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Many Russians Don't Know the Jehovah's Witnesses, But They Still Want Them Banned

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A large majority of Russians support a ban on the Jehovah's Witnesses, a recent poll shows.

Roughly eighty percent of those questioned by the independent Levada Center pollster said they supported a Justice Ministry ban on the religious group after it was labeled an extremist sect.

Russia's Supreme Court formally banned the Jehovah's Witnesses in April, forcing 396 registered Jehovah's Witnesses organizations across the country to dissolve.

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Only 12 percent of respondents polled by Levada were unsupportive of the ban.

Meanwhile, about half of the 1600 people questioned admitted they had heard little to nothing about the controversy surrounding the group. Only 13 percent knew about the case in detail and 34 percent said they had "heard something" about it.

Supporters of the group have claimed the ban is an encroachment on religious freedom and say Russia's controversial anti-terrorism laws are being used to demonize religious minorities.

The survey was conducted from June 23 to 26, in 48 Russian regions.

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