

Russia Sees Plummeting Demand for Passports in 2015

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A total of 3.788 million foreign travel passports were issued in Russia last year, down 49 percent compared to 2014, the RBC news website reported Friday, citing data from the Federal Migration Service (FMS).

In a number of Russian regions, the decline in the number of international passports issued last year reached 70 percent.

Chechnya was the only region that registered an increase in the number of foreign travel passports granted last year, the news website reported.

Russia currently issues two kinds of passports for foreign travel — a 10-year biometric passport and a 5-year passport.

According to RBC's estimates, there was a 54 percent drop in the number biometric passports issued last year, than in 2014. The number of 5-year passports issued over the same period decreased by 36 percent, RBC reported.

FMS head Konstantin Romodanovsky said that the decline in the number of issued passports is linked to the introduction of passports valid for 10 years. In addition to that, Russians are increasingly choosing domestic travel over international trips, he said.

According to RBC, the decline could also be attributed to a sharp fall in the real incomes of Russians, a consequence of recession.

A decrease in the number of issued international passports was also registered in the crisis year of 2009 and in 2014, when the Russian economic slowdown was aggravated by the falling prices for oil and Western sanctions.

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