

Putin's Support Drops Below 70% Ahead of Elections

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Vladimir Putin **Kremlin Press Service**

With a month and a half left until Russia stages a presidential vote, President Vladimir Putin's support in state-run polling has dipped below 70 percent for the first time in almost a year.

State-run pollster VTsIOM's latest survey conducted last week [showed](#) that 69.9 percent of respondents would vote for Putin if the elections took place this Sunday, dropping from 73.2 in the previous week. There is little doubt that Putin will be re-elected for a fourth term on March 18 as the Kremlin pursues a turnout of 70 percent with 70 percent of votes cast for the president.

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“There's a pattern of the authorities' ratings dropping during the election campaign, which has been observed for several years,” Putin's former speechwriter Abbas Gallyamov was [cited](#) as saying by the BBC's Russian service.

“This happened with United Russia [party] in the Duma elections in 2011 and 2016,” he said on Thursday.

Although Putin’s campaign managers have nothing to worry about, Gallyamov nevertheless noted that voters have a contradictory desire for both stability and change.

“Putin has used the word ‘changes’ many times but without being specific, so the emphasis is being made on stability. A certain amount of disappointment among the electorate is inevitable in this regard,” he was quoted as saying.

VTsIOM researcher Stepan Lvov attributes Putin’s dip in the ratings — still well ahead of his competitors by more than 60 percent — to the fast-approaching election date and the “crystallization of electoral choice.”

“Emotional judgements are being switched on and have influenced our respondents’ answers,” Lvov told the BBC Russian service.

VTsIOM is the biggest Russian pollster left to track opinion polls ahead of the vote after the Levada Center, one of Russia’s largest and most authoritative pollsters, [opted](#) not to publish election-related data over fears of repercussions.

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