

Death Penalty Falling Out of Favor Among Russians, Poll Shows

July 14, 2014



In 2009, the Constitutional Court extended the moratorium and ruled that no court in the country has the right to sentence anyone to death.

The number of Russians who support the death penalty has taken a nosedive in the last two years, independent pollster the Levada Center revealed Monday.

Although a provision in Russia's Criminal Code allows capital punishment for especially grave crimes, a moratorium has been in place since 1996. In 2009, the Constitutional Court extended the moratorium and ruled that no court in the country has the right to sentence anyone to death.

In late June, the Levada Center conducted a poll to gauge public perception of the death penalty in Russia.

Fifty-two percent of respondents said they were in favor of the death penalty, compared to 61 percent in 2012. Going further back, in 2002, that number stood at 73 percent.

There has likewise been a surge in the number of Russians who actively oppose capital punishment, from 24 percent in 2012 to 33 percent in 2014.

The majority of those who voted in favor of the death penalty were between the ages of 18 and 25, and most of them men. In Moscow, 49 percent of respondents expressed support for capital punishment.

The poll was conducted between June 20 and 23 among 1,600 adults across 134 Russian cities.

In recent years, several high-ranking officials have spoken out in favor of removing the moratorium, including Investigative Committee head Alexander Bastrykin. Speaking before State Duma deputies in May, Bastrykin expressed the view that the death penalty should remain effectively available in certain cases. Following a mass shooting in Belgorod in 2013, Bastrykin famously argued that a return to the death penalty should be discussed, and the public's opinion should be taken into account.

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