

# 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 Oblast<sup>1</sup>.

The following tables show the dynamics of several parameters indicating the social feeling and socio-political sentiment of the Vologda Oblast population in October – December 2018, and also on average for the latest six surveys (February – December 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 October – December 2018, we observe a continuing declining trend in people's support for the work of the head of state; the trend has been observed since June. Over the past two months, the share of positive assessments decreased by 2 p.p. (from 64 to 62%), and on the whole in June – December 2018 – by 8 p.p. (from 70 to 62%).

As for the dynamics of assessments of the Prime Minister's work, we see that the share of negative judgments has also increased since June 2018: in the last two months – by 2 p.p. (from 35 to 37%), from June to December – by 9 p.p. (from 28 to 37%).

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<sup>1</sup> 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/>.

*For reference:*

In general, the level of approval of the President's work in October – December 2018 has not changed significantly and amounted to 64%. The share of positive assessments of the Government's work also remains stable (37%). According to Levada-Center, in October – November 2018, the share of positive assessments of the head of state is 66%, the Government – 34%.

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

Answer	2007	2011	2012	2016	2017	Feb. 2018	Apr. 2018	June 2018	Aug. 2018	Oct. 2018	Dec. 2018	Average for the latest 6 surveys	Dynamics (+/-), the latest 6 surveys compared to ...		
													2017	2011	2007
<b>RF President</b>															
I approve	75.3	58.7	51.7	67.8	67.3	68.7	68.1	70.1	65.9	63.5	61.9	66.4	-1	+8	-9
I don't approve	11.5	25.6	32.6	18.8	20.0	20.8	18.4	17.5	22.1	24.1	27.0	21.7	+2	-4	+10
<b>Chairman of the RF Government*</b>															
I approve	-*	59.3	49.6	52.3	49.5	48.3	49.9	52.0	47.4	45.2	45.3	48.0	-1	-11	-
I don't approve	-	24.7	33.3	27.6	31.1	30.8	27.8	27.5	31.9	34.8	36.9	31.6	+1	+7	-
<b>Governor</b>															
I approve	55.8	45.7	41.9	37.7	39.8	39.3	39.5	40.5	37.3	35.7	38.3	38.4	-1	-7	-17
I don't approve	22.2	30.5	33.3	39.3	39.3	37.9	36.1	35.3	36.9	39.1	40.3	37.6	-2	+7	+15
* Included in the survey since 2008.															

Over the past two months, there have been ambiguous changes in the dynamics of assessments of the President's success in addressing the country's key problems. For example, from October to December 2018, the share of people who believe that the head of state is successfully coping with the issues of strengthening Russia's international positions increased (by 3 p.p., from 51 to 54%). At the same time, the share of those who negatively assess the President's work to restore order in the country decreased by 2 p.p. (from 49 to 47%)

Assessment of V. Putin's work to protect democracy and increase the welfare of citizens did not change significantly over the past two months (37 and 30%, respectively).

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

Answer	2007	2011	2012	2016	2017	Feb. 2018	Apr. 2018	June 2018	Aug. 2018	Oct. 2018	Dec. 2018	Average for the latest 6 surveys	Dynamics (+/-), the latest 6 surveys compared to ...		
													2017	2011	2007
<b>Strengthening Russia's international standing</b>															
Successful	58.4	46.2	43.1	51.2	55.7	55.2	56.1	55.6	53.3	51.3	53.5	54.2	-2	+8	-4
Unsuccessful	24.9	33.7	37.9	29.9	26.8	26.9	26.9	26.7	29.1	30.7	30.3	28.4	+2	-5	+4
Success index	133.5	112.5	105.2	121.3	129.0	128.3	129.2	128.9	124.2	120.6	123.2	125.7	-3	+13	-8
<b>Imposing order in the country</b>															
Successful	53.2	36.6	35.4	49.2	50.6	50.9	54.2	55.1	51.0	48.5	46.9	51.1	0	+15	-2
Unsuccessful	34.0	50.0	50.7	36.7	36.1	32.7	30.8	32.9	36.2	37.9	39.5	35.0	-1	-15	+1
Success index	119.2	86.6	84.7	112.6	114.5	118.2	123.4	122.2	114.8	110.6	107.4	116.1	+2	+30	-3
<b>Protecting democracy and strengthening citizens' freedoms</b>															
Successful	44.4	32.4	28.8	36.6	40.3	42.8	42.9	43.4	39.8	37.3	36.5	40.5	0	+8	-4
Unsuccessful	37.0	48.3	52.3	44.3	40.2	38.7	37.1	38.1	41.4	42.7	43.3	40.2	0	-8	+3
Success index	107.4	84.1	76.5	92.3	100.2	104.1	105.8	105.3	98.4	94.6	93.2	100.2	0	+16	-7
<b>Economic recovery and increase in citizens' welfare</b>															
Successful	47.2	30.7	28.5	27.2	29.3	31.0	31.3	32.3	30.6	30.6	29.9	31.0	+2	0	-16
Unsuccessful	39.1	56.1	57.9	59.4	56.9	53.7	55.3	55.2	58.3	57.2	57.6	56.2	-1	0	+17
Success index	108.1	74.6	70.6	67.8	72.4	77.3	76.0	77.1	72.3	73.4	72.3	74.7	+2	0	-33

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

According to the results of the surveys, the dynamics of public opinion assessments of V. Putin's work in the first months of his fourth presidential term are more negative than in the corresponding period of 2012. In June – December 2012, the corresponding figure was 53–54%; in June – December 2018, it decreased by 8 p.p. (from 70 to 62%).

## Assessment of the Russian President's work in the first months of his third and fourth presidential terms

Answer	June 2012	Aug. 2012	Oct. 2012	Dec. 2012	Dynamics (+/-), Dec. 2012 to June 2012	June 2018	Aug. 2018	Oct. 2018	Dec. 2018	Dynamics (+/-), Dec. 2018 to June 2018
<b>Assessment of the Russian President's work:</b>										
I approve	54.5	53.7	50.9	53.3	-1	70.1	65.9	63.5	61.9	-8
I don't approve	28.9	31.1	32.1	34.6	+6	17.5	22.1	24.1	27.0	+10
<b>Success in addressing key issues:</b>										
<b>Strengthening Russia's international standing</b>										
Successful	43.3	47.2	41.9	44.1	+1	55.6	53.3	51.3	53.5	-2
Unsuccessful	37.8	34.9	39.4	39.0	+1	26.7	29.1	30.7	30.3	+4
Success index	105.5	112.3	102.5	105.1	0	128.9	124.2	120.6	123.2	-6
<b>Imposing order in the country</b>										
Successful	35.3	40.9	34.8	37.5	+2	55.1	51.0	48.5	46.9	-8
Unsuccessful	51.8	45.6	50.1	50.7	-1	32.9	36.2	37.9	39.5	+7
Success index	83.5	95.3	84.7	86.8	+3	122.2	114.8	110.6	107.4	-15
<b>Protecting democracy and strengthening citizens' freedoms</b>										
Successful	30.1	33.0	26.7	28.5	-2	43.4	39.8	37.3	36.5	-7
Unsuccessful	51.4	48.1	54.0	54.7	+3	38.1	41.4	42.7	43.3	+5
Success index	78.7	84.9	72.7	73.8	-5	105.3	98.4	94.6	93.2	-12
<b>Economic recovery and increase in citizens' welfare</b>										
Successful	29.1	34.7	25.3	29.3	0	32.3	30.6	30.6	29.9	-2
Unsuccessful	57.1	51.4	61.1	59.6	+3	55.2	58.3	57.2	57.6	+2
Success index	72	83.3	64.2	69.7	-2	77.1	72.3	73.4	72.3	-5

In October – December 2018, the structure of Vologda Oblast residents' preferences concerning political parties did not change significantly. Support for the United Russia party is 36%, support for LDPR and KPRF is 9% each, and for the Just Russia party – 3%.

It is necessary to point out that the share of Vologda Oblast residents who believe that today none of the parliamentary parties express their interests increased noticeably in the past two months (by 3 p.p., from 29 to 32%, which is the highest figure for 2016–2018).

Which party expresses your interests? (% of respondents)

Party	2007	Election to the RF State Duma 2007, fact			Election to the RF State Duma 2011, fact			Election to the RF State Duma 2016, fact			Feb. 2018	Apr. 2018	June 2018	Aug. 2018	Oct. 2018	Dec. 2018	Average for the latest 6 surveys	Dynamics (+/-), the latest 6 surveys compared to ...		
		2011	2012	2016	2011	2012	2016	2017	2017	2011								2007		
United Russia	30.2	60.5	31.1	33.4	29.1	35.4	38.0	34.7	38.4	39.7	38.9	38.1	36.5	36.0	37.9	+3	+7	+8		
LDPR	7.5	11.0	7.8	15.4	7.8	10.4	21.9	11.0	10.1	9.6	9.7	9.7	9.7	8.8	9.6	-1	+2	+2		
KPRF	7.0	9.3	10.3	16.8	10.6	8.3	14.2	7.6	7.1	8.1	8.7	10.3	11.1	9.9	9.2	+2	-1	+2		
Just Russia	7.8	8.8	5.6	27.2	6.6	4.2	10.8	4.8	3.5	2.5	2.3	2.7	3.4	2.8	2.9	-2	-3	-5		
Other	1.8	-	1.9	-	2.1	0.3	-	0.5	0.9	1.2	0.5	0.6	0.4	0.4	0.7	0	-1	-1		
None	17.8	-	29.4	-	31.3	29.4	-	29.2	28.8	26.2	26.7	28.5	29.0	31.9	28.5	-1	-1	+11		
It's difficult to answer	21.2	-	13.2	-	11.7	12.0	-	12.2	11.1	12.7	13.3	10.0	9.9	10.2	11.2	-1	-2	-10		

Assessment of social mood in October – December 2018 did not change significantly: the proportion of people who experience mostly positive emotions is 71%; the proportion of those who believe that “everything is not so bad and it is possible to stand it” is 77%.

The share of Vologda Oblast residents who consider themselves “poor and extremely poor” remains stable (45%). During the past three years, it has been slightly (3-4 percentage points) higher than the proportion of those who say their income is average.

The consumer sentiment index since August 2018 is 89 points, which is 3 points lower than in June 2018. 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	Feb. 2018	Apr. 2018	June 2018	Aug. 2018	Oct. 2018	Dec. 2018	Average for the latest 6 surveys	Dynamics (+/-), the latest 6 surveys compared to ...		
													2017	2011	2007
<b>Mood</b>															
Usual condition, good mood	63.6	63.1	67.3	68.0	70.4	68.6	71.5	72.5	72.5	71.3	70.7	71.2	+1	+8	+8
I feel stress, anger, fear, depression	27.8	28.9	27.0	26.2	24.2	23.4	23.1	22.8	22.5	23.1	23.5	23.1	-1	-6	-5
<b>Stock of patience</b>															
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	76.2	79.0	76.5	78.0	75.7	77.1	77.1	-1	+2	+3
It's impossible to bear such plight	13.6	15.3	15.8	15.6	15.8	16.3	14.8	16.6	15.5	17.1	17.5	16.3	+1	+1	+3
<b>Social self-identification*</b>															
The share of people who consider themselves to have average income	48.2	43.1	44.7	42.1	43.1	41.2	41.8	43.1	43.3	42.8	41.6	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	46.2	46.5	45.3	44.1	45.4	44.7	45.4	-1	+1	+3
<b>Consumer sentiment index</b>															
Index value, points	105.9	89.6	91.5	77.7	84.6	89.2	90.3	92.2	89.2	89.2	89.1	89.9	+5	0	-16

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

In October – December 2018, negative changes in the dynamics of assessments of social well-being are registered in 7 out of 14 socio-demographic groups. The proportion of people who positively characterize their daily mood decreased by 2–4 p.p. among women (from 72 to 68%), among people under the age of 30 (from 85 to 82%), among people with secondary vocational education (from 74 to 71%) and higher education (from 77 to 74%), among people who by self-assessment of their income belong to the category of 60% of middle-income residents of the Vologda Oblast (from 73 to 70%), and among residents of Vologda (from 69 to 67%) and Cherepovets (from 78 to 75%).

Positive changes in the dynamics of social mood for the period from October to December 2018 are observed in three socio-demographic groups: men (the share of positive judgments increased from 71 to 73%); persons with secondary and incomplete secondary education (from 64 to 68%), people who by self-assessment of their income belong to 20% of the most affluent residents of the Vologda Oblast (from 81 to 83%).

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

Population group	2007	2011	2012	2016	2017	Feb. 2018	Apr. 2018	June 2018	Aug. 2018	Oct. 2018	Dec. 2018	Average for the latest 6 surveys	Dynamics (+/-), the latest 6 surveys compared to ...		
													2017	2011	2007
<b>Sex</b>															
Men	65.9	64.5	69.1	68.8	70.6	71.0	73.4	74.5	73.9	70.8	73.4	72.8	+2	+8	+7
Women	61.7	62.0	65.8	67.4	70.2	66.6	70.0	70.9	71.3	71.8	68.4	69.8	0	+8	+8
<b>Age</b>															
Under 30	71.3	70.0	72.3	76.4	78.1	74.2	79.6	81.3	77.9	85.1	81.6	80.0	+2	+10	+9
30-55	64.8	62.5	67.9	67.4	71.5	68.8	74.0	75.1	74.9	70.9	71.6	72.6	+1	+10	+8
Over 55	54.8	58.3	62.1	64.0	64.9	65.6	64.2	64.7	66.5	65.4	64.7	65.2	0	+7	+10
<b>Education</b>															
Secondary and incomplete secondary	58.4	57.4	57.2	62.1	63.6	60.5	65.5	64.8	66.5	63.8	67.8	64.8	+1	+7	+6
Secondary vocational	64.6	63.6	66.7	68.4	72.0	68.9	72.7	74.9	72.6	73.5	70.5	72.2	0	+9	+8
Higher and incomplete higher	68.6	68.3	77.0	74.3	75.8	77.9	76.2	77.4	78.4	76.5	74.1	76.8	+1	+8	+8
<b>Income groups</b>															
Bottom 20%	51.6	45.3	51.5	52.5	52.9	47.7	61.8	60.0	53.1	59.6	61.3	57.3	+4	+12	+6
Middle 60%	62.9	65.3	68.7	69.4	72.0	70.3	71.7	72.3	74.5	73.1	69.7	71.9	0	+7	+9
Top 20%	74.9	75.3	81.1	80.9	83.7	82.2	81.5	85.5	83.4	81.3	83.4	82.9	-1	+8	+8
<b>Territories</b>															
Vologda	63.1	67.1	73.6	69.9	72.6	71.0	73.5	75.4	70.4	68.8	67.1	71.0	-2	+4	+8
Cherepovets	68.1	71.2	76.2	71.7	75.7	71.5	75.0	76.7	79.1	77.7	74.5	75.8	0	+5	+8
Districts	61.6	57.1	59.8	64.8	66.1	65.6	68.3	68.6	69.8	69.2	70.5	68.7	+3	+12	+7
Oblast	63.6	63.1	67.3	68.0	70.4	68.6	71.5	72.5	72.5	71.3	70.7	71.2	+1	+8	+8

## Conclusion

According to the research results, despite gradual “routinization of the issue”<sup>2</sup> concerning the increase in the retirement age, so far there are no sustainable positive changes in the dynamics of public opinion on key issues related to the assessment of the work of the authorities, the situation in the country and personal self-perception.

The downward trend in the number of positive assessments of the work of the President that started in June 2018 continued in October – December 2018 (from June to December, it decreased by 8 p.p., from 70 to 62%). The share of people who believe that the head of state is successfully coping with the problem of economic recovery and growth of citizens’ welfare remains consistently low (30%). There are no positive changes in the dynamics of the financial situation: the share of “the poor and extremely poor” is 45% (which is more than the share of people with “average income” – 42%), the consumer sentiment index since August 2018 is 89 points, which indicates the predominance of pessimistic forecasts about the prospects of development of the economic situation in the country and personal financial well-being.

The absence of positive changes in public opinion is largely due to the real dynamics of the standard of living and quality of life. Thus, according to the data of Vologdastat, real incomes of the population amounted to 96.9% in September 2018 compared to the previous month, real wages – 98.1% (for comparison: these figures in 2017 were slightly better: real cash incomes in September were 102.5% compared to August, and real wages – 99.9%)<sup>3</sup>.

In general, the assessment of the President’s work in the first months of V. Putin’s fourth presidential term (2018) still looks somewhat worse than in the corresponding period of his third presidential term (2012). The level of support for the head of state in 2012 was about 54%; in 2018, it decreased from 70 to 62%, which is obviously due to a number of reforms negatively perceived by the population (primarily raising the retirement age and VAT). Lack of mutual understanding between the society and the authorities on the major development direction announced by V. Putin in his Address to the Federal Assembly on March 1, 2018 (a breakthrough in improving the dynamics of the standard of living and quality of life) so far makes us doubt the effectiveness of the implementation of the key tasks of the May 2018 Decree. Apparently, the solution to this issue is postponed for the next year, although it should be noted that V. Putin’s last (according to the current Constitution of the Russian Federation) presidential term leaves less time for postponing actual measures, and each month is exacerbating the need for social justice and sustainable positive dynamics of well-being.

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

<sup>2</sup> Trust ratings of politicians, ratings of approval of the work of state institutions, ratings of the parties: VTsOM Press Release. 2018. No. 3788. 12 October. Available at: <https://wciom.ru/index.php?id=236&uid=9363> (comment of M. Mamonov, head of the practice of political analysis and consulting of at the research department)

<sup>3</sup> Operational indicators characterizing the standard of living. Official website of the territorial office of the Federal State Statistics Service. Available at: [http://vologdastat.gks.ru/wps/wcm/connect/rosstat\\_ts/vologdastat/ru/statistics/standards\\_of\\_life/](http://vologdastat.gks.ru/wps/wcm/connect/rosstat_ts/vologdastat/ru/statistics/standards_of_life/)