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Russia's Population Decline More Than Doubles in 2020

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Sergei Bobylev / TASS

Russia's population decline more than doubled in 2020, the latest sign of the coronavirus pandemic's impact on the country, according to updated figures from Russia's federal statistics agency seen by The Moscow Times.

Russia's population totaled 146.05 million as of Jan. 1, 2021, down from 146.75 million at the start of 2020 — a decrease of 702,072 people.

The more than 700,000-person decline exceeds Rosstat's previous estimates and marks the largest drop since 2005, when Russia's population decreased by 564,500.

According to calculations by the RBC news website, some of the worst-hit places were Russia's second city St. Petersburg, where the population declined by a record 58 times, while the republic of Tatarstan saw a 72-fold decline.

Russia has recorded some 475,000 excess fatalities between the start of the pandemic and the

end of April, the latest month for which data is available, according to calculations by The Moscow Times. That is one of the world's highest tallies both in overall terms and adjusted for population.

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Rosstat earlier attributed the decline in the sharp slowdown in migration spurred by the pandemic. Russia is currently experiencing unprecedented labor shortages with many migrant workers unable to enter Russia due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Rosstat also said the decline was due to a decreasing birthrate linked to economic uncertainty as Russian's real disposable incomes have fallen to an eight-year low.

According to government forecasts, the country will be able to achieve population growth rates no earlier than 2030. Rosstat predicted that the country's population could drop by more than 12 million by 2035.

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