

Methods: A cross-sectional survey was carried out from November 2023 to February 2024 among beekeepers in Lithuania. A representative sample of $N = 369$ (5% margin of error) has been enrolled in the study. A mixed-model approach was used for data collection. Research instrument consisted of a two-part questionnaire covering socio-demographic variables and questions on the use of bee products.

Results: 369 respondents participated in the study: 73% ($n = 270$) males and 27% ($n = 99$) of females. The mean age was 57.8 years ($SD = 14.4$). Beekeepers assessed their health as good and only 2% assessed it as bad, while the Lithuanian rate is 12%. 95% of the respondents used bee products for health purposes, 5% did not use at all. Large beekeepers (>100 beehives) were more likely not to choose bee products ($p < 0.001$). No correlation was found between chronic diseases and consumption of bee products, except for diabetes mellitus ($p = 0.001$). The most common reasons for choosing apitherapy products included respiratory (62%), digestive (31%) diseases, immunity boosting (77%), dermatological conditions (53%). Propolis was pointed out in the survey as being used by 74%. Elder beekeepers (>65 years) were found to be more likely to use propolis ($p < 0.001$). They were also more likely to use it for prevention ($p < 0.001$) and in case of toothache ($p = 0.001$).

Conclusions: The majority of beekeepers use bee products for health purposes. The most common reasons for consuming honey and other bee products are immunity boosting and colds. It was found that beekeepers over 65 years of age are more likely to use propolis for prevention and toothache treatment.

Key messages:

- Although the consumption of bee products is high among beekeepers, elder generation and owners of smaller apiaries are more likely to use bee products for health purposes.
- Chronic diseases are not associated with consumption of bee products, except for beekeepers with diabetes mellitus who do not consume it.

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The health profile of Lithuanian beekeepers and use of bee products for health purposes

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Background: There is little research about the health profile and attitude of beekeepers themselves who are the main suppliers of apitherapy products to the general public. The study aims to describe the health profile of Lithuanian bee keepers and identify their attitudes towards use of bee products for health purposes.