

Raising the alcohol age limit to 20 in Lithuania: lessons learned

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Lithuanian Tobacco and Alcohol Control Coalition (NTAKK)

LITHUANIAN TOBACCO AND ALCOHOL CONTROL COALITION (NTAKK)



NTAKK – legal association since 2008 which currently has 39 member organizations.

NTAKK mission is to promote, advocate and contribute to implementation of evidence-based, effective measures for control and prevention of the use of all psychoactive substances and gambling in Lithuania.

NTAKK aims to:

- Unite stakeholders in the field of psychoactive substances prevention and policy;
- Encourage and develop public and NGO cooperation;
- Advocate for implementation of evidence-based policy;
- Develop, implement and support policy programs, projects, etc.

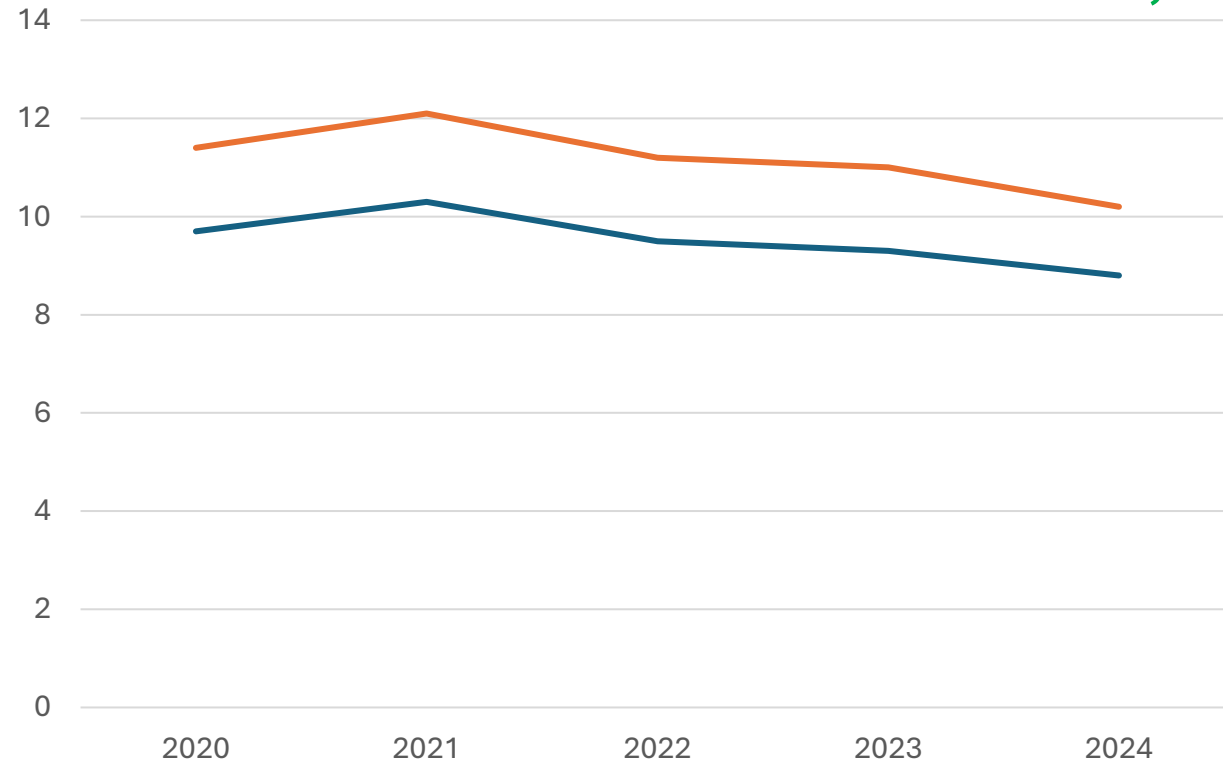
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No silver bullet ...

but comprehensive alcohol control policy measures, including WHO Best Buys reduce alcohol consumption in general and vulnerable populations.

Alcohol consumption in Lithuania is reduced, harm is lower, tax income increases.

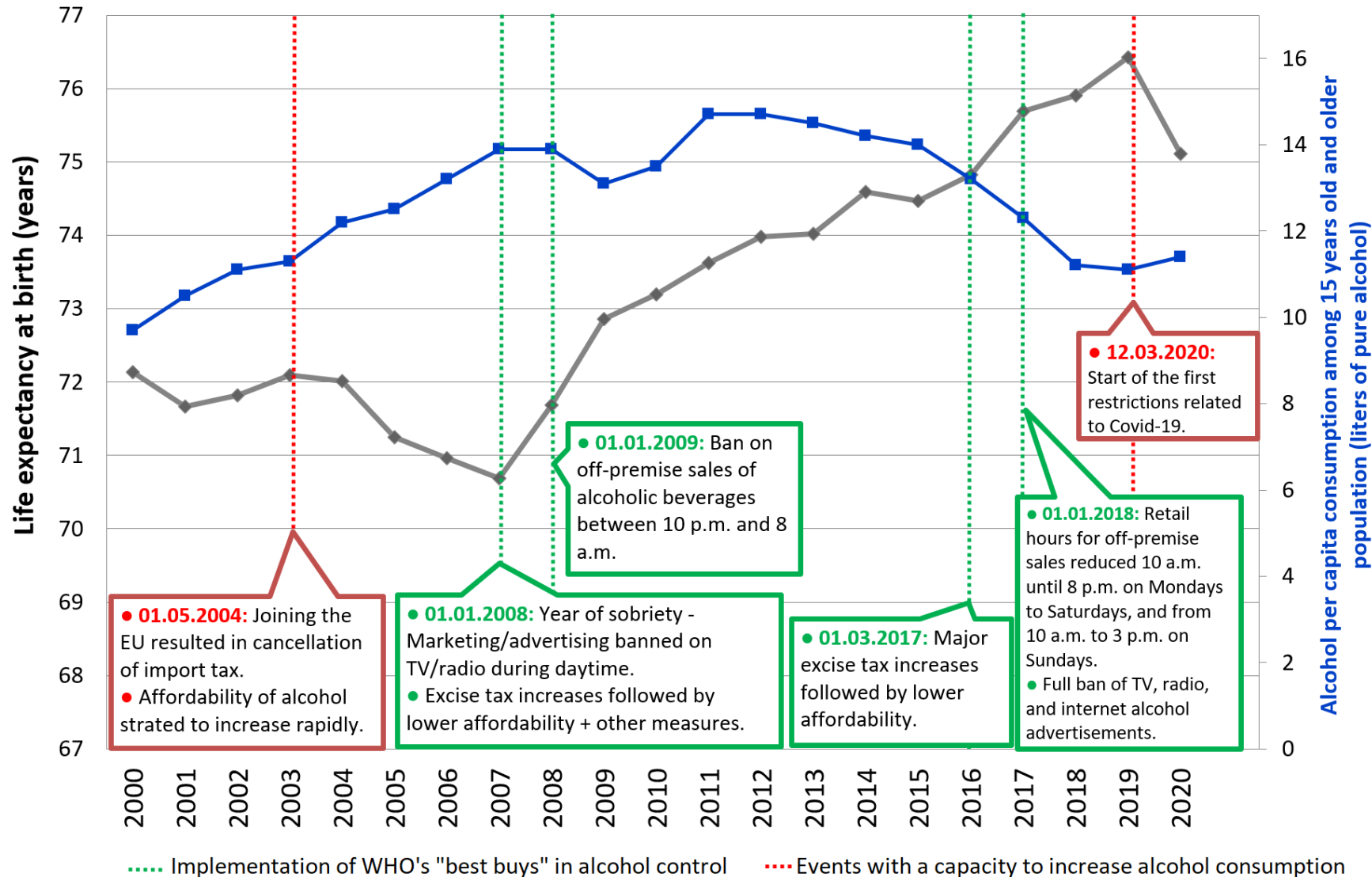


2024 alcohol consumption per capita for under 15s
10,2 l – lowest in decade

— Consumption of legal alcoholic beverages, Per capita / liters, absolute (100%) alcohol

— Consumption of legal alcoholic beverages, per capita aged 15 and over / liters, absolute (100%) alcohol

Measuring success: effect of WHO's alcohol policy "Best Buys" on life expectancy at birth and alcohol consumption in Lithuania (2000–2020)



Source: Rehm J, Badaras R, Ferreira-Borges C, Galkus L, Midttun NG, Gobiņa I, et al. Impact of the WHO "best buys" for alcohol policy on consumption and health in the Baltic countries and Poland 2000–2020. *Lancet Reg Health – Eur* [Internet]. 2023 Aug 30 [cited 2023 Sep 11];0(0). Available from: [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanep/article/PIIS2666-7762\(23\)00123-0/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanep/article/PIIS2666-7762(23)00123-0/fulltext)

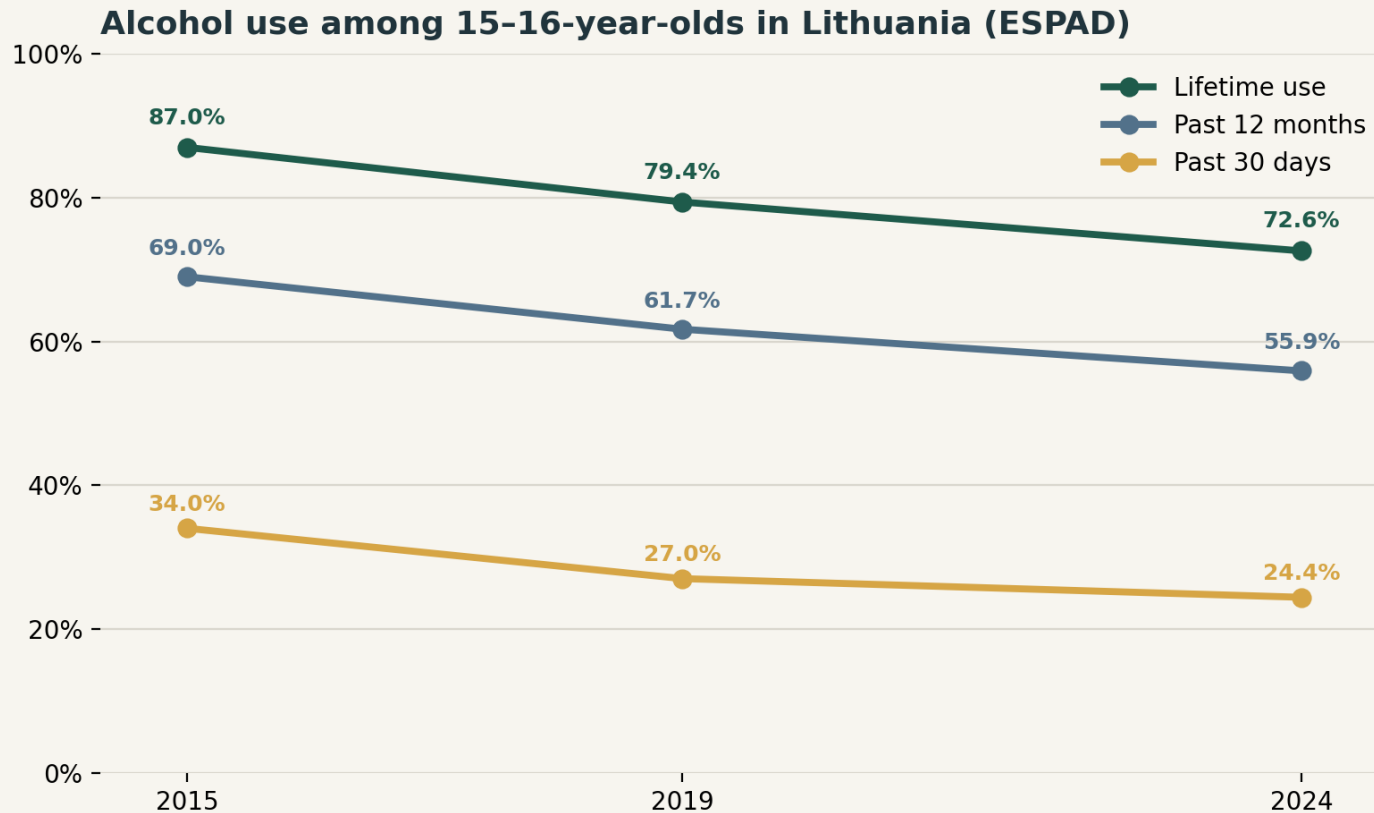
What changed from 2015 to 2024 Lithuania in ESPAD



Note: the latest ESPAD wave is 2024, published Lithuania report is for 2024.

A. Consumption declined across all three prevalence windows

ESPAD Lithuania: lifetime use, past-year use, and past-30-day use all moved down from 2015 to 2024



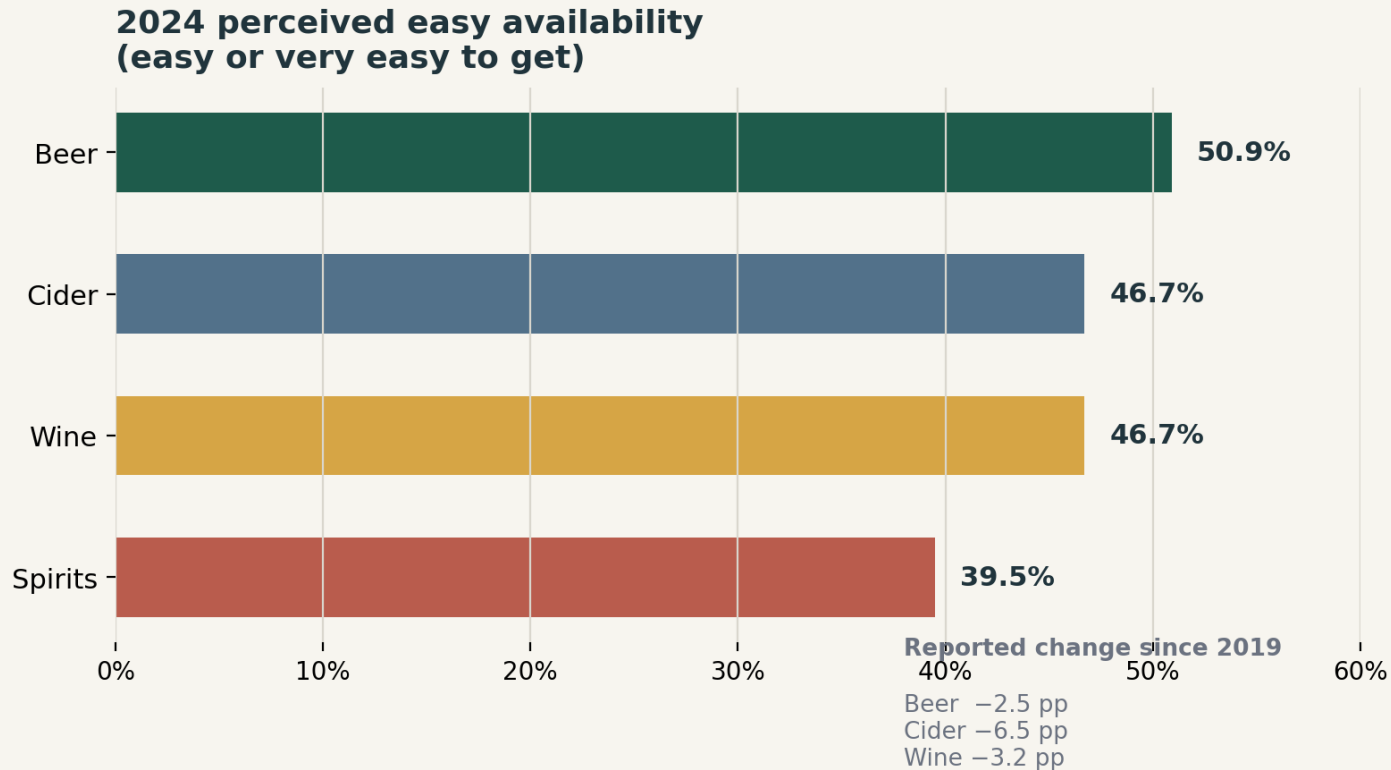
What changed

- Lifetime alcohol use reduced from 87.0% in 2015 to 72.6% in 2024.
- Past-12-month use reduced from 69.0% in 2015 to 55.9% in 2024.
- Past-30-day use reduced from 34.0% to 24.4%, the lowest level since 2003.

Takeaway: youth drinking prevalence reduced on every standard ESPAD indicator

B. Perceived availability is lower

ESPAD asks whether getting alcohol would be easy or very easy if the student wanted it



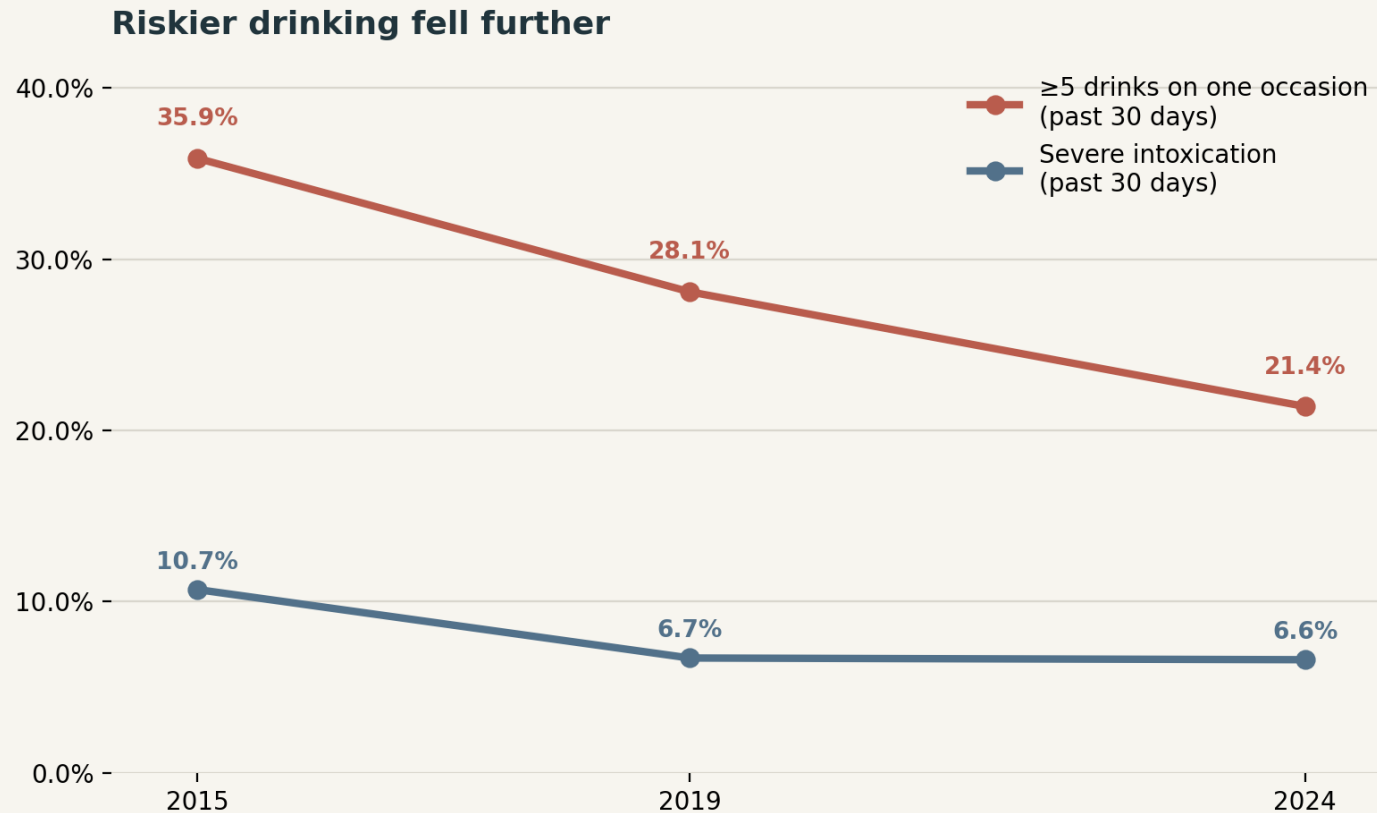
What changed

- In 2024, “easy / very easy” access was still reported by 50.9% for beer, 46.7% for cider, 46.7% for wine, and 39.5% for spirits.
- Compared with 2019, perceived access reduced further: beer -2.5 pp, cider -6.5 pp, and wine -3.2 pp.
- Girls rated access as easier than boys for every alcohol category in the 2024 report.

Takeaway: availability remained substantial, but the overall direction was downward

C. Riskier drinking reduced

The strongest decline is in heavy episodic drinking; severe intoxication also remains below 2015 levels



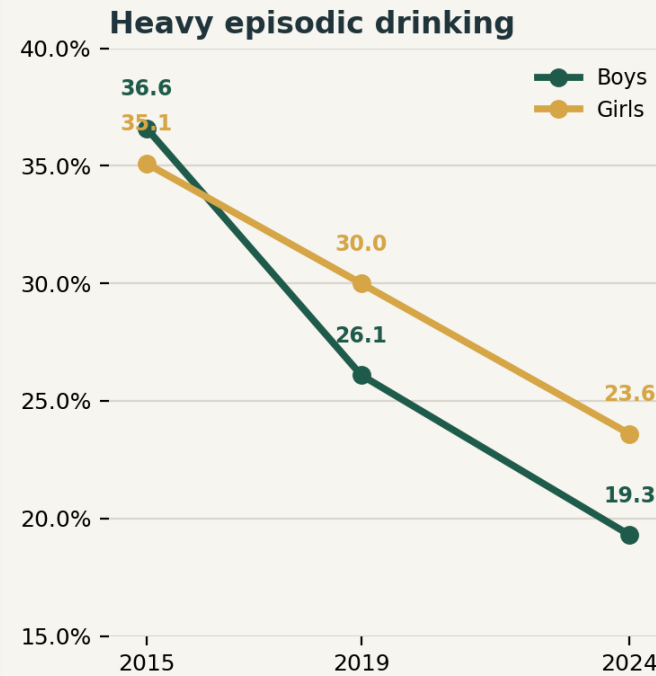
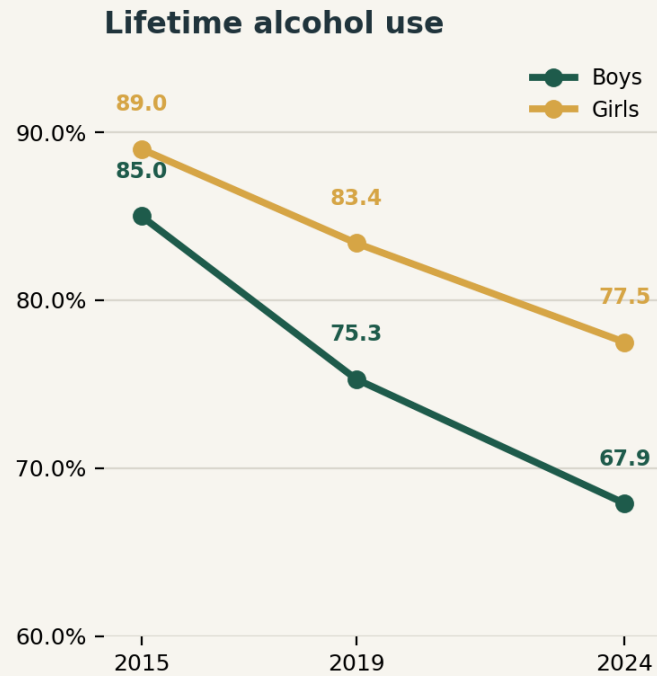
What changed

- Reporting 5+ drinks on one occasion in the past 30 days reduced from 35.9% in 2015 to 21.4% in 2024.
- Severe intoxication in the past 30 days reduced from 10.7% in 2015 to 6.6% in 2024.
- Important : severe intoxication essentially stayed flat since 2019 (6.7% to 6.6%), so the post-2018 improvement is much stronger for binge drinking than for recent intoxication.

Takeaway: overall less frequent high-risk drinking, but not all indicators improved equally after 2018.

D. The gender pattern shifted

In Lithuania's recent ESPAD results, girls now report higher alcohol involvement on several indicators



What changed

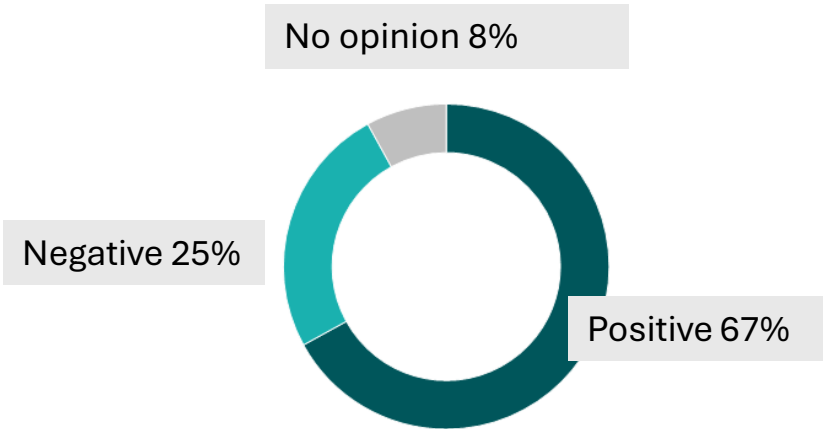
- Lifetime alcohol use stayed higher among girls in every shown wave and the gap persisted in 2024: 77.5% for girls versus 67.9% for boys.
- For heavy episodic drinking, girls were already above boys in 2019 and remained above in 2024: 23.6% versus 19.3%.
- So the story is not just “less drinking overall” — it is also a shift in who reports the higher rates on key measures.

Takeaway: the aggregate decline coexists with a changed gender pattern, especially for heavier drinking indicators.

Not a simple convergence story: by 2024 girls were above boys on lifetime use, past-year use, past-month use, and 5+ drinks on one occasion.

Measuring acceptability: mixed basket

Do you support increase of alcohol purchase age?



Would you support full ban on alcohol advertising 2015/Are you satisfied with ban? 2020/2023

	2015	2020	2023
YES	57%	60%	66%
NO	29%	21%	22%
DON'T KNOW	14%	19%	12%

Source: NTAKD, Sprinter surveys, 2015, 2020, 2023

> [Am J Drug Alcohol Abuse](#). 2023 Sep 3;49(5):664-674. doi: 10.1080/00952990.2023.2238322. Epub 2023 Aug 21.

Changes in attitudes toward alcohol control policies in Lithuania: findings from two representative surveys in 2015 and 2020

Daumantas Stumbrys ¹, Ilona Tamutienė ¹, Jacek Moskalewicz ², Janusz Sieroslawski ²





Conclusions: support for restrictions on alcohol-selling points, increase in alcohol price, and random alcohol testing of drivers declined following the adoption of new alcohol control policy measures.

Limited evidence: more positive attitudes towards restrictive alcohol control policy are associated with older age, female gender, abstinence, less alcohol related problems

Attitudes

- 2018–2019 Lithuanian survey study, the **age restriction was the most supported measure** among the control policies of 2018: about **61%** rated it positively in 2018 and **60%** in 2019, versus **12%** and **10%** negatively.
- Overall population was more positive than negative about policies restricting alcohol consumption, with age restriction among the most favored;
- Representative -survey study compared **2015 and 2020** assessing whether support for alcohol-control measures declined after implementation. Support for age-related restrictions remains solid.

CONCLUSIONS

-  **Consumption POPULATION AND UNDERAGED:** clearly decreased (ESPAD, HBSC)
-  **Availability:** decreased (ESPAD)
-  **Normalization:** likely decreased (based on binge drinking trends)
- HIGH SUPPORT for the age restrictions
-  **Specific causality:** cannot specifically isolate age increase effect

Advertising continues and does target young people

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