

Pollster Says Approval for Putin at 12-Year Low

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Concerns over President Vladimir Putin's ability to improve living standards have pushed his approval rating to its lowest in more than 12 years, an independent polling agency said Thursday.

In a survey by the Levada Center, 62 percent of respondents voiced approval for Putin's performance in the country's highest office, down from 65 percent in December.

That is still higher than the approval rating of many Western leaders. But the figure from the survey, conducted between Jan. 18 and Jan. 21, was the lowest since June 2000, a month after the start of his first term.

Since he started his third term in May, his approval rating in the monthly survey has fluctuated between 69 percent that month and 63 percent in August and November.

"This is a very stable trend: falling confidence, the declining legitimacy of the authorities," Levada director Lev Gudkov said.

The most important factor was "the loss of belief that Putin can guarantee an economic path for the country that leads to an improvement in living standards."

The former KGB officer's approval rating exceeded 70 percent for most of his 2000–2008 presidency, a time of spectacular growth driven by rising world oil prices, and it sometimes rose above 80 percent.

Inflation overtook wage increases in Russia for the first time after the global financial crisis, and economic growth has not fully recovered, coming in at 3.7 percent last year after averaging 7 percent during Putin's first stint as president.

After four years as prime minister, Putin won the presidency again in March despite a series of opposition protests that drew tens of thousands of people and underscored discontent among the urban middle class with his prolonged dominance.

Despite growing dissatisfaction over corruption and failings in public services such as health care, law enforcement and schools, Gudkov said Putin can count on a broad support base, which ensures that his rating will likely never dip below 30 percent.

Asked to name which politicians they trusted most, 38 percent of those polled by Levada in January named Putin, up from 34 percent in December. Levada polled 1,596 Russians adults nationwide, with a margin of error of 3.4 percent.

Putin has not ruled out seeking another six-year term in 2018. He has used choreographed television appearances to sculpt the image of a tough, sharp-minded leader in command of economic facts and figures but with a finger on the pulse of the people.

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