

Putin's Approval Rating Up to 80%, Poll Says

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The  **Moscow Times**

President Vladimir Putin's approval rating has reached 80 percent, 14 years to the day since he first became head of state, according to a poll published Wednesday.

The survey published by the independent Levada Center pollster shows that Putin's popularity has been on an upward curve since January, when it was 65 percent.

The Crimea region's becoming a part of Russia, which Putin made official by signing a treaty into law on Friday, and the success of the Winter Olympics in Sochi are apparently the key contributors to the ratings surge. A separate recent poll by state-run VTsIOM showed that over 90 percent of Russians supported Crimea joining to Russia.

Putin enjoyed his highest approval rating, 85 percent, at the time of the March 2008 presidential election that was won by Dmitry Medvedev, while his all-time low of 63 percent came in March 2013, less than a year into his third term.

The most recent poll was conducted among 1,603 Russians in 130 urban centers from March

21 to 24. The margin of error did not exceed 3.4 percent.

A separate poll carried out Monday among 3,000 Russians by the Public Opinion Foundation showed that 64 percent would vote for Putin if an election were to be held this weekend, a 4 percent increase from last week's figure. The Public Opinion Foundation's poll had a margin of error no higher than 3.3 percent.

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