

# **A STEP-BY-STEP RESEARCH ON THE LIVING INCOME OF WASTE PICKERS IN LAGOS, NIGERIA**

*Integrating Spiritual, Psychological, Historical, Cultural, and Sustainability  
Perspectives*

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**Sponsored by:**

FCI, SYSTEMIQ

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**Location:**

Lagos, Nigeria

*Sustainability is not complete until those who safeguard it can truly live from it.*

A step by step research on the living income of waste pickers in Lagos, Nigeria. This version not only offers depth but integrates overlooked perspectives—spiritual, psychological, historical, cultural, and sustainability.

## 1. Purpose of the Study

Not Just Economic — A Restoration Mission

“This study is not only aimed at measuring income but restoring human dignity to a neglected workforce.”

Beyond Data: We intend capturing the heartbeat of Lagos’ sustainability heroes—the unseen engine behind urban cleanliness.

Justice-Oriented Purpose: This study to us in ASWOL will serve as a silent protest against systemic neglect of informal workers.

Eco theology & Humanity: Waste pickers are stewards of God’s creation, turning “trash to treasure.” Their income deserves to reflect that sacred duty.

## 2. Contextual Background.

Lagos Through the Eyes of Waste Pickers

Historical Angle: Tracing how colonial urban planning in Lagos excluded informal laborers—thereby creating today’s ghettos and income disparities.

Urban Mythology: Waste pickers are often treated as societal “ghosts”—present but ignored. This study according to us in ASWOL is a rare privilege through SYSTEMIQ to give “names to the nameless.”

Spiritual Context: In many African cultures, waste is symbolic of both curse and redemption. Waste pickers, ironically, are the redeemers, when it comes to getting west out of our environs in Lagos, Nigeria.

## 3. Toolkit Development.

Tools Beyond Measurement—They Must Heal

Using Participatory Photography: We in ASWOL will be giving waste pickers disposable cameras. For them to show what their world actually looks like on a daily basis.

Life Mapping Tool: Ask them to draw or narrate their typical day, noting income, risk, emotions, thereby making data become story.

Silent Observation: We would also be taking notes of their body language, workspace rituals, and protective improvisations, all this and more will help us also find texture to our findings.

## 4. Methodology

The “Unseen” Sampling Logic Location

Bias Correction: Most studies sample around dumpsites. Include roadside collectors, drain cleaners, and recyclers on wheels. Social Ecosystem Sampling: Interview waste buyer chains, middlemen, and scavenger children—capture the income leakage.

Temporal Sampling: Income varies by time of day, weather, and season. Collect data in dry and rainy seasons.

## 5. Methodology Guide

Training Enumerators to Become Advocates

Empathy Training: Make data collectors watch a short documentary on informal labor dignity (e.g., Waste Land).

Language Sensitivity: Avoid labels like “scavengers” or “informal.” Use “resource workers” or “waste valorizers.”

Mirror Method: Have enumerators first answer the survey themselves to understand emotional burden.

## 6. Calculating the Living Income

Living Income is Not Just Survival—It’s Flourishing

Add Emotional Cost Buffer: Waste pickers face stigma. Add an “emotional resilience premium” to the income estimate.

Include Child Development Cost: Many waste picker households have children out of school. Living income must include potential recovery cost.

Gender Adjustment: Women pickers earn less and face greater risk. Calculate gender-equitable living income.

## 7. Comparing Current Incomes

We hope SYSTEMIQ will go farther than; Measuring More Than Money, but will also look into the following AREAS in their subsequent findings in relation to waste pickers income

Time-Income Tradeoff: Calculate how many hours it takes to earn a meal. Show how income isn’t just low—it’s unjustly earned.

Invisible Labor: Women often clean, sort, or care while picking. Count this as unpaid labor impacting real income.

Income vs. Risk: Factor in injury, harassment, and extortion risk—showing that income is often “hazard-paid survival.”

## 8. Compiling Benchmark Incomes

Waste Pickers vs. the “Valued” Professions

Compare:

Street cleaner (government-employed) vs. informal picker

Urban security guard vs. female picker (often earns less despite more risk)

A comprehensive overview of salary structures in Nigeria, covering both formal (public and private) and informal sectors:

Formal Sector Salaries

### Federal Civil Service (CONPSS / IPPIS)

With a new minimum wage of ₦70,000/month, grade-level salaries range from:

GL 01–03 (Support Staff): ₦70,000–~~₦110,000~~ ☐

GL 07–09 (Mid-level Officers): ₦150,000–~~₦265,000~~

GL 12–14 (Senior Officers): ₦280,000–~~₦500,000~~

GL 15–17 (Directors & Permanent Secretaries): ₦400,000–~~₦850,000+~~

### State Government Agencies

Structured similarly with slightly lower scale:

GL 01–03: ₦30,000–~~₦35,000~~

GL 04–06: ₦40,000–~~₦65,000~~

GL 07–09: ₦70,000–~~₦150,000~~

Senior levels: up to ₦500,000+ at top management ☐

### Banking Sector (Private)

Graduate Trainee: ₦60,000–~~₦100,000~~

Banking Officer: ₦120,000–~~₦200,000~~

Deputy Manager: ₦450,000–~~₦600,000~~

Branch Manager: ₦700,000–~~₦1,000,000~~

Directors & MD/CEO: ₦2M–~~₦10M+~~

### Private Sector (General Roles)

Entry-level: ₦90,000–~~₦150,000~~/month

Mid-level professionals: ₦200,000–~~₦350,000~~/month

Senior-level / executive: ₦400,000–~~₦1,000,000+~~

Healthcare Professionals Example (public vs private):

Public junior doctor: ₦120,000–~~₦300,000~~; private hospitals often lower unless specialist roles ☐

Pharmacists: Public entry-level ₦165,000–~~₦200,000~~; private ₦50,000–~~₦150,000~~ ☐

### Informal Sector Wages

Waste pickers and similar informal workers typically earn ₦2,000–~~₦5,000~~/day (≈~~₦60,000–~~  
₦120,000/month) depending on waste volume and market prices, many depend on daily income, may lack formal contracts or benefits, and frequently fall below official minimum wage standards.

### Summary Comparison

Sector Typical Monthly Income Range (₦)

Public Support Staff ₦70,000 – ₦110,000

Mid-Level Public Officers ₦150,000 – ₦300,000

Senior/Director-Level Officers ₦300,000 – ₦850,000+

Banking & Finance ₦120,000 – ₦10,000,000+ (depending on rank)

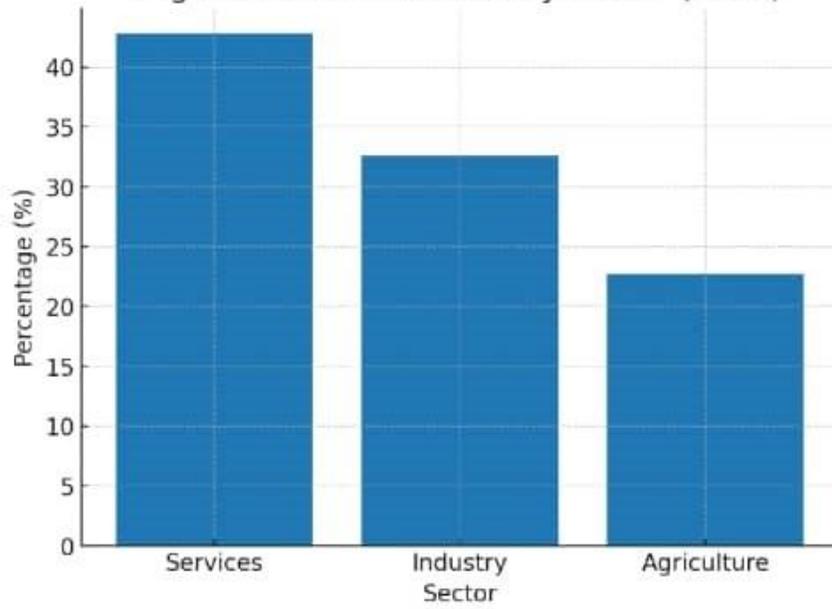
Private Professionals ₦90,000 – ₦1,000,000

Informal Workers ₦60,000 – ₦120,000 (daily-income based, variable)

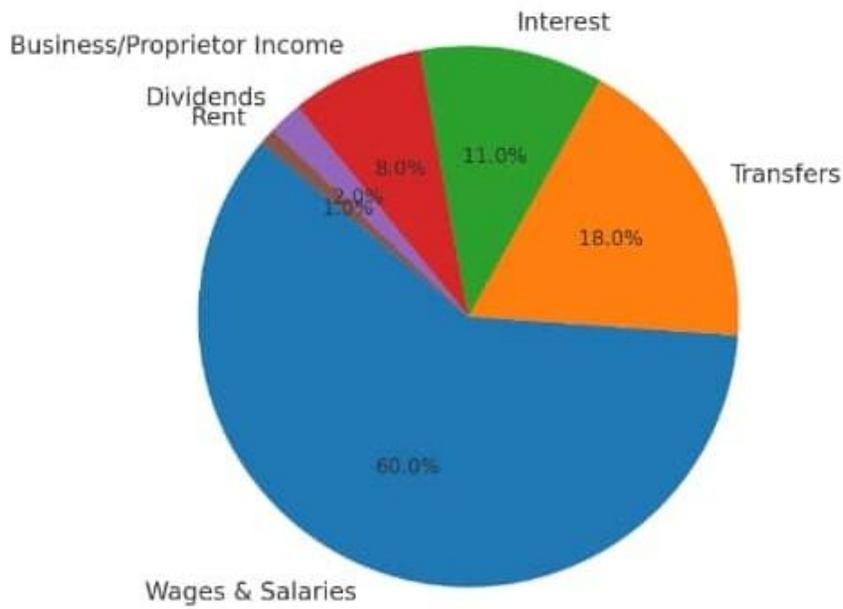
### Why It Matters

Formal roles offer more stability, benefits, and upward mobility; while informal sector earnings are low, insecure, and without social safety nets—underscoring the need for living income benchmarks and policy protection.

Nigeria National Income by Sector (2023)



Personal Income Distribution (Global Estimate)



## Waste Pickers (Informal Workers) Income Sources

