

# Despite Economic Woes, 85 Percent of Russians Still Support Putin

January 29, 2015



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Against the backdrop of a dramatic economic downturn, 85 percent of Russians said they still support President Vladimir Putin's actions at the helm of Russia, the Levada Center independent pollster revealed Wednesday.

This figure has remained steady since November after peaking in October with a five-year high of 88 percent.

Only 15 percent of Russians said they do not support Putin as Russia's president, according to the study.

In addition, 55 percent of respondents said that domestic affairs are moving in the right direction, while 27 percent said the opposite.

The poll also shed light into respondents views on the trustworthiness of Russia's leaders.

Asked which official they believed to be most trustworthy among Russia's ruling elite, 62 percent named Putin, 27 percent named Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu, 18 percent chose Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev and 12 percent chose Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov. Chechnya's strongman leader Ramzan Kadyrov, who has received widespread criticism for his republic's human rights record, scored 5 percent of the vote.

Asked which politicians were the least trustworthy in Russia, a surprising number of opposition activists who are not in fact politicians were chosen. While a few professional politicians, such as Vladimir Zhirinovsky and Boris Nemtsov, ranked among the least trustworthy, many respondents named activists such as socialite-turned-journalist Ksenia Sobchak and former oil tycoon Mikhail Khodorkovsky.

The poll was conducted among 1,600 people with the margin of error not exceeding 3.4 percent.

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