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Nearly Half of Russians Willing to Share Messages With Authorities – Poll

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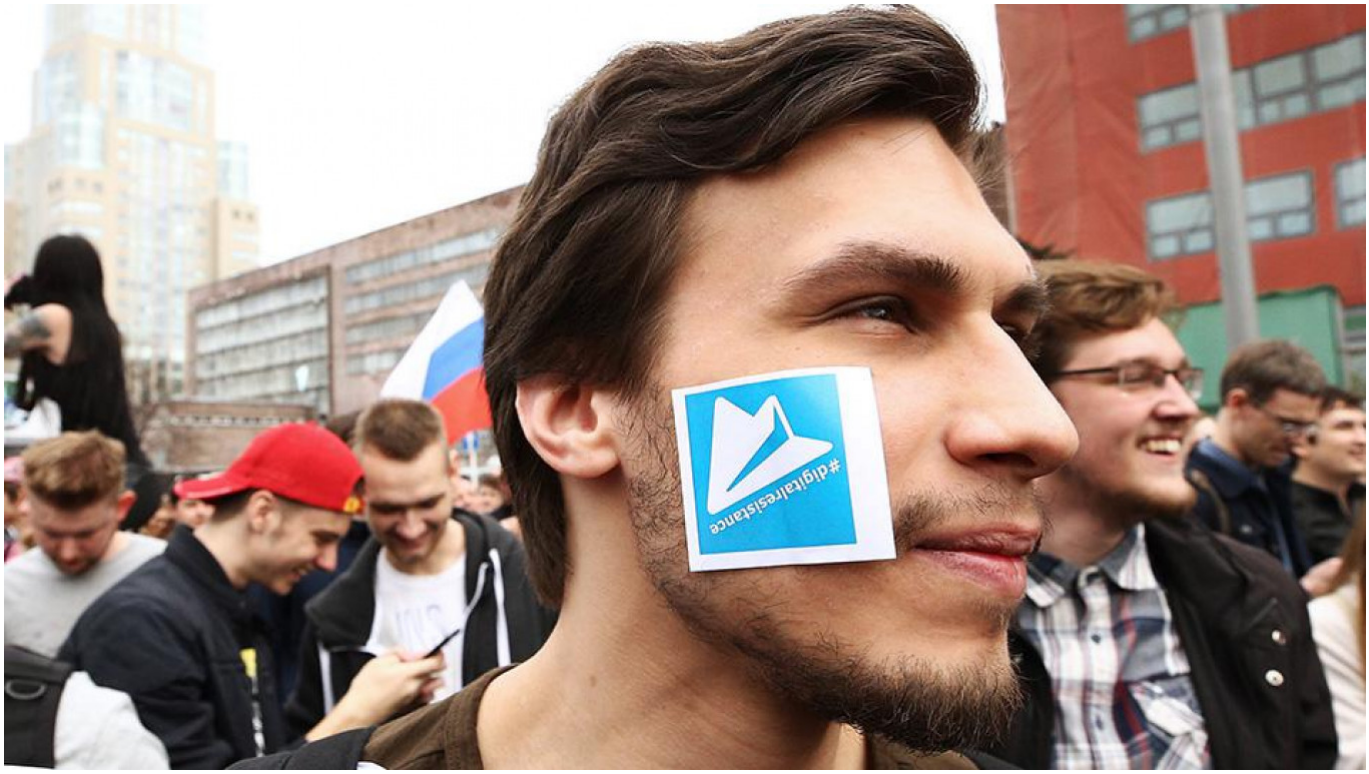

Mikhail Tereschenko / TASS

Forty-eight percent of Russians surveyed by the independent Levada Center have said they support laws requiring users to grant law enforcement authorities access to private messages.

Russia passed a series of draconian laws in 2016, among other steps requiring Internet companies to provide the Federal Security Service (FSB) with access to encrypted communications. The law was applied last year when a court fined the Telegram messaging service, leading to efforts to block the app for refusing to hand over encryption keys to the FSB.

Tech firm representatives, including Telegram founder and CEO Pavel Durov, have maintained that providing encryption keys or gaining access to information beyond the device is impossible.

Related article: What Russia's New Draconian Data Laws Mean for Users

A total of 48 percent of Levada's respondents are in favor of legislation which compels people to turn over their private correspondence, with 31 percent saying they "somewhat support" and 17 percent saying they "fully support" the laws.

Eighteen percent do not support such measures, 13 percent do not fully support, and 22 percent found it difficult to answer the question.

Of the 56 percent of respondents who told Levada they were aware of legislation forcing Internet companies to grant authorities access to users' messages, 59 percent said the measures "combat terrorism and crime" while 28 percent consider them censorship and a restriction on freedom of speech.

The results track with state-backed pollster VTsIOM's results from April 24, in which almost two-thirds of surveyed Russian Internet users said they did not care about the court order to ban Telegram.

Levada carried out the survey among 1,600 Russians between April 20 and April 24.

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