

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 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 (June 2021) and for the period from August 2020 to June 2021 (last 6 polls).

We compare the results of the surveys with the data for 2000 (the first year of V. Putin's first presidential term), 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 2018–2020².

In April – June 2021, the level of approval of the work of the President of the Russian Federation did not change significantly. The share of positive assessments is 52–53%, negative – 30–31%.

The share of negative assessments of the President's work, compared to August 2020, decreased by 4 p.p. (from 34 to 30%). At the same time, the share of positive assessments has not changed significantly (52–53%)³.

The share of negative assessments of the work of the Chairman of the RF Government decreased by 6 p.p. (from 41 to 35%) for the period from August 2020 to June 2021. The share of positive assessments increased by 3 p.p. (from 39 to 42%).

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/>.

² In 2020, four "waves" of monitoring were conducted. Surveys in April and June 2020 were not conducted due to quarantine restrictions during the spread of Covid-19.

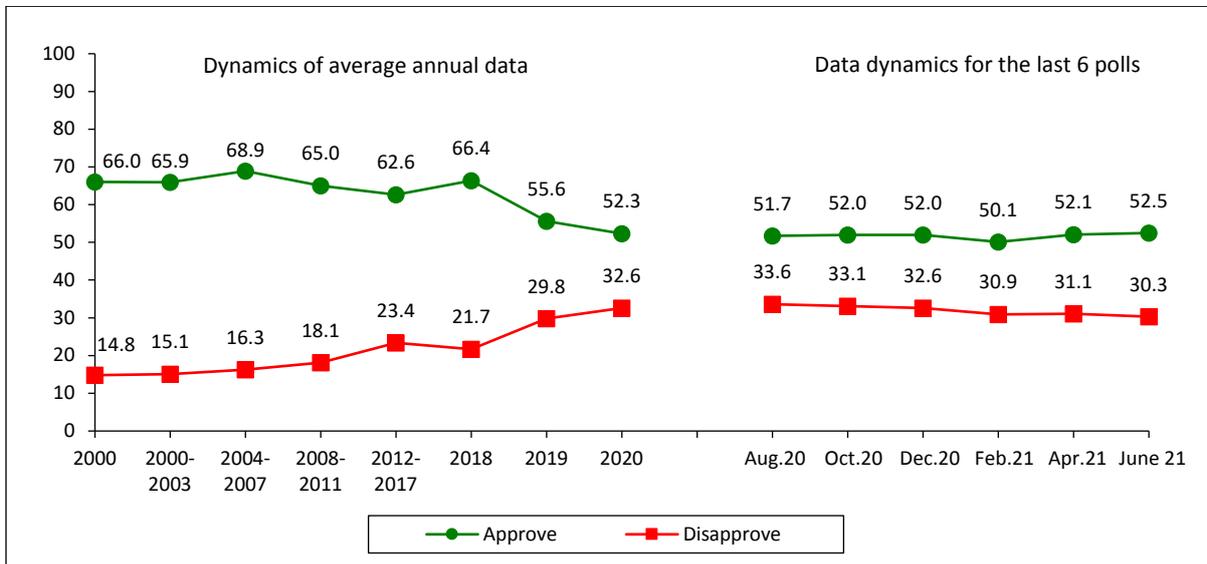
³ Hereinafter, the results of a comparative analysis of survey data, conducted in April 2021, and the results of a monitoring "wave", conducted in August 2020.

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

Respond option	Dynamics of average annual data							Data dynamics for the last 6 polls						Dynamics (+/-), Apr. 2021 to Feb. 2020
	2000	2007	2011	2012	2018	2019	2020	Aug. 2020	Oct. 2020	Dec. 2020	Feb. 2021	Apr. 2021	June 2021	
RF President														
I approve	66.0	75.3	58.7	51.7	66.4	55.6	52.3	51.7	52.0	52.0	50.1	52.1	52.5	+1
I disapprove	14.8	11.5	25.5	32.6	21.7	29.8	32.6	33.6	33.1	32.6	30.9	31.1	30.3	-3
Chairman of the RF Government**														
I approve	-**	-**	59.3	49.6	48.0	41.1	38.7	38.9	38.8	39.1	37.6	38.8	42.2	+3
I disapprove	-	-	24.7	33.3	31.6	38.4	40.4	40.9	40.8	38.8	38.8	38.3	35.1	-6
Governor of the Oblast														
I approve	56.1	55.8	45.7	41.9	38.4	35.7	35.0	35.2	35.5	32.9	33.9	36.3	37.8	+3
I disapprove	19.3	22.2	30.5	33.3	37.6	40.2	42.5	41.9	42.1	44.2	42.4	41.3	38.4	-3

* Question: "How do you assess the current performance of...?" According to the research methodology, the sampling error does not exceed 3%, so hereinafter changes with a difference of 2 p.p. are not taken into account or are considered insignificantly; they are highlighted in blue in the tables. Positive changes are highlighted in green, negative changes are highlighted red.
 ** The question has been asked since 2008.

In general, do you approve or disapprove of the work of the President of Russia? (% of respondents, FSBIS VoIRC RAS data)*



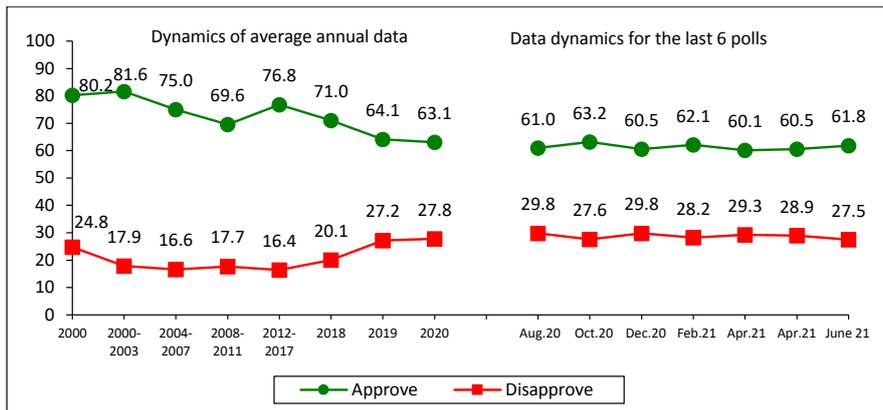
* Hereinafter, all graphs show the average annual data for 2000, 2018, 2019, 2020, as well as the average annual data for the periods 2000–2003, 2004–2007, 2008–2011, 2012–2017, corresponding to the periods of presidential terms.

For reference:

According to VCIOM data for April – first half of June 2021, the level of approval of the President’s work did not change (60–62%)⁴, the share of negative answers was 28–29%.

According to the latest data of the Levada-Center (April – May 2021⁵), the share of positive assessments also did not change (65–67%), negative assessments was 32–33%.

In general, do you approve or disapprove of the work of the President of the Russian Federation?
(% of respondents; VCIOM data)*



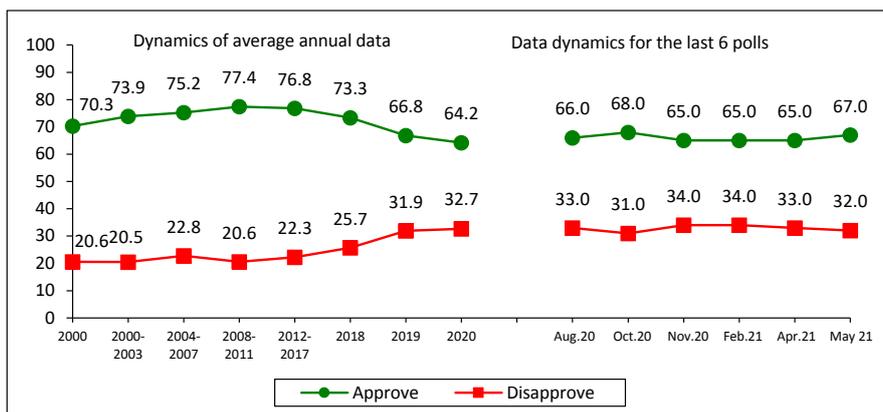
Annual dynamics (June 2021 to August 2020)	
Respond option	Dynamics (+ / -)
I approve	+1
I disapprove	-2

* Question: “In general, do You approve or disapprove of the work of the President of the Russian Federation?”

Data for June 2021 – average value for two polls: conducted on June 6, 2021 and June 13, 2021

Source: VCIOM data. Available at: <https://wciom.ru/>

In general, do you approve or disapprove of the work of V. Putin at the position of the President of Russia? (% of respondents; Levada-Center data)*



Annual dynamics (May 2021 to August 2020)	
Respond option	Dynamics (+ / -)
I approve	+1
I disapprove	-1

* Question: “In general, do you approve or disapprove of the work of V. Putin at the position of the President of Russia?”

Source: Levada-Center data. Available at: <https://www.levada.ru/> (no data for December 2020).

⁴ At the moment of writing this article, VCIOM latest data were dated June 13, 2021. Source: VCIOM. Ratings. Available at: <https://wciom.ru/ratings/dejatelnost-gosudarstvennykh-institutov>

⁵ Latest data – May 2021. Source: Levada-Center. Indicators. Available at: <https://www.levada.ru/indikatory>

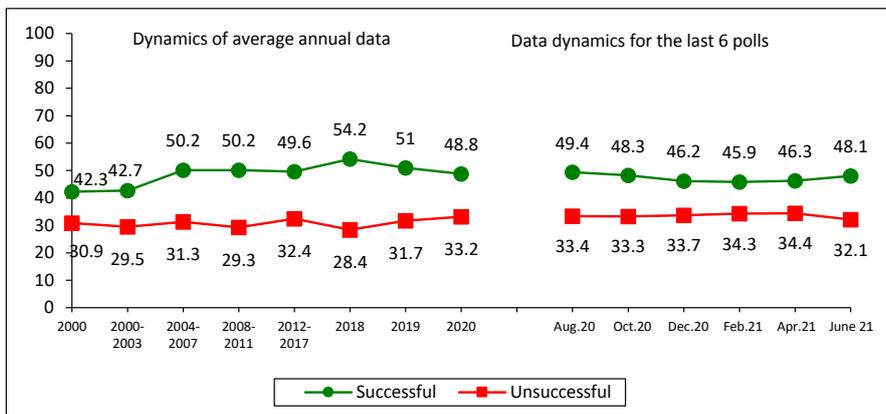
From April to June 2021, the share of the Oblast residents, who consider the President’s work to solve the key problems of the country, has increased by 2–4 p.p.:

- ✓ strengthening Russia’ international positions (from 46 to 48%);
- ✓ restoring order in the country (from 37 to 41%);
- ✓ protecting democracy and strengthening the freedoms of citizens (from 31 to 35%);
- ✓ boosting the economy and increasing the welfare of the population (from 23 to 27%).

As of June 2021, the share of positive assessments reflecting the success of the President’s solution of the country’s key problems corresponds to the indicators of August 2020.

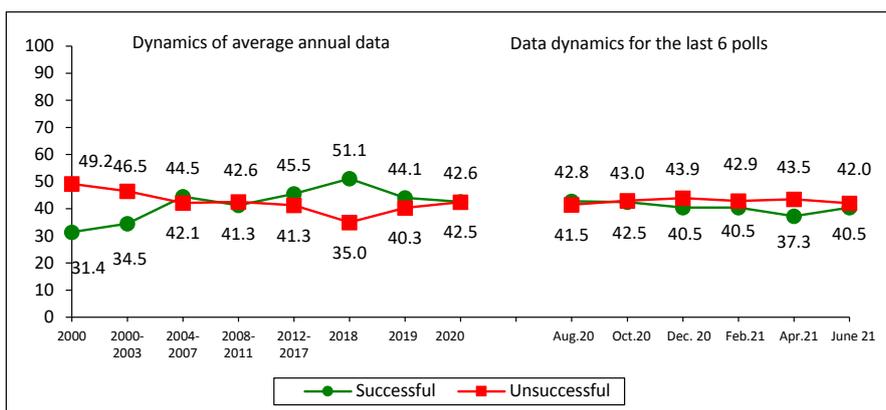
In your opinion, how successful is the RF President in coping with challenging issues..?
(% of respondents; VoIRC RAS data)

Strengthening Russia’s international positions



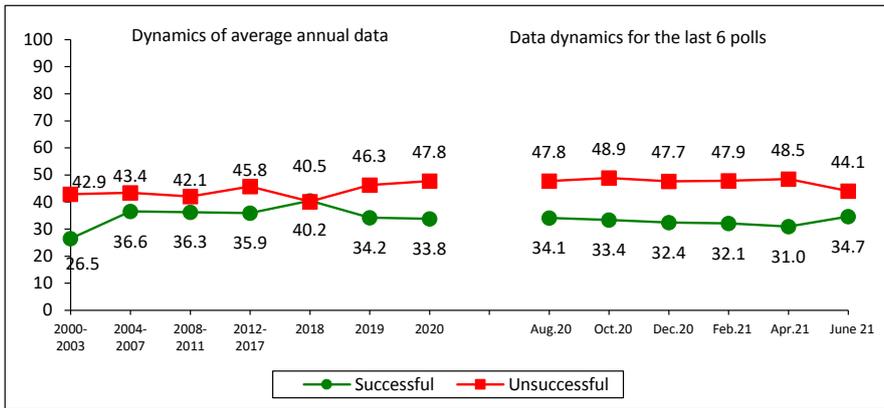
Annual dynamics (June 2021 to August 2020)	
Respond option	Dynamics (+ / -)
Successful	-1
Unsuccessful	-1

Imposing order in the country



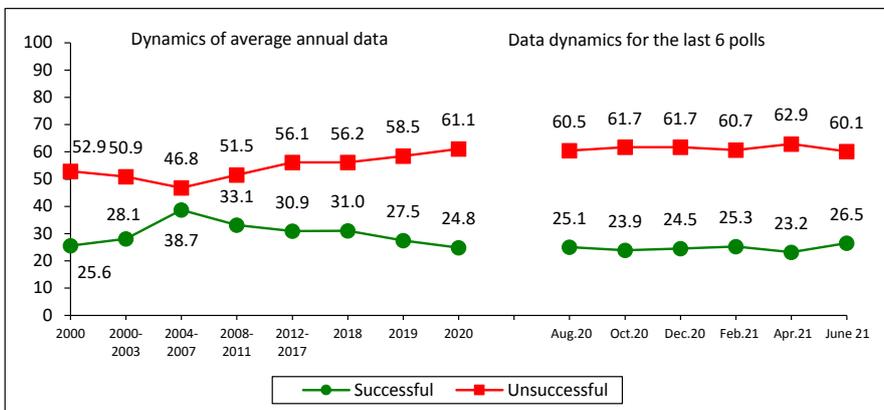
Annual dynamics (June 2021 to August 2020)	
Respond option	Dynamics (+ / -)
Successful	-2
Unsuccessful	+1

Protecting democracy and strengthening citizens' freedoms



Annual dynamics (June 2021 to August 2020)	
Respond option	Dynamics (+ / -)
Successful	-4
Unsuccessful	-2

Economic recovery and increase in citizens' welfare



Annual dynamics (June 2021 to August 2020)	
Respond option	Dynamics (+ / -)
Successful	0
Unsuccessful	+1

The structure of political preferences of the region’s residents remains stable. It is still dominated by United Russia (the share of its supporters is 32%), the support of the other parties is much less: 9–10% – LDPR, 8–9% – KPRF, 3–4% – the Just Russia party.

More than the third of the region’s population (35–36%) thinks that none of the political forces represented in the State Duma do not express their interests.

In general, a similar structure of political preferences was in August 2020.

Which party expresses your interests? (% of respondents; VoIRC RAS data)

Party	Dynamics of average annual data										Data dynamics for the last 6 polls						Dynamics (+/-), June 2021 to Aug. 2020
	2000	2007	2011	Election to the RF State Duma 2011, fact	2012	2016	Election to the RF State Duma 2016, fact	2018	2019	2020	Aug. 2020	Oct. 2020	Dec. 2020	Feb. 2021	Apr. 2021	June 2021	
United Russia	18.5	30.2	31.1	33.4	29.1	35.4	38.0	37.9	33.8	31.5	30.9	31.1	30.9	30.5	31.5	32.1	+1
KPRF	11.5	7.0	10.3	16.8	10.6	8.3	14.2	9.2	8.8	8.4	8.6	8.8	7.3	8.3	8.7	8.1	-1
LDPR	4.8	7.5	7.8	15.4	7.8	10.4	21.9	9.6	9.1	9.5	9.3	9.4	9.5	10.1	9.9	8.5	-1
Just Russia	-	7.8	5.6	27.2	6.6	4.2	10.8	2.9	3.4	4.7	4.8	4.3	5.0	3.6	2.6	4.1	-1
Other	0.9	1.8	1.9	-	2.1	0.3	-	0.7	0.3	0.5	0.4	0.3	0.7	0.2	0.1	0.1	0
None	29.6	17.8	29.4	-	31.3	29.4	-	28.5	33.7	34.2	33.6	33.8	35.3	35.9	36.4	35.4	+2
Hesitate to respond	20.3	21.2	13.2	-	11.7	12.0	-	11.2	11.0	11.1	12.4	12.2	11.2	11.3	10.9	11.8	-1

In June 2021, the trend of improving assessments of public sentiment continued. Over the past two months, the indicators of the population’s social well-being have improved (by 3 p.p.) (from 63 to 66%); the share of those who think that “everything is not so bad, and it is possible to live; it is difficult to live, but it is possible to stand it” – by 3 p. p. (from 74 to 77%).

The share of people who positively characterize their mood and have a high potential for patience is higher than in August 2020. (by 9 and 4 p. p., respectively).

The share of the Oblast residents who subjectively classify themselves as “poor and extremely poor” did not change significantly from April to June 2021 (47–48%).

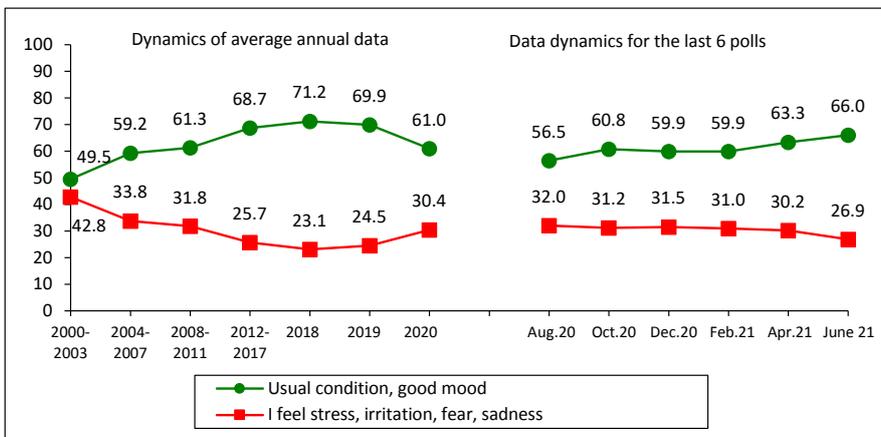
It is worth noting that in August 2020, the share of “poor and extremely poor” people was higher by 3 p.p. (50%).

Consumer sentiment Index (CSI) reflecting people’s forecasts regarding the prospects for economic development and their personal financial situation, as in April 2021, amounted to 83 points.

CSI is significantly lower than in August 2020 (86 p.), while in fact, since the global financial crisis, CSI has not exceeded the mark of 100 points which means that pessimistic forecasts prevail in population estimates.

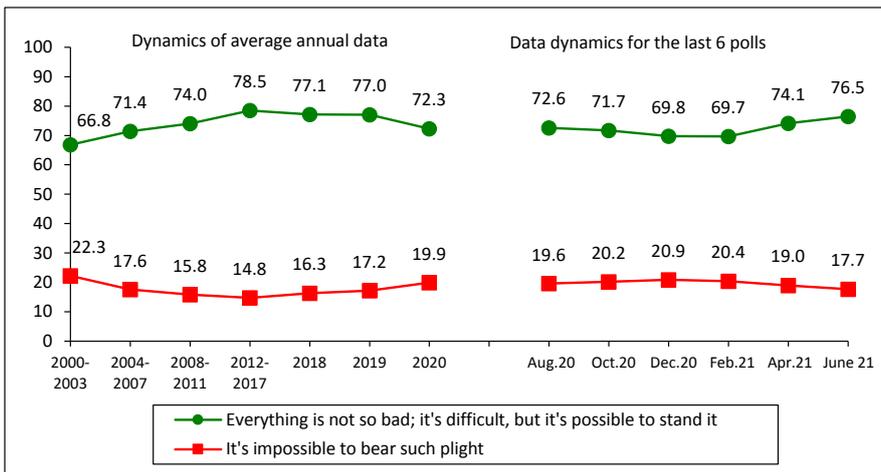
Estimation of social condition (% of respondents; VoIRC RAS data)

Social mood



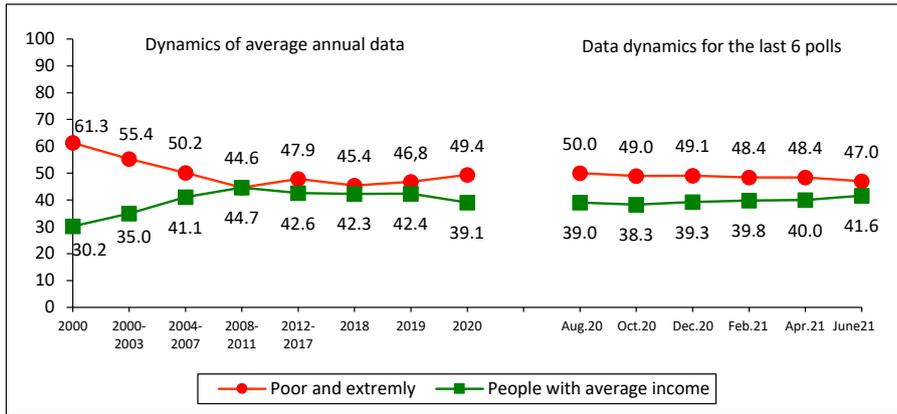
Annual dynamics (June 2021 to August 2020)	
Respond option	Dynamics (+ / -)
Usual condition, good mood	+10
I feel stress, irritation, fear, sadness	-5

Stock of patience



Annual dynamics (June 2021 to August 2020)	
Respond option	Dynamics (+ / -)
Everything is not so bad; it's difficult to live, but it's possible to stand it	+4
It's impossible to bear such plight	-2

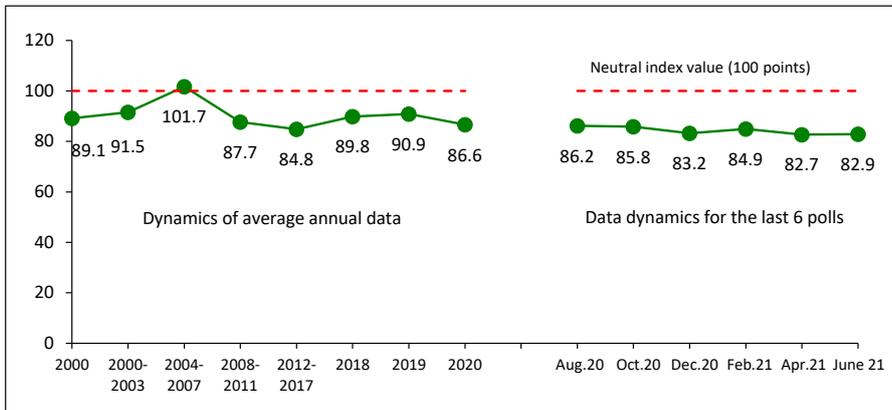
Social self-identification*



Annual dynamics (June 2021 to August 2020)	
Respond option	Dynamics (+ / -)
People with average income	+3
Poor and extremely poor	-3

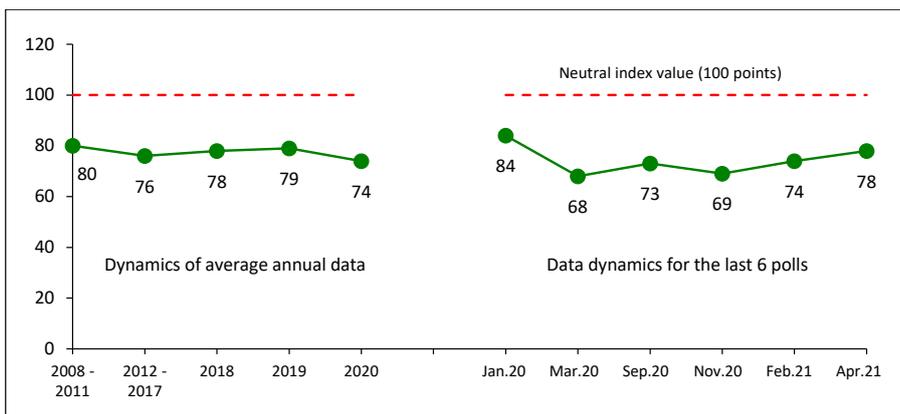
* Question: "Which category do you belong to, in your opinion?"

Consumer Sentiment Index (CSI; points; data of VoIRC RAS for the Vologda Oblast)



Annual dynamics (June 2021 to August 2020)	
CSI	Dynamics (+ / -)
Index value, points	-3

Consumer Sentiment Index (CSI; Levada-Center data* for Russia)



Annual dynamics (June 2021 to August 2020)	
CSI	Dynamics (+ / -)
Index value, points	-6

* Index is calculated since 2008

Source: Levada-Center data. Available at: <https://www.levada.ru/indikatory/sotsialno-ekonomicheskie-indikatory/>

Latest data is for April 2021. There are no data for the period from April to August 2020.

Over the past two months, in most socio-demographic groups (in 8 out of 14), the share of people who positively characterize their daily mood has increased slightly, especially among people under the age of 30 (by 6 p.p., from 67 to 73%), people with secondary and incomplete secondary education (by 6 p.p., from 57 to 63%), as well as those who, according to self-estimates of their own income, belong to the category of 20% of the most wealthy residents of the Oblast (by 6 p.p., from 71 to 77%).

Positive changes are noted in the dynamics for the period from August 2020 to June 2021: the share of people experiencing mainly positive emotions is higher in all socio-demographic groups (except for the 20% of the most wealthy), especially among residents of Cherepovets (by 16 p.p., from 54 to 70%), people aged 30–55 years (by 14 p.p., from 56 to 70%), in the category of the 20% least wealthy (by 14 p.p., from 40 to 54%).

Social mood in different social groups (respond option “Wonderful mood, normal, stable condition”, % of respondents; VoIRC RAS data)

Population group	Dynamics of average annual data							Data dynamics for the last 6 polls						Dynamics (+/-), June 2021 to Aug. 2020
	2000	2007	2011	2012	2018	2019	2020	Aug. 2020	Oct. 2020	Dec. 2020	Feb. 2021	Apr. 2021	June 2021	
Gender														
Male	50.1	65.9	64.5	69.1	72.8	70.1	60.8	55.6	60.7	60.0	60.8	61.3	65.1	+10
Female	43.3	61.7	62.0	65.8	69.8	69.6	61.2	57.3	60.8	59.8	59.2	64.9	66.7	+9
Age														
Under 30	59.1	71.3	70.0	72.3	80.0	81.1	67.6	69.0	64.6	65.2	60.9	67.4	73.0	+4
30–55	44.2	64.8	62.5	67.9	72.6	71.2	61.8	56.2	62.5	60.9	64.4	65.5	70.0	+14
Over 55	37.4	54.8	58.3	62.1	65.2	63.3	57.4	51.9	56.9	56.5	54.1	59.1	58.3	+6
Education														
Secondary and incomplete secondary	41.7	58.4	57.4	57.2	64.8	63.2	56.1	51.7	56.9	52.6	56.2	56.9	62.5	+11
Secondary vocational	46.4	64.6	63.6	66.7	72.2	72.7	63.5	59.1	63.5	62.5	60.9	64.3	66.1	+7
Higher and incomplete higher	53.3	68.6	68.3	77.0	76.8	73.4	63.3	58.6	61.4	64.6	62.7	68.7	69.7	+11
Income groups														
Bottom 20%	28.4	51.6	45.3	51.5	57.3	53.2	43.4	40.4	46.0	38.9	44.3	49.8	54.2	+14
Middle 60%	45.5	62.9	65.3	68.7	71.9	71.4	62.6	56.6	61.9	63.3	60.1	65.8	67.0	+10
Top 20%	64.6	74.9	75.3	81.1	82.9	81.8	75.6	76.4	70.6	76.3	76.0	70.8	76.5	0
Territories														
Vologda	49.2	63.1	67.1	73.6	71.0	68.6	60.9	57.0	61.0	58.7	55.8	57.0	59.4	+2
Cherepovets	50.8	68.1	71.2	76.2	75.8	71.2	60.4	54.4	59.3	60.7	64.4	68.1	70.8	+16
Districts	42.2	61.6	57.1	59.8	68.7	69.8	61.4	57.5	61.4	60.0	59.7	64.0	67.1	+10
Oblast	46.2	63.6	63.1	67.3	71.2	69.9	61.0	56.5	60.7	59.9	59.9	63.3	66.0	+10

Conclusions

The results of the next stage of monitoring show mainly positive changes in the dynamics of public mood for the period from April to June 2021.

First of all, it concerns the characteristics of people's psychological well-being, as well as assessments of the President's solution success of the country's key problems.

A number of factors could have influenced the improvement of population emotional state: new measures to support certain categories of citizens which were announced by the President during another Address to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation held in April 2021; the positive attitude of people to the ongoing vaccination against coronavirus; the celebration of the Victory Day and the non-working week announced during this period; the onset of the summer "holiday vacation" season...

There are many reasons for improving social mood assessments, but, apparently, they are not related to a tangible improvement in the financial situation of population. **For instance, over the past two months, the share of the Oblast residents who consider themselves to be "poor and extremely poor" has not changed and amounted to 46–48% (which is higher than the share of people of "average income"). Consumer sentiment index remains consistently low (83 p.).**

Vladimir Putin's personal meeting with J. Biden should be attributed to the unambiguously important and positive events of recent days after which a relative "warming" began to be seen in relations between Russia and the United States; it was extremely expected in the conditions of high tension that characterized the international political situation in the first months of 2021. According to experts, "the first step toward what can be called peaceful coexistence was taken in Geneva... The short era of perception of Russia by American Democrats, thanks to the President Barack Obama's ability, as a regional power has ended"⁶.

It is quite possible that this event will become, if not an impulse, then at least a unique period for Russia, when the implementation of the President's public promises (including implementation of national projects) will no longer be hindered by the tense foreign policy situation.

For the present, we can make positive, but very cautious forecasts on this issue the realism of which will be confirmed (or refuted) by the following measurements of public opinion monitoring.

Materials were prepared by M.V. Morev, I.M. Bakhvalova

⁶ Remchukov K. Biden and Putin have started the game. Quite possible, it is a great game. *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, June 17, 2021. Available at: https://www.ng.ru/editorial/2021-06-17/2_8176_editorial.html