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Xenophobia on the Rise in Russia, Poll Says

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Negative attitudes toward foreigners in Russia have surged since 2017, according to a new survey published by the Levada Center.

Last year, Levada registered record tolerance levels for foreigners among Russians. The share of respondents who said they would like to restrict one or more nationalities from the country fell to its lowest of 54 percent, down from an all-time high of 81 percent in 2013.

Related article: Russians' Tolerance for Foreigners at All-Time High

This year, the share of respondents who favored limiting immigration for non-Russians has jumped 12 points to total 64 percent, according to survey results published by Levada on Monday.

“Given the social and political context in which the survey was conducted, one can assume that the rise in these xenophobic sentiments is caused by a rechanneling of Russians’ discontent with pension reform and worsening consumer and social sentiment toward irritation with the ‘Other’,” Levada sociologist Karina Pipiya wrote.

Rising negativity was most pronounced toward the Roma, Chinese and Vietnamese ethnic groups, with year-on-year spikes of at least 14 percent.

The survey showed 19 percent of respondents supporting the “Russia for Russians” slogan, up from 10 percent in 2017, following a three-year decline.

More Russians also spoke in favor of ethnic discrimination in rental placements and job ads over those who expressed “bewilderment” or “indignation,” according to Levada’s findings.

Conversely, Pipiya told the Vedomosti business daily that attitudes toward Western countries had improved in the wake of the 2018 football World Cup, with recent Levada poll results showing waning anti-Americanism among Russians.

Historically, overall attitudes toward various nationalities stayed relatively stable over the past decade and a half. Moreover, almost one-third of respondents told Levada they oppose limiting migration to members of any nationality.

Levada conducted the survey between July 19 and July 25 among 1,600 Russians over the age of 18.

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