

ITUC Global COVID-19 Survey



22 – 25 June 2020
Key Findings

Executive Summary

The ITUC Global Covid-19 Survey has analysed government and employer responses to the pandemic for the past three months. The surveys have identified gaps in responses and been the foundation for international advocacy and campaigning.

The final survey in this series charts the basis for economic recovery and resilience plans, with a New Social Contract, universal social protection and democratic rights at their core.

Universal social protection – a foundation for resilience

Unions have been active in negotiating support for workers. Almost two-thirds (63% or 60 countries) said unions in their country had been able to secure additional support for workers as part of government or employer responses to the Covid-19 pandemic. This support most often takes the form of provision of a social protection floor – including paid sick leave, income support, health care.

In addition, unions have been able to secure a range of additional measures to support workers, including additional wage support, subsidies and cash payments for food, PPE and bonus payments for frontline workers, the deferral of taxes, job guarantees and having Covid-19 declared an occupational disease.

Despite these gains for workers, the Covid-19 pandemic has brutally exposed the fault lines of the global divide between those that have universal social protection, including health and income support, and those that do not. In too many of the poorest countries, workers in both the formal and the informal sectors have faced the choice of

staying at home and watching their families starve or trying to find work despite the very real risk of the coronavirus to their lives and those in their community.

The ITUC is campaigning for a Global Social Protection Fund which would need USD37.8 billion in the first five years to close the financing gaps to meet SDG 1.3 in low-income countries.

From crisis to recovery

While there has been a general trend to re-opening workplaces, business and community spaces among those that have completed all five waves of the survey, several countries have reimplemented lockdown measures, while others seek to once again delay the spread of the virus.

This indicates how governments have to move towards long-term planning of restarting economies while continuing to respond to the spread of the virus.

The Covid-19 health crisis is now fueling unemployment on a scale that was unimaginable just months ago.

The challenge is to design a recovery that rebuilds the social contract between government and societies with resilient foundations to withstand further shocks. It can only succeed if people and the planet are on equal footing with economy.

The majority (81% or 77) countries said that their government is preparing an economic recovery plan as part of its response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

However, 19% (18 countries) said that their government is not preparing an economic recovery plan.

Of those 77 countries who said that their government was preparing a plan:

64% (49 countries) said that unions in their country were involved in discussions with government on economic recovery plans, and 36% (28 countries) said unions were not involved.

77% (59 countries) said that job creation is part of economic recovery plans, and 23% (18 countries) said job creation was not part of plans.

Just under half (49% or 38 countries) said that action on climate change and Just Transition was part of economic recovery plans.

Economic recovery plans for an interdependent world will require national and global financing for recovery and resilience that can only be delivered and sustained with the rebuilding of trust in democracies and massive reform of multilateralism.

Democratic rights and freedoms under threat

The response to the Covid-19 pandemic is the greatest act of human solidarity the world has seen. Yet, under the cover of measures to tackle the coronavirus pandemic, many countries are advancing their anti-workers'-rights agenda.

The 2020 ITUC Global Rights Index exposed the break down in the social contract that governments and employers have with working people, with violations of workers' rights at a seven-year high.

Over half (56% or 53) of countries reported that over the past few months their government had brought in restrictions to human and labour rights under the guise of their response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Democratic rights, trust and accountability are the essential building blocks of the new economic model the world needs as it recovers from the shock of the Covid-19 pandemic. A resilient global economy must be built on a New Social Contract: a new commitment to workers' rights, renewed investment in compliance and the rule of law, and a foundation of workplace democracy. These are the foundations for a future where we leave no one behind.

Sharan Burrow,
General Secretary, ITUC

Introduction

121 trade unions from 95 countries took part in the fifth ITUC Global Covid-19 Survey, between 22–25 June 2020.

Six questions were asked using an online survey platform to understand the prevalence and nature of support for workers and government economic recovery plans, and assess how well or badly governments and employers are responding to the crisis.

ITUC affiliates have been asked regular survey questions to track the global response to Covid-19 since 17 March 2020 to identify trends in support of international and national advocacy and campaigning. This is the final survey in this series. Three questions monitoring the government response and assessing how well or badly governments and employers are responding are tracking questions that have been asked in each survey over the last three months.

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.

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

62 non-OECD countries

Regions:

- 23 countries in Africa
 - 14 countries in the Americas
 - 19 countries in Asia-Pacific
 - 39 countries from the Pan European region of the ITUC (PERC)
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Government Responses to COVID-19

22 – 25 June 2020

Global Findings

Over half (54% or 51) of countries surveyed are undertaking a partial reopening of workplaces, businesses and community spaces. 17% (16 out of 95 countries) are undertaking a full re-opening.

In total, almost three-quarters (71%, or 67 out of 95) of countries are undertaking a partial or full re-opening.

Just 9% (9 countries) are containing the spread of the virus with national lockdown measures, such as closing schools and non-essential businesses, while 18% (17 countries) are delaying the spread of the virus with the promotion of handwashing, working from home, social distancing and border restrictions for international visitors.

Just 2 countries (2%) said that the Coronavirus is not a major threat to public health or the national economy.

Global – Tracking Data

52 countries have completed each of the four waves of this survey (17–23 March, 30 March–2 April, 20–23 April, 25–28 May and 22–25 June). The results for these countries are listed below¹:

	Survey 1 17 – 23 March 52 countries	Survey 2 30 March – 2 April 52 countries	Survey 3 20 – 23 April 52 countries	Survey 4 25 – 28 May 52 countries	Survey 5 22 – 25 June 52 countries
Contain the spread of the virus with national lock down measures	30 countries (58%)	36 countries (69%)	31 countries (60%)	5 countries (10%)	Nil
Partial re-opening of workplaces, businesses and community spaces	—	—	9 countries (17%)	39 countries (75%)	35 countries (67%)
Delay the spread of the virus with promotion of hand washing	20 countries (38%)	15 countries (29%)	11 countries (21%)	6 countries (12%)	8 countries (15%)
Coronavirus is not a major threat to public health or the national economy	2 countries (4%)	1 country (2%)	Nil	Nil	1 country (2%)
Full re-opening of workplaces, businesses and community spaces	—	—	1 country (2%)	2 countries (3%)	8 countries (15%)

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

Among those who have completed the five waves of the survey, there have been the following changes since the last time the survey was run:

- 1 country moved from containing the spread to delaying the spread.
- 4 countries moved from containing the spread to a partial reopening.
- 4 countries moved from delaying the spread to a partial reopening.
- 8 countries moved from a partial reopening to a full reopening

Despite a general trend to reopening among those that have completed all five waves of the survey, several countries have reimplemented lockdown measures:

- 5 countries moved from a partial reopening to delaying the spread.
- 2 countries moved from a full reopening to a partial reopening.

G20 Findings

13 of the 17 G20 countries (76%) in this survey are undertaking a partial re-opening.

4 countries (24%) are undertaking a full re-opening.

No countries are delaying or containing the spread.

OECD Findings

16 of the 33 OECD countries that completed this survey are undertaking a partial re-opening (48%). 9 countries (27%) are undertaking a full re-opening.

5 (15%) are delaying the spread of the virus, while just 1 (3%) is containing the spread of the virus.

2 countries (6%) said that the coronavirus is not a major threat to public health or the national economy.

Regional Findings

Region	Partial re-opening of workplaces, businesses and community spaces.	Full re-opening of workplaces, businesses and community spaces.	Contain the spread of the virus with national lock down measures.	Delay the spread of the virus with promotion of hand washing.	Coronavirus is not a major threat to public health or the national economy.
Americas 14 countries	10 countries (71%)	Nil	1 country (7%)	3 countries (21%)	Nil
Africa 23 countries	11 countries (48%)	3 countries (13%)	5 countries (22%)	4 countries (17%)	Nil
Asia-Pacific 19 countries	13 countries (68%)	3 countries (16%)	1 country (5%)	2 countries (11%)	Nil
Europe (PERC) 39 countries	17 countries (44%)	10 countries (26%)	2 countries (5%)	8 countries (21%)	2 countries (5%)

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Additional Support for Workers

Global Findings

Almost two-thirds (63% or 60 countries) said unions in their country had been able to secure additional support for workers as part of government or employer responses to the Covid-19 pandemic.

37% (or 35 countries) said unions had not been able to secure additional support.

G20 Findings

88% of G20 countries (15 of the 17 in this survey) said that unions in their country had been able to secure additional support for workers. Just 2 (12%) had not.

OECD Findings

85% of OECD countries (28 of the 33 in this survey) said that unions in their country had been able to secure additional support for workers.

5 countries (15%) said that unions had not been able to secure additional support.

Regional Findings

Have unions in your country secured any additional support for workers as part of government or employer responses to the Covid-19 pandemic?

Region	Yes	No
Americas 14 countries	5 countries (36%)	9 countries (64%)
Africa 23 countries	10 countries (43%)	13 countries (57%)
Asia-Pacific 19 countries	12 countries (63%)	7 countries (37%)
Europe (PERC) 39 countries	33 countries (85%)	6 countries (15%)

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Areas of support – building a social protection floor

Those countries that indicated that additional support had been secured for workers as part of government or employer responses to the Covid-19 pandemic were asked what specific measures had been secured. The responses are included in the table below.

The percentage figure was calculated based on the number of countries (60) who said they have secured support for workers.

	Paid sick leave	Income support	Healthcare	Childcare	Pension guarantees
Global 60 countries	22 countries (37%)	52 countries (87%)	19 countries (32%)	8 countries (13%)	9 countries (15%)
G20 15 countries	9 countries (60%)	15 countries (100%)	7 countries (47%)	3 countries (20%)	3 countries (20%)
OECD 28 countries	12 countries (43%)	26 countries (93%)	7 countries (25%)	6 countries (21%)	2 countries (7%)
Americas 14 countries	4 countries (80%)	5 countries (100%)	2 countries (40%)	Nil	Nil
Africa 23 countries	1 country (10%)	7 countries (70%)	3 countries (30%)	Nil	1 country (10%)
Asia-Pacific 19 countries	1 country (8%)	11 countries (92%)	4 countries (33%)	1 country (8%)	1 country (8%)
Europe (PERC) 39 countries	16 countries (48%)	29 countries (88%)	10 countries (30%)	7 countries (21%)	7 countries (21%)

Global Findings (based on 60 countries where unions secured support)

87% (52) of countries are now providing income support.

Countries are less commonly providing paid sick leave (37% or 22 countries) and healthcare (32% or 19 countries).

Few are providing childcare (13% or 8 countries) or pension guarantees (15% or 9 countries).

G20 Findings (based on 15 countries where unions secured support)

100% (15) G20 countries are now providing income support.

60% (9 countries) are providing paid sick leave and 47% (7 countries) are providing healthcare.

Few are providing childcare (20%, 3 countries) or pension guarantees (20% or 3 countries).

OECD Findings (based on 28 countries where unions secured support)

Across the OECD, 96% (26 countries) are now providing income support.

43% (12 countries) of OECD countries are providing paid sick leave.

Just 25% (7 countries) are providing healthcare, and 21% (6 countries) are providing childcare.

Only 2 countries (7%) are providing pension guarantees.

Regional Findings

See table above.

Other areas of support

Trade unions were given the option to identify other areas of support gained for workers in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. These included:

Reduced working hours to prevent job losses	Additional parental leave	Rent exemptions	Increased unemployment benefits, Sick leave and early retirement provisions	Reduced hours working allowance
Covid-19 declared an occupational disease	Extension of temporary unemployment	Direct cash payments	Bonus payments for health workers	Deferral of taxes
Subsidies for private employment wages	Payments for food	PPE and transport to work		Job guarantees
	Support for SMEs in formal and informal sectors			

4 Government economic recovery plan

Global Findings

The majority (81% or 77 countries) of countries said that their government is preparing an economic recovery plan as part of its response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

19% (18 countries) said that their government is not preparing an economic recovery plan.

Plan Details (Global)

Of those who said that their government (77 countries) was preparing a plan:

64% (49 countries) said that unions in their country were involved in discussions with the government on economic recovery plans. 36% (28 countries) said unions were not involved.

77% (59 countries) said that job creation is part of economic recovery plans. 23% (18 countries) said job creation was not part of plans.

Just under half (49%, or 38 countries) said that action on climate change and Just Transition was part of economic recovery plans.

G20 Findings

14 of the 17 G20 countries who took part in this survey (82%) said that their government is preparing an economic recovery plan as part of its response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

18% (3 countries) said that their government is not preparing an economic recovery plan.

Plan Details (G20)

Of those 14 countries who said that their government was preparing a plan:

79% (11 countries) said that unions in their country were involved in discussions with the government on economic recovery plans. 21% (3 countries) said unions were not involved.

86% (12 countries) said that job creation is part of economic recovery plans. 14% (2 countries) said job creation was not part of plans.

Over half (57%, or 8 countries) said that action on climate change and Just Transition was part of economic recovery plans.

OECD Findings

30 of the 33 (91%) OECD countries who took part in this survey said that their government is preparing an economic recovery plan as part of its response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

9% (3 countries) said that their government is not preparing an economic recovery plan.

Plan Details (OECD)

Of those 30 countries who said that their government was preparing a plan:

77% (23 countries) said that unions in their country were involved in discussions with the government on economic recovery plans. 23% (7 countries) said unions were not involved.

80% (24 countries) said that job creation is part of economic recovery plans. 20% (6 countries) said job creation was not part of plans.

Half (50%, or 15 countries) said that action on climate change and Just Transition was part of economic recovery plans.

Regional Findings**Is your government preparing an economic recovery plan as part of its responses to the Covid-19 pandemic?**

Region	Yes	No
Americas 14 countries	9 countries (64%)	5 countries (36%)
Africa 23 countries	19 countries (83%)	4 countries (17%)
Asia-Pacific 19 countries	14 countries (74%)	5 countries (26%)
Europe (PERC) 39 countries	35 countries (90%)	4 countries (10%)

Region	Partial re-opening of workplaces, businesses and community spaces.		Full re-opening of workplaces, businesses and community spaces.		Contain the spread of the virus with national lock down measures.	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Americas 9 countries	4 countries (44%)	5 countries (56%)	6 countries (67%)	2 countries (33%)	4 countries (44%)	5 countries (56%)
Africa 19 countries	9 countries (47%)	10 countries (53%)	12 countries (63%)	7 countries (37%)	10 countries (53%)	9 countries (47%)
Asia-Pacific 14 countries	9 countries (64%)	5 countries (36%)	14 countries (100%)	Nil	6 countries (43%)	8 countries (57%)
Europe (PERC) 35 countries	27 countries (77%)	8 countries (23%)	27 countries (77%)	8 countries (23%)	18 countries (51%)	17 countries (49%)

5 Government restrictions on human and labour rights

Global Findings

Over half (56%, 53 countries) of countries reported that over the past few months their government had brought in restrictions to human and labour rights under the guise of their response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

44% (42 countries) said that their government had not tried to bring in restrictions to human or labour rights.

G20 Findings

Half (53%, or 9 out of 17) G20 countries in this survey reported that their government had brought in restrictions to human and labour rights under the guise of their response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

8 countries (47%) said that their government had not tried to bring in restrictions.

OECD Findings

16 of the 33 (48%) OECD countries in this survey said that their government had brought in restrictions to human and labour rights under the guise of their response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Slightly more however (52% or 17 countries) said that they had not.

Regional Findings

Over the past few months, has your government brought in any restrictions to human and labour rights under the guise of their response to the Covid-19 pandemic?

Region	Yes	No
Americas 14 countries	10 countries (71%)	4 countries (29%)
Africa 23 countries	16 countries (70%)	7 countries (30%)
Asia-Pacific 19 countries	8 countries (42%)	11 countries (58%)
Europe (PERC) 39 countries	19 countries (63%)	20 countries (37%)

6 Assessment of government response

Global Findings

58% of countries believe that their government is responding **well** to the needs of workers affected by the virus

42% of countries believe that their government is responding **badly** to the needs of workers affected by the virus

More than half of countries (58%, or 55 countries) who responded to this survey believe that their government is responding **well** to the needs of workers affected by the virus.

Most (53% or 50 countries) believe their government is responding **quite well**, while just 5% (5 countries) believe their government is responding **very well**.

42% (40 countries) believe that their government is responding **badly**. This includes 30 (32%) who believe they are responding **badly** and 10 (11%) who believe they are responding **very badly**.

Global – Tracking Data

52 countries have completed each of the four waves of this survey (17–23 March, 30 March–2 April, 20–23 April, 25–28 May and 22–25 June). The results for these countries are listed below²:

	Survey 1 17 – 23 March 52 countries	Survey 2 30 March – 2 April 52 countries	Survey 3 20 – 23 April 52 countries	Survey 4 25 – 28 May 52 countries	Survey 5 22 – 25 June 52 countries
Contain the spread of the virus with national lock down measures	22 countries (42%)	20 countries (38%)	20 countries (38%)	22 countries (42%)	22 countries (42%)
Partial re-opening of workplaces, businesses and community spaces	30 countries (58%)	32 countries (62%)	32 countries (62%)	30 countries (58%)	30 countries (58%)

The results from wave 5 have not shifted significantly from wave 4:

3 countries now have a more negative view of their governments response to the crisis; 1 country has shifted from **badly** to very **badly**, 1 shifted from **quite well** to **badly** and 1 shifted from **quite well** to **very badly**.

5 countries now have a more positive view of their governments response to the crisis with 2 shifting from **badly** to **quite well** and 3 shifting from **very badly** to **badly**.

G20 Findings

9 of the 17 (53%) G20 countries who responded to this survey believe their government is responding **quite well** to the needs of workers. No G20 countries believe they are responding **very well**.

8 G20 countries (47%) believe their government is responding **badly** – this includes 3 who believe that their government is responding **very badly**.

OECD Findings

70% or 23 of the 33 OECD countries who responded to this survey believe their government is responding **well** to the needs of workers. No OECD countries believe their governments are responding **very well**.

30% or 10 countries believe they are responding **badly** – including four who believe they are responding **very badly**.

2 Note: only data for those countries that completed each of the five waves has been included, so 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 14 countries	4 countries (29%)	10 countries (71%)
Africa 23 countries	13 countries (57%)	10 countries (43%)
Asia-Pacific 19 countries	7 countries (37%)	12 countries (63%)
Europe (PERC) 39 countries	31 countries (79%)	8 countries (21%)

7 Assessment of employer responses

Global Findings

60% of countries believe that employers are responding **badly** to the needs of workers affected by the virus.

40% believe that employers are responding **well** to the needs of workers affected by the virus.

More than half (60% or 57 countries) believe that employers are responding **badly** to the needs of workers. This includes 15 countries (or 16%) believe that employers are responding **very badly**.

40% (or 38 countries) believe that employers are responding **well**, however; this includes just 1% (1 country) who believe employers are responding **very well**.

Global – Tracking Data

Across the countries who have completed all five waves of this survey, 60% now believe that employers in their country are responding badly to the needs of workers.

52 countries have completed each of the three waves of this survey (17–23 March, 30 March–2 April, 20–23 April, 25–28 May and 22–25 June). The results for these countries are listed below³:

	Survey 1 17 – 23 March 52 countries	Survey 2 30 March – 2 April 52 countries	Survey 3 20 – 23 April 52 countries	Survey 4 25 – 28 May 52 countries	Survey 5 22 – 25 June 52 countries
Companies responding badly	23 countries (44%)	30 countries (58%)	27 countries (52%)	31 countries (60%)	31 countries (60%)
Companies responding well	29 countries (56%)	22 countries (42%)	25 countries (48%)	21 countries (40%)	21 countries (40%)

While there has been some minor movement within countries the results from wave 4 and wave 5 remain the same.

G20 Findings

Across the 17 G20 countries who responded to this survey, 13 countries (or 76%) believe that employers in their country are responding badly.

Just 4 countries (24%) believe employers are responding well.

OECD Findings

48% (16 countries) of those countries in the OECD that responded to this survey believe that employers are responding badly.

Slightly more (17 countries, or 52%) believe employers are responding well.

Regional Findings

Region	How well or badly is your government responding to the needs of workers affected by Covid-19?	
	Well	Badly
Americas 14 countries	Nil	14 countries (100%)
Africa 23 countries	7 countries (30%)	16 countries (70%)
Asia-Pacific 19 countries	8 countries (42%)	11 countries (58%)
Europe (PERC) 39 countries	23 countries (59%)	16 countries (41%)

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