

MONITORING OF PUBLIC OPINION

DOI: 10.15838/esc.2024.1.91.16

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 Region¹.

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 round of the monitoring (February 2024) and for the period from February 2023 to February 2024 (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 2020–2023².

In December 2023 – February 2024, the level of approval of the RF President's work increased slightly (by 2 percentage points, from 62 to 64%). The share of negative assessments decreased from 23 to 21%³.

Over the past 12 months (from February 2023 to February 2024), the share of positive assessments of the work of the head of state increased by 3 percentage points (from 61 to 64%)⁴.

¹ The surveys are held six times a year in the cities of Vologda and Cherepovets, in Babayevsky, Velikoustyugsky, Vozhegodsky, Gryazovetsky, Tarnogsky Kirillovsky, Nikolsky municipal okrugs, and in Sheksninsky Municipal 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 Region's adult population. Sampling error does not exceed 3%.

More information on the results of VoIRC RAS surveys is available at <http://www.vscs.ac.ru/>.

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

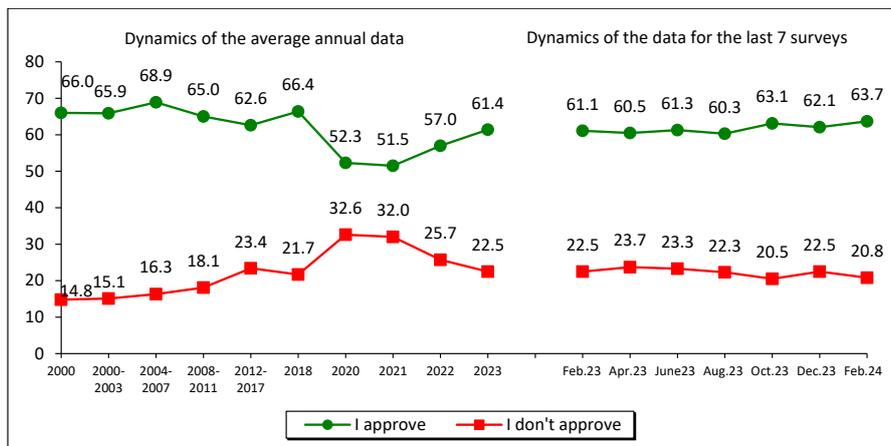
³ Here and elsewhere, in all tables and in the text, positive changes are highlighted in green, negative changes are highlighted in red, and no changes – in blue. Due to the fact that the changes of +/- 3 p.p. fall within the limits of sampling error, they are considered insignificant and are marked in blue.

⁴ Here and elsewhere in the text, the results of a comparative analysis of the data from the survey conducted in February 2024 and the results of the monitoring round conducted in February 2023 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. 2024 to	
	2000	2007	2011	2012	2018	2020	2021	2022	2023	Feb. 2023	Apr. 2023	June 2023	Aug. 2023	Oct. 2023	Dec. 2023	Feb. 2024	Feb. 2023	Dec. 2023	
RF President																			
I approve	66.0	75.3	58.7	51.7	66.4	52.3	51.5	57.0	61.4	61.1	60.5	61.3	60.3	63.1	62.1	63.7	+3	+2	
I don't approve	14.8	11.5	25.5	32.6	21.7	32.6	32.0	25.7	22.5	22.5	23.7	23.3	22.3	20.5	22.5	20.8	-2	-2	
Chairman of the RF Government																			
I approve	-	-	59.3	49.6	48.0	38.7	39.9	45.4	50.1	49.3	48.3	49.2	50.8	51.3	51.9	52.7	+3	+1	
I don't approve	-	-	24.7	33.3	31.6	40.4	37.6	32.0	27.6	27.9	28.1	27.1	26.1	28.6	27.9	26.2	-2	-2	
Vologda Region Governor																			
I approve	56.1	55.8	45.7	41.9	38.4	35.0	36.7	40.9	48.1	47.1	48.3	48.7	48.1	47.5	49.1	50.8	+4	+2	
I don't approve	19.3	22.2	30.5	33.3	37.6	42.5	40.5	35.8	30.9	33.0	32.3	30.7	29.7	29.7	29.9	27.5	-6	-2	
Wording of the question: "How do you assess the current work of ...?"																			

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



Dynamics (+/-), February 2024 to		
Answer option	Feb. 2023	Dec. 2023
I approve	+3	+2
I don't approve	-2	-2

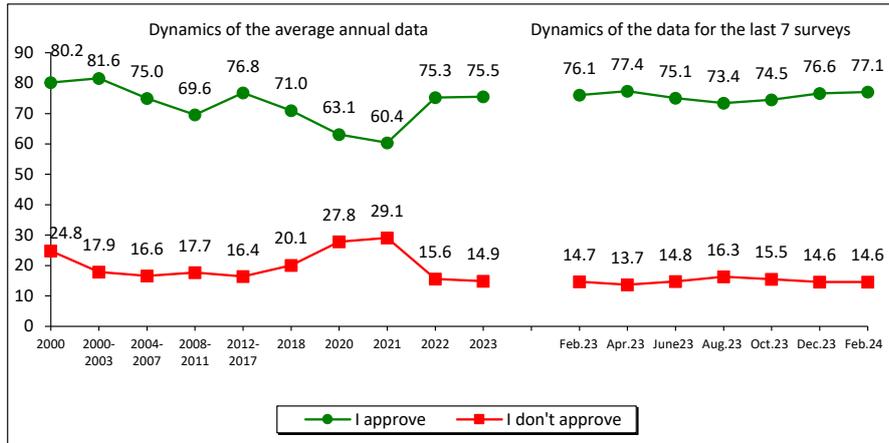
Here and elsewhere, all graphs show the average annual data for 2000, 2018, 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023, as well as the average annual data for the periods 2000–2003, 2004–2007, 2008–2011, 2012–2017 that correspond to presidential terms.

For reference:

According to VCIOM, the level of approval of the RF President's work for the period from December 2023 to February 2024 amounted to 77%. The proportion of negative judgments was 15%.

The estimates of the population as a whole correspond to the level of support for the work of the head of state in February 2023.

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



Dynamics (+/-), February 2024 to		
Answer option	Feb. 2023	Dec. 2023
I approve	+1	+1
I don't approve	0	0

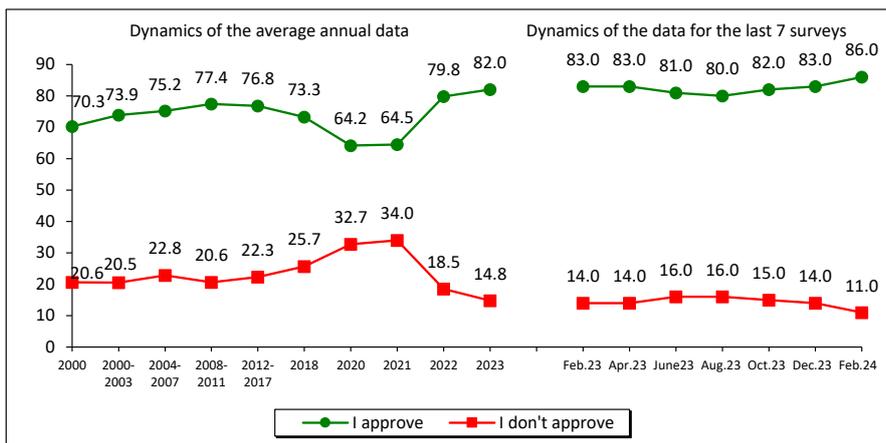
Wording of the question: "In general, do you approve or not approve of the work of the President of the Russian Federation?"

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

According to Levada-Center*, the share of positive assessments of the RF President's activities continues to increase since August 2023. In December 2023 – January 2024, it increased by 3 percentage points (from 83 to 86%), and in general, for the period from August 2023 to January 2024 – by 6 percentage points (from 80 to 86%).

Compared to February 2023, the level of approval of the RF President's work in January 2024 increased slightly (by 3 percentage points, from 83 to 86%).

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



Dynamics (+/-), January 2024 to		
Answer option	Feb. 2023	Dec. 2023
I approve	+3	+3
I don't approve	-3	-3

Wording of the 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>

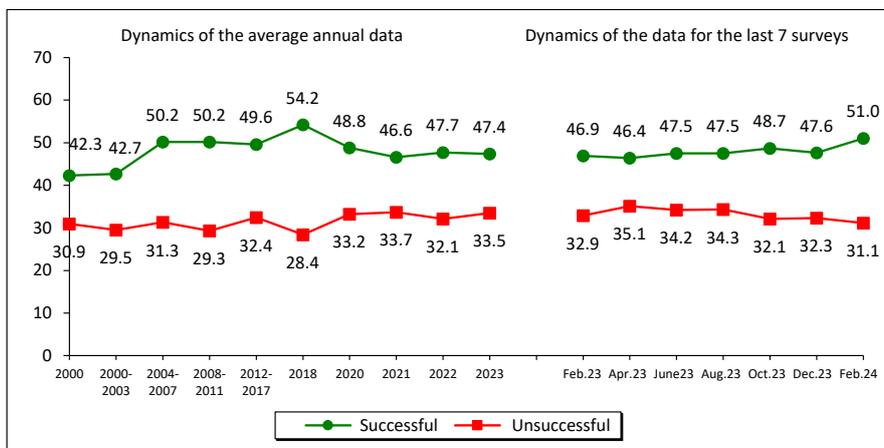
* Included in the register of foreign agents.

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

In the past two months, we observe an increase in the share of the region’s residents who consider the actions of the RF President to strengthen Russia’s international positions to be successful (by 3 percentage points, from 48 to 51%). The share of those who hold the opposite point of view has not changed and amounts to 31–32%.

Over the past 12 months, the proportion of positive assessments increased by 4 percentage points (from 47 to 51%).

Strengthening Russia’s international position

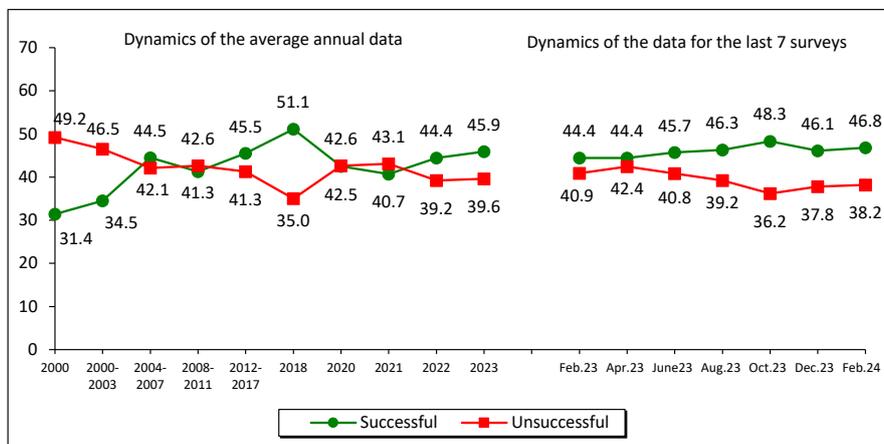


Dynamics (+/-), February 2024 to		
Answer option	Feb. 2023	Dec. 2023
Successful	+3	+3
Unsuccessful	-2	-1

Like in December 2023, the proportion of the region’s residents who note that the RF President’s actions to restore order in the country are successful amounted to 46%. The share of negative judgments is significantly lower and also remains stable (38%).

Some changes are observed in dynamics over the past 12 months: the proportion of positive characteristics increased by 3 percentage points (from 44 to 47%), negative – decreased from 41 to 38%.

Imposing order in the country

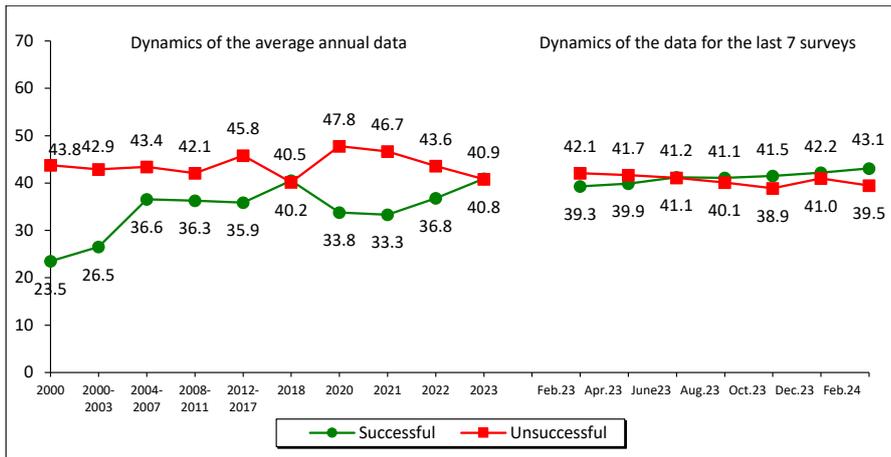


Dynamics (+/-), February 2024 to		
Answer option	Feb. 2023	Dec. 2023
Successful	+3	+1
Unsuccessful	-3	0

In December 2023 – February 2024, the share of the region’s residents who positively assess the RF President’s efforts to protect democracy and strengthen citizens’ freedoms amounted to 42–43%; the proportion of negative opinions was 40–41%.

People’s estimates are slightly better than in February 2023 (the share of positive characteristics increased by 3 percentage points, from 39 to 42%).

Protecting democracy and strengthening citizens’ freedoms

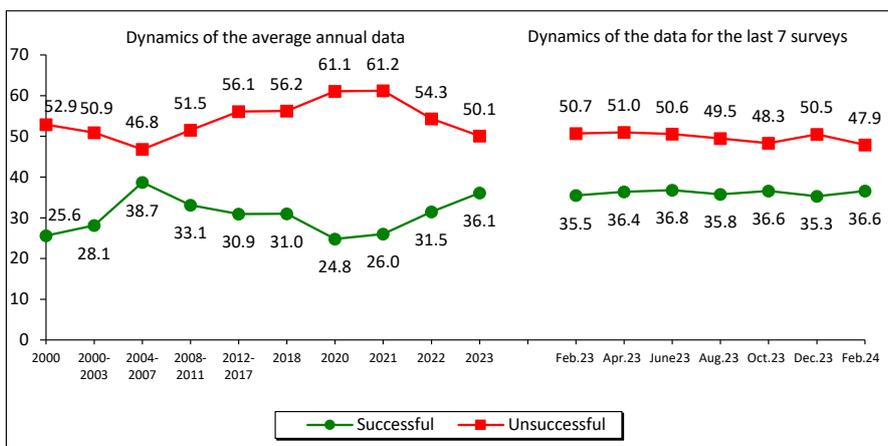


Answer option	Feb. 2023	Dec. 2023
Successful	+4	+1
Unsuccessful	-2	-2

The share of positive judgments about the President’s work to boost the economy and increase the welfare of citizens over the past two months amounted to 35–37%, while the share of negative assessments decreased by 3 percentage points (from 51 to 48%).

Compared to February 2023, the share of positive judgments did not change (36–37%), the proportion of negative assessments decreased by 3 percentage points (from 51 to 48%).

Economic recovery, increase in citizens’ welfare



Answer option	Feb. 2023	Dec. 2023
Successful	+1	+1
Unsuccessful	-3	-3

Over the past two months, the structure of political preferences of the region’s residents did not see any significant changes. The share of those whose interests are expressed by the United Russia party was 43%, the Communist Party – 9–10%, LDPR – 7%, Just Russia – 4%, New People – 1–2%.

Compared to February 2023, the share of those whose interests are expressed by the United Russia party increased by 4 percentage points (from 39 to 43%).

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. 2024 to		
	2000	2007	2011	Election to the RF State Duma 2011, fact			Election to the RF State Duma 2016, fact			Election to the RF State Duma 2020, fact			2021	2022	2023	Feb. 2023	Apr. 2023	June 2023	Aug. 2023	Oct. 2023	Dec. 2023	Feb. 2024	Feb. 2023
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	39.5	39.1	37.6	39.3	39.0	40.3	41.7	42.7	+4	+2	
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	9.6	9.5	9.3	9.5	9.8	9.8	9.8	9.8	9.0	-1	-1
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	7.0	5.9	6.9	6.7	7.8	7.9	6.5	6.6	+1	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	4.4	4.6	4.7	4.7	4.5	4.5	3.5	3.6	+1	0	
New People*	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5.3	2.3	1.5	1.9	1.3	2.1	2.1	2.3	1.5	1.9	1.4	0	+1	
Other	0.9	1.8	1.9	-	2.1	0.3	-	0.7	0.5	-	0.2	0.3	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.0	0.2	0.0	0.3	0.1	0	0	
None	29.6	17.8	29.4	-	31.3	29.4	-	28.5	34.2	-	33.9	30.6	26.5	28.0	28.0	26.5	25.2	24.6	26.6	25.2	-3	-1	
I find it difficult to answer	20.3	21.2	13.2	-	11.7	12.0	-	11.2	11.1	-	10.0	10.1	11.1	11.4	11.4	11.4	11.2	11.4	9.9	11.4	0	+2	

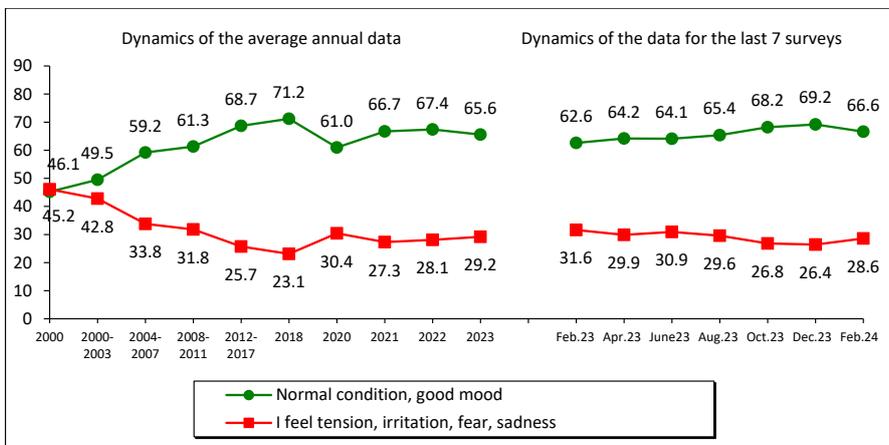
* The New People party was elected to the State Duma of the Russian Federation for the first time following the results of the election held on September 17–19, 2021.

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

In December 2023 – February 2024, the share of the region’s residents who characterize their mood as “normal, fine” decreased slightly (by 2 percentage points, from 69 to 67%). The proportion of negative judgments increased by 3 percentage points (from 26 to 29%).

Nevertheless, people’s estimates are slightly better than in February 2023: the share of positive characteristics of social mood is higher by 4 percentage points (from 63 to 67%), negative – lower by 3 percentage points (from 32 to 29%).

Social mood

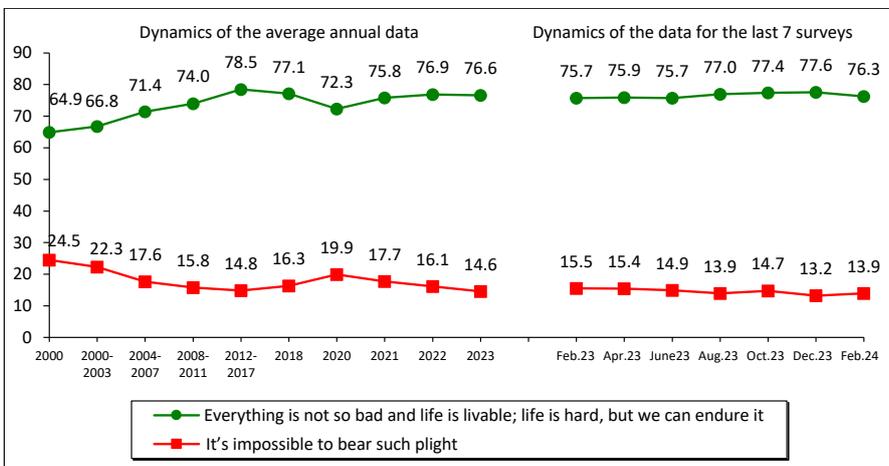


Dynamics (+/-), February 2024 to		
Answer option	Feb. 2023	Dec. 2023
Usual condition good mood	+4	-2
I feel tension, irritation, fear, sadness	-3	+2

We observe no significant changes in the estimates of the stock of patience over the past two months: the share of positive judgments is 76–77%, negative – 13–14%.

In February 2024, population estimates roughly correspond to the level of February 2023.

Stock of patience

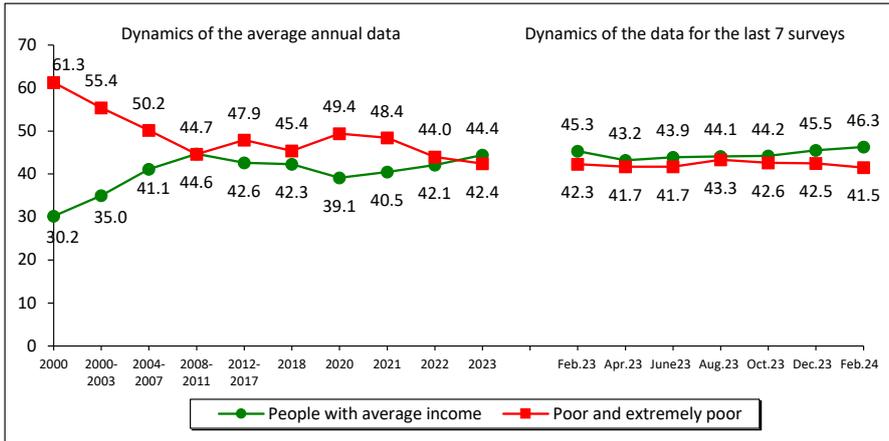


Dynamics (+/-), February 2024 to		
Answer option	Feb. 2023	Dec. 2023
Everything is not so bad and life is livable; life is hard, but we can endure it	+1	-1
It's impossible to bear such plight	-2	+1

Like in December 2023, in February 2024, the proportion of the region’s residents subjectively classifying themselves as “middle-income” people was 46%. The share of those who classify themselves as “poor and extremely poor” did not change, as well (42–43%).

We do not observe any significant changes in the estimates of the population over the past 12 months either.

Social self-identification



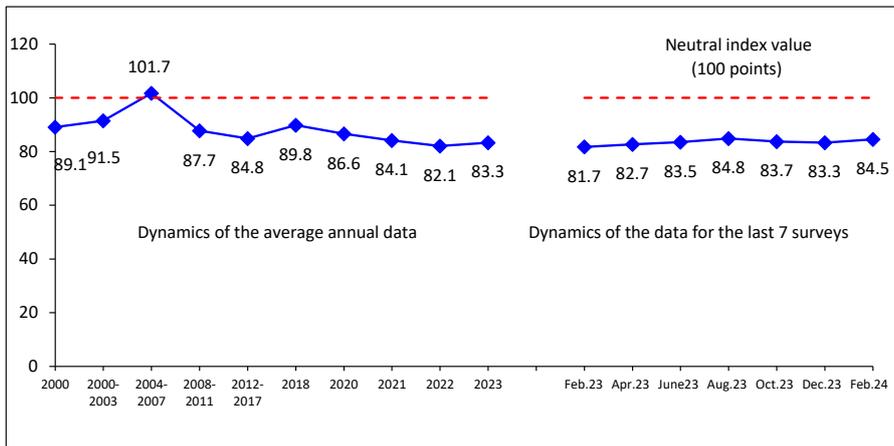
Dynamics (+/-), February 2024 to		
Answer option	Feb. 2023	Dec. 2023
People with average income	+1	+1
Poor and extremely poor	-1	-1

Wording of the question: “What category do you belong to, in your opinion?”

In the period from December 2023 to February 2024, the consumer Sentiment Index (CSI) increased by 2 points (from 83 to 85 points).

Compared with February 2023, the CSI increased by 3 percentage points (from 82 to 85 points).

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



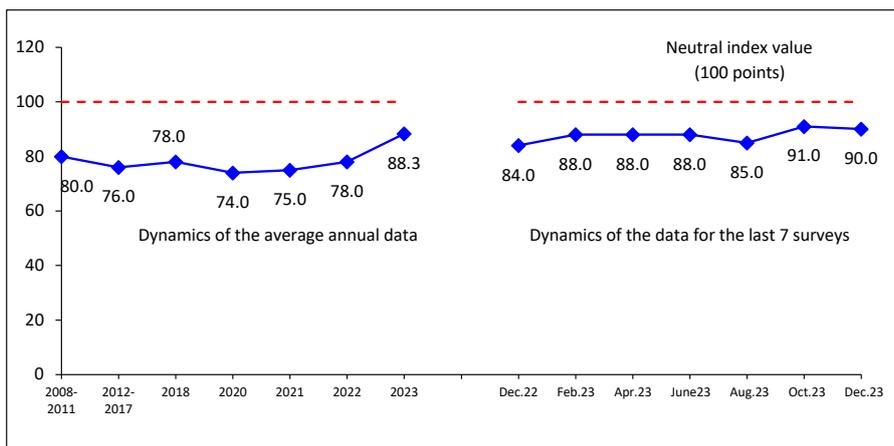
Dynamics (+/-), February 2024 to		
CSI	Feb. 2023	Dec. 2023
Index value, points	+3	+2

For reference:

According to the latest data from the all-Russian surveys conducted by Levada-Center* (for the period from October to December 2023), the Consumer Sentiment Index amounted to 90–91 points.

Tangible positive changes are observed over the past 12 months (the CSI increased by 6 points, from 84 to 90 points).

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



Dynamics (+/-), December 2023 to		
CSI	Dec. 2022	Oct. 2023
Index value, points	+6	+1

* The index is calculated since 2008.

The latest data are as of December 2023.

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

* Included in the register of foreign agents.

During the period from December 2023 to February 2024, a slight (by 2–3 percentage points) decrease in the proportion of those who experience predominantly positive emotions in everyday life was noted in all major socio-demographic groups. Among those who, according to subjective self-estimates of income, fall into the category of the middle 60%, the share of positive assessments of social mood decreased by 6 percentage points (from 73 to 67%).

However, over the past 12 months, changes in social mood in the context of the main socio-demographic groups were predominantly positive: we note positive trends in 8 out of 14 groups, in the rest of the groups, the estimates remain stable.

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

Population group	Dynamics of the average annual data									Dynamics of the data for the last 7 surveys							Dynamics (+/-), Feb.2024 to	
	2000	2007	2011	2012	2018	2020	2021	2022	2023	Feb. 2023	Apr. 2023	June 202	Aug. 2023	Oct. 2023	Dec. 2023	Feb. 2024	Feb. 2023	Dec. 2023
Sex																		
Men	50.1	65.9	64.5	69.1	72.8	60.8	65.7	66.8	65.5	62.5	65.4	63.4	65.4	66.9	69.6	66.5	+4	-3
Women	43.3	61.7	62.0	65.8	69.8	61.2	67.4	67.9	65.7	62.7	63.4	64.7	65.3	69.4	68.9	66.5	+4	-2
Age																		
Under 30	59.1	71.3	70.0	72.3	80.0	67.6	73.5	77.6	75.0	70.6	72.9	72.9	76.2	79.4	78.0	75.1	+5	-3
30–55	44.2	64.8	62.5	67.9	72.6	61.8	69.5	69.4	68.8	63.9	67.7	68.6	69.2	71.1	72.3	69.9	+6	-2
Over 55	37.4	54.8	58.3	62.1	65.2	57.4	60.5	61.1	58.2	58.1	56.9	55.4	56.3	60.5	62.0	59.2	+1	-3
Education																		
Secondary and incomplete secondary	41.7	58.4	57.4	57.2	64.8	56.1	62.1	64.6	62.0	57.2	60.2	61.6	63.2	64.4	65.5	63.9	+7	-2
Secondary vocational	46.4	64.6	63.6	66.7	72.2	63.5	66.7	68.3	66.1	63.7	65.1	63.7	65.1	70.1	69.1	66.0	+2	-3
Higher and incomplete higher	53.3	68.6	68.3	77.0	76.8	63.3	71.5	69.5	68.8	67.3	67.3	68.2	67.4	70.0	72.8	69.4	+2	-3
Income group																		
Bottom 20%	28.4	51.6	45.3	51.5	57.3	43.4	54.6	57.0	50.1	46.2	47.8	50.4	49.6	52.5	54.2	52.2	+6	-2
Middle 60%	45.5	62.9	65.3	68.7	71.9	62.6	67.3	68.1	67.4	62.2	64.4	65.7	67.9	71.0	73.1	66.9	+5	-6
Top 20%	64.6	74.9	75.3	81.1	82.9	75.6	79.9	78.3	73.9	73.8	78.2	72.1	70.3	73.2	75.9	74.4	+1	-2
Territory																		
Vologda	49.2	63.1	67.1	73.6	71.0	60.9	60.3	59.8	59.6	54.5	56.0	57.8	60.8	63.8	64.8	62.5	+8	-2
Cherepovets	50.8	68.1	71.2	76.2	75.8	60.4	71.0	71.2	68.1	65.9	68.4	67.9	66.4	69.4	70.6	67.2	+1	-3
Districts	42.2	61.6	57.1	59.8	68.7	61.4	67.8	69.5	67.7	65.3	66.6	65.6	67.3	70.2	70.9	68.5	+3	-2
Region	46.2	63.6	63.1	67.3	71.2	61.0	66.6	67.4	65.6	62.6	64.3	64.1	65.3	68.3	69.2	66.5	+4	-2

RESUME

According to the results of the first round of the monitoring conducted in 2024, population estimates remain generally stable at the beginning of the year. There were no significant changes in most key indicators, compared to December 2023:

- ✓ the level of approval of the President's work since October 2023 is 62–64%;
- ✓ the percentage of positive estimates of the success of the President's actions aimed at addressing key tasks also remain stable: strengthening Russia's international position – 48–51%; imposing order in the country – 46–47%; protecting democracy and strengthening citizens' freedoms – 42–43%; boosting the economy and increasing the welfare of the population – 35–36%.
- ✓ the share of those whose interests are expressed by the United Russia party is 42–43%;
- ✓ a slight decrease in the share of positive assessments of social mood over the past two months is within the margin of sampling error (+/- 2 percentage points) and has been 67–69% since October 2023;
- ✓ the proportion of the region's residents subjectively classifying themselves as “middle-income people” has been in the range of 44–46% since June 2023;
- ✓ the Consumer Sentiment Index has not change significantly since June 2023 and is 84–85 points, which, however, indicates the predominance of pessimistic forecasts of the population regarding the future of the country's economy and their personal financial situation.

Among the most notable changes at the beginning of the year, we should note a slight decrease in the proportion of those who positively characterize their daily emotional state in all major socio-demographic groups. However, these changes are insignificant and have not yet become a trend. It is quite possible that the end of the New Year days off could affect people's mood; it could also be affected by the increase in prices⁵ (which could affect the estimates of 60% of the middle-income groups); a more serious reason could consist in the growing tension in the international situation around Russia over a potential “open” conflict with NATO countries (at least this was publicly mentioned more than once at the beginning of the year by some representatives of the Western political establishment⁶, as well as a number of Russian experts⁷).

Nevertheless, in February 2024, Russian President Vladimir Putin (addressing, among other things, the entire international community in an interview with American journalist T. Carlson) openly stated that “we have no interest in Poland, Latvia or anywhere else... it goes against common sense to get involved in

⁵ According to the Vologdastat, the consumer price index in December 2023 amounted to 107.8% (compared to December 2022), and in general for 2023 – 106.1% (compared to 2022). While according to the latest data (as of November 2023), real wages in the region amounted to 103.7% (by October 2023). Source: Socio-economic situation of the Vologda Oblast in 2023: Report. Vologdastat. Vologda, 2024. Pp. 54, 76.

⁶ See, for example:

1. NATO Secretary General J. Stoltenberg (Brussels, January 26, 2024): “*If Putin wins in Ukraine, there is a real risk that he will use force again*”.

2. Head of the Norwegian Armed Forces E. Kristoffersen (interview to *Dagbladet* newspaper, January 21, 2024): “*When this war is over, no one knows what Putin's next move will be*”.

3. German Defense Minister B. Pistorius (interview to *Der Tagesspiegel* newspaper, January 19, 2024): “*We hear threats from the Kremlin almost every day... Therefore, we must take into account that Vladimir Putin may one day attack a NATO country*”.

⁷ See, for example:

1. Katasonov V. A sure sign of preparation for a great war. Available at: https://zavtra.ru/blogs/v_mire_ozhidaetsya_novaya_volna_inflyatsii_vernij_priznak_podgotovki_k_bol_shoj_vojne

2. Shurygin V. The West is not going to leave Ukraine, everything is just beginning. Available at: <https://izborsk-club.ru/25311>

some kind of global war. And a global war will bring all of humanity to the brink of destruction”⁸. He repeated the same thing during his annual Address to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation: “The West has provoked conflicts in Ukraine, the Middle East, and other regions around the world while consistently propagating falsehoods. Now they have the audacity to say that Russia harbors intentions of attacking Europe. Can you believe it? We all know that their claims are utterly baseless”⁹. Russia’s position on this issue has been announced quite openly and unambiguously, and only time will tell whether the Western political community will listen to it.

The stability of public opinion assessments, noted at the beginning of the year for most monitoring indicators, is also important in connection with the upcoming main domestic political event – the presidential election that will be held March 15–17, 2024.

On January 29, the RF Central Election Commission officially registered Vladimir Putin as a candidate for the post of head of state, and practically no expert has any doubts that following the results of the election, Vladimir Putin will retain his post as president. According to VCIOM data for February 2024, 76% of Russians plan to participate in the presidential election, while 75% of respondents are going to vote for Vladimir Putin¹⁰.

However, many experts are convinced that “Vladimir Putin’s Western opponents will not allow him to conduct a calm campaign; experts predict the possibility of “serious attempts to tamper with the process”, the preparations for these attempts began “at least a year before the start of the SMO”¹¹. In this situation, the task of further improving the effectiveness of social policy implementation remains extremely important for authorities at all levels in order to maintain the standard of living and quality of life of the general population in the continuing difficult situation in which Russia found itself after the start of the SMO.

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

⁸ Vladimir Putin’s interview to Tucker Carlson, February 9, 2024. Available at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/73411>

⁹ Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly, February 29, 2024. Available at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/73585>

¹⁰ Russian presidential election 2024: The first rating. VCIOM analytical review. February 10, 2024. Available at: <https://wciom.ru/analytical-reviews/analiticheskii-obzor/vybory-2024-reitingi-kandidatov>

¹¹ Mukhin A. External interference in the 2024 election in Russia and possible implications: Report. January 2024. 18 p.