



PUBLIC OPINION AND NATIONAL DEFENCE

Ordered by: Estonian Ministry of Defence

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	2
SUMMARY	4
BACKGROUND OF THE SURVEY	9
1 Sample	9
2 Survey	10
3 Performers.....	12
RESULTS OF THE SURVEY	13
1 General attitudes towards life in Estonia and pride in Estonia	13
2 Confidence in institutions	15
2.1 Confidence in institutions	15
2.1 Confidence in defence structures.....	17
3 Security and threats	19
3.1 Security in the world.....	19
3.2 Security in Estonia	21
3.3 Threats to world security.....	22
3.4 Threats to Estonia	25
3.5 Media coverage of security threats	28
3.6 Security guarantees	29
4 Defence willingness among the population of Estonia	30
4.1 Attitudes towards the necessity of resistance.....	30
4.2 Willingness to participate in defence activities	32
4.3 Desire to leave Estonia in the event of a military threat.....	35
4.4 Ability to act in the event of a potential attack.....	37
4.5 On which topics is more information required	38
5 Defence capability of Estonia	39
5.1 The importance of national defence capability among other areas of public interest that need improving	39
5.2 Assessment of the defence capability of Estonia	40
5.3 Views on the volume of defence expenditures.....	41
5.4 Assessment of state activities in view of the development of national defence.....	43
5.5 Assessments on the defence of the Estonian border.....	44
5.6 Assessment of the security of digital services and information systems of Estonia's e-state.....	45
6 Organisation of Estonian national defence.....	46
6.1 Attitude towards conscript service	46
6.2 Attitudes towards the professional defence forces.....	51
6.3 Attitudes towards professional servicemen and members of the Defence League.....	52
6.4 Tasks of the Defence League.....	54
6.5 Exposure to national defence structures and opinions on joining the Defence League.....	56
7 NATO	58
7.1 Attitude towards membership in NATO	58
7.2 NATO's assistance in the event of a potential threat	61
7.3 Assessments to the actions of NATO.....	62
7.4 Assessments on the effect of the NATO battle group stationed in Estonia.....	63
7.5 Assessment of NATO battlegroup troops.....	64

8	International military operations	66
8.1	Attitude towards participation in international operations.....	66
8.2	Arguments for participation in international operations	67
8.3	Attitudes towards participation in NATO, EU and UN operations	69
8.4	Opinion on the defence co-operation of the European Union	70
9	Veteran policy	71
9.1	Primary associations with the word "veteran"	71
10	National defence instruction in schools	73
11	Media consumption	74
12	Importance of information channels	80

SUMMARY

- In October 2018, upon 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 1,215 residents of Estonia from the age of 15+ were interviewed. This was already the 44th survey in monitoring public opinion, which was started in 2000.
- Assessments given to changes that have taken place in Estonian life have improved steadily since 2015. 42% of respondents believe that life in Estonia has improved while 18% think that the situation has worsened. While the share of positive answers given by Estonians has not changed significantly over the years (41% in October), assessments to changes in Estonian life by people of other nationalities have improved significantly compared to the previous survey (signs of improvement are seen by 45%).
- The proportion of people who feel proud and happy over living in Estonia very often or often enough has increased a little over the course of the last three surveys: if 55% of respondents gave such an answer a year ago, this spring it was 59% and this October 61%.

The proportion of Estonian respondents who feel proud and happy very often or often enough has been more or less stable fluctuating between 63 and 68%. However, we saw a significant increase of such answers (to 49%) given by non-Estonian respondents in October, which is over 10% more than a year ago.

- Of the 10 institutions the reliability of which the respondents were asked to assess, the Rescue Services rank the highest in trustworthiness (95% trusts them completely or rather trusts them). They are followed by the Police (86%), the Defence Forces (75%), the Defence League (72%), and the President of the Republic (71%). Compared to several past surveys the trustworthiness of political institutions rose to the positive side already in fall 2016 after change in government and it is still growing. In October, 64% had confidence in the prime minister, 57% in the government and 54% in the parliament (*Riigikogu*). NATO and the European Union are deemed as trustworthy by 63 and 64% of the respondents respectively. The difference in attitude towards NATO between Estonians and non-Estonians is still vast: NATO is trusted by 75% of Estonians and only 37% of respondents of other nationalities. The situation is similar regarding the Defence Forces (trusted by 85% and 54% respectively) and the Defence League (84% and 46%).
- The belief that the world is going to become more unstable and the likelihood of military conflicts will grow exceeded 70% in spring 2015. As from fall of 2017, when the increase of instability was assumed by 66% of the respondents, the sense of threat has started to subside—in March 2018, an increase in lack of security was predicted by 61%, in this survey 52% of the respondents. 13% of the respondents think that the world will become more secure in the coming decade and 24% believe that the situation will remain unchanged.
- Respondents perceive the security situation in Estonia to be somewhat more positive than that of the world in general: 30% of respondents believe that in 10 years, the residents of Estonia will be living in more secure conditions than they do now; only 19% predict that the situation will grow more unsafe and 35% think that the situation will remain unchanged.
- While in 2015 Russia's activities to restore its authority were still perceived as the main threat to world security, the actions of the Islamic State have been deemed more dangerous henceforth. However, this survey did not present the option of the actions of the Islamic State to the respondents, in its place including cyber-attacks and the spread of misinformation and fake news. The actions of terror organisations are considered the most important (87% consider it certainly or to some degree dangerous). Cyber-attacks are considered to be just as dangerous (85%). The migration of refugees and asylum seekers to Europe is also seen as a threat to world peace (86%), and the spread of misinformation and fake news is the fourth most dangerous (81%).

A worldwide economic crisis (81%) and global climate change (77%) occupy fifth and sixth place on the ranking of threats. Although Russia's attempts to restore its authority in neighbouring countries received more assessments of "certainly" than the previously mentioned ones, together with the answer "to some degree" the Russian threat has retreated to almost the end of the ranking of threat factors (70%). Though in general, all the threat factors listed in the survey are deemed as threatening the security of the world in the view of more than 60% of the respondents.

- There are four main threats to Estonia, the realisation of which in the following years is considered probable or rather probable by more than half of the respondents: 69% of residents think that there may be an organised attack against the Estonian state information systems. Second place was taken by the newly introduced spread of fake news (very or rather probable in the view of 65% of the respondents). 58% believe that some foreign country may interfere in Estonian politics or economy in order to influence these in their own interests. An extensive marine pollution is considered very or rather probable by 53% of the respondents.

An extensive or limited military attack against Estonia is considered very or rather probable by 18–20% of the respondents.

- Answering the question how they assess media coverage regarding the topic of security threats—does the Estonian media write and talk about military threats to Estonia too much and often, just enough, or rather too little—more than half of Estonians (56%) found that military threats to Estonia are talked and written about just enough. Russian speaking respondents think that this topic is covered too much (43%) but the proportion of respondents who think that has decreased. 11% of respondents think that military threats are talked about too little (13% of Estonian- and 6% of Russian-speaking respondents).
- NATO membership continues to be considered Estonia's main security guarantee (57% mention it as one of the three most important factors). In October's survey, we included the category of "defence will of residents", which rose to be the second most important security guarantee with 39%. The development of Estonia's independent defence capability holds 3rd place with 29%. These three factors are followed by, mainly due to the influence of respondents of other nationalities, cooperation and good relations with Russia, which is named among the three most important factors by 46% of non-Estonian respondents and only 15% of Estonian-speaking respondents. Compared to Russian-speaking respondents, Estonians mention more frequently having good allied relations with the US and a permanent presence of allied forces on Estonian territory; respondents of other nationalities, on the other hand, see membership in international organisations (UN, OSCE) as more important compared to Estonians.
- 79% of respondents consider armed resistance in case of a military attack by a foreign country certainly or probably necessary. Estonian-speaking respondents consider armed resistance more necessary than non-Estonians, but the gap is decreasing. Resistance is deemed certainly necessary by 51% of Estonian-speaking and 42% of Russian-speaking respondents, yet only 12% of the latter do not consider resistance necessary.
- 60% of the population would be willing to participate in defence activities to the best of their abilities and skills: 65% of Estonians and 41% of the Russian-speaking respondents (57% of Russian-speaking citizens of Estonia). Here, the rise of the defence will of the Russian-speaking respondents (primarily citizens) can be observed. 77% of male citizens are ready to participate in national defence.
- In a situation where Estonia is under attack, every fifth person would consider leaving Estonia. The most likely people to leave Estonia would be women (20% certainly or probably) and younger people: 39% of people under 20 would want to leave, 27% of people between 20 and 29 and 28% of people between 30 and 39. 22% of non-Estonians and 16% Estonians would probably leave.
- The population's awareness about behaving in an emergency situation is low and compared to March has declined even more. Only a little over one fifth of respondents have a basic understanding of what they could do to defend the country in such an event, while 70% are rather not informed or certainly not informed.

- In their own words, people would like to have more information on how the public would be informed in case of a threat (46%), how to act in a conflict area as a civilian (34%), how evacuation would be organised (32%), and how to solve first priority domestic and household matters (32%). Male respondents also show slightly greater than average interest in questions related to mobilisation and their responsibilities regarding the participation in national defence.
- In this survey, respondents were asked to select up to five areas of public interest that should receive most attention from the government from a given list. The last time this question was asked was in March 2017. The list involved 14 different topics. The most important ones were to increase the people's well-being (67%), improve access to healthcare services (57%), and raise social confidence (56%). In March 2017, second place in importance was held by ensuring economic development, whereas now, the topic has dropped to fourth place (54%). All other topics are held less importance to the public, strengthening the nation's defence capability comes in with 17% at 10th place out of 14.
- 53% of the respondents find that Estonia can be defended until the arrival of allies' assistance in case of an armed attack by a foreign country. Belief in the defensibility of Estonia is higher among Estonians (59%) and lower among respondents of other nationalities (42%), yet, when the result among Estonians was the same as in March, it rose by 6% among respondents of other nationalities.
- The assessments given to the volume of Estonia's defence expenditures show that the predominant view is that they should remain at the current achieved level (50%). One fifth of the population favours an increase in defence expenditures, and the same percentage supports cuts.
- The proportion of respondents who have provided a positive assessment to the state's activities regarding the development of Estonian national defence has remained around 70% throughout the last three years. This time it was exactly 70%. Estonians have a more positive attitude towards the development of national defence compared to non-Estonians (77% and 54% gave a positive assessment to the development of national defence, respectively).
- The assessments on the protection of the Estonian eastern border were clearly negative in autumn 2014. Yet by spring 2016, they had become overwhelmingly positive. In October 2018, 61% of the respondents gave a positive and 21% a negative assessment on the security of the national border.
- For the first time, the survey includes the topic of the security of the digital services and information systems of Estonia's e-state. Perhaps because cyber threats are viewed as the most likely ones, the assessment on the security of this field is also the least positive: 55% of respondents think that the digital services and information systems of our e-state are very or rather secure, while 22% view their security as bad.
- People in Estonia have had very favouring attitudes towards conscript service for young men throughout the survey period. This is evident in the current survey as well: 92% of respondents believe that young men need to undergo conscript service, with 62% finding it certainly necessary.
- The majority of the respondents (63%) also think that young men with minor health disorders should undergo conscript service with an appropriate training load.
- The majority of the population disapprove of evading conscript service – 20% condemn such behaviour and 44% consider it negative. Younger age groups express higher than average tolerance towards evading conscript service: more than 40% of people under 30 years of age take an understanding or approving stance on evasion.
- In 2013, women were given the opportunity to undergo conscript service voluntarily and this has been gaining increasingly more understanding in the society. Of the three options that describe what women's relationship with conscript service should be like, 78% of respondents chose the option of undergoing conscript service voluntarily. 2% approved of compulsory conscript service for women while 16% held the opinion that women should not undergo conscript service at all.

Estonians and younger respondents have a more contemporary attitude towards gender equality compared to respondents of other nationalities and older respondents. 84% of Estonians think that women should have the opportunity of undergoing conscript service voluntarily, whereas 66% of

non-Estonian respondents agree. 29% of the latter think that women should not enter conscript service at all.

- The respondents who considered voluntary conscript service for women necessary or rather necessary were asked whether this should be done based on a special programme or under the same conditions as men. A rise in the general support towards voluntary conscript service for women has also brought along an increase in the proportion of respondents who believe that women's conscript service should be conducted on the basis of a separate programme—this opinion is held by 61% of the respondents who approve of conscripts service for women, while 35% approve of women undergoing conscript service under the same conditions as young men.
- Almost 80% 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. 13% support abandoning compulsory military service and switching to a fully professional army only.
- 38% of the population have a very positive and 42% a rather positive attitude toward professional servicemen. Only 1% of the respondents feel negatively towards them. Attitude towards professional members of the Defence League is also mostly positive: 36% of respondents feel very positive and 35% rather positive toward them. While there is no difference among Estonians and respondents of other nationalities in their attitude toward servicemen (very or rather positive feelings are equally at 80%), then attitude toward members of the Defence League are more reserved among respondents of other nationalities (82% of Estonians and 51% of non-Estonians).
- According to the population of Estonia, the main tasks of the Defence League is conducting military training and ensuring permanent readiness for national defence—these rank first according to 28% and 24% of the respondents, respectively. Between the three choices, permanent readiness for military defence takes first place (53%) and the second is participating in rescue activities in the event of accidents or disasters (both at 47%).

While Estonians perceive the Defence League's national defence tasks as the most important, the population of other nationalities mainly sees the Defence League as a civil defence organisation, stressing the importance of tasks like participating in rescue activities in the event of accidents and disasters and organising civil defence in emergency situations.

- 4% of the respondents participate in the activities of the Defence League, 29% of the respondents are connected to the Defence League through a family member or friend. If the respondents who do not belong to the organisation were to be presented with a proposal to join the Defence League or its associated organisations, 4% would certainly and 16% probably join. The readiness to join is higher among younger respondents.
- Attitudes towards Estonia's membership in NATO continue to be positive: 76% of the population supports it, which is 5% more than in March. 91% of Estonians and 44% of respondents of other nationalities support the membership in NATO. Compared to March, support for NATO has grown by 12% among non-Estonian respondents.
- In this survey, respondents were allowed to give several answers to the question of what kind of aid Estonia could expect from NATO in the event of a military threat. 53% of the respondents found that NATO would provide direct military aid in the event of a conflict while 42% thought that NATO membership would help Estonia to avoid a military attack entirely. 18% of the respondents thought that NATO members would limit their help to political and diplomatic support while 9% believed that the alliance 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 by the alliance to ensure Estonia's security and which are supported by the general population: 68% of the respondents (78% of Estonians) find that NATO has already done enough to ensure Estonia's security and 72% of the population (89% of Estonians but only 37% of non-Estonian respondents) favour the presence of NATO's allied forces in Estonia.

- The question of whether having NATO battle group troops stationed in Estonia make the country generally more secure or less secure or does it have no real effect either way was answered by 77% of Estonians that the NATO battle group has made Estonia more secure. The majority of non-Estonians (40%) do not see NATO's presence as having an effect on Estonia's security, and 29% feel more secure.
- In October 2017, we wanted to know for the first time which words or phrases the respondents would choose to describe NATO battle group troops currently stationed in Estonia. The results were roughly the same as a year ago. The troops are mostly described with positive words, among which "professional" is repeated the most frequently. It is followed by such descriptions as "friendly", "well-intentioned", "polite", "capable", "committed", and "well informed about Estonia". Only 7% considers the allied troops as indifferent towards Estonia and 4% as untrustworthy.
- 68% of the population believe that the 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 non-Estonians (73% and 57% respectively), though the latter has increased by 10% compared to March.
- Participation in international military operations is considered necessary primarily because it provides our soldiers with necessary real combat experience (mentioned by 66% as one of three reasons) and guarantees NATO's assistance to Estonia in the event of potential threats (49%).
- More than two thirds of the respondents support Estonia's involvement in missions conducted under the aegis of NATO, the European Union, and UN, and in missions based on co-operation of allied countries. Whereas most of Estonians support participation in all missions, most of all NATO missions (82%); the respondents of other nationalities put more weight on under which organisation's aegis the mission is carried out. Non-Estonian respondents favour involvement in the UN missions the most (57% supports totally or rather). Missions carried out on the basis of co-operation of allied countries are supported by 57% and EU missions by 56%. Support for NATO missions is even lower than that (support at 47%).
- If in the last survey, support for establishing an EU joint border guard was at 55% and for EU joint military force at 45%, this time the question concerned the increase of defence co-operation between EU Member States.
The abstractly formulated defence co-operation found more public support than the unambiguously worded proposals for establishment of a joint border guard and military force—it is supported by 75% of the respondents.
- The word "veteran" is strongly associated with the image of World War II—38% of Estonians and 67% of non-Estonians regard veterans as people who took part in the Great Patriotic War. 34% of Estonian speaking respondents (11% of non-Estonians) have adopted the national concept of veteran policy which regards veterans as people who have participated in missions of the Estonian Defence Forces.
- Public support for national defence instruction is comparable to that of compulsory conscription service for young men—it remains very high and stable throughout all surveys. 84% 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.
- The most important information channels for obtaining information on matters of national defence are, predictably, television (very or rather important for 82% of the respondents) and radio (71%), more than half of the respondents also deem news portals (63%) and newspapers (56%) as very or rather important. But direct communication with other people still fits between them (68%), being lower than TV, but almost as important as information obtained via radio.

BACKGROUND OF THE SURVEY

This report has been prepared on the basis of the results of the Omnibus survey carried out by Turu-uuringute AS from 4 till 23 October 2018 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;
- Assessments in connection with potential security risks in Estonia and the world;
- Assessments on Estonia's defence capability;
- Defence willingness among the population and estimated behaviour in the event of potential threats endangering Estonia
- Attitudes towards NATO and its role in ensuring Estonian security
- Attitudes toward the presence of NATO allied forces in Estonia and opinions of the allied troops ;
- Attitudes both towards compulsory conscript service for men and voluntary conscript service for women;
- Attitudes towards the Defence League and understanding its tasks;
- Attitudes in connection with Estonia's participation in international military operations;
- Attitudes towards initial national defence instruction in schools.
- Notions on veteran policy.

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 1,100,881 people (Statistics Estonia, 01.01.2018).

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 generalizations 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%

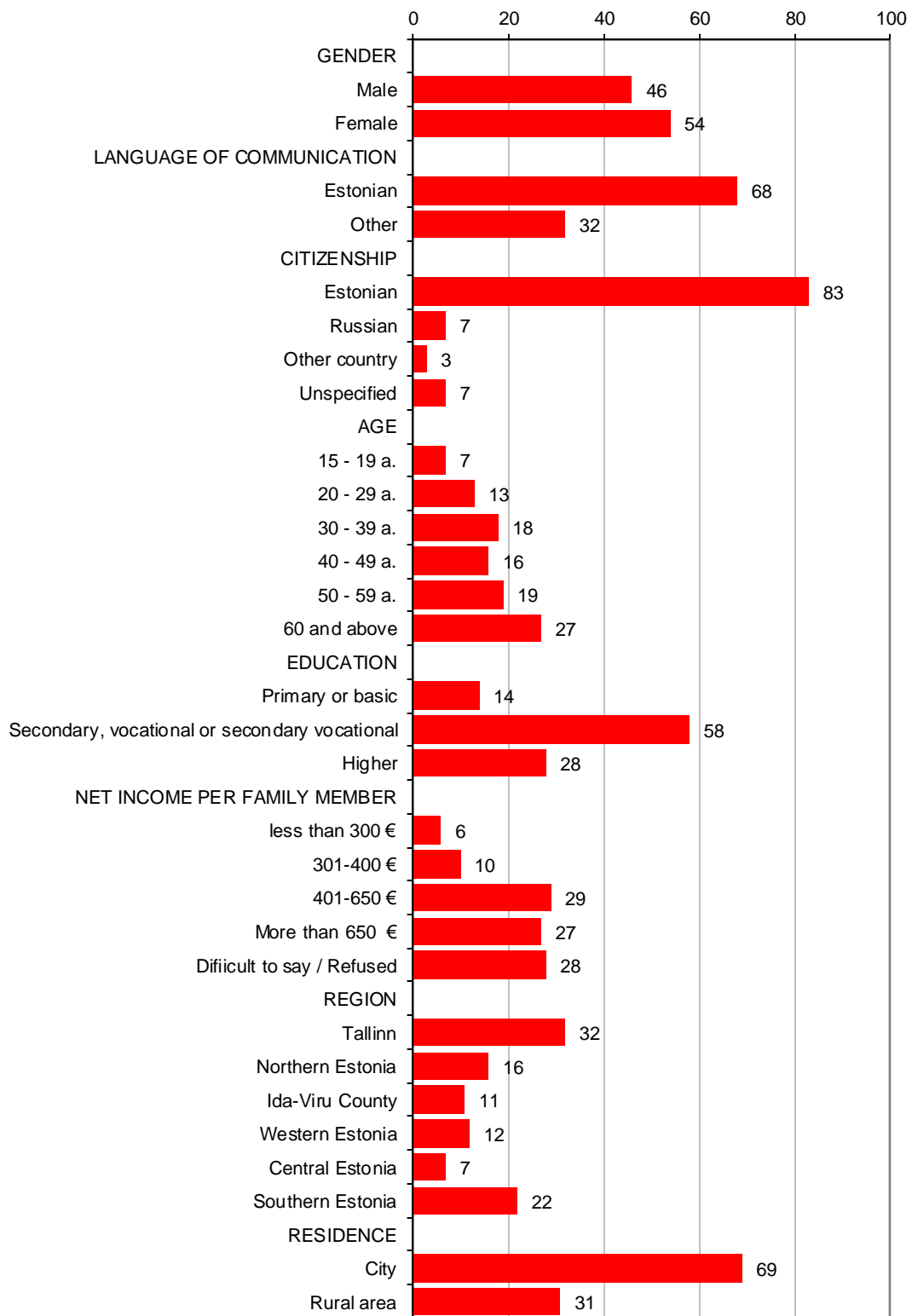
2 Survey

The survey method was personal interview, conducted on tablet computers in either Estonian or Russian, depending on the respondent's preference. A total of **65** pollers who had been given special training by Turu-uuringute AS participated in carrying out the survey. A total of **1,215** interviews were performed in 100 different sampling points. 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	565
Nobody is at home	2384
Target group person is not at home	83
Contact was denied	647
Target group person refused to give the interview	800
Other reasons for not performing the interview	163
Not a dwelling or address inaccessible	149
Summary	
Total addresses	6006
Repeated visits	1427
Correctly filled in questionnaires	1215

Figure 1. Respondents' social and demographic profile, %, n=1215

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.
Data processing and tables:	Marina Karpištšenko
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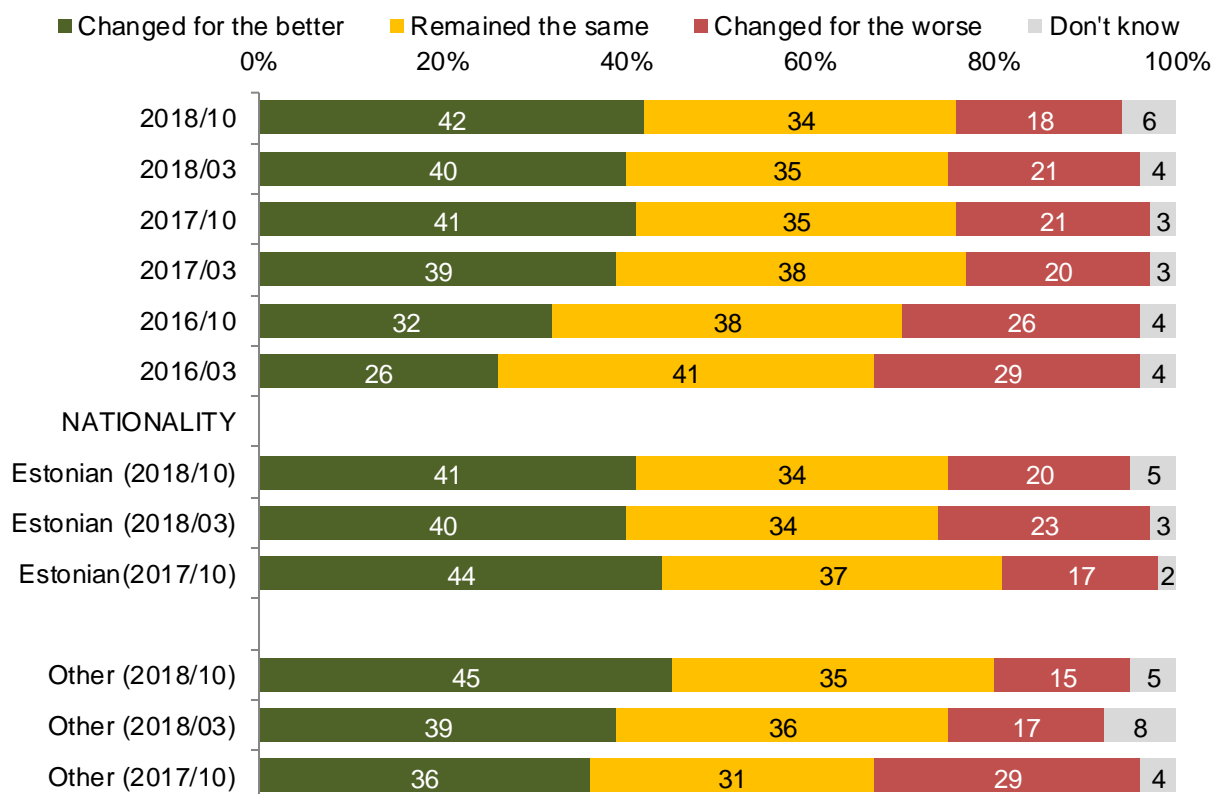
RESULTS OF THE SURVEY

1 General attitudes towards life in Estonia and pride in Estonia

Among other things, people's attitudes towards different social matters, including national defence, are influenced by the positive or negative assessments given to life in Estonia in general. In order to find out people's views, the respondents were asked whether they think that the situation in Estonia is improving or worsening.

The assessments given to changes that have taken place in Estonian life have become steadily more positive from 2015 on. 42% of respondents believe that life in Estonia has improved while 18% think that the situation has worsened (Figure 2). While the share of positive answers given by Estonians has not changed much over recent years, compared to previous surveys the assessments to changes in Estonian life provided by respondents of other nationalities have improved significantly.

Figure 2. Attitudes towards the changes in life in Estonia; 2016–2018 comparison (%; N = all respondents)



People with higher education are more positive about Estonia's development: 54% perceive positive changes. 38% of people who have secondary or secondary specialized education agree, while 34% of those who do not have secondary education think that.

Estonian life is seen as improving by younger respondents: almost half of respondents below 40 years of age perceive improvements, the assessments of Estonian life improving or staying the same are more or less the same among respondents 50 years of age and older.

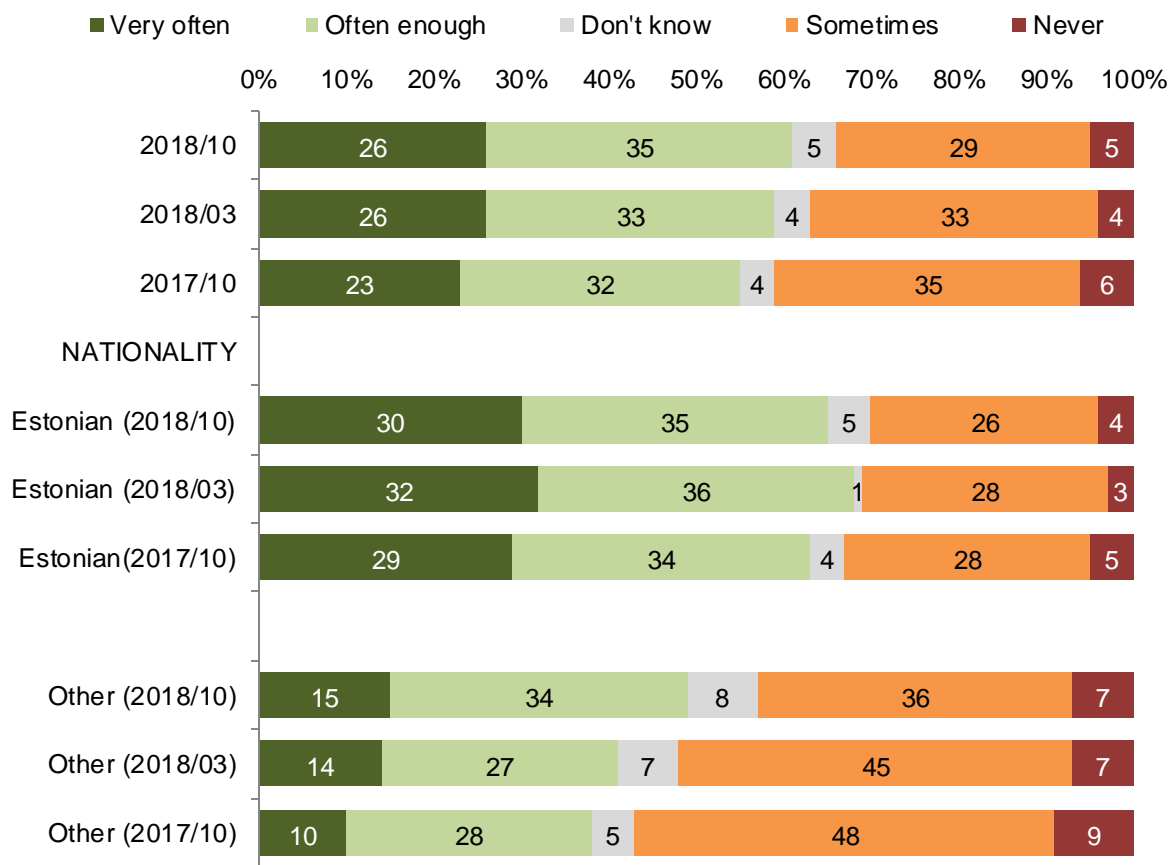
Assessments are naturally influenced by the respondent's economic situation: positive changes are felt by 26% of people within the income bracket of 301 to 400 euros per household member per month, 39% by those whose income is 401 to 650 euros, and 51% of people whose monthly income per household member exceeds 650 euros.

People's attitudes towards changes in life in Estonia also depend greatly on the respondents' emotional relation to Estonia—whether they feel happiness and pride over living here.

The proportion of respondents who feel proud and happy over living in Estonia very often or often enough has increased a little over the past three surveys: a year ago such an answer was given by 55% of the respondents, it had risen to 59% this spring, and currently is at 61%.

The proportion of Estonian respondents who feel proud or happy over living in Estonia very often or rather often has not been more or less stable, fluctuating between 63 and 68%. Among respondents of other nationalities, we see a significant increase in such answers to 49%, which is more than 10% compared to a year ago ([Figure 3](#)).

Figure 3. Pride and happiness over living in the Republic of Estonia; 2017–2018 comparison (%; N = all respondents)



Respondents of other nationalities with non-defined citizenship feel the least proud or happy over living in Estonia—only 33% of them and 39% of Russian citizens answer often or rather often.

58% of Estonian citizens of other nationalities feel proud and happy over living here, 5% never feel that way.

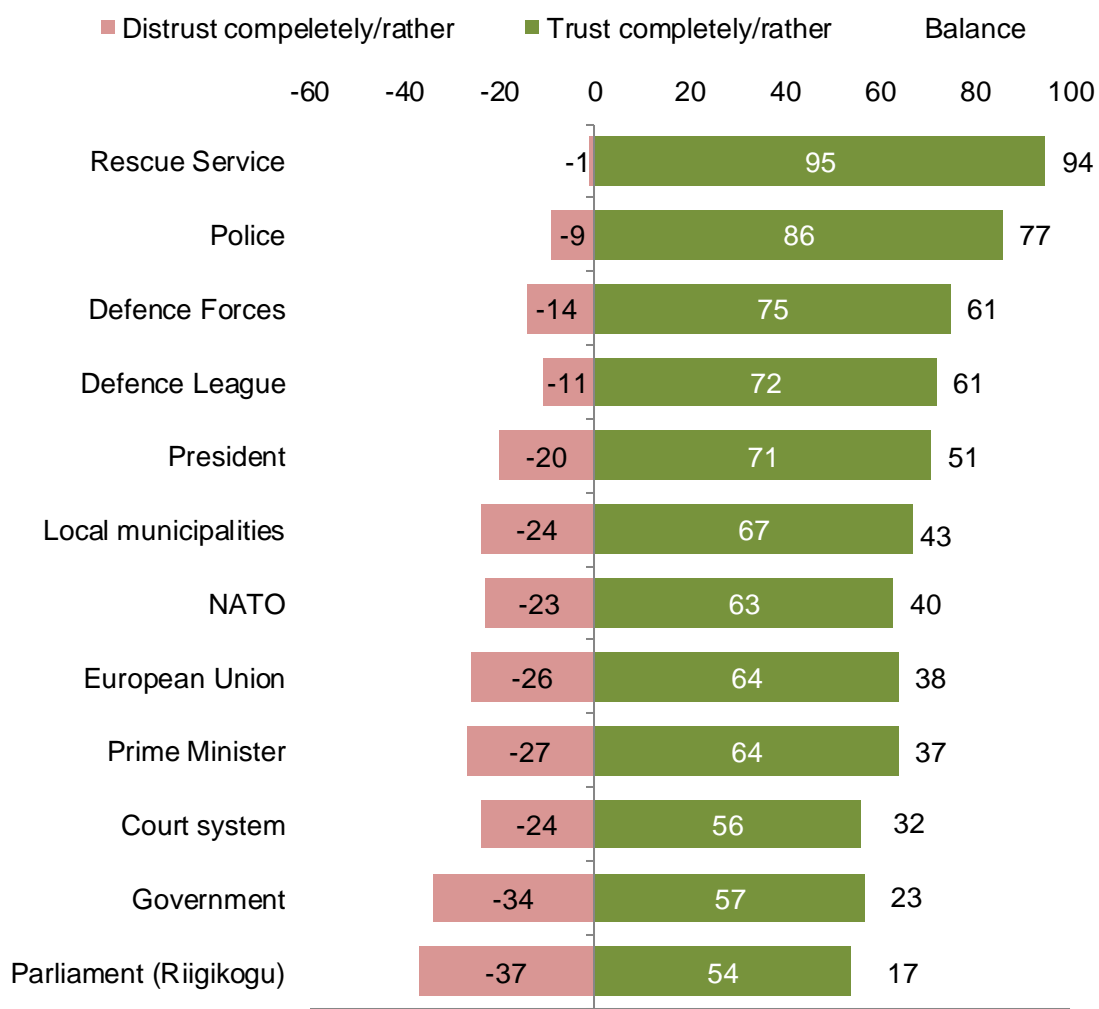
2 Confidence in institutions

The survey addresses the population's confidence in several state and international institutions. The selection of institutions is based on their role in shaping, implementing, or supporting Estonian security policy. The last survey also included local governments and the judicial system to the list of institutions.

2.1 Confidence in institutions

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 greatest confidence in the Rescue Services—95% of the Estonian population trusts them—followed by the Police (86%), Defence Forces (75%), Defence League (72%), and the President of the Republic (71%)** (Figure 4).

Figure 4. Confidence in institutions in October 2018 (%; N = all respondents)



Although political institutions traditionally have the lowest level of confidence, the balance of confidence (the difference of proportions between people who trust and the people who distrust them) for the parliament (*Riigikogu*) and government has been on the positive side for the last two years since the time of the previous government and has increased significantly compared to March. Both the government and parliament are trusted by over half of the population.

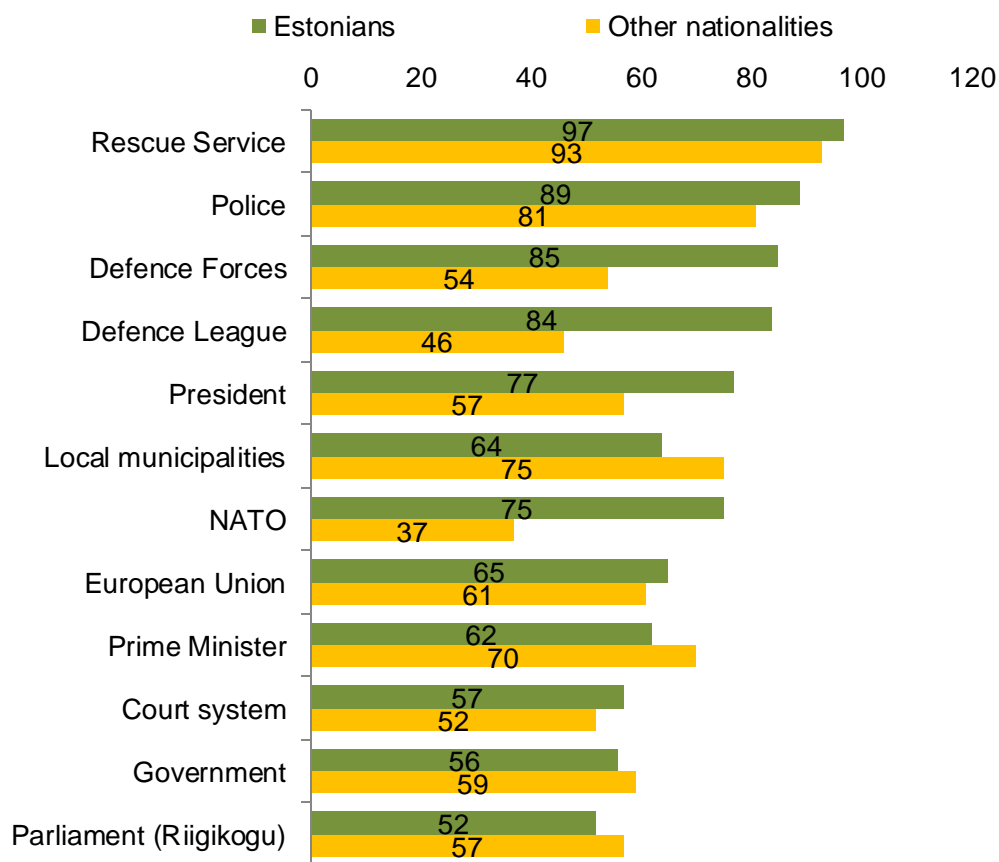
Local governments (trusted by 67%) and the prime minister (64%) have a somewhat higher level of confidence compared to the government and the parliament, which are roughly at the same level as confidence in the EU and NATO. The judicial system has a lower level of confidence than them (56%), although this is an institution which people find hard to assess (21% of respondents answer cannot say).

The level of confidence in institutions between Estonians and respondents of other nationalities is quite different (Figure 5).

The difference in confidence between Estonians and respondents of other nationalities is relatively small when it comes to the Rescue Services, judicial system, the police and border guard, and the European Union, but the differences are significant toward NATO, the Defence Forces, and the Defence League. A 20% difference is also for confidence in the President of the Republic.

For a long time there was also a big difference between Estonians and respondents of other nationalities when it came to confidence in the government and the parliament (Estonians had a much greater confidence compared to respondents of other nationalities), but already in spring 2018 the levels of confidence were equal and in October 2018 Russian-speaking respondents had a little more confidence in the parliament, government, and the prime minister than even Estonian respondents. However, confidence in local government is 11% higher among respondents of other nationalities compared to Estonian respondents.

Figure 5. Confidence in institutions in the eyes of Estonians and non-Estonians: October 2018 (% of those who trust the institutions completely and rather trust them; N = all respondents)



2.1 Confidence in defence structures

The Defence Forces, which holds 3rd place in the trustworthiness ranking after the Rescue Services, **was trusted by 75% of the population of Estonia as at October 2018**. The difference in the assessment of the Defence Forces between Estonian- and Russian-speaking respondents is still very large—it is trusted by 85% Estonians and 54% non-Estonians ([Figure 6](#)).

The Defence League is placed among the most trustworthy institutions right after the Defence Forces — **as at October 2018, 72% of the Estonian population (71% a year ago) trusted the Defence League**, 85% of Estonians and 46 of non-Estonians. ([Figure 7](#)).

Figure 6. Confidence in the Defence Forces in 2000–2018; comparison of the assessments by Estonians and other nationalities
 (% of those who trust it completely or rather trust it; N = all respondents)

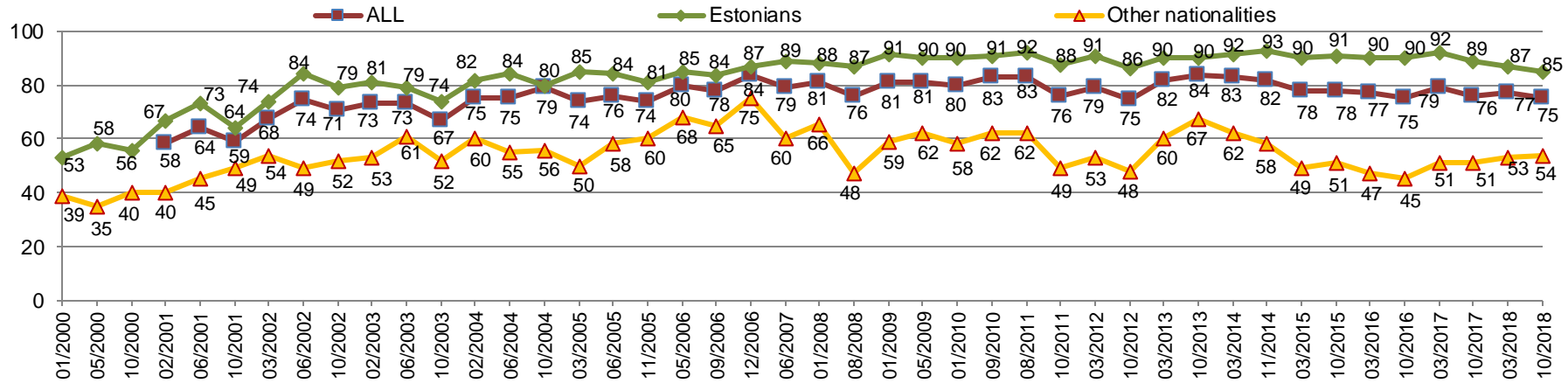
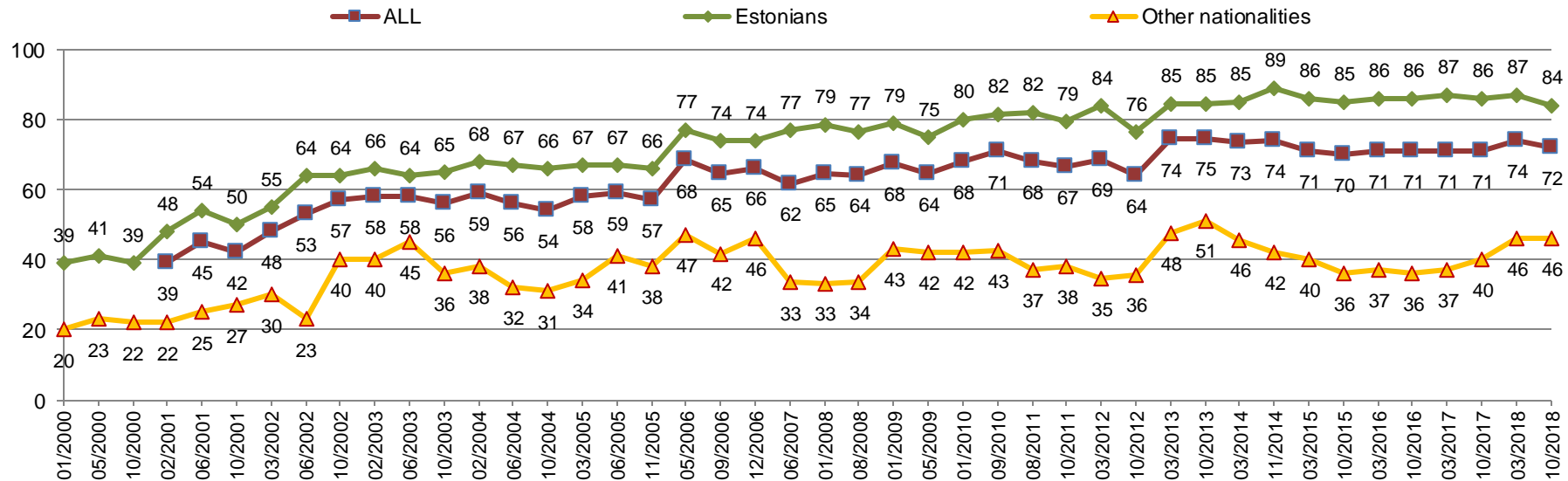


Figure 7. Confidence in the Defence League in 2000–2018; a comparison of assessments by Estonians and other nationalities
 (% of those who trust it completely or rather trust it; N = all respondents)



3 Security and threats

The third chapter provides an overview of how the topic of security in Estonia and the world is viewed by the public, what are the factors threatening the security in the coming years, and what would help to better guarantee Estonia's security.

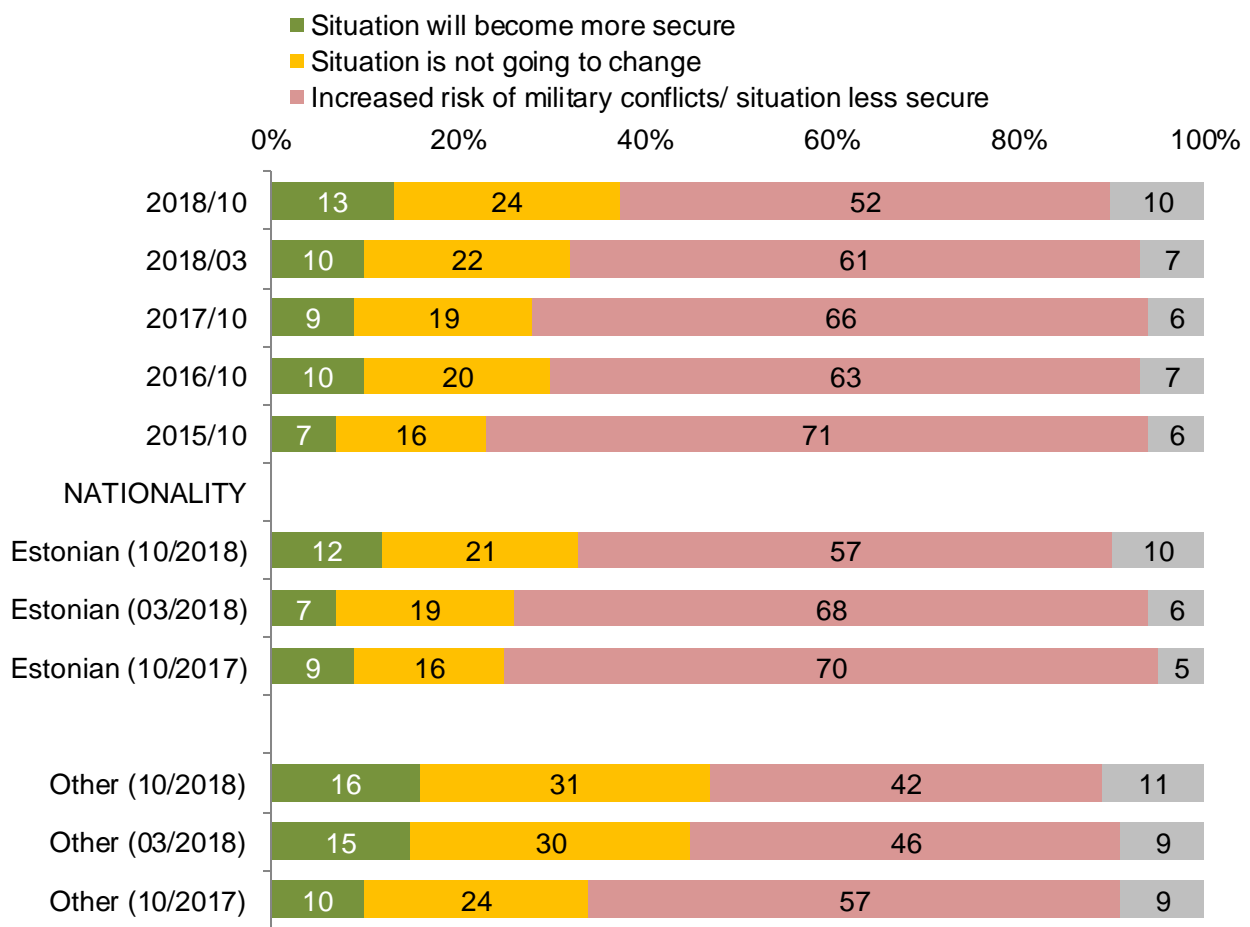
3.1 Security in the world

The question in which the respondents were asked to assess changes in world security is presented in the following wording and has been asked since the year 2000: **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 opinion that instability and the probability of military conflicts will grow in the world in the coming decade exceeded 70% in spring 2015. Although in the fall of 2016, the proportion of respondents who provided such assessment decreased, it still remained high. As of fall 2017, when an increase in instability was predicted by 66% of the respondents, the feel of threat has started to decrease—in March 2018, 61% of the respondents thought that the world will become more unsafe, while in this survey it was 52%. 13% believe that the world becomes safer in the coming decade and 24% think that there will be no change (Figure 8).

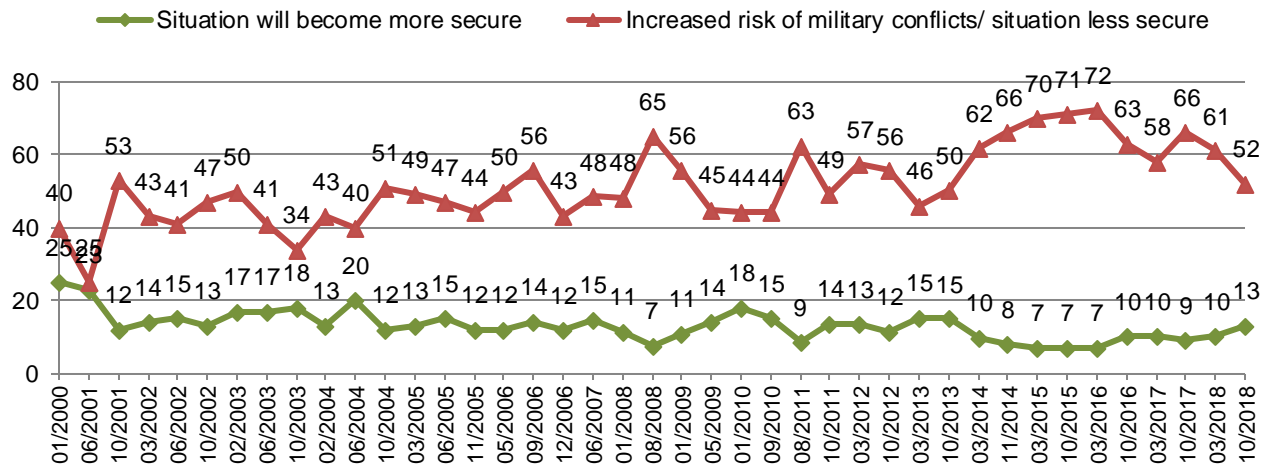
The sense of threat has declined for both Estonians and non-Estonians: from 68% to 57% among Estonians, from 46% to 42% among non-Estonians.

Figure 8. Situation in the world in the coming decade, 2015–2018 comparison (%; N = all respondents)



The long-term trend along with the proportions of the two opposing views is presented on [Figure 9](#). It shows that from the spring of 2014 when the crisis in Ukraine emerged, the proportion of respondents fearing the increase of instability and military conflicts has stayed above 60% exceeding even 70% in three surveys. It has only gone down to under 60% in the last survey while still remaining high.

Figure 9. Situation in the world in the coming decade; 2000–2018 comparison (%; N = all respondents)



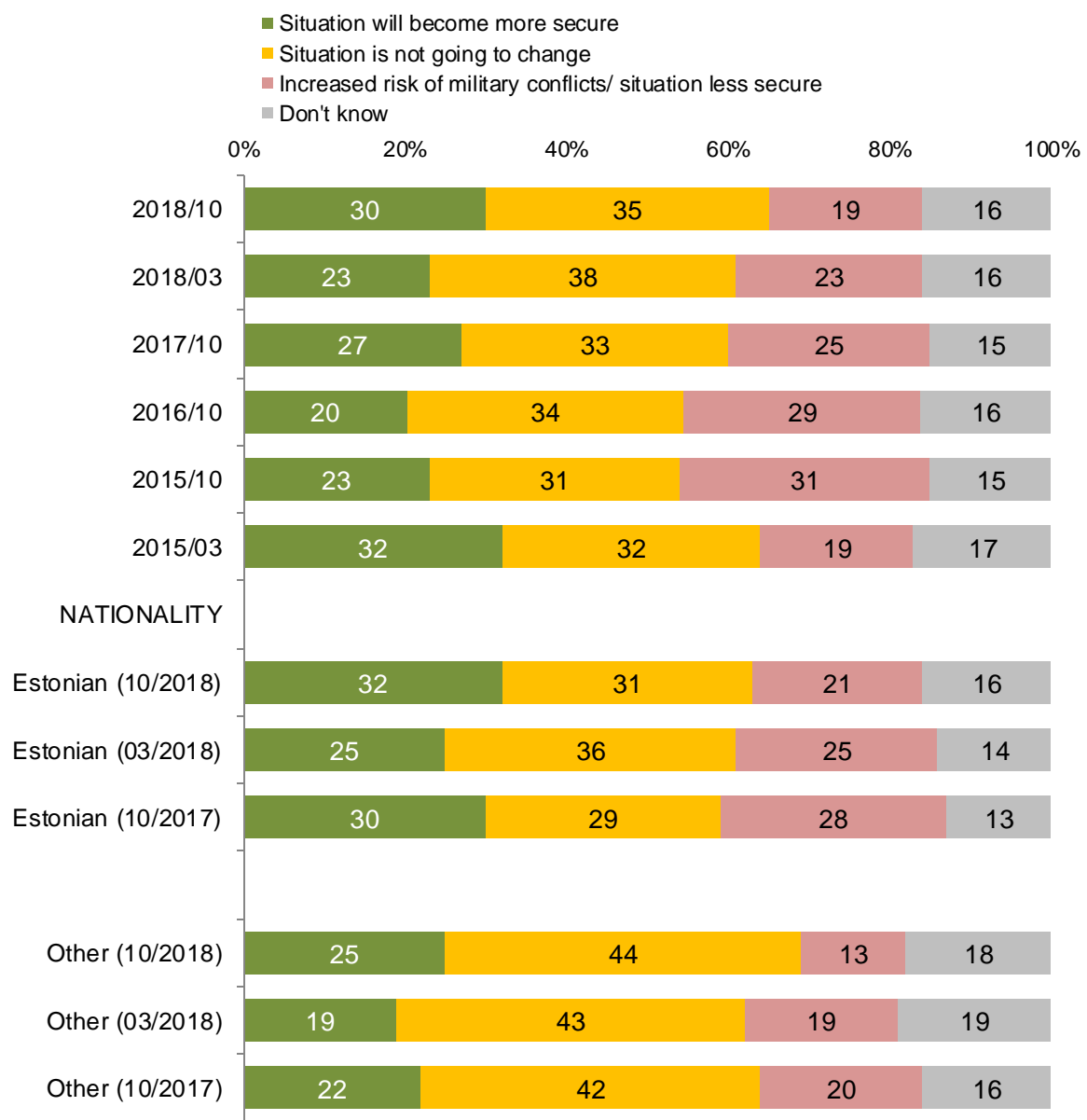
3.2 Security in Estonia

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

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

The security situation in Estonia is perceived to be more positive compared to the situation in the world in general and similarly to the situation in the rest of the world, the sense of threat has also gone down with respect to Estonia. A more secure development is predicted by 30%, insecurity by only 19%. The assessments are similar to March 2015. Compared to Russian-speaking respondents, there are more respondents who predict both more security as well as security among Estonians, Russian-speaking respondents predict more that the situation will remain the same ([Figure 10](#)).

Figure 10. Situation in Estonia in the coming decade, 2015–2018 comparison (%; N = all respondents)



3.3 Threats to world security

The respondents were asked to assess the effect various factors have on peace and security in the world. Compared to previous surveys, the list of threats presented to respondents to assess was changed a little. The activities of the Islamic State were not included, which up to now held first place among the threats. Cyber-attacks and the extensive spread of misinformation and fake news were included. Both of the included categories rose among the four most important threats.

If we consider the assessments "certainly" and "to some extent that too" together, then all the factors listed in the survey are considered to be a threat to world security by more than 60% and five factors by more than 80% of the respondents.

The most important threat is perceived to be activities of terrorist networks, though its threat level is decreasing. Terrorist networks are perceived as certainly dangerous by 50% and to some extent by 37% of the respondents.

Cyber-attacks are deemed to be equally dangerous: certainly by 50% and to some extent by 35% of the respondents.

The **migration of refugees and asylum seekers into Europe** occupies third place, which back in spring 2017 was considered to be a certain threat by 57%, and this time by 44% of the respondents.

Spread of misinformation and fake news comes fourth (certainly 37%, to some extent 44%). These are followed by a **worldwide economic crisis** (certainly 36%, to some extent 45%) and **global climate change** (32% and 45%).

Although **Russia's attempts to restore its authority in neighbouring countries** received more assessments of "certainly" than the previously mentioned ones (37%), together with the answer "to some extent" the Russian threat has retreated to almost the end of the ranking of threat factors (70%).

30% of respondents also perceive organised crime as certainly dangerous. The **war in Syria and East Ukraine and North Korea's actions** have started to lose their actuality: less than 30% of respondents think they are certainly threatening world security, although most of the respondents still think they are dangerous to some extent.

Less serious threats are deemed to be the domination of US in the world, conflicts between rich and poor countries, the growth of China's power and influence in the world, and spread of epidemics. Though these threats, too, pass the level of 60% together when combined with the answer "to some extent" ([Figure 11](#)).

Compared to the previous survey, only the perception of the danger of global climate change has increased, the perception of the danger of worldwide economic crisis, Russia's influence, organised crime, conflicts between rich and poor countries, and epidemics has stayed on the same level. The actuality of other threats has decreased.

Russian-speaking respondents deem the activities of terrorist networks, organised crime, the influence of the US in the world, and spread of epidemics as more dangerous compared to Estonians; a rather similar assessment is given to the migration of refugees and asylum seekers into Europe, spread of misinformation and fake news, worldwide economic crisis, global climate change, and organised crime (see [Figure 12](#)).

The rest of the threats are perceived as more dangerous by Estonians compared to respondents of other nationalities. The biggest difference is in how dangerous **Russia's activities to restore its authority in neighbouring countries** are perceived. Among Estonians, it is deemed as second most dangerous (49% of Estonians deem it as certainly dangerous), among Russian-speaking respondents, it holds a place among the three less important threats together with North Korea and China.

Figure 11. Threats to peace and security in the world 2017–2018 (%; N = all respondents)

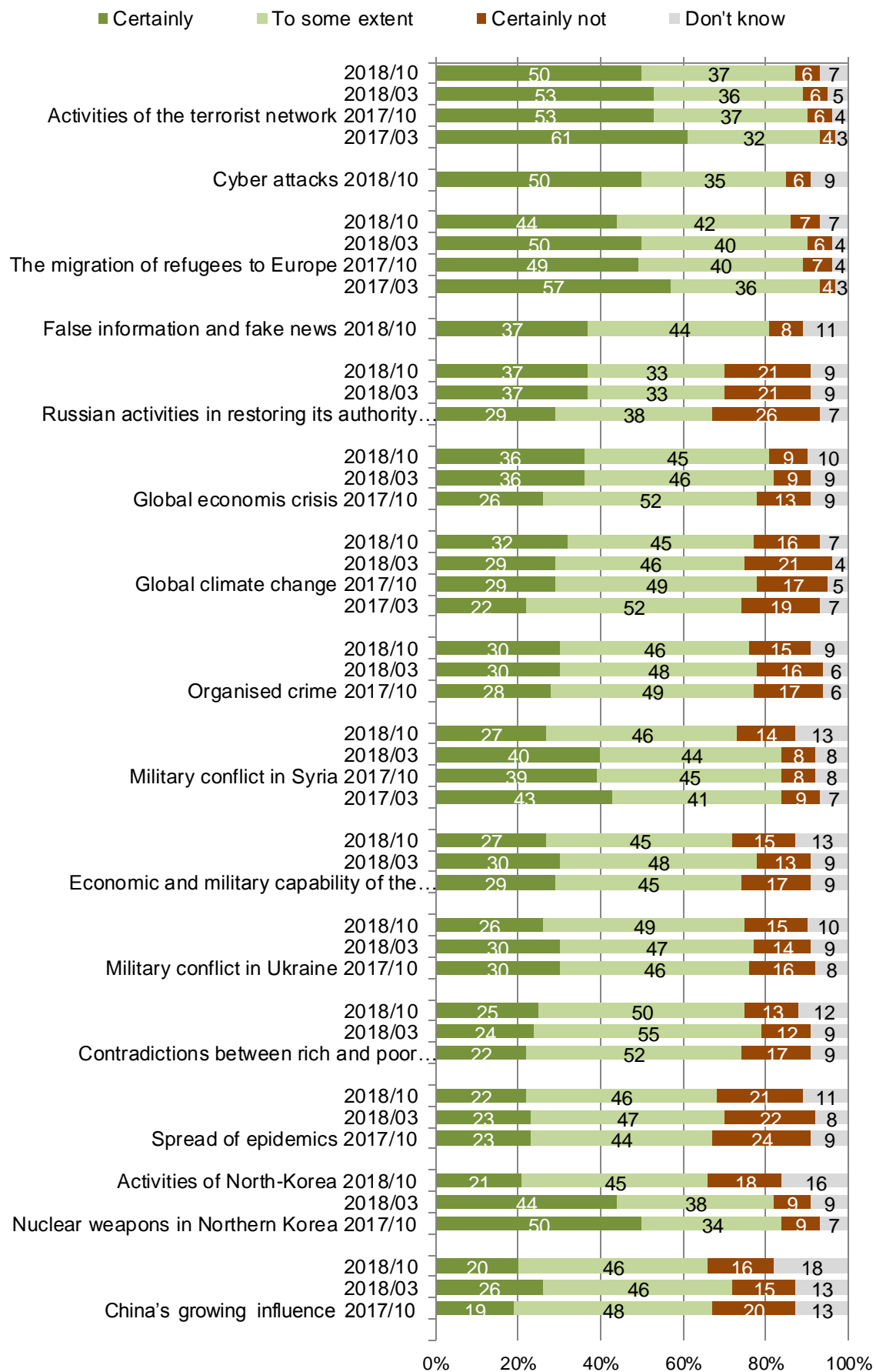
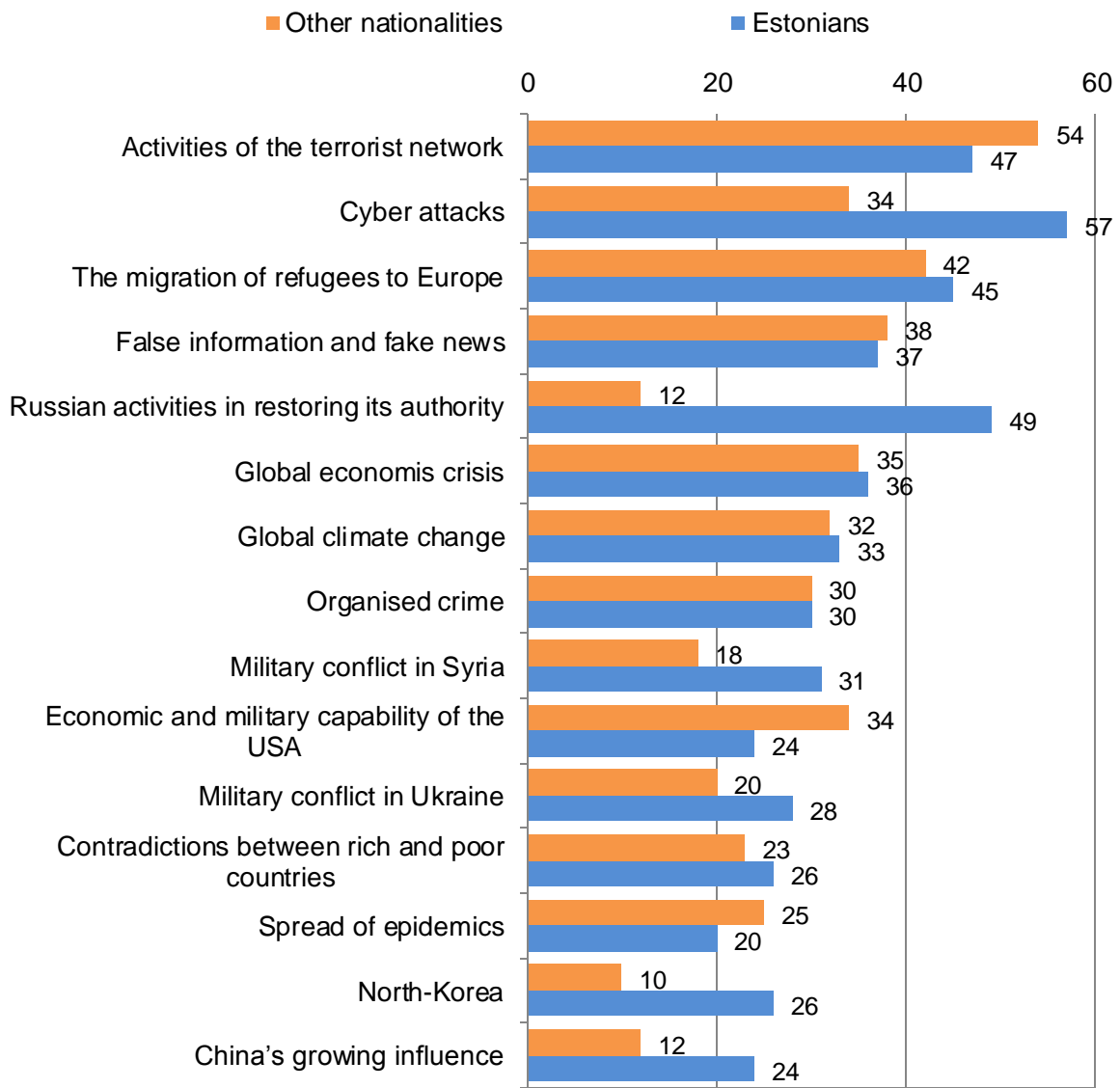


Figure 12. Threats to peace and security in the world in October 2018, answers "this certainly" (%) ; comparison of Estonians and Non-Estonians)



3.4 Threats to Estonia

The respondents were presented with 15 different potential threats to Estonia and asked to assess the probability of their occurrence in the forthcoming years to determine the probability of threats to Estonia. Similarly to global threats, the spread of fake news and additionally the spread of hate speech were included in the list. Threats that were listed previously, an explosion of an oil-carrying train or fuel terminal was replaced with a vast industrial disaster and extensive environmental pollution ([Figure 13](#)).

There are four main threats to Estonia, the occurrence of which in the following years are considered probable or rather probable by more than half of the respondents. Year after year, the view that there may be an **organised attack against the Estonian state information systems, i.e. a cyber-attack** has increased (67% of respondents think it is very or rather probable). Second place was taken by the newly introduced spread of fake news (65%). Third place, viewed equally probable also in March, was taken by the belief that **some foreign country may interfere in Estonian politics or economy in order to influence these in their own interests** (58%). Fourth place was taken by extensive marine pollution which was considered very or rather probable by 53% of the respondents. The probability of marine pollution is considered higher compared to the March survey.

Over 40% of respondents also consider probable the spread of hate speech (45%) and an extensive environmental pollution (43%), the proportion of those who view the occurrence of other problems as very or rather probable remains already below 30%.

An extensive or limited military attack against Estonia is considered the least probable by the respondents (18–20% of the respondents consider it very or rather probable).

Even the assessment of Estonia's internal threats reveals important differences between the responses of Estonians and non-Estonians. **Estonians consider most of the dangers more probable than the Russian-speaking respondents.**

An extensive marine pollution and attack against Estonian citizens in a foreign state are deemed equally probable. The collapse of Estonia's economy is considered a little more probable by respondents of other nationalities compared to Estonians.

The greatest difference occurs in the assessment on the probability of cyber-attacks (76% and 48% respectively), interference by a foreign state in Estonia's politics or economy is also feared more by Estonians (61% and 50%). While a large-scale or limited military attack is considered probable by a 19 to 23% of Estonians, the proportion of non-Estonians who consider this threat probable falls between 13 and 14% (see [Figure 14](#)).

Figure 13. Probability of different threats endangering Estonia in the forthcoming years, March/October 2018 comparison (%) ; N = all respondents)

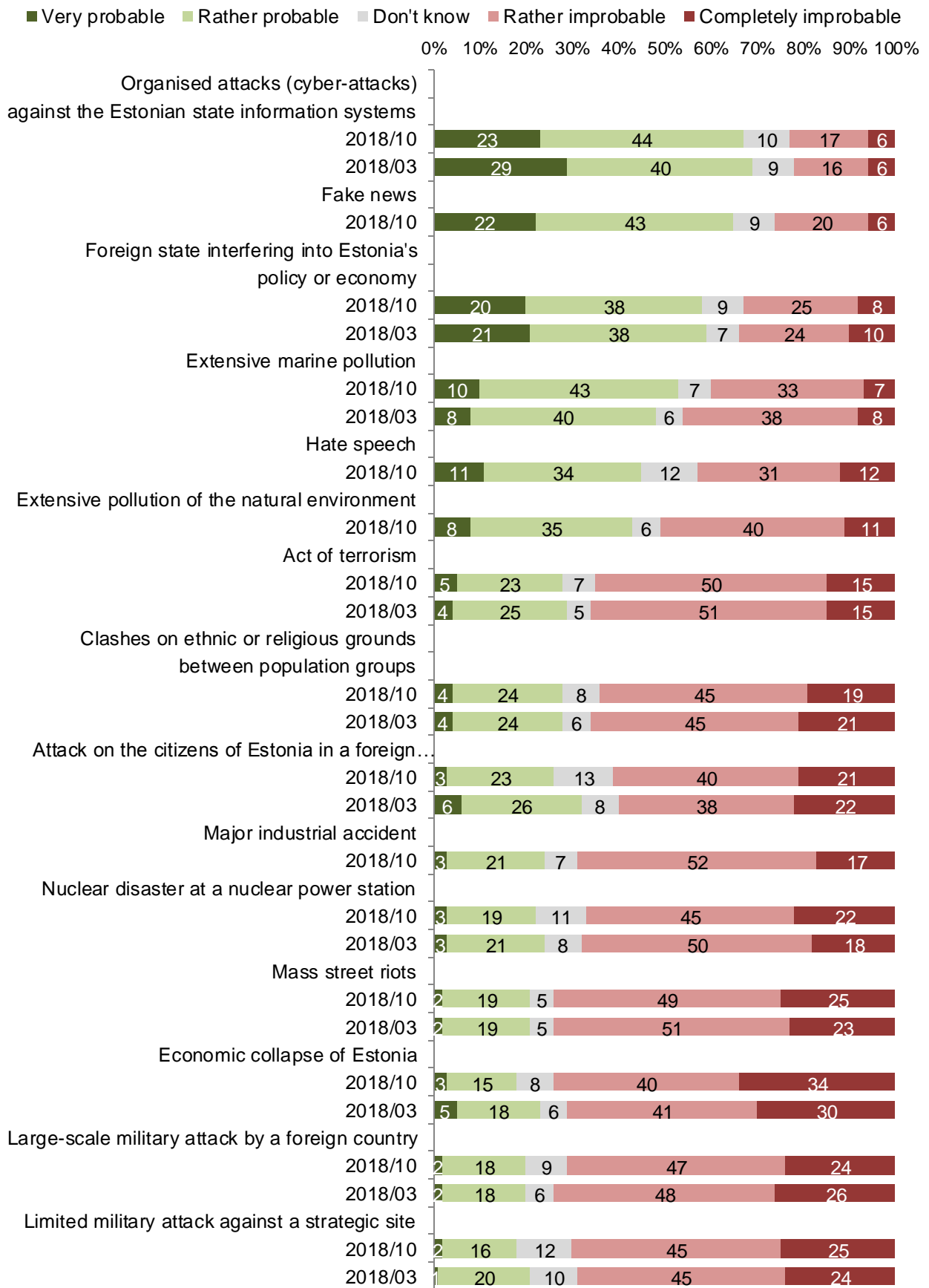
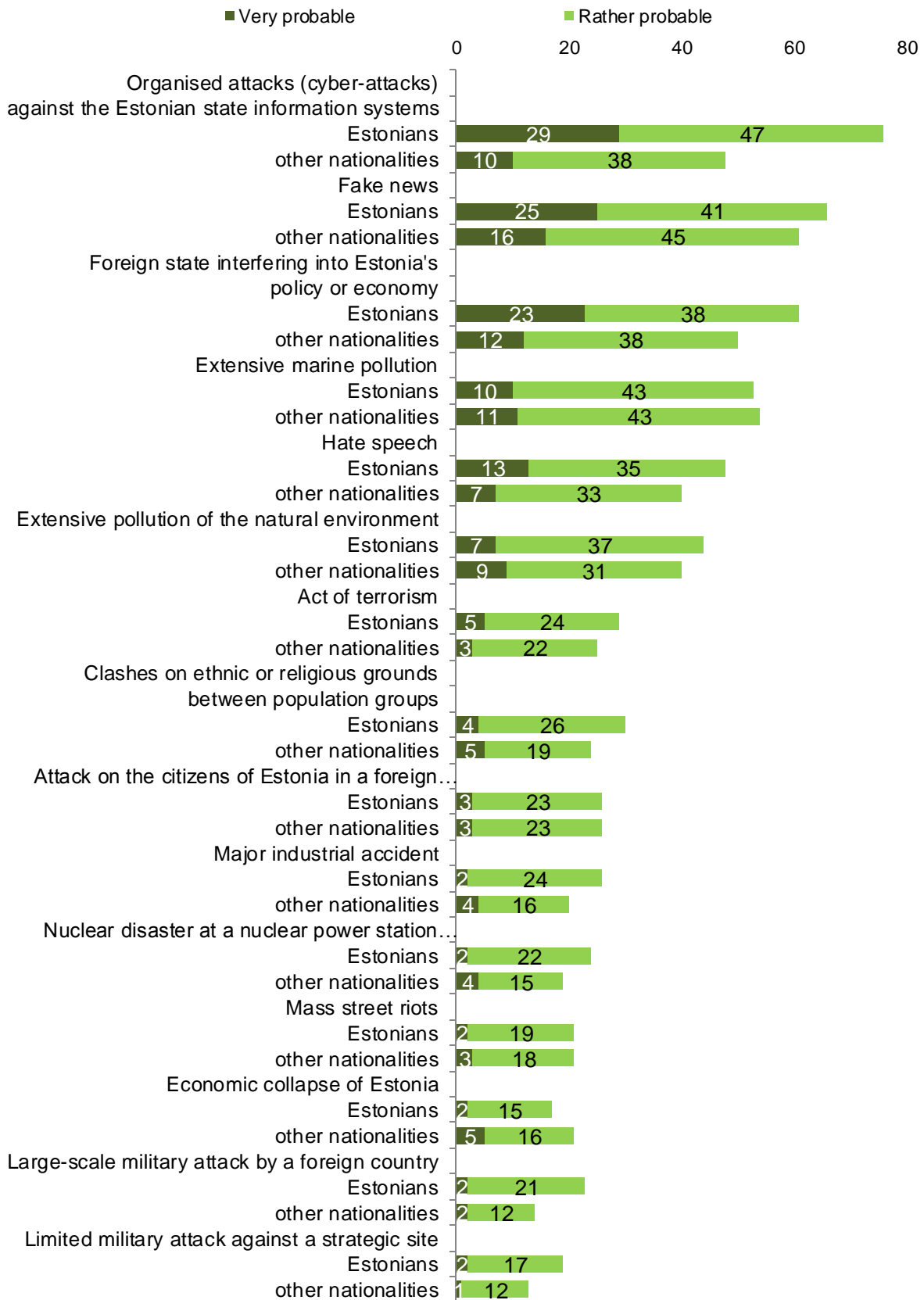


Figure 14. Probability of different threats endangering Estonia in the forthcoming years; comparison of assessments among Estonians and non-Estonians; October 2018
(%; N = all respondents)



3.5 Media coverage of security threats

Since the fall of 2017, the survey included an additional question on how the media coverage with regard to security threats is assessed. The question had the following wording:

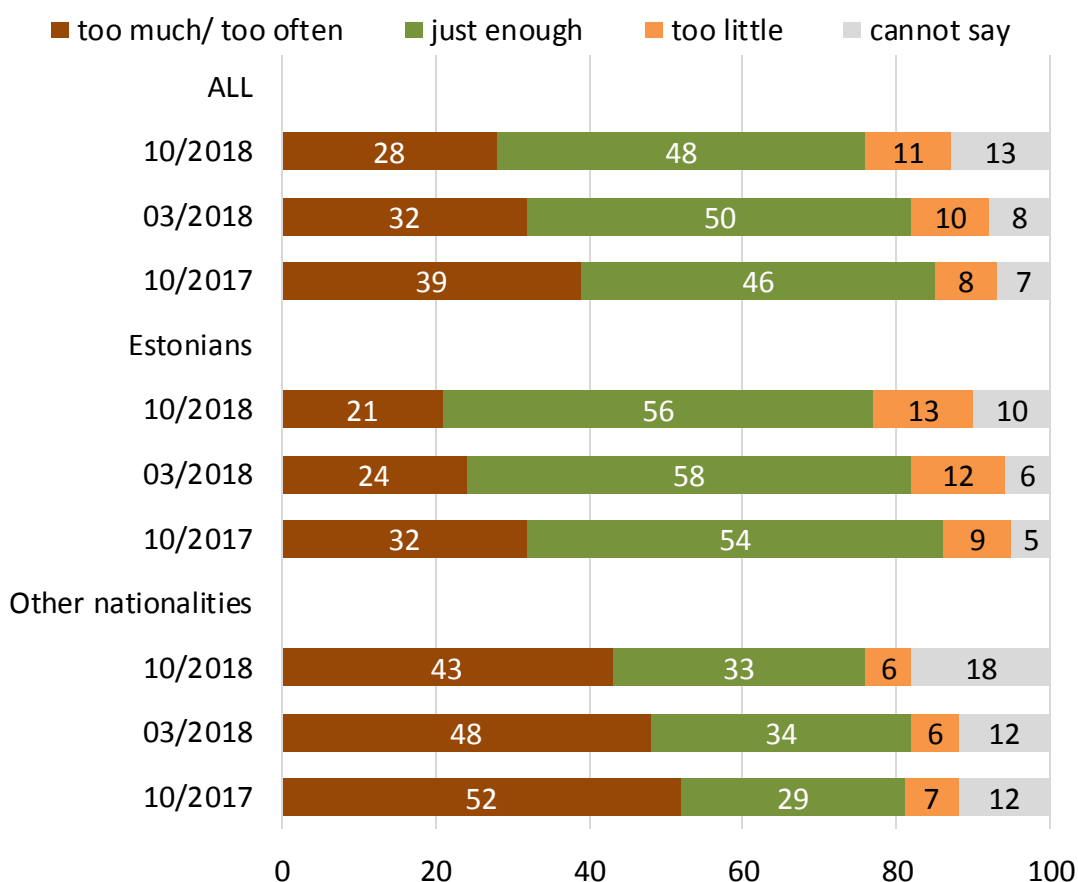
How do you feel, does the Estonian media write and talk about military threats to Estonia too much and too often, just enough or rather too little?

The proportion of respondents who feel that military threats to Estonia are too much and too often written and talked about has gone down over the years. It is hard to tell if it is due to change in attitude or change in the share of such information covered by the media.

While more than half of Estonians believe that the military threats to Estonia are spoken and written about just enough, the majority of non-Estonians think that this topic is covered too much—though the number of people who believe that has decreased significantly over the years.

Only 11% of the respondents think that military threats are spoken about too little (see [Figure 15](#)).

Figure 15. Does the Estonian media write and talk about military threats to Estonia too much and too often, just enough or rather too little? 2017/2018 (%) ; N = all respondents)



3.6 Security guarantees

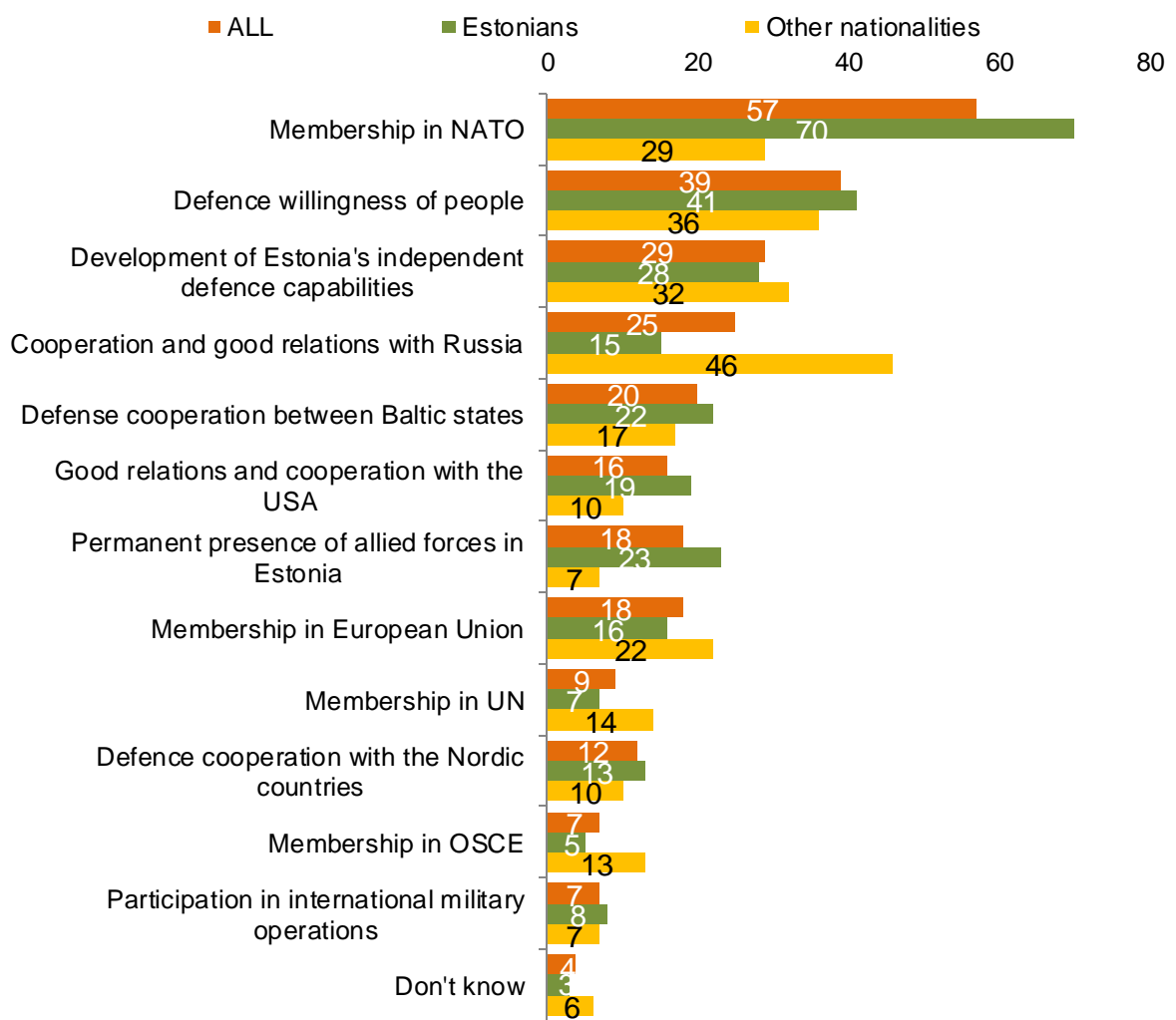
All throughout previous surveys, **Estonia's membership in NATO** has ranked first among important factors that would ensure maximum security to Estonia according to the respondents. It is mentioned by 57% of the respondents as one of the three most important factors this time as well. It is a little less compared to previous surveys, but it can be explained by the inclusion of one additional category among the possible answers. In October's survey, we included the category of "**defence will of residents**", which did indeed rise to be the second most important security guarantee with 39%. The **development of Estonia's independent defence capability** holds 3rd place with 29% (Figure 16).

These three factors are followed by, mainly due to the influence of respondents of other nationalities, **cooperation and good relations with Russia**, which is named among the three most important factors by 46% of non-Estonian respondents and only by 15% of Estonian-speaking respondents.

Both Estonians and non-Estonian respondents give more or less equal support to Baltic defence cooperation (20%), membership in the EU (18%), cooperation with the Nordic countries (12%), and participation in international missions (7%).

Estonians mentioned the alliance with the US and the permanent presence of allied forces in Estonia more often than Russian-speaking respondents. However, respondents of other nationalities value memberships in international organisations (UN and OSCE) more than Estonians.

Figure 16. Security guarantees for Estonia (up to 3 of the most important factors); comparison of assessments among the Estonians and other nationalities, October 2018 (%; N = all respondents)



4 Defence willingness among the population of Estonia

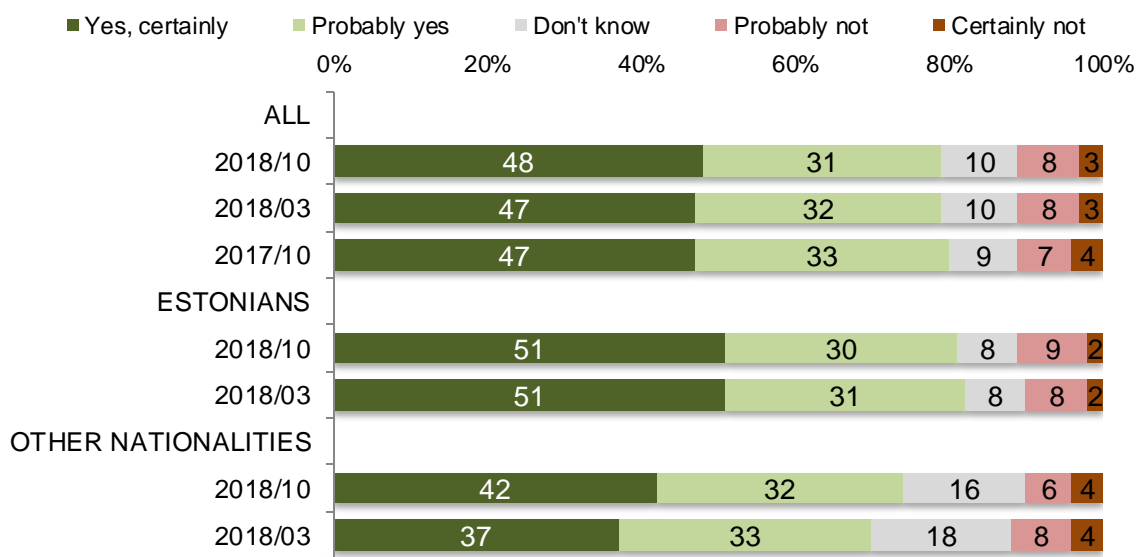
Defence willingness among the population of Estonia is measured with three questions. So-called passive defence willingness is expressed through the opinion on whether Estonia should be defended in case a foreign enemy attacks (*"If Estonia is attacked by any country, should we, in any case, provide 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—if people have no understanding of their potential role in the event of a military conflict, they cannot be expected to show high defence willingness.

4.1 Attitudes towards the necessity of resistance

The proportion of respondents who find armed resistance necessary has remained steady near 80%, sometimes under that threshold, sometimes over. In October 2018, similarly to March, **79% of the Estonia's population considered armed resistance certainly or probably necessary** (Figure 17).

Estonian-speaking respondents tend to consider armed resistance more necessary than people of other nationalities; however, while there are no differences in attitude among Estonians compared to March, support for resistance among respondents of other nationalities has increased significantly. Resistance is deemed certainly necessary according to 51% of the Estonians and 41% of the Russian-speaking respondents. 11% of Estonian respondents and 10% of respondents of other nationalities believe that resistance is not necessary, but the latter include much more respondents who answered "cannot say" (16%).

Figure 17. Necessity for the provision of armed resistance if Estonia is attacked by any country; 2017–2018 comparison (%; N = all respondents)



The proportion of respondents who express passive defence willingness has also been high in past surveys, although in a chronological perspective the proportion of the viewpoint's supporters has been rising steadily (See Figure 18). A comparison of the trend among Estonians and respondents of other nationalities has been presented in Figure 19.

Figure 18. Necessity of armed resistance if Estonia is attacked by any country; 2000–2018 comparison (%) ; N = all respondents)

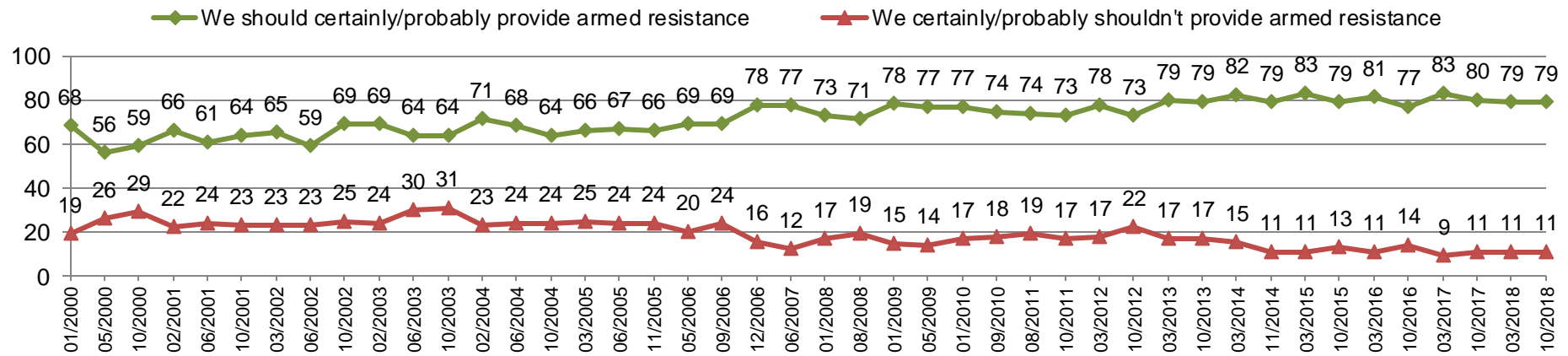
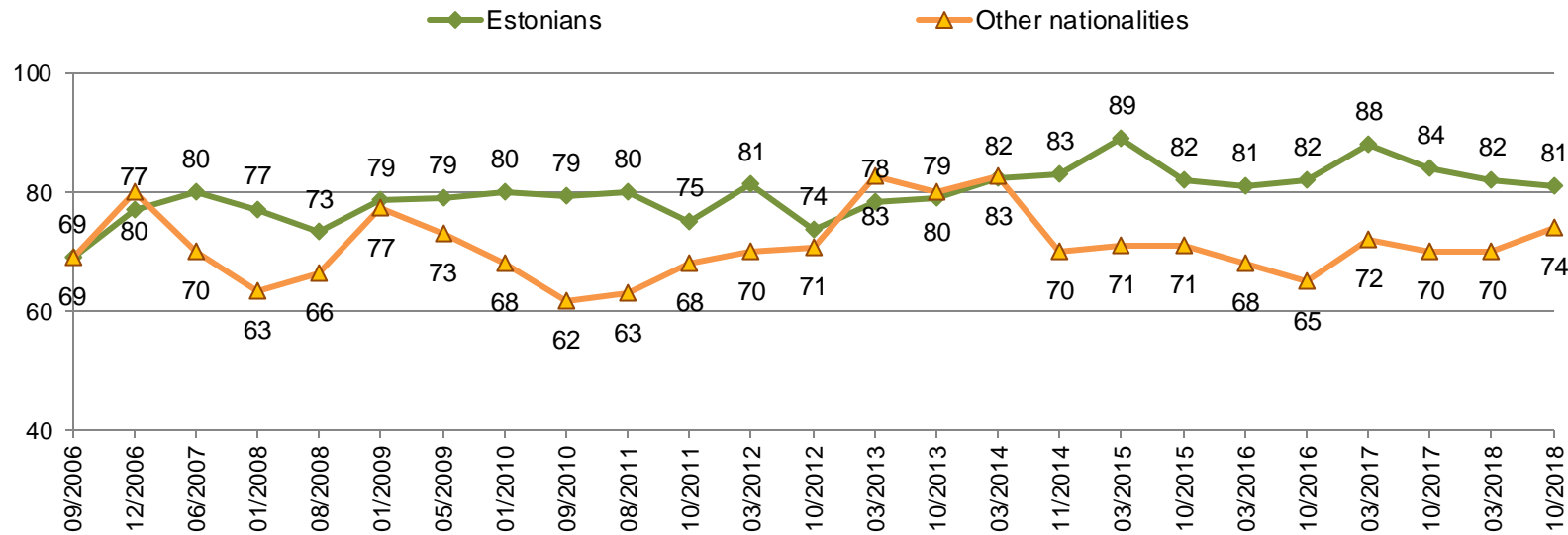


Figure 19. Proportion of the proponents of armed resistance in the event of an attack; comparison of Estonians and non-Estonians 2006–2018 (% of those considering resistance certainly and probably necessary; N = all respondents)



4.2 Willingness to participate in defence activities

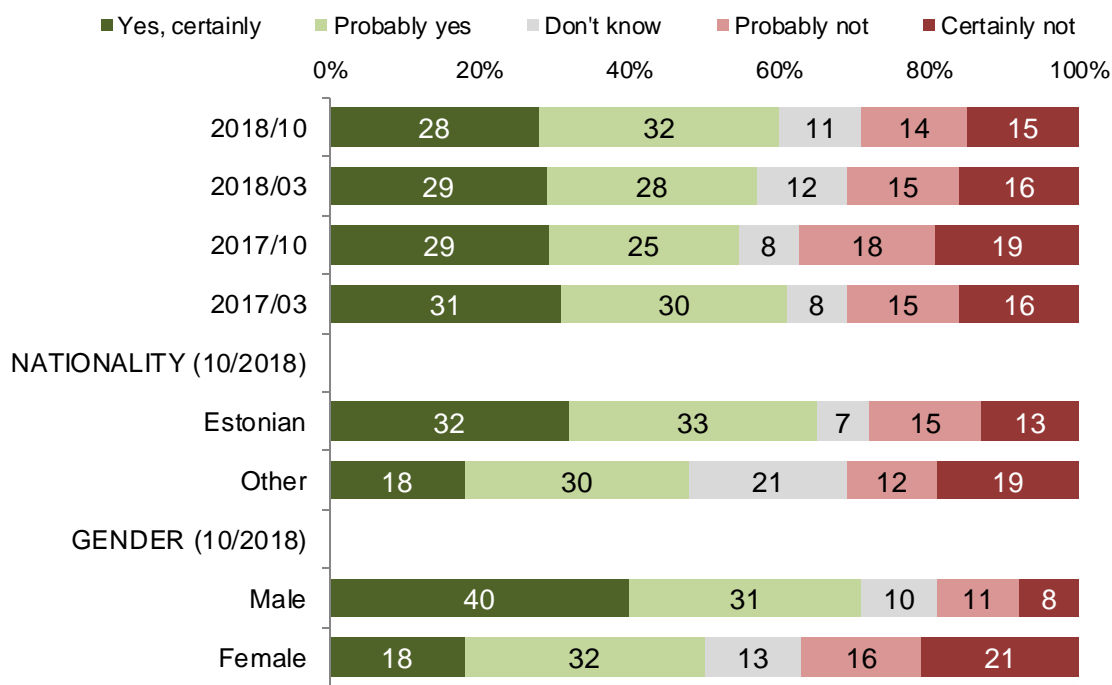
The number of those willing to participate personally in defence activities (so-called active defence willingness) is lower than the proportion of those supporting armed resistance at the state level. While armed resistance is considered necessary by 79%, **60% of the population would be willing to participate in defence activities personally to the extent of their own capabilities and skills** (Figure 20).

28% of the population of Estonia would be certainly willing and 32% probably willing to participate in defence activities to the extent of their own capabilities and skills. 29% of the respondents would certainly or probably not be willing to participate personally in defence activities.

Since conscript service is only compulsory for Estonian citizens, the difference between the attitudes of Estonians and respondents of other nationalities in the matter of active defence willingness is predictably greater than it is in the case of passive defence willingness. While **65% of Estonians would be willing to participate personally in defence activities, the respective indicator for non-Estonians is only 48%**. This indicator is 57% among Estonian citizens of other nationalities (5% higher compared to March), 37% among Russian citizens and 32% among respondents with undetermined citizenship.

When interpreting active defence willingness, it should be considered that participation in national defence is first and foremost seen as armed resistance that is traditionally considered the task of reservists and men. Consequently, the readiness to contribute is inevitably lower among female and older respondents (71% of male respondents would be willing to participate in defence activities, while only half of women feel the same; only 48% of respondents over 60 years of age would be willing to participate in defence activities).

Figure 20. Willingness to participate in defence activities if Estonia is attacked; 2017–2018 comparison (%; N= all respondents)



If we consider only the willingness of male citizens to participate in national defence, the picture on active defence willingness becomes more positive. 77% of male citizens are willing to participate in national defence, 79% of Estonians and 71% of respondents of other nationalities (see Table 3).

Table 3 – Willingness to certainly or probably participate in defence activities among male citizens by age groups; October 2018

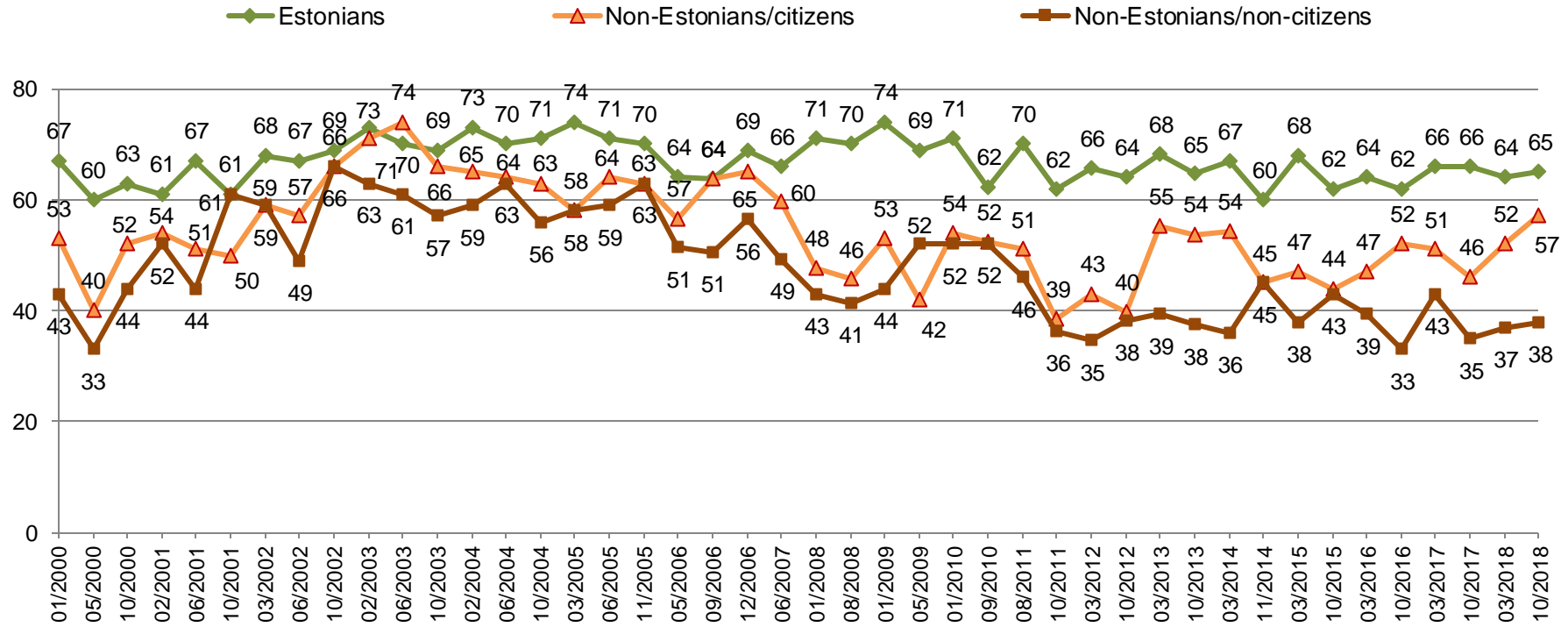
NATIONALITY	ALL	15-34	35-49	50-64	65+
Estonian	79%	76%	88%	78%	69%
Other	71%	67%	96%	63%	X
ALL men / citizens	77%	73%	89%	76%	65%

X – The age group of non-Estonian men over 65 years of age included only 5 respondents, due to which the result cannot be viewed as statistically reliable.

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 among non-Estonians with Estonian citizenship, those with undetermined citizenship and those with Russian citizenship ([Figure 21](#)).

The years 2013–2014 saw an improvement in the defence willingness among non-Estonian citizens, yet it fell under 50% again at the end of 2014. In the last two years the active defence willingness of the Russian-speaking population has again exceeded 50% and in the last survey conducted in October has reached the highest level since 2007

Figure 21. Proportion of the population willing to participate in defence activities in the event of an attack; comparison of Estonians, non-Estonian citizens and non-citizens 2000–2018 (% of those certainly and probably willing to participate; N = all respondents)



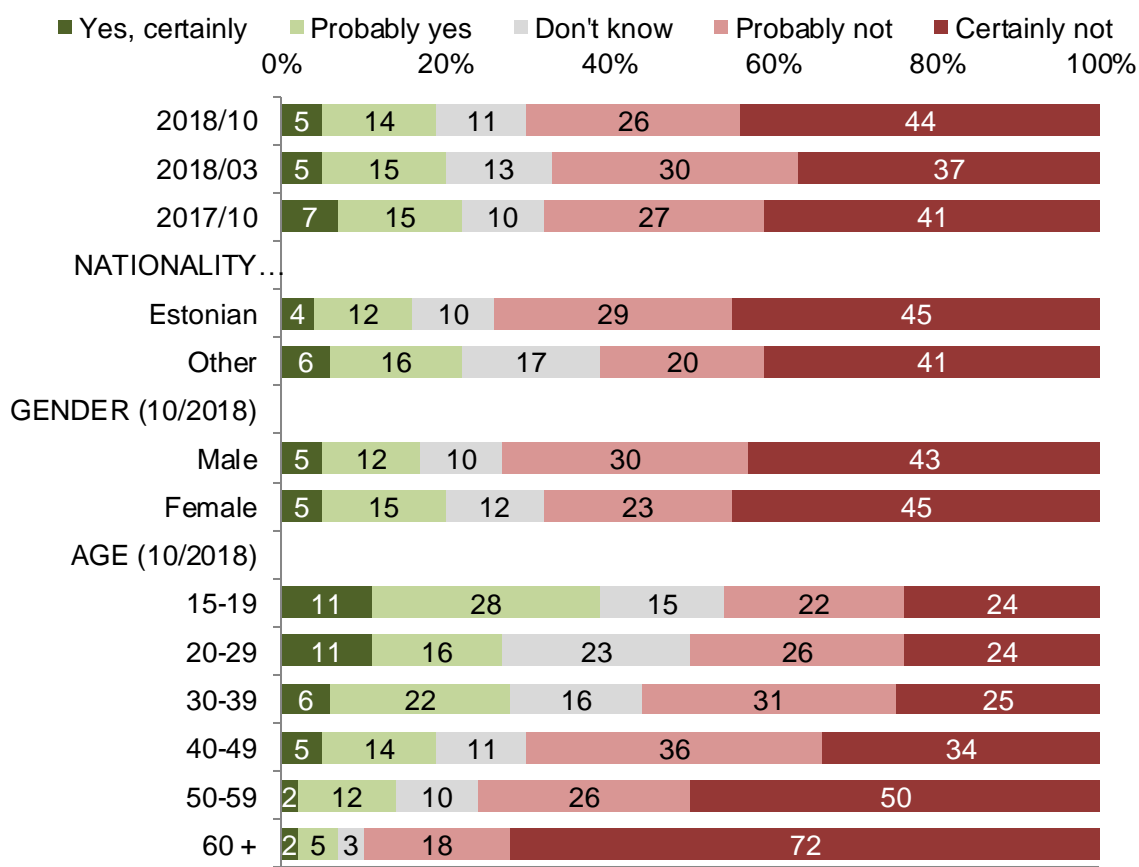
4.3 Desire to leave Estonia in the event of a military threat

In case Estonia is attacked, one fifth of Estonians would consider leaving Estonia—this indicator has been at roughly the same level for several years now. In such a situation, 5% would certainly endeavour to leave and 14% would probably do it. 70% of the population would certainly not or probably not endeavour to leave Estonia in the event of a threat (Figure 22).

The people most prone to leave Estonia are women (certainly or probably 20%) and younger people: 39% of people under 20 years of age, 27% between 20 and 29 years of age, and 28% between 30 and 39 years of age would consider leaving.

From 50 years of age on, the wish to leave Estonia drops rapidly and the smallest number of potential leavers are among people above the age of 60. 22% of non-Estonians and 16% Estonians would probably leave.

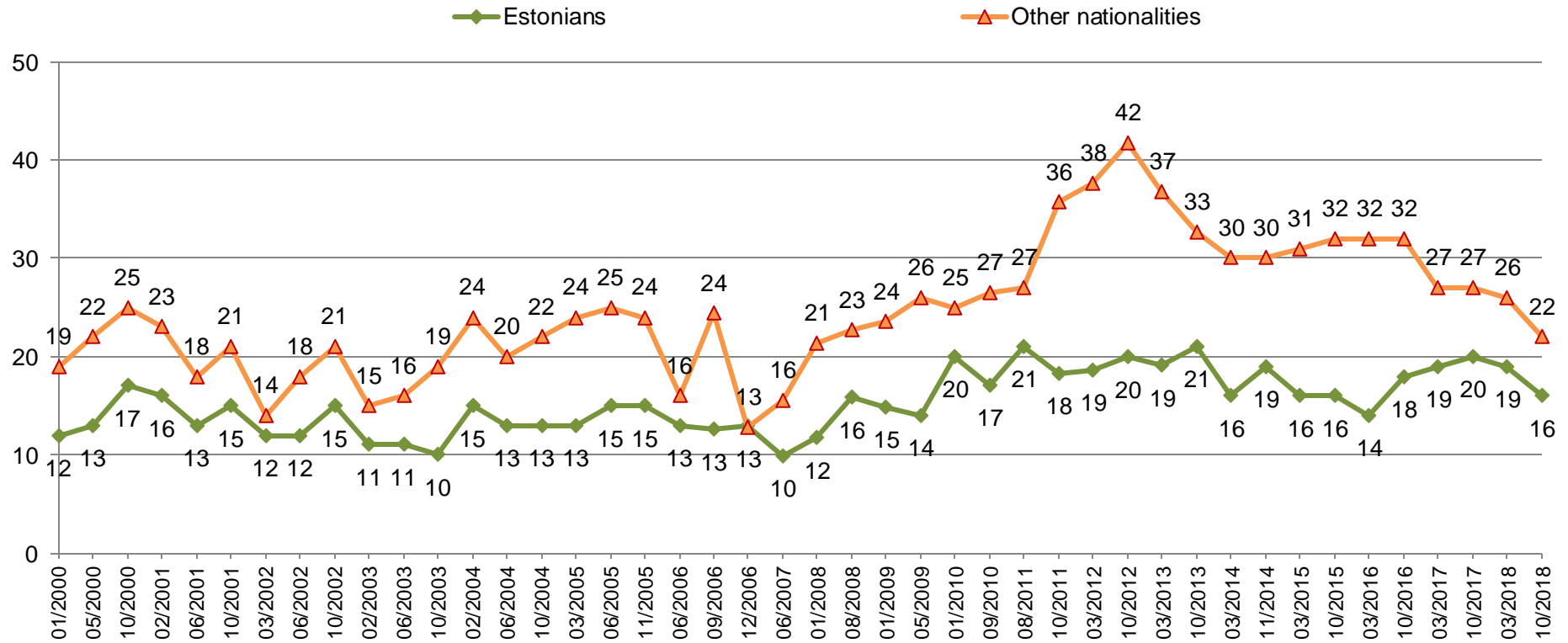
Figure 22. Probability of leaving Estonia in case Estonia is attacked; 2017–2018 comparison (%; N = all respondents)



When taking into account the whole timeline from the beginning of the survey series, it can be seen that the non-Estonian respondents have expressed increasingly higher willingness to leave since the year 2007; the willingness rose to as high as 42% in 2013 and has remained close to 30% since then. The proportion of those wanting to leave has been below 30% in the last three surveys.

Estonians' willingness to leave rose to nearly 20% during the recession years from 2010 to 2013. While it showed an increasing trend in the last surveys, the percentage of probable leavers has declined again in October (see Figure 23).

Figure 23. Proportion of those desiring to leave Estonia in the event of an attack; comparison of Estonians and non-Estonians 2000–2018
 (% of those desiring to leave certainly and those who would probably do it; N = all respondents)

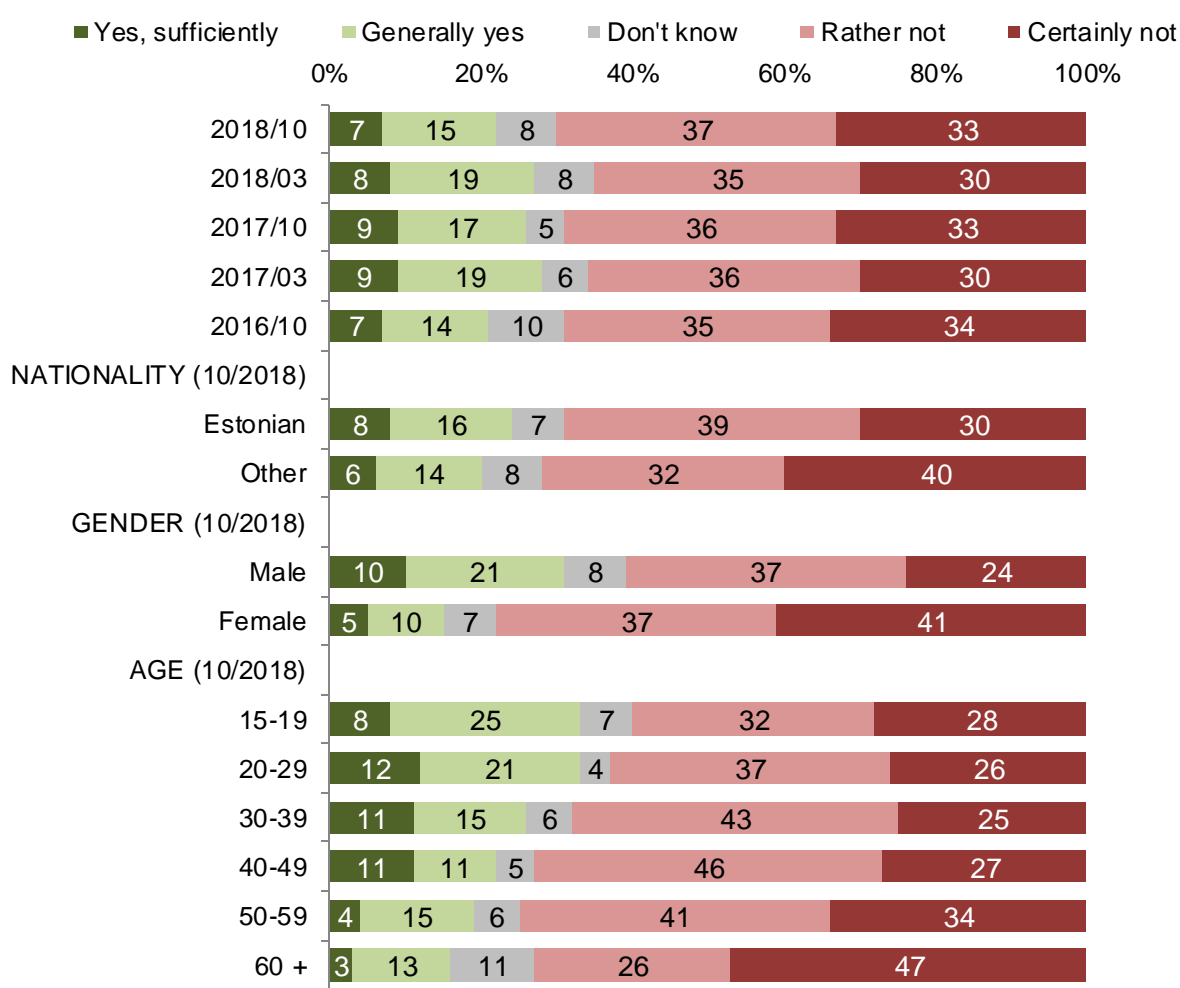


4.4 Ability to act in the event of a potential attack

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 to be rather poor**—only a little over one fifth of respondents answered that they have at least general knowledge about what to do to defend the country in such a situation, while 70% consider themselves rather or certainly not informed.

Assessments on awareness have fallen back to the 2016 level (Figure 24). This could be explained by the fact that the need to better inform the population in a crisis situation has been publicly talked about more than previously.

Figure 24. Being informed about the possibilities of what to do for defending Estonia in the event of an impending foreign attack; 2016–2018 comparison (%) (N = all respondents)



Men consider their awareness to be higher than women (31% vs. 15%), which could be explained by more contact with national defence structures (undergoing conscript service, Defence League). However, assessment of one's awareness has declined among both men and women.

Difference in awareness between Estonians and respondents of other nationalities is decreasing, although it is slightly better among Estonians (24% vs. 20% respectively).

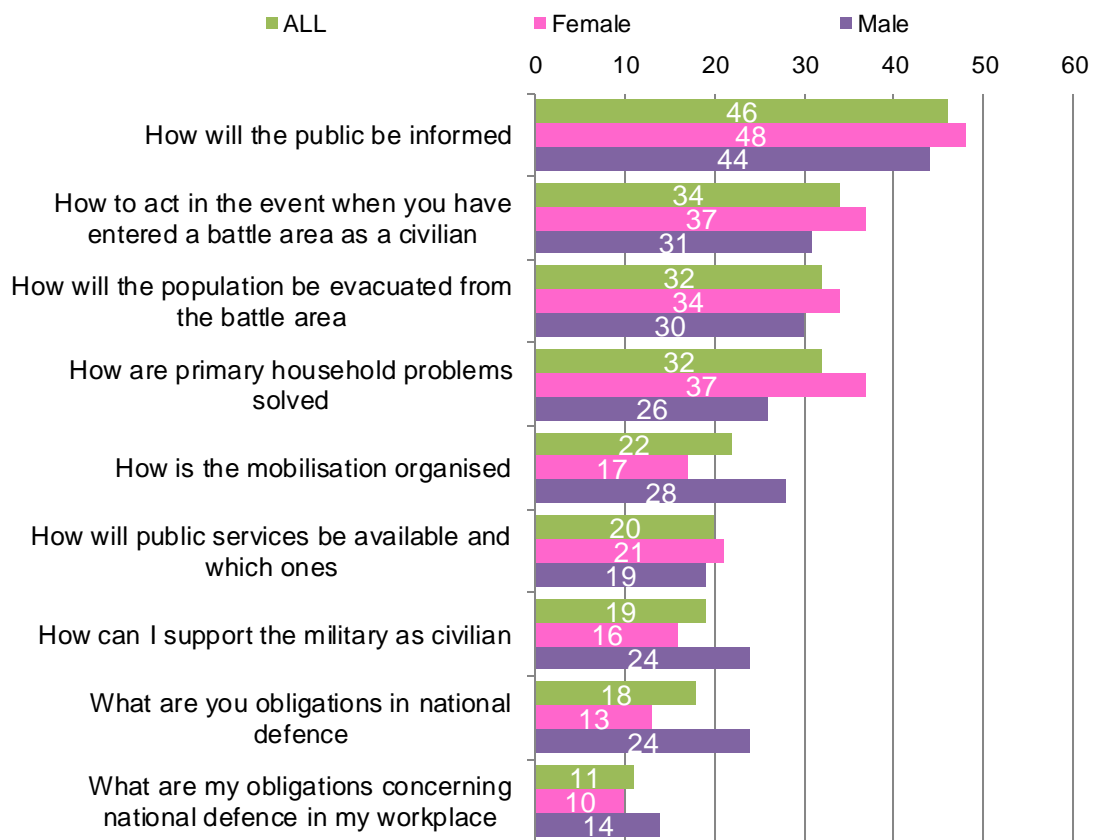
Respondents below 30 years of age consider themselves as best informed (33%), yet the awareness drops as the age increases and only 16% of respondents over 60 years of age consider themselves informed.

4.5 On which topics is more information required

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 and consequently, since November 2014, the survey has included a question about the topics on which people require the most information. Respondents had to choose three topics that are the most important to them out of the nine given.

The ranking and level of importance of the topics has not changed by much during this survey period. The four most important topics highlighted in all of the last surveys are related to the role of civilians in the case of a conflict: **how the general public is informed (46%), how to act when one has entered a combat zone as a civilian (34%), how evacuation is organised (32%), and how to solve basic household problems (32%)**. The rest of the topics are already less relevant: a fifth of the respondents are interested in what are their duties in national defence and how mobilisation is organised, and these topics are more important to male respondents to an above average degree (Figure 25).

Figure 25. On which topics do you require more information? Comparison of men and women October 2018 (%; N = all respondents)



The difference in information needs of male and female respondents is noticeable. 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, their duties in national defence, and the ways in which civilians can contribute to supporting the military

Women would like more information on how to act as a civilian, about evacuation, on how to solve basic everyday problems.

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.

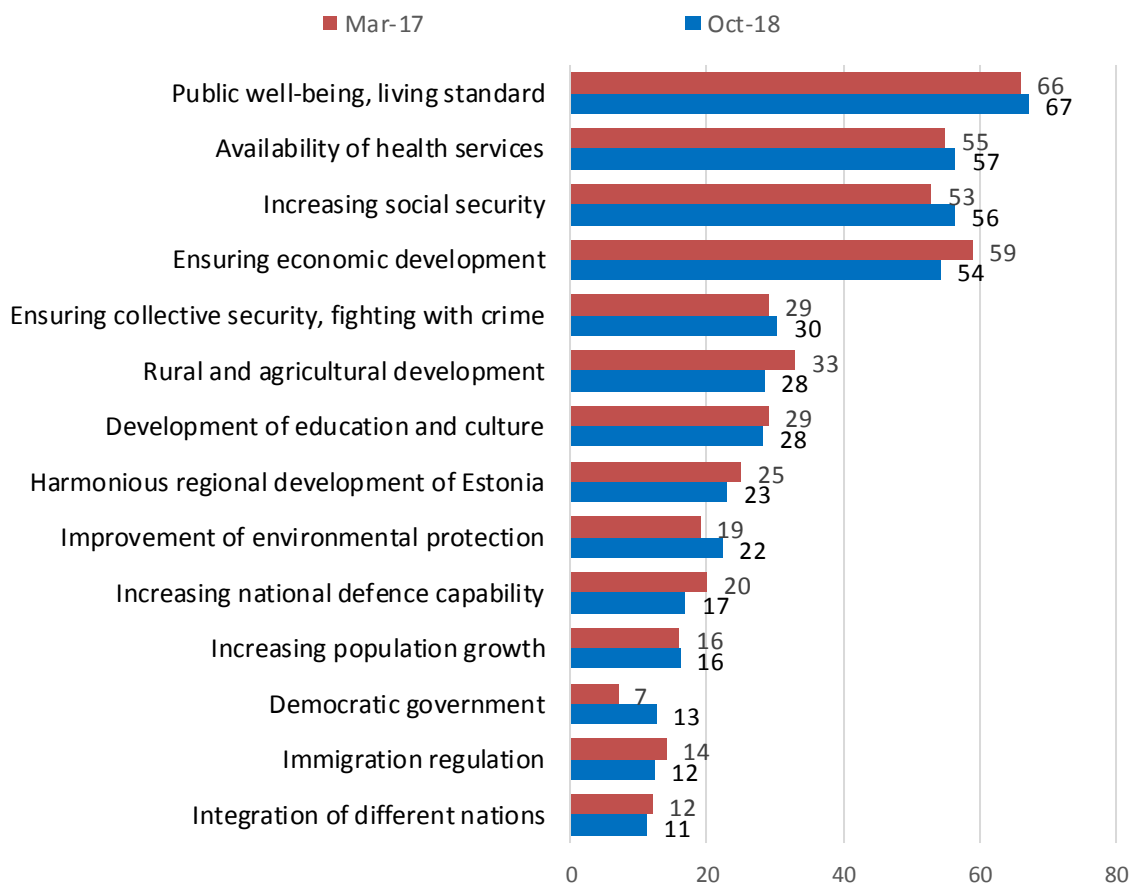
5.1 The importance of national defence capability among other areas of public interest that need improving

In surveys conducted since 2000, the respondents have been asked a few of times to choose up to five areas of public interest that should receive the most attention from the government from a given list. The list included 14 different topics. This question was last asked in March 2017.

There have been no major changes as to which areas of public interest are deemed important. The most important ones were to increase the public well-being (67%), improve access to healthcare services (57%), and increase social security (56%). While in March 2017 ensuring economic development came in second, now the topic has dropped to fourth (54%). People know that the economy is growing but the question is how much does the ordinary person gain from that ([Figure 26](#)).

All other topics are already less important in the view of the public, strengthening the nation's defence capability comes in with only 17% at 10th place out of 14. For example, improvement of environmental protection is deemed more important (22%), while regulation of immigration, integration policy, democratic governing of the state are deemed less important.

Figure 26. Which of these areas in the Estonian society should the government pay most attention to at the present time? March 2017/ October 2018 (%; N = all respondents)

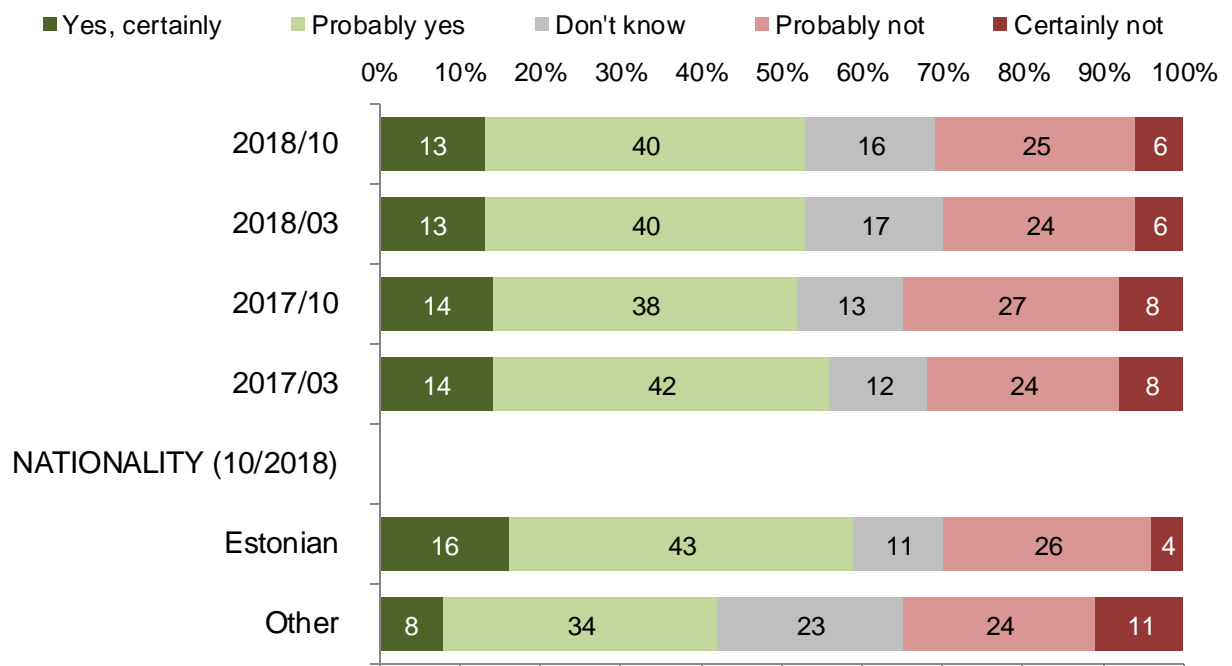


5.2 Assessment of the defence capability of Estonia

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 exceeded 50%. In this survey, 53% of respondents believed that defending Estonia is certainly or probably possible. The percentage of respondents who answered that way was the same in March.

The proportion of respondents who find that Estonia cannot be defended is 31% (Figure 27).

Figure 27. Assessment of the defence capability of Estonia in the event of an armed foreign attack; 2017–2018 comparison (%) ; N = all respondents)



Estonians have more faith in Estonia's independent defence capability than respondents of other nationalities: 59% and 42% respectively. This indicator has dropped among Estonians by 2% (61% in March), but increased by 6% among respondents of other nationalities (36%).

The opinions of Estonian citizens of other nationalities differ greatly from the ones held by Russian citizens and those with undetermined citizenship. While 47% of Estonian citizens of other nationalities believe that Estonia is defensible, only 32% of Russian citizens and 30% of respondents with undetermined citizenship agree.

5.3 Views on the volume of defence expenditures

Support for national defence funding has been high among the Estonian population since the beginning of the survey.

After joining NATO, there was a period of a few years (primarily during the period of 2006–2008) when a third or even greater proportion of the population considered an increase in defence expenditures necessary. At the time, there was a lot of talk about the necessity to conform to NATO requirements and raise defence expenditures to 2% of the GDP

After the 2% criterion was met and even exceeded in recent years, the support for an increase in defence expenditures has dwindled in the recent surveys and the majority of the respondents wish to keep the expenses at the current level. Support for an increase in defence expenditures also fell during the period of 2009–2013 due to the recession.

Assessing the volume of Estonian defence expenditures today, half of the respondents think that **defence expenditures should be kept at the current level (50%)** (Figure 28). An **increase as well as decrease in defence expenditures is favoured equally by one fifth of the population**. 10% of the respondents do not have an opinion.

The attitudes of Estonians and Russian-speaking respondents differ greatly. In the last three years, the proportion of Russian-speaking residents who favour cuts in defence expenditures has been at over 40%. In October, 44% of non-Estonians desired a decrease in defence expenditures.

However, the number of those in favour of increasing defence expenditures among Russian-speaking respondents is equal to Estonians wishing for a decrease—8% and 7% respectively.

While in 2015, the proportion among Estonians supporting an increase in defence expenditures was still at over 40%, it has now come down to 26% and the view that defence expenditures should be maintained at the current level is dominating (Figure 29).

Figure 28. Views on the volume of defence expenditures; 2004–2018 comparison (%; N = all respondents)

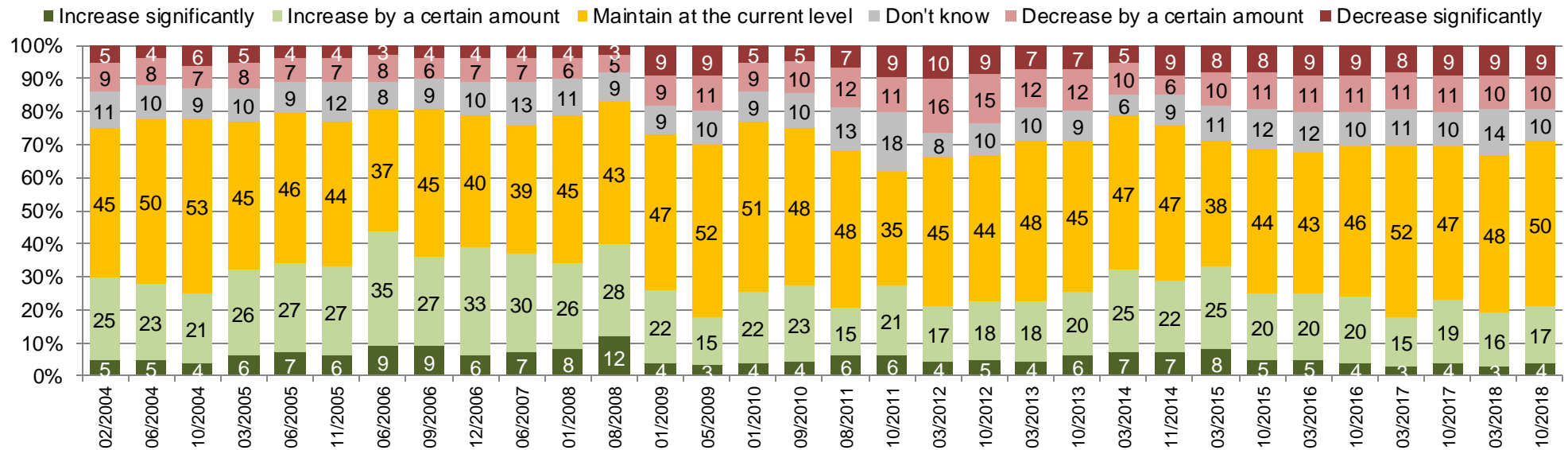
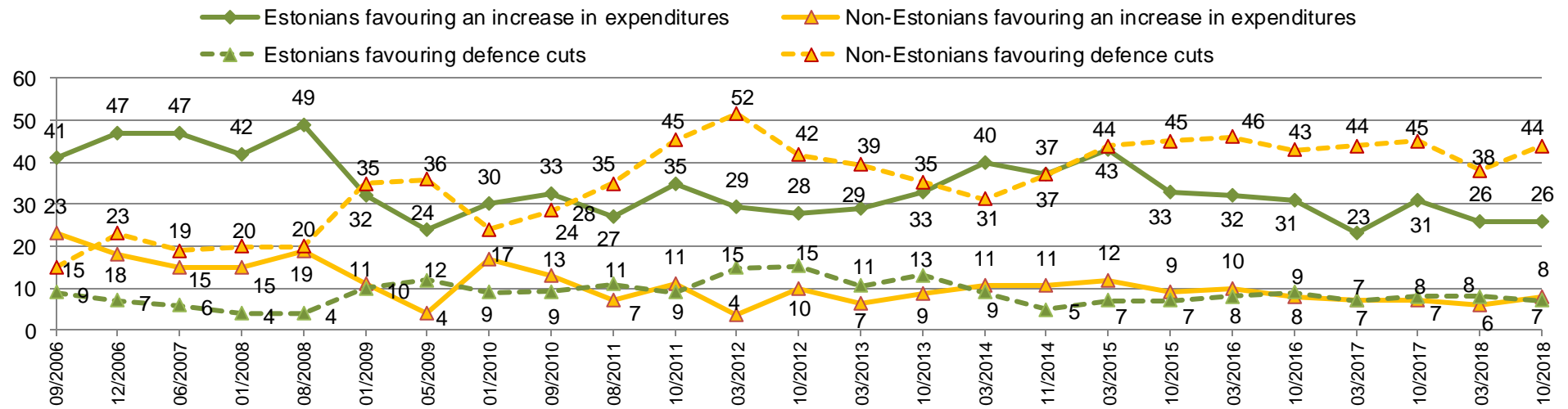


Figure 29. Views on the volume of defence expenditures; comparison of Estonian and non-Estonian population 2006–2018 (%; N = all respondents)

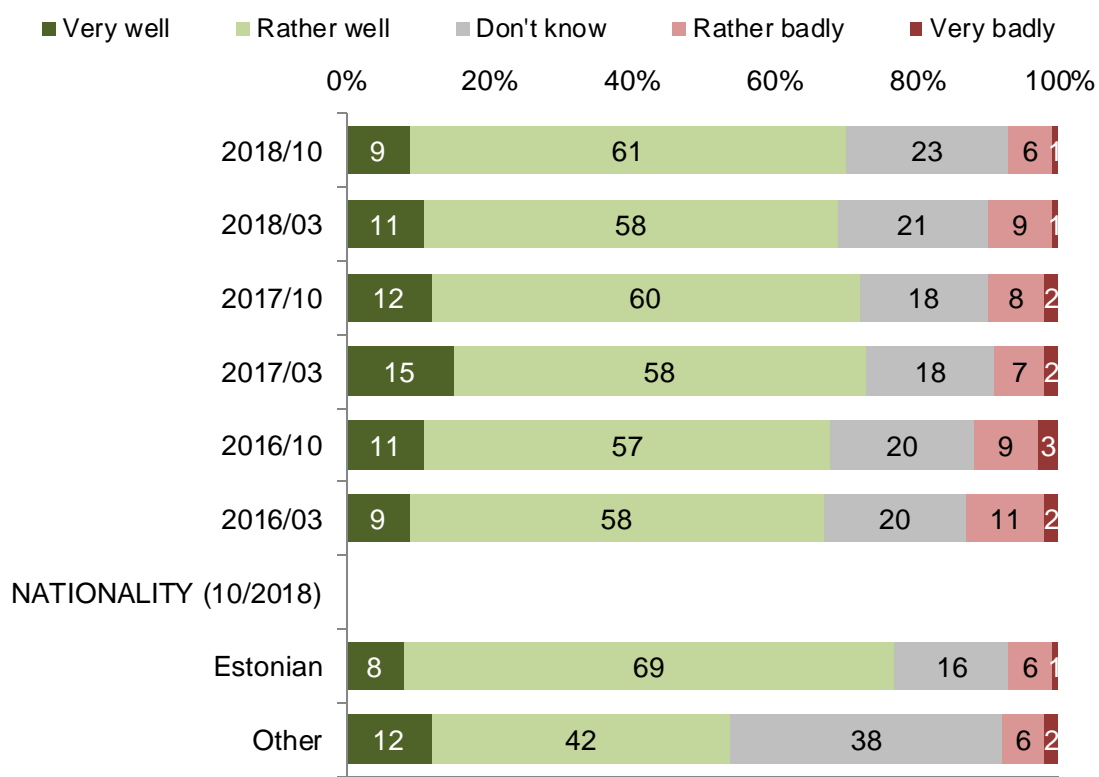


5.4 Assessment of state activities in view of the development of national defence

In the last three years assessment of state's activities in view of development of national defence have been predominantly positive—70% of the respondents did view it as very or rather good also in October 2018 (Figure 30).

Similarly to most of the other assessments on national defence or state institutions, the Estonian-speaking population provides more positive assessments compared to non-Estonians: 77% of Estonians and 54% of non-Estonian respondents regard the development of national defence as good or very good. However, even the latter segment does not have many more respondents who give the development of national defence a negative assessment compared to Estonians (only 8%), yet there are more respondents choosing the answer "cannot say" (38%).

Figure 30. Assessment of state activities in the recent years in view of the development of Estonia's national defence; 2016–2018 comparison (%) ; N = all respondents)



5.5 Assessments on the defence of the Estonian border

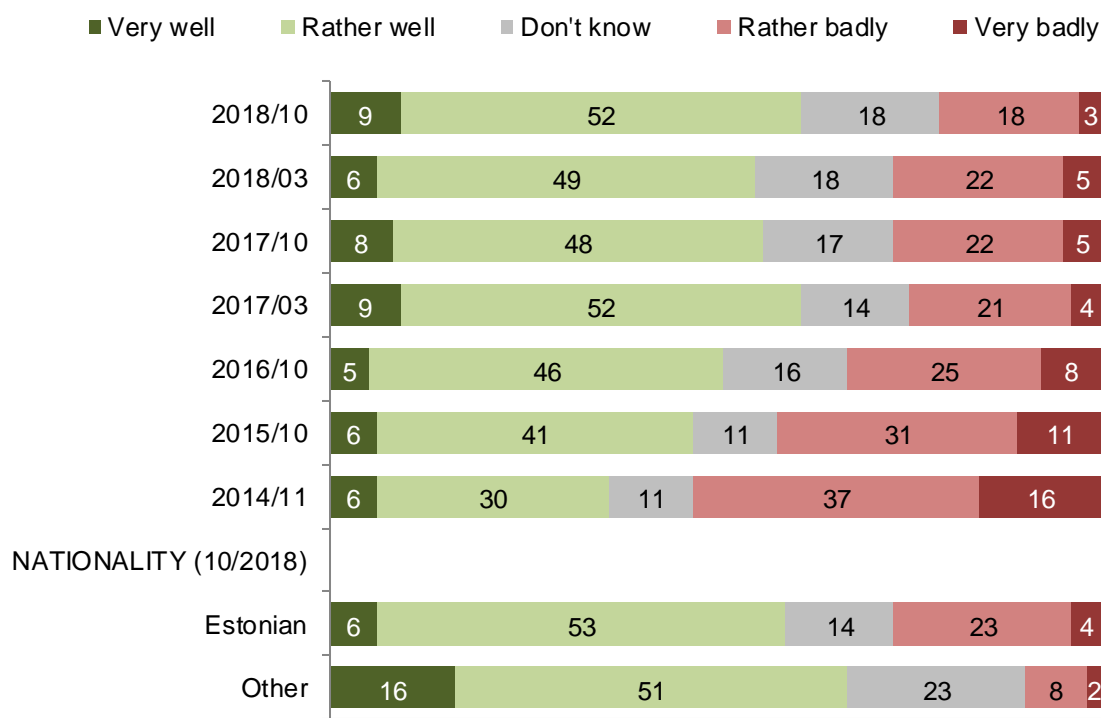
In 2014, the kidnapping of the Estonian Internal Security Service officer Eston Kohver by the Russian special services on the Estonian-Russian border resulted in the public discussion on how well the border line between Estonia and Russia was guarded.

Whereas in autumn 2014, right after the incident at the border, the majority of the assessments given to this question were negative, then already by spring 2016, **the assessments were once again predominantly positive** (Figure 31). In October 2018, defence of the border was assessed positively by 61% and negatively by 21% of respondents. The assessments have turned more positive compared to spring.

The defence of the border is still viewed more critically by Estonians compared to respondents of other nationalities. If 27% of Estonians view the defence of the border negatively, the same is held by only 10% of non-Estonians. Yet, the proportion of positive assessments is higher among respondents of other nationalities compared to Estonians (Estonians 59% and other nationalities 67%).

The assessment differed most drastically in the fall of 2014, when only 27% of Estonians assessed the defence of the border positively, 67% viewed it as bad or very bad. At that time, only 26% of respondents of other nationalities viewed the defence of the eastern border as bad or very bad.

Figure 31. Assessment on the defence of the Estonian border; 2014–2018 comparison (%; N = all respondents)

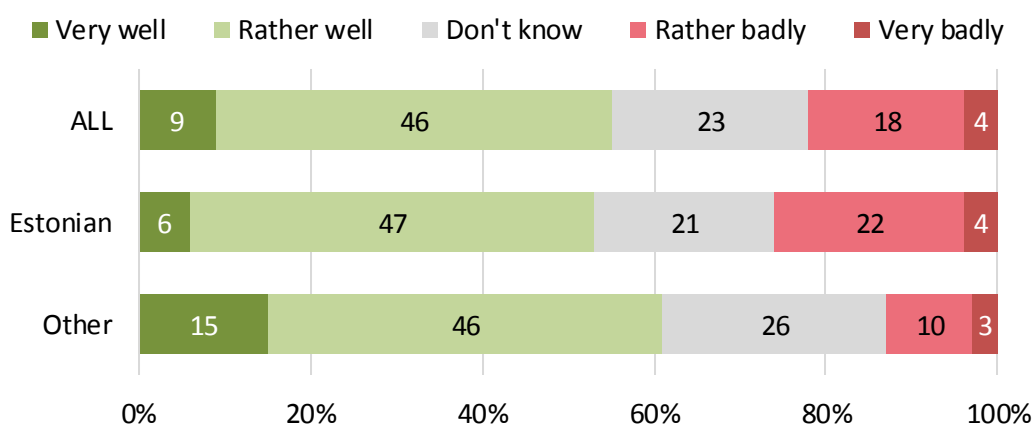


5.6 Assessment of the security of digital services and information systems of Estonia's e-state

For the first time the survey includes the topic of the security of Estonia's e-state. As we have seen previously, cyber-attacks are viewed as the most acute factor threatening Estonia's security. Perhaps because such a threat is viewed as the most likely one, the assessment on the security of this field is also the least positive: 55% of respondents think that the digital services and information systems of our e-state are very or rather secure, while 22% view their security as bad (Figure 32).

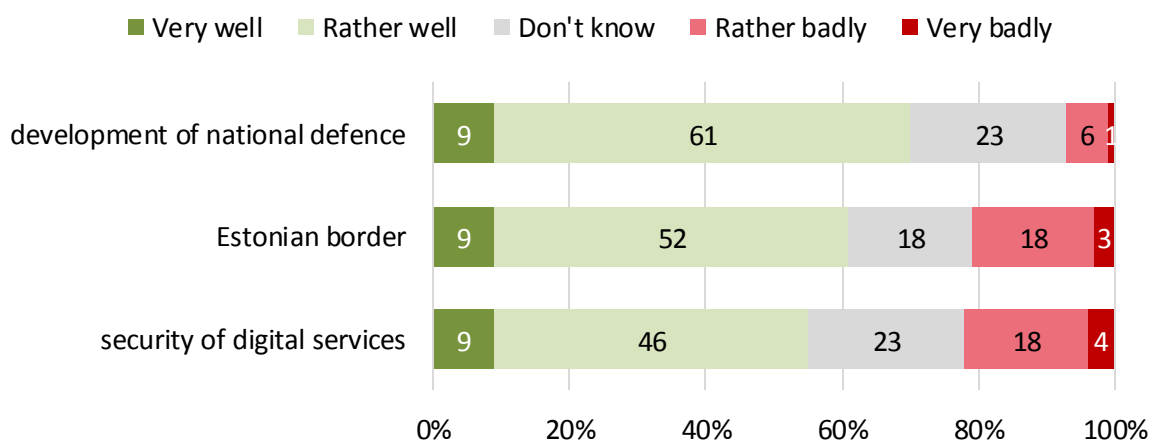
Of course, this is an area which many respondents are unable to assess—almost 25% provide the answer "cannot say".

Figure 32. Assessments of the security of digital services and information systems of Estonia's e-state (%; N = all respondents)



If we compare the assessments to the three areas given under the same spectrum, the largest number of respondents provide a positive assessment to the development of national defence in general, followed by defence of the border, and the least positive assessments are given to the e-state (Figure 33).

Figure 33. Comparison of assessments on development of Estonia's national defence, border defence, and security of digital service and information systems (%; N = all respondents)



6 Organisation of Estonian national defence

The sixth chapter discusses various aspects of national defence organisation in Estonia: 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 it is more appropriate for Estonia to maintain its current defence concept or switch to a fully professional army, opinions on comprehensive national defence and the main tasks of the Defence League.

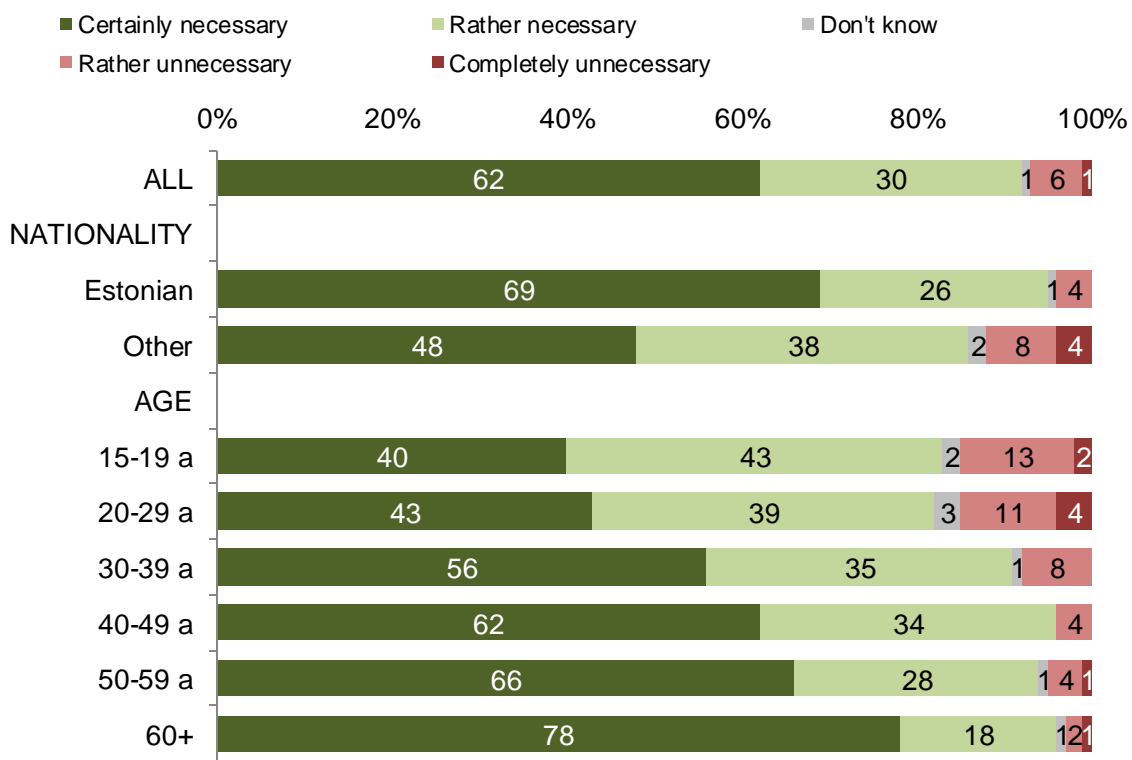
6.1 Attitude towards conscript service

6.1.1 Necessity of conscript service for young men

The Estonian population's attitude towards conscript service for young men has been very favourable throughout the survey period: in **October 2018 as well, 92% of all respondents believed 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 69% of the Estonians respondents and 48% of respondents of other nationalities ([Figure 34](#)).

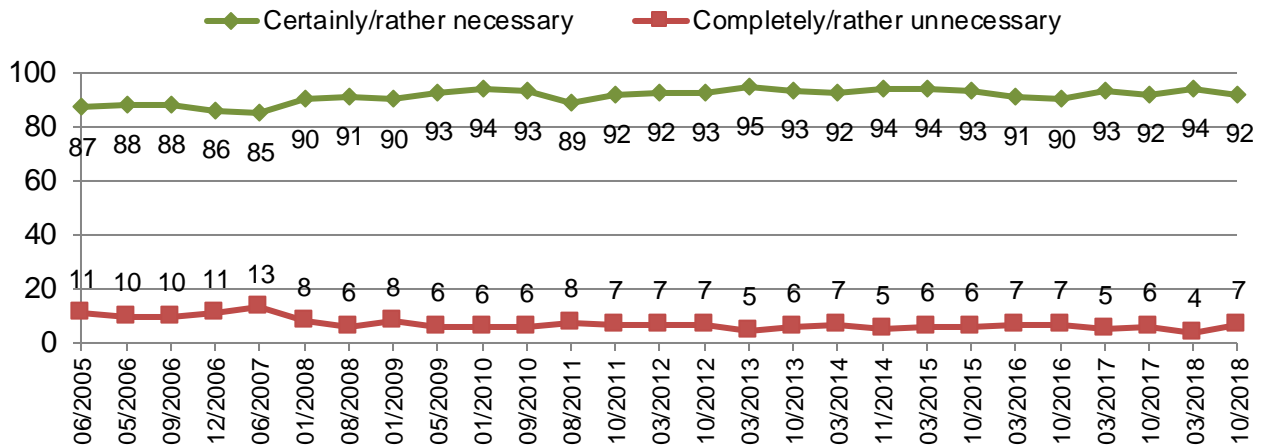
The most dedicated supporters of conscript service are people over 60 years of age, 78% of whom consider it certainly necessary. More than 60% of respondents 40 years of age and older are convinced of the necessity of conscript service and more than half of respondents between 30 and 39 years of age agree. Conscript service is considered certainly necessary by a little over 40% of the respondents below 30 years of age, who are affected most directly by conscript service, while 15% of them consider it unnecessary.

Figure 34. Attitude towards the necessity of conscript service in October 2018 (%; N = all respondents)



The proportion of the people who consider undergoing conscript service certainly necessary or rather necessary for young men has remained at a very high level throughout the years—since 2008, it has constantly been at 90% and higher (Figure 35).

Figure 35. Attitude towards the necessity of conscript service; 2005–2017 comparison (%; N = all respondents)

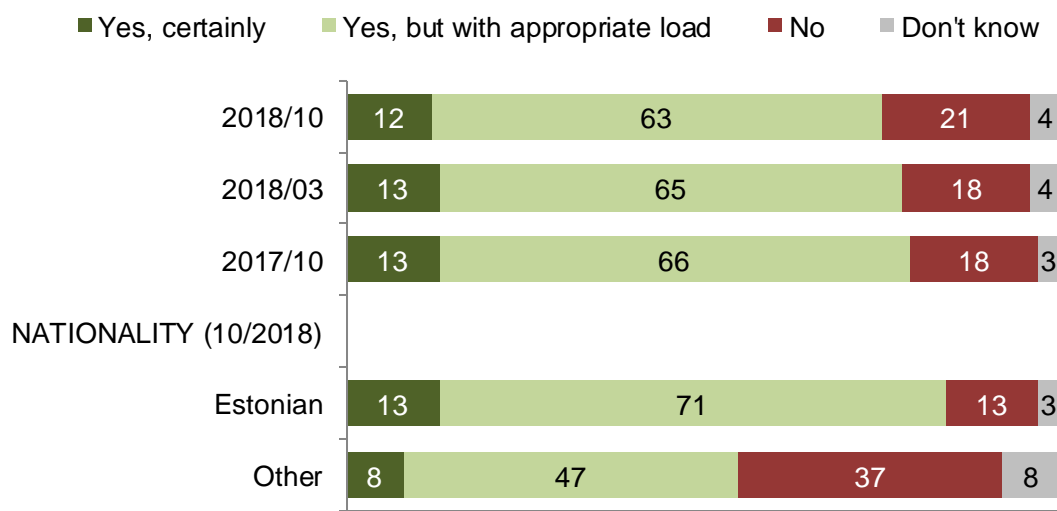


6.1.2. Attitudes towards undergoing conscript service with minor health disorders

Since 2012, the respondents have been additionally asked to assess whether young men with minor health disorders should also undergo conscript service. 12% believe that such young men should certainly undergo conscript service; however, **63% think that young men with minor health disorders should undergo conscript service with an appropriate training load** (Figure 36). The public opinion has remained very stable in this matter over the past three surveys.

Among Estonians, support for extending conscript service duty to young men with minor health disorders is widespread, respondents of other nationalities are more conservative in this regard—37% of them think that young men with minor health disorders should not undergo conscript service at all. 71% of Estonians and 46% of respondents of other nationalities find that young men with minor health disorders should undergo conscript service with an appropriate training load.

Figure 36. Attitudes towards undergoing conscript service regarding young men with minor health disorders; 2017–2018 comparison (%; N = all respondents)



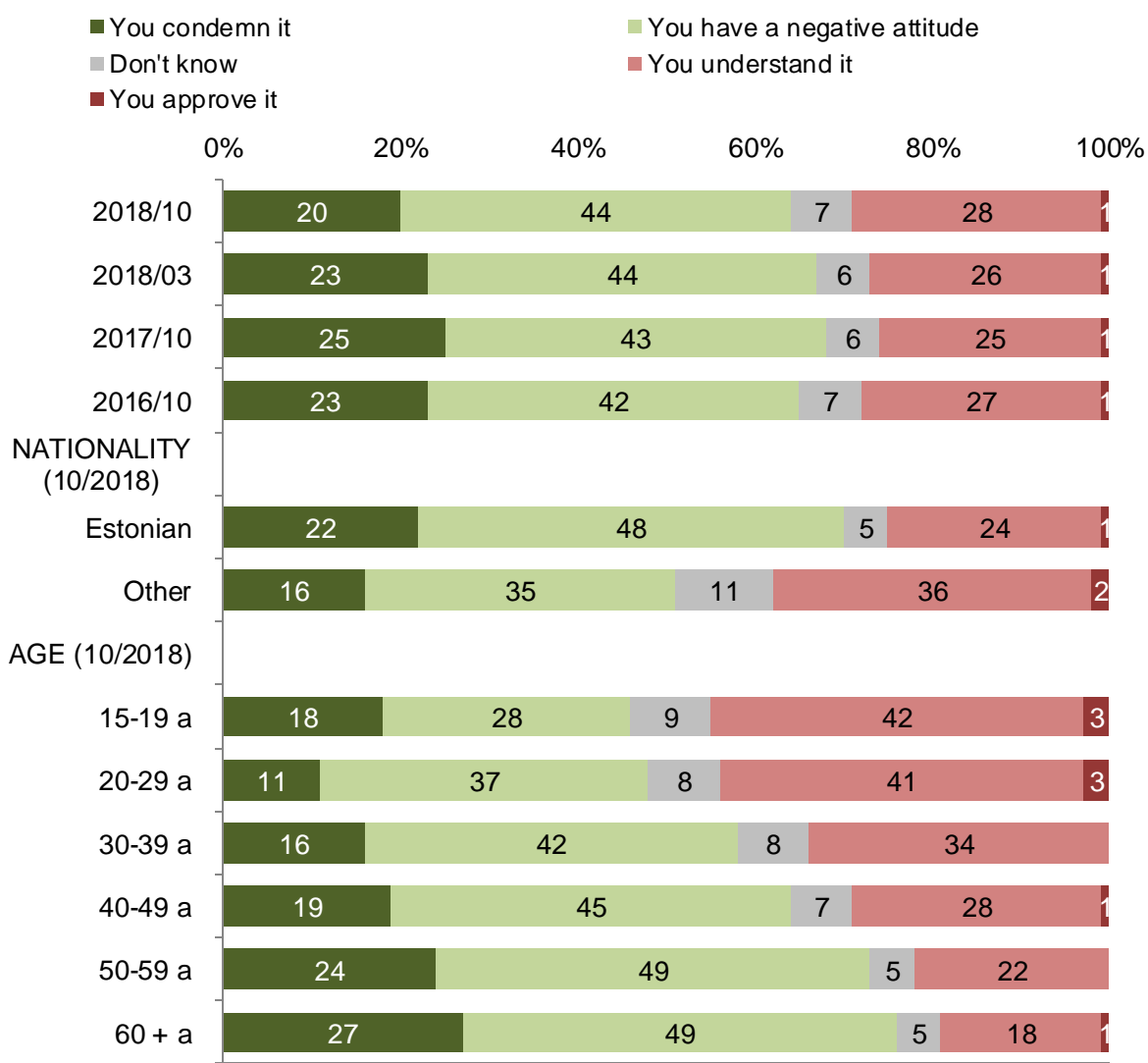
6.1.3. Evasion of conscript service

Bearing in mind the favouring attitudes of the population towards conscript service, it is fully anticipated that a **great share of the population in Estonia disapproves of the evasion of conscript service**—20% condemn such behaviour and 44% consider it negative (Figure 37). 28% of the respondents have an understanding attitude towards the evasion of conscript service, while only 1% of the respondents approve of this.

The difference between Estonians and respondents of other nationalities is almost 20% in this matter: a respective 70% and 51% see evasion negatively.

However, seniors tend to have a more negative attitude towards the evasion of conscript service. More than 40% of respondents below 30 years of age have an understanding or approving attitude towards the evasion of conscript service. However, a condemning attitude increases together with age and 76% of people over 60 years of age view evasion of conscript service negatively.

Figure 37. Attitude towards the evasion of conscript service; 2016–2018 comparison (%; N = all respondents)



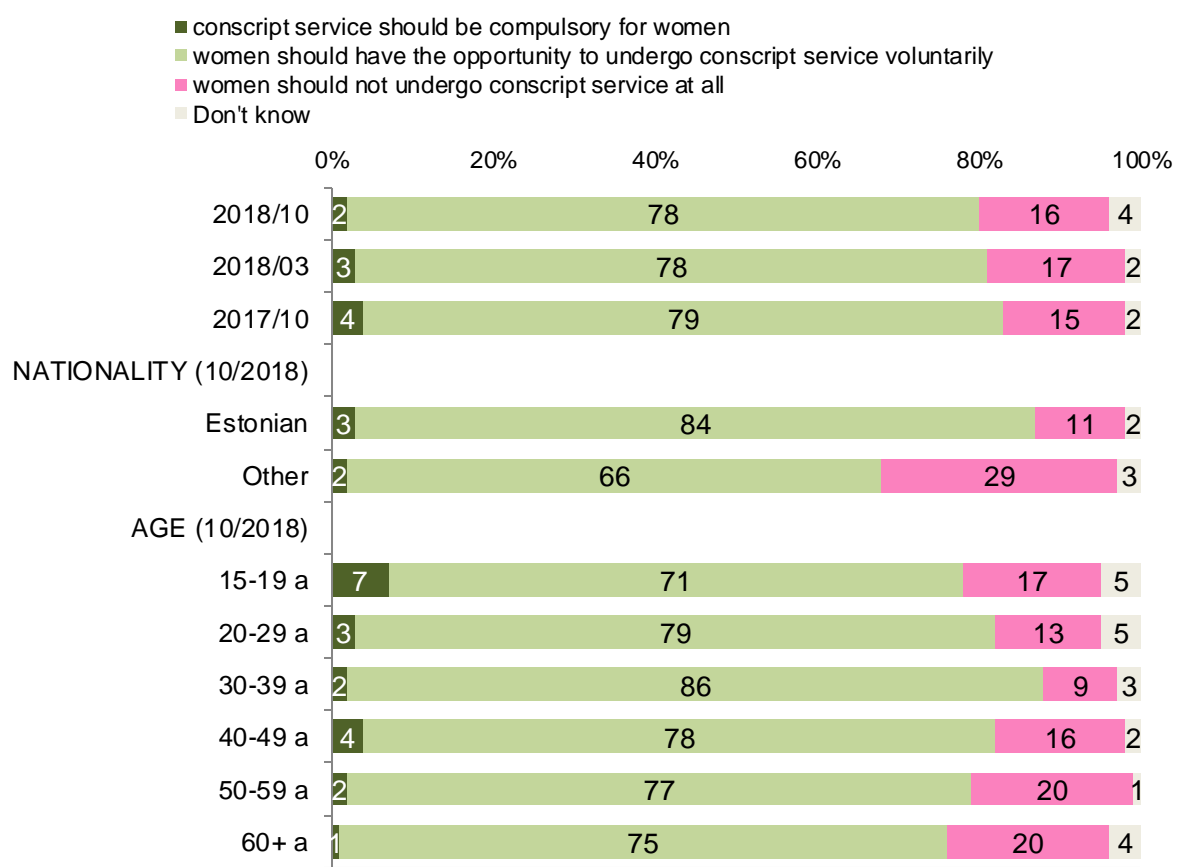
6.1.4. Conscript service for women

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

As from fall 2016, the question about conscript service for women has been presented in the following wording: **“What do you think, what should women’s relationship with conscript service be like?”**

The respondents were offered a choice between three answers: conscript service should be compulsory for women as well, women should have the opportunity to undergo conscript service voluntarily, or women should not undergo conscript service at all, not even voluntarily (see [Figure 38](#)).

Figure 38. Attitude towards the necessity of conscript service for women; 2017–2018 comparison (%) (N = all respondents)



Support for voluntary conscript service for women is predominant—it is supported by **78%** of the respondents and this attitude is stable.

As much as 84% of Estonians support voluntary conscript service for women, while the respective indicator for respondents of other nationalities is 66%. Of the latter, 29% believe that women should not undergo conscript service at all, whether it is compulsory or not. However, there is 2–3% support for compulsory conscript service for women among both Estonians and non-Estonians.

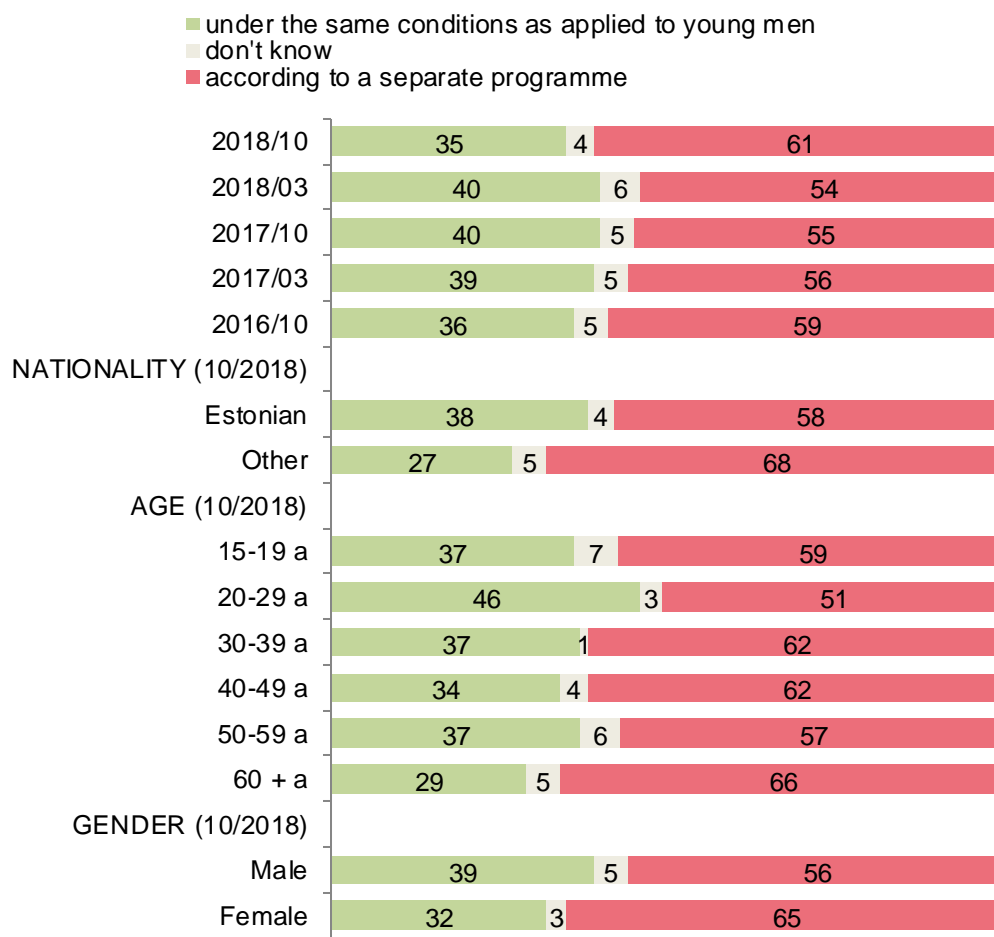
Compulsory conscript service for women is supported by 7% of respondents under 20 years of age. There is still one third among respondents above 50 years of age who would like to keep women away from conscript service.

It can be seen that conservative notions of gender roles have started to slowly disappear also among older people and respondents of other nationalities.

The respondents who considered voluntary or compulsory conscript service for women certainly or rather necessary were asked about the form **in which the conscript service should take place: whether under the same conditions as applied to young men or through a separate programme, which would take the different physical abilities of women into account.**

The prevailing view is that conscript service for women should be conducted according to a separate programme (Figure 39). This view is more prevalent among respondents of other nationalities (68%). Such a solution has above average support also among older respondents (66%) and women (65%).

Figure 39. Which form should conscript service for women take? 2016–2018 comparison
(%; N = all respondents who considered conscript service for women necessary)



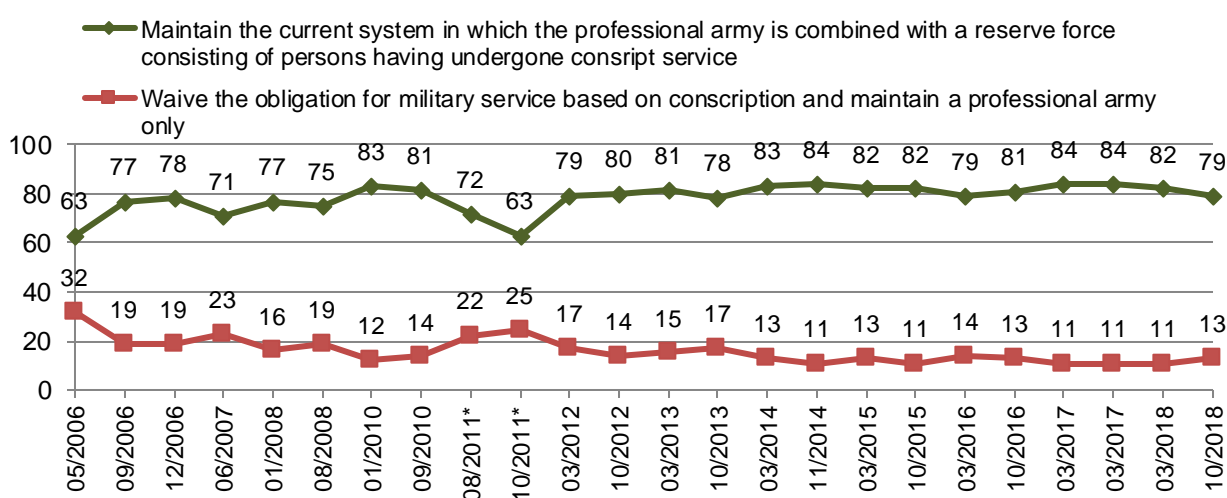
6.2 Attitudes towards the professional defence forces

Despite the fact that more than 90% of respondents find undergoing conscript service necessary, the topic of making the transition to a professional army is sometimes raised in political debates. This became topical after Estonia joined NATO, when a professional defence force was also preferred at the government level and when Latvia and Lithuania abandoned compulsory conscript service.

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 who have undergone conscript service.

The results of the survey reveal that **80% of the population would prefer maintaining the current system based on reserve forces** (Figure 40). Switching to a fully professional army and waiving compulsory conscript service is favoured by only 13% of Estonia’s population.

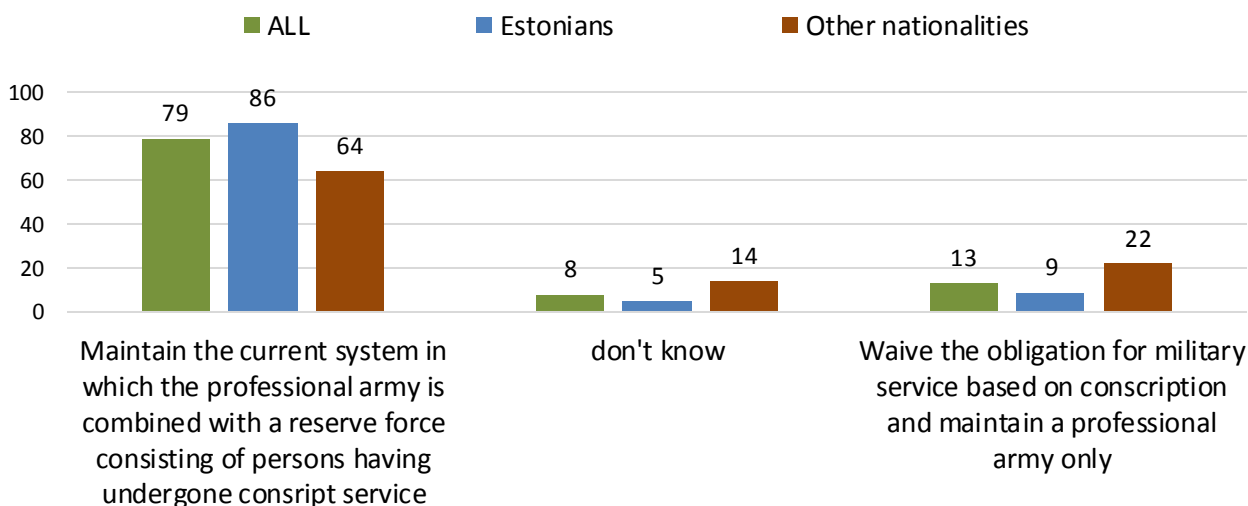
Figure 40. Options preferred for the development of Estonia’s defence concept; 2006–2018 comparison (%; N = all respondents)



* 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".

Transitioning to professional defence forces is supported more by respondents of other nationalities, but regardless of nationality, support for the current system is prevalent (Figure 41).

Figure 41. Options preferred for the development of Estonia’s defence concept – comparison of Estonian and non-Estonian population, October 2018



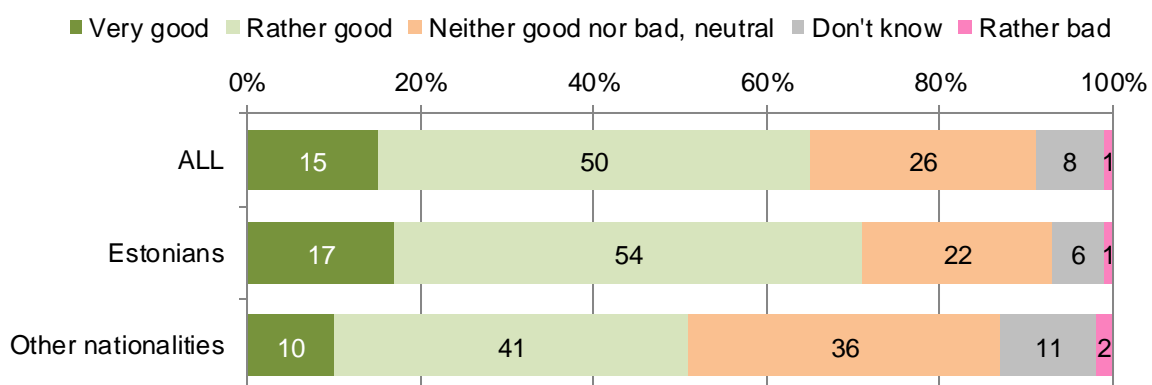
A professional defence force has an above average support also among respondents below 30 years of age: 25% by people between 15 and 19 of age, and 23% by people between 20 and 29 of age.

6.3 Attitudes towards professional servicemen and members of the Defence League

Whereas in previous surveys respondents were asked what is society's general attitude towards professional servicemen (this question was last asked in March 2018), this time we wanted to know the attitude of the respondents themselves.

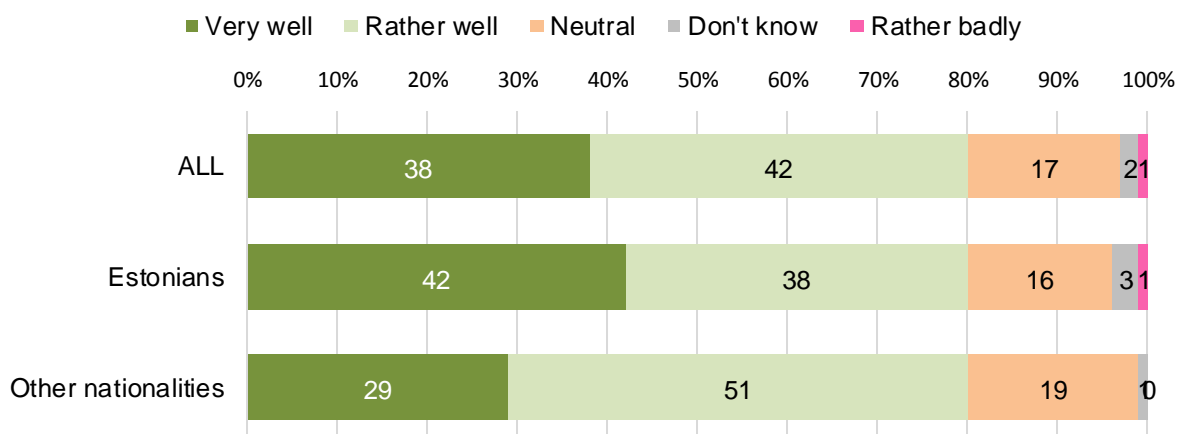
In March the question was: **How do you feel, what is the attitude of Estonian people towards professional servicemen?** (Figure 42)

Figure 42. Attitudes towards professional servicemen; March 2018 (%; N = all respondents)



In this survey, the question was responder-based: **What is your attitude towards professional servicemen?** (Figure 43)

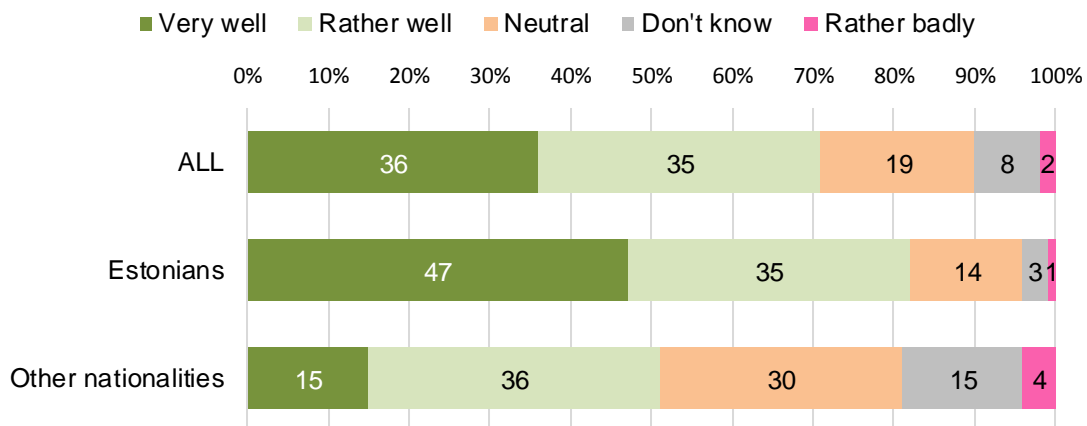
Figure 43. Attitudes towards professional servicemen; October 2018 (%; N = all respondents)



As the figure shows, the respondents slightly underrate the general attitude society has towards servicemen: the respondents' personal attitude is much more positive than the society's assumed general attitude.

Respondents' attitude toward members of the Defence League is also mostly positive (Figure 44).

Figure 44. Attitude towards voluntary members of the Defence League – October 2018
(%; N = All respondents)



While the attitude among Estonian respondents toward voluntary members of the Defence League is even more positive than toward professional servicemen (although both have overwhelming support), respondents of other nationalities are a little more reserved toward voluntary members of the Defence League compared to Estonians. Yet, more than half of them still have a positive attitude.

6.4 Tasks of the Defence League

The respondents were asked to pick the **three most important tasks of the Defence League** from a given list. 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 tasks are considered to be maintaining **permanent readiness for military defence or conducting military training with its members** — these tasks are listed as first by respectively 28% and 24% of the respondents. One tenth of the respondents rank participation in rescue operations or raising defence willingness among the population as first.

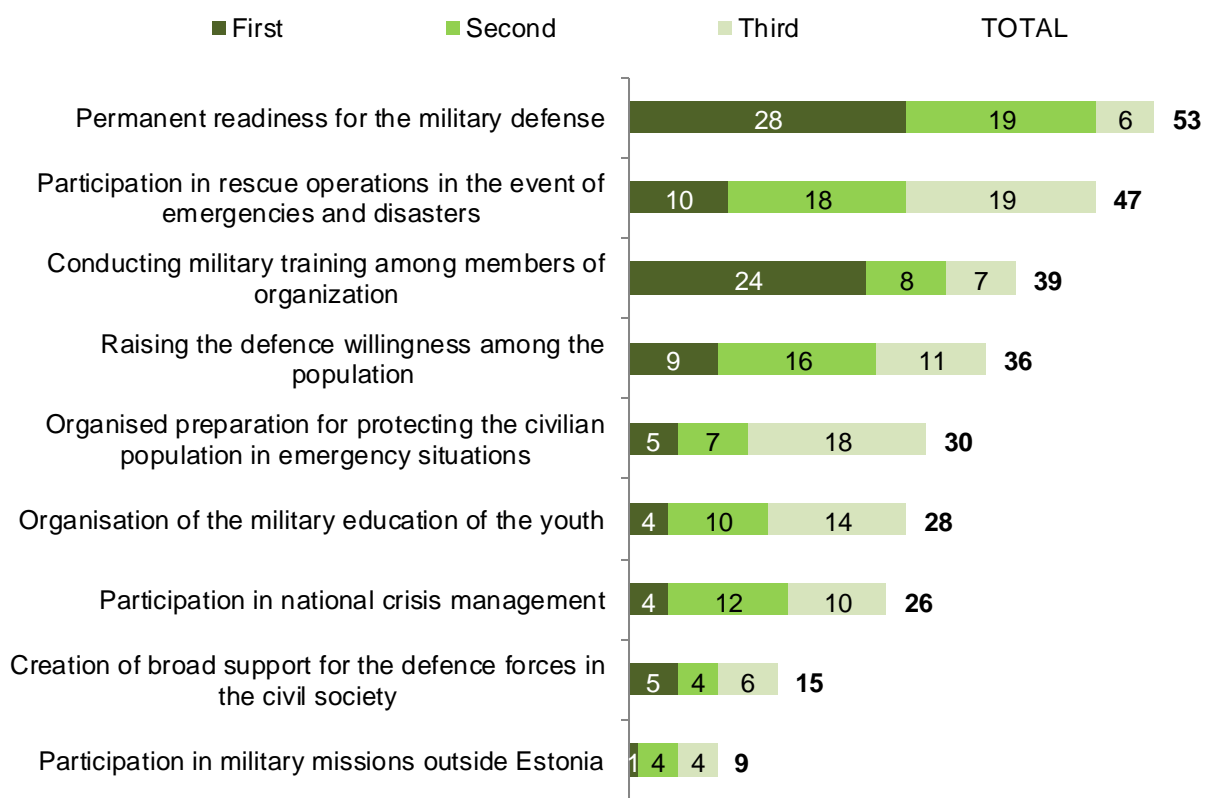
Permanent readiness for military defence (53%) ranks first in the overall summary of the three tasks and **participation in rescue operations in the event of emergencies and disasters** ranks second (**47%**).

The third most important task of the Defence League is considered to be **conducting military training for its members (39%)** which is closely followed by **raising defence willingness among the population (36%)**.

More than one fourth of the respondents consider **organising protection of civilians in emergency situations (30%)**, **organising recreational activities for young people (28%)** or participating in **resolving domestic security crises (26%)** among the three most important tasks.

Participation in military operations outside Estonia was the least popular choice pointed out among the tasks of the Defence League (see [Figure 45](#)).

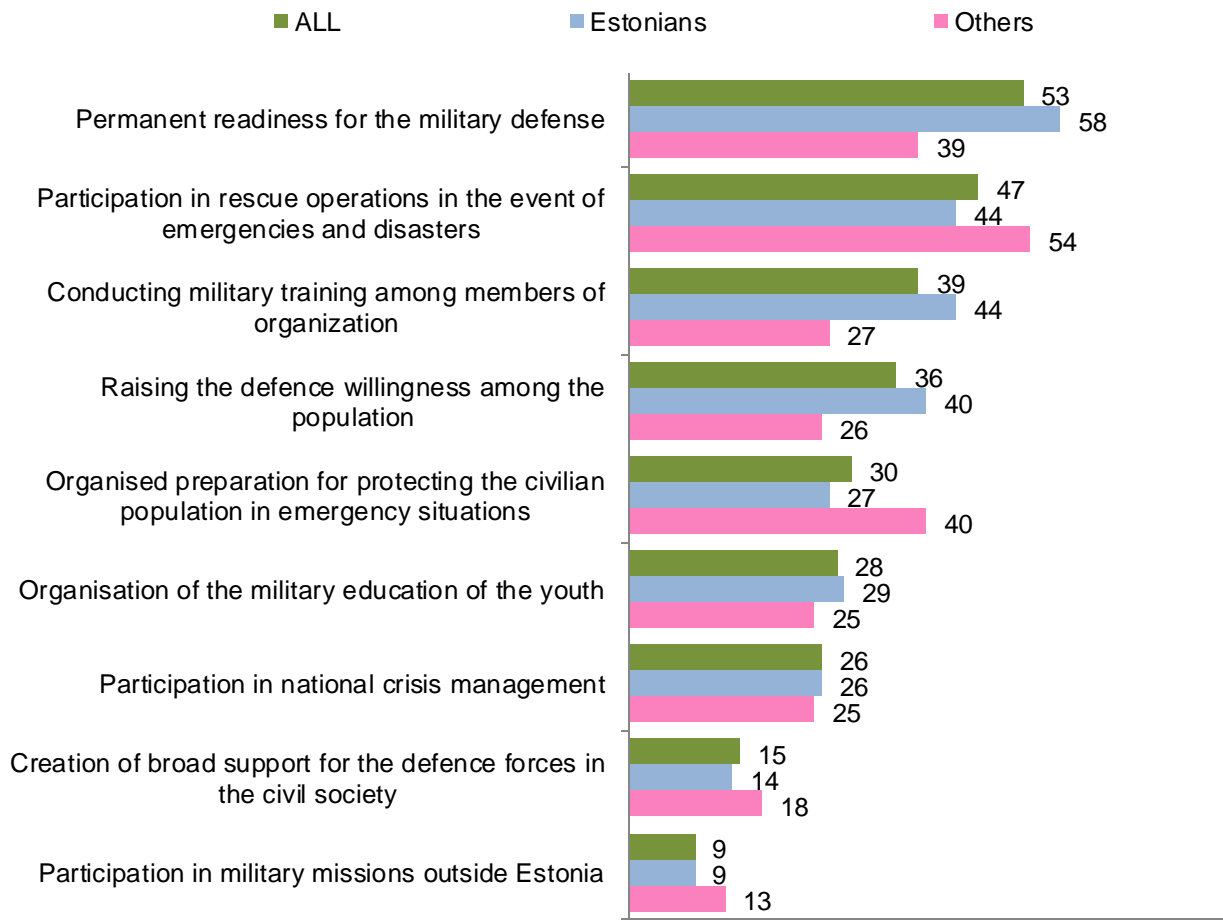
Figure 45. Main tasks of the Defence League, October 2018 (%; N = all respondents)



The tasks of the Defence League have been ranked in that way throughout several surveys. The views of Estonians and population of other nationalities still differ when it comes to understanding the Defence League's tasks.

While Estonians mainly consider the Defence League a national defence organisation, the main task of which is maintaining constant readiness for the military defence of the state (58% place it among the three most important tasks), conducting military training (44%), participating in rescue operations in emergencies and disasters (44%) and raising defence willingness among the population (41%), the Russian-speaking population see the Defence League primarily as a civil defence organisation, deeming participation in rescue operations in the event of emergencies and disasters (54% of respondents of other nationalities place it among the three most important tasks) and organised protection of civilians in emergency situations (40%) its most important tasks (Figure 46).

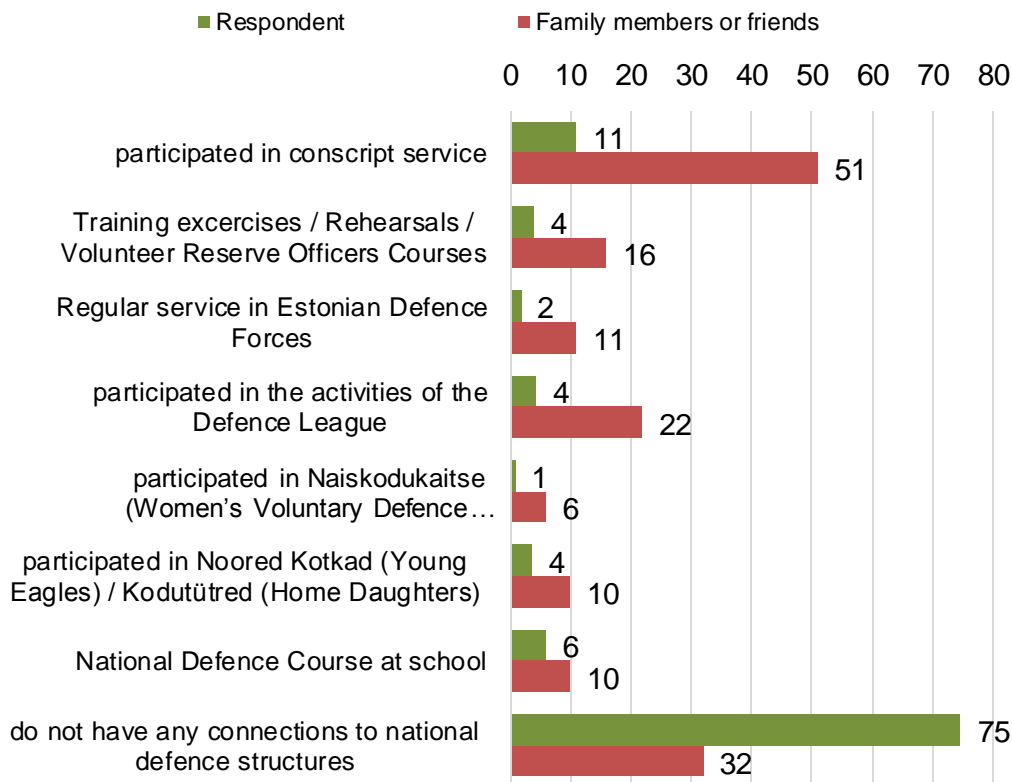
Figure 46. The three main tasks of the Defence League, comparison of Estonian and non-Estonian population; October 2018, (%) ; N = all respondents)



6.5 Exposure to national defence structures and opinions on joining the Defence League

Every survey also establishes the exposure respondents and the persons they are close to have to national defence structures (Figure 47).

Figure 47. Exposure to national defence structures, October 2018 (%; N = all respondents)



Respondents have been most frequently exposed to conscript service (11%) and national defence training (6%). More than half of the respondents' acquaintances or friends have undergone conscript service, while 22% of the respondents' close ones have had contact with the Defence League.

However, 3/4 of the respondents have not had any contact with national defence and 1/3 do not have such contact even at the level of people close to them.

4% of the respondents (5% of Estonians; 6% men) participate in the activities of the Defence League themselves, 29% of Estonians and 26% of men have contact to the Defence League through a family member or friend.

The number of respondents of other nationalities connected to the Defence League is marginal—only 8% have a friend or a family member who is connected to the Defence League and only 2% participate in the activities of the Defence League themselves.

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

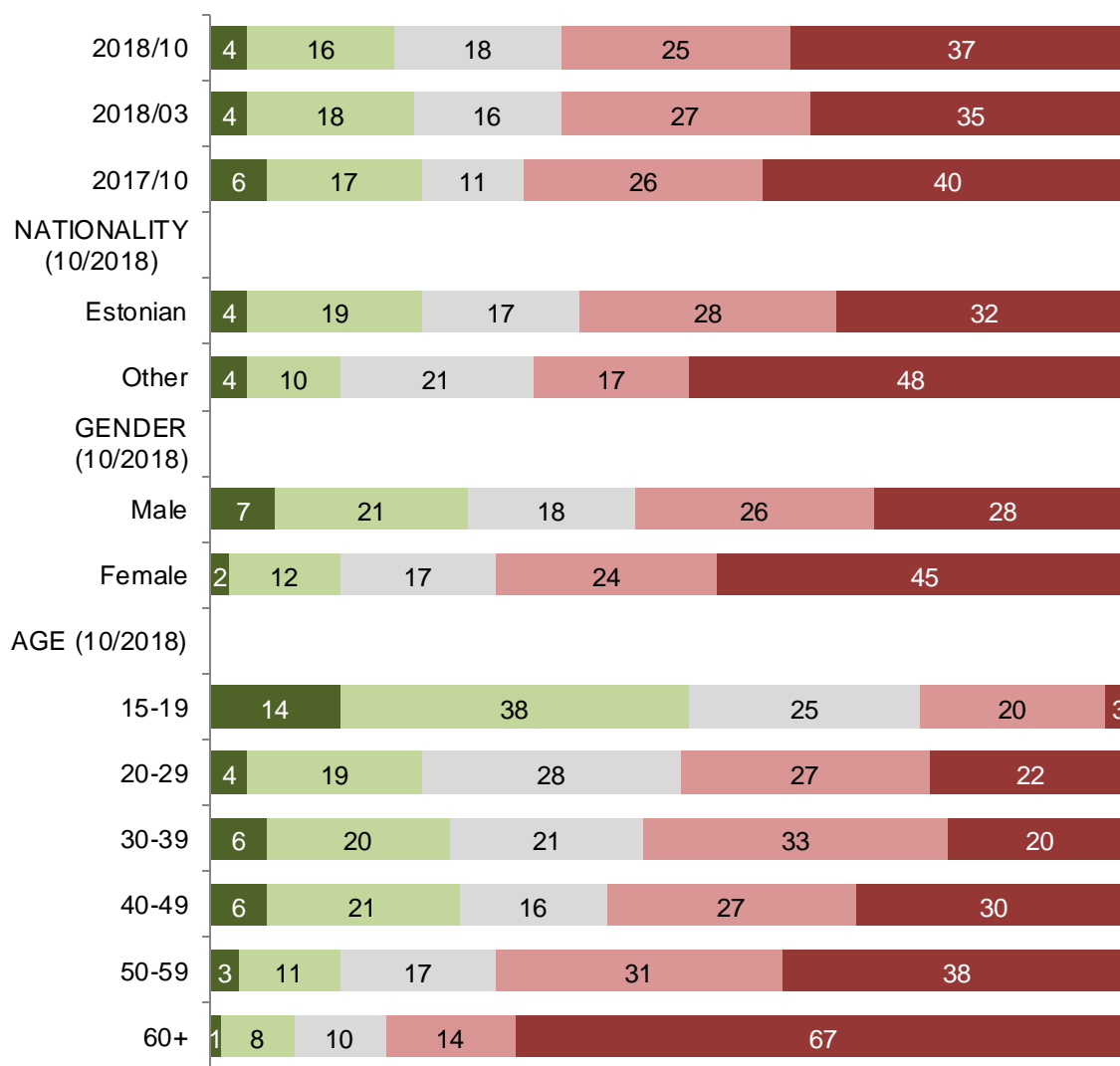
4% of the respondents would certainly join and 16% would probably join if they received a proposal to join the Defence League (Figure 48). Readiness to join has slightly decreased.

4% of Estonian respondents would certainly be ready to join and 19% would probably be ready to join, the respective indicators for non-Estonian respondents are 4% and 10%.

The Defence League is viewed primarily as an organisation for men, thus, readiness to join is also higher among men (28%). Higher readiness to join is expressed by younger respondents: more than half (52%) of those below the age of 20 and ¼ on average by those between 20 and 49 years of age express this view.

Figure 48. Willingness to join the Defence league; 2017–2018 comparison
(%; N = those who are not yet members of the Defence League)

■ will certainly join ■ will probably join ■ don't know ■ probably will not join ■ certainly will not join



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. The respondents were also asked to assess allied troops stationed in Estonia by way of pre-provided adjectives.

7.1 Attitude towards membership in NATO

In October 2018, Estonian membership in NATO was favoured by 76% of the population, which is 5% more than in March. 42% are certainly in favour of and 34% rather in favour the NATO membership. 16% of Estonian residents are against NATO membership while 9% of the population have no opinion in this matter ([Figure 49](#))

While 90% and more of Estonian respondents have been in favour of NATO membership for a long time, support for NATO among respondents of other nationalities is considerably lower and more volatile, depending significantly on political events in the world and the media coverage thereof. Between March 2015 and March 2018, the share of non-Estonian respondents supporting NATO membership was slightly above 30%—as it was after the Bronze Night events in 2007 and the Arab Spring in 2011.

In October 2018, the proportion of supporters of NATO membership of other nationalities had increased to 44%; 38% are against NATO membership. Almost 1/5 (18%) have no opinion in this matter ([Figure 50](#)).

Figure 49. Attitudes towards joining NATO / membership in NATO, comparison of 2000–2018; (%; N = all respondents)

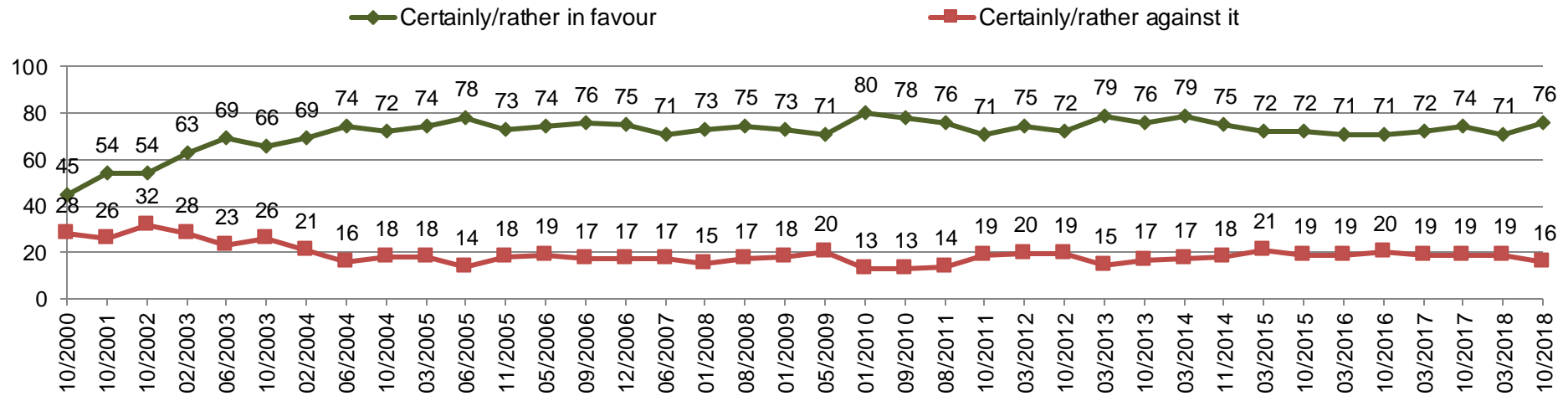
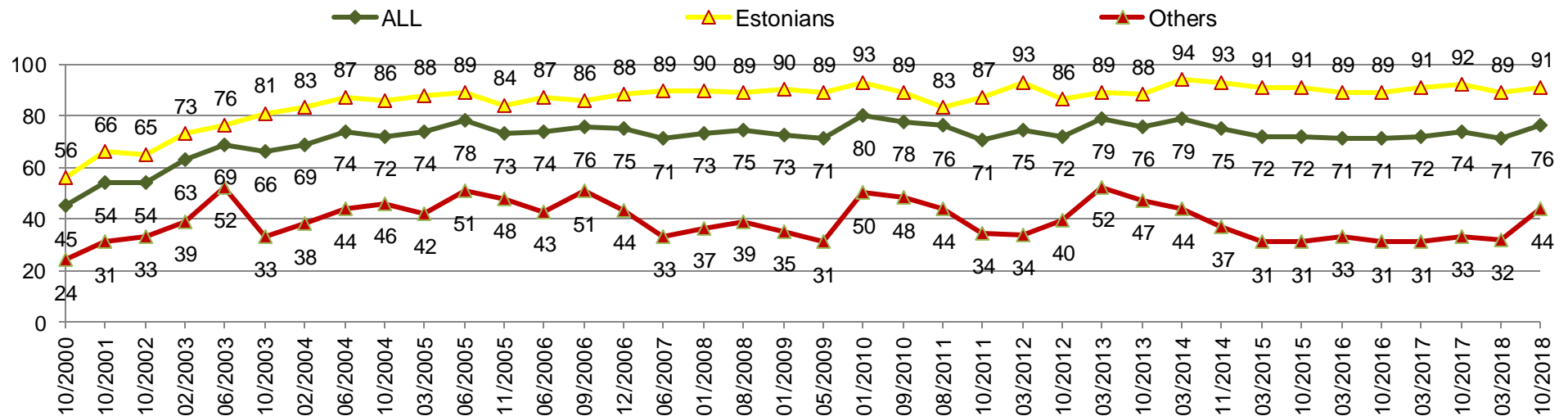


Figure 50. Proportion of the proponents of joining NATO / membership in NATO; comparison of Estonians and Non-Estonians 2000–2018
(% of those certainly and rather in favour of the aforementioned; N = all respondents)

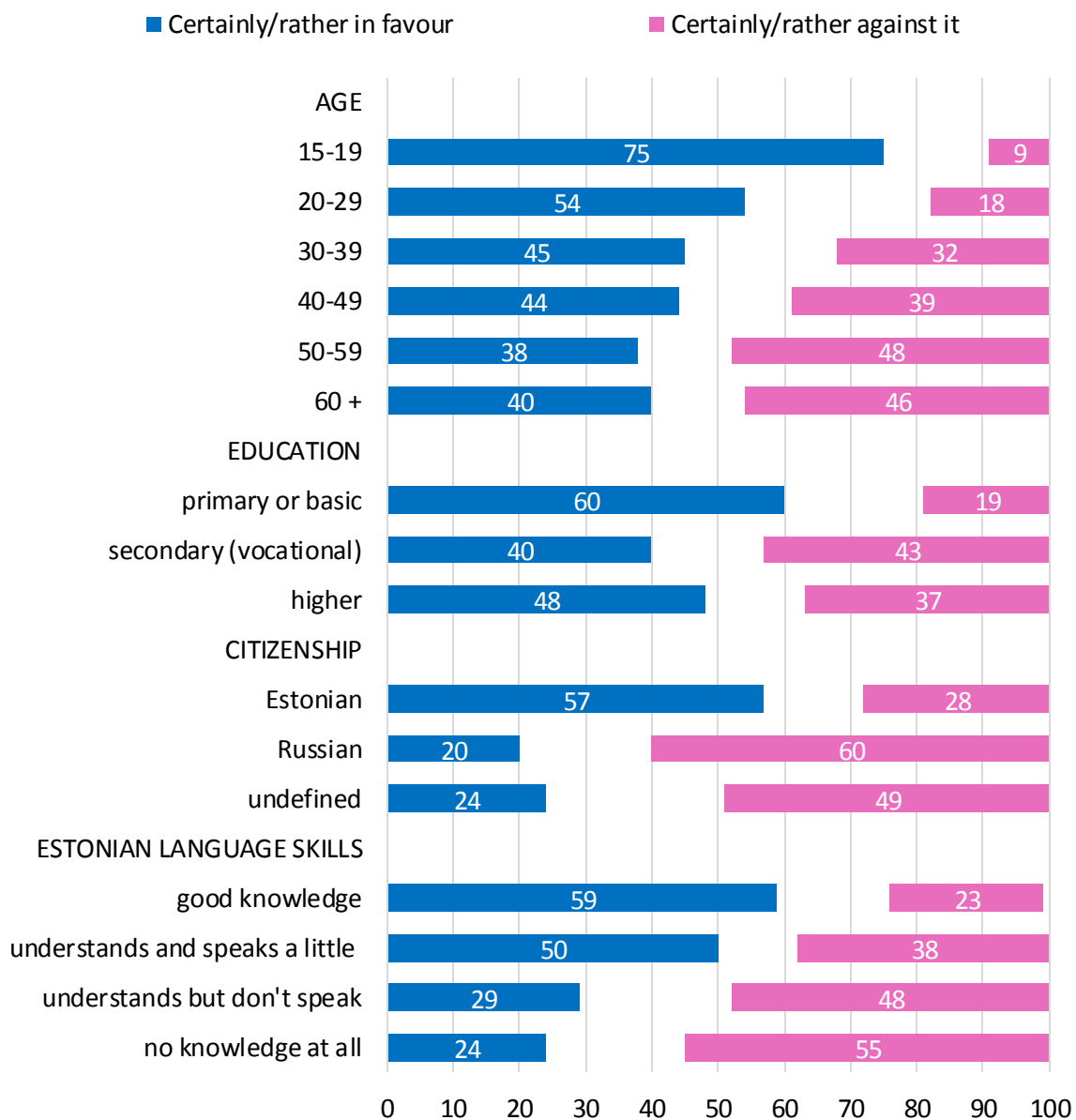


Through observing the attitudes among different groups of the population of other nationalities with regard to NATO membership, it can be concluded that the better a person is integrated and the more proficient they are in Estonian, the more positive is their attitude towards NATO membership (Figure 51).

Non-Estonians over the age of 50 not proficient or only a little proficient in Estonian who do not have Estonian citizenship expressed the most aversion towards NATO membership.

However, almost half of non-Estonians with proficiency in Estonian under 20 years of age support Estonia's NATO membership.

Figure 51. Attitudes towards membership in NATO among non-Estonians October 2018
(N = non-Estonians)



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

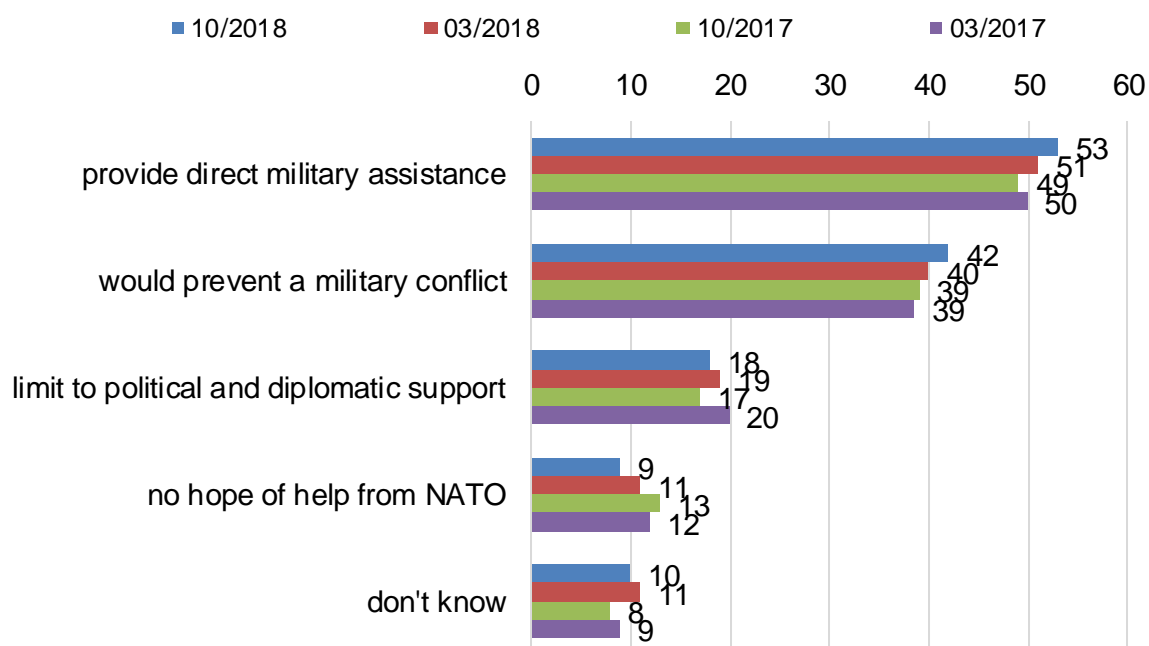
The majority of the population considers NATO Estonia's main security guarantee (see Chapter 3.6). Over the years, people have become increasingly more certain that NATO will provide military aid in the event of Estonia facing a military threat. An increase in the actual presence of allied forces in Estonia has contributed to this sense of security.

In the earlier surveys, respondents were asked to select only one of the four options, but starting from spring 2017 they were given the opportunity to pick several, since different answers were not mutually exclusive.

In November 2016, the respondents had to pick only one option and the results were as follows: **44% of the respondents found that NATO would provide direct military assistance in the event of an impending threat to Estonia**, 21% believed that membership in NATO would be able to prevent a military conflict completely. 14% thought that NATO would limit its aid only to political and diplomatic support and 11% believed that there is no hope for help from NATO.

In the case of several answers more than half of respondents found that NATO would provide direct military assistance in the event of a conflict while 40% thought that membership in NATO would be able to prevent a military attack against Estonia completely. 18% of the respondents found that NATO members would limit their help to political and diplomatic support while 9% thought that there is no hope for help from NATO. Thus, the population's belief in NATO's assistance or preventive power has slightly increased compared to spring (Figure 52).

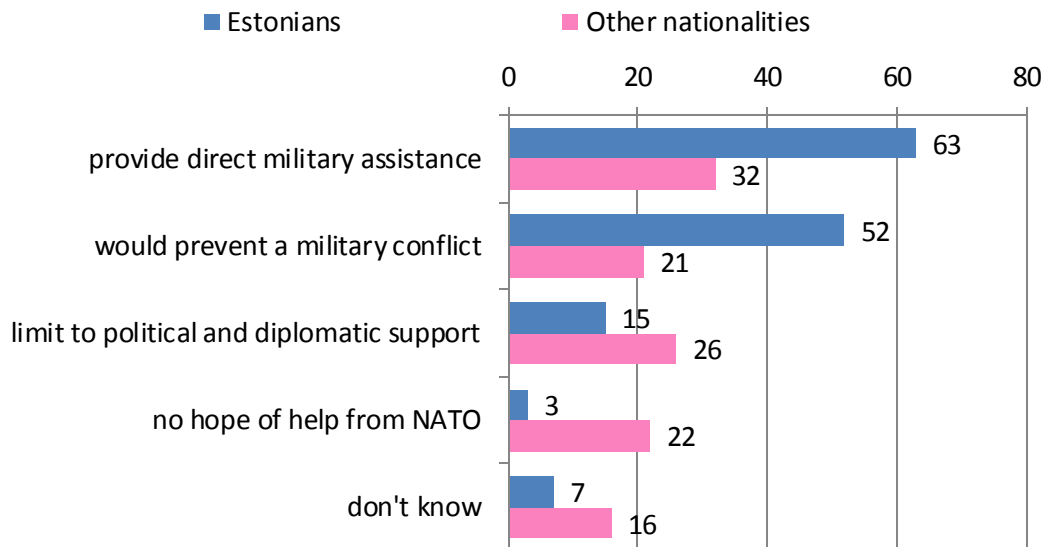
Figure 52. Role of NATO in ensuring Estonia's security if Estonia is exposed to military threat 2017/2018; (%; N = all respondents)



The Estonian-speaking respondents' trust in NATO's support is considerably higher than that of respondents of other nationalities, which originates from the attitude towards the membership in the alliance. These two first answers were provided by respectively 63% and 52% of Estonians, which is at the same level compared to March (Figure 53).

Only 32% (26% in March) of non-Estonian respondents believe in NATO's military assistance. 22% (26% in March) of respondents find that NATO will not help Estonia or that NATO would limit its aid to political and diplomatic support. The share of those non-Estonians who do not expect any aid from NATO has decreased steadily.

Figure 53. Role of NATO in ensuring Estonia's security if Estonia is exposed to military threat, October 2018, comparison of Estonians and non-Estonians (%) ; N = all respondents)

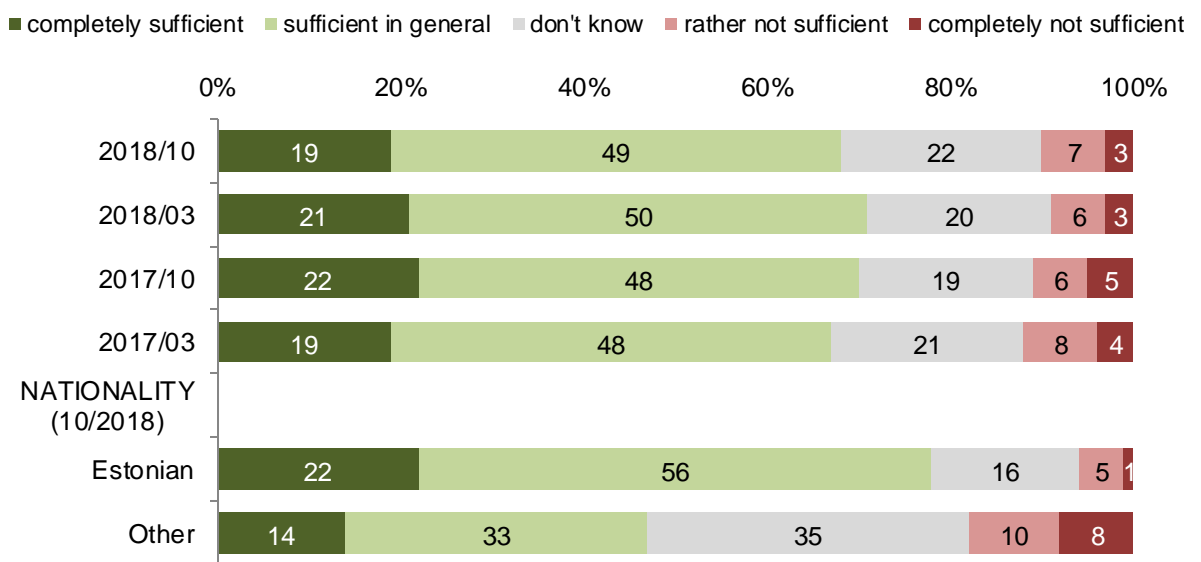


7.3 Assessments to the actions of NATO

Since November 2014 we have 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 to ensure the security of Estonia in today's security situation (Figure 54) and how the presence of NATO allied forces in Estonia is perceived (Figure 55).

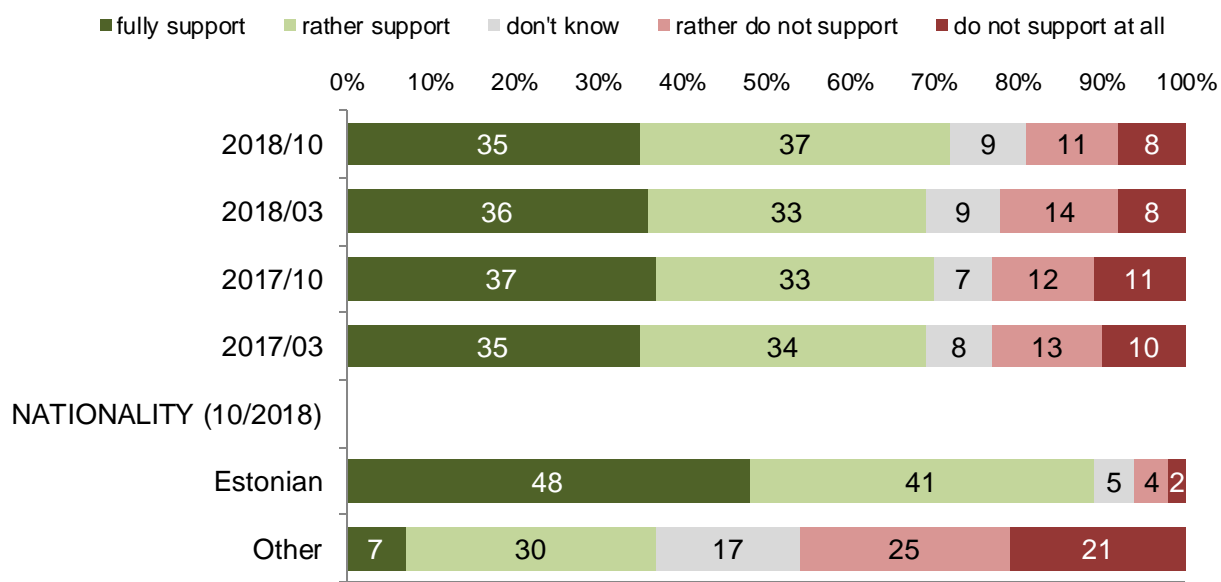
Figure 54. Has NATO taken sufficient measures to ensure the security of Estonia? 2017–2018 comparison (%) ; N = all respondents)



The assessments given to steps taken by NATO for ensuring security in Estonia have been predominantly positive throughout all the surveys, staying near 70%. Almost 80% of Estonians consider NATO's measures as sufficient. More than one third of the respondents of other nationalities give the answer "cannot say", and 47% consider NATO's actions as sufficient.

However, **Russian-speaking respondents are predominantly negative about the presence of NATO allied forces in Estonia (46%), whereas almost 90% of Estonians are in favour of it (Figure 55).** This is directly related to the attitudes toward NATO membership in general. However, it must be noted that the share of non-Estonians with a negative attitude has decreased by 8% (54% in March), and support has increased by 6% (from 31% to 37%).

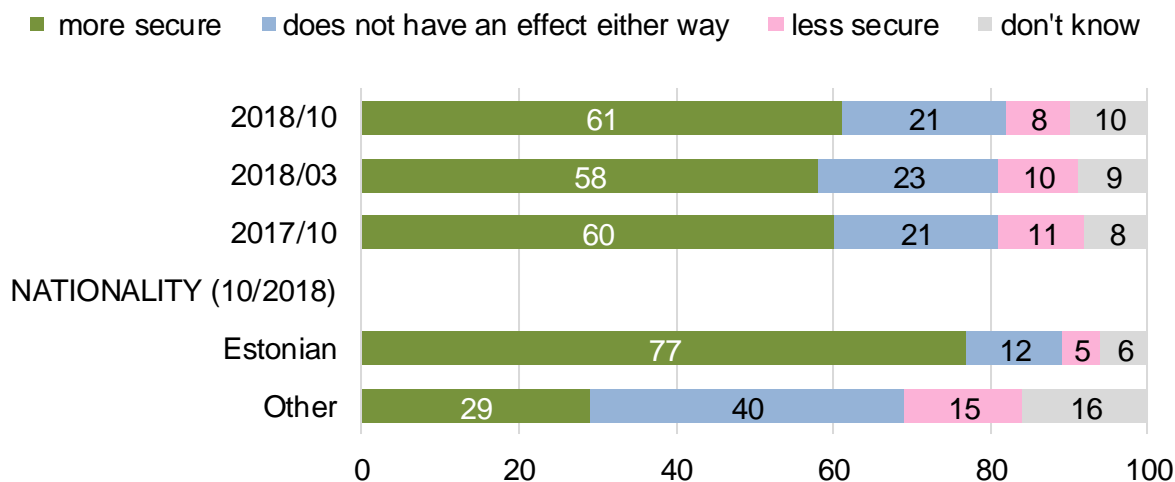
Figure 55. What is your attitude towards the presence of NATO allied forces in Estonia? 2017–2018 comparison (%) ; N = all respondents)



7.4 Assessments on the effect of the NATO battle group stationed in Estonia

In October 2017 another question was added: **Do you think having NATO battle group troops stationed in Estonia generally makes the country more secure or less secure or does it have no real effect either way.** While 77% of Estonians find that the NATO battle group has made Estonia more secure, only 29% of non-Estonians agree with that; the majority do not see that it has an effect on Estonia’s security (40%) (Figure 56).

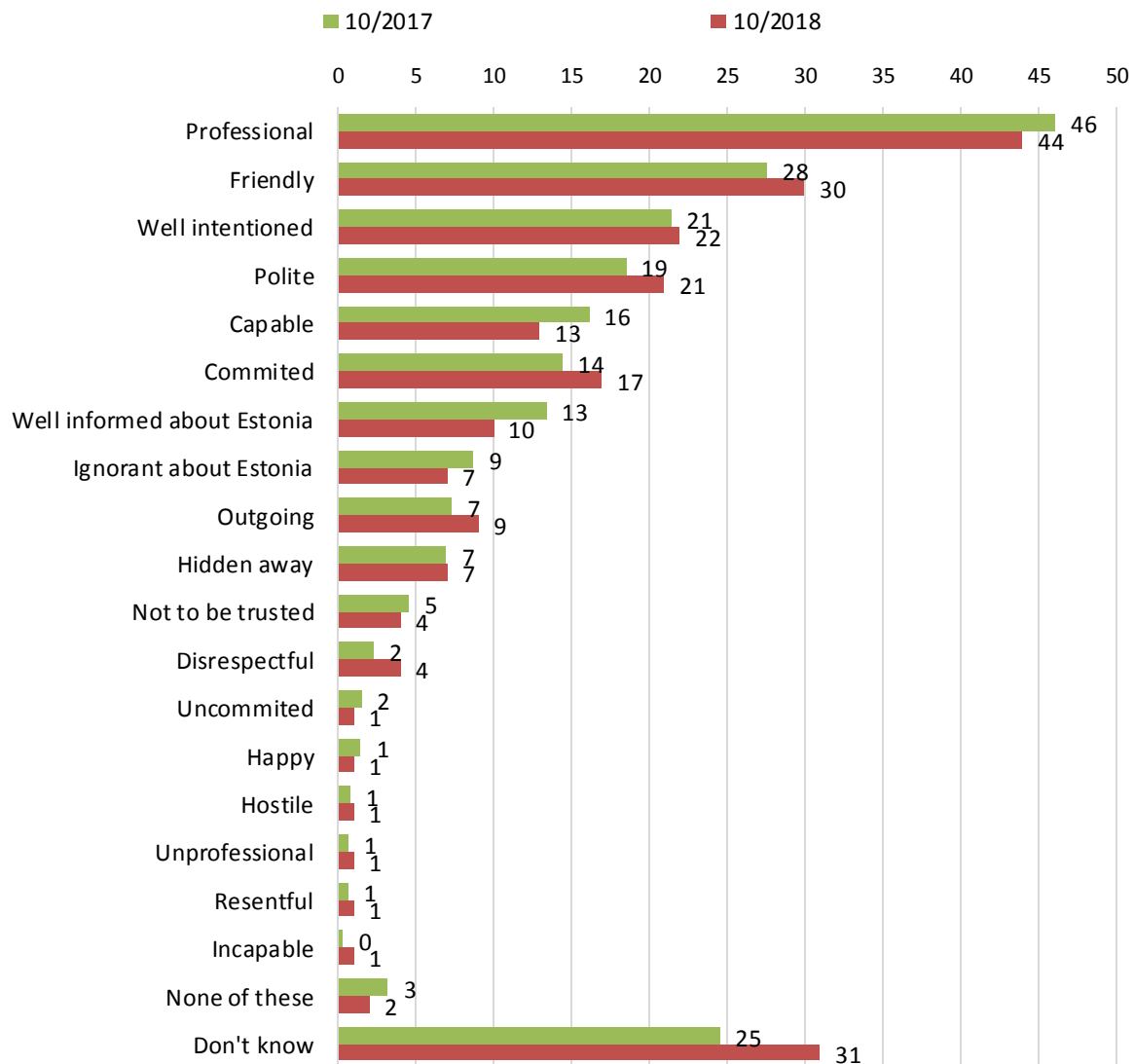
Figure 56. What effect does the stationing of NATO battle group troops have on Estonia’s security? 2017-2018 comparison (%) ; N = all respondents)



7.5 Assessment of NATO battlegroup troops

In the second question added in October 2017, we asked the respondents to select four words among the pre-selected adjectives that would characterise the troops of the NATO battle group stationed in Estonia the best in the respondents' assessment ([Figure 57](#)).

Figure 57. Which, if any, of the following words or phrases would you choose in general to describe NATO battlegroup troops currently stationed in Estonia: October 2017/2018 (%; N = all respondents)



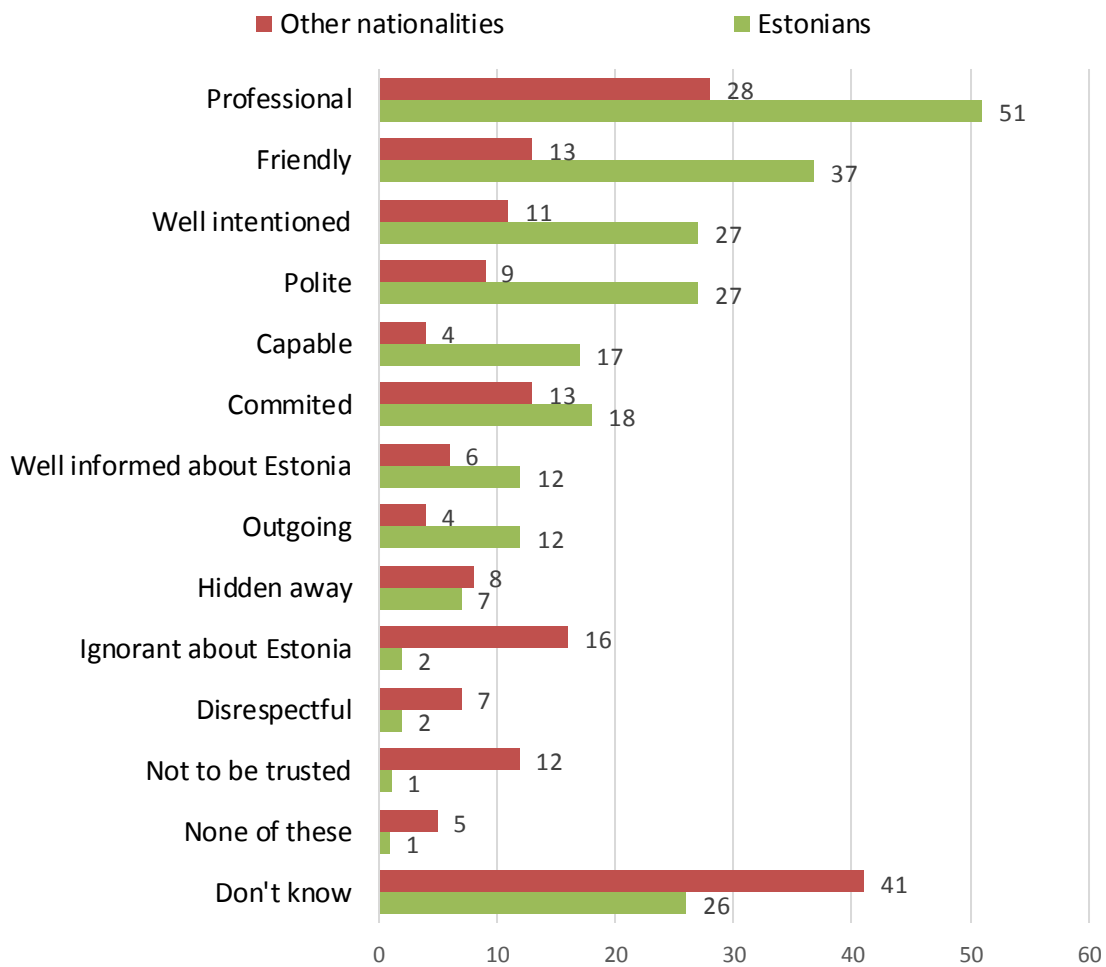
Mostly positive words are used to describe the NATO battle group troops, out of which "professional" is repeated most frequently.

This is followed by such characterisations as "friendly", "well intentioned", "polite", "capable", "committed" and "well informed about Estonia". Compared to last fall, the words "friendly", "polite", and "committed" are used slightly more, "professional", "capable", and "well informed about Estonia" less—but those changes of a couple percentage points remain within the limits of a statistic error.

Only 7% deem the troops of the allied forces as ignorant about Estonia, and 4% deem they are not to be trusted.

Negative characterisations are more common among respondents of other nationalities (See [Figure 58](#)).

Figure 58. Which, if any, of the following words or phrases would you choose in general to describe NATO battlegroup troops currently stationed in Estonia; October 2018 , comparison of Estonians and non-Estonians (%; N = all respondents)



8 International military operations

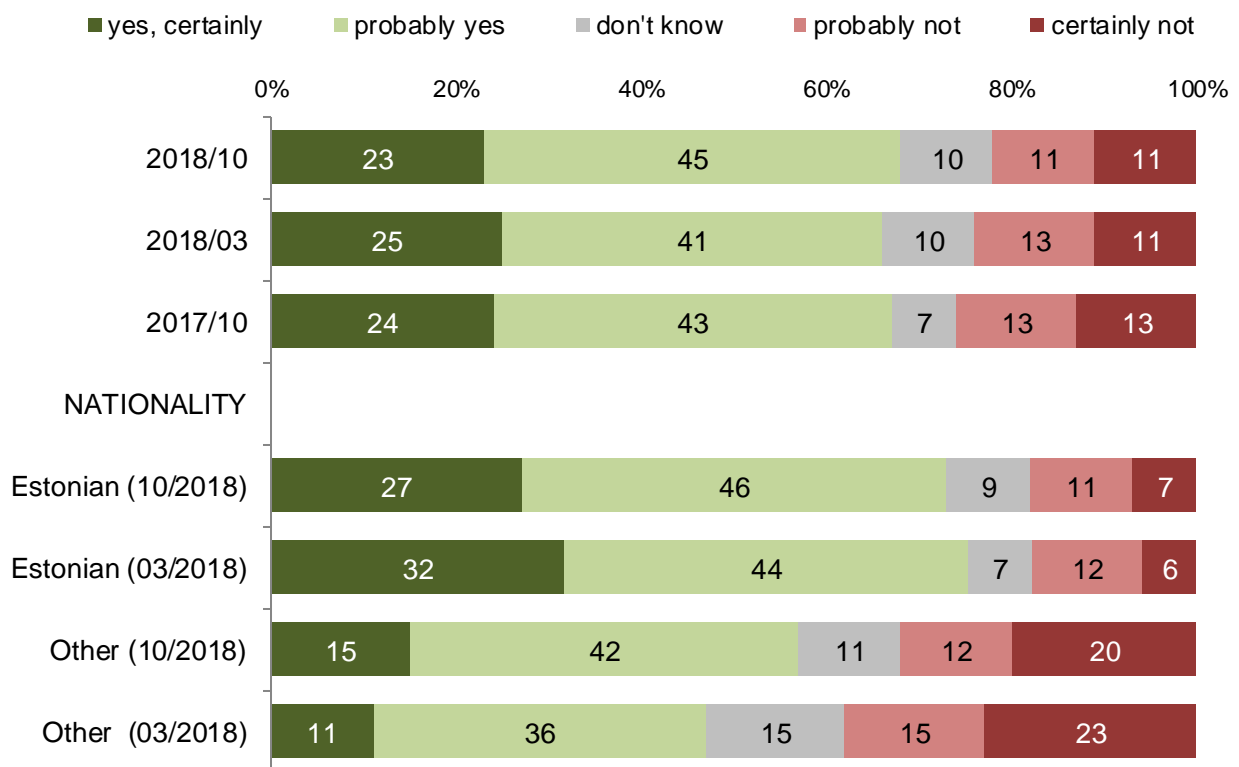
The eighth chapter maps the attitudes towards participation in international military operations: how necessary Estonia's participation is in such operations according to the population, what the reasons for Estonia to participate are, and what the respondents' attitudes towards the Estonian Defence Forces' operations as part of NATO, European Union, and UN units are. We also observe attitude toward a more tight defence co-operation between EU Member States.

8.1 Attitude towards participation in international operations

Positive attitudes toward Estonia's participation in international military operations is always prevalent and is in the last survey at the highest level ever. **68% of the population of Estonia believe that the Estonian Defence Forces' units should, within their capabilities, participate in international military operations**; 24% of respondents feel that it should be certainly done (Figure 59). 22% of the respondents think that the Defence Forces should probably or certainly not participate in these operations.

The difference between attitudes of Estonians and respondents of other nationalities towards international military operations is decreasing. 73% of Estonians are in favour of participating in international operations, 57% of non-Estonians feel the same way, which is 10% more compared to March.

Figure 59. Should Estonian units participate in international military operations? 2017–2018 comparison (%; N = all respondents)



8.2 Arguments for participation in international operations

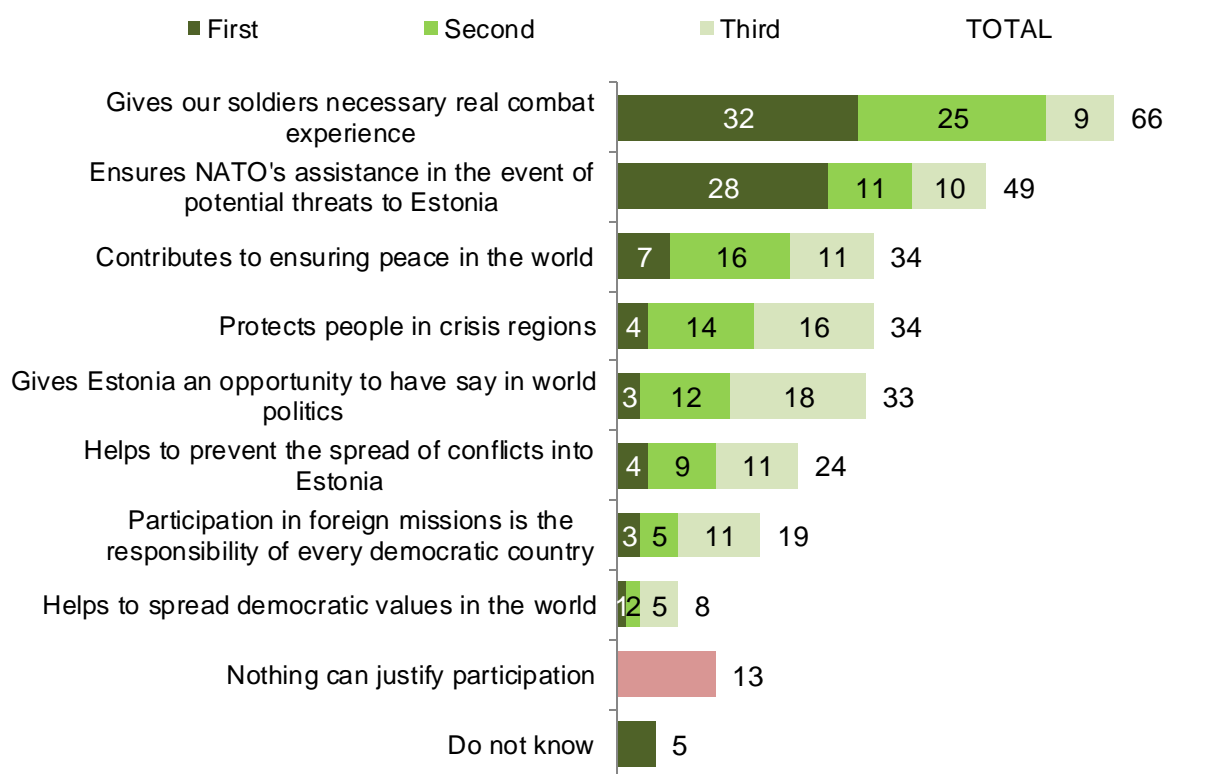
Respondents were asked to select the three most important reasons why Estonia should participate in international military operations from a given list. The results were fixed in sequence, i.e., the most important reason first, followed by the second and third.

The two most important reasons named most frequently were that **participation in operations provides our soldiers real combat experience (32%)** and **it ensures NATO's assistance in the event of a potential threat to Estonia (28%)**. These motives were also first and second respectively as an aggregate sum of the three reasons ([Figure 60](#)).

The next most important arguments for participating in international operations highlighted by the respondents include contributing to world peace (sum of the three reasons 34%) and protecting people in crisis areas (34%). Estonia taking the opportunity to have a say in world politics is deemed almost as important (33%).

Spreading democratic values in the world is seen as the least important (8%).

Figure 60. The most important reasons why Estonia should participate in international military operations; October 2018 (%; N = all respondents)



Attitudes towards participating in international military operations differ slightly among Estonians and respondents of other nationalities ([Figure 61](#)).

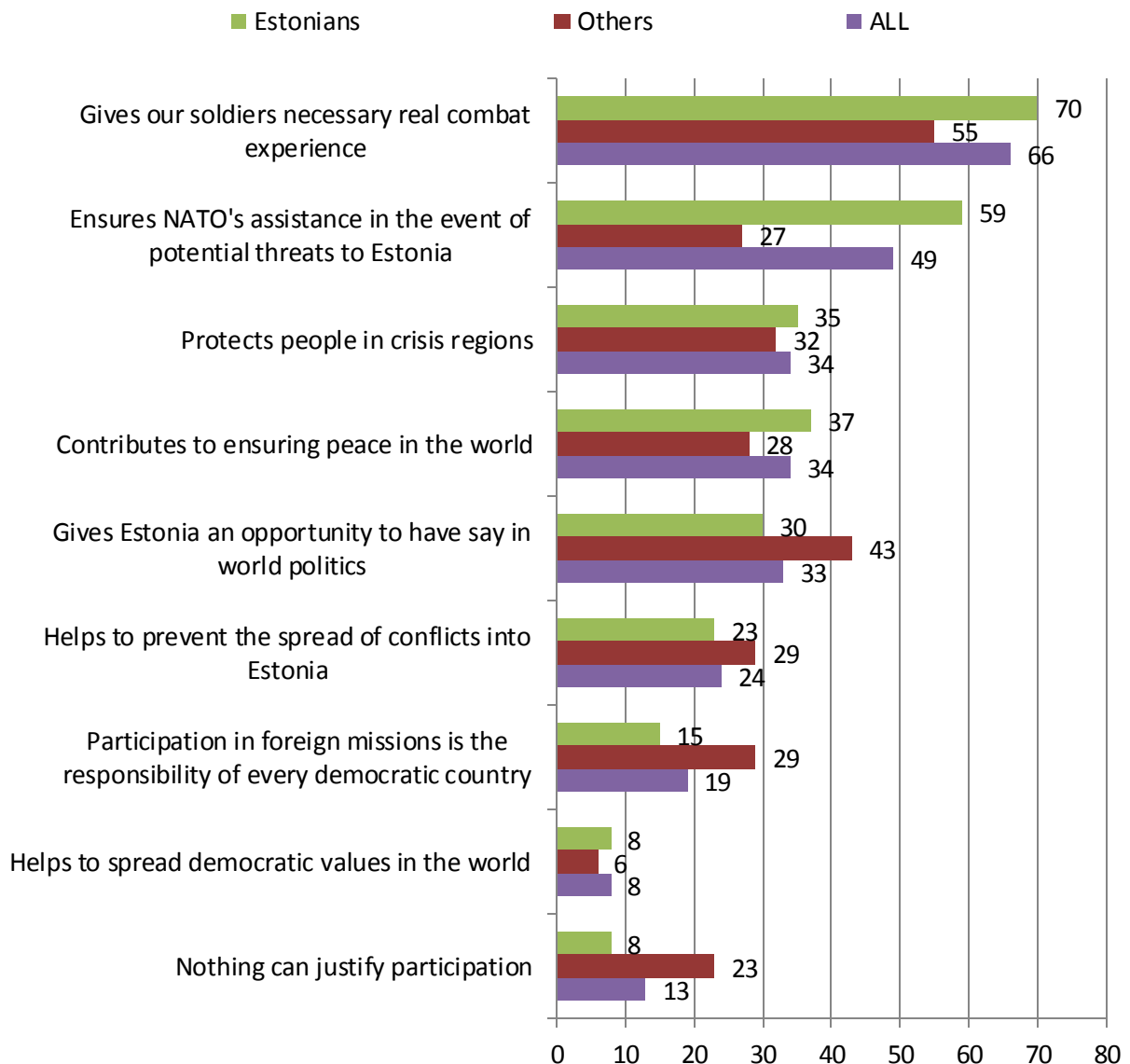
The Defence Forces gaining combat experience is the most important for both Estonian and non-Estonian respondents (70% and 55% respectively) in the aggregate of the three choices, although the latter mention it less frequently. Here, the difference between Estonians and non-Estonians has decreased just like in attitudes towards participating in missions in general.

For Estonians, the second place goes to ensuring NATO's assistance (59%), which is a concept that the respondents of other nationalities are rather sceptical about. Thus, the importance of that answer among non-Estonians is at only 27%.

For non-Estonians, the main second choice is Estonia taking the opportunity to have a say in world politics (43%), third is protecting people in crisis areas (32%). More than Estonians, respondents of other nationalities think that participation in international operations is the duty of every democratic state (29%).

Compared to Estonians, there are more those among non-Estonians who believe that nothing justifies the participation of Estonian servicemen in international operations.

Figure 61. The most important reasons why Estonia should participate in international military operations; October 2018, comparison of Estonians and non-Estonians (%; N = all respondents)



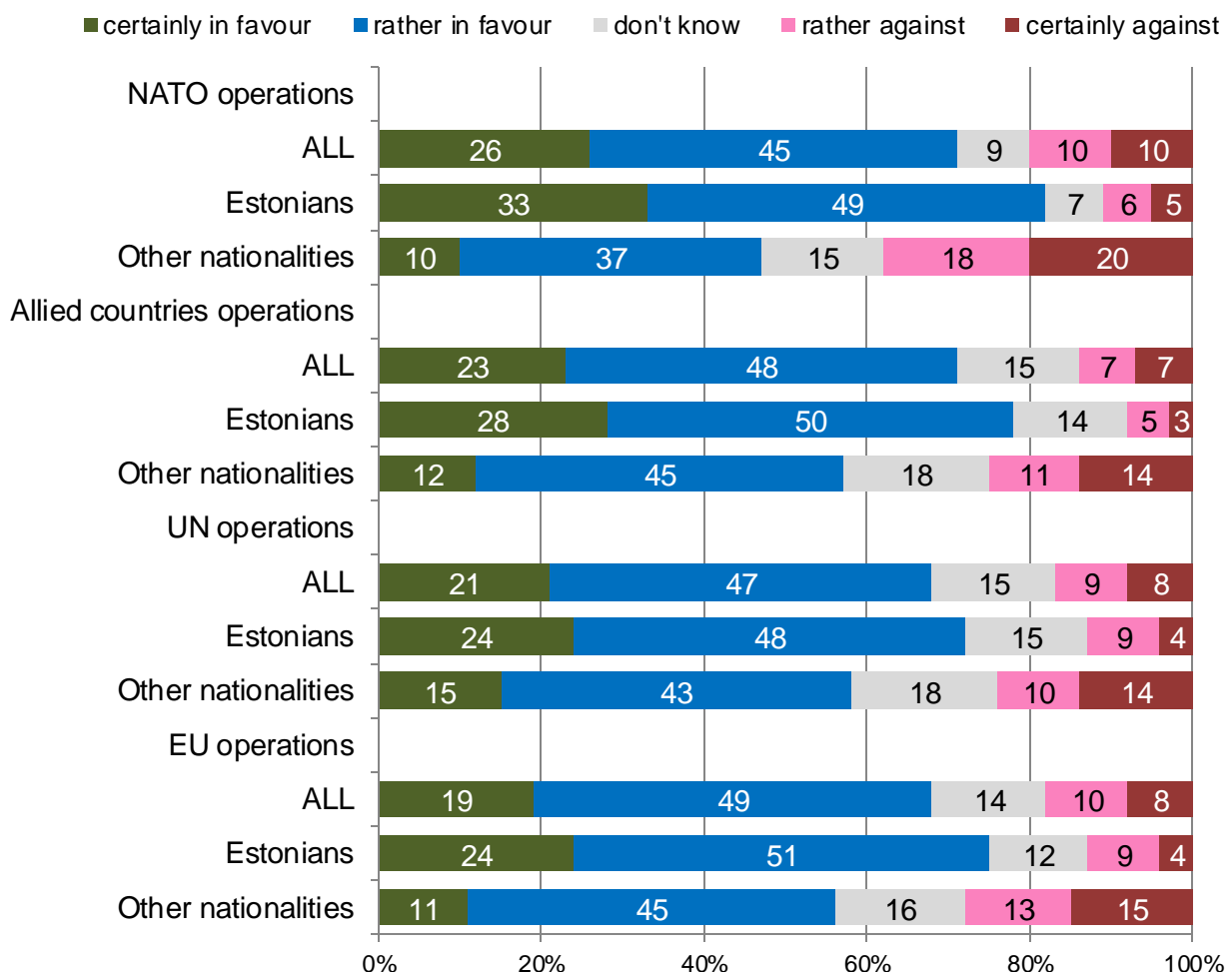
8.3 Attitudes towards participation in NATO, EU and UN operations

Since Estonian servicemen have participated in military operations as part of NATO, EU and UN units, we were curious about whether there is a difference in the public's attitudes towards operations conducted under the aegis of different organisations. The October survey also included "as part of co-operation with allied countries".

There are no great differences compared to the survey conducted in October 2015 when this question was first included in the survey—participation in different missions is supported more or less equally: in October 2018, participation as part of NATO units was supported by 71%, as part of European Union units by 68%, and as part of UN peacekeeping forces by 71% of the respondents (Figure 62).

While the majority of Estonians support participation in all missions, especially those of NATO (82%), support for various operations is lower among respondents of other nationalities, especially low for participation in NATO operations (47%). However, other missions are supported by more than a half of people of other nationalities.

Figure 62. Attitudes towards the units of the Estonian Defence Forces participating in international operations; October 2018 (%; N = all respondents)



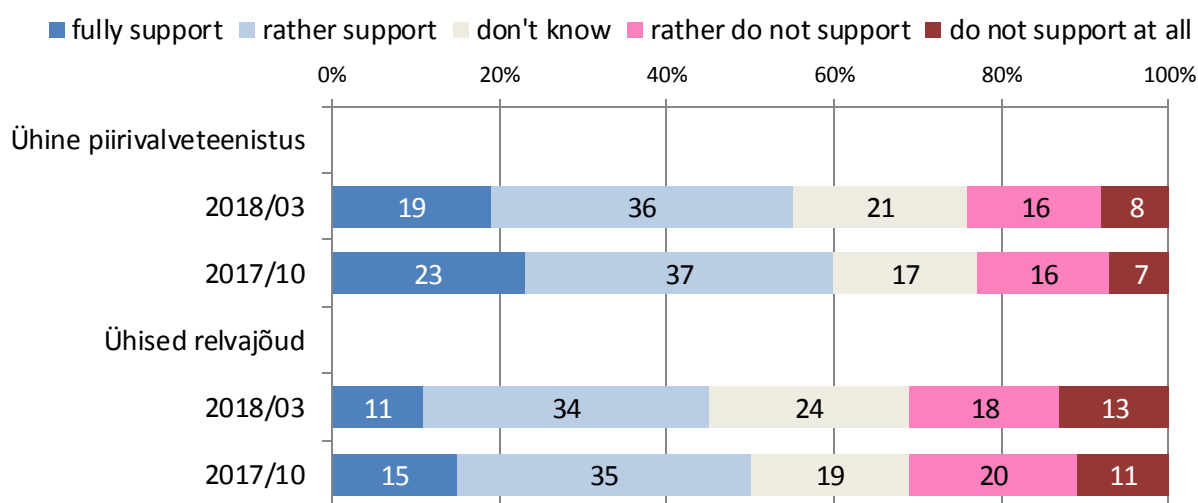
8.4 Opinion on the defence co-operation of the European Union

In previous surveys we were curious how public opinion would react to the proposal of establishing a **common border service and joint armed forces for the European Union**.

This survey presented the following question: **Should the European Union increase defence co-operation among its Member States?**

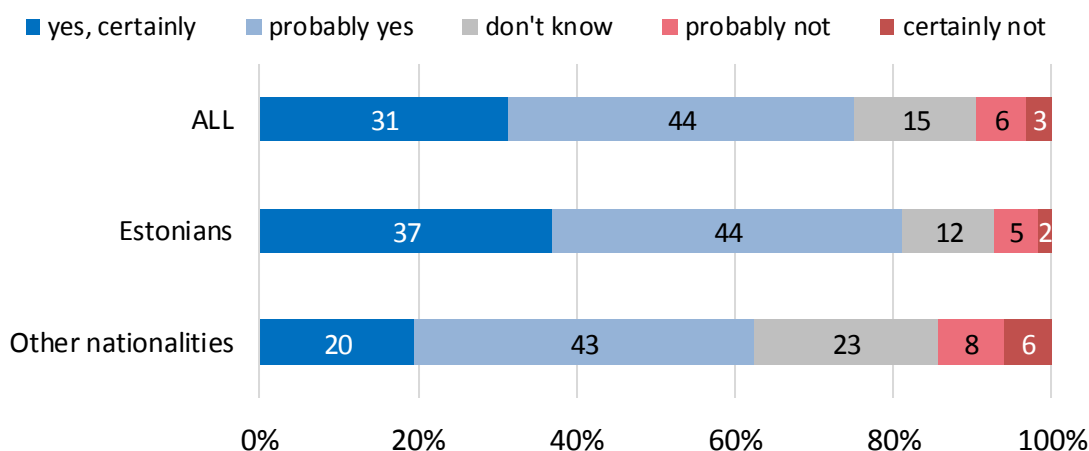
The abstractly formulated defence co-operation found more public support than the unambiguously worded proposals for establishment of a common border service and armed forces—although even they found general support in the view of the public. In March, support for establishing a common EU border service was at 55% and for joint EU armed force at 45% ([Figure 63](#)).

Figure 63. Attitudes towards a common border service and joint armed forces for the European Union; October 2017/ March 2018 comparison (%) (N = all respondents)



However, increase of defence co-operation between EU Member States is supported by $\frac{3}{4}$ of the respondents: by 81% of Estonians and 63% of respondents of other nationalities ([Figure 64](#)).

Figure 64. Attitude toward an increase of defence co-operation between EU Member States, October 2018 (%) (N = all respondents)



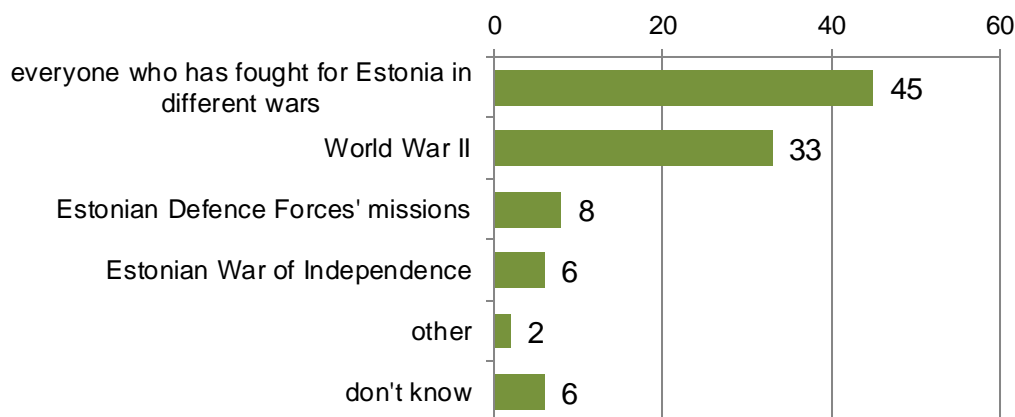
9 Veteran policy

9.1 Primary associations with the word "veteran"

Since November 2011, the survey has included a question on whether people associate the word "veteran" primarily with World War II, the Estonian War of Independence, or the Estonian Defence Forces' foreign operations. The results of the previous surveys up to March 2016 showed that more than half of the population (55%) **associates the word "veteran" primarily with World War II**. 17% of all respondents associated that term with foreign operations of the Estonian Defence Forces (23% of Estonian and 5% of Russian-speaking respondents). At the same time, many respondents chose the option "other" and specified that they use the term "veteran" to denote participants of all wars.

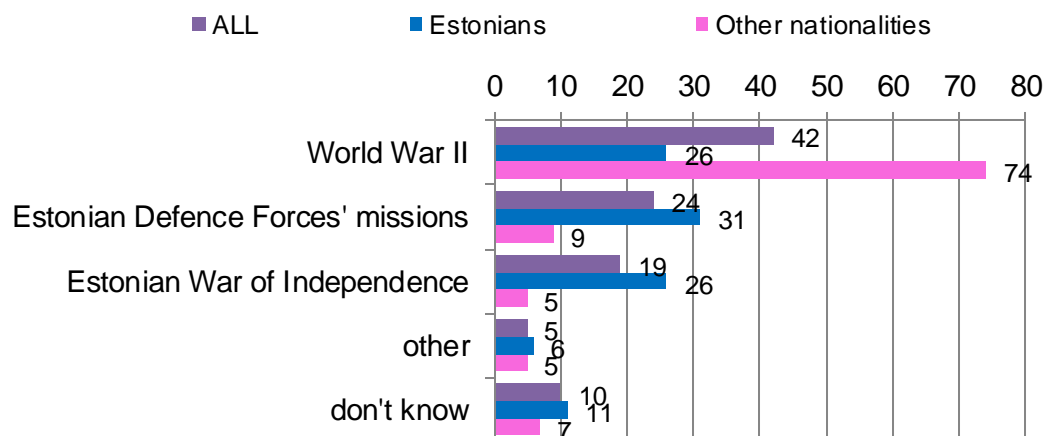
As a result, the respective option was added to ones presented to the respondents and it became the most popular answer right away. In a survey conducted in fall 2017, it was supported by 45% of the respondents ([Figure 65](#)).

Figure 65. What are the primary associations with the word "veteran", October 2017
(%; N = all respondents)



However, in the context of veteran policy the most important aspect is to know, first and foremost, how much will people associate the term "veteran" with foreign operations of the Estonian Defence Forces, we returned to the former wording of the question in March and excluded the answer about participants in all wars ([Figure 66](#)).

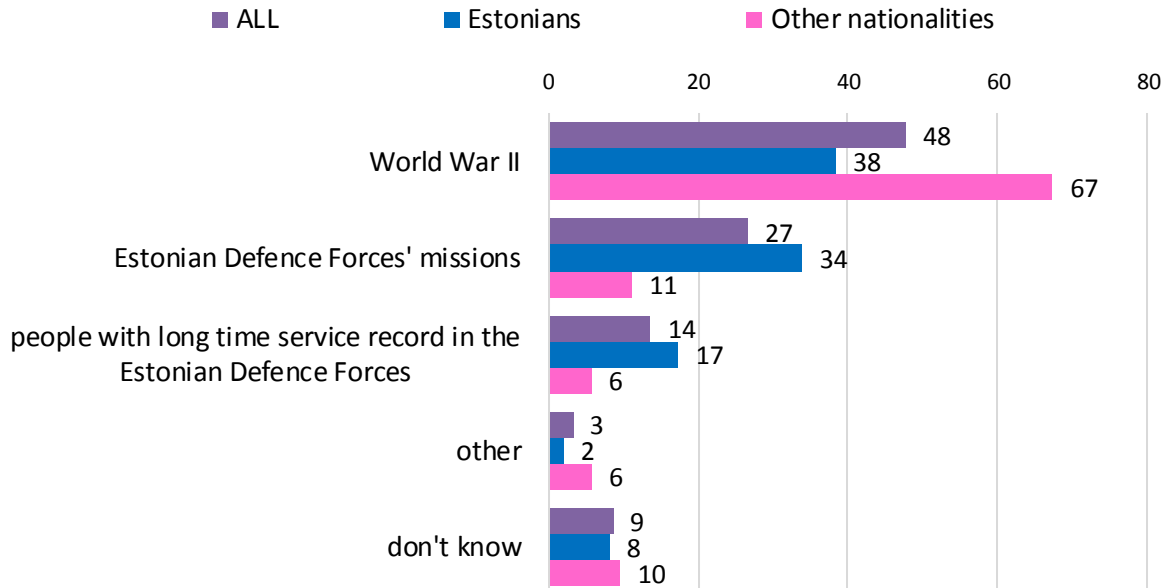
Figure 66. What are the primary associations with the word "veteran"? March 2018
(%; N = all respondents)



Of course, it is important to honour those who participated in the Estonian War of Independence, alas, those who participated in it are no longer alive. Thus, under practical considerations, we left out participants in the Estonian War of Independence from the options and replaced it with the option "people with long time service record in the Estonian Defence Forces". The result is the following distribution of answers (Figure 67).

Figure 67. What are the primary associations with the word "veteran"?

October 2018 (%; N = all respondents)



As can be seen, the distribution of answers does not change by much: World War II is still the clear leader with 48%. Still, the proportion of respondents who associate the term "veteran" with people who have participated in missions of the Estonian Defence Forces is slowly increasing. It has increased from 24% to 27% among all respondents, and from 31% to 34% among Estonians. The latter indicator is only 4% lower than the percentage of Estonians who associate veterans with World War II.

10 National defence instruction in schools

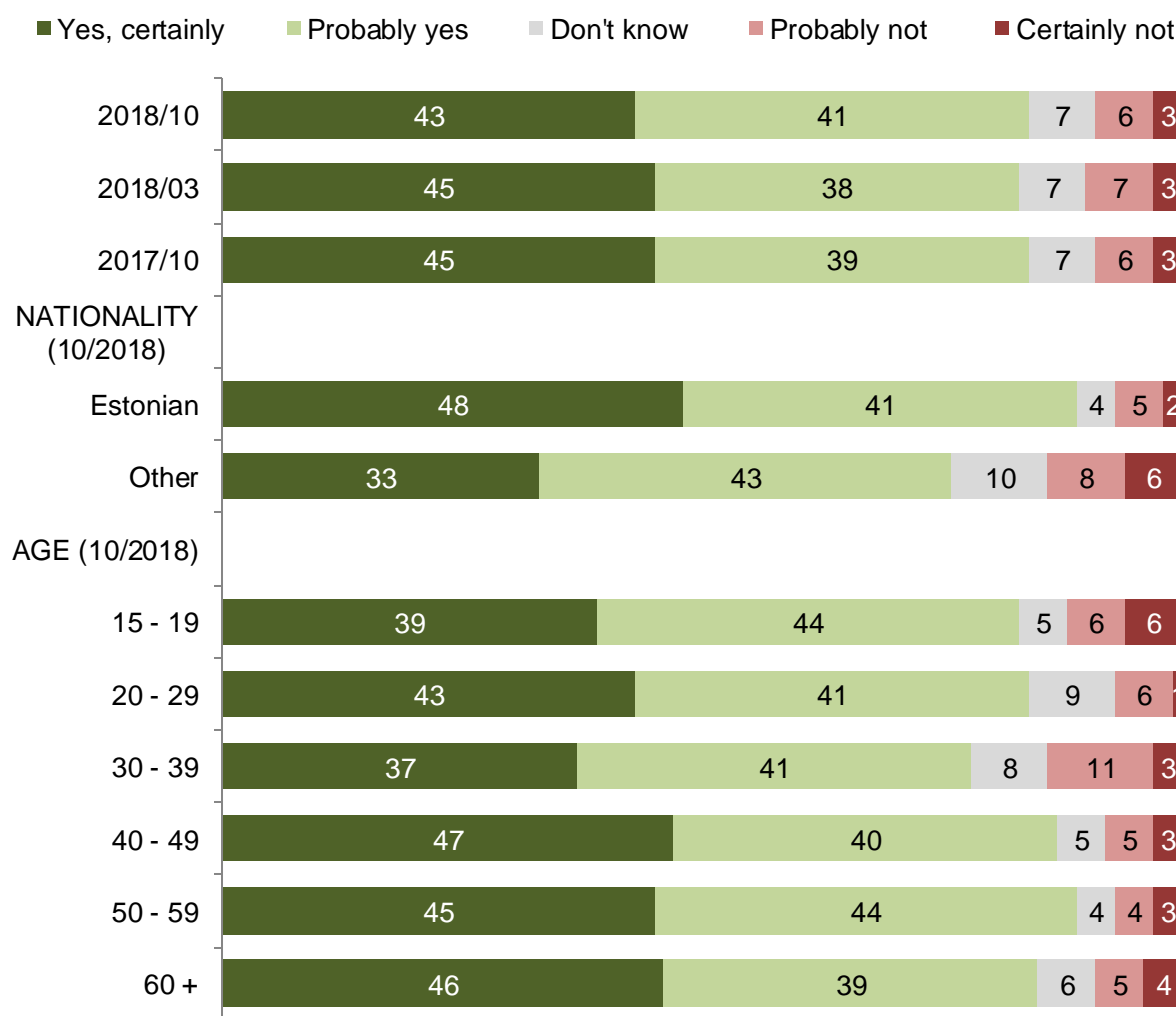
The attitude towards the necessity of national defence instruction in schools has been almost as positive among the Estonian population as towards compulsory conscript service for young men: about 4/5 or more of the respondents since 2008 have found it certainly necessary or probably necessary.

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

84% of the respondents consider the opportunity to receive national defence instruction certainly or probably necessary (Figure 68). Estonian and Russian-speaking respondents’ support to national defence instruction differs by more than 10%, yet clearly dominates the answers of both respondent groups (89% for Estonians and 76% for non-Estonians). Unfortunately, it must be acknowledged that compared to Estonian language schools, Russian language schools have less opportunities to study national defence instruction, which also results in lesser awareness of the content of this subject among non-Estonians. Yet, only 14% of respondents of other nationalities are opposed to national defence instruction (7% of Estonians).

Support for national defence instruction is also prevalent among different age groups.

Figure 68. Attitude towards the necessity of national defence instruction in all educational institutions providing secondary education; 2017–2018 comparison (%) ; N = all respondents)

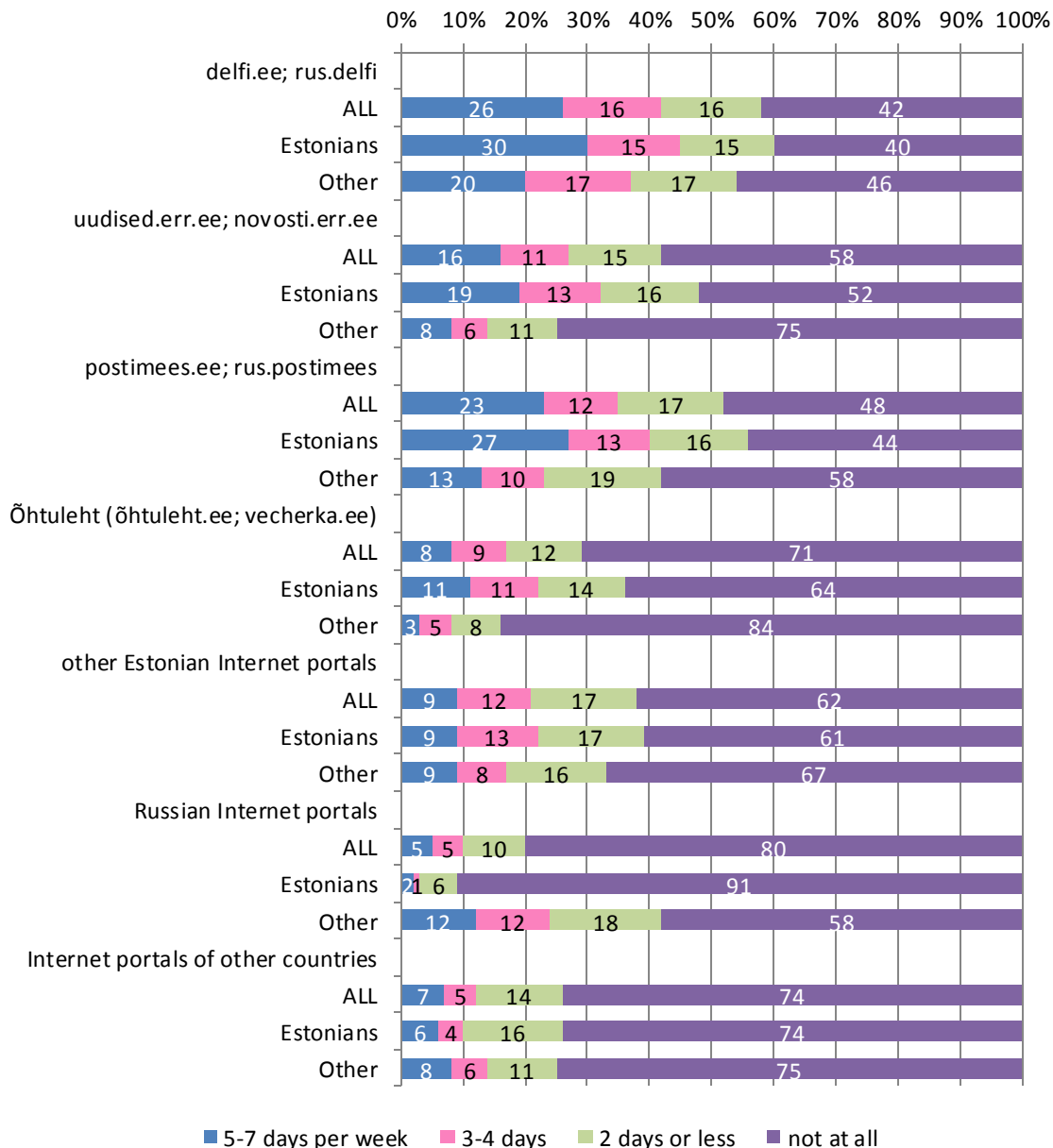


11 Media consumption

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

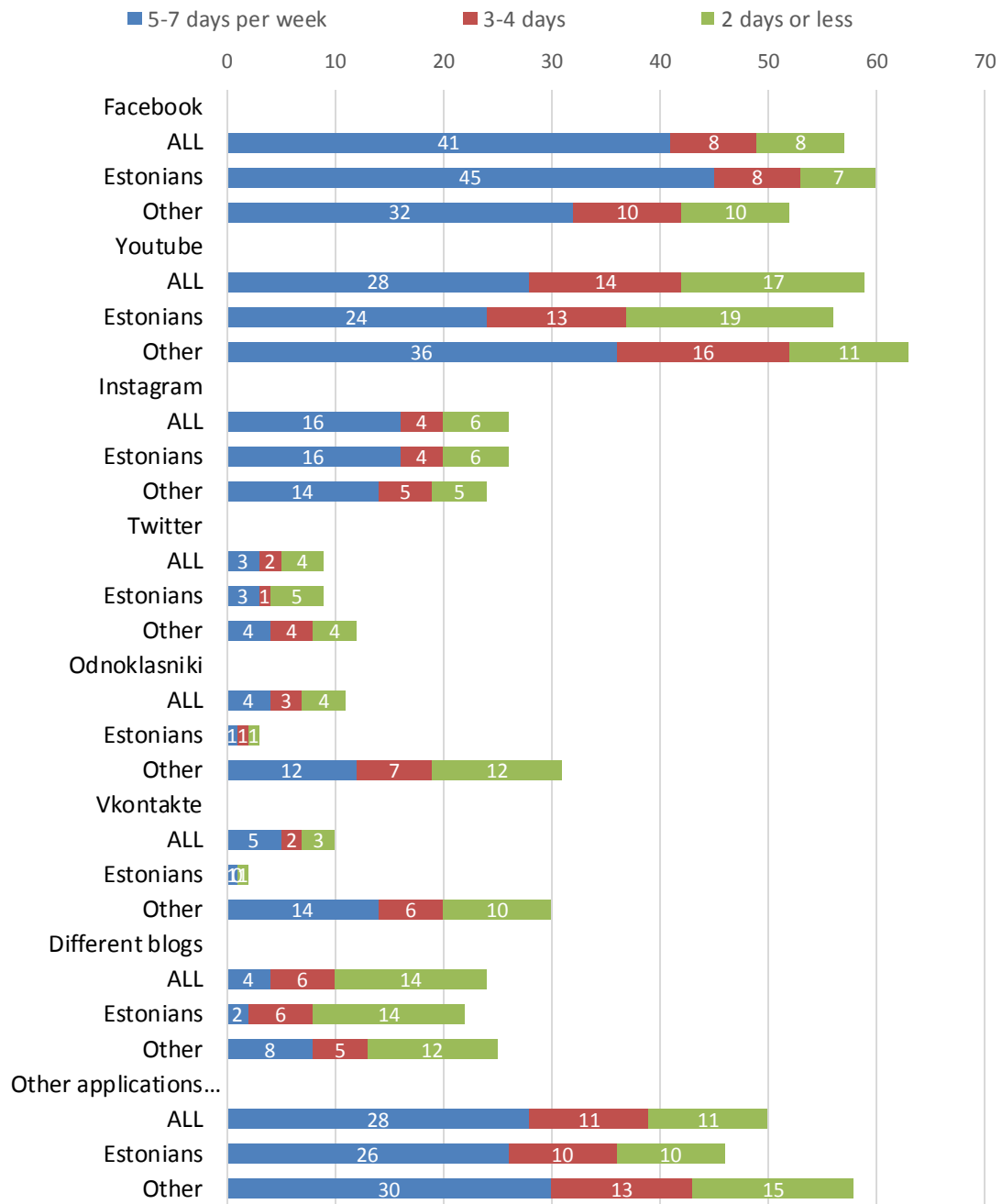
The following presents the survey results describing the respondents' engagement with different television channels and radio stations as well as visits to Internet portals in the form of frequency distributions.

Figure 69. Visits to news portals and online newspapers; October 2018
(%; N = all respondents)



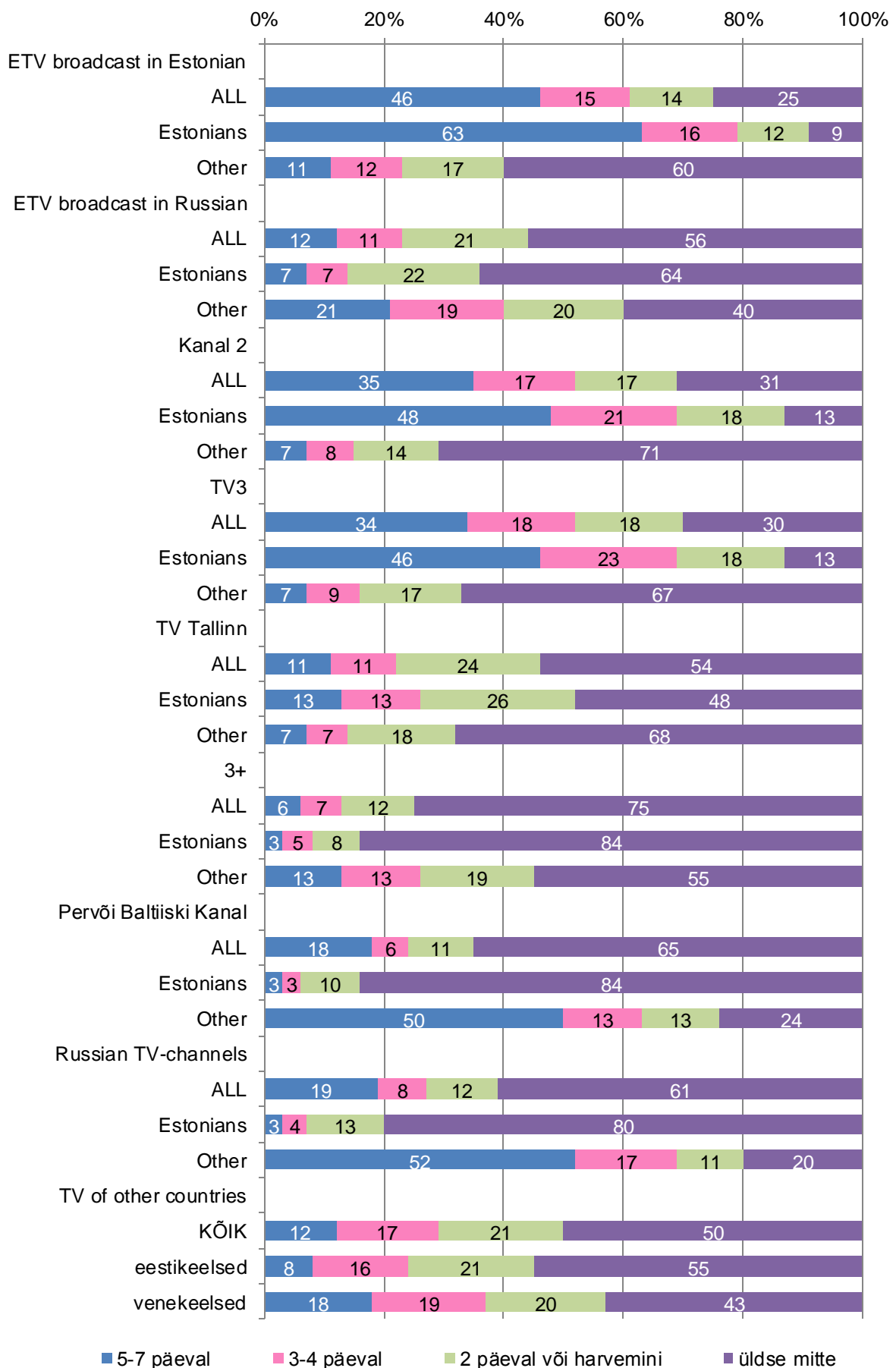
The most popular news portals were Delfi and postimees.ee, whereat Delfi also has the largest Russian-speaking audience. The web portal of the Estonian Public Broadcasting is used much more by Estonians than non-Estonians.

Figure 70 Use of social media, October 2018 (%; N = all respondents)



As examples of other direct communication applications, respondents were presented with applications such as Skype, Messenger, Snapchat, WhatsApp, Telegram etc.)

Figure 71. Engagement with television channels; October 2018 (%) ; N = all respondents)



The following figure shows the attitudes of Russian-speaking respondents towards Estonia's membership in NATO depending on exposure to different TV channels (Figure 72).

We see that those Russian-speaking respondents who watch Estonian language programs on Eesti Television at least once a week perceive Estonia's NATO membership more favorably than those who view Russian TV channels or the programs on Pervyi Baltiiski Kanal. Viewing or non-viewing of Estonian Russian language channel ETV+ does not influence attitudes toward NATO.

Of course, the figure below only indicates the general distribution of factors measuring the viewing/non-viewing of TV channels, a more precise effect of media consumption would require a typological analysis.

Figure 72. Attitudes towards Estonia's membership in NATO depending on exposure to TV-channels; October 2018 (%; N = all respondents)

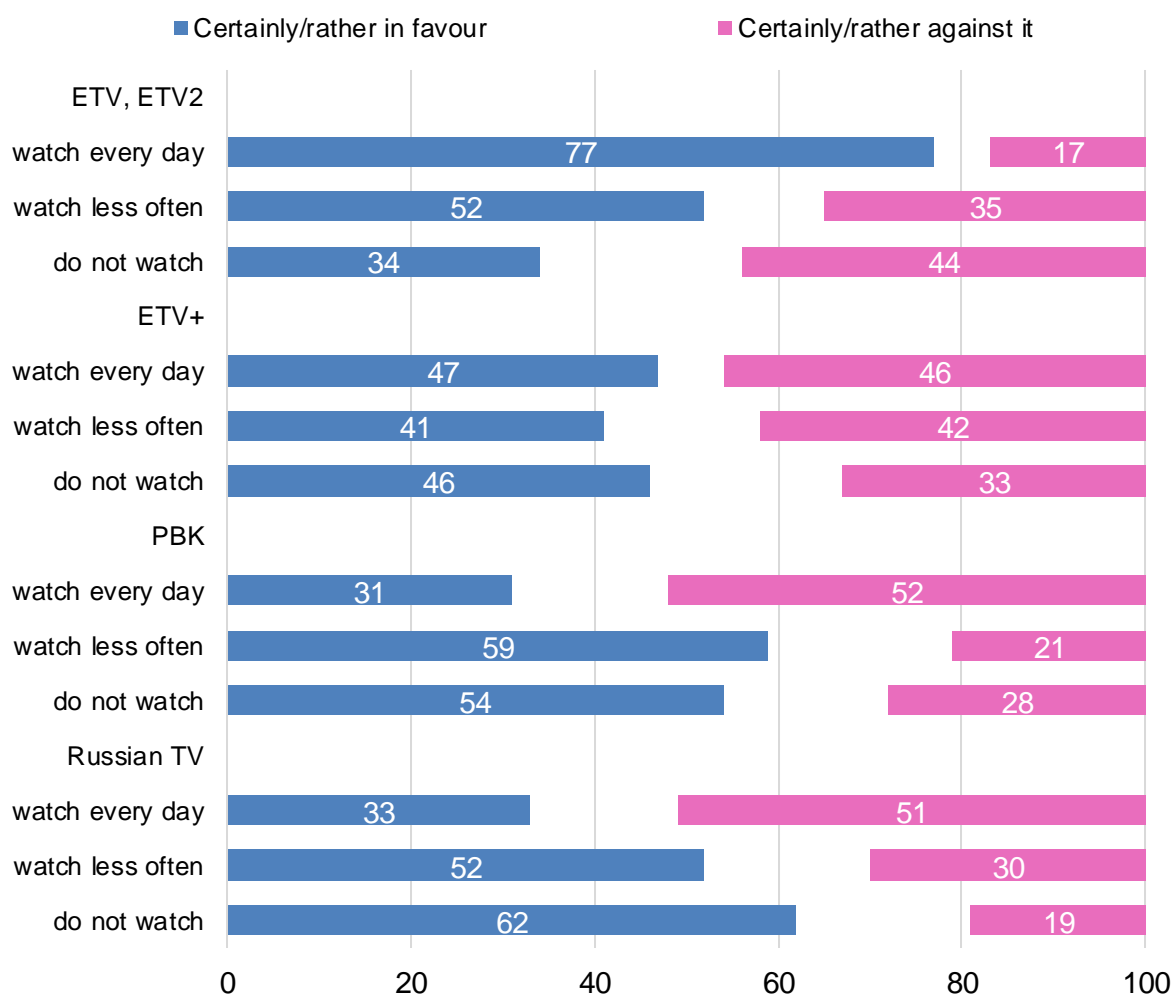


Figure 73. Engagement with radio stations; October 2018 (%; N = all respondents)

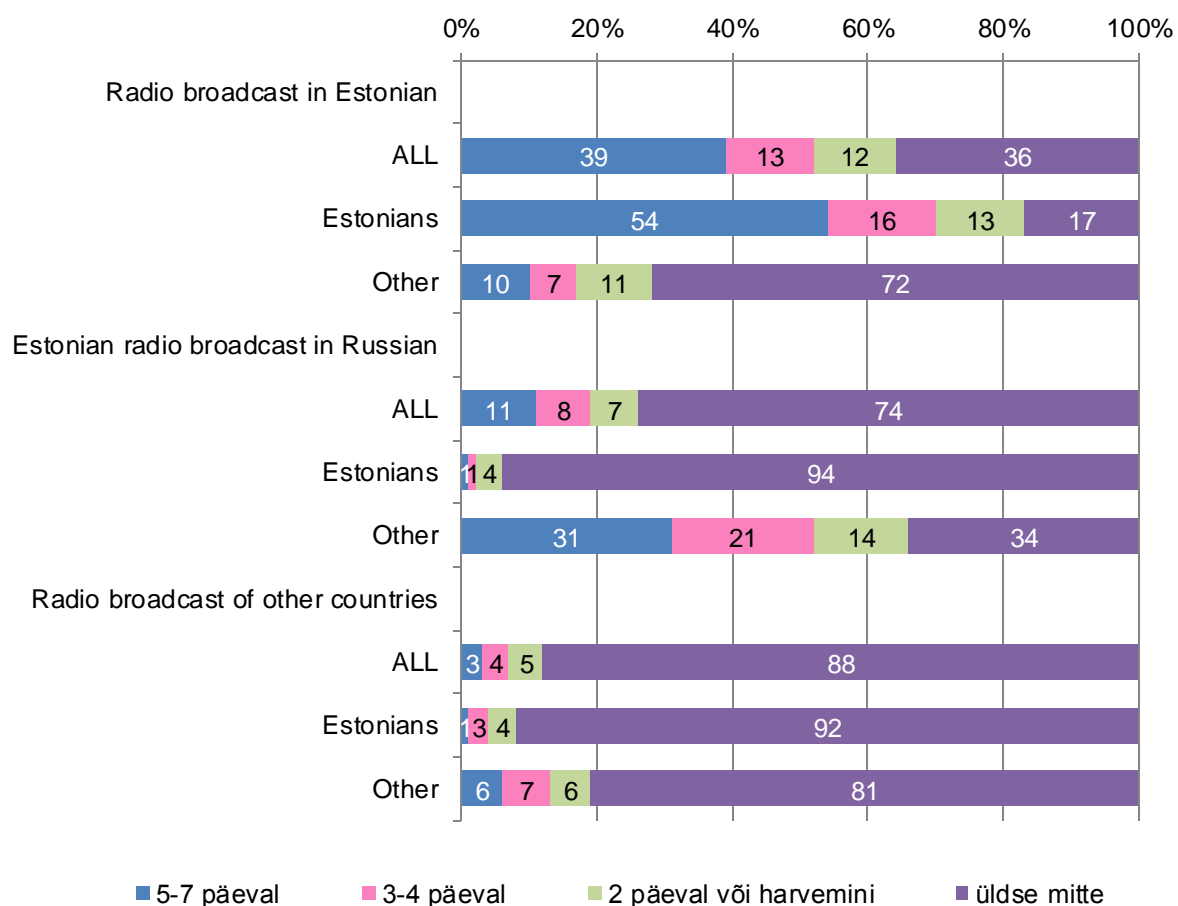


Figure 74. Reading newspapers—on the basis of six most recent issues; October 2018
(%; N = Estonian-speaking respondents)

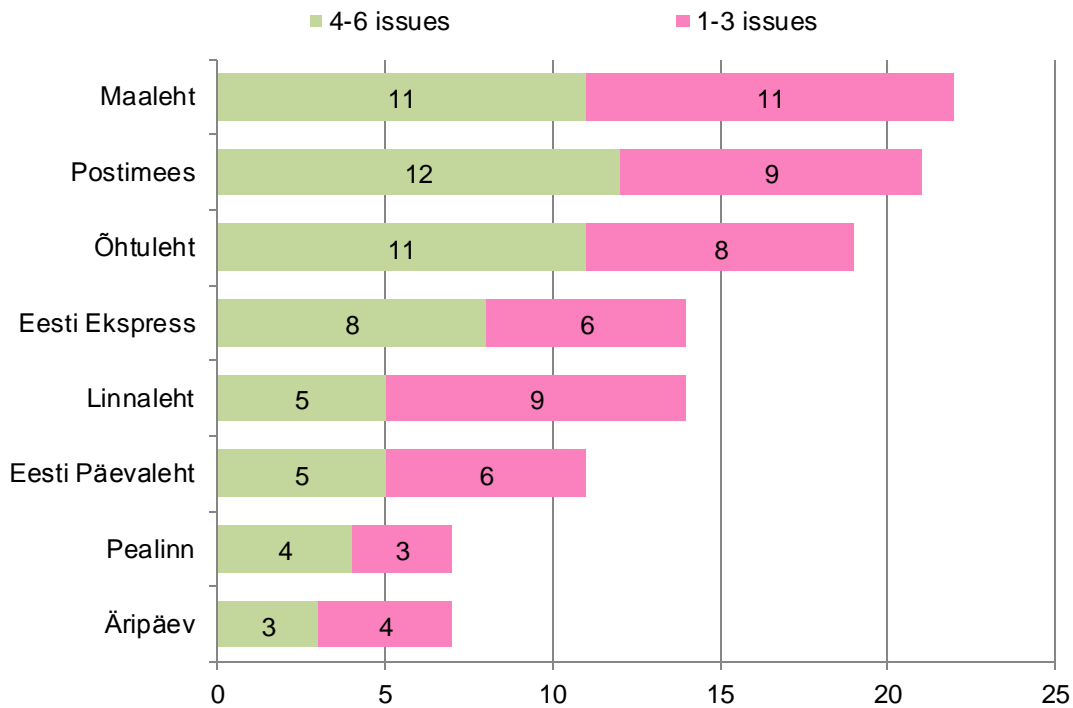
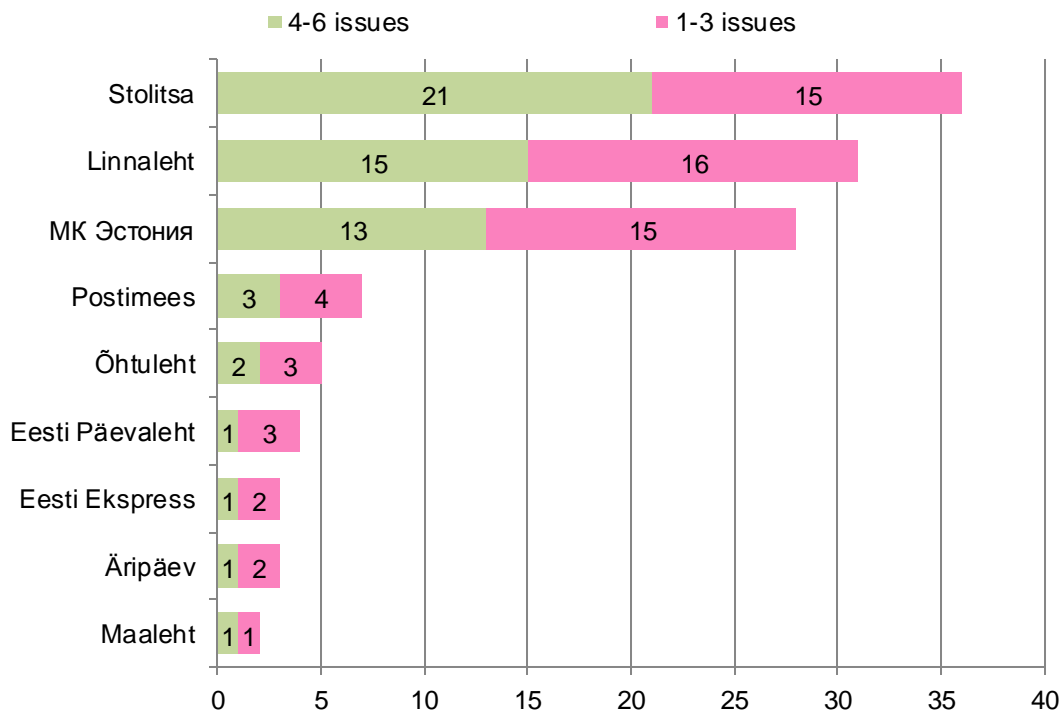


Figure 75. Reading newspapers—on the basis of six most recent issues; October 2018
(%; N = Russian-speaking respondents)



12 Importance of information channels

To assess the impact of different print and web channels, TV and radio stations, and social media channels to people's attitudes, an additional typological analysis would be required. In this survey, we asked the respondents themselves to assess which information channels are important to them in obtaining information related to national defence.

The most important ones are, predictably, television and radio, more than half of the respondents deem news portals and newspapers as very or rather important. However, direct communication with other people fits right between these two, being below TV, but almost as important as information obtained via radio.

Print ads, street advertisements, and electronic news letters are deemed the least important.

Figure 76. How important is this channel in regard to information on national defence, October 2018 (%) ; N = all respondents)

