The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Number of Russians Wanting to Leave Hits All-Time Low Despite Crisis — Poll

March 20, 2015



Despite an economic crisis, the number of Russians who wish to permanently leave their country has hit historic lows.

The number of Russians who wish to permanently leave their country has hit historic lows, a new poll showed Friday, despite an economic crisis brought on by Western sanctions over Ukraine and a fall in the global price of oil.

Overall, 83 percent of respondents surveyed by independent pollster Levada said they would "rather not" and "absolutely not" emigrate from Russia, while only 12 percent said they would want to leave the country forever.

The last time polls revealed similar sentiments was in April 2009, when 80 percent of Russians said they had no desire to emigrate from their country. Of note, Russia was then — as now — hit by a severe economic crisis.

Lev Gudkov, the head of Levada Center, told the RBC news site that the reason that more Russians want to stay in the country is because they first want to understand how the crisis

will affect them.

"In the first phase of a crisis, the desire to protest and emigrate declines. People want to adjust to their new circumstances, understand what they have to do. We can expect a surge in the amount of people who want to emigrate in one-and-a-half to two years time, as happened after the 2008 crisis," Gudkov was cited as saying.

The respondents who told Levada that they did wish to emigrate said they were seeking better living conditions abroad, a more secure future for their children, or were afraid of the lawlessness of Russian public officials.

According to Gudkov, those wanting to emigrate were some of the most successful Russians.

"These are well-educated people, who have earned money and have the social capital to leave," he told RBC, adding they would emigrate when they no longer saw any opportunities for themselves in Russia.

The Levada Center poll was conducted among 1,600 respondents in 46 Russian regions between March 13-16. The margin of error was no greater than 3.4 percent.

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