

PUBLIC OPINION MONITORING

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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 VolRC RAS in the Vologda Oblast¹.

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 (February 2023) and for the period from February 2022 to February 2023 (the last seven surveys, that is, almost a year).

We compare the results of the surveys with the average annual data for 2000 (the first year of Vladimir Putin's first presidential term), 2007 (the last year of Vladimir 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 Vladimir Putin's third presidential term).

We also present the annual dynamics of the data for 2018 and for 2020–2022².

In December 2022 – February 2023, the share of positive assessments of the RF President's work increased slightly (by 2 percentage points, from 59 to 61%). The proportion of negative judgments decreased by 3 percentage points (from 25 to 22%).

Compared to February 2022, the level of approval of the head of state's work increased by 13 percentage points (from 48 to 61%); the proportion of negative assessments decreased by 10 percentage points (from 33 to 23%)³.

¹ The surveys 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 surveys 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 February 2023 and the results of the monitoring "wave" conducted in February 2022 are given in the frame.

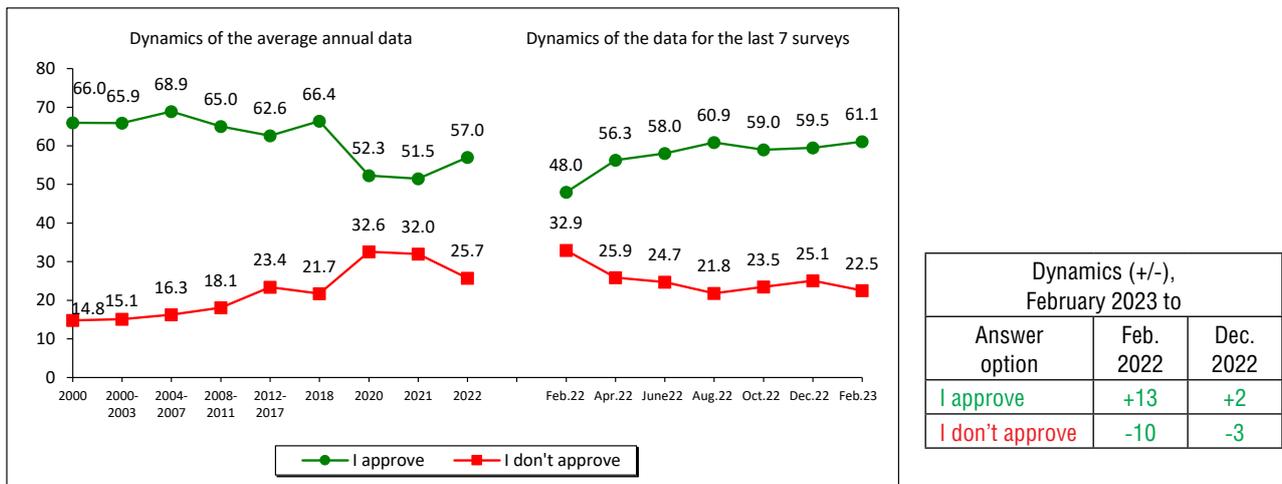
How would you assess the current work of..? (% of respondents)

Answer option	Dynamics of the average annual data									Dynamics of the data for the last 7 surveys							Dynamics (+/-), Feb. 2023 to	
	2000	2007	2011	2012	2018	2020	2021	2022	Feb. 2022	Anp. 2022	June 2022	Aug. 2022	Oct. 2022	Dec. 2022	Feb. 2023	Feb. 2022	Dec. 2022	
RF President																		
I approve	66.0	75.3	58.7	51.7	66.4	52.3	51.5	57.0	48.0	56.3	58.0	60.9	59.0	59.5	61.1	+13	+2	
I don't approve	14.8	11.5	25.5	32.6	21.7	32.6	32.0	25.7	32.9	25.9	24.7	21.8	23.5	25.1	22.5	-10	-3	
Chairman of the RF Government*																		
I approve	-*	-*	59.3	49.6	48.0	38.7	39.9	45.4	37.6	43.6	45.5	47.5	48.1	50.1	49.3	+12	-1	
I don't approve	-	-	24.7	33.3	31.6	40.4	37.6	32.0	37.7	32.5	31.4	29.4	31.3	29.9	27.9	-10	-2	
Governor																		
I approve	56.1	55.8	45.7	41.9	38.4	35.0	36.7	40.9	33.9	38.2	41.2	43.3	43.0	45.5	47.1	+13	+2	
I don't approve	19.3	22.2	30.5	33.3	37.6	42.5	40.5	35.8	41.6	37.3	34.3	32.5	33.9	35.2	33.0	-9	-2	

Wording of the question: "How do you assess the current work 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.

Figure 1. How would you assess the current work of the RF President? (% of respondents, VoIRC RAS data)



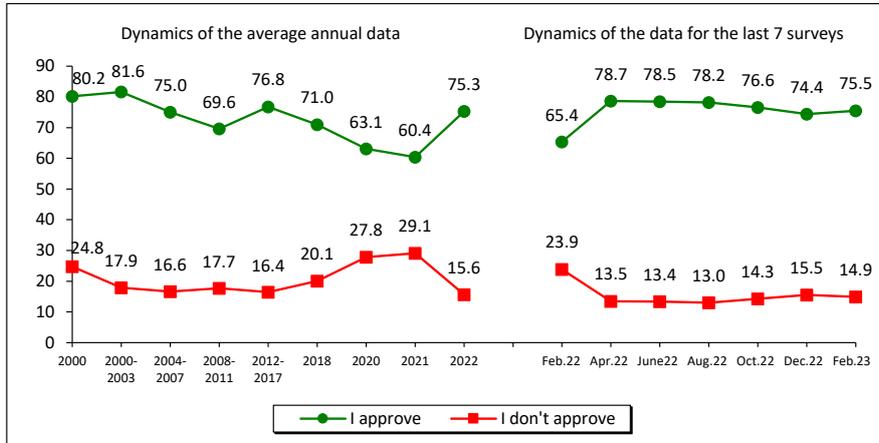
Hereinafter, all graphs show the average annual data for 2000, 2018, 2020, 2021, 2022, as well as the average annual data for the periods 2000–2003, 2004–2007, 2008–2011, 2012–2017, corresponding to the presidential terms.

For reference:

According to VCIOM, the level of approval of the President's work from December 2022 to the first half of February 2023 did not change and amounted to 74–75%.

Compared to February 2022, the share of positive assessments has increased significantly – by 10 percentage points (from 65 to 75%).

**In general, do you approve or not approve of the work of the RF President?
(% of respondents; VCIOM data)**



Answer option	Feb. 2022	Dec. 2022
I approve	+10	+1
I don't approve	-9	-1

Question: "In general, do you approve or not approve of the work of the President of the Russian Federation?"

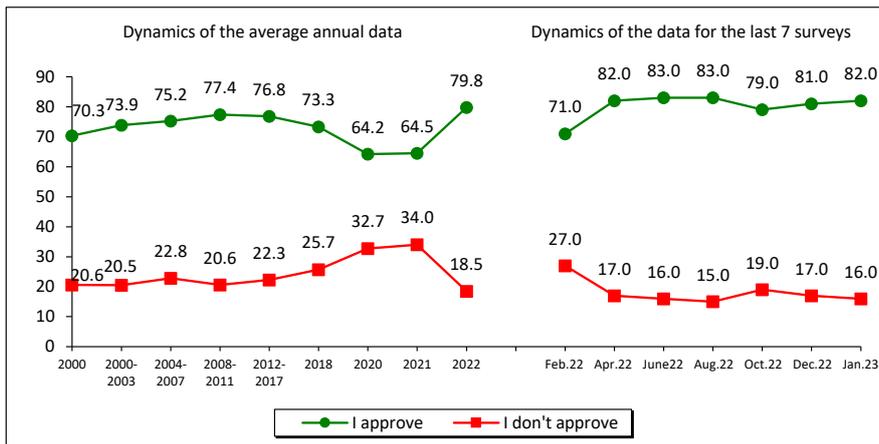
Data for February 2023 represent the average for two surveys: (February 5 and 12).

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

According to Levada-Center, the share of positive assessments of the President's work in December 2022 – January 2023 was 81–82%.*

From February 2022 to January 2023, the level of approval of the President's work increased by 11 percentage points (from 71 to 82%).

**In general, do you approve or not approve of the work of Vladimir Putin as President of Russia?
(% of respondents; Levada-Center* data)**



Answer option	Feb. 2022	Dec. 2022
I approve	+11	+1
I don't approve	-11	-1

Question: "In general, do you approve or not approve of the work of Vladimir Putin as President of Russia?"

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

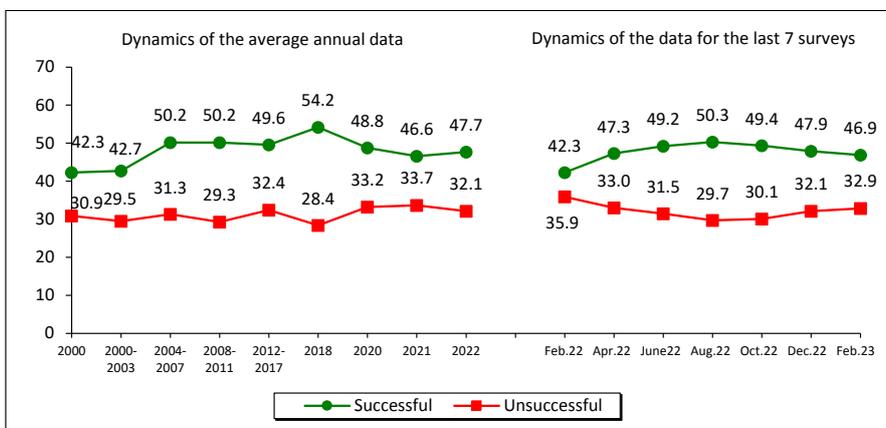
* Included in the register of foreign agents.

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

Over the past two months, the share of those who consider the RF President’s work to strengthen Russia’s international positions to be successful did not change significantly (47–48%). The proportion of those who hold to the opposite point of view remains stable as well (32–33%).

From February 2022 to February 2023, the share of positive assessments of the actions of the head of state to strengthen international standing increased by 5 percentage points (from 42 to 47%); the share of negative judgments decreased by 3 percentage points (from 36 to 33%).

Strengthening Russia’s international position

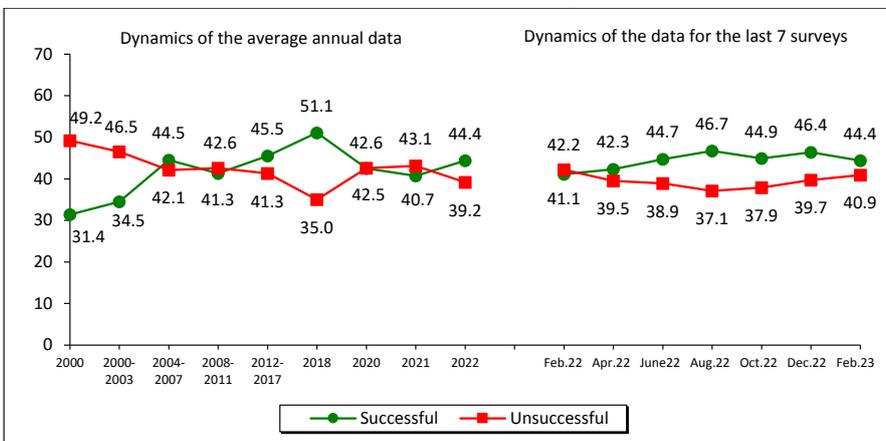


Answer option	Feb. 2022	Dec. 2022
Successful	+5	-1
Unsuccessful	-3	+1

In December 2022 – February 2023, the share of Vologda Oblast residents who positively assess the work of the head of state to restore order in the country, decreased by 2 percentage points (from 46 to 44%). The proportion of negative assessments has not changed significantly (40–41%).

From February 2022 to February 2023, the share of people who positively assess the work of the head of state to restore order in the country increased by 3 percentage points (from 41 to 44%); the proportion of negative judgments has not changed (41–42%).

Imposing order in the country

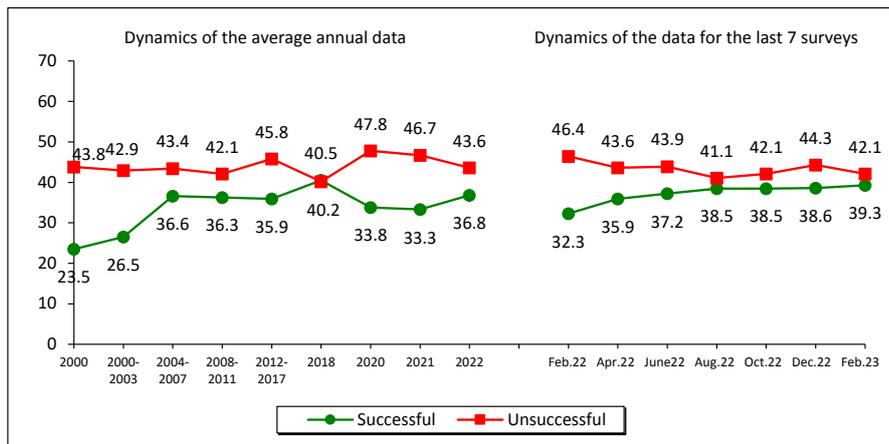


Answer option	Feb. 2022	Dec. 2022
Successful	+3	-2
Unsuccessful	0	+1

In December 2022 – February 2023, the share of positive assessments of the success of the President’s work to protect democracy and strengthen citizens’ freedoms did not change and amounted to 39%. The proportion of negative judgments decreased by 2 percentage points (from 44 to 42%).

Positive changes are noted for the period from February 2022 to February 2023: the share of positive assessments increased by 7 percentage points (from 32 to 39%), the proportion of negative ones decreased by 4 percentage points (from 46 to 42%).

Protecting democracy and strengthening citizens’ freedoms

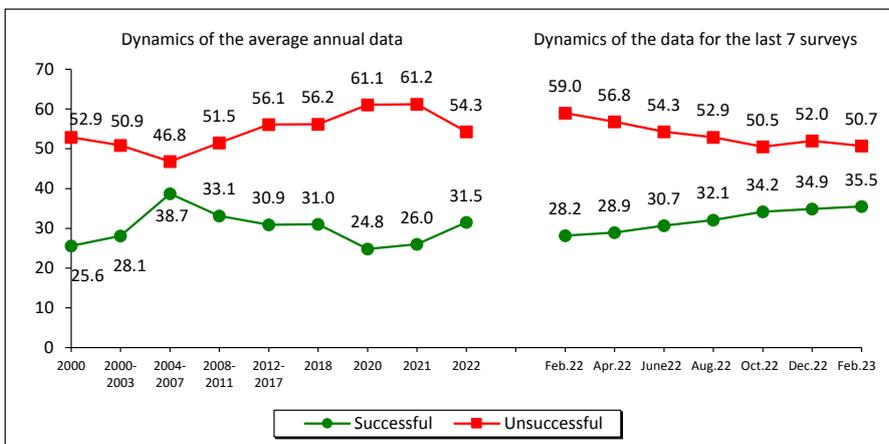


Dynamics (+/-), February 2023 to		
Answer option	Feb. 2022	Dec. 2022
Successful	+7	+1
Unsuccessful	-4	-2

In December 2022 – February 2023, public opinion regarding the President’s work aimed at boosting the economy and increasing the welfare of citizens did not change significantly: the share of positive assessments was 35–36%, the proportion of negative ones was 51–52%.

From February 2022 to February 2023, the share of positive assessments increased by 8 percentage points (from 28 to 36%), the share of negative ones also decreased by 8 percentage points (from 59 to 51%).

Economic recovery and increase in citizens’ welfare



Dynamics (+/-), February 2023 to		
Answer option	Feb. 2022	Dec. 2022
Successful	+8	+1
Unsuccessful	-8	-1

The structure of political preferences of Vologda Oblast residents did not change over the past two months: the share of people whose interests are expressed by the United Russia party is 38–39%, the Communist Party – 9–10%, the Liberal Democratic Party – 6%, the Just Russia party – 5%, the New People party – 1%.

From February 2022 to February 2023, we note an increase in support for the United Russia party (by 8 percentage points, from 31 to 39%), as well as a decrease in the proportion of people who find it difficult to make their choice or who believe that none of the parliamentary parties expresses their interests (by 3 percentage points, from 42 to 39%).

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

Party	Dynamics of the average annual data												Dynamics of the data for the last 7 surveys							Dynamics (+/-), Feb. 2023 to	
	2000	2007	2011	Election to the RF State Duma 2011, fact	2012	2016	Election to the RF State Duma 2016, fact	2018	2020	Election to the RF State Duma 2020, fact	2021	2022	Feb. 2022	Apr. 2022	June 2022	Aug. 2022	Oct. 2022	Dec. 2022	Feb. 2023	Feb. 2022	Dec. 2022
United Russia	18.5	30.2	31.1	33.4	29.1	35.4	38.0	37.9	31.5	49.8	31.7	35.2	31.1	34.2	34.9	36.2	36.7	38.3	39.1	+8	+1
KPRF	11.5	7.0	10.3	16.8	10.6	8.3	14.2	9.2	8.4	18.9	9.3	10.1	9.5	11.2	10.2	10.4	9.9	9.3	9.5	0	0
LDPR	4.8	7.5	7.8	15.4	7.8	10.4	21.9	9.6	9.5	7.6	9.9	7.3	9.4	7.7	7.8	6.8	6.0	6.3	5.9	-4	0
Just Russia – Patriots for the Truth	–	7.8	5.6	27.2	6.6	4.2	10.8	2.9	4.7	7.5	4.7	4.9	5.7	4.5	4.8	4.9	4.5	4.7	4.6	-1	0
New People*	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	5.3	2.3	1.5	1.6	1.3	1.6	1.9	1.1	1.5	1.3	0	0
Other	0.9	1.8	1.9	–	2.1	0.3	–	0.7	0.5	–	0.2	0.3	0.7	0.3	0.1	0.1	0.5	0.0	0.1	-1	0
None	29.6	17.8	29.4	–	31.3	29.4	–	28.5	34.2	–	33.9	30.6	32.4	30.8	30.7	29.3	30.6	29.9	28.0	-4	-2
I find it difficult to answer	20.3	21.2	13.2	–	11.7	12.0	–	11.2	11.1	–	10.0	10.1	9.6	10.0	9.9	10.5	10.8	9.9	11.4	+2	+2

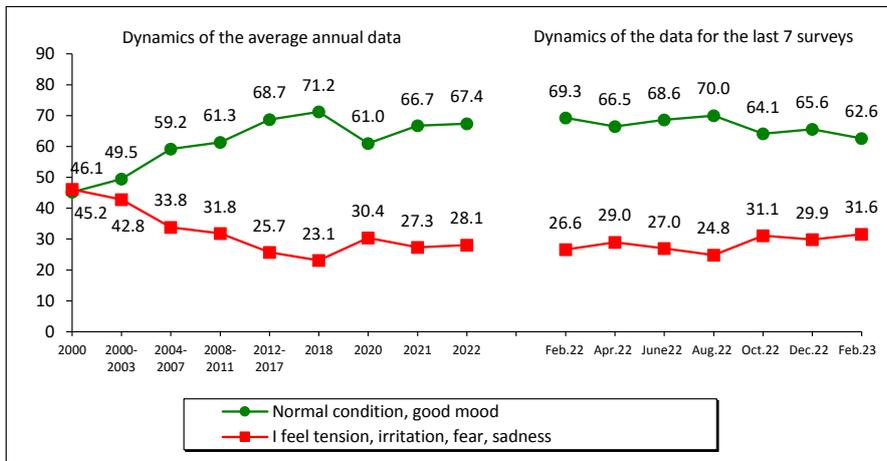
* The New People party was elected to the State Duma of the Russian Federation for the first time following the results of the election held on September 17–19, 2021.

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

Over the past two months, the social mood of Vologda Oblast residents slightly deteriorated. The proportion of people describing their daily emotional state as “normal, fine” decreased by 3 percentage points (from 66 to 63%). The proportion of those who experience mainly “tension, irritation, fear, sadness” increased by 2 percentage points (from 30 to 32%).

Compared to February 2022, there is a decrease in the share of positive assessments of social mood by 6 percentage points (from 69 to 63%), as well as an increase in the proportion of negative assessments (by 5 percentage points, from 27 to 32%).

Social mood

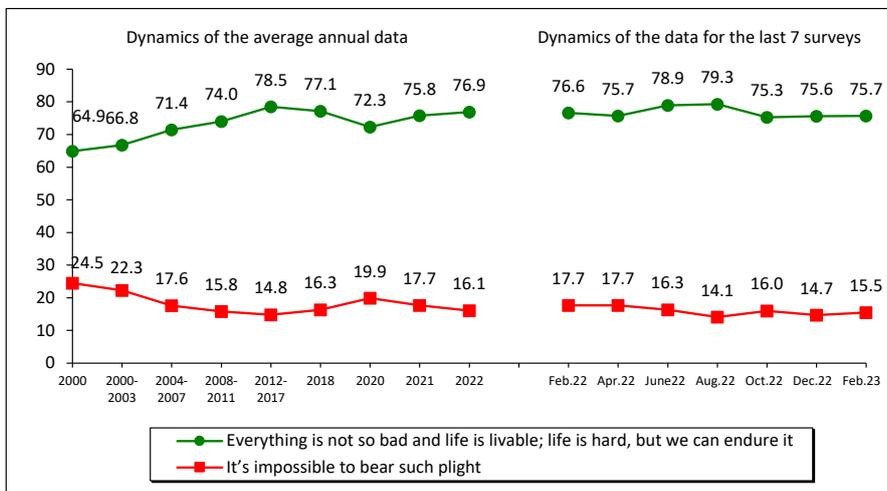


Dynamics (+/-), February 2023 to		
Answer option	Feb. 2022	Dec. 2022
Usual condition good mood	-6	-3
I feel tension, irritation, fear, sadness	+5	+2

In December 2022 – February 2023, the share of those who believe that “everything is not so bad and life is livable; life is hard, but we can endure it” remained stable (76%). The proportion of those who note that “it’s impossible to bear such plight” did not change as well (15–16%).

From February 2022 to February 2023, the share of positive assessments of the stock of patience was 76–77%; at the same time, the share of negative assessments decreased by 2 percentage points (from 18 to 16%).

Stock of patience

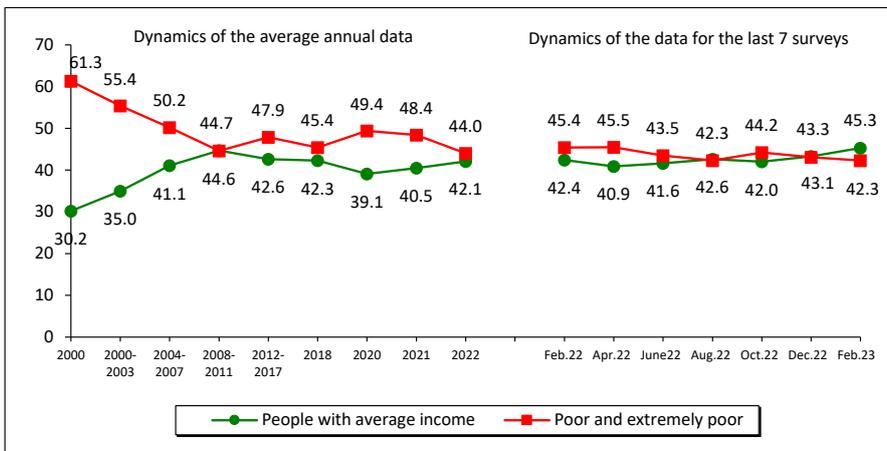


Dynamics (+/-), February 2023 to		
Answer option	Feb. 2022	Dec. 2022
Everything is not so bad and life is livable; life is hard, but we can endure it	-1	0
It's impossible to bear such plight	-2	+1

The proportion of Vologda Oblast residents subjectively classifying themselves as “poor and extremely poor” over the past two months did not change significantly (42–43%); the share of those who subjectively classify themselves as “middle-income people” increased slightly (by 2 percentage points, from 43 to 45%).

Compared to February 2022, the proportion of “middle-income people” increased by 3 percentage points (from 42 to 45%), the share of the “poor and extremely poor” slightly decreased by 3 percentage points as well (from 45 to 42%).

Social self-identification



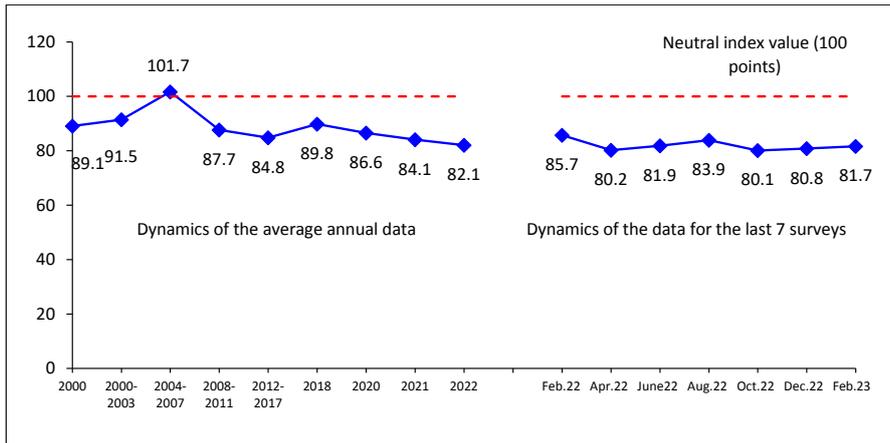
Dynamics (+/-), February 2023 to		
Answer option	Feb. 2022	Dec. 2022
People with average income	+3	+2
Poor and extremely poor	-3	-1

Question: “What category do you belong to, in your opinion?”

In December 2022 – February 2023, the Consumer Sentiment Index (CSI) was 81–82 p.

Compared with February 2022, there is a decrease in the CSI by 4 points (from 86 to 82 points), which indicates a growth in people’s pessimistic forecasts about the future of the Russian economy and their personal financial situation.

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



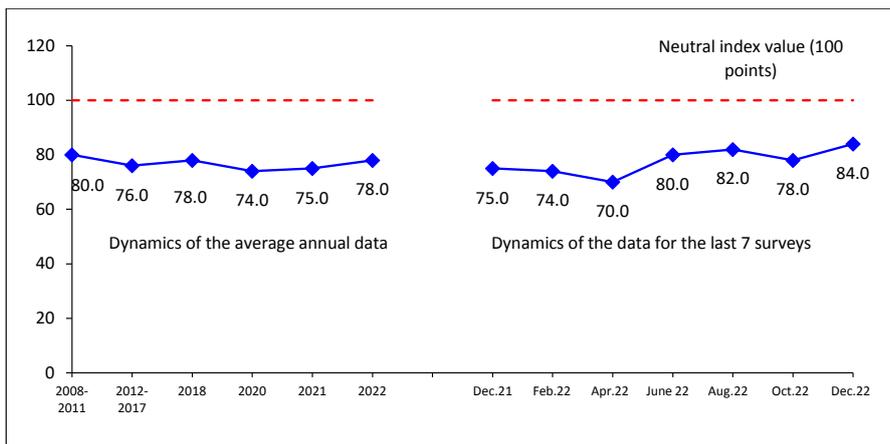
Dynamics (+/-), February 2023 to		
CSI	Feb. 2022	Dec. 2022
Index value, points	-4	+1

For reference:

According to the latest data from the all-Russian conducted by Levada-Center, positive changes are noted in the dynamics of the CSI for the period from October to December 2022 (the CSI increased by 6 points, from 78 to 84 p.).*

For the period from February to December 2022, the CSI increased by 10 points (from 74 to 84 p.).

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



Dynamics (+/-), December 2022 to		
CSI	Feb. 2022	Dec. 2022
Index value, points	+10	+6

The index is calculated since 2008.

Latest data are as of December 2022.

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

* Included in the register of foreign agents.

Social mood over the past two months experienced mainly negative dynamics. The majority of the socio-demographic groups showed a decrease in the proportion of people who characterize their daily emotional state a positive, especially among those who, according to self-estimates of own income, make up the group of bottom 20% (by 9 percentage points, from 55 to 46%), as well as among people under the age of 30 (by 8 percentage points, from 79 to 71%).

From February 2022 to February 2023, mainly negative changes are also observed in social mood trends: the proportion of people showing positive emotions decreased in all major socio-demographic groups, especially among the 20% of the least affluent residents of the Vologda Oblast (by 14 percentage points, from 60 to 46%) and people with secondary/secondary vocational education (by 12 percentage points, from 69 to 57%).

Social mood in different social groups (answer option: "Wonderful mood, normal, stable condition", % of respondents; VolRC RAS data)

Population group	Dynamics of the average annual data								Dynamics of the data for the last 7 surveys							Dynamics (+/-), Feb. 2023 to	
	2000	2007	2011	2012	2018	2020	2021	2022	Feb. 2022	Apr. 2022	June 2022	Aug. 2022	Oct. 2022	Dec. 2022	Feb. 2023	Feb. 2022	Dec. 2022
Sex																	
Men	50.1	65.9	64.5	69.1	72.8	60.8	65.7	66.8	65.5	68.3	67.4	69.9	65.0	64.7	62.5	-3	-2
Women	43.3	61.7	62.0	65.8	69.8	61.2	67.4	67.9	72.3	65.1	69.7	70.2	63.3	66.5	62.7	-10	-4
Age																	
Under 30	59.1	71.3	70.0	72.3	80.0	67.6	73.5	77.6	75.3	81.8	77.3	77.8	74.5	78.7	70.6	-5	-8
30–55	44.2	64.8	62.5	67.9	72.6	61.8	69.5	69.4	70.7	71.1	68.8	72.0	65.2	68.5	63.9	-7	-5
Over 55	37.4	54.8	58.3	62.1	65.2	57.4	60.5	61.1	65.3	55.2	65.3	64.6	58.7	57.2	58.1	-7	+1
Education																	
Secondary and incomplete secondary	41.7	58.4	57.4	57.2	64.8	56.1	62.1	64.6	68.7	63.0	65.8	68.5	58.9	62.7	57.2	-12	-6
Secondary vocational	46.4	64.6	63.6	66.7	72.2	63.5	66.7	68.3	68.3	69.8	70.5	71.0	65.8	64.3	63.7	-5	-1
Higher and incomplete higher	53.3	68.6	68.3	77.0	76.8	63.3	71.5	69.5	71.5	66.9	69.7	70.8	67.5	70.6	67.3	-4	-3
Income group																	
Bottom 20%	28.4	51.6	45.3	51.5	57.3	43.4	54.6	57.0	60.5	61.5	58.4	55.4	50.7	55.4	46.2	-14	-9
Middle 60%	45.5	62.9	65.3	68.7	71.9	62.6	67.3	68.1	68.8	64.2	70.3	73.2	65.9	66.1	62.2	-7	-4
Top 20%	64.6	74.9	75.3	81.1	82.9	75.6	79.9	78.3	81.5	81.9	75.7	77.0	78.7	74.9	73.8	-8	-1
Territory																	
Vologda	49.2	63.1	67.1	73.6	71.0	60.9	60.3	59.8	63.2	60.2	61.0	61.5	55.7	57.2	54.5	-9	-3
Cherepovets	50.8	68.1	71.2	76.2	75.8	60.4	71.0	71.2	72.6	70.1	72.8	74.6	67.9	69.1	65.9	-7	-3
Districts	42.2	61.6	57.1	59.8	68.7	61.4	67.8	69.5	70.8	68.1	70.6	72.3	66.6	68.5	65.3	-5	-3
Oblast	46.2	63.6	63.1	67.3	71.2	61.0	66.6	67.4	69.3	66.5	68.7	70.1	64.1	65.7	62.6	-7	-3

RESUME

February 2023 marks one year since the start of the special military operation (February 24, 2022). The RF President noted that “one year ago, to protect the people in our historical lands, to ensure the security of our country and to eliminate the threat coming from the neo-Nazi regime that had taken hold in Ukraine after the 2014 coup, it was decided to begin the special military operation. Step by step, carefully and consistently we will deal with the tasks we have at hand”⁴.

Over the past 12 months, there have been multidirectional trends in the dynamics of public sentiment.

✓ **On the one hand, we can point out that in the conditions of increasing international political tension, economic sanctions against Russia imposed by NATO countries, and ongoing hostilities, society is consolidating around the President and, in general, around state power.**

Thus, from February 2022 to February 2023, the level of approval of the work of the President increased by 13 percentage points (from 48 to 61%); Chairman of the RF Government – by 11 percentage points (from 38 to 49%), Vologda Oblast Governor – by 13 percentage points (from 34 to 47%). In addition, support for the United Russia party in power also increased (by 8 percentage points, from 31 to 39%), as well as the assessment of the work of the RF President in key areas, primarily in strengthening Russia’s international positions (by 5 percentage points, from 42 to 47%), promoting Russia’s economic recovery and improving the welfare of citizens (by 8 percentage points, from 28 to 36%).

✓ **On the other hand, we should note that during the period from February 2022 to February 2023, the social mood of people deteriorated. The proportion of those who characterize their daily emotional state as “normal, fine” decreased by 6 percentage points (from 69 to 63%), and the proportion of those who mainly feel “tension, irritation, fear, sadness” increased by 5 percentage points (from 27 to 32%).**

This is partly a natural consequence of the difficult geopolitical and domestic situation that Russia is facing after the start of the SMO, and partly this is due to people’s concerns about the prospects for the development of the Russian economy and their personal financial situation (this is evidenced by a decrease in the Consumer Sentiment Index over the past 12 months by 4 points, from 86 to 82 p.).

Thus, the public opinion trends revealed during the survey indicate that the resource of popular trust in the authorities (like any other resource) has its limits. The society understands the complexity of the situation in which the country found itself after February 24, 2022, and is ready to continue to support the political course implemented by the President. However, the head of state rightly noted that “national defense is the top priority, but in resolving strategic tasks we need to create conditions for confident progress in our country”⁵.

In this regard, further dynamics of social sentiment will largely depend not only on the progress of its implementation, but also on the quality, timely and complete fulfillment of the instructions of the head of state, including those that Vladimir Putin set out during his Address to the Federal Assembly on February 21, 2023: to create a special targeted fund to help families of fallen military and veterans; to launch a program of preferential rental housing for defense industry employees; to carry out smooth transition to the traditional basic training of specialists with higher education; to increase the minimum wage, etc.

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

⁴ Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation, February 21, 2023. Available at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/70565>

⁵ Ibidem.