



INSTITUTE FOR MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT ISSUES (IMDI)

POLICY BRIEFS SERIES #2



Filipinos go overseas
to escape **UNEMPLOYMENT...**

**...but the country
can't brush off rising**

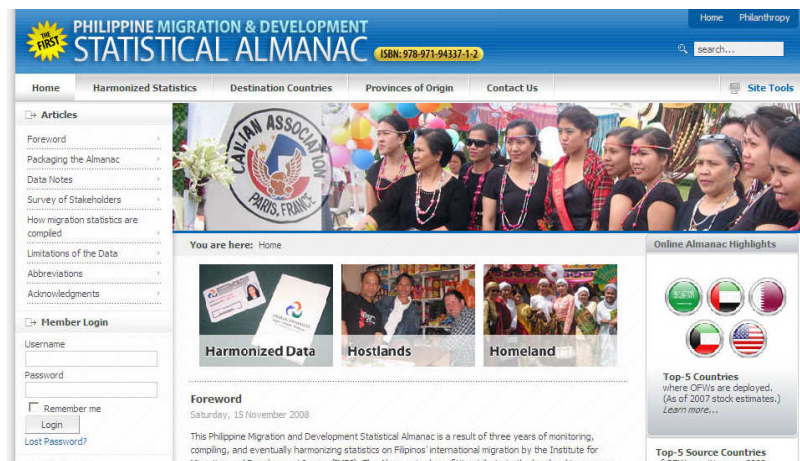
JOBLESSNESS

A policy brief on overseas migration and domestic employment

by **DAWN NAISA L. MAJADUCON** (June 2009)

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



THERE have been debates as to what overseas migration by Filipinos implies. One school of thought says opportunities abroad (work and permanent settlement) that many Filipinos have availed of reflect the competitiveness of the “global” Filipino worker. Thus, when you see a country that has attained a “record-high” of deployed overseas workers last year (1,376,823), and that now has some 1,536,452 permanent residents who registered with government agencies, it seems that overseas migration might be suited for Filipinos.

However, the other school of thought says overseas migration reflects the weaknesses of the domestic labor market. The Philippines is characterized to have high rates of unemployment and underemployment, as well as a growing labor force. No wonder overseas migration has been a response of a visible number of the country’s labor force to get out of a country that cannot provide as many jobs.

Jobs abroad, and jobs prior to going overseas

Data from the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration show that many Filipino workers abroad are service workers (1,460,941) and production workers (1,191,769) [See *Table 1*]. Most of service workers are women [see *Table 2*] while most production workers are men [see *Table 3*].

Meanwhile, 1981 to 2007 data from the Commission on Filipinos Overseas show that seven out of ten Filipinos who are registered permanent residents are unemployed (1,087,470, or 71.2 percent of the 1,536,452 total). Just above a tenth of these registered permanent residents who were employed prior to migration are professionals (173,030, or 11.3 percent), while nearly two-thirds of the total registered permanent emigrants are unemployed housewives (325,292 or 21.2 percent) [See *Table 4*] (*It is difficult to determine at this time the occupations of our permanent residents across all the countries where they go to*).

Table 1: Total deployed new-hire migrant workers by occupational group (1993-2007)

Occupational group	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	Total
Administrative and managerial workers	325	335	340	345	576	397	333	284	385	374	387	565	490	817	1,136	7,089
Agricultural, animal husbandry and forestry workers, fishermen and hunters	1,753	1,270	981	833	547	395	454	526	551	612	413	682	350	807	952	11,126
Clerical and related workers	4,179	2,788	3,441	3,315	3,619	3,529	8,042	10,029	3,356	4,098	4,025	5,324	5,539	7,912	13,660	82,856
Production and related workers transport and equipment operators	92,846	87,709	82,491	77,918	85,733	76,288	79,559	57,807	56,744	69,513	61,352	63,719	74,802	103,584	121,704	1,191,769
Professional, technical and related workers	65,274	72,788	43,907	36,848	51,656	55,823	62,367	78,685	97,453	99,688	78,956	94,147	63,941	41,258	42,431	985,222
Sales workers	2,538	2,206	1,989	1,965	2,641	2,596	2,279	2,083	3,188	3,043	2,490	3,950	4,261	5,517	7,940	48,686
Service Workers	98,912	90,713	81,023	84,824	76,661	80,696	84,380	91,206	92,362	97,374	84,021	113,423	133,907	144,321	107,118	1,460,941
Not stated	-	8	1	13	14	-	-	12,410	15,711	11,426	9,867	3	995	3,906	10,613	64,967
Totals	265,827	257,817	214,173	206,061	221,447	219,724	237,414	253,030	269,750	286,128	241,511	281,813	284,285	308,122	305,554	3,852,656

Table 3: Total deployed female new-hire migrant workers by occupational group (1993-2007)

Occupational group	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	Total
Administrative and managerial workers	57	63	77	68	115	83	59	76	105	128	103	167	109	289	423	1,922
Agricultural, animal husbandry and forestry workers, fishermen and hunters	38	27	8	19	40	13	8	6	36	15	29	21	39	91	79	469
Clerical and related workers	1,267	862	1,276	1,287	1,499	1,508	2,760	4,453	1,995	2,543	2,207	3,093	3,553	4,640	8,876	41,819
Production and related workers transport and equipment operators	10,763	13,971	18,281	8,282	14,968	16,023	20,781	16,430	13,755	20,319	18,766	20,847	23,096	23,338	20,004	259,624
Professional, technical and related workers	49,015	58,943	31,106	24,481	37,294	41,693	50,581	67,454	83,056	84,828	67,330	80,450	51,980	24,042	20,981	773,234
Sales workers	947	796	784	725	1,158	1,165	813	949	1,814	1,452	1,393	2,758	2,972	3,111	5,385	26,222
Service Workers	78,227	80,771	73,617	76,786	68,428	73,037	77,040	83,780	83,951	88,078	76,292	102,035	123,219	128,160	86,203	1,299,624
Not stated	-	-	-	5	7	-	-	1,620	1,306	78	205	1	194	745	3,546	7,707
Totals	140,314	155,433	125,149	111,653	123,509	133,522	152,042	174,768	186,018	197,441	166,325	209,372	205,162	184,416	145,497	2,410,621

Table 4: Total deployed male new-hire migrant workers by occupational group (1993-2007)

Occupational group	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	Total
Administrative and managerial workers	268	272	263	277	461	314	274	208	280	246	284	398	381	528	713	5,167
Agricultural, animal husbandry and forestry workers, fishermen and hunters	1,715	1,243	973	814	507	382	446	520	514	596	384	661	311	716	873	10,655
Clerical and related workers	2,912	1,926	2,165	2,028	2,120	2,020	5,282	5,576	1,361	1,555	1,818	2,230	1,986	3,271	4,782	41,032
Production and related workers transport and equipment operators	82,083	73,733	64,210	69,636	70,765	60,265	58,777	41,377	42,985	49,190	42,579	42,855	51,694	80,240	101,688	932,077
Professional, technical and related workers	16,259	13,845	12,801	12,367	14,362	14,129	11,786	11,230	14,392	14,849	11,620	13,677	11,953	17,212	21,443	211,925
Sales workers	1,591	1,410	1,205	1,240	1,483	1,429	1,466	1,134	1,374	1,591	1,096	1,189	1,288	2,405	2,551	22,452
Service Workers	20,685	9,942	7,406	8,038	8,233	7,657	7,336	7,412	8,400	9,292	7,725	11,343	10,666	16,135	20,889	161,159
Not stated	-	8	1	8	7	-	-	2,970	2,880	531	895	2	800	3,161	7,066	18,329
Totals	125,513	102,379	89,024	94,408	97,938	86,196	85,367	70,427	72,186	77,850	66,401	72,355	79,079	123,668	160,005	1,402,796

Source: *Philippine Overseas Employment Administration*

Tables processed by *Ma. Carmelita F. Santos (University of Santo Tomas Social Research Center)*

Table 4: Number of registered Filipino emigrants by major occupational group prior to migration, 1981-2007

Major occupational group	Total
Employed	448,982
Professional, technical, and related workers	173,030
Managerial, executive, and administrative workers	18,619
Clerical workers	57,988
Sales workers	66,675
Service workers	36,223
Agricultural, animal husbandry, forestry workers and fishermen	32,934
Production process, transport equipment operators and laborers	58,298
Members of the Armed Forces	5,215
Unemployed	1,087,470
Housewives	325,292
Retirees	52,998
Students	373,270
Minors (below seven 7 years old)	122,836
Out-of-School Youth	4,651
Refugees	3
No occupation reported	208,420
Total	1,536,452

Source: Commission on Filipinos Overseas (2008)

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

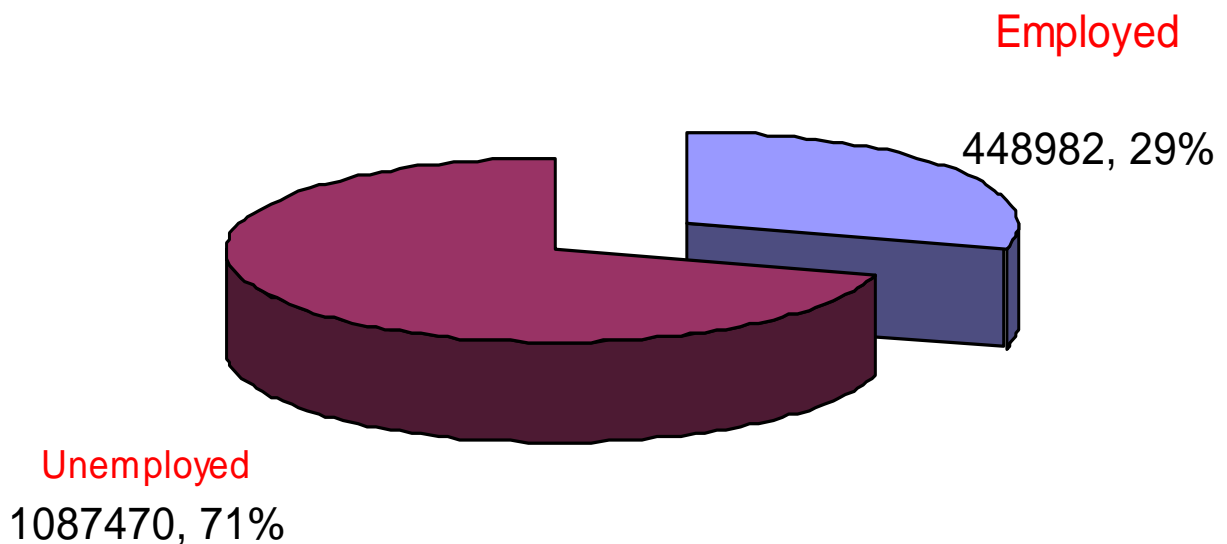


Figure 1: Employed and unemployed registered Filipino emigrants prior to migration

Female migrants outnumber males

Female temporary and permanent migrants outnumber their male counterparts.

Datasets related to temporary migration or overseas work prove the feminization phenomenon: the deployed data of new-hire overseas workers by the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration [see *Table 5*], the annual Survey on Overseas Filipinos [see *Table 6*], and the data coming from the quarterly Labor Force Survey [see *Table 7*].

This feminization of migration phenomenon is also visible in permanent migration—both for registered permanent residents [see *Table 8*] and spouses of foreign nationals [see *Table 9*]. There are 67 males per 100 female registered permanent migrants, as there is one man per 10 women who are married to foreign spouses.

Table 5: Total deployment of new-hire temporary contract workers by gender, 1992-2007

Year	Female	Male	Total
1992	129,869	130,725	260,594
1993	138,242	117,955	256,197
1994	153,504	105,482	258,986
1995	124,822	89,335	214,157
1996	111,487	94,304	205,791
1997	123,399	97,842	221,241
1998	133,458	85,757	219,215
1999	151,840	85,420	237,260
2000	178,323	74,707	253,030
2001	186,018	72,186	258,204
2002	208,278	77,850	286,128
2003	175,103	66,408	241,511
2004	208,411	72,064	280,475
2005	205,206	79,079	284,285
2006	184,454	123,668	308,122
2007	146,337	160,046	306,383

Source: Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (2008)

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

**Table 6: Overseas Filipino workers by sex (in 000s), 1995 to 2007
Survey on Overseas Filipinos**

Year	Both sexes	Male	Female
2007	1,747	890	857
2006	1,515	751	764
2005	1,327	667	660
2004	1,180	604	577
2003	982	508	475
2002	1,056	554	502
2001	1,029	528	501
2000	978	527	451
1999	1,043	547	497
1998	904	469	435
1997	1,013	554	459
1996	795	416	379
1995	795	504	396

Details may not add up due to rounding off

Source: National Statistics Office - Survey on Overseas Filipinos (various years)

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

Table 7: Share of OFWs by sex (in %), from the Labor Force Survey, 1988-2004

Year	Sex (in %)		Total
	Male	Female	
1988	59.1	40.9	100.0
1989	61.5	38.5	100.0
1990	65.3	34.7	100.0
1991	62.8	37.2	100.0
1992	62.1	37.9	100.0
1993	61.9	38.1	100.0
1994	58.2	41.8	100.0
1995	55.5	44.5	100.0
1996	58.5	41.5	100.0
1997	58.3	41.7	100.0
1998	55.1	44.9	100.0
1999	55.2	44.8	100.0
2000	55.0	45.0	100.0
2001	54.7	45.3	100.0
2002	52.6	47.4	100.0
2003	52.1	47.9	100.0
2004	51.2	48.8	100.0

Source: National Statistics Office - Labor Force Surveys (various years), in Manolo Abella and Geoffrey Ducanes (2008)

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

Table 8: Registered Filipino emigrants by gender (1981 to 2007)

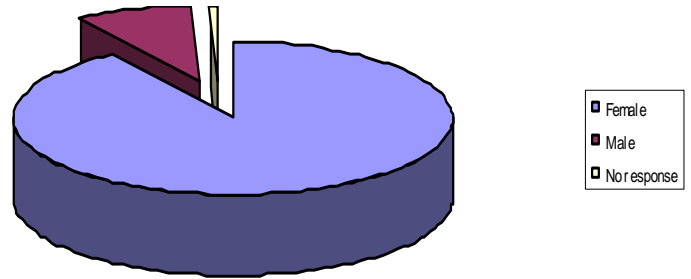
Year	Male	Female	Total	Sex ratio *
1981	20,350	28,517	48,867	71M/100F
1982	21,752	32,201	53,953	68M/100F
1983	17,816	24,665	42,481	72M/100F
1984	16,970	24,581	41,551	69M/100F
1985	18,409	26,860	45,269	68M/100F
1986	20,408	28,930	49,338	70M/100F
1987	23,921	32,429	56,350	74M/100F
1988	24,625	33,395	58,020	74M/100F
1989	22,807	32,938	55,745	69M/100F
1990	25,400	37,749	63,149	67M/100F
1991	24,719	37,745	62,464	65M/100F
1992	25,128	39,026	64,154	64M/100F
1993	26,211	40,179	66,390	65M/100F
1994	26,180	38,351	64,531	68M/100F
1995	22,550	33,692	56,242	67M/100F
1996	24,446	36,467	60,913	67M/100F
1997	20,936	33,123	54,059	63M/100F
1998	14,629	24,380	39,009	60M/100F
1999	14,657	25,850	40,507	57M/100F
2000	19,907	31,124	51,031	64M/100F
2001	20,313	31,741	52,054	64M/100F
2002	22,329	35,391	57,720	63M/100F
2003	22,233	32,904	55,137	68M/100F
2004	26,141	38,783	64,924	67M/100F
2005	27,333	41,695	69,028	65M/100F
2006	32,259	50,708	82,967	64M/100F
2007	30,877	49,722	80,599	62M/100F
Total	582,429	873,424	1,536,452	67M/100F
Annual average	22,401	33,593	59,094	67M/100F

Source: Commission on Filipinos Overseas (2008)

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

Table 9 and Figure 2: Registered Filipino/a spouses by gender (1981 to 2007)

Sex	Total
Female	302,678
Male	28,793
No response	2,201
Total	333,672
Sex Ratio (Appox.)	10F /1M



Legend: F – female; M - male

Source: Commission on Filipinos Overseas (2008)

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

Educational attainment prior to migration

Data on temporary migrants reveal that at least a quarter to just above a third of overseas workers earned college degrees—this being an indicator of the “brain drain” phenomenon. But high school graduates/undergraduates and college undergraduates have gained overseas work opportunities, especially if they are in semi-skilled or low-skilled jobs [see *Table 10*].

College graduates lead in terms of the number of registered permanent residents by educational attainment. Noticeably, some 24.19 percent of registered permanent residents are high school undergraduates and graduates, while 15.51 percent are college undergraduates [see *Table 11*].

But looking at Filipinos who married foreign spouses, 31.1 percent of them are high school undergraduates and graduates. They have surpassed the number of spouses who are college graduates (26.52 percent) —implying that these spouses of foreign nationals may try permanent migration to achieve work and economic opportunities in foreign countries.

Table 10: Share of overseas Filipino workers by educational attainment

Year	Elementary graduate/ undergraduate	High school graduate/ undergraduate	College undergraduate	College graduate	No information	Total
1988	10.2	33.4	30.1	26.2	0.2	100.0
1989	9.5	36.2	30.2	23.8	0.4	100.0
1990	11.1	35.8	25.6	26.4	1.0	100.0
1991	10.2	35.7	27.5	25.4	1.3	100.0
1992	10.6	36.2	27.8	24.3	1.0	100.0
1993	9.5	37.2	27.5	24.8	0.9	100.0
1994	7.0	37.5	27.1	27.2	1.1	100.0
1995	8.3	38.3	28.5	24.2	0.7	100.0
1996	8.4	33.7	31.4	24.9	1.6	100.0
1997	7.3	33.4	32.0	25.3	1.9	100.0
1998	7.4	34.0	32.7	23.5	2.4	100.0
1999	6.9	34.5	30.3	26.3	2.1	100.0
2000	6.3	32.4	30.8	27.8	2.7	100.0
2001	5.4	33.1	27.9	33.6	0.0	100.0
2002	5.9	31.4	27.2	35.5	0.0	100.0
2003	5.2	29.8	31.0	34.0	0.0	100.0
2004	5.3	30.4	28.5	35.8	0.0	100.0

Source: National Statistics Office - Labor Force Survey (various years),
in Manolo Abella and Geoffrey Ducanes (2008)

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

Table 11: Number of registered Filipino emigrants by educational attainment prior to migration, 1988-2007

Educational attainment	Total	%
Not of Schooling Age	88,010	7.34
No Formal Education	9,980	0.83
Elementary Level	155,246	12.95
Elementary Graduate	52,066	4.34
High School Level	149,175	12.45
High School Graduate	140,669	11.74
Vocational Level	19,405	1.62
Vocational Graduate	45,785	3.82
College Level	185,941	15.51
College Graduate	317,926	26.52
Post Graduate Level	17,075	1.42
Post Graduate	15,373	1.28
Non-Formal Education	1,466	0.12
Not Reported / No Response	526	0.04
Total	1,198,643	100

Source: Commission on Filipinos Overseas (2008)

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

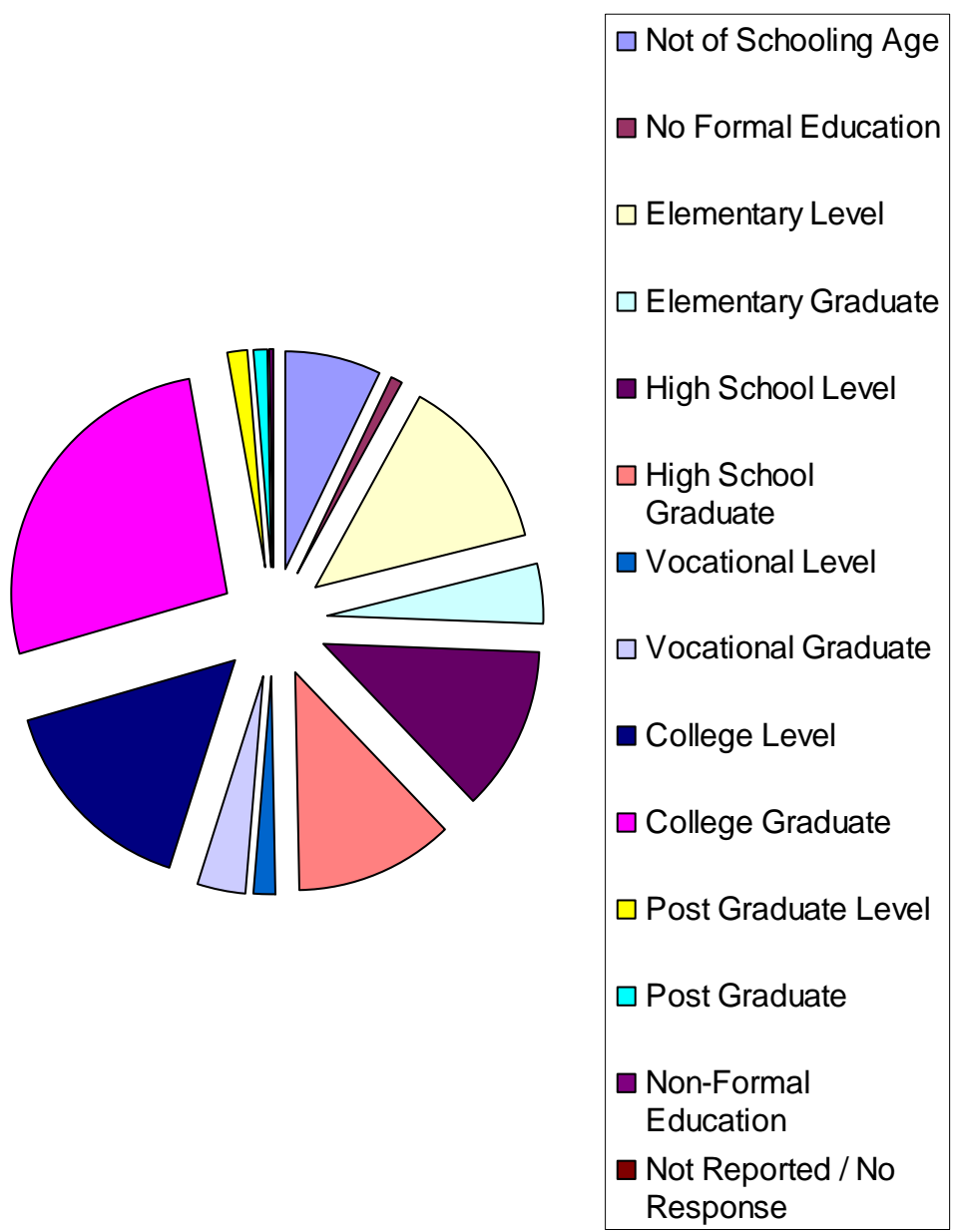


Figure 3: Number of registered Filipino emigrants by educational attainment prior to migration, 1988-2007

Table 12: Number of registered Filipino spouses by educational attainment prior to migration, 1988-2007

Educational attainment	Total	%
No Formal Education	651	0.20
Elementary Level	5,554	1.66
Elementary Graduate	8,767	2.63
High School Level	38,409	11.51
High School Graduate	65,398	19.60
Vocational Graduate	19,296	5.78
Vocational Level	9,319	2.79
College Level	59,573	17.85
College Graduate	94,237	28.24
Post Graduate	1,741	0.52
Post Graduate Level	4,176	1.25
No Response	2,675	0.80
Not Known by Filipino	23,876	7.16
Total	333,672	100.00

Source: Commission on Filipinos Overseas (2008)

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

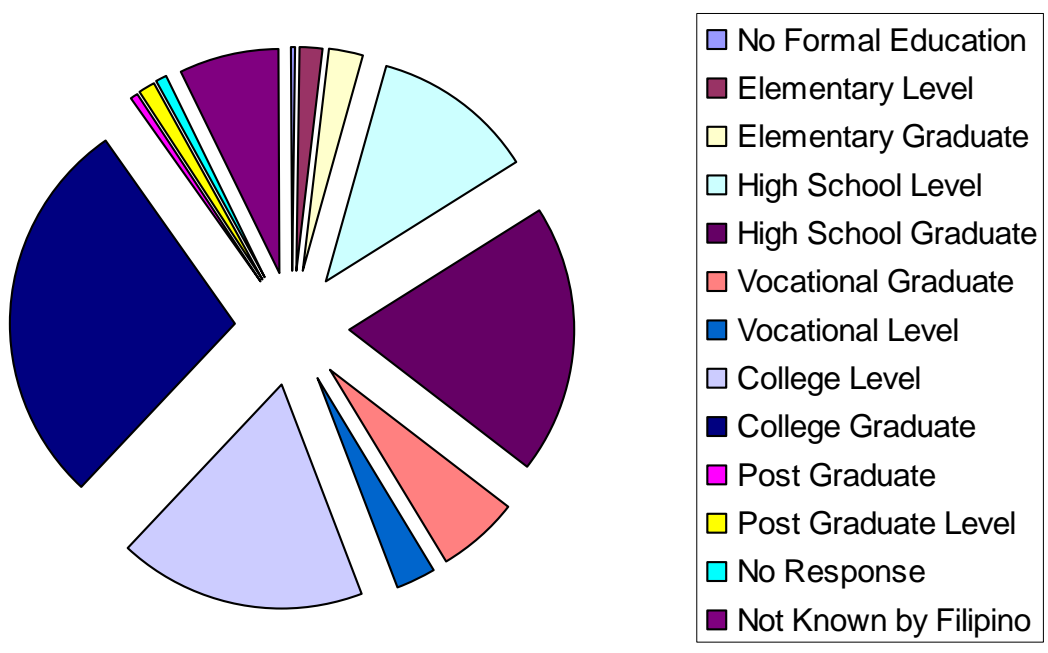


Figure 4: Number of registered Filipino spouses of foreign nationals by educational attainment prior to migration, 1988-2007

In summary: a) Temporary migrants are mostly female service sector workers and male production sector workers; b) Many permanent migrants left their unemployed conditions in the Philippines; c) Temporary and permanent overseas migration are opportunities for women, on the overall; and d) High school undergraduates and graduates have been major beneficiaries of temporary and permanent migration.

Overseas migration reducing domestic joblessness, improving worker productivity?

For the longest time, overseas migration makes up for the lack of job opportunities here at home. Some analysts believe that the country's unemployment rate could have been higher without overseas migration.

Table 13 shows data on domestic employment conditions and overseas migration data (note here that in 2005, the government changed its definition of who are "employed," to even include those working less than 40 hours a day, and overseas workers). While the country, in 2008, had the lowest unemployment rate (6.8 percent) in the last 12 years, there are still a visible number of jobless Filipinos. Noticeably also, even if the underemployment rate is reducing lately, the actual number is growing (underemployment is an indicator of low working conditions by workers). This is even if the combined number of temporary and permanent migrants is rising, as well as the ratios of the total of temporary and permanent migrants to the homeland employed and unemployed.

Meanwhile, there are debates surrounding labor productivity being affected by overseas migration. One school of thought says overseas migration leads to decreased labor productivity by people left behind, especially so that increasing remittances are coming in. Another school of thought says overseas migration does not affect labor productivity of the family members left behind.

Labor Force Survey data processed by two experts showed that even if labor force participation rate includes overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) as among those who are employed, the labor force participation rates of household members with and without overseas Filipino workers are virtually the same. But if OFWs are excluded from the employed, those households with OFWs have lower labor force participation rates than households without OFWs (not surprisingly).

Table 13: Domestic employment and overseas migration

Year	Domestic Employment Data <i>All in 000</i> <i>(below are end-October figures of the Labor Force Survey)</i>						Overseas Migration Data			Contract workers plus registered emigrants as % of total employed in homeland	Contract workers plus registered emigrants as % of total labor force in the homeland
	Employment		Unemployment		Underemployment		Total Deployed Contract Workers Abroad	Total Number of Registered Emigrants	Combined Total		
	Employed (in 000)	Rate	Unemployed (in 000)	Rate	Underemployed (in 000)	Rate					
1997	27,888	92.1	2,377	7.9	5,805	20.8	747,696	54,059	801,755	2.87	2.22
1998	28,262	92.6	3,016	9.6	6,701	23.7	831,643	39,009	870,652	3.08	2.29
1999	29,003	90.6	2,997	9.4	6,415	22.1	837,020	40,507	877,527	3.02	2.28
2000	27,775	89.9	3,133	10.1	5,526	19.9	841,628	51,031	892,659	3.21	2.44
2001	30,090	90.2	3,271	9.8	4,995	16.6	867,599	52,054	919,653	3.06	2.39
2002	30,252	89.8	3,423	10.2	4,628	15.3	891,908	57,720	949,628	3.14	2.48
2003	31,553	89.8	3,567	10.2	4,989	15.8	867,969	55,137	923,106	2.92	2.30
2004	31,733	89.1	3,886	10.9	5,357	16.9	933,588	64,924	998,512	3.15	2.44
2005	32,876	92.6	2,620	7.4	6,970	21.2	981,677	69,028	1,050,705	3.19	2.47
2006	33,185	92.7	2,621	7.3	6,761	20.4	1,062,567	82,967	1,145,534	3.45	2.69
2007	33,671	93.7	2,248	7.4	6,104	18.1	1,077,623	80,599	1,158,222	3.43	2.76
2008	34,533	93.2	2,525	6.8	6,028	17.5	1,376,823	70,800	1,447,623	4.19	3.36

Notes:

- ❖ *Employment-related data cited here refer to the new Philippine definitions of who are employed, unemployed and underemployed (please refer to the Labor Force Survey link in the website of the National Statistics Office, www.census.gov.ph). NSO started implementing a definition of the International Labour Office regarding employment in 2005.*
- ❖ *Meanwhile, figures on contract workers abroad came from the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration. Figures, on the other hand, for emigrants and permanent residents came from the Commission on Filipinos Overseas.*
- ❖ *It is to note that some analysts think deployed contract workers abroad and emigrants should not be counted as part of the country's domestic labor force.*

Sources: National Statistics Office, Philippine Overseas Employment Administration, and Commission on Filipinos Overseas, and Bureau of Labor and Employment Statistics

Packaged by the Institute for Migration and Development Issues

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

Table 14: Labor force participation rate comparisons with and without overseas workers in the definition of who are employed

Year	Labor Force Participation Rate, DOLE-Bureau of Labor and Employment Statistics	Labor Force Participation Rate computations of Manolo Abella and Geoffrey Ducanes (2008)					
		Including OFWs in employed		Including OFWs in employed but excluding students in the labor force		Excluding OFWs in employed (definition of the National Statistics Office)	
		w/out OFWs	with OFWs	w/out OFWs	with OFWs	w/out OFWs	with OFWs
1988	66.1	65.9	62.6	74.9	76.2	65.9	50.6
1989	66.0	65.5	63.9	74.8	75.9	65.5	52.1
1990	64.4	65.1	61.8	74.5	75.1	65.1	48.7
1991	66.4	65.1	63.6	74.8	76.3	65.1	51.7
1992	66.0	65.0	64.1	74.2	75.8	65.0	51.9
1993	65.6	65.2	64.2	74.7	76.3	65.2	52.0
1994	65.5	65.3	65.9	74.8	77.5	65.3	54.4
1995	65.8	64.9	65.8	74.5	77.4	64.9	54.6
1996	66.7	66.3	64.4	76.0	76.9	66.3	53.0
1997	66.1	66.0	66.3	75.2	77.5	66.0	54.1
1998	65.9	65.7	66.1	75.1	77.0	65.7	54.8
1999	66.4	66.0	65.8	75.3	77.3	66.0	54.7
2000	64.9	65.8	65.0	75.3	76.9	65.8	53.3
2001	67.1	66.1	66.8	76.0	78.7	66.1	55.8
2002	67.4	67.1	66.5	76.5	78.0	67.1	55.4
2003	66.7	68.0	67.3	76.4	78.7	67.7	55.7
2004	67.5	67.7	67.3	76.7	78.4	68.0	55.9

Sources: Bureau of Labor and Employment Statistics;
Manolo Abella and Geoffrey Ducanes (2008), using data from the Labor Force Survey

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

OFWs and the homeland's unemployed, underemployed: They're all increasing

A look at overseas Filipinos' employment conditions may reflect some of the realities in the country's labor market such as the lack of job opportunities for less-educated workers, and the presence of a huge number of semi-skilled and low-skilled workers that all seek more gainful incomes and wages.

More importantly, it remains a mystery if overseas migration has helped ease problematic domestic employment conditions. Underemployment has not gone down in absolute number significantly, while unemployment remains visibly high. These reflect the inability of the domestic economy to generate as many jobs for the growing number of Filipino workers here at home.

While overseas migration will be a reaction for Filipinos to get out of employment-related problems here at home, relying too much on overseas migration will ultimately challenge stakeholders' efforts to improve domestic employment conditions.

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