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# Estonian Schoolchildren's Opinions about Violence and the Possibilities for Preventing It

## 1. Introduction

An individual's behaviour is largely dependent on whether and to what extent he or she acknowledges which code of conduct he or she pursues in his or her behaviour; the acknowledgement of rules, in turn, determines the attitude of the individual towards the phenomena currently affecting our life in society at a particular moment.

A phenomenon that has become an inseparable part of our daily life is violence that can be expressed in very different forms — as school and domestic violence, violence against children and animals, etc. As a rule, violence is defined as behaviour that causes or may cause bodily injuries. However, violence can be defined in a broader basis as well, by including in the definition both physical and psychological damage along with indifference to or disregard for others' needs.

Violence is a phenomenon that characterises society as a whole, and embraces certain gender specificity. While men experience violence mostly in public places and the offender is predominantly an unfamiliar person, women fall victims to violence most often in their family and the offender is the woman's partner. Statistically, home is the most unsafe place for a woman. According to a survey of the Open Society Institute, 285<sup>\*1</sup> women fall victim to physical or sexual violence in Estonia every day and 2/3 of these cases take place at home. Also, 227 men experience violence every day, but only 9% of the cases take place in their homes.<sup>\*2</sup>

In addition to adults, violence (including sexual violence) also affects youth (schoolchildren) daily. A survey of sexual abuse, conducted in 1999, revealed that 70% of the responding children had experienced sexual abuse (including mild and severe verbal abuse, mental abuse, physical and severe physical sexual abuse).<sup>\*3</sup> When we

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<sup>1</sup> The size of the Estonian population was 1,340,935 as of 1 January 2008. Source: <http://www.stat.ee/pohinaitjad> (11.09.2008) (in Estonian).

<sup>2</sup> Võrdsed võimalused inimvääreks eluks. Sotsiaalministeerium. Vägivald (Equal Opportunities for Decent Life. Ministry of Social Affairs. Violence). Available at <http://www.sm.ee/esttxt/pages/goproweb0908> (31.10.2006) (in Estonian).

<sup>3</sup> Võrdsed võimalused inimvääreks eluks. Sotsiaalministeerium. Koolivägivalda või seksuaalse väärkohtlemise all kannatavad lapsed (Equal Opportunities for Decent Life. Ministry of Social Affairs. Children Experiencing School Violence or Sexual Abuse). Available at <http://www.sm.ee/esttxt/pages/goproweb0484> (31.10.2006) (in Estonian).

look at the statistics collected on crime victims in 2007, we see that in 7% of the offences registered in 2007, the victim was a minor. Young people aged 14–17 were most often victims of theft, whereas children aged below 14 experienced physical abuse.\*<sup>4</sup>

A survey of school violence, conducted in basic schools by the Estonian Union of Child Welfare in 2001, indicated that 46.97% of the respondents had experienced poking or pushing as milder forms of physical violence. The number of pupils who had experienced mockery was 39.57%, personal items had been taken away or hidden from 34.1% of the pupils. Approximately 16% of the pupils in basic school had been hit or beaten.\*<sup>5</sup>

School violence has not disappeared over the last few years either. According to the survey “Deviant Behaviour of Estonian Minors,” conducted by the Institute of Law, University of Tartu, and the Ministry of Justice in 2006, of the children responding to the questionnaire, 24% had experienced school violence, and every fifth child had fallen a victim to the theft of his or her personal items. The most common victims of violence were minors aged from 14 to 15, while 3–4% of the girls and 6–7% of the boys had experienced violence.\*<sup>6</sup>

Violence is not characteristic of a secure society; yet the attitude of the members of society towards violence characterises, to a great extent, the level of their legal conscience. Awareness of the violence problem (especially among young people) as well as searching for and identifying measures to reduce it gives a bigger contribution to increasing the security of society. One of the factors, the importance of which both in developing (legal) conscience and reducing violence cannot be overestimated, is social control, which applies both to self-control as well as informal and formal control. Social control, as an evaluation system, shapes public opinion which may play a considerably greater role in social life and a form of social behaviour, than it may seem at the first glance.

## 2. Self-control as foundation of social control

It is a well-known saying that to make the world a better place, one should start with oneself. To paraphrase the saying, we may say that before you evaluate the conduct of other people, you should look at your own, and do so through your own internal prism.

The rules that guide a person's behaviour can be categorised into external and internal: external rules of conduct are those that have been fixed (in writing) and that are expressed in certain acts by people; we can regard internal rules of conduct as the way of thinking and the convictions of a person, referring to them as thinking patterns or attitudes. Internal patterns of conduct do not presume the presence of group spirit existing in the external world in the sense of a localised collective consciousness that is separate from the individual. The rules of conduct that guide thinking exist only in individuals and may solely be expressed indirectly through their words and actions. We can speak about an individual's social consciousness only in the case of abundance of uniform internal rules of conduct of people, and only in this sense.\*<sup>7</sup>

In investigating internal control units, focus is placed on self-control that guides an individual's Ego and Superego and thus impedes deviant behaviour. An inadequate internal control is often the consequence of an unfavourable social environment (above all family).

Self-control forms the basis of any type of social control and represents containment of disrupting emotions and impulses. The people who possess this skill (1) are good at restraining their impulsive feelings and disrupting emotions; (2) remain calm, positive and determined also during the moments of trial; (3) think clearly and maintain their ability to focus even under stress.\*<sup>8</sup> Self-control is founded on a person's morals and stems from his or her conscience which is an internal, individual perception of justice.

Conscience serves as an internal moral voice, the core of justice, a so-called regulatory filter. With a clear conscience, a person is satisfied because the feeling of solidarity serves as an act of self-realisation in an ideal community. If this regulatory filter detects a deviation from the standards accepted on the level of consciousness, this elicits fear that is manifested as an accusing reaction in the form of self-criticism and punishment.

<sup>4</sup> Speech by Minister of Justice Rein Lang at the prosecutors' general assembly on 4.04.2008. Available at <http://www.just.ee/35279> (9.08.2008) (in Estonian).

<sup>5</sup> Võrdsed võimalused inimväärses eluks. Sotsiaalministeerium. Koolivägivalda või seksuaalse väärkohtlemise all kannatavad lapsed (Equal Opportunities for Decent Life. Ministry of Social Affairs. Children Experiencing School Violence or Sexual Abuse). Available at <http://www.sm.ee/estxt/pages/goproweb0484> (31.10.2006) (in Estonian).

<sup>6</sup> A. Markina, B. Šahverdov-Žarkovski. Eesti alaealiste hälbiv käitumine (Deviant Behaviour of Estonian Minors). Tallinn, 2007. Available at [http://www.just.ee/orb.aw/class=file/action=preview/id=33222/Alaealiste%2Bh%E4lbiv%2Bk%E4itumine%2B\\_5\\_.pdf](http://www.just.ee/orb.aw/class=file/action=preview/id=33222/Alaealiste%2Bh%E4lbiv%2Bk%E4itumine%2B_5_.pdf) (9.08.2008) (in Estonian).

<sup>7</sup> M. Rehbinder. Rechtssoziologie. 5. Aufl. München 2003, S. 42–43.

<sup>8</sup> D. Goleman. Töö emotsionaalse intelligentsusega. Emotsionaalse intelligentsuse kasutamine (Working with Emotional Intelligence. Use of Emotional Intelligence). Tallinn 2001, p. 101 (in Estonian).

Consciousness stems from the understanding that an individual has a responsibility and liability to other people, which constitutes the individual's responsibility and liability to himself or herself. Unlike shame, consciousness does not depend on the opinion of others and in this sense serves as an internal moral judge. An advanced consciousness signals a morally mature personality. People who act in a manner that is acceptable to society can be divided into (1) people who are mostly guided by consciousness in their behaviour (shame plays an insignificant part), and (2) people who are guided by shame (consciousness remains secondary). The former are undoubtedly morally more mature.<sup>\*9</sup>

Figuratively, consciousness has been compared to a sharp rock that is located in the soul of an individual. If the individual does not behave as required, the rock starts to roll and hurts the soul. But rolling wears down the edges of the rock and the more the rock rolls, the less it hurts the soul. This means that consciousness no longer responds.<sup>\*10</sup> In cases like that, the individual no longer pays critical attention to any behaviour that is contrary to the standards, including offences.

In this way, we can view crime control policy in a wider social context because the core values of society are protected through that. Aimed directly at criminal behaviour, by controlling crime, a certain social and cultural environment is reproduced and social capital (condemnation, punishment as a response to the violation of generally accepted standards, remedy of damage caused by crime) is created.<sup>\*11</sup>

### 3. Crime and violence in society

The practice of crime and violence control is inseparably related to the development level and cultural space of a particular society. This necessitates consideration of the problems that society faces at a particular moment when drafting the criminal policy of a country.

When implementing criminal policy, it is important to know how safe the surrounding environment appears to the population and what measures the population consider appropriate and efficient in increasing the safety of society. Hence, the decision of the *Riigikogu* of 21 October 2003 emphasises that relating to criminal policy, the 'approved development trends must also be observed when planning means to fight crime and [...] local governments, citizens' associations and individuals must be involved in preventing offence more than before'.<sup>\*12</sup> Here we cannot underestimate the youngest members of our society — children — whose attitudes, understanding and evaluations reflect the perceptions of adults and determine how violent, criminal or, *vice versa*, law abiding our future society will be.

The level of juvenile delinquency has been high in Estonia over the years: 255 offences committed by persons aged under 16 in 2002, while the number was 190 in 2003 and 492 in 2004; the number of offences committed by young people aged from 16 to 17 was 688, 705 and 923, respectively; the number of offences committed by people aged from 18 to 24 was 3438, 3594 and 4222, respectively.<sup>\*13</sup>

When analysing the offences committed by minors in 2007 by categories, it appears that one-half of the offences committed by minors in 2007 were against property, offences against public order constituted one-fifth and offences against the person accounted for 13%. During that year, 8 killers and rapists who were minors were identified; the number of robberies committed by minors was 150. Offences against public trust made up 9%. The latter comprised, in most cases, the misuse of an important identity document, that is, by using documents that did not belong to them, young people attempted to attend various events or enter night clubs, for which they did not have permission because of their age. We may presume that a considerable part of these offences were committed out of foolishness. Hence, both national institutions and local governments can take preventive steps to spare, on the one hand, young people of the proceedings, and on the other hand, reserve resources for fighting more serious offences.<sup>\*14</sup>

<sup>9</sup> I. Meos. *Filosoofia sõnaraamat. Olulisi mõisteid, koolkondi, filosoofe, seisukohti* (Dictionary of Philosophy. Important Notions, Schools, Philosophers, Opinions). Tallinn 2002, p. 239.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> Eesti inimarengu aruanne 2001: 2.4. Karistuspoliitika Eestis 1991–2000 (Estonian human development report 2001. Punishment policy in Estonia 1991–2000). Available at <http://72.14.203.104/search?q=cache:D2E2PI2tMZgJ:www.iiss.ee/nhdr/2001/2.4.html> (28.03.2007) (in Estonian).

<sup>12</sup> Kriminaalpoliitika arengusuundade aastani 2010 heakskiitmine. Riigikogu 21. oktoobri 2003. a otsus (Approval of development trends of criminal policy until 2010. Decision of the Riigikogu of 21 October 2003). Available at <https://www.riigiteataja.ee/ert/act.jsp?id=637829> (4.04.2007) (in Estonian).

<sup>13</sup> Kuritegudes süüdistatavad. Isikute rühm ning aasta (People Accused of Crimes. Group of People and Year). Available at <http://pub.stat.ee/px-web.2001/Dialog/Saveshow.asp> (3.10.2006) (in Estonian).

<sup>14</sup> Speech by Minister of Justice Rein Lang at the prosecutors' general assembly on 4.04.2008 (Note 4).

In addition to crimes, minors commit various misdemeanours and offences. The results of a survey conducted among ordinary schoolchildren in different districts in Estonia in 2006, showed that the majority of them had violated the law at least once during the previous year. According to the survey, pupils aged from 11 to 15 had committed the following offences\*<sup>15</sup>:

	Boys	Girls
Shouting in a public place	33%	27%
Present in an intoxicated state in a public place	19%	4%
Damaged or destroyed property belonging to strangers	19%	8%
Participated in gang fights	19%	5%
Throwing rocks or bottles at people	16%	7%
Theft of items with a value less than EEK 50	14%	51%
Rape or attempted rape	1%	0%

Thus, minors and young people unavoidably 'contribute' to the decreasing security of society and provide a new generation of adult criminals. This gives rise to the question of what minors themselves think about crime and violence and what would be the possibilities of ensuring security for themselves and society.

## 4. Schoolchildren of Tartu on violence and its prevention

Violence (just as crime) is an eternal phenomenon that exists in any society. The forms of violence change in line with the development of society and/or political processes; in certain cases, the degree of cruelty, intensity and frequency also changes (*cf.* during war and peace) but the human mind recognises, regardless of the processes described, what acts are violent and a person always searches for opportunities to counter violence. This represents the realisation of the core of Superego (which develops most rapidly at the ages of 5 and 6, then during adolescence when a person starts to make more conscious decisions, values and ideals are adopted), when the already fixed values and ideals can no longer be changed or always even identified. Thus, an individual does not always recognise why he or she feels guilty or disturbed. He or she fails to perceive that he or she has violated a rule accepted during childhood, the meaning of which he or she has already forgotten.\*<sup>16</sup> The perception of violence is therefore more static by nature than the changes in the content and/or character of acts of violence accompanying the development of society. This fact allows, in the opinion of the author, for an analysis to be performed in this paper on the survey conducted in 2003.

Within the framework of an international survey in 2003\*<sup>17</sup> we questioned Tartu schoolchildren\*<sup>18</sup>, to find out how violent or criminal they considered our society and what they had done to increase their security.

The responses to questions 'How has violence changed among the youth over the past couple of years?' are depicted in Figures 1 and 2. The answers given to that question were given on a five-point scale: 5 – decreased significantly, 4 – decreased to some extent, 3 – no change, 2 – increased to some extent, and 1 – increased significantly. Since the survey was carried out in the winter and spring of 2003, the phrase 'over the last couple of years' means that the pupils had to look back to 2001. On the following scale, the higher mean indicates trends of decreasing violence according to pupils and the smaller mean, on the contrary, the increasing of violence.

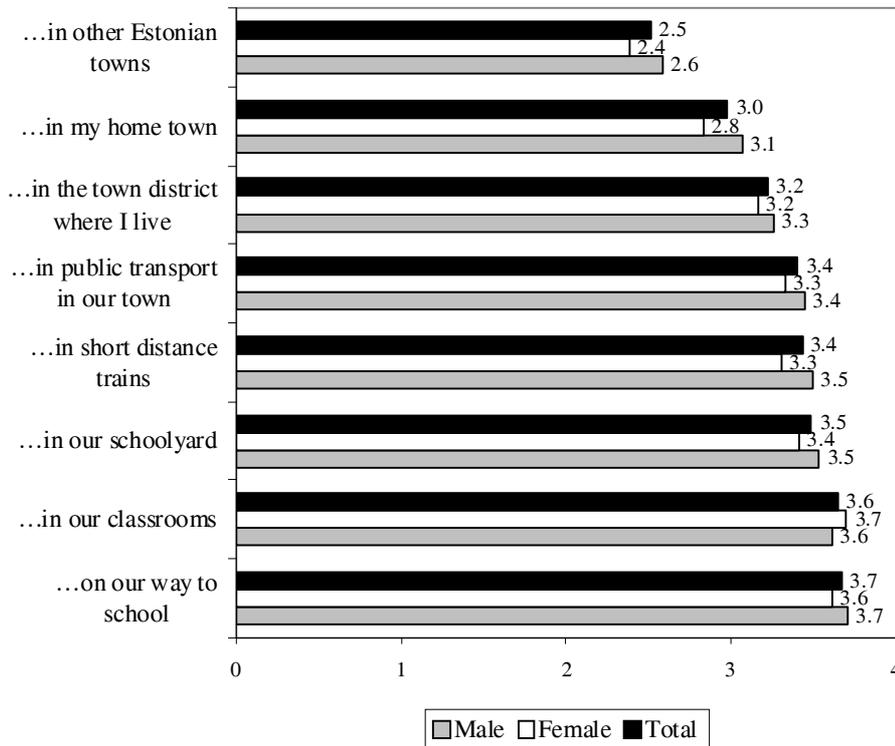
<sup>15</sup> A. Kuus. Suur osa teismelistest on seadust rikkunud (Large Share of Young People Have Violated the Law). – Postimees, 31.08.2006 (in Estonian).

<sup>16</sup> L. Keltikangas-Järvinen. Agressiivne laps. Kuidas suunata lapse isiksuse arengut (Aggressive Child. How to Direct the Development of the Child's Personality). Tallinn 1992, p. 41 (in Estonian).

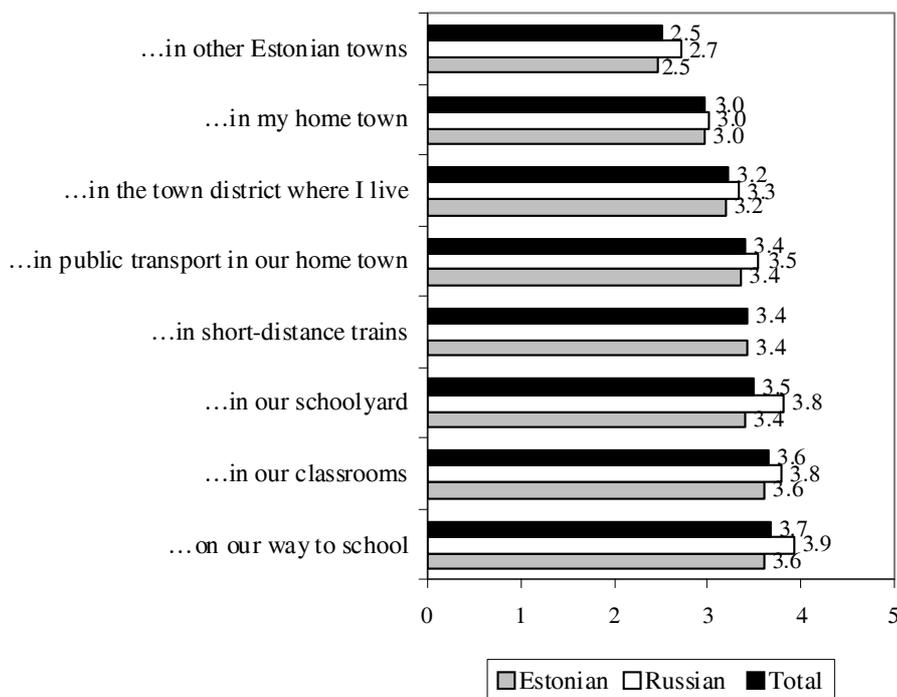
<sup>17</sup> Youth's Experience of Violence as Accused and Victim in International Project Baltic Sea: European Future Region in 2002–2004. Project Manager in Estonia Prof. J. Sootak, co-ordinator University of Greifswald.

<sup>18</sup> The respondents were pupils of Forms 8 and 9 of Estonian and Russian basic schools and freshmen of vocational schools in Tartu. (The sample was comprised of 363 pupils, including 200 boys and 163 girls; the average age of pupils was 15–16 years). Tartu is the second largest town in Estonia and the centre of Southern Estonia. The population of Tartu exceeded 100,000 in 1977 and has remained around that level to date. According to the population register, as of 1 August 2007, the number of people who had registered Tartu as their residence was 101,250. Of them, 80% are Estonians, 16% are Russians and 4% represent other nations.

**Figure 1. Opinions of young people on changes in violence over the past two years, depending on the gender of pupils (mean values).<sup>19</sup>**



**Figure 2. Opinions of young people on changes in violence over the past two years, depending on the gender of pupils (mean values).**



<sup>19</sup> All the results of the survey included in this paper have been presented as arithmetic means.

The comparison of the data given in the figures allows for the conclusion to be made that the results differ most in relation to national background (see Figure 2). The opinions of pupils speaking different languages differ most regarding classroom and schoolyard violence. There are considerably fewer Russian-speaking pupils, compared to Estonian youth, who think that the level of violence has remained the same. The pupils who opine that school violence has decreased over the years outnumber those who do not. This may be caused, among other things, by the increasingly serious attitude of Russian-speaking pupils towards education, which is the most important guarantee for integration into our society. The decreasing violence in Russian basic schools may also be ascribed to stricter discipline and order compared with Estonian schools, as well as to the peculiarities of Slavic culture and national feelings of togetherness.

It is noteworthy that regardless of the language and the gender of the respondents (see Figure 1), the other towns apart from their own home town have a higher rate of violence. Such an opinion implies that the youth are aware of the acts of violence registered in our society but since they have not fallen victims to violence in their home town, they do not perceive their home town to be as violent as the other towns. Due to media coverage, just as adults, the youth have also developed certain stereotypical preconceptions about certain regions of Estonia (above all the capital Tallinn and East-Viru County<sup>20</sup>), as if more acts of violence were registered there than in other Estonian towns, so smaller towns and more 'peaceful' areas leave the impression of being less violent.

When looking at the number of offences registered in Estonia and the areas where they were committed, we see that the following number of offences has been committed in Tallinn: 25,587 in 2002; 25,026 in 2003; 24,393 in 2004, and 24,584 in 2005; in East-Viru County, the indicators were 5652, 6518, 6318 and 6412, respectively. Considering the number of offences registered in Tartu County over the same period, we may spot a growing trend: in 2002, the number of offences registered in the county was 4285, while 4352 offences were registered in 2003, and 4388 in 2004, complemented by 4480 offences in 2005.<sup>21</sup> It is possible to fall victim to an offence in any region in Estonia. In their opinion, young people proceeded from the stereotypical preconceptions or their personal experience of violence.

As may be expected, young people feel safe<sup>22</sup> during the daytime in an environment familiar to them (streets, public transport, school); their feeling of security is not that strong when staying at various places of the town in the evening or at night. Hence, the responses given here are in line with those analysed above, which suggested that pupils consider that violence has decreased at school and around it over the previous years.

When boys and girls feel equally safe during the daytime, insecurity generally increases with darkness — people's sense of danger rises regardless of their gender. Girls feel especially insecure and particularly in places where young people tend to gather in groups. This gives rise to the question what to do and what pupils have done so far to protect themselves or others from violence.

It appears from the survey that the most frequently used option is, for example, to carry a mobile phone to call for help ( $x = 2.8$ ) and the cases of possession of some kind of a weapon are most rare ( $x = 4.8 \dots 4.9$ ). The survey actually reveals that 51% of the respondents often or very often carry along something to call for help, and only 2.5% of the respondents carry often or very often some type of a weapon (e.g., gas weapon). This is never done by 94% of the respondents, i.e., they do not have a weapon.

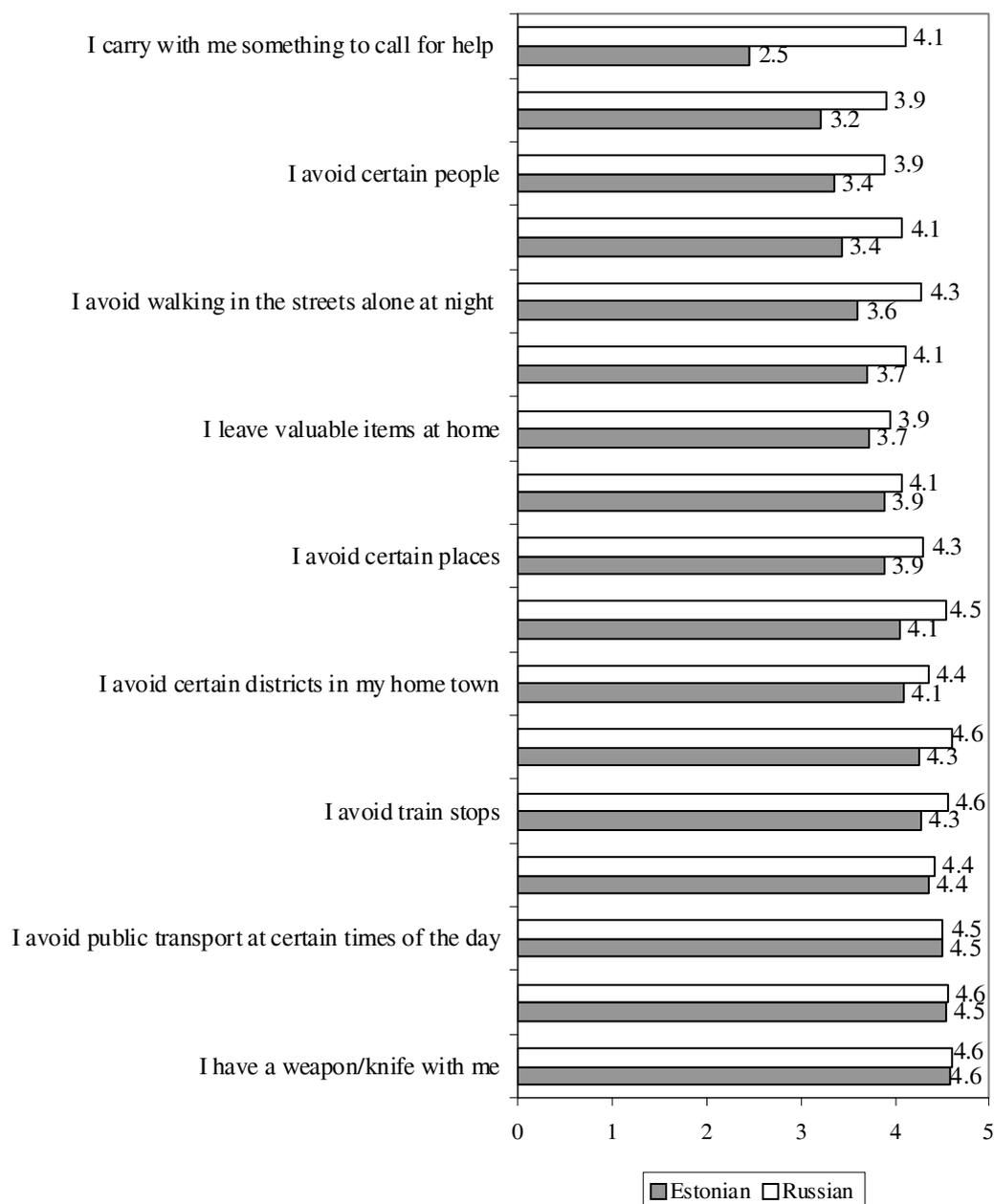
The results of the survey indicate that many young people do not avoid carrying with them large amounts of money ( $x = 3.4$ ) and valuable items ( $x = 3.8$ ), or avoid certain places (dark parks, passageways, etc.) or certain people. They probably rely too much on the possibility to call for help, without thinking that it may not always be possible. This certainly relates to the personal experience of young people — unless they have fallen victim to offences, they cannot be fearful.

Major differences appear between the answers given to this question by Estonian- and Russian-speaking pupils (see Figure 3).

<sup>20</sup> East-Viru County is a traditional industrial region in Estonia, which was dominated by the oil shale industry during the Soviet period, and where the work force largely consisted of migrants to Estonia. The migration that lasted for decades in East-Viru County rendered Estonians a national minority. The industrial development that was based on mineral resources resulted in a unidirectional economy, due to which the social environment is monotonous. Now that several of the mines have been closed down, the region suffers from unemployment, one of the important causes of which is the poor or non-existent knowledge of Estonian as the official language of the Republic of Estonia. A large proportion of migrants and their descendants, and unemployment, are the main factors that have shaped the stereotype that the East-Viru County is more violent and criminal than the other regions in Estonia.

<sup>21</sup> Registreeritud kuriteod. Aasta, kuriteo toimepaneku paik ning näitaja (Registered Crimes. Year, Place Committed, Crime and Indicator). Available at <http://pub.stat.ee/px-web.2001/Dialog/Saveshow.asp> (3.10.2006) (in Estonian).

<sup>22</sup> The question 'How safe do you feel at the following places?' could be answered on a four-point scale: 4 – very unsafe, 3 – unsafe, 2 – safe, and 1 – very safe.

**Figure 3. Evaluation of various ways of conduct (mean values)<sup>\*23</sup>**

The general trend is that Estonian pupils prefer more often all the ways of action offered in the questionnaire compared to their Russian peers. If according to the pupils of Estonian basic schools, the most efficient method of protecting themselves and if necessary also other people was the opportunity to call for help (e.g., by a mobile phone), Russian-speaking young people considered leaving large amounts of money and valuable items at home as well as avoiding certain people to be most efficient. The opportunity to call for help (e.g., by carrying a mobile phone) was surprisingly unpopular among Russian-speaking respondents. When comparing the two groups, it appears significant that Russian-speaking pupils did not rely on any of the options offered by us, which would help reduce the danger of falling victim to violence. It is possible that none of the ways of conduct suggested by us seemed very efficient to them; it is, however, also possible that non-Estonians, above all, rely on themselves in the case of the danger of violence and believe that they would find a way out

<sup>23</sup> Twenty-two ways of conduct were presented to pupils to prevent violence or to protect others from it. Pupils' opinions were measured on a five-point scale: 5 – never, 4 – seldom, 3 – sometimes, 2 – often, and 1 – very often. To give an integral overview, we have to use arithmetic means. The following was taken into account when interpreting the mean values: the smaller the numerical value of the mean, the more frequently the respondent takes action to prevent violence. The higher the mean, the less often relevant action is taken.

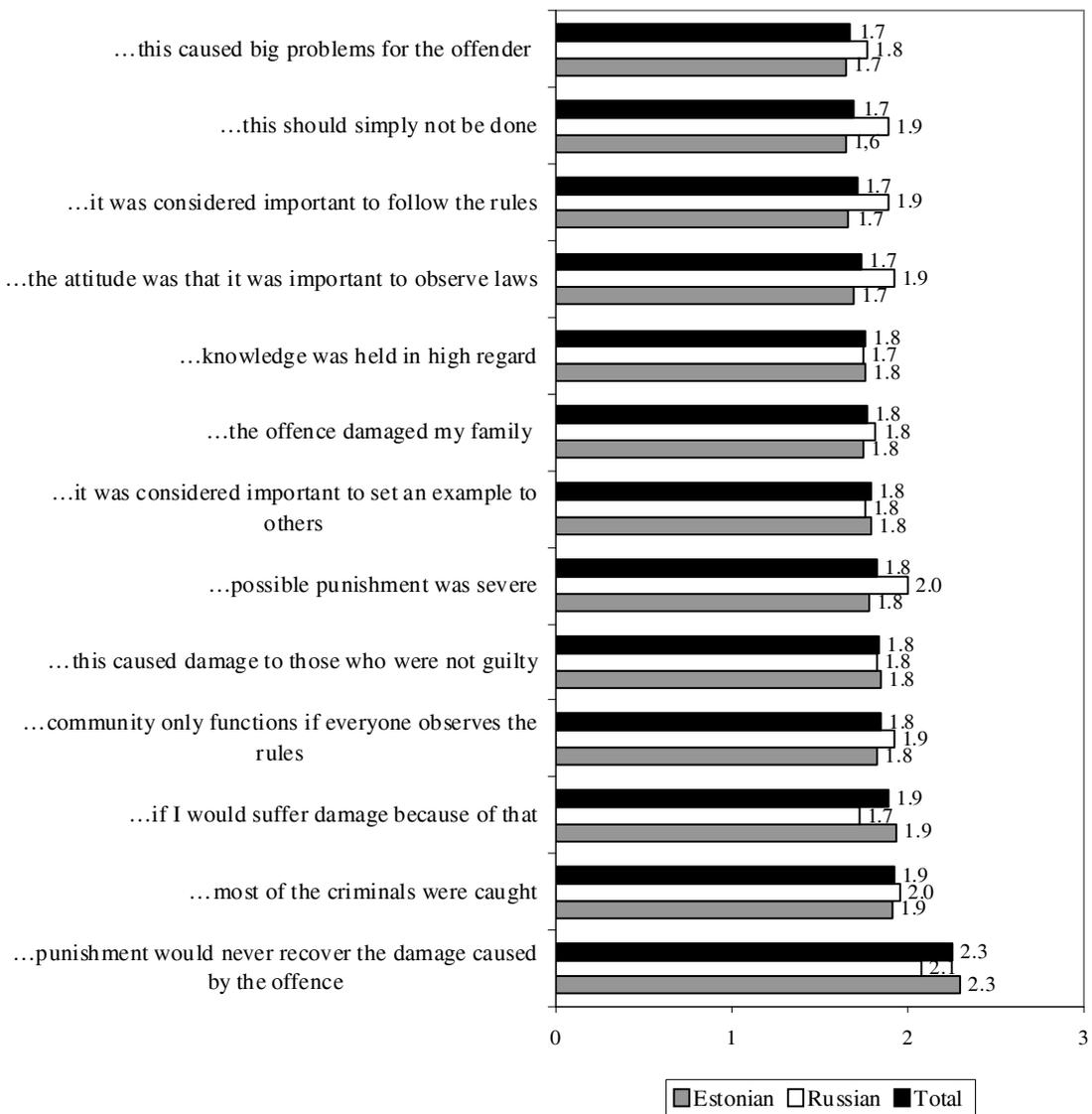
themselves in a critical situation (e.g., avoid remaining in isolated places in the dark, rely on their physical strength when it would be necessary to resist an attack, etc.).

The data at our disposal does not allow us to provide an unequivocal explanation of the reasons for different patterns of action based on national background. We cannot confirm here whether it is a lower sensibility threshold for Russian-speaking children that does not regard as dangerous situations in which Estonian pupils already take precautions, or the reason lies somewhere in the socioeconomic or cultural and everyday field.

As said above, we can all do something to prevent violence and crime. The problem has, however, a so-called national aspect, in which the drafted and adopted laws must be appropriate to fight the vices both as regards prevention and punishment of those who are guilty. What would be the reasons, according to our young people, why it would be reasonable to refrain from committing an offence? Would this serve as a point of departure for the legislator as well?

In the survey, the following statement was presented to pupils: 'It would be more reasonable not to commit an offence if ...' The responses to the statements given in Figure 4 were provided using a four-point scale: 4 – completely disagree, 3 – disagree, 2 – agree rather than disagree, and 1 – completely agree. Thus, the smaller the numerical value of the mean, the more respondents agree with the statement, and *vice versa*, the bigger the numerical value, the smaller the number of respondents who agreed. The response options have been given in shortened versions in the Figure.

Figure 4. Responses broken down by language (mean values)



The results allow for the conclusion to be reached that, according to the pupils, it would be reasonable to refrain from committing an offence if this caused big problems for the offender; they also valued the upswing of legal consciousness among the population (e.g., they considered it important to follow the rules, value knowledge, consider it important to set a good example to others). At the same time, the respondents did not find that severe punishments would affect the reasonability of committing an offence.

## 5. Conclusions

The 'new' Estonian society, the building of which immediately followed the restoration of Estonian independence in 1991 and gained momentum after the membership of the European Union in 2004, has to date developed into a society in which we have priorities for future development and a vision of what our country and society could look like in the future. Our development priorities certainly include movement towards a more secure society, while reduction of violence in society and involvement of society as a whole in achieving the goal would contribute to that.

Unfortunately, Estonian society as a whole cannot be considered safe yet — there is too much violence around us, and the 'number of offences committed by minors and directed at them' is high.<sup>\*24</sup>

According to schoolchildren living in Tartu, an increase in violence may be spotted in other Estonian towns rather than their home town over the past few years. This can be explained predominantly by stereotypical preconceptions developed by the media that certain Estonian regions (e.g., in East-Viru County) are more violent and criminal than the other Estonian regions. At the same time, violence (including school violence) serves as a phenomenon that has touched upon all Estonian regions more or less. As appears from Figures 1 and 2, the respondents claimed that violence in their schoolyard and school house had decreased over the previous years. However, looking at the relevant statistics and the results of the surveys (see, e.g., the sources indicated in the introductory part of this paper), there is no reason for excessive optimism. A large number of cases of school violence provide evidence of low self-control both in the relationships between minors and in relationships involving a minor and an adult (pupil and teacher). In the case of minors, it is a great concern that young people do not often even realise that their act has been violent.<sup>\*25</sup> This, once again, signals an urgent need for society (and the state!) to develop the legal consciousness of young people in order to cultivate a healthy attitude to the surrounding environment and clarify the limits between justified and unjustified behaviour.

One of the possibilities to limit violence is to use (formal social control) measures (as efficiently as possible!) applied by the state against individuals who have resorted to violence and committed offences. According to the schoolchildren involved in the study, it is reasonable to refrain from committing an offence if this would cause great problems for the offender and his or her family; they also value an upswing in the legal consciousness among the population. At the same time, the respondents do not find that severe punishments could affect the reasonability of committing an offence (see Figure 4).

Once again, this testifies that it is more important that severe punishments strive for changing people's attitude in the broadest sense of the word — starting from their attitude toward themselves to their attitude towards all other living creatures, nature and unwritten and written rules.

The survey conducted confirms, on the one hand, the need to identify and apply more efficiently measures to increase legal consciousness, and on the other hand, it is unavoidable to consider what would be the most efficient methods of social control in the present society.

<sup>24</sup> See speech by Minister of Justice Rein Lang at the prosecutors' general assembly on 4.04.2008 (Note 4).

<sup>25</sup> See, e.g., A. Kuus. Teismeliste korteripidu lõppes kassi tapmisega (An Adolescent House Party Ended in the Killing of a Cat). Postimees, 28.03.2007 (in Estonian).