

Independent Russian Pollster Self-Censors Ahead of Elections

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Anton Kardashov / Moskva News Agency

One of Russia's largest and most authoritative polling centers has decided not to publish any data during the upcoming presidential campaign over fears of repercussions related to its label as a "foreign agent."

Russia's Justice Ministry [labelled](#) the Levada Center a "foreign agent" in 2016 after an inspection of the pollster's documents determined that it was receiving foreign funding and engaging in political activity.

Related article: [Leading Independent Pollster Blacklisted as 'Foreign Agent'](#)

From the start of the 2018 presidential campaign, Levada has been forced to cease publishing its data, the pollster's director, Lev Gudkov, [told](#) the Vedomosti business daily.

Gudkov said his agency would continue to conduct surveys, but would not be allowed to publish results, as "foreign agents" are banned from taking part in elections according to the law.

"Violating the law can lead to fines or even the closure of the organization," Vedomosti cited Gudkov as saying.

In September, Levada's press secretary Karina Papiya said that Levada may publish exit polls after the presidential elections are over, the RBC business portal [reported](#).

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