

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 2016, and also on average for the last six polls (June 2015 – April 2016). These data are compared with the data for 2007 (the last year of Vladimir Putin's second presidential term, when the assessment of the President's work was the highest) and for 2011 (the last year of Dmitry Medvedev's presidency). The yearly dynamics of the data is presented beginning from 2013.

Estimation of performance of the authorities

In February – April 2016, the assessment of work of the President of the Russian Federation did not change significantly (67–68%), which corresponds to the average indicators for 2015 (69%) and which is significantly higher than in 2011 – 2014 (59–64%). However, in the short retrospective, negative changes are observed. So, for the three latest surveys (from December 2015 to April 2016) the percentage of positive ratings of the President's work decreased by 3 percentage points (from 70 to 67%).

Over the past two months, the level of support for the Chairman of the Government of the Russian Federation did not change (54–55%). This is less than in 2015 (58%), and corresponds to the level of 2014 (54%).

For reference: the nationwide level of approval of the RF President's performance February – March 2016 remains stable (81–82% according to VTsIOM and Levada Center), but in comparison with December 2015, it decreased by 3 p.p. (from 85–86%).

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	2015	June 2015	Aug. 2015	Oct. 2015	Dec. 2015	Feb. 2016	Apr. 2016	Average for the latest 6 surveys	Dynamics (+/-) the latest 6 surveys in comparison with...		
											2014		2011	2007	
RF President															
I approve	75.3	58.7	55.3	64.1	69.1	69.5	72.0	69.3	69.7	68.1	66.9	69.3	+5	+11	-6
I don't approve	11.5	25.6	29.4	22.3	17.5	16.1	17.8	18.1	16.5	16.1	17.9	17.1	-5	-9	+6
Chairman of the RF Government*															
I approve	-*	59.3	48.9	54.2	58.1	59.1	60.7	58.1	57.9	54.9	53.5	57.4	+3	-2	-
I don't approve	-	24.7	32.8	27.6	21.7	19.5	22.5	21.0	21.7	22.6	25.7	22.2	-5	-3	-
Governor															
I approve	55.8	45.7	44.4	40.1	39.3	40.5	41.5	38.7	39.7	35.1	34.9	38.4	-2	-7	-17
I don't approve	22.2	30.5	33.2	38.9	36.2	35.4	35.4	36.0	35.3	38.2	39.6	36.7	-2	+6	+14
* Included into the survey since 2008.															

In February – April 2016, the share of the Vologda Oblast residents who think that the President successfully copes with the task of strengthening international positions of Russia did not change significantly (51%), which corresponds to the level of 2014–2015.

However, the assessment of success of the President's actions in addressing the key problems of the country in December 2015 – February 2016 slightly reduced:

- the share of the Vologda Oblast residents who think that the President successfully copes with the task of strengthening international positions of Russia decreased by 2 p.p. (from 53 to 50%);
- the share of the Vologda Oblast residents who think that the President successfully copes with the task of restoring order in the country decreased by 3 p.p. (from 51 to 48%);
- the share of those who believe that the President is successful in protecting democracy and strengthening citizens' freedoms decreased by 5 p.p. (from 41 to 36%);
- the share of those who believe that the President successfully copes with the task of economic recovery and promotes the increase in the welfare of citizens decreased by 3 p.p. (from 31 to 28%).

In general, the assessment of the success of the President's work on all these issues remains at the level of 2014–2015, except for his work on economic recovery and improvement of the citizens' welfare (34–35% in 2014–2015, 28% in April 2016).

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	2015	June 2015	Aug. 2015	Oct. 2015	Dec. 2015	Feb. 2016	Apr. 2016	Average for the latest 6 surveys	Dynamics (+/-) the latest 6 surveys in comparison with...		
													2014	2011	2007
Strengthening Russia's international standing															
Successful	58.4	46.2	45.7	50.4	51.7	51.1	52.2	50.7	53.2	50.9	50.7	51.5	+1	+5	-7
Unsuccessful	24.9	33.7	36.2	32.4	31.3	32.5	32.4	33.1	31.5	29.1	30.9	31.6	-1	-2	+7
<i>Индекс успешности</i>	133.5	112.5	109.5	118.0	120.4	118.6	119.8	117.6	121.7	121.8	119.8	119.9	+2	+7	-14
Imposing order in the country															
Successful	53.2	36.6	39.4	48.0	50.2	49.9	51.7	48.6	50.5	47.7	48.1	49.4	+1	+13	-4
Unsuccessful	34.0	50.0	47.5	39.1	37.9	38.0	37.9	38.7	38.0	37.2	38.2	38.0	-1	-12	+4
<i>Index of success</i>	119.2	86.6	91.9	108.9	112.3	111.9	113.8	109.9	112.5	110.5	109.9	111.4	+3	+25	-8
Protecting democracy and strengthening the citizens' freedoms															
Successful	44.4	32.4	31.8	37.5	40.4	42.2	42.6	38.1	41.0	36.9	35.6	39.4	+2	+7	-5
Unsuccessful	37.0	48.3	51.0	45.4	41.5	38.3	41.7	44.3	43.7	44.3	45.3	42.9	-2	-5	+6
<i>Index of success</i>	107.4	84.1	80.8	92.1	99.0	103.9	100.9	93.8	97.3	92.6	90.3	96.5	+4	+12	-11
Economic recovery and increase in the citizens' welfare															
Successful	47.2	30.7	31.3	34.8	34.2	36.2	36.6	32.1	30.9	28.0	27.6	31.9	-3	+1	-15
Unsuccessful	39.1	56.1	56.8	53.4	52.3	49.9	52.6	54.3	55.7	57.0	57.9	54.6	+1	-2	+15
<i>Index of success</i>	108.1	74.6	74.5	81.4	81.8	86.3	84.0	77.8	75.2	71.0	69.7	77.3	-4	+3	-31
* Ranked according to the average value of the index of success for 2015.															

Over the past two months, the structure of the Russians' preferences concerning political parties did not see any significant changes. At the same time, the proportion of people who believe that today no party expresses their interests increased (by 3 p.p., from 32 to 35%).

The "United Russia" retains its leading positions. The level of its support corresponds approximately to the indicators of 2014 (33–34%). However, in the short-term dynamics, negative trends are observed – for the period from December 2015 to April 2016 the proportion of the Vologda Oblast residents who say that the "United Russia" expresses their interests, decreased by 5 p.p. (from 39 to 34%).

The positions of other parties remain stable: LDPR is supported by 7–8%, KPRF – by 7-9%, the "Just Russia" – by 3-4%.

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	2015	June 2015	Aug. 2015	Oct. 2015	Dec. 2015	Feb. 2016	Apr. 2016	Average for the latest 6 surveys	Dynamics (+/-) the latest 6 surveys in comparison with...		
		2014	2011	2007																
United Russia	30.2	60.5	31.1	33.4	29.4	32.8	38.8	40.3	38.5	38.0	39.0	35.1	34.1	37.5	+5	+6	+7			
LDPR	7.5	11.0	7.8	15.4	7.2	7.6	6.2	5.4	5.9	6.1	7.1	6.9	8.2	6.6	-1	-1	-1			
KPRF	7.0	9.3	10.3	16.8	11.3	9.7	7.1	6.8	7.1	6.9	6.5	9.4	7.2	7.3	-2	-3	0			
Just Russia	7.8	8.8	5.6	27.2	4.6	3.5	3.6	3.3	3.5	3.3	3.7	2.7	2.7	3.2	0	-2	-5			
Other	1.8	–	1.9	–	0.6	0.3	0.2	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.4	0.5	0.2	0.3	0	-2	-2			
No party	17.8	–	29.4	–	34.9	34.4	31.8	32.5	33.8	32.3	30.5	31.7	34.9	32.6	-2	+3	15			
It is difficult to answer	21.2	–	13.2	–	10.2	11.7	12.2	11.6	11.1	13.3	12.9	13.7	12.7	12.6	+1	-1	-9			

In February – April 2016, the assessments of social feeling of the Vologda Oblast residents improved slightly):

- the proportion of people who describe their mood as “normal, good” increased by 4 p. p. (from 63 to 67%);
- the proportion of those who say that “everything is not so bad; it’s difficult to live, but it’s possible to stand it” increased by 5 p. p. (from 73 to 78%).
- the share of those who consider themselves “poor and extremely poor” decreased by 2 p.p. (from 51 to 49%).

The consumer sentiment index for the period from February to April 2016 did not change significantly (75 – 74 p.).

The assessment of social well-being in general corresponds to the level of 2014–2015.

However, in the short-term dynamics, some negative trends are observed. So, for the period from December 2015 to April 2016:

- the proportion of positive characteristics of social mood decreased (by 3 p.p., from 70 to 67%);
- the percentage of people who say that they “can’t bear such plight” increased (by 3 p.p. from 13 to 16%);
- the consumer sentiment index decreased (by 4 points, from 78 to 74%).

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

Answer option	2007	2011	2013	2014	2015	June 2015	Aug. 2015	Oct. 2015	Dec. 2015	Feb. 2016	Apr. 2016	Average for the latest 6 surveys	Dynamics (+/-) the latest 6 surveys in comparison with...		
													2014	2011	2007
Mood															
Usual condition. good mood	63.6	63.1	68.6	69.4	68.7	69.5	73.1	70.4	69.6	63.4	67.0	68.8	-1	+6	+5
I feel stress. anger. fear. depression	27.8	28.9	26.2	24.9	25.9	24.4	23.5	25.4	24.3	28.9	25.4	25.3	0	-4	-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	78.4	79.0	82.2	78.2	78.0	73.1	77.5	78.0	-3	+3	+4
It's impossible to bear such plight	13.6	15.3	14.2	12.6	14.5	14.7	13.3	13.9	12.7	16.1	16.4	14.5	+2	-1	+1
Social self-identification*															
The share of people who consider themselves to have average income	48.2	43.1	43.9	43.2	38.7	39.4	39.9	39.2	38.9	39.9	40.9	39.7	-4	-3	-9
The share of people who consider themselves to be poor and extremely poor	42.4	44.3	46.9	49.1	50.7	48.0	50.5	50.2	50.5	51.4	49.4	50.0	+1	+6	+8
Consumer sentiment index															
Index value. points	105.9	89.6	90.3	87.6	77.1	80.1	77.9	77.7	77.7	75.0	74.4	77.1	-10	-12	-29
* Question: "Which category do you belong to. in your opinion?"															

In the annual dynamics, the proportion of people who describe their mood as “good, normal, smooth” has remained stable since 2013 (69–70%) and higher than in 2007 and 2011 (65–67%).

Over the past two months, positive changes took place in all categories of the population (with the exception of people with higher and incomplete higher education) and in all income groups. And among the 20% of the poorest, the proportion of people describing their mood as positive increased by 8 p.p. (from 43 to 51%).

However, negative changes are observed in some socio-demographic groups of the population in the short-term retrospective.

Thus, in December 2015 – April 2016, the share of positive assessments of social mood decreased in the following categories of population:

- men (by 3 p.p., from 70 to 67%)
- people aged 30–55 (by 3 p.p., from 69 to 66%);
- people with secondary and incomplete secondary education (by 3 p.p., from 65 to 62%) and people with higher and incomplete higher education (by 5 p.p., from 77 to 72%);
- people who according to their own assessment of their income belong to the groups of the 60% who have average income (by 4 p.p., from 72 to 68%);
- residents of Vologda (by 5 p.p., from 74 to 69%).

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

Population group	2007	2011	2013	2014	2015	June 2015	Aug. 2015	Oct. 2015	Dec. 2015	Feb. 2016	Apr. 2016	Average for the latest 6 surveys	Dynamics (+/-) the latest 6 surveys in comparison with...		
	2014	2011	2007												
Sex															
Men	65.9	64.5	69.9	68.9	69.5	72.7	75.2	69.8	69.9	63.9	66.5	69.7	+1	+5	+4
Women	61.7	62.0	67.5	69.8	68.0	66.8	71.3	70.9	69.2	63.1	67.5	68.1	-2	+6	+6
Age															
Under 30	71.3	70.0	75.5	75.1	77.1	79.4	78.9	82.8	76.9	69.9	75.4	77.2	+2	+7	+6
30-55	64.8	62.5	69.2	69.5	67.2	67.6	72.1	68.0	69.0	62.1	66.0	67.5	-2	+5	+3
Over 55	54.8	58.3	62.4	65.4	65.5	65.9	70.8	66.0	65.9	61.5	63.7	65.6	0	+7	+11
Education															
Secondary and incomplete secondary	58.4	57.4	60.6	62.5	63.6	64.0	70.2	65.7	64.6	57.8	62.4	64.1	+2	+7	+6
Secondary vocational	64.6	63.6	68.1	70.4	70.1	73.6	75.3	70.3	67.7	60.7	67.3	69.2	-1	+6	+5
Higher and incomplete higher	68.6	68.3	77.4	76.2	72.7	70.6	74.1	75.8	76.9	72.9	71.5	73.6	-3	+5	+5
Income groups															
20% of the poorest people	51.6	45.3	46.2	50.8	51.8	57.1	55.7	54.2	49.8	42.6	51.3	51.8	+1	+6	0
60% of the people with median income	62.9	65.3	71.9	72.3	71.0	71.3	77.7	70.1	72.2	66.3	67.6	70.9	-1	+6	+8
20% of the most prosperous people	74.9	75.3	83.3	84.8	82.0	82.5	85.1	87.1	78.8	77.9	81.0	82.1	-3	+7	+7
Territories															
Vologda	63.1	67.1	75.0	76.4	73.9	75.6	77.9	77.6	73.6	65.1	69.1	73.2	-3	+6	+10
Cherepovets	68.1	71.2	75.3	76.3	70.6	71.2	74.9	71.4	73.2	66.4	70.5	71.3	-5	0	+3
Districts	61.6	57.1	61.6	61.8	64.6	65.1	69.4	65.9	65.0	60.9	63.9	65.0	+3	+8	+3
Oblast	63.6	63.1	68.6	69.4	68.7	69.5	73.1	70.4	69.5	63.5	67.1	68.9	-1	+6	+5

Conclusion

in February–April 2016, there is an improvement in the estimates of social well-being of the population, which may be associated with the coming of spring, and with a number of events that occurred in March 2016 (for example, the withdrawal of the majority of Russian troops from Syria,

celebration of the second anniversary of accession of Crimea to the Russian Federation). However, economic problems remained the center of attention of people, making these issues a key factor in the political struggle unfolding in the run-up to the State Duma election (September 2016).

The evaluation of the work of the President and Government, as well as the level of support of the “United Russia” party for the past two months did not change significantly. The proportion of positive judgment is higher than in 2013–2014, but in the short-term dynamics (from December 2015 to April 2016) there are slight negative changes. This indicates that the population is becoming more demanding. As the results of VTsIOM opinion polls show, society requires a new economic policy: “65% of the Russians believe that the authorities should develop economic policy that is different from the current one. Society is tired of the fact that the success or failure of the economy depends on the oil market and return of commodity prices to a comfortable level. A clear majority of the population want the current economic course to be changed, and they link this change to the reliance on internal resources and substantial stimulation of economic activity”².

Further dynamics of public opinion will depend, firstly, on how effective the work is carried out to “upgrade the performance of not only the Government but also the entire state machinery”, especially regarding the implementation of the “targeted approach in the work of ministries and departments”³. Secondly, the dynamics of public opinion will depend on how the effective implementation of the main provisions of the National Security Strategy – 2015 that reinforces personal responsibility of the President for the implementation of key national security priorities, including those in the sphere of economy, standard of living and quality of life.

As Vladimir Putin noted, “we have to think about how to deal with our domestic affairs and problems, our roads, our healthcare, education, how to develop our economy, restore it and reach the required growth pace. If we do all this, we will not have to deal with anybody because then – only in this case – we will be invulnerable people with bright prospects who want to live in this country and are proud of it”⁴.

² *Krizisnaya ekonomika: v poiskakh vykhoda: press-vypusk* [Crisis Economics: in Search of a Solution: Press Release], 2016, no. 3046, February. Available at: <http://wciom.ru/index.php?id=236&uid=115594>

³ Stenogramma Pryamoi linii s Prezidentom RF V.V. Putinyam ot 14 aprelya 2016 g. [Transcript of the Direct Line with Russian President Vladimir Putin of April 14, 2016]. *Ofitsial'nyi sait Prezidenta RF* [Official Website of the President of the Russian Federation]. Available at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/51716>

⁴ *Ibidem*.