

# Minnesota’s Mental Health Counselor Workforce, 2014-2016

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE 2014 LPC AND LPCC WORKFORCE SURVEYS<sup>i</sup>

## Overall

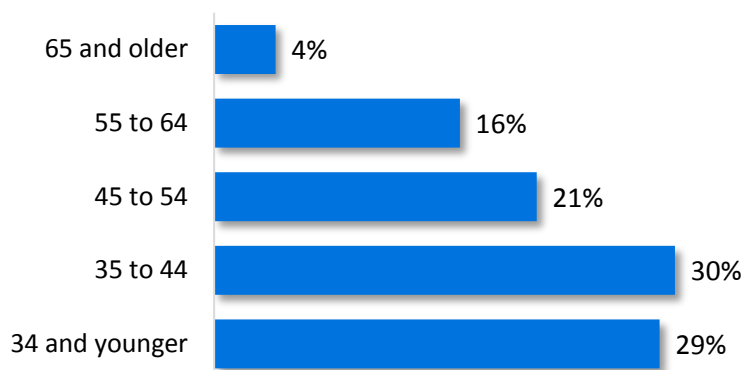
According to the Board of Behavioral Health and Therapy, as of March 2016 there were **1,565** actively licensed counselors—1,112 licensed professional clinical counselors (LPCCs) and 453 licensed professional counselors (LPCs).<sup>ii</sup> This report combines both license types and refers to them collectively as “mental health counselors.”<sup>iii</sup>

## Demographics

**Sex.** Overall, approximately 81 percent of Minnesota mental health counselors are female, which is typical of health care professions, particularly mental and behavioral health professions.

**Age.** The median age of mental health counselors is 41, and the majority (59 percent) are age 44 and younger, making this one of the youngest mental health professions in the state. The median ages of social workers, marriage and family therapists, and psychologists are 43, 45, and 57, respectively. This makes mental health counselors a promising source of new labor market entrants who can partially offset the loss of services provided other mental health professions (notably psychologists) who are retiring in large numbers.

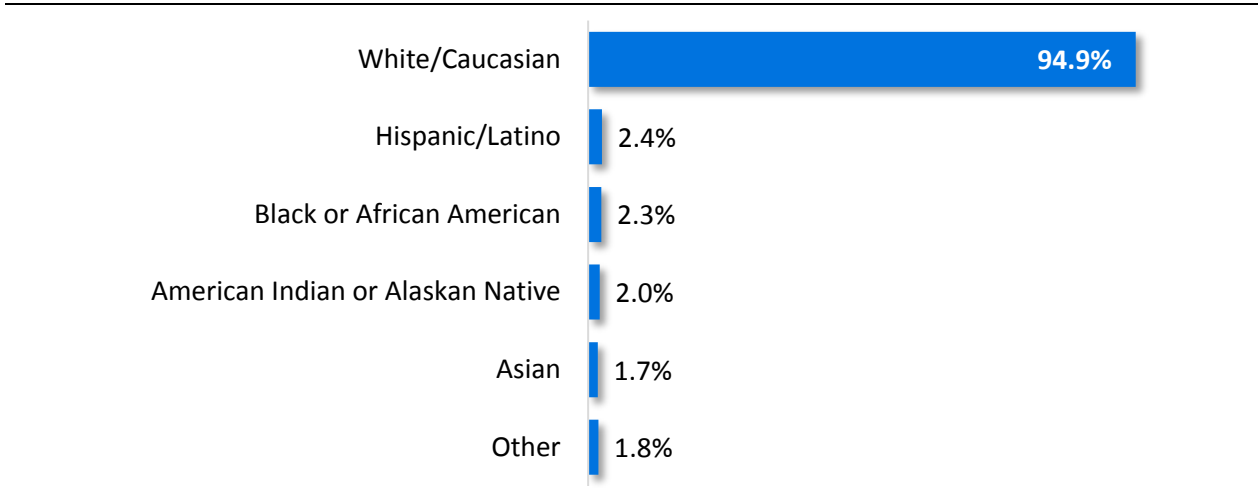
**Age of Minnesota Mental Health Counselors**



*Source: Minnesota Board of Behavioral Health and Therapy, March 2016. Analysis done by MDH. Percentages are based on 1,554 Minnesota mental health counselors who provided valid birth dates to the Board.*

**Race.** Mental health counseling is an overwhelmingly white profession. Asked on the MDH survey to identify as many races as applied to them, all mental health counselors indicated that they were white. Small numbers also selected another race and/or Hispanic or Latino ethnicity, as shown below.

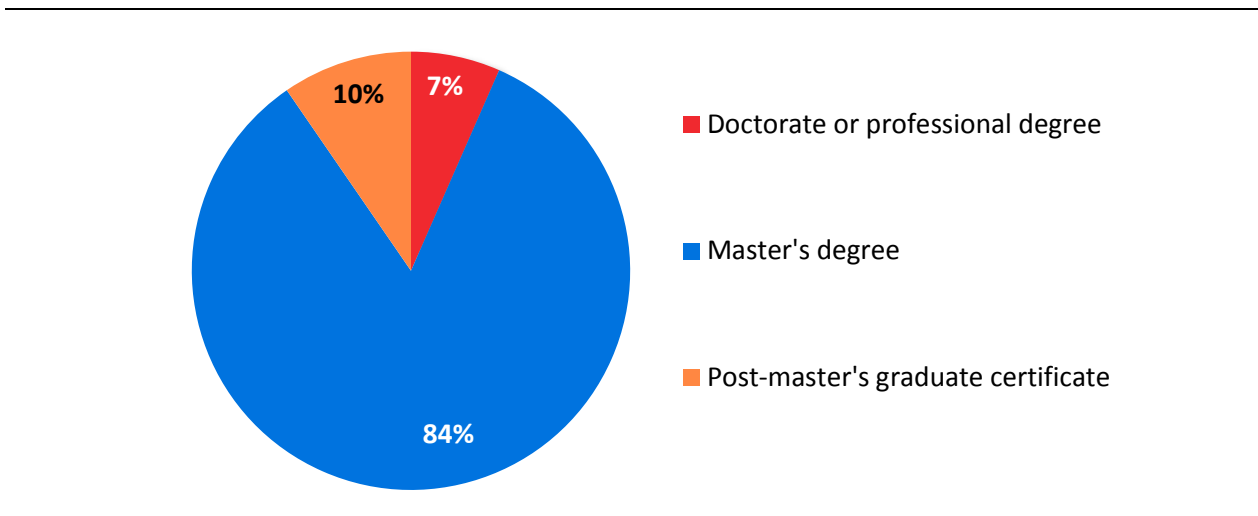
**Race of Minnesota Mental Health Counselors**



Source: MDH LPC/LPCC Workforce Questionnaire, 2014. Respondents could select as many races as applicable.

**Education Level.** A master’s degree is required for licensure as an LPC or LPCC in Minnesota. The vast majority of mental health counselors—84 percent—earned a master’s degree, with another 10 percent earning a post-master’s graduate certificate, and seven percent earning a doctorate degree.

**Education Level of Minnesota Mental Health Counselors**



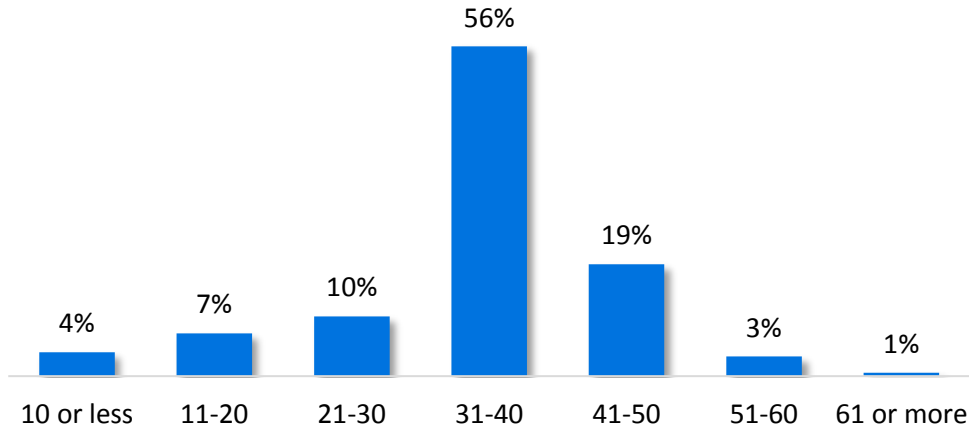
Source: MDH LPC/LPCC Workforce Questionnaire, 2016. The chart is based on 731 survey responses.

## Employment

**Share of Mental Health Counselors Employed.** An estimated **89.9 percent** of Minnesota mental health counselors reported on the MDH questionnaire that they were “employed or self-employed in a paid position requiring a license as a professional clinical counselor/professional counselor.” Of the small number of those *not* in a licensed counselor position, most indicated that they were employed in another field and not seeking work in this capacity (3.4 percent of all LPC/LPCCs).

**Hours Worked.** For mental health counselors, the median work week was 40 hours, and the majority of mental health counselors worked between 31-40 hours per week.

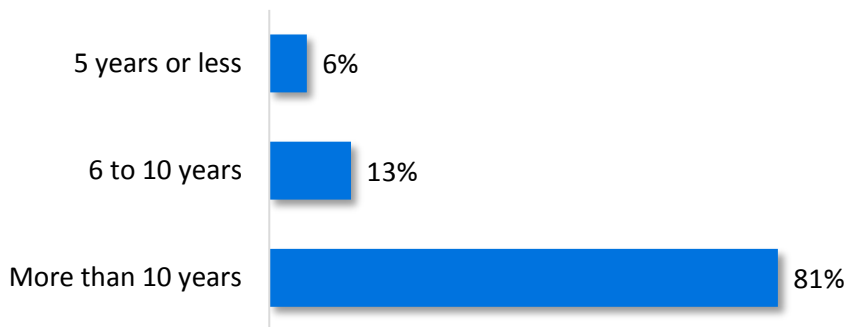
Hours Worked in a Typical Week



Source: MDH LPC/LPCC Workforce Questionnaire, 2014. The chart is based on 650 valid survey responses.

**Future Plans.** The vast majority—81 percent—of mental health counselors reported that they planned to practice in Minnesota for more than 10 years. This is likely a reflection of the number of relatively young counselors in the field.

“How long do you plan to continue practicing as an LPC/LPCC in Minnesota?”



Source: MDH LPC/LPCC Workforce Questionnaire, 2014. The chart is based on 656 valid responses.

**Work Setting.** The questionnaire asked LPCs and LPCCs to identify their primary work setting. The most commonly reported setting was a mental health center (21.5 percent), followed by an individual private practice (12.0 percent) and a group private practice (10.8 percent).

### Mental Health Counselors' Work Setting

Setting	Share of Mental Health Counselors Working in this Setting
Mental Health Center	21.7%
Individual Private Practice	12.0%
Group Private Practice	10.8%
Hospital	6.0%
Corrections	5.2%
Social Service Agency	4.5%
Schools (K-12)	4.3%
Group Home/Residential Facility	4.0%
College/University	3.4%
Federally Qualified Health Center or non-profit clinic	3.2%
Other	21.8%

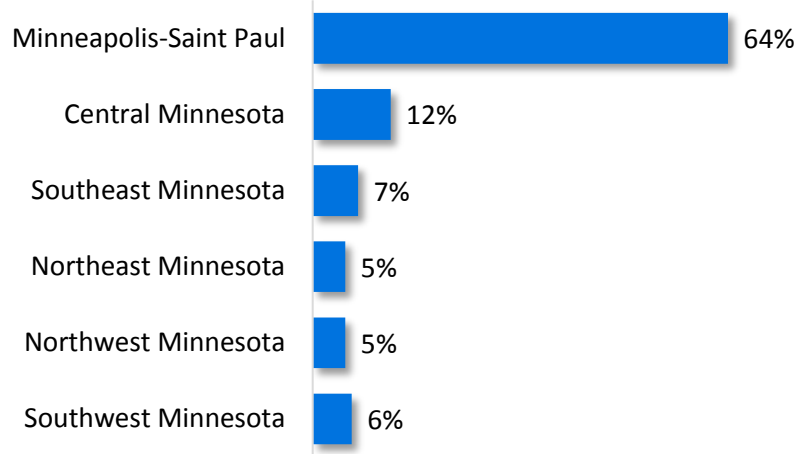
Source: MDH LPC/LPCC Workforce Questionnaire, 2014. The chart is based on 650 survey responses.

## Geographic Distribution

To get a sense of the accessibility of mental health counseling services around the state, the next two charts provide two different views of the geographic distribution of LPCs and LPCCs. These analyses are based on geocoded addresses that are supplied to the Board of Behavioral Health and Therapy at the time of license renewal.<sup>iv</sup>

**Distribution by Region.** The first chart shows the distribution of mental health counselors across the six planning areas around Minnesota. As shown, the majority are practicing in the Twin Cities metro area, with another 12 percent in central Minnesota. The remaining regions are home to significantly smaller shares of mental health counselors. (For reference, the Twin Cities metro area houses approximately 54 percent of the state's population, with all other regions housing between 7 and 13 percent of Minnesotans.) Although mental health counselors are not the only providers offering mental health services, their heavy concentration in the Twin Cities region exemplifies the well-known maldistribution of mental health providers around the state.

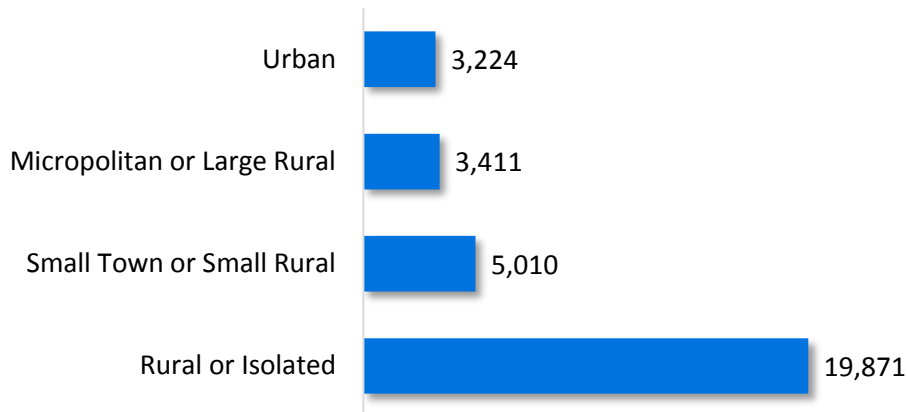
**Mental Health Counselors by Minnesota Region**



Source: Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) geocoding and analysis of March, 2016 Minnesota Board of Behavioral Health and Therapy address data. Percentages above are based on 1,462 valid Minnesota addresses.

**Distribution across urban and rural areas.** The chart below provides another view of the geographic distribution of mental health counselors, showing the size of the population for every one counselor in urban, micropolitan, small town, and rural areas. As shown, there are just under 3,300 Minnesotans for every one counselor in urban areas, compared to nearly 20,000 in the most rural areas of the state. This pattern is typical of other healthcare professions, reflecting the relative inaccessibility of care in sparsely populated areas of the state. These numbers should not be interpreted as “case load” sizes. Rather, we might say that if the demand for counseling services is constant across all areas, rural Minnesotans “share” a single mental health provider with roughly six or seven times the number of people than urban Minnesotans do. This could affect accessibility of services by increasing appointment wait times and driving distances, for example.

**Minnesota Population-to-Counselor Ratio**



Source: Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) geocoding and analysis of March, 2016 Minnesota Board of Behavioral Health and Therapy address data. Percentages above are based on 1,462 valid Minnesota addresses.

Visit our website at <http://www.health.state.mn.us/data/workforce/index.html> to learn about the Minnesota healthcare workforce. County-level data for this profession is available at <http://www.health.state.mn.us/data/workforce/database/index.html>

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<sup>i</sup> The Minnesota Department of Health (MDH), in cooperation with the Minnesota Board of Behavioral Health and Therapy, collected information on demographics, education, career and future plans of LPCs and LPCCs during a workforce questionnaire in 2015. Unless noted, all data are based on information collected from that survey. The response rate for the 2015 LPC and LPCC surveys were 34.8 percent and 52.7 percent, respectively.

<sup>ii</sup> Of the total 1,565 actively licensed LPCs and LPCCs, 72 listed a practice address outside of Minnesota and 31 did not provide a practice address. Additionally, based on survey responses, 10.1% of the total licensees are not currently practicing as a mental health counselor. Thus, not all actively licensed LPCs and LPCCs are part of the Minnesota mental health counselor workforce.

<sup>iii</sup> Although they are combined in this report, LPCs and LPCCs have different scopes of practice. LPCs are classified as mental health practitioners with a far more limited scope than LPCCs, who are licensed to provide clinical services. See Minnesota Statute 245.462 Subd. 17 and 18.

<sup>iv</sup> Addresses are generally practice locations, but a small number of mental health counselors who are not working report home addresses. Additionally, approximately 5 percent reported an out-of-state address to the Board; these practitioners may or may not be providing services in Minnesota, but in any case, they could not be geocoded.