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Social security of Russia's population: an overview of the past years studies *

The aim of the article is to evaluate the level of social protection and to define the most acute problems and risks (threats), undermining the feeling of social security in the people of Russian regions. It is determined, that the population feels less protected due to the onset of poverty, crime and environmental threat. According to the analysis results, the type of society existing in the regions can be defined as unsatisfactory for the social activity of an individual, since the population is poorly protected from external objective risks and threats.

Feeling of social security, social danger, threat, region.



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Social security is a multidimensional concept. In juridical sciences, the social security of an individual, is understood as legal, as well as political, economic and institutional activities aimed at protection of human rights. In economics this concept is closely related to social protection, i.e. the state or society concern over citizens seeking help due to their social position, health status, age, insufficient means of subsistence [1]. Accounting of the objective and subjective indicators is the key approach in sociological surveys. The objective aspect of social security is defined as economic

integrity of the state, the level of citizens' rights protection, the quality of life, social guarantees, etc. Subjectively, social security is the feeling, determined by the psychological state of an individual while assessing the degree of social vulnerability.

A significant number of works by Russian scientists is dedicated to the research on social protection of population. Psychological safety factors of an individual and issues on psychological security are discussed in the works of A.V. Koteneva [6], G.V. Grachev [3].

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The sources of psychological threats, extensively damaging the mental health of an individual, compromising his integrity, thus causing its deformation, interfering with the normal activity of an individual are distinguished in the works of Ye.N. Ruskina [13]. L.S. Gutkin evaluates material security indicators and social protection of population on the basis of statistical data on average monthly income, scale of pensions and unemployment rate [4].

O.B. Sheveleva, V.V. Mikhailov disclose methodological and theoretical basics of social protection, and elaborate the lines of social security system improvement in the region on the basis of a system approach [16]. O.A. Polyushkevitch highlights objective and subjective security indicators, ascribing security against crime, economic viability, quality of life, social guarantees to the first group, while sense of safety at home, in a city, or country, the degree of confidence in family members, neighbors, governance, politicians, to the patriotism and tolerance formation [11]. Studying the population self-assessment on social security in some regions of Siberia, V.G. Nemirovsky and A.V. Nemirovskaya, have identified two types of societies: one endangering social activity and the other possessing a threat to the social identity of an individual [10].

According to the data of the all-Russian monitoring, N.I. Lapin, L.A. Belyaeva worked out the social security ratio, which is one of the three components of the social health index (i.e. index calculated as the arithmetic average of the social security, life satisfaction, and social optimism ratios) [12].

The article provides the results of the research, carried out within the project 'Socio-cultural portraits of Russia's regions'. The data of the public opinion poll of the Vologda Oblast population was used as the information base for studying the feeling of social security. The poll was conducted in 2008, 2010, 2012 by the

Institute of Socio-Economic Development of Territories of Russian Academy of Sciences. The sample comprised Vologda, Cherepovets, as well as 8 districts of the Oblast. Each sample group amounted to 1500 people. The conditions ensuring the sample representativeness were the following: the maintenance of the proportion between the urban and the rural population; the proportion between the residents of different types of settlements (rural communities, small and medium towns); age and sex structure of the Oblast adult population (sampling error did not exceed 3%).

The responses to the question: 'How safe do you feel from multiple dangers?' by 10 hazards (crime, poverty, abuse of power by officials, misuse of power by law enforcement authorities, environmental threat, loneliness and abandonment, political persecution, national origin discrimination, age or gender harassment, religious discrimination) served as the indicator for identifying the self-assessment on social security level. Social security ratio (as weighted arithmetic mean) was computed for each hazard-issue. The total ratio of social security is calculated as the arithmetic average of the given ratios and indicates the degree of community sustainability (0 – 1 measurement range). Values above 0.71 indicate high level of security, 0.51 – 0.7 values evidence of sufficient security level, while values less than 0.5 indicate insufficient security level (the ratio combines certain stability and the ability to differentiate regions, but disclaims the complete comparability of the territories, which might differ in dangers of topical interest).

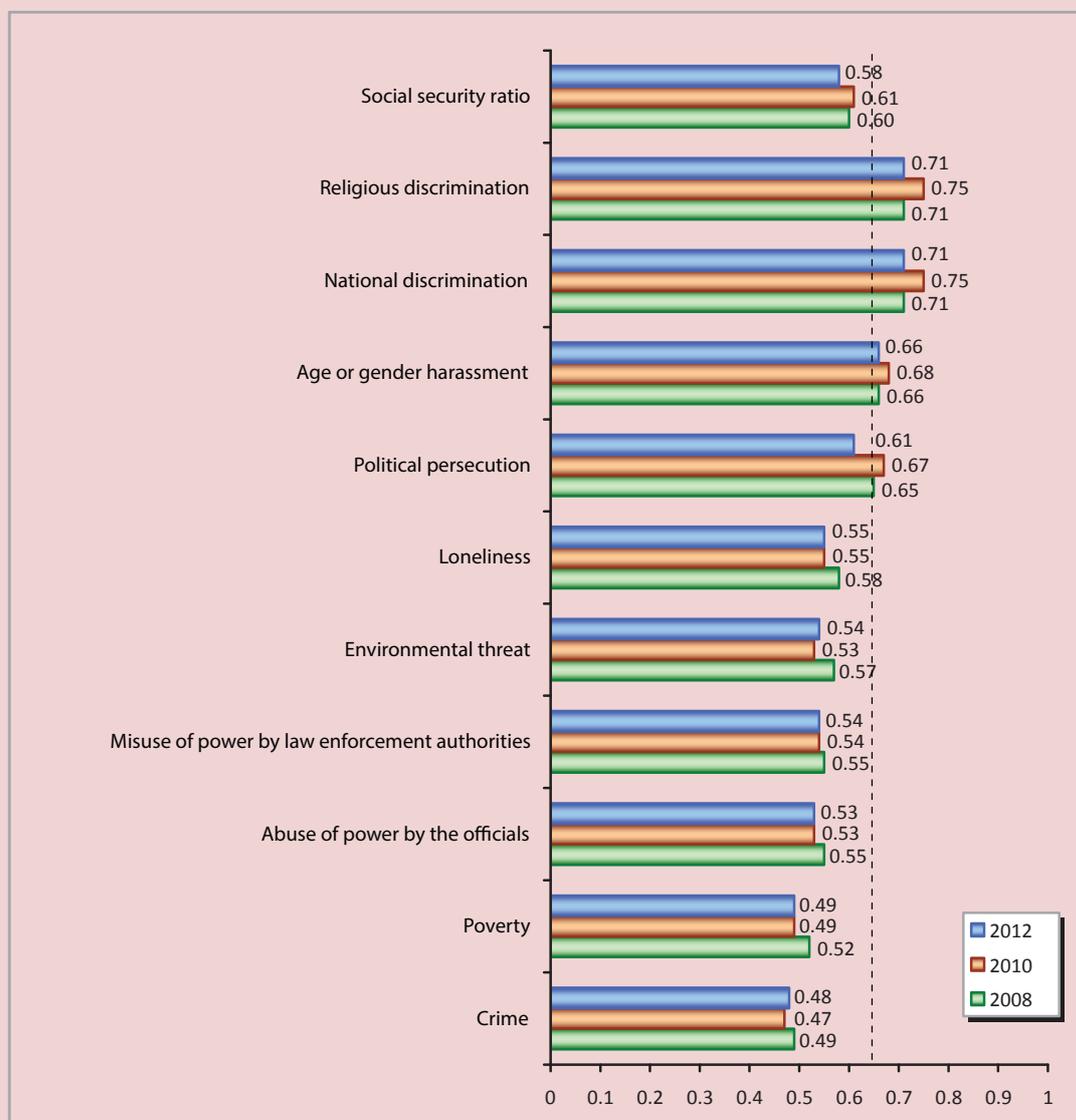
The most urgent problems for the Vologda Oblast are crime and poverty (only 13% and 17% of the population, respectively, consider themselves fully or rather protected).

The issue concerning the interaction between the authorities and the population is also acute, having become more negative in the 2008 – 2012 period: 45% of residents in 2012 considered themselves unprotected (or rather unprotected) facing the officials' abuse of

power, as compared to only 39% of 2008. This may be explained by the aftereffects of the crisis period, which was characterized by production decline, dismissals, wage violations, etc. Much in the situation depended on the attitude of the officials of different levels, whose decisions often did not satisfy the oblast residents. The environmental threat and misuse of power by law enforcement authorities are also included in the list of the most acute problems (*fig. 1*). National and religious discrimination concern

Vologda residents to a lesser extent, with only 16% feeling unprotected, which is related primarily to the fact that Russian-speaking population prevails in the Vologda Oblast. On the whole, the ratio of social security in the oblast amounted to 0.58 in 2012, that is slightly below 0.61 ratio of 2010, and 0.60 ratio of 2008. These trends did not have a negative impact on the social situation in the oblast, so the level of social protection has been remaining adequate throughout the period under review.

Figure 1. Social security ratio of the Vologda Oblast population



Source: Results of the survey 'Socio-cultural portrait of the region' (ISED T RAS).

Men feel insecure mostly due to the power abuse by law enforcement authorities and officials, whereas women do not feel protected from poverty and crime. Pensioners (over 50%) are more vulnerable than the other age groups. Thus, the misuse of power by law enforcement agencies is much more urgent for the people in the 45–49 age group, crime is of topical interest among 50–54 age group. The citizens over the age of 55 are greatly concerned by the poverty issue [15]. The needy population group of the oblast considers itself unprotected against poverty and abuse of power by the officials, above all [14]. Those who are financially wealthy and are used to indulging in every pleasure, feel themselves mostly unprotected against the misuse of power by law enforcement authorities (frequently, as a result of illegal cash income received by many representatives of the category). The divorced and the residents of towns (with the population below 100 thousand people) suffer from social insecurity concerning all of the problems studied to a greater degree, than other population categories.

The technique applied for studying social security ('Values and interests of the Russians', 'Socio-cultural portrait of the region') [7] makes its analysis possible, not only in the Vologda Oblast. Thus, on the basis of the survey data obtained by researchers from other regions of Russia, seven more territories have been considered: the Chuvash Republic (2006), the Perm Oblast (2006), the Kursk Oblast (2007), the Smolensk Oblast (2007), the Tula Oblast (2009), the Tyumen Oblast (2009), Krasnoyarsk Krai (2012) and the country as a whole (2010) [12].

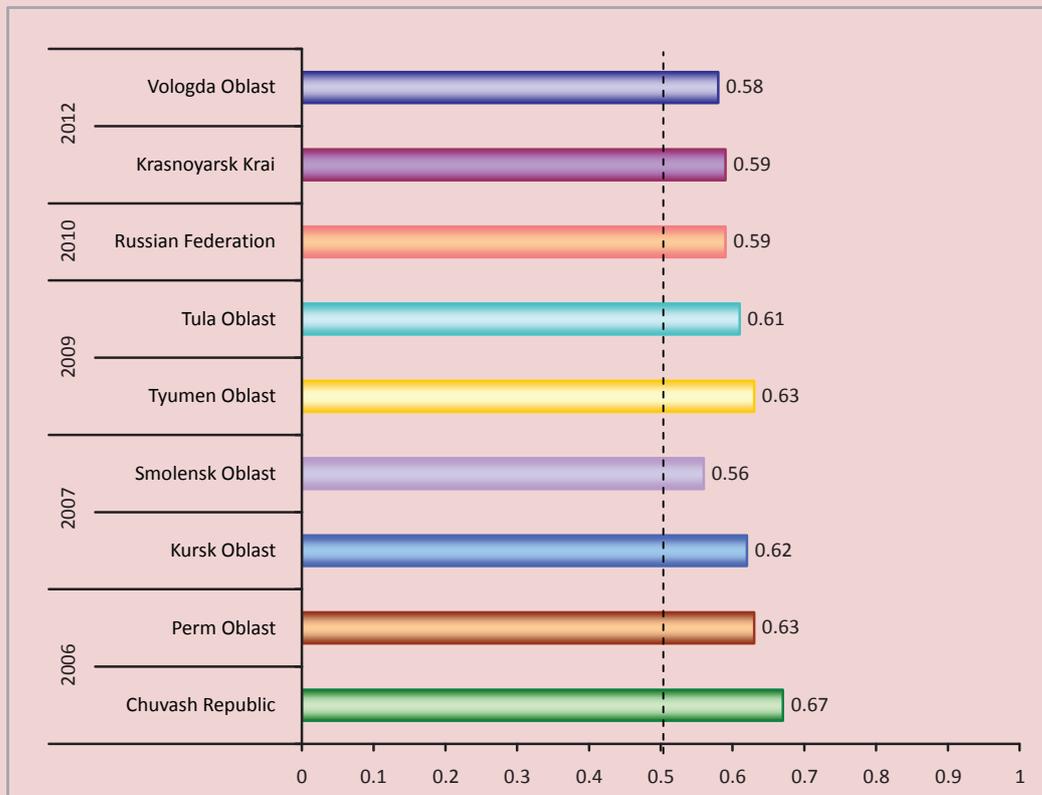
In the period under review, social security ratios in different regions of the country were rather distant from each other, being in the 0.56–0.67 range (*fig. 2*). The maximum value was registered in the Chuvash Republic, while the minimum value was observed in the Smolensk Oblast, with all the values being in the range of the sufficient security level, so the situation has been homogeneous.

Comparative analysis of hazard issues in the enumerated regions showed, that crime is the most acute problem for the Smolensk Oblast: 62% of the residents consider themselves unprotected (or rather unprotected), while only 6% feel completely, or rather protected. The list is supplemented with poverty (59%) and environmental threat (55%). Smolensk residents are the least concerned by national and religious discrimination (11 and 13%, respectively). Residents of the Chuvash Republic, as well as of the Smolensk Oblast expressed the greatest anxiety about the crime, however to a significantly smaller degree (51% of respondents consider themselves unprotected). Similarly, discriminatory harassment worries only 4–6% of the Chuvash Republic population. The situation in the Smolensk Oblast is somewhat more acute than in Russia on average, being a result of the greatest concern expressed by the oblast residents with regard to all range of the problems considered, not of the sharp contrast in vulnerability to certain dangers.

Most acute social dangers include crime, poverty, abuse of power by the officials, environmental threat and misuse of power by law enforcement authorities. As shown in the *table*, the lowest protection level against crime (the first place among the considered dangers) has been observed in 8 of the examined regions, with sufficient security level (0.53) being registered only in the Chuvash Republic. These data indicate that the population of the Russian Federation does not feel safe from criminal offences; the hope of protection by law enforcement authorities is also faint. So, social isolation and uncertainty about future and relationships with people is characteristic of Russian citizens.

The second place is taken by the fear of poverty, deeply felt by the residents of the Smolensk Oblast (0.46), the Tula Oblast (0.48), and Krasnoyarsk Krai (0.47). After three years (2006–2009) residents of Tyumen became less

Figure 2. Security ratio in Russia's regions
(territories involved in the project 'Socio-cultural portrait of the region')



Source: The results of the fifth wave of All-Russian Monitoring 'Values and Interests of the Russian population' obtained by the Centre for the Study of Social and Cultural Change of the IPhRAS in 2006; Regional survey results 'Socio-cultural portrait of the region'[12].

concerned by poverty, so their security level has increased. The tendency is opposite in the Vologda Oblast, where the post-crisis period is characterized by reduction in the level of security against economic problems, that is undoubtedly interconnected with worsening socio-economic situation in the region, falling income, and decreasing living standard.

The third place is occupied by the problem of misuse of power by the officials, security level against which is insufficient in most regions. The low value of the ratio indicates the lack of hope in government officials, and mistrust of the administrative structures, particularly with regard to the police, and regional offices of political parties, as well as mass media.

Environmental threat is in the fourth place, being of special concern to the residents of the Smolensk Oblast (0.46), the Kursk Oblast (0.49), and Krasnoyarsk Krai (0.47).

A threat to security and human comfortable existence arises from an adverse economic impact on the environment. Pollution and the degradation of natural resources has been increasing, negatively affecting the public health, ecological safety and economic stability. Therefore this problem will become more relevant in the foreseeable future, the solution to which depends both on the steps taken to reduce human pressure on the environment, as well as on enhancing the level of environmental culture, ecological education and upbringing of an individual.

Security level of the population against dangers in eight regions of Russia

Dangers (threats)	Insufficient (0.5 and less)	Sufficient (0.51–0.7)	High (0.71 and over)
<i>Most acute social dangers</i>			
1. Crime	Smolensk Oblast Kursk Oblast Perm Oblast Tula Oblast Krasnoyarsk Krai Tyumen Oblast Vologda Oblast	Chuvash Republic	
2. Poverty	Smolensk Oblast Krasnoyarsk Krai Tula Oblast Kursk Oblast Perm Oblast Vologda Oblast	Chuvash Republic Tyumen Oblast	
3. Abuse of power by the officials	Kursk Oblast Smolensk Oblast Perm Oblast Krasnoyarsk Krai Tula Oblast	Chuvash Republic Tyumen Oblast Vologda Oblast	
4. Environmental threat	Kursk Oblast Smolensk Oblast Krasnoyarsk Krai	Chuvash Republic Perm Oblast Tyumen Oblast Tula Oblast Vologda Oblast	
5. Misuse of power by law enforcement authorities	Smolensk Oblast	Chuvash Republic Kursk Oblast Perm Oblast Krasnoyarsk Krai Tula Oblast Tyumen Oblast Vologda Oblast	
<i>Least acute social dangers</i>			
6. Loneliness and abandonment		8 regions, total	
7. Political persecution		Smolensk Oblast Krasnoyarsk Krai Tyumen Oblast Vologda Oblast	Chuvash Republic Kursk Oblast Perm Oblast Tula Oblast
8. Age or gender harassment		Smolensk Oblast Krasnoyarsk Krai Vologda Oblast	Chuvash Republic Kursk Oblast Perm Oblast Tula Oblast Tyumen Oblast
9. National discrimination			8 regions, total
10. Religious discrimination			8 regions, total
Source: Data of the public opinion polls in the regions of Russia: Chuvash Republic (2006), Perm Oblast (2006), Kursk Oblast (2007), Smolensk Oblast (2007), Tula Oblast (2009), Tyumen Oblast (2006, 2009), Krasnoyarsk Krai (2012), Vologda Oblast (2008, 2010, 2012) [12].			

The analysis has shown that the least acute social dangers include loneliness and abandonment, political persecution, age or gender harassment, national discrimination, religious discrimination.

The problem of loneliness and abandonment occupies the sixth place among the ten threats. However, among the analyzed regions there is not a single one with a high security level. The issue is multifaceted, since it involves both

moral and social aspects. The issue is acute mostly due to the crisis not only in traditional family relationships, but in the institution of the family, as well. An individual feels lonely when he/she realizes how inferior the relations between him/her and the people important to him/her are, when he/she lacks communication. Thus, it can be concluded that a certain 'stratum of isolated people' (not in the physical sense) exists in the Russian society. Social loneliness increases society fragmentation, leads to the indistinctness of traditional social boundaries and to the loss of social position.

Political persecution takes the seventh place. The feeling of insecurity from political persecutions is extremely strong among the residents of the Vologda Oblast; the estimated protection level has declined over the last two years from 38% in 2010 to 31% in 2012 (as compared to 47% in 2010 throughout Russia). At the same time, there are no reasons to claim that any active or passive protest moods have been observed in the Vologda Oblast [5]. 61% of the Chuvash Republic population feels protected.

Age and gender harassment is in the eighth position. It should be noted that the residents of the Tyumen Oblast began to feel themselves more protected: a positive trend has been revealed in the oblast during the three-year period (individual security increased by 5 p.p.). This conclusion can not be applied to the Vologda Oblast, where the security ratio, on the contrary, decreased by 2 percentage points. [8].

A detailed analysis of the hazard-issues revealed that the regions' residents are the least concerned by national and religious discrimination (the ninth and tenth places). It is connected, first of all, with the fact that the population of these territories is not characterized by significant ethno-cultural or ethno-religious diversity, and the Russian-speaking population constitutes an overwhelming majority.

However, analyzing the dynamics of the ratios (in the Tyumen and Vologda oblasts), the author notes a certain decrease in the security level. The emergence of the tendency is related to an annual increase in the number of labor migrants mainly from the CIS countries (Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan) in Russia, as the ethnic and cultural identity of migrants is weaker than that of the indigenous people.

The examined subjects of the Russian Federation differ in the level of the residents' security from various dangers, so, each region is characterized by its own socio-cultural and psychological specifics, but similar in that the population of all the examined territories feels most vulnerable to external objective conditions (crime, poverty, environmental threat, abuse of power by the officials and misuse of power by law enforcement authorities), and that the people would like to change these conditions for the better, so that the danger from them would diminish. The social security level of the population of Russia's regions is not high, so there is every reason to characterize the existing type of society as unsatisfactory for the social activity of an individual. Moreover, the population is poorly protected from external objective risks and threats. Internal subjective characteristics of an individual refer to the least acute social risks (the feeling of loneliness and abandonment, political and religious beliefs, nationality, age, gender). Man is not able to change many of these characteristics, but if they were rejected, it could destroy his socio-cultural self-identification and self-consciousness.

To sum up, it should be noted that social security is a generalized efficiency characteristic of the system of social security measures, activities of the state authorities on social policy implementation, as well as the effectiveness and feasibility of statutory social guarantees [2]. Due to the dynamics of socio-economic development, current changes and challenges of modernization, the problem of social protection is impossible to be resolved completely.

At the same time, regional comparisons indicate that the positive trends are achievable, and effective measures on social security (socio-economic, legal, political) contribute to social tension reduction in the society.

The social security of the citizens not only consists in advancing their political, socio-economic rights, but also comprises the

psychological component of an individual. The sources of insecurity, which at the moment cause decline in the quality of life and living standards of the population, are to be neutralized by creating high-paying jobs, improving social security and social assistance, effectively combating corruption and crime, solving environmental problems, improving socio-economic stability.

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