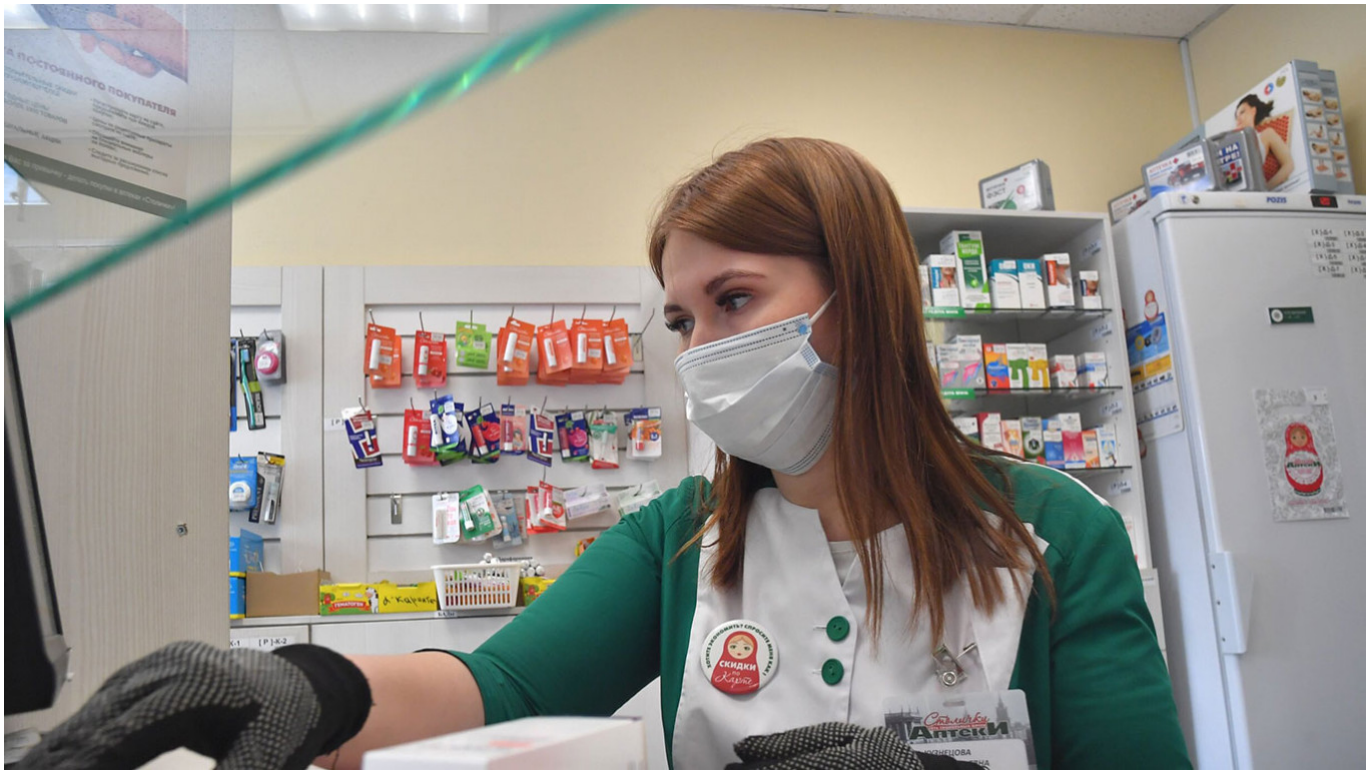
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Demand for Abortion Pills in Russia Hits Record High – Kommersant

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Sergei Kiselev / Moskva News Agency

Demand for abortion drugs in Russia reached an all-time high in 2022, the Kommersant business daily reported Wednesday, citing data by the RNC Pharma consultancy.

A total of 1.4 million drugs that induce abortions and 2.2 million emergency contraception drugs were sold in Russia last year, marking a 60% and 53% increase from 2021 respectively.

"The launch of [Russia's] special military operation [in Ukraine], [Western] sanctions, the population's falling incomes and partial mobilization [of Russia's military reservists] — all these factors are unlikely to have contributed to plans for building a family," said RNC Pharma's development director Nikolai Bespalov.

Women's support charities told Kommersant that Russia's invasion of Ukraine in early 2022 and the military mobilization that followed in September led to a "spike in abortions."

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Yet Russian Health Ministry data shows a different picture, with all types of abortions decreasing by 3.9% from 411,000 in 2021 to 395,000 in 2022. Medical abortions declined by 5.3% from 189,000 to 179,000 over the same period.

The disparity between falling abortion rates and rising demand for abortion pills could be due to clinics stocking up on supplies amid the threat of Western sanctions, according to experts who spoke to Kommersant.

Sanctions and supply chain disruptions over Russia's war in Ukraine have sparked fears of shortages in Russia's pharmaceutical industry which still relies on Western raw materials for production.

But international humanitarian law provides rules to protect access to health care, including drugs and medical services.

This year, Kommersant noted that demand for the abortion pills mifepristone and misoprostol fell by 7.4% while demand for emergency contraception continued to grow by 26% in January-May 2023.

"The situation has somewhat stabilized this year," said Bespalov. "The news is not as frightening and the impact of sanctions was noticeably weaker than expected. As a result, demand for terminating pregnancies compared to the beginning of last year has decreased."

Health Minister Mikhail Murashko last month backed limiting the distribution of abortion-inducing drugs and a ban on private facilities from administering abortions, raising fears that a national abortion ban could be on the horizon amid the government's conservative turn.

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