

## **OPINION MONITORING: JANUARY—FEBRUARY 2025**

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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## **СОЦИАЛЬНЫЕ И ЭКОНОМИЧЕСКИЕ ПРОБЛЕМЫ**

### **NEW YEAR EXPENSES: EXPECTATIONS AND REALITY**

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### **NEW YEAR EXPENSES: EXPECTATIONS AND REALITY**

January 10, 2025

This year, Russians' expectations and reality related to New Year's spending coincided; budget overspending amounted to only 3%. In total, Russian citizens spent an average of a record 64,439 rubles on the New Year's dinner, leisure, and gifts, with planned spending of 62,655 rubles. In previous measurements, the budget overspend was much more noticeable. For example, in 2008–2013, it varied from 11 to 22%, and in 2020–2022 from 23 to 31%. Only once during the observation period did Russians manage to "break even" (in 2007, the overspend was zero) or save (in 2018, actual spending was 1% lower than planned). Thus, even though New Year's spending is difficult to predict, this year Russians were almost able to stay within their budget, repeating the success of 2023 (2% overspent).

Contrary to the expectations of Russians themselves, the main item of expenditure this year was gifts to family and friends (29,868 rubles). Next comes holiday leisure (children shows, visits to theaters, restaurants, etc.; 22,327 rubles) and, far ahead of the two mentioned spending categories, the New Year's dinner (12,244 rubles). Although on average Russians saved on food and entertainment, spending less than planned on the holiday dinner (892 rubles) and leisure (4,209 rubles), they were forced to spend more money on gifts: the excess of actual expenses over planned ones on average amounted to 6,885 rubles.

The New Year's dinner and gifts can be considered more universal categories of expenses in comparison with leisure: most of the respondents named expenses on them (75% and 76% respectively), while 48%, or every second, spent money on entertainment this year. About the same share of respondents answered that they managed to avoid expenses of this latter kind (44%).

Traditionally, most New Year's expenses are provided by men. In 2025, preparation for the holidays cost men an average of 83,450 rubles, while women on average spent 48,731 rubles. The largest gap in male and female spending was on New Year's gifts; men were almost 2.5 times more generous (43,121 rubles vs. 18,958 rubles).

### **RUSSIAN STUDENTS: YESTERDAY, TODAY... TOMORROW?**

January 12, 2025

A VCIOM survey showed that college students evoke mostly positive associations in Russians. In 24% of cases, they the respondents associate college awith a wonderful, carefree time, a fun life, the golden years of youth and joy. Almost the same share of respondents (23%)

name gaining new horizons for development, i.e., opportunities, prospects, future, and moving forward. Another 23% of responses concern everything related to the educational process: training, college, session, exams, dormitories, and profession.

Every sixth Russian, when mentioning students and student life, thinks of the younger generation, youth and adolescence (18%), some remember their student youth (4%), think about children and grandchildren (2%), another 3% associate student life with new connections, both friendly and romantic. However, for some of the respondents, student life carries negative connotations: a difficult, hard period, fear and sleepless nights, disappointment and wasted time, as well as a low quality of education (13%).

A total of 74% of the respondents were able to provide a meaningful answer to this question; 11% admitted that they have no associations with students and student life, and 15% found it difficult to name any. However, in general, student life in the eyes of most Russians is associated with a time of opportunities, prospects, and development.

40% of Russians today are confident that the financial situation of students has improved over the past 15–20 years, this is the maximum for the entire period of measurements since 2006, when the figure was two times lower (20% both in 2006 and 2011). At the same time, the greatest optimism in this matter is demonstrated by zoomers and millennials, that is, those who are either students themselves or were recently students (43–46%). The share of those who, on the contrary, notice a deterioration in the situation is decreasing, from 53% in 2006 to 20% in the current measurement. Another 15% today believe that nothing has changed over the past 15–20 years. Such data in general may indicate real changes in the lives of students and more opportunities for earning money.

Positive dynamics are also observed in assessments of how the outlook of students and their general cultural level have changed over the last 15–20 years. Since 2011, the indicator has been growing and reached its maximum in the current measurement: today, 38% of Russians note that the outlook and general cultural level of students have changed for the better (+19 p.p. compared to 2011). 27% hold the opposite opinion (-16 p.p. compared to 2011), and 14% believe that nothing has changed. Zoomers and millennials (43% each), as well as citizens with a complete secondary and secondary vocational education, are more likely than others to give positive assessments to this question (42–43%). But the audience with higher and incomplete higher education, on the contrary, turned out to be more skeptical: more than a third (36%) note that students' horizons have become poorer.

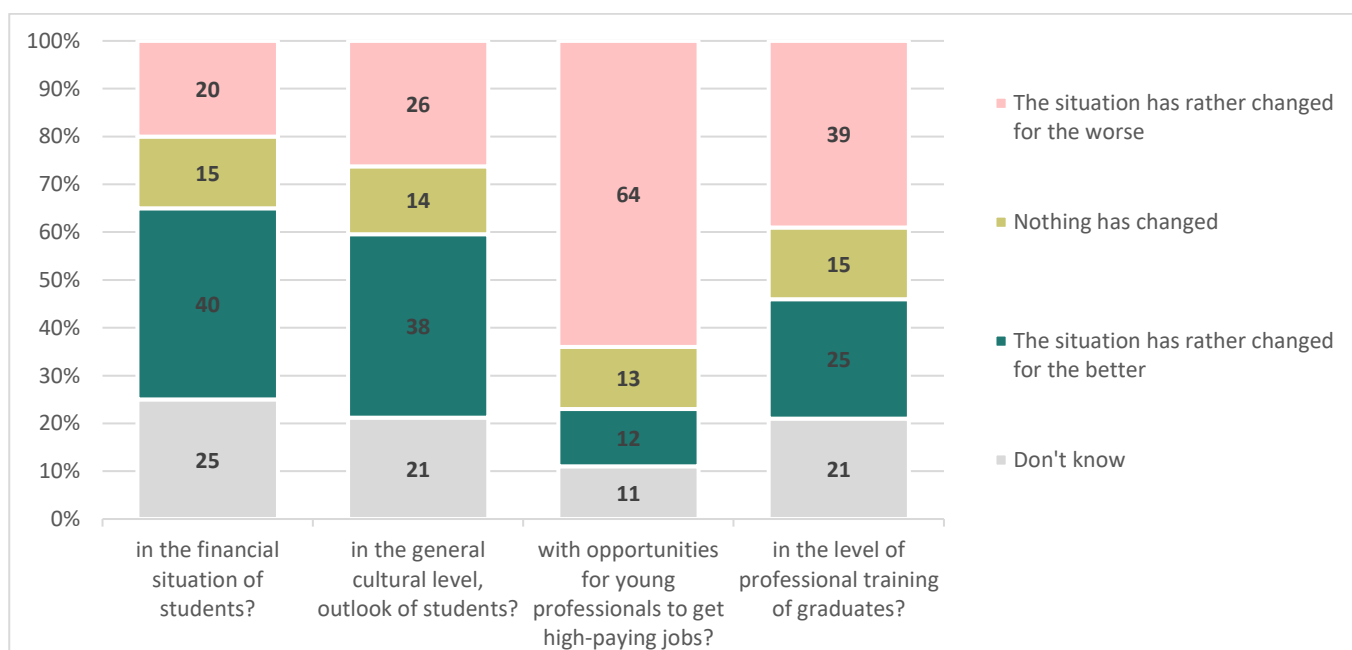
Russians have also become noticeably more optimistic about the opportunities for young professionals to find a high-paying job. A significant portion of respondents (37%) believe that it is easier to do this these days than it was 15–20 years ago. In previous surveys (2006, 2011, 2013, 2015, and 2017), the similar proportion was two to five times lower (7–18%). Accordingly, the share of those who see a worsening of the situation has decreased: from 64–65% in 2006 and 2011 to 26% in the current period. At the same time, today's students

themselves are even more likely to confirm that it is easier to find a high-paying job than before (47% among zoomers). 19% of Russians do not notice any changes.

If, in the opinion of Russians, modern students have become more affluent, then the situation with their level of professional training is not getting much better. The respondents are more often inclined to believe that over the past one and a half to two decades, students have become less competent (39%). This is the maximum since 2013 (2013 – 31%, 2015 – 28%, 2017 – 33%), but lower than in 2011 (44%). A quarter of respondents (25%) say that the situation has improved, compared to 2015–2017, the dynamics are negative (then 29% thought so).

Zoomers, i.e. today's students (37%), believe in the high level of their professional competence. The indicator is also higher among citizens with secondary specialized education (33% vs. 25% among all Russians). However, among those with higher or incomplete higher education, almost every second person (48% vs. 39% among all Russians) speaks of a worsening situation in terms of the students' level of professional training.

**Fig. 1. If we compare today with what it was 15-20 years ago, in what direction, in your opinion, have the changes taken place... (closed-ended questions, one answer, % of all respondents)**



### ENGINEERS: YESTERDAY, TODAY... TOMORROW?

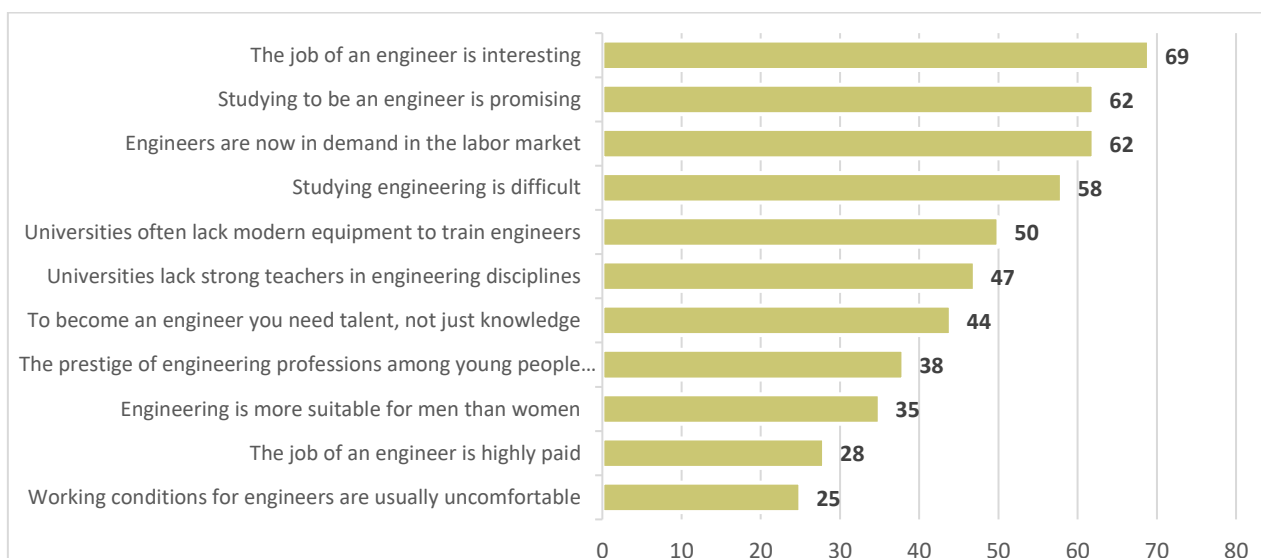
February 5, 2025

As technologies developed and production facilities were modernized, enterprises began to acutely feel the shortage or low quality of training of specialists. The non-intervention tactic threatened a serious technological failure, so the state began to take measures to increase the attractiveness of technical specialties. Today we see that the prestige of the engineering profession is unstable: after growing last year, the share of citizens seeing it as a prestigious job fell to the 2023 level. Young people under 24 still rate the prestige of the profession the

most highly, but this share is also decreasing. It would seem that at least in the last five years, financial support measures (grants, scholarships) have been initiated and implemented, information and popularization work has been carried out to increase interest in technical specialties, cooperation between educational institutions and enterprises has been established, which enriches the learning process with practice and is critical for the employer. However, this is still not enough. Increasing wages and creating favorable working conditions, as well as strengthening training (including career guidance) are the main incentives to increase interest in engineering professions, according to both young people and older generations. The most striking marker of the prestige of the engineering profession is precisely the high level of salary: most Russians who consider the work of an engineer to be highly paid speak of its prestige (85%), and more than half of them say they would like to obtain an engineering profession if they had such a professional choice now (58%). An anti-marker of prestige is uncomfortable working conditions.

69% of young people aged 18–35 consider the engineering profession prestigious, while 46% declare potential (projective) interest in mastering an engineering specialty. The reluctance to choose engineering professions is justified not only by unattractive pay and working conditions, but an important role is also played by the still existing gender stereotypes, as well as the idea of engineering as an overwhelming science that requires, on the one hand, deep knowledge, and on the other, talent. In addition, even though young people consider the work of an engineer interesting, prestigious, and in demand, the labor market offers other equally attractive alternatives with more rapid career growth and a high starting salary. Prestige itself turns out to be helpless in the face of the strength of the designated barriers, without the elimination of which in the future it will be impossible to provide an “engineering rear” for successful competition in the technological race.

**Fig. 2. There are different ideas about the profession of an engineer. Now I will read some of them. If you agree with any of them, speak up (closed-ended question, any number of answers, % of all respondents agreed with the statement)**



## **LIFESTYLE**

**FAST FOOD IN RUSSIA: FAST AND THAT'S IT**

**OUR STEREOTYPES ABOUT FEMALE LEADERSHIP**

**FOOD PATRIOTISM**

### **FAST FOOD IN RUSSIA: FAST AND THAT'S IT**

**January 20, 2025**

Over the past 15 years, fast food has been steadily conquering Russian society, actively integrating into everyday life. Today, 78% of Russians say that there are fast food establishments in their locality, in 2010 there were significantly fewer of them (50%). In particular, the number of those who say that there are a large number of fast food establishments in their locality has increased significantly: from 30% in 2010 to 50% in 2025. Another 24% noted that there are few such establishments (+8 percentage points compared to 2010). Only 15% of respondents indicated that there is nothing like this in their city or village (-24 percentage points compared to 2010).

The main factor in the spread of fast food establishments is urbanization; the larger the size of the settlement, the more fast food establishments there are. In megacities (Moscow, Saint Petersburg, and other cities populated over a million people), 86–89% of the respondents reported many such food outlets, while in rural areas only 17% did. Age also apparently affects awareness. Among zoomers and younger millennials, 66% and 78%, respectively, say that there are many places to grab a fast food snack in their settlement. This figure is noticeably lower among representatives of older generations (34 and 26% in the generations of stagnation and thaw, respectively).

As the number of fast food establishments grows, so does their attendance. Today, six out of ten Russians (62%) visit such places with varying frequency. Over the past 15 years, the figure has doubled (30% in 2010). Moreover, over the past three years alone, the growth mounted up to 12 percentage points, which means the trend is not fading. A third of Russians visit fast food establishments no more than once a month (35%, +21 percentage points compared to 2010 and +7 percentage points compared to 2022), another 14% have been there 1–2 times a month, and 13% visit once a week or more often (+8 percentage points compared to 2010).

The audience of fast food establishments is represented mainly by young Russians, among zoomers and younger millennials almost a third (30–32%) visit them weekly. This habit is more prevalent among those with a good financial situation (22% of weekly visitors vs. 9% in the group with a bad financial situation) and residents of megacities (22–26% of weekly visitors). With age, the proportion of Russians who have never been to fast food outlets increases (77% in the thaw generation vs. 8% among zoomers). The indicator also increases as the population of the locality decreases (among rural residents, 49% have never been to fast

food establishments, among residents of megacities — 23–26%). The more fast food establishments in the locality, the higher their attendance. Among those who have many fast food outlets nearby, 22% visit them once a week or more often (vs. 13% among all Russians).

Why do Russians like fast food establishments? Firstly, it is fast and convenient (79% of answers in total). This is the determining factor: fast food saves time (40%), especially when you are too lazy or have no time to cook (13%) or you are on the road, far from home (9%), at work (3%) or need a quick snack (6%); eating fast food is also a fairly simple option (8%).

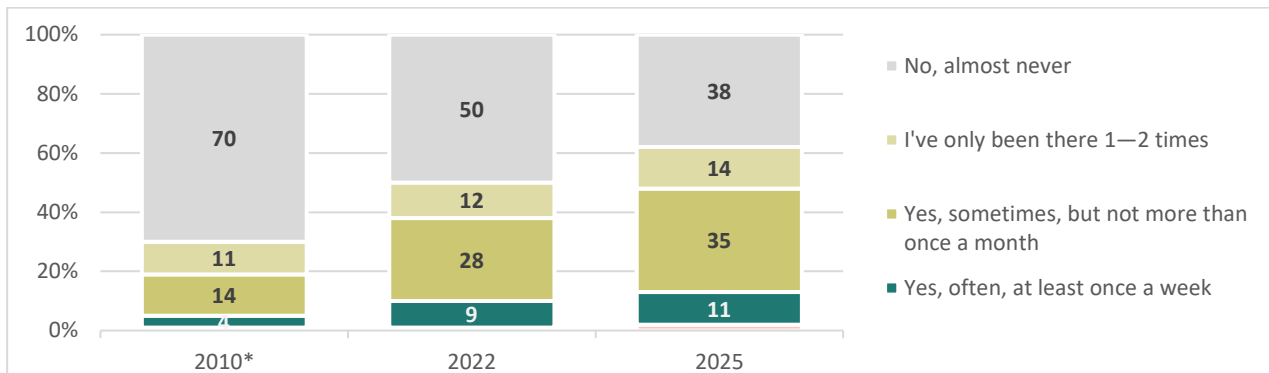
The second factor of choice is taste and quality (29% of responses in total). Fast food consumers noted that the food there is tasty (16%), of high-quality (4%), filling and with a large selection of dishes (4%), and sometimes you just want unhealthy food (5%).

For some fast food consumers, it is an opportunity to have a good time with loved ones, to change the environment (in total, 16% of responses). Thus, 7% go there with children, grandchildren, 4% — with friends or on holidays, 3% — out of interest, to unwind, and 2% go for good service. The price factor (11%) is mentioned less frequently in the responses, and the availability of fast food was not as important for visitors. The same applies to territorial accessibility (10% of responses in total).

Speed, convenience, and taste are the dominant motives for choosing fast food establishments in all age groups. But young people are much more likely to talk about saving time (53 and 63% among zoomers and younger millennials, respectively) and about being too lazy to cook (21 and 19%, respectively). Men more often choose fast food establishments to save time (45 vs. 36% of women), and women — because they occasionally do not feel like cooking (16 vs. 8% among men).

Those who prefer home-cooked food are more likely to avoid fast food establishments, and they simply do not like fast food (46%). The healthy eating factor was also important: some respondents in this group noted that fast food is unhealthy, while they prefer healthy food (20%). Quite often, the answers signified mistrust of fast food outlets and the quality of the dishes prepared there (18%). Another 12% said that they are not interested in such food. That is, giving up fast food is mainly a conscious choice in favor of home-cooked or healthy food. Other reasons, such as the lack of fast food outlets in the area (15%), high cost (10%), and the impossibility of visiting them due to age or health reasons (9%), are mentioned in the answers much less often.

**Fig. 1. Do you ever eat at fast food establishments, so-called fast food restaurants, where you can quickly eat in literally 10–15 minutes, or not? (closed-ended question, one answer, % of all respondents)**



\* Until 2017, surveys were conducted using door-to-door face-to-face interviews (Express project), stratified multi-stage sampling with quotas for socio-demographic parameters, representing the population of the Russian Federation aged 18 and older by type of settlement, gender, age, education and federal district. The sample size is 1,600 respondents.

## OUR STEREOTYPES ABOUT FEMALE LEADERSHIP

February 2, 2025

Russian society continues to associate leadership with men. This view is characteristic of both men and women: the conviction that only a man can be a leader demonstrates surprising stability, although over the last century, many efforts have been made to equalize the opportunities of men and women. We believe that this is explained by two stereotypes.

The first stereotype relates to the exclusive role of a man as a leader is based on characteristics that are usually attributed to a man. For example, Russians say that men have the corresponding natural qualities: determination, activity, willpower, physical superiority. People often cite the argument about the “evolutionary role of a man. Women leaders are supported by less than a tenth of respondents, and their position is based exclusively on personal female qualities, such as responsibility, intelligence, moral fortitude, etc.

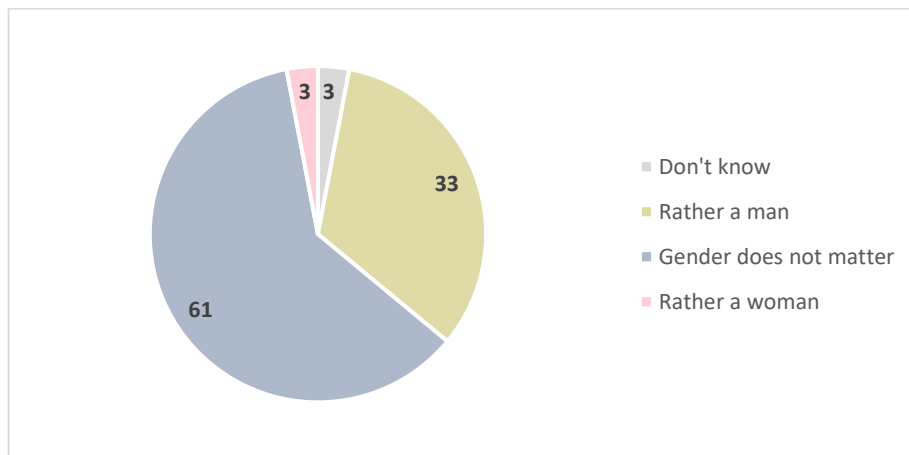
The second stereotype concerns “traditionally female” industries, in which Russians allow women to lead as an exception, such as education and medicine, because they are associated with care, interaction and service. In essence, we see the translation of the role of a woman in the family to the role of a woman in society. On the contrary, management, technology, engineering, and science are not mentioned among the “female” spheres, which is extremely unfair, since we know and are currently observing many examples of women achieving and achieving great success in these areas.

But among younger people, especially zoomers and younger millennials, there is a different trend: for them, the gender of a leader is not particularly important. This generation has grown up in an environment where gender equality issues are discussed openly, and examples of female leaders are becoming more visible.



At the same time, leadership in Russia remains a zone of significant prejudices that limit women's career opportunities. It is important that women themselves often support the stereotypes, which only reinforces the idea of “female” and “male” professions in society. Breaking stereotypes and popularizing female leadership is the key to creating a more equitable and diverse professional space.

*Fig. 2. Would you prefer your boss to be a man, a woman, or gender does not matter? (closed-ended question, one answer, % of all respondents)*



## **FOOD PATRIOTISM**

February 9, 2025

The extension of the food embargo has brought the topic of gastronomic patriotism to the forefront and created the basis for further promotion of products labeled *Made in Russia* on the domestic market. As the results of a recent VCIOM poll show, despite the nearly twofold increase in the number of so-called “cosmopolitan consumers” for whom the country of origin of the product does not matter, Russian society still remains loyal to domestic producers. As was the case 30 years ago, at the same price, the majority of the citizens will give preference to more familiar and understandable food products of Russian manufacture, and only a few will choose imported products.

To a greater extent, manifestations of food patriotism are characteristic of older generations, which may be a consequence of stable consumer habits formed in conditions of limited choice in the Soviet era, as well as ideas about the quality of that very product, known from long ago, the secrets of production of which are available only to local producers. Zoomers, born in the era of food abundance, are rather indifferent to the country of origin of products.

It is noteworthy that the commitment to domestic products remains against the background of the leveling of ideas about the superior quality of domestic or, conversely, foreign products. If, up until the introduction of the food embargo in 2014, the dominant opinion in society was that domestic food products were of better quality than imported ones, then, starting in 2015, the opinion about comparable quality has been spreading. Over the past

30 years, the number of supporters of this latter point of view has almost doubled. Russian consumers have also lost illusions regarding another important criterion for choosing food products: according to respondents, today domestic products are at least as expensive as foreign ones, whereas in the 1990s they were considered more affordable. Over these years, the uncertainty in answers to the question about the cost of domestic and imported products has also increased: it has become much more difficult for modern consumers to compare them, which is partly due to the erasure of the boundaries between them.

The results of the study show that quality and cost remain important, but not the only criteria for consumer choice. There are other, non-obvious and difficult to determine factors, such as ideological and cultural, including fashion. Among the examples we can name the special position of Belarusian products on the Russian market, the fashion for Russian wines or “Dubai” chocolate, and some others.

**Fig. 3. If you had to choose between two products of the same price, one domestic and one foreign, which one would you choose? (closed-ended question, one answer, % of all respondents)**

