

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 VoIRC RAS in the Vologda Oblast ¹.

The following tables and graphs show the dynamics of several parameters of social well-being and socio-political sentiment of the region's population according to the results of the latest "wave" of the monitoring (October 2021) and for the period from December 2020 to October 2021 (the latest six polls, that is, almost a year).

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 August – October 2021, the level of approval of the RF President's work did not change significantly. The share of positive assessments is 52%. The proportion of negative assessments is 33%.

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

The level of approval of the work of the Chairman of the RF Government in October 2021 was 38–39%, just as in December 2020.

From December 2020 to October 2021, assessments of the work of the region's head improved significantly: the share of positive judgements increased by 5 p.p. (from 33 to 38%), the share of negative assessments decreased by 3 p.p. (from 44 to 41%).

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.vscs.ac.ru/>.

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

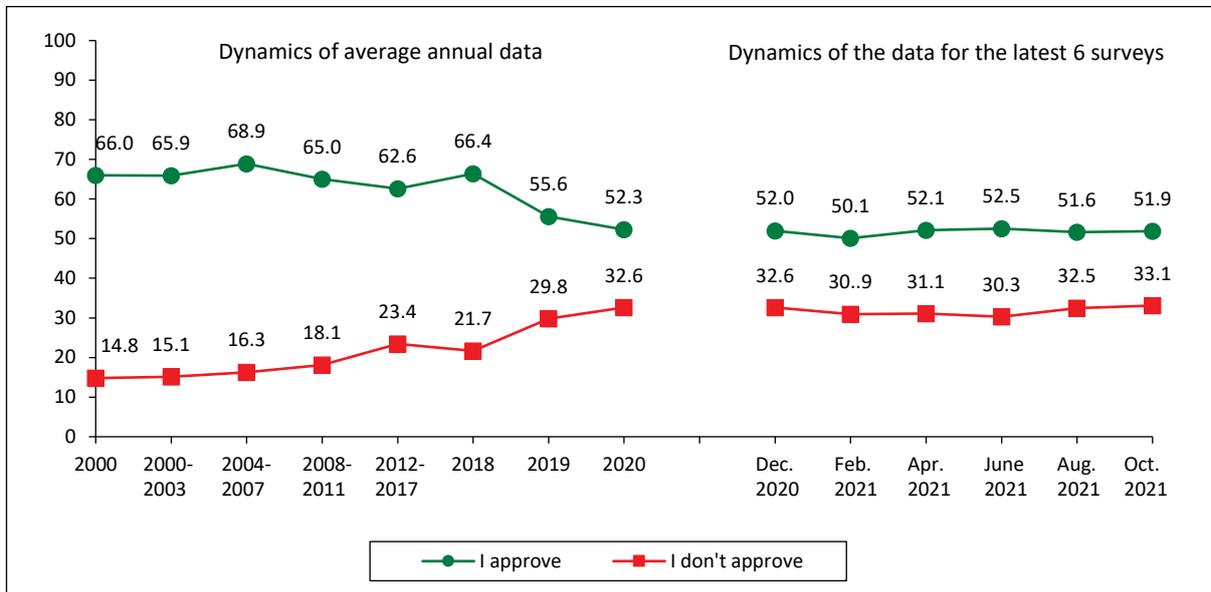
³ Hereinafter, the results of a comparative analysis of the data from the survey conducted in August 2021, and the results of a last-year monitoring "wave", conducted in October 2020 (the last survey before pandemic restrictions), are given in the frame.

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

Respond option	Dynamics of average annual data							Dynamics of the data for the latest 6 surveys						Dynamics (+/-), Oct. 2021 to Dec. 2020
	2000	2007	2011	2012	2018	2019	2020	Dec. 2020	Feb. 2021	Apr. 2021	June 2021	Aug. 2021	Oct. 2021	
RF President														
I approve	66.0	75.3	58.7	51.7	66.4	55.6	52.3	52.0	50.1	52.1	52.5	51.6	51.9	0
I disapprove	14.8	11.5	25.5	32.6	21.7	29.8	32.6	32.6	30.9	31.1	30.3	32.5	33.1	+1
Chairman of the RF Government*														
I approve	-*	-*	59.3	49.6	48.0	41.1	38.7	39.1	37.6	38.8	42.2	42.7	39.7	+1
I disapprove	-	-	24.7	33.3	31.6	38.4	40.4	38.8	38.8	38.3	35.1	36.0	38.3	-1
Governor														
I approve	56.1	55.8	45.7	41.9	38.4	35.7	35.0	32.9	33.9	36.3	37.8	38.6	37.5	+5
I disapprove	19.3	22.2	30.5	33.3	37.6	40.2	42.5	44.2	42.4	41.3	38.4	38.5	40.7	-4

The wording of the question: "How do you assess the current performance of ...?" According to the survey technique, 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.
*Included in the survey since 2008.

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



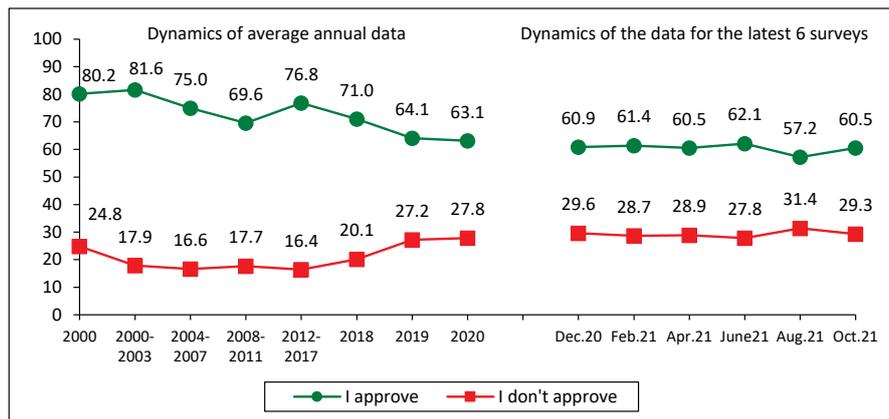
Hereinafter, all graphs show the average annual data for 2000, 2018, 2019, 2020, as well as the average annual data for the periods 2000–2003, 2004–2007, 2008–2011, 2012–2017, corresponding to the periods of presidential terms.

For reference:

According to VTsIOM, the level of approval of the RF President's work for the period from August to the 1st half of October 2021 increased by 4 p.p. (from 57 to 61%).

According to the latest data from Levada-Center (as of September 2021) we can see positive changes in the dynamics of assessments of the work of the head of state: the share of positive assessments increased by 3 p.p. (from 61 to 64%) compared to August 2021.*

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



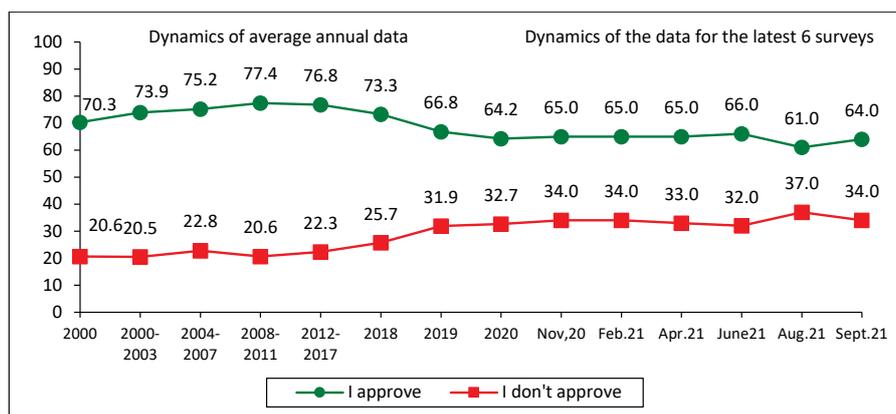
Annual dynamics (October 2021 to December 2020)	
Respond option	Dynamics (+ / -)
I approve	0
I disapprove	0

Question: "In general, do you approve or disapprove of the work of the President of the Russian Federation?"

Data for October 2021 – average value for two surveys: conducted on October 3, 2021 and October 10, 2021.

Source: VTsIOM 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 (September 2021 to November 2020)	
Respond option	Dynamics (+ / -)
I approve	-1
I disapprove	0

Question: "In general, do you approve or disapprove of the work of Vladimir Putin at the position of the President of Russia?"

Source: Levada-Center*. Indicators. Available at: <https://www.levada.ru/indikatoriy>. The latest data – July 2021.

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

* Included in the register of foreign agents.

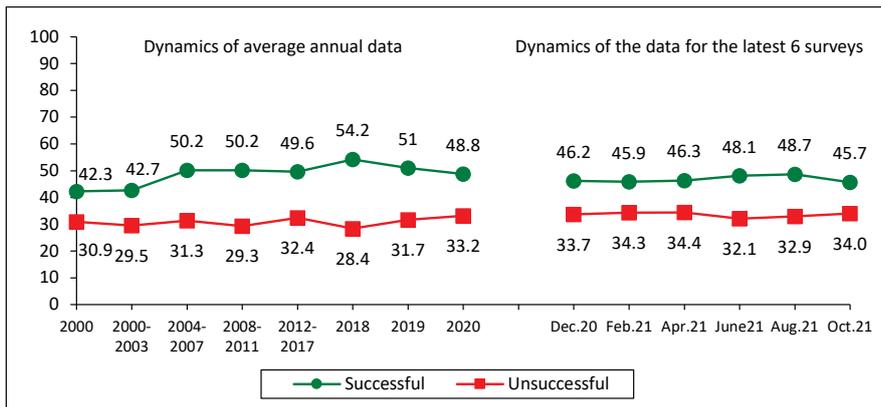
Over the past two months, there was a slight deterioration in the public opinion concerning the RF President’s work on strengthening Russia’s international positions (the share of positive assessments decreased by 3 p.p., from 49 to 46%) and on his efforts to promote economic recovery and growth of citizens’ welfare (the proportion of negative judgments increased by 2 p.p., from 61 to 63%).

As in August, in October 2021, 42–43% of Vologda Oblast residents note that V.V. Putin is successfully coping with the task of restoring order in the country; 35% consider the activities of the head of state to protect democracy and strengthen citizens’ freedoms to be successful.

From October 2020 to August 2021, the share of positive assessments of the work of the RF President aimed at restoring order in the country increased slightly (by 2–3 p.p.) (from 41 to 43%), to protecting democracy (from 32 to 35%), boosting the economy (from 25 to 27%)

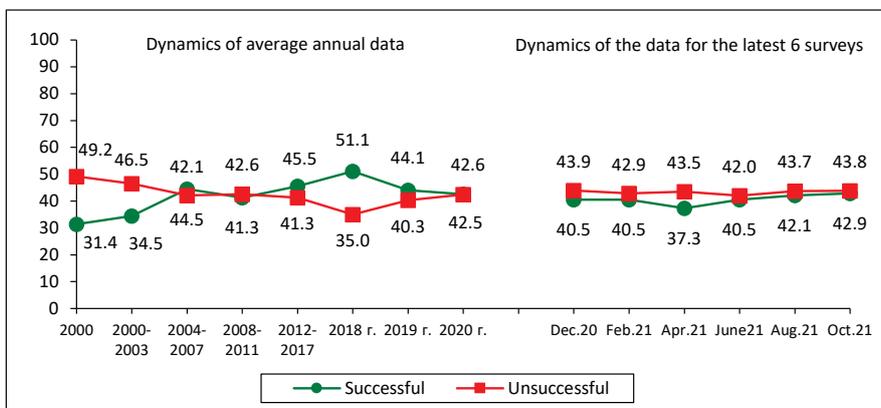
In your opinion, how successful is the RF President in coping with challenging issues?
(% of respondents; VoIRC RAS data)

Strengthening Russia’s international position



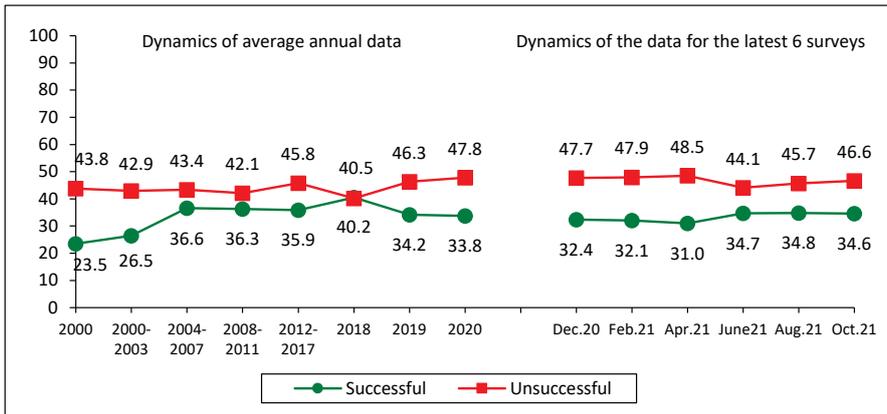
Respond option	Dynamics (+ / -)
Successful	-1
Unsuccessful	0

Imposing order in the country



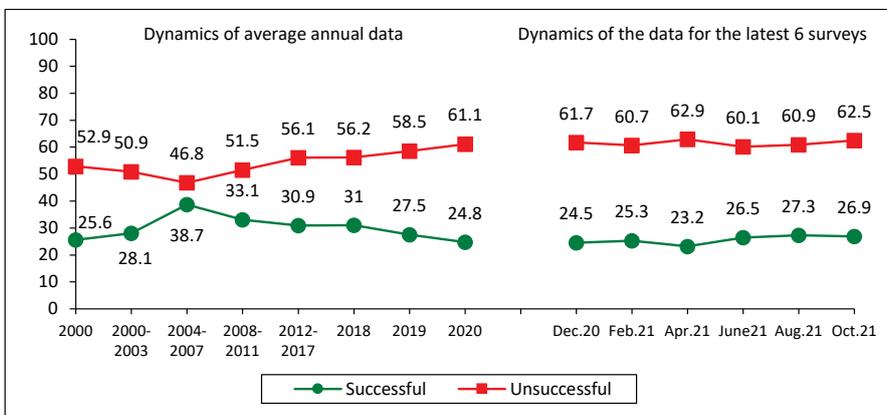
Respond option	Dynamics (+ / -)
Successful	+2
Unsuccessful	0

Protecting democracy and strengthening citizens' freedoms



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

Economic recovery and increase in citizens' welfare



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

There have been no significant changes in the structure of political preferences of the region’s residents for the period from August to October 2021: the level of support for United Russia is 32–33%, KPRF and LDPR – 9–11% each, “Just Russia – For the Truth” – 5–6%.

At the same time, over the past two months, the proportion of people who have not decided on their political preferences, or who believe that none of the political forces currently represented in the State Duma reflects their interests has significantly decreased (by 6 p.p., from 44 to 38%).

During the period from December 2020 to October 2021, there was a slight increase in the share of supporters of United Russia (by 2 p.p., from 31 to 33%) and KPRF (by 4 p.p., from 7 to 11%).

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

Party	Dynamics of average annual data										Data dynamics for the last 6 polls						Dynamics (+/-), Oct. 2021 to Dec. 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	Dec. 2020	Feb. 2021	Apr. 2021	June 2021	Aug. 2021	Oct. 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	30.5	31.5	32.1	31.7	32.7	+2
KPRF	11.5	7.0	10.3	16.8	10.6	8.3	14.2	9.2	8.8	8.4	7.3	8.3	8.7	8.1	9.3	11.1	+4
LDPR	4.8	7.5	7.8	15.4	7.8	10.4	21.9	9.6	9.1	9.5	9.5	10.1	9.9	8.5	9.9	11.2	+2
Just Russia – for the Truth	-	7.8	5.6	27.2	6.6	4.2	10.8	2.9	3.4	4.7	5.0	3.6	2.6	4.1	5.3	6.3	+1
Other	0.9	1.8	1.9	-	2.1	0.3	-	0.7	0.3	0.5	0.7	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.5	0
None	29.6	17.8	29.4	-	31.3	29.4	-	28.5	33.7	34.2	35.3	35.9	36.4	35.4	34.1	31.7	-4
I find it difficult to answer	20.3	21.2	13.2	-	11.7	12.0	-	11.2	11.0	11.1	11.2	11.3	10.9	11.8	9.6	6.6	-4

In October 2021, the upward trend in the assessments of public sentiment continued. Over the past two months, the share of people experiencing mostly positive emotions increased from 68 to 71% (by 3 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” did not change 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 11 and 7 p.p., respectively).

The share of the Oblast residents who subjectively classify themselves as “poor and extremely poor” increased slightly over the past two months (by 2 p.p., from 48 to 50%); the share of people of “average income” decreased from 41 to 39%.

In general, the structure of social self-identification in October 2021 corresponds to the level of six months ago (December 2020): the proportion of “the poor and extremely poor” still prevails over the proportion of those with “average income” by 10 p.p.

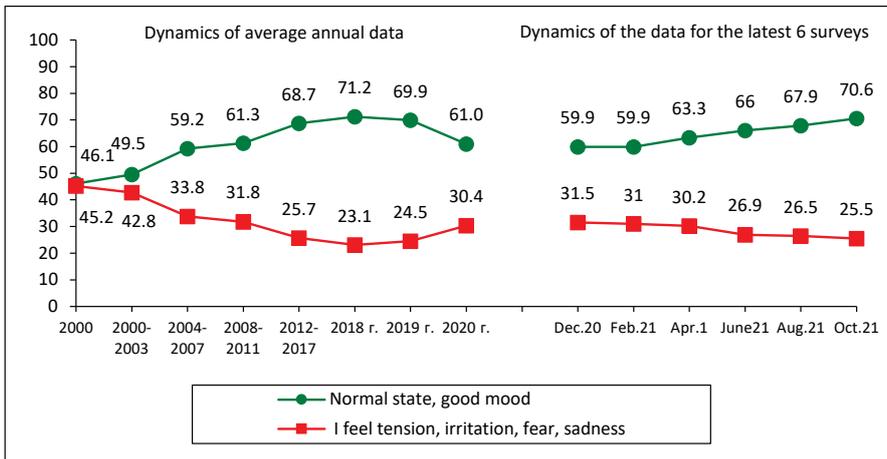
In August – October 2021, there was an increase in the consumer sentiment index (by 3 points, from 83 to 86 p.), which indicates a slight increase in people’s optimistic moods about the dynamics of the economic situation in the country and their personal financial situation.

The CSI is still below 100 points (which means the predominance of pessimistic forecasts in the Oblast in general); however, we should note that positive changes are observed for the first time in the past six months. Compared to December 2020, in October 2021, the consumer sentiment index increased by 3 points (from 83 to 86 p.).

For reference: according to the latest data from Levada-Center* (included in the register of foreign agents), the consumer sentiment index in the whole country did not change in June – August 2021 (75 p.); for the period from September 2020 to August 2021, it increased by 2 points (from 73 to 75 p.)

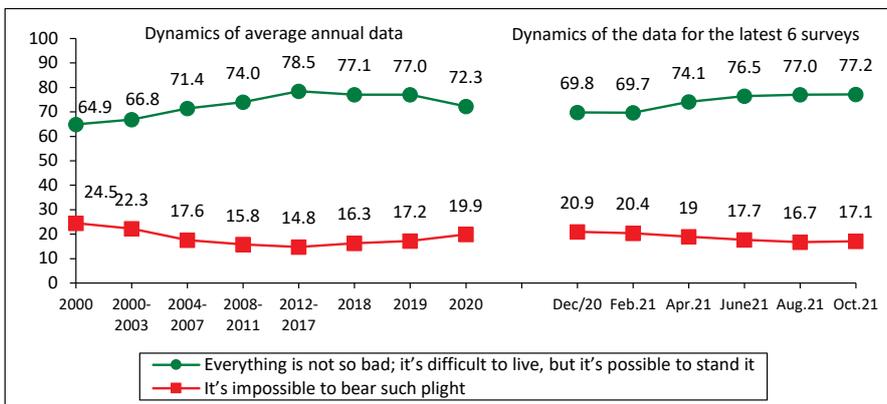
Estimation of social condition (% of respondents; VoIRC RAS data)

Social mood



Annual dynamics (October 2021 to December 2020)	
Respond option	Dynamics (+ / -)
Usual condition, good mood	+11
I feel stress, irritation, fear, sadness	-6

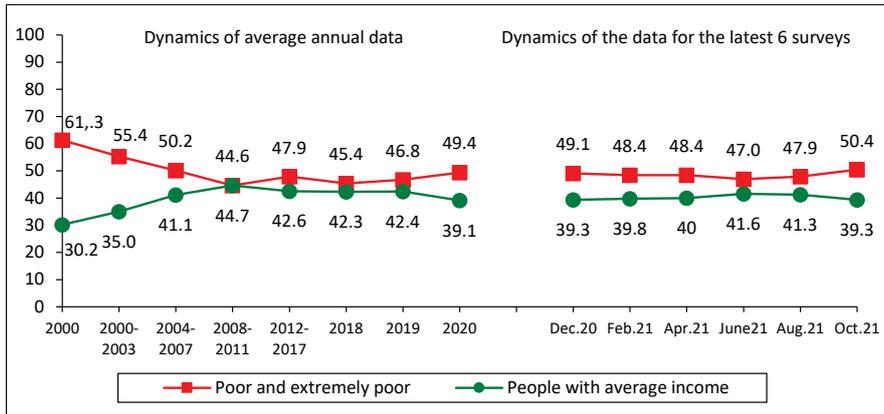
Stock of patience



Annual dynamics (October 2021 to December 2020)	
Respond option	Dynamics (+ / -)
Everything is not so bad; it's difficult to live, but it's possible to stand it	+7
It's impossible to bear such plight	-4

* Included in the register of foreign agents.

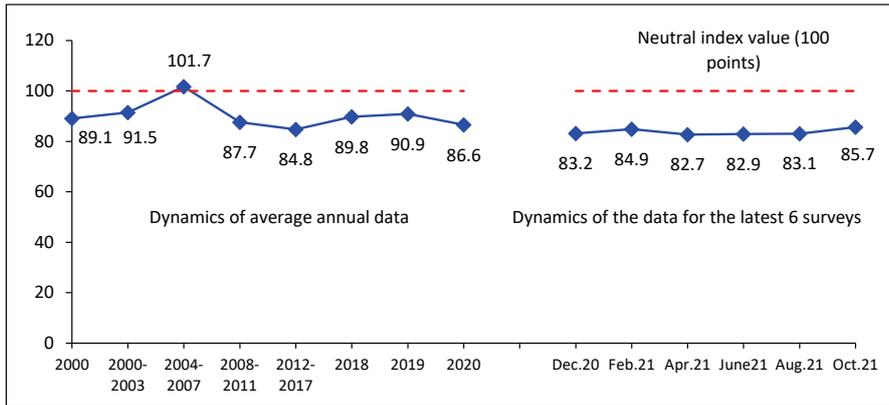
Social self-identification*



Annual dynamics (October 2021 to December 2020)	
Respond option	Dynamics (+ / -)
People with average income	0
Poor and extremely poor	+1

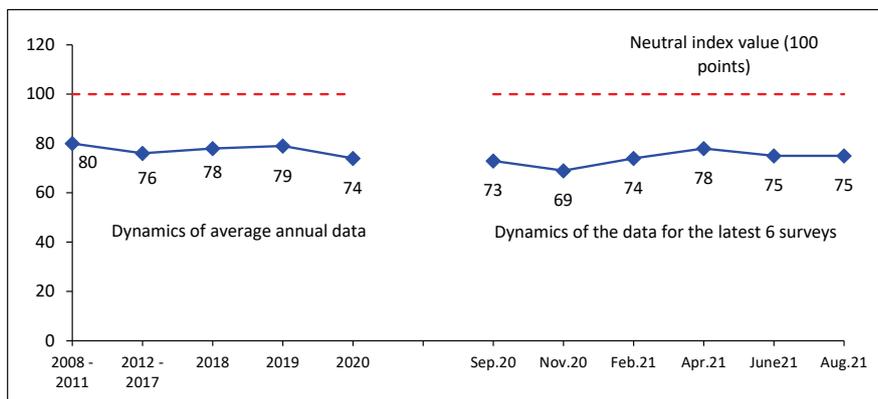
Question: "Which category do You belong to, in your opinion?"

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



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

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



Annual dynamics (August 2021 to September 2020)	
CSI	Dynamics (+ / -)
Index value, points	+2

The index is calculated since 2008.

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

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

* Included in the register of foreign agents.

Over the past two months, the share of people who positively characterize their daily mood has increased in 6 out of 14 socio-demographic groups, especially among people over the age of 60 (by 10 p.p., from 58 to 68%), as well as among those who, according to self-estimates of their own income, belong to the category of 20% of the least affluent residents of the Oblast (by 5 p.p., from 55 to 60%).

Negative changes in the dynamics of social mood assessments are noted among people under the age of 30 (by 7 p.p., from 82 to 75%), as well as in the group of 20% of the wealthiest residents of the region (by 3 p.p., from 87 to 84%).

For the period from December 2020 to October 2021, positive changes in social mood are observed in all major socio-demographic groups, especially among people who, according to self-estimates of their income, belong to the bottom 20% (by 21 p.p., from 39 to 60%).

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							Dynamics of the data for the latest 6 surveys						Dynamics (+/-), Oct. 2021 to Dec. 2020
	2000	2007	2011	2012	2018	2019	2020	Dec. 2020	Feb. 2021	Apr. 2021	June 2021	Aug. 2021	Oct. 2021	
Sex														
Men	50.1	65.9	64.5	69.1	72.8	70.1	60.8	60.0	60.8	61.3	65.1	65.6	70.0	+10
Women	43.3	61.7	62.0	65.8	69.8	69.6	61.2	59.8	59.2	64.9	66.7	69.8	70.9	+11
Age														
Under 30	59.1	71.3	70.0	72.3	80.0	81.1	67.6	65.2	60.9	67.4	73.0	82.3	75.3	+10
30–55	44.2	64.8	62.5	67.9	72.6	71.2	61.8	60.9	64.4	65.5	70.0	71.4	70.8	+10
Over 55	37.4	54.8	58.3	62.1	65.2	63.3	57.4	56.5	54.1	59.1	58.3	58.1	68.3	+12
Education														
Secondary and incomplete secondary	41.7	58.4	57.4	57.2	64.8	63.2	56.1	52.6	56.2	56.9	62.5	63.2	64.1	+12
Secondary vocational	46.4	64.6	63.6	66.7	72.2	72.7	63.5	62.5	60.9	64.3	66.1	68.5	70.4	+8
Higher and incomplete higher	53.3	68.6	68.3	77.0	76.8	73.4	63.3	64.6	62.7	68.7	69.7	73.0	77.1	+13
Income groups														
Bottom 20%	28.4	51.6	45.3	51.5	57.3	53.2	43.4	38.9	44.3	49.8	54.2	55.0	60.4	+21
Middle 60%	45.5	62.9	65.3	68.7	71.9	71.4	62.6	63.3	60.1	65.8	67.0	68.9	70.9	+8
Top 20%	64.6	74.9	75.3	81.1	82.9	81.8	75.6	76.3	76.0	70.8	76.5	86.7	84.2	+8
Territories														
Vologda	49.2	63.1	67.1	73.6	71.0	68.6	60.9	58.7	55.8	57.0	59.4	59.7	64.0	+6
Cherepovets	50.8	68.1	71.2	76.2	75.8	71.2	60.4	60.7	64.4	68.1	70.8	72.3	75.2	+15
Districts	42.2	61.6	57.1	59.8	68.7	69.8	61.4	60.0	59.7	64.0	67.1	70.1	71.5	+12
Oblast	46.2	63.6	63.1	67.3	71.2	69.9	61.0	59.9	59.9	63.3	66.0	67.9	70.5	+11

CONCLUSIONS

The results of the next “wave” of public opinion monitoring conducted in October 2021 indicate several largely contradictory trends.

On the one hand, support for the work of the authorities remains stable. The share of positive assessments concerning the work of the RF President has remained at the level of 50–52% over the past 6 polls. There are also no significant changes in the assessments of V.V. Putin’s work on addressing Russia’s key problems (with the exception of a slight decrease, in October 2021, in the proportion of people who believe that the RF President is successfully coping with strengthening Russia’s international positions (by 3 p.p., from 49 to 46%))

The structure of people’s political preferences as a whole reflects the results of the elections to the State Duma held on September 17–19, 2021. We observe:

- ✓ a stable share of supporters of the United Russia party (31–33% in the last 6 polls);
- ✓ over the same period (from December 2020 to October 2021) – the growth of support for the Communist Party (by 4 p.p., from 7 to 11%);
- ✓ a noticeable decrease in the proportion of citizens who have not made up their mind yet or who believe that none of the main political parties reflects their interests. Over the past two months, their share decreased by 6 p.p. (from 44 to 38%), over the last 6 surveys – by 8 p.p. (from 46 to 38%).

Since February 2021, the proportion of residents of the Oblast who characterize their mood as “normal, excellent” has been steadily growing. Over the past two months, their share increased by 3 p.p. (from 68 to 71%), in general, for the period from February to October 2021 – by 11 p.p. (from 60 to 71%).

At the same time, it is important to note that over the past two months, the share of positive assessments of social mood in the Oblast as a whole has increased primarily due to assessments of socially vulnerable groups – people over 60 years of age and low-income groups. This, in our opinion, suggests that the social orientation of the state (which can be traced in the public speeches of the president, in the amendments to the Constitution he proposed, and in the measures of financial support for citizens regularly taken by the RF Government) is reflected in the assessments of public opinion. The question is whether the authorities will be able to maintain this positive trend.

Another important positive change for the period from August to October 2021 was, in our opinion, an increase in the consumer sentiment index (by 3 points, from 83 to 86 p.), which indicates an improvement in the forecasts of the population regarding the prospects for the development of the Russian economy and their personal financial situation. The increase in the consumer sentiment index is still extremely insignificant; perhaps it will not become a trend; in addition, it should be noted that the CSI still remains in the zone below 100 p., which indicates the predominance of pessimistic expectations among the people. And, nevertheless, taking into account the dynamics of the previous months (in which no positive changes have been observed for a long time), the growth of the CSI by 3 p.p. compared to the previous “wave” of surveys is a rather significant and indicative result; in our opinion, it is closely related to the already noted long-term trend of improving social sentiment.

Thus, according to the results of sociological surveys (those conducted not only in the Vologda Oblast, but also nationwide), positive changes or, at least, the absence of negative ones are noted according to many very significant criteria for evaluating the effectiveness of public administration. During the period of the State Duma election, as well as against the background of the ongoing threat of the COVID-19 pandemic, this, of course, can be regarded as an achievement of the authorities at all levels and the head of state himself.

However, at the same time, judging by the dynamics of public sentiment, there is no tangible progress in solving the most pressing, lingering problems. Here, first of all, we are talking about people's subjective perception of the dynamics of the standard of living and quality of life. According to the results of the latest survey, the proportion of people subjectively classifying themselves as "poor and extremely poor" (which has long prevailed over the proportion of "middle-income" people) has increased by 2 p.p. over the past two months (from 48 to 50%) and, thus, exceeded the annual average for the period since 2008.

At the same time, we see that negative trends in assessing the Russian President's work aimed at promoting economic recovery and the growth of citizens' welfare: over the past three surveys (from June to October 2021), the share of negative judgments increased by 3 p.p. (from 60 to 63%), and over the past 3 years (from 2018 to 2020) – by 5 p.p. (from 56 to 61%).

Thus, while we observe favorable long-term trends and short-term changes in the dynamics of social well-being, in the change in consumer sentiment, and amid the absence of any signs of deterioration in the assessments of the work of the authorities, there still remains an alarming situation regarding overcoming the problem of poverty (or rather, people's subjective perception of the dynamics of the standard of living and quality of life), which V.V. Putin called "our main enemy" and "a threat to stable development, to the demographic future"⁴.

In fact, this assessment is the most comprehensive reflection of the state of the entire public administration system: on the one hand, recognition of its still insufficient effectiveness in solving the most pressing problems of concern to the population, on the other hand, awareness of the need for its system-wide and comprehensive adjustment. In particular, in order to justify the "credit of trust" given to Vladimir Putin in the presidential election of 2018 and to the United Russia, the party of power, in the parliamentary election of 2021; or, in other words, so as not to lose the existing legitimacy of the implemented political course in the assessments of public opinion.

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

⁴ Vladimir Putin's speech at a meeting with deputies of the State Duma of the eighth convocation. *Official Website of the RF President*. October 12, 2021. Available at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/66905>