

Most Russians Think Their Interests Not High on Putin's Agenda, Poll Says

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The  **Moscow Times**

Only one in eight Russians think that President Vladimir Putin represents the interests of "ordinary people" in the country, a recent poll showed, even though a vast majority have said that they "trust" their leader.

The most popular choice in a question that allowed for multiple answers was that Putin represented the interests of security services, the army and the police, survey results published online by the independent Levada pollster Sunday indicated. This compares to 37 percent two years earlier.

Only 14 percent said that Putin represented the interests of "everyone without exception," coming in sixth. The number of those who said that Putin represented the interests of "ordinary people" — office or factory workers and farmers — trailed further behind, with 12 percent.

Other top choices in the poll were "oligarchs," bankers and large businesses, with 38 percent, government officials and bureaucrats, with 33 percent, managers of large companies, with 24

percent, and the middle class or people with above-average incomes, with 23 percent.

The poll results may appear unexpected following another poll, also by Levada, that was released two days earlier, showing that 71 percent of Russians "trust" their president.

The majority, or 51 percent, of respondents in the latest poll credited Putin with having reestablished Russia as a "great, respected power" in the latest poll, up from 36 percent a year ago.

Russians' perception of their country's international standing has increased after Moscow's annexation of Crimea last month, with more than six in 10 Russians saying they considered their country to be a great power, according to a mid-March poll by Levada, a 16 percentage point increase from late 2011.

In a divergent view from the other side of the Pacific, White House officials said that the administration plans to further isolate Russia by cutting off its political and economic ties to the outside world, but otherwise largely ignore Russia for the remaining two and a half years of U.S. President Barack Obama's term in office, The New York Times reported Saturday.

The poll was conducted on March 21-24 among 1,603 people in 45 regions, and gave a margin of error of no more than 3.4 percent.

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