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Official Data Shows 450,000 Russians Killed in War, Death Rate Accelerating – Rosstat Leaks

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Alexander Avilov / Moskva News Agency

A data leak from the Russian state statistics agency Rosstat shows that, according to official figures, over 450,000 Russians have been killed in the war in Ukraine, making the war the fourth most common cause of death in Russia since 2022.

Russia has not officially disclosed its battlefield losses since September 2022 and has dismissed independent estimates as unreliable. Rosstat's figures would make the war in Ukraine Russia's deadliest conflict since World War II, far exceeding the 13,000 Soviet troops killed in the nine-year Soviet-Afghan War.

Rosstat was hit by a cyberattack from Oct.29 and Nov, 1 by the Belarus Cyber Partisans and Silent Crow hacking groups, who posted messages on the organization's homepage. The

groups, both banned in Russia as "extremist organizations," stole data on Russia's economy and demographics as well as wartime losses.

"This is the most significant leak of data when it comes to Russian casualties," Janis Kluge, head of the Russia and Eurasia division at the German Institute for International and Security Affairs, told The Moscow Times. "I think it's established as a fact that the war has never been more deadly than it is right now."

As well as active servicemen, the figure calculated by the Silent Crow includes civilians killed in airstrikes and Ukraine's 2024 incursion into Russia's Kursk region. The total death toll is likely to be higher as this data does not include soldiers missing in action, nor the 27,000 foreign fighters believed to have been recruited into the Russian armed forces.

The Moscow Times cross-referenced a random sample of 50 names from Mediazona and BBC Russian's "Counting the Dead" open source repository of Russian death records with Silent Crow's leaked dataset, but was unable to verify the data in its entirety.

But the figures are in line with other assessments of Russian casualties; the British Defense Ministry said in early September that over half a million people had died fighting for Russia and casualties could number as high as 1.5 million, including the wounded.

Since the full-scale invasion of Ukraine, 6.2 Russians have been killed for every kilometer of territory gained. That territory has become increasingly costly each year as the number of registered deaths climbed despite Russia's progress on the front line stalling.

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Not all deaths recorded in the database were in combat. 14,160 cases described the death of a member of the Russian armed forces from non-military causes, including illnesses, road accidents or suicide. Over 32,000 died from wounds they had sustained at least a year earlier.

The Belarus Cyber Partisans released a lower figure of 393,881 killed, using a different methodology that only counted the deaths of military personnel or civilians in combat or from the long-term effects of the fighting.

72% of deaths were registered as occurring in the so-called Donetsk People's Republic, where over 20,000 Russian troops were killed in the bloody 10-month Battle of Bakhmut.

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The leak supports research showing that Russia's ethnic republics have suffered disproportionately from mobilization and recruitment for the armed forces, with major cities like Moscow registering a smaller share of overall casualties than their populations would suggest.

Researcher Maria Vyushkova told The Moscow Times that the Kremlin's recruitment policies amounted to the "extermination of entire nations" for some of Russia's smallest ethnic groups, attracting men into the armed forces with salaries far more lucrative than anything available locally and generous benefits for their families if they die, or offering a route out of incarceration.

Kluge told The Moscow Times that although Rosstat's figures are dramatic, they may have little economic impact on their own. "This represents around half a percent of Russia's working-age population of 80 million people. That is not enough to make the news because the men who are fighting usually don't have very productive jobs in the first place.

"But the main significance is political," he added. "It's about who is winning this war and you cannot say Russia is winning this war if it is losing population at this rate."

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