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Russian Lawmakers Still Prefer Telegram Despite Kremlin Push for State-Backed Max Messenger

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duma.gov.ru

Russian lawmakers continue to rely on Telegram as their main channel of communication with the public despite a Kremlin directive urging them to switch to the state-backed messenger app Max, according to a study cited by the Kommersant business daily on Friday.

The analysis by consulting group Polilog found that lawmakers from the ruling United Russia party have the largest combined Telegram following with about 4.8 million subscribers.

State Duma Speaker Vyacheslav Volodin, also from United Russia, leads all deputies in average post views and reposts.

He is followed by New People party leader Alexei Nechaev, his deputy Vladislav Davankov and Liberal Democratic Party (LDPR) head Leonid Slutsky.

On average, posts by New People lawmakers attract the most views at around 31,000 per post,

nearly triple the average for United Russia deputies (11,200).

LDPR and A Just Russia lawmakers average around 11,400 and 10,600 views, respectively.

Related article: Everything You Need to Know About Max, Russia's State-Backed Answer to WhatsApp

The study also found that about a quarter of deputies post only text messages on Telegram, while 55% combine text and images and 20% share videos. Roughly 116 deputies post short video clips ("circles"), and just 23 use voice messages. When reposting content across platforms, Telegram remains their first choice.

The findings come as the Russian government steps up efforts to promote Max, a "national messenger" it hopes will replace Western-owned apps.

State communications regulator Roskomnadzor in August started restricting calls made through Telegram and WhatsApp.

Around the same time, the presidential administration instructed lawmakers and officials to move their official channels to Max and create a "priority information system" there, the exiled news outlet Vyorstka reported.

The initiative is overseen by the state-affiliated organization Dialog, which manages regional communications centers that handle citizen outreach on behalf of the authorities.

Duma Speaker Volodin announced the launch of his Max channel on Aug. 13, and parliamentary press offices soon informed journalists that official comments would now appear exclusively on the new platform.

Messages in Duma Telegram chats at the time indicated that updates would no longer be published on Telegram, a rule that most lawmakers appear to have ignored in practice.

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