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Most Russians Oppose Same-Sex Relationships – Poll

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Russian society has become more polarized over LGBT rights amid the government's aggressive campaign to promote conservative values. **Mercedes Mehling / unsplash**

More Russians oppose same-sex relationships than they did nearly a decade ago, according to a new survey released Friday.

Russia's independent Levada Center pollster said 69% of respondents disagreed with the statement that "adults have the right to enter into same-sex relationships by mutual consent."

That share has grown from 60% in 2013, when Russia adopted its controversial "gay propaganda" law that banned promotion of homosexuality among minors.

LGBT activists criticized the law for further marginalizing minority groups across the country and stifling their freedoms in favor of promoting conservative "traditional values" that Russia's leaders say are at odds with liberal Western attitudes.

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The Levada survey showed an increasing split in how Russian society views same-sex relationships, with those in support increasing slightly from 23% in 2013 to 25%. The proportion who said they were undecided declined from 17% to 7%, following years in which the issue of LGBT rights has become a prominent part of the government's anti-Western messaging on state television.

"In other words, public opinion on this issue has grown more polarized than ever," Levada said.

Respondents aged 18-24 expressed the most support for same-sex couples, with 53% backing adults' right to enter into a same-sex relationship. Some 39% held the opposing view.

As the age of respondents' increased, support for same-sex couples declined and opposition increased markedly.

Asked about their personal views of gay people, more respondents expressed "disgust" and "fear" (38%) than in 2013 (26%), Levada said. At the same time, the share of those who viewed people who identify as homosexual in a neutral light has grown from 23% to 32% over the same period.

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The survey also showed strong correlation between people who personally know an LGBT person and support for LGBT rights, with 70% backing among the few respondents who said they have LGBT acquaintances.

The survey was conducted among 1,600 Russians between Sept. 23-29.

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