



Transforming the Field  
Education Landscape

# STATE OF SOCIAL WORK FIELD EDUCATION

## NATIONAL SURVEY REPORT 2020

*Presented by*

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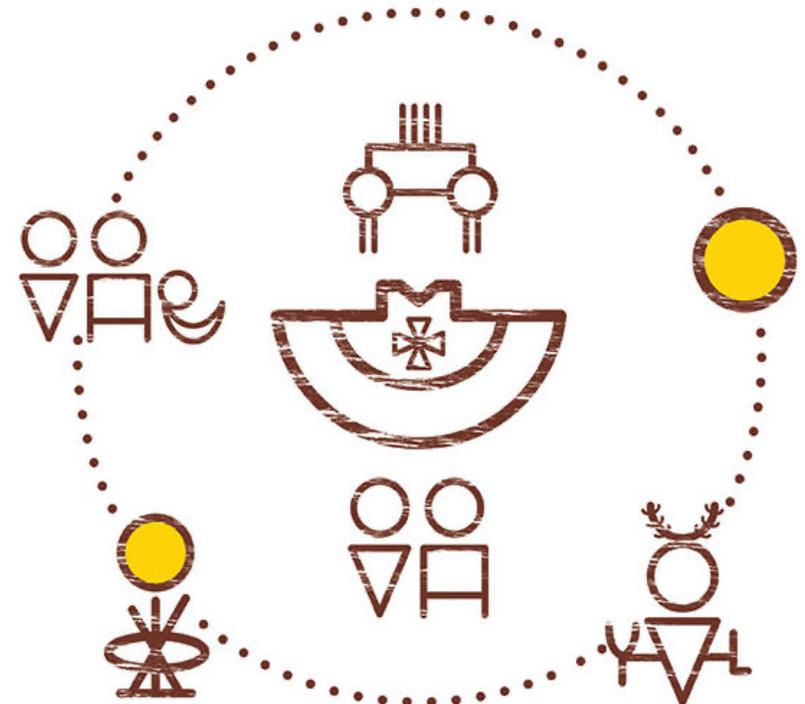
Host: Dr. Wasif Ali, Post-Doctoral Scholar

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# TERRITORIAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The University of Calgary respectfully acknowledges that we are located on Treaty 6 territory, a traditional gathering place for diverse Indigenous peoples including the Cree, Blackfoot, Metis, Nakota Sioux, Iroquois, Dene, Ojibway/Saulteaux/Anishinaabe, Inuit, and many others whose histories, languages, and cultures continue to influence our vibrant community.

*L'Université de Calgary reconnaît respectueusement qu'elle est située sur les terres du Traité 6, lieu de rassemblement traditionnel pour de nombreux peuples autochtones parmi lesquels sont les Cris, les Pieds-Noirs, les Métis, les Sioux des Nakotas, les Iroquois, les Dénés, les Ojibwés/Saulteaux/Anichinabés, les Inuits et bien d'autres encore. Leurs histoires, leurs langues et leurs cultures continuent d'influencer notre communauté dynamique.*



ii' taa'poh'to'p

University of Calgary Office of Indigenous Engagement

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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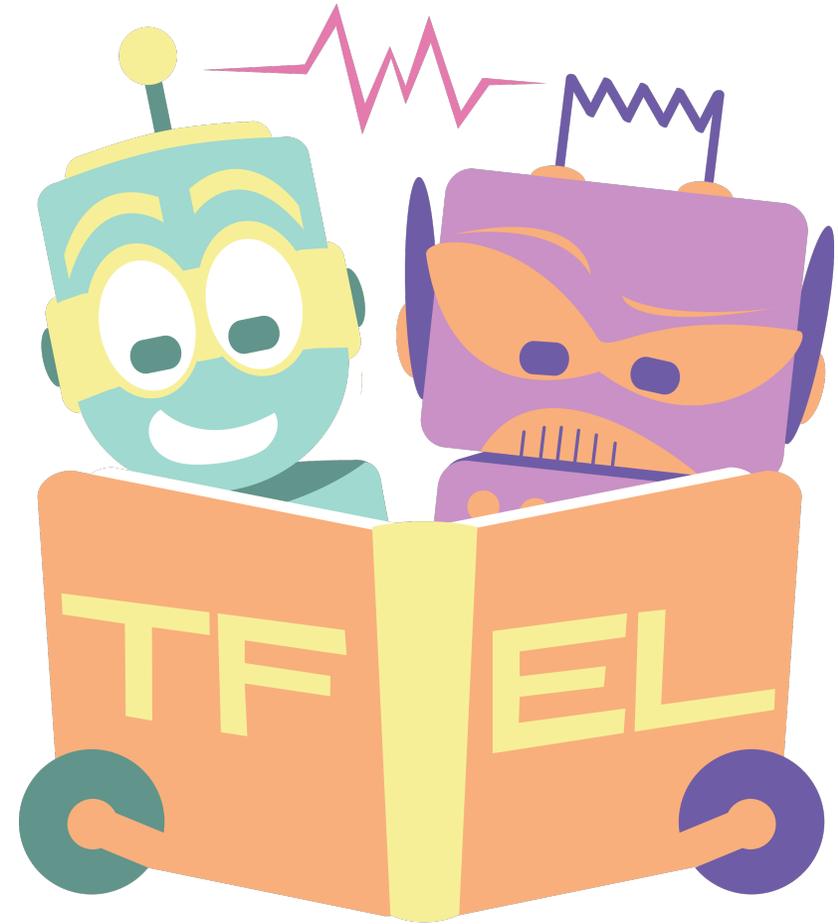
CRSH  SSHRC

# INTRODUCTION

- Dr. Julie Drolet, PhD, RSW
  - Julie is a Professor in the Faculty of Social Work at the University of Calgary and the Project Director of the TFEL partnership
- Dr. Wasif Ali, PhD
  - Wasif is a post-doctoral scholar with the TFEL project
- Tara, Emma, Ellen, and Jeff
  - They are research assistants with the TFEL project and are social work students from the University of Calgary
- We also want to acknowledge past research assistants: Mohammad Idris Alemi, Cara Au, Louisa Jaslow, Ashley Labossiere, Elisa Poon, Ory Li Pi Shan, Jayden Wickman

# OVERVIEW

1. Context
2. Background
3. National Survey
4. Methodology
5. Findings
6. Questions



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# CONTEXT



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The Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) developed the 2015 State of Field Education Survey on administrative models, staffing and resources of field education programs in the USA (CSWE, 2015).

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The TFEL project developed a national survey on the state of field education in Canada adapting the CSWE 2015 survey (Drolet, 2020).

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We hope the survey findings will increase awareness of the critical state of field education and support a concerted effort to develop more sustainable field education models.

## BACKGROUND

- Field education coordinators and programs experience:
  - A lack of resources, support, and recognition (CSWE, 2015; Macdonald, 2013; Robertson, 2013)
  - Financial cutbacks which impede the development of community relationships (Clark & Drolet, 2014)
  - Rising student demand for placement, and shortage of practicums (Ayala et al., 2017; Bogo, 2015)
  - Increasing workload (Macdonald, 2013; Robertson, 2013)
  - Challenges with field instructor recruitment and retention (Ayala et al., 2017, Ayala et al., 2018)
- The challenges associated with resource availability intensifies as the number of social work programs and student enrollment increases (Bogo, 2015)
  - With demands becoming increasingly pressing, the FEC workload is becoming more complex and unsustainable (Ayala et al., 2017)

# NATIONAL SURVEY

Purpose: To examine and gain a better understanding of the state of social work field education in Canada.

## Field education areas examined:

- Demographics of field coordinators and programs
- Field placement settings and types
- Breakdown and adequacy of resources
- Workload expectations of field coordinators
- Field directors/coordinators perception of the current state of social work field education

## METHODOLOGY

- An online survey was used to gather descriptive statistics on the state of social work field education
- A survey link was emailed to field directors/coordinators of all 43 CASWE-ACFTS accredited institutions
- Survey included multiple choice, Likert Scale, and open-ended short answer questions
- Offered in English and French (French version professionally translated and locally reviewed)
- Data collected and analyzed through Survey Monkey and Excel
- French responses translated using Google Translate

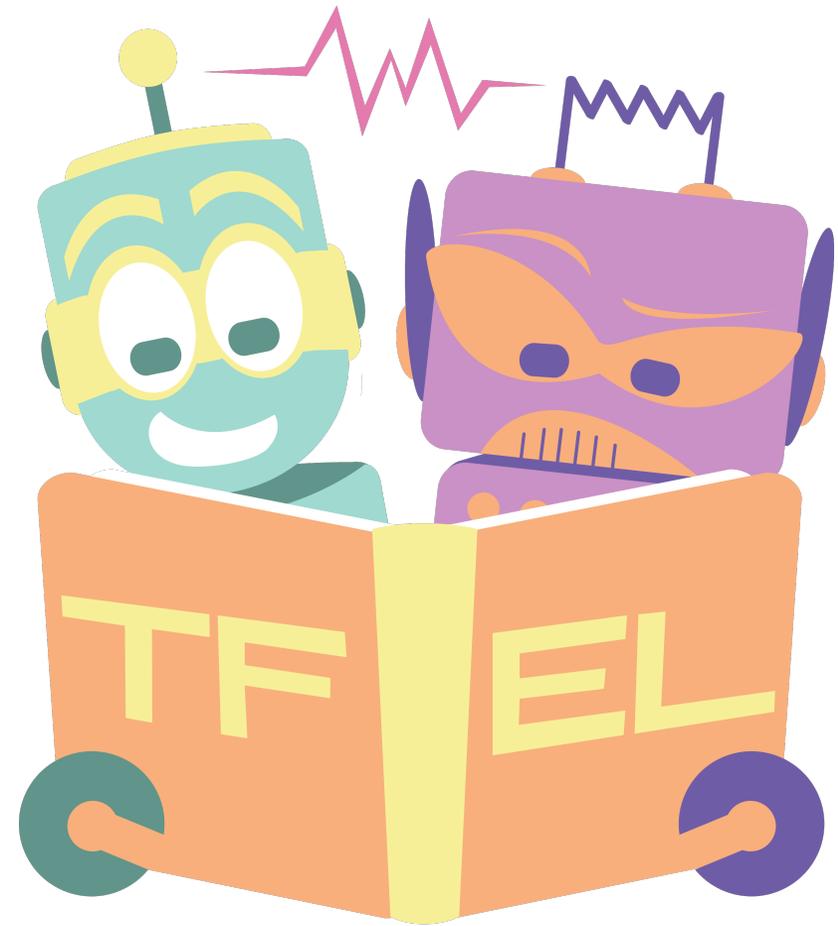
# DATA ANALYSIS



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- Survey responses:
  - 39 field directors/coordinators responded to the survey (39/43 = 90.7% response rate)
    - 31 (79.5%) complete and 8 (20.5%) incomplete responses
- Data analysis was completed by identifying the responses for each individual question:
  - Descriptive analysis completed for field director/coordinator demographics, program details, and perspectives on field education
  - Comparative analysis was completed to further explore the categories mentioned above

# FINDINGS



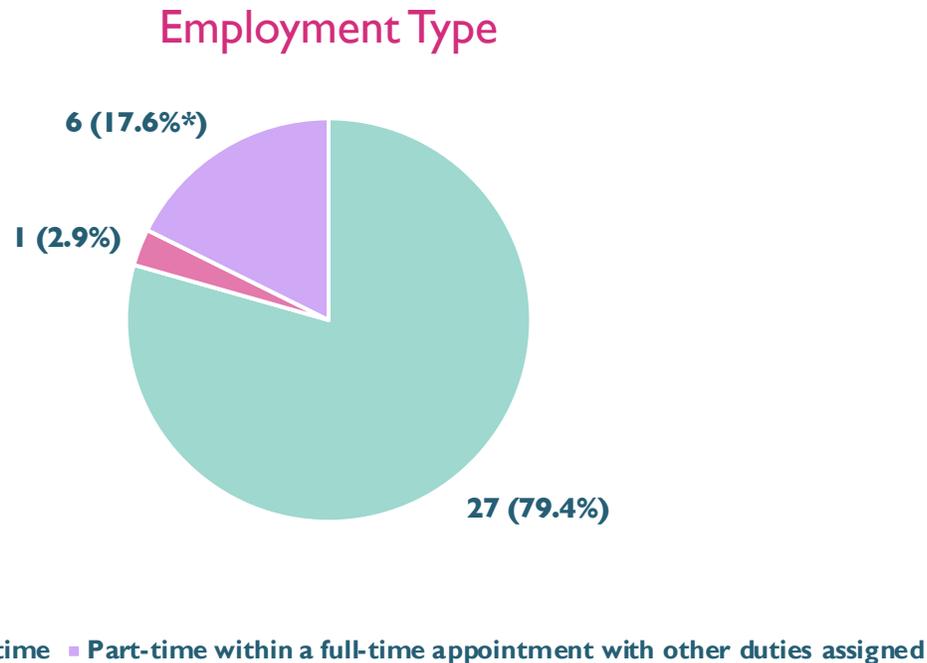
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## FIELD DIRECTOR/ COORDINATOR DEMOGRAPHICS

Of the FEC/Directors who responded:

- 89.7% were women
- Average age was 49.2 years
- 79.5% have a Master of Social Work degree
- Average years as a FEC/D at current institution was 6.4 years, ranging from less than 1 year to 20 years
- Average years as a FEC/D in total was 6.6 years, ranging from less than 1 year to 20 years
- Average years of general involvement in social work education was 13.6 years, ranging from 1 year to 30 years

# FIELD DIRECTOR/COORDINATOR EMPLOYMENT TYPES



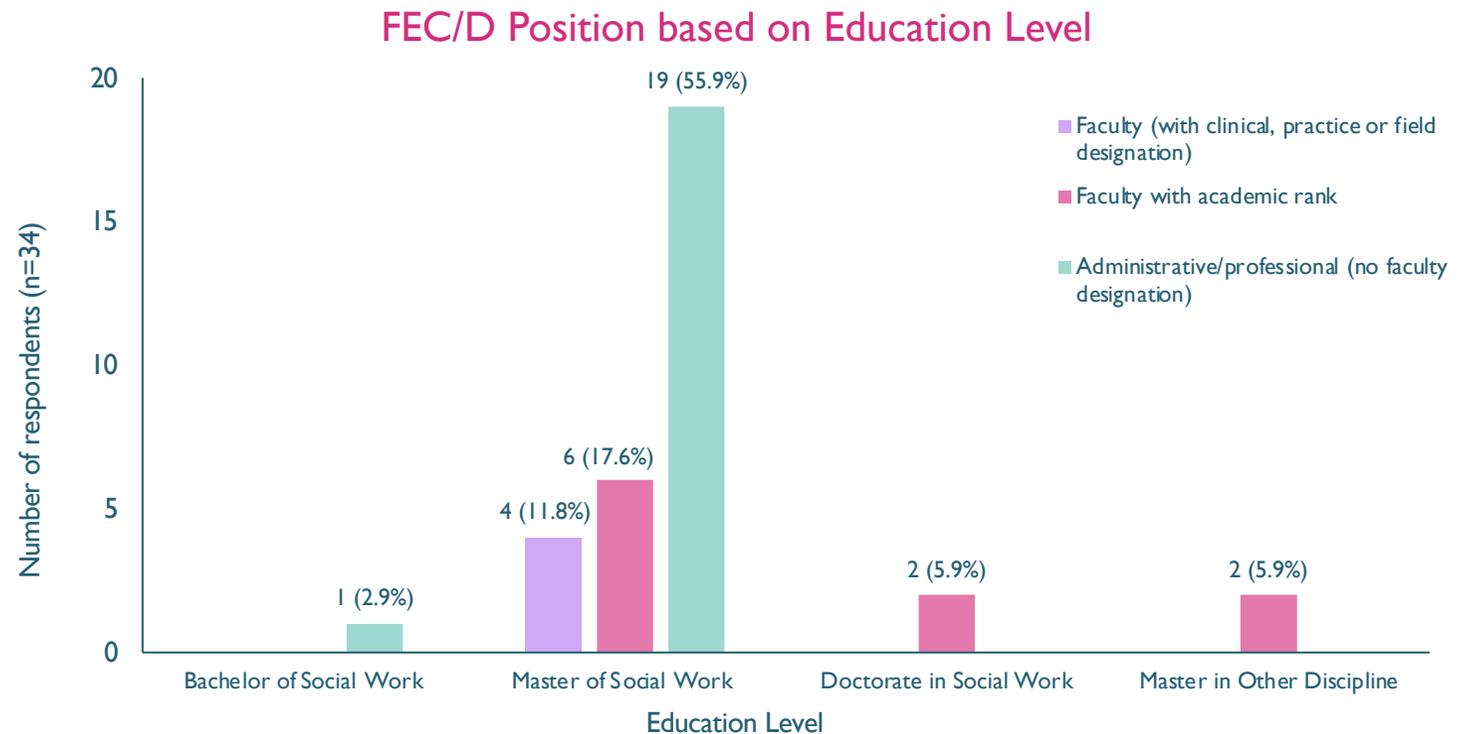
- According to survey responses (n=34), almost all FEC/Directors, across all education levels, are employed full-time or part-time within a full-time appointment with other duties assigned. The part-time position is the least common.

\* Rounding Adjustment

**Figure 1.** A chart showing the employment type of FEC/Ds across all education levels

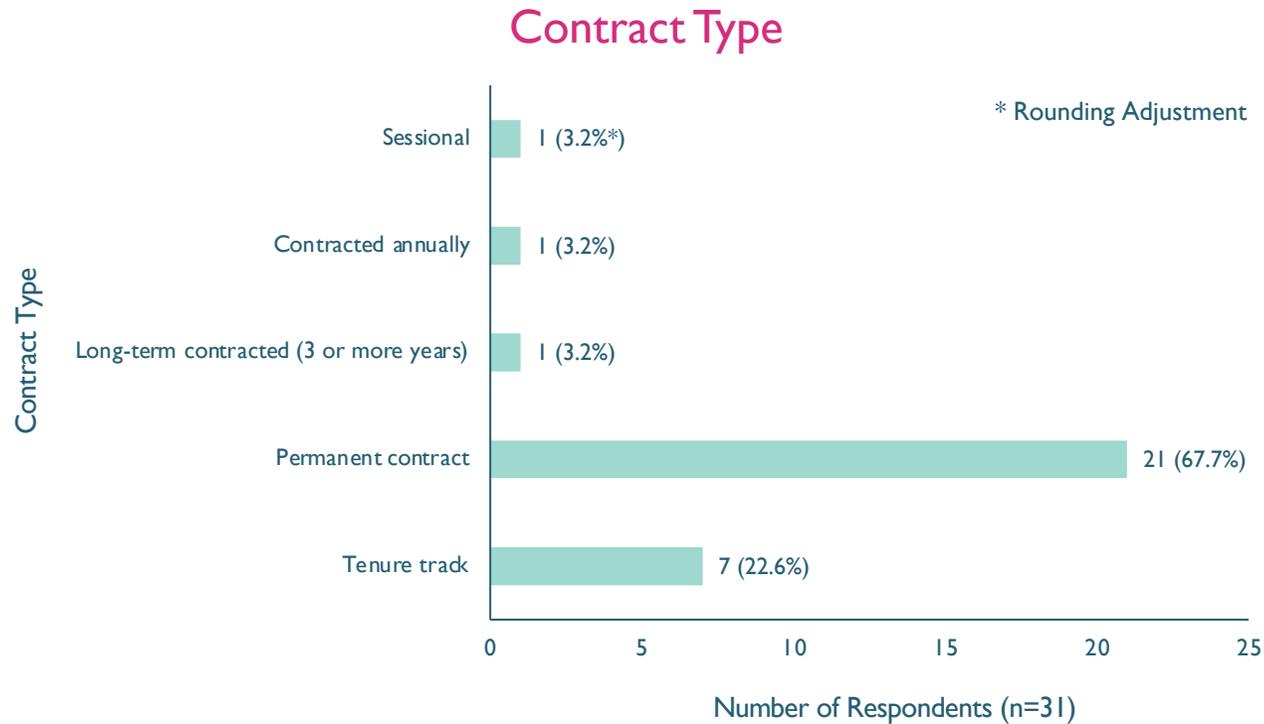
# FIELD DIRECTOR/COORDINATOR EMPLOYMENT POSITIONS

- Administrative/professional (with no faculty designation) positions are most common
- Faculty with academic rank (assistant professor, associate professor, professor, or instructor/senior instructor) positions are the second most common overall, but it is the most common for Doctorate in Social Work or Master in Other Disciplines
- Faculty (with clinical, practice, or field designation) positions are least common



**Figure 2.** A graph representing FEC/D positions based on highest level of education achieved

# FIELD DIRECTOR/COORDINATOR CONTRACT TYPES

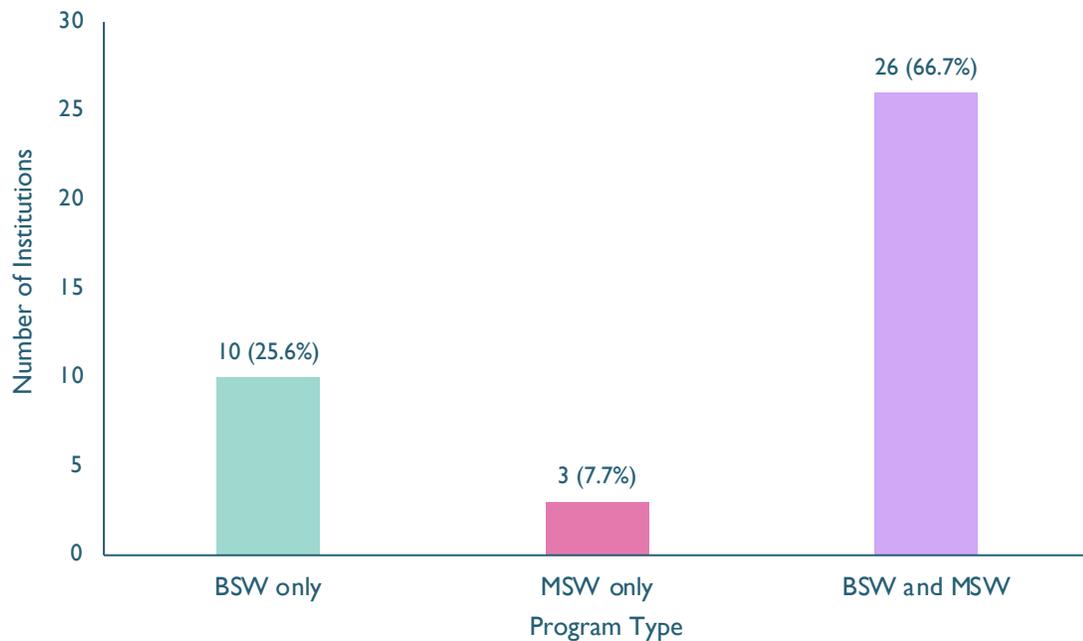


- Permanent contracts are the most common across all education levels achieved
- Tenure track is the second most common
- Long-term, annual, and sessional contracts are rare, with only one respondent in each of those categories

**Figure 3.** A graph representing the number of respondents by contract type

# PROGRAM DETAILS – BSW AND MSW PROGRAMS

## BSW and MSW Programs in Canadian Institutions



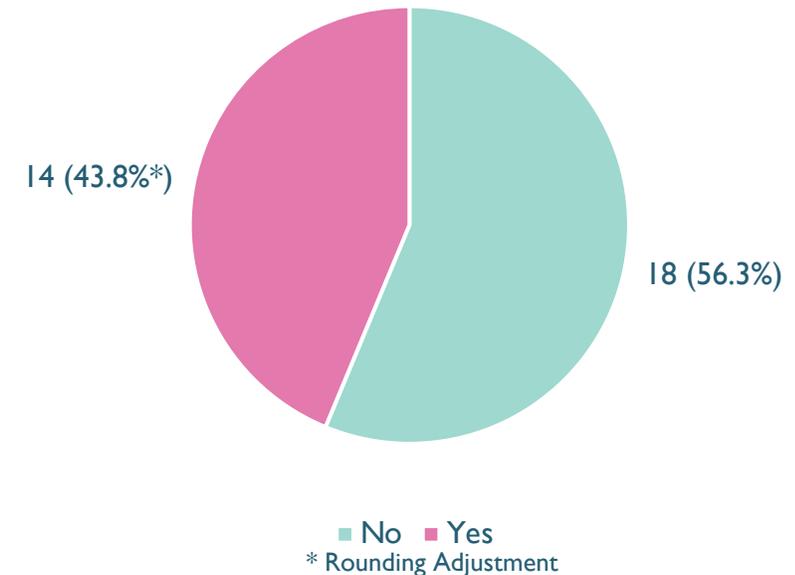
- Majority of programs offer both BSW and MSW
- The BSW only and MSW only programs tend to be smaller in size, from under 100 students up to 499 students
- Programs that offer both BSW and MSW programs vary in program sizes, from under 100 students to 500+

**Figure 4.** A graph of social work program(s) offered by institution

# PROGRAM DETAILS – ONLINE/DISTANCE OR BLENDED PROGRAMS

- Slightly more respondents did not offer online/distance or blended programs
- Of the institutions that responded yes to online/distance/blended models, only 2 reported having separate and distinct field staff for these programs
- We are curious to see if there will be more of this type programming offered in the future in the context of COVID-19

Institution Offering an Online/Distance or Blended Program (BSW and/or MSW)

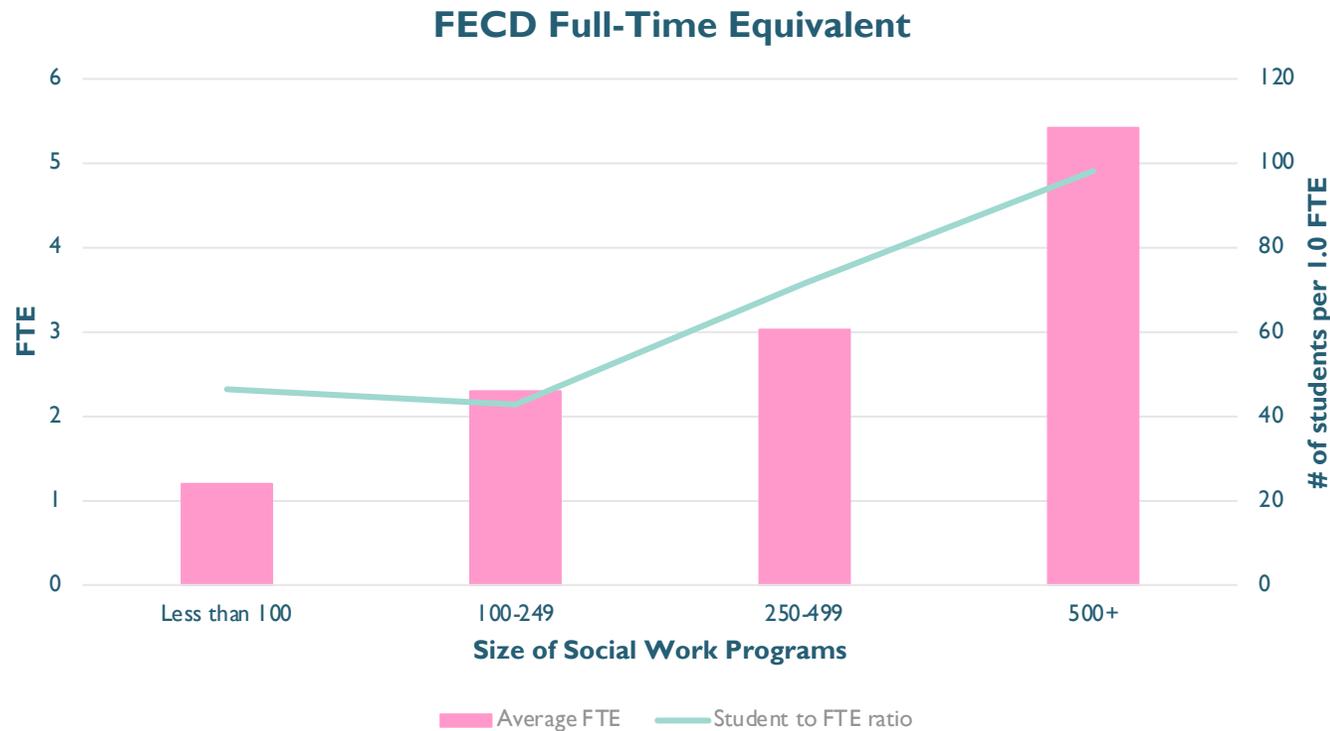


**Figure 5.** A chart of online/distance or blended MSW and/or BSW program availability in institutions

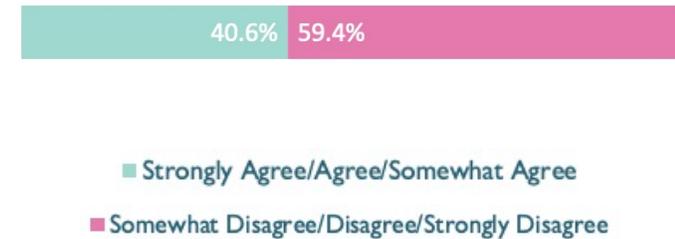
## PRACTICUM DETAILS

- Of the placement settings reported by institutions:
  - 97.4% include urban locations
  - 76.9% include rural locations
  - 64.1% include Urban Indigenous settings
  - 51.2% include placements on reserve
- Majority of respondents indicated that a small percentage of students experienced disrupted/replaced practica or required unique placement designs
  - However, it is notable 6.1% responded that between 11% and 20% of their students experienced disrupted/replaced practica, and 6.3% responded that over 20% of their students required unique placement designs
  - These findings align with literature that states that student demands and complex placements can create challenges for FEC/Ds

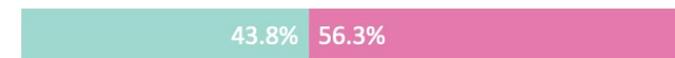
# STAFFING MODELS – FIELD TEAM BY PROGRAM SIZE



*Field education receives adequate resources overall, including staffing, financial resources, technology, and technical support, for its programs and operations at my institution.*



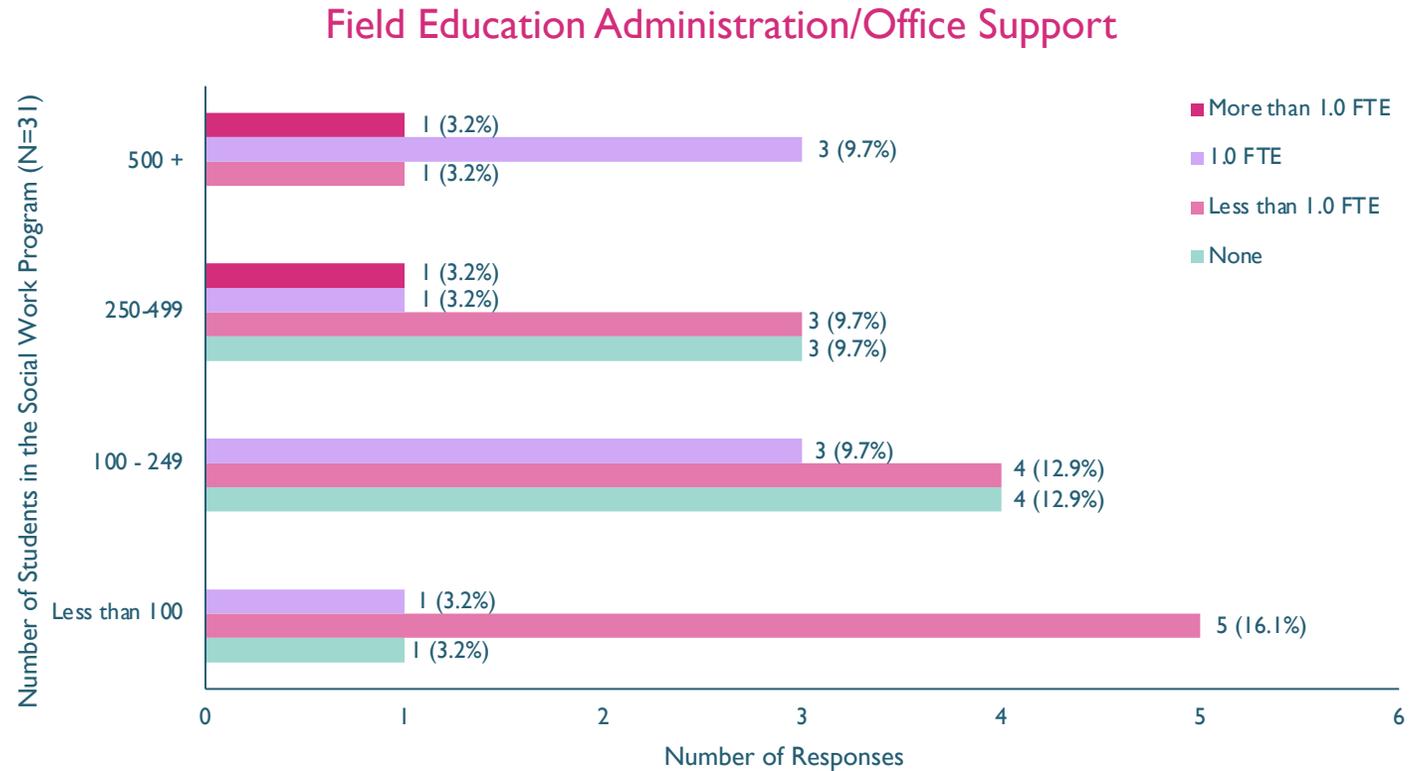
*Field education staffing levels in my school/program are adequate to address fully the responsibilities of overseeing field education.*



**Figure 6.** Average size of the core field team/department by program size

# STAFFING MODELS – ADMINISTRATION/OFFICE STAFF

- This graph represents the number of full-time administrative and office support staff assigned to onsite programs
- Approximately a quarter of survey respondents whose social work programs have 499 students or less reported that there is no administrative/office support staff assigned to field education
- Across program sizes, most core field teams have 1.0 FTE or less in administrative/office support assigned to field education



**Figure 7.** Administrative staff support (FTE) based on program size

## FIELD RESOURCES

Collaborative Partnerships	Number of Responses (N=32)
Provincial Health	24 (75.0%)
Local Organizations	22 (68.8%)
Government Ministries	19 (59.4%)
Regional Organizations	16 (50.0%)
Professional Body	16 (50.0%)
Regulatory Body	9 (28.1%)

**Table 1.** A table representing the proportion of responses stating the type of collaborative partnerships they have with agencies to support field placements for students

# FIELD DIRECTOR/COORDINATOR ACTIVITIES

## Most Common Activities (n=32)

Activity	Total Responses
Developing field manual	31 (96.9%)
Relationship building with agencies	31 (96.9%)
Participating in policy development	30 (93.8%)
Advising students on field education-related matters	30 (93.8%)
Participation in social work program committees	29 (90.6%)

**Table 2.** Most common reported activities for FEC/directors

## Least Common Activities (n=32)

Activity	Total Responses
Teaching social work courses other than field education	10 (31.2%)
Scholarly research, publications and presentations	11 (34.4%)
Advising students on course selection, degree requirements and/or career planning	11 (34.4%)
Administration of field education awards	13 (40.6%)
Participation in student retention processes	15 (46.9%)

**Table 3.** Least common reported activities for FEC/directors

# PERSPECTIVES OF FIELD EDUCATION – LIKERT SCALE

## Placement Challenges

Having enough appropriate placements for the number of students admitted to this social work program is a significant, ongoing challenge.

87.5%

Within the past five years, placement disruptions due to changes in agency staffing or funding have become more common.

87.5%

Because of large numbers of students, it is sometimes necessary to place students in field education settings that we would otherwise not choose to use.

75.0%

## Challenges Faced by FEC/Ds

It is difficult to cultivate new field placement opportunities because of the range of responsibilities assigned to/expected of the director/coordinator of field education.

68.8%

Given the range of expectations for the field director/coordinator and field staff, it is difficult to find the time to do everything that is needed.

71.9%

Given the range of expectations for the FEC/D and field staff, locating appropriate placements regularly results in work performed by the FEC/D well beyond recognized work hours

75.0%

■ Strongly Agree/Agree/Somewhat Agree

■ Somewhat Disagree/Disagree/Strongly Disagree (includes N/A)

**Figure 8.** A graph representing Likert Scale responses of “Strongly Agree/Agree/Somewhat Agree” versus “Somewhat Disagree/Disagree/Strongly Disagree”

## PERSPECTIVES OF FIELD EDUCATION – IN RESPONDENTS' OWN VOICES...

Field education across Canada has been in a state of crisis for the past 10 years... Field budgets have been cut to the bone but we are expected to do more with less.

**HELP!!!**

Staffing has not been sufficient to be able to complete all relevant tasks associated with field coordination. More resources are urgently needed.

Our greatest challenge now is to plan for placements in the Fall during the COVID-19 context.

[Field education is] In crisis and under appreciated - fails to recognize the invisible labour of agencies, students and field education personnel.

## LIMITATIONS OF STUDY

- This study is specific to Canadian context, capturing only CASWE-ACFTS accredited universities
- Sample size: 39 respondents, with only 31 surveys fully completed
- Surveys might reflect the combined experiences of all field staff in an institution or the personal experience of the individual who completed it
- Questions and context in the surveys might create difficulties in respondents' understandings of questions
- Survey was administered during COVID-19
- Some findings were inferred interpreting open-ended responses

## FUTURE RESEARCH

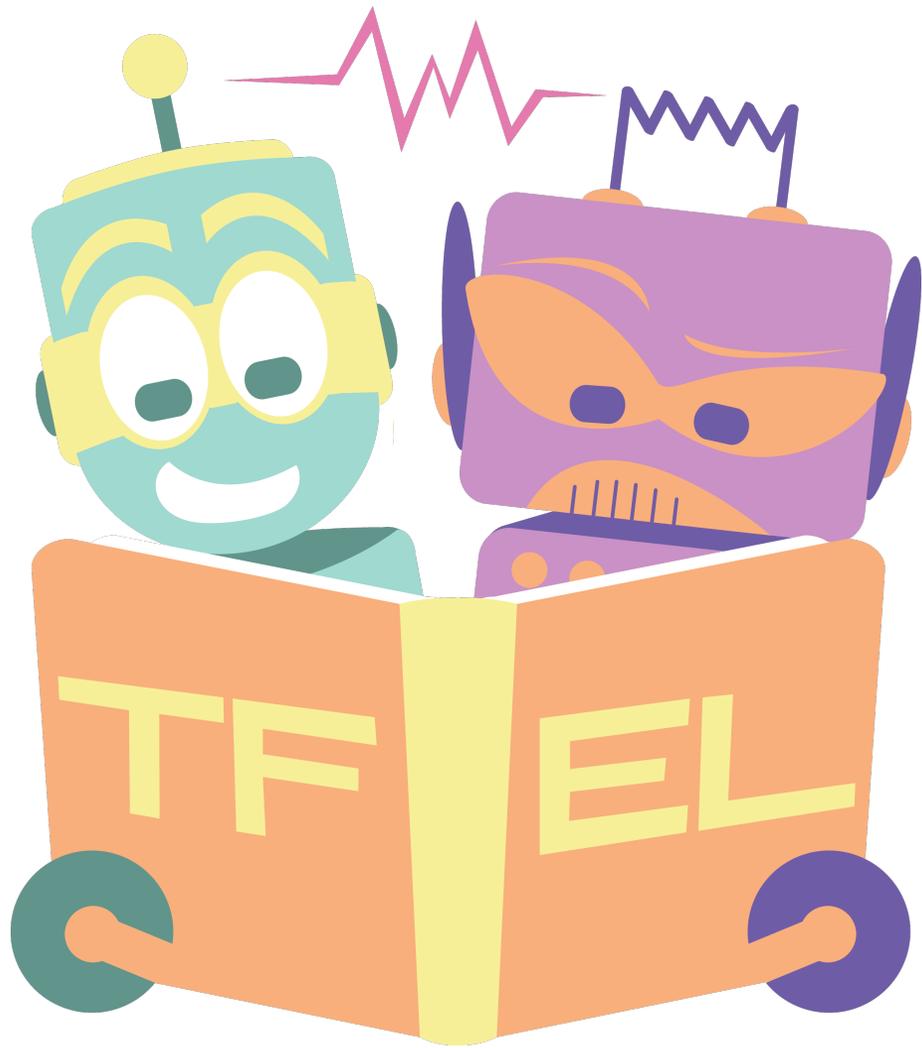
- An international study should be conducted on the state of social work field education in other countries, including the US (CSWE 2015 Study), Australia, UK, China, etc. for cross-national comparisons
- Future research topics can further investigate experiences of students, field instructors, and placement agencies
- Future research can examine online/blended social work program models and best practices in the context of and resulting from COVID-19
- Research delving into promising, wise, and innovative practices used by FEC/Directors is crucial based on the findings from this current study

# CONCLUSION



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- Findings provide an assessment of the state of social work field education
- Findings indicate the need for more sustainable models of field education
- Next steps:
  - The TFEL partnership aims to create resources for students to enhance learning opportunities
  - Investigate sustainable and innovative models of practice that relate to social work field education
  - Build awareness and understanding regarding the state of social work field education in Canada and engage important stakeholders in a concerted effort to address the current crisis



QUESTIONS?

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