

PUBLIC OPINION MONITORING

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. The monitoring is conducted by VolRC 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 2018, and also on average for the latest six polls (December 2017 – October 2018).

The results of the research 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), for 2011 (the last year of Dmitry Medvedev's presidency), and for 2012 (the first year of V. Putin's third presidential term).

The yearly dynamics of the data are presented for the last two years (2016–2017).

In August – October 2018, the level of approval of the work of the President of the Russian Federation decreased by 2 p.p. (from 66 to 64%). The trend of decreasing support for the head of state has been registered since June 2018. For this period, the share of those who positively estimate the work of Vladimir Putin has declined by 6 p.p. (from 70 to 64%).

The share of positive assessments concerning the work of the Prime Minister over the past two months decreased by 2 p.p. (from 47 to 45%), and for the period from June to October – by 7 p.p. (from 52 to 45%).

For reference:

According to VTsIOM, in August – September 2018, the share of positive assessments of the President's work did not change significantly (64%). According to Levada-Center, the share of people who support the activities of the head of state decreased by 3 p.p. (from 70 to 67%).

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 VolRC RAS polls is available at <http://www.vsrc.ac.ru/>.

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

| Answer | 2007 | 2011 | 2012 | 2016 | 2017 | Dec. 2017 | Feb. 2018 | Apr. 2018 | June 2018 | Aug. 2018 | Oct. 2018 | Average for the latest 6 surveys | Dynamics (+/-), the latest 6 surveys compared to ... | | |
|---------------------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--|--|------|------|
| | | | | | | | | | | | | | 2017 | 2011 | 2007 |
| RF President | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| I approve | 75.3 | 58.7 | 51.7 | 67.8 | 67.3 | 68.9 | 68.7 | 68.1 | 70.1 | 65.9 | 63.5 | 67.5 | 0 | +9 | -8 |
| I don't approve | 11.5 | 25.6 | 32.6 | 18.8 | 20.0 | 19.3 | 20.8 | 18.4 | 17.5 | 22.1 | 24.1 | 20.4 | 0 | -5 | +9 |
| Chairman of the RF Government* | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| I approve | -* | 59.3 | 49.6 | 52.3 | 49.5 | 49.9 | 48.3 | 49.9 | 52.0 | 47.4 | 45.2 | 48.8 | -1 | -11 | - |
| I don't approve | - | 24.7 | 33.3 | 27.6 | 31.1 | 31.3 | 30.8 | 27.8 | 27.5 | 31.9 | 34.8 | 30.7 | 0 | +6 | - |
| Governor | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| I approve | 55.8 | 45.7 | 41.9 | 37.7 | 39.8 | 39.4 | 39.3 | 39.5 | 40.5 | 37.3 | 35.7 | 38.6 | -1 | -7 | -17 |
| I don't approve | 22.2 | 30.5 | 33.3 | 39.3 | 39.3 | 40.1 | 37.9 | 36.1 | 35.3 | 36.9 | 39.1 | 37.6 | -2 | +7 | +15 |
| * Included in the survey since 2008. | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

In August – October, the proportion of people who believe that the President successfully addresses most of the key issues in the country decreased slightly (by 2–3 p.p.):

- ✓ the share of those who believe that V. Putin is successfully coping with the issues of strengthening Russia's international positions decreased from 53 до 51%;
- ✓ with restoring order in the country – from 51 to 49%;
- ✓ with protecting democracy and strengthening citizens' freedoms – from 40 to 37%.

The share of Vologda Oblast residents who give positive assessments to the President's efforts to raise the economy and increase the welfare of citizens has not changed over the past two months, however, it remains extremely low (31%). For comparison, 57% hold the opposite point of view.

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

| Answer | 2007 | 2011 | 2012 | 2016 | 2017 | Dec. 2017 | Feb. 2018 | Apr. 2018 | June 2018 | Aug. 2018 | Oct. 2018 | Average for the latest 6 surveys | Dynamics (+/-), the latest 6 surveys compared to ... | | |
|---|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--|--|------------|------------|
| | | | | | | | | | | | | | 2017 | 2011 | 2007 |
| Strengthening Russia's international standing | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Successful | 58.4 | 46.2 | 43.1 | 51.2 | 55.7 | 56.5 | 55.2 | 56.1 | 55.6 | 53.3 | 51.3 | 54.7 | -1 | +8 | -4 |
| Unsuccessful | 24.9 | 33.7 | 37.9 | 29.9 | 26.8 | 28.3 | 26.9 | 26.9 | 26.7 | 29.1 | 30.7 | 28.1 | +1 | -6 | +3 |
| <i>Success index</i> | <i>133.5</i> | <i>112.5</i> | <i>105.2</i> | <i>121.3</i> | <i>129.0</i> | <i>128.3</i> | <i>128.3</i> | <i>129.2</i> | <i>128.9</i> | <i>124.2</i> | <i>120.6</i> | <i>126.6</i> | <i>-2</i> | <i>+14</i> | <i>-7</i> |
| Imposing order in the country | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Successful | 53.2 | 36.6 | 35.4 | 49.2 | 50.6 | 52.0 | 50.9 | 54.2 | 55.1 | 51.0 | 48.5 | 52.0 | +1 | +15 | -1 |
| Unsuccessful | 34.0 | 50.0 | 50.7 | 36.7 | 36.1 | 34.6 | 32.7 | 30.8 | 32.9 | 36.2 | 37.9 | 34.2 | -2 | -16 | 0 |
| <i>Success index</i> | <i>119.2</i> | <i>86.6</i> | <i>84.7</i> | <i>112.6</i> | <i>114.5</i> | <i>117.4</i> | <i>118.2</i> | <i>123.4</i> | <i>122.2</i> | <i>114.8</i> | <i>110.6</i> | <i>117.8</i> | <i>+3</i> | <i>+31</i> | <i>-1</i> |
| Protecting democracy and strengthening citizens' freedoms | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Successful | 44.4 | 32.4 | 28.8 | 36.6 | 40.3 | 43.3 | 42.8 | 42.9 | 43.4 | 39.8 | 37.3 | 41.6 | +1 | +9 | -3 |
| Unsuccessful | 37.0 | 48.3 | 52.3 | 44.3 | 40.2 | 39.3 | 38.7 | 37.1 | 38.1 | 41.4 | 42.7 | 39.6 | -1 | -9 | +3 |
| <i>Success index</i> | <i>107.4</i> | <i>84.1</i> | <i>76.5</i> | <i>92.3</i> | <i>100.2</i> | <i>103.9</i> | <i>104.1</i> | <i>105.8</i> | <i>105.3</i> | <i>98.4</i> | <i>94.6</i> | <i>102.0</i> | <i>+2</i> | <i>+18</i> | <i>-5</i> |
| Economic recovery and increase in citizens' welfare | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Successful | 47.2 | 30.7 | 28.5 | 27.2 | 29.3 | 31.6 | 31.0 | 31.3 | 32.3 | 30.6 | 30.6 | 31.2 | +2 | +1 | -16 |
| Unsuccessful | 39.1 | 56.1 | 57.9 | 59.4 | 56.9 | 56.3 | 53.7 | 55.3 | 55.2 | 58.3 | 57.2 | 56.0 | -1 | 0 | +17 |
| <i>Success index</i> | <i>108.1</i> | <i>74.6</i> | <i>70.6</i> | <i>67.8</i> | <i>72.4</i> | <i>75.3</i> | <i>77.3</i> | <i>76.0</i> | <i>77.1</i> | <i>72.3</i> | <i>73.4</i> | <i>75.2</i> | <i>+3</i> | <i>+1</i> | <i>-33</i> |
| * Ranked according to the average value of the index of success for 2016. | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

In August – October 2018, the structure of Vologda Oblast residents' preferences concerning political parties did not change significantly. Support for the United Russia party remains at 37–38%, support for LDPR and KPRF is 10–11%, and for the Just Russia party – 3%. The share of Vologda Oblast residents who believe that today none of the parliamentary parties express their interests is 29%, just like it was two months earlier.

Which party expresses your interests? (% of respondents)

| Party | 2007 | Election to the RF State Duma 2007, fact | 2011 | Election to the RF State Duma 2011, fact | 2012 | 2016 | Election to the RF State Duma 2016, fact | 2017 | Dec. 2017 | Feb. 2018 | Apr. 2018 | June 2018 | Aug. 2018 | Oct. 2018 | Average for the latest 6 surveys | Dynamics (+/-), the latest 6 surveys compared to ... | | |
|--------------------------|------|--|------|--|------|------|--|------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|----------------------------------|--|------|------|
| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 2017 | 2011 | 2007 |
| United Russia | 30.2 | 60.5 | 31.1 | 33.4 | 29.1 | 35.4 | 38.0 | 34.7 | 37.9 | 38.4 | 39.7 | 38.9 | 38.1 | 36.5 | 38.3 | +4 | +7 | +8 |
| LDPR | 7.5 | 11.0 | 7.8 | 15.4 | 7.8 | 10.4 | 21.9 | 11.0 | 11.6 | 10.1 | 9.6 | 9.7 | 9.7 | 9.7 | 10.1 | -1 | +2 | +3 |
| KPRF | 7.0 | 9.3 | 10.3 | 16.8 | 10.6 | 8.3 | 14.2 | 7.6 | 8.1 | 7.1 | 8.1 | 8.7 | 10.3 | 11.1 | 8.9 | +1 | -1 | +2 |
| Just Russia | 7.8 | 8.8 | 5.6 | 27.2 | 6.6 | 4.2 | 10.8 | 4.8 | 4.3 | 3.5 | 2.5 | 2.3 | 2.7 | 3.4 | 3.1 | -2 | -2 | -5 |
| Other | 1.8 | - | 1.9 | - | 2.1 | 0.3 | - | 0.5 | 1.1 | 0.9 | 1.2 | 0.5 | 0.6 | 0.4 | 0.8 | 0 | -1 | -1 |
| None | 17.8 | - | 29.4 | - | 31.3 | 29.4 | - | 29.2 | 28.5 | 28.8 | 26.2 | 26.7 | 28.5 | 29.0 | 28.0 | -1 | -1 | +10 |
| It's difficult to answer | 21.2 | - | 13.2 | - | 11.7 | 12.0 | - | 12.2 | 8.6 | 11.1 | 12.7 | 13.3 | 10.0 | 9.9 | 10.9 | -1 | -2 | -10 |

In October 2018, compared with August, the proportion of Vologda Oblast residents who positively characterize their emotional state decreased slightly (by 2 p.p., from 73 to 71%). The proportion of people who believe that “everything is not so bad and we can live; it is difficult to live, but it’s possible to stand it” decreased from 78 to 76% during the same period.

There have been no significant changes in the characteristics of the current dynamics and prospects of the financial situation over the past two months, although it is difficult to assess positively the situation in general:

- ✓ the share of Vologda Oblast residents who consider themselves “poor and extremely poor” is 45% since June 2018 (for comparison, the share of people of “average income” is 43%);
- ✓ the consumer sentiment index fell after its positive dynamics observed in December 2017 – June 2018; it is currently 89 points (we should note that the value of the index below 100 points indicates the pessimistic forecasts of the population regarding the prospects of development of their own financial situation and the economy as a whole).

Estimation of social condition (% of respondents)

| Answer | 2007 | 2011 | 2012 | 2016 | 2017 | Dec. 2017 | Feb. 2018 | Apr. 2018 | June 2018 | Aug. 2018 | Oct. 2018 | Average for the latest 6 surveys | Dynamics (+/-), the latest 6 surveys compared to ... | | |
|---|-------|------|------|------|------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--|--|------|------|
| | | | | | | | | | | | | | 2017 | 2011 | 2007 |
| Mood | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Usual condition, good mood | 63.6 | 63.1 | 67.3 | 68.0 | 70.4 | 70.5 | 68.6 | 71.5 | 72.5 | 72.5 | 71.3 | 71.2 | +1 | +8 | +8 |
| I feel stress, anger, fear, depression | 27.8 | 28.9 | 27.0 | 26.2 | 24.2 | 24.0 | 23.4 | 23.1 | 22.8 | 22.5 | 23.1 | 23.2 | -1 | -6 | -5 |
| Stock of patience | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Everything is not so bad; it's difficult to live, but it's possible to stand it | 74.1 | 74.8 | 76.6 | 78.0 | 77.7 | 77.1 | 76.2 | 79.0 | 76.5 | 78.0 | 75.7 | 77.1 | -1 | +2 | +3 |
| It's impossible to bear such plight | 13.6 | 15.3 | 15.8 | 15.6 | 15.8 | 16.2 | 16.3 | 14.8 | 16.6 | 15.5 | 17.1 | 16.1 | 0 | +1 | +2 |
| Social self-identification* | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| The share of people who consider themselves to have average income | 48.2 | 43.1 | 44.7 | 42.1 | 43.1 | 41.7 | 41.2 | 41.8 | 43.1 | 43.3 | 42.8 | 42.3 | -1 | -1 | -6 |
| The share of people who consider themselves to be poor and extremely poor | 42.4 | 44.3 | 44.5 | 49.0 | 46.6 | 47.1 | 46.2 | 46.5 | 45.3 | 44.1 | 45.4 | 45.8 | -1 | +1 | +3 |
| Consumer sentiment index | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Index value, points | 105.9 | 89.6 | 91.5 | 77.7 | 84.6 | 87.3 | 89.2 | 90.3 | 92.2 | 89.2 | 89.2 | 89.6 | +5 | 0 | -16 |
| * Question: "Which category do you belong to, in your opinion?" | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

Positive changes in the dynamics of social mood for the period from August to October 2018 are observed in two socio-demographic categories of the population: among people under the age of 30 (by 7 p.p., from 78 to 85%) and among residents of the region who by self-assessment of their income belong to the group of 20% of the poorest residents (by 7 p. p., from 53 to 60%)

Besides, the estimates of social mood in two socio-demographic groups deteriorated: among men (by 3 p.p., from 74 to 71%) and among persons aged 30–55 (by 4 p.p., from 75 to 71%)

In other socio-demographic groups there have been no significant changes in the dynamics of everyday emotional well-being over the past two months.

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

| Population group | 2007 | 2011 | 2012 | 2016 | 2017 | Dec. 2017 | Feb. 2018 | Apr. 2018 | June 2018 | Aug. 2018 | Oct. 2018 | Average for the latest 6 surveys | Dynamics (+/-), the latest 6 surveys compared to ... | | |
|------------------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|----------------------------------|--|------|------|
| | | | | | | | | | | | | | 2017 | 2011 | 2007 |
| Sex | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Men | 65.9 | 64.5 | 69.1 | 68.8 | 70.6 | 70.8 | 71.0 | 73.4 | 74.5 | 73.9 | 70.8 | 72.4 | +2 | +8 | +7 |
| Women | 61.7 | 62.0 | 65.8 | 67.4 | 70.2 | 70.3 | 66.6 | 70.0 | 70.9 | 71.3 | 71.8 | 70.2 | 0 | +8 | +8 |
| Age | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Under 30 | 71.3 | 70.0 | 72.3 | 76.4 | 78.1 | 82.2 | 74.2 | 79.6 | 81.3 | 77.9 | 85.1 | 80.1 | +2 | +10 | +9 |
| 30-55 | 64.8 | 62.5 | 67.9 | 67.4 | 71.5 | 73.1 | 68.8 | 74.0 | 75.1 | 74.9 | 70.9 | 72.8 | +1 | +10 | +8 |
| Over 55 | 54.8 | 58.3 | 62.1 | 64.0 | 64.9 | 61.4 | 65.6 | 64.2 | 64.7 | 66.5 | 65.4 | 64.6 | 0 | +6 | +10 |
| Education | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Secondary and incomplete secondary | 58.4 | 57.4 | 57.2 | 62.1 | 63.6 | 61.2 | 60.5 | 65.5 | 64.8 | 66.5 | 63.8 | 63.7 | 0 | +6 | +5 |
| Secondary vocational | 64.6 | 63.6 | 66.7 | 68.4 | 72.0 | 75.0 | 68.9 | 72.7 | 74.9 | 72.6 | 73.5 | 72.9 | +1 | +9 | +8 |
| Higher and incomplete higher | 68.6 | 68.3 | 77.0 | 74.3 | 75.8 | 75.6 | 77.9 | 76.2 | 77.4 | 78.4 | 76.5 | 77.0 | +1 | +9 | +8 |
| Income groups | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Bottom 20% | 51.6 | 45.3 | 51.5 | 52.5 | 52.9 | 50.7 | 47.7 | 61.8 | 60.0 | 53.1 | 59.6 | 55.5 | +3 | +10 | +4 |
| Middle 60% | 62.9 | 65.3 | 68.7 | 69.4 | 72.0 | 72.0 | 70.3 | 71.7 | 72.3 | 74.5 | 73.1 | 72.3 | 0 | +7 | +9 |
| Top 20% | 74.9 | 75.3 | 81.1 | 80.9 | 83.7 | 86.2 | 82.2 | 81.5 | 85.5 | 83.4 | 81.3 | 83.4 | 0 | +8 | +8 |
| Territories | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Vologda | 63.1 | 67.1 | 73.6 | 69.9 | 72.6 | 72.2 | 71.0 | 73.5 | 75.4 | 70.4 | 68.8 | 71.9 | -1 | +5 | +9 |
| Cherepovets | 68.1 | 71.2 | 76.2 | 71.7 | 75.7 | 75.2 | 71.5 | 75.0 | 76.7 | 79.1 | 77.7 | 75.9 | 0 | +5 | +8 |
| Districts | 61.6 | 57.1 | 59.8 | 64.8 | 66.1 | 66.9 | 65.6 | 68.3 | 68.6 | 69.8 | 69.2 | 68.1 | +2 | +11 | +6 |
| Oblast | 63.6 | 63.1 | 67.3 | 68.0 | 70.4 | 70.5 | 68.6 | 71.5 | 72.5 | 72.5 | 71.3 | 71.2 | +1 | +8 | +8 |

CONCLUSION

One of the most significant events (which, in our opinion, could have a major impact on the dynamics of public sentiment in August – October 2018) was Vladimir Putin’s televised address to the Russians, during which he spoke about the pension reform, the most resonant and acute topic of recent months. It should be noted that people were waiting for the President’s position on this issue; they hoped that the initial draft law prepared by the Government (which, according to the results of sociological surveys, was perceived very negatively in society² and even led to mass protests across the country) would be, if not canceled, then at least significantly adjusted.

² According to the research conducted by the Public Opinion Foundation in June 2018, 80% of Russians perceived the pension reform negatively. According to regional studies of VoIRC RAS in August and October 2018, 74% of Vologda Oblast residents shared this opinion.

The expectations of the population as a whole were met. The President once again acted as a “strategist and defender”³, and his amendments to the draft pension reform were quite significant⁴, and they were reflected in the final version of the relevant federal law in October 2018⁵.

Perhaps the growth of positive mood among young people and among the least affluent population groups is associated with the President’s amendments to the draft pension reform. However, in general, as the results of sociological measurements show, the speech of the head of state did not have a significant impact on the dynamics of key indicators of public opinion: people’s assessments of the work of the authorities started to deteriorate in June 2018, and this trend is continuing; there are no positive changes in the dynamics of the emotional state, stock of patience, social self-identification, consumer sentiment...

The election of heads of regions, held on September 9, 2018 in 26 constituent entities of the Russian Federation, confirmed the fact that people are dissatisfied with the actions taken by the Government of the Russian Federation and by the party of power in the first months of the political season (especially against the background of the fact that Putin’s March speech before the Federal Assembly found broad public support: experts note that after his speech “society was expecting a rapid socio-economic breakthrough, but it did not understand that it would be necessary to sacrifice something and to change everything in order to achieve it...”⁶). Turnout decreased in most regions; there were resonant scandals related to the election procedures; large-scale protests were held on the single day of voting.

However, in mid-October 2018, VTsIOM experts stated: “The negative forecasts regarding the decline in the legitimacy of the government after the final decision on the amendments to the pension legislation did not materialize. Most likely, this is due to the fact that the issue became a routine one”⁷. The results of national and regional sociological studies allow us to agree with this opinion: society takes “bitter medicine”⁸ in the form of later retirement. However, given the quite unambiguous initial reaction to the draft pension reform, we can say that society does so with no enthusiasm and without conscious understanding of the need for this step to achieve breakthrough development in the standard of living and quality of life.

The materials were prepared by M.V. Morev, I.V. Paranicheva, I.M. Bakhvalova

³ VTsIOM General Director V. Fedorov in the special edition of the program “60 minutes” (TV channel “Russia 1”). Aired on August 29, 2018. Official website of the program. Available at: <https://60-minut.su/60-minut-vyipusk-ot-29-08-2018-putin-smyagchil-pensionnyiy-zakonoproekt.html>

⁴ Reducing the retirement age for women to 60 years instead of 63; pension benefits for mothers with many children; maintaining federal and most regional pension benefits for people of current retirement age (55 years for women and 60 years for men), etc.

⁵ Federal Law 350 dated October 3, 2018 “On amendments to certain legislative acts of the Russian Federation on the appointment and payment of pensions”.

⁶ Skorobogatyi P. Landmark – 2021. *Ekspert*, no. 41 (October 8 – 14), p. 53.

⁷ Ratings of trust in politicians, approval of the work of state institutions, ratings of parties. *VTsIOM Press Release # 3788*, October 12, 2018. Available at: <https://wciom.ru/index.php?id=236&uid=9363> (comment by M. Mamonov, head of the practice of political analysis and consulting at the research department).

⁸ Koshelenko A. Medvedev compared the pension reform to the “bitter medicine”. *Moskovsky komsomolets*, 2018, August 10. Available at: https://www.mk.ru/politics/2018/08/10/medvedev-sravnil-pensionnyuyu-reformu-s-gorkim-lekarstvom.html?utm_referrer=https%3A%2F%2Fzen.yandex.com