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ANALYSIS OF INTERVIEWS AIMED AT IDENTIFYING AND ADDRESSING HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES IN ARMENIAN MILITARY FORCES



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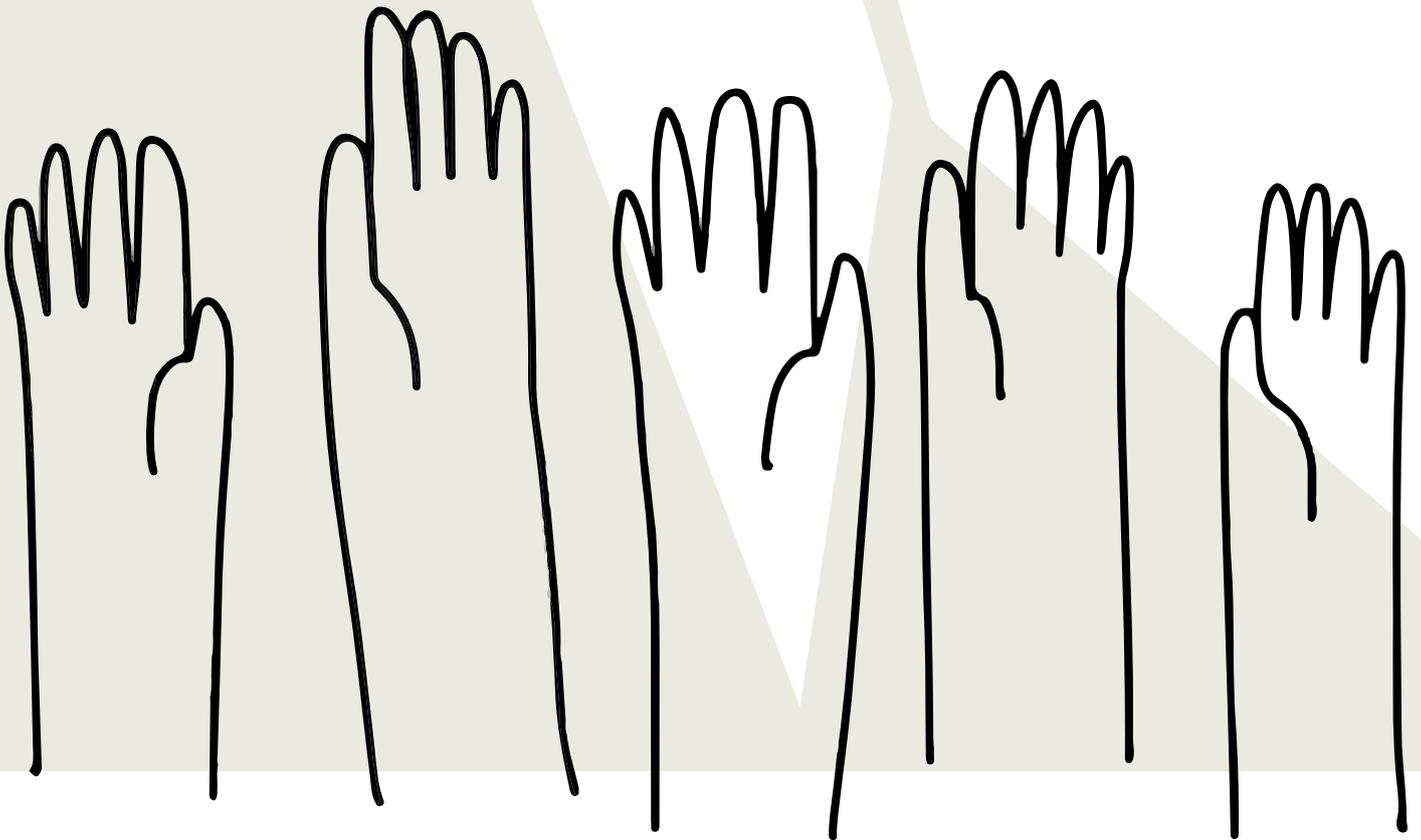
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ABSTRACT

A number of studies have been conducted and published regarding the state of human rights in the armed forces of Armenia, the problems in the army, and the attitude of citizens (including conscripts) toward military service. Unfortunately, some of the most critical issues in the military remain unresolved, and still there are numerous cases of gross human rights violations, also stemming from the lack of in-depth research and analysis about their causes.

This research and report, unlike other studies, is solely based on the interviews of the primary data carriers, citizens who have completed military service, and the results of those interviews. The research team interviewed 112 former conscripts, most of whom had served in the military within the last five years which suggests that the information they provided is relevant and up-to-date. Moreover, the vast majority of interviewees had also participated in military operations.

The research aims to reveal the servicemen's attitude towards military service, military staff, and fellow servicemen, as well as find out the manifestations of the most common human rights violations in the armed forces, opinions about the law enforcement agencies in the military sector, the reasons for those, and the effectiveness of particular institutions inlaid in the army. The collection, systematization, and analysis of data on the listed phenomena are aimed at creating an informational basis for solving various problems in the armed forces or, at least, for assisting further, more targeted, and in-depth research in this direction (including those conducted by the government agencies of the defense sector).

The interviews were carried out with a unique methodology by posing interrelated and complementary (checking) questions. The primary task was to get the most credible information from former servicemen by creating an frank and safe psychological atmosphere for communication. In several cases, the respondents refused to answer some questions, and the analysis shows that these are the questions perceived as **“dangerous”** by the former servicemen (for example, questions related to witnessing ill-treatment, or to those who committed it, etc.). Obviously, answering these questions would likely increase the proportion of negatively inclined data (survey results), not the other way around. However, the report's analyzes and conclusions were based only on the accurate responses.

The report is summarized with main conclusions based on the combined analysis of the interview results. The list of findings is not comprehensive, as the

collected data have essentially an ambiguous nature. Thus, their alternative study may lead to many other conclusions. In some cases, at first glance, it may seem that some conclusions are “well-known facts” about military service, but, firstly, their credibility does not cast any doubt; secondly, they reflect patterns, not unique cases; and lastly, they examine today’s military service itself, not to the realities of the past.

METHODOLOGY

To study the level of human rights protection in the Armenian Armed Forces, in May-July 2022, the monitoring group established in the scope of the initiative of the Peace Dialogue NGO, conducted surveys among citizens completed their compulsory military service.

The interviews were conducted using a questionnaire based on a previously developed methodology. The average length of an interview was approximately an hour. The respondents could avoid the questions they did not want to answer for some reason.

Surveys were conducted in Lori, Tavush, Shirak, Syunik, Kotayk, and Ararat regions of the Republic of Armenia and Yerevan city, with 112 citizens who served in the army between 2014 and 2022.

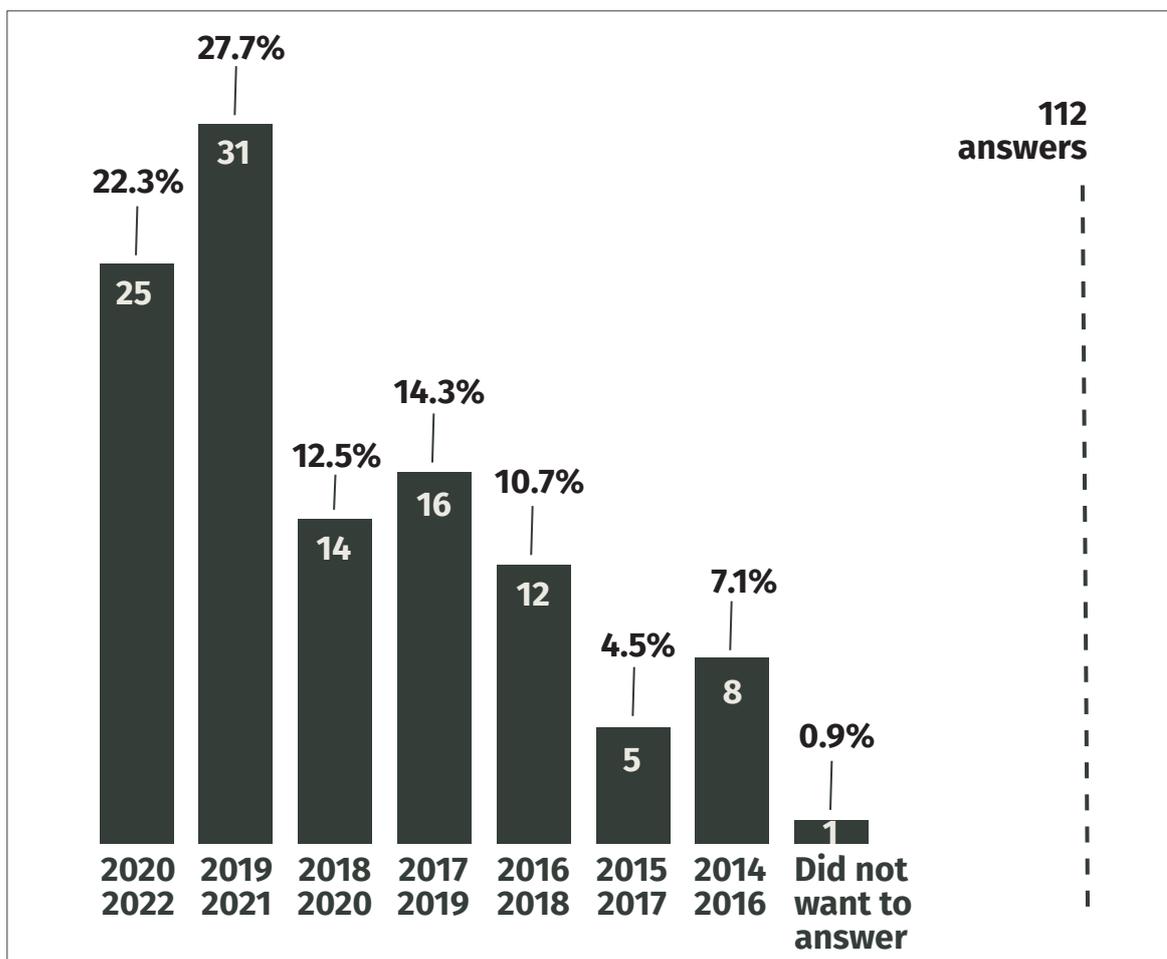
SURVEY PARTICIPANTS

The majority of 112 respondents (31 people) served in 2019-2021, 25 in 2020-2022, and 16 in 2017-2019. **See illustration 1.**

Distribution of the respondents according to the years of service:

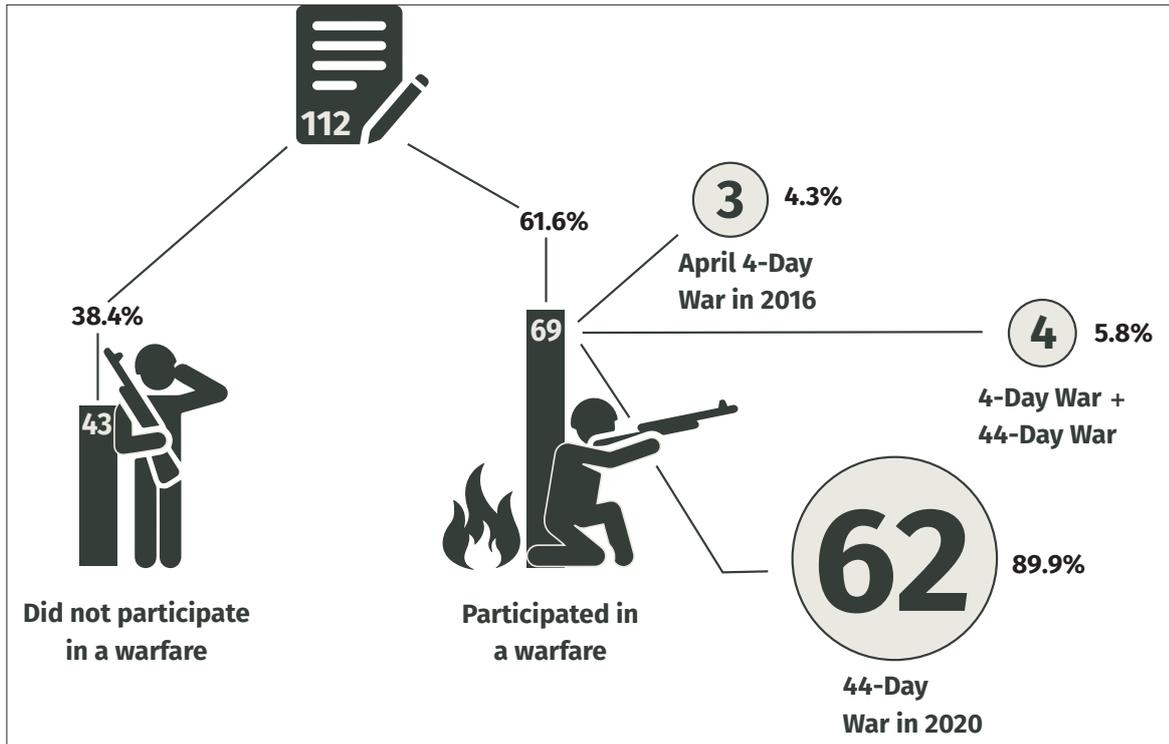
- 8 (7.1%) - 2014-2016,
- 5 (4.5%) - 2015-2017,
- 12 (10.7%) - 2016-2018,
- 16 (14.3%) - 2017-2019,
- 14 (12.5%) - 2018-2020,
- 31 (27.7%) - 2019-2021,
- 25 (22.3%) - 2020-2022,
- 1 (0.9%) - was reluctant to answer.

Illustration 1. Distribution of the respondents according to the years of service



Out of the citizens who participated in the survey, 69 (61.6%) were involved in military operations with different status (as conscripts, volunteers, or mobilized due the declared Martial Law). Among them, 3 respondents (4.3%) participated in the 2016 April Four-Day War, 62 (89.9%) in the 2020 44-Day War, and 4 (5.8%) took part in both. **See illustration 2.**

Illustration 2. The respondents' participation to military operations (armed conflicts)



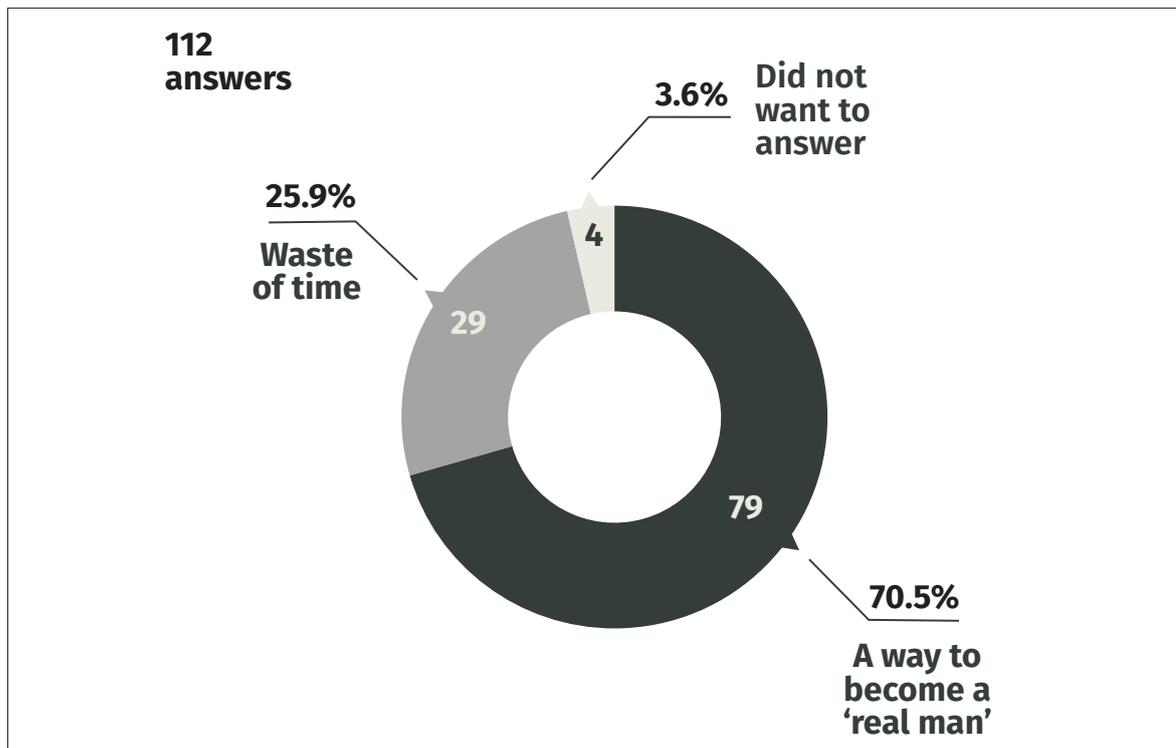
RESEARCH RESULTS

General opinion about military service

The first question of the pre-set questionnaire aimed to determine the respondents' attitudes toward military service. Out of 112 citizens:

- 79 (70.5%) stated that in their opinion, service is a way to become a 'real man';
- 29 (25.9%) considered military service a waste of time;
- 4 respondents (3.6%) did not want to answer this question. **See illustration 3.**

Illustration 3. Meaning of Military Service



Among the three most common answers to the question about the positive aspects of military service were the following:

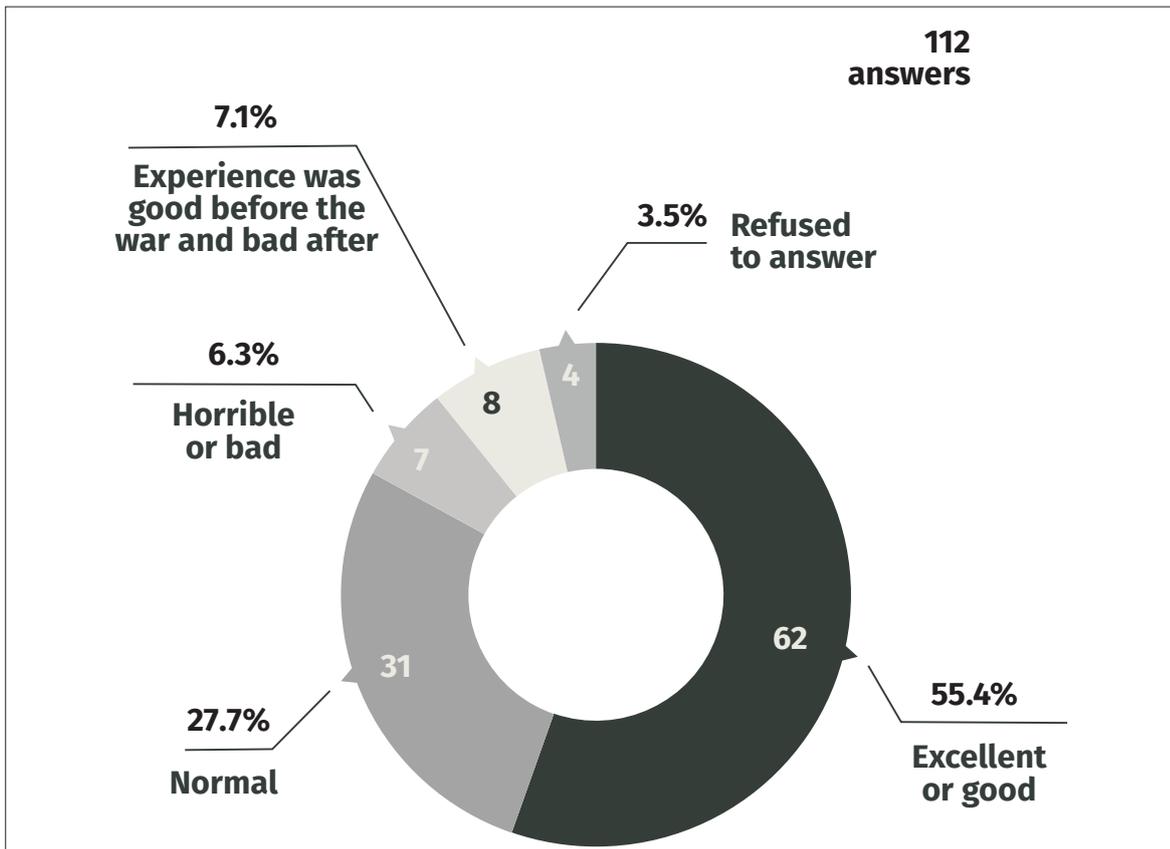
- Growing as an individual (68 persons, 60.7%);
- Getting new friends (31 persons, 27.7%);
- Protecting my homeland (9 persons, 8%).

Out of 112 respondents:

- 62 (55.4%) - considered their compulsory military service experience excellent or good;

- 31 (27.7%) - normal;
- 7 (6.3%) - horrible or bad. Notably, 8 (7%) respondents, who participated in military operations, stated that the experience was good before the war and bad afterwards. 4 people (3.6%) refused to answer the question about the quality of their military service. **See illustration 4.**

Illustration 4. How was your experience of compulsory military service?



Simultaneously, only 22 (20%) of the respondents expressed their willingness to serve again. 80 (71%) survey participants considered that they were not ready to serve for another two years. 10 respondents (9%) did not answer this question.

See illustration 5.

It should be noted that some of the respondents; however, stated that they would serve again in case of war, and some would serve for a shorter period.

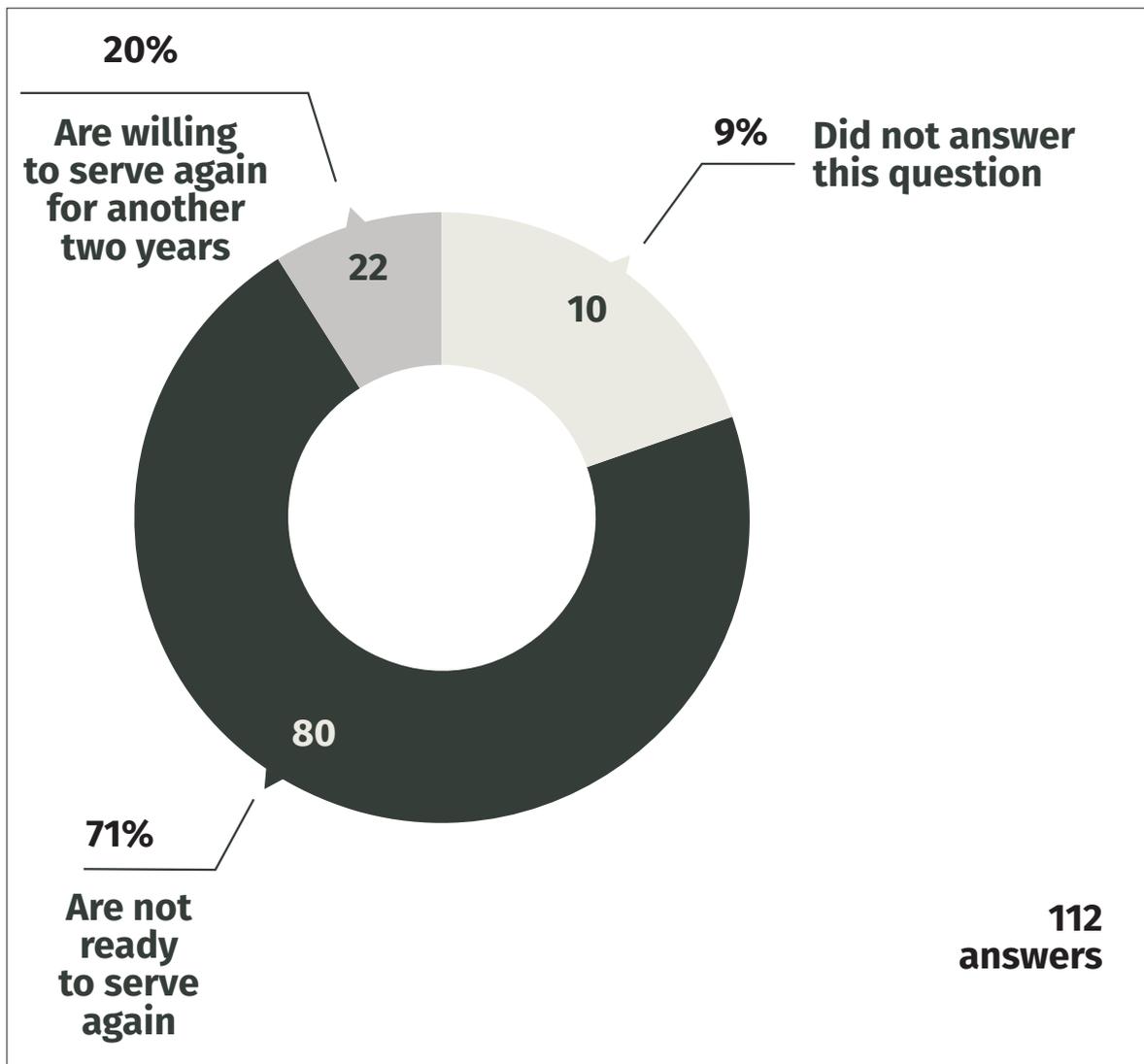
The leading answers to the question "What advice would you give to your brother or friend who is going to serve?" were as follows:

- "Be attentive" (36 people, 32.1%);
- "Follow orders" (19 people, 17%);
- "Stay the way you are" (16 people, 14.3%).

Among the frequently mentioned options were also:

- "Don't interfere in other people's problems" (13 people, 11.6%);
- "Be humble" (12 people, 10.7%);

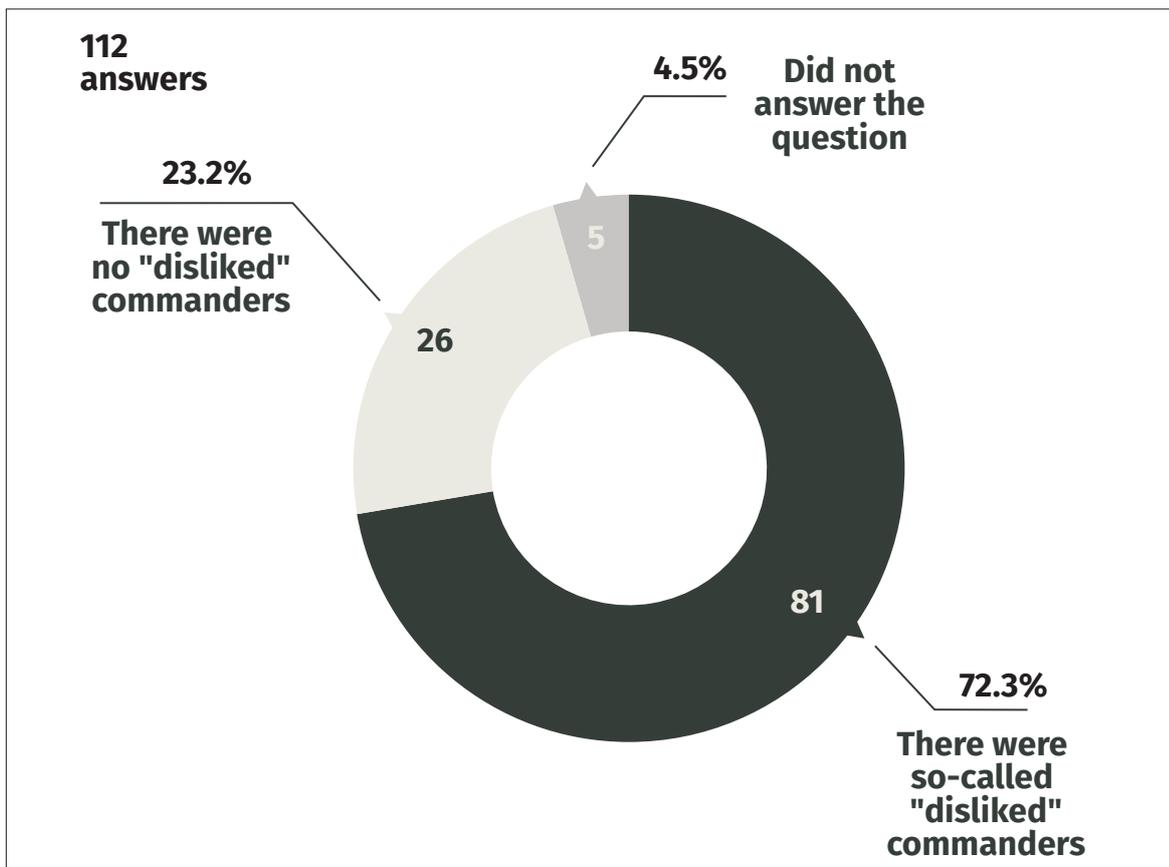
Illustration 5. Are you willing to serve for another two years?



Servicemen's Perceptions of Military Staff

81 out of 112 survey participants (72.3%) found that there were so-called “disliked” officers in their military unit during the service. The concept of “disliked” officers (commanders) referred to those officers who were rude to the soldiers, who cursed or hit them. 26 respondents (23.2%) stated that there were no such officers, 5 people (4.5%) did not answer the question. **See illustration 6.**

Illustration 6. Were there any “unpopular or disliked” commanders in your unit?



28 of the 81 respondents (34.6%) who gave an affirmative answer to the previous question did not want to specify the reason for the officers' such behavior. The most frequent answers to this question were the following:

- So that the soldiers do not become insolent (16 people, 19.8%);
- As a means of self-affirmation (11 people, 13.6%);
- Because of their personality (9 people, 11.1%);
- Due to witnessing the atrocities of war (6 people, 7.4%).

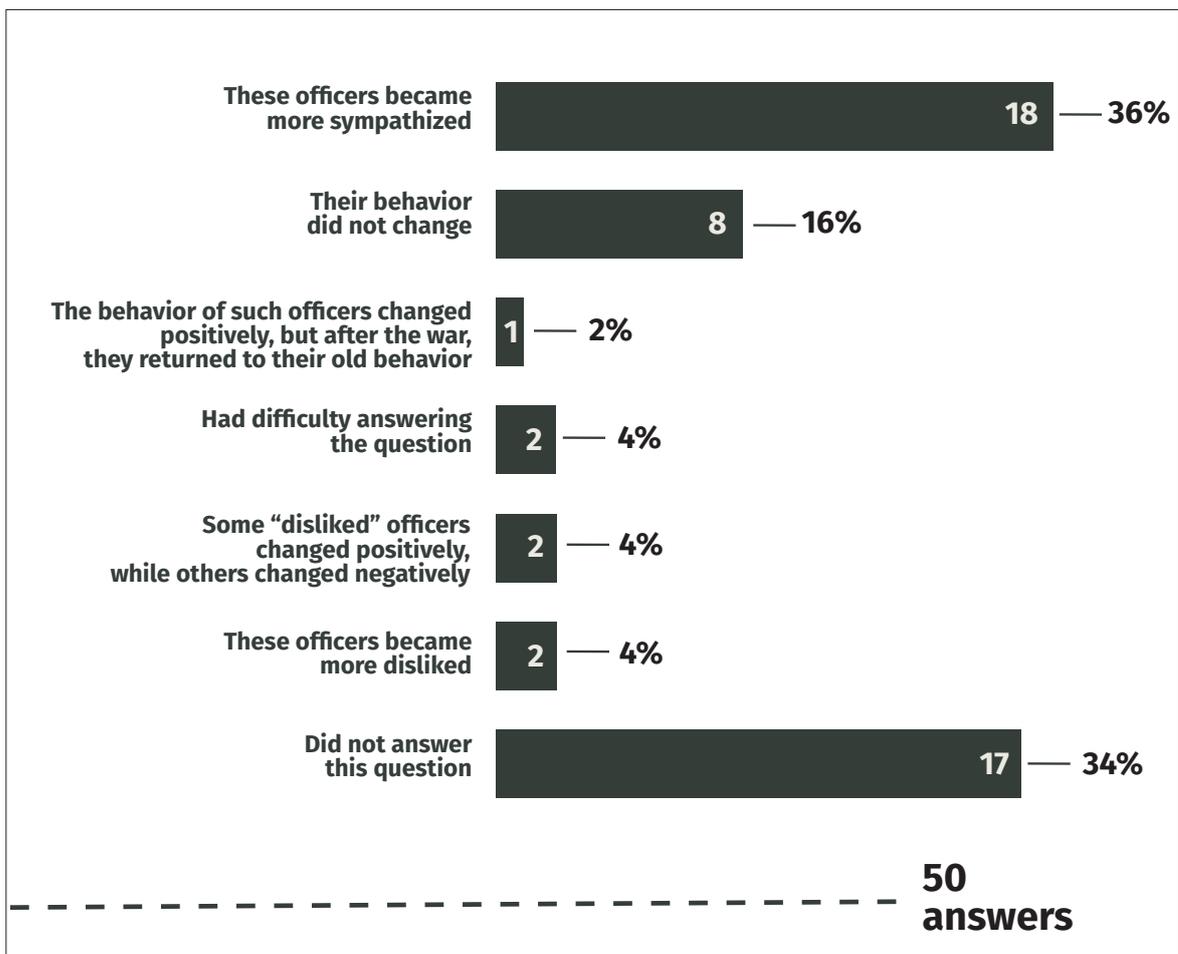
The respondents also indicated that they had avoided dealing with such officers (29 people, 35.8%) or had shown an individual approach (23 people, 28.4%). 21 people (25.9%) did not answer the question.

Out of the 50 respondents who gave an affirmative response to the question related to the “disliked” officers and also took part in military operations:

- 18 (36%) found that these officers became more sympathized during and after the military operations;
- 8 (16%) found that their behavior did not change during or after the war;
- 17 (34%) did not answer this question;
- 1 person (2%) found that during the war, the behavior of such officers changed positively, but after the war, they returned to their old behavior;
- 2 (4%) had difficulty answering the question;
- 2 people (4%) stated that some “disliked” officers changed positively during or after the war, while others changed negatively;
- 2 people (4%) answered that these officers became more disliked by the soldiers during or after the war. **See illustration 7.**

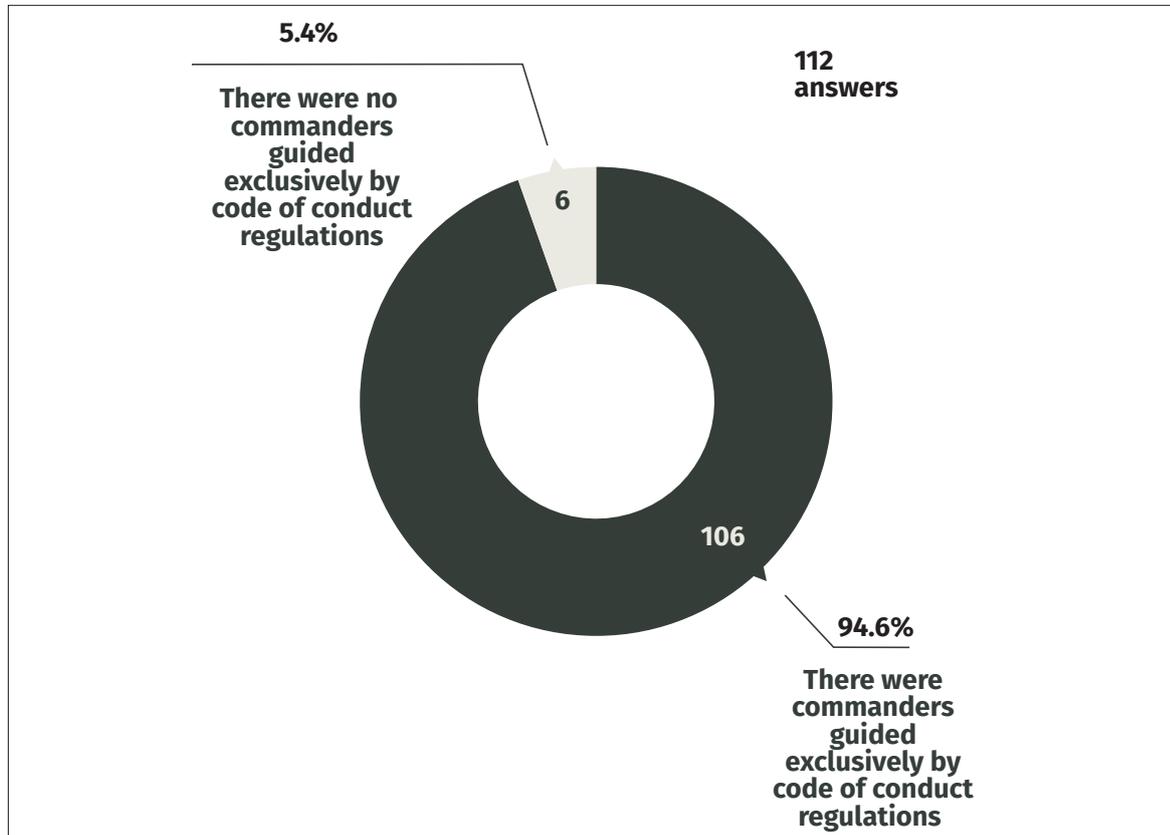
The next set of questions was aimed at examining the respondents’ perceptions of the officers who are exclusively guided by statutory relations.

Illustration 7. How the “disliked” commanders’ behaviour changed during and after the warfare?



Most of the respondents (106 people, 94.6%) found that in their military unit, there were officers guided exclusively by statutory regulations (“formalists”). Only 6 people (5.4%) stated that there were no such officers in their military unit. **See illustration 8.**

Illustration 8. Were there officers implicitly guided by statutory regulations?



Out of the respondents who gave a positive response to the question:

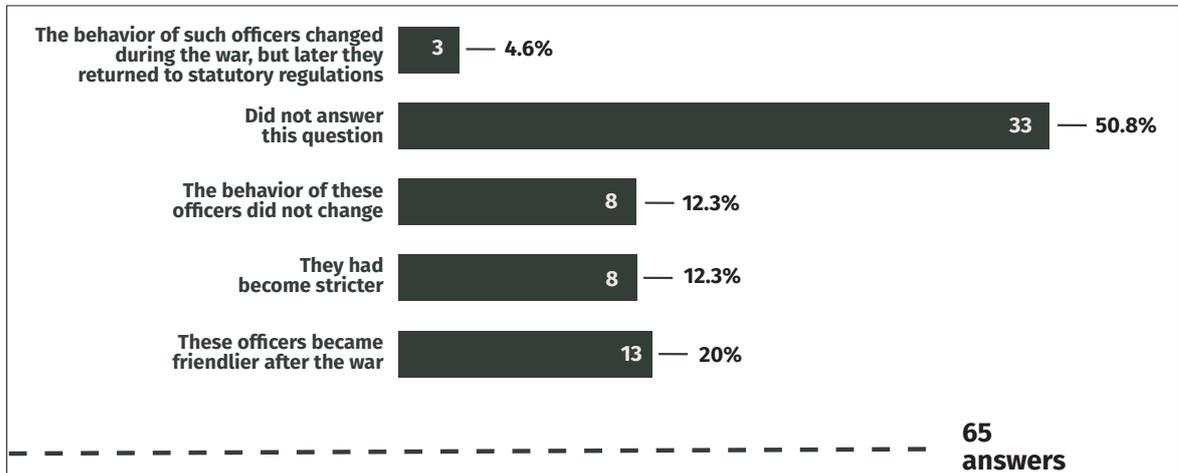
- 56 (52.8%) stated they communicated with such officers only in accordance with the statute;
- 19 (17.9%) tried to adapt to serving in such conditions;
- 4 (3.8%) could not adapt to the requirements of officers guided by statute. 2 respondents of this group reported that they avoided contact with such officers or got into an argument with them;
- 27 people (25.5%) did not answer how they managed to get along with such officers.

Out of the 65 respondents who gave a positive response to the question about the presence of commanders guided exclusively by statutory relations in the unit and had participated in military operations:

- 13 (20%) noted that these officers became friendlier after the war;
- 8 (12.3%) found that they had become stricter;
- 8 (12.3%) found that the behavior of these officers did not change during or after the war.

- 33 (50.8%) did not answer this question;
- 3 people (4.6%) answered that the behavior of such officers changed during the war, but later they returned to statutory relations. **See illustration 9.**

Illustration 9. How the “formalist” commanders’ behaviour changed during and after the warfare?



The respondents also were asked which type of officers they preferred. The responses suggest that the majority of 112 respondents (63 people, 56%) prefer the officers who follow statutory regulations, 21 (19%) - partially follow statutory regulations, and 4 (4%) - officers who do not follow statutory regulations. 24 respondents (21%) did not answer that question.

Notably, among respondents who participated in military operations, the attitude towards officers guided by statutory regulations is more favorable, as evidenced by the following quotes:



“The right way is the legal way. It prepares for difficulties. It was expressed even better during the war that following statutory regulations was right.”

(20 years old, 2020-2022 conscription)



“Strict officers are preferable for me because you gain knowledge from them. The war showed that knowledge can save.”

(20 years old, 2020-2022 conscription)



“Although it is not pleasant at that moment, we realized during the war that it was better by the book.”

(21 years old, 2019-2021 conscription)

Surveys have shown that soldiers value the following qualities the most in their commanders:

- Being endowed with positive human qualities (47 people, 42%);
- Following statutory regulations (40 people, 36%);
- Being friendly (33 people, 29%);
- The ability to appreciate the soldier (20 people, 18%);
- Competence (being knowledgeable) (18, 16%).

According to 36 (32.1%) of 112 respondents, the officers had shown inappropriate rudeness towards them during their service. According to 48 (42.9%), they were not treated with such an attitude, and 28 (25%) did not say anything about it.

See illustration 10.

63 respondents (56.3%) stated that a similar rude attitude had been shown toward their peer soldiers. 33 respondents (29.5%) answered that their fellow servicemen did not receive such treatment, and two people (1.8%) stated that they had no information about any cases. 14 respondents (12.5%) did not answer this question. **See illustration 11.**

Illustration 10. Have any of the officers shown rude attitude toward you?

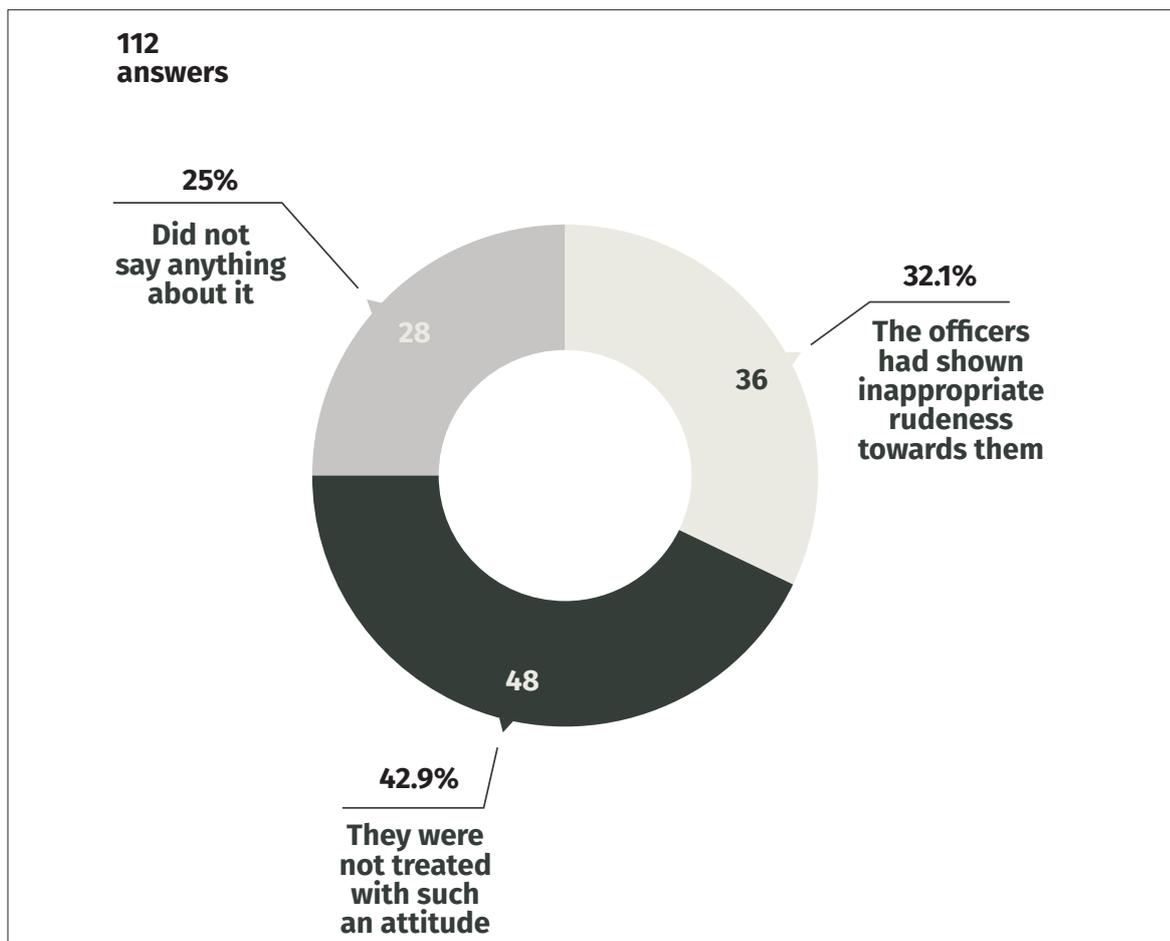
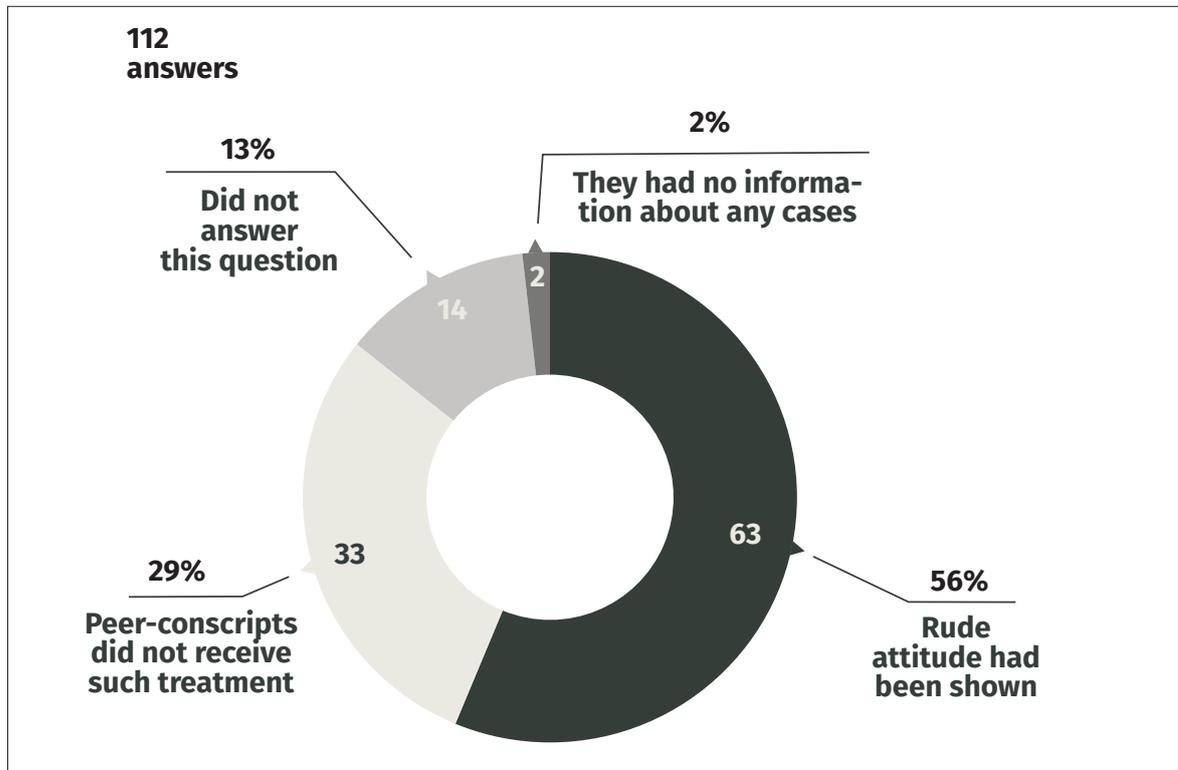


Illustration 11. Have any of the officers shown rude attitude toward your peer-conscripts?



The most common answers to the question “How was it expressed?” (Rude treatment) were:

- “Hitting” (44 people, 59.5%);
- “Beating” (38 people, 51.4%);
- “Abusing verbally” (35 people, 47.3%);
- “Cursing” (34 people, 45.9%);
- “Mocking” (25 people, 33.8%).

The overwhelming majority of respondents chose not to answer the question about the reasons for such an attitude. **See illustration 12.**

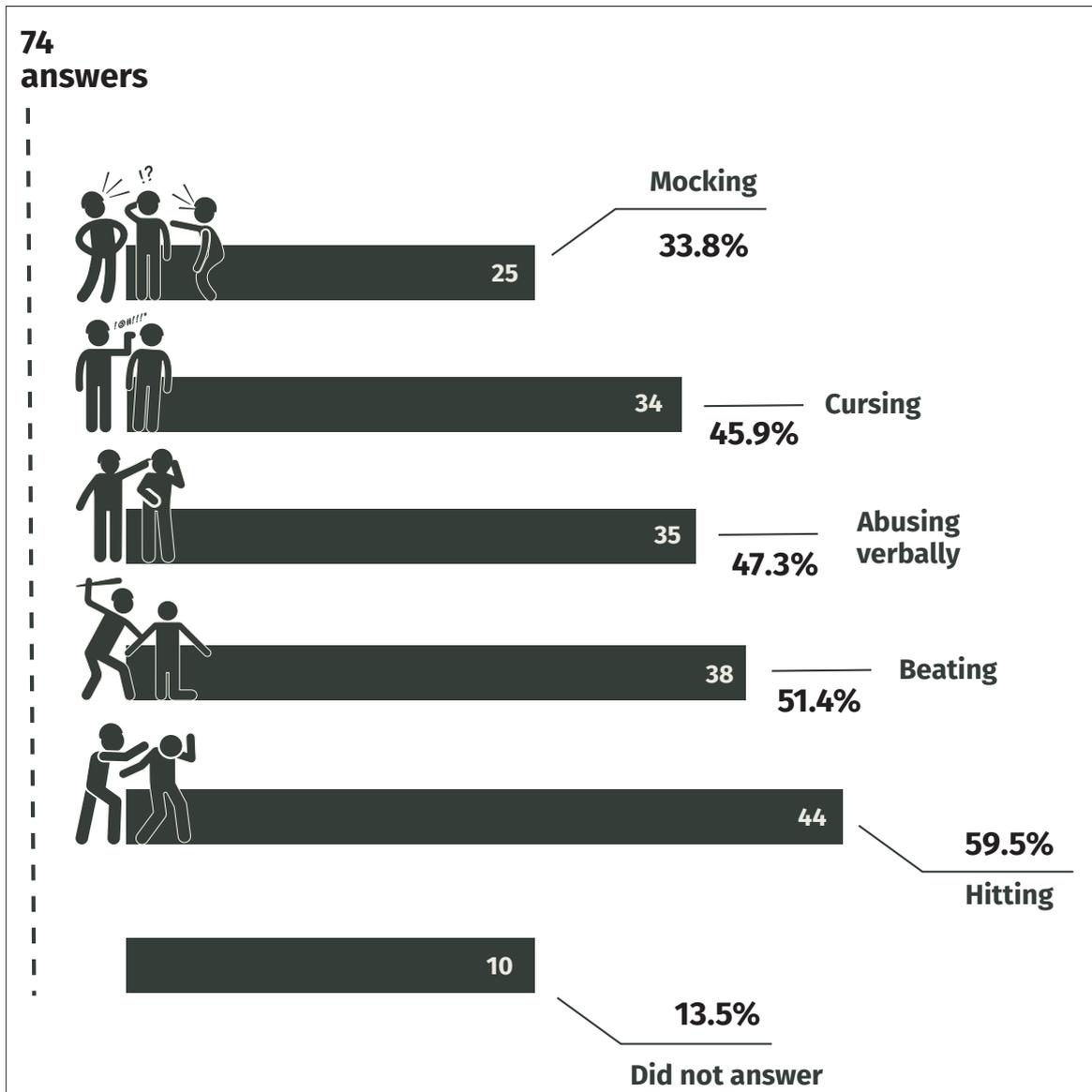
The responses of those few who agreed to talk about reasons are expressed in the following quotes:



“I can’t describe all the incidents. I don’t even want to remember everything again. “Beating” is a weak word..., ...For example, the troop commander: his insults were endless; every word was an insult. Sometimes he would beat us on his own or could order others to do it. Well, you learn with time to endure.”

(23 years old, 2019-2021 conscription)

Illustration 12. How was the rough treatment expressed?



“

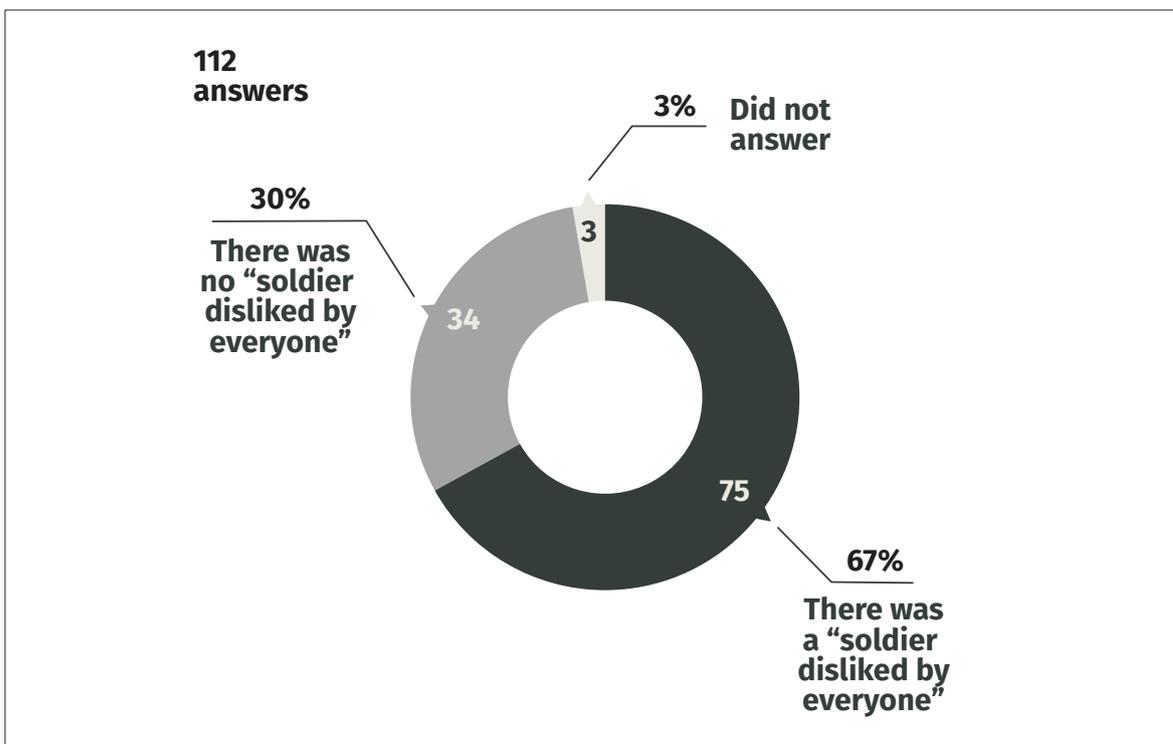
“This happened to everyone. There was no need for a reason; because of their bad mood the soldiers would suffer. It would usually be forgotten, considering who the officer was. You can’t go sort things out with your troop commander, talk to him to understand each other. The military police did not come for such cases. It’s normal; the Military Police wouldn’t come unless someone had been killed.”

(23 years old, 2020-2022 conscription)

Perceptions of Statutory and Non-Statutory Relationships and Servicemen Interactions

Another group of questions was developed to highlight the problems related to the servicemen’s relations during the service. 75 of the 112 citizens who participated in the survey (67%) reported that during their service, there was a “soldier disliked by everyone” in their military unit. 34 respondents (30%) stated that they did not have such “disliked” peer soldiers. 3 people (3%) preferred not to answer the question. **See illustration 13.**

Illustration 13. Was there a soldier “disliked” by everyone?



According to the respondents, the most common reasons for being disliked by peer soldiers were as follows:

- “Snitching” to the Military Police and officers (18 people, 24%);
- Being irresponsible or disobeying commands (12 people, 16%);
- Arrogance (12 people, 16%).

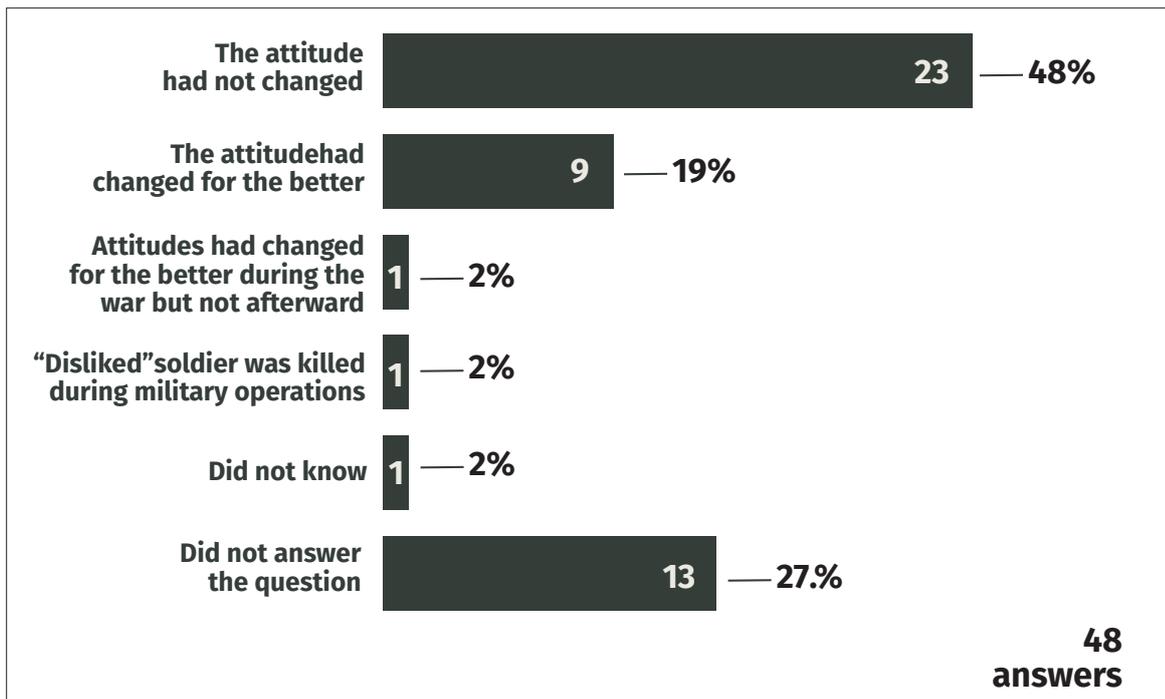
35 (46.7%) of the 75 respondents who had a “disliked” peer soldier during their service also stated that they did not communicate with such soldiers. Out of the above-mentioned 75, 48 respondents participated in military operations.

Out of them:

- 23 (48%) found that the attitude towards the “disliked” servicemen had not changed after the war;

- 9 (19%) found that the attitude towards them had changed for the better;
- 1 (2%) respondent found that attitudes had changed for the better during the war but not afterwards;
- 1 (2%) answered that such a soldier was killed during military operations;
- 1 (2%) answered, that he did not know;
- 13 respondents (27%) did not answer the question. **See illustration 14.**

Illustration 14. Did the attitude toward the “disliked” soldiers change during and after the war?



In addition, 77 of the 112 respondents (69%) stated that “there were soldiers in their military unit who were constantly oppressed, harassed or exploited.” There were no such servicemen in the military units of 33 (29%) respondents. 1 person (1%) stated that he did not remember whether there had been such soldiers or not. Another respondent (1%) did not answer the question. **See illustration 15.**

Most respondents chose not to answer the question who those oppressed servicemen were (60 people, 77.9%).

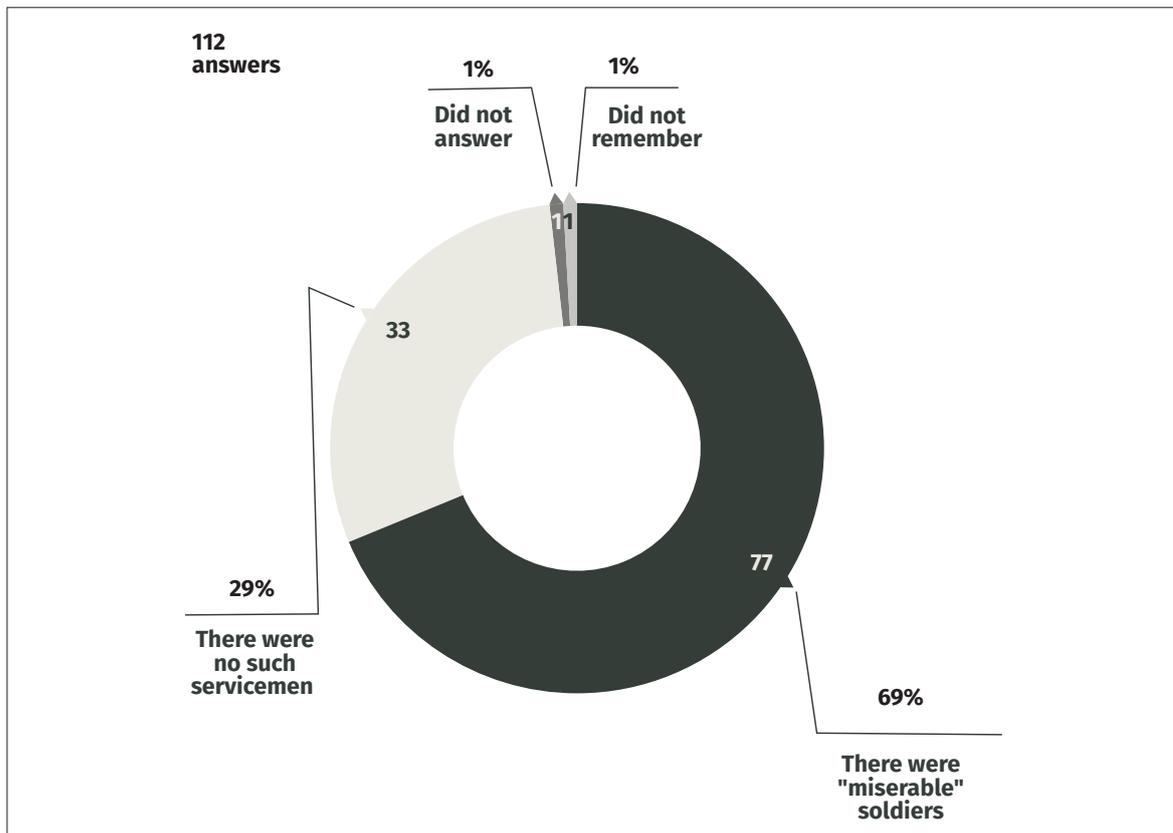
Among the mentioned options were the following:

- Servicemen who could not defend themselves (10 people, 13%);
- Sexual minorities (6 people, 7.8%);
- New recruits (2 people, 2.6%);
- Inadequate* servicemen (2 people, 2.6%).

***The respondents did not clarify the wording “Inadequate”.**

34 (44.2%) of the 77 respondents confirming the presence of “miserable” servicemen at their unit stated that such servicemen were often bullied. 21 (27.3%) stated that they were rarely bullied, and 22 (28.6%) did not indicate how often “miserable” servicemen were bullied.

Illustration 15. Were there any “miserable”, oppressed soldiers in your military unit?

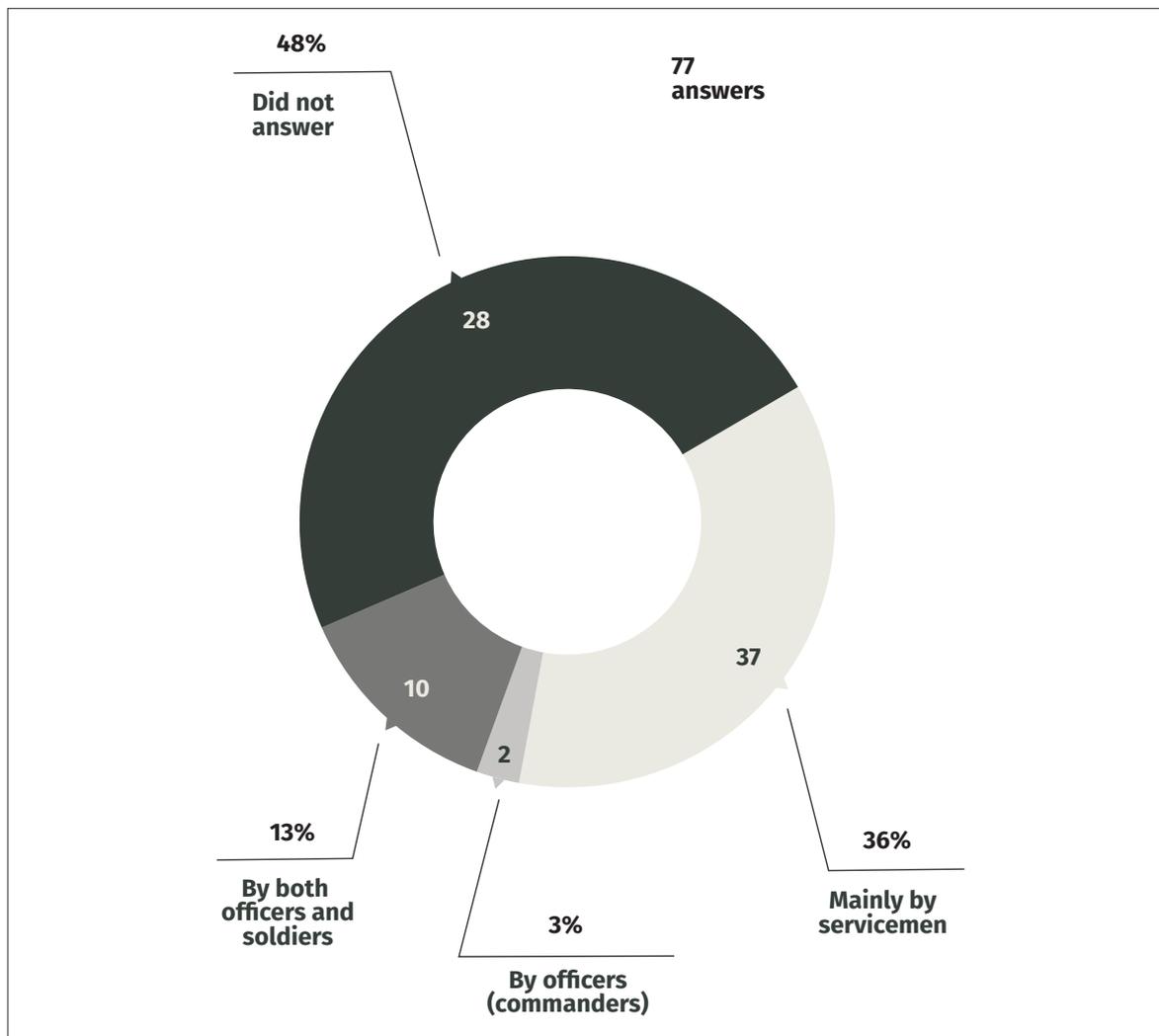


Out of the above 77 respondents:

- 28 (36%) stated that the so-called “miserable” soldiers were bullied mainly by servicemen;
- 2 (3%) - by officers;
- 10 (13%) - by both officers and soldiers;
- And 37 (48%) chose not to answer the question. **See illustration 16.**

These 77 survey participants clarified what they meant by ‘bullying the “miserable” servicemen’ by using the following terms (the respondents mentioned more than one version):

- 42 (54.5%) stated that they were exploited;
- 18 (23.4%) - they were mocked;
- 6 (7.8%) - they were subjected to physical or psychological abuse;
- 6 (5.2%) - expressed neglect towards them;
- 3 people (3.9%) - their personal belongings had been taken away;
- 1 person (1.3%) - they were threatened;
- 27 people (35.1%) did not answer this question. **See illustration 17.**

Illustration 16. Who were bullying “miserable” soldiers?

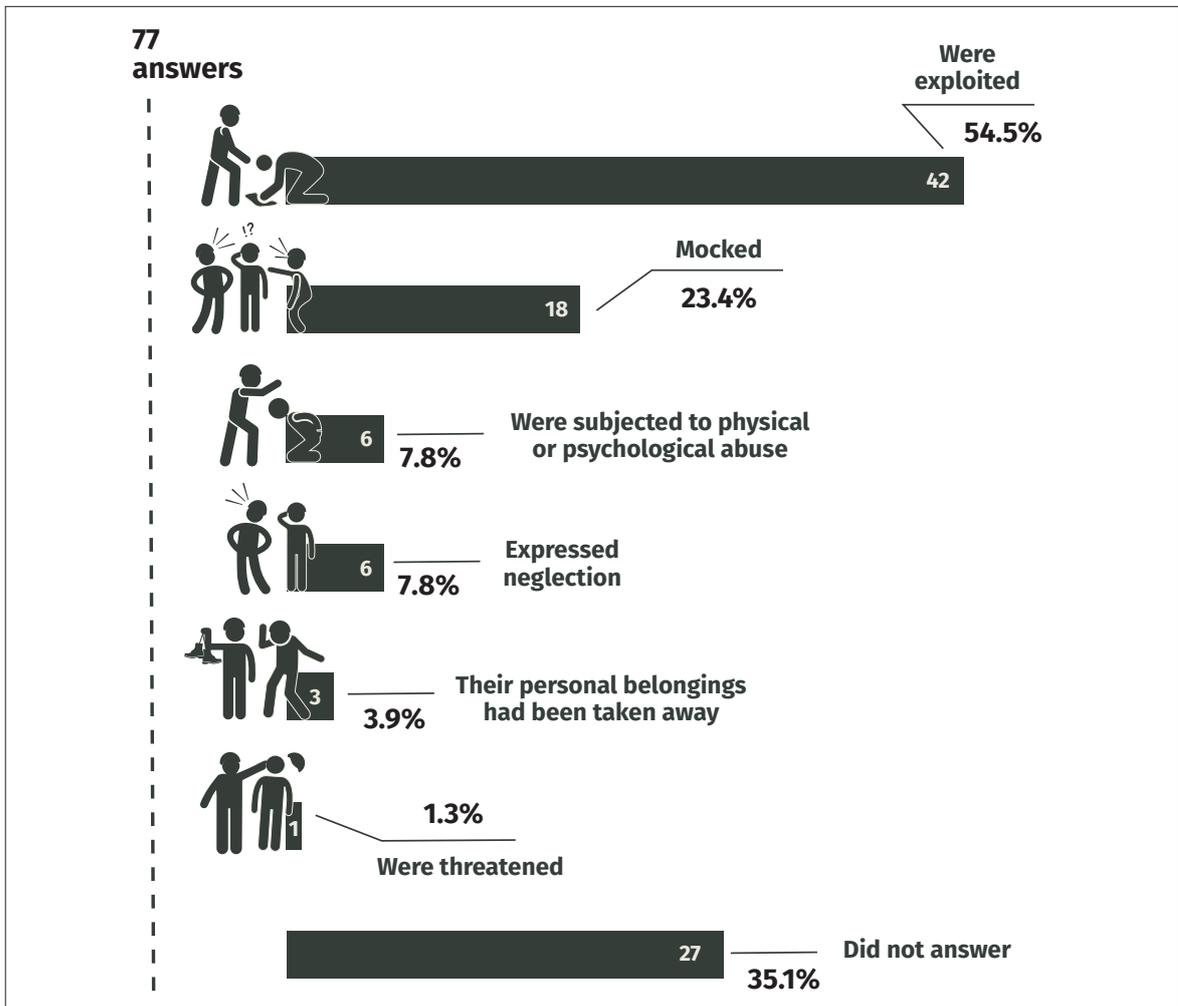
Below are quotes from responses to the question, “How were they bullied?”



“Well, there were some soldiers who did all the work; they didn’t eat with us, they were doing the cleaning. The commander told us to stay away from them as they weren’t men. Well, I don’t know how to say it, so it sounds normal. They were “faggots” and what kind of guy would like to sit at the same table or shake hands with them after learning such a thing? It had happened several times that other soldiers hit them. I did too, but for the most part, they were alone. When there was work to do, whether construction or cleaning, they did it without being told.”

(23 years old, 2019-2021 conscription)

Illustration 17. How were they bullied?



“Besides me, there was another boy, but in comparison, they harassed me more. I don’t know why. Perhaps I am not like them, and I have a different mentality. It started with the commanders, and then the other servicemen also started mistreating me. In other words, the commanders forced them to do so. Besides the beatings, they also humiliated me a lot, forced to clean the toilets, sit alone during meals, sleep in the basement... I don’t want to remember everything.”

(21 years old, 2020-2022 conscription)



“For example, there were two servicemen whom we did not oppress or harass. When an officer came and said something needed to be done, they would run to do it

without asking. It's hard to say why. They served alienated from us, but at the same time, if there was some work to do, they understood that they had to do it. But we did not beat them."

(21 years old, 2019-2021 conscription)



"Yes, there were poor servicemen whom others tried to harass, but the other soldiers and officers did not let that happen. They penalized those soldiers to make it clear that everyone is equal."

(21 years old, 2017-2019 conscription)

11 of the respondents (14.3%) stated that the officers had intervened when the "miserable" servicemen were bullied. 16 (20.8%) said that peer soldiers also intervened in such cases.

In other cases, the respondents stated that both the officers and peer soldiers did not intervene or rarely intervened.



"... Basically, in the army, you try to avoid getting into trouble for someone else, you try to stay away. Depending on the situation, we could help. ... Very frequently they (the officers) were not aware of, and even if they were, not everyone took action..."

(20 years old, 2020-2022 conscription)

It is essential to note that the overwhelming majority of respondents, 96 out of 112 (85.7%), stated that they had quarreled or fought with peer soldiers during their military service. Only 16 (14.3%) of the respondents indicated that they had not been involved in such disputes. **See illustration 18.**

According to 96 servicemen who participated in an argument or fought with their peer soldiers, the main reasons for such disputes were

- Not understanding each other (23 people, 24%);
- Insubordination (13 people, 13.5%);
- Ordinary arguments (10 people, 10.4%);
- Making a "wrong or unreasonable remark" (9 people, 9.4%);
- 8 people (8.3%) did not remember the reason for the fight.

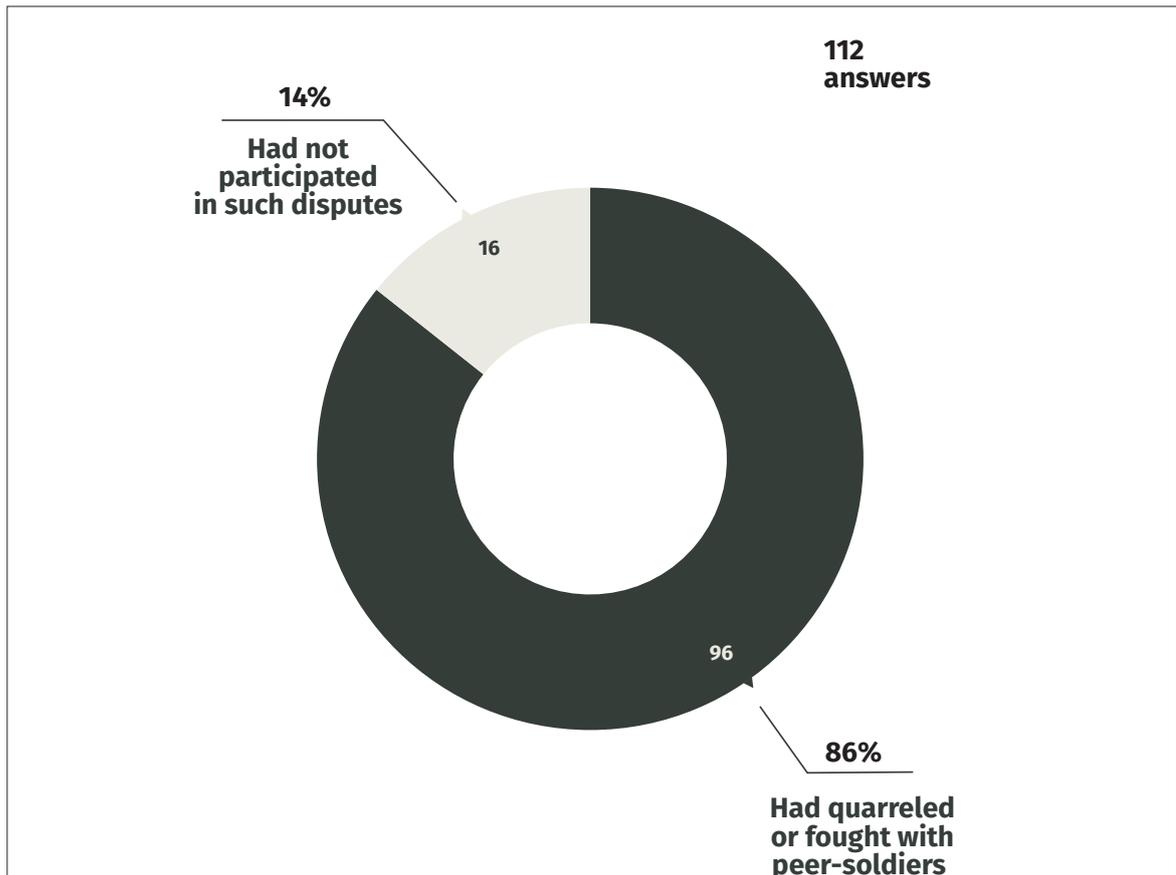
Other answers included problems with not following personal hygiene, lying, having self-assertion problems, and stealing.

According to the 96 citizens mentioned above, disputes were settled as follows

(the respondents declared more than one option):

- Settling together (76 people, 79.2%);
- With the officers' intervention (15 people, 15.6%);
- By calling friends outside the unit (14 people, 14.6%);
- With the peer soldiers' intervention (13 people, 13.5%);
- 7 respondents (7.3%) did not answer the question.

Illustration 18. Have you ever fought or argued with your peer conscripts?



According to 54 out of the aforementioned 96 respondents (56%), the relationship improved after the quarrel, while 16 (17%) said the relationship ended or worsened. 26 people (27%) did not answer this question.

The respondents also mentioned that those aware of such disputes in the military unit were (the respondents mentioned more than one option):

- Peer soldiers (31 people, 32.3%);
- Officers (28 people, 29.2%);
- Friends outside the unit (16 people, 16.7%);
- Nobody (28 people, 29.2%);
- 18 (18.8%) did not answer the question.

The respondents indicated the following options to the question, "Who intervened in the case of disputes in the army?":

- Officers (20 people, 40%);
- Peer soldiers (18 people, 36%);
- Friends outside the unit (14 people, 28%);
- No answer (8 people, 16%).

As part of the surveys, there was an attempt to determine what kind of intervention each of the three mentioned groups (outsiders, officers, and peer soldiers) had during the dispute.

Thus, according to the respondents, **friends outside the unit** tried to intervene by:

- Talking (11 people, 78.6%);
- Fighting (one person, 7.1%);
- 2 respondents (14.3%) did not answer the question.

Officers:

- Gave a verbal warning or a disciplinary penalty (12 people, 60%);
- Talked (6 people, 30%);
- Sent to the Military Police (3 people, 15%);
- Punished with physical exercises (2 people, 10%).

Peer soldiers:

- Talked (14 people, 77.8%);
- Fought (2 people, 11.1%);
- 3 respondents (16.7%) did not answer the question.

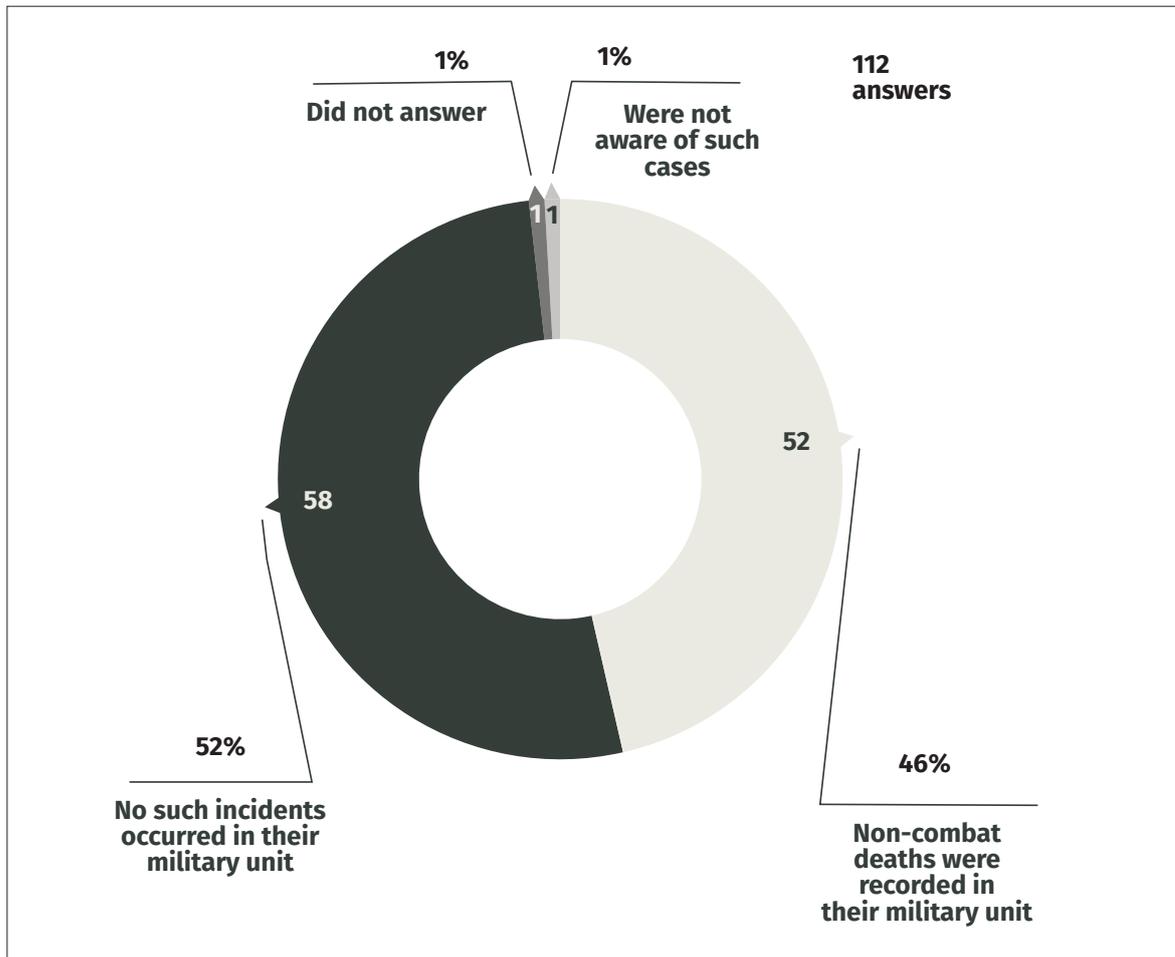
52 out of 112 (46%) confirmed that 1 or more non-combat deaths were recorded in their military unit during their military service. 58 (52%) indicated that no such incidents occurred in their military unit, 1 (1%) stated that they were not aware of such cases, and another one (1%) did not answer this question. **See illustration 19.**

By the way, among the 52 respondents confirming the fact of non-combat deaths in their military unit during their service (with the option to choose more than one option):

- 43 people (82.7%) stated that the cause of the incident was suicide;
- 16 (30.7%) - murder by a peer soldier or an officer;
- 3 (5.8%) - careless handling of weapons;
- 1 respondent (1.9%) did not know the reason;
- 2 people (3.8%) did not answer.

To determine the effectiveness of the institute of psychologist-officers introduced in the RA Armed Forces in 2013, within the framework of the survey, we made an attempt to find out whether there was a psychologist-officer in the military unit of the respondents during their military service.

Illustration 19. Have there been any non-combat deaths in your military unit during your service?



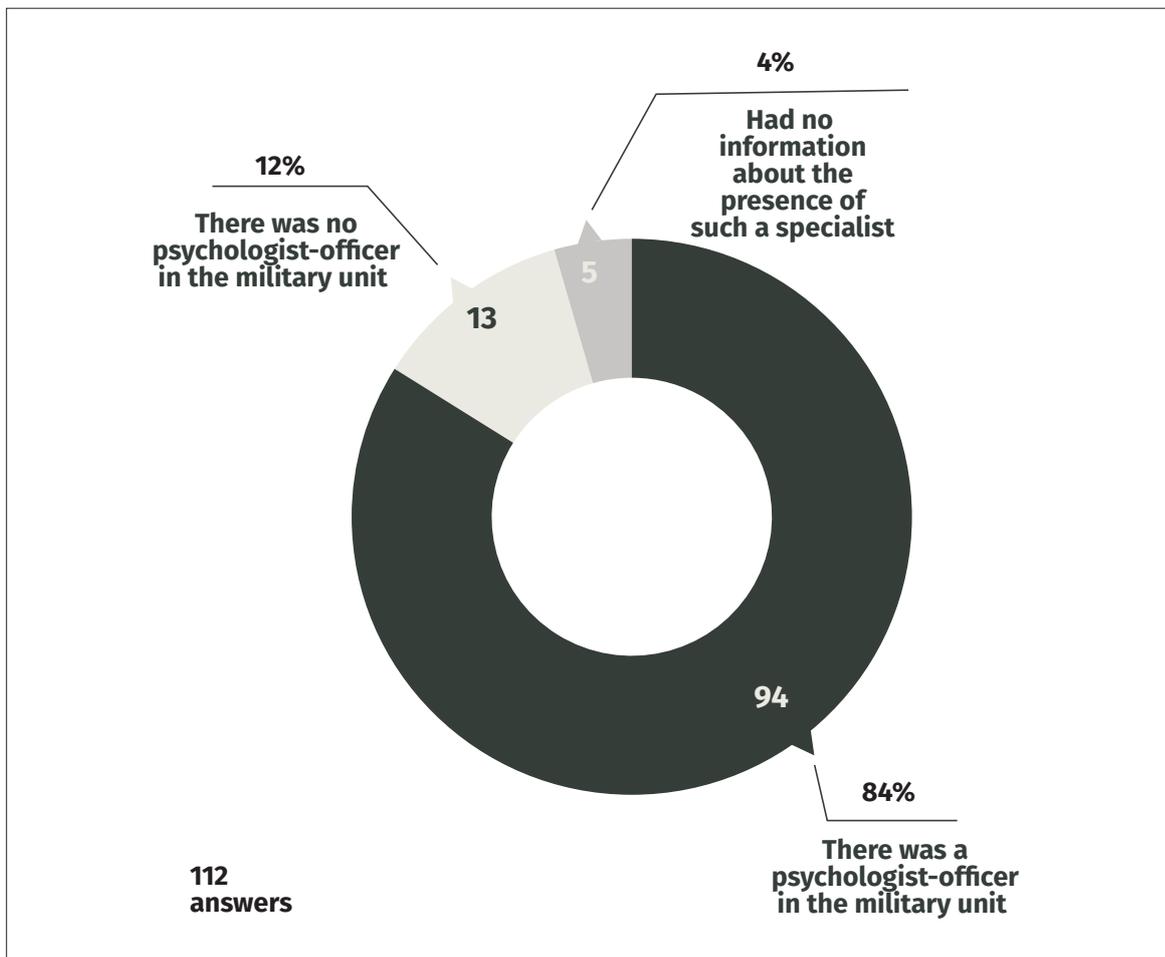
94 (84%) of the respondents gave a positive answer to this question, and 13 (12%) - a negative one. Five respondents (4%) had no information about the presence of such a specialist in the military unit. **See illustration 20.**

In addition:

- 75 people (79.8%) indicated that they had not personally reached out to the psychologist-officer;
- 14 (14.9%) had not applied personally but had group meetings with a psychologist during the service;
- 5 people (5.3%) reported that they had consulted a psychologist. **See illustration 21.**

At the same time, out of the questioned former servicemen:

- 36 (38.3%) reported that their peer soldiers had not reached out to the psychologist-officer;
- 13 people (13.8%) stated that their peer soldiers had reached out to the specialist;

Illustration 20. Were there a psychologist-officer in your military unit?

- 5 people (5.3%) said that they were not aware of;
- And 40 people (42.6%) did not answer this question. **See illustration 22.**

Out of 5 citizens who personally reached out to the psychologist-officer during the service,

- 3 (60%) indicated that contact with the specialist was helpful;
- 1 (20%) stated that the work with the psychologist-officer was ineffective;
- 1 (20%) had applied in order to avoid the service. **See illustration 23.**

The 13 respondents who indicated that peer soldiers contacted the psychologist-officer also adeed the following:

- “Yes, it helped” (3 people, 23.1%);
- “I don’t know” (3 people, 23.1%);
- “Tthe communication was rather friendly than professional” (1 person, 7.7%);
- “Contacted in order to avoid the service” (1 person, 7.7%);
- “No, it didn’t help” (1 person, 7.7%);
- 4 people (30.7%) did not answer that question. **See illustration 24.**

Illustration 21. Have you ever reached out to psychologist-officer?

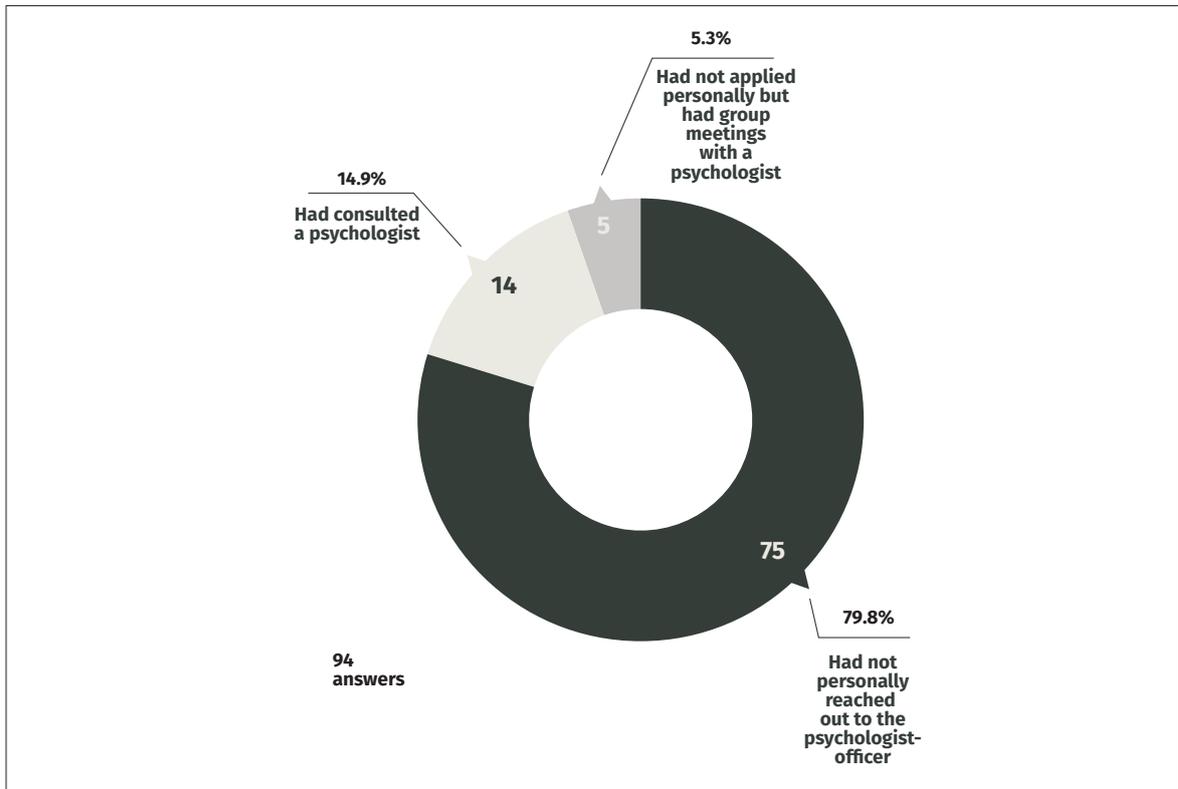


Illustration 22. Have your peer soldiers reached out to psychologist-officer?

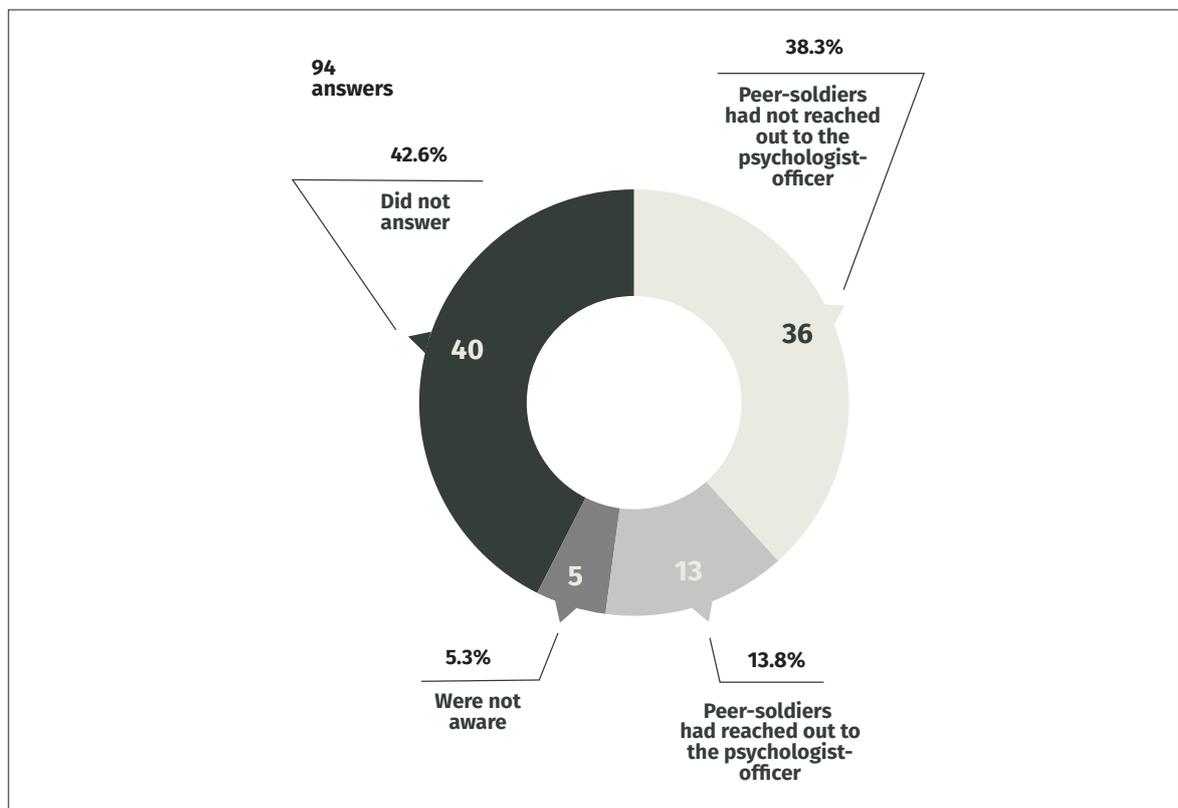


Illustration 23. Did it help you?

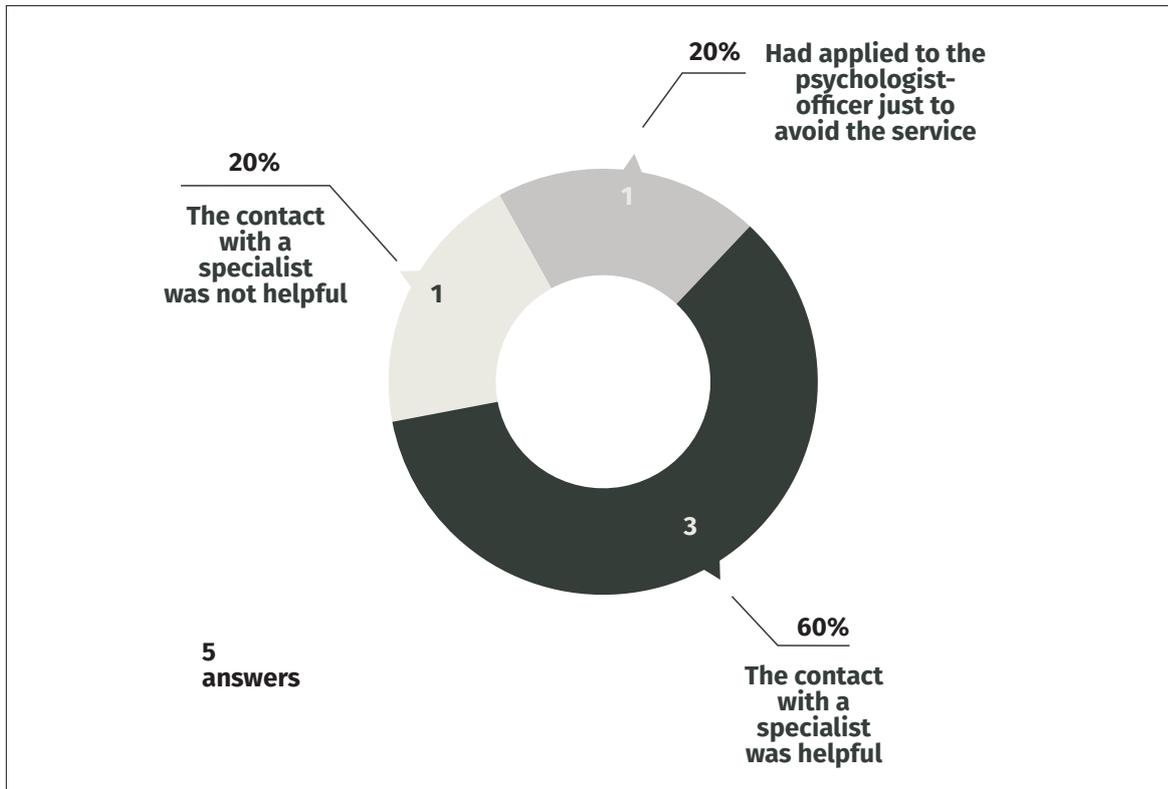
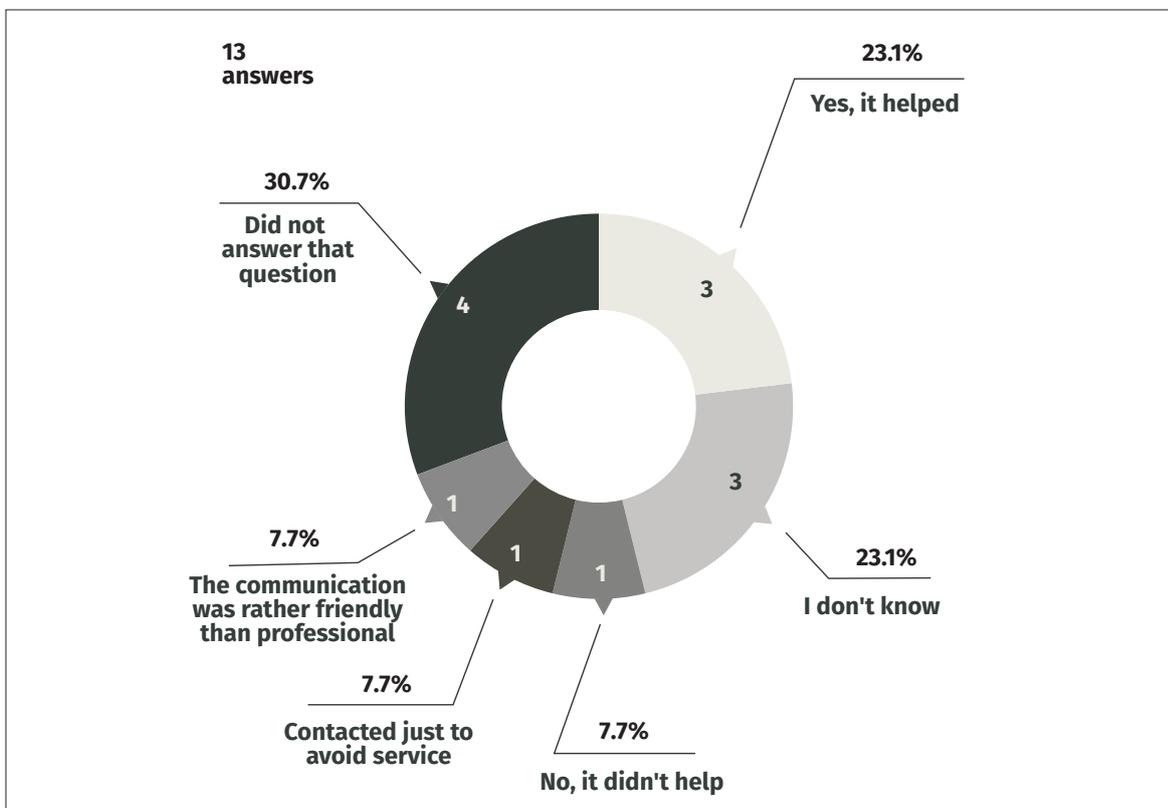


Illustration 24. Did it help your peer soldiers?



Out of 89 respondents who stated they and their peer soldiers had not contacted the psychologist-officer:

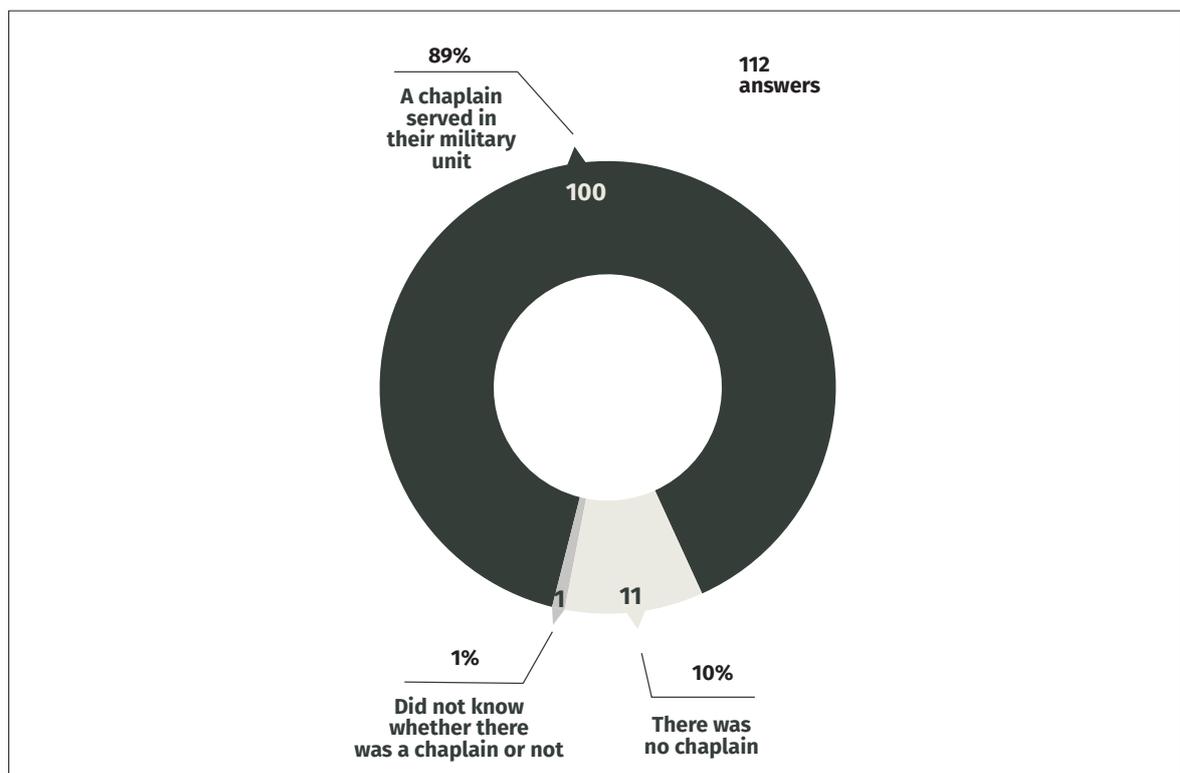
- 50 (56.2%) indicated that they had not consulted a specialist since there was no need;
- 21 (23.6%) did not answer why they had not applied;
- 5 people (5.6%) stated that they had not consulted a psychologist because it is inappropriate for a man;
- 5 people (5.6%) doubted the psychologist’s professional abilities;
- 5 people (5.6%) were suspicious that their conversations with a psychologist would remain private;
- 3 (3.4%) stated that they did not turn to the officer-psychologist not to be criticized by their peer soldiers.

100 out of the 112 citizens who participated in the survey (89%) stated that a chaplain served in their military unit or occasionally visited them. 11 (10%) said that there was no chaplain in the military unit during their service, and 1 respondent (1%) did not know whether there was a chaplain or not. **See illustration 25.**

An attempt was made to find out whether the respondents or their peer soldiers had contacted the chaplain, and in response, we received the following information:

- 87 (87%) had not contacted them personally;
- 3 (3%) had contacted them personally;
- 10 (10%) did not answer the question. **See illustration 26.**

Illustration 25. Were there a chaplain in your military unit?



At the same time, according to the respondents:

- Their peer soldiers had turned to the chaplain (21 people, 21%);
- Their peer soldiers did not turn to the chaplain (29 people, 29%);
- They did not know if their peer-soldiers had turned to the chaplain (4 people, 4%);
- 46 people did not answer the question (46%). **See illustration 27.**

Illustration 26. Have you reached out to the chaplain in your military unit?

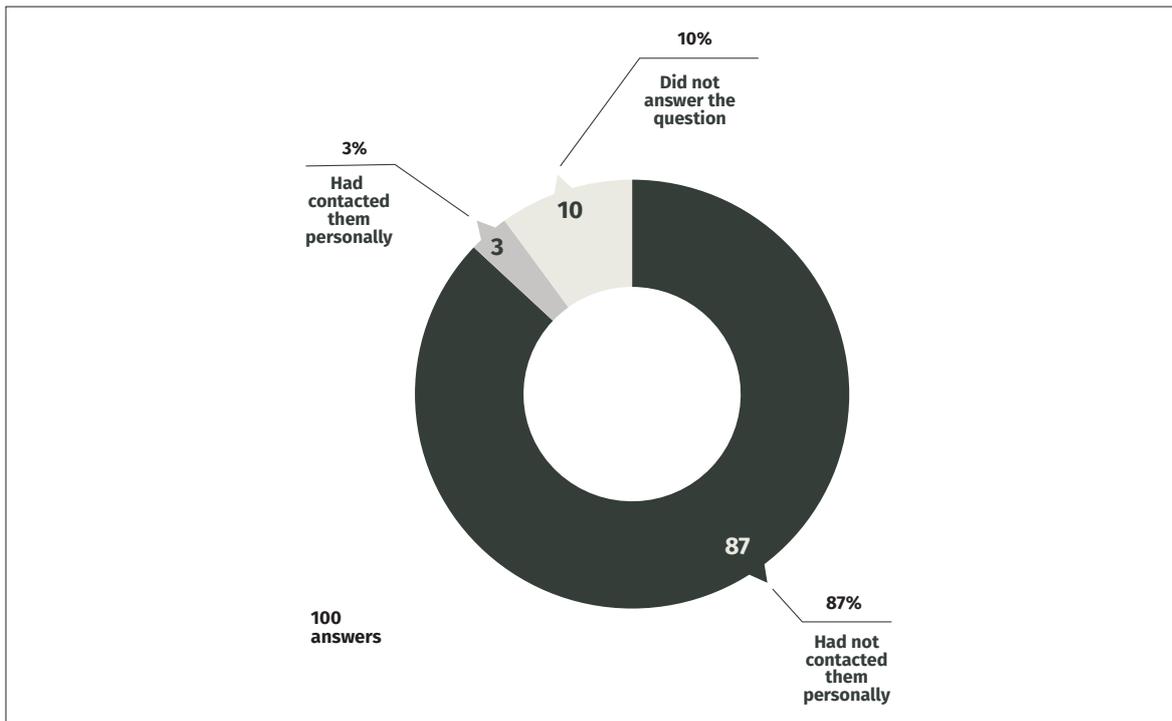
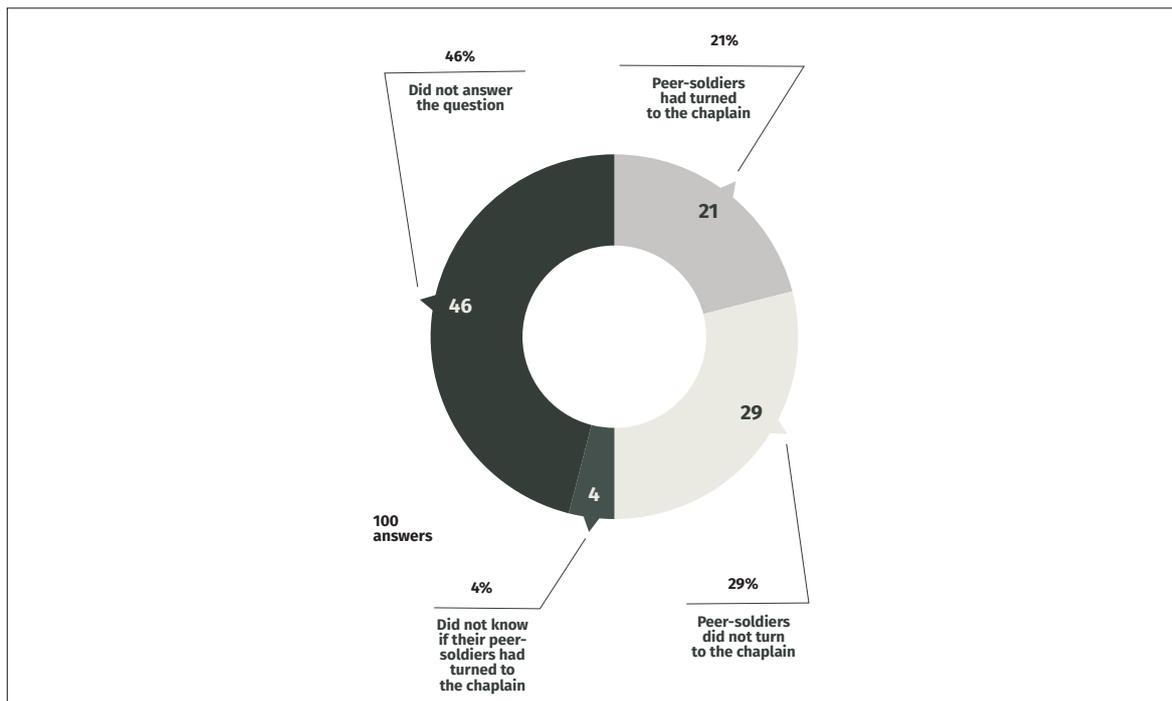
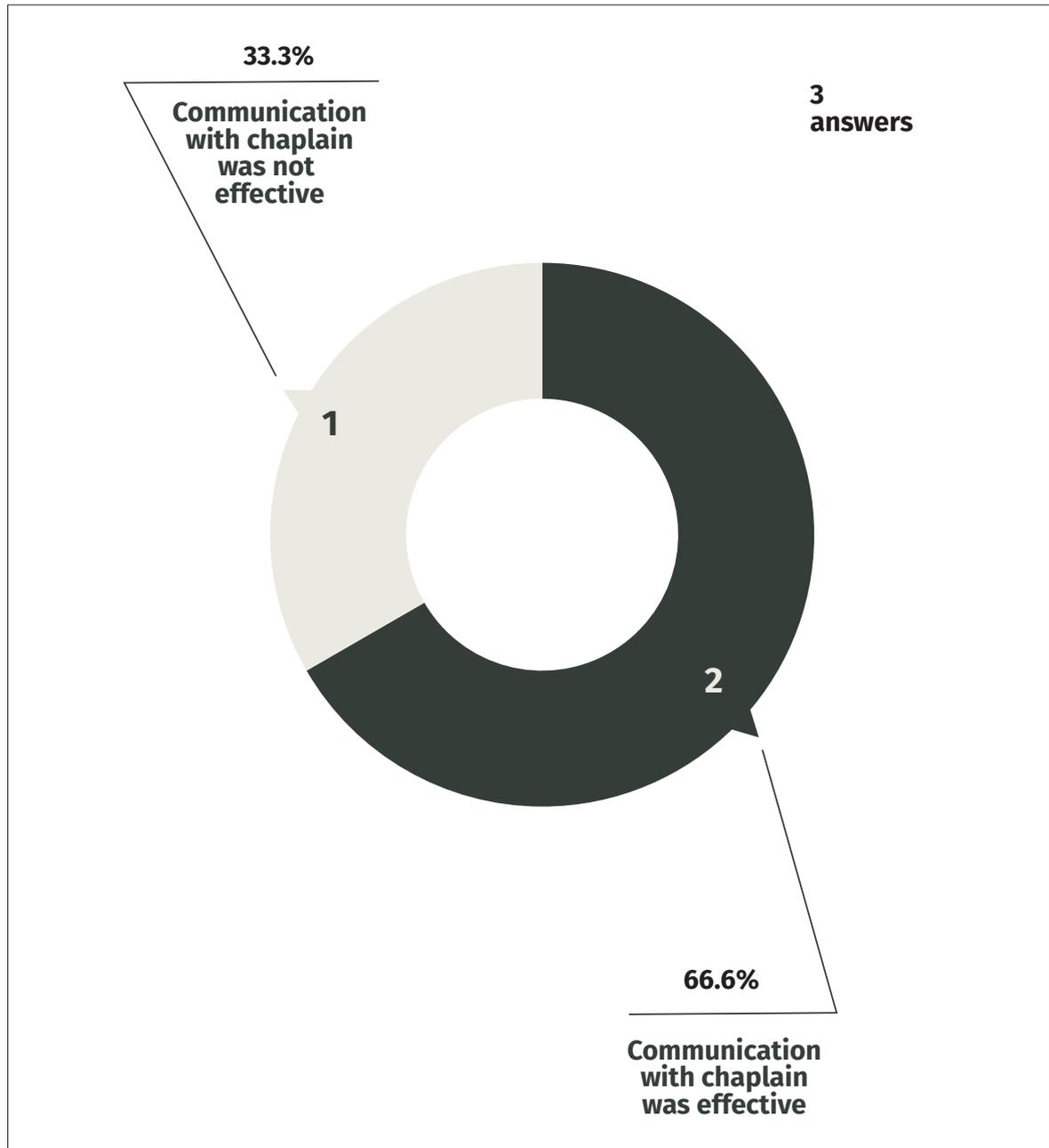


Illustration 27. Have your peer-soldiers reached out to the chaplain?



During the service, 2 out of 3 citizens (66.6%) who personally had contacted the chaplain found that the communication with them was effective, and 1 (33.3%) found it useless. **See illustration 28.**

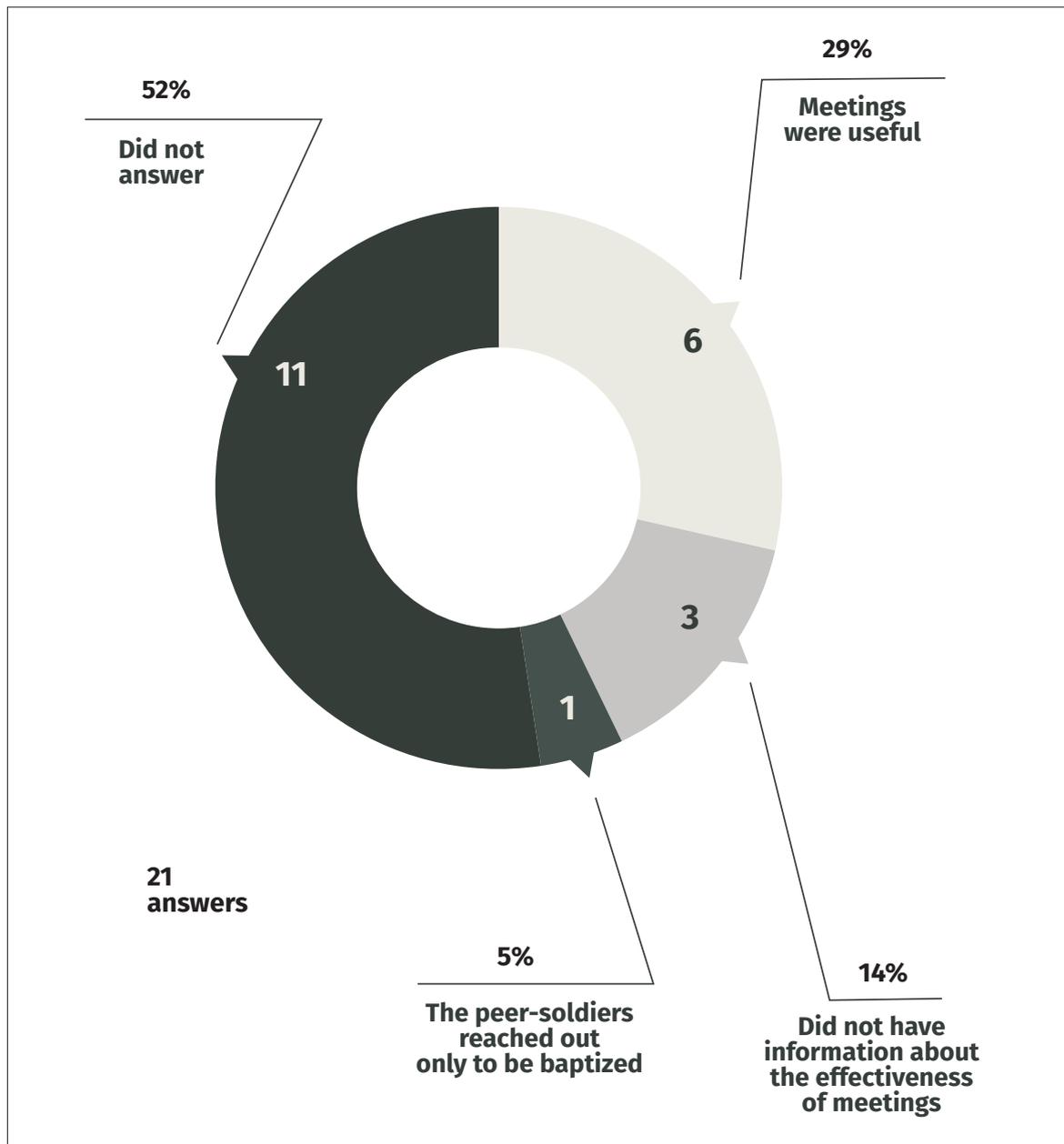
Illustration 28. Did it help you?



Out of 21 citizens who reported that their peer soldiers had turned to the chaplain:

- 6 (29%) indicated that the meetings were useful;
- 3 (14%) did not have information about the effectiveness of meetings;

Illustration 29. Did it help your peer-soldiers?

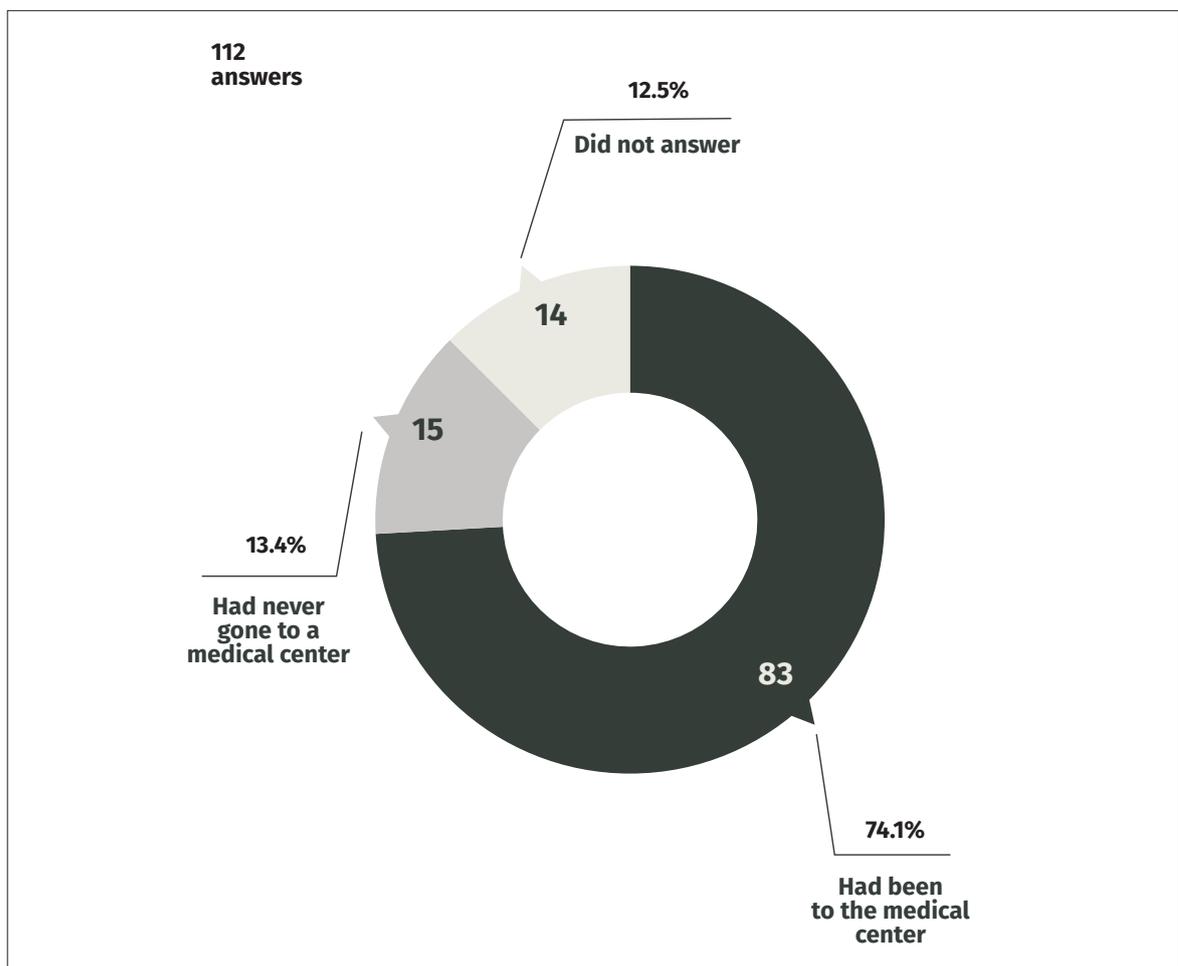


- 1 (5%) stated that the peer soldiers reached out only to be baptized;
- 11 (52%) did not answer that question. **See illustration 29.**

Servicemen’s Perceptions of Medical Care Quality

Another set of questions was designed to determine servicemen’s perceptions regarding the quality of medical care during their service. For this purpose, the first question asked to the respondents was the following. “Have you ever applied to the medical center in your military unit?” Out of 112 survey participants, 83 (74.1%) had gone to the medical center with different issues during the service. 15 (13.4%) stated that they had never gone to a medical center, and 14 (12.5%) did not answer this question. **See illustration 30.**

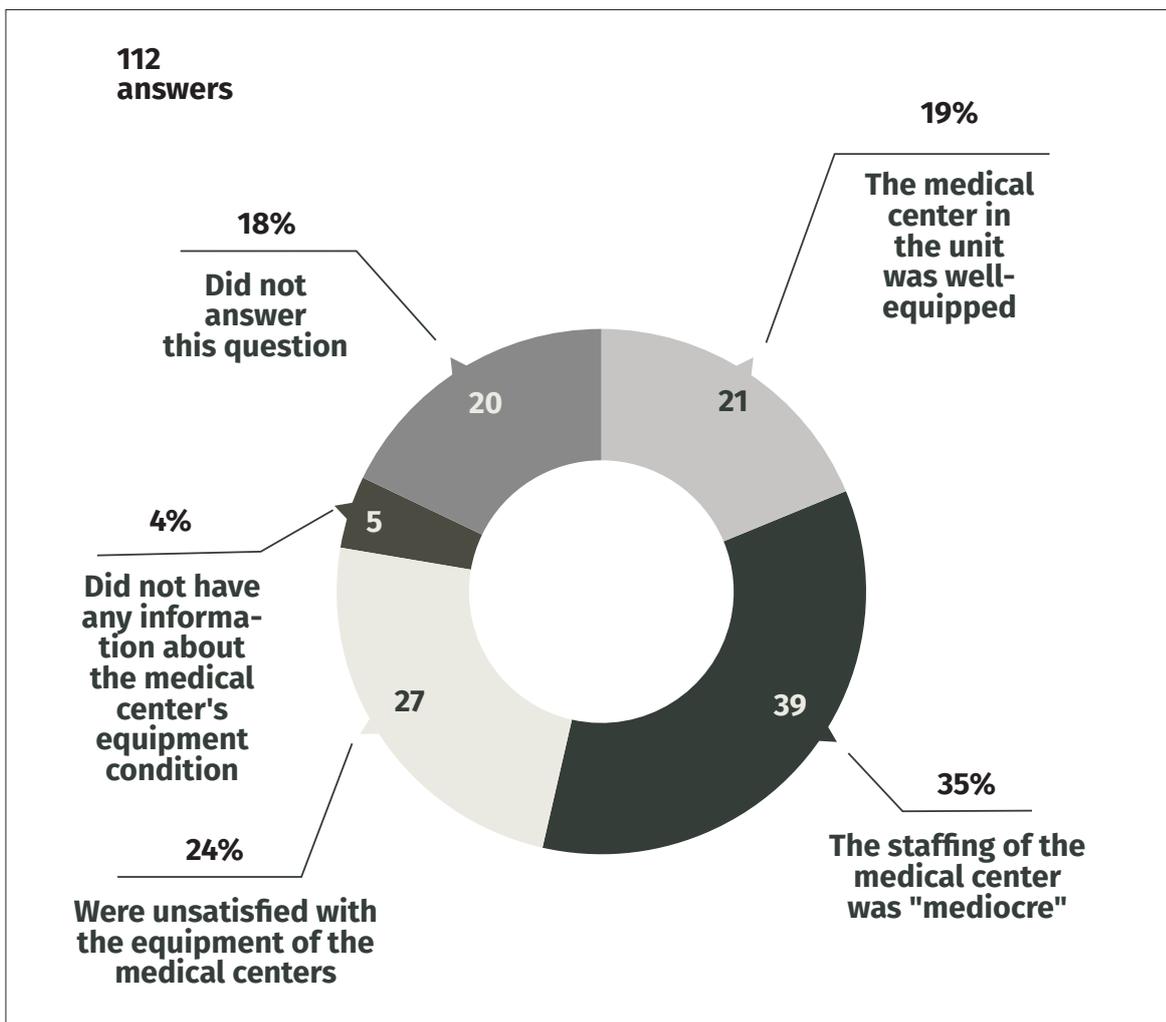
Illustration 30. Have you ever gone to the medical center in your military unit?



Out of the respondents:

- 21 (19%) think that the medical center in the unit was well-equipped;
- 39 people (35%) assessed the staffing of the medical center as “mediocre”;
- 27 (24%) were unsatisfied with the equipment of the medical centers;
- 5 (4%) did not have any information about the medical center’s equipment condition;
- 20 people (18%) did not answer this question. **See illustration 31.**

Illustration 31. Was the medical center sufficiently equipped?



The sharpest criticisms about the poor condition of the medical center can be presented with the following quote:



"Bad, there was nothing. Only saltwater (sodium chloride) and painkillers."

(22 years old, 2017-2019 conscription)

From the other opinions expressed, it could be concluded that the servicemen mainly assessed the condition of the medical centers of their military units as satisfactory.

Notably, 23 respondents (20.5%) stated that during their service, they witnessed cases when a serviceman with serious health problems was not provided with proper medical care. 32 people (28.6%) mentioned such cases had not happened during their service. 6 respondents (5.4%) did not remember such cases, and 51 (45.5%) did not answer this question.

During the interviews, the citizens voiced such opinions:



“They couldn’t treat anything... .. people with smallpox were sent to the hospital only with an acquaintance’s intervention..... once they tortured a person with a stomach ulcer so much that eventually he was sent home after they saw how bad he was.”

(23 years old, 2017-2019 conscription)



“Some are hospitalized for small things because they have good acquaintances, but others who actually need care have to wait in queues for a long time.”

(20 years old, 2020-2022 conscription)



“After dragging me around for a month, they couldn’t understand what was wrong with me and accused me of evading the service. Then, after a lot of persistence, I was taken to a hospital in Yerevan, where finally received a treatment.”

(23 years old, 2018-2020 conscription)

To the question of what happened to those servicemen who went to the medical center with health problems and were not assisted, the 23 respondents who encountered such cases during their service answered as follows:

- Remained at the unit and continued the service: 8 people (34.8%);
- 5 people (21.7%) were discharged due to the problem growing more complicated;
- 8 people (34.8%) were eventually transferred to the hospital;
- 2 people (8.7%) did not answer the question.

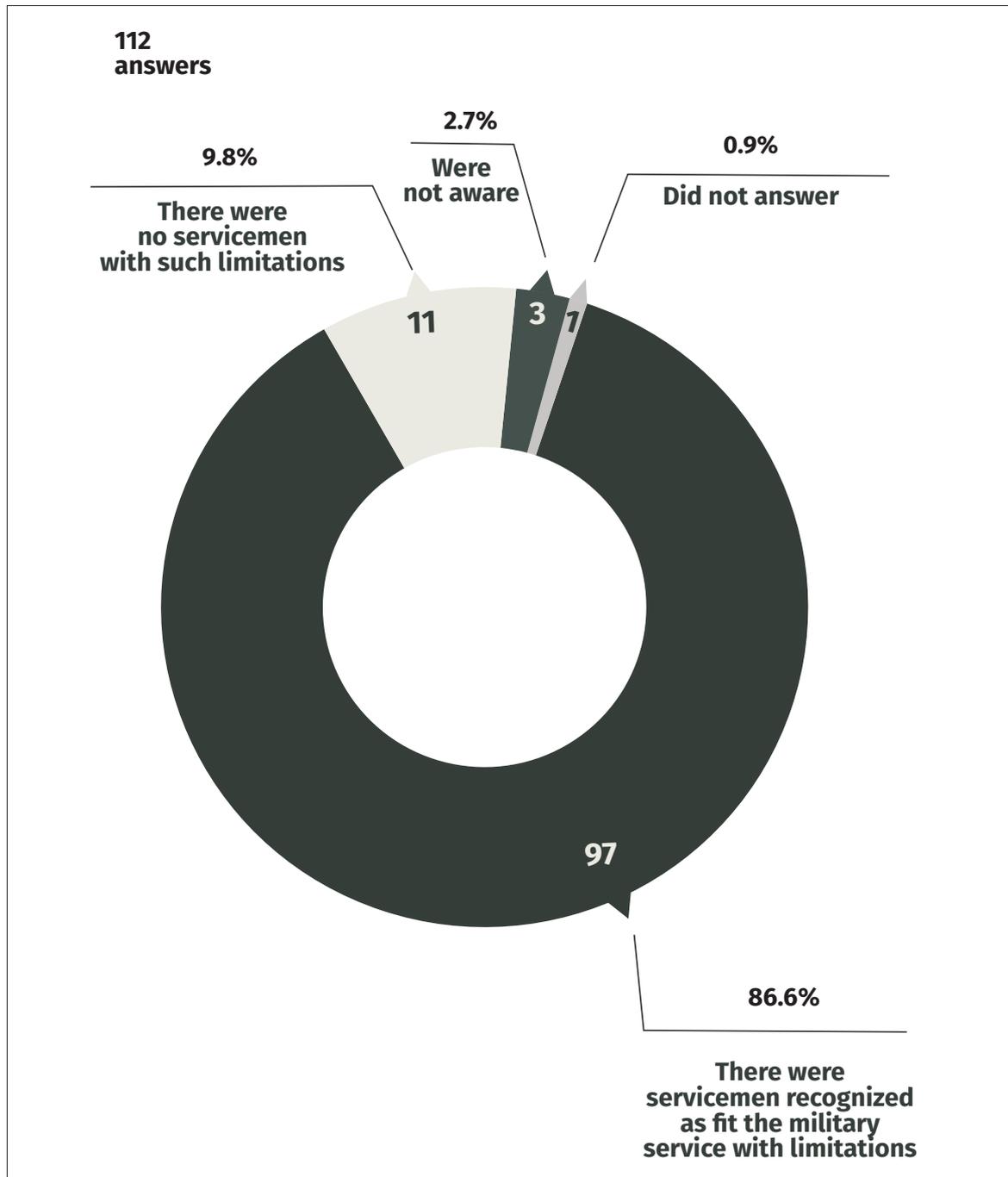
Out of 112 citizens who participated in the survey:

- According to 97 (86.6%), during their service, there were servicemen recognized as fit for the military service with limitations;
- 11 people (9.8%) stated that there were no servicemen with such limitations in their military unit;
- 3 people (2.7%) were not aware of such servicemen;
- 1 person (0.9%) did not answer that question. **See illustration 32.**

Among the 97 respondents who had servicemen recognized as fit for the military service with limitations;

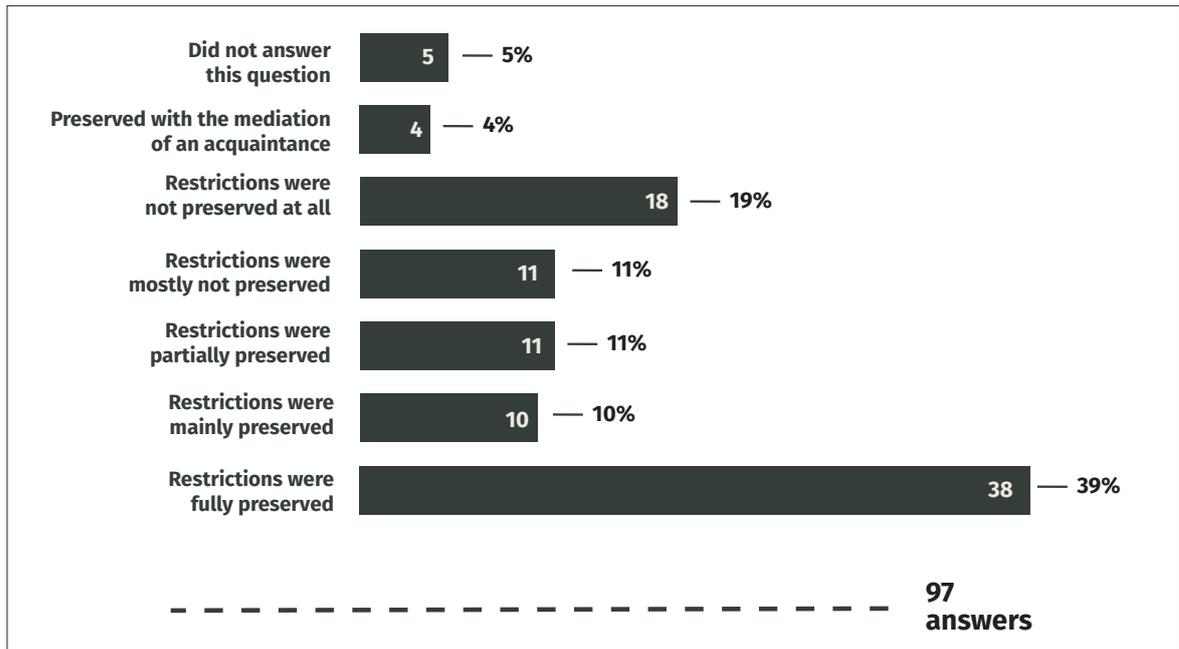
- 38 (39%) found that such servicemen’s restrictions were fully preserved during the service;
- 10 people (10%) - mainly preserved;

Illustration 32. Were there servicemen recognized as fit the military service with limitations?



- 11 (11%) - partially preserved;
- 11 (11%) - mostly not preserved;
- 18 (19%) - not preserved at all;
- 4 (4%) - preserved with the mediation of an acquaintance;
- 5 (5%) did not answer this question. **See illustration 33.**

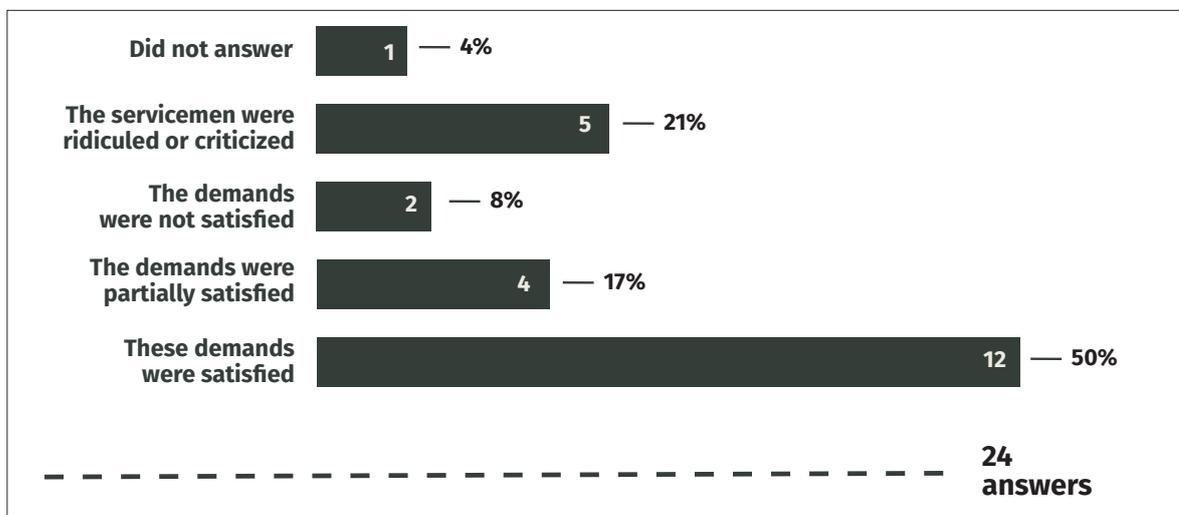
Illustration 33. Were the restrictions fully preserved?



Among the citizens who stated that the limitations were not fully preserved or were not preserved at all (59 people, 60.8%), we tried to find out whether the servicemen recognized as fit with limitation demanded these restrictions be followed or not. During the service of 24 respondents, such cases occurred. In particular:

- According to 12 respondents (50%), these demands were satisfied;
- According to 4 people (17%), the demands were partially satisfied;
- 2 people (8%) said that the demands were not satisfied;
- 5 people (21%) claimed that the servicemen were ridiculed or criticized;
- 1 respondent (4%) did not answer this question. **See illustration 34.**

Illustration 34. What reaction did they receive from their commanders and peer-servicemen?

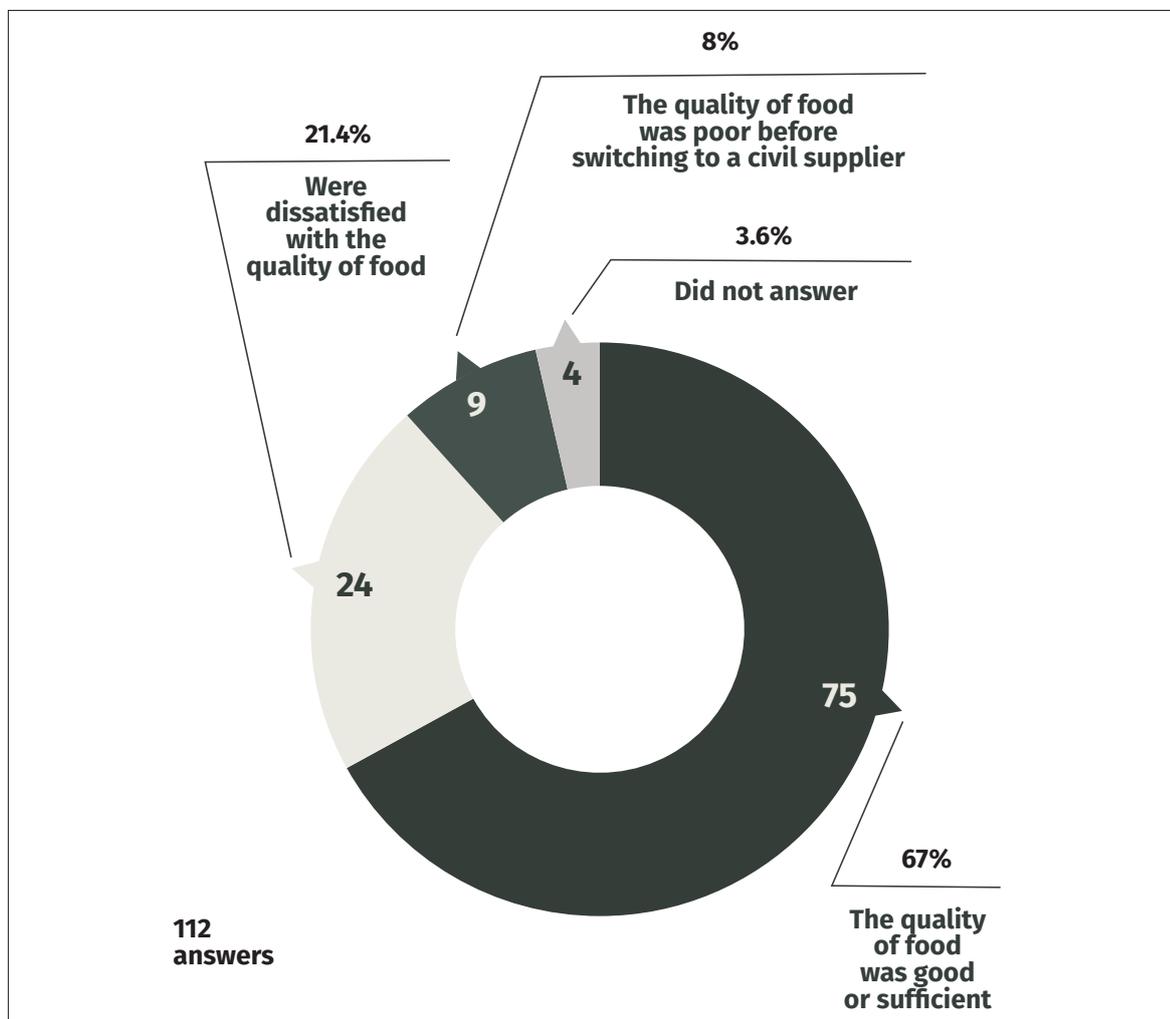


Food Quality Control During Military Service

To find out the servicemen's perceptions regarding the quality of food provided during the military service, we asked the participants the following question: "How was the food in the military unit?"

In response to the question, 75 of 112 citizens (67%) reported that the quality of food was good or sufficient, 24 (21.4%) indicated that they were dissatisfied with the quality of food, 9 (8%) mentioned that the quality of food was poor before switching to a civil supplier. 4 respondents (3.6%) did not answer the question. **See illustration 35.**

Illustration 35. How was the food in your military unit?



"It was terrible; we would often buy (food). If we hadn't done it, we would have starved. Sometimes I did not eat anything and stayed hungry until I could buy something"

from outside. The quality of the food was poor, the meat was not edible at all. We used to eat something ok only in the frontier, what we bought.”

(22 years old, 2018-2020 conscription)

“

“In the beginning, the supplier was the Ministry of Defense. It was horrible, we had to eat so that we wouldn’t starve. Especially for those who couldn’t afford to buy food from the outside or the “Chayny (teahouse).” The rest would buy. Then it switched to a civil supplier. It was good for a few days, but later the portions became tiny. It was ok only on inspection days.”

(23 years old, 2017-2019 draft)

“

“The food in the military unit was perfect. Yes, we ate with a great appetite, and it was distributed equally and on time. We’d stay hungry or thirsty during military exercises only because the car would be late.”

(25 years, 2015-2017, conscription)

“

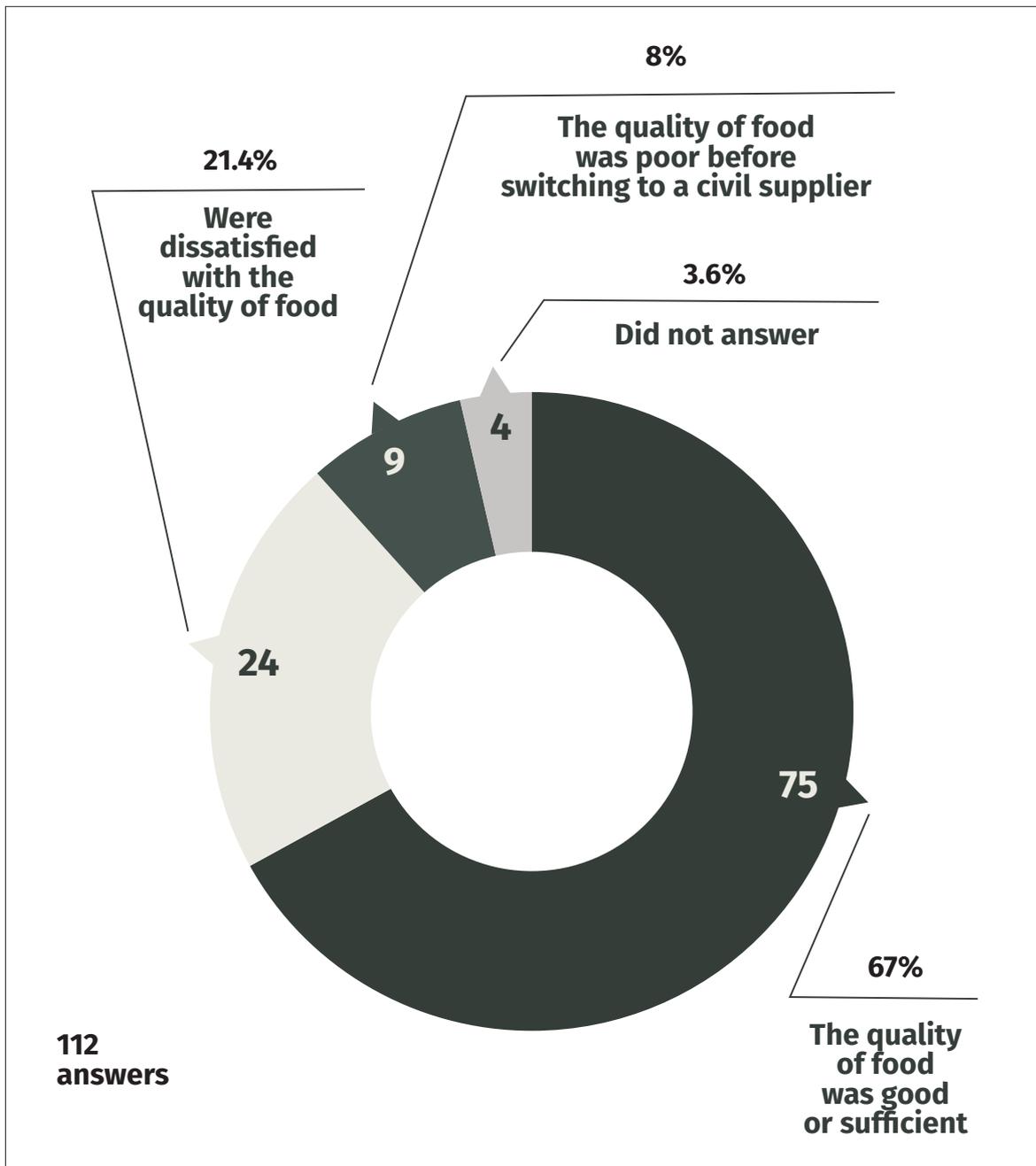
“The food in the military unit was excellent, better than in many people’s houses. I ate, and it was equally distributed. It was terrible on the frontier. During the battle, we stayed hungry and thirsty for three days. The food could have been close to us, but it was impossible to reach it under the enemy’s fire.”

(21 years old, 2019-2021 conscription)

To the question, “Have there been cases when you or your peer servicemen have stayed hungry or thirsty for a long time?”, out of 112 participants;

- 47 (42%) said no;
- 34 (30.4%) said yes;
- 18 (16%) said no, because they used to get food from other available places;
- 13 (11.6%) did not answer this question. **See illustration 36.**

Illustration 36. Have there been cases when you or your peer-servicemen have stayed hungry or thirsty for a long time?

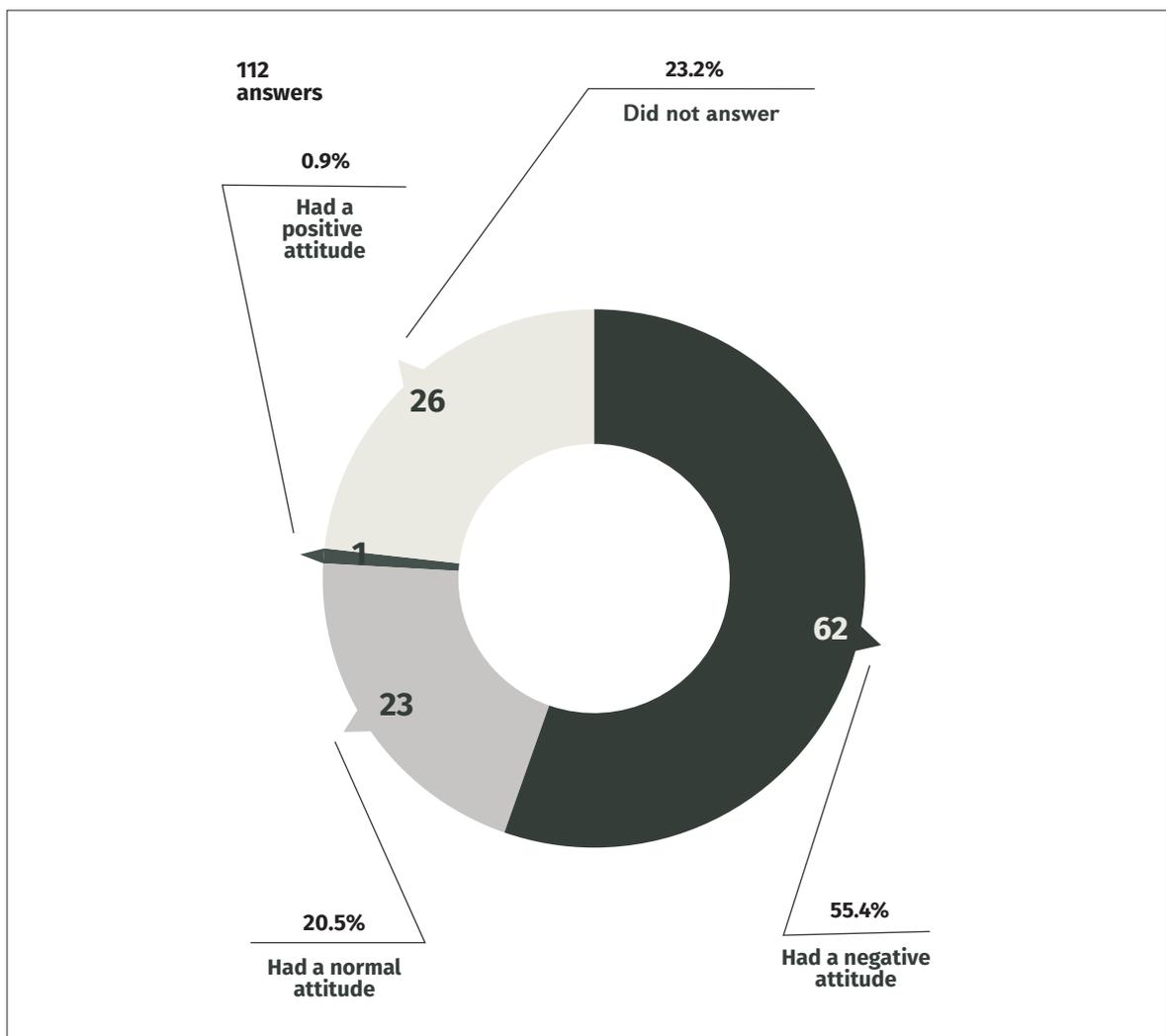


Servicemen’s Perceptions of Penalty and Punishment Mechanisms During Military Service and Relations with the Military Police and Other Prosecuting Authorities

During the surveys, more than half of the survey participants (62 people, 55.4%) stated that they had a negative attitude towards the Military Police, the investigative committee, and the Prosecutor’s Office during their service. Only 23 of the respondents (20.5%) stated that they had a normal attitude towards the above-mentioned bodies conducting proceedings, and 1 (0.9%) had a positive attitude*. 26 people (23.2%) did not answer this question. **See illustration 37.**

*The respondent is currently employed by the Military Police.

Illustration 37. What were your attitudes towards the Military Police or other prosecuting authorities?



The next question was formulated as follows. “Have you or your peer soldiers ever been to any of these institutions?”

The answers were arranged as follows:

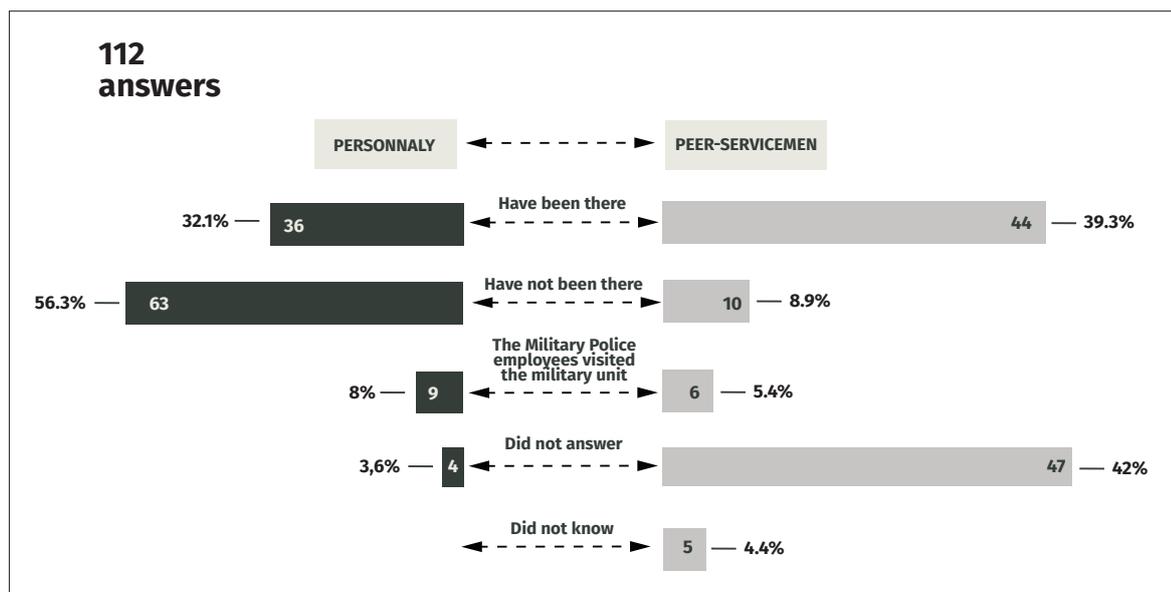
The respondents themselves:

- “Yes, I have been” - 36 people (32.1%);
- “No, I haven’t been” - 63 people (56.3%);
- “I haven’t been, but the Military Police have visited the military unit” - 9 people (8%);
- 4 respondents (3.6%) did not answer the question.

Peer servicemen:

- “Yes, my peer soldiers have been” - 44 people (39.3%);
- “No, my peer soldiers have not been” - 10 people (8.9%);
- “My peer soldiers have not been there, but the Military Police employees visited the military unit” - 6 people (5.4%);
- “I don’t know”: 5 people (4.5%);
- 47 people (42%) did not answer the question. **See illustration 38.**

Illustration 38. Have you or your peer-servicemen ever been to any of these?



The following quotes present the respondents’ opinions of these structures.



“There is no one who treats the military police well. They haven’t taken me, but they have taken several of my friends. There was a fight among several troops. They took a couple of people. Intimidation, shouting, and cursing, of course, happened. The same things as ordinary cops do. Well, ours didn’t say anything. They were free to go after a day.”

(21 years old, 2019-2021 conscription)



“No soldier or officer treats the Military Police well. No one likes them. Maybe even their relatives don’t like them. The same goes for the investigative or prosecutor’s office. We did not go to them, only they visited. The Military Police came from time to time to conduct inspections. They asked us questions and talked to us individually. But there was nothing to say. Whatever happens, you never say anything. It’s better to shoot yourself in the head than to say something to the Military Police and become a snitch.”

(23 years old, 2019-2021 conscription)



“Normal. Yes, I have been there once. There was a fight, and they took me as a witness. They were respectful, interrogated, and released.”

(23 years old, 2017-2019 conscription)



“Normal. Yes, a friend hit his peer soldier while sleeping, bruising the eye. The Military Police took him, no violence involved, everything was according to the law.”

(25 years old, 2015-2017 conscription)

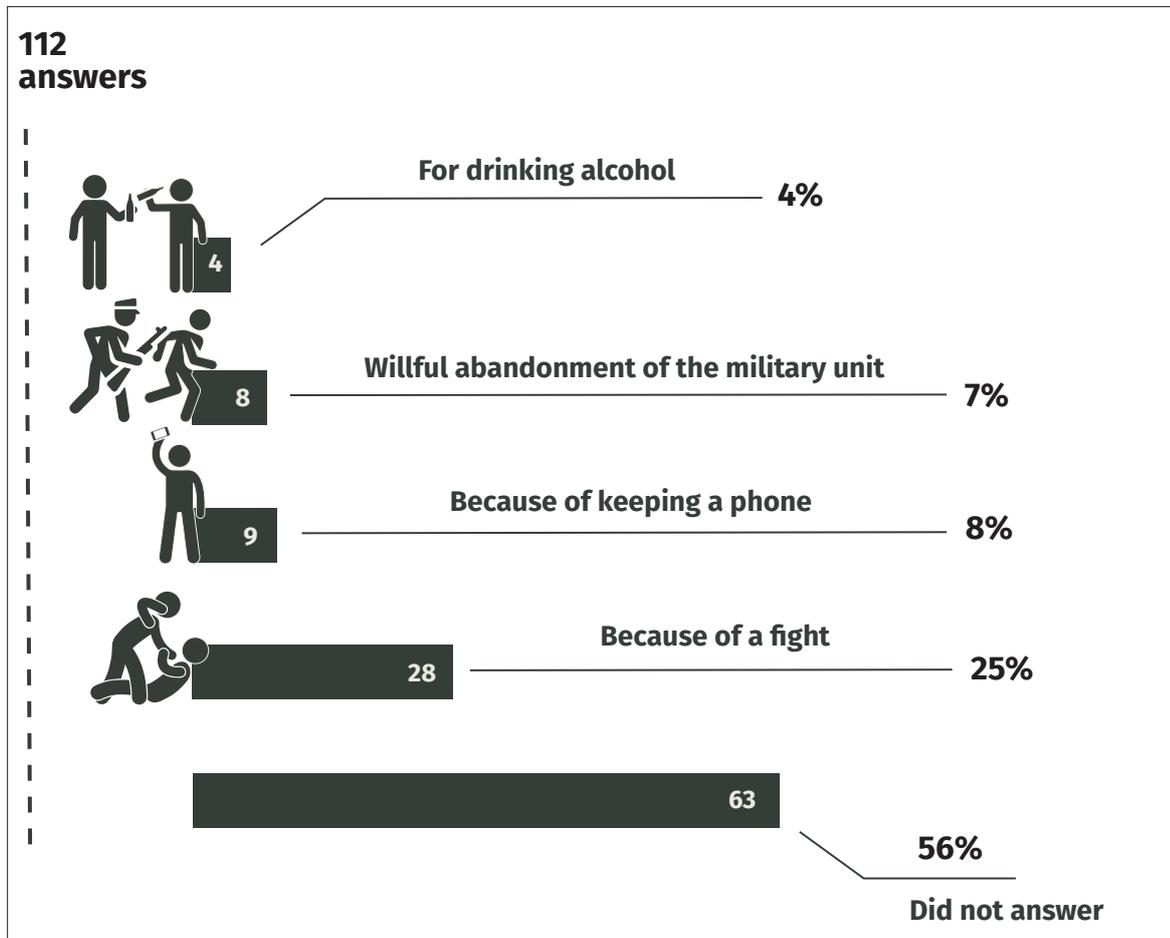
The majority of participants, 63 out of 112 (56%), chose not to answer the question, “Why were they taken to the Military Police?”

The most frequently heard options were the following:

- Because of a fight - 28 people (25%);
- Because of keeping a phone - 9 people (8%);
- Willful abandonment of the military unit - 8 people (7%);
- For drinking alcohol - 4 people (3%). **See illustration 39.**

With the next question, an attempt was made to determine the kind of treatment the respondents and their peer soldiers received in the Military Police. The question was answered by those citizens who stated that they had been to the military Police (36 people) and those who said their peer soldiers had been there (44 people).

The answers to this question are arranged as follows.

Illustration 39. Why were the conscripts taken to the Military Police?**The treatment towards them:**

- “Respectful” - 20 people (55.6%);
- “Disrespectful” (threatened, cursed, beaten, kept in a cell, etc.) - 12 people (36.1%);
- “I immediately found an acquaintance” - one person (2.8%);
- 3 participants (8.3%) did not answer the question. **See illustration 40.**

The treatment towards their peer servicemen:

- “Respectful” - 11 people (25%);
- “Disrespectful” (threatened, cursed, beaten, kept in a cell, etc.): 20 people (45.5%);
- “I don’t know”: 8 people (18.2%);
- 7 participants (15.9%) did not answer the question. **See illustration 41.**

At the same time, 33 respondents (29.5%) stated that their rights had been explained to them or their peer soldiers in the Military Police, 25 (22.3%) indicated that they had not been presented their rights, 40 (35.7%) did not know, and 1 (0.9%) did not remember anything like that. 13 (11.6%) people did not answer this question.

Illustration 40. What kind of treatment the respondents received in the Military Police?

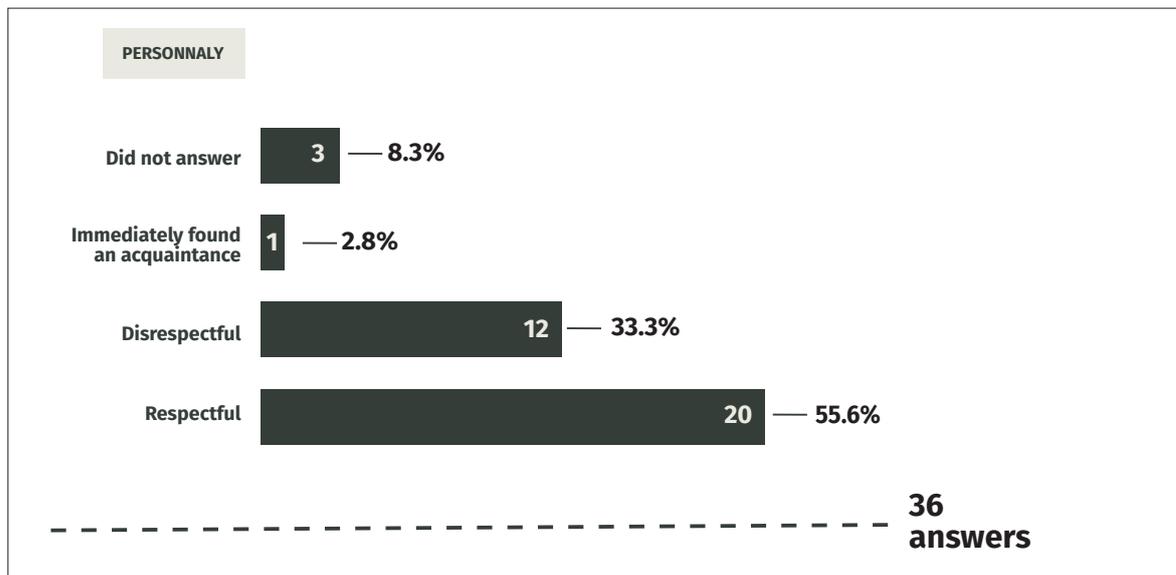
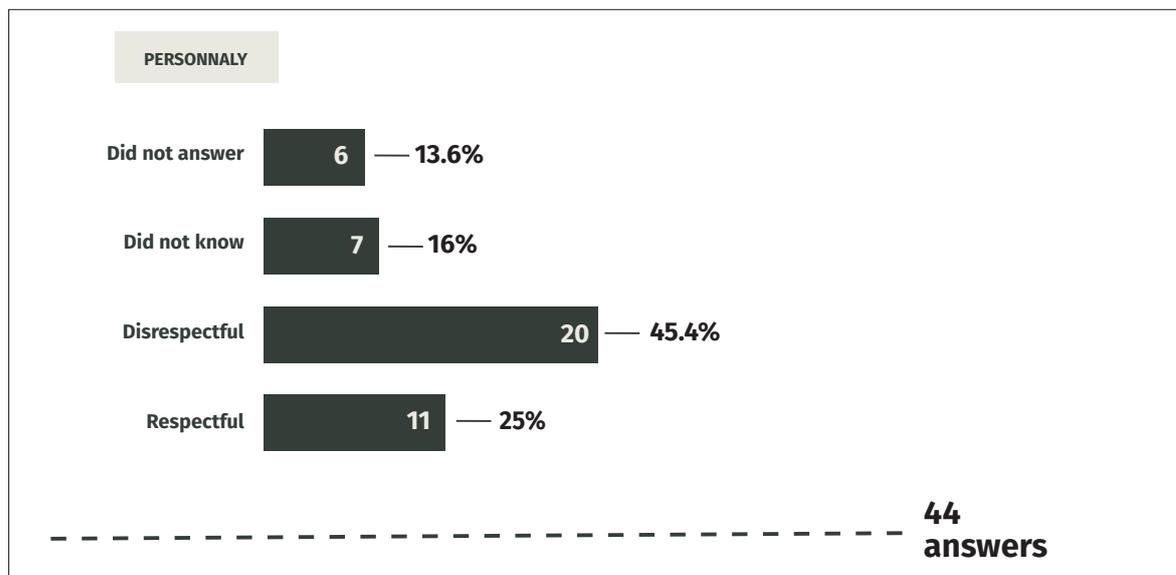


Illustration 41. What kind of treatment their peer-servicemen received in the Military Police?



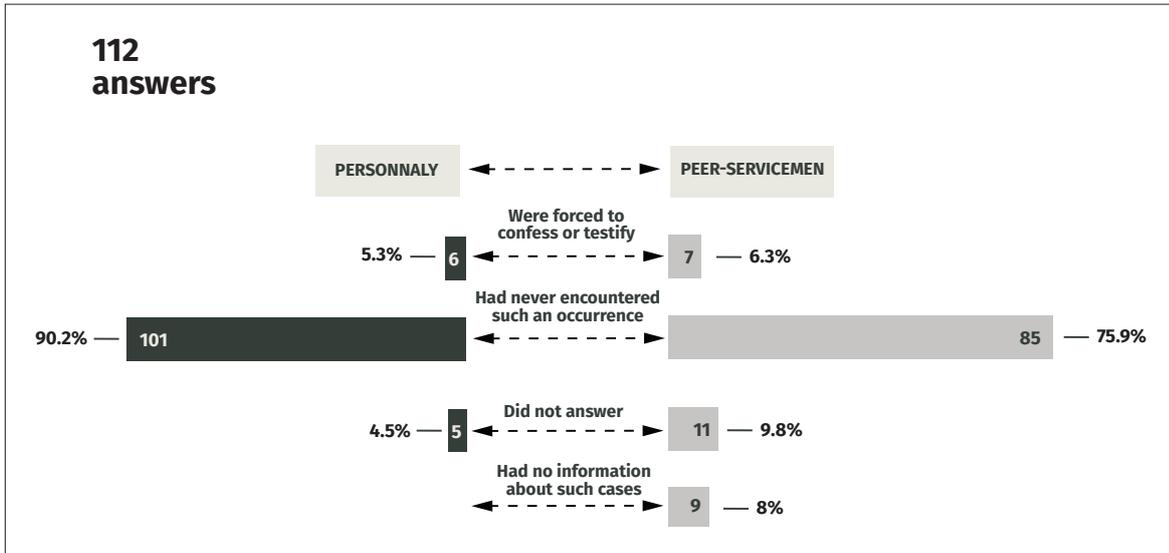
Most respondents stated that they were never forced to confess or testify.

- 101 (90.2%) indicated that they had never personally encountered such an occurrence;
- 6 (5.3%) stated that they had personally faced such a problem;
- 5 people (4.5%) did not answer.

Simultaneously,

- 85 people (75.9%) stated that such an incident had not happened with their peer servicemen either;
- 7 (6.3%) claimed that there had been such an incident with their peers;

Illustration 42. Have you or your peer servicemen ever forced to confess or testify in Military Police, Investigation Committee, or the Prosecutor's Office, etc.



- 9 (8%) reported that they had no information about such cases;
- 11 (9.8%) did not answer the question. **See illustration 42.**

It is noteworthy that 7 of the respondents stated that they or their peers had been kept in the Military Police for quite a long time.

- 4-10 days: 3 people;
- 11-30 days: 3 people;
- 31 days or more: 1 person.

Out of 112 citizens surveyed:

- 47 (42%) had been subjected to a disciplinary penalty during their service;
- 55 (49.1%) had not been subjected to a disciplinary penalty;
- 10 respondents (8.9%) did not answer the question regarding the disciplinary penalty.

At the same time

- 43 (38.4%) indicated that their peers had been subjected to a disciplinary penalty;
- 37 (33%) stated that their peers had not been subjected to such a penalty;
- 3 people (2.7%) were not aware whether their peers had been subjected to such a penalty or not;
- 29 participants (25.9%) did not answer this question. **See illustration 43.**

It is worth mentioning that the main reasons for the disciplinary penalty were:

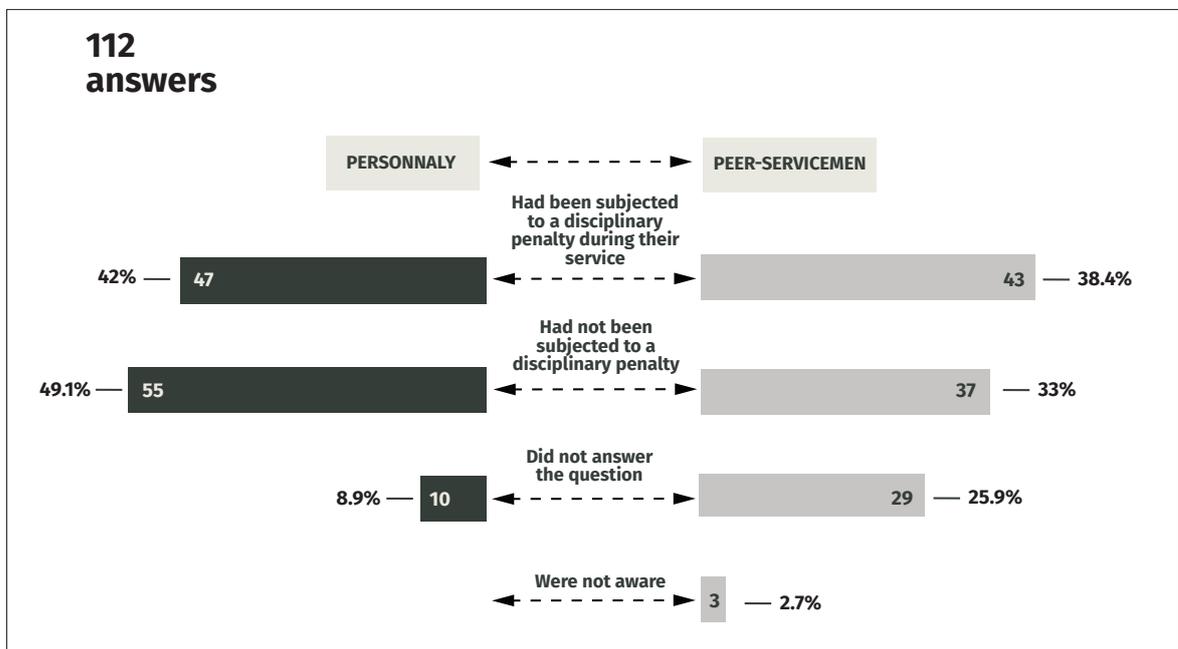
- Arguments/fights: 21 (31.8%);
- Alcohol usage: 13 (19.7%);
- Insubordination: 11 (16.7%);

- Voluntarily leaving the military unit: 10 (15.2%);
- Keeping a mobile phone: 7 (10.6%).

It is interesting that out of those 66 citizens who reported that they or their peer soldiers had been subjected to disciplinary penalty,

- 28 (42.4%) found that the penalty was fair,
- 5 (7.6%) - that the penalty was not fair,
- One (1.5%) that it was partially fair,
- 32 respondents (48.5%) did not answer the question. **See illustration 44.**

Illustration 43. Have you or your peer servicemen been subjected to a disciplinary penalty during the service?

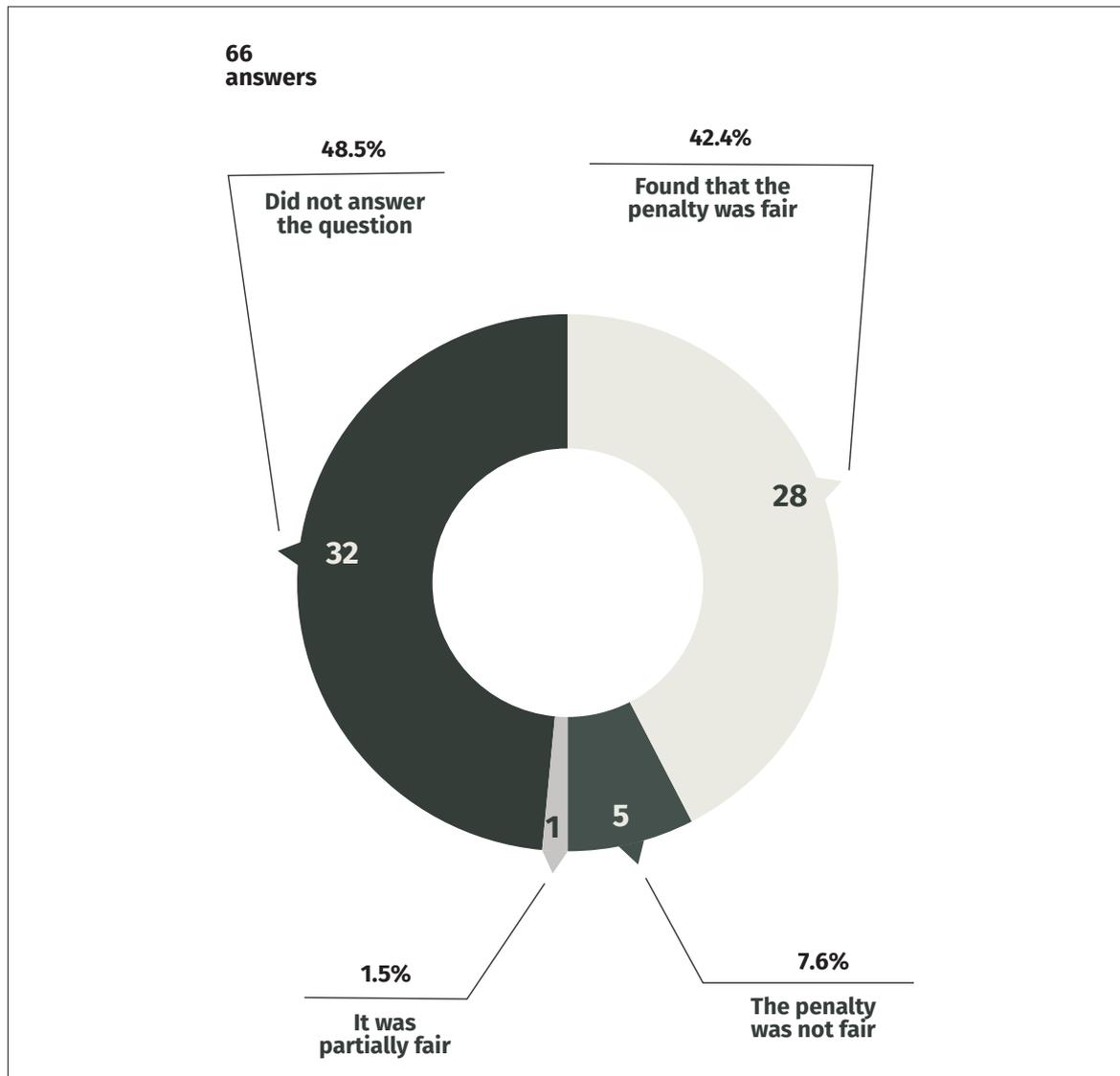


At the same time, none of the respondents mentioned that they contacted the lawyer of the military unit for the imposed penalty because of not trusting them.

2 people reported that the commander personally had punished them by locking up in some place, and 5 people said that such incidents had happened with their peer soldiers. By the way,

- One of the respondents mentioned that such punishment had lasted several hours;
- Another mentioned 1 day;
- Two mentioned 2 days and more.

To the question, “Did you know whom to reach out in case of violation of your or your peer soldiers’ rights?”:

Illustration 44. Do you think penalty was fair?

- 38 stated that they were aware they could contact the hotline of the Ministry of Defense (33.9%);
- 24 (21.4%) said that they could turn to the officers of the military unit;
- 22 (19.6%) would not contact anyone;
- 21 (18.8) would prefer to reach out to their friends in the military unit or outside.

With the next question we strove to find out whether the rights of the servicemen who participated in the military operations had been violated during the military operations and afterwards.

14 of the 69 servicemen who participated in combat operations said yes. As the most common violations, the respondents mentioned as follows:

- The fact of participating in military operations was not registered in the military book;
- Problems with obtaining the necessary documents for receiving state-ordered treatment or pension.

The final question of the survey was to find out, “What needs to be changed in the Armenian army?”

- 38 respondents (33.9%) found it necessary to update technologies and equipment;
- 24 (21.4%) stated that the soldiers should be provided with all the essential supplements so that they don't need anything from outside;
- Another 24 (21.4%) indicated that it is desirable that serving according to the law should be mandatory for everyone;
- 19 (17%) stated that they would like to see more competent officers.

CONCLUSIONS

The results of the interviews shape the following main conclusions.

1. The attitude of the majority of servicemen, even those who have been involved in the military operations, towards military service is mainly self-centered, that is, military service is perceived as a means of personal development and improvement.
2. Under statutory relations, servicemen understand mostly military training (physical, combat, and mental training); however, interpersonal relations and their regulation are beyond this scope.
3. Interpersonal relations among the soldiers, including conflicts and disagreements, are often handled against law regulations - through violence, threats of violence, and civilians' intervention.
4. Soldiers prefer officers who follow military statute (especially highly intellectual and competent) to those who neglect military regulations.
5. In most military units, there are commanders (officers) who, as a routine and periodic behavior, show ill-treatment (torture, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment) to servicemen (subordinates).
6. Most of the servicemen interviewed have been subjected to or witnessed ill-treatment (torture, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment), including beating, insults, and mocking.
7. The manners of the criminal subculture are the predominant regulatory tool in interpersonal relations, which in some cases are followed even by the representatives of the military staff.
8. The most disgraceful and unacceptable behavior in the course of the military service is cooperation (reporting the committed crime in one way or another) with law enforcement agencies, which is a characteristic of the criminal subculture's manner.
9. In several military units, some groups of servicemen perform forced labor, that is, they are forced to perform tasks that are not part of their official duties.

10. The rights of some servicemen to be free from ill-treatment (especially inhuman and degrading treatment) and exploitation (forced labor) are grossly violated by both the military staff and peer soldiers as a manifestation of discrimination based on sexual orientation.
11. For various reasons, vulnerable and weak servicemen rarely receive protection and support from the military staff.
12. Only a small part of the interpersonal conflicts and disagreements are settled through the intervention of the military staff, even if the latter are informed about the incident.
13. The vast majority of servicemen not only do not realize the need to receive psychological support, but even if they do, they do not apply to the psychologist-officer or chaplain of the military unit.
14. Consulting the psychologist-officer and the chaplain for some personal problems has mostly yielded a positive result.
15. The two main reasons for not reaching out to the psychologist-officer are mistrust (assumed lack of professional knowledge and skills, fear of breach of confidentiality) and misconceptions about psychological support (considering it shameful or ostentatious).
16. In some military units (about 1/4), the medical centers are deprived of the opportunity to provide quality medical care.
17. In some military units, servicemen (including those with serious health problems) are not provided with proper medical care.
18. There are high risks of corruption when it comes to the health condition of servicemen (provision of quality medical care, following restrictions); i.e., in a number of cases, these medical care issues are solved by corruption.
19. Food, especially provided by a civil supplier, is mainly good quality, but sometimes (especially during combat duty), servicemen buy and cook food on their own.
20. The attitude of servicemen towards military law enforcement agencies (Military Police, investigative body, and Prosecutor's Office) is rather negative for objective and subjective reasons.
21. In some cases, the Military Police subjects servicemen to ill-treatment (torture, inhuman or degrading treatment) to compel them to testify as well.

22. In several cases, the right to the servicemen's freedom was grossly violated by the Military Police or the military staff, indicating that the servicemen, without being arrested or detained, were kept by the military police for a long time or by the commander in some closed area (building).
23. During military service, the most common offenses (criminal or disciplinary) are physical or psychological violence, voluntarily leaving the military unit, insubordination, drinking alcohol, and possessing a mobile phone.
24. The level of trust of servicemen toward military lawyers is deficient.
25. A little more than half of the servicemen are aware of the possible legal ways of protecting their rights in case of violation (specifying the command or the Ministry of Defense as the addressee).
26. The two critical dimensions for improving military service are the improvement of logistics (including both military equipment and non-food items) and the improvement of the military staff (including both personal value system and military capability components).