

Cutting through the data:

How to start your
living wage
assessment with
confidence



**LIVING
WAGE**
FOUNDATION

An introduction to accessing robust living wage data

Although corporate commitments to living wages are increasing, fragmented and inconsistent data continues to limit effective implementation and credible reporting. The wide range of methodologies and estimates available can make it difficult for companies to ensure comparability, transparency and alignment across geographies and supply chains.

This short blog summarises the existing sources of living wage estimates globally and then introduces WageMap - one of the key initiatives striving to cut through the data problem and catalyse living wage implementation by multinational employers.



Why is Living Wage Data Important?

Reliable living wage calculations are essential because they provide a credible, evidence-based benchmark that ensures wages accurately reflect the real cost of meeting workers' basic needs and allow employers to implement fair and effective pay commitments.

Robust living wage data:

- Demonstrates what wage is required to ensure a decent standard of living, based on real costs and local realities rather than assumptions. These costs include food, housing, education, transportation and healthcare (amongst others)
- Provides transparency on what is included and how it is calculated to ensure comparability across global operations and ensure effective implementation
- Facilitates social dialogue, building trust between employers and workers, enabling meaningful conversations about pay
- Creates the conditions for more informed internal discussions about living wage implementation, facilitating buy-in from key internal stakeholders
- Supports monitoring, verification and accountability of living wage implementation
- Read more about the principles of how living wages should be calculated here: [ILO principles on estimating a living wage](#) | [International Labour Organization](#)




What living wage data already exists?

There are a wide variety of approaches to calculating living wages and many estimates exist for different regions. The rate you choose will depend on geographical scope and what data is available.

Locally-owned estimates align well with the ILO's principle of ensuring data is reflective of local context and socio-economic realities. Key examples include national accreditation programmes such as [Living Wage Foundation](#), [Living Wage For US](#) and [Living Wage Movement Aotearoa New Zealand](#). On a global scale, key approaches include the [Anker Methodology](#) (used by the Global Living Wage Coalition).

How to find living wage benchmarks :

IDH recognition process for methodologies & estimates finder

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IDH, the Sustainable Trade Initiative, has developed a set of objective criteria for the minimum elements that a living wage benchmark methodology should include to be reliable. They have developed a tool to help find living wage estimates calculated by recognised methodologies. By searching a specific region, you can access a list of the estimates available: [IDH Salary Matrix](#)

Publication of free and paid for global living wage estimates:

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Free global living wage estimates can be found here:

- [WageIndicator](#)
- [Valuing Impact](#)

There are also paid for estimates available:

For example:

- [Living Wage Database | Fair Wage Network - fair-wage.com](#)


National living wage movements:

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Local living wage movements are best placed to ensure that there is social dialogue, local governance and movement building, which are fundamental for ensuring appropriate living wages are implemented.

The Living Wage Foundation has created a network of national living wage movements to support collaboration and knowledge sharing. Many of these local movements have living wage rates, with some having accreditation and additional guidance to support employers: [Global Living Wage Network | Living Wage Foundation](#)

ILO guidance and country engagement on living wages:

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General principles with a focus on the importance of engaging with representative employers' and workers' organizations and social partners to ensure local ownership of a rate: [Living wages | International Labour Organization](#)



What challenges do businesses raise about living wage data?

Many businesses find themselves stuck in a data bottleneck, hampering progress. The primary issues raised are:

1

Data gaps: it is not possible to access data for all regions, it can be outdated, unreliable or difficult to find

2

Limited transparency: it can be challenging to understand differences in methodologies, reducing trust in the figures

3

No universal standard: it is not possible to compare living wage data across contexts and methodologies, so it's difficult for businesses to ensure consistency, credibility and comparability across operations and supply chains

4


Weak coordination: limited collaboration between methodologies and stakeholders and lack of support available to implement living wages

When living wage data is unclear, action stalls and workers stay in poverty.


How will WageMap combat these challenges?

WageMap, a consortium of leading living wage data and service providers, is addressing the living wage data problem by:

Publishing a Living Wage Reference Standard to evaluate living wage methodologies and their estimates. It includes stakeholder-consulted criteria for what a living wage calculation should include (e.g. housing, nutrition, childcare).

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- Providing greater consistency, clarity and comparability on approaches to living wage estimation
 - Conducting assessment at the estimate level rather than at the methodology level (as with IDH recognition process)
 - Guiding methodology owners on good practice and incentivising improvements
 - Living Wage Reference Standard

Creating an aggregated map of living wage methodologies and estimates (e.g. “The WageMap”) assessing living wage benchmarking methodologies against the LWRS and publishing how each methodology and corresponding estimate aligns in a particular location.

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- Making it easier for employers to access living wage estimates and understand how different living wage methodologies compare to each other
 - Increasing visibility of locally lead data in the global space
 - Enabling employers to focus on implementing a living wage in their value chains instead of second-guessing the quality of the living wage data
 - Increasing credibility and transparency of employer initiatives on living wage

How you can get involved with WageMap:

WageMap is currently in the pilot phase of assessing living wage methodologies. It will publish the first data set at the UN Forum on Business and Human Rights in November 2026.

1

Engage with WageMap as a key stakeholder to enable us to refine and develop our offer

2

Sign up to the WageMap newsletter to keep up to date with developments: [WageMap - Supporting the achievement of living wages for workers through standardizing living wage data](#)

3

Fund the WageMap initiative

Watch this webinar recording to find out more: [Living Wages: Strengthening the Comparability and Credibility of Estimates](#) | [Events](#) | [Sustainable Business Network and Advisory Services](#) | [BSR](#)

To find out how you can support the WageMap initiative contact layla.meerlool@livingwage.org.uk



Please keep in touch

We are happy to discuss UK accreditation or other actions you can take globally on living wages. Get in touch to find out more.

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