

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 October – December 2014 and also on the average for 2014. These data are compared with the data for 2013.

Estimation of performance of the authorities

In October – December 2014 the United States and its European partners increased their economic and political pressure on Russia in connection with our country's position on the events in Ukraine. Under the circumstances, Russia's authorities have boosted the implementation of measures aimed to strengthen the sovereignty of our country, to ensure its decent geopolitical standing, and to overcome complications in the economy, in financial and banking sector and in social sphere. The consolidation of the Russian society is increasing under the current conditions. This is proved by the results of public opinion monitoring in the Vologda Oblast.

Despite the aggravation of the external and internal situation in Russia, the assessment of the performance of the federal authorities in the period from October 2014 to December 2014 remains high. The level of support of the President of the Russian Federation by Vologda Oblast residents is in the range of 66–67%, the level of support of the Chairman of the RF Government is 56%.

For reference: according to VTSIOM (for the first half of December 2014) the nationwide level of approval of the performance of the RF President is 85%, the proportion of negative estimates is 8%.

On average for 2014 compared to 2013 the levels of approval of the performance of the President and the Government have increased (from 55 to 64% and from 49 to 54%, respectively). The performance of the Vologda Oblast Governor is approved by 40% of respondents on average for 2014 (in 2013 – 44%), the share of those who do not approve of his performance has decreased over the past two months from 40 to 37%.

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. The 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.vscс.ac.ru/>

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

Answer option	2007	2011	2013	2014	Feb. 2014	Apr. 2014	June 2014	Aug. 2014	Oct. 2014	Dec. 2014	Dynamics (+/-), 2014 in comparison to...		
											2013	2011	2007
RF President													
I approve	75.3	58.7	55.3	64.1	56.1	62.8	66.6	66.4	66.8	66.0	+9	+5	-11
I do not approve	11.5	25.6	29.4	22.3	29.3	25.4	21.8	19.3	18.5	19.7	-7	-3	+11
Chairman of the RF Government *													
I approve	-	59.3	48.9	54.2	49.3	52.5	55.8	55.2	56.2	56.3	+5	-5	-
I do not approve	-	24.7	32.8	27.6	32.9	30.9	26.4	26.8	23.9	24.7	-5	+3	-
Governor													
I approve	55.8	45.7	44.4	40.1	42.8	41.6	38.5	38.8	39.7	39.3	-4	-6	-16
I do not approve	22.2	30.5	33.2	38.9	36.9	39.0	40.9	40.1	39.6	37.0	+6	+8	+17

* Included into the survey since 2008.

The last two months witnessed an increase in the proportion of the oblast residents who believe that the President of the Russian Federation is successful in coping with key issues such as imposing order in the country (increase from 49 to 52%), protection of democracy and strengthening the freedoms of citizens (from 38 to 41%), as well as economic recovery and increase in the citizens' welfare (from 34 to 38%). Public opinion concerning the President's efforts to strengthen the international position of Russia remains stable: the proportion of positive views is 51–52%, negative – 30–31%.

The assessments of all the parameters on average for 2014 are more positive than in 2013.

Which party expresses your interests? (as a percentage of the number of respondents)

Answer option	2007	2011	2013	2014	Feb. 2014	Apr. 2014	June 2014	Aug. 2014	Oct. 2014	Dec. 2014	Dynamics (+/-), 2014 in comparison to...		
											2013	2011	2007
Strengthening Russia's international standing													
Successful	58.4	46.2	45.7	50.4	45.9	48.6	53.7	50.9	52.3	50.8	+5	+4	-8
Unsuccessful	24.9	33.7	36.2	32.4	35.7	35.5	31.7	30.0	31.0	30.3	-4	-1	+8
<i>Index of success</i>	<i>133.5</i>	<i>112.5</i>	<i>109.5</i>	<i>118.0</i>	<i>110.2</i>	<i>113.1</i>	<i>122.0</i>	<i>120.9</i>	<i>121.3</i>	<i>120.5</i>	<i>+9</i>	<i>+6</i>	<i>-16</i>
Imposing order in the country													
Successful	53.2	36.6	39.4	48.0	42.7	46.7	49.5	47.5	49.4	52.1	+9	+11	-5
Unsuccessful	34.0	50.0	47.5	39.1	43.7	40.9	39.5	37.8	37.8	35.1	-8	-11	+5
<i>Index of success</i>	<i>119.2</i>	<i>86.6</i>	<i>91.9</i>	<i>108.9</i>	<i>99.0</i>	<i>105.8</i>	<i>110.0</i>	<i>109.7</i>	<i>111.6</i>	<i>117.0</i>	<i>+17</i>	<i>+22</i>	<i>-10</i>
Protecting democracy and strengthening the citizens' freedoms													
Successful	44.4	32.4	31.8	37.5	32.3	36.3	40.1	37.6	38.2	40.7	+6	+5	-7
Unsuccessful	37.0	48.3	51.0	45.4	50.1	48.7	43.9	43.7	44.3	41.9	-6	-3	+8
<i>Index of success</i>	<i>107.4</i>	<i>84.1</i>	<i>80.8</i>	<i>92.1</i>	<i>82.2</i>	<i>87.6</i>	<i>96.2</i>	<i>93.9</i>	<i>93.9</i>	<i>98.8</i>	<i>+11</i>	<i>+8</i>	<i>-15</i>
Economic recovery and increase in the citizens' welfare													
Successful	47.2	30.7	31.3	34.8	31.5	34.9	35.8	35.1	33.9	37.6	+4	+4	-12
Unsuccessful	39.1	56.1	56.8	53.4	57.1	54.3	53.5	50.2	54.4	50.8	-3	-3	+14
<i>Index of success</i>	<i>108.1</i>	<i>74.6</i>	<i>74.5</i>	<i>81.4</i>	<i>74.4</i>	<i>80.6</i>	<i>82.3</i>	<i>84.9</i>	<i>79.5</i>	<i>86.8</i>	<i>+7</i>	<i>+7</i>	<i>-27</i>

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

The structure of the Russians' preferences concerning political parties has not changed significantly over the past two months. The "United Russia" remains leader – the proportion of the oblast residents who believe that this party expresses their interests is 36–37%. Support for the KPRF is 8–9%, for the LDPR – 7–8%, for the "Just Russia" – 3–4%.

In 2014 compared to 2013 the share of supporters of the "United Russia" increased slightly (from 29 to 33%). The positions of the rest of parliamentary parties remain stable.

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	2014	Feb. 2014	Apr. 2014	June 2014	Aug. 2014	Oct. 2014	Dec. 2014	Dynamics (+/-), 2014 in comparison to...		
													2013	2011	2007
United Russia	30.2	60.5	31.1	33.4	29.4	32.8	28.3	29.5	32.7	34.3	35.5	36.7	+3	+2	+3
KPRF	7.0	9.3	10.3	16.8	11.3	9.7	10.9	10.7	9.8	9.1	9.3	8.3	-2	-1	+3
LDPR	7.5	11.0	7.8	15.4	7.2	7.6	8.9	8.3	6.2	6.9	7.3	7.8	0	0	0
Just Russia	7.8	8.8	5.6	27.2	4.6	3.5	3.5	3.3	3.3	3.7	3.9	3.2	-1	-2	-4
Other	1.8	–	1.9	–	0.6	0.3	0.4	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.7	0.1	0	-2	-2
No party	17.8	–	29.4	–	34.9	34.4	35.2	34.8	36.0	35.0	32.6	32.7	-1	+5	+17
It is difficult to answer	21.2	–	13.2	–	10.2	11.7	12.7	13.1	11.8	10.9	10.7	11.1	+2	-2	-10

The characteristics of social sentiment and stock of patience for the last two months have not changed substantially. The share of the oblast residents who assess their mood as "good and normal" is 69–71%; the share of those who believe that "everything is not so bad; it's difficult to live, but it's possible to stand it" is 80%.

In December 2014, compared with October 2014, the structure of social self-identification of the population somewhat deteriorated: there was a reduction in the proportion of the oblast residents who consider themselves people with average incomes (from 44 to 42%) and an increase in the share of those who consider themselves "poor" and "extremely poor" (from 49 to 51%).

The consumer sentiment index for the period from February 2014 to December 2014 has declined by 10 points (from 92 to 82 p.). And this is understandable: according to Vologdastat, in the period from January to November 2014 the general price increase was 8.1%, food prices increased by 12.2%, prices for non-food products – by 5.3%, for services – by 8.1%.

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

Answer option	2007	2011	2013	2014	Feb. 2014	Apr. 2014	June 2014	Aug. 2014	Oct. 2014	Dec. 2014	Dynamics (+/-), 2014 in comparison to...		
											2013	2011	2007
Mood													
Usual condition, good mood	63.6	63.1	68.6	69.4	65.1	69.3	71.1	70.5	69.3	70.9	+1	+6	+6
I feel stress, anger, fear, depression	27.8	28.9	26.2	24.9	27.1	24.9	23.7	25.1	24.6	24.1	-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	80.8	79.8	81.3	81.0	82.5	80.3	80.0	+2	+6	+7
It's impossible to bear such plight	13.6	15.3	14.2	12.6	12.3	11.1	13.4	12.8	12.1	13.6	-2	-3	-1
Social self-identification													
The share of people who consider themselves to have average income	48.2	43.1	43.9	43.2	44.2	43.1	42.0	44.1	43.5	42.3	-1	0	-5
The share of people who consider themselves to be poor and extremely poor	42.4	44.3	46.9	49.1	46.9	49.1	48.4	49.6	49.3	51.0	+2	+5	+7
Consumer sentiment index													
Index value, points	105.9	89.6	90.3	87.6	91.5	90.3	90.5	87.1	84.0	82.3	-3	-2	-18

Attitude of the population toward the anti-Russian sanctions imposed by the USA and the EU countries and toward Russia's response to these actions

In October – December 2014 the public opinion monitoring was supplemented by a special block of questions aimed to assess the degree of the oblast residents' awareness of the anti-Russian sanctions imposed by the U.S. and EU countries and Russia's response thereto, and how this, in their opinion, can affect the development of economic situation in the country and the region.

The survey results show that the vast majority of the Vologda Oblast residents know about the existence of economic sanctions imposed by the U.S. and EU against Russia and about the response of the Russian Federation (81 and 85%, respectively). The share of those who believe that they are well aware of the economic sanctions against Russia has increased from 41 to 44% over the last two months; the share of those who have only a general idea about them has decreased from 43 to 38%.

The proportion of those who are well aware of the response of the Russian Federation on the anti-Russian sanctions imposed by the U.S. and EU countries and the share of those who have only a general idea about that remains unchanged (41–42% and 43–44%, respectively).

People's awareness of the U.S. and EU sanctions against Russia and of Russia's response to these actions (as a percentage of the number of respondents)

Answer option	Vologda			Cherepovets			Districts			Oblast		
	Oct. 2014	Dec. 2014	Dynamics (+ -), Oct. 2014 to Dec. 2014	Oct. 2014	Dec. 2014	Dynamics (+ -), Oct. 2014 to Dec. 2014	Oct. 2014	Dec. 2014	Dynamics (+ -), Oct. 2014 to Dec. 2014	Oct. 2014	Dec. 2014	Dynamics (+ -), Oct. 2014 to Dec. 2014
In connection with the conflict in Ukraine some countries have introduced sanctions against Russia in recent months. Did you know that?												
I am well aware of that	56.3	55.8	-1	61.0	55.6	-5	21.7	30.6	+9	41.1	43.7	+3
I hear something, but I don't know the details	33.1	32.9	0	32.3	35.4	+3	53.9	41.4	-13	42.8	37.6	-5
I hear about this for the first time	2.0	3.3	+1	3.1	1.3	-2	7.8	8.3	+1	5.1	5.1	0
It is difficult to answer	8.6	8.0	-1	3.6	7.8	+4	16.5	19.7	+3	11.1	13.5	+2
The Russian Government has imposed a one-year ban on the importation into Russia of agricultural products, raw materials and foodstuffs from the countries that have imposed sanctions against our country. Did you know that?												
I am well aware of that	54.5	55.0	+1	63.1	58.3	-5	21.6	26.2	+5	41.1	42.1	+1
I hear something, but I don't know the details	35.1	35.7	+1	30.5	34.1	+4	56.2	51.0	-5	43.9	42.6	-1
I hear about this for the first time	3.5	2.8	-1	2.8	2.8	0	7.7	6.2	-2	5.3	4.4	-1
It is difficult to answer	6.8	6.4	0	3.6	4.8	+1	14.6	16.6	+2	9.7	10.9	+1

In December 2014, as in the previous assessment period, the proportion of those who find it difficult to assess the impact of U.S. and EU sanctions on the economy of Russia and the Vologda Oblast, became significantly higher than the proportion of optimistic and pessimistic forecasts (29% vs. 24% and 30% vs. 20–21%, respectively). The share of positive and negative opinions in this respect was approximately equal.

In October – December 2014 there was an increase in the amount of negative assessments of the effects of the U.S. and EU sanctions for the economy of Russia and the oblast (the share of pessimistic reviews increased from 20 to 24% and from 17% to 20%, respectively).

Opinion of the population about the consequences of the sanctions imposed by the USA and the EU for the Russian economy and the Vologda Oblast economy (as a percentage of the number of respondents)

Answer option	Vologda			Cherepovets			Districts			Oblast		
	Oct. 2014	Dec. 2014	Dynamics (+ -), Oct. 2014 to Dec. 2014	Oct. 2014	Dec. 2014	Dynamics (+ -), Oct. 2014 to Dec. 2014	Oct. 2014	Dec. 2014	Dynamics (+ -), Oct. 2014 to Dec. 2014	Oct. 2014	Dec. 2014	Dynamics (+ -), Oct. 2014 to Dec. 2014
In your opinion, how will the sanctions imposed by foreign countries affect Russia's economy?												
The sanctions will have a positive effect, they will improve the situation	26.5	26.2	0	24.4	20.5	-4	26.8	25.3	-2	26.1	24.3	-2
The sanctions will have a negative effect, they will aggravate the situation	28.0	31.4	+3	30.8	44.7	+14	9.9	9.4	-1	20.1	24.4	+4
Nothing will change, everything will remain as it has been	17.2	21.6	+5	20.5	15.7	-5	25.8	27.3	+2	22.1	22.7	+1
It is difficult to answer	28.3	20.8	-8	24.4	19.2	-5	37.5	38.0	+1	31.7	28.6	-3
In your opinion, how will the sanctions imposed by foreign countries affect the economy of the Vologda Oblast?												
The sanctions will have a positive effect, they will improve the situation	22.0	19.0	-3	22.8	16.9	-6	24.2	23.1	-1	23.3	20.7	-3
The sanctions will have a negative effect, they will aggravate the situation	25.8	27.8	+2	26.2	33.8	+8	7.3	9.7	+2	17.1	20.4	+3
Nothing will change, everything will remain as it has been	21.7	29.3	+8	27.4	27.3	0	29.6	30.5	+1	26.9	29.3	+2
It is difficult to answer	30.6	23.9	-7	23.6	22.0	-2	38.9	36.8	-2	32.7	29.5	-3

The opinions of the oblast residents about the consequences of Russia's response to the U.S. EU sanctions are as follows: the share of those who believe that they will bring more good than harm amounts to 42%; 20% of the population think the opposite. At the same time, the share of pessimistic forecasts has increased over the last two months (from 16 to 20%).

Opinion of the population about Russia's reciprocal sanctions against the USA and the EU (as a percentage of the number of respondents)

In your opinion, will the ban on the import into Russia of certain foreign foodstuffs do Russia more good or harm?												
Answer option	Vologda			Cherepovets			Districts			Oblast		
	Oct. 2014	Dec. 2014	Dynamics (+ -), Oct. 2014 to Dec. 2014	Oct. 2014	Dec. 2014	Dynamics (+ -), Oct. 2014 to Dec. 2014	Oct. 2014	Dec. 2014	Dynamics (+ -), Oct. 2014 to Dec. 2014	Oct. 2014	Dec. 2014	Dynamics (+ -), Oct. 2014 to Dec. 2014
Sooner more good	46,0	42,2	-4	60,8	53,0	-8	36,0	36,5	-1	45,1	42,3	-3
Sooner more harm	16,4	23,4	+7	16,9	27,3	+10	15,1	14,3	-1	15,9	20,1	+4
It is difficult to answer	37,6	34,4	-3	22,3	19,7	-3	48,9	49,2	0	39,0	37,6	-1

Conclusion

The results of the surveys conducted in December 2014 show that, despite the deterioration of Russia's standing in the international arena and the increased difficulties in its socio-economic development, the society maintains a high level of support to public authorities.

At the same time, the surveys point out that the structure of social self-identification is deteriorating, consumer sentiment index is declining, which requires appropriate action on the part of the federal and regional authorities.

The decrease in consumer activity also indicates that the Russians are becoming less and less confident about the fact that their financial situation may improve. This is largely due to the fact that the oblast residents are not sure whether this international policy of imposing sanctions can have a favorable outcome. Despite the vigorous information campaign and regular assuring statements by government representatives claiming that the anti-Russian economic sanctions will give a new impetus to economic development, the share of pessimistic forecasts regarding the effect of the sanctions policy on the national and regional economy is growing. This indicates that the people have anxious expectations concerning the trends in their financial situation in the near future.