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Russians Increasingly Get Their News from Social Media, Internet – Poll

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Semyon Likhodeyev / TASS

A growing number of Russians get their news from social media and the internet, according to a survey published by the independent Levada Center pollster on Tuesday.

Forty-two percent of Levada's Russian respondents use social media to get their daily news, while 39% get it from the internet. While television remains the primary news source for Russians with 64% saying they watch television for news the figure represents a 21% drop from 2018. Previous Levada surveys have shown that Russians' trust in television as a news source has fallen by 25% in the past decade.

Among all respondents, 57% said they use social media on a daily basis, a 20% increase compared to a similar 2017 survey. Russian VKontakte remains the most popular social network, followed by YouTube and Instagram, which were accessed by 35% and 31% of respondents respectively.

The study notes that the Chinese video-sharing app TikTok saw a surge in popularity, with

14% of Russian respondents saying they frequently use the platform.

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Foreign-owned social media companies have come under increased pressure from the Kremlin in recent months as Russia's opposition has been eager to use the increasingly popular platforms to call for anti-government demonstrations.

In January and February, several social media platforms took down Russians' calls to protest in support of jailed Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny over the authorities' claims that the posts illegally incited minors to attend unauthorized rallies. Soon after, Margarita Simonyan, editor-in-chief of state-funded news outlet RT, called on the Russian government to ban foreign social media platforms from operating in the country altogether.

Levada conducted the survey among 1,616 respondents from 50 regions between Jan. 29-Feb. 2.

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