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Public Opinion and National Defence

Report to the Ministry of Defence
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SUMMARY

- In October/November 2019, 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 1,226 residents of Estonia aged 15+ were interviewed. This was already the 46th survey in monitoring public opinion since the year 2000.

- With regard to assessments of changes in Estonian life, a small decline has taken place in fall 2019: according to 42 per cent of respondents, life in Estonia has improved (compared to 48% in spring), 37 per cent (35%) assess the situation as the same, and according to 14 per cent (13%) the situation has got worse.

- The proportion of people who feel proud and happy about living in Estonia very often or often was on the rise until October 2018, attaining 61%. Such an increase may be associated with the emotional background of Estonia’s 100th anniversary year. In March 2019 the proportion of such respondents declined to 56% and remains at the same level in the fall. Among Estonians this indicator is at 63%, and 44% among respondents of other nationalities.

- Of the twelve institutions the reliability of which respondents were asked to assess, the Rescue Services rank the highest in terms of trustworthiness (96% trusts them completely or, rather trusts them). This is followed by Police and Border Guard (89%), the Defence Forces (80%), the Defence League (76%), local government (71%) and the President of the Republic of Estonia (66%). The trustworthiness of NATO is equal to that of the institution of the President. 58% of the respondents have confidence in the Prime Minister; 58% in the Parliament (Riigikogu); 53% in the government. Compared to the spring, trustworthiness of the Prime Minister and Parliament has slightly increased. The European Union and NATO are considered trustworthy by 71% and 66% of the respondents, respectively. There continues to be a large disparity between attitudes of Estonians and non-Estonians toward NATO: 81% of Estonian respondents and only 36% of respondents from other nationalities trust NATO. Large differences also occur with regard to the Defence Forces and the Defence League. 89% of Estonian and 63% of non-Estonian respondents trust the Defence Forces, and the trust in the Defence League is at 87% and 50% respectively. In the spring survey the trust of other nationalities in the Defence Forces and the Defence League was lower (54% and 44% respectively)

- The belief that the world was going to become more unstable and the likelihood of military conflicts would grow exceeded 70% in spring 2015. In fall 2017, the sense of threat started to subside, and this fall the prognosis of increasing threat was given by 55% of the respondents. 12% of the respondents think that
the world will become more secure in the coming decade, 24% believe that the situation will remain the same.

- Respondents perceive the security situation in Estonia to be somewhat more positive than that of the world in general: 29% of respondents believe that in 10 years, the residents of Estonia will be living in more secure conditions than they do now; only 21% predict that the situation will grow more unsafe and 35% think that the situation will remain unchanged. Assessments of Estonia`s security situation have remained stable in the recent years.

- While in March 2015 Russia’s activities in restoring its authority in the neighbouring states were still perceived as the main threat to world security (the effects of the Ukrainian events being behind it), and in 2016–2017 the actions of the Islamic State and the war in Syria were perceived as the main threat, in recent surveys, the importance of these threats has retreated due to new factors. Cyberattacks are considered to be the most important with 53% of respondents seeing them as certainly threatening and 35% as threatening to some extent. In second place is the immigration of war refugees and asylum seekers, considered certainly threatening by 49%, and threatening to some extent by 40% of respondents. In third place is the actions of terrorist organisations, considered certainly threatening by 48%, and threatening to some extent by 41% of respondents. In fourth place is the spread of false information and fake news (45% and 41%, respectively). Russia’s attempts to restore its authority in its neighbouring countries were considered certainly threatening by 39% of respondents, but nearly a quarter of respondents thought that Russia is definitely not dangerous. Among the “to some extent” responses, regarded the growth of China’s power as more dangerous (certainly threatening by 36% and to some extent by 42%), or the dominant role of the US in the world (certainly threatening by 34% and to some extent by 45%) than that of Russia (33%). The roles of China and the US in the world are being regarded as increasingly threatening. Nevertheless, for Estonians, Russia remains in second place in the ranking of threats (51% of respondents answered that “this certainly” is a threat). However, only 13% of non-Estonians regard Russia as a certain danger, giving it last place in the ranking of 15 kinds of threat.

- There are five threats to Estonia, the realisation of which in the following years is considered probable or rather probable by more than half of the respondents. According to 72% of residents think that there may be an organised cyber-attack against Estonian state information systems. The spread of fake news (considered very or rather probable by 70% of the respondents) ranks second. 59% believe that some foreign country may interfere in Estonian politics or economy in their own interests. The spread of
hate speech (55%) ranked the fourth. An extensive marine pollution is considered very or rather probable by 53% of the respondents. More than 40% of respondents believe that extensive pollution of the natural environment is also likely (43%). The percentage of those who consider the rest of the threats very or rather likely is 30% and less. An extensive military attack against Estonia is considered very or rather probable by only one fifth of the respondents.

- In response to the question of how respondents evaluate media coverage on the topic of security threats – does the Estonian media write and talk about military threats to Estonia too much and too often, just enough, or rather too little – one quarter of respondents believed that too much is written and spoken about military threats. However, half of respondents believed that media coverage of military threats is adequate. The latter position is clearly dominant among Estonians (58% believe that there is adequate coverage of military threats to Estonia). However, non-Estonians’ responses are equally divided between “too much” and “adequately” (38% and 37%, respectively). 14% of respondents think that military threats are not discussed enough.

- NATO membership continues to be Estonia’s main security guarantee according to public opinion (53% mention it as one of the three most important factors). The defence willingness of residents is in 2nd place with 41%, and in third place, with 31%, is the development of Estonia’s independent defence capability. These three factors are followed by (mainly due to the influence of respondents of other nationalities) cooperation and good relations with Russia (22%), which is named among the three most important factors by 46% of non-Estonian respondents, and only 11% of Estonian-speaking respondents.

- 79% of respondents consider armed resistance in the case of a military attack by a foreign country certainly or probably necessary. Estonians consider armed resistance to be more necessary than non-Estonians, but the gap has decreased. Resistance is deemed certainly necessary by 83% of Estonians and 73% of non-Estonian respondents, yet only 11% 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: this includes 66% of Estonians and 46% of non-Estonians (48% of Estonian citizens of other nationalities). 75% of male citizens are ready to participate in national defence (78% of Estonians and 62% of other nationalities).

- In a situation where Estonia is under attack, every fifth of the person would consider leaving Estonia. Women (23% certainly or probably) and younger people are most likely to leave Estonia. 32% of those under 20 years of age;
35% of people between 20 and 29; and 37% of people between 30 and 39 would want to leave. Among non-Estonians, 25%, and of Estonians, 19% would probably leave.

- The population’s awareness about behaving in an emergency situation is low. Only a quarter of respondents have a basic understanding of what they could do to defend the country in a military attack; while more than two thirds are rather not or certainly not informed.
  - Among those who consider their informedness to be generally good, the proportion of men is twice as large as that of women (37% vs. 16%); the previous difference between Estonian respondents and those of other nationalities has disappeared. 26% of Estonians and 25% of respondents from other nationalities consider their informedness to be generally good.
  - In their own words, people would like to have more information on how the public would be informed in case of a threat (40%); how to act in a conflict area as a civilian (35%); how evacuation would be organised (35%); 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 participation in national defence.
  - 51% of the respondents find that Estonia can be defended until the arrival of allies’ assistance in the case of an armed attack by a foreign country. The percentage of those who do not consider defending Estonia possible is 32%. Belief in the defensibility of Estonia is higher among Estonians (56%) and lower among respondents of other nationalities (43%).
  - According to the assessments given to the volume of Estonia’s defence expenditures, people predominantly think the budget should remain at the level currently achieved (47%). 23% of the population favour increasing defence expenditures, and 18% 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 past three years. The proportion of positive responses is 70% this time as well. Estonians have a more positive attitude towards the development of national defence compared to non-Estonians (78% and 55% gave a positive assessment to the development of national defence, respectively).
  - The issue of the protection of the Estonian eastern border became topical in autumn 2014 and the public’s assessments were predominantly negative. Yet by spring 2016, they had become mainly positive again. In fall 2019, 61% of respondents provided a positive and 18% a negative assessment to the security of the national border.
  - There is a separate question concerning the protection of Estonia’s e-state digital services and information systems. Cyberattack was considered the
greatest threat to Estonian state security, and assessments of defensibility of this area are the most critical. Nevertheless, assessments show a modest rising trend: in the fall of 2019, 57% of respondent consider our state’s e-state digital services and information systems very well or quite well protected; 18% gave a negative assessment.

- People in Estonia have had very favouring attitudes towards conscript service for young men throughout the survey period. According to the present survey, 91% consider conscript service for young men to be necessary, and of these respondents, 64% consider it to be certainly necessary.

- The majority of the respondents also think that young men with minor health disorders should undergo conscript service. 12% believe that such young men should certainly undergo conscript service without alterations, while 61% that they should undergo conscript service with an appropriate training load.

- Considering the very positive attitude towards the compulsory military service of young men, it is to be expected that the majority of the population disapprove of evading conscript service—23% condemn such behaviour and 45% consider it negative. The younger age groups express higher than average tolerance towards evading conscript service: more than 40% of respondents under the age of 20 have an understanding or approving stance towards evasion. By contrast, 79% of those over 60 condemn evasion of conscript service or hold a negative attitude toward it.

- Since 2013, women have had the opportunity to undergo conscript service voluntarily and this has been gaining increasingly more understanding from 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 already the third survey in a row. 3% approved of compulsory conscript service for women while 15% held the opinion that women should not undergo conscript service at all. Estonians have a more contemporary attitude towards gender equality compared to respondents of other nationalities. 84% of Estonians think that women should have the opportunity of undergoing conscript service voluntarily, whereas 67% of non-Estonian respondents agree. 25% 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. The majority of respondents believe that women’s conscript service should be conducted on the basis of a separate programme—this opinion is held by 54% of the respondents who approve of conscript service for women, while 41% approve of women undergoing conscript service under the same conditions as young men.
78% 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. 15% support abandoning compulsory conscript service and switching to a fully professional army only.

Public opinion toward members of the professional military is predominantly positive: 80% of respondents hold a very or generally positive attitude and 18% are neutral.

Public opinion on the potential role of women in the Defence Forces is slowly changing. 50% of respondents find that women could serve equally to men in all positions and in all units, 40% find that women should serve on the home front and in other supporting functions. Similar to attitudes towards women’s participation in conscript service, the attitudes of respondents of other nationalities are more conservative in this issue as well: 54% of non-Estonians see women rather on the home front and in other supporting functions, 59% of Estonians, however, find that women could serve equally with men.

According to the population of Estonia, the main tasks of the Defence League are ensuring permanent readiness for national defence and conducting military training for its members—these rank first according to 27% and 24% of the respondents, respectively. 11% of respondents allot first place to participation in rescue activities and 9% raising defence willingness among the population. In aggregate of the three choices, ensuring readiness for national defence of the state holds first place (48%), and the third-ranking choice, participation in rescue activities in case of accidents and catastrophes (47%), rises to a firm second place. The option that was in second place, conducting military training for members ranks third (38%) in the summary. Least in importance according to the respondents is participation of the Defence League in military missions outside of Estonia.

While Estonians see that national defence tasks are the most important for the Defence League, respondents of other nationalities mainly see 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.

Attitudes toward Defence League volunteer members is predominantly positive, as was also true of attitudes toward professional military servicemen: of the respondents 38% have a very good attitude, and 34% a generally good attitude. There is practically no negative attitudes, though one fifth of the respondents hold a neutral attitude.

This time the survey included questions about Naiskodukaitse (Women’s voluntary defence organisation). Awareness of the existence of Naiskodukaitse
is very high among Estonians and very low among respondents of other nationalities (89% and 24%, respectively). Those who know about Naiskodukaitse share a rather unanimous view that this organisation is necessary: 86% consider it definitely or rather necessary. Similarly to the Defence League, we asked the respondents to evaluate the tasks of Naiskodukaitse by picking the three most important tasks from a given list. For the first option, respondents picked supporting the activities of the Defence League (13%), raising the defence willingness of the population (13%), increasing the inclusion of women and girls in national defence (11%), and organising charity events in support of the Defence Forces and the Defence League (11%). Conducting military training was named in first place by 9% of the respondents.

Supporting the activities of the Defence League also remains a priority in aggregate of the three choices (34%), followed by participation in rescue work and involving women and girls in national defence (31% equally).

- 4% of the respondents participate in the activities of the Defence League; 21% 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 15% would probably join. The willingness to join is higher among younger respondents.

- Only 2% of the respondents belong to Naiskodukaitse; 9% are connected to this organisation through friends or family members. Of the women who are not involved in Naiskodukaitse, 20% would certainly or probably be prepared to join.

- Attitudes towards Estonia’s membership in NATO continue to be positive: 74% of the population support it. 91% of Estonians and 38% of respondents of other nationalities support NATO membership. Compared to the spring, support of NATO membership among non-Estonians has declined by six percentage points.

- The respondents were given many options for 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 39% thought that NATO membership would help Estonia to avoid a military attack entirely. 20% of the respondents thought NATO members would limit their help to political and diplomatic support while 10% believed the alliance would not help Estonia in any way. Compared to Estonians, respondents of other nationalities tended to be more skeptical.

- 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: 67% of the respondents (78% of Estonians) find that NATO has already done enough to ensure Estonia’s
security and 73% of the population (91% of Estonians but only 35% of non-Estonian respondents) favour the presence of NATO’s allied forces in Estonia.

- 78% of Estonians responded that the NATO battle group has made Estonia more secure when prompted with the question of whether having NATO battle group troops stationed in Estonia make the country generally more secure or less secure or whether it has no real effect either way. The majority of non-Estonians (39%) do not see NATO’s presence as having an effect on Estonia’s security, and 30% feel more secure.

- Beginning in October 2017, the fall survey has contained a question where respondents are asked to choose among four provided adjectives which in their view best characterise the soldiers of the NATO battle group stationed in Estonia. Mostly, positive words are used to describe the soldiers in the NATO battle group. The most frequent is the word “professional” (43%), followed by characterisations such as “friendly” (32%), “well-intentioned” (25%) and “polite” (23%). The proportion of those giving negative characterisations is marginal; more of such responses are given by members of other nationalities.

- 66% 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 (76% and 45%, respectively).

- Participation in international military operations is considered necessary primarily because it provides our soldiers with necessary real combat experience (mentioned by 62% as one of three reasons) and guarantees NATO’s assistance to Estonia in the event of potential threats (45%).

- More than two thirds of the respondents support Estonia’s involvement in missions conducted under the aegis of NATO, EU, and UN, and in missions based on the co-operation of allied countries. Whereas most of Estonians support participation in all missions, most of all NATO missions (83%), the organisation under the aegis of which a mission is carried out has more weight in the case of respondents of other nationalities. Non-Estonian respondents mainly favour involvement in UN missions (55% support it completely or rather support it). Missions carried out in co-operation with allied countries and EU missions are supported by 50%. The non-Estonians’ support for NATO missions is even lower at 39%.

- 73% of the respondents support increasing defence co-operation between EU Member States: this includes 80% of Estonians and 63% of non-Estonians.
o The word “veteran” is strongly associated with the image of World War II in the Russian-speaking opinion space—67% of non-Estonians see veterans as people who took part in World War II. 33% of Estonians (44% of all respondents) consider participants of World War II veterans. 33% of Estonian-speaking respondents, a slight majority, (15% of non-Estonians) have adopted the position that veterans are people who have participated in missions of the Estonian Defence Forces.

o Public support for national defence instruction is comparable to that of compulsory conscription service for young men—it has remained very high and stable throughout all surveys. 83% of the respondents find that all schools that offer secondary education should certainly or probably provide the possibility of receiving national defence instruction. National defence instruction is highly supported by both Estonian (89%) and Russian-speaking respondents (70%).

o The most important channels for obtaining information on matters of national defence are, predictably, television (very or rather important for 84% of the respondents) and radio (75%); more than half of the respondents also deem news portals (64%) and newspapers (55%) very or rather important. Direct communication with other people still fits in between the mentioned channels (69%).
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 in autumn 2019 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 and the main guarantees for the Estonian security;
• 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 toward the structure of Estonian defence; both towards compulsory conscript service for men and voluntary conscript service for women;
• Attitudes towards the Defence League and understanding its tasks;
• Attitudes towards Naiskodukaitse and understanding its tasks;
• Attitudes in connection with Estonia’s participation in international military operations and international cooperation regarding the defence of the state;
• 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 questionnaire that was used and distribution tables by important background characteristics.
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 permanent residents of the Republic of Estonia with the age above 15, which totals 1,102,616 people (Statistics Estonia, 01.01.2018).

The usual sample of the Omnibus 1000 is 1,000 respondents. From August 2019 onward, the omnibus survey is carried out simultaneously in face-to-face (N=500) and web interviews (N=500). Since for public opinion surveys on topics of the defence of the state, it is required to conduct only face-to-face interviews, the current survey was conducted through two omnibus surveys in October and November.

In addition to two omnibus samples (each with N=500), a supplementary survey was carried out with an additional sample N=200 with only Russian-speaking respondents.

The sample for the omnibus survey 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 the source addresses, on which basis the interviewer begins their work. Within each area, the source address is selected randomly from the address list of the Population Register.

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

Use of the proportional model of the general sample ensures the representativeness of the sample, in other words, it allows making generalisations about the whole same-age population of Estonia. The maximum sampling error does not exceed ±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.
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-urementute AS participated in carrying out the survey. A total of 1,226 interviews were performed in 137 different sampling points.

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reasons for not carrying out the interview</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There are no target group persons in the family</td>
<td>666</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nobody is at home</td>
<td>2384</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Target group person is not at home</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact was denied</td>
<td>805</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Target group person refused to give the interview</td>
<td>804</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not a dwelling or address inaccessible</td>
<td>261</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other reasons for not performing the interview</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total addresses</td>
<td>5060</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repeated visits</td>
<td>1133</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Weighting and data processing

The information processing package SPSS for Windows 25.0 was used to process the results of the study.

Weighting was used to adjust smaller disparities between the survey sample and the survey model so as to correspond more closely to the social-demographic model of the population. Two kinds of weighting were used.

Since, in addition to the ordinary survey sample, supplementary interviews were conducted in Russian with 200 non-Estonians, the general weighting contained in the data file was intended to bring the social-demographic constitution of the survey file into correspondence with the general model for the whole population. To accomplish this, the proportion of Estonians had to be increased and the consciously overrepresented proportion of non-Estonians decreased.

In addition, a separate weighting instrument has been provided for the weighing of the Estonian and non-Estonian samples. In these cases the proportion of Estonians and non-Estonians remains the same, but the different gender and age composition of the Estonian and non-Estonian populations is taken into account. It makes sense to use these weightings if the attitudes of Estonians and non-Estonians are to be analysed separately and in greater depth.

The indicators presented in this report are derived from a general distribution arrived at by general weighting (cf Figure 1). The frequency tables provided in the Appendices on respondents from Estonian background and other nationalities reflect separate weightings of these bodies of data. Therefore, marginal differences exist between the general distribution and the separate tables concerning respondents of Estonian background and other nationalities.
Figure 1. Respondents’ social and demographic profile, %, n=1226
Performers

The persons responsible for various stages of the survey are:

Report, project management:       Juhan Kivirähk
Sample/coordination of interviewing work: Kristel Merusk,
                                        Kaja Sõdor,
                                        Roman Vjazemski.
Data processing and tables:        Marina Karpištšenko
Editing English translation        OÜ Scriba
Customer’s contact person:         Rika Margat

Contact information:

• General phone: 585 29 700
• E-mail: post@turu-uuringute.ee
• Web-page: www.turu-uuringute.ee
• Address: Pärnu mnt. 102, Section A, 11312 Tallinn

Research manager’s contact information:

• Telephone: 5515200
• E-mail: juhan@turu-uuringute.ee
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. When people perceive that changes in the society are for the better, the treat the problems that arise in different spheres of social life in a more balanced and positive manner. We asked:

When you evaluate the life of Estonia as a whole, do you think that things have improved, worsened or remained the same in the past few years?

Assessments of changes in Estonian life have continued to improve. If in spring 2016 only 26% of respondents believed that life in Estonia had changed for the better, and 29% believed things had changed for the worse, then by spring 2019 the proportion of positive assessments had risen to 48% and only 13% of respondents gave a negative assessment of Estonia’s development.

In fall 2019 there has been a small decline in these assessments: life in Estonia has improved according to 42% of respondents; 37% assess the situation as the same, and 14% as having changed for the worse (Figure 2). If in the spring we observed more positive assessments among Estonians as compared to other nationalities, this time there are no differences.

Figure 2. Attitudes towards the changes in life in Estonia; comparison of 2016–2019 (%; N = all respondents)
People with higher education are more positive about Estonia’s development: 49% perceive positive changes (in the spring the proportion of such respondents was 57%). 41% of people who have secondary or secondary specialized education agree, while 33% of those who do not have secondary education share this view.

Assessments are naturally influenced by the respondent’s economic situation: in the income group of less than 300 euros per household member per month, 31% of the respondents perceive positive changes; within the income bracket of 301–400 euros; 45% of those whose income is 401–650 euros, and more than half of the 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 connection to Estonia—whether they feel happy and proud over living here.

The proportion of respondents who feel proud and happy over living in Estonia very often or often enough increased over the years until October last year, reaching 61% in October. The increased sense of pride and happiness over living in Estonia last year was perhaps somewhat related to Estonia’s centenary celebrations. By March 2019 the proportion of respondents with such an assessment had declined to 56% and remains at the same level this fall.

The proportion of Estonian respondents who feel proud or happy over living in Estonia very often or rather often has been fluctuating between 63 and 68%. This time, the result falls in the lower end of the scale (63%).

Among respondents of other nationalities, we saw a significant increase in positive answers (49%) last October, but the figure had decreased to 42% again this March, and remains at the same level (44%) (Figure 3).

There is only a marginal number of respondents who never feel pride and happiness over living in Estonia.
The connection between these two indicators is obvious: of those who think life in Estonia is on the way to improvement, 68% have often or often enough felt pride or happiness about Estonia; of those in whose opinion the situation has remained the same, this figure is 50%, and among those who think developments are pointing in a negative direction, it is 37% (cf. Table 3).

Table 3 – Pride and Happiness over Estonia, arranged according to assessments of the development of Estonia. (%; N = all respondents)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>ALL</th>
<th>Change for the better</th>
<th>Remained the same</th>
<th>Change for the worse</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very often</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Often enough</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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. Since October 2018 local governments and the judicial system were included in the list of institutions.

2.1 Confidence in institutions

Respondents evaluated the trustworthiness of institutions on a scale with four categories: trust completely, rather trust, rather distrust and distrust completely. Of the twelve institutions included in the survey, people have the greatest confidence in the Rescue Services—96% of the Estonian population trusts them—followed by the Police and Border Guard (89%), Defence Forces (80%), Defence League (76%), the European Union (73%), local municipalities (71%), and NATO and the President of the Republic (both 66%) (Figure 4).

Figure 4. Confidence in institutions in October/November 2019 (%; N = all respondents)
Although political institutions traditionally garner the lowest level of confidence, the balance of confidence (the difference of proportions between people who trust and distrust them): 58% of the population trust the Parliament and the Prime Minister, and 53% trust the government.

The trustworthiness of very many institutions is on the same level according to respondents who are Estonian or who belong to other nationalities (Rescue Services, Police and Border Guard, local municipalities, the Riigikogu, the government and the Prime Minister); however, there are also those which are viewed very differently in terms of confidence. The greatest disparity is in confidence in NATO; the confidence of respondents of other nationalities in the defence forces and the Defense League is also less than average. Confidence in the European Union also differs by more than ten percentage points. Nevertheless, it is important to note that the confidence of respondents from other nationalities in the majority of institutions except NATO has grown. (Figure 5).

**Figure 5. Confidence in institutions in the eyes of Estonians and non-Estonians; October/November 2019 (\% of those who trust the institutions completely and rather trust them, \%; N = all respondents)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Estonians</th>
<th>Other nationalities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rescue Service</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Police/Border guard</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defence Forces</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defence League</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European Union</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local municipalities</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NATO</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>President</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Court system</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parliament (Riigikogu)</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prime Minister</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2.2 Confidence in defence structures

In fall 2019, 80% of Estonia’s population had confidence in the Defence Forces, which holds third place on the scale of trustworthiness, following Rescue Services and the Police and Border Guard. Growth in confidence took place first and foremost among respondents of other nationalities. 89% of Estonians and 63% of respondents from other nationalities had confidence in the Defence Forces. This is nine percentage points more than in the spring. The last time the confidence of residents of other nationalities showed such a level of confidence in the Defence Forces was in 2013–2014. (Figure 6).

The Defence League is placed among the most trustworthy institutions right after the Defence Forces. In fall 2019, 76% of residents of Estonia trusted the Defence League; 87% of Estonians and 50% of non-Estonians. Here as well the growth in confidence took place first and foremost among respondents of other nationalities. (Figure 7).
Figure 6. Confidence in the Defence Forces in 2000–2019; comparison of 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 2000–2019; 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 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 are asked to assess changes in world security is presented in the following wording since the year 2000:

**What do you think, will the world become more secure and the risk of military conflicts reduce, or, conversely, will 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 would 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 assessments decreased, it still remained high. As of fall 2017, when an increase in instability was predicted by 66% of the respondents, the sense of threat has started to decrease—in March 2018, 61% of the respondents thought that the world would become more unsafe, in October it was 52%; in March 2019, 58% and this fall, 55%.

12% of respondents believe that the world will become safer in the coming decade and, and 24% think that there will be no change.

The sense of threat on the part of Estonian respondents is greater than that of respondents of other nationalities: 63% of Estonians think that instability in matters of security will increase, while 38% of respondents from other nationalities hold this view. (Figure 8).

The long-term trend along with the proportions of the two opposing views is presented in Figure 9. It shows that since the spring of 2014 when the crisis in Ukraine began, the proportion of respondents fearing the increase of instability and military conflicts has stayed above 60%, even exceeding 70% in three surveys. Only in the last two years has this proportion fallen below 60%, but without a doubt this remains a high indicator.
Figure 8. Situation in the world in the coming decade; comparison of 2018–2019 (%; N = all respondents)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Situation will become more secure</th>
<th>Situation is not going to change</th>
<th>Increased risk of military conflicts/ situation less secure</th>
<th>Don't know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2019/10</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019/03</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018/10</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nationality</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estonian</td>
<td>2018/10</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estonian</td>
<td>2019/03</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estonian</td>
<td>2018/10</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2019/10</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2019/03</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2018/10</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 9. Situation in the world in the coming decade; comparison of 2000–2019 (%; N = all respondents)

- Situation will become more secure
- Increased risk of military conflicts/ situation less secure
3.2 Security in Estonia

The question about 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. Increasing security is predicted by 29% and insecurity by 21% of the respondents.

Compared to respondents from other nationalities, there are more Estonian respondents who fear an increase in threat (23% and 15% respectively). Among respondents of other nationalities there are more “don’t know” responses (21%) (Figure 10).

Figure 10. Situation in Estonia in the coming decade; comparison of 2018–2019 (%; 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. In 2018 cyberattacks and the spread of false information and fake news were added to the list of threats, and both rose immediately into the list of top four most significant threats, where they also remain in the current survey.

If we consider the assessments “certainly” and “to some extent” together, all the factors listed in the survey are considered to be a threat to world security by more than 70% and thirteen factors by more than 80% of the respondents (Figure 11).

Cyber-attacks are deemed to be the most important threat: certainly by 53% and to some extent by 35% of the respondents. The migration of refugees and asylum seekers into Europe is in second place, it is considered to be a certain threat by 49% and to some extent by 40% of respondents. In third place is the activities of terrorist networks, viewed as a certain threat by 48% of respondents and to some extent by 41%. Spread of misinformation and fake news comes fourth (certainly 45%, to some extent 41%).

These are followed by a worldwide economic crisis (certainly 42%, to some extent 44%) and global climate change (39% and 44%). In March the perceived importance of these two threats grew significantly compared to fall 2018, but in the current survey these threats are assessed similarly to the spring survey.

Russia’s attempts to restore its authority in neighbouring countries are assessed as certainly dangerous by 39% of respondents, but almost a quarter of respondents does not consider Russia to be a threat at all. If we include the responses “to some extent”, then clearly the growth of China’s power is deemed more of a threat than Russia (certainly by 36% and to some extent, 42%) and the dominant role of the USA in the world (certainly so by 34%, to some extent by 45%). The roles of both China and the USA continue to be perceived as more of a threat.

Once again, the proportion of respondents who consider eastern Ukraine and Syria as threats has increased. 33% of respondents consider both to be a certain threat to world peace.

32% of respondents consider organised crime to be a certain threat. If we include the response “to some extent” (49%), this global threat exceeds the 80% level.

Under 30% of respondents consider conflict between rich and poor nations, the spread of epidemics, and the activities of North Korea to be certainly threatening to peace and security.
Figure 11. Threats to peace and security in the world 2018–2019 (%; N = all respondents)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Threat</th>
<th>2019/10</th>
<th>2019/03</th>
<th>2018/03</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cyber attacks</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activities of the terrorist network</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The migration of refugees to Europe</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>False information and fake news</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Global economic crisis</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Global climate change</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russian activities in restoring its authority</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China’s growing influence</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US domination of the world</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military conflict in Ukraine</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military conflict in Syria</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organised crime</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contradictions between rich and poor</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spread of epidemics</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activities of North-Korea</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Certainly | To some extent | Certainly not | Don't know
---|---|---|---
53 | 35 | 18 |
54 | 35 | 16 |
30 | 35 | 9 |
48 | 41 | 16 |
51 | 38 | 7 |
30 | 37 | 7 |
49 | 40 | 5 |
30 | 39 | 6 |
43 | 42 | 7 |
45 | 41 | 7 |
45 | 40 | 6 |
44 | 43 | 7 |
38 | 42 | 5 |
42 | 45 | 5 |
36 | 43 | 7 |
30 | 43 | 8 |
38 | 31 | 8 |
39 | 33 | 9 |
29 | 46 | 18 |
34 | 45 | 12 |
32 | 44 | 12 |
27 | 45 | 13 |
33 | 48 | 8 |
28 | 48 | 9 |
26 | 49 | 10 |
38 | 48 | 9 |
27 | 46 | 11 |
32 | 49 | 7 |
33 | 48 | 6 |
30 | 46 | 9 |
29 | 53 | 9 |
27 | 53 | 11 |
27 | 46 | 11 |
27 | 46 | 11 |
27 | 46 | 15 |
28 | 45 | 8 |
28 | 44 | 13 |
21 | 45 | 16 |
Respondents from other nationalities consider the activities of terrorist networks, the influence of the US in the world and organised crime more dangerous than Estonians. A rather similar assessment is provided to the immigration of refugees to Europe, world economic crisis and global climate change (cf. Figure 12).

Estonians consider the rest of the threats more dangerous than respondents of other nationalities. The biggest difference emerges from the assessments on how dangerous Russia's activities to restore its authority in the neighbouring countries are deemed. Among Estonians, it is perceived as the second most dangerous factor (51% of Estonians deem it as certainly dangerous), while it is in last place in the ranking of threat factors among Russian-speaking respondents with a figure of 13%.

In the opinion of both Estonian respondents and respondents from other nationalities, the greatest increase has been in the assessments of the threat posed by the situation in Syria (for Estonians the proportion of the response “certainly” has increased from 28% to 37%; for respondents of other nationalities, the rise has been from 17% to 25%).

Compared to the spring survey, the growing power of China is more of a worry for Estonians (the proportion of “certainly” responses has risen from 34% to 43%).
Figure 12. Threats to peace and security in the world; October/November 2019 (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. Similarly to global threats, the spread of fake news and additionally the spread of hate speech were included in fall 2018, as both of these factors rose to significance among threats to Estonia (Figure 13).

Compared to the spring survey, the map of threats to Estonia has remained very stable: there are no statistically similar differences between assessments of these dangers. There continue to be five threats that more than half of respondents regard as very or rather likely to manifest in the forthcoming years. A large-scale military attack on Estonia is considered least likely.
In assessing threats internal to Estonia, there are also differences between the answers of Estonian respondents and those of other nationalities. Estonians consider four out of five of these threats likelier than respondents of other nationalities.

The greatest threat is perceived to be cyber-attacks (79% and 56% respectively), spread of hate speech (62% and 38%) and fake news (74% and 61%).

Threats to the environment, extensive marine pollution, and extensive pollution of the natural environment are seen as equally likely. The same obtains for attacks on citizens of Estonia in a foreign country, major industrial accidents and mass street riots.
Figure 14. Probability of different threats endangering Estonia in the forthcoming years; comparison of assessments by Estonians and non-Estonians; October/November 2019 (%; N = all respondents)
3.5 Media coverage of security threats

Since the fall of 2017, the survey included an additional question on how 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?**

Respondents’ assessments on the media coverage of military threats to Estonia have been quite stable over the years. In fall 2019, one quarter of respondents thought that military threats have received too much coverage in the media. However, half of the respondents think that military threats are discussed just enough in the media.

While among Estonian respondents, the clearly dominant position is the latter one (58% think that there is just enough coverage), non-Estonians give the responses “too much” and “just enough” coverage in equal proportion. Compared to earlier surveys, the proportion of those respondents from other nationalities who think there is too much media coverage of this topic has declined.

Only 14% of the respondents think that military threats are not discussed enough (cf 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? 2018/2019 (%) N = all respondents**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>too much/too often</th>
<th>just enough</th>
<th>too little</th>
<th>cannot say</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>ALL</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/2019</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03/2019</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/2018</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ESTONIANS</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/2019</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03/2019</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/2018</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>OTHER NATIONALITIES</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/2019</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03/2019</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/2018</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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 53% of the respondents as one of the three most important factors this time as well. The second most important security guarantee is the defence willingness of residents (41%), while the development of Estonia’s independent defence capability ranks 3rd with 31% (cf. Figure 16). Responses to this question have remained stable for a long time.

These three factors are followed by cooperation and good relations with Russia (22%), mainly due to the influence of respondents of other nationalities. It is named among the three most important factors by 46% of non-Estonian respondents and only 11% of Estonian-speaking respondents.

In contradistinction, belonging to NATO is seen as one of the three most significant factors guaranteeing Estonian security by 69% of Estonian respondents, and only 19% of respondents from other nationalities.

In the same category as belonging to NATO are good relations with allies in the USA, and the permanent presence on Estonian territory of allied military forces. These factors are also considered significantly more important by Estonian respondents than by respondents of other nationalities. However, respondents of other nationalities value memberships in international organisations (EU, UN and OSCE) more than Estonians.

Both Estonians and non-Estonian respondents support cooperation with the Nordic countries and participation in international missions more or less equally.
Figure 16. Security guarantees for Estonia (up to 3 of the most important factors); comparison of assessments by Estonians and other nationalities; October/November 2019 (%; N = all respondents)
4 Defence willingness

The defence willingness of 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?”), while 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 steadily around 80%; sometimes under, sometimes over that threshold. In fall 2019 79% of Estonia’s population considered armed resistance certainly or probably necessary. (Figure 17).

Figure 17. Necessity for the provision of armed resistance if Estonia is attacked by any country; Spring/Autumn 2019 (%; N = all respondents)
Estonian-speaking respondents tend to consider armed resistance more necessary than people of other nationalities; the difference is ten percentage points. Resistance is deemed certainly necessary by 48% of Estonians and 37% of the Russian-speaking respondents. However, the proportion of those not in favour of armed resistance is approximately the same among Estonian respondents and those from other nationalities: 9% of Estonian respondents and 11% of respondents of other nationalities believe that resistance is not necessary. The lower level of support of respondents of other nationalities for armed resistance is due to the greater proportion of “I don’t know” responses (16%).

The proportion of respondents who express passive defence willingness has remained stable at 80%, already since 2013 (cf. Figure 18). The support of Estonians and respondents from other nationalities for resistance was equal in the years 2013–2014, but after 2014, that of respondents of other nationalities has lagged behind by ca ten percentage points. (Figure 19).
Figure 18. Necessity of armed resistance if Estonia is attacked by any country; 2000–2019 (%; N = all respondents)

Figure 19. Proportion of the proponents of armed resistance in the event of an attack; comparison of Estonians and non-Estonians 2006–2019 (% 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 in defence activities personally (so-called active defence willingness) is naturally lower than the proportion of those supporting armed resistance at the state level. While armed resistance is considered certainly or probably necessary by 79% of the respondents, 60% of the population would be willing to participate in defence activities personally to the extent of their own capabilities and skills (Figure 20).

Figure 20. Willingness to participate in defence activities if Estonia is attacked; Spring/Autumn 2019 (%; N= all respondents)

29% of the population of Estonia would be certainly willing and 31% would be probably willing to participate in defence activities to the extent of their own capabilities and skills. 30% of the respondents certainly or probably wouldn’t 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 is predictably greater in the matter of active defence willingness than it is in the case of passive defence willingness. While 66% of Estonians would be personally willing to participate in defence activities, the respective indicator for non-Estonians is only 46%. This level is 48% among Estonian citizens of other nationalities; 47% among Russian citizens, and 41% among respondents with undetermined citizenship.
In 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 (70% of male respondents would be willing to participate in defence activities, while only 51% of women feel the same; only 51% of respondents over 60 years of age would be willing to participate in defence activities). The largest proportion of those respondents prepared to participate in the defence of the state was in the age bracket 40–49.

If we only consider the willingness of male citizens to participate in national defence, we get a more positive picture of active defence willingness. 75% of male citizens are willing to participate in national defence; this includes 78% of Estonians and 62% of respondents of other nationalities. It is a matter of some concern that of Estonian citizens of other nationalities aged 15–34, only 54% are prepared to participate in defence activities (cf Table 4).

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NATIONALITY</th>
<th>ALL</th>
<th>15-34</th>
<th>35-49</th>
<th>50-64</th>
<th>65+</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Estonian</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russian or other</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ALL men/citizens</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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 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 of non-Estonian citizens, yet it fell below 50% again at the end of 2014. In the years 2016–2018, the active defence willingness of citizens once again exceeded 50%, but the 2019 survey shows a decline again. At the same time, the willingness of non-citizens to participate in the defence of Estonia shows a tendency toward growth.
Figure 21. Proportion of the population willing to participate in defence activities in the event of an attack; comparison of Estonians and non-Estonians 2000–2019 (% of those certainly and probably willing to participate)
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 roughly at the same level for several years now. In such a situation, 7% would certainly endeavour to leave and 14% would probably do it. 68% of the population would certainly not or probably not endeavour to leave Estonia in the event of a threat (Figure 22).

The people most likely to leave Estonia are women (certainly or probably 23%) and younger people; 32% of those under 20 years of age, 35% of those between 20 and 29 years of age, and 37% of those between 30 and 39 years of age would consider leaving.

From 50 years of age onwards, the wish to leave Estonia drops rapidly and the smallest number of potential leavers are among people above the age of 60. 25% of non-Estonians and 19% of Estonians would probably leave.

Figure 22. Probability of leaving Estonia in case Estonia is attacked; Spring/Autumn 2019 (%; N = all respondents)
Looking at the timeline from the beginning of the series of surveys, we observe a rise in non-Estonians' wish to leave the country beginning in 2007, which continued to rise to an especially high level of 42% by 2013, after which it remained steady near 30% in the years 2017–2019.

Estonians' willingness to leave rose to nearly 20% during the recession years from 2010 to 2013. It then fell slightly but rose to a fifth of the population again in 2017, where it remains today. (cf. Figure 23).

**Figure 23. Proportion of those desiring to leave Estonia in the event of an attack; comparison of Estonians and non-Estonians 2000–2019** (% of those certainly desiring to leave and those who would probably do it; N = all respondents)
4.4 Ability to act in the event of a potential attack

For people to be able to participate in defence activities, they need to know how they would be able to do this. In order to obtain an overview of the population’s defence awareness, the respondents were asked to tell whether they considered themselves adequately informed about what to do in the event of an impending foreign attack.

The results show that people consider their ability to act in the event of a potential attack rather poor—only about a quarter of respondents answered that they had at least a general understanding about what to do to defend the country in such a situation, while more than two thirds considered themselves rather or certainly not informed (Figure 24).

The number of men who consider themselves well-informed is twice as high as the corresponding figure for women (37% vs. 16%), which could be explained by more exposure to national defence structures (undergoing conscript service, Defence League). However, assessments of personal awareness can be considered low among men as well.

The previous difference in informedness between Estonian respondents and those of other nationalities has disappeared: 26% of Estonian respondents and and 25% of respondents of other nationalities assess their informedness as generally good.

20–39-year-old respondents consider themselves the best informed, yet the awareness drops as the age increases and only 15% of respondents over 60 years of age consider themselves informed. The level of informedness among young people aged 15–19 is also low at 17%.

Respondents with higher education consider themselves more informed than average, and as the education level declines, the proportion of informed respondents declines accordingly.
Figure 24. Being informed about the possibilities of what to do for defending Estonia in the event of an impending foreign attack; comparison of 2018/2019 (%; N = all respondents)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Yes, sufficiently</th>
<th>Generally yes</th>
<th>Don't know</th>
<th>Rather not</th>
<th>Certainly not</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>38</td>
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<td><strong>GENDER (10/2019)</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>11</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>42</td>
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<td><strong>AGE (10/2019)</strong></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>14</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-29</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-39</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-49</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>30</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>60 +</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>EDUCATION (10/2019)</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Secondary, vocational</td>
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<td>18</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.5 Topics on which more information is required

To determine the topics on which people need information the most so as to behave adequately during the attack of an external enemy respondents had to choose three subjects that were 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 the survey period (Figure 25). 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 public will be informed (40%); how to act in the event when one has entered a battle area as a civilian (35%); how evacuation will be organised (35%), and how primary household problems will be solved (32%).

Figure 25. On which topics do you require more information? 2018–2019 (%; N = all respondents)

Topics connected with a person’s own obligations toward national defence are of lesser importance. Responsibilities toward national defence and how mobilisation will be organised is of interest to less than a fifth of respondents, and more than the average they are of interest to male respondents. Of course, one reason might be that those who have performed conscription service already have this information, and do not need any additional information.
Based on the above, men’s and women’s need for information is different. Though the four most important topics in the order are in the foreground for men as well, it is of more than average importance for them to know how mobilisation will be organised, what their responsibilities will be towards national defence, and how it is possible to support the military as a civilian.

However, women, as compared to men, desire more information on how to act as a civilian, about evacuation, and about solving primary household problems. (Figure 26).

**Figure 26. On which topics do you require more information?**
October/November 2019, comparison of men and women
(%; N = all respondents)
5 Defence capability of Estonia

The fifth chapter reflects the population’s attitudes towards Estonia’s defence capability, the volume of defence expenditures, and the state’s activities regarding the development of national defence.

5.1 Assessment of the defence capability of Estonia

Respondents were asked to say whether they think Estonia is defendable until help arrives from the allies in the event of an armed foreign attack.

Since fall 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 the previous surveys, 53% of respondents believed that defending Estonia was certainly or probably possible, and this time 51 per cent of respondents thought the same. Thus belief in the defendability of Estonia has been stable over the last five years, but it has not grown. The proportion of respondents who find that Estonia cannot be defended is significantly lower at 32% (Figure 27).

Figure 27. Assessment of the defence capability of Estonia in the event of an armed foreign attack; Spring/Autumn 2019 (%; N = all respondents)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NATIONALITY (10/2019)</th>
<th>Yes, certainly</th>
<th>Probably yes</th>
<th>Don't know</th>
<th>Probably not</th>
<th>Certainly not</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2019/10</td>
<td>13</td>
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<td>24</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019/03</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estonian</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Estonians have more faith in Estonia’s independent defence capability than respondents of other nationalities: the figures are 56% and 43%, respectively.
5.2 Views on the volume of defence expenditures

Support for funding national defence 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 in 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 increasing 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.

In assessing the volume of Estonian defence expenditures today, nearly half of the respondents think that defence expenditures should be kept at the current level (47%) (Figure 28). 23% of the population are in favour of raising defence expenditures, and 18% favour a decrease.

Large differences can be seen in the attitude of Estonian respondents and respondents of other nationalities. Over the last three years, over 40% of non-Estonians have been in support of cutting defence expenditures. In fall 2019, 39% of non-Estonians were in favour of reducing defence expenditures.

Thus the attitudes of Estonian respondents and those of other nationalities toward defence expenditures are in reverse proportion: there are as few supporters of increasing defence expenditures among respondents of other nationalities as there are those Estonians who wish to decrease defence expenditures, 10% and 8%, respectively. However, 29% of Estonians support increasing defence expenditures, while among non-Estonians, the supporters of decreasing defence expenditures (39%) predominate (Figure 29).
Figure 28. Views on the volume of defence expenditures; comparison of 2004–2019 (%; N = all respondents)

Figure 29. Views on the volume of Estonian defence expenditures; comparison of Estonian and non-Estonian population 2006–2019 (%; N = all respondents)
5.3 Assessment of state activities in view of the development of national defence

In the last three years, assessment of the state’s activities in view of the development of national defence have been predominantly positive—70% of the respondents say the state has been doing very or rather well also in this fall (Figure 30).

Similarly to most of the other assessments on national defence or state institutions, Estonians provide more positive assessments compared to respondents of other nationalities: 78% of Estonians and 55% of non-Estonians regard the state has been doing rather or very well in the development of national defence. However, even the latter segment does not have many respondents who assess the development of national defence negatively (11%), yet there are more respondents who chose the answer “don’t know” (34%).

Figure 30. Assessment of the state’s activities in developing Estonia’s national defence in the recent years; comparison of 2018–2019 (%; N = all respondents)

5.4 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 resulted in negative assessments on the defence of the Estonian border, by spring 2016, positive assessments were once
again clearly predominant (Figure 31). In fall 2019, 61% gave a positive assessment to the defence of the Estonian border and 18% gave an negative assessment.

The question of the Estonian border is one of the few that prompts more positive assessments from respondents of other nationalities compared to Estonians. The proportion of positive assessments is higher among respondents of other nationalities compared to Estonians (Estonians, 60% and 65% for non-Estonians). While 23% of Estonians view the defence of the border negatively, the same opinion is held by only 10% of non-Estonians.

**Figure 31. Assessment on the defence of the Estonian border; comparison of 2014–2019 (%; N = all respondents)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Very well</th>
<th>Rather well</th>
<th>Don't know</th>
<th>Rather badly</th>
<th>Very badly</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2019/10</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019/03</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018/10</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018/03</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017/10</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017/03</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016/10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015/10</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014/11</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>NATIONALITY (10/2019)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estonian</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 5.5 Assessment of the security of digital services and information systems of Estonia’s e-state

In addition to military national defence and the border guard, cyber-security is one of the important areas today. For this reason, since fall 2018 we have included the topic of the security of Estonia’s e-state. As we saw above (chapter 3.4), cyber-attacks are considered the most acute threat to Estonian state security. Perhaps because this threat is viewed as the most likely to occur, the assessment on the security of this field is also the least positive. Nevertheless, these assessments are gradually improving. In fall 2019 57% of respondents consider the digital services and information systems of our e-state to be very or rather secure, and 18% view the security as bad (Figure 32).

Of course, this is an area which many respondents are unable to assess—a quarter of respondents provides the answer “don’t know”.

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

**Figure 33. Comparison of assessments on the development of Estonia’s national defence, border defence, and the security of digital service and information systems; October/November 2019 (%; N = all respondents)**

- **Development of national defence:**
  - Very well: 13%
  - Rather well: 57%
  - Don’t know: 21%
  - Rather badly: 7%
  - Very badly: 2%

- **Estonian border:**
  - Very well: 11%
  - Rather well: 50%
  - Don’t know: 21%
  - Rather badly: 15%
  - Very badly: 3%

- **Security of digital services:**
  - Very well: 11%
  - Rather well: 46%
  - Don’t know: 25%
  - Rather badly: 15%
  - Very badly: 3%
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.

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 fall 2019, 91% of all respondents consider it necessary for young men to go through conscript service. Only 8% of the population consider conscript service rather or completely unnecessary.

71% of Estonians assess conscript service as certainly necessary; 22% consider it rather necessary; the figures for respondents of other nationalities are 47% and 36% respectively.

The most dedicated supporters of conscript service are people over 50 years of age, 75% of whom consider it certainly necessary. More than 60% of respondents 40–49 years of age and older are convinced of the necessity of conscript service and more than half of the respondents between 30 and 39 years of age agree. Only among those most personally affected by conscript service do less than half consider it certainly necessary: 32% of 15–19-year-olds and 47% of those 20–29 years of age (Figure 34).
6.1.2 Attitudes towards undergoing conscript service with minor health disorders

Since 2012, 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, 61% think that young men with minor health disorders should undergo conscript service with an appropriate training load (Figure 35). Public opinion has remained very stable in this matter over the years.

Estonians’ support for extending conscript service to young men with minor health disorders is widespread, while respondents of other nationalities are more conservative in this regard—44% of them think that young men with minor health disorders should not undergo conscript service at all. 70% of Estonians and 43% of respondents of other nationalities find that young men with minor health disorders should undergo conscript service with an appropriate training load.
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—23% condemn such behaviour and 45% consider it negative (Figure 36). 24% 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 15% in this matter: a respective 74% and 57% see evasion negatively or condemn it.

Seniors tend to have a more negative attitude towards the evasion of conscript service. More than 40% of respondents below 20 years of age have an understanding or approving attitude towards the evasion of conscript service. However, condemning attitude becomes prevalent with age and 79% of people over 60 years of age view the evasion of conscript service negatively or condemn it.
6.1.4 Conscript service for women

The opportunity for women to undergo conscript service has been gaining increasingly more understanding in the society—already since March 2015, more than a half of the respondents have considered 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?**

Given this wording, over three fourths of respondents have answered that women should have the opportunity to undergo conscript service on a voluntary basis (**Figure 37**).
Attitudes toward women’s conscript service do not depend on the gender of respondents: 79% of men support the opportunity of women to undergo conscript service voluntarily, while 78% of women are of the same opinion.

Compared to Estonians, people of other nationalities are slightly more conservative. 84% of Estonians and 67% of respondents of other nationalities support women’s voluntary conscript service. Of the latter group 25% are of the opinion that women should not undergo conscript service in a compulsory manner or even as volunteers.

Support for women’s compulsory conscript service no longer significantly depends on the age of the respondent. If previous conservative assessments of this question were given by the oldest respondents, this time – surprisingly – the lowest support for women’s voluntary conscript service came from the youngest respondents, 64%.

The respondents who considered voluntary or compulsory conscript service for women necessary were asked about the form in which the conscript service should take place: 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 38). This view is more prevalent among...
respondents of other nationalities (71%). More than half of older respondents (60% or those over 60) support this solution.

**Figure 38. Which form should conscript service for women take? Comparison of 2018–2019 (%; N = all respondents who considered compulsory or voluntary conscript service for women necessary)**

- under the same conditions as applied to young men
- don’t know
- according to a separate programme

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<td>42</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>53</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>56</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6.2 Attitudes towards 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, and Latvia and Lithuania abandoned compulsory conscript service.

Respondents were asked to assess whether they think Estonia should waive compulsory conscript service and maintain a professional army only or preserve 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 78% of the population would prefer maintaining the current system based on reserve forces (Figure 39). Switching to a fully professional army and waiving compulsory conscript service is favoured by only 15% of Estonia’s population.

Figure 39. Options preferred for the development of Estonia’s defence concept; comparison of 2006–2019 (%; N = all respondents)

* In surveys conducted in 2011, another wording of the question was used, with the 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 by more than average by respondents of other nationalities (21%), support for the current system is prevalent (Figure 40). Professional defence forces also receive above-average support from the younger groups of respondents; 20% of respondents aged 15–19 and 23% of respondents aged 20–29.
6.3 Attitudes towards professional servicemen

In previous surveys, respondents were asked about the society’s general attitude towards professional servicemen. This question was last asked in March 2018, when 65% of the respondents rated the attitude of the society as very good or generally good and only 1% rated it as bad.

Since October 2018 we use the question: What is your attitude towards professional servicemen?

Like the opinion of the whole society, the respondents’ personal attitude towards professional servicemen is also positive, even much more positive than the society’s assumed general attitude proposed in previous surveys (Figure 41).

Figure 41. Attitudes towards professional servicemen; 2018/2019 (%; N = all respondents)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nationality (10/2019)</th>
<th>Very well</th>
<th>Rather well</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Don’t know</th>
<th>Rather badly</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Estonians</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other nationalities</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 40. Preferred options for developing the Estonian defence concept—comparison between Estonians and other nationalities; October/November 2019 (%; N = all respondents)
6.4 Attitudes towards women’s role in the Defence Forces

Since October 2016, we have asked about the role of women in the Defence Forces: Could women serve in the Defence Forces equally to men in all positions and in all units or should women serve on the home front and in other supporting functions?

Over the years, perceptions of the potential role of women in the Defence Forces are slowly but persistently changing (Figure 42).

**Figure 42. Opinions on the role of women in the Defence Forces; comparison of 2016–2019 (%; N = all respondents)**

- **women should serve in all military units and positions**
  - 10/2019: 49
  - 03/2019: 43
  - 03/2018: 44
  - 10/2016: 50

- **women should serve on the home front and in assisting positions**
  - 10/2019: 48
  - 03/2019: 46
  - 03/2018: 42
  - 10/2016: 44

- **don't know**
  - 10/2019: 10
  - 03/2019: 10
  - 03/2018: 9
  - 10/2016: 9

Similarly to the attitudes towards women’s participation in military service (cf. chapter 6.1.4.), the attitudes of older respondents and respondents of other nationalities are more conservative in this issue (Figure 45).

**Figure 43. Opinions on the role of women in the Defence Forces, comparison between Estonians / other nationalities; October/November 2019 (%; N = all respondents)**

- **women should serve in all military units and positions**
  - ALL: 59
  - Estonians: 50
  - Other nationalities: 59

- **women should serve on the home front and in assisting positions**
  - ALL: 54
  - Estonians: 40
  - Other nationalities: 54

- **don't know**
  - ALL: 13
  - Estonians: 8
  - Other nationalities: 10
7 National Defence Organisations

In this chapter we examine people’s attitudes toward volunteer defence organisations and understanding of the tasks, as well as willingness to join such organisations.

7.1 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 task 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 the military training of its members—these tasks are listed as first by 27% and 24% of the respondents respectively. 11% considered participation in rescue operations or raising defence willingness among the population as the most important, and 9% foreground raising defence willingness among the population. The priorities attributed to the activities of the Defence League have been similar throughout the years.

Permanent readiness for military defence (48%) ranks first in the overall summary of the three tasks; conducting military training of the members of organisation ranks second right behind it (47%), and participation in rescue operations in the event of emergencies and disasters ranks third (38%).

Almost one third of respondents (31%) consider raising defence willingness among the population among the three most important tasks of the Defence League.

One fourth of the respondents consider participating in resolving domestic security crises (26%) and organising the protection of civilians in emergency situations (24%) among the three most important tasks. For 22% of respondents organising recreational activities for young people is considered to be among the three most important tasks.

Participation in military operations outside Estonia was the least popular choice among the tasks of the Defence League (cf Figure 44).
While Estonians mainly consider the Defence League a national defence organisation, 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 (for 46% of respondents of other nationalities) as well as the organised protection of civilians in emergency situations (30%).

The primary task of the Defence League according to Estonians is permanent readiness for military national defence (included by 57% among the Defence League’s three most important tasks). Only in second place (48%) is participation in rescue operations in case of accidents or catastrophes. (Figure 45).
Figure 45. Three main tasks of the Defence League, comparison of Estonian and non-Estonian population; October/November 2019 (%; N = all respondents)

When asked about the respondent’s attitudes towards the voluntary members of the Defence League (similarly to the question about professional servicemen; cf. chapter 6.3), the attitude is mainly positive as well (Figure 46).

Figure 46. Attitude towards voluntary members of the Defence League; Spring/Autumn 2019 (%; N = all respondents)
7.2 Naiskodukaitse

7.2.1 Awareness of Naiskodukaitse

This time the survey once again included questions about Naiskodukaitse. These questions have been included in our survey since March 2017.

Firstly, we asked: Have you heard of the existence of Naiskodukaitse? If the respondents replied in the affirmative, they were asked: How necessary are the activities of Naiskodukaitse for national defence?

Awareness of the existence of Naiskodukaitse is very high among Estonians and very low among respondents of other nationalities (89% and 24%, respectively). Compared to the March 2019 survey, awareness has slightly declined (Figure 47).

Figure 47. Awareness of the existence of Naiskodukaitse; 2017/2019 (%; N = all respondents)

The Estonians who know about Naiskodukaitse share the rather unanimous view that this organisation is necessary: it is considered certainly or rather necessary by 86% of the respondents.

Only a few of the non-Estonian speaking respondents knew about Naiskodukaitse, and among those who were familiar with it, 64% were certainly or rather convinced about the necessity of the organisation. The rest either cannot say (18%) or consider such an organisation unnecessary (18%) (cf. Figure 48).
7.2.2 Tasks of Naiskodukaitse

As with the Defence League, we asked respondents to evaluate the tasks Naiskodukaitse by picking the three most important tasks from a given list (cf Figure 49).

The rather equally selected first options were supporting the activities of the Defence League (13%), raising defence willingness among the population (13%), the inclusion of women and girls in national defence (11%), and organising charity events in support of the defence Forces and the Defence League (11%). Conducting military training was pointed out first by 9%.

Supporting the activities of the Defence League also remained a priority in aggregate of the three choices (34%), followed by participation in rescue work (31%) and involving women and girls in national defence (31%). One quarter of respondents think the three most important tasks of Naiskodukaitse should include organising military education of youth (26%) and raising defence willingness among the population (25%). One fifth consider it important to organise charity events (22%) and preparation for the organised defence of the population (19%).

Figure 48. Assessment of the necessity of Naiskodukaitse; 2017/2019 (%; N = all respondents)
If we compare the results of the current survey with those of previous ones (Figure 50), then compared to 2017, Naiskodukaitse has come to be seen not only as a means to increase inclusion of women and girls in national defence, but also as playing a role in participating in rescue operations and the protection of the population in emergency situations, as well as in organising recreational activities for the youth.
Figure 50. Main tasks of Naiskodukaitse, comparison 2017/2019
(\%; N = all respondents)

- Supporting the activities of the Defence League (catering, medicine, communications, etc.)
- Participation in rescue operations in the event of emergencies and disasters
- Increasing the inclusion of women and girls in national defence
- organisation of the military education of the youth
- Raising defence willingness among the population
- Organising charity events in support of the Defence Forces and the Defence League
- Organised preparation for protecting the civilian population in emergency situations
- Conducting military training
- Creation of broad support for the defence forces in the civil society
- Participation in national crisis management
- Don't know
### 7.3 Exposure to national defence structures

Every survey also establishes how the respondents, their family and friends have been exposed to national defence structures (Figure 51).

**Figure 51. Exposure to national defence structures; October/November 2019** (%; N = all respondents)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Respondent</th>
<th>Family members or friends</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participated in conscript service</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training exercises / Rehearsals / Volunteer Reserve Officers Courses</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regular service in Estonian Defence Forces</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participated in the activities of the Defence League</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participated in Naiskodukaitse (Women’s Voluntary Defence Organisation)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participated in Noored Kotkad (Young Eagles) / Kodutütred (Home Daughters)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Defence Course at school</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>do not have any connections to national defence structures</td>
<td></td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to the most frequent responses, people have been mostly exposed to conscript service (11%), national defence training (7%), participation in reservists' training exercises (4%) or participation in the Defence League (4%).

More than half of the respondents’ family members or friends have undergone conscript service; while 21% of the respondents’ family members have been exposed to the Defence League.

However, three fourths of the respondents have had no exposure to national defence and one third have had no contact even through their family or friends.

4% of respondents (5% of Estonians and men); participate in the activities of the Defence League themselves, 27% of Estonians and 24% of men have been exposed to the Defence League through a family member or friend.

2% of women participate in the activities of Naiskodukaitse.
7.4 Opinions on joining the Defence League and Naiskodukaitse

Four 4% of respondents (5% of Estonians and men); participate in the activities of the Defence League themselves.

The respondents who were not members of the Defence League or related organisations were asked whether they would want to join (Figure 52).

4% of the respondents would certainly join and 15% would probably join if they received a proposal to join the Defence League. Readiness to join the Defence League has been steady over time.

Figure 52. Willingness to join the Defence League; comparison of 2018–2019 (%; N = respondents who are not yet members of the Defence League)
4% of Estonian respondents would certainly be ready to join and 18% would probably be ready, these indicators for non-Estonian respondents are 2% and 10%, respectively.

The Defence League is primarily viewed as an organisation for men, thus, readiness to join is also higher among men (24%). Higher readiness to join is expressed by younger respondents: 34% of those below the age of 20 and one fourth of those between 20 and 49 years of age express this view.

Only 2% of the respondents belong to Naiskodukaitse, 9% of respondents have friends or family members in the organisation. Out of the women who are not connected to Naiskodukaitse, 20% would be certainly or probably ready to join (23% of Estonian and 11% of Russian-speaking respondents) (Figure 53).

**Figure 53. Readiness to join Naiskodukaitse; 2017/2019 (%; N = women who are not connected to Naiskodukaitse)**

Women in the age group of 20–39 are the most optimistic about joining Naiskodukaitse: 30% of them would be ready to join.
8 NATO

The eighth, 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.

8.1 Attitude towards membership in NATO

In fall 2019, Estonian membership in NATO was favoured by 74% of the population. 47% are certainly in favour of and 27% rather in favour of the NATO membership. 15% of Estonian residents are against NATO membership while 10% of the population have no opinion in this matter. Support for membership in NATO has remained stable (Figure 54).

While 90% and even more of the Estonian respondents have been in favour of NATO membership for a long time, support for NATO among the respondents of other nationalities is considerably lower and more volatile, depending significantly on political events in the world and the media coverage thereof (Figure 55).

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 NATO membership supporters among other nationalities had increased to 44% and has remained the same in March 2019. In this fall’s survey the proportion of supporters of NATO among respondents of other nationalities has fallen to 38%. 39% are against NATO membership. Almost a quarter (23%) of non-Estonians do not know what position to take.
Figure 54. Attitudes towards joining NATO / NATO membership; comparison of 2000–2019 (%; N = all respondents)

Figure 55. Proportion of the proponents of joining NATO / NATO membership; comparison of Estonians and non-Estonians 2000–2019 (% of those certainly and rather in favour of NATO; N = all respondents)
If we observe the attitudes towards NATO membership among the groups of the population that belong to other nationalities, it can be concluded that the better a person has integrated and the more proficient they are in Estonian, the more positive their attitude towards NATO membership (Figure 56).

**Figure 56. Attitudes towards NATO membership among different groups of non-Estonians; October/November 2019 (%; N = non-Estonian respondents)**

The lowest support for NATO membership is among those non-Estonians who have little or no knowledge of Estonian, who are older than 40 and who do not have Estonian citizenship. By contrast, half of the respondents who are under 30 years of age and who have a good command of the Estonian language support Estonia’s membership in NATO.
8.2 NATO’s assistance in the event of a potential threat

The majority of the population consider 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.

Respondents were given four options to answer the question: **What is the role of NATO in ensuring Estonia’s security if Estonia is exposed to military threat?** Respondents could pick several answers, since different responses were not mutually exclusive.

Residents’ assessments of NATO’s help in the event of a military threat have been very stable over the recent years. More than half of respondents think that NATO would provide direct military aid in the event of the outbreak of a military conflict, and 40% believe that membership in NATO would be able to prevent a military attack against Estonia completely. One fifth of the respondents found that NATO members would limit their help to political and diplomatic support while 10% thought that NATO would not help at all. Over the past two years, opinions on NATO’s role have been very stable (Figure 57).

**Figure 57. Role of NATO in ensuring Estonia’s security if Estonia is exposed to military threat; 2018/2019 (%)**

Estonian-speaking respondents’ trust in NATO’s support is considerably higher than that of respondents of other nationalities, which originates from the attitude towards membership in the alliance. The two most popular answers were provided by 67% and 47% of Estonians, respectively (Figure 58).
Only 26% (32% a year ago in October) of non-Estonian respondents believe in NATO’s military assistance. 23% of the respondents find that NATO would not help Estonia and 26% believe that NATO would limit its aid to political and diplomatic support.

**Figure 58. Role of NATO in ensuring Estonia’s security if Estonia is exposed to military threat, comparison of Estonians and non-Estonians; October/November 2019 (%)**

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 two questions:

**Whether NATO has taken sufficient measures to ensure the security of Estonia in today’s security situation** (Figure 59) and **how they perceive the presence of NATO allied forces in Estonia** (Figure 60).

The assessments provided to steps taken by NATO for ensuring security in Estonia have been predominantly positive throughout all the surveys. 67% consider NATO’s activities sufficient or generally so; 8% consider it rather or completely insufficient.

78% of Estonians consider NATO’s activity sufficient. 42% of respondents of other nationalities give a positive assessment to NATO’s activities, but a similar amount, 43% of respondents answered “don’t know”.

**8.3 Assessments to the actions of NATO**
Figure 59. Has NATO taken sufficient measures to ensure the security of Estonia? Comparison of 2018–2019 (%; N = all respondents)

The general attitude towards NATO’s presence in Estonia is also overwhelmingly positive. However, there is a clear divergence of opinions among respondents of other nationalities. While 90% of Estonians are in favour of the presence of NATO in Estonia, only 37% of non-Estonian respondents agree. 45% on non-Estonians disapprove of NATO’s presence (Figure 60).

Figure 60. What is your attitude towards the presence of NATO allied forces in Estonia? Comparison of 2018–2019 (%; N = all respondents)

This attitude is directly related to the attitude towards NATO membership in general—those who support NATO membership are also in favour of the presence of NATO units in Estonia, but those who are against NATO membership do not like presence of the allied forces either.
8.4 Assessments on the effect of the NATO battle group stationed in Estonia

In October 2017 a new question was added to the survey: 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 78% of Estonians find that the NATO battle group has made Estonia more secure, only 30% of non-Estonians agree with that; the majority of non-Estonian respondents do not see that it has had an effect on Estonia’s security (39%) (Figure 61).

Figure 61. What effect does the stationing of NATO battle group troops have on Estonia’s security? Comparison of 2018–2019 (%; N = all respondents)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2019/10</th>
<th>2019/03</th>
<th>2018/10</th>
<th>2018/03</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>More secure</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less secure</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nationality (10/2019)</th>
<th>2018/10</th>
<th>2018/03</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Estonian</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
7.5 Assessment of NATO battlegroup troops

Beginning in October 2017 we have asked respondents to choose four adjectives from a provided list which in their view best characterise the NATO battlegroup troops stationed in Estonia (Figure 62).

Figure 62. Which, if any, of the following words or phrases would you choose in general to describe NATO battlegroup troops currently stationed in Estonia? October 2017/2019 (%; N = all respondents)

Mostly positive words are used to describe troops in the NATO battlegroup; most frequent is the word “professional”.

The following characterisations in order of frequency are “friendly”, “well-intentioned”, “polite”, whereas the frequency of all of these words has arisen over
the years. Certainly, the active participation of NATO battlegroups in public events has contributed to this.

Only 6% consider the allied battlegroup soldiers to be indifferent toward Estonia; only 4% consider them untrustworthy. The frequency or the word “hidden away” has risen from 7% to 9%.

More negative characterisations are given by respondents of other nationalities (cf Figure 63).

**Figure 63. Which, if any, of the following words or phrases would you choose in general to describe NATO battlegroup troops currently stationed in Estonia? Comparison of Estonians and non-Estonians; October/November 2019 (%; N = all respondents)**

- **Professional**: 28% (Estonians), 12% (Other nationalities)
- **Friendly**: 12% (Estonians), 12% (Other nationalities)
- **Well intentioned**: 31% (Estonians), 12% (Other nationalities)
- **Polite**: 28% (Estonians), 12% (Other nationalities)
- **Capable**: 12% (Estonians), 5% (Other nationalities)
- **Committed**: 16% (Estonians), 12% (Other nationalities)
- **Well informed about Estonia**: 13% (Estonians), 7% (Other nationalities)
- **Outgoing**: 12% (Estonians), 5% (Other nationalities)
- **Hidden away**: 9% (Estonians), 8% (Other nationalities)
- **Ignorant about Estonia**: 14% (Estonians), 3% (Other nationalities)
- **Disrespectful**: 12% (Estonians), 5% (Other nationalities)
- **Not to be trusted**: 9% (Estonians), 1% (Other nationalities)
- **Don’t know**: 42% (Estonians), 42% (Other nationalities)
9 International military operations

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

9.1 Attitude towards participation in international operations

Positive attitudes toward Estonia’s participation in international military operations have been consistently prevalent: 66% of the population of Estonia believe that the Estonian Defence Forces’ units should, within their capabilities, participate in international military operations; 26% of those respondents feel that the Defence Forces should certainly participate in operations. 25% of the respondents think that the Defence Forces should probably or certainly not participate in these operations. Support for these missions has continued at the same level for a long time (Figure 64).

Figure 64. Should Estonian units participate in international military operations? Spring/Autumn 2019 (%; N = all respondents)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>0%</th>
<th>20%</th>
<th>40%</th>
<th>60%</th>
<th>80%</th>
<th>100%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2019/10</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019/03</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NATIONALITY</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estonian</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(10/2019)</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(03/2019)</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (10/2019)</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>19</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (03/2019)</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>24</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

76% of Estonians are in favour of participating in international operations, 45% of non-Estonians feel the same way, which, compared to spring this year is 5% and compared to October of last year 12 percentage points less.
9.2 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 (Figure 65).

Figure 65. The most important reasons why Estonia should participate in international military operations; October/November 2019 (%; N = all respondents)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Sum of three answers</th>
<th>First</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gives our soldiers necessary real combat experience</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensures NATO's assistance in the event of potential threats to Estonia</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protects people in crisis regions</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contributes to ensuring peace in the world</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gives Estonia an opportunity to have say in world politics</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helps to prevent the spread of conflicts into Estonia</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation in foreign missions is the responsibility of every democratic country</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helps to spread democratic values in the world</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nothing can justify participation</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The two most important reasons named the most frequently were that participation in operations provides our soldiers real combat experience (32%) and ensures NATO’s assistance in the event of a potential threat to Estonia (29%). These motives were also first and second in aggregate of the three reasons.

According to respondents, the three next arguments in the order of importance as to why there should be participation in international missions are protecting people in crisis regions (31% list this among the three most important reasons), contributing to ensuring peace in the world (28%), and Estonia taking the opportunity to have a say in world politics (25%).
As the support of respondents from other nationalities is less than that among Estonians, fewer reasons are given for participation in the missions. 22% of non-Estonians think nothing justifies the participation of Estonian servicemen in international operations. Similarly to Estonians, they consider only the humanitarian motive: ensuring world peace and protecting people in crisis regions (Figure 66).

**Figure 66. The most important reasons why Estonia should participate in international military operations; October/November 2019**

(sum of three reasons %; N = all respondents)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Estonians</th>
<th>Others</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gives our soldiers necessary real combat experience</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensures NATO's assistance in the event of potential threats to Estonia</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protects people in crisis regions</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contributes to ensuring peace in the world</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gives Estonia an opportunity to have say in world politics</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helps to prevent the spread of conflicts into Estonia</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation in foreign missions is the responsibility of every democratic country</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helps to spread democratic values in the world</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nothing can justify participation</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Defence Forces gaining combat experience is the most important for both Estonian and non-Estonian respondents (67% and 50%, respectively) in aggregate of the three choices, although the latter group mentioned it less frequently.

For Estonians, ensuring NATO’s assistance (55%) ranks second—this is a concept that the respondents of other nationalities are rather sceptical about (see chapter 8.2). Thus, the importance of that answer among non-Estonians is only at 23%.

The second reason of importance for non-Estonians is the protection of people in crisis regions (31%). The same proportion of Estonian respondents consider this reason among the three most important ones, but in Estonians’ responses 31% favour helping to ensure peace in the world.
9.3 Attitudes towards participation in NATO, EU and UN operations

Respondents were asked to assess to what extent they support Estonia’s participation in missions organised in the framework of cooperation between NATO, EU, UN and allied nations.

Participation in different missions is supported more or less equally: under the aegis of UN peacekeeping forces and the framework of the cooperation of allied nations (69% for both); 68% in missions with NATO forces, and 66% with European Union organisations (Figure 67).

While the majority of Estonians support participation in all missions, especially those of NATO (83%), support for various operations is lower among respondents of other nationalities—it is especially low for participation in NATO operations (39%). However, other missions are supported by at least half of people of other nationalities.

Figure 67. Attitudes towards the units of the Estonian Defence Forces participating in international operations; October/November 2019 (%; N = all respondents)
9.4 Opinion on the defence co-operation of the European Union

In previous surveys we were curious about how public opinion would react to the proposal of establishing a common border service and joint armed forces for the European Union. Since October 2018 we have presented the following question:

*What is your stance in terms of European Union increasing defence co-operation among its Member States?*

Increasing defence co-operation between EU Member States is supported by 75% of the respondents: 80% of Estonians and 63% of respondents of other nationalities (Figure 68). These levels have not changed significantly over the past year either.

Figure 68. Attitude toward increasing defence co-operation between EU Member States. Spring/Autumn 2019 (%; N = all respondents)
10 Veteran policy

10.1 Primary associations with the word “veteran”

Questions about what associations people have with the word ‘veteran’ have been posed in our studies in different versions, giving respondents different options for their answers.

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 question remained in the same form until March 2016 and the responses showed that more than half of the population (55%) associated the word “veteran” primarily with World War II. 17% of all respondents associated the term with the 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 describe the participants of any war.

As a result, the respective option (“everyone who has fought for Estonia in different wars”) was added to the choices 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.

However, in the context of veteran policy, the most important aspect is to know, first and foremost, how many people associate the term “veteran” with the foreign operations of the Estonian Defence Forces. Therefore, we returned to the former wording of the question in the latest surveys and excluded the answer about participants in all wars and the Estonian War of Independence (we are no longer able to pay tribute to those involved in this war). By adding the option “people with long time service records in the Estonian Defence Forces” we have received the following distribution of answers in the last two surveys (Figure 69).


Figure 69. What is your primary association with the word “veteran” out of the three following definitions? 2018/2019 (%; N = all respondents)

World War II remains the clear leader with a 44% association, but its proportion is gradually declining. The proportion of respondents who associate the term with people who have participated in missions of the Estonian Defence Forces is slowly increasing. 27% of respondents define the idea of veteran in correlation with official policy on veterans.

Among Estonians, the term “veteran” has become equally associated with those who have participated in the Estonian Defence Forces' missions and with veterans of the Second World War (both 33%). However, among the respondents of other nationalities, World War II is still by far the first place with 67%.

Figure 70. What is your primary association with the word “veteran” out of the three following definitions? Estonians/Other nationalities; October/November 2019 (%; N = kõik vastajad)
11 National defence instruction in schools

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

Since fall 2014, the question has stated: **Should it be possible to get national defence instruction in all educational institutions providing secondary education?**

83% of the respondents consider the opportunity to receive national defence instruction certainly or probably necessary (Figure 71). Estonian and non-Estonian respondents’ support to national defence instruction differs by almost 20%, yet favourable attitudes clearly dominate the answers of both respondent groups (89% for Estonians and 70% for non-Estonians).

**Figure 71. Attitude towards the necessity of national defence instruction in all educational institutions providing secondary education; Spring/Autumn 2019 (%)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NATIONALITY (10/2019)</th>
<th>2019/10</th>
<th>2019/03</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Estonian</strong></td>
<td>43</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other</strong></td>
<td>32</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AGE (10/2019)</th>
<th>2019/10</th>
<th>2019/03</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15 - 19</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 - 29</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 - 39</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40 - 49</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50 - 59</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60 +</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
12 Media consumption

The questionnaire included a large section on media consumption with the main purpose of observing how the population’s attitudes on national defence are influenced by their exposure to different media channels. As we all know, public opinion is largely formed in the sphere of influence created by the mass media.

12.1 Engagement with information channels

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

The most popular news portals were Delfi and postimees.ee, both for Estonian and Russian speaking users. Estonian news portals are used significantly more by Estonians than non-Estonians. The situation is the reverse for Russian news portals (Figure 72).
Figure 72. News portal and online newspaper visits; October/November 2019 (%; N = all respondents)
Among direct communication applications, respondents could choose between Skype, Messenger, Snapchat, WhatsApp, Telegram.
Figure 74. Engagement with television channels; October/November 2019 (%; N = all respondents)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Channel Type</th>
<th>ALL</th>
<th>Estonians</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>5-7 days per week</th>
<th>3-4 days</th>
<th>2 days or less</th>
<th>not at all</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>ETV broadcast in Estonian</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ALL</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estonians</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>14</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ETV broadcast in Russian</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ALL</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>23</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estonians</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>24</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Kanal 2</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ALL</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estonians</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TV3</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ALL</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estonians</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3+</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ALL</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estonians</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pervõi Baltiiski Kanal</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ALL</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>14</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estonians</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Russian TV-channels</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ALL</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>13</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estonians</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TV of other countries</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ALL</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>22</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estonians</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>23</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Legend: 5-7 days per week, 3-4 days, 2 days or less, not at all
Russian speakers most frequently view Russian television channels and Pervyi Baltiiski Kanal (PBK). Nevertheless, the Estonian Broadcasting Russian-language channel ETV+ has established contact with more than half of the Russian-speaking population.

The following figure shows the attitudes of Russian-speaking respondents towards Estonia’s membership in NATO depending on their exposure to different TV channels (Figure 75).

**Figure 75. Attitudes towards Estonia’s membership in NATO depending on exposure to TV-channels; October/November 2019**

(%; N = Russian-speaking respondents)

We see that the Russian-speaking respondents who watch Estonian-language programs on ETV every day have a more favourable attitude towards Estonia’s NATO membership than those who view Russian TV channels or the programs on Pervyi Baltiiski Kanal daily. Viewing or not viewing Estonian Public Broadcasting’s Russian language channel ETV+ does not influence attitudes toward NATO.
Figure 76. Newspaper readership on the basis of the six most recent issues; October/November 2019 (%; N = Estonian-speaking respondents)

Figure 77. Newspaper readership on the basis of the six most recent issues; October/November 2019 (%; N = Russian-speaking respondents)
12.2 Importance of information channels

To assess the impact of different print and web channels, TV and radio stations and social media channels have on people’s attitudes, an additional typological analysis would be required. In this survey, we asked the respondents to assess which information channels were important to them in obtaining information related to national defence (Figure 78).

**Figure 78. How important is this channel with regard to information on national defence? October/November 2019**(%; N = all respondents)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Channel</th>
<th>Very important</th>
<th>Rather important</th>
<th>Don’t know</th>
<th>Rather not important</th>
<th>Not important at all</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Television</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radio</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct communication with other people</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>News portals</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspapers</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social media</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Web-pages</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electronic newsletters</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Print ads</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Street advertisements</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The most important ones are, predictably, were television and radio; while more than half of the respondents also deem news portals and newspapers very or rather important. However, direct communication with other people fits right in between these two.

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