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2 in 5 Russians Don't Believe Navalny Was Poisoned – Poll

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Navalny on Thursday accused President Vladimir Putin of being behind his poisoning. **Pavel Golovkin / AP / TASS**

Two out of five Russians don't believe that Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny was poisoned, according to the results of an independent Levada Center poll published Friday.

The findings come as Navalny's approval ratings have more than doubled in the past year, the survey said.

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Navalny fell violently ill on a domestic flight on Aug. 20 and was flown to Berlin in a coma for treatment two days later. Germany says it has unequivocal proof that Navalny was poisoned by the nerve agent Novichok, while Russian authorities have rejected the claims and demanded to see evidence of poisoning.

According to the Levada Center's results published by the Open Media news website, 42% of Russian respondents said they don't believe that Navalny was deliberately poisoned.

One-quarter (25%) said they do believe "in one way or another" that Navalny was deliberately poisoned.

Of those who believe that he was poisoned, only 30% blamed the Russian authorities, while 8% blamed either Western intelligence or the subjects of Navalny's anti-corruption investigations.

Nearly half of the respondents declined to answer the question altogether, Open Media said.

Meanwhile, Navalny's approval rating doubled from 9% last year to 20%, according to Levada. His disapproval rating has also doubled, from 25% in 2019 to 50% in 2020.

Navalny's critics often dismiss his labeling as Russia's opposition leader, citing previous polls placing his approval rating at around 3%.

The Kremlin belittled Navalny's political significance as "quasi and marginal" Thursday, pushing back on the opposition figure after he blamed President Vladimir Putin for his poisoning in his first media interview since being discharged from hospital.

Levada Center conducted the phone survey among 1,605 Russians between Sept. 25-30.

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