

# Resilience of Socially Vulnerable Populations to Disinformation in Lithuania: The Role of the Welfare State

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## Abstract

The geopolitical context, particularly the ongoing war in Ukraine, underscores the necessity for societal preparedness and resilience against disinformation in Lithuania. This issue is especially important for the Baltic countries, which experience substantial disinformation flows from the Russian Federation. This study aims to investigate the resilience of socially vulnerable people in Lithuania to disinformation, with a specific focus on the role of the welfare state. A representative survey was conducted among the Lithuanian population in 2024 to achieve this aim. The data were analysed using multinomial logistic regression. Resilience to disinformation was measured through statements reflecting the dominant narratives of Russian disinformation. Independent variables included respondents' labor market status, age, income, education, and subjective evaluation of their living standards, providing a comprehensive framework for assessing social vulnerability. The findings reveal that socially vulnerable populations, particularly those with lower socioeconomic status and limited educational attainment, exhibit lower levels of resilience to disinformation. Furthermore, the role of the Lithuanian welfare state in mitigating these vulnerabilities and protecting against poverty appears inadequate.

## Keywords

disinformation; hybrid threats; Lithuania; resilience; vulnerable population; welfare state

## 1. Introduction

The Covid-19 pandemic not only posed challenges to the health sector, labor market, and public services but also intensified disinformation flows. Furthermore, the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine activated hybrid threats across European countries. Disinformation emerged as a significant tool to undermine trust

in government and destabilize democratic systems in the Baltic countries. In Lithuania, disinformation—often disseminated through online channels in the national language, originating from Russia—targets society with its misleading information. Consequently, enhancing societal resilience to disinformation has become integral to Lithuania's national defence policy. However, resilience to disinformation varies among different societal groups (Dagdeviren et al., 2020; Valverde-Berrocoso et al., 2022; Weitzel et al., 2022).

Research has shown that socially vulnerable groups, such as the unemployed, low-income individuals, or those at risk of poverty, single people, and those belonging to specific age groups (e.g., younger or older individuals), are particularly susceptible to disinformation (see Valverde-Berrocoso et al., 2022; Weitzel et al., 2022). Trust in government and democracy has been widely recognized as a critical indicator of societal resilience to disinformation and propaganda (Fominaya, 2022; Sternisko et al., 2020). This trust, however, is influenced by various demographic and socioeconomic characteristics.

Morkūnas (2022) highlights that, in Lithuania, Russian disinformation has been aimed at increasing the perceived distrust of governments, perceived lack of career possibilities, perceived lack of justice, and perceived imminence of military actions in the region. Research by Martišius (2022), Denisenko (2018, 2020), Keršanskas (2021), Lašas et al. (2020), Vaišnys et al. (2017), and others further elucidates the dynamics of Russian propaganda and disinformation, contextualizing these phenomena within a broader geopolitical landscape. However, these works have not specifically addressed the resilience of socially vulnerable groups to disinformation. This article seeks to fill this gap by analyzing the resilience of socially vulnerable populations in Lithuania to disinformation, with particular attention to the role of the welfare state. The study is structured as follows: First, a review of existing literature on disinformation, trust, and societal resilience is provided; second, an empirical analysis of the resilience of socially vulnerable groups to disinformation and their levels of trust in the government is presented. Finally, the role of the welfare state in fostering resilience is examined.

The contribution of this research is twofold. First, the findings extend the understanding of disinformation by identifying which societal groups are more vulnerable to disinformation narratives and more likely to distrust the government while being receptive to external information sources. Second, the study contributes to welfare state literature and research by exploring the adequacy and effectiveness of welfare policies in ensuring societal resilience, particularly among vulnerable populations.

## 2. Literature Review

Disinformation is defined as intentionally false information disseminated to harm a nation, increase distrust in governmental institutions, incite fear among the population, and exacerbate social tensions (Freedman et al., 2021). It shares similarities with propaganda, which seeks to manipulate and control public opinion (Humprecht, 2023). The dissemination of disinformation represents an abuse of power, eroding public trust in institutions and the media (Puebla-Martínez et al., 2021). The spread of disinformation, however, depends on specific social, media, and political contexts, as well as the vulnerability of various societal groups to disinformation (Humprecht, 2023).

Given its harmful implications, the pervasive nature of disinformation necessitates strategies to mitigate its spread and enhance societal resilience. Resilience is usually defined as the ability to recover from

disturbances (Bergstrand et al., 2015; Donoghue, 2022; EuropeAid, 2016; Rose, 2004). It is a positive response made by individuals over time in the face of financial, social, or emotional adversity (Batty & Cole, 2010). Debates on resilience in social life pay attention from the individual to the social and from individual actions to creating conditions for them to take place (Estêvão et al., 2017). Structural conditions and path dependency impact the resilience of social subjects (Dagdeviren et al., 2016). According to Dagdeviren et al. (2016), systems that protect individuals through redistribution of wealth and/or protection of income in times of economic adversity are highly relevant to resilience. Feelings of subjective insecurity are also important for resilience (Harrison, 2013). Path dependency is another point in understanding resilience because it is a process in which an initial condition or a development generates a reinforcement mechanism for the emergence of a particular path with particular outcomes (Dagdeviren et al., 2016). Thus, resilience in individuals or households may be a manifestation of structural factors or path dependence reflected in their behavior. Social resilience is observed by examining the positive and negative aspects of social exclusion, marginalization, and social capital. Stress and variability associated with resource dependency are manifest in instability (Adger, 2000). Resource dependency demonstrates the coevolutionary nature of the social and natural systems being examined, with social and economic systems being more or less “resilient” to external physical and social stresses (Adger, 2000). Focusing on the multidimensionality of poverty—or “ways of life”—as an indicator of analysis can help articulate the resources and constraints associated with a specific position in the social structure, shaped by socioeconomic conditions defined by concepts of relative and absolute poverty, as well as by the everyday life practices, evaluations, representations, cultural and social references, and the strategic choices of families and individuals operating within those constraints (Estêvão et al., 2017). Therefore, it is necessary to identify the problem: The lack of resilience for certain individuals may instead be the result of a number of interacting factors such as social exclusion, the efficacy of social support, various prejudices and biases, and different social and personal problems. The second aspect is the intermittence of hardship, and resilience is not a permanent personal attribute but rather a process dependent upon social as well as individual factors (Calado et al., 2020). Social resilience processes result from choices made by reflexive actors with different dispositions. These choices depend on the capacities and powers, including the perception of available resources and the evaluation of the consequences of their alternative use. Access to resources is a central issue in allowing recovery from a crisis, or to live, maintain, or improve living conditions (Calado et al., 2020). Thus, resilience is related to certain types of outcomes (Calado et al., 2020).

Enhancing resilience against disinformation requires assessing how information is evaluated and shared. Bayer et al. (2019) suggest that resilience to disinformation should be understood as the capacity to encounter disinformation, discover the truth, comprehend public matters, and engage in informed decision-making. A critical prerequisite for fostering resilience is the presence of a public discourse, enabling citizens to have a choice in learning a range of perspectives and ideas.

Kont et al. (2024) define resilience to disinformation as the capability that manifests in encounters with disinformation and results in either questioning or recognizing disinformation. This resilience is also reflected in the reluctance to share, like, or comment on disinformation (Humprecht, 2023). Notably, disinformation producers often claim to reveal information allegedly hidden by established news media and politicians (Humprecht, 2023): Extensive use of social media is detrimental to resilience and increases the probability of further dissemination of disinformation.

Resilience differs across societal groups, highlighting the need for academic discourse focused on identifying vulnerable populations and strengthening their capacity to cope with disinformation. The existing literature on resilience in disaster contexts suggests that vulnerability is often defined through poverty criteria. For example, Bergstrand et al. (2015) and Bonati et al. (2023) illustrate that the poor generally have fewer resources and safety nets than the rich.

In the domain of information and communication, vulnerability is conceptualized as the susceptibility of recipients to manipulation—whether intentional or unintentional—by the media disseminating false or inaccurate information. Puebla-Martínez et al. (2021) highlight that individuals unable to recognize misinformation may contribute to its spread by forwarding messages, particularly within social networks. Consequently, cognitive skills, critical attitudes, and digital literacy are essential for evaluating misinformation effectively. Additionally, prior beliefs, ideologies, age, memory capacity, and personality traits influence how individuals assess the credibility of information. The same authors also emphasize that sociodemographic characteristics, including income level, social status, and place of residence, shape perceptions regarding the prevalence and identification of misinformation. Furthermore, studies demonstrate that the level of education significantly impacts awareness and comprehension of hybrid threats, including disinformation (Korauš et al., 2023; Puebla-Martínez et al., 2021). Kirmayer (2024) points out that individuals' worldviews are shaped by their knowledge, expectations, and cognitive priors, which are, in turn, influenced by life experiences such as education and engagement in public discourse. The author further asserts that education regarding institutions (government, law, and healthcare) can foster trust in these institutions.

Psychological dimensions of vulnerability are explored by Pantazi et al. (2021), who argue that default gullibility and epistemic vigilance are important in political information, resulting in people exhibiting excessive gullibility toward inaccurate information and overly vigilant toward truthful information.

Kont et al. (2024) state that attempts to understand resilience will always lead to questions about vulnerability, which is at the opposite end. Kont et al. (2024) differentiate between micro-, meso-, and macro-level factors of influence on resilience to disinformation. At the micro level, political ideology, cognitive processes, and pathologies are considered the prime drivers of vulnerability to disinformation. Researchers (Kont et al., 2024; Kirmayer, 2024, among others) aim to conduct a more comprehensive examination beyond merely assessing varying levels of resilience across different social groups. The key focus of their inquiry is understanding the factors contributing to people's susceptibility to disinformation.

One significant determinant of resilience is trust in news media (Humprecht, 2023). When people distrust traditional media, they are more likely to seek information from alternative sources (Klebba & Winter, 2024). Humprecht (2023) observed the relationship between trust and democratic attitudes. The rejection of democratic values can lead to a lack of trust in traditional sources of information, and this gap can potentially be filled by alternative sources of information that are more susceptible to disinformation. However, the relationship between trust in politicians and willingness to share disinformation is complex (Humprecht, 2023). Trust lies at the heart of disinformation (Wardle & Derakhshan, 2017) because it is ultimately about believing facts or "alternative truths."

Political trust also plays a crucial role in shaping responses to disinformation (Klebba & Winter, 2024). Studies have demonstrated that the extent to which people engaged with Covid-19-related disinformation—

whether by selecting, sharing, or believing in it—was strongly correlated with their mistrust of political institutions (Klebba & Winter, 2024). More broadly, levels of trust in societal institutions influence how individuals select, disseminate, and accept disinformation. Institutional trust in politics refers to the degree to which people perceive core political institutions and actors as credible, fair, competent, and transparent, and its erosion can negatively impact public participation in government-endorsed initiatives (Devine & Valgarðsson, 2024; Klebba & Winter, 2024). For example, if citizens perceive the government as untrustworthy in ensuring redistribution, fostering trust in policy decisions related to economic preferences becomes challenging (Devine & Valgarðsson, 2024).

For Dimdins et al. (2024), political trust can be conceptualized as a general evaluation of the political system and an assessment of specific political actors and institutions. It is shaped by “perceptions of particular qualities” attributed to political actors or institutions, as well as by situational circumstances and contextual factors. It is usually linked to public satisfaction regarding the performance of political institutions, as individuals rely on their subjective well-being as a criterion in evaluating governmental performance (Dimdins et al., 2024). People determine whether they are content enough to support authorities, as they expect political institutions to establish societal conditions conducive to achieving satisfactory well-being. Direct evaluations of the national economic situation and personal household finances are also significant predictors of political trust.

For Uslaner (2012), inequality as a contextual macro-level factor leads to lower levels of trust and creates tensions between more and less advantaged groups. This author also concludes that, besides economic equality, the sense of optimism also acts as a factor of trust. More recently, Bobzien (2023) has stated that individuals feel more politically dissatisfied when they identify inequality because higher levels of income inequality may be associated with higher levels of economic insecurity, which leads individuals to trust less in political institutions. The economically well-off individuals who benefit from inequality have higher trust levels, while economically less well-off individuals—who are put at a disadvantage—have lower trust levels. Citizens assess government performance and consider the responsibilities of politicians and institutions in addressing underlying problems (Kumlin et al., 2024).

A welfare factor is crucial in mitigating low levels of political trust (Uslaner, 2012). Rothstein (2010) argues that welfare state policies contribute to overall trust levels by fostering societal well-being and reducing corruption. Countries with comprehensive, universal welfare systems tend to exhibit lower levels of corruption, higher social trust, and greater overall happiness. In contrast, systems reliant on means-tested benefits are more susceptible to corruption and tend to foster lower levels of both social trust and well-being (Rothstein et al., 2010). Furthermore, dissatisfaction with the welfare state often correlates with broader political distrust (Kumlin, 2007). Research suggests that individuals store and recall information about government performance in a general rather than sector-specific manner, allowing them to form holistic evaluations of the welfare state (Kumlin et al., 2024).

Perceptions of fairness in the distribution of public resources significantly influence citizens’ evaluations of policies (Tóth et al., 2022). Such perceptions are shaped by the socio-political context, with empirical findings from the Czech Republic and Slovakia indicating that citizens’ assessments of policies and political representatives are primarily influenced by the benefits they receive (Tóth et al., 2022). Additionally, the perceived level of corruption and standard of living are key factors shaping public evaluations of policy outputs (Tóth et al., 2022).

Economic insecurity is another important determinant of political behavior (Vlandas & Halikiopoulou, 2022). Welfare state policies are likely to mitigate the costs and risks associated with belonging to particular social groups, thereby shaping political preferences. Different social groups experience varying levels of economic insecurity, influencing their voting behavior. Economically vulnerable voters, in particular, are more likely to depend on the generosity of social policies (Vlandas & Halikiopoulou, 2022).

Welfare state dissatisfaction tends to correlate with general political distrust (Kumlin, 2007). Kumlin (2002) distinguishes between “nootropic” perceptions—formed through information provided by political elites, experts, and the media—and personal welfare state experiences, which shape individuals’ assessments of government responsibility for public agencies and programs. While socio-tropic perceptions are partly the product of personal experiences, direct interactions with welfare state services have a greater influence on overall judgments of the welfare system and political trust. Citizens tend to link the quality of welfare state services not only to the performance of the incumbent government but also to the overall functioning of the democratic system (Kumlin, 2002).

Subjective self-interest, defined as individuals’ perceptions of their personal gains from welfare state arrangements and public services, plays a significant role in shaping political trust (Kumlin, 2002). However, studies suggest that socioeconomic status variables—such as social class, education, and income—only moderately explain variations in political trust. Instead, subjective assessments of life satisfaction appear to have a stronger correlation with political trust. Happy people are generally more satisfied with institutions and governance.

While Bauer (2018) did not find evidence that unemployment negatively affects trust in government or satisfaction with democracy, his findings indicate a negative relationship between unemployment and life satisfaction. According to Bauer (2018), the experience of unemployment may affect concrete attitudes toward policies related to unemployment, whereas more abstract attitudes remain largely unaffected.

### 3. Data and Methods

Our analysis builds upon existing literature that identifies age, education, and labor market status as key factors influencing social resilience in individual and social conditions. To examine the relationship between disinformation and trust in the government and these factors, we utilized data from a representative survey conducted in Lithuania in 2024. The survey was administered by the market and public opinion research company Spinter Tyrimai following the methodology developed by a research team from Vilnius University. The study sample included respondents aged 18 and over, ensuring representation across gender, age, education, social status, and place of residence. Particular attention was given to the inclusion of retirees (aged 64+) and other socially vulnerable groups, including recipients of social assistance, the unemployed, and individuals with disabilities or having children with disabilities. The data was collected using the CAPI and CAWI methodologies. In the CAPI method, interviewers conducted in-person surveys at respondents’ homes using a digital questionnaire. The CAWI method involved an online questionnaire accessible via a provided link. Notably, the CAWI approach limited respondents’ ability to revise their answers.

This study focuses on identifying social groups that exhibit greater vulnerability to disinformation and lower levels of trust in the government. According to Bayer et al. (2019), our approach examines vulnerabilities

that fake news narratives exploit. Resilience or vulnerability to disinformation has been assessed using the following statements as variables:

1. Sanctions on Russia due to its aggression against Ukraine have not achieved the declared goals and have primarily harmed the Lithuanian population through price increases.
2. Lithuanian politicians care too much about Ukraine and ignore Lithuanian interests.
3. Lithuanian politicians emphasize threats from Russia and the probability of war to evoke fear rather than solving problems related to poverty reduction.

These statements reflect prevalent Russian disinformation narratives, particularly those emphasizing social concerns. Unlike conventional survey questions on disinformation (e.g., those used in Eurobarometer), we used the above statements as our effort aimed to measure respondents' resilience/vulnerability to external disinformation attacks from Russia. The socioeconomic context issues Russia uses to confront the official line of the Lithuanian government to support Ukraine against Russia's aggression. These narratives reflect the manipulation of socioeconomic issues and seek to reveal societal doubts about the government's politics. The narratives have attributes to the definition of disinformation: falsity, intention to strategic manipulation, and impact on society (Bayer et al., 2019). Similar narratives are defined in other sources or research (see, for example, EUvsDisinfo, 2024; also, Janeliūnas, 2024). Lithuanian public media provided explanations about the economic situation, the causes of inflation, and the importance of supporting Ukraine in the country from the beginning of the full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

Trust in the government was measured by asking whether the Lithuanian government would care for all citizens during security crises and extreme situations by using the following statement as a variable: "The Lithuanian government will be able to care for all its citizens."

To analyze these variables about different social groups, we categorized respondents based on the following criteria:

- Education: Three groups were defined: (a) secondary education or lower, (b) non-university higher education, and (c) university-level higher education.
- Personal income amount per month: Income was classified into three categories: (a) below EUR 600 (poverty line), (b) between EUR 601 and EUR 2000, and (c) above EUR 2001.
- Employment status (active/inactive): Respondents were categorized as either "Active" (employed or self-employed) or "Inactive" (unemployed, retired, students, or those unable to work due to disability or other reasons).
- Subjective evaluation of living standards: Respondents self-assessed their living standards as (a) very good or good, (b) neutral, or (c) very bad or bad.
- Age groups: Three categories were established: 18–34, 35–65, and 65 and older.

All selected independent variables align with prior research findings discussed in the preceding section. To assess vulnerability to disinformation and identify groups with lower trust in the government, we employed a multinomial logistic regression model, which is particularly suited for categorical variables.



### **3.1. Sociodemographic Characteristics of the Respondents**

The survey sample was designed to ensure a balanced gender distribution, with 46% male and 54% female respondents. The age range spanned from 18 to over 80, with the largest proportion falling between 30 and 69 years, each age bracket contributing roughly 16%. Educational attainment varied, with 25.5% holding a university degree, 18.9% having completed secondary education, and 18.2% possessing vocational training. Regarding employment status, 50.2% of the respondents were employed in salaried positions, while 10.3% were self-employed and 3.6% were business owners. Retirees comprised 30.8% of the sample, with 5.9% being unemployed and 4% being students. Household income per family member spanned a broad range, with the majority earning between EUR 301 and 1100 per month. A small percentage (2%) reported income below EUR 200, while only 0.7% earned more than EUR 3001. The primary sources of household income were wages (69.4%), pensions (32.9%), and earnings from individual or business activities (15.6%).

## **4. Findings**

This study examines the relationship between disinformation, trust in the government, and various socioeconomic factors, including education, income levels, labour market activity, and subjective assessments of living standards. To contextualise the multinomial logistic regression results, this section provides a brief discussion of these indicators in the Lithuanian context. Lithuania has made significant efforts to align its national policies with the principles outlined in the EPSR. Established in 2017, the EPSR encompasses 20 principles designed to ensure fair working conditions, social protection, and inclusion, thereby promoting social equality across Europe (European Commission, 2023). Lithuania's commitment to the EPSR is particularly relevant given its historical and socioeconomic challenges, such as high levels of poverty and youth unemployment. However, the implementation of the EPSR in Lithuania encounters several obstacles, including the absence of direct enforcement mechanisms and a binding legal framework, which limits its function to that of a policy agenda (Carella & Graziano, 2021).

### **4.1. Education**

Education, training, and lifelong learning constitute the first principle of the EPSR. Although Lithuania has achieved a relatively high secondary education attainment rate (96.4% among individuals aged 20–24 in 2022), persistent challenges remain in addressing youth unemployment and aligning educational outcomes with labour market demands. In 2023, the unemployment rate among young people (aged 15–24) stood at 12.4%, notably higher than the general unemployment rate of 6.4% (National Policies Platform, 2024). This disparity underscores the need for more targeted policies facilitating the transition from education to employment. Additionally, disparities in access to quality education and training persist, with rural areas significantly lagging behind urban centres.

### **4.2. Income and Poverty**

Recent policy trends indicate the Lithuanian government's commitment to expanding public social services and increasing social benefits to reduce poverty. This commitment is reflected in a gradual increase in social benefit allocations and a rising share of GDP devoted to social expenditures. However, despite these efforts, Lithuania remains below the EU average in terms of social expenditure, allocating only 18% of its GDP to social



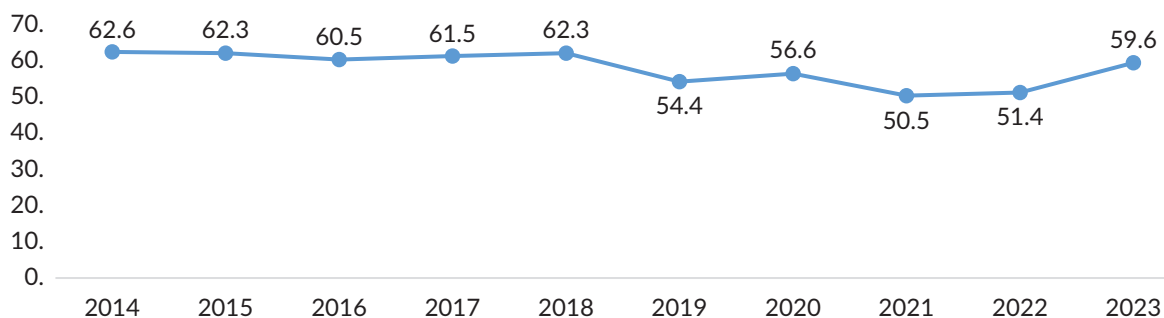
protection in 2021, compared to the EU-27 average of 28.7% (Eurostat, 2024b). Between 2012 and 2022, the relative poverty risk in Lithuania consistently hovered around 20% (Valstybės duomenų agentūra, 2024), with the rate of people at risk of poverty reaching 20.6% in 2023. This data indicates an insufficient social protection system for vulnerable populations. Historically, Lithuania has exhibited one of the highest poverty risk levels in the EU, reflecting its low-funded welfare state that follows the Baltic model (Greve, 2022). While reports on EPSR implementation suggest progress in poverty reduction, income inequality remains critical (Eurostat, 2024a). Lithuania's income inequality ratio stood at 6.4 in 2022, among the highest in the EU (Valstybės duomenų agentūra, 2024). Furthermore, although approximately 20% of the Lithuanian population is at risk of poverty, only 2–3% of those affected receive social support, resulting in high non-take-up rates. According to EPSR projections, the non-take-up rate for monetary social assistance is expected to decline from 22.4% in 2017 to below 10% by 2030 (European Commission, 2022a).

#### **4.3. Subjective Evaluation and Trust**

Data from the European Social Survey (2018) indicate that Lithuanians report moderate levels of life satisfaction, with an average score of 6.5 out of 10, consistent with broader trends observed in Central and Eastern Europe (Eurofound, 2020). Previous research identifies distrust in institutions as a defining characteristic of Lithuanian society (Kovács et al., 2017; Saxonberg & Sirovátka, 2009). Aidukaitė (2009) attributes this phenomenon to the legacy of communism, which has shaped public perceptions of government responsibility and institutional trust. Low governmental trust is prevalent in Eastern European countries due to historical governance failures and ongoing economic challenges (Aidukaitė et al., 2016; Kuitto, 2016). According to the independent public opinion research company Vilmarus, in September 2024, 46% of the Lithuanian population distrusted the government, whereas only 17.4% expressed trust (Vilmarus, 2024). Eurobarometer data similarly highlight low trust levels in national governance, averaging 50% between 2017 and 2021 (European Commission, 2022b). Additionally, in 2023, the average trust score among individuals aged 16 and older in the EU was 5.8 (on a scale from 0 to 10), whereas in Lithuania, it was only 4.3 (Eurostat, 2024a).

#### **4.4. Employment Status: Active vs Inactive in the Labour Market**

The EPSR sets a target employment rate of at least 78% for individuals aged 20–64 by 2030. However, in Lithuania, unemployment significantly correlates with a poverty risk; in 2022, 51% of unemployed individuals fell below the at-risk-of-poverty threshold (Valstybės duomenų agentūra, 2024). Over the ten-year period, the at-risk-of-poverty rate for unemployed individuals remained persistently high, fluctuating between 50.5% and 62.6%, which underscores the structural vulnerability of this group. Figure 1 illustrates the at-risk-of-poverty rate among unemployed persons in the EU from 2014 to 2023, based on Eurostat data. Eligibility for unemployment benefits in Lithuania requires at least 12 months of employment within the preceding 30 months. Benefits are provided for a maximum of nine months, with gradual reductions. In March 2024, the average unemployment benefit stood at EUR 546.2, rising to EUR 596.6 by November 2024 (Social Insurance Fund in Lithuania, 2024). However, the at-risk of poverty threshold in 2023 was EUR 566, indicating that unemployment benefits often remain insufficient for financial security. The EPSR action plan aims to raise the minimum unemployment social insurance benefit from EUR 149.39 in 2021 to at least the minimum consumption needs level by 2030.



**Figure 1.** At-risk of poverty rate of unemployed persons in Lithuania (2014–2023).

Following the nine-month unemployment benefit period, individuals may qualify for social assistance if they remain unemployed. Social assistance in Lithuania is calculated based on state-supported income levels, which amounted to EUR 176 as of 1 January 2024. The monthly social assistance benefit for a single resident equals the difference between 1.1 times the state-supported income per person per month and the actual income of that person. For households, this calculation considers 100% for the first member, 90% for the second, and 70% for each additional household member. In 2024, the average monthly social assistance benefit was approximately EUR 152 (SADM, 2024), leaving many recipients at continued risk of poverty.

The following paragraphs examine the multinomial logistic regression model, which utilizes the previously defined variables. The final model is statistically significant ( $p < 0.001$ ). Pearson’s Goodness of Fit test yields a value of 0.827, indicating a good model fit. The likelihood ratio test suggests that the active/inactive variable is statistically insignificant (see Table 1).

Our primary focus is the evaluation of the statement: “Sanctions on Russia due to its aggression against Ukraine have not achieved the declared goals and have primarily harmed the Lithuanian population through price increases” (see Table 2).

**Table 1.** Likelihood ratio tests: “Sanctions on Russia due to its aggression against Ukraine have not achieved the declared goals and have primarily harmed the Lithuanian population through price increases.”

Effect	Age groups	Active/inactive	Subjective life standard evaluation	Education	Income groups
Sig.	0.006	0.334	0.001	0.005	0.008

The findings indicate significant variations in public perception based on education, age, and self-assessed living standards. Using *totally disagree* as the reference category, the results suggest that individuals with secondary or lower education are 2.7 times more likely to *totally agree* with the statement than those who *totally disagree*. The probability of young respondents (18–34) choosing *totally agree* is nearly 60% lower than those selecting *totally disagree*. Similarly, respondents who evaluate their living standards as good or average are 70–80% less likely to *totally agree* than *totally disagree* (see Table 2).

While younger respondents (18–34) and those with a positive subjective living standard assessment are less likely to select *agree* over *totally disagree*, individuals in the lower-income group exhibit a 4.7 times greater likelihood of choosing *agree*. The probability of selecting *totally disagree* is highest among the average-income

**Table 2.** Parameter estimates for the statement: “Sanctions on Russia due to its aggression against Ukraine have not achieved the declared goals and have primarily harmed the Lithuanian population through price increases.”

Group	B	Exp(B)	Sig.
<b>Totally agree</b>			
Age (18–34)	–0.865	0.421	0.009
Subjective living standard evaluation (good)	–1.731	0.177	< 0.001
Subjective living standard evaluation (average)	–1.171	0.310	< 0.001
Education (secondary and lower)	1.029	2.798	< 0.001
<b>Agree</b>			
Age group (18–34)	–0.733	0.481	0.015
Subjective living standard evaluation (good)	–1.362	0.256	< 0.001
Education (secondary and lower)	0.638	1.892	0.013
Income group (lower than at-risk of poverty line)	1.561	4.764	0.001
Income group (average)	1.404	4.072	0.002

group, though slightly lower than that of the lower-income group. Furthermore, respondents with secondary or lower education are 1.8 times more likely to choose *agree* than *totally disagree* (see Table 2).

Assessment of this statement shows education’s role as a condition for critical thinking, which is emphasized in the resilience against disinformation literature. Age is another factor revealed in this case; the younger cohort appears more resilient to this type of information, likely due to their higher life satisfaction and, certainly, their experience of being born and raised in a democratic society, or less personal experience and more nootropic perception, as it is defined by Kumlin (2002).

The likelihood ratio test suggests that the active/inactive and age group variables are statistically insignificant (see Table 3).

**Table 3.** Likelihood ratio tests: “Lithuanian politicians care too much about Ukraine and ignore Lithuanian interests.”

Effect	Age groups	Active/inactive	Subjective life standard evaluation	Education	Income groups
Sig.	0.342	0.692	0.001	0.001	0.011

Note: Age groups and activity status are statistically insignificant.

The probability of selecting *totally agree* is significantly lower for individuals with a good (approximately 80%) or average subjective living standard evaluation (approximately 65%). Conversely, secondary or lower education and higher non-university education increase the probability of choosing *totally agree* rather than *totally disagree* by approximately 2.2 times (see Table 4).

Similarly, respondents from the lower-income group are 3.3 times more likely to choose *agree* over *totally disagree*. Individuals with secondary or lower education exhibit a 3.1 times greater likelihood of choosing *agree*, while those with higher non-university education have a 2.1 times higher probability of agreement. Good and

average subjective living standard evaluation reduces the probability of agreement with a statement compared to the reference group (see Table 4).

This statement shows that groups with limited resources, low subjective assessment of living standards, and lower education are the main factors to agree with. Social exclusion and a lack of care from the government show how welfare clients evaluate welfare state efforts in Lithuania. The finding sounds similar to the conclusions of Adger (2000), Harrison (2013), and Estêvão et al. (2017).

**Table 4.** Parameter estimates for the statement: “Lithuanian politicians care too much about Ukraine and ignore Lithuanian interests.”

Group	B	Exp(B)	Sig.
<b>Totally agree</b>			
Subjective living standard evaluation (good)	−1.771	0.170	< 0.001
Subjective living standard evaluation (average)	−1.047	0.351	< 0.001
Education (secondary and lower)	0.790	2.203	< 0.001
Education (higher non-university)	0.832	2.298	< 0.001
<b>Agree</b>			
Subjective living standard evaluation (good)	−1.147	0.318	< 0.001
Subjective living standard evaluation (average)	−0.411	0.663	< 0.001
Income group (lower than at-risk of poverty line)	1.213	3.364	< 0.010
Education (secondary and lower)	1.146	3.145	< 0.001
Education (higher non-university)	0.747	2.111	< 0.001

The final model is <0,001. Pearson’s Goodness of Fit is 0,362, which means it fits well.

The likelihood ratio test suggests that all variables are statistically significant (see Table 5).

**Table 5.** Likelihood ratio tests: “Lithuanian politicians emphasise threats from Russia and the probability of war to instill fear, rather than solving problems related to poverty reduction.”

Effect	Age groups	Active/inactive	Subjective life standard evaluation	Education	Income groups
Sig.	0.001	0.035	0.001	0.001	0.012

Note: All our selected independent variables are statistically significant.

Young age (18–34) and good and average subjective living standard evaluations reduce the probability of choice to *totally agree* over *disagree* by 50–60 percent. While secondary and lower education increases the probability (1.8 times), and higher non-university education contributes (2 times) to the choice of *totally agree* instead of *disagree* (see Table 6).

The probability of agreeing with the statement increases up to 3.6 times among the low-income group. The probability that the respondents with secondary and lower education will agree with the statement rather than disagree with it increases by 1.8 times (see Table 6).

**Table 6.** Parameter estimates for the statement: “Lithuanian politicians emphasise threats from Russia and the probability of war to instill fear, rather than solving problems related to poverty reduction.”

Group	B	Exp(B)	Sig.
<b>Totally agree</b>			
Age (18–34)	–0.775	0.461	0.006
Subjective living standard evaluation (good)	–1.700	0.183	< 0.001
Subjective living standard evaluation (average)	–0.958	0.383	< 0.001
Education (secondary and lower)	0.518	1.678	0.025
Education (higher non-university)	0.738	2.092	0.002
<b>Agree</b>			
Age (18–34)	–0.707	0.493	0.003
Subjective living standard evaluation (good)	–1.094	0.493	< 0.001
Education (secondary and lower)	0.610	1.841	0.002
Income (lower than the at-risk of poverty line)	1.303	3.681	0.003

Low redistribution, persistent risk of poverty, and about a fifth of the population having lived at risk of poverty during the last ten years—these are factors influencing the assessment of this statement. Especially then, the statement “Lithuanian politicians emphasise threats from Russia and the probability of war to instill fear rather than solve problems related to poverty reduction” evaluates people who are faced with poverty. This finding aligns with Dagdeviren et al.’s (2016) conclusion that the discourse of resilience must be viewed within the context of the social conditions in which it arises.

The final model is statistically significant ( $p < 0.001$ ), which predicts the dependent variable *trust in the government* better than the intercept-only model. The Pearson’s Goodness of Fit value is 0.538, confirming a good model fit. Pearson’s chi-square test is not statistically significant.

The likelihood ratio test suggests that the education and income group variables are statistically not significant (see Table 7).

**Table 7.** Likelihood ratio tests: “The Lithuanian government will be able to care for all its citizens” (during security crises and extreme situations).

Effect	Age groups	Active/inactive	Subjective life standard evaluation	Education	Income groups
Sig.	0.004	0.017	0.001	0.320	0.345

Note: Education and income are statistically insignificant, while age, activity status (active/inactive), and subjective life standard evaluation are significant variables.

The probability of disagreement is 1.9 times higher among young respondents (18–34) compared to those who *totally agree*. In contrast, active individuals are 30% less likely to choose *disagree*, while those with good and average subjective living standards are more likely to disagree with the statement (see Table 8).

Our measurement of trust in the government confirms the opinion of the younger cohort and, again, the significance of the subjective material situation on trust. The finding confirms Harrison’s 2013 conclusion that feelings of subjective insecurity are also important for resilience.

**Table 8.** Parameter estimates for the statement: “The Lithuanian government will be able to care for all its citizens” (during security crises and extreme situations).

Group	B	Exp(B)	Sig.
Disagree			
Age group 18–34	0.677	1.967	0.001
Active population	–0.403	0.668	0.016
Subjective evaluation of living standard (good)	0.706	2.026	< 0.001
Subjective evaluation of living standard (average)	0.781	2.184	< 0.001

## 5. Conclusions

This study underscores the intricate interplay between resilience to disinformation and social vulnerabilities experienced by socially vulnerable groups in Lithuania. Socially vulnerable populations, particularly those with lower socioeconomic status and limited educational attainment, exhibit lower levels of resilience to disinformation. Additionally, those dissatisfied with their living standards tend to exhibit lower trust in the government. In contrast, younger individuals and those with higher subjective evaluations of their living standards show more excellent resistance to disinformation and highlight the importance of economic security and personal well-being, which is critical in fostering trust and resilience. Our findings confirm the sociological understanding of resilience, which looks at it as a process from the lens of social structural conditions (Batty & Cole, 2010; Calado et al., 2020; Dagdeviren et al., 2016; Donoghue, 2022; Estêvão et al., 2017). Kumlin’s (2007) conclusion is that welfare state dissatisfaction correlates with general political distrust. As well as Shu et al.’s (2020) concept of disinformation, the content of disinformation, in many cases, is highly sensationalized, seeking to affect the reader. In our research, disinformation focuses on economic issues and government responsibility, which are the outcomes of welfare state performance and can be negatively evaluated by welfare state clients.

Lithuanian welfare state efforts to protect against poverty and reduce economic insecurity are still insufficient. Our research revealed that lower-income groups and those at risk of poverty are disproportionately affected by disinformation, as economic hardships often amplify disappointment, distrust, and openness to alternative and often false narratives. Addressing economic disparities through enhanced social security measures and poverty alleviation policies is essential to strengthening societal resilience to disinformation (Bobzien, 2023).

Education is a significant factor in shaping resilience to disinformation (Korauš et al., 2023; Puebla-Martínez et al., 2021). Individuals with secondary or lower education are notably more likely to accept disinformation narratives, revealing a pressing need for targeted interventions in education. Enhancing critical thinking and media literacy across all education levels could significantly bolster the public’s ability to assess information and reduce susceptibility to manipulation critically.

The role of the welfare state is central to mitigating economic and lower education vulnerabilities. While Lithuania has made progress in aligning its policies with the EPSR, persistent challenges such as high poverty and income inequality undermine its capacity to foster resilience. Expanding welfare provisions and addressing gaps in social protection are essential steps toward reducing societal vulnerabilities, building trust in governmental institutions, and enhancing resilience against disinformation.

This research also emphasizes the critical need for a holistic approach to combating disinformation in Lithuania. Effective strategies must address the intersection of economic, educational, and social vulnerabilities, focusing on fostering trust in institutions. Policymakers should prioritize inclusive welfare policies, invest in educational programs that promote media literacy, and implement public awareness campaigns to mitigate the spread of disinformation. By addressing these challenges comprehensively, Lithuania can enhance its societal resilience and safeguard its democratic values against external threats.

## 6. Limitations of Research

We used to measure resilience against the disinformation statements reflecting the main narratives of Russian disinformation used during the Russian aggression against Ukraine. The assessment of these statements can have multiple causes, including ideological beliefs, path dependency, distrust of the government in the context, etc. We did not reveal various factors and focused mainly on welfare and subjective feelings about it in this context. Therefore, different times and choices of measurement of resilience against disinformation can impact findings. As Bayer et al. (2019) stated, measuring disinformation's impact and attributing causality with certainty under non-laboratory circumstances is nearly impossible.

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## Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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