

NEW: The Effects of the US Foreign Aid Freeze on Freedom House



- Freedom Map
- Countries
- Issues
- Perspectives
- Policy Recommendations

FREEDOM IN THE WORLD 2024

Lithuania

89

/100

FREE

Political Rights	38 /40
Civil Liberties	51 /60

LAST YEAR'S SCORE & STATUS

89 /100

Free

A country or territory’s Freedom in the World status depends on its aggregate Political Rights score, on a scale of 0–40, and its aggregate Civil Liberties score, on a scale of 0–60. See the methodology.



TOP

Overview

Lithuania is a democracy in which political rights and civil liberties are generally respected. Chronic problems including corruption and socioeconomic inequality often arouse public dissatisfaction with the government, political parties, and other institutions. Women, LGBT+ people, members of the Romany, Jewish, Muslim, Russian, and Polish minorities, and some other groups experience varying degrees of discrimination and underrepresentation in politics.

Key Developments in 2023

- Municipal council and mayoral elections were held in March. The Lithuanian Social Democratic Party (LSDP) and Homeland Union-Lithuanian Christian Democrats (TS-LKD) outperformed other political parties and committees. The polls featured the highest voter turnout for local elections in the last 20 years, at almost 49 percent.
- In May, parliamentary discussions began on legislation for gender-neutral civil unions, intending to grant rights to same-sex couples.
- The Lithuanian government continued to engage in pushbacks against migrants crossing the border from Belarus. EU officials have criticized Belarusian authorities since 2021 for coaxing migrants to Belarus's borders with Lithuania and other EU member countries and stranding them there, as a form of political retaliation for international sanctions.



On Lithuania

See all data, scores & information on this country or territory.

[See More](#) >

Country Facts

Population

2,832,000

Global Freedom Score

89/100 **Free**

Other Years

2025

- In December, the parliament adopted amendments that placed limits on arbitrary detention. The move came after the Constitutional Court in June had struck down recently enacted sections of the law governing the legal status of foreigners, which had mandated the detention of asylum seekers while their cases were adjudicated.

Political Rights

A. Electoral Process

A1 0-4 pts

Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections?	4 / 4
---	-------

The president, whose main competencies as head of state pertain to foreign affairs, is directly elected for up to two consecutive five-year terms. The prime minister, who as head of government holds most executive authority, is appointed by the president with the approval of the Seimas (parliament). Recent executive elections have met democratic standards.

Centrist nonpartisan candidate Gitanas Nausėda was elected president in 2019. He took 66 percent of the vote in a runoff, defeating Ingrida Šimonytė, an independent lawmaker backed by the TS-LKD. Šimonytė was appointed prime minister following

October 2020 parliamentary elections. Both the presidential election and the appointment of the prime minister were in accordance with democratic standards.

A2 0-4 pts

Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections?	4 / 4
---	--------------

The unicameral, 141-seat Seimas includes 71 members elected in single-mandate constituencies and 70 chosen by proportional representation, all for four-year terms.

In the October 2020 elections, which observers deemed free and fair, the TS-LKD won 50 seats, while the incumbent centrist-populist Farmers and Greens Union (LVŽS) won 32. Two socially liberal and probusiness parties, the Liberal Movement and the Freedom Party, respectively won 13 and 11 seats; they formed a coalition government with the TS-LKD that November. Six other parties and a number of independent candidates won the remaining seats.

Municipal council and mayoral elections were held in March 2023. The LSDP and TS-LKD outperformed other political parties and committees. The polls featured the highest voter turnout for local elections in the last 20 years, at almost 49 percent.

A3 0-4 pts

Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies?	4 / 4
--	--------------

The legislative framework for conducting elections is consistent with democratic standards and generally well implemented. The Central Electoral Commission has typically operated and adjudicated election-related complaints in a fair manner.

In April 2022, the Seimas adopted three constitutional amendments on electoral issues. The amendments authorized direct mayoral elections, lowered the minimum age for running in legislative elections to 21 years from 25, and implemented a 2011 ruling of the European Court of Human Rights to allow an impeached person to run for president or parliament 10 years after being removed from office.

B. Political Pluralism and Participation

B1 0-4 pts

Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings?	4 / 4
---	-------

Political parties generally operate freely. Citizens of other European Union (EU) member states living in the country are eligible to join and found Lithuanian political parties.

The minimum number of members for political parties, 2,000, somewhat restricts the creation of new parties and the maintenance of small ones. Public funding rules generally favor the main parliamentary forces, as private financing of political organizations is tightly restricted.

In September 2022, the Seimas overrode a presidential veto to significantly raise requirements for the formation and functioning of public election committees—a way for groups of citizens to run for municipal councils or the European Parliament without joining or establishing a political party. In the March 2023 municipal elections, 32 registered political committees participated, securing 183 out of a total of 1,498 seats contested.

B2 0-4 pts

Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections?	4 / 4
--	-------

Regular transfers of power between rival parties after elections have been the norm since the early 1990s, with left- and right-leaning coalitions alternating in government. Parties in opposition retain a significant presence in the Seimas.

B3 0-4 pts

Are the people’s political choices free from domination by forces that are external to the political sphere, or by political forces that employ extrapolitical means?	4 / 4
---	-------

Sporadic cases of vote buying during national elections have been observed, and clientelism can influence politics at the local level. However, voters and candidates are generally free to exercise their political autonomy without undue influence or interference.

B4 0-4 pts

Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, racial, religious, gender, LGBT+, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities?	4 / 4
--	--------------

There are no formal restrictions on the political participation of women, LGBT+ people, or members of ethnic, religious, and other minority groups. Women and women’s interests remain underrepresented in politics, though improvements are evident. Women currently hold 28 percent of Seimas seats and the three leaders of the governing coalition are women, including Prime Minister Šimonytė and Viktorija Čmilytė-Nielsen, the leader of the Liberal Movement, who serves as the speaker of the parliament. Šimonytė’s cabinet approaches gender balance, with women holding 6 of the 14 ministerial posts.

Political parties that are supportive of LGBT+ rights increased their parliamentary representation in 2020. The Freedom Party, founded in 2019, campaigned for marriage equality and had an openly gay candidate among its leaders.

The Electoral Action of Poles in Lithuania–Christian Families Alliance (LLRA-KŠS), which represents members of the ethnic Polish minority, failed to clear the 5 percent vote threshold for proportional-representation seats in 2020, but captured three seats in single-mandate districts.

C. Functioning of Government

C1 0-4 pts

Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government?	4 / 4
---	-------

The country’s elected officials are able to determine and implement government policies without improper interference from unelected or foreign entities.

C2 0-4 pts

Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective?	3 / 4
--	-------

Corruption remains an issue in Lithuania, and certain sectors, including health care and construction, are perceived as prone to malfeasance. While anticorruption bodies are active, there are usually considerable delays in the investigation and prosecution of political corruption cases. Eurobarometer surveys of citizens’ attitudes suggest growing intolerance of corruption in Lithuania; while 46 percent of

respondents in 2022 said it was acceptable to give a money, give a gift, or do a favor in order to access a public service, that number fell to 40 percent in 2023.

C3 0-4 pts

Does the government operate with openness and transparency?	3/4
---	-----

Lithuanian law grants the public the right to access official information, and the government generally complies with such requests. However, cases have been observed when journalists were denied access to information of public interest using the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) as grounds for the denial. When challenged, courts have granted access and ruled that the GDPR was misinterpreted. Operations of state-owned enterprises remain somewhat opaque and prone to financial misconduct.

European institutions lauded recent changes to transparency rules for lobbying activities as well as improvements in the country’s public procurement framework. Nevertheless, more than a third of public contracts are still awarded following a single bid or no call for bids at all.

Civil Liberties

D. Freedom of Expression and Belief

D1 0-4 pts

Are there free and independent media?	3/4
---------------------------------------	-----

The government generally respects freedom of the press, and the media market is vibrant. However, the increasing concentration of media ownership in the hands of a small number of companies raises the risk of editorial interference by powerful political and business interests. Journalists often engage in self-censorship when reporting on certain large companies.

Under the state of emergency declared after the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, the transmission of any programs broadcast by Russian and Belarusian television and radio channels was suspended. The state of emergency also allowed for the restriction of Lithuanian media if they were deemed to spread disinformation or propaganda, incite war, or breach Lithuanian sovereignty.

State institutions, major media outlets, and civil society groups have stepped up their efforts to fight online disinformation in recent years.

D2 0-4 pts

Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private?	4 / 4
---	--------------

Freedom of religion is legally guaranteed and largely upheld in practice. However, nine so-called traditional religious communities, and particularly the Roman Catholic Church, enjoy certain government benefits, including annual subsidies that are not granted to other groups.

D3 0-4 pts

Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination?	4 / 4
---	--------------

Academic freedom is respected, and the educational system is generally free from political influence or pressure.

D4 0-4 pts

Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution?	4 / 4
---	--------------

The freedoms of personal expression and private discussion are generally robust and unrestricted. However, following the full-scale Russian military invasion of Ukraine in

February 2022, there are perceptions that criticism of the government on security-related issues can result in institutional scrutiny or societal marginalization.

E. Associational and Organizational Rights

E1 0-4 pts

Is there freedom of assembly?	4 / 4
-------------------------------	-------

Freedom of assembly is generally respected.

In the wake of the nationwide state of emergency declared in February 2022, assemblies supporting the military actions of the Russian or Belarusian regimes in Ukraine were banned.

E2 0-4 pts

Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work?	4 / 4
---	-------

Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) are able to register without facing serious obstacles, and they generally operate without undue restrictions in practice.

E3 0-4 pts

Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations?	3/4
--	-----

Workers have the right to form and join trade unions and engage in collective bargaining, though there have been reports of employees being punished for attempting to organize. Less than 10 percent of workers are trade union members, and the share of workers covered by collective agreements is similarly low. Strikes take place, but infrequently.

F. Rule of Law

F1 0-4 pts

Is there an independent judiciary?	3/4
------------------------------------	-----

Although public confidence in the courts has been steadily improving, judicial corruption remains a concern. Concerns remain regarding transparency in the selection of judges.

F2 0-4 pts

Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters?**3/4**

Defendants generally enjoy the presumption of innocence and freedom from arbitrary arrest and detention, but detained suspects are not always granted timely access to an attorney. Due to low pay levels, many qualified lawyers do not wish to participate in the state-guaranteed legal aid system. Moreover, recent legislative changes have further restricted legal access for socially vulnerable groups by allowing the authorities to exact litigation costs from people who were provided with legal aid and subsequently convicted.

The prosecutor general's office is largely independent of political control and influence. However, underfinancing remains an issue.

F3 0-4 pts**Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies?****3/4**

The population is largely free from major threats to physical security, and the homicide rate has declined in recent years, though it remains one of the highest in the EU.

Although the government has taken measures to improve the situation, conditions at some prisons are substandard, violence among prisoners remains a problem, and physical abuse of prisoners by correctional officers persists.

F4 0-4 pts

Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population?	2 / 4
--	--------------

The Constitution guarantees equality before the law and forbids discrimination based on gender, race, language, and other categories. Laws provide similar protections against discrimination based on sexual orientation, though gender identity is not addressed. In practice, women generally earn less than men per hour worked, and both LGBT+ people and members of the Romany minority experience societal discrimination. Public signs must be written only in Lithuanian, even in areas predominantly inhabited by people who speak different languages.

Since 2021, EU officials have criticized Belarusian authorities for coaxing migrants to Belarus’s borders with Lithuania and other EU member states and stranding them there as a form of political retaliation for international sanctions. In 2023, the Lithuanian government continued to engage in pushbacks against migrants crossing the border. According to Amnesty International, “at least 2,599 people” were forcibly returned to Belarus in 2023 despite the risk of abuses there. During the first half of the year, the parliament approved measures authorizing border guards to conduct

pushbacks, a move Amnesty International characterized as contrary to international law.

Foreign registration centers for accepted migrants have been criticized by international human rights monitors for poor conditions and instances of ill-treatment. In June 2023, Lithuania’s Constitutional Court issued a ruling stating that recently enacted measures mandating the detention of asylum seekers while their cases were adjudicated violated Article 20 of the constitution, which protects people’s freedom and safety. As a result, in December parliament adopted amendments that placed limits on arbitrary detention.

G. Personal Autonomy and Individual Rights

G1 0-4 pts

Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education?	4 / 4
---	-------

Residents of Lithuania may leave the country and travel internally without significant obstacles.

G2 0-4 pts

Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors?	4 / 4
--	--------------

Successive governments have worked to maintain a well-regulated market economy, and the legal framework generally protects property rights and the freedom to operate private businesses.

G3 0-4 pts

Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance?	3 / 4
--	--------------

Individual freedom regarding personal status matters such as marriage and divorce is generally upheld, but marriage is constitutionally defined as a union between a man and a woman. Same-sex partnerships are not legally recognized. In May 2023, parliamentary discussions began on compromise legislation for gender-neutral civil unions, intending to grant rights to same-sex couples.

Domestic violence remains a problem; it is one of the country’s most reported crimes, but the rates of investigation and prosecution remain inadequate. The Law on the Protection against Domestic Violence came into force in July 23; it stipulates

that an adult who causes a risk of violence can be evicted from their place of residence for a period of 15 days on the basis of a police order.

G4 0-4 pts

Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation?	3/4
---	------------

Legal protections against exploitative working conditions exist and are enforced in practice. The number of fatal accidents at work in the first half of 2023 decreased by 30 percent compared to the same period in 2022, while the number of serious accidents decreased by 22 percent, according to a July 2023 report from the Official Statistics Portal. However, the incidence rate for fatal workplace accidents in Lithuania is nearly twice the EU average, according to Eurostat data from 2019.

Foreign workers in sectors such as construction and transportation are vulnerable to labor trafficking. Lithuanian women and children have been exploited for sex trafficking.

Be the first to know what’s happening.

Subscribe

Join the Freedom House weekly newsletter

ADDRESS

1850 M St. NW Floor 11
Washington, DC 20036
(202) 296-5101

GENERAL INQUIRIES

info@freedomhouse.org

PRESS & MEDIA

press@freedomhouse.org

@2025 FreedomHouse