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Third of Russians Expect Rigged 2016 Duma Elections

By The Moscow Times

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More than a third of Russians believe that the upcoming State Duma elections will not be free and fair, a survey by independent pollster Levada Center revealed Friday.

Thirty eight percent of the 1600 respondents believed that the elections would involve slander, pressure on the electorate, ballot tampering, or other forms of electoral fraud. Forty four percent said that the elections would mostly run legally and fairly, while 19 percent declined to answer.

Amongst those surveyed by the center between February and May this year, 13 percent believed that the authorities would bribe voters, and 22 percent believed that local and regional electoral commissions would manipulate the votes.

A fifth of respondents believed that the elections would be free from any malpractice, with a further 26 percent declining to answer.

Respondents were split on whether a real struggle for power would take place inside the Duma during the September 16 elections, with 42 percent saying that the battle between parties was real, and another 42 percent claiming it was "just an imitation, with distribution of seats decided by the government."

The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe was excluded from participating in the Duma elections last month as international observers.

The State Duma elections in 2011 were seen as dishonest by many Russians, sparking protests in the capital. The Levada Center survey found that only 10 percent of respondents saw the last elections as "completely honest" five years on.

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