The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Nearly Half of Russian Adults Are Chronically Ill, Health Ministry Says

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April 22, 2015



The number of Russian adults who suffer from a chronic disease remains at 44 percent — the same number as last year — although fewer Russians are smoking and alcohol consumption is down, the Health Ministry reported Wednesday.

Of the 40 million adults in Russia who took part in a government program offering free clinical testing last year, 44 percent were found to suffer from a chronic, non-communicable disease, such as cancer, diabetes or cardiovascular problems, according to statistics published Wednesday on the government's official website.

A further 22.4 percent were found to be at risk of developing a cardiovascular disease, the report said. The latest figures show very little has changed since 2013, when 34.6 million adults underwent similar testing in the first year of the program.

Chronic, non-communicable diseases are the No. 1 cause of death and disability in the world, according to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. This includes diseases such

as types of cancer that can be brought about through excessive smoking and drinking.

The Health Ministry was able to put a positive spin on its report, noting the decrease in the number of Russians who smoke and the decline in overall alcohol consumption.

Citing data from a survey conducted by state-run pollster VTsIOM in June, the ministry said the number of non-smokers in Russia rose to 65 percent in 2014, up from 58 percent in 2013. Russians also drank less alcohol last year — 11.78 liters per person on average, compared to 11.87 liters in 2013 and 16.2 liters in 2008, the report found.

The Russian government has introduced a host of measures in recent years to tackle smoking and drinking, including outlawing the sale of alcohol after 11 p.m. and introducing a ban on smoking in certain public places.

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