

ITUC Global COVID-19 Survey



20 April – 23 April 2020
Key Findings

Executive Summary

Almost one in five countries (17%) say they are undertaking partial re-opening of workplaces, businesses and community spaces, raising serious concerns about preparations to protect workers from Covid-19 as they return to work.

The global trade union movement is calling on governments and occupational health and safety bodies around the world to recognise Covid-19 as an occupational disease. At the ILO, the ITUC is campaigning for a new standard on biological hazards and for Occupational Health and Safety to be included as fundamental right.

Workers need official recognition of Covid-19 as an occupational disease and for governments to require reporting and recording of work-related cases, as well as compensation schemes and medical care for victims for work-related Covid-19 and for their bereaved families.

Just one in five (21%) countries would rate the measures that are in place to protect workers from the spread of the virus at work as good. Most (54% or 58 countries) would rate these protections as fair. Twenty-six countries (24%) would rate the protections as poor.

Of the 19 countries planning a partial or full re-opening:

Just **five** rate the protections in place for workers as good.

Six rate the protections in place as poor.

Eight would rate the protections as fair.

In the Americas, 44% of countries say measures for safe workplace are poor, and in Africa 41% of countries say workplace safety is poor. Only 25% of countries in Europe rate measures to protect workers from the spread of the virus as good.

The majority of countries (61%) are containing the spread of the virus with national lockdown measures, including the closure of schools and non-essential businesses.

While many countries continue to respond to high levels of infections and deaths, shortages of personal protective equipment (PPE) for health and care workers is a serious issue in the majority of countries. The ITUC has been lobbying the G20 to keep borders open for trade, including supplies of PPE.

Under half (49%) of countries said that they always or very often have adequate supplies of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) available for all health workers and care workers responding to the virus. Fifty-one per cent of countries said PPE supplies are sometimes, rarely or never adequate, exposing the risks faced by millions of frontline health and care workers responding to the pandemic.

While governments are responding to the needs of workers well in 66% of countries, there are regional differences. Governments are responding badly in 61% of countries in the Americas and 42% of countries in the Asia-Pacific region.

Just over half (51% or 55 countries) believe that employers are responding badly to the needs of workers. Nine countries (or 8%) believe that employers are responding very badly.

In many countries the struggle will be to keep the measures governments have put in place for income and wage protection, while in many countries the struggle to achieve guarantees of decent work (as defined in SDG 8: jobs, income and social protection) has just deepened. Social dialogue between unions, governments and employers is critical. The world cannot go back to business as usual – recovery plans must ensure a socially just future.

Introduction

One hundred forty-eight trade unions from 107 countries took part in the third ITUC Global COVID-19 Survey between 20th April – 23 April 2020.

Five questions were asked using an online survey platform to monitor government responses, review provisions of personal protective equipment and safe workplaces, and assess how well or badly governments and employers are responding to the crisis.

ITUC affiliates will be asked regular survey questions to track the global response to Covid-19 and identify trends in support of international and national advocacy and campaigning. Three questions monitoring the government response and assessing how well or badly governments and employers are responding are tracking questions that will be asked in each survey.

17 G20 countries including Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Korea, Mexico, the Russian Federation, South Africa, Turkey, the UK and the USA.

35 out of 36 OECD countries including Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Chile, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Korea, Latvia, Lithuania, Mexico, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, Turkey, the UK, the USA.

72 non-OECD countries

Regions:

- 22 countries in Africa
 - 18 countries in the Americas
 - 26 countries in Asia-Pacific
 - 40 countries from the Pan European region of the ITUC (PERC)
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Government Responses to COVID-19

from the survey of 20 – 23 April 2020

Global Findings

61% of countries are containing the spread of the virus with national lockdown measures and closure of schools and non-essential businesses.

21% are delaying the spread of the virus with promotion of handwashing, working from home, social distancing and border restrictions for international visitors.

Almost one in five countries (17%) say they are undertaking a partial re-opening of workplaces, businesses and community spaces.

Global – Tracking Data

Sixty-five countries have completed each of the three waves of this survey (17–23 March, 30 March - 2 April and 20 -23 April). The results for these countries are listed below¹:

	Survey 1 17 – 23 March 65 countries	Survey 2 30 March – 2 April 65 countries	Survey 3 20 – 23 April 65 countries
Coronavirus is not a major threat to public health or the national economy.	3 countries (5%)	1 countries (2%)	—
Delay the spread of the virus with promotion of hand washing.	26 countries (40%)	19 countries (29%)	14 countries (22%)
Contain the spread of the virus with national lockdown measures.	36 countries (55%)	45 countries (69%)	39 countries (60%)
Partial re-opening of workplaces, businesses and community spaces.	—	—	11 countries (17%)
Full re-opening of workplaces, businesses and community spaces.	—	—	1 country (2%)

¹ **Note:** only data for those countries that completed each of the three waves has been included so results may differ from the global average and from previous tracking data.

G20 Findings

12 out of the 17 G20 countries in this survey (71%) are containing the spread of the virus with national lockdown measures.

OECD Findings

21 out of the 35 (60%) OECD nations that completed this survey are containing the virus with national lockdown measures.

Almost one in three (11, or 31%) are undertaking a partial re-opening.

Three are delaying the spread with the promotion of handwashing and other measures.

Regional Findings

Region	Partial re-opening of workplaces, businesses and community spaces	Contain the spread of the virus with national lockdown measures	Delay the spread of the virus with promotion of handwashing
Americas 18 countries	2 countries (11%)	12 countries (67%)	3 countries (17%)
Africa 22 countries	2 countries (9%)	13 countries (59%)	7 countries (32%)
Asia-Pacific 26 countries	5 countries (19%)	13 countries (50%)	8 countries (31%)
Europe (PERC) 40 countries	8 countries (20%)	27 countries (68%)	4 countries (10%)

2 Supplies of Personal Protective Equipment

Global Findings

Under half (49%) of countries said that they **always** or **very often** have adequate supplies of personal protective equipment (PPE) available for all health workers and care workers responding to the virus.

Of these, just 16% (or, 17 out of 107 countries) said that supplies were **always** adequate.

35% (38 countries) said that their supplies were **sometimes** adequate.

16% (17 countries) said that supplies were **rarely** (14%) or **never** (2%) adequate.

G20 Findings

Just 7 (41%) out of the 17 G20 countries that responded to this survey said that PPE supplies were **very often** adequate. None said supplies were always adequate.

Eight (47%) said supplies were **sometimes** adequate.

Two countries said that supplies were **rarely** adequate.

OECD Findings

Just one OECD country said that PPE supplies were **always** adequate.

51% (18 countries) said that they were **very often** adequate and 40% (14 countries) said they were **sometimes** adequate.

Just two countries said they were **rarely** or **never** adequate.

Regional Findings**Are adequate supplies of personal protective equipment (PPE) available for all health workers and care workers responding to Covid-19 in your country?**

Region	Always/Often	Sometimes	Rarely/Never
Americas 18 countries	3 countries (17%)	10 countries (56%)	5 countries (28%)
Africa 22 countries	6 countries (27%)	8 countries (36%)	8 countries (36%)
Asia-Pacific 26 countries	13 countries (50%)	11 countries (42%)	2 countries (8%)
Europe (PERC) 40 countries	29 countries (73%)	9 countries (23%)	2 countries (5%)

3 Safe Workplaces

Global Findings

Just one in five (21%, or 23 countries) countries would rate the measures that are in to protect workers from the spread of the virus at work as **good**.

Most (54% or 58 countries) would rate these protections as **fair**.

26 countries (24%) would rate the protections as **poor**.

Of the 19 countries planning a partial or full re-opening:

Just 5 (rate the protections in place for workers as good.

Six rate the protections in place as poor.

Eight would rate the protections as fair.

G20 Findings

Across the 17 G20 countries included in this survey, just three or 18% would rate the protections in place for workers as **good**.

Eight would rate the protections as **fair** (47%) and six as **poor** (35%).

OECD Findings

Just six of the 35 (17%) OECD countries that responded to this survey would rate the measures in place to protect workers as **good**.

69% (or 24 countries) would rate the measures as **fair**.

Five countries or 14% would rate the protections as **poor**.

Regional Findings

In your opinion, how would you rate the measures that are in place for safe workplaces to protect workers from the spread of Covid-19 at work?

Region	Good	Fair	Poor
Americas 18 countries	3 countries (17%)	7 countries (39%)	8 countries (44%)
Africa 22 countries	3 countries (14%)	10 countries (45%)	9 countries (41%)
Asia-Pacific 26 countries	7 countries (27%)	14 countries (54%)	5 countries (19%)
Europe (PERC) 40 countries	10 countries (25%)	26 countries (65%)	4 countries (10%)

4 Assessment of Government Responses

Global Findings

66% of countries believe that their government is responding **well** to the needs of workers affected by the virus

34% of countries believe that their government is responding **badly** to the needs of workers affected by the virus

Two-thirds of countries (66%, or 71 countries) that responded to this survey believe that their government is responding **well** to the needs of workers affected by the virus.

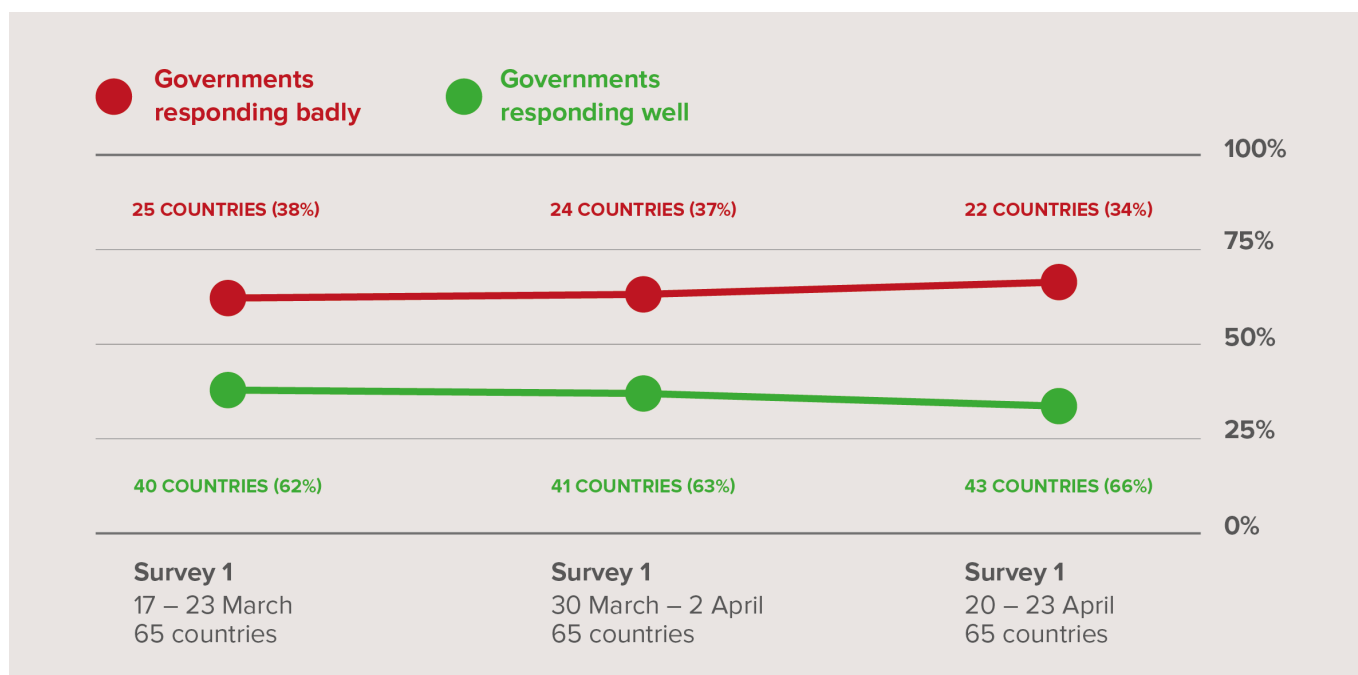
Most (54% or 58 countries) believe their government is responding **quite well**, while just 12% (13 countries) believe their government is responding **very well**.

34% (36 countries) believe that their government is responding **badly**. This includes 27 (25%) that believe they are responding **badly** and 9 (8%) that believe they are responding **very badly**.

Global – Tracking Data

Amongst the 65 countries that have completed all three waves of the survey, there has been a slight increase in the number of countries that believe their government is responding well (from 40 countries to 43).

65 countries have completed each of the three waves of this survey (17 -23 March, 30 March – 2 April and 20 -23 April). The results for these countries are listed below²:



G20 Findings

Eight of the 17 (47%) G20 countries that responded to this poll believe their government is responding **quite well** to the needs of workers. No G20 countries believe they are responding **very well**.

Nine G20 countries (53%) believe their government is responding **badly** – although just one believes that its government is responding **very badly**.

OECD Findings

69% or 24 of the 35 OECD countries that responded to this survey believe their government is responding **well** to the needs of workers.

31% or 11 countries believe they are responding **badly**.

² **Note:** only data for those countries that completed each of the three waves has been included; therefore, results may differ from the global average and from previous tracking data.

Regional Findings

How well or badly is your government responding to the needs of workers affected by Covid-19?

Region	Well	Badly
Americas 17 countries	7 countries (39%)	11 countries (61%)
Africa 23 countries	14 countries (64%)	8 countries (36%)
Asia-Pacific 18 countries	15 countries (58%)	11 countries (42%)
Europe (PERC) 36 countries	34 countries (85%)	6 countries (15%)

5 Assessment of Employer Responses

Global Findings

51% of countries believe that employers are responding **badly** to the needs of workers affected by the virus.

49% believe that employers are responding **well** to the needs of workers affected by the virus.

Just over half (51% or 55 countries) believe that employers are responding **badly** to the needs of workers. Nine countries (or 8%) believe that employers are responding **very badly**.

49% (or 52 countries) believe that employers are responding **well**; however, just 3% (3 countries) believe employers are responding **very well**.

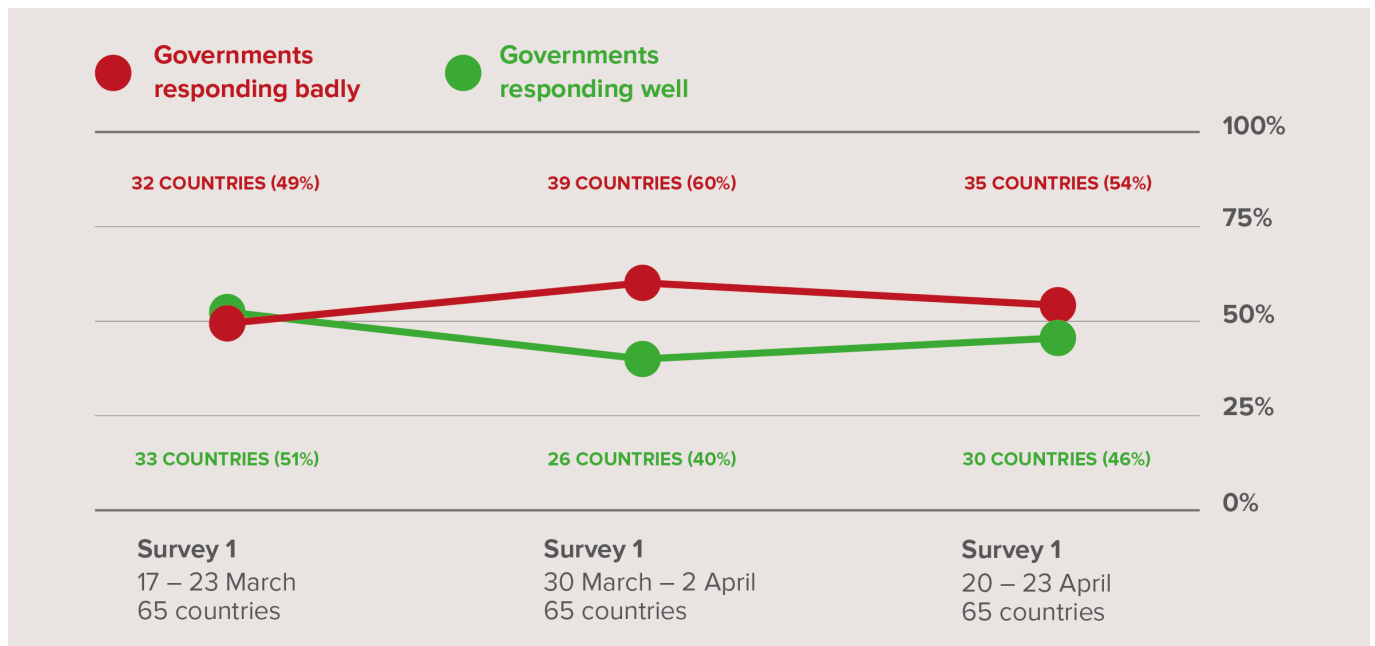
Global – Tracking Data

Across the countries that have completed all three waves of this survey, 54% now believe that employers in their country are responding badly to the needs of workers.

This is down from 60% in wave two, but up from the 49% in wave one.

65 countries have completed each of the three waves of this survey (17 -23 March, 30 March – 2 April and 20 -23 April). The results for these countries are listed below³:

3 Note: only data for those countries that completed each of the three waves has been included; therefore, results may differ from the global average and from previous tracking data.



G20 Findings

Across the 17 G20 countries that responded to this survey, 12 countries (or 71%) believe that employers in their country are responding badly.

Just 5 countries (29%) believe employers are responding well.

OECD Findings

37% (13 countries) of those countries in the OECD that responded to this survey believe that employers are responding badly.

Most countries (22, or 63%) believe employers are responding well.

Regional Findings

How well or badly do you think employers are responding to the needs of workers affected by Covid-19?

Region	Well	Badly
Americas 17 countries	1 country (6%)	17 countries (94%)
Africa 23 countries	12 countries (55%)	10 countries (45%)
Asia-Pacific 18 countries	11 countries (42%)	15 countries (58%)
Europe (PERC) 36 countries	27 countries (68%)	13 countries (33%)