

Male approach to treatment of females. The Estonian case.

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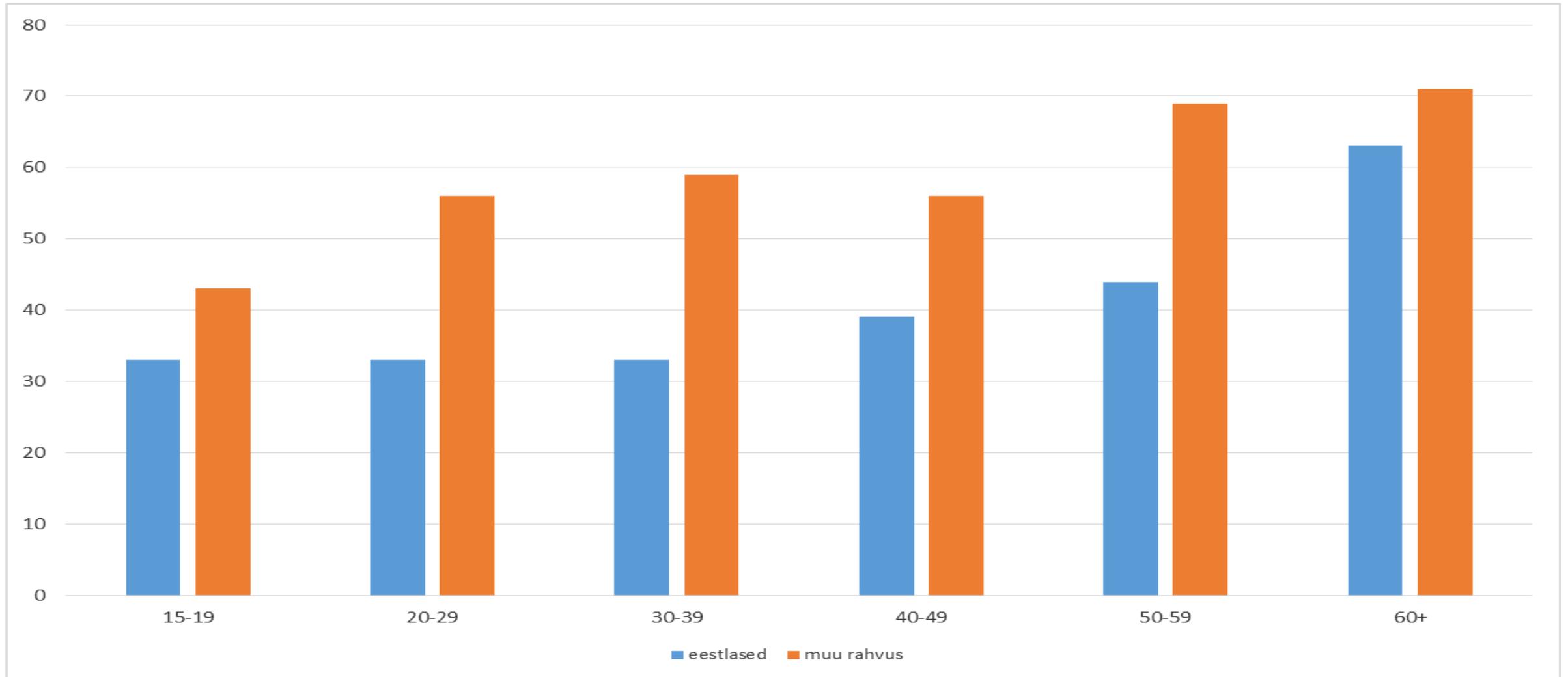
Introduction. What is Estonia?

- Population 1,3 mln, incl 30% russian-speaking minority
- There are ca 3400 professionals (incl 10% women)
- There are ca 3300 conscripts (incl 1% females)
- The hot reserve is 21 000
- At the moment there are approximately 1500 NATO troops in Estonia (enhanced forward presence)
- There is a voluntary organisation Kaitsealiit (Defence League) with 25 000 members (incl ca 3000 females)
- Defence budget 645 mln eur
- Conscription is obligatory for males, voluntary for females
- Since 2017 we have the EDF gender policy

The most obsessive question for estonians:

What do they think of me?

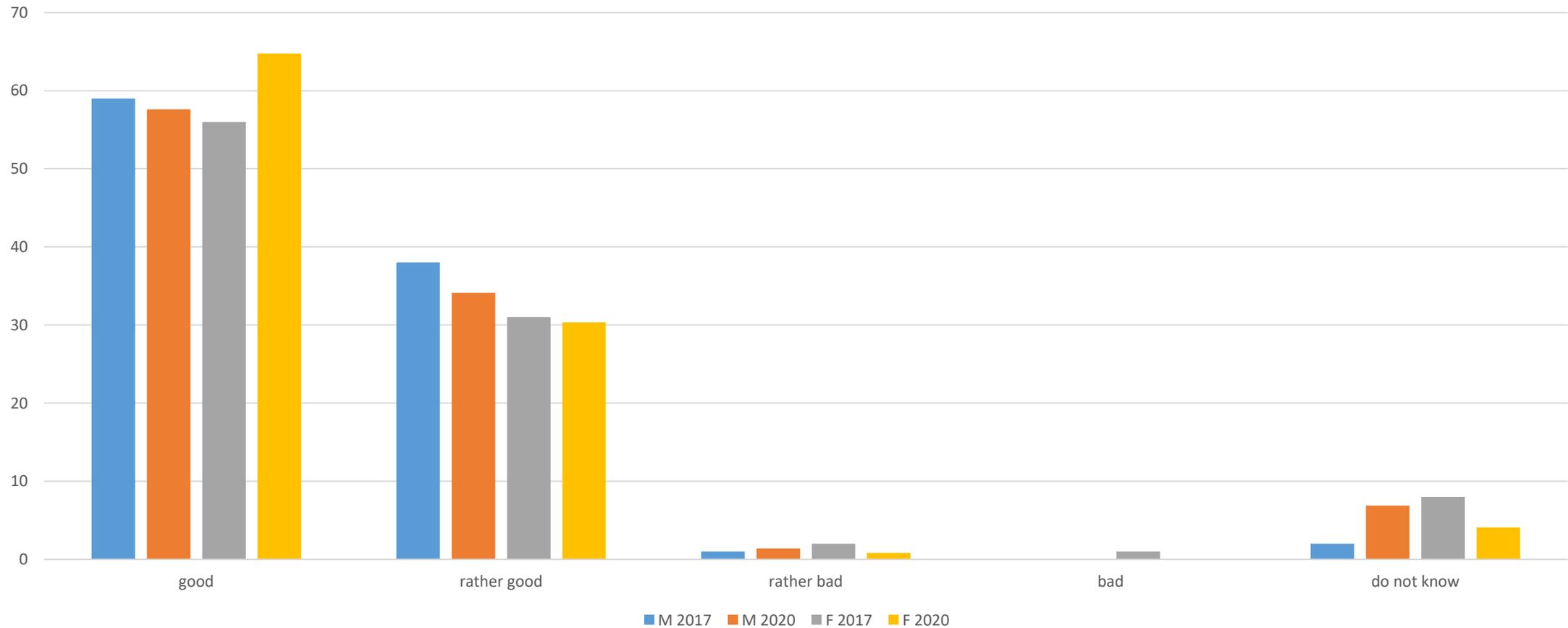
What does the society think? Military is not a place for females.



The study

- Web-based questionnaire among all professionals of EDF.
- Aiming to gather information on the experiences, attitudes, proposals, challenges and stereotypes of EDF professionals concerning participation of females in the service.
- Longitudinal, once in 4 years.
- In 2017 survey we had 732 respondents (609 m, 123 f).

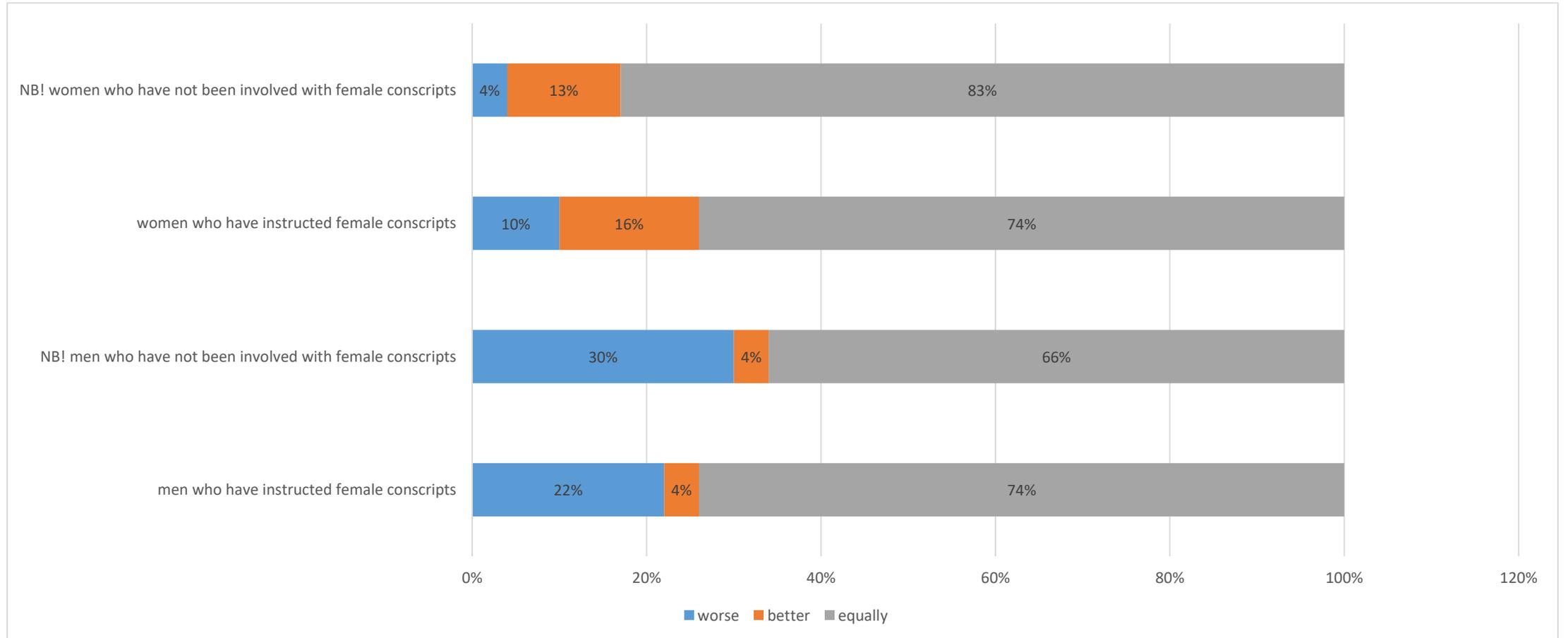
What is the attitude of my loved ones towards my career? The answers from professionals. „Äge!“



The study of 2017

- Among other questions we asked if the female and male conscripts perform equally well in the service?
- 73% of respondents said that female and male conscripts cope equally well. 6% estimated that girls are coping better. 21% estimated the opposite.
- Then we asked with an open question to explain what does the respondent mean and give some examples. 461 of them did.
- Qualitative content analysis with 4 general coding categories.

Split down by experience

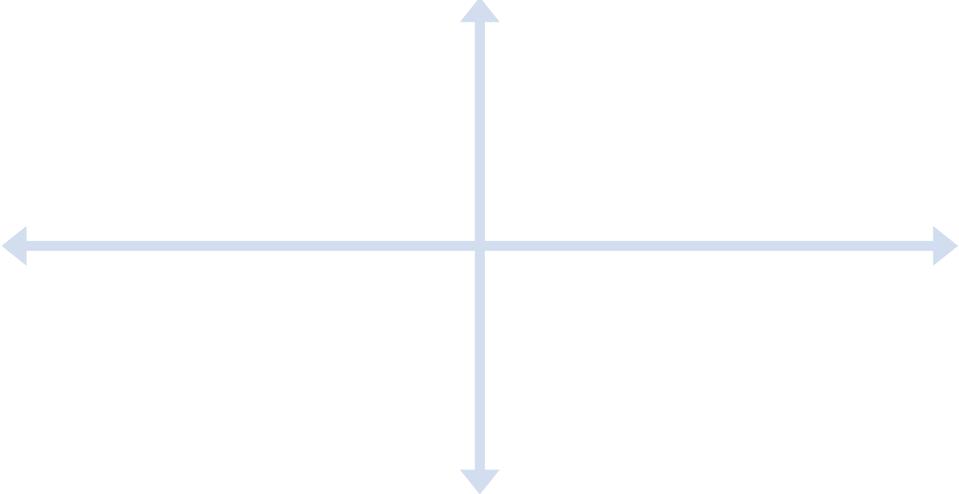


Sex does not matter

Physical shortcoming

Boys and girls are conceptually different

Physical shortcomings are compensated

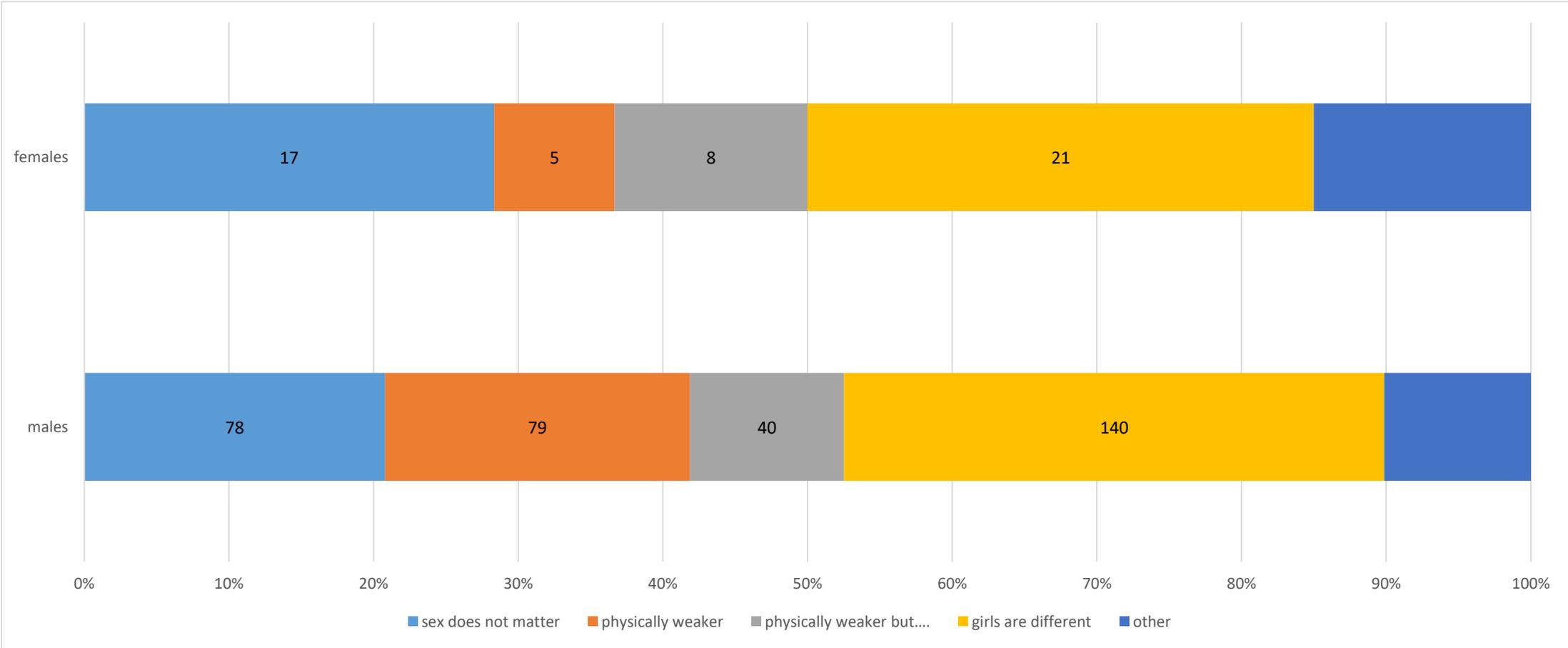


Content analysis

- Girls and boys are different – 37%
- Sex does not matter – 22%
- Physically weaker – 19%
- Physically weaker but compensates – 11%
- Other – 11%



Split down by sex



Girls and boys are different:

- *„It is clear that some tasks are easier for males. Specific combat tasks should be carried out by men. But if one needs to concentrate, be accurate and punctual then girls have advantages. So that the unit as a whole needs both sets of skills.“*

Officer, male, 31-45 a

- *„women are more dedicated. In my view it is easier to train girls because they think of their homes, children and country. If someone tries to hurt children then you will see the fury of a woman. But males are more like big boys playing their war games with their big toys. Women have other values and perhaps for that reason they constitute a good symbiosis. I am sure the deterrance would be better if both sexes are out there for their country. Just like they do in Israel. “*

Officer, female, 31-45 a

Sex does not matter

- *„in the forces there are many posts that can be filled with people only with special capabilities. If a soldier weights 45 kg then there is no point to make him a javelin operator. I have met several female conscripts who are coping well and those who do not. The same case is with male conscripts :)“*

NCO, male, 31-45 a

- *„It all depends who do you compare with whom. There are girls who are performing excellent. And there are boys who just do not get it no matter what. “*

NCO, female, 31-45 a

Physically weaker

- *„proportionally girls do finish their final survival hike with better results than boys. Boys are whining but girls are there to prove themselves. “*

Officer, male, 18-30 a

- *„when i graduated from the NCO course last year then the boys had swollen and hurting feet, they were sick etc. But girls completed the course with no losses whatsoever.,,*

NCO, female, 31-45 a

Physically weaker but....

- *„I had female conscripts who would not be as strong as boys but you can correct that with the distribution of tasks and positions. For example if the javelin is too heavy for the girl then you give her some other task. I had once a female camerade on deployment and that experience was positive.“*

NCO, male, 31-45 a

- *„women are more diligent and their will to perform is stronger. They have the need to prove themselves. As girls are entering conscription voluntarily, then obviously their motivation and sense of duty is different. According to my experience girls are setting higher aims and standards and usually they succeed.“*

Officer, female, 18-30 a

The study of 2020

- 672 respondents (537 m, 135 f)
- In addition to the previous four discourses a new one emerged with the share of 14%:
„female conscripts have higher motivation“
- My explanation is that since we have the EDF gender policy (2017) professionals have started more to contemplate and reflect on the gender issues. As a result the discourse of „female’s higher motivation“ has emerged and is taking ground.



Girls have higher motivation. Examples

- *„Since there are only few females in the unit they receive more attention. As they feel that the eyes are on them they put more effort to perform well. Females are here voluntarily which means that they have made clear why they want to be in the service. At the same time there are boys who do not want to be here and have no motivation whatsoever. Which means that girls as conscripts are performing better than the average.“*

NCO, male, 18-30

- *„There are actions where females perform better. If physical strength is needed they may be slower. In general girls have higher motivation and they put 110% effort into service while the boys try to cut the corners. For example we had a survival hike where girl had to carry the weapon for the boy because the boy was so exhausted.“*

NCO, female, 18-30

For a conclusion

- There is not one single way how the male thinks of a female. There are several thinking patterns.
- Those patterns or discourses can be influenced.
- It is possible to note that EDF gender policy has yielded results in many ways. The ones that i presented were not the results that we were aiming for but we like what we have achieved.



Thank you!