

Half of Russians Support Tough NGO Sanctions

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Over half of Russians support tough measures implemented against NGOs, while nearly a third don't know what activities these organizations are actually engaged in, a Levada Center poll suggests.

A controversial law was passed in November requiring all groups that receive foreign funding and engage in "political activity" to register as "foreign agents," a term that carries connotations of spying.

Since then, prosecutors have searched the offices of as many as 2,000 NGOs across the country, while 36 groups have had legal action brought against them.

Fifty-three percent of the people who took part in the survey agreed with tougher sanctions for NGOs found to be in violation of the regulations, while 22 percent disapproved of them, Interfax reported Thursday, citing the study.

Prosecutor General Yury Chaika this week defended the searches, saying that complaints from NGOs were groundless and that 500 violations had been discovered as a result of the inspections.

The study also revealed that Russians have mixed ideas about the nature of non-governmental organizations' work. Sixty-eight percent of the respondents had at least some knowledge of NGOs, while 29 percent said they had never heard anything about them.

Thirty-five percent of the poll's participants thought NGOs mainly perform charity work for various groups, while 31 percent said they predominantly address social problems.

Every fifth respondent said protection of civil rights constituted the main priority in NGOs' activities.

Fifteen percent of respondents suggested that NGOs are concerned with local issues, while the same number said they are involved in politics.

Almost every tenth respondent said NGOs were mainly in the business of securing grants and other sources of financing for their work, the poll found.

No margin for error was given.

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