

Putin's Popularity Reaches Historic High of Almost 90 Percent

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President Vladimir Putin

President Vladimir Putin's domestic popularity rating has reached yet another record high against the backdrop of Russia's military intervention in Syria, state-run pollster VTsIOM said Thursday.

Putin's approval ratings reached 89.9 percent last weekend, exceeding the previous high of 89.1 percent recorded in June, VTsIOM said in an online statement. In between the highs, his approval rating had hovered around 86 percent, according to the pollster's data.

VTsIOM attributed Putin's growing popularity to Russia's involvement in Syria, saying 26 percent of respondents had pointed to the war in Syria as the most memorable event of the previous week.

Russia in late September announced a series of air strikes in Syria to combat the Islamic State, in the country's biggest intervention in the Middle East since the Soviet Union launched a military offensive in Afghanistan.

Russia's military drive in Syria has successfully pushed the conflict in Ukraine out of the spotlight, the poll showed.

Only 5 percent of respondents pointed toward developments in Ukraine as the most memorable event of the preceding week. Two percent of respondents said the economy — inflation, rising prices and the collapse of the ruble — had caught their attention.

VTsIOM said Putin's popularity had remained above 80 percent during the past 18 months, experiencing a steady boost in the aftermath of the country's annexation of Crimea in March last year.

“In March 2014 it was an average of 76.2 percent, in April 82.2 percent, in May 86.2 percent,” the pollster said in its statement.

The VTsIOM poll questioned 1,600 people in 46 Russian regions from Oct. 17 to 18. The margin of error did not exceed 3.5 percent.

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