

---

# SURVEY OF NEW IMMIGRANTS TO ESTONIA

**Survey conducted among the Estonian population and immigrants**

**Turu-uuringute AS**

**August/October 2016**

Pärnu mnt 102, 11312  
Tallinn  
Tel 585 29 700  
[post@туру-uuringute.ee](mailto:post@туру-uuringute.ee)  
[www.turu-uuringute.eu](http://www.turu-uuringute.eu)

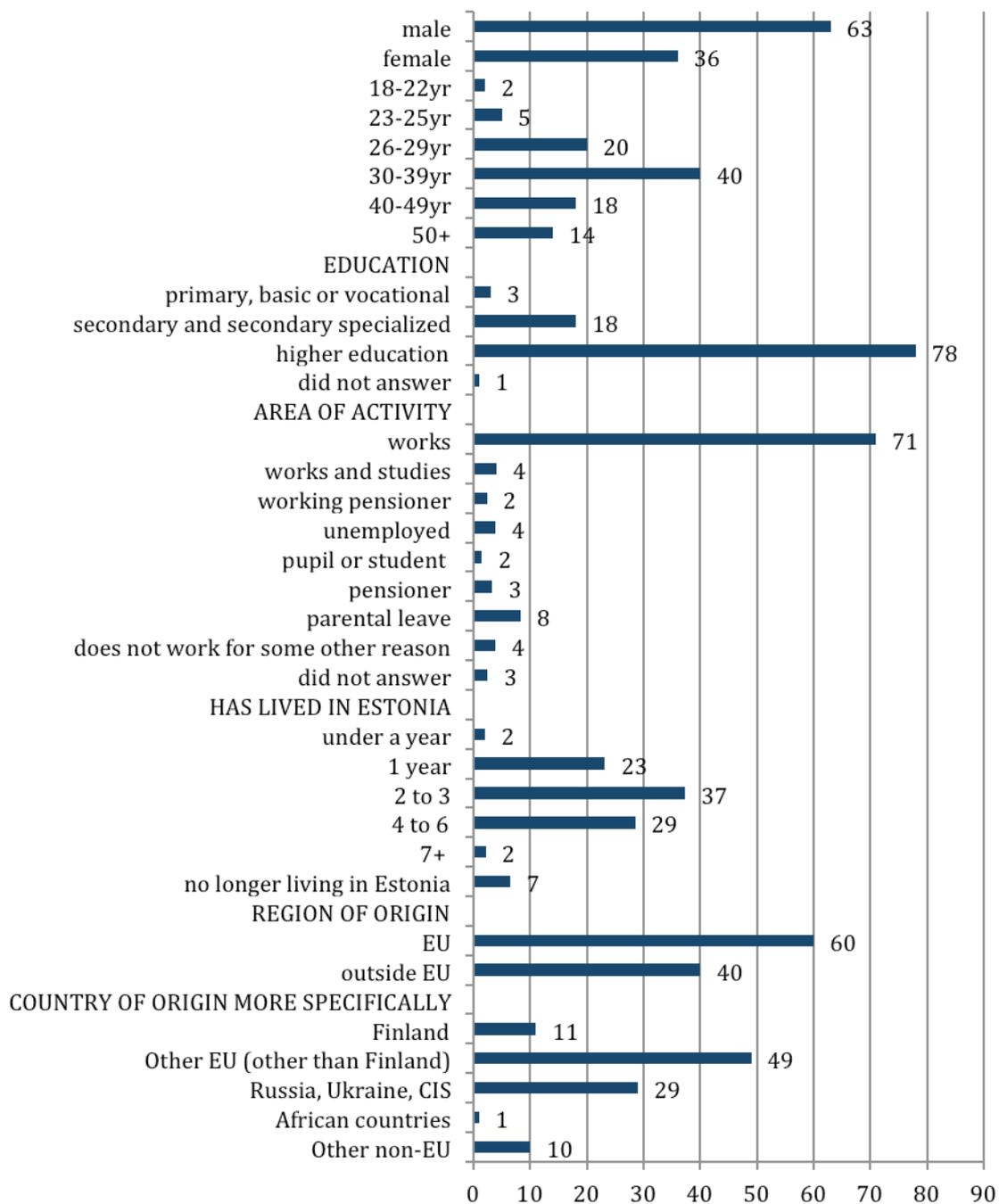
**Turu-uuringute AS**



## RESULTS OF THE IMMIGRANT SURVEY

### 1 Profile and origin of respondents

Figure 13. Profile of respondents, %, n=600



## Countries of origin of respondents:

United States of America	Italy
Argentina	Canada
Australia	Kazakhstan
Brazil	Greece
Ecuador	Kyrgyzstan
Egypt	Lithuania
Philippines	South Africa
Dominican Republic	Latvia
Hong Kong	Moldova
India	Nigeria
Iran	Norway
Israel	Poland
Colombia	Portugal
Cuba	France
Vietnam	Sweden
Malaysia	Romania
Mexico	Germany
Mongolia	Serbia
Syria	Scotland
Thailand	Slovakia
Taiwan	Finland
Chile	Sudan
Turkey	United Kingdom
Armenia	Denmark
Azerbaijan	Tajikistan
Austria	Tunisia
Belgium	Turkmenistan
Bulgaria	Uganda
Ghana	Ukraine
Spain	Hungary
The Netherlands	Uzbekistan
Croatia	Belarus
Ireland	Russia
Iceland	

In the analysis, we view the respondents of European Union and non-European Union origin separately. In addition, we formed smaller groups: Finland, Other EU, Russia/Ukraine/CIS, Africa and Other Non-EU.

The "Other Non-EU" group includes the following countries:

United States of America	Brazil
Argentina	Ecuador
Australia	Egypt

Philippines  
Dominican Republic  
Hong Kong  
India  
Iran  
Israel  
Colombia  
Cuba  
Vietnam

Malaysia  
Mexico  
Mongolia  
Syria  
Thailand  
Taiwan  
Chile  
Turkey

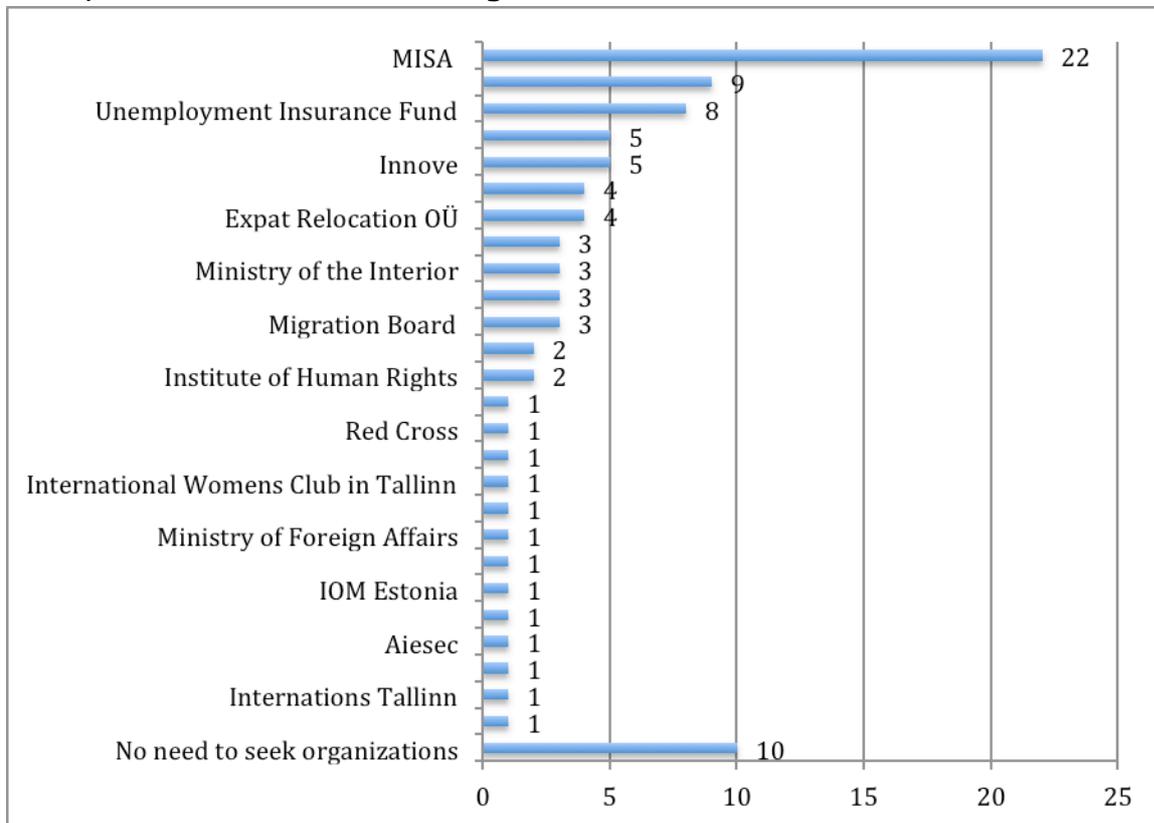
## 2 Renown of organizations

Question: *Estonia has several organizations engaged in assisting immigrants and people granted international protection (such as refugees). Which of these organizations in Estonia can you name?*

Similarly to the results of permanent residents, the organizations devoted to assisting them are not all that well-known – most of the respondents (83%) could not list any organization, while 10 people answered that they themselves did not need such organizations and thus were not interested in them (figure 14).

The Migration and Integration Foundation MISA proved to be the best-known organization – 22 people had heard of it. It was followed by the Police and Border Guard Board (PPA) and the Unemployment Insurance Fund. Some people knew of the Ministry of the Interior's welcome programme, SA Innove, Move My Talent and Expat Relocation OÜ. Besides organizations, a number of government institutions, student organizations, Red Cross and also Humana second-hand clothing store were mentioned.

**Figure 14. Renown of organizations engaged with immigrants, absolute figures n=96, those who could name organizations**



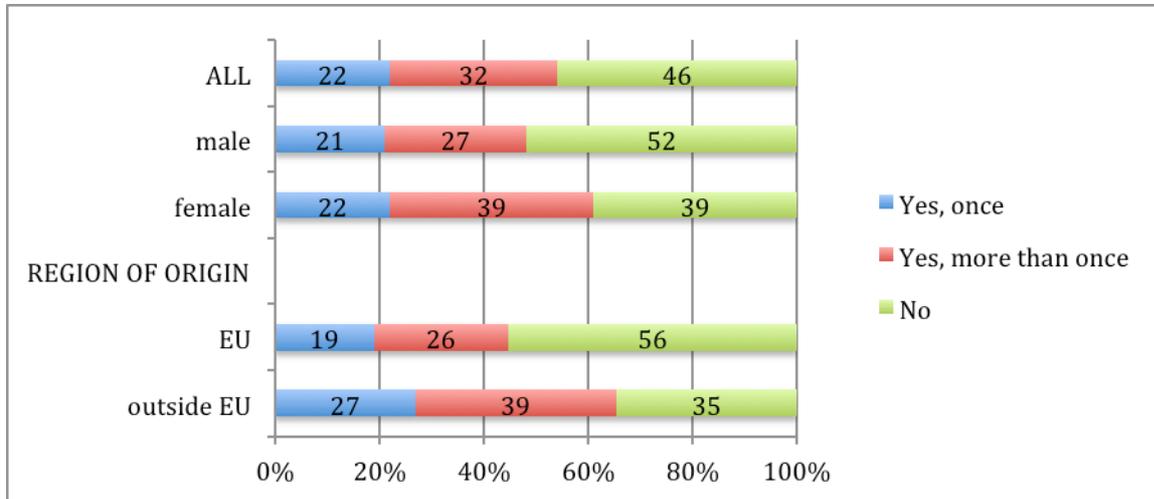
### 3 Contact with organizations and satisfaction with them

We ask whether the respondents have had contact with the abovementioned migrant assistance organizations. The question was asked only of people who could identify an organization or institution.

It turned out that 54% of people who knew any of the immigrant aid organizations had had contact with any of the organizations (figure 15). Thus only very few immigrants had had direct contact. Twenty-two percent of the target group had had one contact with the organizations and 32% more than one contact.

We see that women had somewhat more frequent contacts than men, and above all, persons from outside the European Union had contacted the organizations – 66% of them (only 45% in the EU).

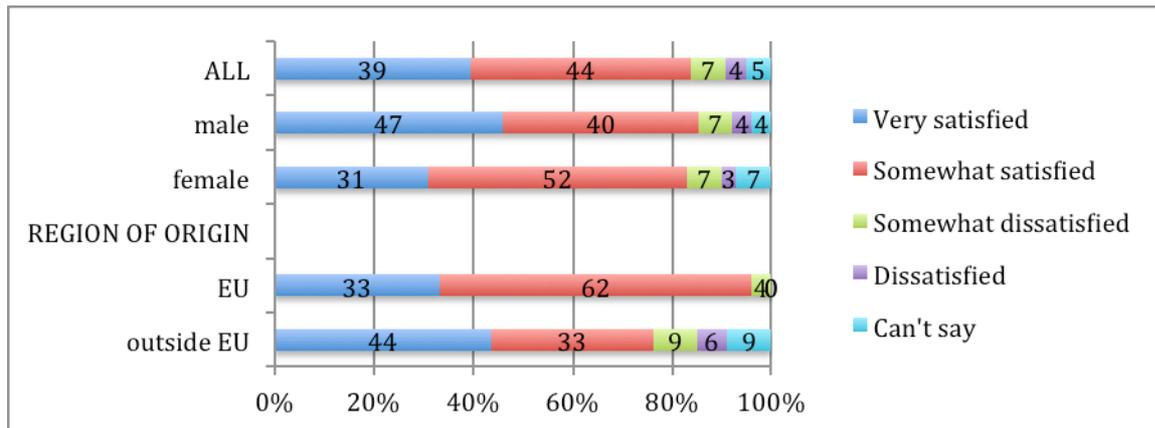
**Figure 15. Have you had contact with these organizations? n=103, those who knew any organization (%)**



This was followed by the question of to what extent they were satisfied with the information received via the organizations and the quality of the information. In our look at the findings, we omit the ones that did not ask for information and who have other points of contact (figure 16).

We see that the satisfaction with organizations assisting migrants in Estonia is high – 83% of immigrants are either satisfied or very satisfied with the information released by the organizations. Those who are somewhat or very dissatisfied make up 11%. Satisfaction is somewhat higher among men than it is among women. Viewing the result by regions of origin, it turned out that those who are from the European Union are much more frequently satisfied – satisfaction is 95% and the dissatisfied make up only 4%. The indicators for those from outside the EU are 77% and 15%. Although the general result is lower among those from outside the EU, there are also more who are fully satisfied with the information.

**Figure 16. Satisfaction with information obtained from organizations, %, n=58, those who have asked for information**



## 4 Reasons for coming to Estonia

In the following, we will look at the reasons why citizens of other countries have settled in Estonia in recent years. Respondents could mark more than one answer.

The two main reasons were, as expected, work (44%) and family, including marriage (48%) (figure 17). One percent received international protection from the state and they also include refugees. This figure indicates that the reason for studying is 4%, but as noted above, students were not included in the study sample as they are not directly included in the immigrants target group.

Fifteen percent of respondents identified other reasons for coming to Estonia. In many cases these included major interest in the language and culture of Estonia, favourable economic environment for business activity, or volunteer work. Negatives include war and economic crisis in the former place of residence. In addition, various personal reasons were brought out.

- *I love Estonia, Estonian culture, the Estonian language and all of my Estonian friends.*
- *To put it honestly, we came here to flee the immigration problems in our homelands that were caused by non-European Union countries (mainly the Middle East and North Africa). We invested lots of money into real estate and industry in the hopes that Estonia WON'T start making the same mistakes as the ones made in Western Europe. Otherwise Estonia would not have been an attractive investment destination for us, and we wouldn't have chosen to stay here and integrate.*
- *The unreasonable tax system in Finland. Civil liberties in Estonia*



- *e-Estonia: I am a freelance software developer and I love the e-services here. We built a house in Estonia. I am interested in several Estonian companies.*
- *We live in Estonia, as we love the country and the people here and have learned to appreciate it.*
- *Better quality of life*
- *"First of all, I moved due to all the new opportunities and family reasons (my better half), and I also wanted to mention that I was tired of the financial hassles and corruption prevalent in Latvia. Estonia also has a much higher level of order in every infrastructure sense in the following fields: police, medical care, education system, roads and transport and last but not least, electronic document system and other electronic public services."*
- *To do business here*
- *European Volunteer Service, volunteer work (6 times)*
- *Good economic atmosphere*
- *Hobbies*
- *Wanted to experience life in a foreign culture*
- *Local lifestyle, nature, outdoor sport, climate, internationality*
- *For a regular holiday*
- *When I retired, I wanted a change in my life.*
- *Because I fell in love with this country*
- *Easier to do business and closer to the rest of Europe.*
- *I don't work in Estonia, but I came here because of work and a relationship. The development of civil society in Central and Eastern Europe brought me here to train people in the field. After that I made donations to Estonian charities from UK and US philanthropists... I opted for early retirement to live a simple life in Estonia.*
- *I hate Finland!*
- *Taxes, business.*
- *My love of this country.*
- *My father is an Estonian and I wanted to grow closer to my Estonian relatives and the local culture (I don't have Estonian citizenship myself and I have lived in Estonia since 2015)*
- *My girlfriend is Estonian.*
- *Missionary for the Catholic Church*
- *I like the country and wanted to live and work here.*
- *A time of changes in my life.*
- *The idea was that I'd live some time in Estonia as a pensioner, but I'm still here. My daughter in Finland asked me when I'm coming back. I told her that the migration question is a difficult topic and afterwards it's much easier to transport ashes over the sea. To be honest, I have no idea why I'm here.*
- *I've always wanted to come to northern Europe. I believe in Nordic values and wanted to raise my children in the Nordic cultural space. I believe Estonia is a great society.*
- *Unexpected impulse decision and true feeling of disgust toward the Finnish government.*
- *I bought a second home in Estonia*
- *I bought a flat. I have friends in Estonia. I'm interested in Estonian culture and traditions. I'm a designer and artist (painter).*
- *My wife and I decided to continue our life in Estonia, as we fell in love with the country and its inhabitants right away.*

- *By ethnicity. My grandfather was an Estonia who was persecuted during the Soviet era.*
- *I wanted new challenges in my life.*
- *I was curious about Estonia and consider it a very beautiful place to live in.*
- *New adventure, I like the country and its nature.*
- *Volunteer work (3 times)*
- *I needed a change and I liked Estonia when I visited it before.*
- *Due to the political situation in Russia*
- *In connection with business*
- *I came to my historical homeland, ethnic Estonians (3 times)*
- *Intolerable situation in my homeland – war, economic crisis*
- *Political motives*
- *Economic and military instability in homeland*

Men have come to Estonia more frequently in connection with their work, but women more often for family reasons. The 40-49 age group has come more often in connection with work. It was also revealed that immigrants with lower educational attainment have more often come to Estonia for family reasons while the more highly educated have often come for work-related reasons.

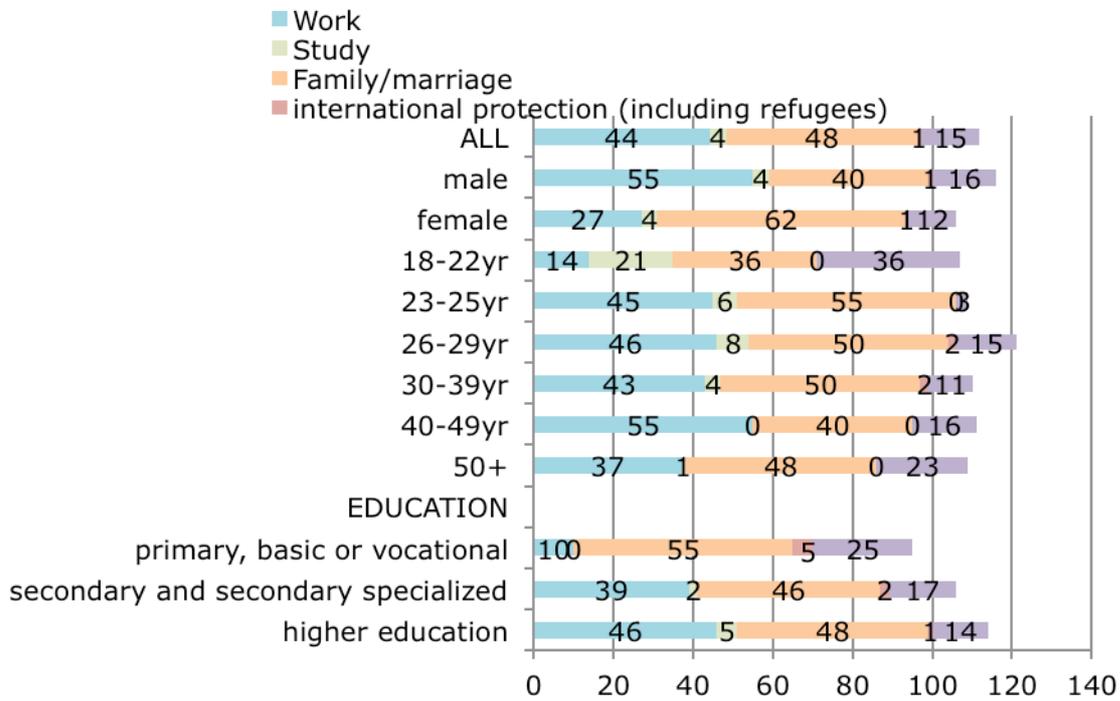
From Figure 17A, we can see the reasons that people moved to Estonia, based on country of origin. We see that European Union citizens have most frequently been drawn to Estonia by work, but people from outside the EU have come more often due to marriage or for other family reasons.

Looking more closely at region of origin, we can see that compared to people from other countries in the region, Finnish citizens have come to Estonia less frequently for family reasons. A less frequent reason has been work for local companies (50%). Finns were more likely than other nationalities to cite the more favourable economic climate or tax system, due to which they started a business or bought real estate.

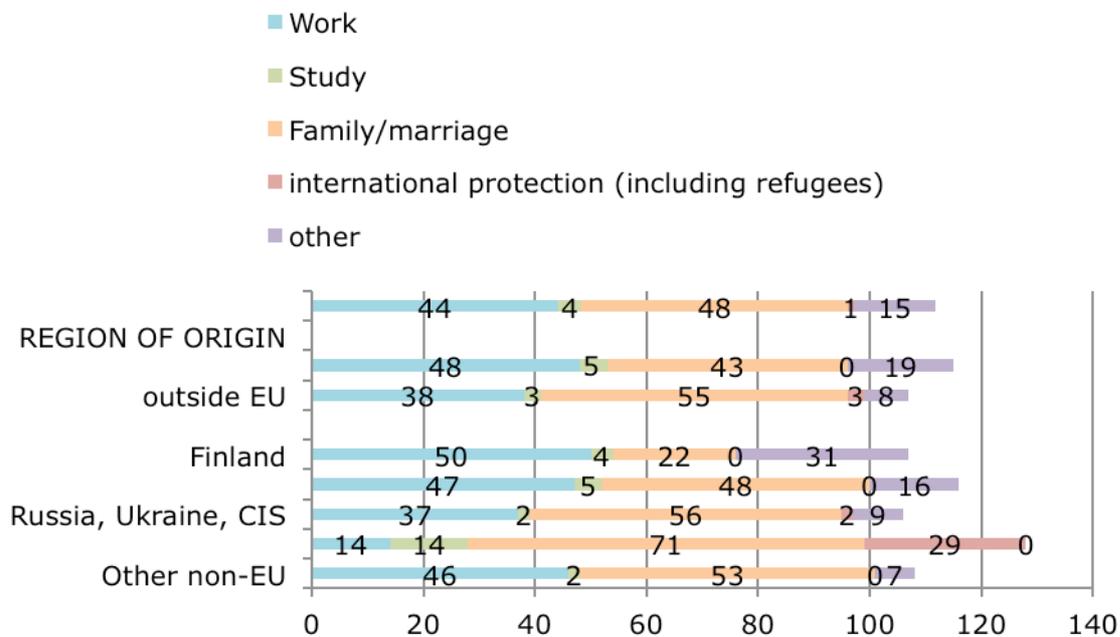
The figure provides, in a separate group, the answers from respondents from African countries. There are unfortunately too few of them to draw more serious conclusions. Yet we can see from the responses from the few respondents that, compared to other regions, they have much more frequently asked for international protection in Estonia – 29%.



**Figure 17. Reasons for coming to live in Estonia, %, n=600**



**Figure 17A. Reasons for coming to live in Estonia, %, by origin, n=600**



## 5 Need for assistance and contact with local inhabitants

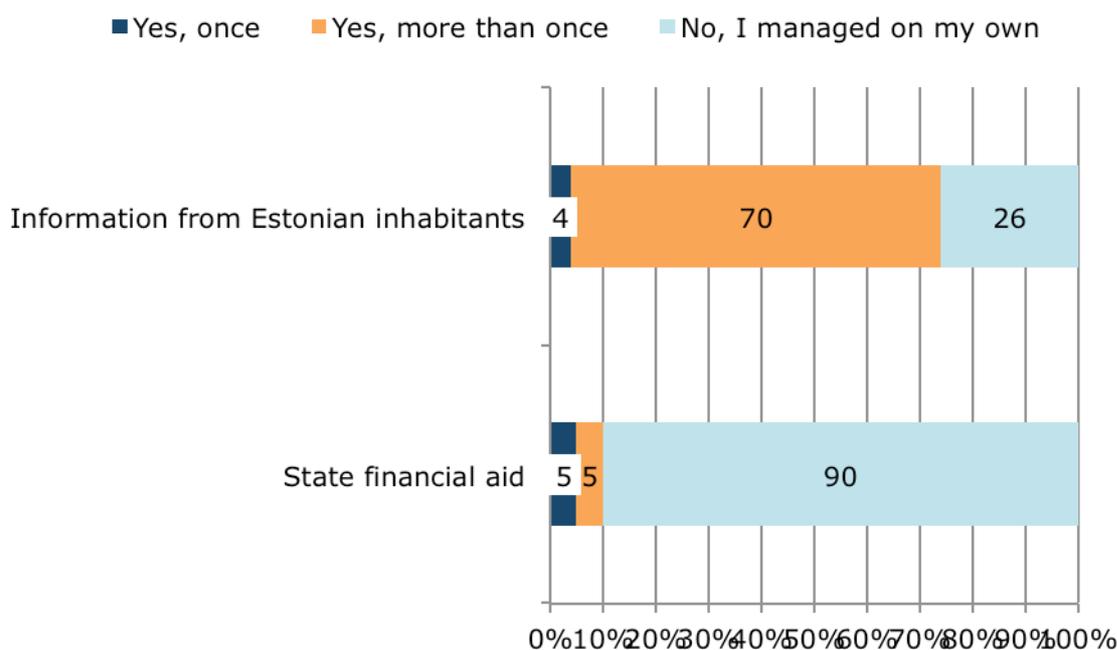
Question: *Has your family needed financial aid from the state or information from local inhabitants (transport etc)? Did you get the assistance you needed?*

Immigrants who have come to Estonia in the last six years have mainly not received financial assistance from the state – only 10% have needed it, including 5% who have needed it more than once (figure 18). Considering the fact that 78% of our respondents are people with higher education, this may explain the result better. Women and people with elementary or basic education have needed financial aid more often than the average. Assistance has been needed more frequently by people whose former homeland is outside the European Union (14% vs. 8% of EU citizens).

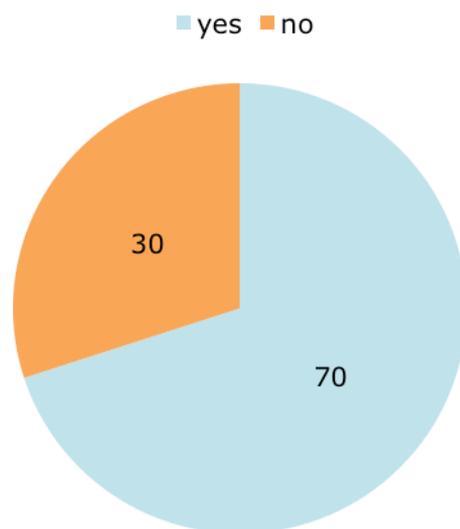
With regard to aid in everyday situations, 74% of immigrants have needed information from local inhabitants while living in Estonia, including 4% on one occasion and 70% more than once. The need for information does not depend on the respondent’s gender, age group or country of origin; it is even throughout all respondent groups.

It turns out that 70% of those needing financial assistance and 94% of those needing information have received the aid they were seeking (figures 18A and 18B). Seventy-six percent of women and 67% of men received the needed financial aid. In addition, it turns out that immigrants from the European Union have received aid from the Estonian state more frequently than immigrants from elsewhere (figure 18C).

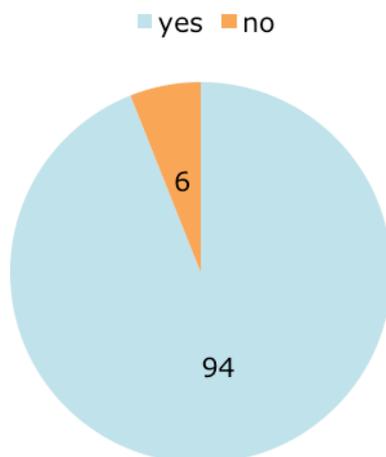
**Figure 18. Need for assistance from the state and local inhabitants, %, n=600**



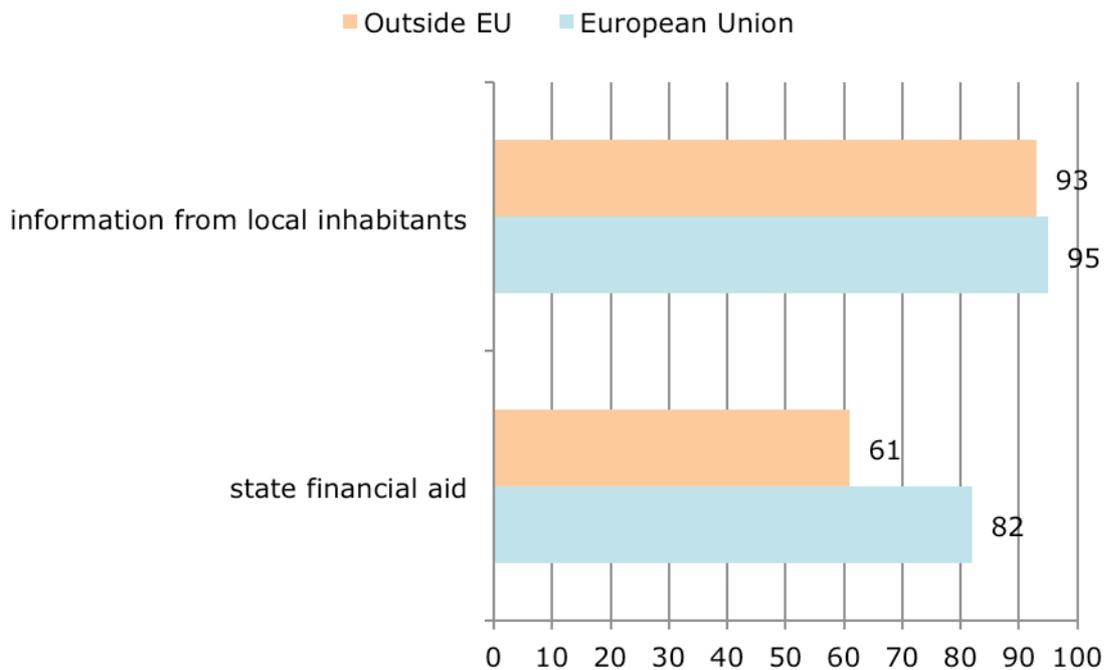
**Figure 18A. Receiving financial aid from the state, %, n=61, those who have needed financial aid**



**Figure 18B. Receiving information from local inhabitants, %, n=447, those who have needed information**



**Figure 18C. Receiving the necessary aid pursuant to origin, %, n=those who have needed financial aid**

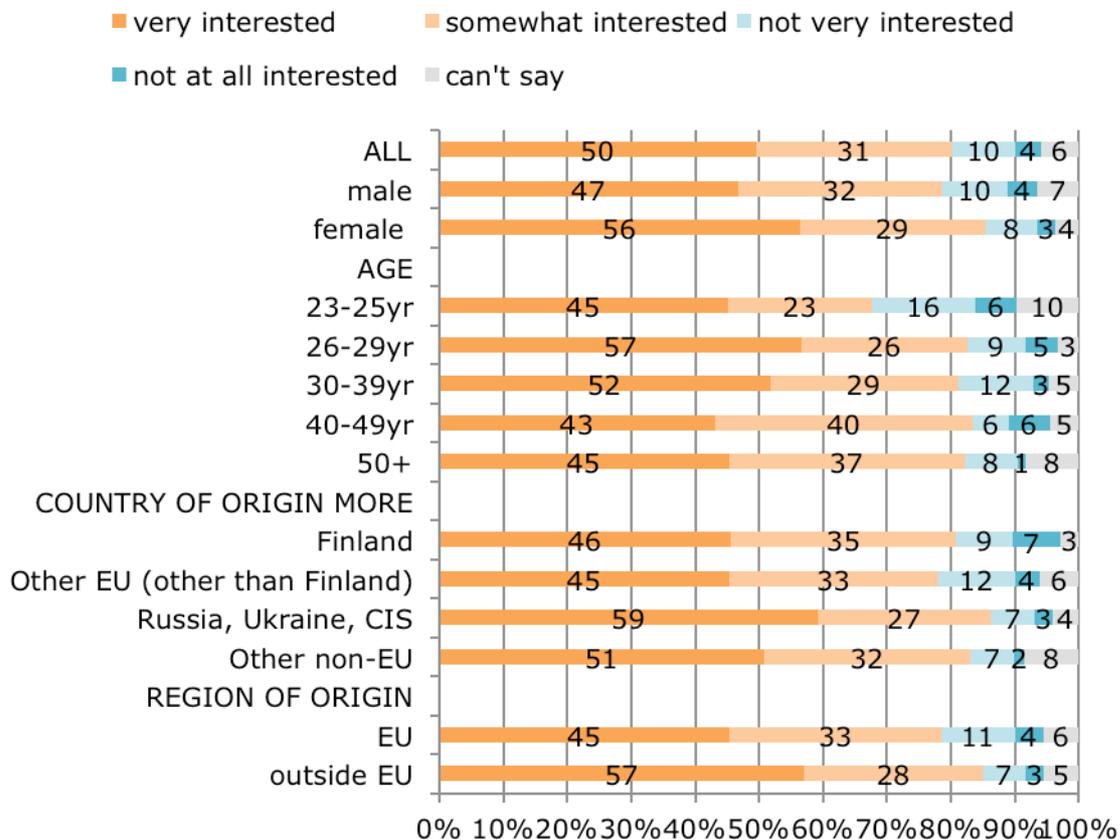


## 6 Interest in language learning and Estonian culture

Question: *To what extent are you interested in learning Estonian?*

To better integrate the immigrants into Estonian society, it is important for them to want to learn Estonian. Eighty-one percent of immigrants are interested in learning the language, and 14% are not. We see greater than average interest among the women of the target group (very interested – 56%), in the 26-29 age group (57%) and among immigrants of Russian/Ukrainian and CIS origin (59%). Young women from the CIS who have married Estonians and who sense the necessity of Estonian proficiency for coping with life on a daily basis make up a significant share. The so-called integrative phenomenon among women also plays a part; it holds that when women marry, they learn their husband’s mother tongue more frequently than men learning their wife’s native language. In general, it turned out that those coming from outside the EU have a greater interest in learning Estonian than those coming from the EU.

**Figure 19. Interest in language learning, %, n=600**

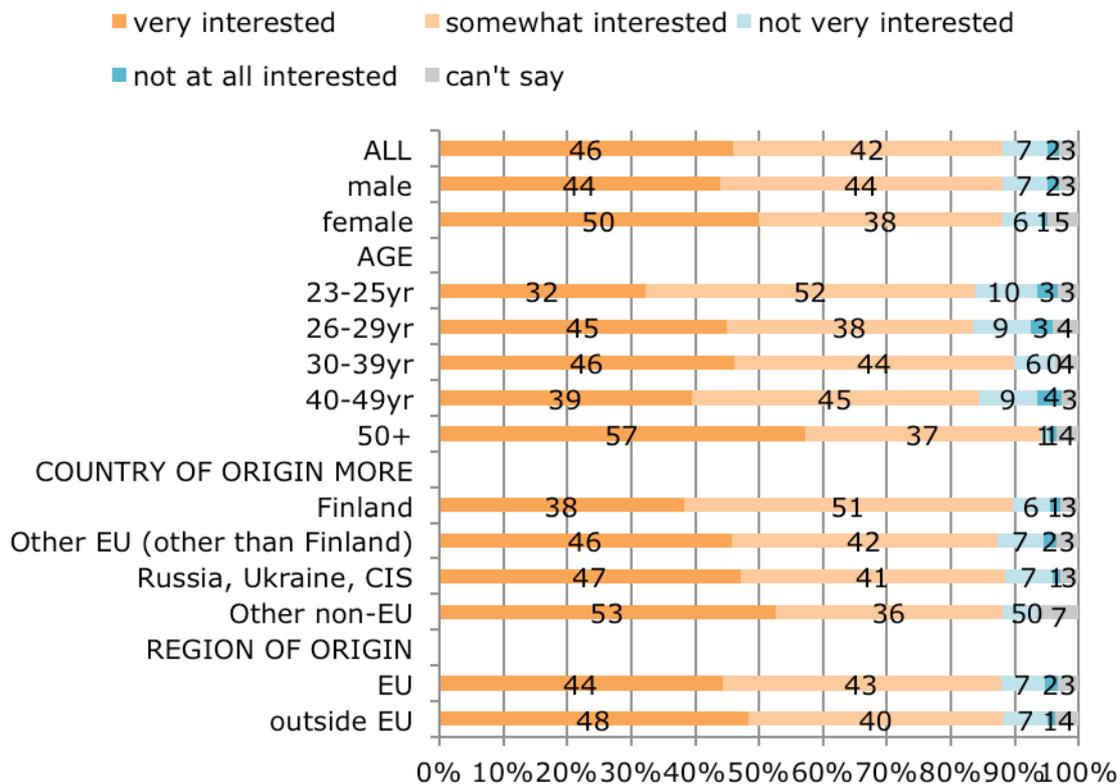


### Interest in Estonian culture

*To what extent are you interested in learning about Estonian culture and traditions?*

A total of 88% of the immigrants are interested in learning about Estonian culture and traditions, and 46% are very interested in it. We see greater than average interest also among women and those immigrating from outside the EU. We also see it in the oldest age group – age 50+ – where 57% are very interested in Estonian culture and 37% are somewhat interested. The age difference can probably be explained by the fact that older people have likely more free time.

**Figure 20. Interest in Estonian culture, %, n=600**



### Whether children should study in Estonian school

Question: *Do you consider it important for your children to attend a school in Estonia where Estonian is the language of instruction?*

57% of the immigrants answered affirmatively and 22% deem it necessary rather than the contrary. Thus it is important to immigrants that their children study Estonian and integrate better into our society. Only 14% of respondents take an opposing view and 4% say they don't know.

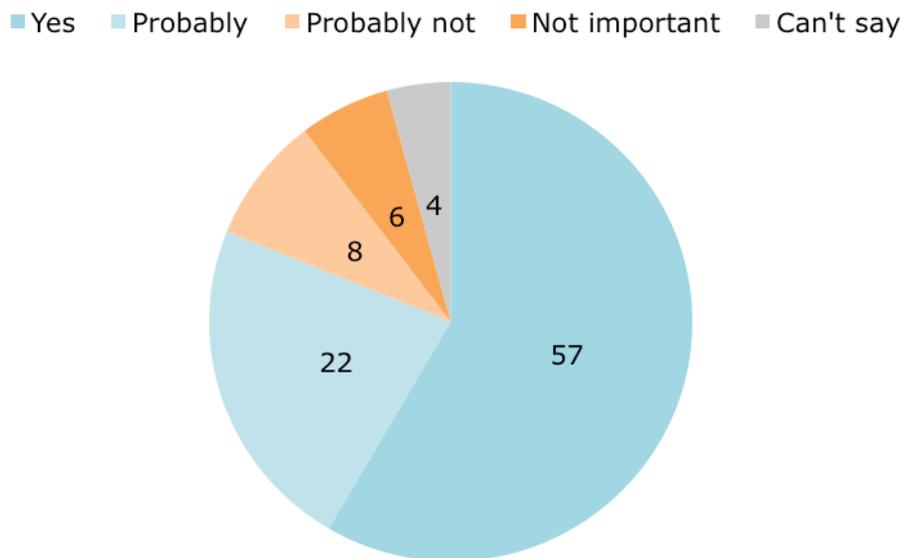
Logically enough, the ones who are more interested in studying Estonian are also more likely to be interested in their children learning Estonian.

It turns out that men are more interested than women in studying at a school where the language of instruction is Estonian. No great differences were found in age groups, but the oldest age group puts less priority on the topic than others – their children are likely already grown and the topic affects them less.

Let us look separately at the results for immigrants from different regions. For immigrants from European Union, it is more important and natural for them that their children study in an Estonian school – 66% feel it is important and 18%, somewhat important. Immigrants from outside the EU consider it less important – 48% feel it is important and 28%, somewhat important. Those from Russia, Ukraine and the CIS place the least amount of priority on the

topic – they probably hope that their children can be enrolled in a school that teaches in Russian.

**Figure 21. Should your children study in an Estonian school? %, n=600**



## 7 Estonian proficiency

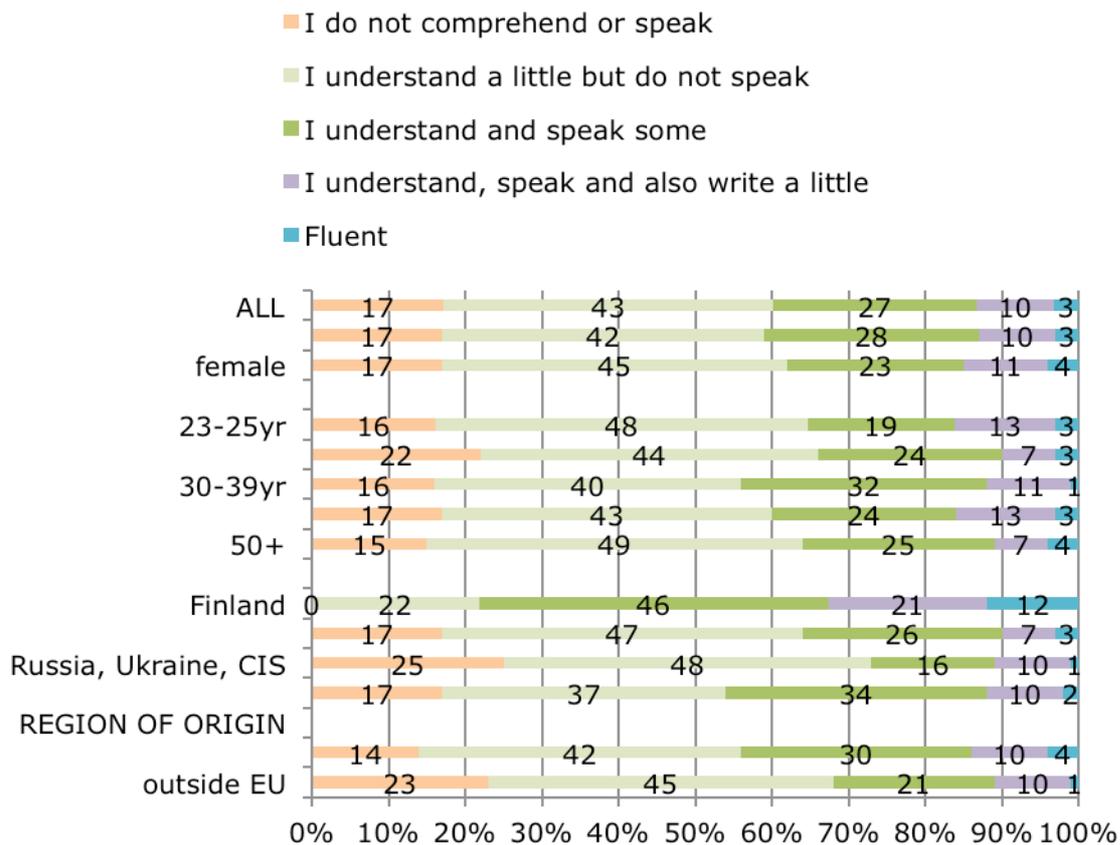
Let us also look at the topic of how new immigrants appraise their Estonian proficiency.

The most frequent answer to the question was: I understand a little, but do not speak the language – 43%. Twenty-seven percent understand the language and speak it to some extent, and there are 10% of immigrants understand, speak the language, and write the language to some degree. 3% of respondents say they speak Estonian fluently. 17% do not speak it or understand it at all.

Figure 22 shows that, logically enough, language proficiency is best among immigrants from Finland – 12% say they are fluent in Estonian. The poorest finding was among people from Russia, Ukraine and CIS, of whom 25% do not understand anything or speak; this is the highest percentage for the non-proficient.

We see the best proficiency among the 30-39 age group, and going by region, proficiency of immigrants from the European Union is better than it is among EU immigrants.

**Figure 22. Respondents’ Estonian proficiency in their own opinion, %, n=600**



## 8 Plans and recommendation to come to Estonia, familiarization with their own language/culture

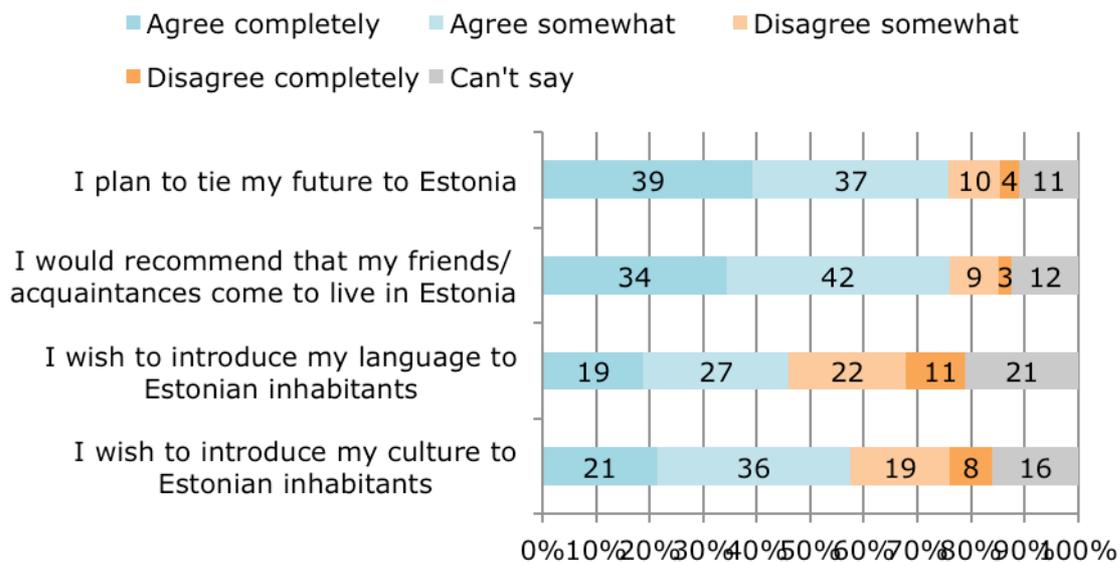
The respondents had the following attitudes toward Estonia: 39% definitely plan to tie their future to Estonia and 37% will likely do so. That amounts to 76% of immigrants. Only 14% do not plan to do so. The question does not make it clear whether all respondents plan to keep on living here themselves – some of them probably intend to be tied to Estonia in some other manner.

The same amount – 76% – would recommend Estonia to their acquaintances as a place to live; 12% would not do so. Such a result shows the relatively high satisfaction level with local life.

With regard to introducing their own mother tongue to Estonians, the respondents split into two camps – 46% wish to do so but 33% do not feel it is necessary. Twenty-one percent of immigrants did not take a position on the matter.

Compared to their culture, a greater share of immigrants wants to introduce their culture to Estonians – a total of 57%.

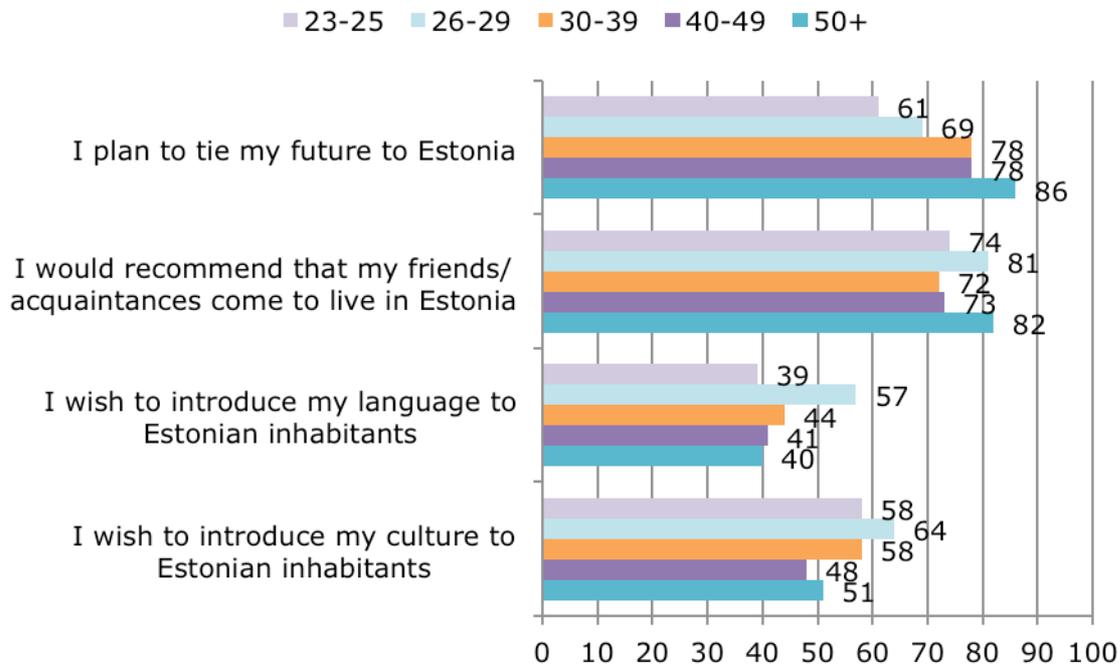
**Figure 23. Future plans and attitudes with regard to Estonia, %, n=600**



Younger people were least likely to want to tie their future to Estonia – 61% of respondents in the 23-25 age group expressed this position (figure 23A). The older the respondent, the more definite their plans to stay in Estonia. The view was shared by 86% of respondents in the over-50 age group.

The 26-29 age group is most likely to want to introduce their language to Estonians. Fewer are interested in this in other groups. It is also more the younger set who wants to introduce their culture – age groups up to 39.

**Figure 23A. Future plans and attitudes with regard to Estonia, agree + somewhat agree, %, n=600**



**Figure 23B. Figure 23. Future plans and attitudes with regard to Estonia, agree + somewhat agree, %, n=600**

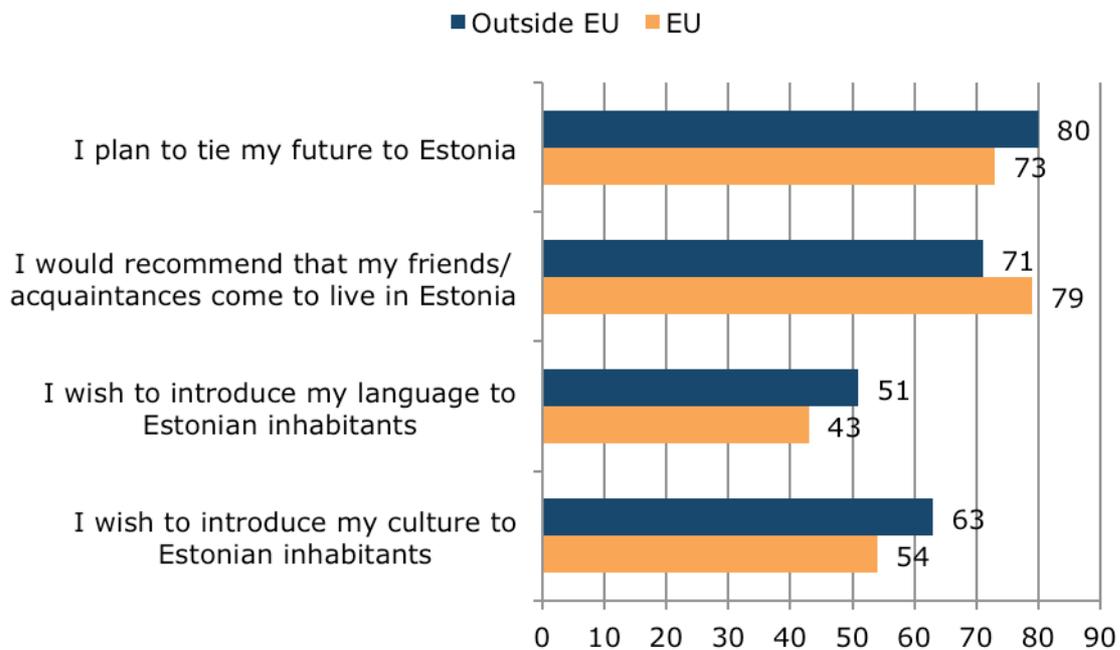


Figure 23B shows that the immigrants from outside the EU are more likely to want to stay living in Estonia than those from the European Union. Surprisingly, they are not as apt to want to recommend their friends and acquaintances to come live in Estonia – the percentage of those who feel this way among immigrants from outside the EU was below the respective figure for the immigrants from within the EU. The difference is not great, however – 8%. Those from outside the European Union have a greater desire than Europeans to introduce language and culture to Estonian inhabitants – over half want to do so.

## 9 Assessment of the support network

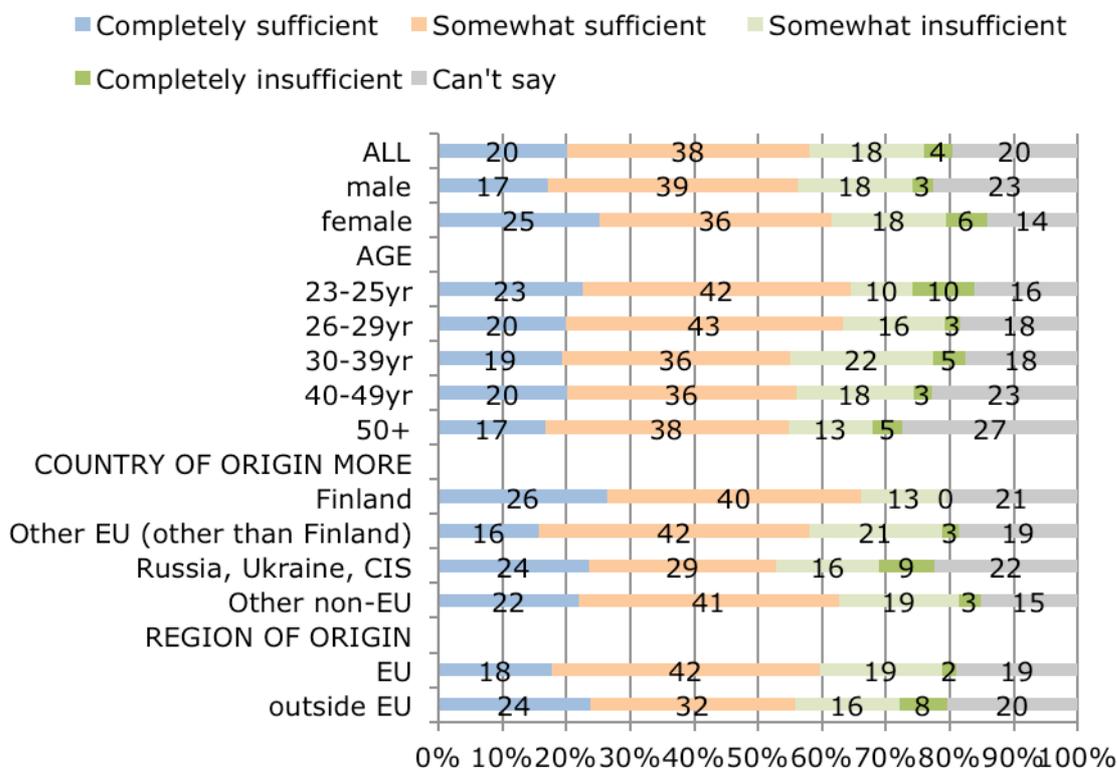
*In order for new immigrants to cope better in Estonian society, a support network has been created in Estonia – meaning an adaptation programme, language learning, availability of services in English, explanations as to how Estonian society works... Is this support network sufficient for immigrants, in your opinion?*

The most frequent rating given to the support network was “somewhat sufficient”, which was the answer in the case of 38% of immigrants. Twenty percent consider it completely sufficient. Thus 58% gave a positive assessment to the support system and 22% had a negative view of the support network for immigrants. Twenty percent said they could not say. Thus it can be said that immigrants tend to be satisfied with the support system rather than the contrary.

Women and the members of the two youngest age groups tended to be more satisfied with the support system.

The immigrants from the European Union are generally more satisfied than those from outside the EU, although the ones from outside the EU tend to be “very satisfied” more frequently. The highest level of satisfaction was seen, once again, from those coming from Finland and the satisfaction was lower in the case of those from Russia, Ukraine and other CIS countries.

**Figure 24. Opinion of the sufficiency of the support network, %, n=600**



## 10 Media space

To determine which media space Estonia’s new immigrants are primarily in, we asked which news channels they followed.

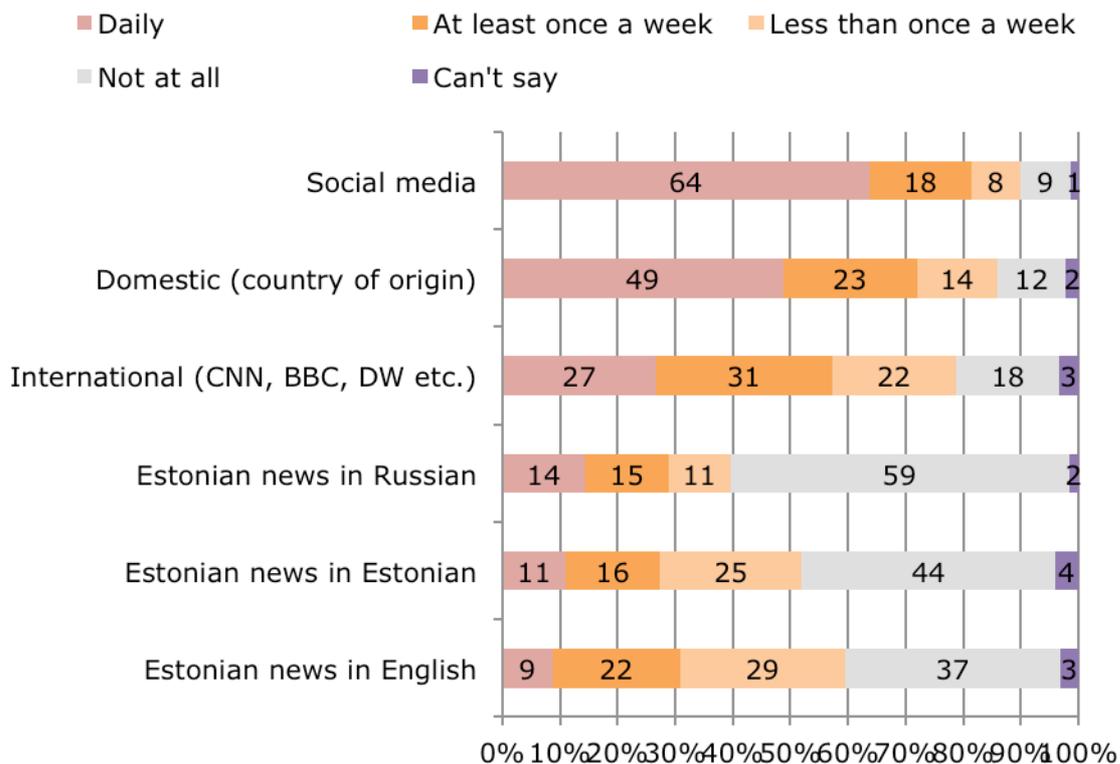
The most frequent answer was social media, which is followed by 64% of immigrants every day. It was followed by domestic (country of origin) news channels, followed daily by 49% of respondents and international channels (27%). Estonian news is followed a great deal less by immigrants in Estonia – only 9-14% follow them daily in some language. If we add in those who watch Estonian news once a week, we get an Estonian news following of about 30%. Slightly more immigrants followed Estonian news in Russian than Estonian news in English. At the same time, the latter group includes more people who follow news more rarely – at least once a week.

A trend can be discerned based on age groups – younger people follow social media much more often. In the case of other media channels, it is the reverse – those at least 40 years of age follow all channels somewhat more frequently than the younger people.

Thus, if we compare the media space inhabited by Estonian residents and immigrants, we see that they are quite different. 23% of permanent residents follow international media channels at least once a week; 58% of immigrants do so. For the most part, permanent

residents follow local news channels. For immigrants, they most often tune into the news from their country of origin.

**Figure 25. Following news channels, %, n=600**



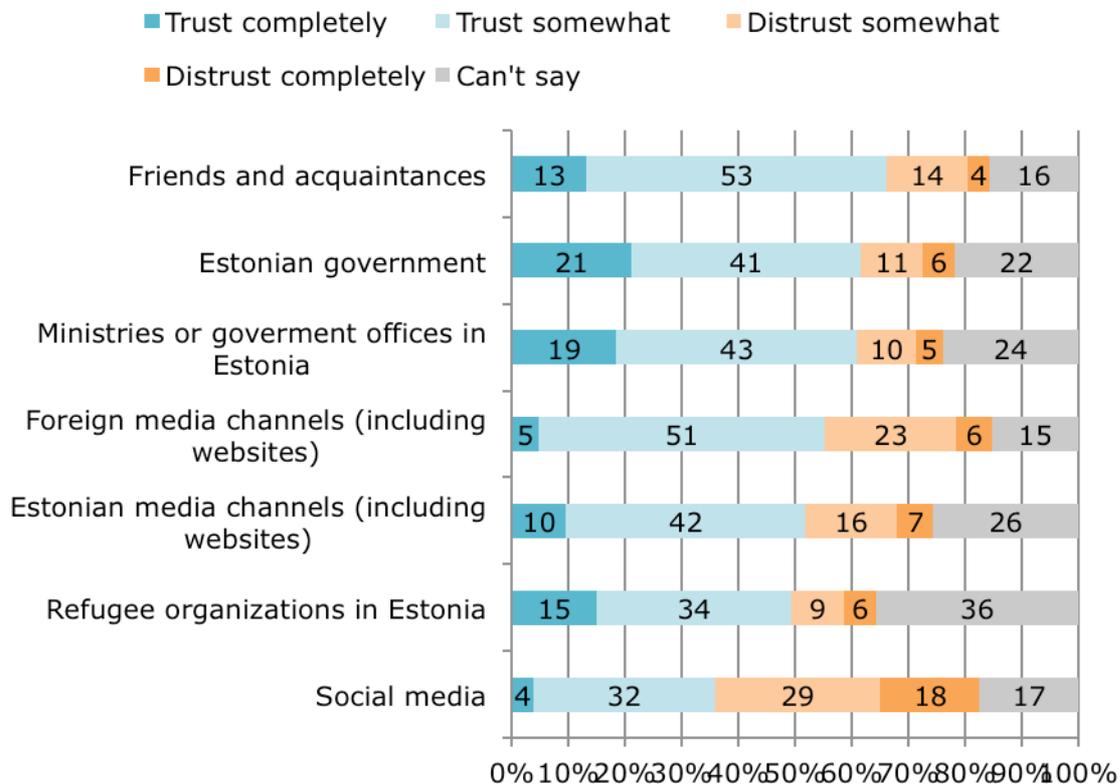
## 11 Trusting information related to the refugee crisis

Last year, Estonia saw much discussion about what information sources can even be trusted on topics related to the migrant crisis. There was talk among the people about government bodies concealing information etc. For that reason, we asked: *To what extent do you trust the information obtained from different sources regarding the migrant crisis?*

Some respondents protested against the question, saying that Estonia is not experiencing any migrant crisis. The result to this question showed that similarly to Estonian population, immigrants put the most trust in their friends and acquaintances (66%) in the case of the migrant crisis. They are followed by the Estonian government and ministries/government offices (equal at 62%), which can be considered to be a quite good level of trust. Fourth came all foreign media outlets, which are trusted by 56%, but not trusted by 29%, which indicates quite a split.

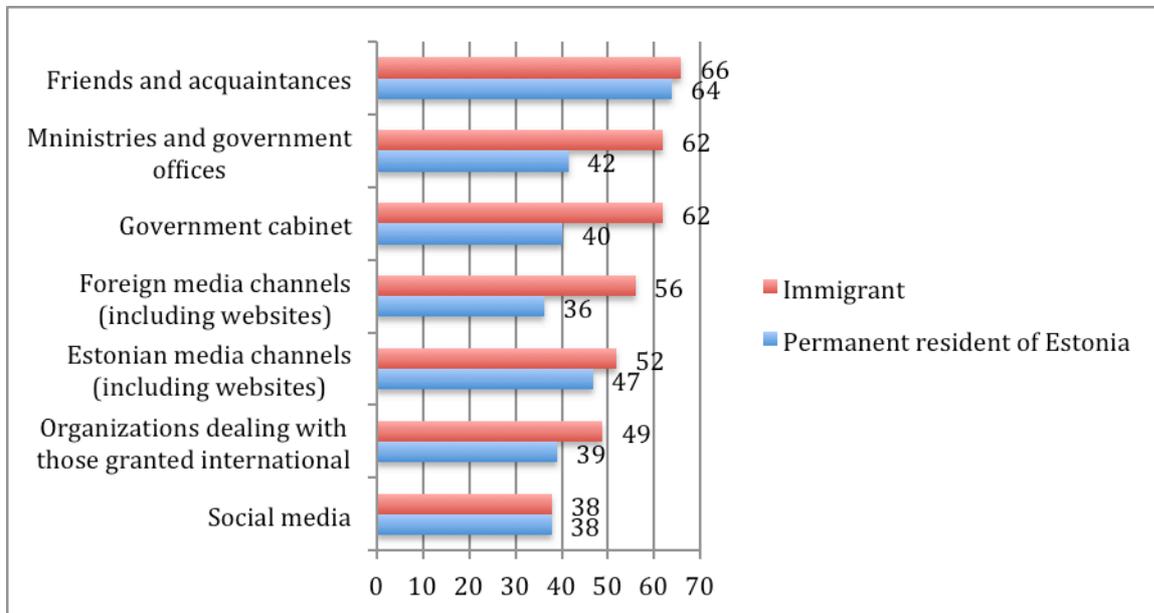


**Figure 25A. Trusting information on the refugee crisis, %, n=600**



Comparing the result to the result for permanent residents, it turned out surprisingly that the immigrants trust nearly all of the information sources more than do the permanent residents on average (figure 25A). The biggest differences in trust were seen in the case of the Estonian government, ministries/government offices and the foreign media, which are trusted by immigrants by 20% more than by local inhabitants. We will get some explanation for this in the subsequent chapters of the report where we look at the short answers given by the respondents.

**Figure 26A. Trust regarding information about the refugee crisis, trusts + somewhat trusts, comparison of permanent residents and immigrants, %, n=number of respondents in target group**



## 12 Are human rights violated in Estonia?

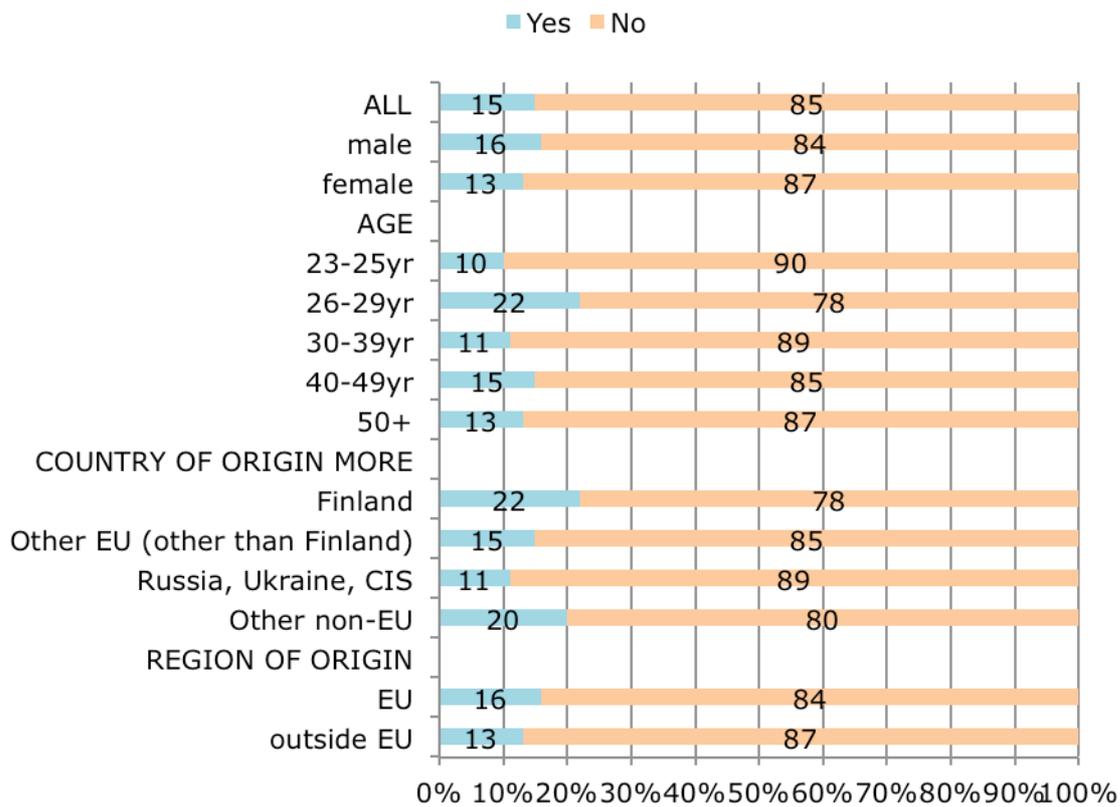
The closing part of the survey pertained to the topic of human rights. Question: *Have your human rights or those of an acquaintance of yours been violated?*

15% of the immigrants answered in the affirmative; 85% in the negative. It should be borne in mind that many of the cases mentioned do not actually fall under the category of human rights.

The 26-29 age group was most likely to indicate yes to human rights violations in Estonia. (22%), and the lowest percentage was seen in the 23-25-year-old group (10%). Immigrants from outside the EU are less likely to have noted human rights violations than those who have come from the European Union. Violations were mentioned most often by the Finns – 22% – and immigrants from outside the EU and CIS, and least of all by the citizens from Russia, Ukraine and the CIS (11%).

Compared to permanent residents, the immigrants were more likely to bring up human rights violations – the figure for Estonian residents was 6% of the entire population, based on a 2016 study. A role in this may be played if the respondents had higher expectations in the destination country before moving to Estonia but the hopes were not realized.

**Figure 27. Have your human rights or those of an acquaintance been violated? %, n=600**



### Human rights violations cases, short answers

Respondents were asked to briefly describe in what way their or their acquaintance’s rights were violated.

To summarize the results, it turned out that on 13 occasions, cases more associated with intolerance than literal human rights topics were mentioned. Yet racism and directly xenophobic actions or disparaging words aimed at foreigners were mentioned quite often (31 times). In addition, a topic that came up recurrently was disparagement of same-sex couples or homophobia – 7 times.

This partially corroborated a finding turned up in other studies: Estonian inhabitants exhibit low tolerance, with people of other races being particularly sensitive to this.

In addition, it turned out that some respondents also mentioned other topics that could not be classified as human rights – for example, low-paying work, meager pensions and low

proficiency in foreign languages in the service sector. We will bring out the responses to the questions (unabridged):

- “Human rights violations” is perhaps an exaggeration in this respect, but once, a police officer made a disparaging comment in my direction, because I am a foreigner.
- Harassment at the workplace and some Estonians (highly educated) have clearly said that all foreigners should go back where they came from, including people of Russian origin born in Estonia. To be honest, it was totally shocking to hear that from educated people (30-45 years of age) who are employed. I have also received in my mailbox a petition against all foreigners in Estonia; and as you might think, I didn’t sign the document but saved it.
- Anyone who isn’t an Estonian has experience at least one case of discrimination on the basis of race, religion, sexual orientation or other reason. But I suppose it’s like that everywhere.
- Instead of a specialist with the required qualifications, an Estonian was hired for an English-speaking position on the basis of a personal acquaintance.
- When I worked at a hotel (where the main requirement was English ability), I was insulted for not knowing Russian by some Estonian citizens by birth who didn’t speak a word of Estonian.

## Comments on the topic

Respondents were given an opportunity to comment on the topic at the end of the survey; 39 of them availed themselves of the opportunity.

Estonia received many positive assessments for its inhabitants, tax system and other aspects. Positive comments were made 16 times. In addition, Estonian inhabitants were urged to take a more tolerant attitude toward immigrants, and suggestions were made for making changes that would simplify the lives of immigrants.

- If Estonia wants to be in the vanguard of progressive countries like they say they are, the country should start attracting a much greater number of qualified people from all over the world. So make your laws more open and friendly to immigrants and Estonian companies so that foreign employees would not face obstacles to coming to work here.
- I haven’t personally had any problems and I feel completely at home in Estonia.
- I do humanitarian work all over Russia and Europe and I have worked extensively with different ethnicities in the last 18 months in connection with the European refugee crisis. Information on refugees and migrants in Estonia is not exactly the best. For instance, I come to grips with misguided views every day in Tallinn.
- I think public opinion on the topic (immigration, refugees etc) will change naturally over time, particularly thanks to various programmes like Erasmus that introduce educated foreigners to the country.
- I have always been drawn by the eastern part of Europe. I “discovered” Estonia in 2014 and came here for the Song and Dance Festival. When I came here, I felt I had

come home, and because of that I came back a few months later. The people, language, culture and atmosphere suit me well.

- I don't like how businesspeople are treated in Finland. Estonia is much more supportive and the tax system is better.
- The development of the digital sector is excellent. It's very easy to handle practical issues with government over the Internet.
- The tax rate is very reasonable, health care (private) is advanced and affordable.