

OPINION MONITORING: JANUARY—FEBRUARY 2023

VCIOM-Sputnik daily survey results. The survey method is stratified dual-frame sample consisting of telephone interviews. The sample is based on a complete list of landline and mobile phone numbers operating in Russia and involves 1,600 persons aged 18 and older. The data were weighted for the probability of selection and reflect social and demographic characteristics. The margin of error at a 95% confidence level does not exceed 2.5%. In addition to sampling error, minor changes in question wording and different circumstances arising during the fieldwork can introduce bias into the survey.

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LIVING IN DEBT: MONITORING

January 13, 2024

The results of the VCIOM monitoring survey show that over the past 20 years, the attractiveness of loans for Russians has decreased. The share of those who borrow money has decreased from 62% to 44%. In January 2024, 13% of the respondents call themselves avid borrowers (they borrow money very often or rather often; in 2004 and 2009 the same estimate was 14%). Another 31% consider themselves to be periodic borrowers («rarely, but sometimes it happens»), while back in 2004, every second Russian could be classified as the latter (48%).

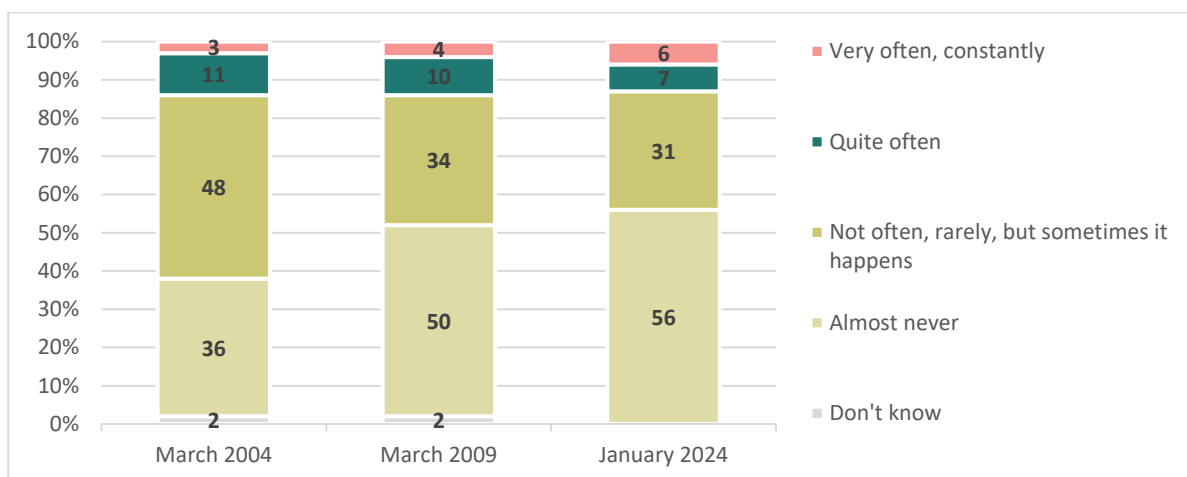
The greatest risk of ending up in a «debt hole» might be observed among citizens with low incomes. Every fifth person in this group takes out loans constantly (19% versus 2–4% of Russians with good and average financial standing). Regular debtors are also more likely to be Russians with secondary education (10%). The most active borrowers are Russians aged 25–59 years old (25–34 years old — 54%, 35–44 years old — 50%, 45–59 years old — 46%), with poor and very poor financial situation (53%), and residents of villages (51%).

More than half of the respondents reported that they almost never borrow money (56%, +20 percentage points since 2004). Young people aged 18–24 (62%) and representatives of the older generation 60+ (67%) avoid loans more often. Another possible explanation is the low level of solvency of these groups and, as a result, potential difficulties in repaying the debt. Citizens who are satisfied with their income (66%) and residents of capitals (64%) also almost never borrow money.

The most preferred creditor for Russians is still their close circle of acquaintances. If necessary, Russian citizens are more likely ask relatives or very good friends for financial help (55%, in 2004 — 61%). Every third respondent expressed readiness to take out a loan from a bank (34%). Over the past 20 years, trust in financial institutions in this matter has increased significantly: in 2004, only 18% would apply to a bank for a loan, which is half as much as now. Russians are not ready to involve their superiors at work, colleagues, or third-party wealthy people (on the recommendation of acquaintances and friends) in solving their financial problems (only 2% of respondents picked each of these options); the same applies to contacting a microfinance organization (1%).

Young people aged 18-24 are noticeably more likely to involve their social network in solving money problems (73%). Only one in five in this age cohort would contact a bank (20%). For avid borrowers, it most likely does not matter which lender to turn to, their close circle (49%) or the bank (41%).

**Fig. 1. Anything can happen in life, please tell me, how often do you borrow money?
(closed-ended question, one answer, % of all respondents)**



STUDYING AT A UNIVERSITY AND EMPLOYMENT PROSPECTS: MONITORING

January 19, 2024

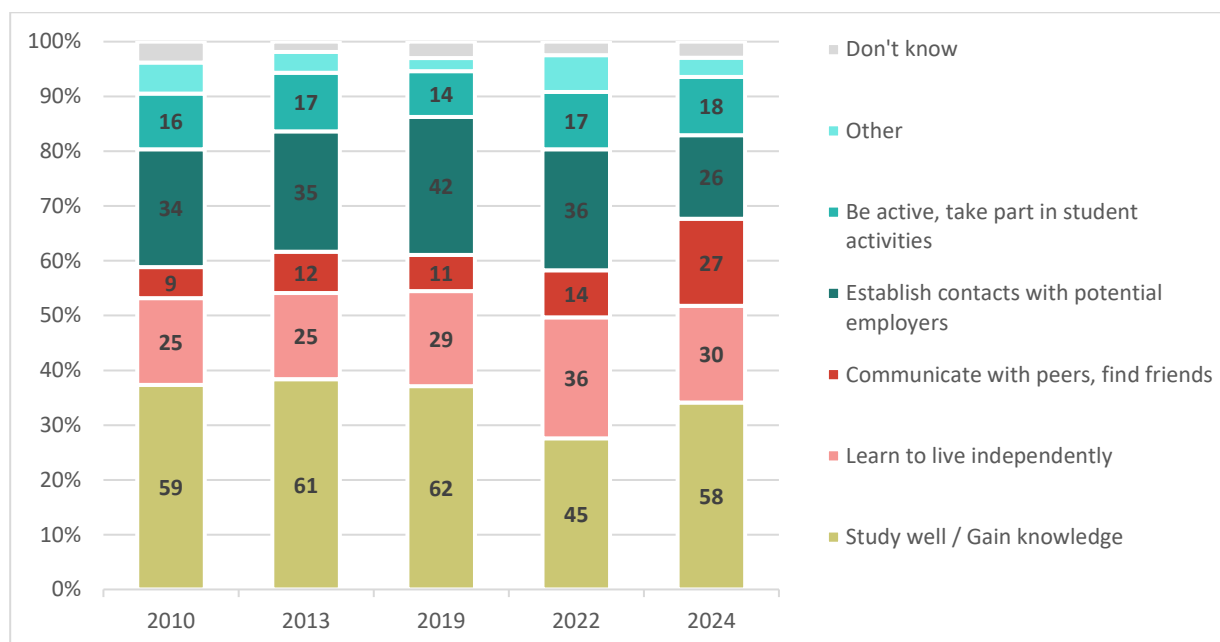
Successful study and gaining new knowledge are still the top priority for university students in the opinion of Russian citizens (58%). Russians also believe that in the process of obtaining higher education, it is important to learn how to live independently, communicate with peers, and establish contacts with potential employers. Compared to previous measurements, today these answers are heard with approximately the same frequency (30%, 27% and 26%, respectively). According to another 18%, the most important thing for student youth is to be active and take part in student events. At the same time, communication with peers and finding friends during the period of study are becoming increasingly important in the eyes of Russians (+13 percentage points since 2022), while establishing contacts with potential employers is less important (-10 percentage points over the last two years).

The student values ranking looks as follows: study well (41% among 18–24 year olds), establish contacts with potential employers (35%), find friends (34%), learn to live independently (31%), and be active (25%).

One of the possible reasons why the student years are no longer considered a good time to find a potential employer is the growing optimism regarding the employment of young people. Today, 9% of university graduates say that the process of finding a job is easy – the highest number over the entire observation period (versus 2–4% in previous surveys); the same applies to those who believe that the employment issue can be resolved by making a small effort – 32% (versus 12–22% in previous surveys). Another 40% today believe that finding a job is very difficult for graduates, while two years ago every second person (50%) was sure of this. Every tenth person can be counted among the pessimists – they see employment for graduates as practically impossible (10%). Fortunately, over the past 15 years, the share of such people in Russian society has decreased more than twice (24% in 2009).

Young Russians aged 25–34 in 44% of cases consider the job search for graduates to be relatively simple (“you have to put in a little effort”), and every eighth person thinks it is easy (12%).

**Fig. 2. What do you think is the most important thing during your time at university?
(closed-ended question, up to two answers, % of all respondents)**



PHONE FRAUD: MONITORING

February 2, 2024

In a February survey, 67% of Russians admitted that they had received scam calls in the past six months to a year, while in 2021, just over half of our fellow citizens could tell about such an experience (57%, +10 percentage points over three years). SMS fraud is much less common in Russia. Recently, every sixth person (17%) has encountered attempts at this kind of fraud, in 2021 and 2022 — every fifth person (19% and 20%, respectively). There are several reasons why attackers prefer phone calls, one of the most obvious is that it is much easier to win over a potential victim during a conversation than in impersonal text messages.

According to the results obtained, the main criterion for choosing a potential victim is the place of residence. Residents of both capitals are most susceptible to telephone fraud: 85% of Muscovites and St. Petersburg residents have encountered it (including 81% who received calls from scammers, 26% — SMS messages). In rural areas, 57% of our fellow citizens have dealt with telephone scammers: 55% received calls, every tenth — SMS (10%).

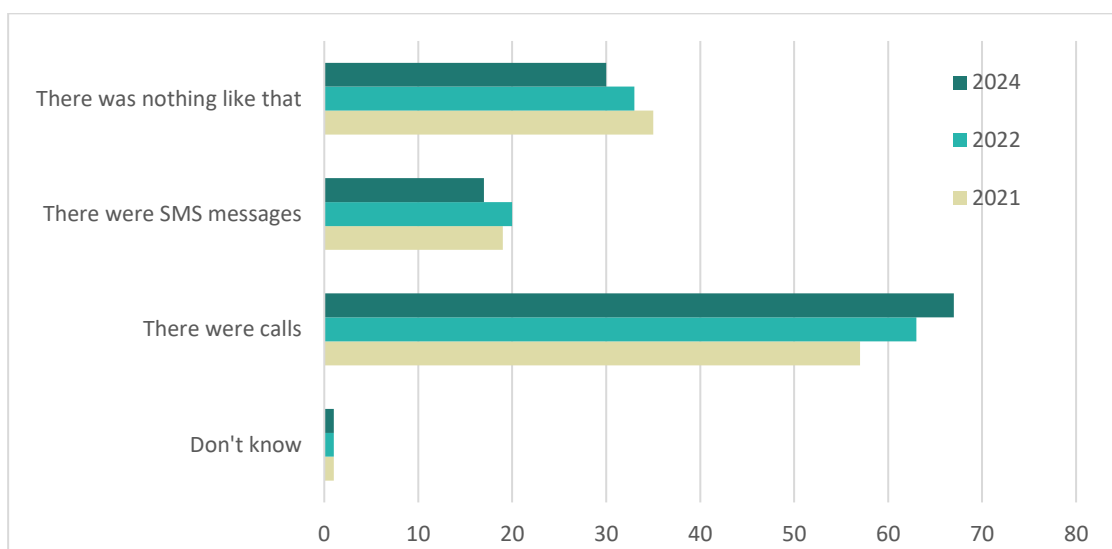
Another differentiating factor is the level of education: the higher it is, the more often respondents report the experience of "communication" with scammers. 77% of Russians with higher and incomplete higher education admitted that they received fake calls, 22% encountered SMS fraud. Among respondents with secondary specialized education, these figures were 60% and 14%, respectively. The described differences are most likely explained by the ability to recognize scam.

3 out of 10 Russians (30%) have not encountered any of the above, among 18–24 year olds — 4 out of 10 (40%). Probably, being more tech-savvy users, young people more often than others install applications on their devices to block unwanted calls/mailings, which means they become less vulnerable to such fraud.

Most Russians who were contacted by fraudsters did not allow themselves to be deceived and did not suffer financial losses (93%, in 2021 and 2022 — 91%). This estimate remains unchanged throughout the entire measurement period. 7% of those who encountered telephone fraud suffered financial losses (including 3% who assessed the damage as insignificant, 4% — as significant).

In general, Russians are skeptical about their chances of being deceived by telephone scammers: 46% consider such a situation to be unlikely, 27% — impossible. Another 23% admit ("it could well happen") that they could lose money because of the actions of telephone scammers. Among middle-aged Russians (45—59 years old), this answer is slightly more common — 31%. Increasing the level of digital and financial literacy in our country is bearing fruit: over the past three years, the share of Russians who are extremely skeptical about their chances of being deceived by telephone scammers ("I am sure that this will never happen") has increased by 9 percentage points (2021 — 18%), while the share of those who admit such a situation to be probable, on the contrary, decreased by 11 percentage points (2021 — 34%).

Fig. 3. Tell me, have you personally received calls or SMS messages from telephone scammers in the last six months to a year?
(closed-ended question, up to two answers, % of all respondents)



SURROGATE MOTHERHOOD: PRO ET CONTRA

February 4, 2024

Today, most Russians are familiar with the term “surrogacy” (97%, 2013 — 96%), including seven out of ten who know well what it is (73%, 2013 — 71%).

The attitude towards this phenomenon in Russian society is rather loyal: 84% consider it acceptable to use the services of surrogate mothers, over ten years the share of such answers has grown by 8 percentage points. However, more often the respondents are not talking about widespread use (16%), but see it as an option in special cases when people cannot give birth to a child on their own (68%, +8 percentage points compared to 2013). Every tenth Russian considers the use of surrogate mothers to be unacceptable under any circumstances 11% (-8 percentage points compared to 2013).

The generation of modern youth aged under 35 — those who grew up in conditions when surrogacy was already widely discussed and for whom it is a rather habitual phenomenon — noticeably more often treats it as the norm. In this group, 27–31% accept using the services of surrogate mothers in any situation and consider it normal. The older the Russians, the less often they talk about surrogacy in this way (among 35–44 year olds — 17%, 45–54 year olds — 12%, in the group aged over 60 years old — 8%).

The attitude towards surrogacy correlates with urbanization. City dwellers in general and especially in capital cities more often perceive this phenomenon as a norm, acceptable in any situation (25% in Moscow and St. Petersburg and 10–11% in rural areas and small towns with a population of up to 100 thousand people).

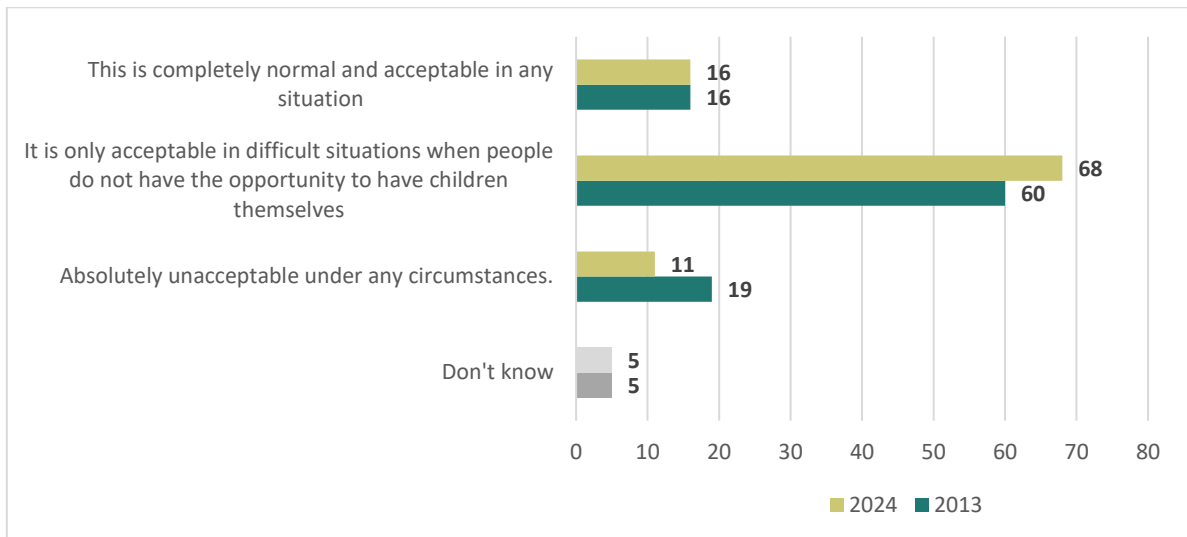
Residents of the North Caucasus District are twice as likely as Russians in general to find it unacceptable to solve infertility problems with the help of surrogate mothers (21% versus 11%).

The initial attitude to surrogacy determines the willingness to resort to such services if necessary. Among those who consider this phenomenon to be the norm, 40% chose surrogacy, and 41% chose to adopt a child from an orphanage. Among those who called surrogacy unacceptable, only 1% would agree to it, 81% would prefer to adopt a child from an orphanage. The willingness to resort to the services of surrogate mothers is higher among citizens with incomplete higher and higher education (29% versus 13% in the group with incomplete secondary education), as well as capital city residents (34% versus 20–21% in rural areas and small towns with a population of up to 100 thousand people).

Over the past ten years, we have become more likely to regard surrogacy as a necessary and useful thing. Today, six out of ten Russians think so (60%, +9 percentage points compared to 2013). At the same time, the share of those who call this phenomenon morally unacceptable has decreased from 26% in 2013 to 18% in 2024.

Young Russians are more likely than others to give positive assessments to surrogacy (88% in the group of those aged under 25, 70% in the group of aged 25–34). While representatives of the older age group call it morally unacceptable in 25% of cases (versus 2% among 18–24 year olds and 6% among 25–34 year olds). At an older age, people are usually more attached to established socio-cultural norms, and surrogacy may seem to them to be a violation of these foundations, while progressive youth are often more open to everything new, including alternative methods of parenting.

Fig. 4. In your opinion, is it acceptable or unacceptable to use the services of a surrogate mother? (closed-ended question, one answer, % of all respondents who know / have heard of it)



LIFESTYLE

WINTER HOLIDAYS 2024: AN OVERVIEW

FAMILY AS A VALUE

WINTER HOLIDAYS 2024: AN OVERVIEW

January 14, 2024

According to the data obtained, most Russians associate their winter holidays in 2024 exclusively with pleasant memories: 75% were satisfied with how they spent their New Year and Christmas holidays. Over the entire period of measurements since 2006, the indicator has only dropped below 70% twice (in 2019 — 69%, in 2021 — 61%). 19% of our fellow citizens, or about one in five, are not satisfied with their New Year holidays, and it is the lowest value in the last ten years.

Those aged 35–44 are more satisfied with the New Year and Christmas holidays (81% versus 75% among all Russians), as well as citizens with a good financial situation (82% versus 56% in the group with a bad one).

Every second Russian spent time with friends and family during the January holidays this year (49%), four out of ten preferred a quiet rest at home watching TV (43%). Other popular options include visiting friends (24%), walks in the fresh air (22%), attending New Year's performances with children, and cultural events (13% each). Another 11% of our fellow citizens spent the holidays actively — they went skating, skiing or sledding. The tradition of visiting friends during the New Year holidays has become noticeably less popular over the past two decades (in 2006 — 54%, in 2023 — 24%). Perhaps, with each passing year, virtual communication is increasingly replacing personal meetings, even on holidays. Every fifth Russian reported that instead of resting, he / she had to work (22%). Illness interfered with the plans of another 13% of Russian citizens.

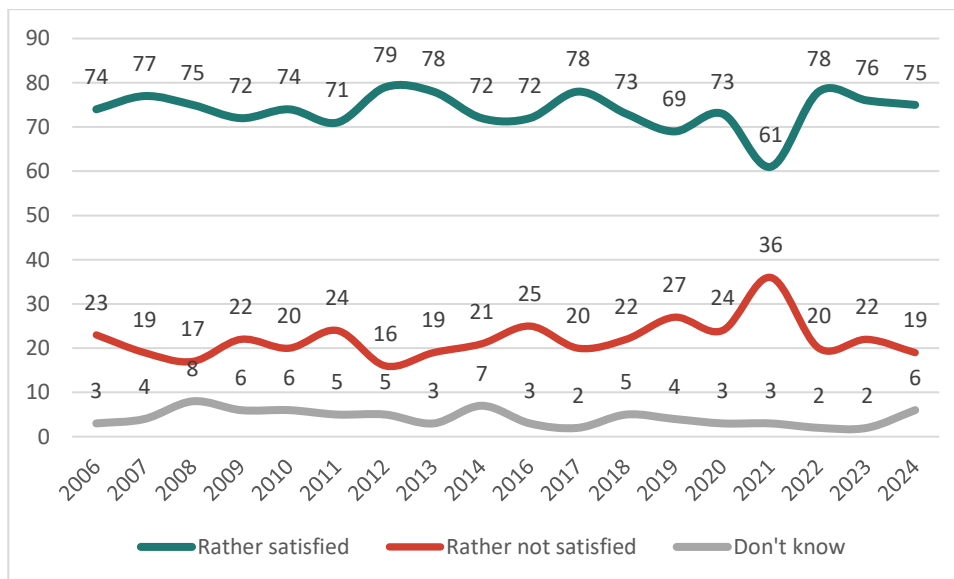
Men worked more often than women during the New Year holidays (27% versus 17%), while women watched TV at home more often (47% versus 39%). The leisure time of young people under 25 is distinguished by the fact that they often spent it with friends (61%), and young people also visited restaurants, clubs, and discos more often than other Russians (21%). Russians aged 35–44 more often than others attended New Year's performances and Christmas trees with their children during these holidays (23%), and went skating, skiing, or sledding (20%). Among the older cohort, TV bypassed all other types of leisure: 49% of Russians over 60 watched it during the New Year holidays (versus 30% of those aged 18–24).

Most Russians refuse to travel during the New Year holidays (73%), since 2018 the figure has remained at 70–77%. 26% traveled outside the region, 1% — outside the country. The most likely to be among the "New Year" tourists are men (31% versus 24% among women), Russians under 35 (37-38% versus 14% among the older group), with incomplete higher or higher education (36%) and with a good income level (32% versus 20% in the group with a poor financial situation).

Among Russians traveling on vacation, 15% went to rural areas, 7% went to Moscow or the Moscow region, 4% to St. Petersburg or the Leningrad region and Krasnodar. The cost of a trip per

person this year averaged 17,027 rubles; in three years, it has more than doubled (in 2021 — 7,635 rubles).

Fig. 1. Are you satisfied with how you spent your New Year and Christmas holidays or not? (closed-ended question, one answer, % of all respondents)



FAMILY AS A VALUE

January 23, 2024

A strong family occupies a key place in the Russian national value coordinate system (67%, in October 2023 — 68%). It leads in the answers of the citizens, regardless of the level of education, place of residence, gender, age, and financial status, being a connecting link between various strata of Russian society. For most respondents, creating a family is not just the most important value, but a life goal (87%). Judging by the answers, this understanding comes with age: the older the respondent, the more often he / she shares this point of view (“one of the most important goals for a person is to create a family”). Among young people aged 18–34, this answer occurs in 70–77% of cases, among those over 60 — in 94%.

In the opinion of Russians, the traditional family has always been and will be necessary for a person, because it is easier to survive in it (85%). The majority also agree that no matter how the world changes, the traditional family will always be modern (82%). Therefore, the preservation of the continuity of family traditions in general and traditional family values in particular (including the culture of motherhood and fatherhood, having many children) is supported by most respondents (76% and 82%, respectively).

For every second Russian, the ideal family is a large family (50%), that is, with three children (40%) or more (4–5 children — 8%, 6 children or more — 2%). Another 38% believe that a family should have two children; there are practically no supporters of childless and one-child families among Russians (5% and 2%, respectively).

According to our fellow citizens, the upbringing of children and what kind of people they will grow up to a greater extent depends on the family (78%) than on society, school and environment (14%). In this regard, Russians equally place responsibility for the upbringing of the younger generation on men and women (93%), and not only on mothers (5%) or fathers (2%).

Fig. 2. In your opinion, how many children should a family ideally have? If you think that a family does not necessarily need to have children, then say so (open-ended question, one answer, % of all respondents)

