

# ITUC Global COVID-19 Survey

## 17-23 March 2020

### Key Findings

#### Introduction

109 trade unions from 86 countries took part in the first ITUC Global COVID-19 Survey between 17 – 23 March 2020.

Six questions were asked using an online survey platform to monitor government responses, review economic and social policies being used to respond to the pandemic and assess how well or badly governments and employers are responding to the crisis. ITUC affiliates will be asked regular survey questions will be asked in the coming months to track the global response to COVID-19 and identify trends in support of international and national advocacy and campaigning.

- Fifteen G20 countries including Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Japan, Mexico, the Russian Federation, South Africa, Turkey, the UK and the USA.
- 28 out of 36 OECD countries including Australia, Austria, Canada, Chile, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxemburg, Mexico, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Turkey, the UK, the USA.
- 58 Non-OECD countries.

#### 1. Government Responses to COVID-19 17 – 23 March 2020

##### Global Findings

- **53% of countries are containing the spread of the virus** with national lock down measures, the closure of schools and non-essential businesses.
- **43% of countries are delaying the spread of the virus** with promotion of hand washing, working from home, social distancing and border restrictions for international visitors.

##### G20 Findings

Nine out of fifteen G20 countries (60%) **were said to be containing the spread of the virus** and 5 out of fifteen (33%) were said to be delaying the spread.

##### OECD and Non-OECD Findings

In 21 out of 28 OECD countries (**75%**) **were said to be containing the spread of the virus** and 7 out of 28 (25%) were said to be delaying the spread.

In the 58 non-OECD countries surveyed: **43%** were said to be **containing the spread of the virus** and **52%** were said to be **delaying the spread**.

## 2. Worst affected workers/sectors

Those worst affected at this stage in the COVID-19 pandemic include those who are at most risk of person to person contact due to the nature of their work:

**Health workers** due to the risk of exposure as well as from a shortage of personal protective equipment (PPE).

**Transport workers** because of closures and strict border controls as well as drivers who are in direct contact with commuters and households.

**Retail and service workers including fast food workers** were initially at risk of exposure due to their public facing roles – as businesses closed they now face severe economic hardship. Many shop assistants, supermarket workers and postal workers are not routinely provided with personal protective equipment (PPE).

As restrictions on movement including governments bans on travel and gatherings of large numbers of people were put in place, these sectors were seen as most economically affected:

**The performing arts and entertainment workers** including actors, film and tv productions and musicians were among those who first lost their jobs as concerts were stopped.

**Tourism workers** including hotel and airline staff.

With school closures now taking place in many countries, teachers and other education workers are at risk.

Particular concerns are identified for **informal economy workers, small businesses and self-employed and platform/gig economy workers** because of reduce demand from closures required to stop the spread of the virus.

There are early warnings export workers such as in textiles and garments are at economic risk from border restrictions or production cancelled or postponed because of lack of demand from importing countries

## 3. Government Measures to Slow the Spread of COVID-19

Thirteen government measures to respond to the public health impact of COVID-19 were surveyed.

### Global Findings

- The top five measures that governments were putting in place to slow spread of virus are:
- Limiting the size of mass gatherings (92% of countries)
- Cancelling sporting events (88% of countries)
- Closure of schools (84% of countries)
- Self isolation of individuals and households showing symptoms of the virus (83% of countries)
- Travel restrictions for travellers arriving in-country (82% of countries)

65% of countries promoting working from home for some workers.

More than half (58%) of all governments surveyed offering additional funding for the public health care system.

58% of countries asking vulnerable groups to self-isolate.

Half of all governments surveyed have closed non essential businesses (excluding supermarkets and pharmacies).

Over a quarter (28%) of countries have domestic lock downs in place restricting people to homes or the local community.

Restrictions on the number of food or household items customers can purchased is happening in only 12% of countries.

Restrictions on democratic rights and freedoms as a result of government actions need to be closely monitored as:

- 24 countries are using surveillance apps to monitor individuals and the spread of the virus,
- 13 countries are postponing local or national elections.

### **Word cloud of other measures governments have put in place**

State of Emergency, Closing of Borders, Police Enforcement, Detention of People, Emergency Legislation, Investment in Health Care, Public Health Campaigns, Military providing Healthcare, Wartime Authority for Manufacturing, Voluntary Testing

### **G20 Findings**

The top five measures that governments are putting in place to slow spread of virus are:

- 14 out of 15 G20 countries (93%) cancelling sporting events.
- 14 out of 15 G20 countries (93%) limiting the size of mass gatherings.
- 13 out of 15 G20 countries (87%) closed schools.
- 13 out of 15 G20 countries (87%) self-isolation of individuals and households showing symptoms of the virus.
- 13 out of 15 G20 countries (87%) promoting working from home.

9 out of 15 (60%) G20 governments offering additional funding for the public health care system.

6 out of 15 (40%) G20 governments closed non-essential business excluding supermarkets and pharmacies.

5 out of 15 (33%) G20 governments put in place domestic lockdowns restricting people to home or local community.

### **OECD Findings**

The top five measures that governments are putting in place to slow spread of virus:

- 27 out of 28 OECD countries (96%) promoting working from home for some workers.
- 26 out of 28 OECD countries (93%) closing schools.
- 25 out of 28 OECD countries (89%) cancelling sporting events.
- 24 out of 28 OECD countries (86%) self-isolating individuals and households showing symptoms of the virus.
- 23 out of 28 OECD countries (82%) limiting the size of mass gatherings.

19 out of 29 OECD countries (68%) closing non-essential business excluding supermarkets and pharmacies.

13 out of 28 OECD countries (46%) offering additional funding for the public health care system.

## 4. Government Economic Policies for COVID-19

Ten economic policies for governments to respond to COVID-19 were surveyed.

### Global Findings

The top five policies that governments are putting in place to respond to economic impact of virus are:

- Provision of free health care 50% of countries
- Employment protection for those self isolating 34% of countries
- Tax relief for businesses 31% of countries
- Paid sick leave for a period of self isolation 29% of countries
- Bailout funds for business or sectors 29% of countries

More countries were providing bail out funds for business than providing sick leave or part time with only 23% of countries providing part time leave for carers, 21% of countries providing sick leave for all or some workers.

Income support and cash payments were only in place in 12% of countries.

### Word cloud of other economic policies governments have put in place

Tax Holidays for Business, Rent and Mortgage Relief, Interest Free Credit for Business, Family Leave Allowance

### G20 Findings

The top five policies of G20 governments to respond to economic impact of virus:

- 8 out of 15 G20 governments providing paid sick leave for some workers
- 7 out of 15 G20 governments providing free health care
- 7 out of 15 G20 governments providing bail out funds for businesses
- 5 out of 15 G20 governments providing tax relief for businesses
- 5 out of 15 G20 governments providing paid sick leave for a period of self isolation.

5 out of 15 G20 governments were providing employment protection for those self-isolating.

Less than a third (4 out of 15) G20 governments were providing paid sick leave for all workers.

Only 3 out of 15 G20 governments were providing income support to cover housing, food and electricity for all workers and paid part time leave to care for dependents.

Only 2 out of 15 G20 governments were providing cash payments to individuals.

### OECD Findings

The top five policies that OECD governments are putting in place to respond to economic impact of virus are:

- 14 out of 28 OECD countries providing tax relief to business
- 14 out of 28 OECD countries providing bailout funds for businesses
- 14 out of 28 OECD countries providing employment protection for those self isolating
- 13 out of 28 OECD countries providing free health care.
- 11 out of 28 OECD countries offering paid part time leave to care for dependents.

Only 11 out of 28 OECD countries were offering paid sick leave for the period of self isolation and 10 countries are offering paid sick leave for some workers.

Only 5 out of 28 OECD countries were offering income support to cover housing, food and electricity for all workers. 4 out of 28 were offering paid sick leave for all workers and cash payments to individuals

## 5. Many governments are responding well

### Global Findings

62% of countries think their government is responding to the needs of workers well.

38% of countries think their government is responding to the needs of workers badly.

### G20 Findings

8 out of 15 G20 countries are responding well to the crisis.

7 out of 15 G20 countries are responding badly to the crisis.

### OECD Findings

19 out of 28 OECD countries are responding well to the crisis.

9 out of 28 OECD countries are responding badly to the crisis.

## 6. Employers are responding badly

### Global Findings

48% of countries think that employers are responding to the needs of workers badly.

39% of countries think that employers are responding to the needs of workers well.

### G20 Findings

Employers in 9 out of 15 G20 countries are responding badly to the crisis.

Employers in 6 out of 15 G20 countries are responding well to the crisis.

### OECD Findings

Employers in 17 out of 28 OECD countries are responding well to the crisis.

Employers in 11 out of 28 OECD countries are responding badly to the crisis.