

Almost 40% of Russians Call Moscow Protest Convictions 'Politically Motivated' – Poll

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AP / TASS

Nearly 40% of Russians believe that the recent criminal convictions of more than a dozen people over this summer's Moscow protests were politically motivated, according to new independent polling.

The Sept. 8 local and regional elections were among the [most remembered](#) events of the past month, according to the independent Levada Center pollster. Five of the 17 people held in jail have been [sentenced](#) to prison terms ranging between two and three and a half years on charges of mass unrest and violence against police, while one was sentenced to five years for a tweet.

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Thirty-eight percent of Russian respondents said courts had handed down politically motivated sentences to protesters and bystanders in the so-called “Moscow Case,” according to Levada’s results [published](#) Wednesday.

Another 24% said the sentences were fair, while 28% had no knowledge of the court cases.

Around half (53%) of Levada’s respondents called last month’s elections fair, with 35% saying they were unfair. Half of respondents (50%) said they were satisfied and 30% said they were dissatisfied with the results.

The pro-Putin United Russia party lost one-third of its seats in the Moscow city legislature while retaining its majority, a result the opposition attributes to its tactical voting strategy. Several opposition candidates had been barred from running in the Sept. 8 elections, sparking the biggest wave of anti-government protests in nearly a decade. Thousands were detained, at times violently, during unauthorized demonstrations.

The Human Rights Watch NGO [called](#) the mass-unrest and police-assault charges against 17 activists excessive and groundless.

Levada conducted the poll among 1,601 respondents in 50 Russian regions on Sept. 26-Oct. 2.

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