The Moscow Times
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INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

# 'Old New Year' Has Enduring Popularity in Russia

By The Moscow Times

January 13, 2014

Nearly half of Russians are planning to ring in the "Old New Year" on Monday night, in a sign of the enduring popularity of the holiday based on the old Julian calendar.

Old New Year is a legacy of the calendar that the country used before the 1917 Bolshevik revolution. The Russian Orthodox Church still follows that calendar, making Christmas fall on Jan. 7, followed by "Old New Year" on Jan. 14.

About 48 percent of Russians planned to celebrate the holiday this year, a survey published by pollster Levada Center showed.

The number marks a slight decline from the previous year, when 52 percent of respondents said they would celebrate the Old New Year.

Despite its tsarist-era origins, "Old New Year" remained popular during the Soviet era, when

many Russians held a somewhat toned-down version of their Dec. 31 New Year's Eve festivities on Jan. 14.

"Old New Year" traditionally marks the end of the holiday season for many Russians and many keep up their decorations and New Year trees until that day.

The number of Russians celebrating "Old New Year" peaked at 61 percent in 2001, from 49 percent in 1999, before dropping again to 47 percent in 2005, a summary of previous years' research published on the Levada Center website showed.

Since the introduction of a two-week New Year holiday in 2005, the number of people who planned to include "Old New Year" festivities in their celebrations has remained virtually unchanged, hovering at around half of the population.

The latest poll, conducted in late December among 1,603 people around Russia, gave a 3.4 percent margin of error.

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