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Russians' Views of Navalny Protests Increasingly Negative – Poll

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Navalny's team branded the April protest as the "final battle" between good and neutrality. **Kirill Kudryavtsev / AFP**

Only 16% of Russians viewed last month's nationwide protests in support of jailed Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny positively, according to a poll by the independent Levada Center published Thursday, a signal of flagging momentum for his embattled opposition groups.

Navalny's team had called on supporters to take to the streets on April 21 to demand proper medical care for the opposition politician after his doctors warned he was near death three weeks into a hunger strike. His allies called the protests the "final battle" between good and neutrality ahead of an anticipated court ruling to ban their activities as "extremist."

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Over one-third (39%) of Russians held negative attitudes toward the protests while 42% said they felt neutral toward them, Levada said.

Young people and new media readers were more likely to view the protests positively, while older age groups and television viewers held more negative attitudes.

According to the Levada Center, 21% of Russians closely followed the protests, while 59% said they had at least heard about them.

Among television viewers and radio listeners, only 7% and 6% closely followed the events, compared to those who get their news from the internet, social media and Telegram channels at 17%, 18% and 37%, respectively.

The results expose a decline in enthusiasm from this January's rallies demanding Navalny's release, which 22% of Russians viewed positively. Those protests, which broke out after he was detained upon returning from poisoning recovery abroad, were been fueled by public discontent over his viral video investigation into President Vladimir Putin's alleged $1.3 billion palace.

Levada's latest poll also reveals a much higher positive rating (47%) for last summer's rallies in the Far East city of Khabarovsk, where tens of thousands demanded the release of their region's governor — a member of the nationalist Liberal Democratic Party — after he was jailed on old murder charges.

Top Navalny aide Leonid Volkov said Thursday that Navalny's team would no longer announce new protests in advance, saying that they will instead be "spontaneous."

Levada conducted the survey among 1,614 respondents from 50 regions between April 22-April 28.

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