

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 Oblast ¹.

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 (August 2021) and for the period from October 2020 to August 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 June – August 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%. The share of negative assessment increased slightly (within the sampling error) – by 3 p.p. (from 30 to 33%).

Over the past 6 polls (October 2020 – August 2021), the assessment of the head of state's activity has not changed: the share of positive judgments is 52%, negative – 33%³.

During the same period, public opinion about the activities of the Prime Minister of the Russian Federation improved slightly: the share of positive assessments increased by 4 p.p. (from 39 to 43%), negative assessments decreased by 5 p.p. (from 41 to 36%).

In the dynamics of the assessment of the activities of the region's head for the period from October 2020 to August 2021, there are also minor (within the sampling error) positive changes: the level of approval increased by 3 p.p. (from 36 to 39%), the share of negative characteristics decreased by 3 p.p. (from 42 to 39%).

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.vscs.ac.ru/](http://www.vscs.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.

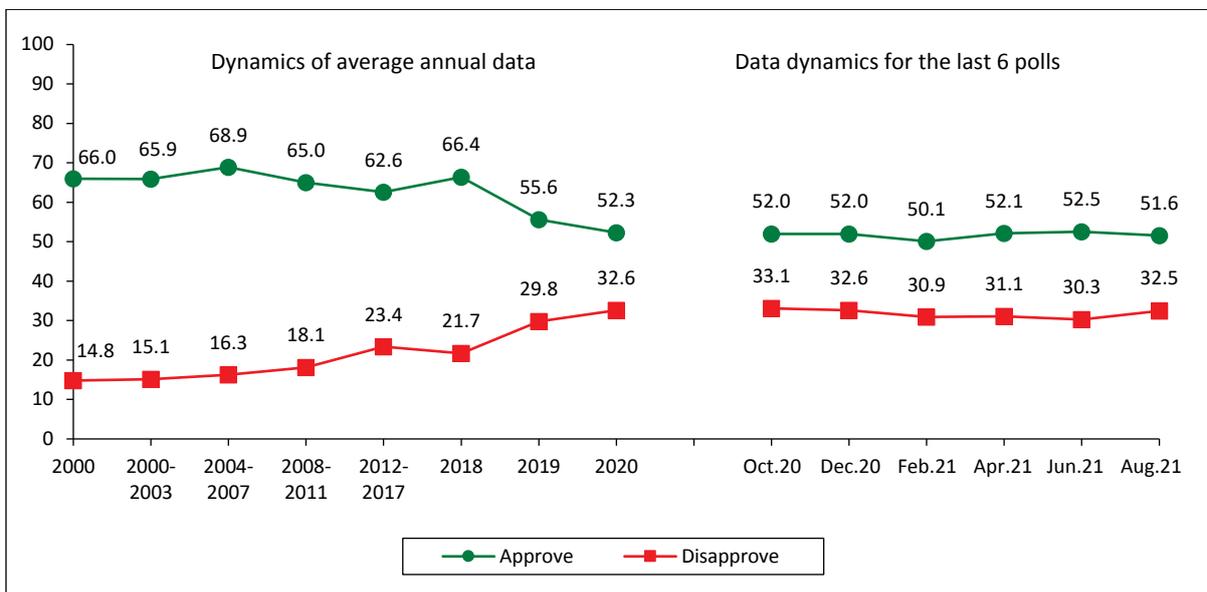
³ Hereinafter, the results of a comparative analysis of survey data, conducted in August 2021, and the results of a last-year monitoring "wave", conducted in October 2020 (the last survey before pandemic restrictions), are given in the frame.

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 (+/-), Aug. 2021 to Oct. 2020
	2000	2007	2011	2012	2018	2019	2020	Oct. 2020	Dec. 202	Feb. 2021	Apr. 2021	June 2021	Aug. 2021	
RF President														
I approve	66.0	75.3	58.7	51.7	66.4	55.6	52.3	52.0	52.0	50.1	52.1	52.5	51.6	0
I disapprove	14.8	11.5	25.5	32.6	21.7	29.8	32.6	33.1	32.6	30.9	31.1	30.3	32.5	0
Chairman of the RF Government*														
I approve	-*	-*	59.3	49.6	48.0	41.1	38.7	38.8	39.1	37.6	38.8	42.2	42.7	+4
I disapprove	-	-	24.7	33.3	31.6	38.4	40.4	40.8	38.8	38.8	38.3	35.1	36.0	-5
Governor of the Oblast														
I approve	56.1	55.8	45.7	41.9	38.4	35.7	35.0	35.5	32.9	33.9	36.3	37.8	38.6	+3
I disapprove	19.3	22.2	30.5	33.3	37.6	40.2	42.5	42.1	44.2	42.4	41.3	38.4	38.5	-3

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 insignificant; they are highlighted in blue in the tables. Positive changes are highlighted in green, negative changes are highlighted in red.
 * The question was first asked in 2008.

How do you assess the current performance of the President of Russia?
 (% of respondents, FSBIS VoIRC RAS data)



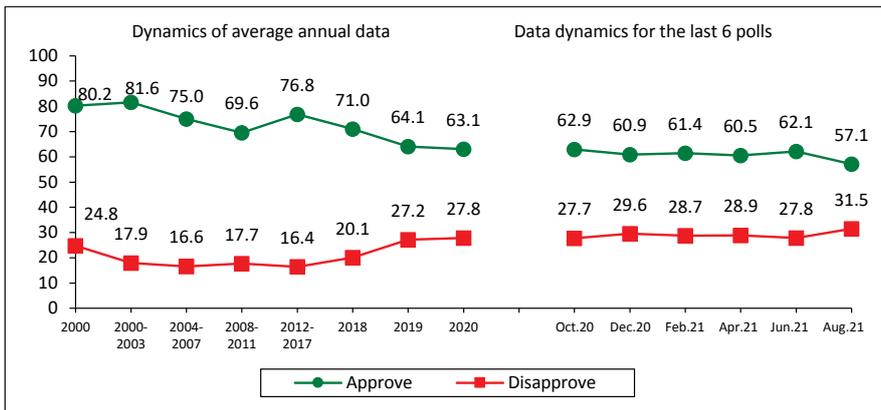
Hereinafter, all graphs show the average annual data for 2000, 2018, 2019, 2020, as well as the average annual data for the periods 2000–2003, 2004–2007, 2008–2011, 2012–2017, corresponding to the periods of presidential terms.

For reference:

According to VCIOM data, for the period from June to the beginning of August 2021, the level of approval of the Russian President’s activities decreased by 5 p.p. (from 62 to 57%). The share of negative ratings increased by 4 p.p. (from 28 to 32%).

According to the latest data of the Levada-Center (July 2021), there are also minor negative changes in the dynamics of assessments of the activities of the head of state: the share of positive assessments decreased by 2 p.p. points (from 66 to 64%), negative assessments increased by 3 p.p. (from 32 to 35%).

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



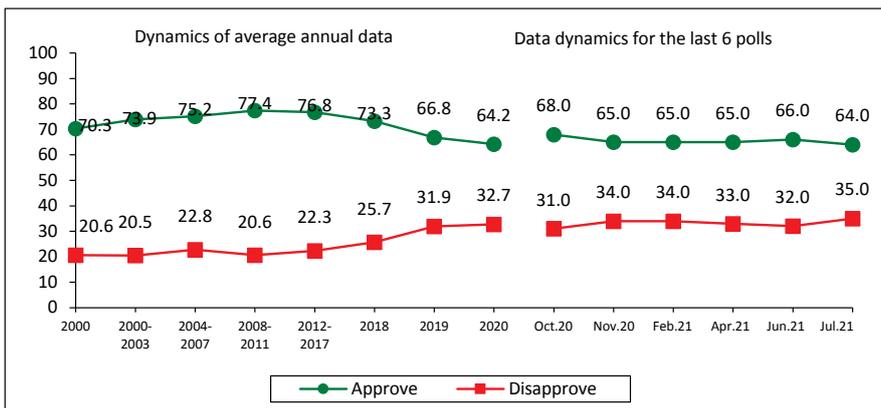
Annual dynamics (August 2021 to October 2020)	
Respond option	Dynamics (+ / -)
Approve	-6
Disapprove	+4

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

Data for August 2021 – average value for two polls: conducted on August 1, 2021 and August 8, 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 (July 2021 to October 2020)	
Respond option	Dynamics (+ / -)
Approve	-4
Disapprove	+4

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

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

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

* It is entered in the register of foreign agents.

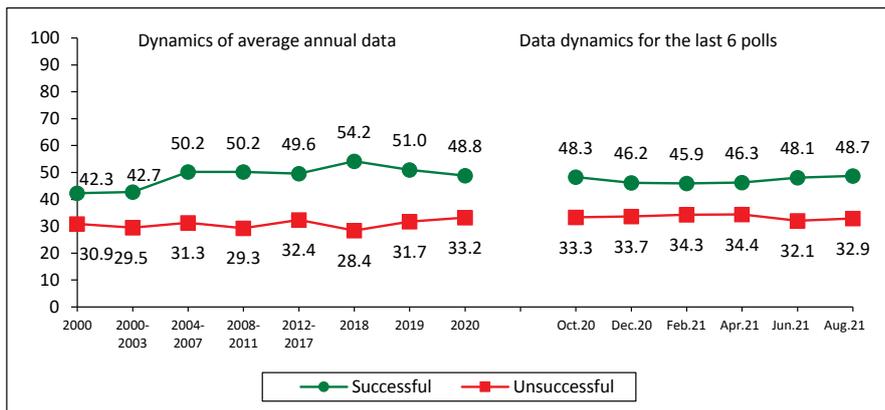
From June to August 2021, the opinion of the Vologda Oblast residents about the success of the Russian President’s solution of the country’s key problems has not changed significantly:

- ✓ 48–49% of respondents positively assess the activities of the head of state to strengthening Russia’s international positions;
- ✓ 41–42% – imposing order in the country;
- ✓ 35% – protecting democracy and strengthening citizens’ freedoms;
- ✓ 27% – economic recovery and increase in citizens’ welfare.

From October 2020 to August 2021, there are no significant changes, except for a slight (within the sampling error) improvement in public opinion assessments regarding the success of the actions of the Russian President to boost the economy and increase citizens’ welfare: the share of positive judgments increased by 3 p.p., from 24 to 27%.

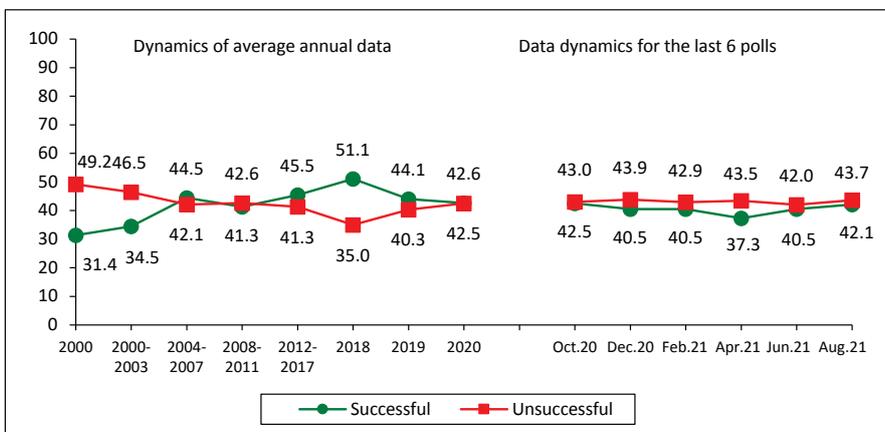
In your opinion, how successful is the RF President in coping with challenging issues..? (% of respondents; FSBIS VoIRC RAS data)

Strengthening Russia’s international position



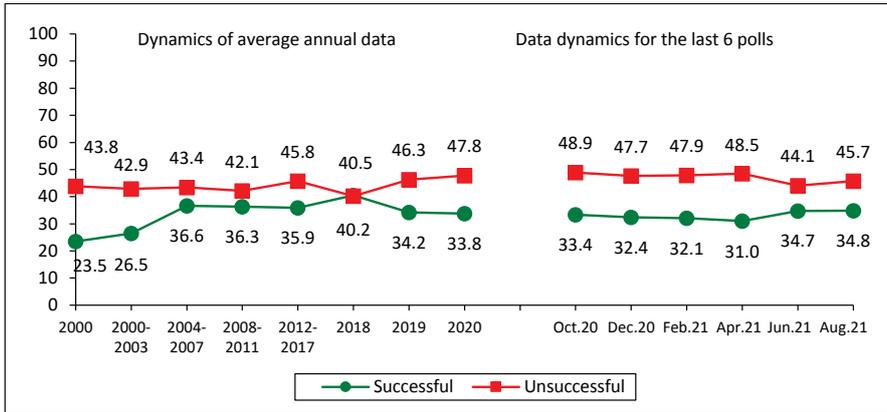
Annual dynamics (August 2021 to October 2020)	
Respond option	Dynamics (+ / -)
Successful	0
Unsuccessful	0

Imposing order in the country



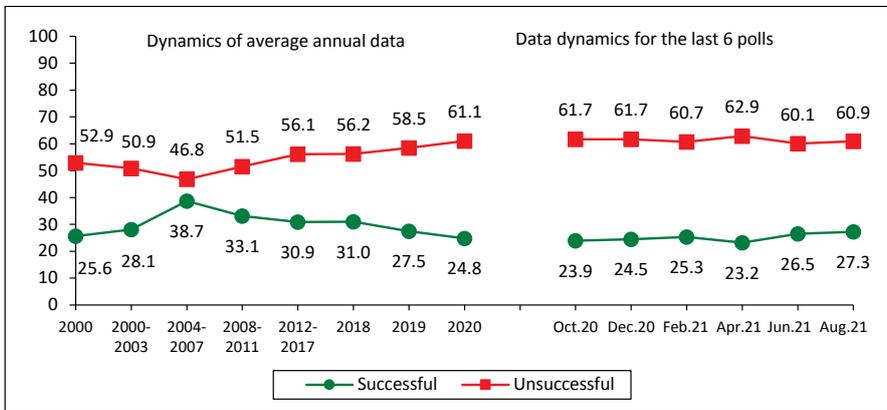
Annual dynamics (August 2021 to October 2020)	
Respond option	Dynamics (+ / -)
Successful	0
Unsuccessful	+1

Protecting democracy and strengthening citizens' freedoms



Annual dynamics (August 2021 to October 2020)	
Respond option	Dynamics (+ / -)
Successful	+1
Unsuccessful	-3

Economic recovery and increase in citizens' welfare



Annual dynamics (August 2021 to October 2020)	
Respond option	Dynamics (+ / -)
Successful	+3
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, 4–5% – the Just Russia party.

More than the third of the region’s population (34–35%) 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 recorded in October 2020.

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

Party	Dynamics of average annual data										Data dynamics for the last 6 polls						Dynamics (+/-), Aug. 2021 to Oct. 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	Oct. 2020	Dec. 2020	Feb. 2021	Apr. 2021	June 2021	Aug. 2021	
United Russia	18.5	30.2	31.1	33.4	29.1	35.4	38.0	37.9	33.8	31.5	31.1	30.9	30.5	31.5	32.1	31.7	+1
KPRF	11.5	7.0	10.3	16.8	10.6	8.3	14.2	9.2	8.8	8.4	8.8	7.3	8.3	8.7	8.1	9.3	+1
LDPR	4.8	7.5	7.8	15.4	7.8	10.4	21.9	9.6	9.1	9.5	9.4	9.5	10.1	9.9	8.5	9.9	+1
Just Russia	-	7.8	5.6	27.2	6.6	4.2	10.8	2.9	3.4	4.7	4.3	5.0	3.6	2.6	4.1	5.3	+1
Other	0.9	1.8	1.9	-	2.1	0.3	-	0.7	0.3	0.5	0.3	0.7	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.2	0
None	29.6	17.8	29.4	-	31.3	29.4	-	28.5	33.7	34.2	33.8	35.3	35.9	36.4	35.4	34.1	0
Hesitate to respond	20.3	21.2	13.2	-	11.7	12.0	-	11.2	11.0	11.1	12.2	11.2	11.3	10.9	11.8	9.6	-3

In August 2021, the trend of improving assessments of public sentiment continued. Over the past two months, the share of people experiencing mainly positive emotions has increased from 66 to 68% (by 2 p.p.); the proportion of those who believe that “everything is not so bad and it is possible to live, it is difficult to live, but it is possible to stand it” has not changed significantly (77%).

The share of people who positively characterize their mood and have a high potential for patience is higher than in October 2020 (by 7 и 5 p. p. respectively).

The share of the Oblast residents who subjectively classify themselves as “poor and extremely poor” was 47% (as in June) in August 2021; the share of people of the “average income” was 41%.

It is worth noting that in the period from October 2020 to August 2021, the share of the Oblast residents, who subjectively classify themselves as middle-class, slightly increased (within the sampling error; by 3 p.p., from 38 to 41%), although it still remains lower than the proportion of “poor and extremely poor” (48%).

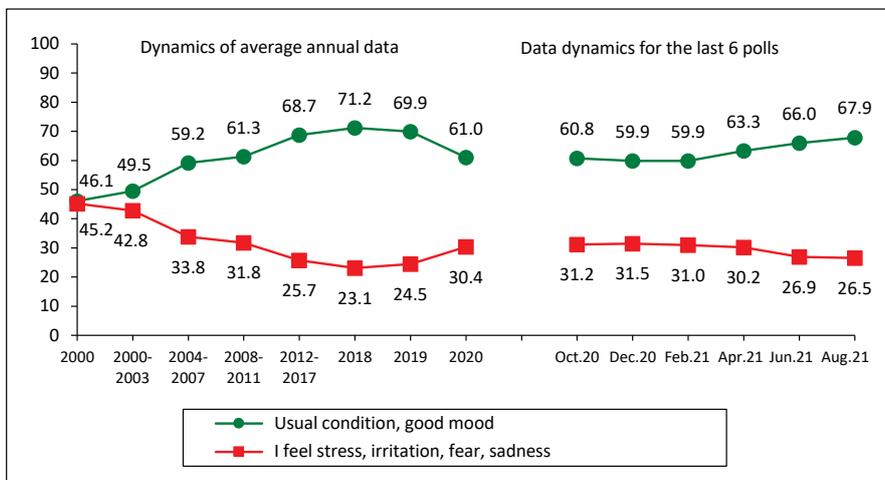
Consumer sentiment Index (CSI) reflecting people’s forecasts regarding the prospects for economic development and their personal financial situation, as in June 2021, amounted to 83 points.

CSI is significantly lower than in October 2020 (86 p.), and it has not exceeded the mark of 100 points which means that pessimistic forecasts prevail in population estimates.

For reference: according to the Levada-Center, for the period from April to June 2021, the consumer sentiment index in Russia as a whole decreased by 3 points (from 78 to 75 points).*

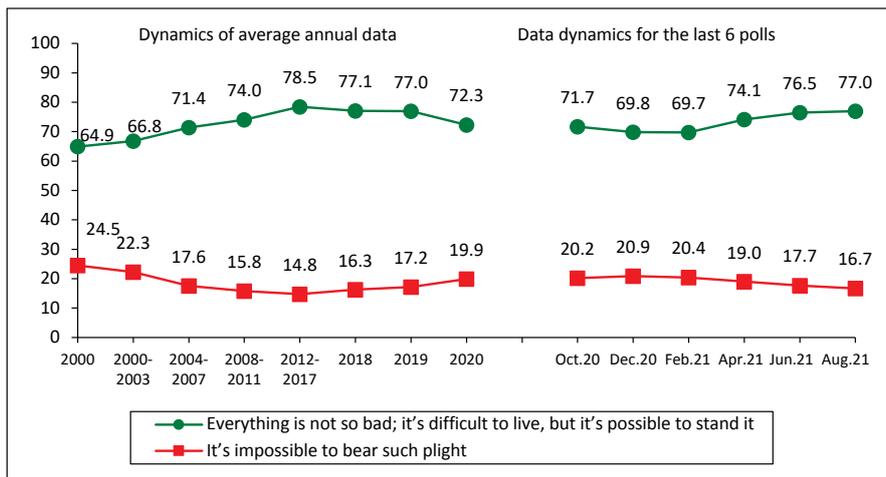
Estimation of social condition (% of respondents; FSBIS VolRC RAS data)

Social mood



Annual dynamics (August 2021 to October 2020)	
Respond option	Dynamics (+ / -)
Usual condition, good mood	+7
I feel stress, irritation, fear, sadness	-5

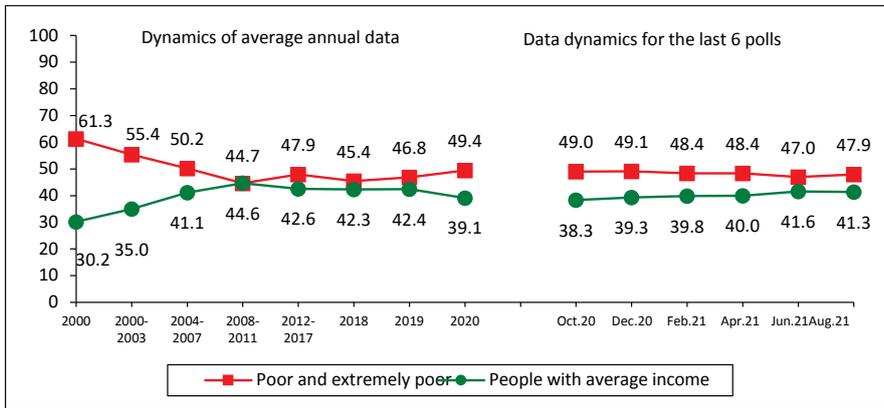
Stock of patience



Annual dynamics (August 2021 to October 2020)	
Respond option	Dynamics (+ / -)
Everything is not so bad; it's difficult to live, but it's possible to stand it	+5
It's impossible to bear such plight	-4

* It is entered in the register of foreign agents.

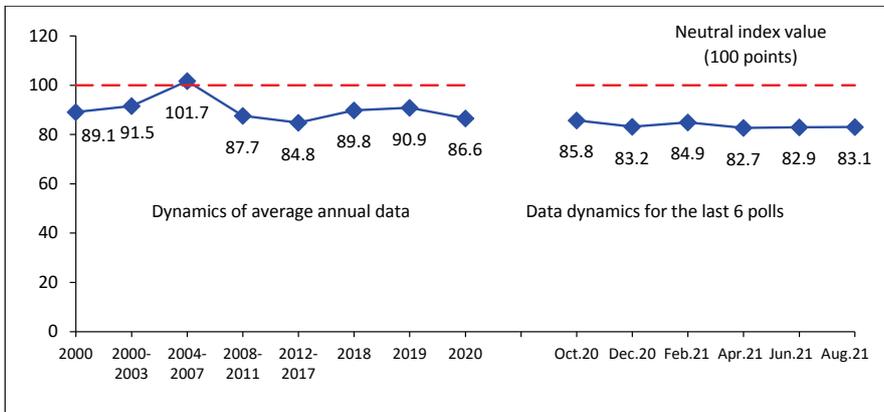
Social self-identification



Annual dynamics (August 2021 to October 2020)	
Respond option	Dynamics (+ / -)
People with average income	+3
Poor and extremely poor	-1

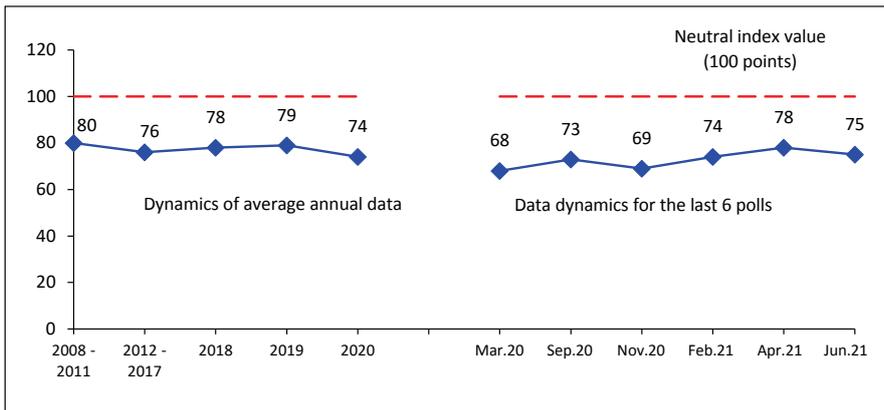
Question: "Which category do You belong to, in your opinion?"

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



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

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



Annual dynamics (June 2021 to October 2020)	
CSI	Dynamics (+ / -)
Index value, points	+7

Index is calculated since 2008

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

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

* It is entered in the register of foreign agents.

Over the past two months, in 6 out of 14 of socio-demographic groups of population, the share of people who positively characterize their daily mood has increased, especially among people under the age of 30 (by 9 p. p., from 73 to 82%), 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 10 p. p., from 77 to 87%).

For the period from October 2020 to August 2021, positive changes in social mood are observed in all major socio-demographic groups of population, except the Vologda residents (there are no significant changes in the regional capital over the past 6 surveys: the share of positive assessments of social mood is 60–61%).

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

Population group	Dynamics of average annual data							Data dynamics for the last 6 polls						Dynamics (+/-), Aug. 2021 to Oct. 2020
	2000	2007	2011	2012	2018	2019	2020	Oct. 2020	Dec. 2020	Feb. 2021	Apr. 2021	June 2021	Aug. 2021	
Gender														
Male	50.1	65.9	64.5	69.1	72.8	70.1	60.8	60.7	60.0	60.8	61.3	65.1	65.6	+5
Female	43.3	61.7	62.0	65.8	69.8	69.6	61.2	60.8	59.8	59.2	64.9	66.7	69.8	+9
Age														
Under 30	59.1	71.3	70.0	72.3	80.0	81.1	67.6	64.6	65.2	60.9	67.4	73.0	82.3	+18
30–55	44.2	64.8	62.5	67.9	72.6	71.2	61.8	62.5	60.9	64.4	65.5	70.0	71.4	+9
Over 55	37.4	54.8	58.3	62.1	65.2	63.3	57.4	56.9	56.5	54.1	59.1	58.3	58.1	+1
Education														
Secondary and incomplete secondary	41.7	58.4	57.4	57.2	64.8	63.2	56.1	56.9	52.6	56.2	56.9	62.5	63.2	+6
Secondary vocational	46.4	64.6	63.6	66.7	72.2	72.7	63.5	63.5	62.5	60.9	64.3	66.1	68.5	+5
Higher and incomplete higher	53.3	68.6	68.3	77.0	76.8	73.4	63.3	61.4	64.6	62.7	68.7	69.7	73.0	+12
Income groups														
Bottom 20%	28.4	51.6	45.3	51.5	57.3	53.2	43.4	46.0	38.9	44.3	49.8	54.2	55.0	+9
Middle 60%	45.5	62.9	65.3	68.7	71.9	71.4	62.6	61.9	63.3	60.1	65.8	67.0	68.9	+7
Top 20%	64.6	74.9	75.3	81.1	82.9	81.8	75.6	70.6	76.3	76.0	70.8	76.5	86.7	+16
Territories														
Vologda	49.2	63.1	67.1	73.6	71.0	68.6	60.9	61.0	58.7	55.8	57.0	59.4	59.7	-1
Cherepovets	50.8	68.1	71.2	76.2	75.8	71.2	60.4	59.3	60.7	64.4	68.1	70.8	72.3	+13
Districts	42.2	61.6	57.1	59.8	68.7	69.8	61.4	61.4	60.0	59.7	64.0	67.1	70.1	+9
Oblast	46.2	63.6	63.1	67.3	71.2	69.9	61.0	60.7	59.9	59.9	63.3	66.0	67.9	+7

CONCLUSIONS

Thus, the results of the next “wave” of public opinion monitoring, conducted in August 2021, showed that there were no significant changes in the dynamics of population estimates compared to the first summer months.

It is worth noting that, compared with the beginning of 2021, today there is a higher support level for all public authorities, more positive self-assessments of social mood and a reserve of patience. Against the background of the still urgent epidemiological threat caused by the spread of the coronavirus, as well as the accompanying large-scale socio-economic problems that have somehow affected the majority of Russians, maintaining a positive trend in the population’s assessments of key indicators reflecting the state of society is an important achievement of the entire public administration system. Especially against the background of the upcoming elections to the State Duma, scheduled for September 17–19, 2021.

However, self-assessments of the current financial situation of people and pessimistic expectations regarding its development remain consistently low. The share of the Oblast residents who subjectively classify themselves as “poor and extremely poor” has not actually changed since the beginning of the year (48%) and is still more significant than the proportion of people of “average income” (41%). From February to August 2021, the consumer sentiment index fell from 85 to 83 points, which indicates an increase in people’s anxiety about their well-being in the near future.

The continuing concern of population is explained by official statistics: for example, according to the Vologda Statistics Department data, for the period from January to May 2021, real wages in the region amounted to 97.1% compared to the corresponding period last year (it decreased by 3%). At the same time, the consumer price index for the second quarter of 2021 amounted to 101.8% compared to the second quarter of 2020, for food products, it was 102.1%⁴.

It is quite possible that the current state of public opinion can largely be due to a seasonal factor (favorable climatic conditions, vacation time, summer worries, the period of reduction of housing and communal services tariffs), which has a complex positive impact on the psychological well-being of people pushing into the background issues related to the political situation in the country.

But whether it will be possible to maintain the emerging positive trends of public moods in the autumn-winter period (which, among other things, is likely to increase the burden on the health care system due to the seasonal exacerbation of viral diseases) is a question that remains open and requires maximum concentration of efforts at all levels of public power, especially after the parliamentary elections.

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

⁴ Socio-Economic Situation of the Vologda Oblast in January-June 2021: Report. Vologda: Vologdastat, 2021. P 69.