

WhatsApp Still Russia's Most Widely Used Messenger Despite Video Call Restrictions

September 22, 2025



Mikhail Metsel / TASS

WhatsApp remains Russia's most widely used messaging app despite government restrictions and the Kremlin's push to promote the homegrown rival Max, the business newspaper Kommersant [reported](#) on Monday.

The Meta-owned service reached 97 million unique monthly users in August, up slightly from the same month last year, according to data cited by Kommersant.

VK, the state-linked developer of Russia's Max app, reported 93.5 million monthly users across its platforms last month, while Telegram ranked third with 91 million.

Max, launched in March as an alternative to WhatsApp and Telegram, is growing quickly but still trails its competitors.

The app counted 32.2 million monthly users in August, but more than 34 million downloads in

the first half of September, Kommersant said.

Daily usage remains far lower. WhatsApp recorded 82 million daily users and Telegram nearly 68 million, compared with Max's 7 million in August, which rose to 16.4 million in early September.

Related article: [Russia's Answer to Eurovision Hits a Flat Note](#)

Analysts told Kommersant that the surge in downloads reflected aggressive state promotion, but that Russians have not yet made Max their primary messenger. WhatsApp remains deeply embedded in family and workplace chats, while VK and Telegram have attracted users by integrating news, payments and entertainment, they said.

The Russian government began [blocking](#) voice calls on WhatsApp and Telegram in August, describing the restrictions as an anti-fraud measure. That move came as authorities ratcheted up their promotion of Max, requiring it to come pre-installed on all personal devices sold in the country, and promoting it in schools and government agencies for work communications.

Analysts expect Max's audience to grow by as much as 25% by the end of 2025, compared with 1-9% growth for the established leaders.

Original url:

<https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2025/09/22/whatsapp-still-russias-most-widely-used-messenger-despite-video-call-restrictions-a90584>