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INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Russia Records 30K Excess Deaths in July, Most Monthly Fatalities in Decade

Authorities report fewer than 6,000 deaths officially from the coronavirus.

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Russia's coronavirus statistics have been questioned since the beginning of the pandemic. **Peter Kovalev / TASS**

Russia recorded more than 30,000 excess deaths in July as the coronavirus pandemic continued to sweep across the country, new data from the country's statistics service Rosstat has shown.

A total of 181,479 deaths were registered in July 2020, according to data compiled by regional registry offices — compared to an average of around 150,000 over the previous five years.

That tally means more people died in July 2020 than in any of the previous 119 months, since a spate of devastating wildfires killed tens of thousands across Russia in August 2010. It is typically rare for summer months to record a higher number of deaths than during the winter.

The data once again raises questions over a possible dramatic undercounting of Covid-19 fatalities in Russia.

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Rosstat found 10,079 coronavirus-related fatalities in July — using figures compiled from the cause of death listed on death certificates. However, it said the infection was the main cause of death in only 5,922 cases — in a counting practice which runs against World Health Organization Guidelines. In around 30% of cases where coronavirus was confirmed or suspected, authorities say the virus played no role whatsoever in the patient's fatality.

Analysis by The Moscow Times previously found Russia saw around 26,000 excess deaths in the first months of the pandemic, with some regions seeing hundreds of unexplained fatalities, while their official coronavirus death tallies remained low.

The new figures bring Russia's total excess death count since the start of the pandemic to above 55,000.

Related article: Six Months Into the Coronavirus Outbreak, Russia's Statistics Still Provide More Questions Than Answers

Meanwhile, official statistics published by Russia's federal coronavirus task force showed fewer than 14,000 people had died from the coronavirus by the end of July.

Russia recorded more than 5,000 new coronavirus cases on Friday for the first time since mid-August.

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