

Alcohol Deaths Plummet as 'Warmest Winter' Hits Russia

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Deaths from alcohol poisoning fell 37.3% in the space of a year. Kirill Zykov / Moskva News Agency

Experts are attributing a sharp drop in the number of deaths from alcohol poisoning in Russia to the unseasonably warm winter.

Some 619 people died from alcohol poisoning in January 2020, down 37.3% from January 2019, Russia's National Center for Alcohol Policy Development said Thursday. The past winter was the warmest since records began in 1891, Russia's Hydrometeorology Center announced the same day.

Russia's consumer protection union said the mild winter played a key role in that drop, Interfax <u>reported</u>. Union leader Pavel Shapkin said there is a direct correlation between an increase in temperatures and a decline in alcohol consumption.

"An average 10-degree temperature rise above normal reduces the burden of alcohol on the population's health by the same 10 degrees," Shapkin told Interfax.

"As a result, the negative outcomes of alcohol consumption have dramatically decreased," Shapkin was quoted as saying.

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The consumer protection union previously <u>reported</u> a slight decline in vodka sales between 2019 and 2018.

Russia's 40% decline in alcohol consumption, though still some of the world's highest, has contributed to Russia's rapid rise in life expectancy, the World Health Organization <u>said</u> last year.

Alcohol consumption fell in the mid-1980s under the last Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev-led campaign, though rates skyrocketed after the Soviet collapse in 1991.

Russia has introduced several measures to cut down on alcohol consumption under President Vladimir Putin, including a sales ban after 11 p.m., minimum retail price increases for spirits and an advertising blackout.

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