



Living Wages

Strengthening the
Comparability and
Credibility of Estimates



Webinar | March 2026



Today's Speakers



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Housekeeping

- 1. Mute During Presentation**
- 2. Share Questions in Chat**
- 3. Raise Hand and Come off Mute for Q&A**

Agenda

1. The Living Wage Data Challenge and Emerging Solutions
2. Unpacking the Living Wage Reference Standard
3. Living Wage Employer Perspective | Hershey
4. How WageMap is Taking on the Living Wage Data Challenge
5. Q&A

01

The Living Wage Data Challenge and Emerging Solutions



Living Wages Are Increasingly on the Corporate Agenda



Supply Chain Commitments from Major Brands

Why? Since 2020 a number of multinationals have made commitments to expand living wages into their supply chain.

The Challenge: Ensuring suppliers understand how to evaluate living wage gaps and are in a position to be able to close them.



Disclosure and Human Rights Due Diligence Requirements including Living Wage

Why? Regulations such as CSRD, CSDDD and EU Pay Transparency Act have made living wage mainstream.

The Challenge: Many new companies are attempting to run living wage gap analyses for compliance purposes, but the lack of alignment and comparability across datasets makes it confusing to measure systematically.



Living Wage Tracked by Rating Agencies, Audits and Industry Platforms

Why? Numerous organizations are incorporating living wage into how they evaluate companies and suppliers (e.g. Ecovadis, Sedex, World Benchmarking Alliance, Platform for Living Wage Financials, UNGC Forward Faster etc.)

The Challenge: With numerous methodologies for calculating living wage and total remuneration, it is difficult to compare progress and verify claims across employers.

The Living Wage Data Problem

Despite growing commitment to living wages, **fragmented and inconsistent data** continues to hinder large-scale adoption and implementation.



Lack of Transparency

Limited clarity on **how** different living wage methodologies are constructed and **what assumptions** they use makes it difficult for actors to understand and interpret estimates.



Limited Comparability

The **absence of a standardized and widely accepted standard for comparing living wage methodologies and data** makes it hard to compare living wage estimates across geographies, sectors, and methodologies, leading to inconsistent decision-making.



Weak Implementation Capacity

As companies and other actors rely on different living wage data across value chains, **implementation efforts remain fragmented, slowing progress and creating confusion** rather than alignment.

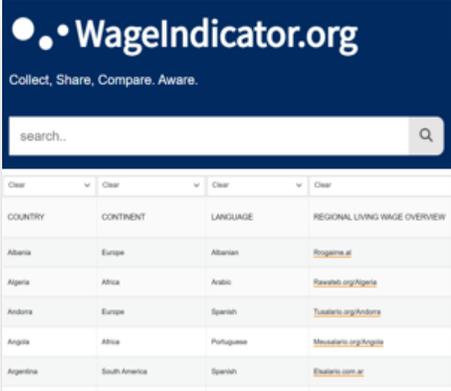
Existing Solutions to the Living Wage Data Problem

These solutions have contributed to progress, but impacts have not yet been transformative. Employers, particularly multinational companies require clearer guidance to **navigate the range of living wage methodologies** and to determine **which benchmarks are most appropriate for their specific contexts**.

IDH Recognition Process for Methodologies & Estimates Finder



Publication of Global Living Wage Estimates



ILO Guidance and Country Engagement on Living Wage



Industry Alignment on Methodologies



Why WageMap Was Founded

In 2023, **six leading living wage data and service providers** came together to try to address the data inconsistencies and confusion that had become major barriers to scaling progress on living wage globally.



01

Unpacking the WageMap Living Wage Reference Standard



How WageMap Solves the Living Wage Data Problem

WageMap's mission is to support the **achievement of living wages for workers globally** and **drive alignment** across living wage methodologies and frameworks by establishing a reference standard and creating an aggregated view of existing estimates.

Core Priorities

1. Establish a Living Wage Reference Standard



Develop a **universally accepted Living Wage Reference Standard method** to calculate a living wage.



Guide data providers, offer a **foundation for creating incentives** and **promote transparency** in employer actions.

2. Create an aggregated map of living wage estimates



Assess existing national and global living wage benchmarking methodologies against the Living Wage reference standard.



Determine a single living wage estimate value that is most aligned with the Living Wage reference standard **in specific geography**.

Secondary Priorities



Build a **Living Wage Knowledge Hub** to support shared understanding, learning and informed use of living wage data among stakeholders.

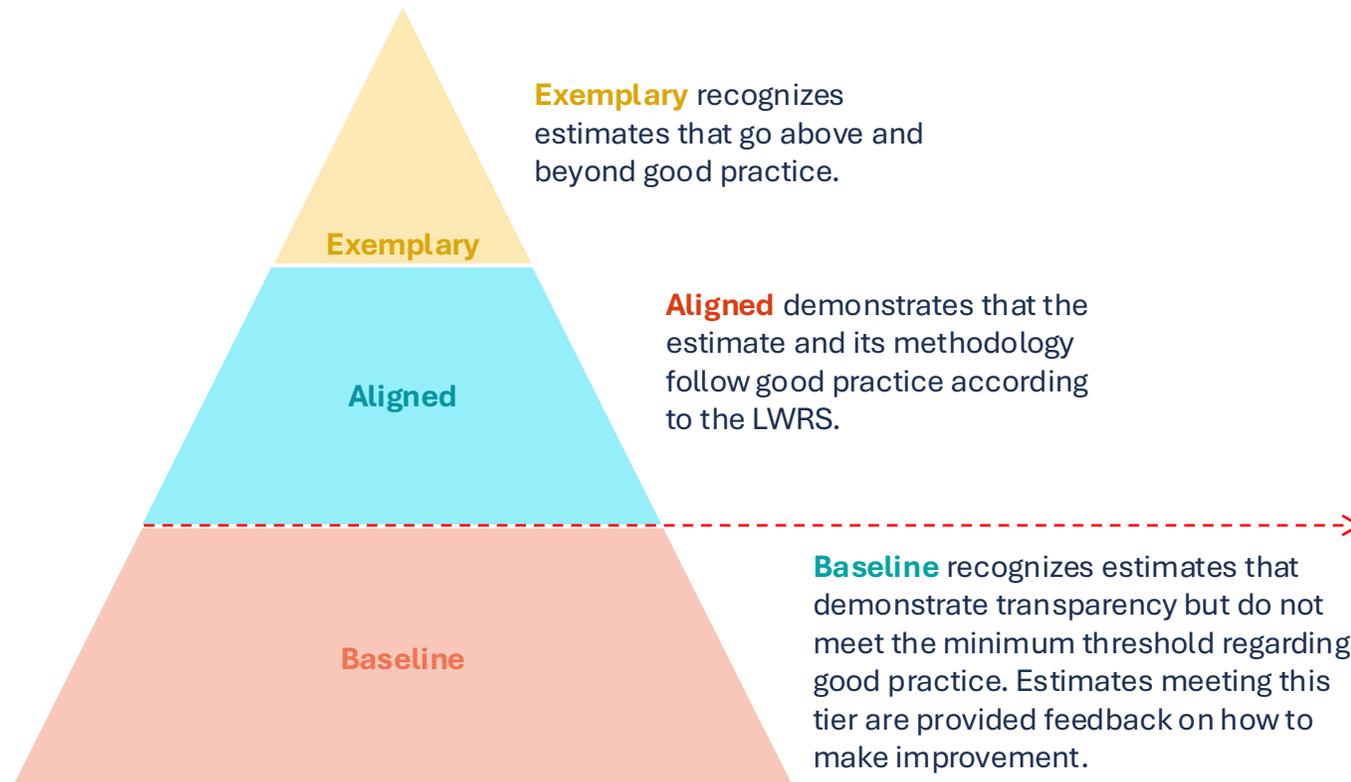


Expand the global movement and encourage collaboration, knowledge-sharing and collective action to accelerate progress towards living wages.

What is the Living Wage Reference Standard

Definition

The Living Wage Reference Standard is a document which can be used to assess living wage estimates according to three categories containing quality criteria: Baseline, Aligned, and Exemplary.



Purpose

Create a universally accepted 'Standard' that:



Provides greater consistency clarity and alignment on approaches to living wage estimation



Guides methodology owners about good practices



Increases credibility and transparency of employer initiatives on living wage

How Are the Methodologies Evaluated?

1. Assess the methodology against the questions included in the Standard



To ensure evaluations are as clear and consistent as possible, the methodology used a **binary approach** where each criterion is scored as **Met** or **Not Met**. The binary approach eliminates ambiguity and allows users to quickly understand whether a requirement has been fulfilled.

2. Conduct an overall methodology assessment against the quality criteria



The framework is organized into **three distinct categories** – **Baseline, Aligned, Exemplary** – with each tied to a specific set of yes/no questions. Scoring templates have been developed to illustrate how this approach works in real assessments.

1.2.4: MIGRANT LABOR (3 QUESTIONS)

QUESTIONS	Explanation	Assessment
BASELINE REQUIREMENTS		
1. DOES THE ESTIMATE AS IT REGARDS MIGRANT LABOR, ALIGN WITH THE PRINCIPLE OF EQUAL REMUNERATION FOR WORK OF EQUAL VALUE? ¹⁸	Living wage estimates must not encourage pay discrimination via its treatment or consideration of migrant laborers in the population. As such, a living wage must ensure that a “typical worker” in an area is able to afford decency. It should not create a living wage estimate that only addresses migrant populations apart from local populations.	Met / Not Met
ALIGNED REQUIREMENTS		
2. IS THE LIVING WAGE ESTIMATE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE COSTS OF LIVING WITHIN THE POLITICAL BOUNDARIES OF THE WORK LOCATION?	Decent work requires that workers can afford a decent livelihood within a reasonable commute to their workplace. If an area often has migrant laborers commuting daily for work from a close neighboring country, the cost of living estimated to produce a living wage estimate is to be limited to costs within the country of work. This acknowledges that many workers cannot simply move to lower-cost neighboring countries, and that suggesting they do so may disregard their cultural and community ties to the country where they work.	Met / Not Met
EXEMPLARY		
3. IF COSTS OF LIVING ARE INCLUDED ACROSS POLITICAL BOUNDARIES, IS THE CROSSING OF THOSE BOUNDARIES DUE TO THE FACT THAT ALL ALLOWABLE EXCEPTIONS ARE MET AND PUBLICLY EXPLAINED?	Including costs of living across a national boundary in a way that respects all Baseline and Aligned Requirements must show through thorough evidence that in an area: a) <u>most</u> workers at a living wage in a living wage estimate area are from a different country; b) <u>all</u> workers in a work location are legally permitted to live in the country of their choice and access the more affordable cost of living while not being overburdened by commuting difficulties to arrive at their work location across national borders on a daily	Met / Not Met

Contents of the Living Wage Reference Standard

Part 1 | Overarching Frameworks

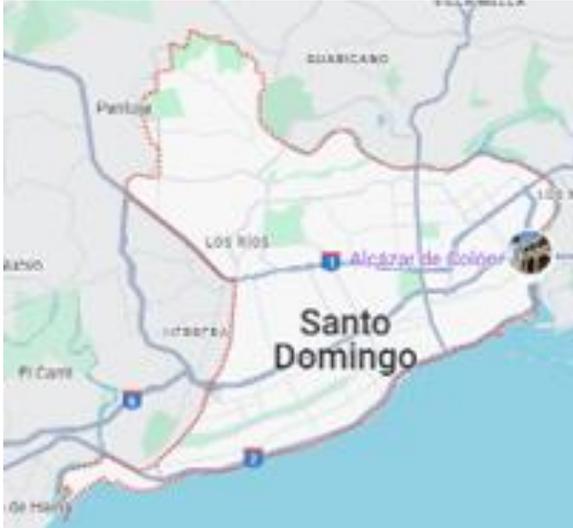
Section	Overview
Data collection and Transparency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data Collection and Sharing Academic Rigor – Survey-based Data and Focus Group Transparency Conflict of Interest Representative Data
Geographic scope and Timing of estimates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Geographic Scope Quality Control Local Input of Ownership Migrant Labor Timing for Updates of Data
Family size, Number of workers per family and Working Hours	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Family Household Size – General Family Size – Number of Adults and Children Number of Workers per Family Working Hours
Accounting for public Benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Applicability of Public Benefits Accessibility of Public Benefits Accounting for Public Benefits

Part 2 | Items on Cost of Living

Section	Overview
Nutritious Food	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nutrition Variability of Diet Price Collection
Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Housing Size Rent vs. Home Ownership Utilities, Furnishings, Insurance, Maintenance and Repairs, Taxes, and Mandatory Service Charges
Healthcare	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data Collection and Transparency – General
Care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensuring Timely Childcare Payment Elder Care / Retirement
Transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assessing Transportation
Other Categories (COICOP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alcoholic Beverages, Tobacco and Narcotics Clothing and Footwear Furnishings, Household Equipment and Routine Household Maintenance Information and Communication Recreation, Sport, and Culture Education Services
Savings for Special or Emergency Events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Amount Included
Mandatory Deductions from Pay	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Depth and Specificity

What could the WageMap Aggregated Data Map look like?

Estimate Country: Dominican Republic
Estimate Coverage: Santo Domingo



Scoring Framework:

- Exemplary
- Aligned
- Baseline

Methodology owners will be able to “opt in” to different levels of participation in the WageMap publication.

Living Wage Reference Standard Categories and Scoring
 This standard is used as a point of comparison. The most aligned living wage estimate is provided along with the associated data below.

The scoring below is illustrative only, showing two of the six subcategories within the first category. The final version would include scoring across all categories.

Full Opt-in	Partial Opt-in	No Active Opt-in
Living Wage Methodology 1 Estimate: 15.35 DOP/hour Estimate Year: 2024 Evaluation: Link: Website	Living Wage Methodology 2 Estimate: Website Estimate Year: 2024 Evaluation: Link: Website	Living Wage Methodology 3 Estimate: Website Estimate Year: 2024 Evaluation: Link: Website

Data Collection and Transparency

Data Collection and Sharing	Exemplary	Exemplary	Baseline
Academic Rigor – Survey-based Data	Exemplary	Aligned	Exemplary
Academic Rigor – Focus Groups	Baseline	Aligned	Aligned
Transparency	Exemplary	Aligned	Baseline
Conflict of interest	Aligned	Aligned	Aligned
Representative Data	Aligned	Aligned	Aligned

Geographic Scope and Timing

Geographic Scope	Exemplary	Aligned	Aligned
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*WageMap continues to explore different ways to visualize their data map and welcomes feedback on the proposed concept.

Staying in Lockstep with the ILO on Living Wage

The Living Wage Reference Standard is designed to be in alignment with the ILO principles. As the ILO expands its guidance on living wage, WageMap will continue to evolve the standard.

Definition

In line with the ILO Constitution and the Philadelphia Declaration, and consistent with the spirit of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), **the ILO denotes that the concept of the living wage is:**

“the wage level that is necessary to afford a decent standard of living for workers and their families, taking into account the country circumstances and calculated for the work performed during the normal hours of work; calculated in accordance with the ILO’s principles of estimating the living wage, as outlined below; and to be achieved through the wage-setting process in line with ILO principles on wage setting.”

ILO Principles for Living Wage Benchmarking



Estimation of the **needs of workers and their families** through evidence-based methodologies



Consultation with representative employers' and workers' organizations on living wage estimates and **involvement of social partners** throughout their development, with a view to ensuring **national and/or local ownership**



Transparency, including details with regard to data sources and methods of processing, that are open to scrutiny, are comprehensive and replicable



Robustness of the data in terms of **representativeness and transparent data collection** methods



Timely public availability of the estimates, data and methodologies



Specification on whether estimates are gross or net, namely **whether items such as social security contributions are included or not**



Regular adjustments to consider changes in the cost of living and the patterns of consumption



Quality control, including sound technical review, validation, as well as periodic review for continuous improvements



Promotion of gender equality and non-discrimination



Consideration of the **regional or local context** and socio-economic and cultural realities

02

Perspectives from the Employer



WageMap is brought to you by:



Launch Partners

- Launch partners provide a fixed, three-year financial commitment to enable the WageMap proposition to be put into practice.
- Current paying Launch Partners are **Hershey**, **Mondelez**, and an **undisclosed partner**.



Members

- Members provide a fixed, three-year financial commitment to enable the WageMap proposition to be put into practice.
- WageMap's current paying Member is **Target Corporation**.



Sponsors

- Sponsors provide a financial commitment determined on an individual basis to contribute to the WageMap activities.
- WageMap's current sponsors are **ISS World**, **Bettys and Taylors of Harrogate**, **McKinsey**, and **Linklaters**.



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Today's Guest Speaker



Madeleine Eldredge

Human Rights & Social Impact
Lead, Global Sustainability Team
The Hershey Company

03

How WageMap is Working to Address Living Wage Data Challenge



In 2024, WageMap reviewed over twenty living wage methodologies* internally to develop the LWRS.

2026 will focus on evaluating ten methodologies and their estimates against the LWRS and publishing the results on the WageMap site.



*The organizations depicted represent public methodologies that WageMap reviewed in 2024 in the development of the WageMap Living Wage Reference Standard. This does not signify their participation in the WageMap pilot.

WageMap Pilot Roadmap

WageMap proposes to pilot a scalable assessment approach, combining a rule-based scoring aligned with the LWRS, exploration of AI-supported assessments to enable global scale, and human oversight to ensure credibility and fairness.

January

March

May

September

November

December



Build AI Evaluation System

Evaluate WageMap Methodologies (4)

Evaluate Data providers outside of WageMap (6)

Publish the aggregated dataset and living wage map

Transition WageMap governance

Year 3 will focus on evaluating 10 methodologies and their estimates against the LWRS and on publishing the results on the WageMap website.



WageMap AI Assessment of Methodologies

WageMap is developing an AI-assisted assessment system to evaluate living wage methodologies against our Living Wage Reference Standard.

Why AI-Assisted Assessment?

- **Consistency:** The same evidence receives the same score across all assessments
- **Transparency:** Every decision is documented with specific evidence and rationale
- **Institutional Memory:** Past decisions inform future assessments, ensuring fairness
- **Efficiency:** Comprehensive assessments completed in a structured, timely manner
- **Privacy:** Your proprietary information remains protected throughout the process and we evaluate with publicly available data exclusively unless you choose to share something additional



Council of Human Assessors

WageMap has consistently shared that it is **building a model in which external evaluators can assess how the Living Wage Reference Standard is implemented** for methodologies. Even with an AI initial assessment, WageMap continues to explore how it can implement a council of human assessors beyond the pilot. Currently

What to Expect:

What can we deliver with our current funding?



A **public site** with a comparison of how 10 methodologies compare to each other across different criteria



A publication of **estimates by living wage data providers that opt in** to having their living wage estimates accessible*

**This is dependent on data providers opting in. It is unlikely that global data providers will be ready in 2026 to opt in. It will likely be mostly regional and country-specific data providers that directly showcase living wage benchmarks while others provide links to benchmarks on their website.*

What could we deliver with additional funding?



Improved **UX and functionality of public dataset** to support functionality and usability (**\$30-\$60k**)



A council of **human assessors** to review overview AI assessment (**\$25k-\$50k**)



Guidance on how **approaches to total remuneration** relate to the standard (**TBD**)



Alignment with ISO standards (**TBD**)



Strengthen **community building and collaboration model** between data and service providers (**TBD**)

How to Engage with the WageMap Movement

Each stakeholder plays a specific role in **supporting, using, or strengthening** the Living Wage Reference Standard.

As a Data Provider

Data providers are organizations that generate or maintain living wage estimate data. Data providers can choose to **share their living wage estimates** (or just have a link to their website) and **participate directly in WageMap's evaluation and engagement activities**.

Join the 2026 Pilot!

As a Methodology Evaluator

Methodology evaluators are individual organizations or collaborators trained to evaluate living wage estimates. Methodology evaluators will initial AI-assessments estimates and provide scoring context and feedback.

As a Data User

Data users are employers or other entities that use Living Wage data to inform their living wage efforts. WageMap will **engage data users to create offerings that best meet their needs**.

Attend a WageMap event or focus group

WageMap Living Wage Reference Standard

As a Key Partner

Key partners will consist of non-profit organizations, unions, international organizations, governments, etc. WageMap will work with key stakeholders to strengthen the approach and the overall movement. Engagement can include check-ins, specialized focus groups, or collaborations on evaluation and implementation

Set up a meeting with WageMap to discuss ways to work together



How to Engage

Support WageMap

- WageMap is seeking additional funding to strengthen our current work in 2026 as well as long term funding to ensure that the Living Wage Reference Standard and the aggregated site of estimates and scores continues to be updated on an annual basis.

Participate in Events and meetings

- Share your feedback and questions!
- Come to our events:
 - Workshops
 - London – April 16
 - Amsterdam – April 21
 - Paris – April 23
 - Copenhagen April 29
 - To be confirmed – New York UNGA Week (end of September)
 - UN Forum on Business and Human Rights
 - WageMap plans to launch its publication and host an event in Geneva (end of November)

Contact Us

To follow up or for broader questions, please address communications to the Project Management Office:

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If you're familiar with any collaborating organizations and wish to discuss this project, please reach out to their designated lead contact for communication:

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