

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 VoIRC RAS in the Vologda Oblast¹.

The following tables show the dynamics of a number of parameters of social well-being and socio-political moods of the region's population based on the results of the last "wave" of monitoring (October – December 2019), as well as for the period from December 2018 to December 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 2017–2019.

In October – December 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%; the share of negative assessments is 30–31%.

A slight increase in the share of negative judgments about the work of the head of state is observed in the second half of 2019: for the period from June to December, it increased by 3 percentage points (from 28 to 31%).

In general, by the end of 2019, the level of approval of the work of the head of state has significantly decreased (compared to 2018, by 10 percentage points, from 66 to 56%); the share of negative assessments has increased by 8 percentage points (from 22 to 30%).

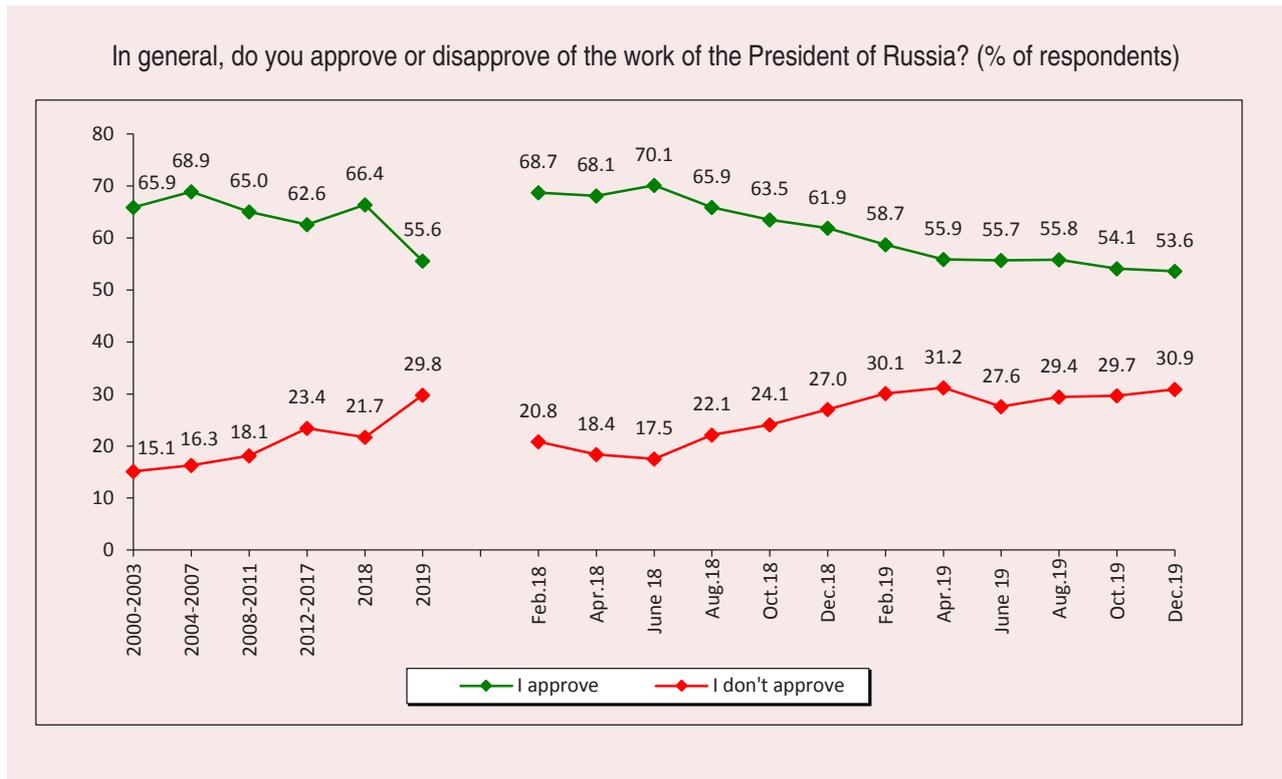
¹ The polls are held six times a year in Vologda, Cherepovets, and in eight districts of the oblast (Babayevsky District, Velikoustyugsky District, Vozhegodsky District, Gryazovetsky District, Kirillovsky District, Nikolsky District, Tarnogsky District and Sheksninsky District). The method of the survey 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.vsc.ac.ru/>.

For reference:

According to VTsIOM, the level of approval of work of the President of the Russian Federation in October – first half of December 2019 decreased from 65 to 63%, the share of negative judgments increased from 26 to 28%.

According to Levada-Center, in October – November 2019, the share of positive assessments of the work of the head of state decreased from 70 to 68%, and the proportion of negative evaluations increased from 29 to 31%.



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

Answer	2007	2011	2012	2017	2018	2019	Dec. 2018	Feb. 2019	Apr. 2019	June 2019	Aug. 2019	Oct. 2019	Dec. 2019	Dynamics (+/-)	
														2019 to 2018	Dec. 19 to Oct. 19
RF President															
I approve	75.3	58.7	51.7	67.3	66.4	55.6	61.9	58.7	55.9	55.7	55.8	54.1	53.6	-10	-1
I don't approve	11.5	25.5	32.6	20.0	21.7	29.8	27.0	30.1	31.2	27.6	29.4	29.7	30.9	+8	+1
Chairman of the RF Government*															
I approve	-*	59.3	49.6	49.5	48.0	41.1	45.3	41.6	38.8	40.9	43.1	41.1	41.1	-7	0
I don't approve	-	24.7	33.3	31.1	31.6	38.4	36.9	39.3	40.2	38.0	36.3	37.5	38.9	+7	+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	35.6	-3	0
I don't approve	22.2	30.5	33.3	39.3	37.6	40.2	40.3	41.5	41.4	38.6	38.5	40.1	40.8	+3	+1

* Included in the survey since 2008.

Over the past two months, there have been no significant changes in the assessment of the success with which the President solves the country’s key problems: 52% of residents of the Oblast positively assess the work of the head of state aimed at strengthening Russia’s international positions, 44% positively assess his efforts aimed at restoring order in the country, 34% positively assess his efforts aimed at protecting democracy and strengthening the freedoms of citizens, 26% positively assess his efforts aimed at boosting the economy and increasing the welfare of the population.

At the same time, negative changes are observed at the end of 2019. For example, compared to 2018, there has been a decline in the proportion of those who believe that the President is doing well in the following spheres:

- ✓ strengthening Russia’s international positions – by 3 percentage points (from 54 to 51%);
- ✓ restoring order in the country – by 7 percentage points (from 51 to 44%);
- ✓ protecting democracy and strengthening citizens’ freedoms – by 7 percentage points (from 41 to 34%);
- ✓ boosting the economy and increasing citizens’ welfare – by 3 percentage points (from 31 to 28%).

For the period from December 2018 to December 2019, the share of negative assessments of the population increased by 3 to 7 percentage points for all the issues appearing in the survey.

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

Answer	2007	2011	2012	2017	2018	2019	Dec. 2018	Feb. 2019	Apr. 2019	June 2019	Aug. 2019	Oct. 2019	Dec. 2019	Dynamics (+/-)	
														2019 to 2018	Dec. 19 to Oct. 19
Strengthening Russia’s international standing															
Successful	58.4	46.2	43.1	55.7	54.2	51.0	53.5	51.5	50.2	51.9	51.0	49.9	51.7	-3	+2
Unsuccessful	24.9	33.7	37.9	26.8	28.4	31.7	30.3	31.7	32.7	30.3	30.6	32.4	32.4	+3	0
Success index	133.5	112.5	105.2	129.0	125.7	119.4	123.2	119.8	117.5	121.6	120.4	117.5	119.3	-6	+2
Imposing order in the country															
Successful	53.2	36.6	35.4	50.6	51.1	44.1	46.9	44.2	42.4	44.5	46.1	43.1	44.1	-7	+1
Unsuccessful	34.0	50.0	50.7	36.1	35.0	40.3	39.5	40.7	42.6	39.3	39.3	40.0	39.7	+5	0
Success index	119.2	86.6	84.7	114.5	116.1	103.8	107.4	103.5	99.8	105.2	106.8	103.1	104.4	-12	+1
Protecting democracy and strengthening citizens’ freedoms															
Successful	44.4	32.4	28.8	40.3	40.5	34.2	36.5	33.5	32.3	34.6	35.5	35.1	33.9	-6	-1
Unsuccessful	37.0	48.3	52.3	40.2	40.2	46.3	43.3	45.3	47.7	45.5	46.1	45.7	47.3	+6	+2
Success index	107.4	84.1	76.5	100.2	100.2	87.9	93.2	88.2	84.6	89.1	89.4	89.4	86.6	-12	-3
Economic recovery and increase in citizens’ welfare															
Successful	47.2	30.7	28.5	29.3	31.0	27.5	29.9	28.1	28.1	29.1	26.5	26.9	26.1	-4	-1
Unsuccessful	39.1	56.1	57.9	56.9	56.2	58.5	57.6	56.9	58.2	57.8	59.7	58.2	60.0	+2	+2
Success index	108.1	74.6	70.6	72.4	74.7	69.0	72.3	71.2	69.9	71.3	66.8	68.7	66.1	-6	-3
* Ranked according to the average value of the index of success for 2018.															

In October – December 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%.

At the end of 2019, two changes should be noted:

1. Reduction in support for United Russia (by 4 percentage points, from 38 to 34%).
2. Increase in the share of people who believe that none of the political forces represented in Parliament expresses their interests (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		Election to the RF State Duma 2016, fact		2017	2018	2019	Dec. 2018	Feb. 2019	Apr. 2019	June 2019	Aug. 2019	Oct. 2019	Dec. 2019	Dynamics (+/-)	
			2012	2016	2019 to 2018	Dec. 19 to Oct. 19												
United Russia	30.2	31.1	33.4	29.1	35.4	38.0	34.7	37.9	33.8	36.0	34.6	33.3	34.8	33.5	32.8	33.7	-4	+1
LDPR	7.0	10.3	16.8	10.6	8.3	14.2	7.6	9.2	8.8	9.9	9.1	8.0	8.5	8.7	9.1	9.2	0	0
KPRF	7.5	7.8	15.4	7.8	10.4	21.9	11.0	9.6	9.1	8.8	8.9	8.2	9.1	10.5	8.3	9.4	-1	+1
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	4.0	+1	0
Other	1.8	1.9	–	2.1	0.3	–	0.5	0.7	0.3	0.4	0.6	0.3	0.3	0.4	0.1	0.1	0	0
None	17.8	29.4	–	31.3	29.4	–	29.2	28.5	33.7	31.9	34.2	34.7	32.3	32.1	34.3	34.3	+5	0
It's difficult to answer	21.2	13.2	–	11.7	12.0	–	12.2	11.2	11.0	10.2	9.7	12.6	12.4	10.9	11.2	9.3	0	-2

The estimates of social well-being of the population show no significant changes either in the short-term (for the last two months) or in the long-term (for 2019) retrospective:

- ✓ most residents of the Oblast positively characterize their daily emotional state (70%) and say that “everything is not so bad and we can live” (78%);
- ✓ the proportion of people who subjectively refer to themselves as “middle-class” citizens is stable at 41–42%; however, it is significantly lower than the proportion of those who consider themselves to be “poor” and “extremely poor” (47 – 48%). it should also be noted that during the period from December 2018 to December 2019, the share of “poor and extremely poor” residents of the region increased by 4 percentage points (from 44 to 48%);
- ✓ the consumer sentiment index in 2019 was 91 points, at the same time, in the last two months, it has slightly decreased (from 92 to 90 points), which indicates a deterioration in people’s forecasts regarding the future economic situation in the country and their personal financial situation.

Estimation of social condition (% of respondents)

Answer	2007	2011	2012	2017	2018	2019	Dec. 2018	Feb. 2019	Apr. 2019	June 2019	Aug. 2019	Oct. 2019	Dec. 2019	Dynamics (+/-)	
														2019 to 2018	Dec. 19 to Oct. 19
Mood															
Usual condition, good mood	63.6	63.1	67.3	70.4	71.2	69.9	70.7	68.0	68.8	71.4	70.9	70.3	69.7	-1	-1
I feel stress, anger, fear, depression	27.8	28.9	27.0	24.2	23.1	24.5	23.5	25.6	25.5	23.5	23.4	24.0	25.0	+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	77.0	77.1	74.3	76.7	78.0	76.8	77.8	78.4	0	+1
It's impossible to bear such plight	13.6	15.3	15.8	15.8	16.3	17.2	17.5	19.1	17.5	16.5	16.2	17.2	16.7	+1	-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	42.4	41.6	43.8	41.3	43.3	42.9	41.4	41.4	0	0
The share of people who consider themselves to be poor and extremely poor	42.4	44.3	44.5	46.6	45.4	46.8	44.7	44.8	46.9	45.8	47.0	48.0	48.4	+1	0
Consumer sentiment index															
Index value, points	105.9	89.6	91.5	84.6	89.9	90.9	89.1	90.1	90.0	91.2	91.8	92.0	90.3	+1	-2

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

In the context of the main socio-demographic groups, there have been no significant changes in the social mood over the past two months, except for those with secondary vocational education (a decline in the share of positive ratings by 4 percentage points, from 74 to 70%), and residents of the Oblast who according to self-evaluations of their income belong to 20% of the least secured strata (in this group, the proportion of positive judgments also declined by 4 percentage points, from 54 to 50%).

At the same time, in the group of the bottom 20%, there is also the most significant deterioration in social mood estimates for the period from December 2018 to December 2019 (by 11 percentage points, from 61 to 50%).

In general, no positive changes were observed in any of the analyzed socio-demographic groups at the end of 2019. There were no significant changes in nine groups, in five groups there was a decrease in the share of positive assessments of social mood (especially significant among people with higher and incomplete higher education – by 4 p.p., from 77 to 73%; among the top 20% of the residents of the Oblast – by 4 p.p., from 57 to 53%; and among residents of Cherepovets – by 5 p.p., from 76 to 71%).

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

Population group	2007	2011	2012	2017	2018	2019	Dec. 2018	Feb. 2019	Apr. 2019	June 2019	Aug. 2019	Oct. 2019	Dec. 2019	Dynamics (+/-)	
														2019 to 2018	Dec. 19 to Oct. 19
Sex															
Men	65.9	64.5	69.1	70.6	72.8	70.1	73.4	69.9	68.6	72.1	71.8	69.2	69.0	-3	0
Women	61.7	62.0	65.8	70.2	69.8	69.6	68.4	66.4	69.0	70.8	70.1	71.2	70.3	0	-1
Age															
Under 30	71.3	70.0	72.3	78.1	80.0	81.1	81.6	76.3	81.2	82.9	85.2	79.9	81.3	+1	+1
30-55	64.8	62.5	67.9	71.5	72.6	71.2	71.6	68.0	71.5	70.5	74.0	71.1	71.9	-1	+1
Over 55	54.8	58.3	62.1	64.9	65.2	63.3	64.7	64.3	59.8	67.4	60.7	65.1	62.6	-2	-2
Education															
Secondary and incomplete secondary	58.4	57.4	57.2	63.6	64.8	63.2	67.8	61.5	60.4	64.4	65.6	63.4	64.0	-2	+1
Secondary vocational	64.6	63.6	66.7	72.0	72.2	72.7	70.5	68.6	73.0	77.3	72.8	73.9	70.4	+1	-4
Higher and incomplete higher	68.6	68.3	77.0	75.8	76.8	73.4	74.1	73.8	73.3	72.1	73.9	72.6	74.7	-3	+2
Income groups															
Bottom 20%	51.6	45.3	51.5	52.9	57.3	53.2	61.3	50.4	56.1	54.9	53.2	54.1	50.2	-4	-4
Middle 60%	62.9	65.3	68.7	72.0	71.9	71.4	69.7	67.2	69.9	74.1	72.1	72.6	72.6	-1	0
Top 20%	74.9	75.3	81.1	83.7	82.9	81.8	83.4	86.2	81.0	81.0	81.4	80.5	80.5	-1	0
Territories															
Vologda	63.1	67.1	73.6	72.6	71.0	68.6	67.1	65.5	68.5	70.3	68.0	70.8	68.6	-2	-2
Cherepovets	68.1	71.2	76.2	75.7	75.8	71.2	74.5	71.1	67.8	72.1	74.4	72.0	69.9	-5	-2
Districts	61.6	57.1	59.8	66.1	68.7	69.8	70.5	67.6	69.6	71.7	70.5	69.0	70.3	+1	+1
Oblast	63.6	63.1	67.3	70.4	71.2	69.9	70.7	68.0	68.8	71.4	70.9	70.3	69.7	-1	-1

Conclusion

According to the results of 2019, the dynamics of public sentiments of residents of the Vologda Oblast show mainly negative changes. This applies to the assessment of the work of federal state authorities (compared to 2018, the level of approval of the President’s work decreased by 10 p.p., from 66 to 56%; the Prime Minister’s work – by 7 p.p., from 48 to 41%), as well as support for the United Russia party (the share of people who believe that the party in power expresses their interests for 2018–2019 decreased by 4 p.p., from 38 to 34%).

We should also note that over the past year, the assessments of the success of the President’s work aimed at solving the country’s key problems deteriorated (by 3–7 p.p.); there have been no positive changes in the dynamics of social mood in any of the socio-demographic groups.

Assessments of the performance of the Vologda Oblast Governor remain relatively stable compared to 2018: the level of approval is 36–38%. Various indicators of social well-being remain stable as well: the proportion of people who positively characterize their daily emotional state remained at the level of 70–71%, the share of Vologda Oblast residents who think that “it’s not so bad and we can live” remains at the level of 77% in recent years.

The dynamics of self-assessments of the financial situation in 2019 can be interpreted in different ways: on the one hand, there were no negative changes in it (which, in principle, is a

good result, if we take into account the deterioration of assessments regarding the work of the authorities). On the other hand, it is difficult to characterize it positively: the share of “poor” and “extremely poor” residents exceeds the share of people of “average income” (47 and 42%, respectively), and the consumer sentiment index remains below 100 points (90–91 p.p.), which indicates the prevalence of pessimistic forecasts of the population regarding the future of the Russian economy and their personal financial situation.

It is important to emphasize that the trends in public opinion observed in the Vologda Oblast are not unique to the region. In particular, the leading Russian centers engaged in sociological surveys record a drop in the level of approval of the President’s work: according to VTsIOM, for the period from 2018 to the 1st half of December 2019, it decreased by 7 p.p. (from 71 to 64%), according to Levada-Center (for 2018 – November 2019) – by 6 p.p. (from 73 to 67%). According to the Institute of Sociology of the Russian Academy of Sciences (IS RAS), the level of trust in the head of state in 2017 was 71%, in 2018 – 69%, in 2019 – 57%².

The ratings of the United Russia party (according to VTsIOM) in early 2018 fluctuated in the interval of 45–50%; in the second half of 2018 (after the announcement of the pension reform) – 35–39%, in 2019 – in the interval of 32–34%.

The consumer sentiment index (according to Levada-Center) was 78 points in 2018 and 79 points in 2019.

In our view, the deterioration in the assessments of the work of federal authorities in 2019 is not so much due to their adoption of some management decisions that fundamentally differ from the opinion of the population (as was the case with the pension reform in 2018), but rather to the unjustified expectations of people regarding the implementation of simple, concrete and non-discriminatory promises voiced by V. Putin in his Address to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation in 2018 and later enshrined in the May Decree and national projects.

According to the Federal State Statistics Service, in 2018, the real disposable income of the population of the Vologda Oblast amounted to 99.4% of the level of the corresponding period of 2017, and in January – September 2019, the value of this indicator decreased to 99.1%. Real accrued wages in 2018 amounted to 109.1% of the level of 2017, and in January – September 2019 – to 103.7% of the corresponding period of 2018³... In other words, neither people’s subjective assessments nor any real trends in living standards recorded in official statistics show any signs of “twofold reduction in poverty” that people are waiting for so much; although the mass media regularly inform people about “multibillion” financial resources allocated to the implementation of projects, support of certain sectors, etc.

Vladimir Putin noted at one of the meetings on the implementation of national projects: “People are not interested in abstract promises; citizens are interested in the result, and not in the distant future, but now”⁴. We think that the results of Russian and regional public opinion

² *Russian society after the presidential election-2018: request for change: an information and analytical report*. Moscow, 2018. P. 35; *On the pressing problems of our life and the interaction of regulators, business and citizens: a report on the results of a mass sociological study*. Moscow, 2019. Vol. 1. P. 82.

³ *Socio-economic situation of the Vologda Oblast in January-October 2019: report*. Vologdastat. Vologda, 2019. Pp. 64-65.

⁴ Meeting of the Council for Strategic Development and National Projects on May 8, 2019. Available at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/60485>

surveys convincingly prove this thesis of the head of state. The fact that the negative dynamics of perception of the work of federal government agencies, as well as the stable alarming situation with regard to the financial situation of the population, are not accompanied by a decrease in social well-being indicators, only proves that people rely on the help of the state less and less, and the gap between them and the state is thus increasing.

Under the circumstances, the attitude of society toward the authorities will be determined primarily by positive changes in the dynamics of living standards and overcoming social inequality, such as inequality not only in terms of income, but also in terms of employment opportunities, education, quality medical care, etc. it is highly likely that this issue will become more relevant as the results of national projects are “delayed” and the State Duma election of 2021 and the presidential election of 2024 are getting closer.

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