

Despite World Cup Excitement, Russians Angry Over Retirement Reform

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Dmitry Feoktistov / TASS

Watching the World Cup may be an enjoyable pastime, but an overwhelming majority of Russians are still angry about their government's long-term plan to raise the retirement age, according to recent polls.

Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev announced the reform, which would push the retirement age past the <u>life expectancy</u> of some Russians, on June 14, the opening day of the football tournament. The Kremlin was accused of using the World Cup as a cover to avoid dissent as it pushes through unpopular measures.

The World Cup did beat out the announcement of retirement reform as the most memorable event in June for Russians <u>surveyed</u> by the independent Levada Analytical Center.

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Fifty-six percent of people said the World Cup was the most unforgettable event of June, while only 31 percent named the government's proposal to reform the pension system. Nearly half of the Russian population over the age of four watched their country's opening match with Egypt.

But around 90 percent of Russians oppose the government's plan to raise the retirement age, according to a second Levada survey.

Popular discontent over the retirement proposal spilled into the streets in the past weeks, as both pro-Kremlin and opposition forces staged demonstrations all over Russia.

Both Levada and the state-run VTsIOM pollster have registered a significant drop in the population's trust toward Medvedev and, for the <u>first time</u> in several years, President Vladimir Putin.

"The resulting data was not surprising," Levada concluded.

Reuters contributed reporting to this article.

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