



From a peace project to a security union? Finns' expectations for security and defense policy in the 2024 European Parliament election

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Introduction

In this report, we examine the security and defense policy perceptions of Finnish people in anticipation of the 2024 European Parliament elections. The report is part of the "Dynamic Support for Security and Defense Policy" (NATOpoll) research project funded by Kone Foundation, in which the same respondents are interviewed every six months, and the development of their views is compared. The first survey of the project was carried out before the NATO Vilnius Summit in June 2023 (Amadae et al. 2023a; Wass et al. 2023a) and the second on the eve of the 2024 Finnish presidential elections in December 2023 (Amadae et al. 2023b; Wass et al. 2023b). The data used in this report was collected between 18 and 24 April 2024 (see appendix 1).

The thermostatic model, which is widely used in political research (Wlezien 1995), has found that public opinion varies dynamically in relation to the cultural context, policy actions, as well as to the frames through which politics is interpreted. Politicians in turn seek to control these interpretive frames using different rhetorical, symbolic, and performative means (Baumgartner and Jones 1991). In the current rapidly developing security environment, the views held by citizens can be expected to shift rapidly, including within a short period of time, which makes it important to regularly monitor these views. Politicians also closely follow the development of public opinion and are willing to change policy accordingly (for a summary, see Ahrens 2024; Walgrave and Soontjens 2023). Public opinion has also been found to play an important role in the formulation of foreign and security policy (Gravelle et al. 2017). Finland's swift decision to apply for NATO membership in the spring of 2022 is an example of a case where public opinion legitimated the shift in security and defense policy away from its legacy of neutrality.

The European Union has traditionally played a rather limited role in military foreign and security policy issues. In 2017, the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) was founded to address security and defense policy, but its impact has so far been minimal. However, Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the need to coordinate a joint response at the EU level have significantly changed the Union's role as a security policy agent. There are estimates that 500,000 Ukrainian and Russian troops have been killed or wounded since the war's onset, which surpasses the number of US military casualties in WWII. Together with the United States and many other countries, the EU has imposed extraordinary sanctions on Russia. These include import and export bans, a price cap for Russian oil that is transported on Western insured ships, bans on using the ports and airspace of EU countries for Russian ships and aircrafts, the freezing of the foreign exchange reserve investments of the Central Bank of Russia, and the freezing of assets and entry bans for companies and individuals (see e.g. Astrov et al. 2024).

In addition to the sanctions and the condemnation of Russia's actions, as well as diplomatic support to Ukraine, the third main reaction has been humanitarian, economic and military aid for Ukraine. The support provided to Ukrainian refugees living in EU countries by the civil society and individual citizens has also been substantial. By March 2024, the Union and its member states had decided on providing a total of 143 billion euros in aid, of which, more than half has already been paid or delivered. The EU institutions share of the total aid is 85 billion euros. The aid provided by the Union is mainly

financial support, while the aid from member countries' is focused on directly supporting Ukraine's warfare capacity via donations of weapons, ammunition, and other war materials. Finland has been one of Ukraine's biggest supporters in Europe when calculated in relation to its Gross Domestic Product. The Union and its member states (with the exception of some countries such as Hungary and Slovakia) have also shown strong political support to Ukraine through expressions of solidarity and statements condemning Russia's actions, and above all, through opening the possibility for Ukraine's accession to the European Union in December 2023. Compared to the member countries' own programs, the joint support has facilitated its effective targeting and allows for effectively setting the conditions for Ukraine's institutional development, which are important for EU membership.

A significant part of the aid for Ukraine given by EU institutions' is funded through joint debt rather than the EU budget (Ronkainen 2024a). The share of funds directed at security and defense is limited in the EU budget and these funds are not used to aid Ukraine (Leino-Sandberg 2024). For example, of the 50-billion-euro aid package that was decided upon in early February 2024, 33 billion is financed by loans borrowed by the Union. Similarly, the 11 billion euros that have so far been allocated through the European Peace Facility to provide military support for Ukraine is also financed outside the Union budget through national payments tied to GDP. The ability to deliver war materials to Ukraine requires a rapid increase in the Union's own military equipment production, especially when simultaneously there is a call to ensure the production of materials for the national defense of the EU member states. Joint financing also plays a significant role in setting up defense equipment production, although the main part of procurement costs likely will continue to be financed nationally. These issues, together with the need to strengthen EU's technological competitiveness and to secure funding for the investments required for the green transition, elevate the pressure to increase the EU budget from the current approximately one percent of the EU countries' GDP. This budgetary increase, however, would be politically difficult and most "net payer" countries, including Finland, have opposed raising their own financial contribution. The mobilization of joint resources may also require more joint borrowing to finance expenses, especially if total funding is to be increased quickly. While new joint debt would facilitate financing for those countries whose own debt burden is already high, it may also be seen as a way to increase the burden on net payers and as an indirect means to promote economic and political integration, because taking care of the new joint debt will require more centralized decision-making in the future. In addition, discussions on increasing the effectiveness of raising funds for the EU, for example through payments and taxes, have also been prominent, especially in the European Parliament election campaigns.

The heightened geopolitical tensions and the division of countries into competing blocs, imply increased demands for joint EU action, beyond the immediate aid for Ukraine. The EU has indeed actively sought to build a stronger security-policy identity for itself (Dijkstra 2022). In March 2024, the European Commission published the first European Defense Industrial Strategy, which aims to respond to the changing environment of geopolitical competition and to strengthen the EU's internal defense cooperation and the readiness of its defense industry (Pöllänen 2024). One concrete example of the increased centrality of security and defense on the EU agenda is a proposal to create the position of defense (industry) commissioner in the European Commission (Grand 2024). However, decisions on all these issues require the unanimity of the member countries. The question of strengthening EU's common foreign and security policy has long been a divisive issue between member states as it includes the tense relationship between state sovereignty and the promotion of common security

interests. The European Union's foreign and security policy has been observed to be disjointed and lacking consensus. This has been visible, for example, in its inability to effectively address the conflict between Israel and Hamas (Dempsey 2024).

The volatile political development of the United States, including Donald Trump's previous presidency and possible re-election, have further strengthened the view that Europe's independent defense capability should be significantly stronger (Legrain 2024). The political fragmentation in the US has also been reflected in its aid to Ukraine and in many parts of Europe there is a growing concern that the 60-billion euro military aid package approved by the US Congress in April 2024 may be the last. Europe's current security infrastructure, which is primarily based on the NATO defensive alliance serving as a common defense solution for most EU countries, is, however, politically, institutionally and economically deeply rooted as the EU-NATO has a shared history of over thirty years. In the early years, cooperation was largely built around international crisis management and only became institutionalized after the joint EU-NATO declaration of 2002. However, the direction of the cooperation remained rather vague until it was elevated to the level of strategic partnership in 2016 (Nato 2016). The aim of this reformed cooperation was to develop common capabilities to address hybrid threats and to build military industrial capability. Despite the war in Ukraine, The EU-NATO cooperation has not been strongly featured in discussions recently. However, a division of labor between the two organizations has been established along the lines of soft and hard security and the development of the range of means expected of each one. Since Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014, NATO has strengthened its defense and deterrence, while the EU has sought to increase its range of means to address lower-level crises. The joint declaration between the EU and NATO published in January 2023 also identifies the areas where the organizations have a common interface. These include issues related to protecting critical infrastructure, strengthening national resilience, tackling the expansion of new and disruptive technologies and the fight against climate change (Council of the European Union 2023).

The EU's foreign policy activity in the 2020s is characterized by an effort to strengthen its strategic autonomy from the US. This refers to the EU's independent ability to be a global actor that makes foreign and security policy decisions and carry them through with third parties (Helwig 2020). China's rising dominance and market leadership in the production of goods and services central to the green transition, such as wind and solar power equipment, batteries and electric cars, the increasing prominence of the Global South in international politics, technological competition, the climate crisis and global migration are key issues in EU's strategic position in the coming years. They partly reflect the focus of the current Commission of Ursula von der Leyen, where the key drivers of the EU's development are reacting to external factors (Miettinen 2023). Europe has lagged behind China and the United States, especially in developing strategically important technology, patents, university-educated labor force, and in startups worth more than a billion euros (Ronkainen 2024b).

The relationship between China and the EU has deteriorated especially since 2017 and the competition between their economies and social systems has intensified. The EU views China's trade practices, human rights violations, actions against the liberal world order, and military activity in the Taiwan Strait and the South China Sea as growing problems (European Parliament 2024a). President Xi Jinping's visit to Europe in early May 2023 highlighted the increasing tensions. The EU accuses China of unfair trade practices and is threatening Chinese manufacturers of electric cars and several other

products with countermeasures (Politico 2024). The choice of travel destinations by Xi also sent an important message: he visited France, as well as Serbia and Hungary, which have become China's new European partners.

The EU has estimated that there is a considerable threat of military conflict in Taiwan in the next 20-30 years (European Parliament 2024a p. ix). This poses a significant risk for the EU, which is currently crucially dependent on Taiwanese semiconductors. The EU has therefore sought to reduce its economic and political dependencies on both China and Taiwan in strategically important areas. Its actions to do so have included legislature on monitoring foreign investments and creating the EU Chips Act (European Parliament 2024a, p. xiii). The European Union Critical Raw Materials Act (CRMA) is also aimed at reducing these dependencies. The EU has also sought to stand out from the digital services policy of China and the United States through a strategy that emphasizes citizens' rights, and thereby strengthen its "digital sovereignty" (Hiltunen 2024).

The political climate in Europe seems to suggest that Europe will once again witness an ideological shift towards the far right (Cunningham et al. 2024). The European Parliament elections have traditionally been seen as secondary elections, subordinate to the national political arena and they have been of remarkably little interest to citizens (Reif and Schmitt 1980). While in public debates the European Parliament may still be framed as having little power in decision-making, in reality, out of all the EU institutions, its power has grown the most, and its composition considerably impacts the future direction of the Union (Kantola 2024). The changes in the political power relations will likely be most clearly visible in key questions related to EU's values regarding the rule of law and the attitude towards equality and equality, as well as climate and environmental policy and asylum and immigration policy (Tuominen 2024). Many of the radical right-wing parties are sympathetic towards Russia, which can increase political pressure to change EU's policy towards Russia into a more moderate direction.

The ideological shift towards the right within EU countries can also more broadly affect the Union's ability to strengthen common foreign and security policy (Balfour and Lehne 2024). This can mean inability to find common policy positions, but it can also gradually shift the EU's foreign and security policy positioning. To an extent, the European Parliament elections in the summer of 2024 will reflect voters' views of their countries' leadership roles in European security and foreign policy: what role will the large countries of the EU and the traditional axis of Germany and France play in it, how will Poland's strengthened role be viewed at the EU level, and what is the ability of other large and small member states to influence EU's foreign and security policies, and can more decision-making power be given to joint institutions, and can decisions be made by majority voting? And how can post-Brexit Great Britain be kept involved in the development that it was previously actively promoting as a member state?

The changed security environment has also changed EU citizens' expectations of the role of the EU in foreign and security policy. These elections could be described as "foreign and security policy elections", because of the central presence of these themes in the political discussions. Eurobarometer research indicates strong support among EU citizens for a common defense and security policy, enhanced defense cooperation, raised military spending by member states, and increased military equipment production. In Finland, citizens expect candidates to take positions on foreign and security

policy, as well as on border control and internal security (Aula Research and Toivo 2024). Throughout the EU, citizens and politicians are debating what role the EU should take with respect to addressing the security concerns of its member states. Where some characterize an increased role for the EU in defense cooperation, military spending and military equipment production, as a shift in identity from the EU from a peace project into security union, others note a continuity with the EU's history of selectively supporting wars linked to the interests of its member states (Kundnani 2024).

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The development of support for NATO membership

We first examine the development of support for NATO among Finns according to socio-economic status (figures 1a and 1b), political orientation (figure 1c) and party affiliation. The basis of the comparison is our survey data collected in June (n=2,877) and November (n=2,038) 2023. The latest survey collected in April 2024 was responded to by 1,654 Finns (57%) from the original group. The surveys are weighted in such a way that they also form an independently representative sample of Finns (see appendix 1). The question formulation is the same as the one used by NATO in its own citizen surveys (see e.g. NATO Audience Research 2023).

In NATO's most recent survey conducted in November-December 2023, the defense alliance's support had dropped slightly compared to the previous survey, conducted a year earlier, which showed the highest support figures in the history of the survey. In the most recent survey, on average, 66 percent of the citizens of the member countries would vote for remaining in NATO, 12 percent in favor of leaving, and 22 percent could not say their position (NATO Annual Tracking Research 2023). Immediately after joining, Finland ranked at the top of the member states in terms of citizens' positive attitudes towards the defense alliance. In general, the attitudes towards NATO in new member states have tended to be more positive on average than in the old member states (NATO Audience Research 2023).

Figure 1a. The development of support for NATO membership by gender, age and education (%).

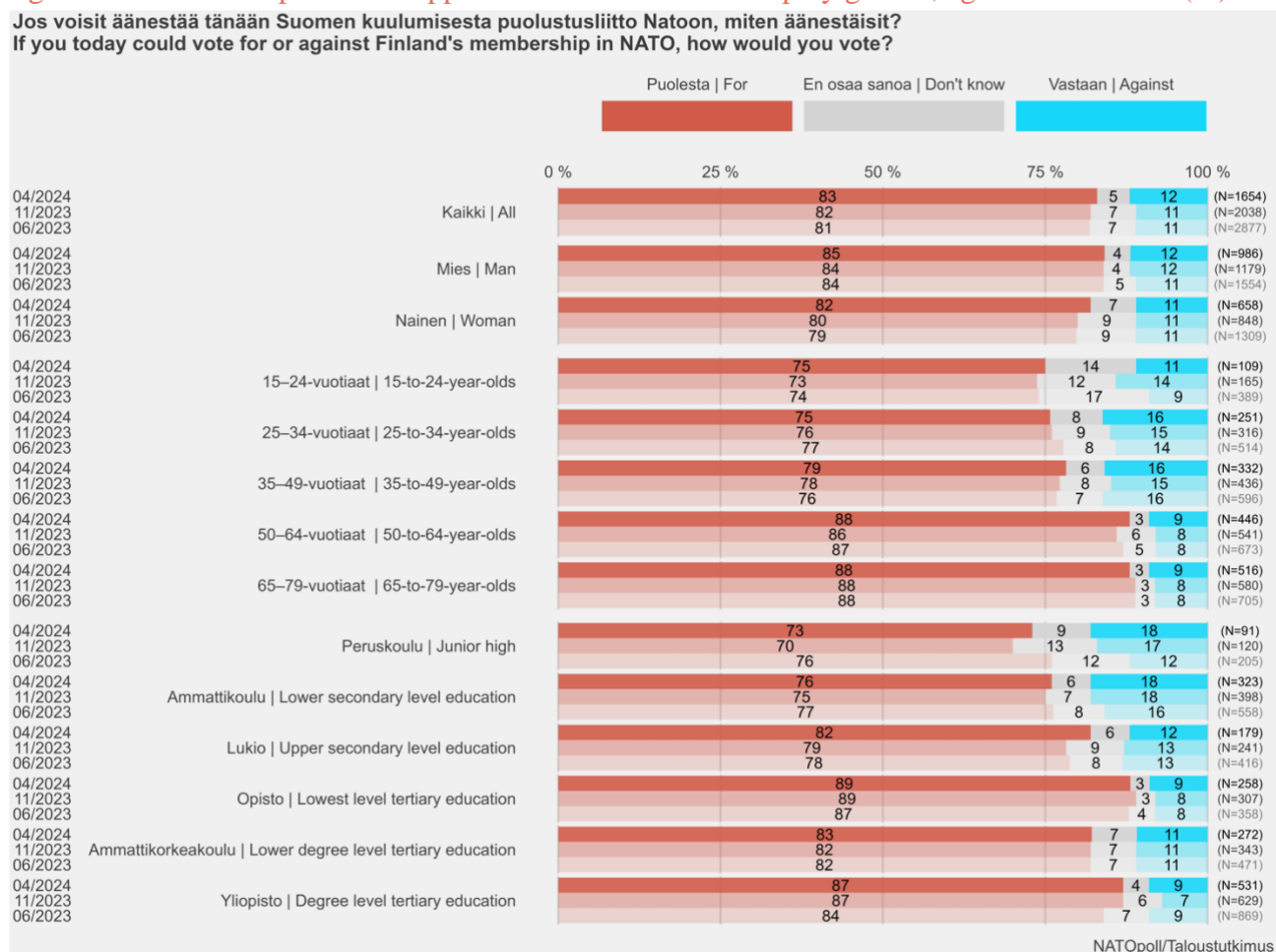


Figure 1a illustrates that support for Finland's NATO membership has remained at the same level as in our previous surveys. The socio-economic differences in attitudes towards the membership of the defense alliance have also remained unchanged, although some variation in support can be seen within individual groups. The highly educated, those in upper occupational groups, and the highest earners demonstrate significantly more positive attitudes towards the membership than those who have completed junior high school education, manual laborers, unemployed people, and citizens at the bottom of the income distribution. (figures 1a and 1b). Previous studies have also highlighted differences in NATO support between education groups (Weckman 2023).

Figure 1b. The development of support for NATO membership by occupational class and income (%).

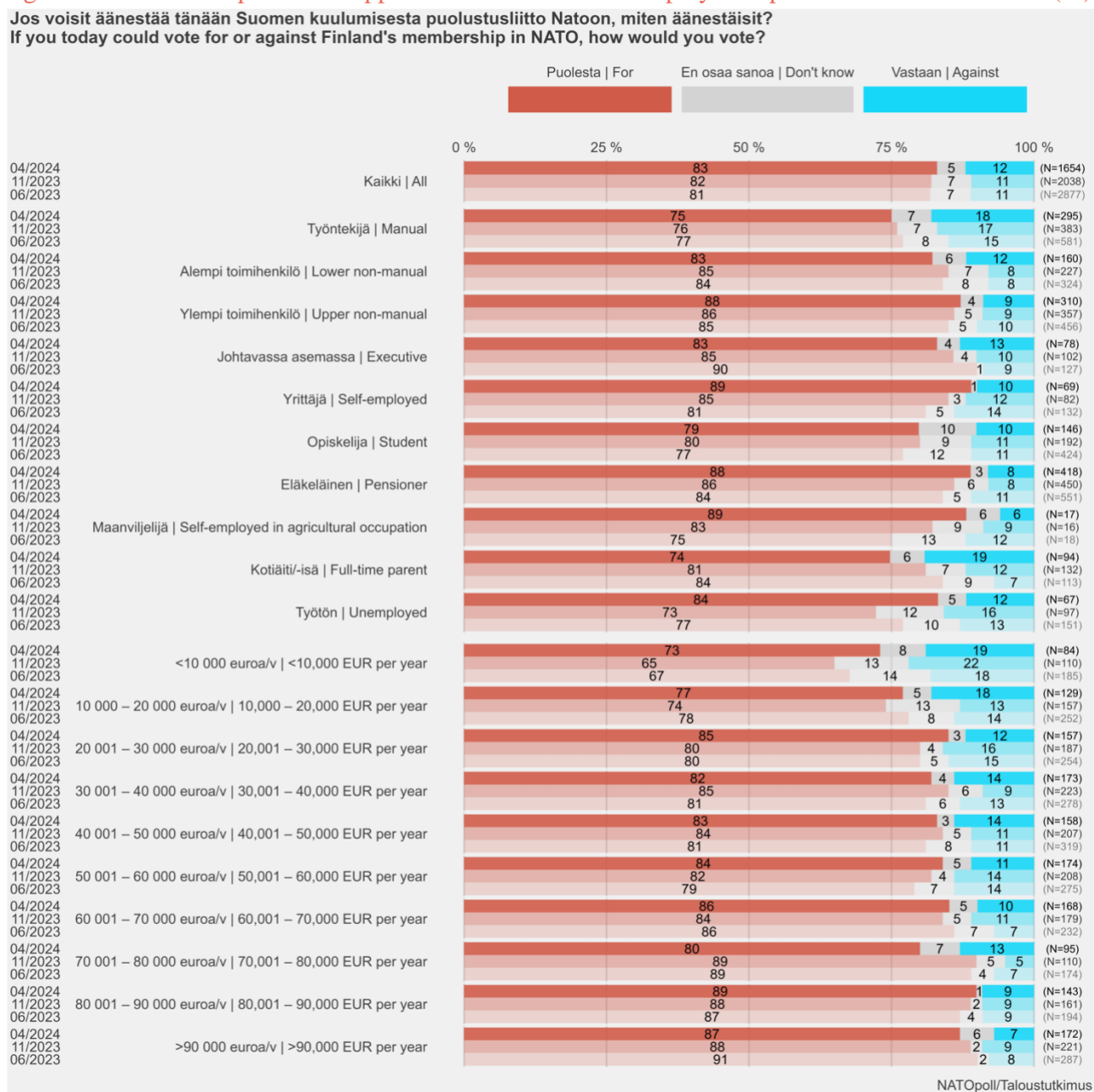
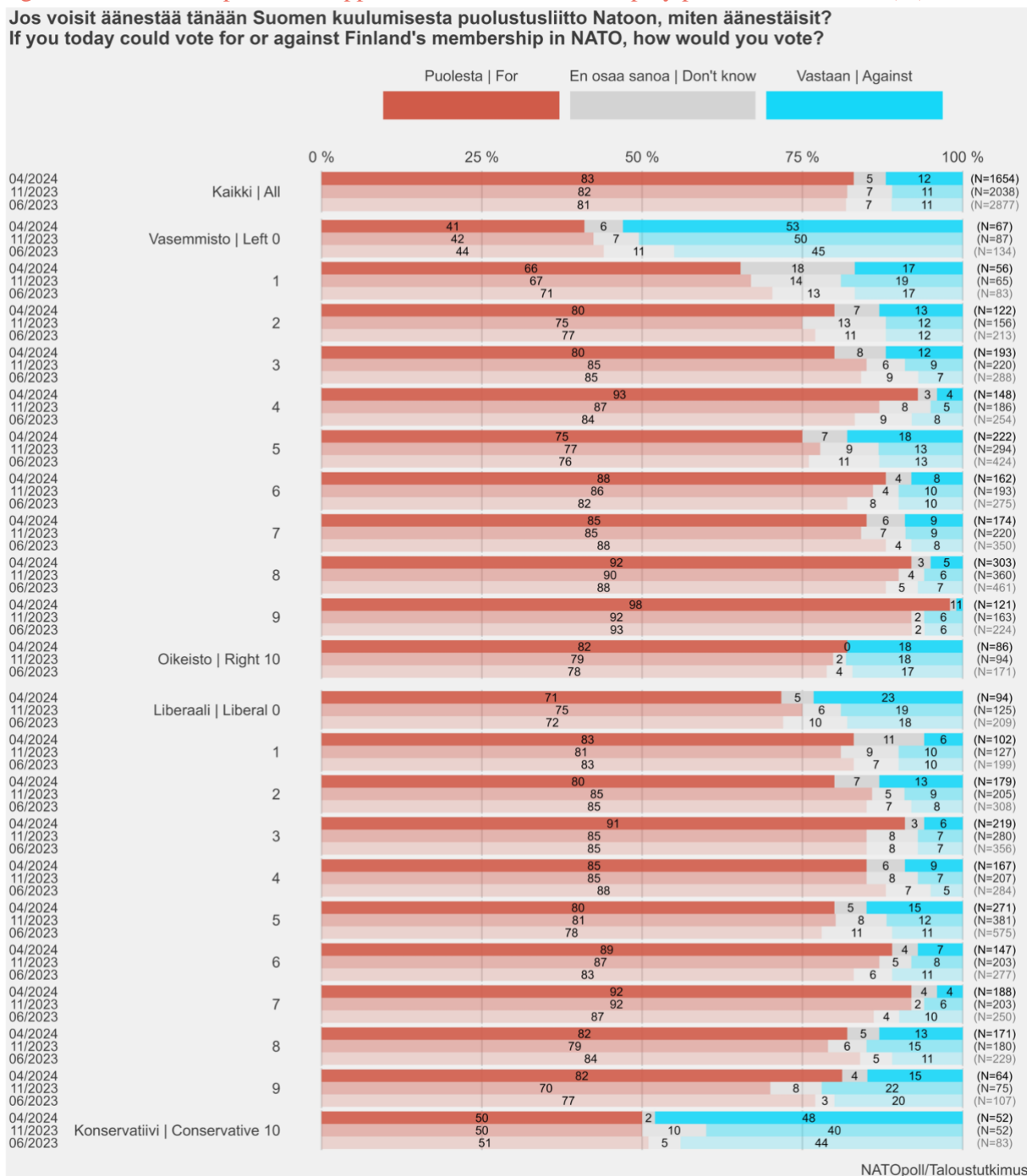


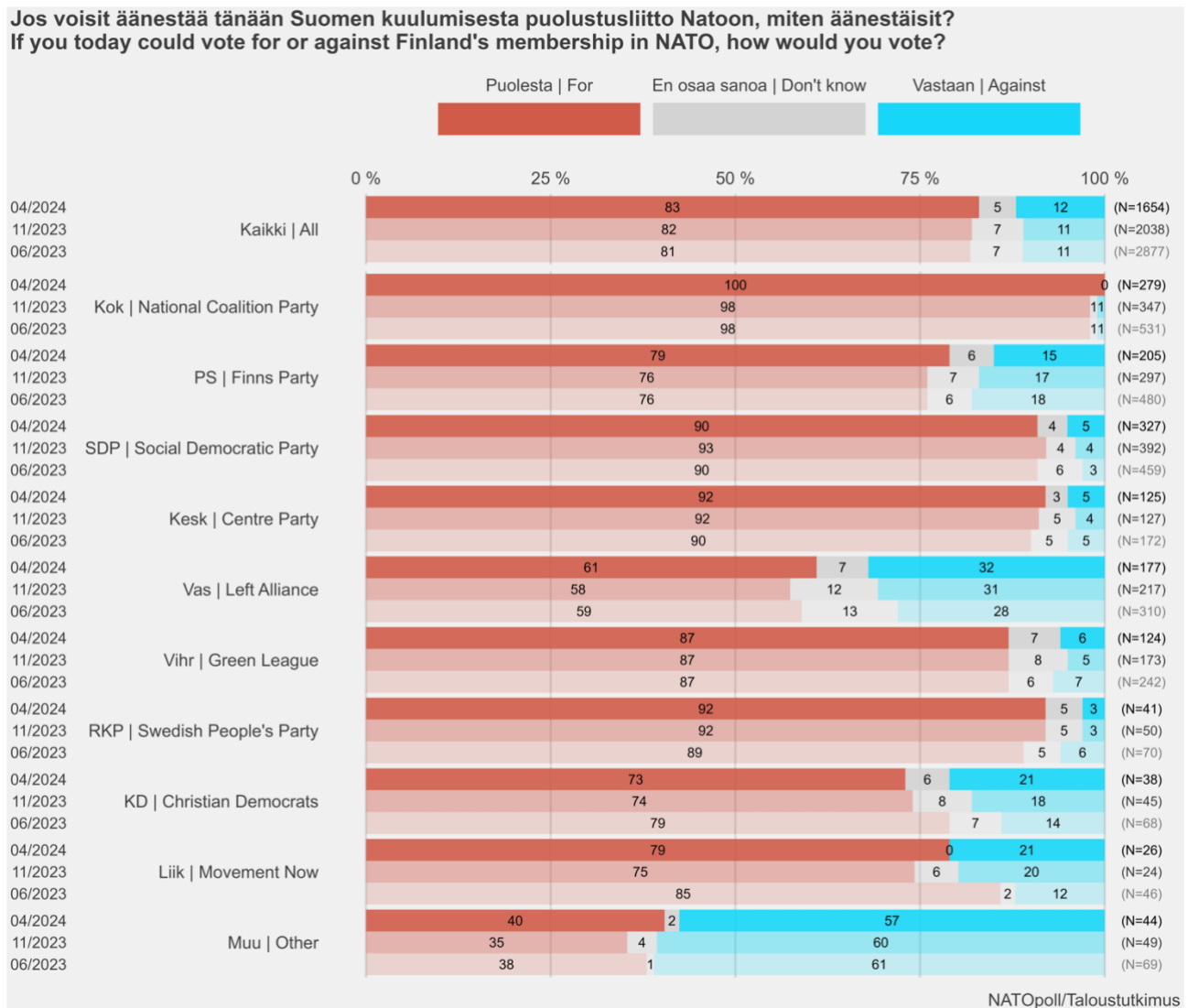
Figure 1c. The development of support for NATO membership by political orientation (%).



As was the case in the previous surveys, the attitude towards Finland's NATO membership also divides Finns according to their political orientation. Respondents were surveyed according to how they conceived their political orientation both along the left-right spectrum (economic dimension), and the liberal-conservative spectrum (cultural dimension). Support for NATO is highest among those respondents who consider themselves to be on the political right (economic dimension) of the left-right spectrum (Figure 1c). In this regard, polarization has become even more pronounced. Roughly

half (53%) of those who consider themselves to be completely on the left of the spectrum, would vote against Finland's NATO membership, while practically all (98%) of those who consider themselves to be on the very right end of the spectrum, support the membership. When observed on the liberal-conservative spectrum (cultural dimension), those who consider themselves to be at the center show highest support for NATO membership. Those respondents who considered themselves to be on the very conservative end of the liberal-conservative spectrum were most critical of the Finnish NATO membership. However, respondents strongly identifying as liberals also held more negative attitudes about the membership than average.

Figure 1d. The development of support for NATO membership by party choice (%).



The attitude towards Finland's NATO membership is not divided along the lines of those who vote for the parties that are currently in the government coalition and those that vote for parties that are currently in the opposition. There is considerable dispersion within both groups. All the voters of the National Coalition Party (Kokoomus) now support the NATO membership, and support is also very high among Swedish People's Party (RKP) voters (92%). By contrast, the attitude of the voters of the other two parties in the government coalition, Finns Party (Perussuomalaiset, 79%) and the Christian

Democrats (Kristillisdemokraati, 73%), is clearly more critical. Out of the parties in the opposition, less than two thirds of the voters of the Left Alliance continue to support Finland's NATO membership, while voters of both the Centre Party (Keskusta) and the Social Democratic Party (SDP) hold highly positive views towards NATO. The support for NATO by voters of the biggest parties has remained remarkably high while simultaneously NATO as an institution and the practical requirements of the membership have become more familiar during the first year following Finland's accession to the defense union.

Support for EU membership

The long-term trend in Finland towards the European Union has been a generally positive attitude that surpasses EU-average attitudes towards the Union. According to the [Eurobarometer survey](#) carried out in early 2024, Finns are more satisfied (49% were totally positive) with the functioning of the Union than the average (44%) of the member states of the Union, and the willingness to vote in the upcoming European Parliament elections had also increased significantly compared to the situation five years ago (European Union 2024a). Until the 2009 Euro crisis, Finnish political parties were rather united in their support for increased integration, however, as has been the general trend in Europe, currently there is visible dispersion among the views regarding the use of transnational power and deepened integration within center-right parties (Lehtinen and Raunio 2024). Throughout Finland's EU membership, the Finns Party has been critical towards the EU, however, as members of the current government coalition, their active efforts to leave the EU have waned. Historically, the attitude of the Christian Democrats towards the Union has varied depending on whether they are in the government coalition.

Figure 2. Support for EU membership by party choice (%).

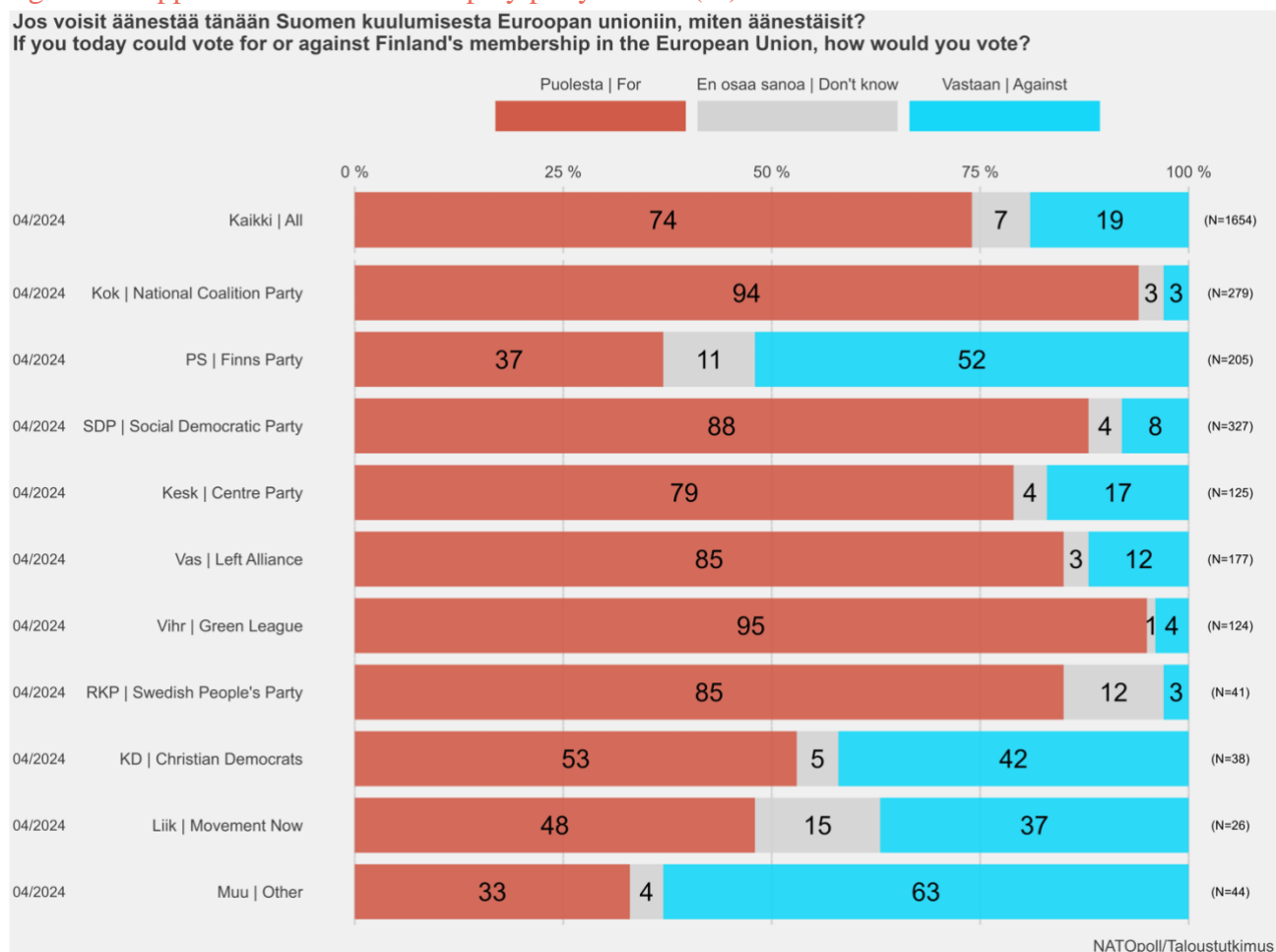


Figure 2 illustrates that the average support for Finland's EU membership is almost ten percentage points lower than the support for Finland's NATO membership. The question of deepening EU integration also strongly divides the voters of different parties. The voters are clearly divided into two groups based on their party, i.e. the supporters of the EU (The National Coalition Party, Social Democratic Party, Centre Party, the Left Alliance, the Green League and the Swedish People's Party) and the opponents (Finns Party, Christian Democrats, Movement Now and small parties). Therefore, the attitude towards the EU is one dimension of the development of polarization in Finland (Kestilä-Kekkonen et al. ed. 2024).

The voters of the Green League are the strongest supporters of the EU membership, which reflects the party's strong positive stance in relation to, for example, the strengthening of the European Parliament's powers, increasing the EU budget and the Union's right to collect taxes (Lehtinen and Raunio 2024). Likewise, almost all the voters of the National Coalition Party have a positive attitude towards EU membership. Support is also high among voters of leftist parties, which may partly reflect the emphasis that the Union has placed on mitigating the climate crisis, the Union's increasingly positive attitude towards the role of the state in steering industrial policy, and the general loosening of the governing framework related to economic policy following the financial crisis and the corona pandemic. Only one third of the supporters of the Finns Party support Finland's EU membership. Similarly, only half of the voters of the Christian Democrats are in favor of the membership, despite the party being in the

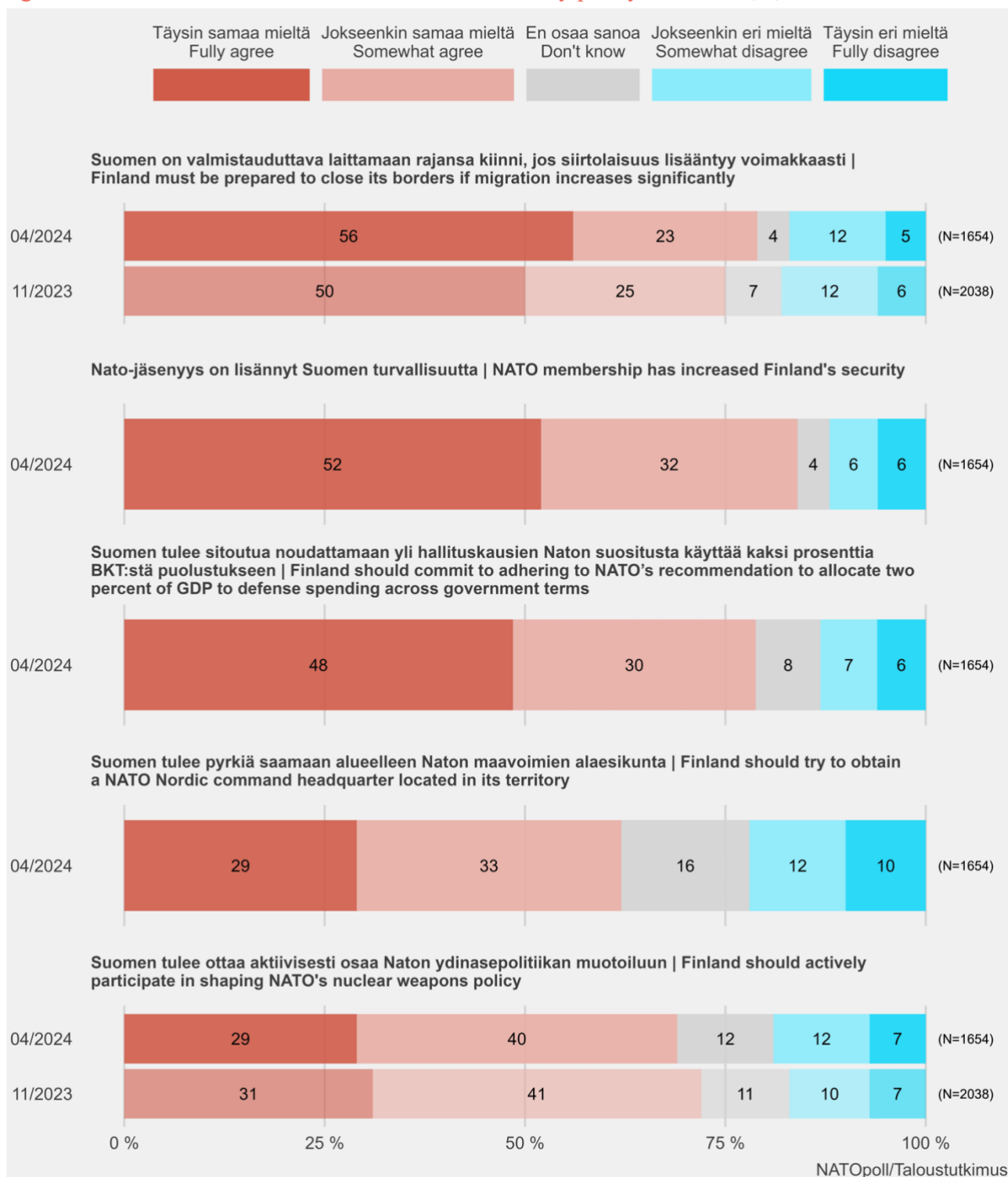
government coalition, which has a positive attitude towards EU integration. The strongest opposition to the EU is concentrated among people who vote for parties with no seats in the Parliament of Finland.

Views on Finnish and European security and defense policy decisions

Figures 3a and 3b examine citizens' views on Finland's actions as a NATO member. Some of the questions are the same as in the previous NATOPoll surveys, while others cover topics that have become especially relevant during the spring of 2024. The first observation that emerges is related to how widely the NATO membership is considered to have met the expectations associated with it. Two years after submitting the application for the NATO membership and one year after accession, 84 percent of Finns consider that the membership has strengthened Finland's national security. The respondents are also willing to pay for NATO membership, 78% of respondents consider that Finland should commit to adhere to NATO's recommendation to allocate two percent of Gross Domestic Product to defense spending across government terms. This topic has been particularly relevant since February 2024, when Donald Trump, seeking re-election, stated in a campaign rally that Russia can do what it wants to NATO countries that fail to meet shared defense spending targets. Later, in an interview with the British GB News, Trump described his statement as a "form of negotiation", aimed at motivating NATO members to fulfill their commitments (GB News 2024).

Another relevant question relates to Finland's goal to obtain a NATO command headquarter on its territory. This issue was highlighted in the campaign of President Alexander Stubb in early 2024. A Ministry of Defense senior specialist has stated that this relates to the broader command structure for Northern Europe, currently being developed by NATO's military leadership (Yle 2024a). According to information published in early April 2024, the ground force sub-headquarters could be established in the city of Mikkeli (Iltalehti 2024). Our data, which was collected shortly following these reports, shows that most Finns (62%) support Finland's pursuit of obtaining NATO Nordic command headquarters in its territory. However, the share of respondents that were unable to express their opinion on the issue is considerable (16%). This may reflect the uncertainty and scarce communication regarding Finland's pursuit of the command headquarters. It is possible that a decision on the issue will be reached during the Washington Summit in July 2024.

Figure 3a. Preferences for Finland's defense and security policy decisions (%).

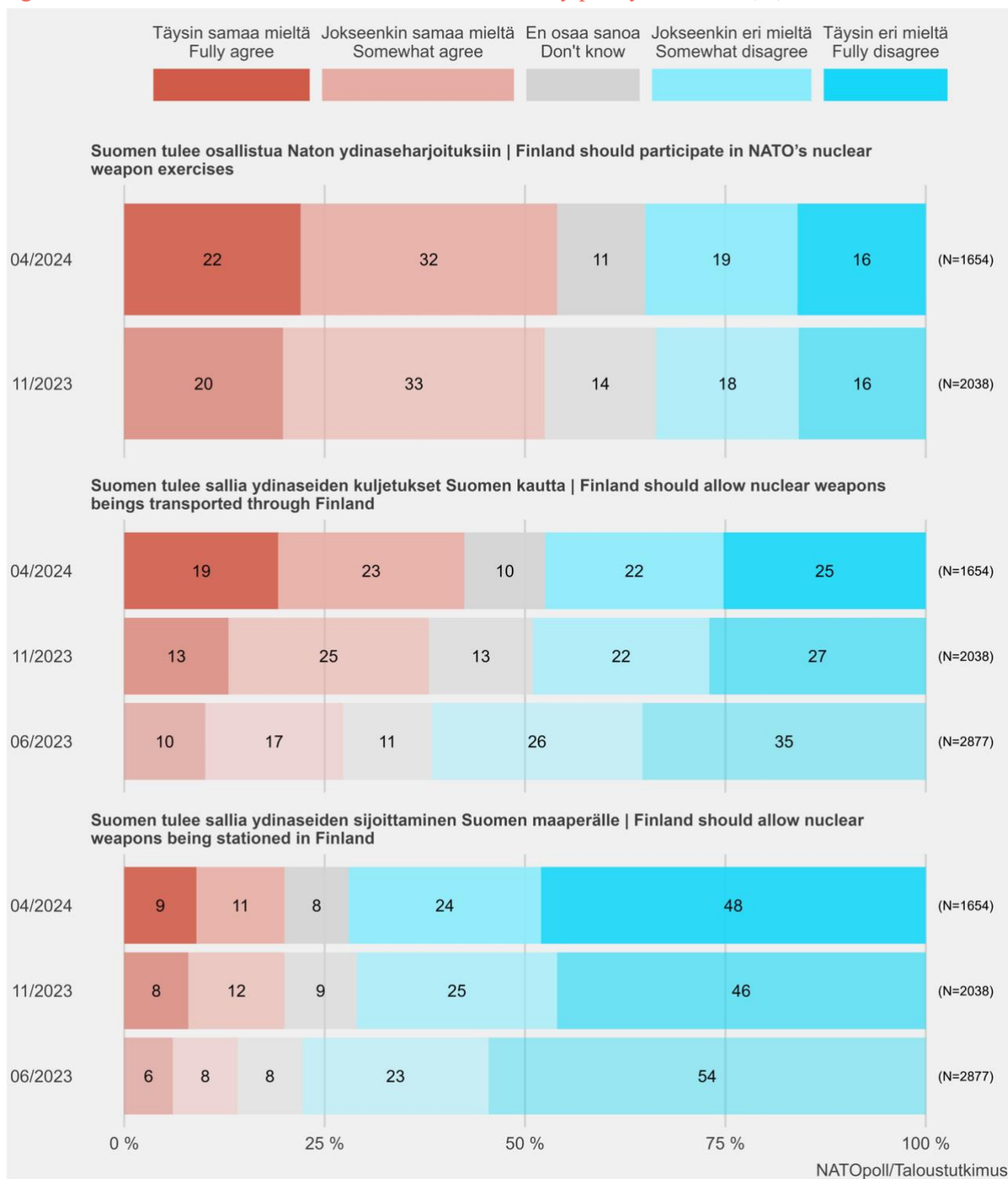


The third key insight relates to the question of nuclear weapons as a central element of NATO's deterrence and the readiness of Finland to adopt the different levels of requirements in NATO's nuclear deterrence policy (Juntunen et al. 2024). This issue also was widely discussed during the second round of Finland's presidential elections between Alexander Stubb and Pekka Haavisto. Stubb expressed his readiness to reform the Nuclear Energy Act to allow for transporting nuclear weapons through Finland.

The current legislation prohibits stationing and transporting nuclear weapons on Finnish territory (Helsingin Sanomat 2024b). The position of Pekka Haavisto's was significantly more reserved, he emphasized the risk of escalation inherent to nuclear weapons and the possibility of the development of a situation which is difficult to control. Our previous survey, conducted prior to the presidential elections, found that there had been a shift in citizens' attitudes toward nuclear weapons. The attitudes in this survey have remained unchanged from those results. The most significant change in attitudes relates to transporting nuclear weapons through Finland; now 42% of respondents would allow transporting nuclear weapons, which is four percentage points higher than five months ago. Survey data used to analyze this question finds that most of the people who vote for the National Coalition Party (74%), Finns Party (59%), Swedish People's Party (51%) and Movement Now (51%) support allowing nuclear weapons to be transported through Finnish territory. By contrast, most voters of the Left Alliance (66%) and the Christian Democrats oppose it. While in the Finnish context there is broad consensus regarding many aspects of security and defense policy, the question of nuclear weapons is ideologically divisive and can therefore be seen as part of the development of broader political polarization (Kestilä-Kekkonen et al. ed. 2024).

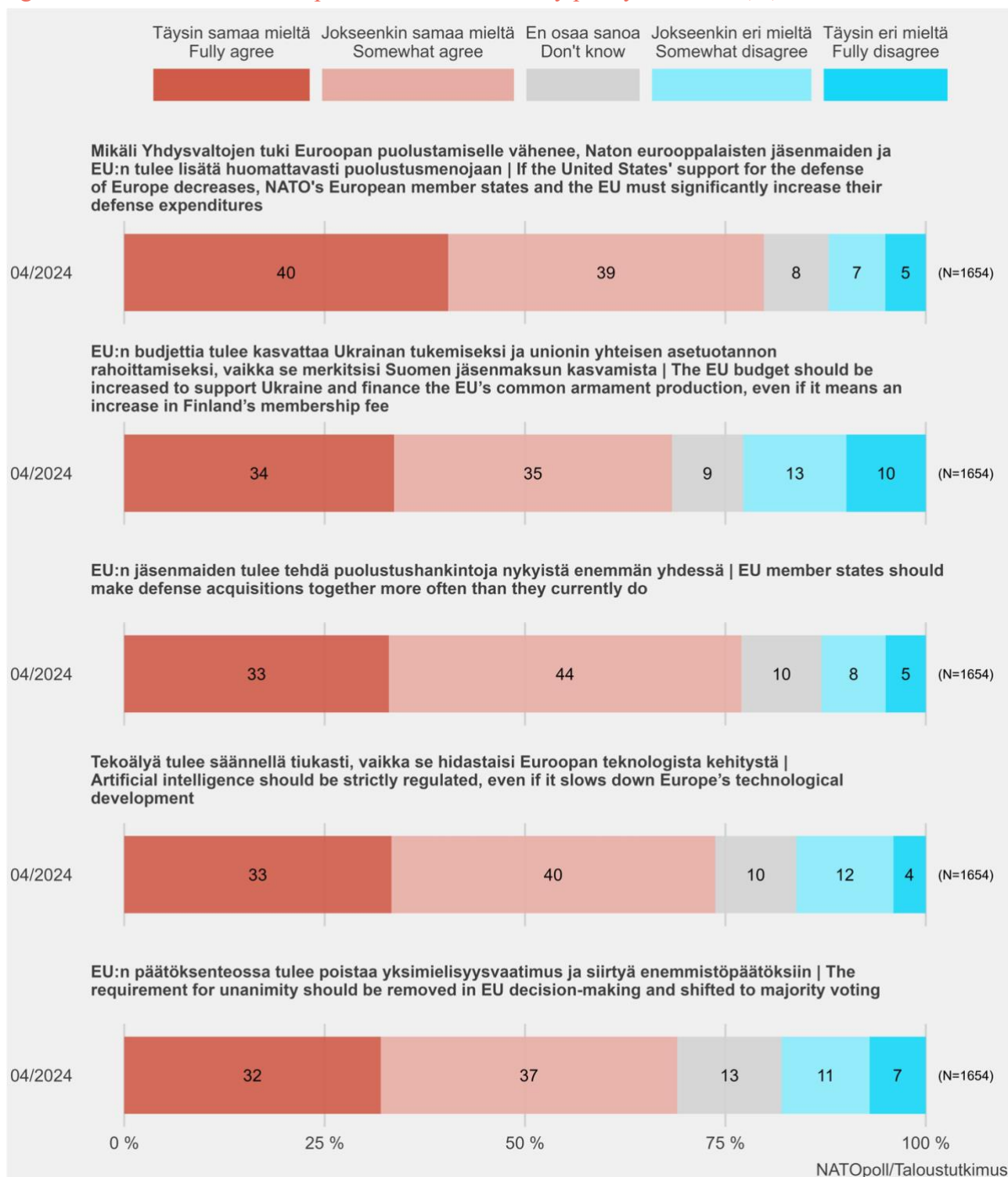
There is remarkably high willingness among respondents (79%) to close the Finnish-Russian border due to the perception of an uncontrolled flow of asylum seekers. This partly reflects the salience of the political discussions and public debate regarding the draft act to combat instrumentalized migration (Sisäministeriö 2024). However, it is noteworthy that since late 2023 following Finland's decision to close the border as a response to Russia's hybrid operations, there has only been a slight increase in support for the border closure.

Figure 3b. Preferences for Finland's defense and security policy decisions (%).



Figures 4a and 4b examine citizens' views on Europe's upcoming security and defense policy decisions related to supporting Ukraine, enhancing defense procurement, and strengthening member states' national defense industry, as well as financing the resulting costs.

Figure 4a. Preferences for Europe's defense and security policy decisions (%).



Overall, it appears that respondents broadly share the belief that the European Union should take a stronger role in guaranteeing the safety of Europe. Less than a third (30%) of respondents believe that US support to defend EU member states can be counted on, regardless of who is elected US president in November 2024. It is likely that these views have been influenced by the news coverage in early 2024 regarding Trump's NATO stances, including during his presidency, seeking to make US defense

support for European NATO allies conditional to their defense spending (GP News 2024). Similarly, the goal of the European [Defense Industrial Strategy](#) to have 50 percent of member states' procurement budget dedicated to EU-based suppliers by 2030 is also widely supported by respondents (77%). If this goal is achieved, the difference will be significant because currently 78 percent of purchases are made from suppliers outside of the European Union, with over 60 percent from the United States (Pöllänen 2024). Most respondents (61%) also consider that, in accordance with the EU strategy, it is important that when strengthening the defense industry, environmental sustainability criteria is taken into account.

Finns widely agree (79%) that, if US support decreases, member states and the EU must increase their defense expenditure. Out of the total 1,824 billion-euro [EU multiannual financial](#) framework for 2021-2027, only 13 billion is allocated for security and defense (Leino-Sandberg 2024). There is also an understanding (69%) that in order to support Ukraine and finance the EU common armament production, the EU budget should be increased, even if it means increasing the [EU membership fee](#) of Finland. This is noteworthy considering that Finland, like many other net-payer countries, has traditionally been critical of the EU as a "transfer union" where wealth is redistributed from wealthier countries to poor countries. Historically, this view has been shared across the political spectrum (Lehtinen and Raunio 2024).

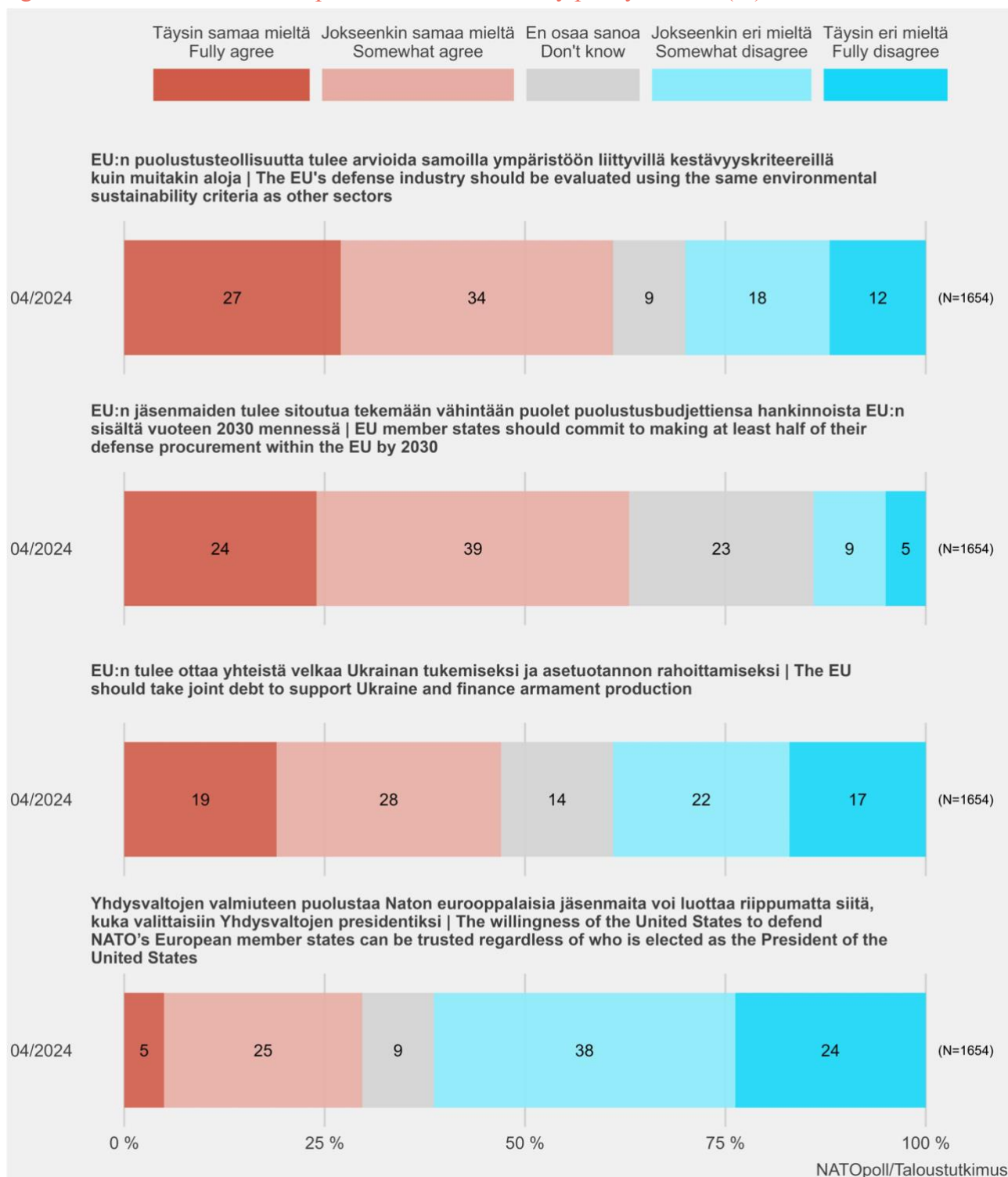
There are clearly more reservations towards taking joint debt to finance aid to Ukraine and strengthening the European defense industry. However, the proportion of supporters is higher than opponents (47% vs. 39%), indicating that a relatively high share of respondents support joint debt for these purposes. It appears that feelings of solidarity towards Ukraine and the perception of the need for the EU member states to invest more in common security make respondents willing to accept an increase in the burden of membership fees.

While Finns generally tend to hold negative views towards public debt, joint debt is not rejected to finance these goals (Ronkainen 2022). The data collected and used to compliment the analysis of our results shows that voters of the Green League (60%) and the Swedish People's Party (60%) are the most supportive towards shared debt among EU member states, while voters of the Christian Democrats (30%) and Finns Party (33%) are most critical of it. These findings are largely in line with the responses of European Parliament candidates in *Helsingin Sanomat's* voting advice application, although in the application, candidates were asked about their views on joint EU debt on a general level, rather than specifically in relation to Ukraine and the EU's armament production (Helsingin Sanomat 2024c). In Yle's European Parliament election debate, Prime Minister Petteri Orpo also stated that joint EU debt may be acceptable if no alternative to finance support for Ukraine is found (Yle 2024b). However, the discussions on joint debt in the context of the European Parliament elections has obscured the fact that the EU has already taken on significant joint debt to support Ukraine (Ronkainen 2024b).

Another similar insight relates to the debate on the reform of the EU's decision-making structure. The EU's founding treaties require unanimity of the member states in decisions on the EU's foreign, security and defense policy. In the spring of 2022, following the corona pandemic and Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the large member countries France, Germany and Italy highlighted the need to revise the founding treaties to enable the transition to majority voting (Yle 2022). For a decision to be approved

through a qualified majority, 55 percent of member states, representing at least 65 percent of the EU population should support it. At the time, 13 small member states, including Finland, published a statement opposing the motion to move to majority voting. In our survey, over two-thirds of respondents (69%) support moving to qualified majority voting. Although the question in the survey is not specifically framed in relation to security policy, it could be assumed that the difficulties surrounding decision-making on Ukraine's aid packages at the EU level have made vulnerability of unanimous decision-making in the Union's institutional architecture visible to citizens. There are inherent tradeoffs between majoritarian voting and unanimity, between easy decision making and the veto power of sovereign states to joint decisions.

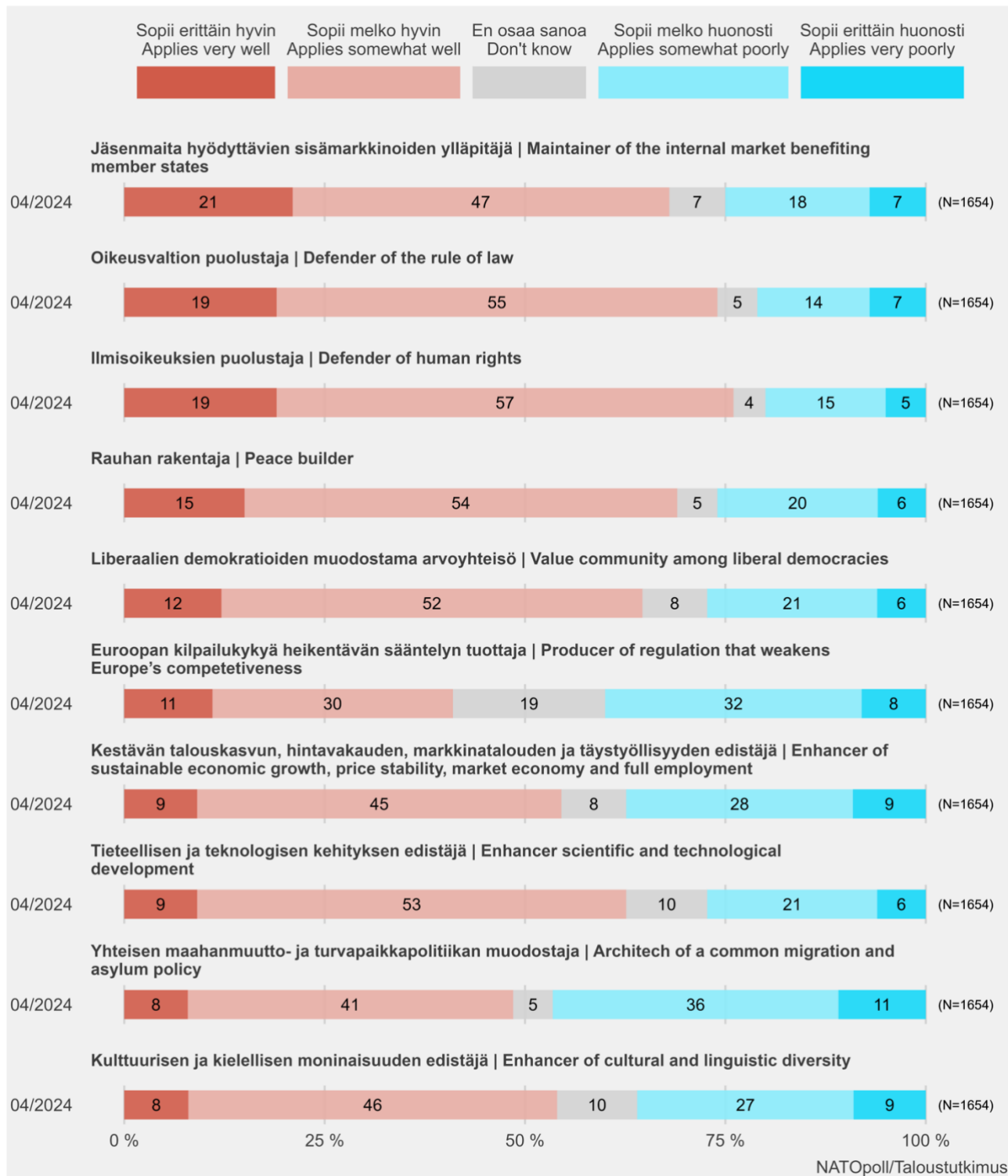
Figure 4b. Preferences for Europe's defense and security policy choices (%).



Finns also strongly support (73%) the EU's efforts to regulate artificial intelligence (Hiltunen 2024) (Figure 4a). Artificial intelligence can also be used for defense purposes, for example for autonomous drones. In this regard, it is worth noting that the development and use of artificial intelligence for defense purposes has practically been excluded from the scope of EU's artificial intelligence legislation (European Commission 2024) and is thus largely regulated through national legislation.

Perceptions of EU policy missions

Figure 5a. Perceptions of EU policy missions (%).



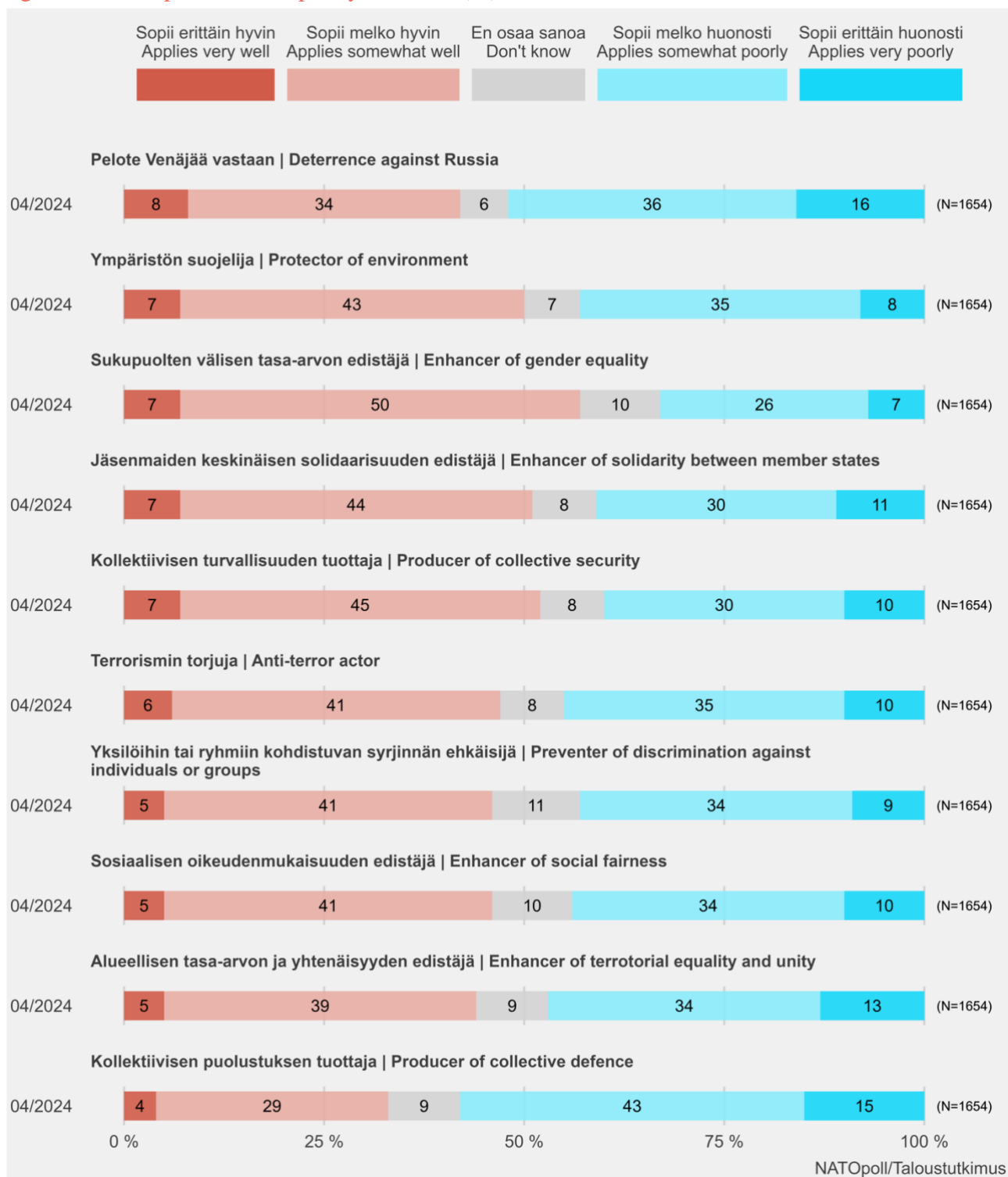
In Figure 5a and 5b, respondents were asked to provide their view on 20 descriptions of the tasks of the EU. The definitions were taken from the EU's own description of its aims and values (European Union 2024b) listed in Article 3 of the Treaty of Lisbon. While all member states have committed to

complying with the core values of the EU, including respect for human dignity and human rights, individual freedom, equality, democracy, the rule of law and the rights of minorities, in recent years these core values have also been challenged or directly violated from within the EU. In 2012, the EU received the Nobel Peace Prize. However, in recent years the Union's own core value base has also been eroded especially due to its immigration policies and issues linked to asylum processes. As well as the funds of the [European Peace Facility](#) (EPF), founded in 2021 to prevent conflicts, is used to provide military equipment to Ukraine in the wake of Russia's invasion. (Sormunen 2024; Tuominen 2024). The EU membership negotiations with Ukraine and Moldova, initiated in December 2023, demonstrate the importance placed on shared values as a requirement for membership.

During Ursula von der Leyen's presidency, the EU has sought to portray itself as a promoter of democracy and rule of law by actions such as organizing citizens' panels as part of the Conference on the Future of Europe, preparing the Defence of Democracy package to tackle the threat of foreign interference, and by updating its anti-corruption legislation (European Parliament 2024b). Strengthening the EU's social dimension has also been strongly on the current Commission's agenda, and in the field of social and equality policy, a number of instruments and initiatives have been presented and approved (Elomäki 2024). Finns widely view the EU as a defender of the rule of law (74%) and human rights (76%), a peace builder (69%), and a value community among liberal democracies (64%). During the financial crisis and the corona pandemic, particularly Southern European member states highlighted the role of the Union in the production of shared responsibility and equality. This characterization is perceived as quite important by respondents: 51 percent view the EU as an enhancer of solidarity between member states, and slightly less than half of respondents considered that the task of the EU also extends to enhancing social fairness (46%) and territorial equality and unity (44%). Almost half (46%) of respondents express that the social dimensions of the union include tasks to prevent discrimination against individuals or groups.

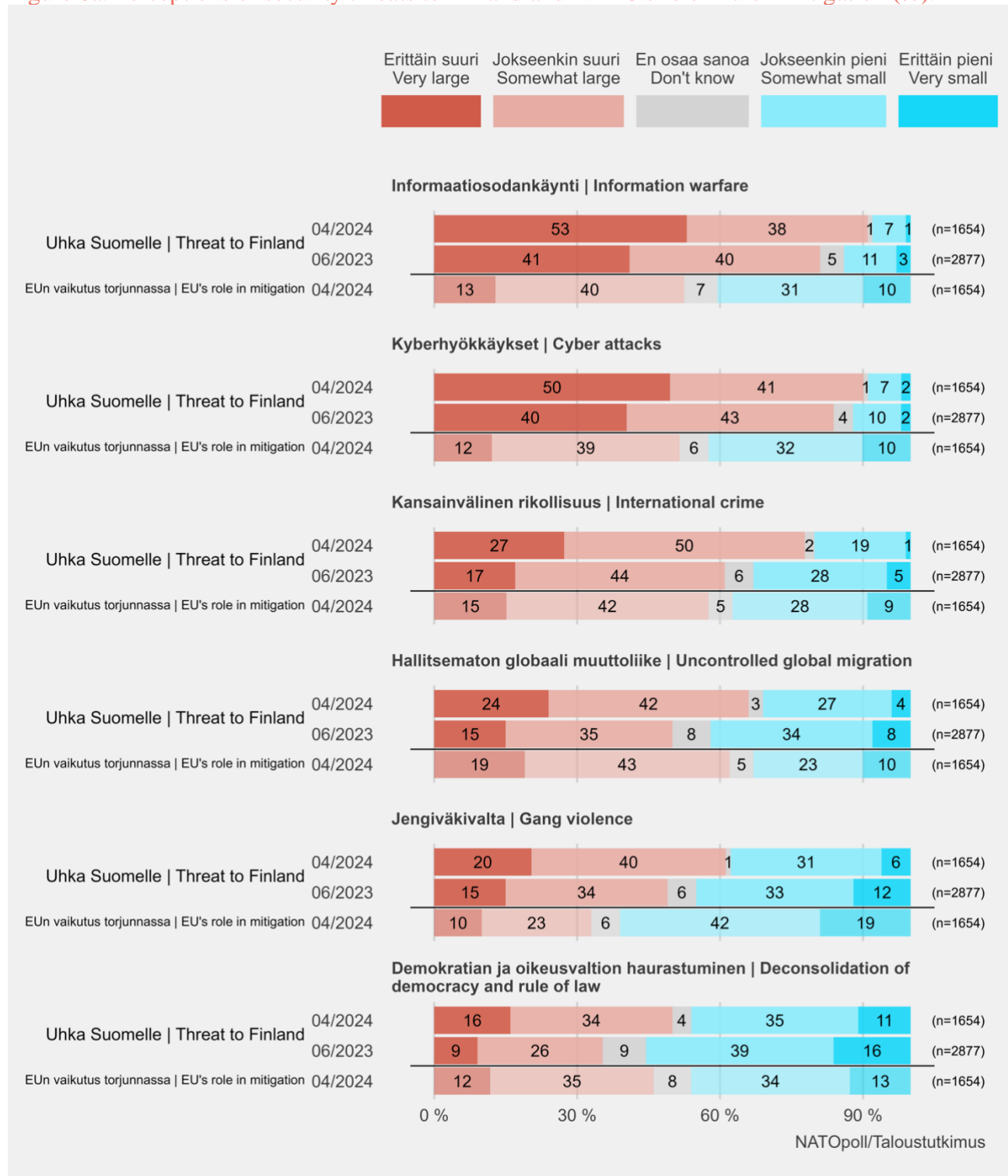
In addition to these traditional interpretive frameworks emphasizing the EU as a project of peace and solidarity, many respondents also consider the EU as a producer of collective security (52%), an anti-terrorist actor (47%) and as a provider of deterrence against Russia (42%). One third of respondents view the EU as a producer of collective defense. The Finnish wording of the survey suggests that "collective defense" implies a military connotation, whereas "collective security" implies a broader set of security concerns beyond military threats.

Figure 5b. Perceptions of EU policy missions (%).



Perceptions of security threats to Finland and NATO's role in their mitigation

Figure 6a. Perceptions of security threats to Finland and NATO's role in their mitigation (%).



Figures 6a and 6b examine respondents' views on the threats facing Finland and the EU's role in combating them. The possible threats included in the list are the same as those used in our survey conducted in June 2023. In that survey, respondents were asked to evaluate NATO's role in responding

to possible threats (Wass et al. 2023; Amadae et al. 2023). The responses in the newest survey emphasize respondent's worries about non-military threats. In comparison to the responses from a year ago, there has been a reduction in the perception of threat of armed attack on Finland. However, across many other threat domains the threat perception has increased. The share of respondents who consider an armed attack on Finland to be a large or somewhat large threat has decreased in a year (25% vs. 32%). There has been a slight decrease in the percentage of Finns who consider being threatened with weapons of mass destruction (WMD) to pose a high risk to Finland (7% vs. 10%); yet overall the respondents consistently report a worry about a WMD threat to be very large or somewhat large (37% in both the June 2023 and April 2024 surveys).

In all other domains of threat perception respondents report increased worries. These include (Figure 6a) information war (2024: 91% versus 2023: 81); cyberattacks (2024: 91%; 2023: 83%), international crime (2024: 77%; 2023: 61%), uncontrolled global migration (2024: 66%; 2023: 50%), gang violence (2024: 60%; 2023: 49%), and deconsolidation of democracy and the rule of law (2024: 50%; 2023: 35%). This also holds true (Figure 6b) for environmental catastrophes (2024: 47%; 2023: 39%), trade wars (2024: 52%; 2023: 45%), and destruction of critical infrastructure (2024: 39%; 2023: 36%). Respondents report a relatively high confidence in the EU's role in mitigating comprehensive security threats: environmental catastrophe (44%), trade wars (65%), information warfare (53%), cyberattacks (51%), international crime (57%), uncontrolled migration (62%), and deconsolidation of democracy and the rule of law (47%). This can be contrasted with the respondents' confidence in the EU's role in combatting traditional military threats: armed attack on Finland (40%), threats with weapons of mass destruction (37%) and critical infrastructure (35%).

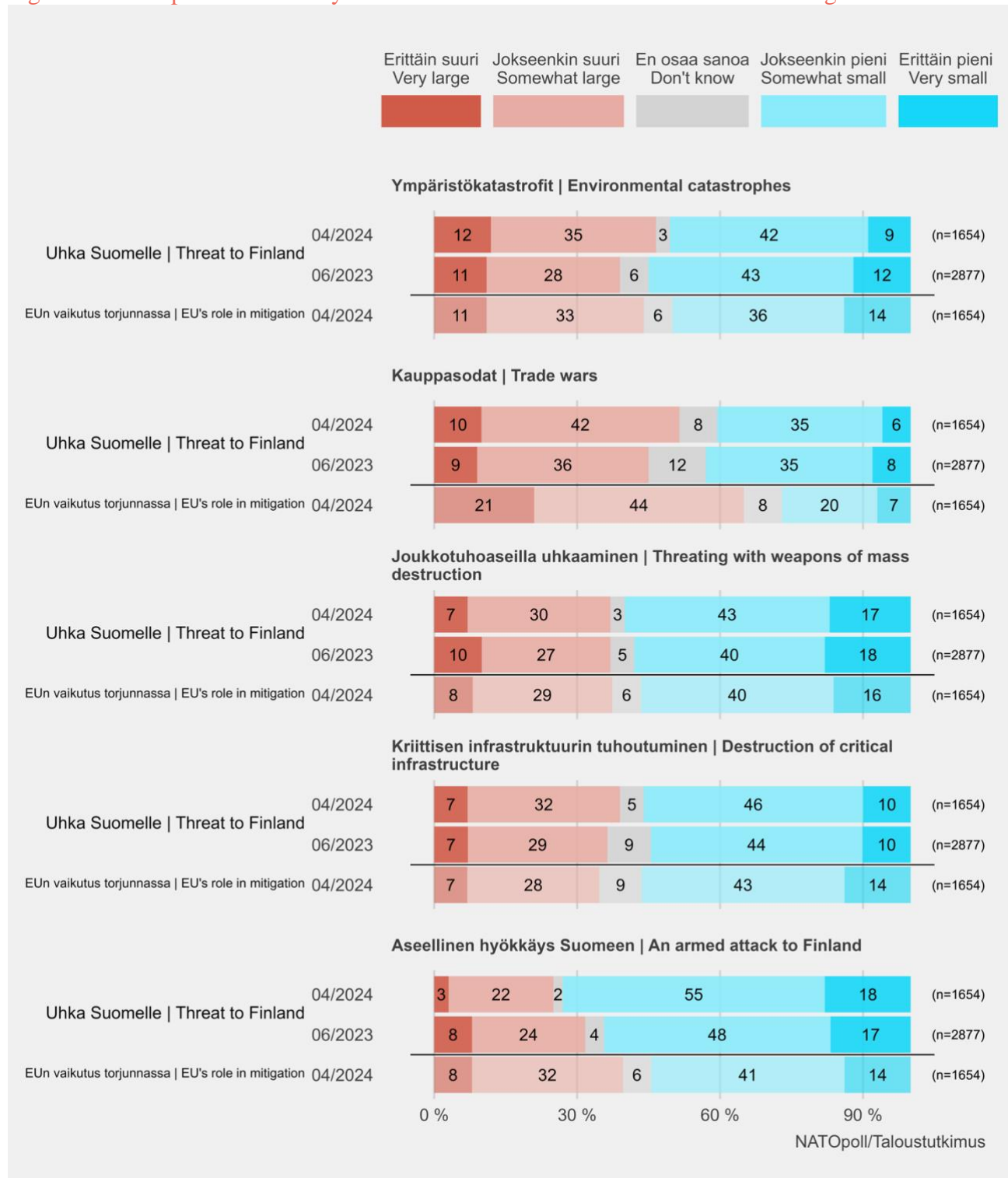
In the summer of 2023, respondents reported on their perceptions of NATO's role in mitigating the same comprehensive security threats: environmental catastrophe (12%), trade wars (17%), information warfare (38%), cyberattacks (42%), international crime (19%), uncontrolled migration (16%), and deconsolidation of democracy and the rule of law (18%). They reported on their perceptions of NATO's role in combatting traditional military threats: armed attack on Finland (82%), threats with weapons of mass destruction (76%) and critical infrastructure (38%). These numbers suggest that respondents perceive a division of labor between the EU, with a focus on comprehensive security threat mitigation, and NATO with a focus on traditional military threat mitigation. However, it is interesting that while attacks on a NATO member's cyber security fall under article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty (NATO 2023), trust in the ability of the EU to tackle these issues is clearly higher than the perceptions of NATO's capability in this area in the survey of summer 2023 (38% and 42%, see Wass et al. 2023; Amadae et al. 2023). This may reflect the active efforts of the Union in this field (European Parliament 2024b).

One explanation for the decreased worry of an armed attack on Finland may be Finland's NATO membership and the associated security guarantees. Eighty four percent of Finns consider NATO membership to have increased Finland's security (see figure 3a). As perceptions of existential threats to Finland's sovereign territory from military attack weaken, attention is drawn to other threats including uncontrollable migration, gang violence, and deconsolidation of democracy and the rule of law. The reduction in the perceived threat to Finland by military attack may also be explained by the news coverage of the war in Ukraine. During the past winter, there were no major changes in the

frontline situation in Ukraine, which decreased media visibility of the war. This can also have reduced the concerns about the war expanding to Finland.

Finns are also increasingly worried about international phenomena. International crime is considered a major threat by 77 percent, uncontrolled global migration by 66 percent, and trade wars by 55 percent of respondents. The share of those who fear the first two categories has increased by almost 20 percentage points from a year ago. The perceptions of threat of uncontrolled migration have likely been influenced by the public debate about Russia instrumentalizing migration. After August 2023, 1,300 third-country nationals arrived in Finland without a visa. The Finnish government responded to the perceived threat by closing the eastern border for the time being (Valtioneuvosto 2024). The EU has sought to increase its operational capacity in managing its external borders and to harmonize the asylum procedure across its member states (European Council 2024; Sormunen 2024). This can be reflected in the relatively high level of trust of respondents in the EU's role in combating the threat of uncontrolled immigration (62%).

Figure 6b. Perceptions of security threats to Finland and NATO's role in their mitigation.



In dealing with the border situation and in connection with the preparation of an act on temporary measures to combat instrumentalized migration, the Finnish government has had to evaluate the relationship between the mitigation of threats and Finland's obligations regarding the constitution and international human rights treaties. This may have contributed to the significantly increased fear of the fragility of democracy and the rule of law (50% in 2024 vs. 37% in 2023). In Europe, these concerns

of the breakdown of democratic norms and the rule of law have been observed especially with regard to Poland and Hungary. Also, the increased public debate about media freedom and the constitutional amendment guaranteeing the independence of the judiciary (Helsingin Sanomat 2024a) may have strengthened citizens' views that democracy and the rule of law cannot be taken for granted in Finland either. Although the EU emphasizes democracy and rule of law as its core values (Tuominen 2024), less than half (47%) of the respondents consider that the EU has a significant role in combatting these threats. The proportion of those who consider gang violence (60%) and environmental disasters (47%) to be a major threat has also increased. The EU's role in combating these threats is perceived as rather small (33% and 44%), which is somewhat surprising considering that in public debate, Finland is often compared to other EU member states, such as Sweden and France.

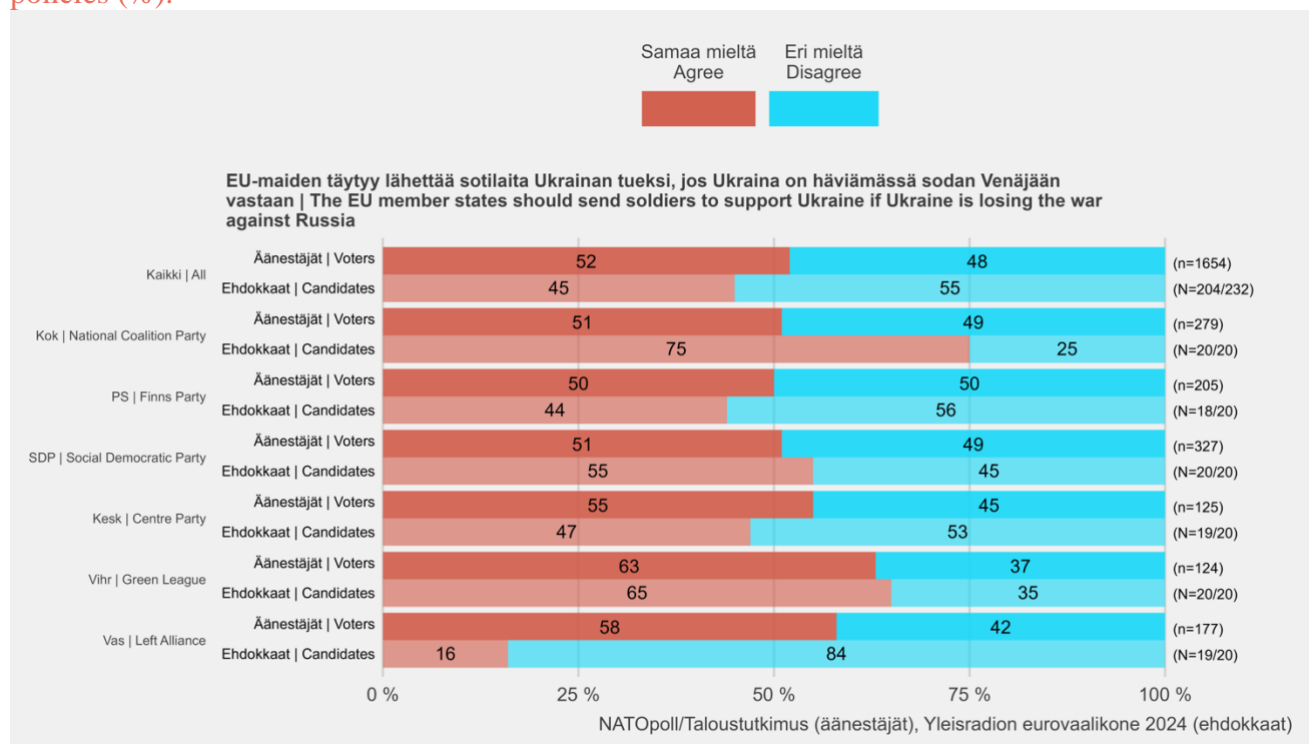
Congruence between party voters' and EP election candidates' views on foreign and security policies

Figures 7a–7c examine the views of voters and of European Parliament election candidates on current European foreign and security policy issues. The views of the candidates have been taken from their responses in the Yle voting advice application (VAA), in which the response options were “yes” or “no”. To make comparison of the views possible, the questions made to the respondents of our NATOpoll survey were formulated in an identical format to those in the VAA. When comparing candidates and voters, it should be noted that the sample size for the candidates is rather small especially when parties are compared. As one party can have no more than 20 candidates, we cannot claim the views of the candidates to be representative of their entire party because a different constellation of candidates would likely have resulted in a slightly different distribution of responses. For the same reason, we also cannot draw conclusions about what explains the differences between citizens' and candidates' views. Hence, we do not know whether these differences are due to the fact that those who get nominated as candidates for EP candidates might be different than citizens on average, or the fact that only a small number of citizens ever gets nominated as candidates.

The aim of the comparison between the views of respondents and candidates therefore is only to illustrate what the candidates representing the different parties in these specific European Parliament elections think about the issues related to the EU's foreign and security policy and how these compare to the views of the voters of their party, regardless of what explains the observed differences. The party affiliation of voters was defined based on which party they would vote for if national parliamentary elections were held today. We defined the party affiliation based on the Finnish parliamentary elections instead of the European Parliament elections because many people do not vote in European elections.

Yle's voting advice application includes almost all Finnish candidates in the European Parliament elections. In the analysis of candidate responses, we can therefore ignore the error margin, which is a challenge in statistical reasoning. With regards to the sample of voters, sample size for voters of smaller parties is rather limited, which is why we only report on our findings on the views of the candidates and voters of the six biggest parties. The comparison of all voters and candidates also includes the smaller parties.

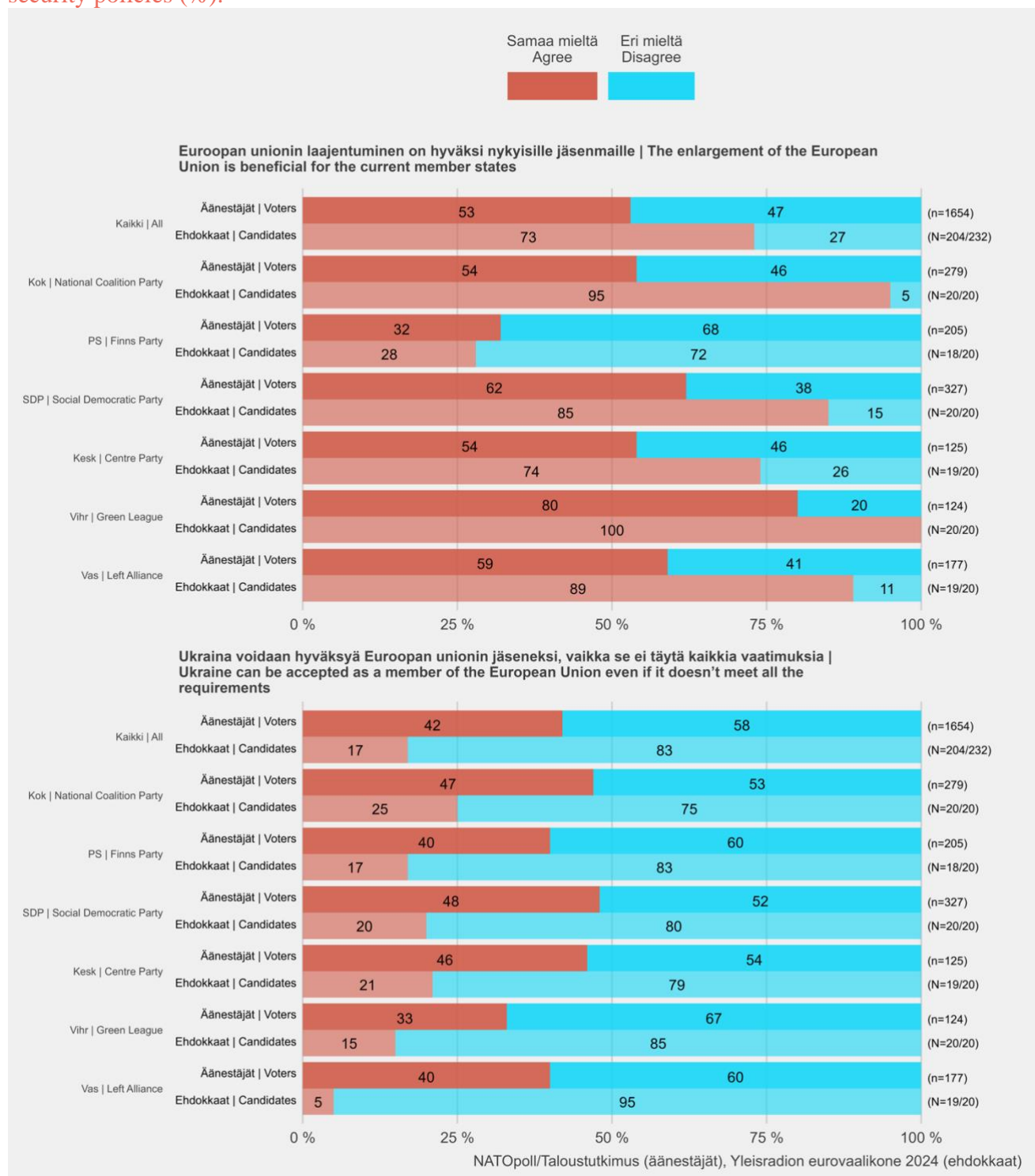
Figure 7a. Congruence between party voters' and EP election candidates' views on foreign and security policies (%).



The views of voters and candidates in the European Parliament elections are rather similar when it comes to views EU members sending soldiers to support Ukraine if it is losing the war against Russia: most voters (52%) and less than half of the candidates (48%) are in favor (Figure 7a). The debates about sending foreign troops to Ukraine to support the country's defense efforts have increased over the course of the spring 2024, particularly following French President Emmanuel Macron's comments on the possibility of sending soldiers to Ukraine (Yle 2024c). The most significant difference in the opinions of the voters and the candidates on this issue are found in the Left Alliance. 58 percent of Left Alliance voters agree with the statement, while only 16 percent of the candidates support it. The situation is reverse between the National Coalition Party voters and candidates: three quarters of candidates and only a narrow majority of voters (51%) agree with sending soldiers to Ukraine. Out of all the parties, the views of voters and candidates of the Green League are the closest to each other (63% and 65%).

The most significant differences between the views of candidates and voters relate to the enlargement of the European Union (Figure 7b). There are nine current candidate countries, including several Western Balkan countries, Ukraine, and Turkey (Eurooppatiedotus 2024). Over half (53%) of the voters and almost three quarters of the candidates (73%) consider the enlargement of the Union to be beneficial for the current member states. The views of voters and candidates are most similar among the traditionally European Union skeptical Finns Party (32% and 28%). The Finns Party is the only party where voters are less critical of the benefits of EU enlargement than the candidates. The biggest differences in the views of the voters and the candidates can be found in the National Coalition Party where 54 percent of the voters and 95 percent of the candidates consider the enlargement of the Union to be beneficial for current member states.

Figure 7b. Congruence between party voters' and EP election candidates' views on foreign and security policies (%).



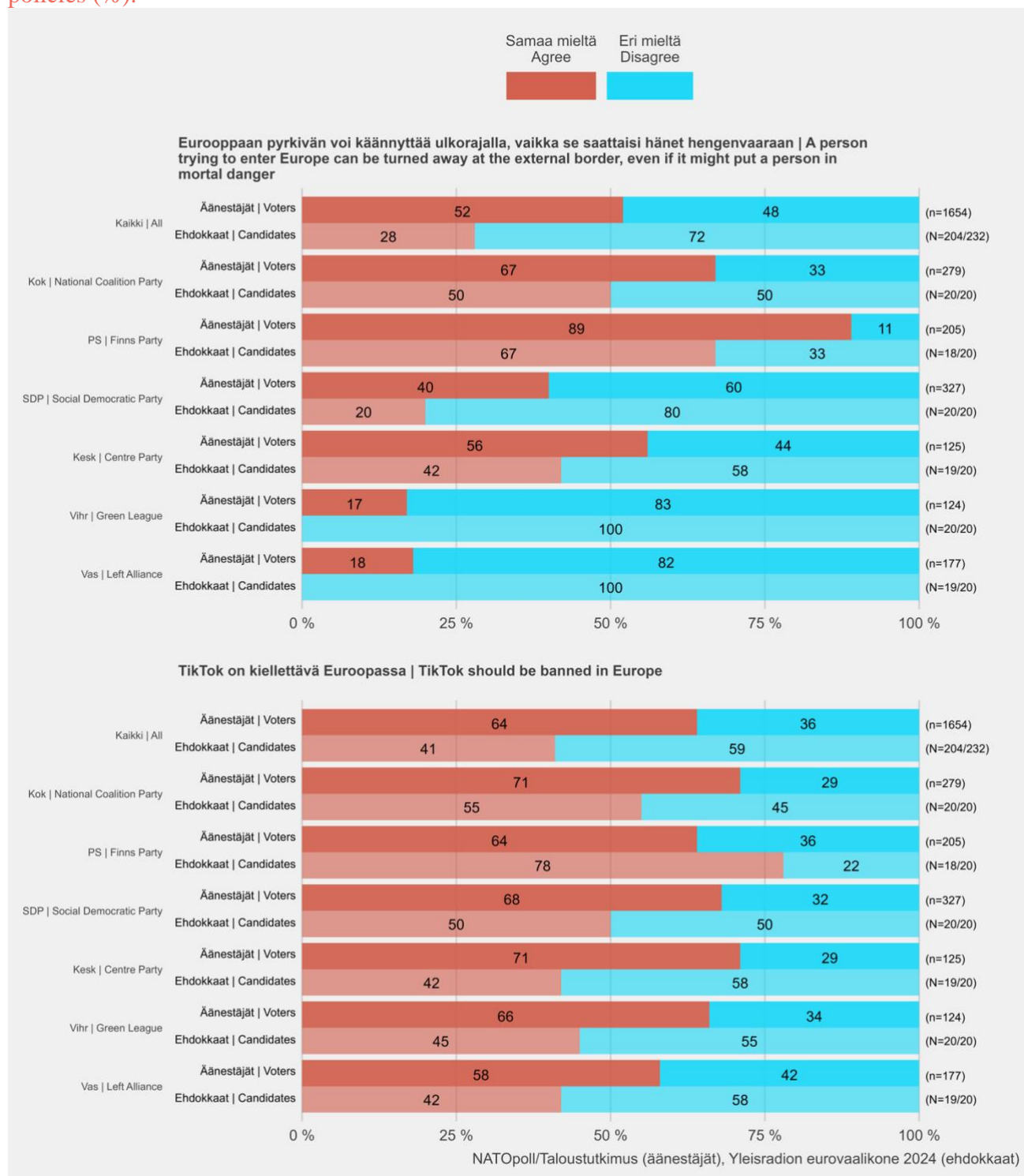
The differences of views between voters and candidates increase in relation to the question of whether Ukraine can be accepted as an EU member even if it does not meet all the requirements. Overall, 42 percent of the voters and 17 percent of the candidates agree with the statement. The biggest difference in views is found among voters and candidates of the Left Alliance, whose candidates have the most reservations about Ukraine's membership. Only five percent of the candidates support Ukraine's

membership, while support among the party's voters is 40 percent, i.e. close to the Finnish average. Out of the candidates, members of the National Coalition Party are the strongest supporters of Ukraine's EU membership, even if it does not meet all requirements. A quarter (25%) of the National Coalition's candidates and almost half (47%) of the voters back Ukraine's membership. In the Green League, voters and candidates are noticeably closer to each other than the average (difference of 18% points).

An even greater difference between the views of voters and candidates relates to whether people trying to enter Europe's external border can be turned away, even if it might put the person in mortal danger (Figure 7c). EU's goal to prevent people from reaching its external borders is evident in its current asylum policy. It has used mechanisms such as return arrangements, outsourcing of border control and the partnership agreement with Tunisia (Sormunen 2024). A narrow majority of the voters (52%), and only one quarter of candidates (28%) agree with the statement. The statement generates highest support from the Finns Party. Eighty-nine percent of voters and 67 percent of candidates of Finns Party agree with the statement. Candidates of the Green League and the Left Alliance most strongly disagree, and no candidates from these parties support turning away people at the external border. However, 17 percent of Green League and 18 percent of Left Alliance voters are in favor of the statement.

The differences of views of candidates and voters on whether TikTok should be banned in Europe are also significant. This issue became salient in public debate in January 2024 following a proposal by National Coalition Party MP and European Parliament candidate Aura Salla to consider banning TikTok in the EU (Salla 2024). Nearly two thirds of voters (64%) and over two fifths of the candidates (41%) agree with the statement. The biggest differences of opinion can be found in the Centre Party, where 71 percent of the voters and 42 percent of the candidates agree. Differences of opinion are smallest among the Finns Party: almost two thirds of (64%) voters and three quarters (78%) of candidates support banning TikTok in Europe.

Figure 7c. Congruence between party voters' and EP election candidates' views on foreign and security policies (%).



Conclusions

The European Parliament elections in June 2024 are being held in a context of multifaceted challenges. During the last year and a half, the economies of the member states have been affected by slow economic growth, inflation and high interest rates, the effects of which have been compensated for up to now by a stimulating finance policy. The Ukraine war has been linked to economic shock, inflation, and slowed down economic growth (Papunen 2024). A return to common macroeconomic rules may slow down growth or in worst case, push Europe into recession. China and the United States are strongly supporting their national industries and production, and the EU is trying to reform its policy on economic state aid to address the intensifying geopolitical competition. This is especially critical in relation to the green transition, where the US Inflation Reduction Act has played an important role in prompting global competition in this area. Similarly, through its Belt and Road initiative, China has made considerable investments in countries of the Global South and in this way, it has economically bound them to itself. In the geopolitical competition, Europe lags behind both the United States and China, which can be seen, for example, in its lower levels of strategically important technology, the share of people with higher education, and patent applications (Ronkainen 2024b).

At the same time, the responsibility for supporting Ukraine is increasingly shifting to the EU, which is simultaneously working to develop its own defense industries. Responding to these perceived needs may require a significant increase in the Union's budget or taking on more joint debt in the next few years. This goal may, however, collide with the election victory of anti-EU national conservative parties in the European Parliament elections. How can the EU remain internally functional in order to remain a significant actor in a world with a rapidly changing balance of power? One possibility is that the Union may shift its portfolio of activities toward a greater emphasis on solutions to multifaceted security needs of its members. Placing a greater emphasis on collective security concerns might also be acceptable to the far-right parties and their voters. Alternatively, a change in the political power relations within the EU could also lead to difficulty in decision-making. For example, supporting Ukraine could be increasingly left to NATO, which may leave it vulnerable to the internal political development of the United States. Decisions will need to be made about the ultimate aim of NATO's and the EU's defensive support for Ukraine, and whether the aim to defeat and repel the Russian invading forces and to extend NATO membership to Ukraine would be worth any level of commitment regardless of the risks, costs and tradeoffs. How these decisions will be made within sovereign states and the European Union and North Atlantic Treaty Organization remains to be seen, and public opinion will play an important role.

In this Policy Brief 1/24 we examined Finns' views on national security and defense policy decisions, the EU's foreign, security and defense policy role, as well as the security threats facing Finland and the perceived role of the EU in responding to them. The information is based on survey data collected in June and November 2023 and in April 2024. One key finding is that citizens' views on security and defense policy have not significantly changed over the past year. The support for Finland's NATO membership is solid and opposition is concentrated among citizens who consider themselves to be on the very left of the political spectrum and those on the conservative end of the conservative-liberal spectrum. Over half (58%) of those who place themselves on the very left oppose NATO, while practically all the respondents that consider themselves to be on the right side of the right-left divide support the NATO membership. In Finland, polarization has become stronger in recent years (Kestilä-

Kekkonen et al. ed. 2024) and this development can also be observed in several issues related to the debate on NATO, even though traditionally there has been strong consensus regarding foreign and security policy in Finland (Pesu 2023). NATO membership is also perceived to have significantly increased Finland's security. This perception becomes understandable with the world political situation and the prolonged war in Ukraine. Despite Finland's current tense national economic situation, Finns are ready to pay the full price for NATO membership, i.e. at least the two percent of Gross Domestic Product required by NATO. The attitudes towards Finland's role as part of NATO's nuclear deterrent has not changed from the previous survey six months earlier even though Finland's nuclear weapons policy was a central theme in the presidential elections held in early 2024.

Citizens strongly support Finland's EU membership, although most voters of the Finns Party, Movement Now and small parties, oppose it. Similarly, only slightly over half of the supporters of Christian Democrats (53%) are in favor of EU membership. Finns are therefore divided into two camps along the lines of party affiliation in their views regarding EU membership. However, overall, support for the EU is surprisingly high considering that outside election season, public attention and party stances regarding the union tend to focus on major crises, such as the economic problems of the euro zone, the refugee crisis, Brexit, the corona stimulus package, and Russia's invasion of Ukraine. This relegates public discussion of the overall benefits of EU membership to a back seat (Lehtinen and Raunio 2024). However, the EU has also been able to marshal resources to tackle existential threats facing all of humankind, such as the climate crisis. This partly explains the current very positive attitude of both the Green League and the Left Alliance and their voters towards the Union.

Expectations of the EU vary. Many of the respondents in our survey view the EU as a value community that defends traditional democracy, the rule of law and human rights. However, the notions of the Union as an enhancer of solidarity between member states, as well as of regional equality and unity, and as a preventer of discrimination against individuals and groups, divide citizens more. This is despite the fact that the current EU Commission has sought to strengthen the social dimension of the EU (Elomäki 2024). The EU's role as a producer of collective security (52%), and also to some extent common defense (33%), is recognized by respondents. There is a broad consensus that the EU must take more responsibility for its own defense if the US withdraws support for Europe's defense, and for developing its armaments production. This has most obviously been influenced by the upcoming presidential elections in the United States taking place in the fall of 2024 and the possibility that Donald Trump, who has made critical and sometimes inconsistent statements about NATO, will be re-elected president.

Finns' support for Ukraine is very stable. This, together with the perceived need to develop EU armament production is seen to justify raising Finland's EU membership fee. Almost half of the respondents would be willing to take on more joint EU debt for the purpose of supporting Ukraine. In Finland, joint debt has become one of the central themes of the European Parliament elections (Ronkainen 2024a), alongside which there has also been discussion about enhancing the collection of the Union's own funds, for example in the form of payments and taxes. There is also a willingness to increase qualified majority decisions in the EU, which can be assumed to reflect the problems that have arisen especially in connection with the aid packages for Ukraine in the current decision-making structure of the Union, where the unanimous consent of the member states is required on foreign policy issues.

Finns also widely support (63%) the goal included in the EU's defense industrial strategy that the member states spend at least half of their defense budget on procurements from within the EU by 2030. This may prove to be difficult to achieve because currently [63% of EU member states' defense expenditures](#) go to the US, and [78% to outside the EU](#). Investing in national production capacity is also justified from the point of view of national security of supply. For example, in terms of supporting Ukraine, it would be more effective if the member countries cooperated more in the production of materials.

Finns are willing to strengthen the EU's and member states' role in paying for their own defense needs in case of withdrawal of US support, in supporting Ukraine, and to increase their joint defense acquisitions. However, the threats that are perceived to be most severe are information warfare and cyberattacks, rather than an armed attack on Finland. International crime and uncontrolled migration also seem to increasingly worry Finns. Especially with regard to crime and migration, the EU is perceived to be able to produce solutions, which reflect the EU's actions in creating common asylum policy and the control of external borders (Sormunen 2024).

We also examined the differences in views of the voters and European Parliament election candidates of the various parties on issues related to the EU's foreign and security policy. On the question of whether the EU member states should send soldiers to support Ukraine in the case that they are losing the war against Russia, the opinions of respondents and candidates were relatively congruent when examined by party. However, this question strongly divides both the candidates and survey respondents across the board, and within parties: about half of both respondents and candidates support, and half oppose sending troops from EU countries to Ukraine. The candidates consider EU enlargement to be beneficial for the current member states more often than the survey respondents. In contrast, voters have a more positive attitude than the candidates towards Ukraine's EU membership even if it does not meet all requirements, turning away asylum seekers even if it poses a risk to their lives, and banning TikTok in Europe. Our survey is purely descriptive and only allows speculative interpretations of the reasons for the differences in opinion. One possible explanation for the differences in the opinions of voters and candidates could be, for example, that voters approach policy positions through achieving goals while candidates consider what is politically possible and realistic.

A main finding of this report is that Finns remain willing to pay for NATO, are willing to close their border if migration increased significantly, and that they find security and defense policy to be important. Another notable result is that whereas Finns are less worried about an armed attack on Finland's territory (25% in April 2024 versus 32% in June 2023), when considering respondents' threat perceptions across the board in other domains, including climate catastrophe, infrastructure attacks, and deconsolidation of democracy and rule of law, levels of worry have risen. The EU is perceived as most capable of mitigating threats in the areas of trade war, uncontrolled migration and international crime. Finns are polarized as to whether to send EU member states' soldiers to Ukraine in the event of an impending military defeat by Russia. The 2024 European Parliament elections and the composition of the next Commission will play a central role with respect to the degrees of emphasis placed on the EU's multifaceted security policy stance, including shoring up hard military defenses, versus maintaining a broad mission portfolio traditionally dedicated to enhancing human welfare and the rights of its citizens.

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APPENDIX 1. Research data

The report is based on three different surveys designed by the research project “*Dynamic Support for Security and Defense Policy (NATOpoll)*” funded by the Kone Foundation. The first survey was collected by Taloustutkimus from June 8 to June 19, 2023. A total of 2,877 Finns aged 16 to 79 participated in the survey. The survey was conducted in Taloustutkimus’ permanent internet panel, from which a sample was selected based on age, gender, and region. The lower response rate of younger age groups was addressed by inviting more representatives of this age group to participate. Regarding the geographical area aspect, the panel focuses on cities and urban areas. As to the socioeconomic status of respondents, those who had vocational education and those working in manual labor are underrepresented. Moreover, there are less entrepreneurs within the respondents than their share of the population. These material biases were taken to account by weighing these results to correspond with the population statistics on age, gender, and place of residence. The margin of error is approximately +/- 1.8 percentage points.

We first asked respondents to state their stance on Finland’s NATO membership if a referendum on the topic were to be held today. Following this, we asked the respondents to express their opinion on eight statements that reflected the possible policies that Finland could promote following the NATO membership. We examined the political frames linked to NATO by inquiring how accurately 11 different statements of NATO’s missions described the nature of the alliance as an actor. Additionally, we asked the respondents to evaluate the significance of 11 security threats for Finland, and NATO’s role in the mitigation of these threats. We also asked how much the respondents were personally willing to pay annually to assure that Finland’s defense capability is credible and sufficiently resourced in the opinion of NATO, the Finnish Defense Forces, and experts. Finally, the respondents were asked to answer a broad range of questions regarding their political affiliation, ideological orientation, and social status.

The second round of data collection was carried out between November 10 and 23, 2023. The survey, carried out through the in Taloustutkimus’ permanent internet panel, was conducted only with respondents who had taken the first round of the survey in June 2023. A total of 2,038 Finns aged 17 to 79 participated in the survey. This is 71 percent of the respondents of the first survey. The material biases were considered by weighing responses to correspond with the population statistics on age, gender, and place of residence in the first survey. The margin of error is approximately +/- 2.2 percentage points. Some of the questions in the second round were the same as in the first round. Additionally, new questions on current security and defense policy themes were included. Some of these questions were the same as those in voting advice application by Helsingin Sanomat. We also asked about respondents’ views on the role of the state and perceptions of democracy. A conjoint survey experiment was also included, presenting respondents with two cards at a time, each listing different features related to the state’s security environment. The respondents had to choose the state in which they would prefer to live. Like in the first round, the survey concluded with a comprehensive set of questions measuring respondent’ political affiliations, ideological orientations, and social positions. Questions about national identity were also included.

The third round of data collection was carried out between April 18 and 24, 2023. As in the second round in November 2024, the third round was carried out through the in Taloustutkimus’ permanent

internet panel, only with respondents who had taken the first round of the survey in June 2023. A total of 1,654 Finns aged 17 to 79 participated in the survey, which is 57 percent of the respondents of the first survey and 81 percent of the second one. The respondents are weighed by the population statistics on age, gender, and place of residence to correspond with the first survey. The margin of error is approximately +/- 2.6 percentage points. Some of the questions in the third round were the same as in the first and second round. Additionally, new questions on current security and defense policy themes, artificial intelligence, and especially questions of the EU's role as a foreign and security policy actor were included. Some of these questions were the same as those in voting advice application by Yle. We also examined the perceptions of the political frameworks linked to the EU by asking respondents to evaluate the importance of 20 different EU's policy missions. Like in the previous two rounds of data collection, the survey concluded with a comprehensive set of questions measuring respondent's political affiliations, ideological orientations, and social positions.



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