

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 ISEDT 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 August – October 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 Dmitri Medvedev's presidency). The yearly dynamics of the data is presented beginning from 2013.

Estimation of performance of the authorities

In August – October 2016, the assessment of work of the President of the Russian Federation did not change significantly and amounted to 68–69%. Approval of the President's work remains at the level of 2015 (69%), which is significantly higher than in 2011–2014 (55–64%). Approximately one in five residents of the Vologda Oblast (20%) gives negative assessments of the President's work, which is slightly higher than in 2015 (18%) and significantly exceeds the level of 2007 (12%).

The assessment of the work of the Chairman of the Government of the Russian Federation over the past two months became slightly worse: the percentage of positive judgments decreased from 53 to 49%; the share of negative judgements increased from 28 to 31%. The proportion of positive judgments about the work of the Prime Minister remains lower than in 2014–2015 (54–58%).

For reference: the nationwide level of approval of the RF President's performance remains stable. In August – October 2016 it was 79–81% according to VTsIOM (the share of negative assessments was 13–15%); and in August – September it was 82% according to Levada-Center (the share of negative judgements was 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 ISEDT RAS polls are available at <http://www.vscs.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	Dec. 2015	Feb. 2016	Apr. 2016	June 2016	Aug. 2016	Oct. 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	69.7	68.1	66.9	67.4	68.7	68.4	68.2	-1	+10	-7
I don't approve	11.5	25.6	29.4	22.3	17.5	16.5	16.1	17.9	20.1	19.6	19.7	18.3	+1	-7	+7
Chairman of the RF Government*															
I approve	-*	59.3	48.9	54.2	58.1	57.9	54.9	53.5	52.8	52.7	49.4	53.5	-5	-6	-
I don't approve	-	24.7	32.8	27.6	21.7	21.7	22.6	25.7	28.6	27.7	30.6	26.2	+4	+1	-
Governor															
I approve	55.8	45.7	44.4	40.1	39.3	39.7	35.1	34.9	38.2	38.4	39.1	37.6	-2	-8	-18
I don't approve	22.2	30.5	33.2	38.9	36.2	35.3	38.2	39.6	40.3	40.0	39.3	38.8	+3	+8	+17

* Included into the survey since 2008.

In August – October 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 50–51%;
- 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 36–37%;
- 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 26–27%.

It should be noted that in February – October 2016, the percentage of Vologda Oblast residents who think that Russian President's work on economic recovery and growth of welfare of citizens is unsuccessful increased from 57 to 61%.

Over the last 12 months on average the proportion of positive ratings (26%) remains lower than in 2011–2015 (31–35%).

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	Dec. 2015	Feb. 2016	Apr. 2016	June 2016	Anp. 2016	Oct. 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	53.2	50.9	50.7	52.2	50.1	51.4	51.4	0	+5	-7
Unsuccessful	24.9	33.7	36.2	32.4	31.3	31.5	29.1	30.9	29.0	30.3	28.8	29.9	-1	-4	+5
<i>Index of success</i>	133.5	112.5	109.5	118.0	120.4	121.7	121.8	119.8	123.2	119.8	122.6	121.5	+1	+9	-12
Imposing order in the country															
Successful	53.2	36.6	39.4	48.0	50.2	50.5	47.7	48.1	49.7	50.0	49.7	49.3	-1	+13	-4
Unsuccessful	34.0	50.0	47.5	39.1	37.9	38.0	37.2	38.2	37.5	35.1	35.6	36.9	-1	-13	+3
<i>Index of success</i>	119.2	86.6	91.9	108.9	112.3	112.5	110.5	109.9	112.2	115.4	114.1	112.4	0	+26	-7
Protecting democracy and strengthening the citizens' freedoms															
Successful	44.4	32.4	31.8	37.5	40.4	41.0	36.9	35.6	38.3	36.7	35.7	37.4	-3	+5	-7
Unsuccessful	37.0	48.3	51.0	45.4	41.5	43.7	44.3	45.3	42.2	45.0	44.7	44.2	+3	-4	+7
<i>Index of success</i>	107.4	84.1	80.8	92.1	99.0	97.3	92.6	90.3	96.1	91.7	91.0	93.2	-6	+9	-14
Economic recovery and increase in the citizens' welfare															
Successful	47.2	30.7	31.3	34.8	34.2	30.9	28.0	27.6	27.5	26.7	26.4	27.9	-6	-3	-19
Unsuccessful	39.1	56.1	56.8	53.4	52.3	55.7	57.0	57.9	59.1	60.4	60.9	58.5	+6	+2	+19
<i>Index of success</i>	108.1	74.6	74.5	81.4	81.8	75.2	71.0	69.7	68.4	66.3	65.5	69.4	-12	-5	-39

* Ranked according to the average value of the index of success for 2015.

Over the past two months, the structure of Russians' preferences concerning political parties did not change and it has remained stable since the beginning of 2016. The United Russia party is supported by 36–37%, LDPR – by 11–13%, KPRF – by 8–9%, the Just Russia party – by 5–6%.

According to the results of the 2016 State Duma election the ruling party received 38% of votes, LDPR – 22%, the Communist Party – 14%, the Just Russia party – 11%. As in 2011, supporters of the ruling party showed the almost complete coincidence of sociological measurement and results of the vote. A two-fold excess in the proportion of those who voted for United Russia over the proportion of those who shared the ideas of this party in 2007 may indicate that an administrative resource was involved. During the last two election campaigns, LDPR, KPRF and just Russia showed a significant gap between expected and real support, pulling part of the votes of the United Russia party.

C Since April 2016 there has been a 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%, in October – 24%). It is connected with the primaries held by United Russia in May 2016 and also with the election to the State Duma of the seventh convocation held on September 18, 2016.

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	Election to the RF State Duma 2016, fact		Dec. 2015	Feb. 2016	Apr. 2016	June 2016	Aug. 2016	Oct. 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	36.3	36.2	-3	+5	+6		
LDPR	7.5	11.0	7.8	15.4	7.2	7.6	6.2	21.9	7.1	6.9	8.2	10.3	10.5	12.8	9.3	+3	+2	+2		
KPRF	7.0	9.3	10.3	16.8	11.3	9.7	7.1	14.2	6.5	9.4	7.2	8.0	7.5	9.0	7.9	+1	-2	+1		
Just Russia	7.8	8.8	5.6	27.2	4.6	3.5	3.6	10.8	3.7	2.7	2.7	4.0	4.7	6.1	4.0	0	-2	-4		
Other	1.8	–	1.9	–	0.6	0.3	0.2	–	0.4	0.5	0.2	0.3	0.4	0.3	0.4	0	-2	-1		
No party	17.8	–	29.4	–	34.9	34.4	31.8	–	30.5	31.7	34.9	29.7	26.1	23.7	29.4	-2	0	+12		
It is difficult to answer	21.2	–	13.2	–	10.2	11.7	12.2	–	12.9	13.7	12.7	11.7	14.3	11.8	12.9	+1	0	-8		

* Ranked according to the official results of the voting on the territory of the Vologda Oblast on September 18, 2016 (preliminary data of the CEC as of September 20, 2016).

Assessments of social feeling in August – October 2016 did not change significantly:
 – the proportion of people who describe their mood as “normal, good” remains at the level of 69–70%;

– 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 78–80%.

The proportion of the Vologda Oblast residents who consider themselves “rich” or “with average income” was 42–43% in October 2016 (like in August), which is slightly higher than at the beginning of the year (40%). The proportion of people who consider themselves “poor and extremely poor” remains higher and amounts to 49–50%.

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, and 81 p. in October. 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	Dec. 2015	Feb. 2016	Apr. 2016	June 2016	Anp. 2016	Oct. 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	69.6	63.4	67.0	68.0	68.8	70.2	67.8	-1	+5	+4
I feel stress, anger, fear, depression	27.8	28.9	26.2	24.9	25.9	24.3	28.9	25.4	26.7	25.8	24.3	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	78.4	78.0	73.1	77.5	78.2	78.3	79.5	77.4	-1	+3	+3
It's impossible to bear such plight	13.6	15.3	14.2	12.6	14.5	12.7	16.1	16.4	15.7	15.5	14.9	15.2	+1	0	+2
Social self-identification*															
The share of people who consider themselves to have average income	48.2	43.1	43.9	43.2	38.7	38.9	39.9	40.9	42.8	43.2	42.3	41.3	+3	-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	50.5	51.4	49.4	47.1	49.5	48.9	49.5	-1	+5	+7
Consumer sentiment index															
Index value, points	105.9	89.6	90.3	87.6	77.1	77.7	75.0	74.4	77.3	79.4	80.8	77.4	0	-12	-28

* Question: "Which category do you belong to, in your opinion?"

In general in the Vologda Oblast, in August – October 2016, the percentage of those who describe their social mood as being “good, normal, positive” has remained stable (70%). For the last two months, there have been no significant changes in the context of different socio-demographic groups.

In two out of 14 socio-demographic categories there was an increase in the percentage of people describing their mood as positive. Among them:

- men (by 5 p.p., from 67 to 72%);
- persons with secondary and incomplete secondary education (by 3 p.p., from 62 to 65%), and people with secondary vocational education (also by 3 p.p., from 69 to 72%).

Formally (within the sampling error), the decline in the assessments of social mood in August – October 2016 is registered in only one category – among people with higher and incomplete higher education (the percentage of positive judgments decreased by 2 p.p., from 77 to 75%)

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

Population group	2007	2011	2013	2014	2015	Dec. 2015	Feb. 2016	Apr. 2016	June 2016	Anp. 2016	Oct. 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	69.9	63.9	66.5	70.0	67.3	71.6	68.2	-1	+4	+2
Women	61.7	62.0	67.5	69.8	68.0	69.2	63.1	67.5	66.5	70.0	69.0	67.6	0	+6	+6
Age															
Under 30	71.3	70.0	75.5	75.1	77.1	76.9	69.9	75.4	81.2	74.5	76.3	75.7	-1	+6	+4
30-55	64.8	62.5	69.2	69.5	67.2	69.0	62.1	66.0	68.3	67.1	68.9	66.9	0	+4	+2
Over 55	54.8	58.3	62.4	65.4	65.5	65.9	61.5	63.7	59.8	67.7	68.3	64.5	-1	+6	+10
Education															
Secondary and incomplete secondary	58.4	57.4	60.6	62.5	63.6	64.6	57.8	62.4	62.9	61.7	64.7	62.4	-1	+5	+4
Secondary vocational	64.6	63.6	68.1	70.4	70.1	67.7	60.7	67.3	69.3	68.5	72.1	67.6	-2	+4	+3
Higher and incomplete higher	68.6	68.3	77.4	76.2	72.7	76.9	72.9	71.5	73.3	76.8	74.6	74.3	+2	+6	+6
Income groups															
20% of the poorest people	51.6	45.3	46.2	50.8	51.8	49.8	42.6	51.3	52.0	56.3	55.5	51.3	-1	+6	0
60% of the people with median income	62.9	65.3	71.9	72.3	71.0	72.2	66.3	67.6	69.3	70.4	71.8	69.6	-1	+4	+7
20% of the most prosperous people	74.9	75.3	83.3	84.8	82.0	78.8	77.9	81.0	85.2	78.5	79.3	80.1	-2	+5	+5
Territories															
Vologda	63.1	67.1	75.0	76.4	73.9	73.6	65.1	69.1	71.5	69.2	71.0	69.9	-4	+3	+7
Cherepovets	68.1	71.2	75.3	76.3	70.6	73.2	66.4	70.5	72.5	74.0	72.7	71.6	+1	0	+3
Districts	61.6	57.1	61.6	61.8	64.6	65.0	60.9	63.9	63.7	65.7	68.1	64.6	0	+7	+3
Oblast	63.6	63.1	68.6	69.4	68.7	69.5	63.5	67.1	68.1	68.8	70.1	67.9	-1	+5	+4

Conclusion

According to the results of the main political event of 2016 (election to the State Duma of the seventh convocation, which took place on September 18), the United Russia party got a constitutional majority in the Parliament, because it received 55% of votes nationwide (compared to 49% in 2011). In the Vologda Oblast, according to the preliminary data of the Central Election Commission, 38% voted for United Russia, which is 5 p.p. higher than in 2011 (33%).

However, in absolute terms, the number of votes for the ruling party at the 2016 election compared to 2011 decreased: nationwide – by 3.9 million people (from 32.4 to 28.5 million), in the Vologda Oblast – by 39.3 thousand people (from 184.7 to 145.4 thousand). It should also be noted that, in comparison with 2011, voter turnout in Russia as a whole decreased significantly – by 12 p.p. (from 60.2 to 47.8%), in the Vologda Oblast – by 15 p.p. (from 56.3 to 40.9%). In absolute terms, voter turnout in 2016, compared to 2011, decreased by 13.1 million people nationwide (from 65.7 to 52.6 million), in the Vologda Oblast – by 162.5 thousand (from 553.7 to 391.2 thousand).

The Central Election Commission's official data on the election to the State Duma of the seventh convocation fully reflect public opinion trends observed in sociological monitoring measurements. 38% of the Vologda Oblast residents note that the United Russia party expresses their interests, the party obtained the same percentage of votes on September 18.

It should also be noted that support for United Russia since February 2016 remains at the level of 35–36%. Its victory was largely achieved thanks to the low turnout and return to the mixed voting system. **The proportion of positive assessments of the work of United Russia Chairman Dmitri Medvedev in the period from August to October 2016 declined by 4 p.p. (from 53 to 49%).**

During 2016 (as well as in the past two months) there were no significant improvements in self-assessment of people's financial situation: the share of those who consider themselves "poor and extremely poor" is 50%. People's opinions about the success with which the President deals with economic recovery and increase in the welfare of citizens also remain negative (the share of negative assessments is 60–61%, positive – 26–27%).

The lack of positive change in people's perception of the dynamics of the standard of living and quality of life correlates with the data of official statistics. **Thus, according to Vologdastat, in July 2016, real disposable income of the Vologda Oblast residents amounted to 88.6% compared to July 2015, and real wages – 98%.**

Thus, the 2016 election campaign has not led to significant changes in public opinion about the state of the Russian society, the population shows neither excessive optimism nor pessimism. People are waiting for the development of events. We can only agree with the President that "this election result is, without question, an advance on the part of our people, and we now must live up to their expectations"², and hope that this advance will be justified.

² Stenogramma soveshchaniya Prezidenta RF V.V. Putina s chlenami Pravitel'stva RF 19 sentyabrya 2016 g. [Transcript of the meeting of President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin with members of the Russian Government on September 19, 2016]. *Ofitsial'nyi sait Prezidenta RF* [Official website of Russian President]. Available at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/52913>