



Summary of Trends and Developments in Social Security

2015

**National Insurance Institute
Israel**

Research and Planning Administration



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2015

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Contents

Introduction	1
The National Insurance Vision	1
The National Insurance Institute in Numbers	1
Legislative Changes in 2015 – Summary	2
Client Service	3
Taking Up Rights to Benefits	4
Legislative Changes	6
Old Age and Survivors	8
Long-Term Care	11
General Disability	12
Mobility	15
Income support	16
Maintenance	17
Maternity	18
Children	19
Work Injury	21
Reserve Service	22
Unemployment	23
Prisoners of Zion	24
Vocational Rehabilitation	24
Workers’ Rights after Bankruptcy and Corporate Liquidation	27
Hostile Action Casualties	28
Payment of Insurance Contributions	29
Counseling for the Elderly	30
National Insurance Funds	32
International Conventions	36
Future Changes	37
The Funds	38

Introduction

The National Insurance Institute (NII) is the backbone of Israel's social security system. The NII plays a central role in reducing poverty, decreasing inequality and protecting individuals from economic and social uncertainty. It also helps to shape Israel's welfare policy.

The purpose of national insurance is to prevent social and economic distress and to strengthen social unity and solidarity. Its principal tools are payments (benefits and pensions), some of which are universal for all the country's residents (such as child allowances and Old age pensions), while others are selective for those who meet certain criteria. The effectiveness of these payments is measured by their ability to reduce economic uncertainty and prevent temporary or extended income risks.

The National Insurance Vision

The NII is the leading professional body in the field of social security in Israel.

Policy – the NII acts according to the law to implement Israel's welfare policy, and is an influential partner in forming and maintaining the principles of this policy: mutual guarantees, reduction of social gaps, reducing poverty and ensuring the ongoing existence of the social security system.

Service – the NII will operate proactively and effectively, with sensitivity and respect for the individual, so that every insured person can exercise all their rights. Its activity will be based on constant striving for excellence, while adapting to the changing needs of service-users by maintaining contact with the insured public and the community.

Quality – the NII will be the focus for a skilled, high quality and ethical workforce, with a sense of mission, responsibility and belonging. It will develop human resources and work for constant improvement of the tools at its disposal.

The National Insurance Institute in Numbers

The NII serves Israel's population of some 8.5 million residents. In 2015, the NII paid benefits amounting to about 75 billion shekels.

In 2015 the NII operated 32 social programs, covering some 130 types of payments and services, including Old age pensions, child allowances, long-term care benefits, income support and various types of disability benefits.

The NII employs about 4,000 people, who conduct about 15 million interactions with insured residents in 78 local branches and service centers, by telephone and online.

Legislative Changes in 2015 – Summary

- ✓ Limiting fees charged by companies and attorneys that help clients to exercise their rights.
- ✓ Online reporting of salaries once every six months for employers.
- ✓ Update of mortality charts in the capitalization regulations.
- ✓ Long-term benefits in cash (from temporary to permanent provision)
- ✓ Increasing the amounts of the attendance allowance and benefits for disabled children, following the rise in the minimum wage.
- ✓ Special supplement for disabled on respirators.
- ✓ Benefits in electricity payments for victims of hostilities.

It should be noted that 2015 was an election year, so the Knesset (Israeli Parliament) sat only for two months.

Client Service

Under the NII service strategy, clients and full exercise of their rights is of utmost importance, highlighting the need to strengthen existing avenues of client service and to initiate new ones.

2015 was characterized by extensive activity in this field: a uniform model of client flow in local branches was constructed; information was made more accessible; processes were shortened or reinforced; work plans were prepared – a management routine that intensifies service awareness on the part of staff – and contacts between the public and the NII employees who handle their cases were increased by means of initiated telephone calls.

The NII has made great strides in the provision of services by digital means: submission of claims, availability of claims forms online, a personal service site, SMS for updates and reminders about personal matters, calculators for determining eligibility for benefits, and more self-service terminals in local authority buildings.

In 2015 the Call Center handled over 5.1 million calls, while the number of personal callers in local branches declined steadily.

Use of online services for submitting claims, sending required documents and receiving communications by email rose in 2015, as part of the green revolution.

Inquiries by Service Channel, 2014-2015

	2014	2015	% change
Total	18,789,589	20,597,146	10.0%
Reception in branches	3,466,559	3,291,813	-5.0%
Call centers	5,110,027	5,134,824	0.5%
Internet	8,124,041	10,073,098	24.0%
Automated service stands	2,088,962	2,097,411	0.4%

Taking Up Rights to Benefits

In 2015, the Benefits Administration initiated several activities designed to help individuals take up their rights, thereby improving service and reinforcing citizens' trust. These activities included: full uptake of rights initiated by the NII, cutting bureaucracy with digital innovations, direct contact with citizens – the "**There's someone to talk to**" project, the service revolution in medical committees.

Initiated activities to promote take-up of rights:

- ✓ Cross-checking data from NII computers with information held by various Government ministries, to avoid unnecessary hassle for the public and shorten case-handling. The result was an increase in the number of benefits paid automatically with no need for claims, and advance payments for general disability transferred within 10 days.
- ✓ Medical information received online from health providers and hospitals enables claims to be initiated while patients are still in hospital, and facilitates take-up of benefits stemming from the entitlement to disability pension...
- ✓ Setting up a website for social workers.
- ✓ Research and surveys to promote take-up of rights, for example: Old age and maternity.
- ✓ Initiating clarification by telephone.

Digital innovations

- ✓ Use of email to save paper correspondence.
- ✓ NII clerks use SMS to update clients on the progress of their case and remind them of documents needed.
- ✓ Claims, with all accompanying documents, can be submitted online.
- ✓ Calculators for checking eligibility for benefits and allowances.
- ✓ Online payment of insurance contributions.
- ✓ Personal site where the insured can monitor all activity pertaining to them.

Service revolution in medical committees:

- ✓ Assistance in preparing for medical committees ("Helping Hand")
- ✓ Limiting requirements for attendance in person.
- ✓ Fast track for difficult cases.
- ✓ Printed summary of the committee's findings.
- ✓ Improving outcomes – doctors must give reasons for their decisions.
- ✓ **Daily** satisfaction surveys, re-organization of the Medical Bureau.
- ✓ Round tables with clients (those who have been through medical committees meet others who are awaiting the committees).
- ✓ Appeals committees removed from the NII.

Legislative Changes

Fees that may be charged by companies and attorneys helping clients to exercise their rights have been limited.

As of July 22th 2015, amendment 161 to paragraph A315-J315 of the National Insurance Law, restricts the fees that can be charged by attorneys or private companies helping clients to apply for the following NII benefits: work accidents, general disability, mobility, volunteers, polio and Radiation-affected persons.

Under this amendment, the fee is calculated according to the value of the benefit awarded for five years. A fee for opening the file (up to NIS 800) may be added, and in certain cases an additional sum may be charged according to certain criteria, such as the value of the benefit (a benefit of less than NIS 1,200) and the type of handling (representation in legal forums). In some cases - such as appeals to the courts on recognition of work accidents, or preparation of medical opinions as part of the attorney's handling - an unlimited fee may be approved,

Update of mortality charts in the benefits capitalization regulations

According to the amendment of 2016, mortality charts in the benefits capitalization regulations were updated, for example to cover victims of road accidents that were also work accidents. The charts, which had not been revised for a long time, were updated *inter alia*, on the basis of average life expectancy in Israel.

The updates followed a petition to the High Court and recommendations of committees set up by the Minister of Welfare and NII committees.

Minimum wage

In January 2015 the minimum wage was NIS 4,300 and in April 2015 it rose to NIS 4,650 – an increase of about 8%.

Maternity

As of August 2015, and every month during the first year after the birth, an examination of entitlement is carried out automatically. This examination is conducted retroactively from January 1st, 2015.

Financial support for rent

(Jointly with the fields of Income support, Maintenance and Old age and Survivors)

Following an appeal accepted by the National Labor Court, it was decided that for an insured person who receives an income support benefit, Old age pension with income supplement or alimony, paying rent and requiring financial assistance with these payments, the amount of this assistance will not be taken into account when calculating eligibility for his benefit.

Travel abroad outside the eligibility period in a calendar year

(Jointly with the fields of Income support, Maintenance and Old Age and Survivors)

The criteria for determining how often, for purposes of payment of Old age pension, income support or alimony, an insured person may travel abroad during a calendar year were examined by the Regional Labor Court, and it was determined that overseas travel **prior** to claim for benefit will not be included when counting periods abroad in a calendar year.

Old Age and Survivors

Old Age

Since 2015, recipients of Old age pension who are entitled to income supplement under the Income Support Law receive the supplement automatically. In addition, an extra payment to recipients of income supplement was authorized and paid in December 2015.

In 2015 the number of Old age pension recipients was 900,788, about 3.7% higher than in 2014.

Basic Old Age Pension* (NIS)

	Without children	With one child	With two children
Adult	1,531	2,015	2,499
Couple	2,301	2,785	3,269

* The rates in this and all other tables are per month, unless stated otherwise.

Pensioners reaching the age of 80 receive an additional NIS 86.

Old Age Pension plus Income Supplement

Increased Rate – for those under age 70 (NIS)

	Without children	With one child	With two children
Adult	2,803	4,487	5,421
Couple	4,164	5,099	6,033

Increased Rate – for those who have reached age 70-79 (NIS)

	Without children	With one child	With two children
Adult	3,042	5,130	6,064
Couple	4,808	5,742	6,677

Increased Rate – for those who have reached age 80+ (NIS)

	Without children	With one child	With two children
Adult	3,016	4,792	5,727
Couple	4,469	5,404	6,339

Giving information to adult children of the deceased regarding their rights to compensation from Germany

In certain cases, if the deceased had submitted a claim in Israel for compensation from Germany and has not left a will, his adult children may be eligible for a survivors' benefit from Germany in the framework of the Ghettos Law. In these circumstances only, adult children of the deceased can be given an authorization of the deceased parent's pension in order to exercise their rights to a survivors' pension.

Rights of an insured person whose pension is ceased due to lack of co-operation

If an insured person is sent notice of cessation of benefits, the clerk must search the NII database for documents or other claims that could help to renew the pension and grant the individual full rights to Old age and survivors' benefits, and try to contact the individual.

Survivors

The amount of the survivors' pension paid by the NII depends on the insured's family status. In this matter, the insured's "child" is defined in Section 238 of the National Insurance Law, taking into account his studies or military service.

Survivors' Pension (NIS)

Young Widow	Single adult	Single adult + 1 child	Single adult + 2 children	One orphan	Two orphans	Age 80+ supplement
1,150	1,531	2,249	2,967	951	1,902	86

Survivors' Pension plus Income Supplement age under 70 (NIS)

Single adult	Single adult + 1 child	Single adult + 2 children	One orphan	Two orphans
2,981	5,028	5,962	2,022	2,963

Survivors' Pension plus Income Supplement age 70-79 (NIS)

Young widow/er	Single adult + 1 child	Single adult + 2 children	One orphan	Two orphans
3,042	5,130	6,064	2,022	2,963

Survivors' Pension plus Income Supplement age 80+ (NIS)

Young widow/er	Single adult + 1 child	Single adult + 2 children	One orphan	Two orphans
3,151	5,303	6,064	2,022	2,963

Long-Term Care

Long-Term Care Benefit in Cash (from temporary to permanent provision)

As a rule, the long-term care benefit is given as a service in kind. The amount is transferred to manpower companies providing the service, according to the eligibility level determined by the NII.

Since October 2015, eligible recipients may in certain circumstances choose to receive their benefit in cash, and may revert to receiving the service in kind at any time. The change was preceded by a pilot that indicated high levels of satisfaction among recipients who received cash, so the temporary provision became a permanent one.

In 2015, the number of recipients of long-term care benefit was 160,808 – about 1.0% more than in 2014.

Long-Term Care Benefit (NIS)

	Benefit in kind	Benefit in cash
Fairly dependent	1,992	1,594
Very dependent	3,284	2,627
Completely dependent	3,678	2,942

General Disability

Increasing the attendance allowance and the benefit for disabled child following the rise in minimum wage

Under the Minimum Wage Law, the minimum wage was raised in three stages (on April 1, 2015, July 1, 2016, and January 1, 2017) to NIS 5,000.

Because of the additional expense borne by those disabled who employ helpers in their home (sometimes more than one person) as well as by parents of disabled children needing daily assistance, it was decided to raise the attendance and the benefits for disabled children.

Although amendments to the Minimum Wage Law create a mechanism for temporary increase (followed by a slow erosion, with no regular updates of the minimum wage), the above supplements will be paid permanently, and the entire benefit will continue to be regularly updated according to the CoL Index.

Supplement for a disabled child on a respirator

As of April 1, 2015 a supplement is being paid to the benefit for a handicapped person using a respirator. The monthly supplement is NIS 1,817 (as of Apr 01, 2015) and this payment replaces that of NIS 1,100 from the Ministry of Welfare until that date.

Anyone needing to use a respirator continuously all day and all night to replace the natural action of breathing, where cessation of the respirator's action would cause the person's breathing to stop and immediately endanger him/her. By "respirator" is meant a machine which permanently replaces a person's breathing, and not an oxygen generator nor a device to help autonomous breathing.

Conditions of receiving the supplement

Those satisfying the following two conditions are eligible for the supplement:

1. Those entitled to a disabled child allowance at a rate of 188%.
2. Those answering to the description of a handicapped person using a respirator: A person needing to use a respirator continuously all day and all night to replace the natural action of breathing, where cessation of the

respirator's action would cause the person's breathing to stop, thereby immediately and certainly endangering him/her.

By "respirator" is meant a machine which permanently replaces a person's breathing, and not an oxygen generator nor a device to help autonomous breathing.

In 2015 there were 229,745 recipients of the disability benefit, an increase of 1.4% compared to 2014.

General disability benefit– 100% disability (NIS)

Individual disabled	Disabled person with spouse			Dependents' supplement	
	No children	One child	2 children	Spouse	Child
2,342	3,514	4,451	5,388	1,172	937

Additional Monthly Benefit

An additional monthly benefit to the disabled pension is paid to person with at least 75% disability who does not reside in an institution where more than 50% of his costs are paid by a public body, and his medical disability has been defined as 50% at least, or 40% to 49% in the case of mental or intellectual disability.

Following the update of the minimum wage, attendance allowances for the severely disabled and benefits to disabled children and the were increased, and a new allowance was added for disabled persons on ventilation living in the community. This increase is intended to enable the severely disabled who are dependent on assistance from others to continue employing helpers so that they can remain in the community and in their family environment. Payments to some 20,000 persons eligible for the increased benefit were made on July 12, 2015, while payments to 1,025 people on respirators (913 of them are children and 112 severely disabled) were made on August 5th, 2015.,

Attendance Allowance

An allowance equal to 50%, 111.9% or 188% of the full single benefit, depending on the degree of dependence on others.

The number of recipients in 2015 was 50,832 – an increase of about 10% over 2014.

Benefit for Disabled Child

A benefit equal to 50% up to 188% of the full single disability pension, depending on the grounds for eligibility. In a family with two or more disabled children, each child is entitled to an additional 50% of the benefit for which he is eligible.

The number of recipients in 2015 was 44,624 – an increase of 10% over 2014.

Mobility

The mobility allowance provides various benefits to people with impairments that limit their mobility, with the aim of helping them to integrate into the community and develop an independent life. The benefits are paid for by state funds under a Mobility Agreement signed between the Ministry of Finance and the National Insurance Institute.

There were no legislative changes in 2015.

Mobility allowance for those with 80%-100% disability and earning (NIS)

	Small car	Medium car	Large car	Huge car
Driver	1,544	2,103	2,610	1,540
Non-driver	1,540	2,099		

In 2015 there were 37,910 recipients of the mobility allowance – an increase of 3.5% compared to 2014.

Income support

Requesting documents

As part of service improvement, the issue of requesting documents was reviewed and it was decided from September 1st 2015, to make the process more efficient, as follows: requests for documents should take into account the individual, and NII clerks must use their judgment and not ask for too many; ensure the documents are not already available in the NII database, and explain which documents are necessary in the case of complex requirements.

In 2015 there were 98,347 recipients of income support, a decrease of 5% compared to 2014.

Income Support Rates for Persons under the Age of 55 (NIS)

Individual adult	Single parent		Other		Couple		
	One child	Two children	One child	Two children	No children	One child	Two children
1,730	2,897	3,373	2,594	2,897	2,378	2,594	2,897

Income Support Rates for Persons Aged 55 and Over (NIS)

Individual adult	Single parent		Other		Couple		
	One child	Two children	One child	Two children	No children	One child	Two children
2,162	3,535	4,400	3,103	3,622	3,243	3,762	4,281

Maintenance

The Maintenance-Guarantee of Payment Law, which came into effect in 1972, aims at guaranteeing means of subsistence to a woman who possesses a judgment for maintenance, and to her children, regardless of her capacity to enforce this judgment.

When the husband obligated does not voluntarily comply with the judgment and does not pay the woman the maintenance to which she is entitled according to the judgment, the law enables the woman to turn to the National Insurance Institute in order that the Institute enforce the judgment; that is, pay an maintenance benefit to the woman and in parallel, collect this money from the person obligated by means of enforcement procedures.

The payment is granted to the woman for as long as the husband is obligated to pay her maintenance. The rate of the payment is as determined in the judgment or under the regulations (of the Maintenance-Guarantee of Payment Law) – whichever is the lower rate. With the NII guaranteeing to pay the woman and her children the maintenance to which she is entitled, it also takes upon itself all that is involved in collecting the amount specified in the judgment. Therefore, only a woman who does not take steps to enforce the judgment on her own or who ceases enforcement procedures before she applies to the NII is entitled to payments.

The NII pays maintenance for every child up to the age of 18.

Maintenance Rates for Women under the Age of 55 (NIS)

Unmarried woman or woman married to the person owing alimony				Remarried woman or children only		
Without children		One child	Two children	One child	Two children	Each additional child
New	Existing					
1,730	1,946	2,897	3,373	2,022	2,963	865

Maintenance Rates for Women Aged 55 and Over (NIS)

Unmarried woman or woman married to the person owing alimony			Remarried woman or children only		
Single	One child	Two children	One child	Two children	Each additional child
2,162	3,535	4,400	2,022	2,963	865

The number of women receiving alimony under the Maintenance Law was 17,038 in 2015 – a decrease of 4.5% compared to 2014.

Maternity

Maternity and paternity leave in cases of surrogacy

Although the law on maternity leave in cases of surrogacy uses feminine terms (**intended mother**), the NII allows couples to choose who will take the leave, including split periods, as in the case of adoption.

Automating special allowance payment

When a mother dies in childbirth or within a year of giving birth, the NII will pay a special allowance for each infant born in that birth and residing in Israel. The allowance is paid to her spouse for the period of time he does not work due to her death (maximum 14 weeks) during 24 months. If a survivors' or dependents' benefit is paid, the special allowance is paid for 12 months. As of August 2015, and every month during the first year after the birth, an examination of entitlement is carried out automatically. This examination is conducted retroactively from January 1, 2015.

Figures

Recipients of a **maternity grant** in 2015 – 177,117; about 2% more than in 2014.

Recipients of a **maternity benefit** in 2015 – 123,827; about 3% more than in 2014.

Hospitalization Grant (NIS)

Regular grant	In the case of premature birth
12,513	198,405

Maternity Grant for One Birth (NIS)

One infant			Two infants	Three infants	Each extra infant
1 st child	2 nd child	3 rd or more child			
1,751	788	525	8,757	13,163	4,379

Maternity Benefit (NIS)

	1-3 months	4-6 months	7-9 months	10-12 months	13-20 months
Three children	11,209	8,757	7,006	5,254	3,065
Four children	14,887	11,822	9,633	6,568	3,853
Five children	21,893	17,514	13,136	8,757	4,991

Maximum maternity benefit for salaried and self-employed women: NIS 1,459.50 per day and NIS 43,785 per month.

Children

Higher child allowances and opening savings plans for children

The Economic Efficiency Law stated that the child allowance would be increased retroactively from May 2015. It also stipulated that a savings plan would be opened for every child.

The updated basic child allowance was paid from December 2015, retroactively from May 2015.

Allowance for Child Born after June 2003

First child	150 NIS
Second child	188 NIS
Third child	188 NIS
Fourth child	188 NIS
Fifth and subsequent child	150 NIS

Allowance for Child Born before June 2003

First child	150 NIS
Second child	188 NIS
Third child	188 NIS
Fourth child	336 NIS
Fifth and subsequent child	354 NIS

There is no change in the rate of the additional allowance paid to recipients of subsistence benefits, for those with 3 or more children, or to recipients of income support or Old age pensions with income supplement – NIS 98 for the third and fourth children only.

Full take-up of rights to child allowances

An option has been developed for the computerized child allowance system to send alerts to clerks in the following cases: a family with additional children for whom they are not receiving child allowances; a divorced couple whose file has not yet been split and their child may be eligible for a study grant; a family returning from abroad whose eligibility for child allowance has not be renewed.

The clerk must look at each case individually, according to instructions from the head office on full take-up of rights for benefit recipients.

Full take-up of rights for divorced women (2014-2015)

On receiving information from the Interior Ministry regarding divorce, the wife is sent a letter with a claims form to split the couple's file, plus a claims form for a study grant. She must complete these forms and attach the required documents. Due to the many cases of divorced women who have not fully taken up their right to the grant although the NII has contacted them, a decision has been taken to locate them in a centralized file on the database. Clerks have been instructed to contact the women who are located so that they can claim the study grant.

Submitting an online claim to split a file and receive study grant

There is an option to submit claims to split a file and receive a study grant without a personal code or password. The claim is automatically forwarded to a clerk, and the client does not have to come to the branch in person.

Immediate issue of payment confirmations

Mothers wishing to obtain annual confirmation of child allowance payments or deductions from the allowance can do so through the website and obtain confirmation immediately.

In 2015, child allowances were paid for 2,679,682 children – an increase of 2% compared to 2014.

A study grant was paid for 56,157 children – a decrease of about 4.5% from 2014.

Work Injury

Under the National Insurance (Work Injuries) Law, all workers are insured against the risk of work accidents and occupational diseases.

It is compulsory for all employers to insure their employees (except for policemen, jailers, and defense employees) against the above risks. Such employees include those regularly or temporarily employed, for daily or monthly wages, full-time and part-time workers.

All employees working in Israel – as well as the self-employed – are insured, regardless of the age or nationality of the workers.

Work injury insurance is designed to compensate insured persons who are injured at work for the loss of income for the period of time after the injury, during which they are unable to work. The National Insurance Institute therefore pays them an injury allowance for a period of up to three months.

If the injured person remains disabled as a result of the injury, he is entitled to a pension or grant as decided by the medical committee before which he must appear. The injured person is also entitled to receive medical treatment for his injury, free of charge.

Upon the death of an insured person who suffered a work injury (work accident or occupational disease), his relatives – the widow/widower, orphans, parents and other close relatives (defined as dependants) may be entitled to work injury benefits

There were no legislative changes in 2015.

Benefits to Work Injury Victims (NIS)

	Maximum daily benefit	Maximum monthly work disability & dependents' benefit
Salaried worker injured before December 31, 1994	656.78	19,703
Self-employed, or salaried worker injured after January 1, 1995.	1,094.63	32,839

In 2015, the number of recipients receiving a disability benefit due to a work injury was 60,411, a decrease of about 1% compared to 2014.

Reserve Service

A new process for ensuring full take-up of rights by insured persons doing reserve duty and their employers

In order to increase uptake of rights in reserve duty, the NII, together with the Ministry of Defense, has developed a computerized process for locating reservists and their employers who have not yet submitted claims for a reserve service benefit. Every insured person will receive detailed instructions for submitting a claim online according to his or her status – salaried or not. At the same time, a survey was carried out to ascertain the reasons why people failed to make claims.

Maximum and Minimum Reserve Duty Benefit (NIS)

	Per month	Per day
Maximum for salaried employee	43,240	1,441.33
Maximum for self-employed	43,240	1,441.33
Minimum benefit	5,881	196.02
Minimum grant for Gadna (youth brigades)	2,315	77.17

Unemployment

The NII provides the unemployed person with a source of subsistence for the duration of the entitled period. The unemployment benefits are paid to persons who were salaried employees, who are registered with the Employment Service (labor exchange) as non-employed and who report to the Employment Service to look for work .

The insured should report to the Employment Service immediately upon termination of employment, and then report on regular days as instructed by the Service. Every month, the Employment Service transfers to the NII the information on the number of unemployment days registered, and the NII pays the insured its unemployment benefits based on that information.

The number of recipients of unemployment benefit increased in 2015 to a monthly average of about 69,780 recipients, a decrease of about 3.2% compared to 2014.

There were no legislative changes in 2015.

Unemployment Benefits, 2015 (NIS)

Daily basic amount	346
Daily average pay for discharged soldier	173
Maximum daily unemployment pay for a soldier who has not worked since discharge	103.80
Unemployment pay for a soldier on vocational training	72.66
Daily ceiling for calculating supplement for a soldier sent to unsuitable work	129.80
Full grant for discharged soldier who did “preferred work”	9,550
Maximum daily amount	1,730
Maximum daily unemployment pay for first period	370.40
Maximum daily unemployment pay for second period	246.93

Prisoners of Zion

Under the Law of Benefits for Prisoners of Zion and their Families-1992, a resident citizen of Israel, recognized as a Prisoner of Zion by the competent authority in the Ministry of Absorption, is entitled to benefit from the National Insurance Institute.

Non-disabled Prisoners of Zion are also eligible for benefit, conditional on an income test. Furthermore, disabled Prisoners of Zion are eligible for an additional income-based benefit, in addition to their regular, basic benefit.

Disabled Prisoners of Zion are also entitled to in-kind benefits including medical care and vocational rehabilitation.

Relatives of Prisoners of Zion who are in jail or who have passed away may be entitled to various benefits.

There were no legislative changes in 2015.

Vocational Rehabilitation

Under the National Insurance Law (1968) and Amendment 13 to this law (1974), the right to vocational rehabilitation is bestowed to the following groups:

- work-related injured people;
- people with disabilities (disability caused at birth, by an accident or illness) or when they are unsuitable for rehabilitation, their spouses;
- widows and widowers.

Under the Benefits to Hostile Action Casualties Law (1974), various services, benefits and rights – including the right to vocational rehabilitation – are granted to injured victims of hostile or terrorist act and to bereaved families as results of such acts.

The vocational rehabilitation services are provided by the means of the rehabilitation departments located in all local branches of the NII throughout the country. These

departments are staffed by professional social workers who implement rehabilitation policies.

Vocational rehabilitation services include assessment, career counseling, individual tailored rehabilitation plans, professional training, academic education, and placement services. Most services are purchased by the NII at the open market, while services from segregative frameworks (such as rehabilitation centers) may be acquired for those in need. The process begins with self-referral, with referral by community agencies, or with out-reach activities of the NII.

Consulting service for severely disabled

In the past decade, special focus has been placed on the accessibility of rehabilitation services and on their adaptability to the needs of the severely disabled. For example, support services such as translation into sign language, tutoring and special transportation were set up.

Rehabilitation for terror acts victims

Another trend, notable since 2000, as a result of the increase in terror acts against the civilian population, includes the development of special interventions. During this period, there were over 2000 such acts, injuring over 20,000 people and killing more than a thousand. The high number of injured includes victims of continued incidents in the area surrounding Gaza in the aftermath of the Cast Lead operation, as well as late claims submitted in the aftermath of the Pillar of Defense operation as well as isolated terror acts in the course of the year.

The Rehabilitation Bureau has set up a special community service for these victims, in which about 300 volunteers work in all areas of the country. In addition, victims are accompanied by a social worker (rehabilitation officer) who visits them in the hospital or at the home in a condolence call, and provides continuous support to meet various needs in all areas of their lives and throughout their lives.

Since 2008, lessons learned from the Second Lebanon War were implemented, and in order to prevent the development of post-traumatic disorders, the NII funds emotional treatments as early as possible, including to victims who did not submitted a claim to be recognized as hostile action victims.

Despite the great burden on the Rehabilitation Bureau as a result of the numerous terror acts, the Bureau continued in 2015 to care for the other entitled population groups as well, by means of vocational rehabilitation plans and take-up of welfare rights, with special emphasis on early intervention and work integration.

There were no legislative changes in 2015.

Workers' Rights after Bankruptcy and Corporate Liquidation

The law of insuring employee rights in case of bankruptcy and corporate liquidation was enacted in 1975, to protect employees whose rights were severely impaired as a result of difficulties faced by their place of work, consequent to which liquidation or bankruptcy decrees had been filed.

Under the law, an employee whose employer went bankrupt or whose company underwent liquidation is entitled to receive a benefit from the National Insurance Institute that includes payments, owed by the employer, up to the maximum amount set by the law:

1. Wages
2. Severance pay
3. Provident fund payment

There were no legislative changes in 2015.

Hostile Action Casualties

Persons injured as a result of a hostile action by enemy forces in Israel or abroad are entitled to cash benefits as well as to benefits in kind such as treatment, hospitalization, convalescence, medical appliances, vocational rehabilitation and assistance in housing and in purchase of a vehicle.

Relatives of persons who died as a result of a hostile action receive a monthly dependents' benefit (equivalent to the benefit rate paid under the Families of Soldiers Killed in Action Law) as well as vocational rehabilitation and special benefits.

Amendment to Law on Benefits to Hostile Action Casualties

Disabled persons with 100% disability or more will also be eligible for medical treatment for injuries and illnesses that are not connected to their injury from terrorism.

Benefits and Grants - Purchase tax and vat refund for electric home appliances

Terror victims were added to those eligible for discounts on electricity consumption; this group includes people with at least 50% disability. The amendment, which came into force on December 1st 2015, also requires secondary electricity suppliers to grant discounts.

Payment of Insurance Contributions

Online reporting of salaries from employers every six months

Under the Economy Arrangements Law of July 2015, employers are obliged to send an online report once every six months instead of once a year (by July 18th and the January 18th each year) and a yearly report (by April 30th for the preceding year). Receiving reports twice a year helps the NII to promote full take-up of rights and prevent the buildup of credit or debit balances in personal benefit and payment accounts due to late reports.

Increasing the employer's NII contribution

As part of the program to maintain the NII's financial stability in 2015, the third stage of raising employers' contributions by 0.5% was implemented (from 6.75% to 7.25%).

Increasing Treasury participation in collection for the Children Branch

Child allowance rates were increased retroactively from May 2015. As a result, the Ministry of Finance allocation for the Children Branch was recalculated, because when allowances were reduced in 2013, the full amount thus saved was transferred to the Treasury. Consequently, since December 2015 the Treasury is funding the restoration of the allowances to their previous levels.

NII Contributions from Employers and Employees by Branch (% of wage)

Since 1.1.15	Reduced rate	Full rate
Total	6.95	19.25
To National Insurance Branches	3.85	14.25
Old age and survivors	1.52	5.89
Long term care	0.05	0.31
General disability	0.37	2.28
Accident	0.02	0.12
Work injury	0.37	1.80
Maternity	0.15	1.36
Child	1.32	2.08
Unemployment	0.04	0.36
Bankruptcy	0.01	0.05
Under Other Laws	3.10	5.00
Health tax	3.10	5.00

Counseling for the Elderly

The Counseling Service for the Elderly was set up in 1972 as a demonstration project of the National Insurance Institute, at the initiative of Mr. Leo Blumensohn. His idea was to have volunteer pensioners support other elderly persons and help them take up their rights at the NII and at other organizations. The Service began modestly with a handful of volunteers working in three local branches. Over the years it expanded considerably, and today includes thousands of volunteers in all local branches throughout the country.

The Service is a professional one, managed by social workers whose expertise is in the fields of gerontology and volunteerism. Its aim is to provide support and assistance to the elderly living in the community, by means of existing resources. The basic perception underlying its work is that there should be a direct link between the elderly person and the volunteer – elderly to elderly – in order that the volunteer be able to understand the elderly person's inner feelings stemming from problems related to old age.

The volunteers are required to undergo a four-month training course, during which they learn about the perception of the NII, the special needs of the elderly, the changes that occur at this age, and the skills needed in work with the elderly.

The work of the Service includes:

- Preliminary home visits – Hundreds of visits are conducted throughout the country to predefined population groups, in accordance with information from NII data banks. Groups targeted for these visits include: recipients of long-term care benefits, persons whose claim for this benefit was deferred, elderly widows, the very old (over 88), etc. In the course of the visits, conducted by specially-trained volunteers, questionnaires are filled out by means of which we may ascertain whether or not the elderly receive proper treatment, and then act accordingly.
- Regular home visits – a continued link to elderly persons in need. The volunteers assigned to these elderly become their main intermediaries and defendants.
- Counseling – Elderly persons and members of their families visit the offices of the Service and are provided with counseling on all their problems, mediating services (both with the NII and other organizations), and above all, a listening ear.
- Support groups for widows/widowers – aimed at lifting the widows and widowers out of their loneliness and depression, and helping them get back to daily functioning and social involvement.

- Support groups for spouses of ill or handicapped elderly – aimed at easing the burden of intensive care.
- Joint projects in the community – in accordance with the specific needs of the town or community. The aim is to strengthen the elderly who live in the community, providing them assistance in a wide range of fields.
- Information days for new pensioners – during which lectures on free-time culture are given, and information is provided on a variety of topics, such as community services and activities and rights in social security.
- Information days for widows who have recently become widowed, informing them of their rights in social security and in the community, including a lecture on the legal aspects of widowhood, and providing them with the opportunity to participate in a support group.

All services of the Counseling Service for the Elderly are offered free of charge.

National Insurance Funds

The National Insurance Funds are national funds for the development of social services for at-risk populations. The Funds provide professional assistance and funding for infrastructure development projects and programs to promote and improve the quality of life for the NII's main target populations: people with disabilities, the elderly, children and young people at risk, victims of work accidents, recipients of income support and the unemployed. The Funds' work is anchored in the National Insurance Law.

Requests for assistance come through two main channels: following publication of an NII call to the public, or inquiries initiated by various bodies.

Innovative Social Ventures Incubator (Hub)

In 2015, together with Joint Distribution Committee - JDC Israel, the Funds worked to establish an incubator for social ventures, intended to locate innovative social initiatives and assist with their preliminary development, so that following a pilot period they could be absorbed into NII and JDC Funds. The first incubator cycle is due to start towards the end of 2016.

Submitting requests online

As part of the effort to digitize Government services, since 2015 the Funds have been working to develop a system for submitting requests online. The system, set up through Microsoft, will increase access to the Funds and their transparency for the general public, improve communications between bodies submitting the requests and improve efficiency in the Funds. The system is expected to go live on the NII website by the end of 2016.

The Fund for Development Services for the Disabled

This Fund helps local authorities and associations in the third sector to develop services for the severely or moderately disabled that allow them to integrate into the workforce and into society as a whole and to improve their welfare. The assistance is provided to develop infrastructure and finance equipment in a range of areas: frameworks for young children, special education, occupational rehabilitation, sheltered housing in the community, leisure activities, sport and maintaining a healthy lifestyle, improving physical conditions and quality of life in institutions, and

purchasing equipment to aid in rehabilitation and accessibility in various locations and public buildings, etc.

Support for research and development of technological solutions for people with disabilities

In 2015 the Fund for Development Services for the Disabled launched a program to provide funding for research and development of technological solutions for people with disabilities, in conjunction with the Office of the Chief Scientist in the Ministry of the Economy. The venture was intended to increase the integration of people with disabilities into society and the labor market.

In 2015 there was a significant increase in the Fund's investment in three areas – housing in the community, leisure and special education, and more aid for frameworks dealing with people on the autistic spectrum, who suffer from a real lack of suitable services. In all, the Fund helped 22 frameworks designed for the autistic spectrum: rehabilitation day-care centers were established, and equipment was purchased for special-education schools and kindergartens, and for adult treatment centers and sheltered housing.

Long-term Care Fund

This Fund helps organizations to develop services for the elderly in the community (for example, day-centers) and in institutions (public and private care-homes). The assistance is intended for infrastructure and equipment, and to develop innovative models for the elderly and infirm in the community and institutions. The Fund also helps to develop preventative programs for old people at risk of physical decline: smart panic buttons for people with dementia, nursing services at home, and support groups for families who are carers. The Fund also develops training programs for staff who work in care homes.

Since 2015, continuing the work of recent years, the Fund helped in the following areas: development and upgrading care-homes for the elderly according to the 2016 Ministry of Health plans, establishing and renovating day-care centers for the mentally and physically frail; defining innovative and experimental programs (operating departments for the frail elderly in care-homes using the housing cluster system, operating day-centers using the flexible work model (second shift), and a program for families caring for disabled and isolated old people); as part of the national program to deal with Alzheimer's disease – developing a 24 hour call-center for sufferers of dementia and a support program for their main carers. The Fund also

extended its combined model for dealing with old people with complex needs living in the community to another four towns.

The Fund for Demonstration Projects

The Fund for Demonstration Projects helps public and private organizations to develop social services with an innovative, experimental element for a range of populations, most defined as at-risk: families living with poverty and unemployment, the elderly, people with special needs, and so on. The Fund provides professional knowledge and experience in development welfare services and participates in the costs of the service and the accompanying research. In many ventures the Fund operates in conjunction with Government ministries.

Since 2015 the Fund has participated in the following ventures: programs to reduce loneliness among the elderly in the community, encouraging physical activity for the disabled, setting up integrated spaces in urban parks, setting up local and regional centers for children and youth suffering from emotional and mental problems (using the one-space model developed in Australia), developing the accessible city model with a training center for professionals and for the public on issues of accessibility in urban spaces (jointly with the Fund for Development Services for the Disabled).

The Fund also published a manifesto which attracted 150 suggested programs, which are currently being evaluated, and plans have started to develop an incubator for social initiatives in collaboration with the JDC.

Fund for At-Risk Children and Youth

The Fund for At-Risk Children and Youth acts to promote work with youngsters under the age of 18 who are at-risk due to neglect, abuse, violence or sexual abuse, including juvenile offenders, drug users and young people exposed to dangerous living conditions. In special cases, the Fund also works with at-risk youth up to the age of 23. The Fund assists in the development and assimilation of models and programs tailored to their needs, and works with Government ministries (Welfare, Education, Health, Immigrant Absorption and the Economy), private funds, public organizations and commercial organizations.

In 2015, the Fund was active in the following areas: **Spark for a Sure Future** – preparation for work and independent living for young people in civilian and military service; developing a model for intervention among neglected children and their families (in conjunction with the Rashi Foundation and the Ministry of Welfare); and

developing a model for intervention and empowerment for youngsters in the Ethiopian community.

The Manof Fund for Prevention of Work Accidents

The Manof Fund finances activities for the prevention of work accidents and programs to encourage health and safety at work: research in the field of health and safety at work and implementation of the findings in the workplace; developing and improving innovative safety measures; identifying professional risks and hazards in the workplace; participating in the purchase of innovative safety measures; and providing information, training and publicity on these matters.

In 2015 the Fund was engaged in promoting health and safety in agriculture, preventing exposure to noise, promoting safety at work, and helping to draw up new regulations on safety at work and promotion of workers' health.

International Conventions

An international social security convention is an agreement signed between Israel and another country to maintain the social rights of those who move from one country to the other and to prevent duplicate payment of national insurance contributions by Israelis living and working in the other country.

Israel has signed conventions with the following countries: Great Britain, Holland, France, Belgium, Austria, Germany, Sweden, Switzerland, Denmark, Finland, Uruguay, Czech Republic, Norway, Bulgaria, Slovakia and Romania. A convention to regulate and prevent duplicate national insurance payments only has been signed with Canada.

The conventions apply to residents of Israel and citizens of the other countries and their families, and each treaty specifies the branches of insurance it covers. The broadest include most branches of insurance: Old age, survivors, disability, victims of work injury, children and maternity.

New Convention with Italy

In December 2015, a new convention with Italy came into force, which replaced a limited one that had included only exemption from national insurance payments for workers sent by their employers to the other country. The new convention regulates the prevention of duplicate payments as follows: a worker sent to the other country by his employer for up to 24 months is insured in the sending country. By mutual agreement, this period can be extended for a further 24 months. Diplomats, public employees and mobile employees in transport industries, aviation and shipping, are insured for an unlimited time in the sending country.

Future Changes

Customer Service

- ✓ Continuing to develop a new system to operate the call-center.
- ✓ Development automatic services and call routing.
- ✓ Adapting the **Tevel System** for various channels (counter, self-service, online order of forms etc.)
- ✓ Connecting additional local branches to the online appointment booking system.
- ✓ Further development of online services for transparency in handling claims.
- ✓ Submitting claims by telephone.
- ✓ **Disabled for Disabled** – recruiting disabled people to help others fill out forms.

Long-term care

- ✓ Implementing the next stage of the Ben Yehuda Committee's recommendations for assessing dependency: preparing an interactive assessment form; purchasing uniforms for assessors; increasing cooperation with doctors in the community; information for the professionals and the general public; training for geriatric specialists; changes of assessments by geriatric experts; changing the tests for those aged 90 and over.
- ✓ Expanding the fast tracks for determining eligibility.
- ✓ Moving eligibility for the long-term care benefit forward to the eighth day following the request (instead of the first day of the following month).
- ✓ Operating the **First Class** project in Soroka Hospital.

Reserve Service

Under the present law, payments for reservists in cases of less than 60 days between one period of reserve duty and the next are calculated as the greater of: income in the quarter prior to the term of duty, or income in the quarter prior to the previous term of duty, with no retroactive restriction.

- ✓ An amendment was proposed to limit withdrawal of past income to one year only, beyond which reserve pay would be calculated on income in the quarter prior to the start of duty (the amendment does not affect the air crew agreement).
- ✓ An amendment was proposed to limit claims for reserve duty pay to the last seven years – the usual obsolescence period in Israel (instead of back to 1992).

The Funds

Long-term Care Fund

- ✓ Developing a model to integrate the work of various Government ministries relating to the care of elderly people with complex health and social needs.
- ✓ Operating a national program to deal with senile dementia.
- ✓ Developing innovative technologies to support frail elderly people.

Demonstration Projects Fund

- ✓ Extending the **Revolution in Higher Education** project to institutions of technology and professional training courses.
- ✓ Programs to promote a healthy lifestyle for people with disabilities.

Fund for At-Risk Children and Youth

- ✓ Preparatory courses for at-risk children and youth.
- ✓ Programs for special population groups, such as young girls at risk.

Fund for Development of Services for the Disabled

- ✓ Encouraging residents to move from Ministry of Welfare hostels to living in the community.
- ✓ Encouraging people with disabilities to integrate into communal leisure activities (with the emphasis on community centers).
- ✓ Development support technologies for people with disabilities.