

The Necessity of Care Costs in Living Wage Estimates: A Lifecycle Approach to Childcare and Eldercare

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Executive Summary

The inclusion of care costs—spanning both childcare and eldercare—in living wage estimates represents a critical yet often overlooked component of ensuring workers can afford a decent standard of living throughout their entire working lives. This paper examines why a comprehensive lifecycle approach to care should be considered an essential element of living wage methodologies, particularly through the lens of human rights and gender equity. Drawing on international frameworks from the International Labour Organization (ILO), World Bank, and United Nations, we demonstrate that excluding or inadequately addressing care costs across the lifecycle perpetuates gender inequality, undermines human capital development, and contradicts the fundamental premise of living wage estimates that assume multiple workers per household.

The evidence reveals a multi-pronged care crisis: globally, 606 million women of working age are unavailable for employment due to care responsibilities (compared to only 41 million men)¹, presenting challenges to gender equity and workforce participation. Furthermore, over 40% of all children below primary-school-entry age worldwide—nearly 350 million children—need childcare but do not have access to it, with this gap most acute in low- and lower-middle-income countries where 8 out of 10 children who need care lack access². This indicates that current childcare expenditure levels in HES data are replicating the issue of lack of affordability that contributes to poverty rather than reflecting the needs of workers and their families to achieve a decent livelihood from a human rights lens.

Eldercare needs are also growing in volume and price and have not historically been accounted for in living wage estimates. A 2024 OECD study predicts that expensive long term elder care needs are projected to increase by an average of 30% across OECD countries by 2050³. These costs are often completely unaffordable for low-income families. Across 11 OECD countries, even after accounting for public benefits, the out-of-pocket costs of elder care for those with only moderate needs would equal at least 50% of median income, while the long-term care costs for those with severe needs would exceed median income in 16 OECD countries and rise above median income itself in seven countries and subnational regions. But this issue isn't specific to OECD countries. In a peri-urban district of southern

¹ ILO. (2018). *Care Work and Care Jobs for the Future of Decent Work*. Geneva: International Labour Organization.

² World Bank. (2020). *Better Jobs and Brighter Futures: Investing in Childcare to Build Human Capital*. Washington, DC: World Bank.

³ OECD. (2024). *Is Care Affordable for Older People?* OECD Health Policy Studies. Paris: OECD Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1787/2931a9e6-en>

Ghana caregiving to the elderly cost 48% of monthly income⁴. These statistics underscore a systematic gap in current wage structures to account for the real costs of care across a worker's lifetime.

The WageMap Standard offers stakeholder-informed best practices that address these gaps through a lifecycle of care approach. Rather than viewing childcare and eldercare as separate challenges, the Standard recognizes care as a continuous need that shifts form throughout a worker's life. The approach suggested in the Standard incorporates full childcare costs based on actual market prices during the years when children require care, with these same wage levels continuing through later working years when the funds transition to eldercare or retirement savings—reflecting how different societies handle elder support.

This lifecycle approach addresses a key concern about fairness to employers. By amortizing childcare costs only across the actual years when children need care (for example, 16 years for a typical U.S. family with two children four years apart), rather than across an entire 45-year working life, the Standard ensures adequate funds are available when needed. The "extra" funds in non-childcare years are not an overestimation but rather a necessary provision for the eldercare phase of the lifecycle, whether through retirement savings in Western contexts or direct elder support in societies with multi-generational care traditions.

The paper examines and addresses three common challenges in incorporating care costs into living wage estimations: (1) the assumption that extended families provide adequate care, which evidence shows may perpetuate poverty cycles rather than alleviating them; (2) reliance on expenditure surveys that may systematically underestimate care needs due to affordability constraints; and (3) the practice of spreading care costs too thinly across working lives, which fails to provide adequate resources when families actually incur these expenses.

International guidance increasingly supports comprehensive approaches to care in living wage estimates. The ILO explicitly states that living wage estimates must consider gender equity in living wage estimations⁵, while the IDH Sustainable Trade Initiative requires that childcare should be provided or an explanation clearly asserting why not must be available⁶. The World Bank's extensive research demonstrates that investing in care infrastructure yields multi-generational impacts by promoting equity, improving women's employment and productivity, enhancing child and elder outcomes, and boosting overall economic development⁷.

This paper presents the case that living wage estimations, as they are designed to provide a decent livelihood for workers and their families, benefit from adequately accounting for care costs across the full lifecycle from both a human rights and practical perspective. When living wage estimations assume more than one worker per family—typically 1.5 to 1.8 workers—they implicitly require that both parents in a family household are available to work. Without affordable care for both children and elders, this

⁴ Nortey, S.T., Aryeetey, G.C., Aikins, M., Amendah, D., & Nonvignon, J. (2017). Economic burden of family caregiving for elderly population in southern Ghana: the case of a peri-urban district. *International Journal for Equity in Health*, 16(16). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12939-016-0511-9>

⁵ International Labour Organization. (2024). *ILO principles for estimating a living wage* [Web page]. Retrieved [Accessed September 1, 2025] from <https://www.ilo.org/ilo-principles-estimating-living-wage>

⁶ IDH Sustainable Trade Initiative. (2021). *Living Wage Roadmap Guidance*. Utrecht: IDH.

⁷ World Bank. (2020). *Better Jobs and Brighter Futures: Investing in Childcare to Build Human Capital*. Washington, DC: World Bank.

assumption becomes challenging to realize, particularly affecting women who disproportionately bear caregiving responsibilities across generations.

The WageMap Standard's lifecycle approach offers a practical pathway that maintains the single living wage principle while ensuring families can afford care necessary throughout their lives. By using actual market costs where available and a standardized proxy methodology based on caregiver-to-child ratios and living wages for caregivers where data is scarce, these best practices provide a replicable, transparent method for incorporating care costs globally. The Standard represents an ongoing dialogue with stakeholders to refine and improve how living wages account for the full spectrum of care needs working families face from their first child through their own elder years.

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I. Introduction: The Living Wage-Care Nexus

The concept of a living wage— “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”⁸—has gained significant traction globally as stakeholders recognize that minimum wages often fall short of meeting basic needs. Yet, despite growing consensus on the importance of living wages, one critical component remains inconsistently addressed across methodologies: the lifecycle of care costs, spanning from childcare through eldercare. This paper explores why care costs represent an essential element of living wage estimates throughout a worker's entire life and how their inclusion strengthens both the theoretical foundation and practical application of living wage standards worldwide.

The Human Rights Framework

The right to an adequate standard of living is enshrined in Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which explicitly recognizes that this right extends to workers and their families across their lifespans⁹. The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights further elaborates this principle, establishing that remuneration must provide all workers with “a decent living for themselves and their families”¹⁰. Importantly, these foundational documents make no distinction between care needs at different life stages—the right to dignity and adequate support extends from childhood through old age.

Care sits at the intersection of multiple human rights: the right to work, the right to gender equality, the rights of the child, and increasingly recognized, the rights of older persons. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child emphasizes that children have the right to development, education, and care that enables them to reach their full potential¹¹. Similarly, the UN Principles for Older Persons, affirms that older persons should have access to adequate food, water, shelter, clothing, health care, and family and community support¹². When working families cannot afford quality care at either end of the age spectrum, these fundamental rights are compromised. And since a living wage is intended to provide a decent life from a human rights lens for a worker and their family, WageMap proposes that it is not an adequate estimate of living wage if these care costs are excluded or not sufficiently accounted in living wage estimations.

Gender Equity Imperatives

The care question is inextricably linked to gender equity across the entire lifecycle. The ILO's data reveals that women perform 76.2% of total unpaid care work globally, dedicating 3.2 times more time than men

⁸ International Labour Organization. (2024). *What is a living wage?* [Web page]. Retrieved [Accessed September 1, 2025] from <https://www.ilo.org/what-living-wage>

⁹ United Nations. (1948). *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. New York: UN General Assembly.

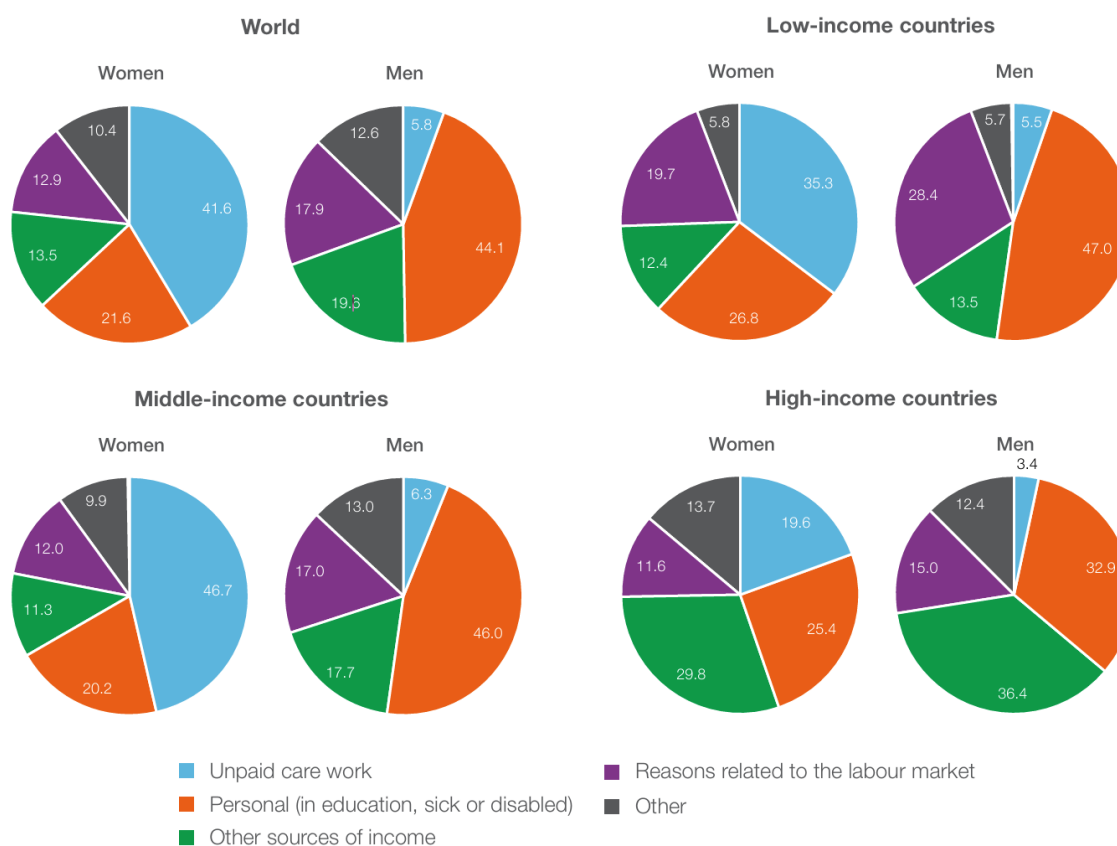
¹⁰ United Nations. (1966). *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights*. New York: UN General Assembly.

¹¹ United Nations. (1989). *Convention on the Rights of the Child*. New York: UN General Assembly.

¹² United Nations. (1991). *United Nations Principles for Older Persons*. New York: UN General Assembly.

to these activities¹³. In 2018, 647 million working-age adults were hindered from entering the workforce due to family responsibilities—94% of whom were women¹⁴.

Figure 1: Percentage of Inactive Persons, by Sex and Main Reason for Being Outside the Labour Force, 2018



Source: ILO calculations based on labour force and household survey microdata¹⁵

This pattern manifests across economic contexts with consistent gender disparities. In the Middle East and North Africa region, the lack of childcare options is identified as the most challenging barrier for women to join the labor market¹⁶. Research shows that expanding options for quality and affordable childcare services could increase female labor force participation by 2.5 percentage points in Jordan, 2.1

¹³ ILO. (2018). Care Work and Care Jobs for the Future of Decent Work. Geneva: International Labour Organization.

¹⁴ Ibid

¹⁵ Ibid

¹⁶ World Bank. (2023). Who Cares? Care Work and Women's Labor Market Outcomes in Iraq, Jordan and Lebanon. State of the Mashreq Women Flagship 2. Washington, DC: World Bank. Available at: <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/099000502222338765/pdf/P16815701c336d00e095dc093ef29af40a7.pdf>

in Lebanon and 0.5 in Iraq. If childcare was free, expected changes could be as much as 7.3 and 7.1 percentage points in Jordan and Lebanon, respectively¹⁷.

The burden of care contributes significantly to gender inequality. Women are disproportionately impacted by the inability to access care services. And this can have a negative impact on employers as well. As fertility rates around the world decline¹⁸, labour shortages become an increasing issue. The McKinsey Global Institute suggests that by expanding access to childcare and eldercare, women in particular are better able to stay in the workforce¹⁹, decreasing turnover and addressing labour gaps as they develop in many countries around the world.

Global Scope of the Care Challenge

The care gap is a global phenomenon affecting both developed and developing nations. The World Bank estimates that over 40% of all children below primary-school-entry age worldwide need childcare but lack access to it²⁰. A survey across 31 developing countries showed that only 4% of employed women used formal childcare²¹.

The challenge varies significantly by economic context. In Jordan, only 2.3% of children aged 0 to 5 years are benefiting from formal childcare services. In Iraq, the corresponding share is 0.7% for children aged 0 to 4 years, and in Lebanon it is 4.8% for children 0 to 3 years old²². In all three countries, well over half of mothers rely on family, friends, and neighbors as the main source of care support.

Eldercare presents parallel challenges. According to the OECD, the total cost of long-term care can range from one to almost seven times the national median income depending on severity of needs²³. In 16 OECD countries, individuals with severe needs face out-of-pocket costs for home care exceeding 50% of median income even with public support²⁴.

The Living Wage Promise and Practice

Living wage estimates typically base calculations on a reference family size, assuming multiple workers contribute to household income. This assumption varies by country context but creates an inherent challenge: when living wage estimates assume multiple workers per family, especially when the number

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division. (2022). *World Population Prospects 2022*. New York: United Nations.

¹⁹ Ilingrud, Kweilin. (2024, August 13). "Here's how to address labor shortages to drive economic growth." McKinsey Global Institute. Available at: <https://www.mckinsey.com/mgi/media-center/heres-how-to-address-labor-shortages-to-drive-economic-growth>

²⁰ World Bank. (2020). *Better Jobs and Brighter Futures: Investing in Childcare to Build Human Capital*. Washington, DC: World Bank.

²¹ Ibid.

²² World Bank. (2023). *Who Cares? Care Work and Women's Labor Market Outcomes in Iraq, Jordan and Lebanon*. State of the Mashreq Women Flagship 2. Washington, DC: World Bank. Available at: <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/099000502222338765/pdf/P16815701c336d00e095dc093ef29af40a7.pdf>

²³ OECD. (2024). *Is Care Affordable for Older People?* OECD Health Policy Studies. Paris: OECD Publishing.

²⁴ Ibid.

of workers is high at above 1.75, but fail to account for care costs, families may be unable to achieve these worker participation rates. A Living Wage that assumes multiple workers in the family, thus not leaving space for a full time caregiver at home, should include childcare to fully achieve a basic but decent livelihood for a worker and their family.

II. The Case for Including Care in Living Wage Estimates

The treatment of care costs in living wage estimates raises fundamental questions about whether workers can truly afford a decent standard of living for themselves and their families. This section explores four interconnected arguments that suggest comprehensive care costs throughout the lifecycle merit serious consideration.

Child Development and Human Capital Formation

The potential inclusion of quality childcare in living wage estimates could be viewed as an investment in future human capital. The World Bank's analysis suggests that access to quality early childhood care and education generates both immediate and long-term benefits extending beyond individual families²⁵.

In Indonesia, the economic cost of unmet childcare needs is substantial. Women without elderly family support for childcare face approximately US\$1,300 in foregone earnings due to prolonged absence from the labor market. Women with elderly support are likely to return to work two years after childbirth; for women without such support, this period is twice as long²⁶.

Multi-Worker Family Model Requirements

Perhaps the most compelling mathematical consideration emerges from examining the internal logic of living wage estimates themselves. When methodologies assume that families require more than one worker to achieve a decent standard of living—typically between 1.5 and 1.8 workers—they create an implicit requirement that someone must be available to work.

Reflecting local realities across various living wage estimation methodologies, there is a typical trend of over 1.6 workers per family on average. During early childhood years, when care is least affordable, it would be highly unlikely that a typical family would achieve these participation rates. The WageMap Standard recognizes this mathematical challenge, noting that when estimates assume more than one worker per family but don't include care costs, families cannot achieve the income levels that living wages are designed to provide²⁷.

Additionally, based on evidence presented in this paper above that lack of accessibility to affordable care options is a driver behind women leaving the workforce, the upward cost of care inclusion in living wage estimates may in fact contribute to upward movement in labor force participation rates and the number of workers in a family, thus balancing some of the impact of care costs in increasing living wage estimates

²⁵ World Bank. (2020). *Better Jobs and Brighter Futures: Investing in Childcare to Build Human Capital*. Washington, DC: World Bank.

²⁷ WageMap. (2024). *Draft Living Wage Reference Standard*. WageMap.

by likely increasing the number of workers over time that can contribute to the income of that family. This would in turn create a downward pressure on living wage estimates over time and as workforce participation increases among women currently unable to access work due to care responsibilities.

III. Examining Current Approaches and WageMap's Proposed Approach

Current methodologies for living wage estimates reveal significant variations in how care costs are addressed, if at all. This section examines critical limitations in existing approaches.

Limitations of Excluding Care Costs

The most fundamental challenge is that many methodologies exclude care costs entirely. As the Anker Research Institute notes, excluding childcare "creates gender equity issues as women are disproportionately impacted by not being able to afford childcare" and "creates fundamental issues with calculations where more than one income is expected"²⁸.

The ILO has explicitly stated that living wage estimates must consider gender equity²⁹. The IDH Sustainable Trade Initiative stakeholder informed Living Wage Roadmap requires that childcare should be provided or an explanation clearly asserting why not must be available³⁰. Yet many methodologies continue to exclude these costs.

One of the predominant criticisms of living wage estimates received through the WageMap stakeholder consultations round 1 and 2, questioned whether researchers and methodology owners should have the power to assert what basket of goods a worker needs for decency from a human rights lens. WageMap has gone to great lengths in the creation of the living wage reference standard to address these concerns by including flexibility and requirements for local stakeholder inputs on variability to the basket of goods included at a local level. Additionally, WageMap examined human rights in detail to ensure that all goods considered are necessary for achieving those human rights as set by the UN. As stated earlier in this paper, care enables rights for children, the elderly, and moves the world toward greater gender equity. Firmly planting the issue within a human rights framework. As such, excluding care costs from the WageMap standard would represent a decision to not implement a necessary provision for basic human rights without justification, and at the whim of the methodology. This leads to less credible estimates, less recognition of the work of women, and is not aligned with ILO guidance on estimating a living wage with a gender equity lens.

Challenges with Amortization Methods

WageMap compared over a dozen different living wage estimation methodologies to assess the various approaches to the inclusion of the cost of care. It found only two methodologies that specifically consider

²⁸ Anker Research Institute. (2023). *Working Paper 9: How gender is embedded in the Anker Methodology and an exploration of care work and living wage*. Geneva: ARI.

²⁹ ILO. (2024). *ILO principles for estimating a living wage*. Geneva: International Labour Organization.

³⁰ IDH Sustainable Trade Initiative. (2021). *Living Wage Roadmap Guidance*. Utrecht: IDH.

both childcare and eldercare/retirement in living wage estimations. Many exclude care entirely, but some include some funds for childcare without consideration for eldercare and amortize childcare costs across a worker's expected years of participation on the workforce.

However, since childcare is an early life expense, amortizing childcare costs across the entire work-life while excluding elder care entirely, will not allow workers to afford childcare when they need it, and will continue to negate the need for eldercare. But including both the total cost of childcare every year in a living wage estimation as well as costs for elder care might artificially inflate living wage estimations by not considering that care costs are fluid over the life of the worker and not needed in any one category for every year of life within a typical family. The solution being proposed by WageMap for consideration in the living wage standard proposes a new direction not currently implemented by any methodologies examined. This would account for the lifecycle of care while allowing for amortization by a different method. Recognizing the fluid nature of care responsibilities from childcare to elder care.

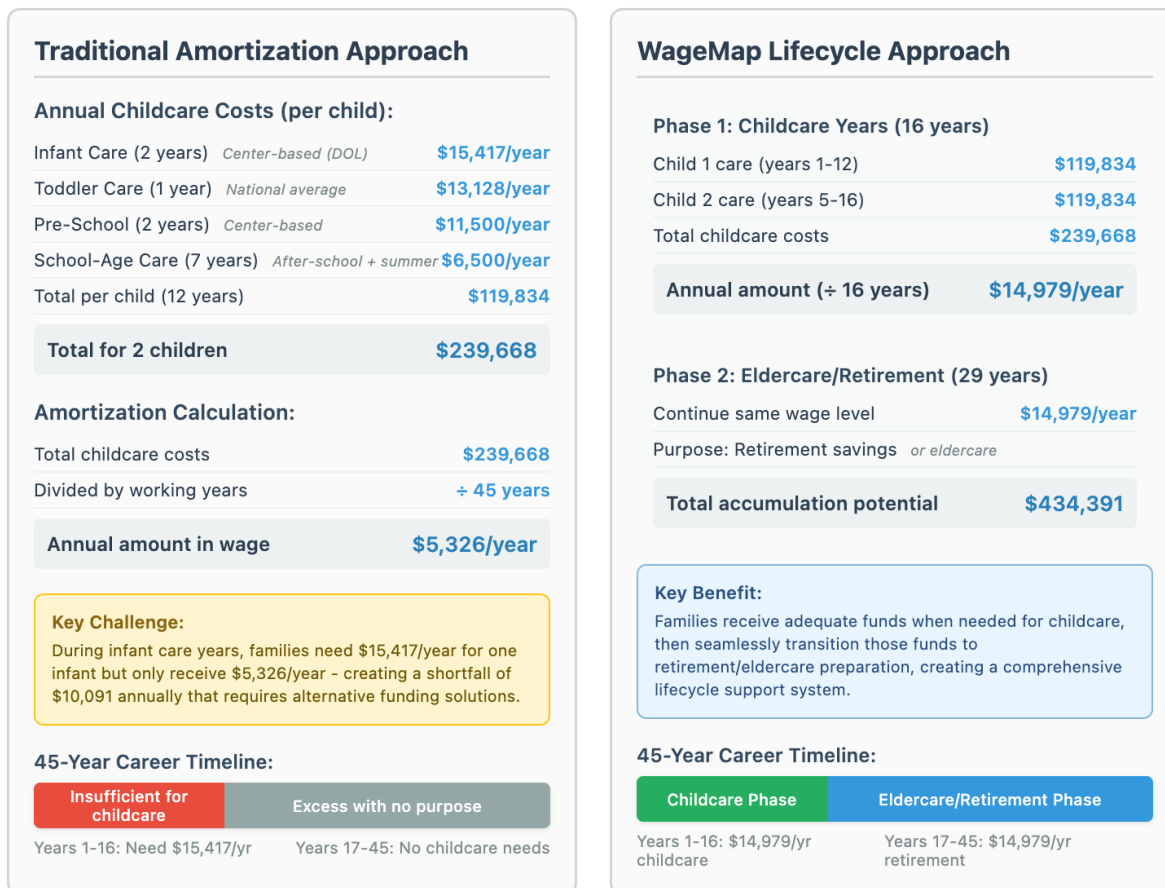
This approach is illustrated below with a theoretical example in the U.S. The high cost of childcare allows us to highlight the scale of amortization issues and the benefits of the lifecycle of care approach. Costs of care would be significantly less in lower income countries or where government is providing free or subsidized care.

Figure 2:

Lifecycle of Care vs Traditional Amortization

U.S. Example: 2 Children, 4 Years Apart, 45-Year Working Career

Data Sources: U.S. Department of Labor Women's Bureau (2024), Care.com Cost of Care Report (2025), Child Care Aware of America (2024)



Expenditure Survey Limitations

The Anker Research Institute's analysis reveals fundamental problems with using expenditure surveys for care costs. Childcare expenditure, for example, appears in at least three different Classification of Individual Consumption According to Purpose (COICOP) major groups³¹:

- Domestic services (including nannies) under "Furnishing and household maintenance" (05.6.2.1)
- Early childhood education under "Education services" (10.1.0.1)
- Nurseries and daycare under "Personal care and social protection" (13.3.0.1)

This scattered classification means researchers must access highly disaggregated data—often unavailable—to capture total care costs. Additionally, where lack of affordability leads to lack of

³¹ Anker Research Institute. (2023). *Working Paper 9: How gender is embedded in the Anker Methodology and an exploration of care work and living wage*. Geneva: ARI.

availability, expenditure data will not cover actual costs of childcare. Elder care is equally difficult to assess due to COICOP disaggregation.

Referencing expenditure survey data also risks perpetuating current conditions of poverty that do not support a gender equity approach to including the costs of care in a living wage. When families can't afford care, they often leave children home alone in the care of another child, leave the workforce to provide care, or use family and friends for care provision when possible. "In parts of Ethiopia more than 50 percent of rural girls ages 5 to 8 are providing" childcare to younger siblings daily³². This can have large impacts on the ability of these children to attend school, a burden often born by girls in a family, further exacerbating the issue of gender equity. These are not choices made by workers as much as they are necessities demanded when care is unaffordable.

When workers cannot afford care, they are not paying for it. As such, any use of current expenditures on care maintains the issue of lack of affordability as it represents current use rather than demand and need. Thus, perpetuating current conditions of poverty.

The WageMap living wage reference standard in its current form proposes assessing actual costs of care as a normative category in living wage estimations to avoid these insufficiencies.

The Extended Family Assumption

Many methodologies assume extended families provide care at no monetary cost. However, evidence suggests this assumption may not reflect economic realities. In Ghana, women providing eldercare for family members lose an average of \$186.18 monthly, with 78% reporting high financial stress³³. In Indonesia, 67% of households with young children do not include an elderly family member who could provide care³⁴.

WageMap proposes in the living wage reference standard that if cultural considerations are driving the lack of care utilization, then exceptions to including some care costs might be still meet the highest levels of standard compliance. But this should be informed by broad local stakeholder consultation and research that shows that even if quality care was available and affordable, workers in a country would choose not to utilize the care in favor of leaving children with unpaid family members or friends who can deliver quality care.

Data-Scarce Contexts

Market prices for childcare as a base for establishing a lifecycle of care approach may not exist in all contexts. A lack of affordability of care can commonly lead to lack of availability of care. Where care is unavailable, assessing prices might be unrealistic. WageMap proposes a proxy approach to ensure living wage estimates are internationally comparable in places where care costs can't be readily assessed or collected. This proxy approach in these cases, uses caregiver-to-child ratios based on international

³² World Bank. (2020). *Better Jobs and Brighter Futures: Investing in Childcare to Build Human Capital*. Washington, DC: World Bank.

³³ Nortey, S.T., et al. (2017). *Economic burden of family caregiving for elderly population in southern Ghana*. International Journal for Equity in Health, 16(16).

³⁴ World Bank. (2017). *Access to childcare can improve women's labor market outcomes in Indonesia*. Washington, DC: World Bank.

norms or local regulations in conjunction with the assumption that caregivers should also earn a living wage. The process proposed is as follows:

1. Identify appropriate caregiver-to-child ratios based on local laws or international norms (e.g., 1:8)
2. Assume caregivers must earn a living wage themselves
3. Divide the caregiver's living wage by the number of children they can appropriately care for
4. Multiply cost by the number of children in the reference family
5. Amortize across the years of caregiving using typical number of children and typical gap between each child as detailed in the lifecycle approach.

IV. Implementation Considerations

Moving from theoretical frameworks to practical implementation presents various challenges and opportunities.

Data Collection Strategies

Effective implementation requires robust data collection adapted to diverse contexts. The WageMap Standard suggests multiple approaches depending on data availability:

In contexts with developed care markets:

- Regular collection of prices from registered providers
- Ensuring price data reflects quality standards
- Capturing cost variations across age groups

In data-scarce contexts:

- Using regulatory requirements for caregiver ratios
- Conducting time-use surveys
- Testing pilot programs to establish estimates
- Using proxies where data is unavailable

Context-Specific Adaptations

Implementation must recognize cultural, economic, and social variations. The WageMap Standard's flexibility allows for adaptations while maintaining core principles of adequacy and equity.

Stakeholder Engagement

Successful implementation requires engaging diverse stakeholders. The WageMap Standard emphasizes consultation throughout implementation, recognizing that consensus-building is essential for sustainable change.

V. Conclusions and Recommendations

This examination reveals both significant challenges in current approaches and promising pathways toward more comprehensive ways of considering care in a living wage.

Key Findings

First, the lifecycle nature of care appears to be a fundamental economic reality. From childcare in early career years through eldercare responsibilities in later years, care costs represent a continuous expense throughout working lives.

Second, gender equity considerations make care cost inclusion particularly important. With 647 million working-age adults hindered from workforce participation due to care responsibilities—94% of them women—excluding care costs may perpetuate gender inequality.

Third, the multi-worker household assumption common in living wage methodologies appears to require care cost inclusion for mathematical consistency. When methodologies assume 1.5-1.8 workers per household but don't include care costs, families may be unable to achieve these participation rates.

Fourth, international frameworks increasingly support comprehensive approaches to care, from the ILO's guidance on gender equity to the World Bank's evidence on human capital returns.

Recommendations for Practice

Based on these findings, several recommendations emerge:

1. **Adopt lifecycle approaches:** Rather than viewing childcare and eldercare separately, methodologies might benefit from recognizing care as a continuous need throughout working lives.
2. **Use full market costs during years of need:** Ensuring wages cover full care costs during actual years of expense, rather than amortized amounts that may leave families unable to afford care when needed.
3. **Develop context-appropriate proxy methodologies:** In contexts where formal care markets don't exist, proxy calculations based on caregiver ratios and living wages can estimate appropriate costs.
4. **Address both childcare and eldercare:** Comprehensive methodologies might address both, recognizing cultural variations in how societies support different life stages.
5. **Engage stakeholders throughout:** Given complexity and cost implications, robust stakeholder engagement appears essential.

Areas for Further Research

Additional research could strengthen understanding in several areas:

- Systematic, comparable data on care costs across different contexts

- Longitudinal studies tracking family care expenses across careers
- Research on implementation impacts for workers, families, and employers
- Understanding how living wages including care costs interact with public policy

Toward a More Comprehensive Future

The inclusion of care costs in living wage estimates represents recognition that care is not peripheral to economic life but central to it. When workers can afford quality care for their children and elders, benefits extend beyond individual families to entire societies.

The WageMap Standard offers one approach to this inclusion, proposing best practices that maintain wage adequacy throughout the care lifecycle while respecting cultural diversity and economic realities. As stakeholder consultation continues, these practices will evolve and improve.

The path forward requires continued collaboration among researchers, practitioners, policymakers, and workers whose lives these wages must support. Through such collaboration, living wage methodologies can evolve to ensure that all workers can afford decent living standards throughout their lives—including the care that makes those lives possible.

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