

Ageing and Employment Policies

Promoting Active Ageing in Lithuania

POLICY CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS



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the European Union

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Foreword

This summary report is the culmination of a comprehensive project to address the unique challenges faced by Lithuania's older population in social, political, and labour market engagement. The action was funded by the European Union via the Technical Support Instrument, and implemented by the OECD, in co-operation with the Directorate-General for Structural Reform Support of the European Commission. It aligns with the OECD's commitment to creating inclusive societies that enable all citizens to participate fully, regardless of age.

In collaboration with the Lithuanian Ministry of Social Security and Labour, local institutions, and the European Commission's Directorate-General for Structural Reform Support, the project "Comprehensive Review of Policies to Facilitate Active Ageing in Lithuania" (21LT07) sought to provide a holistic understanding of the key challenges older Lithuanians face as well as recommendations to promote active ageing in Lithuania.

Several outputs were produced, including a detailed assessment of the situation of Lithuania's older population compared to their European counterparts and other OECD countries. This in-depth assessment highlighted crucial areas where improvements can be made through policy interventions. Subsequent stages of the project focused on showcasing good practices from other EU countries, a study visit, providing recommendations for reforms, and crafting a comprehensive roadmap for implementation. Finally, a pilot programme was proposed to improve the human capital and employability of older citizens.

The objective of this final report is to provide practical, evidence-based guidance to policy makers in Lithuania to improve the inclusion of older people in all spheres of life. The report builds on the responses of the Ministry of Social Security and Labour, the Association of Local Authorities, and the municipalities of Kaunas, Panevėžys and Švenčionys to the OECD Policy Questionnaire on Active Ageing provided between September and November 2021. The information collected via the questionnaire is complemented by insights from a series of fact-finding meetings and workshops with representatives from ministries, municipalities, NGOs, civil society organisations and academics undertaken between September 2021 and June 2023.

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The project benefitted from insights and practices shared by peers from OECD countries. For the component of the project on public and political life participation, the OECD team thanks Abigail Chantler (Ireland), Verena Schriebl (Austria), Satu Karppanen (Finland) and Marilette van As (Netherlands) for their contributions.

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Executive summary

Lithuania is one of the fastest-ageing countries in Europe. Its working-age population is expected to decline significantly, giving rise to considerable economic, labour market, social and public governance challenges. Recognising the adverse effects of rapid population ageing, the government has stepped up its efforts in recent years and several national strategic priorities have underlined the importance of active ageing. Yet, many Lithuanians aged 55 and over continue to lag the younger generation and their peers in neighbouring countries in fully engaging in society. They lack tools and opportunities to keep their skills up to date and to actively contribute to the economy and the decision-making processes that are relevant to their well-being. According to the EU 2018 Active Ageing Index, which serves as a guiding framework for addressing the challenges posed by an ageing population, Lithuania ranks 19th out of the 27 EU countries.

A coherent and integrated approach involving national governments, local municipalities, employers, and civil society is needed to help older persons overcome the complex barriers they face in their daily lives, remain independent, and achieve their potential.

Older people staying active through employment is not only crucial for Lithuania's economic success but can also help them improve their cognitive ability, mental well-being and social inclusion. Despite recent progress in labour market inclusion, large inequalities remain by skill level, age, gender and region. Notably, at 40%, the skills-related employment gap among 55-64 year-olds is 10 percentage points above the EU average. Long-term unemployment has been trending down for all ages except for older workers. In 2021, among older people unemployed, half of them had been unemployed for over a year. A key challenge will be to prevent further aggravation of labour market and social inequalities, as Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine may considerably affect the Lithuanian economy.

Lithuania should focus on four priority areas to help older citizens have longer and fulfilling careers:

- Retaining the talent of older workers reduces the high risks of poverty in old age and helps firms fill ongoing labour shortages. Unfortunately, age discrimination is pervasive in Lithuania, hindering opportunities for older people in the labour market. Too few resources are allocated to age-management policies that can prevent declining productivity among older workers. Moreover, while it is possible to combine income from work and retirement, it is rarely done.
- Improving job quality and health at work is critical. There is a high prevalence of poor health and low job quality among older workers in Lithuania, with nearly half of workers aged 50 and older reporting negative effects on their health due to work –significantly higher than the EU average. In addition, many earn relatively low wages and work long hours. Lack of access to sound occupational health services, limited awareness of good health practices and a lack of expertise in tackling ill health in the workplace contribute to an unwelcoming environment for older workers. A national dialogue and strategy, involving key stakeholders, should be developed to improve preventive health measures in the workplace.
- Promoting a more inclusive lifelong learning system will help maintain the productivity of an ageing workforce and allow older citizens to benefit from a digital and green economy. Yet, access to training is highly unequal in Lithuania, with overall participation rates significantly lower than the

OECD average. Less than 20% of people aged 50 and older participated in training over a 12-month period, compared to 34% in the EU. Creating an environment that encourages reskilling and upskilling for older workers throughout their life, as well as involving local actors in reaching out to older inactive populations in rural and remote areas, will be important to reduce these inequalities.

- Ensuring that older people can continue to work is an essential part of the policy mix. Finding ways to restore confidence and increase older job seekers' awareness of their own skills will be critical. But low funding for public employment services in Lithuania limits their capacity to offer individualised counselling to help older people overcome multiple barriers to employment and health limitations. Supporting older workers with entrepreneurship opportunities and implementing wage subsidies for low-wage earners, as demonstrated by a successful recent programme in Lithuania, can also help older workers find and retain employment.

Lithuania also performs poorly compared to other OECD countries in key determinants of social participation of older people, including low income, poor health and limited use of support. Several types of assistance such as long-term care and housing adaptations are offered by Lithuanian municipalities, although uptake is low because of older people not applying. Making it easier for older people to access support through simpler procedures would improve their capacity for active ageing.

Effective public governance mechanisms are crucial for the design and implementation of active ageing strategies, as they can help align the policy objectives of central and subnational stakeholders and ensure relevant policies and services are implemented coherently. Older people should be consulted and actively engaged in all phases of the policy-cycle and service design and delivery to inform decisions that affect them. However, there are ongoing governance issues, including a lack of co-ordination among different levels of government, especially in health, employment, transportation and social affairs which can lead to fragmented policies and service delivery. Trust in government among the over 50s is lower than the OECD average (fewer than 3 in 10 compared to 5 in 10), and older people's political efficacy and participation, including in voting, contacting public officials, and party membership lags behind OECD and EU averages.

To strengthen its governance arrangements and to promote the representation and participation of older people in public decision-making, Lithuania has established a Council for Senior Citizens and municipal seniors' councils, collaborated with NGOs and Universities of the Third Age and assigned a focal point in charge of older persons in three pilot municipalities. However, further efforts in the following areas could help create an enabling environment and effective governance structures for the active participation of older people in all spheres of public and political life:

- Delivering more responsive and integrated public services by collecting data on the needs of older people, providing clear communication, and regularly monitoring and evaluating the quality and responsiveness of public services; and assigning a focal point in charge of older persons in all municipalities to provide information and advice for older people on relevant public services and to co-operate with relevant ministries, agencies, and NGOs in the implementation of active ageing policies in the municipalities.
- Enhancing the participation of older people in public and political life by providing targeted training for senior citizens, combating ageism and stereotypes, engaging older people in policy design through the Council for Senior Citizens, involving older people in participatory budgeting initiatives and promoting meaningful volunteering opportunities.
- Strengthening institutional mechanisms and capacities for policies and service delivery for older persons by clarifying mandates between ministries and municipalities, promoting co-ordination, equipping municipal staff with adequate skills and resources, facilitating learning among municipal seniors' councils.

1 Introduction

Lithuania is ageing rapidly. The ratio of the old-age population (65 years and older) to the population aged 15-64 years will almost double from 32 individuals aged 65 and over for 100 persons in 2022 to nearly 60 by 2050, (Figure 1.1, Panel A). Rapid ageing coupled with high emigration will dramatically shrink the labour force over the next three decades with Lithuania facing the second largest drop in its working-age population in the EU27 following Latvia (Figure 1.1, Panel C). The workforce is also expected to age faster. The share of older workers (55-64) in the working population is expected to rise from 23% in 2022 to 26% in 2050, compared to 22% in the EU27 (Figure 1.1, Panel B). The government projects ageing-related fiscal costs, including for pensions, health and long-term care, to rise from 15.3% of GDP in 2019 to 17.6% in 2060 (OECD, 2022^[1]).

These trends will test the Lithuanian public administration to deliver public policies and services and to allocate public resources in the face of a major demographic change. The relative weight of older citizens will increase among voters, and so will their demand for resources and public services. At times of growing intergenerational divides in societies and global challenges such as climate change and digitalisation, creating conditions and opportunities for older people to participate in society, public and political life, the labour market, and strengthening intergenerational relations will be crucial.

Therefore, urgent action is needed in various policy domains captured under the Active Ageing principle including i) sustaining employability and access to lifelong learning at older ages, ii) enhancing their social inclusion, and iii) increasing their participation in public and political life to maintain growth, high living standards, and social cohesion in the Lithuanian society.

The European Commission defines active ageing as “helping people stay in charge of their own lives for as long as possible as they age and, where possible, to contribute to the economy and society” (Eurostat, 2020^[2]). The Active Ageing Index (AAI) developed by the European Commission (DG EMPL) and UNECE is a tool to assess older people’s ability to control their own lives and (capacities for) participation in both society and the economy (UNECE/European Commission, 2019^[3]). By covering various areas of the lives of older people, the AAI aims to capture this complexity. Based on the overall AAI, Lithuania ranks only 19th in the European Union (Figure 1.2).

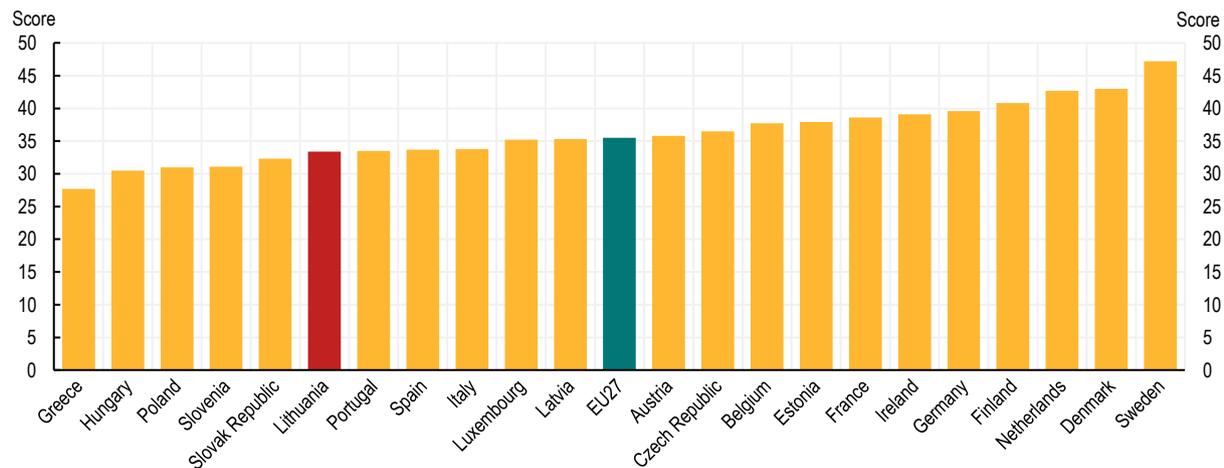
Figure 1.1. Lithuania will age faster than most EU and OECD countries



Note: OECD and EU27 are weighted averages.
 Source: OECD Population Projections Database, <http://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?QueryId=88954>.

Figure 1.2. Lithuania scores well below average on the Active Ageing Index

Overall score on the 2018 Active Ageing Index



Note: EU27 is an unweighted average.

The AAI contains four domains that have an equal weight: employment; social participation; independent, healthy and secure living; and capacity and enabling environment for active ageing. The first two domains cover various aspect of participation directly, the latter two domains assess the preconditions that need to be fulfilled for older people to realise participation.

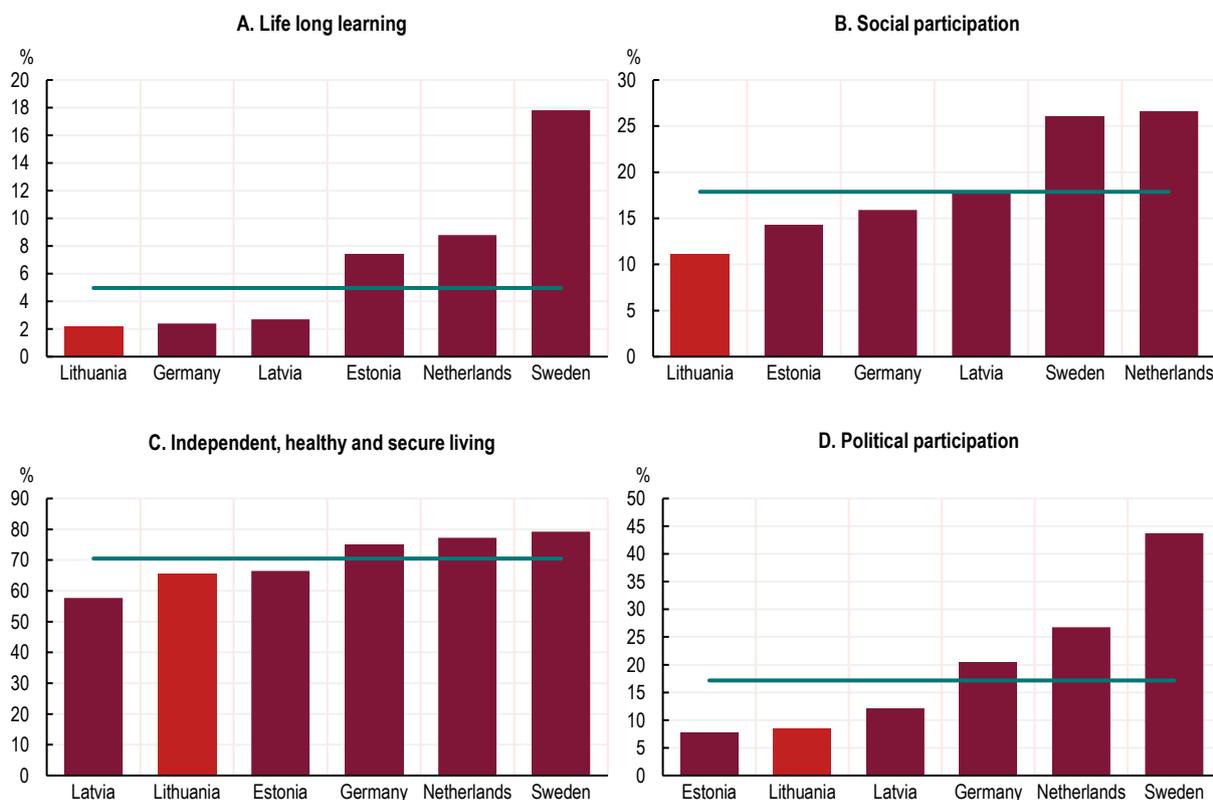
Source: UNECE/European Commission (2019^[3]), *2018 Active Ageing Index: Analytical Report*, <https://unece.org/population/publications/active-ageing-index-analytical-report>.

This relatively low score is driven by the poor performance of Lithuania on several of the key sub-components of the AAI. In particular, older Lithuanians among the lowest access to lifelong learning in the EU (Figure 1.3, Panel A). The country's limited opportunities for learning contributes to stark inequalities in the labour market. For instance, older workers without a degree have employment rates of 40%, compared to 80% for their higher-educated counterparts. This disparity, larger than the EU average, underscores the importance of lifelong learning in maintaining employability and adapting to evolving labour market demands, particularly for lower-skilled individuals.¹

High social exclusion at older ages is another key issue concerning the active ageing in Lithuania (Figure 1.3, Panel B). The AAI indicates that the quality of life of older Lithuanians is relatively low and that the preconditions for its improvement in terms of independent, healthy and secure living, capacity and enabling environment currently are limited. Social participation drops sharply after age 65, especially among women. This is also reflected in the AAI, where Lithuania has the lowest score of the 23 European OECD countries included in the domain of social participation. COVID-19 has exacerbated old-age exclusion as epidemic control measures that were taken to contain its spread and the higher risk of serious illness in older people has resulted in reduced opportunities for older people to participate in social activities. In addition to social participation itself, Lithuania also scores poorly in several domains that facilitate active participation of older people, including low income, poor health, and limited use of support (Section 2). This is reflected in the AAI dimension of independent, healthy and secure living, in which Lithuania has the third lowest score of the 23 OECD countries after Latvia and Greece (Figure 1.3, Panel C), and the lowest score in the domain of capacity and enabling environment for active ageing (Figure 1.3, Panel D).

Figure 1.3. Lithuania scores relatively low score in several dimensions of Active Ageing

Active Ageing score for four key dimensions, selected countries and EU27, 2018



Note: The green lines represent the unweighted average of the EU27 (Panels A-C) and EU28 (Panel D).

Source: UNECE / European Commission (2019_[3]), *2018 Active Ageing Index: Analytical Report*, <https://unece.org/population/publications/active-ageing-index-analytical-report>.

Finally, Lithuania faces a significant challenge in facilitating the involvement of its older citizens in public and political life, as presented in Chapter 3. Trust in government among this demographic is notably lower than the OECD average, 28% on average compared to 50% on average in 2021. Political participation in this group could be improved, for instance, the AAI shows that only 11% of older people attended a meeting of a political party, signed a petition, or contacted a politician or public official compared to the EU average of 19% and the OECD average of 20% in 2016 (UNECE/European Commission, 2019_[3]). Furthermore, only 2.4% of those aged 55+ participated in voluntary activities such as community and social services in 2016 (UNECE/European Commission, 2019_[3]).

Recognising these challenges, the government has put forward several strategies with the aim to tackle various barriers to improve livelihoods of older Lithuanians. Most notably, the National Strategy for Demography, Migration and Integration for 2018-30, aims among others to provide opportunities for older people to integrate into society, participate in social and political life and in the labour market, and strengthen intergenerational relations. These goals are also reflected in the inter-institutional plan for the implementation of this strategy for 2020-22. The National Progress Plan for 2021-30, approved by the Government of the Republic of Lithuania, emphasises improving the well-being of older people.

However, an overarching challenge for Lithuania is to unite various stakeholders around a holistic active ageing agenda with clear mandates and allocation of responsibilities to avoid fragmented delivery of public services across levels of government. While the active ageing agenda is chiefly co-ordinated by the Ministry of Social Security and Labour at national level, subnational service provision related to active ageing, including physical and mental health care, aid at home, informal adult education and skilling programmes, may vary regionally and across municipalities and hence largely depends on local capacities (UNECE/European Commission, 2019^[3]; OECD, 2021^[4]). This requires reinforced co-ordination and a more coherent approach between central and subnational stakeholders in the implementation of policies and programmes and delivery of services targeting older people in Lithuania.

A life-cycle perspective can also help Lithuania strengthen their preparedness for rapid population ageing by taking steps to improve the health, skills of adults throughout their working lives, as recommended in the *OECD Council Recommendation on Ageing and Employment Policies* (OECD, 2015^[5]), *OECD Jobs Strategy* (OECD, 2018^[6]) and *Preventing Ageing Unequally* (OECD, 2017^[7]).

The report is comprised of three chapters. The first presents the outcomes, challenges and policy recommendations in employment and lifelong learning. The second chapter focuses on social policy, presenting how to improve the integration of older people in social life. The final chapter outlines the strengths, challenges, and policy recommendations to increase the participation of senior citizens in public and political life. Each chapter proposes concrete policy steps to improve the outcomes of older citizens.

2 Promoting employment opportunities and lifelong learning of older citizens

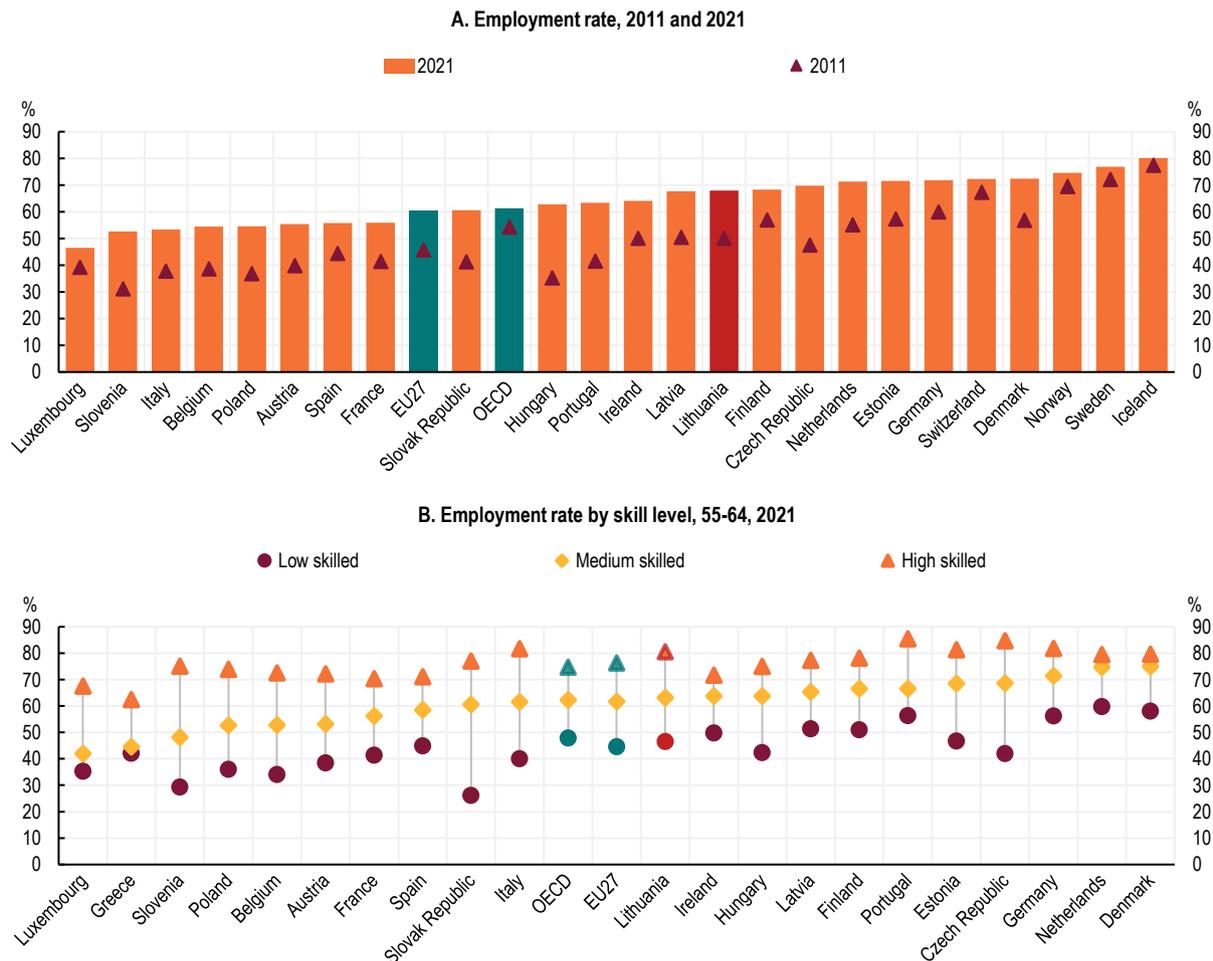
2.1. Rapid population ageing and the shrinking of the workforce requires prolonging working lives and rethinking lifelong learning policies

Giving people better employment opportunities at older ages will be necessary to address challenges posed by demographic change, reduce existing labour market tensions and maintain high living standards. Thanks to reforms to retirement ages, and better educated and healthier cohorts entering into older age, the employment rate of older Lithuanians has improved markedly over the past decade (Figure 2.1, Panel A). At 68%, the employment rate of older workers aged 55-64 in 2021 stood above the EU27 average of 61%. Employment of older people also proved to be resilient in the face of the sharp economic contraction that occurred in 2020 as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic (Zitikytė, 2022^[8]).

Despite this progress, large inequalities in employment remain, by gender, skills, region, and there is substantial scope to further harness the talent of older people. Lithuania's older citizens have one of the largest inequalities in employment by educational attainment in the EU. Those with tertiary degrees have employment rates of 81%, whereas those with the lowest degrees only reach 47% of employment rates (Figure 2.1, Panel B). The gap between these two groups is on average smaller (32 percentage points) at the EU level.

Figure 2.1. Employment outcomes for older people have improved but are still very unequal

Employment rates for persons aged 55-64 over time and by skill level

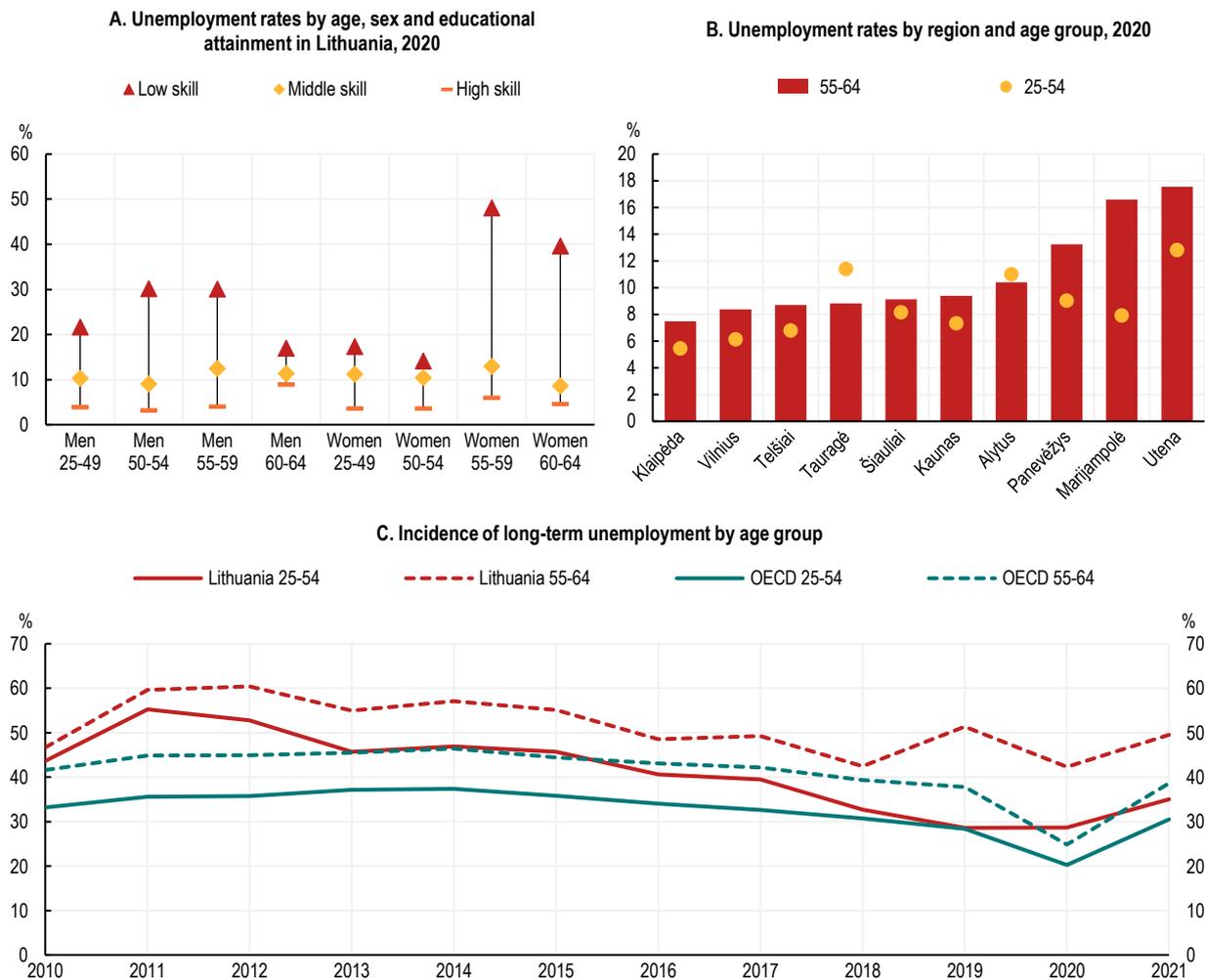


Note: EU27 and OECD are weighted averages in Panel A and unweighted in Panel B. *Low skilled* refers to below upper secondary education, *medium skilled* to upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary education and *high skilled* to tertiary education (based on ISCED 2011). Source: OECD dataset LFS by sex and age – indicators <http://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?QueryId=54218> (Panel A), OECD dataset Educational attainment and labour force <https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?QueryId=93189> and Eurostat dataset Employment rates by sex, age and educational attainment level for the EU27 (Panel B).

Unemployment, especially long-term unemployment, presents a unique challenge for Lithuania’s older and unskilled citizens, with rates exceeding EU averages and distinct disparities based on age, education, and geography. Compared to the EU average, unemployment among older people is higher (8.2% vs 5.5% in 2021, (OECD, Forthcoming^[9]). Long-term unemployment (12 months and over) among the elders is particularly concerning (Figure 2.2). Nearly half of the 55-64 unemployed are out of work for over a year (Figure 2.2, Panel C). Older citizens are now much more likely than younger ones to be in long-term unemployment whereas this was not the case 20 years ago. Among those with lower educational attainment, the likelihood of being unemployed increases significantly with age (Figure 2.2, Panel A). Geographical inequalities are also stark: the unemployment rates are particularly higher for the older people in more rural districts (Figure 2.2, Panel B).

Lithuania is experiencing significant labour shortages that have further been exacerbated by the COVID-19 crisis, like in many other OECD countries. This issue underscores the importance of enhancing the employment rate of older workers. As the population shrinks and job vacancy rates rise – a trend that has almost doubled since 2015 (OECD, Forthcoming^[9]) – the inclusion of older workers in the labour market is increasingly critical.

Figure 2.2. Older Lithuanians struggle to find new jobs and prospects



Note: *Low skill* corresponds to less than upper secondary; *Middle skill* to upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary; and *High skill* to tertiary education. Long-term unemployment is unemployed for more than 12 months. OECD is a weighted average.

Source: Panels A and B, Lithuanian Labour Force Survey, 2020. Panel C: OECD dataset Incidence of unemployment by duration <http://dotstat.oecd.org/Index.aspx?QueryId=9594>.

Many older Lithuanians face multiple barriers including poor health and lack of the right skills that prevent them to keep their current jobs and finding new ones. Age discrimination and prejudice are also major obstacles that hinder their successful employment in good quality and productive jobs. Compared to other EU countries, older workers in Lithuania have limited opportunities to take part in lifelong learning which not only hurts their chances in the labour market but also limits their participation social, public, and political life. Tackling these barriers requires a broad and integrated approach involving all key stakeholders.

2.2. Retaining and attracting older workers

Effectively retaining skills and talents of older individuals has a number of advantages for both employers and workers. For employers, low job turnover of older workers can be beneficial in particular, if they have accumulated firm-specific human capital and improve the know-how transfer to the younger generation of workers. Retaining older workers can also reduce costs for older workers because when they lose their job, finding a new one is uncertain, lengthy, and difficult, as evidenced by their high unemployment rates. Unfortunately, the retention rate for older workers is the 17th lowest of OECD countries and the lowest among the neighbouring countries (Figure 2.3, Panel A). Retaining and attracting older workers will require a combined action on four fronts that make it difficult for older Lithuanians to access and hold on to good quality jobs.

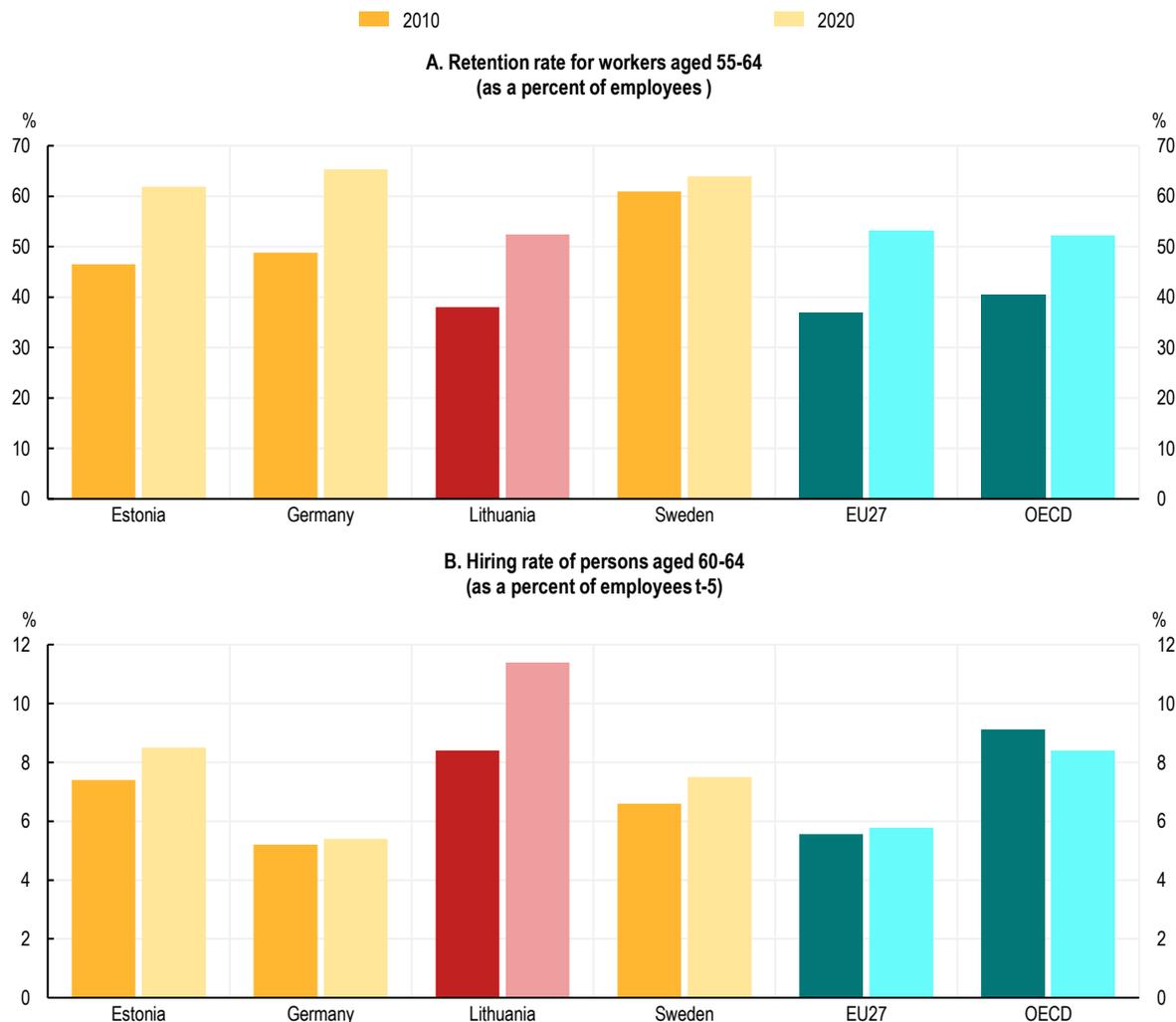
First, prejudices against older workers are highly prevalent among Lithuanian employers. Older Lithuanians report feeling unrecognised at their workplace more than their EU counterparts (OECD, Forthcoming^[9]). Reports of age discrimination are among the highest in Europe. Evidence suggests that age discrimination not only hurts employees, but also firms as it reduces their pool of potential workers and thereby results in lower productivity and efficiency. The country currently does too little to raise awareness about the potential of older workers and to eradicate negative perceptions and stereotypes. Many countries have successfully implemented awareness campaigns to eliminate age discrimination. An interesting example is the case of the Netherlands where two public awareness campaigns were launched featuring an ex-soccer player to reduce the negative stereotypes among employers and encourage them to hire older workers. Anti-age discrimination laws are powerful if victims themselves are aware of their rights. In this regard, Belgium disseminated information via banners and posters on the illegal nature of discrimination based on age and encouraged victims of discrimination to report their experience.

Second, there is a scarcity of flexible-time arrangements for older workers. Starting in their 50s, people often face increased responsibilities for caring for older family members. Older workers often need flexible time arrangements to combine care responsibilities with work, or to improve their work-life balance to prevent and reconcile with health issues. Two obstacles to flexible time arrangements exist in Lithuania. First, employers are usually reluctant to provide flexibility. Second, reducing the number of hours often causes a reduction in further pension benefits which are already relatively low. Tackling these two obstacles through policies should be considered. Additionally, phased-retirement schemes are limited in Lithuania (i.e. transitioning to retirement via reductions in working time), whereas they would allow older workers to reduce their working time to gradually retire.

Third, mandatory retirement ages in the public sector are still low. They force into retirement workers that could continue to work, imposing an end to a working relationship that is potentially beneficial for both the employer and the employee. These rules can possibly also cause discrimination as senior workers could be seen as less capable due to their age. Acknowledging these shortcomings, the government raised the ceiling of those age limits in a 2016 reform. Some age ceilings remain relatively low compared to the general retirement age, as evidenced by the mandatory retirement at 55 years of age for officers at the primary level in the internal service.

Figure 2.3. Many older Lithuanians struggle to hold onto their jobs

Retention and hiring rates of older workers, 2010 and 2020



Note: The retention rate is defined as all employees currently aged 60-64 with job tenure of five years or more as a percentage of all employees aged 55-59 5-years previously. The hiring rate is defined as employees aged 55-64 with job tenure of less than one year as a percentage of total employees. EU27 and OECD are unweighted averages. In Panel A, the OECD excludes Columbia and Israel (both years) as well as Chile, Costa Rica, New Zealand and Türkiye in 2010. In Panel B, OECD excludes Israel (both years) and New Zealand in 2010.

Source: OECD Older Worker Scoreboard 2021, <https://www.oecd.org/employment/ageingandemploymentpolicies.htm>.

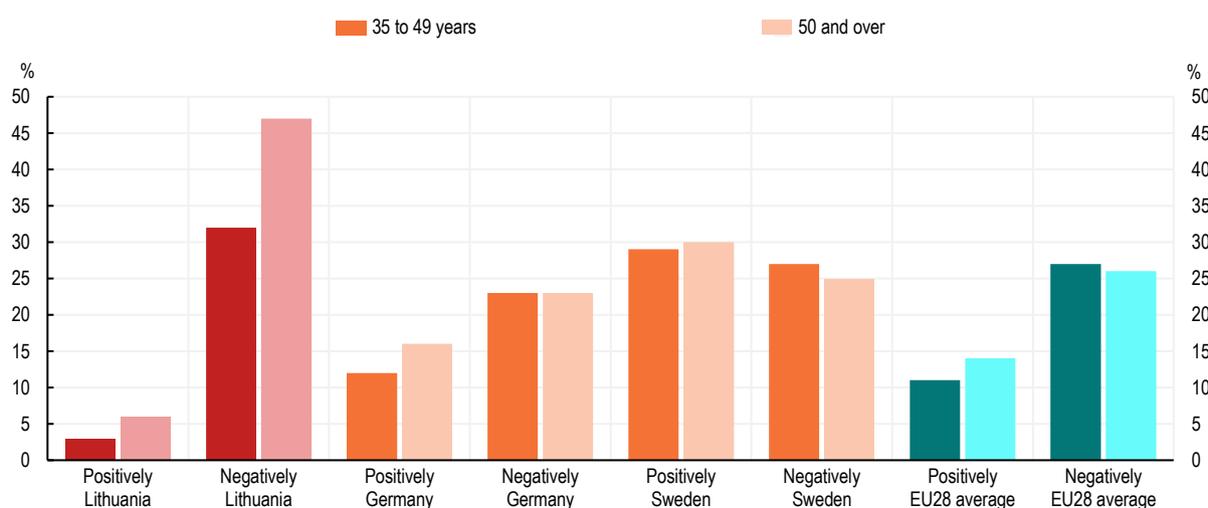
Finally, age-management practices are seldom used by Lithuanian employers, despite evidence of their success for improving human resource use. Firms who do not have age-diverse workforces miss on these complementarities and do not reach their productivity potential. Age-management practices include i) establishing training and development programmes for workers of all ages; ii) establishing age-diverse teams to ensure know-how transmission and complementarity of workers; and finally, iii) flexible work arrangement and inclusive HR practices to accommodate work life with health and family obligations. A successful example of flexible work arrangements is Norway's inclusive workplace agreements (IWA). This age management strategy is designed through a tri-partite collective agreement done at the sectoral level between employees, employers, and the government. The objectives of this IWA include reductions in sick leave, increased employment of people with reduced functional ability and delaying retirement. Consultancy services in age-management are provided to or arranged for SMEs in various European countries since the early 2000s.

2.3. Improving job quality and health at work

Ensuring older persons are healthy is a crucial factor for longer and productive working careers. Evidence suggests that there is a strong link between working conditions, health and productivity. Unfortunately, the prevalence of poor health and low job quality among older workers is very high in Lithuania. Compared to the rest of EU countries, Lithuania ranks high in the incidence of older persons reporting health problems, and in the share of older workers reporting that work negatively affects their health. Nearly half of the workers aged 50 and older complain about work having a negative effect on health, whereas this percentage is only one in four on average in the EU (Figure 2.4). This gap is much smaller in younger cohorts.

Figure 2.4. A greater number of Lithuanians report health problems

Assessment on how work affects own health, as a share each age group, 2015



Source: European Working Conditions Survey – Data visualisation, <https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/data/european-working-conditions-survey>.

Older workers also report to have high levels of job strain, compared to the young and compared to the EU average (OECD, Forthcoming^[9]). Night and shift work are more prevalent in older workers than in the younger ones, whereas the opposite is observed on average in the EU. Older workers often do jobs requiring simple tasks, which suggests they may not be making full use of the experience and competencies acquired over the years.

Overall, lack of labour inspectors, coupled with little awareness of good health practices at work, paints a picture of a working environment not welcoming for older workers. Inspections in Lithuania are more often focused on finding undeclared workers, and less on improving or controlling health and safety standards. Evidence suggests that non-compliance with health and safety can be high, especially among Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs). Improving the health and safety environment at work can be an effective way to prevent health issues and sickness for older workers.

A joint approach by different key stakeholders is required to improve preventive health measures at the workplace. Such an approach can be facilitated through a national dialogue of stakeholders, to create a national level strategy. One practical recommendation is to set up mobile health services to examine workers' health and raise awareness on the benefits of investing in physical and mental health. The provision of mobile health services will provide additional means to identify and address health risks at work at work allow and fill in existing gaps information gaps for employers and workers in remote areas.

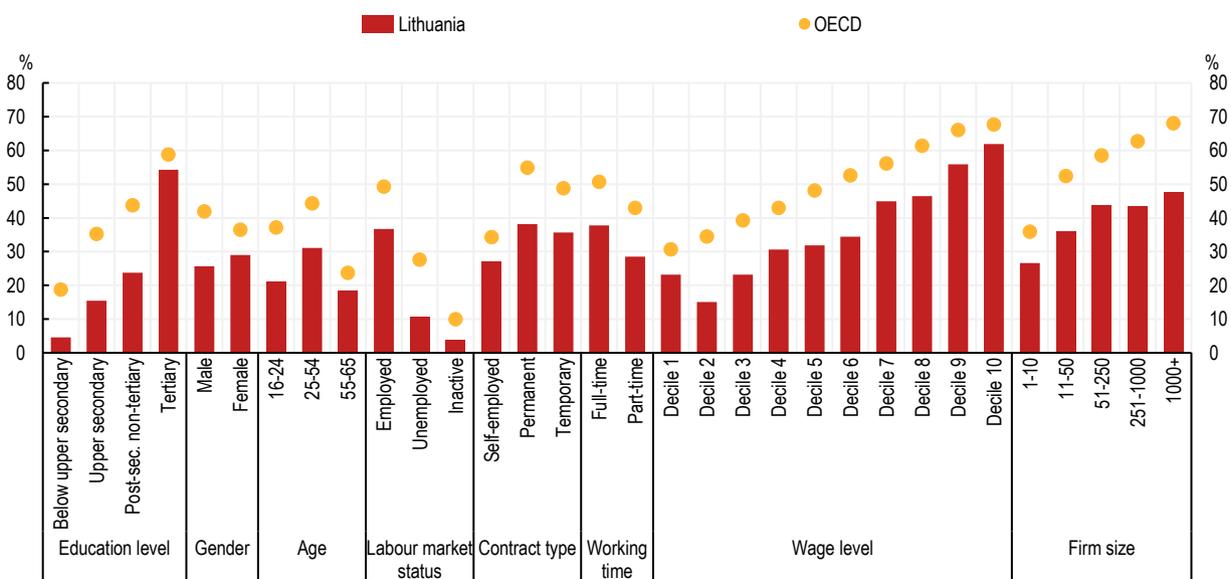
At the same time, labour inspectors should be given additional training and resources to help, inform and raise awareness about good health practices at work. This initiative will help create a culture of health and safety in the workplace, with the aim of promoting a more positive working environment for all workers.

2.4. Promoting lifelong learning

Access to training is highly unequal and few older people participate in learning activities in Lithuania. The overall participation rate in training is considerably lower than the OECD average (27% vs 39%). The gap in training participation between younger and older people is one of the largest in the EU, as less than 18% of older adults participate in training (whether formal or non-formal job-related training). Training is unequally used. It is more frequent for the highly educated, younger, high income, and those working in large firms (Figure 2.5).

Figure 2.5. Access to training is low and targeted to the young and already skilled

Share of adults participating in formal or non-formal job-related training



Note: Participation in formal and non-formal training refers to the 12-month period before the interview.

Source: Survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC), <https://www.oecd.org/skills/piaac/>.

There are significant barriers to training older people and to engage them in learning. The motivation for training is lower among older persons, who report more difficulties identifying their skills needs and perceive training to be less useful. Best practices from other countries show that career guidance can prove to be a valuable tool to motivate workers engage further in training. Unfortunately, career guidance services for older workers in Lithuania are under-developed and where available, few older people use career guidance and counselling. SMEs have little to no financial help to reskill their workforce, thus making it difficult to invest in training older workers, let alone identifying their training needs. To enhance the effectiveness and adoption of career guidance, Belgium and France established a practice of a thorough skills assessment organised by the PES. This assessment consists of an in-depth skills profiling of the individual and is available to all persons employed or unemployed.

This age gap in training matters, as the skills of older workers lag those of younger ones, who are on par with OECD standards. Compared to the 25-34 year-olds and to their European older peers, older people in Lithuania score relatively low in basic and digital skills. Given the large share of jobs that are at risk of automation in Lithuania, increasing the take-up of training seems particularly relevant as a tool to keep older workers employable and make them possible to work longer. It is necessary to create an environment where older people can reskill and upskill throughout their lives.

Non-formal adult education and training is insufficiently recognised in the country, despite the importance of third age universities. Recognising learning outcomes can be encouraged by certifying non-formal education and training and recognising non-formal and informal learning in national qualification frameworks. This recognition of prior learning (RPL) can also mean adults are able to reengage with formal learning by limiting the amount of time required to complete a qualification, which helps to overcome time-related barriers to participation in training for individuals.

2.5. Bringing older people back to work

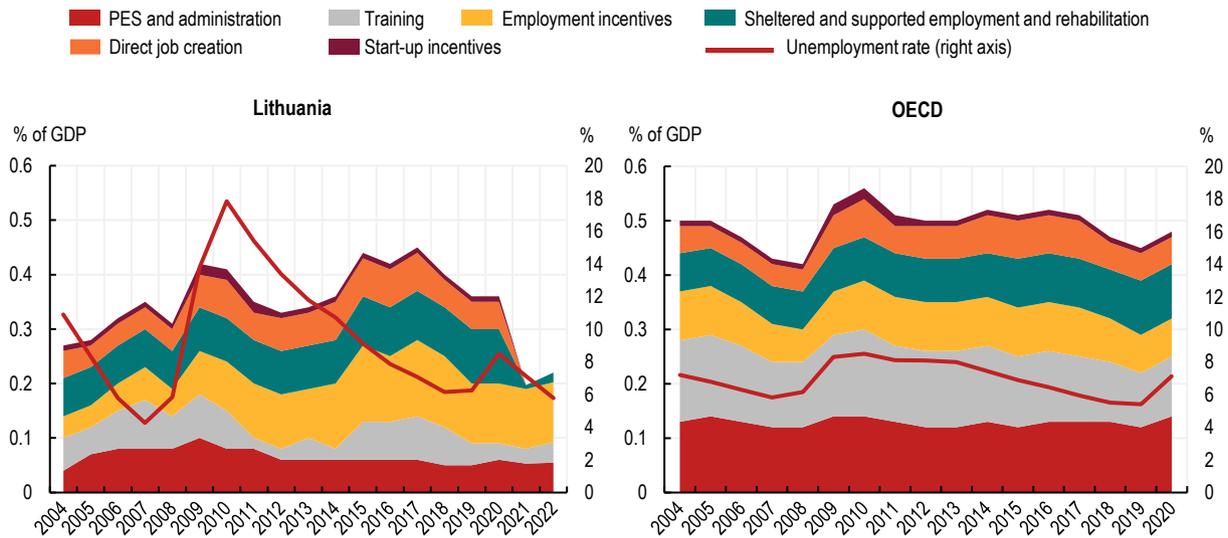
Bringing older people back into work will be an important challenge that Lithuania needs to tackle in the near term, especially for the lower skilled and inactive i.e. those not employed and not looking for work. Compared to their European peers and to the youth, older Lithuanians have longer unemployment spells and are more likely to be discouraged from searching for work. Older people (aged 50 and over) account for about 40% of the total unemployed population, a level that has been rising in the last 10 years. Unemployment is particularly acute among low-skilled older citizens, for whom it reaches levels above 30% for both genders. Older unemployed individuals are also much more likely to be unhappy about their situation. Older unemployed are 12 percentage points more likely to be sad or depressed compared to their employed peers.

The discouragement and low motivation of older citizens from seeking work can be addressed through a mix of policies involving ALMP, better usage of public employment services (PES) as well as targeted and time-limited employment subsidies. One particularly successful measure that has been implemented in the Netherlands is the called *Inspiration days*, which are large events resembling jobs fairs and organised by municipalities, local PES and employers. During these events, older and less skilled job seekers participate in activities designed to restore confidence and increase their awareness of their own skills and provide opportunities for job-matching with employers.

Although in Lithuania PES are highly used to search for work, low funding limits their capacity to offer individualised counselling for older workers and those with health limitations. Spending on ALMPs in Lithuania in 2020 as a percentage of GDP was 0.36%, a quarter less than the OECD average of 0.48% (Figure 2.6). Spending on active labour market measures per unemployed person as a percentage of GDP in 2019 is well below the EU average. Moreover, supporting older workers with multiple problems requires an integrated approach. Training of PES staff is crucial for improved intermediation services.

Figure 2.6. ALMP Expenditures are low compared to other OECD countries

Expenditures on active labour market policies and unemployment rate in Lithuania (2014-22) and OECD (2014-19)



PES: public employment service. GDP: gross domestic product.

Note: OECD average is an unweighted and excludes Colombia, Costa Rica and Iceland. Employment incentives are net of employment maintenance incentives, to remove as much as possible measures that are specific to COVID-19. These exceptional measures are estimated for 2021-22.

Source: EC-OECD Labour Market Policies Database, <https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=LMPEXP>; OECD LFS by Sex and Age – Indicators Database, <http://stats.oecd.org//Index.aspx?QueryId=54218>; Economic Outlook No 112 – November 2022 <https://stats.oecd.org/index.aspx?DataSetCode=EO>; and the OECD Questionnaire on Policy Responses to the COVID-19 Crisis (responses from Lithuania).

Support for entrepreneurship is also under-developed. The share of self-employed older people (aged 55-64) in Lithuania is relatively low and decreasing from 13.9% in 2010 to 5.5% in 2020. The EU and OECD averages for the same period also show a decrease in the share of older people who are self-employed, but the share is almost three to four times higher (17.6% and 21.8% respectively). PES in other OECD countries provide a wide range of tools to support self-employed citizens, or entrepreneurship at older ages. This is partly because self-employment may represent a possibility for the older unemployed to get a job.

Wage subsidies for low-wage earners in Lithuania have recently shown to have positive effects on employment and job retention. A wage subsidy programme was recently evaluated in Lithuania. Jobseekers could apply to this programme, which would subsidise up to 50% of the wages paid by the firm for the jobseeker, for up to six months, conditional on firms committing to keeping the worker for a full year. Three years after the start of the subsidised employment, participants were still 11 percentage points more likely to be employed than non-participants, which shows that the initial subsidy was successful in placing a low-skilled individual in a durable job. Wage subsidies for employing older workers could be effective in overcoming discriminatory practices in recruitment and compensate employers from a temporarily lower productivity of a newly hired older worker. Overall, caution should be taken if implementing wage subsidies to minimise dead weight loss and crowding out, i.e. firms taking the subsidy for their existing older workers without an effect on total employment of older workers.

Box 2.1. Key policy recommendations to promote the employment of older citizens

Key policy recommendations to increase training by workers in their mid- to late careers

- Promote career and vocational guidance, especially for mid-career and older workers, to help them understand the benefits of training as well as improve the uptake of learning measures.
- Strengthen the focus on training to basic skills as well as digital skills to promote participation in employment, social and public and political life.
- Consider increasing the subsidies for vocational training and upskilling of workers. Different methods can be used to achieve this objective, such as vouchers to workers, individual learning accounts, subsidies for firms that train workers.
- Broaden the access to career guidance and training for employees in SMEs, as these often need help identifying the needs in terms of skills and training of their workers.
- Setting up mechanisms for validating and recognising skills, including non-formal adult education and training. This measure could facilitate the re-engagement with formal learning as well.

Key policy recommendations to improve job retention and attract older workers

- Raise awareness for employers about the benefits of working time flexibility for older employees.
- Foster a flexible retirement system: facilitate the choice of phased retirement, i.e. switching from full-time to part-time work at older ages, by smoothing income from work and pensions for different choices of working time.
- Ensure that employment separations are based on competency and fitness rather than on age and eliminate mandatory retirement for all civil servants. This can remove obstacles for older individuals aged 65 and over to re-enter the workforce.
- Raise awareness about the benefits of employing older workers and address age stereotypes for instance through national campaigns and management training.
- Scale-up counselling of SMEs on appropriate life cycle human resource management approaches to better manage age diverse workforces.

Key policy recommendations to increase the employment rates of older unemployed and inactive

- Increase the resources of PES to allow for intensive and regular one-on-one job coaching and mentoring sessions with older workers most in need of counselling. Consider providing digital counselling for older workers and inactive in remote areas with limited access to public transport.
- Strengthen training for PES staff to effectively work with older unemployed with multiple employment barriers.
- Support entrepreneurship of older workers, including self-employment and business start-ups.
- Support upskilling and reskilling of low-skilled older workers and support training measures for older workers to adapt to technological change at the workplace (including through digitalisation).
- Consider expanding the wage subsidy programme to unskilled older workers. Time-limited financial incentives such as wage subsidies for firms, when they are properly targeted to low-wage older workers, seem to successfully increase employment in Lithuania. To be most effective, the wage subsidies should be well-targeted to older low-skilled workers or people with

limiting health conditions. Prepare evaluations of the programme before its implementation, to ensure its effectiveness.

- Organise job fairs and group-counselling session to promote self-esteem, working on expectations, based on the example of the Dutch Inspiration Days. Counselling needs to include an assessment of competencies and aspirations based on work experience.

Key policy recommendations to improve job quality and health-related aspects of jobs for older cohorts

- Expand the mandate of public health bureaus to raise awareness on the benefits of improving health and working conditions at the workplace.
- Make use of local-level mobile health services to examine workers' health in SMEs, as well as those in remote and rural areas.
- Set-up a national occupational health service advisory line accessible to employers of all ages (e.g. as in the United Kingdom).
- Set up a national level strategy involving key stakeholders to better foster a national dialogue on the link between working conditions, health prevention and productivity. This dialogue could offer room for identifying and showcasing good examples and collective agreements concluded at sector and company level.
- Provide preventative counselling to workers and early in the sickness spell to promote timely return to work.

3

Integrating older people in social life

Lithuania scores poorly on the Active Ageing Index (Figure 1.2.) which provides a general picture of older people's capacity for participating in all areas of life. It has the lowest score of all European OECD countries in the social participation domain. Moreover, it is also among the lowest-ranking countries in the domains assessing the preconditions that need to be fulfilled for older people to be able to realise participation, that is, the domains of independent, healthy and secure living, and of capacity and enabling environment.

The improved social participation of older people is an important policy priority in Lithuania as it is included as a policy goal in several strategic policy documents. Implementation is co-ordinated across ministries through implementation plans, each covering only a couple of years of the full period covered by the strategy. These implementation plans contain a more detailed set of initiatives and connected indicators and targets. Yet, targets often refer to procedural outputs (e.g. the number of people enrolled in a programme) whereas outcome indicators are essential to assess effectiveness and efficiency of an intervention, and therefore are key to developing evidence-based policies. In addition, the situation of older people is not always monitored separately, making it difficult to assess the progress being made in improving their lives in some areas. The wide variation in initiatives in the area of active ageing, often situated at the local level and in the form of temporary and relatively small-scale projects, offers an opportunity to assess the effectiveness of various types of interventions.

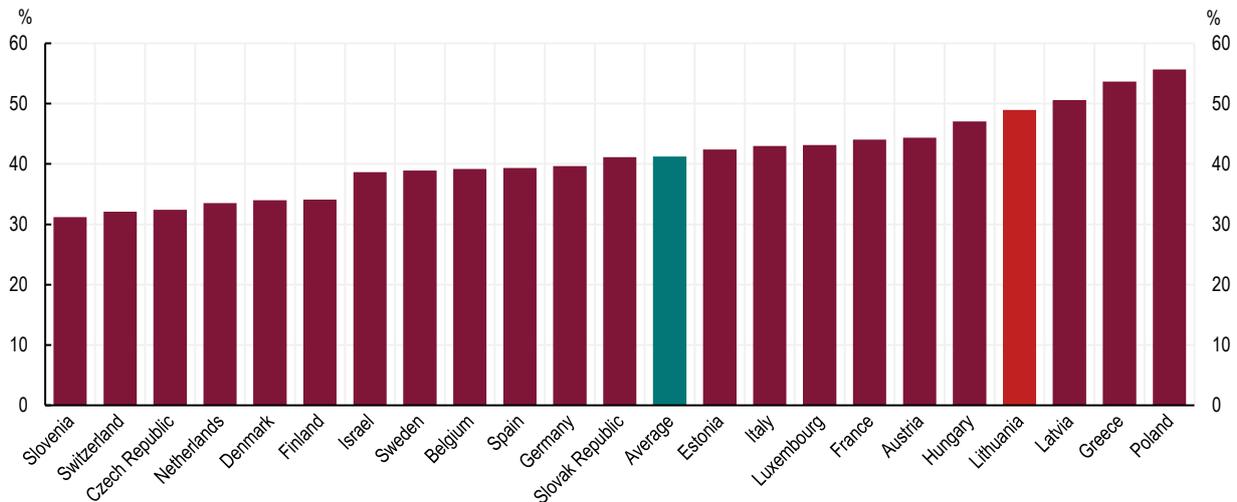
3.1. Healthy ageing and resilience

Bad health is an important barrier to older people's social participation. However, older Lithuanians are in relatively poor health while services and assistive devices that allow older people with disabilities to lead active and independent lives remain underused.

Older people in Lithuania are in poor health compared to those in other OECD countries. Life expectancy at age 65 is among the lowest and is even the lowest for men. Older Lithuanians have the poorest perceived health in the OECD as only one in ten people aged 65 or older declares to be in good or very good health. The share of older people reporting that they are limited in their daily activities due to health problems is higher in Lithuania than in the OECD on average. Around a quarter of older Lithuanians report having difficulties in executing activities of daily life or instrumental activities of daily life, which is around the OECD average (OECD, Forthcoming^[9]). Yet, these difficulties are more likely to translate into a loss of capacity in Lithuania as half of the older population reports an unmet need, meaning that they do not receive the help they need with an issue, compared to four in ten older people on average across 22 OECD countries (Figure 3.1).

Figure 3.1. Half of older people have unmet long-term care needs, substantially more than in most other countries

Share of the population 65+ with a need for help in executing daily activities that is not or only partially met, 2020



Note: A need is considered unmet if a person reports difficulties with activities of daily life (getting dressed, bathing, eating...), instrumental activities of daily life (cooking, shopping, using public transport,...) or other basic activities (walking, sitting, climbing stairs,...) and declares either to receive no help with these activities or to receive help that does not meet their need all the time. The green bar represents the unweighted average of the 22 OECD countries shown.

Source: OECD calculations based on the Survey of Health, Ageing and Retirement in Europe (wave 8).

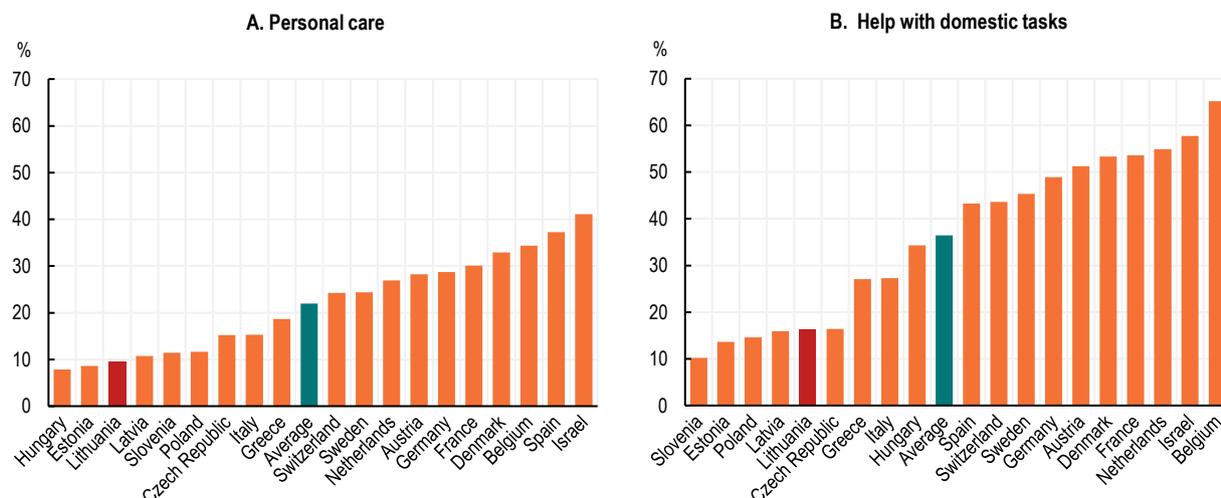
Older Lithuanians' lifestyles are relatively unhealthy and half of deaths in Lithuania are linked to lifestyle factors. The share of overweight older people is elevated because of comparatively less healthy diets and lower levels of physical activity. Older men are also much more likely to smoke in Lithuania than in the OECD on average. Moreover, one in five older people fell in the last six months – the highest share in the OECD – and one-third is afraid of falling, which can discourage people from living active lives, particularly when pavements are uneven or slippery due to weather conditions. Local public health bureaus are active in lifestyles and preventive health, although they have taken few initiatives in relation to falling prevention in recent years.

While the use of medical specialists and dentists is below average, hospitalisation rates of older people are very high despite older people generally preferring other forms of healthcare. Insufficient availability and affordability of health and dental care services do not form major obstacles to using these services.

Through provision of services, adaptations of the physical environment and provision of aids, the impact of disability and disease on a person's functioning and capacity to live independently can be reduced. Although steadily rising, the use of long-term care services at home – personal care, domestic help and meals-on-wheels – remains very low despite a commitment to facilitating people to stay in their own homes for as long as possible (Figure 3.2). Prices of specific long-term care services differ strongly between municipalities. In addition, the use of assistive devices is limited in Lithuania compared to the other OECD countries included. Few older people with walking difficulties use a wheelchair or mobility scooter, although canes and walking frames are widely used. However, walk-supporting and walk-replacing aids are not substitutes, but rather complements providing mobility in different situations. Personal alarms, which provide easy access to help for people living independently, are barely used.

Figure 3.2. Limited use of personal care and domestic help at home

Share of the population 65+ with at least one ADL or IADL limitation that received personal care and domestic help at home in the last 12 months, 2020



ADL: Activities of Daily Life, IADL: Instrumental Activities of Daily Life.

Note: A limitation refers to any difficulty a person has in executing a one activity from a list of 14 activities as a result of a physical, mental, emotional or memory problem. The 14 activities cover six ADL (getting dressed, walking across the room, bathing, eating, getting in/out of bed, going to the toilet) and eight IADL (cooking, shopping, making a call, taking medicine, doing work around the house or garden, managing money, leaving the house independently and using public transport, doing laundry). The green bars represent the unweighted average of the 19 OECD countries shown.

Source: OECD calculations based on the Survey of Health, Ageing and Retirement in Europe (wave 8).

3.2. Housing and transport

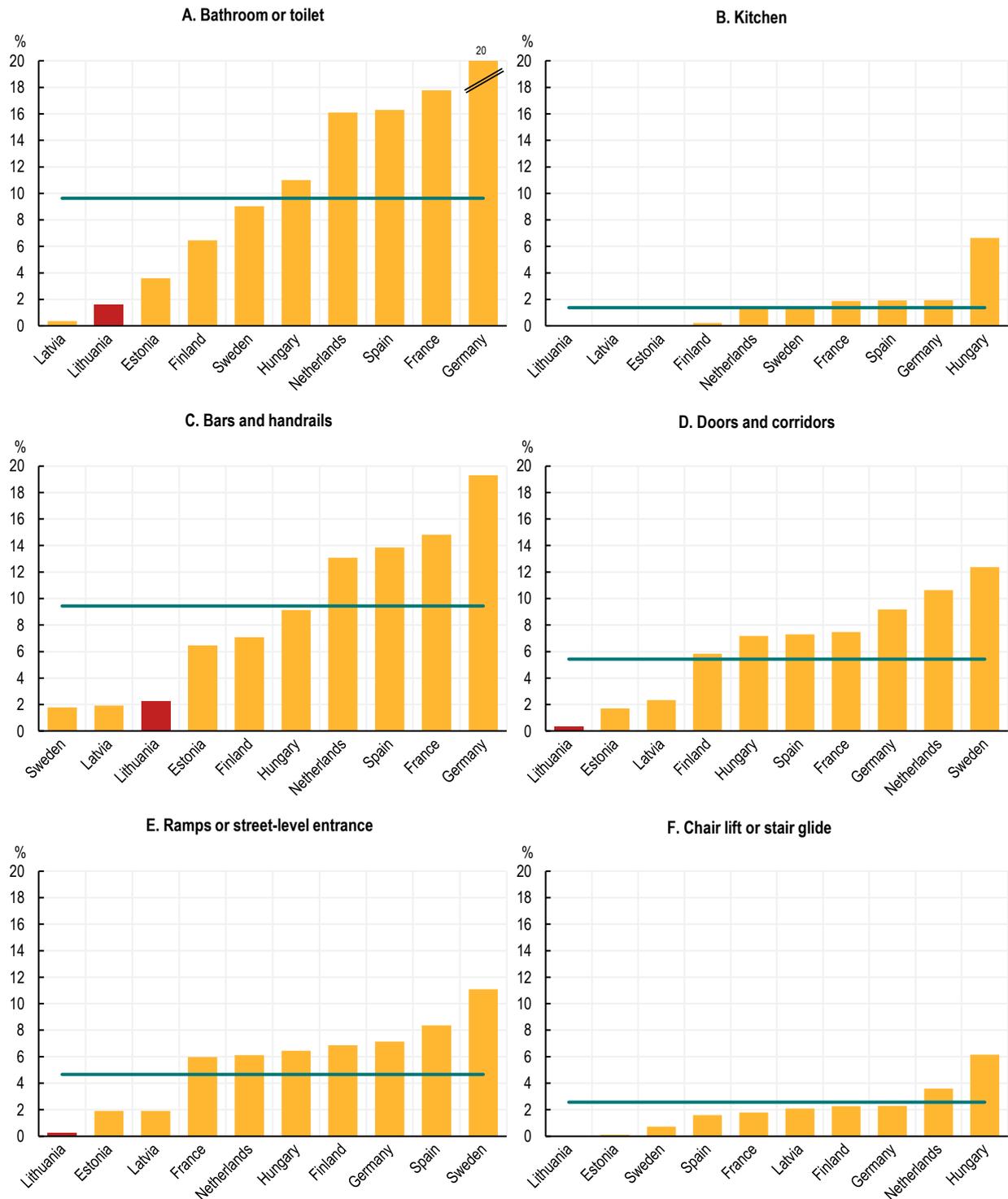
To meet with others, people must be able to move around in their own homes, their neighbourhoods, and the wider environment. However, very few older Lithuanians live in adapted homes despite their relatively poor health, and public transport in rural areas is not accommodating to older people's needs.

Living alone is very common among older people, and in particular older women, in Lithuania. Of all people 65 and over, 42% live alone, and even 50% of women in this age group. At the same time, the share of older people living in multi-generational households is also above average at 20%.

Home ownership rates are very high among older Lithuanians, but homes are not very adapted to older people's needs. Of people aged 65 and over, 96% own their own dwellings. At the same time, over ten percent lack basic sanitation in their homes, such as a bath or shower or an indoor flushing toilet. In terms of adaptations, Lithuania is consistently among the countries with the lowest shares of older people living in houses with certain adaptations among 22 European OECD countries, and it has the lowest use of kitchen adjustments, door and corridor adjustments, ramps and stair lifts (Figure 3.3). Moreover, few homes are equipped with warning systems such as alarms, sensors and buttons. While, in principle, housing adaptations are free of charge, the low take-up rates may be linked to administrative requirements and the long procedure via a municipal commission even for rather simple adaptations and by a lack of knowledge about the possibilities for housing adaptations.

Figure 3.3. Few older people live in adjusted homes

Share of the population 65+ living in a dwelling with specific adaptations, 2020



Note: The green lines represent the unweighted average of 22 OECD countries, those shown with the addition of Austria, Belgium, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Greece, Israel, Italy, Luxembourg, Poland, Slovenia, the Slovak Republic and Switzerland.

Source: OECD calculations based on the Survey of Health, Ageing and Retirement in Europe (wave 8).

Older Lithuanians feel very unsafe in their own neighbourhoods. Of people aged 65 and over, 44% declare feeling unsafe or very unsafe walking alone in their local area after dark, double the average of 24 European OECD countries and a significantly higher rate than in any other country included in the analysis. Feeling unsafe is unlikely to be related to criminality as older Lithuanians generally perceive their neighbourhoods as being free from problems of crime, violence or vandalism and personal experiences with burglary or assault are limited in international comparison. Hence, feeling unsafe is more likely to be related to quality and accessibility of infrastructure and the high rate of older people having recently experienced a fall. Hence, providing more benches may help older people feel safer going out, alongside accessible pavements, street lighting and public toilets.

Lithuania has a rather large bus fleet and the cost of bus travel is heavily discounted for older people, but access and timetables are likely important obstacles for older people to use public transport. Access to public transport stops for those aged 65 and over is lower in Lithuania than in any other OECD country, with older people in rural areas being much less likely to have a bus stop within walking distance. Moreover, timetables in rural areas are particularly designed for people commuting to work and for school children, with services in the morning and the late afternoon, but are less accommodating to the needs of older people who often do not need to be at their destination for a full day (e.g. traveling for a medical appointment, for shopping or for a social gathering).

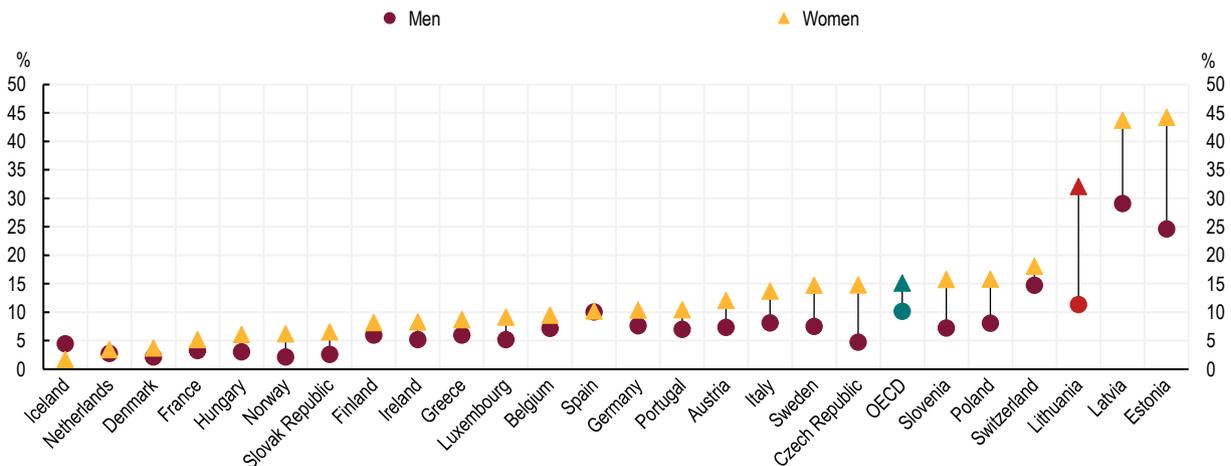
3.3. Financial and social resources

Social participation requires both financial and social resources. Basic needs must be fulfilled before people can use available financial resources for participation in social activities. Moreover, a social network not only provides people with opportunities for personal contact, it can also help people access benefits or services.

Older people in Lithuania have very low disposable incomes and a very high risk of relative poverty compared to other OECD countries. The average income of those aged 66 and over is 71% of that of the total population, and it is only 66% among people aged 76 and over. In comparison, these rates are 88% and 80%, respectively, for the OECD on average. Among people 66 and over, 25% live in relative poverty, measured as having an equivalised disposable income below 50% of the median, compared to 14% in the OECD on average and compared to 16% in the total Lithuanian population. Older women have an elevated relative poverty rate (32%, more than double the OECD average), whereas relative poverty of older men (11%) is around the OECD average (Figure 3.4). Women's higher likelihood of living alone explains about half the gender difference in relative poverty rates, with 57% of older women living alone having an equivalised disposable income below the relative poverty threshold. Material deprivation rates confirm this picture as 26% of Lithuanians aged over 66 are unable to afford at least three items of a nine-item list compared to 11% among European OECD countries.

Figure 3.4. Lithuania has the largest gender gap in relative income poverty among older people

Relative income poverty rates among people aged 66+ by gender, latest available year



Note: OECD is a weighted average, excluding Colombia. Data are for 2018 with the following exceptions: 2019 (France, Sweden), 2017 (Denmark, Hungary, Switzerland) and 2016 (Netherlands).

Source: OECD (2021_[10]), *Pensions at a Glance 2021: OECD and G20 Indicators*, Table 7.2, <https://doi.org/10.1787/ca401ebd-en>.

The Lithuanian pension system consists of a complex combination of separate benefits. In addition to a points-based earnings-related scheme, first-tier benefits include a contribution-based basic pension, a minimum pension (the pension supplement), several safety-net benefits and a supplement for single pensioners. The pension supplement plays a very small role: due to increases in other pension benefits and different indexation rules, the top-up it provides has eroded and the supplement is likely to become obsolete. A modest supplementary benefit is paid to all single people who reached the statutory retirement age. The social-assistance old-age pension is only available to people who reached the statutory retirement age but cannot claim a contributory pension, although the benefit exceeds that of social assistance benefits provided under the Law on Cash Social Assistance for Poor Residents. The combination of the social assistance old-age pension and the supplementary benefit for single people together result in a benefit of 13% of gross average earnings, while on average across the OECD, non-contributory benefits equal 21% of gross average earnings.

Contributory pension build-up is modest for low-income earners. The future net replacement rate of a person working a full career from age 22 in 2020 at half of average earnings (i.e. about the minimum wage) equals 44%, the second lowest in the OECD and 30 percentage points below the OECD average. For a person on average wages, the future net replacement rate in Lithuania is 31%, the lowest in the OECD and less than half the OECD average. The pension does not build up linearly in line with career length: no pension entitlements are built up for careers shorter than 15 years; upon reaching 15 years there is a hike in pension entitlements; pension build-up is modest between 15 and 32.5 years worked; and build-up accelerates after 32.5 years. After 45 years of working at the minimum wage, the pension still falls below the poverty threshold.

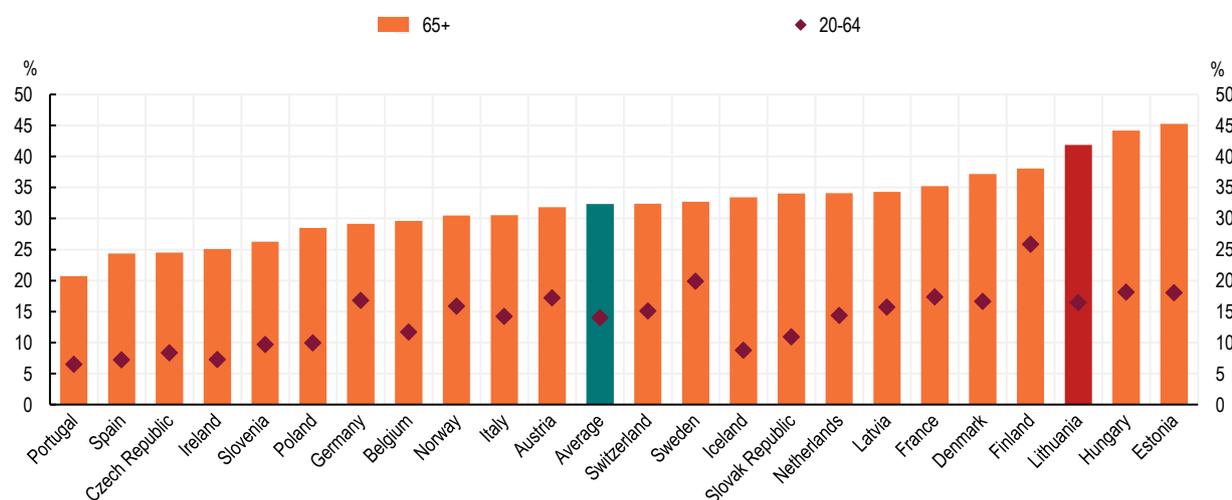
Participation in cultural or sport activities is low across all age groups in Lithuania, although the fall in participation between those aged 50-64 and those aged 65-74 is comparatively high, especially for women, where the decline is the sharpest in the EU. The share of people aged 65-74 visiting live performances is similar to the EU average, although older Lithuanians are less likely than older people in the EU on average to participate in cultural visits, cinema and sporting events. The most important reasons older people in Lithuania give for not participating are cost, a lack of interest and no availability in the neighbourhood, with 22-23% of respondents in each of the three categories. Compared to non-participants in other

EU countries, older people in Lithuania appear more willing to participate in the activities but have greater availability and cost difficulties.

Older Lithuanians have comparatively few in-person contacts but compensate for this through contacts over the telephone or the internet, which illustrates the importance of telephone and internet connections to tackle social isolation and loneliness. More than 40% of those aged 65 or over are living alone in Lithuania, compared to 32% for the 23 European country average (Figure 3.5). One-third of older people sometimes feel lonely in Lithuania and one in ten say they often feel lonely, which is around the average of 22 European OECD countries. Older Lithuanians have limited regular contact, with under 30% of older people getting together with family or friends at least weekly, compared to over half of older people in the EU27. Typically, older people meet with family or friends only a couple of times per month. However, when also including interactions through telephone, mail or e-mail, older Lithuanians typically have interactions with their close network several times per week, among the highest levels in the OECD. Despite the importance of virtual contacts, high-speed internet access in Lithuania is poor in comparison to other OECD countries, both in general and for those living in rural areas. Only 63% of households in Lithuania have access to internet with fast broadband compared to an average of 87% across 26 European OECD countries; in rural areas 28% of Lithuanian households are covered compared to 64% on average in these OECD countries.

Figure 3.5. A high proportion of older people are living alone in Lithuania

Percentage of population living alone by age, 2018



Note: The green bar represents the unweighted average of the 23 European OECD countries shown.

Source: European Social Survey wave 9.

Older Lithuanians have fairly small and homogenous close networks. On average there are fewer than two people with whom older people often discuss things that are important to them, and the age diversity of their networks is below-average. Age-diverse personal networks better protect older people against social isolation and loneliness as they limit the occurrence of close contacts passing away. Moreover, increased intergenerational contact is a good antidote to ageism.

3.4. Integrating services to improve access

Uptake of several types of assistance provided by Lithuanian municipalities is low, despite existing needs and municipalities usually granting assistance when older people apply for them. Taken together, these findings point at non-take-up of social services resulting from older people not applying. In close consultation with the Lithuanian Ministry of Social Security and Labour, the integration of social services was selected as the focal point for the collection of good practices, with the aim of reducing the non-take-up of services among older people. This would improve active ageing as it would facilitate older people to live longer in their own homes and participate in the community. The good practices analysed are preventive home visits in Denmark (Hjørring), customer guidance in Finland (Tampere) and reablement in Sweden (Eskilstuna).

Having a single contact point for older people to request assistance is vital to service access. In all three good practices, a single contact point provides information on services available and eligibility conditions and forwards the case to a case manager as needed. The contact point in the three countries has separate procedures to deal with people seeking information or assistance for themselves and to deal with others, such as friends or neighbours, expressing concern about someone. Subsequently, a single case manager is assigned who follows the individual needing assistance. This way, the case manager can build a trustful relationship with the older person which allows for a more open conversation about needs and preferences. The case manager then develops a service plan together with the older person, with both agreeing on an integrated service package consisting of both social services and housing adaptations, and its price. Once the service package is agreed upon, the case manager acts as an intermediary between the older person and the service providers, and co-ordinates service delivery.

A home visit allows the case manager to develop a better overview of the needs of the older person. Not only can the case manager see the conditions the person lives in, and therefore see which types of assistance are needed, but the home also provides a more personal and private environment for an open conversation about needs and preferences. When an older person seeks any form of assistance, a home visit contributes to the development of a comprehensive support package that overcomes different obstacles to independent living and social participation. Home visits can also be used preventively, in which case they are targeted to specific vulnerable groups (e.g. people who recently widowed or returned from a stay in hospital, or people who have sought assistance before) or offered to a broader section of the older population, such as all people over a specific age (e.g. 80 and over). The level of targeting of specific sub-populations for preventive home visits determines both the staffing resources required and the extent to which people with needs can be identified.

Setting up a system with a one-stop shop, a single case manager and home visits requires some resources. First, there is a need for training of the administrators working at the single contact point and the case managers. As these workers will be covering multiple areas of an older person's life, they should know the various services that may be useful to older people in the municipality, their application procedures and their eligibility criteria. Furthermore, some Danish educational institutions offer courses specifically on executing home visits, training the case managers involved among others in recognising not only care needs but also risk factors for loneliness or other more complex needs. Second, the system requires more financial resources at the first moment the older person contacts the municipality for support. All three good practices entail higher costs at first but are estimated to start generating savings as of one to three years later due to the needs being detected earlier on and assistance therefore being more effective in preventing or slowing down deterioration of the older person's condition. Third, an integrated IT system is needed that facilitates not only the evaluation of an older assistance-seeker's application for various types of social services but also the monitoring of the person's condition and needs once receiving assistance. That would allow for an earlier detection of new needs in service recipients, an easier application procedure to expand service delivery and therefore a faster intervention.

The co-ordination of eligibility criteria across services and housing adaptations offered facilitates their integration into a single service package. A single eligibility check is used across services, which facilitates the compilation of the service package and simplifies the procedure to add extra services to the service package as needed. This also implies simplifying the procedure for housing adaptations at least for minor adaptations (see Section 3.2). One way to improve the co-ordination of eligibility criteria is through “nesting” meaning that for some services specific eligibility criteria are added to a basic set of eligibility criteria applying to other services.

Public Health Bureaus provide a wide range of preventive health programmes for older people. Both the lectures and activities they provide offer opportunities for social service representatives to engage with older people and inform them of the types of assistance that are available. Using these events as a platform for informal contact between older people and social service representatives may reduce the threshold for applying for support.

Box 3.1. Key recommendations to improve the integration of older people in social life

Key policy recommendations to strengthen evaluation procedures:

- Evaluate initiatives based on outcomes to assess their effectiveness and efficiency.
- Compare outcomes across initiatives, making use of the wide variation in initiatives to evaluate which ones work better than others.
- Treat older people as a separate group in evaluations, assessing whether initiatives are effective to improve active ageing.

Key policy recommendations to reduce the negative impact of health and unmet needs on social participation of older people:

- Boost local public health bureaus' efforts to promote healthy lifestyles and reduce falling. This can be done by providing more funding, developing an evaluation framework to assess the effectiveness of health bureaus' interventions and sharing evidence-based good practices between public health bureaus.
- Provide a procedure for healthcare workers to flag whether an older person may need support services. This could happen through an integrated platform for social service delivery accessible to healthcare and social services staff involved in the care for a person, or an online tool where healthcare workers can express their concern about an individual to the municipalities' social services staff.

Key policy recommendations to eliminate barriers to social participation of older people in the areas of housing and transport:

- Allow for minor housing adaptations without municipal commission approval.
- Ensure some public transport connections outside commuting periods.

Key policy recommendations to reduce financial and social barriers to social participation:

- Increase pensions of low-income earners and simplify the pension entitlement structure.
- Organise activities that explicitly aim to bring people across generations together.

Key policy recommendations to improve the take-up of the various types of support available to older people:

- Create a one-stop shop for social services and housing adaptations for older people.
- Assign a case manager to make a service plan and monitor the older person.
- Perform a home visit for a full assessment of the life situation when an older person seeks any form of assistance.
- Co-ordinate eligibility criteria and application procedures for social services and housing adaptations.
- Proactively contact older people at critical moments in their lives to check if they need assistance.

4 Strengthening the participation of older people in public life

Public governance is at the heart of creating conditions and opportunities for older people to participate in society, public and political life, the labour market, and strengthen intergenerational relations. Yet, important governance challenges persist due to fragmented delivery of public services and lack of co-ordination across certain policy areas such as health, employment, transportation, and social affairs (UNECE, 2021^[11]; AGE Platform Europe, 2021^[12]). Moreover, older people lack the tools, channels and opportunities to actively contribute to decisions that are relevant for their well-being (UNECE, 2021^[11]). Evidence shows that a lack of political will, or lacking financial or human resources or instruments for implementing participatory approaches in the public administration as well as ageism, social isolation and digital exclusion constitute important barriers to older people's participation in public and political life (UNECE, 2021^[11]). Addressing such challenges is crucial to strengthen the relationship between older people and public institutions and their association with democratic processes.

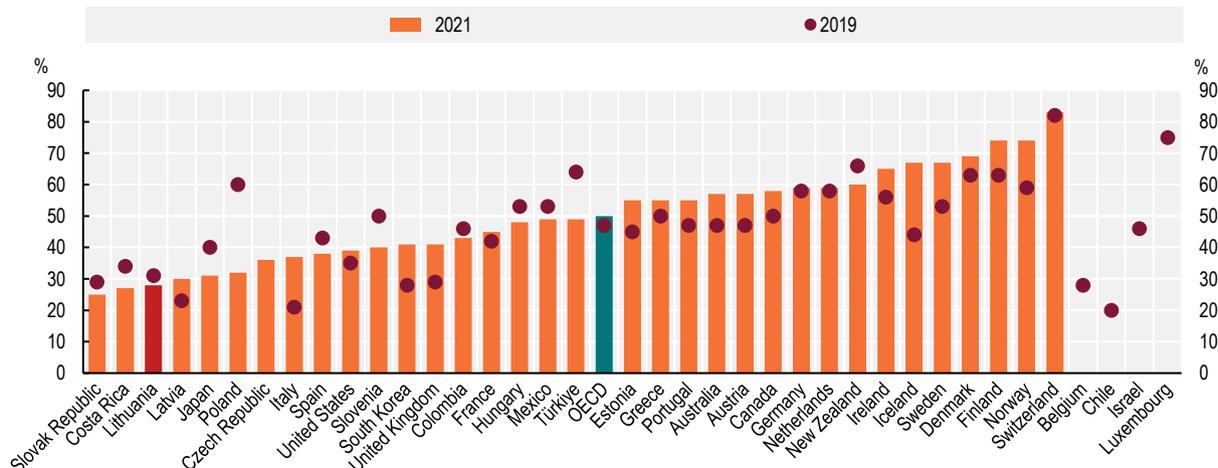
The OECD Framework on Drivers of Trust in Public Institutions shows that opportunities for participation and engagement of citizens in policy and decision-making processes and institutions of representative democracy are important drivers of their trust in government (Brezzi, 2021^[13]). At times of declining trust in government in Lithuania (Figure 4.1), opportunities for the meaningful participation of citizens of all ages, including older people, in public decision and policy making is particularly urgent (OECD, 2022^[14]; OECD, 2022^[15]).

In this context, the Government of Lithuania is seeking to increase the participation of older people in public and political life as part of its active ageing agenda. The Strategy for Demography, Migration and Integration Policy for 2018-30, approved by the Parliament of Lithuania in 2018, refers to the participation of older people in political life as one of its key objectives (Government of the Republic of Lithuania, 2018^[16]).

Since the adoption of the Strategy, Lithuania has made important progress to implement this agenda, including through the establishment of a new permanent Council for Seniors' Affairs, the creation of municipal seniors' councils in the municipalities of Kaunas City and Klaipeda City. The government has also collaborated with non-governmental organisations (NGOs) representing older persons and Universities of the Third Age, such as through the creation of dedicated projects and funding support.

Figure 4.1. Just over a quarter of older people in Lithuania expressed trust in national government in 2021 compared to 50% on average across OECD

Share of people who trust in the national government, persons aged 50 and over, 2019 and 2021



Note: Data are unavailable for the Czech Republic (2019) and Belgium, Chile, Israel and Luxembourg (2021).

Source: Gallup World Poll, 2019 and 2021.

However, the findings from the OECD assessment point to governance challenges to the effective implementation of Lithuania's active ageing agenda and its objectives on strengthening the association of older people with democratic processes and public institutions. This chapter provides a brief overview of main challenges and barriers identified by the OECD assessment, and outlines policy recommendations to create an enabling environment and effective governance structures for the active participation of older people in all spheres of public and political life. In particular, it aims to identify obstacles and measures to address them in:

1. Strengthening the relationship between older people and public institutions;
2. Enhancing the participation of older people in public and political life; and
3. Encouraging the participation of older people in local public life.

The assessments and recommendations presented in this chapter were discussed with relevant stakeholders, including representatives of ministries, municipalities, NGOs, and academics in a series of workshops and fact-finding meetings. They are also informed by relevant OECD frameworks and legal instruments, notably the *OECD Recommendation on Creating Better Opportunities for Young People* (OECD, 2022^[17]), the *OECD Recommendation on Open Government* (OECD, 2017^[18]), the *OECD Recommendation on Public Policy Evaluation* (OECD, 2022^[19]), the *OECD Recommendation on Public Service Leadership and Capability* (OECD, 2019^[20]) and the *OECD Policy Framework on Sound Public Governance* (OECD, 2020^[21]).

4.1. Older people's participation in public and political life in Lithuania

Across OECD countries for which data exists, older people are more likely to take part in elections and vote than younger people (OECD, 2020^[22]; Eurostat, 2020^[23]). Recent evidence from the AGE Barometer indicates that older persons are often more loyal to political parties they have voted for when they were young (AGE Platform Europe, 2021^[12]). People aged 65+ also express more interest in politics compared to those aged 18-64 on average across the OECD (European Social Survey, 2018^[24]). However, the participation of older people in the policy cycle appears to take place rather on an ad hoc basis in many OECD countries and is rarely grounded in formalised practice (Eurostat, 2020^[23]).

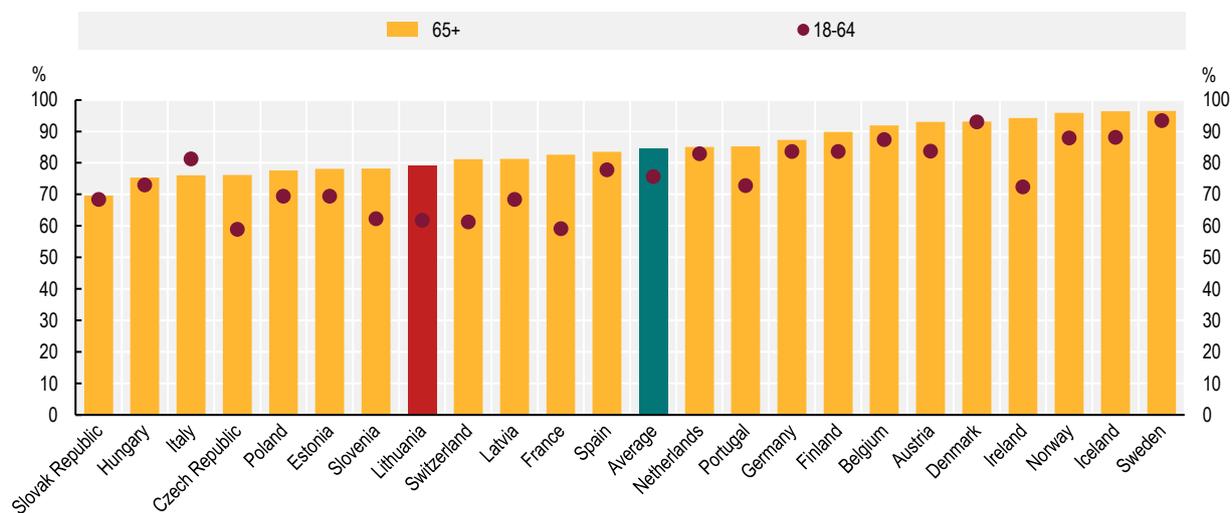
Some of these trends can also be observed in Lithuania. Evidence from the European Social Survey demonstrates that people aged 65 years and older in Lithuania are more likely to vote and feel closer to one political party over others compared to young people (European Social Survey, 2018^[24]).

According to the sample of the European Social Survey, 79% of older citizens in Lithuania report to have voted in the national elections in 2016, compared to 62% of other age groups (Figure 4.2). Yet, Lithuania ranks below the majority of OECD countries in this area. Across OECD countries for which data is available, 85% of older people voted on average in the last national election (European Social Survey, 2018^[24]).

According to the interviews and responses to the OECD Policy Questionnaire, legal barriers (e.g. voter registration requirements), lack of interest, lack of awareness of political issues and mistrust of older people in political parties constitute some of the main barriers to showing up at the ballot boxes in Lithuania. However, there is no governmental body tasked with strengthening the civic skills and knowledge of citizens, including older people, for example by raising awareness about civic rights and duties or designing civic education programmes. Initiatives to provide civic education and engagement skills appear to be provided by some political parties and NGOs on an ad hoc basis and with limited outreach to people living in more vulnerable circumstances.

Figure 4.2. Older people in Lithuania are more likely to vote than persons aged 18-64, however, turnout is below the European average

Country averages on respondents' likelihood to have voted in their last national election, 2018



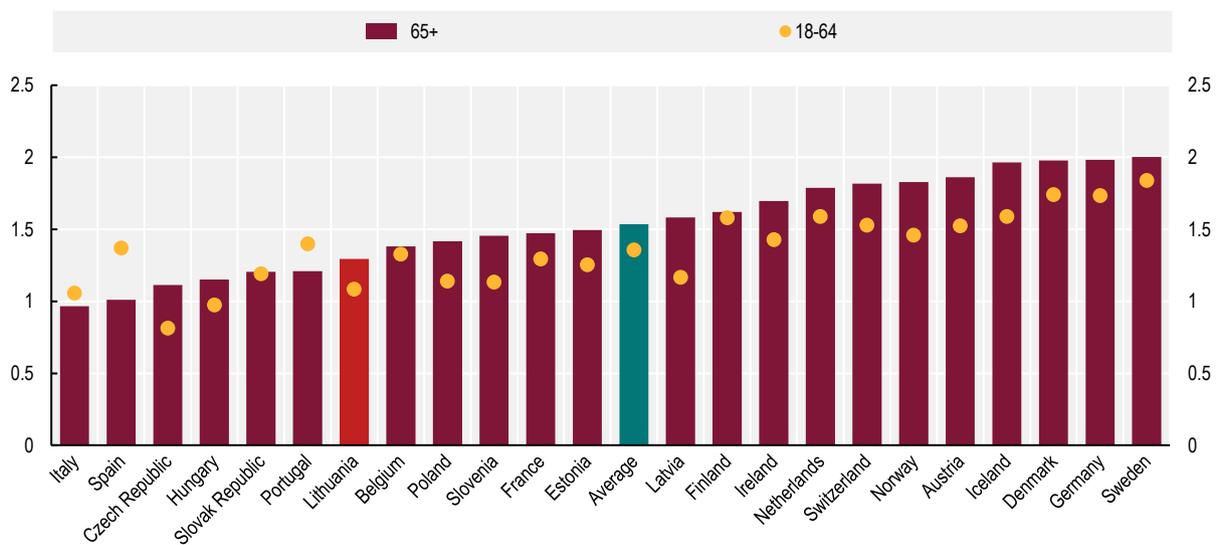
Note: Responses were weighted as 1 = yes and 0 = no. The green bar represents the unweighted average of the 23 European countries shown. Source: OECD calculations based on European Social Survey (wave 9).

Trust in political parties and politicians may affect citizens' participation in civic and political life (OECD, 2022^[15]). Lithuania ranks below the OECD average in terms of trust in political parties. On a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 is “no trust” and 10 is “complete trust”, people aged 65 years and older in Lithuania assigned a score of 3 out of 10 for political parties compared to an OECD average of 4 (European Social Survey, 2018^[24]). Trust in politicians also remains below OECD average among older persons (European Social Survey, 2018^[24]). In turn, only 7% of older people (65+) say they contacted a politician, government or local government official in 2018 (2010: 4%) compared to an average of 15% across OECD countries (European Social Survey, 2018^[24]).

According to the Ministry of Social Security and Labour, the lack of interest among a significant share of older people in public and political participation opportunities constitute a key challenge. This is confirmed by data from the European Social Survey, in which Lithuania ranks below the OECD average in terms of older people's interest in politics in 2018 (Figure 4.3) (European Social Survey, 2018^[24]).

Figure 4.3. Older people in Lithuania express more interest in politics than those aged 18-64 but overall interest is low

Country averages to the question “How interested would you say you are in politics?”, 2018



Note: Respondents ranked their interest from “not at all” = 0 to “very” = 3. The green bar represents the unweighted average of the 23 European countries shown.

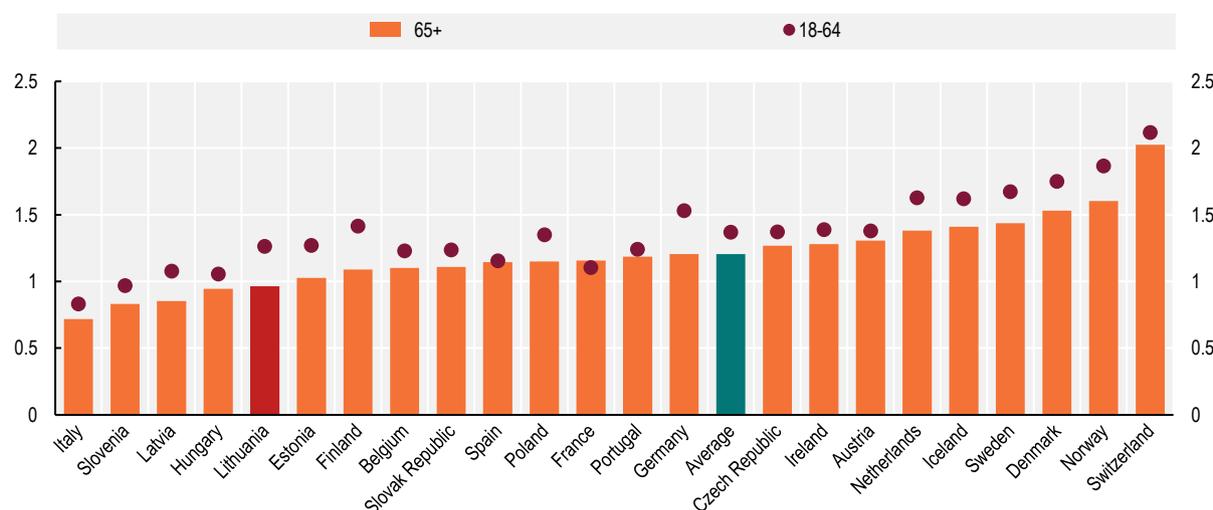
Source: OECD calculations based on European Social Survey (wave 9).

However, evidence shows that the lack of interest in politics alone cannot explain the differences across age groups in terms of their participation in public and political life. In fact, the same survey shows that older people express more interest in politics compared to other age groups in Lithuania (Figure 4.3). Yet, older people are less likely than the younger population to join political parties, contact politicians or public officials, or take an active role in a group involved with political issues (European Social Survey, 2018^[24]).

Furthermore, older people in Lithuania are less likely than their peers in most other OECD countries to feel that the political system allows them to have an influence on politics (Figure 4.4) (European Social Survey, 2018^[24]). The following section will analyse in greater detail some of the underlying governance challenges that might help explain these findings.

Figure 4.4. Older people in Lithuania are less likely than those aged 18-64 to feel they have a say in what government does

Country averages to the question “How much would you say the political system allows people like you to have a say in what the government does?”, 2018



Note: Respondents were asked to provide a rating from 0-4, where 0= not at all and 4= a great deal. The green bar represents the unweighted average of the 23 European countries shown.

Source: OECD calculations based on European Social Survey (wave 9).

4.2. Legal frameworks, government plans and strategies for participation of older people in public decision-making

The Government of Lithuania has demonstrated political commitment to promote the participation of older people in public and political life with the adoption of the Strategy for Demography, Migration and Integration Policy for 2018-30. The strategy defines “engagement of older people” as their involvement in non-governmental organisations (NGOs), activities of political parties and in making decisions related to them.

The Strategy and its accompanying Action Plan adopt a cross-sectoral approach to tackle multidimensional challenges of population ageing. They aim to promote the participation of older people in the labour market, social and political life; ensure their financial security, access to life-long learning, quality healthcare, volunteering; and strengthen intergenerational relations. In the area of public and political life, both documents acknowledge the importance of supporting NGOs representing senior citizens and involving them in public decision-making processes (Government of the Republic of Lithuania, 2020^[25]; Government of the Republic of Lithuania, 2018^[16]).

However, the Strategy and Action Plan lacks a clear measurable targets and objectives. For instance, although the Strategy underlines the need to promote the participation of older people in political parties, the Action Plan does not provide any measurable targets in this area. Moreover, while the Action Plan stipulates that older people shall be encouraged to participate in consultative councils, commissions and working groups at state and municipal level, it leaves the establishment of these consultative bodies at the discretion of ministries and municipalities. The Plan also does not include any measures to reinforce civic and citizenship literacy among senior citizens, or to strengthen their trust in government and association with democratic institutions and does not discuss the role of public communication and civic space in creating an enabling environment for engagement. It also does not cover practical considerations that

oftentimes constitute barriers to the participation of older people in public and political life, such as lack of transportation in rural areas.

Moreover, the distribution of responsibilities would benefit from more clearly assigned tasks and responsibilities, notably between central level and municipalities, as well as measurable targets and performance indicators. The Strategy and Plan also do not include measures or tools to support policy makers in integrating the perspectives of older people across policy and service areas nor to strengthen their relationship with public institutions.

The OECD Recommendation on Open Government highlights that a systematic approach to involve stakeholders in consultations is needed and calls on governments to “grant all stakeholders equal and fair opportunities to be informed and consulted and actively engage them in all phases of the policy-cycle and service design and delivery” (OECD, 2017^[18]). The OECD Guidelines for Citizen Participation Processes (2022^[26]) introduce a ten-step methodology to support public institutions from all levels of government in designing, planning and implementing participatory processes and outline nine guiding principles that help ensure the quality of these processes. This document could be introduced as a practical hands-on tool to support public authorities in Lithuania in their efforts to reach out and involve older people in public decision making.

Lithuania is a member to the Open Government Partnership (OGP) since 2011. To support the participation of older people in public and political life, the Action Plans Lithuania is required to submit in the context of its membership to the OGP could be used to include specific measures targeting older citizens (Open Government Partnership, 2022^[27]). Moreover, monitoring reports to keep track of the implementation of the Action Plans could include age-disaggregated data to display progress across different age groups, including for the elderly. Lithuania is currently implementing its fifth Action Plan (2021-23), which includes a provision to implement participatory democracy instruments of the OECD and provide assistance to institutions seeking to test these measures at national or municipal level (Government of the Republic of Lithuania, 2021^[28]). These objectives and related activities are however not further defined in the Plan.

The Government of Lithuania has also established a national NGO Fund. This instrument will serve to allocate funds to develop the NGO sector and build its capacity to participate in policy making (Lithuanian Ministry of Social Security and Labour, 2022^[29]). However, support to NGOs can neither guarantee meaningful stakeholder participation and nor substitute government efforts to engage with all citizens whether they are part of NGOs or not. Furthermore, the existing system of NGOs may not be representative of the diversity of backgrounds of the older population in Lithuania. For instance, interviews conducted by the OECD suggest that NGOs are facing difficulties to reach to older people living in less fortunate socio-economic conditions and rural areas, among others.

The creation of consultative bodies for older people in ministries and municipalities presents another platform to involve older people in public policy and decision-making processes. For example, in Denmark, Finland and in some parts of Germany, municipalities and regions are legally obliged to have a consultative council for older people to inform relevant policies and decisions. In Denmark, this also applies to councils at regional level. In Germany, regional laws guarantee the right of older citizens’ councils to give their advice on any legislative project (AGE Platform Europe, 2021^[12]). The experience across these countries shows that, to be considered legitimate and impactful, clear roles and procedures are needed to regulate the relationship between such councils and public authorities. In Lithuania, consultative councils at subnational level exist in only two out of 60 municipalities: Kaunas City Municipality and Klaipeda City Municipality.

Given that active ageing policies cut across various ministerial portfolios and demand concerted efforts among ministries and municipalities, a clear and comprehensive strategy can help identify and co-ordinate priorities. Australia, Austria, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Finland, France, and Germany, among others, have developed national senior citizens’ strategies with measures to encourage older people’s participation

in civic life. The Austrian Federal Plan for Senior Citizens “Ageing and the Future” aims to mainstream ageing in all policy fields and foster intergenerational dialogue through volunteering activities and strengthen their political participation (UNECE, 2021^[30]). Colombia’s Strategy on Ageing (2015-24) envisages that, by 2024, 50% of municipalities and districts should have associations, organisations or support networks of older adults and apply measures to enable older adults to develop civic engagement capacities (Government of Colombia, 2015^[31]). Finland’s National Programme on Ageing 2030 commits to allocate specific budgets to foster volunteering initiatives among older persons, promote co-operation and information exchange between authorities and the elders, and survey older people’s associations to map obstacles and challenges related to volunteering in an ageing society (Government of Finland, 2020^[32]).

A national strategy focused on older people can also facilitate co-ordination among ministries, agencies and sub-national authorities as well as non-governmental stakeholders in the delivery of public services in areas such as health, employment, transport, housing, justice, sports, culture and leisure. Principles of good governance codified in various OECD legal instruments and recommendations stipulate that such strategies should be evidence-based; participatory; resourced; transparent and accessible; monitored, evaluated and accountable; cross-sectoral; gender-responsive and supported by high-level political commitment to achieve their intended goals (OECD, 2020^[22]; OECD, 2017^[18]; OECD, 2016^[33]).

4.3. From ambition to action: A need to strengthen institutional structures, mandates, resources and capacities

4.3.1. Institutional structures and mandates

In Lithuania, policies targeting older people are co-ordinated by the Ministry of Social Security and Labour. The ministry is responsible for selecting and supporting projects of NGOs representing older people as outlined in the Strategy for Demography, Migration and Integration Policy for 2018-30 (Government of the Republic of Lithuania, 2018^[16]). This includes measures to promote the participation of older people’s representatives in advisory councils of state and municipal institutions as well as activities to encourage their participation in social life through cultural and educational activities. The main priorities the Ministry of Social Security and Labour identifies in promoting the participation of older people in political life are:

- promoting co-operation between state and municipal institutions and bodies and NGOs representing the interests of the elderly, enabling them to participate in matters concerning them;
- promoting the change of society’s values, a constructive culture focused on older people, fostering a positive image of them; and
- seeking innovative and creative mechanisms to promote solidarity and intergenerational interaction by supporting volunteering in order to avoid loneliness and isolation of older people.

The Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Education, Science and Sports are involved in implementing these objectives. The Ministry of Education, Science and Sports supports activities that promote life-long learning including civic knowledge and engagement, while the Ministry of Culture provides opportunities for older people to acquire and improve digital skills and to address social isolation and loneliness, in particular through public libraries (The Ministry of Education, Science and Sports of the Republic of Lithuania, 2022^[34]). Libraries provide spaces for events and communication targeting older people, run voting polls in small towns, and disseminate information to encourage citizens to vote.

However, the lack of clearly defined mandates risks undermining efforts in these areas. For instance, while involving older people in public decision-making processes through consultative councils, commissions and working groups formed by state and municipal institutions is a joint responsibility between the Chancellery of the government and MoSSL, according to the Inter-institutional Action Plan, the allocation of responsibilities between them is not clearly spelt out. Moreover, although they are responsible for bodies

and measures that ultimately can foster older people's awareness of public and political issues, the mandates for the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Education, Science and Sports as well as for municipalities in this area are not clearly defined. Uncertainty about mandates also exists between the central level and municipalities on public and political life participation of older people because they are not defined by law, which can undermine joint initiatives as well as effective inter-institutional co-ordination.

Moreover, the collection of age-disaggregated data by Lithuanian Department of Statistics in the field of citizen participation in public and political life appears to be ad hoc and remains uneven across sectors as well as regions and municipalities as the Department lacks a responsibility in this area (OECD, 2021^[35]).

4.3.2. Vertical and horizontal co-ordination

Currently, there are no inter-institutional co-ordination channels and mechanisms, such as committees or working groups in place to implement the Strategy for Demography, Migration and Integration Policy for 2018-30 and the accompanying Action Plan.

The Lithuanian Council for Pensioners' Affairs operating under the MoSSL provides a platform for exchange and aims to facilitate co-operation among national and municipal authorities and NGOs representing interests of older and retired persons. The Council consists of 22 members and includes representatives of the main umbrella NGOs representing the elderly, representatives of the Ministry of Social Security and Labour and representatives of the Lithuanian Association of Municipalities and meets on a quarterly basis. Depending on the issue under discussion, representatives of other ministries and institutions may also be invited to the meetings of the Council such as the Ministry of Health.

The Council gives its opinion on draft legislations by submitting proposals for amendments to existing legislation or its provisions (Government of the Republic of Lithuania, 2021^[36]). For instance, the Council contributed to the drafting of the new version of the Law on Social Services as well as to the drafting of amendments to the Law on Social Insurance Pensions.

However, this Council fulfils a consultative purpose and the participation of ministries and municipalities apart from the MoSSL tends to take place on an ad hoc rather than permanent basis, which discourages continuous inter-ministerial and multi-level co-ordination.

Several OECD countries have put in place mechanisms to implement active ageing or national senior citizens' strategies across different ministries and stakeholders. These mechanisms often take the form of inter-ministerial or inter-departmental co-ordination bodies and working groups. For example, Ireland's National Positive Ageing Strategy was overseen by a Cross-Departmental Group, which was composed of representatives of the Departments of Health; Social Protection; Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation; Education and Skills; Environment, Community and Local Government; Communications, Energy and Natural Resources; Transport, Tourism and Sport; Justice and Equality as well as the Central Statistics Office (UNECE, 2021^[37]). Finland's National Programme on Ageing 2030 established a cross-administrative group, which includes the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, the Ministry of Education and Culture, the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment, the Ministry of the Environment, the Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare, and the Association of Finnish Municipalities (Government of Finland, 2020^[32]).

According to the interviews conducted by the OECD and responses to the OECD Policy Questionnaire, the lack of effective co-ordination mechanisms between stakeholders is one of the most important barriers that prevents older people from volunteering or being active in public and political life. In addition, line ministries and municipalities in Lithuania lack incentives to deliver on horizontal initiatives.

To foster a more concerted approach, in October 2021, an agreement was signed between the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Education, Science and Sports, the Ministry of Culture, the Association of Local Authorities and the Ministry of Social Security and Labour to co-ordinate more closely their respective

interventions and initiatives in the area of active ageing and social inclusion. A permanent Council for Senior Citizens has been set up under the MoSSL. It includes representatives from, ministries, non-governmental organisations and the Association of Municipalities. This newly formed Council of Senior Citizens will replace the existing Lithuanian Council for Pensioners' Affairs.

4.3.3. Resources and capacities

Findings also point to a need to strengthen human, financial and administrative capacities for inter-ministerial co-ordination as well as the collection and use of age-disaggregated evidence. For instance, in the Ministry of Social Security and Labour, only one person, the Chief Adviser for the Elderly, is responsible for demographic policy, ageing policy and social inclusion of older people. The responsibilities of the Chief Adviser for the Elderly include the preparation and implementation of legal acts and measures for the social inclusion of the elderly and co-operation with different units of the Ministry of Social Security and Labour, other ministries, municipalities, NGOs as well as international organisations. The absence of a dedicated unit or department in charge of implementing the active ageing agenda is one of the key reasons for the limited capacities in undertaking these tasks.

In many OECD countries, specific departments, units or ministries co-ordinate the work on active ageing. The location of the lead unit within government can be an indicator of the political importance given to this agenda. It can also have an impact on its specific functions (e.g. monitoring and co-ordination roles), resources (e.g. budgets and human resources) and scope of influence (e.g. convening power). For example, Canada, Denmark and Germany have specific ministerial portfolios for senior citizens while the Department or Ministry of Health is in charge of co-ordinating this portfolio in Australia, Belgium, Chile, Colombia and Costa Rica. In Austria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland and France, the Ministry of Social Affairs is entirely or partially responsible for the development of policies focused on older people. Despite differences in their institutional set-up, they assume similar responsibilities, including the preparation, implementation and co-ordination of national policies and strategies for senior citizens.

Some OECD countries opted for creating independent oversight institutions and mechanisms to strengthen the accountability of government action in this area. Spain and Norway established an Ombudsperson for Older Persons as an independent mechanism to promote the interests, needs and perspectives of older people in society and protect their rights (AGE Platform Europe, 2021^[12]; UNECE, 2021^[37]). In Malta, a Commissioner for Older Persons was appointed to raise awareness about the rights of older persons. The Commissioner can investigate alleged breaches of their rights and initiate measures to safeguard them (UNECE, 2021^[38]). Oversight institutions fulfil an important function to promote transparency by holding governments accountable for achieving objectives in the area of active ageing.

4.4. Tools to mainstream the perspectives of older people in policy making

The well-being and inclusion of older people in all spheres of public life demands responsive and concerted efforts across various policy fields. To ensure that interests and perspectives of older people are reflected across these areas, and to involve older people in the process of decision making, core functions of the government can be leveraged, such as the collection and use of evidence, the allocation of public resources, rulemaking, and public procurement (OECD, 2020^[22]).

4.4.1. The availability and use of age-disaggregated evidence

The Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing recommends “mainstreaming ageing” through the systematic integration of ageing issues across all relevant policy fields and at all levels of government to respond more effectively to the needs of different age groups (UN, 2002^[39]). To be effective, commitments to embed an “age lens” needs to be anchored in government strategies and plans, underpinned by political

commitment and leadership, and effective co-ordination mechanisms (UNECE, 2021^[37]). In addition, age-disaggregated data and evidence as well as impact assessments that anticipate the implications of draft legislation across different age groups can inform new laws, policies and programmes and provide opportunities for stakeholder engagement and intergenerational dialogue.

However, obstacles persist to the integration of an “age lens” across the core functions of government across OECD countries. Notably the availability of age-disaggregated evidence remains uneven across policy areas (OECD, 2020^[22]). A recent OECD report shows that Lithuania faces challenges in collecting and processing quality data and translating data into policy design (OECD, 2021^[35]). The report points to the need to improve public officials’ capacity to generate and use robust and credible evidence and to systematically embed evidence in decision-making processes (OECD, 2021^[35]). Evidence from the interviews and responses to the OECD Policy Questionnaire show that evidence, in the field of citizen participation in public and political life is not always disaggregated by age.

In Lithuania, the Department of Statistics collects data on the participation of citizens in public and political life through household and population surveys, which are conducted on a regular basis. However, the scope of data collection on public and political life participation by the Department of Statistics appears to be limited with only few indicators being collected and monitored on a regular basis and disaggregated by age. Similar challenges can be observed in the collection of data disaggregated by geographical location, which risk masking the disparities that exist for citizens, including older people, in different regions and municipalities.

In addition to the Department of Statistics, evidence collected by the Ministry of Social Security and Labour, line ministries, municipalities as well as by the international organisations is used to track the participation of older people in public and political life. Nonetheless, the interviews and replies to the questionnaire point to a lack of data for key indicators such as the satisfaction of citizens with democracy, trust in national government and public institutions, membership in NGOs, satisfaction with opportunities to participate in public life, and participation in non-institutionalised channels of public and political life (e.g. participation in social movements and demonstrations, signing petitions).

4.4.2. Public management tools

Some OECD member and accession countries also use public management tools such as regulatory impact assessments to anticipate the impact of new legislation on specific age groups. However, overall, their use remains limited.

Bulgaria has introduced demographic impact assessment for every new piece of legislation. The preliminary assessment is done by the proposer of the legislative act through a questionnaire as set out in the respective regulations. Following this preliminary assessment, the Council of Ministers evaluates the potential demographic impact of the proposal. The Government of Canada has put in place “Gender-based analysis plus” (GBA+) as a tool for the development of policies, programmes, legislation and other initiatives. It examines who is impacted by an issue, how they are impacted, how their identities and environments shape those impacts, what responses are needed, the potential different impacts of the response on different populations, and how barriers or negative impacts can be mitigated. GBA+ primarily seeks to advance gender equality but it also looks at other factors such as age, race, ethnicity, religion and mental or physical disability (Government of Canada, 2022^[40]). The Government of the Netherlands is currently piloting a “Generation Test” to assess whether a public policy is fair from an intergenerational perspective (OECD, 2020^[22]).

There are also examples of countries which leverage public budgeting tools and processes to promote the participation of older people. In Portugal, the Municipality of Alfandega da Fé is implementing a participatory budgeting initiative for older persons aimed at involving older citizens in making decisions about municipal investments (AGE Platform Europe, 2021^[12]). This participatory budgeting initiative for senior citizens strives to promote active citizenship in order to strengthen the credibility and transparency of public institutions and the quality of democracy (International Observatory on Participatory Democracy, 2022^[41]).

In Lithuania, regulatory impact assessments or participatory budgeting processes are so far not leveraged to support the implementation of its active ageing agenda and promote the participation of older people. However, several participatory budgeting initiatives already exist at local level which are directed towards all residents regardless of their age. In fact, 22 out of 60 municipalities in Lithuania currently implement participatory budgeting (Transparency International Lithuania, 2021^[42]). In 2021, almost 40 000 citizens were involved through these initiatives in deciding on the allocation of a part of the municipal budget (Transparency International Lithuania, 2021^[42]). For example, Kaunas District Municipality is conducting a participatory budgeting programme, which allows residents to submit proposals on how to improve public areas in the municipality and which are then voted by the public. Selected projects receive funding and support from the municipality to implement them (Kaunas District Municipality, 2022^[43]).

Yet, a study conducted by Transparency International Lithuania shows that only a few municipalities assess outcomes of their participatory budgeting programmes (OECD, 2020^[44]). The same study points to a need to define and publish the selection criteria more clearly and involve citizens more actively in the implementation of the selected projects (Transparency International Lithuania, 2021^[42]). The existing participatory budgeting initiatives can also be leveraged to support active engagement of older people in making decisions and allocating public budgets.

Box 4.1. Key recommendations to promote the participation of older people in all spheres of public and political life

Key policy recommendations to strengthen the relationship between older people and public institutions

- Collecting data and evidence systematically on the needs of older people, disaggregated by gender, socio-economic background, geographic area, (dis)ability status and all other relevant characteristics, including through consultations that are inclusive and accessible to them.
- Using clear communication on the availability of public services by channels accessible and targeted to older people such as through public libraries, health and care service providers, and traditional media such as radio, broadcast television, newspapers and tailoring public services to older people by integrating them and reviewing administrative and regulatory burdens.
- Assigning a focal point in charge of older persons in the municipalities to act as a first contact to provide information and counsel for older people on relevant public services and to co-operate with relevant ministries, agencies, and NGOs in the implementation of active ageing policies in the municipalities.
- Monitoring and evaluating the quality and responsiveness of public services for older people on a regular basis through surveys, polls, and interviews that are accessible to them and using the feedback gathered systematically to alter course.

Key policy recommendations to enhance the participation of older people in public and political life

- Providing targeted trainings for senior citizens to increase civic, citizenship, media and digital literacy including through partnerships with NGOs and academic institutions.
- Addressing ageism and stereotypes against older people through awareness-raising programmes, including in partnership with non-governmental stakeholders.
- Using the new Council for Senior Citizens to systematically engage older people in the design of policies, services, and programmes for older people across all relevant policy and service areas.
- Promoting meaningful volunteer service for older people through laws, strategies and programmes accompanied with adequate capacities and resources (e.g. qualified trainers, a system to accredit and recognise volunteering activities), and disseminating and raising awareness on volunteering opportunities.

Key policy recommendations to encourage the participation of older people in local public life

- Clarifying mandates and allocation of responsibilities between ministries and municipalities.
- Using the new Council for Senior Citizens with the capacity and mandate to promote co-ordination between ministries and municipalities, including through the Association of Local Authorities and by ensuring systematic representation of all relevant stakeholders at national and local levels.
- Equipping staff in municipalities with adequate skills and resources to implement local engagement initiatives.
- Facilitating learning between existing municipal seniors' councils and municipalities with no such body, including through the Association of Local Authorities.
- Leveraging existing participatory budgeting initiatives to encourage active citizenship among older people including through partnerships with NGOs, Universities of the Third Age, and municipal elderly councils/consultative bodies.

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Note

¹ While according to the AAI, Lithuania performs well in terms of employment of older people, the index only considers employment rates for different age groups and does not take in account differences between older people such as by educational level or region, thereby hiding inequalities among important groups in the labour market.

Ageing and Employment Policies

Promoting Active Ageing in Lithuania

POLICY CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS

Lithuania is one of the fastest-ageing countries in Europe. Its working-age population is not only ageing, but also expected to decline significantly, giving rise to considerable economic, labour market, social and public governance challenges. The inclusion of older persons has improved in many areas in the past two decades. Yet, many Lithuanians aged 55 and over continue to lag in fully engaging in society relative to younger people and their peers in neighbouring countries. This report takes a holistic approach to analyse Active Ageing policies in Lithuania in three dimensions: labour market inclusion, social policies, and participation in public and political life. It provides tailored policy recommendations to improve the well-being of older people in Lithuania in terms of better employment and lifelong learning outcomes, stronger integration in society, and participation in democratic institutions and processes.



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