

# ITUC Frontlines 2016 Poll

## Special Topic: Wages and Inequality



ITUC International Trade Union confederation  
CSI Confédération syndicale internationale  
CSI Confederación Sindical International  
IGB Internationaler Gewerkschaftsbund



TNS opinion

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# Introduction

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With 45% of the world's people living on the the edge and 52% just getting by, this represents a social and economic disaster.

The worlds GDP has trebled over three decades but the corporate greed that has captured the wealth of workers contribution through a model of global trade that relies on low wages, insecure and unsafe work is destroying the lives of working families and ironically undermining global corporations which are facing shrinking markets.

The ITUC's latest poll covering countries with 55% of global GDP and 45% of the world's population demonstrates the failure of governments to reign in corporate greed and corruption. It has broken trust in our democracies.

The world needs a lift in income share for the 99% with a social protection floor, a minimum wage on which people can live with dignity and strengthened collective bargaining. Nothing else will tackle inequality, kick-start economies and reassert a measure of social justice.

The Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Agreement on climate held out the hope of a zero carbon zero poverty world but they alone are not enough.

End corporate greed.



**Sharan Burrow**

General Secretary, International Trade Union Confederation

# Commentary

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In this first ITUC Frontlines Poll of 2016, the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) chose to revisit a question on wages, how the global population is faring financially.

Across the nine G20 economies polled (Argentina, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, South Korea, the UK and the USA) each respondent was asked to select the statement that best described their financial situation. Together, the populations of these countries represent an estimated 45% of the world's population and more than half of global GDP.

This question has been repeated by the ITUC over the past four years, in a total of 21 countries, and this report tracks these results over time.

**Overall, across the 9 countries, almost half are living on the edge of survival, barely able to afford essentials - housing, food and electricity.**

45% of the people in this poll stated that they are barely able to get by, with 11% saying they don't have enough money for essentials like housing, food and electricity, and 34% saying that they can afford to meet only these most basic needs, but have no money left over. [\[CHART 1\]](#)

This leaves almost half the population with no buffer for the future, and with no ability to engage with the market as consumers. [\[CHART 2\]](#)

**One in ten of those in this poll and their families are falling through the cracks, without enough money to cover their basic needs.**

11% of the population stated that they did not have enough money even to cover the basic essentials; housing, food and electricity. [\[CHART 3\]](#)

**This figure has barely changed since 2012, when the ITUC began asking this question.**

Each year, around one in ten participants in our polls have stated that they do not have enough money to meet even their most basic needs. [\[CHART 5\]](#)

Over the period 2012 to 2014 the question was asked of the same five countries (Canada, France, Germany, the UK and the USA) three times; in 2012 the figure was 10%, rising to 11% in 2013 and then 8% in 2014.

In 2016 we repeated the question with five of those countries. Again one in ten (10%) state that they do not have enough money to meet their basic needs. Across all the nine countries included in this year's poll, the average is 11%, highlighting just how little this figure has moved. [\[CHART 4\]](#)

This is not just people struggling to get by, this is one in ten of the population who cannot meet their most basic needs for survival.

**Despite stagnant results, it is clear that some populations are struggling even more than others.**

In Argentina, an overwhelming 63% of the population said that they did not have enough money for basics (14%) or that once they had covered their basics needs they had nothing left over (49%). Large percentages of the populations of France (56%) and Germany (52%) said the same.

South Korea also has a large proportion of their population struggling to meet their basic needs, with more than one in five (22%) stating that they do not have enough money for basics like housing, food and electricity. [\[TABLE 1\]](#)

**Regional inequalities in financial situations are also stark within countries, particularly India and Argentina.**

Across the population of Argentina, 14% said they could not meet their basic needs; however there are dramatic differences between regions. In Argentine Northwest/Gran Chaco almost one in five (19%) stated that they could not afford basic essentials, while this figure dropped to 11% in Pampas/Patagonia and 12% in Mesopotamia. [TABLE 3]

This regional difference is also present in India, where 14% in both the North East and East reported not having enough for basic essentials, while this figure was considerably lower in the North (6%) and South (5%). [TABLE 4]

In the USA those living in the Southern States are more likely to be living on the edge, and least likely to be getting by. [TABLE 5]

**Young people in particular are struggling to meet their basic needs.**

Across the 9 countries included in this poll, 15% of those aged 16-24 stated that they did not have enough money for basic essentials, like food, housing and electricity.

This compares to the average of those aged 25+, with 10% saying they don't have enough for essentials (10% of those aged 25-34, 9% of those aged 35-44, 12% of those aged 45-54 and 8% of those aged 55+). [TABLE 2]

**However those aged 45-54 are also struggling to get by, at a time when they have the greatest responsibilities (children and caring for parents).**

This age group are often referred to as the 'sandwich generation' due to their dual responsibilities in raising their own family, and in caring for their parents. Globally, over half this group (51%) say that they don't have enough for essentials; 39% of this sandwich generation say that they have nothing left over once they pay for basics like housing, food and electricity, while 12% say they can't even cover those basic costs.

As this population group moves towards the end of their working life, the situation does not improve, with 50% of those aged 55+ saying they do not have enough for essentials (8%) or have nothing left over once they pay for only their most basic needs (42%). [TABLE 2A]

**The results from Germany highlight these global trends at a country level.**

21% of those aged 16-24 in Germany say that don't have enough money to meet their basic needs.

The pressure being placed on the 'sandwich generation' is also apparent here, with 53% of those aged 45-54 saying that they either don't have enough for basics (8%) or that they have nothing left over once they cover their most basic needs (45%). This trend again stretches into the end of their working life, with 54% of those aged 55+ saying they don't have enough money for basics (9%) or have nothing left over once they pay for basics like housing, electricity and food (45%). [TABLE 6]

**Overall, women are struggling more than men to meet their basic needs.**

46% of woman said that they either didn't have enough for basics (11%) or had nothing left over once they met only their most basic needs (35%). This compares to 44% of men who said the same. [TABLE 2]

**There is strong correlation with education level and financial security, with people who have lower levels of education struggling to pay bills.**

The age at which people finished education has a strong correlation with the financial stability that people have in life. In six out of nine countries the majority of people who don't have enough for basic essentials finished their education aged 16 years or younger.

In all countries, those who are able to save a little money finished their education aged 20 years or older. [TABLE 7]

# Profiles

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Outlined below are the key commonalities that exist across countries amongst each of the financial categories. Respondents who most commonly fell into this category across all the countries surveyed were most like to have the following socio-demographic characteristics.

## Desperation

'not enough for basic essentials'

- » Female
- » Young (aged 16-24)
- » Someone with less years education

### Comments:

This group represents some of the global populations most vulnerable; the young, females, and those with a poor education.

In the majority of countries (6 of the 9) **females** were more likely than males to not have enough money to meet their basic needs.

In almost all countries (7 of the 9) it is **young people** (aged 16 to 24) who most commonly said that they could not cover their most basic needs.

Following this theme, those with a **low education** were also more likely to state that they do not have enough money for basic essentials in the majority of countries (6 of the 9).

## Living on the Edge

'enough for basic essentials, but nothing left over'

- » Female
- » Of any age group
- » Someone who has a mid-level education

### Comments:

The findings for this group represent how – globally – many people could find themselves struggling to get by. Although females again are most likely to be in this group, for this profile the age group most likely to be represented is dependent on the country.

**Females** are again over-represented in this category; in 6 of the 9 countries they are more likely than males to be living on the edge.

Those with a **mid-level education** (17 to 19 years) are most likely to fall into this category in the majority of countries (6 of the 9).

## Just Getting By

'enough for basic essentials, with a little left to save'

- » Male
- » Aged 25-34
- » Someone who has a higher level of education

### Comments:

This profile – of those who are finding it easier to get by than the others – is commonly made up of those with arguably greater privilege and advantage; males and those with higher levels of education.

In 6 of the 9 countries, **males** are more likely than females to select this category.

In all 9 countries, it is those with a **higher level of education** (20+ years) who are more likely to fall into this category.

In the majority of countries (5 of the 9) it is those aged 25 to 34 most likely to be just getting by, while in 3 others it is the next age group up (those aged 35 to 44).

# Chart 01:

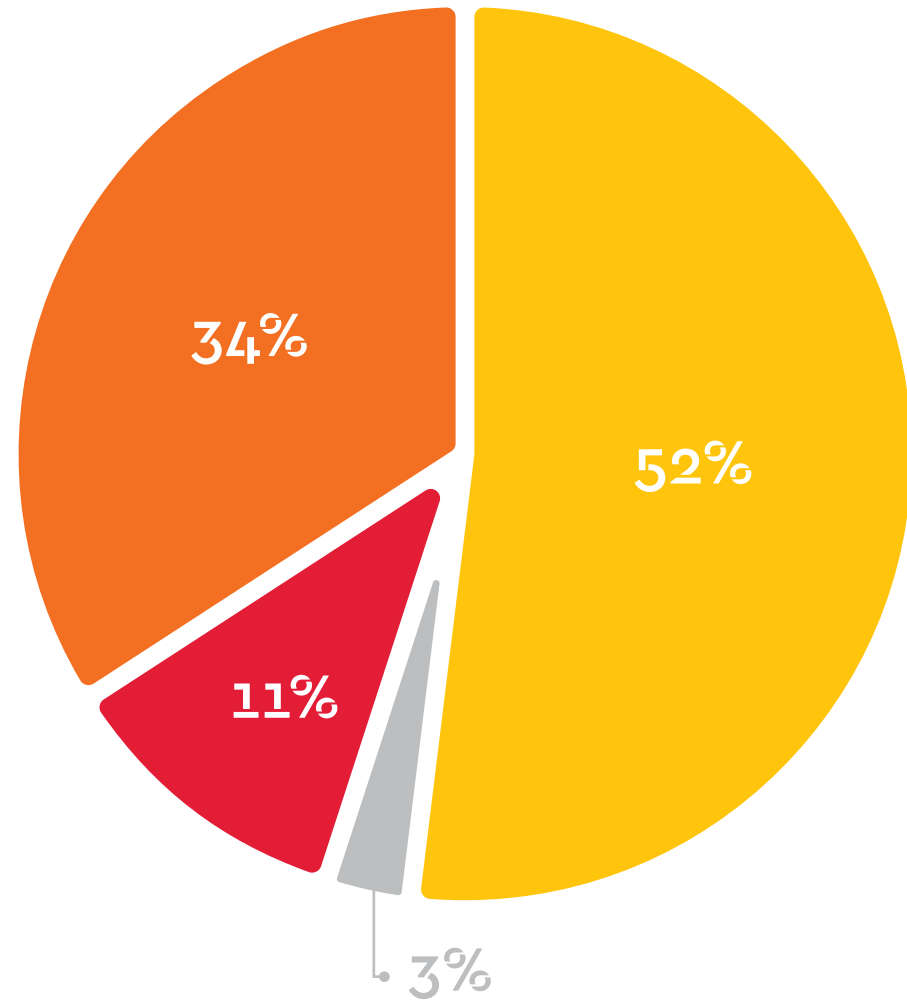
## 2016 - Global Mean

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**Question:**

Which of the following statements best describes your financial situation? I don't have enough money for basic essentials, like housing, food and electricity OR I have enough money for basic essentials, but I cannot save any money OR I have enough money for basic essentials, and I can save a little money OR Don't know.

- Desperation - 11%
- Getting by - 52%
- On the edge - 34%
- Don't know - 3%



**Notes:**


Total sample size across the 9 countries is 9187. Sample size for each country is displayed in the methodology.

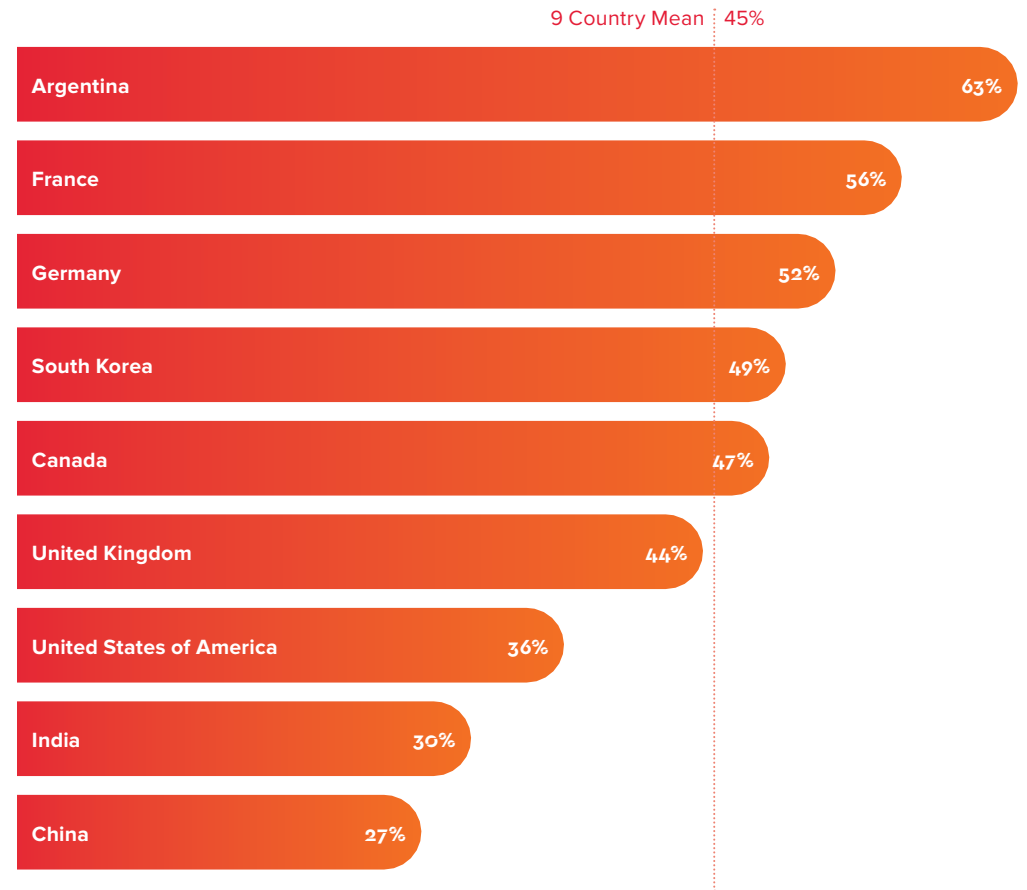
# Chart 02:

## Country Results – Desperation and Living on the Edge (2016)

**Question:**

Which of the following statements best describes your financial situation? I don't have enough money for basic essentials, like housing, food and electricity OR I have enough money for basic essentials, but I cannot save any money OR I have enough money for basic essentials, and I can save a little money OR Don't know.

 Desperation and on the edge



**Notes:**

Sample size is at least n=1000 per country. Total sample size across the 9 countries is 9187. Sample size for each country is displayed in the methodology. Don't know figure not displayed for ease of reading.




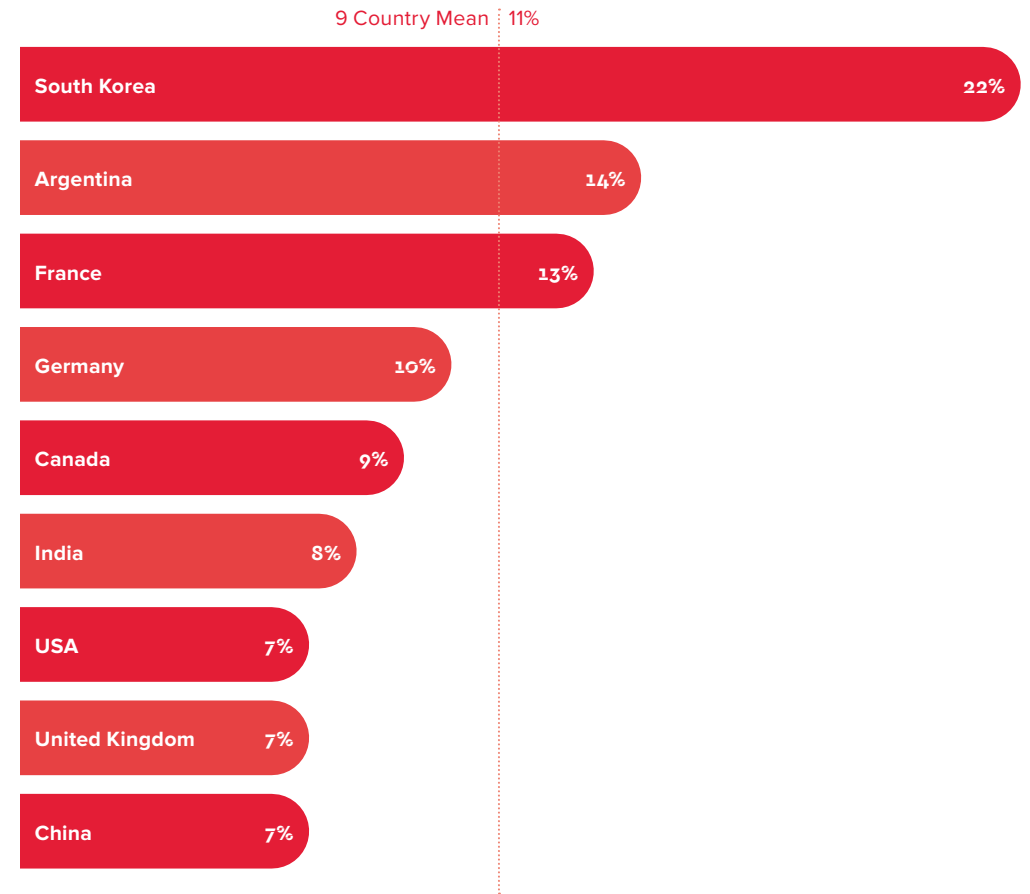
# Chart 03:

## Country Results – Desperation, Not Enough for Basic Essentials (2016)

### Question:

Which of the following statements best describes your financial situation? I don't have enough money for basic essentials, like housing, food and electricity OR I have enough money for basic essentials, but I cannot save any money OR I have enough money for basic essentials, and I can save a little money OR Don't know.

 Desperation, not enough for basic essentials



### Notes:


Sample size is at least n=1000 per country. Total sample size across the 9 countries is 9187. Sample size for each country is displayed in the methodology.

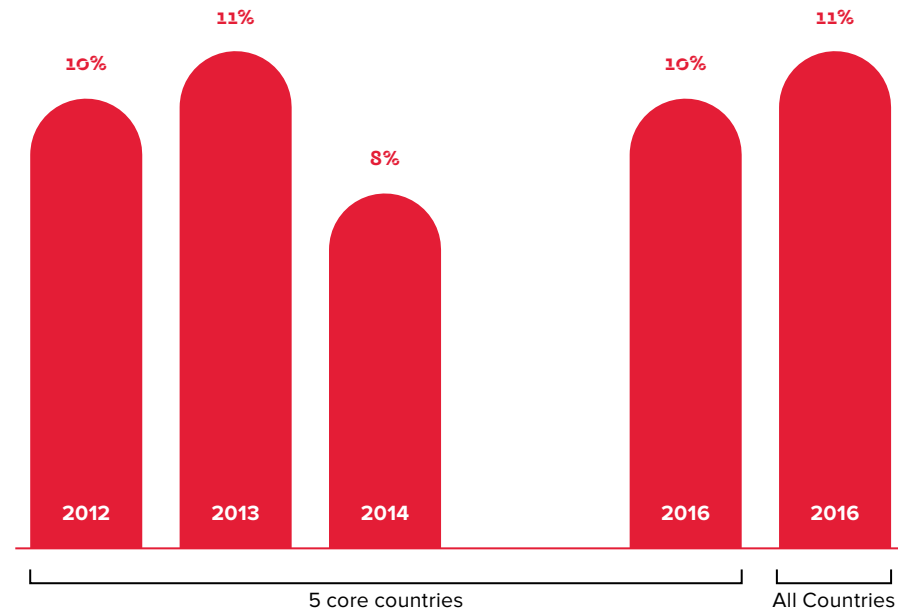
# Chart 04:

## Tracking – Desperation, Not Enough for Basic Essentials (Global)

### Question:

Which of the following statements best describes your financial situation? I don't have enough money for basic essentials, like housing, food and electricity OR I have enough money for basic essentials, but I cannot save any money OR I have enough money for basic essentials, and I can save a little money OR Don't know.

 Desperation, not enough for basic essentials



### Notes:


The 2012 – 2014 results are based on the findings of 5 core countries (the UK, France, Canada, the USA and Germany). The 2016 result '5 core countries' contains the results of 5 of these countries that were included in this year's poll. The final bar '2016 All Countries' is the average (mean) of the results from all the 9 countries included in 2016.

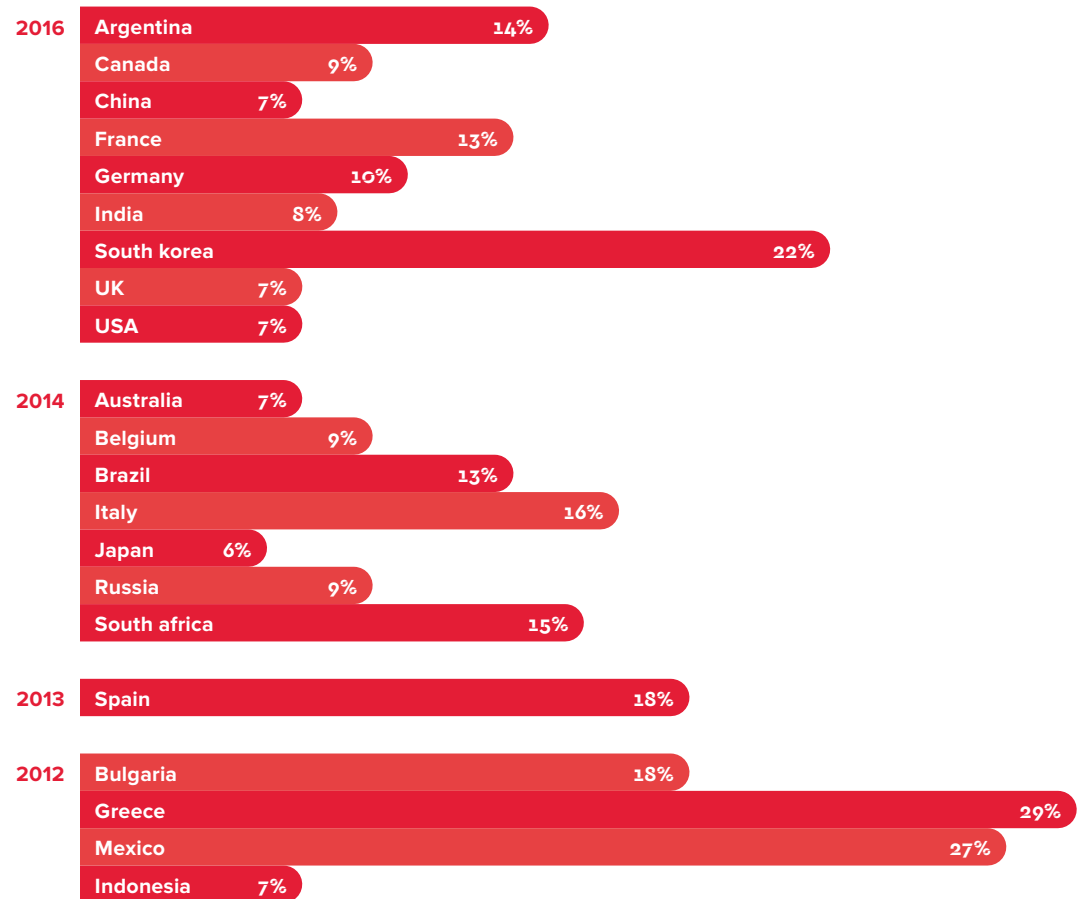
# Chart 05:

## Tracking - Desperation, Not Enough for Basic Essentials (Country)

### Question:

Which of the following statements best describes your financial situation? I don't have enough money for basic essentials, like housing, food and electricity OR I have enough money for basic essentials, but I cannot save any money OR I have enough money for basic essentials, and I can save a little money OR Don't know.

 Desperation, not enough for basic essentials



### Notes:

Sample size is at least n=1000 per country. Where the question has been asked of a country more than once the most recent figure has been used.

# Table 01:

## Current Financial Situation: By Country

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**Question:**

Which of the following statements best describes your financial situation?

	TOTAL	Argentina	Canada	China	France	Germany	India	South Korea	UK	USA
I don't have enough money for basic essentials, like housing, food and electricity	11%	14%	9%	7%	13%	10%	8%	22%	7%	7%
I have enough money for basic essentials, but I cannot save any money	34%	49%	38%	20%	43%	42%	22%	27%	37%	29%
I have enough money for basic essentials, and I can save a little money	52%	34%	50%	72%	39%	46%	65%	47%	54%	60%
Don't know	3%	4%	3%	1%	5%	2%	4%	4%	2%	4%

## Table 02:

### Current Financial Situation: Global Results by Demographic

**Question:**

Which of the following statements best describes your financial situation?

	TOTAL	Male	Female	16-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55+
I don't have enough money for basic essentials, like housing, food and electricity	11%	11%	11%	15%	10%	9%	12%	8%
I have enough money for basic essentials, but I cannot save any money	34%	33%	35%	31%	30%	33%	39%	42%
I have enough money for basic essentials, and I can save a little money	52%	53%	50%	48%	57%	56%	46%	49%
Don't know	3%	3%	3%	6%	3%	2%	3%	2%

## Table 02a:

### Current Financial Situation: Global Results Impact on Generations

**Question:**

Which of the following statements best describes your financial situation?

Ranking	Desperation	On the Edge
	I don't have enough money for basic essentials, like housing, food and electricity	I have enough money for basic essentials, but I cannot save any money
1	Millennials 16-24 (15%)	Retirees 55+ (42%)
2	Sandwich generation 45-54 (12%)	Sandwich generation 45-54 (39%)
3	Millennials 25-34 (10%)	Generation X 35-44 (33%)

## Table 03:

### Current Financial Situation: Regional Results for Argentina

**Question:**

Which of the following statements best describes your financial situation?

	TOTAL	Argentina Total	Argentine Northwest / Gran Chaco	Buenos Aires City	Cuyo	Mesopotamia	Pampas / Patagonia
I don't have enough money for basic essentials, like housing, food and electricity	11%	14%	19%	13%	17%	12%	11%
I have enough money for basic essentials, but I cannot save any money	34%	49%	44%	52%	39%	54%	47%
I have enough money for basic essentials, and I can save a little money	52%	34%	33%	31%	45%	33%	37%
Don't know	3%	4%	5%	4%	-	-	4%

## Table 04:

### Current Financial Situation: Regional Results for India

**Question:**

Which of the following statements best describes your financial situation?

	TOTAL	India Total	East	North	North East	South India	West India
I don't have enough money for basic essentials, like housing, food and electricity	11%	8%	14%	6%	14%	5%	7%
I have enough money for basic essentials, but I cannot save any money	34%	22%	24%	19%	35%	26%	20%
I have enough money for basic essentials, and I can save a little money	52%	65%	57%	69%	46%	65%	71%
Don't know	3%	4%	5%	5%	5%	4%	2%

## Table 05:

### Current Financial Situation: Regional Results for USA

**Question:**

Which of the following statements best describes your financial situation?

	TOTAL	USA Total	North East	Midwest	South	West
I don't have enough money for basic essentials, like housing, food and electricity	11%	7%	6%	7%	7%	10%
I have enough money for basic essentials, but I cannot save any money	34%	29%	28%	28%	31%	27%
I have enough money for basic essentials, and I can save a little money	52%	60%	61%	61%	57%	61%
Don't know	3%	4%	4%	4%	4%	2%

## Table 06:

### Current Financial Situation: Age Results for Germany

**Question:**

Which of the following statements best describes your financial situation?

	TOTAL	Germany Total	16-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55+
I don't have enough money for basic essentials, like housing, food and electricity	11%	10%	21%	7%	8%	8%	9%
I have enough money for basic essentials, but I cannot save any money	34%	42%	33%	40%	41%	45%	45%
I have enough money for basic essentials, and I can save a little money	52%	46%	42%	51%	48%	45%	44%
Don't know	3%	2%	4%	2%	3%	3%	1%

# Table 07:

## Current Financial Situation: Age Finished Education

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**Question:**

Which of the following statements best describes your financial situation?

Countries: Argentina, Canada, China, Germany, India, UK	16 years or younger	17-19 years	20 years or older
Desperation: I don't have enough money for basic essentials, like housing, food and electricity	23%	10%	7%
Living on the edge: I have enough money for basic essentials, but I cannot save any money	33%	40%	33%
Just getting by: I have enough money for basic essentials, and I can save a little money	43%	47%	58%

**Question:**

Which of the following statements best describes your financial situation?

Countries: France, South Korea, USA	16 years or younger	17-19 years	20 years or older
Desperation: I don't have enough money for basic essentials, like housing, food and electricity	19%	21%	11%
Living on the edge: I have enough money for basic essentials, but I cannot save any money	51%	36%	31%
Just getting by: I have enough money for basic essentials, and I can save a little money	27%	39%	54%



# Methodology

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These conclusions are based on the 2016 International Trade Union Confederation Frontlines Poll.

The results in the document relate to one of four questions asked in this poll via an Internet omnibus survey.

This question was asked in nine countries (Argentina, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, South Korea, the UK and the USA).

The results to the questions not included in this report will be released separately.

In each of the 9 countries, approximately n=1000 respondents were interviewed. Exact sample sizes are listed below:

The sample in each country has been selected by quotas to reflect national proportions in regards to age, gender and region.

SPSS Software and Microsoft Excel were used to analyse the results.

Essential Media Communications were responsible for questionnaire design, data analysis and reporting.

TNS Opinion carried out the fieldwork between the 14th and 22nd April, 2016.

Figures have been rounded so tables may not add to 100%.

Country	Sample Size
Argentina	1015
Canada	1010
China	1041
France	1020
Germany	1029
India	1029
South Korea	1005
UK	1034
USA	1004

**Copies of the ITUC Global Poll reports from 2012, 2013 and 2014 are available on the ITUC website:**

[www.ituc-csi.org](http://www.ituc-csi.org)

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