

BELGIUM

Western Europe

High-income country

Overall Score 92 96 95.5
2020 2022 2024



Score worsened

LRI RATING Access to Decent Work



0 - 50	50.5 - 60	60.5 - 70	70.5 - 80	80.5 - 90	90.5 - 100
TOTAL LACK OF ACCESS TO DECENT WORK	BASIC ACCESS TO DECENT WORK	LIMITED ACCESS TO DECENT WORK	REASONABLE ACCESS TO DECENT WORK	APPROACHING ACCESS TO DECENT WORK	ACCESS TO DECENT WORK

The country rating is based on the overall score of 0-100, with the following coding: The overall score ranges from 0 to 100, where 100 signifies the highest possible score and 0 signifies the lowest possible score. The score indicates "access to decent work" by law.

Contextual Indicators

Population (2022)	11.69 M	Total Fertility (rate) (2022)	1.53	Female Labour Force ⁴ (2024)	A : 2.54 M	B : 51% (participation rate)
Labour Force (2024)	5.41 M	Trade Union (density) (2019)	49%	Non-Standard Employment ⁵	A : 43% (part-time employment) (2023)	B : 10% (temporary employment) (2023)
GDP per Capita (2022)	\$49,927	Collective Bargaining (coverage) (2019)	96%	Work Injuries ⁶ (per 100,000 workers)	A : No Data (fatal)	B : 2,314 (non-fatal) (2021)
Poverty Headcount ¹ (2022)	12%	Social Protection ³ (coverage) (2022)	100%	Minimum Wage ⁷ (April 2024)	EUR	1,994
Informal Employment ² (2022)	1%	Workers per Labour Inspector ⁸ (2023)	18,607	Living Wage ⁹ (April 2024)	EUR	1,887

Sources: World Bank | International Labour Organization | WageIndicator Minimum Wages and Living Wages Database | M = Million
GDP per Capita in USD (\$) | wages shown in local currency and per month

At a glance

For Belgium, the labour legislation applicable at the national level is analysed and scored. Different rules may apply in other jurisdictions, necessitating review of other sources.

Following this approach, Belgium's overall score is 95.5 out of 100. The overall score for Belgium is greater than the regional average observed across Western Europe (92). Within the Western Europe, the highest score is observed for Belgium (95.5).

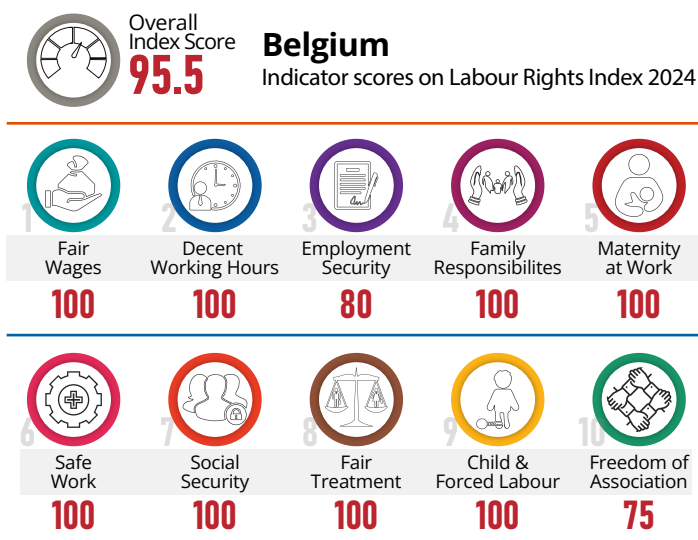
Belgium saw a positive score adjustment in the Social Security indicator due to a methodological change that no longer considers the waiting period for accessing sickness benefits. However, it faced a negative score adjustment in the Freedom of Association Indicator, following ILO CEACR's concerns about excessive sanctions on disruptions caused by strikes and the replacement of striking workers by engaging students.

The country scores on the Labour Rights Index must be interpreted with caution, considering also the contextual indicators like the size of the population and labour force, informal employment in the country, social protection coverage, level of economic development (as measured by GDP per capita), female labour force participation rate, incidence of non-standard employment in the form of part-time employment and temporary employment as well as work injuries, both fatal and non-fatal. Trade union density and collective bargaining coverage rates are also relevant contextual indicators to assess the state of freedom of association and collective bargaining in the country.

About Labour Rights Index

The Labour Rights Index 2024 (LRI 2024) is a de-jure index covering 145 economies and structured around the working lifespan of a worker. In total, 46 questions or evaluation criteria are scored across 10 indicators. The overall score is calculated by taking the average of each indicator, with 100 being the highest possible score. The Index uses a rating system, ranging from "Total Lack of Access to Decent Work" to "Access to Decent Work". The Labour Rights Index aims at an active contribution to the Sustainable Development Goals, by providing necessary (complementary) insights into de jure provisions on issues covered in particular by SDG 5 (Gender Equality), SDG 8 (Decent Jobs), SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities) and SDG 16 (Strong Institutions). The Labour Rights Index scores countries based on applicable labour laws only. It does not comment on actual working conditions or labour law compliance in workplaces. The legislation that is used to score the country under the Labour Rights Index is generally national or federal level legislation. In cases where the legislation is enacted at the provincial/regional or state level, the Index analyses the labour legislation applicable to the most populous province/region or state (in federal, confederal or other complex structure states). Scoring for each country is based on labour legislation, as applicable on 1 January 2024.

*Please check page 4 of the country profile for explanatory end notes.




For each indicator, the score ranges from 0 to 100, where 100 signifies the highest possible score and 0 signifies the lowest score. The overall score is the average of 10 indicators.

In order to measure the trend in country's legislative performance over the last edition of the Labour Rights Index (2022), the opposite legend is used.

 Score increase  Score decrease  Score adjustment  Methodological change  No change






1. FAIR WAGES 100

QUESTION	ANSWER	LEGAL BASIS	TREND
Does the legislation or collective negotiation set and determine the minimum wages in the country?	Yes	The Collective Bargaining Agreement No. 43 of 1988	
Does the law require regular and timely payment of wages?	Yes	Loi concernant la protection de la rémunération des travailleurs, 12 Avril 1965	
Does the law require overtime compensation to be at least 125% of the regular hourly rate?	Yes	§29 of the Labour Act, 1971	
Does the law require any additional compensation for working on a weekly rest day?	Yes	§26-bis and 29 of Labour Act 1971; §11 of Public Holidays Act 1974	
Does the law require additional compensation for night work?	Yes	§35-37 of Labour Act 1971; §79 of the Law on Flexible Work, 2017	





2. DECENT WORKING HOURS 100

Does the law stipulate general weekly working hours as 48 hours or lower?	Yes	§19-29 of Labour Act 1971; §4 & 7 of the Law on Flexible Work, 2017; §51 & 52 of Law of 20 December 2020	
Does the law restrict maximum working hours, including overtime, to 56 hours per week?	Yes	§27 of the Labour Act, 1971	
Does the law require a paid weekly rest of at least 24 consecutive hours?	Yes	§3, 11-18, 32.2 and 66 of Labour Act 1971	
Does the law require paid public holidays?	Yes	§4 & 11 of Public Holidays Act 1974	
Does the law require at least three working weeks of paid annual leave?	Yes	Royal Decree on determining Annual Leave for Salaried Workers, 30 March 1967; §34-38 of the Law of 20 December 2020	

3. EMPLOYMENT SECURITY 80

Does the law require a written employment contract or employment particulars to be given to a worker on commencement of employment?	Yes	3 JUILLET 1978-Loi relative aux contrats de travail	
Does the law restrict the hiring of fixed-term contract workers?	Yes	§10-11 of 3 JUILLET 1978-Loi relative aux contrats de travail; §32 of the Law on Flexible Work, 2017	
Does the law limit the length of the probation period, including renewals, to three months?	Yes	§48-49 & 66-67 of 3 JUILLET 1978-Loi relative aux contrats de travail	
Does the law require a 30-day notice period before employment contract termination?	Yes	Arrêté Royal du 09 Janvier 2014; §4 & 5 of Collective Labour Agreement no 147 2020; Law of 13 February 1998	
Does the law require severance pay at the rate of at least two weeks of wages for every year of service?	No	§6-13 of Convention Collective De Travail N° 10 Du 8 Mai 1973	

4. FAMILY RESPONSIBILITIES 100

Does the law require a four-month parental leave for parents?	Yes	Arrêté royal relatif à l'introduction d'un droit au congé parental dans le cadre d'une interruption de la carrière professionnelle	
Does the law require at least one week of paid paternity leave for fathers?	Yes	§30.2 of 3 JUILLET 1978-Loi; §221, Royal Decree on Compulsory Sickness and Indemnity Insurance law; §63 Law of 20 December 2020	
Does the law require flexible working arrangements for workers with family responsibilities?	Yes	§68-75 of the Law on Flexible Work, 2017	
Does the law require paid nursing breaks?	Yes	Royal Decree Rendering compulsory Collective Agreement N° 80 on Nursing Breaks, 2001	

In order to measure the trend in country's legislative performance over the last edition of the Labour Rights Index (2022), the opposite legend is used.

● Score increase ● Score decrease ● Score adjustment ● Methodological change ○ No change

5. MATERNITY AT WORK

100

QUESTION	ANSWER	LEGAL BASIS	TREND
Does the law prohibit inquiring about pregnancy during recruitment?	Yes	§4 of the Act on Combatting Discrimination between Men and Women, 2007	○
Does the law require maternity leave of at least 14 weeks?	Yes	§39 of Labour Act 1971; §5 of the Belgian Law of 25 April 2014	○
Does the law require cash maternity benefits to be at least two-thirds (66.67%) of a worker's former wage?	Yes	§128 of Loi relative à l'assurance obligatoire soins de santé et indemnités coordonnée le 14 juillet 1994	○
Does the law require cash maternity benefits to be paid through a contributory social insurance or a universal benefits system or such benefits are an employer's liability?	Yes	§128 of Loi relative à l'assurance obligatoire soins de santé et indemnités coordonnée le 14 juillet 1994	○
Does the law protect workers from dismissals during or on account of pregnancy?	Yes	§40 of Labour Act 1971	○

6. SAFE WORK

100

Does the law require employers to provide free personal protective equipment to workers?	Yes	Arrêté royal du 13 juin 2005 relatif à l'utilisation des équipements de protection individuelle	○
Does the law require employers to train workers on health and safety issues?	Yes	§16bis-21 of Arrêté royal du 27 mars 1998 relatif à la politique du bien-être des travailleurs lors de l'exécution de leur travail	○
Does the law restrict work that is prejudicial to the health of the mother or the child?	Yes	§39-43 of Labour Act 1971; Arrêté royal du 2 mai 1995 concernant la protection de la maternité	○
Does the law provide for employment injury benefits in the event of an occupational accident or disease?	Yes	Coordinated law of 3 June 1970 on Compensation for Occupational Diseases; Work Accidents Act 1971	○

7. SOCIAL SECURITY

100

Does the law provide for an old age benefit?	Yes	Royal Decree no. 50 of 24 October 1967 on Retirement and Survivors' Pensions; MISSOC Comp. Table for Belgium	○
Does the law provide for survivors' benefits?	Yes	Royal Decree no. 50 of 24 October 1967 on Retirement and Survivors' Pensions; MISSOC Comp. Table for Belgium	○
Does the law provide for unemployment benefits?	Yes	Royal Decree of 25 November 1991 on Unemployment; MISSOC Comp. Table for Belgium	○
Does the law require paid sick leave (and sickness benefits) for the first six months of sickness?	Yes	Coordinated Law of 14 July 1994 on Medical Care and Benefits; MISSOC Comp. Table for Belgium	●
Does the law provide for invalidity benefits?	Yes	Coordinated Law of 14 July 1994 on Medical Care and Benefits; MISSOC Comp. Table for Belgium	○

8. FAIR TREATMENT

100

Does the law require equal remuneration for men and women workers for work of equal value?	Yes	§4-5 of Loi du 10 mai 2007 tendant à lutter contre certaines formes de discrimination; 22 AVRIL 2012. — Loi visant à lutter contre l'écart salarial entre hommes et femmes	○
Does the law prohibit sexual harassment in employment?	Yes	§32bis & 32ter of the Loi du 4 août 1996; §101 & 119 of the Code Pénal Social 2010	○
Does the law prohibit discrimination in employment matters?	Yes	§19-28 of the Anti-Racism Act 1981; §26-31 of the Gender Equality Act 2007; §21-26 of the Anti Discrimination Act 2007	○
Does the law allow women to do the same job as men?	Yes	§23 of the Belgian Constitution 1831	○
Does the law guarantee basic labour protection to the platform workers?	Yes	Royal decree No 72 of 10 November 1967; Royal Decree of 20 July 1971	○

9. CHILD AND FORCED LABOUR

100

QUESTION	ANSWER	LEGAL BASIS	TREND ¹²
Does the law prohibit the employment of children?	Yes	\$43-46 bis of Employment Contracts Act, 1978	<input type="radio"/>
Does the law set employment entry age equal to or higher than the compulsory schooling age?	Yes	\$43-46 bis of Employment Contracts Act, 1978; \$1 of the Compulsory Education Act, 1983	<input type="radio"/>
Does the law prohibit the employment of young persons in hazardous work under the age of 18 years?	Yes	\$8, 9, 32, 34 & 34 bis of Labour Act, 1971	<input type="radio"/>
Does the law prohibit forced labour?	Yes	\$433 quinquies and 433 octies of Penal Code 1867	<input type="radio"/>

10. FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION¹¹

75

Does the law allow workers to form and join unions of their own choice?	Yes	\$27 of the Belgian Constitution 1831; USDOS CRHRP 2021 (Belgium)	<input type="radio"/>
Does the law allow workers to bargain collectively with employers through their representative unions?	Yes	Organic Law on National Labour Council 1952; Law of 5 December 1968 on Collective Agreements and Joint Committees	<input type="radio"/>
Does the law provide the right to strike?	Yes	Loi du 19.08.1948 relative aux prestations d'intérêt public en temps de paix	<input type="radio"/>
Does the law prohibit imposing excessive sanctions against striking workers, including replacement of such workers?	No	\$406 of the Criminal Code of Belgium, 1867; ILO CEACR, C87, Direct Request, 2023; ITUC Global Rights Index 2024 (Belgium Profile)	<input checked="" type="radio"/>

¹ Proportion of population living below the national poverty line (%), as measured under the SDG 1.2.1

² Share of informal employment in total employment (%), as measured under the SDG 8.3.1

³ Proportion of the country population covered by social protection floors, as measured under the SDG 1.3.1

⁴ The female labour force is shown in absolute number (A) along with the female labour force participation rate (B)

⁵ Non-Standard Employment has been defined as part-time employment (A) and temporary employment (B)

⁶ Rate of fatal (A) and non-fatal work injuries (B) per 100,000 workers, as measured under the SDG 8.8.1

⁷ Minimum Wage and Living Wage amounts are shown in local currency. The amounts are retrieved from the WageIndicator Minimum Wage Database and the WageIndicator Living Wage Database. The minimum wage amounts are those as were applicable on 1 April 2024. The Living Wage amounts are from the April 2024 data release by the WageIndicator. Given the declining share of labour income (a widely used measure of inequality, measuring the proportion of total income in a country that employed people earn by working), the contextual indicators on minimum wage and living wage are relevant.

⁸ Robust legislation, backed by effective enforcement, forms the foundation for achieving decent work in practice. In this regard, it is relevant to see if the country has an adequate number of labour inspectors. While the Labour Inspection Convention, 1947 (No. 81) calls for a "sufficient number" of inspectors to do the work required, there is currently no official definition for a sufficient number of inspectors. In its 2006 General Survey on Labour Inspection, the ILO referred to the following benchmarks on the number of labour inspectors in the country in relation to the labour force: 1:10,000 in industrial market economies, 1:15,000 in rapidly industrializing economies, 1:20,000 in transition economies, and 1:40,000 in less developed countries. The latest guidance from the ILO (2022) however emphasizes a more holistic evaluation of national context rather than solely a ratio of labour inspectors to the size of labour force.

⁹ The Living Wage estimates shown in this country profile are for a typical family (lower bound) that comprises two adults. The number of children is determined by the country-specific fertility rate, representing the average number of children in a family. One adult is engaged for 100% of normal working hours, while the working hours of the second adult are approximated based on the national labour force participation rate. The combined wage earned by two adults, each receiving a living wage, is designed to meet the requirements for achieving a decent standard of living for the family. For further details on this, please check here: <https://wageindicator.org/salary/living-wage>

¹⁰ The prohibited grounds for discrimination are "race, colour, sex, religion, political opinion, national extraction or social origin, age, disability and trade union membership". A score of 1 is assigned only if a country has prohibited discrimination on at least 7 of the above 10 grounds.

¹¹ The Freedom of Association indicator of the Labour Rights Index uses Observations/Direct Requests from the ILO Committee of Experts on Application of Conventions and Recommendations (CEACR), the US Department of State's Country Reports on Human Rights Practices (USDOS CRHRP) and the country's legal profiles under the ITUC Global Rights Index 2024 to measure a country's compliance with the right to freedom of association and collective bargaining. A country's score on the LRI's Freedom of Association indicator must also be read together with the SDG indicator 8.8.2, which measures the level of national compliance with labour rights (freedom of association and collective bargaining) based on ILO textual sources and national legislation. It has a range from 0 to 10, with 0 being the best possible score (indicating higher levels of compliance with FACH rights) and 10 the worst (indicating lower levels of compliance with FACH rights). The score for Belgium on the latest available data of the SDG 8.8.2 is "0.69" (2022). Other than SDG 8.8.2, we suggest considering the country's score on ITUC's latest Global Rights Index. The score for Belgium in 2024 is "3". As explained by the ITUC, "Countries are rated in clusters from 1-5+ depending on their compliance with collective labour rights, with 1 being the best rating and 5+ the worst rating a country could get. A high-rated cluster means that workers in the country have no right to their collective voice due to government failure to guarantee rights".

¹² In order to measure the trend in country's legislative performance over the last edition of the Labour Rights Index (2022), the legislative table indicates improvement or worsening of de-jure labour rights in country through the following colours.

☒ Score improved due to a positive legislative reform

☐ Score worsened due to a negative legislative reform

☐ Score is adjusted for the country due to a minor revision in the methodology for the Social Security indicator

☐ Score is adjusted for the country due to better access to the country's legal sources, or where the score for the Freedom of Association indicator is adjusted based on the latest reports from ILO, USDOS & ITUC Global Rights Index 2024

☐ No change