

99% of St. Petersburg Counted in Census

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A senior St. Petersburg statistics official said Tuesday that 99 percent of the city's residents took part in this year's census, despite widespread reports of apathy and even hostility toward the nationwide headcount.

"There were cases where census workers did not make it to several buildings, we're not denying that at all," Dmitry Dorofeyev, deputy head of the city branch of the State Statistics Service, told Interfax.

"All complaints will be carefully considered, and stationary census points will remain open for another four days," he said.

Residents of Moscow and St. Petersburg demonstrated "the least willingness" to participate in the census, according to a VTsIOM poll of 1,600 people released Monday.

Nationwide, just 5 percent of respondents said they were unlikely to respond when workers came to their homes. One-third said they were unlikely to go to a census station on their own, the poll found.

Dorofeyev said census workers reported that some residents intentionally avoided them, while in a few instances they even threatened physical violence.

"All of those questions are being settled at the district level," he said. "Later, we'll provide statistics on how many incidents there were."

Governor Valentina Matviyenko thanked St. Petersburg residents for their active participation this year, which she said was "much higher" than in the previous census in 2002, according a statement posted Monday on her government's web site.

But Federation Council Speaker Sergei Mironov, who represents St. Petersburg in the upper chamber of parliament, called on the statistics service to provide a full report on citizens' complaints.

St. Petersburg media and blogs reported numerous instances of manipulated data, violations of confidentiality, and students being forced to help conduct the census, he said.

The two-week census, which ended Monday, cost an estimated 17 billion rubles (\$562 million). Opposition groups including The Other Russia had called for a boycott to protest state policies, while demographers said the data was vital for their research.

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