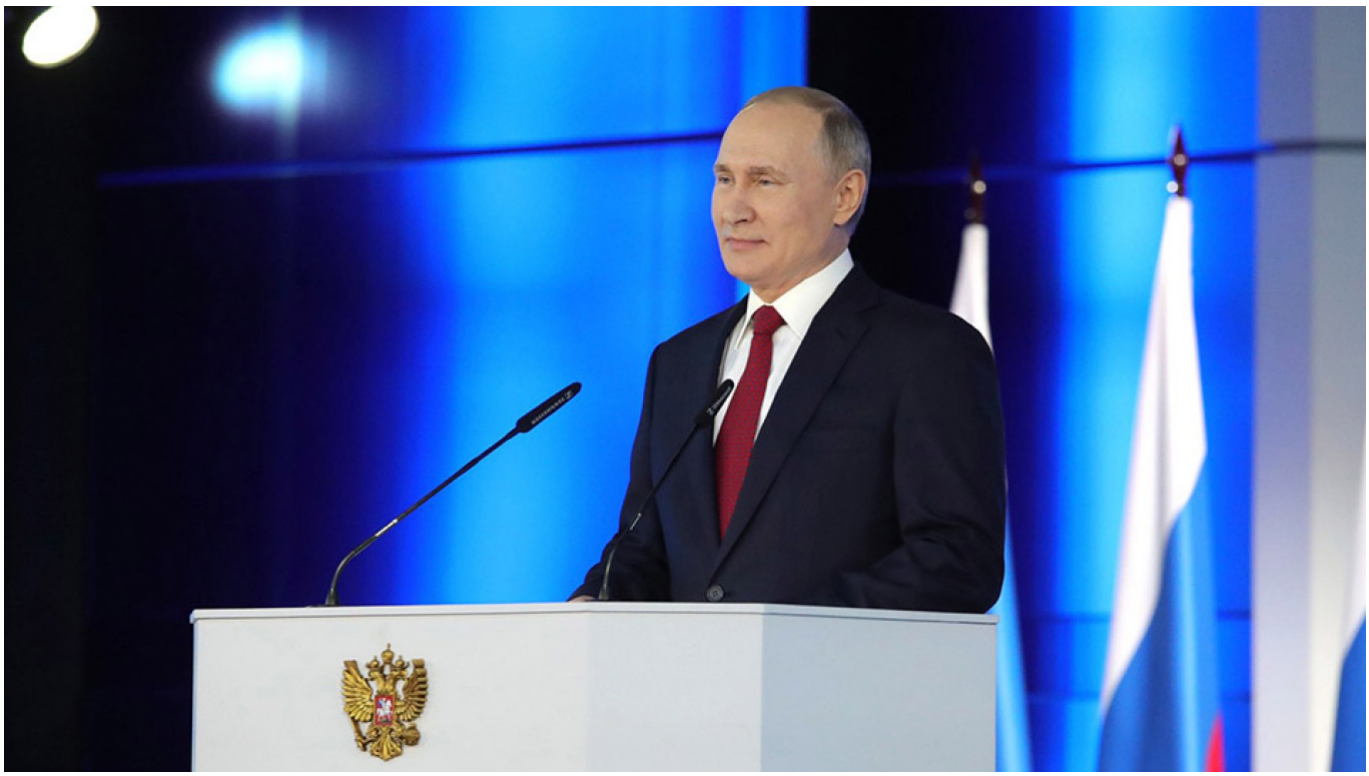
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INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

1 in 4 Russians Want Putin Presidency Beyond 2024 – Poll

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Putin, 67, was elected to his fourth overall term in 2018 and is constitutionally required to step down in 2024. **Kremlin.ru**

More than one-quarter of Russians want to see President Vladimir Putin stay in power after his term ends in 2024, according to a survey by the independent Levada Center pollster published Thursday.

Putin, 67, was elected to his fourth overall presidential term in 2018 and is constitutionally required to step down in 2024. Observers said that the sweeping constitutional shake-up Putin set in motion this month gives the president the scope to extend his 20-year grip on power.

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Twenty-seven percent of Russian respondents said they wanted Putin to stay on as president

after 2024, Levada said.

Another 25% said they wanted Putin to either return to private life or retire.

Levada's director Lev Gudkov said that, combined with the 7% of respondents who said they do not want to see Putin in public life at all, the share of Russians opposed to his return "came as a surprise."

"The increase in fatigue among people is visible," Gudkov told the Open Media news website.

"The situation is reminiscent of the pre-protest mood that prevailed in 2010-2011," he added.

Meanwhile, 33% of respondents wanted to see Putin retain some kind of political role after he exits the presidency.

Putin's proposed overhaul of the Constitution somewhat weakens the presidency while giving more power to the parliament and the State Council, his advisory body made up of high-level officials. Lawmakers swiftly passed his proposals in the first of three readings last week.

In remarks Thursday over his pledge to put the reforms to a public vote, Putin said that voters will have final say on whether he will sign the constitutional amendments into law.

Levada conducted the survey among 1,603 respondents across 50 Russian regions from Jan. 23-29, a week after Putin announced the proposed changes.

In another survey conducted over the same period and released Friday, 47% of Levada respondents said they believe Putin intends to expand his powers and remain in office with the help of the constitutional amendments.

Another 44% said they trust that Putin is acting in the public interest, according to the Levada poll results published by the Vedomosti business daily.

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