

Telegram Surpasses WhatsApp Traffic Volume in Russia

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The private messaging app Telegram has for the first time overtaken WhatsApp in traffic volume in Russia, the Vedomosti business daily [reported](#) Monday, with experts predicting the Russian-founded messenger will also surpass the user count of its Meta-owned competitor this year.

Telegram accounted for 60-80% of total traffic exchanged in Russia by the start of 2023 and has continued to grow since then, according to an analysis by Russia's top four telecom operators cited by Vedomosti.

WhatsApp's traffic in Russia reportedly remained unchanged over the same period.

"Traffic volume reflects not only the popularity of the service, but also how much heavy content — primarily video — users transfer through it," Vedomosti quoted an unnamed representative of the Beeline provider as saying.

Related article: [Lacking Oversight, Telegram Thrives in Ukraine Disinformation Battle](#)

Telegram was founded by Russian-born tech billionaire Pavel Durov, who left Russia in 2014 following disputes with the government over user privacy and losing his brainchild, the popular social network VKontakte, to Kremlin allies.

In addition to its messaging service, Telegram serves as a critical platform for broadcasting uncensored information and is used by many independent Russian journalists as well as officials.

A Russian court banned WhatsApp parent company Meta, which also owns Facebook and Instagram, as an "extremist" organization shortly after Moscow's troops invaded Ukraine in early 2022, but said the ruling would not affect WhatsApp.

Vedomosti reported that WhatsApp still boasts the highest number of Russian users. But experts anticipate Telegram — with user numbers in Russia growing five times faster than WhatsApp — to take its spot as soon as this year.

“Telegram is in second place after WhatsApp in terms of the number of users, but Telegram is the fastest-growing messenger,” a representative of the Tele2 provider was quoted as saying.

Telegram’s daily user count totaled 48.8 million people, or around 40% of Russia’s internet users, in January 2023, compared to WhatsApp's 76 million daily users.

“Telegram today is much more than a messenger, it’s a full-fledged media [platform] with a large number of channels,” Maria Saykina, an analyst with the Russian Association for Electronic Communications (RAEC), told Vedomosti.

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