

Lithuanians' awareness about climate change and changes in climate-friendly behaviour in the context of EU

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Introduction

Tackling climate change is a priority for the European Union, which has set current and the latest target to reduce its CO₂ emissions 55 % by 2030, compared to 1990 levels. Not only economic and political aspects but also the society's role are becoming increasingly important in climate change mitigation. Therefore, the aim of this study was to analyse changes in climate change concern, personal responsibility, the importance of government support in improving energy efficiency, personal actions performed to fight climate change and climate-friendly behaviour in Lithuania in the context of the European Union in 2015-2019.

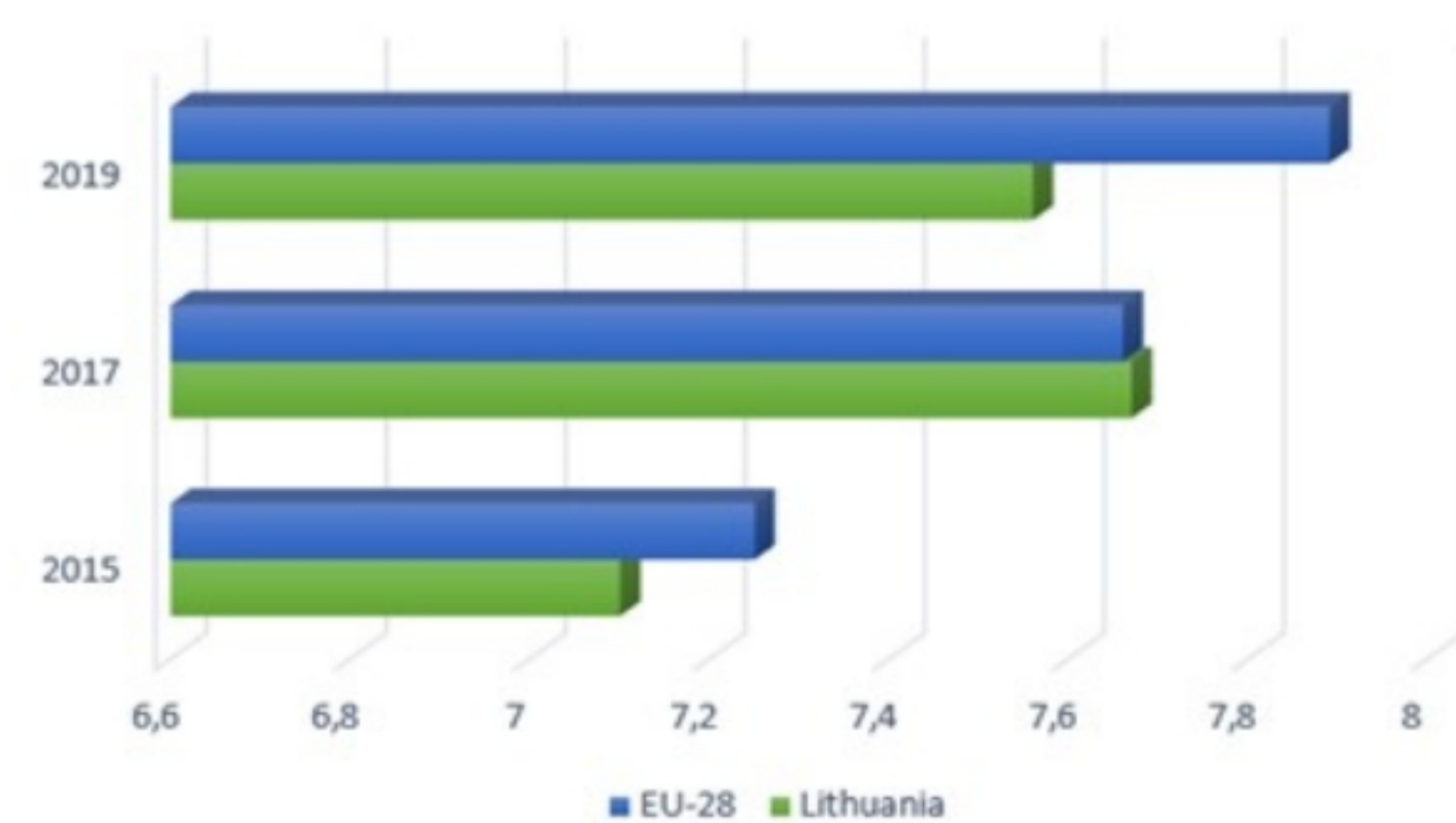


Fig 1. The average of climate change concern level (10-point scale)

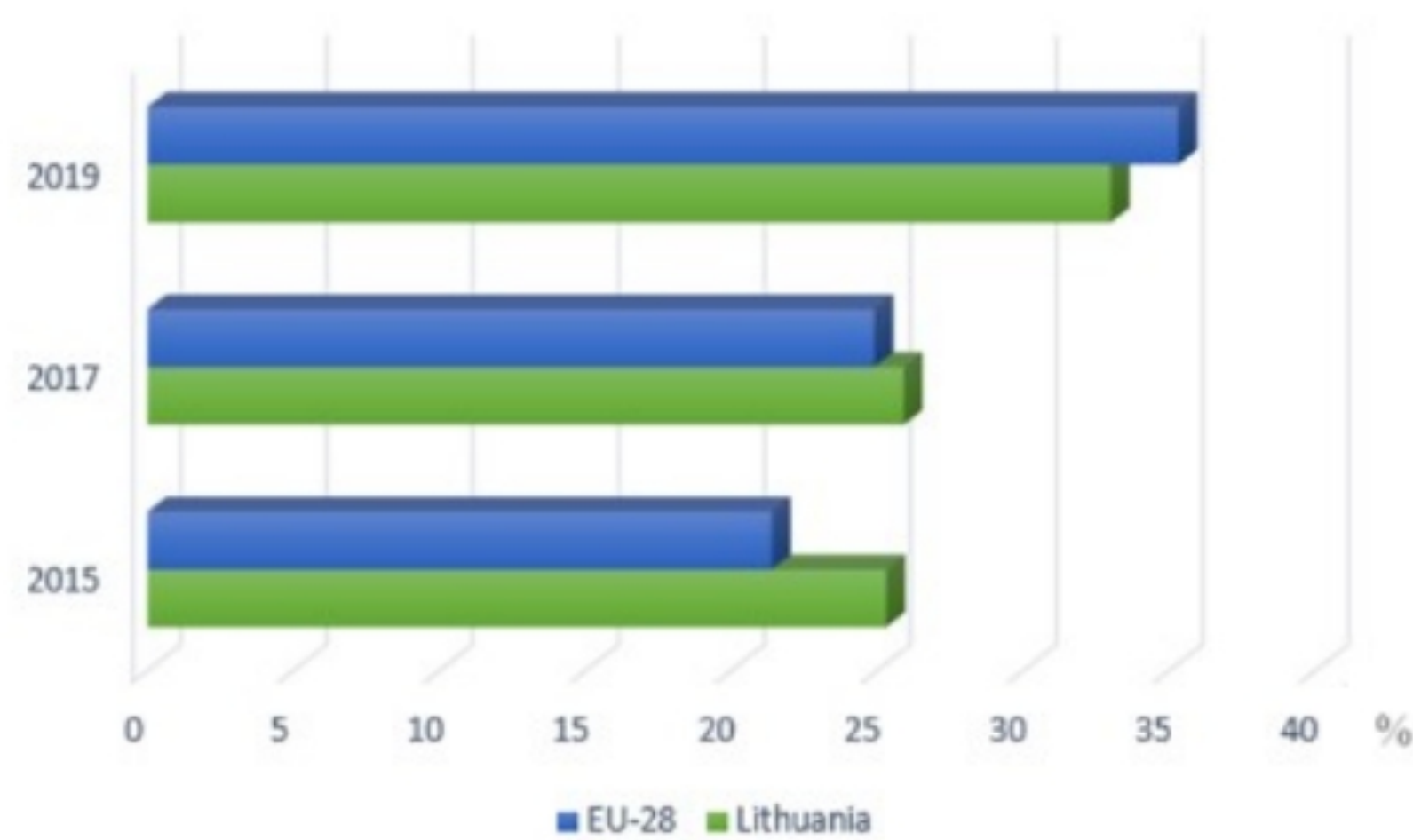


Fig 2. Assumption of personal responsibility (%) for climate change in the period of 2015-2019

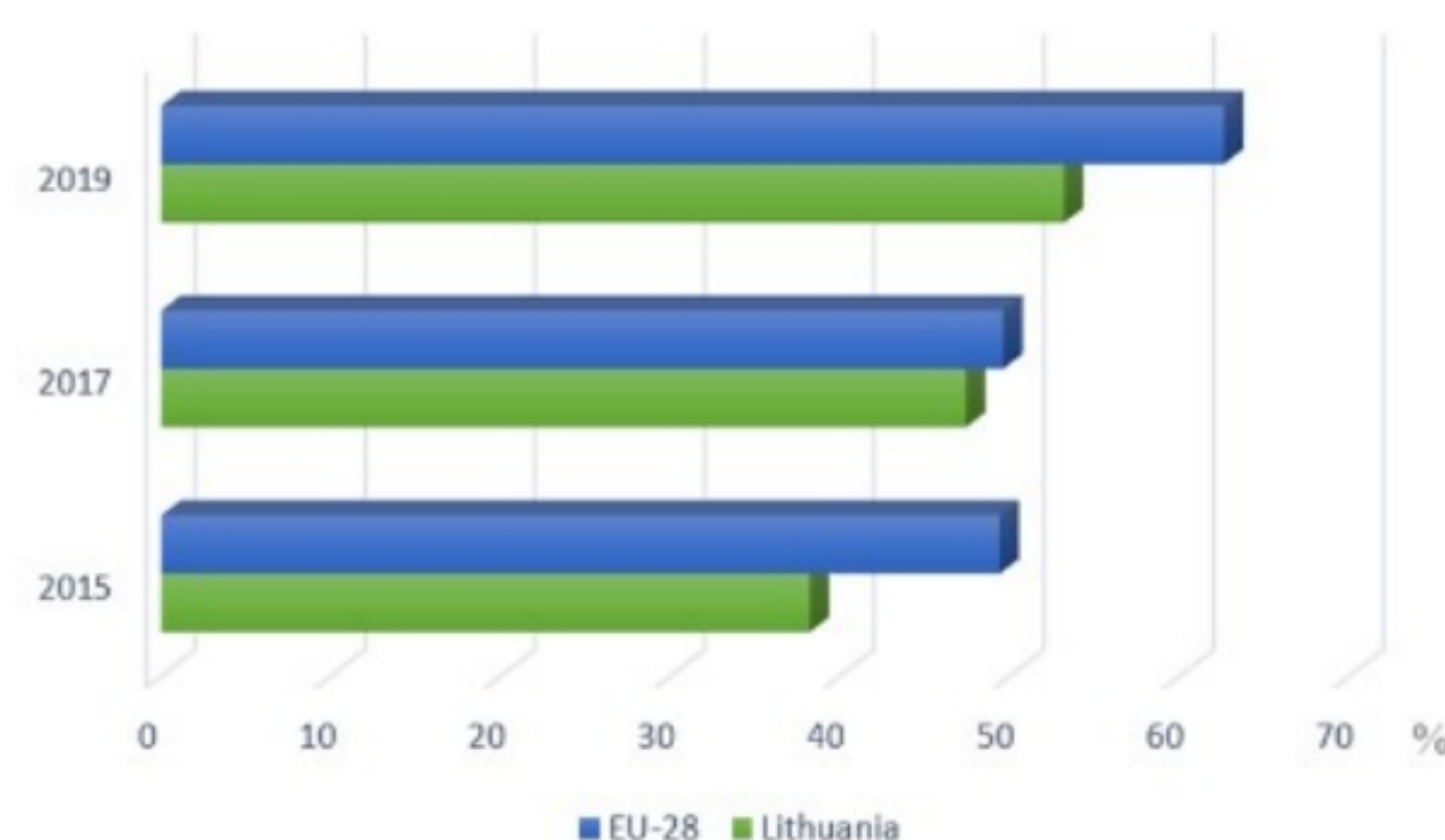


Fig 3. Personal actions performed to fight climate change over the past six months

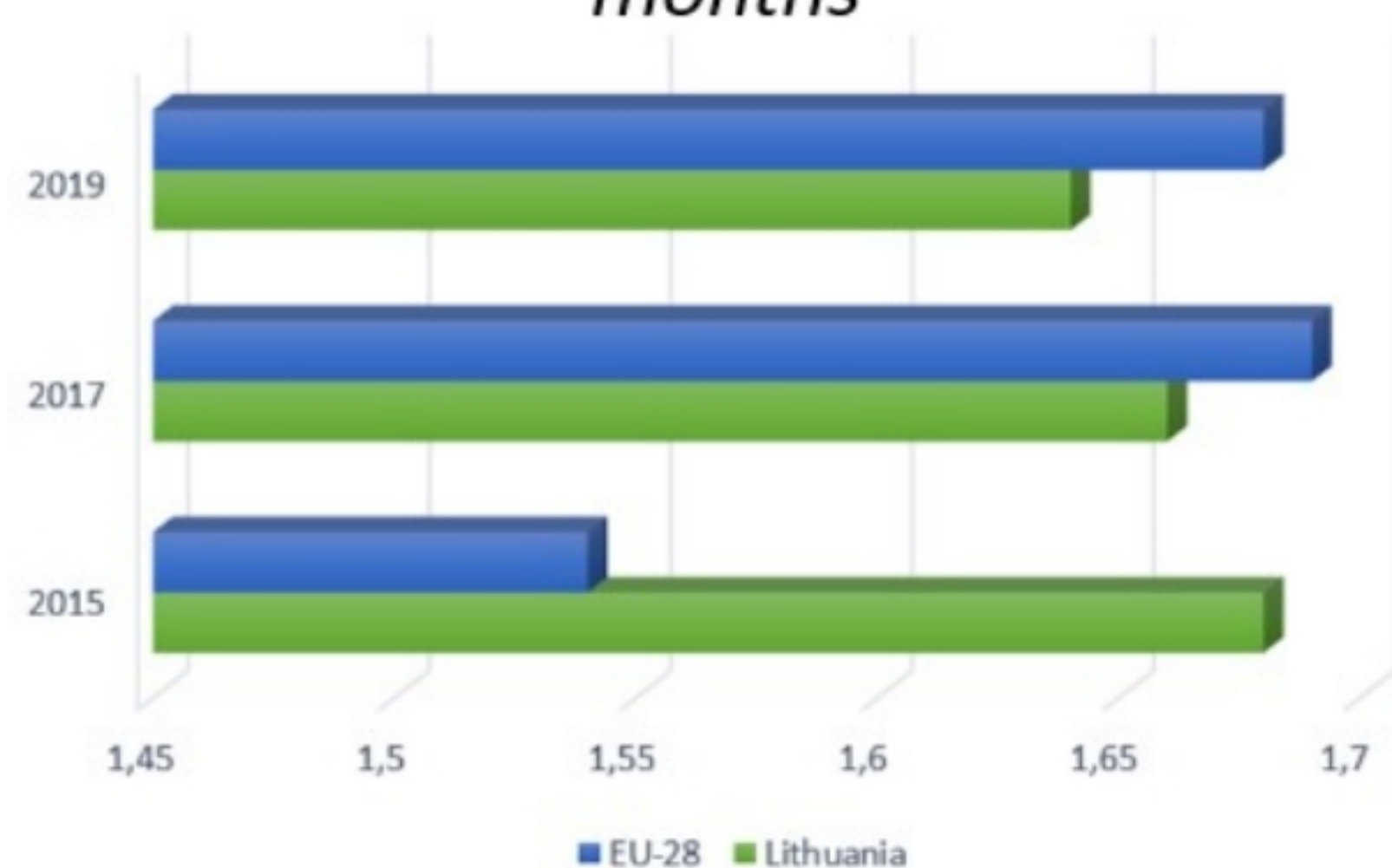


Fig 4. The average of the importance level (5-point scale) of government support in improving energy efficiency in the period of 2015-2019

Methodology

The analysis of concern related to climate change, personal responsibility, the importance of government support, personal actions performed to fight climate change and climate-friendly behaviour changes in the Lithuania and EU has been performed based on the three Eurobarometer surveys (83.4; 87.1; 91.3 performed in May-June 2015; March 2017 and April 2019 respectively). During the surveys, respondents were questioned face-to-face in respondents' homes and in the appropriate national language. The detailed interviews' confidence intervals and methods are provided in reports by the European Commission. The concern level related to climate change was assessed using a scale from one ("not at all a serious problem") to ten ("an extremely serious problem") and the importance level of government support was measured using a scale from one ("very important") to ten ("not at all important"). Other variables were measured using dichotomous values.

Results

Climate change concern and personal responsibility in the EU increased 1.09 and 1.65 times respectively between 2015 and 2019, while in Lithuania climate change concern decreased 1.01 times in 2019 compared to 2017, although the level of responsibility increased 1.3 times during the study period (Fig. 1 and Fig. 2). Personal actions performed to fight climate change over the past six months increased during the study period in both the EU-28 and Lithuania (1.27 and 1.39 times respectively)(Fig. 3). Although the importance of government support in improving energy efficiency in 2015 was higher in Lithuania than in the all EU, it decreased 1.02 times during the study period (Fig. 4). Despite the decline in importance of government support in 2017, 2019 in EU-28 it increased 1.09 times compared to 2015.

Analyzing the changes in climate-friendly behaviour, it was found that the biggest positive behavioral change in Lithuania and EU-28 was in buying more energy efficient household appliances, meanwhile the largest negative change in behaviour was indicated in buying low-energy homes (in Lithuania) and the choice of alternatives to transport (in the EU)(Fig. 5). Furthermore, Lithuanian residents tended to sort waste and insulated home better to reduce energy consumption 1.03 and 1.06 times respectively more than general EU-28 average. However, the choice of a more environmentally friendly energy supplier in the period of 2015-2019 was 1.24 times higher in the EU-28 than in Lithuania. The results show that climate-friendly behaviour depends not only on price, time, effort, but also on opportunities in general (for example, when choosing an electricity supplier).

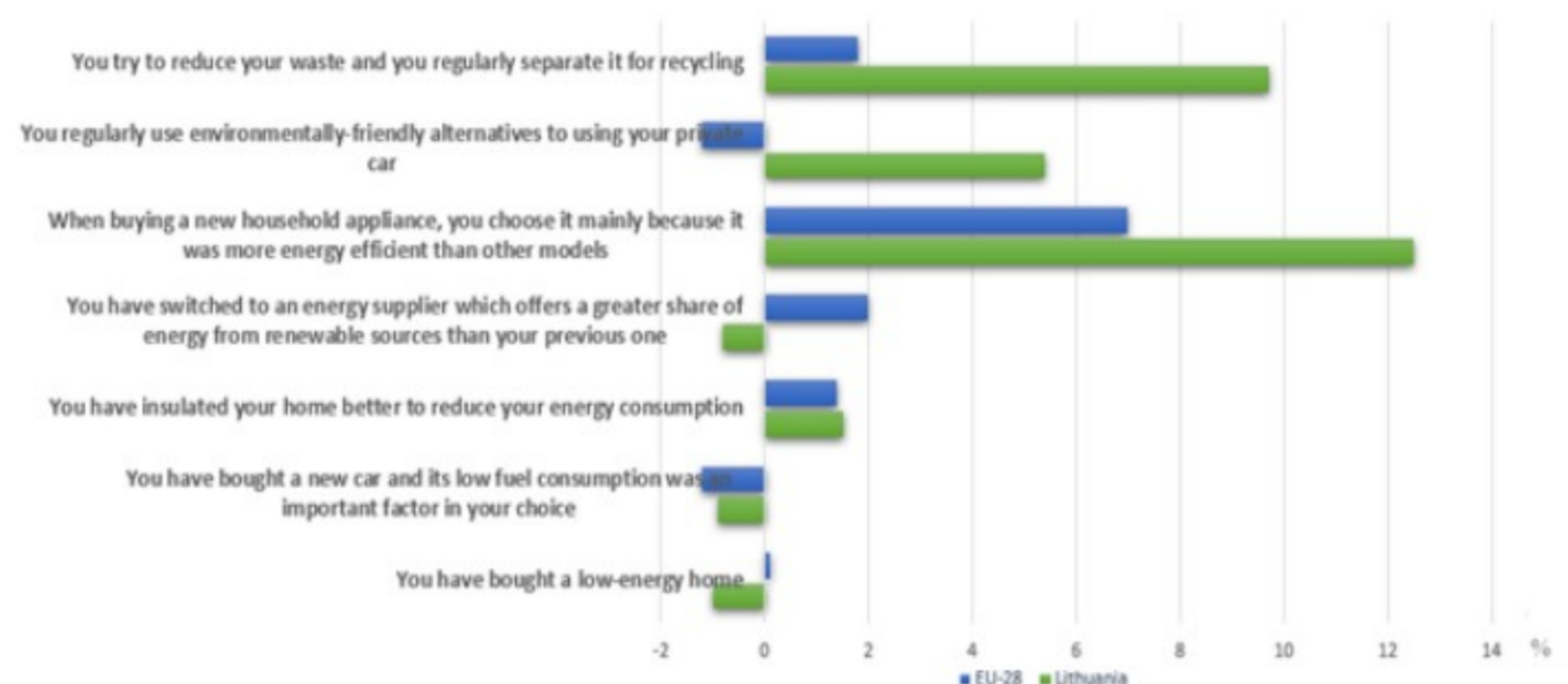


Fig 5. Changes in climate-friendly behaviours in the period of 2015-2019

Main conclusions

According to Eurobarometer surveys, it was found positive changes in climate change concern and responsibility in Lithuania and EU-28. However, the importance of government support has decreased in Lithuania. The biggest positive behavioral change in Lithuania and EU-28 was in buying energy efficient household appliances, meanwhile the largest negative change was indicated in buying low-energy homes (in Lithuania) and the choice of alternatives to transport in the EU. Therefore, the results indicated that climate-friendly behaviour is determined not only by climate change concern and personal responsibility but also by the opportunities (money, effort, time, possibility to act) inherent in the country's residents. This study also shows that policy makers should seek to increase the importance of government to behave in climate-friendly behaviour in Lithuania (as in the overall EU average).