

Large Percentage of Russians Support Foreign Condom Ban – Poll

By [Matthew Bodner](#)

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Russians are generally open to a recent government proposal to restrict imports of foreign-made condoms, according to a poll released by an independent polling center on Thursday, as Moscow continues to look for ways to retaliate against Western sanctions.

In response to Western sanctions imposed against Russia for its annexation of Crimea last year, Moscow has been banning imports of Western-made goods in a bid to achieve economic independence.

Emboldened by the apparent popular support for the Russian government's economic tit-for-tat with the West, retaliatory measures have been growing increasingly outlandish. Russian authorities have recently been publicly burning and destroying foreign produce, and now want to ban foreign condoms.

According to a Levada Center poll released on Thursday, 43 percent of respondents said they would support a proposal forwarded by the Industry and Trade Ministry last week to ban imports of foreign condoms.

Thirty-six percent of the respondents said they didn't agree with the proposal, and 21 percent didn't have an answer.

The ban would also apply to advanced medical technology such as X-rays, ultrasound machines, defibrillators and incubators. When asked if they agreed with banning these items, only 26 percent of respondents said yes.

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If the Industry and Trade Ministry's condom ban went into force, it would only affect 2 percent of Russia's condom market, the Russian News Service reported. Corporations and individuals will still be free to buy foreign-made condoms.

Russia is deeply dependent on foreign condom imports. Russian condoms only supply up to 4 percent of the market, and most of those are produced by one factory, the Armavirsky Factory in the Krasnodar region of southern Russia.

Russians used 418 million condoms in 2013 — a 3 percent increase over 2012 — and the size of the market is valued at 9.8 billion rubles (\$156 million), according to a study published by the Discovery Research Group and reported by news agency RBC last year.

Condom usage continues to rise. News site Vesti.ru reported last week that Russians in April 2015 used 51 percent more condoms than they did in the same month last year.

Contact the author at m.bodner@imedia.ru

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