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POLICY BRIEFS SERIES #1

Low-, semi-skilled OFWs

Leading migrant workers



deserve PROTECTION

A policy brief on the occupations of overseas Filipinos

by BEVERLY JANE BULANDAY (June 2009)

Ms. Bulanday is a graduating Political Science student of the University of Santo Tomas (batch 2010) and a summer 2009 intern of the Institute.

Data in this policy brief can be found in the *Philippine Migration and Development Statistical Almanac*. See the Almanac at <http://almanac.ofwphilanthropy.org>



It has been said that Filipinos' overseas migration reflects weak domestic employment conditions in the Philippines. Some Filipinos who are out of a job, as well as Filipinos who are either underemployed or who wish to earn more, have found overseas migration to be a means to maximize their full potential as workers.

The numbers of temporary and permanent overseas Filipinos are increasing. Data from 1984 to 2008 by the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration has seen the number of overseas workers grow from 350,982 to 1,376,823 last year. Permanent migrants, for their part, have reached a total of 1,526,452 over a 28-year period according to data from the Commission on Filipinos Overseas [see Figures 1.1 and 1.2].

While increasing overseas migration is the case, work opportunities for foreigners (including Filipinos) are those that nationals in host countries do not want to occupy. It is not surprising, therefore, that the occupational profiles of Filipinos abroad reflect that global reality.

**Figure 1.1 Deployed Overseas Contract Workers
1981-2008**

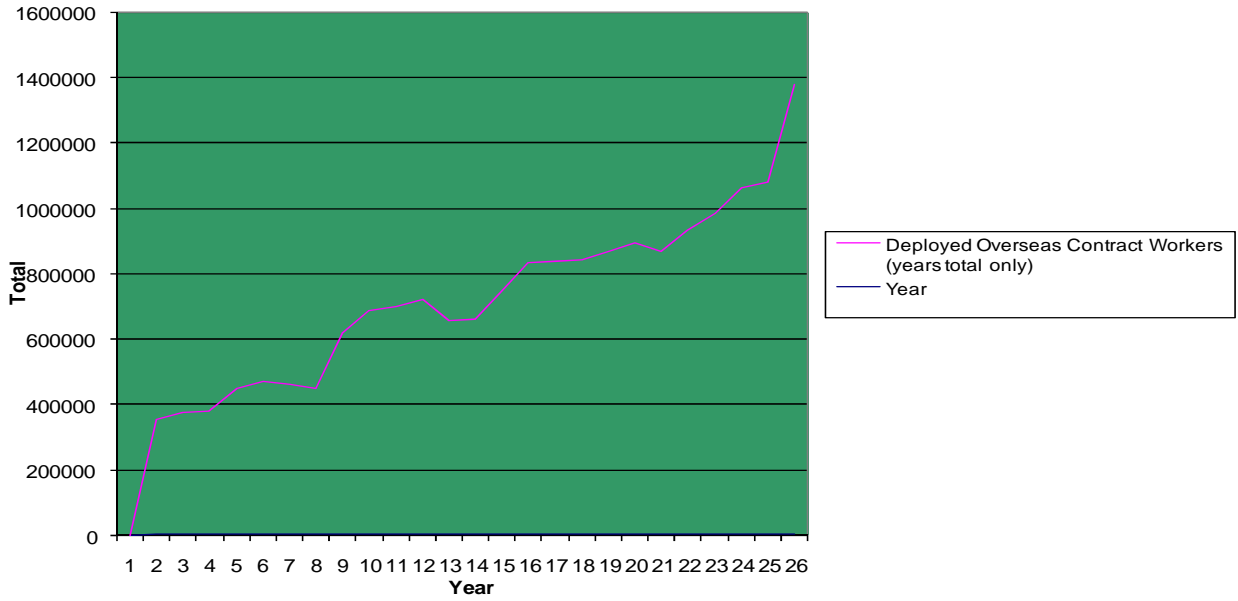
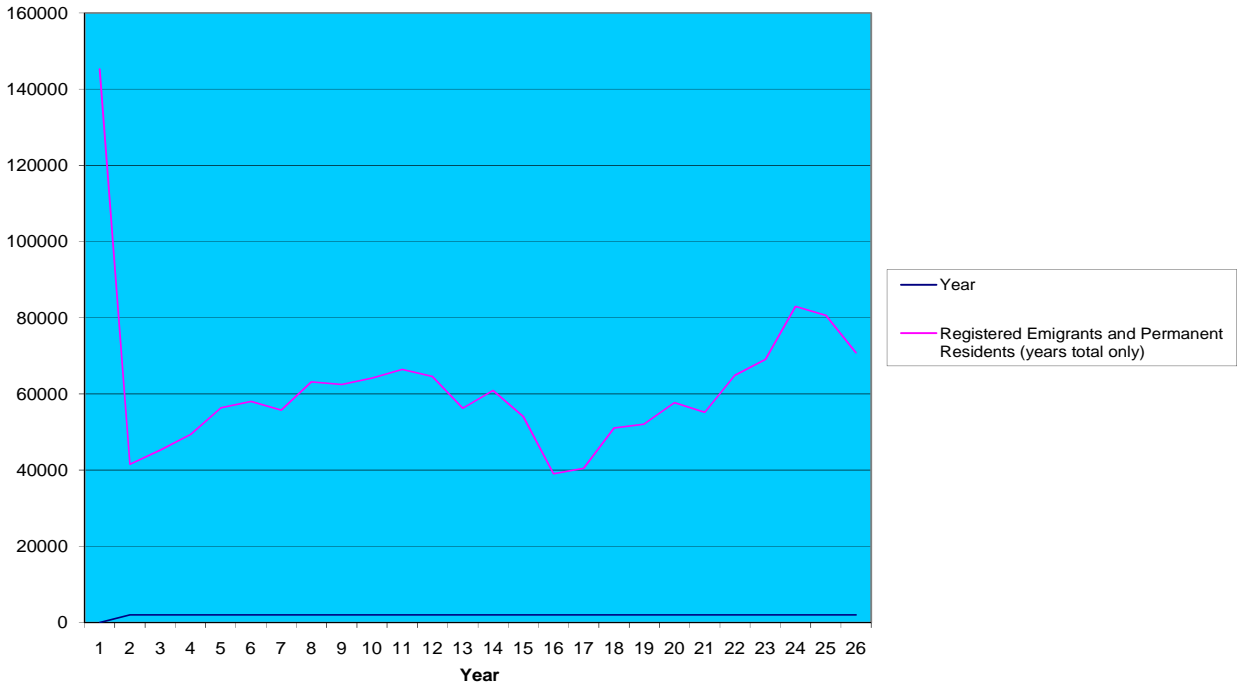


Figure 1.2 Registered Emigrants and Permanent Residents (1981-2008)



Temporary migrants are mostly female service workers doing domestic work

Temporary migrants from the Philippines can either have males or females as the leading group by gender based on annual data releases. But POEA's 1992 to 2007 data show that that service workers (1,460,941) and production workers (1,191,769) are the leading occupational groupings of deployed new-hire overseas workers. Some 88.9 percent of service workers are female (1,299,624) —and many of them are domestic workers. Some 78.2 percent of production workers (that include plumbers, laborers, welders, among others) are male (932,077) [see *Figures 2 to 4*].

By specific type of job and gender (still among new-hire workers), female domestic workers are the leading overseas workers (949,938) —with their number already surpassing the 932,077 total number of male production workers [see *Figure 5*].

Professionals and technical workers are the third leading group of new-hire overseas workers (985,222). Nurses lead the way among professional and technical workers deployed abroad.

Figure 2: Total Deployed new-hire migrant workers by occupational group (1993-2007)

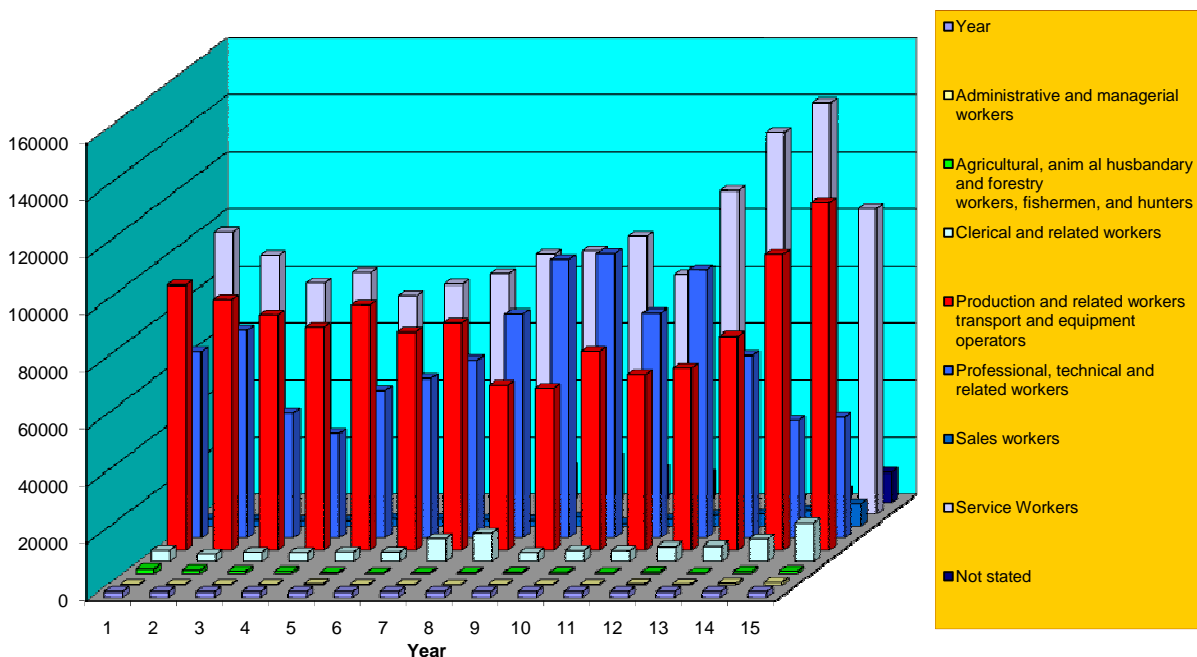
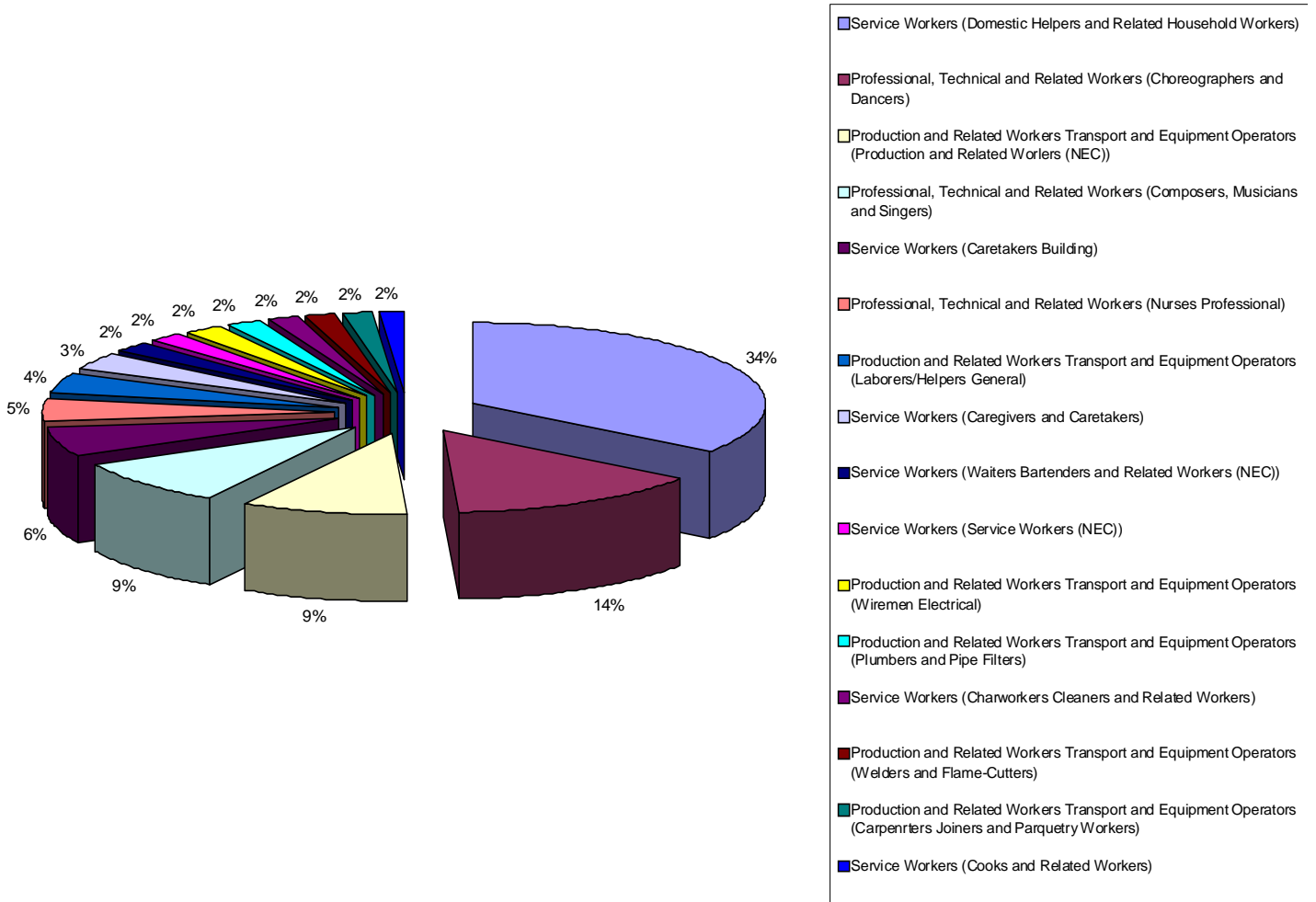


Figure 5: Most number of new-hired deployed overseas workers by specific work or job



Seven of ten registered emigrants are unemployed

The Filipino public does not have an idea what are the work occupations of our permanent residents abroad. But prior to their overseas migration, 1981 to 2007 data show that 448,982 of them are employed and the rest (1,087,470, or 70.8 percent) are unemployed. Among the permanent residents who were employed prior to overseas migration, some 173,030 (or 28.5 percent) of them are professionals, 66,675 of them are sales workers, and 58,928 are production workers. But most of the permanent residents who were unemployed prior to migration are students (373,270 or 34.3 percent) and housewives (325,292 or 29.9 percent) [see *Figures 6.1 to 6.3*].

Among the registered permanent residents are those Filipinos who married foreign spouses (n=309,745). Prior to their migration, some 263,950 of these Filipino spouses are employed and the rest are unemployed (50,462). Filipino spouses of foreign nationals who are service workers (50,101), professional and technical workers (46,251), and unemployed housewives prior to migration (44,249) are the leading groups [see *Figures 7.1 to 7.3*].

Figure 6.1 Number of registered Filipino emigrants by major occupational group prior to migration (EMPLOYED)

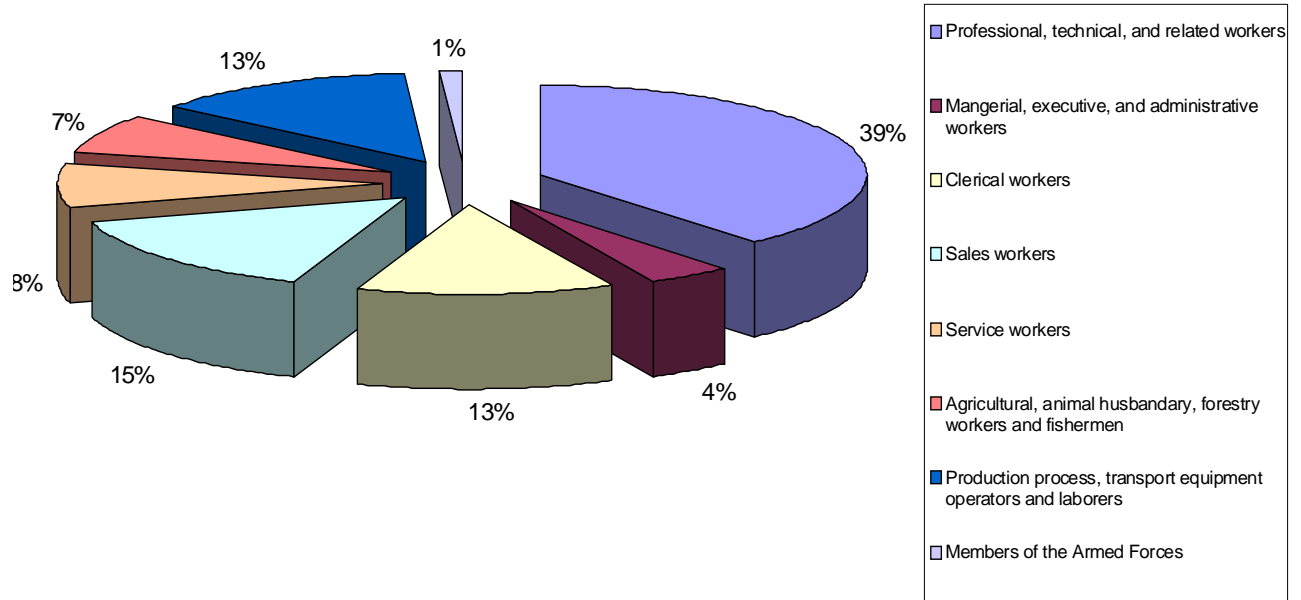


Figure 6.2 Number of registered Filipino emigrants by major occupational group prior to migration, 1981-2007 (UNEMPLOYED)

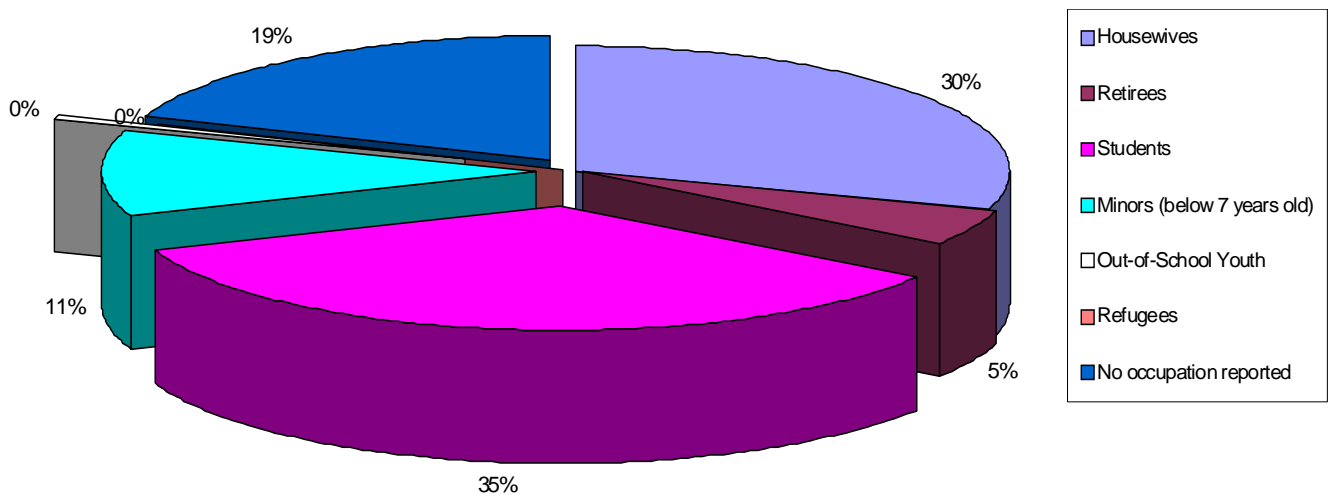


Figure 6.3 Number of registered Filipino emigrants by major occupational group prior to migration, 1981-2007 (EMPLOYED AND UNEMPLOYED)

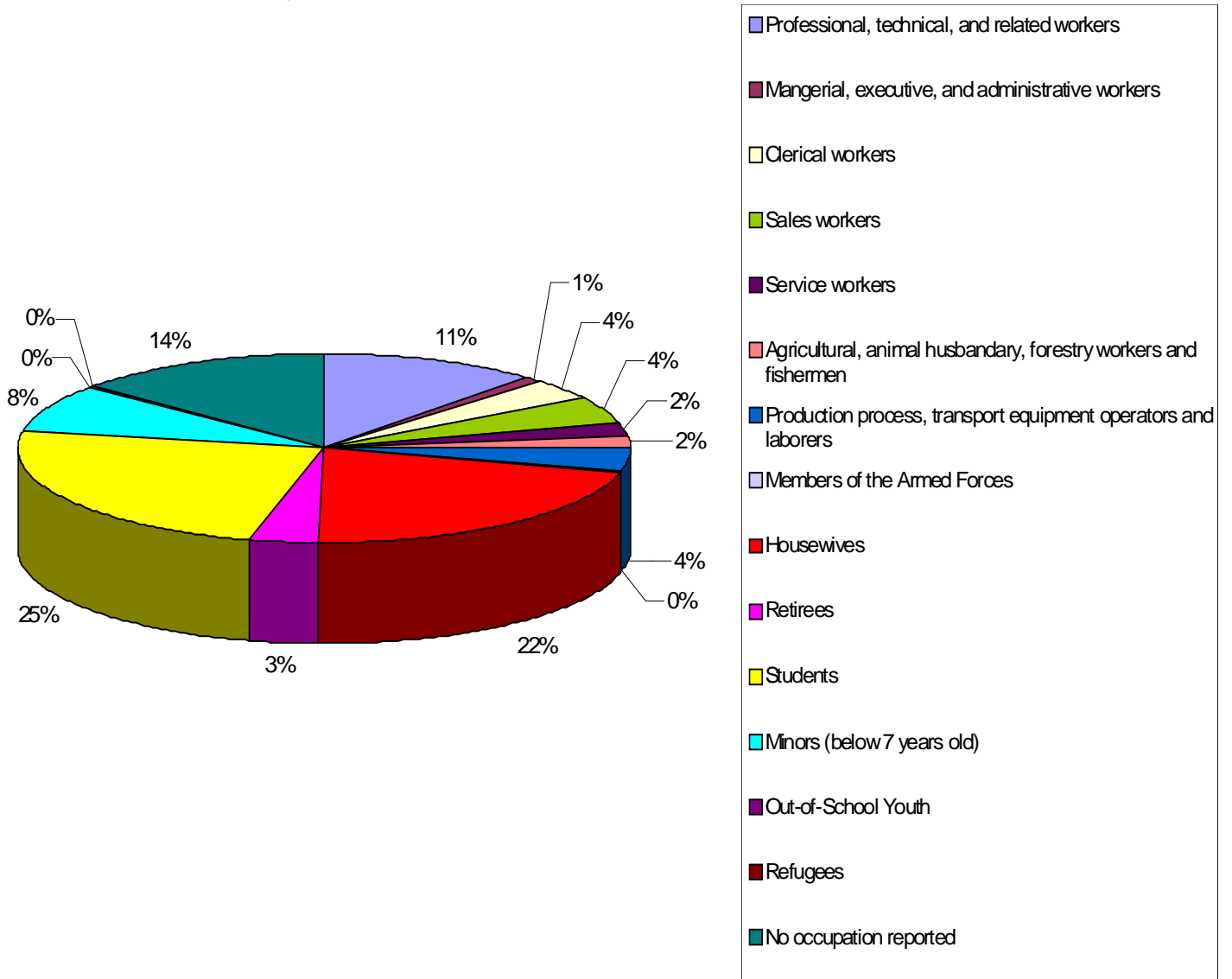


Figure 7.1 Number of Filipino spouses by major occupational group prior to migration, 1989-2006 (EMPLOYED)

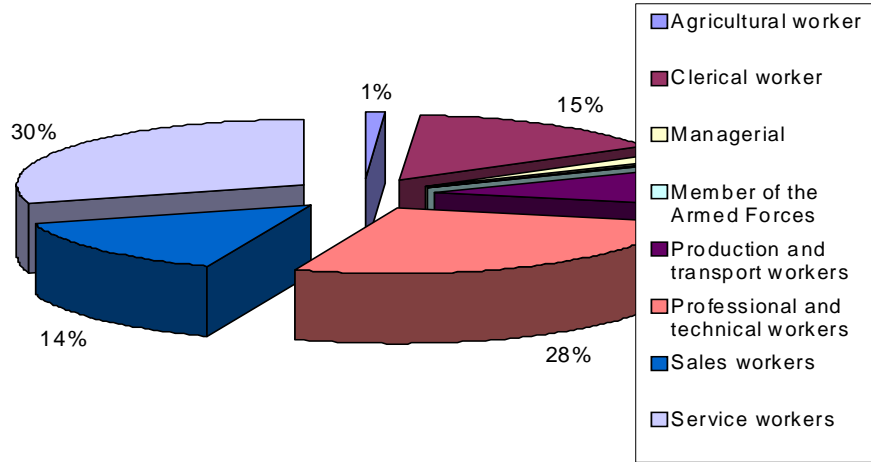


Figure 7.2: Number of Filipino spouses by major occupational group prior to migration, 1989-2006 (UNEMPLOYED)

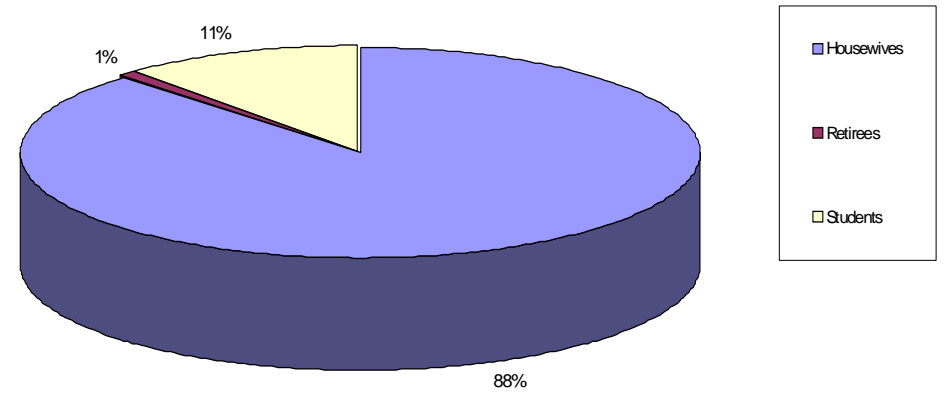
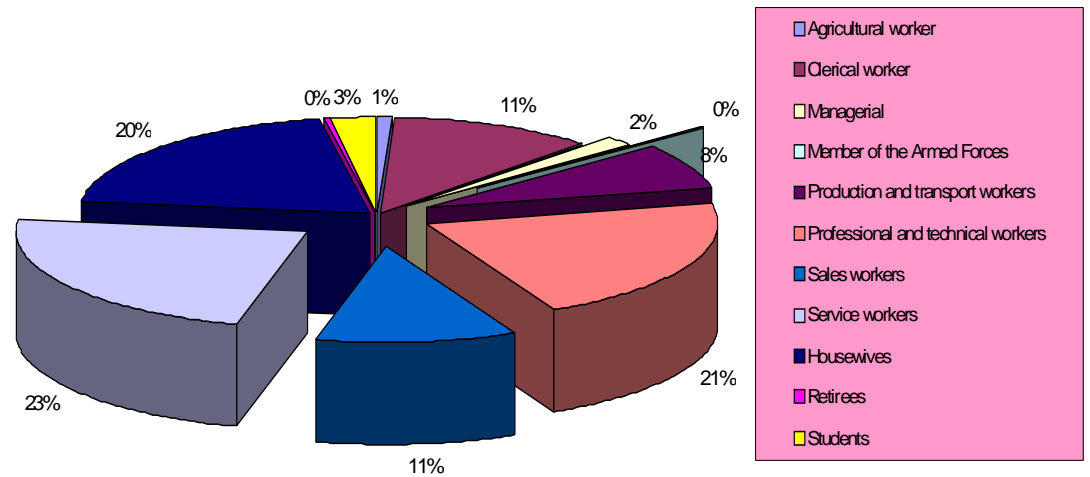


Figure 7.3: Number of Filipino spouses by major occupational group prior to migration, 1989-2006 (EMPLOYED AND UNEMPLOYED)



Who are the top remitters?

Every time government authorities release monthly data on billion-dollar remittances from overseas Filipinos, the rise of these flows of monies is attributed to increasing salaries from professionals and technical workers. It is obvious that service workers and production workers are earning lower wages.

But findings from the annual Survey on Overseas Filipinos (SOF) have always shown that female domestic workers and male production workers are the top overseas Filipino remitters. This is evidenced by the fact that these workers had to send most of their remittances to families and kin back home to support basic needs, debt repayments, and education-related expenses [see *Table 1*].

Table 1: Total cash remittances of male and female overseas Filipino workers by major occupation, years 2001 to 2007

Note: Items in gray reveal the top cash remitters per gender and occupational grouping in each year of the SOF

	Total cash remittance, 2007 (in PhP 1000) <i>Year's total: PhP 81.90B</i>		Total cash remittance, 2006 (in PhP 1000) <i>Year's total: PhP 75.86B</i>		Total cash remittance, 2005 (in PhP 1000) <i>Year's total: PhP 60.034B</i>		Total cash remittance, 2004 (in PhP 1000) <i>Year's total: PhP 56.159B</i>	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Officials of government and special interest organizations, corporate executives, managers, managing proprietors, and supervisors	3,986	305	3,833	284	2,140	226	2,416	90
Professionals	6,254	3,168	5,425	3,694	4,855	3,170	2,833	2,717
Technicians and associate professionals	6,458	1,422	5,899	1,769	3,881	1,997	5,066	1,334
Clerks	1,663	2,055	1,945	1,448	1,264	1,450	1,183	1,247
Service workers and shop and market sales workers	5,519	4,739	4,174	4,492	3,799	3,367	2,883	2,594
Farmers, forestry workers, and fishermen	131	56	221	---	168	--	144	---
Trades and related workers	12,575	645	13,103	563	9,873	570	8,518	684
Plant and machine operators and assemblers	14,543	809	12,226	725	10,435	539	11,659	1,117
Laborers and unskilled workers	4,492	13,082	3,321	12,674	2,742	9,738	2,336	9,320
Special occupations	--	--	64	---	82	8	18	---

Details may not add up due to rounding off.

Source: National Statistics Office - Survey on Overseas Filipinos (2001 to 2007)

See the Philippine Migration and Development Statistical Almanac (<http://almanac.ofwphilanthropy.org>)

Table 1: Total cash remittances of male and female overseas Filipino workers by major occupation, years 2001 to 2007 (continued)

Note: Items in gray reveal the top cash remitters per gender and occupational grouping in each year of the SOF

	Total cash remittance, 2003 (in PhP 1000) <i>Year's total: PhP 48.89B</i>		Total cash remittance, 2002 (in PhP 1000) <i>Year's total: PhP 46.34B</i>		Total cash remittance, 2001 (in PhP 1000) <i>Year's total: PhP 38.51B</i>	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
	Officials of government and special interest organizations, corporate executives, managers, managing proprietors, and supervisors	2,001	315	1,845	331	1,164
Professionals	3,904	2,399	4,951	2,344	3,005	2,117
Technicians and associate professionals	4,011	1,499	4,678	1,052	2,562	884
Clerks	634	696	526	640	514	428
Service workers and shop and market sales workers	2,599	2,266	2,249	1,885	2,403	1,550
Farmers, forestry workers, and fishermen	56	--	139	5	106	---
Trades and related workers	8,297	571	7,303	521	6,124	367
Plant and machine operators and assemblers	9,555	706	8,731	297	7,927	542
Laborers and unskilled workers	1,721	7,434	1,523	7,322	2,009	6,452
Special occupations	211	7	---	22	---	9

Details may not add up due to rounding off.

Source: National Statistics Office - Survey on Overseas Filipinos (2001 to 2007)

See the Philippine Migration and Development Statistical Almanac (<http://almanac.ofwphilanthropy.org>)

Low-skilled workers-cum top remitters

Low-skilled or semi-skilled overseas workers who remit regularly to the Philippines are a major driver of the country's "remittance economy". This is simply because job markets abroad call for such occupations for foreign workers. This trend will all the more continue even as there are efforts to attract more skilled workers in developing countries, and there are continued restrictions to the movement of low-skilled or semi-skilled labor.

Therefore, our semi-skilled and low-skilled workers do not only need more measures and support for the protection of their welfare and rights. An approach as regards their and their families' management of remittances that understands their being semi-skilled and low-skilled workers abroad is called for. They remit frequently (though in lesser amounts), they also try out micro- to small enterprises, and had to repay debts incurred prior to their migration overseas.

The data also implies that the trend of having more semi-skilled or low-skilled workers abroad will not likely cease, even in today's global economic crisis. While our semi-skilled or low-skilled workers in the country, as well as permanent residents who were jobless prior to going out, have been among the biggest beneficiaries of overseas migration, all the more that our provision of social and economic services, as well as means to access legal redress, are called for.