

Public opinion monitoring of the state of the Russian society

As in the previous issues, we publish the results of the public opinion monitoring of the state of the Russian society conducted by ISEDT RAS in the Vologda Oblast¹.

The following tables show the dynamics of a number of parameters indicating the social feeling and socio-political sentiment of the Vologda Oblast population on average for the last 6 surveys (December 2012 – October 2013) in comparison with the data for 2012, as well as for 2011, when D.A. Medvedev's presidential term was due to expire, and for 2007, the last year of V.V. Putin's second Presidency.

The survey results show that in 2012–2013 the evaluation of the performance of Russia's President and the Vologda Oblast Governor is becoming more positive, although the pace of positive changes is insignificant. The situation remains less favourable than it was in 2011 and 2007. There still exist certain negative trends in the public opinion concerning the performance of the RF Government.

Along with the lack of positive changes in the assessment of the authorities' performance, a steady growth in social mood and stock of patience, and a reduction in the level of protest potential is observed in all the social groups. This dynamics indicates that the people tend to pin their expectations and hopes on the activities of the authorities to a lesser extent now. They concentrate more on their personal, family and private life; that is an alarming trend, because it increases the disconnection between the state and society.

Estimation of performance of the authorities

On average for the past 6 surveys in comparison with 2012, the assessments of the performance of Russia's President and the Vologda Oblast Governor have somewhat improved (the share of positive evaluations has increased by 3% and 2% accordingly).

At the same time, from February 2013 the level of approval of the President's performance has not been increasing, it remains at about 55%, which is lower by 20 percentage points than it was at the end of V. Putin's second Presidency in 2007 (75%). The share of negative estimations has increased almost by the same amount (by 20 percentage points – from 11% up to 30%) on average for the past 6 surveys in comparison with 2007.

¹ The polls are held six times a year in Vologda, Cherepovets, and in eight districts of the oblast (Babayevsky District, Velikoustyugsky District, Vozhegodsky District, Gryazovetsky District, Kirillovsky District, Nikolsky District, Tarnogsky District and Sheksninsky District). The method of the survey is a questionnaire poll by place of residence of respondents. The volume of a sample population is 1500 people aged from 18 and older. The sample is purposeful and quoted. Representativeness of the sample is ensured by the observance of the proportions between the urban and rural population, the proportions between the inhabitants of settlements of various types (rural communities, small and medium-sized cities), age and sex structure of the oblast's adult population. Sampling error does not exceed 3%.

More details on the results of ISEDT RAS polls are available at <http://www.vsc.ac.ru/>.

Table 1. Dynamics of the answers to the question: “How do you assess the current performance of..?”, as a percentage of the number of respondents

Indicator	2007	2011	2012	Oct. 2013	Average for the last 6 surveys (December 2012 – October 2013)	Dynamics (+/-), the last 6 surveys in comparison with...		
						2012	2011	2007
RF President								
Approve	75.3	58.7	51.7	54.3	54.7	+3	-4	-21
Do not approve	11.5	25.6	32.6	28.7	30.4	-2	+5	+19
Chairman of the RF Government *								
Approve	-	59.3	49.6	49.0	48.4	-1	-11	-
Do not approve	-	24.7	33.3	30.6	33.4	0	+9	-
Governor								
Approve	55.8	45.7	41.9	45.9	44.2	+2	-2	-12
Do not approve	22.2	30.5	33.3	32.4	33.3	0	+3	+11

* included into the survey since 2008.

Assessment of the RF President’s performance by different social groups

A slight improvement in the assessments of the President’s activity for the last 6 surveys compared with the 2012 is observed in all socio-demographic groups of the population (by 1–5 percentage points). However, in all the groups, the situation remains considerably more negative than it was at the end of V. Putin’s second Presidency (the level of approval of the RF President decreased by 19–24 percentage points).

Table 2. Dynamics of the RF President’s activity approval by different social groups of population, as a percentage of the number of respondents

Groups of population	2007	2011	2012	Oct. 2013	Average for the last 6 surveys (December 2012 – October 2013)	Dynamics (+/-), the last 6 surveys in comparison with...		
						2012	2011	2007
Sex								
Men	73.6	55.6	48.9	48.1	51.9	+3	-4	-22
Women	76.7	61.2	53.9	59.3	56.9	+3	-4	-20
Age								
Under 30	76.6	58.3	49.7	53.4	52.5	+3	-6	-24
30–55	75.1	57.6	50.9	54.1	55.0	+4	-3	-20
Over 55	74.6	60.7	54.6	55.1	56.0	+1	-5	-19
Education								
Incomplete secondary, secondary	70.3	54.9	46.0	47.5	49.4	+3	-6	-21
Secondary vocational	76.4	59.8	51.8	54.3	55.3	+4	-5	-21
Incomplete higher, higher	80.1	61.3	56.6	61.4	59.3	+3	-2	-21
Income groups								
20% of the poorest people	65.1	45.7	40.9	50.7	45.2	+4	-1	-20
60% of the people with middle-sized income	78.0	60.4	53.8	54.4	55.9	+2	-5	-22
20% of the most prosperous people	82.6	68.9	59.4	60.8	63.9	+5	-5	-19
Territories								
Vologda	74.1	58.3	51.6	52.7	52.9	+1	-5	-21
Cherepovets	82.8	68.5	62.3	63.8	63.4	+1	-5	-19
Districts	72.2	53.9	46.3	49.8	50.9	+5	-3	-21

Assessment of the RF President's performance in coping with challenging issues

Some “critical points” in the public opinion can be noted using the index method, the essence of which consists in identifying the correlation between positive and negative moods in the society².

In 2007 the level of positive assessments of the President's performance in solving the key problems of the country was significantly higher than the level of negative assessments. During D. Medvedev's Presidency an opposite situation was observed: the share of negative opinions prevailed over positive assessments for most of the points.

On average for the past 6 surveys the prevalence of negative characteristics remains; however, public opinion has somewhat improved compared to 2012. And this is reflected in the assessments of almost all the social groups.

Table 3. Assessment of the RF President's success in dealing with **the issue of strengthening Russia's international standing** (index in social groups, in points)

Groups of population	2007	2011	2012	Oct. 2013	Average for the last 6 surveys (December 2012 – October 2013)	Dynamics (+/-), the last 6 surveys in comparison with...		
						2012	2011	2007
Sex								
Men	131.9	109.1	101.2	106.7	104.2	+3	-5	-28
Women	134.8	115.1	108.4	119.9	111.8	+3	-3	-23
Age								
Under 30	138.5	113.6	108.6	118.4	109.7	+1	-4	-29
30–55	133.6	112.6	105.6	112.1	110.3	+5	-2	-23
Over 55	128.8	111.3	101.8	113.4	104.4	+3	-7	-24
Education								
Secondary and incomplete secondary	123.6	106.0	97.5	110.1	102.3	+5	-4	-21
Secondary vocational	131.8	112.8	103.8	113.1	107.8	+4	-5	-24
Higher and incomplete higher	147.7	118.6	113.3	118.7	114.8	+2	-4	-33
Income groups								
20% of the poorest people	103.4	83.9	80.9	95.5	84.8	+4	+1	-19
60% of the people with middle-sized income	137.7	117.2	109.6	117.9	113.4	+4	-4	-24
20% of the most prosperous people	155.2	128.7	122.2	128.7	122.0	0	-7	-33
Territories								
Vologda	130.6	114.0	99.6	116.6	106.1	+6	-8	-25
Cherepovets	158.2	131.4	121.5	117.3	114.2	-7	-17	-44
Districts	122.6	102.2	99.6	110.6	106.5	+7	+4	-16
Oblast	133.5	112.5	105.2	114.0	108.4	+3	-4	-25

² Russian Public Opinion Research Center database: social wellbeing indices. Available at: <http://wciom.ru/178/>. For calculating each index the share of negative answers is subtracted from the share of positive answers, after that 100 is added to the obtained figure in order to avoid negative values. Consequently, fully negative answers would give the total index 0, fully positive answers – index 200, the balance between the former and the latter – index 100, which is, in fact, a neutral mark. The index of social strain has a reversed order of values: 0 points is an absolutely positive value, 200 points – an absolutely negative value.

On average for the past 6 surveys in comparison with 2012 and 2011 the share of the oblast residents who believe that the President successfully handles the issue of restoring order in the country has slightly increased. Stable positive changes are observed in most socio-demographic groups of the population, especially among the population of the districts (the index of success has increased by 8–9 points). Negative trends are observed only in the group of the 20% of the poorest people (the index is lower by 1 point in comparison with 2012 and 2011 and by 29 points in comparison with 2007), and also among the Vologda residents (index is lower by 13 points in comparison with 2011 and by 35 points in comparison with 2007).

Table 4. Assessment of the RF President's success in dealing with **the issue of imposing order in the country** (index in social groups, in points)

Groups of population	2007	2011	2012	Oct. 2013	Average for the last 6 surveys (December 2012 – October 2013)	Dynamics (+/-), the last 6 surveys in comparison with...		
						2012	2011	2007
Sex								
Men	118.6	84.4	82.1	88.3	86.8	+5	+2	-32
Women	119.5	89.9	86.7	100.5	92.2	+6	+2	-27
Age								
Under 30	129.1	91.7	87.8	99.7	91.7	+4	0	-37
30-55	119.4	85.1	83.9	90.9	89.0	+5	+4	-30
Over 55	109.7	87.7	83.3	97.7	89.5	+6	+2	-20
Education								
Secondary and incomplete secondary	111.9	81.3	78.8	91.6	85.8	+7	+5	-26
Secondary vocational	118.6	90.2	85.6	97.9	90.8	+5	+1	-28
Higher and incomplete higher	128.5	90.8	88.9	95.6	92.9	+4	+2	-36
Income groups								
20% of the poorest people	98.6	70.8	70.3	75.3	69.4	-1	-1	-29
60% of the people with middle-sized income	121.6	91.1	86.7	96.9	93.2	+7	+2	-28
20% of the most prosperous people	136.7	92.9	98.3	114.2	102.3	+4	+9	-34
Territories								
Vologda	118.5	96.1	82.8	90.3	83.2	0	-13	-35
Cherepovets	136.8	94.1	94.2	106.5	97.6	+3	+3	-39
Districts	110.6	80.0	80.7	91.1	89.0	+8	+9	-22
Oblast	119.1	87.4	84.7	95.0	89.8	+5	+2	-29

Less positive assessments among the oblast population can be observed with regard to the President's performance in coping with the issues of protecting democracy and strengthening the freedoms of citizens. On average for the past 6 surveys, the increase in the index of success in most socio-demographic groups is indicated only by comparison with 2012, especially among people with secondary and incomplete secondary education, and also the residents of the districts (the index is higher by 8 and 11 points, respectively).

Negative trends remain in the assessments of persons with secondary vocational education, the residents of Vologda and Cherepovets. The index of success on average for the past 6 surveys has decreased in these groups by 1–7 points in comparison with 2012, by 9–17 points in comparison with 2011 and by 24–43 points in comparison with 2007.

In comparison with 2011 and especially to 2007, the deterioration of the index values is observed for the majority of the population groups.

Table 5. Assessment of the RF President's success in dealing with **the issue of protecting democracy and strengthening the citizens' freedoms** (index in social groups, in points)

Groups of population	2007	2011	2012	Oct. 2013	Average for the last 6 surveys (December 2012 – October 2013)	Dynamics (+/-), the last 6 surveys in comparison with...		
						2012	2011	2007
Sex								
Men	107.0	80.9	72.8	77.0	76.8	+4	-4	-30
Women	107.7	87.4	79.4	87.1	81.8	+2	-6	-26
Age								
Under 30	115.0	84.7	79.0	82.8	79.5	+1	-5	-35
30-55	106.3	81.9	74.6	78.2	79.7	+5	-2	-27
Over 55	102.4	88.6	77.4	88.9	79.4	+2	-9	-23
Education								
Secondary and incomplete secondary	100.4	78.1	69.5	80.8	77.5	+8	-1	-23
Secondary vocational	109.0	87.0	78.8	82.5	78.2	-1	-9	-31
Higher and incomplete higher	113.9	88.3	80.3	84.7	83.1	+3	-5	-31
Income groups								
20% of the poorest people	94.3	62.6	61.9	73.5	67.3	+5	+5	-27
60% of the people with middle-sized income	108.7	89.0	78.2	80.8	80.3	+2	-9	-28
20% of the most prosperous people	122.3	93.8	87.3	97.1	86.8	0	-7	-35
Territories								
Vologda	98.6	91.3	76.8	76.9	74.8	-2	-17	-24
Cherepovets	122.0	91.8	85.9	85.4	79.2	-7	-13	-43
Districts	104.3	77.6	71.6	84.1	82.3	+11	+5	-22
Oblast	107.4	84.5	76.5	82.6	79.6	+3	-5	-28

In December 2012 – October 2013 in comparison with 2012, the opinion of the districts' residents about the President's activities aimed at recovery of the economy and improvement of citizens's welfare improved significantly (the index increased by 9 points). At the same time, the trends in the assessments of the Vologda and Cherepovets residents remain negative (the index dropped by 34 and 53 points, respectively on average for the past 6 surveys in comparison with 2007). Public opinion in the age group over 55 years old is not improving as well (like in 2012, the index was 74 points, in 2007 – 98 points).

In general, compared to 2012, the index of success in the majority of socio-demographic groups increased by 1–6 points, which is insignificant if we compare the data for the last 6 surveys with the period, when V. Putin’s second term in office was due to expire (2007). During this time, the index of the President’s success in coping with such a vital issue as the growth of citizens’ welfare, has considerably decreased in all the population groups (by 25–45 points).

Table 6. Assessment of the RF President’s success in dealing with **the issue of economic recovery and increase in the citizens’ welfare** (index in social groups, in points)

Groups of population	2007	2011	2012	Oct. 2013	Average for the last 6 surveys (December 2012 – October 2013)	Dynamics (+/-), the last 6 surveys in comparison with...		
						2012	2011	2007
Sex								
Men	106.6	73.0	67.5	72.9	73.4	+6	0	-33
Women	109.5	76.5	72.9	75.2	74.4	+1	-2	-35
Age								
Under 30	117.9	77.3	69.1	82.2	74.1	+5	-3	-44
30-55	109.2	71.5	69.1	72.3	74.0	+5	+3	-35
Over 55	97.8	78.4	74.0	71.3	73.7	0	-5	-24
Education								
Secondary and incomplete secondary	102.2	72.1	68.8	63.0	71.6	+3	-1	-31
Secondary vocational	108.8	76.3	71.1	78.4	73.4	+2	-3	-35
Higher and incomplete higher	114.8	76.5	71.1	82.1	77.0	+6	0	-38
Income groups								
20% of the poorest people	99.0	58.0	57.5	58.6	59.9	+2	+2	-39
60% of the people with middle-sized income	106.5	77.4	72.9	73.3	74.4	+1	-3	-32
20% of the most prosperous people	129.8	83.8	81.0	91.8	85.2	+4	+1	-45
Territories								
Vologda	99.3	77.9	67.5	69.1	65.7	-2	-12	-34
Cherepovets	124.3	79.0	72.3	77.9	70.8	-1	-8	-53
Districts	104.3	71.5	71.0	74.9	79.8	+9	+8	-25
Oblast	108.2	74.9	70.5	74.2	74.0	+3	-1	-34

Estimation of social condition

The share of positive assessments of social mood and stock of patience continues to grow, despite more negative opinions concerning the activity of the Head of State on average for the past 6 surveys in comparison with 2007, as well as the increase in the share of the oblast population, who consider themselves “poor” and “extremely poor”.

Table 7. Estimation of social condition (as a percentage of the number of respondents)

Answer options	2007	2011	2012	Oct. 2013	Average for the last 6 surveys (December 2012 – October 2013)	Dynamics (+/-), the last 6 surveys in comparison with...		
						2012	2011	2007
Mood								
Usual condition, good mood	63.6	63.1	67.3	71.5	68.3	+1	+5	+5
Feeling stress, anger, fear, depression	27.8	28.9	27.0	24.0	26.5	-1	-2	-1
Stock of patience								
Everything is not so bad; it's difficult to live, but it's possible to stand it	74.1	74.8	76.6	81.6	78.7	+2	+4	+5
It's impossible to bear such plight	13.6	15.3	15.8	12.3	14.5	-1	-1	+1
Social self-identification								
The share of people who consider themselves to have average income	48.2	43.1	44.7	45.7	43.8	-1	+1	-4
The share of people who consider themselves to be poor and extremely poor	42.4	44.3	44.5	45.4	46.9	+2	+3	+5
Consumer Sentiment Index								
Index value, points	105.9	89.6	91.5	90.4	90.9	-1	+1	-1

Attitude of the population toward political parties

The dynamics of support to the party of power shows no positive changes. As in 2007 and in 2011, on average for the past 6 surveys, the level of support was 29–30%. At that, there has been a continuous increase in the share of the oblast residents, who consider that no political party among currently existing ones expresses their interests (in 2007 – 18%, in 2011 – 29%, in 2012 – 31%, on average for the last 6 surveys – 35%).

Table 8. Dynamics of the answers to the question: “Which party expresses your interests?”, as a percentage of the number of respondents

Party	2007	Election to the RF State Duma 2007, fact	2011	Election to the RF State Duma 2011, fact	2012	Oct. 2013	Average for the last 6 surveys (December 2012 – October 2013)	Dynamics (+/-), the last 6 surveys in comparison with...		
								2012	2011	2007
United Russia	30.2	60.5	31.1	33.4	29.1	26.9	29.5	0	-2	-1
KPRF	7.0	9.3	10.3	16.8	10.6	11.9	11.4	+1	+1	+4
LDPR	7.5	11.0	7.8	15.4	7.8	8.4	7.1	-1	-1	0
Just Russia	7.8	8.8	5.6	27.2	6.6	4.0	4.8	-2	-1	-3
Other	1.8	–	1.9	–	2.1	1.0	2.8	+1	+1	+1
No party	17.8	–	29.4	–	31.3	37.3	34.6	+3	+5	+17
It is difficult to answer	21.2	–	13.2	–	11.7	10.5	9.9	-2	-3	-11