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# Putin's Approval Rating Creeps Up to 86%, Poll Shows

By The Moscow Times

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A Cossack stands next to a poster with a photo of Russia's President Vladimir Putin during a rally in his support in Stavropol.

Although President Vladimir Putin has maintained the approval of the vast majority of Russians, one-third of their countrymen believe Russia is headed in the wrong direction, independent Moscow-based pollster the Levada Center revealed Thursday.

Eighty-six percent of respondents to a poll conducted between Feb. 20 and 23 said they approved of Putin's actions as president. Two years ago, that figure stood at a comparatively meager 65 percent.

The poll also revealed strong support for the path Russia is currently on. While 29 percent of respondents said Russia was generally headed down the wrong path, 54 percent said Russia is moving in the right direction.

Putin's approval rating has grown slightly in recent weeks despite economic troubles brought on by Western sanctions over the Ukraine crisis, rising inflation, and continued criticism of the Kremlin by the international community. Between November 2014 and January 2015 the approval rating stood at 85 percent, by the Levada Center's count.

Putin's approval rating hit an all-time high of 87 percent last August, as violent battles raged between pro-Russian rebels and Kiev-loyal forces in east Ukraine.

A mere 13 percent of respondents to the Levada Center's poll expressed disapproval of the president, and another 1 percent expressed difficulty answering.

The poll was conducted among 1,600 adults in 134 cities across Russia, and had a margin of error of 3.4 percent.

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