

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines

Exchange rate: US\$1.00 =
2.70 East Caribbean dollars (EC\$)

Old Age, Disability, and Survivors

Regulatory Framework

First law: 1970 (provident fund).

Current law: 1986 (social insurance), implemented in 1987.

Type of program: Social insurance and social assistance system.

Note: The Family Services Division of the Ministry of National Mobilization, Social Development, Family, Gender Affairs, Persons with Disabilities, and Youth (<http://www.mobilization.gov.vc/mobilization/>) administers additional social assistance cash benefits for needy persons, including needy elderly persons, persons with disabilities, and orphans.

Coverage

Social insurance: Employed and self-employed persons. Voluntary coverage for citizens of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines who are no longer in covered employment or live abroad.

Social assistance: Needy residents of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.

Source of Funds

Insured person

Social insurance: 4.5% of covered earnings; 4.29% of covered earnings for certain government workers; 8.84% of declared income for the voluntarily insured.

The minimum weekly earnings used to calculate contributions are EC\$15 (EC\$60 a month).

The maximum weekly earnings used to calculate contributions are EC\$1,000 (EC\$4,333 a month).

The insured person's contributions also finance sickness and maternity benefits.

Social assistance: None.

Self-employed person

Social insurance: 9.5% of reference income, according to eight income categories.

The minimum weekly reference income used to calculate contributions is EC\$120 (EC\$520 a month).

The maximum weekly reference income used to calculate contributions is EC\$1,000 (EC\$4,333 a month).

The self-employed person's contributions also finance sickness and maternity benefits.

Social assistance: None.

Employer

Social insurance: 5.5% of covered payroll.

The minimum weekly earnings used to calculate contributions are EC\$15 (EC\$60 a month).

The maximum weekly earnings used to calculate contributions are EC\$1,000 (EC\$4,333 a month).

The employer's contributions also finance sickness and maternity benefits.

Social assistance: None.

Government

Social insurance: 5.25% or 5.5% of payroll for government workers, depending on the category of work.

Government contributions also finance sickness and maternity benefits.

Social assistance: The total cost.

Qualifying Conditions

Old-age pension (social insurance): Age 61 (gradually rising by one year every three years until reaching age 65 by 2028) with at least 550 weeks (gradually rising to 750 weeks by 2028) of paid or credited contributions.

Early pension: Age 60 and meets the contribution requirement for a full old-age pension.

Partial pension: Must have reached the normal retirement age with at least 500 weeks of paid or credited contributions, but less than the required weeks of contributions for a full old-age pension. The reduced pension will be eliminated in 2028.

Old-age grant (social insurance): Age 61 (gradually rising by one year every three years until reaching age 65 by 2028) with at least 50 weeks of paid contributions but does not meet the contribution requirement for the full or partial old-age pension.

Noncontributory assistance age pension (social assistance, income tested): Must have been aged 57 or older on January 5, 1987, continuously employed before that date for a significant period (no specific period has been defined), and not be currently in paid employment. Must have been a resident for at least 25 years since age 20, including at least five of the last eight years, and on the date the claim is made.

Income test: Monthly income must be less than EC\$37.50; must not receive regular income from any other source or any pension from the National Insurance Scheme.

Elderly assistance pension (social assistance, income tested): Must have been aged 45 or older on January 5, 1987, continuously employed before that date for a significant period (no specific period has been defined) in informal or seasonal work, and not be currently in paid employment. Must have been a resident for at least 25 years since age 20, including at least four of the last five years immediately before the claim is made.

Income test: Monthly income must be less than EC\$37.50; must not receive regular income from any other source or any pension from the National Insurance Scheme.

Disability pension (social insurance): Must be younger than the normal retirement age, be assessed with a disability, and have at least 150 weeks of paid contributions.

Disability grant (social insurance): Must be younger than the normal retirement age, be assessed with a disability, and have at least 50 weeks but less than 150 weeks of paid contributions.

Survivor pension (social insurance): The deceased received or was entitled to receive an old-age or disability pension or grant at the time of death.

Eligible survivors include a widow(er) who was married to or lived with the deceased for at least three years, children younger than age 18 (age 21 if a student, no limit if disabled), and dependent parents aged 60 or older.

The widow(er)'s pension ceases upon remarriage or cohabitation.

Survivor grant (social insurance): The deceased did not meet the contribution requirements for an old-age or disability pension but had at least 50 weeks of paid contributions.

Eligible survivors include a widow(er) who was married to or lived with the deceased for at least three years, dependent children younger than age 18 (age 21 if a full-time student, no limit if disabled), and dependent parents aged 60 or older.

Funeral grant (social insurance): The insured had at least 26 weeks of paid contributions. Paid when the insured, the insured's spouse, or the insured's dependent children younger than age 18 (age 21 if a full-time student, no limit if disabled) dies.

Funeral grant (social assistance): Paid when a noncontributory old-age pensioner, the pensioner's spouse, or the pensioner's dependent children younger than age 18 (age 21 if a full-time student, no limit if disabled) dies.

Old-Age Benefits

Old-age pension (social insurance): The pension is 30% of the insured's average annual earnings with at least 550 weeks (gradually rising to 750 weeks by 2028) of contributions plus 1% of average annual earnings for

each 50-week period of contributions exceeding 550 weeks (gradually rising to 750 weeks from by 2028).

Average annual earnings are based on the insured's covered earnings in the best five years of the entire working career before the year in which the insured reached the normal retirement age. The annual amount is then divided by 52 to determine the weekly pension.

The minimum weekly pension is EC\$70.

The maximum pension is 60% of the insured's average annual earnings.

Early pension: The pension is reduced by 6% for each year the pension is claimed before the normal retirement age.

Partial pension: The pension is reduced in proportion to the number of weeks of missing contributions.

Benefit adjustment: Benefits are adjusted according to inflation every three years, subject to an actuarial review.

Old-age grant (social insurance): A lump sum of six times the insured's average weekly earnings is paid for each 50-week period of contributions.

Average weekly earnings are based on the last 50 weeks of covered earnings prior to reaching age 60.

Noncontributory assistance age pension (social assistance, income tested): EC\$75 is paid every two weeks.

Elderly assistance pension (social assistance, income tested): EC\$75 is paid every two weeks.

Permanent Disability Benefits

Disability pension (social insurance): 30% of the insured's average annual earnings is paid with at least 150 weeks of contributions plus 1% of average annual earnings for each 50-week period of contributions exceeding 550 weeks (gradually rising to 750 weeks by 2028).

Average annual earnings are based on the insured's covered earnings in the best five years of the entire working career. The annual amount is then divided by 52 to determine the weekly pension.

The minimum weekly pension is EC\$70.

The maximum pension is 60% of the insured's average annual earnings.

Benefit adjustment: Benefits are adjusted according to inflation every three years, subject to an actuarial review.

Disability grant (social insurance): A lump sum of six times the insured's average weekly earnings is paid for each 50-week period of contributions.

Average weekly earnings are based on the last 50 weeks of covered earnings before the disability began.

Survivor Benefits

Survivor pension (social insurance)

Spouse's pension: 75% of the old-age or disability pension the deceased received or was entitled to receive at the time of death is paid to the widow(er).

The minimum weekly spouse's pension is EC\$52.50.

There is no maximum spouse's pension.

A pension is paid for a year to a widow(er) younger than age 55 with no dependent children or to a disabled widow(er) younger than age 55.

The widow(er)'s pension ceases upon remarriage or cohabitation.

Orphan's pension: 25% of the old-age or disability pension the deceased received or was entitled to receive is paid to each eligible child; 50% to a full orphan.

The minimum weekly orphan's pension is EC\$17.50 (EC\$35.00 for full orphans).

There is no maximum orphan's pension.

Dependent parent's pension: If there are no other survivors, up to 50% of the old-age or disability pension the deceased received or was entitled to receive is paid to each eligible parent.

The minimum weekly dependent parent's pension is EC\$35.00.

There is no maximum dependent parent's pension.

The maximum combined survivor benefit is 100% of the old-age or disability pension the deceased received or was entitled to receive.

Survivor grant (social insurance): A lump sum of 75% of the old-age or disability grant the deceased received or was entitled to receive is paid to a widow(er); 25% to an orphan (50% to a full orphan); if there are no other eligible survivors, 50% is paid to each dependent parent.

The maximum combined survivor grant is 100% of the old-age or disability grant the deceased received or was entitled to receive.

Funeral grant (social insurance): A lump sum of EC\$4,525 is paid to the person who pays for all or part of the insured's funeral; EC\$2,262.50 is paid for the funeral of the insured's spouse; and up to EC\$2,262.50 is paid for the funeral of the insured's child, depending on the child's age.

Funeral grant (social assistance): A lump sum of EC\$2,262.50 is paid to the person who pays for all or part of the a noncontributory old-age pensioner's funeral; EC\$1,131.25 is paid for the funeral of the insured's spouse; and up to EC\$1,131.25 is paid for the funeral of the insured's child, depending on the child's age.

Benefit adjustment: Benefits may be adjusted according to inflation every three years, subject to recommendations from an actuarial review.

Administrative Organization

National Insurance Board (<http://nissvg.org/>) administers the programs.

Sickness and Maternity

Regulatory Framework

First and current laws: 1986 (social insurance), implemented in 1987, and 1995 (hospital fees).

Type of program: Universal (medical benefits) and social insurance (cash benefits) system.

Coverage

Universal (medical benefits): Residents of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.

Social insurance (cash benefits): Employed and self-employed persons.

Special systems for certain categories of civil servants.

Source of Funds

Insured person

Universal (medical benefits): None.

Social insurance (cash benefits): See source of funds under Old Age, Disability, and Survivors.

Self-employed person

Universal (medical benefits): None.

Social insurance (cash benefits): See source of funds under Old Age, Disability, and Survivors.

Employer

Universal (medical benefits): None.

Social insurance (cash benefits): See source of funds under Old Age, Disability, and Survivors.

Government

Universal (medical benefits): The total cost.

Social insurance (cash benefits): See source of funds under Old Age, Disability, and Survivors.

Qualifying Conditions

Cash sickness benefit (social insurance): Must have at least 26 weeks of paid contributions, including at least eight weeks of paid or credited contributions in the 13 weeks immediately before the incapacity began, and be currently employed.

Cash maternity benefit (social insurance): Must have at least 30 weeks of paid or credited contributions, including at least 20 weeks in the 30 weeks immediately preceding the week that is six weeks before the expected date of

childbirth or the week in which the claim is made, whichever is later.

Maternity grant (social insurance): The insured woman, the insured husband, or partner of an uninsured woman must have at least 20 weeks of paid contributions in the 30 weeks immediately before the week of childbirth.

Sickness and Maternity Benefits

Sickness benefit (social insurance): 65% of the insured's average weekly covered earnings in the 13 weeks before the incapacity began is paid for up to 26 weeks after a three-day waiting period. No benefits are paid if the insured person is receiving a full salary from his or her employer.

There is no minimum or maximum sickness benefit.

Maternity benefit (social insurance): 65% of the insured's average weekly covered earnings in the last 30 weeks of employment is paid for 13 weeks, from up to six weeks before the expected date of childbirth.

There is no minimum or maximum maternity benefit.

Maternity grant (social insurance): A lump sum of EC\$660 is paid.

Workers' Medical Benefits

Public hospitals, clinics, and health care facilities provide health care services. Benefits include maternity care, reproductive and pediatric services, dental care, chronic disease screening, HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment, mental health services, surgery, hospitalization, X-rays and imaging, orthopedic services, nephrology, ophthalmology, physical therapy, and medicine.

Cost sharing: Primary care is provided free of charge. Fees may be required for certain secondary and tertiary health care services.

Dependents' Medical Benefits

Medical benefits for dependents are the same as those for workers.

Administrative Organization

National Insurance Board (<http://nissvg.org/>) administers the cash benefits program.

Ministry of Health (<http://www.health.gov.vc/>) is responsible for policy and delivers medical benefits.

Work Injury

Regulatory Framework

First law: 1939.

Current law: 1997 (work injury).

Type of program: Social insurance system.

Coverage

Employed persons.

Exclusions: Self-employed persons.

Source of Funds

Insured person: None.

Self-employed person: Not applicable.

Employer: 0.5% of payroll.

Government: None; contributes as an employer.

Qualifying Conditions

Must be currently employed and assessed with a work injury or occupational disease.

Temporary Disability Benefits

70% of average weekly earnings is paid after a three-day waiting period for up to 26 weeks.

Average weekly earnings are based on the insured's weekly covered earnings in the last 13 weeks or the total number of weeks of employment before the disability began, whichever is lower.

Permanent Disability Benefits

Permanent disability pension: If the assessed degree of disability is greater than 30%, 70% of the insured's average weekly earnings multiplied by the assessed degree of disability is paid. The insured must have exhausted entitlement to the temporary disability benefit.

The minimum weekly permanent disability pension is EC\$70.00.

Average weekly earnings are based on the insured's weekly covered earnings in the 13 weeks before the disability began.

Constant-attendance allowance: 50% of the insured's disability pension is paid for up to 260 weeks if the insured requires the constant attendance of others to perform daily functions.

Permanent disability settlement: If the assessed degree of disability is from 1% to 30%, a lump sum of 365 times the insured's average weekly earnings multiplied by the assessed degree of disability is paid. The insured must have exhausted entitlement to a temporary disability benefit.

Average weekly earnings are based on the insured's weekly covered earnings in the 13 weeks before the disability began.

Workers' Medical Benefits

Benefits include medical, surgical, and dental treatment; hospitalization; skilled nursing services; medicine; prosthetics; and transportation costs.

Survivor Benefits

Survivor pension

Spouse's pension: 50% of the permanent disability pension the deceased received or was entitled to receive at the time of death is paid to a widow(er) who was married to or lived with the deceased for at least three years.

A pension is paid for one year to a widow(er) younger than age 55 with no dependent children.

The widow(er)'s pension ceases upon remarriage or cohabitation and a lump sum of 52 times the weekly pension is paid.

Orphan's pension: 16.6% of the permanent disability pension the deceased received or was entitled to receive is paid to each dependent child younger than age 18 (age 21 if a full-time student, no limit if disabled); 33.33% to a full orphan.

Dependent parent's pension: If there are no other survivors, up to 50% of the permanent disability pension the deceased received or was entitled to receive is paid to each eligible parent.

Funeral grant: A lump sum of EC\$4,525 is paid to the person who pays for all or part of the insured's funeral. A reduced grant is paid for the funeral of a spouse or child.

Administrative Organization

National Insurance Board (<http://nissvg.org/>) administers the program.

Unemployment

Regulatory Framework

The Protection of Employment Act (2003) requires employers to provide severance pay to employees with at least two years of continuous employment with the same employer in cases of redundancy, illness that lasts for at least six months and is likely to be permanent, unfair dismissal, and constructive dismissal (or discharge). Employees who are dismissed for disciplinary action may be entitled to severance pay if they have at least five years of service. The benefit amount is two weeks of pay for each year of continuous service from two to 10 years; three weeks for each additional year from 11 to 25 years; and four weeks for each year exceeding 25 years. (A year is defined as any period of service of at least six months; periods of service of less than six months are disregarded.)

Employees who have a right to a pension or gratuity payment upon termination are not entitled to severance pay but may request a top up payment if the pension or gratuity is less than the severance pay the employee would have been entitled to receive.