

Estonians in Finland

University of Tartu, Institute of Estonian and General Linguistics

Short facts

History: Estonians in Finland mainly represent more recent allochthonous groups that emerged as a result of the intensive waves of emigration after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 and Estonia's entry into the European Union in 2004.

Statistics:

- Estonians are the second-largest recent migrant group in Finland after the Russian-speaking minority.
- According to Statistics Finland, 39 763 Estonian citizens were living in Finland and 38 364 residents of Finland spoke Estonian as their mother tongue (2013)
- Estonian-speaking communities in Finland are the fastest-growing Estonian-language communities in the Estonian Western Diaspora.

Age groups: A major part of the Estonians in Finland are people in working age, employed especially in medical and care professions and in construction work.

Urban areas: The Estonians in Finland mainly residing in urban centres (in Helsinki, Tampere, Turku).

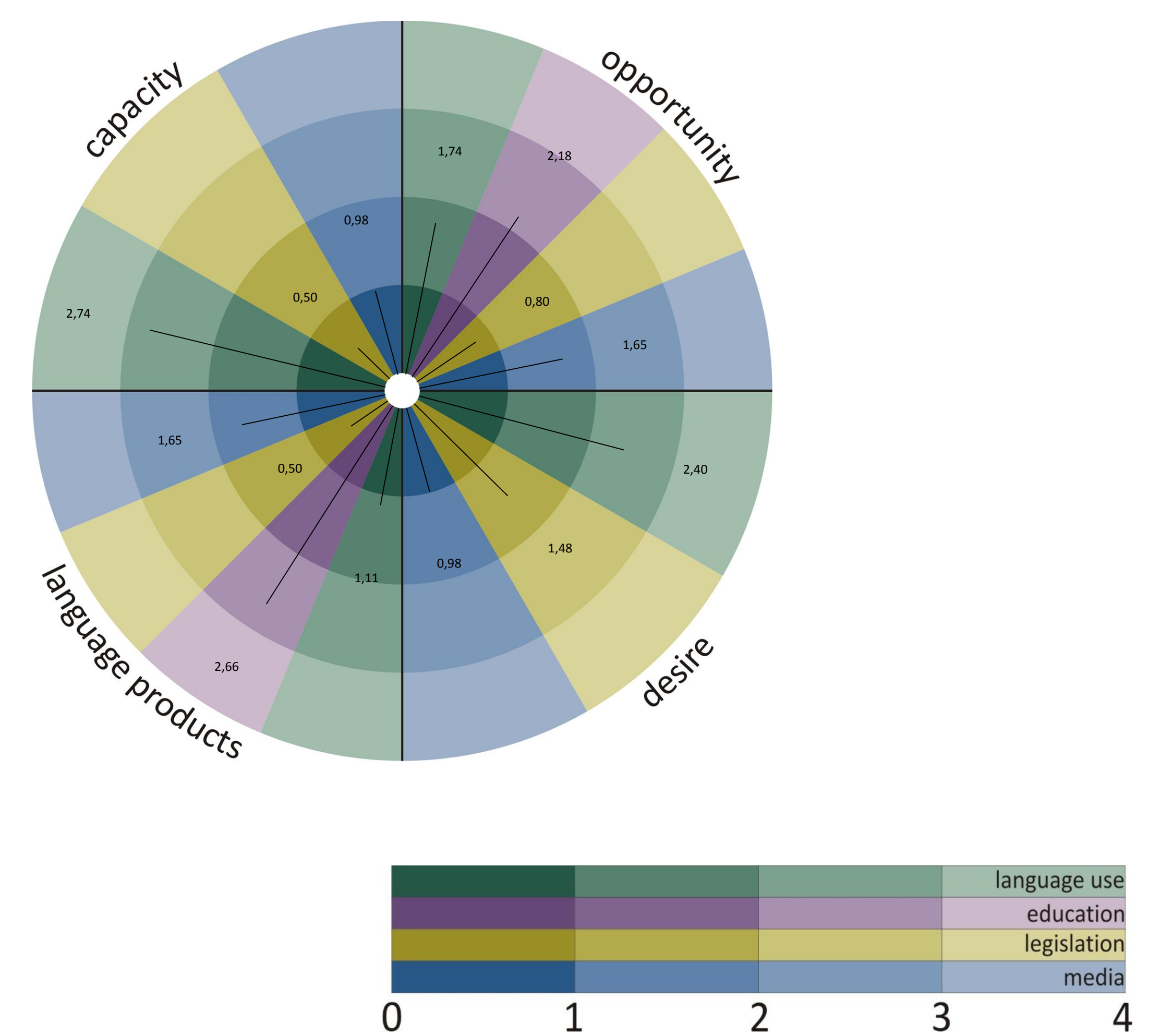


ELDIA's results

- Most of the respondents (84%) consider Estonian as their mother tongue which they speak with a high level of proficiency. For most of the Estonians Finnish is a foreign language which generally has been acquired in adulthood after emigrating to Finland. The self-assessments provided by the respondents of the level of their Finnish skills show that a significant proportion of the respondents can read (64%), speak (51%) and understand Finnish fluently (55%) while 36.8% can write in Finnish fluently.
- Estonians in Finland generally have a positive attitude toward multilingualism. In the families, especially in everyday communication between spouses, different strategies and patterns of multilingual language use are practiced. The vast majority of the respondents (88.4%) attach great importance to the transmission of Estonian and therefore they encourage and support their children to speak the language. Only about 11.6% of the respondents think that it necessary for their children to speak Estonian. Almost half of the respondents (42%) speak only Finnish with their spouse or partner while 43% of respondents use more than one language, in most cases Finnish and Estonian.
- Estonians in Finland have little opportunity to use Estonian outside home. However, in social networks (communication with friends) both languages are used. For most of the respondents Estonian is not required in any public domain.
- The use of Finnish dominates almost in all relevant areas of media and culture (i.e. reading newspapers, listening to radio, watching TV). Finnish is also prevalent in cultural practices at home (e.g. reading books, watching movies, listening to music etc.).

EuLaViBar

The speakers of Estonian are characterised by the linguistic capacity (2.46) and desire (2.25) to use their language, but less opportunities to use the language (1.57). There is also a lack of significant 'Estonian language products' in Finland (1.71), especially in legislation and media as well in education.



The overall assessment of the barometer (EuLaViBar) in regard to the situation of the Estonian language and its sustainability in a broader sense is very low in all dimensions. The grades given by EuLaViBar by dimension remain within Grades 1 and 2 (the range of 1.57-2.46). In no dimension for any of the measured variables does the barometer give the state of Estonian the highest grade (4) marking the stability of the linguistic situation. Of all of the dimensions, EuLaViBar gives the highest grade (2.74) to Estonian speakers' linguistic capacity to communicate in their mother tongue; the lowest grade is given to the speakers' opportunities to use the Estonian language (esp. in legislation, 0.8) and existence of Estonian-language products in Finland (esp. in legislation, 0.5).