

Features of Participation of the Population of Cities of the European North of Russia in Public and Municipal Administration



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Abstract. Citizens' participation in managing the country's development contributes to the formation of civil society and acts as a key element of democracy. In Russia, where three-quarters of the population are urban residents, it is especially important to study these issues in relation to cities, so as to understand the processes taking place in society and work out effective strategies for its development. The aim of the work is to consider ways in which residents of cities in the European North of Russia participate in state and municipal administration and to identify its features in settlements of different sizes. Based on the data of the Central Election Commission of the Russian Federation we analyze the turnout of residents of 68 cities of the European North of Russia for the presidential election of the Russian Federation (2018) and the election to the State Duma of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation (2021). We also assess the level of voter support provided to President Vladimir Putin and the United Russia party. It is revealed that the electoral activity of residents is determined to a greater extent by the peculiarities of the structure of the city's economy rather than the size of the city. Based on the analysis of the results of voting for the choice of urban improvement objects, it was found that residents of sparsely populated cities are more motivated and involved in these processes. We also find out that territorial public self-government is most actively used in small, rather than large, cities. In order to assess the informal mechanisms of citizens' participation, we analyze the availability of official profiles of local self-government bodies on VKontakte social media and the number of their subscribers, as well as data on the number of participants

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in informal urban communities. We have revealed that this method of communication with the authorities is mostly used by residents of small settlements. Scientific significance of the study lies in determining the features of dissemination of various mechanisms of civic participation, depending on the type of city. Practical significance lies in the possibility of using our findings by the authorities in improving the policy of involving citizens in management processes.

Key words: cities, civic participation, political participation of the population, local self-government, election, territorial self-government, European North of Russia.

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Introduction

In December 2023, Russia will celebrate the 30th anniversary of the adoption by popular vote of the country’s highest normative legal act – the Constitution of the Russian Federation¹. This document establishes the foundations of the constitutional system of the state, according to which “the people exercise their power directly, as well as through state authorities and local self-government bodies”. A referendum and free elections are the highest form of expression of the power of the people. Also, Russian citizens have the right to participate in the management of state affairs both personally and through their representatives; to send individual and collective appeals to state authorities and local self-government. In any democratic society, the active participation of the population contributes to the formation of civil society as the main condition of the rule of law and an important tool for building a mutual dialogue between citizens and authorities (Kudashova, Zhukova, 2021).

In Russia, the importance of involving the population in the processes of managing the development of territories is noted at the highest level. In April 2023, at a meeting of the Council for the Development of Local Self-Government, Russian President Vladimir Putin stressed the

¹ The Constitution of the Russian Federation was adopted by popular vote on December 12, 1993, with amendments approved during the all-Russian vote on July 1, 2020.

importance of direct participation of residents in decision-making². In the Fundamentals of the State Policy of Regional Development of the Russian Federation for the period up to 2025, the involvement of citizens to participate in the governance of the country, increasing their civic responsibility in solving issues of socio-economic development of territories is indicated as one of the tools for improving the efficiency of the work of state authorities and local self-government.

The effectiveness of the work of public authorities and local self-government is also largely ensured by the presence of a developed system of social communications with citizens, focused on the mutual exchange of information on possible ways to solve urgent problems. For example, the authorities, unlike the residents themselves, do not always manage to fully assess the existing difficulties in the work of transport or housing and communal infrastructure. An equally important issue is the choice of locations for the construction of social or cultural and leisure facilities. As practice shows³, making such decisions without taking into account the opinions of citizens can lead to conflict situations and even protests.

² Vladimir Putin held a meeting of the Presidential Council for the Development of Local Self-Government via videoconference. Available at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/70959>

³ Construction protests: What did Russians manage to defend? Available at: <https://spb.cian.ru/stati-stroitelnye-protesty-chto-udalos-otstojat-rossijanam-301245/>

The Russian Federation is characterized by a fairly high level of urbanization: almost three-quarters of its population lives in urban settlements. In many ways, they determine the trajectory of socio-economic development in Russian regions. This is especially true for the country's Northern territories, a specific feature of which is the concentration of population and production mainly in cities.

In the scientific literature devoted to the study of civic participation, the problems of involving the population in solving issues of territorial development are considered mainly on the examples of large and largest cities and in much rarer cases – medium and small cities. At the same time, there are very few studies in Russian science that address the peculiarities of citizen involvement in cities of various types, depending on the number of people or the specifics of socio-economic development.

Taking into account the above, the aim of the work was to study the practice of participation of residents of the cities of the European North of Russia (ENR) in state and municipal administration and to identify its features in settlements of different sizes. In order to achieve this goal, the following tasks have been solved: a review of modern research devoted to the study of forms and instruments of public participation has been conducted; indicators of electoral activity of residents of the cities of the ENR in the RF presidential elections and elections to the State Duma of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation have been analyzed; the analysis of the number and proportion of the population of the cities of the ENR who took part in the voting on the choice of improvement facilities within the framework of the federal project "Formation of a comfortable urban environment" is presented; the activity of citizens in terms of using such a tool as territorial public self-government (TPSG) is considered; the number of subscribers to the official pages of local self-government of the cities of the ENR on the social media VKontakte and unofficial urban communities was analyzed.

Scientific novelty of the work consists in analyzing both formal (elections of the President of the Russian Federation and to the State Duma of the Federal Assembly, citizens voting for the choice of objects of landscaping, territorial public self-government) and informal (social media of local self-government bodies and informal urban communities) mechanisms of public participation in state and municipal government, as well as identifying features of their distribution depending on the size of the city.

Research materials and methods

The methodological basis of the research includes the works of domestic and foreign scientists in the field of regional economy, state and municipal administration, institutional foundations of the formation of civil society. In the process of work, methods of synthesis and generalization, monographic, statistical, qualitative and quantitative data processing were used. The main sources of information were the official data of Rosstat, including databases of indicators of municipalities; information contained on the official websites of local self-government bodies of the cities within the ENR.

The general logic of the study was to consider not only formal, i.e. legislatively fixed, mechanisms for the participation of citizens, but also informal or unregulated ways of showing civic activity. At the same time, a big problem is the almost complete absence of any statistical data in the context of municipalities that allow making such an assessment. Annual reports on the activities of heads of cities or local administrations do not always have a section dedicated to the participation of residents in the development of the city.

That is why, within the framework of this study, the mechanisms of civic engagement were taken as a basis, the assessment of which could be carried out in all 68 cities of the European North of Russia. Among the official forms of citizens' participation are the elections of the President of the Russian Federation (March 18, 2018) and the elections

to the State Duma of the Federal Assembly of the eighth convocation (September 19, 2021). Data from the Central Election Commission of the Russian Federation (CEC of the Russian Federation) served as materials for analysis about the turnout at the elections and the share of voters who voted for the current President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin and the United Russia party.

In addition to studying the electoral activity of the population, an analysis of the practice of citizens' participation in voting on the choice of public spaces for landscaping was carried out within the framework of the federal project "Formation of a comfortable urban environment" of the national project "Housing and urban environment".

The experience of using such a mechanism of civic participation as territorial local self-government (TLSG) is also considered. The main source of information in this case was the information provided on the official websites of local self-government bodies of cities, as well as Associations of municipalities of constituent entities of the ENR.

To assess the informal mechanisms of participation of residents in all cities of the European Union, an analysis of the availability of official pages of local self-government bodies on the social media VKontakte and the number of their subscribers was carried out. Data on the number of participants of informal urban communities on the social media were also analyzed (if there are several of them, the largest group was taken).

Theoretical aspects of the study

Many works of both regionalist scientists and sociologists are devoted to the study of issues of population participation in the development of settlements. At the same time, there is currently no consensus in the academic community regarding the definition of the very concept of "public participation". Mainly in domestic and foreign literature, modern authors consider social, civil, and political participation. These concepts are quite closely interrelated and are largely determined by the scale of issues in which citizens participate.

In one of the studies⁴, the authors identify four levels of social activity of the population: 1) neighborhood, 2) social (interpersonal) participation, 3) civic participation, 4) political participation. If in the first case people are ready to participate in solving issues of a rather domestic nature, and the ways of expressing activity are more informal, then in the latter case we are already talking about formalized participation in political life through such forms as elections or citizens' meetings. The basic directions of social or interpersonal participation are volunteering and charity; activity in solving citywide problems; cultural, sports, professional associations of citizens; protection of the interests of individual social groups (Ukhanova, 2021).

Researchers (Nikovskaya, Skalaban, 2017) consider civic participation as "a process by which citizens directly or indirectly influence what decisions are made by authorities, affecting public interests". At the same time, the authors identify a number of key characteristics of civic participation, including the presence of motivation, voluntariness and awareness of the actions of participants.

In the scientific literature, there are several levels of involvement of residents in management processes according to the degree of increase in the intensity of interaction between the authorities and the population: informing, consulting, involvement, delegation and partnership (Koroleva, Kournikova, 2019).

According to the level of influence of the population on management decisions, three main models can be distinguished:

- imitation or lack of participation;
- nominal participation;
- real influence of citizens (Revyakin, 2017).

For a long time in Russia, only the practices of informing and consulting, which relate to the nominal participation of the population, were mainly used. In recent years, there has been a

⁴ Non-institutional social activity of citizens: Forms of implementation and possible support. Key takeaways based on the results of a comprehensive study. 2018. Available at: <https://clck.ru/PkrPg> (accessed: February 25, 2020).

gradual transition to more active involvement of citizens in making managerial decisions, but these processes do not always proceed smoothly.

The mechanisms of public participation in state and municipal administration can also be conditionally divided into formal, i.e. legally regulated, and informal, i.e. not fixed from a legal point of view, but playing a significant role in the management processes for the development of territories (Fig. 1).

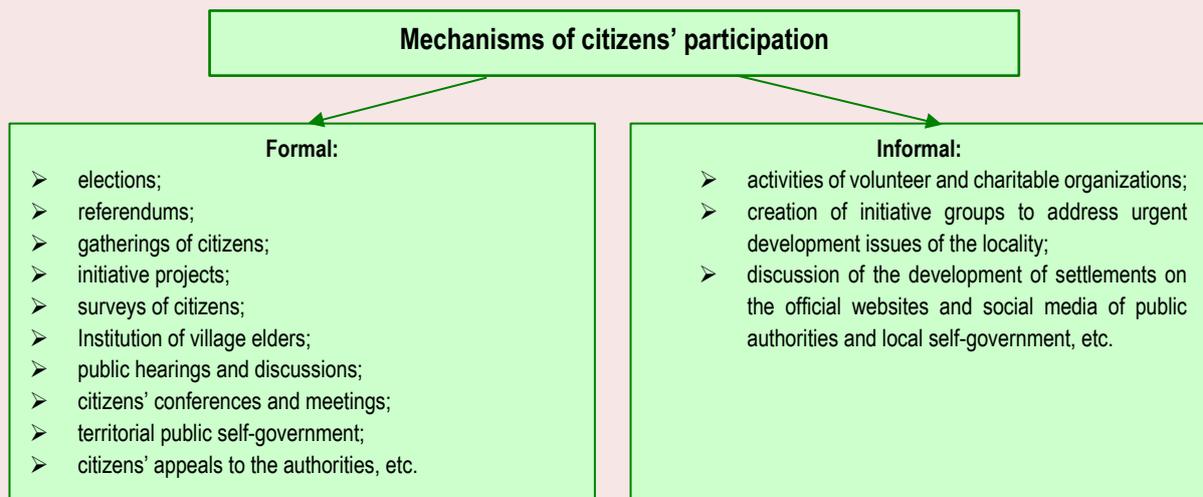
Elections to state or local government bodies are a form of direct democracy and one of the ways of political participation of the population in the management of territorial development, and issues of electoral activity of the population are considered by a large number of researchers (Larichev, 2019; Dementieva, 2020; Nikitina, 2021; Tavares, Carr, 2013; Gökçe-Kızılkaya, Onursal-Beşgül, 2017).

Among the major scientific organizations, the Global Citizenship Observatory (GLOBALCIT) can be distinguished. Scientists of this organization have published a whole set of works devoted to the study of public participation in national and local elections in the European Union (Peltoniemi, 2018; Carvalhais, Oliveira, 2019; Korzec, Pudzianowska, 2021, etc.). There are studies conducted not only in the context of a particular state, but also cross-

country comparisons. For example, the work (Hutcheson, Russo, 2021) presents an analysis of voter turnout in municipal elections and elections to the European Parliament in 28 EU countries.

In Asian countries, the issue of public participation in elections to state or local authorities is also very relevant. In particular, the study of the political activity of the population in China is considered in the works (Zhang et al., 2015; Hill, 2020; Martinez-Bravo et al., 2022). Elections in China are fundamentally different from elections in Western democracies, since there is no party competition. However, at present, the Communist Party of China allows competitive elections at the lowest level of government: urban and rural residents have the right to elect their representatives to local committees (Villagers' Committee and Residents' Committee, respectively) (Xi, Wen, 2019). We should note that, since for a long time until the beginning of the 2010s, the rural population prevailed over the urban population in China, the attention of scientists was mainly focused on studying electoral activity in Chinese villages and villages. This was also due to the fact that elections were allowed in cities only in 2000, whereas in rural areas since the late 1980s. Research results show that one of the features of

Figure 1. Formal and informal mechanisms of public participation in state and municipal governance



Source: own compilation.

local elections in China is the high activity of rural residents (Kennedy et al., 2018; Xi, Wen, 2019).

Among the domestic works on the study of electoral activity of citizens, it is possible to single out studies conducted on a regular basis by the Russia Public Opinion Research Center (VCIOM)⁵ or the Russian Public Institute of Electoral Law⁶.

One of the current issues is the involvement of the population in the processes of strategic management of the development of their settlements. According to Article 13 of Federal Law 172-FZ, dated June 28, 2014 “On strategic planning in the Russian Federation”, a public discussion of the documents being developed is envisaged, however, the residents themselves are not among the participants in strategic planning. Unfortunately, in Russian practice, local governments are often not interested in in-depth discussion of the developed draft strategic planning documents and receiving feedback from the local community (Charakhchyan, Bondarenko, 2017). In the vast majority of cases, the population is involved in the strategic planning process only at the stage of strategy approval through a public hearing procedure, which is often formal in nature (Dus, Vlaskina, 2018).

At the same time, it is extremely important at the earliest stages to involve residents in the development of strategies for the socio-economic development of territories, since ultimately the main mission of these documents is to create comfortable living conditions and ensure the well-being of citizens (Marquart, 2017).

One of the forms of attracting the population and taking into account their opinions is sociological surveys on the problems and prospects of the development of the territory of residence. Another tool can be an expert interview with representatives of professional communities whose activities are of great importance for the development of a particular locality.

⁵ Official website of the Russia Public Opinion Research Center. Available at: <https://wciom.ru/tematicheskii-katalog/politics>

⁶ Website of the Russian Public Institute of Electoral Law. Available at: <https://roiip.ru/reports/>

A significant form of citizens' participation in the management of territorial development is their involvement in budgetary processes at the local level. In the scientific literature of recent years, there has been an increasing number of works devoted to the study of issues of civil or popular budgeting (Đulabić, Jerinić, 2021; Szczepanska et al., 2022; Smoleva, 2021) and crowdfunding (Stiver et al., 2015; Langley et al., 2020; Koniagina et al., 2021; Latysheva, 2020) as forms of public participation in urban development. In the first case, citizens are directly involved in the processes of targeted allocation of public funds. It is the society that determines the urban infrastructure facilities that are necessary to construct for citizens, and which objects should receive funding in the first place. An example of the implementation of this approach in Russia is initiative budgeting within the framework of the “People’s budget” project or voting on the choice of public spaces for improvement within the framework of the national project “Housing and urban environment”.

Civic crowdfunding is not a full-fledged substitute for conventional municipal budgeting, but rather acts as an additional financial instrument (Mayer, 2016). Crowdfunding platforms allow city residents to participate financially in the creation of infrastructure or cultural facilities that are important to them.

One of the forms of public participation in urban development is territorial public self-government (TPSG), which is also reflected in many scientific papers (Bulakh et al., 2021; Gnezdilova, Oganessian, 2021; Safarov, 2022; Mikhailov, 2023). Unlike local self-government bodies, the presence of TPSG in a municipality is not mandatory and does not have a legally established list of issues that this institution deals with. The main advantage of TPSG is that residents of even a small territory inside the city (for example, a courtyard or a street) can solve problems in a fairly short time, unlike state authorities or local self-government that require much more time in this regard.

An important form of civic participation and a way of interacting with public authorities or local self-government are citizens' appeals, which can be presented in the form of a proposal, statement or complaint. At the same time, in the era of rapid development of the Internet and social media, citizens have more opportunities to communicate with authorities and express their civic position (Frolov, Agurova, 2019). One of the key advantages of digital technologies is also an increase in the speed of reporting information about an existing problem, which means a reduction in the time it takes to solve it.

The topic of the influence of digitalization processes on the activity of the population has been reflected in the works of many modern authors. For example, the study (Ferrucci et al., 2020), based on the analysis of data from Facebook⁷ users, analyzes the political activity of U.S. citizens in the online format and the relationship between the frequency of use of the social media and the degree of political involvement. The study (Zagidullin et al., 2021) examines the use of social media as a tool for protest activity of the population in Türkiye.

In general, the literature review allows us to conclude that a fairly large number of works by Russian and foreign authors are devoted to the study of forms and mechanisms of public participation in the development of local territories, in particular cities. At the same time, most authors choose one or more cities as the object of research. At the same time, settlements, as a rule, are either located in the same subject of the Russian Federation, or belong to the same category in terms of population (for example, large cities or million-plus cities). However, the modern urban system is characterized by a variety of different types of cities, respectively, they may differ in the level of activity of residents. The social ties that bind the local community are much less developed in large cities than in small towns (Larichev, 2019), respectively, there may

⁷ Facebook is owned by Meta, which is recognized as an extremist organization and banned in the Russian Federation.

be differences between these types of cities in the use of certain forms of citizen participation in the development of a locality.

In this study, using the example of the European North of Russia as one of the Russian macroregions, an attempt is made to consider the issue of the dissemination of citizen participation practices in cities of different sizes.

Main results of the study

The European North of Russia includes the republics of Komi and Karelia, the Vologda, Murmansk and Arkhangelsk oblasts, including Nenets Autonomous Okrug. The territories under consideration fully meet the criteria for the allocation of regional space, since they are characterized by the presence of well-established economic, infrastructural, socio-cultural intraregional ties, and also differ from other territories by common natural, geographical and climatic conditions, the predominance of the raw materials sector in the economy, the unity of transport and energy infrastructure, low level of population spread, high rates of urbanization (79.8%), exceeding the national average (74.8%).

On the territory of the RF constituent entities under consideration there is a large variety of cities of various types: large (Arkhangelsk, Murmansk, Vologda, Cherepovets), big (Petrozavodsk, Syktyvkar, Severodvinsk), medium (Kotlas, Ukhta, etc.) and small, in a quarter of which the population is less than 10 thousand people (*Tab. 1*).

The choice of the object of research was also due to the fact that cities vary by economic specialization or features of the structure of the economy. In particular, there are cities with a predominance of mining (Vorkuta, Ukhta, Kostomuksha, Olenegorsk, etc.) and manufacturing (Cherepovets, Segezha, Monchegorsk, etc.) industries, tourist cities (Veliky Ustyug, Kirillov, etc.), etc. Many localities are single-industry towns (Novodvinsk, Yemva, Koryazhma, Sokol, etc.) or belong to the category of closed administrative-territorial entities (Zaozersk, Mirny, etc.).

Table 1. Number of cities in the regions of the European North of Russia / share of the population living in them, in the total population of the RF constituent entity*, %

Region	Population					Total
	250 thousand – 1 million people	100–250 thousand people	50–100 thousand people	10–50 thousand people	less than 10 thousand people	
Republic of Karelia	-	1 / 44.7	-	5 / 19.1	7 / 10.0	13 / 73.8
Komi Republic	-	1 / 30.3	2 / 18.5	5 / 16.3	2 / 2.4	10 / 67.5
Arkhangelsk Oblast (including NAO)	1 / 31	1 / 16.2	1 / 5.8	7 / 18.0	4 / 1.9	14 / 72.9
Vologda Oblast	2 / 54.3	-	-	5 / 8.8	8 / 5.0	15 / 68.1
Murmansk Oblast	1 / 40.6	-	-	11 / 41.2	4 / 4.1	16 / 85.9
Total for ENR entities	4 / 29.4	3 / 15.3	3 / 4.8	33 / 19.0	25 / 4.3	68 / 72.8

* As of January 1, 2023.

Source: own compilation on the basis of Rosstat data: The population of the Russian Federation by municipality. Available at: <https://rosstat.gov.ru/compendium/document/13282>

At the first stage of our research, we analyzed the political activity of residents of the cities of the ENR on the basis of data from the RF Central Election Commission on the results of the presidential election held in 2018 and the election to the State Duma of the Federal Assembly held in 2021 (Tab. 2).

Table 2. Results of the RF presidential election (2018) and the election to the State Duma of the RF Federal Assembly (2021), %

City	Population, people (2023)	RF presidential election (2018)		election to the State Duma of the RF Federal Assembly (2021)*	
		Turnout	Proportion of those who voted for Vladimir Putin	Turnout	Proportion of those who voted for the United Russia party
Petrozavodsk	235793	60.2	71.4	40.5	30.6
Kostomuksha	25928	61.3	77.8	38.8	34.1
Kondopoga	25295	61.8	69.0	44.1	26.7
Segezha	23074	57.3	74.7	35.3	34.6
Sortavala	14787	59.9	75.1	39.9	30.4
Medvezhyegorsk	11737	53.9	69.4	40.3	29.3
Kem	9712	57.4	75.1	43.2	26.1
Pitkyaranta	8094	54.4	71.7	33.3	33.0
Olonets	7631	56.0	73.7	39.5	35.1
Belomorsk	7407	50.5	72.0	36.3	36.1
Pudozh	7207	52.4	72.0	41.1	24.8
Suoyarvi	6819	53.7	68.7	41.0	32.5
Lahdenpohya	5855	55.9	75.2	38.9	30.2
Republic of Karelia	527880	57.1	73.0	39.6	31.7
Syktvykar	220042	61.3	68.9	40.3	27.2
Ukhta	78081	61.8	71.1	41.0	28.1
Vorkuta	56389	50.3	74.1	26.6	27.6
Pechora	34383	57.8	72.6	35.8	27.3
Usinsk	31358	62.4	74.2	35.7	28.7
Sosnogorsk	22032	62.1	68.0	41.1	26.8
Inta	19529	50.4	68.5	30.9	31.2
Yemva	10779	59.6	64.8	43.1	28.7
Vuktyl	9198	62.8	70.1	41.7	26.4
Mikun	8401	63.5	69.6	42.2	29.3
Komi Republic	726434	60.4	71.4	39.5	29.4
Arkhangelsk	298617	57.0	73.7	38.6	31.5
Severodvinsk	156056	64.9	78.3	45.0	27.7
Kotlas	56122	64.4	72.2	41.4	23.6
Novodvinsk	32826	61.6	74.7	38.4	33.2

End of Table 2

City	Population, people (2023)	RF presidential election (2018)		election to the State Duma of the RF Federal Assembly (2021)*	
		Turnout	Proportion of those who voted for Vladimir Putin	Turnout	Proportion of those who voted for the United Russia party
Koryazhma	34002	61.8	70.9	41.0	27.6
Mirny	27174	76.4	82.0	62.0	53.5
Velsk	21406	59.8	69.4	39.2	26.4
Nyandoma	18146	57.3	74.0	39.8	29.2
Onega	16449	54.2	72.8	35.3	31.8
Kargopol	8737	59.4	71.5	40.7	31.1
Shenkursk	4524	54.3	72.6	32.4	33.9
Mezen	2832	62.5	71.1	41.7	31.2
Solvychegodsk	1858	61.5	67.5	46.3	28.5
Arkhangelsk Oblast	964304	59.2	75.3	41.6	32.2
Naryan-Mar	23579	60.0	71.3	40.4	25.4
Nenets Autonomous Okrug	41383	63.6	71.6	42.6	29.1
Vologda	311628	66.3	69.7	42.9	30.9
Cherepovets	301040	69.2	73.4	42.0	33.4
Sokol	34298	58.7	73.1	40.3	34.3
Veliky Ustyug	28266	64.6	73.6	45.7	25.7
Gryazovets	14424	64.3	72.5	46.7	33.2
Babaevo	11646	63.6	74.1	43.0	35.4
Vytegra	10292	56.2	71.9	45.2	33.2
Totma	8647	63.3	68.7	48.2	36.2
Kharovsk	8361	59.3	72.0	45.6	36.6
Belozersk	8183	56.8	69.8	43.3	32.2
Ustyuzhna		62.9	71.3	44.8	37.2
Nikolsk	7607	60.3	70.1	44.3	32.4
Kirillov	7069	64.1	70.3	47.0	33.3
Krasavino		63.8	76.5	46.0	37.3
Kadnikov	4022	59.4	74.5	47.0	33.7
Vologda Oblast	1128782	66.1	72.4	45.5	34.3
Murmansk	267422	64.8	76.9	34.9	28.8
Apatity	48748	68.8	71.2	38.5	30.8
Severomorsk	43394	70.8	79.4	49.1	49.7
Monchegorsk	39477	64.6	76.2	36.7	30.8
Kandalaksha	28438	61.2	74.1	36.9	31.4
Kirovsk	24271	72.1	71.1	38.2	28.4
Olenegorsk	20875	62.6	79.1	39.4	34.4
Polyarny	12154	70.5	77.8	50.5	29.6
Kovdor	15423	62.6	76.3	36.3	29.2
Polyarnye Zori	14078	74.4	72.2	40.3	35.7
Zapolyarny	14231	62.4	75.4	37.5	32.4
Snezhnogorsk	10023	65.5	76.8	34.5	27.7
Gadzhievo		77.8	80.1	53.6	39.8
Kola	8933	60.7	77.0	34.2	32.0
Zaozersk	7760	69.0	80.6	47.2	40.8
Ostrovnoy		63.0	82.7	41.7	34.5
Murmansk Oblast	658698	66.3	76.4	43.7	35.8
Russian Federation	146447424	67.5	76.7	51.6	49.8

Turnout exceeds average values for the RF constituent entity

Proportion of voters exceeds average values for the RF constituent entity

* Results of voting in the federal electoral district (according to party lists).

Source: own compilation on the basis of data from the official website of the Central Election Commission of the Russian Federation. Available at: <http://www.cikrf.ru>

In the RF presidential election, residents of ENR cities showed more activity than in the election of State Duma deputies, which corresponds to the situation on average in the regions and the country as a whole. To a certain extent, this is due to the fact that in order to recognize the presidential election as valid, a voter turnout of at least 50% is required, whereas there is no turnout threshold in parliamentary elections.

The analysis of the electoral behavior of citizens in the context of cities within the framework of individual RF constituent entities allowed us to identify the following features. In the Republic of Karelia, a high turnout for the presidential election was recorded in the administrative center – Petrozavodsk (60.2%) and in small towns with a population of 10 to 30 thousand people (with the exception of Medvezhyegorsk). In localities with a population of less than 10 thousand people, the turnout was below the regional average. High level of support for the current President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin was observed in the cities of Kostomuksha (77.8%), Kem (75.1%), Sortavala (75.1%), Segezha (74.7%), as well as in sparsely populated Lakhdenpokhya (75.2%) and Olonets (73.7%).

In the election to the State Duma of the Russian Federation, the highest voter turnout was typical for the monotown of Kondopoga (44.1%), as well as the small towns of Kem (43.2%), Pudozh (41.1%), Suoyarvi (41%). A higher level of support for the United Russia party was observed mainly in cities with a population of up to 10 thousand people – Belomorsk (36.1%), Olonets (35.1%), as well as the industrial cities of Segezha (34.6%) and Kostomuksha (34.1%).

In the Komi Republic, the highest turnout in the RF presidential election was recorded in the most sparsely populated cities of the region: Mikun – 63.5%, Vuktyl – 62.8%. In the cities of Usinsk, Sosnogorsk, Ukhta and Syktyvkar, it also exceeded the regional average (60.4%). However, only in three mining cities – Usinsk (74.2%), Vorkuta (74.1%), Pechora (72.6%) – the level of support for Vladimir Putin was higher than the average for the republic (71.4%).

In the Arkhangelsk Oblast, in 9 out of 13 cities, the turnout for the RF presidential election exceeded the regional average (59.2%). Among all the settlements under consideration, the city of Mirny stands out, having the status of a closed city: turnout in it was 76.4%, and the level of support for Vladimir Putin was 82%. Only in one more city in the region – Severodvinsk – the share of those who voted for the current President of the Russian Federation exceeded the average values for the region (78.3%). The turnout for the State Duma election in Mirny was also the highest (62%). More than a third of voters voted for the United Russia party in only two cities: closed city of Mirny (53.5%) and Novodvinsk (33.2%). The lowest level of support was observed in Kotlas (23.6%) and Velsk (26.4%).

In the only city of Nenets Autonomous Okrug, Naryan-Mar, the turnout rates for the RF presidential election (60%) and the State Duma election (40.4%) were lower than the national average (67.5 and 51.6%, respectively) and for the region (63.6 and 42.6%, respectively). At the same time, the level of support for Vladimir Putin by the population of the city is quite high (71.3%), while the United Russia party is supported by only a quarter of voters.

At the presidential election in the Vologda Oblast, the highest voter activity was observed in two major cities of the region: in Vologda – 66.3%, and in Cherepovets – 69.2%. In the remaining cities (all of them belong to the category of small, the turnout was below the regional average (66.1%). The lowest activity is typical for Belozersk (56.8%) and Vytegra (56.2%).

The highest level of support for Vladimir Putin was observed in the two most sparsely populated cities of the Vologda Oblast – Krasavino (76.5%) and Kadnikov (74.5%). In Cherepovets (73.4%), the indicator also exceeded the regional average. On the contrary, in Vologda, the share of those who voted for the current President of the Russian Federation (69.7%) was one of the lowest in the region; the figure is lower only in Totma (68.7%).

A somewhat opposite situation has developed with the turnout for the election to the State Duma of the Russian Federation. The greatest activity of the population was observed in sparsely populated cities: in Totma, the turnout was 48.2%, in Kadnikov and Kirillov – 47% each. In Vologda and Cherepovets, on the contrary, the turnout was very low: 42.9 and 42.0%, respectively. The United Russia Party enjoys greater support in cities with small population: Krasavino (37.3%), Ustyuzhna (37.2%) and Kharovsk (36.6%).

Among all the regions considered, the Murmansk Oblast has the highest voter turnout for the presidential election: an average of 66.3% in the region, which can be explained by the presence of a large number of closed cities. It is the cities of this category that are the leaders in terms of the share of the population participating in the elections. In 2018, the turnout for the elections in the closed city of Polyarnye Zori, closed city of Severomorsk, Gadzhievo and Polyarny (they are part of the closed city of Aleksandrovsk) exceeded 70%. High activity of residents was also observed in Kirovsk (72.1%) and Apatity (68.8%). The level of support for Vladimir Putin is also the highest in closed administrative-territorial entities: Ostrovnoy (82.7%), Zaozersk (80.6%), Gadzhievo (80.1%). The situation with the turnout for the State Duma election and the share of those who voted for United Russia is generally similar.

Conducting population surveys regarding the development of the social, transport or housing and communal services of the city is one of the ways to

involve citizens in management processes. Thus, with the beginning of the implementation of the federal project “Formation of a comfortable urban environment” of the national project “Housing and urban environment”, city residents have the opportunity to directly participate in the selection of objects of improvement in their locality via online voting. Currently, as part of the implementation of the national project, more than 55 thousand objects have already been improved, including public spaces and courtyards⁸.

In 2023, residents of ENR cities also had the opportunity to vote for improvement objects or for specific design projects of public territories. In the context of the RF constituent entities under consideration, the Republic of Karelia and the Arkhangelsk Oblast should be singled out, because voting in these entities was held in almost every city (with the exception of Belomorsk and Solvychevodsk, respectively). For comparison, in the Vologda Oblast, only 8 out of 15 cities applied for participation in the project for the formation of a comfortable urban environment.

The indicator of the share of citizens who took part in the voting, from the total number of inhabitants of settlements, allows us to conclude that the population of small cities, especially those with a population of up to 10 thousand people, is much more involved in these processes. The absolute leader is the city of Kargopol, where over 40% of the population took part in the voting (*Tab. 3*). In Ustyuzhna and Belozersk, every fourth resident made their choice in favor of the

Table 3. Participation of residents of ENR cities in voting on the choice of public spaces for improvement

City	Number of public spaces put forward for voting, units*	Number of voters, people	Population of the city, people	Number of voters to the population of the city, %
Kargopol	3	3567	8737	40.8
Kotlas	9	17492	56122	31.2
Ustyuzhna	3	1984	7653	25.9
Belozersk	3	2121	8183	25.9
Mezen	2	706	2832	24.9
Pudozh	4	1734	7207	24.1
Veliky Ustyug	9	6508	28266	23.0

⁸ The all-Russian vote to choose improvement objects has started. National projects of Russia. Available at: <https://xn--80aaapampemcchfmo7a3c9ehj.xn--p1ai/news/startovalo-vserossiyskoe-golosovanie-za-obekty-blagoustroystva>

End of Table 3

City	Number of public spaces put forward for voting, units*	Number of voters, people	Population of the city, people	Number of voters to the population of the city, %
Velsk	3	4698	21406	21.9
Nyandoma	7	3979	18146	21.9
Kirillov	3	1529	7069	21.6
Koryazhma	4	7344	34002	21.6
Naryan-Mar	6	5022	23579	21.3
Kem	3	2066	9712	21.3
Shenkursk	3	962	4524	21.3
Sortavala	6	2797	14787	18.9
Polyarny	3	2167	12154	17.8
Olonets	4	1329	7631	17.4
Totma	3	1505	8647	17.4
Pitkyaranta	3	1384	8094	17.1
Olenegorsk	4	3543	20875	17.0
Suoyarvi	2	1123	6819	16.5
Severomorsk	7	7055	43394	16.3
Mirny	4	4380	27174	16.1
Vytegra	3	1603	10292	15.6
Yemva	1	1670	10779	15.5
Polyarnye Zori	4	2146	14078	15.2
Kandalaksha	4	4331	28438	15.2
Kovdor	2	2347	15423	15.2
Kola	2	1353	8933	15.1
Medvezhyegorsk	4	1770	11737	15.1
Vologda	8	46739	311628	15.0
Severodvinsk	3	23275	156056	14.9
Lakhdenpokhya	3	872	5855	14.9
Segezha	3	3401	23074	14.7
Kondopoga	4	3656	25295	14.5
Ukhta	2	11163	78081	14.3
Cherepovets	6	42893	301040	14.2
Monchegorsk	3	5557	39477	14.1
Apatity	1	6793	48748	13.9
Arkhangelsk	20	40943	298617	13.7
Onega	2	2249	16449	13.7
Petrozavodsk	25	32237	235793	13.7
Inta	3	2644	19529	13.5
Sosnogorsk	4	2978	22032	13.5
Gadzhievo	2	1189	9088	13.1
Kostomuksha	6	3203	25928	12.4
Kirovsk	1	2941	24271	12.1
Syktvykar	18	26207	220042	11.9
Zaozersk	3	909	7760	11.7
Snezhnogorsk	1	1131	10023	11.3
Usinsk	2	3455	31358	11.0
Murmansk	9	28069	267422	10.5
Pechora	1	3596	34383	10.5
Vorkuta	3	5865	56389	10.4
Novodvinsk	3	2878	32826	8.8

* In the case where one public space is indicated, the vote was held for the choice of a design project for its improvement.

Source: information on the number of voting participants was obtained on the basis of materials from websites on the implementation of the federal project "Formation of a comfortable urban environment" in the Republic of Karelia. Available at: <https://10.gorodsreda.ru/>; in the Komi Republic. Available at: <https://11.gorodsreda.ru/>; in the Arkhangelsk Oblast. Available at: <https://29.gorodsreda.ru/>; in the Vologda Oblast. Available at: <https://35.gorodsreda.ru/>; in the Murmansk Oblast. Available at: <https://51.gorodsreda.ru/>; in Nenets Autonomous Okrug. Available at: <https://83.gorodsreda.ru/>

landscaping project they liked. Kotlas stands out among medium cities, since almost a third of the population has been active there.

Vologda has the highest rates in the group of large and big cities: about 15% of the population participated in the voting. Residents of Murmansk are less active: only one in ten citizens took part in a survey on the choice of objects for improvement.

Territorial public self-government (TPSG) established by Federal Law 131-FZ, dated October 6, 2003 is also one of the forms of participation of the population in solving issues of local importance. This mechanism is based on the interaction of the residents themselves, who independently determine the list of the most pressing problems and organize themselves on a voluntary basis to solve them. Local self-government bodies, in turn, can provide advisory assistance to TPSGs, as well as provide support in terms of material support for their activities.

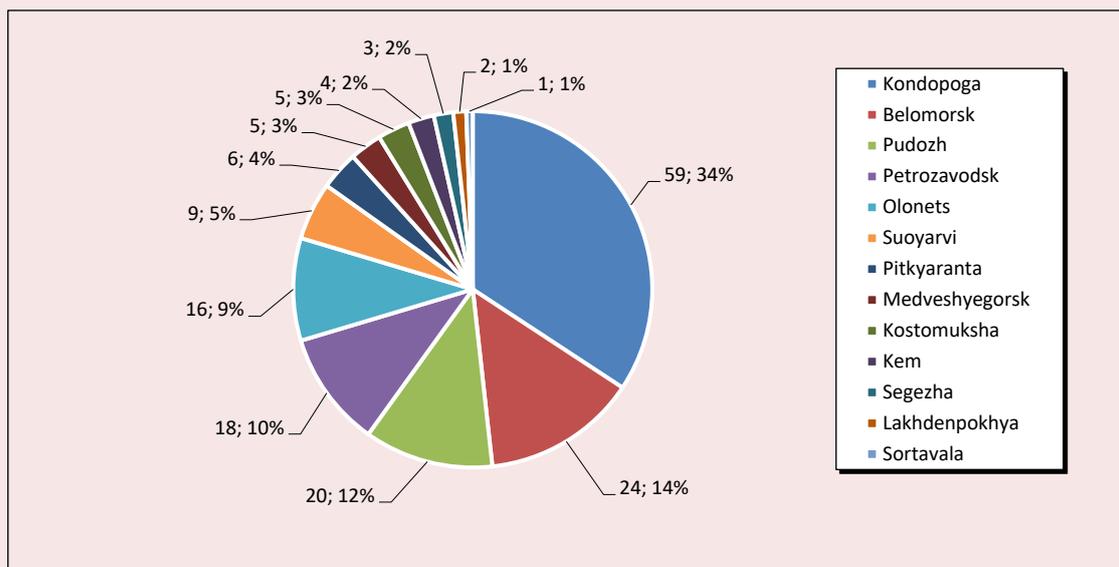
The institution of territorial public self-government has a significant potential for the development of small-sized territories. At the

same time, at present, in our opinion, the lack of a clear system of accounting for the work of TPSG is a rather serious problem. In particular, among the ENR regions under consideration, the most complete information on the number of TPSG is available only for the Republic of Karelia.

As of July 1, 2023, 572 TPSGs have been created in the region, but only 172 of them (30%) are in cities (Fig. 2). It should be emphasized that the largest number of TPSGs operates in small cities rather than the administrative center of Petrozavodsk. Thus, in the city of Kondopoga with a population of less than 30 thousand people, there are 59 TPSGs, or a third of their total number in the cities. In Belomorsk and Pudozh, where the population is less than 9 thousand people, 24 and 20 TPSGs were created, respectively. This form of civic activity is least common in the following cities: Sortavala (1 TPSG), Lakhdenpokhya (2 TPSGs) and Segezha (3 TPSGs).

In the Arkhangelsk Oblast, as of February 1, 2023, 1,204 TPSGs were registered. At the same

Figure 2. Number of functioning TPSGs in the cities of the Republic of Karelia in 2023; their share in the total number in the cities



Source: Register of territorial public self-governments in the Republic of Karelia as of July 1, 2023. Available at: <https://acmo-kareliya.rf/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/Reestr-na-01.07-2023.pdf>

time, the information is presented only in the context of municipal districts, urban or municipal okrugs. Thus, it is difficult to say how many TPSGs there are in cities that do not have this status. At the same time, according to available information, it can be concluded that the leader in the number of functioning TPSGs is Kotlas (33 TPSGs), which belongs to the category of medium cities rather than the largest cities of the oblast, Arkhangelsk (18 TPSGs) and Severodvinsk (2 TPSGs)⁹.

Based on the materials of the Association of Municipalities of the Komi Republic¹⁰, we can conclude that the practice of applying territorial public self-government in cities is used extremely poorly. So, out of all 87 TPSGs of the republic, only one is located in Syktyvkar and two in Inta. Unfortunately, for the Vologda and Murmansk oblasts, up-to-date information on the number of TPSGs is not presented in a systematic form, so it is difficult to draw any definite conclusions for these regions.

In general, in our opinion, TPSGs carry out a very important mission to unite and consolidate people to solve common problems, since not every citizen is ready to show their civic activity individually.

Further, as part of the study, we analyzed the availability of official accounts of local self-government bodies of cities and the number of their subscribers on VKontakte. According to the data obtained during the study, currently in 33 out of 66 municipal formations¹¹, local authorities have an account on VKontakte (Tab. 4). At the same time, the analysis of the share of subscribers from the total population allows us to conclude that residents of large cities are much less active in this type of communication with the authorities.

For example, in Cherepovets, only 1.6% of residents are subscribed to the Cherepovets City Hall community, in Vologda 2.8% of the population is subscribed to the Vologda City Administration group.

Table 4. Number of subscribers to the official accounts of local self-government bodies of the cities of the ENR on VKontakte*

No.	Municipal formation	Population, people	Name of the community on VKontakte	Number of subscribers to the community, units	Number of participants to the number of population of the municipality, %
1	Closed City of Mirny	27174	Official Mirny	17407	64.1
2	ME Polyarnye Zori	15726	Polyarnye Zori	9570	60.9
3	Closed City of Zaozersk	7760	Administration of the Closed City of Zaozersk	4273	55.1
4	UO Naryan-Mar	23579	City of Naryan-Mar	10368	44.0
5	Closed City of Aleksandrovsk	32232	Closed City of Aleksandrovsk	13699	42.5
6	ME Kirovsk	26253	Your Kirovsk	10754	41.0
7	ME Kovdorsky District	16763	Single-industry city of Kovdor	6827	40.7
8	UO Vuktyl	10365	Administration of Urban Okrug "Vuktyl"	4157	40.1
9	Closed City of Ostrovnoy	1432	Administration of the Closed City of Ostrovnoy	565	39.5

⁹ Internet portal of the territorial public self-government of the Arkhangelsk Oblast. Available at: <https://www.tos29.ru/geografiya/>

¹⁰ Official Internet portal of the Association "Council of Municipalities of the Komi Republic". Available at: http://atosrk.ru/page/tos_komi

¹¹ We consider 66 municipal entities and not 68, since three cities (Gadzhievo, Snezhnogorsk and Polyarny) are part of one municipality – the closed city of Aleksandrovsk.

End of Table 4

No.	Municipal formation	Population, people	Name of the community on VKontakte	Number of subscribers to the community, units	Number of participants to the number of population of the municipality, %
10	US Sortavala	17930	Administration of Sortavala Settlement	6326	35.3
11	ME Monchegorsk	41729	Administration of the city of Monchegorsk	13686	32.8
12	UO Kostomuksha	26531	Kostomukshsky Urban Okrug	8585	32.4
13	UO Inta	21092	Administration of ME UO "Inta"	5946	28.2
14	UO Severodvinsk	156731	Administration of Severodvinsk	40784	26.0
15	UO Kotlas	67023	Administration of Urban Okrug "Kotlas"	17095	25.5
16	UO Vorkuta	67702	Vorkuta City Administration	15745	23.3
17	UO Koryazhma	34002	Administration of Urban Okrug "City of Koryazhma"	7775	22.9
18	US Velsk	21815	Administration of Urban Settlement "Velskoye"	4563	20.9
19	UO Usinsk	36025	Administration of Okrug "Usinsk"	7531	20.9
20	UO Ukhta	94168	Administration of MEUO "Ukhta"	18629	19.8
21	ME Olenegorsk	27974	Olenegorsk City Administration	4348	15.5
22	ME Apatity	48763	Apatity City Administration	7205	14.8
23	UO Severomorsk	50949	Administration of the Closed City of Severomorsk	7139	14.0
24	UO Arkhangelsk	303357	Open Arkhangelsk	40796	13.4
25	UO Petrozavodsk	235793	Administration of Petrozavodsky Urban Okrug	29599	12.6
26	US Nikolsk	7607	Nikolsk City Administration	903	11.9
27	UO Novodvinsk	32826	Administration of ME "City of Novodvinsk"	3223	9.8
28	UO Syktyvkar	233105	Official Syktyvkar	21408	9.2
29	US Krasavino	5460	Territorial department in the City of Krasavino	352	6.4
30	US Mikun	8401	Administration of US "Mikun"	516	6.1
31	UO Murmansk	267422	Murmansk City Administration	14713	5.5
32	UO Vologda	318112	Vologda City Administration	8785	2.8
33	UO Cherepovets	301040	Cherepovets Mayor's Office	4870	1.6

* The number of community members is given as of July 19, 2023. Subscribers can be residents of other municipalities, too.
Source: own compilation on the basis of information from the social media VKontakte. Available at: <https://vk.com/>

The leaders in population coverage are the closed city of Mirny in the Arkhangelsk Oblast, Municipal Okrug Polyarnye Zori and the closed city of Zaozersk in the Murmansk Oblast, where more than half of the residents are subscribed to the official accounts of local self-government bodies¹². Among cities with a population of less than 10

¹² Subscribers to official communities of local self-government bodies on VKontakte may include people who do not currently live in the municipality under consideration; therefore, the data presented have a certain margin of error.

thousand people, only three local governments have a VKontakte page, but the number of subscribers is small. In the city of Nikolsk, about 12% of the population are members of the community "Administration of the city of Nikolsk", in the city of Krasavino – 6.2% of residents are subscribed to the "Territorial department in the city of Krasavino", in the city of Mikun – 6.1% are subscribed to the "Administration of Mikun". In general, greater activity in this form of interaction with local authorities is typical for cities with a population of 10 to 30 thousand people.

We should note that almost all official accounts of local self-government bodies have forms for citizens' appeals. Any resident of the city in this way can report a problem, ask a question or express their opinion. However, modern digital technologies make it possible to track complaints or suggestions not only in official communities of local authorities. For example, the social media monitoring system

“Incident Management” helps to find and process messages that citizens leave in open sources on the Internet, for example in informal urban communities.

As part of the study, we analyzed the number of participants of such groups on VKontakte (Tab. 5). According to the results, there are such communities in almost all cities of the European North of Russia,

Table 5. Unofficial urban communities on VKontakte*

City	Name of urban community	Number of participants, units	Number of participants to the population of the city. %
Ostrovnoy	Gremikha, Murmansk-140, Ostrovnoy	10182	In 7.2 times
Mezen	Podslushano Mezen	14857	In 5.2 times
Nikolsk	Podslushano Nikolsk	33973	In 4.5 times
Shenkursk	Podslushano Shenkursk	16318	In 3.6 times
Pudozh	Podslushano v Pudozhe I Karelia	24214	In 3.4 times
Lakhdenpokhya	Lakhdenpokhya - NAVSEGDA!	19294	In 3.3 times
Velsk	Podslushano Velsk	61270	In 2.9 times
Suoyarvi	Podslushano v Suoyarvi	19256	In 2.8 times
Kadnikov	Podslushano Kadnikov	11290	In 2.8 times
Kargopol	Podslushano v Kargopole	24392	In 2.8 times
Totma	Podslushano Totma	22220	In 2.6 times
Pitkyaranta	Podslushano v Ptk. (Pitkyaranta)	20390	In 2.5 times
Belozersk	Belozersk	20005	In 2.4 times
Gryazovets	Podslushano - Gryazovets	34396	In 2.4 times
Kem	Podslushano I Kem	22660	In 2.3 times
Mikun	PODSLUSHANO MIKUN In Culture	18785	In 2.2 times
Krasavino	Podslushano v Krasavino	12023	In 2.2 times
Babaevo	Podslushano Babaevo	25152	In 2.1 times
Solvychegodsk	SOLVYCHEGODSK – GLUBINKA RUSI	3960	In 2.1 times
Vuktyl	“Gorodok Vuktyl”	18498	In 2 times
Sortavala	Podslushano v Sortavala	28937	195.7
Vytegra	Nastroenie – Moya Vytegra	19571	190.2
Onega	TIPICHNAYA ONEGA	30423	185.0
Gadzhievo	Podslushano v Gadzhievo	16784	184.7
Veliky Ustyug	Podslushano Veliky Ustyug	50955	180.3
Naryan-Mar	Podslushano I Naryan-Mar	39670	168.2
Yemva	g. Yemva (Knyazhpogostskii raion)	18043	167.4
Belomorsk	PB/ Podslushano Belomorsk	12002	162.0
Polyarnye Zori	Podslushano Polyarnye Zori	22175	157.5
Snezhnogorsk	Podslushano v Snezhnogorske	15772	157.4
Pechora	Tipichnaya Pechora	51918	151.0
Kandalaksha	KANDALAKSHA VKURSE	41265	145.1
Murmansk	Murmansk	385775	144.3
Olonets	Olonets Live I Novosti raiona	10974	143.8
Sosnogorsk	Podslushano Sosnogorsk	30583	138.8
Zapolyarny**	Nikel, Zapolyarny, Pechenga. Doska obyavlenii	40450	132.2
Apatity	Podslushano Apatity	63735	130.7
Severomorsk	Severomorsk Onlain	56515	130.2

End of Table 5

City	Name of urban community	Number of participants, units	Number of participants to the population of the city. %
Kotlas	Kotlas	71744	127.8
Olenegorsk	OLENEGORSK VKURSE	25633	122.8
Kirovsk	Podslushano Kirovsk Khibiny	28801	118.7
Kirillov	KIRILLOV I ONLINE	8275	117.1
Kola	Gorod Kola 51 (Kolskii raion)	10265	114.9
Koryazhma***	Uslyshano I Koryazhma, Kotlas	101700	112.8
Vologda	Onlain Vologda	346796	111.3
Severodvinsk	Severodvinsk life	171493	109.9
Zaozersk	Podslushano Zaozersk	8356	107.7
Sokol	Podslushano Sokol	36760	107.2
Monchegorsk	Podslushano Monchegorsk – No.1	39239	99.4
Kostomuksha	ANTIBESDKA - Kostomuksha	25720	99.2
Usinsk	Usinsk.Onlain	30139	96.1
Mirny	Podslushano Mirny	25306	93.1
Inta	PODSLUSHANO INTA	18113	92.7
Novodvinsk	IPN † (Novodvinsk)	30419	92.7
Ustyuzhna	Podslushano Ustyuzhna	6760	88.3
Vorkuta	Khelou, Vorkuta!	47980	85.1
Arkhangelsk	Arkhangelsk life	248635	83.3
Petrozavodsk	Podslushano v PTZ I Petrozavodsk	193003	81.9
Kondopoga	Podslushano Kondopoga	18617	73.6
Kharovsk	Gorodok nash Kharovsk	6028	72.1
Ukhta	Podslushano Ukhta	56085	71.8
Polyarny	Nash Polyarny	8522	70.1
Segezha	Segezha	14793	64.1
Kovdor	KOVDOR VKURSE	9026	58.5
Nyandoma	NYANDOMA	10538	58.1
Medvezhyegorsk	Medvezhyegorsk: komanda zhitelei. Perezagruzka	5755	49.0
Syktvykar	Podslushano Syktvykar	86851	39.5
Cherepovets	Cherepovets	93714	31.1

* The number of community members is presented as of July 19, 2023. Subscribers can be not only residents of this municipality. In some cities there are several informal urban communities, the largest ones in terms of the number of participants were taken into consideration in the study.

** The share of community members is calculated from the total population of the city of Zapolyarny, urban-type settlement Nikel, urban-type settlement Pechenga.

*** The share of community members is calculated from the total population of Koryazhma and Kotlas.

Source: own compilation on the basis of information from VKontakte. Available at: <https://vk.com/>

in some cases the group unites several localities geographically located close to each other, for example, the community “Uslyshano. Koryazhma, Kotlas” unites the population of two corresponding cities, or the group “Nikel, Zapolyarny, Pechenga. Doska obyavleniy”, which includes residents of three settlements at once.

The number of subscribers of groups of small cities is several times higher than the population of the city itself. For example, the community

“Gremikha, Murmansk-140, Ostrovnoy” consists of more than 10 thousand people, which is 7.2 times more than the population of the city of Ostrovnoy itself. The number of participants of the groups “Podslushano” in the small cities of Mezen, Nikolsk, Shenkursk, Pudozh, Lakhdenpokhya exceeds the population of these cities by 3.3–5.2 times. Such activity, in our opinion, can be explained by two main factors. First, the number of participants in informal groups may include people

who currently do not live in a small city, but were born in it. Second, the groups themselves are like some kind of “bulletin board”. In particular, it may publish information about the purchase/sale of goods and services, search for a traveling companion to get to a regional center or a neighboring city, available jobs in organizations and enterprises. That is, the subscribers of the community can be people for whom the published information is of interest, in particular, residents of neighboring urban and rural settlements.

In medium cities, the number of subscribers of unofficial communities is about a third higher than the population of the city itself, for example, in Apatity – 130.7% of the city’s population, in Severomorsk – 130.2%, in Kotlas – 127.8%. With regard to big cities, we note that only the urban communities of Murmansk (“Murmansk”) and Vologda (“Onlain Vologda”) have the number of subscribers that exceeds the population of the city itself – by 44.3 and 11.3%, respectively. In Petrozavodsk, Syktyvkar and Cherepovets, the number of participants in informal groups on VKontakte is significantly less than the number of city residents.

Conclusion

Thus, according to the results of the research, several key conclusions can be drawn concerning the peculiarities of participation of residents of various types of cities in state and municipal administration.

1. In the context of individual constituent entities of the ENR, there are certain differences in the electoral behavior of residents of cities with different number of population. In particular, in the Republic of Karelia and the Vologda Oblast, high turnout for the RF presidential election is typical for large, rather than small, cities. However, regarding the election to the State Duma of the Russian Federation in these regions, the situation was the opposite. In general, the determining factor in the macroregion is the city’s economic specialization, rather than size. In the regions of

the European North there is a considerable number of closed cities (Aleksandrovsk, Severomorsk, Zaozersk, Mirny), as well as cities with a single-industry economy (Cherepovets, Severodvinsk, Apatity, Kirovsk, Polyarnye Zori). It is these two groups of settlements that are leaders in voter turnout, as well as in the level of support for Russian President Vladimir Putin. In our opinion, this can largely be due to the power of the influence of the administrative resource, since in closed cities a significant proportion of the population is employed in the public sector, and in single-industry towns the life of most citizens is closely linked to the activities of the city-forming enterprise, which in both cases can be used as a lever to control the electoral behavior of citizens. Also, one of the reasons may be that these cities have a higher level of wages, so the population is more satisfied with the policy pursued by the current authorities and is not interested in changing its course.

2. Residents of the most sparsely populated cities (up to 10 thousand people) are much more actively involved in voting on the improvement of the urban environment. On average, every fifth citizen is active in them, whereas in large and big cities their share ranges from 10 to 15%. The difference, in our opinion, can be explained in general by the greater willingness of residents of small cities to participate in the discussion of urban problems. Thus, according to sociological surveys, less than a quarter of residents of Vologda and Cherepovets (23.7 and 23.1%, respectively) have a desire to participate in discussions on topical issues of city development¹³, and, for example, the majority of residents of the small cities of Kirovsk and Kovdor (51.5 and 50.5%, respectively) are ready to discuss issues of urban improvement (Sharova, Maleus, 2022). The second important factor is that participation in federal projects for the improvement of territories in conditions of local budgets shortage

¹³ Data from the monitoring of living conditions of the population of large cities in the Vologda Oblast, conducted by VolRC RAS in 2023.

is often the only opportunity for small settlements to improve the state of the urban environment. It is obvious that the local governments of small cities are maximally motivated in terms of the active involvement of residents in the voting processes.

3. In urban settlements of the ENR, territorial public self-government, as an instrument of civic participation, is less actively used compared to rural areas. In particular, in the Republic of Karelia, less than 1/3 of 572 TPSGs are located in cities. At the same time, the analysis of the situation in the context of settlements allows us to conclude that residents of small cities, especially Kondopoga, Belomorsk and Pudozha, are the most proactive in this matter in comparison to residents of the administrative center of Petrozavodsk. This indicates a greater willingness of residents of small cities to unite and consolidate their efforts to solve common problems. In our opinion, a significant role is played by the fact that TPSGs can apply for budgetary funds or grants (Gainanov et al., 2022). Measures to support the work of TPSGs are effective due to the use of such a tool as proactive budgeting. For example, in 2022, in the territory of Belomorsky Urban Settlement, 14 TPSGs participated in the competitive selection for the implementation of projects, four of which became winners and received funding totaling more than 2.5 million rubles. The funds were allocated for repairs in the library building, improvement of parking lots and playgrounds, etc.¹⁴ Thus, territorial public self-government acts as another actually working tool for obtaining funding for the implementation of improvement measures and the formation of a comfortable urban environment.

4. Based on the analysis of the share of subscribers to the official accounts of local self-government bodies of cities on Vkontakte, we can conclude that residents of small cities, especially with a population of 10 to 30 thousand people, are more actively using the possibilities of this method of communication with the authorities, compared

to the population of large cities. Against the background of other settlements, we can distinguish the closed city of Mirny in the Arkhangelsk Oblast, Municipal Okrug Polyarnye Zori and the closed city of Zaozersk in the Murmansk Oblast, where more than half of the residents are subscribed to the official pages of local self-government bodies. This is largely due to the peculiarities of economic structure in these cities.

5. In small towns of the European Union, the level of involvement of the population in informal urban communities on the social media is significantly higher: in some, the share of participants is several times higher than the population of the city. In medium cities, the number of subscribers to informal communities exceeds the population of the city itself by about a third, and only two large cities (Murmansk and Vologda) are characterized by an excess of the number of subscribers over the population of the city itself. This feature can be explained to some extent by the fact that many members of urban communities used to live in small towns and subsequently left the locality, but they keep in touch with their “small homeland” via the social media.

Scientific significance of the study consists in determining the features of the spread of formal and informal mechanisms of participation of urban residents in management processes, depending on the number of people living in cities.

Practical significance of the work consists in the possibility of using our findings by public authorities and local self-government in improving the implemented policy of involving citizens in the processes of state and municipal administration.

Of course, beyond the scope of the study, there are still many mechanisms of residents' political and civic participation, in particular, issues of initiative budgeting in cities or citizens' participation in volunteer organizations. They will be the topic of further scientific papers on the problems and prospects of the development of civic engagement.

¹⁴ Report of the head of the municipality “Belomorskoye urban settlement” for 2022. Available at: https://www.belomorsk-mo.ru/omsu/dokladi_vistupleniya/

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