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**SOCIAL SENSE OF THE SAMARA REGION POPULATION**

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***Abstract***

The article deals with the problem of social well-being - one of the key problems of the vital activity of society and person. The authors of the article studied the social well-being of the Samara region population in the course of two sociological surveys in 2011 and 2015. The research is based on the methodological approach developed by the Center of Socio-Cultural Changes Study, part of the Institute of Philosophy, Russian Academy of Sciences, under the guidance of Corresponding Member of the Russian Academy of Sciences N.I. Lapin. Social well-being of the population is one of the basic characteristics of a person, along with his physical condition and reflects a completely different sphere of human life: his emotional and psychological state. The article presents different approaches to the definition and measurement of social well-being. It is necessary to highlight the fact that social well-being is a subjective-value definition of the personality of his state in various areas of his life, each of which is characterized by specific criteria, indication and indicators. Social well-being index of the Samara region population was calculated, compared with other regions, based on simple sociological empirical indicators (answers of respondents), and the study shows dependence of social well-being and its indicators on the financial situation of the population.

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**Keywords:** Region, financial situation, protection factor, general life satisfaction rate, optimism coefficient, social well-being index.



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## 1. Introduction

The concept of "social well-being" was introduced in the scientific literature in the 1970s. Similar terms - "subjective well-being", "life-quality perception" and even "happiness level" are used in American socio-psychological and economic research (Bradburn, 1969; Campbell, Converse, & Rodgers, 1976; Andrews, 1983; Diener, Oishi, & Lucas, 2003).

There is a continuing discussion about the theoretical distinction between these concepts in foreign scientific literature. However, apart from some nuances, it can be concluded that researchers use them interchangeably (Veenhoven, 2006). Moreover, despite the length of the scientific discussion and using the "life satisfaction" category and its synonyms, the difficulty in interpretation remains to this day (Veenhoven, 2007). This difficulty is due, firstly, to different understanding of this category, depending on the general normative ideas about it, which differ in different cultures (Ye, Ng, & Lian, 2015), and secondly, due to the fact that scientists apply different methodological approaches to the study of this phenomenon (Gorshkov & Petukhov, 2017, pp. 77-78). As a result, life satisfaction is studied as a whole, simultaneously with the study of satisfaction with its different spheres. Despite the obvious interrelation of these two approaches, they are rarely used together, although this methodological synthesis provides significant predictive capabilities and meaningful conclusions for developing and implementing socio-economic measures by the state and municipal authorities.

Different interpretations of the "social well-being" concept are proposed in Russian sociology. Toshchenko and Kharchenko (1996) consider social well-being as an initial structural element of social mood. The resulting indicator of social well-being is the need for self-preservation of a social being, a group and society member, as well as an assessment of the well-being degree and level of the surrounding microenvironment.

Mikhailova (2010) considers the individual social well-being "as a certain state of experiencing comfort or discomfort of being in society". It is noted that the state of health is a special psychological formation, arising under the influence of various external factors.

Golovakha, Panina, & Gorbachik (1998) determine the social well-being of people as their generalized emotional-evaluative response to social changes and their position in a transforming society.

Despite the abundance of definitions and approaches to the concept of "social well-being", it is possible to single out the common to all of them - social well-being is a subjective-axiological definition by a person of their state in various life areas, characterized by specific criteria, indexes and indicators.

Social well-being of the population is one of the basic characteristics of a person, along with their physical condition. If the physical condition of a person can be measured and diagnosed using medical equipment (not always successfully), then diagnosing social well-being is many times more difficult because it is a complex integral indicator that reflects completely different spheres of human activity: their emotional and psychological state. The social well-being index (SWBI) is a collective indicator of the person's objective and subjective position and condition.

Researchers propose a different set of indicators characterizing the social well-being of the population. A list of objective and subjective indicators of social well-being was proposed in the study by Golovakha, Panina, and Gorbachik (1998). The respondents had to evaluate virtually all spheres of personal activity, such as "financial well-being", "personal security", "political conditions of life

satisfaction”, “interpersonal relations”, “self-assessment of their education and abilities”, “state of physical and mental health”, “availability of vital and prestigious goods”, “confidence in their abilities and future” (Golovakha et al., 1998).

The basic values of the social well-being index (SWBI) according to the methodological approach developed by the Center of Socio-Cultural Changes Study, part of the Institute of Philosophy, Russian Academy of Sciences, under the guidance of Corresponding Member of the Russian Academy of Sciences Lapin (Lapin & Belyaeva, 2006; Lapin & Belyaeva, 2010) are protection factor (PF), general life satisfaction rate (GLSR) and the optimism coefficient (OC). The social well-being index is calculated as the average of the three mentioned above.

The authors of the article analysed of the population social well-being in the course of two sociological surveys of the Samara region (2011, 2015), and calculated it according to the standard methodology developed by the Center of Socio-Cultural Changes Study, part of the Institute of Philosophy, Russian Academy of Sciences (RAS). The research results are presented in this article.

## **2. Problem Statement**

To calculate the social well-being index of the Samara region population using the data obtained in the course of two sociological surveys (2011, 2015), its changes and factors affecting the social well-being index and its dynamics.

The social well-being index is calculated as the average of the sum of three: protection factor (PF), general life satisfaction rate (GLSR) and the optimism coefficient (OC).

Protection factor (PF) is calculated as the average value of the population protection from 10 hazards. The security of the population from social hazards is determined from the respondents' answers to the question “How much do you personally feel protected from various dangers today?”

General life satisfaction rate (GLSR) is calculated on the basis of the respondents' answers to the question “How satisfied are you with your life in general?”

The optimism coefficient (OC) is based on three questions: “Are you confident or not sure about your future today?”, “Have you and your family started to live better or worse this year?” and “Do you think you and your family will live better or worse next year?”.

## **3. Research Questions**

The value of the social well-being index of the Samara region population and its components: protection factor (PF), general life satisfaction rate (GLSR) and the optimism coefficient (OC).

The value of each component, its share and influence on the social well-being index.

Comparison of the social well-being of the Samara region population with other regions, where similar studies were carried out using a comparable methodology.

The value of financial factors and their impact on the social well-being and its components.

#### **4. Purpose of the Study**

On the basis of the developed methodology, using sociological surveys, derive the social well-being index of the Samara region population, compare it with other regions and identify the influence of financial factors on the social well-being of the population.

#### **5. Research Methods**

The methodological basis of the research is the anthroposocietal approach (Lapin & Belyaeva, 2009). According to this approach, the whole society, its regions and individual settlements are characterized by five main functions: life-supporting, spiritual-integrating, status-differentiating, power-regulating and anthro-po-communicative, which are implemented and supported by the respective specific institutions. Regional environment can both favor and hinder the realization of life strategies and the sociocultural potential of an individual. From the standpoint of an anthroposocietal approach, the attention of researchers is distributed between two poles: one pole is formed by typological personality characteristics that allow social factors to operate in this region successfully or unsuccessfully for themselves and for the region, the other pole are the characteristics of the region itself towards the residents of a given settlement.

The socio-cultural foundations of the region are: historical, natural and geographical heritage, population and its social well-being, cultural capital and potential, standard of living, social differentiation and mobility, labor and innovation activity, public safety and management.

In accordance with the methodological approach, statistical and sociological research methods were used to study the socio-cultural characteristics of the region. To study social well-being, we conducted a sociological survey and compared the results with other regions.

#### **6. Findings**

As a result of the research, the following findings were obtained.

##### **6.1. Protection Factor**

The results of the study show that the population of the Samara region believes that it is protected from infringements due to their nationality and religious beliefs to a greater extent than from other problems / dangers and to a lesser extent protected from crime, arbitrariness of officials, environmental threat, poverty and arbitrariness law enforcement.

The data for the Samara region in general coincide with the data for other regions (Boyko et al., 2015), Kursk Region: (Kogai, Pasovets, Kogai, & Yatskova, 2015), Tyumen Region: (Andrianova, Davydenko, & Romashkina, 2011) and data of the All-Russian monitoring "Values and interests of the population of Russia", conducted in 2010.

There are five main problems / dangers among the population of Russia and the Samara region: crime, poverty, arbitrariness of officials, environmental threat and arbitrariness of law enforcement agencies.

The protection factor (PF) of the Samara region population was 0.61 in 2011 and 0.63 in 2015. In the Russian Federation, the protection factor was 0.61 in 2006 and 0.63 in 2010.

**Table 01.** Protection factor (PF)

Samara Region		Chuvash Republic		Kursk Region		Tyumen Region	
2011	2015	2006	2012	2007	2012	2006	2009
0,61	0,63	0,67	0,63	0,62	0,59	0,60	0,63

On the whole, the protection factor of the Russian Federation population has increased. The lack of protection of the population from such dangers as the arbitrariness of officials, arbitrariness of law enforcement agencies, poverty and crime has decreased. The insecurity from environmental threats, oppression due to age, gender, religious and political beliefs has increased.

### 6.2. General Life Satisfaction Rate (GLSR)

In our study, life satisfaction was considered not as a complex indicator (Tikhonova, 2015; Latova, 2017), but as a simple empirical one, measured by the respondents' answer to the question “How satisfied are you with your life in general?” The majority of the Samara region population (65%) and the Russian Federation (59%) are satisfied with their lives. The results of the study show that the general life satisfaction rate (GLSR) in the Samara region is higher than in the Russian Federation (0.72 vs. 0.68). The rate remained the same in 2015.

**Table 02.** General life satisfaction rate (GLSR)

Samara Region		Chuvash Republic		Kursk Region		Tyumen Region	
2011	2015	2006	2012	2007	2012	2006	2009
0,72	0,72	0,68	0,64	0,64	0,67	0,72	0,72

The life satisfaction rate is related to the financial situation of a person. The study showed that the rich and affluent segments of the population are more satisfied with their lives than the needy, which, in turn, confirms the conclusion about the preservation and increase of social distances in Russian society - both in general and in the regional context (Belyaeva, 2018).

### 6.3. The optimism coefficient (OC)

The social optimism coefficient consists of three indicators: confidence in the future, a comparison of the standard of living with the past year and the expectations for the next year.

More than half of the Samara region population is confident in their future. There was no particular difference in confidence in the future for the urban and rural population in the research process.

The data for the Samara region is fully comparable with the results for the Russian Federation as a whole for 2010. The coefficient in the Samara region and in Russia was 0.65 in 2011, and 0.68 in 2015.

Confidence in the future is correlated with the financial situation of a person. The better the financial situation of a person is and the higher the social stratum, the higher is the level of confidence in

their future. Among the poor, only 26% (2011) and 23% (2015) of the population are confident in their future, among the rich, this figure rises to 73% (2011) and 55% (2015).

Confidence in the future depends on such an indicator as a comparison of your standard of living with the past year. The coefficient of comparison of living standards with the previous year in the Samara region in 2011 was 0.60, in Russia in 2010 - 0.58, which is significantly lower than in 2006 (0.64). In 2015, the indicator of the coefficient of comparison of living standards with the previous year was already 0.55. The fall of this indicator in Russia is a consequence of the global financial crisis.

In the Samara region, according to a 2011 survey, 22% of respondents have become better off, 21% of the population - worse. For 55% of respondents, nothing has changed in their standard of living in 2011 compared to 2010. This data is comparable with the data for the Russian Federation in 2010.

The study showed a decline in the standard of living of the Samara region population in 2015. Only 14% of respondents have become better off compared to last year, and 37% are worse off.

Among the social strata in 2011, the rich and wealthy became better off. The proportion of those whose standard of living has risen is 68% and 61%, respectively. In the poor and destitute strata of the population, the proportion of those whose standard of living has increased compared to last year was only 9% and 11%, respectively.

The economic crisis of 2014-2015 had a significant impact on all segments of the population. However, it is the middle strata of the population that is experiencing the greatest consequences of the economic crisis. If in 2011 68 and 61% of the rich and wealthy began to live better than last year, in 2015 only 13 and 14%, respectively, could agree with this statement.

Comparing their standard of living with the past year, assessing it at the present time, the population builds a strategy for the perception of the future life and especially the level of their financial well-being.

The expectation for future of the population was measured depending on the answer to the question: "Do you think that you and your family will live better or worse in the coming year?"

Every fourth respondent believes that next year they will live better, about the same number said that they will live worse and almost every third believes that nothing will change in their lives.

The quantitative value of the population living standard expectation in the Samara region was 0.66 in 2011. This is about as much as in the Russian Federation as a whole in 2006 and 2010. (0.66 and 0.65, respectively). In 2015, the coefficient decreased to 0.61.

Among the social strata, the most optimistic in terms of their financial well-being are the rich and wealthy segments of the population. In 2011, the share of those who believe that they will live better next year in these strata is 56% and 40%, respectively. In the poor and destitute sections of the population, the proportion of those who believe that they will live better next year was only 14% and 13%, respectively.

In 2015, these indicators significantly decreased among the rich and wealthy segments of the population.

The social optimism coefficient consists of three indicators: confidence in the future, a comparison of the standard of living with the past year and the expectations of the population next year. As a result of the quantitative analysis of these indicators, the optimism coefficient (OC) in the Samara region was 0.64

in 2011. In the Russian Federation, the optimism coefficient was 0.63 in 2006 and 2010. In 2015 the optimism coefficient in the Samara region decreased to 0.61.

**Table 03.** Optimism coefficient (OC)

Samara Region		Chuvash Republic		Kursk Region		Tyumen Region	
2011	2015	2006	2012	2007	2012	2006	2009
0,64	0,61	0,56	0,66	0,62	0,63	0,68	0,63

#### 6.4. Social well-being index

As a result of calculating the protection factor (PF), the general life satisfaction rate (GLSR) and the optimism coefficient (OC), a quantitative value of the social well-being index (SWBI) was obtained, which is calculated as the average of the above-mentioned three.

In the Samara region, the social well-being index of the population was 0.66 in 2011, which is slightly higher than the same indicator for the Russian Federation in 2010 (0.63). In 2015, the social well-being index in the Samara region dropped to 0.65, which is comparable with other regions.

Of the three indicators that make up the social well-being index, in the Samara region, the protection factor is lower than the average for the Russian Federation.

**Table 04.** Social well-being index (SWBI)

Samara Region		Chuvash Republic		Kursk Region		Tyumen Region	
2011	2015	2006	2012	2007	2012	2006	2011
0,66	0,65	0,63	0,64	0,63	0,63	0,64	0,65

According to the standard method, if the value of the social well-being index (SWBI) is below 0.51, it indicates a lack of sustainability of the society or region. The index of social well-being of the Samara region population was 0.66 in 2011 and 0.65 in 2015, which is slightly higher than the similar indicator for the Russian Federation.

## 7. Conclusion

The results of the study showed that the Samara region population believes that it is protected from infringements due to their nationality and religious beliefs to a greater extent than from other problems / dangers and to a lesser extent protected from crime, arbitrariness of officials, environmental threat, poverty and arbitrariness of law enforcement agencies. The protection factor in the Samara region is average among other regions of Russia.

The majority of the Samara region population is satisfied with their lives. The life satisfaction rate, as well as the optimism coefficient in the Samara region is slightly higher than in the Russian Federation.

The social well-being index in the Samara region population was 0.66 in 2011, 0.65 in 2015, which is slightly higher than the similar indicator for the Russian Federation in 2010 (0.63). Of the three

indicators that make up the social well-being index, the protection factor in the Samara region is lower than the average for the Russian Federation.

Financial situation has a significant impact on all components and the social well-being of people in general. The higher the standard of living is, the higher are all the indicators of the population social well-being.

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