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State Statistics Show Flat Unemployment, Survey Paints Different Story

By The Moscow Times

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Despite unemployment levels remaining relatively consistent in the first six months of 2015, more Russians are seeing close friends and family members losing their jobs than in January, according to survey data released by a Russian polling center on Tuesday.

According to Russian state statistics agency Rosstat, in January the levels of unemployment across the country reached 4.2 million people, or about 5.5 percent of the workforce. In June, the number of unemployed Russians was 4.1 million, or about 5.4 percent of the workforce.

Although Rosstat shows unemployment levels have not changed much in the first half of 2015, despite Russia's ongoing economic woes and falling GDP, a poll conducted by state pollster VTsIOM last month showed Russians are seeing an increase in family members and friends losing their jobs.

Since January, the number of Russians who have seen a close relative, family member, or friend lose their jobs have increased, according to VTsIOM's unemployment index, which measures the severity of unemployment felt by respondents.

In January, the unemployment index was -44, and in recent months has fluctuated between -29 and -33. The index is measured on a scale of -100 to 100, with higher numbers indicating that the problem of unemployment is more relevant to respondents, according to VTsIOM.

The index is calculated by taking the difference between the percentage of respondents reporting that no one close to them has lost their jobs in the last two to three months, and those who reported two or more family members or friends losing their jobs.

A breakdown of VTsIOM's polling data show that in July, nearly one in three Russians (31 percent) reported someone close to them losing their jobs, up from 24 percent in January. The number of respondents reporting no firings close to them dropped four percent from January to 64 percent in July.

The poll surveyed 1,600 Russians living in 130 cities across 46 regions of Russia during the period of July 25 to 26.

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