

## Subjective factor in social development as a key resource for the consolidation of the Russian society



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**Abstract.** Transformation processes in the modern globalizing world cover all spheres of society, causing serious qualitative and quantitative changes in its structure. The role of society in the process of globalization is becoming increasingly important, that is why the consolidation of its members becomes the most important direction of social development.

The authors consider the problem of consolidation of the Russian society, they substantiate the importance of the subjective factor in social development, which consists in the people's perception of key events in the political, economic, and social life.

The analysis of official statistical data shows that there are certain positive trends in the dynamics of the most representative indicators of social health, which reflects the degree of psychological adaptation of the population to their living conditions. However, having calculated the latent level of some of them (suicide), the authors identify that there is inaccuracy in the records of these indicators, which proves

that there are flaws in the state system of collection of statistical information. It highlights the relevance of sociological research for a comprehensive and in-depth analysis of current social processes and phenomena.

The article presents the experience of sociological research carried out at ISEDT RAS. It serves as a tool to study the subjective factor of social development. The analysis of the sociological surveys' findings shows that the social mood of the citizens nationwide and in the Vologda Oblast is improving; this fact indicates that people are adapting to their living conditions that changed in the 2000s. At the same time, positive trends in social well-being in the Russian society are mainly associated with the satisfaction of personal and family interests. Throughout the 2000s and at present the issue of alienation of the Russian society from the government remains acute, which is indicated by the growth of the social fragmentation index and the low level of trust in the main governmental and public institutions. The authors conclude that the development of consolidation processes in Russia depends largely on the degree of interaction between the society and authorities. Domestic sociological science can play a crucial part in the solution of this problem.

**Key words:** consolidation of society, social development, sociology, social perception, trust, social well-being.

Russian sociologist M.K. Gorshkov in his 2010 article "Russian sociology and the challenges of modern society" noted that "the Russian society is in a continuous transition, and no one knows exactly where it is going and at what social speed. As a consequence, the question of Russia's future remains open in many respects [8, p. 6]. The key problems of the Russian society, which are highlighted by M.K. Gorshkov are as follows: dependence of Russia's economy on raw materials, low competitiveness of its manufactured goods, fledgling democracy and the weakness of civil society, negative demographic trends and the social sphere with the remnants of the Soviet period, corruption that breeds tyranny, despotism and injustice [8, p. 6]. These issues were relevant in 2010 and they remain relevant in 2014, despite a gradual "fade out" of the effects of the global financial crisis.

On the background of those problems of the post-Soviet and post-crisis (during the 1990s) Russia, the society has found itself on

the threshold of new radical transformations, which will determine the vector of its further development in the coming decades.

We are talking about the ideas of national identity, preservation and development of state sovereignty, enhancement of the role of civil society in public administration, overcoming the "crisis of trust" in the state and society's institutions, abandonment of the pro-Western ideology of "consumer society" and return to original Russian roots of development based on moral values. Recently, the importance and magnitude of global changes in the society are highlighted in President V.V. Putin's speeches; besides, they are reflected in the works of leading Russian scientists S.S. Sulakshin [30], M.K. Gorshkov [7], V.K. Levashov [16], J.T. Toshchenko [33] and others.

Consolidation of the Russian society is one of the most important issues that is coming to the fore in modern Russia as a result of transformation processes.

It is relatively more important in Russia than in many developed countries, due to the scale of transformational effects of post-Soviet reforms that resulted in a significant decline in the standards of living of the majority of the population, growth of poverty, anomie and crime, and the general disintegration and disruption of the Russian society [15, p. 148]. This stems, first, from the extent of transformational “break-up” in the socio-economic sphere during the last two decades, which caused a significant decline in the standards of living among the majority of the population, and an objective destabilization of the Russian society. Second, it is connected to the fact that changing the country’s development model led to the formation of significant social inequality, the depth of which, especially in the most advanced regions, has increased in dozens of times in comparison with the Soviet period. The illegitimacy of such inequalities in the public consciousness has a serious effect on the destabilization of the Russian society and on the escalation of social conflicts. Third, the years of reforms have changed (and are continuing to change) the society management system. This could not but lead to the weakening of “feedback” between ordinary Russians and the authorities, to the change of the functions of some traditional means that express the problems of public life, for example, mass media in the Soviet times; and the disappearance of other structures, in particular, those, to which the people would appeal for resolving relevant issues [27, p. 3].

Certain flaws in the social systems, leading to the fact that at present they reproduce the way of life prevailing in the country and its

current model, rather than develop it, does not mean that they are not working. As a result, the post-reform Russia concentrates a huge socio-psychological resource that serves as a basis for the implementation of a modernization breakthrough, which the Russian society desperately needs today [8, p. 6.].

The direction of social evolution dictates the necessity to meet the higher demands of people, the demands based on instrumental values such as creativity and self-actualization [21, p. 3]. A new understanding of the role and place of man in the system of social relations requires the transformation of the approach to governance – the transition from traditional forms and methods of management to a human-oriented model of economy, social sphere, and policy based on enhancing the quality of life [21, p. 4]. This transformation involves the need to adjust the system of indicators reflecting the efficiency of public administration, the identification of new indicators of public administration in accordance with current trends.

Due to the urgency of the issue concerning the consolidation of the Russian society, which implies the convergence of the masses and the authorities for efficient and productive collaboration and cooperation “based on internal (mental, value) consent and understanding of pressing issues and goals” [1], particular importance is attached to the study of subjective perceptions of the key changes occurring in the socio-economic, political and cultural life by the members of the society. It is the “socio-psychological resource” that is the main development factor under spiritual, moral and ideological

transformations that Russia is already facing in 2014. And it is the “subjective” factor, as J.T. Toshchenko points out, that “plays an essential and increasingly important role among the factors that determine the content and the vector of changes in the world and in our country” [33, p. 32].

The analysis of the national and global statistics data shows that the main indicators of social health, which characterizes the degree of people’s adaptation to their living conditions, deteriorated in the Russian Federation in 1990–1999, and have improved since 2000. For instance, in 2000–2012 in the Russian Federation there was a decrease in mortality rate from suicide (from 39 to 21 cases per 100 thousand people, in the Vologda Oblast – from 57 to 21 cases), homicide (from 28 to 11 cases, in the Vologda Oblast – from 27 to 10 cases), incidence of mental disorders (from 84 to 48 cases, in the Vologda Oblast – from 108 to 37 cases), alcoholism (from 130 to 86 cases, and from 99 to 86 cases, respectively), drug addiction (from 50 to 14 cases, and from 29 to 14 cases, respectively).

The dynamics of mortality from suicide shows most clearly the trends in psychological adaptation of the society to the key socio-economic, cultural and other events happening in the country. The representativeness of this indicator, as the one reflecting the degree of social development, was noted by the classics of the Russian and foreign sociology (E. Durkheim, P. Sorokin); and today their scientific and philosophical views have not lost their relevance.

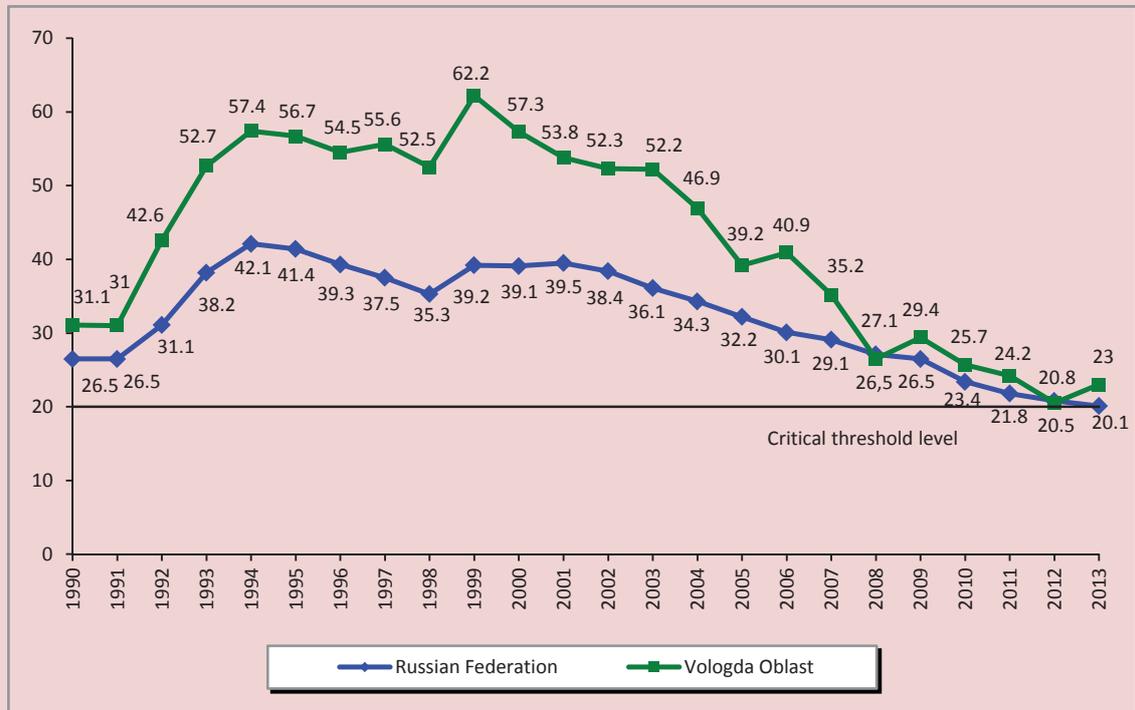
The increase in suicide mortality in the 1990s reflects the heavy, mainly psychological,

consequences of the collapse of the Soviet Union, and also the 1991 and 1998 economic crises. Positive trends in the 2000s emerged due to relative stabilization of the political and socio-economic situation, gradual adaptation of the people to a new development paradigm after the collapse of the USSR (*fig. 1*).

Similar trends are observed in the Vologda Oblast with a negative impact of the global financial crisis being more pronounced at the regional level. The Vologda Oblast was among the regions that had been most affected by the crisis [20, p. 100]; it turned from a donor region into a recipient region with the greatest budget deficit nationwide (in 2010 – 28%). It was caused by the decline in steel production, which accounts for almost 90% of tax revenues of the Vologda Oblast budget [5].

However, the official statistics do not reflect comprehensively the relationship between the social processes and phenomena taking place in the society. They do not take into account important aspects such as people’s mood, their attitude to the different spheres of private and public life, to the performance of the authorities. In addition, they possess a certain degree of inaccuracy. The problems of Russia’s statistics are partly caused by the malfunction of the mechanism of collecting data in regions, and by the interest of regional authorities in data misrepresentation. The long-standing practice consisting in the systematic distortion of performance indicators under the Soviet regime is a specific aggravating factor in this respect. In the Soviet era, natural and budget statistics, based on the total recording

Figure 1. Suicide mortality rate (per 100 thousand people)



Source: Federal State Statistics Service Database. Available at: <http://www.gks.ru/>

were supplemented by inaccurate summary macroeconomic statistics. It was determined by a non-monetary, natural character of the Soviet economy. In Russia, left with the Soviet legacy, the statistics became similar to a randomly curved, opaque mirror, so that even professionals cannot assess the state of the economy and society on their basis [9]. For example, a study of the latent level of suicidal mortality in the Vologda Oblast has shown that the real prevalence of suicide can be twice higher than those registered by the official statistics (*fig. 2*).

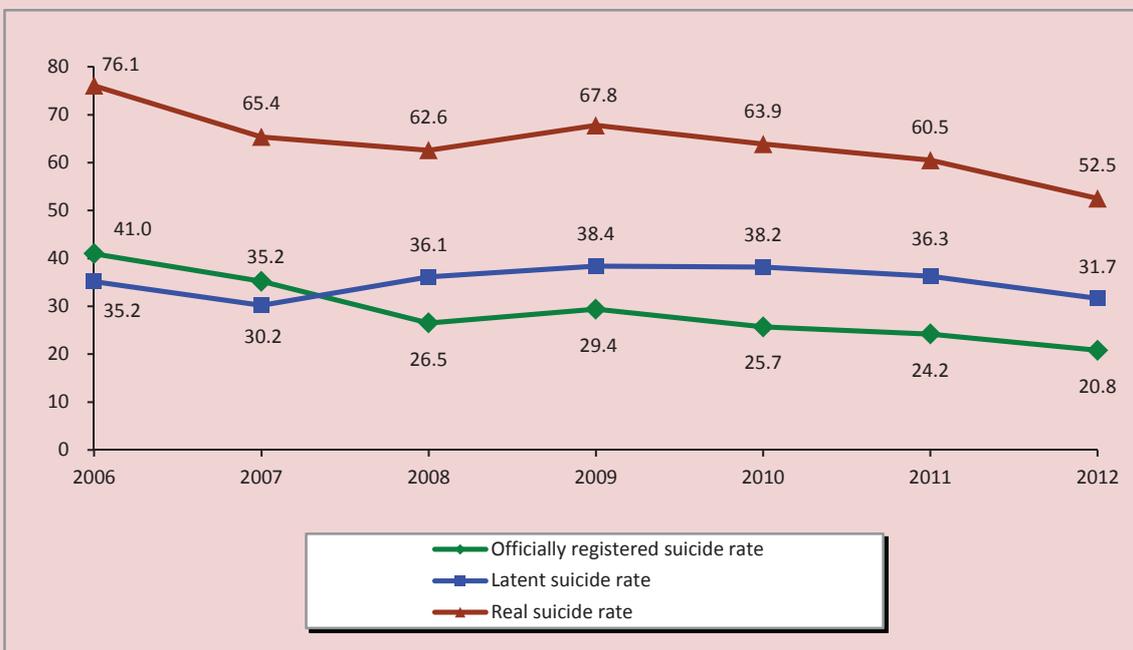
It is necessary to consider the people's own subjective perception of socio-economic and political processes in order to reveal comprehensively the causes and nature of

social processes and phenomena. At ISED T RAS this goal is achieved by conducting a public opinion monitoring<sup>1</sup> developed in collaboration with RAS Institute of Socio-Political Research.

The level of trust in state and public institutions is one of the key indicators of social perception. Trust as a product of social development and evolution of man's

<sup>1</sup> The first public opinion polls were conducted by ISED T RAS in 1993 in Vologda and Cherepovets, and in three municipal districts (Velikoustyugsky, Vozhegodsky, Kirillovsky). Since 1996 a survey of 1.500 respondents aged 18 years and older is conducted in the cities of Vologda and Cherepovets, and in Babaevsky, Velikoustyugsky, Vozhegodsky, Gryazovetzky, Kirillovsky, Nikolsky, Tarnogsky, Sheksninsky districts every two months. The survey method is questionnaire poll by place of residence of respondents. Sampling error does not exceed 3%. The total sample size per year is 9 thousand people.

Figure 2. Officially registered, latent and real rate of suicide mortality in the Vologda Oblast (per 100 thousand people)\*



\* Calculated by the author according to the UNICEF methodology [10, p. 61]. The data of the territorial office of the Federal State Statistics Service in the Vologda Oblast were used.

worldview in the course of social dynamics reflects people’s demand for consolidation and unity of social forces and resources, and promotes the achievement of common social goals in different spheres of public life [15, p. 14]. This indicator is important also because it shows the people’s assessment of the country’s development policy pursued by the current government; that is, it can be regarded as an integral indicator of the relationship between the state and society. On the other hand, it reflects the assessment of the civil society institutions’ performance, which characterizes the attitude of the population toward current democratic foundations.

International research shows that the Russian Federation is among the countries

in which the people’s trust in state and public institutions is low<sup>2</sup>. Every year the Russian citizens’ trust in the government, business, mass media and non-profit organizations is about two times lower than the average for the 27 countries participating in the survey (tab. 1).

<sup>2</sup> The data of “Edelman Trust Barometer”, the international study of the level of trust. The online survey, which was conducted in 27 countries in October – November 2012, was conducted with the participation of 26000 respondents, including 5 800 informed “opinion leaders” in two age groups (25–34 and 35–64), with higher education, included in the top 25% group by income for this age in the country, who watch business and political news at least several times a week). Participating countries: China, Singapore, India, Mexico, Hong Kong, UAE, Malaysia, Canada, Indonesia, USA, Netherlands, Brazil, Germany, France, Sweden, UK, Italy, Australia, Poland, South Korea, Ireland, Argentina, Spain, Turkey, Japan, and Russia.

Table 1. Level of trust in key institutions

Institution	Average world value (in % of the number of respondents)				Russia (in % of the number of respondents)				Russia's position			
									among 23 countries	among 26 countries	among 27 countries	
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2011	2012	2013	2014	2011	2012	2013	2014
Government	52	43	48	44	39	26	29	27	n/a	24	24	22
Business	56	53	58	58	41	41	40	45	23	22	25	19–23
Mass media	49	52	57	52	37	33	38	35	n/a	25*	25	25
NGOs	61	58	63	64	n/a	28	40	41	n/a	25*	25	26
<i>Average</i>	<i>55</i>	<i>51</i>	<i>57</i>	<i>54</i>	<i>40</i>	<i>32</i>	<i>36</i>	<i>37</i>	<i>22</i>	<i>25*</i>	<i>26</i>	<i>26</i>

Source: 2014 Edelman Trust Barometer. Available at: <http://www.edelman.com>

Table 2. Ranking of countries by the integral index of trust

Position	2013		2014		2014 to 2013 (in p.p.)
	Country	Level of trust	Country	Level of trust	
<b>10 leaders</b>					
1	China	80	UAE	79	+13
2	Singapore	76	China	79	-1
3	India	71	Singapore	73	-3
4	Mexico	68	Indonesia	72	+10
5	Hong Kong	67	India	69	-2
6	UAE	66	Malaysia	65	+1
7	Malaysia	64	Canada	60	-2
8	Canada	62	Netherlands	60	+1
9	Indonesia	62	Mexico	59	-9
10	USA	59	Hong Kong	59	-8
<b>10 outsiders</b>					
17	Italy	51	Republic of South Africa	50	Did not participate in the survey in 2013
18	Australia	50	USA	49	-10
19	Poland	48	France	46	-8
20	South Korea	47	Japan	44	+3
21	Ireland	46	Italy	43	-8
22	Argentina	45	Turkey	41	-1
23	Spain	42	Spain	39	-3
24	Turkey	42	Ireland	39	-7
25	Japan	41	Russia	<b>37</b>	<b>+1</b>
26	Russia	36	Poland	35	-13

Source: 2014 Edelman Trust Barometer. Available at: <http://www.edelman.com>

Russia was at the bottom of the list of countries ranked according to the integral index of trust in 2013, and it was next to last – in 2014 (*tab. 2*).

The President enjoys the highest level of trust among state authorities in the Russian Federation. One of the unique features of the Russian system of government consists in a hypertrophied role of personality. Personality prevails over the institution itself [34].

The trend of trust in the head of state in the 2000s is demonstrated by the significance of the personality of the incumbent President of the Russian Federation V.V. Putin for the Russian population. According to the World Economic Journal, Vladimir Putin ranks third according to the level of trust among the heads of states of the world (1st place – Dilma Rousseff (Brazil), 2nd place – Angela Merkel (Germany)) [25]. In the triad “President – Government – State Duma” the head of state is stronger than individual state bodies [34]. This thesis is confirmed by the data of sociological surveys (*tab. 3*).

In general, the dynamics of the approval of the President’s performance at the regional and federal levels is the same, which is shown by the results of the sociological surveys by VCIOM, Levada-Center and ISEDТ RAS (*fig. 3*).

The concentration of positive public opinion only on the institution of the presidency and on the personality of V.V. Putin, on the one hand, has considerable potential for the consolidation of the society; this process has been going on for several months with regard to the situation in Ukraine (Leonid Slutsky, the Chairman of the State Duma Committee on the Commonwealth of

Independent States, Eurasian Integration and Links with Compatriots, said on the subject: “The Situation in Ukraine consolidates all of the Russian civil society. All the people say unanimously that our compatriots in Ukraine must be protected, and the Russian language and the Russians must not be forced out of Ukraine” [23]).

However, on the other hand, the high level of support of Russia’s President among the Russians is no evidence of bridging the gap between the state and society and therefore does not contradict the fact that there is a process of social atomization going on in the society.

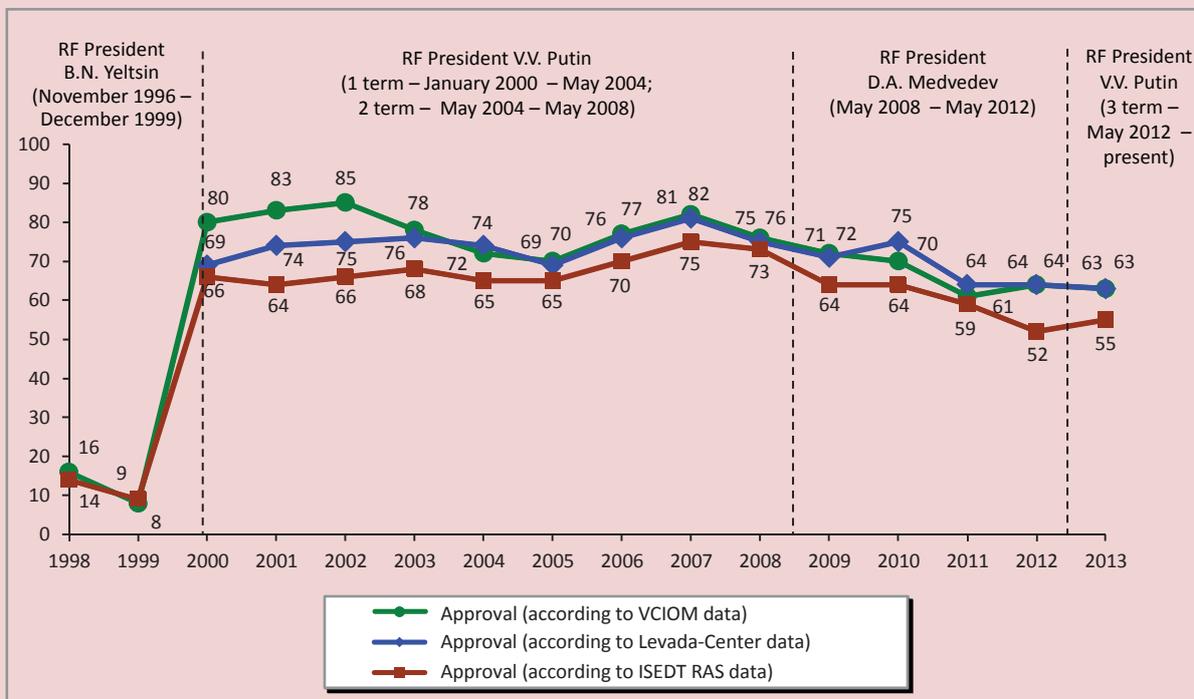
At present, the feeling of personal connection of citizens with Russia is being lost gradually. The entire period of reforms is accompanied by total social and political alienation, which consists of two streams of negative phenomena that are “tearing” the society: social atomization and political alienation of the population from the authorities [17, p. 8].

The subjective perception of the socio-economic and political situation in the country by the people affects their social well-being. The level of happiness and subjective satisfaction with life is the most popular and in-demand indicator among the indicators of social well-being assessed at the global level. Macroeconomic indicators (such as GDP) do not always reflect to the fullest extent the real situation concerning the country’s development. In particular, a high level of income does not always guarantee satisfaction with life. The growth of wealth over the decades is not accompanied by the signs of increasing happiness.

Table 3. Dynamics of the level of trust in social structures and institutions existing in the country (as a percentage of the number of respondents)

Social structures and government institutions	1996	2000	2007	2011	2012	2013	dynamics +/- 2013 to		
							2012	2011	2007
<i>Level of trust &gt;40%</i>									
RF President	26.5	57.1	60.3	50.5	45.7	47.0	+1	-4	-13
Church	37.9	42.3	44.8	47.5	41.4	43.9	+3	-4	-1
RF Government	18.5	42.7	41.9	47.4	39.6	40.4	+1	-7	-2
Procuracy	18.2	30.9	31.1	35.4	33.9	40.1	+6	+5	+9
<i>Level of trust &gt;35%</i>									
Court	19.8	31.6	32.1	35.8	36.1	39.3	+3	+4	+7
Oblast Government	14.2	31.3	40.6	36.6	34.6	37.8	+3	+1	-3
Federal Security Service	12.6	34.2	34.2	35.8	33.2	37.5	+4	+2	+3
Army	34.2	37.0	28.7	34.1	31.3	37.5	+6	+3	+9
<i>Level of trust &gt;30%</i>									
Federation Council	13.4	28.3	34.9	35.5	32.3	34.6	+2	-1	0
Police	14.1	27.2	28.3	32.1	29.3	33.7	+4	+2	+5
Local Government*	-	-	32.3	33.9	29.3	32.7	+3	-1	+1
State Duma	14.8	23.0	29.5	32.0	30.5	31.6	+1	0	+2
Mass Media	15.4	33.4	27.5	28.7	29.5	30.2	+1	+2	+3
<i>Level of trust &gt;25%</i>									
RF Public Chamber**	-	-	-	27.3	28.1	29.9	+2	+3	-
Oblast Public Chamber**	-	-	-	25.7	25.4	29.2	+4	+4	-
Trade Unions	20.2	28.4	28.6	30.0	25.6	27.8	+2	-2	-1
Directors, CEOs	5.2	19.6	23.6	22.3	25.1	27.5	+2	+5	+4
Public organizations*	-	-	24.4	26.7	26.5	26.8	0	0	+2
<i>Level of trust &lt; 25%</i>									
Banking and business circles	8.5	12.4	21.3	20.4	21.3	23.4	+2	+3	+2
Political parties and movements	6.8	10.7	17.6	22.8	20.9	20.4	-1	-2	+3
* Included in the list of answers in 2006.									
** Included in the list of answers in 2010.									
Source: ISED T RAS public opinion monitoring data.									

Figure 3. Level of approval of the RF President's performance according to VCIOM, Levada-Center, and ISED T RAS



Source: public opinion monitoring carried out by ISED T RAS, VCIOM, and Levada-Center.

This problem is a subject of hot debate in the UK, France, Canada, Northern Ireland and many other developed countries. Experts discuss methods for measuring happiness and its factors, and possibilities of its monitoring at the international level [37, p. 137].

In 2006 the New Economist Foundation (NEF) developed an international index of happiness (Happy Planet Index), which reflects the well-being of people and environment in different countries. It shows the efficiency with which the countries “convert” natural resources into long and happy lives for their citizens [35]. According to the 2012 data, Costa Rica has the highest

HPI value (64.04), Botswana – the lowest (22.59); Russia ranks 122nd with the value of 34.52 [6] between the Republic of the Congo and Bulgaria (in 2011 it ranked 108th; *tab. 4*).

Since 2011, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) has been conducting a study “The OECD Better Life Index” [22]. The study covers 39 countries. The indicators are based on statistical analysis and regular sociological research. According to this index, Russia was among the five unhappiest countries in 2012, primarily, because of the low values of indices such as “Civil engagement”, “Health” and “Life satisfaction” (*tab. 5*).

Table 4. Ranking of countries according to the 2012 Happy Planet Index\*

Leaders			Outsiders		
Country	HPI	Position in the world	Country	HPI	Position in the world
Costa Rica	64.04	1	South Africa	28.19	141
Vietnam	60.44	2	Kuwait	27.11	142
Colombia	59.75	3	Niger	26.83	143
Belize	59.29	4	Mongolia	26.77	144
El Salvador	58.89	5	Bahrain	26.62	145
Jamaica	58.53	6	Mali	26.04	146
Panama	57.80	7	Central African Republic	25.26	147
Nicaragua	57.06	8	Qatar	25.19	148
Venezuela	56.87	9	Chad	24.68	149
Guatemala	56.86	10	Botswana	22.59	150

\* For comparison (rating position is given in parentheses): USA – 37.34 (105), Canada – 43.56 (65), China – 44.66 (60), UK – 47.93 (41), Germany – 47.20 (46), France – 46.50 (50), Sweden – 46.17 (52), Norway – 51.43 (29), Russia – 34.52 (122), Congo – 34.55 (121), Bulgaria – 34.15 (123).  
Source: *Happy Planet Index*. Available at: <http://www.happyplanetindex.org/>

Table 5. Ranking of countries according to the OECD Better Life Index (2012)

Position	Country	Indicators (aspects)											Better Life Index
		Housing	Income	Jobs	Community	Education	Environment	Civil engagement	Health	Life satisfaction	Safety	Work-life balance	
<b>5 leaders</b>													
1	Australia	7.5	4.6	7.7	8.3	7.6	8.8	9.5	9.3	8.1	9.5	6.6	7.95
2	Sweden	6.2	4.7	7.2	7.6	8.3	9.7	8.7	8.8	9.3	8.2	8.8	7.95
3	Canada	7.8	5.9	7.7	8.4	7.6	8.4	6.1	9.2	8.8	9.7	7.5	7.92
4	Norway	7.4	3.9	8.6	8.0	7.2	9.2	6.4	8.1	9.7	9.1	9.1	7.88
5	Switzerland	6.0	7.8	8.9	8.6	7.3	8.3	3.6	9.3	10	8.7	7.9	7.85
<b>5 outsiders</b>													
<b>35</b>	Russian Federation	5,9	1,3	5,8	5,6	6,1	4,3	2,3	0,6	3,0	7,2	8,6	<b>4,61</b>
36	Brazil	3.9	0.0	4.7	6.2	1.5	6.5	4.5	4.7	6.4	2.8	7.3	4.41
37	Chile	3.5	0.7	4.9	3.6	4.0	2.9	4.4	5.7	6.0	6.3	5.5	4.32
38	Mexico	4.2	0.6	3.9	1.2	0.7	5.3	5.5	4.7	8.5	0.0	3.0	3.42
39	Turkey	1.3	0.7	2.3	0.0	1.5	3.1	6.2	5.0	2.0	7.8	0.0	2.72

Source: *Official website OECD Better Life Index*. Available at: <http://www.oecdbetterlifeindex.org/ru/#/111111111111>

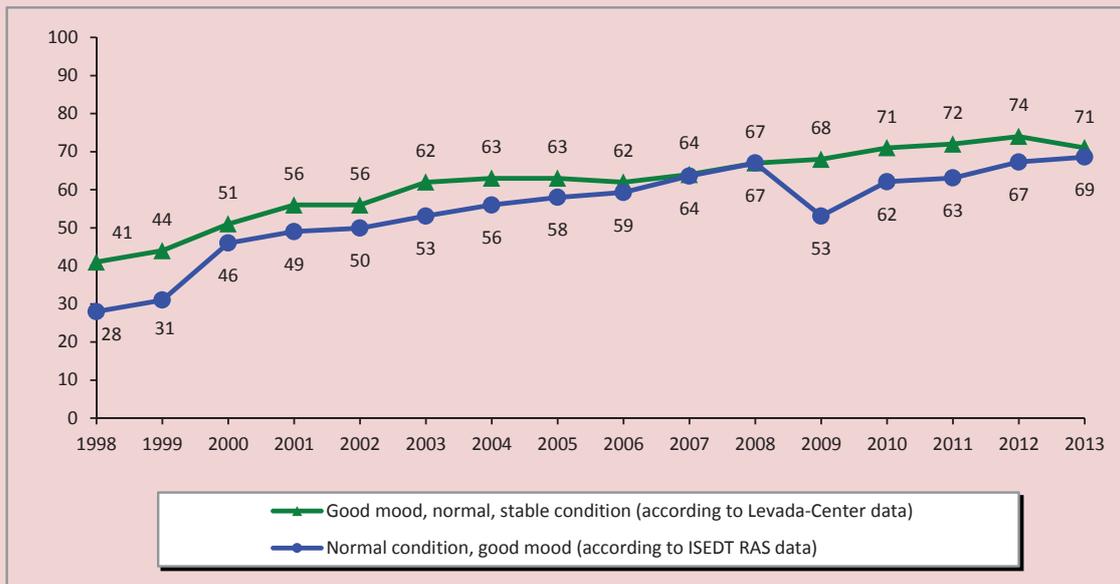
These and other foreign studies have given rise to the myth that the majority of Russians feel unhappy.

However, the VCIOM sociological polls<sup>3</sup> show that for 1990–2013 the share of “happy” Russians has increased from 44 to 76%. Even the global financial crisis had no significant effects on the people’s assessments, because the level of 70–77% has remained stable since 2008 [13]. A similar survey conducted by ISED T RAS in the Vologda Oblast in 2012 shows that 69% of its residents share this view.

For the period from 2001 to 2013 the average score of “happiness” in the Vologda Oblast has increased from 5.2 to 6.5<sup>4</sup>.

The trends in the level of happiness pointed out by the Russian researchers correlate with the results of the comparative analysis of the dynamics of social mood in the Russian Federation and the Vologda Oblast (fig. 4). Social mood, according to J.T. Toshchenko, “is objectively a defining and integrating indicator of the level of well-being, social establishment or misery, and the degree of resistance... Its specific feature

Figure 4. Proportion of people who characterize their mood as positive, in the Russian Federation and in the Vologda Oblast (as a percentage of the number of respondents)



Source: public opinion monitoring carried out by ISED T RAS and Levada-Center.

<sup>3</sup> VCIOM, national survey, 1600 respondents. The question “There are all sorts of things happening in life – both good and bad. But, on the whole, are you happy or not?” Answer options: “Definitely yes” and “Rather yes”, “Rather no” and “Definitely no”.

<sup>4</sup> The question is put as follows: “Please, evaluate on a 10-point scale, how happy you are”. The question is asked once a year.

consists in the fact that it reflects the reality based on the vital interests of an individual, his ultimate goals and ideals. The reality, reflected through social mood, determines the goal-setting activity of an individual, his formulation of the key goals of social and spiritual life. That is why social mood as the most important characteristic of social consciousness participates in the regulation of actions of a person, of people, social groups, social institutions, and demonstrates their mindset and attitude, value orientations and sets [33, p. 30].

The level of social anomie is an important indicator that should be taken into consideration when characterizing the trends in social feeling. The concept of social anomie was developed by Emile Durkheim in the 19th century and continued by R. Merton. Anomie is mainly expressed in the alienation of individuals and groups, their non-involvement in the processes taking place in a society; it is also characterized by the abandonment of the sense of solidarity, which in turn leads to the destruction of cultural and ethical foundations of a society, loss of moral values, and marginalization of its members [32]. Describing the state of the Russian society after the collapse of the USSR, S.G. Kara-Murza wrote: “If the current unstable equilibrium is not influenced purposefully and skillfully, the shift will continue in the direction of a deepening anomie and social breakdown” [14, p. 123].

The team of researchers from the Center for Suicide Research at the Oxford University Department of Psychiatry have developed an index of social isolation (anomie) calculated according to population census in each

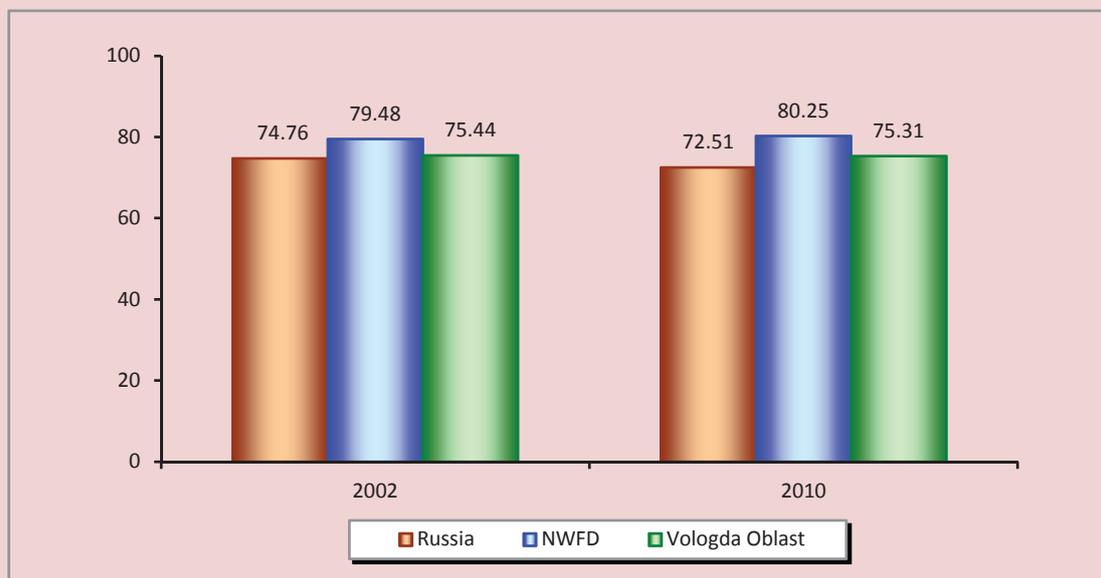
County and formed as the sum of the following indicators: the proportion of residents whose home address was different the year before the 1991 census (number of immigrants); the proportion of persons who live alone; the proportion of unmarried adults; the proportion of residents who live in rented accommodation [39].

The researchers at ISEDT RAS made calculations<sup>5</sup> [35] concerning the level of social anomie; they show that during the intercensal period (2002–2010) there have been positive changes in the level of social fragmentation of the population in Russia. The index of social disunity has decreased from 74.76 to 72.51% in Russia, and from 75.44 to 75.31% in the Vologda Oblast. The situation in the Northwestern Federal District is somewhat worse: the index of social fragmentation has increased from 79.48 to 80.25% during the intercensal period (*fig. 5*).

Thus, the level of social fragmentation in the Vologda Oblast is higher than national average. Trends in the dynamics of the level of anomie in the oblast population correspond to those nationwide; however, national average positive changes are going on faster than those in the region.

<sup>5</sup> We have used the methodology of the Center for Suicide Research at the Oxford University Department of Psychiatry. The index of social fragmentation (anomie) was calculated according to the population census data and consisted of the sum of the following indicators: the proportion of residents whose home address was different the year before the 1991 census (number of immigrants); the proportion of persons who live alone; the proportion of unmarried adults; the proportion of residents who live in rented accommodation. In the calculation of the index we have replaced the proportion of people living in rented accommodation with the proportion of people living in communal apartments, hostels, residential institutions, hotels and other accommodations, since the information on the initial option was absent in the 2010 census results.

Figure 5. Index of social fragmentation (anomie) (according to the results of the 2002 and 2010 all-Russia population censuses)



Source: The results of the 2002 all-Russia population census. Available at: <http://www.perepis2002.ru/index.html?id=11>; The results of the 2010 all-Russia population census. Available at: [http://www.gks.ru/free\\_doc/new\\_site/perepis2010/croc/perepis\\_itogi1612.htm](http://www.gks.ru/free_doc/new_site/perepis2010/croc/perepis_itogi1612.htm)

In addition to assessing the social mood and the level of happiness in the population, the research carried out by ISEDТ RAS helps determine the proportion of residents who experience symptoms of anxiety, depression and neurosis. This makes it possible to reveal a fine line, when the state of dissatisfaction with life moves to the level of pathological mental health disorders, which in turn can initiate self-destructive social phenomena such as suicide.

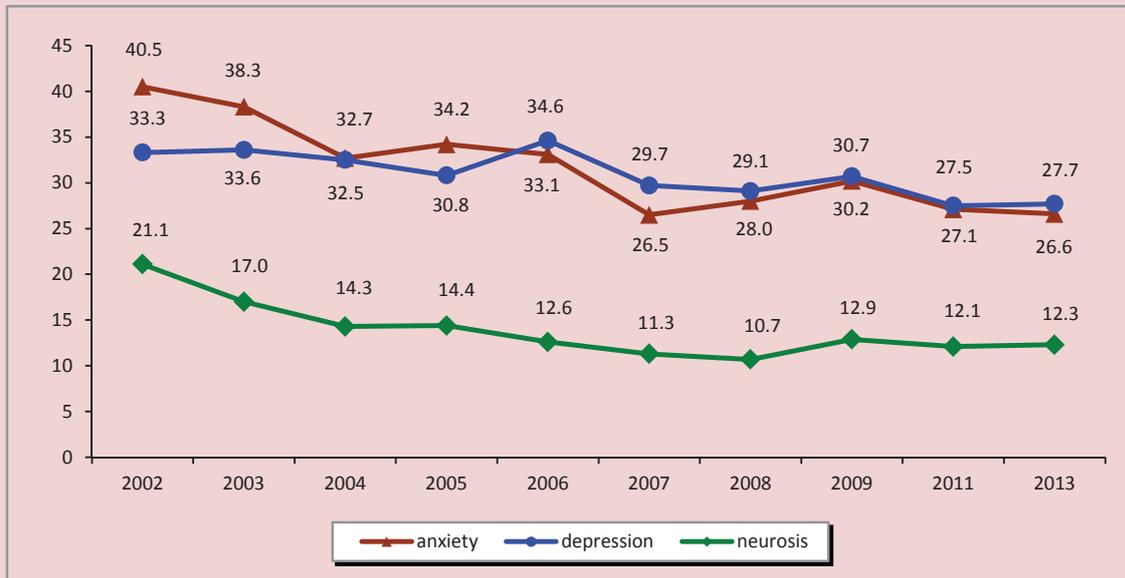
In general, for 2002–2013 the proportion of the Vologda Oblast residents who feel anxiety, depression and neurosis has decreased (fig. 6). However, the proportion of the oblast residents who show the symptoms of these pathological conditions remains substantial: according to the data for 2013, one in four

people has the signs of anxiety or depression, and 12% of the population have the symptoms of neurosis.

Thus, national institutions engaged in the study of public opinion point out that there is a growth in positive attitudes in the Russian society, and their data are confirmed by the fact that they correlate with the improving indicators of the demographic and socio-economic statistics, and also by the similar results of regional sociological surveys.

The main problem lies in the fact that the society is being increasingly alienated from the government, and there is an increasing degree of fragmentation in the society itself, the mood of the Russians is associated more and more with their own interests and, primarily, with the satisfaction of their

Figure 6. Proportion of residents who have symptoms of anxiety, depression and neurosis (as a percentage of the number of respondents)



\* The survey has been conducted once every two years since 2009.

Source: ISEDТ RAS public mental health monitoring.

material needs. E.V. Balatsky also notes this fact when he compares the dynamics of GDP and the index of macropsychological state of the society [4].

This is also highlighted by M.K. Gorshkov, who writes in the article “Russian dream: an experience of sociological assessment”: “Under the conditions of the increasing anxiety, and often hostility, of external environment, and the lack of opportunity to influence its events, the Russians are concentrating their efforts on creating a comfortable microenvironment...The core of the microcosm of the Russians is the family in its traditional form: the man is a breadwinner and the woman is a caring wife and homemaker, and they create a family for the birth and upbringing of children” [7, p. 3].

Such ideas are expressed by RAS Academician V.I. Zhukov: “In the modern Russian society the priority of a deed for the benefit of society and other people is transformed into the priority of a deed for the benefit of personal interests. In the modern Russia in the conditions of the crisis and cultural instability there emerges a personality type with prevailing orientation on individual and personal norms of behavior and activity” [10, p. 39].

Sociological polls conducted by ISEDТ RAS indicate similar trends at the regional level: since 2007 there has been a decrease in the level of trust in the authorities, but this does not affect the positive dynamics of social mood (the positive trend in 1996–2013 was interrupted only in the crisis year of 2009).

That is, the expectations and hopes of the population are less and less associated with the activities of the authorities; people no longer expect help from the state, there is a tendency towards personal isolation, “withdrawal into one’s own self”.

The processes such as atomization of the Russian society, expansion of alienation trends in it, its increasing inconsistency with ideals of justice characteristic of the Russian culture and accepted by all population groups lead to “a change in the psychological mechanism of formation of identity of the Russians in general, which will entail a lot of consequences – from the loss of readiness to endure personal problems without protest during new probable economic crises to a failure to “repay a debt to the country” by serving in the army... The trend of destruction of “inherent solidarity” can split the Russian society. And even though it is not yet the time to talk about this split, there are grounds to assert that a brewing discontent is internally heterogeneous, and this heterogeneity is likely to increase over time [7, p. 3].

It is evidenced by the data of sociological surveys carried out by ISED T RAS: more than half of the Vologda Oblast residents say they can trust only their “closest friends and relatives”, one in four people says at present you “can trust no one”; only 15% of the oblast population trust most of their acquaintances and everyone without exception (*tab. 6*).

Social cohesion nationwide is pointed out by 14% of the population, at the oblast level – by 16%, at the place of residence – 28%, among the closest associates (for comparison) – 52% (*tab. 7*).

The fact that people reduce their level of self-identification to the elite groups, corporations, friends and family, limiting their interests to selfish goals of small communities, weakens the integrity of the society. They cease to be the cells of the unified state mechanism. The very concepts “state”, “motherland” as the ultimate guarantors of sustainable development and satisfaction of needs, lose their value in public opinion, and the citizens no longer feel responsible for their future [35].

Table 6. Who can you trust? (as a percentage of the number of respondents)

Answer	2010	2011	2013
At present you cannot trust anyone	26,1	24,7	27,9
I can trust only my closest friends and relatives	58,1	56,5	52,5
I can trust most of my acquaintances	12,8	16,1	15,2
One should trust everyone without exception	2,3	2,5	1,6

Table 7. Is there more... at present? (as a percentage of the number of respondents)

Indicator	In the country		In the oblast		At the place of your residence		In your immediate circle	
	2011	2013	2011	2013	2011	2013	2011	2013
Harmony, unity	14.2	14.1	19.3	15.9	24.1	28.4	46.9	52.1
Discord, disunity	61.1	59.5	55.6	54.4	51.5	44.3	29.3	23.2
Difficult to answer	24.7	26.4	25.1	29.7	24.4	27.3	23.9	24.7

It is not accidental that the ideas of consolidation of the Russian society, formation of spiritual, moral and cultural identity are voiced by V.V. Putin during his third presidential term. This is reflected in his article “Russia muscles up”, in which V.V. Putin writes that the post-Soviet Russian society solved the problem of “revival of the authority and forces of the state as such... restoration of national unity, in other words, establishment on its entire territory of the sovereignty of the Russian people, and not the domination of individuals or groups... The recovery period is over. The post-Soviet stage in the development of Russia, as well as in the development of the whole world, is completed and exhausted. All the prerequisites for moving forward on a new basis and in a new quality are created” [24].

The President’s position was voiced in detail in his Valdai speech, after which many have noted that the President established himself as the “national leader”, “the heir of the Russian conservative political tradition”, “the critic of the entire current model of development of the Western civilization”. The impetus was provided by the situation in Ukraine, which has demonstrated the full consolidation potential of the Russian society.

Today Russia is standing on the threshold of a moral state. The paradigm of satisfaction of material needs has become obsolete. Change is inevitable, but it can go in two directions: either toward the moral state in which “the main ideology and program of values is centrist construction that takes into account legal and moral interests of all groups

and members of the society, optimizing this intricately constructed social system” [31] and that is an “inevitable nonrandom evolutionary stage of modern types of nation-states” [30, p. 100]; or toward the “dissolution, destruction of the national state and its sovereignty as its main attribute from the viewpoint of international law; this is just what has happened in Libya and Syria” [29, p. 23].

Further trends in the dynamics of social health will depend on how the President will be able to implement the consolidation potential of the society, to increase the trust in the state and public institutions. Under the circumstances, the relationship between the state and society should be promoted primarily by sociological science that has accumulated over the years of its existence the significant potential that allows it to play a significant role in the “social renewal of the country, the dissemination of scientific knowledge in the economy, politics and culture corresponding to global trends in the development of civilization” [28].

As we can see, a superficial glance at the improving indicators of the official statistics does not give a complete picture of the real trends and threats in the development of the Russian society; it also makes it impossible to find “sore spots”, the suppression of which may jeopardize the viability of the country. However, a detailed analysis of the indicators that reflect the people’s subjective perception of key changes in public life, allows us to see the underlying factors that influence the development of society and the state and determine their future.

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