

The Daily Lives and Concerns of Migrant Nurses and Care Workers in Aging Societies Struck by COVID-19: The Case of Japan

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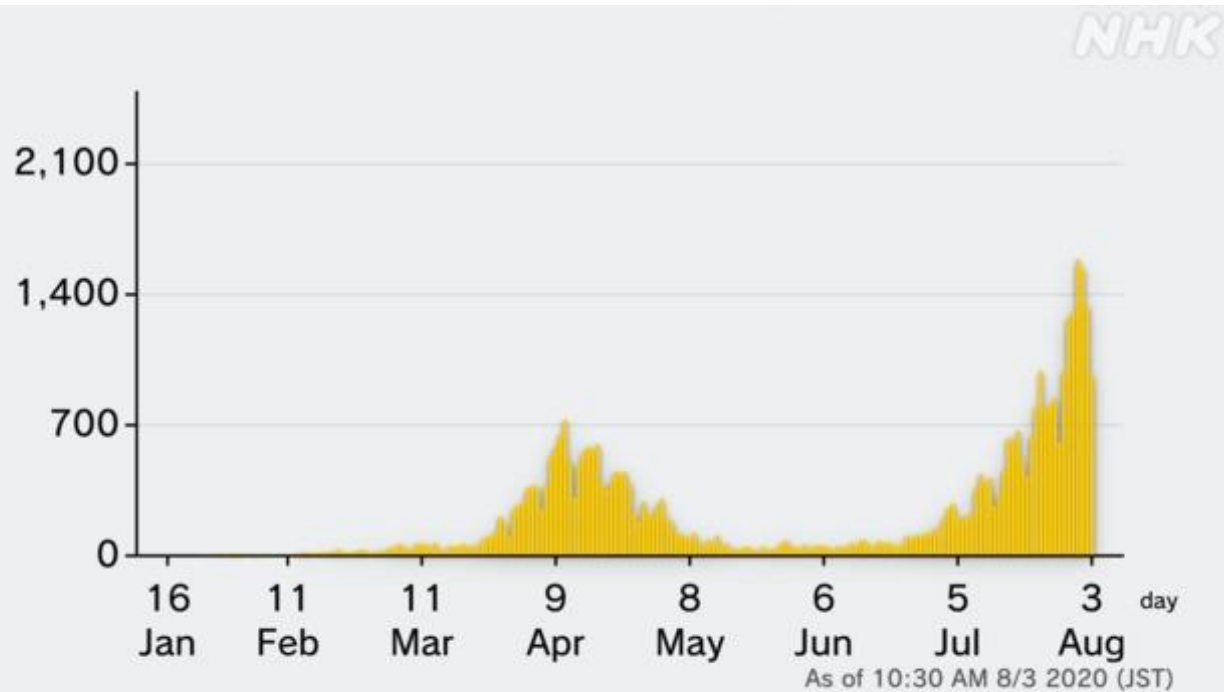
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Introduction

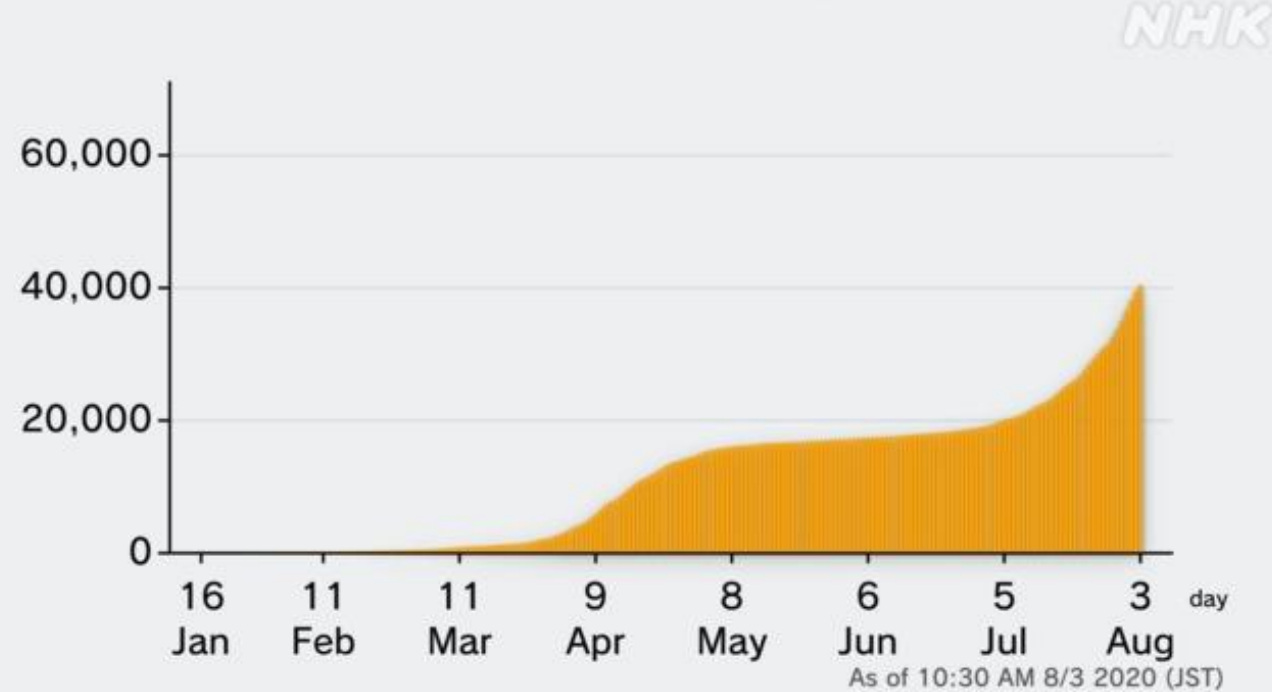
- Japan has been dealing with the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic since March 2020, and in recent weeks the country has seen the second rise in infections in Metropolitan Tokyo and other prefectures. This continues to present a threat to public health especially in a country where 28.4% of the population are elderly (over 65) with thousands of care facilities.
- This presentation introduces and analyzes the impacts on migrant nurses and elderly-care workers, and situates the discussion with the country's accepting plan on care migrants during the current ongoing situation.

Japan Facing the Second Wave of COVID-19 Cases

Confirmed Cases in Japan (daily)



Confirmed Cases in Japan (cumulative)



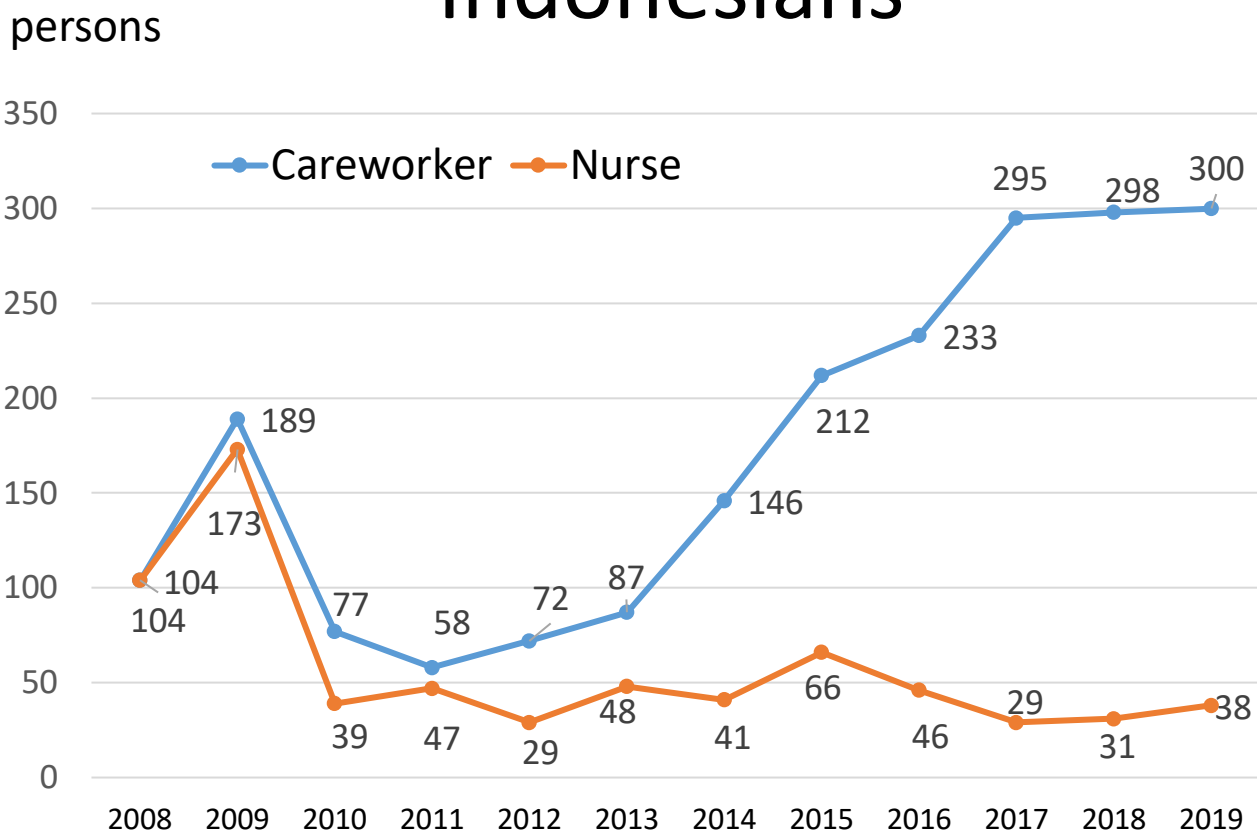
(source) NHK World-Japan web, 4 Aug. 2020, “Coronavirus Outbreak”.

Hundreds of Hospitals and Elderly-care Facilities Struck by COVID-19

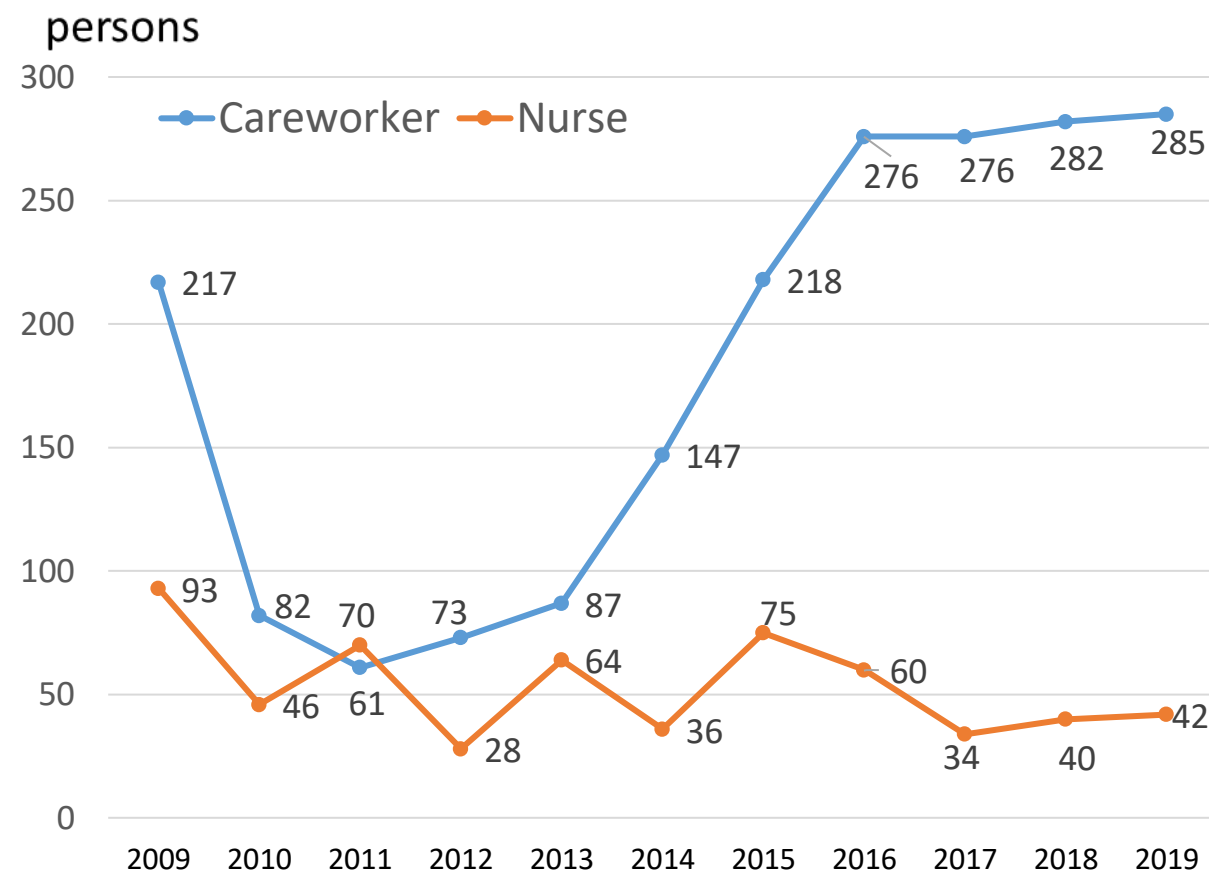
- By the end of May 2020, infected patients, residents, and staff were found at more than 200 hospitals and 70 care facilities in Japan (*Nikkei Medical*, 28 May 2020).
- It is reported that 205 or more patients infected in the hospitals had died by early June (*Mainichi Shimbun*, morning version, 8 June 2020).
- A lot of hospitals (more than 250) accepting positive patients have faced management crisis. The average of amount of their monthly loss (deficit) was around 100 million yen [940 thousands US \$] (*Asahi Shimbun*, web version, 28 July 2020).

Transition of Numbers of Indonesian and Filipino Candidates for Certified Care Worker(*Kaigo-fukushishi*) and Registered Nurse under Japan's Economic Partnership Agreements with Southeast Asian Countries (2008-2019)

Indonesians

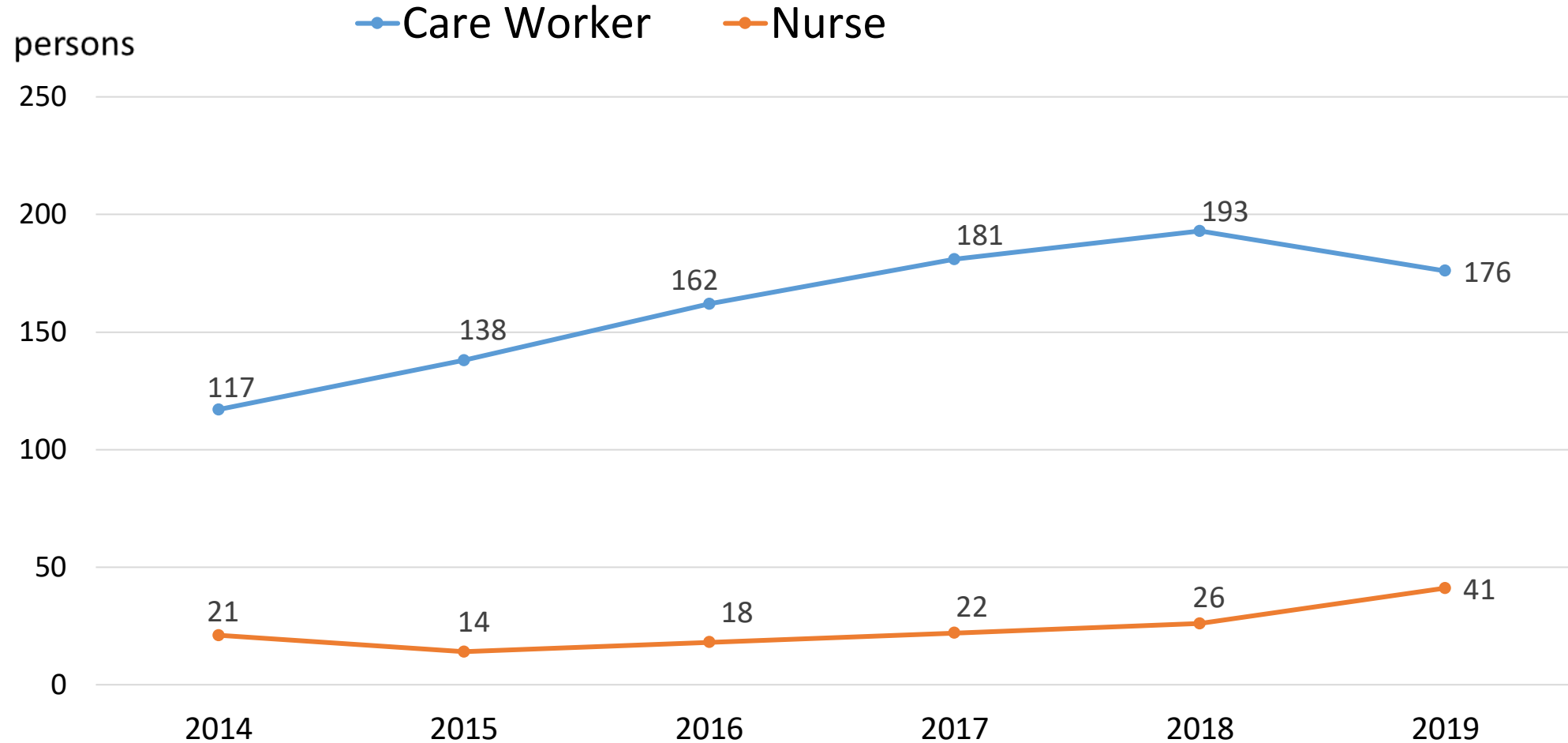


Filipinos



(note) Data obtained from JICWELS (Japan Int'l Corporation of Welfare Services) official HP

Transition of Numbers of Vietnamese Candidates for Certified Care Worker and Registered Nurse under Japan-Vietnam EPA (2014-2019)



(note) Date obtained from JICWELS official HP

Filipino Nurses and Care Workers bound for Japan under Japan-Philippines Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA)

(Photo taken in Metro Manila in May 2009)



Filipino “Registered Nurse Candidates” Studying Japanese Language at a Hospital (Photo taken Yamaguchi Prefecture in Dec.2009)



Indonesian Male Registered Nurse Mr. A Has Serious Concern More than the Time of the First Wave in Japan

At his hospital, a few of the patients and medical staff became infected with COVID-19.

Mr. A gets to work by crowded trains where he fears of infection.

Medical staff working at its special wards for COVID-19 positive patients have to stay at the nearby hotel during their assignment period.

Although Mr. A was also requested to work at the special ward in rotation, he declined it.

He explains the reason:

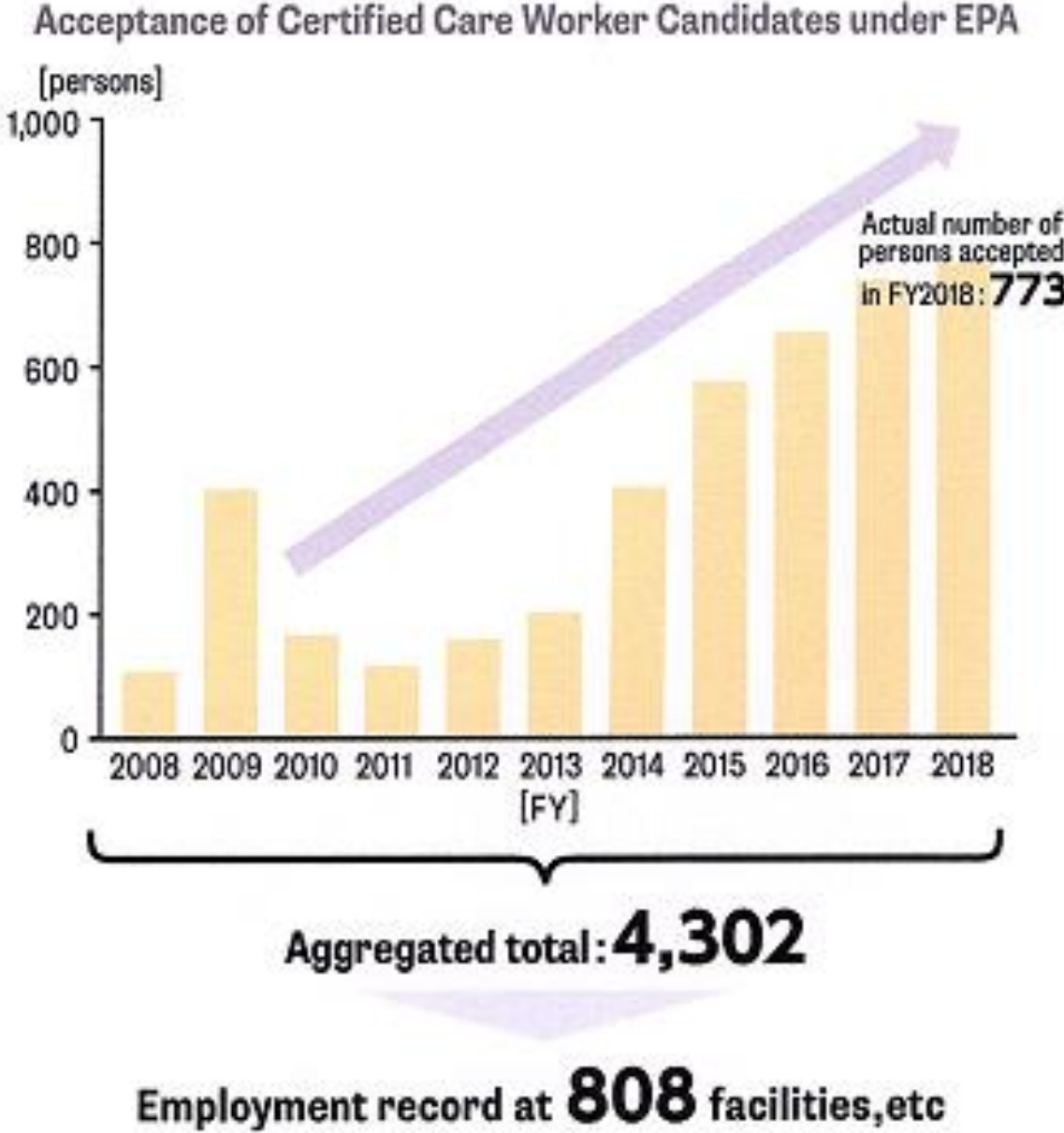
“The hotel does not provide halal food. I also have to take care of my children’s homework during this summer”

(A’s response to the presenter’s Zoom interview on 1 Aug. 2020)



(note) Photo from Heisei Medical Welfare Group HP. The interviewee is not a staff of Heisei Group.

The cumulative number of certified care worker candidates entering Japan from Indonesia, the Philippines and Vietnam under EPAs was more than 5,000 (as of 2019)



(source) Mitsubishi UFJ Research & Consulting, 2019, “ Guidebook for Care Service Providers on Employment of Foreign Care Workers”, p.4.

A Filipina EPA Certified Care Worker's Narrative during State of Emergency Declared All Over Japan

“I have been careful to avoid physical contact (*sukin tacchi*) as much as possible, but I just find myself doing it. The residents are used to be touched that way and they might feel uneasy or lonely if we stop touching them”.

(Lynette's response to the presenter's Skype interview on 26 April 2020)



Photo taken at the care facility of Jusenkai in Fukuoka Prefecture by her coworker in May 2020



A Filipina Non-EPA Care Worker's Narrative on Her Daily Life.

She has been working at a long-term care facility in Fukuoka for more than 10 years.

“ I still hug them even now in order to let their mind at ease”

“ I can understand what elder residents wish to say and ask me when I observe their eyes and mouths”

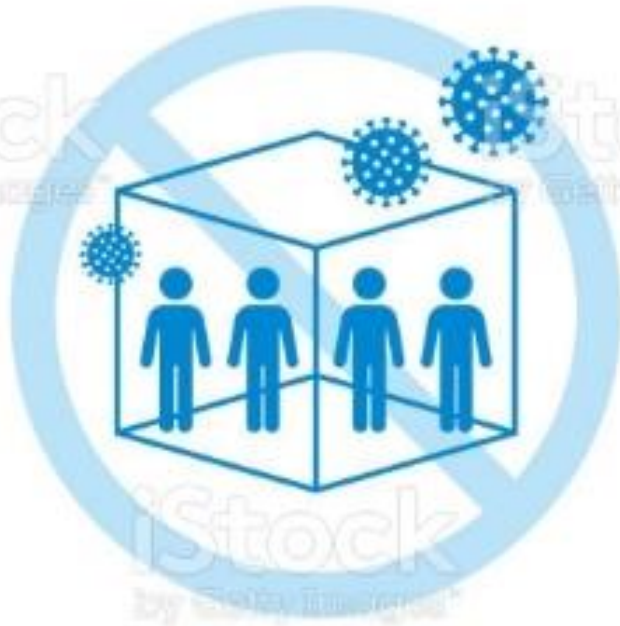
(Jennifer's response to the presenter's interview on 8 July 2020)



Filipino care workers tend to feel dilemma for Japan's Policy to Avoid the "Three Cs"

The "Three Cs" are the follows:

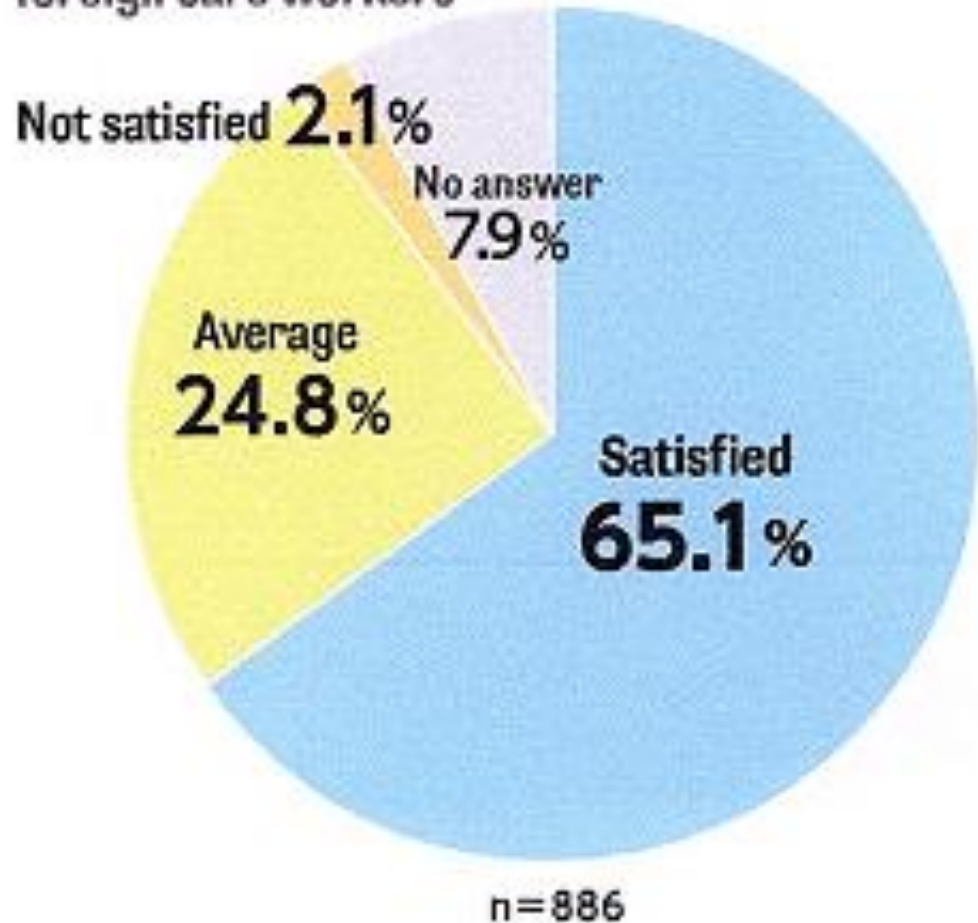
- Closed spaces Crowded places Closed-contact settings



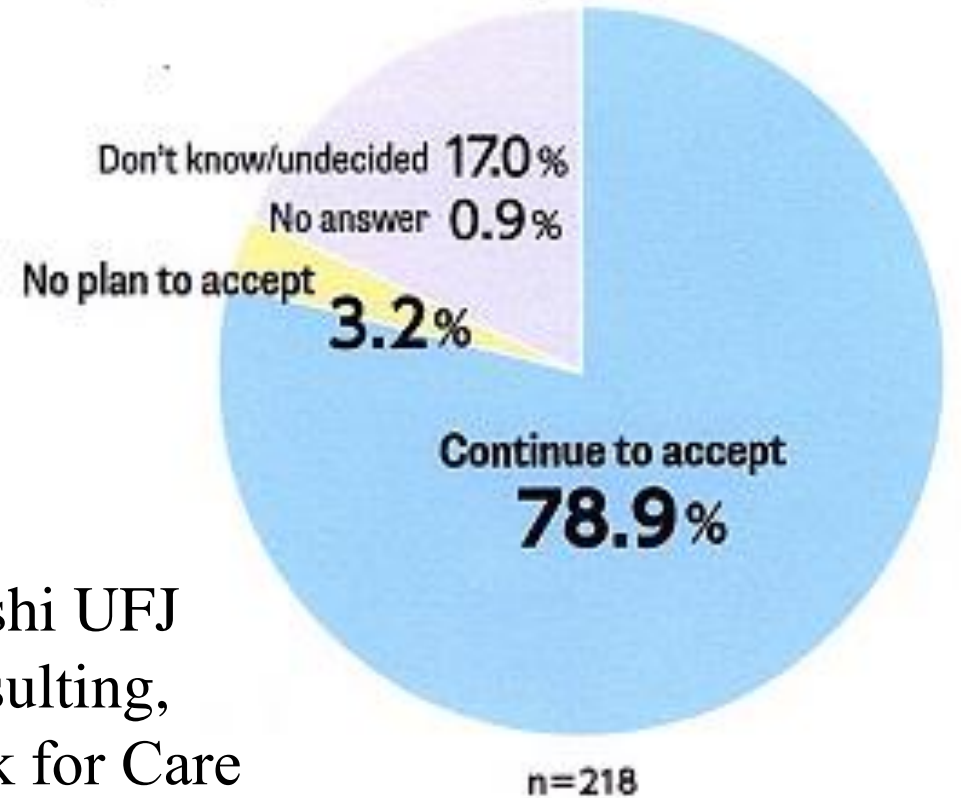
High Percentages of Satisfaction for EPA Care Workers

Most Employers Expressed Their Wishes to Continue to Accept EPA Care Workers

Quality of long-term care services provided by foreign care workers



Long-term care facilities employing EPA Care Workers



(source) Mitsubishi UFJ Research & Consulting, 2019, "Guidebook for Care Service Providers on Employment of Foreign Care Workers", p.4.

Prospect for Supply and Demand of Care Workers in Japan

	2017	2020	2025
(persons)			
Supply	1.95 million	2.06 million	2.15 million
Demand	2.08 million	2.26 million	2.53 million
Shortage	0.12 million	0.20 million	0.377 million
Fulfillment Rate	94%	91%	85%

(Source) Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, 2015, “Prospects for supply and demand of care human resources towards 2025”

EPA and 3 Other Schemes for Employing Care Workers from Abroad

In 2019, the Japanese government made a plan to accept 60,000 care workers at a maximum for next 5 years as “Specified Skilled Workers”.

They are required to acquire a certain level of Japanese language and care knowledge.

(source) Mitsubishi UFJ Research & Consulting, 2019, “Guidebook for Care Service Providers on Employment of Foreign Care Workers”, p.2.

Visa Categories

Does the foreign care worker available for employment have **certified care worker qualification**?

Can the foreign care worker **work permanently**?

EPA	Employment of Certified Care Worker Candidates under Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) → go to page 6	N/A However, the aim is to obtain qualification	After obtaining qualification, Permanent employment is possible <small>if qualification is not obtained within certain period, return to home country</small>
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Nursing Care	Employment of foreigners who graduated a certified care worker training school in Japan and have “Nursing Care” status of residence → go to page 7	Certified Care Worker	Permanent employment is possible
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Technical Intern Training	Employment of foreigners using the Technical Intern Training Program (technical intern trainee) → go to page 8	N/A Eligible to take examination if practical requirements, etc. are met	5 years maximum *1 *2
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Specified Skilled Worker	Employment of foreigners with “Specified Skilled Worker (i)” status of residence → go to page 9	N/A Eligible to take examination if practical requirements, etc. are met	5 years maximum *1 *2
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The number of **Technical Intern Trainees in care sector bound for Japan especially from Vietnam and Myanmar had increased sharply before the breakout of the pandemic**



Training for Vietnamese care workers at Hoang Long Investment Construction & Manpower Supply Joint Company in Hanoi (photo provided by the company)



Myanmar care workers trained by a Japanese certified care worker (photo made public by Myanmar Unity, a Japanese-managing manpower supply company in Yangon)

Conclusion

- In Japan, Filipinos and other care migrants' practices and minds are generally evaluated well, and thus more number of migrant care workers from neighboring Asian countries were expected to come to Japan until early 2020.
- This tendency, however, became uncertain due to prolonging global spread of COVID-19 infection. The wills and level of commitment of the Japanese government and sending countries are tested now.
- Migrant nurses and care workers have concerns and dilemmas that are not shared by Japanese workers in some cases. Their differential cultural and religious values should be taken into consideration by their employers and supervising bodies amid ongoing global crisis.

References

- Ohno, Shun, 2020, “Southeast Asian Workers on the Ground of Pandemic-Stricken Medical and Nursing Care Services in Japan: Their Daily Lives and Concerns”, *CSEAS* (Center for Southeast Asian Studies) *NEWSLETTER*, 78: TBC.
- Ohno, Shun, 2012, “Southeast Asian Nurses and Caregiving Workers Transcending the National Boundaries: An Overview of Indonesian and Filipino Workers in Japan and Abroad”, *Southeast Asian Studies*, Vol.49, No.4, pp.541-569.