Russians to Skip May Day Rallies Even as Protest Mood Grows

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Correction appended.

Despite an uptick in protest sentiment, most Russians will stay away from street rallies during the May Day holidays, according to a new poll.

At least 70 percent of respondents said they were not planning to participate in annual street rallies either for or against the authorities on May 1, the independent pollster Levada Center said.

The poll registered a slight rise in protest sentiment among respondents, growing to 16 percent from 10 percent a year ago. The share of people who said they would rally in support of the authorities on Wednesday remained the same at 17 percent.

Alexei Grazhdankin, deputy director of the Levada Center, linked the rise in the protest mood in society with an overall apathy for May Day. The poll found that the number of Russians who

will celebrate May 1 in one way or another has dropped from 58 percent in 2011 to 52 percent now.

"People began to celebrate May Day again in the early to mid-2000s as their material well-being and the situation in the country got better," he told Izvestia. "This year's plunge testifies to the pessimistic feelings accumulating in society."

He noted that the current rise in protest sentiment reflected in the poll is practically unrelated to recent anti-Kremlin street protests, which were driven primarily by the well-educated, well-off residents of big cities.

"By its geographical and social distribution, this protest is quite different. People with a low level of education who are living at or below the poverty line in small and medium-sized towns are ready to join the protests," Grazhdankin said.

A large anti-Kremlin rally is planned in Moscow on May 6.

Correction: An earlier web version of this story incorrectly gave the date for the anti-Kremlin rally as May 7. The rally is planned for May 6.

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