

Russian Part-Time, Idle Workforce Hits Highest Since 2020 Pandemic Peak

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Dmitry Belitsky / Moskva News Agency

The number of Russian workers on reduced hours or in temporary downtime rose to its highest level since mid-2020, underscoring growing strain on businesses as the economy slows.

Around 1.6 million employees were placed on part-time schedules, shortened workweeks or idle status in the fourth quarter of 2025, the highest since the third quarter of 2020, when coronavirus restrictions disrupted economic activity, the Central Bank [said](#) in its Regional Economy report.

Over the full year, the figure increased by 14.3%, or 198,000 people.

The surge points to a widening use of reduced working hours as companies seek to cut costs without resorting to mass layoffs, highlighting weakening demand across key sectors and a broader cooling of economic activity.

Oil producers, [metallurgical](#) firms, construction companies and automakers were among the most affected.

At least 10 major firms — including [VSMPO-Avisma](#), Alrosa, Cemros, AvtoVAZ, GAZ and Kamaz — [shortened](#) workweeks or placed staff on forced leave in 2025 to manage financial pressures. Kamaz is again [considering](#) similar measures.

The trend has continued into 2026. In February, a large machinery manufacturer in the Saratov region shifted more than half its workforce to part-time schedules.

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A knitwear factory in the Jewish autonomous region placed about half its production staff on unpaid leave for two months, while the rest moved to a four-day week, the Central Bank said.

In the Leningrad region, production at a former IKEA furniture factory that is now owned by timber group Luzales was [halted](#) due to delayed payments for shipped goods, which led to a shortage of working capital and prevented the purchase of raw materials.

From May 1, about 38% of workers at the IZ-Kartex excavator plant in Kolpino will move to a three-day workweek, citing falling demand and rising customer debt.

Companies are increasingly turning to reduced hours and downtime as a crisis-response tool amid high interest rates, stagnating domestic demand and declining exports.

Russia's Economic Development Ministry [said](#) GDP fell 1.8% year-on-year in the first two months of 2026, while the Russian Academy of Sciences [estimated](#) a 1.5% contraction for the quarter.

That contrasts with the Central Bank's earlier [forecast](#) of 1.6% growth in the first quarter.

Consumers have also shifted to a more cautious stance. Russians have cut spending even on essentials such as [food](#), [medicine](#), [clothing and footwear](#), and are postponing purchases of electronics and vehicles.

A survey by CSP Platforma and OnIn found that 82% of respondents are concerned about the economic outlook and expect prices and utility tariffs to rise faster than incomes over the coming year.

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