The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Putin's Approval Rating Remains at 86% Unfazed by Economic Crisis, Ukraine Conflict

By Jennifer Monaghan

May 28, 2015



Russian President Vladimir Putin gestures during the Business Russia forum in Moscow, Russia, May 26, 2015.

President Vladimir Putin continues to enjoy the approval of a staggering 86 percent of the Russian public, a poll revealed Thursday, indicating levels of support that many Western leaders could only dream of.

Putin's approval rating, announced by independent Moscow-based pollster the Levada Center, sat at the same level last month, when a similarly worded poll was conducted.

By comparison, the most recent Gallup Poll data shows that U.S. President Barack Obama enjoys the approval of a mere 46 percent of Americans. German Chancellor Angela Merkel currently has the approval of 70 percent of her compatriots, Reuters reported in early May.

Meanwhile, 63 percent of the public voiced approval of the actions of Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev, a decrease of three percentage points from a similar Levada poll conducted in April.

Putin's approval rating has soared in 2015 despite economic troubles brought on by Western sanctions over the Ukraine crisis, rising inflation and continued criticism of the Kremlin by the international community.

His current standing of 86 percent is also a far cry from May 2013, when a comparatively paltry 64 percent of the Russian public said they approved of his actions as president, according to a Levada Center poll.

In a further indication of the public backing for the president, when asked to name a handful of Russian politicians and public figures whom they trusted most, 62 percent named Putin — putting him at the top of the list, and representing an increase of two percentage points from last month's Levada poll.

Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu, in second place, was presented as a trustworthy character by 29 percent of the Russian public, placing him above Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev, whom 21 percent of people named, Levada found.

Sixty percent of those polled said they approved of the direction that the country is taking under Putin, again indicating no change from last month's Levada poll. Twenty-three percent of those polled said they disapproved of Russia's current path.

The Levada Center poll was conducted between May 22 and 25 among 1,600 people across 46 Russian regions, with a margin of error no greater than 3.4 percent.

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Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2015/05/28/putins-approval-rating-remains-at-86-unfazed-by-economic-crisis-ukraine-conflict-a46934