

The section “Public Opinion Monitoring of the State of the Russian Society” presents the results of regular opinion polls conducted by VoIRC RAS in the Vologda Oblast. The information is published in our journal since March 2009 (Issue 1(5)) as part of the article from the chief editor.

Since October 2017 onward (beginning with Issue 5(53)) “Public Opinion Monitoring” is published as an Annex to the issue presenting reference information about major trends in social well-being of the region’s residents.

Public Opinion Monitoring of the State of the Russian Society

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

The following tables show the dynamics of several parameters indicating the social feeling and socio-political sentiment of the Vologda Oblast population in August – October 2017, and also on average for the latest six polls (December 2016 – October 2017). 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 are presented beginning from 2013.

In August – October 2017, the level of approval of the work of the President of the Russian Federation did not change significantly (68–70%). It corresponds to an average annual indicator for 2015–2016 and is slightly higher than at the beginning of 2017 (66%). The share of negative evaluations of the President’s work for the last two months is 17–19%.

The level of support for the Chairman of the Government of the Russian Federation did not change significantly: the share of positive judgements in August – October is 50–52%. The proportion of negative assessments is 30%, which is higher than in 2015 (22%) and in 2016 (28%).

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 1,500 people 18 years of age 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 information on the results of VoIRC RAS polls is available at <http://www.vssc.ac.ru/>.

For reference: the nationwide level of approval of the RF President's performance remains stable. According to VTsIOM, In September and in the first half of October it was 83–85% (the share of negative assessments was 11%). The proportion of positive assessments of the work of the Chairman of the RF Government in September and in the first half of October was 52–54% (the share of negative assessments was 31–32%).

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

| Answer | 2007 | 2011 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | Dec. 2016 | Feb. 2017 | Apr. 2017 | June 2017 | Aug. 2017 | Oct. 2017 | Average for the latest 6 surveys | Dynamics (+/-), the latest 6 surveys compared to... | | |
|--|------|------|------|------|------|------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|----------------------------------|---|------|------|
| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 2016 | 2011 | 2007 |
| RF President | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| I approve | 75.3 | 58.7 | 55.3 | 64.1 | 69.1 | 67.8 | 67.3 | 65.7 | 63.6 | 67.5 | 69.7 | 68.3 | 67.0 | -1 | +8 | -8 |
| I don't approve | 11.5 | 25.6 | 29.4 | 22.3 | 17.5 | 18.8 | 19.3 | 21.1 | 23.6 | 19.3 | 17.3 | 19.4 | 20.0 | +1 | -6 | +9 |
| Chairman of the RF Government * | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| I approve | -* | 59.3 | 48.9 | 54.2 | 58.1 | 52.3 | 50.4 | 50.4 | 47.5 | 47.9 | 49.7 | 51.5 | 49.6 | -3 | -10 | - |
| I don't approve | - | 24.7 | 32.8 | 27.6 | 21.7 | 27.6 | 30.1 | 29.8 | 32.8 | 32.1 | 30.9 | 29.9 | 30.9 | +3 | +6 | - |
| Governor | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| I approve | 55.8 | 45.7 | 44.4 | 40.1 | 39.3 | 37.7 | 40.2 | 38.9 | 36.7 | 40.6 | 42.3 | 40.8 | 39.9 | +2 | -6 | -16 |
| I don't approve | 22.2 | 30.5 | 33.2 | 38.9 | 36.2 | 39.3 | 38.5 | 37.8 | 41.1 | 38.9 | 38.7 | 39.2 | 39.0 | 0 | +9 | +17 |
| * Included in the survey since 2008. | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

There were no substantial changes in the assessment of success of the President's actions in addressing the key problems of the country over the past two months:

- the share of those who think that the President successfully copes with the task of strengthening international positions of Russia is 58% (26% of the Vologda Oblast residents think otherwise);

- the share of those who think that the President successfully copes with the task of restoring order in the country is 52-53% (the share of negative judgements is 35-36%);

- the share of those who believe that the President is successful in protecting democracy and strengthening citizens' freedoms is 42% (the share of negative judgements is 38-39%);

- 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 31-32% (55-56% of the Vologda Oblast residents think otherwise).

We should note that in December 2016 – October 2017, there has been a gradual increase in the index of success of the President’s work to address the most critical issue of economic growth and welfare in Russia (during this time, the index increased by 11 points, from 66 to 77 points). However, the value of this index is still below 100 points, which means that there is a predominance of negative judgments in people’s assessments of the President’s work to increase the welfare of the population.

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

| Answer | 2007 | 2011 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | Dec. 2016 | Feb. 2017 | Apr. 2017 | June 2017 | Aug. 2017 | Oct. 2017 | Average for the latest 6 surveys | Dynamics (+/-), the latest 6 surveys compared to... | | |
|---|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|----------------------------------|---|------|------|
| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 2016 | 2011 | 2007 |
| Strengthening Russia’s international standing | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Successful | 58.4 | 46.2 | 45.7 | 50.4 | 51.7 | 51.2 | 51.9 | 54.5 | 52.4 | 55.3 | 58.1 | 57.6 | 55.0 | +4 | +9 | -3 |
| Unsuccessful | 24.9 | 33.7 | 36.2 | 32.4 | 31.3 | 29.9 | 31.1 | 26.5 | 27.7 | 25.8 | 26.1 | 26.3 | 27.3 | -3 | -6 | +2 |
| Success index | 133.5 | 112.5 | 109.5 | 118.0 | 120.4 | 121.3 | 120.8 | 128.0 | 124.7 | 129.5 | 132.0 | 131.3 | 127.7 | +6 | +15 | -6 |
| Imposing order in the country | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Successful | 53.2 | 36.6 | 39.4 | 48.0 | 50.2 | 49.2 | 50.2 | 49.5 | 47.3 | 49.9 | 52.0 | 52.7 | 50.3 | +1 | +14 | -3 |
| Unsuccessful | 34.0 | 50.0 | 47.5 | 39.1 | 37.9 | 36.7 | 36.7 | 36.8 | 38.8 | 35.8 | 35.6 | 35.1 | 36.5 | 0 | -14 | +2 |
| Success index | 119.2 | 86.6 | 91.9 | 108.9 | 112.3 | 112.6 | 113.5 | 112.7 | 108.5 | 114.1 | 116.4 | 117.6 | 113.8 | +1 | +27 | -5 |
| Protecting democracy and strengthening citizens’ freedoms | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Successful | 44.4 | 32.4 | 31.8 | 37.5 | 40.4 | 36.6 | 36.2 | 38.6 | 36.8 | 39.1 | 41.7 | 42.5 | 39.2 | +3 | +7 | -5 |
| Unsuccessful | 37.0 | 48.3 | 51.0 | 45.4 | 41.5 | 44.3 | 44.3 | 41.3 | 43.5 | 39.7 | 38.8 | 38.3 | 41.0 | -3 | -7 | +4 |
| Success index | 107.4 | 84.1 | 80.8 | 92.1 | 99.0 | 92.3 | 91.9 | 97.3 | 93.3 | 99.4 | 102.9 | 104.2 | 98.2 | +6 | +14 | -9 |
| Economic recovery and increase in citizens’ welfare | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Successful | 47.2 | 30.7 | 31.3 | 34.8 | 34.2 | 27.2 | 27.2 | 26.1 | 25.8 | 28.5 | 31.3 | 32.3 | 28.5 | +1 | -2 | -19 |
| Unsuccessful | 39.1 | 56.1 | 56.8 | 53.4 | 52.3 | 59.4 | 61.1 | 59.1 | 57.3 | 57.2 | 55.9 | 55.3 | 57.7 | -2 | +2 | +19 |
| Success index | 108.1 | 74.6 | 74.5 | 81.4 | 81.8 | 67.8 | 66.1 | 67.0 | 68.5 | 71.3 | 75.4 | 77.0 | 70.9 | +3 | -4 | -37 |
| * Ranked according to the average value of the index of success for 2016. | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

Over the past two months, the structure of Russians' preferences concerning political parties did not change significantly. The United Russia Party is supported by 35% (which, however, is lower than in 2015 (39%), LDPR – by 11%, KPRF – by 11%, the Just Russia Party – by 5%.

We should also note that in October 2017, as well as in August, 40% of respondents found it difficult to choose from Parliament parties the one that reflects their interests, or said that none of them expressed their opinion.

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

| Party | 2007 | | 2011 | | 2013 | | 2014 | | 2015 | | 2016 | | 2017 | | Average for the latest 6 surveys | Dynamics (+/-), the latest 6 surveys compared to... | | | |
|---------------------------|------|--|------|--|------|------|------|------|--|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|----------------------------------|---|------|------|------|
| | 2007 | Election to the RF State Duma 2007, fact | 2011 | Election to the RF State Duma 2011, fact | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | Election to the RF State Duma 2016, fact | Dec. 2016 | Feb. 2017 | Apr. 2017 | June 2017 | Aug. 2017 | | Oct. 2017 | 2016 | 2011 | 2007 |
| United Russia | 30.2 | 60.5 | 31.1 | 33.4 | 29.4 | 32.8 | 38.8 | 35.4 | 38.0 | 34.5 | 33.9 | 31.8 | 33.8 | 35.2 | 35.6 | 34.1 | -1 | +3 | +4 |
| LDPR | 7.5 | 11.0 | 7.8 | 15.4 | 7.2 | 7.6 | 6.2 | 10.4 | 21.9 | 13.9 | 10.2 | 10.7 | 11.1 | 10.9 | 11.5 | 11.4 | +1 | +4 | +4 |
| KPRF | 7.0 | 9.3 | 10.3 | 16.8 | 11.3 | 9.7 | 7.1 | 8.3 | 14.2 | 8.7 | 7.2 | 6.2 | 8.5 | 8.0 | 7.3 | 7.7 | -1 | -3 | +1 |
| Just Russia | 7.8 | 8.8 | 5.6 | 27.2 | 4.6 | 3.5 | 3.6 | 4.2 | 10.8 | 4.9 | 4.3 | 4.8 | 5.1 | 5.8 | 4.5 | 4.9 | +1 | -1 | -3 |
| Other | 1.8 | - | 1.9 | - | 0.6 | 0.3 | 0.2 | 0.3 | - | 0.3 | 0.1 | 0.5 | 0.3 | 0.4 | 0.8 | 0.4 | 0 | -2 | -1 |
| No party | 17.8 | - | 29.4 | - | 34.9 | 34.4 | 31.8 | 29.4 | - | 30.1 | 30.7 | 34.8 | 29.1 | 26.1 | 26.2 | 29.5 | 0 | 0 | +12 |
| It is difficult to answer | 21.2 | - | 13.2 | - | 10.2 | 11.7 | 12.2 | 12.0 | - | 7.7 | 13.6 | 11.2 | 12.1 | 13.7 | 14.1 | 12.1 | 0 | -1 | -9 |

The most significant changes in August – October 2017 occurred in the dynamics of assessments of social well-being:

- in the past two months, the percentage of people describing their mood as positive decreased (by 3 p.p., from 74 to 71%);
- the share of those who believe that “everything is not so bad; it is difficult to live, but possible to stand it” decreased by 7 p.p. (from 81 to 74%).

As the results of the survey show, it may be associated with the dynamics of the assessments of people's standard of living. Thus, for the period from August to October 2017, the proportion of those who subjectively consider themselves to be "poor and extremely poor", increased by 3 p.p. (from 46 to 49%, which is the highest value for the latest six surveys).

Meanwhile, the dynamics of the consumer confidence index (CSI) show no negative changes: like two months earlier, it is 86 points, which indicates the predominance of pessimistic forecasts concerning the prospects of the economic situation in the country and people's personal financial situation.

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

| Answer | 2007 | 2011 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | Dec. 2016 | Feb. 2017 | Apr. 2017 | June 2017 | Aug. 2017 | Oct. 2017 | Average for the latest 6 surveys | Dynamics (+/-), the latest 6 surveys compared to... | | |
|---|-------|------|------|------|------|------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|----------------------------------|---|------|------|
| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 2016 | 2011 | 2007 |
| Mood | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Usual condition, good mood | 63.6 | 63.1 | 68.6 | 69.4 | 68.7 | 68.0 | 70.4 | 67.2 | 68.6 | 71.0 | 73.8 | 71.0 | 70.3 | +2 | +7 | +7 |
| I feel stress, anger, fear, depression | 27.8 | 28.9 | 26.2 | 24.9 | 25.9 | 26.2 | 26.1 | 28.5 | 25.5 | 23.2 | 21.2 | 22.8 | 24.6 | -2 | -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 | 78.4 | 78.0 | 81.1 | 78.2 | 77.3 | 78.7 | 80.5 | 74.4 | 78.4 | 0 | +4 | +4 |
| It's impossible to bear such plight | 13.6 | 15.3 | 14.2 | 12.6 | 14.5 | 15.6 | 14.9 | 16.1 | 16.4 | 14.8 | 13.5 | 17.5 | 15.5 | 0 | 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 | 42.1 | 43.7 | 42.5 | 42.8 | 43.5 | 45.2 | 43.0 | 43.5 | +1 | 0 | -5 |
| The share of people who consider themselves to be poor and extremely poor | 42.4 | 44.3 | 46.9 | 49.1 | 50.7 | 49.0 | 47.4 | 47.2 | 47.3 | 43.2 | 45.8 | 48.8 | 46.6 | -2 | +2 | +4 |
| Consumer sentiment index | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Index value, points | 105.9 | 89.6 | 90.3 | 87.6 | 77.1 | 77.7 | 79.4 | 82.0 | 80.8 | 84.3 | 86.2 | 86.7 | 83.2 | +6 | -6 | -23 |
| * Question: "Which category do you belong to, in your opinion?" | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

Negative changes in the dynamics of social mood in the past two months occurred in 6 out of 14 socio-demographic categories (in other groups no significant changes are observed). First of all, we should note a decrease in the proportion of positive characteristics of emotional condition among men (by 4 p.p., from 75 to 71%); people 30 to 55 years of age (by 5 p.p., from 76 to 71%); and among those who according to their own assessments of their income fall within the category of 20% of the wealthiest (by 4 p.p., from 86 to 82%).

Social mood in different social groups (answer: "Good mood, normal condition", as a percentage of the number of respondents)

| Population group | 2007 | 2011 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | Dec. 2016 | Feb. 2017 | Apr. 2017 | June 2017 | Aug. 2017 | Oct. 2017 | Average for the latest 6 surveys | Dynamics (+/-), the latest 6 surveys compared to... | | |
|--------------------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|----------------------------------|---|------|------|
| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 2016 | 2011 | 2007 |
| Sex | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Men | 65.9 | 64.5 | 69.9 | 68.9 | 69.5 | 68.8 | 73.3 | 66.9 | 67.6 | 72.5 | 74.6 | 71.3 | 71.0 | +2 | +7 | +5 |
| Women | 61.7 | 62.0 | 67.5 | 69.8 | 68.0 | 67.4 | 68.1 | 67.4 | 69.4 | 69.9 | 73.1 | 70.8 | 69.8 | +2 | +8 | +8 |
| Age | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Under 30 | 71.3 | 70.0 | 75.5 | 75.1 | 77.1 | 76.4 | 80.8 | 70.9 | 80.5 | 75.4 | 80.1 | 79.4 | 77.9 | +1 | +8 | +7 |
| 30-55 | 64.8 | 62.5 | 69.2 | 69.5 | 67.2 | 67.4 | 71.8 | 66.7 | 70.1 | 72.0 | 75.9 | 71.4 | 71.3 | +4 | +9 | +7 |
| Over 55 | 54.8 | 58.3 | 62.4 | 65.4 | 65.5 | 64.0 | 62.8 | 65.8 | 60.4 | 67.4 | 67.8 | 66.4 | 65.1 | +1 | +7 | +10 |
| Education | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Secondary and incomplete secondary | 58.4 | 57.4 | 60.6 | 62.5 | 63.6 | 62.1 | 62.8 | 61.4 | 64.9 | 65.8 | 65.2 | 63.3 | 63.9 | +2 | +7 | +6 |
| Secondary vocational | 64.6 | 63.6 | 68.1 | 70.4 | 70.1 | 68.4 | 72.7 | 67.7 | 69.3 | 70.2 | 76.7 | 73.3 | 71.7 | +3 | +8 | +7 |
| Higher and incomplete higher | 68.6 | 68.3 | 77.4 | 76.2 | 72.7 | 74.3 | 76.9 | 73.1 | 71.7 | 78.0 | 79.1 | 77.1 | 76.0 | +2 | +8 | +7 |
| Income groups | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 20% of the poorest people | 51.6 | 45.3 | 46.2 | 50.8 | 51.8 | 52.5 | 57.5 | 44.6 | 49.1 | 57.1 | 58.1 | 57.9 | 54.1 | +2 | +9 | +2 |
| 60% of the people with median income | 62.9 | 65.3 | 71.9 | 72.3 | 71.0 | 69.4 | 70.7 | 70.8 | 70.6 | 72.9 | 73.7 | 71.7 | 71.7 | +2 | +6 | +9 |
| 20% of the most prosperous people | 74.9 | 75.3 | 83.3 | 84.8 | 82.0 | 80.9 | 83.5 | 86.3 | 79.9 | 81.3 | 86.4 | 82.1 | 83.3 | +2 | +8 | +8 |
| Territories | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Vologda | 63.1 | 67.1 | 75.0 | 76.4 | 73.9 | 69.9 | 73.6 | 67.9 | 70.6 | 74.0 | 77.0 | 74.0 | 72.9 | +3 | +6 | +10 |
| Cherepovets | 68.1 | 71.2 | 75.3 | 76.3 | 70.6 | 71.7 | 74.0 | 73.7 | 74.1 | 76.1 | 77.9 | 76.9 | 75.5 | +4 | +4 | +7 |
| Districts | 61.6 | 57.1 | 61.6 | 61.8 | 64.6 | 64.8 | 66.6 | 63.1 | 64.3 | 66.6 | 69.7 | 66.1 | 66.1 | +1 | +9 | +4 |
| Oblast | 63.6 | 63.1 | 68.6 | 69.4 | 68.7 | 68.0 | 70.4 | 67.2 | 68.6 | 71.1 | 73.8 | 71.1 | 70.4 | +2 | +7 | +7 |

CONCLUSION

The results of this stage of the monitoring indicate that, despite the fact that the level of support of the President is still consistently high (68-69%), the dynamics of social well-being show negative change. There has been a decrease in the proportion of those who positively describe their emotional state, people's stock of patience has decreased, and the proportion of "the poor and the extremely poor" has increased. These changes have not yet become a trend and they still can be of a seasonal nature (for example, they can be associated with the end of the holiday period). However, there is reason to believe that in this way people can respond to the discrepancy between the official statements of the authorities and the real situation in the dynamics of the standard of living and quality of life.

Contrary to the statements of the minister of economic development Maxim Oreshkin that "pessimistic forecasts of experts who did not expect GDP to grow by more than 1 percent have not materialized" and that "following a minor technical slowdown in July, we expect a new wave of positive news and accelerated economic growth in the next few months"², the dynamics of the standard of living show no significant changes so far, as evidenced by the data of official statistics. For instance, in the first half of 2017, compared with the first half of 2016, the consumer price index in the Vologda Oblast increased by 1.6% (for food products – by 2.6%). While real disposable monetary incomes of inhabitants of the region decreased by 10%. Experts of Vologdastat note that "almost one third of organizations sustained loss from economic activity. Compared with the corresponding period of the previous year (the 1st half of 2017 to the 1st half of 2016) the amount of the loss of unprofitable organizations increased by 54.8% and amounted to 1.7 billion rubles"³.

It is noteworthy that negative changes in social mood are observed not in socially vulnerable population groups (pensioners, low-income categories of citizens), but primarily among middle-aged people and those who assesses their own incomes as being average or high. Real wage, which is the main source of income in these groups increased by only 1.1% in the 1st half of 2017 compared with the 1st half of 2016.

Thus, ordinary citizens still do not feel that that "the Russian economy has overcome the crisis and is gathering momentum"⁴. The unfulfilled expectations of people regarding the standard of living negatively affect social identity and the assessments of social well-being. In this regard, further dynamics of public opinion will largely depend on whether the Russian economy is able not only to get out of the crisis, but also to develop at such a rate that the general population would feel it.

Materials were prepared by M.V. Morev, I.V. Paranicheva, T.V. Urvanova.

² Speech of M.S. Oreshkin at the meeting of the Russian President with Government members on September 11, 2017: transcript. *Official website of the Russian President*. Available at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/55590>

³ *Sotsial'no-ekonomicheskoe polozhenie Vologodskoi oblasti v 1 polugodii 2017 g.*[Socio-economic situation in the Vologda Oblast in the first half-year of 2017]. Vologdastat, 2017. 13 p.

⁴ Vladimir Putin's speech at the meeting of the Russian President with Government members on September 11, 2017: transcript. *Official website of the Russian President*. Available at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/55590>