



Round 1 Public Consultation Stakeholder Feedback & Responses

Geographic specificity

1. How will WageMap address the preference of multinational companies for a single living wage rate rather than multiple regional benchmarks?

This will not be addressed by the reference standard, however multiple estimates will be showcased in the eventual public aggregated map. There continues to be different opinions on this without a majority position from engaged stakeholders. Additionally, many companies already pay different rates across a country as minimum wages often differ by area and cost of living as well. There is a consensus that data should reflect actual cost of living. How an employer chooses to implement living wage will be addressed in future guidance documents.

2. It makes sense to structure what data currently exists, but there is also a need to help employers navigate what to do when there isn't an appropriate benchmark for a region that may not meet baseline requirements so that they can still begin to make progress.

The WageMap reference standard is structured to prioritize and promote use of data that meets at least the "Working Towards Compliance" requirements. However, in cases where such data is not yet available, we are amenable to referencing alternative data sources - even if they do not fully meet the "Working Towards Compliance" criteria- as useful starting points for initial scoping and orientation.

3. Agree that alignment is needed in terms of the types of regional boundaries you use. In India they're geographical, in Vietnam they're different economic zones - how do we link supply chain data and the different productions facilities to this kind of information? Did you already reach consensus on the type of boundary?

The reference standard will use political boundaries, while aiming for a level of specificity and data representativeness that captures the intersection between political, economic, and cost-of-living differences. In many cases, this will



require going beyond broad regional classifications and rural/urban context. Where data is organized around economic zones (e.g., in Vietnam), we will align those zones with the relevant political boundaries they overlap.

4. Overall, on this piece, I think it will be extremely useful. The approach that you're using is not making a judgment call, but rather be transparent on how the different estimates follow these ladders, so to speak, or pyramid, upon the desired scenario, to what's feasible, to what will be actually too limited. And then the users can make a decision on the best estimate that they would like to use, right but also aiming always at that North and start and for this particular piece of the geography, I think is quite useful in practice. You know, when we work with producers, for instance, that are trying to do work on living wages, this level of advice or recommendation is crucial, especially for countries where we might have only one estimate for the entire country, right? Is it really appropriate to use it? What else can use, you know? What? Just be able to recognize the most suitable value that they can compare the remuneration against, is a recurrent question, especially for countries where the availability of estimates is limited. So having these, at least guides, guides the well, if I cannot get to the Northern Star because there's no such value, what's next in the ladder that I could use to get rolling and not use that as a skews, not for not working on living wages, so to speak. So I think this piece is quite interesting and well structured.

Just a comment. Thanks!

5. The approach is good because estimates need to be very local when countries have very large differences in various areas, but also address commuting (working downtown or in another country and living else where)

We believe we have this incorporated this feedback in the reference standard. Please comment on the setup in next round of consultations.

6. Is the aim of this triangle to classify the LW systems of the partners in WAGE MAP? If you say 'compliant', does this mean that LW system of the WAGE MAP partner includes to the items mentioned in scoring model. If the answer to these questions is yes, have you considered making a table with the WAGE MAP partners in the column, and tick the degrees of geographical specificity in the rows?

WageMap plans to map every estimate that is publicly available in every category according to a triangle with three tiers, Working Towards Compliance, Compliance, and Beyond Compliance. Each will have a point assignment, and we will identify the living wage for the estimates most aligned



with the reference standard in our final Wage Map. We will also list any categories that were noncompliant for transparency.

7. **By presenting a scoring, you sharing what is best. Best of what, from which perspective, by whom? Many companies need a good approach worldwide similar for all their employees. I don't see that version in this scoring, where it is a version highly desired by larger firms.**

The reference standard itself is meant to make work easier for global companies, by allowing them to understand which data is achieving best practice. Best practice is defined based on academic rigor, alignment with ILO principles on living wage estimation, and consensus among a wide range of stakeholders consulted in this process.

8. **The scoring categories are confusing. On Geographic Coverage, I suggest covering the social security coverage, perhaps this is also part of the political/economic boundaries.**

See previous responses on geographic specificity (#3).

In Mexico, the salary structure is determined by urban and rural areas and, consequently, there are significant differences in terms of consumption habits and social development.

Understood, hence we are adding the geographic specificity and guidance on rural/urban distinctions needed.

North Star (Now referred to as Beyond Compliance): Geographic Coverage according to administrative regulation is easier, everybody understands that. Commuting habits change over time / season / class therefore are new hurdle for implementation. Family size: if adding an extra category single parent looks a good idea, I would suggest that to pick single income family, for the blunt reason you don't want HR, boss, company to check how many children or partners you have. Intrusive, and not needed. And in many regions in the world not allowed.

For single-income families, we will share data as proposed in the reference standard. And encourage estimators to share that information. We agree that employers should not have to determine the structure of families for workers. Overall feedback leads us to conclude that the typical number of workers statistically in a location should be the primary benchmark and then we should



drive companies to pay everyone enough for single earners to support the family. Therefore, that data should also be made available.

- 9. I believe the North Star (Now referred to as Beyond Compliance) standard is basically "un-reachable" and should therefore not be included**

The "Beyond Compliance" elements are being implemented in all cases by a methodology that currently exists. None of the methodologies have hit all these requirements, but we see that each is reachable as every "Beyond Compliance" requirement in each category has been reached by an existing methodology. Hence, we are driving toward the best practices. But it isn't necessary to reach that for every estimate.

- 10. Reflective of political and economic boundaries makes most sense if north star (now referred as beyond compliance) is unachievable.**

We will be reflecting political and economic boundaries in the reference standard.

- 11. Living wage must be defined at the finest possible territorial level in order to represent the real living conditions of employees, particularly in terms of housing costs. In very large cities (such as Shanghai), a neighborhood-based approach is also necessary.**

See previous responses on geographic specificity (#3).

- 12. Looks good! Makes sense. It's intuitive!**

Thanks!

- 13. Looks good but worried that north star is unachievable.**

See previous responses on geographic specificity (#3).

- 14. How will you acknowledge multiple benchmarks in the dataset where only one is identified as 'standard-aligned'**

See previous responses on geographic specificity (#3).

- 15. It is important that the standard is clear and easy to use**

See previous responses on geographic specificity (#3).



16. I'm interested whether having locally specific could bring keep wages down for "poorer" areas - and reinforce geographical inequalities? Rather than trying to raise the bar for these areas?

We apply a floor to this. So, if poorer areas have conditions that do not qualify as decent, we are not replicating that poverty but rather pricing what it would cost to achieve decency.

17. How can you ensure data from all geographic areas?

See previous responses on geographic specificity (#3)

18. Is equality index featured in this model?

The current version of the reference standard does not include a formal equality index. However, principles of equity and non-discrimination are embedded throughout the reference standard. For example, in how it addresses gendered impacts of care responsibilities, access to public services, and representation in data collection.

19. I'm in agreement with local geographic coverage reflective of commuting habits being the gold standard, and am interested in learning more about how commuting habits are measured and integrated.

See previous responses on geographic specificity (#3).

20. Most data that you are mining is likely critical noncompliant because most wage information would be provided by political entities (local governments). so how do you scrub that out?

The reference standard addresses this by requiring all data - whether self-collected or from public sources - to meet the same academic rigor and transparency criteria. This includes scrutiny around sampling, representativeness, and methodology. Specifically, chapter 1, section 1.1 of the reference standard lay out the requirements for data collection and academic rigor. If government data does not meet these criteria, it will not be considered compliant. In such cases, users are encouraged to complement or replace it with independent fieldwork or alternative data collection methods outlined in the reference standard. This ensures that even when national statistics are used, they are held to the same standards as any other source.



21. Geographical coverage should include political, economic, and transportation areas. The data should also consider factors such as migration and seasonality. As casualization of workers is picking up.

See previous responses on geographic specificity (#3).

Family size & number of workers

22. In relation to gender equity, have you reviewed assumptions about the number of hours worked by earners i.e. do you want to arrive at a consensus on the number of assumed working hours for main and any second or sole earners in order to earn family living wage?

Given the differing views across stakeholders, the reference standard takes a dual approach. It provides estimates based on the typical number of earners per family, reflecting statistical labor force data in the specific geography. It also encourages and supports the calculation of a single-earner living wage, to ensure aspirational alignment with the principle that one full-time worker should be able to support a family.

Working hours used in both cases must reflect typical full-time work in the region, and are capped at 48 hours per week, in line with ILO guidance. Overtime hours are excluded to avoid reinforcing excessive or inequitable workloads.

23. I had also companies and families telling us, well, but what does family mean as in, is a family can be even very western concept, where you think it's your closest family, your mom, that children, that's it. But I also work in projects where family includes nephews, aunts, everyone is living on the same roof, and in some cultures, that is more often the case than where you have just a family living mom that children or a single household, if we are including and considering single households, and how that could affect The benchmark soon, we also then consider, in some benchmarks, the fact that families include the full family.

Yes, this is incorporated in the reference standard as "family household."



24. Assuming that living wage of 1 worker is foregrounded as an indicator of importance, family size or household size should matter relatively less. The worker income could be applied across an average household size in a country.

This is included in the reference standard as an option to present.

25. A Floor of 2 Children - I strongly disagree because there are many places with a fertility rate lower than 1.49. Plus, the fertility rate is dropping in many places around the world, so using two children will only become increasingly more 'split from reality'. Using the fertility rate can help account for places where large families are still the norm or where the rate isn't dropping. Why do we refer to "children" and not "dependents"? I'm not sure how common it is to care for people who are not children (e.g. the elderly), but I assume it's often enough to factor in. And actually, if you do assume "dependents" then I think the "floor of two" is easier to justify. I feel comfortable not using integers. Living wage calculations are full of assumptions and estimations. I'd prefer a figure that's more representative. If that's 1.7, for example, then let's use 1.7. Accounting for single parent households is tricky because this varies widely by country. The US is a massive outlier. Perhaps this can be factored into the assumptions on # of wage earners. That way it's more context specific.

*Yes, this is included in the reference standard in number of wage earners.
Dependents are now also addressed in the reference standard.*

26. As long as the living wage is a voluntary approach on the part of companies, taking into account a 2nd income (even part-time) should not be an option. The company has no certainty that the 2nd adult is working (full-time or part-time), and that the 2nd employer is paying at least a Living Wage. Taking a 2nd income into account therefore introduces a very strong bias and does not guarantee that this family will be able to meet its essential needs.

This is currently addressed in the reference standard.



27. Regarding family size: either one can take the 'standardized' approach (=family with 2 adults + kids) OR the family size is adapted to the real family size in the country (=average family size in country, thus adapting family size for single mums). By choosing for the standardized approach (=family with 2 adults + kids), you say that the LW should cover for a family. Thus, even when half of the country's population in working age is a single person without kids, you still provide a LW for a standardized family. In my view this approach is the best one. Adapting the standardized family size to country-specificities troubles the LW understanding, and thus the LW acceptance.

This is currently addressed in the reference standard.

28. We need to start from a statistical approach. Advantage: a company doesn't have to check babies/lovers etc. No division between married/not married/single mam etc. Rather have a higher living wage, than this approach! 2. keep it a statistical approach. If a country has less than 1 kid, you cant propose 2 kids as a baseline, you don't get any buy in for that.

This is currently addressed in the reference standard.

29. To have a focus on implementation and not on family count - I would suggest simple options, no discussion. Like standard, typical (two adults earn + fertility rate) and single income (one adult earns from the family (fertility rate) - A kid is seen as a person. Fertility rate can be capped at 1.

This is currently addressed in the reference standard.

30. Family size could be considered as 2 persons for the new changing world and single parent era. So, one family should have one worker at least.

This is currently addressed in the reference standard.

31. Households with one person or one worker are common. The living wage should allow people to live alone as well.

This is currently addressed in the reference standard.



32. If in the calculations, you also include, like the number of workers in the family, you already make it more difficult to calculate. So I think it is very helpful to say, yeah, it should be, actually, it should be one person earning this living wage, or for the typical family size, because many of those workers take care of a whole family. And many times, they also even send family back, send money back to a family in, I don't know, somewhere in another province. So for instance, in Cambodia, we have discussions sometimes, yeah, how do we present, like, the money that people are sending back to their hometown? Is it also part of the living ways, you know? So, and then we make the decision, okay, yeah, we present it also separately, because unions are also sometimes afraid that they present a number which is too high, right? So I think we have to really think about like, how do are those benchmarks used for collective bargaining social dialog? If that is truly up, I think what we also aim to impact, um, yes. So yeah, I find it difficult to give input because everywhere, like minimum wage negotiation, the CBA negotiations are done in a different way, but you have to take into account like what is done nationally in the minimum wage negotiations.

On remittances: while they are not included as a separate line item in the living wage calculation, the reference standard assumes that the worker is supporting a typical family - not just themselves. Therefore, even if a worker lives alone and sends money back home (often to a lower-cost area), the living wage still reflects the income needed to support a family in the generally higher-cost area where the worker is employed. In this way, remittances are indirectly accounted for.

Regarding the use of living wage estimates in collective bargaining and social dialogue: the reference standard emphasizes the importance of local stakeholder engagement and recognizes the diversity of national wage-setting processes. While the reference standard itself does not dictate how data must be used, further guidance (Implementation Guidance) will be provided on their application - including how they can support gap assessments and negotiations. This allows unions and other local actors to use benchmarks as tools in ways that suit their contexts.

33. Few similar comments on families/ single people without dependents:

1. In that case, a living wage estimated assuming a typical family would be higher so it's beneficial for someone without children, right?
2. So does this mean LW excludes people who have not started their family, exactly because they're living under the LW
3. What if her or his family = 0 at this point



This is addressed in the reference standard.

34. I don't agree with the rounding concept - makes it less accurate for all, rather than more useable. I'm not sure about rounding up when it comes to number of children. i think most people understand there is no such thing as a "portion" of a child. it might be fine if there is a large enough value

This is addressed in the reference standard.

35. We need to ensure we are accounting for single parent households.
Unclear about the rationale behind the exclusion of single-person families

This is addressed in the reference standard.

36. To me it seems consistent that if you have a partial worker you could also have a partial child and it make sense to make it one or the other (whole workers/children, partial workers/children)

This is addressed in the reference standard.

37. It would be helpful to avoid having too many data broken down per family size for the same geography, otherwise it becomes difficult for companies to pick the right number

This is addressed in the reference standard.

38. I think it makes more sense to use Standard Family living wage for all location.

We understand the appeal of using a Standard Family model across all locations to simplify comparisons. However, feedback across our consultations revealed a strong consensus that living wage estimates must remain locally grounded to be meaningful and accurate. Family size and composition vary significantly across regions, and a one-size-fits-all model would risk misrepresenting actual cost of living realities. That said, to support comparability, the reference standard encourages methodologies to clearly disclose how family size is calculated and allows for population-weighted averages for standard family types (nuclear, single-parent, family household etc.). This allows users to align estimates across geographies without losing local specificity, which is essential for wage setting, policy engagement, and supply chain application.



39. The closer to reality the methodology allows us to go the better for the outcomes.

Just a comment. Thanks!

40. Additional factors -unpaid care work & median employment rate for men/women.
Some statistics state that the average number of years working is less than for men.
Dependent parent to be considered.

On unpaid care work, the reference standard recognizes that in many contexts, such work, typically done by women, is not compensated. To address this, the reference standard encourages to include the cost of substituting unpaid care work with paid care, where relevant. This approach aligns with a gender equity lens, as recommended by the ILO, by ensuring that both adults in a household have the choice to participate in paid work if they wish.

Regarding median employment rates or years worked, while actual labor force participation varies by gender and country, the living wage does not assume unequal contributions. Instead, it assumes a model where the wage earned by one full-time worker can support a typical family. This avoids reinforcing existing gender inequalities and supports the principle of equitable access to employment.

We acknowledge that in some societies, lower employment rates among women may reflect structural or cultural barriers rather than individual choice. The reference standard aims not to replicate these patterns, but to encourage fair compensation that supports the full participation of all family members in the labor force, if they choose.

41. Typical family term is against diversity, Consider what a 'family' could look like in other contexts. This seems like a western approach. What about when other types of families (extended families, elderly parents, etc) are typical? This might require further exploration. The meaning of family/household underlying this does not apply in many countries (e.g. Family as nuclear family).

This is addressed in the reference standard.



42. 24,4% of participants agreed with the following statement: "A Floor of 2 Children Should be Applied in All Cases to Prevent Replication of Poverty" (whereas 46,3% disagreed).
- 63,2% of participants agreed with the following statement: " No Ceiling to the Typical Number of Children Should be Applied"
- 69,6% of participants agreed with the following statement: " Single Parent Households Should be Accounted for in Typical Family Size and Number of Workers"
- 45,6% of participants agreed with the following statement: " A Child Should not be Accounted for as a "Partial Person""
- 67,9% of participants agreed with the following statement: " Living Wage for 1 Worker per Family Would be Valuable Data to Share"

Family Size and Number of Workers

43. Some methodologies assume a fixed family type (e.g., two children of specific ages), rather than calculating costs over an entire childhood.

The reference standard seeks a more dynamic approach, capturing cost variations across different years of a child's upbringing.

Transport

44. How can you define a general cost if different persons have different possibilities or habits of using different transport services, for example taxi and bus or other massive transport service?

This is addressed in the reference standard.

45. Mobility in terms of money/km for the cheapest available mode of mobility option could be considered because public transport and transport itself has seen very diverse forms across the world.

The reference standard acknowledges the wide diversity in transport systems globally. Public transport is the preferred basis for cost estimation where it is adequate, accessible, legal, and commonly used by workers. However, in locations where public transport is insufficient or unavailable, the reference standard requires that costs for private transport be included instead - fully



accounting for expenses such as vehicle amortization, fuel, maintenance, and required fees.

46. A living wage must enable an employee and his family to meet their basic needs. Lifestyles (transport, food, housing) and the reality of public services must be taken into account. A universal approach is not in line with the ILO definition ('according to the circumstances of the country'). All the elements of the basket of essential goods and services must be defined locally.

This is how the reference standard is arranged, requiring local level appropriateness.

47. Transport costs are typically the costs of one person in the family. So you need to indicate that the transport costs will be double for the 2-adult typical family and you have to make an assumption about the transport costs of the kids in the typical/standard family. E.g.: at what age do kids start to ride their own motorbike (e.g. 18), and how is this taken into account when calculating the costs of a kid?

We have added information in the reference standard about types of trips to be included that honor both adults and children.

48. Keep it simple: one approach for the world. Rather a bit higher than deciding that cars are needed in the USA but not in other countries where public transport is just a mini-bus. Avoid a system where richer countries dictate.

We fully agree with the spirit of this feedback. That said, transport costs must also reflect real-world access and necessity. The current reference standard does not assume cars are required in any specific country. Instead, it establishes a clear hierarchy:

- 1. Use public transport where it is adequate, accessible, legal, and commonly used.*
- 2. Where this is not the case, especially in rural or under-served areas, private transport (e.g., motorbike, car, or informal shared modes) may be used - but only if this reflects actual local practice and legal options.*

This approach is designed to maintain local realism while avoiding upward or downward bias based on geography.

49. I believe it is wise to be mindful that setting this standard may influence, for example, talks regarding public transport.



Just a comment. Thanks!

50. For the sustainable world, we hope to develop local economic growth from local procurement policies to companies within 80 kilometers. The transportation of workers might have new approaches to reach.

Just a comment. Thanks!

51. Public transport is also mini busses, widely used in Southern Africa. It is a risk to check who uses what where and why? Then again the rich will decide that they use a car, and others not, or the other way around. How will you know year on year, season by season? And why promoting private cars where there is a movement to go for shared cars (mini - bus)

We have added this to the reference standard. Also, see previous responses on Transport (#45).

52. I agree with the approach too but wanted to say the legality may get tricky quickly...will the standard be ok saying where something is illegal but common, that's the benchmark? (Makes sense but may be hard?) (I was thinking about transport in South Africa for instance, majority is illegal but affordable, not very safe, not insured etc...legal alternative is mostly unaffordable).

Living wage is a concept viewed through a human rights lens. So just because something is common does not mean it achieves decency from a human right lens. Modes of transportation that are illegal and unsafe are not meeting basic decency. All workers deserve to afford a safe method of getting to work. So, all transportation included in living wage should be legal and safe.

53. We agree with the approach.

Just a comment. Thanks!

54. Would transport type not change across different job categories even within the same locality? How are you going to assess local practice? It would be good to make sure these aren't just country level but also take into consideration how certain cities may have transport
Sounds good. Just to point out, same regions (within a country or district) can have different types of preferences transport. Special needs like pregnant women/disability should considered



We have included this in the reference standard.

55. Would it take into account if the place of work is required to provide transport by law or a monetary value for transport by law?

We have included this in the reference standard.

56. It would be a possibility to steer towards better public transport infrastructure- but that is a long shot. Otherwise most used mode of transport is better.

We have included this in the reference standard.

57. Within a small area transport links can be very different experiences for rural and urban.

We have included this in the reference standard.

58. What about cities where public transport is widely available except for cross-border employees? I see there is no public and some companies are providing the transportation to the workers. Not sure how consider these a combination of public and private transportation costs must be considered; for instance, in certain areas, using public transport often requires taking private transport as well.

We have included this in the reference standard.

59. There are way different about the law in different countries.

We have included this in the reference standard.

60. We are very aligned with this approach especially for US, where private transport is often required for people to be able to get to place of work

We have included this in the reference standard.

61. Where public transport isn't available - would some level of guaranteed safety be a good guideline towards a "minimally acceptable" form of transport?

Yes. We have included references to safe transportation in the reference standard.



62. Looks good. Any thoughts on reproducing poverty patterns (maybe it's not typical to own a vehicle due to costs so then that's not factored it?)

Updates will track increasing levels of development. For example, in one country motorbikes might be the typical and legal means of transport. However, if in 5 years of development, that typical mode moves to cars, then the transport costs should shift to reflect that reality.

63. I think, again, it would be important to collect data on transport in different countries - or even better: a solution to many of the questions i could be not to use a cost of living approach?

The use of a cost-of-living approach is in line with ILO guidance, which states that living wages should be based on the actual cost of meeting basic needs. This has been affirmed through a tripartite agreement involving governments, employers, and workers' representatives.

Regarding the point on transport, we agree that this is an important cost component. Data on transport is collected locally, where workers work and live, in each country as part of the living wage calculation. For more detail, please refer to Section 2.4 of the reference standard, which outlines how transport costs are considered.

Healthcare

64. What were the international norms being used?

We have included this in the reference standard.

65. Government-provided healthcare should be incorporated.

We have included this in the reference standard.

66. Healthcare should include spouse, children and dependents.

We have included this in the reference standard.



67. Healthcare costs cover a risk which, by definition, is uncertain (i.e. does not occur every month). Out-of-pocket healthcare costs, if they are taken into account, must be limited and represent only a very marginal fraction of the Living wage.

We have included this in the reference standard.

68. Can you clarify how additional health care costs are calculated for the LW, because not all members of a family have all these costs each year. So you need to make assumptions: a family will on average consume all additional health costs every second year. Compare to the cost of a dentist, which is e.g. 50 USD per visit, but it is 100 USD on a yearly basis. But the costs for a denture are 500 USD, but are consumed only once in a lifetime, and only by half of the adult population. Which means adding 5 USD on the yearly living wage.

We have addressed this in part by emphasizing the need for healthcare costs to be adequate for the reference-size family at all stages of life. This includes costs that may not be incurred every year but are expected over the course of life - such as those related to maternal and reproductive health. These have been explicitly referenced as essential and are considered in the estimation process, in line with OHCHR and ILO guidance. At the same time, we have not included all categories of infrequent healthcare needs, such as dentures or similar lifetime costs, as standard inclusions. The focus has been placed on those health needs that are more universally experienced or that carry significant implications for decent living standards when unmet.

69. In different markets, employer provided health insurance still normally requires a balance between what the employer funds and what the employee funds. In the above consensus approach, I'd like to see 'the employer funded portion of employer provided health insurance' credit accounting to savings to worker off open market rates.

This will be addressed in guidance on how benefits can be credited against a living wage.

70. In case health care should be included the Living Wage will explode. Among the rich there is the tendency to fly to Johannesburg or to Mumbai for surgery. Be careful with rights - where no employer can give this.

We have included this in the reference standard.



71. Agree with approach, 100% aligned.

Just a comment. Thanks!

72. Makes sense; and accounting for family care is a lot trickier in the US with hybrid: medicaid, CHIP, state level programs, etc.

We have included this in the reference standard.

73. Operationally, is it feasible to calculate an average number across a population for costs related to medications, procedures, physician visits, etc.? I'm curious how this looks in practice.

Yes, it is operationally feasible to calculate average healthcare costs provided that the data is geographically specific. These costs are estimated based on what a typical family would incur, rather than individual extremes.

While we recognize that some individuals may face higher or lower healthcare expenses (e.g., due to chronic illness or exceptional health), the living wage methodology is designed to reflect the typical experience - not the outliers.

Where relevant, the cost of health insurance is also included in the estimate, as it can help mitigate the impact of unexpected or high medical costs. For more details, please refer to the 2.3 healthcare section of the reference standard.

74. Would healthcare costs reflect an average number of dependents that aligns with the family concept methodology presented earlier?

This is included in the reference standard.

75. Did you consider access to microfinance schemes related to healthcare which features in many lower income settings?

While we recognize that microfinance or informal credit mechanisms can play an important role in healthcare affordability in some contexts, they are not currently included as part of the living wage healthcare cost estimation framework. The reference standard instead emphasizes ensuring that the core costs of adequate healthcare access should not require reliance on debt or informal borrowing mechanisms.



76. The cap on health insurance is important, it should be able to cover chronic issues.

We specify that health insurance plans included in LW estimates must be assessed as ample. This means they should cover a broad range of services beyond basic care, including emergency visits, preventative care, testing, specialist visits, and prescriptions. The reference standard explicitly notes that plans limited to only basic needs or catastrophic events are not sufficient, as they would not meet the adequacy standard.

77. Great to see supplementary insurance considered!

Just a comment. Thanks!

Housing

78. If possible, turn this into dwelling space required in square meters. Size of house is being determined by market in most urban areas.

This is included in the reference standard.

79. Regarding the sq footage, you could set a minimum.

This is included in the reference standard.

80. How people live can be judged by locals, you don't need some one from abroad to help you to decide for that.

This is included in the reference standard.

81. In a way, it is good to consider the number of rooms, shared bath rooms, etc. However, this seems unrealistic for some countries. Separate rooms are not appreciated as much in certain cultures.

This is included in the reference standard.

82. I agree that separate spaces for children should be considered in all cases. However, in rural areas it is difficult to find this separation.

This is included in the reference standard.



83. Where government housing benefits and subsidies are available, will these be included or excluded in the costs?

This is included in the reference standard

84. In case white people will come and decide where we should live and how - we don't see Living Wages as a good approach. Who decides where babies sleep? Should they be in separate rooms, since it is the case in the UK or USA? Should toilets be inside, where they seen as good outside? What is this? Can we decide what we think ourselves as OK? In stead of that white men decide what should be seen as ok?

This is included in the reference standard.

85. As in the transportation section, should additional costs associated with insurance be considered here?

This is included in the reference standard.

86. There should be other standards considered too, regarding building quality, sanitation etc.

This is included in the reference standard.

87. In majority metropolitans in South Asia 2 or 3 bed houses have very high renting, unless the commuting is increased. There are joint families where parents live with adults.

This is included in the reference standard.

88. Number of room should be based on local situation too.

This is included in the reference standard.

89. Availability of accommodation with "correct" number of bedrooms needs to be considered.

This is included in the reference standard.

90. Is a pit toilet considered 'decent'? The standard for a toilet should be safe/sanitary.

This is included in the reference standard.

91. Not sure about cultural variations- should LW not raise standards?



This is included in the reference standard.

92. Does this take account for laws like in the UK where children of opposite sex cannot share bedroom after a certain age. In the UK age and gender of children are taken into account when allocating council housing e.g teenage boys and girls shouldn't share bedrooms

This is included in the reference standard.

93. Where company housing is provided, are the current caps still recommend (and also for other IKBs)?

This will be included in future implementation guidance.

94. How to assess housing costs for companies with cross border employees (e.g France vs. Luxembourg/ Switzerland)?

This is included in the section on migrant labor in standard and geographic considerations.

95. How about proximity with public transport? Also, a reasonable commuting distance to work should be considered. Perhaps also valuable to consider suitable housing as maximum commute distance / times to & from their workplaces.

Yes, proximity to public transport and reasonable commuting distances are important considerations, especially when defining suitable housing and living costs.

The reference standard does account for this under geographic specificity. When commuting areas are used, we ensure they reflect reasonable commuting distances based on local norms

96. I think some countries have common shared flat cultures and some do not. Housing rent fee would be also different culturally.

While we recognize that shared housing or flat-sharing is common in some countries, the living wage is based on a family or a family household model, as recommended by the ILO. This means the estimate reflects the cost of housing suitable for a family- not an individual or shared living arrangement.

Similarly, when employers provide shared accommodations (e.g., barracks or bunk-style housing), these are not accepted as a substitute for adequate family housing in the living wage framework.



97. Could you clarify whether we are talking about renting (or owning) a place?

This is included in the reference standard.

98. Also important: protection against heat or being able to heat the house in cold periods.

This is included in the reference standard.

99. Is the maintenance or repair of the house included?

This is included in the reference standard.

100. Housing cost should consider weather conditions and the effects of climate change, including unforeseen circumstances such as floods, earthquakes, & fires. Maintenance charges to be managed.

Yes, the reference standard does take into account weather conditions, climate-related impacts, and unforeseen events when calculating housing costs. This is addressed in two ways:

Maintenance costs are included in the housing estimate and are expected to reflect local realities.

A margin for unexpected events is also included in the living wage calculation. This margin is designed to help households manage unforeseen circumstances, including emergencies like fires, floods, or earthquakes.

101. Are we then considering renting and property depending on what's most usual in different places?

This is included in the reference standard.

102. I really like point 5, but would remove points 2-4 as they fall under point 5 (different sleeping/living arrangements appropriate in different cultures)

This is included in the reference standard.

103. Nonstandard housing types make it difficult to identify what is considered a bedroom

This is included in the reference standard.



104. 67,4% of participants agreed with the following statement: "Living Rooms should not be Accounted for as a Separate Sleeping Space for Children - Families should have at Least 2 Bedrooms"

74,4% of participants agreed with the following statement: "Both Number of Rooms and sq. Footage Should be a Consideration in Assessing the Proper Housing Size"

This is included in the reference standard. Both floor space and number of rooms are included. However, there was disagreement largely across global South stakeholders on whether adults and children should have different sleeping spaces. Thus, we have chosen to allow this to be available in the reference standard.

Unexpected events

105. I suggest changing language to "savings for special or emergency events" to capture weddings as well as funerals, home repair, etc.

This is included in the reference standard.

106. Re margin for extra expenses: Maybe in the consensus instead of giving a specific % (which seems to have been set arbitrarily at some point?) formulate it as a margin which allows for.... (without %)

While a 5% margin remains referenced as a Working Towards Compliance requirement, the reference standard allows for flexibility. The draft reference standard now emphasizes that local context and stakeholder input - supported by either secondary sources or primary data collection - can justify deviations from this benchmark. This approach ensures both alignment with recognized norms and adaptability to differing geographic realities.

107. 5% seems to be okay but up to 10% is better so that the workers have some saving reserve and less likely to get into debt.

We agree that applying a fixed savings rate such as 5% or 10% may not reflect the realities in all contexts. In response to this type of feedback, the reference standard was revised to remove any fixed percentage requirement.

Instead, the current approach requires that any savings or resilience margin included in a living wage estimate be justified based on the country or regional context. The reference standard encourages getting more insight into the appropriate amount through local stakeholder consultation. This allows for



flexibility where higher savings reserves are needed due to greater financial risks or instability.

For more detail, please see Section 2.7 of the reference standard, which outlines how savings for resilience should be determined and documented.

- 108. Margin ok - more fair to have same margin everywhere, instead of having higher margin where people are more white, and more able to scream.**

See previous response on margins (#106).

- 109. I'd argue that the upper bracket (10% or more) is the best alternative seeing how it will influence social resilience and strengthen local communities. It equips people with the "tools" to better craft their own surroundings and future.**

See previous response on margins (#106).

- 110. A more definite definition is needed.**

This is included in the reference standard.

- 111. I would suggest using higher one than what is currently shown.**

See previous response on margins (#106).

- 112. Objective rule needed - like the connection to social protections. What is the influence of social protection systems? the margin need to be higher when there is no or bad social protection.**

Please refer to the public benefits section (#123).

- 113. If employers paid around 13% for the retirement fund, and some of the amount can be withdraw at any time, can it be considered as part of the calculation of the unexpected event?**

This will be addressed in future guidance on implementation regarding wage assessments and total remuneration.

- 114. Yes, apply margin to the net;**

This is included in the reference standard.



115. In general, I would focus on the standard for the margin vs. accounting for every cost (ex: furnishings). Consider making the margin relatively higher and the costs required to be included

This is included in the reference standard. Additionally see previous response on margins (#106).

116. It is a range between 5% to 10% or is rounded to this percentages?

See previous response on margins (#106).

117. Margin should have a range varying from 5% to an x% and on net LW
What is the 5% or 10% margin based on? Why 5%? 5% may seem low for lower wages given high inflation over the past few years - I am assuming people on low incomes are likely to have high interest rate loans repayments which would chew up the 5-10% margin was 'global' indebtedness.

To begin with, the living wage is designed to cover all typical household needs without requiring debt. The goal is that, once earning a living wage, a worker should not need to take out loans for daily essentials—meaning the estimate does not factor in interest payments from personal debt. Also, see previous response on margins (#106).

118. Suggestion to change category to "life events and other events"

We agree that the original term needed improvement, and in response to feedback, we've updated the category name to "savings for resiliency: special or emergency events."

This new terminology better reflects the broad range of unforeseen life events, including those related to climate change, health emergencies, and other unexpected shocks. It also aligns with established language in social protection and economic planning, where resiliency is a widely recognized concept.

119. Great to see. This can be framed as resilience to the increased natural disasters due to climate change in some regions

Just a comment, Thank you!

120. Some elements of a living wage, such as continuing education, emerged from focus groups with low-wage workers rather than from researchers' initial frameworks.



This is included in the reference standard.

Care

121. Have you connected with the Global Alliance For Care? They could know someone that could help with that research. Sofia del Valle (WBA) can make a connection if we haven't

Further research into care in process. WageMap is now engaged with the Global Alliance for Care.

122. If possible, a broad disaggregation into types - geriatric care, chronic illnesses etc may be attempted.

Further research into care in process.

123. Issues relating to the care of the elderly fall within the remit of public welfare systems: the retirement pensions paid (or public allowances) should enable the needs of retired people to be met. It therefore does not seem logical to include them in the Living Wage: transfer of the burden from the welfare system to the private sector, or from the deficiency of one employer (that of the retired person) to the company currently employing the employee receiving a Living Wage.

The reference standard does not automatically include elderly care costs in the living wage. Instead, it explicitly states that where public benefits or pensions adequately cover the needs of retired individuals, those supports are accounted for—and the living wage estimate will not include additional costs for elder care in such cases.

However, in contexts where public systems do not sufficiently meet the needs of the elderly, some support costs may fall on working household members. In those instances, the living wage methodology allows for those real, observed costs to be included—not as a transfer of burden, but as a reflection of actual household needs that the wage should enable a worker to meet.

This approach aligns with our principle of grounding estimates in local realities, while also accounting for public benefits where they exist.

124. I find it extremely difficult to assess the care costs, as these costs are difficult to estimate, and also to identify who bears the costs. E.g. care for elder parents, should these costs be at the account of the parents, or (and thus included in LW) of their children? And how do you calculate when the parents have e.g. 2 children, who



share the costs? I do not believe that the care costs will ever equalize the childcare costs. In my view childcare costs are not an add-on of the LW, but an add-on to be paid by the employer ONLY for employees with young children, either by providing cash or by providing childcare centers at the workplace or paying for these costs in nearby centers

It is illegal in some countries to provide different pay based on the number of children in a family. As such, we cannot suggest that companies add this on to families with children. This is considered discriminatory.

125. This questions is absurd complex, do you expect anyone to answer serious?

Further research into care in process.

126. Compression of the costs of transfer or access to different healthcare institutions, when these are not accessible

Further research into care in process.

127. Given that I understand the meaning of the statements: adding all cost for care at the shoulders of employers means you make implementation of living wage impossible. Care cost can be seen partially a role for employers who need to pay the living wage, but should also be seen as part of the role of family, community, government.

Further research into care in process.

128. How a single worker with a living wage can pay for a care service that also should earn a living wage

Further research into care in process.

129. Is there any correlation between number of wage earners and need for care? Possibly an inverse-relationship which proves the point?

Further research into care in process.

130. Elder care would need to take into account: typical max working age, avg death age, avg number of elders... very complex! At present do many methodologies include eldercare as a stand alone?

Further research into care in process.



131. Even where care is not available outside of family setting- provided by family member. The family cost need to be considered in order to give recognition to that role

Further research into care in process.

132. I really like that you have clarified the over estimation - linking it to elder care and retirement provision.

Further research into care in process.

133. Access to childcare may be complex in higher income countries

Further research into care in process.

134. Do you have any data of average remaining age in different countries?

Further research into care in process.

135. The link between childcare and eldercare has been well considered and thought about.

Further research into care in process.

136. A factor to apply to situations where there is at least one disabled family member. Living wage in situation of disability is higher and should be recognized, even if not included in base calculus.

Further research into care in process.

137. Do we expect the average life expectancy per geography would/should impact this care lifecycle analysis and amortization (of childcare/eldercare/retirement costs) across years?

Further research into care in process.

138. Not completely clear yet, how to calculate it over working lifetime? Will care costs be spread over years or not?

Further research into care in process.

139. On hours of work, would typical work week be set for typical low paid job or just overall average? Typical working day looks different between eg low paid service role vs managerial & profession



Further research into care in process.

140. On gender equity, have you reviewed assumptions re number of hrs worked by earners and are you aiming for consensus on number of assumed working hrs for main & second/sole earners to reach family LW? From a feminist perspective, care should also include self-care and mental health. Women often wake up early to manage household responsibilities before heading to work. Along with the elderly, are disabled, or chronically ill also included in care costs? these are hidden economic burden disproportionately shouldered by women

Further research into care in process.

141. Is access to paid parental leave or family medical leave factored into the childcare and elder care methodology?

Further research into care in process.

142. Childcare calculations must be understood within the context of geographical locations. For instance, in many countries of the Global South, factors such as low wages and the structure of supply chain

Further research into care in process.

143. Pre- and Post-Partum Care should be included such as costs for supervision or domestic help for pregnant workers needing rest or assistance.

Further research into care in process.

144. I'm not sure whether mixing retirement costs (as opposed to elder care) with LW muddles the water - since LW should perhaps focus more on the working life than afterwards

Further research into care in process.

145. 59,4% of participants did not consider important to answer the following question for the standard "Calculating Care Costs Where Lack of Affordability Leads to Lack of Availability".

50% of participants did not consider important to answer the following question for the standard "Understanding Local Cultural Preferences and Impacts on Care Decisions" (while 28% thought it was important to ask this question).



65,6% of participants did not consider important to answer the following question for the standard "Assessing the Interaction Between Retirement Savings and Elder Care Costs".

50% of participants did not consider important to answer the following question for the standard "Understanding Costs Necessary for Decency After Retirement and Interaction with Lifecycle Childcare Costs" (while 28% thought it was important to ask this question).

Further research into care in process.

146. Participants' perceived importance of asking proposed questions for the standard is further detailed in the related summary table (view on this tab, on the right of this table).

Further research into care in process.

147. Government-funded childcare should be counted in the same way as employer-paid childcare.

Government provision will be accounted for, just as healthcare is, to ensure living wage calculations reflect real costs.

148. In Quebec, subsidized childcare exists, but availability is inconsistent. Some families still struggle to find a place, and this should be acknowledged.

The reference standard will introduce a proxy for areas where childcare is unavailable, ensuring affordability is not the barrier to availability.

Mandatory Deductions

149. The responsibility of paying mandatory taxes and deductions should not rest on workers. Instead, it should be an obligation for companies and employers to fulfill, as part of their compliance requirements. This proposal aims to ensure that workers receive a higher take-home pay and fosters a proper employer-employee relationship through formal contractual agreements. Workers should have access to social security benefits and other employee benefits.

This is included in the reference standard.

150. If we said living wages are net amounts would this not make the consideration of tax/deductions superfluous?



This would not allow employers to know what they need to pay to reach that net living wage level.

151. Determine an overall appropriate margin that includes reasonable components of "other"

We make "other" more specific by using COICOP categories. See section 2.6 in the reference standard.

152. Indirectly, parks may reduce physical/mental healthcare costs over time....and agree that this is too indirect to include in LW calc.

Yes, we agree.

153. Strongly disagree with Social inclusion - it perpetuates a poverty gap! The richer countries will have more social inclusion elements. Doesn't make sense.

We understand the concern, but we respectfully disagree with the idea that including social inclusion costs perpetuates a poverty gap. In fact, data shows that even in low-income countries, people routinely spend on social participation (e.g., weddings, funerals, community events), often saving up in advance to do so.

Excluding social inclusion costs entirely would ignore these real and culturally significant expenditures. It would also set a lower standard of living in contexts where people already make sacrifices to maintain dignity and connection. In that sense, excluding social inclusion would reinforce exclusion and deepen the poverty gap, rather than prevent it.

The reference standard includes this component to reflect the universal human need for dignity and social participation, while ensuring the amounts are locally informed and appropriate.

154. Sanitary products should be part of minimum decent standards and not social inclusion

This is included in the reference standard.

155. Is basic entertainment included?

This is included in the reference standard.



156. Determine an overall appropriate margin that includes reasonable components of "other."

We don't want to apply arbitrary margin as it may ignore local specificities. It should be consulted with local stakeholders and appropriately accounted for. Also see previous responses on margin.

157. Indirectly, parks may reduce physical/mental healthcare costs over time....and agree that this is too indirect to include in LW calculus

We agree that while access to parks and public spaces can have long-term benefits such as improved physical and mental health, these effects are indirect and difficult to quantify within the scope of a living wage estimate.

158. Local inputs are important, to get a good picture of what should include in other costs (although it should also be realistic).

We agree and we account for local input throughout the reference standard.

159. We have a study that might give you some insights-
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/354788375_Stories_Change_Everything_-_A_Feminist_Approach_to_a_Living_Wage_for_Farmworkers_in_South_Africa

Just a comment, Thanks!

160. To clarify-Is the latest consensus on categories of cost still "food, water, housing, education, healthcare, transport, clothing, and other essential needs, including provision for unexpected events"?

The reference standard will follow IDH recognition criteria as the "Working Towards Compliance" requirement for all living wage estimates. Typical expense categories in IDH recognition criteria include the following but other items might be added based on local context: Nutritious food ; Clothing and footwear; Housing (incl. rental costs, maintenance and furnishing); Healthcare; Transportation; Information and communication; Recreation, sport and culture; Education services; Restaurants and accommodation services; Insurance and financial services; Personal care and other gender aspects (e.g. sanitary products); Care (child+elder); Other; A small margin for unexpected events.

161. Should "entertainment / leisure" be a separate category than just a part of "other", since a basic level of that could be considered as a part of a decent life too?



This is included in the reference standard.

162. I would appreciate consideration of "quality of life" (QoL) assessments in addition to cost
(+ how it links to income)
--> As income contributes to QoL but QoL is broader than costs of goods

Just a comment, Thanks!

163. Personal career development costs should be included.

COICOP category on education and services captures this but is based on local situations. Also, personal career development is highly subjective and context specific.

164. 44,4% of participants disagreed with the following statement: "Industry Specific Deductions Should be Considered When Measuring Gaps, not in Geographic Calculations" (while 15% of participants agreed with it).

71% of participants agreed with the following statement: "Since Tax Codes Change Regularly, Taxes Must be Reassessed Annually and Cannot be Updated with Inflation"

77,4% of participants agreed with the following statement: "Ideally, all Taxes and Mandatory Deductions from Pay Should be Considered Down to the Municipal Level if Possible and Appropriate for Geography"

This is included in the reference standard.

Food

165. Some methodologies assume different food costs depending on family type, rather than calculating an average over a lifetime.

The reference standard will encourage a more detailed approach to ensure that food costs are representative of actual needs.

General

166. Did you also review the Accounting for Living Wages methodology (by Shift & Capital Coalition) or is that a little out of scope here? Maybe the standard could at least point to it so the way living wage progress is talked about is also following best practice



We would consider Shift and that approach a bit further, in a thorough review. It did come to play a bit in the review of family size. Overall, we can definitely add in the reference standard and are looking into it.

167. The way this has been set up, where organizations that are developing benchmarks now are acting as arbitrators of benchmarks of other organizations - seems to be a conflict of interest. I don't know where the group gets their authority to be an arbitrator on this topic. As you know IDH also is already that kind of arbitrator for, if I may use the word in that sense, for benchmarking methodologies that want to contribute to the Living Wage roadmap for banana, and I think that's been widely, you know, accepted and that's just, you know, a way of working that that is considered to be practical, but to have another organization, of course, on the scope that's much larger than The banana industry, do something that is similar, and I just don't particularly feel comfortable about it also, as you know, because I'm associated with one of the methodologies that's not part of your association.

Thank you for your feedback. The WageMap consortium was started based on the great work of organizations like IDH and many others. We are working to address potential conflicts of interest through our approach to standard evaluation and engagement with other data providers. Please see the Round 2 Public Consultation Background document for more details.

168. Ultimately, workers need to be the ones in charge of determining what they need in order to cover their basic needs. So my question is, how would that be included in your approach?

This is included in the reference standard.

169. How is the GLWC/Anker research institute involved in this -- or why not? They seem to be considered as one of the "pioneering researchers" of LW -- Understand that Michelle used to manage the GLWC so would be great if you help the wider population clarify any differences

The Anker Methodology® and the work of the GLWC (Global Living Wage Coalition) have indeed been foundational in advancing living wage research globally. In developing this reference standard, we reviewed a wide range of publicly available methodologies and data sources, including the Anker Methodology®, as part of our background research.



However, the GLWC/Anker Institute is not currently part of the WageMap Consortium. Participation in the consortium is entirely voluntary, and the door remains open to any methodology that wishes to engage.

We appreciate the contributions of all pioneering research efforts in this field, and our aim is to build on and align with credible, evidence-based practices wherever possible - while also ensuring clarity on who is and isn't formally involved in the consortium process.

170. Using focus groups with low-wage workers to validate whether proposed benchmarks reflect real-world expenses.

Noted that the reference standard will not dictate methodologies but rather assess how different approaches align with a common framework, allowing for some variation while ensuring comparability.