

CAPSULE

Survey Assure is a blockchain-based tool that helps empower workers to safely share their workplace experiences and access a workforce-wide view of factory conditions as well as information about the health and well-being of survey respondents. The system protects the identity of workers and records immutable data. Survey Assure is a crucial first step in a transparent evaluation of working conditions and is designed to foster trust between factory leadership and workers. Leveraging blockchain technology for the evaluation of the human condition is a pioneering innovation with broad potential for positive impact on worker health and well-being worldwide.

PROJECT STATUS

Survey Assure is an open source minimum viable product (MVP). Two successful pilot tests of the system have been completed. The first deployment of the solution was in four garment factories in Mexico in 2019. Due to the pandemic, the second pilot was implemented remotely in one garment factory in Poland in 2020.

CHALLENGE SURVEY ASSURE ADDRESSES

Workers lack mechanisms to safely and confidentially report issues and advocate for better conditions. According to the World Health Organization, over 50% of workers in many countries have no social protection and lack enforcement of occupational health and safety standards. The global system of auditing factory working conditions lacks trust, transparency, and accountability. Worker surveys and regular follow up can inform process improvement, reduce absenteeism and turnover, and fortify the effectiveness of corrective actions. Yet, workers seldom see the results of surveys or audits, fear reprisal for participating in surveys or interviews, and suspect bias or manipulation when the data is presented to employers or watchdogs.

KEY FEATURES OF THE SOLUTION

- Survey Assure is a web application using open application programming interfaces (APIs) to plug into existing survey collection software for worker health surveys. The system was piloted through Qualtrics.
- Survey Assure uploads survey responses in near real-time and hashes them to the Ethereum blockchain to create tamper resistant records of the results.
- The system is designed to provide the results of surveys to workers upon survey completion.
- Workers' identities are masked from factory leadership and the brand. Researchers have access to pseudonymous worker identities to compare data and more effectively measure if workplace interventions were helpful.
- Surveys can be administered either on the ground in factories using tablets, or remotely using smartphones.
- System administrators can view raw data or build data composites to display insights from the survey results.

BROADER IMPACT

Survey Assure can increase the efficacy of working condition audits by closing the feedback loop on workplace improvement initiatives. This system could be the first stage of establishing a trusted blockchain-based survey system as a universal benchmark for labor rights protection across industries and countries, increasing transparency and accountability for worker well-being. If scaled, the tool has the potential to securely strengthen worker rights and validate successful ethical supply chain practices.

COLLABORATORS

Survey Assure was developed through a federal grant awarded by the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor (DRL) to build a blockchain-powered solution for a social innovation challenge. This project is a collaborative effort by New America, Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health's Sustainability and Health Initiative for NetPositive Enterprise (SHINE), ConsenSys, Levi Strauss Foundation, and Apparel International.

NEXT STEPS

There are questions surrounding how to continue to iterate on the solution, address a backlog of features, and scale. Future iterations of the system could incorporate business data ranging from worker hours to purchase order volume to better understand impacts on factory workers. We are inviting feedback to best map out future strategy for wider adoption. For more information, please contact DIGI@newamerica.org.