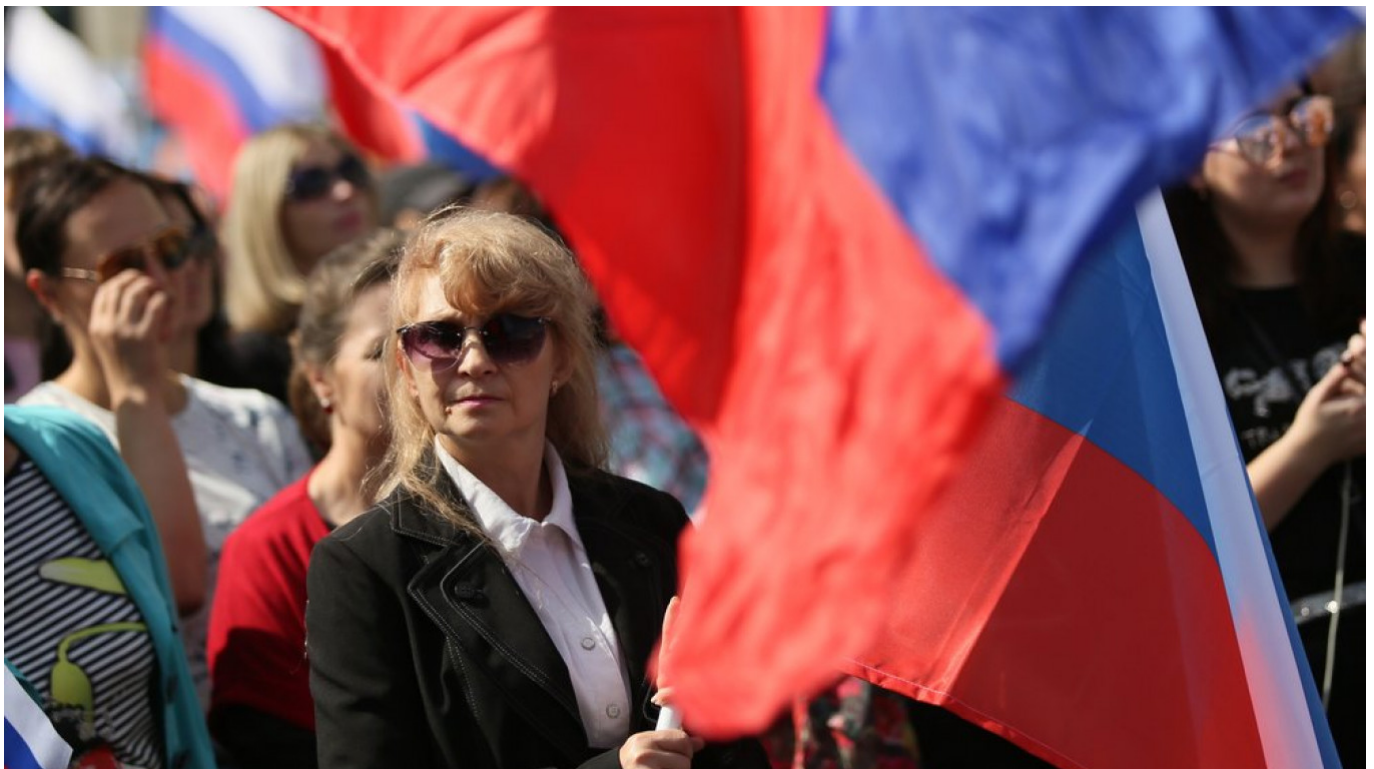


Russians Increasingly Value Free Speech, Civil Rights – Poll

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Kirill Zykov / Moskva News Agency

The share of Russians who view free speech, the right to a fair trial and other civil rights as important freedoms has increased by double digits in two years, according to the independent Levada Center pollster.

Experts and sociologists link the double-digit growth in the importance of civil rights issues among Russians to events surrounding recent anti-government protests, falling living standards and unpopular government reforms.

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Free speech has made the highest gains on Levada's list of 17 rights and freedoms most valued by its respondents, with 58% of Russians saying they value it in 2019 compared to 34% in 2017.

The right to a fair trial rose three spots in the ranking to third place, with 64% of Russians saying they value it this year compared to 50% two years ago, the survey [published](#) Wednesday said.

“A significant increase in the frequency of these responses could indicate the growing importance... of ‘human rights’ in the public opinion,” the pollster said.

Its sociologist Karina Pipiya attributed the increasing share of Russians who value human rights to sweeping [crackdowns](#) on protest activity and [online speech](#), increasing financial hardships and unpopular pension [reforms](#).

“All these issues have become more acute than in 2014-2016, when the population turned a blind eye toward many issues and thought less about their freedoms,” Pipiya [told](#) the Kommersant business daily.

The rights to peaceful assembly (28%) and participation in public and political life (30%) ranked last in Levada’s valued rights and freedoms poll but also saw double-digit growth from 2017.

Similarly, the freedom to obtain information (39%) and freedom of religion (40%) jumped by double-digit percentages but ranked third- and fourth-last.

The right to life, freedom and personal security (78%) and medical assistance (70%) — which Levada calls “biological” and health needs — stayed put between 2017 and 2019 in first and second place.

Levada conducted the survey among 1,616 people in 50 Russian regions between Oct. 24-30.

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