

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 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 the period from October 2018 to October 2019

We compare the results of the surveys with the data for 2007 (the last year of V. Putin's second presidential term, when the assessment of the President's work was the highest), 2011 (the last year of Dmitry Medvedev's presidency) and 2012 (the first year of V. Putin's third presidential term).

We also provide yearly dynamics of the data for the last two years (2017–2018).

In August – October 2019, the level of approval of the work of the President of the Russian Federation did not change significantly: the share of positive assessments is 54–56%; the share of negative assessments is 29–30%.

There have been no tangible changes in the dynamics of assessments of the work of the head of state since April 2019; but in general, over the past 12 months (from October 2018 to October 2019), there has been a noticeable decrease in the share of positive judgments (by 10 percentage points, from 64 to 54%).

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%.

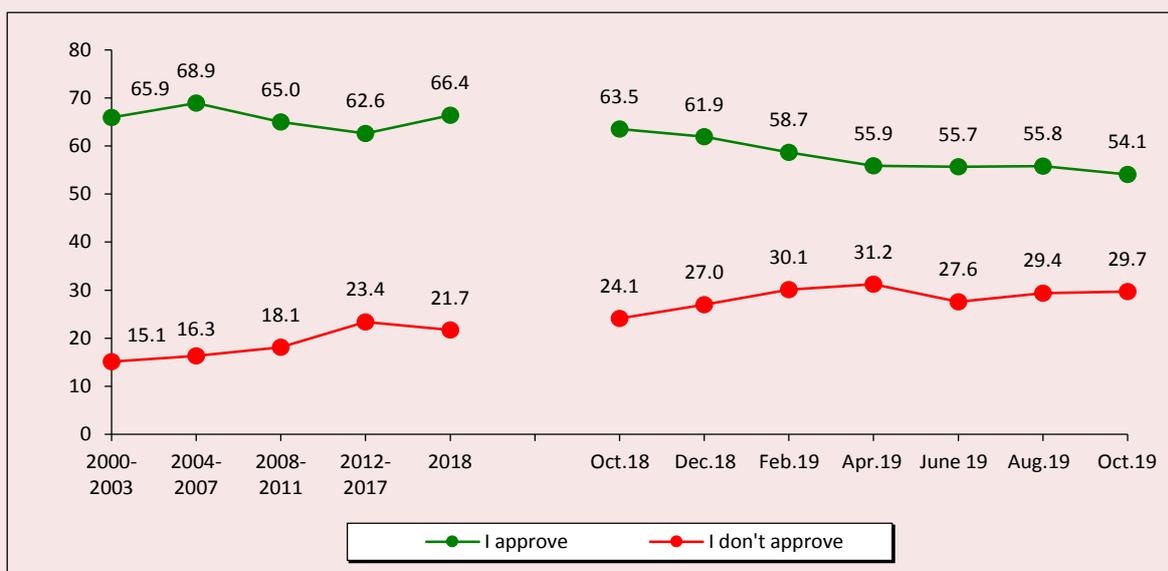
More information on the results of VolRC RAS polls is available at <http://www.vsrc.ac.ru/>.

For reference:

According to VTsIOM, the level of approval of the work of the President of the Russian Federation in September – first half of October 2019 amounted to 65–66%; the share of negative assessments was 26%.

According to Levada-Center, in August – September 2019, 67–68% of Russians expressed positive opinions about the work of the head of state, while 31% expressed negative opinions.

In general, do you approve or disapprove of the work of the President of Russia? (% of respondents)



* Here and further, the tables and graphs present the data of VoIRC RAS on the results of the monitoring of public opinion conducted in the Vologda Oblast.

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

Answer	2007	2011	2012	2017	2018	Oct. 2018	Dec. 2018	Feb. 2019	Apr. 2019	June 2019	Aug. 2019	Oct. 2019	Dynamics (+/-), Oct. 2019 compared to	
													Oct. 2018	Aug. 2019
Chairman of the RF Government*														
I approve	-*	59.3	49.6	49.5	48.0	45.2	45.3	41.6	38.8	40.9	43.1	41.1	-4	-2
I don't approve	-	24.7	33.3	31.1	31.6	34.8	36.9	39.3	40.2	38.0	36.3	37.5	+3	+1
Governor														
I approve	55.8	45.7	41.9	39.8	38.4	35.7	38.3	36.5	34.7	35.4	36.1	35.6	0	-1
I don't approve	22.2	30.5	33.3	39.3	37.6	39.1	40.3	41.5	41.4	38.6	38.5	40.1	+1	+2

* Included in the survey since 2008.

Over the past two months, the proportion of Vologda Oblast residents who believe that Vladimir Putin is successful in his work aimed at restoring order in the country decreased slightly (by 3 percentage points, from 46 to 43%). This is significantly less (by 6 percentage points) than in October 2018 (49%).

In general, the opinion of Vologda Oblast residents regarding the success of the President's work on other key problems of the country in August – October 2019 has not changed:

- ✓ 50% of the population positively assesses the President's work on strengthening Russia's international positions;
- ✓ 35% of the population positively assesses the President's work on protecting democracy and strengthening citizens' freedoms;
- ✓ 27% of the population positively assesses the President's work on economic recovery and growth of people's welfare.

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

Answer	2007	2011	2012	2017	2018	Oct. 2018	Dec. 2018	Feb. 2019	Apr. 2019	June 2019	Aug. 2019	Oct. 2019	Dynamics (+/-), Oct. 2019 compared to	
													Oct. 2018	Aug. 2019
Strengthening Russia's international standing														
Successful	58.4	46.2	43.1	55.7	54.2	51.3	53.5	51.5	50.2	51.9	51.0	49.9	-1	-1
Unsuccessful	24.9	33.7	37.9	26.8	28.4	30.7	30.3	31.7	32.7	30.3	30.6	32.4	+2	+2
<i>Success index</i>	133.5	112.5	105.2	129.0	125.7	120.6	123.2	119.8	117.5	121.6	120.4	117.5	-3	-3
Imposing order in the country														
Successful	53.2	36.6	35.4	50.6	51.1	48.5	46.9	44.2	42.4	44.5	46.1	43.1	-5	-3
Unsuccessful	34.0	50.0	50.7	36.1	35.0	37.9	39.5	40.7	42.6	39.3	39.3	40.0	+2	+1
<i>Success index</i>	119.2	86.6	84.7	114.5	116.1	110.6	107.4	103.5	99.8	105.2	106.8	103.1	-8	-4
Protecting democracy and strengthening citizens' freedoms														
Successful	44.4	32.4	28.8	40.3	40.5	37.3	36.5	33.5	32.3	34.6	35.5	35.1	-2	0
Unsuccessful	37.0	48.3	52.3	40.2	40.2	42.7	43.3	45.3	47.7	45.5	46.1	45.7	+3	0
<i>Success index</i>	107.4	84.1	76.5	100.2	100.2	94.6	93.2	88.2	84.6	89.1	89.4	89.4	-5	0
Economic recovery and increase in citizens' welfare														
Successful	47.2	30.7	28.5	29.3	31.0	30.6	29.9	28.1	28.1	29.1	26.5	26.9	-4	0
Unsuccessful	39.1	56.1	57.9	56.9	56.2	57.2	57.6	56.9	58.2	57.8	59.7	58.2	+1	-2
<i>Success index</i>	108.1	74.6	70.6	72.4	74.7	73.4	72.3	71.2	69.9	71.3	66.8	68.7	-5	+2

* Ranked according to the average value of the index of success for 2018.

In June–August 2019, the structure of people’s political preferences has not changed: the level of support for the United Russia party is 33–34%, LDPR and KPRF – 8–9%, the Just Russia party – 4%.

We should note that in comparison with October 2018, people’s support for the ruling party decreased (by 4 percentage points, from 37 to 33%) and the share of those who believe that today none of the political forces represented in Parliament expresses their interests has increased (by 5 percentage points, from 29 to 34%).

Which party expresses your interests? (% of respondents)

Party	2007	2011	Election to the RF State Duma 2011, fact	2012	2016	Election to the RF State Duma 2016, fact	2017	2018	Oct. 2018	Dec. 2018	Feb. 2019	Apr. 2019	June 2019	Aug. 2019	Okt. 2019	Dynamics (+/-), Oct. 2019 compared to	
																Oct. 2018	Aug. 2019
United Russia	30.2	31.1	33.4	29.1	35.4	38.0	34.7	37.9	36.5	36.0	34.6	33.3	34.8	33.5	32.8	-4	-1
KPRF	7.0	10.3	16.8	10.6	8.3	14.2	7.6	9.2	11.1	9.9	9.1	8.0	8.5	8.7	9.1	-2	0
LDPR	7.5	7.8	15.4	7.8	10.4	21.9	11.0	9.6	9.7	8.8	8.9	8.2	9.1	10.5	8.3	-1	-2
Just Russia	7.8	5.6	27.2	6.6	4.2	10.8	4.8	2.9	3.4	2.8	2.9	2.9	2.5	3.9	4.2	+1	0
Other	1.8	1.9	–	2.1	0.3	–	0.5	0.7	0.4	0.4	0.6	0.3	0.3	0.4	0.1	0	0
None	17.8	29.4	–	31.3	29.4	–	29.2	28.5	29.0	31.9	34.2	34.7	32.3	32.1	34.3	+5	+2
It’s difficult to answer	21.2	13.2	–	11.7	12.0	–	12.2	11.2	9.9	10.2	9.7	12.6	12.4	10.9	11.2	+1	0

In fact, there are no changes in the indicators of social well-being: the proportion of those who characterize their mood as positive is 70–71%; the proportion of those who believe that today “everything is not so bad; it’s difficult to live, but it’s possible to stand it” is 77–78%.

The proportion of those who consider themselves “poor and extremely poor” amounted to 47–48% in August – October 2019, which is slightly higher than in October 2018 (by 3 percentage points, 45%).

Apparently, this is due to low (or, at least, not sufficiently tangible) rates of growth of the standard of living and quality of life; it is evidenced by the steady prevalence of people’s pessimistic forecasts about the future of the Russian economy and their personal financial situation. Thus, the consumer sentiment index in October 2018 amounted to 89 points, in August – October 2019 – to 92 points; that is, despite its positive dynamics, it still varies in the range of less than 100 points.

Estimation of social condition (% of respondents)

Answer	2007	2011	2012	2017	2018	Oct. 2018	Dec. 2018	Feb. 2019	Apr. 2019	June 2019	Aug. 2019	Oct. 2019	Dynamics (+/-), Oct. 2019 compared to	
													Oct. 2018	Aug. 2019
Mood														
Usual condition, good mood	63.6	63.1	67.3	70.4	71.2	71.3	70.7	68.0	68.8	71.4	70.9	70.3	-1	-1
I feel stress, anger, fear, depression	27.8	28.9	27.0	24.2	23.1	23.1	23.5	25.6	25.5	23.5	23.4	24.0	+1	+1
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	77.7	77.1	75.7	77.1	74.3	76.7	78.0	76.8	77.8	+2	+1
It's impossible to bear such plight	13.6	15.3	15.8	15.8	16.3	17.1	17.5	19.1	17.5	16.5	16.2	17.2	0	+1
Social self-identification*														
The share of people who consider themselves to have average income	48.2	43.1	44.7	43.1	42.3	42.8	41.6	43.8	41.3	43.3	42.9	41.4	-1	-2
The share of people who consider themselves to be poor and extremely poor	42.4	44.3	44.5	46.6	45.4	45.4	44.7	44.8	46.9	45.8	47.0	48.0	+3	+1
Consumer sentiment index														
Index value, points	105.9	89.6	91.5	84.6	89.9	89.2	89.1	90.1	90.0	91.2	91.8	92.0	+3	0

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

Over the past two months, in most socio-demographic groups, the proportion of people who characterize their mood as being positive has not changed significantly.

The share of positive assessments has increased slightly among those over 55 years of age (by 4 percentage points, from 61 to 65%) and among Vologda residents (from 68 to 71%).

At the same time, we observe a decrease by 3 to 5 percentage points in the share of positive assessments of their mood among men (from 72 to 69%), among persons under the age of 30 (from 85 to 80%) and among those from 30 to 55 years of age (from 74 to 71%).

Over the past year (from October 2018 to October 2019), we observe negative trends in the dynamics of assessments of social moods among young people under the age of 30 (the percentage of positive assessments decreased by 5 percentage points, from 85 to 80%), among people with higher and incomplete higher education (by 4 percentage points, from 77 to 73%), among those who according to their own assessments of their income belong to the bottom 20% (from 60 to 54%), and among the residents of Cherepovets (by 6 percentage points, from 78 to 72%).

As we can note, a slight deterioration in the emotional state of representatives of not only socially vulnerable population groups (those with lowest incomes), but also other categories suggests that the standard of living is not the only factor affecting people's daily mood. Apparently other factors in this regard include the expectations of the population in relation to tangible changes in the implementation of the President's election promises, the growth of interest in political life in the country and the region (which may be associated with the elections of the head of the region held September 8, 2019) and, accordingly, a clearer articulation of the socio-political request to the authorities.

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

Population group	2007	2011	2012	2017	2018	Oct. 2018	Dec. 2018	Feb. 2019	Apr. 2019	June 2019	Aug. 2019	Oct. 2019	Dynamics (+/-), Oct. 2019 compared to	
													Oct. 2018	Aug. 2019
Sex														
Men	65.9	64.5	69.1	70.6	72.8	70.8	73.4	69.9	68.6	72.1	71.8	69.2	-2	-3
Women	61.7	62.0	65.8	70.2	69.8	71.8	68.4	66.4	69.0	70.8	70.1	71.2	-1	+1
Age														
Under 30	71.3	70.0	72.3	78.1	80.0	85.1	81.6	76.3	81.2	82.9	85.2	79.9	-5	-5
30-55	64.8	62.5	67.9	71.5	72.6	70.9	71.6	68.0	71.5	70.5	74.0	71.1	0	-3
Over 55	54.8	58.3	62.1	64.9	65.2	65.4	64.7	64.3	59.8	67.4	60.7	65.1	0	+4
Education														
Secondary and incomplete secondary	58.4	57.4	57.2	63.6	64.8	63.8	67.8	61.5	60.4	64.4	65.6	63.4	0	-2
Secondary vocational	64.6	63.6	66.7	72.0	72.2	73.5	70.5	68.6	73.0	77.3	72.8	73.9	0	+1
Higher and incomplete higher	68.6	68.3	77.0	75.8	76.8	76.5	74.1	73.8	73.3	72.1	73.9	72.6	-4	-1
Income groups														
Bottom 20%	51.6	45.3	51.5	52.9	57.3	59.6	61.3	50.4	56.1	54.9	53.2	54.1	-6	+1
Middle 60%	62.9	65.3	68.7	72.0	71.9	73.1	69.7	67.2	69.9	74.1	72.1	72.6	-1	+1
Top 20%	74.9	75.3	81.1	83.7	82.9	81.3	83.4	86.2	81.0	81.0	81.4	80.5	-1	-1
Territories														
Vologda	63.1	67.1	73.6	72.6	71.0	68.8	67.1	65.5	68.5	70.3	68.0	70.8	+2	+3
Cherepovets	68.1	71.2	76.2	75.7	75.8	77.7	74.5	71.1	67.8	72.1	74.4	72.0	-6	-2
Districts	61.6	57.1	59.8	66.1	68.7	69.2	70.5	67.6	69.6	71.7	70.5	69.0	0	-2
Oblast	63.6	63.1	67.3	70.4	71.2	71.3	70.7	68.0	68.8	71.4	70.9	70.3	-1	-1

CONCLUSION

Thus, according to the results of the next stage of the public opinion monitoring conducted by VolRC RAS, the socio-political situation in the Vologda Oblast in August – October remains quite stable: despite the end of the summer vacation season and the gradual deterioration of weather conditions, the assessments of the emotional state of people are still at a high level (70% of residents of the Vologda Oblast characterize their mood as "normal, good, even").

People's attitude toward the work of key representatives of state power has remained stable since April 2019: 55–56% of Vologda Oblast residents approve of the work of the President, 40–43% – the Prime Minister, 35–36% – the Governor (we should note that the lower estimates of the level of approval of local authorities is quite a normal situation, which is typical not only of the Vologda Oblast, but also of Russia as a whole. Experts attribute it to "the proximity of regional and municipal governments to the everyday life of citizens", as well as to the fact that "people can monitor their work not only by watching TV"²).

It is most likely that in August–October, a slight decrease in the proportion of people who believe that the President is successfully restoring order in the country (from 46 to 43%) adequately reflects the reaction of Vologda Oblast residents to the protest actions in Moscow, which were associated with

² *Russian Everyday Life in Crisis: How Do We Live and What Do We Feel?: Information and Analytical Summary of the Results of a Nationwide Study*. Moscow, 2015. P. 15.

the non-admission of a number of candidates to the elections to the City Duma. However, this event had no significant effect on regional life; thus, the socio-political situation remained stable. The gubernatorial elections on September 8, 2019 in the Vologda Oblast (as in the RF majority of constituent entities that participated in the voting) were held without incidents; according to the Central Election Commission of the Russian Federation, the incumbent head of the region O.A. Kuvshinnikov won the election with 60.79% of the votes, with a turnout of 40.52%³.

There remains a rather tense situation regarding how Vologda Oblast residents assess their financial situation. In the dynamics of social self-identification, significant changes have not occurred for at least the last 12 months (since October 2018), while the proportion of those who consider themselves to have “average income” remains significantly lower than the proportion of the “poor and extremely poor” (approximately 42–43% vs. 45–48%). Against the background of expectations of “breakthrough” changes in the standard of living and quality of life, it is difficult to characterize the situation as positive; and perhaps it affects the deterioration of the emotional state of certain population groups such as people 18–30 years of age (due to their age, they are ready to be more actively involved in the social and political life of the country and the region), persons with higher education (who have a potentially higher level of awareness and interest in the events of domestic political life), residents of Cherepovets (who traditionally have a higher level of income than residents of Vologda and its districts).

We should also note that according to official statistics, real cash incomes in the second quarter of 2019 increased by 11.6% compared to the first quarter. However, this growth was mainly associated with social benefits rather than wages: during the same period in the structure of cash incomes the share of income from business activities decreased from 5.4 to 5%, the share of income from wages changed very slightly (from 61.2 to 61.3%), the share of income from social benefits increased by 2.7% (from 23.3 to 26%)⁴.

The positive changes of the last two months are largely restorative. In particular, this applies to the level of approval of the work of federal authorities, which in the long-term retrospective (over the past 12 months, from October 2018 to October 2019) decreased by 4–10 percentage points, as well as the share of the “poor and extremely poor”, which during the same period increased from 45 to 48%.

Thus, we can point out that psychological well-being of the population is relatively stable; however, it would be premature to say that the current estimates of the work of the authorities concerning the most acute question – raising the standard of living and quality of life – are long-lasting. In order to “consolidate” and develop the positive changes observed in the dynamics of public opinion in recent months, it is necessary to fulfill key expectations and socio-political requests of the general public, which are primarily related to the President’s election promises implemented today in the framework of national projects. The effectiveness and timeliness of achieving these indicators will influence the nature of public sentiment and the level of social tension not only in the Vologda Oblast, but also in Russia as a whole.

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

³ Election results published on the website of the Central Election Commission. Available at: http://www.vologod.vybor.izbirkom.ru/region/region/vologod?action=show&root=1&tvd=23520001251387&vrn=23520001251383®ion=35&global=&sub_region=0&prver=0&pronetvd=null&type=222

⁴ Operational data of Vologdastat:

“The main indicators of the standard of living”. Available at: <https://vologdastat.gks.ru/storage/mediabank/60R.htm>

“The structure of monetary incomes of the population”. Available at: <https://vologdastat.gks.ru/storage/mediabank/%D0%A1%D1%82%D1%80%D1%83%D0%BA%D1%82%D1%83%D1%80%D0%B0%20%D0%94%D0%94.htm>