The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Russia Marks Record 12-Month Population Decline

October 11, 2021



Russia has faced a festering demographic crisis for years **Yaroslav Chingaev / TASS**

Russia's natural population underwent its largest peacetime decline in recorded history over the last 12 months, an analysis of official government statistics has shown.

Russia's natural population — a figure which counts registered deaths and births, excluding the effects of migration — declined by 997,000 between October 2020 and September 2021, demographer Alexei Raksha calculated.

The stark drop comes as Russia, which has one of the world's highest Covid-19 death tolls, continues to see record numbers of lives lost to the pandemic. The country has recorded at least 660,000 excess deaths since the start of the pandemic.

Russia's total population of around 145 million is lower than it was when President Vladimir Putin came to power in 2000 despite Moscow's annexation of Crimea in 2014 which added 2 million to Russia's official population statistics.

Related article: Russia's Coronavirus Excess Death Toll Hits 660K

Russia's previous period of rapid depopulation came during the 1990s — a decade of economic upheaval when birth rates crashed and social problems like poverty and alcoholism saw a dramatic rise. The previous record decline in natural population came between July 1999 and June 2000, when Russia's population fell by 983,000, Raksha said.

After rising consistently throughout the post-war years of the Soviet Union, Russia's natural population saw consistent declines for decades following the Soviet collapse — with overall numbers propped up only by the inflow of millions of migrant workers from ex-Soviet republics in Central Asia.

Russia's natural population returned to growth for a brief period around 2012, before starting to decline again in the years before the pandemic as the economy weakened and living standards fell.

Throughout his two-decade rule, Putin has promoted a host of policies and welfare payments to boost the country's flagging birth rate, such as a generous "maternity capital" scheme which gives new parents the equivalent of thousands of dollars that can be spent on housing or education.

The government has also used the demographic crisis as justification for its campaign to promote what it calls "traditional family values" that has included policies like outlawing adoption for same-sex couples and banning "gay propaganda."

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2021/10/11/russia-records-record-12-month-population-decline-a75262