

Poll: Russian Material Confidence Exceeds Pre-Crisis Level

By [The Moscow Times](#)

September 02, 2010

The  Moscow Times

Russians' sense of material well-being is even higher than before the global economic crisis struck two years ago, poll results released Thursday said, as the country returns to growth.

The number of people who said they struggle to afford everyday consumer products and clothes fell to the lowest level since polling began a decade ago, the poll by the independent polling agency Levada Center concluded.

Forty-eight percent of respondents said they could comfortably afford food and clothes, up from 39 percent last year. Sixteen percent said they were able to invest in "long-term goods" like furniture and consumer electronics, up from 13 percent.

"This shows the sharpest social problems caused by the crisis are fading," said Marina Krasilnikova, head of Levada's standards of living division.

"But this does not mean we have exited the crisis," Krasilnikova said. "Our polls say many believe the crisis will last up to five years."

Russia was hit hard by the global financial crisis in late 2008, suffering its worst economic contraction in 15 years and ending a decade of robust growth. The country's gross domestic product contracted 7.9 percent in 2009, but it is expected to grow 4 percent this year.

On average, Russians earned 21,360 rubles (\$696) in July, up from 18,872 rubles (\$615) a year earlier, government figures showed.

The swift recovery could boost the ruling tandem of Prime Minister Vladimir Putin and President Dmitry Medvedev, who face parliamentary elections in 2011 followed by a presidential race in 2012.

Sixty-nine percent of Russians said they approved of Medvedev and 72 percent said they approved of Putin in a poll released Thursday by state-funded pollster VTsIOM. The number suggested that the way the two politicians handled this summer's drought, the worst on record, did not dent their ratings.

The Levada survey said the number of people who said they could buy "expensive products" such as apartments and vacation homes remained at about 1 percent, where it has hovered for the past decade.

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