



**Health and Long-Term Care for
Aging Populations:
Are International Workers the Solution?**

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**Presentation to the
International Organization for Migration
Geneva, Switzerland**

March 23, 2006



The Issue

- OECD long-term care survey found “staff shortages and staff qualifications” were by far the most frequently mentioned concerns
- Nurse shortages are predicted worldwide in almost all developed countries
- Many African countries have <20 nurses per 100,000 (>1,000 in Norway and Finland)
- Disproportionate numbers of migrating healthcare workers are in LTC settings

Social, Economic, and Demographic Features

- Demographic Factors
- Skill Levels and Working Conditions
- Gender and Race
- Historical and Geographic Relations

Demographic Factors in Developed Countries

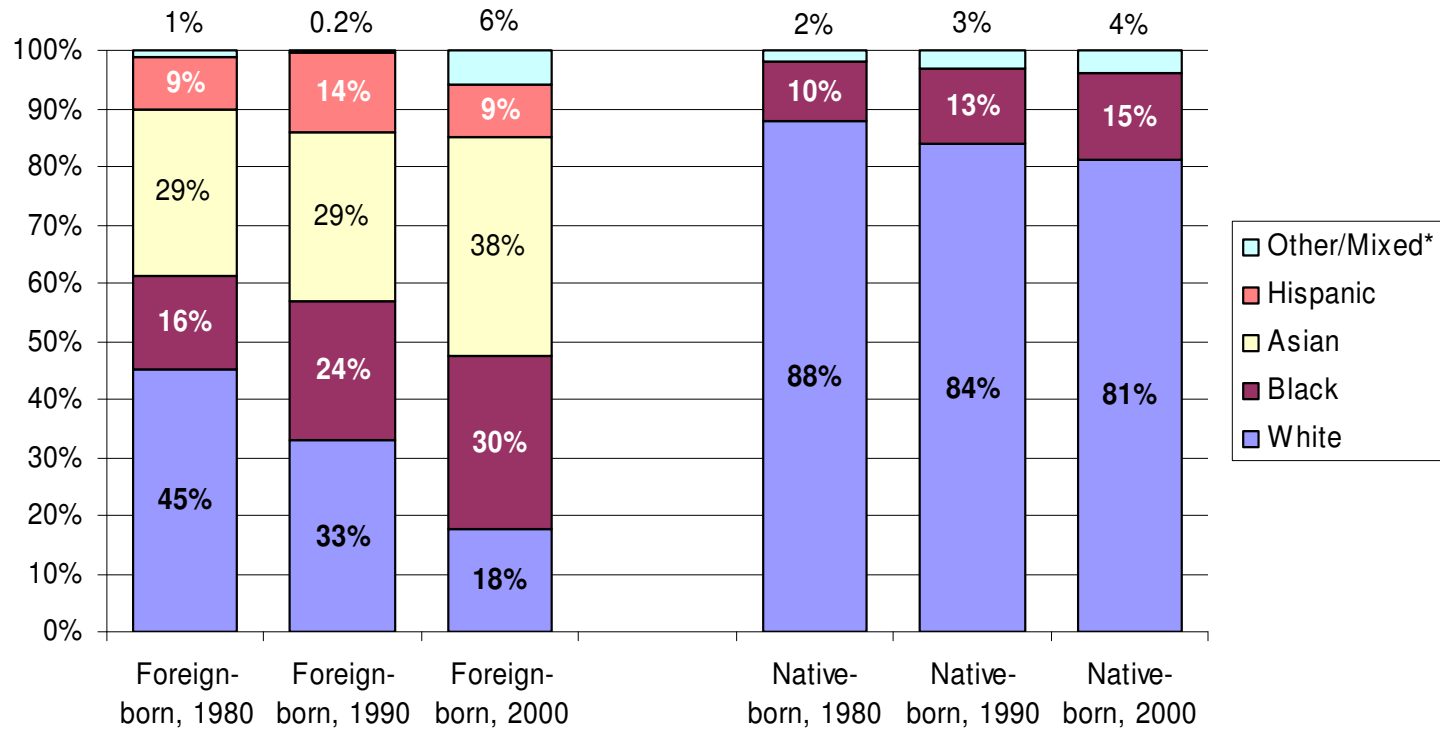
- Number of very old increasing
- Number of working age decreasing
- Italy and Japan, the percentage of people age 80 and older is projected to more than triple, from 5 percent to nearly 17 percent by 2050; however, the number of working age people (age 15–64) is projected to decline by 38 percent during that period.

Skill Levels and Working Conditions

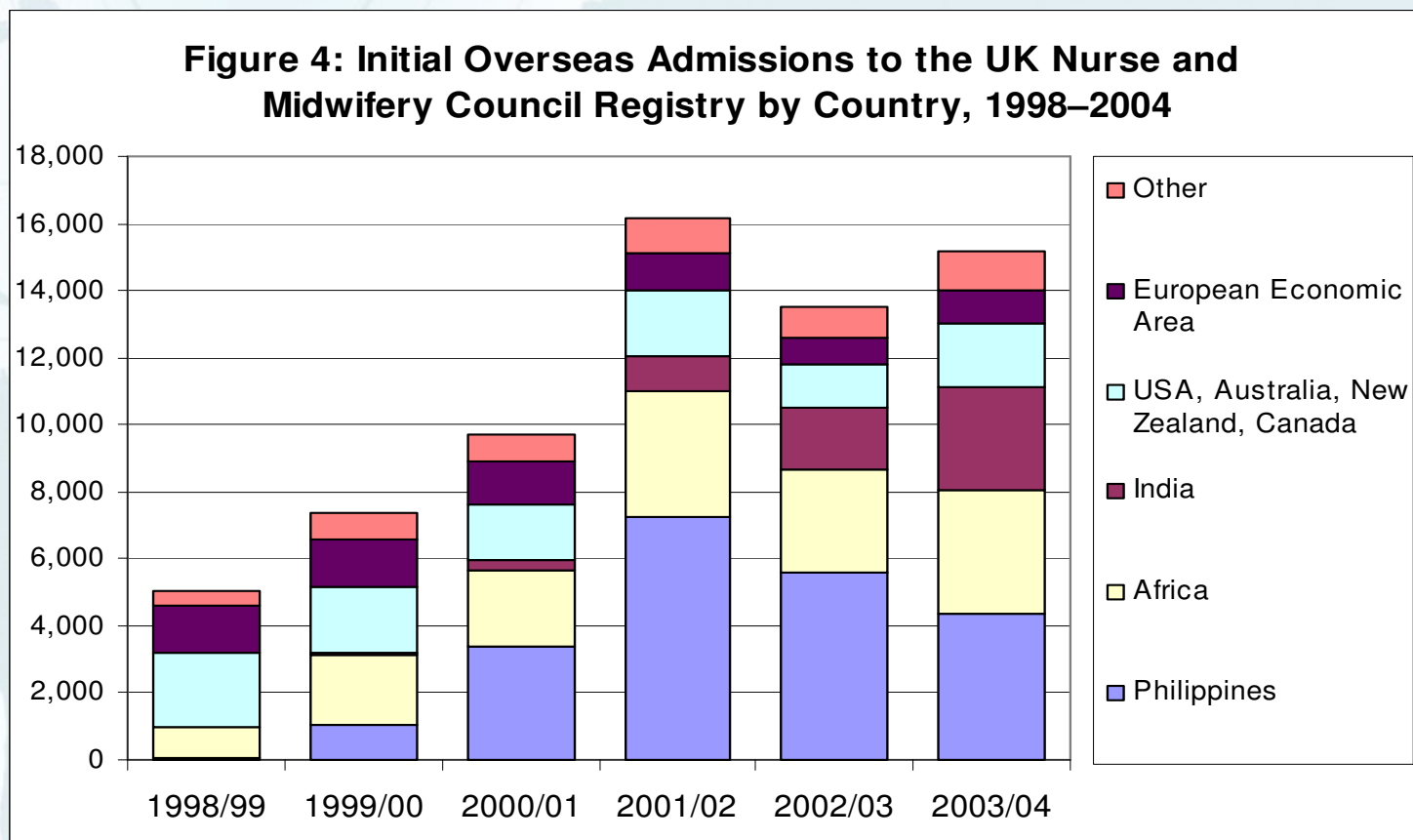
- High skill market – The UK and the US each licensed more than 15,000 foreign-trained nurses last year.
- Lower skill market – Over half of foreign-born LTC aides in US come from Latin America and the Caribbean islands.
- Gray market – Half a million international workers, mostly irregular, provide supportive services to older people in their homes in Italy.

Gender and Race

Figure 2: Race/Ethnicity of Foreign- and Native-born Nurses in Long-Term Care Settings, 1980–2000



Historical and Geographical Relations



Policy Decisions

- Long-Term Care Financing Policies
- Immigration Policies
- Education and Credentialing
- Worker Recruitment

Long-Term Care Financing Policies

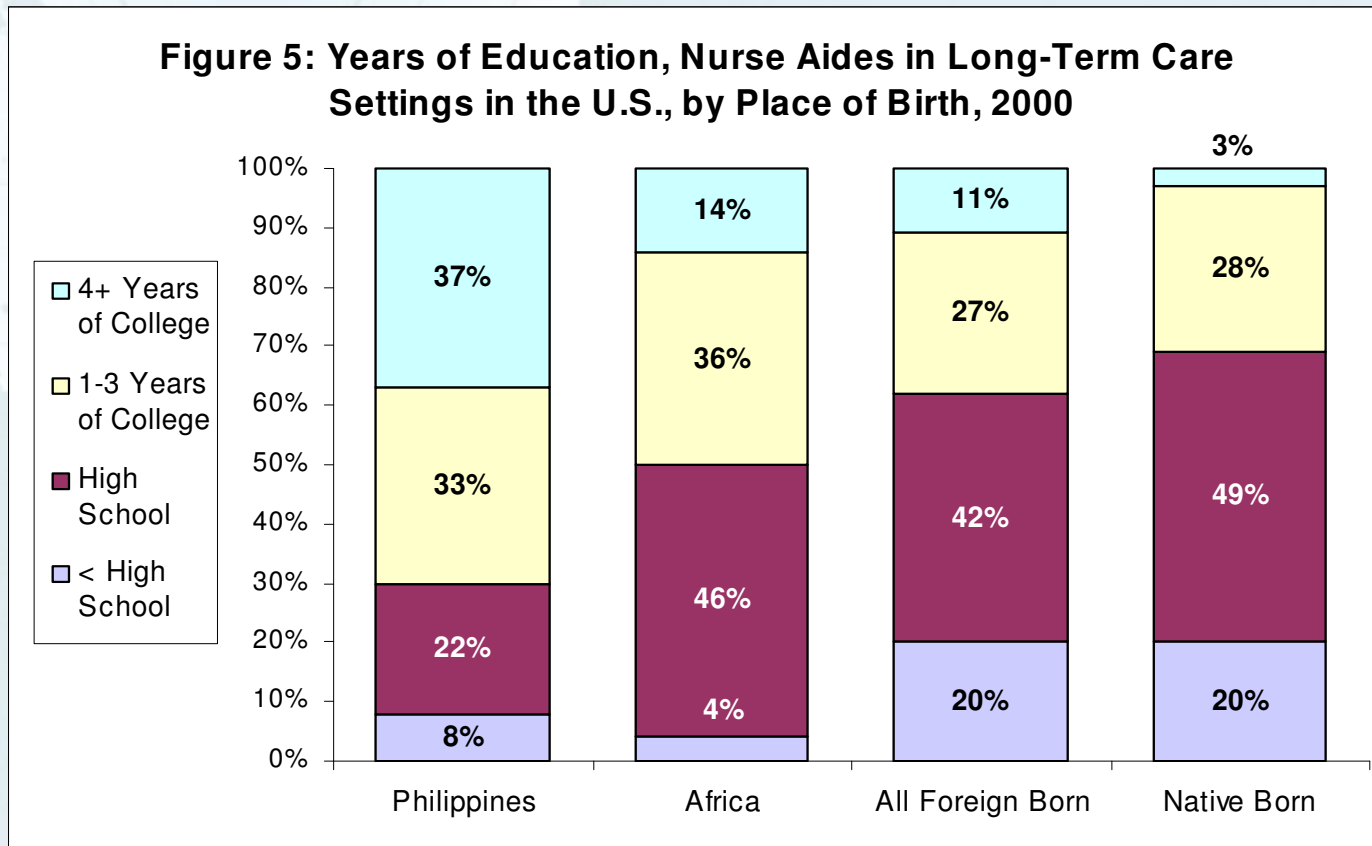
- Higher percentage of public spending for LTC, professional services – Scandinavia
- Moderate public pay, cash benefits – Germany, Austria
- Moderate public pay, means-tested – UK, US
- Low public pay, strong family responsibility – Italy, Spain

Immigration Policies

- **Unilateral** – e.g., special visa incentives for healthcare workers, UK and US
- **Multi-lateral** – e.g., EU expansion, though labor markets remained restricted
- **Bi-lateral** – e.g., UK/South Africa agreement

Education and Credentialing

Figure 5: Years of Education, Nurse Aides in Long-Term Care Settings in the U.S., by Place of Birth, 2000



Worker Recruitment

- Many codes of ethics from governmental, international agreements, and NGOs, but...
- Study found “support systems, incentives and sanctions, and monitoring systems necessary for effective implementation and sustainability are currently weak or have not been planned”
- For example, one in four overseas nurses qualified in the UK in 2002–2003 was from a country on its proscribed list

Japan

- Old age dependency ratio – 30 people 65+ for every 100 15-64; will rise to 77 by 2050
- Number needing LTC – will rise from 2.8 million to 5.2 million in 2025
- Percent GDP spent on LTC – 0.83%
- Percent of country foreign – 1%, only 110 foreign “medical service” workers
- Percent opposed to allowing foreign workers – 83%
- Recent agreement with Philippines allows 100 nurses in first year, but opposed by Japanese Nurses Association

Scandinavian Countries

- Old age dependency ratio – Sweden, 26 will rise to 68 in 2050; Norway, 23 will rise to 42
- Percent of GDP spent on LTC – Sweden, 2.89%; Norway, 2.15%
- Percent of population foreign – Sweden, 12.0%; Norway, 7.3%
- Both taking steps to increase foreign workers, mostly from Eastern Europe

Italy

- Old age dependency ratio – 30 projected to rise to 75 in 2050
- Percent of population foreign – 2.5%
- Percent 65+ in institutions – 2.2%
- Percent domestic workers who are foreign – 80%
- Number of foreign domestic workers serving older persons – Roughly one half million

Austria

- Old age dependency ratio – 25 projected to rise to 55 in 2050
- Older persons receiving institutional care – 3.6%
- Percent receiving LTC allowances for home care – 15%
- Percent of population foreign-born – 12.5%
- Many short-term in-home workers from Central and Eastern Europe

United Kingdom

- Old age dependency ratio – 24 projected to rise to 38 in 2050
- Percent of GDP spent on LTC – 1.37%
- Percent of population foreign-born – 8.3%
- Percent of newly licensed nurses foreign-trained (2003/04) – 43.8%
- Percent of newly licensed nurses from developing countries – approx. 80%

United States

- Old age dependency ratio – 15 projected to rise to 32 in 2050
- Percent GDP spent on LTC – 1.29%
- Percent population foreign-born – 12.3%
- Percent of newly licensed RNs foreign-trained – 15%
- Percent of nurses in LTC settings who are foreign-born – 16% (up from 6% in 1980)

Conclusions

No one solution fits all situations

- Different migration patterns
- Different labor needs in developed countries
- Different needs in the developing countries that are the source of long-term care workers
- Different skill levels reflect different needs
- Different policy areas and objectives

Call for different types of engagement between developed and developing countries

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