

Russian Worry High On Health, Ecology

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Russians are among the most dissatisfied in the world with their health and well-being, having great distrust for the health-care system and deep concerns about the environment, a new survey released Thursday showed.

Russia ranked 27th out of the 30 countries featured in the health and well-being index created by consumer goods giant Philips and researcher Ipsos, with a composite score of 37 points.

That ranked well below the global average of 57, though still ahead of Turkey, Italy and Japan.

The United Arab Emirates came in first, with 88 points, while Western countries such as the United States, France and Germany were clustered around the 57-point average.

The Russia survey covered Moscow and all regions and asked 1,096 respondents to evaluate their health and express everyday concerns.

"The results of the survey demonstrate a need for significant improvement in the health

and state of well-being of the Russian people," said Arjan de Jongste, CEO of Philips in Russia and the CIS.

According to the findings, the most important factors determining Russians' health and well-being were the cost of living, which was deemed important by 90 percent of those surveyed, and family relations, cited by 89 percent.

But the survey found that only 13 percent of Russians regularly visit doctors and more than one in three rarely have medical checkups.

Two-thirds choose to rely on vitamins, homeopathic remedies and other nontraditional treatments to stay healthy, rather than consult a doctor.

Among respondents' major health concerns were declining medical service quality (87 percent), increasing medicine prices (77 percent) and ineffective government legislation (61 percent).

The dire health-care outlook has led the government to vow to triple health-care spending to 1.4 trillion rubles (\$45 billion) by 2015.

Social indicators painted an equally unflattering picture.

While the bulk of Russians were content with the availability of shops and Internet access (more than 70 percent), relatively few of those polled felt satisfied with the cost of living or their income (less than 25 percent).

In another revealing finding, Russians rated worries about ecological conditions, pollution and the availability of parks especially high (close to 90 percent), above concerns over schools or hospitals.

Although the country has suffered from longstanding environmental degradation dating back to the Soviet period, Russians' attachment to the land and concern over pollution are not often acknowledged in surveys of this type.

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