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# Public Opinion and National Defence

Report to the Ministry of Defence

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## SUMMARY

- In March 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 1,209 residents of Estonia aged 15+ were interviewed. This was already the 45<sup>th</sup> survey in monitoring public opinion as of the year 2000.
- Assessments on changes that have taken place in Estonian life have improved steadily since 2015 as well as compared to the previous survey. 48% of respondents believe that life in Estonia has improved while 13% think that the situation has worsened. While in October 2018 assessments to changes in Estonian life by people of other nationalities improved significantly, this time the increase was owing to the more positive answers of Estonians—half of Estonians find that life in Estonia has improved. 43% of respondents from other nationalities agree.
- The proportion of people who feel proud and happy over living in Estonia very often or often enough has slightly declined compared to the previous survey. Perhaps the high patriotism of 2018 was extraordinary and related to Estonia's centenary celebrations. The share of respondents who feel proud and happy over living in Estonia very often or often was 56%, which is similar to the level at the end of 2017. The proportion was 63% among Estonians and 42% among non-Estonians.
- Of the 12 institutions the reliability of which the respondents were asked to assess, the Rescue Services rank the highest in terms of trustworthiness (96% trusts them completely or rather trusts them). They are followed by the Police and Boarder Guard (87%), the Defence Forces (78%), the Defence League (73%), local government (69%) and the President of the Republic (64%).

53% had confidence in the prime minister, 52% the government and 50% in the parliament (*Riigikogu*). The slight decline in the reliability of political institutions is probably due to the post-election period.

NATO and the European Union are trusted by 63% and 62%, respectively. The difference in the attitudes towards NATO held by Estonians and non-Estonians is still vast: NATO is trusted by 77% of Estonians and only 35% of respondents of other nationalities. The situation is similar regarding the Defence Forces (trusted by 90% and 54%, respectively) and the Defence League (86% 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. As of autumn 2017 when the increase of instability was assumed by 66% of the respondents, the sense of threat has started to subside—in March 2018, an increase in insecurity was predicted by 61%, in October by 52% and in this survey by 58% of the respondents. 10% of the respondents think that the world will become more secure in the coming decade and 23% believe that the situation will remain the same. Of course, the results of this survey also indicate that a large part of the public still feels the world is unstable.
- Respondents perceive the security situation in Estonia to be somewhat more positive than that of the world in general: 28% of respondents believe that in 10 years, the residents of Estonia will be living in more secure conditions than they do now; only 20% predict that the situation will grow more unsafe and 37% 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 could have been 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.

Cyber-attacks are considered to be the most important with 54% of respondents seeing them as certainly threatening and 35% as threatening to some extent. The second most important threat is considered to be the actions of terror organisations (51% rated these as certainly threatening and 38% as threatening to some extent). The migration of refugees and asylum seekers to Europe is also seen as a threat to world peace (50% and 39%, respectively), while the spread of misinformation and fake news is considered the fourth most dangerous phenomenon (45% and 40%, respectively).

Worldwide economic crisis (44% and 43%) and global climate change (42% and 42%) occupy the fifth and sixth place in the ranking of threats. The percentage of respondents who consider global climate change certainly threatening has increased by 10%.

Although Russia's attempts to restore its authority in the neighbouring countries were considered certainly threatening by more respondents (39%), together with the answer "to some extent" (31%), the Russian threat has retreated to the end of the ranking. Perceptions of the Russian threat are very different for Estonians and respondents of other nationalities. While for Estonians, Russia is still ranked second in terms of threats (52% answered "this certainly" to this question), for non-Estonians, Russia is ranked last among 15 potential threats (11%).

- 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: 75% 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 71% of the respondents) ranks second. 62% 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 54% 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 or limited 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—more than half of Estonians (55%) found that military threats to Estonia are talked and written about just enough. Russian-speaking respondents think that this topic is covered too much (45%). 12% of respondents think that military threats are not discussed enough.
- NATO membership continues to be Estonia's main security guarantee according to public opinion (55% mention it as one of the three most important factors). The defence willingness of residents, which is included in the survey since October 2018, rose to 2<sup>nd</sup> place with 38%. The development of Estonia's independent defence capability holds 3<sup>rd</sup> place with 30%.  
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 10% 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. Estonian-speaking respondents consider armed resistance more necessary than non-Estonians, but the gap has decreased. Resistance is deemed certainly necessary by 83% of Estonian-speaking and 73% of non-Estonian respondents, yet only 10% of the latter do not consider resistance necessary.
- 58% of the population would be willing to participate in defence activities to the best of their abilities and skills: this includes 64% of Estonians and 46% of the Russian-speaking respondents (50% of Russian-speaking citizens of Estonia). 73% of male citizens are ready to participate in national defence.

- In a situation where Estonia is under attack, every fifth person would consider leaving Estonia. Women (23% certainly or probably) and younger people are the most likely to leave Estonia—33% of people under 20 years of age, 42% of people between 20 and 29 and 31% of people between 30 and 39 would want to leave. 22% of non-Estonians and 19% Estonians 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 such an event, while more than two thirds are rather not or certainly not informed.
- In their own words, people would like to have more information on how the public would be informed in case of a threat (41%), how to act in a conflict area as a civilian (37%), how evacuation would be organised (35%), and how to solve first priority domestic and household matters (34%). Male respondents also show slightly greater than average interest in questions related to mobilisation and their responsibilities regarding participation in national defence.
- 53% 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 31%. Belief in the defensibility of Estonia is higher among Estonians (59%) and lower among respondents of other nationalities (42%).
- 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 (48%). 24% of the population favour increasing defence expenditures, and 20% support 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. This time it was 69%. Estonians have a more positive attitude towards the development of national defence compared to non-Estonians (77% and 53% 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 March 2019, 58% of the respondents provided a positive and 24% a negative assessment to the security of the national border.
- For the second time, the survey included the topic of the security of Estonia's e-state digital services and information systems. Perhaps because cyber threats are viewed as the most likely to occur, the assessment on the security of this field is also the least positive: 53% of respondents think that the digital services

and information systems of our e-state are very or rather secure, while 22% consider them poorly protected.

- People in Estonia have had very favouring attitudes towards conscript service for young men throughout the survey period. This is evident in the current survey as well: 92% of respondents believe that young men need to undergo conscript service, while 62% find it certainly necessary.
- The majority of the respondents also think that young men with minor health disorders should undergo conscript service. 10% believe that such young men should certainly undergo conscript service without alterations, while 63% think 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—22% condemn such behaviour and 43% consider it negative. The younger age groups express higher than average tolerance towards evading conscript service: more than 40% of people under 30 years of age have an understanding or approving stance towards evasion.
- 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 16% 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 66% of non-Estonian respondents agree. 26% 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 52% of the respondents who approve of conscript service for women, while 43% approve of women undergoing conscript service under the same conditions as young men. Compared to October, the share of respondents who think women should receive special treatment has decreased.

- More than 80% of the population prefer maintaining the current concept of national defence based on professional defence forces together with reserve forces consisting of those who have undergone conscript service. 11% support abandoning compulsory conscript service and switching to a fully professional army only.
- Public opinion on the potential role of women in the Defence Forces is slowly changing. 49% of respondents find that women could serve equally to men in all positions and in all units, 42% 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: 56% of non-Estonians see women rather on the home front and in other supporting functions, 58% of Estonians, however, find that women could serve equally with men.
- 37% of the population have a very positive and 41% a rather positive attitude towards professional servicemen. Attitude towards voluntary members of the Defence League is also mostly positive: 37% of respondents feel very positive and 33% rather positive about them. There is practically no negative attitude, but a fifth of the respondents expressed a neutral attitude.
- According to the population of Estonia, the main tasks of the Defence League are ensuring permanent readiness for national defence and conducting military training—these rank first according to 25% and 26% of the respondents, respectively. In aggregate of the three choices, these two tasks remain the most important (47% and 40%, respectively), but besides military training, participating in rescue activities in the event of accidents or disasters (39%) is as important.

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.

- This time the survey included questions about Naiskodukaitse (Women's voluntary defence organisation), which were last included in the survey in March 2017.

Awareness of the existence of Naiskodukaitse is very high among Estonians and very low among respondents of other nationalities (91% and 29%, respectively).

Those who know about Naiskodukaitse share a rather unanimous view that this organisation is necessary: 84% 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 (14%), increasing the inclusion of women and girls in national defence (12%), raising the defence willingness of the population (12%) and organising charity events in support of the Defence Forces and the Defence League (11%) with equal frequency.

Supporting the activities of the Defence League also remains a priority in aggregate of the three choices (38%), followed by participation in rescue work (29%), involving women and girls in national defence (28%) and organising youth leisure activities (27%).

- 4% of the respondents participate in the activities of the Defence League, 23% 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 1% of the respondents belong to Naiskodukaitse, 9% of them are connected to this organisation through friends or family members. Of the women who are not involved in Naiskodukaitse, 18% would certainly or probably be prepared to join.
- Attitudes towards Estonia's membership in NATO continue to be positive: 75% of the population support it. 90% of Estonians and 44% of respondents of other nationalities support NATO membership. The better a person has integrated into Estonian society and the more fluent they are in Estonian, the more positive their attitude towards NATO membership.
- The respondents were given a choice between two options for the question of what kind of aid Estonia could expect from NATO in the event of a military threat. 52% of the respondents found that NATO would provide direct military aid in the event of a conflict while 41% thought that NATO membership would help Estonia to avoid a military attack entirely. 19% of the respondents thought NATO members would limit their help to political and diplomatic support while 12% believed the alliance would not help Estonia in any way.
- The feeling of security towards NATO's aid is supported by the steps that have already been taken by the alliance to ensure Estonia's security and which are supported by the general population: 67% of the respondents (77% of Estonians) find that NATO has already done enough to ensure Estonia's security and 74% of the population (91% of Estonians but only 37% of non-Estonian respondents) favour the presence of NATO's allied forces in Estonia.

- 77% 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 (45%) do not see NATO's presence as having an effect on Estonia's security, and 27% feel more secure.
- 64% 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 (72% and 50%, respectively).
- Participation in international military operations is considered necessary primarily because it provides our soldiers with necessary real combat experience (mentioned by 58% as one of three reasons) and guarantees NATO's assistance to Estonia in the event of potential threats (44%).
- More than two thirds of the respondents support Estonia's involvement in missions conducted under the aegis of NATO, the European Union, and UN, and in missions based on 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 (58% support it completely or rather support it). Missions carried out in co-operation with allied countries are also supported by 58% and EU missions by 50%. Support for NATO missions is even lower than 50% (at 43%).
- 73% of the respondents support increasing defence co-operation between EU Member States: this includes 78% of Estonians and 61% of non-Estonians.
- The word "veteran" is strongly associated with the image of World War II in the Russian-speaking opinion space—69% of non-Estonians see veterans as people who took part in World War II. 34% of Estonians (46% of all respondents) consider participants of World War II veterans. 39% of Estonian-speaking respondents, a slight majority, (14% of non-Estonians) have adopted the position that veterans are people who have participated in missions of the Estonian Defence Forces.
- Public support for national defence instruction is comparable to that of compulsory conscription service for young men—it has remained very high and stable throughout all surveys. 82% 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 and Russian-speaking respondents.

- The most important channels for obtaining information on matters of national defence are, predictably, television (very or rather important for 83% of the respondents) and radio (75%); more than half of the respondents also deem news portals (64%) and newspapers (57%) very or rather important. Direct communication with other people still fits in between the mentioned channels (70%).

46–47% of respondents from other nationalities watch Russian TV channels or PBK daily, while only 21% watch ETV+, the Russian channel of Estonian Public Broadcasting. This leads to the isolation of information spaces, which also offer various insights into national defence issues.

## BACKGROUND OF THE SURVEY

This report has been prepared on the basis of the results of the Omnibus survey carried out by Turu-uuringute AS from 5 till 25 March 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;
- Defence willingness among the population and estimated behaviour in the event of potential threats endangering Estonia
- Attitudes towards NATO and its role in ensuring Estonian security
- Attitudes toward the presence of NATO allied forces in Estonia and opinions of the allied troops;
- Attitudes both towards compulsory conscript service for men and voluntary conscript service for women;
- Attitudes towards the Defence League and understanding its tasks;
- Attitudes towards Naiskodukaitse and understanding its tasks;
- Attitudes in connection with Estonia's participation in international military operations;
- Attitudes towards initial national defence instruction in schools.
- Notions on veteran policy.

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

## Sample

The survey was carried out in the Omnibus 1000 environment. Omnibus 1000 is a regularly held survey (following a specific schedule), whose sample comprises of the citizens of the Republic of Estonia with the age above 15, which totals 1,100,881 people (Statistics Estonia, 01.01.2018).

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

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

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

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

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

**Table 1 Sampling error limitations**

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

## Survey

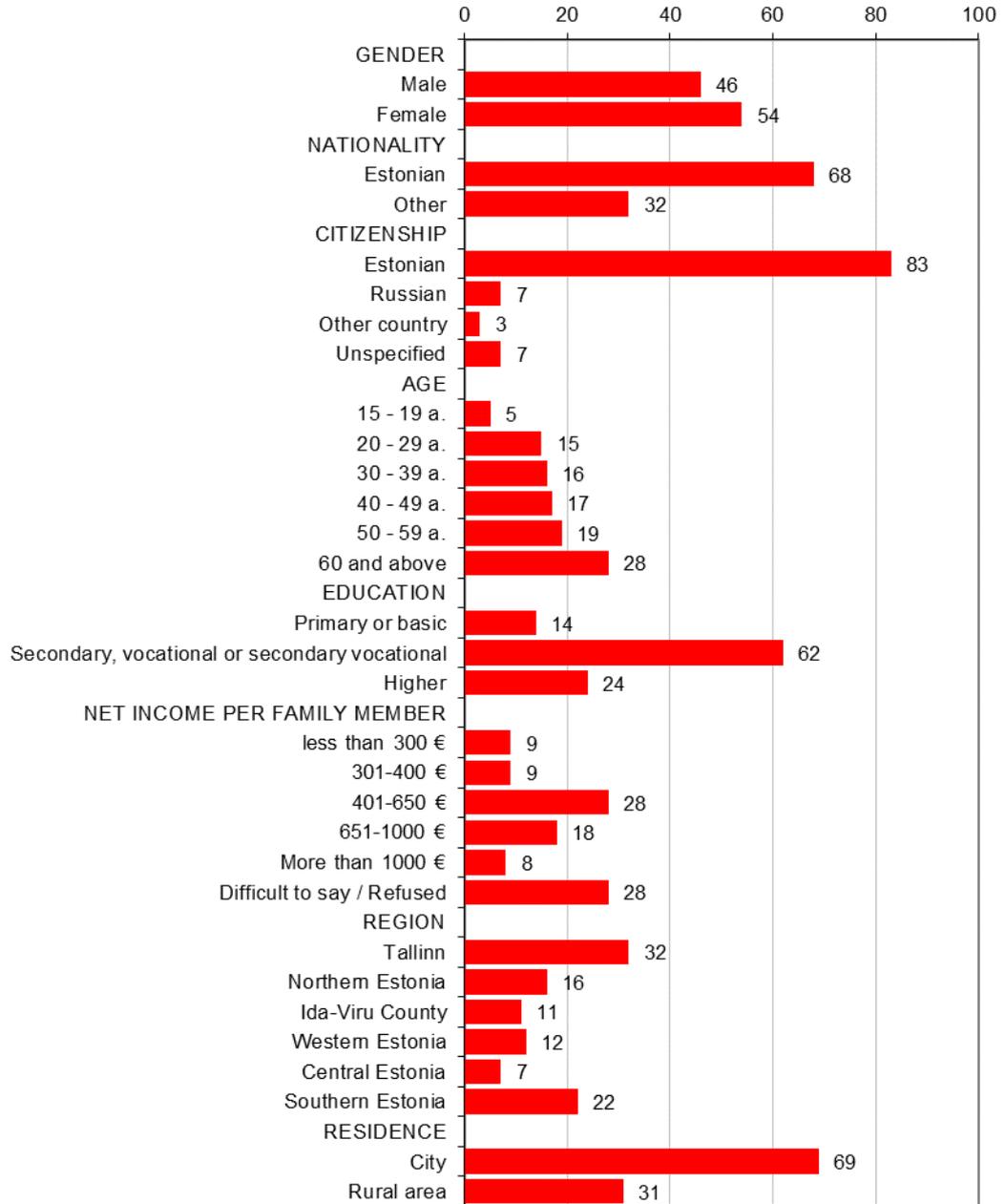
The survey method was personal interview, conducted on tablet computers in either Estonian or Russian, depending on the respondent's preference. A total of 65 pollers who had been given special training by Turu-uuringute AS participated in carrying out the survey. A total of 1,209 interviews were performed in 101 different sampling points. The social and demographic profile of the respondents has been provided in Figure 1.

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

**Table 2 Results of the polling**

Reasons for not carrying out the interview	Total
There are no target group persons in the family	552
Nobody is at home	2054
Target group person is not at home	97
Contact was denied	639
Target group person refused to give the interview	758
Other reasons for not performing the interview	118
Not a dwelling or address inaccessible	118
Summary	
Total addresses	5545
Repeated visits	1196
Correctly filled in questionnaires	1209

**Figure 1. Respondents' social and demographic profile, %, n=1209**



## Performers

The persons responsible for various stages of the survey are:

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

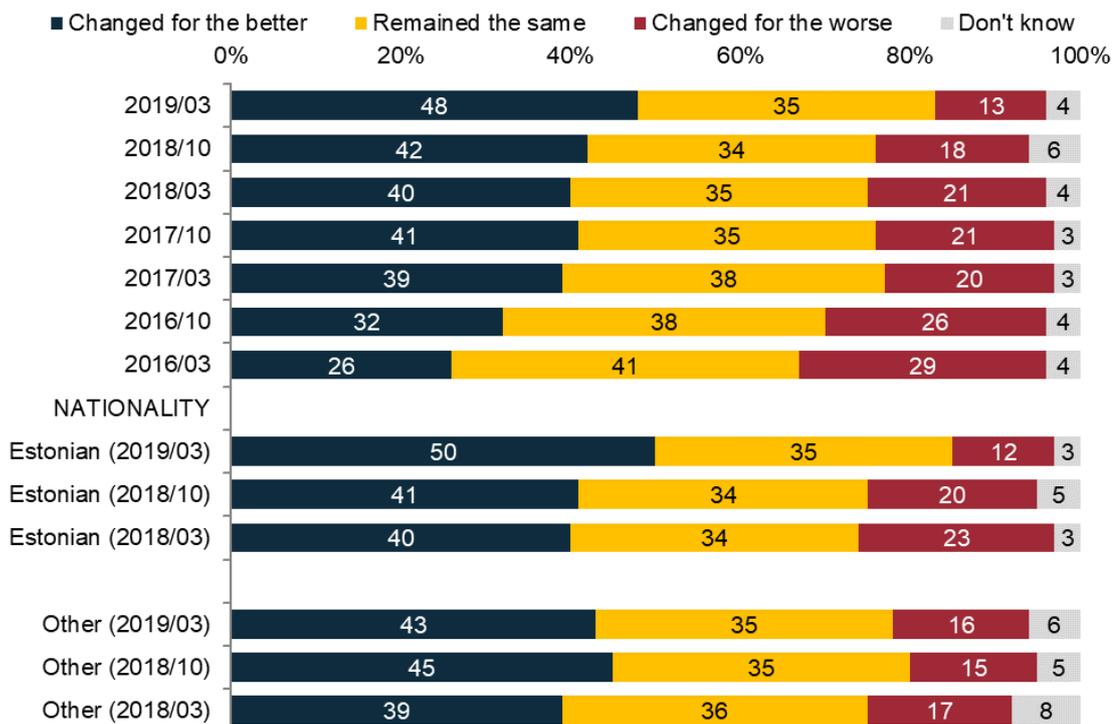
## 1 General attitudes towards life in Estonia and pride in Estonia

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, they 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?**

The assessments given to changes that have taken place in Estonian life have become steadily more positive from 2015 onwards. 48% of respondents believe that life in Estonia has improved while 13% think that the situation has worsened (Figure 2). While the share of positive answers given by Estonians has increased since October 2018, the assessments provided by respondents of other nationalities, which improved significantly last year, have remained at the same level.

**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: 57% perceive positive changes. 47% of people who have secondary or secondary specialized education agree, while 38% of those who do not have secondary education share this view.

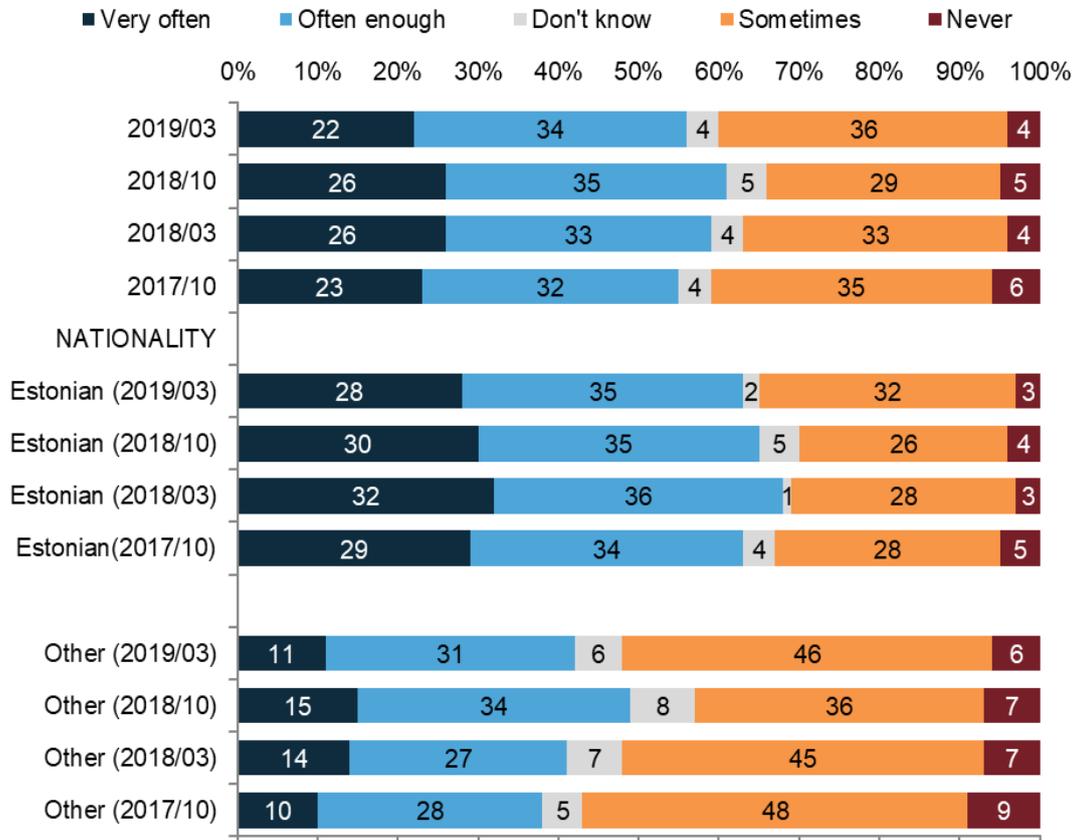
Assessments are naturally influenced by the respondent's economic situation: in the income group of less than 300 euros per household member per month, 44% of the respondents perceive positive changes; within the income bracket of 301–400 euros per household member per month, positive changes are felt by 40% of people. Positive changes are also perceived by 50% of those whose income is 401–650 euros, and 52% of people whose monthly income per household member exceeds 650 euros. It is worth noting that the evaluations on Estonia's development by respondents with lower incomes have become more positive, which may be related to the impact the new income tax calculation procedure has on low-income respondents.

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 this year, the share of such respondents has decreased to 56%.

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 has decreased to 42% again this March. While last year's surge of patriotism could have been influenced by Estonia's centenary celebrations, in March this year, the decrease could be attributed to disappointment in the results of the *Riigikogu* elections ([Figure 3](#)).

**Figure 3. Pride and happiness over living in the Republic of Estonia; comparison of 2017–2019 (%; N = all respondents)**



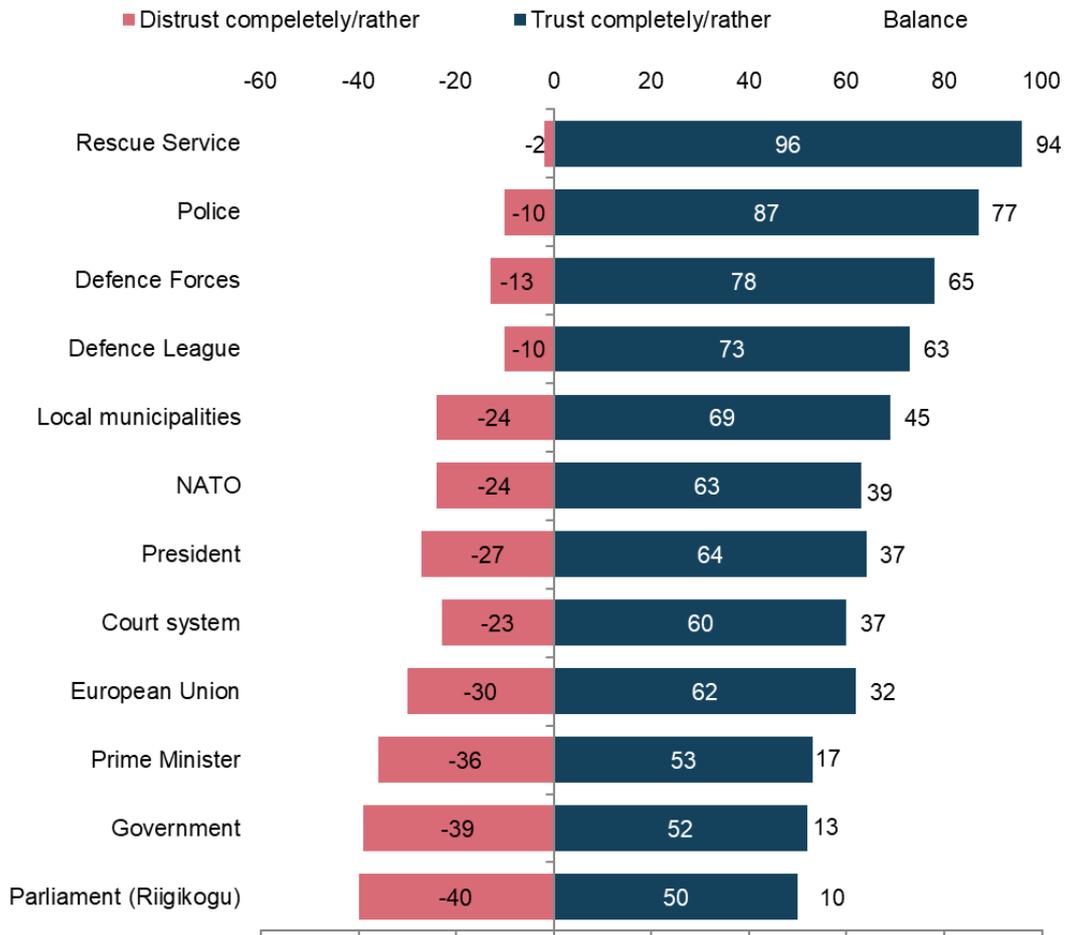
## 2 Confidence in institutions

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 completely distrust. 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 (87%), Defence Forces (78%), Defence League (73%), local government (69%) and the President of the Republic (64%) (Figure 4).

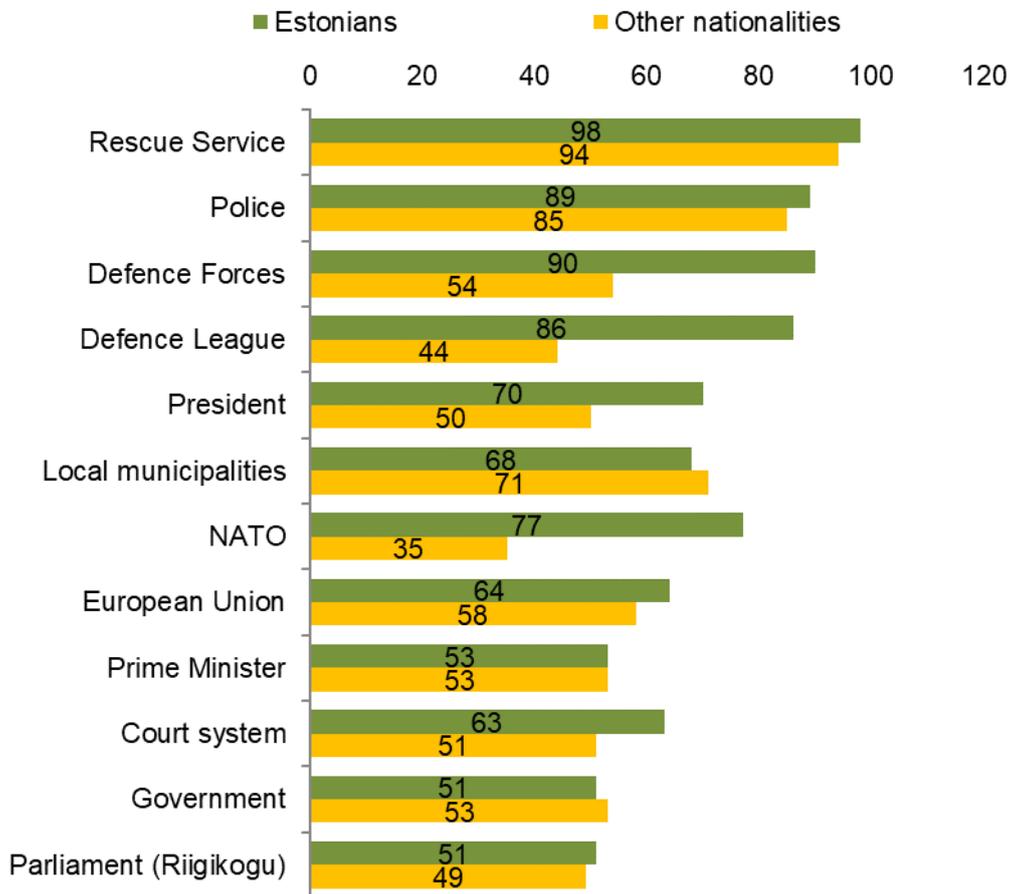
**Figure 4. Confidence in institutions in March 2019 (%)** (N = all respondents)



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) for the *Riigikogu* and government has been quite high given the post-election period: the *Riigikogu*, government and prime minister are trusted by more than half of the population.

International institutions NATO and the European Union are equally trusted by 63–64% of respondents, but their credibility varies greatly between Estonians and respondents of other nationalities. While the credibility of the European Union is only slightly different among Estonians and the respondents of other nationalities, the proportion of non-Estonians who trust NATO is twice as low as that of Estonians (Figure 5).

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



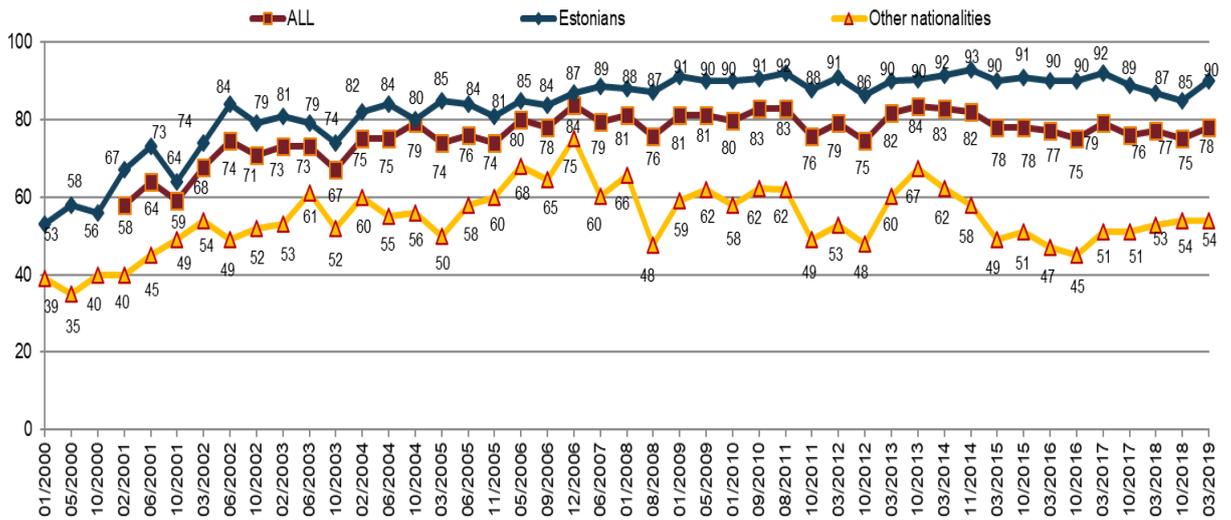
The confidence of Estonians and other nationalities in the Rescue Services, the Police and Border Guard, the government and *Riigikogu* is about equal, but in the case of the Defence Forces and the Defence League, the differences are great, as we have also seen with the assessments on NATO's credibility. Respondents of other nationalities also had 20% less confidence in the President of the Republic compared to Estonians.

## 2.2 Confidence in defence structures

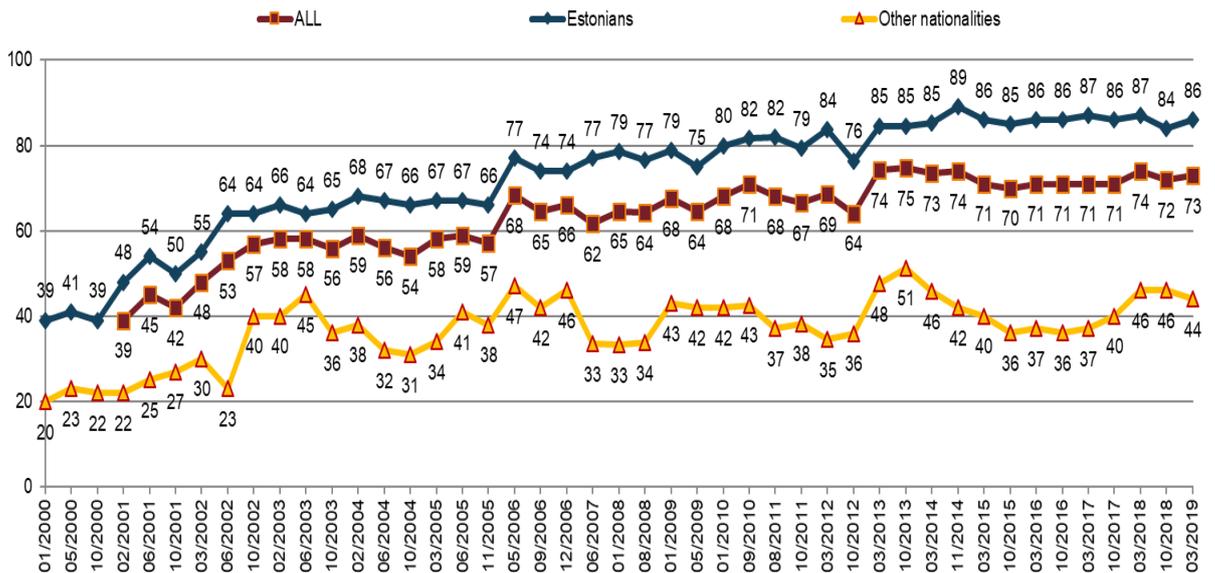
The Defence Forces, which holds 3<sup>rd</sup> place in the trustworthiness ranking after the Rescue Services and the Police and Border Guard, was trusted by 78% of the population of Estonia as at March 2019. The difference in the assessments regarding the Defence Forces of Estonian- and Russian-speaking respondents is still very large—it is trusted by 90% of Estonians and 54% of non-Estonians ([Figure 6](#)).

The Defence League is placed among the most trustworthy institutions right after the Defence Forces—as at March 2019, 73% of Estonian residents, i.e., 86% of Estonians and 44% of non-Estonians trusted the Defence League. (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.

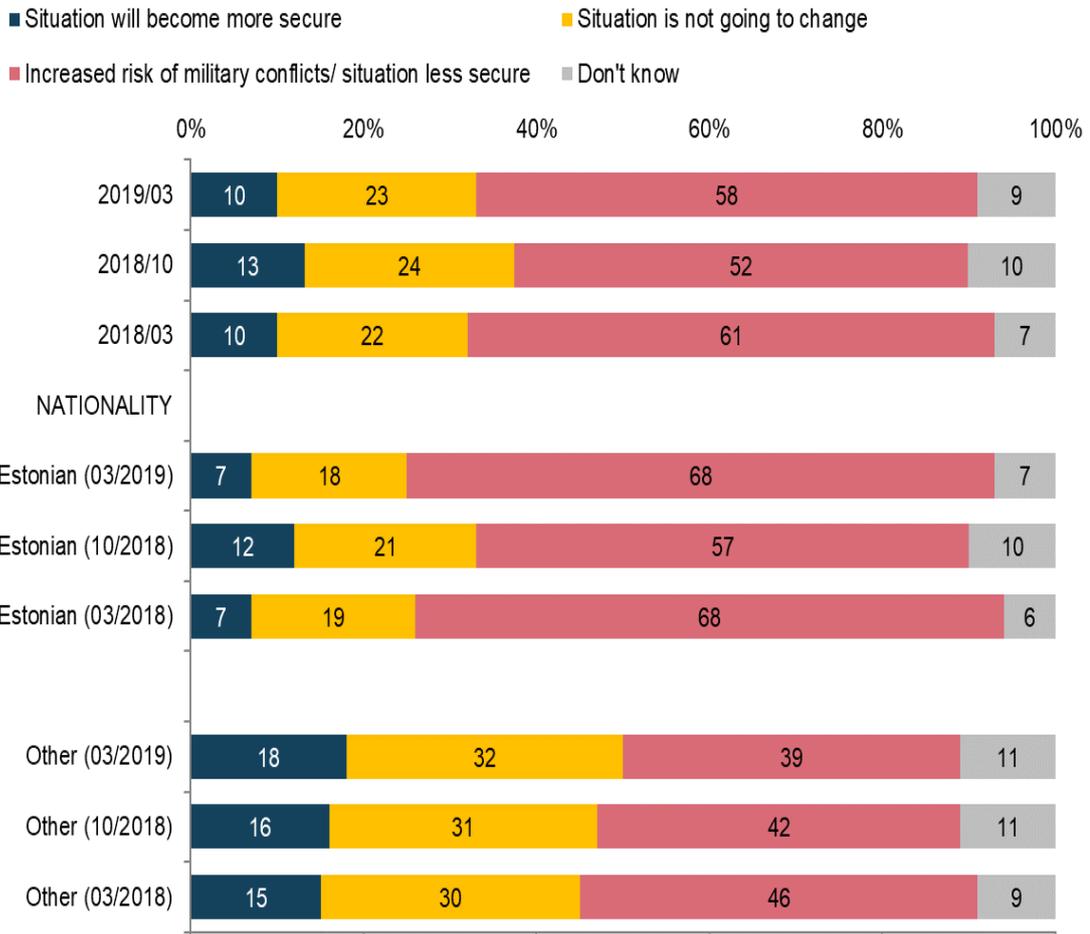
### 3.1 Security in the world

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% and in this survey (March 2019) the corresponding figure was 58%. 10% of respondents believe that the world will become safer in the coming decade and 23% think that there will be no change ([Figure 8](#)).

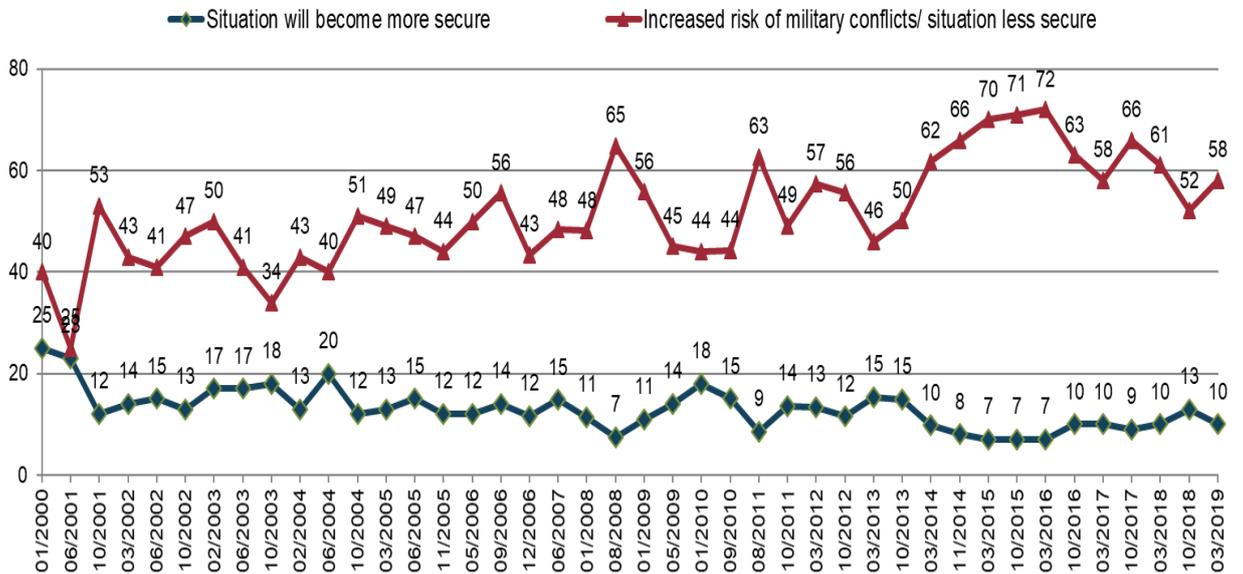
While the Estonians' sense of threat has increased to the level it was the year before compared to October last year (68% believe that global security instability is increasing), the sense of threat felt by respondents of other nationalities has rather decreased (from 42% to 39%).

**Figure 8. Situation in the world in the coming decade; comparison of 2018–2019 (%) ; N = all respondents)**



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. It has only decreased below 60% in the last two surveys, while still remaining high.

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



### 3.2 Security in Estonia

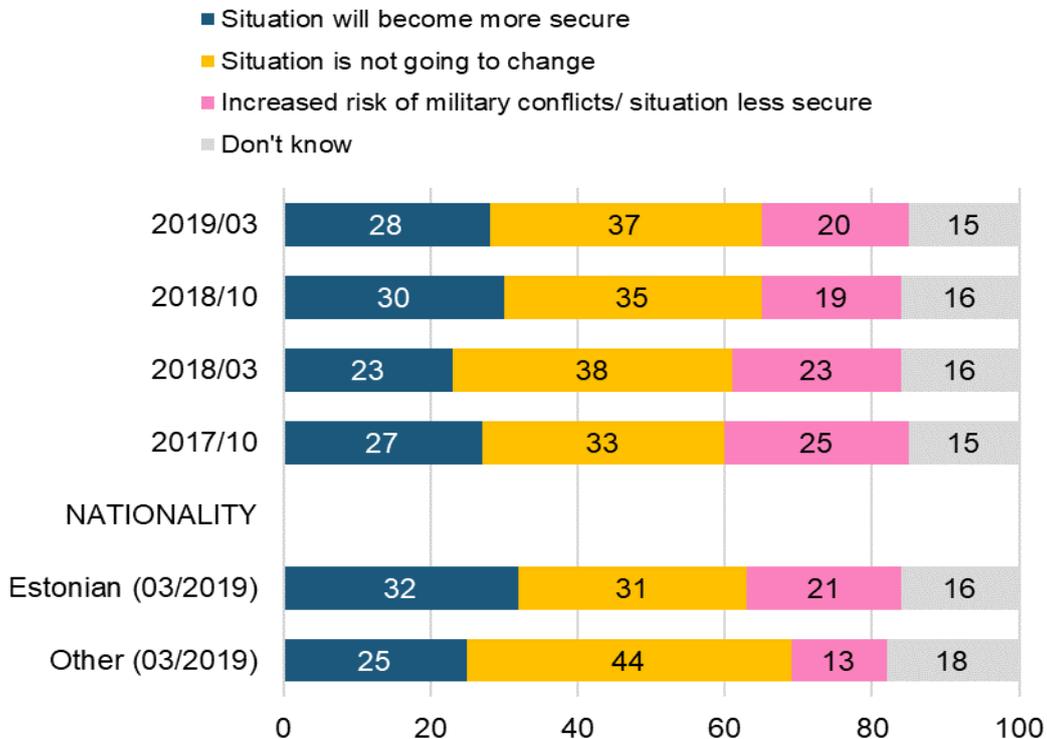
The question about security in Estonia was presented in the following wording:

**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 28% and insecurity by 20% of the respondents.

Compared to Russian-speaking respondents, there are more respondents who predict both increasing security as well as insecurity among Estonians (32% and 21%, respectively); Russian-speaking respondents more often predict that the situation will remain the same (44%) (Figure 10).

**Figure 10. Situation in Estonia in the coming decade; comparison of 2017–2019 (%)** (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. Compared to previous surveys, the list of threats presented to the respondents for assessment was changed a little in October last year. Cyber-attacks and the extensive spread of misinformation and fake news were included in the survey. Both new categories rose among the four most important threats.

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 60% and seven factors by more than 80% of the respondents (Figure 11).

Cyber-attacks are deemed to be the most important threat: certainly by 54% and to some extent by 35% of the respondents. The activities of terrorist networks are in second place. Terrorist networks are perceived as certainly dangerous by 51% and dangerous to some extent by 38% of the respondents.

The migration of refugees and asylum seekers into Europe occupies third place—it was considered to be a certain threat by 50% and a threat to some extent by 39% of the respondents.

Spread of misinformation and fake news comes fourth (certainly 45%, to some extent 40%), the importance of which has increased compared to the previous survey.

These are followed by a worldwide economic crisis (certainly 44%, to some extent 43%) and global climate change (42% and 42%). The share of respondents who believe that global climate change is a certain threat has increased by 10%.

33% of respondents also perceive organised crime as certainly dangerous. Together with the answer “to some extent” (48%), the proportion of this global threat also increased to a level of more than 80%.

Compared to organised crime, Russia’s attempts to restore its authority in the neighbouring countries are assessed as certainly dangerous more often (39%). Together with the answer “to some extent” the summarised proportion of Russian threat is 70%, which places it nearly at the bottom of the ranking of threat factors.

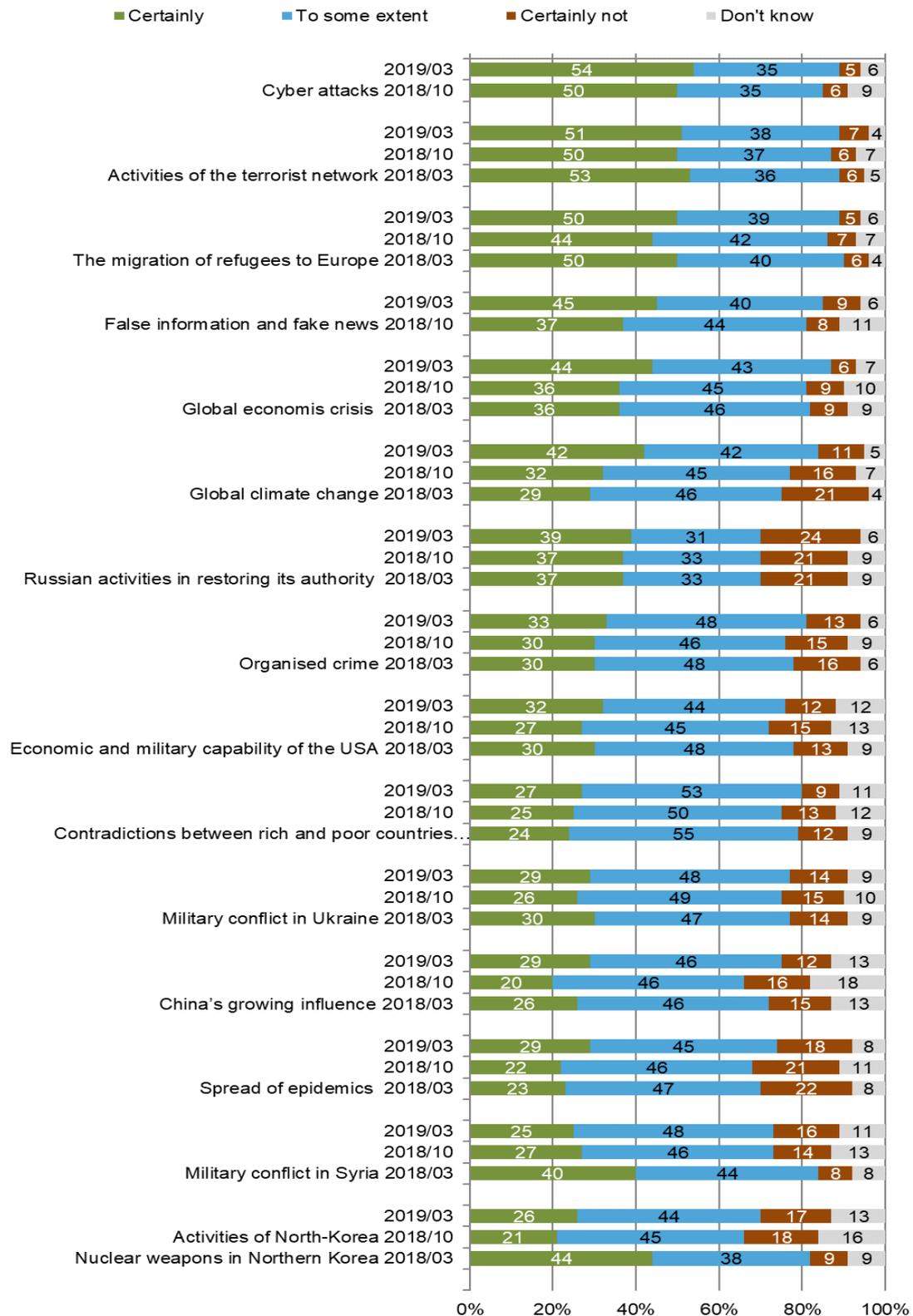
In summary, the military and economic domination of the US in the world (certainly + to some extent 76%), conflicts between rich and poor countries (80%), armed conflict in East Ukraine (77%), the growth of China’s power and influence in the world (75%), and the spread of epidemics (74%) are considered more dangerous than Russia.

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

The war in Syria, which was formerly perceived as the most important threat, has now retreated to 73%, with 25% of respondents believing it to be a certain threat. North Korea is also considered a threat to world security by 70% of respondents (certainly 26% and to some extent 44%)

Compared to the previous survey, people have begun to consider cyber-attacks, the spread of misinformation and fake news, worldwide economic crisis and global climate change more dangerous. Threats arising from Syria and North Korea are perceived to have decreased.

**Figure 11. Threats to peace and security in the world 2018–2019**  
(%; N = all respondents)

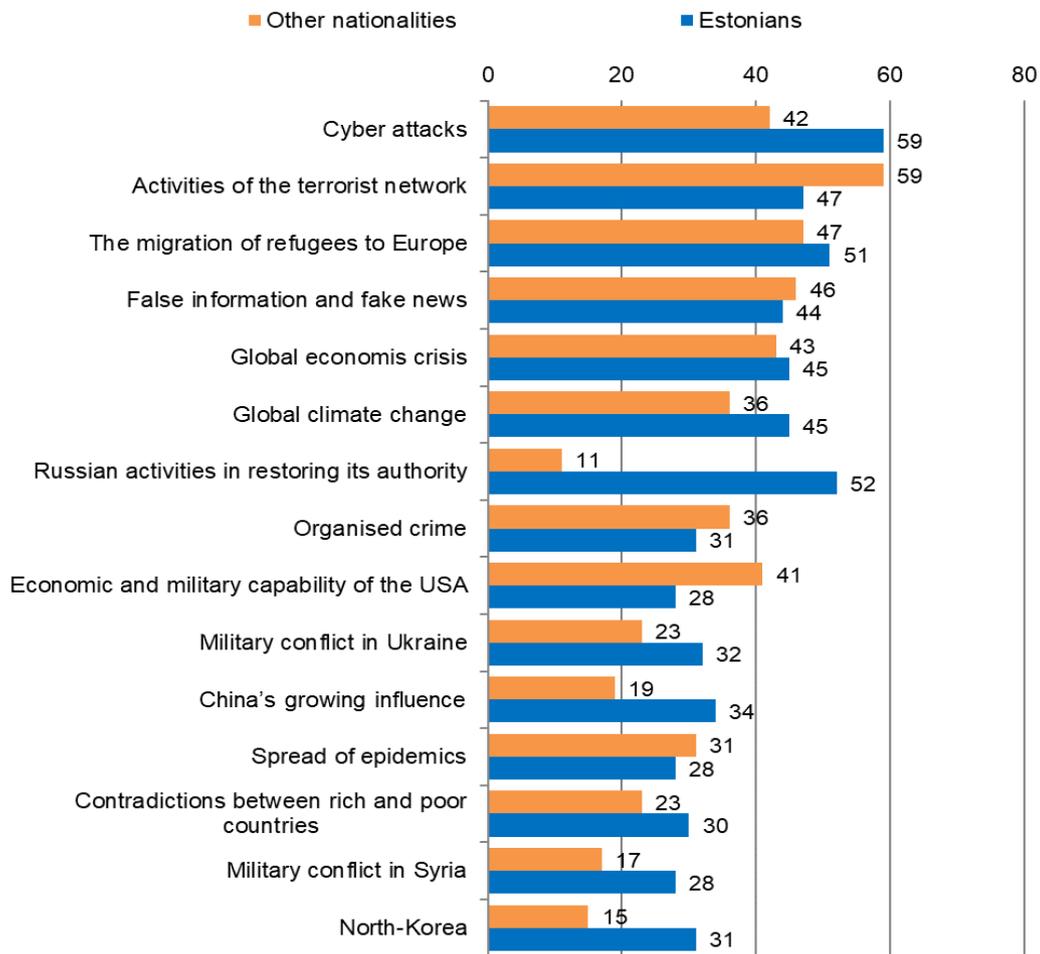


Respondents from other nationalities consider the activities of terrorist networks, the influence of the US in the world and organised crime more dangerous than Estonians. A rather similar assessment is provided to the spread of misinformation and fake news, worldwide economic crisis, spread of epidemics and the migration of refugees and asylum seekers into Europe (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 (52% of Estonians deem it as certainly dangerous), while it is in last place in the ranking of threat factors among Russian-speaking respondents.

The different perceptions of Estonians and other nationalities about Russia's role in threatening global security also lead to different assessments regarding Estonia's national defence.

**Figure 12. Threats to peace and security in the world in March 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 the list last autumn. Threats that were listed previously—an explosion of an oil train or fuel terminal—were replaced with a vast industrial disaster and extensive environmental pollution ([Figure 13](#)).

There are five main threats to Estonia, the occurrence of which in the following years are considered probable or rather probable by more than half of the respondents.

The view that there may be an organised attack against Estonian state information systems, i.e., a cyber-attack, has increased year after year, with 75% of respondents thinking it is very or rather probable (in October the share of such respondents was 67%).

Second place was again taken by the spread of fake news, which was considered very or rather probable by 71% of the respondents (65% in October).

Third place (62%) was taken by the belief that some foreign country may interfere in Estonian politics or economy in order to influence these in their own interests (58% in October).

Fourth place was taken by the spread of hate speech with 55% (45% in October) and fifth place by extensive marine pollution, which was considered very or rather probable by 54% of the respondents (53% in October).

Over 40% of respondents also consider extensive environmental pollution probable (43%). The proportion of those who view the occurrence of other problems very or rather probable remains below 30%.

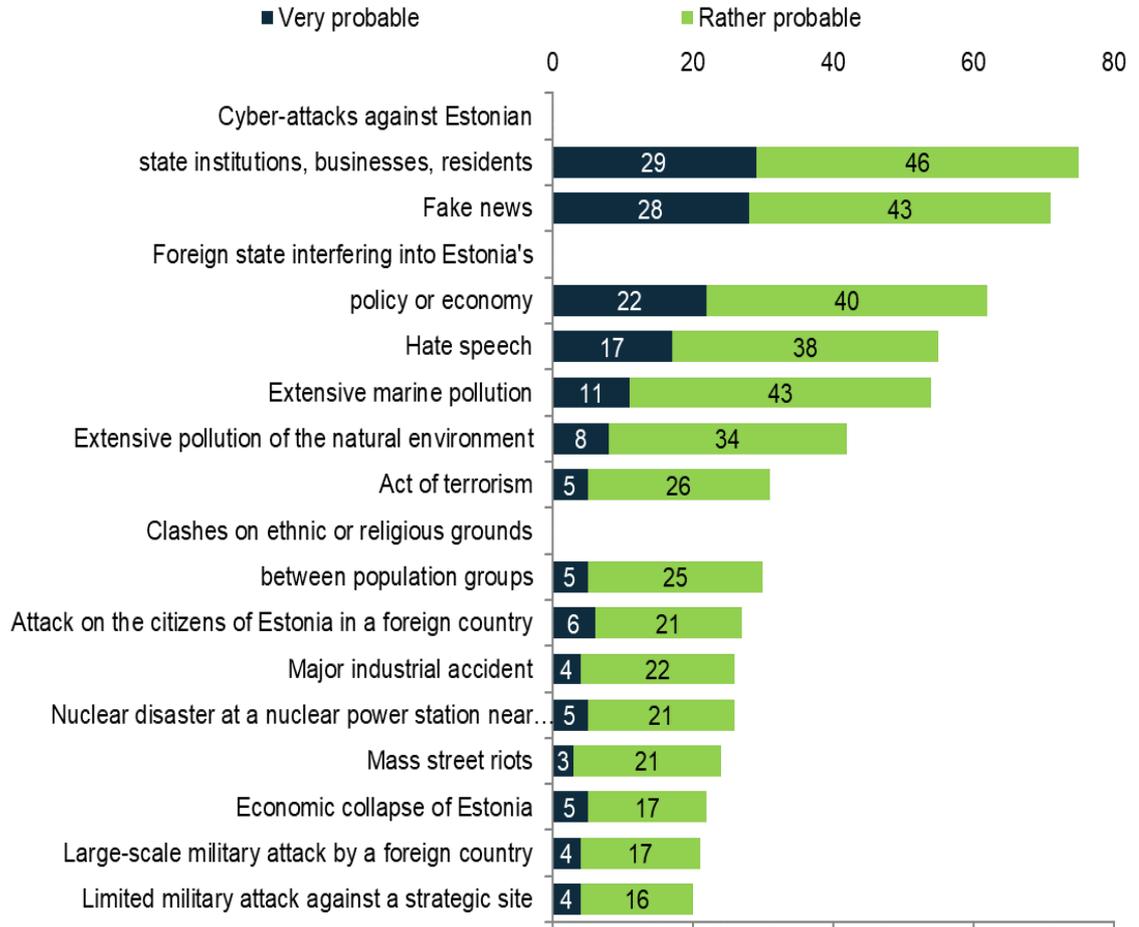
An extensive or limited military attack against Estonia is considered the least probable by the respondents (one fifth of the respondents consider it very or rather probable).

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

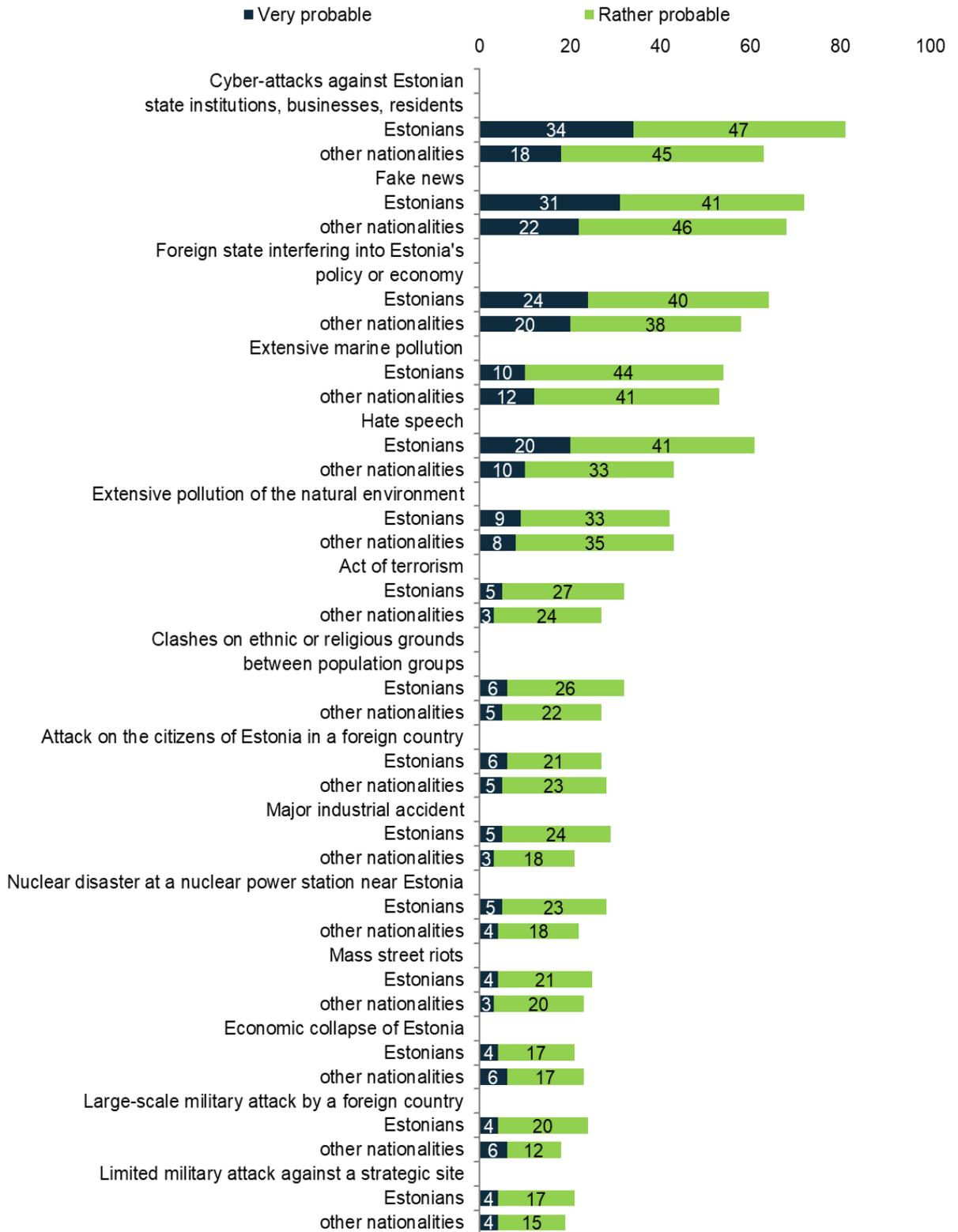
An extensive marine pollution and pollution of the natural environment are deemed equally probable, as well as an attack against Estonian citizens in a foreign country, the economic collapse of the Estonian state and mass street riots.

The greatest difference occurs in the assessment on the probability of cyber-attacks (81% and 63%, respectively) and the spread of hate speech (61% and 43%).

**Figure 13. Probability of different threats endangering Estonia in the forthcoming years; March 2019 (%; N = all respondents)**



**Figure 14. Probability of different threats endangering Estonia in the forthcoming years; comparison of assessments by Estonians and non-Estonians; March 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:

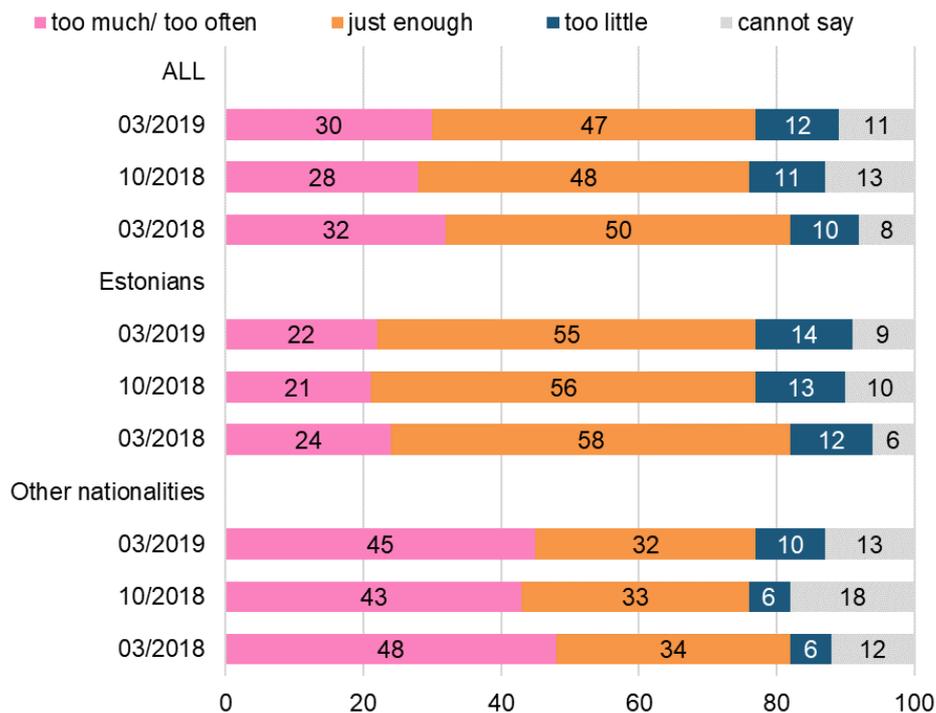
**How do you feel, does the Estonian media write and talk about military threats to Estonia too much and too often, just enough or rather too little?**

Respondents' assessments on the media coverage of military threats to Estonia have been quite stable over the years. The proportion of respondents who think that military threats are discussed too much and too often in speech and writing is 30%. Nearly half of the respondents (47%) think that military threats are discussed just enough in the media.

While more than half (55%) of Estonians believe that military threats to Estonia are discussed just enough, the majority of non-Estonians (45%) think that this topic is covered too much.

Only 12% of the respondents think that military threats are not discussed enough (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)



### 3.6 Security guarantees

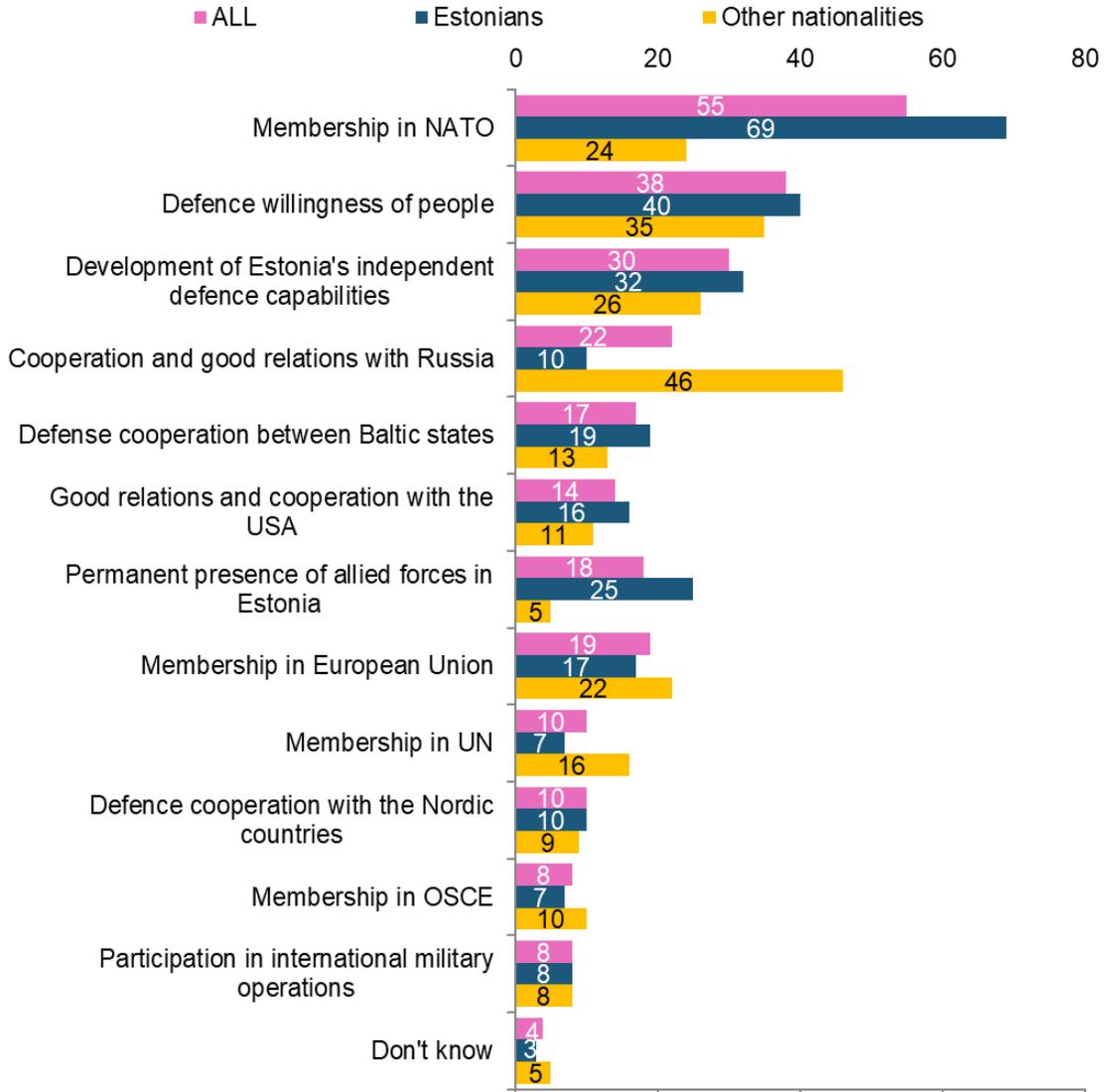
All throughout previous surveys, Estonia's membership in NATO has ranked first among important factors that would ensure maximum security to Estonia according to the respondents. It is mentioned by 56% of the respondents as one of the three most important factors this time as well. The second most important security guarantee is the defence willingness of residents (38%), while the development of Estonia's independent defence capability ranks 3<sup>rd</sup> with 30% ([Figure 16](#)). The results have not changed compared to autumn and it can be said that the majority of the public adequately understands our main security guarantees.

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 10% of Estonian-speaking respondents. Seeing Russian relations as a guarantee of Estonian security is becoming less and less important for both Estonians and respondents of other nationalities.

Both Estonians and non-Estonian respondents support cooperation with the Nordic countries and participation in international missions more or less equally (7%).

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

**Figure 16. Security guarantees for Estonia (up to 3 of the most important factors); comparison of assessments by Estonians and other nationalities; March 2019 (%; N = all respondents)**



## 4 Defence willingness

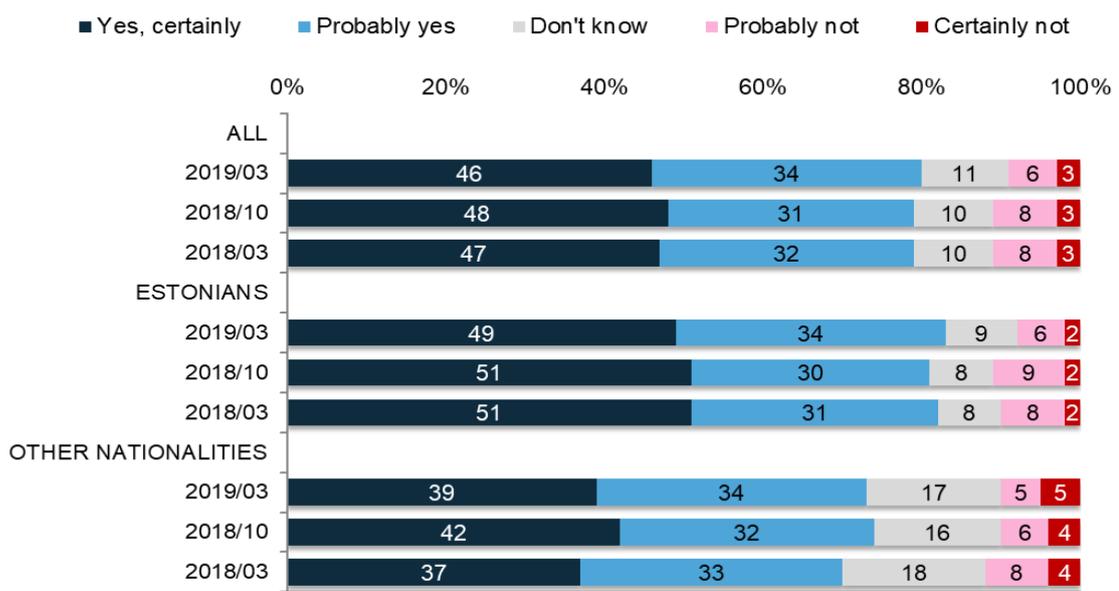
The defence willingness of the population of Estonia is measured with three questions. So-called passive defence willingness is expressed through the opinion on whether Estonia should be defended in case a foreign enemy attacks (“If Estonia is attacked by any country, should we, in any case, provide 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 March 2019, 80% of Estonia’s population considered armed resistance certainly or probably necessary ([Figure 17](#)).

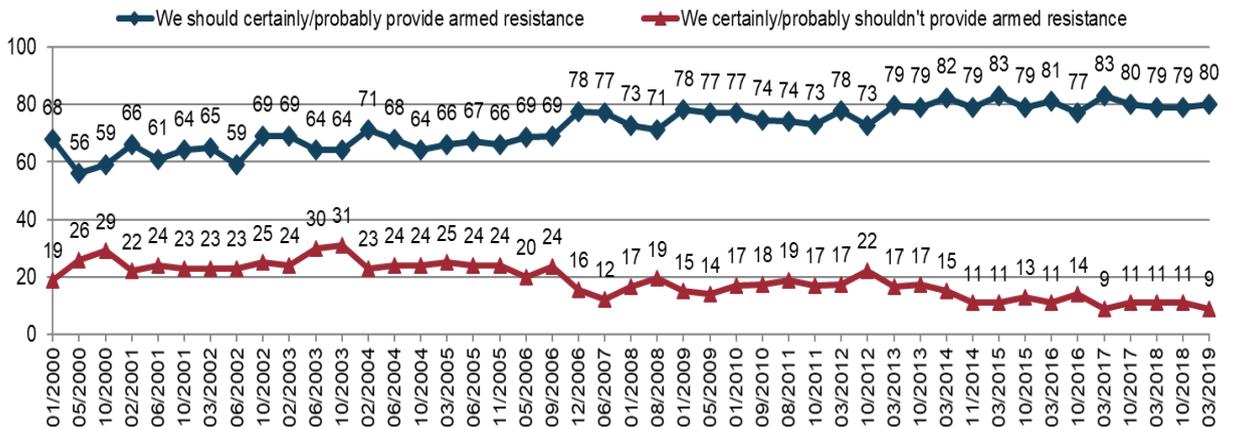
**Figure 17. Necessity for the provision of armed resistance if Estonia is attacked by any country; comparison of 2018–2019 (%) ; N = all respondents)**



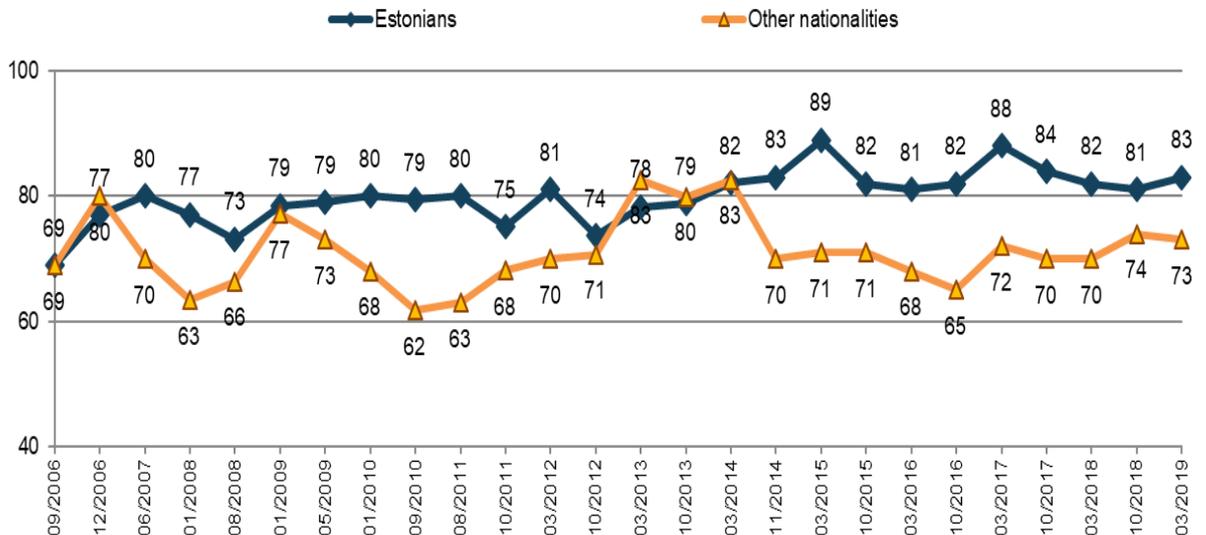
Estonian-speaking respondents tend to consider armed resistance more necessary than people of other nationalities; but the difference is not great. Resistance is deemed certainly necessary by 49% of Estonians and 39% of the Russian-speaking respondents. 8% of Estonian respondents and 10% of respondents of other nationalities believe that resistance is not necessary, but the latter group includes much more respondents who answered “cannot say” (17%).

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

**Figure 18. Necessity of armed resistance if Estonia is attacked by any country; comparison of 2000–2019 (%; N = all respondents)**



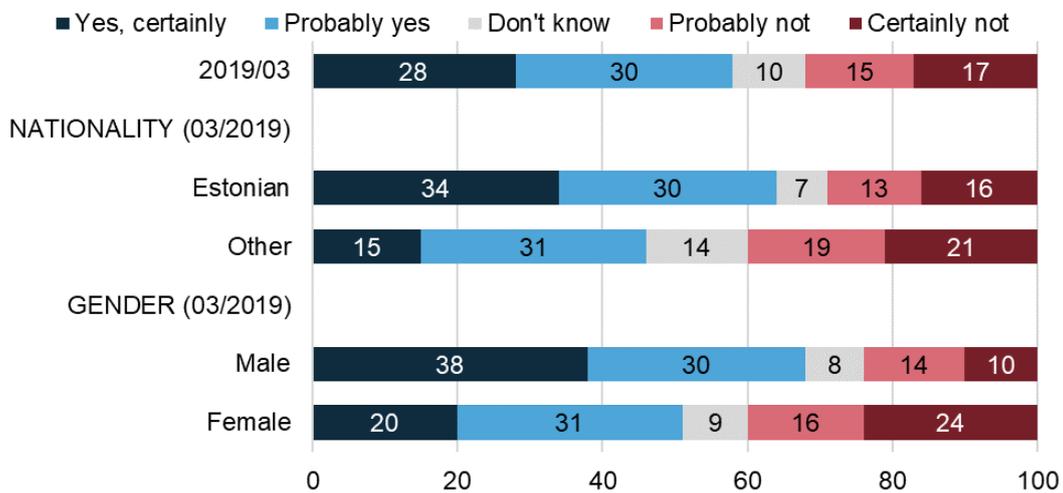
**Figure 19. Proportion of the proponents of armed resistance in the event of an attack; comparison of Estonians and non-Estonians 2006–2019 (% of those considering resistance certainly and probably necessary; N = all respondents)**



## 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 lower than the proportion of those supporting armed resistance at the state level. While armed resistance is considered certainly or probably necessary by 80% of the respondents, 58% 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; March 2019** (%; N= all respondents)



28% of the population of Estonia would be certainly willing and 30% would be probably willing to participate in defence activities to the extent of their own capabilities and skills. 32% 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 64% of Estonians would be personally willing to participate in defence activities, the respective indicator for non-Estonians is only 46%. This indicator is 50% among Estonian citizens of other nationalities, 41% among Russian citizens and 45% 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 (68% of male respondents would be willing to participate in defence activities, while only half of women feel the same; only 49% of respondents over 60 years of age would be willing to participate in defence activities).

If we only consider the willingness of male citizens to participate in national defence, we get a more positive picture of active defence willingness. 73% of male citizens are willing to participate in national defence; this includes 76% of Estonians and 58% of respondents of other nationalities. However, two thirds of Estonian citizens of other nationalities aged 15-49 are ready to participate in national defence (Table 3).

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

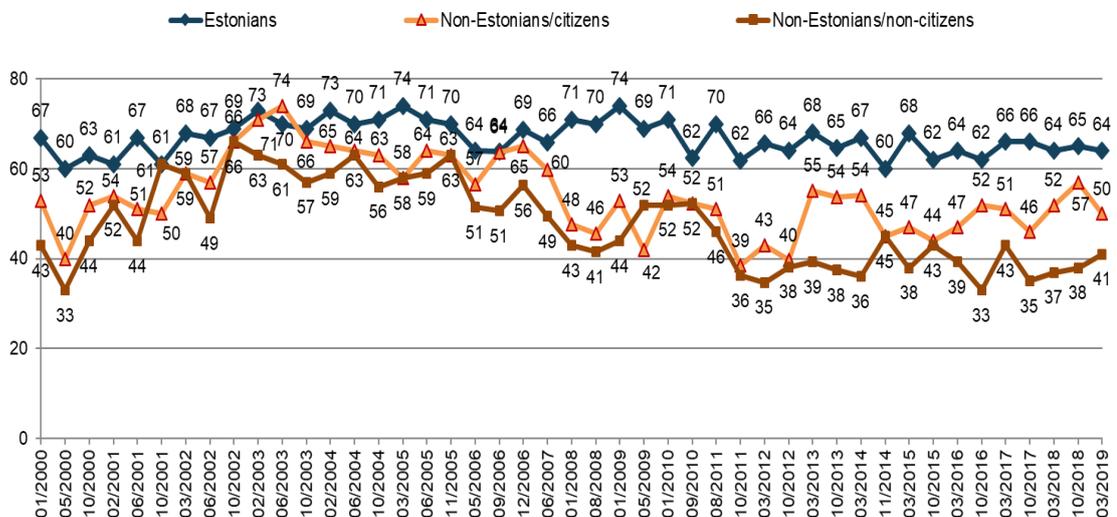
NATIONALITY	ALL	15–34	35–49	50–64	65+
Estonian	76%	74%	85%	82%	58%
Russian or other	58%	69%	65%	35%	49%
ALL men/citizens	73%	73%	83%	75%	57%

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 last three years the active defence willingness of the Russian-speaking population has again exceeded 50%.

**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; N = all respondents)



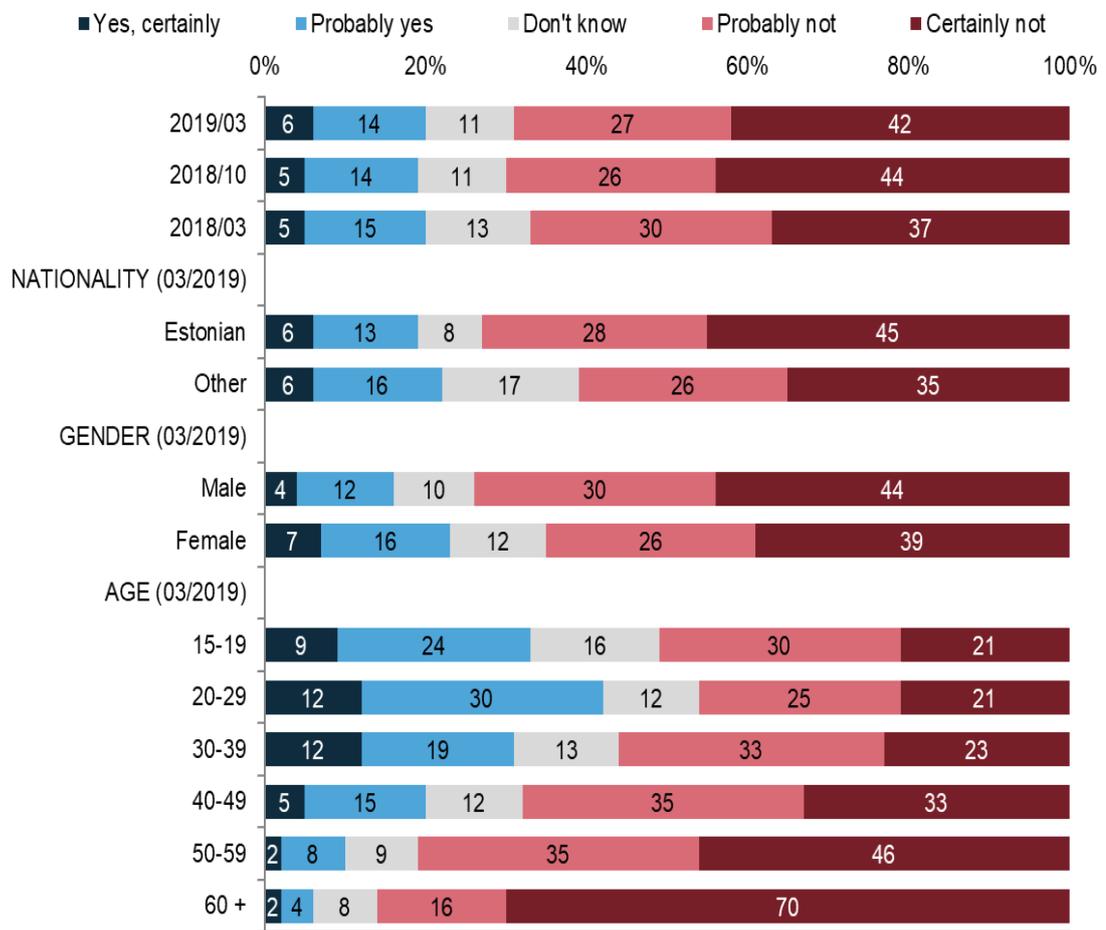
### 4.3 Desire to leave Estonia in the event of a military threat

In case Estonia is attacked, one fifth of Estonians would consider leaving Estonia—this indicator has been roughly at the same level for several years now. In such a situation, 6% would certainly endeavour to leave and 14% would probably do it. 69% 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: 33% of those under 20 years of age, 42% of those between 20 and 29 years of age, and 31% 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. 22% of non-Estonians and 19% of Estonians would probably leave.

**Figure 22. Probability of leaving Estonia in case Estonia is attacked; comparison of 2018–2019 (%)**; N = all respondents

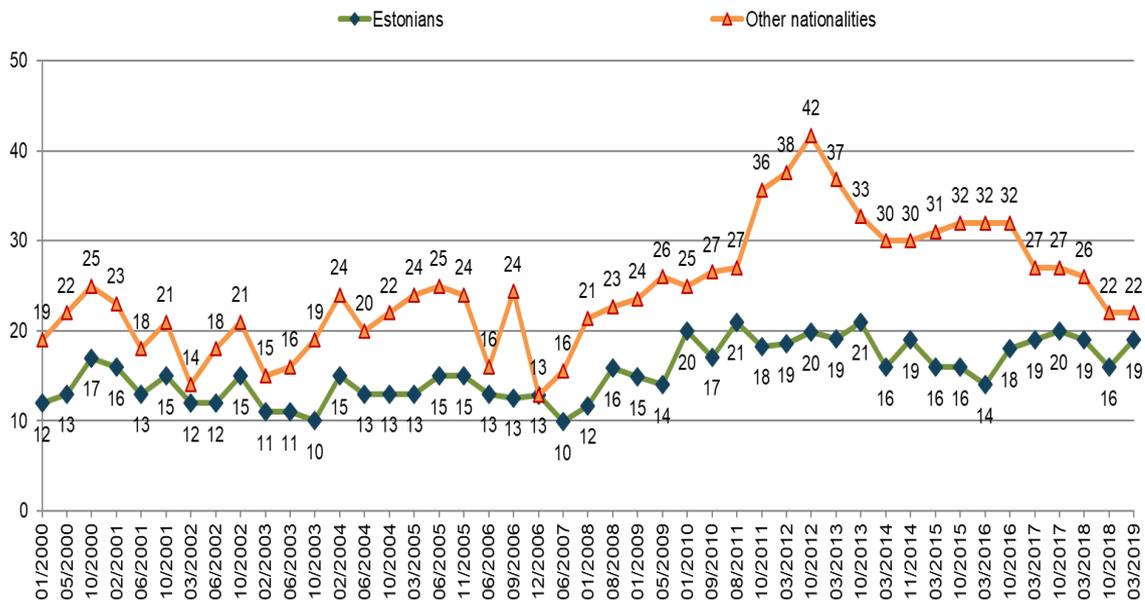


In observing the whole timeline from the beginning of the survey series, it can be seen that non-Estonian respondents have expressed increasingly higher willingness to leave since the year 2007; the willingness rose to as high as 42% in 2013 and has remained close to 30% since then. The proportion of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

Estonians' willingness to leave rose to nearly 20% during the recession years from 2010 to 2013. It then fell slightly but has risen to a fifth of the population again in the last two years. The autumn of 2018 was an exception—the proportion of those who certainly and probably wanted to leave was 16% (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

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.**

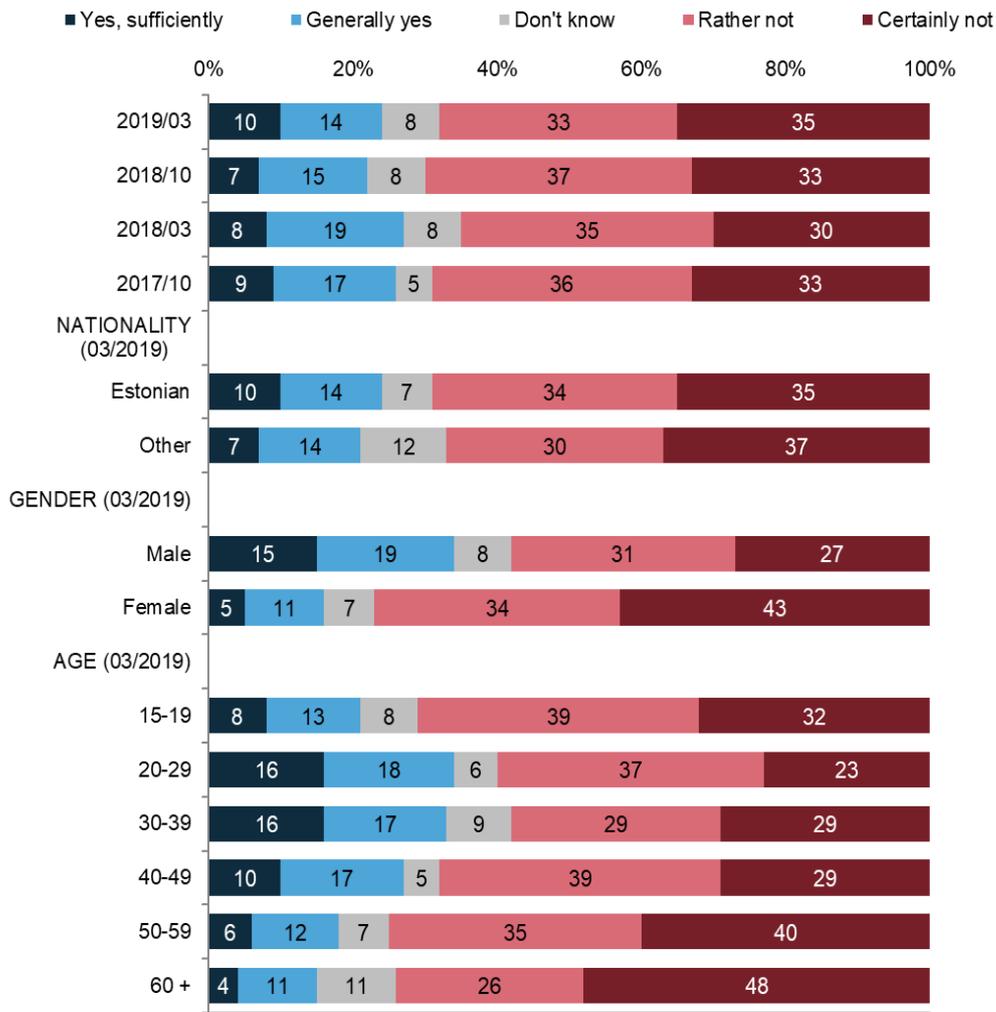
The results show that people consider their ability to act in the event of a potential attack rather poor—only about a quarter of respondents answered that they had at least a general understanding about what to do to defend the country in such a situation, while more than two thirds considered themselves 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 (34% vs. 16%), which could be explained by more exposure to national defence structures (undergoing conscript service, Defence League). However, assessments of personal awareness are low among men as well.

The difference in the awareness of Estonians and respondents of other nationalities is decreasing, although it is slightly better among Estonians (24% vs. 21%, respectively).

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.

**Figure 24. Being informed about the possibilities of what to do for defending Estonia in the event of an impending foreign attack; comparison of 2017–2019** (%; N = all respondents)



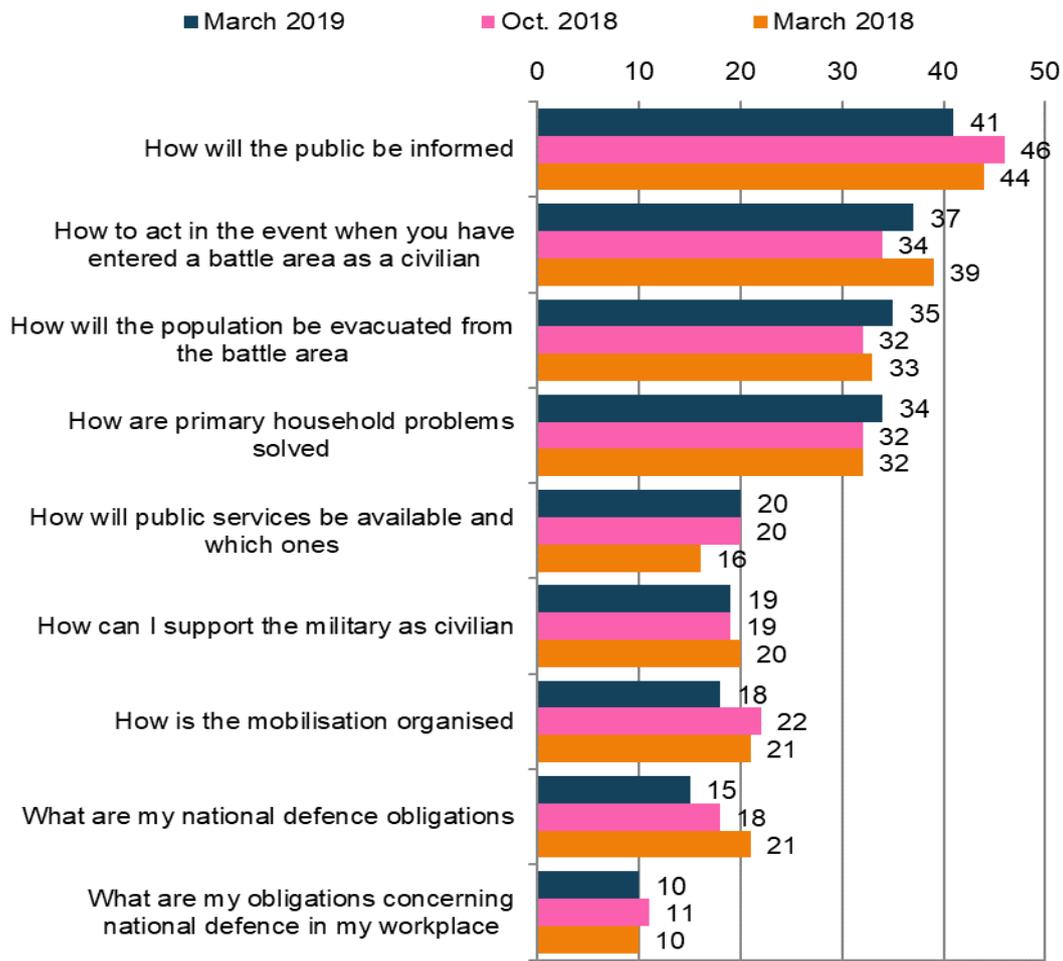
## 4.5 Topics on which more information is required

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 general public is informed (41%), how to act when one has entered a combat zone as a civilian (37%), how evacuation is organised (35%), and how to solve basic household problems (34%).

The rest of the topics are already less relevant: a fifth of the respondents are interested in their duties in national defence and how mobilisation is organised—these issues are considered important by more than half of the male respondents.

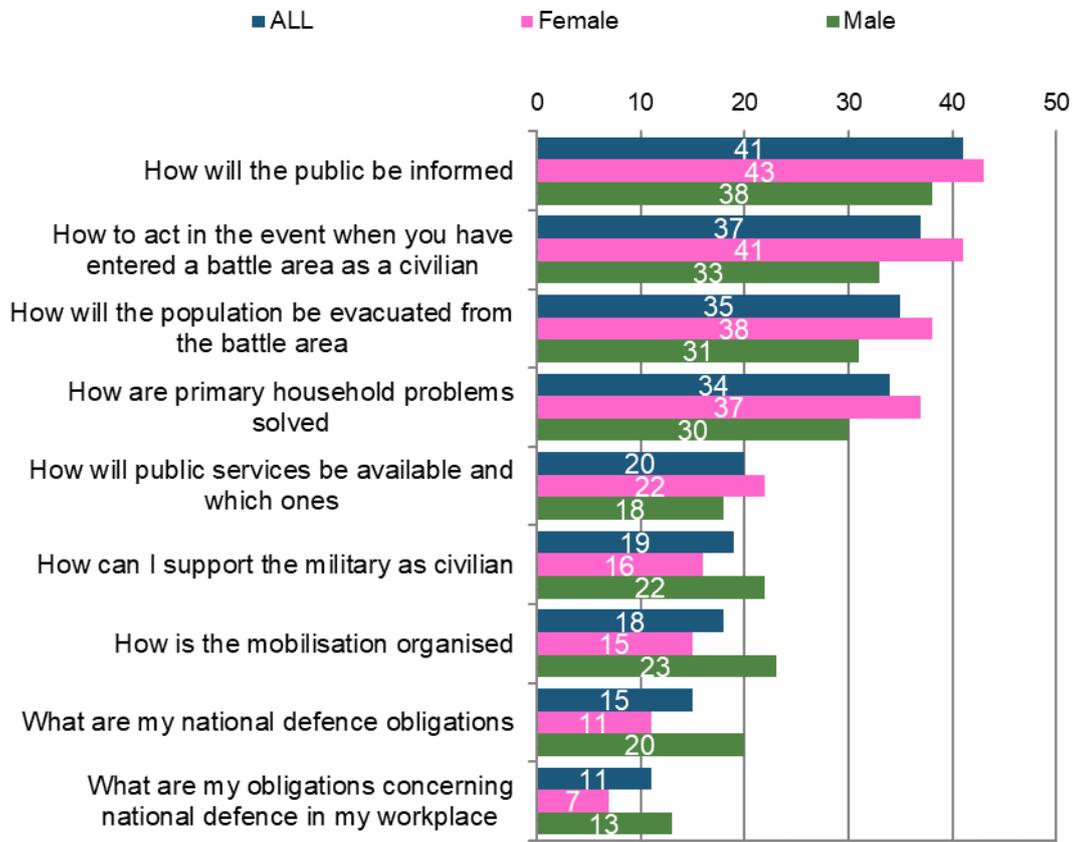
**Figure 25. On which topics do you require more information? 2018–2019**  
(%; N = all respondents)



The difference in the information needs of male and female respondents is noticeable. Even though men are also concerned with the four topics listed as the most important in the general ranking, they show greater than average interest in how mobilisation would be organised, their duties in national defence, and the ways in which civilians can contribute to supporting the military.

Women would like more information on how to act as a civilian, evacuation, and solving basic everyday problems (Figure 26).

**Figure 26. On which topics do you require more information? March 2019, comparison of men and women (%; N = all respondents)**



## 5 Defence capability of Estonia

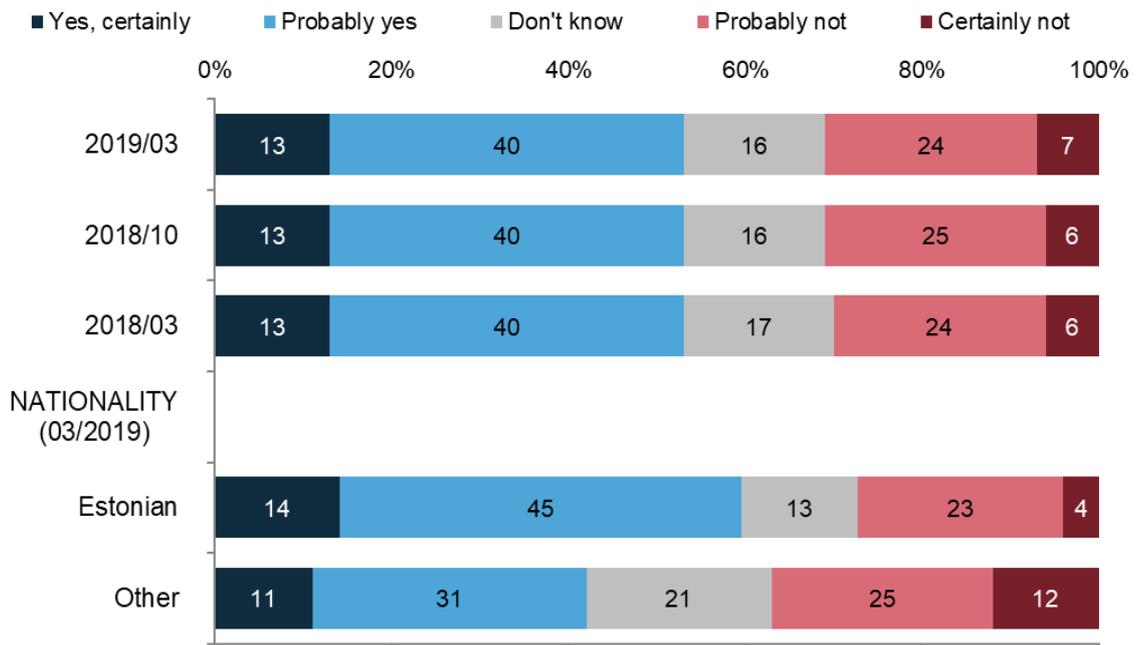
The fifth chapter reflects the population's attitudes towards Estonia's defence capability, the volume of defence expenditures, and the state's activities regarding the development of national defence.

### 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 autumn 2014, the proportion of respondents who believe that it would be possible to defend Estonia in the event of an armed foreign attack has exceeded 50%. In the last three surveys, 53% of respondents believed that defending Estonia was certainly or probably possible. The proportion of respondents who find that Estonia cannot be defended is 31% (Figure 27).

**Figure 27. Assessment of the defence capability of Estonia in the event of an armed foreign attack; comparison of 2018–2019** (%; N = all respondents)



Estonians have more faith in Estonia's independent defence capability than respondents of other nationalities: the figures are 59% and 42%, respectively. These indicators were the same in October last year.

The opinions of Estonian citizens of other nationalities differ greatly from the ones held by Russian citizens and people with undetermined citizenship. While 48% of Estonian citizens of other nationalities believe that Estonia is defendable, only 27% of Russian citizens and 34% of respondents with undetermined citizenship agree.

## 5.2 Views on the volume of defence expenditures

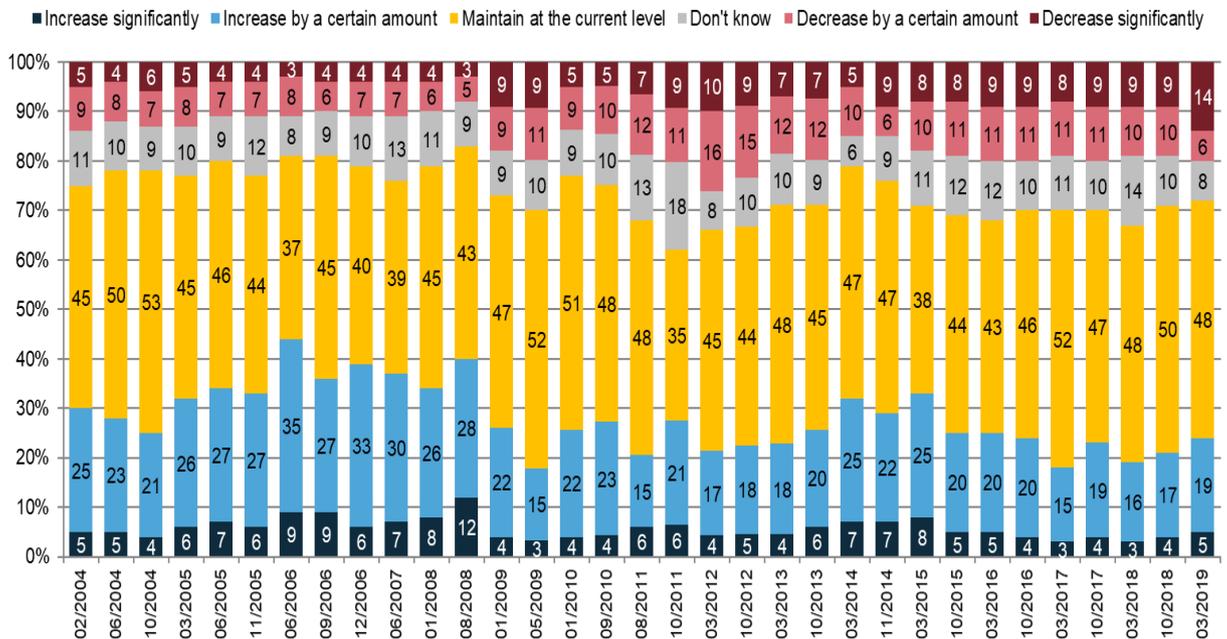
Support for funding national defence has been high among the Estonian population since the beginning of the survey.

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.

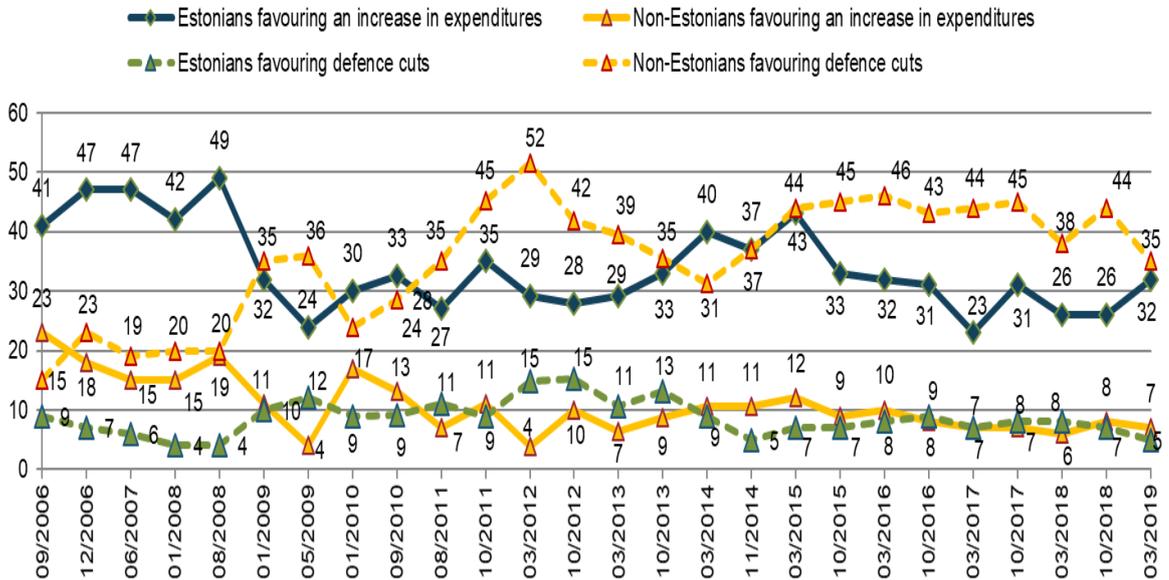
In assessing the volume of Estonian defence expenditures today, nearly half of the respondents think that defence expenditures should be kept at the current level (48%) (Figure 28). An increase in defence expenditures is favoured by a quarter and a decrease by one fifth of the population.

**Figure 28. Views on the volume of defence expenditures; comparison of 2004–2019 (%)** (N = all respondents)



The attitudes of Estonians and respondents of other nationalities differ greatly. In the last three years, the proportion of respondents of other nationalities who favour cuts in defence expenditures has been over 40%. In March this year, 35% of non-Estonians favoured a decrease in defence expenditures (Figure 29).

**Figure 29 Views on the volume of Estonian defence expenditures; comparison of Estonian and non-Estonian population 2006–2019 (%; N = all respondents)**



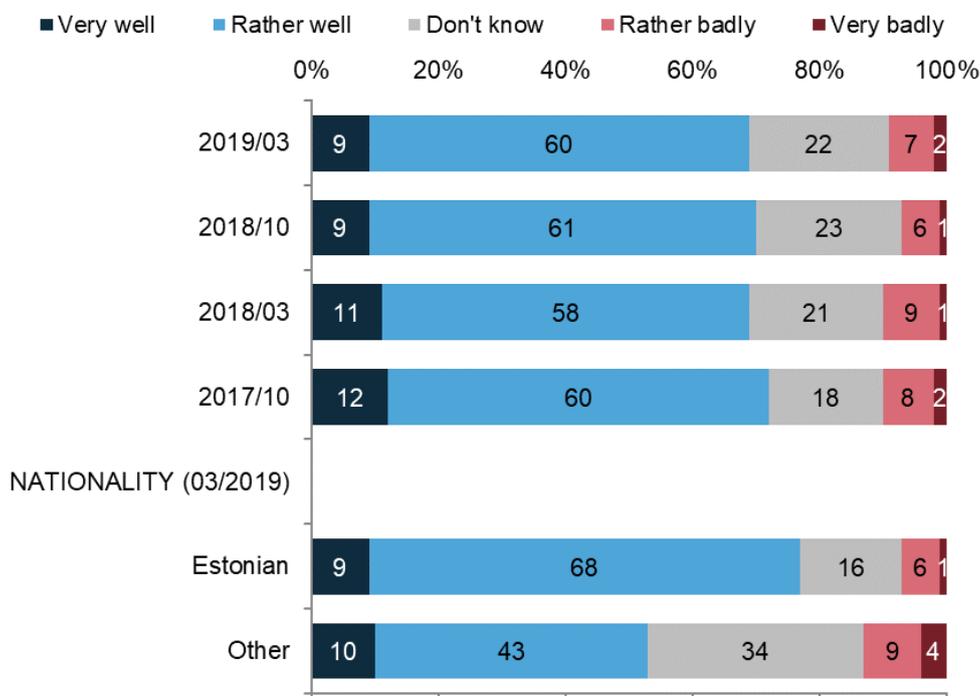
Thus, the attitudes of Estonians and respondents of other nationalities are inversely proportional to the level of defence expenditures: the proportion of Estonians in favour of increasing the expenditures is almost the same as the proportion of non-Estonians supporting cuts. However, the number of those in favour of increasing defence expenditures among non-Estonians is as low as the proportion of Estonians who want cuts—7% and 5%, respectively.

### 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—69% of the respondents say the state has been doing very or rather well also in March 2019 (Figure 30).

Similarly to most of the other assessments on national defence or state institutions, the Estonian-speaking population provides more positive assessments compared to non-Estonians: 77% of Estonians and 53% of non-Estonian respondents 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 (13%), yet there are more respondents who chose the answer “cannot say” (34%).

**Figure 30. Assessment of the state's activities in developing Estonia's national defence in the recent years; comparison of 2017–2019 (%; 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 the public discussion on how well the border line between Estonia and Russia was guarded.

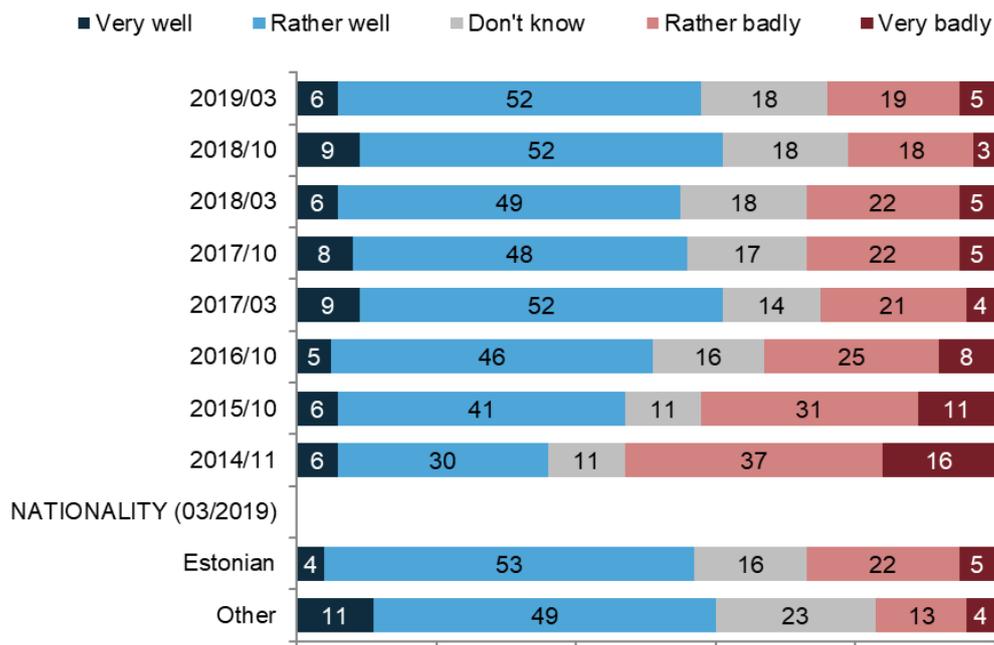
Whereas in autumn 2014, right after the incident at the border, the majority of the respondents provided negative assessments in terms of the level of protection of the Estonian border, already by spring 2016, the assessments were once again predominantly positive (Figure 31). In March 2019, the defence of the border was assessed positively by 58% and negatively by 24% of respondents. This time, assessments were slightly more critical compared to last autumn.

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 57% and other nationalities 60%) and while 27% of Estonians view the defence of the border negatively, the same opinion is held by only 17% of non-Estonians.

The assessment differed the most drastically in the fall of 2014, when only 27% of Estonians assessed the defence of the border positively, and 67% viewed it as

rather or very bad. At the same time, only 26% of respondents of other nationalities thought that the eastern border was rather or very badly protected.

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

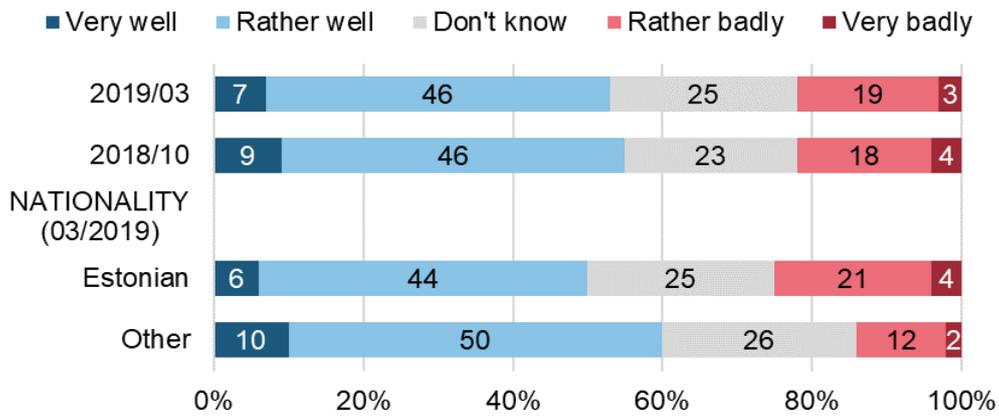


## 5.5 Assessment of the security of digital services and information systems of Estonia’s e-state

Last year the topic of the security of Estonia’s e-state was also included in the survey. As we have seen previously (chapter 3.4), cyber-attacks are viewed as the most acute factor threatening Estonia’s 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: 53% of respondents think that the digital services and information systems of our e-state are very or rather secure, while 22% view the security as bad (Figure 32).

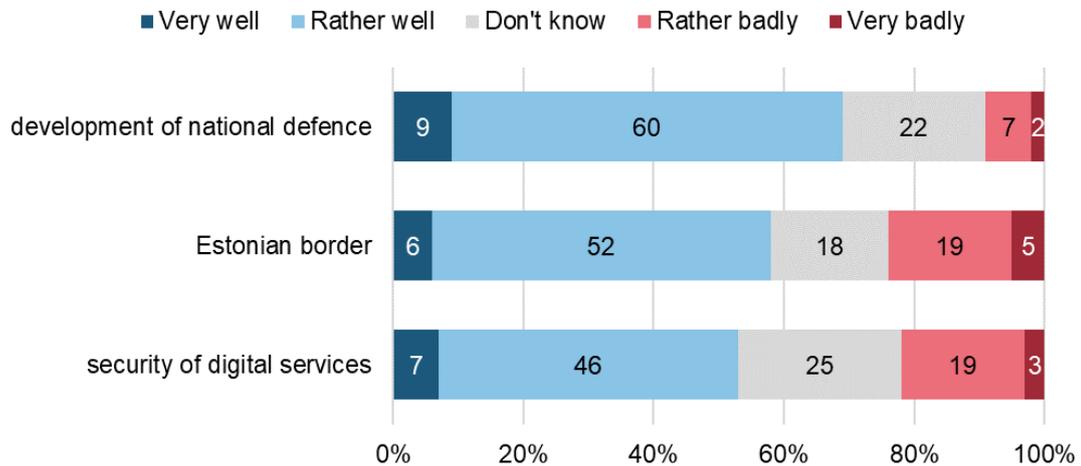
Of course, this is an area which many respondents are unable to assess—almost 25% provide the answer “cannot say”.

**Figure 32. Assessments of the security of digital services and information systems of Estonia's e-state; comparison of 2018–2019 (%; N = all respondents)**



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; March 2019 (%; N = all respondents)**



## 6 Organisation of Estonian national defence

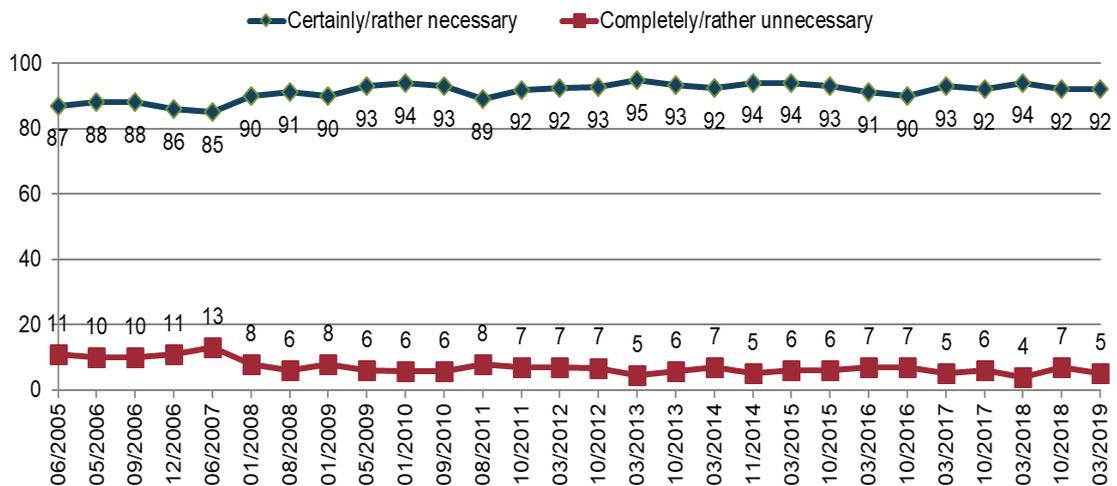
The sixth chapter discusses various aspects of national defence organisation in Estonia: the attitudes towards conscript service (including the necessity of it being compulsory to young men and voluntary for young women, evasion of conscript service and inclusion of young people with minor health disorders),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

### 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: 92% of all respondents believed that young men need to undergo conscript service in March 2019 as well. Only 5% of the population consider conscript service rather or completely unnecessary (Figure 34). Typically, a schedule such as Figure 34 is not included in the reports because the task of a drawing is to illustrate changes or differences. However, the steadily high support (90% and above) for the compulsory conscript service of young men exhibited by the Estonian population is a phenomenon that deserves to be covered with a separate illustration.

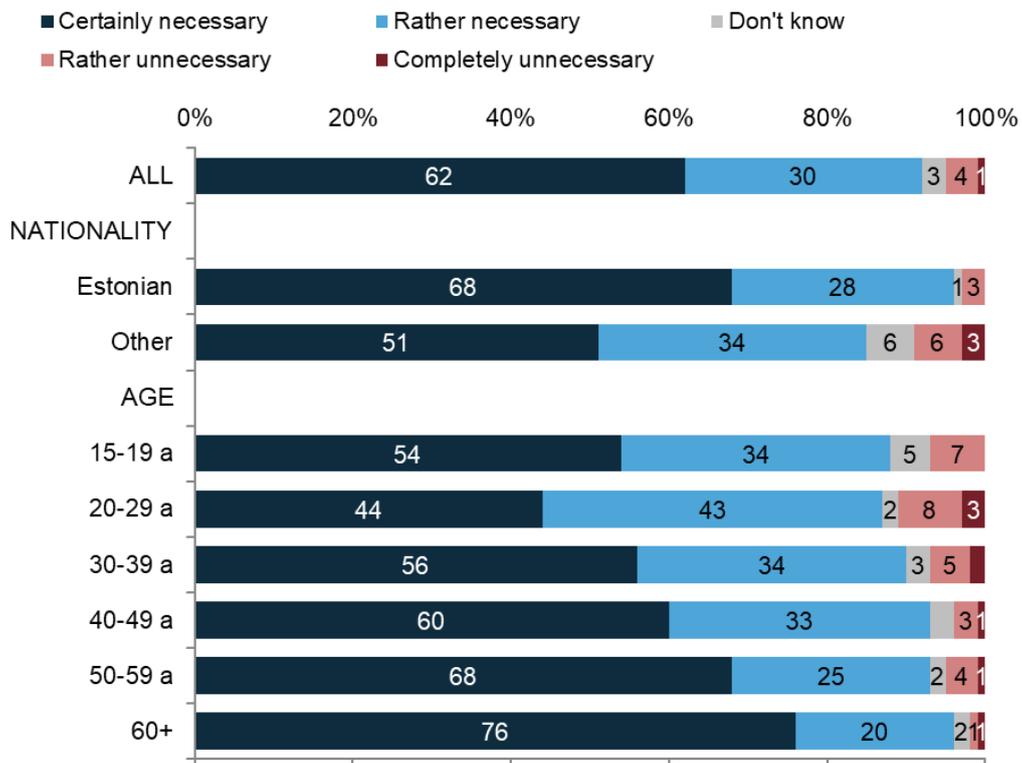
**Figure 34. Attitude towards the necessity of conscript service; comparison of 2005–2019 (%)**; N = all respondents)



Undergoing conscript service is considered certainly necessary by 68% of the Estonians respondents and 51% of respondents of other nationalities.

The most dedicated supporters of conscript service are people over 60 years of age, 76% of whom consider it certainly necessary. More than 60% of respondents 40 years of age and older are convinced of the necessity of conscript service and more than half of the respondents between 30 and 39 years of age agree. Conscript service is considered certainly necessary by 44% of the respondents below 30 years of age, who are affected by it the most, while 11% of them consider it unnecessary (Figure 35).

**Figure 35. Attitude towards the necessity of conscript service; March 2019**  
(%; N = all respondents)

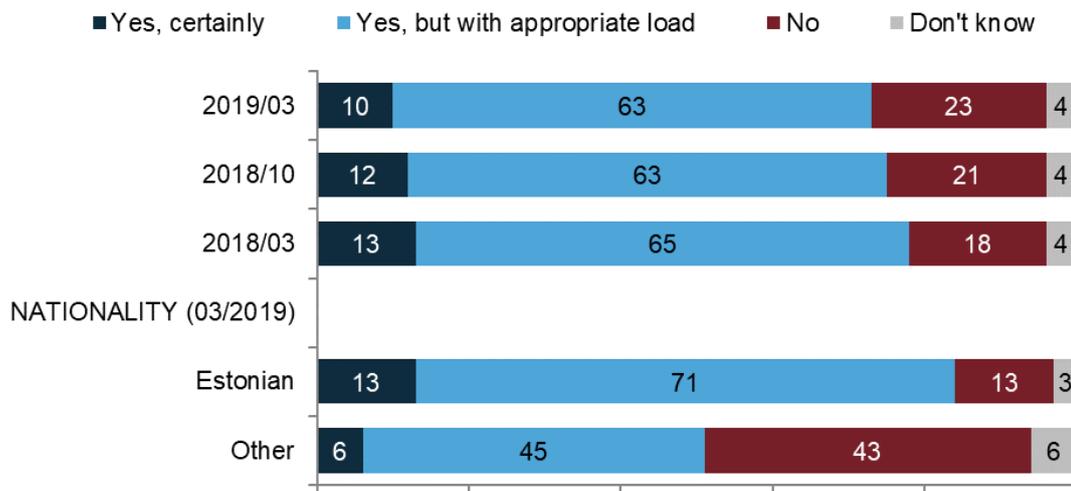


### 6.1.2 Attitudes towards undergoing conscript service with minor health disorders

Since 2012, respondents have been additionally asked to assess whether young men with minor health disorders should also undergo conscript service. 10% believe that such young men should certainly undergo conscript service; however, 63% think that young men with minor health disorders should undergo conscript service with an appropriate training load (Figure 36). Public opinion has remained very stable in this matter over the years.

Among 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—43% of them think that young men with minor health disorders should not undergo conscript service at all. 71% of Estonians and 45% of respondents of other nationalities find that young men with minor health disorders should undergo conscript service with an appropriate training load.

**Figure 36. Attitudes towards young men with minor health disorders undergoing conscript service; comparison of 2018–2019**  
(%; N = all respondents)



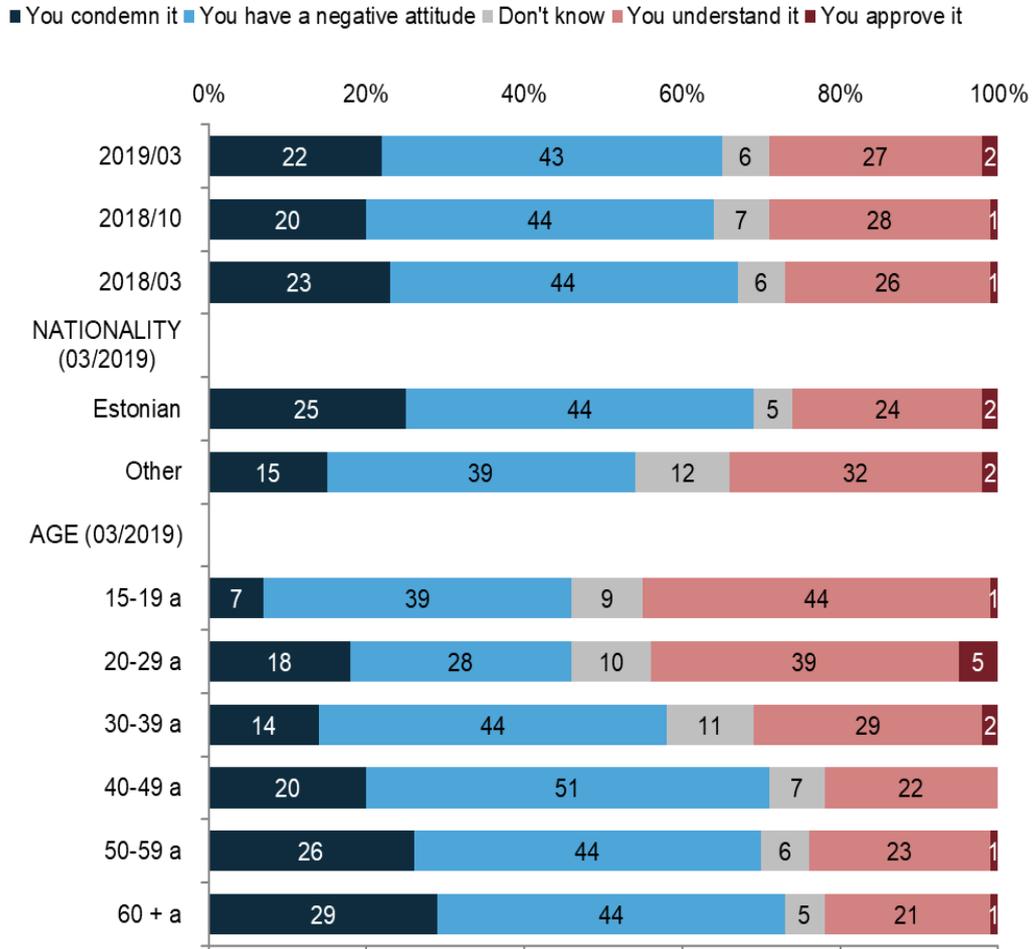
### 6.1.3 Evasion of conscript service

Bearing in mind the favouring attitudes of the population towards conscript service, it is fully anticipated that a great share of the population in Estonia disapproves of the evasion of conscript service—22% condemn such behaviour and 43% consider it negative (Figure 37). 27% of the respondents have an understanding attitude towards the evasion of conscript service, while only 2% of the respondents approve of this.

The difference between Estonians and respondents of other nationalities is 15% in this matter: a respective 69% and 54% see evasion negatively or condemn it.

However, seniors tend to have a more negative attitude towards the evasion of conscript service. More than 40% of respondents below 30 years of age have an understanding or approving attitude towards the evasion of conscript service. However, condemning attitude becomes prevalent with age and 73% of people over 60 years of age view the evasion of conscript service negatively.

**Figure 37. Attitude towards the evasion of conscript service; comparison of 2018–2019 (%; N = all respondents)**



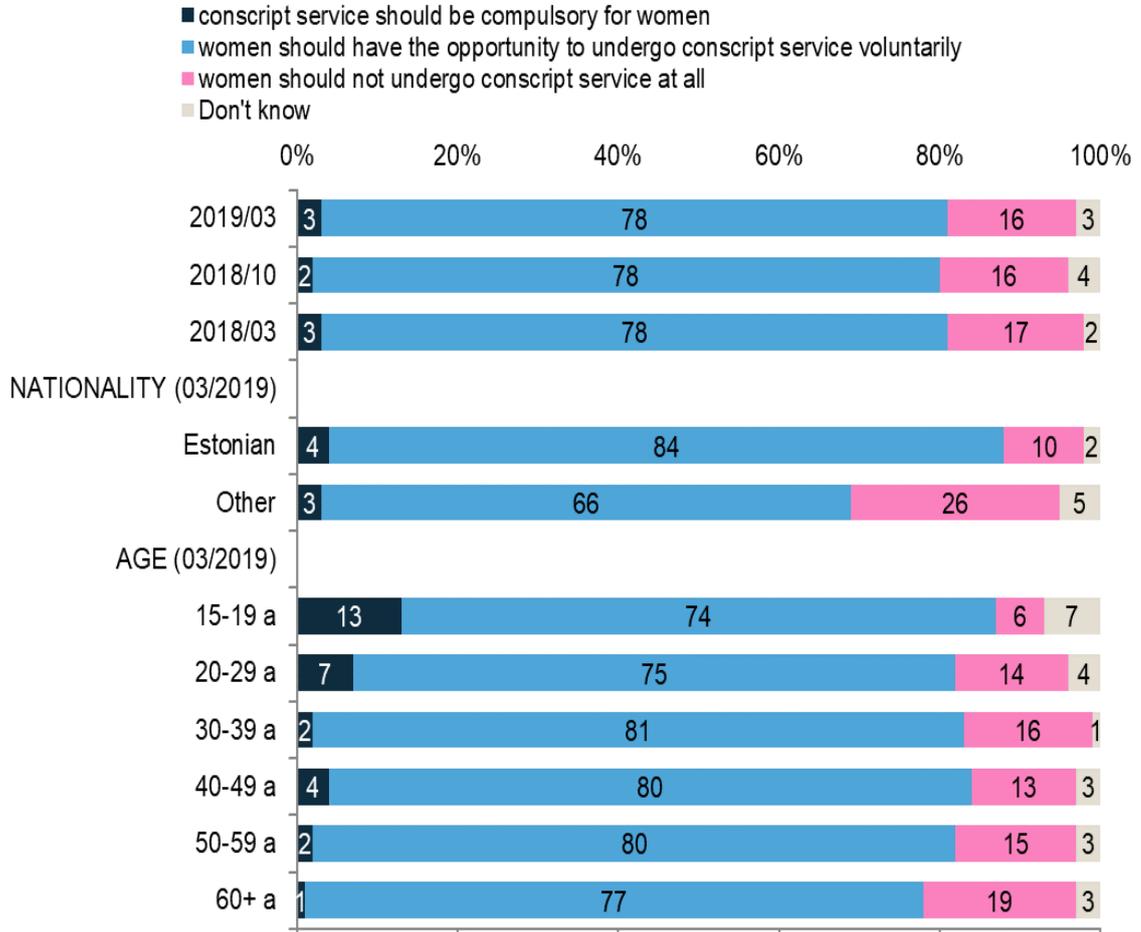
### 6.1.4 Conscript service for women

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

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

**Figure 38. Attitude towards the necessity of conscript service for women; comparison of 2018–2019 (%) ; N = all respondents)**



Support for voluntary conscript service for women is predominant—it has been persistently supported by 78% of the respondents in the past three surveys.

As many as 84% of Estonians support voluntary conscript service for women, while the respective indicator for respondents of other nationalities is 66%. Of the latter, 26% believe that women should not undergo conscript service at all, whether it is compulsory or voluntary. However, 3–4% of Estonians and non-Estonians support compulsory conscript service for women.

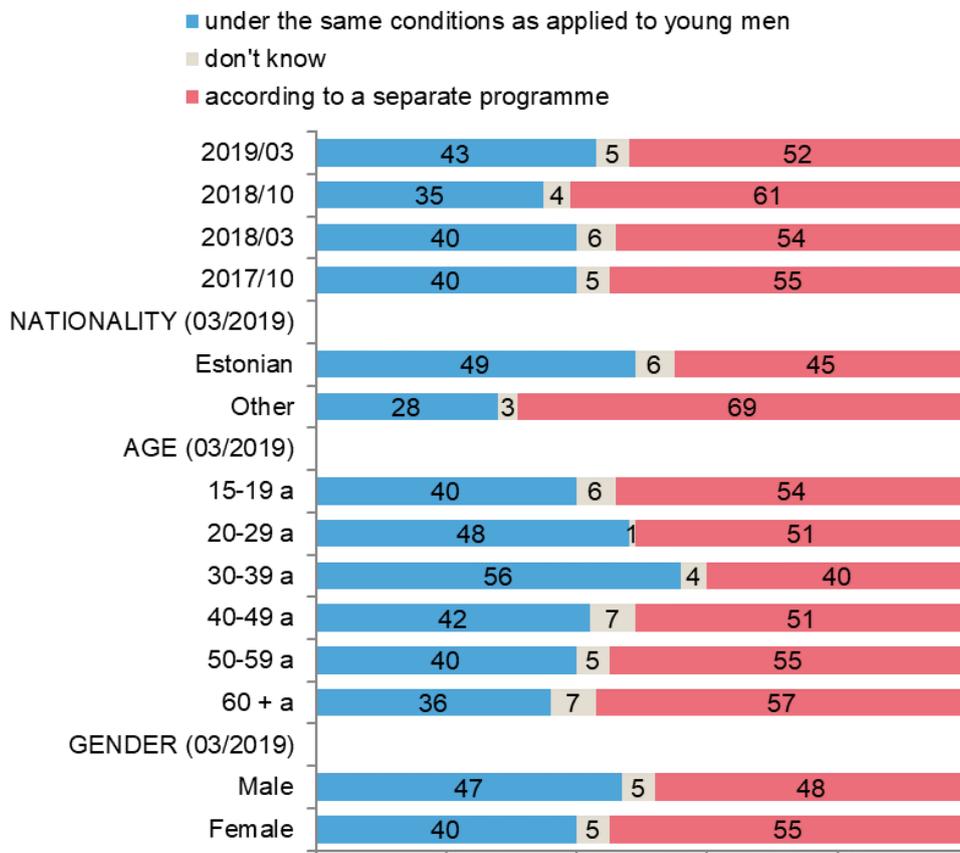
Compulsory conscript service for women is primarily supported by younger respondents who have a different understanding of gender roles than the older generation. Compulsory conscript service for women is supported by 13% of respondents under 20 years of age and 7% of respondents aged 20–29. One fifth of the respondents above 56 years of age would still like to keep women away from conscript service.

The respondents who considered voluntary or compulsory conscript service for women certainly or rather necessary were asked about the form in which the conscript service should take place: under the same conditions as applied to young

men or through a separate programme, which would take the different physical abilities of women into account.

The prevailing view is that conscript service for women should be conducted according to a separate programme (Figure 39). This view is more prevalent among respondents of other nationalities (69%). Such a solution also gained above average support among older respondents (57%) and women (55%).

**Figure 39. Which form should conscript service for women take? Comparison of 2017–2019** (%; N = all respondents who considered compulsory or voluntary conscript service for women necessary)



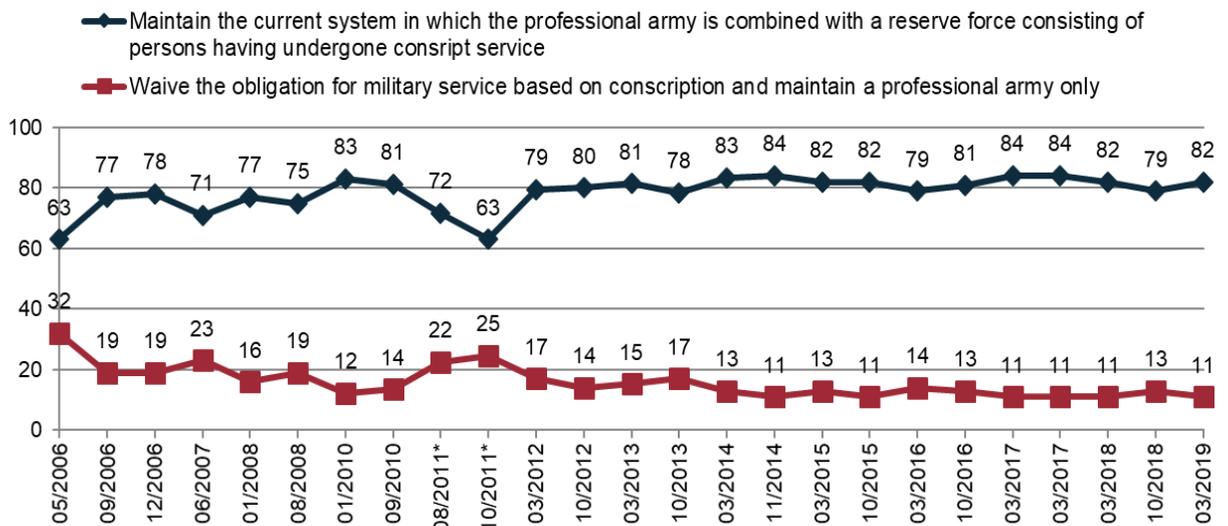
## 6.2 Attitudes towards professional defence forces

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, when a professional defence force was also preferred at the government level and when Latvia and Lithuania abandoned compulsory conscript service.

Respondents were asked to assess whether they think Estonia should waive compulsory conscription 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 more than 80% of the population would prefer maintaining the current system based on reserve forces (Figure 40). Switching to a fully professional army and waiving compulsory conscript service is favoured by only 11% of Estonia's population.

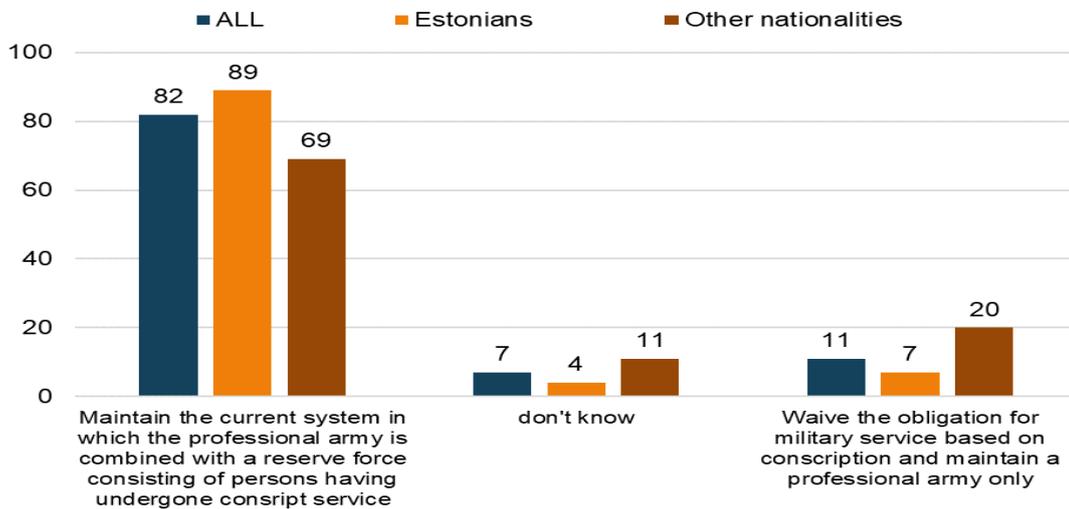
**Figure 40. Options preferred for the development of Estonia's defence concept; comparison of 2006–2019 (%)** (N = all respondents)



\* 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 respondents of other nationalities (more than average), but regardless of nationality, support for the current system is prevalent (Figure 41). Professional defence forces also receive above-average support from the youngest group of respondents (18% of respondents aged 15–19).

**Figure 41. Preferred options for developing the Estonian defence concept— comparison between Estonians and other nationalities; March 2019 (%; N = all respondents)**



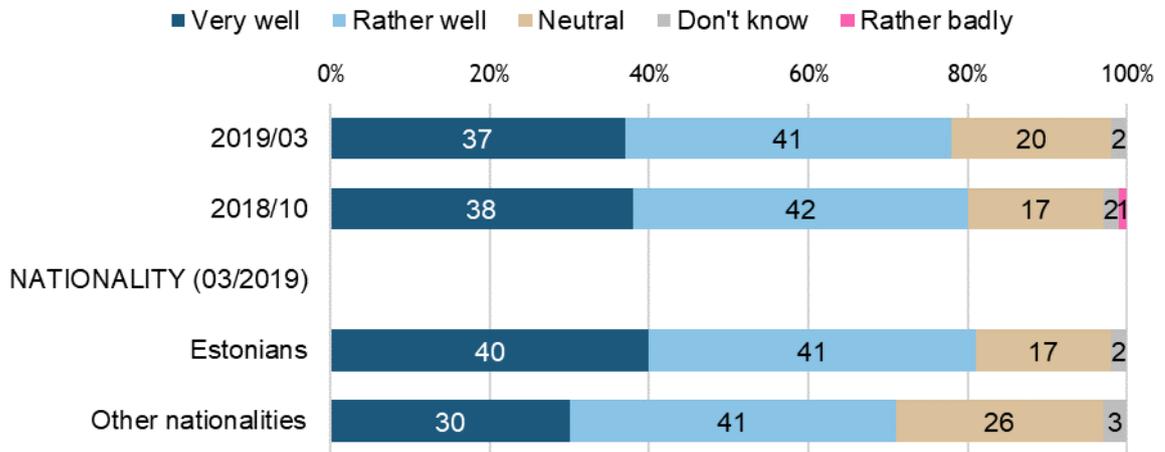
### 6.3 Attitudes towards professional servicemen and members of the Defence League

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?**

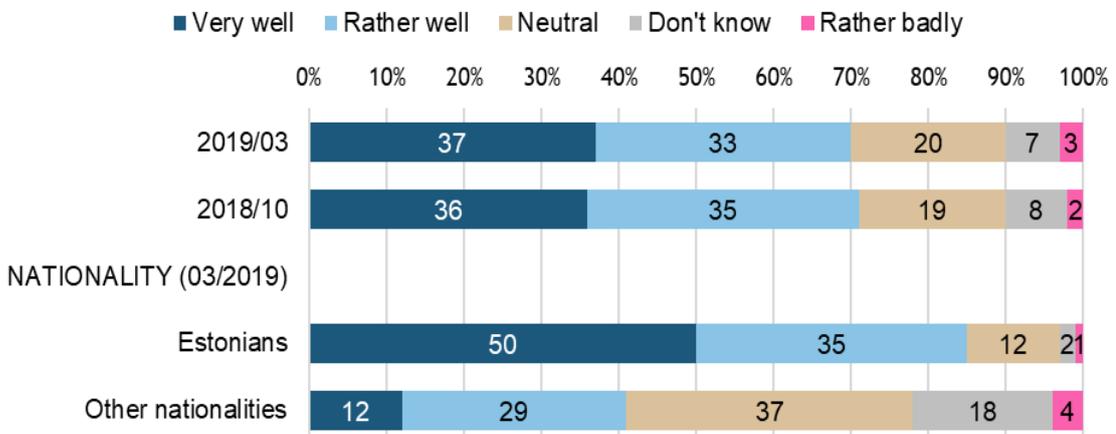
Like the opinion of the whole society, the respondents' personal attitude towards professional servicemen is also positive, even much more positive than the society's assumed general attitude proposed in previous surveys ([Figure 42](#)).

**Figure 42. Attitudes towards professional servicemen; October 2018/March 2019** (%; N = all respondents)



The respondents' attitude toward members of the Defence League is also mostly positive ([Figure 43](#)).

**Figure 43. Attitude towards voluntary members of the Defence League; October 2018/March 2019** (%; N = all respondents)



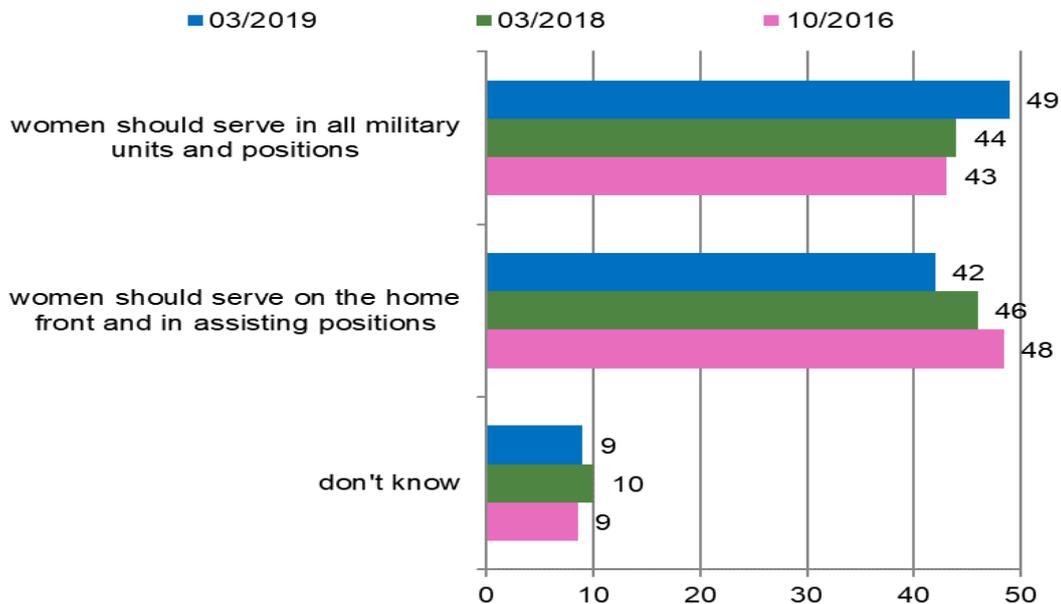
While the Estonian respondents' attitude towards voluntary members of the Defence League as well as professional servicemen is overwhelmingly positive, respondents of other nationalities are remarkably more reserved towards voluntary members of the Defence League compared to Estonians. Yet, negative attitudes are expressed by only a marginal minority of non-Estonians.

## 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?**

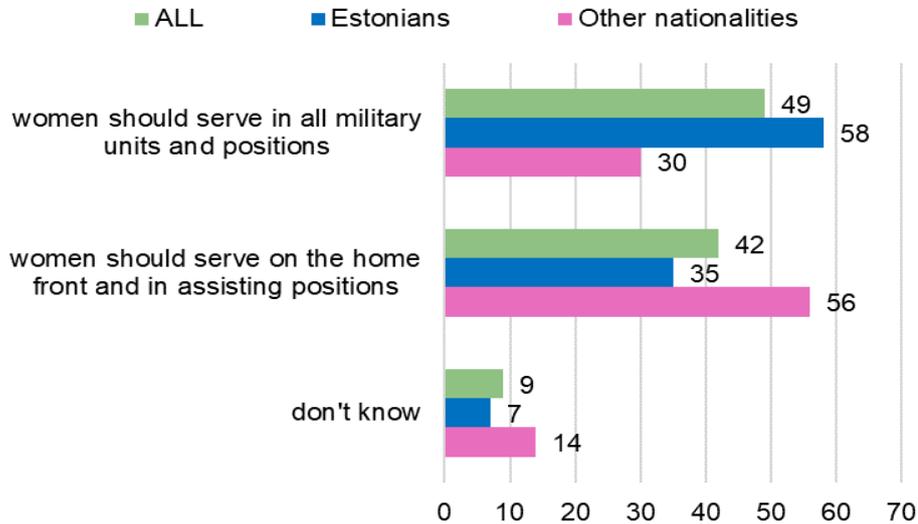
Over the years, perceptions of the potential role of women in the Defence Forces are slowly but persistently changing (Figure 44).

**Figure 44. Opinions on the role of women in the Defence Forces; comparison of 2016–2019** (%; N = all respondents)



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

**Figure 45. Opinions on the role of women in the Defence Forces, comparison between Estonians / other nationalities; March 2019 (%)** (N = all respondents)



## 6.5 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 25% and 26% of the respondents respectively. One tenth of the respondents considered participation in rescue operations or raising defence willingness among the population as the most important. The priorities attributed to the activities of the Defence League have been similar throughout the years.

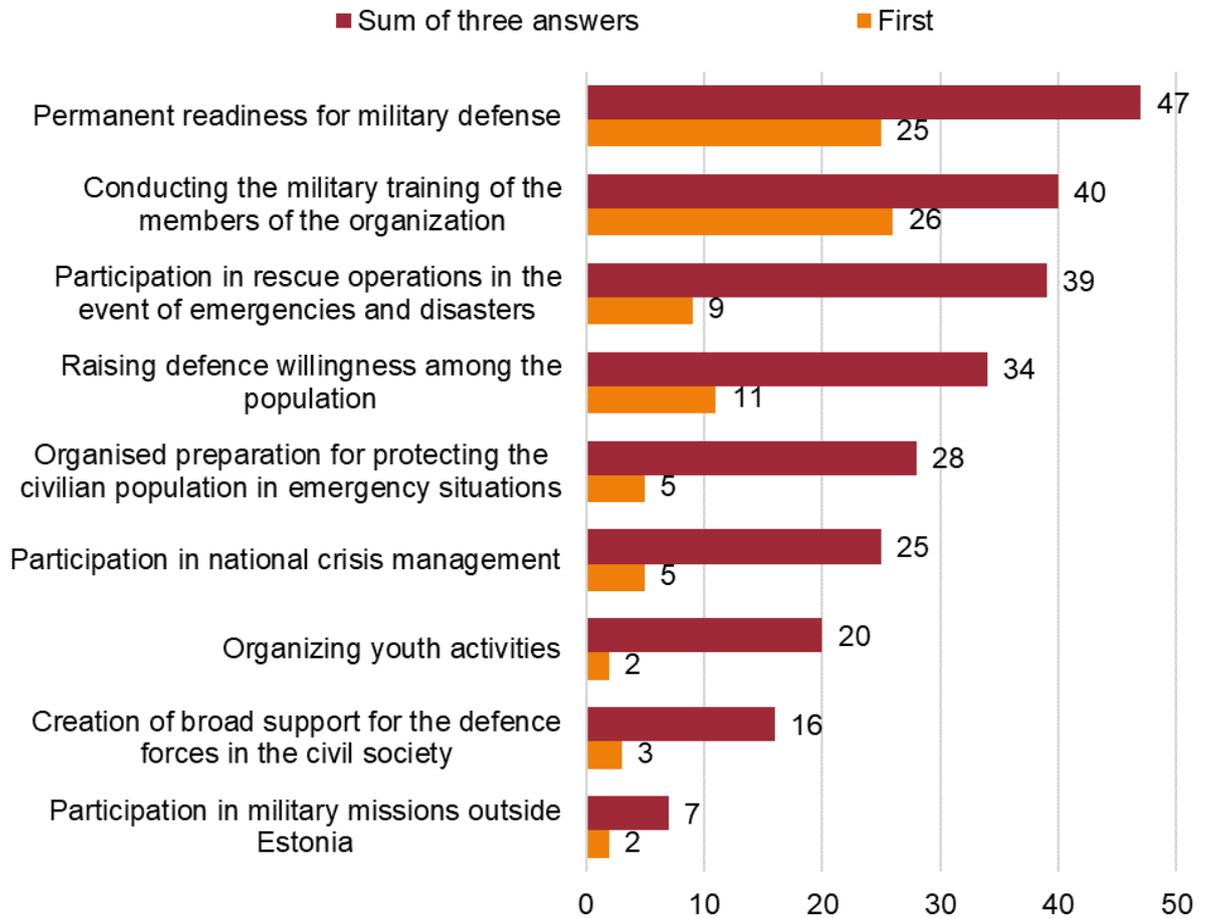
Permanent readiness for military defence (47%) ranks first in the overall summary of the three tasks; conducting military training of the members of organisation ranks second (40%), with participation in rescue operations in the event of emergencies and disasters right behind it (39%).

A third of the population think that raising defence willingness among the population is among the three most important tasks of the Defence League (34%).

One fourth of the respondents consider organising the protection of civilians in emergency situations (28%) and participating in resolving domestic security crises (25%) among the three most important tasks. For one fifth of the respondents, organising recreational activities for young people is considered to be among the three most important tasks.

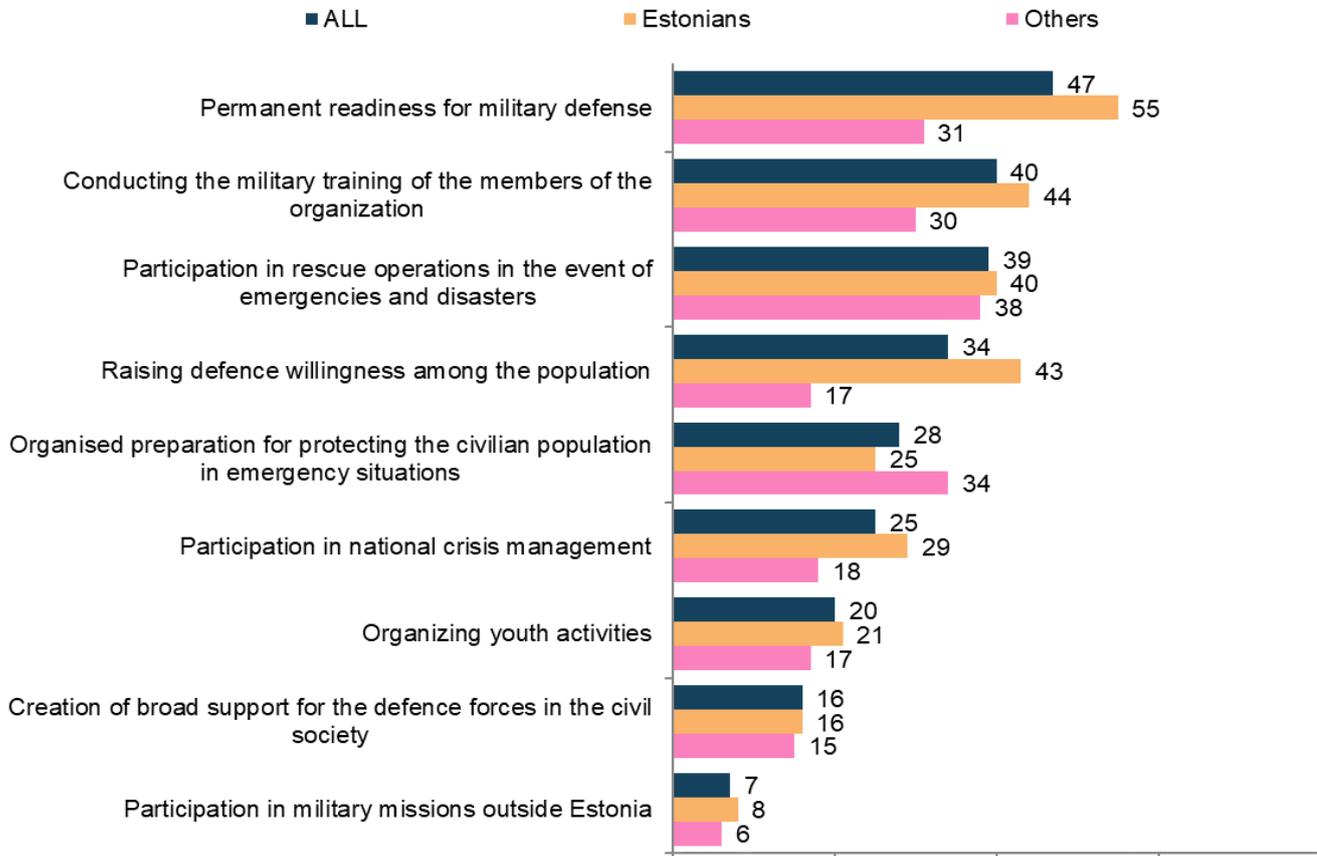
Participation in military operations outside Estonia was the least popular choice among the tasks of the Defence League (Figure 46).

**Figure 46. Main tasks of the Defence League, March 2019**  
(%; N = all respondents)



While Estonians mainly consider the Defence League a national defence organisation, the main task of which is being constantly prepared for the military defence of the state (55% place it among the three most important tasks), conducting military training (44%), participating in rescue operations in emergencies and disasters (40%) and raising defence willingness among the population (43%), 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 (38% of respondents of other nationalities place it among the three most important tasks) and the organised protection of civilians in emergency situations (34%) its most important tasks (Figure 47).

**Figure 47. Three main tasks of the Defence League, comparison of Estonian and non-Estonian population; March 2019 (%; N = all respondents)**



## 6.6 Naiskodukaitse

### 6.6.1 Awareness of Naiskodukaitse

This time the survey included questions about Naiskodukaitse. These questions were last included in our survey in March 2017.

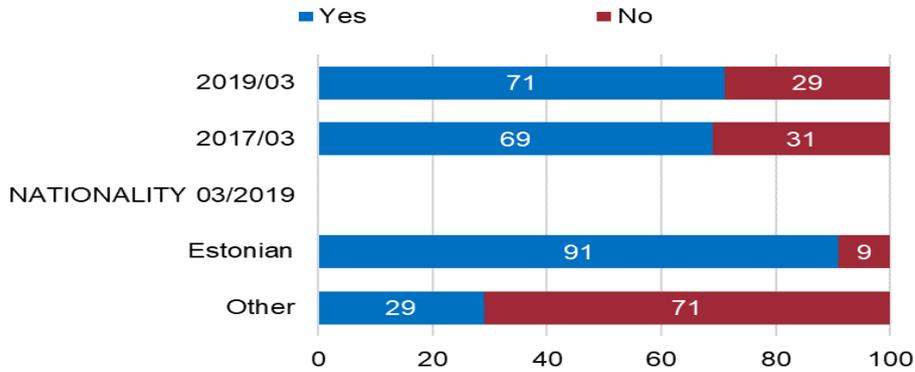
First we asked: **Have you heard of the existence of Naiskodukaitse?**

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 (91% and 29%, respectively). However, the awareness of non-Estonians has risen slightly over two years (24% in 2017) ([Figure 48](#)).

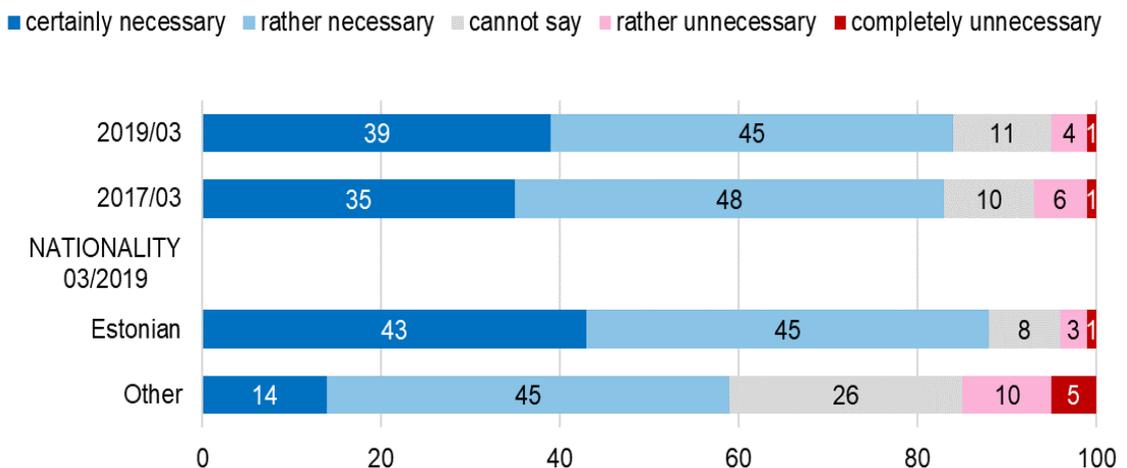
**Figure 48. Awareness of the existence of Naiskodukaitse; March 2017/2019**  
(%; N = all respondents)



The Estonians who know about Naiskodukaitse share the rather unanimous view that this organisation is necessary: it is considered certainly or rather necessary by 88% of the respondents.

Only a few of the Russian-speaking respondents knew about Naiskodukaitse, and among those who were familiar with it, about 60% were certainly or rather convinced about the necessity of the organisation. The rest do not know (26%) or consider such an organisation unnecessary (15%) (Figure 49).

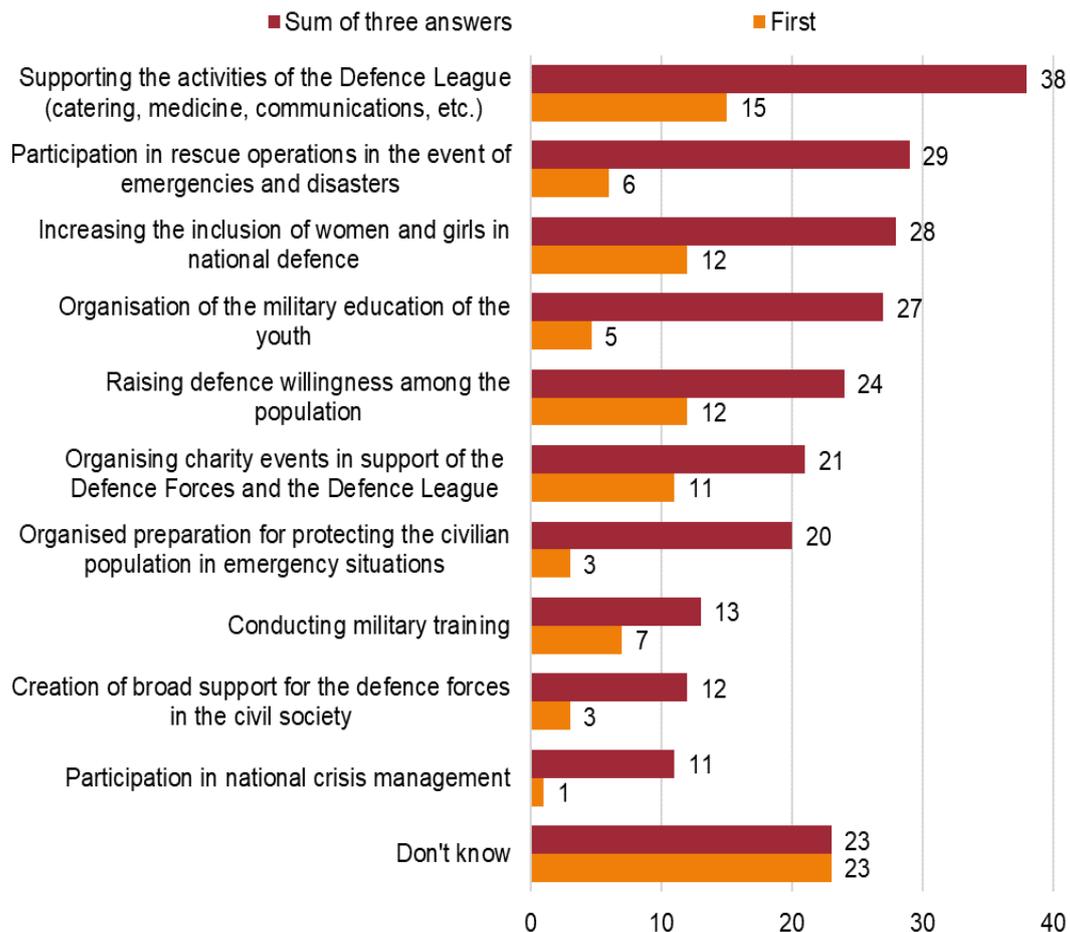
**Figure 49. Assessment of the necessity of Naiskodukaitse; March 2017/2019**  
(%; N = all respondents)



## 6.6.2 Tasks of Naiskodukaitse

As with the Defence League, we asked the respondents to evaluate the tasks of Naiskodukaitse by picking the three most important tasks from a given list (Figure 50).

**Figure 50. Main tasks of Naiskodukaitse; March 2019** (%; N = all respondents)



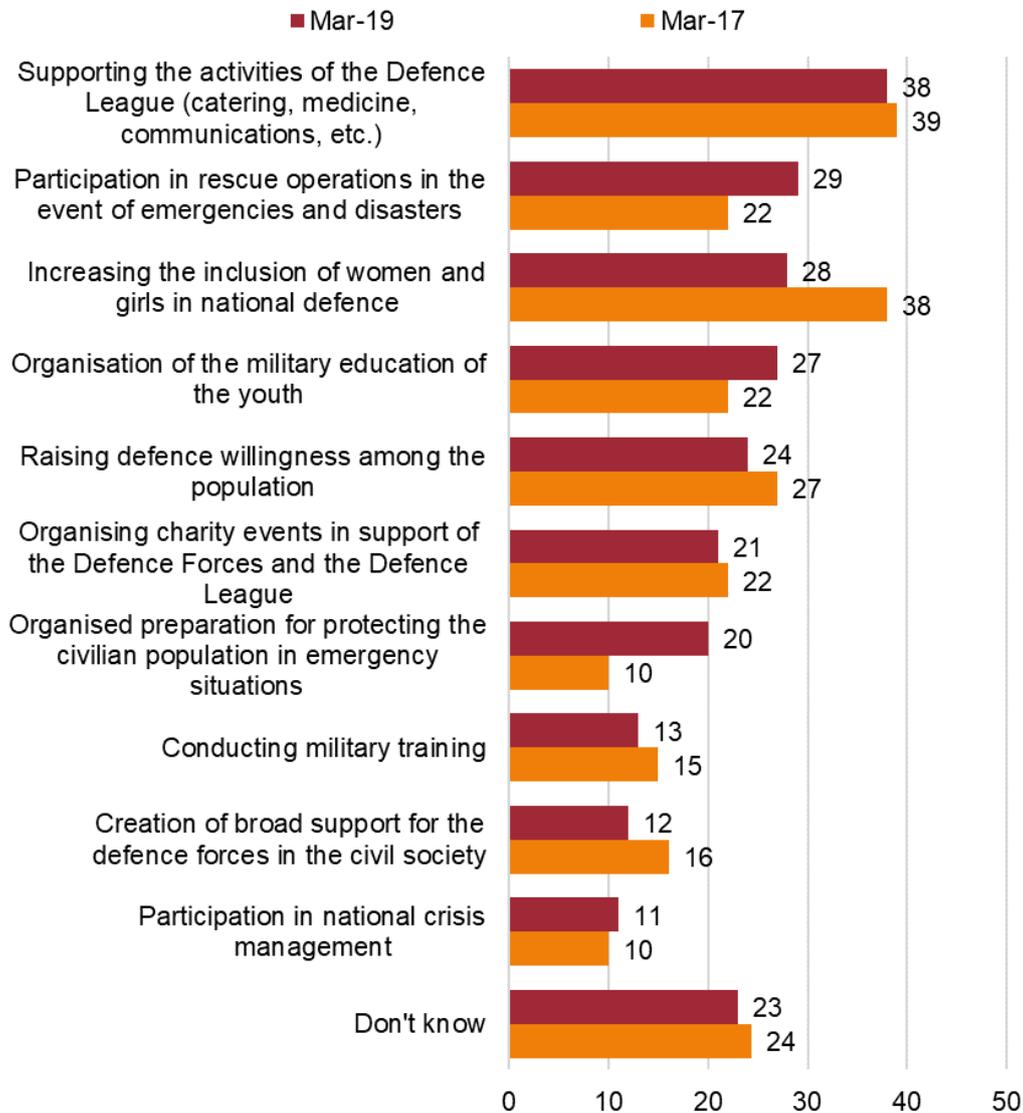
The rather equally selected first options were supporting the activities of the Defence League (15%), increasing the inclusion of women and girls in national defence (12%), raising defence willingness among the population (12%) and organising charity events in support of the Defence Forces and Defence League (11%). Conducting military training was pointed out first by 7%.

Supporting the activities of the Defence League also remained a priority in aggregate of the three choices (38%), followed by participation in rescue work (29%), involving women and girls in national defence (28%) and organising youth leisure activities (27%). Nearly a quarter (24%) consider raising defence willingness among the population among the three main tasks, while one fifth considers organising charity events and participating in rescue activities in the event of

emergencies and disasters the most important. If we compare the results of this survey with those of two years ago (Figure 51), supporting the activities of the Defence League is still considered to be the most important task of Naiskodukaitse.

Naiskodukaitse is less often seen as an organisation dedicated only to the inclusion of women in national defence; instead, the functions related to the substantive activities of Naiskodukaitse (participation in rescue operations and protecting the civilian population in emergency situations, as well as the organisation of leisure activities for the youth) are highlighted more frequently.

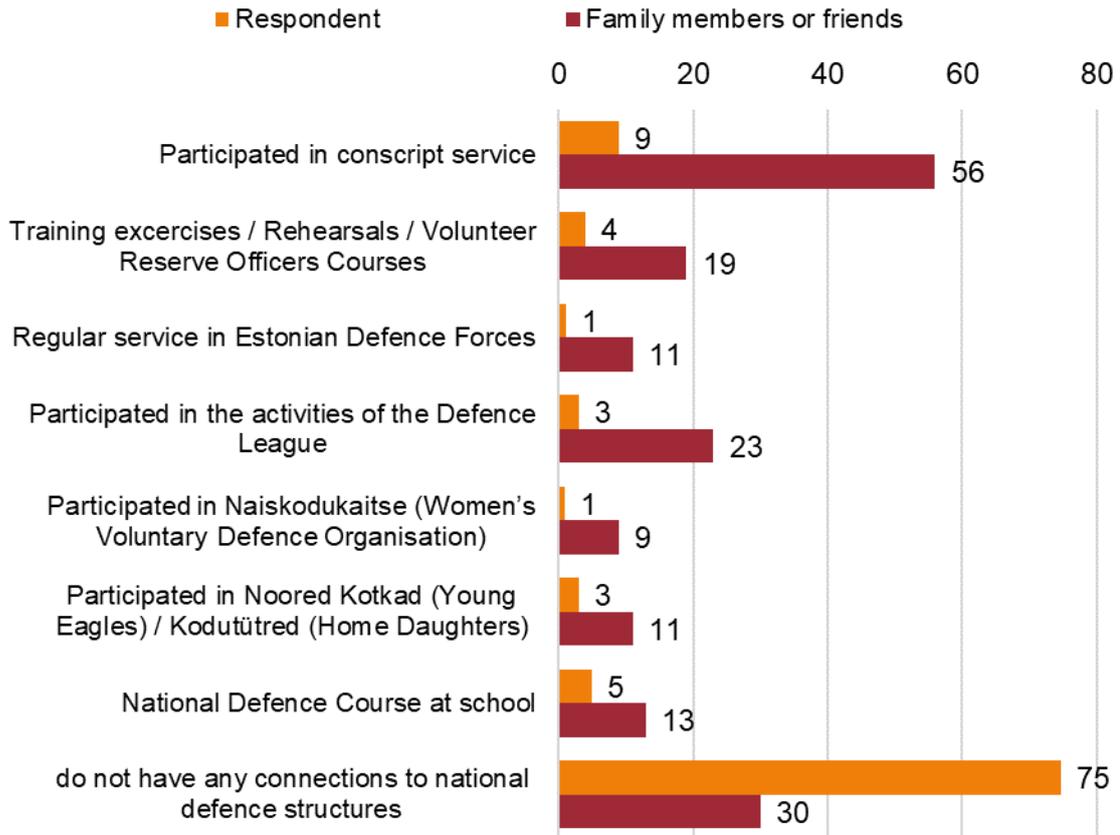
**Figure 51. Main tasks of Naiskodukaitse, comparison of March 2017/2019**  
(%; N = all respondents)



## 6.7 Exposure to national defence structures

Every survey also establishes how the respondents, their family and friends have been exposed to national defence structures (Figure 52).

**Figure 52. Exposure to national defence structures; March 2019**  
(%; N = all respondents)



According to the most frequent responses, people have been mostly exposed to conscript service (9%), national defence training (5%) or have participated in reservists' training exercises (4%).

More than half of the respondents' family members or friends have undergone conscript service, while 23% 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.

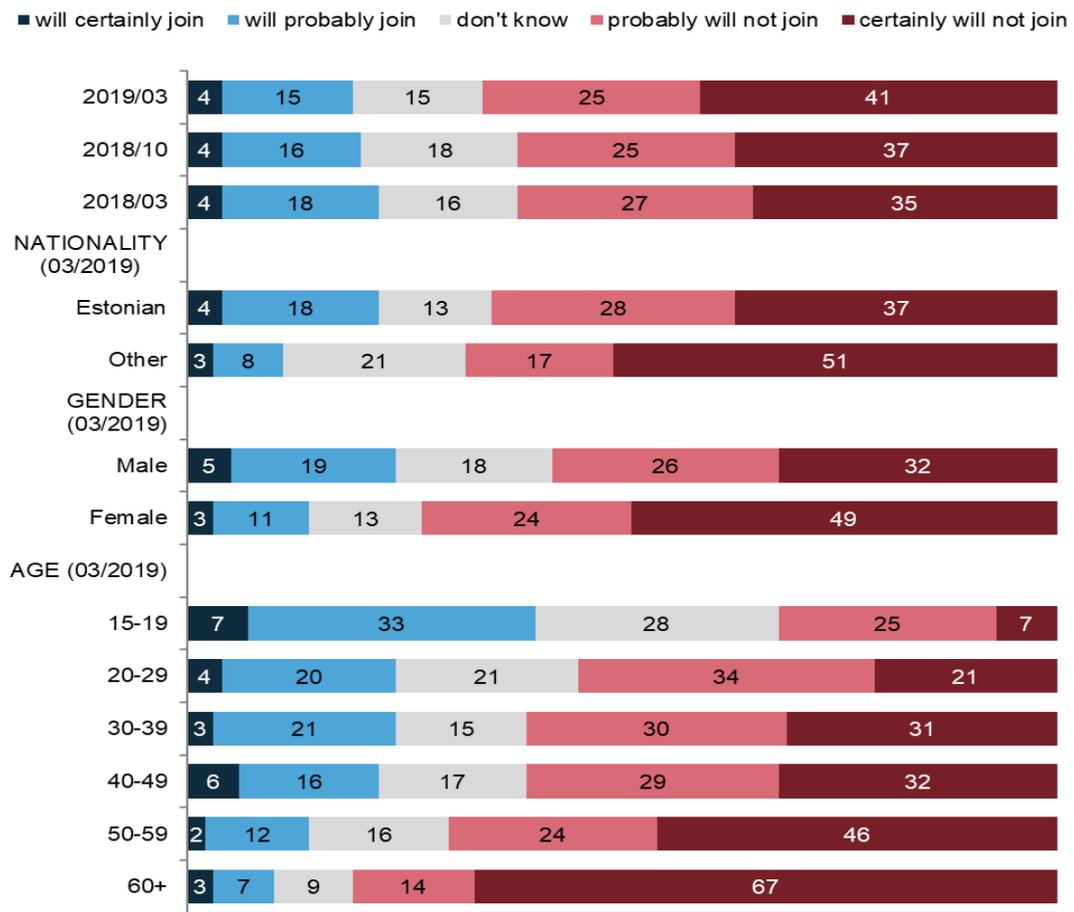
3% of the respondents (5% of Estonians; 6% men) participate in the activities of the Defence League themselves, 33% of Estonians and 29% of men have been exposed to the Defence League through a family member or friend.

## 6.8 Opinions on joining the Defence League and Naiskodukaitse

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

The respondents who were not members of the Defence League or related organisations were asked whether they would want to join the Defence League (Figure 53).

**Figure 53. Willingness to join the Defence League; comparison of 2018–2019** (%; N = respondents who are not yet members of the Defence League)



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 has slightly decreased.

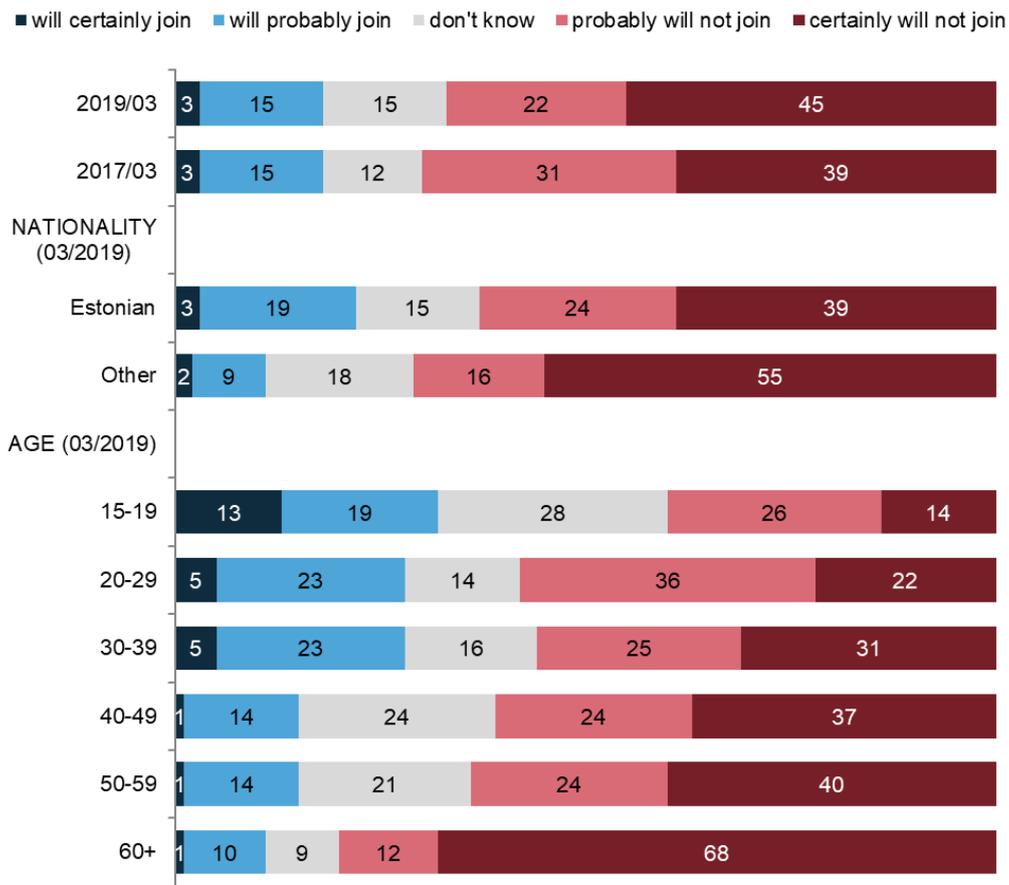
4% of Estonian respondents would certainly be ready to join and 18% would probably be ready to join, the respective indicators for non-Estonian respondents are 3% and 8%.

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: 40% of those below the age of 20 and one fourth of those between 20 and 49 years of age express this view.

Only 1% 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, 18% would be certainly or probably ready to join (23% of Estonians and 6% of non-Estonians) ([Figure 54](#)).

**Figure 54. Readiness to join Naiskodukaitse; March 2019** (%; N = women who are not connected to Naiskodukaitse)



Women in the youngest age group are the most optimistic about joining Naiskodukaitse: 13% would be certainly and 19% probably ready to join. 28% of women between 20 and 39 years of age would be ready to join Naiskodukaitse.

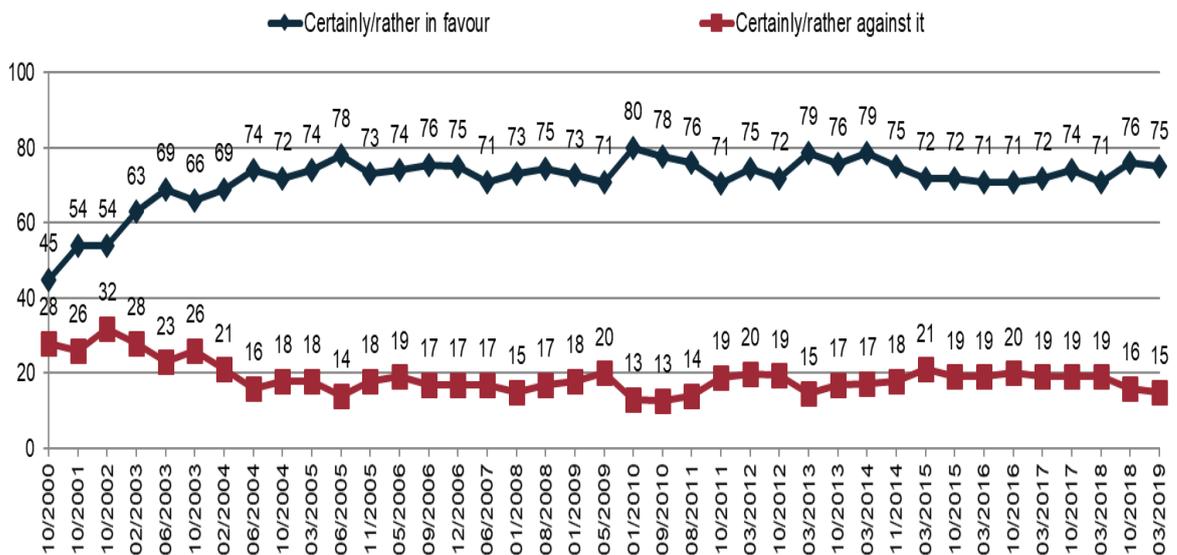
## 7 NATO

The seventh, NATO-related chapter provides an overview of the population's attitude towards Estonia's membership in NATO, their views on the role of NATO in providing security to Estonia and the ways in which the steps NATO has taken to ensure Estonian security in the world's new security situation are assessed. The respondents were also asked to assess allied troops stationed in Estonia by way of pre-provided adjectives.

### 7.1 Attitude towards membership in NATO

In March 2019, Estonian membership in NATO was favoured by 75% of the population. 43% are certainly in favour of and 32% rather in favour of the NATO membership. 15% of Estonian residents are against NATO membership while 9% of the population have no opinion in this matter (Figure 55).

**Figure 55. Attitudes towards joining NATO / NATO membership; comparison of 2000–2019 (%)**; N = all respondents



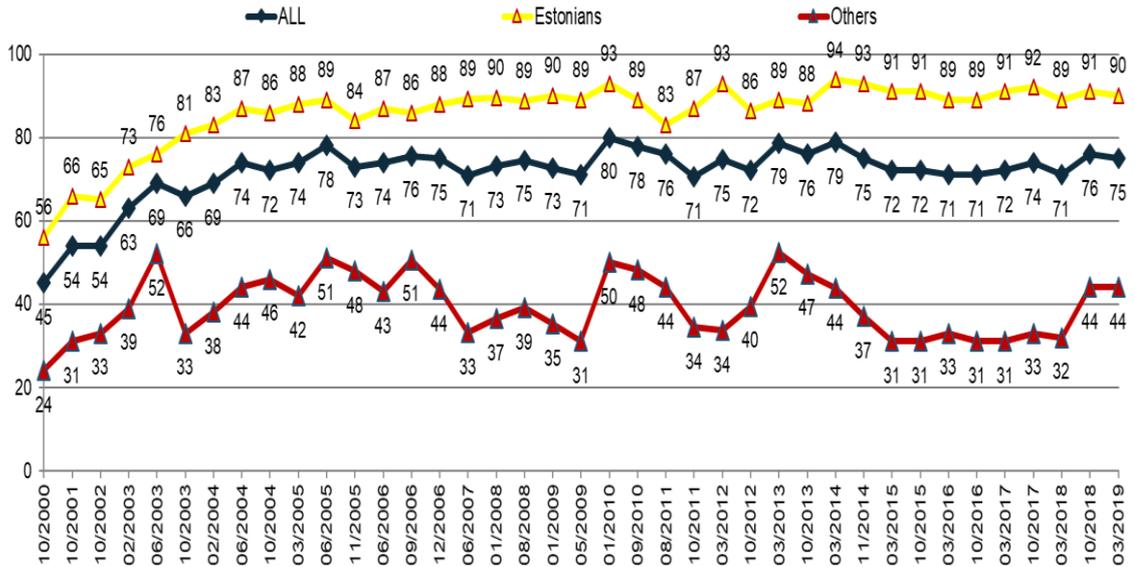
While 90% and even more of the Estonian respondents have been in favour of NATO membership for a long time, support for NATO among the respondents of other nationalities is considerably lower and more volatile, depending significantly on political events in the world and the media coverage thereof.

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. 38%

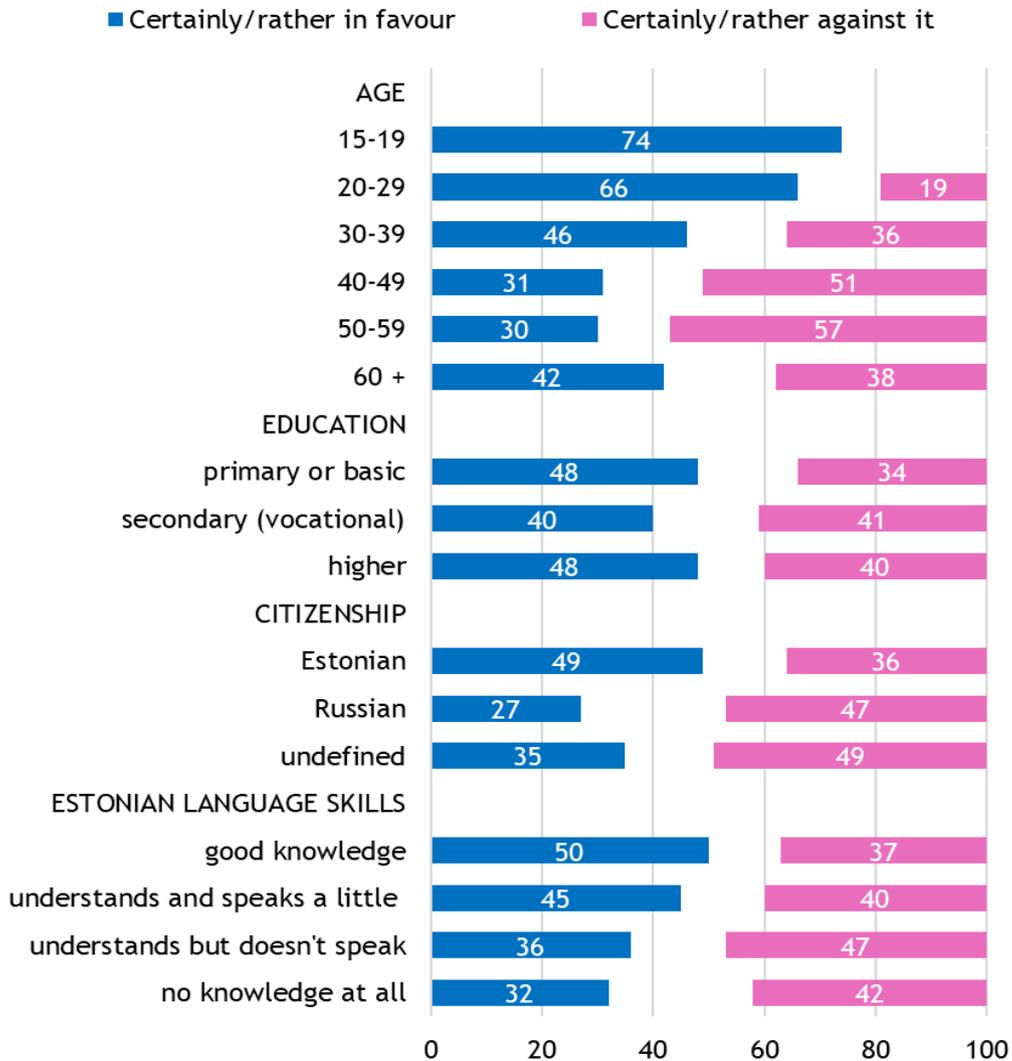
of respondents are against NATO membership and nearly one fifth (18%) have no opinion in this matter (Figure 56).

**Figure 56. 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 57).

**Figure 57. Attitudes towards NATO membership among different groups of non-Estonians; March 2019** (% , N = non-Estonian respondents)



Non-Estonians aged 40–59 who are not proficient in Estonian or speak it a little and who do not have Estonian citizenship were the most averse to NATO membership. However, more than two thirds of non-Estonians with proficiency in Estonian under 30 years of age support Estonia’s NATO membership.

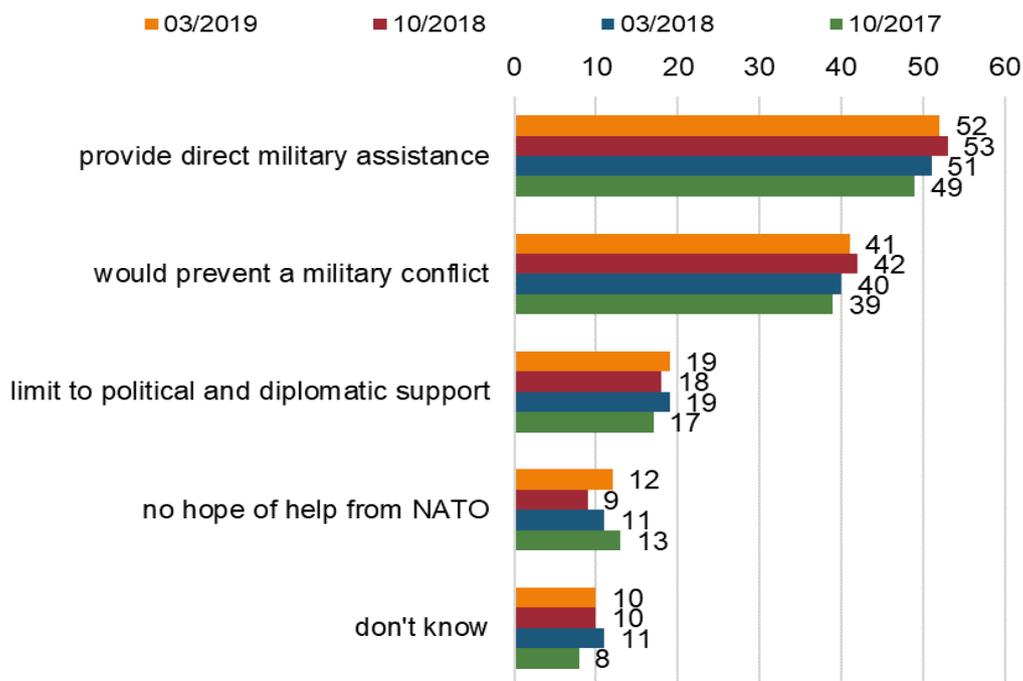
## 7.2 NATO’s assistance in the event of a potential threat

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.

More than half of the respondents found that NATO would provide direct military assistance in the event of an impending threat to Estonia and more than 40% believe that membership in NATO would be able to prevent a military attack against Estonia completely. 19% of the respondents found that NATO members would limit their help to political and diplomatic support while 12% thought that NATO would not help at all. Over the past two years, opinions on NATO's role have been very stable (Figure 58).

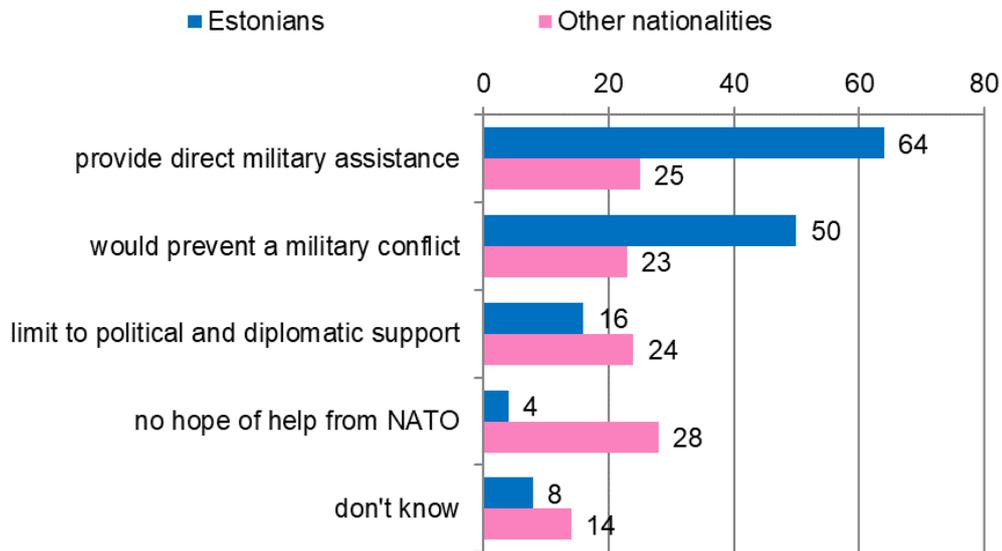
**Figure 58. Role of NATO in ensuring Estonia's security if Estonia is exposed to military threat; 2017/2019 (%)** (N = all respondents)



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 64% and 50% of Estonians, respectively (Figure 59).

Only 25% (32% in October) of non-Estonian respondents believe in NATO's military assistance. 28% of the respondents find that NATO would not help Estonia and 24% believe that NATO would limit its aid to political and diplomatic support. The share of those non-Estonians who have no faith in NATO has increased compared to October 2018.

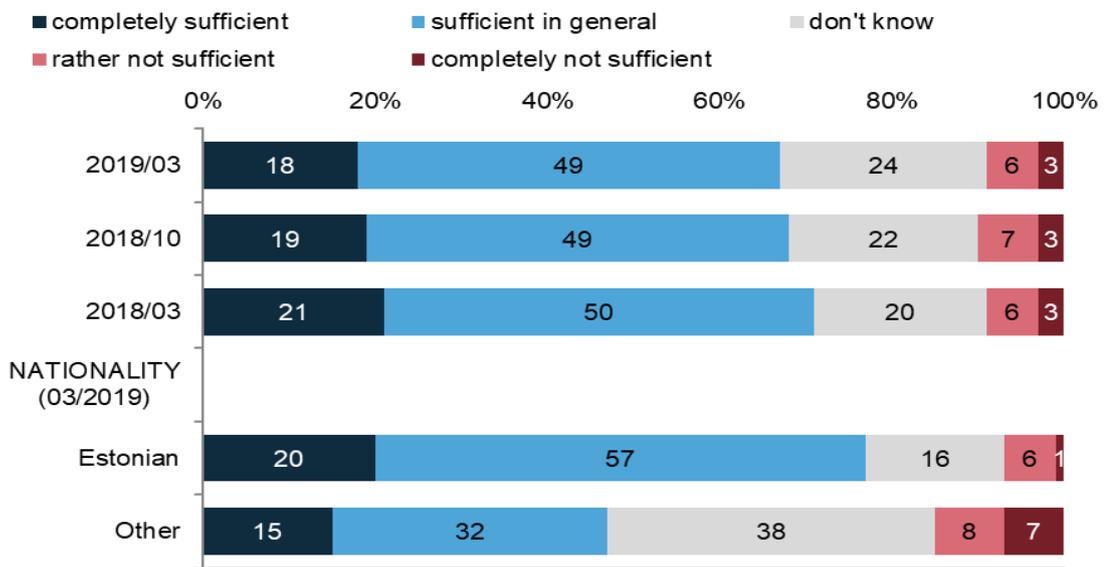
**Figure 59. Role of NATO in ensuring Estonia's security if Estonia is exposed to military threat, comparison of Estonians and non-Estonians; March 2019** (%; N = all respondents)



### 7.3 Assessments to the actions of NATO

Since November 2014 we have studied the attitude of the Estonian population towards actions already taken by NATO to ensure better security for Estonia. The respondents were asked **whether NATO has taken sufficient measures to ensure the security of Estonia in today's security situation** (Figure 60) and how they perceive the presence of NATO allied forces in Estonia (Figure 61).

**Figure 60. Has NATO taken sufficient measures to ensure the security of Estonia? Comparison of 2018–2019** (%; N = all respondents)

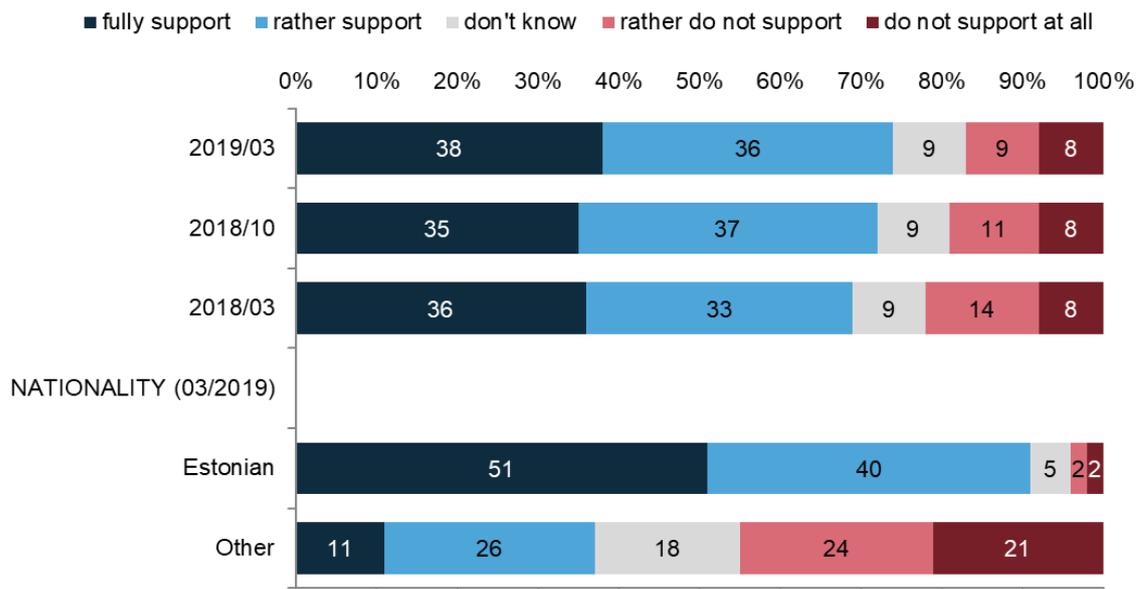


The assessments provided to steps taken by NATO for ensuring security in Estonia have been predominantly positive throughout all the surveys. The decline from 71% to 67% in a year has occurred at the expense of the growing number of respondents who replied “don’t know”. The proportion of negative assessments to NATO's activities has not increased.

More than three quarters of Estonians consider the activities of NATO sufficient. 47% of respondents from other nationalities provide a positive assessment to NATO's activities, but as many as 38% of them answered “don’t know”.

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 61](#)).

**Figure 61. What is your attitude towards the presence of NATO allied forces in Estonia? Comparison of 2018–2019 (%) ; N = all respondents)**



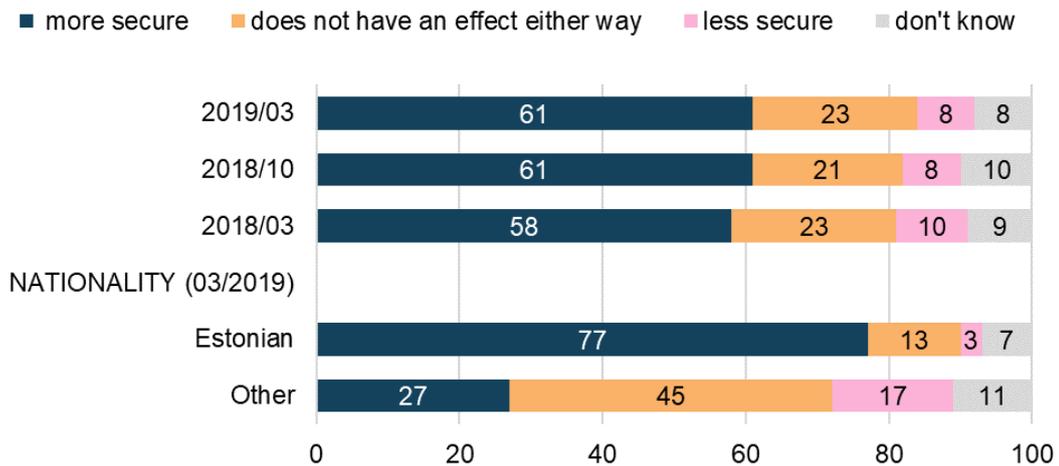
This attitude is directly related to the attitude towards NATO membership in general—those who support NATO membership are also in favour of the presence of NATO units in Estonia, but those who are against NATO membership do not like allied presence either.

## 7.4 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 77% of Estonians find that the NATO battle group has made Estonia more secure, only 27% 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 (45%) (Figure 62).

**Figure 62. What effect does the stationing of NATO battle group troops have on Estonia's security? Comparison of 2018–2019 (%)** (N = all respondents)



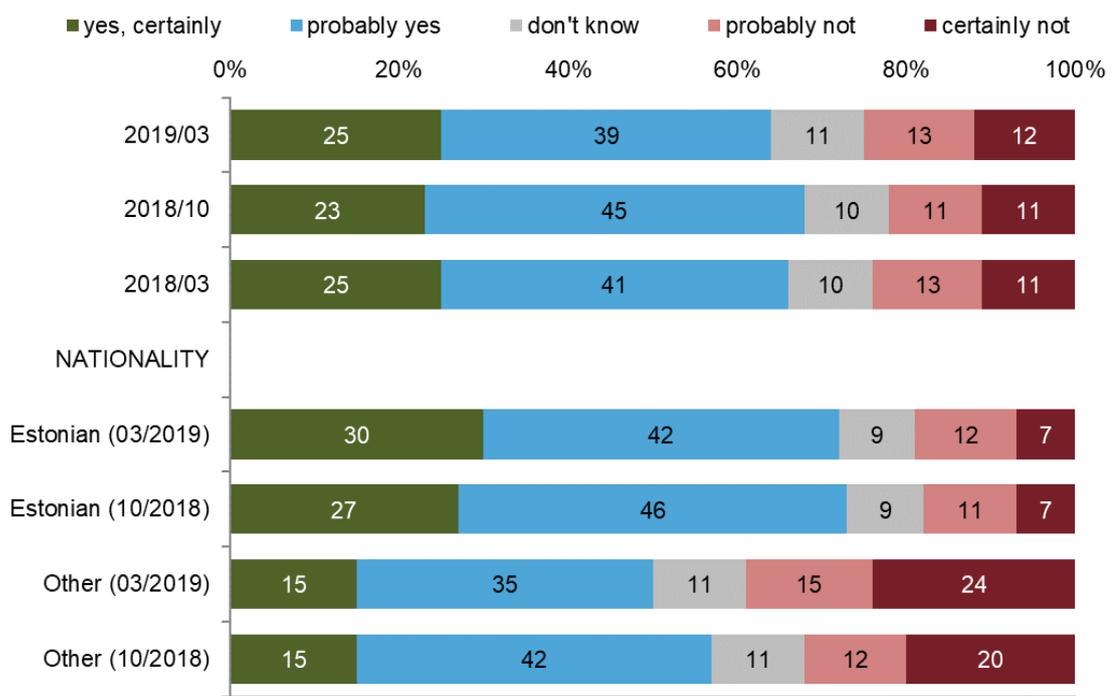
## 8 International military operations

The eighth chapter maps the attitudes towards participation in international military operations: how necessary Estonia's participation is in such operations according to the population, what 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.

## 8.1 Attitude towards participation in international operations

Positive attitudes toward Estonia’s participation in international military operations have been consistently prevalent. While support of international military operations increased to the highest level it has ever been last autumn (68%), in March 2019 there has been a slight decline, due to the negative attitude among non-Estonians. 64% of the population of Estonia believe that the Estonian Defence Forces’ units should, within their capabilities, participate in international military operations; 25% of 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 (Figure 63).

**Figure 63. Should Estonian units participate in international military operations? Comparison of 2018–2019 (%) ; N = all respondents)**



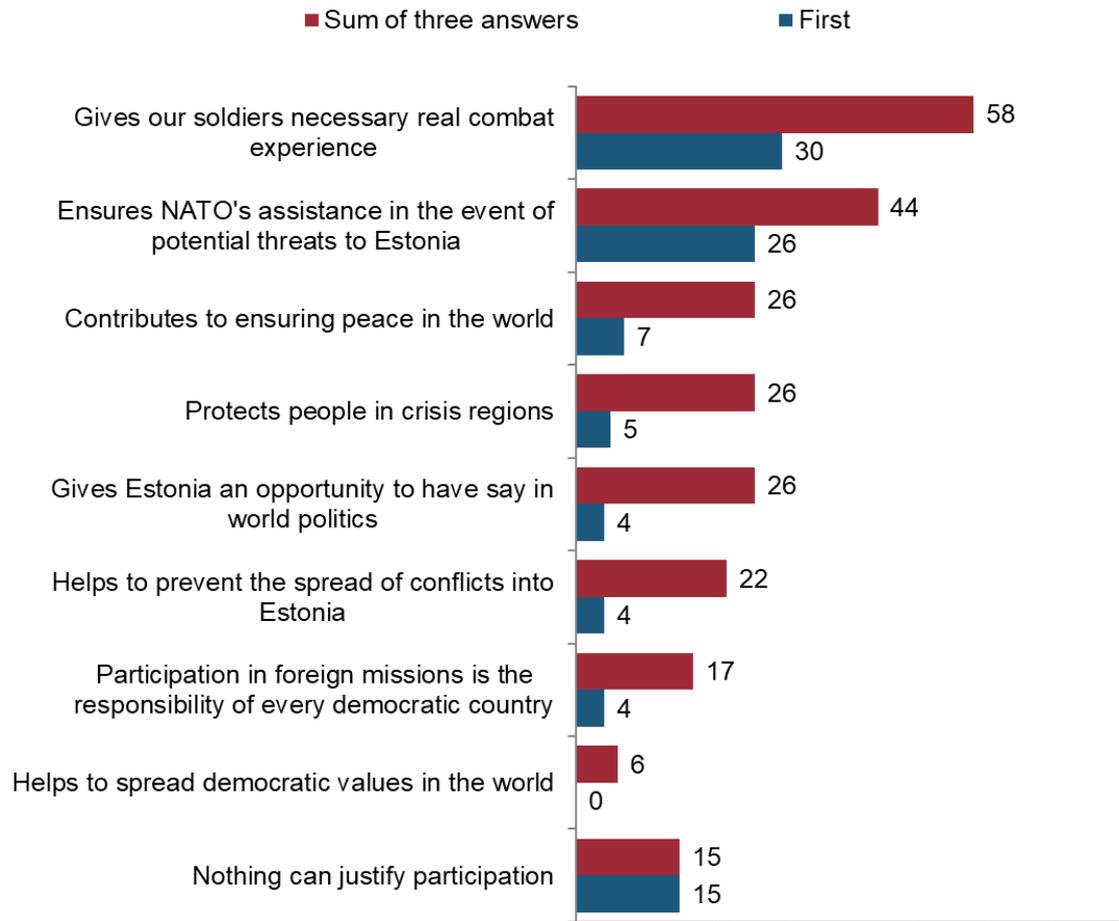
72% of Estonians are in favour of participating in international operations, 50% of non-Estonians feel the same way, which is 7% less than in past October.

## 8.2 Arguments for participation in international operations

Respondents were asked to select the three most important reasons why Estonia should participate in international military operations from a given list. The results

were fixed in sequence, i.e., the most important reason first, followed by the second and third (Figure 64).

**Figure 64. The most important reasons why Estonia should participate in international military operations; March 2019 (%) ; N = all respondents)**



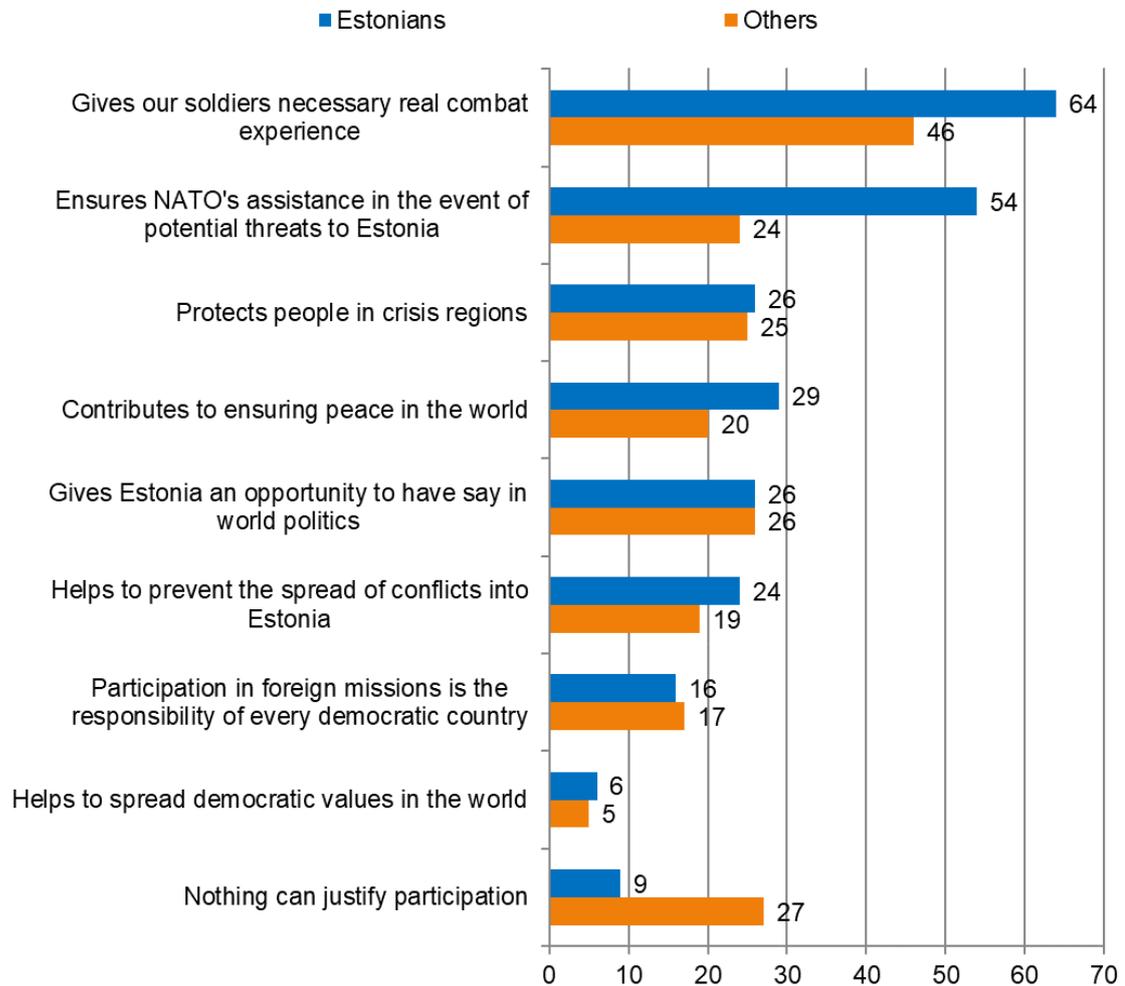
The two most important reasons named the most frequently were that participation in operations provides our soldiers real combat experience (30%) and ensures NATO's assistance in the event of a potential threat to Estonia (26%). These motives were also first and second in aggregate of the three reasons.

The following three important arguments for participating in international operations highlighted by the respondents include contributing to world peace, protecting people in crisis areas and Estonia taking the opportunity to have a say in world politics. All these reasons are mentioned by 26% of the respondents as the three most important ones.

Spreading democratic values in the world is seen as the least important (6%).

Attitudes towards participating in international military operations differ slightly among Estonians and respondents of other nationalities (Figure 65).

**Figure 65. The most important reasons why Estonia should participate in international military operations; March 2019** (sum of three reasons %; N = all respondents)



The Defence Forces gaining combat experience is the most important for both Estonian and non-Estonian respondents (64% and 46%, respectively) in aggregate of the three choices, although the latter group mentioned it less frequently.

For Estonians, ensuring NATO's assistance (54%) ranks second—this is a concept that the respondents of other nationalities are rather sceptical about (see chapter 7.2). Thus, the importance of that answer among non-Estonians is only at 24%.

For non-Estonians, the second most important choice is Estonia taking the opportunity to have a say in world politics (26%), third is protecting people in crisis areas (25%).

Compared to Estonians, more non-Estonians believe that nothing justifies the participation of Estonian servicemen in international operations (27% and 9%, respectively).

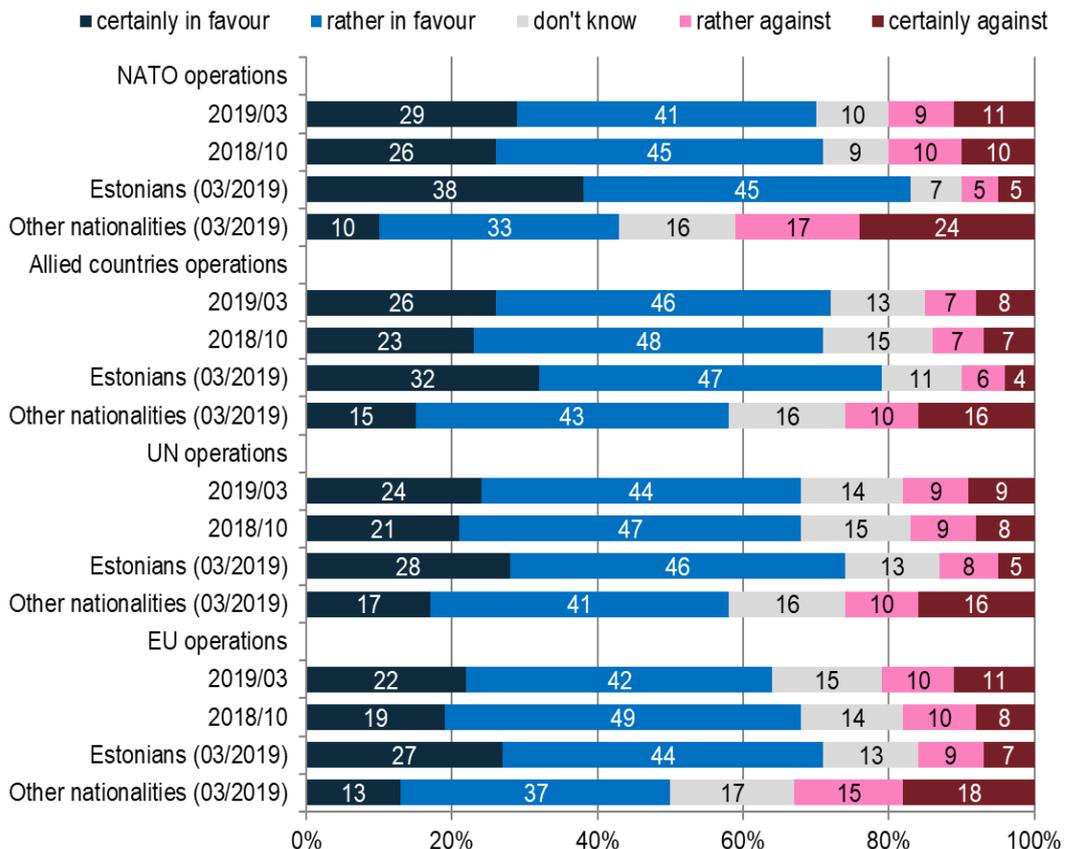
### 8.3 Attitudes towards participation in NATO, EU and UN operations

Since Estonian servicemen have participated in military operations as part of NATO, EU and UN units, we were curious about whether there is a difference in the public's attitudes towards operations conducted under the aegis of different organisations. The October 2018 survey also included the category "as part of co-operation with allied countries".

Participation in different missions is supported more or less equally: in March 2019, participation as part of NATO units was supported by 70%, as part of European Union units by 64%, as part of UN peacekeeping forces by 68%, and as part of other allied cooperation by 72% of the respondents (Figure 66).

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 (43%). However, other missions are supported by more than a half of people of other nationalities.

**Figure 66. Attitudes towards the units of the Estonian Defence Forces participating in international operations; October 2018/March 2019**  
(%; N = all respondents)

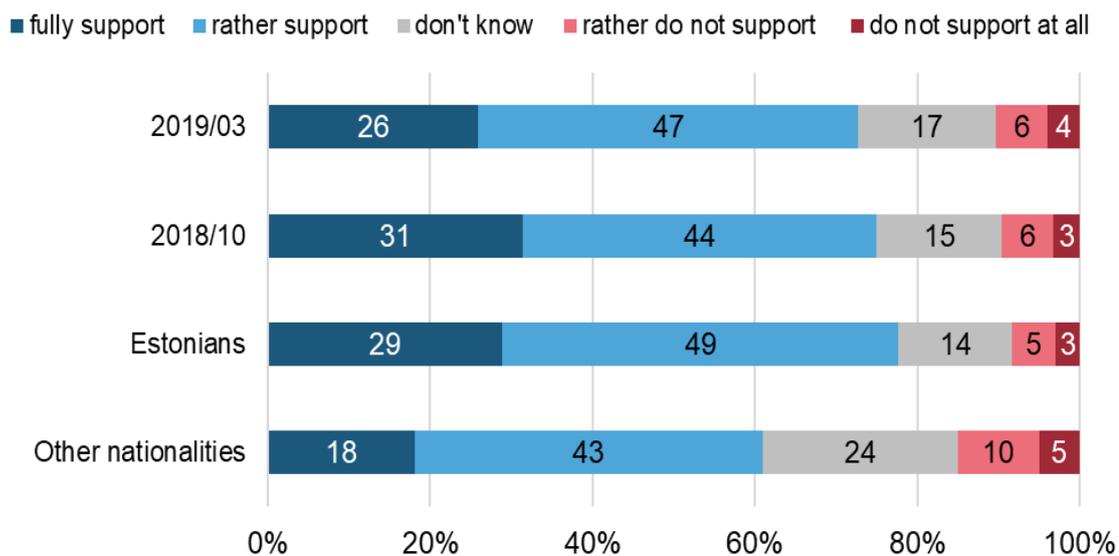


## 8.4 Opinion on the defence co-operation of the European Union

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: **Should the European Union increase defence co-operation among its Member States?**

Increasing defence co-operation between EU Member States is supported by 73% of the respondents: 78% of Estonians and 61% of respondents of other nationalities (Figure 67).

**Figure 67. Attitude toward increasing defence co-operation between EU Member States. October 2018/March 2019 (%) ; N = all respondents)**



## 9 Veteran policy

### 9.1 Primary associations with the word “veteran”

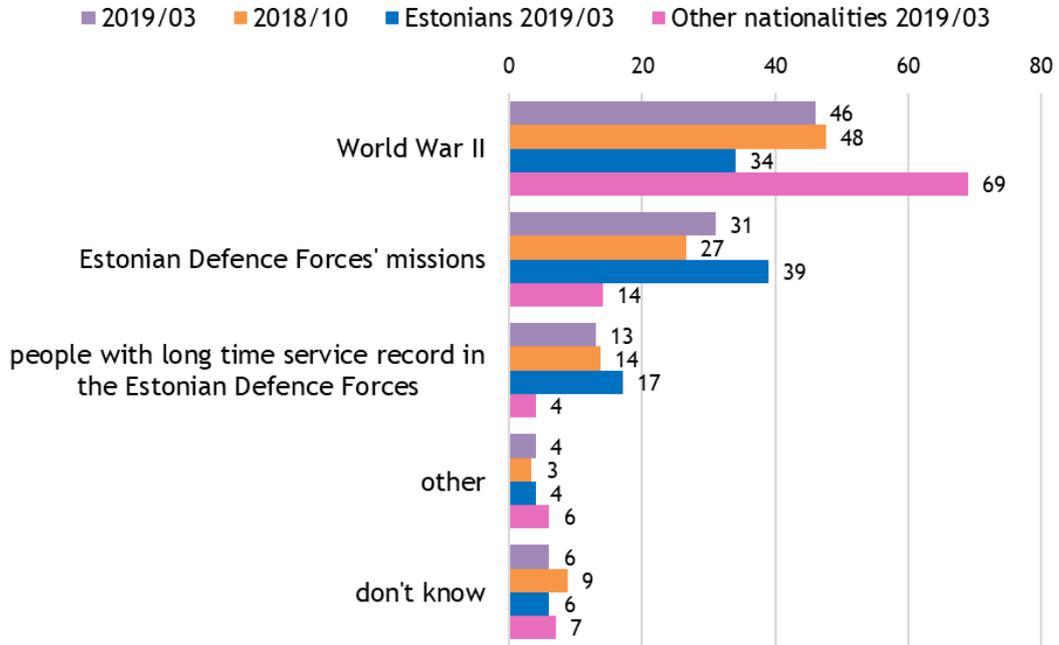
The question of what the word “veteran” signifies to people has undergone many changes during our surveys.

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 much 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 68](#)).

**Figure 68. What is your primary association with the word “veteran“ out of the three following definitions? October 2018/March 2019 (%; N = all respondents)**



World War II is still the clear leader with regard to the term “veteran” with 46%. Still, the proportion of respondents who associate the term with people who have participated in missions of the Estonian Defence Forces is slowly increasing. It has increased from 27% to 31% among all respondents.

Among Estonians, the term “veteran” has become the most frequently associated with those who have participated in the Estonian Defence Forces’ missions (from 34% in October 2018 to 39% in March 2019). 34% of Estonians associate the term with World War II.

However, among the respondents of other nationalities, World War II is still by far in the first place with 69%.

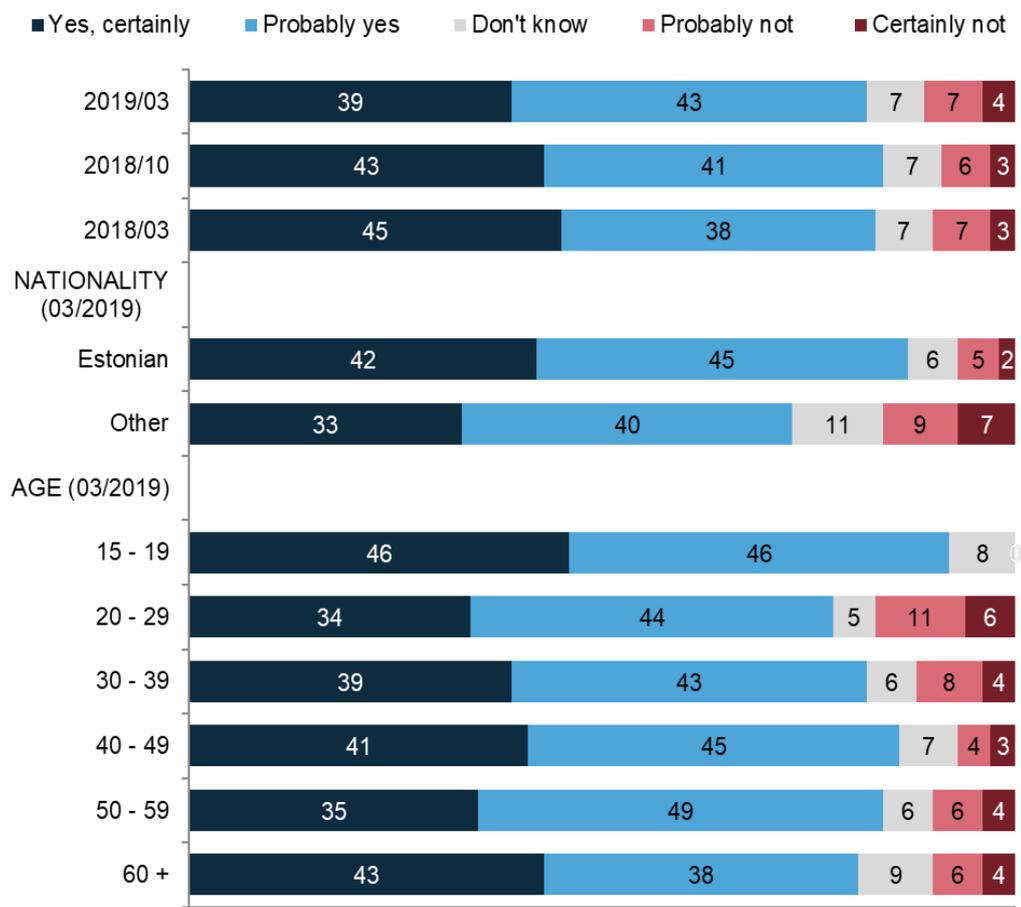
## 10 National defence instruction in schools

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.

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

82% of the respondents consider the opportunity to receive national defence instruction certainly or probably necessary (Figure 69). Estonian and non-Estonian respondents' support to national defence instruction differs by more than 10%, yet favourable attitudes clearly dominate the answers of both respondent groups (87% for Estonians and 73% for non-Estonians).

**Figure 69. Attitude towards the necessity of national defence instruction in all educational institutions providing secondary education; comparison of 2018–2019** (%; N = all respondents)



Unfortunately, it must be acknowledged that compared to Estonian-language schools, Russian-language schools have less opportunities to provide national defence instruction, which also results in lower awareness about the content of this subject among non-Estonians (and slightly lower support). Yet, only 16% of respondents of other nationalities are opposed to national defence instruction (7% of Estonians).

Support for national defence instruction is also prevalent among different age groups. Among the respondents aged 15–19 no one was opposed to national defence instruction.

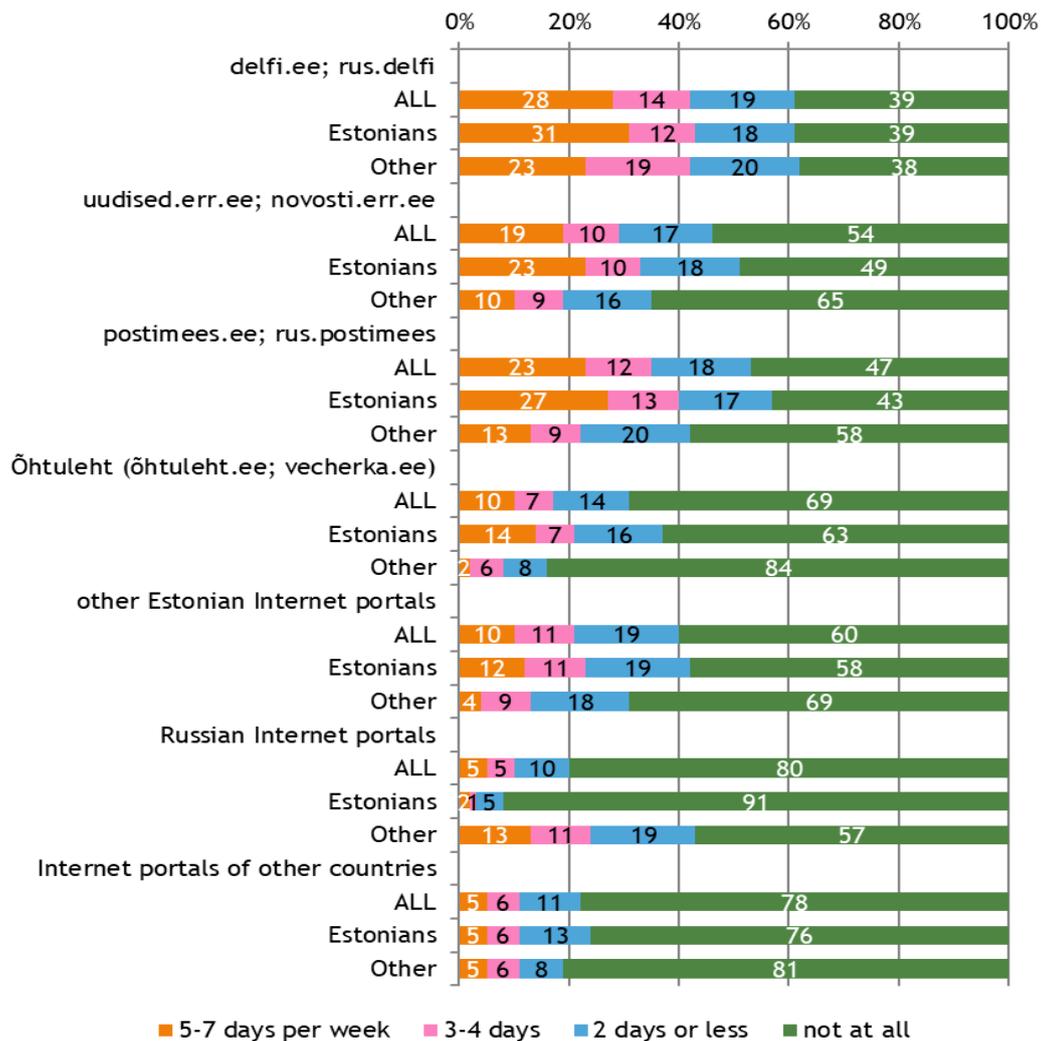
## 11 Media consumption

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 opinions expressed in the mass media.

### 11.1 Engagement with information channels

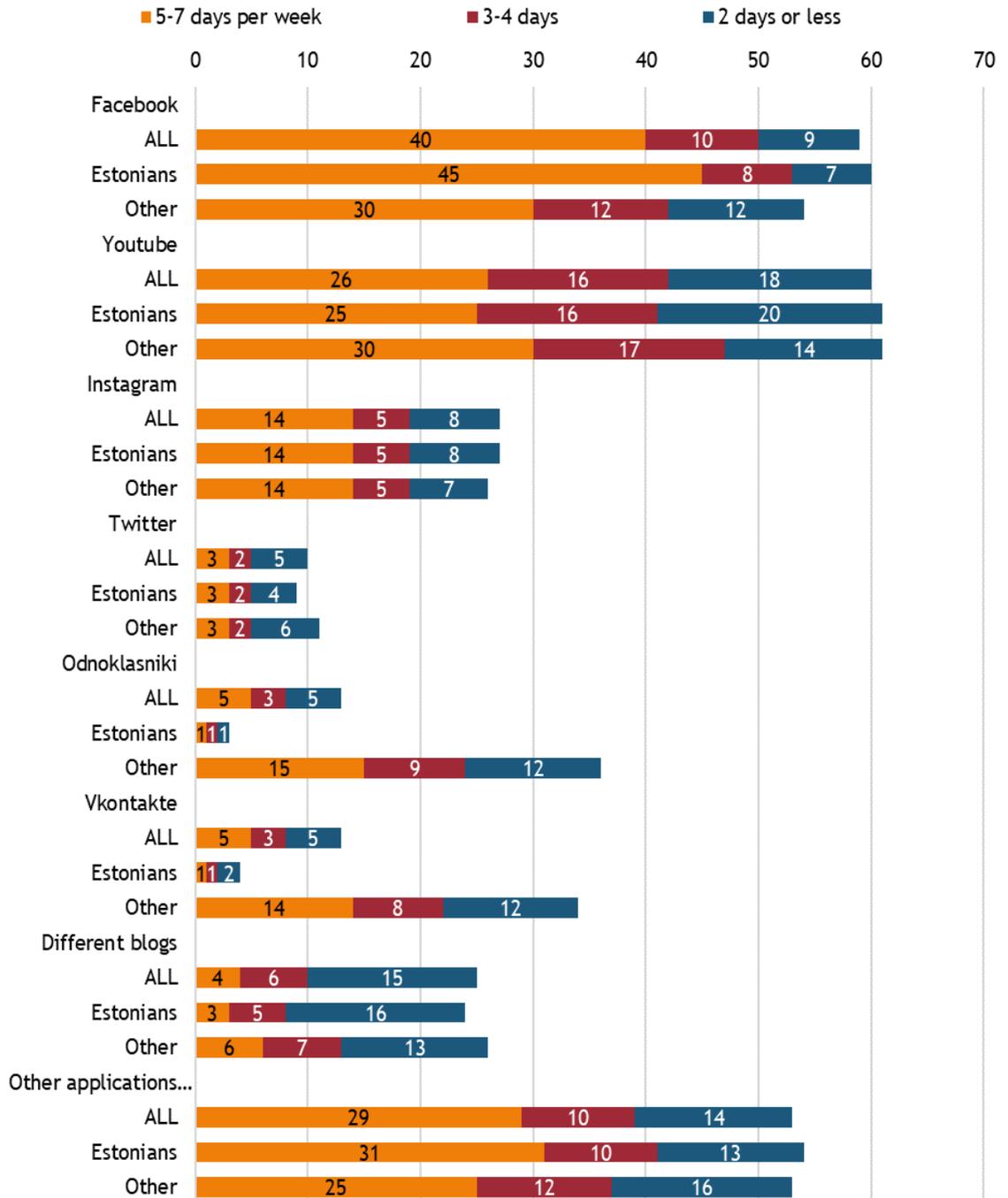
The following part presents the survey results on the respondents' engagement with different television channels and radio stations as well as visits to Internet portals in the form of frequency distributions.

**Figure 70. News portal and online newspaper visits; March 2019** (%; N = all respondents)



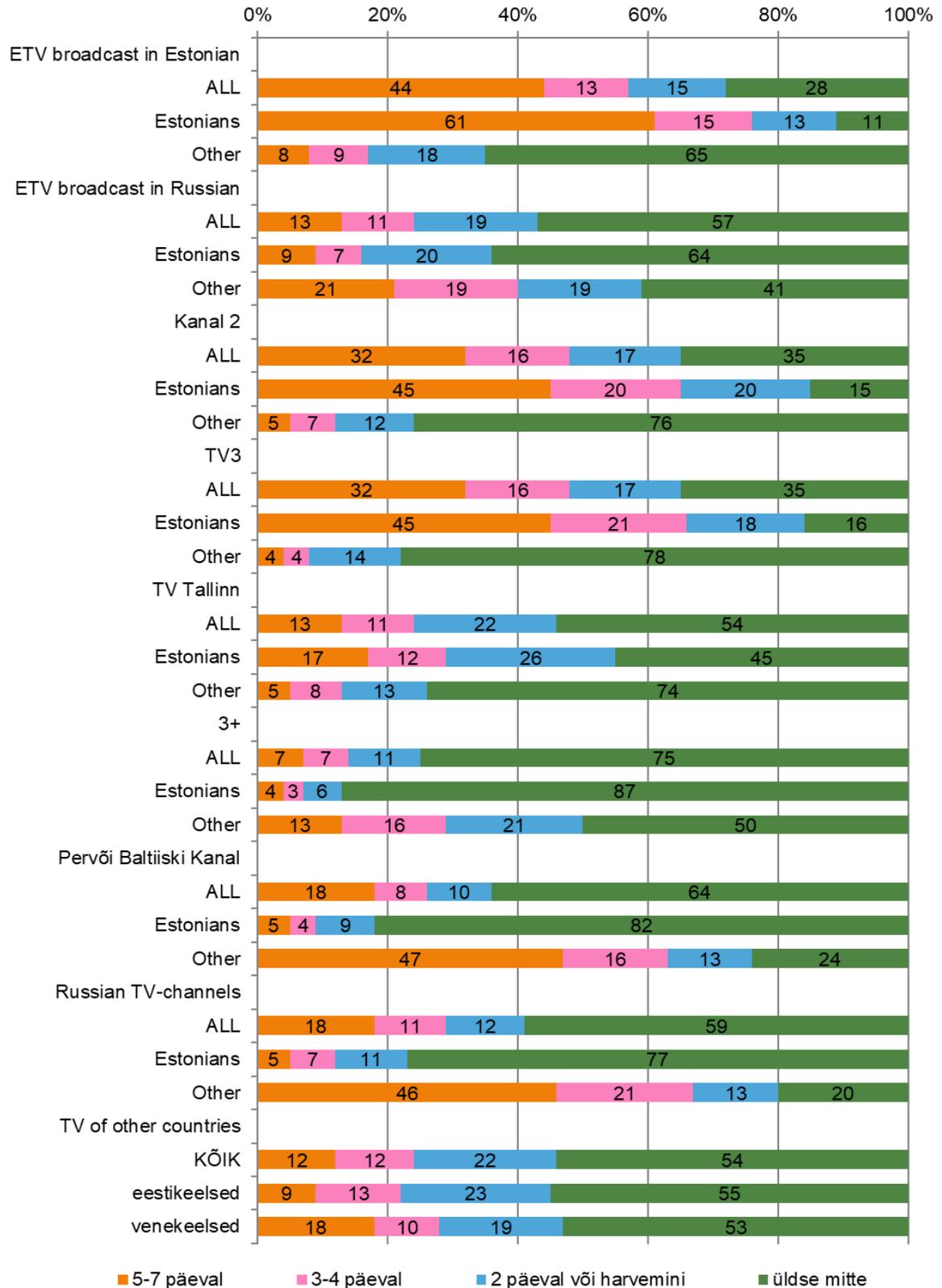
The most popular news portals were Delfi and postimees.ee, whereas Delfi has more Russian-speaking users. The web portal of Estonian Public Broadcasting is used much more by Estonians than non-Estonians.

**Figure 71. Use of social media, March 2019 (%)**; N = all respondents



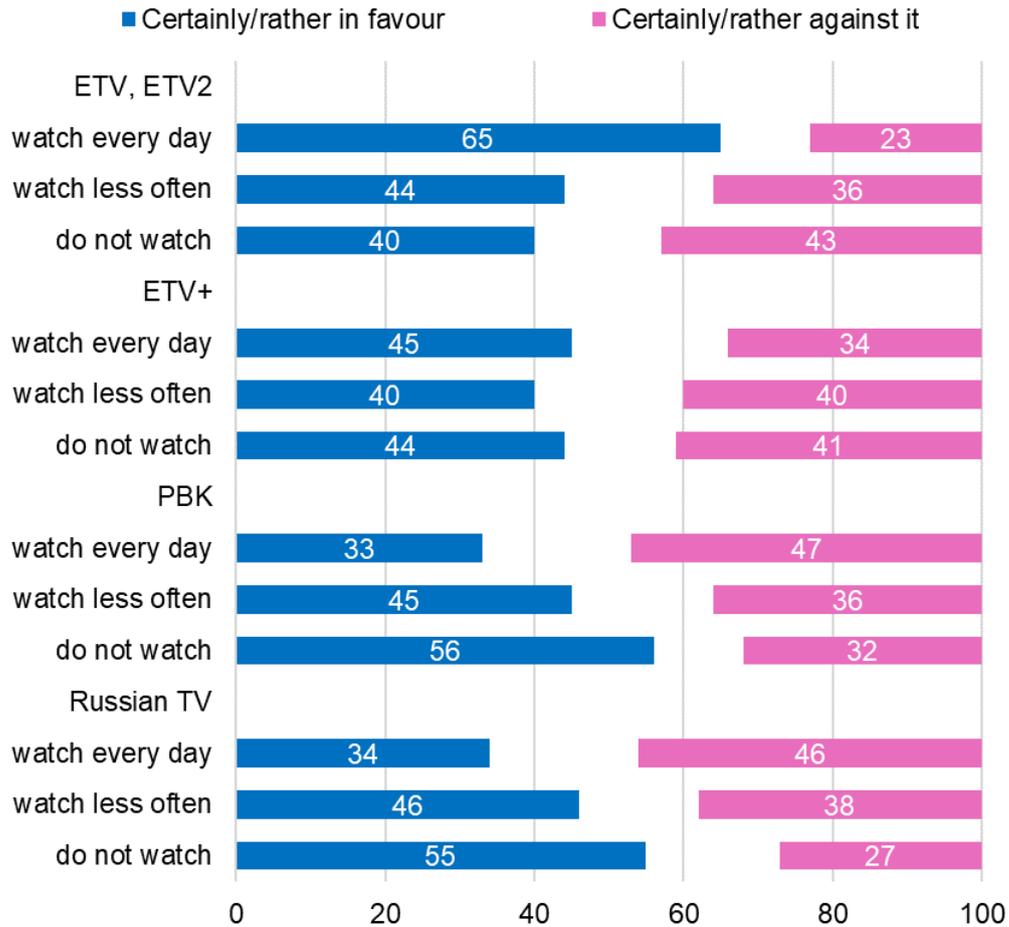
Among direct communication applications, respondents could choose between Skype, Messenger, Snapchat, WhatsApp, Telegram etc.)

**Figure 72. Engagement with television channels; March 2019**  
(%; N = all respondents)



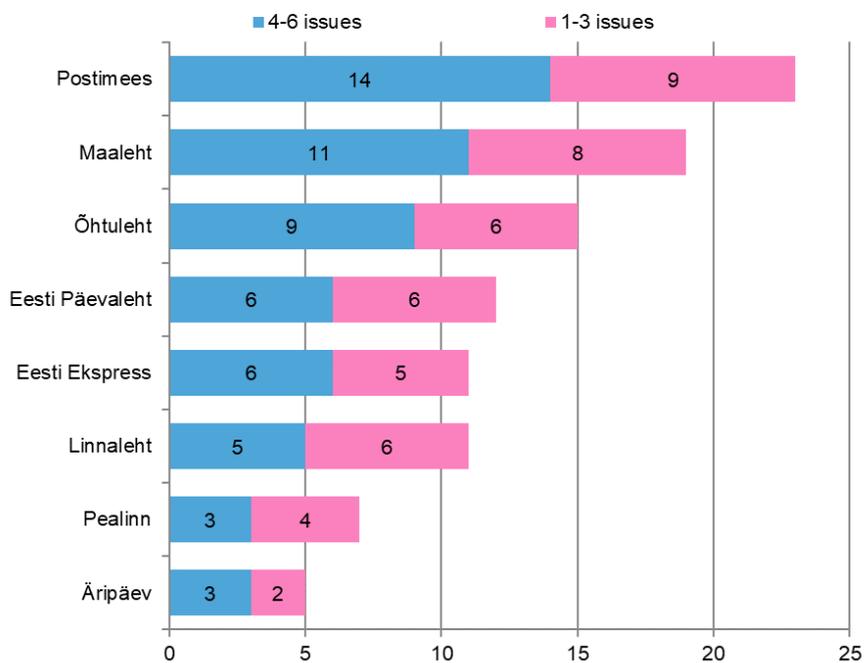
The following figure shows the attitudes of Russian-speaking respondents towards Estonia's membership in NATO depending on their exposure to different TV channels (Figure 73).

**Figure 73. Attitudes towards Estonia's membership in NATO depending on exposure to TV-channels; March 2019 (%)** (N = Russian-speaking respondents)

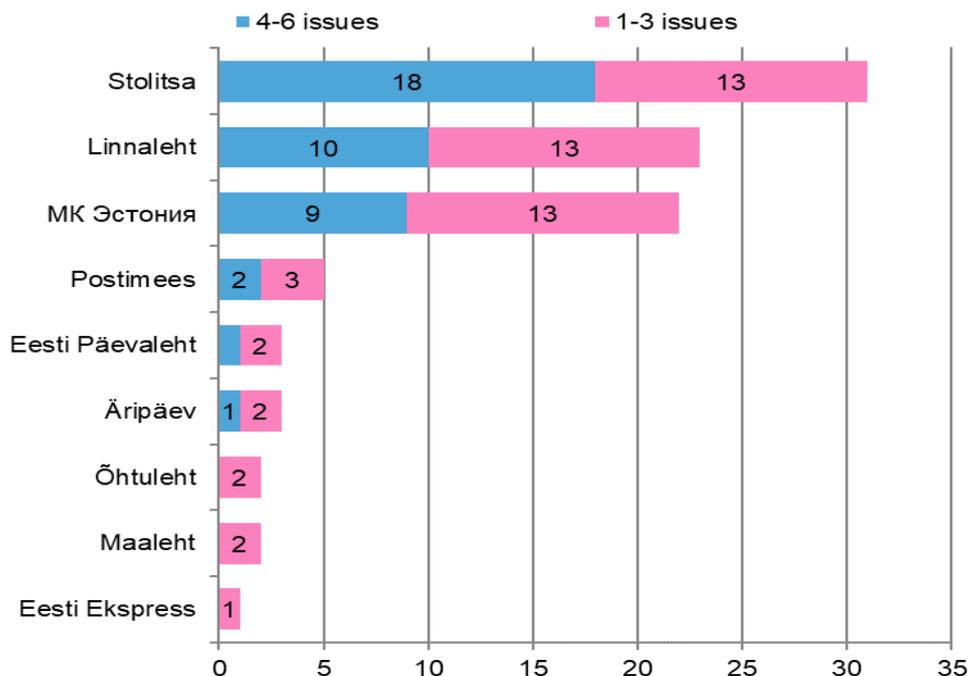


We see that the Russian-speaking respondents who watch Estonian-language programs on ETV every day have a more favourable attitude towards Estonia's NATO membership than those who view Russian TV channels or the programs on Pervyi Baltiiski Kanal daily. Viewing or not viewing Estonian Public Broadcasting's Russian language channel ETV+ does not influence attitudes toward NATO.

**Figure 74. Newspaper readership on the basis of the six most recent issues; March 2019 (%; N = Estonian-speaking respondents)**



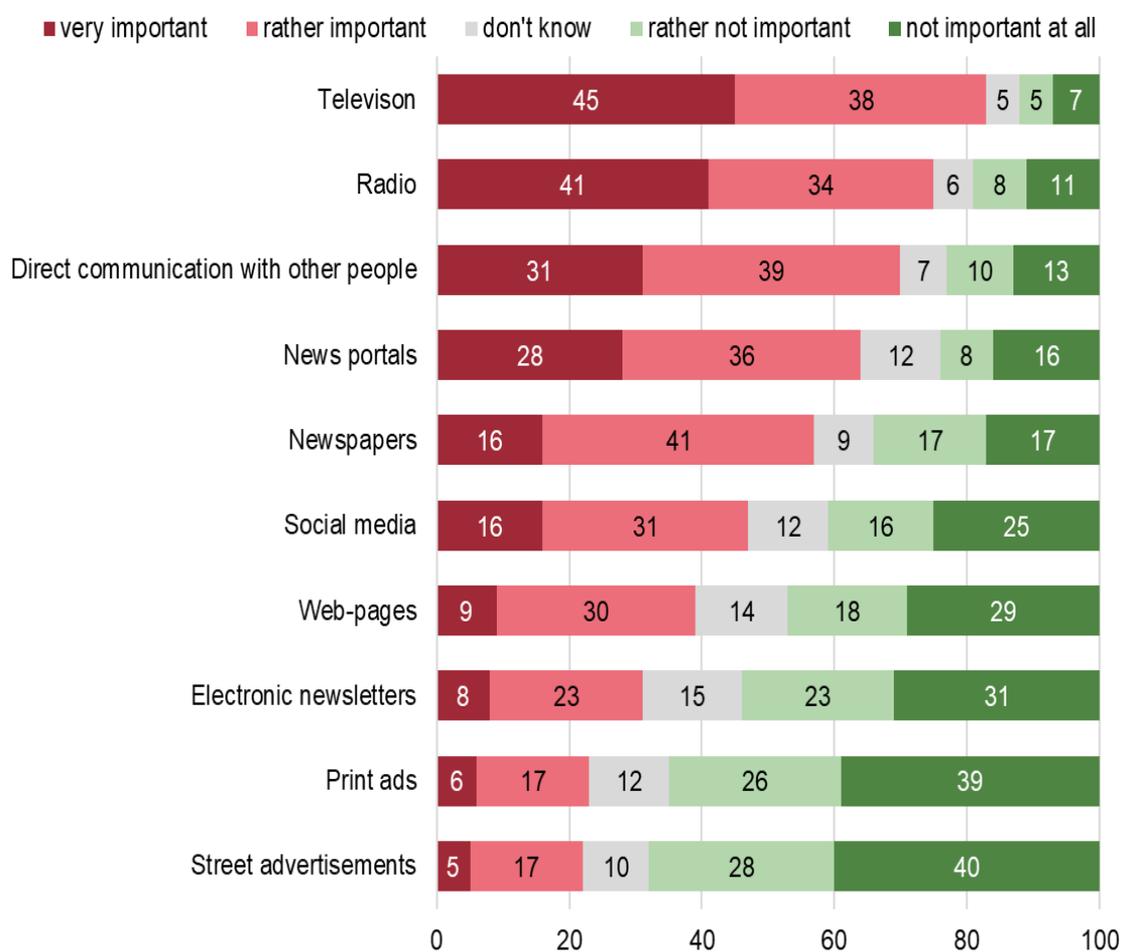
**Figure 75. Newspaper readership on the basis of the six most recent issues; March 2019 (%; N = Russian-speaking respondents)**



## 11.2 Importance of information channels

To assess the impact 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 76).

**Figure 76. How important is this channel with regard to information on national defence? March 2019 (%; N = all respondents)**



The most important ones are, predictably, 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.