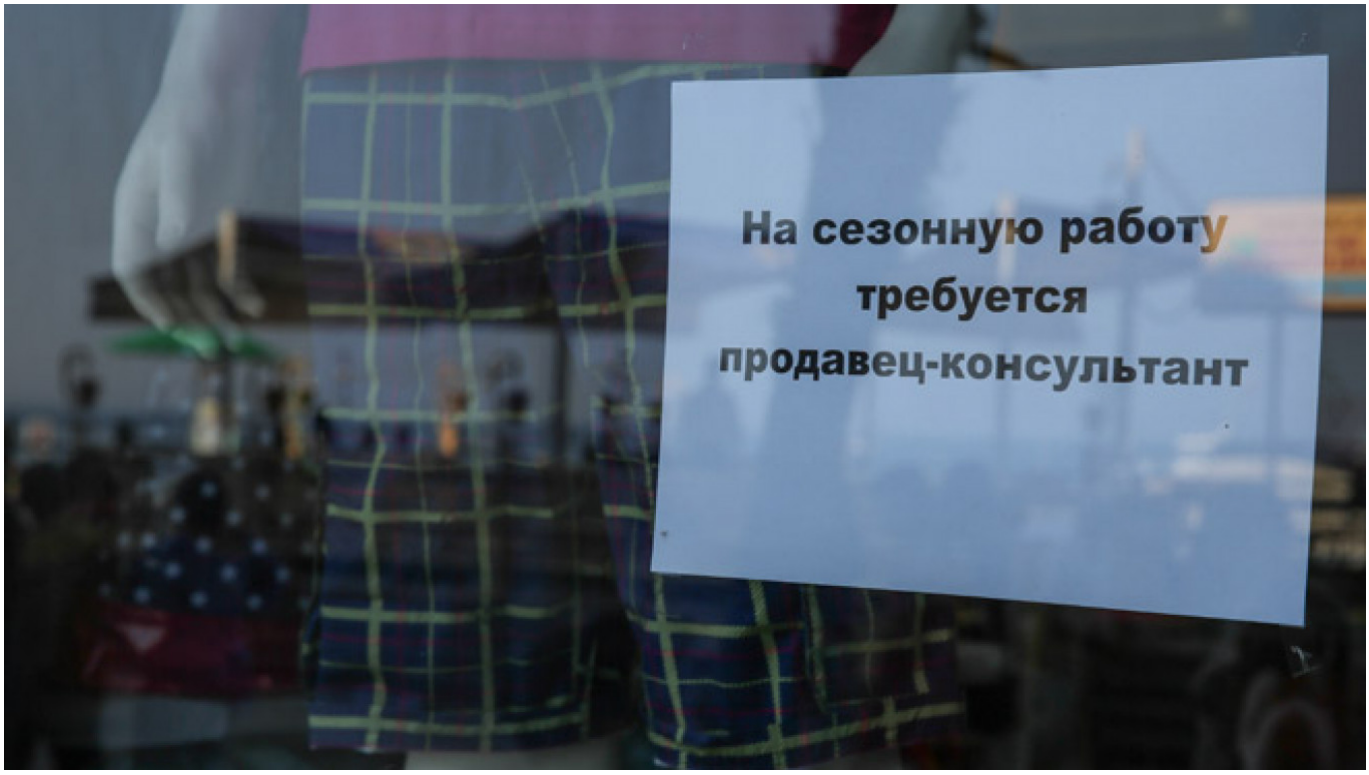
The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Fear of Unemployment Recedes in Russia

By The Moscow Times

March 11, 2015



A job advertisement hanging in a Russian shop window.

Anxiety over unemployment or salary cuts has fallen slightly in Russia over the last three months, but 32 percent of people are still either experiencing workplace firings or expect them in the near future, according to a new poll published by the independent Levada Center on Wednesday.

The data showed that 18 percent of Russians expect to be forcibly moved to part-time employment and 22 percent expect salary cuts in the coming months.

A low rate of unemployment has been one of the signature economic achievements of the 15 years since Vladimir Putin first became Russian president in 2000.

The figures from the survey of 1,600 people, which had a margin of error of 3.4 percent, are slightly lower than a similar poll conducted in December, when falling oil prices and Western

sanctions caused a run on the ruble — suggesting that some of the fears about the Russian economy might be easing.

In the December Levada poll, 42 percent of respondents said firings were ongoing or that they expected them in the coming months.

Unemployment grew 0.7 percent in Russia last week, the slowest rate for a month, according to data published by the Labor and Social Protection Ministry on Wednesday.

Russia is cushioned to a certain extent from high unemployment by its shrinking working-age population.

Large quantities of foreign migrant workers have also left Russia in recent months amid the collapse of the ruble and emerging economic downturn. Russia's Federation of Migrants said in December that more than one-quarter of the country's migrant workers were planning to leave.

The government announced plans on Jan. 19 to earmark 52 billion rubles ($800 million) to alleviating unemployment. Analysts expect the economy to contract by up to 5 percent this year amid Western sanctions and depressed oil prices.

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