

# Lithuania

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## INTRODUCTION

Lithuania is a stable democracy, where, since 1990 (when the independent state was restored), no government has been re-elected, and the formation of government was always left to the political opposition. Lithuania's gross domestic product grew every year from 2010 to 2024 ([Official Statistics Portal, 2025](#)). Since 2022, when Russia's war against Ukraine complicated the geopolitical situation, Lithuania has been increasing its defence budget every year ([Ministry of National Defence Republic Lithuania, 2025](#)).

There is a favorable legal situation for media freedom, but economic and political risks occasionally threaten professional autonomy. The strengthening of investigative journalism over the last decade is characteristic: the Public Service Media established the Investigative Unit in 2018, and several private organizations conduct significant journalistic investigations. In 2024, the Media Support Fund launched a fellowship programme for journalists, including freelance journalists conducting investigative journalism ([Media Support Fund, 2024](#)).

The survey of journalists took place in late 2022 and early 2023. Changes in the Lithuanian economy, which was recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic, led to high inflation (the second highest in the European Union in 2022), and the income level of journalists at that time lagged behind the inflation rate ([Balčytienė et al., 2023](#)). Another characteristic circumstance is the context of Russia's war against Ukraine when the agenda of many journalists and editors was permeated with an emphasis on supporting Ukraine and combating Russian disinformation.

## BACKGROUNDS OF JOURNALISTS

The Lithuanian journalist community is dominated by women (62.3%); male journalists make up 37.7%. The average age of journalists is 43.6 years (SD = 13.4; Median = 42). 95.4% of journalists have obtained a university education, 44.7% have a bachelor's degree, and 50.7% have a master's degree. 71.5% of journalists have obtained formal education and/or professional training in journalism. 57% are graduates of university studies in journalism, and 28.8% acquired/improved journalistic skills via apprenticeships/cadetships and short-term courses (17.9%).

## JOURNALISTS IN THE NEWSROOM

The Lithuanian journalist population includes 17.1% of editors-in-chief and other top-level managers, 17.7% are middle managers/editors, and 65.2% of journalists do not hold management positions in organizations. Almost two-thirds of journalists (64.9%) work in the capital, Vilnius. 68.2% work in national media editorial offices, 30.5% – in regional/local media (1.3% – no main medium). Most (79.5%) of journalists work in private commercial media organizations, 13.9% in public service media, and 4.6% in non-profit private media (2.0% – no main medium or affiliate of foreign media).

74.9% of Lithuanian journalists work with employment contracts (3% are fixed-term contracts), and 19.5% are freelancers. 5.6% of journalists have relationships with more than one organization under employment contracts or as freelancers. 44.4% of journalists received an average or lower income than the national average salary at the end of 2022 (up to 1,200 euros), 51% of journalists earned more than 1,200 euros, and 4.6% did not disclose their income. 31.2% of survey participants indicated receiving additional income from activities other than journalism.

The average work experience of Lithuanian journalists is 18.1 years (SD = 11.8; Median = 15). Journalists work in regional/local media for more years than in national media. Full-time journalists work an average of 41.1 hours per week (SD = 9.3; Median = 40). Less than a third (29.2%) of the country's journalists belong to professional organizations uniting journalists.

In terms of the background of their main employers, newspaper editorial offices were indicated as the main workplace by just over a third of journalists (34.1%). Content created by this group of journalists is also published online. The share of journalists working for online news websites was 30.1%. Also, 12.3% of journalists worked for an organization with a television background and 10.6% in radio editorial offices. Journalists working in magazine editorial offices accounted for 7%, and 3% of journalists worked in news agencies. Another 3% of the surveyed journalists indicated working on different media platforms. 34.4% of journalists specialize in one thematic area and the other 65.6% work in various areas.

43.7% of journalists surveyed experienced stress at work very often or often in the last six months.

## SAFETY AND WORK-RELATED CONCERNS

Although physical attacks against Lithuanian journalists are quite rare, psychological threats related to the profession are relatively frequent, sometimes affecting journalists' family members as well. Almost four-fifths of journalists have experienced safety incidents related to their journalistic work. The most common incidents experienced by journalists were demeaning/ hateful speech, public discrediting of their work, and questioning their morality (Table 1). The survey revealed that male journalists face different threats more often than women, except for sexual assault/harassment.

The perceived insecurity factors reflect journalists' concern about their physical and psychological well-being. Also, almost a third of journalists were convinced (strongly agreed or agreed) that those who harm journalists go unpunished (Table 2).

**TABLE 1. EXPERIENCED THREATS**

	N	Very often	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Demeaning or hateful speech directed at you	302	2.6%	10.3%	28.1%	29.1%	29.8%
Public discrediting of your work	302	1.7%	7.3%	18.9%	28.5%	43.7%
Surveillance	300	0.0%	0.7%	2.0%	6.7%	90.7%
Hacking or blocking of social media accounts or websites	302	0.0%	0.7%	2.0%	9.9%	87.4%
Arrests, detentions or imprisonment	302	0.0%	0.0%	0.3%	0.3%	99.3%
Legal actions against you because of your work	302	0.7%	3.6%	8.3%	12.9%	74.5%
Stalking	302	0.3%	2.0%	3.3%	7.3%	87.1%
Other threats or intimidations directed at you	302	1.0%	3.0%	10.6%	25.5%	59.9%
Sexual assault or sexual harassment	302	0.0%	0.0%	0.7%	7.0%	92.4%
Other physical attacks	302	0.3%	0.3%	1.0%	3.6%	94.7%
Coercion	302	0.0%	0.0%	2.3%	9.9%	87.7%
Questioning of your personal morality	302	1.7%	5.6%	14.2%	26.8%	51.7%
Others using your byline for fabricated or manipulated stories	301	0.7%	1.0%	5.0%	11.6%	81.7%
Others disseminating your personal information	302	0.3%	1.0%	4.3%	14.6%	79.8%
Workplace bullying	302	0.3%	1.3%	4.0%	8.9%	85.4%
Abductions	302	0.0%	0.0%	0.3%	0.3%	99.3%
Office raids or seizures or damage to equipment	302	0.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.3%	99.3%
Intimidation that targets family	302	0.0%	0.7%	2.0%	2.0%	95.4%

Question: "In the last five years, how often have you experienced any of the following actions related to your work as a journalist?"

**TABLE 2. WORK-RELATED CONCERNS**

	N	Agree/ strongly agree	Mean	SD
Worried about losing job in journalism within the next 12 months	301	16.9%	2.10	1.23
Concerned about physical well-being	302	25.5%	2.41	1.25
Concerned about emotional and mental wellbeing	302	26.8%	2.52	1.22
Concerned that those who harm journalists in Lithuania go unpunished	301	30.2%	2.68	1.25

Question: "Thinking about your work, please tell me how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements." (Scale: 5 = Strongly agree; 4 = Agree; 3 = Neither agree nor disagree; 2 = Disagree; 1 = Strongly disagree.)

JOURNALISTIC ROLES

Lithuanian journalists had the strongest perception of the monitorial roles, while the accommodative and interventionist roles were moderately perceived. The perception of collaborative roles was weakest on average (Table 3). However, on average, the understanding of support for government policy and conveying a positive image of the politicians among journalists working in regional/local media was stronger than that of journalists working in national media.

**TABLE 3. JOURNALISTIC ROLES**

	N	Very/extremely important	Mean	SD
Be a detached observer	302	92.4%	4.63	0,77
Monitor and scrutinize those in power	302	74.8%	4.03	1,29
Shine a light on society's problems	302	91.4%	4.53	0,87
Motivate people to participate in politics	302	24.8%	2.56	1,27
Provide analysis of current affairs	301	78.1%	4.05	1,12
Let people express their views	302	68.5%	3.88	1,11
Provide information people need to form political opinion	302	66.9%	3.68	1,37
Advocate for social change	300	73.3%	3.93	1,10
Influence public opinion	300	39.7%	3.05	1,29
Set the political agenda	302	18.9%	2.17	1,22
Promote peace and tolerance	302	80.8%	4.21	1,00
Educate the audience	302	88.4%	4.49	0,84
Point toward possible solutions to society's problems	302	71.5%	3.96	1,12
Speak on behalf of the marginalized	302	63.9%	3.67	1,36
Support national development	297	61.9%	3.69	1,13
Support government policy	299	7.1%	1.78	1,03
Convey a positive image of political leaders	301	5.0%	1.40	0,85
Provide entertainment and relaxation	302	27.5%	2.60	1,36
Provide the kind of news that attracts the largest audience	302	59.3%	3.63	1,23
Provide advice, orientation and direction for daily life	300	39.6%	2.98	1,38
Tell stories that emotionally move the audience	300	48.0%	3.23	1,31
Support efforts to protect public health	300	64.4%	3.71	1,18
Counteract disinformation	302	86.1%	4.41	1,01
Discuss future implications of current events	302	74.8%	3.99	1,10

Question: "Please tell me how important it is to do each of the following in your daily work." (Scale: 5 = Extremely important; 4 = Very important; 3 = Moderately important; 2 = Slightly important; 1 = Not at all important.)

## JOURNALISTIC EPISTEMOLOGIES

More than four-fifths of Lithuanian journalists believe it is possible to represent objective reality in reporting, and the facts should speak for themselves. Only a little more than a quarter agreed that interpretation is necessary to make sense of facts. Also, very few journalists believe that truth is inevitably shaped by those in power (Table 4). It can be asserted that objectivist and truth-seeking professional norms prevail in the journalistic community.

**TABLE 4. JOURNALISTIC EPISTEMOLOGIES**

	N	Agree/ strongly agree	Mean	SD
Interpretation is necessary to make sense of facts	300	26.3%	2.65	1.19
Truth is inevitably shaped by those in power	301	5.6%	1.65	0.89
It is impossible for journalists to withhold their personal beliefs from reporting	301	16.9%	2.40	1.06
Things are either true or false, there is no in-between	298	18.8%	2.44	1.19
It is possible to represent objective reality in reporting	302	81.1%	4.02	0.85
Journalists should trust their instincts in deciding what's true and what's not	302	11.6%	2.17	1.04
Journalists should intuitively know what the final story will be	301	8.9%	2.12	0.97
Journalists should let the facts speak for themselves	302	83.8%	4.19	0.85
Journalists should be part of a community to portray it accurately	297	31.0%	2.90	1.13
Journalists should make their standpoint transparent in their work	301	10.0%	1.96	1.07
Journalists should alert audiences when a source's claim is untruthful	300	88.0%	4.33	0.91

Questions: "The following statements deal with beliefs related to how journalists know what they know. For each of them, please tell me how strongly you agree or disagree." / "Using the same scale, please tell me how strongly you agree or disagree with the following beliefs." (Scale: 5 = Strongly agree; 4 = Agree; 3 = Neither agree nor disagree; 2 = Disagree; 1 = Strongly disagree.)

## JOURNALISTIC ETHICS

Although more than four-fifths of Lithuanian journalists support strong professional ethical standards, a significant part of the journalistic community considers that these standards can be ignored in extraordinary circumstances (Table 5). Almost every second journalist sees the need to claim to be somebody else in their work and use hidden recording devices and confidential documents without authorization. Also, more than a third of journalists demonstrated a favorable attitude toward publishing unverified information (Table 6).

**TABLE 5. ETHICAL ORIENTATIONS**

	N	Agree/ strongly agree	Mean	SD
What is ethical for journalists should always be determined by professional standards regardless of situation and personal judgment	302	83.1%	4.20	0.85
What is ethical for journalists should be determined by professional standards unless extraordinary circumstances require disregarding them	300	61.3%	3.57	1.11
What is ethical for journalists should depend on each specific situation	301	23.6%	2.52	1.23
What is ethical for journalists should be a matter of personal judgment	302	6.0%	1.71	0.94

Question: "The following statements describe different responses journalists may have to ethical problems. For each of them, please tell me how strongly you agree or disagree." (Scale: 5 = Strongly agree; 4 = Agree; 3 = Neither agree nor disagree; 2 = Disagree; 1 = Strongly disagree.)

**TABLE 6. JUSTIFICATION OF CONTROVERSIAL REPORTING METHODS**

	N	Always justified	Justified on occasion
Claiming to be somebody else	302	1.3%	46.4%
Using hidden recording devices	302	3.6%	54.0%
Using confidential business or government documents without authorization	299	8.0%	52.0%
Using the personal materials of powerful people, such as documents and photos, without their permission	302	3.3%	37.4%
Using the personal materials of ordinary people, such as documents and photos, without their permission	302	0.3%	13.9%
Paying people for confidential information	300	1.7%	29.5%
Accepting money from sources	301	0.3%	3.0%
Accepting a free product or service from sources	301	1.0%	16.2%
Producing content that mimics news stories but hides its promotional nature	301	0.7%	15.2%
Publishing or broadcasting stories with information that is not yet verified	302	1.0%	40.1%

Question: "Which of the following, if any, do you think may be always justified, or justified on occasion, and which would you not approve of under any circumstances?"

## EDITORIAL AUTONOMY AND MEDIA FREEDOM

Most Lithuanian journalists assess the freedom to select news stories and to decide which aspects of a story should be emphasized positively. Moreover, more journalists were completely free to emphasize the story aspects than those who were completely free to select the story themselves. However, journalists assess media freedom in Lithuania more negatively on average than their personal freedom to select stories and emphasize certain stories' aspects (Table 7).

**TABLE 7. PERCEPTIONS OF EDITORIAL AUTONOMY AND MEDIA FREEDOM**

	N	A great deal/ complete freedom	Mean	SD
Freedom in selecting the news stories	302	94.4%	4.43	0.61
Freedom in deciding which aspects of a story should be emphasized	302	94.7%	4.53	0.65
Media freedom in Lithuania	298	78.5%	3.85	0.66

(Scale: 5 = Complete freedom; 4 = A great deal of freedom; 3 = Some freedom; 2 = Little freedom; 1 = No freedom at all.)

## EDITORIAL INFLUENCES

According to journalists, professional and procedural factors influence their work most: journalistic ethics, information access, news-gathering resources availability, and time limits. Journalists perceive organizational, economic, and political influences as less critical factors. The military, religious groups, and, especially, criminal groups indicate little influence on the work of journalists (Table 8).

**TABLE 8. EDITORIAL INFLUENCES**

	N	Very/extremely influential	Mean	SD
Peers on the news staff	298	51.3%	3.41	1.22
Editorial supervisors and higher editors	254	67.3%	3.76	1.14
The business managers of the news organization	273	41.4%	3.07	1.30
The owners of the news organization	256	29.7%	2.61	1.36
Editorial policy	292	58.9%	3.53	1.18
Advertising considerations	261	23.0%	2.36	1.32
Profit expectations	253	23.3%	2.53	1.30
Audience research and data	289	46.4%	3.25	1.18
Availability of news-gathering resources	297	73.7%	3.96	1.00
Time limits	299	70.6%	3.81	1.04
Journalism ethics	302	88.1%	4.40	0.86
Self-censorship	283	31.8%	2.76	1.39
Personal values and beliefs	298	60.1%	3.63	1.17
Colleagues in other media	286	12.2%	2.30	1.04
Friends, acquaintances and family	290	10.3%	2.04	1.08
Feedback from the audience	300	51.3%	3.44	1.08
Competing news organizations	285	24.2%	2.66	1.07
Media laws and regulation	296	67.9%	3.83	1.12
Access to information	298	79.9%	4.13	0.85
Government censorship	259	11.2%	1.78	1.14
Government officials	277	8.7%	1.74	1.02
Politicians	282	7.1%	1.67	0.99
Business people	288	7.3%	1.80	0.99
Public relations	294	18.4%	2.48	1.14
Relationships with news sources	294	55.4%	3.49	1.14
Police	258	12.8%	1.88	1.18
Issue advocacy groups	284	9.5%	2.03	1.03
Scientists or health experts	289	27.0%	2.64	1.18
Religious groups and institutions	267	5.6%	1.62	0.96
Military	255	9.8%	1.79	1.09
Para-military groups, militias and similar groups	198	2.0%	1.19	0.56
Organized crime and criminal groups	223	0.9%	1.08	0.37
Terrorist groups	202	0.0%	1.03	0.20

Question: "Here is a list of potential sources of influence. Please tell me how much influence each of the following has on your work as a journalist." (Scale: 5 = Extremely influential; 4 = Very influential; 3 = Moderately influential; 2 = Slightly influential; 1 = Not at all influential.)