

Over Half of Russians Want Putin to Quit in 2018, Poll Finds

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President Putin meeting Buddhist monks near Verkhnyaya Ivvolga village in the Buryatia republic on Thursday.

More than half of Russians do not want to see President Vladimir Putin stay in office after 2018, according to a new survey.

Fifty-five percent of Russians want a completely new president, while 22 percent said they would be satisfied if Putin were re-elected, and 8 percent said they would be happy to see Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev return to the Kremlin, according to the survey by the independent Levada Center.

Many Russians appear to simply want to see a new face, and the ideological position of the new president does not bother them, Alexei Grazhdankin, deputy head of the Levada Center, told Vedomosti.

Putin said in a television interview in December that he would not remain in office for a "single day" if he saw that he had lost the trust of the Russian people.

The Kremlin did not have an immediate comment on the new survey. On Thursday, Putin was chairing a meeting on the forestry industry in the Buryatia republic, near the Mongolian border. He also met with Buddhist monks.

Putin is serving his third term since 2000. Unlike the first two four-year terms, this one will last six years under a constitutional amendment approved after he stepped aside for his protege Medvedev in 2008 to avoid violating the Constitution's limit of two consecutive terms.

The poll, conducted in late March, questioned 1,601 people in 45 regions. It has a margin of error of 3.4 percentage points.

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