

OPINION MONITORING: MARCH—APRIL 2024

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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POLITICS

ABOUT MODERN RUSSIAN PATRIOTISM

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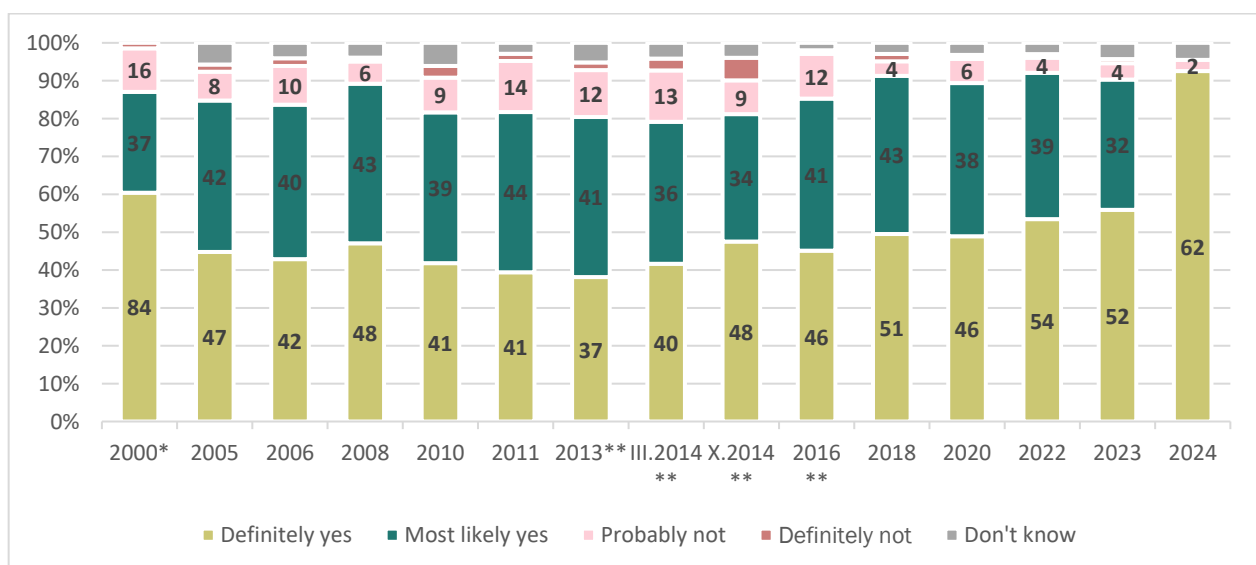
March 4, 2024

According to the VCIOM monitoring survey, the level of patriotism in Russian society is higher than ever: today, 94% of the country's residents consider themselves patriots, including 62% who are absolute patriots (+10 percentage points over the past year). This is the absolute maximum for the entire observation period. In general, the trend towards patriotism began in the fall of 2014, when the share of confident patriots for the first time in a long time significantly exceeded the share of hesitant patriots (48% vs. 36%).

Today, the feeling of patriotism is shared approximately equally by men and women (93% and 95%, respectively), young people and older generations (87% among the 18-24-year-olds and 94% among respondents aged over 60 years old), and residents of capital cities and villages (94% and 95%, respectively).

In the March survey, 8 out of 10 Russians shared their understanding of what it means to «love your homeland» (82%). Based on the responses received, the following three semantic fields can be identified. The first is «homeland is...» (family, home / love for family, caring for loved ones; place of birth, where you live / your city, region; well-being / security / prosperity; children; nature; Earth; country / Russia). The second is «to love the homeland is...» (to be proud; to protect; to invest in development, prosperity; to know and love history, culture, traditions; to live in it / not to leave; to be a patriot; to act in the interests of the country; to help / to support). The third and less meaningful is «to love the homeland means to have certain qualities» (to be worthy / responsible; honest and decent; faithful and devoted). In the first case, the statements reveal an understanding of what the homeland represents for Russians, in the second — what it means to love it, in the third — what kind of person one must be to do this.

Fig. 1. How would you describe yourself, as a patriot of your country or not (closed-ended question, one answer, % of all respondents)



Notes:

* The question was: "Do you consider yourself a patriot of Russia?"

** The question was: "Tell me, do you feel like a patriot of Russia or not?"

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC PROBLEMS

TAXPAYER'S DILEMMA: PAY MORE, LIVE BETTER?

CAREER GUIDANCE: GOOD, BUT NOT ENOUGH!

TAXPAYER'S DILEMMA: PAY MORE, LIVE BETTER?

March 23, 2024

67% of Russians today consider it unfair to pay income tax at a flat rate of 13% for all citizens, including people with high and low incomes. These data can be interpreted as the readiness of Russian society for tax reform. At the same time, the indicator has remained virtually unchanged since 2005 (65%). Share of the respondents supporting a flat income tax rate is less than a third (27%, in 2005 — 25%).

The older Russians are, the more often they support the thesis that the flat income tax is unfair (81% in the group of aged over 60 vs. 47% among young people aged 18–24). Perhaps, with age, people more often feel the need for social protection and support, especially if they are retired or often use government services. They may believe that a higher tax burden on high-income categories of citizens will better ensure social justice in society.

Speaking about the tax rates, more than half of Russians (53%) agreed that taxes can be high, if only poor people could receive more support from the state in the form of free services (education, health care, security, etc.). In other words, high taxes are not perceived as an obstacle to economic growth. Less than a third (27%) of our fellow citizens think differently. In their opinion, taxes should be as low as possible, then each person will be able to best manage their money. This question caused difficulty for a significant part of respondents (20%). The indicators have not changed over three years.

Most Russians not only acknowledge that high taxes allow the state to better implement its social functions, but also declare their willingness to pay more taxes (46%) to be sure of the wide availability and high quality of public services. This vision is more prevalent among young people (among 18–24-year-olds — 65%, among 25–34-year-olds — 50%). Every third (33%) would like to pay less taxes, while understanding that public services may be of lower quality and less accessible. Every fifth could not decide on the answer (21%). Since 2021, Russians' views on this issue have also not changed.

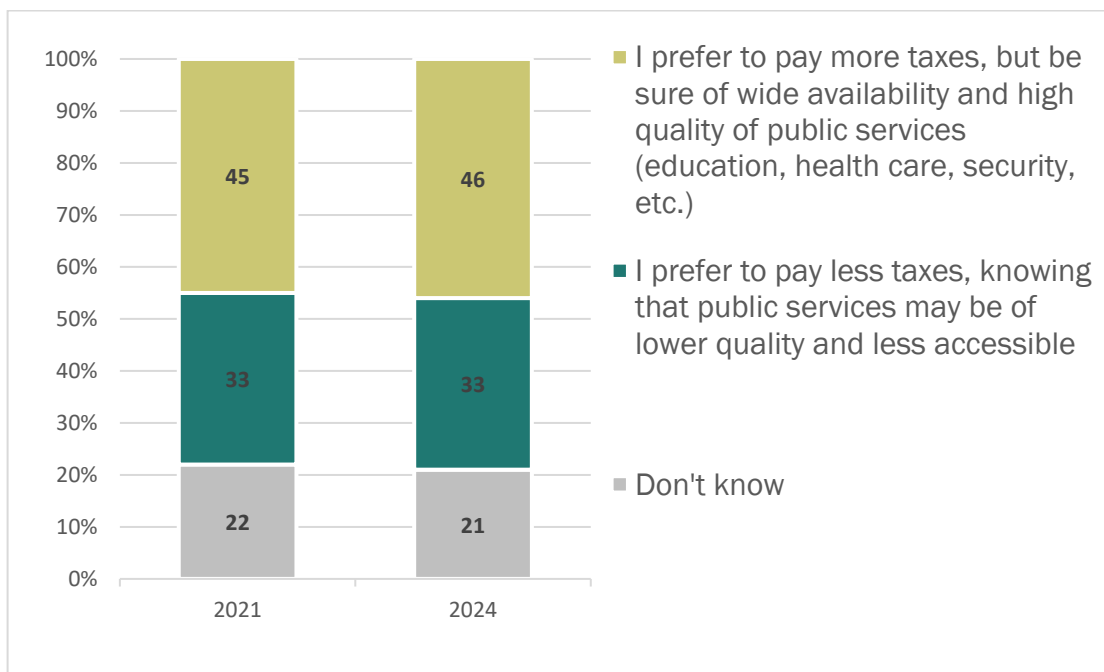
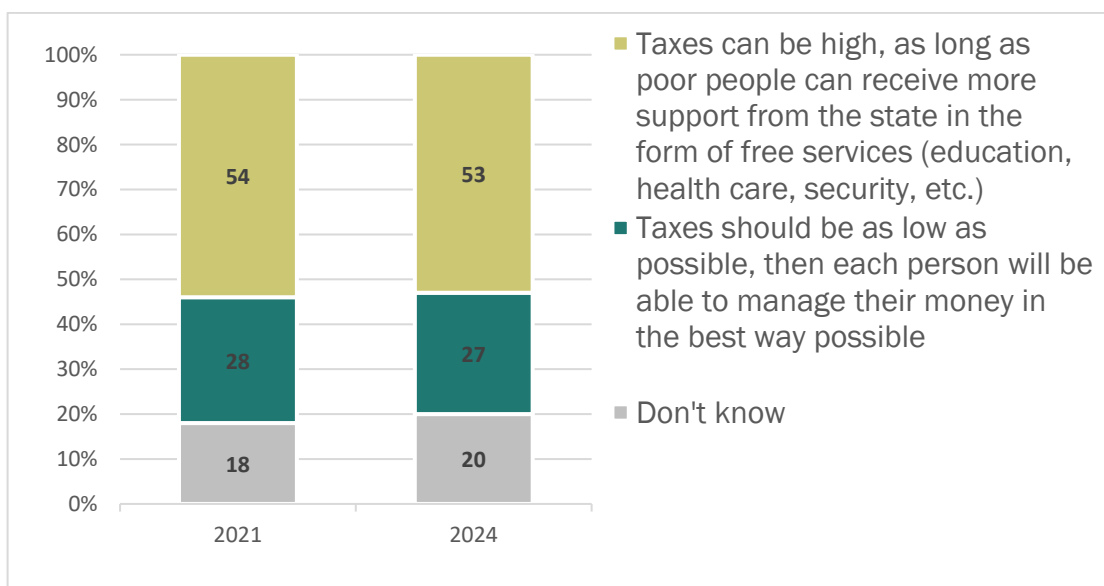
Russians with different levels of financial status have different views on taxes and the tax system. There is a well-established opinion that people with high incomes may have a negative attitude towards taxes and seek to reduce the tax burden. However, the VCIOM poll refutes this. Russians with a good financial status are much more likely to declare their willingness to pay more taxes to be sure of the wide availability and high quality of government services — 56% (vs. 46% among all Russians and 36% in the low-income audience). They are also more likely to say that taxes can be high, if poor people can receive more support from the state in the form of free services — 59% (vs. 53% among all Russians and 49% in the low-income audience).

Citizens with a poor financial situation more often support the opposite theses: 42% choose the option of paying less taxes, understanding that public services may be of lower quality and less

accessible (vs. 33% among all Russians and 27% among the high-income audience). A third of them are convinced that taxes should be as low as possible, then each person will be able to best manage their money (vs. 27% among all Russians and 24% among the high-income audience).

The situation changes somewhat when it comes to the fairness of a flat income tax for all citizens. Russians with a good financial situation more often consider it fair when all citizens, regardless of income, pay income tax at a flat rate (35% vs. 27% among all Russians and 16% among the low-income audience). In the low-income group, this situation is more often perceived as unfair – 77% (vs. 67% among all Russians and 60% among the high-income audience).

Fig. 1. Which statement most accurately reflects your opinion: (closed-ended question, one answer, % of all respondents)



CAREER GUIDANCE: GOOD, BUT NOT ENOUGH!

March 29, 2024

In the past, when choosing their profession, Russians were guided mainly by personal preferences and family opinion. 40% indicated interest in the profession, 20% indicated recommendations from parents, 19% each indicated an example from parents and personal experience. Quite often, the decision to get a particular profession comes «through the environment» and the example of others: stories from elders (10%), teachers (8%), examples of other acquaintances (8%) or famous people (4%), films, books (3%), discussions on the Internet (2%) and advice from tutors (1%). Some respondents, when choosing a future profession, were guided by their place of residence and employment opportunities there (16%). At the same time, only 2% of Russians chose a profession based on expectations for a potentially high income in the chosen industry.

The career guidance system plays a lesser role in choosing a profession: a tour of the workplace name only 4% of the respondents, the results of career guidance tests and career guidance lectures — 2% each.

Young people aged 18–24, compared to other cohorts, significantly more often choose a profession in accordance with personal preferences (61% vs. 33% in the group aged over 60). Young Russians under 34 generally rely more often on the recommendations of parents (25–28% vs. 15–16% in the group aged over 45) and personal experience (26–24% vs. 15% in the group aged over 60). Every fourth person in the older age group indicated the option «example of parents» (25%), modern young people under 24 name it twice less often (13%).

The top three criteria by which Russians chose their future profession were headed by personal interest (56%), followed (with a significant gap) by a high salary (31%) and demand in the labor market (26%). The social significance of the profession (20%) was twice as important as its prestige (10%). Every tenth person (10%) named suitable working conditions. The views of men and women on the criteria for choosing a profession are quite close, the exception being men's greater interest in the size of the salary (36% vs. 27% among women).

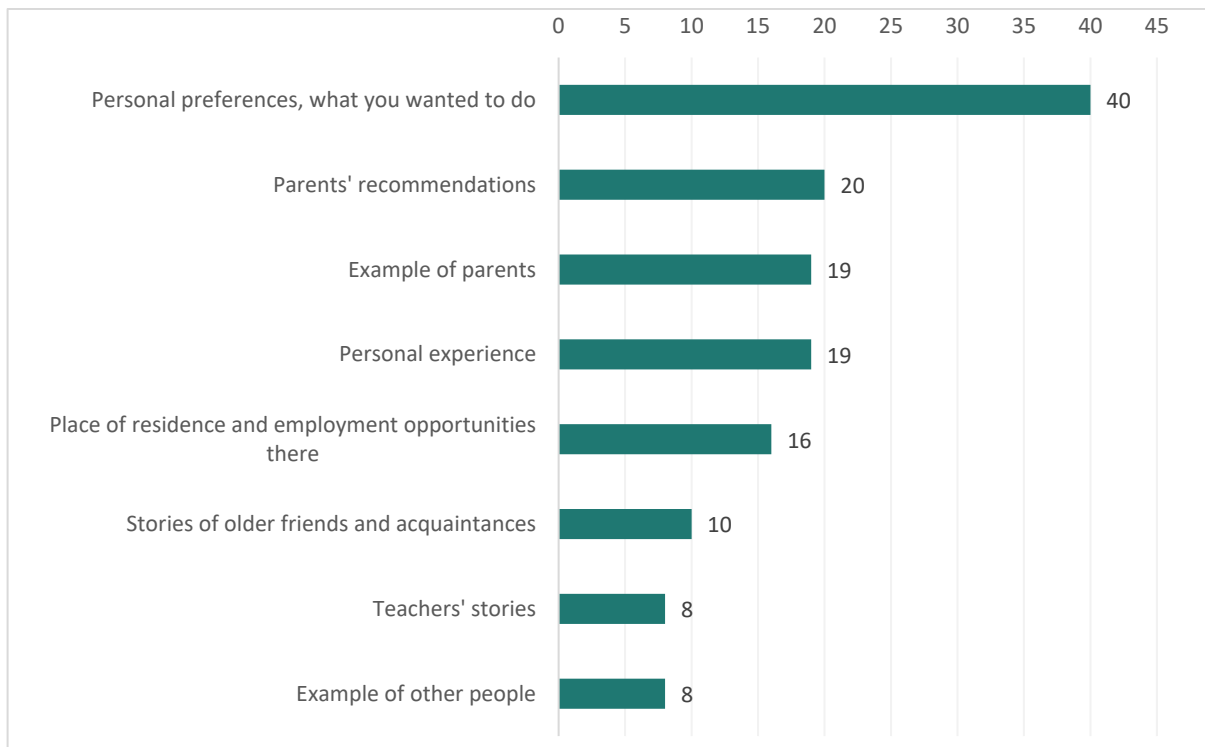
As in the previous question, such a criterion as personal interest is more often heard in the answers of young people (64–66% among 18–34-year-olds). More than a quarter in this group consider the usefulness of a future profession (25–29%). Russians under 45, when choosing a profession, paid more attention to its demand (31–35% vs. 18% in the group aged over 60 years old) and high wages (41–44% vs. 17% in the group aged over 60 years old).

The higher the level of education, the more often the choice of profession is associated with the extent to which it corresponds to personal interests and preferences (63% among citizens with incomplete higher and higher education vs. 40% in the group with incomplete secondary education) and with the extent to which the profession is useful for society (26% among citizens with incomplete higher and higher education vs. 8% in the group with incomplete secondary education).

Russians were unanimous in their opinion that career guidance work in schools and preschool institutions is necessary (86%). Including 70% who support its beginning in the sixth grade and later.

Among respondents under 44 years old, the figure is even higher — 77–78%. A total of 16% consider it appropriate to introduce such work in grades 1–5 or in kindergarten; this view is more prevalent among Russians aged over 60 years old (28%). Only 5% of Russians believe that career guidance work should not be carried out in schools and kindergartens at all.

Fig. 2. Let's talk about vocational training or career guidance (this is help in choosing a suitable profession that matches a person's interests and capabilities). In your opinion, who or what had the greatest influence on your choice of profession? You can give up to four answers (closed-ended question, up to 4 answers, % of all respondents; the figure shows the options that received more than 5% support)



LIFESTYLE

STRESS MANAGEMENT

IS THERE LIFE WITHOUT A SMARTPHONE?

STRESS MANAGEMENT

April 6, 2024

Today, more than ever, attention is paid to mental health issues. Self-care is becoming an integral part of our lives, and seeking psychological help from specialists is a common practice. To one degree or another, finding ways to combat stress is relevant for most Russians. However, fortunately, they resort to it in exceptional cases, since the troubles in their lives are mainly situational. During the April VCIOM survey, about a third of respondents noted that they rarely or sometimes experience stress (34% and 37%, respectively), 13% — often, while 6%, according to their own estimates, live in constant stress. In total, 9 out of 10 of Russians (90%) experience stress with varying frequency, which corresponds to the figures from five years ago (2019 — 91%) and is slightly lower than the figures from 14 years ago (96%). At the same time, the share of those who experience stress regularly (constantly and frequently) has returned to the 2010 level: today, every fifth person can be classified as being in stress (19%, 2010 — 18%), in 2019 — every fourth person (25%). Another 8% today, apparently, are maximally protected from stress and never experience it (2010 — 3%).

The proportion of those experiencing stress on a regular basis is approximately the same among men and women (17% and 20%, respectively), young people aged 18–24 and older people over 60 (20% and 15%, respectively); however, residents of megacities experience stress somewhat more often (constantly and often — 25% vs. 18% among rural residents).

The answers vary much more depending on the family's financial situation: the higher it is, the less often Russians are subject to stress, which partly indicates the prevalence of financial stress in our lives. Thus, Russians who assess their financial situation as bad and very bad experience constant stress five times more often than their wealthy fellow citizens (16% vs. 3%, respectively).

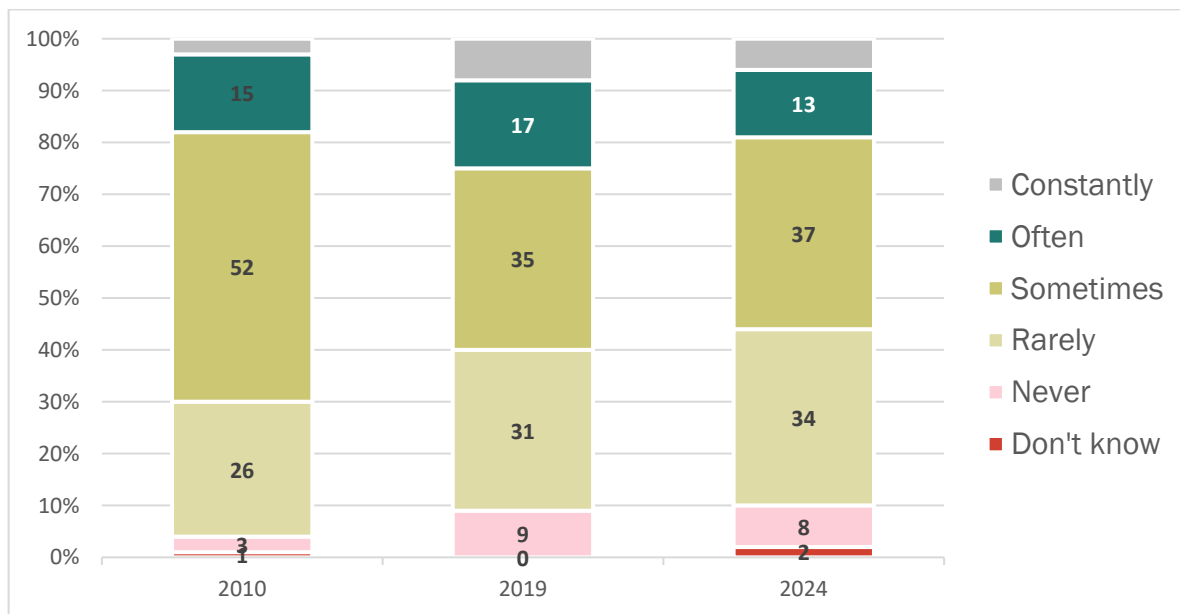
Over the past five years, the methods of dealing with stress have not undergone any fundamental changes. As in 2019, Russians prefer to restore their mental balance in a variety of ways, using not only psychological methods, but also bodily (or physical) practices. Some respondents find relief in physical activity, preferably in the fresh air (walking/hiking/nature — 11%, sports/exercise — 9%, household chores/cleaning — 2%, gardening — 2%), in communication (spending time with family/communicating with loved ones — 5%, sharing with loved ones/talking it out/complaining — 4%, friends/meeting with friends — 3%, etc.), changing activities (unspecified — 5%) and hobbies (music — 6%, reading — 4%, movies/TV series/TV — 4%, computer games — 2%). Another 6% take sedatives, about the same number of respondents named destructive practices — alcohol (5%) and smoking (3%). In other words, Russians prefer to cope with stressful situations on their own.

The fact that Russians often choose to deal with stress on their own is also evidenced by the relatively low demand for professional psychological help. According to VCIOM, 15% of respondents

have ever sought it (2019 – 12%), including 5% in the last six months. Among those who experience stress regularly, the figure is almost twice as high – 27%. 84% of Russians have never visited a specialist (psychologist/psychotherapist, etc.).

The typical Russian who has experience in seeking professional psychological help is a woman (20% vs. 11% of men), under 35 years old (among 18–24-year-olds – 26%, among 25–34-year-olds – 25%), with higher or incomplete higher education (20%) and living in one of the capitals or a city with a population of over a million (24% and 22%, respectively).

Fig. 1. Everyone has troubles and stress in their life. And how often do they happen to you? (closed-ended question, one answer, % of all respondents)



IS THERE LIFE WITHOUT A SMARTPHONE?

April 14, 2024

More than half of Russians claim that they can easily spend time without a smartphone and not think about missed notifications (58%). A quarter of respondents, on the contrary, feel discomfort when being without a gadget for a long time (26%). Another 14% of Russians do not think about problems of this kind – this is the share of non-users of smartphones in our country. Most often, these are active TV viewers (73%), which is probably due to generational differences.

The fast pace of life in megacities apparently leaves no choice for Muscovites and St. Petersburg residents – 42% of them feel discomfort when they are without a smartphone for a long time. Among rural residents, this answer is 2.6 times less common – 16%. The latter, on the contrary, either easily spend time without a smartphone (55%), or do not use it at all (28% vs. 5–13% in other areas).

The ability to keep in touch with family and friends is the main function of a smartphone in the opinion of Russian users (the group's share is 86%). According to their own estimates, they spend most of their time on communication (62%). Four out of ten spend their time on their smartphones solving educational/work tasks and reading the news (41% and 39%, respectively). Next comes browsing social networks, reading the feed (32%), online shopping (31%) and watching videos, films, and TV series

(30%). Reading books and playing games on a smartphone are less popular (16% and 12%, respectively).

More «feminine» activities on a smartphone include communication (67% vs. 55% of men), online shopping (39% vs. 22%) and browsing social networks (35% vs. 29%), while reading the news is more «masculine» (42% vs. 37% among women).

The top 3 situations for using a smartphone are a break at work/study, rest, and before going to bed (51%, 49%, and 46% of users, respectively). Another 23% of respondents do not part with their gadget during meals, and 16% keep using it during meetings with friends and family.

Even though most of our fellow citizens are probably still far from nomophobia, two thirds of Russian smartphone users are not ready to give up their «smart helper» and replace it with a regular push-button phone (66%). This most often applies to those who use their smartphone for work, study (76%), online shopping (74%) and browsing social networks (73%). 34% of users are ready to take such a desperate step for the digital age, including 13% who stated this with complete confidence. The greater the distance from megacities, the weaker the conviction in the indispensability of smartphones. In Moscow and St. Petersburg, 21% of users declare their readiness to switch to a push-button phone, in smaller but still large cities with a population of over a million — 27%, while in villages the figure reaches 40%.

Fig. 2. Modern phones — they are called smartphones — in addition to making regular calls, allow you to access the Internet, install additional applications, watch videos, communicate on social networks, make online purchases. Many of us constantly receive notifications on our smartphones about news, calls, new messages. Which of the following statements suits you best (closed-ended question, one answer, % of all respondents)

