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# PUBLIC OPINION AND NATIONAL DEFENCE

**Ordered by: Estonian Ministry of Defence**

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## SUMMARY

- In March 2015, on the order of the Estonian Ministry of Defence, the Social and Market Research Company Turu-uuringute AS conducted a public opinion survey on national defence during which 1,207 residents of Estonia from the age of 15+ were interviewed. This was already the thirty-seventh survey in monitoring public opinion, which was started in 2000.
- With regard to the domestic political climate, the survey period is mainly characterised by the parliamentary elections held on 1 March — the survey started two days after the election day. The election results were already known to the general public when the survey began (70% of voting-age citizens were satisfied with the election results), yet the coalition negotiations were still in progress. The foreign policy atmosphere during the survey period was characterised by the fragile ceasefire in Ukraine and Russian media's ongoing propaganda against western countries. This is very likely the main reason why the Estonian Russians' attitude towards Estonian national defence and the role of NATO in ensuring Estonian security is worsening. At the same time, our NATO allies have taken increasingly more specific steps to strengthen their presence in Estonia, which in turn has boosted Estonians' confidence in national defence.
- Compared to the autumn, there are more respondents regarding changes in Estonian life as positive (36%), the number of those who think life has got worse (23%) has decreased. Estonian respondents are clearly more positive towards the development of Estonia than Russian-speaking respondents.
- In the survey, the feeling of pride about living in the Republic of Estonia and about the fact that Estonia is a member of the European Union and NATO was measured. 52% of all respondents, including 58% of Estonians and 39% of non-Estonians, are very often or often enough proud and happy to live in Estonia. The European Union and NATO memberships are not as important to people: 37% of the respondents are often proud of belonging to the European Union and 39% of belonging to NATO.

The attitudes of Estonians and non-Estonians towards the EU and NATO are also significantly different. For instance, only 12% of the Russian-speaking respondents are often proud of belonging to NATO, whereas the indicator for Estonians is 50%.

- Among the ten surveyed institutions the reliability of which it was asked to assess, the Rescue Service is trusted the most (94% complete or partial confidence). In this ranking, the Rescue Service is followed by the Police and Border Guard Board (84%), the Defence Forces (78%), the Defence League (71%), the President (63%), NATO (62%) and the European Union (61%). The reliability of the Government (57%), Prime Minister (55%) and Parliament (55%) is also high enough. However, the confidence of the Russian-speaking population in the country's political and national defence institutions is at times up to a half lower than that of Estonians. The greatest difference can be observed with regard to the confidence in NATO, which is trusted by 78% of Estonians and only 28% of Russian-speaking respondents.
- Never before during the 16 years of this survey has such a great percentage of the Estonian population (70%) shared the opinion that the world is going to become more unstable and the likelihood of military conflicts will grow in the coming decade. Only 7% believe that the world is becoming more secure in the coming decade and 15% think that the situation will remain unchanged.
- Respondents perceive the situation of Estonia to be somewhat more positive—there are equally 32% of those who believe that security will increase as well as those who think that the situation will remain unchanged. While the situation in the world is seen as more insecure compared to spring, the security assessment regarding Estonia has become slightly more positive.

- The main threats to the world security the respondents highlighted are the activities of Russia to restore its authority (46% of the surveyed definitely consider it a threat), the acts of terrorist networks (44%) and activities of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (44%). While Estonian and Russian-speaking respondents assess many global threats similarly, there is a fundamental difference in evaluating the activities of Russia. For Estonians, Russia clearly remains the primary threat (64%), whereas only 6% of Russian-speaking respondents share that opinion.
- Similarly to preceding surveys, the most probable threats to Estonia are thought to be the following three, the realisation of which more than half of the respondents consider probable or quite probable in the following years: 71% of residents think that there may be an organised attack against the Estonian state information systems (a so-called cyber-attack), 61% think that some foreign country may interfere in Estonian politics and economy in order to influence these in their own interests and 50% believe that an extensive marine pollution may take place. Regarding other threats, there are more of those respondents who believe the realisation of the aforementioned threats is rather unlikely. Still, people, especially Estonians, have started to regard the probability of an extensive or limited military attack more seriously than before (46% and 37% of Estonians think that these threats are very or rather probable, respectively).
- For the Republic of Estonia, NATO membership is still considered to be the main security guarantee (63% mention it as one of the three most important factors). Similarly to preceding surveys, the development of Estonia's independent defence capability holds 2<sup>nd</sup> place (46%), followed by cooperation and good relations with Russia (30%) which is considered the main security guarantee by Russian-language speakers (67%, Estonian speakers 13%) and that has risen to 3<sup>rd</sup> place in the present survey. For Estonian-speaking respondents, the most important security guarantee is clearly membership in NATO (79% of Estonian speakers and 28% of Russian speakers), development of Estonia's independent defence capability is in 2<sup>nd</sup> place (52%, Russian speakers 31%).
- The proportion of people who consider armed resistance necessary in case of a military attack has risen to the same level as it was last spring (83%). Considering the 1% rise within error limitations, it can be said that the Estonian population has never shown such strong passive defence willingness. Estonian-speaking respondents consider armed resistance more necessary than non-Estonians (89% and 71% respectively).
- 68% of Estonians and 40% of Russian-speaking respondents would be willing to participate in defence activities to the best of their abilities and skills. While Estonians' defence willingness has increased by 8%, the number for non-Estonians has decreased by 5%. Considering only the willingness of male Estonian citizens to participate in national defence, defence willingness is still very high among Estonian men: 90% of males under 60 years of age are ready to defend the country. This number remains around 60% among Russian-speaking male citizens.
- In a situation where Estonia is under attack, every fifth person would consider leaving Estonia. The most eager to leave are the Estonian residents under 40. In the event of a military conflict, 16% of Estonians and 31% of Russians would endeavour to leave Estonia.
- Awareness of the population about behaving in an emergency situation is quite low: only 27% would know what they could do to defend Estonia, if there would be the threat of an attack by a foreign enemy, whereas 69% do not regard themselves as informed enough. However, the trend is still positive—the number of informed people has grown a few per cent with each survey.
- In their own words, people would like to have more information of how to act in a conflict area as a civilian (44%), how the public would be informed in case of a threat (44%) and how evacuation would be organised (41%). Male respondents also show interest that is slightly greater than the average in mobilisation and their responsibilities regarding the participation in national defence.
- Assessments to Estonia's national defence ability have improved since the last survey: in the event of an attack from a foreign country, defending Estonia is considered certainly possible or probably possible by 56 per cent of the respondents (63% of Estonians).
- When assessing the volume of the Estonian defence expenditures, a third of the surveyed people find

that defence spending must be increased and 18% that it should be decreased. Estonians' attitude towards defence expenditures is inversely proportional to that of the Russian-speaking respondents: there are as many supporters of increasing defence expenditures among Estonians as there are those in favour of decreasing it among Russian-speaking residents—43% and 44% respectively.

- One third of the Estonian and one seventh of the Russian-speaking respondents would be willing to make a financial contribution to support Estonian national defence.
- 70% of the population provided a positive assessment to the state's activities regarding the development of Estonian national defence—this is 8% more than in November, but 3% less than a year ago in March. Estonians have a more positive attitude towards the development of national defence than non-Estonians (78% and 54% respectively).
- While last autumn, the assessments regarding the protection of the Estonian national border were clearly negative, the number of positive and negative assessments is equal now. However, Estonian respondents still tend to be the most critical. In autumn, as many as two thirds of Estonians gave a negative assessment to the protection of the Estonian external border; now, the number of negative assessments is still high, but it has decreased to 54%. Only every fifth Russian-speaking respondent perceives that there are problems with the defence of the eastern border.
- People in Estonia have very favouring attitudes towards conscript service: as many as 94% of respondents believe that young men need to undergo conscript service, with 67% believing that it is certainly necessary. Three fourths of the respondents think that young men with minor health disorders should undergo conscript service with an appropriate training load.
- The majority of the population (68%) disapprove of the evasion of conscript service—26% condemn such behaviour and 42% consider it negative. Younger age groups are more tolerant than average towards the evasion of conscript service— 40% of people under 30 take an understanding stance.
- In 2013, women were given the opportunity to undergo conscript service voluntarily and this has been gaining increasingly more understanding in the society—in March, more than a half of the surveyed people considered it certainly necessary or rather necessary. Estonians and younger respondents have a more contemporary attitude towards the questions of gender equality than Russian-speaking and older respondents. 61% of Estonians think it is necessary for women to have the opportunity of undergoing conscript service, whereas only 29% of Russian-speaking respondents agree. Most of those who consider conscript service for women necessary believe that women should undergo conscript service under a special programme.
- 82% of the population prefer the maintenance of the current defence concept of professional defence forces together with reserve forces consisting of those who have undergone conscript service. 13% support waiving compulsory military service and switching to a fully professional army only.
- Nearly 80% of the population (84% of Estonians) support the wider concept of national defence which states that national defence is not a task only for the armed forces and the Defence League, but a common activity for most state institutions and the whole society. However, it can be said that the wider concept of national defence is not yet concrete enough for the Estonian people.
- According to the population of Estonia, the main task of the Defence League is to create national defence capability, which is marked as the most important task by 37% of respondents and 54% when summarising the three most important tasks. It is followed by the willingness to defend the country and raising the state of defence readiness among the population, which is considered as the most important task by 17% of the respondents, whereas 44% see it as one of the three most important tasks. Participating in rescue activities in the event of accidents and disasters is mentioned as first 13% and among the three main tasks 54%.
- 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 a friend. When respondents would be presented with a proposal to join the Defence League or organisations connected to it, 5% would certainly join and 19% would probably join. The readiness to join is the highest among younger respondents.

- 72% of the population supports Estonia's membership in NATO. Russian-speaking respondents are still growing more indifferent towards NATO. 91% of Estonians were in favour of Estonia belonging to NATO, whereas only 31% of Russian-speaking respondents shared this view.
- Belief in the statement that NATO would give military aid to Estonia in case of a military threat has increased continuously. In the survey in November, the number of respondents having this belief had increased to more than 50%, whereas 63% of Estonians believe in aid from NATO.
- Almost half of the respondents (59% of Estonians and 24% of the Russian-speaking population) believe that NATO will provide direct military aid if Estonia should face a threat. Increase in the feeling of security towards NATO's support has been helped by the steps that have already been taken to ensure Estonian security and which are supported by the general population: 68% of population (88% of Estonians) favour the presence of allied forces in Estonia and 70% (78% of Estonians) believe that NATO has done enough to guarantee Estonia's security.
- 60% of the population believe that units of the Estonian Defence Forces should—in accordance with their capabilities—participate in international operations in different conflict areas of the world. Estonians support the participation of the Estonian Defence Forces in missions even to a greater extent (72% of Estonians, 32% of Russians). Participation in international military operations is considered necessary primarily because it provides our soldiers with necessary real combat experience (mentioned by 62% as one of three reasons) and guarantees NATO's assistance to Estonia in the event of potential threats (55%).
- In the eyes of the population, the image of the operation in Afghanistan is versatile. People have a clear positive attitude towards the professionalism of Estonian servicemen in Afghanistan (70% agree with this statement); on the other hand, there are quite many of those who consider putting the lives of Estonian servicemen into danger in foreign missions inexcusable (51%).
- In the people's mind, the word "veteran" is strongly associated with the image of World War II (59%), only 11% of the respondent associate veterans with operations of the Estonian Defence Forces in Kosovo, Afghanistan and Iraq. Most respondents (67%) consider celebrating Veterans' Day on St George's Day on 23 April certainly necessary or rather necessary. Many Russian-speaking respondents are not aware of this day and were not able to form an opinion on that. Considering that non-Estonians associate the word "veteran" mainly with World War II (more precisely, the Great Patriotic War), one can assume they are used to honouring veterans on another day of the year.
- 87% of respondents certainly or probably believe that all schools that offer secondary education should provide the possibility to have national defence instruction. It is considered equally important by both Estonian and Russian-speaking respondents.
- The national defence themed supplement of the daily Postimees has gained new readers since autumn—the number of readers has grown from 14% to 18%. Considering that more than 30% of Estonians read Postimees regularly (at least once a week), there is room for improvement.

## BACKGROUND OF THE SURVEY

This report has been prepared on the basis of the results of the Omnibus 1000 survey carried out by Turu-uuringute AS from 3 March till 24 March 2015 and similar earlier surveys. The report will be submitted to the **Estonian Ministry of Defence**.

The purpose of the survey was to investigate:

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

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

### 1 Sample

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Table 1 Sampling error limitations**

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

## 2 Survey

The survey method was personal interview, conducted on tablet computers in either Estonian or Russian, depending on the respondent's preference. A total of **56** pollers who had been given special training by Turu-uuringute AS participated in carrying out the survey. A total of **1,207** interviews were performed. The social and demographic profile of the respondents has been provided in Figure 1.

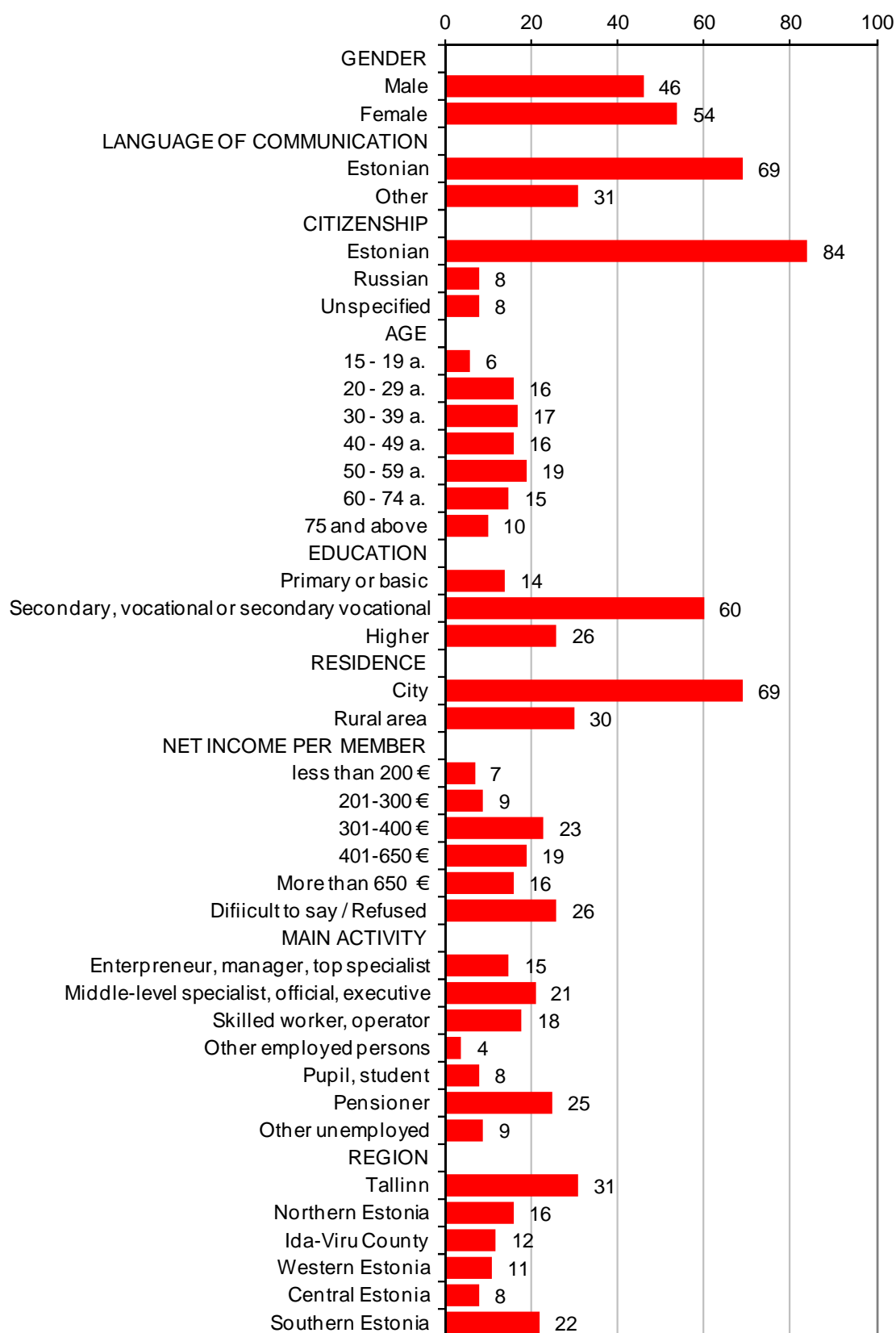
Summary of the results of the polling (number of addresses visited, reasons for not carrying out the interview) have been presented in Table 2.



**Table 2 Results of the polling**

<b>Reasons for not carrying out the interview</b>	<b>Total</b>
There are no target group persons in the family	<b>884</b>
Nobody is at home	<b>2956</b>
Target group person is not at home	<b>52</b>
Contact was denied	<b>708</b>
Target group person refused from giving the interview	<b>803</b>
Other reasons for not performing the interview	<b>157</b>
Not a dwelling or address inaccessible	<b>148</b>
<b>Summary</b>	
Total addresses	<b>6915</b>
Repeated visits	<b>930</b>
Correctly filled in questionnaires	<b>1207</b>

The statistical analysis software package SPSS for Windows 17.0 was used to process data.

**Figure 1. Respondents' social and demographic profile, %, n=1,200**

### 3 Performers

The persons responsible for various stages of the survey are:

Report, project management:	Juhan Kivirähk
Sample/coordination of interviewing work:	Marina Karpištšenko, Kristel Toom, Rutt Vihtla.
Coordination of data entry:	Asta Pajos
Data processing and tables:	Tõnis Stamberg
Customer's contact person:	Lauri Vahtre

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#### Survey leader's contact information:

- Telephone: 5515200
- E-mail: [juhan@turu-uuringute.ee](mailto:juhan@turu-uuringute.ee)

## RESULTS OF THE SURVEY

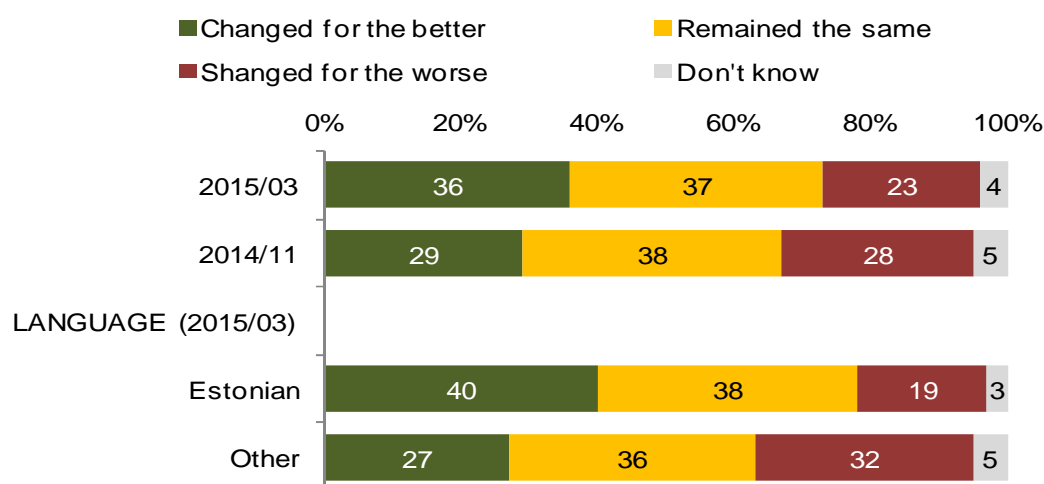
### 1 General attitudes towards life in Estonia and pride in Estonia

The performers of the survey presume that seeing positive changes and feeling happy and proud about living in Estonia are factors that contribute to the positive attitudes towards the state's structures and defence policy.

Compared to the autumn survey, people have provided a more positive assessment to changes that have taken place in Estonian life. The number of respondents who have experienced positive changes has increased and the number of people who gave a negative assessment has decreased. The attitudes have very likely been influenced by the parliamentary elections that took place right before the survey period—elections always carry hope that things are going to get better.

The reason for the shift towards a more positive direction lies mainly in the Estonians' improving attitudes; the assessments provided by Russian-speaking respondents have remained unchanged.

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

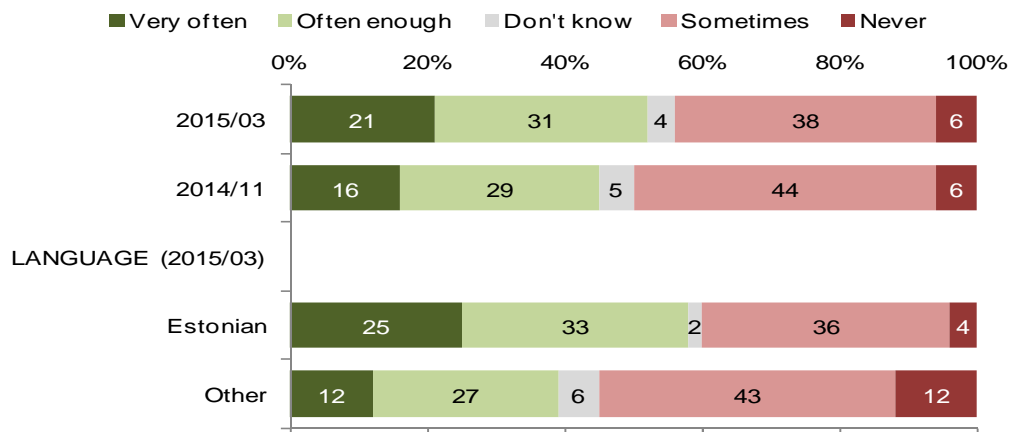


20-40 year olds and respondents with higher education are the most positive about Estonia's advancement; more than 40% of them perceive positive changes. The assessments are also influenced by a respondent's economic situation—positive changes are felt to a more than average extent among people whose income starts from 500 euros per household member per month.

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

Even this question shows improvement in attitude: over 50% of respondents feel proud or happy about living in Estonia very often or often enough, and 38% are sometimes proud. The proportion of respondents who never feel proud or happy about living in Estonia remains at 6%.

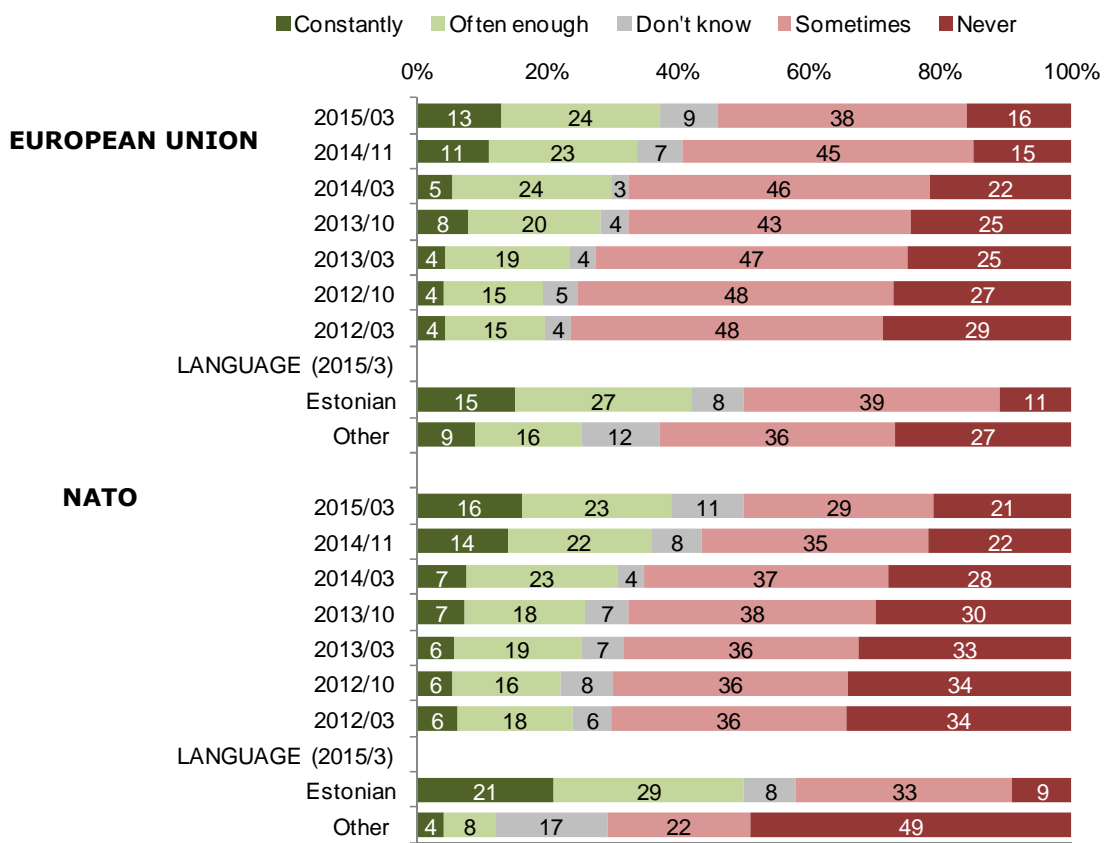
**Figure 3. Pride and happiness over living in the Republic of Estonia (%) ; N = all respondents)**



There is a clear difference in the attitudes of Estonians and people who speak other languages even here. 58% of Estonian-speaking respondents feel proud and happy very often or often enough, while the indicator for people who speak other languages is 39%. 43% of Russian-speaking respondents admit that they experience positive emotions in connection to living in Estonia only sometimes, and 12% do not feel positive about it at all. Respondents with undetermined citizenship are the most critical about living in Estonia.

Happiness and pride over living in Estonia is considerably higher than over Estonia’s membership in the European Union and NATO. In comparison to the autumn survey, the Estonian residents’ pride over belonging to the European Union and NATO has increased by a few percent: **37% of the residents feel constantly or often enough proud over Estonia’s membership in the European Union and 39% over the membership in NATO** (Figure 4). 16% claim having never felt pride in the membership in the European Union and 21% in the membership in NATO.

**Figure 4. Feeling proud of the Republic of Estonia’s memberships (%) ; N = all respondents)**



Based on the language of communication, there are significant differences regarding the membership in the European Union and NATO. The differences are especially great for **the membership in NATO: 50% of Estonians feel proud and happy for it, while only 12% of the speakers of other languages feel the same.** Even 49% of the speakers of other languages claim that they have never felt proud over the Estonian membership in NATO. Only 9% of the speakers of Estonian claim the same.

The following table shows how pride and happiness over living in Estonia, and European Union and NATO membership is connected to the assessments given to the development of Estonian life. Positive attitudes towards the general development of Estonia come with a greater feeling of pride and vice versa—there are significantly fewer people who feel proud and happy over living in Estonia and belonging to both the European Union and NATO among those who perceive Estonian development as negative.

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

Do you feel proud and happy ...	Life in Estonia has		
	changed for the better	remained the same	changed for the worse
<b>... over living in Estonia</b> very often or often enough never	<b>69%</b> 2%	50% 5%	30% <b>15%</b>
<b>... over Estonia's EU membership</b> very often or often enough never	<b>55%</b> 7%	32% 14%	15% <b>32%</b>
<b>... over Estonia's NATO membership</b> very often or often enough never	<b>54%</b> 12%	37% 20%	17% <b>38%</b>

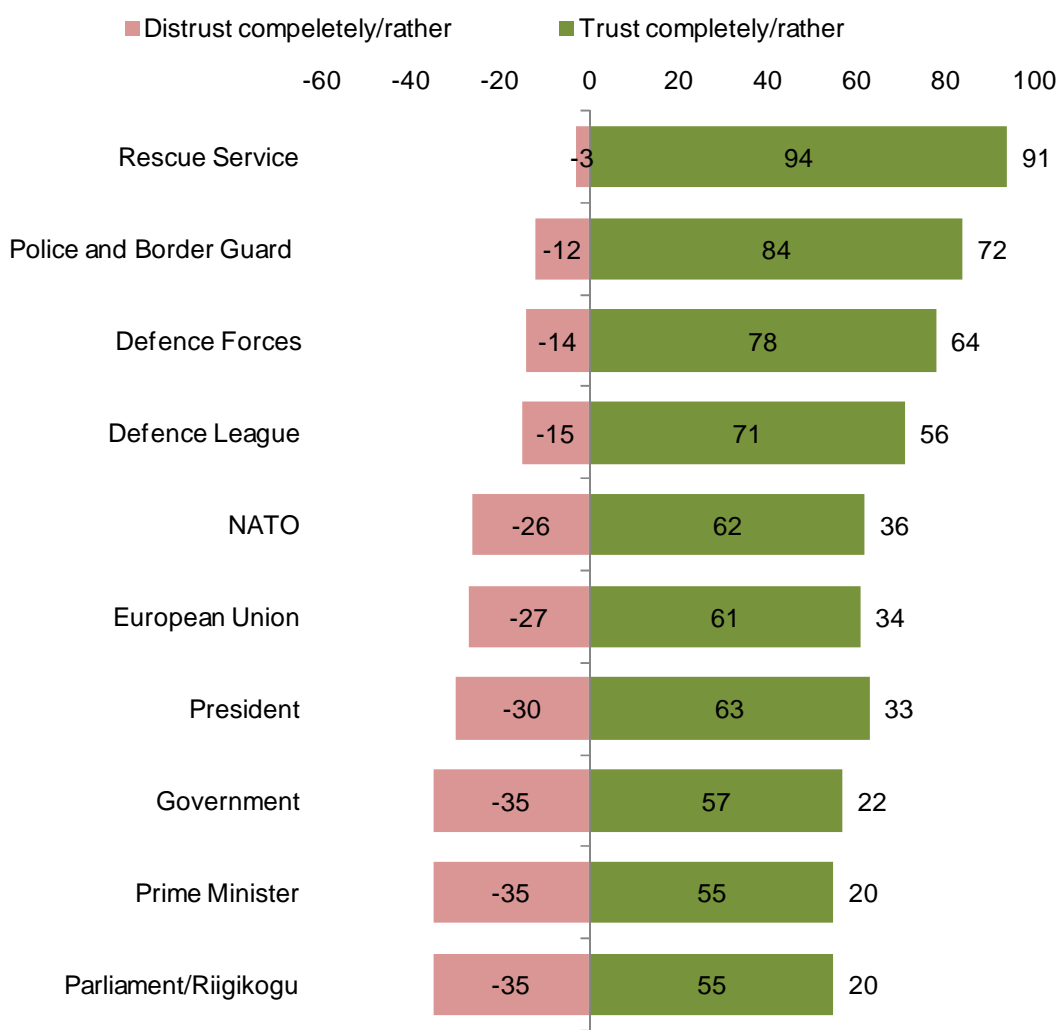
## 2 Confidence in institutions

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

### 2.1 General background

Respondents evaluated the trustworthiness of the institutions using a scale with four categories: completely trust, rather trust, rather do not trust, and do not trust at all. Among the ten institutions surveyed, people have the biggest confidence in the **Rescue Service**—94% of Estonia's population have confidence in it ([Figure 5](#)).

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

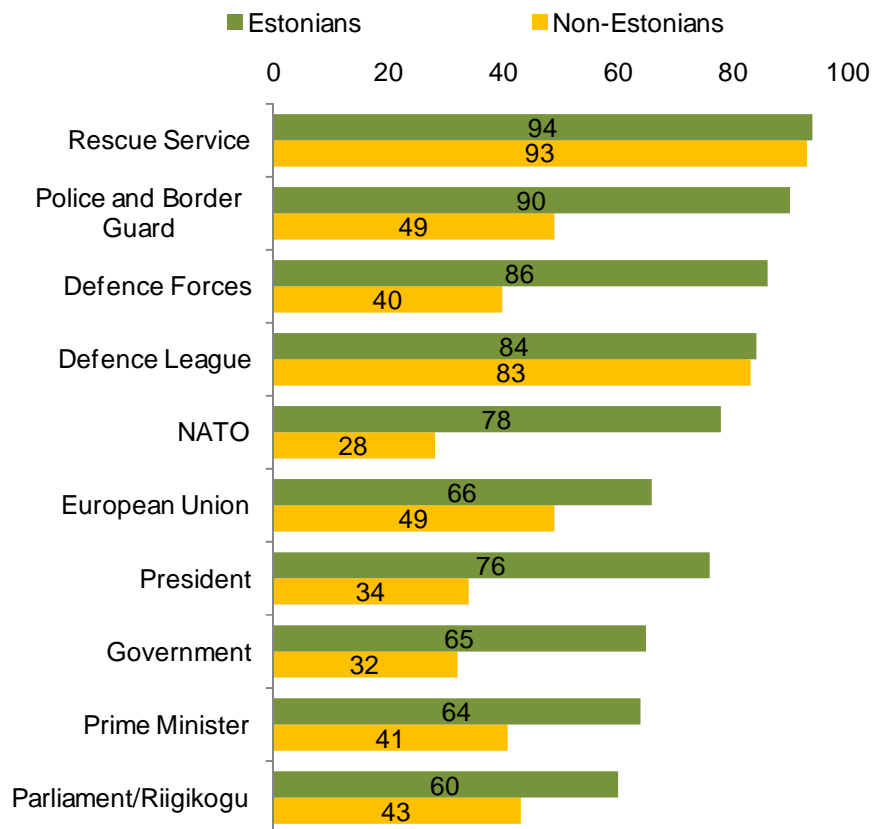


While the confidence in the Rescue Services, Police and Border Guard Board remains on the same level as before, the trust in the Defence Forces and Defence League has decreased a couple of per cent. The trust in NATO and the European Union has also decreased compared to the autumn survey.

As for the Estonian political institutions, the trust in the President and Prime Minister has not changed, yet the confidence in the Government and Parliament has grown—the survey was conducted right after the parliamentary elections.

**The confidence level of all institutions among the Estonian-speaking population remains higher than among the speakers of other languages (Figure 6).** The largest differences become clear in view of NATO (trusted completely or rather completely by 78% of the Estonian-speaking population, by 28% of speakers of other languages), the Defence League (86% vs. 40%), the President (76% vs. 34%), the Prime Minister (65% vs. 32%) and the Defence Forces (90% vs. 49%).

**Figure 6. Confidence in institutions in the eyes of the Estonian-speaking and foreign-speaking population** (% of those who trust the institutions completely and rather trust them; N = all respondents)



## 2.2 Defence structures

**The Defence Forces**, which holds the 3<sup>rd</sup> place in the trustworthiness ranking after the Rescue Services, the 2<sup>nd</sup> place in the trustworthiness ranking by Estonians, **is trusted by 78% of the population of Estonia as at March 2015** (Figure 7). This indicates a 4% decrease compared to the autumn. While the drop is small among Estonians (from 93% to 90%), it is significant among non-Estonians: only 49% of non-Estonians trust the Defence Forces completely or rather trust them (the indicator was 58% in November 2014).

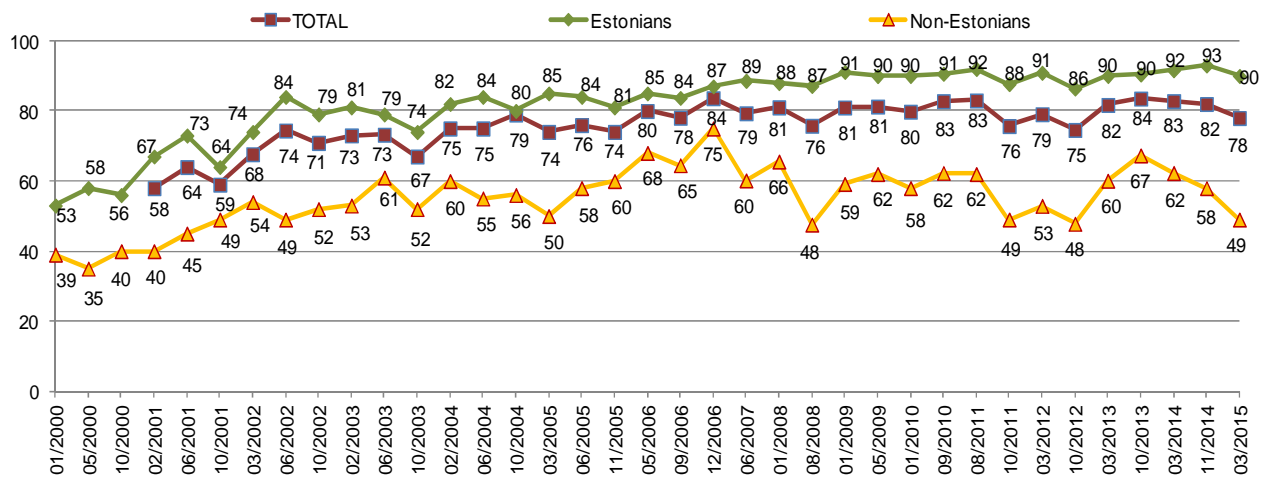
While as from the spring of 2013, the trustworthiness of the Defence Forces has remained at a constantly high level according to the native speakers of Estonian, a tendency towards decline can be viewed among the Russian-speaking respondents from the last spring onwards. This is probably affected by the information from the Russian mass media (issued due to the armed conflict between the Ukraine and Russia) which criticises the entire NATO and undoubtedly has an effect on the attitude towards the Estonian Defence Forces.



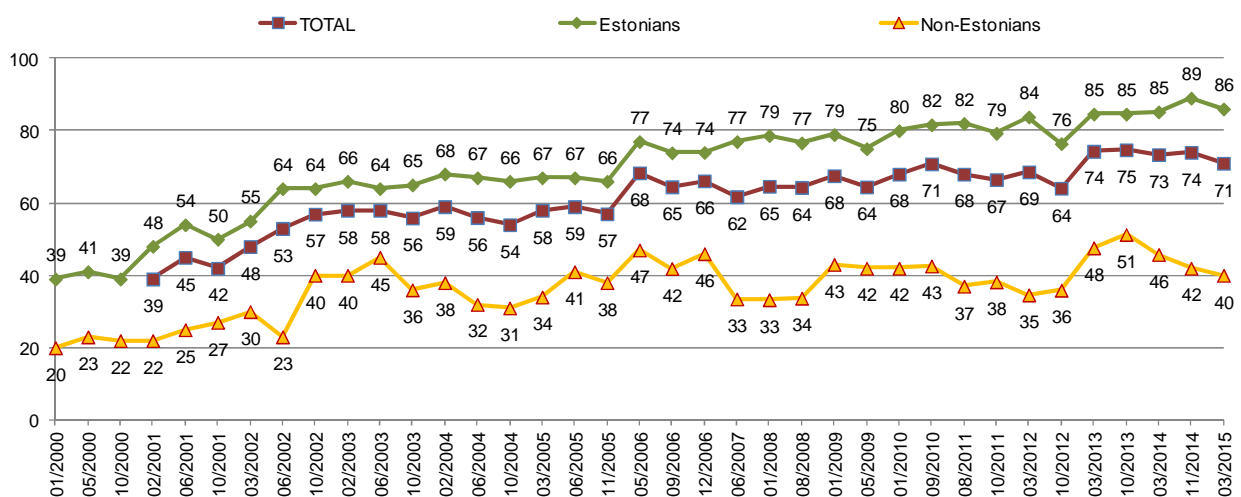
**The Defence League places among the most trustworthy institutions right after the Defence Forces—as at March 2015, 71% of the Estonian population trusted the Defence League (Figure 8).**

Even with the Defence League, the non-Estonians' trust pattern is similar to that of the Defence Forces—the Russian-speaking respondents' trust in the Defence League has been in clear decline since last spring. In this survey, the Defence League is trusted by 86% of Estonians; as for non-Estonians, the indicator is 40%.

**Figure 7. Confidence in the Defence Forces in 2000-2015; comparison of the assessments by the Estonian-speaking and foreign-speaking population (% of those who trust it completely or rather trust it; N = all respondents)**



**Figure 8. Confidence in the Defence League in 2000-2015; a comparison of assessments by the Estonian-speaking and foreign-speaking population (% of those who trust it completely or rather trust it; N = all respondents)**



### 3 Security and threats

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

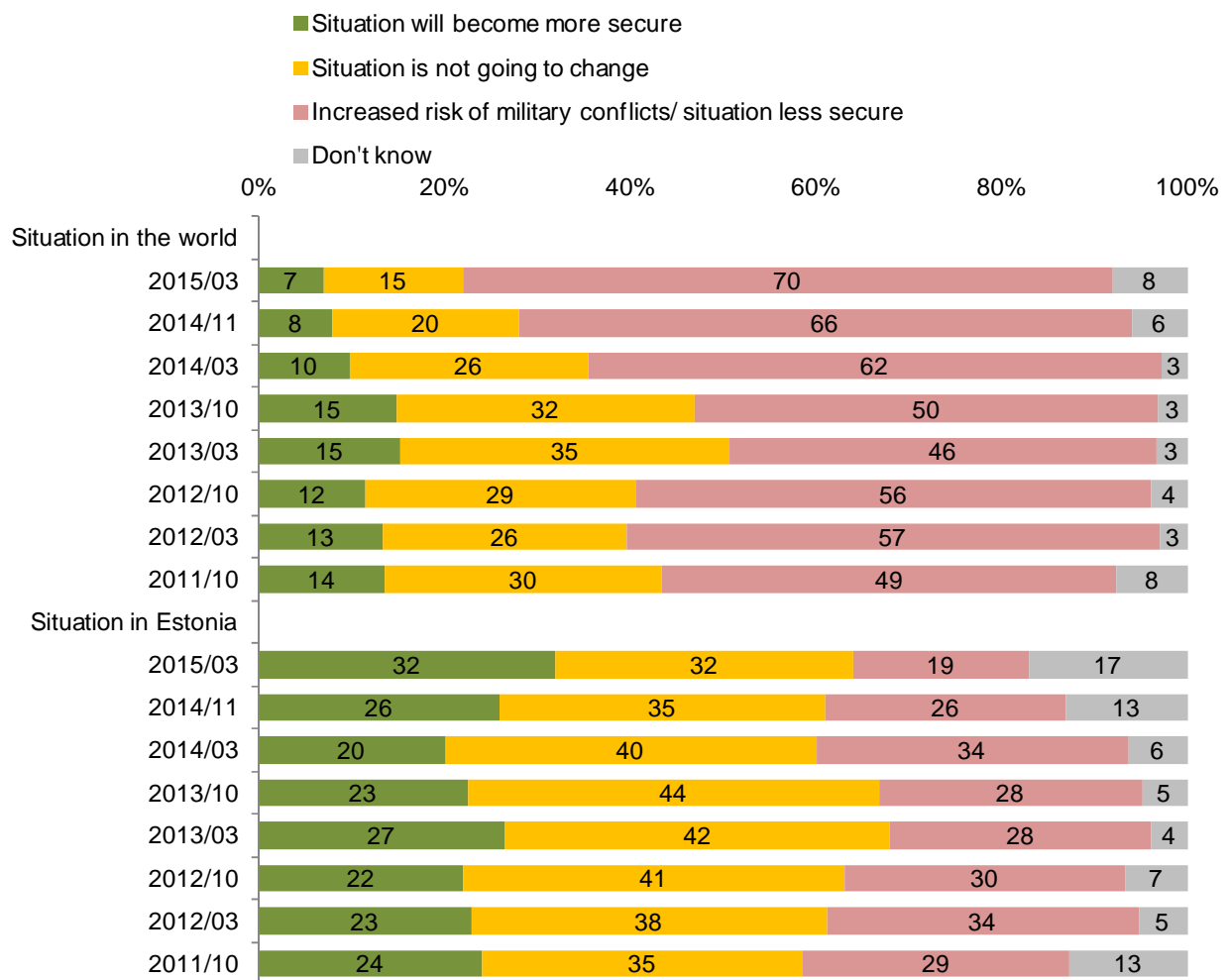
#### 3.1 Security in the world and in Estonia

Questions about the situation in Estonia and in the world were asked with a different wording:

- What do you think, will the world become more secure and the risk of military conflicts reduce, or, conversely, will the instability increase in the world and the probability of military conflicts grow in the coming decade?
- What do you think, what will the situation in Estonia be? Will the population be living in more secure or more insecure conditions in ten years from now?

**Never in the course of this series of surveys has such a great percentage (70%) of the Estonian population thought that in the coming decade, instability and the probability of military conflicts are going to increase in the world (Figure 9).** Only 7% believe that the world is becoming more secure in the coming decade, and 15% think that the situation will remain unchanged. Even in August 2008, after the military conflict between Russia and Georgia, the situation was not considered as critical. (Figure 10).

**Figure 9. Situation in the world and in Estonia in the coming decade, 2011-2015 comparison** (%; N = all respondents)



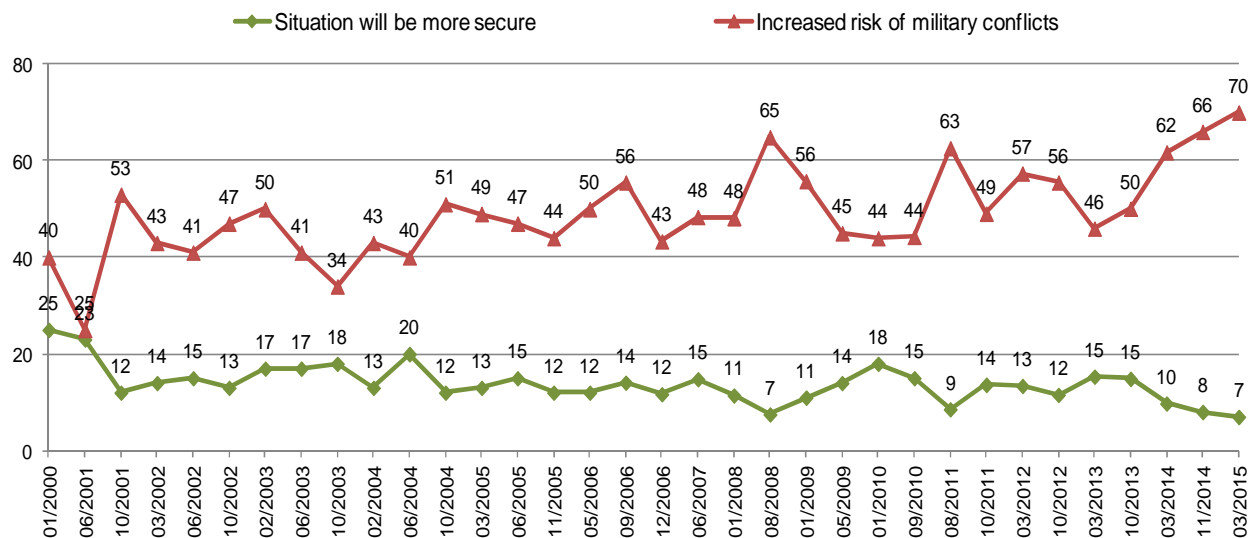
The security situation in Estonia is perceived to be somewhat more positive than the situation in the world and the assessment has become more positive compared to the previous survey: 32% think that, in ten years, the population of Estonia will be living in more secure conditions than now, an equal amount have the opinion that the situation is not going to change in the coming decade. 19% fear the conditions are becoming less secure. Compared to the previous survey, the number of those respondents who are unable to provide their opinion has increased.

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

Estonians are more sensitive about the world's security risks—as many as 75% believe that the situation is worsening. 58% of Russian-speaking respondents share that view, yet compared to Estonians, there are more people who think the situation will remain unchanged (21% in comparison to 13% of Estonians).

However, Estonians are more positive when assessing the future of Estonia: 35% think that, in ten years, we will be living in more secure conditions (26% of Russian-speaking respondents think the same). Even here the Russian-speaking respondents think that the situation is most likely to remain unchanged (40% in comparison to 28% of Estonians).

**Figure 10. Situation in the world in the coming decade; 2000-2014 comparison** (%; N = all respondents)

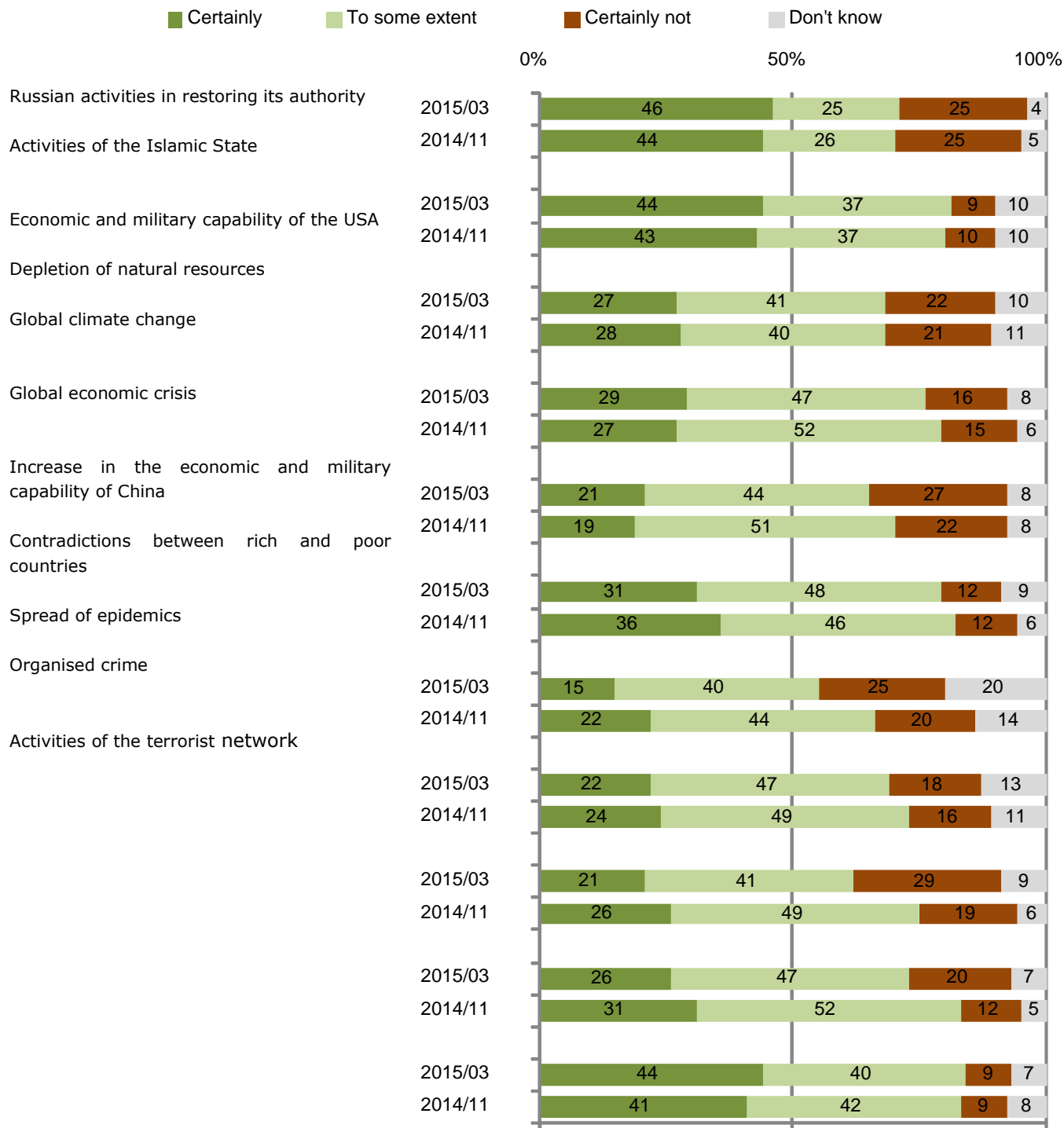


### 3.2 Threats to world security

The respondents of this survey were asked to assess the effect of various currently topical factors on peace and security in the world.

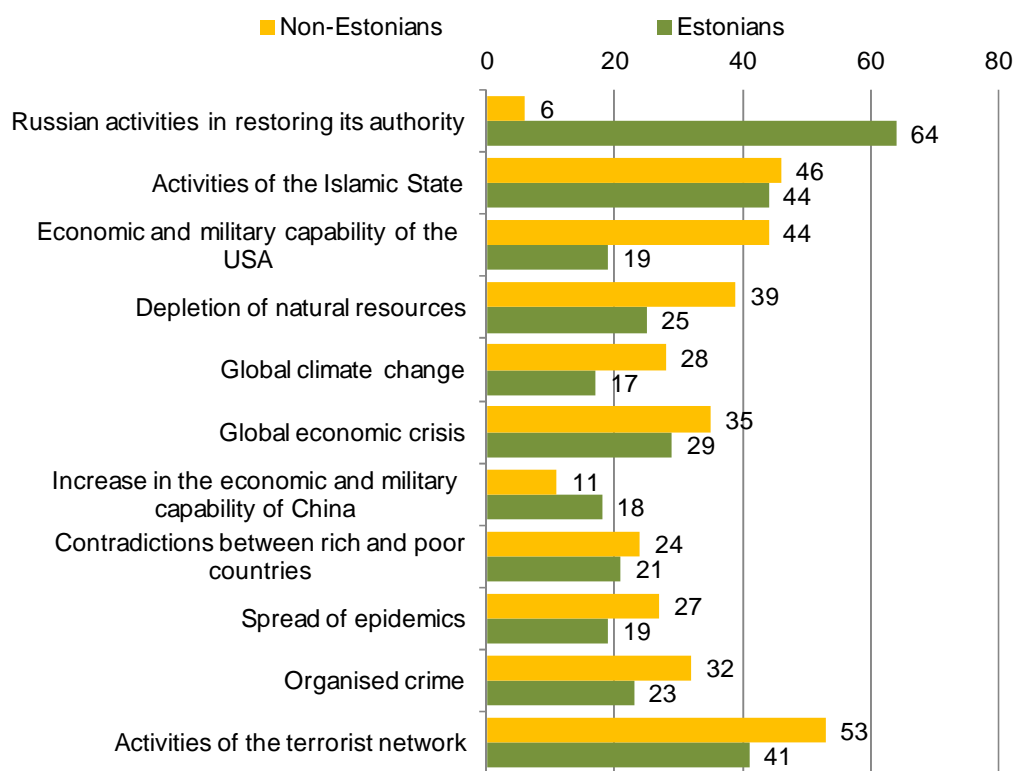
The most important threats pointed out by the respondents are Russia's activities in restoring its authority (46% of the respondents consider it a certain security threat), the activities of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (44%) and activities of terrorist networks (44%). Together with the answer „to some extent“ almost all the dangers listed in the question are pointed out. The respondents feel the least threatened by China's growing influence in the world, the spread of epidemics and global climate changes. ([Figure 11](#)).

**Figure 11. Dangers to peace and security in the world in 2014** (%; N = all respondents)



While Estonians and Russian-speaking respondents assess many global threats similarly, there is a fundamental difference when assessing **steps taken by Russia to restore its authority over the former Soviet territories**. Estonians consider the **activities of Russia to restore its authority over the former Soviet Union territories** the security threat number one: this is certainly a threat for **64% of Estonians**. The same opinion is shared by only **6% of the Russian-speaking respondents**, but two thirds of them do not see Russian activities as a threat (Figure 12).

**Figure 12. Dangers to peace and security in the world in 2014, answers "this certainly"**  
(%; comparison of Estonian-speaking and foreign-speaking respondents)



At the same time, Russian-speaking respondents see the activities of terrorist networks as the most serious threat to global security. While the Islamic State is perceived as a threat to world security by both Estonians and non-Estonians, the latter view the economic and military power of the U.S. equally dangerous.

Compared to Estonians, Russian-speaking respondents also tend to put greater emphasis on the depletion of natural resources, danger of epidemics and organized crime.

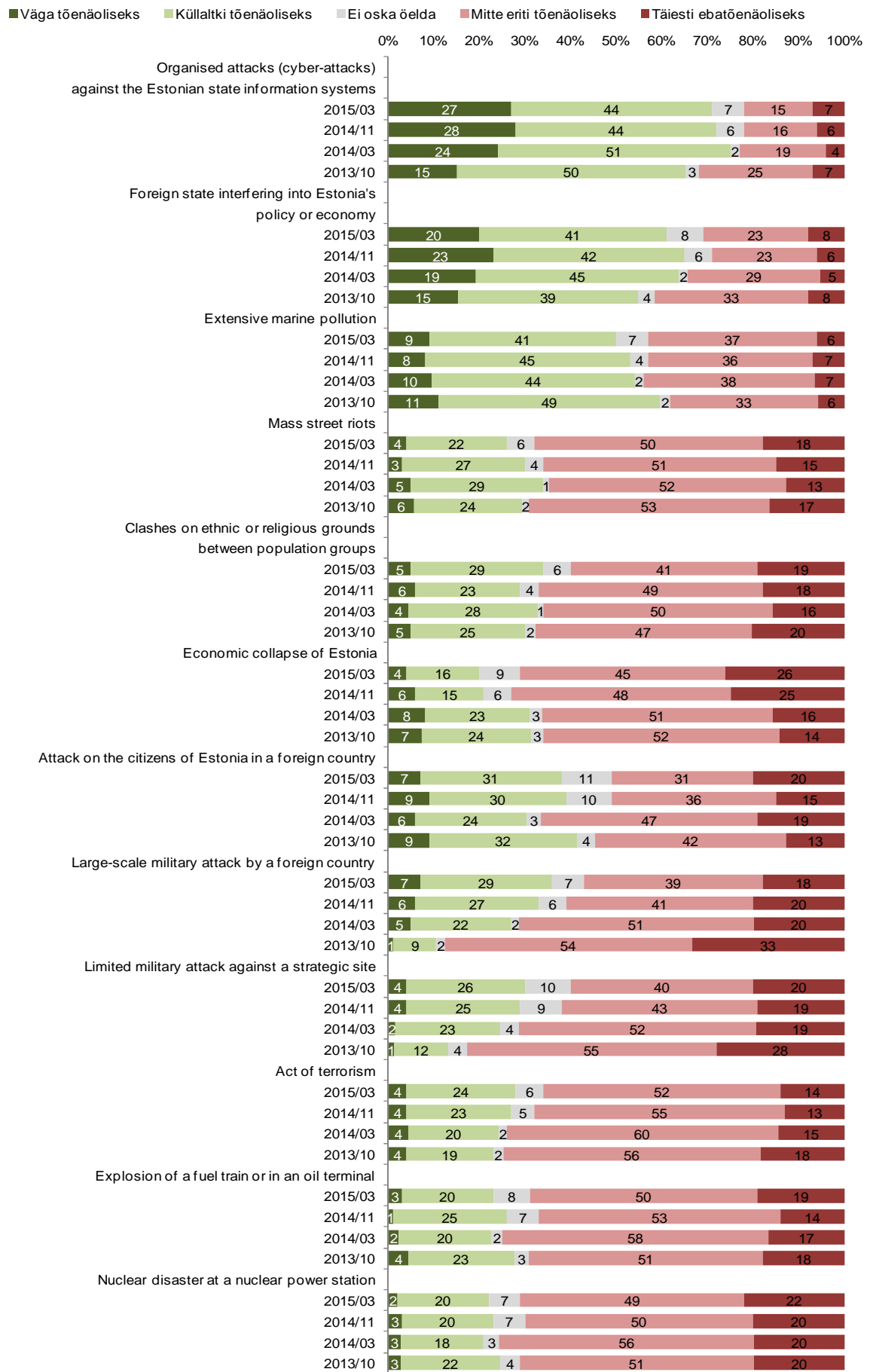
### 3.3 Threats to Estonia

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

There are three threats, the occurrence of which more than half of the respondents considered very or rather probable in Estonia in the forthcoming years: 71% of people think an organised attack (**a so-called cyber-attack**) against the Estonian state information systems can happen, 61% believe that **a foreign state may interfere in Estonia's policy or economy in their own interests**, and 50% are of the opinion that **an extensive marine pollution may occur**.

In case of other dangers, the majority is held by respondents who consider the probability of occurrence unlikely. An attack on citizens of Estonia in foreign countries is very or rather probable for 38%, a large-scale or limited military attack by a foreign country for 36% and 30% respectively, clashes on ethnic or religious grounds between population groups for 34%, acts of terrorism for 28%, mass street riots for 26%, explosion of a fuel train in transit or in an oil terminal for 23%, nuclear disaster at a nuclear power station close to Estonia for 22% and Estonia's economic collapse for 20%.

Compared to the survey conducted in November 2014, the number of people who think clashes on ethnic or religious grounds and a large-scale military attack are probable has slightly grown.

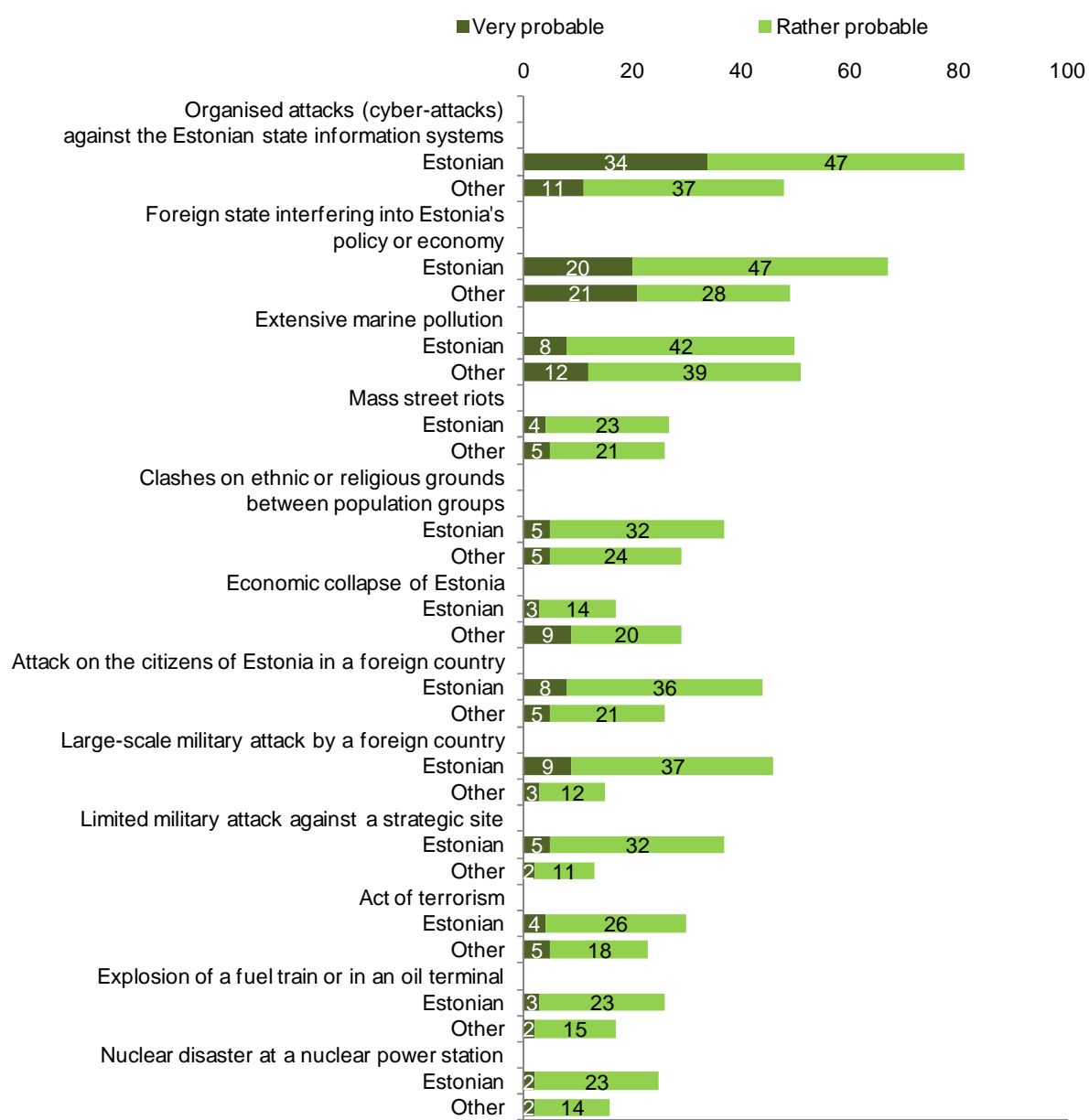
**Figure 13. Probability of different threats endangering Estonia in the forthcoming years, 2012–2015 comparison (%; N = all respondent)**



The assessment of Estonia's internal dangers reveals important differences in view of the respondents' **main language of communication** (Figure 14). Estonians consider most of the dangers more probable than the Russian-speaking respondents. The only exception is the economic collapse of the Republic of Estonia, which 29% of the Russian-speaking respondents find rather probable, while the corresponding number for Estonian speakers is 17%. Extensive marine pollution and street riots are considered equally probable.

The Estonian respondents find the cyber-attacks (respectively 81% and 48%), a foreign state's interference to influence Estonia's policy or economy in their own interests (67% vs. 49%), a large-scale military attack (46% and 15%) or a limited military attack against a strategic site (37% and 13%) and attacks on the citizens of Estonia in a foreign country (44% and 26%) considerably more probable than Russian-speakers.

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

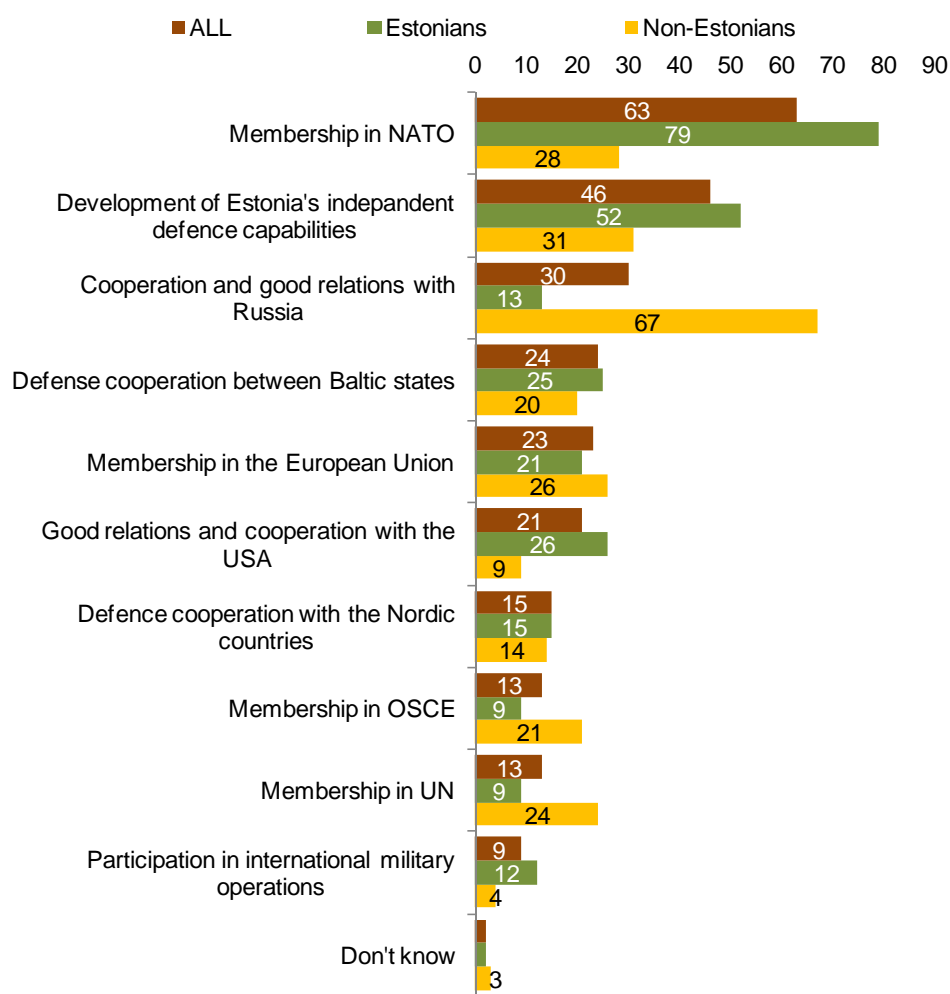


### 3.4 Security guarantees

Among the important factors that would ensure maximum security to Estonia according to the respondents was, similarly to previous waves of survey, **membership in NATO** (listed as first)—this is mentioned by 63% of the respondents, first and foremost by Estonians, as a major factor (Figure 15). It is followed by the development of **Estonia's own independent defence capability**, mentioned by 46% of Estonian residents. Thus, the Estonian-speaking respondents have accepted the two pillars of our national defence: support by NATO's collective defence and ensuring independent defence capability.

Mostly due to the role of foreign-speaking respondents, these two factors are followed by cooperation and good-neighbourly relations with Russia (30%). Both language groups equally support the defence cooperation with the Baltic States (24%) and membership in the European Union (23%).

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



As already evident from the trustworthiness of institutions, the confidence in NATO has decreased among the Russian-speakers when compared to spring, which is also expressed in the assessment of security guarantees (in the spring a year ago 41% of foreign-speakers considered NATO an important security guarantee, this time only 28%). However, the proportion of those who see a security guarantee in developing good relations with Russia has increased (in the last spring 53%, this time 67% of Russian-speakers). Only 13% of Estonians believe that developing close relations with Russia is a potential security guarantee.

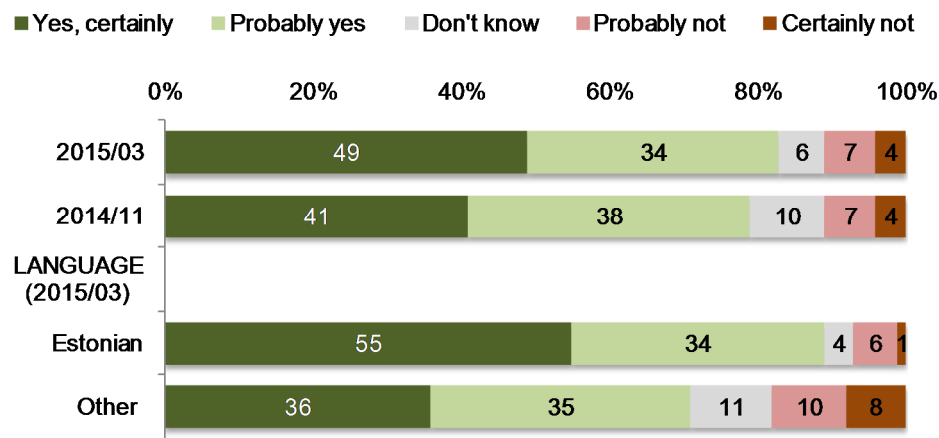
## 4 Defence willingness among the population of Estonia

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

### 4.1 Attitude towards the necessity of resistance

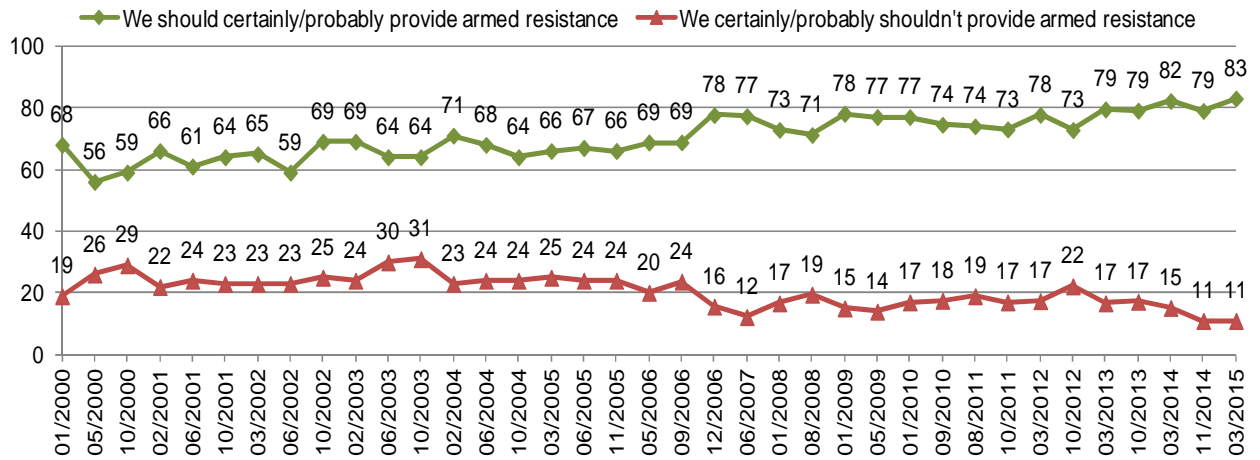
In the event of a foreign attack, armed resistance is regarded certainly necessary by 49% and probably necessary by 34% of the population (Figure 16). Thus, **a total of 83% of the population is in favour of military resistance, while it is regarded unnecessary by 11% of the population.** Estonian-speaking respondents tend to consider armed resistance as slightly more necessary than non-Estonians (certainly necessary according to 55% of the Estonian-speaking and 36% of the Russian-speaking population, respectively), while only 18% of the latter believe that resistance is not necessary.

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



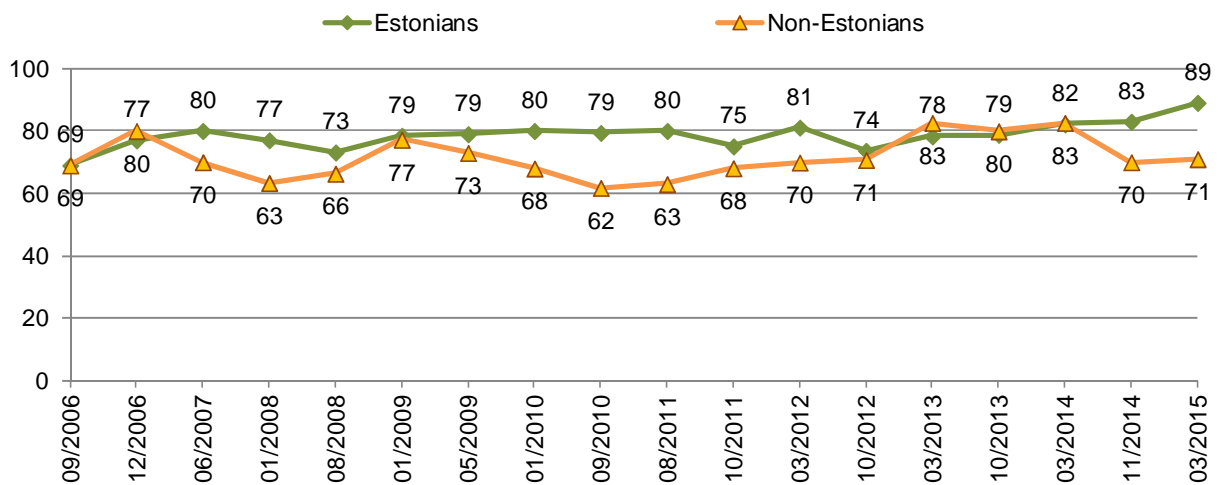
Armed resistance is regarded more necessary compared to the results of the autumn survey; Estonians' attitudes have changed significantly: only 45% considered resistance certainly necessary in November, whereas the indicator is already 55% in the current survey. Thus, the general support for armed resistance has risen to the level of last spring, yet, considering the 1% rise, which is within error limitations, it can be said that the Estonian population has never shown such great passive defence willingness (Figure 17).

**Figure 17. Necessity for the provision of armed resistance, if Estonia is attacked by any country; 2000–2015 comparison (%) ; N = all respondents)**



Nevertheless, the number of the supporters of armed resistance has risen to the highest level only among Estonians compared to the previous surveys; the number has been high before among Russian-speaking respondents (Figure 18).

**Figure 18. Proportion of the proponents of providing armed resistance in the event of an attack; comparison of the Estonian-speaking and foreign-speaking population 2006–2015 (% of those considering resistance certainly and probably necessary; N = all respondents)**



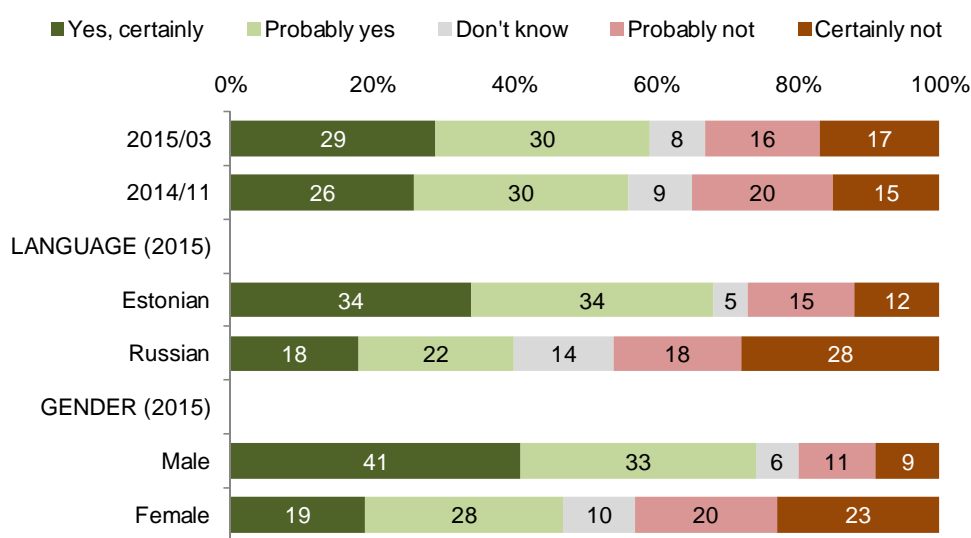
## 4.2 Willingness to participate in defence activities

The willingness of the population to participate personally in defence activities is lower than the proportion of proponents of armed resistance at the state level. While state-level armed resistance is considered necessary by 83%, 59% of the population would be willing to participate in defence activities using their own capabilities and skills (Figure 19). Further, 29% would be certainly willing and 30% probably willing to participate in defence activities. 17% would certainly not and 16% would probably not be willing to contribute to defence activities.

Here, we see an even more significant difference in the attitudes of Estonians and non-Estonians. 68% of Estonians are willing to participate in defence activities (8% growth compared to November), but only 40% of non-Estonians would do so (5% decrease). The Estonians' defence willingness is slightly higher than the Russian-speaking respondents' general average—47%.

When interpreting defence willingness, it should be considered that participation in national defence has been a traditionally male task, and, therefore, the readiness to contribute is inevitably lower among female and older respondents. The awareness of personal contribution possibilities will be discussed in the fourth part of this chapter (4.4).

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



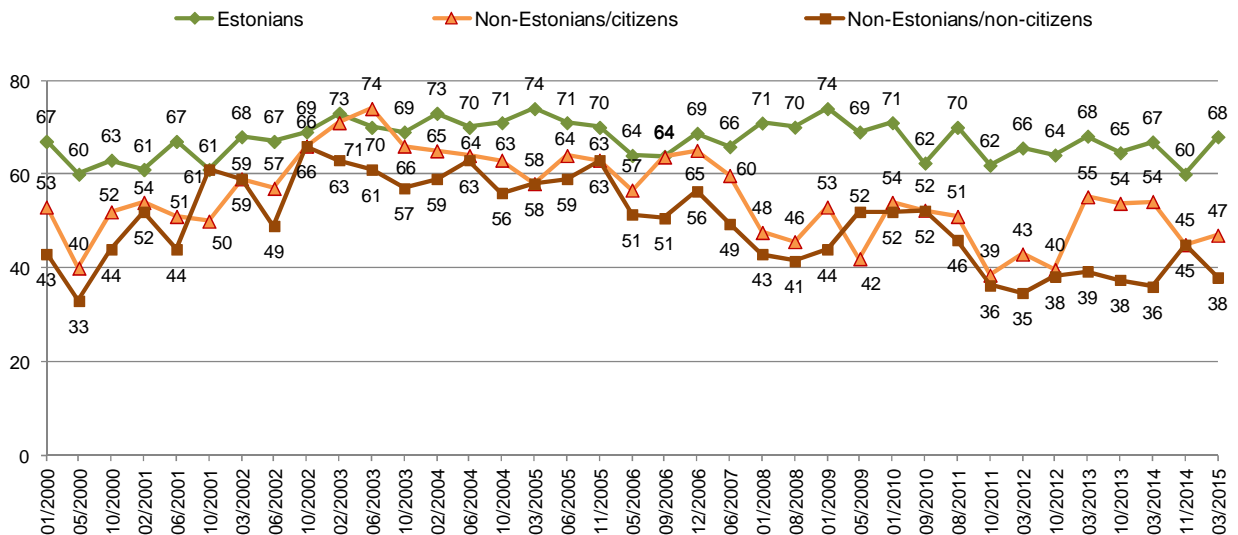
Defence willingness is seen in a more positive perspective when we look at men's willingness to participate in defence activities. Even though defence willingness has dropped among Russian-speaking male citizens, defence willingness is very high among Estonian men—almost 90% of men under 60 years of age are willing to participate in national defence.

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

LANGUAGE OF COMMUNICATION	15-19	20-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60-74	75+
Estonian	87%	83%	80%	93%	86%	77%	73%
	<b>15-29</b>		<b>30-59</b>		<b>60+</b>		
Other	70%		65%		44%		

As for 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, but since 2007 (after the so-called Bronze Night events) this willingness dropped significantly both among non-Estonians with Estonian citizenship and those without citizenship (Figure 20). The recent years saw an improvement of defence willingness among non-Estonian citizens, but in the last survey this willingness has decreased again.

**Figure 20. Proportion of the population willing to participate in defence activities in the event of an attack; comparison of the Estonian-speaking and foreign-speaking population 2000–2015** (% of those certainly and probably willing to participate; N = all respondents)

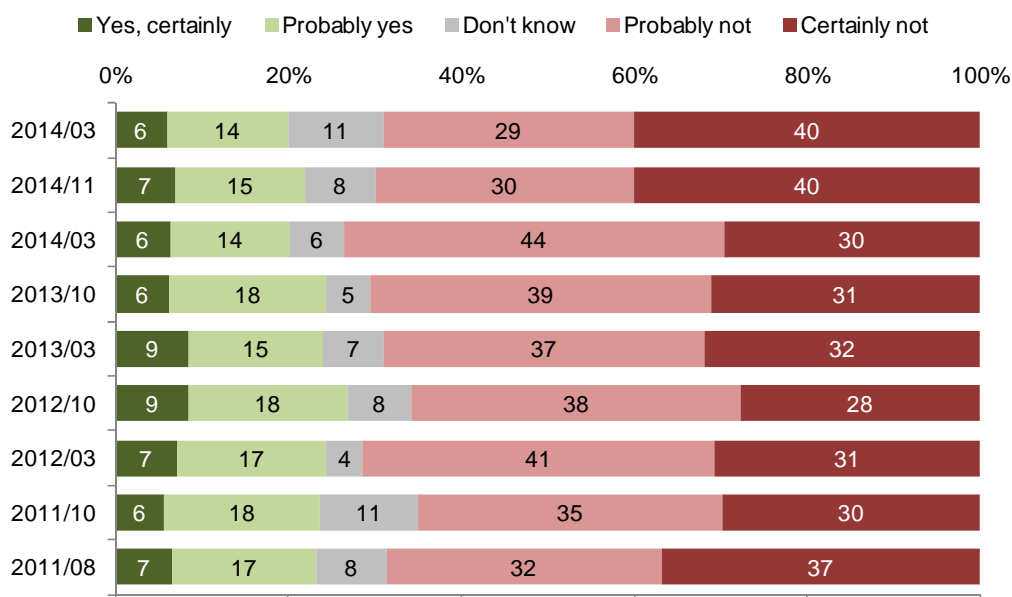


### 4.3 Desire to leave Estonia in the event of a military threat

In case Estonia is attacked, every fifth Estonian resident (20%) would consider leaving Estonia: in such a situation, 6% would certainly endeavour to leave and 14% would probably do it (Figure 21). 69% of the population would certainly not or probably not endeavour to leave Estonia in the event of a threat. These proportions have been quite stable in the past few years. However, the number of respondents who would certainly not leave Estonia has risen—this indicator has been 40% in the last few surveys.

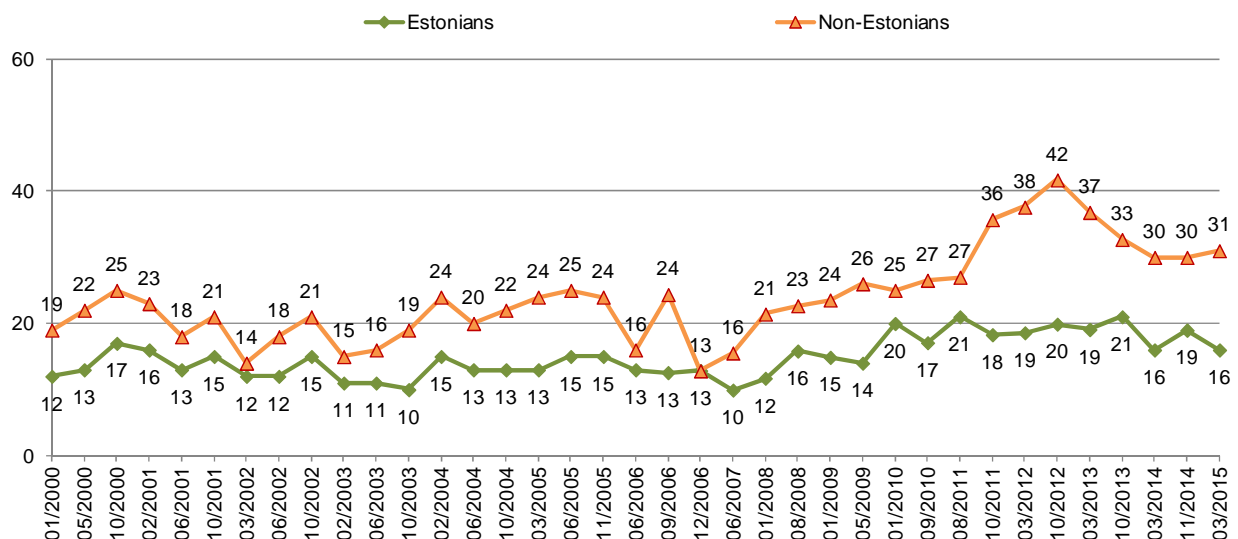
The people most prone to leave Estonia are women (certainly or probably 24%) and people younger than 40 years (more than one third). 31% of Russian-speaking respondents and 16% of Estonians would probably leave Estonia.

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



When taking into account the whole data from the beginning of the survey series, it can be claimed that the Russian-speaking respondents have expressed higher willingness to leave since the year 2011 until the year 2013, when the trend started to decline. (Figure 22).

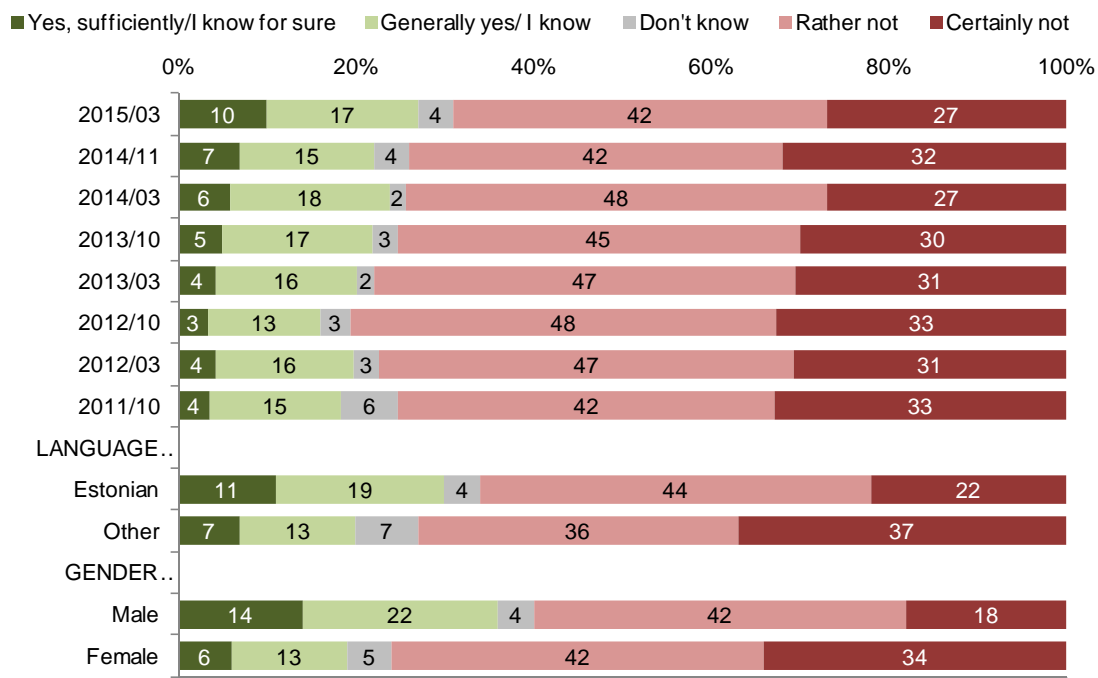
**Figure 22. Proportion of those desiring to leave Estonia in the event of an attack; comparison of the Estonian-speaking and foreign-speaking population 2000–2015 (% of those desiring to certainly leave and those who would probably do it; N = all respondents)**



#### 4.4 Ability to act in the event of a potential attack

In order to obtain an overview of the population's awareness on defence, the respondents were asked to tell whether they considered themselves to be adequately informed about what to do in the event of an impending foreign attack. The results show that, **in the event of a potential attack, people consider their ability to act rather poor**: only 27% would know what they could do for defending the state in such circumstances, but 69% are not informed about this (27% would certainly not know and 42% would rather not know what to do) ([Figure 23](#)).

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



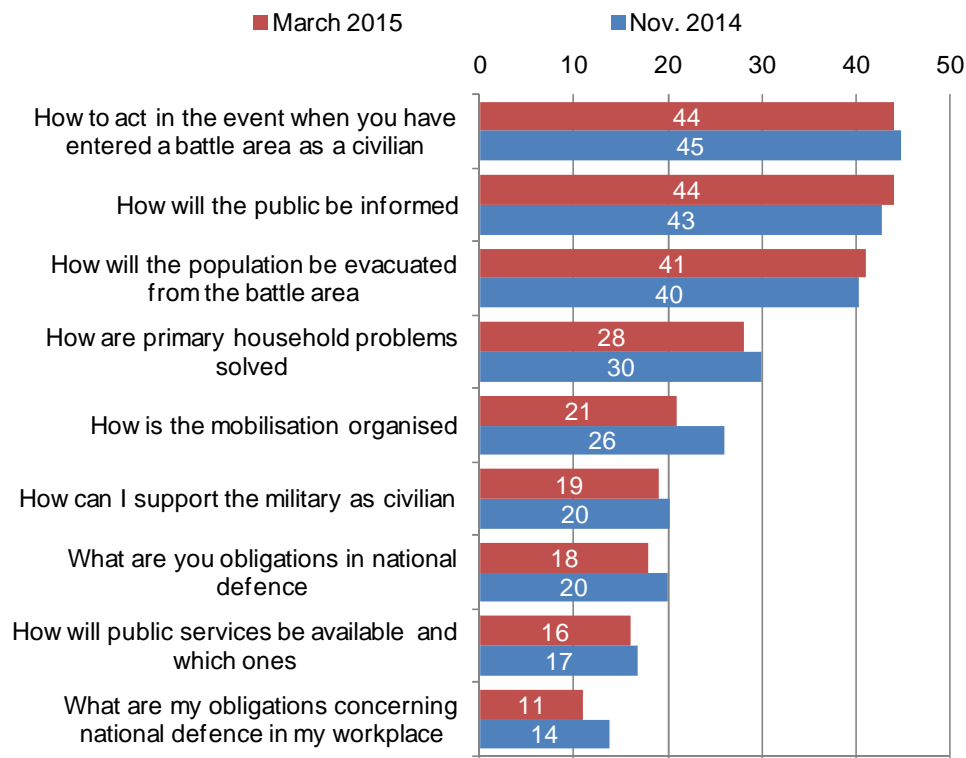
Despite men regarding their level of being informed to be better than women (36% vs. 19%), which can be explained by more contacts with national defence structures (conscriptio, Defence League), and Estonians being somewhat better informed than foreign-speaking respondents (30% vs. 20%), the overall level of being informed is rather low. Such a situation certainly challenges the application of comprehensive national defence.



## 4.5 On which topics do you require more information?

As throughout the surveys the population has assessed its level of being informed to be very low on the topic of what to do in the event of a foreign attack, in November 2014 we have included questions about the topics on which people require the most information in the event of a foreign attack ([Figure 24](#)). Respondents had to choose three topics most important to them out of nine given topics.

**Figure 24. On which topics do you require more information?** (%; N = all respondents)

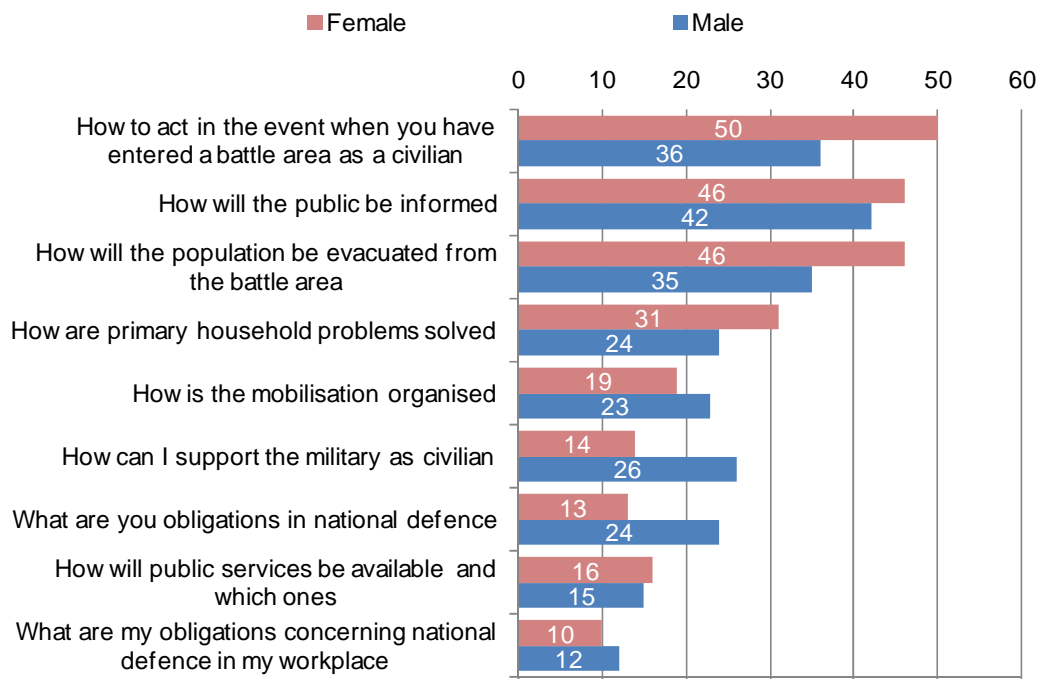


The most important topics on which further information is needed are related to informing and evacuating the civilians: how to act if one has entered the battle area as a civilian, how the public will be informed, how the evacuation is organised. As a rule, these topics have above-average importance for female respondents.

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

Although men are also concerned with these topics, their focus is on how the mobilisation will be organised, how a civilian can contribute to supporting the military and what the respondent's obligations are in national defence ([Figure 25](#)).

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



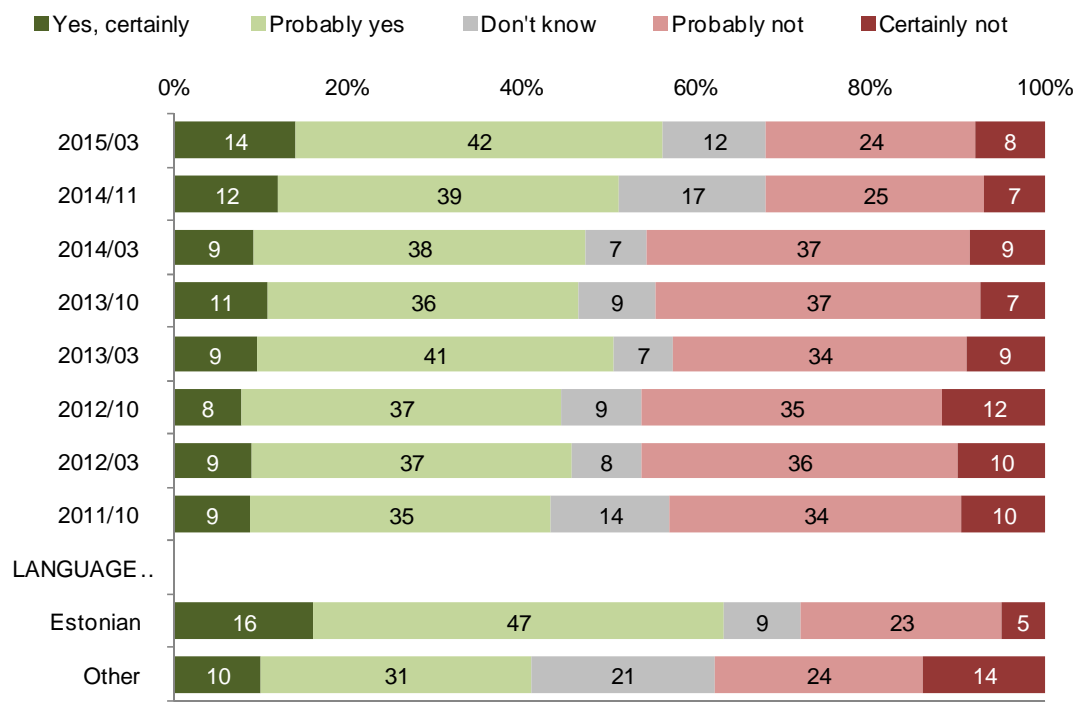
## 5 Defence capability of Estonia

The fifth chapter reflects attitudes within the population in relation to Estonia's defence capability, the volume of defence expenditures and attitude towards the new national defence development plan.

### 5.1 Assessment of the defence capability of Estonia

Respondents were asked to say whether they think that, in the event of an armed foreign attack, Estonia is defendable until help arrives from the allies. In comparison to the previous surveys, the number of respondents who believe that it would be possible to defend Estonia in the event of an armed foreign attack has risen — this opinion is shared by 56% of the respondents. The number of respondents who find that Estonia cannot be defended has remained unchanged compared to the autumn survey, yet the number is considerably lower than a year ago in spring: while the proportion of respondents who were of this opinion was 46% in the last spring, the proportion has fallen to 32 (Figure 26).

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

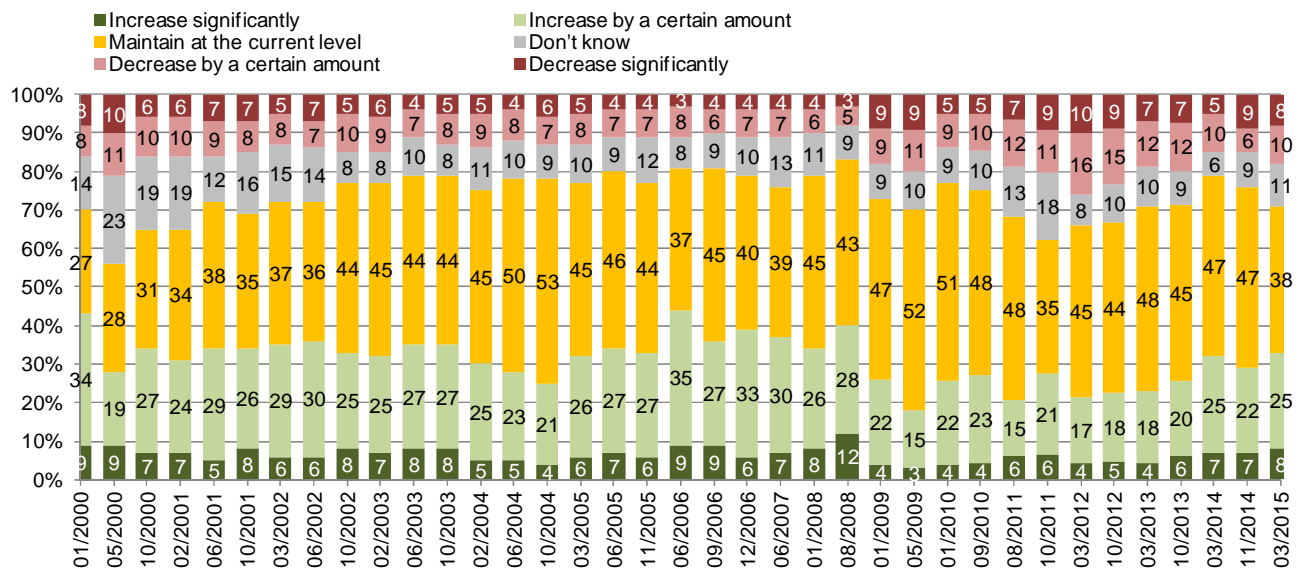


It is possible that the otherwise sceptical views on defence capabilities are abandoned as a result of the actual presence of allied forces in Estonia. After all, the possibility that the allies would not come to help Estonia in the event of a potential attack has been often speculated in the publicity in previous years.

## 5.2 Views on the volume of defence expenditures

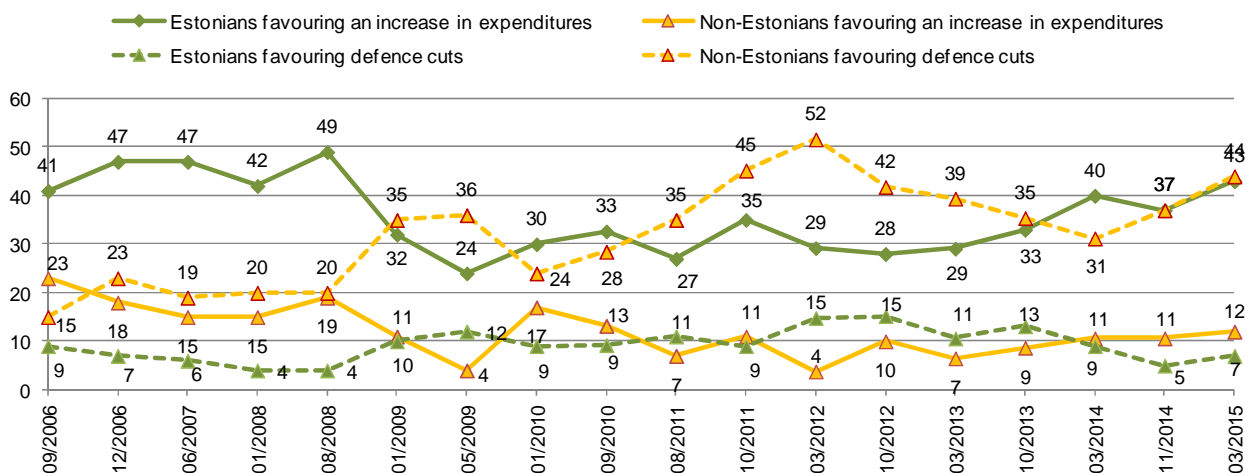
Assessments given to the volume of Estonian defence expenditures reveal that the number of respondents who think that the defence expenditures should be kept on the current level has decreased (Figure 27). An **increase in defence expenditures is favoured by 33% and decrease by 18% of the population**. In comparison to the autumn survey, the numbers of the supporters of both increasing and decreasing defence expenditures have grown.

**Figure 27. Views on the volume of defence expenditures; 2000–2015 comparison (%)**; N = all respondents)



**Estonians’ attitude towards defence expenditures is inversely proportional to that of Russian-speaking respondents: there are as many supporters of increasing the volume of defence expenditures among Estonians as there are supporters of decreasing it among Russian-speaking residents.** (Figure 28). In March 2015, 43% of Estonian-speaking and 12% of Russian-speaking population are of the opinion that the volume of defence expenditures should be increased; 7% of Estonian speakers and 44% of foreign speakers are in favour of expenditure cuts.

**Figure 29. Views on the volume of defence expenditures; comparison of the Estonian-speaking and non-Estonian-speaking population 2006–2015 (%)**; N = all respondents)



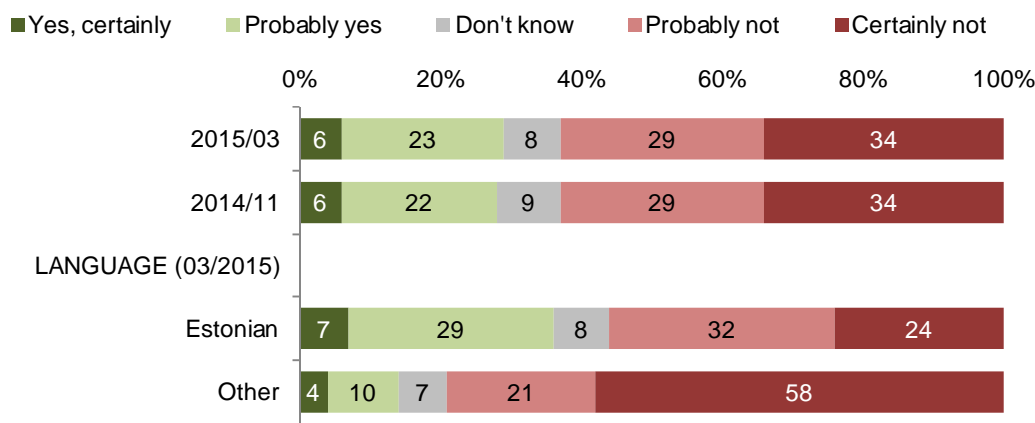
### 5.3 Preparedness for making a personal donation to national defence

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

29% of the respondents are certainly or probably ready to take such a step. 63% of the respondents would probably or certainly not make a donation to national defence (Figure 29).

While 36% of Estonians is willing to support national defence financially, only one seventh of foreign speakers are willing to do so. Of course, such preparedness is related to the respondent’s financial possibilities. 37% of respondents with an average income of over 1,000 euros per household member and 35% of those with an average income of 651–1,000 euros per household member are willing to support national defence financially, while only slightly over 20% of people with an income of less than 400 euros are willing to do so.

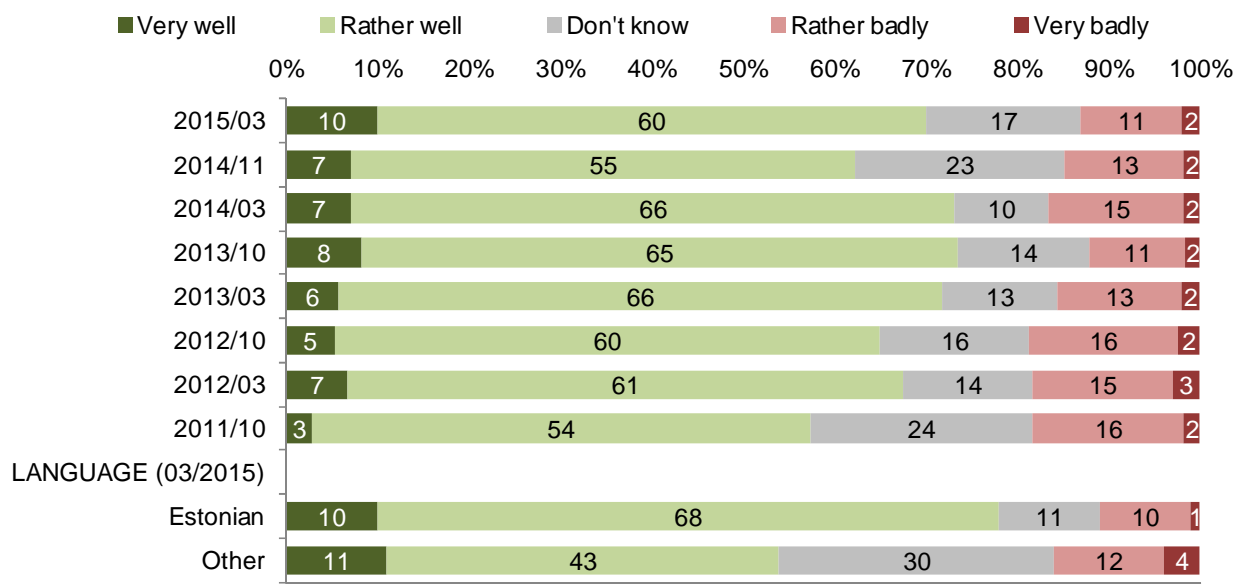
**Figure 29. Preparedness for making a personal donation to Estonian national defence** (%; N = all respondents)



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

Last spring, 73% of the population provided a positive assessment to the state’s activities in view of the development of national defence, yet the figure dropped to 62% in the November survey. By now, the assessments given to the state’s activities have improved again and 70% of the respondents find the activities very or relatively good. The number of negative assessments has decreased (15% in November, now 13%)(Figure 30).

Similar to other national defence surveys, the Estonian-speaking population esteem activities related to national defence development higher than non-Estonians (78% and 54%, respectively, regard state activities in developing national defence as good). Among the foreign-speaking population, the number of those not providing an assessment has risen considerably (37%).

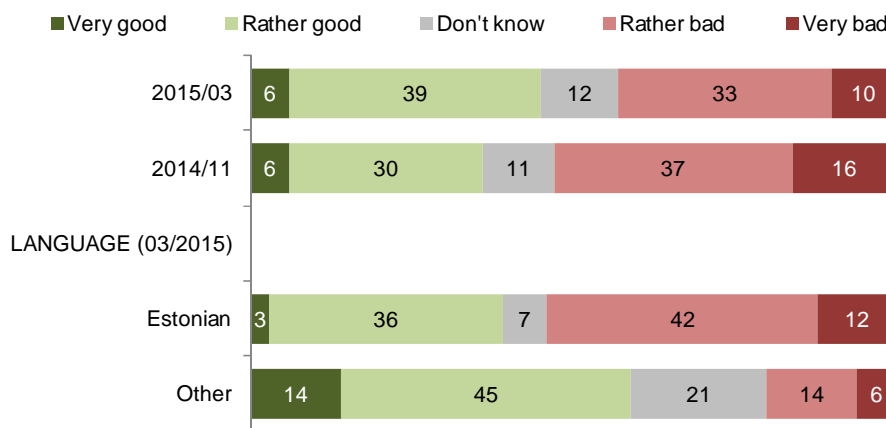
**Figure 30. Assessments of state activities in recent years in view of the development of Estonia's national defence** (%; N = all respondents)

## 5.5 Assessments on the defence of the Estonian border

The kidnapping of the Estonian Internal Security Service officer Eston Kohver by the Russian special services on the Estonian-Russian border has resulted in the public discussion of how well the temporary border line between Estonia and Russia is guarded. We have added a question on how well the respondents find the Estonian border is defended into the November survey.

While negative assessments were clearly prevalent last autumn, positive and negative assessments are now equal in number. However, Estonian respondents are still predominantly critical (Figure 31). Undoubtedly, the activities on the border have also influenced public opinion: as many as two thirds of Estonians provided a negative assessment about the defence of the Estonian external border in the autumn, the number of critical assessments has fallen to 54% by now.

Only one fifth of Russian-speaking respondents share the critical view about the Estonian border, while more than half of Russian-speaking respondents think that the Estonian external border is well protected.

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

## 6 Organisation of Estonian national defence

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

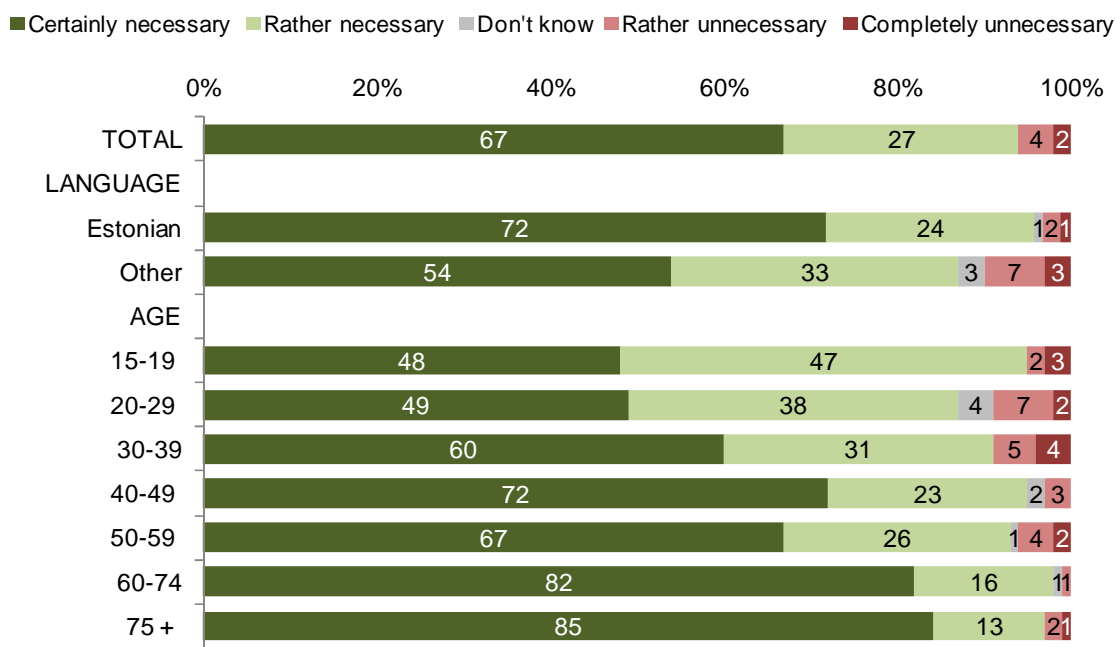
### 6.1 Attitude towards conscript service

#### 6.1.1. Necessity of conscript service for young men

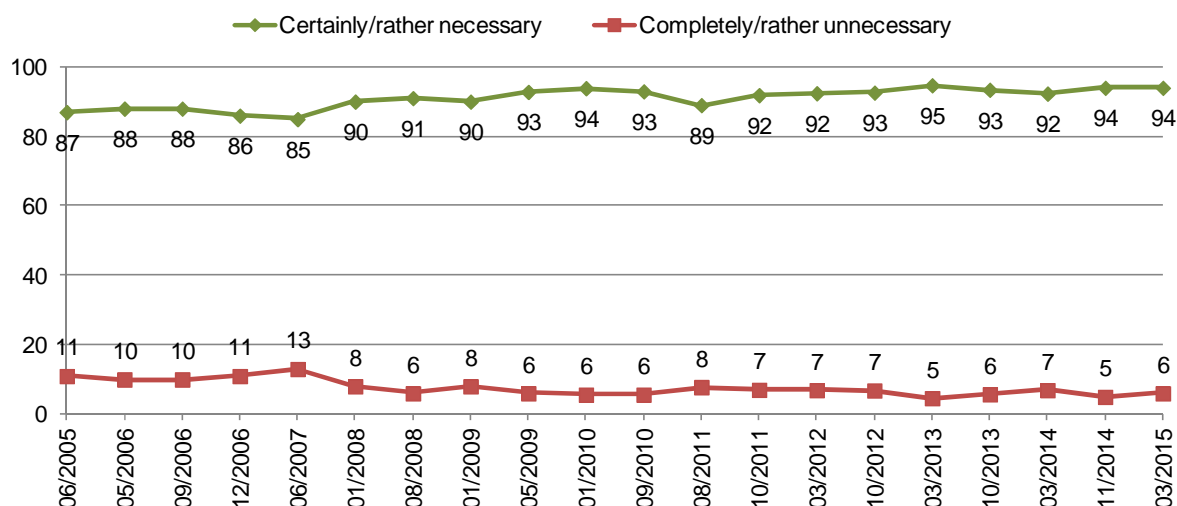
As for conscript service, the population of Estonia still has a very favourable attitude towards it: **94% of all the respondents believe that young men need to undergo conscript service**, with 67% believing that it is certainly necessary and 27% rather necessary (Figure 32). Only 6% of the population believe that conscript service is rather or totally unnecessary. Undergoing conscript service is valued as certainly necessary by 72% of the Estonian-speaking respondents and 54% of the foreign-speaking respondents.

The most dedicated supporters of conscript service are people aged 60 and over, but the number of supporters is nearly 50% even among under 30 year olds, who are influenced by the conscript service the most, and less than 10% consider it unnecessary.

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

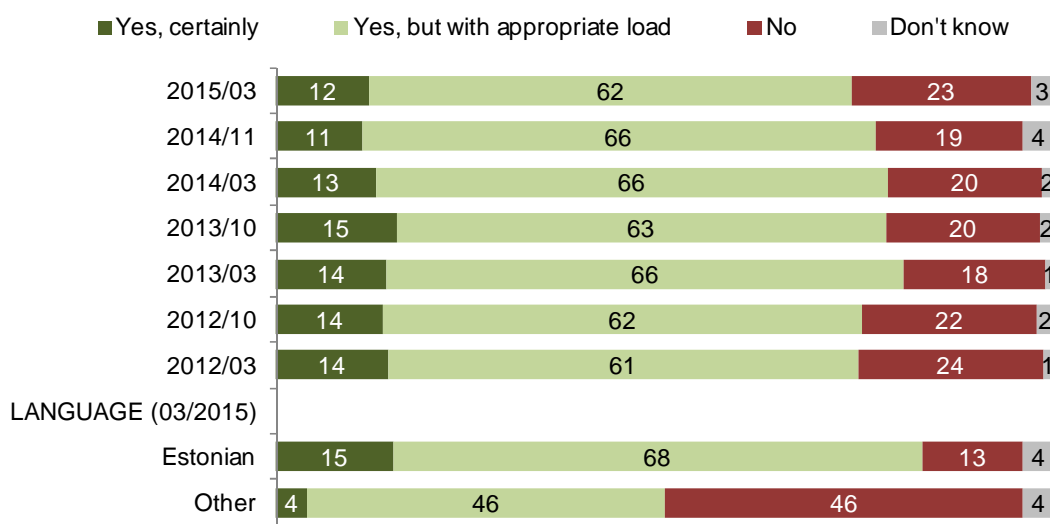


**The proportion of the population who consider undergoing conscript service for young men necessary or rather necessary has remained at a very high level over the years** (since 2005, in the range of 85-95%) (Figure 33).

**Figure 33. Attitude towards the necessity of conscript service; 2005–2015 comparison (%)** (N = all respondents)

Since 2012, the respondents have been asked to assess whether young men having minor health disorders should be subject to conscript service. 12% of the respondents believe that such young men should certainly undergo conscript service; however, **62% of the respondents think that young men with minor health disorders should undergo conscript service with an appropriate training load.** (Figure 34).

The most significant differences occur in view of the language of communication. As for Russian-speaking respondents, 46% hold the opinion that young men with minor health disorders should not undergo conscript service, while only 13% of Estonian speakers share the same opinion.

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

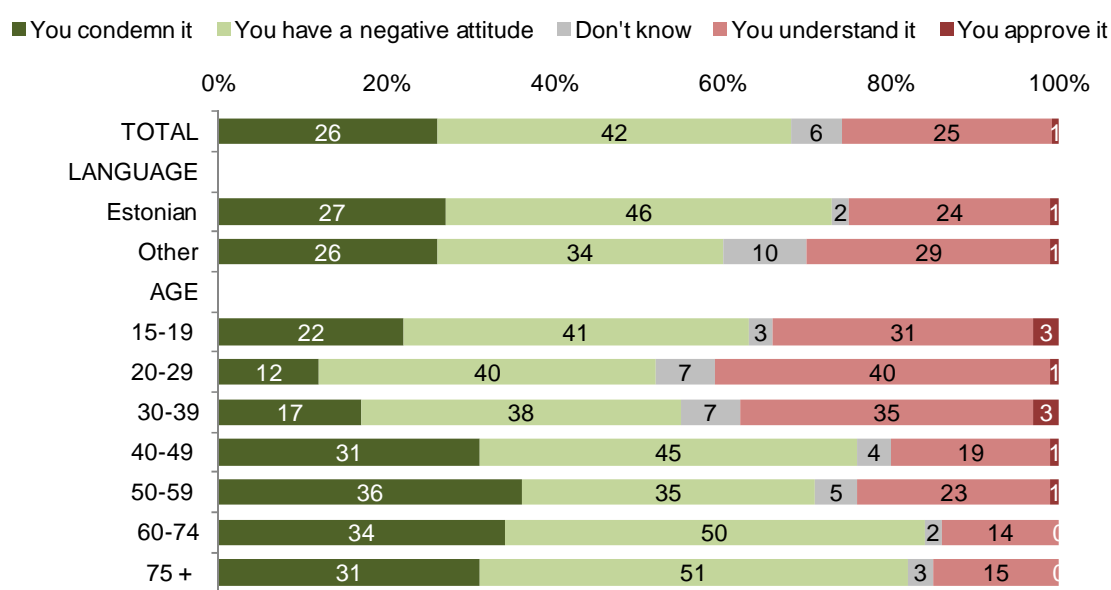


### 6.1.2. Evasion of conscript service

Bearing in mind the favouring attitudes of the population towards conscript service described above, it is fully anticipated that **the majority of the population in Estonia disapproved of the evasion of conscript service** – 26% condemn such behaviour and 42% consider it negative (Figure 35). 25% of respondents have an understanding attitude towards the evasion of conscript service, however, less than 1% of the respondents approve of this.

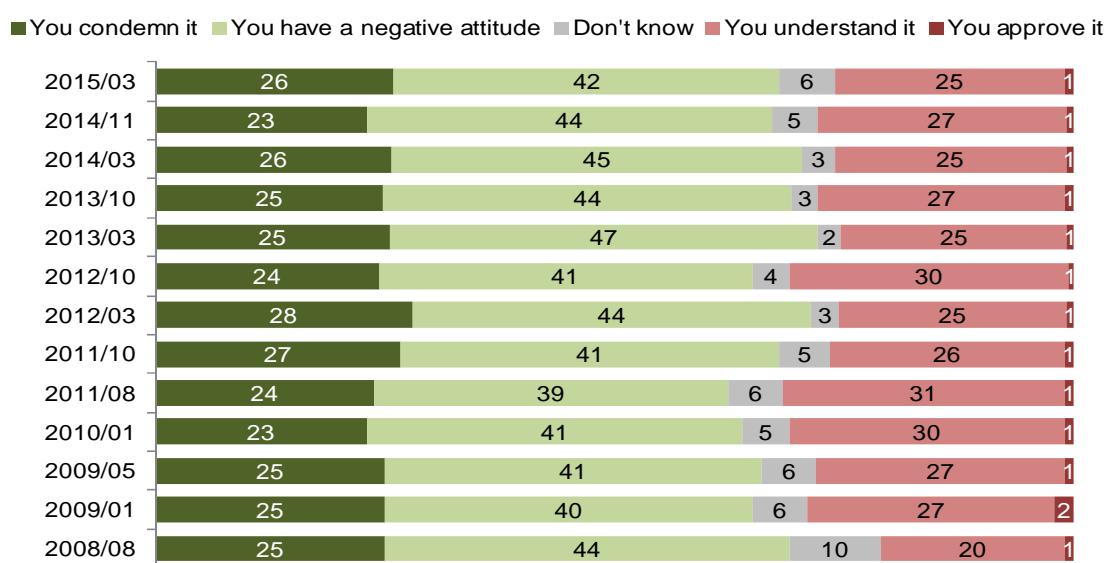
The evasion of conscript service finds disapproval with 73% of the Estonian-speaking respondents and 60% of foreign speakers. Compared to younger respondents, the evasion of conscript service is condemned more by senior respondents—more than 40% of 20–29 year olds express understanding in this matter.

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



During the series of surveys, there have been no major changes in the assessments of the question regarding evading conscript service (Figure 36).

**Figure 36. Attitude towards evading conscript service; 2006–2015 comparison (%) ; N = all respondents)**

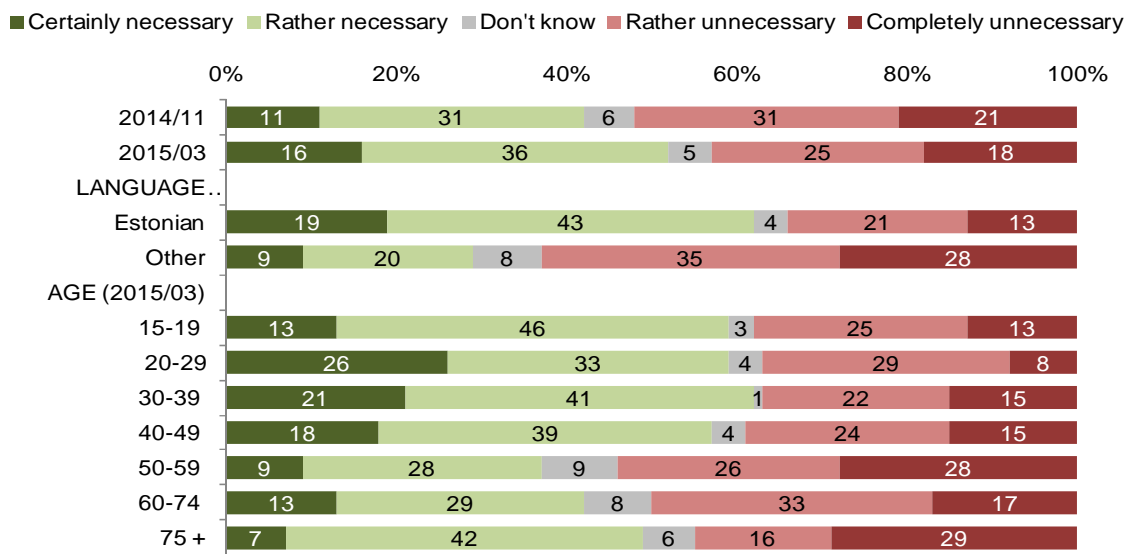


### 6.1.3. Conscript service for women

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

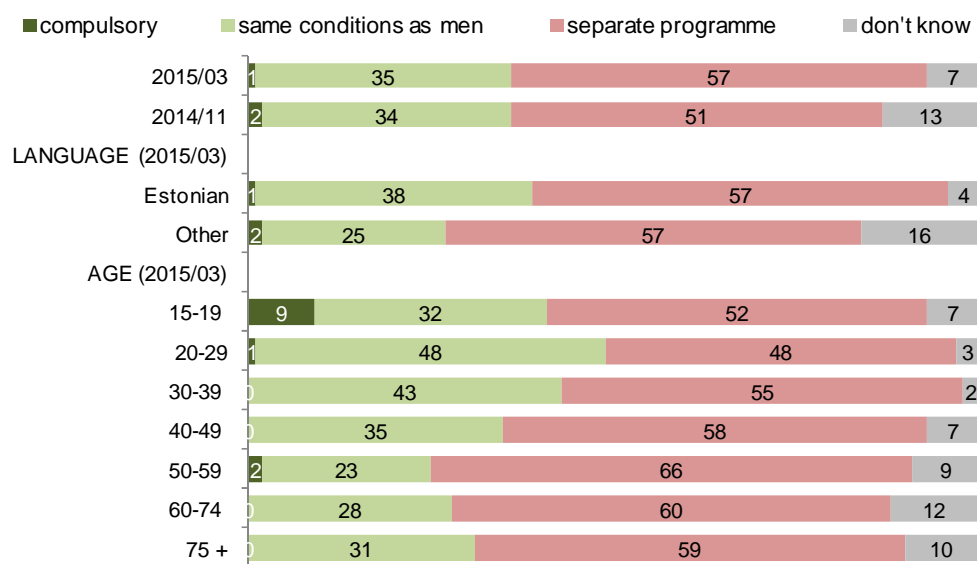
Estonians and younger respondents have a more contemporary attitude towards the questions of gender equality than the Russian-speaking and older respondents. 61% of Estonians think it is necessary for women to have the opportunity of undergoing conscript service, whereas only 29% of the Russian-speaking respondents agree. (Figure 37).

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



Thereafter, the respondents who considered conscript service for women certainly or rather necessary were asked in which form the conscript service should take place. The respondents had to choose from the three options assessed in previous surveys by all respondents: compulsory conscript service, conscript service under the same conditions as applied for young men and conscript service through a separate programme (Figure 38).

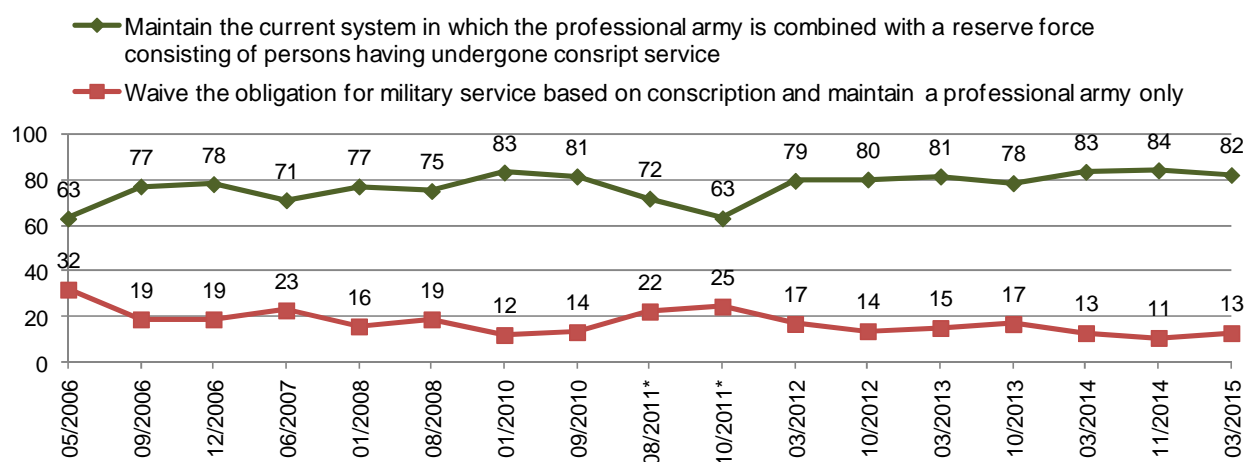
**Figure 38. In which form should conscript service for women be** (%; N = all respondents who considered conscript service for women necessary)



## 6.2 Attitudes towards the professional defence forces

Despite 90% of respondents finding it necessary to undergo conscript service, the topic of making the transition to a professional army is sometimes raised in political debates. Respondents were asked to tell whether they think Estonia should waive compulsory military service based on conscription and maintain a professional army only, or maintain the current system in which the professional army is combined with a reserve force consisting of persons having undergone conscript service. It became evident that **82% of the population would prefer maintaining the current system, with the reserve forces included (Figure 39)**. Switching to a fully professional army and waiving compulsory conscript service is favoured by 13% of the population.

**Figure 39. Options preferred for the development of Estonia's defence concept; 2006–2015 comparison (%) ; N = all respondents)**

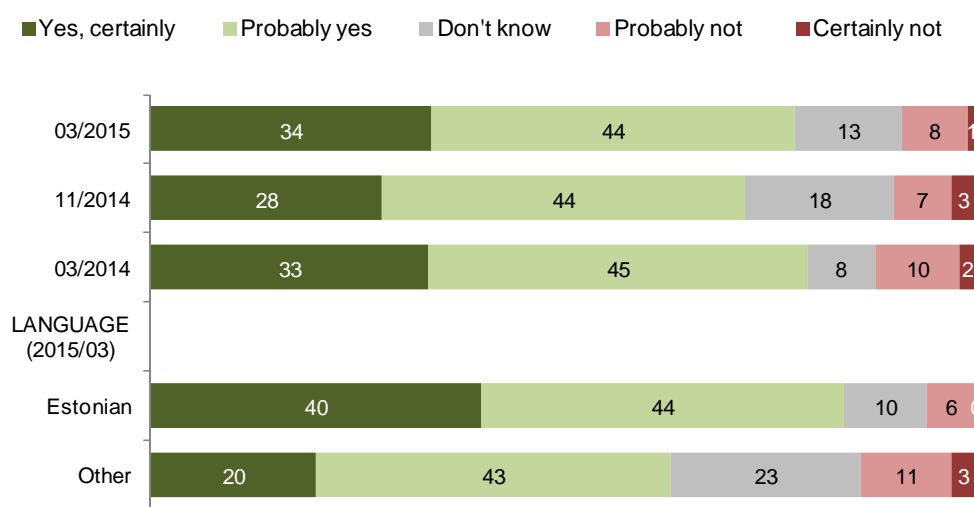


\* In waves of survey conducted in 2011, another wording of the question was used, with the reply options: "Estonia should maintain the general obligation for military service based on conscription" and "Estonia should switch to a professional army".

### 6.3 Attitude towards the comprehensive approach to national defence

Starting from last spring, the survey included a question about the strategy of Estonian national defence according to which national defence is no longer the task of only the Defence Forces and Defence League, but the task of most state authorities and the whole society. Almost 80% of respondents (84% of Estonians) are of the opinion that the comprehensive approach to national defence is certainly or probably suitable for Estonia (Figure 40). The contrary opinion was shared by less than one tenth of the respondents.

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



A comprehensive approach to national defence is a new concept, and not very familiar to the general public. Thus, it is mainly favoured by the educated groups of the society: 88% of respondents with high education view it as certainly suitable or probably suitable for Estonia, 71% of people with primary or basic education agree. Among the latter, the number of people who could answer this question is greater than average.

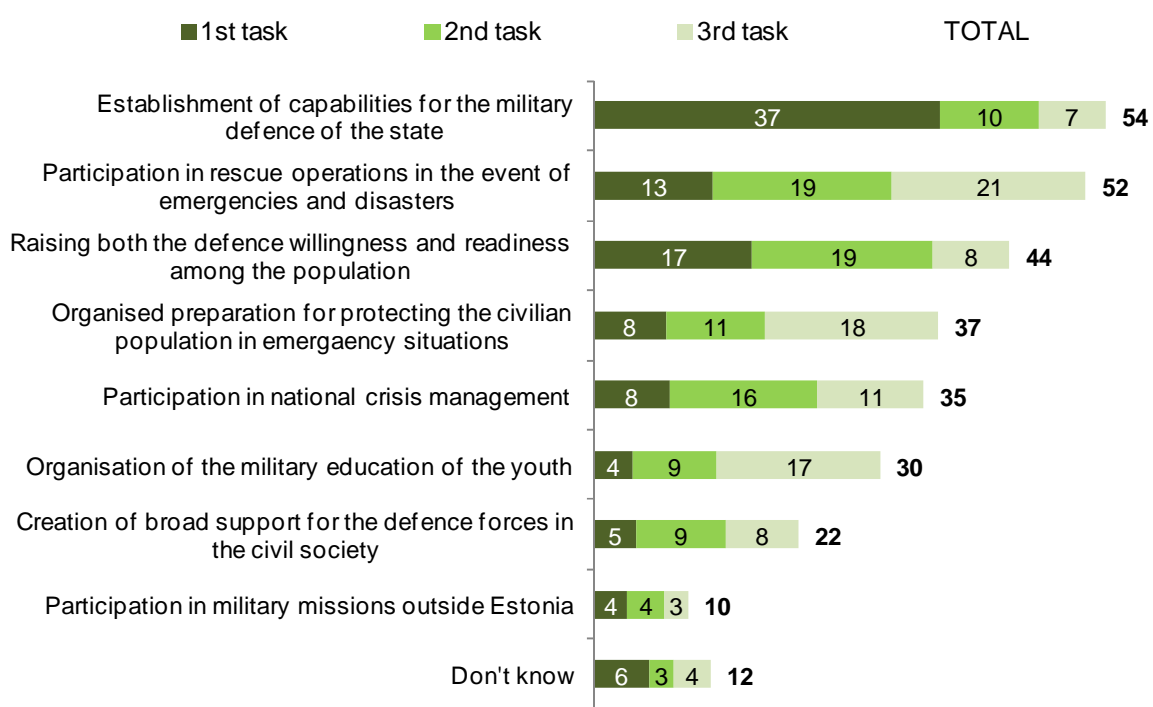
## 6.4 Tasks of the Defence League

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

The Defence League's most important task is considered to be **the establishment of capabilities for the military defence of the state—this task is listed as first by 37% of the respondents** and it also holds the first place among the three options (54%). **Raising both the defence willingness and readiness among the population (17%)** is the second most popular first choice, and is on the third position with 44% in the overall summary of the three tasks. **Participation in rescue operations in the event of emergencies and disasters** holds the second place in the overall summary of the three most important tasks (13% consider it the main task and 52% think it is one of the three most important tasks) (Figure 41).

The other important tasks besides the three abovementioned ones are preparing for civil defence in emergency situations (37%), participating in national security crisis management (35%) and organising the military education of the youth (30%).

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



Compared to the four previous waves of survey, the opinions are not significantly different—there are some small fluctuations (a few per cent) in the incidence of answers, but the vision of the main tasks of the Defence League has remained the same.

There are several differences between the opinions of the Estonian-speaking and foreign-speaking population. According to the Estonian-speaking population, the main task of the Defence League is the establishment of capabilities for the military defence of the state (65%, non-Estonians 32%) and raising both the defence willingness and readiness among the population (52%, non-Estonians 23%). However, the opinion that the main task of the Defence League is participation in rescue operations in the event of emergencies and disasters strongly dominates among the foreign-language speaking population (72% list it as one of the three main tasks, while 44% of Estonians list it among these).

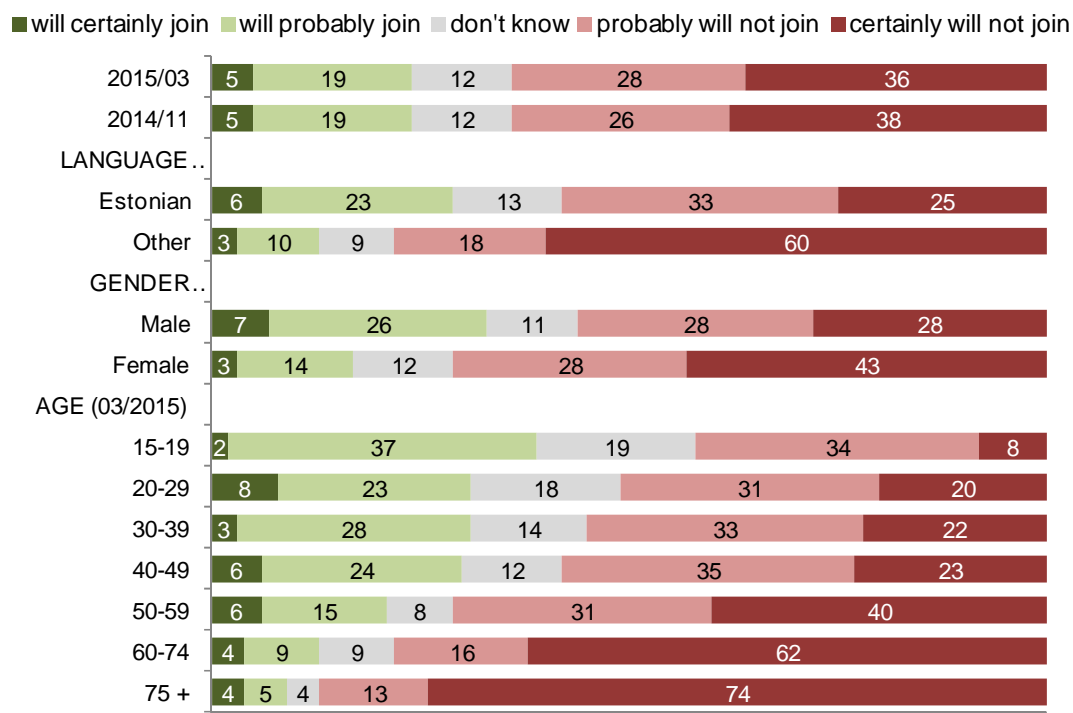
## 6.5 Opinions on joining the Defence League

4% of the respondents participate in the activities of the Defence League themselves, 23% are connected to the Defence League through a family member or a friend. Unfortunately, people connected to the Defence League are mainly Estonians: 6% directly and 32% via family members and friends. The number of Russian-speaking respondents connected to the Defence League is marginal—only 4% have a friend or family member who is connected to the Defence League.

Those respondents, who were not the members of the Defence League or members of related organizations, were asked for their opinion on joining the Defence League.

5% of the respondents will certainly give a positive answer to the question of joining the Defence League or Naiskodukaitse (Women's Voluntary Defence Organisation), and 19% would probably join (Figure 42). The bright side of the answers is that the willingness to join is higher among the younger respondents.

**Figure 42. Willingness to join the Defence league or Naiskodukaitse (%)** (N = those who are not yet members of the Defence League or related organizations)



## 7 NATO

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

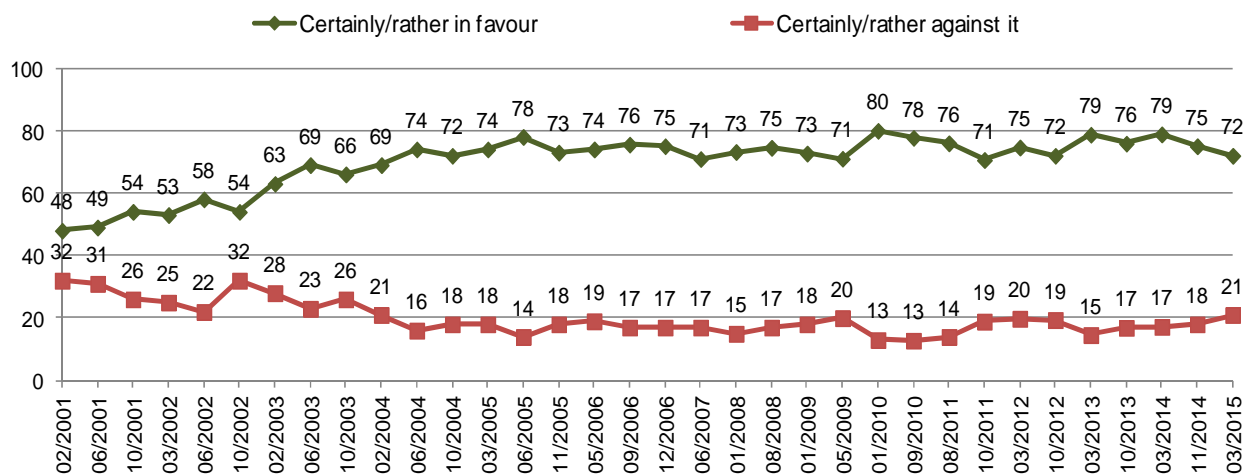
### 7.1 Attitude towards membership in NATO

**In March 2015, the membership of Estonia in NATO was favoured by 72% of the population,** while 43% were certainly in favour of the membership and 29% were rather in favour (Figure 43). 21% of Estonian residents are against NATO membership; 8% of the population has no view on this matter. These figures almost take us back 10 years to the period of joining NATO. It must be admitted that during this time, the society has failed to make NATO more acceptable for Russian-speaking Estonians.

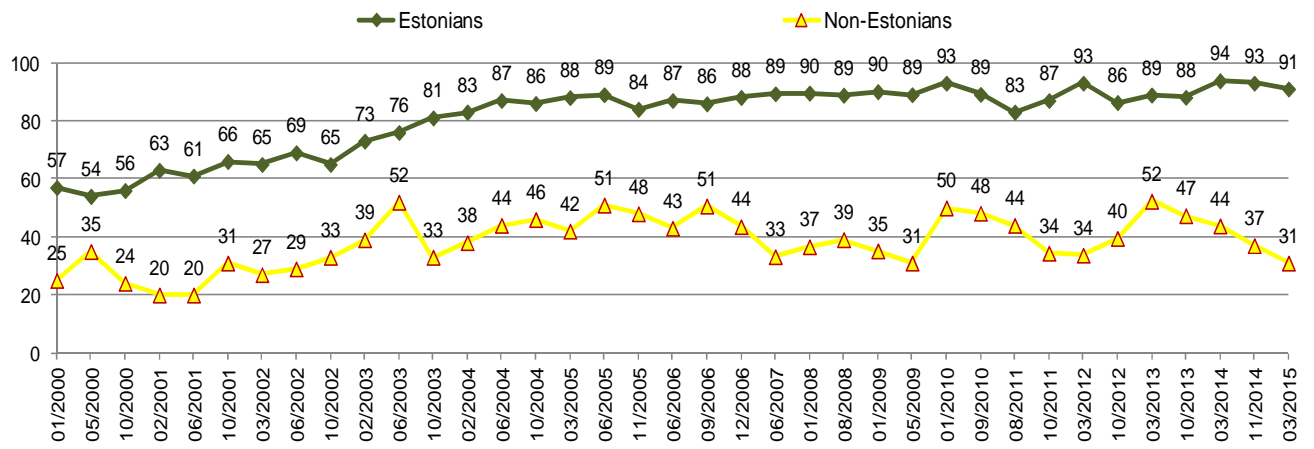
The increasingly negative attitudes to NATO among the foreign-language speaking respondents were already seen in the questions discussed in the previous chapters (confidence in NATO, seeing NATO as a security guarantee to Estonia). The slight fall in the support to the membership in NATO is caused by the negative opinion of the Russian-speaking population. While 91% of Estonian-speaking respondents are in favour of NATO membership, Estonia's membership in NATO is favoured only by 31% Russian-speaking population (Figure 44). 52% of non-Estonians are against Estonia belonging to NATO, 16% do not have a specific opinion in relation to this question or do not wish to disclose it.

During the all period of survey, the **support of the foreign speakers to the NATO membership has seen ups and downs** (Figure 44). The low points of the recent years occurred at different times—foreign speakers' support for NATO membership was low from June 2007 until the summer of 2009, in autumn 2011 and spring 2012, and, currently, we are experiencing another falling trend: from spring 2013 until today the support for NATO membership has fallen.

**Figure 43. Attitudes towards joining NATO / membership in NATO, comparison of 2001–2015;** (%; N = all respondents)



**Figure 44. Proportion of the proponents of joining NATO / membership in NATO; comparison of the Estonian-speaking and foreign-speaking population 2000-2015**  
 (% of those certainly and rather favouring the aforementioned; N = all respondents)





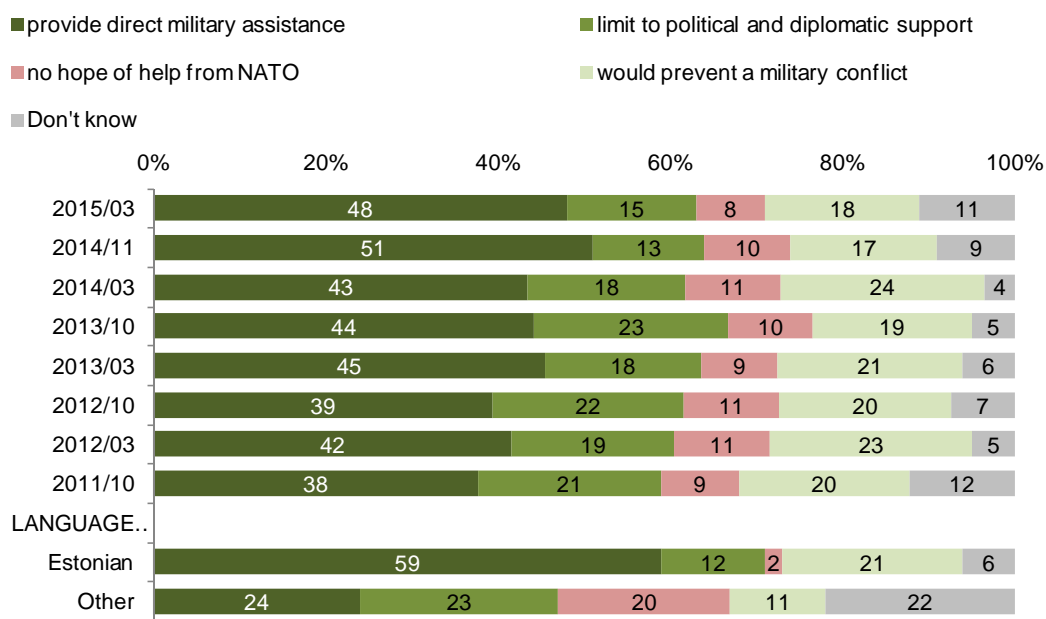
## 7.2 NATO's assistance in the event of a potential threat

The third chapter of the report revealed that NATO is seen as Estonia's main security guarantee. Nevertheless, the general public has brought up the question of whether NATO's Article 5 really is going to be invoked in case of a real military threat several times over the years. We have also touched upon this topic in our surveys and over the years, people have become increasingly more certain that NATO will interfere in the event of Estonia facing a military threat. NATO's air defence mission in Ämari and the arrival of the U.S. contingent of defence forces in Estonia have strengthened the population's beliefs in NATO's support.

**In March 2015, almost the half of the respondents held the opinion that, in the event of an impending threat to Estonia, NATO would provide direct military assistance (Figure 45).** 15% thought that NATO would limit its activities only to political and diplomatic support, 18% believe that membership in NATO would be able to prevent a military conflict completely and only 8% think that there is no hope for help from NATO.

The trust of the Estonian-speaking respondents in NATO's support is considerably higher than among the foreign-language speakers, which probably originates from the attitude towards membership in the alliance. While 59% of Estonians believe in NATO's military support, the same belief is shared by only 24% of the Russian-speaking population. One fifth of non-Estonians believe that Estonia has no hopes for help from NATO.

**Figure 45. Role of NATO in ensuring Estonia's security, if Estonia is exposed to military threat** (%; N = all respondents)

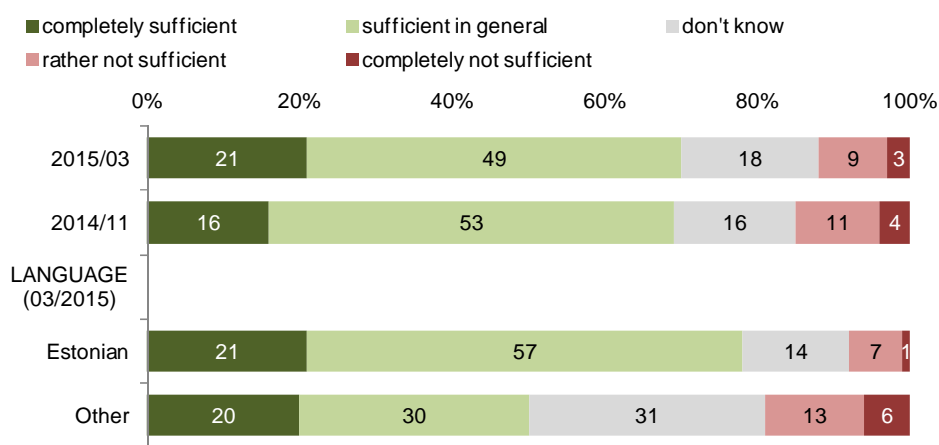


### 7.3 Assessments on the actions of NATO

Since November 2014 two additional questions were added to the survey to study the attitude of the Estonian population towards actions already taken by NATO to ensure better security for Estonia.

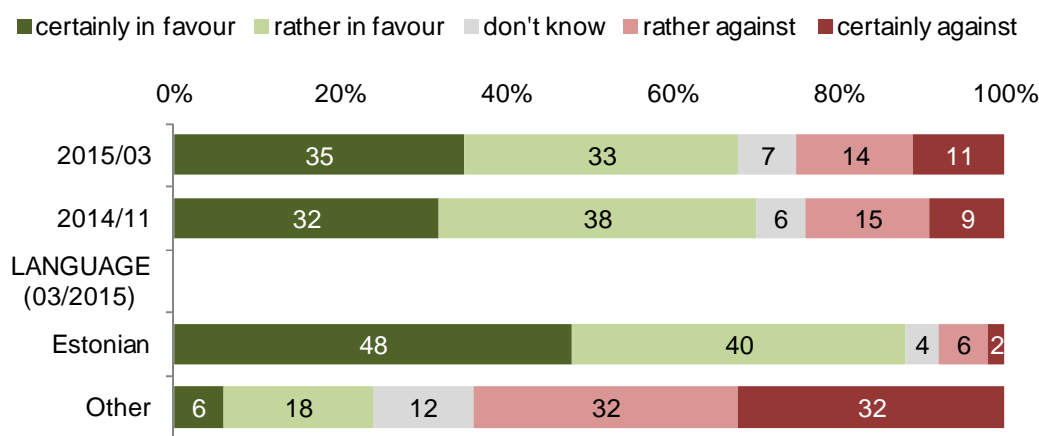
The questions were whether NATO has taken sufficient measures in today's security situation (Figure 46) and how the presence of NATO allied forces in Estonia is assessed (Figure 47).

**Figure 46. Has NATO taken sufficient measures to ensure the security of Estonia?** (%; N = all respondents)



The assessments given to steps taken by NATO to ensure security in Estonia are predominantly positive, 70% of the surveyed, including 78% of Estonians, consider these completely sufficient or generally sufficient. Half of the Russian-speaking respondents also see NATO's activities as positive. However, Russian-speaking respondents are predominantly negative about the presence of NATO allied forces in Estonia, whereas 90% of Estonians are in favour of it.

**Figure 47. What is your attitude towards the presence of NATO allied forces in Estonia?** (%; N = all respondents)



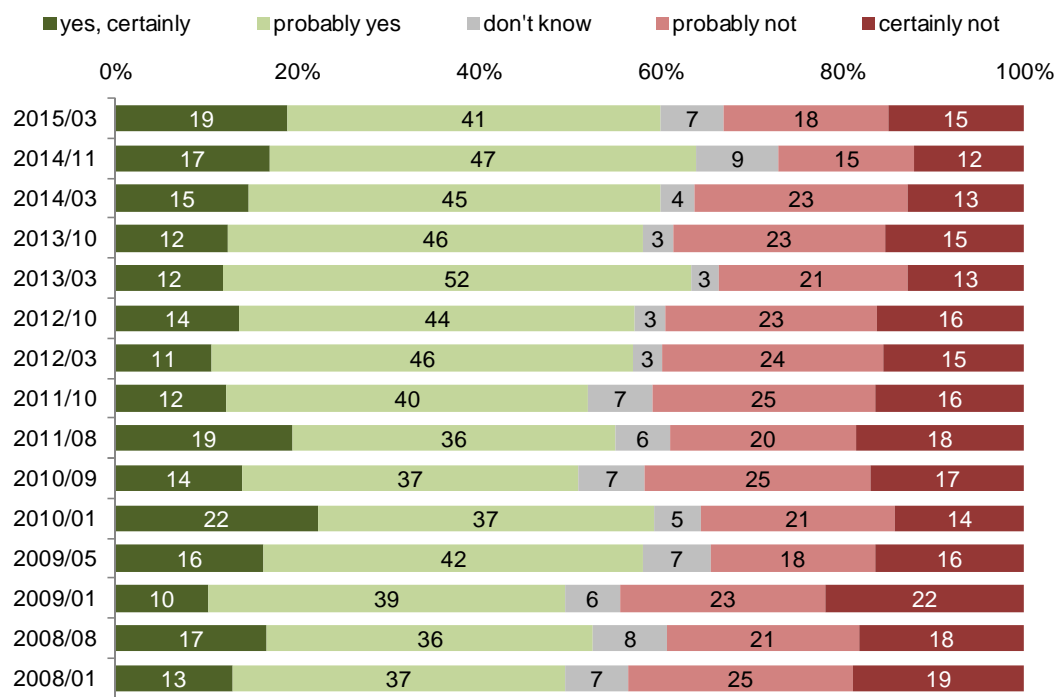
## 8 International military operations

The eighth chapter deals with attitudes regarding participation in international military operations: how necessary Estonia's participation is in such operations according to the population, what the reasons for Estonia to participate are and what their impressions of the Estonian Defence Forces' biggest foreign operation are—this took place in Afghanistan under the NATO contingent during the previous 10 years.

### 8.1 Attitude towards participation in international operations

**60% of the population of Estonia believe that the Estonian Defence Forces units should—in accordance with their capabilities—participate in international military operations; 19% of respondents feel that it should be certainly done (Figure 48).** No need for participation in international operations is seen by 33% of the population.

**Figure 48. Should Estonian units participate in international military operations?**  
(%; N = all respondents)



There is a significant difference between Estonian and Russian-speaking respondents' attitudes towards international military operations. Compared to the survey in autumn, Estonians have grown more supportive of participation in military operations (the number has increased from 64% to 72%), whereas the support of Russian-speaking respondents towards the participation in military operations has fallen from 43% to 32%. 55% of Russian-speaking respondents are against participation in international military operations.

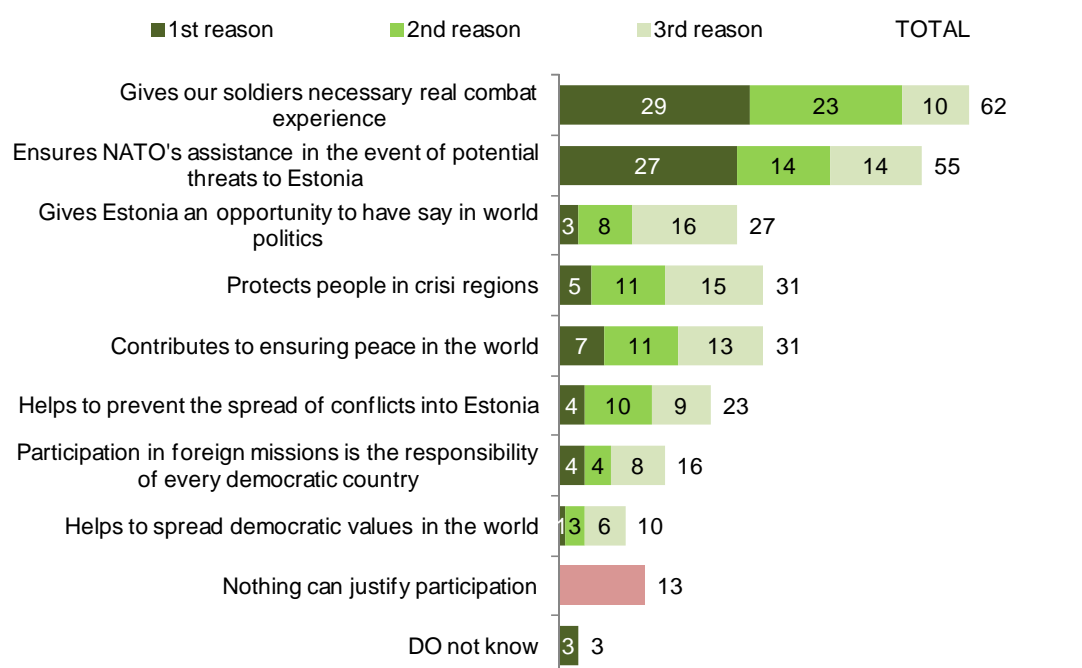
## 8.2 Arguments for participation in international operations

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

Two of the most important reasons were almost equally highlighted: 29% of respondents consider participation in international operations most important because it gives our soldiers necessary real combat experience and 27% think it is important because it ensures NATO's assistance in the event of a potential threat to Estonia. Of all the three most important reasons, our soldiers receiving combat experience remains the most significant argument. (Figure 49).

Other arguments for participating in international operations highlighted by the respondents include contributing to world peace (one of the three most important reasons according to 31%) and protecting people in crisis areas (31%), taking the opportunity of having one's say in world politics (27%) and preventing the spread of conflicts into Estonia (23%).

**Figure 49. The most important reasons why Estonia should participate in international military operations** (%; N = all respondents)



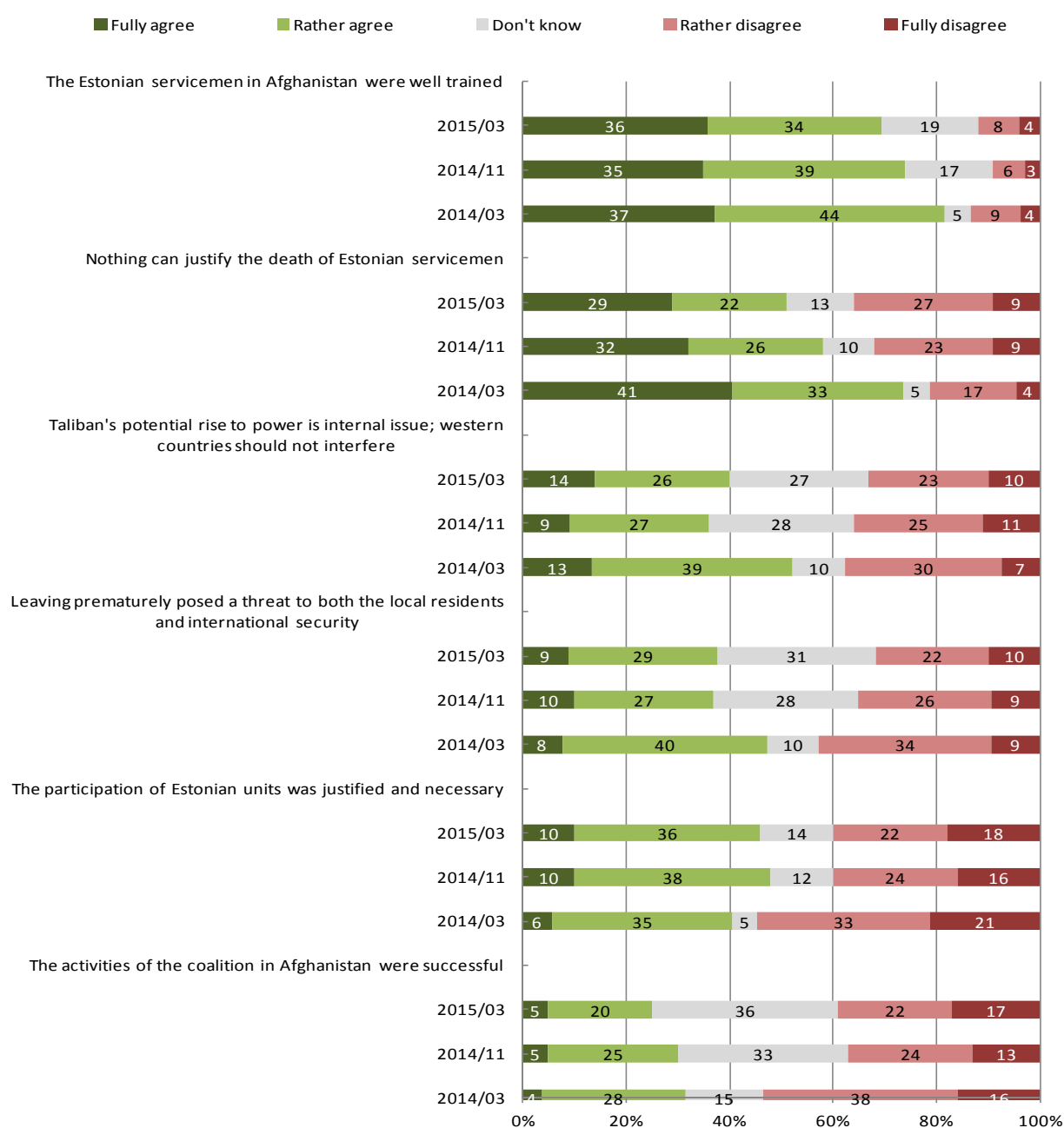
The rankings are mainly based on the responses of Estonians: while 34% of Estonians mention gaining combat experience as the first reason and 70% see it among the three most important reasons, the respective figures for Russian-speaking respondents are merely 18% and 43%. The second most important reason—NATO's support to Estonia—is regarded as the most important reason by 33% and as one of the three most important reasons by 67% of Estonians and only 13% and 27% of Russian-speaking respondents respectively. 39% of the Russian-speaking respondents believe that none of the aforementioned arguments justify participation in international military operations.

### 8.3 Image of the operation in Afghanistan

As a separate issue in the survey, attitudes of the population of Estonia towards the Defence Forces' biggest foreign operation so far—the operation in Afghanistan within the NATO contingent, which ended this summer—were explored. For an overview of the ways of depicting the operation, six different statements were given and respondents were asked to assess how much they agreed with these.

Most of the population is of the opinion that the **Estonian soldiers acting in Afghanistan are well trained** — the respective statement is completely or rather favoured by 70% of the population (Figure 50). On the other hand, almost 51% of respondents find that **nothing can justify the death of Estonian servicemen and the continued endangering of their lives during the operation in Afghanistan**. The answers for the rest of the statements are distributed quite evenly between contrary opinions. As the operation has ended, the number of those respondents who are unable to provide an opinion has probably increased—the topic is off the table.

**Figure 50. Agreement with different statements regarding the operation in Afghanistan, (%) ; N = all respondents)**



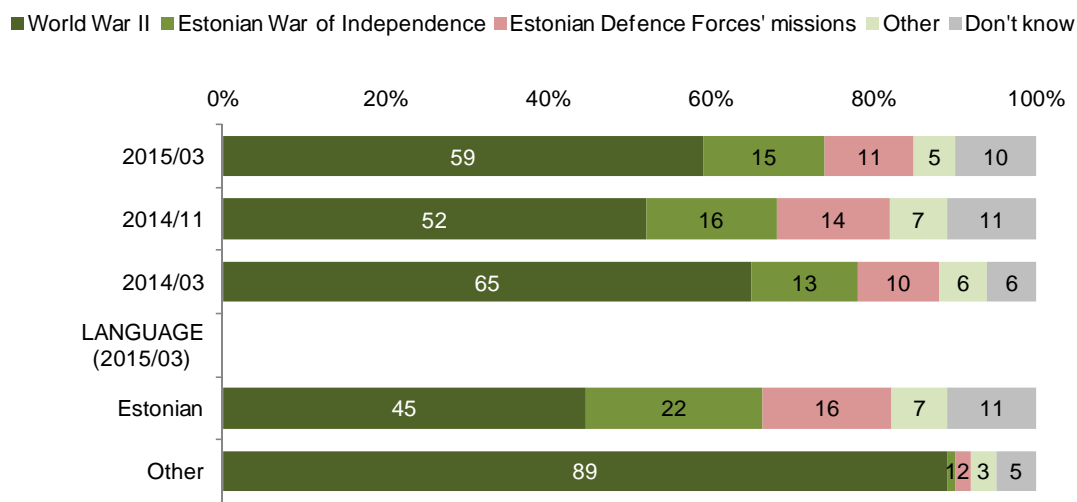
## 9 Veteran policy

In the four last waves of survey, respondents were further asked whether the word "veteran" is primarily connected to World War II, the Estonian War of Independence, or the Estonian Defence Forces' operations in Kosovo, Afghanistan and Iraq.

The responses show that for more than a half of the population **the word "veteran" is primarily associated with World War II** (Figure 51). For Russian-speakers, veterans are associated with World War II to a greater extent than for the Estonians (81% vs. 45%), on the other hand, for Estonians, veterans are more often associated with the Estonian War of Independence (22% vs. 1%)

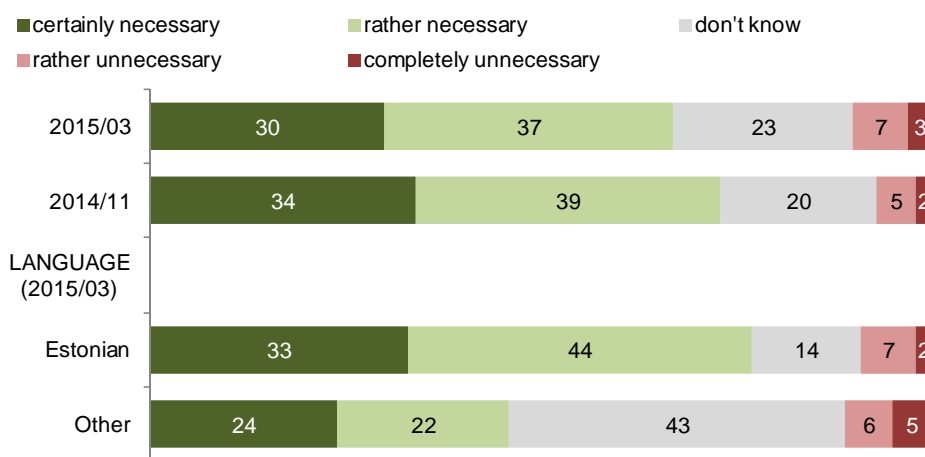
Those 5% of respondents who claimed that the word "veteran" is associated with some other option most often noted that the word "veteran" should refer to the participants of all wars.

**Figure 51. What are the primary associations with the word "veteran", 2013–2014 comparison** (%; N = all respondents)



The Veterans' Day held on April 23 (St. George's Day) each year is considered certainly necessary or rather necessary by the majority of the respondents—no matter what they consider the meaning of the word "veteran" to be (Figure 52). The Russian-speaking population is not very aware of such a day — 43% of them does not know about it or cannot say anything about it.

**Figure 52. Attitude towards the celebration of Veterans' Day** (%; N = all respondents)



## 10 Information related to national defence

The final chapter includes results of two national defence information related questions: the need for national defence instruction in schools and the reading of the supplement Riigikaitse of the daily Postimees.

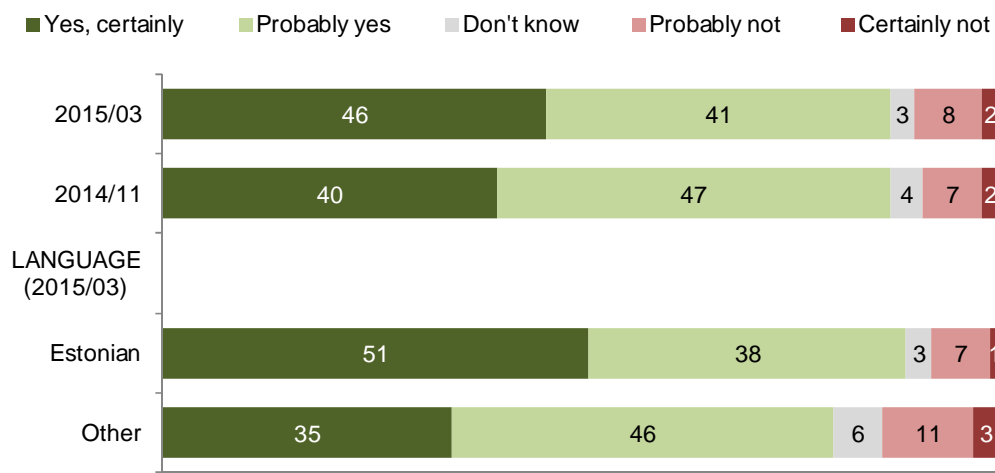
### 10.1 National defence instruction in schools

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

In this survey, we used an altered version of the question which sounded: **“Should it be possible to get national defence instruction in all educational institutions providing secondary education?”**

Compared to previous surveys, the support for national defence instruction in schools is even higher: it is considered certainly necessary or probably necessary by 87% of the respondents, more specifically: 89% of the Estonian-speaking and 81% of the Russian-speaking respondents. (Figure 60)

**Figure 60. Attitude towards the necessity of national defence instruction in all educational institutions providing secondary education (%) ; N = all respondents)**



## 10.2 Supplement Riigikaitse of the daily Postimees

In addition to the general mapping of media consumption, the questionnaire included a direct question regarding an information source related to national defence. While up to March 2014, the survey studied the readership of the supplement Riigikaitse.EE of the weekly Eesti Ekspress, in November 2014, the question was aimed towards the readership of the supplement Riigikaitse of the daily Postimees.

On the basis of the survey results, it can be claimed that the people interested in Riigikaitse.EE have also found the supplement Riigikaitse of the daily Postimees.

During the last couple of years, the supplement Riigikaitse.EE of the weekly Eesti Ekspress (published quarterly) was read by 10–14% of the population, among them 2–3% read it in most cases and 8–11% at times. **The supplement Riigikaitse of the daily Postimees was read by 18% of the respondents, among them 6% read it in most cases and 12% once or a couple of times.** (Figure 61)

As it is an Estonian-language edition, it was quite expected that there were more readers among the Estonian respondents than among the non-Estonians (24% and 5% respectively). Furthermore, there are more readers among people with higher education (28%) and men (22%).

**Figure 61. Reading the supplement Riigikaitse of the daily Postimees (%)** (N = all respondents)

