

Background

Lithuania, a Baltic nation of 2.67 million people, regained independence from the Soviet Union in 1991. It has since developed into a parliamentary democracy and joined the European Union (2004) and NATO (2004). The government of Lithuania is led by a parliament (Seimas) with 141 members and a Prime Minister, while the directly elected President (currently Gitanas Nausėda) holds a formally non-partisan role with significant powers, including veto authority over legislation. Political power often alternates between center-right and center-left coalitions. For example, a center-right government led by the Homeland Union–Lithuanian Christian Democrats with liberal partners took office in 2020. However, in the 2024 parliamentary elections, a center-left coalition comprising the Social Democrats, the Union of Democrats "For Lithuania," and the Dawn of Nemunas party won a majority and formed the government. This shifting political landscape influences drug policy: liberal parties such as the Freedom Party and Liberal Movement have pushed for reforms like cannabis decriminalization, while more conservative and agrarian parties have opposed such changes.

Historically, drug use in Lithuania was officially low and heavily stigmatized during the Soviet period, as authorities largely suppressed public acknowledgment of illicit drug problems. The Soviet drug policy was highly repressive, criminalizing possession and trafficking with severe penalties, and drug addiction was treated as a social and moral failing rather than a health issue. After Lithuania regained independence in 1991, the country experienced a significant increase in drug trafficking and consumption, driven by its integration into global markets and the rise of organized crime.

Lithuania began developing a modern institutional framework for drug control by adopting the Law on Control of Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (1998) and related legislation establishing the legal basis for regulating narcotics, precursors, and illicit trafficking. The government adopted its first National Drug and Drug Addiction Prevention Program in 1999, focusing on prevention, supply reduction, and care for addicts, with significant support from UN organizations, the EU, and other international partners². This Program was renewed in 2010, 2016, 2018 and then replaced by comprehensive National Agenda for Drug, Tobacco and Alcohol Control 2023–2035.

Throughout the 2010s and into the 2020s, Lithuania has maintained a cautious and measured approach to drug policy. While European trends have increasingly favoured health-centred and harm reduction models, Lithuania's policymakers and much of the public continue to emphasize the importance of maintaining strong supply controls and promoting drug-free lifestyles, especially among youth. The National Agenda for Drug, Tobacco and Alcohol

¹ <https://www.osw.waw.pl/en/publikacje/analyses/2024-12-13/centre-left-government-forms-government-lithuania>

² https://www.drugsandalcohol.ie/3711/1/EMCDDA_NR2000Lithuania%5B1%5D.pdf

Control 2023–2035³ reflects this balanced approach by prioritizing prevention and demand reduction alongside carefully considered harm reduction measures. This prudent stance acknowledges the risks associated with drug use and seeks to uphold societal well-being by preventing initiation and encouraging abstinence, rather than normalizing substance use. In this context, Lithuania's drug policy evolution represents a deliberate effort to adapt to new challenges without compromising the core values of public safety and health.

Drug use and prevalence

Illicit drug use in Lithuania remains relatively low by European standards, but it has increased over the past decade. General population surveys (ages 15–64) show that 14.1% of Lithuanians have tried an illicit drug at least once in their lifetime (as of 2021). This marks a rise from 11.5% in 2016 and reflects a longer-term uptick after an earlier drop in the early 2010s⁴. By comparison, the EU average lifetime prevalence is 28.9%, meaning Lithuania's rate is about half the European average. The most commonly used illicit substance is cannabis, consistent with global patterns. In 2021, an estimated 13.7% of adults (15–64) had used cannabis at least once, indicating that cannabis accounts for the vast majority of drug experimentation. Other illicit drugs (such as MDMA, cocaine, amphetamines, or heroin) are used much less frequently in Lithuania.

Recent use of drugs is also comparatively low. In 2021, about 4.5% of adults reported using some illicit drug in the last 12 months, and 1.6% had used in the last 30 days. These figures⁵ suggest that regular or current use is confined to a small minority. Drug use is notably higher among males (21.2% lifetime prevalence for men vs. 7% for women) and is concentrated in young adults. As in other countries, young adults (typically ages 18–34) show the highest use: in the key 25–34 age bracket, roughly 1 in 4 people have tried cannabis in their lifetime. This generational pattern indicates that younger cohorts are more exposed to drug use than older Lithuanians, which may signal future increases in overall prevalence as this cohort ages.

Among youth and students, surveys reveal mixed trends. The European School Survey Project on Alcohol and Other Drugs (ESPAD) found that in 2019, 19% of Lithuanian 15–16-year-old students had tried an illicit drug at least once, up slightly from 18% in 2015. The vast majority of those cases involve cannabis: 18.1% of students had used cannabis by 2019, a bit above the ESPAD average of 15.1%. After cannabis, the next most tried substances were ecstasy (3.0% of students), LSD or other hallucinogens (2.6%), and amphetamines (2.3%). These levels are on par with or somewhat higher than neighbouring countries – one analysis noted that Lithuania and Latvia had among the highest school cannabis prevalence in the Baltic region (around 20%), while Estonia's was closer to 15%⁶. However, very recent data show a possible stabilization: a national Health Behaviour in School-aged Children survey indicated lifetime

³ <https://ntakd.lrv.lt/en/national-strategies-on-drugs/>

⁴ <https://www.lrt.lt/en/news-in-english/19/2097911/is-drug-use-among-lithuanian-teenagers-indeed-on-the-rise>

⁵ <https://ntakd.lrv.lt/en/facts-and-numbers/>

⁶ <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC11116880/>

cannabis use among 9th graders decreased slightly from 18.0% in 2018 to 16.3% in 2022, with past-month use holding steady around 7.4%. In other words, roughly one in six high school freshmen have tried cannabis, a figure approaching the European average. These youth indicators have caused alarm domestically, even though they remain far below levels seen in some Western European countries.

In summary, cannabis is the primary illicit drug in Lithuania, with lifetime use around 14% of adults and rising, yet overall drug prevalence in the population is modest relative to Europe. There is evidence of incremental growth in drug experimentation, driven by younger people. Still, Lithuania is generally categorized among the lower-prevalence countries in Europe. Public health officials caution that the uptick, though small, should be monitored. They are employing new methods (wastewater analysis, hair sample surveys) to better understand trends. The data suggest that Lithuania's drug consumption has been rising from a low baseline, and while it remains well below the EU average for adults, the gap is narrower among adolescents⁷.

Drug-induced deaths in Lithuania

In 2023, Lithuania recorded 74 deaths primarily attributed to the use of narcotic and psychotropic substances, marking a decrease from 87 cases in 2022⁸. This corresponds to a mortality rate of 2.58 deaths per 100,000 population, with a stark gender disparity: the death rate among men was nearly six times higher than among women - 4.59 versus 0.79 per 100,000 respectively. The average age of those who died was 38.4 years, significantly younger than the European average. Notably, deaths among minors were also reported, including two 17-year-olds and two 19-year-olds.

Opioids, particularly synthetic types such as carfentanil, remain the most frequently implicated substances in fatal poisonings. In 2023, carfentanil was detected in 29 of the 74 drug-induced deaths, making it the dominant lethal agent despite a slight decrease from 31 cases in 2022. Synthetic cathinone 3-CMC was found in six fatal cases, including two where it co-occurred with carfentanil. Overall, opioid-related deaths (including carfentanil, methadone, morphine, and others) accounted for over 64% of all toxicological findings.

Drug-induced deaths by age group in Lithuania (2010–2023). Source: Hygiene Institute data

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Under 15	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
15–19	0	1	0	3	1	2	0	1	0	0	1	0	4	4
20–24	0	1	3	1	2	0	0	1	1	2	1	0	2	0
25–29	10	14	21	16	15	20	16	9	9	6	9	7	16	12
30–34	9	12	11	24	26	25	27	25	16	9	17	15	24	19
35–39	10	10	13	16	27	18	17	19	9	11	9	11	15	8
40 and over	21	7	6	7	22	20	14	20	17	14	10	16	26	31
Total	51	45	54	87	93	85	74	75	52	42	47	49	87	74
Average age	33.2	32.3	34.5	34.9	37.2	35.8	35.6	37.6	36.7	41.3	39.2	38.0	39.2	38.0

⁷ <https://www.lrt.lt/en/news-in-english/19/2097911/is-drug-use-among-lithuanian-teenagers-indeed-on-the-rise>

⁸ <https://ntakd.lrv.lt/media/viesa/saugykla/2024/10/WF9Xg2ZJ5Al.pdf>

Geographically, the highest concentration of such deaths occurred in Vilnius municipality, which reported 32 cases. Other urban areas like Kaunas and Klaipėda maintained relatively stable but lower fatality figures. This urban concentration aligns with broader European trends where drug mortality is often higher in capital regions.

While the overall number of deaths has decreased compared to 2022, it still exceeds the annual figures recorded from 2018 to 2021. The continued presence of highly potent synthetic opioids like carfentanil poses an ongoing threat. Moreover, polysubstance use - combinations of drugs, or drugs with alcohol and benzodiazepines - was increasingly observed in fatal cases, reflecting the growing complexity of drug-related harms in Lithuania.

Drug policy and legislation

Legal status of cannabis: Lithuania maintains strict regulations regarding cannabis possession, with any amount subject to legal consequences under Article 259 of the criminal code⁹. Unauthorized possession, cultivation, or transport of cannabis is penalized, and the Ministry of Health defines a "small quantity" as up to five grams of flower. However, this remains a criminal offense, carrying potential penalties such as a fine, arrest, or up to two years of imprisonment. A legislative proposal by the Freedom Party aimed at adjusting penalties for first-time offenders, allowing them to pay a fine between €50 and €300 instead of facing criminal charges, was reviewed by the Seimas' legal affairs committee on 7 April 2025, but has not yet progressed further¹⁰.

Changes in cannabis-related legislation have been implemented gradually. On 11 October 2018, the Seimas approved access to prescription cannabinoid medicines, with the regulation taking effect on 1 May 2019. Only EU-authorized products such as nabiximols (Sativex) and cannabidiol (Epidyolex) are permitted for import, while raw flower and magistral oils remain restricted¹¹¹². Industrial hemp is regulated under the 2013 Pluoštinių Kanapių Act¹³, and amendments in 2022 increased the THC threshold for field crops from 0.2% to 0.3%, aligning Lithuania's regulations with updated EU standards¹⁴. However, finished goods with THC levels exceeding 0.2% continue to be classified as narcotics, limiting domestic extraction and broader market availability.

Historical shifts: Lithuania's approach to drug possession changed markedly in 2017: the new administrative offences code dropped the earlier provision that allowed first-time offenders with a small amount of narcotics to receive only an administrative fine, shifting all

⁹ <https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAK/467c9660db3111e782d4fd2c44cc67af>

¹⁰ <https://www.lrt.lt/naujienos/lietuvoje/2/2531058/seimo-komitetas-traukia-is-stalciaus-projekta-del-mazo-kiekio-kanapiu-dekriminalizavimo>

¹¹ <https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAK/467c9660db3111e782d4fd2c44cc67af>

¹² <https://sam.lrv.lt/public/canonical/1745299324/27524/29-KI%202025-04-17%20protokolas.pdf>

¹³ <https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAD/TAIS.449687>

¹⁴ <https://lrv.lt/media/viesa/saugykla/2023/8/6sBkC6huOS0.pdf>

unauthorised possession into the criminal code¹⁵. To implement the change, the Seimas amended article 259 of the criminal code, classifying possession of *any* quantity of cannabis (or other controlled substances) as a misdemeanour punishable by community service, a fine, arrest or up to two years' imprisonment, while retaining higher penalties for larger quantities. "Small", "large" and "very large" quantities are fixed by health-ministry order V-239; for herbal cannabis the small-quantity ceiling is 5 g¹⁶. Consumption itself remains an administrative issue under article 71 of the administrative offences code, but possession is not covered there. Criminal sanctions escalate sharply if intent to distribute is proven: article 260 sets a baseline of five to eight years' imprisonment for supplying even a modest amount of cannabis, with higher ranges for larger quantities. In the same legislative cycle the Seimas passed law XIII-653, which removed courts' discretion to suspend sentences for serious crimes, eliminating the possibility of a suspended term in distribution cases¹⁷.

Although courts often impose fines or probation for first-time cannabis possession, any conviction now creates a permanent criminal record; United Nations human-rights experts have described the penalties for minor drug offences as disproportionate¹⁸. Since "distribution" legally includes giving something away for free, sharing a joint can fall under Article 260, as shown in recent court rulings¹⁹.

Law enforcement and judicial approach

Since 1 January 2017, unauthorised possession of any quantity of narcotic or psychotropic substances is prosecuted under criminal code (BK) article 259; the baseline penalty is community service, a fine, arrest or up to two years' imprisonment.²⁰ BK article 260 applies where intent to distribute is proved; it prescribes two to eight years' imprisonment for ordinary cases, rising with quantity and aggravating circumstances.²¹ An earlier option to give only an administrative fine disappeared when the new administrative offences code (ANK) XII-1869 entered into force, removing drug possession from the list of administrative violations. The Ministry of Health's order V-239 sets quantitative tiers for each substance; dried cannabis up to 5g is "small", 5–500 g "large", and above 500 g "very large".²² Consumption without possession is still an administrative matter under draft amendments to ANK article 71, but the

¹⁵ <https://www.euda.europa.eu/system/files/publications/4518/TD0616152ENN.pdf>

¹⁶ <https://www.infolex.lt/ta/60476#>

¹⁷ https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/rs/legalact/TAK/54cdb3e077af11e99ceae2890faa4193/format/OO3_ODT/

¹⁸ https://www.baltictimes.com/un_experts_penalties_for_small_amounts_of_drugs_are_disproportionate_in_lithuania/

¹⁹ <https://www.teismai.lt/lt/teismu-pranesimai-spaudai/uz-narkotiniu-medziagu-laikyma-ir-platinima-silutes-teismas-paskyre-5100-euru-bauda/11338>

²⁰ <https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/rs/legalact/TAK/2bc42850d42b11eb9787d6479a2b2829/>

²¹ <https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalActPrint/lt?category=TAP&documentId=TAIS.234279&jfwid=f4nne6zet&>

²² <https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAD/TAIS.210215/asr>

bill has not yet been adopted²³. In the same 2017 reform cycle parliament adopted law XIII-653, narrowing judges' ability to suspend sentences for "serious crimes", a category that includes distribution under BK 260²⁴. Supreme Court case-law confirms that any gratuitous transfer ("sharing a joint") fits the legal notion of distribution, although lower courts may treat it leniently.

Police statistics show that supply suppression remains a national priority; the 2023 police performance report lists "interdiction of narcotic and psychotropic substances" among the top four objectives²⁵. Customs officers likewise report yearly multi-hundred-kilogram seizures on the west-east trafficking route (e.g. 569 kg of assorted drugs seized in 2023)²⁶. At street level, officers open criminal investigations even for gram-level cannabis cases. Academic reviews of sentencing data supplied to parliament during deliberations on bill XIVP-1690 show that, in 2021, fines and arrest together accounted for almost half of all sanctions under BK 259²⁷.

Judges have repeatedly asked the legislature to clarify quantity thresholds and to distinguish sharing from profit-motivated dealing; a 2020 Supreme Court practice review summarised common difficulties in applying BK 259/260 and urged proportionality in minor cannabis cases²⁸. Draft law XIVP-1767, re-submitted to the legal affairs committee on 7 April 2025, would re-introduce an administrative tier: €50–300 for a first offence, €300–1 000 for repetition, and mandatory referral to treatment after three incidents within a year²⁹. A parallel 2023 proposal would allow people with substance-use disorder to avoid prosecution altogether by completing a certified treatment program³⁰.

Public opinion and political debate

Lithuanian surveys and parliamentary records show that most adults still oppose easing drug-possession laws, yet support is rising among younger voters, and that divide shapes the political debate. A July 2022 representative poll for public broadcaster LRT found 74 % of respondents against decriminalising small-quantity possession of narcotics, while 18 % were in favour; approval climbed to 35 % in the 18–29 age group but fell to 10 % among those aged

²³ <https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAP/57bff080d42411eb9787d6479a2b2829>

²⁴ <https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAD/2914b7d2a8da11e7a65c90dfe4655c64>

²⁵ <https://policija.lrv.lt/media/viesa/saugykla/2024/3/Fp9JjkWAvDg.pdf>

²⁶ <https://lrmuitine.lt/web/guest/280>

²⁷ https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/rs/lasupplement/TAK/37df94907f6411edbdcebd68a7a0df7e/b56fe1e2366c8a205a0a75b7fa67eac5/format/ISO_PDF/

²⁸ <https://www.lat.lt/data/public/uploads/2018/06/ab-40-1.docx>

²⁹ <https://www.lrt.lt/naujienos/lietuvoje/2/2532660/seimo-ttk-praso-naujos-ministerijos-pozicijos-del-mazo-kiekio-kanapiu-dekriminalizavimo>

³⁰ <https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAK/458b5bd0bf3b11ed924fd817f8fa798e?positionInSearchResults=2&searchModelUUID=05f4be22-29d0-49ec-be91-825d8154bf6c>

50 and over.³¹ The same generational pattern is reflected in party platforms, with the liberal Freedom Party and Liberal Movement promoting decriminalisation bills, opposed by the conservative Homeland Union, the Social Democrats and the Farmers-Greens Union³²³³³⁴. President Gitanas Nausėda has publicly rejected cannabis decriminalisation, citing drug use in schools as a priority concern³⁵.

In parliament the main draft laws - projects XIVP-1766/XIVP-1767 - would replace criminal liability for possessing up to a “small amount” of cannabis (quantity to be set by the Health Ministry) with €50–300 fines, rising to €300–1 000 for repeat offences and compulsory referral to treatment after three incidents. These bills advanced narrowly in 2022 but were returned to committee in April 2025 for further government input³⁶³⁷. Freedom Party MPs Morgana Danielė and Aušrinė Armonaitė lead the reform effort; they argue that removing criminal records will reduce social harm³⁸³⁹. Critics - including senior prosecutors and the President’s Office - contend that Lithuania “is too small to experiment” and warn of normalising drug use⁴⁰. Human-rights and youth NGOs such as Young Wave counter that current penalties are disproportionate and deter people from seeking help⁴¹. While the Seimas continues to debate, polling suggests any reform will need to reassure an older electorate that public-health safeguards accompany legal change.

The Freedom Party (*Laisvės partija*) remains the only Lithuanian parliamentary group that has formally pledged to “decriminalise cannabis-only possession and link users to health services”; its MPs Morgana Danielė and Aušrinė Armonaitė registered the companion bills

³¹ <https://kaunieciams.lt/trys-is-keturiu-gyventoju-nepitaria-narkotiku-dekriminalizavimui-lrt-baltijos-tyrimai/>

³² <https://www.lrt.lt/naujienos/lietuvoje/2/1698075/dar-vienas-laisves-partijos-kompromisas-narkotiku-dekriminalizavimo-projekte-liko-tik-kanapes>

³³ <https://www.lrt.lt/naujienos/lietuvoje/2/1846051/armonaite-po-balsavimo-del-kanapiu-vakarietiskos-vertybes-sunkiai-skinasi-kelia>

³⁴ <https://www.lrt.lt/naujienos/lietuvoje/2/1846251/kanapiu-dekriminalizavimo-istatymas-iplieske-gincus-tarp-opozicijos-socialdemokratu-kaltina-uzsiimant-politiniu-turgumi>

³⁵ <https://kaunas.kasvyksta.lt/2022/12/30/lietuvoje/g-nauseda-pasisako-pries-nedidelio-kiekio-kanapiu-dekriminalizavima/>

³⁶ <https://www.lrt.lt/naujienos/lietuvoje/2/2532660/seimo-ttk-praso-naujos-ministerijos-pozicijos-del-mazo-kiekio-kanapiu-dekriminalizavimo>

³⁷ <https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalActPrint/lt?category=TAK&documentId=a49026a04c8311ec86bdcb0a6d573b32&jfwid=>

³⁸ <https://www.lrt.lt/naujienos/lietuvoje/2/1948408/daniele-nematau-kaip-paauglystes-patirtys-susijusios-su-kompetencija-priimti-narkotiku-politikos-sprendimus>

³⁹ <https://www.lrt.lt/naujienos/lietuvoje/2/1846051/armonaite-po-balsavimo-del-kanapiu-vakarietiskos-vertybes-sunkiai-skinasi-kelia>

⁴⁰ <https://www.lrt.lt/naujienos/lietuvoje/2/1838503/prokuroras-numano-kas-slypi-uz-kanapiu-dekriminalizavimo-lietuva-per-maza-valstybe-kad-galetume-taip-su-ja-eksperimentuoti>

⁴¹ <https://youngwave.lt/dekriminalizacija/>

XIVP-1766/1767 and secured Government backing in 2023⁴²⁴³⁴⁴. The Liberal Movement (*Liberalų sąjūdis*) supports the same objective as a harm-reduction tool and, in 2021, asked the Health Minister to draft parallel legislation on compulsory treatment and prevention; faction members such as Jonas Varkalys argue that repeat offenders should be steered to therapy rather than court⁴⁵⁴⁶. By contrast, the conservative Homeland Union-Christian Democrats (TS-LKD) have voted against or abstained on every decriminalisation motion; vice-chair Paulius Saudargas has said the initiative poses “unacceptable health risks”, although individual TS-LKD deputies such as Mykolas Majauskas earlier promoted a narrow medical-cannabis law⁴⁷. The Social Democrats (LSDP) have taken a cautious line: during the 2022 plenary vote most of their caucus did not register in the hall, and party spokespeople later described the proposal as “galinti pakenkti jaunimui” (“potentially harmful to youth”)⁴⁸. The Farmers and Greens Union (LVŽS) – which oversaw the 2017 tightening of penalties – tabled an “alternative” package urging stricter education and treatment in place of decriminalisation and declared that easing sanctions would “normalise drug use”⁴⁹. Finally, the opposition Democrats “For Lithuania” led by former prime minister Saulius Skvernelis have announced that their faction “will not support” any move to replace criminal liability with administrative fines, arguing it would expand the illicit market⁵⁰.

Cannabinoids in medicine: limited but legal pharmaceutical access

Parliament amended the Law on Pharmacy on 11 October 2018; the change (in force since 1 May 2019) authorises doctors to prescribe medicines that contain cannabinoids if the product is registered in the national medicines register⁵¹⁵². Industry data and clinicians’ statements

⁴² <https://www.lrt.lt/naujienos/lietuvoje/2/1413185/koalicijoje-nesutarimai-del-narkotiku-dekriminalizavimo-klausimo-nesitikejo-kad-bus-kalbama-ne-tik-apie-kanapes>

⁴³ <https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAK/ce583070bf4811ed924fd817f8fa798e?jfwid=>

⁴⁴ <https://laisvespartija.lt/vyriausybe-prite-mazo-kiekio-kanapiu-dekriminalizavimo-projektui/>

⁴⁵ <https://liberalai.lt/naujienos/ruosiantis-narkotiku-dekriminalizacijai-liberalu-sajudzio-frakcija-kreipesi-i-sveikatos-apsaugos-ministra/>

⁴⁶ <https://m.kauno.diena.lt/naujienos/lietuva/politika/liberalu-sajudis-del-narkotiku-dekriminalizacijos-kreipesi-i-dulki-1034594>

⁴⁷ https://www.lrs.lt/sip/portal.show?p_r=38282&p_k=1&p_t=260407&printVersion=1

⁴⁸ <https://77.lt/kanapiu-legalizavimas-opozicija-piktina-valdanciuju-buldozeriu-stumiamas-projektas-o-ji-palaike-socialdemokratai-staiga-pakeite-nuomone>

⁴⁹ https://www.respublika.lt/lt/naujienos/lietuva/lietuvos_politika/_valstieciai_siulys_alternatyva_narkotiku_dekriminalizavimui/

⁵⁰ https://www.lrt.lt/naujienos/lietuvoje/2/1844910/skvernelis-musu-frakcija-narkotiniu-medziagu-dekriminalizavimo-nepalaukys?srsId=AfmBOorPhr1GpXUI6CCJOH1xANa0fMPwzYqT9nhgefumn_9N1zy9u7Nj

⁵¹ <https://www.lrytas.lt/sveikata/medicinos-zinios/2018/10/11/news/lietuvoje-istorinis-ivykis-iteisintos-medicinines-kanapes-7859013>

⁵² <https://www.vz.lt/agroverslas/2018/10/11/seimas-iteisino-medicinines-kanapes>

show that pharmacies seldom stock these preparations because of low demand and import-authorisation costs, so patient uptake remains very low⁵³. A cannabidiol preparation for severe childhood epilepsy (Epidyolex) obtained EU marketing authorisation in 2019, but at the end of 2024 it was still going through national reimbursement and pricing procedures, so routine access has not begun⁵⁴.

Harm-reduction and treatment services

Opioid substitution therapy (OST) with methadone or buprenorphine has been available since the early 2000s and is now delivered through the Republic Centre for Addictive Disorders (RPLC) and its five branches, as well as through licenced methadone services integrated in primary and secondary health care institutions and harm reduction services. In 2022, 736 people received OST at least once and 511 were still in treatment on 31 December⁵⁵. Needle-and-syringe programs (NSPs) operate from 11 fixed or mobile low-threshold sites in nine municipalities. According to the National Tobacco, Alcohol and Drugs Control Department (NTAKD) 2022 annual report, in that year Lithuania distributed approximately 264,647 sterile syringes. However, the report notes that people who inject drugs (PWID) in Lithuania receive on average up to 30 syringes per year - significantly below the WHO recommendation of at least 200 per person per year by 2020 and 300 by 2030. This indicates that coverage is currently well below international public health benchmarks⁵⁶.

Naloxone, the opioid-overdose antidote, is issued through RPLC clinics and outreach teams, also distributed to inmates released from prisons; 1 202 kits were handed out in 2022, and police officers in Vilnius, Kaunas and Klaipėda began carrying the spray version after joint training sessions⁵⁷. Despite these measures, drug-induced deaths rose to 87 in 2022, prompting the government to place overdose prevention and early intervention among the priorities of the 2023-2035 national drugs, alcohol and tobacco strategy⁵⁸.

Other public-health responses include a 2024 Government decision to create a uniform “response algorithm” for schools experiencing drug incidents, and pilot on-site drug-checking at five music festivals in 2022 (400 reagent tests distributed)⁵⁹. Nonetheless, civil-society groups point to persisting gaps: discarded syringes remain visible in some urban districts, and

⁵³ <https://canabiotic.eu/nauji-vaistai-su-kanabinoidais-lietuvoje-kas-tai/>

⁵⁴ https://ntakd.lrv.lt/uploads/ntakd/documents/files/2023_metinis%2Bvirselis.pdf

⁵⁵ https://www.rplc.lt/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/Veiklos_ataskaita_2022.pdf

⁵⁶ <https://ntakd.lrv.lt/uploads/ntakd/documents/files/2022%20metinis%20%28galutinis%29.pdf>

⁵⁷ <https://ntakd.lrv.lt/lt/naujienos/narkotiku-zalos-mazinimas-ne-tik-panaudotu-svirkstu-surinkimas/>

⁵⁸ <https://ntakd.lrv.lt/public/canonical/1728271794/1166/NTAKD-PSICHOAKTYVIOSIOS%20MED%C5%BDIAGOS-tendencijos%20ir%20pokyciai%202024-vidiniai%20spaudai.pdf>

⁵⁹ <https://www.lrt.lt/naujienos/lietuvoje/2/2361016/su-narkotiku-problema-susidurusios-mokyklos-veiks-pagal-vieninga-algoritma>

the average syringe coverage per PWID is still far from international recommendations⁶⁰.

Recent developments and future outlook (2022 - 2025)

Lithuania's drug-policy framework has been shaped by two parallel tracks since 2022: a strategic commitment to health-led responses and repeated parliamentary postponements of draft legislation that would replace criminal penalties for use-level offences.

National strategy: On May 2023, the Seimas adopted the National Agenda on Drug, Tobacco and Alcohol Control, Prevention and Harm-Reduction 2023–2035 (Seimas resolution No XIV-1982 (23 May 2023)⁶¹, which instructs all ministries to "prioritise public-health measures" and, where appropriate, consider "reducing criminalisation for possession intended for personal use".

Cannabis-only decriminalisation bill (XIVP-1766/1767)⁶²: The Freedom Party and Liberal Movement registered a two-bill package in 2022⁶³ that would convert first-time possession of up to a Health-Ministry-defined "small quantity" of cannabis into an administrative offence carrying a €50–300 fine. The bills passed first reading on 14 December 2022 but were sent back to the Legal Affairs Committee (TTK) for redrafting.

- First committee approval: 8 March 2023 – TTK endorsed the concept but asked for technical revisions⁶⁴.
- Latest status: 2 April 2025 – TTK voted to postpone further debate until the centre-left Government, installed after the 2024 elections, states its position⁶⁵.

Hemp regulation and high-THC intermediates – developments since 2022

Under amendments to Lithuania's Law on Fiber Hemp, effective since March 2022, Lithuanian operators are authorized to produce 'intermediate products' from hemp where the THC content (the sum of delta-9-THC and delta-9-THCA) exceeds the standard 0.2% limit. This manufacturing activity requires a specific permit issued by the NTAKD. It is understood that the source hemp plants must comply with EU industrial hemp regulations (i.e., belong to the EU catalogue of varieties and contain ≤0.2% THC in the field). According to the NTAKD's 2024

⁶⁰ <https://www.lrt.lt/naujienos/lietuvoje/2/1921342/nauja-seskinės-kasdienybė-besimetantys-svirkstai>

⁶¹ <https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAD/1bc8cc00faf111edbc0bd16e3a4d3b97>

⁶² https://www.lrs.lt/pls/inter/dokpaieska.rezult_l?p_nr=XIVP-1766&p_nuo=&p_iki=&p_org=&p_drus=&p_kalb_id=1&p_title=&p_text=&p_pub=&p_met=&p_lnr=&p_denr=&p_es=0&p_tid=&p_tkid=&p_t=0&p_tr1=2&p_tr2=2&p_gal=&p_rus=

⁶³ https://www.lrs.lt/sip/portal.show?p_k=1&p_r=35435&p_t=281720

⁶⁴ <https://www.lrt.lt/naujienos/lietuvoje/2/1931621/teisės-ir-teisėtvarkos-komitetas-prite-bk-pataisoms-del-mazo-kiekio-kanapiu-dekriminalizavimo>

⁶⁵ <https://www.etaplus.lt/naujiena/seimo-ttk-praso-naujos-ministerijos-pozicijos-del-mazo-kiekio-kanapiu-dekriminalizavimo-355046>

Activities Report⁶⁶, as of December 31, 2024, there were 5 such valid permits issued for this type of manufacturing.

In December 2022 the Seimas adopted a separate amendment to the 2013 Law on Hemp (law No XIV-1756)⁶⁷ that merely aligned cultivation rules with the new EU Common Agricultural Policy: raw plant material may now contain up to 0.3 % THC instead of 0.2 % in order to remain eligible for EU direct payments (Regulation (EU) 2021/2115, art. 5 §2 a). The change does not affect the 0.2 % ceiling set in 2020 for finished consumer products, nor does it legalise marketing of flowers or CBD extracts.

Since January 1, 2023, amendments to the Law on Fibre Hemp have come into effect, requiring that the packaging of hemp products supplied to the market clearly indicate the final intended use of the product and the method of consumption. Additionally, on December 6, 2022, the Minister of Health and the Minister of Agriculture issued an order titled "On the Approval of the List of Maximum Permissible Levels of Tetrahydrocannabinol in Hemp Products Intended for Final Consumption or Their Categories."⁶⁸ This order stipulates that, starting April 1, 2023, a zero THC limit applies to smokable herbal products.

NTAKD notes in its report that violations related to smokable herbal products increased in 2023, surpassing those linked to electronic cigarettes. As these products were actively promoted and sold online, NTAKD emphasizes the need for stricter regulations to limit accessibility and curb internet-based infractions. In 2024, during its monitoring of online spaces, NTAKD investigated the website happyherb.lt and found potential illegal remote sales of cannabis flower joints, conducting a test purchase that confirmed unauthorized transactions involving THC-containing products, leading to the transfer of evidence to the General Prosecutor's Office and the initiation of a pre-trial investigation by Klaipėda County Police.

In 2024, NTAKD⁶⁹ significantly strengthened its oversight of hemp tobacco products, monitoring their production, market supply, and THC levels, while enforcing the Lithuanian Hemp Law for the first time, imposing sanctions on businesses violating regulations. Notably, NTAKD fined the largest gas station chain in Lithuania, Viada, for selling cannabis flower joints labeled as "tea," and continues to face a legal dispute with UAB BIOTECUS, which is seeking to prove its product was legitimately marketed.

⁶⁶ <https://ntakd.lrv.lt/public/canonical/1742553278/1345/NTAKD-2024%2BM.%2BVEIKLOS%2BATASKAITA%2B%281%29.pdf>

⁶⁷ <https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAD/7f6f7682c9f011efb81fa0211f8edf4d?jfwid=al8wk0863>

⁶⁸ <https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAD/6112a96075a511ed8a47de53ff967b64>

⁶⁹ <https://ntakd.lrv.lt/public/canonical/1742553278/1345/NTAKD-2024%2BM.%2BVEIKLOS%2BATASKAITA%2B%281%29.pdf>