

# LITHUANIA

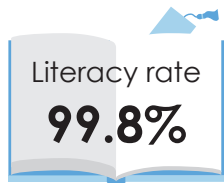
Lithuania is the largest and most southerly of the three Baltic republics. Lithuania's history stretches back to 1253, when it first appeared on the maps, and proudly bears the honor of having the first constitution in Europe, dated May 1791. From the 13th century to 1795, the Grand Duchy of Lithuania was a single European state encompassing parts of Belarus, Poland, the Russian Empire, and Ukraine. At its height, it was the largest state in Europe. It is situated along the Baltic Sea and bordered by Latvia, Belarus, Poland, and Kaliningrad (a Russian exclave). Its capital, Vilnius, is known for its medieval old town. It also has Gothic, Renaissance and baroque architecture, and an 18th-century cathedral built on a pagan temple site. Lithuania was welcomed as a NATO member in March 2004 and joined the European Union in May 2004. Lithuanian is the official language and Russian, Polish and Belarusian are also spoken. The currency is the euro.



Population  
**2,823,859**



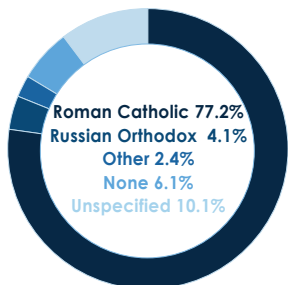
**25,212** Mi<sup>2</sup>  
Slightly larger than  
West Virginia



## Ethnicities

- Lithuanian 84.1%
- Polish 6.6%
- Russian 5.8%
- Belarusian 1.2%
- Other 1.1%
- Unspecified 1.2%

## Religions



## FAMILY LIFE

In Lithuania, the traditional household consists of two parents and 1-2 children. There are single parent families, though this is not very common. Usually both parents work and are financially responsible for the family, with the exception of rural areas where fathers are typically responsible for financially supporting the family.

Siblings will usually ask before borrowing personal items, but it is common to share items when they are of the same gender. It is common for family members to have alone time. Many parents encourage their children to start planning and using their free time independently by joining activities, clubs, or spending time with friends. Students seek support from their parents for general questions about their future and career plans.

Household chores are often assigned based on gender. Girls might be responsible for cleaning or cooking and boys for fixing anything around the house. Families eat meals together depending on family schedules. Sometimes children will cook smaller meals for themselves, and it is common for parents to prepare food in advance that children can heat up or finish cooking. Students in Lithuania are responsible for their own transportation to and from school and it is common for parents to allow teenagers to travel alone between towns or even abroad for short trips.

Parents usually do not monitor their children's behavior online. They may follow their social network profiles but will usually not check personal messages, emails, or browsing history.

It is common to have pets both in urban and rural areas, and to adopt pets from shelters. If the family owns a detached house, dogs may be kept outside, but some families keep dogs and cats inside as well.

## FRIENDSHIP

Teenagers enjoy socializing both in groups and one-on-one. They often go to cafes, coffee shops, parks, or malls with their friends and also socialize online. It is normal for boys and girls to socialize with each other in groups or one-on-one.

Eye contact is considered a sign of respect and shows that one is engaged and listening. Teenagers may not be good at verbalizing their feelings and in many cases will discuss personal matters like relationships with their friends rather than their parents.

## SCHOOL LIFE

Most high school students have 6-7 lessons each day during a five-day school week. Students are evaluated on class participation, homework, papers, and exams. Some schools allow students in 11th and 12th grades to choose certain electives or take courses at different levels of difficulty. Most schools have very strict rules regarding fighting, bullying, and sexual harassment, although punishments vary. Cheating is not permitted, but it is common practice for students to cheat. Consequences for cheating may result in failing exams or contacting parents if it occurs repeatedly. Students generally buy a hot lunch at school. It is very rare to take food for lunch to schools.

The relationships between students and teachers are generally formal both in and out of the classroom. Students greet their teachers by standing up when the teacher walks into the class. While teachers sometimes allow students to call them only by their name, it is more common for students to address them as “teacher” or “Mr./Mrs.” with their last name.

There are some options to participate in sports, art, or other clubs provided by schools, but it is also very common for students to participate in sports clubs, dance classes, or art studios outside of school. Students usually pay to participate in these extracurricular activities.

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## FOOD

In larger towns, people have a wide variety of food diets. In some cases, the entire family might be vegetarian or vegan, but it is also common for some family members to follow a specific diet while others do not.

## RELIGION

Most families are not very religious. Those that do tend to follow rules and traditions at home, and occasionally visit church for religious holidays. Most places of worship do not serve as community centers and are seen as sacred places with strict behavior rules.

## PERSONAL CARE

Usually teenagers shower every day or every other day. It is considered normal to wear some clothes for several days in a row without washing. It is not common to wash clothes after just one use, with the exception of underclothing.



The Future Leaders Exchange (FLEX) program is sponsored by the U.S. Department of State. FLEX provides competitively selected secondary school students from 21 countries in Europe and Eurasia with the opportunity to spend the academic year in the U.S. living with a volunteer host family and attending a host high school. Begun in 1993, FLEX now has over 27,000 alumni.