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INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Putin Crowned Russia's 'Politician of the Year'

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President Vladimir Putin

Russians have named President Vladimir Putin politician of the year for the 15th year running, a poll revealed Tuesday.

The survey, conducted by state-run pollster the Public Opinion Foundation, found that 68 percent of Russians chose to name the president as their "Person of the Year" in politics.

Putin has topped the poll every year since he first took the presidency in 2000. Last year, he accrued just 32 percent of the vote — meaning his support has more than doubled in the past 12 months, according to the poll.

Vladimir Zhirinovsky, the flamboyant leader of the Liberal Democrat party, finished in second place with 4 percent of this year's vote, while Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov came in third with 3 percent. Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev finished fourth, earning 2 percent of the vote.

It has been a busy year for Putin, who in March oversaw the annexation of Crimea from Ukraine, just weeks after his country hosted what was reportedly the most expensive Olympic Games in history.

Last week, influential magazine Time named him "second runner-up" on its 2014 list of most influential people in the world. The list was topped by Ebola fighters, and Ferguson protesters, respectively.

Putin was described by Time as an isolated "imperialist," whose aim was to restore the Russian Empire and project its influence into the world by offering an alternative to liberal Western democracies.

The Public Opinion Foundation poll was carried out on Dec. 7 among 1,500 people in 43 different regions. The margin of error was no greater than 3.6 percent.

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