

**Sociological Institute, Russian Academy of Sciences
St. Petersburg, RUSSIA**

**SOCIAL INEQUALITY:
THE SITUATION IN
RUSSIA AND BELARUS**

**G.Eremicheva, E.Evdokimova, S.Ignatova,
N.Kornev, E.Poretskina**

2009

Main frames in the respondents' perceptions of social inequality

- inequality in living standards
- authorities' contribution to creation and reproduction of social inequality
- inequality of living standards and quality of life in urban and rural areas
- importance of personal resources, including personal qualities
- main ways of amelioration of social inequality
- social inequality is a requisite element in any society's life

- M: What are the basic problems in our society for today?
(...) I. (m, 23): Inflation. Prices are rising, and salaries don't. It is more difficult to buy consumer goods. *fg: low income, city, Russia.*
- E. (f, 45): Take health care for example. If you have money, you can get better treatments. The science has progressed in many areas. But treatments are not widely available, due to financial reasons. Unfortunately we have to face these problems. My son is seriously ill, expensive medicine is necessary. And my mum is a pensioner. Hospitals are awful. If you get there, it is just terrible. Everything requires payment. *fg: low income, city, Russia.*

- T. (f, 37): Inequality in educational sphere. There are lots of talented children who cannot get higher education because parents cannot afford to pay. And children with average abilities finish high schools because their parents can pay. *fg: average income, city, Belarus.*
- A. (m, 33): The difference between rich and poor grows. (...) So formerly it was not such a gulf, there was a chance to save up and build an apartment. And now this chance is close to zero: yes, there are credits, but it is necessary «to sit on bread and milk» for some years and buy nothing for yourself. This gulf grows every moment. *fg: average income, city, Belarus.*

- A. (m, 41): The first is a corruption. M: What kind of corruption? A. (m, 41): Corruption in government authorities. (...) V. (m, 59): Corruption from top to bottom. *fg: low income, city, Russia.*
- A. (m, 47): (...) we do not stay within the law, and the legislation is not adjusted. And this causes social inequality, basically, because it was so and it will be so. Who has authority and money, is quite prosperous. *fg: average income, village, Russia.*
- V. (m, 44): After perestroika, the majority who were in positions of authority stayed there. Who had access to material resources became rich. And ordinary workers stayed ordinary workers. So who was rich became even richer. *fg: average income, city, Belarus*

- M: What problem worries you? A. (f, 22): That it is impossible to get a job without any networks or without great working experience. *fg: low income, city, Russia.*
- I. (m, 23): We have inequality everywhere. The one, who is closer to authority - he knows the ropes. Let's look at jobs – now, it is impossible to get a normal high-paid job without blat. If you do not know any deputy, it is impossible. And that is all. *fg: average income, village, Belarus*

- N. (m, 53): And why do people move from villages to cities? Nobody stays here, there is simply nothing to do here. (...) O.(f, 37): Absence of infrastructure. (...) N. (m, 53): Roughly speaking, future trends of the city versus ours. Why here the youth does not give birth, as they do in city? And why to give birth? There is no habitation, no salary, and no job. *fg: average income, village, Russia*
- M: And what is the reason of distinctions between city and village? E. (f, 22): In opportunities. I. (f, 52): In incomes. El. (f, 31): It cannot be compared with the city. (...) V. (m, 50): The reason is in distribution of public funds between city and village. It is natural, that the priority is given to the capital. *fg: average income, city, Belarus*

- E. (f,18): (...) The person was born in a poor family, in a one-room apartment - and only exclusive can raise. (...) What - they can develop normally, to rise? And so, if you were born in a poor family you will sit in this apartment.

fg: average income, city, Russia.

- V. (m, 50): Networks, clans. We have spoken about it already. There is like a staircase. And financial opportunities of a certain person. Plus very strong personal ambitions. There are people who are like this because of the internal structure... It is a very serious.

factor. fg: average income, city, Belarus

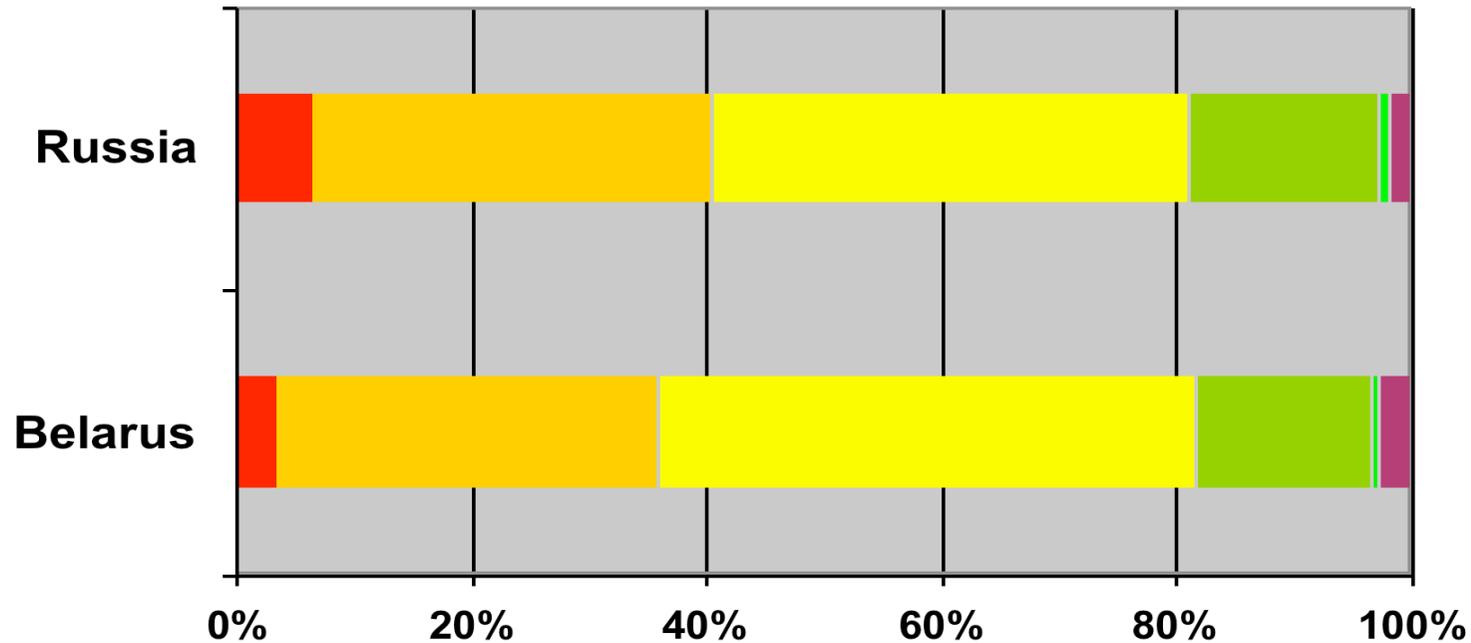
- T. (f, 47): If it was possible make so that the well-being of a governmental structures and our authorities depend on lower [stratum]! Then may be they would be interested in the well-being of the lowest part. It is impossible to be without legislation. And (...) they should report about their work. *fg: low income, village, Russia.*
- T. (f, 36): It is necessary to give freedom for development of middle classes. J. (m, 41): It is possible to grip in a vice, or liberalize all. Give a freedom. Let them grab millions, but also let middle class to develop. (...) T. (f, 36): As we are citizens of the state, we should pester our deputies. (...) They should protect us so that we can develop as a middle class. *fg: low income, city, Belarus.*

- N. (f, 46): (...) I believe only in myself. A person should change his life by himself. Nothing ventured, nothing gained, a person should develop, should find his course of life. *fg: low income, city, Belarus.*
- A. (m, 41): (...) my parents have told me: do not wait for the help neither from the state, nor from deputies, nor from anybody. Until you will not tell yourself, that you are the president, no one will understand it - the problems won't be solved, nothing will change. *fg: low income, city, Russia*

- I. (f, 52): If you are a minister, or not a minister, or an engineer, or a worker, - there should be one law for everyone. And may be the level of our life would be normal - according to our labour contribution. (...) Then we would be viewed according to our abilities. *fg: average income, city, Belarus.*
- E. (f, 31): (...) The aim of the state is to provide a deserved life not only to the person who wants to be engaged in business, who is active, who wants to work in this sphere, but also to the ordinary man who doesn't have these qualities, but who wants to have a family and a normal household conditions. (...) It is a aim of the society to provide a deserved life to everybody. *fg: average income, city, Belarus*

- D. (m, 24): The mechanism of an inequality is a vital mechanism for the socium. It recovers, gives impulse to developments in science and technology. It makes people aspire to something. All the same, it is based on an egoistical impulse. That is important. It is an example for other people. If I can do it, so you can do it too. *fg: low income, city, Russia.*
- A. (m, 33): It (social inequality) can be useful up to a certain point. E. (f, 31): It is helpful when people have more or less equal starting opportunities. And if this inequality is compelled and person is unable to cope with it, it only harms. *fg: average income, city, Belarus.*

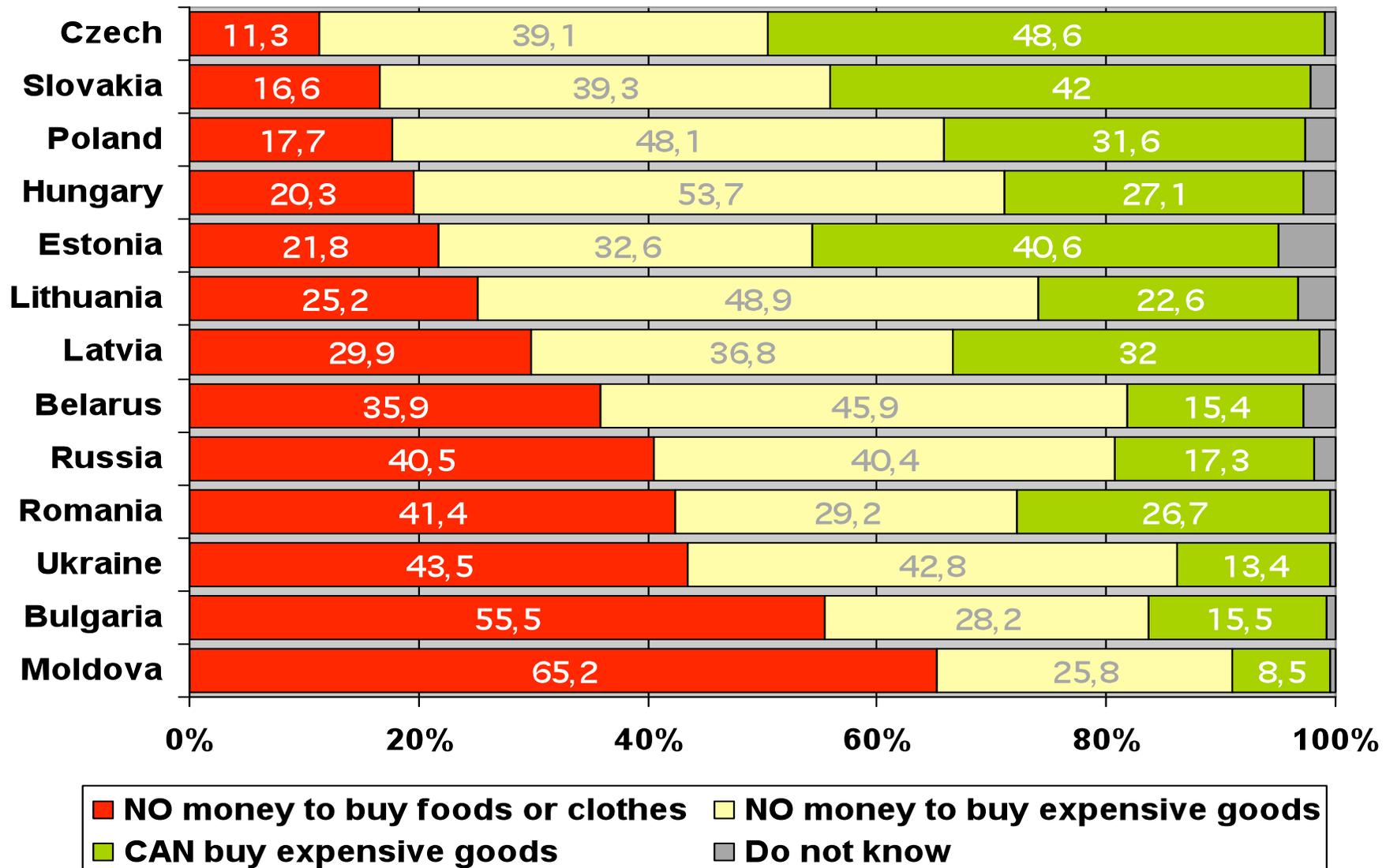
Financial circumstances of households



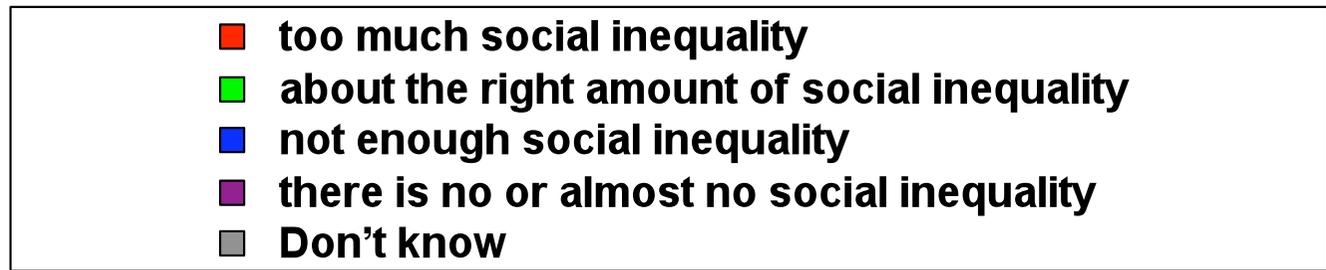
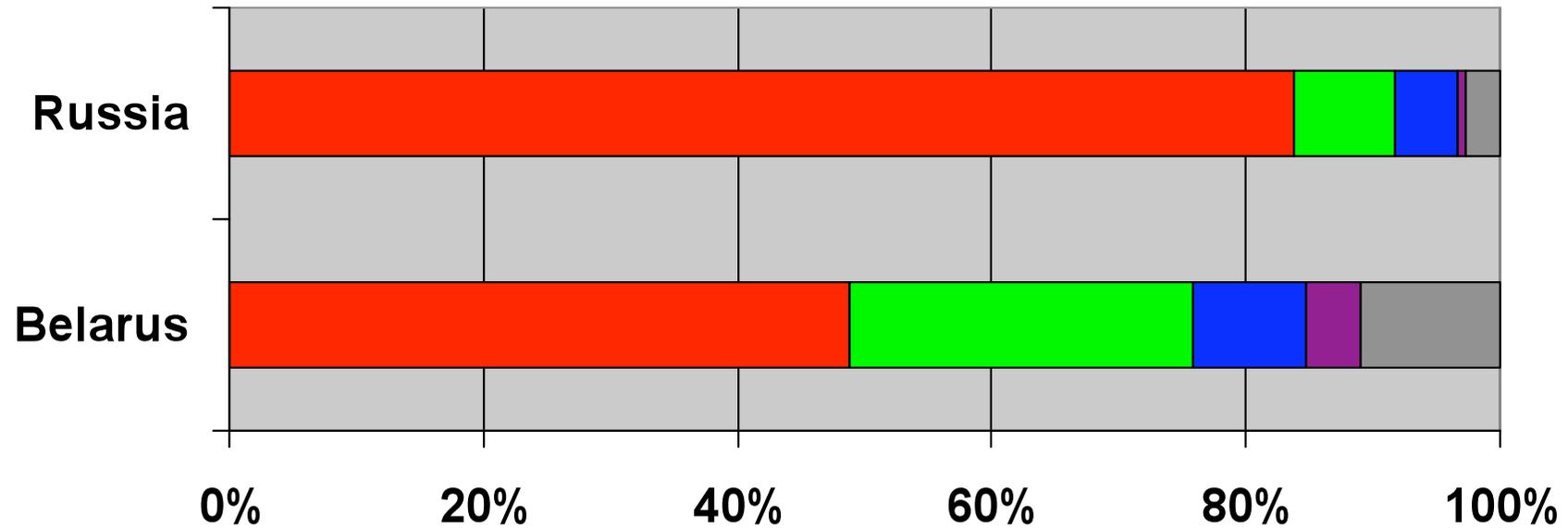
- NO money to buy food
- NO money to buy clothes
- NO money to buy expensive goods
- CAN buy expensive goods
- CAN afford everything
- don't know

Financial circumstances of households

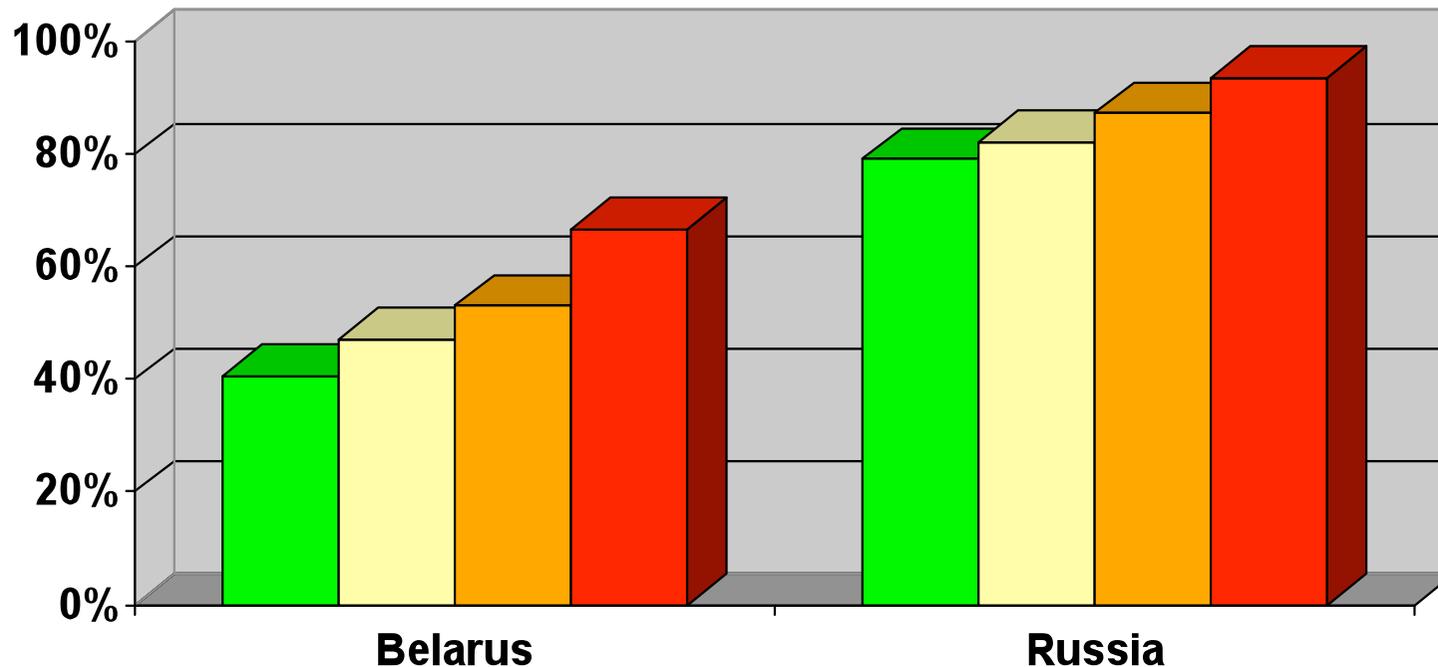
3 groups of household's financial circumstances



Degree of social inequality in Belarus and Russia

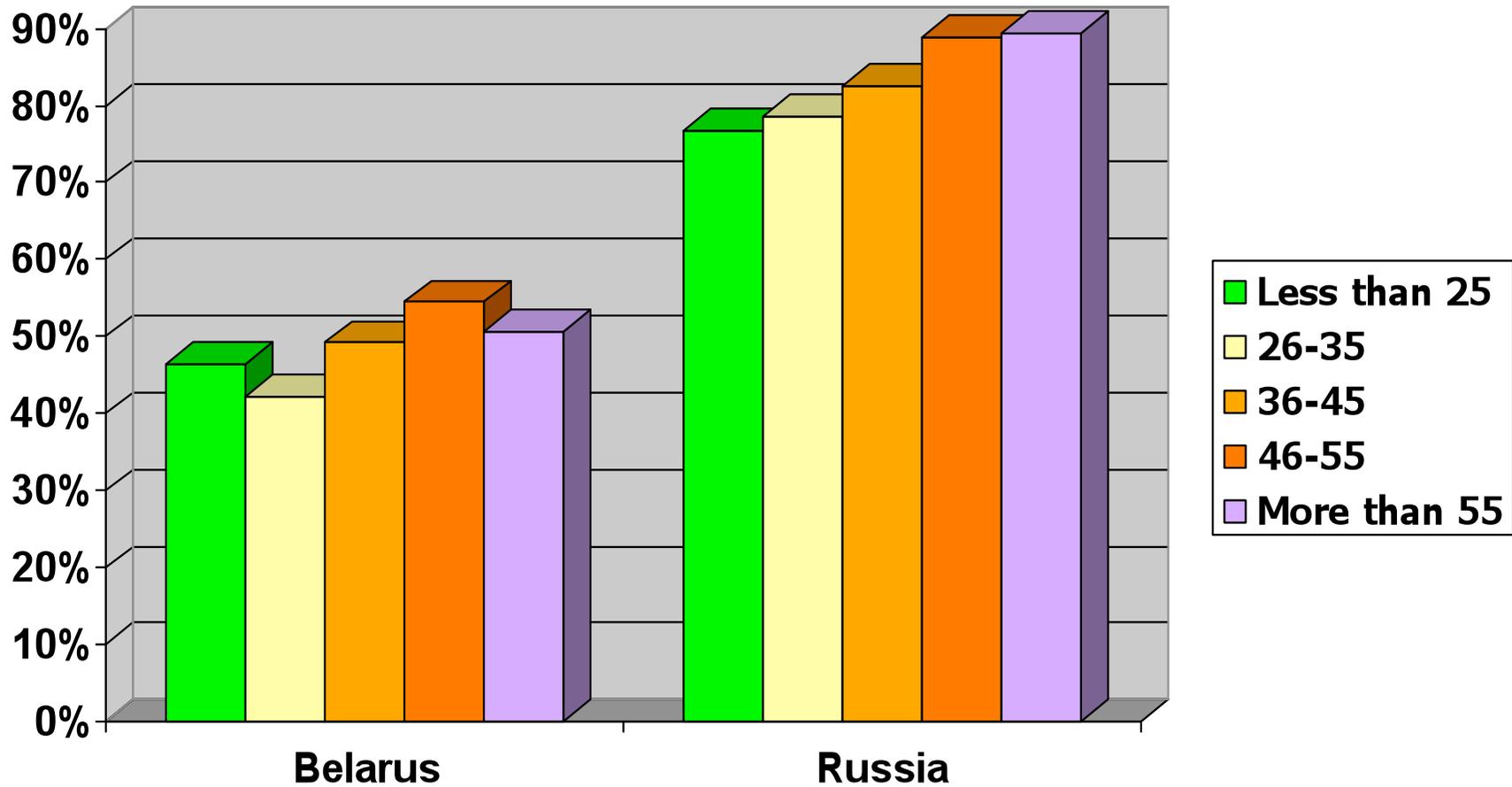


The share of respondents who believe that there is “too much social inequality” and households’ financial circumstances

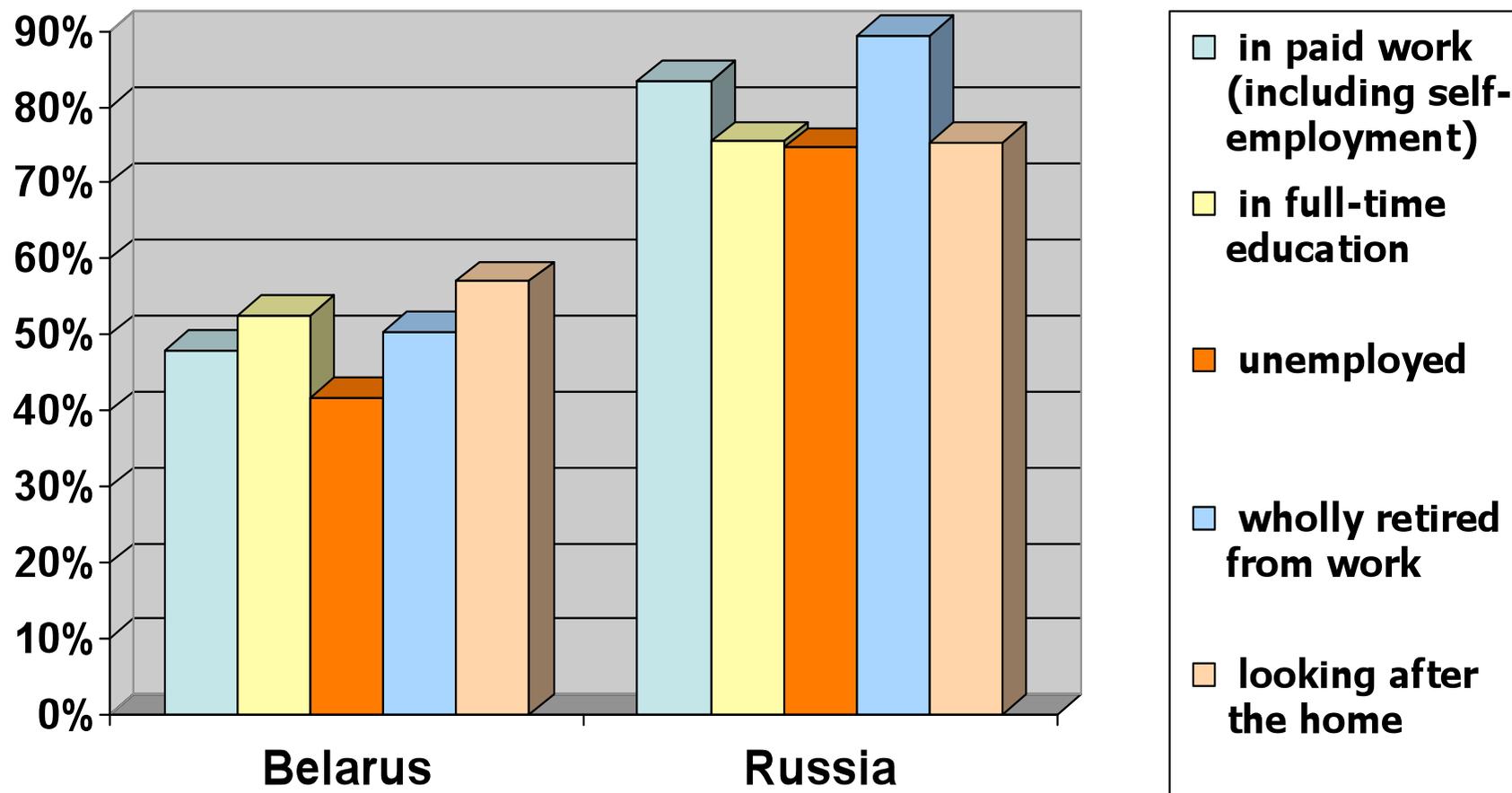


- Enough for some expensive goods but not for all things we want**
- Enough for food, clothes and shoes but not for expensive goods**
- Enough for food but not for clothes and shoes**
- We do not have enough money even to buy food**

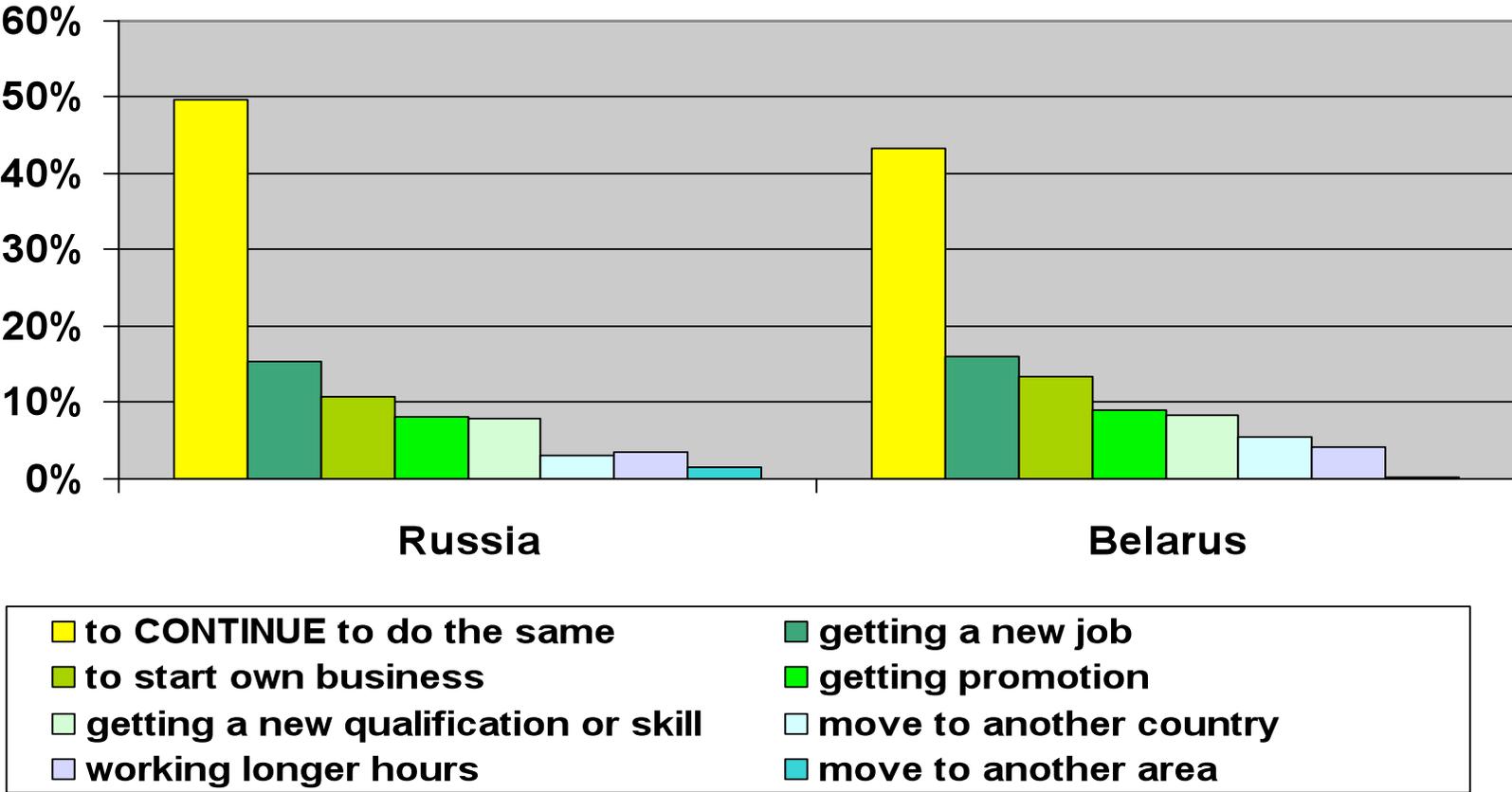
The share of respondents who believe that there is "too much social inequality" and age



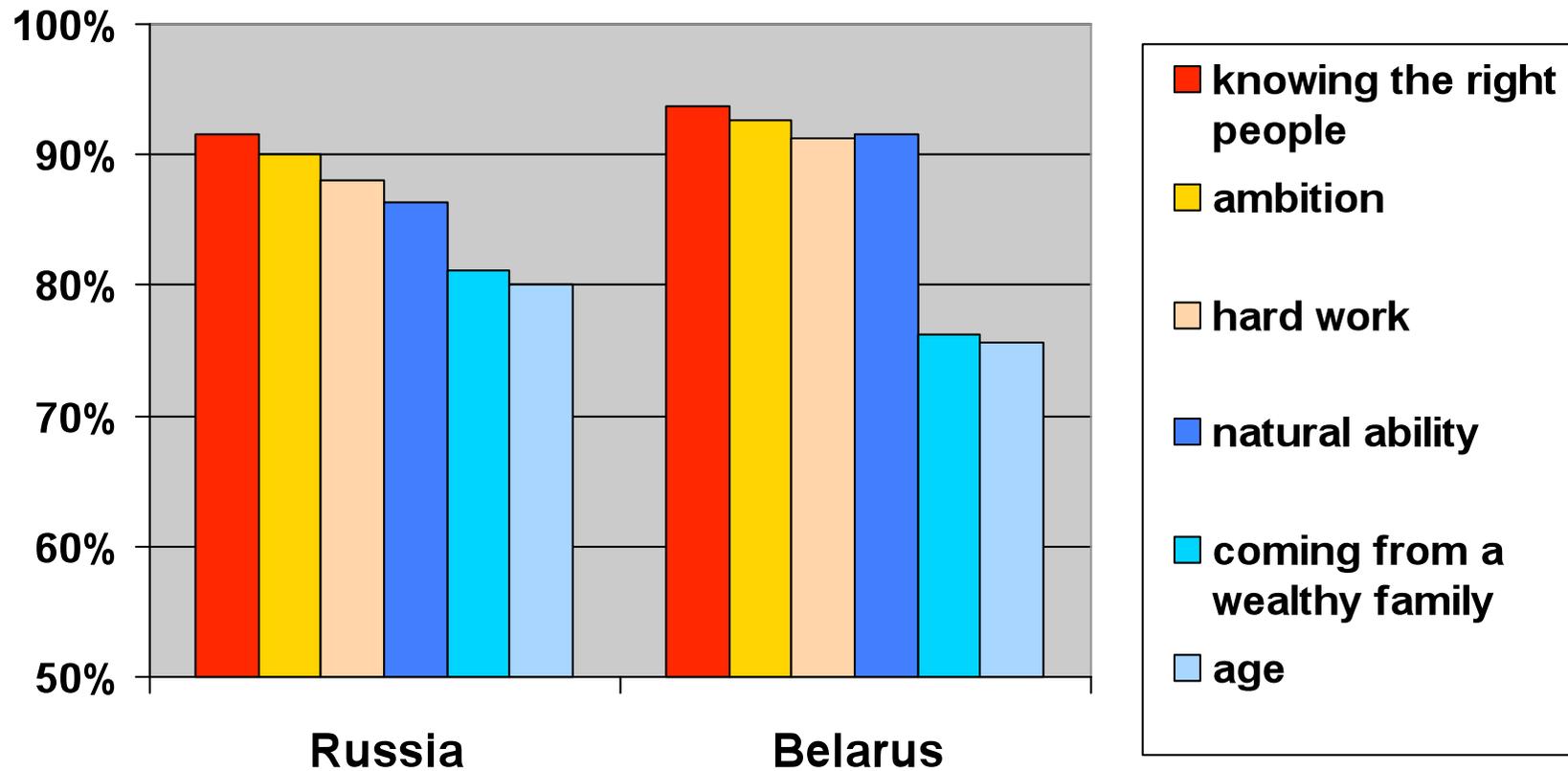
The share of respondents who believe that there is “too much social inequality” and job situation



Ways of increasing living standard

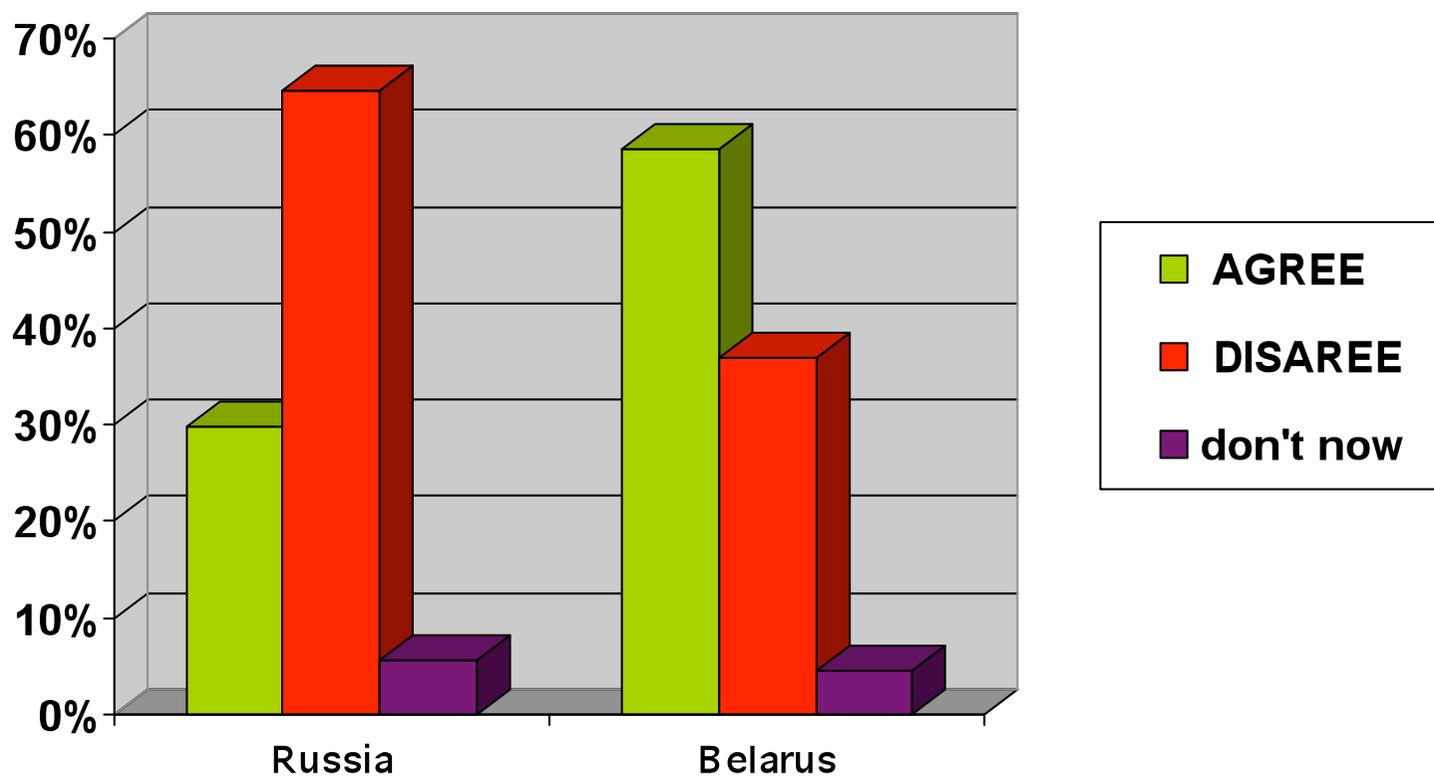


Opportunities for getting ahead: dependence on different factors



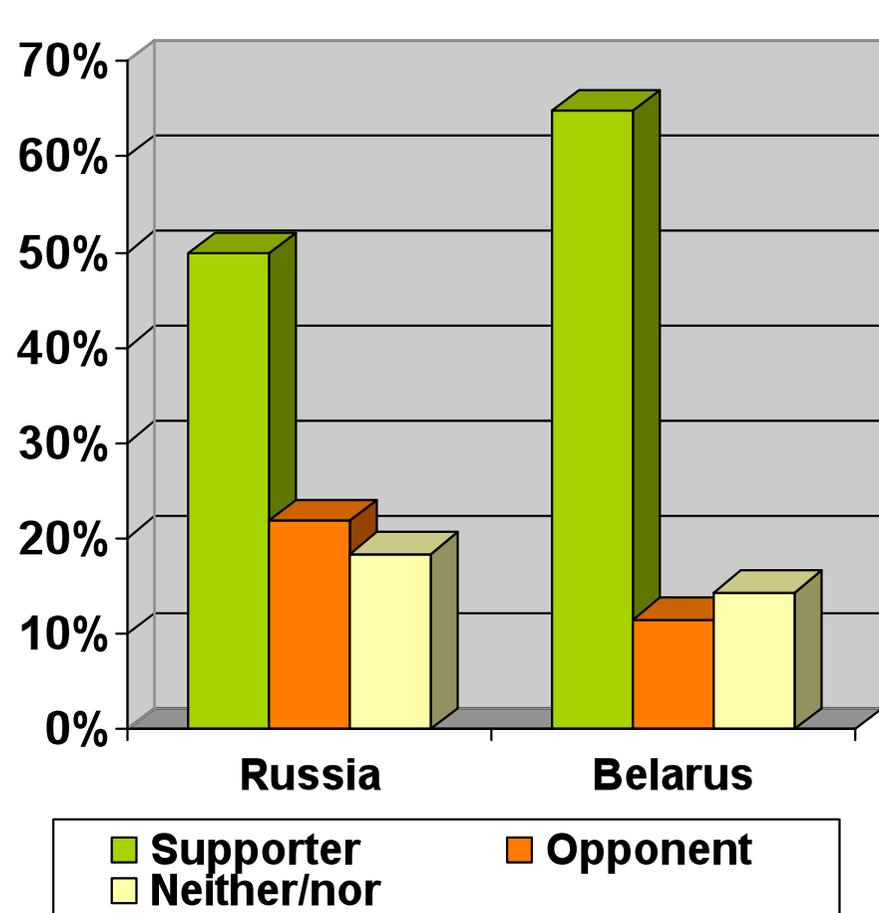
Estimations of government's work

"The government acts for the benefit of the majority of the society"

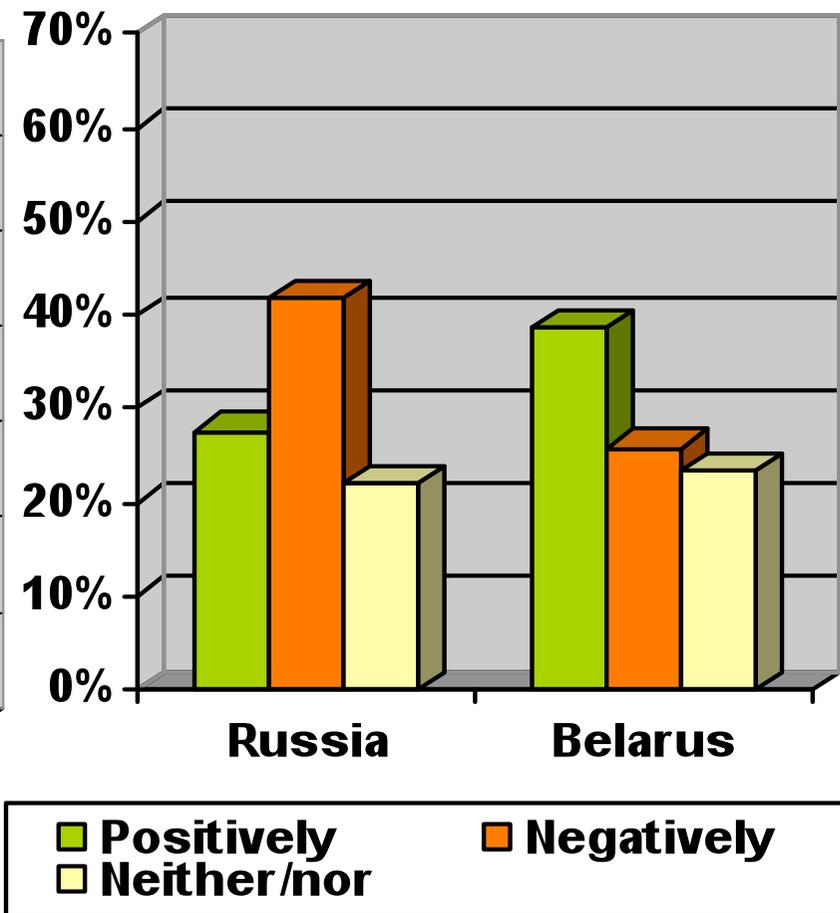


Support of market economy

IDEAL

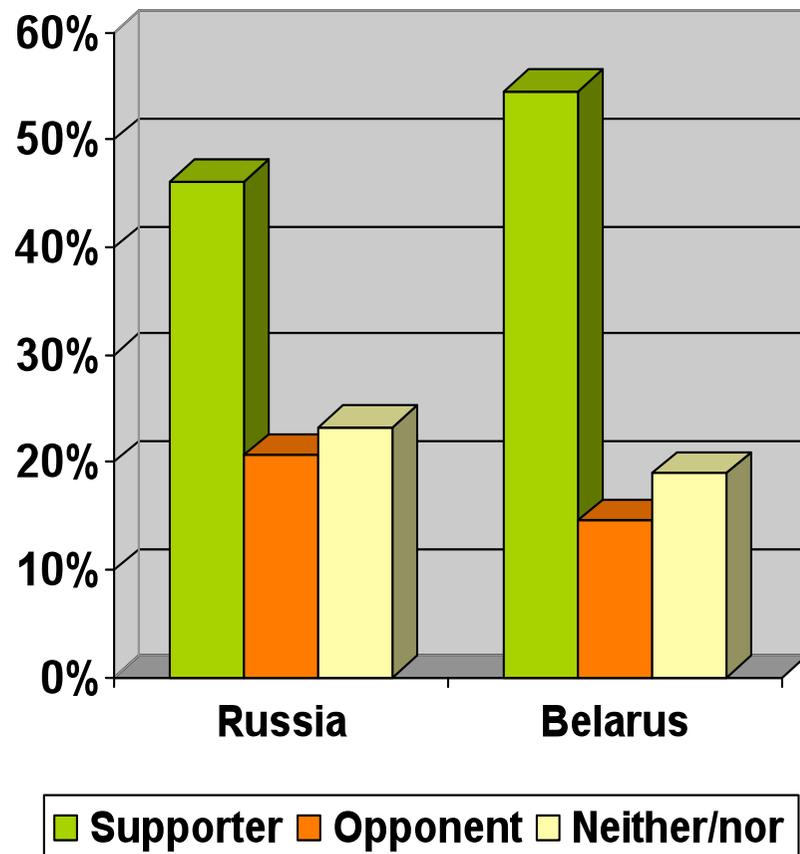


REAL



Support of democracy

IDEAL



REAL

