

National Human Rights Index

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2024

Right to Social Security

Expert Commentary

The score:	4,4	-0,1
<i>Including scores by component:</i>		
• Existence of an effective social security system	3,4	-0,1
• Support for the unemployed and persons incapable of working	3,8	-0,2
• Support for families, children, the elderly and persons with disabilities	5,9	

Assessing the state of the right to social security in 2024, the Index experts gave lower scores than in 2023. **Among the main reasons:**

- tightening of support conditions for the unemployed
- ill-considered regulation of licensing, leading to the mass closure of private nursing homes
- efforts by the authorities to raise awareness and educate the public are noted, as well as the generally favorable economic situation, which is having an impact on the fulfillment of the state's social obligations

• Existence of an effective social security system

In 2024, social security legislation underwent a number of changes aimed at optimizing the system and adapting it to demographic and economic realities. The system is financed mainly by contributions from employers and employees: for example, the Social Protection Fund (SPF) revenues for 2024 are planned at 28.2 billion rubles, of which the lion's share – 25.98 billion rubles – is insurance contributions.

The state subsidises only special categories of pensions and benefits (about 1.7 billion roubles from the budget for pensions for civil servants, military personnel, social pensions, etc.). The SPF's expenditures in 2024 amount to over RUB 22 billion for the payment of all types of pensions and about RUB 5.3 billion for benefits (temporary disability, maternity, care, etc.). The fund's budget was even planned with a small surplus of ~457 million rubles, which indicates the financial stability of the system.¹ At the same time, experts noted the authorities' unwillingness to address the long-term sustainability of the pension system: there is no information about any significant reforms.

¹ <https://les.1prof.by/news/aktualno-na-vyplatu-pensij-v-2024-godu-budet-napravleno-bolee-22-mlrd-rub/>



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The average old-age pension at the end of 2024 was approximately 852 rubles (\approx 264 dollars)². For comparison, in neighboring Lithuania, the average old-age pension in 2024 will be around €605, and in Poland, the equivalent of \sim \$856. Thus, the level of Belarusian pensions lags significantly behind that of its neighbors, although official rhetoric emphasizes the state's social orientation.

Experts noted as a positive aspect the intensification in 2024 of information and awareness-raising activities aimed at educating the public about available social guarantees: meetings were held with the population, especially in rural areas; dialogue platforms and round tables were organized. There is a lot of information about such events on the official websites of state bodies. However, experts also questioned the real coverage of such events and their effectiveness. Experts noted the continuing lack of transparency and accessible statistics. For many social indicators, the state deliberately replaces statistical indicators with formal quantitative assessments that do not reflect reality. The Ministry of Labor's website has been almost completely cleared of figures, leaving only "educational materials."

Nevertheless, experts generally noted that favorable economic conditions and a well-established social system ensure that all population groups are covered, with no systematic exclusion of any social groups. However, there are no mechanisms for taking into account new vulnerable groups, including those who are forced to emigrate due to political persecution.

• Support for the unemployed and persons incapable of working

In 2024, state employment policy changed significantly, tightening the conditions for receiving unemployment benefits. On October 11, 2024, Law No. 36-Z "On Amendments to Laws on Employment"³ was adopted, which will come into force on January 1, 2025. This law introduced a new version of the Employment Law and a number of important innovations:

1) Tighter conditions for the granting of unemployment benefits: benefits will now only be paid to those who have registered with the employment service no later than one month after the date of dismissal (or termination of contract, graduation from higher education, etc.) and who have at least five years of work experience with contributions paid prior to dismissal. In addition, dismissal must occur for valid reasons clearly listed in the law (expiration of the contract, health reasons, conscription into military service, reinstatement of a previously dismissed employee, etc.). This means that those who voluntarily resigned or were laid off without sufficient work experience are now not eligible for benefits. There are some exceptions: the seniority requirements do not apply to citizens who have been caring for children under 3 years of age, disabled children under 18 years of age or disabled persons of group I or elderly persons over 80 years of age, as well as young people under 21 years of age who are looking for their first job. Graduates of educational institutions and those discharged from military/alternative service for valid reasons also retain their unconditional right to benefits.

2) The period for receiving unemployment benefits has been cut in half. Before, benefits were paid for up to 26 calendar weeks (about 6 months), but now the maximum period has been cut to 13 weeks (3

² <https://gazetaby.com/post/pensioneram-podnimut-pensii-no-est-nyuans/205239/>

³ <https://pravo.by/document/?guid=12551&p0=H12400036>



months). Only certain categories of people will continue to receive benefits for up to 26 weeks: unemployed people who have 5 years or less left before retirement, as well as unemployed people in regions with a tense labor market. The government will establish a separate list of such territories each year.

3) New procedure for determining the amount of unemployment benefits. Previously, it was linked to the base amount and depended on the salary, with a maximum amount of 2 base amounts (in 2024, this is 80 rubles). Now, the law provides for a fixed benefit amount set by the Council of Ministers with the approval of the president (by a resolution of the Council of Ministers dated December 31, 2024⁴, effective January 1, 2025, the benefit for all categories of unemployed persons has been unified at 40 rubles per month (approximately 12 euros). In addition to reducing the payment period, other restrictions have been introduced: the allowance is now only granted once within 36 months of dismissal (previously it could be received again after one year), and the maximum period of registration with the employment service has been reduced from 18 to 12 months.

4) The law separately regulates the employment of so-called “obligated persons” – parents who are obliged to reimburse the costs of maintaining children taken into state care (previously, this area was regulated by Decree No. 18). Now, when hiring such persons, employers do not need to request a reference from their previous place of work, and the hiring itself must take place on the day the person appears on the court’s referral. Formally, this facilitates the process of their employment, but the essence remains the same – to force dysfunctional parents to work through the courts so that they “compensate the state for its expenses.” The ILO has criticized Belarus for its practice of forced labor of such categories of citizens, and the change in legislation may be linked to a desire to soften its image without completely abandoning the practice of forced employment.

5) Quotas for jobs for persons with disabilities: From January 1, 2025, quotas will be established for the employment of persons with disabilities by all employers (except for small businesses with up to five employees, as well as organizations of persons with disabilities, budgetary organizations, and organizations equivalent to them). The parameters of the quotas will be determined by the government, but the law already imposes obligations on employers: to fulfill the established quota, to hire persons with disabilities referred by the employment service under the quota, and to report on the creation of jobs for persons with disabilities. Previously, Belarus had a practice of reserving jobs for people with disabilities, but this measure is now being strengthened with mandatory quotas. The implementation of quotas should help to employ persons with disabilities, but much will depend on how effectively the state monitors the implementation of this provision and creates conditions for persons with disabilities to work (barrier-free environment, subsidies to employers, etc.).

Although financial support for the unemployed has been reduced, the state has continued some employment incentive programs. For example, there is a program to resettle unemployed people in rural areas, which provides relocation allowances for those who move to work in villages. However, the

⁴ <https://etalonline.by/document?regnum=c22401064>

scale of this support is small: in 2024, only about 80 families took advantage of the resettlement program, of which 26 moved from cities to villages and 51 from villages to villages⁵.

On July 1, 2024, new rules came into force regarding temporary disability benefits (“sick pay”)⁶:

- for citizens who have worked for 10 years or more, sick leave is paid from the first day of illness at 100% of lost earnings (previously, the first 12 calendar days were reimbursed at 80%);
- all payments subject to mandatory social insurance contributions to the Social Insurance Fund budget for social insurance for all employers (including former employers) in the calculation period are included in the calculation. Previously, only payments related to work performance were included (one-time payments such as financial assistance, health benefits, etc. were not included in the calculation);
- the calculation period has been increased to 18 months (previously, it was 6 months and only took into account earnings from current employers);
- the calculation of average daily earnings and periods of contribution payments to the fund is carried out automatically by the SPF (the decision to centralize the calculation minimizes the number of errors in the calculation of sick leave by the accounting services of organizations).

This new procedure is a step towards the automation of social calculations, but in 2024, due to the increase in the calculation period for many categories of workers who did not have earnings for the previous 18 months, the actual amount of sick leave was reduced, according to experts.

Experts also noted as an ongoing problem the difficulty of access to social protection for those who are employed in informal employment, work part-time or seasonally. Although such persons should formally be covered, in practice they may find themselves outside the system due to the complexity of procedures and restrictive conditions (e.g., the requirement to have five years of contributions to the SPF), and as a result, current contributions to the SPF do not lead to the actual receipt of benefits.

Thus, in terms of support for the unemployed, 2024 was marked more by a reduction in direct material assistance and tighter controls than by an expansion of opportunities for the unemployed.

● **Support for families, children, the elderly and persons with disabilities**

In 2024, the implementation of legislation on the rights of **persons with disabilities** continued (the Law on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Their Social Integration came into force in 2023⁷), which for the first time in Belarus enshrined the prohibition of discrimination on the basis of disability. In particular, refusal to provide “reasonable accommodation” for persons with disabilities is now officially considered a form of discrimination.

⁵ <https://www.sb.by/articles/v-mintruda-rasskazali-na-kakikh-usloviyakh-bezrabotnykh-pereselyayut-v-selskuyu-mestnost.html>

⁶ <https://pravo.by/novosti/analitika/2025/february/80676/>

⁷ <https://pravo.by/document/?guid=12551&p0=H12200183>



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In 2024, Belarus reported for the first time to the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities⁸, which in its concluding observations noted the elimination of independent CSOs, in particular the Office for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities⁹.

In fact, the state declares its support for the rights of persons with disabilities, but suppresses independent civil control in this area.

At the institutional level, in 2024, a system of job reservations and the creation of specialized jobs for persons with disabilities remains in place, as do disability pension supplements, etc.

In 2024, social pensions (for persons with disabilities in groups I and II without sufficient employment record, children with disabilities, etc.) were indexed four times, linked to the growth of the minimum subsistence budget (MSB). According to the Ministry of Labor, social pensions were increased by 10.6% in February and 2.9% in May, and then by another 3.4% in August. From November 1, 2024, another increase in social payments was expected along with the growth of the SMP. The amount of the social pension, for example, for elderly people who are not entitled to an old-age pension, was about 216.5 rubles (at the beginning of 2024). Disabled persons of Group I and families caring for them are entitled to *targeted social assistance* – a monthly allowance for the purchase of hygiene products. It is provided regardless of income to families with disabled children with a IV degree of health impairment or disabled persons of group I, subject to a medical certificate of need. In 2024, the amount of this allowance for hygiene products was 572.4 rubles as a one-off payment (may be provided periodically upon confirmation of expenses).

When discussing the adequacy of payments, experts concluded that even if benefits were indexed, this did not compensate for the real depreciation of payments against inflation. Indexation is perceived as an attempt to “catch up” rather than “overtake” inflationary processes.

Various benefits and special **family support** programs remain in place. The most significant for families is the child care allowance for children under 3 years of age, paid monthly to one of the parents. Its amount is linked to the average salary in the country and is revised twice a year, on February 1 and August 1. From February 1, 2024, the allowance increased by 11.3%¹⁰. Between February 1, 2024, and July 31, 2024, the allowance was: 724.85 rubles for the first child, 828.40 rubles for the second and each subsequent child, and 931.95 rubles for a disabled child under the age of 3. These amounts are equivalent to approximately \$220–280 and correspond to the established percentages: 35% of the average salary for the first child, 40% for subsequent children, and 45% for disabled children.

At the same time, according to experts, in 2024, there was a noticeable increase in cases of termination of payments for the loss of a breadwinner and to children recipients abroad, often without notification or legal procedure. Although the law had previously provided for the termination of payments if a

⁸ <https://news.un.org/ru/story/2024/08/1455476>

⁹ The Office for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities was liquidated in Belarus in 2021; criminal proceedings were initiated against its leaders, who were forced to leave Belarus and continue their activities in exile.

¹⁰ <https://pravo.by/novosti/obshchestvenno-politicheskie-i-v-oblasti-prava/2024/january/76640/>



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person was absent from the country for more than six months, this provision was rarely applied, but in 2024 it began to be used actively. Although there are no statistics, this trend has become noticeable at the level of field observations. The practice varies across regions, and in some cases the authorities simply send a letter to the person's previous address informing them of the termination of payments and inviting them to appeal the decision in court – which is impossible in practice for persons abroad. This indicates a deliberate practice of depriving people of social support on a discriminatory basis (those forced to leave the country due to the threat of political persecution).

The “family capital” program (a one-time cashless deposit that the state opens for a family upon the birth (or adoption) of a third or subsequent child) is an important element of support for large families; At the end of 2024, a decision was made to extend it for another five years, from January 1, 2025, to December 31, 2029.¹¹ As of January 1, 2024, the amount of family capital was set at 31,480 rubles¹², which is 1,530 rubles more than a year earlier (an increase of ~5%) – thus compensating for inflation. In 2024, the conditions for early use of family capital were simplified: the requirement to obtain permission from the local executive committee to use capital for housing construction was abolished. Now families who build an apartment on their own (without state support) can use the capital for these purposes without additional approval. It was also clarified that capital funds can be used to repay any housing loan regardless of the year it was obtained (including those issued before 2015) – previously there were restrictions on loan dates. These innovations are intended to make the program more flexible and useful¹³. According to statistics from the Ministry of Labor, as of November 1, 2024, 141,905 family capital deposit accounts had been opened in Belarus for large families¹⁴ (i.e., more than 140,000 families had their third (or more) child during the program).

In 2024, Belarus completed the previous stage of **pension reform** to raise the retirement age and length employment record, which began in 2017. The standard retirement age is now 63 for men and 58 for women (these thresholds were reached by 2022). The minimum insurance period for receiving a labor pension continued to increase by six months each year. From January 1, 2024, the required length of employment was 19 years and six months (in 2023, it was 19 years). From 2025, the threshold will reach 20 years. In addition, the period of earnings taken into account when calculating pensions is increasing: in 2024, the best 30 years of earnings were taken into account (in 2023, it was 29 years). The gradual extension of the period (expected to be extended to all years of employment) will lead to a reduction in pensions for those whose salaries were significantly lower in their early years. These measures are explained by the need for long-term balance in the pension system in the context of an aging population, but they also mean that some elderly citizens who have not accumulated the required employment record will remain on social pensions. For such persons (women over 60 and men over 65 who are not entitled to an old-age pension), the state pays a social pension of about 50% of the

¹¹ <https://pravo.by/document/?quid=12551&p0=P32400403>

¹² <https://www.mintrud.gov.by/ru/razmer-semeinogo-kapitala-2024-ru>

¹³ <https://pravo.by/novosti/analitika/2024/october/79348/>

¹⁴ <https://mintrud.gov.by/ru/news-ru/view/semejnyj-kapital-na-1-nojabrja-2024-g-8758-2024/>



minimum subsistence level (in 2024, this will be about 216 rubles, or less than \$70, which is extremely low).

There is still no automatic link between pensions and inflation. Instead, the president, on the recommendation of the government, increases pensions several times a year, based on the growth of average wages. The law guarantees an increase at least once a year. In 2024, labor pensions were increased by 10% from February 1¹⁵ and by 5% from October 1¹⁶, with both increases coinciding with election campaigns (single voting day and presidential elections). As a result, the average pension in 2024 was 851.58 rubles (about \$270)¹⁷, and for many pensioners, pensions remain close to the minimum subsistence budget for pensioners (as of November 2024, the minimum subsistence budget for pensioners was ~298 rubles). In 2024, pensions were paid on time and, according to the authorities, their financing was a priority.

An important step that the authorities have taken to correct their own mistakes was the adoption of amendments¹⁸ to the pension legislation, which restore the right to a full pension for working pensioners and reduce the insurance period required to receive a pension to five years for women who have raised four or more children. These provisions will come into force on January 1, 2025.

In 2024, a model for “buying back” insurance period began to be implemented, which allows people to obtain the quasi-employment record required for a pension by paying contributions.

In 2024, an information campaign was intensified, calling for participation in the “three plus three” supplementary pension insurance program, introduced in 2021.¹⁹

Experts drew particular attention to a significant change: in 2024, the procedure for paying pensions and benefits will change²⁰: From January 1, 2025, all pensions and benefits will be paid only through banks (i.e., an additional technological barrier will be introduced for recipients of social payments, as not all of them will be able to master modern banking technologies). The argument is to reduce the SPF budget expenditure on home delivery of pensions and through post offices, but the new procedure will affect 30% of pension recipients (70% already receive their pensions through a bank)²¹. The law contains some exceptions (for Minsk, regional and district centers – being over 70 years of age; for the rest of the territory – disability groups I and II), for which delivery by post is possible, but at an additional cost. Experts predict significant difficulties for pension and benefit recipients in 2025, when this provision will come into effect.

¹⁵ <https://president.gov.by/ru/documents/ukaz-no-413-ot-29-dekabrya-2023-g>

¹⁶ <https://pravo.by/document/?guid=12551&p0=P32400357>

¹⁷ <https://t.me/MintrudSocBelarus/17073>

¹⁸ <https://pravo.by/document/?guid=12551&p0=P32400402>

¹⁹ <https://pravo.by/document/?guid=12551&p0=P32100367>

²⁰ <https://pravo.by/document/?guid=12551&p0=H12300318>

²¹ <https://energo.1prof.by/news/aktualno-v-belarusi-menyaetsya-poryadok-vyplaty-pensij-i-posobij/>



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Ill-considered regulation of licensing issues (in the absence of feedback mechanisms and public participation) has also led to serious problems. Changes²² to licensing legislation introduced licensing for residential care services from July 2024, which directly affected private nursing homes: of 34 private institutions, only three obtained a license, while the rest closed due to strict requirements and short deadlines²³. The closure led to a crisis: there were not enough places in state institutions, families were forced to take their relatives home and look for alternative forms of care for the elderly and people with illnesses. As a result of the crisis, by the end of 2024, the authorities revised²⁴ the requirements, especially for buildings where services were provided, as most of them were rented private houses²⁵.

According to the Ministry of Labor, in 2024, more than 255,600 Belarusians received various types of targeted social assistance²⁶. This is a significant figure (about 2.7% of the country's population), reflecting the level of poverty.

Experts noted a significant reduction in the list of subsidized medicines, as well as interruptions in the supply of a number of medicines, including insulin in early 2024.

²² <https://pravo.by/document/?guid=12551&p0=W22441937>

²³ <https://pravo.by/novosti/obshchestvenno-politicheskie-i-v-oblasti-prava/2024/august/78448/>

²⁴ <https://pravo.by/document/?guid=12551&p0=C22400963>

²⁵ [Belarus rolled back some excessive licensing requirements on social services | CSOMETER](#)

²⁶ <https://belta.by/society/view/mintruda-v-2024-godu-adresnuju-sotsialnuju-pomosch-poluchili-bolee-2556-tys-belorusov-692106-2025/>



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