



Washington State Society for  
**Clinical Social Work**  
Identity • Integrity • Diversity

A few weeks ago, the Association of Social Work Boards (ASWB) released an Exam Pass Rate Analysis report demonstrating a racial disparity in pass rates for the required social work exam. This is the first time demographic information about pass rates for the exam has been publicly available. The release of this report follows years of advocacy from the NASW to make this information public.

The WSSCSW joins the NASW, its 55 chapters, and the Social Work and Hospice Care Network (SWHPN) in voicing concern about the use of a test that has a disparate impact on experienced social workers seeking to become licensed. We are concerned that the test is based on “practice analysis” that primarily collected data from white social workers and therefore privileges the practices and perspectives of white social workers, creating an advantage for white test takers and a disadvantage to social workers of color. *Our profession and clients benefit from a more diverse workforce, and we now have evidence that this test hinders progress toward a more racially diverse community of social workers.*

As a board, we are committed to making diversity, equity, inclusion, and anti-racism part of everything we do. Our commitment to our mission, and social work values, drives us to support equitable practices within our field. We are concerned that ASWB’s understanding of the problem with the test and their proposed remedies fall woefully short of what is needed. We are calling for abolishing the exam use in Washington State and the future interstate compacts. We cannot “wait and see” what improvements will be made in the future when our colleagues of color are being hurt by this exam today. We are also aware of the shortage of behavioral health workers in Washington State. We believe that removing this biased barrier to licensure will immediately increase the number of experienced licensed social workers to serve our state's vulnerable populations who need care.

Over the next several months, the WSSCSW will listen to our members and work with other social work organizations to build a collective action plan.

Thank you for your continued membership, advocacy, and support of the social work profession.

Link to the report [here](#).

Please see below for an excerpt from the ASWB report’s WA data.

## Number of test-takers and first-time pass rates by demographic group 2011-2021

State/Province	# test-takers (overall)	Pass rate (overall)
WA	2,943	84.2%

  

Demographic	Group	# test-takers	Pass rate
Race/Ethnicity	Asian	185	65.9%
	Black	152	55.9%
	Hispanic/Latino	209	67.0%
	Multiracial	100	83.0%
	Native American/Indigenous peoples	40	55.0%
	White	2,134	90.6%
Gender	Men	440	81.1%
	Women	2,501	84.8%
Age	18 - 29	286	92.0%
	30 - 39	1,462	87.6%
	40 - 49	679	82.3%
	50 and older	516	72.7%
Language	English	2,762	86.4%
	Non-English	181	50.3%

From ASWB Report