

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 February – April 2015, and also on average for the last six surveys (June 2014 – April 2015). These data are compared with the data for 2013; we also present their current dynamics (December 2014 – April 2015, i.e. for the three latest waves of the survey)

Estimation of performance of the authorities

In February – April 2015, the support of the RF President's performance increased slightly: the level of approval rose from 66 to 68%, the share of negative assessments decreased from 21 to 16%. The people's estimates are better than in 2013, when the level of support of the head of state was 55%, and the share of negative characteristics was 29%.

The level of approval of performance of the Chairman of the RF Government in April 2015, compared with February, did not change either. The share of positive assessments is 56–57%, but the proportion of negative assessments decreased from 25 to 21%. For comparison: people's estimates in 2013 were worse: 49% supported the Chairman of the RF Government, the share of negative judgments was 33%.

For reference: according to VTSIOM surveys carried out April 5 and April 12, 2015 the nationwide level of approval of the performance of the RF President did not change, compared to February 2014, and it is 87.1% (the proportion of negative estimates is 7.3%). The level of support of the Chairman of the RF Government in the first half of April 2015 was 68.9% (the proportion of negative estimates was 18.2%).

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/>

On average for the last six surveys the level of support to the federal authorities remains higher than in 2013 and 2011.

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

Answer option	2007	2011	2013	2014	June 2014	Aug. 2014	Oct. 2014	Dec. 2014	Feb. 2015	Apr. 2015	Average for the last six surveys	Dynamics (+/-), the last six surveys in comparison with...		
												2013	2011	2007
RF President														
I approve	75.3	58.7	55.3	64.1	66.6	66.4	66.8	66.0	66.3	67.5	66.6	+11	+8	-9
I do not approve	11.5	25.6	29.4	22.3	21.8	19.3	18.5	19.7	20.5	16.2	19.3	-10	-6	+8
Chairman of the RF Government*														
I approve	-*	59.3	48.9	54.2	55.8	55.2	56.2	56.3	56.1	56.5	56.0	+7	-3	-
I do not approve	-	24.7	32.8	27.6	26.4	26.8	23.9	24.7	24.7	20.5	24.5	-8	0	-
Governor														
I approve	55.8	45.7	44.4	40.1	38.5	38.8	39.7	39.3	38.3	37.1	38.6	-6	-7	-17
I do not approve	22.2	30.5	33.2	38.9	40.9	40.1	39.6	37.0	37.4	37.5	38.8	+6	+8	+17
* Included into the survey since 2008.														

The share of the Vologda Oblast residents, who believe that the President is successful in strengthening Russia's international standing, has increased for the last two months (from 50 to 53%).

The assessment of the President's performance in coping with the remaining key problems of the country has not changed significantly: the proportion of people, who support the actions of the head of state aimed to restore order in the country is 50%, to protect democracy and strengthen the citizens' freedoms – 39%, to promote economic recovery and increase the citizens' welfare – 35%.

In general, the attitude of the Vologda Oblast residents to Vladimir Putin's activities aimed to cope with the most important challenges of Russia remains more positive than in 2011–2014.

In your opinion, how successful is the RF President in coping with challenging issues?^{*}
(as a percentage of the number of respondents)

Answer option	2007	2011	2013	2014	June 2014	Aug. 2014	Oct. 2014	Dec. 2014	Feb. 2015	Apr. 2015	Average for the last six surveys	Dynamics (+/-), the last six surveys in comparison with...		
												2013	2011	2007
Strengthening Russia's international standing														
Successful	58.4	46.2	45.7	50.4	53.7	50.9	52.3	50.8	50.4	52.7	51.8	+6	+6	-7
Unsuccessful	24.9	33.7	36.2	32.4	31.7	30.0	31.0	30.3	29.5	28.7	30.2	-6	-4	+5
<i>Index of success**</i>	<i>133.5</i>	<i>112.5</i>	<i>109.5</i>	<i>118.0</i>	<i>122.0</i>	<i>120.9</i>	<i>121.3</i>	<i>120.5</i>	<i>120.9</i>	<i>124.0</i>	<i>121.6</i>	<i>+12</i>	<i>+9</i>	<i>-12</i>
Imposing order in the country														
Successful	53.2	36.6	39.4	48.0	49.5	47.5	49.4	52.1	50.3	50.1	49.8	+10	+13	-3
Unsuccessful	34.0	50.0	47.5	39.1	39.5	37.8	37.8	35.1	37.3	37.5	37.5	-10	-13	+4
<i>Index of success</i>	<i>119.2</i>	<i>86.6</i>	<i>91.9</i>	<i>108.9</i>	<i>110.0</i>	<i>109.7</i>	<i>111.6</i>	<i>117.0</i>	<i>113.0</i>	<i>112.6</i>	<i>112.3</i>	<i>+20</i>	<i>+26</i>	<i>-7</i>
Protecting democracy and strengthening the citizens' freedoms														
Successful	44.4	32.4	31.8	37.5	40.1	37.6	38.2	40.7	39.5	39.2	39.2	+7	+7	-5
Unsuccessful	37.0	48.3	51.0	45.4	43.9	43.7	44.3	41.9	40.9	39.9	42.4	-9	-6	+5
<i>Index of success</i>	<i>107.4</i>	<i>84.1</i>	<i>80.8</i>	<i>92.1</i>	<i>96.2</i>	<i>93.9</i>	<i>93.9</i>	<i>98.8</i>	<i>98.6</i>	<i>99.3</i>	<i>96.8</i>	<i>+16</i>	<i>+13</i>	<i>-11</i>
Economic recovery and increase in the citizens' welfare														
Successful	47.2	30.7	31.3	34.8	35.8	35.1	33.9	37.6	34.4	34.7	35.3	+4	+5	-12
Unsuccessful	39.1	56.1	56.8	53.4	53.5	50.2	54.4	50.8	51.5	49.9	51.7	-5	-4	+13
<i>Index of success</i>	<i>108.1</i>	<i>74.6</i>	<i>74.5</i>	<i>81.4</i>	<i>82.3</i>	<i>84.9</i>	<i>79.5</i>	<i>86.8</i>	<i>82.9</i>	<i>84.8</i>	<i>83.5</i>	<i>+9</i>	<i>+9</i>	<i>-25</i>

^{*} Ranked according to the average value of the index of success for the last 6 surveys.
^{**} The indices are calculated as follows: the share of negative answers is subtracted from the share of positive answers, then 100 is added to the obtained value, so as not to have negative values. Thus, completely negative answers would give the total index of 0, and completely positive answers would give the total index of 200; the balance between the former and the latter expresses the value of the index 100, which is, essentially, a neutral mark.

The proportion of the Oblast residents who believe that the “United Russia” expresses their interests is 38–39%. Support for the KPRF is 8%, for the LDPR – 6–7%, for the “Just Russia” – 4%.

In February – April 2015 there was only a slight increase in the proportion of the Vologda Oblast residents who believe that none of the political parties reflects their interests (from 30 to 32%), but this figure is still less than in 2014 (34%) and 2013 (35%); this indicates a higher level of interest of the Oblast residents in economic and political life in the country.

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	June 2014	Aug. 2014	Oct. 2014	Dec. 2014	Feb. 2015	Apr. 2015	Average for the last six surveys	Dynamics (+/-), the last six surveys in comparison with...		
														2013	2011	2007
United Russia	30.2	60.5	31.1	33.4	29.4	32.8	32.7	34.3	35.5	36.7	38.8	38.2	36.0	+7	+5	+6
KPRF	7.0	9.3	10.3	16.8	11.3	9.7	9.8	9.1	9.3	8.3	7.7	7.8	8.7	-3	-2	+2
LDPR	7.5	11.0	7.8	15.4	7.2	7.6	6.2	6.9	7.3	7.8	6.7	6.1	6.8	0	-1	-1
Just Russia	7.8	8.8	5.6	27.2	4.6	3.5	3.3	3.7	3.9	3.2	4.1	3.7	3.7	-1	-2	-4
Other	1.8	–	1.9	–	0.6	0.3	0.1	0.1	0.7	0.1	0.3	0.1	0.2	0	-2	-2
No party	17.8	–	29.4	–	34.9	34.4	36.0	35.0	32.6	32.7	30.3	31.5	33.0	-2	+4	+15
It is difficult to answer	21.2	–	13.2	–	10.2	11.7	11.8	10.9	10.7	11.1	12.0	12.5	11.5	+1	-2	-10

The characteristics of social mood and stock of patience for the last two months have improved.

The share of the Oblast residents, who assess their mood as “good and normal”, decreased: it was 62% in December 2015, and in April it was 68%.

The proportion of those, who believe that “Everything is not so bad; it’s difficult to live, but it’s possible to stand it” increased in February – April 2015 from 74 to 79%.

In general, the assessments of social sentiment and stock of patience in April 2015 are approximately the same as they were in 2013–2014, and they remain higher than in 2011.

However, in the last two months there were no significant changes in the people’s assessment of their own financial situation. About 52–53% of the Oblast residents consider themselves to be “poor” and extremely poor”. The proportion of those who consider themselves to have “average income” is still lower (37–38%). In general, the structure of social self-identification of the population in the early 2015 remains more negative than in 2011–2014.

The Consumer Sentiment Index (CSI) continues to decline. This tendency is observed since June 2014. CSI decreased from 76 to 73 points in the last two months, which indicates that there remain anxious expectations in the society regarding the development of economic situation in the country and people’s own financial well-being.

However, according to the results of the study, the negative trend in CSI is not consistent with positive trends in social mood, stock of patience, and support of the performance of the President of the Russian Federation. The reason is that the Consumer Sentiment Index reflects a general perception of the economic situation in the country, rather than the people’s assessments of their personal financial situation, the dynamics of which does not show negative changes (the proportion of people of “average income” and “poor and extremely poor” in the last two months has not changed and amounts to 37 and 52%, respectively).

In other words, the assessment of changes in the dynamics of personal financial situation remains more stable than the estimation of the overall economic situation in the country, and this has a decisive influence on social well-being and attitude toward the activities of the authorities.

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

Answer option	2007	2011	2013	2014	June 2014	Aug. 2014	Oct. 2014	Dec. 2014	Feb. 2015	Apr. 2015	Average for the last six surveys	Dynamics (+/-), the last six surveys in comparison with...		
												2013	2011	2007
Mood														
Usual condition, good mood	63.6	63.1	68.6	69.4	71.1	70.5	69.3	70.9	61.8	67.6	68.5	0	+5	+5
I feel stress, anger, fear, depression	27.8	28.9	26.2	24.9	23.7	25.1	24.6	24.1	31.3	26.6	25.9	0	-3	-2
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	81.0	82.5	80.3	80.0	74.3	78.9	79.5	0	+5	+5
It's impossible to bear such plight	13.6	15.3	14.2	12.6	13.4	12.8	12.1	13.6	17.3	14.9	14.0	0	-1	0
Social self-identification*														
The share of people who consider themselves to have average income	48.2	43.1	43.9	43.2	42.0	44.1	43.5	42.3	38.3	36.7	41.2	-3	-2	-7
The share of people who consider themselves to be poor and extremely poor	42.4	44.3	46.9	49.1	48.4	49.6	49.3	51.0	53.3	51.6	50.5	+4	+6	+8
Consumer Sentiment Index														
Index value, points	105.9	89.6	90.3	87.6	90.5	87.1	84.0	82.3	75.7	73.4	82.2	-8	-7	-24
* Question: "Which category do you belong to, in your opinion?"														

In February – April 2015, the proportion of positive assessments of social mood increased in 13 out of the 14 socio-demographic groups of the population; first of all, in people aged 30–55 (from 58 to 68%) and the 20% of the poorest residents in the Oblast (from 38 to 56%).

Negative changes are observed in only one group among the 20% of the wealthiest inhabitants of the Oblast (the share of positive assessments of social mood has dropped from 80 to 78%).

In the Vologda Oblast in general and in almost all the socio-demographic categories of the population (excluding the 20% of the poorest) social mood is better than in 2007. Apparently, this is due to the beginning of Vladimir Putin's third presidential term and, in principle, with the fact that Vladimir Putin is President. It is in 2012 that the percentage of positive assessments of social mood reached the level that it currently maintains (67–69%). Up to 2012 the proportion of those who estimates their mood positively was somewhat lower (63%). This feature is observed in almost all (in 11 out of 14) the socio-demographic groups.

Social mood in different socio-demographic groups (answer option “Good mood, usual, good condition”, as a percentage of the number of respondents)

Category of population	2007	2011	2012	2013	2014	June 2014	Aug. 2014	Oct. 2014	Dec. 2014	Feb. 2015	Apr. 2015	Average for the last six surveys	Dynamics (+/-), the last six surveys in comparison with...		
													2013	2011	2007
Sex															
Men	65.9	64.5	69.1	69.9	68.9	71.3	69.5	68.8	69.7	61.7	67.4	68.1	-2	+4	+2
Women	61.7	62.0	65.8	67.5	69.8	71.0	71.4	69.8	72.0	61.9	67.8	69.0	+2	+7	+7
Age															
Under 30	71.3	70.0	72.3	75.5	75.1	76.1	79.1	76.6	76.4	71.3	73.5	75.5	0	+6	+4
30–55	64.8	62.5	67.9	69.2	69.5	71.8	70.3	68.3	69.8	58.3	67.9	67.7	-2	+5	+3
Over 55	54.8	58.3	62.1	62.4	65.4	66.7	64.9	66.1	69.1	60.7	63.7	65.2	+3	+7	+10
Education															
Incomplete secondary, secondary	58.4	57.4	57.2	60.6	62.5	61.7	63.3	65.4	67.8	54.8	62.1	62.5	+2	+5	+4
Secondary vocational	64.6	63.6	66.7	68.1	70.4	72.2	71.3	70.2	71.8	65.2	68.2	69.8	+2	+6	+5
Incomplete higher, higher	68.6	68.3	77.0	77.4	76.2	80.4	77.7	73.3	73.5	65.8	73.1	74.0	-3	+6	+5
Income groups															
20% of the poorest people	51.6	45.3	51.5	46.2	50.8	54.9	54.1	50.2	55.1	38.3	55.6	51.4	+5	+6	0
60% of the people with middle-sized income	62.9	65.3	68.7	71.9	72.3	72.7	71.5	73.5	75.0	65.2	69.2	71.2	-1	+6	+8
20% of the most prosperous people	74.9	75.3	81.1	83.3	84.8	89.0	89.6	79.0	81.6	80.3	78.1	82.9	0	+8	+8
Territories															
Vologda	63.1	67.1	73.6	75.0	76.4	78.6	80.7	75.5	75.6	66.4	72.5	74.9	0	+8	+12
Cherepovets	68.1	71.2	76.2	75.3	76.3	79.9	76.5	72.8	73.2	63.1	69.8	72.6	-3	+1	+5
Districts	61.6	57.1	59.8	61.6	61.8	62.3	61.5	64.0	67.1	58.6	63.7	62.9	+1	+6	+1
Oblast	63,6	63,1	67,3	68,6	69,4	71,1	70,5	69,3	70,9	61,8	67,6	68,5	0	+5	+5

Conclusion:

The results of the survey carried out in April 2015 indicate that the situation has improved compared to the beginning of the year in many key positions that characterize public opinion. Social mood has improved considerably (the percentage of positive assessments increased from 62 to 68%, and negative assessments decreased from 31 to 27%), the stock of patience has increased (the proportion of positive ratings increased from 74 to 79%, negative ratings – decreased from 17 to 15%), the approval of the RF President’s performance has increased (approval rating increased from 66 to 68%, the proportion of negative judgments dropped from 21% to 16%).

In addition, after declining in December 2014 and February 2015, the assessment of success of the President's actions aimed at economic recovery and growth of citizens' welfare has stabilized (35%), as well as the share of the Oblast residents, who consider themselves to have "average level of financial welfare" (37%).

For the first time in the period from October 2014 to April 2015 there was a break in the negative trend of reduction in the Consumer Sentiment Index among the people who belong to the poorest 20% of the Oblast residents according to their own assessments of their income level (over the last two months CSI in this group has increased from 59 to 63%). The same group is also distinguished by the largest increase in the proportion of positive ratings of social mood (from 38 to 56%).

As for the negative trends of recent months, it is necessary to mention the decrease in the Consumer Sentiment Index (it decreased from 76 to 73% in February – April 2015). This is an important indicator that reflects the essence of people's consumer sentiment, their forecasts for the future development of the economic situation and their own financial position. However, as the research has shown, the negative trend in CSI indicates the disturbing expectations of people, their uncertainty about the future, rather than the assessment of the real changes in the dynamics of the standard of living.

Positive changes in the dynamics of public opinion are related to the improvement of the financial situation of the population, and to the overcoming of the feeling of crisis. This is confirmed by the official statistics², and this was mentioned by Vladimir Putin during the "direct line" with the population on April 16, 2015³.

In general, the subject of the last three "direct lines" with the President clearly reflects the trends in public opinion. After discussing the issues related to international politics and national self-determination (which were the main topics of the "direct line" in 2014), the 2015 agenda is again focuses on the internal socio-economic problems; but now they are considered not in the context of the "May decrees" (as it was in 2013), but in the context of the functioning of Russia's economy under the sanctions.

The fact that public attention is focused on domestic economic issues, on the one hand, indicates their importance to the population. On the other hand, however, it proves that the society shares the viewpoint of the President about the necessity to "find better ways to manage these (*socio-economic, – editorial note*) processes by ourselves, in our own country"⁴.

² According to Vologdastat (Regional Office of the Federal State Statistics Service of the Russian Federation in the Vologda Oblast), the real disposable money income of the population in January 2015 amounted to 118.1% of those in January 2014.

³ In particular, the RF President noted: "We are faced with certain external constraints, and this affects growth rate and development; but in general, we see that the ruble is strengthening, and stock markets are rising. We have managed to prevent the increase of inflation" (Source: Stenogramma "Pryamoi linii" s Prezidentom RF V.V. Putinym ot 16 aprelya 2015 [Transcript of "Direct Line" with Russian President Vladimir Putin, April 16, 2015]. *Ofitsial'nyi sait Prezidenta RF* [Official Website of the RF President]. Available at: <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/49261>)

⁴ During the "direct line" in April 2015, the RF President also pointed out: "As for the sanctions, they certainly contribute to our difficulties, but still it is not the main thing" (Source: Stenogramma "Pryamoi linii" s Prezidentom RF V.V. Putinym ot 16 aprelya 2015 [Transcript of "Direct Line" with Russian President Vladimir Putin, April 16, 2015]. *Ofitsial'nyi sait Prezidenta RF* [Official Website of the RF President]. Available at: <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/49261>).