5,692,550	5,901,280	208,730	3.7%
15–24 years of age	3,830,505	3,857,170	26,665	0.7%
25–64 years of age	14,603,825	15,560,475	956,650	6.6%
65+ years of age	3,169,970	3,527,845	357,875	11.3%
75+ years of age	1,274,900	1,465,910	191,010	15.0%

(Source: Census of Canada)

The overall population growth in Canada includes some quite different patterns by province and territory, as illustrated in the following table. Ontario, British Columbia, the Yukon and Northwest Territories showed higher than average growth rates while Alberta was slightly above average.

**Table 3: Population by Province 1991 and 1996**

	All Ages		Change 1991 to 1996	
	1991	1996	Number	Percent
Canada	27,296,860	28,846,760	1,549,900	5.7%
Newfoundland and Labrador	568,470	551,790	-16,680	-2.9%
Prince Edward Island	129,765	134,555	4,790	3.7%
Nova Scotia	899,945	909,285	9,340	1.0%
New Brunswick	723,900	738,135	14,235	2.0%
Quebec	6,895,965	7,138,795	242,830	3.5%
Ontario	10,084,885	10,753,575	668,690	6.6%
Manitoba	1,091,945	1,113,895	21,950	2.0%
Saskatchewan	988,930	990,235	1,305	0.1%
Alberta	2,545,555	2,696,825	51,270	5.9%
British Columbia	3,282,060	3,724,500	442,440	13.5%
Yukon Territory	27,800	30,765	2,965	10.7%
Northwest Territories	57,650	64,405	6,755	11.7%

Source: Census of Canada

\* Please note: throughout the report, tables follow the explanatory text on any given topic. They provide supplementary, numeric documentation of the analytical or descriptive point being made.



Even more differences were seen in terms of age group changes. Several provinces saw the 0-14 age group, which has been chosen to represent children, actually decline during the 1991 to 1996 period while this age group grew significantly in the "growing" provinces of Ontario and British Columbia. In addition the number of children increased significantly in the Yukon and Northwest Territories, reflecting population trends in these northern areas.

**Table 4: Children by Province 1991 and 1996**

	0-14 Years of Age		Change 1991 to 1996	
	1991	1996	Number	Percent
Canada	5,692,550	5,901,280	208730	3.7%
Newfoundland and Labrador	127,920	109,795	-18125	-14.2%
Prince Edward Island	29,360	29,100	-260	-0.9%
Nova Scotia	184,360	180,110	-4250	-2.3%
New Brunswick	151,215	144,605	-6610	-4.4%
Quebec	1,378,170	1,372,185	-5985	-0.4%
Ontario	2,055,240	2,214,220	158980	7.7%
Manitoba	239,735	244,615	4880	2.0%
Saskatchewan	237,465	228,585	-8880	-3.7%
Alberta	601,105	614,480	13375	2.2%
British Columbia	662,245	735,175	72930	11.0%
Yukon Territory	6,840	7,380	540	7.9%
Northwest Territories	8,895	21,005	2110	11.2%

Source: Census of Canada

Much of the overall population growth is due to high immigration rates. This explains many of the differences in provincial population growth rates, although population changes in Canada also reflect some major inter-provincial movements.

**Table 5: Immigrants to Canada 1991 to 1996**

	Number	Percent of 1996 Population
Canada	1,038,995	3.6%
Newfoundland and Labrador	1,500	0.3%
Prince Edward Island	430	0.3%
Nova Scotia	6,490	0.7%
New Brunswick	2,585	0.4%
Quebec	150,910	2.1%
Ontario	562,980	5.3%
Manitoba	19,175	1.7%
Saskatchewan	7,755	0.8%
Alberta	69,600	2.6%
British Columbia	216,610	5.9%
Yukon Territory	360	1.2%
Northwest Territories	585	0.9%

Source: Census of Canada

The recent immigrant population tends to be somewhat younger than the overall population, with fewer people in retirement age groups. Since immigration also emphasizes labour market entrants there are proportionately fewer children amongst immigrants but the differences are small. In 1996 3.3 percent of the 0 to 14 age group in Canada were recent immigrants. In Ontario 4.7 percent of the child age group were recent immigrants and in British Columbia the share was 5.0 percent. However immigrant populations are not only important in terms of actual population growth but also of future growth as young labour force members form families once settled in Canada.

Immigration policy still calls for annual immigration of some 220,000 to 250,000 persons. This will continue as a source of population growth into the coming decade.

There are further demographic aspects that also have an impact on overall demand as well as in defining further demand related issues.

Aboriginal populations have certain needs linked to location, age structure and socio-economic issues. The available figures for the Aboriginal population, as measured by the 1996 Census, are considered to be an underestimate because of some Aboriginal

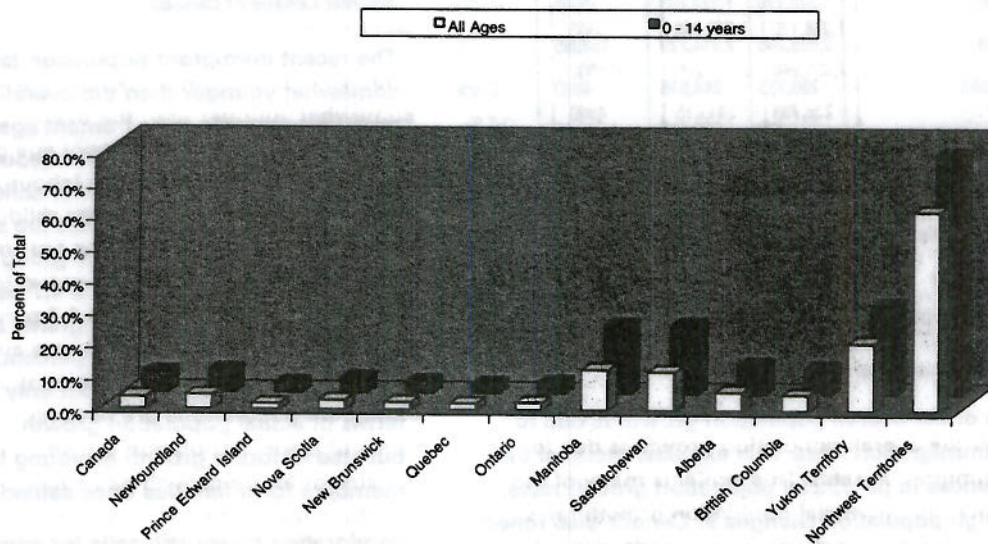


non-response to the Census. Statistics Canada suggests that the population underestimate is in the region of 44,000. This means that the Census population figures should be considered a minimum indicator of demand. A further note on this is that "Aboriginal" is an overall umbrella definition that is self-selected by Census respondents. The response category of Aboriginal refers to Inuit, North American Indian and Metis. For some of these categories there are other measures of population, such as registered members of particular First Nations. These membership numbers are in a process of change as many members of First Nations have relatively recently re-claimed "official" Aboriginal status, while others are in the process of doing so. The Census numbers are therefore provided as a general guide

to the overall numbers of Aboriginal people in Canada and in each province or territory.

The Aboriginal population is younger than the overall population and is located to a greater extent in certain provinces or territories. While the Aboriginal population is close to 4 percent of the Canadian population of all ages, the 0 to 14 age group Aboriginal population is over 6 percent of the total population of Canadian children in that age group. But there are major differences by province, as in provinces such as Manitoba and Saskatchewan where the proportion of Aboriginal peoples in the population is far higher and in the Northwest Territories where the Aboriginal population is a majority.

**Figure 1: Aboriginal Population Representation**



Source: 1996 Census of Canada

Within the Aboriginal population children comprise about 34 percent of the total Aboriginal population across Canada. This compares with about 20 percent for the overall population.

**Table 6: Aboriginal Population in 1996**

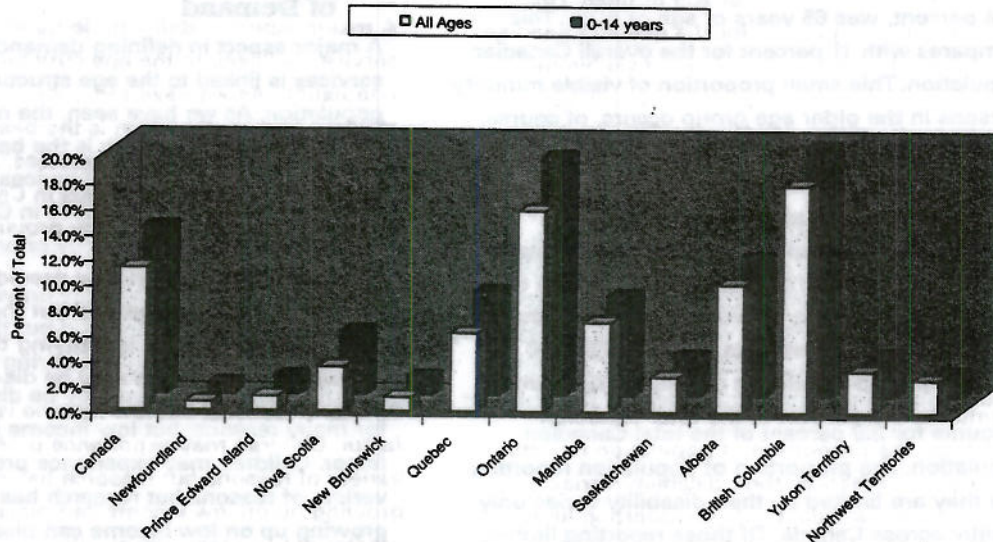
	All Ages Number	0-14 Years of age	
		Number	Percent
Canada	1,101,955	378,755	34.4%
Newfoundland and Labrador	24,595	7,790	31.7%
Prince Edward Island	2,400	910	37.9%
Nova Scotia	26,795	8,725	32.6%
New Brunswick	17,095	5,415	31.7%
Quebec	142,385	41,180	28.9%
Ontario	246,065	78,590	31.9%
Manitoba	138,885	52,240	37.6%
Saskatchewan	117,350	48,955	41.7%
Alberta	155,650	57,150	36.7%
British Columbia	184,445	59,970	32.5%
Yukon Territory	6,440	2,045	31.8%
Northwest Territories	39,855	15,765	39.6%

Source: 1996 Census of Canada

Recent immigrants have some initial needs for social service programming. There are further needs over the long term including barriers to employment, housing, etc. and especially cultural aspects that might impact on health and family areas. Although it clearly does not measure any aspect of these needs with any accuracy the best general indicator of these types of issues is the visible minority population.

Recent immigration has emphasized movements of people from Asia, Pacific Rim, South America and Caribbean countries. In 1996 the visible minority population in Canada was reported at close to 3,200,000 in total. This made up just over 11 percent of the overall Canadian population. The visible minority, with more recent migrants, is also a somewhat younger population than the Canadian one. In 1996 just over 13 percent of the 0 to 14 age group in Canada was visible minority. There are also significant differences in where visible minorities are most likely to be living.

**Figure 2: Visible Minority Representation**



Since the visible minority population is younger than the overall Canadian population, children from 0 to 14 years of age make up a higher proportion than is seen across the entire population. About a quarter of the visible minority population falls into this child age group compared to 20 percent of the overall population.



**Table 7: Visible Minority Population in 1996**

	<i>All Ages Number</i>	<i>0-14 Years of age Number</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Canada	3,197,480	778,340	24.3%
Newfoundland and Labrador	3,815	960	25.2%
Prince Edward Island	1,520	415	27.3%
Nova Scotia	31,320	9,030	28.8%
New Brunswick	7,990	2,100	26.3%
Quebec	433,985	111,990	25.8%
Ontario	1,682,045	415,470	24.7%
Manitoba	77,355	19,240	24.9%
Saskatchewan	26,950	7,185	26.7%
Alberta	269,280	66,950	24.9%
British Columbia	660,545	144,350	21.9%
Yukon Territory	1,000	245	24.5
Northwest Territories	1,670	400	24.0%

Source: Census of Canada

1996 Census results also showed a relatively small proportion of the visible minority population, close to 6 percent, was 65 years of age or older. This compares with 11 percent for the overall Canadian population. This small proportion of visible minority persons in the older age group occurs, of course, because many of the visible minority population are relatively recent immigrants.

It is important to include a final group in the demographic review of potential demand indicators: persons who reported themselves disabled to the point of limited activity at work, school or elsewhere. The 1996 Census reports that just over 785,000 persons reported significant disability. This number accounts for 2.8 percent of the total Canadian population. The proportion of population reporting that they are limited by their disability varies only slightly across Canada. Of those reporting limited activity from disabilities, 16.7 percent are 65 years of age or older. The proportion of disabled who are 65 years of age or older does vary across provinces and territories but this reflects the age structure of each province.

**Table 8: Population Reporting Disabilities Limiting Activity in 1996 Population with Disabilities**

	<i>Total Number</i>	<i>Share of Total Pop</i>	<i>Proportion 65+</i>
Canada	785,345	2.8%	16.7%
Newfoundland and Labrador	13,710	2.5%	14.8%
Prince Edward Island	3,795	2.9%	17.9%
Nova Scotia	31,160	3.5%	15.9%
New Brunswick	25,835	3.5%	18.8%
Quebec	156,490	2.2%	20.4%
Ontario	311,530	2.9%	15.1%
Manitoba	31,000	2.8%	19.1%
Saskatchewan	28,345	3.0%	21.4%
Alberta	78,035	2.8%	14.7%
British Columbia	105,445	2.8%	15.5%
Yukon	795	2.6%	13.8%
Northwest Territories	1,665	2.6%	20.1%

Source: Census of Canada

## 2. Socio-economic Aspects of Demand

A major aspect in defining demand for social services is linked to the age structure of the population. As we have seen, the numbers of children and youth, which is the basic demographic driver of demand for child services, has really changed little during the 1990s in Canada, although there are different patterns by province.

The numbers of children may provide the basic measure of potential demand but the real measure of demand comes from identifying those who are disadvantaged. Children may be disadvantaged for many reasons, but low income is often a major factor. Children may experience problems for a variety of reasons but research has shown that growing up on low income can place children at greater risk of many social "ills."

There has been a shift in work and work patterns as well as in family composition. The proportion of full-time full-year work in the economy has decreased, giving way to more transient work patterns and young workers. Often the parents of young families are disproportionately affected by this change in work patterns. Other groups such as Aboriginal

families, recent immigrant families, and families led by persons with disabilities are all more likely to be affected by these employment patterns and are all more likely to be living on lower incomes than the average family income.

A particularly important shift in family patterns, which is directly linked to poverty for children, is the increase in the number of families headed by a single parent. Lone parent headed families, along with the other groups noted here, frequently are found below the low-income cut-offs. This is especially true of lone parent families headed by a in common law couples, which is also linked to less stable living arrangements and lower incomes.

**Table 9: Families in Canada**

	1991	1996	Change
Total Families	7,355,730	7,837,865	6.6%
Total Lone-Parent Families	953,640	1,137,510	19.3%
Female Lone Parent Families	788,395	945,230	19.9%
Common Law couples	719,275	920,640	28.0%

Source: Census of Canada

The proportion of female lone-parent families in Canada in 1996 was 12.1 percent, up from 10.7 percent in 1991. Very similar proportions and changes are seen across all provinces and territories.

**Table 10: Female Lone-Parent Families**

	Number in 1996	Share of all families 1996	1991
Canada	945,230	12.1%	10.7%
Newfoundland and Labrador	17,240	11.1%	11.7%
Prince Edward Island	4,345	12.1%	10.8%
Nova Scotia	33,640	13.2%	11.3%
New Brunswick	24,595	11.9%	11.1%
Quebec	252,515	12.9%	11.7%
Ontario	355,035	12.1%	10.4%
Manitoba	34,450	11.8%	10.6%
Saskatchewan	29,290	11.2%	9.7%
Alberta	75,930	10.6%	10.3%
British Columbia	115,110	11.4%	9.9%
Yukon Territory	1,105	13.7%	11.8%
Northwest Territories	1,980	13.2%	12.0%

Source: Census of Canada

Other information gives us a comparison of incomes for lone parent families; especially those headed by females. In 1997, the latest year for which there is a reading of family income, the average income of female-headed lone parent families was \$24,837. This income is 44.6 percent of the average income of all economic families (those living in family groups or unattached individuals).

**Table 11: Average Income of Families**

Constant 1997 \$	1993	1995	1997	Income Comparison
Total Families	54,803	55,877	55,628	100.0%
Lone-Parent Families	25,544	26,662	26,773	48.1%
Female Lone Parent Families	23,784	24,961	24,837	44.6%
Two-parent families	61,527	62,931	63,235	113.7%

Source: Statistics Canada Family Income Data

The consequences of these changes in family composition and income is that there are far more new families that have children in a situation of economic stress, and therefore who may eventually be in need of social services.

### 3. Aboriginal Peoples—Some Special Demand Considerations

An earlier section provided a snapshot of the overall Aboriginal population, as identified by the 1996 Census, for Canada as a whole and by province or territory. Because of the demand placed on social services by children and youth, this demographic measure also provided information on the Aboriginal population aged 0–14 years of age.

When assessing demand factors for social services delivery for the Aboriginal population, there are several social and economic factors that lead to a far greater demand on the delivery of social services than the demand indicated by overall Aboriginal population size.

Geography or location of residence is one key aspect. Many Aboriginal people live in small, northern and isolated communities. Merely being able to provide service to these communities adds a further element of demand for social service resources. In addition, many Aboriginal people, especially those in the 15 to 24 youth age group, are very mobile, moving within their province of residence, between reserve and city or between



provinces. Sometimes these are permanent but more often they are for short or varied periods of time. This mobility, with the attendant discontinuity of case management, further increases the pressure on organizations and on professionals providing social services.

However it is economic problems that can often be seen as creating the conditions where significant social problems exist and these, in turn, lead to high demand for services. They also further emphasize some very special needs that are placed on service delivery models.

Aboriginal people have low incomes in comparison to other Canadians:

- The average income of Aboriginal people at \$15,700 (1996 Census) is significantly lower than the \$25,400 average income of non-Aboriginal people.
- Even more telling is the fact that Aboriginal people are disproportionately found in very low income, or poverty, groups. The 1996 Census reported that, while 27 percent of the 15 years of age and older, non-Aboriginal population reported having incomes below \$10,000 in 1995, close to 46 percent of the Aboriginal population over 15 years of age had an income of less than \$10,000.

The Aboriginal population does include a larger share of young persons so we also looked at the comparison for adults between 25 and 44 years of age. This adult age group includes those who typically have completed their education, have fully entered the labour market, and are establishing families of their own. For this adult age group the Census reported that:

- 37 percent of the adult Aboriginal population reported that their annual income was below \$10,000. This is almost double the 20 percent of the non-Aboriginal population who reported that their annual income was below \$10,000 in 1995.

From many sources we know that poverty, as reflected by such low incomes, is closely linked to a wide array of social or personal pressures that often result in higher demands for social services.

Information from the 1996 Census also points out that one-third of Aboriginal children, those under 15 years of age, live in a single parent household, which is more than twice the national figure. Families headed by single parents typically have even lower incomes than families with two parents so this further emphasizes that significant proportions of Aboriginal children live in poverty.

Another measure of the economic stress experienced by the Aboriginal population is lack of employment. Unemployment rates as reported by the 1996 Census, show that Aboriginal persons in the workforce are more likely to be unemployed than are non-Aboriginal people. The Aboriginal unemployment rate in 1996 stood at 24 percent compared to a non-Aboriginal 9.8 percent unemployment rate. This unemployment measure, while striking, actually does not fully measure the gap in employment. Typically Aboriginal people are less likely to be active in the formal labour market, especially those who live in northern or remote areas, and therefore would not even be included in the unemployment numbers. (Persons no longer actively seeking employment are not counted as part of the "labour force." The labour force, for census purposes, is composed of those employed or actively seeking work.)

Certain other aspects are linked to this economic situation. Location is one, with many Aboriginal people living in remote and small communities that limit opportunities. These communities frequently are characterized by a lack of full-time, full-year work opportunities. And, while educational attainment is improving, it is still typically lower for many Aboriginal people.

Aboriginal health is a further issue that has wide-reaching impacts. The federal department of Indian and Northern Affairs (INAC), in their roll-up of health and social indicators, points out that life expectancy for Aboriginal people is lower by some 7 years than for the overall population. Also that infant mortality rates, while falling over the past decade, are still double the Canadian average. A further point made is that Aboriginal people are more likely than other Canadians to have hearing, sight and speech disabilities, while they match the all-Canadian mobility impairment rate. Other health indicators for