

From the Editorial Board. November 13–15, 2014, Vologda will host the All-Russian Research-to-Practice Conference “Society and Sociology in Modern Russia”, devoted to the 20th anniversary of the Sociologist Day in the Russian Federation. The Conference is organized by the RAS Institute of Sociology, the RAS Institute of Socio-Political Research, the RAS Institute of Socio-Economic Development of Territories, and the Vologda Oblast Government. A working group has been created for the preparation to the forum. Considering that ISED T RAS has long been paying much attention to sociological research, it was decided to hold this event in Vologda.

The following publication opens a series of pre-Conference articles on the role of sociological knowledge and practice of its application in the development of Russia’s society.

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Sociological assessment of public administration efficiency



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Abstract. The article presents the evolution of sociology in Russia and substantiates the increasing importance of sociological science in the country’s transition to innovation development. Special attention is paid to the methodological and practical aspects of regional sociological assessments that has been carried out by ISED T RAS in the Vologda Oblast for almost twenty years. The authors prove that sociological tools allow them to make a system assessment of the effectiveness of state management, to define the main directions of economic and social development in the country and its regions. The article points out key problems, the solution of which will enhance the role of sociological knowledge in the development of the Russian society.

Key words: Sociological measurement, assessment of the state of society, efficiency of public administration, improvement of sociological tools.

1. The relevance of sociological knowledge in the 21st century.

The development of Russian sociology is usually divided into three periods (pre-Soviet, Soviet and post-Soviet) that replace each other on the principle of continuity thus facilitating evolutionary development of science. The Soviet period, is seen by many as a stage, when science became “an institute for ideological maintenance of totalitarian regime” [1]. However, the same period was characterized by many important achievements, which provided Russia’s sociology with significant potential, enabling it to play an important role in the country’s social renewal, the transformation of scientific knowledge in the economy, politics and culture, corresponding to global trends of civilization development”. With all of its difficulties and limitations, sociology in the Soviet Union was formed as a science that met the urgent necessity to solve the internal needs of the society, as a science able to substantiate the forms and methods of overcoming urgent social, socio-economic and socio-political contradictions generated by the dominant ideology [2].

In the Soviet period the first Faculty of Social Sciences with the Department of Sociology headed by P. Sorokin (1919–1920) was opened at Petrograd University; further on, the foundation for applied sociology was laid (A.K. Gastev, F.R. Dunaevsky, N.A. Vitke, O.A. Yermansky, P.M. Kerzhentsev); T.I. Zaslavskaya started active work in this field in the 1960s, the Institute of Philosophy of the USSR Academy of Sciences established the Department of Sociology (G.V. Osipov), the Philosophy Faculties at the Leningrad and Moscow Universities opened the laboratories for sociological research (V.A. Yadov, Yu.V Arutyunyan). The Russian Society of Sociologists was established in 1989.

At the same time, these and many other achievements of the Soviet period were accompanied by certain problems: insufficient quality

of basic and applied research, weak material and technological base, reduction in the flow of young researchers in fundamental science, disunity inside the sociological community.

After the collapse of the USSR and implementation of democratic measures of organizing state and public life, the key issue of Russian sociology became the lack of interest of the authorities in serious research into the most difficult social problems of the country.

In the period of perestroika, fundamental research actually stopped. On the one hand, because many scientists directly plunged into political activities, and on the other, economic manifestations of the crisis of science, and the lack of funding began to show themselves. And the research paradigm broke down completely, it became impossible to move in the directions that developed by inertia, and methodological base was insufficient to handle pressing issues.

Equal importance was attached to the issue of sociological community fragmentation due to a great number of organizations and agencies involved in public opinion polls. The public and political situation in the late 1980s – early 1990s required inexpensive applied research seeking specific solutions to various problems. The firms and centers engaged in such studies were to turn their findings into a product by replicating their methods. In pursuit of commercial aims, such centers neglected the quality of their research, and their goals: their objectives satisfied the demands of the market, rather than the state. In the early 1990s there were about 300 such centers in Moscow alone. And the quality of their research was “not always perfect” [3].

The lack of a system approach to solving the key tasks of the country’s development, lack of coordination in sociological research at the regional level, pragmatic attitude toward the studies, which consists in the financing of only those studies that can be used in this very moment – all these problems are acute at present as well. Many organizations are

engaged in the study of public opinion. But very often the same data are interpreted differently.

However, the vector of development of the modern Russian society dictates the need for greater attention to the opinion of society in public administration. It is necessary to search for new forms of assessing its efficiency, since the market transformations going on for over twenty years have not brought any desired results so far [4]. The state–society interaction, in which sociological science plays a role of mediator, is currently one of the main resources for improving the efficiency of public administration – the task, the solution of which determines the development of regional communities and the Russian Federation as a whole.

Society needs sociology as the framework of the modern outlook, as the factor in the formation of self-consciousness of the Russian society and identity. Domestic sociology declares its adherence to the values of civil society and its readiness to participate in the formation and development of civil society in our country. It can and should influence public debate, voicing the interests of different social groups, while maintaining objectivity and commitment to the independence of scientific knowledge [5].

However, the government's policy of extreme liberalism, large-scale withdrawal of the state from economic and social policy does not form the necessary request from the government, primarily to the Russian Academy of Sciences, to conduct research into social environment and an objective analysis of the changes in society at the national and regional levels.

2. Modern Russian society in the mirror of sociology.

The urgency of raising the importance of social science is connected with two features of development of the Russian society in the 21st century:

First, it is the lingering unsolved key problems (the dependence of the Russian economy on raw material resources, extremely low competitiveness of the manufactured products, fledgling democracy and the weakness of civil society, negative demographic trends and problems in the development of the social sphere, corruption that breeds arbitrariness, lack of freedom, and injustice [6]). The main factor impeding the reduction of the gap between Russia and developed Western countries is Russia's state structure, primarily the oligarchic and corrupt power "vertical" built in the 2000s. Its functioning resulted in a major redistribution of resources from the groups, oriented to modernization of society, to the top officials, who seek limitless personal enrichment. In these conditions, modernization of the Russian society requires not only the development of new technologies, but also the formation of strong, competent legal and legitimate authorities, capable of radical democratization and strengthening of the main public institutions [3].

Secondly, the key changes taking place in the period of V.V. Putin's third presidency indicate new trends in social development. We are talking about the changes that are conceptual, and global in their content, the changes that are voiced in the RF President's speeches and reflected in the works of authoritative public figures, experts, research workers (S.S. Sulakshin, M.K. Gorshkov, V.K. Levashov, Zh.T. Toshchenko, A.G. Dugin, S.Yu. Glazyev and other [8, 9, 10, 11, 14, 15]). These are the ideas of national identity, preservation and development of national sovereignty, enhancing the role of civil society in public administration, overcoming the "crisis of confidence" in governmental and public institutions, the abandonment of the Pro-Western ideology of "consumer society" and return to original Russian roots of development based on spiritual-moral values, the transition

from the social state to the moral state, which is “inevitable non-random evolutionary stage of modern types of countries” [8].

The post-reform Russia has accumulated a huge socio-psychological resource that serves as a basis for modernization breakthrough, which Russia’s society needs desperately [6]. The desire of the RF President “to implement quality changes in Russia, to feel the people’s mood and support, to be on the same wavelength with these sentiments, to combine them and make breakthroughs that the society expects of him” [13] was one of the motives and prerequisites for the formation of the All-Russia People’s Front. Reliance on the masses facilitates the provision of efficient influence on the bureaucracy, oligarchs, and everyone else, so the mass support gives legitimacy to the Presidential power, makes decisive action and breakthroughs possible.

Consolidation potential of V.V. Putin as head of state and as a personality was noted by members of the Izborsk Club, focusing on the contrast of Russian and Western civilization and the key role of the President in the process of Eurasian integration” [14]. He “advocates conservative values, thanks to which Russia will be able to resist the erosion of moral norms going from the West [15]. Russia with Putin and Russia after Putin has an excellent and promising future if it is able to continue the line of “the function of Putin”, if it is able to continue moving in the direction of itself, its independence, preservation of its civilizational features [16].

On the eve of his third presidency in the article “Russia muscles up” V.V. Putin writes that Russian society in the post-Soviet period solved the problem of “revival of the prestige and power of the state itself... the restoration of national unity, in other words, the establishment of the sovereignty of the Russian people on its entire territory, and not the domination of individuals or groups... The recovery period has been passed. The post-Soviet stage in

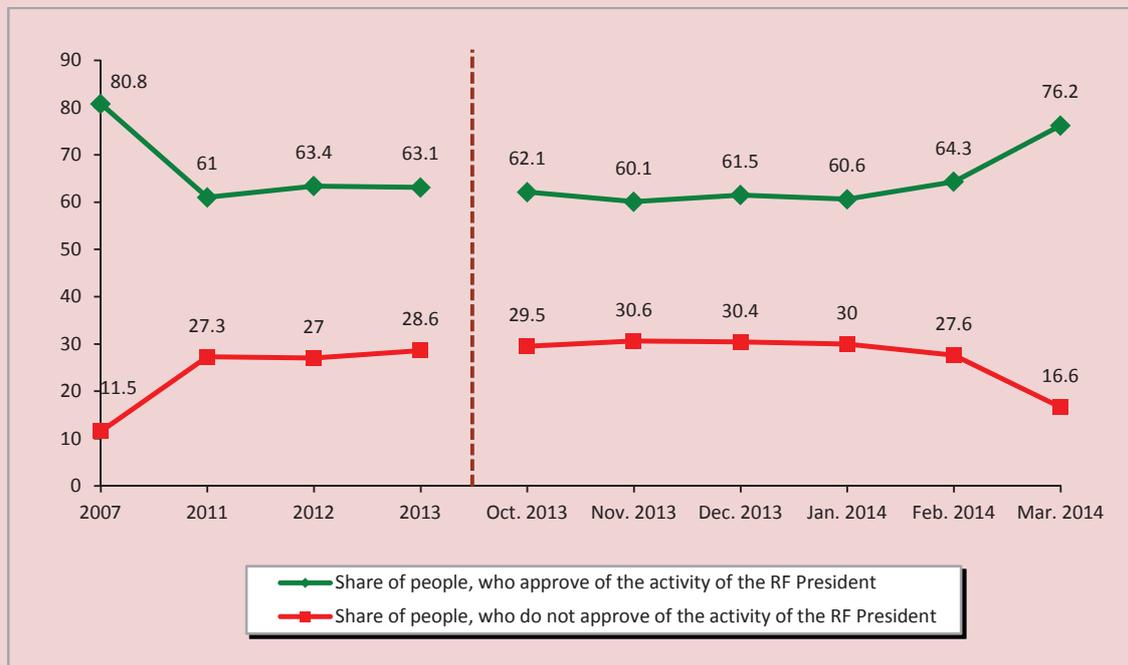
the development of Russia, as well as in the development of the whole world, is completed and exhausted. All the prerequisites for progress have been created – on a new basis and with new quality” [17].

In 2013, at a meeting on the execution of the Decrees of May 7, 2012, President of the Russian Federation V.V. Putin outlined the strategy of transformations and the guidelines of public policy that were to be achieved by 2018. They seek to “provide a higher standard of living to the citizens of the Russian Federation, primarily due to the significant increase in the efficiency of public administration and the quality of public sector” [18]. In his subsequent speeches in 2012–2013, Head of State showed his firm commitment to implement the outlined strategy, in spite of any domestic or foreign obstacles.

The President voiced his position in full measure at the meeting of the Valdai International Discussion Club in September 2013 [19]. V.V. Putin’s speech became the first large-scale attempt of Russia’s authorities to formulate a new political ideology for Russia after the collapse of the Soviet Union, and also to consider critically the issue concerning the values that should form the basis for a new Russian identity, the Eurasian peace and international relations” [20]. The President proved himself to be the “heir to the Russian conservative political tradition” [21] and the “critic of the whole modern model of development of the Western civilization” [22].

The events related to the situation in Ukraine: the referendum in the Crimea, the accession of the Crimea and Sevastopol to the Russian Federation provide a telling example in this context. They demonstrated consolidation potential of the Russian society (it is not by accident that the level of approval of the President’s activity in the last month registered by WCIOM is the maximum for the last 5 years (76%; *fig. 1*).

Figure 1. Estimation of the RF President's activity according to WCIOM data (as a percentage of the number of respondents)*



* 2007 was taken as the reference point; it is the last year of V.V. Putin's second presidential term, the estimation of his activity was the highest. For comparison, we provide the data for 2011 – the last year of D.A. Medvedev's presidency.

Source: WCIOM Database. Available at: www.wciom.ru

The position of V.V. Putin and the Russians in general was reflected in his Kremlin speech on March 18, 2014: “We understand what is happening; we understand that these actions were aimed against Ukraine and Russia and against Eurasian integration. Today, it is imperative to end this hysteria, to refute the rhetoric of the cold war and to accept the obvious fact: Russia is an independent, active participant in international affairs; like other countries, it has its own national interests that need to be taken into account and respected. Russia's foreign policy position on this matter drew its firmness from the will of millions of our people, our national unity and the support of our country's main political and public forces. Obviously, we will encounter external opposition, but this is a decision that we need to make for ourselves. Are we ready to consistently defend our national interests, or will we forever give in, retreat to who knows where?” [23].

Therefore, V.V. Putin's increased rating is connected not only with the rise of patriotic sentiments in the society in connection with the annexation of the Crimea. It is the result of a long period of growing needs of the Russian population in the consolidation on the basis of moral and spiritual ideas.

But the process of consolidation of society, as well as society and the state, cannot be effective without overcoming the “crisis of trust” in the authorities. This problem is especially relevant in Russia, because the “stabilization” of the standard of living after the 1990s crisis ceased to meet the needs of the majority. According to Edelman Trust Barometer¹, only 27% of the Russians trust the authorities (in 2013 – 29%). Russia ranks 22nd by this indicator among 27 countries that

¹ 2014 Edelman Trust Barometer. Available at : <http://www.edelman.com>

participated in the study (in 2013 it ranked 24th among 26 countries). The average level of trust in the authorities among all the countries participating in the survey was 44% in 2014 and 48% in 2013.

People more often feel that they cannot influence the decisions of the authorities, and they cannot influence the changes in their lives. According to ISEDT RAS research, for the 2011–2014 period, the share of Vologda Oblast residents who consider that they cannot influence the state of affairs in the organization where they work has increased by 8 p.p.; in the settlement where they live – by 7 p.p.; in the region – by 6 p.p.; in the country – by 7 p.p.²

A civilized and democratic way out of the situation is to enhance the role of society in the management process and the strengthening of local authorities because they are closest to the real needs of the residents, to the specifics of socio-economic development of the territory under their jurisdiction; and the municipal level is the platform on which the potential of civil activity can emerge.

Thus, at present, public administration efficiency at the federal, regional and municipal levels mainly determines the possibility to implement the consolidation potential of Russia's society. And this, in turn, is one of the main (if not the main) factors that determine further direction of social development, the competitiveness and viability of the Russian State.

Sociological science can realize the accumulated potential and become a link between the state and society, if the following two conditions are met: first, the government should provide the scientific community with tasks for the development of a uniform methodological approach to the estimation of public administration efficiency. Secondly, this work should be coordinated at the federal level; at that the Russian Academy of Sciences should play the key role.

² Data of the monitoring carried out by ISEDT RAS.

Currently, however, the Government does not set such a task. Accordingly, solving the most important issues of Russian sociology is not reflected in the legislation (still there is no draft law on strategic planning, which, in our opinion, should fix the significance of sociological indicators as indicators of public administration efficiency). Macroeconomic indicators are monitored and studied; macrosocial indicators are not, although the knowledge of how society develops is very important. The forecast estimations of social development are equally important, along with economic development forecasts [14].

3. Regional experience of sociological research as a tool for evaluating public administration efficiency.

Today, more importance is attached to the experience of independent approaches, methodological developments for assessing the efficiency of public administration worked out by individual regions. The Institute of Socio-Economic Development of Territories of the Russian Academy of Sciences is one of those research organizations, which have practical experience in the sociological assessment of public opinion at the regional level in the form of monitoring³.

T.I. Zaslavskaya emphasized the importance of monitoring, when the system of sociological research WCIOM, which now is the main sociological center in Russia, was only emerging. She wrote: "We understand that one have to repeat the same questions for monitoring the dynamics.

³ The polls are held six times a year since 1996. 1500 people in Vologda, Cherepovets, and in eight districts of the oblast (Babayevsky District, Velikoustyugsky District, Vozhegodsky District, Gryazovetsky District, Kirillovsky District, Nikolsky District, Tarnogsky District and Sheksninsky District) are polled. 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. The method of the survey is a questionnaire poll by place of residence of respondents.

As a result, there emerged many partial “author’s” monitoring studies. There are monitoring studies of the standard of living, labor market, and a number of others” [3]. This was the basis, on which WCIOM created a single, integral *sociological monitoring of economic reforms*. It makes it possible to solve a number of new tasks. First of all, it provides an opportunity to eliminate (or at least mitigate) significant shortcomings in the information-sociological maintenance of economic reform – to get away from the element of chance in time, subject, and space. Secondly, it makes the research regular. And the main thing is the comprehensive approach to the issue “from the researcher” rather than “from the customer”

The implementation of this idea at the regional level (such, in fact, is the public opinion monitoring carried out by RAS Institute of Socio-Economic Development of Territories in the Vologda Oblast since 1996) allows us to present our methodology of assessing the effectiveness of public administration.

ISED T RAS monitoring has long-term, regular and complex nature, the importance of which was stressed by T.I. Zaslavskaya. Comprehensive sociological studies cover the area of policy and economic relations; they also reveal the issues of health, regional characteristics of living conditions, opportunities and mechanisms for the implementation of labor potential, prospects for the development of civil society, etc. (*tab. 1*).

We use, besides other methods, the index method⁴ for assessing the authorities’ performance effectiveness. Its advantage consists

⁴ The value of the index is calculated in points. Each index is calculated for every question: the share of negative answers is subtracted from the share of positive answers, after that 100 is added to the obtained figure in order to avoid negative values. Consequently, fully negative answers would give the total index 0, fully positive answers – index 200, the balance between the former and the latter – index 100, which is, in fact, a neutral mark. Each of the four minor indices is calculated as average of the sum of the three indices for each of the questions.

in revealing the ratio of positive and negative attitudes in society, which allows us to “determine some “critical points” in public opinion, and, what is more important, in the real state of affairs” [24]. At that, we interpret not so much the numeric value of the index as its variations and changes in time that are associated with other political, social, and economic events [25]. There are various techniques of application of the index in Russian practice. For example, WCIOM assesses the indices of social feeling every month; Levada Center calculates the social sentiment index (SSI), etc. [26].

The index of public mood in the region (IPMR) developed by ISED T RAS is used to summarize the data on the attitude of the inhabitants of municipalities to the work of federal and local executive authorities, as well as the data on the assessment of population’s material well-being and social mood. In addition, it allows researchers to group areas depending on the combination of different indicators (sub-indices), and to track changes in the situation in the region.

IPMR is calculated in three stages (*fig. 2*):

1. The four sub-indices: Sub-Index of Stability, Sub-Index of Well-Being, Sub-Index of Efficiency of the Regional Authorities, Sub-Index of Loyalty to the Policy of the Federal Authorities – are calculated on the basis of the primary sociological data.

2. The first and second indices are combined into the *Index of Social Feeling*, the third and fourth – in the *Index of Attitude to the Authorities*.

3. The integral indicator, the *Index of Public Mood in the Region*, is calculated on the basis of these two indices.

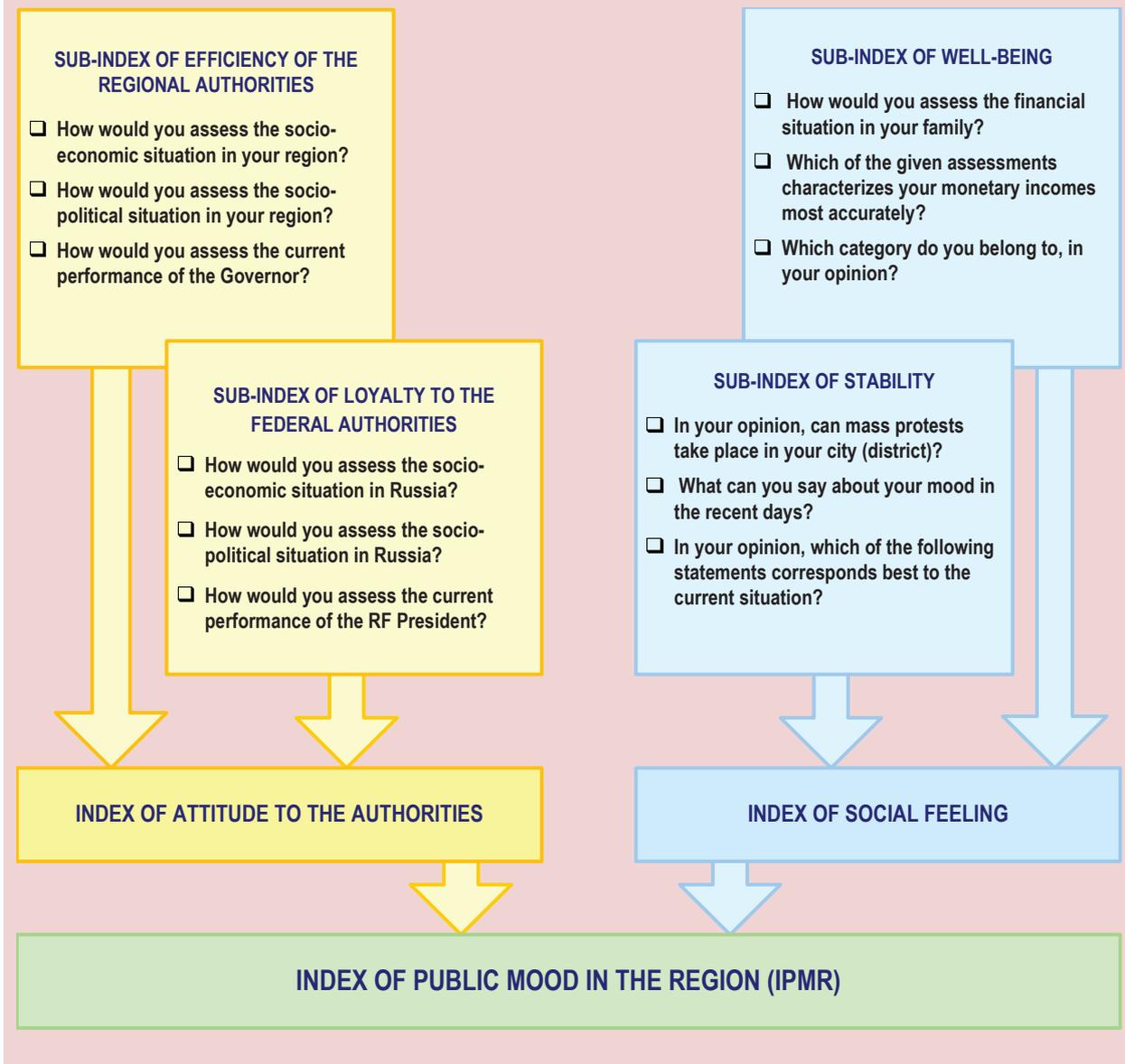
Measuring the *Index of Social Feeling* in the urban and rural areas of the Vologda Oblast revealed two problems:

1. *Absence of positive changes in the Vologda Oblast population’s assessments of their financial situation*. Despite the growth of positive sentiment in the society (as evidenced by the

Table 1. Brief characteristic of sociological research conducted by ISEDT RAS

Areas of research and main research projects	Year when the research was started	Presence of author's patent
<i>Monitoring of economic condition and social feeling of the population</i>		
Monitoring of economic condition and social feeling of the Vologda Oblast population	1995	Database of the monitoring of economic situation and social feeling of the Vologda Oblast population, certificate of the state registration of the database No. 2013620087. Database of the monitoring of economic condition and social feeling of the population in the regions of the Northwestern Federal District, certificate of the state registration of the database No. 2012621290.
Monitoring of economic condition and social feeling of the population in the regions of the Northwestern Federal District	2005	
<i>Reproduction of the population of the territory: trends and reserves</i>		
Conditions for the formation of a healthy generation	1995	Database of the monitoring of the research into the conditions for the formation of healthy generation in the Vologda Oblast, 2012; certificate of the state registration No. 2012620788.
Monitoring of health condition of the population	1999	
Monitoring of socio-psychological climate and mental health of the population	2000	
Reproductive health and reproductive potential of the population	2004	
Suicidal behavior of the population	2004	
Social health of the population	2010	
Qualitative demographic changes in the population as the most important characteristic of demographic crisis	2013	
<i>Human capital management and innovation development of the territory</i>		
Monitoring of the quality of labor potential	1996	Database of the monitoring of the quality condition of the Vologda Oblast population's labor potential, 2012, certificate of the state registration of the database No. 2012620757, No. 2011614700.
Labor behavior as a form of realization of individual labor potential	2011	
Formation of research-and-education space	2009	
Formation of human capital of the territories	2010	
Institutional analysis of the regional labor market	2010	
Human potential of rural territories	2013	
<i>Sociocultural modernization in Russia, its condition in the regions of the country</i>		
Economic behavior of the population (savings, financial, investment, etc.)	2001	Information-analytical system for monitoring the levels of modernization in Russia's regions, certificate of state registration No. 2012661285.
Socio-economic inequality of the population in the region	2006	
Socio-cultural portrait of the Vologda Oblast	2008	
<i>Monitoring of living conditions in the city of Vologda</i>	2003	–
<i>Monitoring of the formation of small and medium business in modern conditions</i>	2002	Database of the surveys of small and medium business in the Vologda Oblast No. 2012620336 (04.01.2012).

Figure 2. Scheme of calculating the Index of Public Mood in the Region



dynamics of the *Sub-Index of Stability* that increased from 139 points in 2007 to 147.5 points in 2013), material well-being of the Oblast inhabitants remains lower than in 2007. The regions and especially the district centers saw the decline in the population's assessments of their financial situation in 2013 compared to 2011, as evidenced by the dynamics of the *Sub-Index of Well-Being*. Its value in the Oblast decreased from 93 points in 2007 to 88 points in 2013 (*tab. 2*).

2. Generally positive changes observed in the dynamics of the *Index of Social Feeling* and its components are formed at the expense of public opinion in urban areas. In rural areas we observe a decline in the index from 114 points in 2007 to 110 points in 2013. The situation in the regions remains tense, which was repeatedly stressed by the Vologda Oblast Governor O.A. Kuvshinnikov, who pointed out the key role of municipal districts in the development of the entire Oblast [28].

Table 2. Index of Social Feeling

Territory	2007	2011	2012	2013	2013 to		
					2012	2011	2007
Sub-Index of Stability							
Vologda Oblast	139.1	142.3	145.8	147.5	+2	+5	+8
Major cities	138.9	144.3	150.4	153.1	+3	+9	+14
<i>Vologda</i>	141.5	142.3	148.2	154.5	+6	+12	+13
<i>Cherepovets</i>	136.6	146.2	152.5	151.8	-1	+6	+15
Districts, including	139.2	140.3	141.3	141.5	0	+1	+2
<i>Urban area</i>	140.6	143.6	148.4	145.5	-3	+2	+5
<i>Rural area</i>	137.6	137.0	134.4	137.4	+3	0	0
Sub-Index of Well-Being							
Vologda Oblast	93.3	88.0	89.0	87.9	-1	0	-5
Major cities	101.9	94.0	95.4	95.1	0	+1	-7
<i>Vologda</i>	98.8	87.4	90.3	88.7	-2	+1	-10
<i>Cherepovets</i>	104.7	99.9	100.1	101.3	+1	+1	-3
Districts, including	85.3	82.3	82.8	80.5	-2	-2	-5
<i>Urban area</i>	80.5	80.0	82.3	78.1	-4	-2	-2
<i>Rural area</i>	90.6	84.6	83.3	82.7	-1	-2	-8
Index of Social Feeling							
Vologda Oblast	116.2	115.2	117.4	117.7	0	+3	+2
Major cities	120.4	119.2	122.9	124.1	+1	+5	+4
<i>Vologda</i>	120.2	114.9	119.3	121.6	+2	+7	+1
<i>Cherepovets</i>	120.7	123.1	126.3	126.5	0	+3	+6
Districts, including	112.2	111.3	112.1	111.0	-1	0	-1
<i>Urban area</i>	110.5	111.8	115.3	111.8	-4	0	+1
<i>Rural area</i>	114.1	110.8	108.8	110.0	1	-1	-4

The lack of positive changes in the dynamics of financial situation of the population affects the assessment of performance of the authorities. A slight improvement of public opinion concerning public administration at the federal level (growth of the *Sub-Index of Loyalty to the Policy of the Federal Authorities* from 100 points in 2012 to 102 points in 2013; *tab. 3*) is observed only in the last year. It turns out that the appeals and promises made by the RF President receive active support of the population, but their implementation at the municipal level is still insufficient. The *Index of Attitude to the Authorities* in 2012 and 2013 was 102 p., which is somewhat lower than in 2011 (108 p.), and significantly lower than the level of 2007 (126 p.).

The analysis of public reports of the executive authorities on the performance results for the year 2013 shows that they contain only the fulfillment of planned indicators, the disbursement of funds and so on, but they do not contain information on the issues that are of primary concern to the population, such as availability and quality of services, standard of living, etc. Although the very initiative concerning the accountability of the authorities to the general public (at least, those who have access to the Internet) corresponds to the tasks set before the public administration at present.

Thus, the Index of the public mood in the region provide a comprehensive assessment of the efficiency of state management,

Table 3. Index of Attitude to the Authorities

Territory	2007	2011	2012	2013	2013 to		
					2012	2011	2007
Sub-Index of Loyalty to the Federal Authorities							
Vologda Oblast	128.0	107.0	100.3	102.6	+2	-4	-25
Major cities	127.1	110.9	104.7	107.3	+3	-4	-20
<i>Vologda</i>	<i>117.8</i>	<i>109.6</i>	<i>102.7</i>	<i>104.4</i>	<i>+2</i>	<i>-5</i>	<i>-13</i>
<i>Cherepovets</i>	<i>135.5</i>	<i>112.1</i>	<i>106.5</i>	<i>110.1</i>	<i>+4</i>	<i>-2</i>	<i>-25</i>
Districts, including	128.9	103.2	96.0	97.6	+2	-6	-31
<i>Urban area</i>	<i>131.6</i>	<i>100.1</i>	<i>92.4</i>	<i>93.4</i>	<i>+1</i>	<i>-7</i>	<i>-38</i>
<i>Rural area</i>	<i>125.9</i>	<i>106.4</i>	<i>99.6</i>	<i>101.9</i>	<i>+2</i>	<i>-5</i>	<i>-24</i>
Sub-Index of Efficiency of the Regional Authorities							
Vologda Oblast	125.8	108.4	103.0	100.6	-2	-8	-25
Major cities	122.5	114.5	109.5	108.2	-1	-6	-14
<i>Vologda</i>	<i>113.3</i>	<i>110.0</i>	<i>103.0</i>	<i>100.2</i>	<i>-3</i>	<i>-10</i>	<i>-13</i>
<i>Cherepovets</i>	<i>131.0</i>	<i>118.5</i>	<i>115.5</i>	<i>115.8</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>-3</i>	<i>-15</i>
Districts, including	128.9	102.6	96.7	92.5	-4	-10	-36
<i>Urban area</i>	<i>129.6</i>	<i>101.9</i>	<i>96.7</i>	<i>95.3</i>	<i>-1</i>	<i>-7</i>	<i>-34</i>
<i>Rural area</i>	<i>127.9</i>	<i>103.2</i>	<i>96.6</i>	<i>89.6</i>	<i>-7</i>	<i>-14</i>	<i>-38</i>
Index of Attitude to the Authorities							
Vologda Oblast	126.9	107.7	101.7	101.6	0	-6	-25
Major cities	124.8	112.7	107.1	107.7	+1	-5	-17
<i>Vologda</i>	<i>115.6</i>	<i>109.8</i>	<i>102.9</i>	<i>102.3</i>	<i>-1</i>	<i>-8</i>	<i>-13</i>
<i>Cherepovets</i>	<i>133.3</i>	<i>115.3</i>	<i>111.0</i>	<i>112.9</i>	<i>+2</i>	<i>-2</i>	<i>-20</i>
Districts, including	128.9	102.9	96.4	95.1	-1	-8	-34
<i>Urban area</i>	<i>130.6</i>	<i>101.0</i>	<i>94.6</i>	<i>94.4</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>-7</i>	<i>-36</i>
<i>Rural area</i>	<i>126.9</i>	<i>104.8</i>	<i>98.1</i>	<i>95.8</i>	<i>-2</i>	<i>-9</i>	<i>-31</i>

simultaneously reflecting the dynamics of public opinion about activity of authorities, social mood and self-appraisal of material situation.

As for the Vologda Oblast, the dynamics of IPMR demonstrates the need to increase the efficiency of public administration (the indicator's value for 2012–2013 has not changed – 110 points, and at the district level it has even declined – from 104 to 103 points; *tab. 4*).

The urgency of financial problems in the district centers remains higher than in rural settlements, the inhabitants of which, apparently, cover the shortage of financial resources by subsistence farming (*Sub-Index of Well-Being* in the district towns in 2013 was 78 points, and in rural areas – 83 points).

4. The task of social science at the new stage of development of the Russian society.

Both international and domestic events of recent months have shown that at present the Russian society is ready to support the policy of the President aimed at the renewal of the country. But this requires a clear organization of bilateral cooperation between state authorities and population at all levels (federal, regional, municipal). Scientific basis for such interaction can be provided by domestic sociology that has accumulated considerable potential in the course of its development, taking into account the specifics of mentality of the Russian society. To unlock the potential of sociological science, certain key problems, which hamper

Table 4. Index of Public Mood in the Region

Territory	2007	2011	2012	2013	2013		
					to 2012	to 2011	to 2007
Vologda Oblast	121.6	111.4	109.5	109.6	0	-2	-12
Major cities	122.6	115.9	115.0	115.9	+1	0	-7
<i>Vologda</i>	<i>117.9</i>	<i>112.4</i>	<i>111.1</i>	<i>111.9</i>	<i>+1</i>	<i>-1</i>	<i>-6</i>
<i>Cherepovets</i>	<i>127.0</i>	<i>119.2</i>	<i>118.7</i>	<i>119.7</i>	<i>+1</i>	<i>+1</i>	<i>-7</i>
Districts, including	120.6	107.1	104.2	103.0	-1	-4	-18
<i>Urban area</i>	<i>120.6</i>	<i>106.4</i>	<i>104.9</i>	<i>103.1</i>	<i>-2</i>	<i>-3</i>	<i>-18</i>
<i>Rural area</i>	<i>120.5</i>	<i>107.8</i>	<i>103.5</i>	<i>102.9</i>	<i>-1</i>	<i>-5</i>	<i>-18</i>

the development of the scientific community in the 21st century, should be overcome; they are: insufficient demand of the authorities for the information obtained through sociological studies; fragmentation within the sociological community itself; lack of coordination of experience of independent research.

The methodology for constructing the Index of Public Mood in the Region is just one attempt to work out a comprehensive approach to assessing the efficiency of public administration. Other subjects of the Russian Federation (Lipetsk, Rostov, Vladimir oblasts, etc.) have an experience of using sociological methods, but as long as the authorities at all levels are not interested in such studies, it is difficult to talk about the systemic nature of the sociology of public administration.

The authorities should develop the need for unbiased, accurate information about public perceptions of socio-economic and political situation in the country; the authorities should require that science provide them with the data on the dynamics of public opinion. And it is necessary to remember that

a competent, stable, reliable public opinion is formulated primarily in open debate.

It is necessary to strengthen the role of the Russian Academy of Sciences as an independent institution, which coordinates sociological research; besides, it is necessary to enhance support to promising regional scientific schools and young scientists, to promote the search for new forms of inclusion of the results of Russian sociology in the world science. Sociology will be able to perform its function only when the system foundation of the research is fixed in the legislation and when there are the unified mechanisms for monitoring public opinion and analyzing the data obtained with its help.

As life and social relations become more complex, the thematic field of sociological science will be expanded, new areas will appear that will require sociological approaches to their measurement. However, one should always remember that the issues, which are crucial for social development and which determine the viability of the country, should not remain without attention, control and comprehensive support from the state.

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