

# Fewer Russians Ready to Re-Elect Putin, Poll Shows

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Russia's President Vladimir Putin gestures as he speaks during a news conference after the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) in Milan, Oct. 17, 2014.

President Vladimir Putin's rating has fallen for the first time this year, a poll by the Levada Center showed Tuesday.

While a poll in August showed that 57 percent of respondents would vote for Putin if there were a presidential election the following weekend, a new poll conducted on Sept. 26-29 revealed that 49 percent would now vote for his re-election.

Presidential spokesman Dmitry Peskov on Tuesday shrugged off the rating change, saying in comments to the TASS news agency that "ratings are not a constant. They're numbers that are inclined to fluctuate."

According to Levada, Putin's rating had been steadily climbing since January, when it stood at 29 percent. The president's popularity rating skyrocketed after Russia's annexation of Crimea in March and throughout the ongoing conflict in Ukraine, despite several rounds of sanctions

imposed on Russia by the European Union and United States in connection with those events.

Alexei Grazhdankin, deputy director of the Levada Center, agreed with Peskov's statement, saying in comments to news website Lenta.ru that political ratings rarely stay at their peak.

The Levada Center's poll was conducted among 1,630 adults in 46 regions of Russia. The margin of error was no higher than 3.4 percent.

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