



PUBLIC OPINION AND NATIONAL DEFENCE

Ordered by: Estonian Ministry of Defence

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SUMMARY

- In March 2016, on the order of the Estonian Ministry of Defence, the Social and Market Research Company Turu-uuringute AS conducted a public opinion survey on national defence during which 1,203 residents of Estonia from the age of 15+ were interviewed. This was already the thirty-ninth survey in monitoring public opinion, which was started in 2000.
- The assessments given to changes that have taken place in Estonian life show a decrease in the proportion of respondents who perceive positive changes and an increase in the number of those who feel that the situation is worsening. In March, 26 per cent of the respondents felt that life in Estonia is improving and 29 per cent that it is worsening; 41 per cent think that the situation has remained unchanged.
- 56 per cent of all respondents feel proud and happy over living in Estonia very often or often enough, which is 6 per cent more than in last October. The proportion of the respondents who never feel proud or happy over living in Estonia has remained at 6 per cent throughout the last four surveys.
- Of the ten institutions the reliability of which the respondents were asked to assess, the Rescue Services rank the highest in trustworthiness (96% trusts them completely or rather trusts them). This is followed by the Police (86%), the Defence Forces (77%), the Defence League (71%). The confidence in the state's political institutions has become negative; the trustworthiness of the President has decreased as well. The confidence in NATO and the European Union, which are trusted by more than half of the respondents, places them between Estonian political institutions and law enforcement agencies.

Estonian-speaking and Russian-speaking respondents' trust in the state's political and national defence institutions differs considerably—at times, Russian-speaking respondents' indicators are almost half as low as those of Estonians. The greatest difference occurs in the confidence in NATO, which is trusted by 75 per cent of Estonians, but only by 21% of Russian-speaking respondents; the situation is similar with the confidence in the President (62% vs 24%).

- The number of people who believe that the world is going to become more unstable and the likelihood of military conflicts will grow remains high since last spring—this opinion is held by 72% of the respondents. Only 7 per cent believe that the world is going to become more secure in the coming decade and 15% think that the situation will remain unchanged.
- Respondents perceive the defence situation in Estonia to be somewhat more positive than that of the world in general, the assessment given to this situation has not changed since last October. 23 per cent of respondents believe that in ten years, the residents of Estonia will be living in more secure conditions than they do now, 31 per cent presume that the situation will remain unchanged and 27% predict an increase in insecurity.
- For a long time, Russia's activities to restore its authority were perceived as the main threat to world security, whereas the current survey reveals that the activities of the Islamic State and the armed conflict in Syria (67%), the migration of refugees to Europe (63%) and the activities of international terrorist networks (62%) are considered even more dangerous than Russia. Along with the armed conflict in Ukraine, which was considered a certain threat to world security by 34% of the respondents, Russia's activities to restore its authority (35%) rank as low as the fourth place.

While Estonian and Russian-speaking respondents assess many global threats similarly, there is a fundamental difference in evaluating the activities of Russia. Estonians rank the threat of Russia as third (48%), whereas Russian-speaking respondents place it as last (6%).

- Similarly to the preceding surveys, the most probable threats to Estonia, the realisation of which in the following years is considered probable or quite probable by more than half of the respondents, are thought to be the following two: 72% of residents think that there may be an organised attack against the Estonian state information systems (a so-called cyber-attack), 65% believe that some foreign country may interfere in Estonian politics and economy in order to influence these in their own interests. The respondents believe that the probability of these two threats has grown since autumn. An extensive marine pollution is deemed probable by 47% and improbable by 46%, while the occurrence nationally or religiously motivated conflicts between population groups is considered probable or improbable by 46% and 49% of the respondents respectively. There was a noticeable rise in the probability of the latter last autumn and the proportion of the respondents who consider that threat probable has remained on the same level in March.

In case of other threats, there are more of those who believe them improbable than those who see them probable. The number of respondents who perceived a military attack against Estonia as probable began to fall in last October and it continues to decrease: an extensive military attack against Estonia is deemed likely by 24% of the respondents, while a limited military attack on a strategic site is seen as probable by 23%.

- NATO membership continues to be considered the main security guarantee for Estonia (59% mention it as one of the three most important factors). Similarly to the preceding surveys, the development of Estonia's independent defence capability holds 2nd place (41%), followed by cooperation and good relations with Russia (29%), which is considered the primary security guarantee by 57% of Russian-language speakers and 16% of Estonian-speaking respondents.

For Estonian-speaking respondents, the most important security guarantee is clearly the membership in NATO (75%; 24% of Russian speakers), development of Estonia's independent defence capability is in 2nd place (48%; 26% of Russian speakers).

- The proportion of people who consider armed resistance necessary in case of a military attack has increased slightly compared to autumn—81%. Estonian-speaking respondents consider armed resistance more necessary than non-Estonians (resistance is deemed certainly necessary by 53% of Estonian-speaking respondents and 33% of Russian-speaking respondents), yet only 15 per cent of the latter do not consider resistance necessary.
- 58% of the population would be willing to participate in defence activities to the best of their abilities and skills: 65% of Estonians and 43% of the Russian-speaking respondents. More than 80 per cent of male citizens under 50 years of age are willing to participate in national defence.
- In a situation where Estonia is under attack, every fifth person would consider leaving Estonia. Women (24% certainly or probably) and younger people up to 39 years of age (about a third) are most likely to leave Estonia. 32 per cent of Russian-speaking respondents and 14 per cent of Estonians would probably leave.
- The population's awareness about behaving in an emergency situation is quite low: only 24% would know what they could do to defend Estonia if there is a threat of attack by a foreign enemy, whereas 71% do not consider themselves informed enough. People's awareness has not risen since spring 2014.

People would like to have more information on how to act in a conflict area as a civilian (42%), how the public would be informed in case of a threat (41%) and how evacuation would be organised (36%). Male respondents also show interest slightly greater than the average in questions related to mobilisation and their responsibilities regarding the participation in national defence.

- Assessments to Estonia's national defence capability have not changed considerably since the last survey: in the event of an attack by a foreign country, defending Estonia is considered certainly possible or probably possible by 53% cent of the respondents (63% of Estonians).

- When assessing the volume of Estonian defence expenditures, 25 per cent of the respondents find that defence spending must be increased and 20% that it should be decreased. The predominant view is that defence expenditures should remain at the currently achieved level (43%). Estonians' attitude towards defence expenditures is inversely proportional to that of the Russian-speaking respondents: 32 per cent of Estonians are in favour of increasing defence expenditures whereas 46 per cent of Russian-speaking respondents support cuts.
- 35 per cent of Estonians and 12 per cent of Russian-speaking respondents would be certainly or probably willing to make a financial contribution to support Estonian national defence.
- 67% of the population provided a positive assessment to the state's activities regarding the development of Estonian national defence. Estonians have a more positive attitude towards the development of national defence than non-Estonians (76% and 48% gave a positive assessment to the development of national defence, respectively).
- While in last autumn, the assessments given to the protection of the Estonian national border were clearly negative, positive assessments are now in the majority—51% of the respondents perceive it as good. Still, the number of critical and positive assessments is almost equal among Estonians (43% and 49% respectively). Only every fifth Russian-speaking respondent (22%) perceives that there are problems with the defence of the eastern border.
- People in Estonia have very favouring attitudes towards conscript service: 91% of respondents believe that young men need to undergo conscript service, with 63% finding it certainly necessary. The majority of the respondents think that young men with minor health disorders should undergo conscript service with an appropriate training load.
- The majority of the population disapprove of the evasion of conscript service—22% condemn such behaviour and 41% consider it negative. Younger age groups are more tolerant than average towards the evasion of conscript service—more than 50% of people under 30 years of age take an understanding stance.
- In 2013, women were given the opportunity to undergo conscript service voluntarily and this has been gaining increasingly more understanding in the society—since March 2015, more than half of the respondents believe it to be certainly necessary or rather necessary. Estonians and younger respondents have a more contemporary attitude towards the questions of gender equality than Russian-speaking and older respondents. 68% of Estonians think it is necessary for women to have the opportunity of undergoing conscript service, whereas only 35% of Russian-speaking respondents agree. This time, the proportion of respondents in favour of voluntary conscript service for women has passed the 50 per cent marker in older age groups as well.

Even though the majority of those who consider conscript service for women necessary have previously thought that this should be done based on a special programme, the proportion of people who feel that women should undergo conscript service under the same conditions as men is gradually increasing (48 per cent).

- 79% of the population prefer maintaining the current concept of national defence based on professional defence forces together with reserve forces consisting of those who have undergone conscript service. 14% support waiving compulsory military service and switching to a fully professional army only.
- 78 per cent of the respondents (88 per cent of Estonians) believe that such a wider concept of national defence, which states that national defence is not only the task of armed forces and the Defence League but a common activity for most state institutions and the entire society, is certainly suitable or probably suitable for Estonia.
- According to the population of Estonia, the main task of the Defence League is to develop national defence capability, which is considered the most important task by 37% of respondents; 52% when the three most important tasks are summarised. Participating in rescue activities in the event of accidents and disasters is mentioned as first by 12% and among the three main tasks by 54%; the willingness to defend the country and raising defence readiness among the population is considered

the most important task by 14% of the respondents, whereas 40% see it as one of the three most important tasks.

While Estonians perceive the Defence League's national defence tasks as the most important, the Russian-speaking population mainly sees the Defence League as a civil defence organisation.

- Five per cent of the respondents participate in the activities of the Defence League, 24% of the respondents are connected to the Defence League through a family member or friend. Russian-speaking respondents are not well-connected with the Defence League—only 5 per cent of the respondents have a friend or a family member with a connection to the Defence League.

If respondents were to be presented with a proposal to join the Defence League or its associated organisations, 4% would certainly join and 19% would probably join. The readiness to join is the highest among younger respondents.

- Attitudes towards Estonia's membership in NATO have not changed compared to autumn 2015: 71% of the population are in favour of it. 89% of Estonians and only 33 per cent of Russian-speaking respondents support the membership in NATO.
- 42 per cent of the respondents (53% of Estonians and 19% of Russian-speaking respondents) believe that NATO will provide direct military aid if Estonia should face a military threat. 15% think that NATO would limit their help to political and diplomatic support. 22% believe that the membership in NATO would help to avoid a military conflict and 8% think that NATO would not help Estonia in any way.
- The feeling of security towards NATO's aid is supported by the steps that have already been taken to ensure Estonian security and which are supported by the general population: 66 per cent of the respondents (77% of Estonians) find that NATO has already done enough to ensure Estonia's security and 69% of the population (88% of Estonians but only 29 per cent of the Russian-speaking respondents) favour the presence of NATO's allied forces in Estonia.
- 65% of the population believe that units of the Estonian Defence Forces should—in accordance with their capabilities—participate in international operations in different conflict areas of the world. Estonians favour the participation of the Estonian Defence Forces in military operations more than Russian-speaking respondents (75% and 42% respectively). Participation in international military operations is considered necessary primarily because it provides our soldiers with necessary real combat experience (mentioned by 65% as one of three reasons) and guarantees NATO's assistance to Estonia in the event of potential threats (55%).
- More than two thirds of the respondents support Estonia's involvement in operations conducted under the aegis of NATO, the European Union and UN. Russian-speaking respondents favour involvement in the UN missions the most, this is followed by participation in the European Union operations and, lastly, in missions as a part of NATO units.
- 68 per cent of the respondents support the creation of a common border service in the European Union, while 16% oppose it.
- Attitudes towards professional servicemen remain positive—66% of the respondents have a very positive or generally positive attitude towards active servicemen, this includes as many as three fourths of Estonian-speaking respondents.
- Interest in the military field and patriotism are considered to be the main motives for becoming a professional serviceman. Factors related to self-improvement are also important: it is seen as an opportunity to receive training and maintain a good physical form. Salary holds the fourth place in the ranking of importance. The lack of other jobs and long holidays are seen as less important.
- In the mind of the society, the word "veteran" is strongly associated with the image of World War II (55%), as many as 84 per cent of Russian-speaking respondents associate veterans with World War II. The proportion of the respondents who associate the word "veteran" with the operations of the Estonian Defence Forces is 17 per cent.

- The majority (68%) of the respondents consider celebrating Veterans' Day certainly necessary or rather necessary. The Russian-speaking respondents' awareness of the celebration is still limited—36 per cent do not know anything about this day or could not say anything about it. 53 per cent of the Russian-speaking respondents deemed the celebration of Veteran's Day necessary, while 75 per cent of Estonians favour the celebration of this day.
- 81 per cent of the respondents find that all schools that offer secondary education should certainly or probably provide the possibility to have national defence instruction. National defence instruction is highly supported by both Estonian and Russian-speaking respondents, although the proportion of the Russian-speaking respondents is 10 per cent lower.
- 16 per cent of the respondents had read the supplement *Riigikaitse* to the daily *Postimees*, 3 per cent of whom read it most of the time and 13 per cent had read it once or twice.

BACKGROUND OF THE SURVEY

This report has been prepared on the basis of the results of the Omnibus 1000 survey carried out by Turu-uuringute AS from 1 March till 21 March 2016 and similar earlier surveys. The report will be submitted to the **Estonian Ministry of Defence**.

The purpose of the survey was to investigate:

- General attitudes towards life in Estonia and pride in Estonia
- Confidence in institutions (incl. defence structures) among the population
- Residents' assessments in connection with potential security risks in Estonia and the world
- Attitudes in connection with Estonia's participation in international military operations
- Defence willingness among the population and estimated behaviour in the event of potential threats endangering Estonia
- Assessments on Estonia's defence capability
- Attitude towards NATO and its role in ensuring Estonian security
- Attitudes both towards compulsory conscript service for men and voluntary conscript service for women
- Attitudes towards the Defence League and understanding its tasks;
- Attitudes towards professional servicemen and opinions on the motives for becoming an active serviceman
- Attitudes towards initial national defence instruction in schools.

The first part of the report describes the methodology, the second part presents the results with figures and comments; the Annex provides the used questionnaire and distribution tables by important background characteristics.

1 Sample

The survey was carried out in the Omnibus 1000 environment. Omnibus 1000 is a regularly held survey (following a specific schedule), whose sample comprises of the citizens of the Republic of Estonia with the age above 15, which totals 1,107,791 people (Statistics Estonia, 01.01.2014).

The usual sample of the Omnibus 1000 is **1,000 respondents**. The sample is formed according to the **proportional model of the general sample**. This model is based on areas and settlement size (number of residents), which are used for selecting 100 source addresses (sample points). Within each area, the source address is selected **randomly** from the address list of the Population Register.

In addition to the main sample, this survey included an **additional sample of 200 respondents** to ensure the better **representation of the Russian-speaking population** in the sample. Although the linguistic composition of the population has been weighed according to the actual situation (*i.e.*, by increasing the effect of Estonian-speaking respondents and decreasing the effect of Russian-speaking respondents), this additional sample allows to analyse the attitudes and opinions of single Russian-speaking groups in detail.

The so-called **principle of the young man** was applied to the selection of respondents at the source address. This means that at the address of the sample, the interview will be performed with the household's youngest male member in the age above 15 who is present at home; if no men are at home, the interview will be performed with the youngest woman. Such a method grants additional possibility for participating in the sample to the categories of respondents who are at home less often (younger people, males) and adjusts the sample to correspond to the population's actual gender and age composition.

Use of the proportional model of the general sample ensures the representativeness of the sample, in other words, it allows making generalisations about the whole same-age population of Estonia. The maximum sampling error does not exceed $\pm 3.10\%$ in polling 1,000 persons, the error may be bigger for smaller subgroups.

The following Table 1 provides sample error limitations at 95% confidence level in assessing the proportion.

Table 1 Sampling error limitations

Sample size	Percentage of answers											
	50%	45%	40%	35%	30%	25%	20%	15%	10%	5%	3%	2%
10	30.99%	30.83%	30.36%	29.56%	28.40%	26.84%	24.79%	22.13%	18.59%	13.51%	10.57%	8.68%
20	21.91%	21.80%	21.47%	20.90%	20.08%	18.98%	17.53%	15.65%	13.15%	9.55%	7.48%	6.14%
30	17.89%	17.80%	17.53%	17.07%	16.40%	15.49%	14.31%	12.78%	10.74%	7.80%	6.10%	5.01%
40	15.49%	15.42%	15.18%	14.78%	14.20%	13.42%	12.40%	11.07%	9.30%	6.75%	5.29%	4.34%
50	13.86%	13.79%	13.58%	13.22%	12.70%	12.00%	11.09%	9.90%	8.32%	6.04%	4.73%	3.88%
60	12.65%	12.59%	12.40%	12.07%	11.60%	10.96%	10.12%	9.03%	7.59%	5.51%	4.32%	3.54%
70	11.71%	11.65%	11.48%	11.17%	10.73%	10.14%	9.37%	8.36%	7.03%	5.11%	4.00%	3.28%
80	10.96%	10.90%	10.73%	10.45%	10.04%	9.49%	8.77%	7.82%	6.57%	4.78%	3.74%	3.07%
90	10.33%	10.28%	10.12%	9.85%	9.47%	8.95%	8.26%	7.38%	6.20%	4.50%	3.52%	2.89%
100	9.80%	9.75%	9.60%	9.35%	8.98%	8.49%	7.84%	7.00%	5.88%	4.27%	3.34%	2.74%
110	9.34%	9.30%	9.15%	8.91%	8.56%	8.09%	7.47%	6.67%	5.61%	4.07%	3.19%	2.62%
120	8.95%	8.90%	8.76%	8.53%	8.20%	7.75%	7.16%	6.39%	5.37%	3.90%	3.05%	2.50%
130	8.59%	8.55%	8.42%	8.20%	7.88%	7.44%	6.88%	6.14%	5.16%	3.75%	2.93%	2.41%
150	8.00%	7.96%	7.84%	7.63%	7.33%	6.93%	6.40%	5.71%	4.80%	3.49%	2.73%	2.24%
200	6.93%	6.89%	6.79%	6.61%	6.35%	6.00%	5.54%	4.95%	4.16%	3.02%	2.36%	1.94%
300	5.66%	5.63%	5.54%	5.40%	5.18%	4.90%	4.53%	4.04%	3.39%	2.47%	1.93%	1.58%
500	4.38%	4.36%	4.29%	4.18%	4.02%	3.79%	3.51%	3.13%	2.63%	1.91%	1.49%	1.23%
750	3.58%	3.56%	3.50%	3.41%	3.28%	3.10%	2.86%	2.55%	2.15%	1.56%	1.22%	1.00%
1 000	3.10%	3.08%	3.03%	2.95%	2.84%	2.68%	2.48%	2.21%	1.86%	1.35%	1.06%	0.87%
1 500	2.53%	2.52%	2.48%	2.41%	2.32%	2.19%	2.02%	1.81%	1.52%	1.10%	0.86%	0.71%

2 Survey

The survey method was personal interview, conducted on tablet computers in either Estonian or Russian, depending on the respondent's preference. A total of **60** pollers who had been given special training by Turu-uuringute AS participated in carrying out the survey. A total of **1,203** interviews were performed. The social and demographic profile of the respondents has been provided in Figure 1.

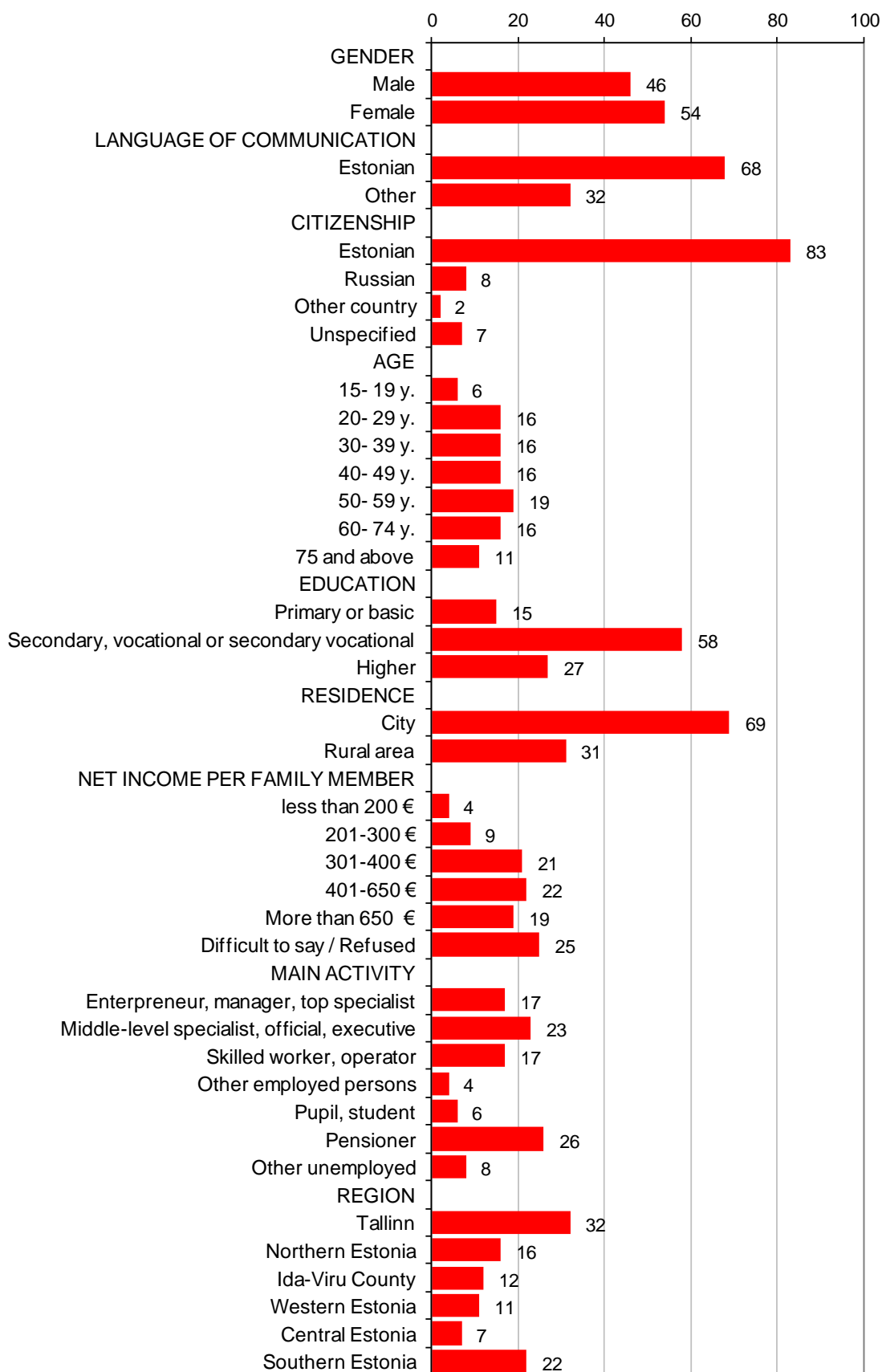
Summary of the results of the polling (number of addresses visited, reasons for not carrying out the interview) have been presented in Table 2.

Table 2 Results of the polling

Reasons for not carrying out the interview	Total
There are no target group persons in the family	668
Nobody is at home	3240
Target group person is not at home	97
Contact was denied	703
Target group person refused to give the interview	820
Other reasons for not performing the interview	131
Not a dwelling or address inaccessible	249
Summary	
Total addresses	7111
Repeated visits	1048
Correctly filled in questionnaires	1203

The statistical analysis software package SPSS for Windows 22.0 was used to process data.

Figure 1. Respondents' social and demographic profile, %, n=1,203



3 Performers

The persons responsible for various stages of the survey are:

Report, project management:	Juhan Kivirähk
Sample/coordination of interviewing work:	Kristel Merusk, Kaja Södor, Roman Vjazemski.
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RESULTS OF THE SURVEY

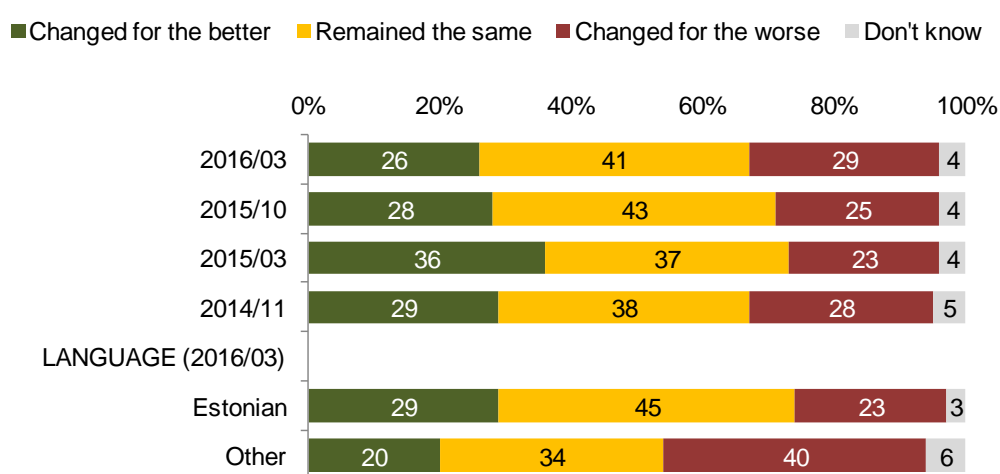
1 General attitudes towards life in Estonia and pride in Estonia

People's attitudes towards different social questions, including national defence, are considerably influenced by the positive or negative assessments given to life in Estonia in general.

At the time of the parliamentary elections in the spring of 2015, people's assessments given to life in Estonia were improving compared to 2014, yet already in autumn, this was followed by a decline and the situation has remained the same in spring 2016. The proportion of the respondents who perceive negative changes has grown by four per cent, the number of respondents who perceive positive changes or feel that the situation has remained unchanged has decreased (Figure 2).

Russian-speaking respondents' assessments have become significantly more negative—40 per cent of them believe that the situation is getting worse (in October 2015, the respective indicator was at 33 per cent). Estonians' attitudes have not changed significantly compared to autumn.

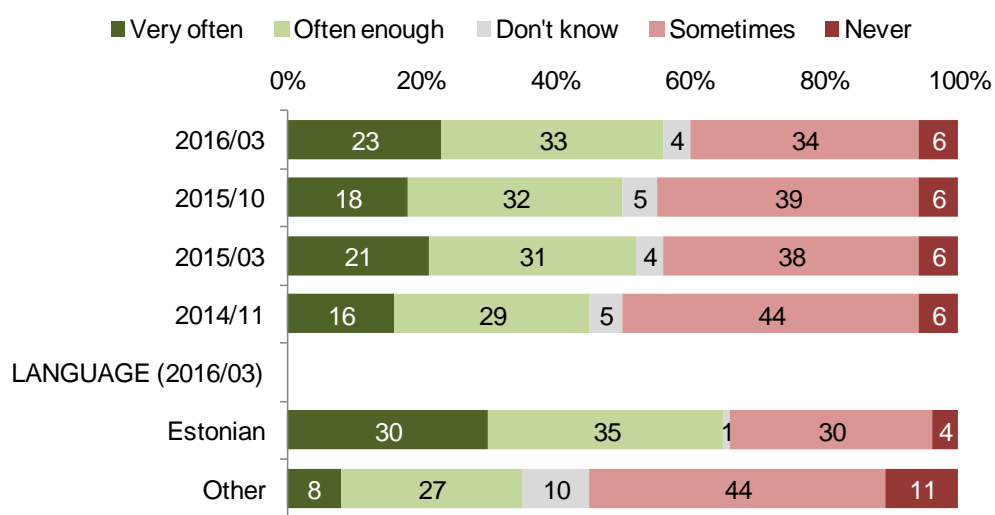
Figure 2. Attitudes towards the changes in life in Estonia (%; N = all respondents)



People under 30 years of age and respondents with higher education are more positive about Estonia's advancement, more than a third of them perceive positive changes. Assessments are naturally influenced by the respondent's economic situation—positive changes are felt to a more than average extent by people whose income starts from 650 euros per household member per month. More than 40 per cent of the respondents whose monthly income per household member exceeds 650 euros per month perceive positive changes.

People's happiness and pride over living in Estonia also depends on how people perceive the changes in Estonian life.

In this question, the attitudes have improved compared to the previous survey: 56 per cent of respondents feel proud and happy about living in Estonia very often or often enough (50% in autumn 2015). The proportion of respondents who never feel proud or happy about living in Estonia has remained at 6% throughout the last four surveys (Figure 3).

Figure 3. Pride and happiness over living in the Republic of Estonia (%; N = all respondents)

Estonians' attitudes show signs of improvement. 65% of Estonian-speaking respondents feel proud and happy very often or often enough (57% in last autumn), while the indicator for people who speak other languages is 35% (36%). 44% of Russian-speaking respondents experience positive emotions in connection to living in Estonia only sometimes and 11% do not feel positive about it at all.

Respondents with undetermined citizenship and citizens of Russia are least proud and happy to live in Estonia—the proportions of those who feel proud and happy very often or often enough are 29% and 31% respectively.

The following table shows how pride and happiness over living in Estonia is connected to the assessments given to Estonia's advancement. Positive attitudes towards the general development of Estonia come with a greater feeling of pride and vice versa—there are significantly fewer people who feel proud and happy over living in Estonia among those who perceive Estonian development as negative. As previously revealed, the assessment given to Estonia's development is closely connected to the income of the specific respondent.

Table 3 – Link between assessments given to life in Estonia and feelings of pride and happiness over Estonia

Do you feel proud and happy ...	Life in Estonia has		
	changed for the better	remained unchanged	changed for the worse
... over living in Estonia			
very often or often enough	75%	58%	33%
never	3%	5%	9%

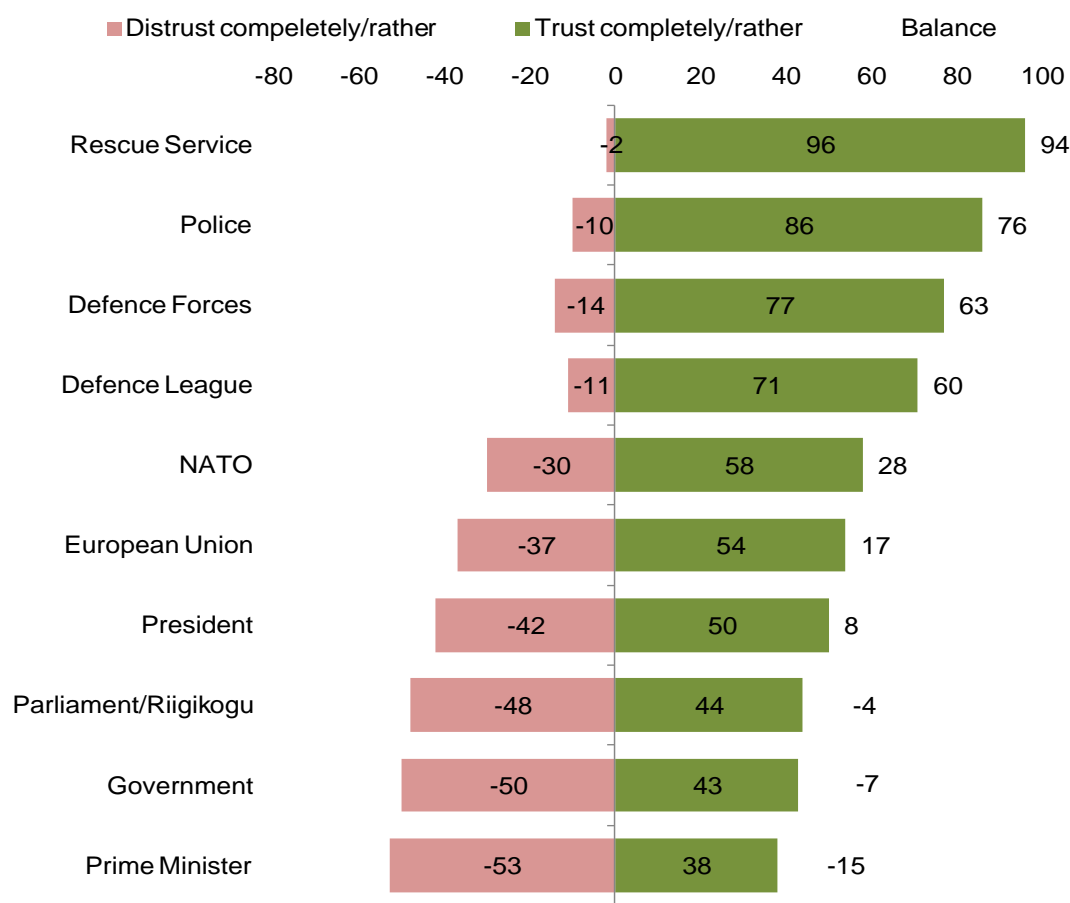
2 Confidence in institutions

The survey addresses the population's confidence in several state and international institutions. The selection of institutions is based on their important role in shaping, implementing or supporting the Estonian security policy.

2.1 General background

Respondents evaluated the trustworthiness of the institutions using a scale with four categories: completely trust, rather trust, rather do not trust, and do not trust at all. Of the ten institutions included in the survey, **people have the biggest confidence in the Rescue Services—as many as 96% of the Estonian population trusts them, they are followed by the Police (86%), Defence Forces (77%) and Defence League (71%)** (Figure 5).

Figure 5. Confidence in institutions. (%; N = all respondents)

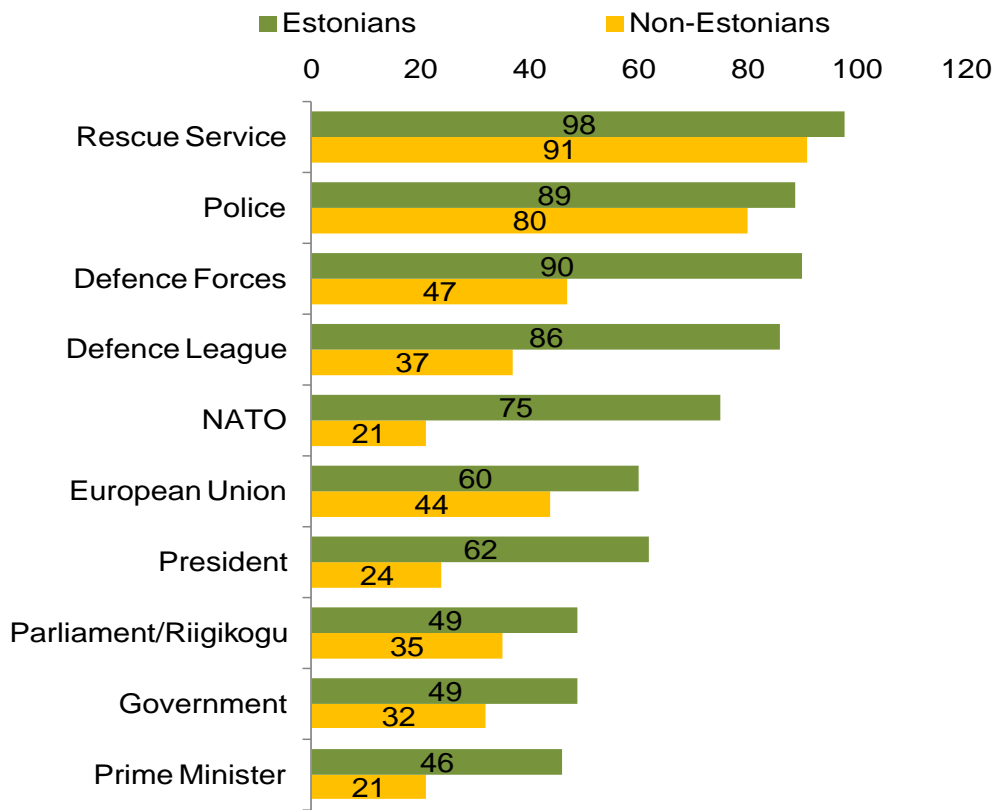


The confidence in political institutions has decreased significantly—the trust in all political powers in Toompea has fallen on the negative side; the confidence in the President has decreased as well.

NATO and the European Union, which are trusted by more than half of the respondents, remain between Estonian political institutions and law enforcement agencies in the ranking of trustworthiness.

The level of confidence in all institutions is higher among the Estonian-speaking population compared to non-Estonians (Figure 5). Differences are great in case of all institutions, except the Rescue Services and Police. The greatest differences are revealed in the attitudes towards NATO (trusted completely or rather completely by 75% of the Estonian-speaking population and 21% of speakers of other languages), the Defence League (86% vs 37%), President (62% vs. 24%), Prime Minister (46% vs 21%) and Defence Forces (90% vs 47%).

Figure 5. Confidence in institutions in the eyes of the Estonian-speaking and foreign-speaking population (% of those who trust the institutions completely and rather trust them; N = all respondents)



Compared to October, the confidence in the President has decreased the most among Estonian-speaking respondents (from 74 per cent to 62 per cent). The trust in the Government, Parliament and Prime Minister has fallen 7–8 per cent.

Russian-speaking respondents show most mistrust in NATO, the Prime Minister and President—the confidence in them has decreased 3–4 per cent compared to October 2015.

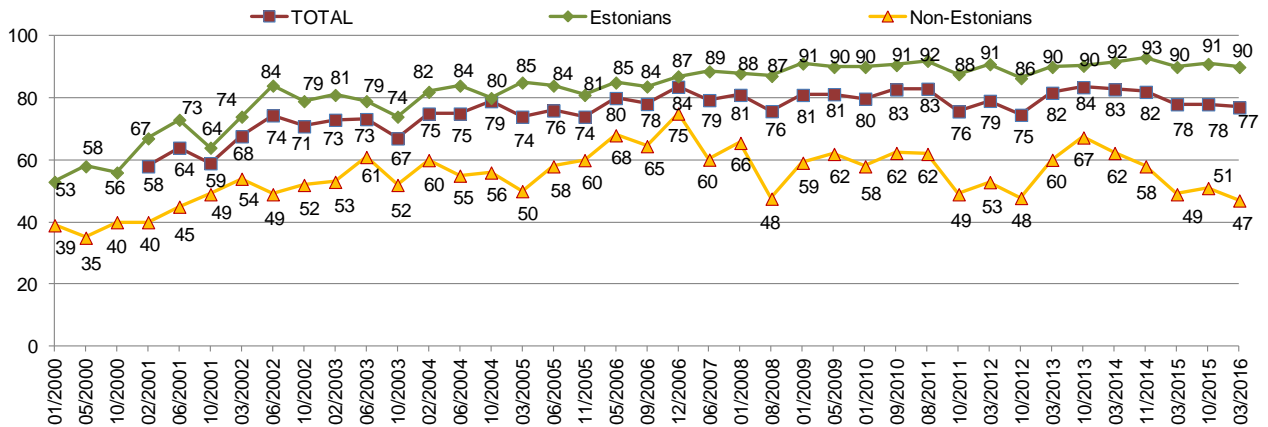
2.1 Defence structures

The Defence Forces, which holds 3rd place in the trustworthiness ranking after the Rescue Services, 2nd place in the trustworthiness ranking of Estonians, **was trusted by 77% of the population of Estonia as at March 2016**—the same level as it was in the two surveys conducted last year (Figure 6).

While the trustworthiness of the Defence Forces has remained at a constantly high level for years (slightly under or over 90 per cent) among the native speakers of Estonian, the Russian-speaking respondents' trust in the Defence Forces continues to decline since last spring. Ever since Estonia joined NATO, the confidence in the Defence Forces has never been so low among Russian-speaking respondents.

This is probably affected by the information from the Russian mass media, which undoubtedly influences the attitudes towards Estonian Defence Forces with its active criticism aimed at Western countries and NATO.

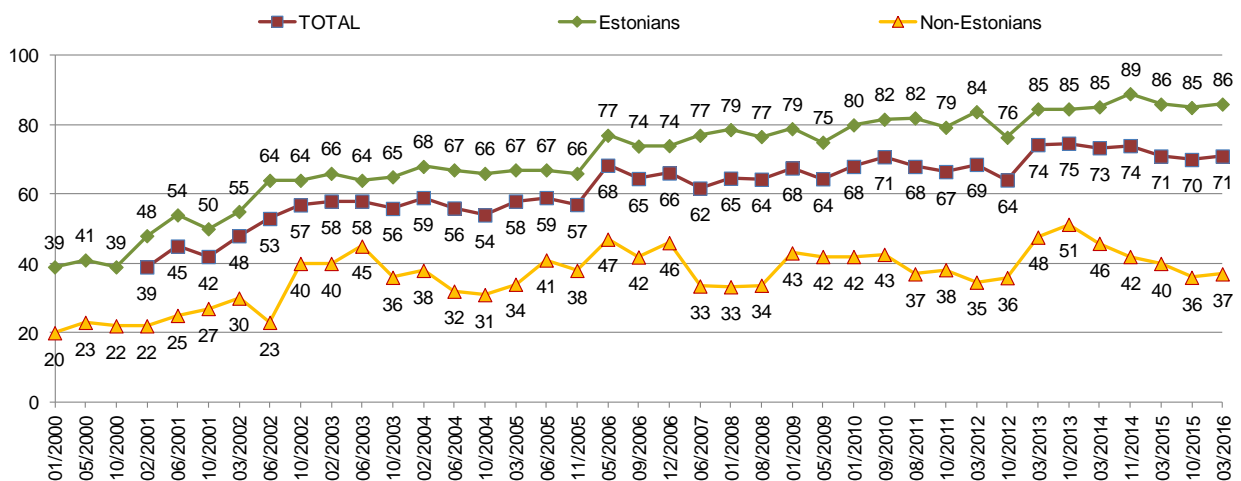
Figure 6. Confidence in the Defence Forces in 2000–2016; comparison of the assessments by the Estonian-speaking and foreign-speaking population (% of those who trust it completely or rather trust it; N = all respondents)



The Defence League is placed among the most trustworthy institutions right after the Defence Forces—as at March 2016, 71% of the Estonian population trusted the Defence League (Figure 7).

With the Defence League too, the non-Estonians’ trust pattern is similar to that of the Defence Forces—even though this spring, the Russian-speaking respondents’ confidence in the Defence League remains on the same level as it was in last autumn, it has been in clear decline since spring 2014. According to the current survey, the Defence League is trusted by 86% of Estonians and 37 per cent of the Russian-speaking respondents.

Figure 7. Confidence in the Defence League in 2000–2016; a comparison of assessments by the Estonian-speaking and foreign-speaking population (% of those who trust it completely or rather trust it; N = all respondents)



3 Security and threats

The third chapter provides an overview of security issues: what kind of situation is expected to occur in the world and Estonia in the coming decade, which threats to Estonia are considered probable by the population in the coming years, and what would help to ensure the security of Estonia.

3.1 Security in the world

The question about world security was presented in the following wording: **What do you think, will the world become more secure and the risk of military conflicts reduce, or, conversely, will the instability increase in the world and the probability of military conflicts grow in the coming decade?**

The number of people who believe that instability and the probability of military conflicts will grow in the world in the coming decade has remained at over 70 per cent since last spring (Figure 8). Only 7% believe that the world is becoming more secure in the coming decade while 15% think that the situation will remain unchanged. The long term trend has been presented on Figure 9.

Figure 8. Situation in the world in the coming decade, 2013–2016 comparison (%; N = all respondents)

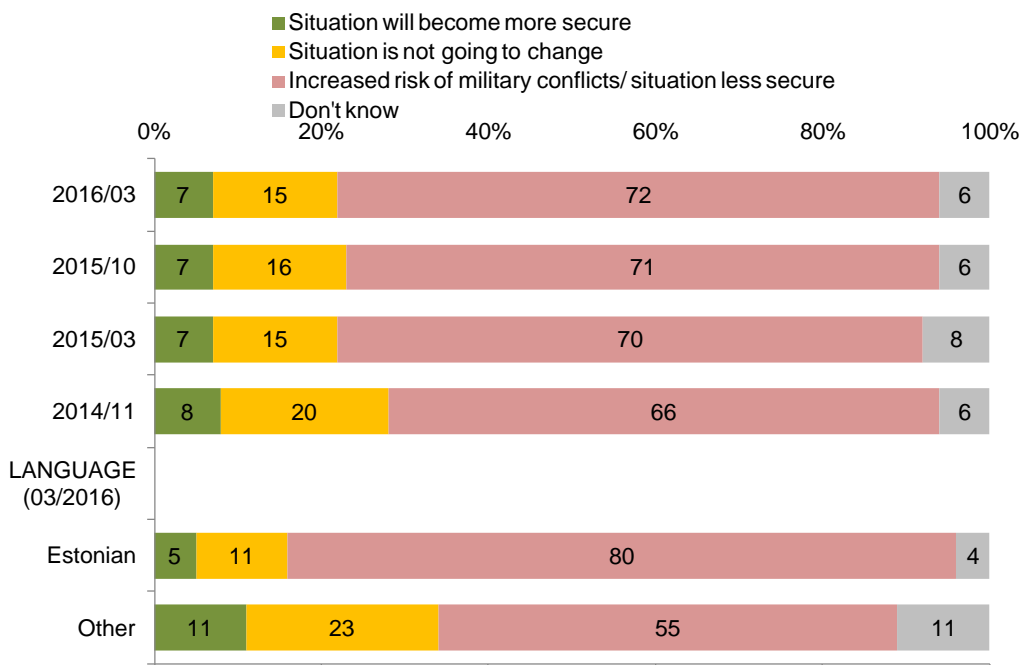
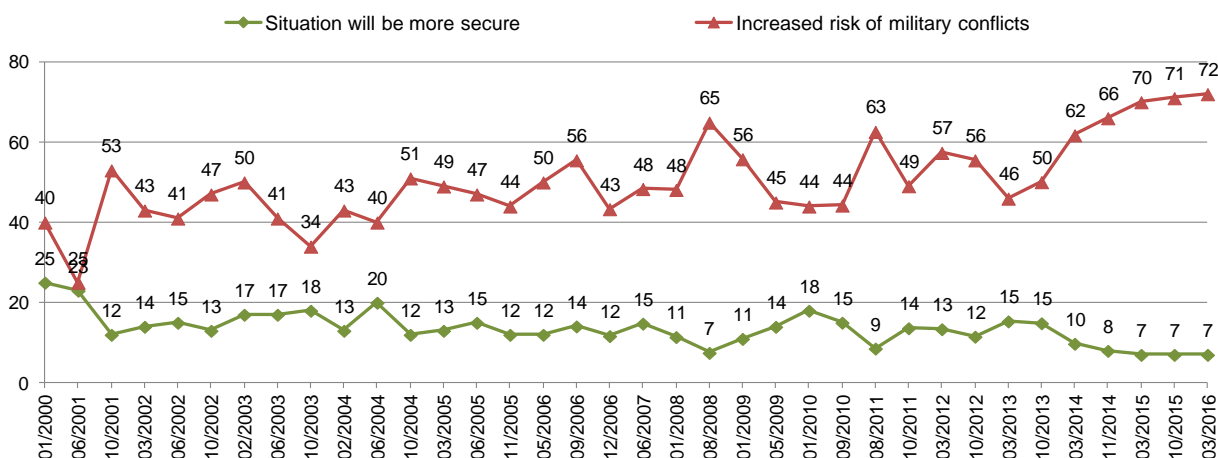


Figure 9. Situation in the world in the coming decade; 2000–2016 comparison (%; N = all respondents)



Estonians and non-Estonians assess the state of world security differently.

Estonians are more sensitive about the world's security risks—as many as 80% believe that the situation is worsening. 55% of Russian-speaking respondents share that view, yet compared to Estonians, there are more people who think the situation will remain unchanged (23% in comparison to 11% of Estonians). Only 5 per cent of Estonians and 11 per cent of the Russian-speaking respondents believe that the world could become more secure in the coming years.

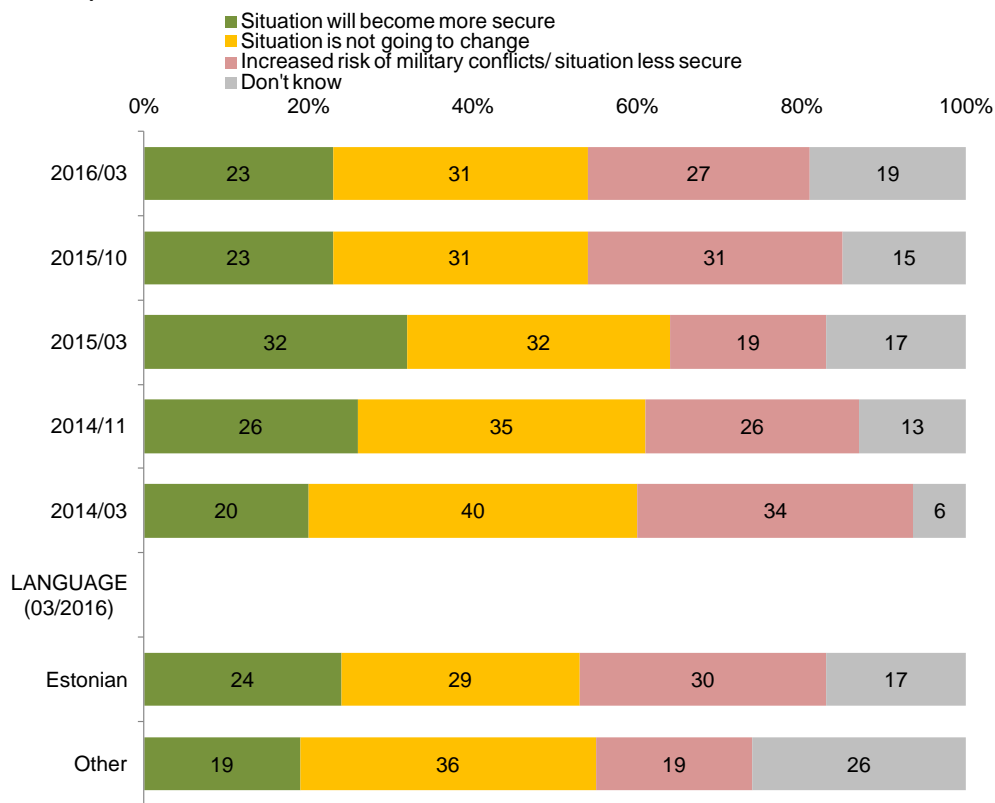
3.2 Security in Estonia

The question about the security in Estonia was presented in the following wording:

What do you think, what will the situation in Estonia be? Will the population be living in more secure or insecure conditions in ten years from now?

The security situation in Estonia is perceived to be more positive compared to the situation in the world in general. Similarly to the assessments given to security in the world, the public opinion has remained largely unchanged on this matter as well. 23 per cent believe that in ten years, Estonian citizens will be living in more secure conditions than now; 27 per cent, or four per cent less than in last autumn, predict an increase in insecurity. The proportion of the respondents who could not say anything has grown equally.

Figure 10. Situation in Estonia in the coming decade, 2012–2016 comparison (%; N = all respondents)



Compared to Russian-speaking respondents, Estonians also believe Estonia's future to be bleaker: 30 per cent of Estonians (4 per cent less than in October 2015) predict a growth in insecurity, the respective figure for Russian-speaking respondents is 24%. 24% of Estonians and 19% of Russian-speaking respondents believe the future to be more secure. Compared to Estonians, more Russian-speaking respondents think the situation is most likely to remain unchanged (36 per cent vs 29 per cent of Estonians).

3.3 Threats to world security

The respondents were asked to assess the effect various factors have on peace and security in the world.

The most important threats pointed out by the respondents are the activities of the Islamic State and the military conflict in Syria (67%), the immigration of war refugees to Europe (63%) and the activities of terrorist networks (62%).

Russia's attempts to restore its authority over the former Soviet territories are seen slightly less dangerous than the armed conflict in Ukraine, even though the latter is also orchestrated by Russia.

The answer "to some extent" highlights almost all other threats listed in the question. The respondents feel the least threatened by the spread of epidemics and China's growing influence in the world ([Figure 11](#)).

While Estonians and Russian-speaking respondents assess many global threats similarly, there is a fundamental difference in the assessment of **steps taken by Russia to restore its authority over the former Soviet territories** and **the armed conflict in Ukraine**. For Estonians, these occupy the fourth and fifth places on the threat scale (48% and 39% of Estonians see these as a certain threat, respectively), yet Russian-speaking respondents place it last (Russia's activities are seen as a certain threat by 6% and the conflict in Ukraine by 24% of the Russian-speaking respondents). 65% of the Russian-speaking respondents do not see Russia as a threat to world security ([Figure 12](#)).

Nevertheless, the threat of Russia has decreased in the eyes of Estonians, who place it after the Islamic State, the arrival of refugees in Europe and the activities of terrorist networks. In last spring, 46% of Estonians still considered Russia's activities to be the number one threat among factors threatening world security.

Compared to Estonians, Russian-speaking respondents see the military capability of the US and the spread of epidemics more dangerous. Estonians tend to consider other threats slightly more important.

Figure 11. Dangers to peace and security in the world in 2016
(%; N = all respondents)

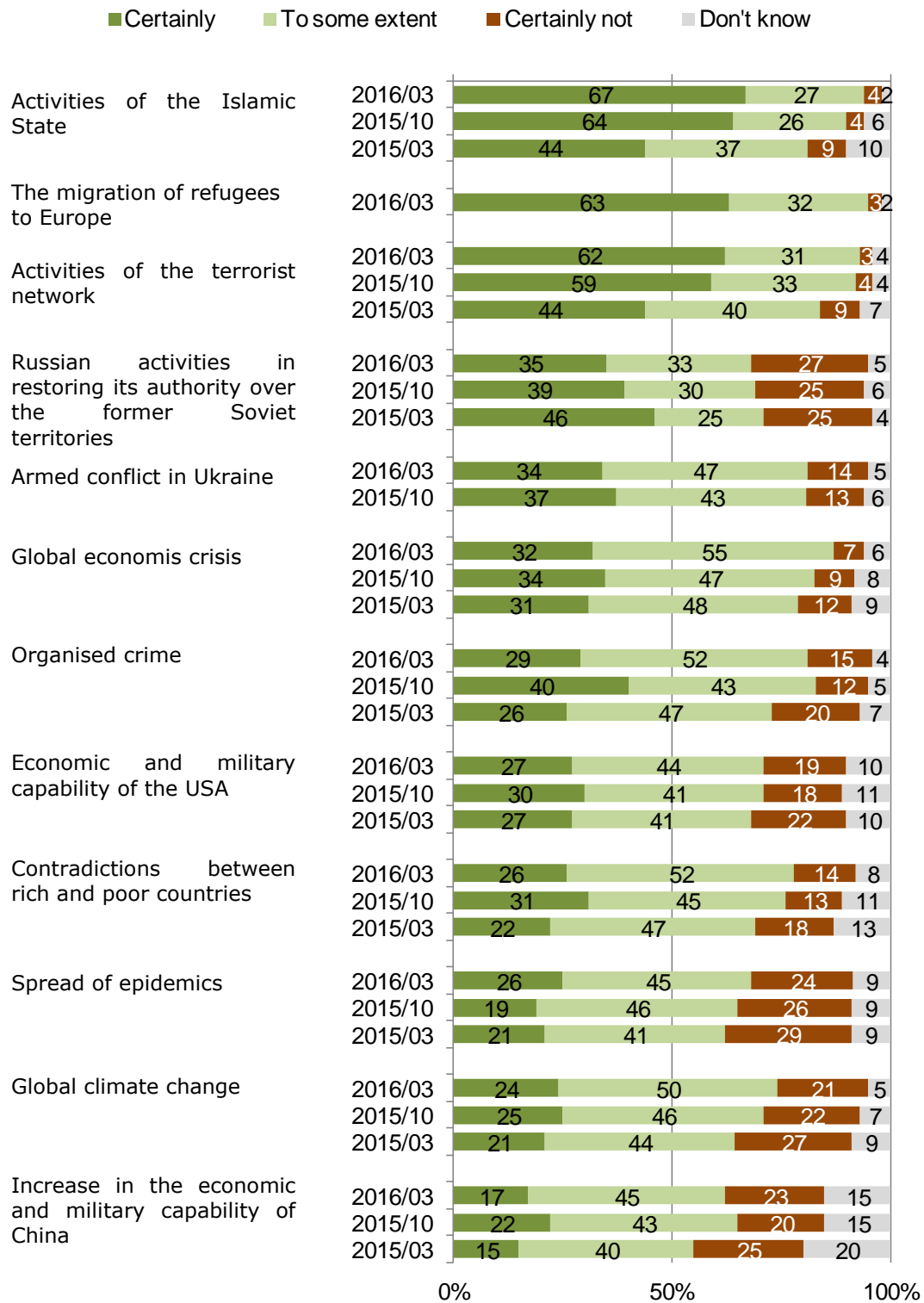
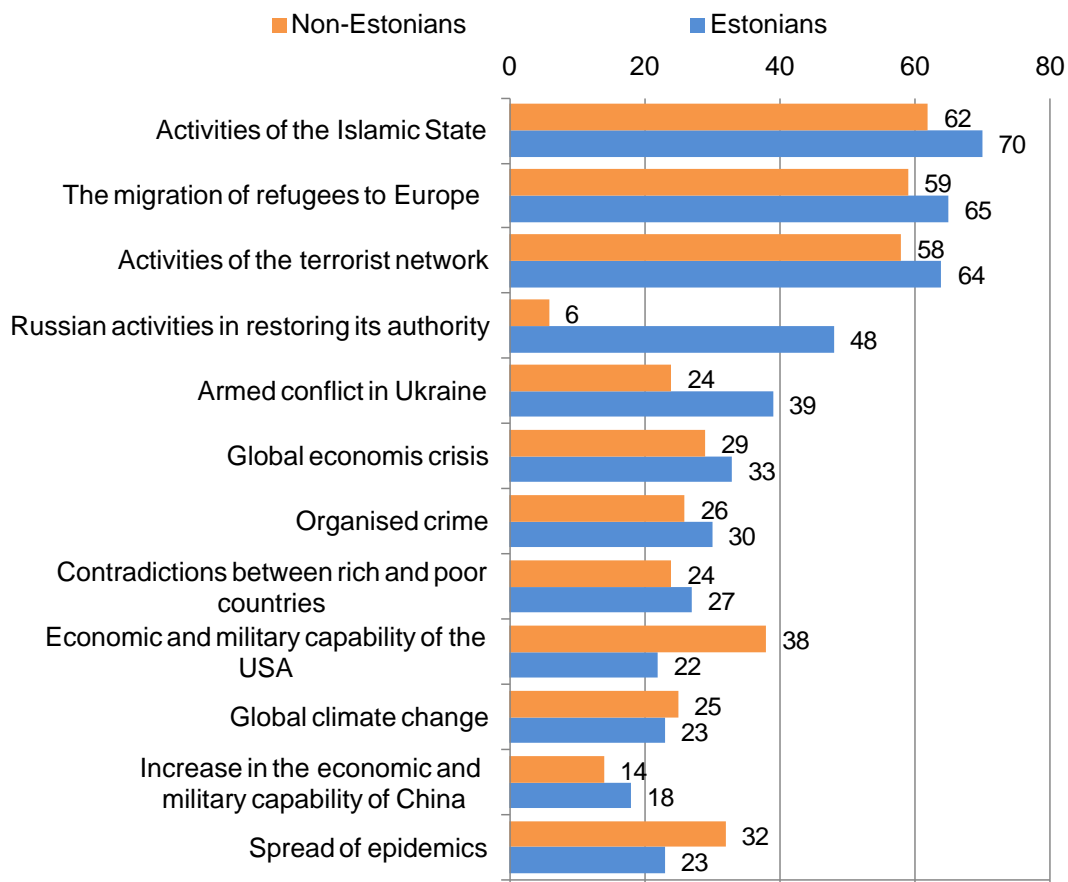


Figure 12. Dangers to peace and security in the world in 2016, answers “this certainly”
 (%; comparison of Estonian-speaking and foreign-speaking respondents)



3.4 Threats to Estonia

The respondents were presented with 12 different potential threats and asked to assess the probability of their occurrence in the forthcoming years ([Figure 13](#)).

There are two main threats, the occurrence of which more than a half of the respondents considered very or rather probable in Estonia in the forthcoming years: 72% of people think there might be an organised attack (**a so-called cyber-attack**) against the Estonian state information systems and 65% believe that **a foreign state may interfere in Estonia's policy or economy in their own interests**. The respondents deemed the occurrence of these threats more probable compared to the survey conducted in autumn.

The following two threats are considered more or less equally probable and improbable: 47% consider an extensive marine pollution probable, while 46% of the respondents think it improbable and the respective indicators for the probability of clashes on ethnic or religious grounds between population groups are 46% and 49% respectively. While the proportion of respondents who consider an extensive marine pollution probable has been declining from year to year, the number of those who think clashes on ethnic or religious grounds are likely to occur is growing. This figure grew significantly last autumn and the proportion of the respondents who consider the threat probable has not changed since then.

When it comes to other threats, there are more respondents who consider them improbable than those who deem them probable. An attack on Estonian citizens in a foreign country is considered very or rather probable by 39% (52% deem it improbable), large-scale street riots by 33% (61%), economic collapse of the Republic of Estonia by 28% (63%) and a nuclear disaster in a nuclear power plant close to Estonia by 27% (62%). Still, the proportion of respondents who consider these threats probable has increased compared to the autumn survey.

While in autumn 2013, 13 per cent of Estonians and 10 per cent of Russian-speaking respondents considered a limited or large-scale military attack against Estonia probable, then by spring 2015, the respective proportions had risen to 30 and 36 per cent respectively. In last October, the proportion of people who consider a military attack probable started to decrease and the trend continues: a large-scale military attack against Estonia is considered probable by 24% (26% in autumn) and a limited military attack on some strategic site by 23% (26%).

Of the threats listed, an explosion of an oil train passing through Estonia or an explosion of an oil terminal was considered most improbable—only 17 per cent. The assessments given to this threat are probably influenced by the knowledge of a decrease in railway transits.

Even the assessment of Estonia's internal dangers reveals important differences in view of the respondents' main language of communication ([Figure 14](#)). **Estonians consider most of the dangers more probable than the Russian-speaking respondents**. The only exceptions are the economic collapse of the Republic of Estonia and an extensive marine pollution, which Russian-speaking respondents find more probable than Estonians.

The Estonian respondents find cyber-attacks (respectively 84% and 47%), a foreign state's interference to influence Estonia's policy or economy in their own interests (68% vs. 56%), a large-scale military attack (29% and 15%) or a limited military attack against a strategic site (27% and 15%) and attacks on the citizens of Estonia in a foreign country (43% and 33%) considerably more probable than Russian-speakers.

Figure 13. Probability of different threats endangering Estonia in the forthcoming years, 2014–2016 comparison (%; N = all respondents)

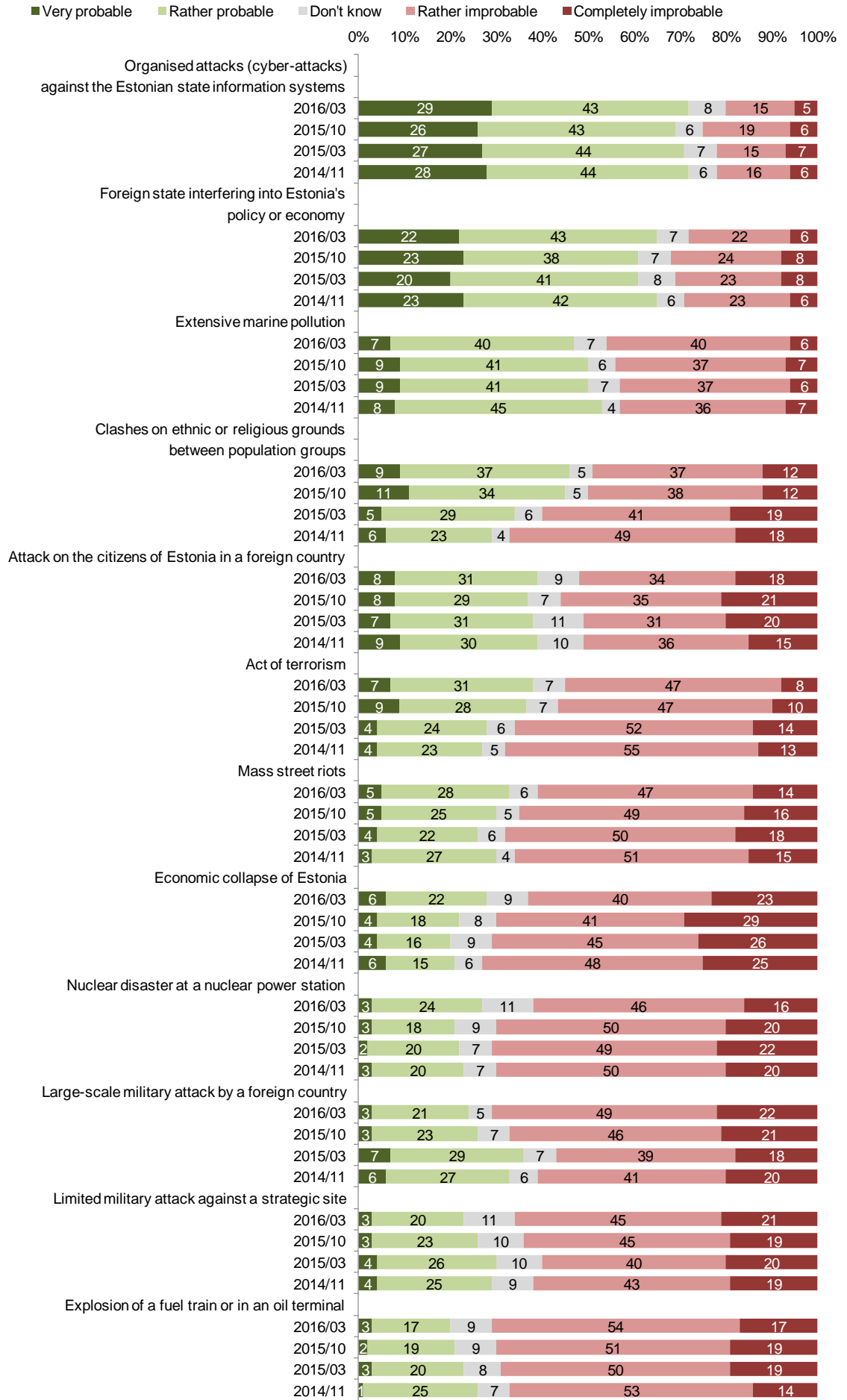
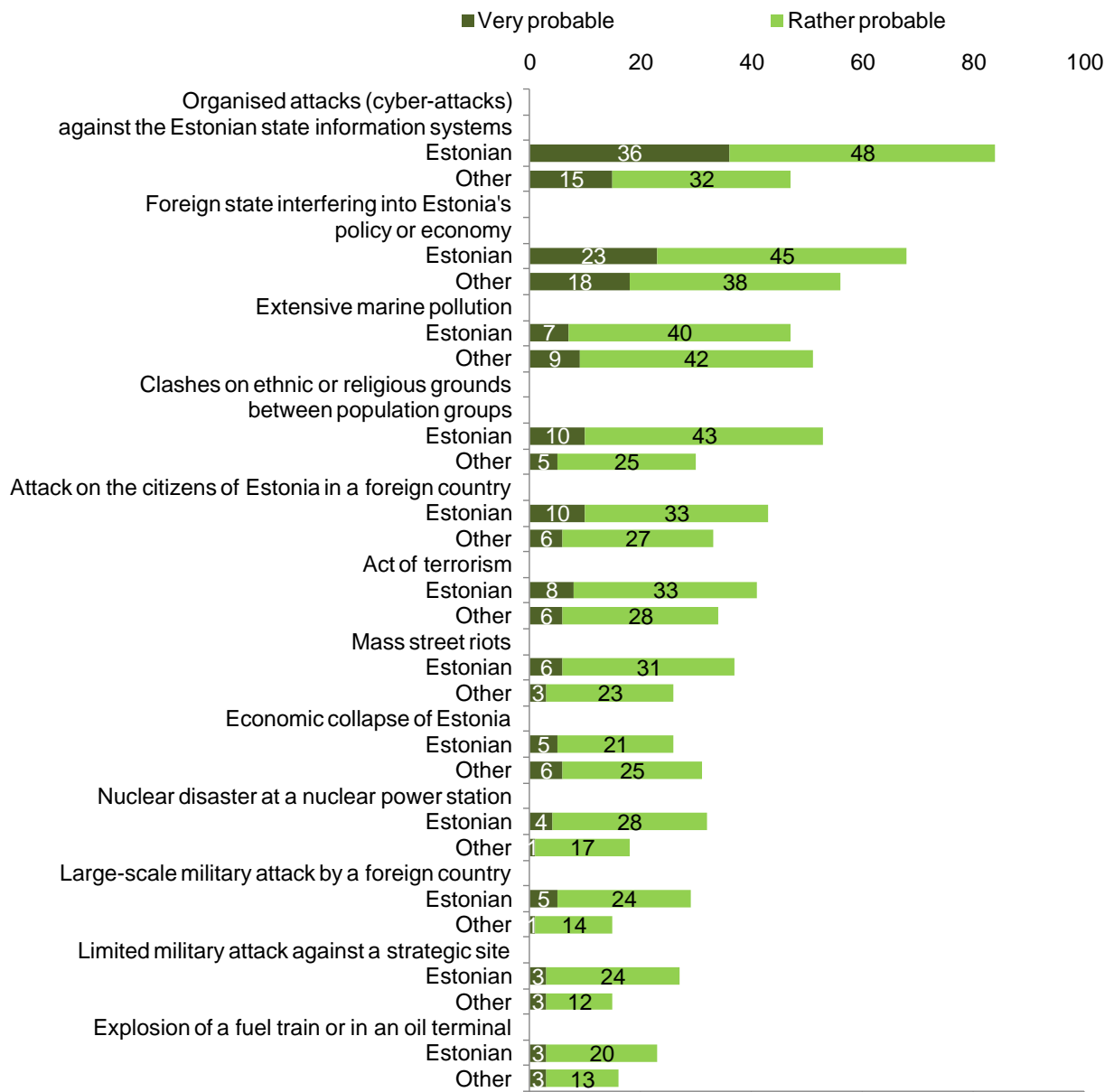


Figure 14. Probability of different threats endangering Estonia in the forthcoming years; comparison of the assessments among the Estonian-speaking and Russian-speaking population (%) ; N = all respondents)



3.5 Security guarantees

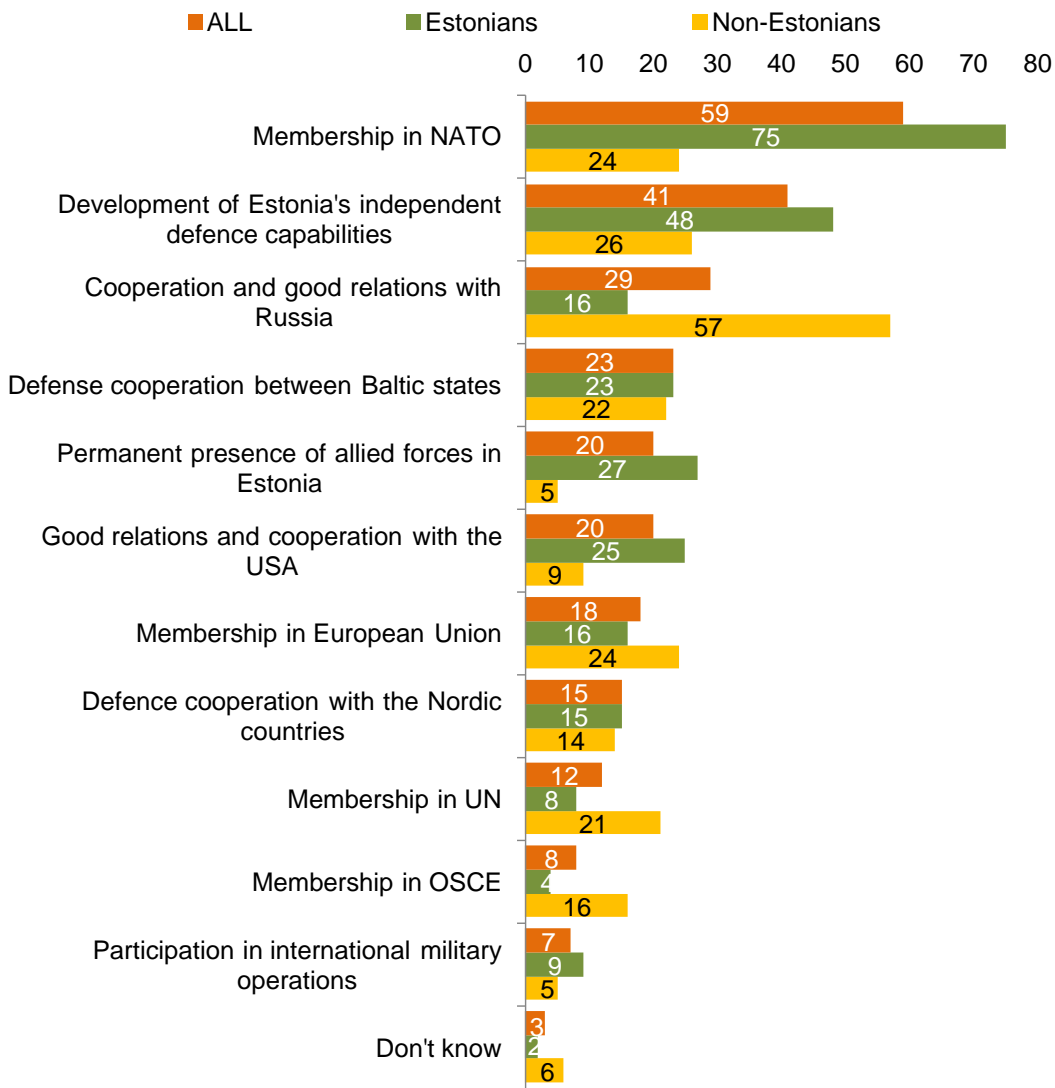
Estonia's membership in NATO was among the important factors that would ensure maximum security to Estonia according to the respondents, similarly to previous surveys, (listed as first)—this is mentioned as one of the important factors by 59% of the respondents and the result is mainly achieved with the help of Estonian respondents: while 75 per cent of Estonians consider NATO the main security guarantee, the respective indicator among the Russian-speaking respondents is 24 per cent ([Figure 15](#)).

It is followed by the development of **Estonia's own independent defence capability**, which is mentioned as one of the main security guarantees by 41% of Estonian residents. Even here there is a fundamental difference between the assessments given by Estonians and Russian-speaking respondents: the development of independent defence capability is considered among the three most important security guarantees by 48% and 26% of the respondents respectively (there is a significant decrease in the assessments of the Russian-speaking respondents—the indicator was 34% in autumn).

Mostly due to the impact of respondents speaking other languages, these two factors are followed by cooperation and good-neighbourly relations with Russia, which are pointed out by 57 per cent of Russian-speaking respondents and only 16 per cent of Estonians. The support for the defence cooperation with the Baltic States (23%) is more or less equal among the two language groups. However, the Russian-speaking respondents value the membership in the European Union, the UN and OSCE considerably more than Estonians.

The support for the permanent presence of allied forces in Estonia and the alliance with the US has reached 20 per cent (both were at 16% in autumn). These guarantees are mostly valued by Estonians.

Figure 15. Security guarantees for Estonia (up to 3 of the most important factors); comparison of the assessments among the Estonian-speaking and foreign-speaking population (%; N = all respondents)



4 Defence willingness among the population of Estonia

Defence willingness among the population of Estonia is measured with three questions. The so-called passive defence willingness is expressed through the opinion on whether Estonia should be defended in case a foreign enemy attacks ("If Estonia is attacked by any country, should we, in any case, provide armed resistance, regardless of the attacker?"), active defence willingness is expressed through the person's willingness to participate in national defence with his/her own skills and competence ("If Estonia is attacked, are you ready to participate in defence activities using your own competence and skills?"). The proportion of those expressing the will to leave Estonia in case of an attack is also mapped. Defence willingness is also related to the topics of how much the people are informed about the ways in which one can protect Estonia in the event of a possible attack.

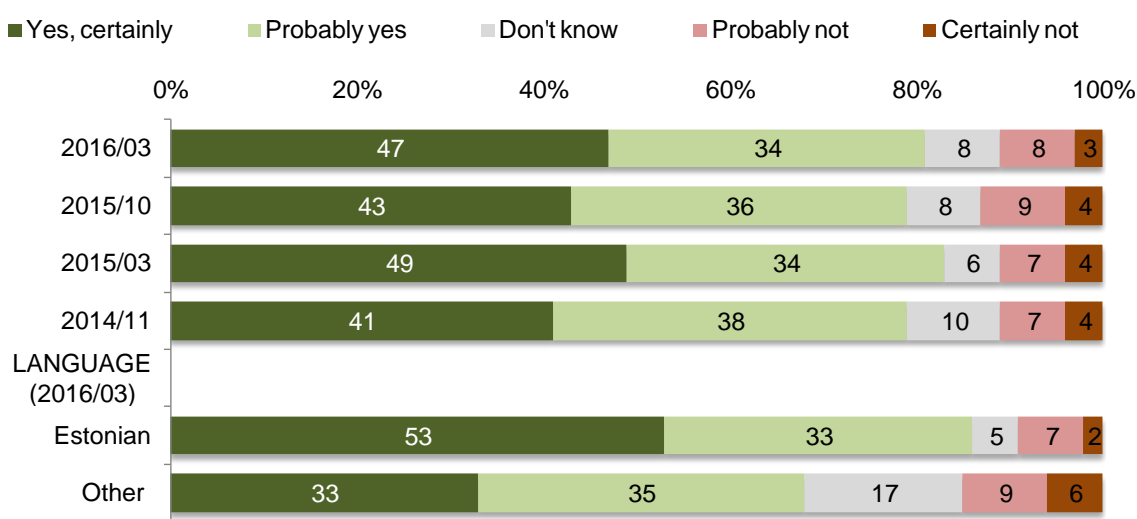
4.1 Attitudes towards the necessity of resistance

In the event of a foreign attack against Estonia, armed resistance is regarded certainly necessary by 47% and probably necessary by 34% of the population (Figure 16). Thus, **a total of 81% of the population is in favour of military resistance, while it is regarded as unnecessary by 11% of the population**. The proportion of the respondents who consider resistance necessary has increased by two per cent compared to October.

Estonian-speaking respondents tend to consider armed resistance slightly more necessary than non-Estonians (certainly necessary according to 53% of the Estonian-speaking and 33% of the Russian-speaking population, respectively), while only 15% of the latter believe that resistance is not necessary (the number of people who answered "cannot say" is the same).

The number of respondents expressing passive defence willingness has remained at slightly over or under eighty per cent throughout the last surveys.

Figure 16. Necessity for the provision of armed resistance, if Estonia is attacked by any country (%) ; N = all respondents)



The long term trend of considering armed resistance necessary has been presented on Figure 17 (for the entire population) and Figure 18 as a comparison of Estonians and Russian-speaking respondents.

Figure 17. Necessity of armed resistance if Estonia is attacked by any country; 2000–2016 comparison (%; N = all respondents)

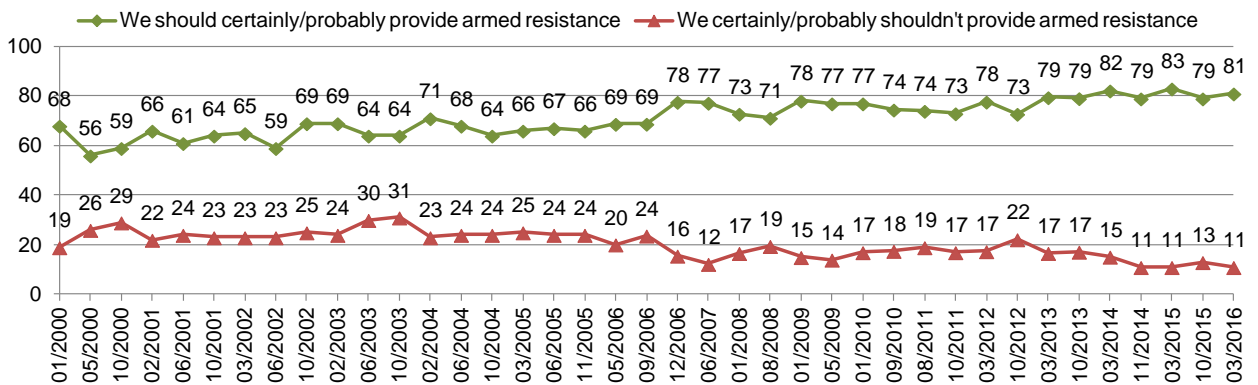
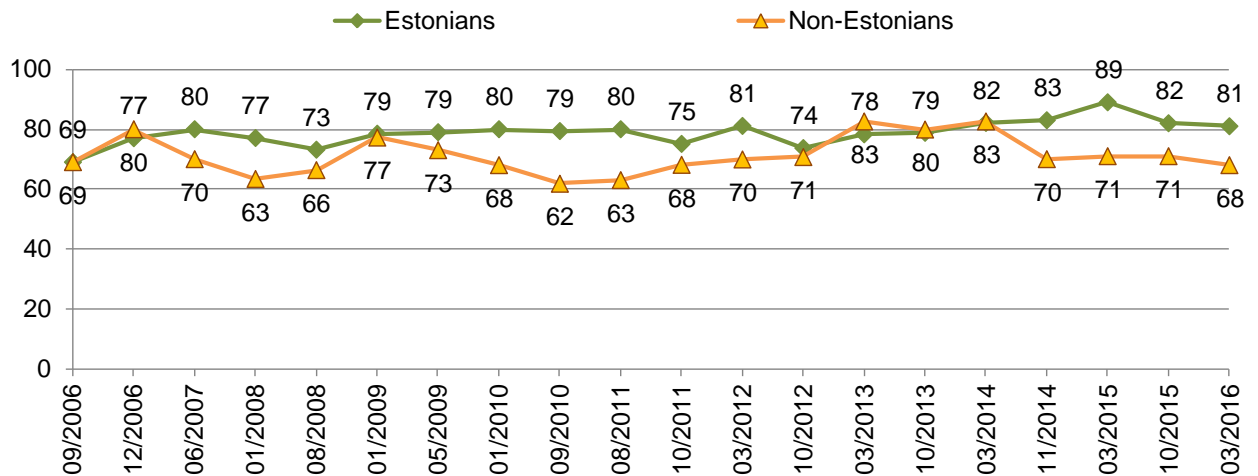


Figure 18. Proportion of the proponents of armed resistance in the event of an attack; comparison of the Estonian-speaking and foreign-speaking population 2006–2016 (% of those considering resistance certainly and probably necessary; N = all respondents)



It is evident that Estonian and Russian-speaking respondents have periods where their defence willingness is equal and periods where the Russian-speaking respondents willingness to resist a foreign attacker is lower. The first of these periods can be linked to the time after the Bronze Night events, the current situation may be connected to the decline in the relations between Russia and NATO.

4.2 Willingness to participate in defence activities

The number of those willing to participate personally in defence activities is lower than the proportion of those supporting armed resistance at the state level. While armed resistance is considered necessary by 81%, **58% of the population would be willing to participate in defence activities to the extent of their own capabilities and skills** (Figure 19). This is three per cent more than in autumn 2015.

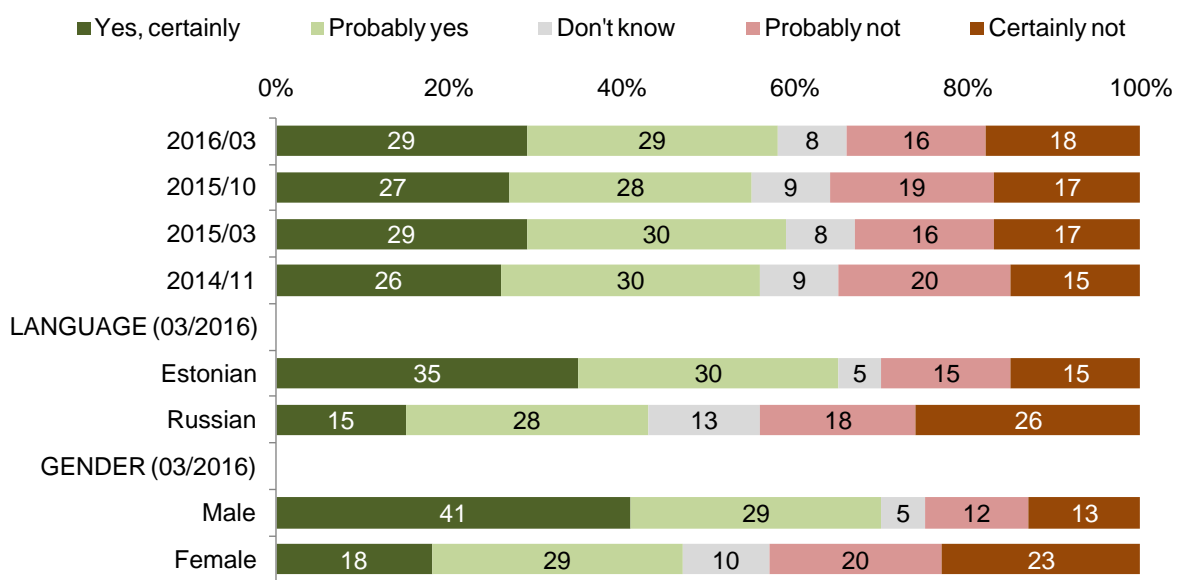
29% of the population of Estonia would be certainly willing and 29% probably willing to participate in defence activities. 34% of the respondents would certainly or probably not be willing to personally contribute to defence activities.

The difference between the attitudes of Estonians and people who speak other languages is even more noteworthy in the question of active defence willingness compared to passive defence willingness. While **65% of Estonians would be willing to participate personally in defence activities, the respective indicator for non-Estonians is only 43%**.

When interpreting defence willingness, it should be considered that participation in national defence has been a traditionally male task, and, consequently, the readiness to contribute is inevitably lower among female and older respondents (for instance, only 39 per cent of respondents over 60 years of age would be willing to participate in defence activities while the respective proportion of respondents under 20 years of age is 66 per cent). Additionally, the percentage of Russian-speaking respondents remains lower than average because conscript service is not compulsory for non-citizens. This, however, is a prerequisite for participating in armed resistance.

The awareness of personal contribution possibilities other than participating in armed resistance will be discussed in the fourth part of this chapter (4.4).

Figure 19. Willingness to participate in defence activities if Estonia is attacked
(%; N= all respondents)



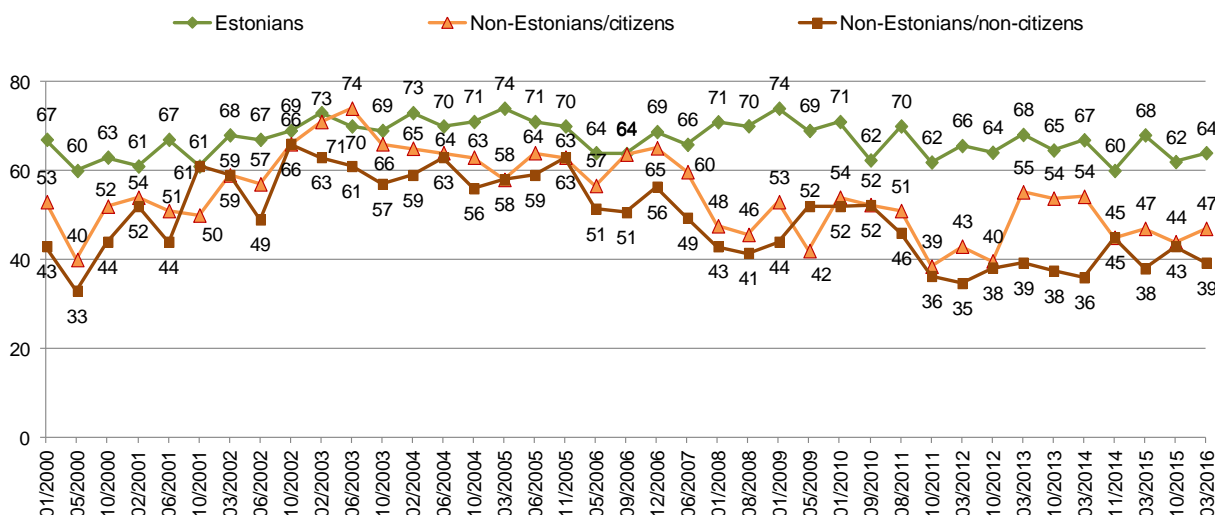
Defence willingness is seen in a more positive perspective when we only look at men's willingness to participate in defence activities: 80 per cent of the male citizens aged 15–64 are willing to participate in national defence. Defence willingness is lower among Russian-speaking male citizens compared to Estonian men. 70 per cent of Russian-speaking male citizens under 35 and 50–64 years of age would be willing to personally participate in national defence, while less than a half of those aged 35–49 would be willing to do so.

Table 4 – Willingness to certainly or probably participate in defence activities among male citizens by age groups

LANGUAGE OF COMMUNICATION	15-34	35-49	50-64	65+
Estonian	84%	88%	81%	52%
Russian	69%	41%	70%	31%
ALL men / citizens	81%	82%	80%	49%

If we view the temporal change of participatory willingness by nationality and citizenship, it becomes evident that, in 2006, defence willingness among non-Estonians with Estonian citizenship was at a comparable level with that of Estonians. After the Bronze Night events in 2007 this willingness dropped significantly both among non-Estonians with Estonian citizenship and those without citizenship (Figure 20). The years 2013–2014 saw an improvement in the defence willingness among non-Estonian citizens, but in the last four surveys this willingness has once again fallen under 50 per cent.

Figure 20. Proportion of the population willing to participate in defence activities in the event of an attack; comparison of the Estonian-speaking and foreign-speaking population 2000–2016 (% of those certainly and probably willing to participate; N = all respondents)

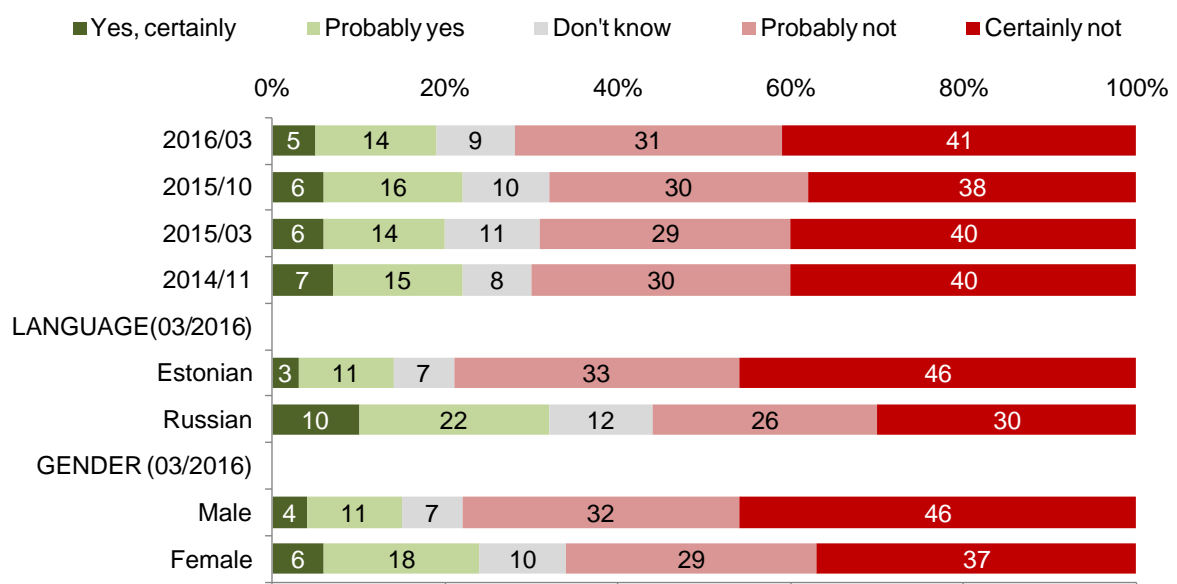


4.3 Desire to leave Estonia in the event of a military threat

In case Estonia is attacked, one fifth of Estonians (19%) would consider leaving Estonia: in such a situation, 5% would certainly endeavour to leave and 14% would probably do it (Figure 21). The proportion of those who would like to leave has decreased by three per cent compared to October. 72% of the population would certainly not or probably not endeavour to leave Estonia in the event of a threat.

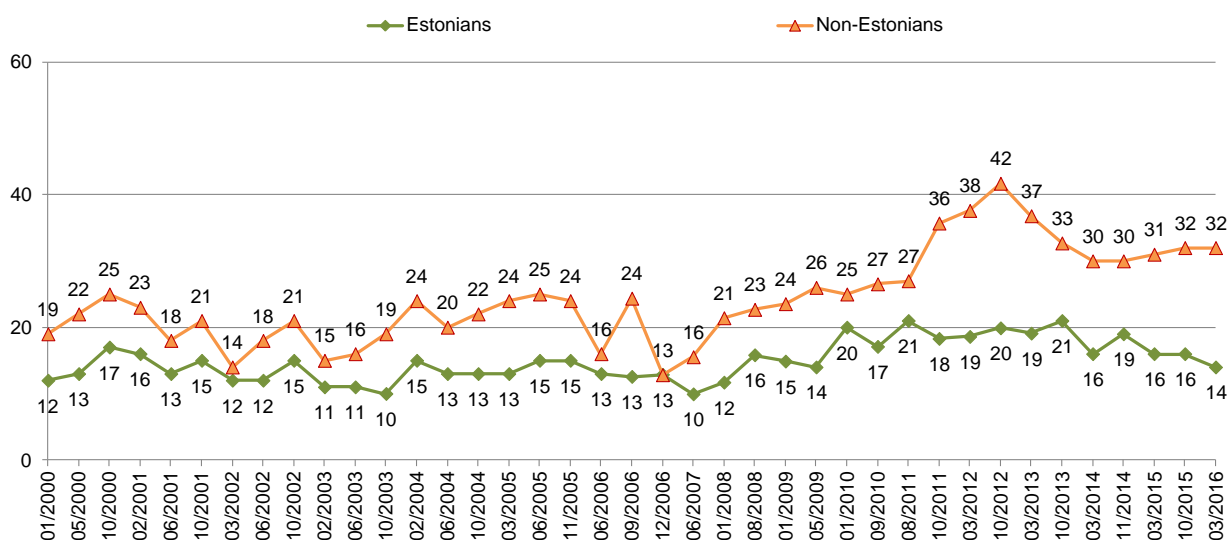
The people most prone to leave Estonia are women (certainly or probably 24%) and younger people up to 39 years of age (approximately one third). 32% of Russian-speaking respondents and 14% of Estonians would probably leave Estonia.

Figure 21. Probability of leaving Estonia in case Estonia is attacked (%) ; N = all respondents)



When taking into account the whole data from the beginning of the survey series, it can be seen that the Russian-speaking respondents have expressed higher willingness to leave since the year 2007; the willingness rose to as high as 42 per cent in 2013 and has then remained close to 30 per cent since 2014. Estonians' willingness to leave was also slightly higher during the recession years from 2010 to 2013, when one fifth of Estonians would have considered leaving (Figure 22).

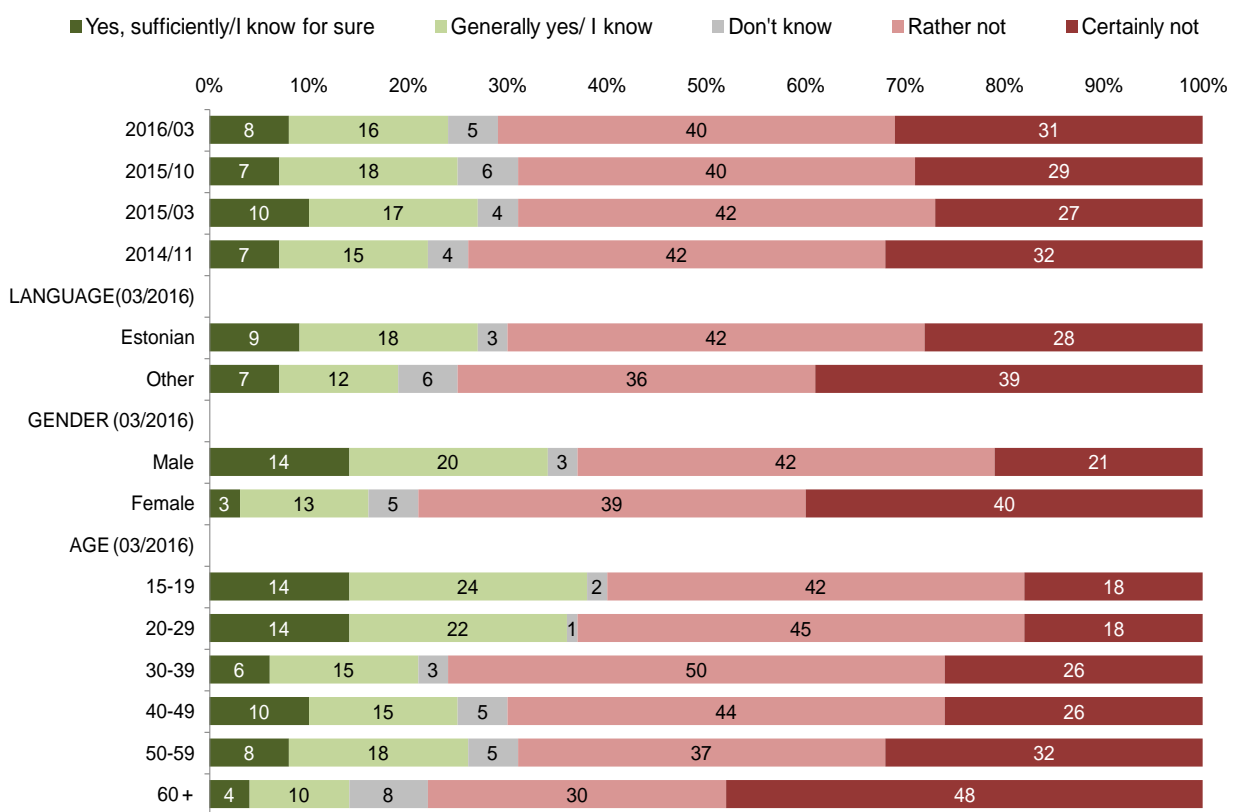
Figure 22. Proportion of those desiring to leave Estonia in the event of an attack; comparison of the Estonian-speaking and foreign-speaking population 2000–2016 (% of those desiring to leave certainly and those who would probably do it; N = all respondents)



4.4 Ability to act in the event of a potential attack

In order to obtain an overview of the population's awareness in terms of defence, the respondents were asked to tell whether they considered themselves to be adequately informed about what to do in the event of an impending foreign attack. The results show that, **people consider their ability to act in the event of a potential attack rather poor**: only one fourth would know what they could do for defending the state in such circumstances but 71% say that they are rather not informed or certainly not informed about this (Figure 23). The results of the past few surveys reveal that people's awareness of the ways to participate in national defence continues to be low.

Figure 23. Being informed about the possibilities of what to do for defending Estonia in the event of an impending foreign attack (%) ; N = all respondents)

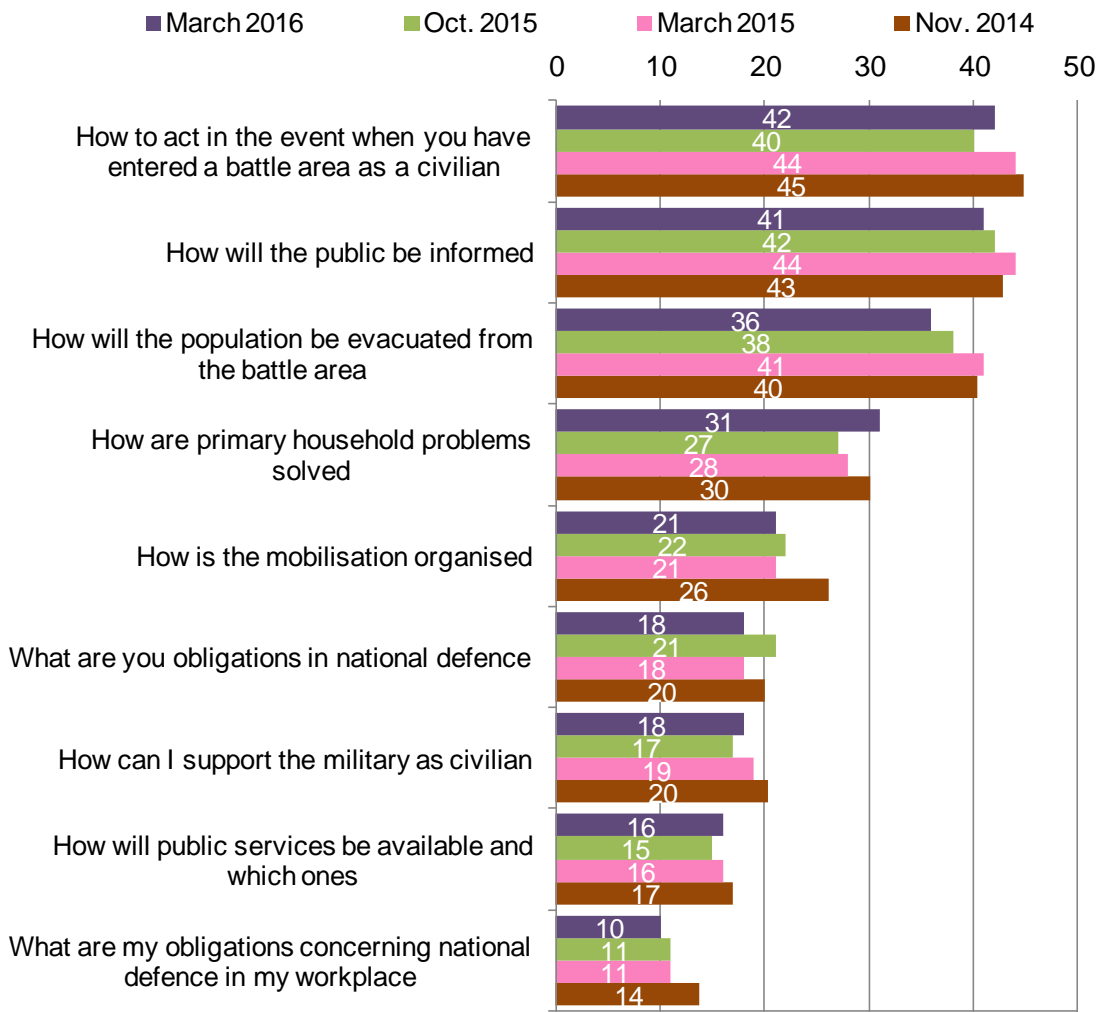


Men consider their awareness to be higher than women (34% vs 16%)—this could be explained by more contacts with national defence structures (conscription, the Defence League). Estonians are somewhat more informed than Russian-speaking respondents.

4.5 On which topics do you require more information?

As throughout the surveys the population has assessed its level of being informed as very low in view of the topic of what to do in the event of a foreign attack, in November 2014 we included a question about the topics regarding the state's activities and organisation of personal life on which people require the most information in the event of a foreign attack (Figure 24). Respondents had to choose three topics most important to them out of nine given topics.

Figure 24. On which topics do you require more information? – 2014–2016 comparison (%)
N = all respondents)

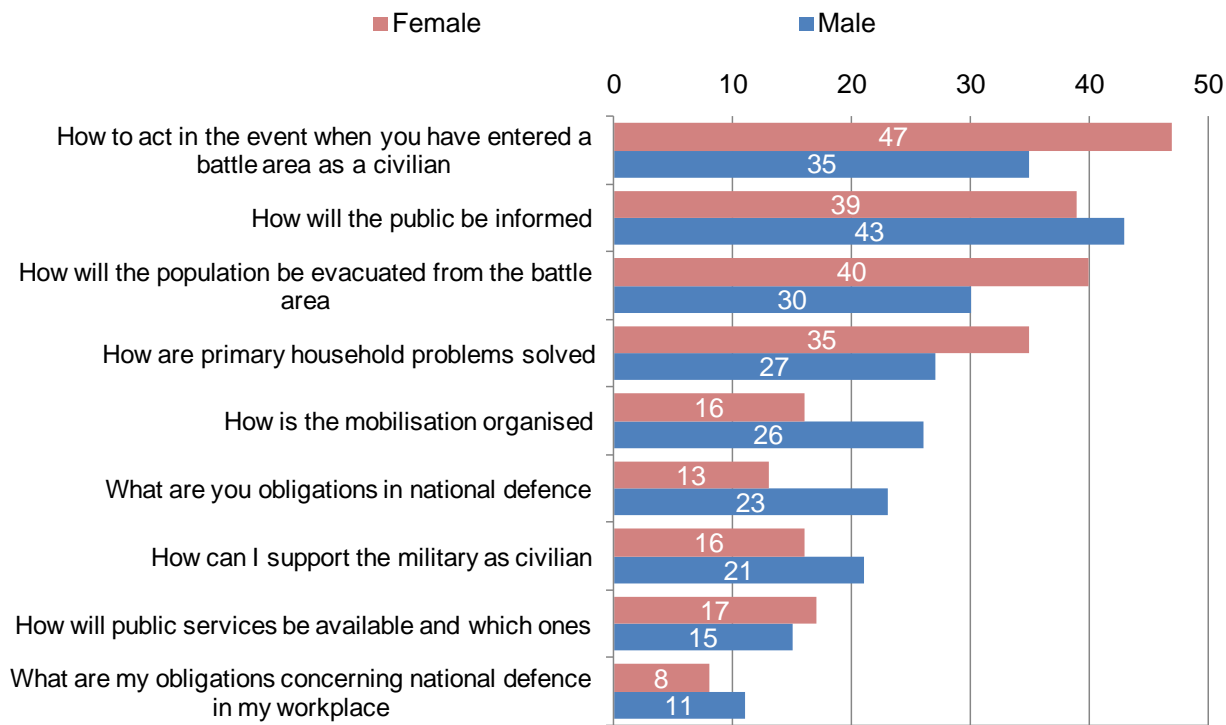


The three most important topics which were highlighted in both surveys and on which further information is needed are related to the role of civilians in case of a conflict: **how to act when one has entered a combat zone as a civilian, how the general public is informed, and how evacuation is organised.**

The information needs of male and female respondents differ to an extent.

Even though men are also concerned with the three topics listed as the most important in the general ranking, they show greater than average interest in how the mobilisation will be organised, how a civilian can contribute to supporting the military and what the respondent's obligations are in national defence. Women would like more information on evacuation, how to act as a civilian and solve basic everyday problems (Figure 25).

Figure 25. On which topics do you require more information? Comparison of men and women March 2016 (%; N = all respondents)



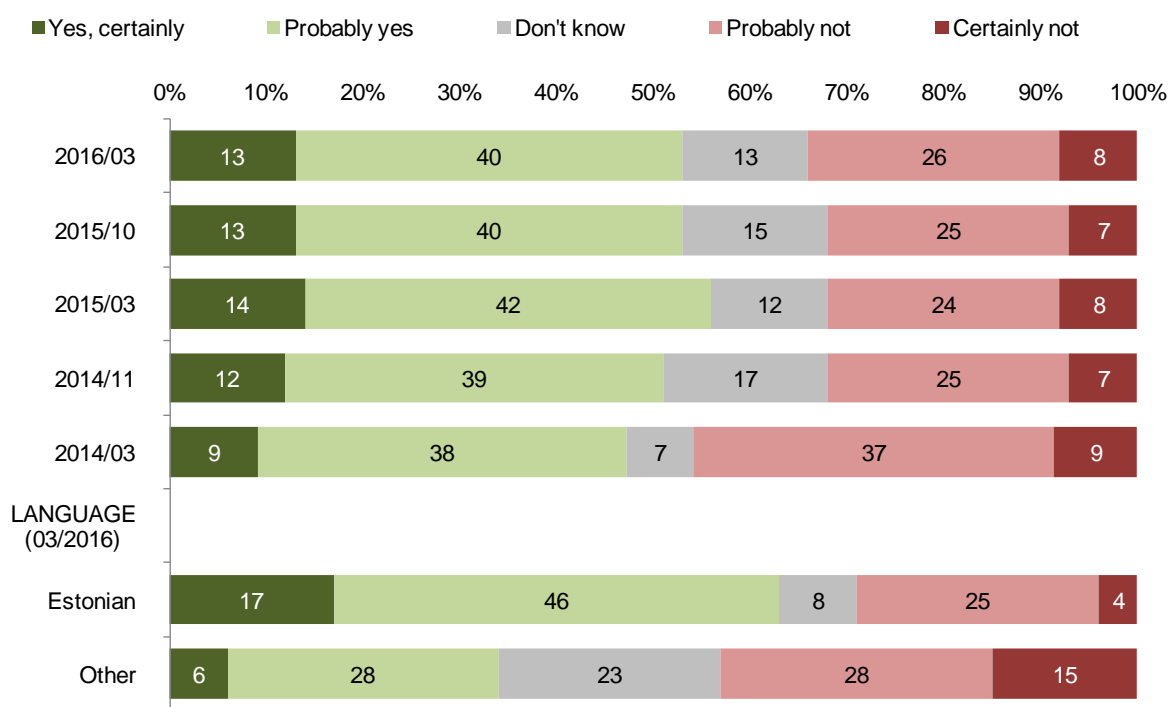
5 Defence capability of Estonia

The fifth chapter reflects attitudes within the population in relation to Estonia's defence capability, the volume of defence expenditures and the state's activities regarding the development of national defence.

5.1 Assessment of the defence capability of Estonia

Respondents were asked to say whether they think Estonia is defensible until help arrives from the allies in the event of an armed foreign attack. Since autumn 2014, the proportion of respondents who believe that **it would be possible to defend Estonia in the event of an armed foreign attack has reached over 50 per cent**. The proportion of those respondents who find that Estonia cannot be defended is one third of all the respondents—in March 2014, the respective proportion was still 46% (Figure 26). Nevertheless, the public confidence in Estonia's defence capability has not increased in the last couple of years.

Figure 26. Assessment of the defence capability of Estonia in the event of an armed foreign attack (%; N = all respondents)



Estonians give a more positive assessment to Estonia's defence capability—more than 60 per cent regard Estonia defensible. The assessments of Russian-speaking respondents reveal that those who do not regard Estonia defensible are in the lead by ten per cent, nearly one fourth of the Russian-speaking respondents say that they do not have a view in this question.

5.2 Views on the volume of defence expenditures

Assessments given to the volume of Estonian defence expenditures reveal that a majority of the respondents think that defence expenditures should be kept at the current level (Figure 27). **An increase in defence expenditures is favoured by 25% and decrease by 20% of the population.**

After joining NATO, there was a period when a third or even greater proportion of the population considered an increase in defence expenditures necessary, which lasted for a few years. At the time, there was a lot of talk about the necessity to conform to NATO requirements and raise defence expenditures up to 2 per cent of GDP. The support for an increase in defence expenditures dropped during the recession years and it has remained stable throughout the last two surveys.

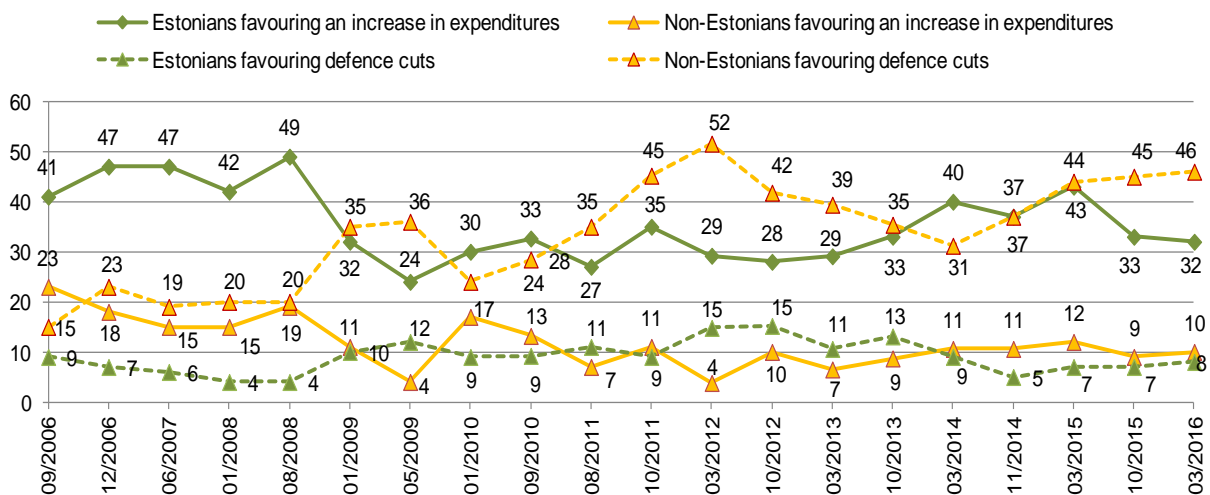
Figure 27. Views on the volume of defence expenditures; 2004–2016 comparison (%) (N = all respondents)



The average attitudes of the population do not give a full overview of the public opinion. **Estonians' attitude towards defence expenditures is inversely proportional to that of the Russian-speaking respondents: there are more supporters of decreasing the volume of defence expenditures among Russian-speaking residents than there are of supporters of increasing it among Estonians** (Figure 28). However, the number of those in favour of increasing defence expenditures among Russian-speaking respondents is equal to Estonians wishing for a decrease.

In March 2016, 31% of Estonian-speaking residents and 10% of residents who speak other languages were of the opinion that the volume of defence expenditures should be increased; 8% of Estonian speakers and 46% of foreign language speakers were in favour of expenditure cuts.

Figure 28. Views on the volume of defence expenditures; comparison of the Estonian-speaking and non-Estonian-speaking population 2006–2016 (%; N = all respondents)



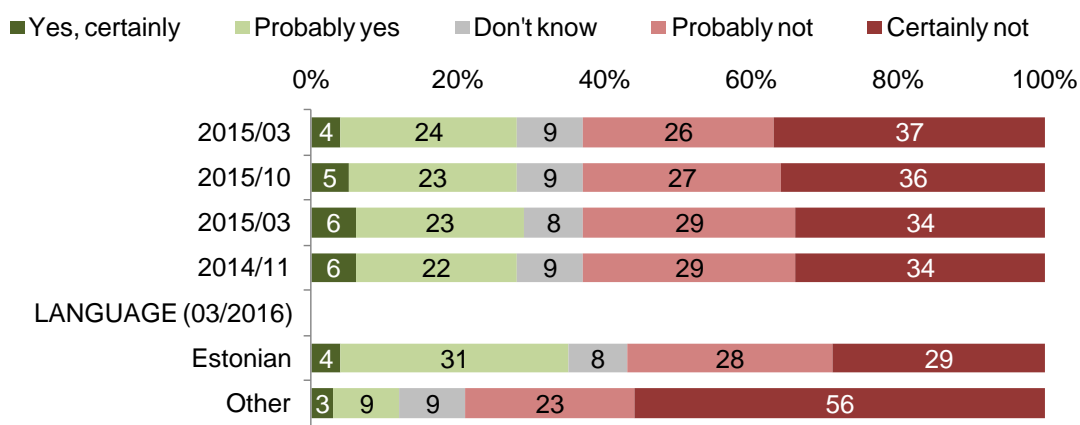
5.3 Preparedness for making a personal donation to national defence

Many people do not seem to realise that there is a direct connection between their own income and appropriations from the state budget—increasing or decreasing budgetary spending on national defence seems relatively abstract to them. The preparedness for making a personal donation to national defence is a much better indicator of people’s attitudes towards the need to strengthen national defence.

The survey reveals that **28 per cent of the respondents would be certainly or probably willing** to make a contribution. 63 per cent of the respondents would probably or certainly not make a donation to national defence. These proportions have remained unchanged throughout the last four surveys, which indicates the stability of the willingness to donate (Figure 29).

35 per cent of Estonians would be willing to make a financial contribution to national defence, whereas only 12 per cent of the Russian-speaking respondents are willing to do so.

Figure 29. Preparedness for making a personal donation to Estonian national defence (%; N = all respondents)

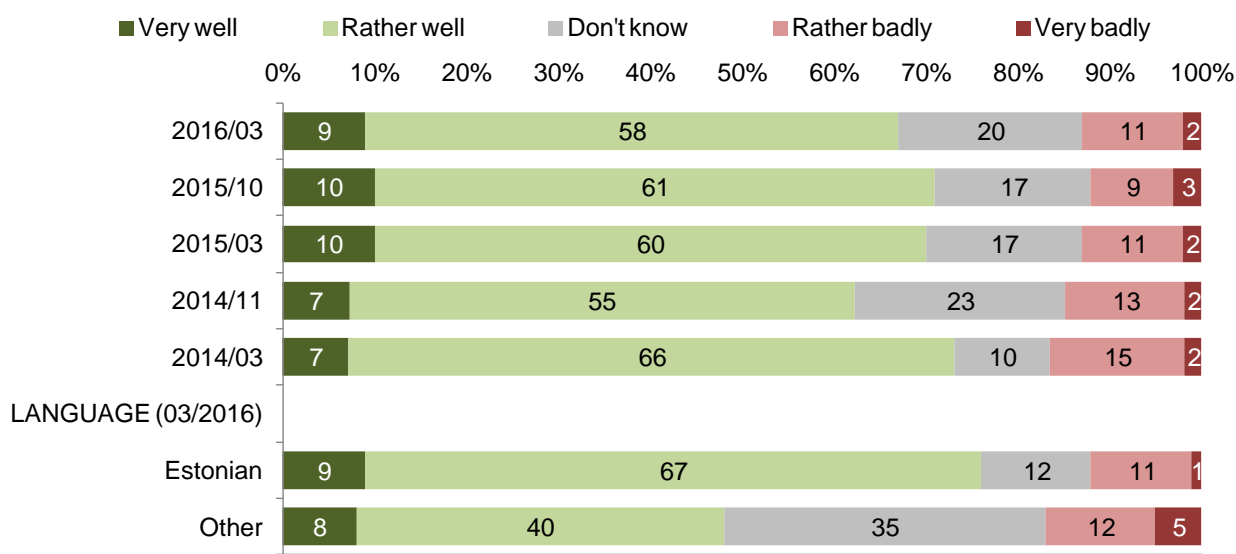


5.4 Assessment of state activities in view of the development of national defence

In spring of 2014, 73% of the population provided a positive assessment to the state's activities in view of the development of national defence and the figure dropped to 71% by October last year, yet now the number of positive assessments has dropped while the proportion of those who answered "cannot say" has increased. The answer was often chosen by Russian-speaking respondents (Figure 30).

Similar to other national defence surveys, the Estonian-speaking population values activities related to national defence development higher than non-Estonians (76% and 48%, respectively, regard state activities in developing national defence as good).

Figure 30. Assessments of state activities in recent years in view of the development of Estonia's national defence (%; N = all respondents)



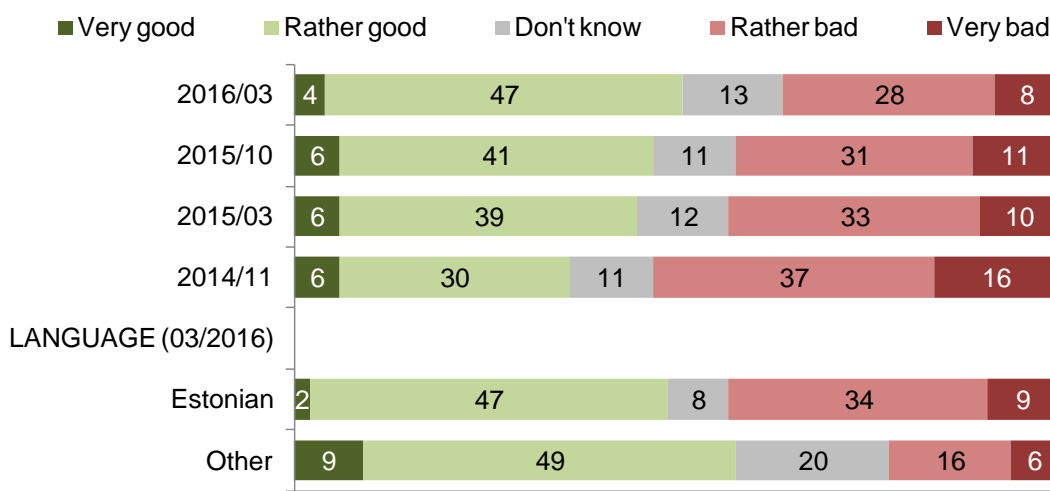
5.5 Assessments on the defence of the Estonian border

In 2014, the kidnapping of the Estonian Internal Security Service officer Eston Kohver by the Russian special services on the Estonian-Russian border resulted in the public discussion on how well the temporary border line between Estonia and Russia is guarded.

In autumn, after the incident on the border, the majority of the assessments given to this question were clearly negative, whereas by now, **the assessments are predominantly positive** (Figure 31).

Only 22 per cent of Russian-speaking respondents are critical about the defence of the Estonian border, the respective indicator for Estonian respondents is slightly over 40 per cent.

Figure 31. Assessment on the defence of the Estonian border (%; N = all respondents)



6 Organisation of Estonian national defence

The sixth chapter discusses various aspects of national defence organisation in Estonia: what are the attitudes towards conscript service (including the necessity of it being compulsory to young men and voluntary for young women, evasion of conscript service and inclusion of young people with minor health disorders), whether is it more appropriate for Estonia to maintain its current defence concept or transfer to a fully professional army, what are the opinions about comprehensive national defence, and what are the main tasks of the Defence League.

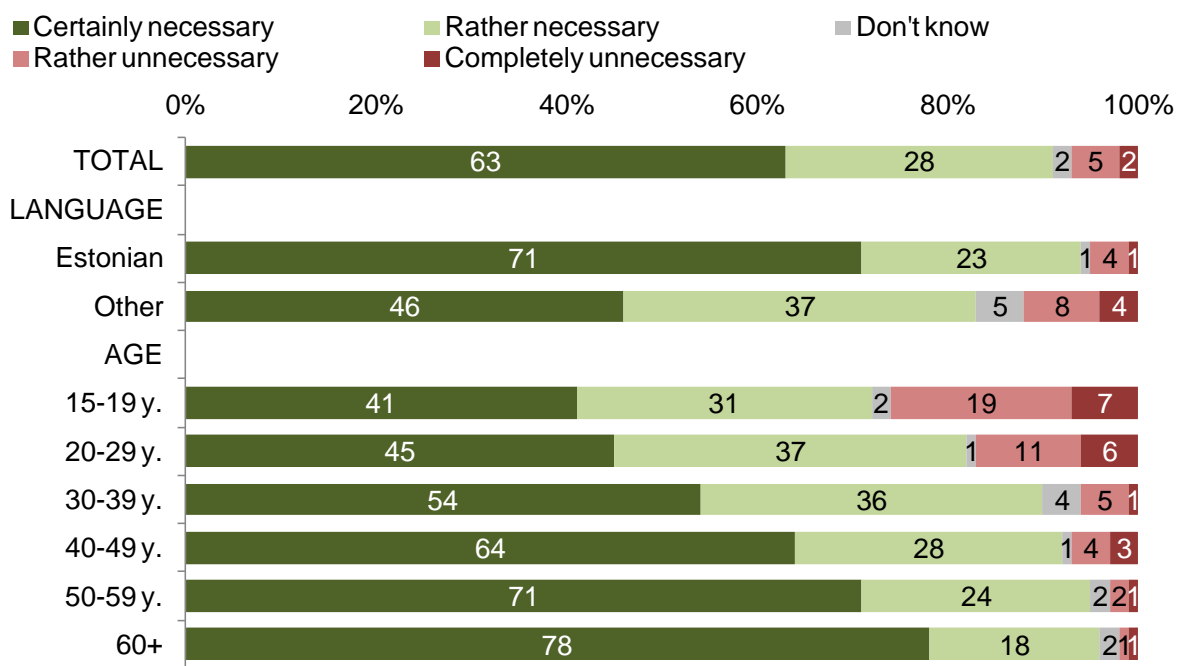
6.1 Attitude towards conscript service

6.1.1. Necessity of conscript service for young men

Estonian population continues to have a very favourable attitude towards conscript service for young men: **91% of all respondents believe that young men need to undergo conscript service**. Only 7% of the population considers conscript service rather or totally unnecessary. Undergoing conscript service is considered certainly necessary by 71% of the Estonian-speaking respondents and 46% of the Russian-speaking respondents (Figure 32).

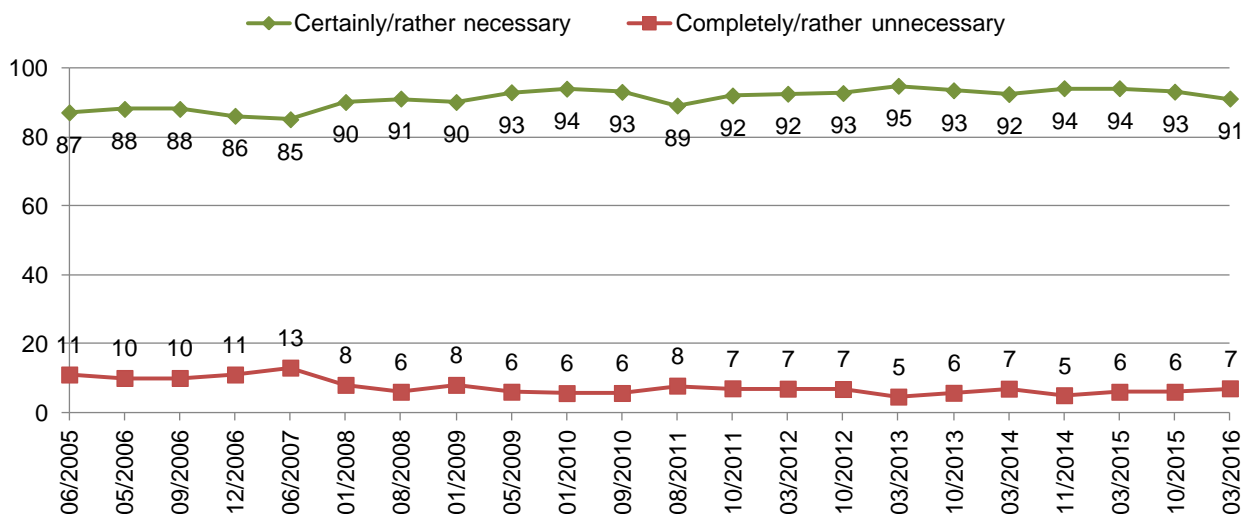
The most dedicated supporters of conscript service are people over 60 years of age, but the number of supporters is over 40 per cent even among people under 30, who are influenced by the conscript service the most, while only one tenth consider it unnecessary.

Figure 32. Attitude towards the necessity of conscript service (%; N = all respondents)



The proportion of the population who consider undergoing conscript service necessary or rather necessary for young men has remained at a very high level over the years (since 2005, in the range of 85–95%) (Figure 33).

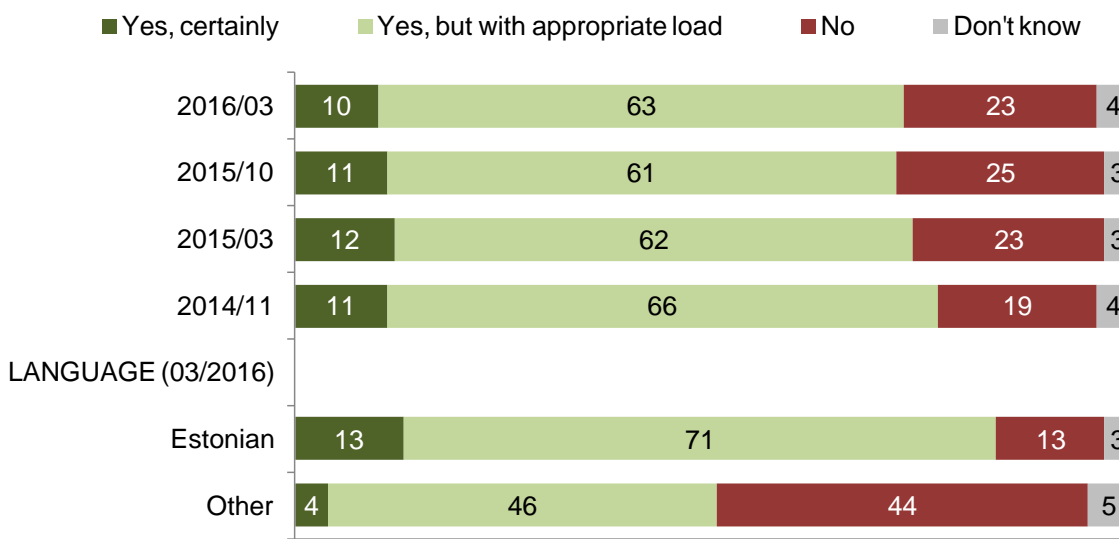
Figure 33. Attitude towards the necessity of conscript service; 2005–2016 comparison (%; N = all respondents)



Since 2012, the respondents have been additionally asked to assess whether young men who have minor health disorders should also be subject to conscript service. 10% of the respondents believe that such young men should certainly undergo conscript service; however, **63% of the respondents think that young men with minor health disorders should undergo conscript service with an appropriate training load** (Figure 34). The public opinion has not changed much in this matter in the last few years.

The most significant differences occur in view of the language of communication. 44% of Russian-speaking respondents hold the opinion that young men with minor health disorders should not undergo conscript service, while only 13% of Estonian speakers share the same opinion. 71% of Estonians find that these young men should undergo conscript service with an appropriate training load.

Figure 34. Attitudes towards undergoing conscript service regarding young men with minor health disorders (%; N = all respondents)

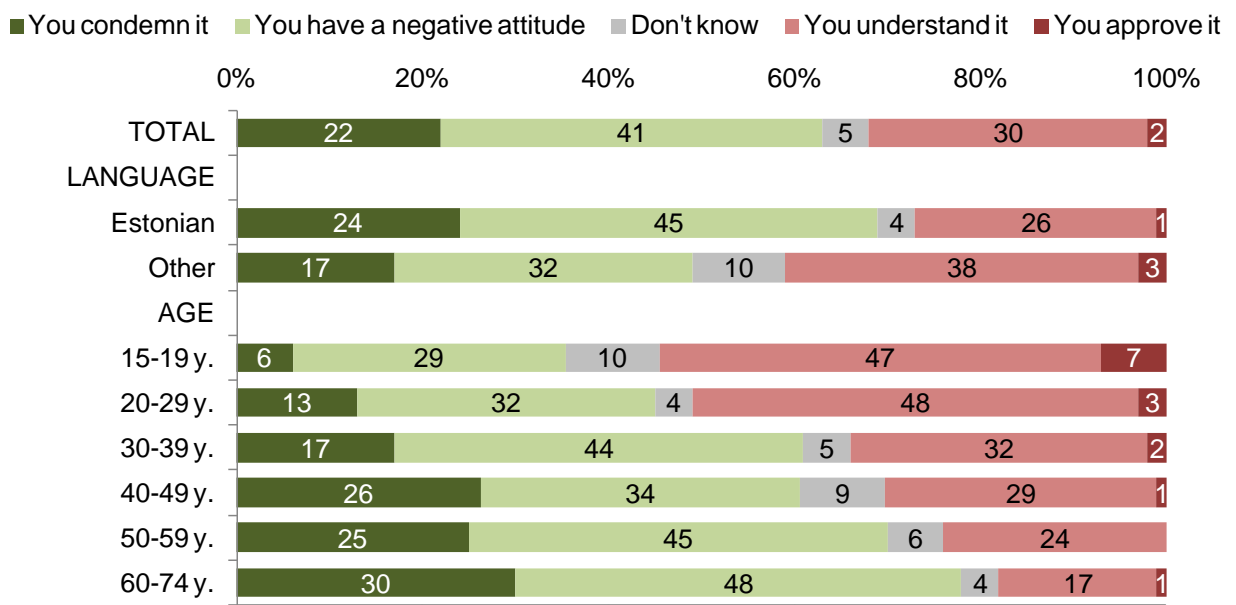


6.1.2. Evasion of conscript service

Bearing in mind the favouring attitudes of the population towards conscript service, it is fully anticipated that **the majority of the population in Estonia disapproved of the evasion of conscript service**—22% condemn such behaviour and 41% consider it negative (Figure 35). 30% of respondents have an understanding attitude towards the evasion of conscript service, while only 2% of the respondents approve of this.

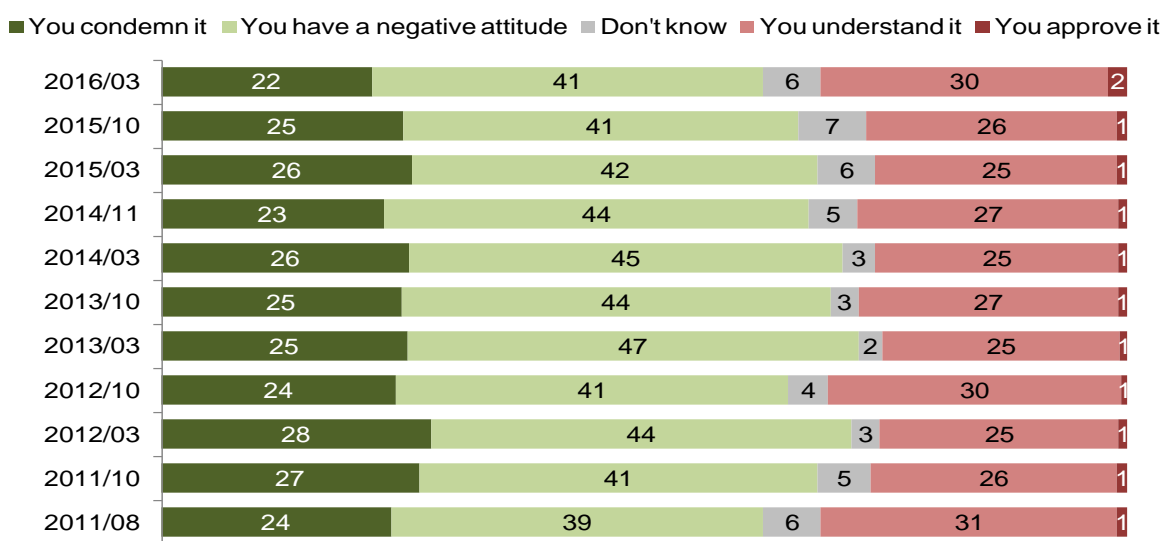
The evasion of conscript service finds disapproval with 69% of the Estonian-speaking respondents and with 49% of the Russian-speaking respondents. Compared to younger respondents, the evasion of conscript service is condemned more by senior respondents—more than half of people under the age of 30 express understanding in this matter.

Figure 35. Attitude towards the evasion of conscript service (%); N = all respondents)



Similarly to expressing the necessity of conscript service, there have been no major changes in the assessments of the question regarding the evasion of conscript service over the years (Figure 36).

Figure 36. Attitude towards evading conscript service; 2011–2016 comparison (%); N = all respondents)

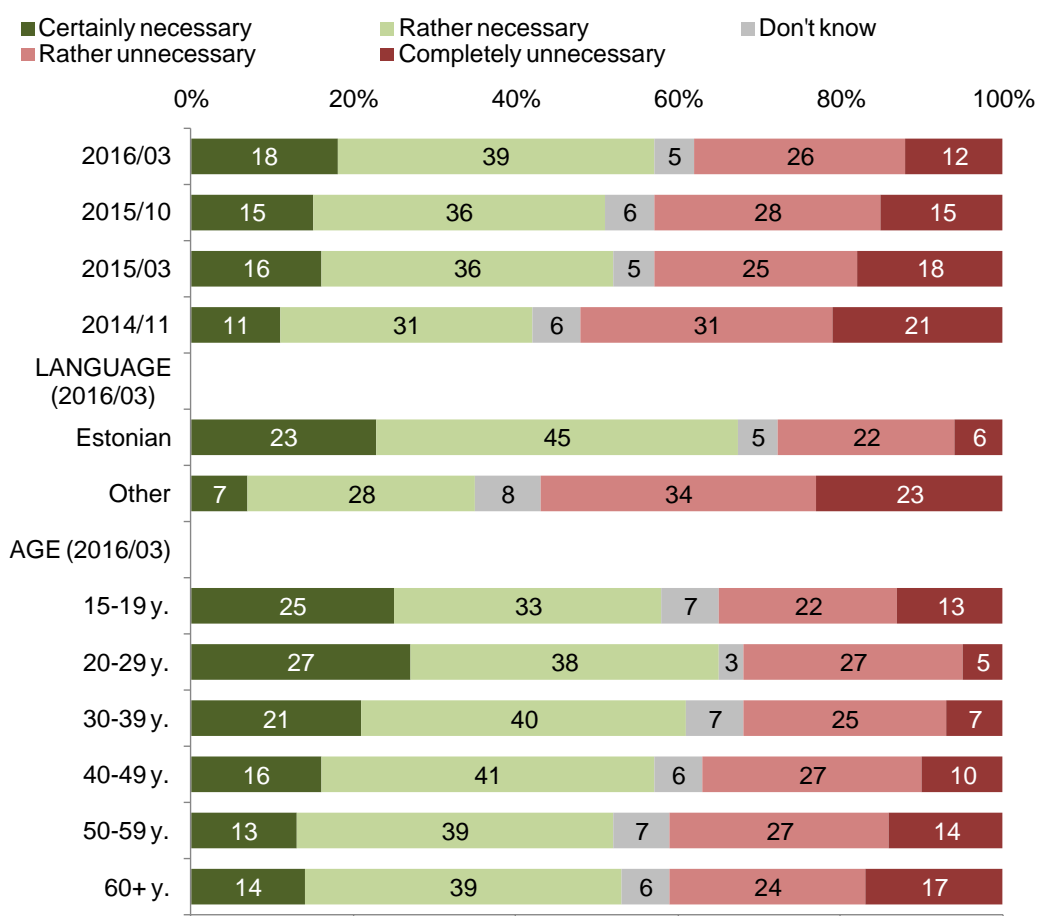


6.1.3. Conscript service for women

The opportunity for women to undergo conscript service voluntarily has been gaining increasingly more understanding in the society—since March 2015, **more than a half of the respondents have thought it certainly necessary or rather necessary.**

Estonians and younger respondents have a more contemporary attitude towards the questions of gender equality compared to the Russian-speaking and older respondents. 68% of Estonians think it is necessary for women to have the opportunity of undergoing conscript service, whereas only 35% of the Russian-speaking respondents agree. The attitudes of respondents over 50 years of age have become more positive as well—in October 2015, more than half of them did not consider voluntary conscript service for women necessary, yet now the support of women’s conscript service has risen over 50 per cent in said age group (Figure 37).

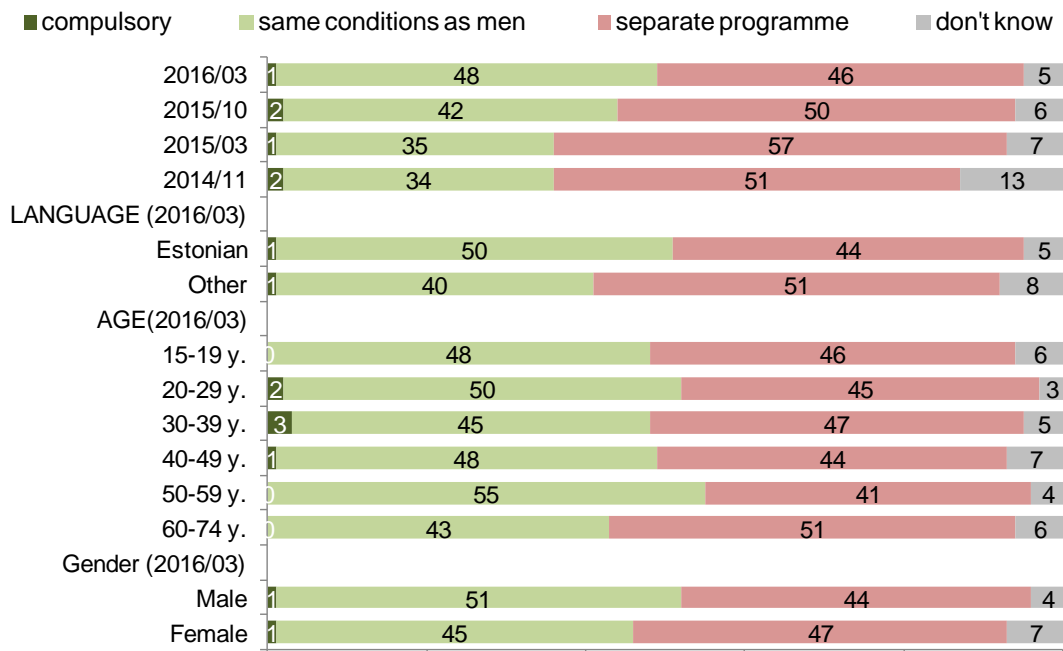
Figure 37. Attitude towards the necessity of conscript service for women (%; N = all respondents)



The respondents who considered conscript service for women certainly or rather necessary were asked about in which form the conscript service should take place. The respondents were given three options: compulsory conscript service, conscript service under the same conditions as applied to young men and conscript service through a separate programme. The previous surveys have always been dominated by the view that women should undergo conscript service through a separate programme, but now it is about to be beaten by the opinion that **conscript service should take place under the same conditions as applied to young men (48%)** (Figure 38).

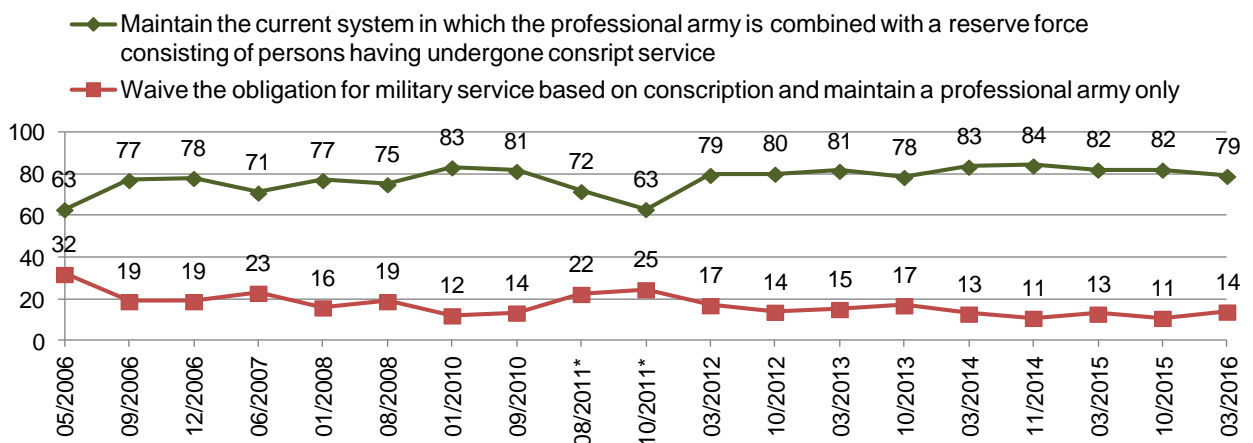
Figure 38. Which form should conscript service for women take?

(%; N = all respondents who considered conscript service for women necessary)



6.2 Attitudes towards the professional defence forces

Despite the fact that more than 90% of respondents find conscript service necessary, the topic of making the transition to a professional army is sometimes raised in political debates. Respondents were asked to tell whether they think Estonia should waive compulsory conscription service and maintain a professional army only, or maintain the current system in which the professional army is combined with a reserve force consisting of persons having undergone conscript service. The results of the survey reveal that **79% of the population would prefer maintaining the current system, with the reserve forces included** (Figure 39). Switching to a fully professional army and waiving compulsory conscript service is favoured by 14% of the population. Similarly to other questions concerning the organisation of national defence, this viewpoint has been very stable over the years.

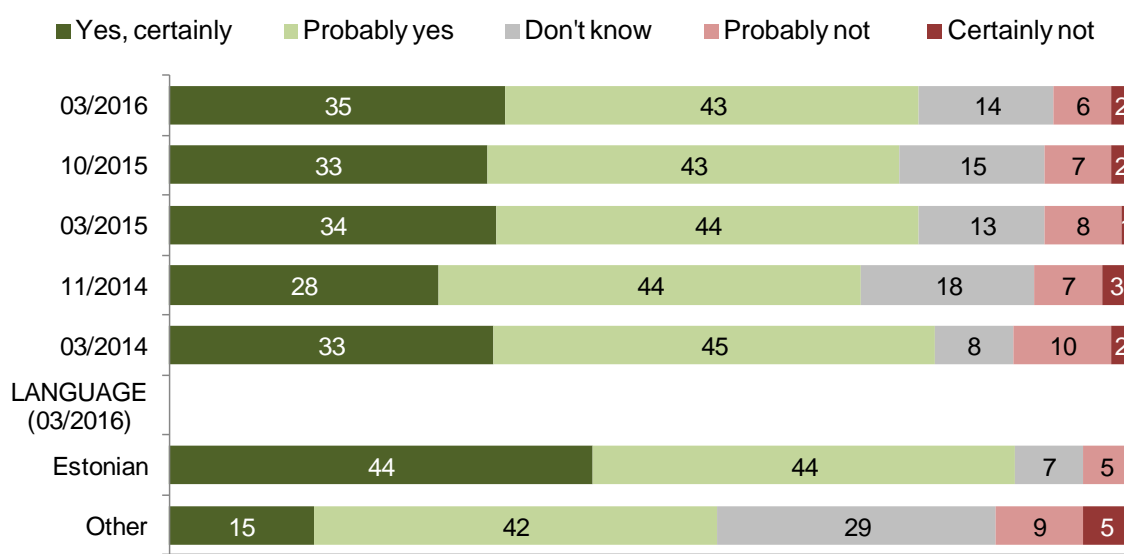
Figure 39. Options preferred for the development of Estonia's defence concept; 2006–2016 comparison (%; N = all respondents)

* In surveys conducted in 2011, another wording of the question was used, with the reply options: "Estonia should maintain the general obligation for military service based on conscription" and "Estonia should switch to a professional army".

6.3 Attitude towards the comprehensive approach to national defence

Starting from spring 2014, the survey includes a question about the strategy of Estonian national defence according to which national defence is no longer only the task of the Defence Forces and Defence League but the joint task of most state authorities and the entire society. **78% of respondents** (88% of Estonians) are of the opinion that **the comprehensive approach is certainly or probably suitable for Estonia** (Figure 40). The contrary opinion was shared by less than one tenth of the respondents.

Figure 40. National defence is not only the task of the Defence Forces but the task of most state authorities and the whole society. Is such a comprehensive approach to national defence suitable for Estonia? (%; N = all respondents)



Since the comprehensive approach to national defence is regarded as positive and widely supported, it is high time to provide people with more specific details. As previously shown, very few people seem to have an understanding of how to act in case of a possible crisis and how to contribute to national defence to the extent of their own capabilities and skills.

29% of the Russian-speaking respondents answered "cannot say", which indicates that the introduction of a comprehensive national defence concept has not managed to sufficiently penetrate the Russian-speaking information space. Moreover, 22 per cent of Russian-speaking Estonian citizens cannot answer that question either.

6.4 Tasks of the Defence League

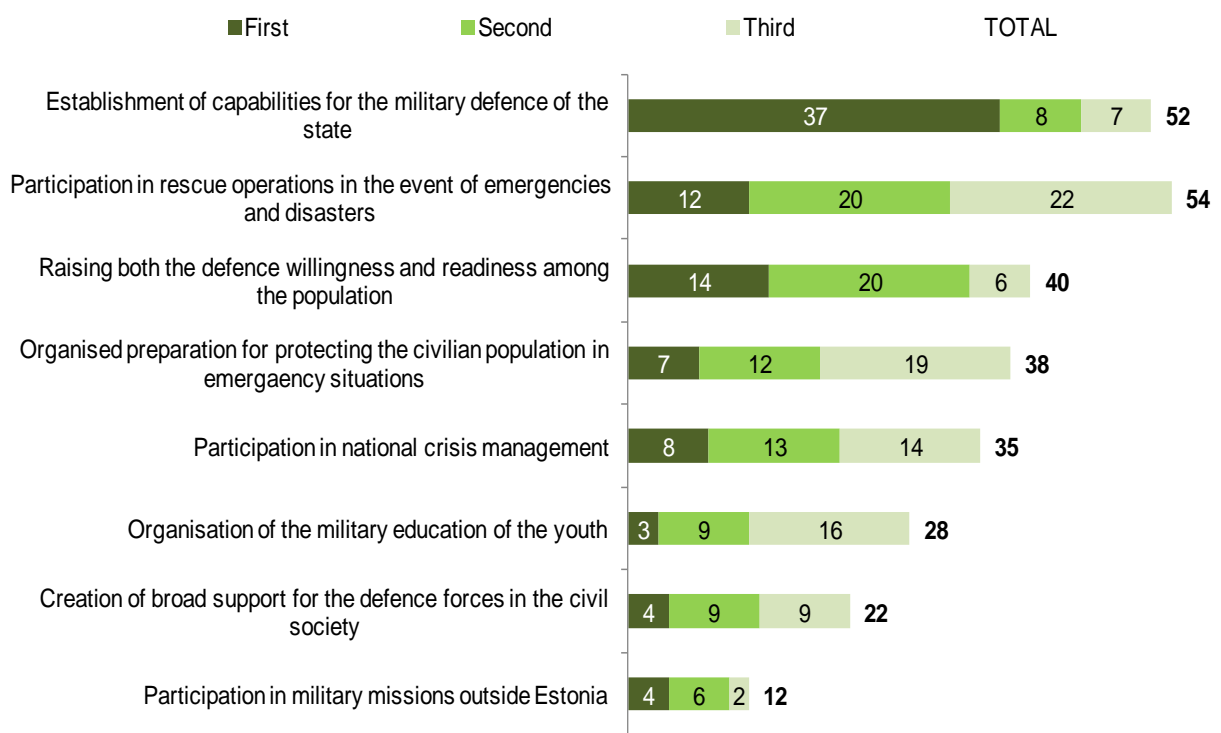
The Defence League has been given a very important role in the national defence strategy. The respondents were asked to pick the **three most important tasks of the Defence League** from a list provided to them. The results were fixed in sequence, i.e., the most important reason first, followed by the second and the third.

The Defence League's most important task is considered to be **creating capabilities for the military defence of the state—this task is listed as first by 37% of the respondents**. However, **participation in rescue operations in the event of emergencies and disasters** holds the first place in the overall summary of the three tasks (54%). **Raising both defence willingness and readiness among the population (14%)** is the second most popular first choice, and it occupies the third position in the overall summary of the three tasks with 40% (Figure 41).

The other important tasks besides the three abovementioned ones are preparing for civil defence in emergency situations (38%), participating in national security crisis management (35%) and organising the military education of the youth (28%).

The public understanding of the tasks of the Defence League remains very stable as well—the order in which the tasks are ranked has been similar through several surveys.

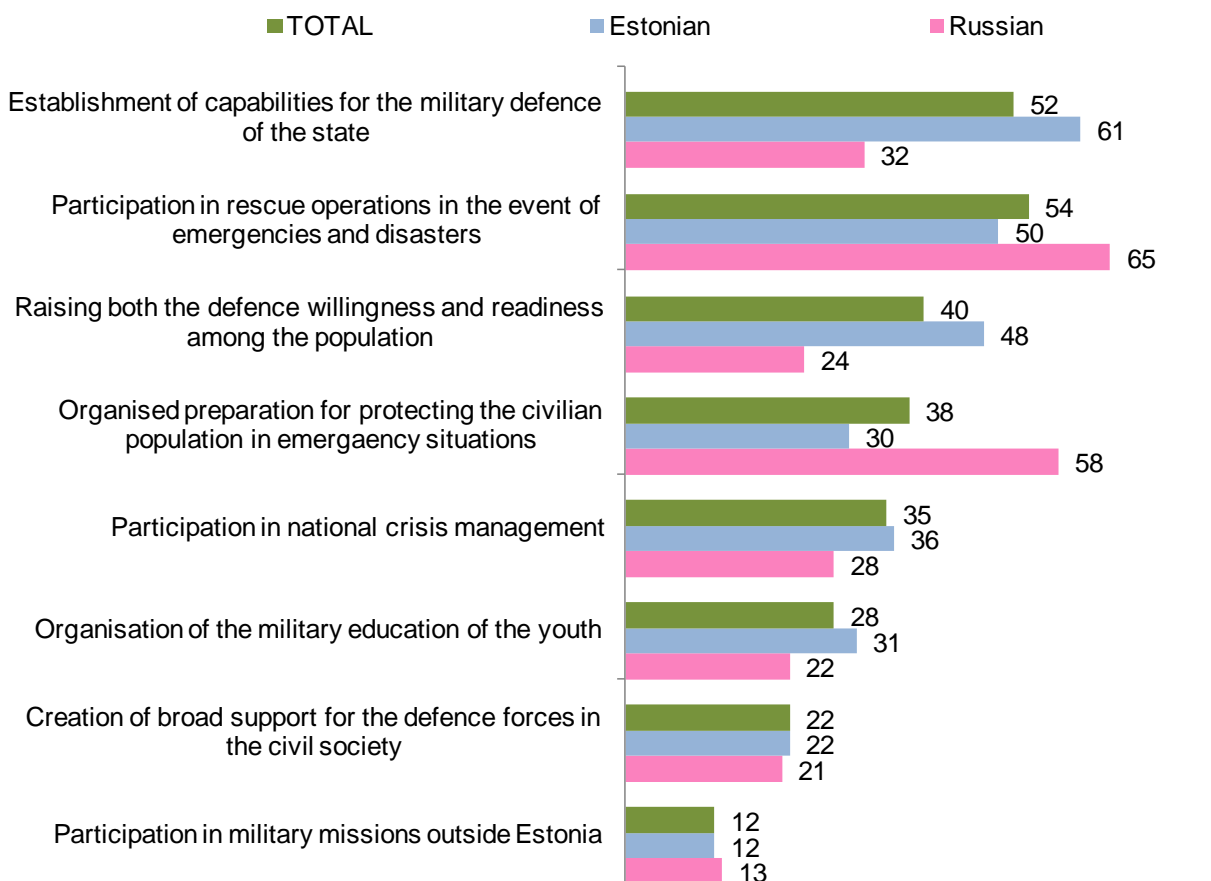
Figure 41. Main tasks of the Defence League (%; N = all respondents)



When it comes to listing the tasks of the Defence League in the order of importance, there are several differences between the opinions of the Estonian-speaking and Russian-speaking population. Estonians mainly consider the Defence League a national defence organisation, the main task of which is creating capabilities for the military defence of the state (46% place it first and 61% place it among the three most important tasks) and raising the defence willingness and readiness of the population (17% name it first; 48% place it among the three most important tasks) while the Russian-speaking population see the Defence League primarily as a civil defence organisation.

For Russian-speaking respondents, the Defence League's main tasks are participation in rescue operations in the event of emergencies and disasters (21% of Russian-speaking respondents name it as first and 65% place it among the three most important tasks) and organised protection of civilians in emergency situations (10% place it first and 58% place it among the three most important tasks) (Figure 42).

Figure 42. The three main tasks of the Defence League by language of communication (%; N = all respondents)



6.5 Opinions on joining the Defence League

5% of the respondents (6 per cent of Estonians) participate in the activities of the Defence League themselves, 24% (32 per cent of Estonians) are connected to the Defence League through a family member or friend.

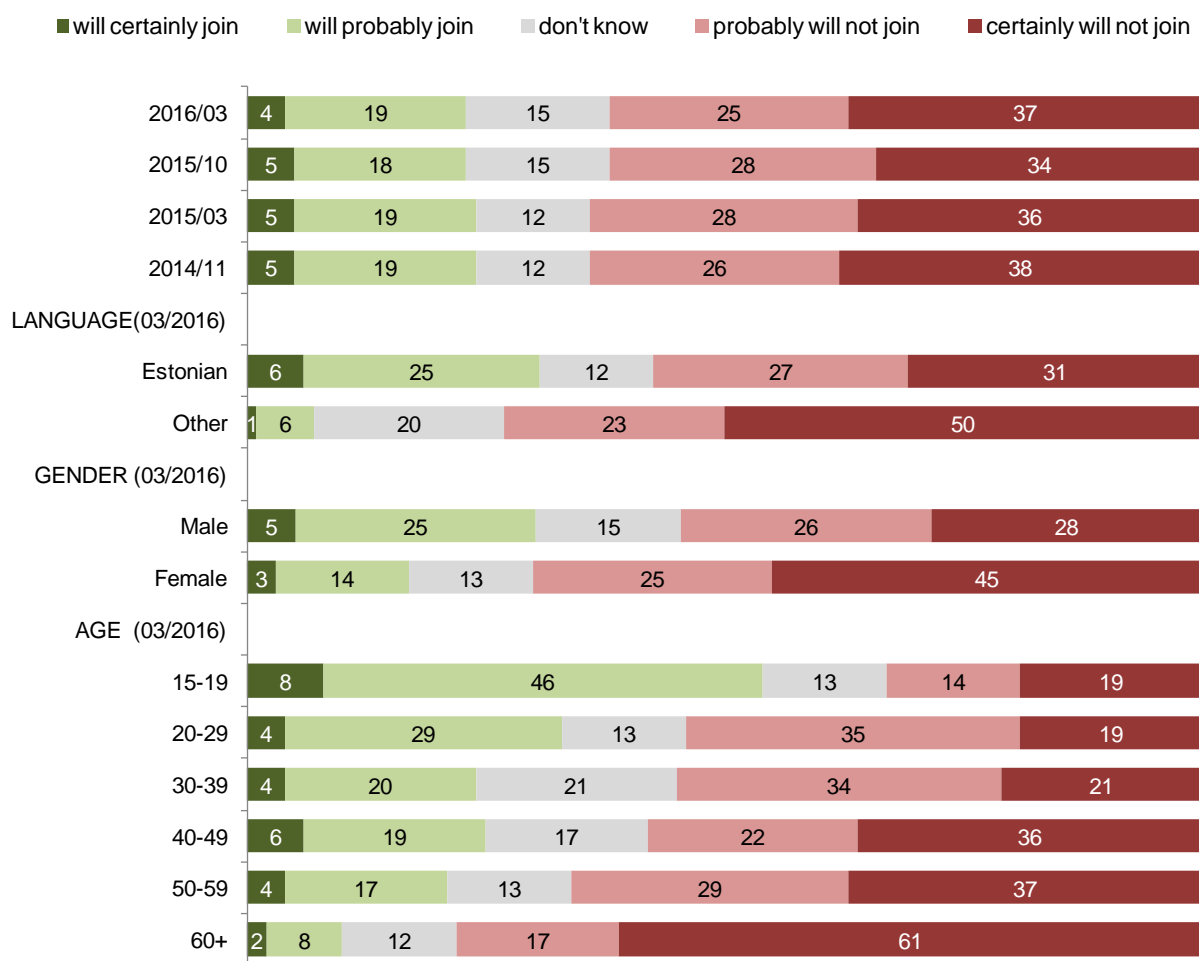
The number of Russian-speaking respondents connected to the Defence League is marginal—only 5% have a friend or family member who is connected to the Defence League.

The respondents who were not the members of the Defence League or related organisations were asked for their opinion on joining the Defence League.

4% of the respondents would certainly join the Defence League or Naiskodukaitse (Women's Voluntary Defence Organisation), and 19% would probably join (Figure 43). The Russian-speaking respondents remain reserved even in the question of joining: only 7 per cent would certainly or probably join. 6 per cent of Estonian respondents would certainly join and 25 per cent would probably join.

The Defence League should certainly rejoice in the fact that the willingness to join is higher among the younger respondents.

Figure 43. Willingness to join the Defence league or Naiskodukaitse (%); N = those who are not yet members of the Defence League or related organisations)



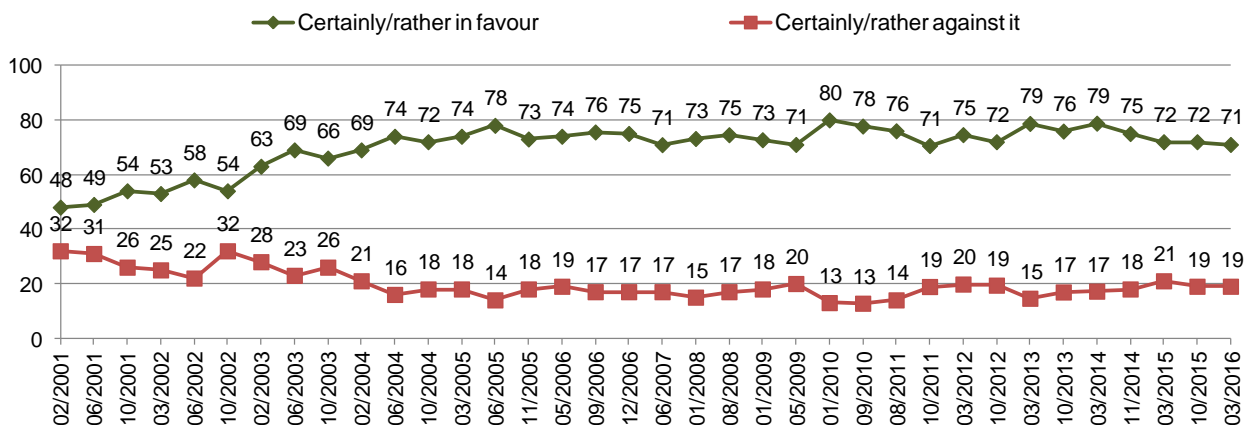
7 NATO

The seventh, NATO-related chapter provides an overview of the population’s attitude towards Estonia’s membership in NATO, their views on the role of NATO in providing security to Estonia and the ways in which the steps NATO has taken to ensure Estonian security in the world’s new security situation are assessed.

7.1 Attitude towards membership in NATO

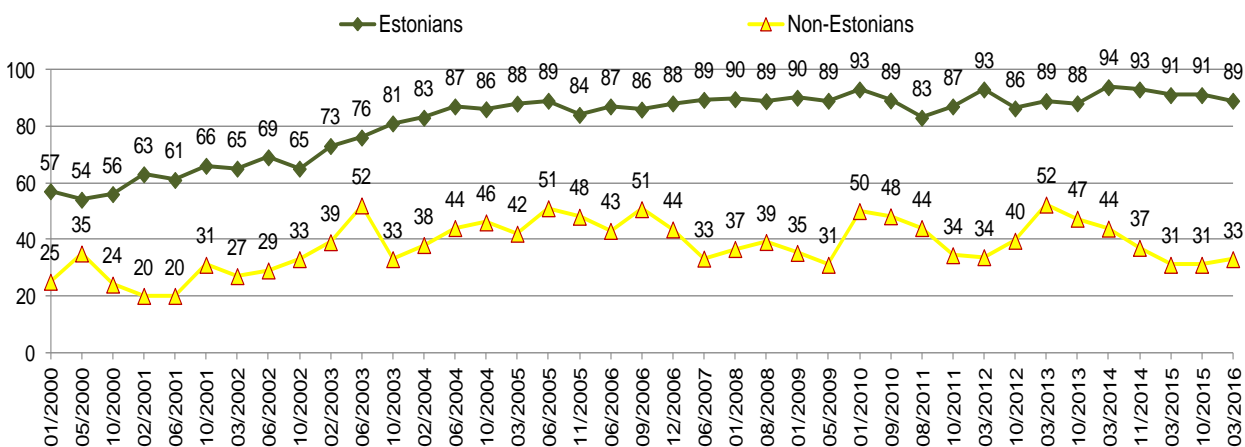
In March 2016, the Estonian membership in NATO was favoured by 71% of the population, with 40% being certainly in favour of the membership and 31% being rather in favour. 19% of Estonian residents are against NATO membership; one tenth of the population have no view in this matter (Figure 44).

Figure 44. Attitudes towards joining NATO / membership in NATO, comparison of 2001–2016; (%; N = all respondents)



While 89% of the Estonian-speaking respondents are in favour of NATO membership, the indicator for the Russian-speaking respondents is considerably lower, only 33 per cent. 48% of the Russian-speaking respondents are against Estonia belonging to NATO and 18% have no specific opinion in this matter (Figure 45).

Figure 45. Proportion of the proponents of joining NATO / membership in NATO; comparison of the Estonian-speaking and foreign-speaking population 2000–2016 (% of those certainly and rather in favour of the aforementioned; N = all respondents)



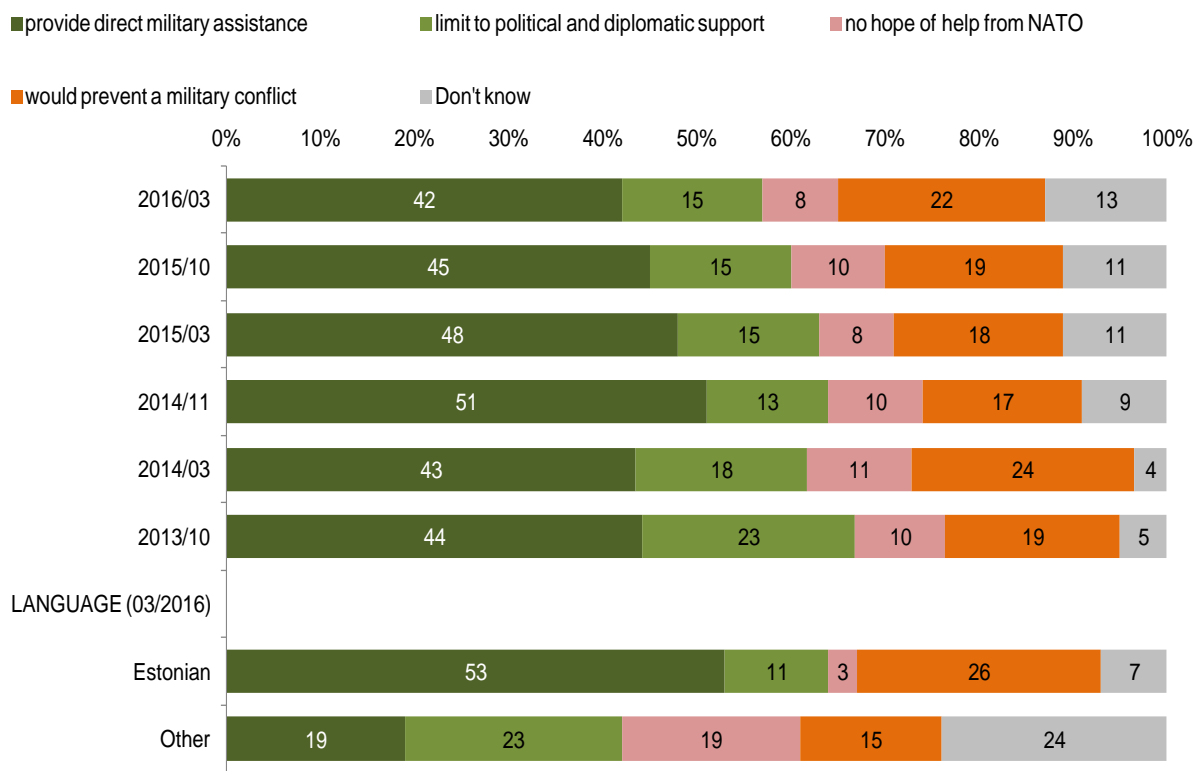
7.2 NATO's assistance in the event of a potential threat

As previously revealed, the majority of the population considers NATO Estonia's main security guarantee (chapter 3.5). Nevertheless, in the past years, the general public has for several times brought up the question of whether NATO's Article 5 really is going to be invoked in case of a real military threat. Over the years, people have become increasingly more certain that NATO will provide military aid in the event of Estonia facing a military threat. An increase in the actual presence of allied forces in Estonia has undoubtedly contributed to this sense of security.

42 per cent of the respondents find that NATO would provide direct military assistance in the event of an impending threat to Estonia, 15% believe that NATO would limit its aid only to political and diplomatic support. 22% think that membership in NATO would be able to prevent a military conflict completely and 8% believe that there is no hope for help from NATO. (Figure 46)

The Estonian-speaking respondents' trust in NATO's support is considerably higher than that of the Russian-speaking respondents, which very likely originates from the attitude towards the membership in the alliance. While 53% of Estonians believe in NATO's military support, the same belief is shared by only 19% of the Russian-speaking population. The same proportion of the Russian-speaking respondents believe that there is no hope for help from NATO, more trust is placed in NATO providing political and diplomatic aid (23%). Only 3 per cent of Estonians believe that NATO's collective defence does not work.

Figure 46. Role of NATO in ensuring Estonia's security if Estonia is exposed to military threat (%; N = all respondents)

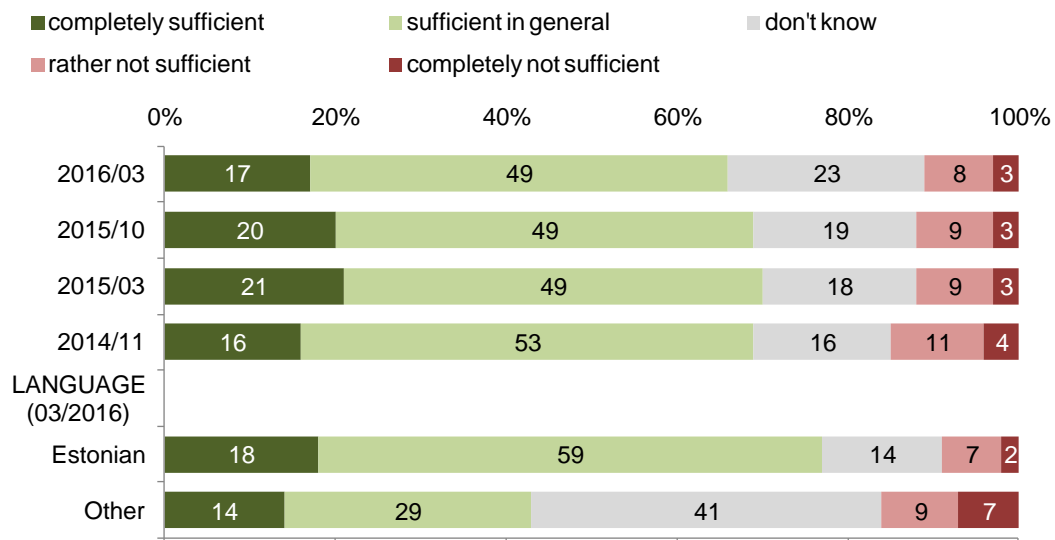


7.3 Assessments to the actions of NATO

Since November 2014 we have also studied the attitude of the Estonian population towards actions already taken by NATO to ensure better security for Estonia.

The respondents were asked whether NATO has taken sufficient measures in today's security situation ([Figure 47](#)) and how the presence of NATO allied forces in Estonia is perceived ([Figure 48](#)).

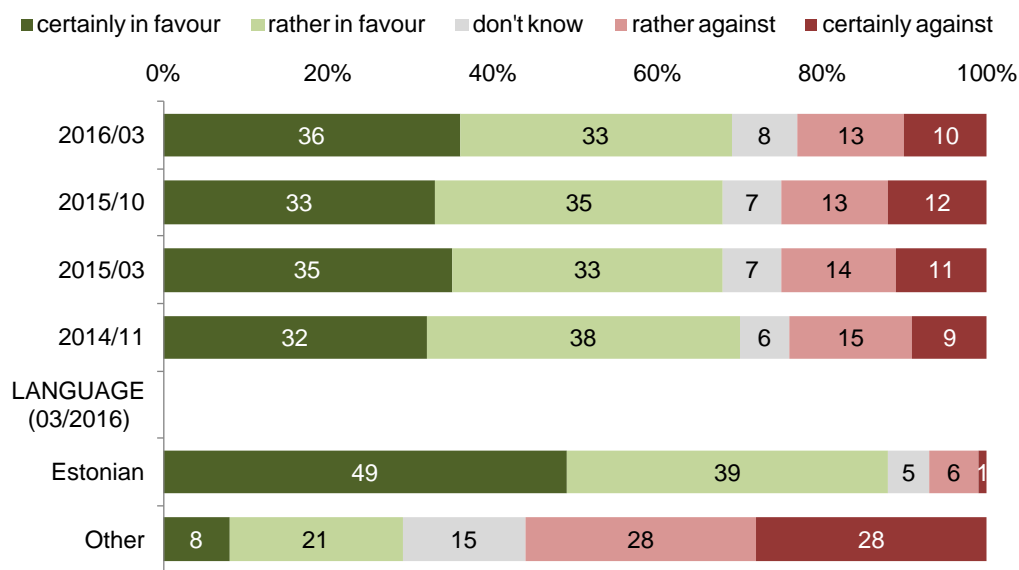
Figure 47. Has NATO taken sufficient measures to ensure the security of Estonia? (%; N = all respondents)



The assessments given to steps taken by NATO for ensuring security in Estonia are predominantly positive, **66% of the surveyed**, including 77% of Estonians, **consider these completely sufficient or generally sufficient**. NATO's activities are seen as sufficient by 43% of the Russian-speaking respondents, yet the proportion of those who are not able to express an opinion is almost equal.

However, **Russian-speaking respondents are predominantly negative about the presence of NATO allied forces in Estonia (56%)**, whereas almost 90% of Estonians are in favour of it.

Figure 48. What is your attitude towards the presence of NATO allied forces in Estonia? (%; N = all respondents)



8 International military operations

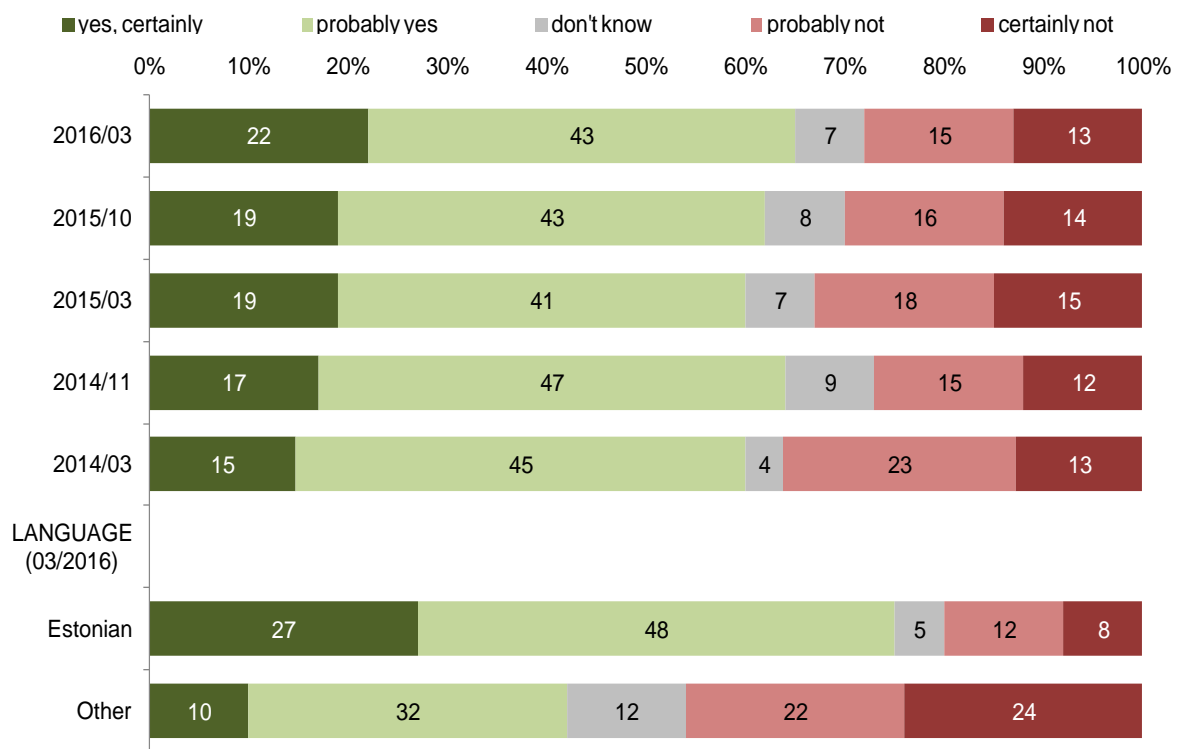
The eighth chapter maps the attitudes towards participation in international military operations: how necessary Estonia's participation is in such operations according to the population, what the reasons for Estonia to participate are and what the respondents' attitudes towards the Estonian Defence Forces' operations as part of NATO, European Union and UN units are.

8.1 Attitude towards participation in international operations

65% of the population of Estonia believe that the Estonian Defence Forces units should—in accordance with their capabilities—participate in international military operations; 22% of respondents feel that it should be certainly done (Figure 49). 28% of the Estonian population see no need for participation in international operations.

There is a significant difference between the Estonian and Russian-speaking respondents' attitudes towards international military operations. 75 per cent of Estonians are in favour of participating in international operations, only 42 per cent of Russian-speaking respondents feel the same. These figures have also changed very little in the last few years.

Figure 49. Should Estonian units participate in international military operations?
(%; N = all respondents)



8.2 Arguments for participation in international operations

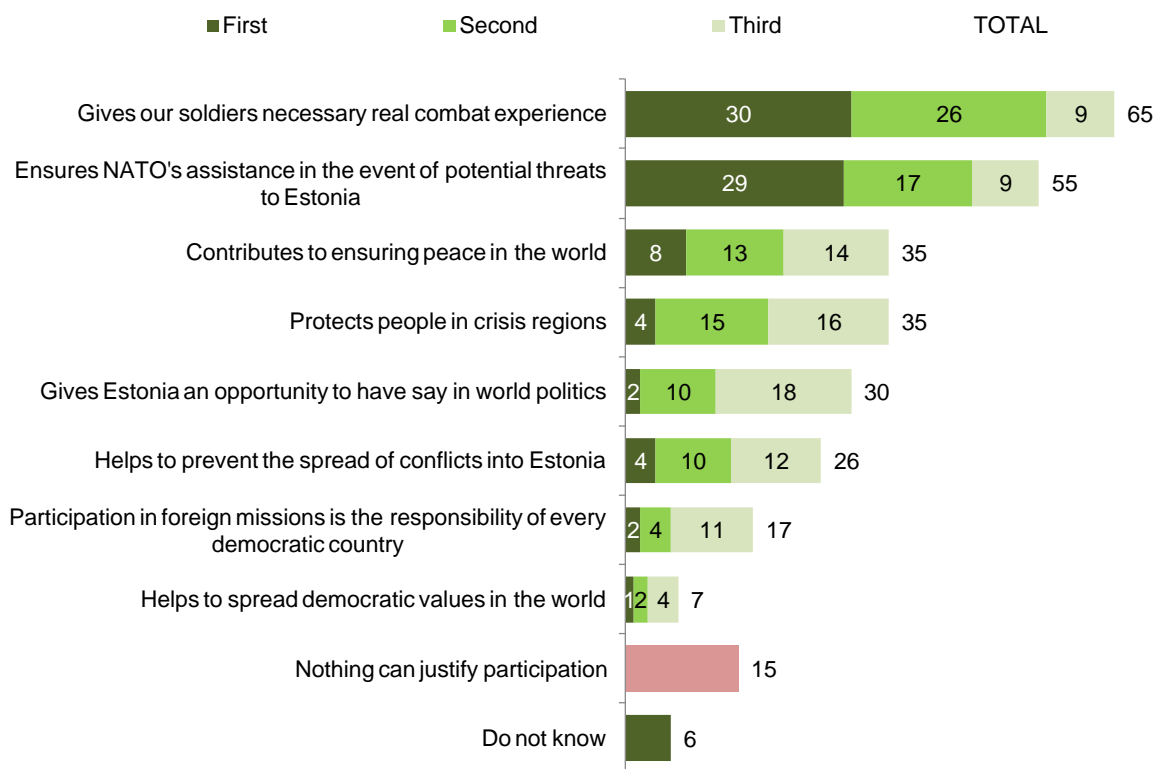
Respondents were asked to select the three most important reasons why Estonia should participate in international military operations from a list provided to them. The results were fixed in sequence, i.e., the most important reason first, followed by the second and the third.

Two of the most important reasons were almost equally highlighted: **30 per cent** of the respondents consider participation in international operations the most important because it **it gives our soldiers necessary real combat experience** and **29 per cent** because it **ensures NATO's assistance in the event of a potential threat to Estonia**. Our soldiers receiving combat experience remains the most significant argument if the three most important reasons are summarised (Figure 50).

Other arguments for participating in international operations highlighted by the respondents include contributing to world peace (one of the three most important reasons according to 35%), protecting people in crisis areas (35%) and Estonia taking the opportunity to have a say in world politics (30%).

28% of the respondents place preventing the spread of conflicts into Estonia among the three most important arguments.

Figure 50. The most important reasons why Estonia should participate in international military operations (%; N = all respondents)



Similarly to the differences in the Estonian and Russian-speaking respondents' attitudes towards participation in international military operations, their understanding of the reasons for participating in said operations differs as well.

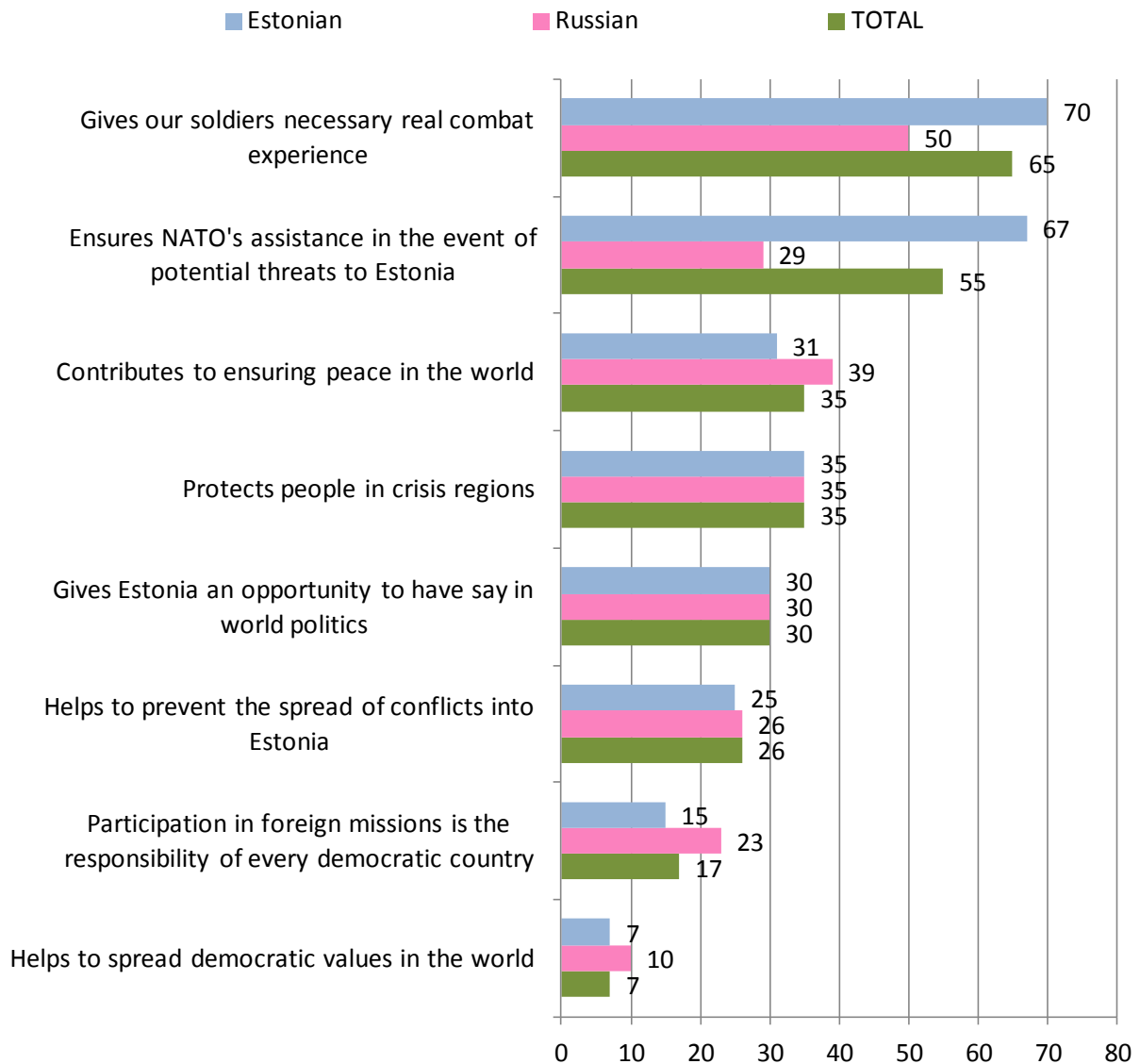
The argument that participation in military operations ensures NATO's assistance in case of a military conflict remains less relevant for the Russian-speaking respondents. While 37% of Estonians name it as the first reason with 67% considering it among the three most important arguments, the respective indicators for Russian-speaking respondents are only 12% and 29%.

32% of Estonians name combat experience as the first reason and 70% place it among the three most important reasons and while Russian-speaking respondents believe this motive to be the most important as well, it is highlighted only by 24% and 50% respectively.

However, compared to Estonians, Russian-speaking respondents place more value on so-called humanitarian arguments: contributing to world peace, protecting people in crisis areas, spreading democratic values. Russian-speaking respondents also support the view that participation in military operations is part of a democratic state's duties to a greater extent than Estonians do (Figure 51).

31% of Russian-speaking respondents believe that none of the named arguments justify participation in foreign military operations.

Figure 51. The most important reasons why Estonia should participate in international military operations (%) ; N = all respondents)

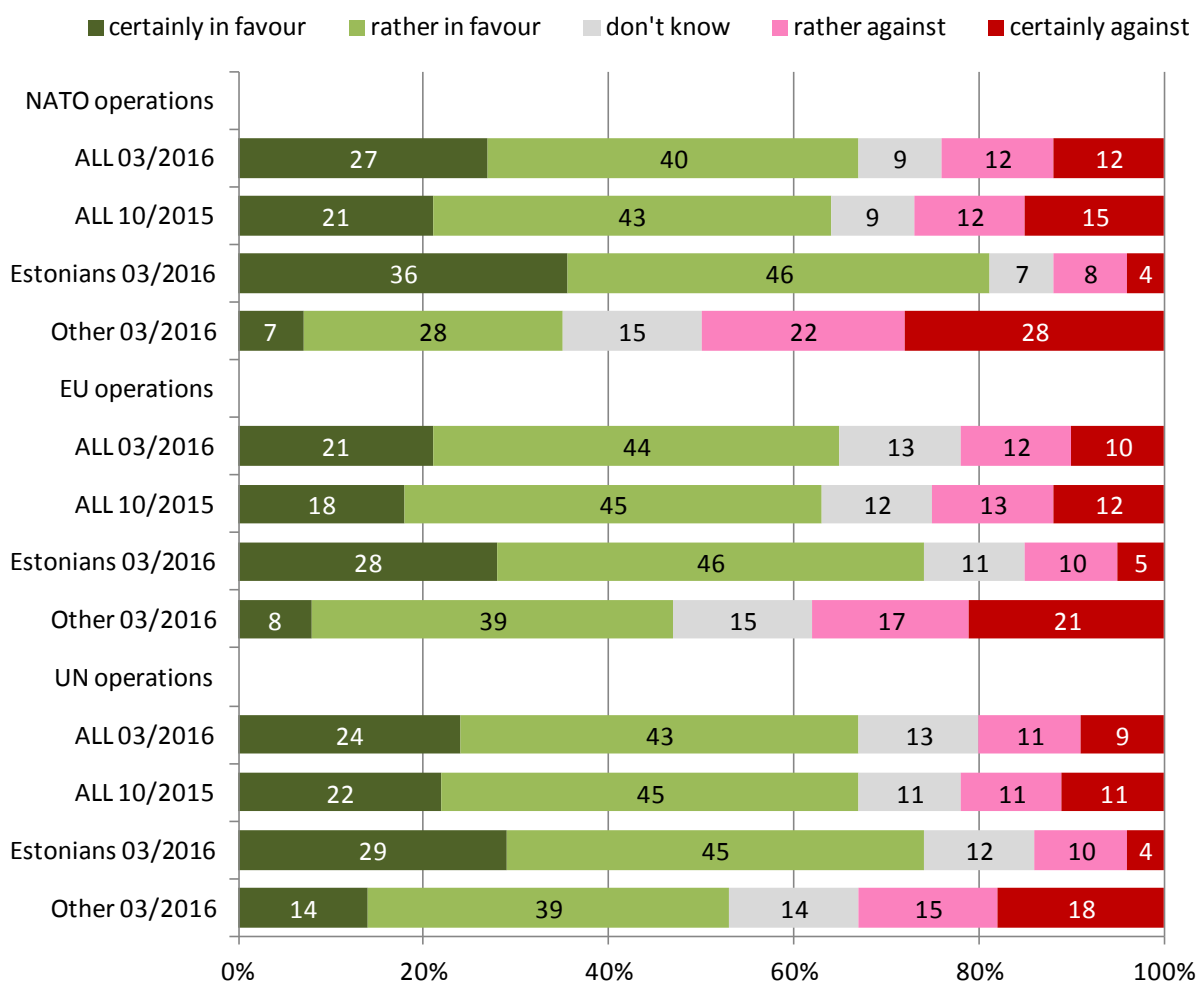


8.3 Attitudes towards participation in NATO, EU and UN operations

Since Estonian servicemen have participated in military operations as part of NATO, EU and UN units, we were curious of whether there is a difference in the public's attitudes towards operations conducted under the auspices of different organisations.

There are no great differences compared to the survey conducted in October 2015. Russian-speaking respondents clearly continue to favour participation in the UN and EU missions over those of NATO (Figure 52).

Figure 52. Attitudes towards the units of Estonian Defence Forces participating in international operations
(%; N = all respondents)



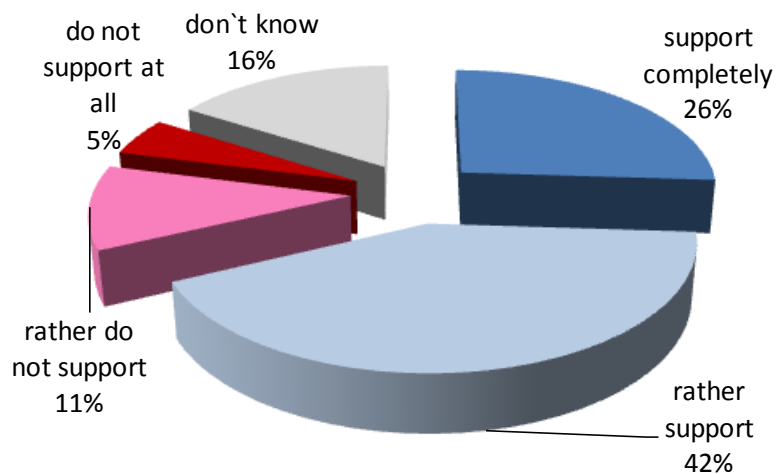
8.4 Attitudes towards a common border service for the European Union

Since the European migrant crisis has deepened the cooperation between the EU countries' police and border service, there has been increasing talks of the necessity to create a common border service for the European Union. The public would greenlight the creation of such structure: 68 per cent supports the creation of a common border service while 16 per cent of the respondents oppose it.

The idea appears to be more obscure for Russian-speaking respondents—23 per cent are not able to form an opinion in this matter. 60 per cent, however, take a supportive stance (72 per cent of Estonians).

Figure 53. Attitudes towards the proposal of a common border service for the European Union

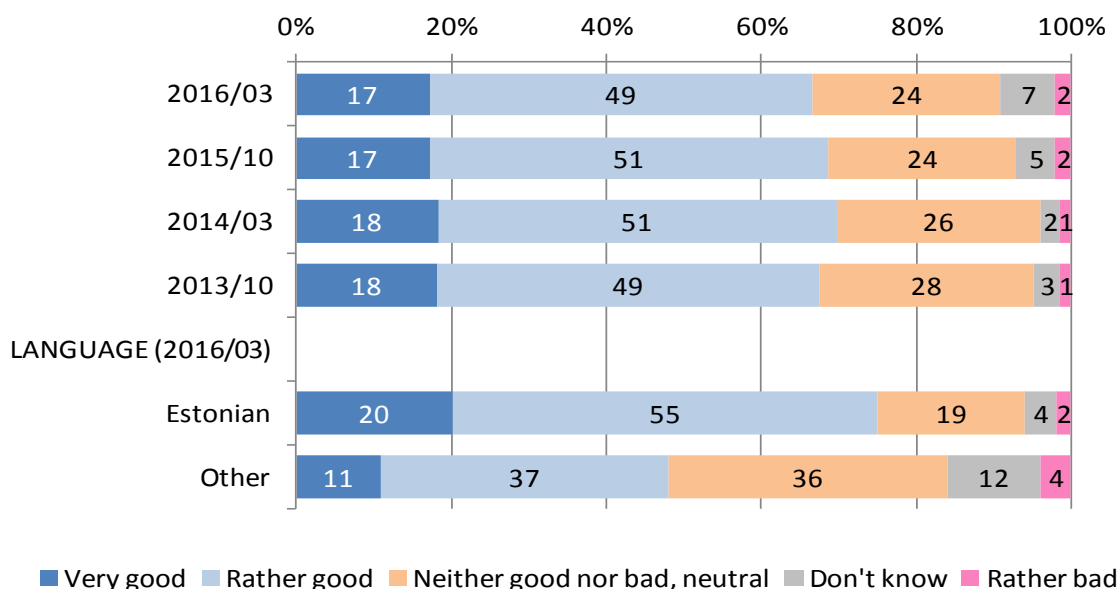
(%; N = all respondents)



9 Attitudes towards professional servicemen

The attitudes towards professional servicemen continue to be positive. **66% of the respondents, including as many as three fourths of Estonians, have a very positive or generally positive attitude towards active servicemen** (Figure 54).

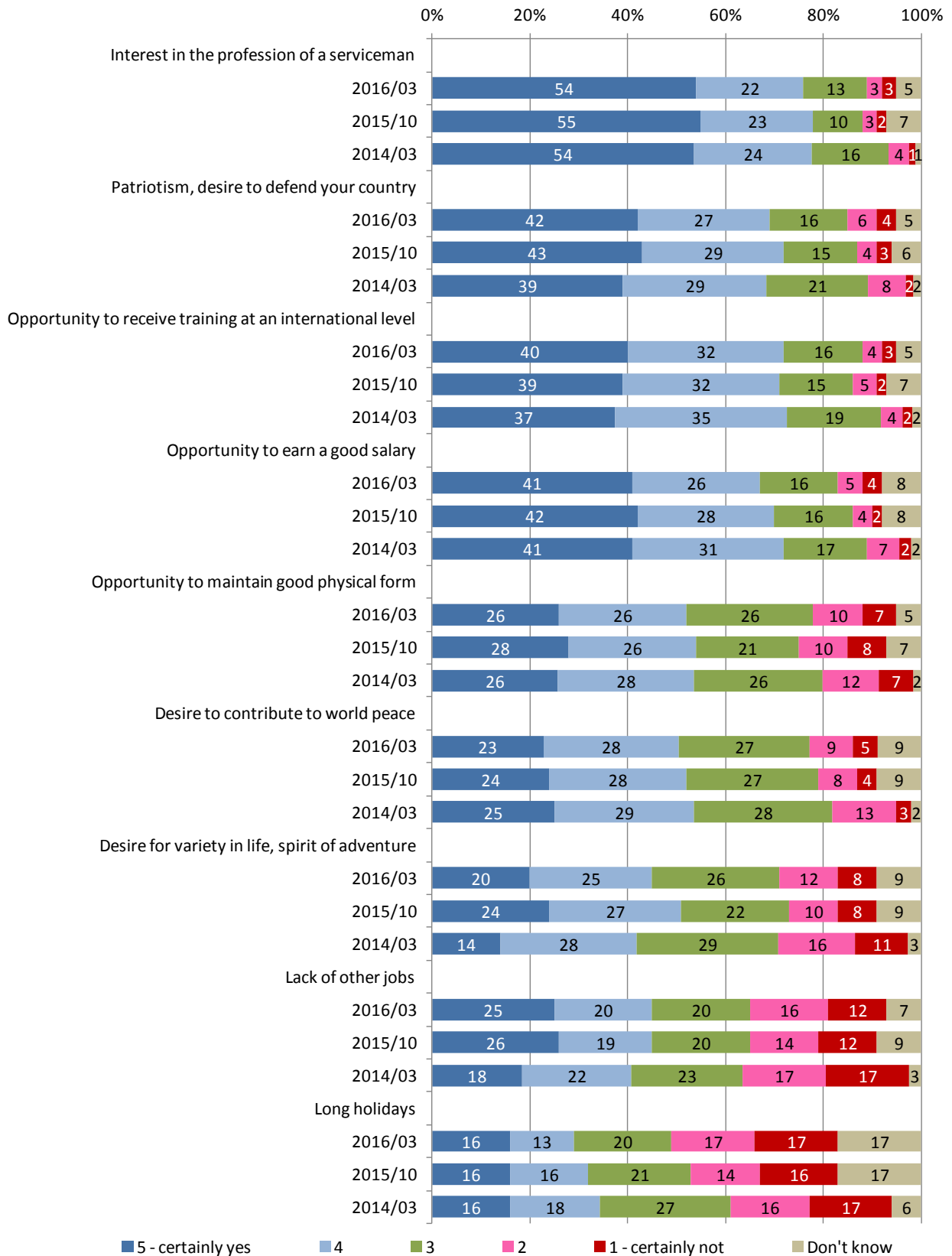
Figure 54. Attitudes towards professional servicemen (%; N = all respondents)



Once again, we asked the public's opinion about the reasons of becoming a professional serviceman.

Interest in the profession of a serviceman and patriotism are considered to be the main motives for becoming a professional serviceman. Factors related to self-improvement are also considered important: becoming a serviceman is seen as an **opportunity to receive training and maintain good physical form**. **Good salary** holds the fourth place in the ranking of importance. The lack of other jobs and long holidays are regarded less important (Figure 55).

Figure 55. Motives for becoming a professional serviceman (%) ; N = all respondents)

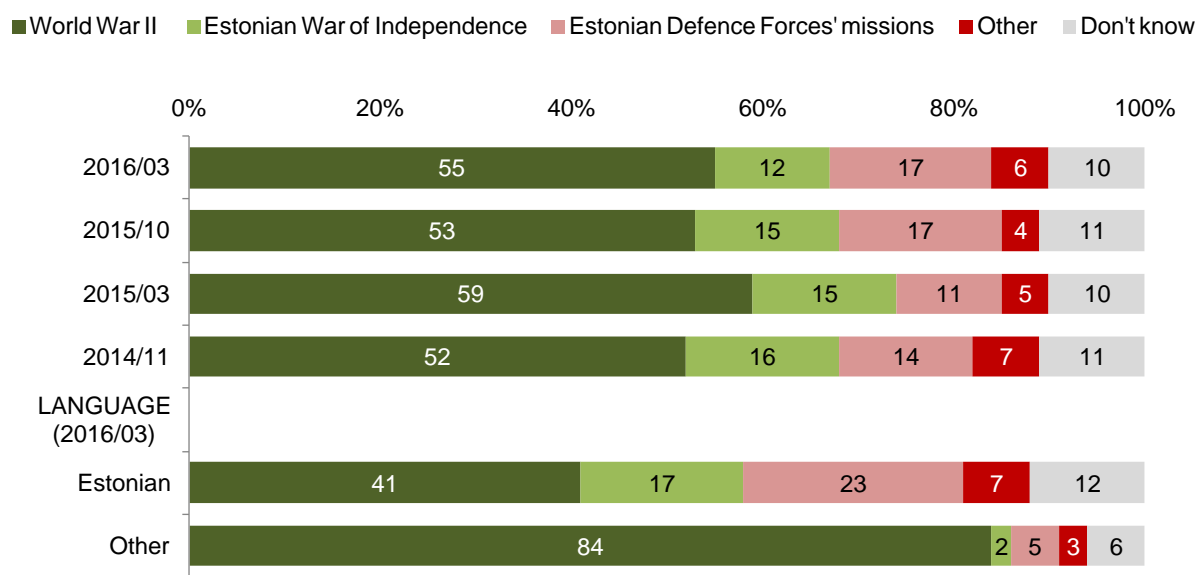


10 Veteran policy

In the last four surveys, respondents were also asked whether they associate the word “veteran” primarily with World War II, the Estonian War of Independence, or the Estonian Defence Forces’ operations in Kosovo, Afghanistan and Iraq. The responses show that more than a half of the population associates **the word “veteran” primarily with World War II** (Figure 56). As many as 84 per cent of the Russian-speaking respondents associate veterans with World War II (41% of Estonians).

17% of Estonians associate the word “veteran” with the Estonian War of Independence (even though none of those veterans are alive now) and the **proportion of those who associate the word “veteran” with servicemen who have participated in the Estonian Defence Forces’ operations shows a slight increase** (from 16 to 23 per cent within a year). Only five per cent of the Russian-speaking respondents consider the servicemen who have participated in those operations veterans. Those 6 per cent of respondents who claimed that the word “veteran” is associated with some other option most often noted that the word “veteran” should refer to the participants of all wars.

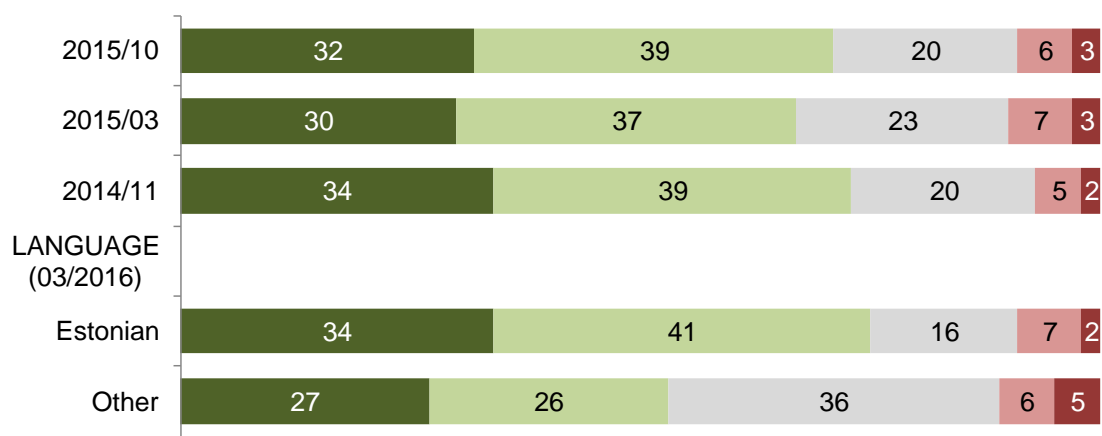
Figure 56. What are the primary associations with the word "veteran" (%) ; N = all respondents)



The Veterans’ Day held on 23 April (St. George’s Day) each year since 2012 **is considered certainly necessary or rather necessary by the majority of the respondents (68 per cent)**—no matter what they consider the meaning of the word “veteran” to be (Figure 57). Russian-speaking population’s awareness of this day is low—36 per cent do not know anything about this day or cannot say anything about it. 53 per cent of Russian-speaking respondents considered the celebration of this day necessary. 75 per cent of Estonians are in favour of celebrating the Veterans’ Day.

Figure 57. Attitude towards the celebration of Veterans' Day (%; N = all respondents)

■ certainly necessary ■ rather necessary ■ don't know ■ rather unnecessary ■ completely unnecessary



11 Information related to national defence

This chapter includes the results of two national defence information related questions: how necessary is national defence instruction in schools and how many of the respondents have read the supplement *Riigikaitse* of the daily *Postimees*.

11.1 National defence instruction in schools

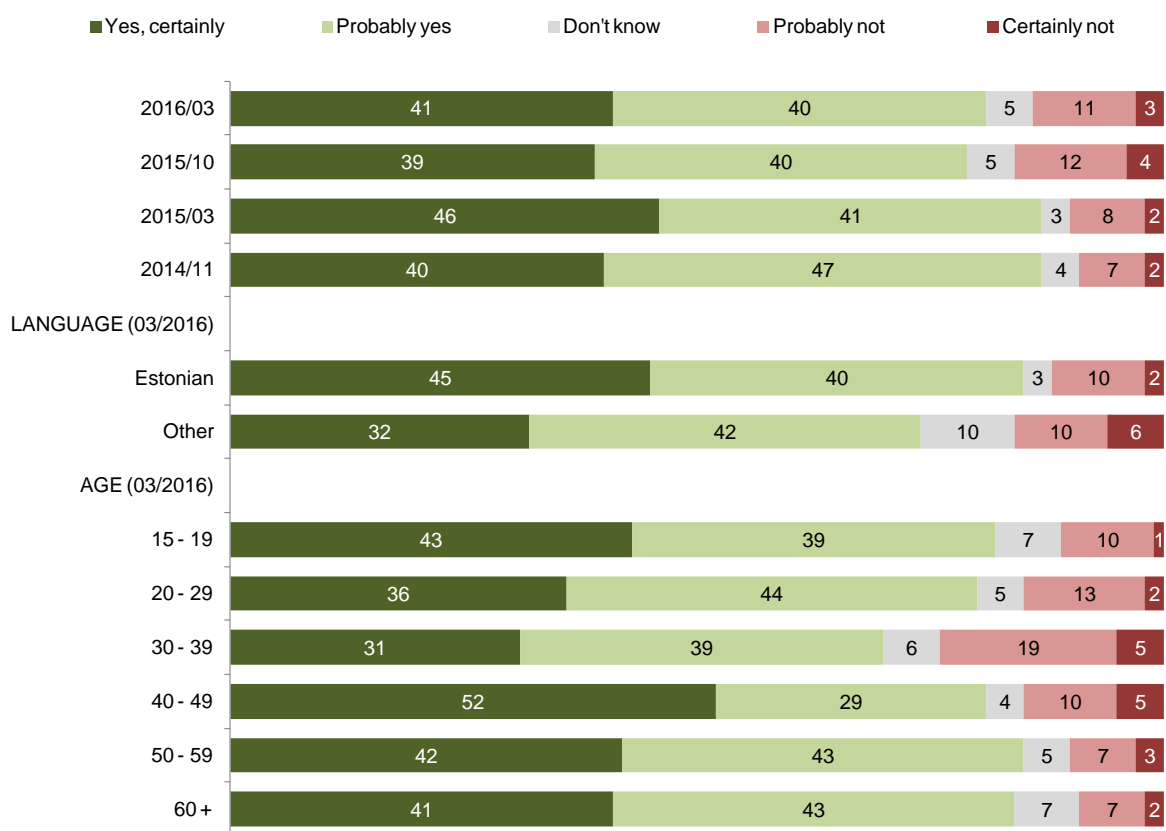
The attitude towards national defence instruction in schools has been consistently positive among the Estonian population—about four fifths of the respondents have found it certainly necessary or probably necessary starting from the year 2008.

In autumn 2014, we made slight changes to the wording of the question which is now as follows: **“Should it be possible to get national defence instruction in all educational institutions providing secondary education?”**

The majority of the respondents continues to support national defence instructions in schools—81 per cent of the respondents consider it certainly necessary or probably necessary (Figure 58). Estonian and Russian-speaking respondents’ support to national defence instruction differs by 10 per cent.

The support for national defence instruction is also predominant if we view specific age groups.

Figure 58. Attitude towards the necessity of national defence instruction in all educational institutions providing secondary education (%) ; N = all respondents)



11.2 Supplement *Riigikaitse* of the daily *Postimees*

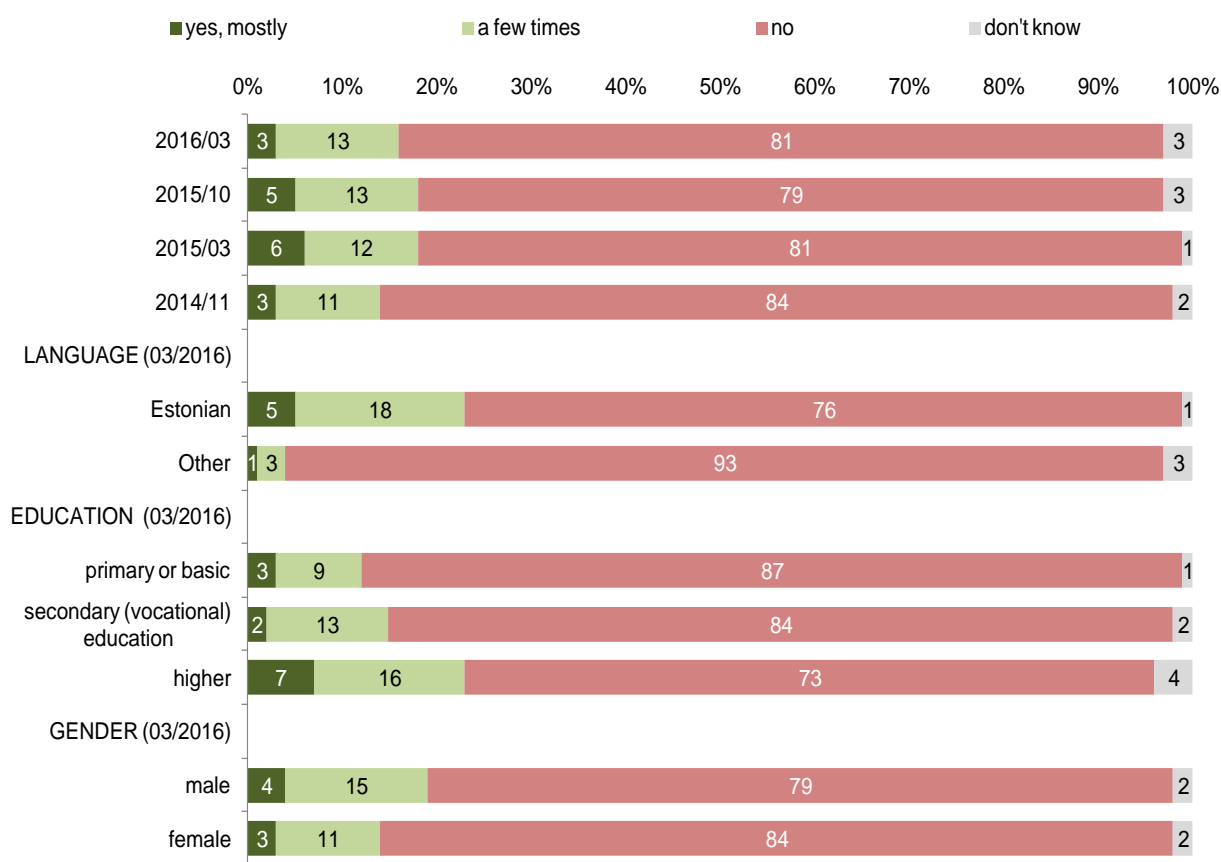
In addition to the general mapping of the populations' media consumption, the questionnaire included a direct question regarding an information source related to national defence. Starting from November 2014, the question involves the readership of the supplement *Riigikaitse* of the daily *Postimees*.

16 per cent of the respondents had read the supplement *Riigikaitse* of the daily *Postimees*, 3 per cent of whom read it in most cases and 13 per cent read it once or a couple of times.

There has been no increase in the readership of *Riigikaitse* compared to the March survey.

As it is an Estonian-language edition, it was rather expected that there were more readers among the Estonian respondents compared to the non-Estonians (23% and 4% respectively). Furthermore, there are more readers among people with higher education (23%) and men (19%).

Figure 59. Reading the supplement *Riigikaitse* of the daily *Postimees* (%; N = all respondents)



12 Media consumption

The questionnaire included a large section on media consumption with the main purpose of observing the relationship between the population's attitude on national defence and their contact with different media channels. This task requires secondary data analysis, which is not the objective of the current report.

The following presents the survey results describing the respondents' engagement with different television channels and radio stations as well as visits to internet portals in the form of simple frequency distributions.

Figure 60. Visits to news portals and online newspapers
(%; N = all respondents)

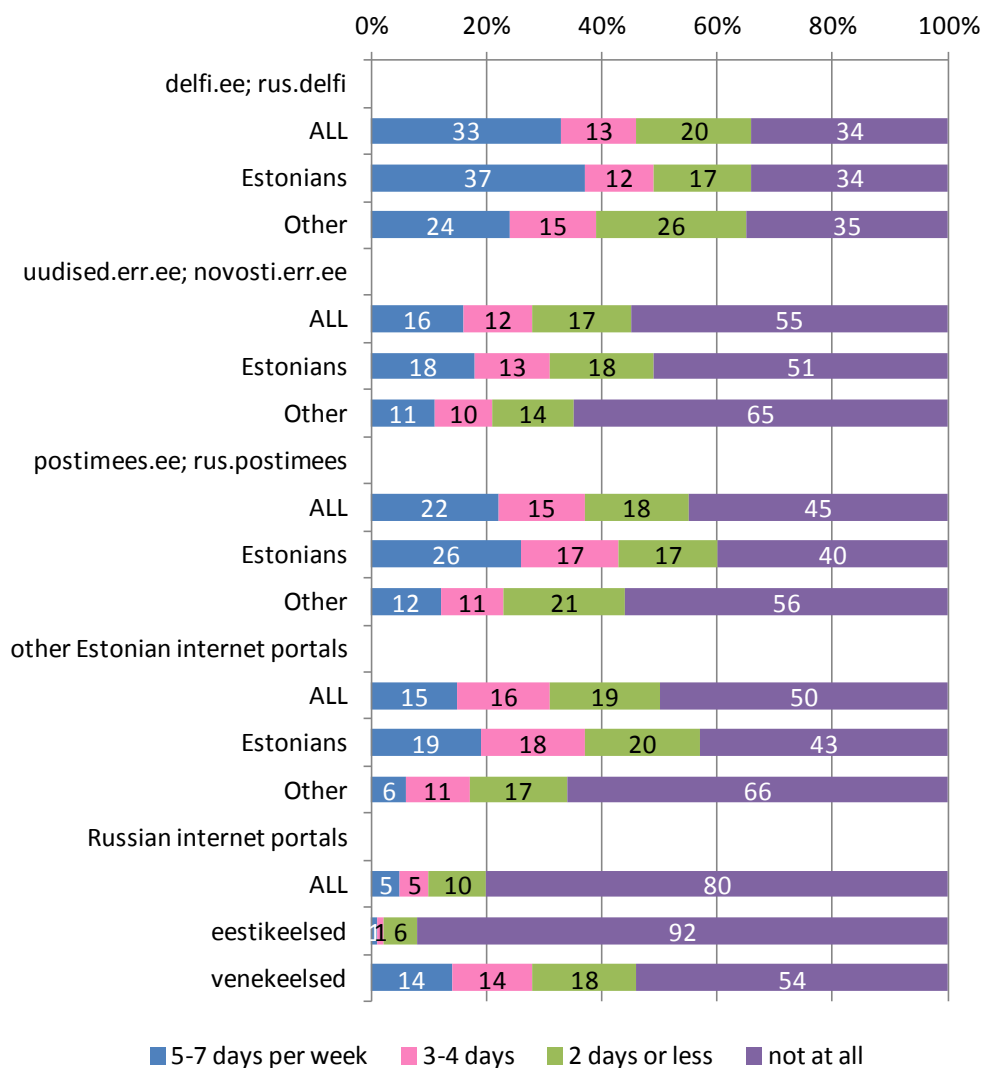


Figure 61. Engagement with television channels and radio stations (%; N = all respondents)

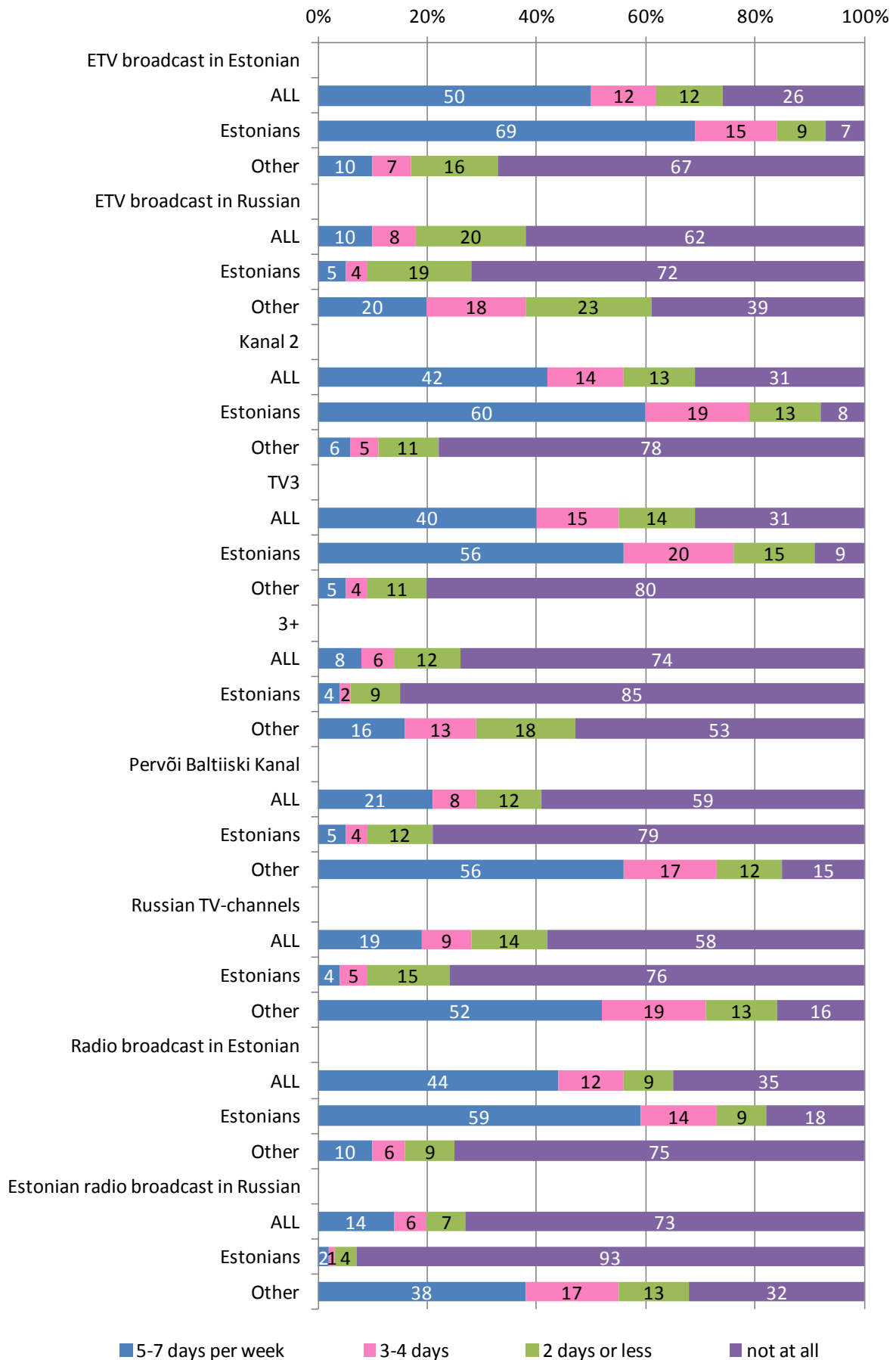


Figure 62. Reading newspapers—on the basis of last six issues (%; N = Estonian-speaking respondents)

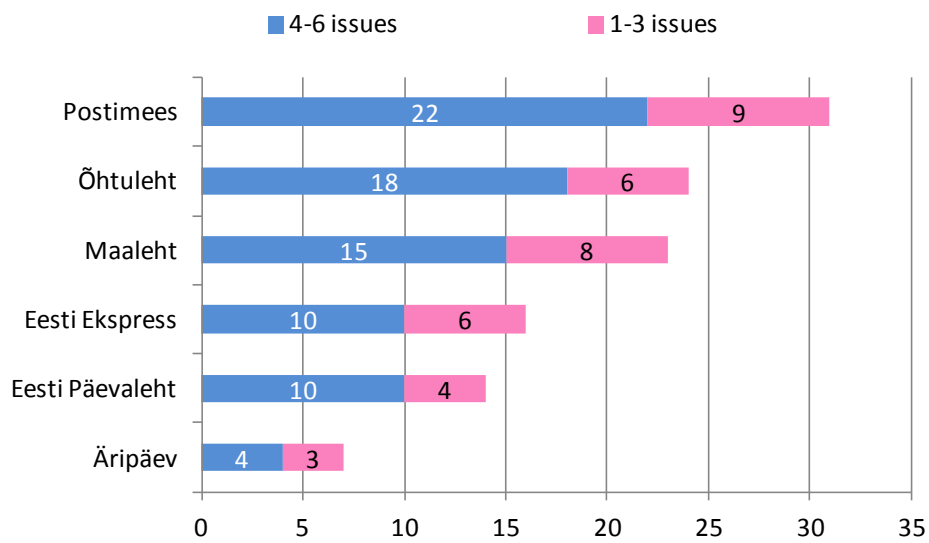
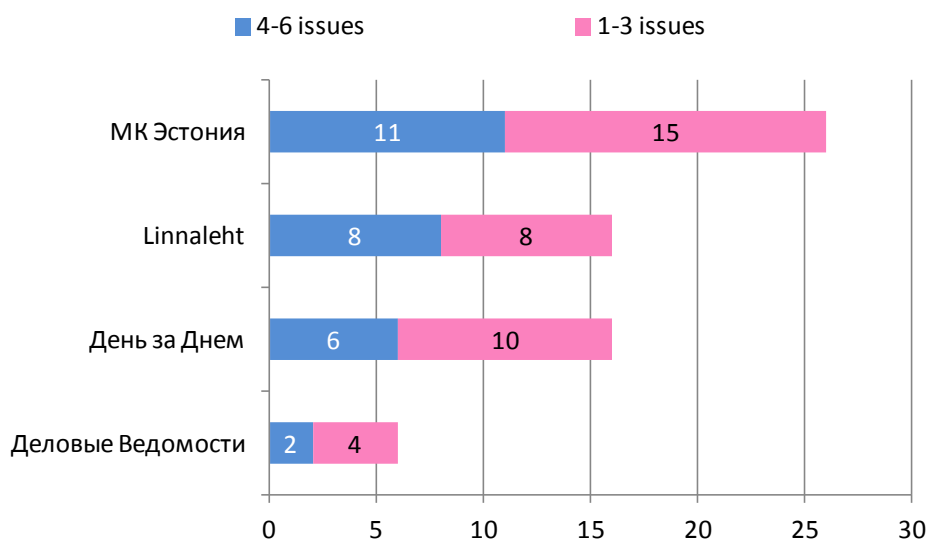


Figure 63. Reading newspapers—on the basis of last six issues (%; N = Russian-speaking respondents)



ANNEXES

1 Questionnaire

2 Summary tables on responses

3 Frequency tables with the responses of Estonians

4 Frequency tables with the responses of non-Estonians