

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 ISEDТ 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 in June – August 2014 and also on the average for the last six polls. These data are compared with the data for 2013, 2011 (when D.A. Medvedev's presidential term was due to expire), and 2007 (when V.V. Putin's second presidency was coming to an end). We do not provide comparisons with 2012, since it was an incomplete year of V.V. Putin's presidency (his inauguration took place on May 7, 2012).

Estimation of performance of the authorities

Despite the fact that international political situation is rather tense (crisis in Ukraine, bilateral sanctions of Russia, and the EU and USA), the assessment of the federal and regional authorities in June – August 2014 did not change. The support of the RF President remains high (66%) as well as that of the Chairman of the RF Government (55%). The nationwide proportion of positive assessments of the President's activity for the last two months has not changed and amounted to 85% (according to WCIOM).

We recall that the growth in the support of the RF President has been very rapid since the beginning of the year. During the first half of 2014 the approval of V. Putin's activity as head of state has increased by 22 percentage points in Russia as a whole (from 64 to 86%) and by 11 percentage points in the Vologda Oblast (from 56 to 67%). The nationwide support of the President in 2007 was higher than that in the region by 6 p.p. (81 and 75%, respectively), and in August 2014 – by 19 p.p. (85% and 66%, respectively). This is largely due to regional specifics: drastic consequences of the 2008 global financial crisis for the Vologda Oblast, and the change of the leadership in the RF subject at the end of 2011.

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 ISEDТ RAS polls are available at <http://www.vssc.ac.ru/>.

The performance of the Vologda Oblast Governor is approved at a somewhat lower level (39%). It should be noted that the support of the Vologda Oblast Governor stabilized after a long decline in October 2013 – June 2014 (the percentage of positive assessments during this time has decreased from 46 to 39%). Apparently, the fact that the support of the region’s head in August 2014 remains at the level of June is connected with the upcoming elections of heads of the Subjects of Federation (September 14, 2014 will be the single day of voting), and also with O. Kuvshinnikov’s statements about the readiness of the region’s economy to function effectively under the sanctions.

How do you assess the current performance of..?
(as a percentage of the number of respondents)

Indicator	2007*	2011*	2013*	Oct. 2013	Dec. 2013	Feb. 2014	Apr. 2014	June 2014	Aug. 2014	Average for the last 6 surveys	Dynamics (+/-), the last 6 surveys in comparison with		
											2013	2011	2007
RF President													
I approve	75.3	58.7	55.3	54.3	57.3	56.1	62.8	66.6	66.4	60.6	+5	+2	-15
I do not approve	11.5	25.6	29.4	28.7	28.9	29.3	25.4	21.8	19.3	25.6	-4	0	+14
Chairman of the RF Government*													
I approve	-	59.3	48.9	49.0	51.1	49.3	52.5	55.8	55.2	52.2	+3	-7	-
I do not approve	-	24.7	32.8	30.6	32.5	32.9	30.9	26.4	26.8	30.0	-3	+5	-
Governor													
I approve	55.8	45.7	44.4	45.9	44.1	42.8	41.6	38.5	38.8	42.0	-2	-4	-14
I do not approve	22.2	30.5	33.2	32.4	35.3	36.9	39.0	40.9	40.1	37.4	+4	+7	+15
* included into the survey since 2008													

For the last two months there has been a decline in the share of the oblast residents, who think that the President’s performance is successful in strengthening Russia’s international standing (from 54 to 51%), in imposing order in the country (from 50 to 48%), in the protection of democracy and strengthening freedoms of citizens (from 40 to 38%). The level of approval of the President’s work in the direction of economic recovery and enhancement of citizens’ welfare did not change significantly in June – August 2014 (35–36%). No positive changes in the assessment of the RF President’s performance in coping with key problems of the country are observed for the first time since the beginning of the year. However, it should be noted that, in spite of the tense political situation in the country and abroad, there is no significant deterioration in the public opinion.

In your opinion, how successful is the RF President in coping with challenging issues?*

(as a percentage of the number of respondents)

Indicator	2007	2011	2013	Oct. 2013	Dec. 2013	Feb. 2014	Apr. 2014	June 2014	Aug. 2014	Average for the last 6 surveys	Dynamics (+/-), the last 6 surveys in comparison with		
											2013	2011	2007
Strengthening Russia's international standing													
Successful	58.4	46.2	45.7	47.7	47.5	45.9	48.6	53.7	50.9	49.1	+3	+3	-9
Unsuccessful	24.9	33.7	36.2	33.7	35.8	35.7	35.5	31.7	30.0	33.7	-3	0	+9
<i>Index of success</i>	<i>133.5</i>	<i>112.5</i>	<i>109.5</i>	<i>114.0</i>	<i>111.7</i>	<i>110.2</i>	<i>113.1</i>	<i>122.0</i>	<i>120.9</i>	<i>115.3</i>	<i>+6</i>	<i>+3</i>	<i>-18</i>
Imposing order in the country													
Successful	53.2	36.6	39.4	41.7	44.5	42.7	46.7	49.5	47.5	45.4	+6	+9	-8
Unsuccessful	34.0	50.0	47.5	46.7	45.5	43.7	40.9	39.5	37.8	42.4	-5	-8	+8
<i>Index of success</i>	<i>119.2</i>	<i>86.6</i>	<i>91.9</i>	<i>95.0</i>	<i>99.0</i>	<i>99.0</i>	<i>105.8</i>	<i>110.0</i>	<i>109.7</i>	<i>103.1</i>	<i>+11</i>	<i>+17</i>	<i>-16</i>
Protecting democracy and strengthening the citizens' freedoms													
Successful	44.4	32.4	31.8	33.5	32.8	32.3	36.3	40.1	37.6	35.4	+4	+3	-9
Unsuccessful	37.0	48.3	51.0	50.9	51.6	50.1	48.7	43.9	43.7	48.2	-3	0	+11
<i>Index of success</i>	<i>107.4</i>	<i>84.1</i>	<i>80.8</i>	<i>82.6</i>	<i>81.2</i>	<i>82.2</i>	<i>87.6</i>	<i>96.2</i>	<i>93.9</i>	<i>87.3</i>	<i>+7</i>	<i>+3</i>	<i>-20</i>
Economic recovery and increase in the citizens' welfare													
Successful	47.2	30.7	31.3	31.9	32.6	31.5	34.9	35.8	35.1	33.6	+2	+3	-14
Unsuccessful	39.1	56.1	56.8	57.7	59.7	57.1	54.3	53.5	50.2	55.4	-1	-1	+16
<i>Index of success</i>	<i>108.1</i>	<i>74.6</i>	<i>74.5</i>	<i>74.2</i>	<i>72.9</i>	<i>74.4</i>	<i>80.6</i>	<i>82.3</i>	<i>84.9</i>	<i>78.2</i>	<i>+4</i>	<i>+4</i>	<i>-30</i>

* Ranked according to the average value of the index of success for the last 6 surveys.

As for the people's opinion concerning political parties, the party "United Russia" remains the leader. In June – August the level of its support did not change significantly (33–34%). The ratings of other parties are also stable: KPRF – 9%, LDPR – 7%, Just Russia – 4%. For the last two months there have been virtually no changes in the share of the oblast residents, who find it difficult to choose a political power that expresses their interests (11–12%).

In the course of 2014 there has been a steady increase in the people's support of United Russia (from February to June – from 28 to 34%). The positions of the rest of the parties from the beginning of the year do not change.

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	2013	Oct. 2013	Dec. 2013	Feb. 2014	Apr. 2014	June 2014	Aug. 2014	Average for the last 6 surveys	Dynamics (+/-), the last 6 surveys in comparison with		
													2013	2011	2007
United Russia	30.2	60.5	31.1	33.4	29.4	26.9	29.5	28.3	29.5	32.7	34.3	30.2	+1	-1	0
KPRF	7.0	9.3	10.3	16.8	11.3	11.9	11.8	10.9	10.7	9.8	9.1	10.7	-1	0	+4
LDPR	7.5	11.0	7.8	15.4	7.2	8.4	8.1	8.9	8.3	6.2	6.9	7.8	+1	0	0
Just Russia	7.8	8.8	5.6	27.2	4.6	4.0	4.4	3.5	3.3	3.3	3.7	3.7	-1	-2	-4
Other	1.8	–	1.9	–	0.6	1.0	0.8	0.4	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.4	0	-2	-1
No party	17.8	–	29.4	–	34.9	37.3	34.4	35.2	34.8	36.0	35.0	35.5	+1	+6	+18
It is difficult to answer	21.2	–	13.2	–	10.2	10.5	10.9	12.7	13.1	11.8	10.9	11.7	+2	-2	-10

The indicators of social condition have remained stable since April 2014: the share of positive assessments of social mood is 71%, the share of positive assessments of the stock of patience in 81–83%.

Since December 2013 the social self-identification of the population has not changed significantly: the proportion of the oblast residents who consider themselves “people of average income” is 42–44%, the share of those who consider themselves to be “poor and extremely poor” is 47–50%.

At the same time, despite stable assessments of the social condition of the population, August 2014, compared with June, witnessed a noticeable decrease in the index of consumer sentiment (from 91 to 87 p.), which indicates the decrease in consumer activity in the region. More likely, it is due to the tense economic situation in the region associated with the debt burden of the regional budget, as well as the uncertainty of the population about the consequences of Russia’s sanctions (mainly, the ban on the delivery of a number of key food products (beef, pork, vegetables, fruits, poultry, fish, seafood, cheese, milk and dairy products) from Australia, Canada, Norway, the USA and EU countries) for the consumer market.

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

Indicator	2007	2011	2013	Oct. 2013	Dec. 2013	Feb. 2014	Apr. 2014	June 2014	Aug. 2014	Average for the last 6 surveys	Dynamics (+/-), the last 6 surveys in comparison with		
											2013	2011	2007
Mood													
Usual condition, good mood	63.6	63.1	68.6	71.5	69.6	65.1	69.3	71.1	70.5	69.5	+1	+6	+6
Feeling stress, anger, fear, depression	27.8	28.9	26.2	24.0	26.2	27.1	24.9	23.7	25.1	25.2	-1	-4	-3
Stock of patience													
Everything is not so bad; it's difficult to live, but it's possible to stand it	74.1	74.8	79.3	81.6	83.1	79.8	81.3	81.0	82.5	81.6	+2	+7	+8
It's impossible to bear such plight	13.6	15.3	14.2	12.3	12.0	12.3	11.1	13.4	12.8	12.3	-2	-3	-1
Social self-identification													
The share of people who consider themselves to have average income	48.2	43.1	43.9	45.7	43.7	44.2	43.1	42.0	44.1	43.8	0	+1	-4
The share of people who consider themselves to be poor and extremely poor	42.4	44.3	46.9	45.4	46.7	46.9	49.1	48.4	49.6	47.7	+1	+3	+5
Consumer sentiment index													
Index value, points	105.9	89.6	90.3	90.4	87.9	91.5	90.3	90.5	87.1	89.6	-1	0	-16

Assessment of the events in Ukraine

Most of the Vologda Oblast residents approve of the policy of Russia toward Ukraine. Their share has slightly increased in June – August 2014 (from 65 to 67%). 10% of the region's population has the opposite opinion.

For the last two months, the support of Russia's policy in relation to the events in Ukraine has increased in the majority of the socio-demographic groups, especially among women (from 64 to 69%), people aged under 30 (from 61 to 67%), persons with secondary vocational education (from 60 to 69%), also among 20% of the poorest (from 43 to 48%), and the residents of Cherepovets (from 73 to 77%).

Do you support Russia's policy concerning the events in Ukraine?
(as a percentage of the number of respondents)

Categories of population	I support		I do not support	
	June 2014	August 2014	June 2014	August 2014
Sex				
Men	66.4	64.0	11.0	13.0
Women	63.8	68.5	9.2	8.2
Age				
Under 30	61.0	67.0	6.9	8.5
30–55	65.2	66.3	10.6	11.2
Over 5	67.5	66.4	11.3	10.3
Education				
Secondary and incomplete secondary	61.5	58.5	9.2	12.7
Secondary vocational	59.6	68.9	12.1	10.6
Higher and incomplete higher	74.0	72.7	8.9	7.5
Income groups				
20% of the poorest people	42.5	47.8	18.7	16.4
60% of the people with middle-sized income	68.1	69.3	8.9	10.3
220% of the most prosperous people	83.9	80.2	5.1	5.6
Territories				
Vologda	72.6	71.9	5.5	9.0
Cherepovets	72.9	77.0	8.5	7.1
Districts	56.5	57.6	13.2	12.8
Oblast	65.0	66.5	10.0	10.3

Over the past two months, the proportion of people, who learn about the Ukrainian events from TV programs, has increased from 80 to 87% in the Vologda Oblast and from 91 to 94% nationwide. 29% of the region's residents get the information about the development of the Ukrainian conflict from friends, relatives and neighbors. This is higher than in June (24%), and, in general, corresponds to the national average level (27%).

The region's residents get the information about the events in Ukraine from online newspapers and social networks on the Internet significantly more often than the residents nationwide (22% – in the Vologda Oblast, 11% – in Russia).

The proportion of the oblast residents, who are not interested in the development of the situation in Ukraine, decreased noticeably for the period from June to August 2014 (from 14 to 8%), but it remains higher than the national average value (1%).

What are your main sources of information concerning the events in Ukraine and the Crimea?*(several answer options; as a percentage of the number of respondents)

Answer option	ISEDT RAS		Levada Center	
	June 2014	August 2014	June 2014	August 2014
TV	79.5	87.0	91	94
Friends, relatives, neighbors	24.0	28.5	26	27
Newspapers	27.9	21.8	9	11
Web-based social networking services	24.1	21.5	10	11
Internet media (newspapers, magazines, information portals)	13.6	14.7	17	18
Radio	14.9	11.9	11	15
Periodicals	4.5	2.6	2	2
Other	0.1	0.3	1	1
I am not interested in it	13.9	7.5	1	1

* In order of prevalence in the Vologda Oblast according to the data as of August 2014.

In comparison with June, in August the proportion of the oblast residents, who believe that the federal media are objective in their coverage of the events in Ukraine, increased (from 56 to 58%). In Russia as a whole, the share of those, who think the same, decreased slightly (from 79 to 74%).

More than half of the oblast residents believe that the foreign media provide biased information about the development of the Ukrainian conflict. The proportion of those, who support this opinion, increased in June – August 2014 from 52 to 60%. This viewpoint is shared by 64% of the population nationwide (as of June 2014).

In your opinion, how impartial are the following mass media when covering the events in Ukraine and the Crimea? (as a percentage of the number of respondents)

Answer option	ISEDT RAS		Levada Center	
	June 2014	August 2014	June 2014	August 2014
Federal Russian mass media				
On the whole and mostly impartial	56.2	57.6	79	74
Not very impartial, completely biased	26.8	25.4	14	17
<i>Index, points</i>	<i>129.4</i>	<i>132.2</i>	<i>165</i>	<i>157</i>
It is difficult to answer	17.0	17.0	7	10
Foreign mass media*				
On the whole and mostly impartial	22.4	18.1	18	n.a.
Not very impartial, completely biased	52.3	59.7	64	n.a.
<i>Index, points</i>	<i>70.1</i>	<i>58.4</i>	<i>54</i>	<i>n.a.</i>
It is difficult to answer	25.3	22.2	18	n.a.

* In July 2014 Levada Center did not ask the question concerning the impartiality of the foreign media in covering the events in Ukraine.

Conclusion

The results of the surveys conducted in August 2014 show that the level of approval of the performance of Russian President (66%) and the federal authorities remains high, despite the tense situation on the international political arena. The role of economic factors in shaping public opinion is still crucial even under the conditions of bilateral sanctions (for example, according to WCIOM, 95% of Russians do not feel the impact of sanctions, although only 13% of the population have not heard about them).

The approval of Russia's policy in relation to the events in Ukraine continues to grow on the regional level (65–67%), as well as the support of the federal mass media in covering issues related to the development of the "Ukrainian conflict" (56–58%). Assessment of the Governor's performance for the last two months has not changed (the approval level is 39%), which, apparently, is connected with the upcoming election of heads of regions on September 14.

In August 2014, compared with June, consumer activism somewhat declined (the index decreased from 91 to 87 p.), however this has not affected the positive assessments of social mood (71%) and stock of patience (83%), which, as before, prevail over negative judgments (25 and 13%, respectively).