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36% of Russians Think Dual Citizens Should Have Fewer Rights

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More than a third of Russians support the notion that the fundamental rights of dual passport holders should be limited, though the majority of the population simply wants to keep dual citizens out of state office, a new poll showed.

Meanwhile, 15 percent professed their own desire to have a second passport or foreign residency permit, the RBC news site said Tuesday.

Thirty-six percent of respondents to a new survey by independent pollster Levada Center endorsed curbing rights for Russian citizens who also have a passport or residency permit for another country.

But another 50 percent stood against any legal crackdown on people with multiple passports, while 14 percent were undecided.

The deadline expired last week for Russians who hold more than one passport or a foreign residency permit to report themselves to the state.

In accordance with a law passed in June, those who hide a second citizenship or foreign residency permit now face community service or fines up to 200,000 rubles ($5,000).

The Levada Center poll questioned respondents on the types of rights curbs they supported for dual citizens.

A "ban from state service" was a runaway favorite, earning 68 percent.

A ban on working for companies with strategic importance to the state was endorsed by 58 percent of respondents to the question, which allowed for multiple answers.

Popular answers also included bans on running for office (48 percent) and heading state-owned media outlets (34 percent), as well as an income tax hike (22 percent).

But a foreign passport carries no moral stigma: 88 percent said they would not change their attitude toward a person for obtaining a second citizenship.

Only 1 percent of respondents said they themselves had a second passport or foreign residency permit, but 16 percent said they personally knew people falling within those categories.

Only 50,000 respondents reported their dual citizenship in time to meet the deadline, the Federal Migration Service said last week. The agency estimated that up to 6 million Russians may hold foreign passports.

So far, no criminal cases have been launched for failure to report dual citizenship.

Russians can get away with just a small fine if they miss the deadline but manage to report themselves before they are exposed as dual citizens.

"Those who cheat will have problems," the law's co-author Andrei Lugovoi told RBC.

The law's authors earlier said no rights curbs are in the cards for dual citizens. They have, however, already been banned from state service since 2004.

A recent draft law also proposes to prohibit them from working as notaries in Russia. Critics called the bill the first move to limit the rights of Russians with two or more passports, who are increasingly viewed with suspicion as Moscow's relations with the West deteriorate.

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