

Russians, Putin Name Their Landmark Events of 2018

December 31, 2018



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From the conflict with Ukraine to sports competitions and mass tragedies, Russia saw no shortage of events that shaped the nation in 2018.

Here's a look at the top five events of the outgoing year according the latest independent Levada Center poll [results](#) and President Vladimir Putin's end-of-year [remarks](#).

1. [Crimean bridge opening](#)

Most Russians agreed with Putin and named the opening of a 19-kilometer stretch of asphalt and rebar from mainland Russia to the annexed Crimean peninsula in May as the most important event of 2018.

After Putin unveiled the auto section of the bridge built by his judo partner and childhood friend Arkady Rotenberg, the Kremlin had to [defend](#) its construction from U.S. criticism as

well as [suggestions](#) on how to destroy it.

2. [Retirement age hike](#)

Proposed against the backdrop of the FIFA World Cup opening ceremony to [minimize](#) its impact, the unpopular increase in the Russians' retirement age still emerged as the second-most important event of the year.

There were protests, concessions, still more protests and dips in the ruling class's popularity ratings throughout the summer. And yet, the pension reform moved swiftly through the legislative process, paving the way for the government to begin raising Russians' retirement ages starting in 2019.

3. [Presidential elections](#)

Outside observers may have seen them as [anti-climactic](#), but the elections that handed Putin his fourth term as president in March were deemed important enough to grab the third spot.

Putin's victory extended his total time in office to nearly a quarter of a century until 2024, when he will turn 71, and has [sparked](#) talk of constitutional changes to keep him in power even longer.

4. [FIFA World Cup](#)

Nothing gripped the nation quite like the Russian football team's unexpected advance from the group stage to the quarterfinals, earning the admiration of fans for their steadfast spirit.

At the Bolshoi Theater New Year's Eve gala on Thursday, Putin named the tournament that Russia hosted in 2018 one of the year's two landmark events.

5. [Winter Cherry mall fire](#)

The mall fire in the Siberian city of Kemerovo that claimed 64 lives, most of them children, stood as a symbol for official negligence as the investigation uncovered a litany of failures.

Exits were blocked, a fire alarm failed to go off, security guards neglected to notify visitors and investigators uncovered a series of violations in this tragedy that Russians named the fifth-most significant event of 2018.

Levada conducted its survey among 1,600 respondents in 52 Russian regions on Dec. 13-19.

Original url:

<https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2018/12/31/russians-putin-name-their-landmark-events-of-2018-a64006>