

Putin's Approval Rating Falls for First Time This Year

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Russian President Vladimir Putin arrives to speak to the media after talks with Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko in Minsk, Belarus.

President Vladimir Putin's approval rating has fallen for the first time this year after hitting record highs amid the ongoing crisis in Ukraine, a poll published this week by the independent Levada Center revealed.

Eighty-four percent of those polled said they approved of Putin's actions, showing a small drop from the 87 percent who expressed support at the beginning of this month. The number of respondents who expressed disapproval of Putin's actions grew from 13 percent earlier this month to 15 percent.

The number of those who approved of Russia's policies had also decreased, from 66 percent at the beginning of the month to 64 percent, according to the poll published Wednesday.

Putin's popularity has soared this year despite Western criticism of Russia's annexation of Crimea and alleged involvement in eastern Ukraine, climbing steadily from 80 percent

since March.

It hit an all-time high of 87 percent earlier this month, just weeks after the international community rounded on Putin for alleged Russian involvement in the downing over war-torn Ukraine of Malaysia Airlines Flight MH17, a catastrophe that claimed 298 lives on July 17.

Last year at this time, long before the Ukraine crisis erupted, the president's approval rating was 63 percent.

The poll was conducted from Aug. 22-25 among 1,600 adults in 46 Russian regions. The margin of error did not exceed 3.4 percent.

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