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Navalny's Popularity Takes a Dive, Poll Says

By Christopher Brennan

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Once the darling of Russia's opposition movement, Alexei Navalny has seen his reputation fall in recent months as he has made more headlines for the criminal cases launched against him than for his political activities.

The number of Russians who have "nothing good to say about him," increased from eight percent to 12 percent between October and April, according to a poll released by independent research organization the Levada Center on Monday.

Of those polled, 39 percent expressed indifference to the activist.

The percentage of respondents who had "nothing bad to say" about Navalny has dipped from 17 percent to 11 percent since October.

Navalny finished second in the Moscow mayoral election in September. Around that same

time, a five-year prison sentence he received for a fraud conviction was suspended to much media fanfare.

Navalny has largely ducked out of the political arena in recent months as various legal proceedings have been brought against him.

In February he was placed under house arrest in connection with another fraud case involving French cosmetics company Yves Rocher.

The conditions of his confinement include a ban on using the Internet or speaking to anyone other than relatives. Those close to the politician continue to man his social media accounts, though his LiveJournal blog has been blocked by Russian authorities and is only accessible through foreign Internet servers.

While the percentage of respondents who were familiar with Navalny surged from 37 percent to 54 percent between March and October 2013, that number has since dropped to 49 percent according to the latest poll.

Navalny issued a tongue-in-cheek response to the Levada poll via Twitter on Monday, saying "No one knows [me] and everyone feels indifferent. #success."

The Levada Center poll carried a 3.4 percent margin of error and was conducted among 1,602 respondents throughout Russia between April 25 and 28.

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