

# Social Well-being Indexes of Russians Fall Because of Economic Crisis – Poll

December 23, 2015



The social well-being indexes of Russians fell in December to reach a several-year low amid the economic crisis and complicated political situation, the state-run pollster VTsIOM reported Wednesday.

Indexes are averages of the participants' positive, moderate and negative estimates.

The welfare self-estimate index fell 10 points compared with November's and reached the low levels of 2009. Meanwhile, 24 percent of Russians estimate their financial situation as “bad.”

The social optimism index fell 17 points compared with September. Only 27 percent of Russians believe that their life is going to improve next year. Their vision of Russia's economic situation is also more negative than in the previous years — 33 percent of VTsIOM respondents see it as bad.

Nevertheless, the overall country's development estimates are still mostly positive — 45 percent of people polled by VTsIOM responded positively. Only 17 percent think otherwise, and all others hadn't made up their minds yet.

The poll was conducted on Dec. 12-13 among 1,600 participants in 46 Russian regions, and had a margin of error not exceeding 3.5 percent.

The main reason for the decline in Russians' social optimism is the ongoing economic crisis, and the consequences they have already noticed, VTsIOM director Valery Fedorov said.

“Real income decreased by 10 percent this year and the ruble collapse amid the current oil market depression resulted in negative perspectives for an economic rise. A lack of 'light at the end of the tunnel' depresses people the most,” Fedorov said.

Another reason for the decline in indexes is that people don't understand the current political and economic climate, political expert Alexei Makarkin told the Vedomosti newspaper Wednesday.

The annexation of Crimea and the Donbass conflict were something people could understand and support, but Syria is just “another Muslim country” far away from them, Makarkin said. “The situation is more complicated and disturbing now, [so] it strengthens distrust,” expert said.

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