The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

As it Happened: Russia Votes

By The Moscow Times

September 19, 2021

Russia heads to the polls in the country's parliamentary elections in which most vocal Kremlin critics have been barred from running. Follow our live coverage of the vote, which is taking place over three days from Friday to Sunday both online and in person.



Polling station for the eighth State Duma elections in Moscow. **Kirill Zykov / Moskva News Agency**

Voting is open across Russia's 11 time zones to elect the 450 members of the country's lower chamber of parliament, the State Duma.

Here's the latest (Moscow time):

Monday Sept. 20

10:00 With 80.1% of votes counted, United Russia was ahead with 49.42% of the vote, followed by the Communist Party with 20.25%.

Voting by party list accounts for only half of the lower house State Duma's 450 seats, and

United Russia was dominating in the other half of seats assigned according to single-mandate races. With 71.50% of those votes counted, United Russia candidates were ahead in at least 196 of the 225 seats.

Sunday Sept. 19

23:00 With 20% of votes counted nationwide, the United Russia party leads with 42.92% of the vote, followed by the Communist Party with 23.04%, LDPR with 8.77%, the A Just Russia party with 7.14% and the New People party with 6.87%. All other parties have less than 5% of the vote.

In single-mandate districts, United Russia leads with 173 mandates, followed by the Communist Party with 18, A Just Russia with 7 and LDPR, Rodina and Civic Platform with 1 each.

21:00 Polls have now closed in every region of Russia.

With 9% of votes counted nationwide, the United Russia party leads with 38.68% of the vote, followed by the Communist Party with 25.11%, LDPR with 9.59%, the New People party with 7.89% and the A Just Russia party with 6.66%. All other parties have less than 5% of the vote, the Central Elections Commission says.

19:00 Nationwide voter turnout stands at 45.15% so far, Central Elections Commission head Ella Pamfilova said. The commission has confirmed 12 cases of ballot stuffing nationwide despite widespread reports and footage of ballot stuffing.

Embed:

> Калмыкия, вброс на участке №120.
>
> Главное — засунуть пачку бюллетеней и не оборачиватьсяhttps://t.co/JjlEYsrF9r pic.twitter.com/QGaGihSJbp
>
> — Медиазона (@mediazzzona) September 19, 2021

17:30 Jailed Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny's wife Yulia Navalnaya announces she has voted. "I've voted for myself and that other guy. ... Do not believe when they say that everything is decided and nothing depends on your vote. It is your vote that can prevent the adoption of yet another shameless law, prevent another political prisoner from being imprisoned. And maybe it will release someone," she wrote in an Instagram post. Navalny himself isn't allowed to vote due to his criminal conviction.

French actor Gerard Depardieu, who was granted Russian citizenship in 2013 by a presidential decree, has cast his vote in the State Duma elections at the Russian Embassy in Paris, the state-run RIA Novosti news agency reported.

17:00 Moscow police have detained three people who attempted to stage solo pickets — the only form of protest that is permitted to take place without the authorities' permission — on Pushkin Square in the city center, the OVD-Info police monitor reported. Two of the protesters held signs calling for fair elections, while the third held a sign calling for the release of political prisoners.

16:30 Nationwide voter turnout currently stands at 40.5%.

In Moscow, more than 2 million people voted online — or 93.4% of voters who registered to vote online — setting a new record. Reports ahead of the elections said that state employees were pressured to vote online.

16:00 Independent election monitor Golos said it continues to see "massive" violations the rights of observers, members of commissions and candidates for a third day in a row. "Throughout all three days, this problem has not been systematically resolved. This is a serious contrast to the federal elections of 2016 and 2018, when the CEC closely monitored the observance of the rights of public inspectors and representatives of candidates," it says.

Golos' "Map of Violations" lists nearly 4,000 instances of possible electoral fraud across the country so far. The monitor said the three-day voting period "greatly expanded" opportunities for such violations.

15:15 The independent Novaya Gazeta newspaper's website goes down, with the newspaper saying it suspects it was subject to a DDoS attack.

14:30 Initial results from the Far East regions of Khabarovsk and Sakhalin, where polls have closed, show the Communist Party outpacing United Russia.

14:00 Amid widespread reports and footage of apparent election violations, Central Elections Commission head Ella Pamfilova said her commission had received 137 reports of voting "coercion" and confirmed eight cases of ballot stuffing, with three polling station heads fired as a result.

Pamfilova also said the commission's website was under "powerful" cyberattacks, adding that the majority were coming from the United States and Germany.

11:30 Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov is the winner of 10,000 prize points that can be spent at local cafes and retailers as part of Moscow's lottery for online voters, according to Moscow Public Chamber Deputy Chairman Alexei Venediktov. The city is also raffling off 10 one-bedroom apartments, 50 cars and discounts at retailers as part of the "Million Prizes" program.

10:00 The independent Golos election monitor has continued to report numerous voting violations, including ballots being stored overnight in unsealed containers or in rooms without video surveillance. Election observers have reported intimidation, threats or even detention for reporting violations, often from vigilante groups "condoned" by police, Golos said. Moscow is in the lead nationwide on Sunday so far with 41 reported violations, followed by St. Petersburg with 27 and the Moscow region with 26.

08:00 Voting has resumed in Moscow on the third and final day of Russia’s 2021 State Duma

elections.

Saturday Sept. 18

22:00 Google-owned YouTube has blocked access to a video posted by Alexei Navalny's team with a list of anti-Kremlin candidates it is recommending voters to back, following a request from Russian authorities. The video, containing all 225 of the Kremlin critic's chosen candidates under the Smart Voting initiative, was viewed more than 900,000 times in the last 24 hours.

It was uploaded following Google and Apple removing Navalny's app from their app stores under pressure from the Kremlin. When viewers inside Russia try to access the video, access is blocked with a notice that reads: "This content is not available on this country domain due to a legal complaint from the government." The video is still accessible for users based outside Russia.

Navalny ally Leonid Volkov, who is leading the Smart Voting initiative from exile, blasted the decision. "I am terribly angry at Google and Apple. They fell for cheap blackmail." He added that the U.S. tech giants had stood firm in the face of other Russian legal requests, such as to store personal user data on Russian servers. "To bend now, for the 101st time is stupid. They've opened Pandora's box. This will end badly" Volkov wrote on Telegram, a platform which he also criticized for deleting a Navalny Smart Voting bot late Friday evening.

21.30 Responding to reports of election fraud and ballot stuffing, CEC deputy head Nikolai Bulayev told the state-run RIA Novosti news agency there were "no violations that would affect the result of the vote."

20.00 Polls have closed on the second day of Russia's parliamentary elections. Turnout stands at 31.5%, the Central Election Commission said Saturday evening. Among those who registered in advance to vote online, turnout is above 70%.

19.30 Despite Russian officials attempts to restrict access to video cameras in polling stations, footage continues to emerge of apparent ballot stuffing, such as a video from Kemerovo, shared by the liberal Yabloko party, showing what appears to be a hand reaching from behind a Russian flag to add ballot slips to the collection box while an election official tries to obscure the camera's view.

Embed:

> В Кемерово наблюдатели от «Яблока» вновь зафиксировали вбросы на УИК 237: женщина пытается загородить от камеры руку, которая появлятся из российского флага и кидает в урну стопку бюллетеней pic.twitter.com/AARrhAMOa0
>
> — Новая Газета (@novaya_gazeta) September 18, 2021

17.15 Russia has demanded Google-owned YouTube remove three videos posted by Alexei Navalny's team promoting his Smart Voting initiative, senior Navalny aide Ivan Zhdanov said in a tweet. The request comes after the Roskomnadzor communications watchdog earlier Saturday demanded Google remove two documents uploaded by Navalny's team with a list of anti-Kremlin candidates they recommend voting for. Google on Friday deleted Navalny's app from its app store under pressure from The Kremlin.

16.45 Some 14 protestors have been detained during Russia's second day of voting, according to the independent OVD-Info monitor. They include activists protesting in support of jailed Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny and an anti-Putin shaman from Siberia as well as a former regional coordinator for Navalny's now-banned political organization in St. Petersburg who was monitoring the vote.

13.30 Russia's internet regulator has demanded Google remove two Google Docs documents containing lists of anti-Kremlin candidates being backed by Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny's team. An email sent from Google to Navalny's team said that the Roskomnadzor communications watchdog had informed the U.S. tech giant that the documents violated Russian laws.

"If you do not remove the files, Google may be forced to block access to them," the email, shared by Navalny's team on his Telegram channel, stated. Google on Friday deleted Navalny's app from its app store under pressure from the Kremlin. The documents in question are a full list of candidates being backed by Navalny's Smart Voting system, a tactical voting initiative designed to oust lawmakers from the pro-Kremlin United Russia party.

13.00 Russia's Central Elections Commission said that it had "recorded three targeted cyberattacks from abroad," against Russia's electoral system and its website during voting Friday. It added that further attacks were expected, but did not state which countries it believes were involved.

12.30 There are fewer reports of crowded polling stations Saturday, but incidents of reported violations continue to come in. In St. Petersburg, a man was detained after he was caught attempting to put around a dozen voting slips, backing the ruling United Russia party, into the ballot box, Novaya Gazeta reported. A video from Samara, shared by vote monitors from the liberal opposition Yabloko party, shows a near-empty polling station all morning, while the official vote tally for the district registered some 1,600 ballots cast Saturday.

Another video showed pens with ink that rubs out being used in polling stations and ballot boxes with secret doors and unsealable seals.

Embed:

> Observers at a Moscow polling place find a pen with disappearing ink, a seal that peels right off & a safe of ballots with a secret back door ⊠ https://t.co/VbhI9qfBH4
>
> — Alec Luhn (@ASLuhn) September 18, 2021

10.00 The independent election monitoring NGO Golos recorded 2,130 possible voting infringements at polling stations Friday. Some 382 were in Moscow and another 171 in St. Petersburg, Novaya Gazeta reported.

08.00: Voting has resumed in Moscow on the second day of Russia's 2021 State Duma elections.

00.30: Telegram founder Pavel Durov said on Friday evening that the instant messenger is suspending support for all "bots associated with election campaigning" during Russia's parliamentary election in what appears to be a blow to Navalny's "Smart Voting" stategy.

Friday Sept. 17

20.00: As polls close in Moscow on the first of three voting days, the official turnout stands at 16.85%, according to Russia's Central Election Commission.

19.00: Reports of suspected election fraud have been circulating on social media throughout the day. This video from St. Petersburg appears to show a ballot box being stuffed with ballot papers, a practice used in previous elections in the country.

Embed:

> ⊠Возможный вброс в Петербурге на участке 1794. Парень с трудом просунул пачку бюллетеней в урну. pic.twitter.com/mpcXf6zOTr
>
> — Андрей Пивоваров (@brewerov) September 17, 2021

18.10: A raccoon was spotted running around one of the polling stations in Moscow, reportedly let loose by its owner when he was casting his vote. It took officials seven minutes to catch the animal, local media said.

Embed:

16.40: President Vladimir Putin, who is self-isolating after being exposed to Covid-19 in his inner circle, has voted online in the country's parliamentary elections from his residence outside Moscow, the Kremlin announced on Friday

Embed:

16.15: Social media videos posted online on Friday showed buses with newly minted Russian citizens continue to leave eastern Ukraine's breakaway Donetsk People's Republic (DNR) to vote in the Russian. Authorities in eastern Ukraine's breakaway Donetsk People's Republic (DNR) have readied nearly 1,000 buses and trains to neighbouring Russia for residents to elections, a move slammed by officials in Kiev.

Embed:

> Из ДНР продолжают отправляться автобусы с гражданами России, которые едут голосовать на первые в своей жизни российские выборы.#Донбассголосует pic.twitter.com/FDSEhLmqLA
>
> — Алексей Карпушев (@AleksKarpushev) September 17, 2021

16.00: Russia's three-day voting periods are likely here to stay, the head of the country's Central Election Commission (CEC) said, a move that critics warn will make it easier to commit voter fraud.

15.20: Over 40% of Muscovites that applied for electronic voting have already voted, the Central Election Committee has said.

14.36 Vladimir Putin will vote in the Duma election online, Kremlin Spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters on Friday.

11.06: Social images on Friday morning showed long queues of people outside voting stations in cities across Russia. A source close to the government told the independent news outlet Meduza that many state employees were told to cast their vote before 12 p.m. on Friday. Critics say Russian elections have a long history of voter intimidation at work, especially in the bloated public sector, which accounts for a third of jobs in Russia. A recent poll published by the state-funded VTsIOM polling agency said 14% of all employers working at industrial plants in Russia had been confronted with forced voting for the upcoming elections

10.20: Over 10% of Russians that applied for electronic voting have already voted, the Ministry of Digital Science said.

10.13: Apple and Google deleted jailed Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny's apps from their online stores after Russian authorities threatened jail time for their employees, Navalny's aides said Friday.

08.01: Polling stations have opened in Russia's regions that belong to the Moscow time zone. Moscow residents will be able to vote online.
AFP contributed reporting.

Original url: https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2021/09/19/as-it-happened-russia-votes-a75070