

Foreign domestic workers' living conditions survey

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for Transient Workers Count Too

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Chapter 1 - Introduction

In Singapore's current fast-paced society, where it is the norm for both spouses to work, foreign domestic workers (FDWs) form a crucial part of our daily lives – they take over tasks that most Singaporeans do not have the time to carry out within the household, from daily chores to being caretakers of children, the elderly and even pets or plants.

In recent years, the number of FDWs has increased steadily. The latest numbers from Ministry of Manpower (MOM), as of December 2015, reported that there are approximately 231,500 FDWs in Singapore. This is about 23% of the 997,100 Work Permit holders¹. In Singapore, the predominant countries of origin of FDWs are Indonesia, Philippines and Myanmar, respectively making up approximately 50%², 30%³ and 15%⁴ of the FDW population. Other approved source countries include Bangladesh, Hong Kong, India, Macau, Malaysia, South Korea, Sri Lanka, Taiwan and Thailand.

Despite their significant numbers, FDWs remain a vulnerable population in Singapore. Their vulnerability starts the moment they leave their homes and travel to a foreign land for a relatively long timeframe, having lost most, if not all, of the support and familiar surroundings that they used to have. Vulnerability is further increased when their living space is their working place - the lack of delineation between these two may increase the possibility of abuse and

¹ Publication: MOM. *Foreign Workforce Numbers*. Mar 2016.

See: <http://www.mom.gov.sg/documents-and-publications/foreign-workforce-numbers>

² Newspaper: The Straits Times. *Demand for Indonesian maids likely to fall in Singapore after pay rise*. Nov 2015.

See: <http://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/manpower/demand-for-indonesian-maids-likely-to-fall-in-singapore-after-pay-rise>

³ Newspaper: Asia One. *Philippine Embassy tightens maid supply to Singapore*. Dec 2015.

See: <http://news.asiaone.com/news/singapore/philippine-embassy-tightens-maid-supply-singapore>

⁴ Newspaper: Channel NewsAsia. *Myanmar helpers could be preferred after wage rise for Indonesians: Maid agencies*. Nov 2015.

See: <http://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/singapore/myanmar-helpers-could-be/2258354.html>

mistreatment, especially as there is power imbalance between employer and employee. This concern is not unfounded, as suggested by the number of reported abuse and mistreatment cases, which seem to have increased sharply within the past two years⁵. While countries of origin are reinforcing regulations, imposing bans and restrictions, the results do not seem that evident, given the paucity of improvements on the whole.

With working and living spaces merged, the conditions of these work-life spaces are key to the general wellbeing of the FDWs. According to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (see Appendix C, (I)), there are five different hierarchical levels of motivational needs, each of which can only be sought after if the previous need is fulfilled. Acknowledging the non-exhaustive list of differences found between FDWs and their employers such as background and culture, we understand that not all five needs can be addressed and fulfilled within each employment situation. However, we do believe that the four fundamental deficiency needs, which consists of 1) physiological: food, water and shelter, 2) safety: security of employment, health and body 3) love/belonging: family and friendship and 4) esteem: status and respect by others, can be and should be attained to provide FDWs a proper work-life space. Henceforth, we will look at the provision of basic amenities and delve deeper for any underlying factors or reasons that contribute to this basic provision not being met.

To counter the persistent problem of poor living conditions, the Indonesian government announced in May 2016 its intention to stop nationals going abroad as live-in FDWs abroad as early as 2017. This move was said to accord with the belief that the separation of working and living spaces will substantially help in reducing abuse and mistreatment of FDWs in countries of destination.

While the feasibility of the live-out solution is not the main focus of this report, we hope that it will shed some light on the problems prompting this policy announcement and offer pointers on the direction of the basic dormitory or accommodation arrangements that will be needed for live-out workers, in order to completely eradicate the root problem of poor living conditions of FDWs.

⁵ Newspaper: The Straits Times. *Courts see more cases of maids being abused*. Jul 2015.
See: <http://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/courts-see-more-cases-of-maids-being-abused>

Chapter 2 - Methodology

This survey was carried out over a period of two years between June 2014 and May 2016, mostly on the monthly Sunday outreach sessions organised by TWC2. 472 female Work Permit holding FDWs were approached and surveyed face-to-face mainly in locations where FDWs usually congregate, namely City Plaza at Paya Lebar, Esplanade at City Hall, Lucky Plaza at Orchard and the Singapore Botanic Gardens. Other than these four locations, there was also a sprinkling of respondents from other locations.

The survey was carried out by two main groups - 1) volunteers and interns of TWC2 (throughout the 24-months duration) and 2) students from a local polytechnic (in two waves in November 2015 and May 2016). To facilitate survey-taking, interviewers would first attempt to build a certain level of trust with the respondents by identifying themselves with a flyer that contains the organisation's information. Thereafter, if the targeted respondent is keen, the survey took place with the interviewer asking questions and recording responses either online or on hard copy forms. To yield more accurate responses, we tried to group volunteers or students according to their language proficiency that corresponds with the nationality of FDWs expected to congregate in a specific location. For instance, Myanmar students from the local polytechnic were sent to Esplanade, where Myanmar FDWs usually congregate, while Malay volunteers and students were covered City Plaza, where Indonesian FDWs usually are. Filipino FDWs usually have the best command of English language, and so there was no significant language barrier during our surveys with them.

Like any quantitative research, this survey research is only able to explore the topic of living conditions in brief and without fine details. We also acknowledge that this survey has its unique flaws and biases. First, as most surveys were conducted on Sundays, there could be a case of more favourable sets of conditions found as. This is based on TWC2's experience: FDWs who are allowed weekly days-off (normally taken on Sundays) are more likely to have better treatment, including living conditions, from their employers. Second, since only a handful of locations were selected, we may have missed surveying a certain subset of FDWs that gather in other less-known locations. Third, the unequal level of language proficiencies between interviewers and respondents may result in some form of misinterpretation, hence affecting the accuracy of results. Lastly, the willingness of respondents may also influence the representativeness of results. Feedback gathered from the survey sessions indicated that FDWs who have been in Singapore for a longer duration are much more confident in answering questions and giving explanations, due to both the familiarity with Singapore society and their better language command. On the other hand, those who are relatively new in Singapore may require assistance from the former, thus, there is a risk of secondhand information being passed on and recorded by the interviewer. Another factor that may affect willingness is the nationality of FDWs, for we received feedback that some nationalities are less receptive and approachable

as compared to the others. A snapshot at the survey results show that, while Indonesians make up half of the FDW population in Singapore, there seems to be more Filipinos surveyed, which can be seen in our subsequent discussion of results. Since the latter category are paid slightly better, the results may also be skewed towards a more favourable side, for there could be a correlation between better salaries and better living treatment, including living conditions. TWC2 acknowledges that these potential flaws may affect the results to some extent or another. Nevertheless, we think the survey provides some valuable insights.

Chapter 3 – Profile of respondents

In our survey, we asked respondents to select an option to the question of “Nationality of Respondents”. This question yielded a total of 472 valid responses from seven different countries as listed in Figure 1, with two respondents giving a “No Answer”. Most of our respondents came from the main three countries of origin for foreign domestic workers (FDWs) - Indonesia, Philippines and Myanmar.

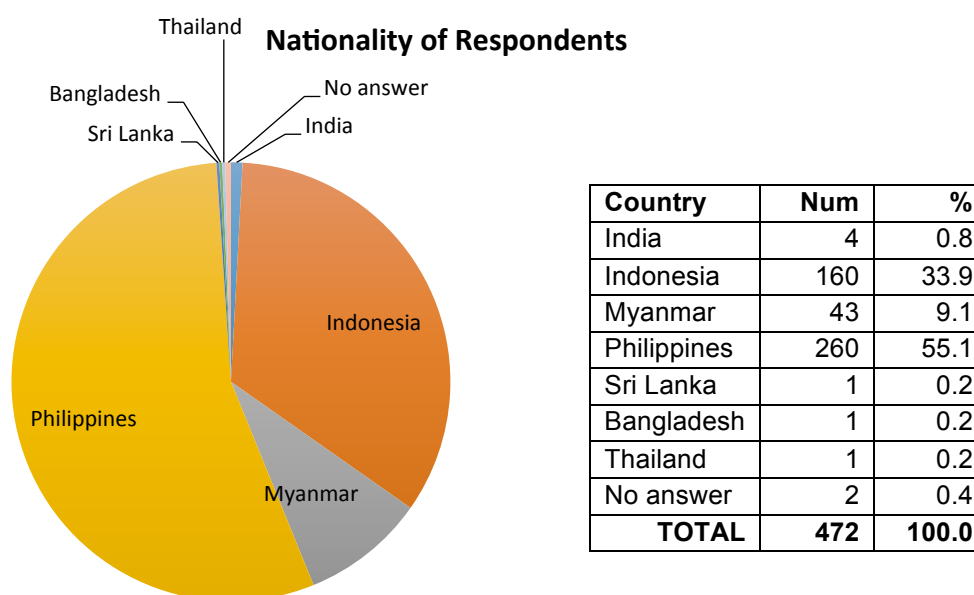
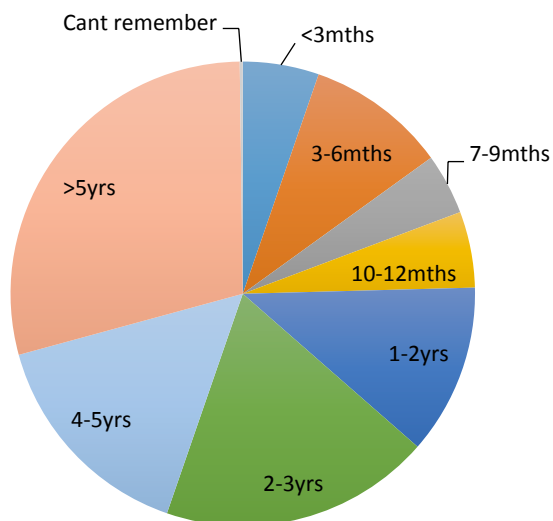


Figure 1

Notably, we see an overrepresentation of the Filipino FDWs in our surveys even though they only make up an approximate 30% of the whole FDW population in Singapore. Comparatively, the Indonesians FDWs are being underrepresented, as they should yield 50% of the responses in order for the sample to be more precise for generalisation of the population. One reason for this could be the choice of survey locations. While we attempted to carefully select the various locations from among the different enclaves where different nationalities congregate, unforeseen circumstances such as weather or turnout for the particular dates were not within our control. Two other important reasons that could result in the Filipino FDWs being overrepresented could be their characteristic of (1) higher likelihood of getting Sundays off and (2) better command of English. Both reasons increase the likelihood of more Filipinos FDWs being surveyed. As aforementioned, this overrepresentation will skew the survey results towards a more favourable side, for there could be a correlation between salary level and better treatment.

Length of Employment with Current Employer



Length	Num	%
<3mths	25	5.3
3-6mths	46	9.7
7-9mths	20	4.2
10-12mths	25	5.3
1-2yrs	56	11.9
2-3yrs	89	18.9
4-5yrs	73	15.5
>5yrs	137	29.0
Cant remember	1	0.2
TOTAL	472	100.0

Figure 2

Regrouping the results of Figure 2, we find that around one-quarter of our respondents has been working with the current employment for a maximum of one year, around half for one to five years, and the last quarter for more than five years.

Additionally, we would like to highlight that these responses only shows the length of employment with current employer – it does not show the length of stay in Singapore thus far, as some FDWs may have changed employer and this is not captured in the results. Future research may include the question of “How long have you been working in Singapore” and “How many employers have you had before this current employer” so as to illustrate a better picture of employment trends that may also be useful in further cross-analysis.

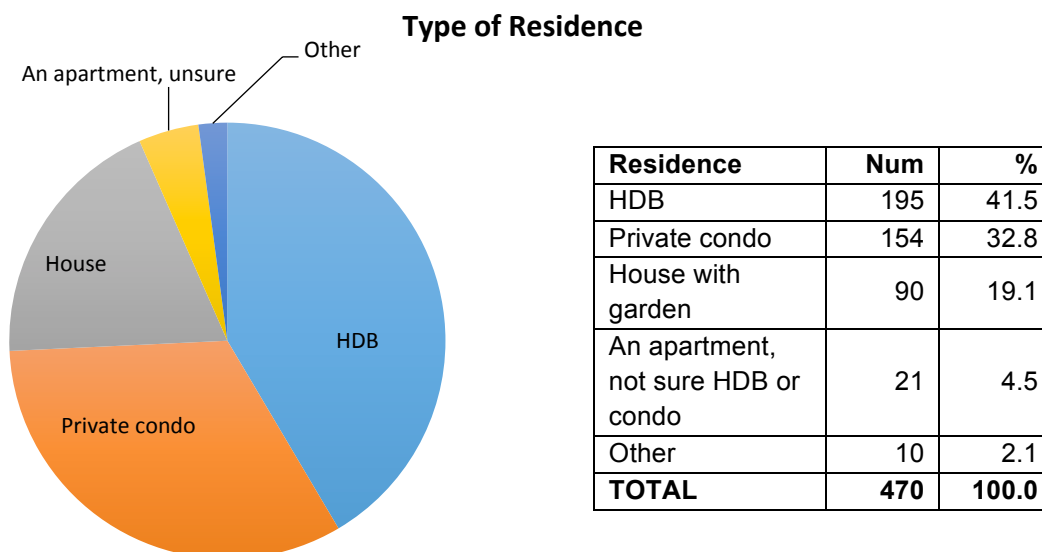


Figure 3

We asked about the type of residence that the FDWs are currently employed in and the responses with the various options given are as shown in Figure 3. Some 5% were unsure of whether the residence they were in was a private condominium or an HDB flat, and some 2% cited 'Others' as the response, with further elaboration such as rented property, shophouse, cluster house. To heighten accuracy, these two options are deemed as invalid responses and hence, only responses 'HDB', 'Private Condominium' and 'House with Garden' were used for analysis in this report, as seen in Figure 4.

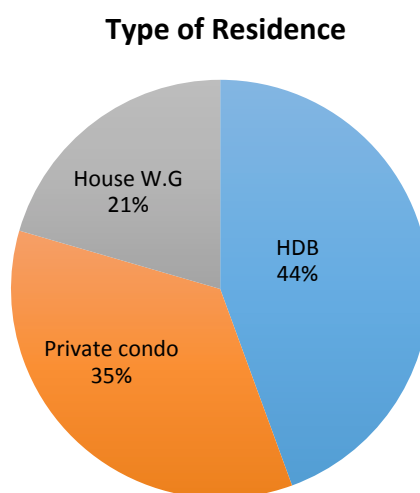


Figure 4

Therefore among the 439 valid responses for this question, we found, in every 20 FDWs, nine FDWs working in an HDB flat, seven in a private condominium and four in a house with garden.

Chapter 4 – Results: Personal space

Many foreign domestic workers are deprived of basic privacy and space. Since there is no clear delineation between working and living spaces for FDWs, we would consider personal space to be one of the top priorities, for it is the only private sphere an FDW can have. Furthermore, sleep is considered as the fundamental physiological need of the Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. Proper sleep requires the security of proper personal space. To get a better picture of the current situation, we asked questions to find out the type of rooms FDWs sleep in, the number of people they are sharing the room with and the type of bed they sleep on.

For the question on the type of rooms respondents sleep in, we have the following responses, as seen in Figure 5.

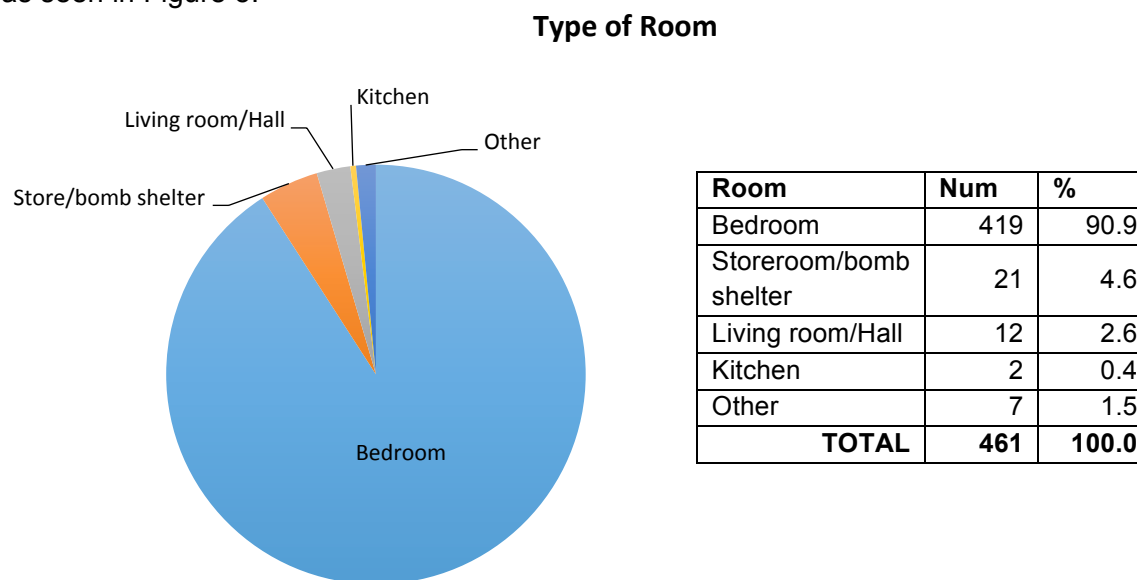


Figure 5

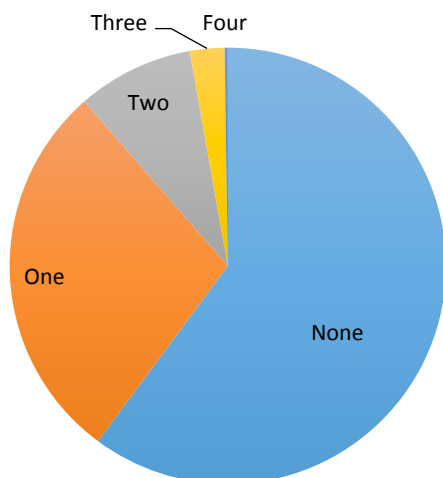
Although it is good to be able to note that more than 90% of the 461 respondents said they slept in a bedroom, the remaining handful of employers should work to provide all FDWs with a proper bedroom to sleep and rest in. While it is already problematic that 4.6% are assigned the 'storeroom/bomb shelter', the 14 FDWs sleeping in the living room and kitchen give even greater cause for concern as those are common spaces without any privacy.

In both living rooms and kitchens, FDWs do not have a proper enclosed area to call their own. Their actions are usually being monitored and FDWs may not be able to totally relax and unwind even during their resting time, due to family activity around them. In the long run, this will be detrimental to their mental health. Akin to any other service sectors, domestic work requires a

certain amount of emotional labour - FDWs are constantly on their toes to ensure their best behaviour amidst the high demands of work, for fear of losing their job. This fear is exacerbated by the full control of the employer over the FDW's presence in Singapore, for the former can cancel the latter's Work Permit and repatriate her without notice. Therefore, having a proper alone-space will serve as a good outlet for the release of negative emotions, preventing emotional exhaustion. In addition, sleeping in living rooms/halls and kitchens also translates to higher risks of disturbed sleep, outrage of modesty, gas and fire hazard.

Delving deeper into the personal space of FDWs, we also look at another crucial aspect - room sharing.

No. of Co-sharers



Pax	Num	%
None	258	60.1
One	122	28.4
Two	37	8.6
Three	11	2.6
Four	1	0.2
TOTAL	429	100.0

Figure 6

Analysing the 429 valid responses for this question (Figure 6), we see that for every 10 FDWs, only six of them have their own alone space (including storerooms, living rooms and kitchen) to sleep in. The other four FDWs could be sharing rooms with up to three other people. However, the only response of 'four pax' is disregarded in this case, as it could be a case of an extreme outlier and hence not significant nor representative, or could be a case of misinterpretation by the respondent as a question asking, "How many others stay in the **house** with the FDW?"

Factoring out FDWs who have a private sleeping space and the outlier response mentioned above, an average of 1.35 co-sharers was calculated amongst the subset of FDWs who are sharing their sleeping space with others. This offers another perspective on the limited personal sleeping space FDWs in Singapore may expect to have.

Amongst the subset of FDWs who are sharing their sleeping spaces, we inquired further into the profiles of the co-sharers (see Appendix B, Figures 35(A) & 35(B)). FDWs were asked to indicate how many of each category of profile they were co-sharing with, selecting from the options of 'Child, 0-11 years old', 'Teenager, 12-19 years old', 'Healthy Adult' and 'Elderly that needs help' of males and females respectively. Looking at the breakdown of this subset, we see two issues that should be highlighted here.

First, as shown above, we have a handful of FDWs co-sharing with three other people. This includes eight FDWs sharing with three children each, one sharing with three female teenagers and two sharing with three female adults each. This translates to very limited private space, notwithstanding that some of them willingly share rooms with other individuals, especially with children.

Second and more importantly, we see a significant 15% (25 FDWs) of this subset sharing rooms with both female and male teenagers or healthy adults. And out of this 15%, a troubling one-third (5%, 9 FDWs) share rooms with (teenage and healthy adult) males only. This figure excludes the four other FDWs who were sharing with an elderly male who needed assistance. Having to share a room with a male teenager or adult fails to offer FDWs with the sense of body safety in Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, as they are at risk of outrage of modesty.

Moreover, this arrangement is definitely against the MOM guideline to protect FDWs' modesty. The guidelines states that "your FDW must not sleep in the same room as a male adult or teenager"⁶. In a recent report by The Straits Times⁷, it is stated that employers who are found to flout this regulation can be fined up to \$10,000 or face a jail term of up to a year or both. This penalty is, however, not stated clearly in the MOM guidelines webpage and employers could think of the requirement as a recommendation rather than a necessity.

Were the non-elderly males also disabled in some way, such that there was a need for an FDW to share the same room? We didn't ask this questions explicitly, but the proportion of 5% that we found is larger than the prevalence rate of the disabled population at 3%, an estimate in the Enabling Masterplan 2012-2016. It does not appear as if having a disabled non-elderly male was a general reason for making the FDW share the room. In any case, similar to school dormitories, university hostels and army bunks, rooms should always be gender-segregated. Mixed gender accommodation should never be assigned, even if it is said that there are no alternatives. This key finding from our survey highlights a hitherto invisible problem. While

⁶ Website: MOM. *Rest days and well-being for foreign domestic worker*. Mar 2016. See: <http://www.mom.gov.sg/passes-and-permits/work-permit-for-foreign-domestic-worker/employers-guide/rest-days-and-well-being>

Employer's Guide: Accommodation – Modesty

⁷ Newspaper: The Straits Times. *Four in 10 maids sleep in shared room: Poll*. Jun 2016. See: <http://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/four-in-10-maids-sleep-in-shared-room-poll>

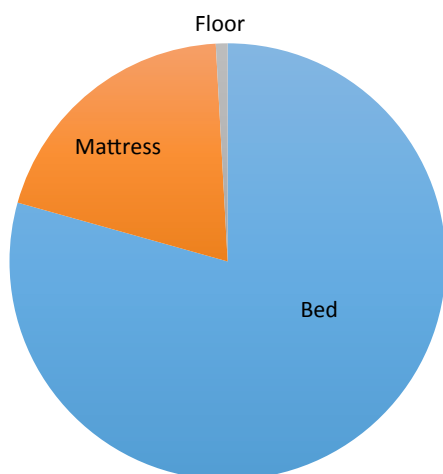
MOM's regulations are in place, there is a need for greater publicity to be given to it and stronger enforcement.

In both “Type of Room” and “Number of Co-sharers”, we see the problem of lack of privacy and space in the FDWs’ accommodation. This may be attributed to the vague guidelines of the Ministry of Manpower (MOM). They state that all employers “should provide your FDW with a separate room. If that is not possible, you [employers] should ensure that her accommodation has adequate space and privacy”⁸. With no strict rule that prohibits sleeping in common areas (living room and kitchen) within the house and giving employers freedom to interpret the guidelines, implementation is bound to be subject to their own discretion. The vague guidelines may also have led to the situation of co-sharing, as they state a requirement for “adequate space and privacy” but yet offer no clear definition of how much is adequate. Clearer rules should be drawn up in order to house all FDWs in proper sleeping conditions for both their physical safety and mental well-being.

Both aspects of “Type of Room” and “Number of Co-sharers” will, in some way, determine and translate to the “Type of Bed”, as there is a need for spatial consideration.

Respondents were given seven options to choose from - ‘Single bed’, ‘Double bed’, ‘Trundle bed’, ‘Lower bunk’, ‘Upper bunk’, ‘Roll-out mattress’ and ‘Floor, no mattress’ - with illustrations included within the survey form. From the responses gathered, we regrouped them into three categories - ‘Bed’, ‘Mattress’ and ‘Floor’, as shown in Figure 7.

Type of Bed



Pax	Num	%
Bed	365	79.3
Single	281	61.1
Double	36	7.8
Trundle	21	4.6
Lower bunk	14	3.0
Upper bunk	13	2.8
Mattress	91	19.8
Floor	4	0.9
TOTAL	460	100.0

Figure 7

⁸ Employer's Guide: Accommodation – Space and privacy

The MOM guideline on basic amenities to provide for a FDW that states “minimally provide your FDW with a mattress, pillow and blanket”⁹ has a high rate of compliance: only four out of 460 responses revealed failure to meet this requirement. Out of these four FDWs, one was sleeping in the living room (alone), two in store room (alone) and one in a bedroom (with someone else). As noted, sleeping on the floor with no mattress is likely to be due to the lack of space in common or shared space. However, this is no defense for the lack of proper bedding for the FDWs.

While 99% of FDWs surveyed having bedding that meets the MOM’s guideline could be a good sign, we would like to push for further improvement by advocating for proper beds for the FDWs. Having only mattress reinforces and instills the same sense of temporariness that the documents and lack of social rights of FDWs does, emphasising her transient identity. While the structural shape of a dwelling is out of an employer’s hands, s/he could at the very least act within his capability to decrease the pressure and insecurity that accompanies the FDW’s status. Since the sleeping area is the only private sphere and space that a FDW can possess, it would definitely help if there were proper permanent bedding instead of the temporariness of a moveable mattress. The feeling of permanency would in turn help a FDW integrate better into a foreign place, therefore improving her well-being.

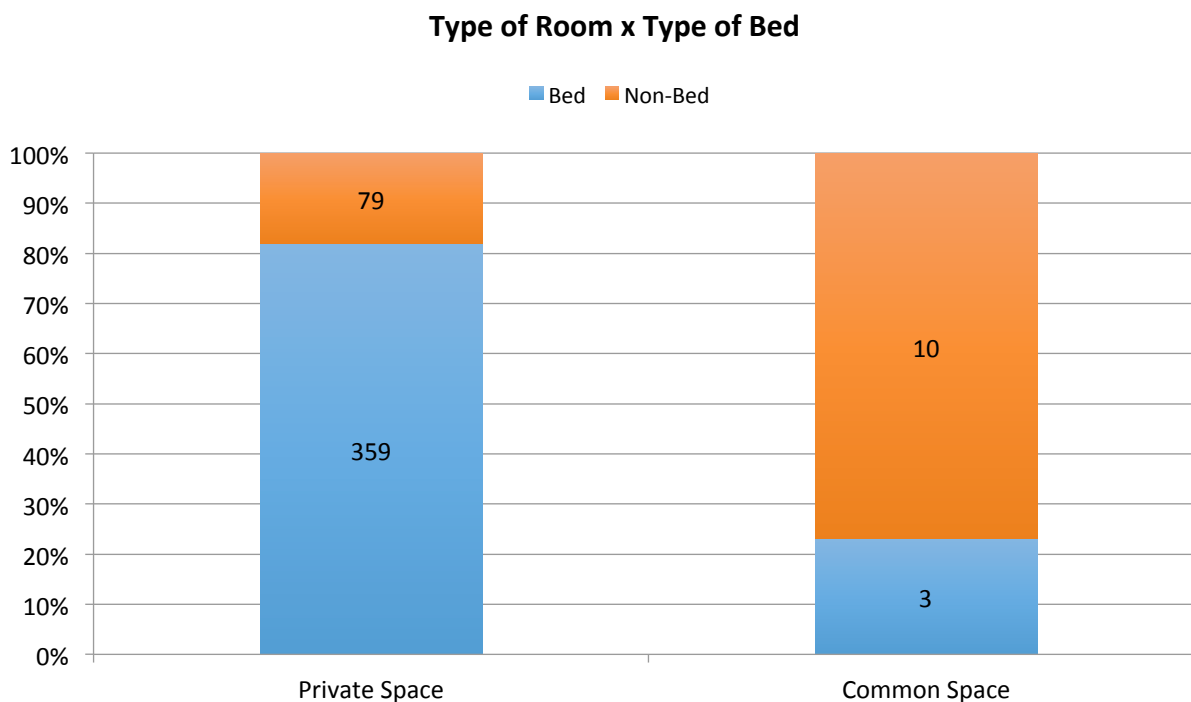


Figure 8

⁹ Employer’s Guide: Accommodation – Basic amenities

From a cross analysis (Figure 8) carried out between “Type of Room”, which was regrouped into ‘Private Space’ i.e. bedroom and storeroom and ‘Common Space’ i.e. living room/hall and kitchen, and “Type of Bed”, which was regrouped into ‘Bed’ and ‘Non-Bed’ i.e. mattress and floor, we see a relatively strong relationship found between the two variables: FDWs who had a private space to sleep in were more likely to have a proper and permanent bedding to rest on as compared to their counterparts who were sleeping in common spaces. Hence, provision of proper beds for all would first require providing FDWs to have a private space to sleep in. This value of this space would be better enhanced as a private area for the FDWs if it were their individual space, with no co-sharing.

Although the above points on “Type of Room”, “Number of Co-sharers” and “Type of Bed” do offer a better insight into the quality of living conditions, especially of personal and private space, we do recognise some limitations to these results. Future research should also probe into the number of people living in a household and the number of rooms in the dwelling place, allowing us to better understand if the inadequate accommodation and basic amenities such as not giving the FDW a proper bedroom and bedding are due to there being no alternative or a case of intentional mistreatment. With a fuller understanding, we will then be able to propose recommendations such as an assessment by the authorities of living conditions, prior to issuance of work permits.

Chapter 5 – Results: Rest & work hours

FDWs surveyed were asked both the time they usually woke up (Figure 9) and the time they went to bed (Figure 10) on a typical weekday. Since the individual results for each question do not reveal much, the questions were merged together to show their sleeping hours, with results as in Figure 11.

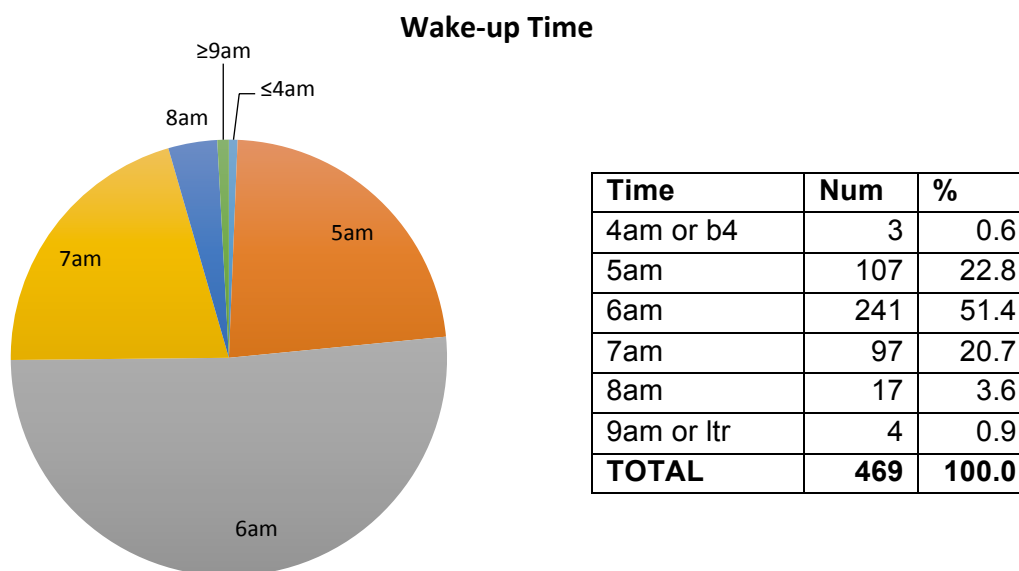


Figure 9

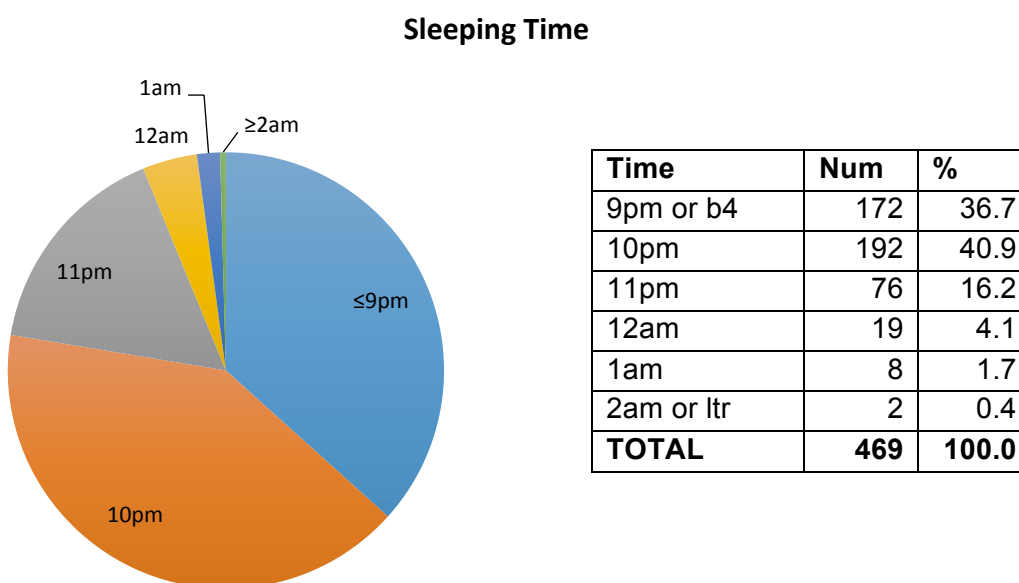


Figure 10

Sleeping Hours

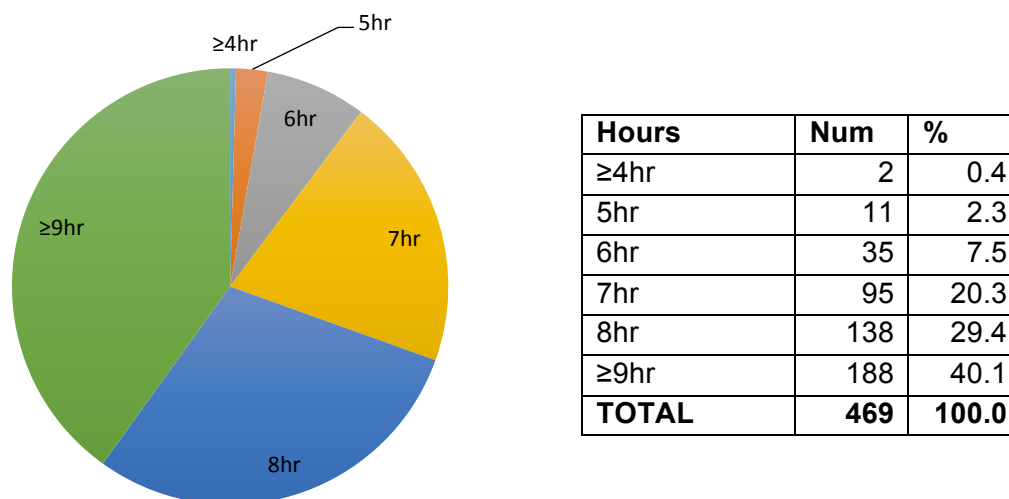


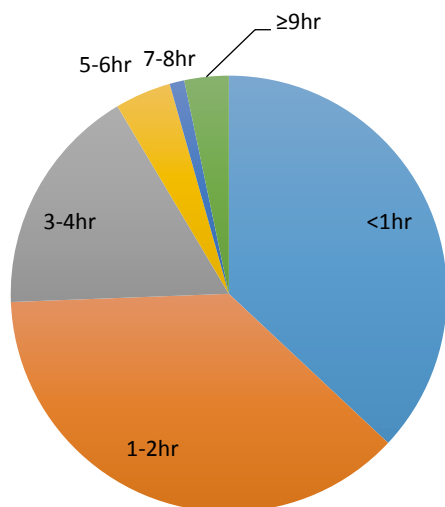
Figure 11

Taking eight hours as a reasonable benchmark for the amount of sleep any person should have daily, we see that in every 10 FDWs, only seven of them have enough sleep while three of them do not. Having proper sleeping hours fulfill the basic physiological need of the Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. Trading sleep for work can be detrimental to anyone and is likely to be counter productive as low energy can reduce one's performance. Sleepiness is also dangerous for any worker, as it translates to a twofold higher risk of sustaining an occupational injury¹⁰. Additionally, chronic sleep deprivation can result in serious health issues such as heart attack, stroke and mental illnesses.

We also asked how much free personal time they enjoyed. It is reasonable for any human being to have at least three to four hours of free time daily outside their work routines. From the responses gathered in Figure 12, we see about 75% of FDWs not getting this sufficient free time for themselves. Free time will allow FDWs to take a break from physical and emotional labour and to recharge themselves. This will help optimise their mental well-being, especially when they are in the same space for at least six days a week.

¹⁰ Study: Melamed S. & Oksenberg A. *Excessive daytime sleepiness and risk of occupational injuries in non-shift daytime workers*. May 2002. See: <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/12003162>

Free Time



Hours	Num	%
<1hr	169	37.0
1-2hr	171	37.4
3-4hr	78	17.1
5-6hr	19	4.2
7-8hr	5	1.1
≥9hr	15	3.3
TOTAL	457	100.0

Figure 12

MOM's guidelines require employers to “ensure your FDW has sufficient rest”. In a familiar fashion, we see the vague word ‘sufficient’ coming up, to be defined subjectively by respective employers. Not just that, nothing was mentioned on what does it mean to rest - sleeping time only or does it also includes free time? It is crucial to address and establish this, for FDWs are often in a vulnerable position due to the overlapping of working-living space and spheres.

Using both sets of information from “Sleeping Hours” and “Free Time”, we were able to capture an estimated duration of working hours for each FDW on a typical weekday.

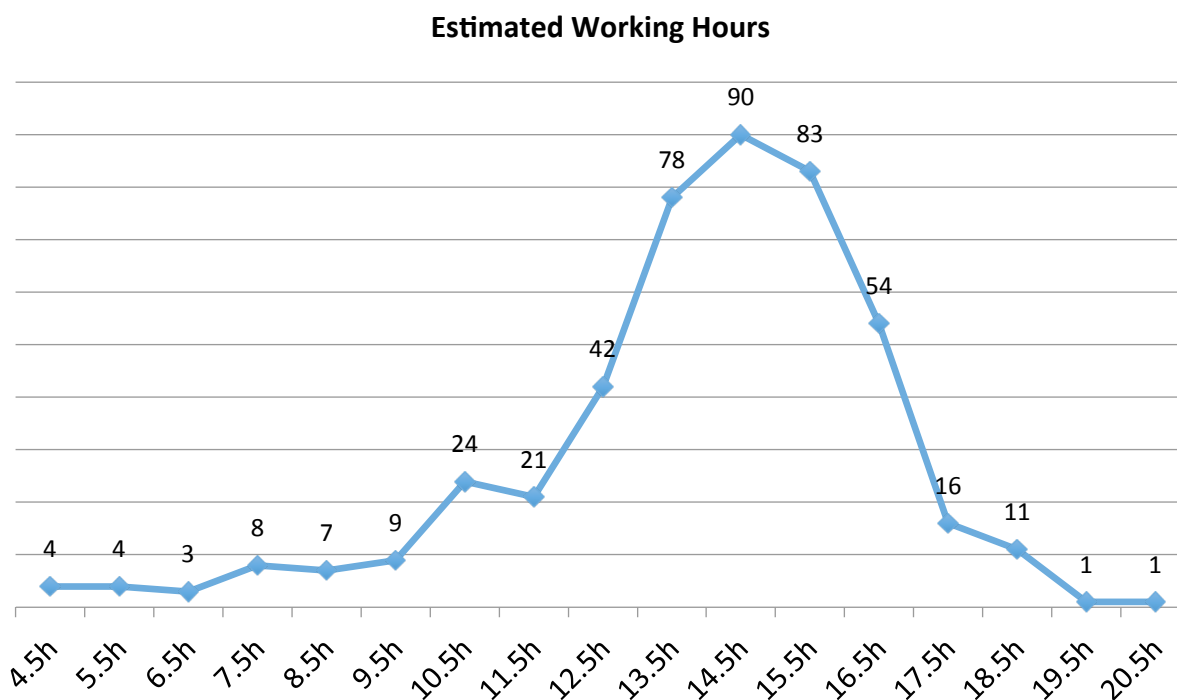


Figure 13

From Figure 13, we see diverse results. At one end, there are FDWs working for an estimated minimum of 4.5 hours daily, while at the other end, they are working 20.5 hours. The results peaked with 90 out of 456 FDWs, around 20%, working for an estimated total of 14.5 hours daily. From this data, the average estimated working hours of the FDWs surveyed was about 13.9 hours, roughly consistent with the finding of an average of 13 hours by Humanitarian Organization for Migration Economics (HOME) in their March 2015 report “Home Sweet Home? Work, Life and Well Being of Foreign Domestic Workers in Singapore”.

Working long hours will also mean less free time. This will be detrimental to the third tier of Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs, affection and friendships – FDWs’ lack of opportunities for leisure and recreation activities like socialization with her fellow compatriots outside of the working sphere, manifested at the very least through having the free time to make a phone call and chat. This is particularly important for this group of workers who are living in a workplace most of the time, thus lacking easy opportunity to form social relationships – which help provide a sense of comfort and belonging.

This average of 13.9 hours uncovers and emphasises a big flaw in the legislative framework for domestic workers. FDWs are not covered by the Employment Act as MOM says “it is not practical to regulate specific aspects of domestic work”. This does nothing other than increase the vulnerability of FDWs.

The Employment Act states that workers are not supposed to work more than 12 hours per day - anything more than this should only be under special circumstances and will require an overtime exemption to be applied with the authority. However, from our survey results, we find 82% of the FDWs surveyed working more than the stipulated 12 hours. But because FDWs are excluded from this Act, the protection does not reach them. There is no other regulation on their maximum working hours.

Likewise, FDWs do not enjoy the provision, under the Employment Act, of overtime pay, at 1.5 times the normal rate of pay, whenever they work more than eight hours per day. They receive a fixed monthly salary no matter how many hours they work every day.

The private nature of the workplace plays a huge role in their not having these protections, for regulation is challenging in such circumstances.

Despite the above, we do acknowledge that while some employers tend to maximise the utility of FDWs, there is also the caveat that the workload may not necessarily be demanded by the employer - some FDWs take more initiative and are more hardworking in making sure the household is spick and span. Whether the workload is demanded by employers or a result of the FDW taking great pride in her work can only be understood if there were data on the number of people living in the household, and the size (floor area) of the dwelling place. Moreover, the figures on working hours can be better interpreted if the survey had looked at the number of other FDWs in the household. All these other measures would help in understanding whether the hours worked were exhausting and intensive or more gently paced. Future research can be carried out in this direction to paint a better picture of the issue of FDWs overworking and having inadequate rest.

Chapter 6 – Results: Other freedoms

The quality of living conditions also encompasses some other less-mentioned aspects such as whether FDWs may cook their own meals to their own taste and have a locker to store personal valuables.

Cooking of meals to one's own taste is important, as there is an intimate and direct link between food, identity and emotional comfort. This is especially important for the foreign population cut off from traditions and customs and social groups; food is a major symbol and channel for foreign nationals to assert their individual identity and relish a moment of private joy. It is also a means to collective identity. The freedom of an FDW to cook a dish that she can take with her on her rest day to share with friends outside is an avenue to strengthened social relationships and self-esteem.

By contrast, a refusal of an employer to allow an FDW to cook food to her own taste, insisting that she eats what the family likes to eat, is a daily reminder of her deeply subordinate status, to the point of erasure of her own identity.

The question was asked if FDWs were “allowed to cook your own meals, to your own taste, at home?” with options as follows: ‘Not allowed’, ‘Don’t know whether allowed’, ‘Allowed, but I rarely cook’, ‘Allowed, & sometimes I cook’, ‘Allowed, & I often cook’ and ‘Other answers’. Excluding the unsure results, other results were regrouped as shown in Figure 14.

Cook Own Meals

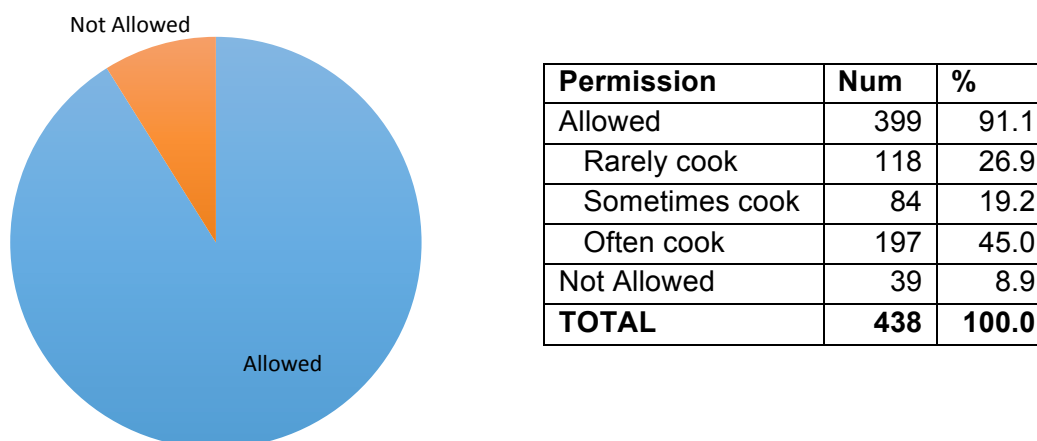
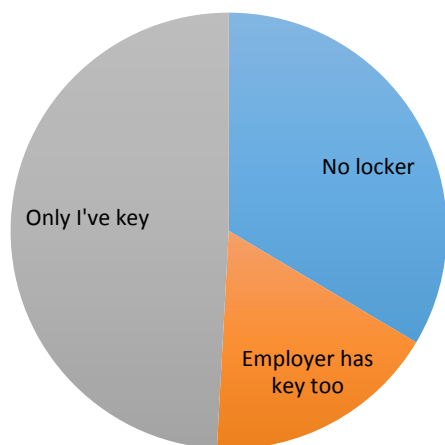


Figure 14

About 9% of the valid 438 responses claimed that they are not allowed to cook their own meals to their own taste. Even though cooking is not a right and neither do the results show a large proportion being disallowed, more understanding and efforts by employers in this regard would be appreciated by FDWs, helping to help ease homesickness. In particular, this action would be useful to newcomers and to FDWs who do not have a weekly rest day and, lacking the opportunity to socialise with compatriots, are most cut off from their cultural comforts.

Another aspect of quality of living conditions includes the possession of a locker in which to store one's personal belongings. Some items may be valuable, like bankbook, salary documents, or the passport, while others not be valuable in terms of price but they are of importance to the FDW, for example, photographs of family, a small item that bears the homely feel. Similar to the previous aspect of cooking of own meals to their own taste, the possession of a locker is not mandated by the MOM guidelines or regulations. Therefore, we see a variety of responses from FDWs as in Figure 15.

Possession of Locker



Possession	Num	%
No	155	33.5
Yes, spare keys with employer	80	17.3
Yes, keys with FDW only	227	49.1
TOTAL	462	100.0

Figure 15

For a non-regulated aspect, the results are fairly good. It can be seen that of every three FDWs, two do have a proper locker to store their belongings and credit should be given to their employers for recognising this need and right. On the other hand, one of every three FDWs does not have her own locker to store their personal belongings. A brief search on forums online suggests that employers are not giving FDWs lockers for various reasons, which include abuse (keeping stolen loot inside) and the absence of necessity (some employers ask FDWs to surrender all their valuables and thus do not see the need for a locker).

Although two-thirds of FDWs surveyed do have a locker, about one-quarter of them have no exclusive control over the locker i.e. someone other than the FDW has the keys to it too. This subgroup forms one-sixth of all responses of this question. Arguably, this non-private locker only means that one's valuables can be subject to the same exposure as those of someone without a locker - the employer could open the locker at any time, with or without the FDW's knowledge. If we exclude this group, we see only one in every two FDWs having a private locker i.e. only FDWs have the keys. One caveat to this survey finding is that an FDW may not know of the existence of a spare key, and thus assume that only she has access.

To many employers, and maybe even to the authorities, an FDW may not have much in the way of valuables that call for a private locker. This is often seen as a form of privilege. However, to these FDWs, the possession of their own private locker serves as a form of basic and minimum security. This will satisfy the property safety need found in the second tier of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. If the fear of theft committed someone who is sharing the same working and/or living space as you is natural and inevitable, that would be true not only for employers, this fear will also be felt by an FDW, who similarly sees her employers as strangers with the same level of uncertainty. Hence, there is an understandable and natural instinct to guard her possessions, however few or (to others) trivial they may be. This is particularly important to FDWs who are co-sharing rooms. Amongst the 170 FDWs who are co-sharing their sleeping space, more than half of them (93) do not have a private locker. The sense of insecurity that emerges from this scenario is likely to be the highest as they do not possess any form of personal security in their working and living place. Should a personal room be impossible due to space constraints, the least an employer could do is to provide the FDW with a small private locker as a basic form of protection and security.

Unlike the above two aspects, withholding of passports by employers is regulated by the law and deemed as unlawful. Yet, as in the above cases, many employers see the FDW's right to her own passport as a privilege. When asked who was holding their passports, FDWs chose from three given options depicted in Figure 16.

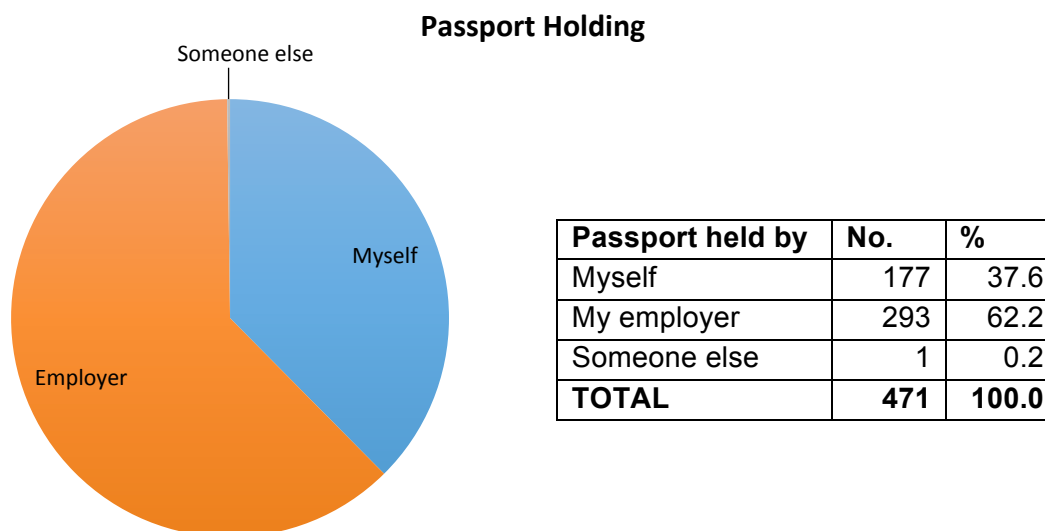


Figure 16

The results suggest that of every 10 FDWs, only four held their own passports while six had their passports with their employers. The only respondent out of the 471 responses who chose the option of 'Someone else', mentioned the agent when we questioned further. A look at this worker's response concerning her length of employment with her current employer showed that she has been working with her current employer for 3-6 months and this could be the reason, albeit not justified, as to why her passport was being held by the agent.

Even though the Passports Act¹¹ (Section 47, subsection 5) prohibits the possession or control of another person's foreign travel document (including the passport) in Singapore, there is no mention of this on the MOM's website page "Employer's Guide: Foreign Domestic Worker". The only mention on MOM's website is found on the FAQ page of Work Passes. Additionally, enforceability is more challenging due to two reasons. For one, the work permit, akin to the identification card locals have, is deemed as sufficient for identification in Singapore. Another issue is the question of consent. MOM would not see the withholding of FDW's passports as unlawful as long as it is with a worker's consent. However, the subordinated position of FDWs in the employment relationship means that there will always be serious doubt whether consent was informed and given willingly.

¹¹ Statute: Attorney-General's Chambers. *Passports Act*. Dec 2008.

Section 47: Offences relating to false foreign travel documents, subsection (5) If —

(a) a person has or retains possession or control in Singapore of a foreign travel document; and

(b) the person knows that the foreign travel document was not issued to him,
the person shall be guilty of an offence and shall be liable on conviction to a fine not exceeding \$10,000 or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 10 years or to both.

with "foreign travel document" means —

(a) a passport; or

(b) a document issued for travel purposes (whether or not also issued for another purpose),

that is issued by or on behalf of the government of a foreign country or such international organisation as the Minister may approve.

Locker Possession x Passport Holding

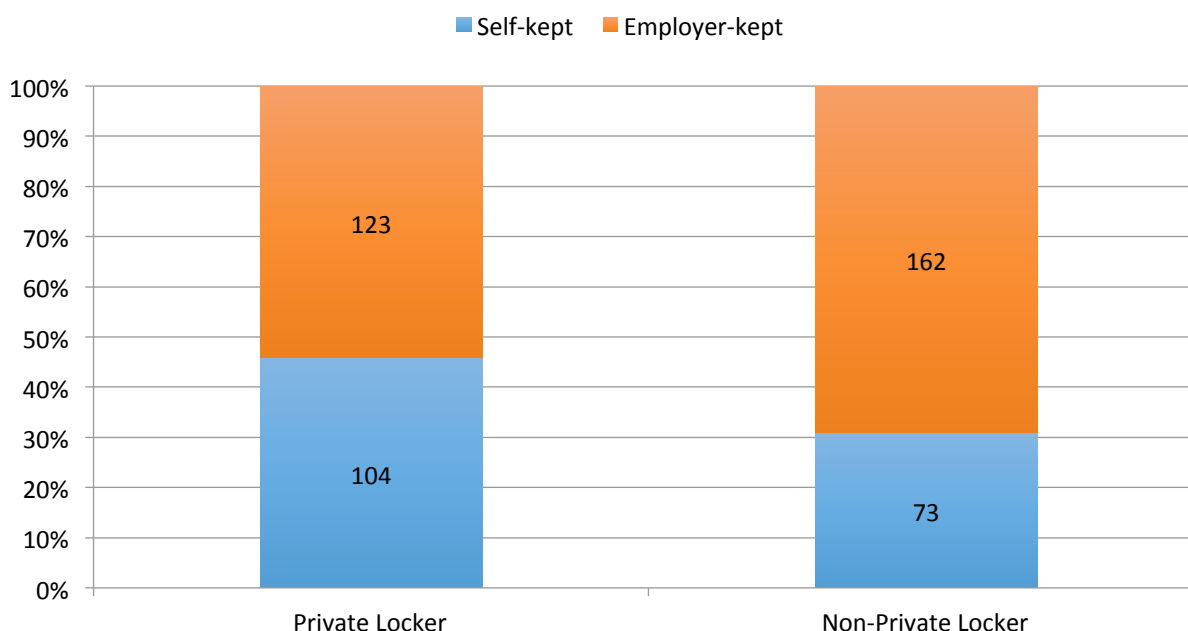


Figure 17

The question of consent can be further explained with a cross analysis carried out (Figure 17) between “Possession of Lockers” and “Passport Holding”. We notice that FDWs who have a private locker are more likely to be keeping their own passports compared to FDWs without a private locker, i.e. they have no locker or are not the only one with the keys. Due to the lack of proper secured storage, FDWs are more likely to have their passports with their employers with the justification of the risk of losing this important document. In this case, consent is questionable as FDWs could have surrendered their passports out of duress, or the act could be self-initiated, in recognition of the lack of secured storage.

Overall, with the lack of visibility and enforcement of this law, it is not surprising that our study showed a high incidence of employers holding on to their employees' passports despite the law.

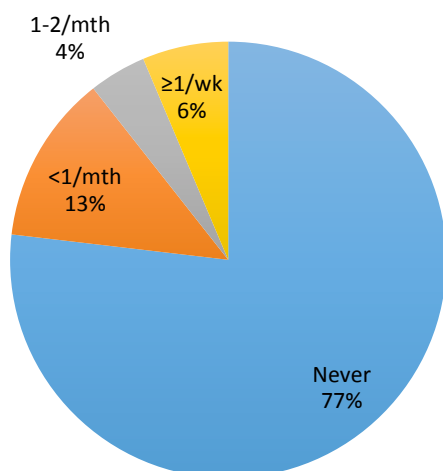
While many people including employers could consider all these three aspects as of secondary importance and a form of luxury or privilege, we would see them as crucial aspects of FDWs' living conditions. Essentially, they symbolize a form of respect from the employers and thus offering the self-esteem that FDWs deserve, fulfilling the fourth tier of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. With these considerations in mind, deliberation of the above three aspects may prove to be important and necessary in creating better living conditions for FDWs.

Chapter 7 – Results: Risks at work

In the last part of the survey, we sought to find out more about certain health and safety aspects of FDWs' working and living environment. This is in light of the increase in reported abuse cases of FDWs in recent years, be it verbal, physical or sexual abuse. The seriousness of the abuse issue is highlighted by the responses of countries of origin such as Myanmar, with its imposition of a five-month ban in 2014. While the frequency of news stories may not necessarily mean an actual increase in abuse cases but just an increase in reporting due to some underlying reasons, this issue is crucial to gaining an understanding of FDWs' well being in a live-in working situation, in order to implement the right measures to eliminate FDW abuse completely.

During the survey, we asked "How often does a member of the family come home smelling of beer or alcohol?" (Figure 18) and "How often does a member of the family drink heavily at home?" (Figure 19). Respondents were given the options of 'Never', 'Less than once a month', 'Once or twice a month' and 'Once a week or more' to choose from and the results are as follows:

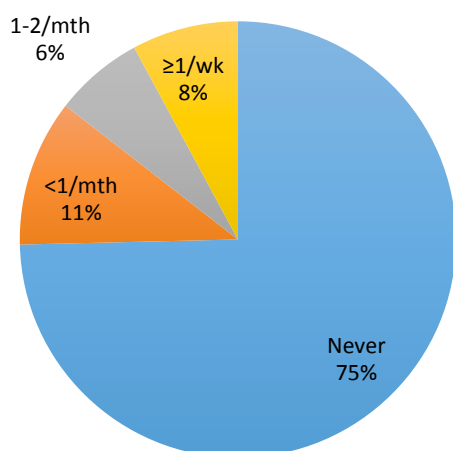
Frequency of Family Member Drinking Heavily at Home



<i>f</i> Drink at Home	Num	%
Never	362	76.9
<1/mth	59	12.5
1-2/mth	20	4.2
≥1/wk	30	6.4
TOTAL	471	100.0

Figure 18

Frequency of Family Member Drinking Outside



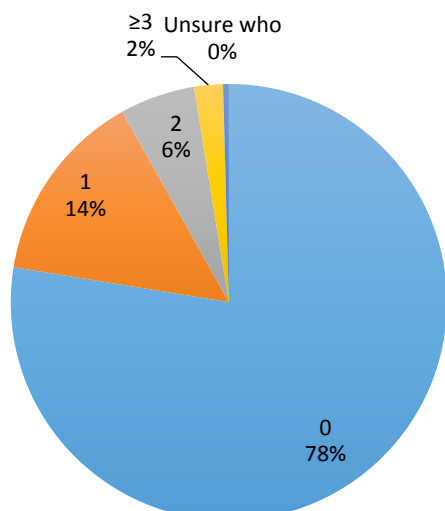
<i>f</i> Drink Outside	Num	%
Never	350	74.6
<1/mth	51	10.9
1-2/mth	31	6.6
≥1/wk	37	7.9
TOTAL	469	100.0

Figure 19

In both responses, we see that at least 75% of the FDWs are subjected to low or no alcohol-related risks. However, the other 25% may be subjected to a higher alcohol-related risk of abuse, especially when alcohol has been proven to cloud judgement, and hence people may act in an uncontrolled way. Deeper research could also be done in this direction to understand the “Frequency of Abuse” in relation to the frequency of drinking, for our results only corresponds to the risk involved but not necessarily one that is translated into abuse.

We also asked the question “How many members of the family smoke at home?” to understand another kind of risk faced by live-in FDWs. Choosing from the options given ‘None’, ‘One’, ‘Two’, ‘Three or more’, ‘I smell tobacco but don't know who’ and ‘Complicated answer’, the results are as shown in Figure 20, excluding the last option due to vagueness.

No. of Family Members Smoking at Home



<i>f</i> Smoke at Home	Num	%
0	363	77.1
1	67	14.2
2	26	5.5
≥3	10	2.1
Smell tobacco, but not sure who	2	0.4
TOTAL	471	100.0

Figure 20

Similar to the response in the case of alcohol-related risk, we see that at least 75% of the FDWs face low or no smoking-related health risks caused by the second-hand smoke that can increase the risk of lung cancer and respiratory diseases. However, we also see the remaining 25% being subjected to higher smoking-related health risks.

Even though a residential home is a workplace for FDWs, it is not included as a workplace that is regulated by the Workplace Safety and Health Act, for the most obvious reason of it being a private sphere, similar to the reason behind the justification for excluding FDWs from the Employment Act. This leaves all FDWs vulnerable in their workplaces, and a review of legislation is called for.

The Smoking Act administered by the National Environment Agency (NEA) is a good example of how the private sphere of the residential home serves as a large persistent obstacle to improving the workplace environment for FDWs. To promote a smoke-free lifestyle, reservoirs and some 400 parks were added onto the list of smoke-free public areas starting from June 2016, citing protection of non-smokers from the harmful effects of second-hand smoke as the reason. While many FDWs are non-smokers, they are still unprotected from the harmful effects of second-hand smoke. To further promote smoke-free workplaces, the Health Promotion Board (HPB) has also come up with “Come Together Quit Together”, a smoking cessation programme for workplaces, which encourages non-smokers, such as friends and supporters, to refer smokers at their workplaces to receive personalised quit advice and counselling. It is not clear if residential homes can be included as workplaces in this campaign. In any case, FDWs, with their disadvantaged position, will rarely dare to raise smoking as an issue. External intervention is required to protect them, who are unprotected on two counts: due to the characteristic of their workplaces and their relative powerlessness

Although seldom investigated, the risks faced by FDWs are real and should not be neglected or downplayed. These risks are heightened when FDWs’ employment terms, unlike those of other workers, do not allow much opportunity for time-off from their workplaces, resulting in increased exposure. The health safety of FDWs should be assured in order to fulfill the second tier of Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs.

Future research needs to be conducted to better highlight and address risks and their solutions to provide FDWs with a safer workplace.

Chapter 8 – Results: Indonesians vs. Filipinas

In this section, we would like to investigate the relevance of the factor of “Nationality” on the other aspects of an FDW’s working and living conditions. In our survey, most of our respondents are from Indonesia and Philippines, which corresponds to the top two sending countries. Although we do have respondents from other countries including the third largest sending country, Myanmar, the low numbers are sufficient for comparison. As the rule of thumb in any survey, the smallest subgroup in each sample should have at least 50 people. Hence, we will only use data from Indonesian and Filipina respondents for analysis in this section, bearing in mind the over- and underrepresentation previously highlighted.

Nationality x Type of Residence

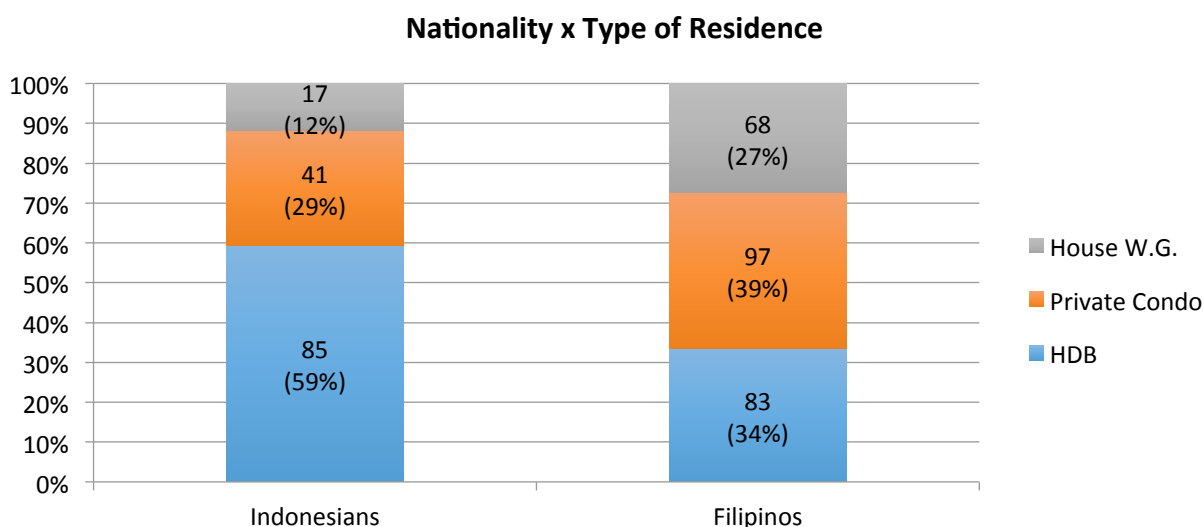


Figure 21

Leaving out the vague answers as mentioned earlier, it is evident from the chart (Figure 21) that a higher proportion of Filipina FDWs are working in “non-public housing” types such as condominiums and houses with gardens as compared to their Indonesian counterparts. One good explanation for this trend can be attributed to the Filipina FDWs’ higher minimum salary. Minimum salary is one of the channels that countries of origin are attempting to utilise to protect their nationals working overseas. In a report by The Straits Times¹², Indonesians still have a lower minimum salary (albeit their government recently increased the minimum salary from \$500 to \$550 in 2016), compared to the Filipinas, who have “higher starting salaries of US\$400

¹² Newspaper: The Straits Times. *Demand for Indonesian maids likely to fall in Singapore after pay rise*. Nov 2015. See: <http://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/manpower/demand-for-indonesian-maids-likely-to-fall-in-singapore-after-pay-rise>

(S\$570)". We would like to highlight that although neither country is able to rigorously enforce its minimum, they have exerted an upward pressure on salaries. Suggesting a correlation between income level and residence type (see Appendix C, (II)), people with a higher income level are more likely to live in non-public housing. For them, the affordability of a costlier Filipina FDW is probably less of an issue than for those in public housing.

This slight difference in minimum salary can be crucial in determining the working and living conditions of FDWs. Higher-income employers would likely also be those with a higher education level. People with a higher education level tend to be more exposed to the world's diversity¹³, which helps challenge stereotypes by promoting interaction between people of different backgrounds. This better understanding can be expected to translate to a higher cultural sensitivity, fostering mutual respect in the long run. This will, in turn, position them to be more understanding employers. Filipina FDWs, as we shall see, tend to enjoy better treatment from their employers as compared to their Indonesian counterparts.

In the following sections, we will do a comparison between Indonesians and Filipinos based on the above chapters. In each chapter, we filter the results to reach the same *n* (number of respondents) for all sub-points for a fair and accurate comparison. For the purpose of analysis, a benchmark of 10% is used as a basis of comparison to spot any evident patterns between both nationalities – only difference of 10% or above is considered as a noticeable difference.

Nationality x Personal space

(Indonesian *n* = 154, Filipino *n* = 249)

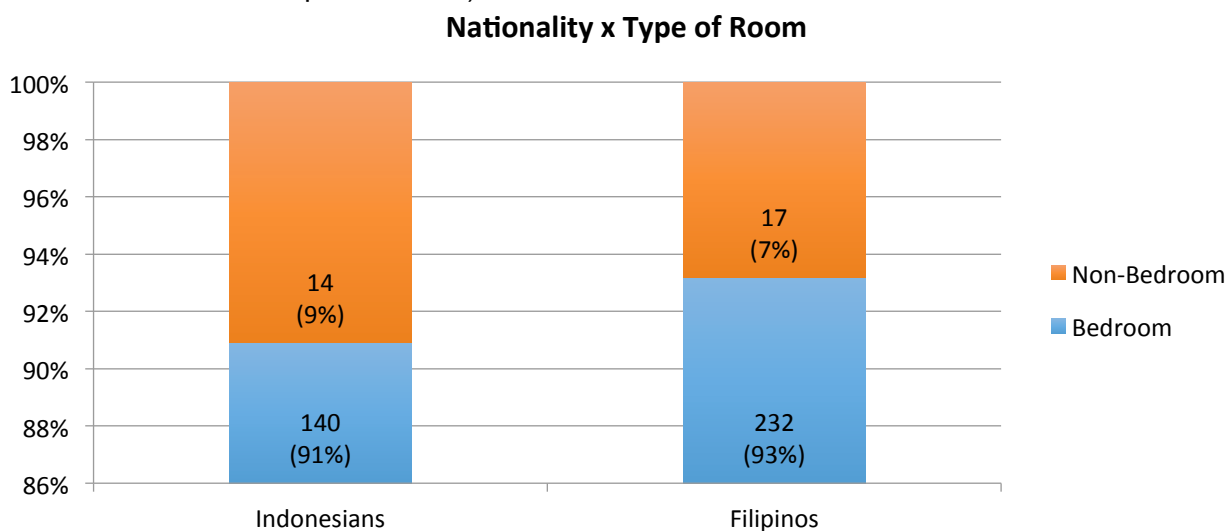


Figure 22

¹³ Article: American Council on Education. *On the Importance of Diversity in Higher Education*. Jun 2012. See: <http://www.acenet.edu/news-room/Documents/BoardDiversityStatement-June2012.pdf>

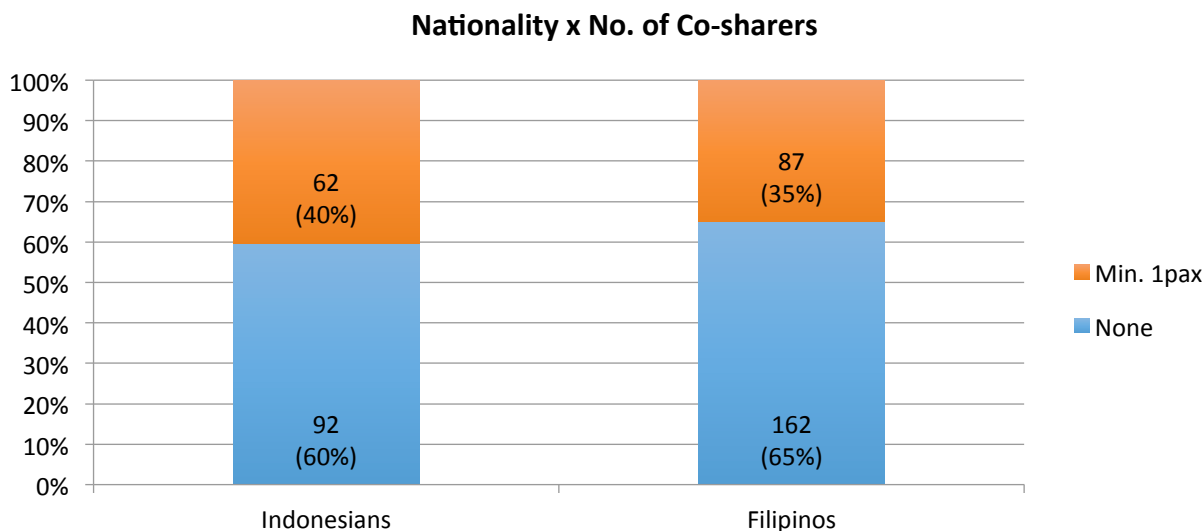


Figure 23

In both cross-analysis of “Type of Room” (Figure 22) and “No. of Co-sharers” (Figure 23), there is no obvious difference (at only 2% and 5% respectively) between the two nationalities.

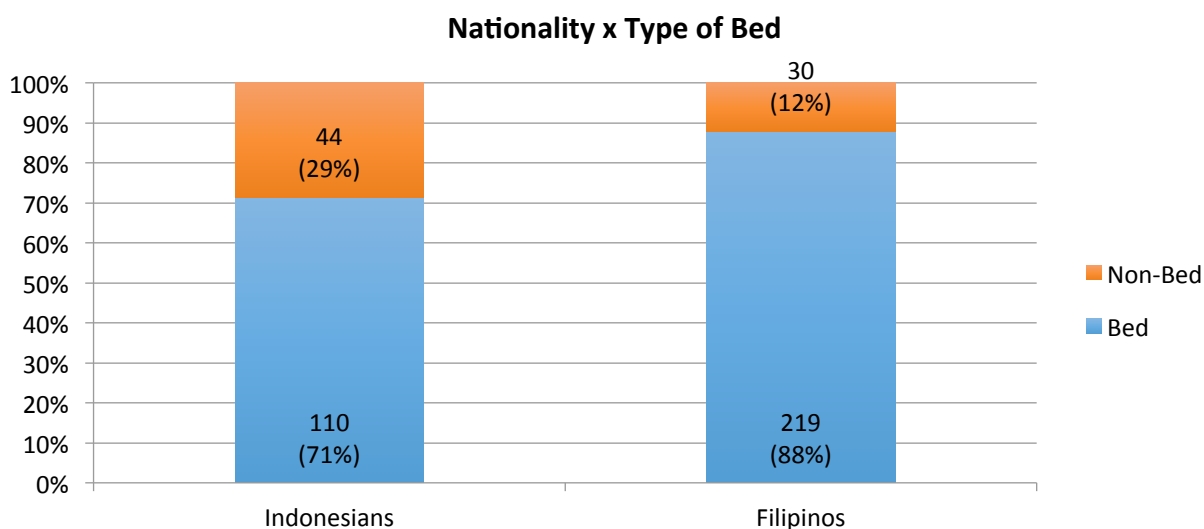


Figure 24

However, in the cross-analysis of “Type of Bed” (Figure 24), there is a noticeable 17% difference - a larger proportion of Filipina FDWs are sleeping on proper beds as compared to the Indonesians. One main reason for this could be the higher-income employers of the former groups are more likely to fork out money to provide their FDWs with a proper permanent bed,

while the lower-income employers of the Indonesian FDWs are more likely to provide the low-cost solution such as a temporary mattress or even a no-cost solution of sleeping on the floor.

On the whole, Filipina FDWs are enjoying more personal space as compared to their Indonesian counterparts, with more of them being offered a bed to rest on.

Nationality x Rest & work hours

(Indonesian n = 156, Filipino n = 249)

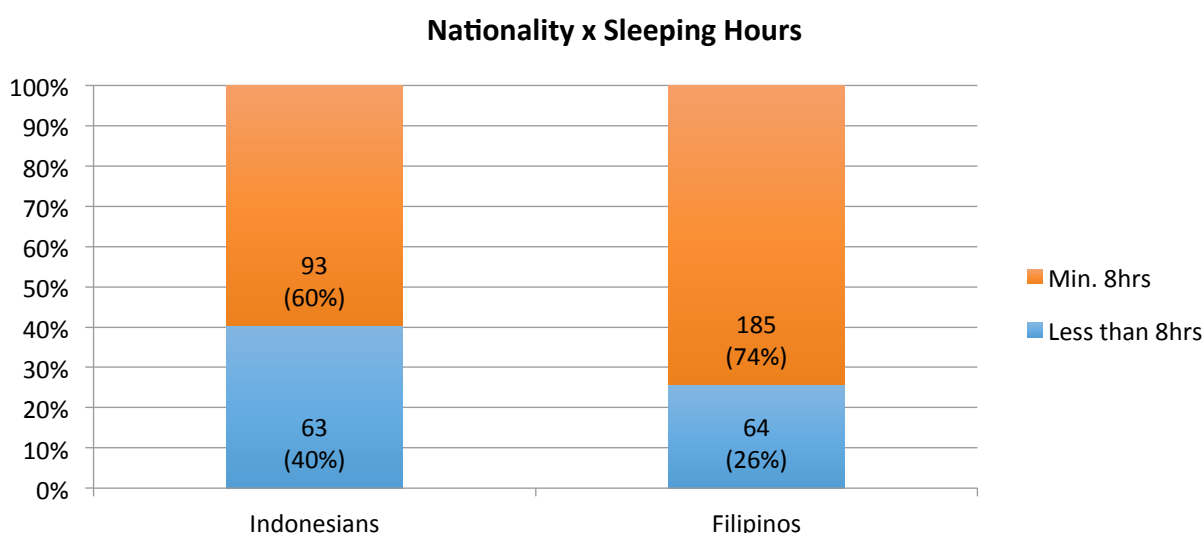


Figure 25

In the cross-analysis of “Sleeping Hours” (Figure 25), there is a noticeable 14% difference between the nationalities - a larger proportion of Filipina FDWs are having at least 8 hours of sleep as compared to the Indonesians. As previously mentioned, having enough sleep will ensure a higher performance and a lower likelihood of occupational and health risks. Even among those who are sleep-deprived, there is a difference: the minimum found in our survey among the Filipinas is 5 hours; for the Indonesians, it is 3 hours.

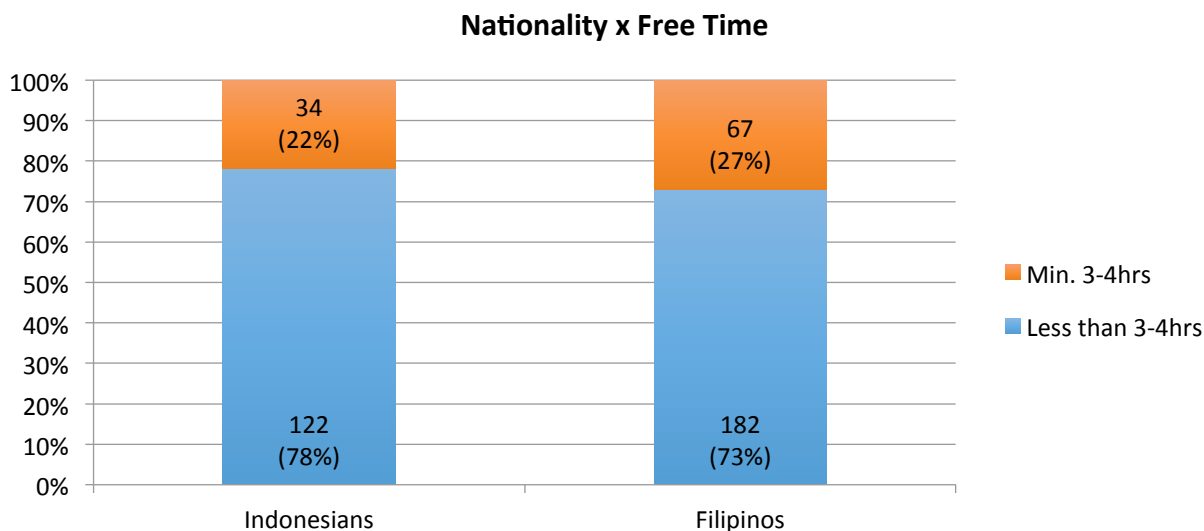


Figure 26

On the other hand, the cross-analysis of “Free Time” (Figure 26) only yields a 5% difference between the nationalities, but this time with a larger proportion of Indonesians FDWs having a minimum of 3 to 4 hours of free time as compared to the Filipinos. This interesting finding can have many explanations, which will not be covered in this report due to the absence of relevant data to support. Future research can be carried out in this direction to understand the underlying reasons for this finding.

Nationality x Working Hours (8)

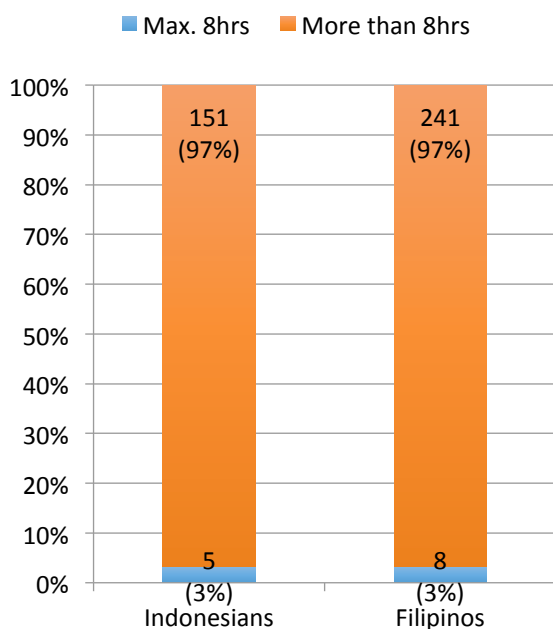


Figure 27(A)

Nationality x Working Hours (12)

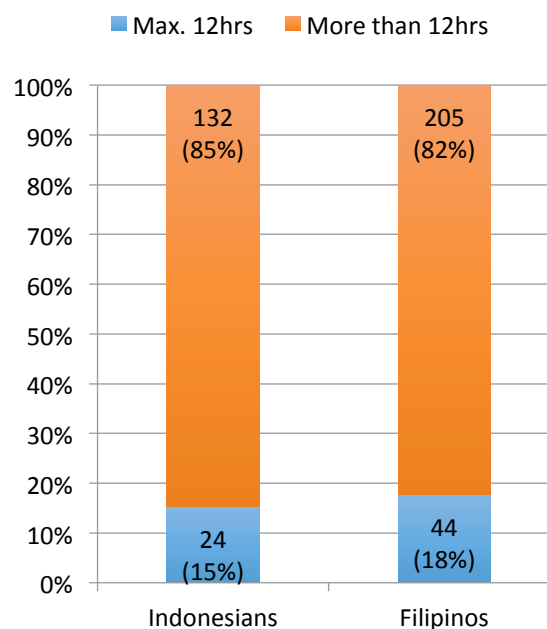


Figure 27(B)

Using both benchmarks of 8 and 12 hours (Figures 27(A) & 27(B)), there is no obvious difference (of 0% and 3% respectively) between both nationalities with regards to their working hours. This means that both nationalities are of the same likelihood of working long hours.

On the whole, Filipino FDWs are given more time to rest as compared to their Indonesian counterparts, with more sleeping hours given by their employers.

Nationality x Other freedoms

(Indonesian n = 151, Filipino n = 236)

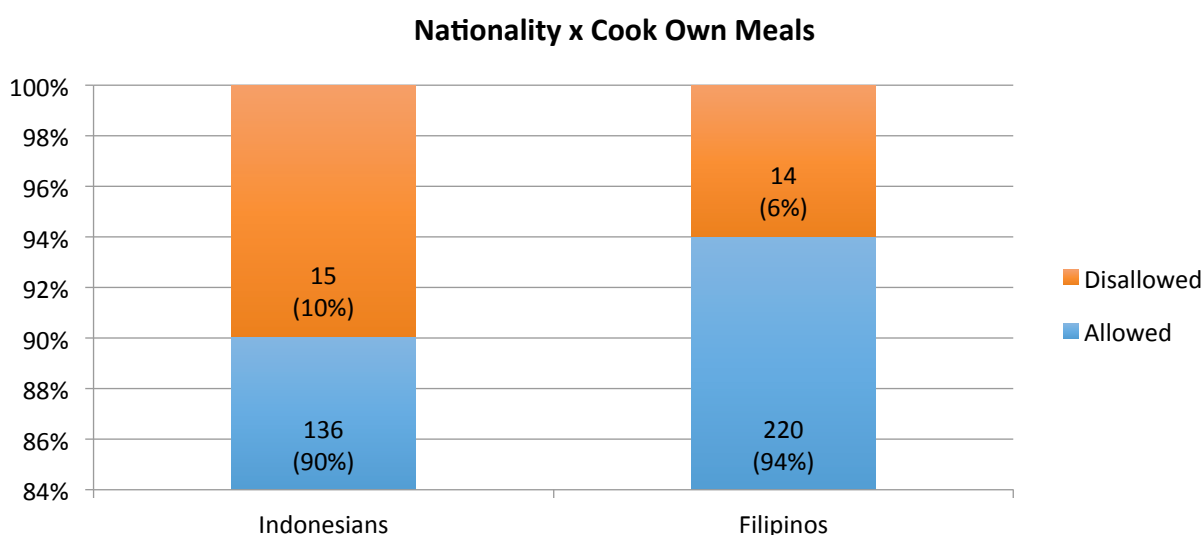


Figure 28

In the cross-analysis of “Cooking of own meals to own taste” (Figure 28), there is no obvious difference (at only 4%) between the two nationalities - 9 in 10 Indonesian and Filipino FDWs, similar to the overall results of all nationalities surveyed.

Nationality x Locker

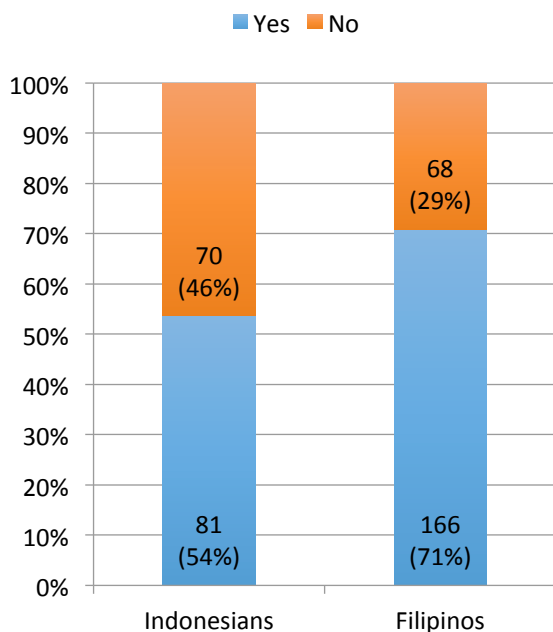


Figure 29(A)

Nationality x Private Locker

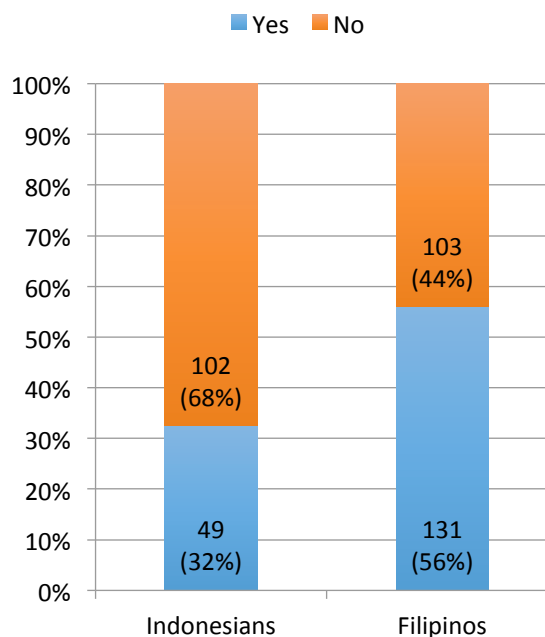


Figure 29(B)

However, in the cross-analysis of both “Possession of locker” and “Possession of private locker” (Figures 29(A) & 29(B)), there is a noticeable difference between the nationalities. In the former, an evident 17% difference is observed while 24% difference is observed in the latter. Not only does this mean that a larger proportion of Filipina FDWs have their own locker, a larger proportion of them also have exclusive control of their own locker, compared to the Indonesians.

Nationality x Passport

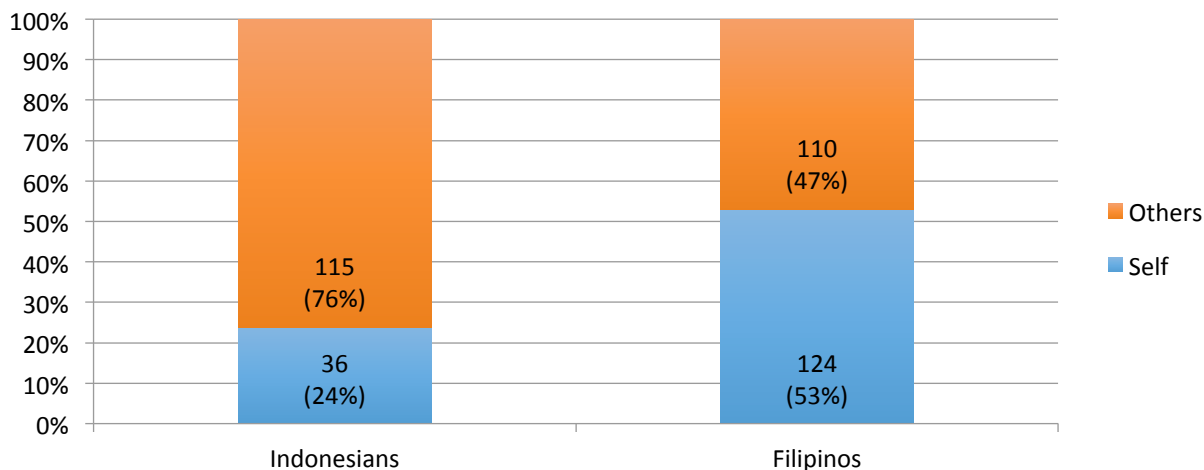


Figure 30

Similarly, in the cross-analysis of “Passport” (Figure 30), there is a noticeable difference of 29% between both nationalities - a larger proportion of Filipina FDWs keep their own passports.

On the whole, we observed that Filipina FDWs generally experience more freedom and offered a greater sense of security by their employers as they have a likelihood of possessing their own locker and passport. This could be correlated to the type of residence, which can suggest the amount of space that an FDW can enjoy.

Nationality x Risk at Work

(Indonesian n = 158, Filipino n = 255)

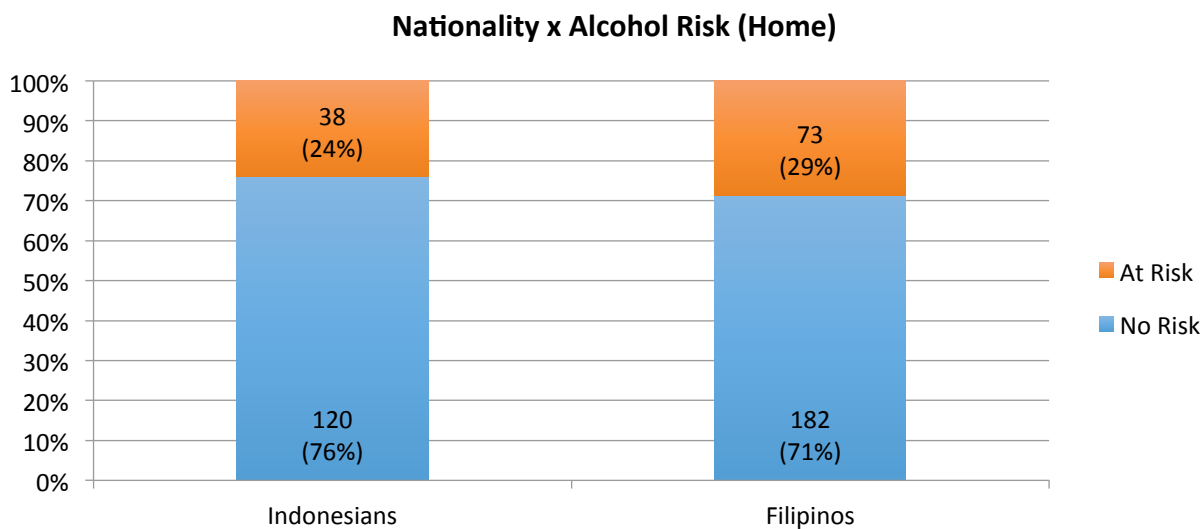


Figure 31

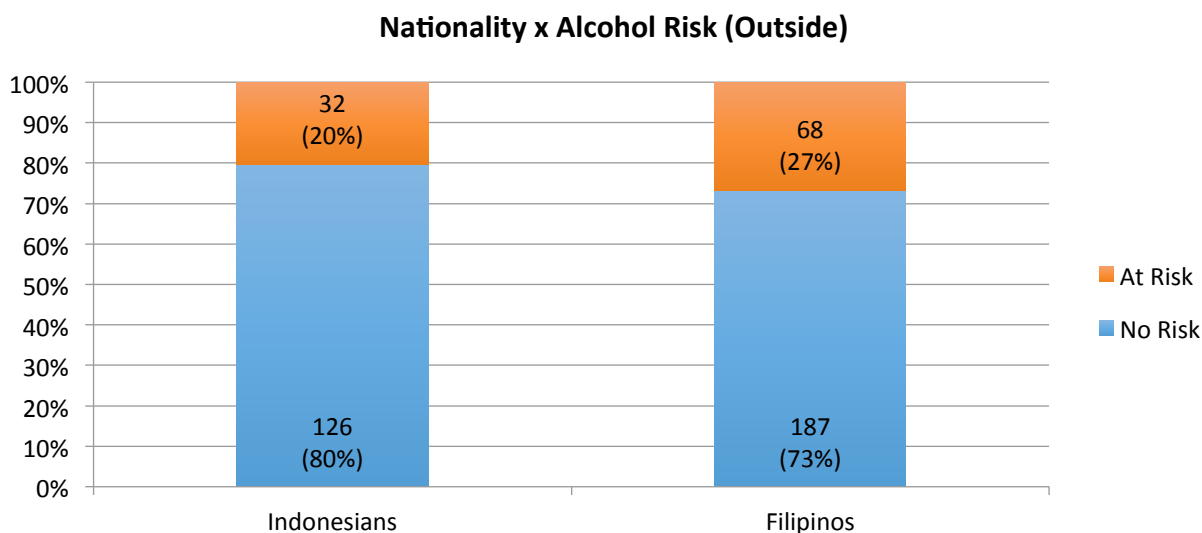


Figure 32

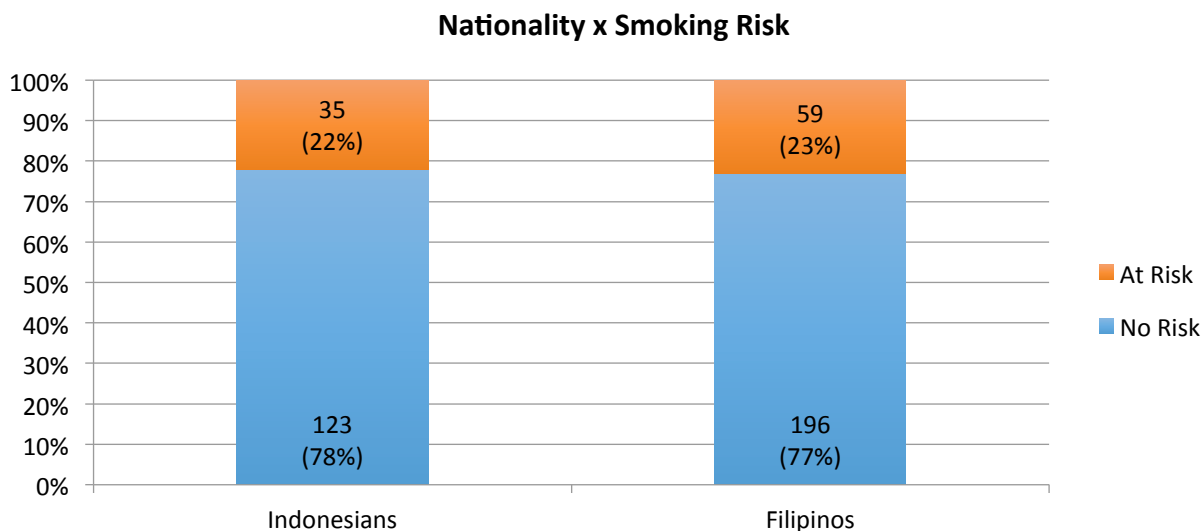


Figure 33

In all three cross-analysis of “Drinking alcohol heavily at home” (Figure 31), “Drinking alcohol heavily outside” (Figure 32) and “Smoking at home” (Figure 33), there is no obvious difference (at only 5%, 7% and 1% respectively) found between both nationalities. If at all this difference needs to be explained, we would posit that it might be due to differential employer backgrounds, particularly in relation to ethnicity and religion. However, our research did not inquire about employers’ background, and we can only speculate at this point. We would suggest that Indonesian FDWs, being Muslims and speaking a similar language, tend to appeal more to the Malay and Muslim employers in Singapore. Islam prohibits drinking and smoking, and it is likely that Malay-Muslim households observe these rules. This would explain why Indonesian FDWs are at a slightly lower risk at work as compared to their Filipina counterparts.

Nationality x Overall

To sum it up, our survey finds that that Filipino FDWs are getting better treatment with more personal space, more resting time (both free and sleeping time) and more freedom, with noticeable better percentages found. On the other hand, the Indonesian FDWs fare slightly better with respect to smoking and alcohol-related risks at work, albeit only to a marginal extent.

Chapter 9 – Overall observations

The overall results and observations of the survey report can be summed up through Figure 34 below:

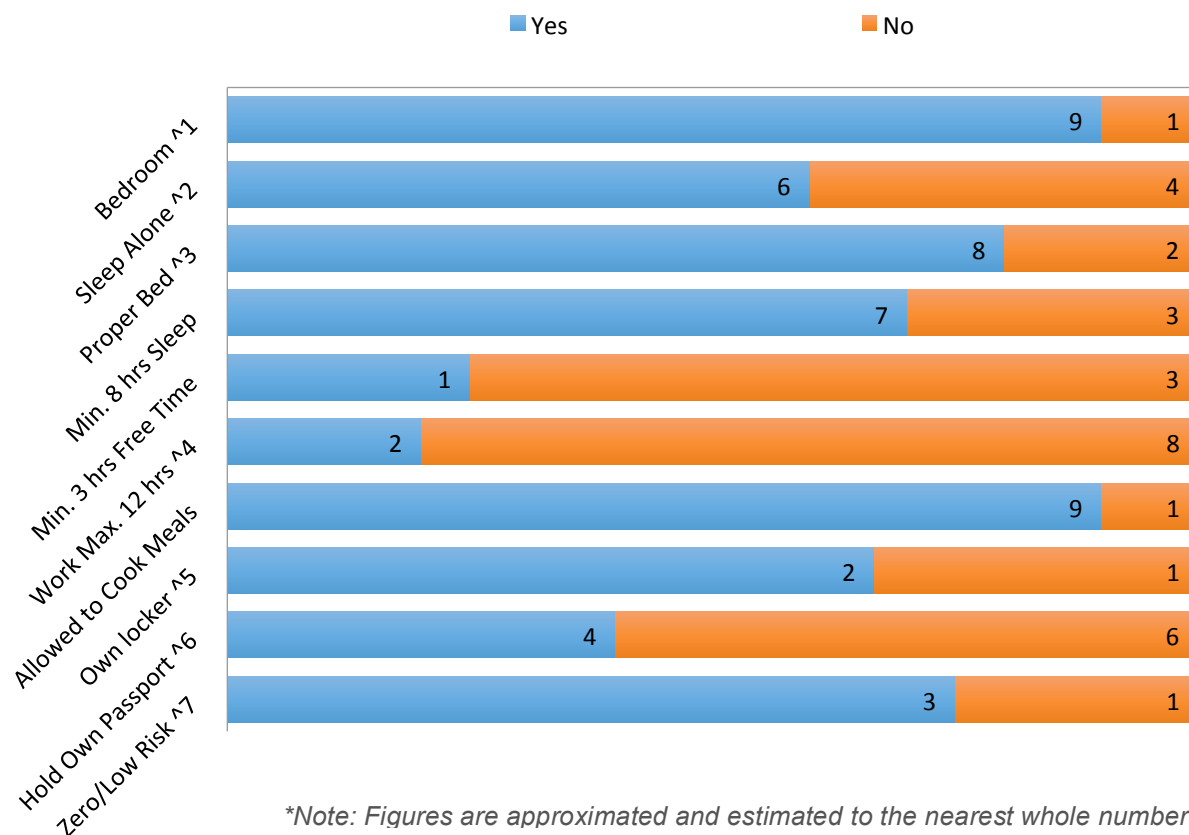


Figure 34

- ^1: 3% of valid responses said they sleep in common spaces like living rooms and kitchens.
- ^2: 5% of valid responses said they share the room with teenage or healthy adult males only.
- ^3: 1% of valid responses said they sleep on the floor without mattress.
- ^4: An average of 13.9 working hours was calculated
- ^5: 50% of valid responses did not have exclusive access to a locker.
- ^6: 1 FDW had her passport held by agency.
- ^7: Only risks related to alcohol and smoke were examined by our survey.



The survey results give us reason to applaud the large proportion of employers who provide their FDWs with decent working and living conditions by adhering to state regulations on providing the basic amenities, and those who do the decent thing even if not specified in law, such as allowing FDWs to cook their own meals to their own taste and providing lockers to store personal belongings. However, we also believe that employers can do more in order to provide FDWs with a more comfortable setting to work and live in, which will be furthered discussed in the following section.

Chapter 10 – Conclusion and recommendations

In the light of the above results and findings, more discussion might be carried out relevant to the recent announcement by the Indonesian authorities in May 2016 about their decision to stop sending new live-in maids abroad from as early as 2017. The main aim of this initiative is to protect their citizens who are working overseas.

By living out, it will be easier to monitor that FDWs work defined hours. It will be easier too to include them within the Employment Act and enjoy its protections. Regulated hours will mean that FDWs will be able to enjoy more free time after working hours on a daily and weekly basis, similar to other employees in Singapore. In addition, working regular hours will also translate to less exposure to risks such as those of alcohol and tobacco smoke. All these factors will help in improving the physical and mental wellbeing of FDWs.

Moreover, with FDWs living out, their accommodation can be better regulated under the current Foreign Employee Dormitories Act and Foreign Employee Dormitories Regulations. This will be an improvement for the FDWs as their working and living conditions are currently barely regulated due to being within a private residential setting. Regulations can ensure that these FDWs will be offered quality living conditions such as a proper gender-segregated bedroom with a proper bed, with a limit on the number of co-sharers to provide FDWs with the privacy and space they should be entitled to. In addition, other aspects of personal life such as facilities for cooking preferred food and having private lockers would also be more easily assured.

However, improved working and living conditions that ought to emerge from living out cannot be taken for granted. Problems will only be pre-empted or solved if the authorities are willing to put in strict and active efforts on enforcing regulations, as experience with some male foreign workers' dormitories with overcrowded and unclean conditions testifies. Naturally, regulations have to be enforced, otherwise they will be of no substance.

We would like to make the following recommendations to the various stakeholders to improve the working and living conditions of live-in FDWs:

(A) Ministry of Manpower

1. FDWs should be included under the Employment Act, as per all other categories of workers. We believe that this is feasible by allowing selective exemption from particular clauses that may not apply due to the nature of the job scope of the FDWs. In this way, they will be assured of protection.

2. MOM webpage of 'Employer's Guide'¹⁴ should be more explicit in terms of the respective duties and penalties so as to be fair to both employers and employees. This is with regards to the failure to comply to prescribed duties under the Employment of Foreign Manpower Act (EFMA)¹⁵, which lays down rules and regulations of employers of foreign employees, who are domestic workers issued with work permits. Prescribed duties include "provide acceptable accommodation for the foreign employee", as elaborated in the Employment Of Foreign Manpower (Work Passes) Regulations 2012¹⁶. While EFMA does not state down the clear requirements of acceptable accommodation, it does reference it to the MOM's website by stating that "accommodation must be consistent with any written law, directive, guideline, circular or other similar instrument issued by any competent authority." However, this puts a group of employers, who only refer to MOM's website and not the EFMA, at a disadvantage, for they are unaware of the penalties involved. Furthermore, the phrase 'Employer's Guide' used by MOM for its webpage is misleading to a certain extent, for employers may think it is just some parameters and not mandated by law.
3. Regulations and guidelines should be more precise, especially in setting minimum standards and requirements such as that for 'adequate space and privacy' and 'sufficient rest'.
 - (i) While a separate room may not be always possible, 'adequate space and privacy' should at least mean a proper bedroom and a limit to the number of co-sharers.
4. Singapore could adopt the International Labour Organisation (ILO)'s framework of 11/24 rule for setting a minimum 'sufficient rest'.
According to Article 24 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), all workers, including domestic workers, are entitled to the labour right to rest. ILO has been advocating the Right to Rest for Domestic Workers (DWs)¹⁷, asserting their rights and believing that happier and healthier workers will create happier and healthier homes and in turn, better societies (see Appendix C, (III)). Under the Right to Rest for Domestic

¹⁴ Website: MOM. *Rest days and well-being for foreign domestic worker*. Mar 2016. See: <http://www.mom.gov.sg/passes-and-permits/work-permit-for-foreign-domestic-worker/employers-guide/rest-days-and-well-being>

¹⁵ Statute: Attorney-General's Chambers. *Employment of Foreign Manpower Act*. Jul 2009.
Section 25A: Compliance with prescribed duties, subsection (1):

Where an in-principle approval of an application for a work pass has been issued by the Controller, the employer, foreign employee or self-employed foreigner concerned shall comply with such duties for or in relation to the employment of such foreign employee or the engagement of such self-employed foreigner as may be prescribed.

¹⁶ Statute: Attorney-General's Chambers. *Employment Of Foreign Manpower (Work Passes) Regulations 2012*. Nov 2012.

Fourth Schedule Conditions And Regulatory Conditions Of Work Permit, Part I Conditions To Be Complied With By Employer Of Foreign Employee Who Is Domestic Worker Issued With Work Permit, Clause 4.

¹⁷ Resource: International Labour Organisation. *Right to Rest for domestic workers*.

See: http://www.ilo.org/global/topics/domestic-workers/WCMS_430883/lang--en/index.htm

Workers, rest period is defined as a duration that “they are free to dispose of their time as they please”. Other than pushing for weekly rest, the ILO also uses the European Working Time Directive of 2003’s recommendation of ‘11/24 rule’ to address the minimum daily rest. This rule defines that daily sufficient rest should be at least of 11 consecutive hours, stating that “employers... will benefit from a rested and efficient domestic worker at lower risk of making serious mistakes...” While this may not be possible for all households in Singapore due to the diversity of different needs found, a first step can aim towards a minimum of 11 hours of sleeping hours and break time. A good framework would be 8 hours of consecutive sleep and 3 hours of divided break time being marked out in the daily schedule of all FDWs. Notably, break time should be clearly differentiated from working time, and should even allow the leaving of household premises, as a research¹⁸ has found out that FDWs do not genuinely enjoy and recharge during their break times when they are still in their workplaces and could be doing some minor work tasks.

5. FDWs should be given ready access to affordable medical check-ups that serve their needs, the results of which would be shared with the workers and not with anyone else, according to principles of doctor-patient confidentiality. Check-ups offered should include:
 - (a) Physical assessment of occupational diseases arising from the nature of work or other illnesses that are caused due to prolong exposure to risks.
 - (b) A basic assessment of the mental and emotional well-being of FDWs, as they are at a higher risk than other workers due to prolonged confinement in the same limited space, constant emotional labour to please employers and lack of social support.

(B) Employers

MOM regulation can only set certain parameters on acceptable behaviour and enforceability will remain an issue due to the private nature of residential spaces. The role of employers is therefore definitely vital in deciding whether the overall working and living conditions of FDWs are conducive to their wellbeing and to a harmonious worker-employer relationship. With the survey results, we would like to recommend the following for FDWs’ employers:

¹⁸ Publication: International Labour Organisation. *Domestic Work Policy Brief 7: Working time of live-in domestic workers*. See:

http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/@ed_protect/@protrav/@travail/documents/publication/wcms_230837.pdf

1. Employers should treat FDWs with due respect. The latter should not be subordinated because of their nationality or salary amount, for we are of the same human race. In line with Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, employers should work on the following to fulfill the four basic needs:
 - (a) Physiological: Provide FDWs with proper sleep by offering private bedrooms with proper beddings.
 - (b) Safety: Provide FDWs with a safe environment. Protect their modesty by ensuring that they do not share the room with any male (except children aged 12 or below) nor do they sleep in common spaces such as living rooms and kitchens. The implication of the former could be the latter, due to space constraints. To resolve both problems, the government should work to develop and allow live-out options as a win-win solution to ensuring privacy and protecting modesty. In addition, employers should also protect FDWs' health by minimising FDWs' exposure to risks whenever possible. Since they are working and living together with the employer, it is good to try and integrate them and give the same consideration to their safety as would be given to that of family members.
 - (c) Love/Belonging: Provide FDWs with the right to have a social life. Like any other migrant workers, FDWs are here to earn a living, but they also need time for rest and recreation. They should not be confined and working around the clock every day. Their right to have free time should be recognized and this can include connecting and socializing with their home community. To facilitate this, a planned basic schedule of daily tasks can be established by the agreement of both parties at the beginning of an FDW's employment. A fixed routine would ensure that FDWs have at least eight hours of sleep and three hours of free time daily, following the aforementioned ILO 11/24 rule. To allow for the unforeseen, employers should indicate their priorities, so that the worker can focus on those in the time available. Employers and workers should do their best to keep to this agreed schedule, unless there are emergency situations.
 - (d) Esteem: Provide FDWs with due respect. If employers have not already done so, display trust in FDWs by offering them a private locker to store their belongings, which should include their passports and other important documents. Employers can also offer FDWs the time and space to cook meals to their preferences. Both actions symbolizes trust and respect, providing workers a greater sense of self-esteem.

These recommendations are non-exhaustive and only proceed from the findings of our survey on the working and living conditions of FDWs in Singapore. Future research can be carried out on its various aspects to delve deeper into more underlying factors behind the problems identified, with a view to coming up with a more comprehensive resolution for them.

Acknowledgements

Transient Workers Count Too wishes to thank our volunteers and caseworkers who ran this survey over two years. We also wish to thank the students and lecturers of the polytechnic that helped in the later stages of the data-gathering. We wish to thank our intern Tay Wei-yu who analysed the data and wrote up this report.

Appendix A - Sample of Survey Questions

DOMESTIC WORKER LIVING CONDITIONS SURVEY



Interviewed by _____

Serial number _____

Interview location _____

Date of interview _____ dd/mm/yyyy

Q.01 How long have you worked with your current employer (majikan sekarang)?

- ☐ < 3 mth
 ☐ 3-6 mth
 ☐ 7-9 mth
 ☐ 10-12 mth
 ☐ more than 1, less than 2 years
☐ 2-3 yrs
 ☐ 4-5 yrs
 ☐ >5 yrs
 ☐ cannot remember
 ☐ no current employer

The following questions relate to current employer or most recent employer (if not currently working)

Q.02 What kind of residence does your employer live in?

- ☐ HDB flat
 ☐ Private condo
 ☐ An apartment, not sure whether HDB or condo
☐ House, with garden
 ☐ Other, please describe: _____

Q.03 What kind of room do you sleep in?

- ☐ Living room/hall
 ☐ Kitchen (dapur)
 ☐ A bedroom (bilik tidur)
 ☐ A store room
☐ Other, please describe: _____




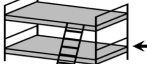


Q.04 Who are the other persons who share the same room/space that you sleep in?

(Put the number of persons in the boxes, do not just tick the boxes. Put zeroes in boxes if no such persons sharing the room. Do not leave any box blank. Example at right)

	MALE	FEMALE		
Child, 0 - 11 years old	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text" value="1"/>	<input type="text" value="0"/>
Teenager, 12 - 19 years old	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text" value="0"/>	<input type="text" value="0"/>
Healthy adult	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text" value="0"/>	<input type="text" value="0"/>
Elderly who needs help	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text" value="0"/>	<input type="text" value="1"/>
Other	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text" value="0"/>	<input type="text" value="0"/>

Please explain: _____

Q.05 Do you sleep on a bed or on floor?

-  ☐ Single bed
  ☐ Double bed
  ☐ Trundle bed
 ☐ Lower bunk
  ☐ Upper bunk
  ☐ Floor with roll-out mattress
 ☐ Floor (no mattress)

Q.06 On a weekday, what time (approx) do you normally wake up (bangun)?

☐ 4 a.m. or earlier ☐ 5 a.m. ☐ 6 a.m. ☐ 7 a.m. ☐ 8 a.m. ☐ 9 a.m. or later

Q.07 On a weekday, what time (approx) do you normally go to bed (tidur)?

☐ 9 p.m. or earlier ☐ 10 p.m. ☐ 11 p.m. ☐ midnight ☐ 1 a.m. ☐ 2 a.m. or later

Q.08 On a typical weekday, roughly how much free time (masa lapang) do you have to do whatever you like, e.g. reading, watching TV, using computer, taking a nap.
(If worker enjoys split free times, add up to estimate total.)

☐ Less than 1 hour ☐ 1-2 hrs ☐ 3-4 hrs ☐ 5-6 hrs ☐ 7-8 hrs ☐ 9 hrs or more

Q.09 Are you able/allowed to cook (masak) your own meals, to your own taste, at home?

☐ Not allowed ☐ Allowed, but I rarely do ☐ Sometimes ☐ I often cook for myself
☐ Don't know. This issue never came up ☐ Other answer: _____

Q.10 Do you have a locker (gerobok/almari) to store your possessions, which you can lock?

☐ No ☐ Yes, but employer also has a spare key ☐ Yes, and only I have the key

Q.11 Who is holding your passport?

☐ My employer ☐ Myself ☐ Someone else. Who? _____

Q.12 How often does a member of the family come home smelling of beer or alcohol?
(Does not have to be the same member of the family)

☐ Never ☐ Less than once a month ☐ Once or twice a month ☐ Once a week or more

Q.13 How often does a member of the family drink beer or alcohol heavily at home?
("heavily" = slightly drunk, not sober)

☐ Never ☐ Less than once a month ☐ Once or twice a month ☐ Once a week or more

Q.14 How many members of the family smoke (merokok) in the home?

☐ None ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 or more ☐ I smell tobacco, but don't know who
☐ It's complicated, please describe: _____

Q.15 Which country are you from?

☐ Indonesia ☐ Philippines ☐ Other, please name _____

Appendix B - Tables

Table of Profile of Co-sharers, Non-exclusive

Non-exclusivity refers to FDWs not only sharing the room with the specific profile. For example in Figure 35, the 28 FDWs sharing the room with 1 Male Child could be also sharing the room with some other profiles like 1 other Female Child.

Profile of Co-sharer	One	Two	Three or more
Male Child, 0 - 11 yrs	28	5	2
Female Child, 0 - 11 yrs	41	7	2
Male Teenager, 12 - 19 yrs	11	0	0
Female Teenager, 12 - 19 yrs	17	4	1
Male Healthy adult	5	0	0
Female Healthy adult	33	3	2
Male Elderly needing help	6	0	0
Female Elderly needing help	33	0	0

Figure 35(A)

Table of Profile of Co-sharers, Exclusive

Exclusivity refers to FDWs only sharing the room with the specific profile. For example in Figure 36, the 15 FDWs share the room with 1 Male Child only while 2 FDWs share the room with 2 Male Children only - no other profiles were in the same room.

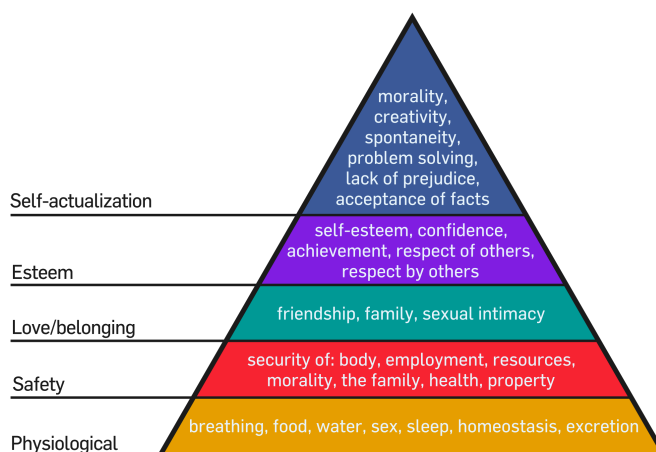
Profile of Co-sharer	One	Two	Three or more
Male Child, 0 - 11 yrs	15	2	2
Female Child, 0 - 11 yrs	25	6	2
Male Teenager, 12 - 19 yrs	6	0	0
Female Teenager, 12 - 19 yrs	12	4	1
Male Healthy adult	3	0	0
Female Healthy adult	23	3	2
Male Elderly needing help	4	0	0
Female Elderly needing help	32	0	0

Figure 35(B)

Appendix C – Additional Information

I. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs¹⁹

Maslow (1943) stated that people are motivated to achieve certain needs, and this set of motivation is unrelated to rewards or unconscious desires. The earliest and most common model includes five stages, and can be divided into basic (or deficiency) needs (e.g. physiological, safety, love, and esteem) and growth needs (self-actualization). A pyramid is used to depict the hierarchical level. These five different hierarchical levels of motivational needs is to be fulfilled on a level-basis – each of which can only be sought after if the previous need is fulfilled – starting from the base. For instance, one can only pursue the second need of safety after his first need of physiological is fulfilled.



1. Biological and Physiological needs - air, food, drink, shelter, warmth, sex, sleep.
2. Safety needs - protection from elements, security, order, law, stability, freedom from fear.
3. Love and belongingness needs - friendship, intimacy, affection and love, - from work group, family, friends, romantic relationships.
4. Esteem needs - achievement, mastery, independence, status, dominance, prestige, self-respect, respect from others.
5. Self-Actualization needs - realizing personal potential, self-fulfillment, seeking personal growth and peak experiences.

¹⁹ Article: McLeod, S. *Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs*. 2014. See: <http://www.simplypsychology.org/maslow.html>

II. Correlation between Income and Type of Residence

From the following two tables found in the 'Key Household Income Trends, 2015' report by Singapore Department of Statistics²⁰, a relationship is suggested between income and type of residence amongst the Singaporean population. A higher average monthly household income will translate to a higher likelihood of living in more expensive residence that are under the non-public category.

Table 12A. Average Monthly Household Income from Work Per Household Member
Among **Resident Employed Households** by Type of Dwelling, 2005 – 2015

Year	Dollar					
	HDB 1- & 2-Room Flats ¹	HDB 3-Room Flats	HDB 4-Room Flats	HDB 5-Room & Executive Flats	Condominiums & Other Apartments	Landed Properties
2005	811	1,486	1,432	2,055	4,411	3,477
2006	812	1,471	1,492	2,088	4,758	3,924
2007	775	1,612	1,632	2,252	5,214	4,604
2008	854	1,820	1,835	2,545	5,467	4,882
2009	858	1,806	1,833	2,469	5,500	4,687
2010	886	1,937	1,979	2,587	5,691	4,926
2011	932	2,066	2,173	2,785	6,254	5,494
2012	978	2,183	2,304	2,929	6,564	5,962
2013	976	2,216	2,415	3,086	6,640	5,614
2014	1,019	2,317	2,519	3,232	6,788	6,414
2015	1,224	2,512	2,718	3,367	7,356	5,888

Notes: A resident employed household refers to a household headed by a Singapore citizen or permanent resident and with at least one working person. Household income from work includes employer CPF contributions.

¹Includes HDB studio apartments.

Table 11A. Average Monthly Household Income from Work
Among **Resident Employed Households** by Type of Dwelling, 2005 – 2015

Year	Dollar					
	HDB 1- & 2-Room Flats ¹	HDB 3-Room Flats	HDB 4-Room Flats	HDB 5-Room & Executive Flats	Condominiums & Other Apartments	Landed Properties
2005	1,686	3,650	4,872	7,295	12,711	15,561
2006	1,667	3,639	4,981	7,384	13,011	16,640
2007	1,558	3,957	5,395	7,923	14,494	18,786
2008	1,783	4,541	6,069	9,022	16,086	20,388
2009	1,788	4,516	6,135	8,811	15,730	19,566
2010	1,879	4,800	6,483	9,186	16,315	20,931
2011	2,105	5,202	7,220	10,160	18,025	24,039
2012	2,233	5,512	7,626	10,735	19,026	25,419
2013	2,270	5,630	7,974	11,199	19,340	23,994
2014	2,313	5,805	8,293	11,606	19,843	27,363
2015	2,697	6,258	8,751	12,172	20,324	25,473

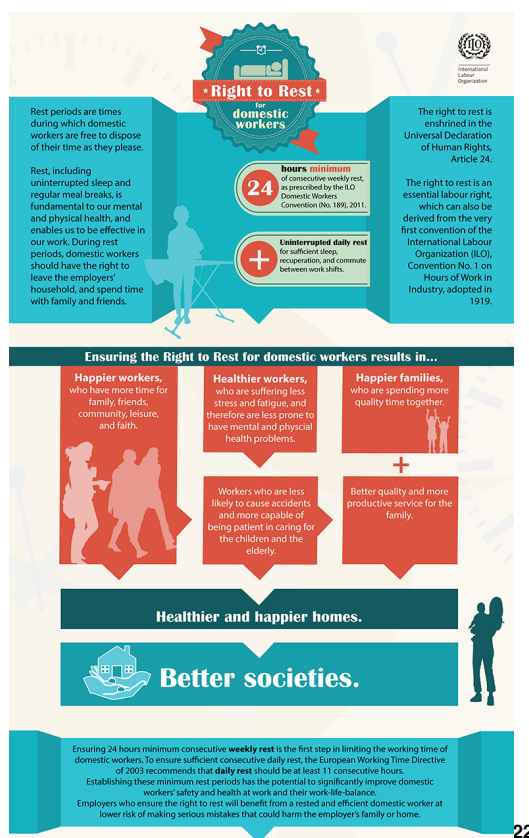
Notes: A resident employed household refers to a household headed by a Singapore citizen or permanent resident and with at least one working person. Household income from work includes employer CPF contributions.

¹Includes HDB studio apartments.

²⁰ Publication: Statistics Singapore. *Key Household Income Trends, 2015*. Feb 2016. See: https://www.singstat.gov.sg/docs/default-source/default-document-library/publications/publications_and_papers/household_income_and_expenditure/pp-s22.pdf

III. ILO Rights to Rest for Domestic Workers²¹

Due to the nature of domestic workers' job scope and workplace, there are many legal obstacles for effective regulations, acknowledged both in Singapore and globally. As such, they are often unprotected due to the exclusion from legislation that regulates the right to rest. This has repercussions – health and safety risks and inability to maintain proper work-life balance. To address this issue but yet optimizing effectiveness, ILO is seeking a different angle – ensuring that domestic workers effectively enjoy their basic human right to rest by having a unique 'Rights to Rest for Domestic Workers' campaign. This requires the introduction of a minimum standard for daily and weekly rest. The 189th convention of ILO, Convention on Domestic Workers, provides for a standard on weekly rest of 24 consecutive hours but does not mention on the minimum duration of daily rest. To fill in this gap and facilitate implementation across countries, the right to rest would be depicted in the form of building blocks, which constituents could assemble gradually, taking an incremental approach.



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²¹ Publication: International Labour Organisation. *Domestic Work Policy Brief 7: Working time of live-in domestic workers*. See:

http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/@ed_protect/@protrav/@travail/documents/publication/wcms_230837.pdf

²² Resource: International Labour Organisation. *Right to Rest for domestic workers*.

See: http://www.ilo.org/global/topics/domestic-workers/WCMS_430883/lang-en/index.htm