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Record Number of Russians Opt for Alternative Civil Service – Vyorstka

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Peter Kovalev / TASS

The number of young Russians opting to replace army service with alternative civil service reached a 14-year high in 2025, the exiled news outlet Vyorstka reported Monday.

Vyorstka's analysis of Russia's Federal Labor and Employment Service (Rostrud) data showed that 3,212 Russians had chosen to perform alternative civil service by the end of 2025.

Alternative civil service has increased 180% since the start of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022, when 1,140 young people performed alternative civil service.

Alternative service has continued gaining popularity in the years since, with 1,645 Russians opting for it by the end of 2023 and 2,439 by the end of 2024.

Russian law allows those whose convictions or religious beliefs are incompatible with military service, as well as certain indigenous peoples, to perform alternative civil service for the benefit of society and the state.

Military recruitment offices frequently obstruct Russian conscripts from exercising their rights to alternative civil service based on formal technicalities.

Rights activists say Russia's move to a year-round military draft allows would-be conscripts to apply for alternative civil service throughout the year.

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