

## Public opinion concerning the world financial and economic crisis and its consequences for Belarus \*

*Public opinion concerning feasible directions of the crisis influence on Belarus, attitudes towards the anti crisis programme and more probable consequences of the crisis, ways of reaction to the crisis, possibility of protest actions and personal participation in such events, patience index change as well as trust in social institutions and government bodies were analyzed in the representative random survey.*

*Sociological researches, financial and economic crisis, public opinion.*



**Sergey A.  
SHAVEL**

Doctor of Sociology, Professor, Head of innovations sociology department of the Institute of Sociology of the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus

Recently, the question of whether the crisis is over is actively discussed at different levels. Expectations of the population are not difficult to predict – people want to move quickly to normal life, but the views of analysts are not clear. Evaluating the situation in Belarus, some signs of positive dynamics can be identified. They are the GDP growth in the first months of this year, the revival of consumer demand, some wage increases, indexation of pensions and other social payments, the continuing low and stable rate of unemployment (about 1% of total employment), as well as the changing balance of purchase and sale of foreign currency. So, during two months in 2010 the population bought 765.5 million, and sold 933.6 million dollars. Last year everything was the opposite: in January – February the population bought 1512 million and sold 739.4 million dollars. Nevertheless, it is too early to speak of the turn, i.e. the end of the crisis. From the sociological point of view it is important to include indicators of social well-being and mood of people,

as they were revealed in August, 2009 on the results of monitoring of public opinion within the Russian and Belarusian project. For this purpose we submit the results of the study.

### *Introduction*

Modern financial and economic crisis above all is characterized by rapid distribution, unprecedented scale and the capture of all countries of the world. This lies on the surface and is available to perception based on the information broadcasted by media from the stock markets and international organizations that monitor the dynamics of world economic indicators. Regarding the internal sources, the origin of the crisis and the mechanisms of its development, aggravation, they remain latent – in any case, most analysts take the view that an accurate diagnosis will be possible only in the post-crisis period. The uncertainty is already visible in the choice of terminology, for example, when the American media for a long time instead of the word “crisis” used the euphemism “recession”. Crisis is a profound

\* Sociological data were obtained in the course of the joint Grant BRFFR monitoring economic conditions and social well-being of the population of regions of the North-West federal district of Russia and Belarus from 15.04.2009 GO9R-031.

disorganization, runaway economic processes with extremely adverse social consequences (increased unemployment, reduced incomes, increased social tension, etc.), and recession is just a slowdown or a relative decline in activity. The beginning of the current world crisis belongs to the middle of 2007, referring to the first clear signs of the collapse of mortgage lending in the USA. However, the reasons of mass non-payment mortgages are still unclear (while revenues kept or even increased), which caused a sharp fall in property prices and, consequently, the collapse of banks that lend money to purchase.

The mortgage crisis could be caused by the fact that the creditor banks in the pursuit of excess profits willingly went to the termination of mortgage contracts and even provoked it, knowing that in this case, the paid amount is not refundable to the borrower. But psychological factor was unrecorded, that is with a critical mass of forced termination a chain reaction appears which results in a panic in the mortgage market. Borrowers can see that prices, for example, of housing, fall, and perceive that previous conditions of the loan agreement as unfair. Accordingly, some of them require renegotiation, others refused to pay the old fees, undertaking litigation, and others get out of the mortgage, hoping for a more acceptable solution to their problem. This process originated long before 2007, and sociologists could identify it in advance, conducting targeted research. Mortgage ought to be slowed down even when about 20% of respondents expressed doubts about their credibility or lack of confidence in banks. But the mortgage crisis could not be predicted either economists or sociologists, because there was no such an order. Banks considered such studies as superfluous, but the state remained in the side observing liberal principle of *laissez faire* – non-interference in private affairs.

Critics of the consumer society have been arguing the dangers of overconsumption and its mythologizing. French sociologist Jean Baudrillard wrote: “We expect gross invasions

and sudden destruction which not foreseeably and obviously, as in May, 1968, will smash this white mass.”<sup>1</sup> A team of authors of the study entitled “Project “Russia” makes clear conclusion: “Easy money in the form of interest provokes the growth of consumption. Nature of the market economy applies on this, existing in a constant growth of consumption. The growing speed and volume transform a man into a sort of tube through which a flow of mostly unnecessary goods flies faster and faster. It is not clear what the maximum capacity of a man as a pipe is, but it is no doubt that it is finite. When consumer activity does not meet production, economy will collapse. Then state structure will collapse”<sup>2</sup>. As far as this conclusion is strategically right, we will know soon. The image of “a man-of-pipe” is not unambiguous, although the “syndrome of consumerism” is a real threat for susceptible individuals, and state covered by it. Unfortunately, world leaders of “G 20” (“Big Twenty”), developing measures to overcome the crisis, has not yet mentioned the need for a change of values, new approaches to the regulation of consumer behavior.

The wave of the global crisis reached Belarus in September, 2008. Strictly speaking, given the above definition, we have no crisis because there are no domestic sources. But in real life there is its influence that in everyday life is often denoted by this word.

### **1. Influence of the crisis on the living conditions of the population of Belarus**

As we can see from *table 1*, the crisis in one way or another affected most of the population.

The most common display of the crisis is called inflation. Thus, 76.4% of respondents said that they felt growth in prices for consumer goods and services. Another 11.7% of respondents acknowledged that although at the time of the survey inflation did not affect them, but it may affect in the future, and 5.1% of respondents are confident that higher prices did not

<sup>1</sup> Baudrillard J. Society of consumption. – M., 2006. – P. 245.

<sup>2</sup> Project “Russia”. – Book 3. – M., 2009. – Access mode: <http://www.irkutsk.ru/ivm/pr/>. – Access date: 17.09.2009.

Table 1. Assessments of the impact of the crisis (in % of respondents)

Have you been affected or not by the following phenomena in the current crisis?	Have you been affected by the crisis?			
	Yes, it affected	No, it did not affect, but it may affect in the future	No, it did not affect, and I think that it will not affect	No answer
Arrears in salary and social payments (pensions, allowances, grants, etc.)	16.2	38.4	34.2	11.2
Decrease (cuts) of wages and social payments	33.3	29.0	25.9	11.8
Reduction, dismissal from the company, which you work at	9.1	30.3	39.3	21.3
Closing (suspension) of an enterprise, which you work at	4.2	26.8	45.5	23.4
Depreciation of ruble savings	30.6	25.9	27.2	16.1
Increase in prices of consumer goods and services	76.4	11.7	5.1	6.8

affect them and will not affect in the future. For a comparative analysis it is useful to introduce an index of significance of impact of inflation, calculated by the formula:

$$I_s = A - B,$$

where

$A$  – a number of answers “Yes, affected”

$B$  – a number of answers “Did not affect, and it will not affect”.

The average for the sample  $I_s = 73.3$  percentage points, less than the average is in the Brest (57.6) and Mogilev (59.3) oblasts, more is in the Gomel oblast (85.2 percentage points) (tab. 2).

Note that these deviations are statistically significant. Thus, the difference between the Gomel oblast, on the one hand, and the Brest and Mogilev oblasts – on the other hand, is, respectively, 28.2 and 26.3 percentage points, which can not be due to random errors. To explain the additional interviews were conducted with those who expressed confidence that rising prices did not affect and will not affect in the future. Every 20-th of the interviewees gave such an answer: a total of 106 people, including

57 women and 49 men, 63 – citizens, 43 – villagers, 33 – under 30 years old, 35 – average age 38 – older age, 68 – with general secondary education and below, 24 – with specialized secondary education, 13 – with higher education. The respondents identified the following reasons for such confidence:

- firstly, the presence of PSP (personal subsidiary plot) (their own or their relatives in the countryside), which gives a measure of independence from the food market, moreover, makes the growth of prices profitable;
- secondly, private enterprise in the field of crafts, manufacturing for sale of certain products, sewing, knitting, coopering;
- thirdly, the additional earnings, rising with the growth of prices;
- fourthly, reliance of small part of students and pupils on parental support.

Thus, it is more or less number of represented categories that explains the difference in responses within regions. For example, in the Gomel oblast only 0.8% are confident that prices will not affect them, whereas in the Brest oblast there are 11.7%.

Table 2. Assessment of the population of inflation effects (in % of respondents)

Have you been affected or not by the growth of prices in the current crisis?	Total	Brest oblast	Vitebsk oblast	Gomel oblast	Grodno oblast	Minsk	Minsk oblast	Mogilev oblast
No answer	6.8	3.1	6.5	6.6	2.8	11.8	4.2	11.9
Yes, affected	76.4	69.3	78.1	86.0	81.4	75.6	78.3	65.1
No, it have not affected, but it may affect in the future	11.7	15.9	12.7	6.6	12.2	8.5	10.6	17.2
No, it have not affected, and I think that it will not affect	5.1	11.7	2.7	0.8	3.7	4.1	6.9	5.8
Index of significance	73.3	57.6	75.4	85.2	77.7	71.5	71.4	59.3

A third of respondents admitted that they had been affected by the crisis-related decrease (cuts) of wages and social payments, almost as many – 26% – expressed confidence that this will not affect them (*tab. 3*).

This means, that wages at some enterprises decreased due to the forced part-time work. As for social payments (pensions, allowances, grants, etc.), as it is known, they did not reduce and even increased in nominal, but the people evaluate their real purchasing power declined due to price increases, including children's range and back-to-school goods. The highest index of significance is in Minsk (28.2 percentage points), showing that the number of those who were affected by decrease of wages and social payments is 2.6 times higher than the number of those who were not affected and in their opinion, will not be affected. The Brest and Vitebsk oblasts show a different picture: a number of people who trust in their own security is more than the victims of the crisis.

Despite the fact that there had been the devaluation of ruble a number of people who acknowledge themselves as affected by the devaluation of savings was only 30,6%, while 27.2% are confident that this will not happen with them, and 25.9% admit such a possibility in the future (*tab. 4*).

These data draw the following conclusion: devaluation provoked by the crisis, of course, affected the interests of depositors, but it did not cause panic and massive outflow of savings and shake faith in the credibility of the banking system as well, that is evidenced by the continuing growth of ruble deposits. First of all the banks of the country posted the statement of the President of Belarus on guarantees of deposits and the appeal of the National Bank with an explanation of the situation which favored to this. Nevertheless, it is necessary to take into account a significant difference in sentiments of people on this issue. In Minsk ( $I_s = 21.1$ ) and Grodno ( $I_s = 21.0$  percentage points) concerns on the persistence of savings is much higher than the national average ( $I_s = 3.4$  percentage points), and on the contrary confidence is higher in Brest, Minsk and Mogilev oblasts.

Arrears in salary and social payments affected at the time of the survey 16.2% of the respondents. This can be attributed to serious signs of crisis in that period, especially given the fact that the system of payments in the second half of 1990-s worked flawlessly, and people used to it.

Not by chance, 34.2% expressed confidence that the problem did not affect them and will not affect. However, 38.4% admit that this can happen with them in the future. Referring to

Table 3. Decrease (cuts) of wages and social payments (in % of respondents)

Have you been affected or not by the decrease (cuts) of wages and social payments in the current crisis?	Total	Brest oblast	Vitebsk oblast	Gomel oblast	Grodno oblast	Minsk	Minsk oblast	Mogilev oblast
No answer	11.8	5.0	9.6	14.4	7.0	14.3	15.1	16.4
Yes, affected	33.3	29.7	18.6	38.7	37.7	45.4	33.9	25.5
No, it have not affected, but it may affect in the future	29.0	28.8	42.7	21.6	35.2	23.1	22.1	33.8
No, it have not affected, and I think that it will not affect	25.9	36.5	29.1	25.3	20.2	17.2	29.0	24.2
Index of significance	7.4	-6.8	-10.5	13.4	7.5	28.2	4.9	1.3

Table 4. The depreciation of ruble savings (in % of respondents)

Have you been affected or not by the depreciation of ruble savings in the current crisis?	Total	Brest oblast	Vitebsk oblast	Gomel oblast	Grodno oblast	Minsk	Minsk oblast	Mogilev oblast
No answer	16.3	9.4	14.8	17.0	14.3	20.3	17.2	20.2
Yes, affected	30.6	25.7	33.2	29.8	40.5	39.3	26.6	18.2
No, it have not affected, but it may affect in the future	25.5	24.4	23.6	24.5	25.7	22.2	25.4	37.9
No, it have not affected, and I think that it will not affect	27.2	40.6	28.4	28.7	19.5	18.2	30.8	23.8
Index of significance	3.4	-14.9	4.8	1.1	21.0	21.1	-4.2	-5.6

table 5, we see that in Minsk the arrears in payments are 25%, and 20% in the Minsk oblast. Note that if the national average proportion of those who are convinced that this will not happen is 34.2%, in Minsk this proportion is only 25%. At the same time, in the Vitebsk oblast the arrears in payments were noted only by 8.0%, in the Grodno oblast – 9.6%, in the Mogilev oblast – 12%.

Reduction, dismissal from enterprises called 9.1% of the respondents (tab. 6). Of course, this figure is overstated because some respondents had in mind not only the termination of the contract, i.e. the actual firing, but also so-called forced time off, reducing the work week, etc. But, of course, they are very unfavorable consequences of the crisis to human health and workforce, they disrupt the rhythm of life, reduce the financial security of families, negatively affect people's mood. However, the social orientation of the economy is a term that not everyone can understand, but it has quietly entered the popular consciousness

and it became apparent in the fact that nearly 40% of all respondents, and among workers (without a sample of retirees, students, housewives) more than 70% expressed confidence that reduction or dismissal do not threaten them. Such certainty about the conservation of their workplace and, consequently, social status is a decisive factor of confidence in the state, its institutions and authorities, guarantee of the stability of society and a certain potential of post-crisis development. Comparison of the regions (see table 6) shows that the most favorable situation for the respondents in the Vitebsk oblast is only 3.1% of those who were dismissed; the situation is worse in Minsk – 12.4%, in all other regions is at the national average .

Closing (suspension) of companies in the crisis affected only 4.1% of the respondents, while 45.5% of all respondents (85% of employees) do not allow the thought that this could happen in their workforces (tab. 7).

This once again confirms the previous conclusion. A little more this issue concerned

Table 5. Arrears in salary and social payments (pensions, allowances, grants, etc.) (in % of respondents)

Have you been affected or not by arrears in salary and social payments (pensions, allowances, grants, etc.) in the current crisis?	Total	Brest oblast	Vitebsk oblast	Gomel oblast	Grodno oblast	Minsk	Minsk oblast	Mogilev oblast
No answer	11.2	5.6	10.0	15.5	8.1	13.3	9.0	16.8
Yes, affected	16.2	17.2	8.0	17.2	9.6	25.0	20.3	12.0
No, it did not affect, but it may affect in the future	38.4	35.2	46.2	31.7	51.1	36.7	33.5	37.7
No, it did not affect, and I think that it will not affect	34.2	42.1	35.8	35.6	31.1	25.0	37.1	33.4

Table 6. Reduction, dismissal from the company, which you work at (in % of respondents)

Have you been affected or not by reduction, dismissal from the company, which you work at in the current crisis?	Total	Brest oblast	Vitebsk oblast	Gomel oblast	Grodno oblast	Minsk	Minsk oblast	Mogilev oblast
No answer	21.3	14.3	15.0	26.5	17.9	23.4	25.2	25.4
Yes, affected	9.1	10.1	3.1	10.0	10.3	12.4	8.6	8.5
No, it did not affect, but it may affect in the future	30.3	29.	37.4	25.5	37.4	9.5	23.0	33.0
No, it did not affect, and I think that it will not affect	39.3	46.3	44.5	38.0	34.5	34.7	43.3	33.0

Table 7. Closing (suspension) of an enterprise which you work at (in% of respondents)

Have you been affected or not by closing (suspension) of the enterprise which you work at in the current crisis?	Total	Brest oblast	Vitebsk oblast	Gomel oblast	Grodno oblast	Minsk	Minsk oblast	Mogilev oblast
No answer	23.4	16.1	16.4	30.8	19.6	25.9	26.7	26.8
Yes, affected	4.2	4.0	1.3	2.4	5.9	3.5	6.2	7.2
No, it did not affect, but it may affect in the future	26.8	20.8	37.0	23.7	30.8	28.2	19.3	30.0
No, it did not affect, and I think that it will not affect	45.5	59.1	45.2	43.1	43.7	42.4	47.8	36.1

Mogilev (7.2), Minsk (6.2) and Grodno (5.9%) oblasts. In Minsk, only 3.5% faced closure or suspension of enterprises.

Table 1 shows the number of respondents who did not answer. For example, 6.8% did not answer on price increase, and 23.4% – the closure of enterprises, etc. The reasons for this may be random omissions unnoticed by the interviewers, the avoidance by respondents of certain issues. But mostly “no answers” appear due to the fact that the respondent does not consider himself to the category, which the issue addressed to. For example, the respondent is currently retired and does not work, or a student, or an unemployed, or a housewife, and he does not consider that he has the right to answer questions about wages, dismissal, redundancy, etc. Note that the recalculation of the number of respondents in this case meaningless because it does not change the ratio between alternatives, i.e. the trend continues, and that was main in the analysis.

We also give comparative opinion poll in Belarus and the North-West federal district of Russia, received in the course of a joint grant (tab. 8).

As seen from table 8, in some areas the crisis has affected the population of Northwestern Federal District of Russia stronger than Belaru-

sians. 31.5% of Russians and 16.2% of Belarusians told about the arrears in salary and social payments, the decrease of wages and social payments 44.5 and 33.3% respectively, the dismissal from the company – 25.2 and 9.1%, enterprise closings – 13.2 and 4.2%, the increase in prices of consumer goods and services – 84.4 and 76.4%. Russians were less affected by depreciation of ruble savings – 27.9%, in Belarus – 30.6%.

## 2. Public awareness about the crisis and the anti crisis program

In the first period of crisis phenomena the Belarusian society, including sociologists and others, opposed the discharge of passion, seeing it as information pressure that can lead to alarmist sentiments, create a panic on the consumer market, in savings, etc. Although Belarus has no stock exchanges, stock market, where panic usually begins or is artificially caused, however, such fears were justified. But by the time of the survey it was revealed that much needed explanatory work of the mobilization plan is not enough. The survey showed that the vast majority of the population (87.5%) has heard anything about the global financial and economic crisis which also affected Belarus (tab. 9).

Table 8. Public opinion in RB and NWFD of Russia on the impact of the crisis (in % of respondents)

Have you been affected or not by the following phenomena in the current crisis?	Have you been affected by the crisis?					
	Yes, it affected		No, it did not affect		No answer	
	RB	RF NWFD	RB	RF NWFD	RB	RF NWFD
Arrears in salary and social payments (pensions, allowances, grants, etc.)	16.2	31.5	72.6	60.5	11.2	8.0
Decrease (cuts) of wages and social payments	33.3	44.5	54.9	49.3	11.8	6.2
Reduction, dismissal from the company, which you work at	9.1	25.2	69.6	65.2	21.3	9.2
Closing (suspension) of an enterprise, which you work at	4.2	13.2	72.3	76.5	23.4	10.3
Depreciation of ruble savings	30.6	27.9	53.1	62.3	16.1	9.8
Increase in prices of consumer goods and services	76.4	84.4	16.8	12.5	6.8	3.1

Table 9. Answers to the question “Have you heard anything about the current global financial crisis which also affected Belarus?” (in % of respondents)

Have you heard anything about the current global financial crisis which also affected Belarus	Total
No answer	2.5%
Yes, I heard	87.5%
I heard nothing	2.8%
I find difficulty in replying	7.2%

58 persons said that they had heard nothing about the crisis, which can be explained by a closed way of life or the desire to seem original. In principle, this does not alter the general conclusion: the whole population of Belarus knows that the crisis has come to our country, has affected all spheres of life support and provides for each family and all the society certain threats that must be fought jointly.

The anti crisis program, implemented by the President of Belarus and the Government of the country answered the questions of how to deal – all together and everyone at his position. Unfortunately, only 6.1% of the respondents were familiar with this program. Another 49.2% know something about it (*tab. 10*).

With education increase awareness significantly increases, but also among specialists with higher education one-third admitted that is generally unfamiliar with the program. That explains why 62.7% did not answer the question “What is your attitude to the anti-crisis program?” (*tab. 11*).

18.6% of the respondents have a positive attitude to the program, negative – 2.9%, indifferent – 15.8%. Today, when the program is being implemented in many areas such as business support, search of new markets, import substitution, strengthening of financial disci-

pline and others, the need for accessible and well-reasoned information only increases, all the more discussions arise on certain issues among leading economists of the country. All that is necessary for the preservation and strengthening of trust in the society which depends on what extent social expectations of the people are taken into account and implemented. Today a new project “Post-crisis Belarus” must be put on the agenda to generalize the experience of crisis management activities, identify the points at which the crisis hit harder than others, find the causes of vulnerability of individual companies or industries.

### 3. The public attitudes to more probable consequences of the crisis for Belarus

It is known that the predictive function is not the strongest side of public opinion. It is more accustomed to rely on already available on the cumulative experience of existing phenomena, which are available to everyone, such as the question “Have you been affected by price increase?”. Public opinion runs qualitatively and constructively in the selection of empirical alternatives, value orientations, preferences, options and solutions, and much more. Penetration into the future poses a particular respondent’s on an expert’s position,

Table 10. Public awareness about the anti-crisis program, implemented by the President and the Government of the Republic of Belarus (in % of respondents)

Education	Are you familiar with the anti crisis program?			
	Yes	Know something	No	No answer
All the respondents	6.1	49.2	42.8	1.9
Elementary	2.4	31.4	64.2	2.0
Incomplete high	1.6	47.2	49.6	1.6
General secondary	6.4	50.6	40.9	2.1
Specialized secondary	7.7	51.3	39.4	1.6
Higher	10.5	54.6	32.8	2.0

Table 11. The attitude of population to the anti crisis program (in % of respondents)

What is your attitude to the anti crisis programme implemented by the President and the Government of the RB?	Total	Men	Women	Under 30 years	30 – 49 years	50 years and elder
Mostly positive	18.6	21.5	16.2	15.6	20.2	19.2
Mostly negative	2.9	4.3	1.6	3.1	3.8	1.7
Indifferent	15.8	17.4	14.4	18.4	15.3	14.5
Find difficulty in replying	62.7	56.7	67.7	62.9	60.7	64.6

which requires expertise and such seemingly incompatible qualities such as imagination and a firm sense of reality, rationality of thought and reflection as well. All of this leads to the fact that much of the interviewees when they met with such questions select the position of “no answer”. However studying public opinion on the future is reasonable and justified. It focuses all the diversity of local conditions, which are not available to narrow specialists, it operates factual information and guesses based on logic and intuition as well, including the archetypes of the collective unconscious.

With this in mind, consider the data in *table 12*.

21.6% of the respondents when asked about the most probable impact of the crisis for RB chose the first option: “Country is expecting serious economic shocks”. Strangely enough, but young people in this matter are more pessimistic than the elder generation, and men compared with women. We wish that this pessimism would acquire design-mobilizing form – at least, protect against complacency, unfounded confidence and especially from parasitical attitudes towards the family and the state.

An innovative alternative is in the second place: “the crisis will push to find new solutions in the economy”. 18.4% chose it, the differences between the categories are unimportant.

The assertion “the recession will not be long, but the economy will grow more slowly than before the crisis” is in the third place. This is the opinion of 12.4% of respondents, almost equal in all groups. Indeed, in the last 10 years the development of economy, social sphere and culture as well went at high and sustainable pace. To gain the same pace is not easy, although not so much on internal as for external reasons, such as rising energy prices, complexities of export, etc.

In the fourth place is the forecast of a period of decline, but without major disruptions – 11.2% of respondents. This can be regarded as a counterweight to those who believed that the country is expecting serious political shocks (7.0%). It is obviously that in today’s reality there is no justification for such a conclusion.

Another of the most probable consequences of the crisis is described as follows: “the crisis will force the control over financial institutions”. 9% noticed it without any group differences. Of course, increased control in the financial area is one of the main problems of the world community, especially of the highly developed countries. For Belarus, it is far less relevant, although some issues, such as subsidized housing construction loans, repayment, the proper use of budgetary funds, etc., require constant monitoring, strengthening of fiscal discipline and responsibility.

Table 12. The likely consequences of the crisis for the Republic of Belarus (in % of respondents)\*

Do you think what likely consequences of the crisis for Belarus are?	Total	Men	Women	Under 30 years	30 – 49 years	50 years and elder
Country is expecting serious economic shocks	21.6	24.8	19.0	26.8	24.4	15.1
Country is expecting serious political upheavals	7.0	8.4	5.9	8.1	7.9	5.4
Economy is expecting a long recession, but without major shocks	11.2	12.0	10.6	11.9	12.4	9.5
The recession will not be long, but the economy will grow more slowly than before the crisis	12.4	14.4	10.8	11.8	14.2	11.1
Consequences of the crisis are greatly exaggerated, the economy will develop in the same way as it did before	5.8	5.8	5.7	3.6	6.1	6.9
The crisis will push to find new solutions in the economy	18.4	16.9	19.7	18.5	20.9	15.7
The crisis will force the control over financial institutions	9.0	9.1	9.0	8.7	9.5	8.8
Find difficulty in replying	2.3	28.4	39.3	30.2	28.6	42.3

\* Total > 100 because a set of two or more options were permitted.



The idea that the effects of the crisis are greatly exaggerated, and the economy will grow as well as before, did not find appreciable support – only 5.8% spoke about it. At first sight, this position may seem optimistic, but in fact – it is pseudoptimism, unrealistic naive energizing that can only make the elements of disorganization and demotivation when high-discipline and responsibility are needed.

As noted above, almost one third (32.3%) found difficulty in replying. But if men are 28.4%, women are 39.3%; the average age is 28.6%, young people are 30.2%, and elder – 42.3%. That is why forecasting methods involve multiple procedures with the provision of results in the previous stages and the exclusion of incompetent experts. But our task is not to obtain quantitative assessment of options but in identifying the mood of the population of Belarus concerning the possible effects of the crisis for our country. We believe that these data indicate the predominance of constructability and realism in public opinion. Calming mood (“everything will be as it was before”) and apocalyptic one – waiting for political upheaval are much less noticeable.

We pay attention to the fact that recently in the media, especially Russian, journalists, politicians, businessmen increasingly praise the crisis: “If there had never been a crisis, I would not have succeeded, “we would not have done that, “we would have never thought of it” – such statements increase. Perhaps this is a belated reaction to the events in Pikalevo and elsewhere, but it is not very appropriate. Whatever was said by individual analysts, the crisis is objectively by its nature is a phenomenon with a predominance of negative modality, and the fact it may encourage in some cases to positive

changes – but at what price – does not change its nature. Most of the population of Belarus considers the crisis as a natural disaster. The data presented in table 13 shows that 55% respondents believe that the crisis has a negative effect on the economy, while 13.3% of them predict the unconditional negative impact, and another 41.7% – rather negative. At the same time, 5.1% admit the possibility of positive results of the crisis on the economy, including 1.6% who firmly believe in this, and 3.9% are more likely yes than no. The fact that there are people, may be they are few, who see the positive in this difficult situation – on their jobs, in the workforce, small business, etc, is very important for capacity of building of post-crisis development. Perhaps at such sites innovative points of growth will appear. We can only state the results of the survey that they exist, – as the people themselves consider. Local authorities should pay special attention to them as possible to support and help to gain perspective.

To a similar question concerning the welfare of the family, only 2.4% of respondents said that the crisis will be positive. Much more respondents than in the previous question expect a negative impact – 60.2%. Every 11<sup>th</sup> of the respondents believe that the crisis will not affect welfare of the family. Although this figure is relatively small it points to the existence of a certain safety margin of households. In general, there is also a realistic approach, the lack of “zigzagging” in the extreme. Note that, again, a third of respondents did not answer, and it is typical for future issues.

To the question: “How has your family’s financial situation changed compared to the previous year?”, the following answers were received (*tab. 14*).

Table 13. Public forecast of the crisis impact on the economy and welfare of the family (in % of respondents)

Answer	Do you think the crisis will affect the state:	
	economy of Belarus	welfare of your family
Positively	1.6	0.9
Rather positively	3.5	1.5
Will not affect	5.9	9.1
Rather negatively	41.7	46.9
Utterly negative	13.3	13.3
Find difficulty in replying	33.9	28.3

9.3% acknowledged that the situation had improved, unchanged – 24.0%, worsened a little – 40.3%, significantly worsened – 16.0%. The data by age categories showed significantly greater improvement with young people (14.2%), compared with the middle age – 9.9% and the elder one – 5.4%. The positive side is the fact that the elder age group more than the average in the sample admitted that their financial situation has not changed (30.4%) and fewer of those who noted a significant worsening – 13.0%. In the North-West federal district of Russia 1.1% noted the improvement of material conditions, 29.2% – has not changed, 61.7% – has worsened.

To assess the psychological aspect of this process, we present comparative data of monitoring in 2002 and 2005 of the Institute of Sociology of NAS of Belarus (*tab. 15*).

In previous years along with the economic growth the material situation of the population raises. Comparing the data in 2002 and 2005, we note the trend of growth: the number of positive responses increased from 18.7 to 27.3%, negative – decreased from 39.8 to 21.1%. In 2005 only 5.3% acknowledged the significant deterioration of their financial position, at the same time 72.7% estimated financial position as good and average. Today, this trend was broken.

Certainly, the decrease of existing levels causes psychological pain, even if funds are sufficient to maintain their traditional way of life.

#### 4. Ways of reaction to the crisis at the individual level

Now we consider how the respondents intend to act in such a situation. Table 16 presents the answers to the question: “If your (your family’s) material conditions worsened or worsens, what do you plan to do?”

The majority (59.3%) first of all consider the possibility of reducing costs, economical housekeeping, excluding not obligatory and less important costs for the family or its individual members. Women (65.4%) and elder generation (66.6%) are ready to meet such a plan actively. At the same time, men, young and middle-aged people are prepared to pay more attention to searching for additional sources of income. Thus, if the average for the sample 47.9% of respondents plan to seek additional sources of income, among men there are 55.4%, women – 41.4%; youth – 60.3%, the average age – 58.7% and elder – 25.2%.

Every tenth is ready to rely on – and, therefore, expects – to be cared for by other family members, relatives, and among them there are women (more than the others) – 12.1%, youth – 10.8% and pensioners – 11.2%.

Table 14. Changing of the material conditions of a family compared to the previous year (% of respondents)

How have your family's material conditions changed compared to the previous year?	Total		RB		
	NWFD RF	RB	Under 30 years	30 – 49 years	50 years and elder
Have improved substantially	-	1.5	2.7	1.7	0.5
Have improved a little	1.1	7.8	11.5	8.2	4.9
Have not changed	29.2	24.0	19.2	21.2	30.4
Have worsened a little	41.7	40.3	39.5	40.1	41.2
Have worsened substantially	20.0	16.0	13.3	20.7	13.0
Find difficulty in replying	8.0	10.3	13.8	8.1	10.1

Table 15. Comparative data on the dynamics of the material conditions of the population of Belarus (in % of respondents)

How have your family's material conditions changed compared with the previous year?	Year of 2002	Year of 2005	Year of 2009
Have improved substantially	1.9	3.2	1.5
Have improved a little	16.8	24.1	7.8
Have not changed	44.9	46.8	24.0
Have worsened a little	26.3	15.8	40.3
Have worsened substantially	13.5	5.3	16.0
Find difficulty in replying	6.5	4.6	10.3

Table 16. Ways of reaction to the crisis at the individual level (in % of respondents)

If your (your family's) material conditions worsened or worsens, what do you plan to do first of all?	Total		RB				
	NWFD RF	RB	Men	Women	Under 30 years	30 – 49 years	50 years and elder
No answer	11.3	3.0					
Try to find additional sources of revenue	53.4	47.9	55.4	41.4	60.3	61.0	25.2
Reduce costs, will economize	28.4	59.4	52.1	65.4	50.1	58.7	66.6
Depend on the care of other family members, relatives	6.1	10.0	7.5	12.1	10.8	8.3	11.2
Take out a bank loan or loans from relatives, friends	2.2	5.6	4.9	6.1	6.0	6.5	4.3
Ask for a monetary support from my employer	1.4	2.1	2.9	1.5	3.0	2.1	1.5
Ask for assistance from the system of state social insurance	2.6	2.7	2.8	2.6	1.9	2.8	3.2
Spend savings	3.1	5.8	6.3	5.4	4.1	4.9	8.0
Sell a part of assets	2.7	2.9	3.3	2.6	1.4	3.6	3.3
Use my own property to get additional income	1.8	1.8	2.3	1.3	1.8	2.2	1.3
Try to get compensation for personal insurance	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.2	0.6	0.1	0.3
Pawn any valuables	1.1	1.6	1.6	1.7	0.7	2.2	1.7
Defend my rights	No	6.9	8.1	5.9	7.4	7.1	6.4

5.8% of respondents think of spending savings: youth – 4.1%, pensioners – 8.0%. 5.6% hope to obtain bank credit or loans from relatives, friends. 2.9% plan to sell some assets if it is absolutely necessary, 1.8% – to use their property for additional income. 2.7% rely on assistance from social insurance systems, 2.1% – monetary support of their employers, 0.3% – compensation for personal insurance, 1.6% of the respondents – to pledge any valuables in a pawnshop. And, finally, 6.9% intend to defend their rights. The greatest discrepancy between the Russians (the North-West federal district of Russia) and the Belarusians concerns plans of reducing costs, economizing. If this measure is in the first place for the Belarusians – 59.4%, only half of the Russians called it – 28.4%. This difference is statistically significant and substantial, but it is not easy to be explained. The archetype “Homo patiens – patient man” can be gently suggested that is more rooted in the mentality of the population of Belarus, because of the historical features of many war hard times, the post-war reconstruction challenges, as well as the traditions of the rural world, accustomed not to complain, endure hardship, etc. But perhaps it is explained by some economic safety margin of the Belarusian households, because the Russians are slightly more ready (53.4) than the Belarusians (47.9%) are to search for additional sources of income.

### 5. Possibility of protest actions and personal participation in them

Crisis deformations of life support (prices, decline in material welfare, savings and real estate depreciation, etc.) objectively lead to psychological frustration (feelings of inability to meet the needs), increasing social tensions, and threaten mass protests. Many times history reaffirmed that this development is likely to be in crisis situations. The forms of protest may be different – today, for example, farmers in Belgium, France, Germany and other countries poured millions of liters of milk to protest against the reduction of purchasing prices, which make this production unprofitable. Protest sentiments tend to arise spontaneously, but there are always forces which are ready to give them an organized form and make a profit for themselves.

What is the degree of such sentiments in Belarus? The task was impossible when studying public opinion about the crisis consequences. We pay attention to the fact that the Belarusians are steady people, avoiding excesses and so on, is generally true, but only within reasonable limits. In April, 1991, in Minsk and other cities of Belarus there were massive actions in connection with a sudden price increase. Then Gorbachev M.S. said: “I have never expected this from Belarus”.

The study showed that currently there is no such a situation. Only 6.9% of the respondents

(*tab. 17*) believe that mass demonstrations can be held against rising prices and falling living standards in their village.

The majority (50.1%) does not allow such developments, and 43.0% did not answer. Today, in comparison with 1991, the situation is fundamentally different: there is no exhausting people trade deficit, a sharp fall in real wages, confusion in thoughts, the uncertainty of the course and direction of perestroika, etc. On the contrary, the population understands that the current crisis is a temporary phenomenon, which causes have nothing to do with our conditions, and the main thing is that the state controls the situation and does its best to moderate the effects of the crisis for the people. The high indices of confidence in the President, the Government and other authorities and institutions eloquently illustrate it, the data of which will be considered separately. All this explains the relatively low level of protest sentiments in the Belarusian society – 6.9%, which is far

from the critical point (30-35%), while getting it there are self-sustaining effects due to irradiation and contamination. Meanwhile, in a regional perspective there are notable differences. Thus, if in the average of the sample only 6.9% of the respondents admit the possibility of protest mass actions relating to the consequences of the crisis, in two regions the figures are larger than average: in Minsk – 13.7%, in the Mogilev oblast – 9.6%; in the Gomel and Grodno oblasts – close to the average, and in the Vitebsk, Brest and Minsk oblasts – below the average, respectively 1.4, 4.2 and 5.4%. Thus, the difference between Minsk and the Vitebsk oblast is statistically significant, but the critical level in Minsk is not even mentioned.

It is also important to take into account the personal readiness of people to participate in protest actions. This question is answered positively only by 3.9%, and in Minsk – 3.7%, in the Grodno oblast – 5.2% of the respondents. Another 3.5% expressed situational readiness:

Table 17. The possibility of protest actions and personal involvement in them (in % of respondents)

Do you think mass demonstrations can be held against rising prices and falling living standards in your village?	Total	Brest oblast	Vitebsk oblast	Gomel oblast	Grodno oblast	Minsk	Minsk oblast	Mogilev oblast
Yes, they can	6.9	4.2	1.4	6.5	6.5	13.7	5.4	9.6%
No, they cannot	50.1	53.7	55.7	56.9	50.8	37.6	51.7	45.8%
Find difficulty in replying	43.0	42.1	42.9	36.7	42.7	48.7	42.9	44.6%
Will you participate in them?								
Yes	3.9	2.5	4.4	5.1	5.2	3.7	2.9	4.2%
Most likely, yes	3.5	2.3	1.4	3.0	4.8	4.2	4.1	4.5%
Probably no	12.1	10.6	8.8	9.7	19.8	13.6	11.3	12.0%
No	59.5	63.9	65.5	61.6	51.7	55.1	59.9	58.1%
Find difficulty in replying	21.0	20.7	20.0	20.6	24.5	23.4	21.8	21.2%

Table 18. Supposed ways of protecting the interests (in % of respondents)

Ways of protecting interests	Total	Men	Women	Under 30 years	30 – 49 years	50 years and elder
Join any party to protect my interests	1.2	1.0	1.4	2.2	1.0	0.8
Defend my interests through trade union organizations	9.6	10.7	8.7	9.6	12.5	6.7
Make the decision to move to another region of the country	3.0	4.1	2.2	5.1	3.8	0.7
Take part in meetings, demonstrations, hunger strikes	1.6	2.0	1.3	1.6	1.7	1.6
Make decision to leave Belarus for another country	7.6	10.0	5.5	12.1	9.0	2.9
Use every opportunity to defend my interests, including the extreme ones	13.5	16.5	11.0	18.9	14.4	8.8
Take nothing	51.1	43.2	57.6	35.8	44.3	68.9
Other	5.9	5.9	5.8	6.0	8.1	3.4

“Most likely admit”. The total number of people who are ready to participate in mass protest actions are 7.4%, including the Brest oblast – 4.8%, the Vitebsk oblast – 5.8%, the Gomel oblast – 8.1%, the Grodno oblast – 10.0%, the Minsk oblast – 7.0%, the Mogilev oblast – 8.7% and Minsk – 7.9%.

As we saw earlier (see tab. 16) 6.9% of the respondents expressed their intention to defend their rights under the deterioration of financial situation. What respondents mean is represented in *table 18*.

The majority (51.1%) will not do anything; 13.5% try to use every possible opportunity, including the extreme ones; 9.6% are going to react through the trade union organizations; 7.6% will leave Belarus for another country; 3.0% will move to another region of Belarus; 1.2% are ready to join a political party to protect their interests; 1.6% will take part in meetings, demonstrations, hunger strikes. The meaning of this question was as it is possible to provide a palette of moods, and to affect what might be on a subconscious level and is not submitted for public discussion. We see that the number of the means of protecting the interests is perfectly legal and realizable: to join a party, work in trade unions, leaving for another region of the country, participation in meetings, although they were supported by a small number of respondents. As for emigration and the so-called “extreme measures”, they are rather virtual options and designed to impress. The crisis has forced developed countries to tighten migration policy and reception of migrants today is severely restricted. “Extreme measures” could mean anything: from changes in lifestyle and parting with the habits, hobbies and so on up to a certain rebellion, vandalism, etc. However, these options must be taken carefully, especially because of their greater support by young people. Prevention of such sentiments among the young people must be the educational work in educational institutions and workplaces, and material assistance, support of youth initiatives, opening up of prospects for self-realization and, of course, simple communication of representatives from all levels of government with the youth as well.

The level of preparedness to participate in meetings and demonstrations is slightly higher in the Gomel and Grodno oblasts, which are associated with higher public concerns on increasing prices for consumer goods and services, as noted above (see table 2). It is reasonable for supervisory bodies to verify this information and, if it is true, to take the necessary measures.

### 6. Patience index of population of Belarus

To generalize characteristics of the state of mass consciousness the patience index is used. It is the most important integral sociological indicator of the cumulative type, reflecting the personal dispositions in terms of man’s perception of his present life situation, based on experience and in comparison with what he has and what he had and what he would like to have, taking into account his own capabilities and objective conditions. The relatively high patience index means that the existing conditions, the social order in society is rather favorable from a psychological standpoint, that allows the subject of management calmly and consistently to implement the planned course. Special attention should be given to those families who find themselves in a quandary. This refers not only to ascertain the reasons for this, but also to provide targeted support. In turn, the low patience index demonstrates a deterioration of many categories of the population, and close to the critical point – about the maturing of a revolutionary situation.

*Table 19* shows the results of monitoring of the Institute of Sociology on the issue for 2002, 2005, as well as comparative data in 2009 for Belarus and the North-West District of the Russian Federation. Note that the patience index is calculated by the formula:

$$Ip = B + (A-C)/100,$$

where

*A* – the number of responses “It’s not so bad and I can live”

*B* – the number of responses “Life is difficult, but I can tolerate”

*C* – the number of responses “I can not stand our plight any more”.

Table 19. The patience index of the population of Belarus (in % of respondents)

How do you think what of the following statements best corresponds to the situation?	2002	2005	2009	
			RB	NWFD RF
It's not so bad and I can live	29.0	47.9	28.3	25.6
Life is difficult, but I can tolerate	56.7	41.2	50.2	50.4
I can not stand our plight any more	8.7	3.0	8.3	14.9
Find difficulty in replying	5.6	7.9	13.2	10.1
The patience index	0.77	0.86	0.70	0.62

Table 20. Patience index in the regions of Belarus (in % of respondents)

How do you think what of the following statements best corresponds to the situation?	Total	Brest oblast	Vitebsk oblast	Gomel oblast	Grodno oblast	Minsk	Minsk oblast	Mogilev oblast
It's not so bad and I can live	28.3	41.6	27.6	28.3	19.0	22.7	25.8	24.6
Life is difficult, but I can tolerate	50.2	42.0	46.6	53.2	51.2	51.2	57.4	48.6
I can not stand our plight any more	8.3	4.5	13.5	9.0	13.5	7.3	4.3	7.3
Find difficulty in replying	13.2	11.9	12.3	9.5	16.3	18.7	12.5	19.5
The patience index	0.70	0.79	0.70	0.72	0.56	0.71	0.79	0.66

The patience index varies from 0 to 1. An alternative B is central to this formula, but if you stay on it, you can reach the wrong conclusion that in 2005 the patience index was less than in 2002 and remained lower in 2009. Therefore it is necessary to take into account the difference between alternatives A and C. In the polls, as a rule, there is some proportion of respondents who did not answer, i.e. dodged questions. It is impossible to determine their position, but their share should be taken into account in calculating the patience index. To do this, the denominator should be the total number of respondents, and not responding, i.e. 100%.

Table 19 shows that Ip in Belarus increased from 2002 to 2005 by 9 percentage points, but by 2009 dropped by 16 percentage points, although is still at a fairly high level. In the North-West federal district of Russia the patience index in 2009 was 0.62 percentage points, that is below 8 percentage points than in RB.

Turning to the regional data in Belarus, it should be noted that in the Mogilev and Grodno oblasts it is slightly below the national average (*tab. 20*).

The main conclusion of the analysis is that the patience index in Belarus and in the North-West federal district of Russia, despite some

differences, currently is significantly above the critical zone. This allows to hope and to be sure as well that any social upheaval will not happen that could hamper success in overcoming crisis impacts and the transition to a sustainable post-crisis development.

### **7. The confidence of the population of Belarus to the public authorities, social institutions and social structures**

The crisis is a serious challenge for the authorities, social institutions and social structures. Without the need to address complex economic, technical, technological and other issues there are psychological contradictions before them. On the one hand, to overcome the effects of the crisis the support of the public, favorable socio-psychological climate are needed, on the other – the objectively deteriorating financial situation, the inevitability of the adoption of unpopular measures endanger the growth of social tension. Successful resolution of these contradictions is possible only through the atmosphere of public trust, which was created in the pre-crisis period and is maintained during the crisis by the fact that the taken crisis management decisions are endorsed by the population. Erosion of trust hinders optimization of social relations, creates suspicion (rumors, conjectures, etc.), and dramatically increases transaction costs.

Pay attention to the fact that in the pre-crisis time, the overall level of confidence in Belarus was one of the highest. Thus, according to the European values survey (EVS), the average level of confidence in European countries amounted to 30.5%, while in Belarus – 41.9%, and in Ukraine – 27.2%, Lithuania – 24.9%, Russia – 23.7%, Poland – 18.9%. It is noteworthy that the “Eurobarometer” (sociological service of the EU) refused to cooperate with the Institute of Sociology because of its public status and conducted surveys in the Republic of Belarus on its own.

In the present study people’s trust in each other has not been studied, since task was to measure the level of institutional trust, i.e. public confidence in authorities, public entities and institutions. For the first time the Belarusian science is included in the list of institutions, but the army and church are excluded, that traditionally occupied the highest places in all previous monitoring studies. *Table 21* shows

the results of the survey. The calculating of confidence index was produced by the formula:

$$Ic = (A-B)/100,$$

where

*A* – the number of replies “Yes, I trust”;

*B* – the number of replies “No, I do not trust”.

In cases where *A* is less than *B*, the index is specified with the sign “-”.

The President of the country has a high index of confidence: 65.2% of the respondents expressed confidence, and only 12.9% – mistrust. The Belarusian science is in the second place – 50.9 and 8.4% respectively. In the third place – the system of education: 55.2 and 13.2%. In general, the group with high ratings can include those authorities, institutions and social structures which index of confidence is more than 0.28. This group also include: Council of Ministers of Belarus – 47.9% of the respondents expressed confidence in it, and 16.0% – mistrust; the National Assembly

Table 21. Public trust to the public structures and authorities

№	The institutions of government and social structures	Do you trust?				
		I trust	I do not trust	Find diff. in replying	Index	Rating
1.	President of Belarus	65.2	12.9	21.9	0.53	1
2.	Council of Ministers of Belarus	47.9	16.0	36.1	0.32	4
3.	National Assembly of Belarus	44.6	15.1	40.3	0.29	6
4.	Local authorities	43.3	25.9	30.8	0.17	13
5.	Administration of your enterprise	42.4	16.8	40.8	0.25	9
6.	Official trade unions	31.4	22.6	46.0	0.08	16
7.	Independent trade unions	20.7	23.6	55.7	-0.03	18
8.	Constitutional Court	44.0	13.6	42.4	0.31	5
9.	State mass media	36.4	27.2	36.4	0.09	15
10.	Independent mass media	22.5	30.4	47.1	-0.08	19
11.	State Securities	45.6	16.9	37.5	0.28	7
12.	Police	46.9	26.7	26.4	0.20	11
13.	Court authorities	45.8	20.2	34.0	0.26	8
14.	Tax authorities	38.1	19.4	42.5	0.19	12
15.	Political parties, movements	12.5	32.5	55.0	-0.20	21
16.	Opposition	8.8	43.1	48.1	-0.34	22
17.	Representative offices of foreign organizations, funds in RB	14.0	25.6	60.4	-0.12	20
18.	Banks	37.9	25.5	36.6	0.12	14
19.	Entrepreneurs, private businesses	30.6	25.9	43.5	0.05	17
20.	Health system	48.5	24.4	27.1	0.24	10
21.	Education system	55.2	13.2	31.6	0.42	3
22.	Belarusian Science	50.9	8.4	40.7	0.43	2

of Belarus – 44.6 and 15.1%; the State Securities – 45.6 and 16.9%. The second group, with an average index of confidence, included: the Court authorities – 45.8 and 20.2%; administration of the company – 42.4 and 24.4%; health system – 48.5 and 24.4%; police – 46.9 and 26.7%; tax authorities – 38.1 and 19.4%; local authorities – 43.3 and 25.9%; banks – 37.9 and 25.5%; state mass media – 36.4 and 27.2%, the official trade unions – 31.4 and 22.6%.

The third group, with the confidence index of close to “0” or negative, consisted of the following structures: entrepreneurs, private business – 30.6 and 25.9%; independent trade unions – 20.7 and 23.6%; independent mass media – 22.5 and 30.4%, representative offices of foreign organizations and founds in the Republic of Belarus – 14.0 and 20.6%, political parties, movements – 12.5 and 32.5%; opposition – 8.8 and 43.1%.

Thus, the number of institutions and social structures have lost confidence index due to the relatively large number of respondents expressing their distrust. These include: health system, police, banks, local authorities, official trade unions, the state mass media, tax authorities, entrepreneurs and private business. This means that they can raise the index of confidence at

the expense of those who today, for now, dissatisfied with their work. As for foreign representatives in Belarus and the political parties, in respect to them, apparently, there are some old stereotypes. Currently, many of these structures have considerably changed and earn more confidence.

For comparison, consider the results of the survey of Russian sociologists in the Northwest federal district of Russia (*tab. 22*).

We stipulate that these data can not be considered representative for the whole country, at least in relation to those institutions that operate in the regions. In analytical terms, we note, firstly, a marked separation of the first three places – the RF President, the RF Government and the Church – from the fourth and subsequent ones. In Belarus, such a situation was observed in the 90-ies. But now the structure of institutions, including the first 10 places, is more balanced, as evidenced by indices of confidence. Secondly, there is a large number of negative indices of trust, including local authorities, police, trade unions, companies’ management and others. Perhaps this is due to the diversity of territorial sampling, representing a number of major regions, including St. Petersburg.

Table 22. Confidence indices in the North-West federal district of Russia

№	The institutions of government and social structures	Do you trust?				
		I trust	I do not trust	Find diff. in replying	Index	Rating
1	President of Russia	62.3	13.4	24.1	0.49	1
2	Government of Russia	56.0	17.3	26.7	0.39	2
3	Council of the Federation	32.4	22.0	45.6	0.10	6
4	State Duma	29.4	29.0	41.6	0.04	8
5	Local authorities	24.5	37.4	38.1	-0.13	13
6	Police	27.1	42.2	30.7	-0.15	14
7	Federal Securities	35.4	22.5	42.1	0.13	4
8	Court	33.1	30.8	36.1	0.03	10
9	Public prosecutor’s office	33.1	28.1	38.8	0.05	7
10	Trade unions	25.3	30.6	44.1	-0.05	11
11	Political parties	14.9	42.6	42.5	-0.30	17
12	Mass media	28.1	38.6	33.3	-0.10	12
13	Directors, business managers	21.2	37.9	40.9	-0.16	15
14	Bank circles, entrepreneurs	18.2	39.0	42.8	-0.19	16
15	Church	49.6	13.5	36.9	0.36	3
16	Army	37.8	27.5	34.7	0.11	5
17	Governing body of the region	30.4	30.1	39.5	0.03	9



The confidence in President of RB is above the average for the sample in the Brest, Minsk, Grodno and Vitebsk oblasts, at the average level – in the Gomel and Mogilev oblasts, slightly below the average is in Minsk.

Thus, this study helped make the following conclusions.

1. The crisis affected, – it could not touch because of its global nature and scale – the majority of the population of Belarus and Russia. For Belarus, the most sensitive to the respondents, were such manifestations of the crisis, as inflation – 76.4% suffered from increasing prices, falling real wages – 33.3%, the devaluation of the Belarusian ruble – 30.6%. For other essential items the impact of the crisis is recognized less or even negligible – arrears of wages and social payments – 16.2%, dismissal – 9.1%, plant closures – 4.2%.

2. By way of devaluation example the psychological effect of competent working with a population of the country's leadership and the National Bank can be estimated. At the request of the IMF Belarusian ruble rate was reduced by 20% against a basket of currencies – dollar, Euro, Russian ruble. In order to prevent panic and the massive outflow of savings the country's presidential statement on guarantees of deposits and circulation of the National Bank with the explanation of the situation have been posted in all banks. Therefore, devaluation does not shake faith in the banking system and the growth of ruble deposits soon continued. For comparison: in the early 1990-es a similar operation (so-called reform of Pavlov) was carried out secretly and provoked a wave of protest actions. Tens of thousands of people took part in strikes and meetings in Minsk and other cities of Belarus. That is why when Mikhail Gorbachev said: "I have never expected it from Belarus".

3. Despite the compactness of the republic, the unity of the natural conditions, the presence of total vertical of power, it was found marked regional differences in the estimates of

the effects of the crisis. They are mostly linked to two factors: a) the fact that cross-border regions (the Brest and the Grodno) earlier than others to felt the motion of the crisis from the West to the East and was better prepared for it; b) Minsk because of the concentration of the major industrial and infrastructure facilities was more vulnerable.

4. Comparative analysis of Belarusian and Russian data sets showed that in July 2009 the population of the North-West federal district of Russia was in some ways more affected by the crisis than Belarusians. Dismissals and plant closures were particularly sensitive that led to increased unemployment. But on the other hand the end of 2009 Belarus became a danger zone of overstocking and falling exports of its products. A gradual withdrawal from this area in 2010 is the main indicator of the real effects of overcoming the crisis. This problem affected less Russia due to the specifics of its exports.

5. In general, the anti crisis program of Belarus and Russia, with their substantial methodological differences, were sufficiently effective, able to compensate for the loss and prevent the slide into depression. This is evidenced, firstly, by relatively high indices of trust management in both countries, and secondly, the low level of readiness for protest actions (in Belarus – 4.6%, in Russia – 6.1%). In turn, people do not trust, more on state paternalism, seek way out themselves: extra work (in Belarus – 53.4%, in Russia – 47.9%); reducing of costs and more economical housekeeping (28.4 and 59.4% respectively).

6. A key lesson of the crisis lies in the fact that it has discovered weaknesses in the economy and social sphere, "the pointing" of which requires the modernization of production of goods and services, infrastructure and social services. To find out what the human potential and institutional capacity of the post-crisis development of Belarus and Russia, to identify it a new joint project can be carried out.