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Moscow Driving Not as Bad as Mexico

By Roland Oliphant

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According to a recent IBM study, 45 percent of Moscow drivers have sat in a three-hour traffic jam at least once. **Denis Sinyakov**

Stressed Moscow drivers might want to spare a thought for their peers in Mexico City and Beijing, after a survey revealed that there are much worse places to be behind the wheel than the Russian capital.

Moscow ranked 13th out of 20 cities for driving comfort in IBM's annual Commuter Pain survey — making it a much nicer place to drive than Mexico City, Beijing or Johannesburg.

And it seems to be getting even better. About a third of Moscow drivers — 31 percent — said the situation had improved "moderately or somewhat." That is up from 16 percent in 2010.

But Moscow's drivers can still claim to sit in some of the longest-running traffic jams in the world.

A survey of drivers in 20 cites found that 45 percent of Muscovite drivers had been stuck in

traffic for more than three hours at least once.

That compares with 35 percent in the Kenyan capital, Nairobi, which ranked 17th in terms of overall comfort.

There are side effects to the suffering. More than a third of Moscow drivers surveyed felt that traffic is negatively impacting their performance at work, up from 25 percent last year.

And more than half of Muscovites said they had been forced to abandon road journeys because of anticipated traffic jams in the past month.

Researchers questioned 8,042 motorists in 20 cities around the world to compile the annual survey.

Respondents were asked to rank their city according to 10 criteria, including commute time, time stuck in traffic, and whether or not traffic has gotten worse, causes anger or stress, and whether they had decided not to make journeys because of congestion.

Montreal turned out to be the least painful city to drive in, scoring just 21 points, followed by London and Chicago.

The worst was Mexico City with 108 points, followed by Shenzhen and Beijing in China.

Moscow scored 65 "pain points" — just behind Milan but ahead of New Delhi.

Mayor Sergei Sobyanin has denied rumors that he is planning a congestion charge for the city center, but defended plans to impose paid parking.

"There will be no paid entry into Moscow, that is obvious. It would be impossible both technically and ideologically," he told Vesti FM radio Tuesday, Interfax reported.

But, he added, motorists would still have to choose between paying to park and traveling to the center on public transportation. "All cities in the world are responding to this problem the same way," he said.

Sobyanin is proud of the results of his work in adding parking spaces so far.

This year about half a million additional parking spaces were created in the city, the mayor said, while in the last 100 years a total of 1 million parking spaces were made.

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