

Scientific Journal of Applied Social and Clinical Science

Acceptance date: 03/07/2025

BRAZILIAN SOCIAL SECURITY: A DISCUSSION ON THE 2019 REFORM AND SPECIAL RETIREMENT

Diego Saraiva Sá

Master in Law, Governance and Public Policy
from the Universidade Salvador

Nadialice Francischini de Souza

PhD in Social Relations and New Rights from
the Universidade Federal da Bahia

Manoel Joaquim Fernandes de Barros

Full Professor in the Postgraduate Programs
in Administration (PPGA) and in Regional
and Urban Development (PPGA) at
Universidade Salvador

Hélder Uzêda Castro

Full Professor in the Postgraduate Programs
in Administration (PPGA) and in Law,
Governance and Public Policies (PPGDGPP)
at Universidade Salvador



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ABSTRACT: This article analyzes the impacts of the 2019 Brazilian Social Security Reform on the rights to health and education, with an emphasis on special retirement. The research begins with the historical trajectory of social rights and the formation of the Welfare State in Brazil, highlighting Social Security as a fundamental instrument of social justice and worker protection. Using a qualitative, exploratory, and descriptive approach, based on a bibliographic and documentary review, the study examines the changes promoted by Constitutional Amendment No. 103/2019. Among the main changes are the requirement of a minimum age for granting special retirement, the prohibition of converting special time into common time, and the modification in the calculation of benefits. The results indicate that such measures hinder access to special retirement and weaken its protective function, by imposing greater time of exposure to unhealthy working conditions. This constitutes a violation of constitutional principles such as the prohibition of social regression and solidarity. Furthermore, there is a worsening of workers' health, an increase in judicialization, and adverse economic and social consequences. It is concluded that, despite being presented as a measure of fiscal sustainability, the reform represents a setback in the guarantee of fundamental rights, compromising human dignity and social justice established by the Federal Constitution of 1988.

Keyword: Social Security Reform; Special Retirement; Social Rights.

INTRODUCTION

The recognition of a list of rights and freedoms inherent to the human person in Western civilization was a long and turbulent process, intrinsically linked to the notion that the State is designed to fulfill the person and not the other way around. Historically, the desire for guarantees of social rights was possible

thanks to social movements, union struggles, the actions of political parties and class struggles, which made it possible to formulate new fundamental rights of the first and second dimension, which are civil, political, social and economic rights, agreed upon in the Virginia Declaration of Rights (1776) and the French Declaration (1789), under the banner of liberty, equality and fraternity.

The objective of society was to redefine the State and transform it into an instrument that guarantees social well-being and social justice, so that social and economic rights would be indistinctly and generically guaranteed, providing greater coverage to both those who were in a state of vulnerability and those who were of advanced age. In Brazil, the first Constitution to explicitly address the social order was in 1934, which laid the foundations for what would come to be known as the Welfare State in the country. Strongly influenced by the Weimar Constitution of 1919, the Constitution (1934) incorporated Title IV, dedicated to the "Economic and Social Order", consisting of 29 articles that outlined the framework for this new order.

The impact of the German model was so profound that the eminent jurist Josaphat Marinho went so far as to state that Brazil had experienced a true "breath of socialization". This socialization movement continued to be reflected in subsequent constitutions, with special emphasis on the Magna Carta of 1946 and 1988, which maintained and improved the integration of the social order into their text.

Social Security emerges in this context as one of the greatest achievements of these socially-biased constitutions. The concept of social security, consolidated with the institution of the Welfare State, represents not only a legal evolution, but also a response to the demands of a society that, over the decades, has come to recognize the need for state protection against

the misfortunes that affect workers. In this way, Social Security not only ensures fundamental rights, but also embodies the constitutional commitment to social justice, reflecting the economic and cultural transformations that shaped Brazil throughout the 20th century.

As a fundamental right, it is a system within the social guarantee, through the payment of a certain contribution and mandatory membership. The subsistence of those who find themselves in vulnerable situations is provided by Social Security due to factors such as incapacity for work, involuntary unemployment, advanced age, contribution time, family responsibilities, imprisonment or death of the person who provided them with financial support. This social protection is implemented through various benefits, including retirement benefits, assistance for illness, accident or imprisonment, maternity pay, family allowance and survivor's pension.

These assistance mechanisms not only represent an economic support network, but also reflect the State's commitment to mitigating the impacts of the adversities faced by insured individuals and their dependents. Through this system, the aim is to ensure not only the maintenance of a minimum standard of living, but also the preservation of the social fabric, by offering institutional responses to individual crises that could otherwise result in profound injustices. In this context, it is understood that maintaining this social security is fundamental in today's Brazilian society; as well as the delicate situation in which people who were previously economically active and are now retired find themselves; further aggravated by a dangerous labor context in which certain individuals found themselves when they were active, this research was dedicated to questioning how the granting of the so-called Special Retirement occurs after the 2019 Pension Reform.

With the 2019 Pension Reform, a wave of discussions emerged around the topic of special retirement, generating a significant increase in the population's interest in this issue and its particularities. This movement awakened a sense of urgency in relation to understanding the changes, especially with regard to the types of retirement that, despite being differentiated, still remain relatively obscure to many, within the scope of this article.

METHODS

A qualitative study that sought to investigate the impacts of the 2019 Brazilian Social Security Reform on special retirements, using an exploratory and descriptive approach, based on a documentary and bibliographic analysis, based on theoretical, legislative and regulatory sources to understand the changes introduced and their consequences for workers. Regarding the nature of the research, this work adopted a qualitative approach, as it aimed to explore the contexts and implications of the social security reform in the context of special retirements, using qualitative analysis, as it allowed a deeper understanding of the interactions between social security law, public policies and the protection of workers exposed to unhealthy conditions.

The exploratory nature of the study was due to the need to investigate a field undergoing recent transformation, and the descriptive nature, to offer a detailed view of the changes and their effects. Regarding the research procedures, we included books, scientific articles and dissertations that address topics such as social security, special retirement and worker protection. The documentary research involved the analysis of legislation, constitutional amendments, legal norms and other official documents that regulate the social security system in Brazil, with special attention to Constitutional Amendment No. 103/2019. The methodology also focused on identifying

the main changes brought about by the 2019 reform, such as the minimum age requirement for special retirement, the prohibition of converting special time into regular time and the new way of calculating benefits.

The objective was to verify whether these changes resulted in a strengthening or a reduction of workers' rights, and, within the delimitation of the universe and sample, the universe of analysis included the social security reforms in Brazil since the 1988 Constitution, with a focus on special retirements. Although this study did not involve quantitative research with field data collection, it sought to analyze the legislative impact and its implications for workers who are entitled to the special retirement benefit. The sample included the main regulatory changes brought about by Constitutional Amendment No. 103/2019 and their legal repercussions. Regarding the data collection instruments and procedures, these were collected from a bibliographic and documentary survey, using the following keywords: social security reform, social security, special retirement, protected subjects and special retirement funding.

The study did not use interviews or questionnaires, but rather an in-depth analysis of legislative and doctrinal texts, with data collection aimed at identifying the most relevant regulatory changes and understanding their practical effects on workers. The data collected were organized into three main areas, which were: (i) minimum age and exposure time: the new minimum age requirement for granting special retirement was studied, relating it to the time of exposure to harmful agents; (ii) prohibition of converting special time into regular time: the impact of this prohibition on workers who could be harmed by the impossibility of conversion was investigated; and (iii) new calculation of the benefit: the new calculation formula was analyzed, with the aim of verifying whether the changes benefit or harm

the worker. Finally, these areas were analyzed from the legal, social and economic perspectives, in order to assess the effects of the reform both in the legislative context and in the practical lives of workers.

The implications were assessed based on criteria of justice and protection of fundamental rights, and there was no need to repeat collections, since the documentary and bibliographic survey was comprehensive and focused on recognized sources in the area. All sources and documents consulted were validated according to the established academic criteria.

RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

After Constitutional Amendment No. 103/2019, special retirement underwent changes that made it more difficult for workers exposed to harmful conditions to access it. The reform introduced criteria such as a minimum age requirement, which did not previously exist, and a "double filter" to assess eligibility, which harmed these workers socially and economically. The conversion of special and ordinary time was also prohibited, making the benefit less accessible. Previously, special retirement was a compensatory benefit created (1960) with the aim of removing workers from harmful environments after 15, 20 or 25 years of exposure, protecting their health and physical integrity.

The social perspective of the issue is extremely sensitive, given the complexity and challenges faced, which can lead to a significant number of workers not having access to special retirement, which impacts their health and quality of life. According to Ribeiro (2020), it was intended to "guarantee the insured compensation for the wear and tear resulting from working in harmful conditions". Ladenthin (2021) highlighted that exposure to harmful agents, not disability, was the criterion for granting the benefit. The reform

established a minimum age of 55, 58 and 60 years for the periods of 15, 20 and 25 years of exposure, respectively. Thus, in addition to the time of exposure, a minimum age was required and the calculation of the benefit was changed, prioritizing the financial sustainability of the social security system over health protection. Kertzman (2019) states that this change compromises the protection that the benefit should guarantee.

Special retirement, created for workers in conditions that are harmful to their health, was intended to compensate for the wear and tear caused by continuous exposure to unhealthy, dangerous or arduous environments, and was granted after 15, 20 or 25 years of work. Its granting was justified by the need to protect the health of workers, removing them from harmful environments before prolonged exposure caused irreparable damage. Constitutional Amendment No. 103/2019 brought changes that profoundly altered this logic. Now, in addition to the time of exposure, the granting of special retirement also requires compliance with a minimum age: 55, 58 and 60 years for activities of 15, 20 and 25 years of contribution, respectively.

It is concluded that workers will have to remain in adverse conditions for longer, compromising their health and exposing them to greater risks. According to Ladenthin (2021), this change brings significant extralegal consequences. From an economic point of view, prolonged exposure affects the ability to work, reducing the competitiveness of workers and often leading to job loss. With impaired health, retirement becomes the only source of income, and the value of the benefit, now lower, further compromises the livelihood of the worker and his family.

In terms of health, workers exposed to harmful agents suffer accelerated wear and tear on their bodies. Factors such as noise, heat, and chemical agents increase the need for me-

dical care and specific care, resulting in high health care costs. In addition, many workers lose their private health insurance when they are away from work, becoming dependent on the public system, which often does not have the capacity to provide them with adequate care. Socially, prolonged exposure also has psychological consequences. Workers who engage in intense and dangerous activities, as they approach old age, may feel useless when they can no longer perform their duties due to physical exhaustion. Poor health not only affects their self-esteem, but also requires greater family support, which can lead to situations of vulnerability and social exclusion.

The requirement of a minimum age for special retirement goes against the constitutional right to a safe, healthy, and dignified work environment, as established by article 225 of the Constitution. The definition of work environment encompasses both physical conditions, such as temperature and noise, as well as chemical and biological conditions, as well as psychological and safety aspects. Prolonged work in adverse conditions, as imposed by the reform, violates these rights, not only affecting the individual but also their family environment. Brazil ranks fourth in the world in terms of work accidents, which demonstrates significant failures in the protection of workers (National Association of Occupational Medicine, 2018). Ladenthin (2021) argues that the lack of planning and objective criteria to ensure health and safety at work violates human dignity and the social value of work. Keeping workers in harmful environments until they reach the minimum age established by the 2019 reform is harmful and negligent.

It is concluded that the 2019 Pension Reform violates three fundamental principles of Social Rights: (i) the Prohibition of Social Regression; (ii) Solidarity and Social Justice; and (iii) the Brotherhood. In addition to the social and legal issues, the economic justification for

the reform is also questionable. Furthermore, analysis of the data suggests that the restrictions imposed by the reform have complicated access to the benefit, increasing litigation.

Although the reform is justified by financial sustainability, it distorts the purpose of the benefit and imposes setbacks in the protection of workers. The intended savings, at the cost of workers' health and dignity, are disproportionate and irrational, in addition to potentially causing negative social and financial impacts, such as increased costs resulting from litigation and health treatments, also affecting families and society as a whole.

The 2019 Social Security Reform prohibited the conversion of special time into common time, which previously allowed workers in unhealthy conditions to convert 15, 20 or 25 years of work into common time, facilitating retirement based on contribution time, allowing retirement only for workers who complete the required 25 years and the minimum age. The ban on the conversion of special time removes the protection due to these workers, forcing them to remain longer in dangerous environments and disregarding the original function of special retirement, which is to protect the health of workers exposed to risks.

The Reform excluded the protection of workers' physical integrity, one of the main focuses of special retirement. In the context of social security, the aim has always been to protect the health of those exposed to dangerous or unhealthy environments, using terms such as "dangerousness" and "physical integrity". The Brazilian social security system is financed by contributions from companies, workers and other sources, according to article 195 of the Constitution. However, public opinion has been influenced by a view of a deficit in the social security system. Since the 1980s, imbalances and omissions by the State have contributed to a deficit in public accou-

nts, leading to the need to reform the system.

The Reform is considered to have brought additional barriers, making access to the benefit more difficult, especially for those who work in harmful conditions. The imposition of a minimum age disconnects the benefit from its compensatory function, forcing workers to remain longer in unhealthy environments. Although the financial justification drove the changes, rights such as health protection were negatively affected. One of the findings of this brief discussion was that the prohibition of converting special time into common time did not respect the acquired rights of those who were already in a position to benefit. In addition, the new calculation rules eliminated the advantage of special retirement.

THEORETICAL ASSUMPTIONS

The history of society shows that social protection originated in the family, where younger members cared for the elderly and disabled. This model was not sufficient for everyone and external support, generally voluntary and promoted by the Church, was limited. State intervention only became a reality in the 17th century with the Poor Law, which marked a turning point, transferring part of the responsibility to the State and beginning the institutionalization of social protection.

The Industrial Revolution brought about major social and economic transformations, highlighting the exploitation of workers and the absence of state regulation. This scenario led to the organization of the working class in search of better conditions, resulting in strikes and protests, which were fundamental to achieving basic rights. The State, noticing the growing discontent, began to intervene in labor relations, guaranteeing minimum rights and becoming an active agent in the promotion of social rights.

In Brazil, the protection system evolved slowly, requiring state intervention to correct

the flaws of unrestricted freedom, especially after the 1988 Constitution, which established new rights and social security rules. The social security system in any country requires constant adjustments to ensure the social protection of insured individuals and their dependents. In a context of rapid social and economic changes, it is crucial to reformulate policies to deal with the instability of employment levels and changes in life expectancy.

Beck (2003) emphasizes that social welfare depends on productivity and full employment, but the decline in birth rates and the increase in life expectancy make it difficult to maintain social security systems. This is a complex issue with global reach. In Brazil and other regions, social security reforms have been influenced by demographic changes and pressure from international organizations. According to Denise Lobato (2019), welfare systems have been eroded due to reforms, which have been more severe in Anglo-Saxon countries and less rigorous in Continental Europe. In Latin America, there has been a trend towards privatization of systems, as in the cases of Chile and Peru. In Brazil, increasing life expectancy and the COVID-19 pandemic have increased pressure on the system, requiring ongoing reviews of “advanced age” parameters and policies that ensure protection for an older and more vulnerable population.

Since the 1988 Constitution, several social security reforms have shaped the granting of benefits. Constitutional Amendment No. 20, of 1998, was a milestone in replacing the criterion of length of service with contribution time, aiming to mitigate public deficits. The reform established mandatory contributions, discouraging early retirements and ensuring greater sustainability. Constitutional Amendment No. 41, of 2003, brought changes focused on public servants and military personnel, such as the end of pay parity and the collection of social security contributions on higher

retirements, with the aim of balancing public accounts. In 2005, Amendment No. 47 relaxed transition rules, seeking to protect rights acquired by civil servants. Amendment No. 103/2019 introduced substantial changes to the Brazilian social security system, impacting the General Regime and the Special Regime. One of the most controversial changes was the “deconstitutionalization” of certain social security rights, allowing new rules to be approved by ordinary law. This flexibility raises concerns about the stability of insured persons’ rights.

The main changes in Amendment No. 103 include the introduction of a minimum retirement age, a new basis for calculating the benefit salary, and changes to disability pensions and survivors’ pensions. These changes aim to make social security more rigorous in order to control the fiscal deficit, although they may compromise the protection of vulnerable groups. In addition, Law No. 9,876 of 1999 introduced the social security factor to calculate pensions, encouraging insured individuals to postpone retirement in order to obtain higher benefits. This factor was replaced by Amendment No. 103/2019, which implemented a new calculation system.

In 2015, Law No. 13,135 changed the rules for survivor’s pensions, introducing stricter requirements to ensure greater fiscal control. Dependents of the deceased insured person became entitled to a pension depending on the duration of the marriage or stable union and the insured’s contribution period. The duration of the benefit also began to vary according to the age of the surviving spouse, with the aim of combating fraud and aligning the benefit with economic reality. These reforms and adjustments, carried out over the last few decades, seek to respond to the social and economic changes faced by the country.

However, the constant changes in the Brazilian social security system, although neces-

sary to ensure financial sustainability, raise questions about the balance between the need for reforms and the preservation of legal certainty and the rights acquired by citizens. To be effective, any public policy must be planned and discussed with society, ensuring its practical and financial implementation. Social Security in Brazil, guaranteed by the 1988 Constitution, is a fundamental right that requires positive action by the State.

In the General Social Security Regime, contributions are determined by article 201 of the Constitution and by laws no. 8,212/91 and no. 8,213/91. Financing depends on the entire society and aims to ensure financial and actuarial balance. However, this balance cannot compromise the protection of the insured. The great challenge of social security reforms is to balance financial sustainability with the maintenance of guaranteed social rights.

For Ávila (2016), legal certainty is manifested in expressions such as “to ensure”, “value”, “social harmony” and “order”, repeated throughout the constitutional text to reinforce its importance. Although the preamble has more political than legal value, it inspired the constituent to create mechanisms to guarantee stability and predictability in legal relations. According to Canotilho (1993), security is essential to direct human life autonomously. Legal certainty aims to protect the trust of citizens, promoting a stable environment, essential for the realization of fundamental rights.

SPECIAL RETIREMENT

Social rights, classified as second-generation rights, emerged as a response to the precarious conditions faced by the working class and the abuses of capitalism during the Industrial Revolution in the 19th century. These rights, such as health, education and social security, are positive rights that require state action for their implementation, promoting social well-being.

Matos (2016) highlights the emergence of the Social State, which broke with government passivity and implemented policies to protect workers, reducing the imbalance between employers and employees. Nascimento (2011) explains that labor legislation was developed with the aim of protecting workers, who were vulnerable to the economic power of the employer, and preventing excessive exploitation. The French Revolution and the emergence of large-scale industry highlighted the need for social reforms to balance labor relations.

At the international level, the rise of social rights and pressure from the working class led to the creation of innovative legislation. The 1917 Mexican Constitution introduced labor reforms, while the 1919 Weimar Constitution in Germany consolidated the Social Democratic State, establishing, for the first time, a social security system to protect workers against the risks of age, disability and hardship. At this time, documents such as the Declaration of Philadelphia (1944) and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) helped to consolidate social rights and promote social solidarity. In Brazil, the 1923 Eloy Chaves Law was the starting point for Social Security, although it was initially a private system.

These historical milestones demonstrate the evolution of social rights, driven by social and economic demands, reflecting the importance of state intervention to ensure social protection and balance economic relations. Since its introduction in 1960, special retirement in Brazil has undergone several transformations, requiring judicial interventions to resolve conflicts and adjust standards. Established by Law No. 3,807/1961, special retirement guaranteed differentiated protection due to adverse working conditions, allowing for a reduction in contribution time for activities considered unhealthy, dangerous or arduous. In 1968, Law No. 5,440-A eliminated the minimum age requirement, maintaining

only the minimum time of exposure to harmful agents. The 1988 Constitution granted special retirement constitutional status, recognizing the need to protect workers exposed to conditions that were harmful to their health. In 1991, Law No. 8,213 regulated special retirement, establishing specific criteria for its granting. Law No. 9,032/1995 brought significant changes, such as the end of classification by professional category, the requirement to prove continuous exposure to harmful agents, and the prohibition of converting regular time into special time. These changes aimed to protect workers exposed to occupational risks, ensuring a fairer social security system that is more appropriate to specific working conditions.

Social protection against occupational risks is a recent concept in human history, as the State has not always acted to protect workers from misfortunes such as disability, illness, old age and unemployment. The first modern employment relationships did not offer guarantees for support when workers lost their ability to work, generating insecurity in the face of accidents and economic crises. With the Industrial Revolution, the State began to intervene to balance interests, developing protection models such as public assistance and social insurance. Since its creation in 1960, special retirement has sought to protect workers exposed to harmful agents, reducing the contribution time required to avoid future disabilities and preserve health.

It is understood that the objective is to compensate for the risks associated with arduous, unhealthy or dangerous activities. Article 201, § 1º of the Federal Constitution of 1988 prohibits differential treatment in the granting of social security benefits, except for activities that involve exposure to harmful agents. This differential treatment aims to achieve true equality by treating unequal situations appropriately. Special retirement requires proof of adverse conditions and is based on the binomial “harmfulness and permanence”.

The exposure must be continuous, and the dangerousness focuses on high risk, not frequency. The criterion is constantly adjusted to ensure effective protection for exposed workers. The Federal Constitution of 1988, in article 195, deals with the funding of social security, financed by the entire society, directly by social contributions and indirectly by budgetary allocations from the Union, States, Federal District and Municipalities. Financing covers health, social assistance and social security, as regulated by the Funding Plan Law. Special retirement, established in 1960, was financed jointly with other social security benefits until 1998, when Law No. 9,732 created an additional contribution from companies, supplemented by resources from the Work Accident Insurance.

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