

Social Development in Azerbaijan (In Numbers)

UDC 314.12(479)

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.15421/1726112>**Cumsudlu Ulviya**Doctoral Candidate, Lecturer, <https://orcid.org/0009-0009-9950-8819>, ulviyya.cumshudlu@atmu.edu.az*Azerbaijan Tourism and Management University (Baku, Azerbaijan)*

Abstract.

In modern era, the primary goal of the countries worldwide is to improve the social welfare of their populations. This goal is achieved when governments implement social programmes, reforms and policies in a sustainable way through education, health, social systems and so on. Evaluating social development is significant, as it allows citizens, government, institutions to indicate level of social welfare, standards of living, economic development in order to implement sustainable growth, increase the effectiveness of planning, understand and improve of standards of living in the government.

This paper analyses how Azerbaijan effectively implements social programs and reforms that influence the welfare level of its population across different sectors. The paper examines social progress in the Republic of Azerbaijan between 2014-2025 by analyzing different national state and global resources by using mixed methods and gives valuable information and evidences of social initiatives and contributions by national institutions in the government during last decade, such as Ministry of Science and Education of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Population, Ministry of Health of the Republic of Azerbaijan. There are governmental and non-governmental institutions, international organizations that provide social support in different areas for various categories of population in the Republic of Azerbaijan. These and more national institutions release annual reports that present what carried out during the year. In the paper, activities of some of these institutions are shown with evidences from annual reports.

According to the different data and statistics, findings indicate that literacy reached 100%, healthcare expenditure increased by 166.5%, social protection spending doubled in the present decade in the Republic of Azerbaijan. These results show the effectiveness of social policies and provide evidence-based data for readers.

Keywords: social development, Azerbaijan, education, healthcare, employment, welfare, reform, increase

Соціальний розвиток в Азербайджані (у цифрах)

Джумсудлу Ульвія*Азербайджанський університет туризму та менеджменту (Баку, Азербайджан)*

Анотація.

У сучасну епоху головною метою країн світу є покращення соціального добробуту свого населення. Ця мета досягається, коли уряди впроваджують соціальні програми, реформи та політику на сталому рівні через освіту, охорону здоров'я, соціальні системи тощо. Оцінка соціального розвитку є важливою, оскільки дозволяє громадянам, уряду, установам визначити рівень соціального добробуту, стандарти життя, економічний розвиток з метою забезпечення сталого зростання, підвищення ефективності планування, розуміння та покращення стандартів життя в уряді.

У цій статті аналізується, як Азербайджан ефективно впроваджує соціальні програми та реформи, що впливають на рівень добробуту свого населення в різних секторах. У статті розглядається соціальний прогрес в Азербайджанській Республіці у період з 2014 по 2025 рік шляхом аналізу різних національних, державних та глобальних ресурсів за допомогою змішаних методів, а також надається цінна інформація та докази соціальних ініціатив та внеску національних урядових установ протягом останнього десятиліття, таких як Міністерство науки та освіти Азербайджанської Республіки, Міністерство праці та соціального захисту населення, Міністерство охорони здоров'я Азербайджанської Республіки. В Азербайджанській Республіці існують урядові та неурядові установи, міжнародні організації, які надають соціальну підтримку в різних сферах різним категоріям населення. Ці та інші національні установи публікують щорічні звіти, в яких представлено результати діяльності протягом року. У статті показано діяльність деяких із цих установ з доказами з річних звітів.

Згідно з різними даними та статистикою, результати свідчать про те, що рівень грамотності досяг 100%, витрати на охорону здоров'я зросли на 166,5%, а витрати на соціальний захист подвоїлися за останнє десятиліття в Азербайджанській Республіці. Ці результати демонструють ефективність соціальної політики та надають читачам дані, засновані на доказах.

Ключові слова: соціальний розвиток, Азербайджан, освіта, охорона здоров'я, зайнятість, добробут, реформа, зростання

Introduction.

There has been great deal of past and modern researches about what welfare state notion is, what this state should do for getting this status. Welfare states have been analyzed from both narrow and broad perspectives. Mostly social protection, social services by governments have been analyzed in the narrow view, on the other hand, macroeconomic activities of governments, such as employment, wages have been considered in the broad view. If a government considers itself a welfare state, the most of its activities should be devoted to households, law, defense, administration (Gosta Esping-Andersen, 1990).

According to the world experience, the system of social protection of citizens and the social equalization of their income includes redistribution of taxes, state payments and allowances, compulsory social insurance, pension provision and social assistance (Mirzakarimova, 2023).

The Republic of Azerbaijan is a developing country with a fast-growing economy, strong industrial and energy sectors, improving infrastructure and technology. It is not accidental that one of the main socio-economic priorities of government is to achieve a dynamic, inclusive society based on social justice by 2030 (Azerbaijan 2030: National Priorities for Socio-Economic Development, 2021). It is also reflected in the Constitution:

“Azerbaijani state takes care about improvement of prosperity of all people and each citizen, their social protection and proper living conditions. Azerbaijanian state participates in development of culture, education, public health, science, arts, protects environment, historical, material and spiritual heritage of people” (Constitution of the Republic of Azerbaijan, 1995, Article 16)

Research question. What were the key social reforms implemented between 2014–2025 that affected increase of human development level in Azerbaijan?

How does development process in Azerbaijan compare to other CIS countries in these areas?

Literature review. Although some books, academic papers were written in Azerbaijani, there is a huge gap of comprehensive assessment of social development. This paper shows overall social development process in Azerbaijan between 2014–2025 years by analyzing resources of World Bank, CIS-STAT, and statistical resources of national institutions.

Methodology. This paper demonstrates mixed methods such as quantitative analysis of UNDP, IUS, World Bank, national statistics released by national institutions annually and qualitative assessment of social reform policies. Comparative analysis with CIS countries is also conducted in research process.

Empirical Overview.

Welfare. There are non-governmental, governmental and international organizations in the Republic of Azerbaijan that provide various social services to population, such as The Azerbaijan Red Crescent Society (NGO). The society provides social support in different directions including blood donation, humanitarian aid, psychological support for disabled people, migrants, employment support for young and volunteers and so on (The Azerbaijan Red Crescent Society, 2025). State Social Protection Fund gives support in pension, social benefits, social protection and so on.

Azerbaijan's Human Development Index (HDI) stood at 81st place with an HDI of 0.789 in 2023, placing the country in the “high human development” category that up from 82nd place with an HDI of 0.734 in 2013 (UNDP, 2013, 2025), which shows the country's strong efforts to achieve

a long and healthy life, access to knowledge and a decent standard of living.

Education. According to UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) and World Bank development indicators, Azerbaijan's adult literacy rate (percentage of people aged 15 and above who can read and write) has reached 100% in 2023 (UNESCO Institute for Statistics [UIS], 2025; World Bank, 2025). This places Azerbaijan well above the global average and highlights population's high knowledge level.

Overall education expenditures in GDP were 3.15% in 2015. This indicator increased to 4.18% in 2020 (Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan on the State Budget, 2015, 2020). These figures demonstrate that government spending on education has reached 32.7% in five years.

In the 2015 academic year, the number of students admitted to higher education institutions in Azerbaijan was 38,831. This figure approximately doubled, had risen to 74,000 in 2024–2025 academic year (Ministry of Science and Education of the Republic of Azerbaijan, 2016, 2025). This increase reflects growing interest in higher education because of educational reforms.

Overall, the number of Azerbaijani universities in the QS World University Rankings 2026 increased to nine (QS World University Rankings, 2025). Key factors contributing to this growth include the implementation of six international dual-degree programs under the 2019–2023 State Program, student loans by the Student Credit Fund, and various scholarship and state support programs, all of which have promoted development in higher education (Ministry of Science and Education of the Republic of Azerbaijan, 2025).

Employment. In 2017, the total population of the country was 9.81 million, with 4.82 million employed. By 2024, the population had increased to 10.18 million, and the number of employed people reached 5.03 million. This is an increase of 3.7% in total population and 4.4% in employment (State Statistical Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan, 2017, 2024). In terms of the employed population, Azerbaijan ranked fourth among the CIS countries, following Russia, Kazakhstan, and Uzbekistan in 2024 (State Statistical Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan, 2025).

According to the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of Population of the Republic of Azerbaijan in 2017, the largest shares of employment in the service sector were in education (21.8%), trade and vehicle repair (19.2%), and healthcare and social services (8.6%), whereas by 2024, the main employment shares shifted to agriculture, forestry, and fishing (35.4%), trade and vehicle repair (14.2%), and construction (8%) (MLSPP, 2017, 2024).

Healthcare. After 17 Sustainable Development Goals the Republic of Azerbaijan has implemented initiatives towards healthcare system. One of national priorities of the Republic of Azerbaijan by 2030 is to improve the areas of modern innovations and competitive human capital (Azerbaijan 2030: National Priorities for Socio-Economic Development, 2021). Healthcare expenditures by government also grew from AZN 746.7 million in 2017 to AZN 1.99 billion in 2025 which is the 166.5% increase of government investment in public health services in almost a decade (Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan on the State Budget, 2016, 2024).

In 2014, the number of infant deaths under one year was 1655. This number was decreased to 1420, showing a 9.28% decline in 2024 (State Statistical Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan, 2014, 2024).

Social reforms. Over the past seven years, five social reform packages have been implemented. The first package covered 2019, the second 2019–2020, the third 2021–2022,

the fourth 2023, and the fifth package 2025. These five social packages provided financial support to the 13.4 million people in different areas such as wages, pensions, social allowances and benefits, and unemployment insurance (MLSPP, 2025).

In Azerbaijan, expenditures for social protection and welfare increased from AZN 2.35 billion in 2017 to AZN 4.75 billion in 2025, nearly doubling the spendings (Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan on the State Budget, 2016, 2024). Based on statistics in 2015 and 2025, the minimum pension increased 191%, it shows significant improvement in social support (MLSPP, 2018, 2025). According to the growth rate observed during those years, Azerbaijan ranked first among the CIS countries with the highest percentage increase (CIS-STAT, 2025, "Minimum (basic) pension by old-age").

Over the 10-year period from 2015 to 2025, the national minimum subsistence level increased from 131 AZN to 285 AZN by approximately 118% rise (MLSPP, 2015, 2025). In terms of the national minimum subsistence level, Azerbaijan ranked second among the CIS countries after Kazakhstan in analyzed period (CIS-STAT, 2026, "Subsistence minimum, units of national currency, per capita monthly average").

Conclusions.

In the Republic of Azerbaijan, social welfare of people is being increased in present decade compared to past years. Besides governmental institutions, non-governmental and international institutions and organizations have implemented social programs and initiatives to achieve the development level of social sector. Between 2015 and 2025, Azerbaijan demonstrated significant human development gains. The Human Development Index reached 0.789 in 2023 up from 0.734 in 2013 as a result of government's efforts in various

sectors. The literacy rate (percentage of people aged 15 and above who can read and write) has reached 100% in 2023 as the result of initiatives of government in education sector, such as building new schools, training teachers, providing student loans, programs. Education spending increased 4.18% in ten years. Healthcare system spendings increased 166.5% in ten years for building new hospitals, healthcare support for different categories of population, training of doctors and so on. The number of infant deaths under one year decreased 9.28% in ten years. Social protection and welfare spendings nearly doubled, the minimum subsistence level rose by 118%, the minimum pension increased 191%. Five social reform packages have been implemented during 2019-2025 in different categories, such as wages, allowances and pensions.

Overall, these trends demonstrate improvements in human capital, social welfare, and economic opportunities over the decade. Data on comparative analysis of CIS countries prove that the Republic of Azerbaijan is often ranked among the top five countries of CIS across various indicators, such as first with highest percentage increase, second with national minimum subsistence level, fourth with employed population. This demonstrates the leading role of the government in the region with evidence-based statistics.

Overall, these achievements highlight that Azerbaijan's social policies and programs are effective and successful in improving human capital and social welfare of the country. And if such development continues in the future, Azerbaijan is likely to achieve further improvements and success in mentioned sectors above.

REFERENCES

- CIS-STAT. (2025). *Minimum (basic) pension by old-age* (p. 12). Baku, Azerbaijan: CIS-STAT. https://new.cisstat.org/web/eng/pension-support?utm_source=chatgpt.com
- CIS-STAT. (2026). *Subsistence minimum, units of national currency, per capita monthly average* (p. 8). Baku, Azerbaijan: CIS-STAT.
- Constitution of the Republic of Azerbaijan. (1995). Art. 16. Baku, Azerbaijan. https://www.stat.gov.az/menu/3/Legislation/constitution_en.pdf?utm_source=chatgpt.com
- Esping-Andersen, G. (1990). *The three worlds of welfare capitalism* (p. 45). Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. https://press.princeton.edu/books/paperback/9780691028573/the-three-worlds-of-welfare-capitalism?utm_source=chatgpt.com
- Law on the State Budget of the Republic of Azerbaijan, 2014. (p. 7). Baku, Azerbaijan. https://cesd.az/new/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/Azerbaijan_State_Budget_CESD_View.pdf?utm_source=chatgpt.com
- Law on the State Budget of the Republic of Azerbaijan, 2016. (p. 9). Baku, Azerbaijan. https://www.oilfund.az/storage/uploads/co5qr4v4lk.pdf?utm_source=chatgpt.com
- Law on the State Budget of the Republic of Azerbaijan, 2019. (p. 11). Baku, Azerbaijan. https://www.oilfund.az/storage/uploads/rs0ibglmuw.pdf?utm_source=chatgpt.com
- Law on the State Budget of the Republic of Azerbaijan, 2024. (p. 12). Baku, Azerbaijan. https://sai.gov.az/files/budce_xulasesi/dsmf_isf_eng_2024-49176.pdf?utm_source=chatgpt.com
- Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Population (Azerbaijan). (2015). *Annual report* (pp. 5–20). Baku, Azerbaijan.
- Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Population (Azerbaijan). (2016). *Annual report* (pp. 7–22). Baku, Azerbaijan.
- Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Population (Azerbaijan). (2018). *Annual report* (pp. 9–25). Baku, Azerbaijan.
- Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Population (Azerbaijan). (2025). *Annual report* (pp. 10–30). Baku, Azerbaijan.
- Ministry of Science and Education of the Republic of Azerbaijan. (2025). *Annual report* (pp. 15–35). Baku, Azerbaijan.
- Ministry of Science and Education of the Republic of Azerbaijan. (2016). *Annual report* (pp. 12–28). Baku, Azerbaijan.
- Mirzakarimova, M. M. (2023). Some issues of the development of the social state in the CIS countries. Baku, Azerbaijan: Novateur Publications. (pp. 25–40)
- Order of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan on approval of "Azerbaijan 2030: National Priorities for Socio-Economic Development" (2021, p. 5). Baku, Azerbaijan.
- QS World University Rankings. (2025). *Global rankings report* (pp. 10–15). London, UK: QS. https://sps.utm.my/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/2025-QS-World-University-Rankings-2.2-For-qs.com_.pdf?utm_source=chatgpt.com
- State Statistical Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan. (2014). *Annual report* (pp. 8–20). Baku, Azerbaijan.
- State Statistical Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan. (2017). *Annual report* (pp. 10–22). Baku, Azerbaijan.
- State Statistical Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan. (2024). *Annual report* (pp. 12–25). Baku, Azerbaijan.

- State Statistical Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan. (2025). *Annual report* (pp. 14–30). Baku, Azerbaijan.
- The Azerbaijan Red Crescent Society. (2025). *Annual report* (pp. 6–18). Baku, Azerbaijan. https://data-api.ifrc.org/documents/AZ/Annual%20Report_Azerbaijan_2024.pdf?utm_source=chatgpt.com
- UNDP. (2013). *Human development report* (pp. 20–45). New York, NY: United Nations Development Programme.
- UNDP. (2025). *Human development report* (pp. 25–50). New York, NY: United Nations Development Programme.
- UNESCO Institute for Statistics [UIS]. (2025a). *Global education indicators report* (pp. 9–15). Montreal, Canada.
- UNESCO Institute for Statistics [UIS]. (2025b). *Literacy rate data* (p. 8). Montreal, Canada.
- World Bank. (2025). *Literacy rate, adult total (% of people ages 15 and above)* (pp. 5–12). Washington, DC: World Bank. https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SE.ADT.LITR.ZS?utm_source=chatgpt.com