

The section “Public Opinion Monitoring of the State of the Russian Society” presents the results of regular sociological polls conducted by VoIRC RAS on the territory of the Vologda Oblast. Previously, the information was published in our journal since March 2009 (Issue 1(5)) as part of the editorial article.

From October 2017 onward (beginning with Issue 5(53)) “Public Opinion Monitoring” is published as an Appendix to the issue and is placed at the end of the Journal, after all the scientific papers. Thus, the results of the monitoring present on a regular basis the 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 December 2017 – February 2018, and also on average for the latest six polls (April 2017 – February 2018). 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 December 2017 – February 2018, the level of approval of the work of the President of the Russian Federation did not change significantly (68–69%). It corresponds to an average annual indicator for 2015–2016. The share of negative evaluations of the President’s work for the past two months did not change and is 19–21%

The level of support of the work of the Chairman of the Government of the Russian Federation in December 2017 – February 2018 was 48–50, **which is a bit lower than in 2014–2016 (52–58%)**. The proportion of negative assessments has remained stable since June 2017 (30–32%).

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.vscac.ru/>

For reference: according to VTsIOM, the share of positive assessments of the President's work nationwide did not change in December 2017 – January 2018 and amounted to 83–84% (the share of negative judgments was 10–11%).

The level of support for the Prime Minister from December to January decreased by 3 p.p. (from 54 to 51%), while the proportion of negative assessments remains stable: 32–33%.

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

Answer	2007	2011	2014	2015	2016	2017	Apr. 2017	June 2017	Aug. 2017	Oct. 2017	Dec. 2017	Feb. 2018	Average for the latest 6 surveys	Dynamics (+/-), the latest 6 surveys compared to...		
														2016	2011	2007
RF President																
I approve	75.3	58.7	64.1	69.1	67.8	67.3	63.6	67.5	69.7	68.3	68.9	68.7	67.8	0	+9	-8
I don't approve	11.5	25.6	22.3	17.5	18.8	20.0	23.6	19.3	17.3	19.4	19.3	20.8	20.0	+1	-6	+8
Chairman of the RF Government*																
I approve	59.3	48.9	54.2	58.1	52.3	50.4	47.5	47.9	49.7	51.5	49.9	49.5	-3	-10	-	-
I don't approve	-	24.7	32.8	27.6	21.7	27.6	29.8	32.8	32.1	30.9	29.9	31.3	31.1	+4	+6	-
Governor																
I approve	55.8	45.7	44.4	40.1	39.3	37.7	38.9	36.7	40.6	42.3	40.8	39.4	39.8	+2	-6	-16
I don't approve	22.2	30.5	33.2	38.9	36.2	39.3	37.8	41.1	38.9	38.7	39.2	40.1	39.3	0	+9	+17

* Included in the survey since 2008.

There were no substantial changes in the assessment of success of the President's work on 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 55–57%;
- the share of those who think that the President successfully copes with the task of restoring order in the country is 51–52%;
- the share of those who believe that the President is successful in protecting democracy and strengthening citizens' freedoms is 43%;
- 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%.

It should be noted that in February 2018, the proportion of people who consider the President's work to address the material problems of the population to be unsuccessful decreased slightly (by 3 p.p., from 56 to 53%; however, this area of the President's work still finds the least support among the people.

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

Answer	2007	2011	2014	2015	2016	2017	Apr. 2017	June 2017	Aug. 2017	Oct. 2017	Dec. 2017	Feb. 2018	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	50.4	51.7	51.2	55.7	52.4	55.3	58.1	57.6	56.5	55.2	55.9	+5	+10	-3
Unsuccessful	24.9	33.7	32.4	31.3	29.9	26.8	27.7	25.8	26.1	26.3	28.3	26.9	26.9	-3	-7	+2
<i>Success index</i>	133.5	112.5	118.0	120.4	121.3	129.0	124.7	129.5	132.0	131.3	128.3	128.3	129.0	+8	+17	-4
Imposing order in the country																
Successful	53.2	36.6	48.0	50.2	49.2	50.6	47.3	49.9	52.0	52.7	52.0	50.9	50.8	+2	+14	-2
Unsuccessful	34.0	50.0	39.1	37.9	36.7	36.1	38.8	35.8	35.6	35.1	34.6	32.7	35.4	-1	-15	+1
<i>Success index</i>	119.2	86.6	108.9	112.3	112.6	114.5	108.5	114.1	116.4	117.6	117.4	118.2	115.4	+3	+29	-4
Protecting democracy and strengthening citizens' freedoms																
Successful	44.4	32.4	37.5	40.4	36.6	40.3	36.8	39.1	41.7	42.5	43.3	42.8	41.0	+4	+9	-3
Unsuccessful	37.0	48.3	45.4	41.5	44.3	40.2	43.5	39.7	38.8	38.3	39.3	38.7	39.7	-5	-9	+3
<i>Success index</i>	107.4	84.1	92.1	99.0	92.3	100.2	93.3	99.4	102.9	104.2	103.9	104.1	101.3	+9	+17	-6
Economic recovery and increase in citizens' welfare																
Successful	47.2	30.7	34.8	34.2	27.2	29.3	25.8	28.5	31.3	32.3	31.6	31.0	30.1	+3	-1	-17
Unsuccessful	39.1	56.1	53.4	52.3	59.4	56.9	57.3	57.2	55.9	55.3	56.3	53.7	56.0	-3	0	+17
<i>Success index</i>	108.1	74.6	81.4	81.8	67.8	72.4	68.5	71.3	75.4	77.0	75.3	77.3	74.1	+6	0	-34

* Ranked according to the average value of the index of success for 2016.

The structure of Russians' preferences concerning political parties in December 2017 – February 2018 remains stable: the United Russia party is supported by 38%, which is a bit higher than in 2016–2017 (35%), LDPR is supported by 10–12%, KPRF – by 7–8%, the Just Russia party – by 4%.

Forty percent of Vologda Oblast residents believe that none of the main political parties expresses their interests or find it difficult to choose their political preferences (in December 2017, their share was 37%).

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		2014	2015	2016	Election to the RF State Duma 2016, fact		2017	Apr. 2017	June 2017	Aug. 2017	Oct. 2017	Dec. 2017	Feb. 2018	Average for the latest 6 surveys	Dynamics (+/-), the latest 6 surveys compared to...		
																					2016	2011	2007
United Russia	30.2	60.5	31.1	33.4	32.8	38.8	35.4	38.0	34.7	31.8	33.8	35.2	35.6	37.9	38.4	35.5	0	+4	+5				
LDPR	7.5	11.0	7.8	15.4	7.6	6.2	10.4	21.9	11.0	10.7	11.1	10.9	11.5	11.6	10.1	11.0	+1	+3	+3				
KPRF	7.0	9.3	10.3	16.8	9.7	7.1	8.3	14.2	7.6	6.2	8.5	8.0	7.3	8.1	7.1	7.5	-1	-3	+1				
Just Russia	7.8	8.8	5.6	27.2	3.5	3.6	4.2	10.8	4.8	4.8	5.1	5.8	4.5	4.3	3.5	4.7	0	-1	-3				
Other	1.8	-	1.9	-	0.3	0.2	0.3	-	0.5	0.5	0.3	0.4	0.8	1.1	0.9	0.7	0	-1	-1				
No party	17.8	-	29.4	-	34.4	31.8	29.4	-	29.2	34.8	29.1	26.1	26.2	28.5	28.8	28.9	0	0	+11				
I'm not sure	21.2	-	13.2	-	11.7	12.2	12.0	-	12.2	11.2	12.1	13.7	14.1	8.6	11.1	11.8	0	-1	-9				

Since October 2017, the share of people who characterize their daily mood as “normal, fine, and good” has remained stable (69–71%), as well as the proportion of those who believe that “everything is not so bad; it’s difficult to live, but it’s possible to stand it” (74–77%).

The structure of social self-identification over the past two months did not change: 41% of people consider themselves to have an “average income”, and 46% think they belong to the category of “poor and extremely poor”.

In February 2018, compared with December 2017, there was a slight increase in the consumer sentiment index, which indicates an increase in the optimistic expectations of the population regarding the development of the economic situation in the country and their personal financial situation (an increase by 2 points, from 87 to 89 p.). This is higher than in 2015–2017 (77–85 p.), however, it is still below the mark of 100 points, which indicates a predominance of negative public forecasts for the future.

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

Answer	2007	2011	2014	2015	2016	2017	Apr. 2017	June 2017	Aug. 2017	Oct. 2017	Dec. 2017	Feb. 2018	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	69.4	68.7	68.0	70.4	68.6	71.0	73.8	71.0	70.5	68.6	70.6	+3	+7	+7
I feel stress, anger, fear, depression	27.8	28.9	24.9	25.9	26.2	24.2	25.5	23.2	21.2	22.8	24.0	23.4	23.4	-3	-6	-4
Stock of patience																
Everything is not so bad; it's difficult to live, but it's possible to stand it	74.1	74.8	80.8	78.4	78.0	77.7	77.3	78.7	80.5	74.4	77.1	76.2	77.4	-1	+3	+3
It's impossible to bear such plight	13.6	15.3	12.6	14.5	15.6	15.8	16.4	14.8	13.5	17.5	16.2	16.3	15.8	0	0	+2
Social self-identification*																
The share of people who consider themselves to have average income	48.2	43.1	43.2	38.7	42.1	43.1	42.8	43.5	45.2	43.0	41.7	41.2	42.9	+1	0	-5
The share of people who consider themselves to be poor and extremely poor	42.4	44.3	49.1	50.7	49.0	46.6	47.3	43.2	45.8	48.8	47.1	46.2	46.4	-3	+2	+4
Consumer sentiment index																
Index value, points	105.9	89.6	87.6	77.1	77.7	84.6	80.8	84.3	86.2	86.7	87.3	89.2	85.8	+8	-4	-20
* Question: "Which category do you belong to, in your opinion?"																

In December 2017 – February 2018, the improvement in social mood is observed in only one socio-demographic group: among persons over 55 years of age (by 5 p.p., from 61 to 66%).

In 7 out of 4 socio-demographic groups, the number of people who experience mainly positive emotions decreased, and in some groups – very significantly. For example, over the past two months, among persons under 30 years of age, the percentage of positive ratings of social mood declined by 8 p.p. (from 82 to 74%); among people with secondary vocational education – by 6 p.p. (from 75 to 69%); among people 30 to 55 years old and among those whose self-reported income places them with the top 20% – by 4 p.p. (from 73 to 69% and from 86 to 82%, respectively).

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

Population group	2007	2011	2014	2015	2016	2017	Apr. 2017	June 2017	Aug. 2017	Oct. 2017	Dec. 2017	Feb. 2018	Average for the latest 6 surveys	Dynamics (+/-), the latest 6 surveys compared to...		
														2016	2011	2007
Sex																
Men	65.9	64.5	68.9	69.5	68.8	70.6	67.6	72.5	74.6	71.3	70.8	71.0	71.3	+3	+7	+5
Women	61.7	62.0	69.8	68.0	67.4	70.2	69.4	69.9	73.1	70.8	70.3	66.6	70.0	+3	+8	+8
Age																
Under 30	1.3	70.0	75.1	77.1	76.4	78.1	80.5	75.4	80.1	79.4	82.2	74.2	78.6	+2	+9	+7
30-55	64.8	62.5	69.5	67.2	67.4	71.5	70.1	72.0	75.9	71.4	73.1	68.8	71.9	+4	+9	+7
Over 55	54.8	58.3	65.4	65.5	64.0	64.9	60.4	67.4	67.8	66.4	61.4	65.6	64.8	+1	+7	+10
Education																
Secondary and incomplete secondary	58.4	57.4	62.5	63.6	62.1	63.6	64.9	65.8	65.2	63.3	61.2	60.5	63.5	+1	+6	+5
Secondary vocational	64.6	63.6	70.4	70.1	68.4	72.0	69.3	70.2	76.7	73.3	75.0	68.9	72.2	+4	+9	+8
Higher and incomplete higher	68.6	68.3	76.2	72.7	74.3	75.8	71.7	78.0	79.1	77.1	75.6	77.9	76.6	+2	+8	+8
Income groups																
Bottom 20%	51.6	45.3	50.8	51.8	52.5	52.9	49.1	57.1	58.1	57.9	50.7	47.7	53.4	+1	+8	+2
Middle 60%	62.9	65.3	72.3	71.0	69.4	72.0	70.6	72.9	73.7	71.7	72.0	70.3	71.9	+2	+7	+9
Top 20%	74.9	75.3	84.8	82.0	80.9	83.7	79.9	81.3	86.4	82.1	86.2	82.2	83.0	+2	+8	+8
Territories																
Vologda	63.1	67.1	76.4	73.9	69.9	72.6	70.6	74.0	77.0	74.0	72.2	71.0	73.1	+3	+6	+10
Cherepovets	68.1	71.2	76.3	70.6	71.7	75.7	74.1	76.1	77.9	76.9	75.2	71.5	75.3	+4	+4	+7
Districts	61.6	57.1	61.8	64.6	64.8	66.1	64.3	66.6	69.7	66.1	66.9	65.6	66.5	+2	+9	+5
Oblast	63.6	63.1	69.4	68.7	68.0	70.4	68.6	71.1	73.8	71.1	70.5	68.6	70.6	+3	+8	+7

CONCLUSION

According to the results of our opinion polls, there were no significant positive changes in people's assessment of the work of the authorities and political parties in the last two months (as well as in the longer term). In December 2017 – February 2018, the indicator of social mood significantly worsened in many socio-demographic groups (first of all, it should be noted that the proportion of people with predominantly positive emotions among people under the age of 30 decreased by eight percentage points, from 82 to 74%).

The structure of social self-identification also remains stable, and it cannot be characterized positively: 46–47% of Vologda Oblast residents subjectively consider themselves to be "poor and

extremely poor”, while the share of those who classify themselves as “having an average income” remains at the level of 41–42%.

According to some of their points, the data of the public opinion monitoring carried out by VolRC RAS correlate with the conclusions of Russian experts who speak about “the revival of consumer behavior”². For instance, over the last 5 months (from October 2017 to February 2018), the proportion of the “poor and extremely poor” residents of the Oblast slightly decreased (by 3 p.p., from 49 to 46%), which affected the growth of optimistic expectations of the population regarding the development of the economic situation in the country and their personal financial situation (during this period, the consumer sentiment index increased by 2 points – from 87 to 89).

Nevertheless, according to the majority of the key parameters of the monitoring, the dynamics of the data does not yet allow us to say that “the situation has been improved in general – people feel quite comfortable and believe that everything is developing in the country as it should be”³. We should sooner speak about a tense expectation of change. The absence of significant changes in the dynamics of the standard of living and quality of life in the Russian society creates a need for tangible development of the socio-economic situation in the country and makes appropriate requests to the future President, who is to be elected in less than two months. According to the data as of February 2018, 38% of Vologda Oblast residents believe that “the country needs changes, they are more important than stability”, and in cities this figure is even higher: 44–46%.

“The long-term trend of stability, the preservation of the system of institutions in another socio-economic reality has begun to shift toward the formation of a request for change”⁴ – this trend becomes the leading idea of the presidential election and, quite likely, the next months of political life. And since the majority of experts are confident about Vladimir Putin’s victory, the main question is whether the President will be able to realize the expectations of people to improve the standard of living and quality of life in 2018. This will determine the social stability in the country and further dynamics of public sentiment.

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

² *Consumer plans – 2018: VTsIOM Press Release*. 2018. No. 3583. February 16. Available at: <https://wciom.ru/index.php?id=236&uid=116700>

³ *Social mood of Russians: the results of 2017: VTsIOM Press Release*. 2018. No. 3550. January 9. Available at: <https://wciom.ru/index.php?id=236&uid=116623>

⁴ Beluza A. Request of the time. *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*, 2017, no. 7434 (268), November 25. Available at: <https://rg.ru/2017/11/25/sociologi-rasskazali-o-peremenah-v-umonastroeniiah-rossiian.html> (the quote from M. K. Gorshkov’s speech at the annual conference of the Russian Political Science Association “The time of big changes: politics and politicians”, Moscow, November 24–25, 2017).