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## In poll, most Russians don't trust Putin to curb corruption

by [David Filipov](#)

MOSCOW — At a time when public anger over government corruption has led to Russia's most widespread protests in years, fewer than half of Russians are confident in President Vladimir Putin's efforts to rein in crooked officials, according to a [survey released Tuesday](#).

The survey, by the Washington-based [Pew Research Center](#), finds Russians generally confident in their country's direction, enthusiastic about Moscow's growing say in world affairs and increasingly sanguine about the economy. A whopping 87 percent of those surveyed said they trust Putin to represent their country's interests on the global stage.

But approval of the job Putin is doing to eliminate corruption has fallen over the past two years, from 62 percent to 49 percent, according to the center, which conducted face-to-face interviews with 1,002 Russians between February and April.

That time span coincides with the [first of two](#) nationwide anti-corruption protests spearheaded by opposition activist Alexei Navalny, after he [alleged](#) that [Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev](#) had illicitly acquired \$1 billion in yachts, mansions and vineyards through bribes.

The anti-corruption rallies are part of a wave of dissatisfaction in Russia unseen since 2012, most of it connected with popular misgivings about official malfeasance.

“Our data indicate that although Russians have a high level of confidence in their president when it comes to global affairs, they nevertheless point to serious problems within their country that affect their daily life,” said Margaret Vice, a senior researcher at the Pew Research Center. “Corruption is also Russians’ second-top concern, second only to rising prices, with almost 9 in 10 saying corrupt political leaders pose a problem for Russia.”

In recent months, Russia has seen rallies by [long-distance truckers](#) angry about road tolls collected by a company run by the son of one of Putin's oldest friends.

Moscow apartment owners [who oppose the city's plan](#) to relocate as many as 1.6 million Muscovites have held several large protests. A recent Transparency International [report](#) characterized the relocation as a gift to Russia's "construction lobby," builders and suppliers who have fallen on lean times because of a recession.

Questions and text messages about corruption popped up during Putin's annual live call-in show three days after nationwide protests June 12, puncturing his effort to convey good news about an economy finally nosing its way [out of the recession](#).

While Navalny's popularity in Russia remains minuscule, 58 percent of respondents in a poll conducted by Russia's independent [Levada Center](#) displayed a positive attitude toward anti-corruption protests.

None of this suggests that Putin's chances of being reelected to a new six-year term next March are in any danger, said Natalia Zorkaya, head of sociological research at the Levada Center, which posts frequent polls showing that Putin's approval rating has not dipped below 80 percent since Russia annexed Crimea in 2014.

Confidence in Putin, she said, "is not decreasing, despite the growth of dissatisfaction with domestic problems." And "even though the protest mood in society is growing," this mood "will not affect elections and the victory of Putin," she said.

Zorkaya said that "the confirmation of the country as a great power" is a far more powerful source of Putin's popularity than the protest movement is a draw against it.

The Pew Research Center is a nonpartisan institute, and neither its survey nor its researchers were willing to draw political conclusions about the results. But several of the findings support Zorkaya's comments.

The Pew survey found that 59 percent of Russians think their country plays a more important role in world affairs than it did a decade ago, and 58 percent are satisfied with the direction Russia is taking, up from 20 percent in 2002.

However, support for Putin's handling of relations with the United States dropped from 85 percent in 2015 to 73 percent this year, Pew found. Putin also received lower marks for relations with the European Union, China and Ukraine.

*Natalya Abbakumova contributed to this report.*