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INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Over 50% Believe Civil Servants Want Wealth

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More than half of Russians say the country's leaders are only concerned about their jobs and wealth, according to a new survey.

Fifty-five percent of respondents said the ruling elites are "only worried about their material and professional wellbeing," up from 33 percent in March 2010, the independent Center for Political Technologies said on its web site Friday.

The poll found that only 12 percent of Russians see their leaders as qualified to lead the country in the right direction, almost half the level of 23 percent a year earlier. President Dmitry Medvedev and Prime Minister Vladimir Putin have seen their approval ratings slump as the economic recovery slows. Neither has ruled out running for president next year.

"This is a significant increase," said Igor Bunin, president of the Center for Political Technologies, which carries out political research. "Even with slightly bastardized elections, people start thinking and drawing comparisons."

Wildfires that left Moscow and other cities filled with smoke a year ago and a terrorist attack on the city's Domodedovo Airport in January that killed 37 people have also hurt public opinion, Bunin said by telephone.

Twelve percent said Russia's rulers were "honest but weak people who were unable to rule" as needed. Another 12 percent said the leaders, dominated by Putin's United Russia party, are "honest but incompetent people who don't know how to break the country's dependence on the raw material sector," the pollster said. One in 10 people said they were not sure how to characterize the people in power.

The survey of 1,600 people was conducted from July 15 to 19 and has a margin of error of 3.4 percentage points.

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