



Baltic Institute of Social sciences

**ETHNIC TOLERANCE AND INTERGRATION
OF THE LATVIAN SOCIETY**

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S A B I E D R Ī B A S I N T E G R Ā C I J A S F O N D S



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DESCRIPTION OF THE RESEARCH

GOALS AND MISSIONS

The primary goals for the research are these:

- To study biases which dominate Latvian public thought and the level of tolerance which exists toward various ethnic and religious groups;
- To discover the mechanisms which lead to the emergence of xenophobic attitudes and the factors which determine the tolerance of Latvia's residents or lack thereof.

Initially the researchers determined two major areas for study in relation to ethnic tolerance and the integration of Latvia's society:

1) Ethnic or (perhaps more precisely) linguistic splits between the Latvian and the Russian speaking parts of the country's society, the result of which is the emergence of two more or less separate segments in society, with parallel establishment of stereotypes and ethnic biases;

2) Attitudes and ideas about immigrants and foreigners who are long-term residents of Latvia and who have a different appearance and/or religion. The need to study attitudes and biases vis-à-vis immigrants with a different appearance and/or religion is dictated by the fact that several immigrants have spoken to the mass media about negative treatment that is the result of their skin colour (it has to be noted, however, that there has been no officially registered incident of physical violence that is based on ethnic or racist biases).

The following tasks were determined in relation to the goals that are identified above:

➤ To study theoretical approaches and studies about ethnic tolerance, bias, racism and xenophobia in other countries, looking at the way in which previous research and theories in other countries could be useful for the study in Latvia;

➤ To use qualitative methods (focus group discussions) to learn about the views of Latvia's Latvians and Russian speakers both with respect to the other dominant group (i.e., the Latvians and the Russians or Russian speakers) and with respect to ethnic groups with different appearances and/or religions (much attention was devoted to the views that were expressed and to the way in which these views were formulated, because biases were often expressed indirectly);

➤ To use qualitative methods (in-depth interviews) to learn about the experience of "different" people who live in Latvia - the way in which people of different external appearance and different religious belief describe the everyday attitude of Latvia's residents toward them;

➤ To elaborate instruments for the second phase of the research - a quantitative survey of Latvians and Russian speaking residents of Latvia (the questionnaire, cards, instructions for interviewers);

➤ To analyse the data that are extracted from the surveys, comparing these with the results of the focus group discussions and in-depth interviews, as well as to evaluate the ideas that have been developed during the course of the research, producing an analytical report on ethnic tolerance and xenophobia in Latvia.

THE METHODOLOGY

The authors used both qualitative (focus groups, in-depth interviews) and quantitative (a representative survey) methods for their research. The use of several methods increases the validity of the study, because quantitative methods allow us to look at various views and attitudes with respect to ethnic tolerance and xenophobia in Latvia, while the qualitative methods produce a more complete and in-depth understanding of human experience, motivations, biases and arguments in the area of ethnic issues.

The focus groups

Six focus group discussions were organised so as to learn about public views with respect to ethnic relations in Latvia, ethnic tolerance and xenophobia, including ethnic stereotypes and the public mood in relation to these issues. Four discussions were organised in Rīga and two in Balvi. Three of the discussions were held in Latvian and three in Russian. The focus groups in Rīga were organised for young people and for middle aged and older people separately. Participants were recruited on the basis of a random quota selection principle. The focus group discussions were held in February 2004.

The in-depth interviews

10 in-depth interviews were conducted with people of different appearance and religious belief so as to find out about their experience with contacts in Latvia and about the everyday attitude of Latvia's residents toward them. Two of the respondents were Arabic, two were African, two came from Sri Lanka, one was from the Roma population, one was a Tatar, one was an Azerbaijani and one was Chinese. Respondents were found through national cultural associations in Latvia, as well as via the "snowball" method (with one interviewee nominating the next one). The interviews were conducted between February and April 2004.

The surveys

Two parallel surveys were run among Latvian and Russian speaking residents of Latvia to learn about the spread of ethnic ideas, biases and xenophobia and about the mutual attitudes of Latvians and Russians. A total of 1,018 respondents were surveyed - 510 Latvians and 508 non-Latvians. The respondents were selected so as to ensure a representational group of Latvians and non-Latvians. The surveys were conducted in March and April 2004.

THE THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS OF THE STUDY

In preparing the study and analysing the resulting data, the work and theories of several researchers in the field of ethnic relations were used. Here we provide a brief summary of each of the theoretical approaches that were used in analysing and interpreting the results.

Allport's inter-group contact hypothesis

Allport first described his hypothesis on inter-group contacts in his 1954 book "The Nature of Prejudice",¹ and it is one of the most widespread concepts in the study of ethnic relations. Allport's hypothesis states that contacts with representatives of a different (ethnic) group can reduce biases toward that group, because such contacts enable the development of more appropriate ideas, the discovery of similar views and values, and, by extension, more positive attitudes and relationships.

At the same time, however, positive influence emerges only from those contact situations which satisfy certain prerequisites - equal status between those who are involved in the situation, common goals, inter-group co-operation instead of competition, as well as normative support (authorities, leaders, laws, traditions). In other words, it is important that the contact experience be positive in nature.

Studies all around the world have, generally speaking, confirmed Allport's contact hypothesis,² not only in regard to ethnic groups (even in those cases when contacts are rare and not too intensive - e.g., looking at the distance between a respondent's home and the home of the nearest neighbour from a different ethnic group), but also with respect to other groups that sometimes are rebuffed - the elderly, gay and lesbian people, people with mental disorders, as well as differently abled people.³

Later studies that are based on Allport's hypothesis have identified many other prerequisites that must be in place if positive attitudes toward other groups are to emerge. Thomas Pettigrew (1998)⁴ criticises this trend, because it means that increasing numbers of contact situations are excluded from the range of positive influence, although studies have mostly confirmed the great importance of contacts in the emergence of favourable attitudes. Pettigrew calls for an evaluation and specification of those factors that are necessary in a contact situation so that positive attitudes emerge, separating these from those factors which simply facilitate the process. Pettigrew feels that more attention must be devoted to the process in which attitudes emerge - how and why attitudes change. He believes that this process includes four individual sub-processes - getting information about a different group, a

¹ Allport, G. (1954/1979). *The Nature of Prejudice*. Cambridge: Addison-Wesley.

² See, e.g., Verkuyten, M. and K. Masson (1995). "New Racism", Self-Esteem and Ethnic Relations Among Minority and Majority Youth in the Netherlands", *Social Behaviour and Personality*, No. 23(2), pp. 137-154. See also Bratt, C. (2002). "Contact and Attitudes Between Ethnic Groups: A Survey-Based Study of Adolescents in Norway", *Acta Sociologica*, No. 45(2), pp. 107-126.

³ Pettigrew, T.F. (1998). "Intergroup Contact Theory", *Annual Review of Psychology*, No. 49, pp. 65-85.

⁴ *Ibid.*

change in behaviour, the establishment of emotional links, and then a change in attitude toward one's own group.

Friendship among people of different nationality can be very important in the establishment of attitudes toward other ethnic groups (Pettigrew believes that friendship can cover all four of the aforementioned process of shaping attitudes). This has been indicated by several studies in various Western European countries. A study of teenagers in Norway,¹ for instance, confirmed links between friendship with people from other ethnic groups on the one hand and a positive attitude toward that group on the other hand. This was particularly true among minorities and among young men (although young men in general had a more negative attitude toward other ethnic groups than did young women).

Wright and his colleagues (Wright, et al., 1997)² concluded in their study that attitudes toward other groups can improve even if one member of a group knows that someone else in the group is friendly with a representative of another group. It has to be emphasised that in many cases, positive attitudes are generalised toward other groups, too.

Several authors argue that it is not possible to determine whether measured attitudes have emerged because of contacts or whether they are perhaps the causes for contacts. In order to find out, longitudinal research is needed. Pettigrew has looked at various studies and suggested that although a reduction in biases has a great role to play in promoting contacts, the opposite process is much stronger (contacts first, reduced biases second).

Neither is it clearly understood how attitudes toward one member of a certain group influence attitudes toward the group as a whole. One prerequisite for this kind of generalisation is that the encountered member of the group be seen as a typical representative of that group (the "salient categorisation strategy"). The fact is, however, that contacts are most often established by those representatives of different groups who are brought together by common interests and values, while other representatives of the different groups usually do not see those individuals as being typical of the group. This is why other authors (Brewer & Miller, 1984)³ insist that boundaries among groups must be reduced (the "decategorisation strategy"). This idea is based on the assumption that inter-group contacts are most positive if the groups are not particularly distinct.

The way in which contacts influence attitudes is largely dictated by the previous attitudes and experiences of individuals (research shows that people with biases usually do not have friends from other nationalities). Also of importance are

¹ Bratt, C. (2002). "Contact and Attitudes Between Ethnic Groups: A Survey-Based Study of Adolescents in Norway", *Acta Sociologica*, No. 45(2), pp. 107-126.

² Wright, S.C., Aron, A., McLaughlin-Volpe, T. and S.A. Ropp (1998). The Extended Contact Effect: Knowledge of Cross-Group Friendships and Prejudice. Santa Cruz: University of California, unpublished manuscript.

³ Brewer, M.B. and N. Miller (1984). *Beyond the Contact Hypothesis: Theoretical Perspectives on Desegregation*. Orlando: Academic.

the legal and social norms which exist in a society, serving to promote or hinder the emergence of positive attitudes.¹

Most studies have confirmed the contact hypothesis with respect to dominant attitudes among ethnic minorities, but some authors have suggested that minority attitudes cannot be explained all that clearly via this particular theory. One explanation is that representatives of the minority and the majority can perceive an identical contact situation in different ways. Minorities, for instance, may have stronger feelings about their lower status. Friendship is seen as a distinctly equal situation, one which largely promotes the generalisation of positive attitudes and the resulting elimination of biases, particularly among members of the majority. Pettigrew, therefore, has suggested that the potential for inter-group friendship has to be measured. Comparing data from four different European countries, Pettigrew concluded that people with friends from a different social group (in terms of nationality, culture, race, religion or social status) have fewer biases. What's more, friendship has a greater influence on bias than vice versa. Positive influences from friends in other groups are applied to groups other than the one to which the friend belongs.²

Forbes (1997)³ has called for a further study of a certain paradox - that individuals from different cultures form positive attitudes toward one another when they become more familiar with one another, while contacts between two different cultural groups usually facilitate conflicts. Forbes believes that relations among ethnic groups can better be analysed at the level of groups, not individuals.

Several studies have shown that contacts with age group peers from different nationalities help in developing a more pluralistic orientation among adolescents - openness to various perspectives, the ability to understand those perspectives, the readiness to change one's own views, and the readiness to accept people with different views.⁴

The theory of social identity

The theory of social identity reviews individual psychological processes so as to explain differences among various groups. The primary thesis here is that it is very important for people to uphold a positive social identity, and belonging to various groups represents a part of that identity. People usually think highly of themselves and of the groups to which they belong, and that has a considerable influence on relations with other groups. When one compares one's own group to another and concludes that one's own group is not better than the other, but one continues to belong to the group, then the person looks for ways of upholding his or her group's

¹ Pettigrew, T.F., *op. cit.*

² Mackie D.M., Smith E.R. (1998) Intergroup relations: Insights from a theoretically integrative approach. *Psychological Review*, 105

³ Forbes H.D. (1997) *Ethnic conflict: Commerce, culture, and the Contact hypothesis*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press

⁴ Engberg, M.E., Meader, E.W. and S. Hurtado (2003). "Developing a Pluralistic Orientation: A Comparison of Ethnic Minority and White College Students", conference materials. http://www.umich.edu/~divdemo/AERA_Paper2003final.pdf (3.08.2003)

sense of superiority. This can be done by demonstrating greater loyalty to the group, by forming negative attitudes toward other groups or by discriminating against other groups (Tajfel&Turner1979).¹

Self-affirmation and self-expression through one's belonging to a group serves to improve the individual's psychological self-estimation. Groups embody the unique identity of individuals in such areas as religion, culture, art and language. These manifestations may seem harmless, but relationships among groups can become so negative that one group's pride and cultural values can threaten others.²

Researchers have pointed out that in general terms, ethnic minorities tend to have a more distinct level of identification with their ethnic group than majorities do.³ Leonardelli & Brewer (2001) found positive relationships among minority representatives between satisfaction with one's own group and biases toward other groups. Among majority representatives, in turn, there was a negative relationship between satisfaction with one's own group and biases toward other groups.⁴

Representatives of the subjective uncertainty reduction theory (Hogg, 2000; Hogg & Abrams 1993)⁵ argue that people try to reduce their uncertainty about things, and one way to do this is to identify with social groups, because that ensures clear ideas about behaviour.

Social dominance theory (Sidanius&Pratto, 1999)⁶, in turn, is based on the idea that there are ideologies in society which promote or reduce the hierarchy of various groups. Individuals do not always accept different ideologies to an equal degree (people seek social influence to a greater or lesser degree). People who distinctly want to dominate try to promote group hierarchy and the influence of their own group versus other groups. In accordance with this approach, the dominance orientation of men is more distinct than that of women, and that helps to explain why men, in general terms, are more biased than women are.

Blumer (1958)⁷, the psychologist who authored the concept of the group position model, feels that biases are based on ideas about a group's status vis-à-vis other groups. Members of a dominant group feel a sense of superiority and think that other groups are completely different and alien, that they do not deserve specific rights, statuses and resources. Dominant groups often feel threatened, because other groups try to reduce their privileges. This approach is based on the assumption that

¹ Tajfel H., Turner J.C. (1979) An integrative theory of intergroup conflict. In W.G. Austin, S. Worchel (Eds.) *The social psychology of intergroup relations*. Monterey, CA: Brooks/Cole

² Mackie, D.M. and E.R. Smith (1998), *op. cit.*

³ Bratt, C., *op. cit.*

⁴ Leonardelli G.J., Brewer M.B. (2001) Minority and majority discrimination: when and why. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 37

⁵ Hogg M.A. (2000) Subjective uncertainty reduction through self-categorization: a motivational theory of social identity processes and group phenomena. In *European Review of Social Psychology*, ed. W. Stroebe, M. Hewstone, 11. Chichester, UK: Wiley

Hogg M.A., Abrams D. (1993) Towards a single-process uncertainty-reduction model of social motivation in groups. In *Group Motivation: Social Psychological Perspectives*, ed. M.A. Hogg, D. Abrams. New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf

⁶ Sidanius J., Pratto F. (1999) *Social dominance: An intergroup theory of social hierarchy and oppression*. New York: Cambridge University Press

⁷ Blumer H. (1958) Race prejudice as a sense of group position. *Pacific Sociological Review*, 1

members of a dominant group build a wall between themselves and other groups. Blumer thinks that biases usually emerge because of the dominant group's feelings about its privileges in having access to resources and benefits that are limited in various ways but are of a high social standing (e.g., land, property, work, entrepreneurship, the ability to take political decisions, educational institutions, resources of leisure and entertainment, various prestigious positions and private life). If the dominant group feels threatened with respect to its "natural" rights, then it thinks that its status, power and survival are endangered. Fear and offence are the basis for generalised biases against people of other nationalities.

The theory of group conflicts

The theory of group conflicts is based on the idea that biases and discrimination are based on conflicts of interest among groups (LeVine & Campbell, 1972).¹ Attitudes and behaviours toward other groups reflect the interests of groups and are largely dependent upon the goals of various groups and the ability of groups to merge those interests. Conflicts among groups, in other words, are based on competition over limited resources. Often it is believed that another group's gains mean losses for one's own group - the so-called zero-sum relationship. Here are some of the theses of the realistic group conflict theory:

- 1) Inter-group threats and conflicts expand along with an increasing feeling that there is competition over resources;
- 2) The greater the threats and conflicts among groups, the greater the expression of hostility which supposedly justifies the conflict and poor behaviour;
- 3) If there is competition over resources, contacts among groups tend to facilitate hostility.

These are ideas which have been confirmed in many different studies. It has to be said that if the existence of competition over resources is important, then even more important is the extent to which people sense that competition. What's more, inter-group conflicts usually exist at the level of groups, not individuals.

On the basis of research that is based on the realistic group conflict theory, Esses (1998)² has elaborated an instrumental model for group conflicts. The model states that limited resources and the specifics of potentially competitive external groups come together to create the impression of competition among groups over the resources. This impression, in turn, creates attempts to get rid of the source of competition in one way or another.

Not all groups are equally perceived as competitors in the battle over resources. Most often these are groups with particularly distinctive elements of identification, ones that do not apply to the group which feels that competition exists. Also of potentially great importance are such factors as the size of a group, different appearances and different behaviours among groups. Potential competitors, however,

¹ LeVine R.A., Campbell D.T. (1972) *Ethnocentrism: Theories of conflict, ethnic attitudes, and group behaviour*. New York: Wiley

² Esses V.M. (1998) Intergroup competition and attitudes toward immigrants and immigration: an instrumental model of group conflict. *Journal of Social Issues*. Winter

have similar interests vis-à-vis the limited resources, and they have similar abilities to obtain those resources. Esses proposes that when it comes to factors that are important in obtaining resources (skills, for instance), groups are likely to see other, similar groups as competitors, while when it comes to less important factors (ethnicity), different groups are more likely to be seen as the competitors.

Social distance and stereotypes

Social distance is an important parameter in ethnic relations. Social distance is measured with the Bogardus scale, which is seen as a classical instrument for measuring attitudes toward various ethnic groups. Hagendoorn and Kleinpenning¹ and other researchers have used the Bogardus scale in evaluating negative attitudes which promote the desire of people to close themselves off and to avoid other ethnic groups.

The concepts “stereotype” and “bias” are often used as synonyms on an everyday basis, but in the literature of social science and psychology, stereotypes and biases are not defined identically. Stereotypes are a form of perception, while biases are an evaluation; they are related concepts, but stereotypes focus on various properties or signs which, according to one group, define another group. These can be physical properties, views or social roles. Biases, for their part, are defined as a positive or negative assessment of a social group and/or its participants. It is usually believed that assumptions about a group’s “typical” properties determine the extent to which the group is seen positively or negatively, thus facilitating the emergence of the relevant attitudes.²

It should be noted that there are also authors who argue that if someone has positive thoughts about his or her own group, that does not necessarily mean that he or she has negative thoughts about people from other groups (Driedger & Clifton, 1984).³ Tolerant people are aware of stereotypes but consciously try not to put them to use (Devine, 1989).⁴ Stereotypes help people in those cases when there is a lack of information, and they are rejected when reality turns out to be different. Many authors attribute negative attitudes toward other races to the psychological desire to give preference to that which is well known.⁵

¹ Hagendoorn, L. and G. Kleinpenning (1991). “The Contribution of Domain Specific Stereotypes to Ethnic Distance”, *British Journal of Social Psychology*, No. 30

² Mackie, D.M. and E.R. Smith, *op. cit.*

³ Driedger L., Clifton R.A. (1984) Ethnic stereotypes: Images of ethnocentrism, reciprocity or dissimilarity? *Canadian Review of Sociology&Anthropology*, 21

⁴ Devine P.G. (1989) Stereotypes and prejudice: Their automatic and controlled components. *Journal of Personality&Social Psychology*, 56

⁵ Ray, J.J. “Do We Stereotype Stereotyping? Stereotyping and Racism”. <http://members.optusnet.com.au/~jonjayray/stereo.html> (3.02.2004)

Elements of personality and ethnic tolerance

The study of personality and ethnic tolerance largely began with Adorno's 1950 study "The Authoritarian Personality".¹ Adorno looked for individual personality traits which might indicate a fascist personality. This approach was later criticised, but other studies have partly confirmed the hypotheses that were contained therein about the link between frustration and aggression. Later studies showed that authoritarianism is related to such personality traits as conformity, respect for tradition, obedience before authority, aggressiveness, as well as a distinct dislike of uncertainty and a lack of clarity (Duckitt, 1992; Sidanius, 1993).²

In the literature, dogmatic thinking is also considered as one of the factors which affects human tolerance, because dogmatic people tend to deny differing views and to lack an ability to think in pluralistic terms.³

Many studies have demonstrated links between biases and an individual's self-esteem. A lack of self-respect promotes negative attitudes toward minorities. This means that biases can satisfy the specific needs of individuals in some cases.

Critical discourse analysis as an instrument for studying ethnic relations and racism

Critical discourse analysis was used in this study for the analysis of focus group results. Critical discourse analysis (CDA) is a method for studying analytical discourse, and its primary supporters include Teun van Dijk, Ruth Wodak and Norman Fairclough, among others. The approach first emerged in the 1980s, and since that time it has become one of the most important approaches to discourse analysis.

Aspects of a society's existence which are often studied via the method of critical discourse analysis include ethnic biases, immigration issues and racism. This approach is based on the thesis that ethnic biases and racism are constantly reproduced through a repeat of specific social actions or practices, particularly as the result of dominating discourse. The basic goal for critical discourse analysis is to reveal the way in which discourses reproduce existing systems of dominance and social inequality.⁴

One of the most important authors in the area of CDA is van Dijk, and together with Wodak he has specialised in the study of racism. In his analysis, he reviews racism as a complex system of social inequality, one which is made up of the following components:

1) Ideology-based social representation of groups (including the way in which one group represents another);

¹ Adorno T.W., Frenkel-Brunswik E., Levinson D.J., Sanford R.N. (1950) *The authoritarian personality*. New York: Harper

² Duckitt J. (1992) *The social psychology of racism*. London: Praeger

Sidanius J. (1993) *The psychology of group conflict and dynamics of oppression: A social dominance perspective*. In S. Iyengar and W.J.McGuire (Eds.) *Explorations in political psychology*. Durham, INC: Duke University Press

³ Gibson, J.L. and R.M. Duch (1992). "Anti-Semitic Attitudes in the Mass Public: Estimates and Explanations Based on a Survey of the Moscow Oblast", *Public Opinion Quarterly*, Vol. 56, pp. 1-28.

⁴ "Ideologies, Racism, Discourse: Debates on Immigration and Ethnic Issues", in ter Wal, J. and M. Verkyuyten (eds.). *Comparative Perspectives on Racism*. Ashgate: Aldershot, Etc. (2000), pp. 91-116.

- 2) Mental models among group members about “ethnic events” - a definition of the situation that is based on biases;
- 3) Discriminatory discourse and other social practices on an everyday basis;
- 4) Institutional and organisational structures and activities;
- 5) Relations of power between the dominant “white people” and the ethnic minority groups.

In describing the first of these components - an ideology-based social representation of a group - Van Dijk has pointed to the following categories in describing social representation:

- (a) Advertising one’s belonging to a group (“We, the white people”, “We, the Danes”, “We, the Latvians”);
- (b) Activities - negative statements about minorities, discrimination, differentiation, rejection of others, etc.;
- (c) Goals - “They have to be kept apart from us”;
- (d) Values - ensuring the priorities and “purity” of one’s own group;
- (e) Positions - superiority and dominance over others;
- (f) Resources - “our territory”, nation and advantages in obtaining social services and assistance.

Van Dijk has pointed to the way in which the pragmatic, semantic and stylistic strategies of interaction can emphasise or select positive information about “us” and negative information about “them”, or else avoid negative information about “us” and positive information about “them”.¹

Van Dijk has particularly analysed various levels of the structure of discourse, beginning with intonation, syntax and use of metaphor and ending with argumentation, assumptions which speakers use and the selection of topics.

Analysing discourse strategies which are typical of a certain ideology, van Dijk first of all points to the tendency of people to establish a positive self-image or self-presentation and a negative presentation of other groups. These elements of discourse point to conflict among the groups that are surveyed, revealing the way in which we speak about ourselves and others.

Within discourse, the representation of themes is also of key importance - the selection and emphasis of the most important information in discourse. Van Dijk uses the word “proposition” to describe these themes.

Because discourse is based on the mental models of individuals with respect to specific events, conversation often includes only one part of the information that is contained within those models. Information which goes missing is usually information which the recipients of information know, because it is either included in the specific discourse or is based on the broader socio-cultural context. All judgments that are included in the mental model but do not appear in the discourse are called the “included” discourse meaning by van Dijk.

In his analysis, van Dijk also points to typical phrases - “denials” that are used in racist discourse and in discourse which has to do with xenophobia or ideologically

¹ “Ideology and Discourse: A Multidisciplinary Introduction”, English version of an Internet course for the Universitat Oberta de Catalunya (UOC), July 2000. see <http://www.discourse-in-society.org/teun.html>.

based attitudes. The most frequently used type of “denial” is “apparent denial”. An example: “I have no objection to X, but ...”. Only the first half of such statements contains a denial of negative attitudes, while the second half tends to contain very negative statements about others. Van Dijk explains this as a situation in which the speaker wishes to establish a positive self-presentation so that the audience does not get the idea that he or she is racist or highly biased.

There are other types of “denial” which have also been described:

- “Apparent concession”: “They may be very smart, but ...”;
- “Apparent empathy”: “Perhaps they had problems, but ...”;
- “Apparent apology”: “Please forgive me, but ...”;
- “Apparent effort”: “We’re doing everything we can, but ...”
- “Transfer”: “I have no problems with them, but my clients ...”
- “Reversal, blaming the victim”: “They’re discriminating against us, not the other way around!”

According to van Dijk, all of these “denials” include a positive self-presentation and a negative presentation of the other.¹

¹ Van Dijk, T.A., Ting-Toomey, S., Smitherman, G. and D. Troutman (1997). “Discourse, Ethnicity, Culture and Racism”, in van Dijk, T.A. (ed.). *Discourse as Social Interaction. Discourse Studies: A Multidisciplinary Introduction*, Vol. 2. London: Sage, pp. 144-180.

MAJOR CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The major conclusions from this study are based on analysis and correlation of theoretical ideas that have emerged during the process - through focus groups, from in-depth interviews and from representative surveys.

Tolerance and sense of being threatened

The results of the research tell us that the sense of being threatened is one of the primary sources for ethnic tensions and intolerance. Latvians in particular tend to feel a sense of being threatened, because they still do not feel that they are a majority in their titular nation. On the basis of a concept that has been drafted by Estonian sociologists, as well as by drawing certain comparisons between the societal development and ethnic constitution of Latvia and Estonia, we can say that Latvians feel that they are a threatened majority.¹

Latvia's Russians and Russian speakers, by comparison, cannot be seen as a typical minority. First of all, they constitute a significant segment of the country's society (for 37% of Latvia's residents, Russian is the mother tongue²). Second, the Russian language is self-sufficient in most areas of life in Latvia, while the Latvian language is not necessarily needed. Third, the Russian speakers in Latvia have become accustomed to the privileges which the Russian language enjoyed while the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics still existed.

The sense of being threatened is exacerbated among ethnic Latvians by a sense of psychological security, by low self-esteem and by a lack of self-confidence. These, too, are factors which are a part of the Soviet heritage, according to focus group results. When we analyse the attitudes and social identity specifics of ethnic Latvians, we see that their attitudes, when compared to those of Russian speaking residents of Latvia, are often more similar to positions that are taken by minorities. For instance, Latvians have a more definitive identification with their own ethnic group than Russians do. Latvians are more closed off, they have fewer contacts with representatives of other nationalities, and they feel more threatened. The Russian speaking segment of the Latvian population, in turn, possesses certain characteristics that are typical of a majority - openness toward others and contacts with representatives of other nationalities.³

It has to be noted, however, that since the restoration of Latvia's independence, Latvia has had language policies which have limited the privileges and importance in public life of the once dominant Russian language. This means that in accordance with

¹ Kalmus, V. (2003). "Is Interethnic Integration Possible in Estonia? Ethno-Political Discourse of Two Ethnic Groups", *Discourse & Society*, Vol. 14(6), pp. 667-697. London: Sage Publications

² This information comes from a comparative study of the language use, language knowledge and language environments of the residents of Latvia between 1996-2004. Baltic Social Sciences Institute, data from 2003.

³ Hewstone, M. (2002). "Intergroup Bias (Social Prejudice). *Annual Review of Psychology*

Blumer's concept,¹ Russian speakers now feel threatened in relation to their "natural" rights.

The fact that the two largest groups in Latvia's society are competing in the area of language hierarchy means that this is one of the basic conflicts between Latvian speaking and Russian speaking residents in Latvia, because both sides feel that they are threatened. A significant majority of Latvians support the idea that the Russian language should be limited in Latvia (77% oppose the institution of Russian as a second state of language, and 76% support a transfer on 1 September 2004 to a system where a majority of classes in non-Latvian high schools are taught in Latvian), while the Russian speaking part of society has quite the opposite beliefs (84% support the institution of Russian as a second state language, and 68% do not support the aforementioned education reforms).

Given that education is a key resource, this conflict of views can be seen as a significant element in the possibility that there might be greater ethnic intolerance on the part of Latvians and non-Latvians alike.

Competition among groups in society and the sense of being threatened - these factors have very much to do with the attitudes of Latvians and non-Latvians, not least in the desire of the two groups to isolate themselves from one another. Data from the quantitative survey tell us that Latvians are less open than non-Latvians. In accordance with the index of isolation and openness, 48% of Latvians and 17% of non-Latvians must be seen as being not particularly open.

Most of the differences between Latvians and non-Latvians in relation to the openness index are created by different attitudes vis-à-vis statements of this sort: *"I would not want too many people from other countries to live in Latvia"*, *"People of different nationalities, with different traditions and habits, cannot really be true residents of Latvia, even if they have lived here for many years"*, and *"It would be better if people of each nationality were to live in their own country"*. The cautious attitude of Latvians toward immigrants and the idea that people of each nationality should live in their own country - this can largely be attributed to the sense of being threatened and to the consequences of Soviet-era migration policies insofar as the ethnic composition of Latvia and the attitudes of Latvians are concerned.

Tolerance measurements tell us that both among Latvians and among non-Latvians, we find a high level of ethnic tolerance when we consider it on the basis of general considerations. For example, almost all Latvians and non-Latvians agree with this statement: *"We must respect the national culture, religion and traditions of all of Latvia's residents, even when these are very much different from our own"* - 93% of Latvians and 97% of non-Latvians.

Once we look at concrete situations or actions in the area of ethnic issues, however, we find differences in the views of Latvians and non-Latvians. Among Latvians, there are comparatively fewer people who agree that the state should support the preservation of various cultures and traditions in Latvia - 67% of Latvians, as opposed to 94% of non-Latvians. There are also fewer Latvians who like the fact that there are lots of people in the country with different cultures (49% of Latvians and 78% of non-

¹ Blumer H. (1958) Race prejudice as a sense of group position. *Pacific Sociological Review*, 1

Latvians). There are, however, more Latvians who think that people of different nationalities should live separately from one another (29% of Latvians, as opposed to 10% of non-Latvians).

These differences can be explained though the fact that ethnic self-limitation is fairly common among Latvians. It is also true that non-Latvians are more open to contacts with people from other ethnic groups.

Once the matter turns to the inflow of people from other countries into Latvia - whether rich or poor people - Latvians and non-Latvians stand shoulder-to-shoulder against the "others" - people from less developed countries, as well as foreigners who want to buy land in Latvia.

In this case we can say that all of Latvia's residents are concerned about the possibility that benefits for another group might cause losses to their own group (LeVine & Campbell, 1972).¹

It seems in general that attitudes and behaviour of people in Latvia sometimes have racist properties, which are often hidden - instead of distinctly negative behaviour, it is manifested through an absence of positive and favourable attitudes. Help is not given in an unclear situation, negative information about an ethnic group is accepted unquestioningly. Also of importance here is the so-called "new racism"², defined as the view that the culture and lifestyle of certain nationalities are too different to be merged into one's own society. Latvia has been a multi-ethnic country for centuries, but many people still believe that a culturally homogenous society is the norm and the ideal which should be pursued. This hinders the acceptance of people of other nationalities, particularly if they are visually different and have expressed a desire to live in Latvia.

Tolerance and the frequency of social contacts

When it comes to ethnic biases between Latvians and Russians and among Latvia's traditional ethnic groups on the one hand and visually different people from other nationalities on the other hand, we can confirm Allport's inter-group contact hypothesis (Allport, 1954/1979).³ In those cases when representatives of different nationalities have close emotional links (friendship or marriage, for instance), attitudes toward contacts are much more positive, because contacts with representatives of other ethnic groups serve to reduce biases toward that group (providing, of course, that the contacts are positive).

It has to be added that those Latvians who do have close contacts with representatives of other nationalities (according to the contact index) think that contacts with people from other nationalities are nice. Among non-Latvians we do not find such a correlation, irrespective of how often they do or do not have contacts with representatives of other nationalities. They always think that such contacts are nice. It is precisely Latvians for whom the frequency of contacts with people of other

¹ LeVine R.A., Campbell D.T. (1972) *Ethnocentrism: Theories of conflict, ethnic attitudes, and group behaviour*. New York: Willey.

² See Barker, M. (1981). *The New Racism*. London: Junction Books.

³ Allport, G. (1954/1979). *The Nature of Prejudice*. Cambridge: Addison-Wesley.

nationalities is a key condition in establishing sympathies and positive contacts with representatives of other ethnic groups.

Tolerance and social distance

When we seek to find out the attitudes of Latvians and non-Latvians toward people of various nationalities and to study the social distance between the specific target group and representatives of other nationalities, we turn to the Bogardus scale. The use of this scale requires respondents to state the level of social distance that they would like to preserve between themselves and the stated ethnic group.

This study reveals the facts that the attitudes of ethnic Latvians toward ethnic Russians are more reserved than are the attitudes of Russians and other non-Latvians toward ethnic Latvians. Among Latvians, only 21% say that they would accept a situation in which a close relative is Russian, while 53% of non-Latvians say that they would accept a close relative who is a Latvian. Generally speaking, however, the social distance between Latvians and non-Latvians, as well as the social distance between both groups on the one hand and Estonians and Lithuanians on the other is not major.

Negative thinking among Latvians and non-Latvians is focused on the same ethnic and religious groups. These are groups that are uncommon in Latvia (Africans, Chinese people). Second, these are groups which are described negatively in the mass media (Muslims and terrorism, Kurds and refugees and asylum seekers in Latvia). Third, there have been negative stereotypes about some groups (people from the Caucasus region, for instance) which have existed in Latvia ever since Soviet times.

Ethnic tolerance and tolerance toward that which is different

When it comes to tolerance toward that which is different, there are no major differences between Latvians and non-Latvians - 38% of the former and 37% of the latter say that they would not like to be neighbours with gay or lesbian people. A total of 59% of Latvians and 55% of non-Latvians have a negative attitude toward non-traditional religious organisations such as the Hare Krishna organisation or the Jehovah's Witnesses, among others.

The fact that more than one-third of Latvians and non-Latvians were ready to say that they would not like their neighbours to be gay or people with AIDS indicates that biases and intolerance in Latvia remain fairly common. We can take a look at the same issue in other European countries, too, however,¹ and see that only the people of Scandinavia have a higher level of tolerance toward the aforementioned groups. In other countries, intolerance and bigotry are usually not less common than in Latvia.

The results of the study, in general, allow us to conclude that those who are more open toward other ethnic groups also tend to be more tolerant toward other groups such as homosexuals, representatives of non-traditional religions, etc.

¹ Loek, H. *The European Values Study: A Third Wave*. Tilburg University, 2001.

Tolerance and trust

Research results tell us that the ability to trust others has to do with one's level of openness toward people of other nationalities, as well as with the frequency of one's contacts with the representatives of other ethnic groups. The more open the individual and the more extensive his or her contacts with people of other nationalities, the greater will be the individual's trust in others. A total of 74% of Latvians and 68% of non-Latvians think that in contacts with others, one must be cautious.

Tolerance and dogmatism

In the literature, dogmatic thinking is considered as one of the factors which affects human tolerance, because dogmatic people tend to deny differing views and to lack an ability to think in pluralistic terms.¹ The results of this study indicate that many Latvians and non-Latvians view the world in black-and-white terms, living under the conviction that there can be only one truth. Only one-fourth or so of Latvians and non-Latvians are open and free in their thinking. This means that the thinking of both groups can serve as a risk factor in the dissemination of ethnic stereotypes and of ethnic intolerance.

Tolerance and a positive social identity

The theory of social identity tells us that it is very important for people to preserve a positive social identity and that this, in turn, can influence relations with other groups, both in a positive and in a negative sense. In this study, the "positive social identity index"² was used to reveal the fact that the desire to create and maintain a positive social identity regarding the Latvian state is more common among Latvians than among non-Latvians. Among Latvians, the "positive social identity" is more common among older people, among those who have an elementary or incomplete secondary education, and among people who live in the country's small towns and rural areas.

The dual nature of a positive social identity means that we must stress that in groups where this identity is more distinct, there is a greater risk of increasing intolerance vis-à-vis other ethnic and linguistic groups in specific situations, e.g., when views conflict and when conflicts are at an early stage.

Tolerance and socio-demographic parameters

Among Latvians and non-Latvians, younger people and more highly educated people tend to be more open. Less open and tolerant are people aged 61-74 and those who have completed no more than an elementary education. It has to be noted that among Latvians, differences that are based on age and education are more distinct than is the case among non-Latvians.

¹ Gibson, J.L. and R.M. Duch (1992). "Anti-Semitic Attitudes in the Mass Public: Estimates and Explanations Based on a Survey of the Moscow Oblast", *Public Opinion Quarterly*, Vol. 56, pp. 1-28.

² The "positive social identity index" was based on attitudes among respondents vis-à-vis three statements and one question (see Preparation of Indexes, p. 53).

The results of the research do not confirm a hypothesis that was based on studies from other countries - that men are less tolerant than women.¹ Tolerance or intolerance also do not correlate with the income of the respondent.

An evaluation of ethnic relations

As a rule, people in Latvia, both Latvians and non-Latvians, think that relations among the two groups are friendly: *“It is so nice and peaceful here, we enjoy relatively peaceful and nice co-existence and life”*. Non-Latvians, however, have rated the relationship as being more friendly than Latvians have - 7.8 on a 10-point scale (with 10 being the friendliest relationship) among Latvians and 8.4 among non-Latvians. Here we see an instance in which the results of the quantitative surveys corresponded to the trends that were seen in focus groups among non-Latvians - non-Latvians tended to avoid any negative statements about Latvians as an ethnic group. Insofar as they expressed dissatisfaction and criticism, non-Latvians addressed it to the country's citizenship and education policies, and particularly to politicians and the mass media.

The vision of the future

People in Latvia tend to have a considerably different idea about the country's future model than one would think on the basis of major elements of the public space - the mass media and the activities of politicians. Most Latvians (84%) and non-Latvians (82%) support this statement: *“It must be ensured that Latvia is unified, that there is one community in society with people from different nationalities”*. Only 6% of Latvians and 9% of non-Latvians support the opposite idea: *“It would be OK if there were two different communities in Latvia's society, with Latvians and Russian speakers living more or less separately and with few contacts between themselves”*.

Risk factors related to tolerance

The results of the study indicate that there are factors in Latvia's society which may have a negative effect on tolerance between Latvians and non-Latvians, as well as on instances when Latvians and non-Latvians come together and demonstrate intolerance toward other groups in society.

Many people in Latvia, whether Latvians or non-Latvians, are dissatisfied with their material condition, their life and their work, and this can exacerbate the sense of insecurity and the belief that resources are threatened. This, in turn, can serve as cornerstone for intolerance and biases vis-à-vis other groups in society - people who arrive from other countries, for instance.

Intolerance can be promoted by a situation in which one group feels that is not equal with another because of stereotypes about limited access to specific resources in

¹ Bratt, C. (2002). “Contact and Attitudes Between Ethnic Groups: A Survey-Based Study of Adolescents in Norway”, *Acta Sociologica*, No. 45(2), pp. 107-126.

comparison to some other group. For instance, one group can believe that another group has greater opportunities to gain material benefits, or it can think that its own abilities to develop its culture are limited.

Increased ethnic intolerance between Latvians and non-Latvians can be facilitated by conflicts over various issues. A vivid example of this has to do with differing views with respect to Latvia's history, as well as planned education reforms.

This, in turn, promotes the emergence of negative biases on both sides. Both Latvians and non-Latvians, for instance, insist that the other group is trying to force its traditions onto others.

Many people in Latvia are intolerant of people who look different or who come from a group that has heretofore been little known in Latvia. Intolerance is reduced, however, if people have experience in terms of contacts with an "alien" group.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Tolerance for those who are different

The main reason why Latvians and non-Latvians have negative attitudes vis-à-vis other groups (ethnic groups such as the Roma, the Chinese or Africans, religious groups such as Muslims and representatives of other non-traditional religions, as well as gay and lesbian people) is that there is a lack of positive contacts with such other groups. It is also true that people fear that which is unknown. Because of this, the main way of overcoming xenophobia is to promote the emergence of an open society, promoting contacts among people from various groups so that everyone can learn about different people and disseminate good practice and positive experiences.

Relations between Latvians and non-Latvians

One specific aspect in relations between Latvians and non-Latvians is that even though such relations are rated as being good and friendly, the fact is that Latvians and non-Latvians have different views about historical justice, they have different ideas about the use and knowledge of the Latvian and Russian language in society, and Latvians tend to close themselves off from representatives of other nationalities.

Improvements in these relations would require a series of open discussions at which representatives of both sides can express their views and listen to the views of others - in a friendly atmosphere, it has to be emphasised. A positive investment in this area would be a series of seminars for residents who do not have a higher education and who represent different nationalities.

I RESULTS OF FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

THE METHODOLOGY FOR EXTRACTING AND ANALYSING INFORMATION

Goals

The goal for the focus group discussions was to obtain information which would allow us to analyse the discourse about ethnic relations while simultaneously learning about the views of people on issues concerning ethnic relations in Latvia, ethnic tolerance and xenophobia, ethnic stereotypes and the public mood.

Interpretation and analysis

The opinions and viewpoints that were heard cannot be used to produce generalisations which apply to all of Latvia's residents. That is because the number of focus group participants was small. The advantage of this methodology is that it was possible to record the text of free conversations, the process was not limited to structured questionnaires. This allows us to analyse the way in which various judgments achieve re-contextualization during the process of discussions, how arguments emerge in a conversation where there are different viewpoints, and how specific discourses are reproduced. In other words, focus groups allow us to analyse the re-contextualization and transformation of narratives in everyday situations and instances of interaction (Wodak, et al, 1999).¹

This approach can be called micro-sociological analysis, with a special role being awarded to the statements of each participant in the discussion. The attempt here is to follow along with each respondent's statements, the context of the situation and the logic of argumentation in the debates. We analysed the dynamics of each focus group discussion and the statements of each respondent in turn.

In our analysis of focus group discussions, we used the basic principles of critical discourse analysis, as presented in the work of the following authors:

- Teun Van Dijk's "Ideology and Discourse: A Multidisciplinary Introduction",²
- Emo Gotsbachner's "Xenophobic Normality: The Discriminatory Impact of Habitualized Discourse Dynamics",³
- Veronika Kalmus' "Is Interethnic Integration Possible in Estonia?";⁴

¹ Wodak, R., De Cillia, R., Reisigl, M. and K. Liebhart (1999). *The Discursive Construction of National Identity*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, Ltd.

² Ideology and Discourse: A Multidisciplinary Introduction. The English language version of an Internet course for the Universitat Oberta de Catalunya (UOC), July 2000. See <http://www.discourse-in-society.org/teun.html>.

³ Gotsbachner, E. (2001). "Xenophobic Normality: The Discriminatory Impact of Habitualized Discourse Dynamics", in *Discourse & Society*, Vol. 12(6):729-759. London: Sage Publications.

⁴ Kalmus, V. (2003). "Is Interethnic Integration Possible in Estonia?: The Ethno-political Discourse of Two Ethnic Groups", in *Discourse & Society*, Vol. 14(6):667-697. London: Sage Publications.

How the results might be used

Critical discourse analysis is based on the idea that ethnic biases and racism are constantly reproduced, repeating specific social activities or practices, particularly as a result of dominant discourse. Discourse analysis, for its part, reveals the way in which discourses reproduce existing systems of dominance and social inequality, the arguments that are used to underpin specific discourses, as well as the motives which are the cornerstone of behaviour among those who carry the discourse forward. This information is very valuable when information campaigns and programmes of action are developed and policies are elaborated.

The results of this study are to be used in preparing a list of activities for a national programme to promote tolerance in Latvia.

It should also be noted that the results of the focus group discussions are of great importance in preparing quantitative research projects and improving their quality (appropriateness). These are invaluable materials in designing representative surveys and in interpreting results:

- 1) Direct text and simple phrases are used in formulating questions;
- 2) The information that is extracted is a basis for analytical hypotheses which are then tested in a representative survey.

A description of the discussions

There were six focus group discussions in this research project - four in Rīga and two in the eastern Latvian town of Balvi. Balvi was chosen because it is different from Rīga in several important respects:

- 1) It is a small town and is located at a considerable distance from the Rīga metropolitan area;
- 2) If 42% of Rīga's residents are Latvians, then 77% of the residents of Balvi region are ethnic Latvians.

The focus groups were established with the aim of hearing the views of young people, of older people, of Latvians, of Russians and of Russian speaking residents of Latvia:

| Location | Language spoken | Age group |
|-----------------|------------------------|------------------|
| Rīga | Russian | Young people |
| Rīga | Russian | Older people |
| Balvi | Russian | Mixed group |
| Rīga | Latvian | Young people |
| Rīga | Latvian | Older people |
| Balvi | Latvian | Mixed group |

CONCLUSIONS

Allport's hypothesis of contact among groups

During the focus group discussions, researchers noted a trend that was then tested in a representative survey - that when there are close emotional links between people of differing nationalities (friendship, marriage), attitudes toward contacts are considerably more positive (the Allport hypothesis on contact among groups, Allport, 1954/1979). Those focus group participants who are Latvians with a spouse who is a Russian spoke sincerely and positively about Russian people, and vice versa.

When confronting the attitudes of Latvian speaking and Russian speaking residents of Latvia and of Latvians, Russians and people of other ethnic groups, researchers noted another trend - that the emergence of attitudes has everything to do with the closeness of relationships. Links between Latvians and Russians are comparatively tight (in families, at work, on the street), and there are far fewer mutual biases than is the case with ethnic groups with which there is no contact experience (Africans, Turks, Arabs) or with which contacts are rare and short-term (the Roma). Respondents who have had close relationships with persons of African, Turkish or Arabic extraction, by comparison, tended to have more positive views vis-à-vis the relevant group. A quantitative examination of Allport's hypothesis can be found in the report of results from the survey of a representative cohort of Latvia's residents.

Ethnic distance

During the analysis of focus group discussions, ethnic distance was reviewed from the position of critical discourse analysis, focusing on the situations and contexts in which the separation between "us" and "they" was presented, or in which categories of ethnic belonging were used. Typically, respondents described various social groups (a class at university, colleagues at work) by using the separation between "Latvians" and "Russians": *"70% of my colleagues are Russians, and 30% are Latvians."* Participants in the discussions mentioned people of other Eastern Slavic origin (Belarusians, Ukrainians) in specific instances, but very seldom in generalisations.

When discussing ethnic groups that are not common in Latvia - Arabs, Japanese, Africans and others, the division between "Latvians" and "Russians" is no longer important. The word "we" is then used to discuss Latvia's permanent residents, whether they be Latvians, Russians, Ukrainians or Belarusians (but this does not apply to the Roma or the Jews of Latvia).

An assessment of ethnic relations

Ethnic relations between the two dominant groups in Latvia - the Latvians and the Russians - are viewed contradictory by focus group participants, and researchers have noted certain differences in the views that are expressed by Latvians and those that are expressed by Russians.

The dominant discourse of the Russians and the Russian speaking population of Latvia includes the following theses or “propositions”:⁵

1) Ethnic relations in Latvia have become better, there are no problems in ethnic relations. There used to be fights between Latvians and Russians, but that is no longer true. This indicates that ordinary people, Latvian or Russian, are good friends.

2) Problems exist only for those who do not speak the Latvian language: *“Perhaps there is a problem for those who do not speak the language at all, who cannot understand and find out what is being said to them.”*

3) Politicians are to blame for the ethnic tensions that do exist. Politicians who came to power after 1991 split up Latvia’s residents and “fooled the people”;

4) In the past, there were not two different communities - Russian speakers and Latvians; this situation has emerged because of things that politicians have done. Latvians and Russians used to stand together, they celebrated holidays together and were friendly.

It is significant that even though the first and the fourth of the aforementioned propositions obviously contradict one another, they exist alongside one another in the dominant discourse, and both are used as arguments in supporting the idea that “politicians are to blame for everything”.

Several aspects in the dominant discourse of Russians with respect to ethnic relations (keeping silent, using the passive voice in speaking, avoiding any negative statements about Latvians) suggest that participants in the discussions try to avoid any conflicts with Latvians and any talk of conflicts with Latvians as an ethnic group.

The dominant discourse of the Latvian group, by contrast, includes different theses - “propositions”:

1) Ethnic relations are seen as good: *“It is so peaceful and nice here, there is relatively peaceful and nice co-existence and life”;*

2) Conflicts on ethnic grounds are typical among young people, but Russian young people are comparatively more aggressive;

3) The “living spaces” of Latvians and Russians are separate - Russians and Latvians are divided up by where they live, where they work and where they spend their free time;

4) Public integration is not successful, because Latvians are too subordinate, they always adapt and speak Russian when there are Russians present, while Russians tend to be haughty and possessed of “chauvinism”, because of which they do not study the Latvian language;

5) Latvians consider the need to speak Russian to be an example of discrimination;

6) Politicians implement integration policies in an unskilful or malicious way, artificially creating a conflict between Latvians and Russians;

7) When there is disharmony, it is usually fomented and instigated by provocateurs from Russia and by nationalists who are seeking revenge.

One thing that is found in the Latvian and the Russian discourse about ethnic relations is the view that ethnic relations among Latvians are good or normal, while ethnic tensions are to be blamed on politicians.

⁵ The term “proposition” here is used in the sense of the critical discourse analysis approach.

The cause of ethnic conflicts

Participants in the focus group discussions were not asked about who is to blame for tensions in ethnic relations, but they brought the matter up themselves. All in all, the participants spent more time in talking about the causes for ethnic tensions than the manifestations of those tensions.

Politicians and the press, insofar as it represents the views of Latvian and Russian politicians, were assigned most of the blame. Here are some statements from the Russian groups:

- *We would be a united nation if there were no politicians to create the gap.*
- *We are split up by politicians who produce ethnic conflicts.*
- *We could live in unity if politics did not separate us. There is a great deal of influence from above, not in everyday contacts with ordinary people. These are political games which the politicians are playing. They are creating the problems.*
- *The only obstacle against a unified society is an artificial political split.*
- *I would have to say that the people, whether Russians, Ukrainians, Jews or Latvians, have no differences of opinion. This mess has been created by politicians and our short-sighted government.*
- *When the barricades were up [the term is used to describe barricades which were erected around key buildings in Latvia in January 1991 to protect them against an attack by Soviet special forces], we all supported one another. Then the government messed everything up, literally everything - they split us up in the blink of an eye. All of this originated in the early 1990s, these mistakes.*

These are statements from the Latvian groups:

- *I think that it is the Latvians who thoughtlessly create the hatred - the segment of the intelligentsia who determine policy.*
- *It's not the intelligentsia, it is the VIPs (Very Important Persons).*
- *VIPs can be called the elite, but I would call them a clique. They're in power, they determine the laws. Whether on purpose or because they're stupid, they have made this process of minority integration or assimilation so harsh that now there are counter-blows from the opposition.*
- *I sometimes listen to our politicians, they are so irresponsible.*
- *It begins up at the top, each politician wants to distinguish himself, but on an everyday basis, people live as friends. I don't like it when politicians call children to participate in demonstrations to wage their personal battles. Neither one side nor the other has explained the education law, the kind of law that it should be.*
- *If a conflict is not instigated from above, then our mentality is fairly calm. If nations respect one another, then there can be no conflict. This is a process which often comes from up above, from the politicians.*

According to the discourse of the Russian group, a boundary between the Latvian community and the Russian community appeared in 1991, when the status of citizenship was instituted in Latvia.

In the Latvian group, the following causes for ethnic tensions were mentioned:

- 1) "Greater Russian chauvinism" which is manifested through a haughty attitude toward Latvians and a refusal to learn the Latvian language;
- 2) A minority complex among Latvians in combination with a desire for "revenge" - an obsequious agreement to speak Russian on the one hand, a lack of skill in existing on equal terms and a desire for revenge on the other.

Ethnic conflicts between Latvians and Russians

Participants in the discussion, particularly ethnic Russians, did not wish to speak about any conflicts that are based on ethnicity. This was clear from the things that they did say: "*The only incident that I can think of ...*", "*I have never had any conflicts with Latvians, except for ...*".

In all of the instances which respondents mentioned, the ethnic conflicts were psycho-linguistic in nature. Someone had said something that was offensive, there was an exchange of harsh words. People mentioned instances when a Latvian said that "Russians are all occupants, get out of here!", or when a Russian said that Latvians are fascists.

It has to be said that a trend was noticed in the focus group discussions which is mentioned in the ethno-sociological literature (Pettigrew, 1998, Brewer & Miller, 1984). People differentiated between those Latvians or Russians who are "ours" and those who are not. Attitudes toward specific members in a group did not always influence attitudes toward the whole group. For instance, people tried to avoid any discussion of conflicts among friends or family members, and when negative attitudes and elements of conflict were brought up, it was almost always on the basis of strangers, whether Latvians or Russians:

It is hard for me to remember any conflict with Latvians. I know people who have friends who are Latvians, and there have been no conflicts there. If you talk about strangers, then sometimes people say that that's a Latvian over there. Then I say, "But you have a close friend who is a Latvian!" Usually the answer is, "But that's not this kind of Latvian." Still, I have never seen any open conflict.

Ethnic biases between Latvians and Russians

In comparing the things which Latvians and Russians said about one another, as compared to things that they had to say about Africans, Arabs or Turks, it has to be concluded that there are considerably fewer ethnic biases between Latvians and Russians. Still, there are certain ethnic concepts that are somewhat negative, and that is evidenced by the fact that among Latvians and Russians alike, the mention or emphasis of someone's nationality relates to offence. In both groups, there are specifically negative associations, "stories", etc., which are familiar to representatives of both groups. These are transmitted and received through just one word - "Russian" or "Latvian". One bias which Latvians transmit and Russians receive when the word "Russian" is used in a specific situation is that "Russians are occupants, so they are undesirable".

Among all six of the discussions, the most vivid statements about bias were heard among young people of Latvian origin in Rīga. Participants in the focus group

said, in specific contexts, that Russian speaking residents of Latvia are “stateless”, “a mass”, “migrants”, “with the blood of small ethnic groups of the steppes”, “tramps” and “low class individuals who wander from one country to another”. In discussing Russians, some participants used a mocking or negative tone when saying such words as “those Russians” and “*krievenes*” [an impolite version of the word “*krievietes*”, which means “female Russians”]. Russians were described as more aggressive, more temperamental and haughty, because they do not wish to speak the Latvian language.

When Russians were asked to describe Latvians, participants said that Latvians are comparatively more closed off, more nonchalant, calmer, more thoughtful and more conservative, more linked to their own traditions and culture, “offended by Russians”. It has to be said, however, that in those groups where the discussion took place in Russian, participants avoided any negative statements about Latvians. That may be because the moderator was a Latvian, which may have created a psychological barrier against any negative statement about Latvians.

Biases against other ethnic groups and religions

When participants talked about other ethnic groups such as Africans, Arabs and others, they often evidenced unjustified biases and intolerance, a fear of the other. At the same time, however, there were also clear desires to be “politically correct” and tolerant. This was seen in statements during which negative views were expressed: “*I’m probably not tactical here, but ...*”, “*I was ashamed of myself, I guess I’m a racist*”, “*There are good people and bad people in every nation*”, “*Each culture has its own geniuses and its own scoundrels - more in one nation, fewer in another*”, “*Although there are good people among them, too ...*”. The approach of critical discourse analysis suggests that the respondents were thus trying to set up a positive self-presentation so that listeners would not get the idea that the speaker is a racist or highly biased (Van Dijk, 2000).

The ethnic and religious groups vis-à-vis which participants most often expressed negative views were Africans, Chechens, Azerbaijanis, the Roma, Arabs, Turks and Muslims. The dominant xenophobic discourse was typified by a statement that was heard from one of the participants in the Latvian group of young people in Rīga: “*I’m no racist, but I hate Negroes.*” This is an absolutely textbook example of what theory calls “apparent denial” (Van Dijk, et al, 1997:170).⁶ According to this theory, the statement indicated an attitude that is xenophobic and somewhat racist. It has to be added that this mood was found in nearly all of the groups, except only for the Latvian group of middle aged and older people in Rīga.

In the Russian group of young people in Rīga, distinctly negative attitudes were expressed toward Islamic people. Several respondents said that Islam should be banned: “*I favour religious discrimination specifically against Islam. This religion might even be banned in Latvia*”, “*That is not permissible, it has to be regulated by law*”, “*This religion should be hauled into court!*” Less radical respondents said that

⁶ Van Dijk, T.A., Ting-Toomey, S., Smitherman, G. and D. Troutman (1997). “Discourse, Ethnicity, Culture and Racism”, in van Dijk, T.A. (ed.). *Discourse as Social Interaction. Discourse Studies: A Multidisciplinary Introduction*, Vol. 2. London: Sage, pp. 144-180.

people can believe what they want, but non-traditional religious groups in Latvia should be banned from appearing on television or agitating on the streets. Essentially this is a call for limitations on freedom of speech and religion.

It has to be noted, however, that in each group discussion there was at least one respondent who tried to uphold the “multiculturalism discourse”, emphasising all of the interesting things that can be learned from people of other nationalities, or talking about positive and pleasant experiences that the respondent had had in contacts with people of other nationalities or religions.

Marriages with a visibly different person of another nationality

Participants were asked what they would do if their children were to marry someone from a very different nationality, and most of the responses were either conciliatory or negative. The conciliatory approach was typified by this statement: *“If that were to happen to me, I would not be very happy, but I would accept the fact that this is the business of the children, it is their family experience, they have to decide themselves. I would not try to interfere.”*

The negative position was typified by someone in the Russian group of middle aged and older Russians: *“As long as he is happy ... but absolutely not with a Negro”* People explained their views by saying that they wish to preserve typical external and cultural specifics of ethnic groups (i.e., talking about the social representation of a group, as defined in Van Dijk, 2000).

Views about the migration of foreigners into Latvia

Most views about the arrival of foreigners in Latvia were negative, based on people’s fear of the unknown and the alien, of competition and a loss of status. Here we find confirmation of the theoretical concept that if there is competition over resources, contacts among groups usually facilitate hostility (Esses, 1998). Immigrants in Latvia are usually seen as potential competitors, and that is true both with respect to wealthy Europeans (they have money and experience) and to people from less wealthy countries (they’ll be ready to work for a lower salary).

People in Latvia feel threatened in the physical sense in terms of space (*“He comes alone, but then he brings in 25 other people”*, *“Muslims have no problems, they have five, seven or eight children”*). There are also social and cultural concerns - a lack of jobs, differing traditions.

Generally speaking, participants said that it would be acceptable if a few foreigners were to come to Latvia to invest their money in economic growth, but it would not be appropriate if there were mass migration or malicious use of Latvia’s relatively inexpensive labour force.

The Russian speaking residents of Balvi had different views on the matter. They didn’t have much to say about immigration as such, with one participant saying that *“Everyone is leaving Balvi”*. If anyone did arrive in the town, said participants, that would be a good thing - *“It would mean that the person likes something here”*.

Summary

Researchers looked at the views, experiences and biases of people in the focus groups with respect to Latvians and Russians, comparing these with views, experiences and biases which exist against people from other ethnic groups who look different. The conclusion has to be that intolerance and the ethnic distance between Latvians and Russians are comparatively negligible. This conclusion was drawn on the basis of these parameters:

- 1) Views about mixed marriages involving one or another ethnic group;
- 2) Experienced contacts and evaluations of same;
- 3) The use of ethnic stereotypes in the discussions.

This trend can be explained in historical and socio-cultural terms. In the distant past and over the last 60 years, Latvians and Russians have had very close links, in most cases - neutral or positive links (mixed marriages, relationships among colleagues at work, etc.). There have been relatively few violent conflicts that are based on ethnicity - Latvian versus Russian. Discrimination against Latvians during the Soviet period is often linked to the structures of power, not to ethnicity as such.

Analysis of the focus group discussions indicates that in the context of dominant discourse which prevails today, relations between Latvians and Russians are, generally speaking, assessed as being good, but there are several differences in the discourse of Latvians and Russians which must be noted:

1) In the Latvian discourse, the main cause for ethnic tension is the issue of the Latvian language - the fact that a certain part of Russians and representatives of other ethnic groups often do not speak the Latvian language and do not want to learn it. According to Latvian respondents, this is also manifested in protests against education reforms. Latvians also speak of clumsy attempts to pursue integration policies.

2) In the Russian or Russian speaking discourse, the main cause for ethnic tension is said to be the desire of politicians to make use of ethnic issues for their own purposes, with some participants speaking of citizenship policies from the early 1990s which they say were discriminatory and split up society.

Attitudes which Latvian and Russian focus group participants expressed vis-à-vis ethnic groups with visual differences allow us to conclude that according to the criteria of van Dijk's analysis, the attitudes are largely based on the ideology of racism. This is evidenced by negative statements, by the desire to maintain the priorities and "purity" of one's own group, as well as by worries about the distribution of resources.

It has to be said, however, that the main reasons for these attitudes may well be a lack of positive contacts - a fear of the alien, which can create a sense of threat.

It must be added, moreover, that the fear of the other and the absence of positive experience cause not just attitudes toward other ethnic groups in Latvia, but also attitudes toward differently abled people in the country. There were two cases in which people were talking about attitudes toward various nationalities and expressed intolerance and hostility toward people with special needs. One person said that an immigrant can be allowed to enter the country only if "*he is not schizophrenic*". Another said that "*on the street, I experience unpleasant feelings when I encounter someone with Down's Syndrome*".

It has to be concluded, therefore, that among Latvians and Russians, there is intolerance vis-à-vis those who are not known, those who cause fright. This means that the basic mechanism for overcoming xenophobia must be the emergence of an open society in Latvia, one which promotes contacts among people from various groups, letting people learn about that which is different and disseminating best practice and positive experience in this area.

II THE RESULTS OF IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS

DESCRIPTION OF INTERVIEWS

The goal of the in-depth interviews was to learn about the experience of foreigners of various nationalities and of representatives of ethnic minorities who live in Latvia when it comes to contacts with people of other nationalities here. Researchers were particularly interested in the existence of xenophobic or racist phenomena in Latvia's society.

In order to study a variety of xenophobic phenomena, researchers chose people from ethnic groups who are visually different from most residents of Latvia. Among them were people of different races who have arrived in Latvia comparatively recently (this group included "foreigners" who have lived in Latvia for 15 years and longer, however), as well as people from various nationalities from the former Soviet Union. These were people who were born in Latvia or settled here several decades ago, and the group also included the Roma.

Respondents were found with the help of national cultural associations in Latvia and through the "snowball" method (with one respondent recommending the next one). In selecting respondents, researchers considered the respondent's ethnicity and the amount of time that he or she had spent in Latvia.

The basic questions for the interviews were based on the goals of the research, as well as on ideas that are found in the literature and in other research studies. Interview plans were set up in line with the specifics of each respondent's activities and experiences. During the interviews, the planned questions were usually posed in an order that was based on the answers which respondents gave. Other questions were also posed. All but two of the interviews were recorded on tape (two respondents did not wish to have their voices recorded).

A total of 10 partly structured interviews, each lasting between 50 and 150 minutes, were recorded. Most of the interviews took place in English, although some were held in Latvian and Russian. All of the in-depth interviews were conducted in Rīga in the spring of 2004.

A SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISATION OF RESPONDENTS

| Ethnic group | Age | Employment | Time spent in Latvia | Latvian language skills | Russian language skills | Interview language |
|---------------------|------------|-------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Sri Lankan | 19 | Student | 7 months | Can communicate with others | Understands but does not speak | English |
| Sri Lankan | 24 | Student | 5 years | Can communicate with others | Does not speak the language | English |
| Chinese | 27 | Student | 5 years | Can communicate with others | Does not speak the language | English |
| African (Algeria) | 35 | Bus driver | 6 years | Good skills | Good skills | Latvian |
| African (Togo) | 34 | Businessman | 14 years | Understands, does not speak well | Very good | Russian |
| Lebanese | 26 | Students | 6 years | Can communicate with others | Does not speak the language | English |
| Lebanese | 31 | Doctor | 11 years | Very good skills | Good skills | English |
| Roma | 59 | Pensioner | Born in Latvia | Very good | Very good | Latvian |
| Azerbaijani | 55 | Businessman | 25 years | Understands, has problems speaking | Very good | Russian |
| Tatar | 58 | Pensioner | 30 years | Understands a bit | Very good | Russian |

SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS OF THE INTERVIEWS

FOREIGNERS

Contacts with Latvia's residents

Strangers (on the street, in stores, on public transport)

When it comes to attitudes among Latvia's residents vis-à-vis foreigners who are visually different, it has to be said that one's appearance is most important in contacts with strangers - on the street, on public transport, in stores, etc. This means that it is understandable that racist expressions and attacks are usually aimed exclusively against foreigners who are strangers, most often through accidental encounters on the street.

The way in which people look at others is one of the first levels of contact. People tend to gaze at visually different foreigners longer than at other people in Latvia. The gazes are very different - careless, favourable, searching or scornful and aggressive.

- *You're a foreigner, no matter from where. You're a foreigner, they're going to look at you. They don't know whether you've been living here for 11 or 20 years. I know lots of people. Rīga is small, you meet people all the time in the city centre, but you're still a foreigner. You go into a store, they stare at you, because you're a foreigner, you're not the same as me.*
- *Sometimes they're a bit aggressive. They stare at us, they feel uncomfortable because of the colour of our skin.*
- *I was once sitting around with a Sri Lankan, and next to us there was a woman who did not like black people, who said that black people disgust her. She was so proud of the fact that she was not black. I think that she was drunk. Of course, my friend was angry.*

Foreigners who are the object of other people's gazes interpret those gazes very differently. They have varying views about attitudes, and they react to those who look at them in different ways. Usually they ignore the stares, but sometimes they are offended. Several interviewees stressed that the behaviour and attitudes of the foreigners themselves are of great importance in forming contacts.

- *Black people do not feel good anywhere except in countries that are populated by black people. Maybe those are just their emotions? Maybe people haven't seen black people all that often. They think - Oh, people are staring at me. They feel bad. Maybe that's their own fault. Maybe they're looking at me because I'm beautiful. Why not? People need to think differently, not just negatively. If someone looks at me, then there are two options - they have good thoughts or bad thoughts. Why not think about good things? Why do we have to make everything bad? (..) Why should I always be sad and shy and think that if someone looks at me, that person obviously hates me? You feel bad, and it's not the other person's fault. Maybe the other person likes black people. You can't know,*

because you haven't spoken to that other person. Maybe. Who knows? At any rate, I don't feel bad.

- *If they look at me, I don't care. Go ahead, look at me all you like. OK, if you look at me and I look at you, then let's flirt. You want to see me, I'll look into your eyes, let's flirt. I don't care, I'm just looking. If you start to look at me, then I start to look at you. That works. Sometimes it's hard to do that all the time. I can't just stare at a guy. I look two or three times, but then I ignore the other person.*
- *If you smile, they smile, too.*

Foreigners who have a different visual appearance often find that on the street or on public transport, they are the focus of particular attention. One respondent reported that on a trolley-bus, an artist drew a picture of a foreign student and then asked her to look at his gallery. Sometimes, however, the attentions are negative:

- *There's this store, I could just kill the guards there. Each time we go to the store, they stand right next to us. Get away from me, look at me from a distance, don't annoy me! (..) There are stores where we have problems, yes. I think that it's damnable racism.*

Scornful words such as "melnais" (a Latvian word for "black") and "nēģeris" (the equivalent of "Negro") are expressed very often. Most people in Latvia don't have much contact experience with people of other nationalities or races, and that is indicated that anyone with a darker skin colour and dark hair is called a "melnais". That is true of Africans, but also of Sri Lankans, Arabs and Chinese people. It has to be noted that foreigners who do not come from Africa usually emphasise that they are not "black". Those people in Latvia who have had more extensive contacts with others can better differentiate people who look different - people from the Caucasus area and Arabs, for instance.

Foreigners react differently to remarks that are made in their direction, and the reaction is often based on skin colour. One African reported that he usually does not become offended if he's called a "Negro", because he's become accustomed to it. A respondent from an Arabic country whose skin colour is quite light, by contrast, tried quite hard to convince someone else that he is not "black":

- *There were two Latvians or Russians walking by, I didn't differentiate between them at that time. They said, Look - two Negroes. We're not Negroes. I called the guy over and said, Tell me why I'm a Negro. Have you ever been in Italy? He said that he had been, yes. What's the difference between me and an Italian? Have you been to France or Spain? Those are Europeans, and I'm a Negro?!*

Contacts with foreigners are often made more difficult because of a lack of foreign language skills. Foreigners usually have poor Latvian and Russian language skills, while many residents of Latvia have inadequate skills in English.

Sometimes foreign students have very friendly relationships with specific salesladies, cashiers, taxi drivers, etc., because they are noticed and seem attractive because of their differing appearance and language.

- *The cashiers are wonderful, how they love me! (..) They always say, Hello girls. I say - How are you? Gradually. No problems. They speak to me very normally.*
- *This taxi driver is so nice that we love him. I think that almost all of the foreign students know him, he is such a nice man. If he is free, he always comes to get us. (..) Sometimes, when we're carrying big bottles of water, he helps us. He's so nice!*
- *It was in my second year here, I still remember this man's face, because it was such a nice face. He was selling flowers. When I went into the store, he gave me some flowers. I said, No, but he insisted. And I took the flowers. Then I made friends with the man, he was very old. Each time when I passed, he gave me big flowers. He still does that. He's so nice! And I can't pay him for the flowers, because he'd feel uncomfortable. So I go to the store and buy him some chocolate. He's so shy. He blushes and doesn't want to take the chocolate.*
- *Nearby here there's a woman, we smile at one another, we hug and kiss. Her husband always says hi, too. When I go out, I meet lots of people. Even cashiers, when I meet them on the street, they stop to talk to me. I feel as if I'm in my own country, and it's wonderful that there are people whom you can greet on the street.*

It may be that the openness of foreigners toward such relations with people who are essentially strangers may indicate in some cases that there is a lack of deeper and more permanent relations with local residents.

Male foreigners often complain about conflicts on public transport, where they are requested to give up their seats for others. Because of their different appearance, they attract particular attention, and their behaviour is often evaluated more critically than is the case with other men:

- *I was on the trolley bus, in the second row. I know that if someone elderly gets on the bus, you have to stand up and give that person your seat, but I was just sitting there and talking with my friend when an old guy got on the bus, came up to us and whacked me with his cane. Can you imagine? He'd never do that to a Latvian or a Russian, perhaps he'd just tell the other person to let him sit down or something. But he hit me on the leg with his cane. How stupid! I said in Latvian, OK, I'm getting up, I didn't see you. That tells me that they think differently of me because of my black hair, for instance.*
- *Once I was on the trolley bus, I was just standing there, and next to me there was a woman and an older man. All of the seats were taken, but one*

stop later, there was one empty seat. I looked to see whether one of them would like to sit down. They didn't, and so I sat down. That was normal, they didn't want to. Then an older woman behind me, she started speaking Latvian, and I couldn't understand precisely what she was saying, but she was basically asking me why I was sitting down and the woman was standing up. Then I stood up again and indicated that the woman should sit down. She said, No, thank you. I said, Can I sit back down? Well, what about that woman? She said that she didn't want to sit down. What was I supposed to do, force her into the seat? And then the old woman said, Oh, you don't speak Latvian or Russian. I spoke to her in Latvian, I said, I'm sorry that I don't understand, I studied Latvian at the university. I can speak a little bit, but not so well. Oh, you understand, but you don't want to speak! No, I understand a bit. And then I had to get off the bus.

Threats and violence

Physical violence is one of the most dangerous manifestations of racism, and, sadly, it can be encountered in Latvia, too. Respondents in the interviews did speak of a sense of being threatened. Most said that in general terms, they feel safe here, but the topic of threats and security was brought up quite often in the discussions, and in various contexts. Respondents particularly emphasised that when one is in an unknown country, one must always be particularly careful.

- *In the first year, I rented a flat, but now I live in the dormitories, because that is safer.*
- *I think that Latvian and Russian women can slap us and chase us away, but we are lost. We are in a strange country. We usually don't say anything, but if we're in a group, we can attack. But if I am alone, I have to think about myself. It's better to be careful, I'm quiet.*

Foreigners use various safety strategies to protect themselves and to avoid conflicts. They try to stay in the background in public places, they try not to be out on the streets after dark, they avoid places where there are drunken adolescents. Quite often, foreigners with a different visual appearance live in a fairly closed circle of family members and friends. Some respondents said that in order to avoid conflicts, they try to avoid conversations with strangers about their place of origin or their reason for being in Latvia. Sometimes foreigners lie and say that they are just students, denying that they are in fact permanent residents of Latvia, thus hoping to foment more favourable attitudes. People with a lighter skin colour - those from Arabic countries, for instance - sometimes claim to be from Italy, because Latvian women have a very positive and romantic idea about Italian men.

An important factor in “securitability”¹ is one’s ability to speak Latvian and Russian, because that makes it easier to communicate, to evaluate situations and to explain one’s own position: *There was once a fight in a club, and basically the girls spoke in our place, they defended us, because we didn’t speak the language yet. Even now I cannot speak the language freely, but I can get along, I can communicate.*

Nearly everyone of the interviewed foreigners had encountered actual physical violence against themselves, most often at night, on the street or in nightclubs which are visited by foreign students. It has to be said that foreigners usually feel safe in nightclubs and discotheques, because there are always guards to intervene in conflicts and to protect the foreigners.

Conflicts most often involve drunken young people (Russian adolescents were mentioned most often in the interviews), and several respondents said that they try to avoid places where young people who have been drinking tend to be found. Foreigners do not always think that such conflicts are racist in nature, arguing that sometimes young people simply want to fight with someone, and then another person’s different appearance attracts their attention: *It’s not much of a problem. They’re kids, they want to fight.* Other respondents talked about other reasons for conflicts - jealousy among locals with respect to girls, a sense that locals are threatened:

- *Sometimes you go to the disco, you start talking to a girl, but maybe she’s with her boyfriend. I don’t think that this is an issue of racism. It’s not nationality, it’s attitude. There are young people who are not educated. What can you expect from them when they encounter foreigners? They think that I’m here to take away their land, to speak to their girlfriends, perhaps they think that I have more money to have a drink, to present myself in their country. I don’t think that at the age of 18 they’re thinking about nationality. Latvians fight among themselves at this age, too. If you go to discos regularly, you see that they [foreigners] are no angels, they make mistakes too.*
- *I think that there’s a bit of jealousy going on here, both among Russian and Latvian guys. They don’t like it if Latvian and Russian girls talk to black people. I’m not sure that I’m right, but I think that may be the case. They’ll always come up to you and try to start a fight. A guy once walked up to me and started to stroke my hair. I didn’t like that, and I said, Get away from me, what’s the matter with you? He said, Let’s go outside and fight. I said, You’re touching my hair, and you want me to fight you? Why?*

¹ According to the UNDP’s Report on Human Development 2002/2003 for Latvia, “securitability” represents the ability of people to avoid insecure situations in which they lose their sense of security, as well as to regain security and sense of security if something does happen. The concept of “securitability” indirectly reflects the fact that one’s sense of security depends both on actual security and on human ideas about security. *Latvija. Pārskats par tautas attīstību 2002/2003: Cilvēkdrošība.* Rīga: UNDP Latvija, 2003, p. 20.

Conflicts of this kind often arise over truly petty issues, and then two sides find themselves opposing one another. The foreigner's different appearance is often brought up from the very start: "What are you doing here, black guy?" The indication is that the foreigner does not belong:

- *I was once at the Roxy nightclub, I was standing there talking to my friend, and there were some Russian guys nearby. I couldn't understand what they were saying. Then one of them spoke to me in English and said, Go home! I said, Why? They said nothing more. I think that they were drunk. I said, I don't understand why I should go. They said something, but I didn't understand what they said. I think they were simply drunk and wanted to get into it with someone. They chose me. I couldn't fight them, though, they were big guys, maybe professional fighters. I spoke to them only in English, maybe I didn't understand them, they didn't understand me. I don't want any problems in Latvia, this is not my country, after all. I don't want problems in my own country either.*

Sometimes foreigners provoke conflicts through their own behaviour:

- *There are foreigners who don't know how to behave themselves, it's not always the case that the locals are to blame. There are foreigners who cause problems themselves. I think that is possible, I've seen it with my own eyes. They get into trouble and have only themselves to blame.*

Still, foreigners usually try to avoid physical conflicts and to resolve conflicts with words: *I have a method with which I can avoid such problems, avoid a fight. I speak to them politely, I say that I am a student, that I'm not doing anything, that I like this country. That kind of thing.* Often a peaceful conversation is sufficient to avoid physical violence.

Greater attention should be devoted to attacks of various kinds that take place during the light of day and without the involvement of alcohol, because in these cases, the racist motivation of attackers is often clearly visible:

- *I was once on the trolley bus. There was a girl who lives somewhere nearby, she was with another girl, too. (...) I was with one guy and one girl. From the moment that the other girl saw us, she started using words such as 'bitch', 'fuck', and so forth. She kept on with those words, and we were wondering what it was with her. We were in the last row, she sat opposite us. (...) There was also another girl, and both of them kept saying 'bitch' and 'fuck'. (...) At the last stop, she got up and did this [demonstrating] - she spit. I was in shock. She didn't hit me, she hit the other girl. It got on her body. She was so very angry. My girlfriend did the same thing right in return. What was she thinking - because we have black skin, we should bow down before such people?*
- *On November 18 [Latvian independence day] last year, I was standing there and talking to a friend who comes from Nigeria. A woman came up to us, I thought that she just wanted to say something. (...) I wasn't listening carefully to what she said, and then I heard the woman calling my friend a 'black monkey'. I asked her, What did you say? She looked at me and said, Yellow monkey. I told her that she should go home, and she*

said something vulgar to me - 'fuck off' or something like that. I just wanted her to go away. I said, You said 'fuck off', why are you here with us? Then her male friend got into the conversation - Did you just say 'fuck off' to my friend?! And then he started to hit me. He wanted to go on, but he saw that I wasn't moving. I just sat there, listened to him, looked at him. No one helped, no one stopped him. Maybe it was just that no one knew me. Then two guys came up and apologised to me - just two guys.

Asked about how the situation of foreigners in Latvia can be improved, several respondents said that it is important to punish those who engage in racist or xenophobic behaviour, particularly in the case of violence.

Colleagues, fellow students, acquaintances

This situation is different from accidental contacts on the street, in stores, in discos or elsewhere. At this level, people are acquainted with one another, and so the attitudes of foreigners and local residents toward one another, as well as the behaviour of the two groups are of greater importance. At this level, however, contacts tend not to be particularly tight, and so visual differences can also be of a certain amount of importance. Very dark skin can scare people off. Generally speaking, those foreigners who are open to communication and who have a lighter skin colour do better in relationships with Latvia's residents.

Friends

Most respondents said that it is not hard to get to know Latvia's residents and to make friends with them, reporting lots of friends among ethnic Latvians and Russians alike. We have to keep in mind here that most of the respondents are students, and young people are usually more open to new contacts and acquaintanceships than are older people. People of middle age find that they must spend more time on their work and their family, and so they live relatively closed-off lives. Certainly they do not make new acquaintanceships as often as young people do. People of all ages have very wide ranges of contacts, however, if they are publicly active. A longer period of time is often needed to establish a closer relationship.

- *I have lots of friends here. Initially they just said, Hi, how's it going? That was all. We partied together, but now they're very good friends, I have Latvian and Russian friends, they are very nice people. They'll help you if you need it. If you have a fight, if there are problems, if you are happy or sad, they'll always be there with you. I love having such friends, and I'd be that kind of friend, too. If you're going to the disco, it used to be that they'd just say, Hi, and then they'd go off with their own friends, but now they're always with us. We're always together, and that's great.*
- *I don't have any problems with young people, they're very nice, very friendly. Sometimes we go to parties together. They always protect me. I have Russian and Latvian friends.*

Foreigners in Latvia tend to have quite a few friends among local residents, and that indicates that both sides can accept that which is different. Friendship is a completely voluntary form of contact, and it is seen as a situation in which both partners are at a distinctly equal level. This largely promotes the generalisation of positive attitudes, thus reducing the level of bias, particularly among representatives of the majority.² That is why friendly relationships and factors which influence such relationships should be the focus of just as much attention as any manifestations of xenophobia.

Romance

Young men from other countries very often get married to local girls. It's of key importance here that the parents of the girls accept the relationships. Often it's initially difficult for them to accept someone from a far-off land, with a different appearance, religion and traditions. Often these concerns are based on fear for the daughter, particularly if the man is Muslim. (*They were a bit afraid - the things that they hear about Arabs, about politics. They think that we're from a different planet or something like that.*) Generally speaking, however, it appears that families eventually come to know the foreigners, accepting them as their daughters' boyfriends and husbands.

Attitudes among various social groups in Latvia from the point of view of foreigners

Foreigners report that they usually encounter positive or neutral attitudes, and most respondents stress that most of the people of Latvia are friendly and helpful. On the other hand, it often takes a longer time to form a closer relationship. In comparing the attitudes of various social groups vis-à-vis foreigners with a different visual appearance, respondents most often talked about different attitudes among young people and older people. Nationality and place of residence did not seem to be of any decisive importance here.

Age

In comparing the attitudes of young people and older people vis-à-vis foreigners, interviewees said that young people are more open and tolerant. Here we should remember, however, that most of the respondents are also young people, which means that it is more likely that they will encounter other young people, and it is easier for them to form contacts. First of all, young people tend to be more open to that which is new and unknown, they have more frequent contacts with the people and culture of other countries, both because of the mass media and because of travel. Foreign language skills are of great importance, because a lack of such skills hinders contacts between foreigners and older people.

² Pettigrew, T.F. (1998). "Intergroup Contact Theory", *Annual Review of Psychology*, No. 49, pp. 65-85.

- *Younger people are more open, it's easy to contact. Older people don't want to be open. We feel that on trolley buses and ordinary buses, for instance.*
- *That's the attitude of older people, those who are older than 50 or 60. Younger people talk to you, they smile, they're interested in your country, it's interesting to them. Middle aged people change their attitudes, too, but when it comes to older people - pensioners, for instance, it's not all that easy.*
- *They stare at us, they feel uncomfortable because of our skin colour. That's particularly true among older women.*
- *Once I was in the trolley bus, and I wasn't even sitting up front. Two old women got on and started to talk to one another, Just look, just look - too many blacks in this country. They didn't think that I understood. I said, Why are you talking about me? That's not polite. They were shocked, they blushed. And then one of them started to speak to me in Russian.*
- *I don't think that there are problems with racism among the younger generation, these are people who have black friends. I don't think that they can hate us or anything like that. I don't think that they have problems with racism, I don't think that they criticise others. No, I don't think so. The situation with older people can change, but other people are just super!*
- *I visited my girlfriend's grandmother, I think that she had never seen a black person in her life. How she loved me! She gave me a whole sack of fruit. I didn't want to take it, but my girlfriend said, Please, take it. And she gave me fruit and vegetables. She prepared dinner, we went into the forest to pick mushrooms. It was wonderful. The grandmother was so nice!*

Nationality

Upon arriving in Latvia, many foreigners are surprised to learn that the country is actually populated by two major ethno-linguistic groups with different cultures. For full contacts with the people of Latvia, one has to learn both Latvian and Russian. Foreigners are fairly quick to notice various differences in behaviour and attitudes. Foreigners describe Latvians as being quiet, peaceful, closed-off and polite, while they describe Russians as being friendly, active and open.

Foreigners in Latvia report meeting more or less equal numbers of Latvians and Russian speakers. Those who have lived here for 15 years and more, however, have mostly become a part of the Russian speaking environment, and only in the last few years have they started to develop more extensive contacts among Latvians. The same difference is also seen in language skills - those who have been here for a longer time usually speak very good Russian and poorer Latvian, while those who have arrived in recent years tend to have a better command of Latvian.

Some respondents said that it's easier to make contact with Russians:

- *I think that recently foreigners have been feeling closer to Russians than Latvians, because Russians also feel as if they're foreigners. Russians are also more active than Latvians. We're closer on an everyday basis. When you talk to a Russian, you move, you jump around. Latvians think slowly, they check out everything about you before they take the next step. In business, for instance - we need something tomorrow, but the Latvian will say that he will think it over, he needs guarantees. The Russian will take the decision quickly.*
- *Russians have more money, they travel more. They support the Arabs, in political terms, too. Latvians are afraid of Russia, and so they chose the American position. I don't want to say that they're against us, but your [Latvian] behaviour, your temperament - you're peaceful people. It's hard for someone who is accustomed to doing everything quickly.*

Asked to compare the attitudes of Latvian and Russian speaking residents vis-à-vis foreigners, most respondents said that people from both groups are nice and friendly, adding that there are good and bad people in every ethnic group. Most foreigners reported friends among Latvians and Russians alike. When talking about racist statements and physical threats, however, foreigners more often spoke of Russian speakers, usually young ones.

Place of residence

Most foreigners in Latvia live in Rīga and seldom visit other places in Latvia. That means that those residents of Latvia who are not residents of the capital city very seldom meet people from other countries and, particularly, from other continents. That allows us to understand why foreigners attract much more attention in other parts of the country than in Rīga. Foreigners said that in other places in Latvia they attract a greater number of looks. One respondent who is very different in appearance, however, said that he doesn't feel that people are staring at him outside of Rīga in particular. Most foreigners don't feel that this interest is anything negative, that it disturbs them in any way. They demonstrate understanding and say that the searching looks are based on the fact that rural people have never seen anyone of a different race. Outside of Rīga, moreover, foreigners do not usually encounter racist statements or behaviour, perhaps because they do not spend much time in other locations or because they tend to be there with their friends.

- *I didn't feel bad. I was definitely the first Chinese person they had ever seen, and so they just looked at me and wondered at what I was doing there. (..) There was nothing negative, however, I felt nothing of the sort. Everyone smiled - particularly the girls.*
- *I once was taking a bus to visit my friend's grandmother. (..) There were young people on the bus, they were all staring at me, and I became embarrassed, because they were staring at me as if I was a black ghost. Then I smiled, and they all calmed down.*

Attitudes in various situations

The Citizenship and Migration Board

The one institution which foreigners in Latvia encounter most often is the Latvian Citizenship and Migration Board, where they handle issues concerning visas and residency permits. The attitude of employees is usually proper and non-discriminatory:

- *I don't think that anyone behaves badly vis-à-vis Lebanese people. If there are a few exceptions, then they themselves are to blame. When there's a situation in which a Lebanese person behaves impolitely and then the official responds in kind, tells the person to come back the next day, that's just a normal reaction.*

There was one respondent, however, who insisted that *"they behave differently when it comes to people from Asia, as opposed to people from Europe. They certainly behave differently when there is a different skin colour. That's true everywhere, though, you can't do anything about it. (..) If your passport is from Sri Lanka or Syria, they look down on it. At any rate, Europeans are perceived differently than we are"*.

The biggest objections among respondents had to do with the procedure for issuing visas. It seemed unfair to many of them that the procedure is far more complicated and expensive for non-Europeans, that they require far more in the way of documents. The complications are largely based on the fact that many countries do not have a diplomatic presence in Latvia, so people regularly have to visit the embassies of their countries elsewhere - in Russia or Sweden, for instance. It is also a problem that Latvia does not have a diplomatic presence in many of the countries from which the foreign students come.

Those respondents who have been living and working in Latvia for a longer period of time have had far more extensive contacts with various government institutions. Interviewees reported mostly positive attitudes, saying that civil servants are always ready to explain things and to help in dealing with various problems. There have also been negative experiences, however, with civil servants being evasive and trying to get rid of the client as quickly as possible (one respondent said that this is true, on average, twice per every 10 encounters). Foreigners also said that saying a few sentences in Latvian at the beginning of the conversation helps to ensure a considerably more positive attitude.

The police

As far as the attitudes of police employees vis-à-vis foreigners are concerned, respondents stressed that police officers are very helpful and responsive, no respondent had any negative experience to report. One foreigner who had lost his way in the city and who had just a sheet of paper with the address was politely

escorted to the address in question. Respondents reported quick reactions to their calls for help:

- *The police have helped us a lot. One of my friends had a problem at the dormitory, someone was banging on his door and yelling at him. He called the police, and they were there three minutes later, 10 cops altogether. They were very helpful.*

Several respondents said that they are very pleased to note that there is no particular surveillance of foreigners in Latvia, that they don't have to carry their passport with them all the time. Some respondents compared Latvia to Russia, saying that in Russia, foreigners have to register, and people with a darker skin colour find themselves having to present their passport several times a day.

Universities

Universities care about their foreign students very much, and staff are usually very kind toward foreigners, allowing them to spend more time in consultations with instructors, for instance. There are usually employees who are responsible for the foreign students in particular. One respondent, for instance, had very nice things to say about an instructor at the Rīga Technical University: *“He is responsible for the foreigners, he is very helpful. He occasionally asks us whether we're having problems. He's ready to deal with any problem, even if it takes place at 4:00 o'clock in the morning”*.

Islam

Muslim respondents were asked to talk about the attitude of Latvia's residents vis-à-vis Islam and toward themselves as Muslims. There were many different responses, covering both positive and hostile attitudes. Some people in Latvia are interested in Islam, they want to learn more, while others relate it to aggressiveness and terrorist organisations. In most cases, according to the respondents, people do not change their mind about anyone upon finding out that he or she is Muslim, this does not affect mutual relations. Sometimes, however, respondents feel that local residents do not think much of their religion.

The desire to remain in Latvia

A very precise way of learning about the extent to which foreigners of various nationalities feel good in Latvia is to ask them about their intentions in terms of staying in Latvia. This is a question that was most often posed to students at Latvia's universities, and some of them reported that they would love to stay in the country:

- *I'm going to stay here for six years, and I hope that I'll be here longer. Perhaps I will continue here. (..) I'm studying medicine now, I don't know - maybe I could work here afterward? I like sports. I'd like to continue with my studies and to take part in sports. Maybe I'll do something in Latvian sports - football or hockey. I don't know, but I want to stay here (..) Not necessarily settle here forever, but work here, both here and there. I'd like to be here at least four months out of every year.*

Those who plan to go back to their own countries after their studies are completed also said in most cases that they'd like to live in Latvia or at least visit the country of their study years from time to time:

- *Sometimes I get the sense that this country is very important to me. Six years. Initially I wanted to go home, but when you come to love people, it's very hard.*

Those foreigners who have established families and work here (mostly former students at Latvia's universities) have no plans of leaving.

Public information and interest

Latvia's residents often reject foreigners or treat them with suspicion simply because they don't know anything about the relevant countries, cultures and religions. Attitudes are often based on various stereotypes and concepts which emerge from the mass media. Muslims are seen as aggressive, Africans are considered to be stupid, and people from most Asian and Arabic countries are seen as coming from places that are poorly developed and have a low level of welfare.

- *The first reaction used to be, O, so where is your camel? You eat with a spoon? I thought you people eat with your fingers. That made me crazy - What are you people talking about? I live better than any of you! What's the deal with the spoons? (..) We have everything. Lebanon is on the Mediterranean, there are no camels. We don't have deserts. (..) We don't live in camps, we have beautiful homes, bigger homes. When I came here, I was surprised that everyone had one-room or two-room apartments, everyone had the same furniture. We have three to seven rooms, each room with its own furnishings.*

Although many people in Latvia have very vague knowledge about distant countries and cultures, there is a certain level of interest in these subjects, particularly among young people:

- *They're very much interested. After we have talked with them, many people say, I'd love to visit Sri Lanka. They want to see it, it sounds wonderful. Some go so far as to start collecting information. I told one girl that I was from Sri Lanka, and three or four days later she sent me a presentation about Sri Lanka, she had looked things up on the Internet. Lots of people like our culture, too, the dancing, the music.*

The fact that biases and negative attitudes are usually based on a lack of information and contacts is demonstrated by the successful experience of the Latvian-Lebanese Education and Culture Club. By organising various informational and cultural events, they have increased the level of interest in Latvia about Lebanon. Of particular importance are the improved attitudes of various civil servants, achieved by inviting them to attend various cultural events:

- *Now they have a better attitude toward us, they know us. They used to see us as Sri Lankans, as Pakistanis. The thinking has changed. No longer is the attitude, Well, here are these people again, they don't speak Latvian, they don't have the right documents, I have problems with them. Now the civil servants are happy to see us, they want to help. They know that the visitors are intelligent.*

Positive attitudes are promoted by contacts with Arabic culture that are made when people travel. It's also true that certain elements of the culture have arrived in Latvia and become popular - water pipes, national dress, etc. There are some people who are studying the Arabic language.

Most people gain information about distant countries and their residents exclusively from the mass media, and so the mass media have a decisive role to play in emerging attitudes. Of particular importance here is the negative image of Arabs that has been presented in the media recently. It is necessary to pay more attention to the provision of information to local residents about Arabic traditions and the like.

VISIBLE DOMESTIC MINORITIES

For centuries now, there has been one minority in Latvia whose members are visually different. That is the Roma people, or Gypsies. During Soviet times, lots of people with different facial appearance and skin colour arrived from other parts of the USSR. Three interviews were conducted to learn about the attitudes of Latvia's residents vis-à-vis these people - one with a Roma woman, one with a male Azerbaijani, and the third with a female Tatar.

People who arrived in Latvia during Soviet times have become very well integrated into the Russian speaking environment, because it brings together people of very many different nationalities. Compared to the generation which arrived in Latvia initially, members of later generations have far more mixed marriages, most often with Russian speaking individuals. Closer links with ethnic Latvians are less common, usually involving colleagues at work. Since the restoration of Latvia's independence in 1991, people of various nationalities have been learning more about their ethnic origins, as have the Latvians themselves. People have been learning languages and studying their cultural traditions.

Both Tatars and Azerbaijanis are usually lumped into the category "Caucasians" in Latvia (the phrase in Latvian refers to people from the region of the Caucasus Mountains, not to the racial category of Caucasians as defined in English). These are nationalities which are seen by many people in Latvia through various stereotypes,

although the stereotypes are not often applied to individuals who are encountered.³ It is only sometimes that representatives of these ethnic groups encounter suspicious attitudes on the part of people of other nationalities (Azerbaijanis more often than Tatars), but there is no reason to speak of openly hostile attitudes or of discrimination. The fact that many of these people are Muslims also has not been much of an obstacle in relations with people from other nationalities.

The Roma face a much different situation in Latvia than do people from other ethnic minorities. Negative stereotypes are far more distinct and specific. In this case, they are applied to almost every Roma person who is encountered, and there is often suspicion-filled and hostile behaviour vis-à-vis the Roma. Those who do not conform to the stereotype are not seen as “true Gypsies”, and they do not, therefore, promote a more positive attitude toward the Roma nation as a whole. People of Roma origin often face nasty comments on the street and on public transport, and they are far more likely than others to face discrimination in the job market and violence on the part of the police. The Roma tend to have few contacts with people of other nationalities. Again, contacts with others are mostly reserved to work colleagues.

When comparing the attitude of Latvia’s residents toward those minorities which have been here for decades and toward those which have arrived relatively recently and from more distant lands, the decisive factor seems to be the extent to which there is a visual difference and the extent to which there are negative stereotypes and ideas about cultural differences. Otherwise, people tend to have a more favourable attitude toward the nationalities that have been in Latvia for a longer period of time, because they have more experience with people from these ethnic groups, and it is more likely that locals will feel that the others have “adapted” to the local lifestyle and behavioural norms. The “others”, in that case, no longer seem all that threatening.

CONCLUSIONS

People from visually different nationalities encounter very different attitudes in Latvia, starting with special favour and interest and ending with suspicions and scorn. Because they look different, these people always attract particular attention - intense gazes, various remarks and, occasionally, physical violence. There have been few such incidents, but every single one of the people who were interviewed could tell researchers about a case of violence in which an acquaintance had suffered. These are situations which most often occur late at night, when one encounters intoxicated young people on the street. There are often conflicts at nightclubs and discotheques, and sometimes these involve foreign students. Still, they can usually feel secure at such locations, because there are usually guards on hand to intervene. It has to be emphasized, however, that sometimes people who are visually different are threatened in physical terms during the light of day and in the presence of many others.

³ That is in line with the theory by Forbes, which says that contacts among individuals usually promote the establishment of positive attitudes, while contacts among different groups often lead to conflicts. See Forbes, H.D. (1997). *Ethnic Conflict: Commerce, Culture and the Contact Hypothesis*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Still, most foreigners encounter reticent or kind and friendly attitudes in Latvia. Young people in particular tell us that they have found many new friends here, both among Latvians and among Russians. Foreign men often date and get married to local girls, and it is often the case that while families initially reject the man from a distant land who has a different culture and religion, they eventually come around and accept and support the new couple.

Attitudes among Latvia's residents vis-à-vis foreigners as such are dictated by several factors:

- The contact situation (the place, whether or not the foreigner is known, as well as the status of the participants in the contact - colleagues, a civil servant and a government institution visitor, etc.);
- The visual appearance of the foreigner - the greater the visual difference from Latvia's residents, the greater the possibility of a more negative attitude;
- Negative stereotypes about significant cultural differences (Muslims, for instance, are seen as being aggressive, with very different habits and cultural norms, which is why they are often treated with rejection and suspicions);
- The extent to which Latvia's residents have had contacts with people of other nationalities;
- The behaviour of foreigners in contacts with Latvia's residents, especially in terms of their openness and communicability.

Asked to compare the attitude of various groups in society toward visually different foreigners in Latvia, respondents in the interviews stressed that young people tend to be more open and favourable than older people. Some foreigners reported that it is easier for them to make friends with Russian speaking residents, because they are more open and active, thus closer to the mentality of the foreigners. Conflict situations, however, are also more common with Russian speaking young people. When comparing people in Rīga to people in other parts of Latvia, respondents said that foreigners attract more attention outside of the capital city, but there are no fundamental differences in attitudes.

In government institutions (foreigners most often encounter the Citizenship and Migration Board), foreigners mostly find proper attitudes, and that is particularly true with respect to the police. Universities which are attended by foreign students devote particular attention and care to them.

Most people in Latvia know little about various distant countries, their religion and culture, and that can cause them to behave in a reserved or rejecting way. It has to be stressed, however, that many people are interested in other countries and would like to learn more about them.

A lack of information and negative stereotypes about people from other countries and their culture can create the idea that there are exaggerated differences between various people and their habits. This creates dislike and fear - usually unjustified, because the

behaviour and habits of foreigners who live in Latvia are usually in line with locally accepted norms of behaviour. This means that experience with contacts with people of different nationalities is of paramount importance here. Contacts allow one to get rid of one's fear of the unknown. People find those things that they have in common, and relations are based less on one's origin, but rather on one's individual personality and on the common interests that one has with another. This means that a contact is no longer perceived as a contact between two ethnic groups, but rather as one between two individuals. This is usually a more positive thing than a contact at the group level.

Negative attitudes toward the Roma, who have been living in Latvia for centuries, are common in Latvia, and the Roma often face negative comments on the street, discrimination in the job market and violence in their lives.

It seems in general that attitudes and behaviour of people in Latvia sometimes have racist properties, which are often hidden - instead of distinctly negative behaviour, it is manifested through an absence of positive and favourable attitudes. Help is not given in an unclear situation, negative information about an ethnic group is accepted unquestioningly. Also of importance here is the so-called "new racism",⁴ defined as the view that the culture and lifestyle of certain nationalities are too different to be merged into one's own society. Latvia has been a multi-ethnic country for centuries, but many people still believe that a culturally homogenous society is the norm and the ideal which should be pursued. This hinders the acceptance of people of other nationalities, particularly if they are visually different and have expressed a desire to live in Latvia.

As the availability of information about various cultures and countries expands, however, and as contact experiences with people of various nationalities become more common, the attitude of Latvia's residents is gradually becoming more tolerant and open.

⁴ See Barker, M. (1981). *The New Racism*. London: Junction Books.

III RESULTS OF THE SURVEY

DESCRIPTION OF THE SURVEY

| | |
|-------------------------------|--|
| Title | Ethnic Tolerance and Integration of Latvia's Society |
| Research organisation | Baltic Social Sciences Institute Elizabetes ielā 65-16, Rīga LV-1050, Latvia Telephone +371-721-7553, fax +371-721-7560 |
| Fieldwork organisation | SIA "A.I. Sistēmas" |
| Schedule for fieldwork | March-April 2004 |
| Location of surveys | Latvia |
| Research method | Direct interviews at the respondent's place of residence |
| Target groups | Latvian and non-Latvian (Russian, Ukrainian, Belarusian, Polish, Lithuanian and other) respondents |
| Selection method | Stratified quota selection |
| Cohort | 501 Latvian respondents, 508 non-Latvian respondents |
| Control | 10% |

A SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC PORTRAIT OF THE TARGET GROUPS

| | | NATIONALITY | | | | Total | |
|--------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------|-----|--------|------|--------|------|
| | | Latvian | | Other | | | |
| | | Number | % | Number | % | Number | % |
| ALL RESPONDENTS | | 510 | 50% | 508 | 50% | 1,018 | 100% |
| AGE | 15-30 | 151 | 53% | 136 | 47% | 287 | 100% |
| | 31-45 | 132 | 49% | 138 | 51% | 270 | 100% |
| | 46-60 | 109 | 47% | 124 | 53% | 233 | 100% |
| | 61-74 | 118 | 52% | 110 | 48% | 228 | 100% |
| GENDER | MALE | 219 | 50% | 220 | 50% | 439 | 100% |
| | FEMALE | 291 | 50% | 288 | 50% | 579 | 100% |
| LEVEL OF EDUCATION | ELEMENTARY / INCOMPLETE SECONDARY | 105 | 54% | 90 | 46% | 195 | 100% |
| | SECONDARY / SPECIALISED SECONDARY | 304 | 51% | 290 | 49% | 594 | 100% |
| | HIGHER | 101 | 44% | 128 | 56% | 229 | 100% |
| RESIDENCE | RĪGA | 110 | 34% | 213 | 66% | 323 | 100% |
| | OTHER CITY | 272 | 55% | 219 | 45% | 491 | 100% |
| | VILLAGE, RURAL AREA | 128 | 63% | 76 | 37% | 204 | 100% |
| REGION | RĪGA | 110 | 34% | 213 | 66% | 323 | 100% |
| | VIDZEME | 173 | 67% | 85 | 33% | 258 | 100% |
| | KURZEME | 92 | 65% | 50 | 35% | 142 | 100% |
| | ZEMGALE | 74 | 56% | 59 | 44% | 133 | 100% |
| | LATGALE | 61 | 38% | 101 | 62% | 162 | 100% |
| CITIZENSHIP STATUS | CITIZEN | 510 | 67% | 251 | 33% | 761 | 100% |
| | NON-CITIZEN | - | - | 257 | 100% | 257 | 100% |

PREPARATION OF INDEXES

Five indexes were prepared for the purposes of this study:

- (1) The ethnic self-isolation index
- (2) The positive social identity index
- (3) The dogmatism index
- (4) The contact index
- (5) The social distance index between Latvians and non-Latvians.

All of the indexes were prepared on the basis of the same principles. The answer scales of some questions were first recoded so that the answer scales of the questions included in the index would be in the same direction.

In those cases where respondents did not provide a definite answer, the average value of his answers to other questions in the index was recorded. In establishing the index, the values of each respondent's answers to the various questions were counted up. The sums were then divided up into four intervals of equal length.

The dispersion of each question in the index and its correlation with the sum of the index were checked.

1) The ethnic self-isolation index

The ethnic self-isolation index focuses on the attitude of respondents vis-à-vis people of other nationalities or religions. It involves answers to six questions in which respondents expressed their attitudes in accordance with the Lickert scale (fully agree, mostly agree, mostly disagree, fully disagree). These are the statements to which interviewees were asked to respond:

1. You cannot fully trust anyone of a different nationality.
2. The views and traditions of Muslims may be dangerous to Latvia's residents.
3. It is not really possible to understand people of other nationalities.
4. I would not want too many people from other countries to live in Latvia.
5. People of different nationalities, with different traditions and habits, cannot really be true residents of Latvia, even if they have lived here for many years.
6. It would be better if people of each nationality were to live in their own country.

In selecting questions for the index, researchers took into account the dispersion of each indication, the interactive correlation of the indications, and the correlation of each indication with the summed value of the index.

The Kronbach's alpha coefficient: 0.65 (this figure represents a measurement of the extent to which the included statements are related to one another, with the scale running from 0 to 1 - the higher the number, the greater the relationship).

2) The positive social identity index

The positive social identity index focuses on attitudes among respondents with reference to three statements and one question (all answers are in line with the Lickert scale):

1. Generally speaking, Latvia is better than many other countries.
2. I prefer being a resident of Latvia to being a resident of any other country.
3. Latvia's residents should support their country's position even if they disagree with it.
4. To what extent are you proud of the fact that you are a resident of Latvia?
Are you...very proud, mostly proud, mostly not proud, not proud at all?

The Kronbach's alpha coefficient: 0.7.

3) The dogmatism index

The dogmatism index reveals the extent to which respondents are open to different views. It represents attitudes toward the following statements:

1. There are two groups of people - those who seek truth and those who oppose truth.
2. Any group, which permits various opinions amongst its participants, will not survive very long.
3. People have different views about things, but only one view can be correct.
4. Generally speaking, it is best to choose friends and partners who have the same views and tastes as I do.

The Kronbach's alpha coefficient: 0.7.

4) The ethnic contact index

The ethnic contact index allows us to understand the extent to which respondents have had experience in contacting with people of other nationalities. Here we bring together answers to six questions (the answers to the last two questions were recorded as dichotomous indications in line with the respondent's nationality - are there or are there not people of other nationalities among the respondent's friends and family members):

1. Do you personally know a Muslim?
2. Do you personally know an African?
3. Do you personally know a Roma person?
4. Have you ever spent a longer period of time (at least one month) outside of Latvia?
5. People of which nationalities are members of your family (i.e., among those people with whom you actually live) - Latvians, Russians, others?

6. People of which nationalities are amongst your friends - Latvians, Russians, others?

The Kronbach's alpha coefficient: 0.43.

5) The social distance index between Latvians and non-Latvians

This index speaks to the attitudes that exist between Latvians and Russians and to the level of mutual social distance (in the parentheses we present the formulation on the Russian language questionnaire):

1. Latvians and Russian speakers, generally speaking, each live in their own separate world.

2. I have no problems in contacts with Russian speakers (*Latvians*) - they're the same kinds of people as everyone else.

3. Latvians (*Russians*) could learn a lot from Russians (*Latvians*).

4. Latvians and Russians are two mutually confronting camps.

5. When I am among Russian speakers (*Latvians*) and am alone, I feel insecure.

6. I avoid contacts with Russian speakers (*Latvians*), because they are completely different than people of my own nationality.

7. I like it if there are people of different nationalities around me, if I can hear both the Latvian and the Russian language.

8. I get angry when I think about the fact that Russian speakers are opposing education in Latvian (*Latvians are forcing us to learn in Latvian*).

The Kronbach's alpha coefficient: 0.67.

ANALYSIS OF THE SURVEY DATA

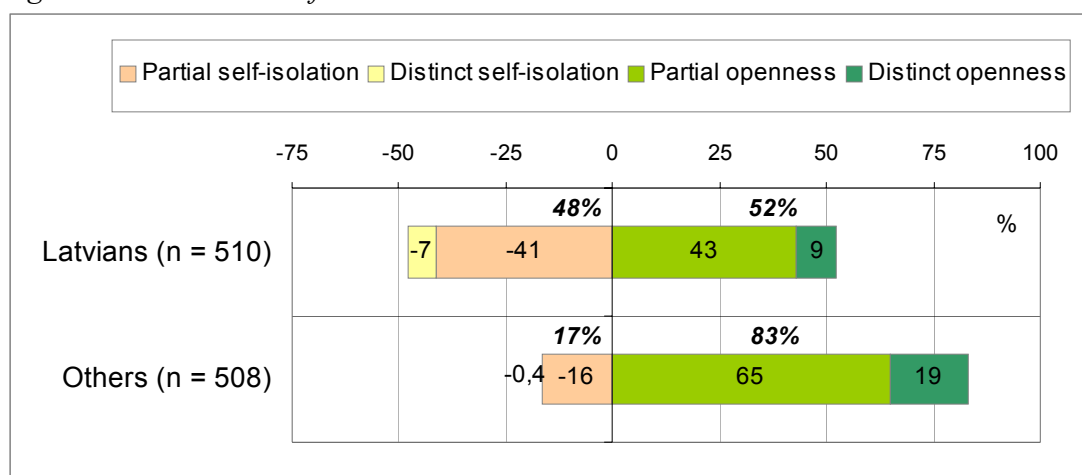
ETHNIC SELF-ISOLATION AND OPENNESS

The goal in studying ethnic self-isolation is to find out which groups in society tend to be more isolated and how this influences attitudes vis-à-vis other ethnic groups.¹

An ethnic self-isolation index² was established by collecting responses to six questions (Figure 1). The results of the survey allow us to conclude that Latvians tend to be cautious in terms of standing aside from other ethnic groups - more so than is the case among non-Latvians.

As can be seen in Figure 1, 48% of surveyed Latvians demonstrated more or less specific signs of ethnic self-isolation. Among non-Latvians, the figure was only 17% (Figure 1).

Figure 1. The ethnic self-isolation index



The greatest differences between the views of Latvians and those of non-Latvians were found in relation to three statements: “I would not want too many people from other countries to live in Latvia”, “People of different nationalities, with different traditions and habits, cannot really be true residents of Latvia, even if they have lived here for many years”, and “It would be better if people of each nationality were to live in their own country” (see Figure 2).

There are several theories, which can help in explaining the more distinct ethnic self-isolation among Latvians, first and foremost, the conflict theory that has been proposed by Esses. The theory states that potentially competitive external groups are viewed very cautiously and perhaps even are rejected if it appears that they might increase competition among groups. In other words, this represents a desire to avoid conflict. Second, the situation can be explained through the frequency of

¹ As was noted previously, statements about ethnic groups include one statement concerning attitudes toward a religious group – Muslims. That was included in the study as a “control group”, with researchers expecting that attitudes toward people of the Islamic faith might be the most negative in comparison to other groups that were considered.

² The ethnic self-isolation index is based on six statements. Depending on the answers given by respondents, four groups of respondents were established at various levels, according to the stated level of isolation (a more detailed explanation of the methodology that is behind the establishment of this index can be found in the Description of the research).

contacts with people of other nationalities - Latvians have had such contacts less frequently than is the case among non-Latvians (see Figure 3). These results confirm the contact hypothesis of Allport - that the frequency of contacts with people of other nationalities is of great importance in establishing more open attitudes vis-à-vis people from those nationalities.

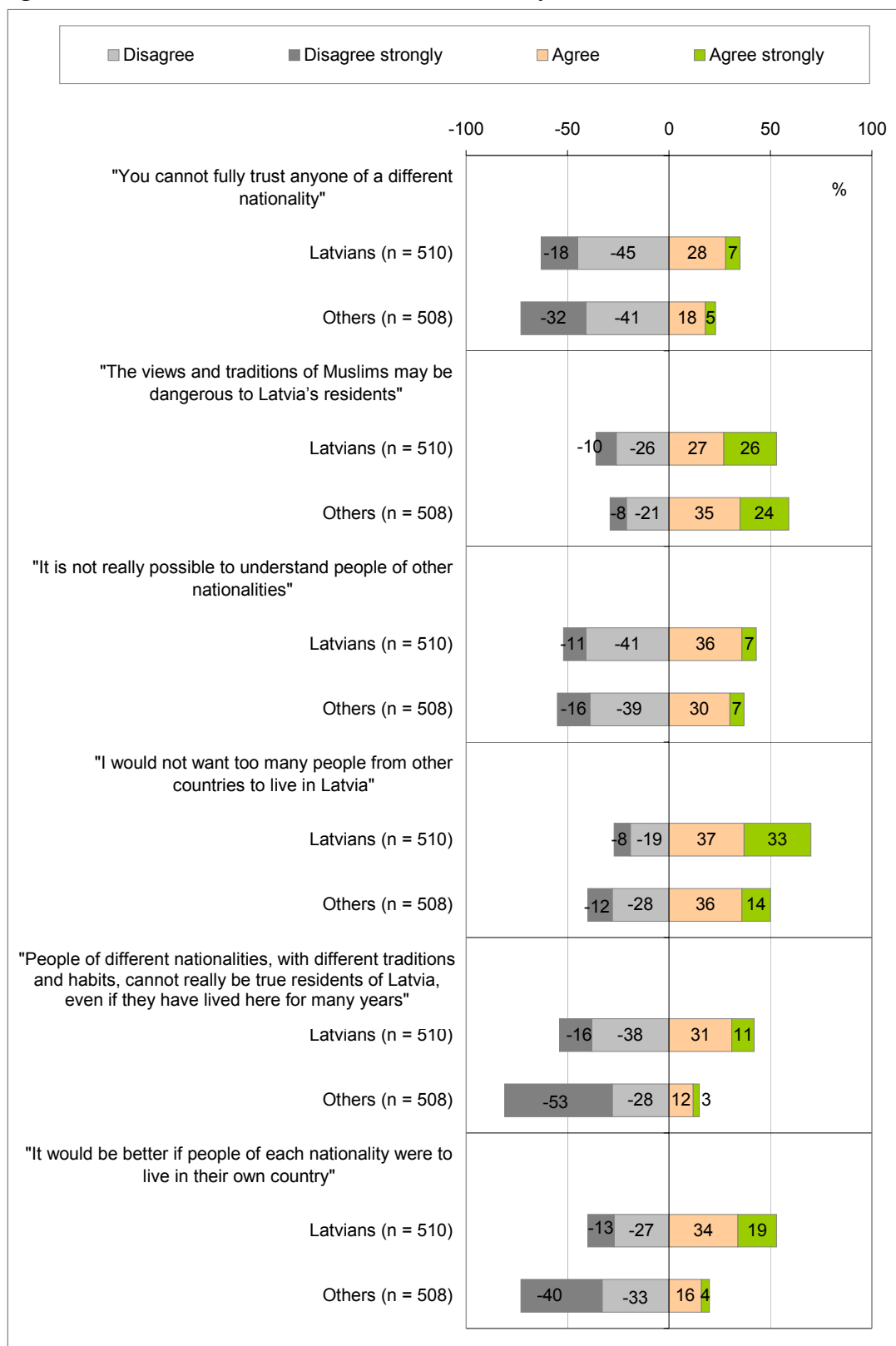
Both Latvians and non-Latvians often have negative attitudes toward Muslims: “*The views and traditions of Muslims may be dangerous to Latvia’s residents*” (52% of Latvians and 59% of non-Latvians agreed with this). Both Latvians and non-Latvians also often hold the view that “*it is not really possible to understand people of other nationalities*”.

Latvians and non-Latvians are also similar in that majorities in both groups deny the view that “*you cannot fully trust anyone of a different nationality*” (see Figure 2).

There are several trends that can be identified when we look at the ethnic self-isolation index of Latvians and non-Latvians on the basis of socio-demographic factors:

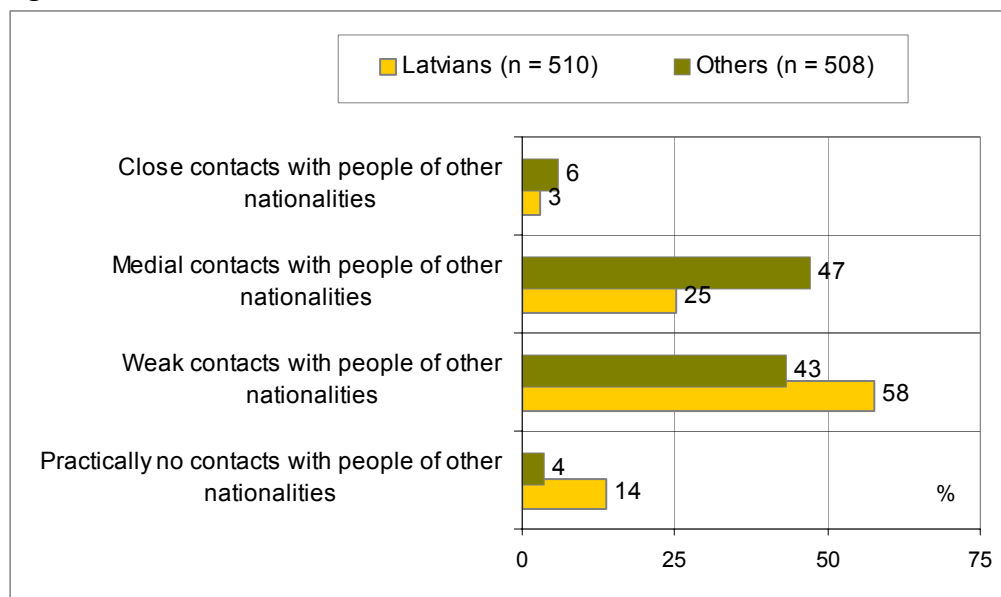
- As far as **Latvians** are concerned:
 - The younger the respondent, the more open is the respondent vis-à-vis people from other ethnic groups, and vice-versa;
 - The more highly educated the respondent, the more open is the respondent vis-à-vis people from other ethnic groups, and vice-versa;
 - Latvians who have closer contacts with people of other nationalities are more open; correspondingly, if the respondent has weak or no contacts with people of other nationalities, the self-isolation is more distinct.
- As far as **non-Latvians** are concerned, similar trends can be observed, but less distinctly than is the case among Latvians:
 - The younger the respondent, the more ethnically open is the respondent and vice-versa. Differences between older and younger people, however, are not as distinct than is the case among Latvians;
 - The higher the level of education, the more distinct is the ethnic openness, and vice-versa. Here, too, the differences are narrower than among the Latvians;
 - Ethnic self-isolation is more frequently typical of non-Latvians who are non-citizens, in comparison to non-Latvians who are citizens;
 - The ethnic self-isolation of non-Latvians depends less on the frequency of contacts with people of other ethnic groups than is the case among Latvians;
 - Non-Latvians in the western Latvian region of Kurzeme, particularly those who live in the region’s small towns, demonstrate more distinct ethnic self-isolation than do people in other parts of the country. Those who are most open to ethnic contacts are non-Latvians in the villages and countryside of the eastern Latvian region of Latgale.

Figure 2. Statements which characterise ethnic self-isolation



It must be stressed here that gender does not have anything to do with ethnic self-isolation. Women and men alike can be open or focused on self-isolation. The same is true with respect to the income of respondents.

Figure 3. The contact index



ETHNIC TOLERANCE

One of the primary goals for the study was to look at biases that dominate in Latvia's society, as well as at the level of tolerance vis-à-vis various ethnic and religious groups.

The researchers particularly looked at ethnic tolerance, focusing attention on the demonstration of tolerance with respect to:

- Different cultures and traditions;
- People of various ethnic groups.

For the purpose of analysing ethnic tolerance, statements were classified on the basis of whether they indicated:

- Tolerance of a general nature;
- Tolerance in relation to the specific situation.

In the literature, specialists have stressed that measurements of tolerance in concrete situations allow for a more specific forecast of a respondent's behaviour than do measurements of views about more generalised situations.¹

Generally speaking, we can conclude that there are no differences in the way that Latvians and non-Latvians evaluate general statements about various cultures, traditions and individuals from different cultures.

There are, however, differences between Latvians and non-Latvians when they are provided with statements that have to do with a more concrete situation or more concrete action. The greatest differences between Latvians and non-Latvians were found in relation to the following three statements: "The state should support the preservation of the culture and traditions of various nationalities in Latvia", "People

¹ Sullivan, J.L. and J.E. Transue (1999). "The Psychological Underpinnings of Democracy: A Selective Review of Research on Political Tolerance, Interpersonal Trust and Social Capital". *Annual Review of Psychology*, No. 50, pp. 625-650.

of various nationalities should live separately”, and *“I like the fact that there are so many people of various nationalities and cultures who live in Latvia”*(see Figure 4).

In describing the differences of opinion, it has to be said that non-Latvians are more likely to accept the presence of people of various nationalities in Latvia, and they are less likely to support the idea that people of various nationalities should live separately. Similarly, they are more likely than Latvians to believe that the state should support the preservation of the culture and traditions of various nationalities in Latvia.

Attitudes toward general statements

Respect for national cultures

Vast majorities of surveyed Latvians (93%) and non-Latvians (97%) either fully or partly agreed with the statement *“we must respect the national culture, religion and traditions of all of Latvia’s residents, even when these are very much different from our own”* (see Figure 4).

Views about people of other nationalities

Substantial majorities of Latvians (85%) and non-Latvians (90%) either fully or partly agreed with the statement *“you can learn much that is new and interesting from people of other nationalities”*. It should be noted that people who live in Latvia’s larger cities and town, both Latvians and Russians, were more likely than others to give the answer *“partly agree”* to this statement (see Figure 4).

The national associations of various nationalities in Latvians

Latvians

A majority of Latvians (76%) agree that *“it is very good that the national associations of many different nationalities are active in Latvia”*. Respondents with a higher level of education signalled approval of this situation more often. The answer *“fully agree”* was given more often by Latvians who have close contacts with people of other nationalities, as well as by people in Latgale (see Figure 4).

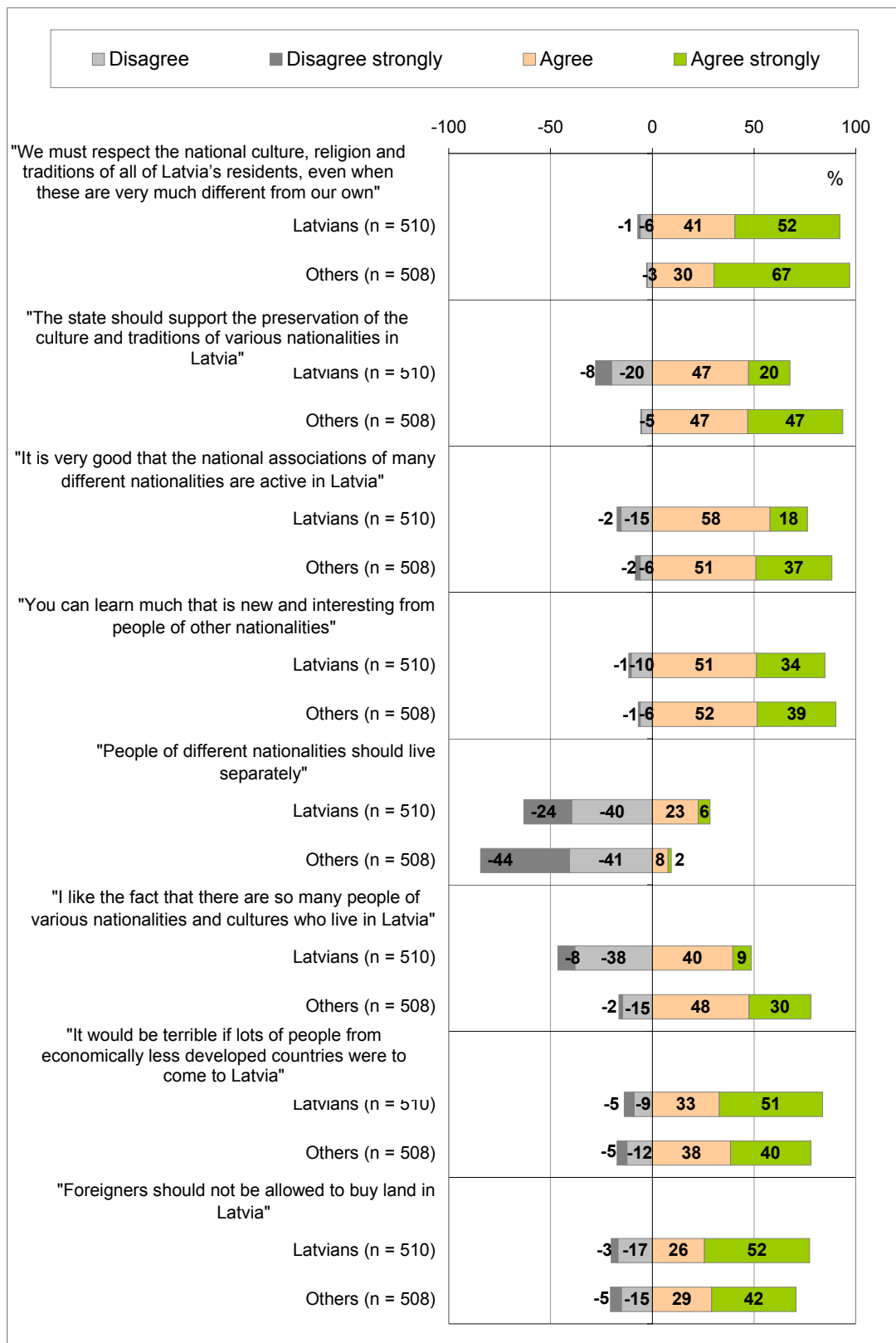
Non-Latvians

Among the surveyed non-Latvians, 88% fully or partly agreed with the statement about the activities of various national associations in Latvia (see Figure 4).

The answer *“fully agree”* was given more often by non-Latvians with a higher education, by people who have had close contacts with people of other nationalities, and particularly by people in the capital city of Rīga and in the southern Latvian region of Zemgale. As far as the age of respondents is concerned, researchers found that the older the respondent, the more frequently he or she agreed with the statement.

Non-Latvians who offered only partial agreement to the statement were found more often in Kurzeme, in larger towns and cities and among younger respondents.

Figure 4. Statements about ethnic tolerance



Attitudes toward statements which relate to concrete situations or actions*People of different nationalities should live separately****Latvians***

A majority of Latvians (64%) disagreed with the statement that “people of different nationalities should live separately”. This was particularly true among respondents in the younger age groups that were surveyed - those between 15 and 45 years old, as well as among people in small towns and the countryside, respondents with a higher education, women, as well as people with close contacts with people of other nationalities.

Still, one-third (29%) of surveyed Latvians agreed with the statement that people of different nationalities should live separately from one another. This view was supported most frequently by Latvian men, by Latvians in the country’s larger towns and cities, and by older people (the 61-74 age group). The same was true among respondents with a lower level of education, as well as among people with weak or no contacts with people of other nationalities.

Non-Latvians

The substantial majority of non-Latvians (84%) disagreed with the idea that people of various nationalities should live separately.

*Acceptance of people of various nationalities in Latvia****Latvians***

A total of 49% of Latvian representatives agreed with the statement “*I like the fact that there are so many people of various nationalities and cultures who live in Latvia*”. 46% of Latvians disagreed.

Agreement with the statement was found more often among Latvians in small towns in Latgale and in the countryside. Ethnic Latvians in the country’s larger towns and cities levelled the greatest objections to the presence of people of other nationalities in Latvia.

Non-Latvians

Far more respondents (78%) were found among non-Latvians to say that they like the presence of people of other nationalities in Latvia (see Figure 4).

Non-Latvians in the small towns and countryside of Kurzeme were less likely than such people in other parts of Latvia to be happy about the fact that Latvia is populated by people of various nationalities and with different cultures. The fewest objections to this situation were found in Latgale and in Latvia’s larger towns and cities. These results allow us to conclude that the views of non-Latvians and Latvians tend to be more similar in those parts of Latvia, which are primarily inhabited by ethnic Latvians.

*State support for various cultures in Latvia****Latvians***

Faced with the statement that “*the state should support the preservation of the culture and traditions of various nationalities in Latvia*”, 67% of ethnic Latvians agreed and 28% did not agree. A positive response was given less often by older people, by residents of small towns and the countryside, and by Latvians with no more than an elementary education.

Non-Latvians

Nearly all non-Latvians (92%) expressed the view that the state should support the preservation of various cultures in Latvia. It is significant here that non-Latvians provided the distinctly positive response (“fully agree”) more often than Latvians did - 20% of Latvians, as opposed to 47% of non-Latvians. This response was given comparatively more often by non-Latvians with a higher education, by those who are older, as well as by those who live in small towns and the countryside in Zemgale (see Figure 4).

POLITICAL TOLERANCE

To analyse political tolerance, researchers used statements which characterise:

- Attitudes toward residents from economically less developed countries;
- Attitudes toward foreign owners of land in Latvia.

Tolerance measurements tell us that both among Latvians and among non-Latvians, we find a high level of ethnic tolerance when we consider it on the basis of general considerations. Once we look at concrete situations or actions in the area of ethnic issues, however, we find differences in the views of Latvians and non-Latvians. These differences can be explained though the fact that ethnic self-isolation is fairly common among Latvians. It is also true that non-Latvians are more open to contacts with people from other ethnic groups.

Once the matter turns to the inflow of people from other countries into Latvia - whether rich or poor people - Latvians and non-Latvians stand shoulder-to-shoulder against the “others” - people from less developed countries, as well as foreigners who want to buy land in Latvia.

In this case we can say that all of Latvia’s residents are concerned about the possibility that benefits for another group might cause losses to their own group (LeVine & Campbell, 1972).¹

Residents from economically less developed countries in Latvia

Latvians

A total of 84% of surveyed Latvians agreed with the statement “*it would be terrible if lots of people from economically less developed countries were to come to Latvia*”. It has to be added that 51% of the respondents - a majority - gave the response “fully agree” to the statement, while 33% said that they “partly agree”. (see Figure 4).

Older people were more likely than others to take a stand against the arrival of people from economically less developed countries. The greatest opposition was found among people in Kurzeme and among rural residents. People in Latgale and people in Latvia’s larger towns and cities supported the arrival of such people in Latvia more frequently than others.

¹ LeVine R.A., Campbell D.T. (1972) *Ethnocentrism: Theories of conflict, ethnic attitudes, and group behaviour*. New York: Willey

Non-Latvians

In this case, non-Latvians, like Latvians, agree in most cases (78%) that it would be bad if lots of people from economically less developed countries were to come to Latvia.

As was the case among Latvians, the negative view was supported most often by older people, as well as by non-Latvians in Kurzeme and in Latvia's larger towns and cities.

Foreigners who own land in Latvia

Latvians

A majority (78%) of surveyed Latvians agreed with and 20% disagreed with the statement that "*foreigners should not be allowed to buy land in Latvia*".

Interestingly, respondents with a higher level of education said more frequently than others that they have no objection to the sale of land to foreigners.

Non-Latvians

Similarly, a majority of non-Latvians (71%) feel that foreigners should not be allowed to buy land in Latvia. It has to be noted that no major difference in opinion was found between non-Latvian citizens and non-citizens.

POSITIVE SOCIAL IDENTITY

According to theories about social identity, it is very important for people to uphold a positive social identity, one that is manifested in part through belonging to various groups. People usually think highly of themselves and of the groups to which they belong, and that, in turn, has a great deal of influence in terms of relations with other groups (Tajfel&Turner, 1979).¹

Self-confirmation and self-expression through one's belonging to one group or another helps to improve the psychological feelings of individuals. Groups embody the unique identity of individuals in such areas as religion, culture, art and language. These things may seem innocent, but the fact is that relations among groups can become so negative that one group's pride and cultural values can threaten other groups (Mackie&Smith, 1998).²

At the same time, however, it must be noted that there are other authors who have argued that if someone has positive thoughts about his or her own group, that does not necessarily mean that the individual has negative opinions about the representatives of other groups (Driedger & Clifton, 1984).³

A "positive social identity index"⁴ was established for this study, and it reveals that among Latvians, there is a distinct desire to uphold a positive social identity

¹ Tajfel H., Turner J.C. (1979) An integrative theory of intergroup conflict. In W.G. Austin, S. Worchel (Eds.) The social psychology of intergroup relations. Monterey, CA: Brooks/Cole.

² Mackie D.M., Smith E.R. (1998) Intergroup relations: Insights from a theoretically integrative approach. *Psychological Review*, 105.

³ Driedger L., Clifton R.A. (1984) Ethnic stereotypes: Images of ethnocentrism, reciprocity or dissimilarity? *Canadian Review of Sociology&Anthropology*, 21.

⁴ The "positive social identity index" was based on attitudes among respondents vis-à-vis three statements and one question (see Preparation of Indexes, p. 53).

regarding the Latvian state. This can be said of 83% of Latvian respondents, but only of one-half of non-Latvians (53%, see Figure 5).

Figure 5. The positive identity index

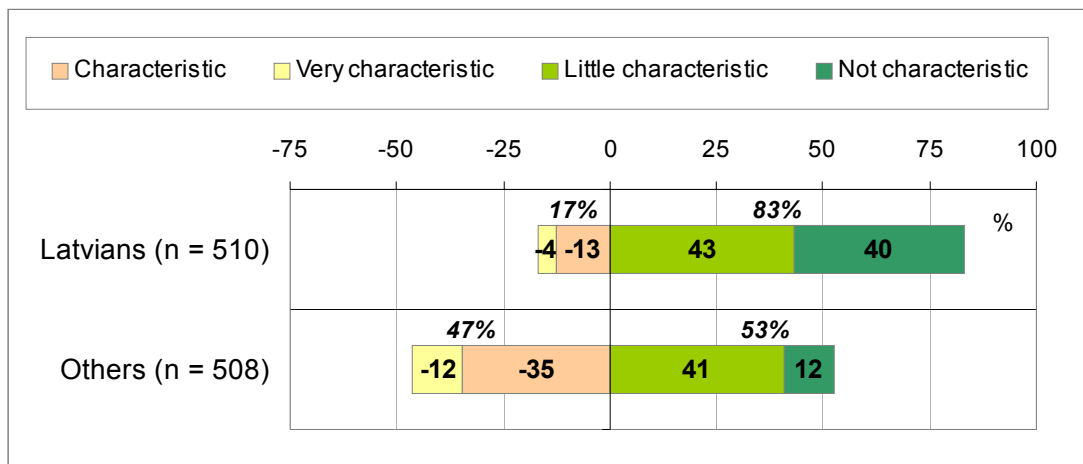


Figure 6-A. Statements reflecting “positive social identity”

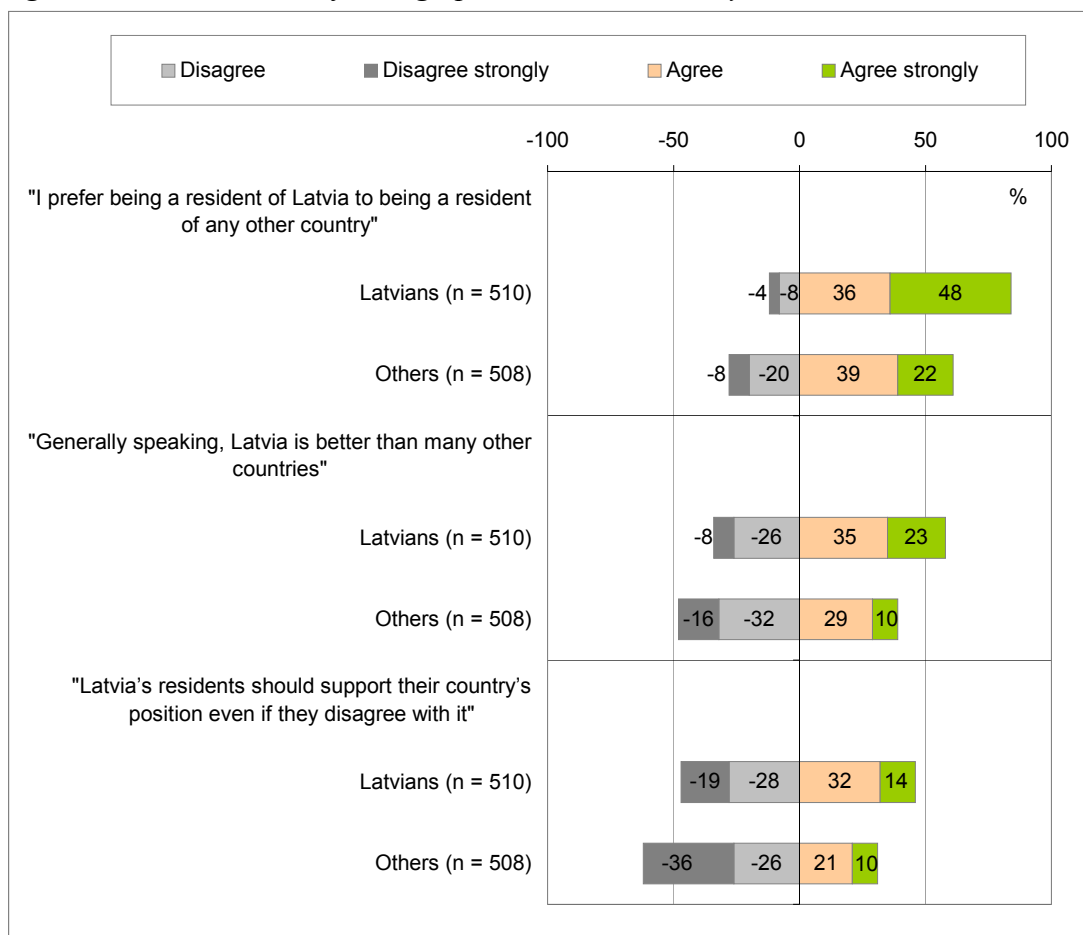
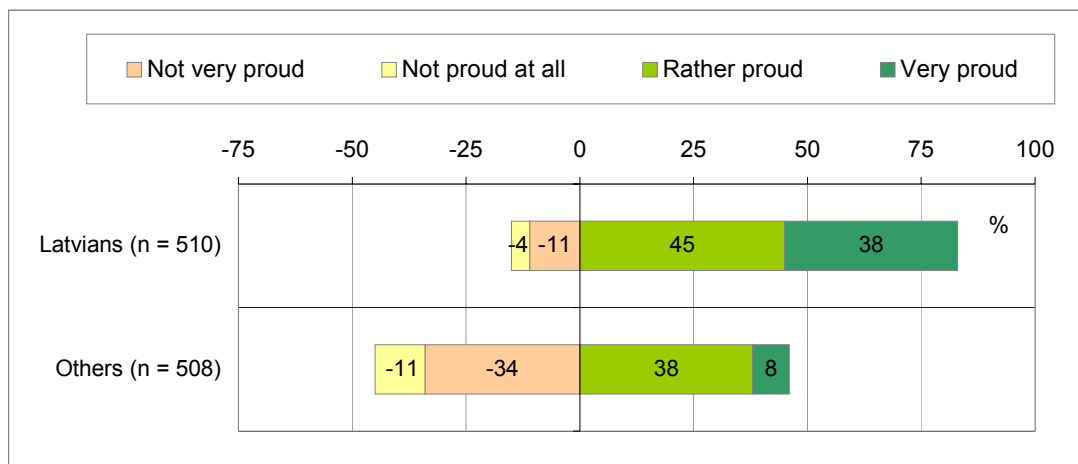


Figure 6-B. "To what extent are you proud of the fact that you are a resident of Latvia?"



Given the dual nature of a positive social identity, it has to be stressed that in groups where the identity is more distinct, there is a greater risk of intolerance toward other ethnic or linguistic groups in specific situations - e.g., in the early stages of a conflict.

Among Latvians, the "positive social identity" is more distinct among older people, those who have an elementary or an incomplete secondary education, and those who live in Latvia's small towns and countryside.

The socio-demographic profile of non-Latvians is quite similar to the aforementioned socio-demographic characterisation of Latvians. Non-Latvians with a distinct "positive social identity", too, tend to be older, with an elementary or an incomplete secondary education, or living in small towns or rural areas.

SOCIAL DISTANCE

The desire to make contact with people of other nationalities

Substantial majorities of Latvian (81%) and non-Latvian (87%) respondents claimed that they like to establish contacts with people of other nationalities.

Interestingly, this claim was made most often by those Latvians who already have close contacts with people of other nationalities, while among non-Latvians, this correlation was not found. Both those who do and those who do not have contact with people from other ethnic groups tend to think that such contacts are nice.

In order to learn about the attitudes of Latvians and non-Latvians vis-à-vis people of various nationalities and to study the social distance between a concrete target group and people of other nationalities, researchers used the Bogardus social distance scale (see e.g. Oskamp, 1977).¹ Respondents were asked to state the level of social distance which they would like to preserve between themselves and a specific ethnic group.

According to Hagendoorn and Kleinpenning,² among others, the social distance scale is appropriate in evaluating negative attitudes. The Bogardus scale includes five positive responses which demonstrate the extent to which the respondent has a positive attitude toward people of another nationality. There are also two negative responses which reveal negative attitudes toward people of other nationalities.

As can be seen in Figure 7, social distance cannot be seen within a single nationality - Latvians have a distinctly positive attitude toward people of their own nationality and they have no objection to other Latvians being close relatives or spouses (90% of Latvians said so).

It has to be remembered here that the category “non-Latvian” in this study includes not just Russians (73% of all non-Latvians), but also Belarussians, Ukrainians and Poles. Given this, it is understandable that among all non-Latvians, 80% of respondents would accept a situation in which Russians are close relatives.

Latvians have more reticent attitudes toward Russians than non-Latvians do toward Latvians. As can be seen in Figure 7, only 21% of Latvians would be pleased if a Russian were a close relative, while 53% of non-Latvians would accept such close relations with ethnic Latvians.

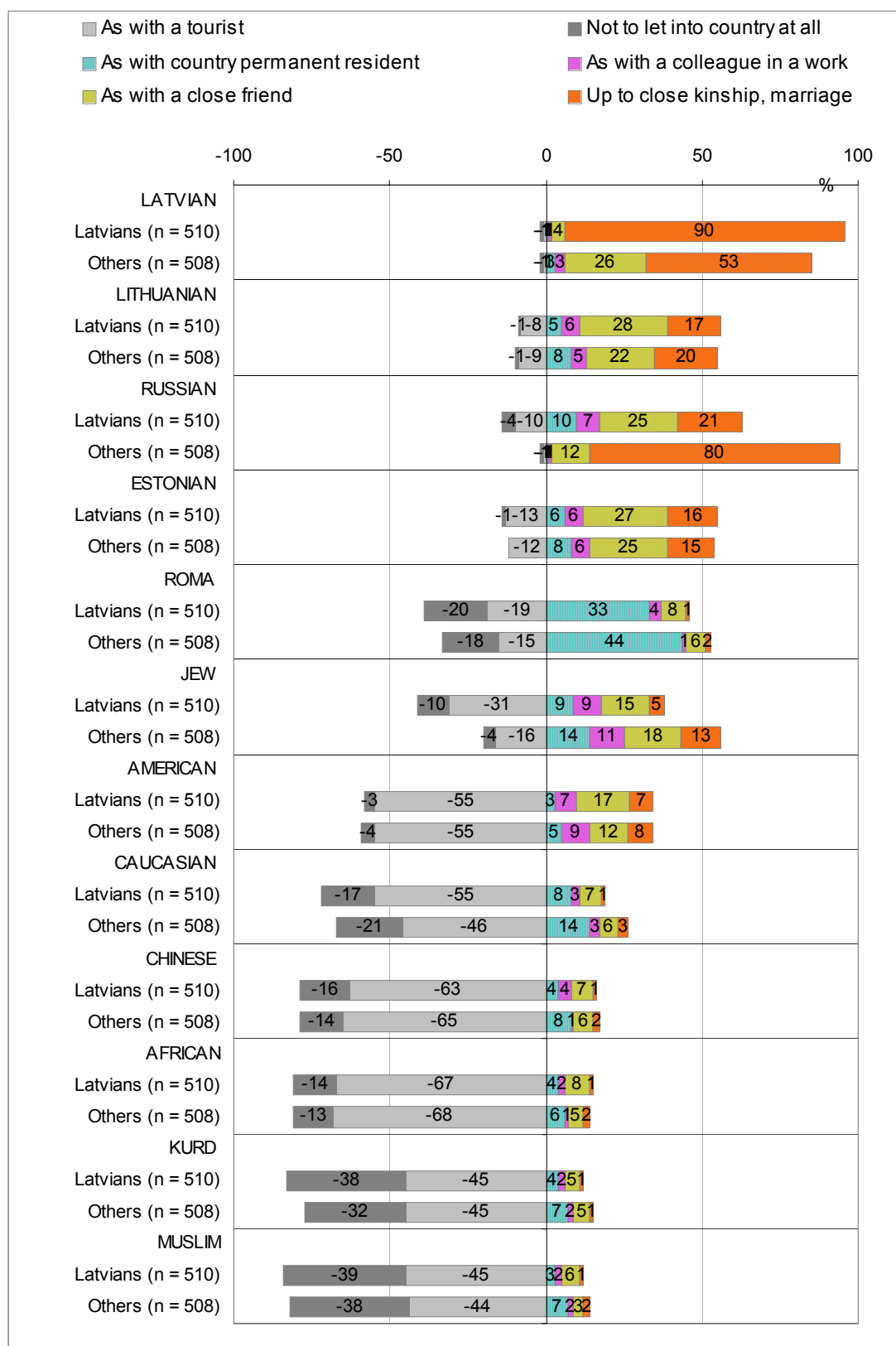
The attitudes of Latvians and non-Latvians toward Estonians and Lithuanians are almost exactly alike. Most would like Estonians and Lithuanians to be neighbours or close friends, while only a comparatively small share would like to have them as close relatives (Figure 7). True, both Latvians and non-Latvians are more hesitant about Estonians than about Lithuanians.

¹ Oskamp S. (1977) *Attitudes and opinions*. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall.

² Hagendoorn, L. and G. Kleinpenning (1991). “The Contribution of Domain Specific Stereotypes to Ethnic Distance”, *British Journal of Social Psychology*, No. 30, pp. 63-78.

Figure 7. The level at which respondents would like to have contacts with people of different nationalities

This figure shows only definite responses.



Quite a few Latvians and non-Latvians have a very cautious attitude toward the Roma (Gypsies) - 39% of Latvians and 33% of non-Latvians. Among those who have a positive attitude toward the Roma, most want to preserve a great social distance nonetheless - contacts with the Roma only as permanent residents of the country (33% of Latvians and 44% of non-Latvians). Very few respondents indeed (9% of Latvians and 8% of non-Latvians) would like the Roma to be relatives or close friends.

Both Latvians and non-Latvians are also cautious vis-à-vis the Americans - only some 40% would like closer contacts, while more than 50% would accept Americans only as tourists.

If we look at the attitudes of Latvians and non-Latvians with respect to people of other nationalities, we find that the responses of Latvians and non-Latvians differ very little, and the differences are not statistically significant (Figure 7).

Regarding people from the region of the Caucasus Mountains, Chinese, Africans, Kurds and Muslims most respondents would like to have contacts with such people only as tourists, and some argue that they shouldn't be allowed to enter the country at all. The overall attitude of respondents toward people from the aforementioned ethnic groups can be classified as negative.

When we look at the extent to which the Bogardus scale can reveal groups with respect to which societies have distinctly negative attitudes, we can conclude that among Latvians and non-Latvians alike, the same ethnic and religious groups are viewed negatively. These groups (Africans, the Chinese) are little known in Latvia. There's lots of negative information in the mass media about some - Muslims and terrorism, the Kurds and refugees who seek asylum in Latvia, etc. There have been negative stereotypes about some of these groups (people from the Caucasus) ever since Soviet times.

Personal contacts with people

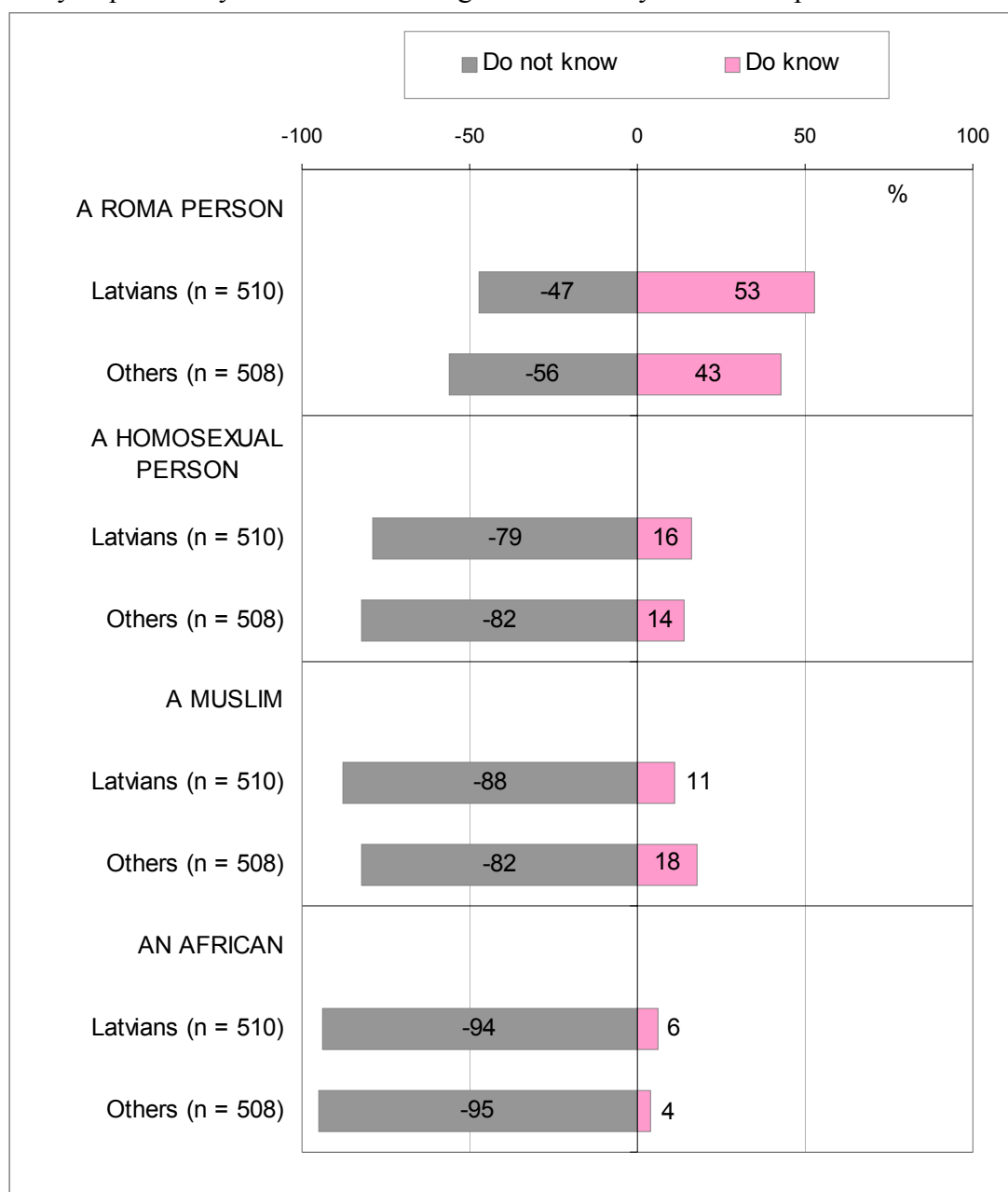
The question about personal contacts was used to check the hypothesis that personal contacts with people from specific groups can affect attitudes toward the group as a whole.

Latvians and non-Latvians were asked whether they are personally acquainted with a Roma person, a Muslim, an African and a gay or lesbian person. The results show that approximately one-half of Latvians and non-Latvians do know a Roma person; while very few respondents have a personal acquaintance with a Muslim, an African or a homosexual person (see Figure 8).

Among ethnic Latvians, personal contacts with Roma people are most common in Kurzeme and least common in Rīga. Among non-Latvians, by comparison, the likelihood of acquaintanceships with Roma people is more based on age - the younger the respondent, the more likely that he or she knows a Roma person.

Figure 8. Personal contacts

“Do you personally know a ...” The figure shows only definite responses.



‘Undesirable neighbours’

Questions about “undesirable neighbours” serve to measure an individual’s tolerance toward people from groups which face bias and intolerance (whether justified or unjustified) in their society. This is a research instrument which can be used to compare the tolerance that is found in one group or another with respect to people with different habits, lifestyles or religions. Asked about “undesirable neighbours”, people most often speak of groups which demonstrate anti-social behaviour (drunkards, for instance), as well as of groups which are significantly

different from others in one way or another (people of a different race, as well as gay and lesbian people).

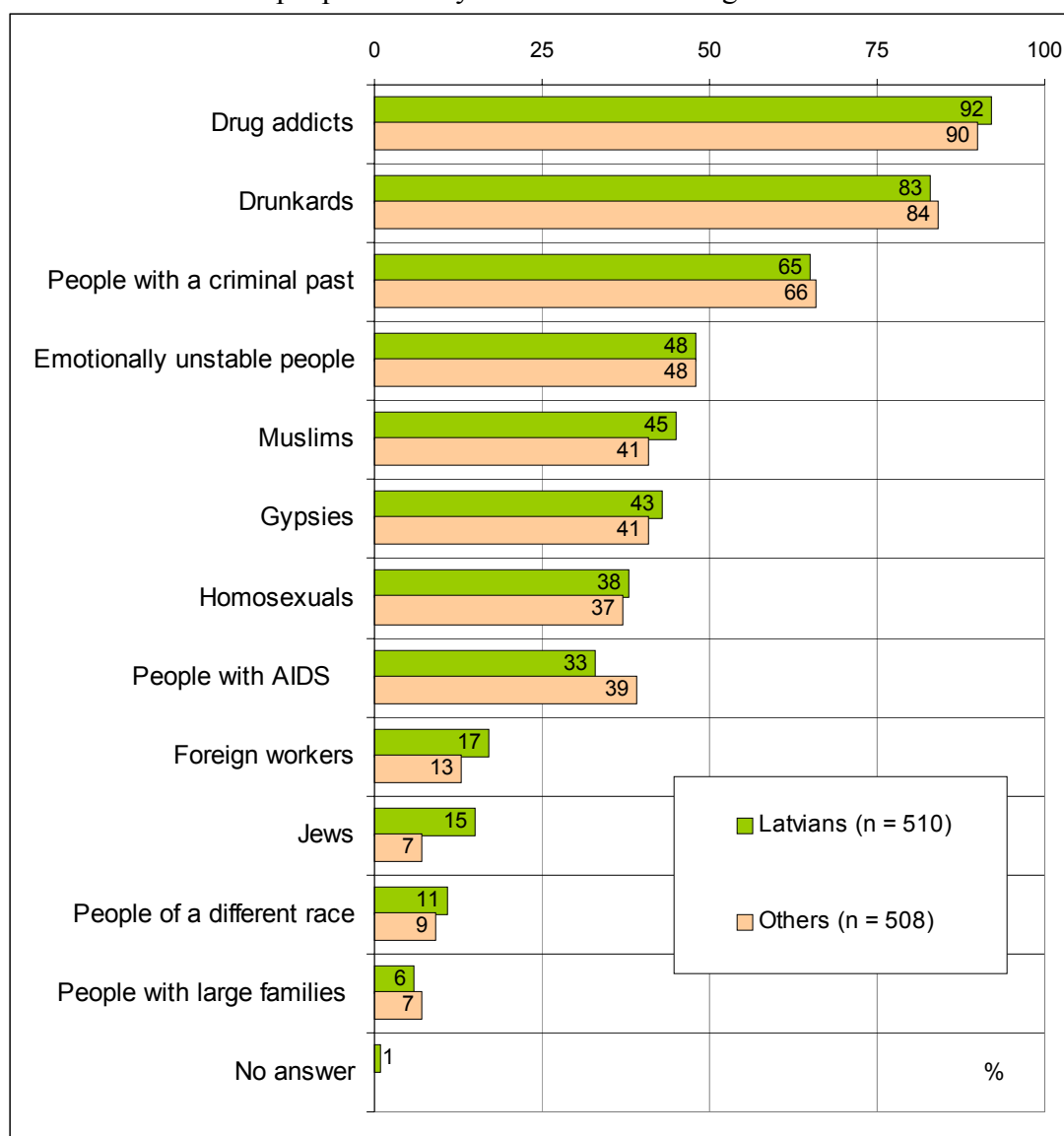
The main thing that we can conclude from the survey data is that both Latvians and non-Latvians basically have the same ideas about undesirable neighbours. This means that tolerance and intolerance toward people with a different culture, lifestyle or other factor are similar among Latvians and non-Latvians.

Both Latvians and non-Latvians would least like to live alongside a drug addict, a drunkard or someone who has a criminal past. These results suggest that respondents most dislike people who engage in anti-social behaviour, irrespective of whether that has been their past or is their present (see Figure 9).

It must also be noted that some people would not like their neighbours to be people of specific nationalities and religions - Roma people and Muslims (see Figure9).

Figure 9. Undesirable neighbours

‘With which kinds of people would you not like to be neighbours?’



Those Latvians and non-Latvians who do not wish to be neighbours with a Roma person or a Muslim most often are not personally acquainted with any Roma person or Muslim. Fewer objections against Roma people and Muslims as neighbours were stated by those Latvians and non-Latvians who do have a personal acquaintanceship with such people.

The fact that more than one-third of Latvians and non-Latvians were ready to say that they would not like their neighbours to be gay or people with AIDS indicates that biases and intolerance in Latvia remain fairly common. We can take a look at the same issue in other European countries, too, however, and see that only the people of Scandinavia have a higher level of tolerance toward the aforementioned groups. In other countries, intolerance and bigotry are usually not less common than in Latvia.¹

Attitudes toward a son's or daughter's marriage to someone of a different nationality

People were asked to state their attitude toward the possibility that a son or daughter might get married to someone of a different nationality. This question was posed to as to extract answers that could be compared to the results of in-depth interviews and focus group discussions.

Ethnic Latvians would be most likely (98%) to support a son's or daughter's marriage to another Latvian (see Figure 10). Many (66%) Latvians would also agree to the marriage of a son or daughter to someone who is Russian.

It has to be said, however, that the attitudes of respondents correlate to age. The younger the Latvian respondent, the greater the support for a potential marriage to a Russian. Differences in views about marriages with Russians were found among Latvians in different parts of Latvia. The greatest support for such marriages was found in Latgale, while the lowest level of support was found in Zemgale and Vidzeme.

Non-Latvians support marriages to Latvians and to Russians to an almost equal extent - 90% of non-Latvians would agree to a child's marriage to a Latvian, while 96% would support a marriage to Russian.

These data suggest that at the level of individual contacts, both Latvians and Russians are mutually open. This allows us to forecast that mixed marriages will continue to be more or less common in Latvia, and that is a significant indicator of ethnic peace in society.

Marriages to Jewish people were supported by more non-Latvians (46%) than Latvians (31%).

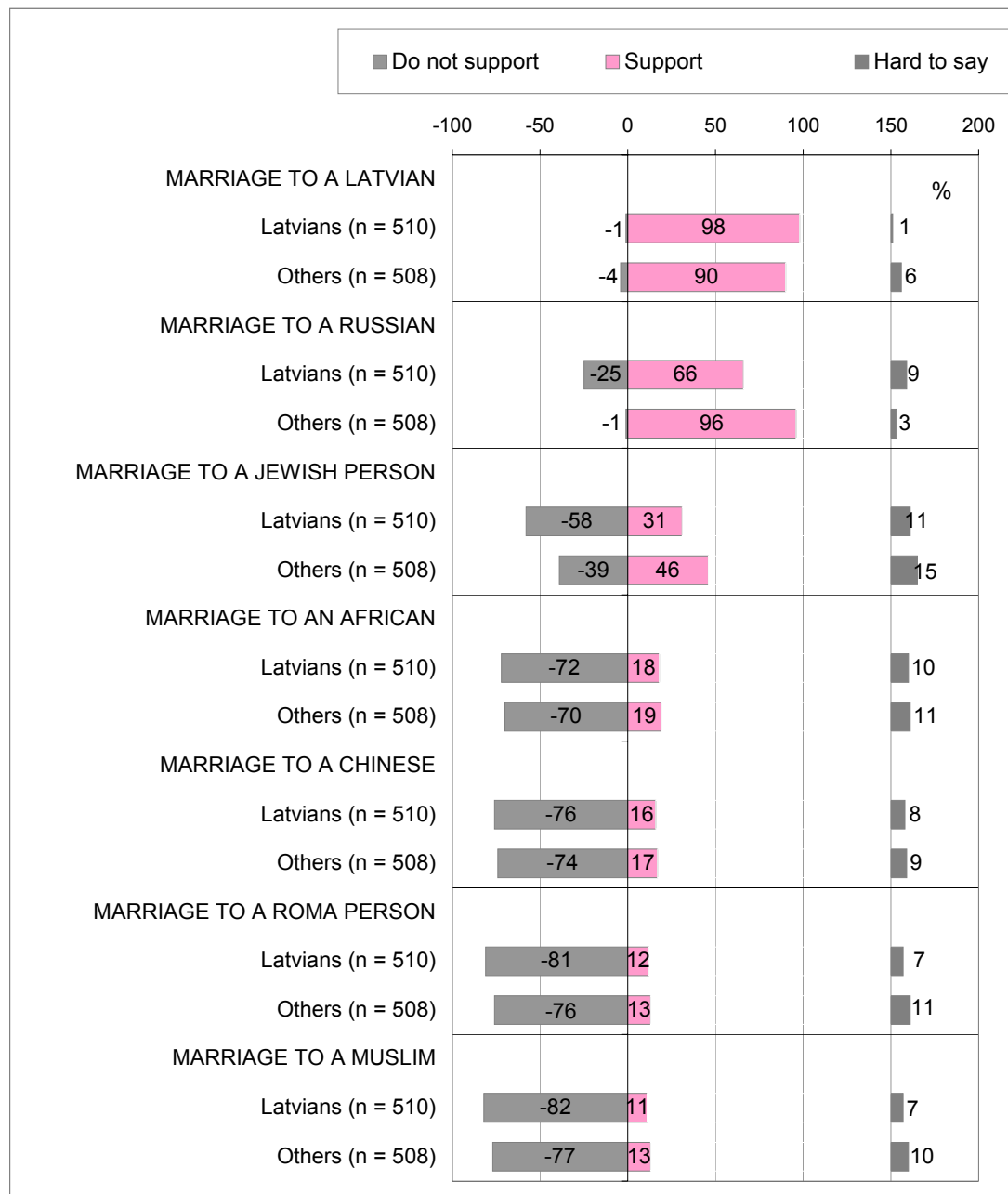
Very few Latvians and non-Latvians would support a child's marriage to someone from Africa or China, to a Roma person or to a Muslim. Among the surveyed respondents, support for such marriages was signalled more often by young people (aged 15 to 30) and by urban residents.

In-depth interviews (see Part II – Results of the in-depth interviews), interestingly, allowed us to take a look at how Latvians and Russians in Latvia form relations with people from ethnic and religious groups that are uncommon in the country - Africans, Chinese, Muslims, etc. We can see that personal contacts with

¹ Loek, H. *The European Values Study: A Third Wave*. Tilburg University, 2001.

someone from a poorly known group will gradually reduce social distance, allowing for the emergence of tolerant and favourable relationships.

Figure 10. Attitudes toward marriage with people of other nationalities
‘What would be your attitude if your son or daughter wished to marry a ...? Would you support or oppose that?’



Interpersonal trust

Majority of Latvians and non-Latvians believe that one has to be careful in contacts with others (74% of Latvians and 68% of non-Latvians). Among Latvians and among non-Latvians, the least trust in others was demonstrated by older people (aged 61 to 74), and by those who have an elementary or an incomplete secondary education.

The results of the research show that trust in others correlates with openness toward people of other nationalities and with the frequency of contacts with people of other nationalities - the more open the respondent and the closer the respondent's contacts with people of other nationalities, the greatest is the trust in all people.

RELATIONS BETWEEN LATVIANS AND NON-LATVIANS

In order to determine attitudes between Latvians and non-Latvians and to measure the level of social distance, researchers elaborated a social distance index for Latvians and non-Latvians. It included eight statements to which respondents were asked to react. The statements characterised the mutual positioning of Latvians and non-Latvians, as well as their views at the level of emotion and action (the methodology for elaborating this index can be found in the section "Description of the survey").

Calculations from the social distance index tell us that:

- Majorities of Latvians (around 69%) and non-Latvians (85%) feel no significant sense of distance vis-à-vis the other group;
- Latvians have a more reserved attitude toward non-Latvians than is the case in the other direction, i.e., Latvians preserve a greater social distance between themselves and non-Latvians than do non-Latvians toward Latvians (see Figure 11).

Among Latvians, greater social distance with non-Latvians can be found among older people and among urban residents. People in Latgale reported the smallest social distance with non-Latvians.

Figure 11. The social distance index between Latvians and non-Latvians



Among non-Latvians who feel a social distance between themselves and ethnic Latvians, there are a few specific trends - younger people and non-citizens feel a greater distance. Non-Latvians in Kurzeme feel the smallest distance, while those in Latgale feel the greatest distance with Latvians.

Interestingly, in those regions where one of the ethnic groups is in a distinct minority, the attitudes of people from that group tend to be positive toward representatives of the majority group in the region, and there is no social distance between the two ethnic groups.

Now let us turn to each of the statements that served as a basis for the social distance index between Latvians and non-Latvians.

Contacts between Latvians and non-Latvians

Nearly all Latvians and non-Latvians agreed with the statement that *“I have no problems in contacts with Russian speakers/Latvians – they are the same kinds of people as everyone else”*. What’s more, more than one-half of respondents in both target groups used the distinctly positive response (“fully agree”) to this statement (see Figure 12).

If we look at the positive answers that were given by ethnic Latvians, a socio-demographic breakdown shows us that the distinctly positive answer was given most often by Latvians in Latgale and by those who have close contacts with people of other nationalities.

Citizenship was the primary factor among non-Latvian responses - those non-Latvians who are citizens were more likely to give full agreement to the statement, while non-citizens were more likely to choose the response “partly agree”.

For control purposes, there was another statement about contacts between Latvians and Russians - *“I avoid contacts with Russian speakers/ Latvians, because they are completely different than people of my own nationality”*. The fact that the responses are very much identical to those that were given in response to the previous statement shows that respondents comprehended the question in giving their answer (Figure 12).

Interestingly, nearly all Latvians and non-Latvians rejected the statement that *“When I am among Russian speakers/Latvians and am alone, I feel insecure”* (Figure 12).

Who does feel insecure? Asked about the feeling of security in the Russian-speaking environment, negative answers were given more by Latvian women, Latvians with an elementary or incomplete secondary education, as well as Latvians with weak contacts with people of other nationalities.

Latvians with a higher education and people in Rīga feel more secure in the Russian-speaking environment. This was particularly true among Latvians aged 31 to 60, Latvians who live in the rural areas of Latgale, and those who have frequent contacts with people of other nationalities.

Among non-Latvians, the ones who most often feel insecure in a Latvian environment are non-citizens and non-Latvians who live in the countryside in Vidzeme. Non-Latvians with a higher education, respondents in Rīga and non-Latvians who are citizens are more likely to feel secure in a Latvian environment.

'I like it if there are people of different nationalities around me, if I can hear both the Latvian and the Russian language'

Latvians less than non-Latvians like to be in the presence of people of other nationalities in a situation where Russian is spoken. The most negative reaction was given by those Latvians who have had virtually no contacts at all with people of other nationalities, those who tend to engage in ethnic self-isolation. Contacts with people of different nationalities seem acceptable to those Latvians who have had close contact with such people before. Most often such people are encountered in the rural areas of Latgale (see Figure 14).

Nearly all non-Latvians say that they like to spend time in Latvian society. Those who do not tend to engage in ethnic self-isolation and have weak contacts with people of different nationalities - just as is the case among ethnic Latvians.

Learning from people of different nationalities

Majorities of Latvians and non-Latvians agreed with the statement "*Latvians (Russians) could learn a lot from Russians (Latvians)*" (see Figure 14). Latvians in Rīga were less likely to agree with the idea that they can learn something from Russians. These tended to be people who have no particular contacts with people of other nationalities. Latvians in Latgale tended to have the opposite opinion - that Latvians can learn from the Russians.

Among non-Latvians, those who are older (61 to 74) and those who live in Latvia's larger cities were more likely than others to believe that they can learn from the Latvians.

Opinion on the unity of Latvians and Russian speakers in Latvia's society

More than one-half of surveyed Latvians and non-Latvians believe that both groups live in Latvia as a unified community. Comparatively large segments of both groups, however, continue to believe that this is not true, arguing that Latvians and Russian speakers each live in their own separate world. This view was a bit more common among Latvians than non-Latvians (see Figure 12).

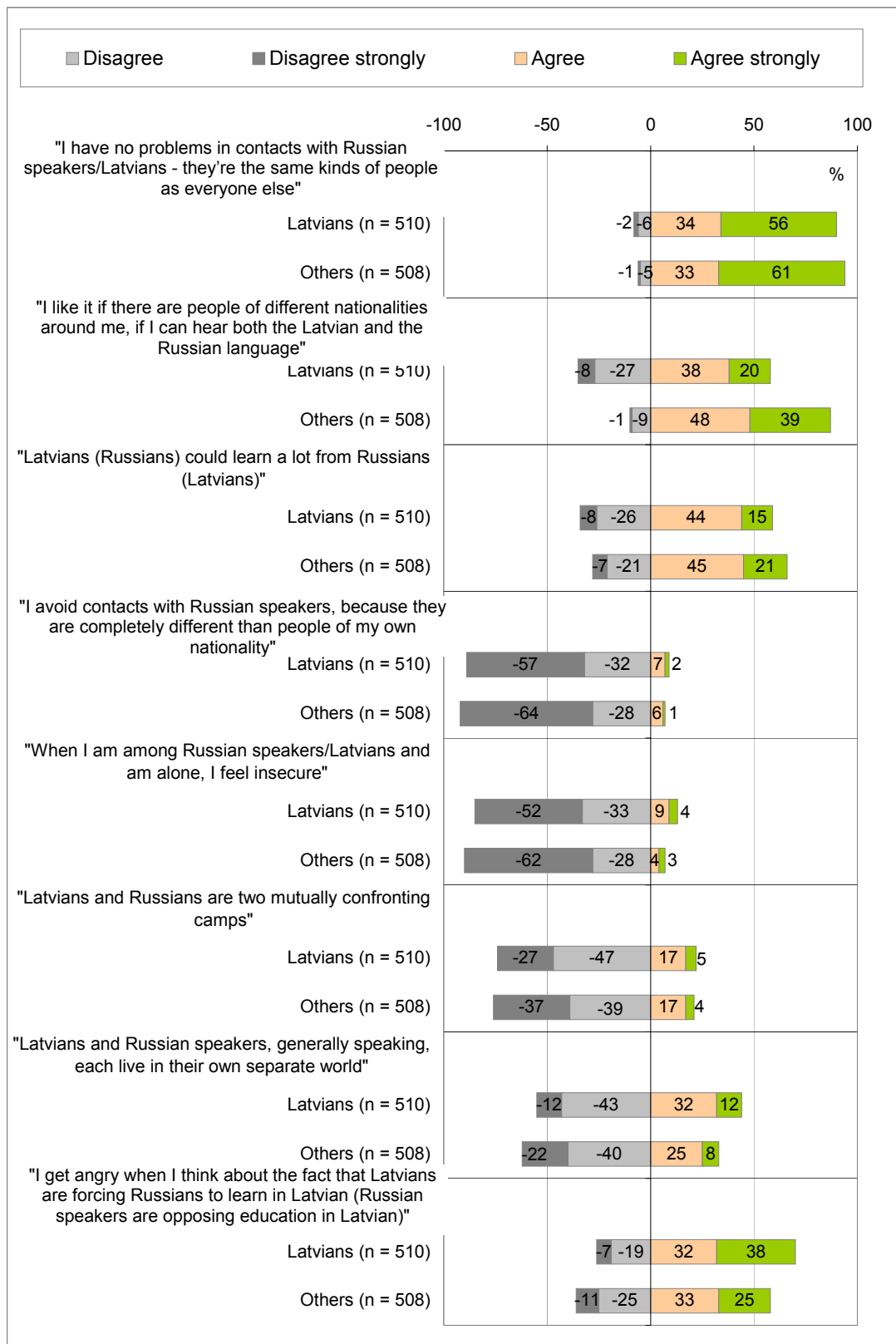
In the more urban environment that is Rīga, both Latvians and non-Latvians were more likely than others to agree with the idea that Latvians and Russian speakers live in different worlds. Latvians who have close contacts with people of other nationalities were more likely to believe that there is unity between the two groups.

A more radical statement that was presented to respondents is this: "*Latvians and Russian speakers are two mutually confronting camps*". Far fewer respondents (around 20%) agreed with this idea than with the idea that "*Latvians and Russian speakers, generally speaking, live in their own separate world*" (Figure 12).

Among Latvians who think that there are two confronting camps in the country, greater numbers are found in Rīga and among people with an elementary or incomplete secondary education.

Similar trends are seen among non-Latvians, i.e., non-Latvians in Rīga who have an elementary or incomplete secondary education signalled agreement with the statement most often.

Figure 12. Statements about relationships between Latvians and non-Latvians
The figure shows only definite responses.



Attitudes toward education in Latvian

There are widespread negative views in Latvia in relation to the question of minority education. Fully 70% of Latvians agree with the statement “*I get angry when I think about the fact that Russian speakers are opposing education in Latvian*”. Among non-Latvians, correspondingly, 58% admit that they are angry when “*thinking about the fact that Latvians are forcing us to learn in Latvian*”.

Among Latvians, the older the person, the more likely he or she is to be angry over the fact that Russians oppose ongoing reforms which are aimed at ensuring that larger proportions of classes in Latvia’s schools are taught in Latvian, as opposed to Russian.

Among non-Latvians, people in Rīga and Latgale expressed anger about the reforms most often.

Stereotypes about ethnic groups

When we look at the stereotypes which are upheld by one group vis-à-vis another, we can understand the extent to which there is a gap between one group’s positive self-image and the negative presentation of the other group. This is an approach that is used in the area of discourse analysis (T. Van Dijk) when studying group conflicts. A similar idea was used in this survey. Respondents were asked to evaluate personal properties in relation to their own group and to the other group.

Both target groups - Latvians and non-Latvians - were asked to define the properties that are most common among Latvians and non-Latvians. The result was information about the properties which people attribute to themselves and those that they attribute to others. Respondents could choose several from among 28 listed properties.

Latvians most often described themselves as hard working, cultural and educated, patient, peaceful and reserved. In fact, non-Latvians also were most likely to attribute these characteristics to Latvians. In some cases, however, the evaluations of Latvians and non-Latvians differed. Non-Latvians were less likely to say that Latvians are hard working and patient. Properties that were seen as least characteristic of Latvians included callousness, impracticality, irresponsibility and laziness. Interestingly, there were two properties which Latvians do not think apply to themselves while non-Latvians do - self-confidence and the desire to force others to accept their own habits (see Figure 13).

Both non-Latvians and Latvians identified the four most common properties of non-Latvians - hospitality, openness and simplicity, an energetic approach to life and readiness to help others. These four properties coincided, but non-Latvians said these things about themselves much more often than Latvians said them about non-Latvians (see Figure 14).

The greatest gap in answers from Latvians and non-Latvians applied to the question of whether one group wishes to force the other to accept its habits. Interestingly, this is a characteristic which both groups attributed to one another. This suggests that this interpretation of the other group is specifically the one which indicates a lack of mutual tolerance between Latvians and Russian speakers in the country.

The same can be said about such properties as peacefulness and patience. Non-Latvians attribute these properties to themselves, while Latvians do not.

Figure 13. Characteristics of Latvians

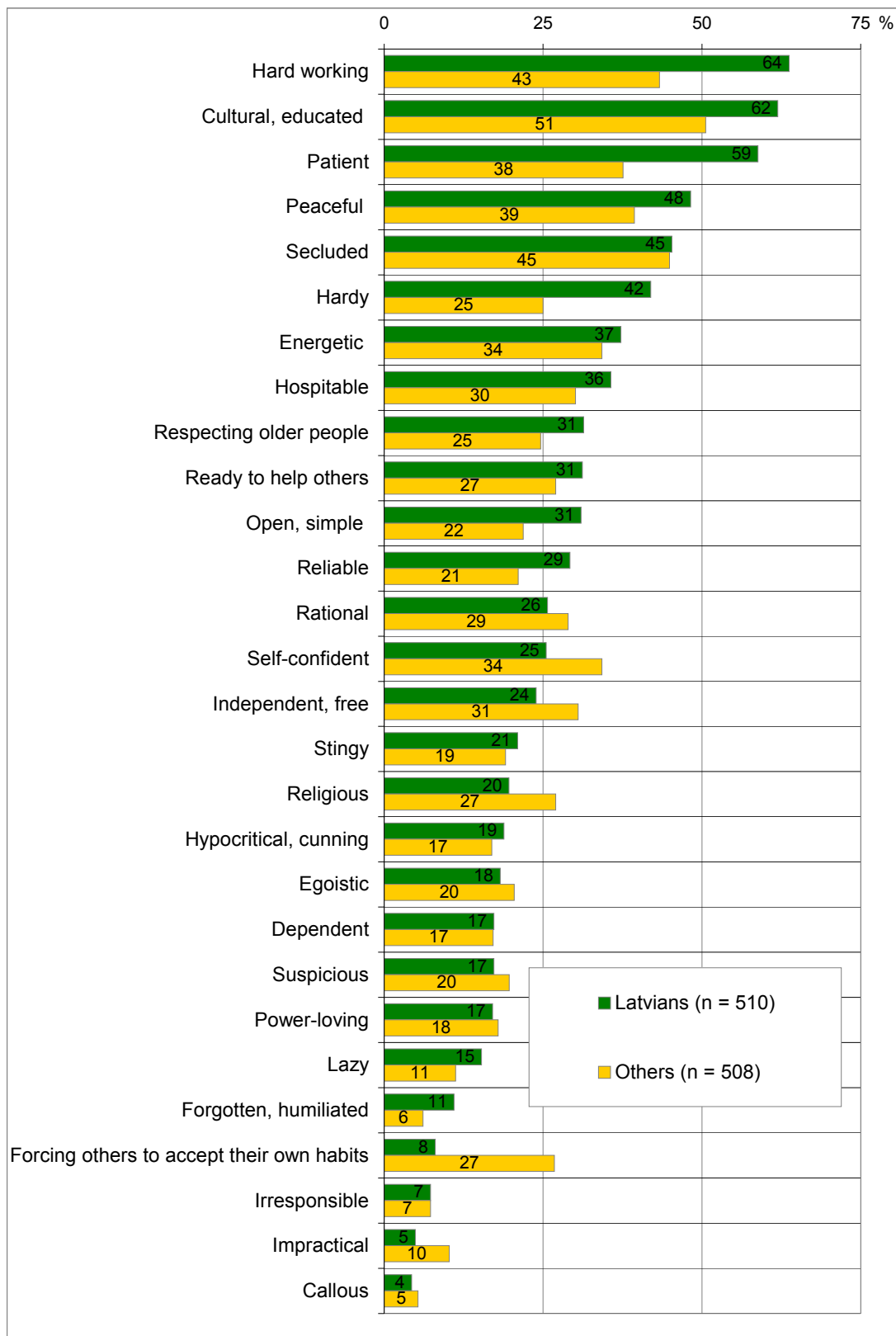
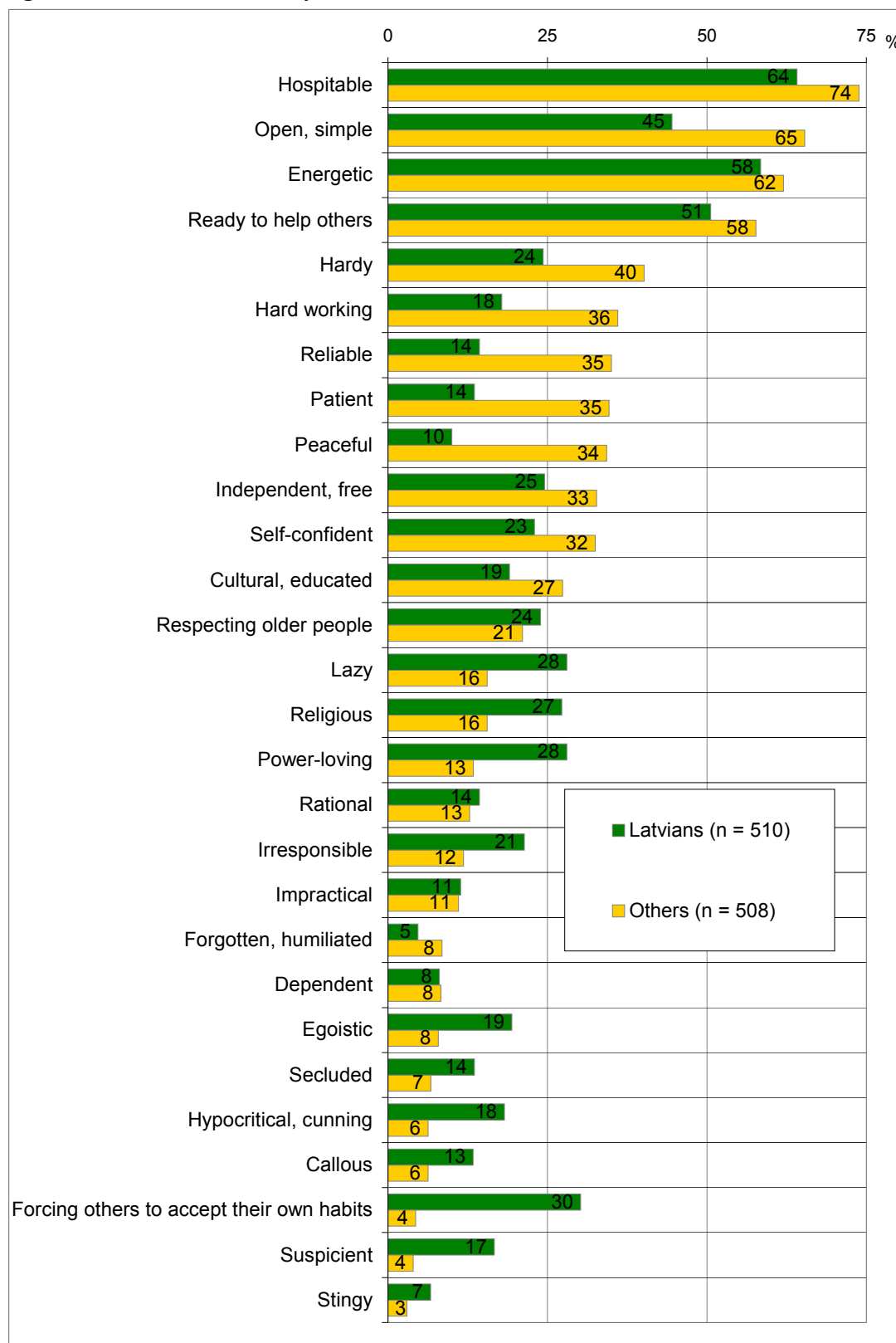


Figure 14. Characteristics of non-Latvians



Stereotypes about the ability to earn a living among various nationalities

Both Latvians and non-Latvians were asked about opportunities which exist to earn a good living, and it became readily obvious that each group thought that the other had a better chance. “Do Russian speakers have larger, identical or smaller opportunities to earn a lot of money, when compared to Latvians?” was the question. Latvians more than non-Latvians argued that non-Latvians have a better chance to earn a good living than Latvians do, while non-Latvians argued that they have less of a chance in this area than Latvians do.

It has to be said, however, that majorities in both groups (74% of Latvians and 62% of non-Latvians) said that Latvians and non-Latvians have an equal chance to earn lots of money.

We can conclude here that some people in Latvia feel that they are limited or threatened, that they have less access to specific resources than other groups do. In line with the group position model of H. Blumer,¹ this can serve as a foundation for biases among one group with respect to the other.

The nationality of family members, relatives, friends and colleagues

Vivid manifestations of ethnic relations include mixed marriages, mixed work collectives and friends from other ethnic groups.

Mixed marriages, indeed, are an indicator of ethnic peace and stability. Survey data show that in Latvia, there are still lots of mixed marriages - one-fifth of Latvian families have family members who are Russians or representatives of other nationalities. Even greater numbers of people of other nationalities are found among more distant relatives.

Friendship is seen as a distinctly equal situation, one that largely facilitates the generalisation of a positive attitude, thus reducing the level of biases, particularly among representatives of the majority.² Survey data show that many Latvians have friends and/or colleagues from other ethnic groups (Figure 15).

The fact that younger Latvians have more frequent contacts with non-Latvians suggests that there is no reason to believe that there will be increased ethnic tensions in Latvia in the future.

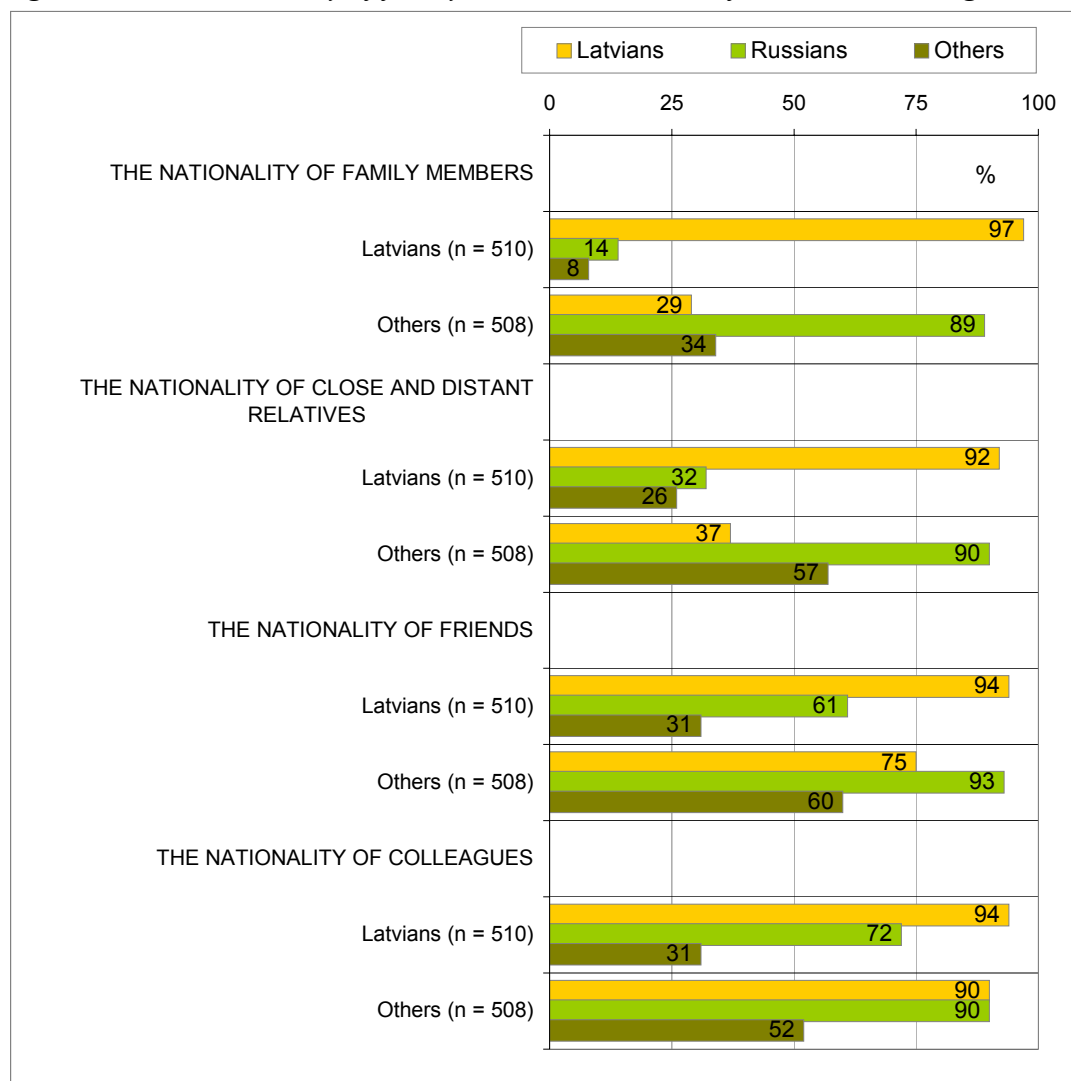
A similar situation was seen in the responses of non-Latvians. Family members of non-Latvians include both Latvians (29%) and people from other ethnic groups. One-third of non-Latvians also have relatives who are Latvians. 75% of non-Latvians said that they have friends who are Latvians, while fully 90% reported colleagues at work who are Latvians.

These data allow us to conclude that contacts at the interpersonal level serve to stabilise the ethnic situation in Latvia, reducing the likelihood of conflict between ethnic and linguistic groups, irrespective of the situations which anger people on both sides of the equation.

¹ Blumer H. (1958) Race prejudice as a sense of group position. *Pacific Sociological Review*, 1

² Mackie and Smith, *op. cit.*

Figure 15. The nationality of family members, relatives, friends and colleagues



Relations among Latvians and Russians, non-Latvians and Latvians

In order to gain a better understanding about relations between various ethnic groups, respondents were asked to describe their relations with other nationalities - Latvians were asked about Russians and non-Latvians were asked about Latvians. People were asked to rate relations on a 10-point scale, where “1” represented hostile attentions and “10” represented friendly relations. In order to make the data more easily surveyed, researchers calculated the average response.

Interestingly, both groups of respondents tend to feel that relations with the other group are friendly - the average score posted by Latvians was 7.8, while the average score among non-Latvians who rated their relations with Latvians was even higher - fully 8.4.

Among Latvians, the residents of Latgale reported more friendly relations with Russians, while less friendly relations were reported in Kurzeme. Survey data tell us that mutual relations are influenced by the social distance between the two nationalities and by the frequency of contacts - the greater the social distance and the

fewer the contacts with people of other nationalities, the more frequently do Latvians feel that relations with Russians are unfriendly, and vice-versa.

Among non-Latvians, those in Kurzeme, those aged 61-74 and those with a higher education were more likely than others to feel that relations with Latvians are friendly. As was the case among Latvians, social distance and frequency of contacts between non-Latvians and Latvians were important here - the smaller the social distance and the more frequent the contacts, the more often respondents evaluated relations as being friendly.

Evaluating ethnic relations in Latvia

Both Latvians and non-Latvians were asked to evaluate ethnic relations in Latvia now, to compare them to the situation that existed a few years ago, and to describe ethnic relations as they are envisaged five years from now. There were no major differences between the two groups.

Most Latvians and non-Latvians say that ethnic relations right now are acceptable. Almost the same share of respondents think that ethnic relations are satisfactory in comparison to the situation that existed a few years ago, too. Asked about the future, majorities of respondents expect ethnic relations to improve or to remain satisfactory, as is the case now. Some respondents said that it is difficult for them to forecast ethnic relations in the five-year future.

PERSONAL PROPERTIES AND ETHNIC SELF-ISOLATION

When seeking out the roots of stereotypes and intolerance, researchers often turn to the study of personal properties. One such approach was elaborated by Roceach, and his ideas have been further developed by other researchers (e.g. Gibson&Duch, 1992¹).

Specialists base their thinking on the hypothesis that people with certain personal properties are more oriented toward intolerance and the dissemination of stereotypes than are people with other personal properties. In order to measure personal properties, the "dogmatism scale" has been elaborated (being closed off and inflexible versus being open to new ideas). In our research, the aim was to find out those groups in society which are characterised by *dogmatic* personal properties.

We included four statements in the survey so as to elaborate the dogmatism index - "*There are two groups of people - those who seek truth and those who oppose truth*", "*Any group which permits various opinions amongst its participants will not last very long*", "*People have different views about things, but only one view can be correct*", and "*Generally speaking, it is best to choose friends and partners who have the same views and tastes as I do*".

Many Latvians and non-Latvians, we found, tend to paint the world in black-and-white colours, living under the belief that there is only one truth. Only one-quarter of Latvians and non-Latvians, it turns out, are free in their thinking and open to new ideas (see Figure 16).

¹ Gibson, J.L., Duch, R.M. (1992). *Anti-Semitic Attitudes of the Mass public: Estimates and Explanations based on a Survey of the Moscow Oblast. Public Opinion Quarterly*, Vol.56:1-28.

Figure 16. The dogmatism index

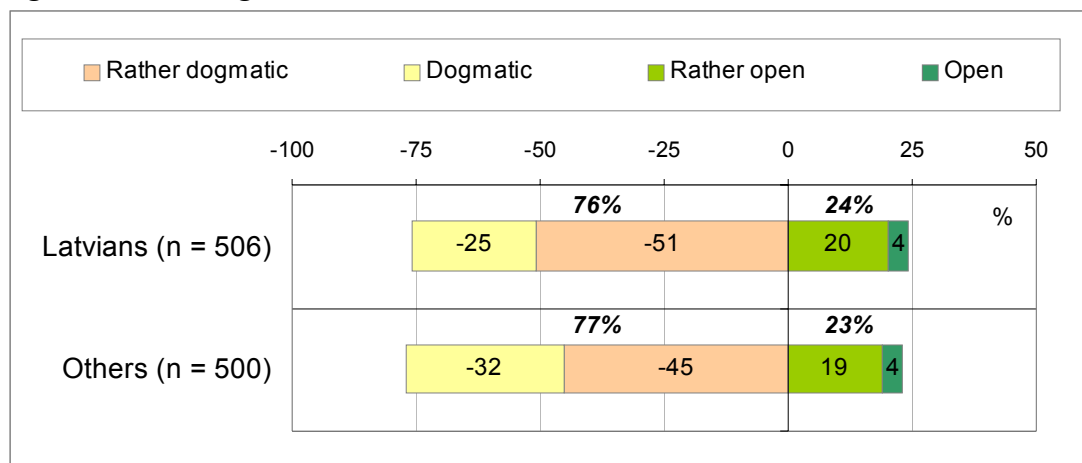


Figure 17. Statements which are a part of the dogmatism index



A socio-demographic breakdown of the *dogmatism* index shows that the older the respondent, the more likely his or her views are to be dogmatic. Accordingly, younger people tend to be more flexible in their thinking. This can be seen both among Latvians and non-Latvians.

There is also a correlation between the *dogmatism* index and the *self-isolation versus openness* index. People who think dogmatically tend to stand aside from people who represent other nationalities and religions, while people who are more

flexible in their thinking are more open toward contacts with people from other ethnic groups.

The statements which were used to measure the dogmatism index are seen in Figure 17. We see that in all four cases, the answers of Latvians and non-Latvians were largely the same. This means that in both cases, the number of people who are dogmatic and the number of people who are open to new ideas is similar and the rather big number of dogmatically thinking people in both groups can serve as a risk factor in reproducing ethnic stereotypes and in facilitating intolerance toward other groups in society.

VISIONS OF THE FUTURE

The views of ethnic groups about the future model for Latvia's society

People present interesting views when they're asked about the preferable model for Latvia's future. Significant majorities of Latvians (84%) and non-Latvians (82%) agree with the statement "*it must be ensured that Latvia is unified, that there is one community in society with people from different nationalities*". The opposite statement - that "*it would be OK if there were two different communities in Latvia's society, with Latvians and Russian speakers living more or less separately and with few contacts between themselves*" - was supported by only a few respondents - 6% of Latvians and 9% of non-Latvians.

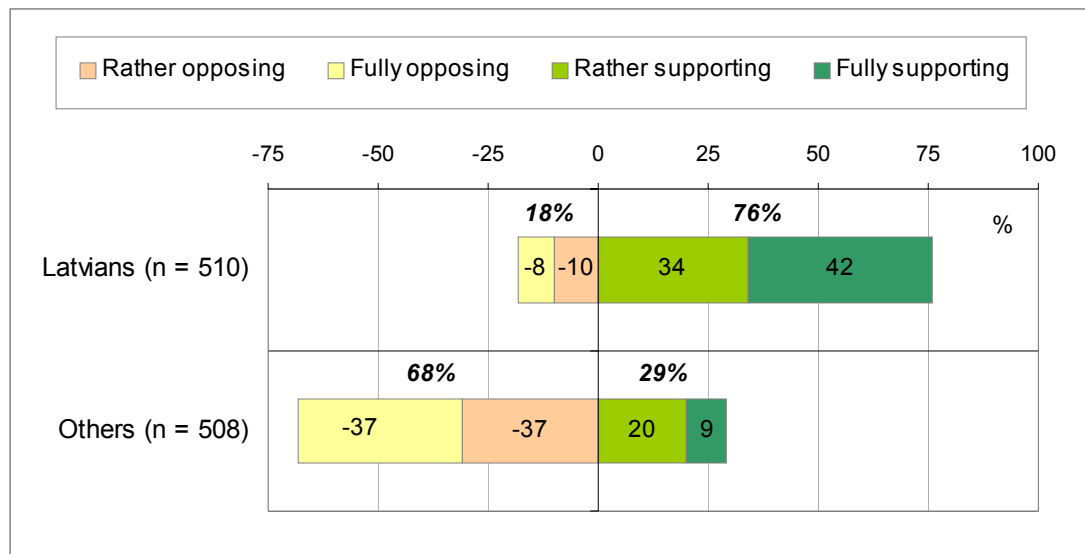
Latvians and non-Latvians presented virtually the same level of agreement when they were asked about the lifestyles of Latvians and others in Latvia. Majority of Latvians (61%) and non-Latvians (72%) believe that differences in lifestyles are negligible, or that there are no differences at all. Relatively few respondents think that the differences in lifestyles are "quite extensive" (30% of Latvians and 21% of non-Latvians).

Attitudes toward education reforms in minority schools and toward Russian as a second state language

Latvians and non-Latvians have very different views when asked about education reforms in minority schools and about the idea that Russian should be a second state language in Latvia. As can be seen in Figure 18, most Latvians support education reforms, while most non-Latvians do not. Among Latvians, education reforms are more supported by older people, while among non-Latvians, elderly people most often do not support the reforms.

Given that education is a key resource in societies, this conflict of views with respect to reforms can be seen as a significant prerequisite for increased ethnic intolerance among Latvians and non-Latvians alike.

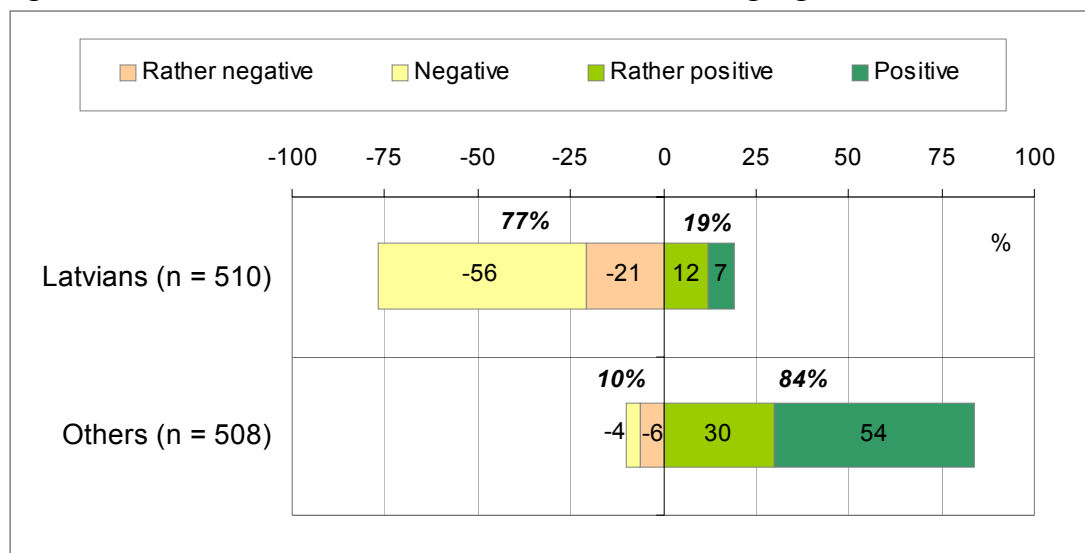
Figure 18. Attitudes toward education reforms in minority schools



Most Latvians refuse to accept the idea that Russian could be a second state language in Latvia. Older people have the harshest views about this matter. Correspondingly, a majority of non-Latvians support the introduction of Russian as a second state language, and again - this position is supported most enthusiastically by older respondents (see Figure 19).

It is clear that attitudes toward language policy and education policy are closely interrelated. In this case, too, differing views among Latvians and non-Latvians serve to increase the risk of mutual intolerance.

Figure 19. Attitudes toward Russian as a second state language in Latvia



The views of ethnic groups about the ability of minorities to develop their culture in Latvia

One-half (53%) of surveyed Latvians think that minority groups in Latvia have good or very good opportunities to develop their culture, but only 34% of surveyed non-Latvians agree. A total of 33% of Latvians and 47% of non-Latvians think that there are satisfactory chances to develop culture, and very few respondents (7% of Latvians and 13% of non-Latvians) believe that there are poor or very poor abilities to do so.

These data show that minorities feel threatened and that they believe that their resources in developing culture are limited. This can serve as a foundation for intolerance and for stereotypes vis-à-vis the majority.

Material conditions as a factor in ethnic relations

There is no question but that material conditions have an effect on ethnic relations and tolerance. Survey data show that when asked to evaluate their own material conditions, Latvians and non-Latvians have similar views. A total of 47% of Latvians and 43% of non-Latvians reported that their material condition is good; while 49% of Latvians and 53% of non-Latvians said that it is bad.

It has to be added that satisfaction with one's material condition correlates with one's satisfaction with one's life and work. Those who say that their material condition is good tend to be more satisfied with their lives and work than is the case among those who think that their material situation is poor.

Nearly all Latvians and non-Latvians who are satisfied with their current material condition think that five years from now, it will be the same or perhaps even better.

Among Latvians and non-Latvians who think that their current material condition is poor or even very bad, however, only some think that in the future their material condition might improve. It has to be noted, too, that Latvians tend to be more optimistic than non-Latvians vis-à-vis the possibility that their material condition might improve in the future.

On the basis of these data, we can conclude that the dissatisfaction of many Latvians and non-Latvians with their material condition, their lives and their work can exacerbate feelings of insecurity and of a lack of resources. This can serve as a foundation for intolerance and biases toward another group in society.