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# PUBLIC OPINION AND NATIONAL DEFENCE

**Ministry of Defence  
SUMMARY**

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## SUMMARY

- The residents of Estonia consider the most reliable institutions to be the Bank of Estonia, the Border Guard, the Defence Forces and the Tax and Customs Board, which more than three thirds of the population completely or mostly trust.

The unrest related to the Bronze Soldier which took place in Tallinn at the end of April has significantly increased the differences between Estonians and non-Estonians regarding trust in state institutions. The Defence Forces are considered reliable by 89% of Estonians but by 60% of non-Estonians.

The reliability of the Defence League is traditionally below that of the Defence Forces. The Defence League is completely or mostly trusted by a total of 62% of those polled, incl. 77% of Estonians and 33% of non-Estonians.

- The global situation is still considered to be unstable – the increase of military conflicts in the world within the next decade is considered likely by 47% of the respondents. 15% of the respondents estimate that the world will become a safer place.
- The most probable potential threat to Estonia is considered to be extensive environmental pollution. Other potential threats are rather considered to be unlikely. In connection to this, a possible military attack by another country is considered to be one of the most unlikely threats (12% of the respondents).
- Among the most important factors ensuring Estonia's security, our member status in NATO is mentioned most frequently. This is followed by membership of the European Union and good-neighbourly relations with Russia. Compared to the previous wave of polls, the significance of the European Union as a security guarantee has substantially increased, the reason for which could be the European Union's reaction towards Russia in relation to the unrest which took place in Tallinn at the end of April.

The most important factor for Estonians is predominantly our membership in NATO, while for non-Estonians, it is cooperation and good-neighbourly relations with Russia. The increased significance of the European Union as a security guarantee can be witnessed among both Estonians and non-Estonians.

- 53% of the respondents find that Estonia's security has increased since its accession to NATO, while 34% believe that no changes have taken place. Security has diminished according to 3% of the respondents. The proportion of these residents who believe that accession to NATO had a positive effect on Estonia's security has increased during the last few years.

- Estonia's membership in NATO is supported by a total of 71% of residents, of whom 36% completely supports it and 35% mostly supports it. A total of 17% oppose membership in NATO.

89% of Estonians and 34% of non-Estonians (44% in December) support membership in NATO.

- 4% of respondents consider their information about what it means for Estonia to be a member of NATO to be very good and 38% consider it rather good.
- Both Estonians and non-Estonians most frequently receive information about the national defence of Estonia and NATO from the local media. Estonians receive it from the local Estonian-language media (television, printed media and radio) and non-Estonians from the local Russian-language media (television, printed media and radio).
- Military resistance towards a possible assailant is considered necessary by 76% of residents. In the event of an attack against Estonia, 62% of the respondents would be willing to assume defence according to their abilities, 27% of whom would completely be prepared to do so.

In case of an assault, a total of 8% of the respondents would decidedly (4%) of preferably attempt to leave Estonia. 45% of the respondents would decidedly not attempt to leave Estonia, while 33% would probably not do it (78% in total).

- 37% of residents support an increase in the expenditure for guaranteeing national defence (7% of whom completely support it). This almost equals the amount of people who support maintaining the current level of expenditure (39%). A stable amount of 11% of respondents has supported the decrease of defence expenditure over the last few years.
- Completing Defence Forces service is considered necessary for young men by 85% of respondents (of whom 56% completely considers it necessary). Establishing obligatory military service for young women corresponding to that of young men is considered unnecessary by 89% (52% of whom say that under no circumstances should this be done). Establishing obligatory military service for young women is considered necessary by a total of 7% of respondents.

The attitude towards evading military service is predominantly negative. 58% of all respondents condemn such behaviour or have a negative attitude towards it. 32% of respondents have an understanding attitude towards evading military service and 2% approve of it.

The most suitable time for completing military service is considered to be the period of time immediately following high school graduation (47%).

Almost half of the respondents believe that their information concerning the conditions of living and service in the Defence Forces is good or rather good (45%). The amount of people who consider their information poor is also almost the same (47%).

- Estonia's transition to fully paid armed forces is supported by 23% of residents. The majority of the respondents (71%) support maintaining the current system where professional army is combined with military service.
- The participation of Estonian military units in international military missions at international sources of conflict is supported by 44% of residents, of whom 13% completely and 31% mostly support it. In the case of current missions, the predominant proportion of respondents supports the discontinuation of Estonia's participation in all areas of conflict.
- 25% of respondents who have completed military service or 3% of the total population would be either completely or mostly prepared to participate in one of the international missions themselves. A total of 6000 – 18 000 people would decidedly wish to participate in a mission with 95% certainty.

A total of 7% of respondents have a positive attitude towards holding the position of a professional serviceman.

- The principal role of the Defence League in the future is most frequently considered to be activity as an organisation guaranteeing internal security (46% of respondents). 26% finds that the Defence League must remain the way it is at the moment. Other alternatives are supported by less than 10% of respondents.