Public Opinion Monitoring of the State of the Russian Society

As in the previous issues, we publish the results of the monitoring of public opinion concerning the state of the Russian society. The monitoring is conducted by VolRC RAS in the Vologda Oblast[1].

The following tables and graphs show the dynamics of several parameters of social well-being and socio-political sentiment of the region's population according to the results of the latest round of the monitoring (October 2023) and for the period from October 2022 to October 2023 (the last seven surveys, that is, almost a year).

We compare the results of the surveys with the average annual data for 2000 (the first year of Vladimir Putin's first presidential term), 2007 (the last year of Vladimir Putin's second presidential term, when the assessment of the President's work was the highest), 2011 (the last year of Dmitry Medvedev's presidency), and 2012 (the first year of Vladimir Putin's third presidential term).

We also present the annual dynamics of the data for 2018 and for 2020−2022[2].

In August − October 2023, the share of positive assessments of the RF President's work increased slightly (by 3 percentage points, from 60 to 63%). The proportion of negative judgments did not change significantly and amounted to 21−22%[3].

Over the past 12 months (from October 2022 to October 2023, the share of positive assessments of the activities of the head of state increased by 4 percentage points (from 59 to 63%), the proportion of negative ones decreased by 3 percentage points (from 24 to 21%)[4].

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[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 Oblast's adult population. Sampling error does not exceed 3%.

More information on the results of VolRC RAS surveys is available at http://www.vscc.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.
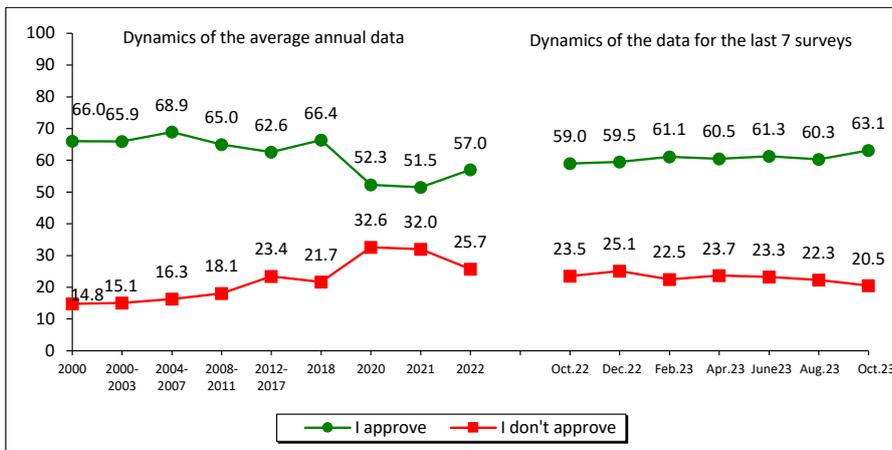
[4] Here and elsewhere in the text, the results of a comparative analysis of the data from the survey conducted in October 2023 and the results of the monitoring round conducted in October 2022 are given in the frame.

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

Answer option	Dynamics of the average annual data								Dynamics of the data for the last 7 surveys							Dynamics (+/-), Oct. 2023 to	
	2000	2007	2011	2012	2018	2020	2021	2022	Oct. 2022	Dec. 2022	Feb. 2023	Apr. 2023	June 2023	Aug. 2023	Окт. 2023	Oct. 2022	Aug. 2023
RF President																	
I approve	66.0	75.3	58.7	51.7	66.4	52.3	51.5	57.0	59.0	59.5	61.1	60.5	61.3	60.3	63.1	+4	+3
I don't approve	14.8	11.5	25.5	32.6	21.7	32.6	32.0	25.7	23.5	25.1	22.5	23.7	23.3	22.3	20.5	-3	-2
Chairman of the RF Government*																	
I approve	-*	-*	59.3	49.6	48.0	38.7	39.9	45.4	48.1	50.1	49.3	48.3	49.2	50.8	51.3	+3	+1
I don't approve	-	-	24.7	33.3	31.6	40.4	37.6	32.0	31.3	29.9	27.9	28.1	27.1	26.1	28.6	-3	+3
Vologda Oblast Governor																	
I approve	56.1	55.8	45.7	41.9	38.4	35.0	36.7	40.9	43.0	45.5	47.1	48.3	48.7	48.1	47.5	+5	-1
I don't approve	19.3	22.2	30.5	33.3	37.6	42.5	40.5	35.8	33.9	35.2	33.0	32.3	30.7	29.7	29.7	-4	0

Wording of the question: "How do you assess the current work of …?"
* Included in the survey since 2008.

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

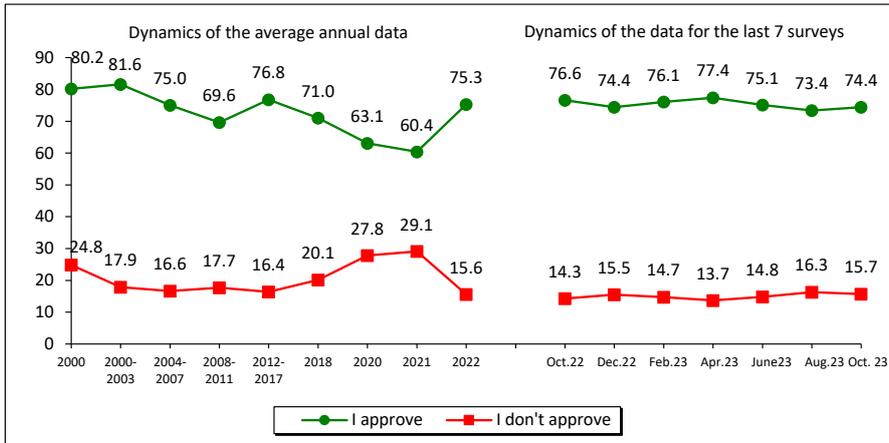| Dynamics (+/-), October 2023 to		
Answer option	Oct. 2022	Aug. 2023
I approve	+4	+3
I don't approve	-3	-2

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

For reference:

According to VCIOM, people's assessment of the RF President's work from August to the first half of October 2023 has not changed significantly: the share of positive judgments is 74%, negative − 16%.

From October 2022 to the first half of October 2023, the level of approval of the President's work decreased slightly (by 3 percentage points, from 77 to 74%); the share of negative judgments was 14−16%.

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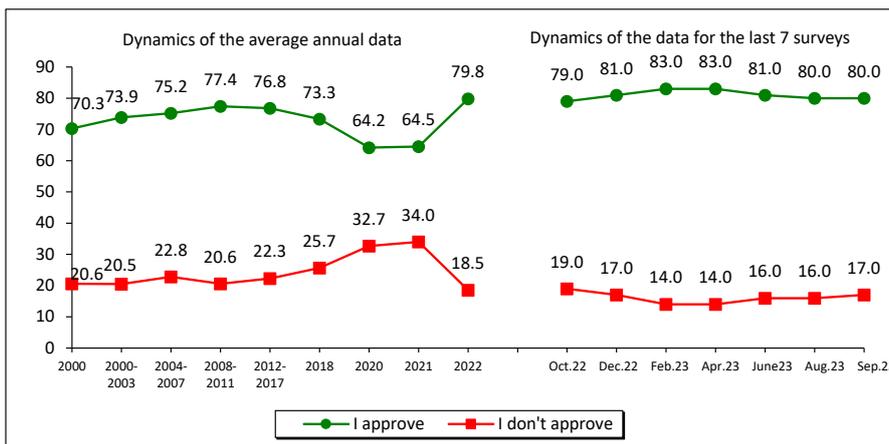**(% of respondents; VCIOM data)**

Dynamics of the average annual data

Dynamics of the data for the last 7 surveys

Dynamics (+/-), October 2023 to		
Answer option	Oct. 2022	Aug. 2023
I approve	-2	+1
I don't approve	+1	-1

Wording of the question: "In general, do you approve or not approve of the work of the President of the Russian Federation?"
Data for October 2023 represent the average for three surveys: (October 1, 2023, October 8, 2023 and October 15, 2023).
Source: VCIOM. Available at: https://wciom.ru/

According to Levada-Center, the share of positive assessments of the President's work in August −
October 2023 amounted to 80%; the proportion of negative judgments was 16−17%.*

*In the annual retrospective, there are also no significant changes: over the past 12 months, the share of
positive assessments was 79−80%, negative − 17−19%.*

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

Dynamics of the average annual data

Dynamics of the data for the last 7 surveys

Dynamics (+/-), September 2023 to		
Answer option	Oct. 2022	Aug. 2023
I approve	+1	0
I don't approve	-2	+1

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
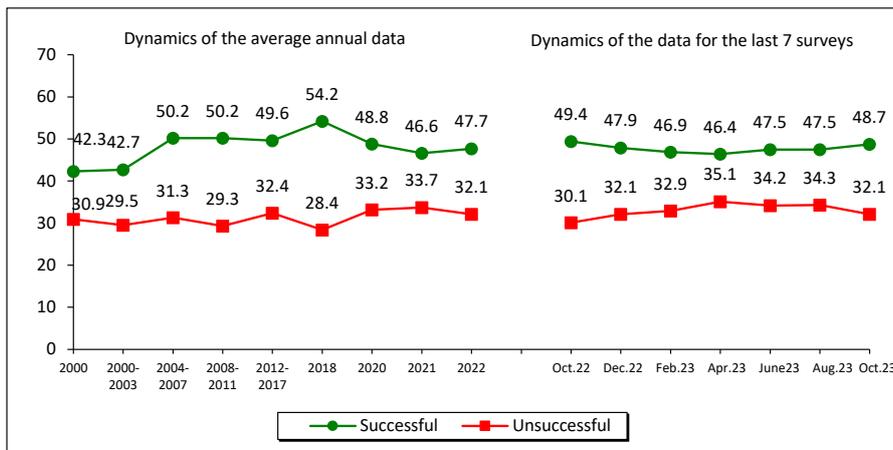
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* Included in the register of foreign agents.

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

Over the past two months, the share of those who consider the RF President's work to strengthen Russia's international position to be successful amounted to 48% (*Fig. 4*). For comparison, the proportion of those who hold to the opposite point of view is considerably smaller and remains stable as well (32−34%).

From October 2022 to October 2023, people's estimates have not changed significantly: the share of positive judgments is 49%, negative − 30−32%.

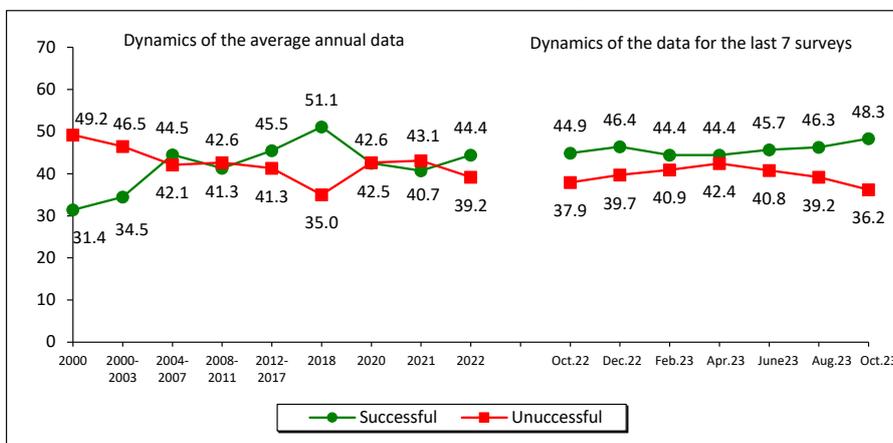Strengthening Russia's international position

Dynamics (+/-), October 2023 to		
Answer option	Oct. 2022	Aug. 2023
Successful	-1	+1
Unsuccessful	+2	-2

The share of Vologda Oblast residents who positively assess the work of the head of state aimed at restoring order in the country continues to increase: it was 46−48% in August − October 2023; however, it increased by 4 percentage points (from 44 to 48%) from April to October 2023. The proportion of negative judgments over the same period decreased by 8 percentage points (from 42 to 36%).

Over the past 12 months, the share of those who positively assess the work of the head of state to restore order in the country increased by 3 percentage points (from 45 to 48%). The proportion of negative judgments was 36−38%.
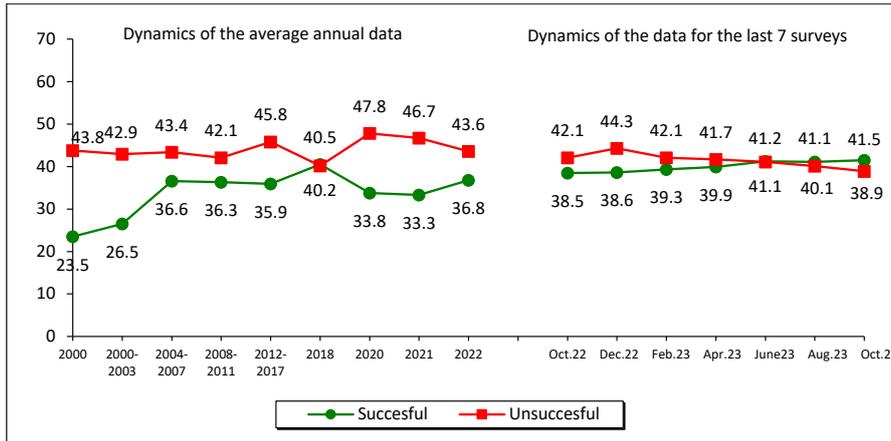
Imposing order in the country

Dynamics (+/-), October 2023 to		
Answer option	Oct. 2022	Aug. 2023
Successful	+3	+2
Unsuccessful	-2	-3

In August – October 2023, the share of positive assessments of the President's work to protect democracy and strengthen citizens' freedoms was 41%, negative – 40−39%.

Over the past 12 months, the share of positive judgments has slightly increased (by 3 percentage points, from 39 to 42%), the proportion of negative ones has decreased (by 3 percentage points, from 42 to 39%).

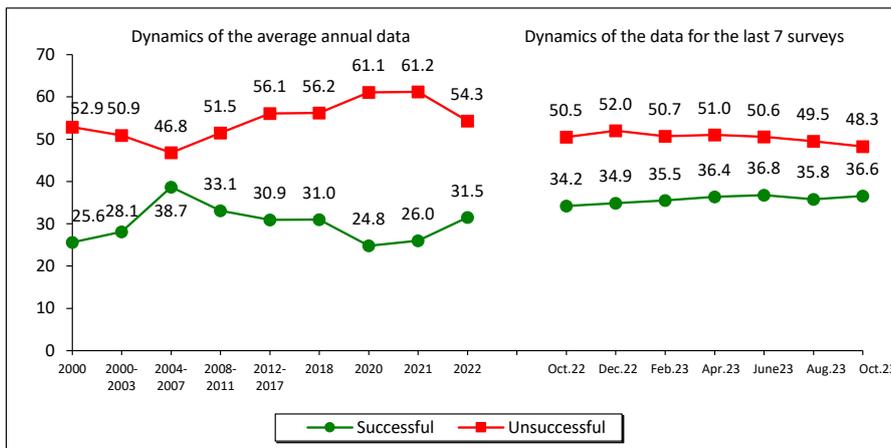### Protecting democracy and strengthening citizens' freedoms

Dynamics (+/-), October 2023 to		
Answer option	Oct. 2022	Aug. 2023
Successful	+3	0
Unsuccessful	-3	-1

The share of positive judgments about the President's work to boost the economy and increase the welfare of citizens has remained stable since February 2023 (36%). The proportion of negative characteristics remains at 48−50%.

From October 2022 to October 2023, the share of positive judgments increased by 3 percentage points (from 34 to 37%), the proportion of negative ones decreased by 3 percentage points (from 51 to 48%).

Economic recovery, increase in citizens' welfare

Dynamics (+/-), October 2023 to		
Answer option	Oct. 2022	Aug. 2023
Successful	+3	+1
Unsuccessful	-3	-1

There have been no significant changes in the structure of political preferences of Vologda Oblast residents over the past two months: in August – October 2023, the share of people whose interests are expressed by United Russia was 39–40%, the Communist Party – 10%, the Liberal Democratic Party – 8%, Just Russia – 5%, the New People – 2%.

Over the past 12 months, there has been an increase in support for the United Russia party (by 3 percentage points, from 37 to 40%), as well as a noticeable decrease in the proportion of those who believe that none of the parliamentary parties expresses their interests (by 6 percentage points, from 31 to 25%).

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

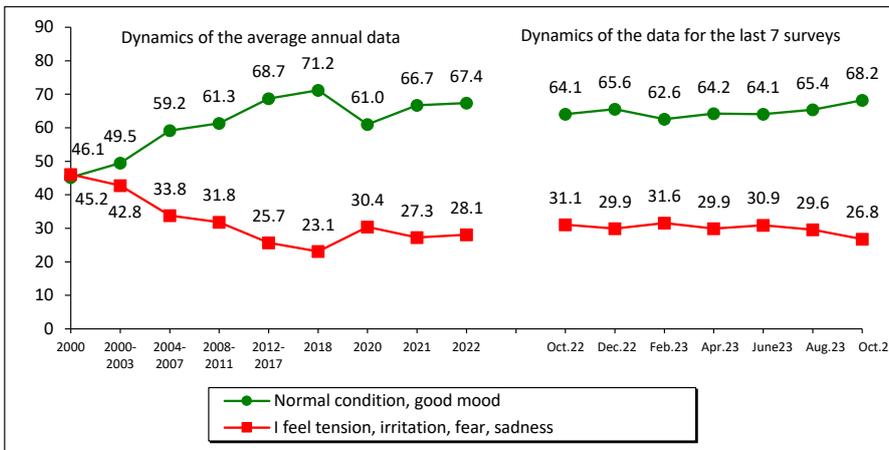| Party	Dynamics of the average annual data												Dynamics of the data for the last 7 surveys							Dynamics (+/-), Oct. 2023 to	
	2000	2007	2011	Election to the RF State Duma 2011, fact	2012	2016	Election to the RF State Duma 2016, fact	2018	2020	Election to the RF State Duma 2020, fact	2021	2022	Oct. 2022	Dec. 2022	Feb. 2023	Apr. 2023	June 2023	Aug. 2023	Oct. 2023	Oct. 2022	Aug. 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	36.7	38.3	39.1	37.6	39.3	39.0	40.3	+3	+1
KPRF	11.5	7.0	10.3	16.8	10.6	8.3	14.2	9.2	8.4	18.9	9.3	10.1	9.9	9.3	9.5	9.3	9.5	9.8	9.8	0	0
LDPR	4.8	7.5	7.8	15.4	7.8	10.4	21.9	9.6	9.5	7.6	9.9	7.3	6.0	6.3	5.9	6.9	6.7	7.8	7.9	+2	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	4.5	4.7	4.6	4.7	4.7	4.5	4.5	0	0
New People*	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	5.3	2.3	1.5	1.1	1.5	1.3	2.1	2.1	2.3	1.5	0	-1
Other	0.9	1.8	1.9	–	2.1	0.3	–	0.7	0.5	–	0.2	0.3	0.5	0.0	0.1	0.1	0.0	0.2	0.0	-1	0
None	29.6	17.8	29.4	–	31.3	29.4	–	28.5	34.2	–	33.9	30.6	30.6	29.9	28.0	28.0	26.5	25.2	24.6	-6	-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	10.8	9.9	11.4	11.4	11.4	11.2	11.4	+1	0

*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; VolRC RAS data)

In October, compared with August 2023, the share of Vologda Oblast residents who positively characterize their daily emotional state increased (by 3 p.p., from 65 to 68%). The share of negative characteristics decreased by 3 percentage points as well (from 30 to 27%).

Over the past 12 months, the proportion of people describing their daily emotional state as "normal, fine" increased by 4 percentage points (from 64 to 68%). The proportion of those who experience mainly "tension, irritation, fear, sadness" decreased by 4 percentage points as well (from 31 to 27%).
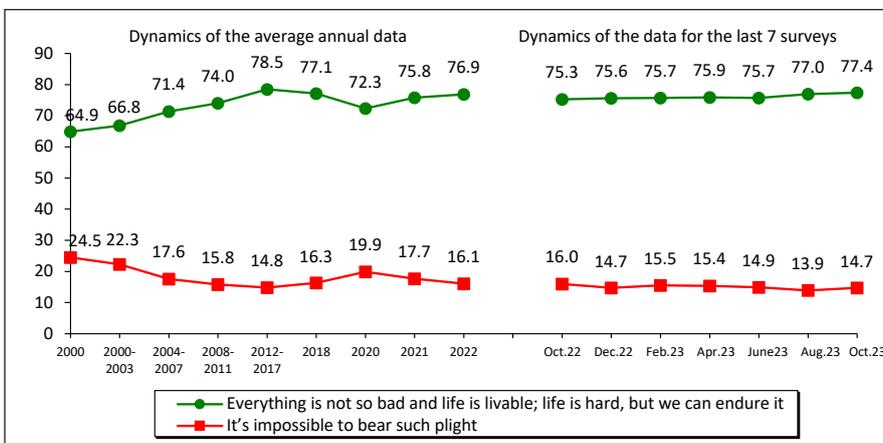
Social mood

Dynamics (+/-), October 2023 to		
Answer option	Oct. 2022	Aug. 2023
Usual condition good mood	+4	+3
I feel tension, irritation, fear, sadness	-4	-3

The stock of patience remains at a consistently high level: in August – October 2023, 77% of Vologda Oblast residents noted that "everything is not so bad and life is livable". The share of those who believe that "it's impossible to bear such plight" has also not changed and amounted to 14−15%).

From October 2022 to October 2023, the share of positive characteristics of the stock of patience was 75–77%); the proportion of negative judgments was 15−16%.

Stock of patience
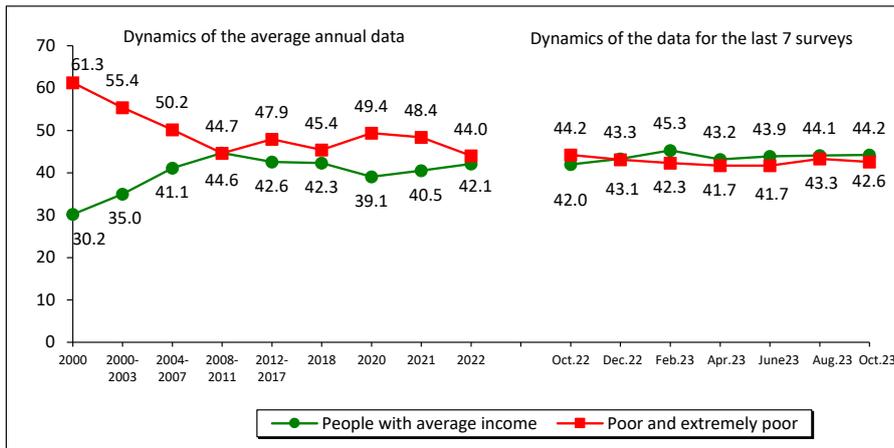

Dynamics (+/-), October 2023 to		
Answer option	Oct. 2022	Aug. 2023
Everything is not so bad and life is livable; life is hard, but we can endure it	+2	0
It's impossible to bear such plight	-1	+1

The proportion of Vologda Oblast residents subjectively classifying themselves as "poor and extremely poor" in August – October 2023 was 43%. The share of those who classify themselves as "middle-income" people was 44%.

There are also no noticeable changes in the annual dynamics. Over the past 12 months, the share of "poor and extremely poor" residents of the Vologda Oblast amounted to 42–43%, the proportion of "middle-income people" – 43–44%.

Social self-identification

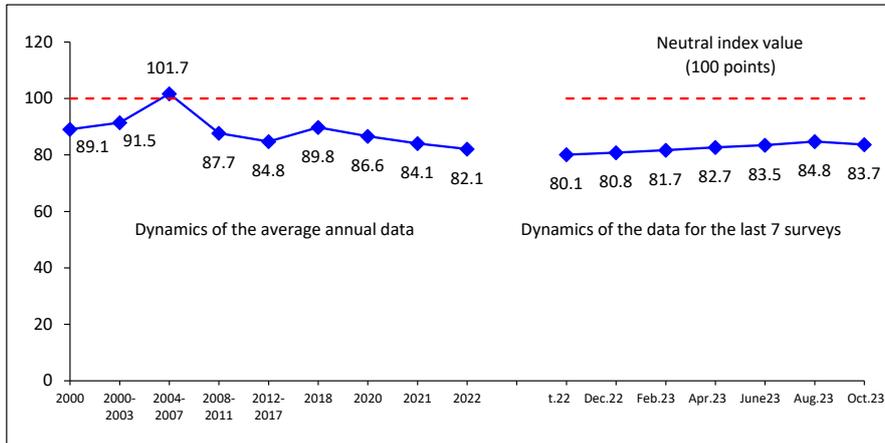| Dynamics (+/-), October 2023 to		
Answer option	Oct. 2022	Aug. 2023
People with average income	+2	0
Poor and extremely poor	-2	-1

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

Over the past two months, the Consumer Sentiment Index (CSI) did not change and amounted to 84–85 points.

Compared to October 2022, the CSI increased by 4 points (from 80 to 84 points).

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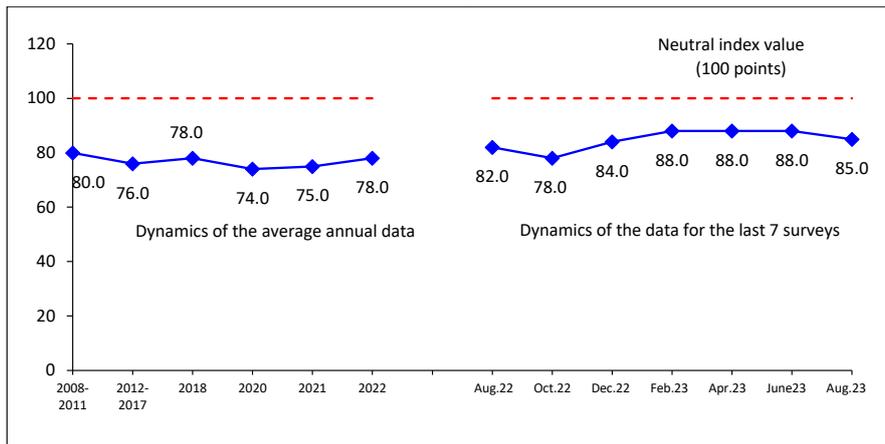(CSI, points; VolRC RAS data for the Vologda Oblast)

Dynamics (+/-), October 2023 to		
CSI	Oct. 2022	Aug. 2023
Index value, points	+4	-1

For reference:

According to the latest data from the all-Russian polls conducted by Levada-Center*, the Consumer Sentiment Index for the period from June to August 2023 decreased by 3 points (from 88 to 85 points).

From August 2022 to August 2023, positive changes are observed in the dynamics of the CSI (the index increased by 3 points, from 82 to 85 points).

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

Dynamics (+/-), August 2023 to		
CSI	Aug. 2022	June 2023
Index value, points	+3	-3

The index is calculated since 2008.

Latest data are as of August 2023.

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

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* Included in the register of foreign agents.

From August to October 2023, in most of the main socio-demographic groups (in 11 out of 14), the share of positive assessments of social mood increased by 3—5 percentage points, especially among people with secondary vocational education (from 65 to 70%) and people over 55 years of age (from 56 to 61%). Negative changes over the past two months have not been noted in any of the main socio-demographic groups.

The dynamics of public sentiment over the past 12 months (from October 2022 to October 2023), show mainly positive changes, especially among residents of Vologda (the share of positive assessments of social mood increased by 8 percentage points, from 56 to 64%). The decrease in the share of positive ratings was recorded only in one group — among people who, according to self-estimates of income, fall into the category of 20% of the most affluent residents of the region. In this group, the share of positive assessments of social mood has decreased by 6 percentage points over the past year (from 79 to 73%).

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

Population group	Dynamics of the average annual data								Dynamics of the data for the last 7 surveys							Dynamics (+/-), Oct. 2023 to	
	2000	2007	2011	2012	2018	2020	2021	2022	Oct. 2022	Dec. 2022	Feb. 2023	Apr. 2023	June 2023	Aug. 2023	Окт. 2023	Oct. 2022	Aug. 2023
Sex																	
Men	50.1	65.9	64.5	69.1	72.8	60.8	65.7	66.8	65.0	64.7	62.5	65.4	63.4	65.4	66.9	+2	+2
Women	43.3	61.7	62.0	65.8	69.8	61.2	67.4	67.9	63.3	66.5	62.7	63.4	64.7	65.3	69.4	+6	+4
Age																	
Under 30	59.1	71.3	70.0	72.3	80.0	67.6	73.5	77.6	74.5	78.7	70.6	72.9	72.9	76.2	79.4	+5	+3
30–55	44.2	64.8	62.5	67.9	72.6	61.8	69.5	69.4	65.2	68.5	63.9	67.7	68.6	69.2	71.1	+6	+2
Over 55	37.4	54.8	58.3	62.1	65.2	57.4	60.5	61.1	58.7	57.2	58.1	56.9	55.4	56.3	60.5	+2	+5
Education																	
Secondary and incomplete secondary	41.7	58.4	57.4	57.2	64.8	56.1	62.1	64.6	58.9	62.7	57.2	60.2	61.6	63.2	64.4	+6	+1
Secondary vocational	46.4	64.6	63.6	66.7	72.2	63.5	66.7	68.3	65.8	64.3	63.7	65.1	63.7	65.1	70.1	+4	+5
Higher and incomplete higher	53.3	68.6	68.3	77.0	76.8	63.3	71.5	69.5	67.5	70.6	67.3	67.3	68.2	67.4	70.0	+2	+3
Income group																	
Bottom 20%	28.4	51.6	45.3	51.5	57.3	43.4	54.6	57.0	50.7	55.4	46.2	47.8	50.4	49.6	52.5	+2	+3
Middle 60%	45.5	62.9	65.3	68.7	71.9	62.6	67.3	68.1	65.9	66.1	62.2	64.4	65.7	67.9	71.0	+5	+3
Top 20%	64.6	74.9	75.3	81.1	82.9	75.6	79.9	78.3	78.7	74.9	73.8	78.2	72.1	70.3	73.2	-6	+3
Territory																	
Vologda	49.2	63.1	67.1	73.6	71.0	60.9	60.3	59.8	55.7	57.2	54.5	56.0	57.8	60.8	63.8	+8	+3
Cherepovets	50.8	68.1	71.2	76.2	75.8	60.4	71.0	71.2	67.9	69.1	65.9	68.4	67.9	66.4	69.4	+1	+3
Districts	42.2	61.6	57.1	59.8	68.7	61.4	67.8	69.5	66.6	68.5	65.3	66.6	65.6	67.3	70.2	+4	+3
Oblast	46.2	63.6	63.1	67.3	71.2	61.0	66.6	67.4	64.1	65.7	62.6	64.3	64.1	65.3	68.3	+4	+3

RESUME

According to the results of the latest round of the monitoring conducted in the period from August to October 2023, there have been no significant changes in the dynamics of most indicators of public sentiment. At the same time, we observe positive trends in the following major monitoring parameters:

✓ first, the level of support for the RF President's work increased (by 3 percentage points, from 60 to 63%); moreover, since April 2023, there has been a steady positive trend in assessments of the success of the head of state's efforts to address all key problems of the country;

✓ second, the share of positive assessments of social mood increased (also by 3 percentage points, from 65 to 68%); moreover, this happened in the majority (in 11 out of 14) of the main socio-demographic groups.

Also, we should note that similar positive trends have been recorded according to the results of all-Russian studies. Thus, according to VCIOM, the level of approval of the RF President's work from August to the first half of October increased from 73 to 74 percentage points, and the public sentiment index increased from 65 to 69 points in August – September 2023[5].

These changes in public opinion assessments generally correlate with how successfully Russia is coping with the range of external threats to national security that it has faced since the beginning of the SMO:

✓ according to the Minister of Defense of the Russian Federation S. Shoigu, the situation on the front line "appears stable and secure"; the actions of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation inspire "confidence that they will not only hold their positions, but also continue to implement the plans we have outlined"[6];

✓ not only has the Russian economy under the sanctions pressure (as Russian President Vladimir Putin has repeatedly stressed) "overcome all the hardships of the past year, but we also achieved positive results…; its restructuring naturally began"[7];

✓ despite the desperate attempts of the Collective West to "cancel" Russia, its international ties continue to strengthen, and along with this process, the outlines of the contours of a multipolar world continue to appear more and more dynamically[8].

A clear illustration of these changes can be found, in particular, in the results of regional and municipal elections held in Russia on the Single Voting Day on September 10, 2023. As experts summed up, "the turnout has become a record-breaking over ten years – since 2013 at this level of elections, besides federal elections… All the current governors, as well as the acting ones, retained their posts. Of these, only two heads of regions were elected from the Communist Party, all the others were from United Russia"[9].

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[5] Social well-being indices. Official website of VCIOM. Available at: https://wciom.ru/ratings/indeksy-socialnogo-samochuvstvija

[6] Meeting on current issues under the RF President, October 16, 2023. Available at: http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/72510

[7] Vladimir Putin's speech at the Valdai International Discussion Club meeting, October 5, 2023. Available at: http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/72444

[8] Following the six countries that will become new BRICS members as of January 2024 (Argentina, Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates), more than 40 countries have expressed interest in joining the BRICS, of which **22 have already submitted official applications** (source: *Rossiyskaya gazeta*. September 22, 2023. Available at: https://rg.ru/2023/09/22/strategicheskij-prioritet.html).

The 3rd Belt and Road International Forum, which was held in Beijing on October 17–18, 2023, hosted **130 countries and 30 international organizations**. The Russian President was the guest of honor at this event.

[9] Pamfilova said that the turnout of 46% was record-breaking. Available at: https://www.rbc.ru/politics/13/09/2023/6501c3fe9a7947ea85beaf37

There are no significant negative trends (according to the results of the latest round of surveys) in the dynamics of public sentiment. However, we should also note that some characteristics related mainly to people's self-assessment of financial situation still remain stable and quite alarming. For example:

✓ the proportion of people subjectively classifying themselves as "poor and extremely poor" remains at a high level (43% for at least the past 12 months);

✓ the Consumer Sentiment Index (CSI) remains below 100 points (which indicates the predominance of pessimistic forecasts in terms of the development of national economy and personal well-being); and in October 2023, the CSI decreased slightly for the first time in the past 12 months (from 85 to 84 points, although it increased from 80 to 85 p. in the previous period from October 2022 to August 2023);

✓ there are certain positive changes in the assessments of the success of the head of state's efforts to boost the Russian economy and promote the welfare of citizens (there was an increase in the share of positive assessments by 3 percentage points, from 34 to 37%, over the past 12 months); however, the proportion of negative characteristics still significantly exceeds the share of positive judgments (48−50 and 35−37%, respectively).

In these conditions, there remains a need for increased attention of authorities at all levels to the implementation of measures to maintain the standard of living and quality of life of citizens. Despite the fact that the successful achievement of all the goals of the SMO and the reduction of the tension caused by external threats around Russia are still the key factors influencing the trends of public sentiment, the solution of urgent pressing social problems also plays an important role in this regard. And it is likely that its importance will increase depending on how successfully the public administration system copes with external challenges and also in the context of the upcoming 2024 major election campaign, the presidential election.

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