

Russians' Confidence in State TV Slipping

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Prime Minister Vladimir Putin making a speech on state-run Rossiya 24 news channel. **Andrei Makhonin**

Russians' faith in the news on state television has dropped over the past year, even though nearly three-fourths of the population still rely on it to keep abreast of what's happening in the country, a new survey said Thursday.

The national survey, conducted by the independent Levada Center pollster, also found that more Russians are going online for news but are not interested in the information offered by foreign news organizations.

Seventy-three percent of Russians believe that they get all the news that they need from the national television channels Channel One, Rossiya, Kultura and local RTR stations — all of which are state owned, Levada said, according to Interfax.

That's in comparison to 87 percent of Russians who tuned in for the news according to a similar survey conducted at the same time last year, it said.

Russians have long relied on television as their main source of news — a fact not lost on the government, which has kept a tight grip on who and what is featured on television for the past decade. But cracks have appeared in recent months amid mass protests against election fraud and President-elect Vladimir Putin. In a first, state television has given some airtime to the protests and opposition figures.

President Dmitry Medvedev, meanwhile, has called for the creation of a true public television station.

The second most important source of news for Russians is the Internet, with 13 percent going online for information, the survey said. That is an increase from 8 percent last year.

Another 8 percent watch other television channels, including state-controlled NTV and Kremlin-friendly Ren-TV, while the rest get news from the radio (2 percent), friends or neighbors (2 percent), newspapers (1 percent) and foreign media (less than 1 percent).

No margin of error was immediately available, although previous Lavada surveys have put it around 3.4 percentage points.

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