

Public Opinion Monitoring of the State of the Russian Society

As in the previous issues, we publish the results of the public opinion monitoring of the state of the Russian society conducted by ISEDТ RAS in the Vologda Oblast¹.

The following tables show the dynamics of a number of parameters indicating the social feeling and socio-political sentiment of the Vologda Oblast population in June – August 2016, and also on average for the last six polls (October 2015 – August 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 June – August 2016, the assessment of work of the President of the Russian Federation did not change significantly (67–69%). Approval of the President's work remains at the level of 2015 (69%), which is significantly higher than in 2011–2014 (55–64%). However, it should be noted that since the beginning of 2016 the share of negative assessments of the President's performance has increased by 4 p.p. (from 16 to 20%)

The assessment of the work of the Chairman of the Government of the Russian Federation over the past two months also did not change (the proportion of positive judgments is 53%, negative – 28%). This figure is somewhat lower than in 2015 (58%), and it roughly corresponds to the level of 2014 (54%). The proportion of negative assessments of the work of the Chairman of the Government has been increasing from October 2015: it was 21% in October 2015; 23% in February 2016 and 28% in August.

For reference: the nationwide level of approval of the RF President's performance remains stable. In June – July 2016 it was 81% according to VTsIOM (the share of negative assessments was 14); and 81–82% according to Levada-Center (the share of negative judgements was 17–18%).

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	Oct. 2015	Dec. 2015	Feb. 2016	Apr. 2016	June 2016	Aug. 2016	Average for the latest 6 surveys	Dynamics (+/-) the latest 6 surveys in comparison with...		
													2015	2011	2007
RF President															
I approve	75.3	58.7	55.3	64.1	69.1	69.3	69.7	68.1	66.9	67.4	68.7	68.4	-1	+10	-7
I don't approve	11.5	25.6	29.4	22.3	17.5	18.1	16.5	16.1	17.9	20.1	19.6	18.1	+1	-8	+7
Chairman of the RF Government*															
I approve	-*	59.3	48.9	54.2	58.1	58.1	57.9	54.9	53.5	52.8	52.7	55.0	-3	-4	-
I don't approve	-	24.7	32.8	27.6	21.7	21.0	21.7	22.6	25.7	28.6	27.7	24.6	+3	0	-
Governor															
I approve	55.8	45.7	44.4	40.1	39.3	38.7	39.7	35.1	34.9	38.2	38.4	37.5	-2	-8	-18
I don't approve	22.2	30.5	33.2	38.9	36.2	36.0	35.3	38.2	39.6	40.3	40.0	38.2	+2	+8	+16

* Included into the survey since 2008.

In June – August 2016, the assessment of success of the President's actions in addressing the key problems of the country did not change significantly:

- the share of the Vologda Oblast residents who think that the President successfully copes with the task of strengthening international positions of Russia is 50–52%;
- the share of the Vologda Oblast residents who think that the President successfully copes with the task of restoring order in the country is 50%;
- the share of those who believe that the President is successful in protecting democracy and strengthening citizens' freedoms is 37–38%;
- 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 is 27–28%.

In the past two months the proportion of people who consider the President's work aimed to restore order in the country unsuccessful decreased (by 3 p.p., from 38 to 35%), but there was an increase in the share of those who negatively assess the work of the head of the state aimed to protect democracy and strengthen freedoms of citizens (by 3 p.p., from 42 to 45%).

In general, over the past six surveys, there were no significant changes in how the Vologda Oblast residents assess the success with which the President addresses key problems of the country. However, it should be noted that for the period from October 2015 to August 2016, there was a significant decrease in the proportion of positive judgments concerning the work of the President on economic recovery and growth of welfare of citizens (by 5 p.p., from 32 to 27%). According to the data as of August 2016, this figure is significantly lower than in 2007 (47%), in 2011 (31%) and in 2013 – 2015 (31–35%). Accordingly, the share of negative assessments of the success with which the President addresses financial issues of the population for the period from October 2015 to August 2016 increased by 6 p.p. (from 54 to 60%), which is significantly higher than in 2007 (39%), in 2011 (56%) and in 2013 – 2015 (52–57%).

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	Oct. 2015	Dec. 2015	Feb. 2016	Apr. 2016	June 2016	Aug. 2016	Average for the latest 6 surveys	Dynamics (+/-) the latest 6 surveys in comparison with...		
													2015	2011	2007
Strengthening Russia's international standing															
Successful	58.4	46.2	45.7	50.4	51.7	50.7	53.2	50.9	50.7	52.2	50.1	51.3	0	+5	-7
Unsuccessful	24.9	33.7	36.2	32.4	31.3	33.1	31.5	29.1	30.9	29.0	30.3	30.7	-1	-3	+6
<i>Index of success</i>	<i>133.5</i>	<i>112.5</i>	<i>109.5</i>	<i>118.0</i>	<i>120.4</i>	<i>117.6</i>	<i>121.7</i>	<i>121.8</i>	<i>119.8</i>	<i>123.2</i>	<i>119.8</i>	<i>120.7</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>+8</i>	<i>-13</i>
Imposing order in the country															
Successful	53.2	36.6	39.4	48.0	50.2	48.6	50.5	47.7	48.1	49.7	50.0	49.1	-1	+13	-4
Unsuccessful	34.0	50.0	47.5	39.1	37.9	38.7	38.0	37.2	38.2	37.5	35.1	37.5	0	-13	+3
<i>Index of success</i>	<i>119.2</i>	<i>86.6</i>	<i>91.9</i>	<i>108.9</i>	<i>112.3</i>	<i>109.9</i>	<i>112.5</i>	<i>110.5</i>	<i>109.9</i>	<i>112.2</i>	<i>115.4</i>	<i>111.7</i>	<i>-1</i>	<i>+25</i>	<i>-7</i>
Protecting democracy and strengthening the citizens' freedoms															
Successful	44.4	32.4	31.8	37.5	40.4	38.1	41.0	36.9	35.6	38.3	36.7	37.8	-3	+5	-7
Unsuccessful	37.0	48.3	51.0	45.4	41.5	44.3	43.7	44.3	45.3	42.2	45.0	44.1	+3	-4	+7
<i>Index of success</i>	<i>107.4</i>	<i>84.1</i>	<i>80.8</i>	<i>92.1</i>	<i>99.0</i>	<i>93.8</i>	<i>97.3</i>	<i>92.6</i>	<i>90.3</i>	<i>96.1</i>	<i>91.7</i>	<i>93.6</i>	<i>-5</i>	<i>+10</i>	<i>-14</i>
Economic recovery and increase in the citizens' welfare															
Successful	47.2	30.7	31.3	34.8	34.2	32.1	30.9	28.0	27.6	27.5	26.7	28.8	-5	-2	-18
Unsuccessful	39.1	56.1	56.8	53.4	52.3	54.3	55.7	57.0	57.9	59.1	60.4	57.4	+5	+1	+18
<i>Index of success</i>	<i>108.1</i>	<i>74.6</i>	<i>74.5</i>	<i>81.4</i>	<i>81.8</i>	<i>77.8</i>	<i>75.2</i>	<i>71.0</i>	<i>69.7</i>	<i>68.4</i>	<i>66.3</i>	<i>71.4</i>	<i>-10</i>	<i>-3</i>	<i>-37</i>

* 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 change and it has remained stable since the beginning of 2016. The "United Russia" is supported by 35–37%, KPRF – by 8–9%, the "Just Russia" – by 3–5%. In comparison to the beginning of the year there is a slight increase in the share of people whose interests are expressed by LDPR (by 4 p.p., from 7 to 11%). In comparison to 2015, the number of supporters of LDPR increased almost twice (from 6 to 11%).

With the approaching election to the State Duma of the Russian Federation on September 18, 2016, there is a gradual decrease in the proportion of people who believe that no major political party expresses their interest: in April 2016 – 35%, in June – 30%, in August – 26%. This trend shows the increasing interest of people in the voting results and a growth of voters' expectations in real positive changes in solving the most pressing issues that concern them.

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

Party	2007	Election to the RF State Duma 2007, fact		Election to the RF State Duma 2011, fact		2013	2014	2015	Oct. 2015	Dec. 2015	Feb. 2016	Apr 2016	June 2016	Aug. 2016	Average for the latest 6 surveys	Dynamics (+/-) the latest 6 surveys in comparison with...		
		2015	2011	2007														
United Russia	30.2	60.5	31.1	33.4	29.4	32.8	38.8	38.0	39.0	35.1	34.1	36.0	36.5	36.5	-2	+5	+6	
LDPR	7.5	11.0	7.8	15.4	7.2	7.6	6.2	6.1	7.1	6.9	8.2	10.3	10.5	8.2	+2	0	+1	
KPRF	7.0	9.3	10.3	16.8	11.3	9.7	7.1	6.9	6.5	9.4	7.2	8.0	7.5	7.6	0	-3	+1	
Just Russia	7.8	8.8	5.6	27.2	4.6	3.5	3.6	3.3	3.7	2.7	2.7	4.0	4.7	3.5	0	-2	-4	
Other	1.8	-	1.9	-	0.6	0.3	0.2	0.1	0.4	0.5	0.2	0.3	0.4	0.3	0	-2	-1	
No party	17.8	-	29.4	-	34.9	34.4	31.8	32.3	30.5	31.7	34.9	29.7	26.1	30.9	-1	+1	+13	
It is difficult to answer	21.2	-	13.2	-	10.2	11.7	12.2	13.3	12.9	13.7	12.7	11.7	14.3	13.1	+1	0	-8	

Assessments of social feeling in June – August 2016 did not change significantly:

- the proportion of people who describe their mood as “normal, good” remains at the level of 68–69%;
- the proportion of those who say that “everything is not so bad; it’s difficult to live, but it’s possible to stand it” is 78%.

The proportion of the Vologda Oblast residents who consider themselves “rich” or “with average income” was 43% in August 2016 (as in June), which is slightly higher than at the beginning of the year (40%). At the same time, the proportion of people who consider themselves “poor and extremely poor” increased noticeably (by 3 p.p., from 47 to 50%, which corresponds to the level of February 2016).

From April 2016, there has been a gradual increase in the consumer sentiment index (CSI), which indicates a growth in the positive expectations concerning the changes in the dynamics of people’s financial situation and economic situation in the country: the index was 74 p. in April 2016, 77 p. in June, 79 p. in August. Nonetheless, the consumer sentiment index still remains well below 100 points, which indicates the predominance of pessimistic forecasts in the evaluation of prospects for their personal financial well-being and the general state of the Russian economy.

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

Answer option	2007	2011	2013	2014	2015	Oct. 2015	Dec. 2015	Feb. 2016	Apr. 2016	June 2016	Aug. 2016	Average for the latest 6 surveys	Dynamics (+/-) the latest 6 surveys in comparison with...		
													2015	2011	2007
Mood															
Usual condition, good mood	63.6	63.1	68.6	69.4	68.7	70.4	69.6	63.4	67.0	68.0	68.8	67.9	-1	+5	+4
I feel stress, anger, fear, depression	27.8	28.9	26.2	24.9	25.9	25.4	24.3	28.9	25.4	26.7	25.8	26.1	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	78.4	78.2	78.0	73.1	77.5	78.2	78.3	77.2	-1	+2	+3
It's impossible to bear such plight	13.6	15.3	14.2	12.6	14.5	13.9	12.7	16.1	16.4	15.7	15.5	15.1	+1	0	+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	39.2	38.9	39.9	40.9	42.8	43.2	40.8	+2	-2	-7
The share of people who consider themselves to be poor and extremely poor	42.4	44.3	46.9	49.1	50.7	50.2	50.5	51.4	49.4	47.1	49.5	49.7	-1	+5	+7
Consumer sentiment index															
Index value, points	105.9	89.6	90.3	87.6	77.1	77.7	77.7	75.0	74.4	77.3	79.4	76.9	0	-13	-29
* Question: "Which category do you belong to, in your opinion?"															

In general in the Vologda Oblast, since April 2016, the percentage of those who describe their social mood as being “good, normal, positive” has remained stable (67–69%). However, for the past two months there were mixed changes in different socio-demographic groups.

In six out of 14 socio-demographic groups, the percentage of positive ratings of the social mood in August 2016 remained at the level of June. These groups include:

- people aged 30–55 (67%);
- persons with secondary and incomplete secondary and secondary vocational education (62 and 69%, respectively);
- inhabitants of the Vologda Oblast who, according to their own assessments of their incomes, fall into the category of 60% with the average income (70%);
- inhabitants of the city of Cherepovets (74%) and districts of the Vologda Oblast (66%).

In 4 socio-demographic categories there is an increase in the percentage of people describing their mood as positive. Among them:

- women (by 3 p.p., from 67 to 70%);

- people aged 55 and over (by 8 p.p., from 60 to 68%);
- persons with higher and incomplete higher education (by 4 p.p., from 73 to 77%);
- 20% of the poorest (by 4 p.p., from 52 to 56%).

In four out of 14 groups, the proportion of the Vologda Oblast residents who have “good mood; normal, steady feeling” declined. Among them:

- men (by 3 p.p., from 70 to 67%);
- people under the age of 30 (by 6 p.p., from 81 to 75%);
- 20% of the richest (by 6 p.p., from 85 to 79%);
- residents of the city of Vologda (by 3 p.p., from 72 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	Oct. 2015	Dec. 2015	Feb. 2016	Apr. 2016	June 2016	Aug. 2016	Average for the latest 6 surveys	Dynamics (+/-) the latest 6 surveys in comparison with...		
													2015	2011	2007
Sex															
Men	65.9	64.5	69.9	68.9	69.5	69.8	69.9	63.9	66.5	70.0	67.3	67.9	-2	+3	+2
Women	61.7	62.0	67.5	69.8	68.0	70.9	69.2	63.1	67.5	66.5	70.0	67.9	0	+6	+6
Age															
Under 30	71.3	70.0	75.5	75.1	77.1	82.8	76.9	69.9	75.4	81.2	74.5	76.8	0	+7	+5
30-55 лет	64.8	62.5	69.2	69.5	67.2	68.0	69.0	62.1	66.0	68.3	67.1	66.8	0	+4	+2
Over 55	54.8	58.3	62.4	65.4	65.5	66.0	65.9	61.5	63.7	59.8	67.7	64.1	-1	+6	+9
Education															
Secondary and incomplete secondary	58.4	57.4	60.6	62.5	63.6	65.7	64.6	57.8	62.4	62.9	61.7	62.5	-1	+5	+4
Secondary vocational	64.6	63.6	68.1	70.4	70.1	70.3	67.7	60.7	67.3	69.3	68.5	67.3	-3	+4	+3
Higher and incomplete higher	68.6	68.3	77.4	76.2	72.7	75.8	76.9	72.9	71.5	73.3	76.8	74.5	+2	+6	+6
Income groups															
20% of the poorest people	51.6	45.3	46.2	50.8	51.8	54.2	49.8	42.6	51.3	52.0	56.3	51.0	-1	+6	-1
60% of the people with median income	62.9	65.3	71.9	72.3	71.0	70.1	72.2	66.3	67.6	69.3	70.4	69.3	-2	+4	+6
20% of the most prosperous people	74.9	75.3	83.3	84.8	82.0	87.1	78.8	77.9	81.0	85.2	78.5	81.4	-1	+6	+7
Territories															
Vologda	63.1	67.1	75.0	76.4	73.9	77.6	73.6	65.1	69.1	71.5	69.2	71.0	-3	+4	+8
Cherepovets	68.1	71.2	75.3	76.3	70.6	71.4	73.2	66.4	70.5	72.5	74.0	71.3	+1	0	+3
Districts	61.6	57.1	61.6	61.8	64.6	65.9	65.0	60.9	63.9	63.7	65.7	64.2	0	+7	+3
Oblast	63.6	63.1	68.6	69.4	68.7	70.4	69.5	63.5	67.1	68.1	68.8	67.9	-1	+5	+4

Thus, according to the results of the survey conducted in August 2016, of the greatest concern is the dynamics of social sentiment among young people (aged under 30) and among the residents of the Vologda Oblast, who, according to their own assessments of their incomes, fall into the category of 20% the most well-to-do. Moreover, negative changes in these population groups in 2016 are marked for the first time.

Conclusion

The election to the State Duma of the Russian Federation on September 18 is a major political event of 2016. Its approach raises people's hopes for a tangible change in the dynamics of the standard of living and quality of life, which, in turn, plays an increasingly important role in shaping the dynamics of public opinion.

Research findings show that the level of support of the President of the Russian Federation remained stable (69%), although the increase in the share of negative assessments of his work (by 4 p.p. compared with the beginning of the year, from 16 to 20%) suggests that people are less satisfied with the efforts the head of state makes to solve the most pressing problems of the population.

This is also confirmed by the dynamics of assessments of the success with which the President handles the issues of economic recovery and growth of welfare of citizens: for the past six surveys (from October 2015 to August 2016) the share of positive judgments decreased by 5 p.p. (from 32 to 27%).

The proportion of people whose interests are not expressed by any major political party remains significant (26%, i.e. more than 300 thousand people); however, from April 2016 it has been decreasing (from April to August – by 9 p.p., from 35 to 26%), indicating the growing public interest in the election on September 18.

The relevance of financial problems is shown by the increase in the proportion of people who consider themselves to be “poor and extremely poor” (in June – August 2016 – by 3 p.p., from 47 to 50%). For the period from 2007 to August 2016, the proportion of representatives of this group increased by 8 p.p. (from 42 to 50%), i.e. by nearly 80 thousand people (from 515,667 to 593,843 people).

Consumer expectations of the population still arouse concern. The consumer sentiment index according to the data as of August 2016 is 79 p., which indicates the predominance of pessimistic expectations regarding the prospects of personal well-being and economic situation in the country. Moreover, the annual dynamics shows a decrease in the CSI: in 2007 – 106 p., in 2011–2013 – 90 p., in 2014 – 88 p., in 2015 – 77 p. Nevertheless, in recent months, the dynamics of the consumer sentiment index is positive: from April to August 2016 the CSI increased by 5 p. (from 74 to 79 p.), which may be associated with the pre-election

atmosphere that has a positive effect on people's expectations regarding the resolution of economic difficulties in the country after the beginning of a new political cycle.

In June – August 2016 there are controversial changes in the dynamics of the social mood of the population. **First of all, it is necessary to note the decline in the share of positive assessments of emotional state among people aged under 30 and representatives of 20% of the richest inhabitants of the Vologda Oblast.** It is difficult to talk about the reasons for these changes yet. It is also unknown whether they can become a trend. Perhaps, this is due to a feeling that amidst the current confrontation between the capitalist and socialist development paradigms the beginning of a new political cycle can make significant adjustments in favor of the latter. At least this is what the expectations of broad layers of the population are focused on. According to experts, “socialism has not only risen, but it has exposed itself as a powerful political alternative to the ruling liberal mainstream”².

Thus, the results of sociological studies clearly demonstrate the trends of public opinion that were discussed in the article from the Chief Editor – people's dissatisfaction with the dynamics of the standard of living and quality of life, the critical need for social justice and its protection by the government are lingering and aggravating; this plays an increasingly important role in the formation of electoral preferences of Russians. Apparently, addressing the key concerns of the population is postponed to the beginning of a new political cycle and will be the theme line during the first months of work of the State Duma of the seventh convocation. Otherwise, it may cause social tension that will significantly complicate the situation in which the 2018 presidential election will be held.

² Kholmogorov E. O nereshennoi probleme sotsializma [About an unresolved issue of socialism]. *Gazeta “Zavtra”* [Newspaper “Tomorrow”], 2016, no. 17 (1169), April 28, p. 3.