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Moscow Behind European Capitals in Terms of Life Quality

By Irina Filatova

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Muscovites are unhappy with the environment, including bad air quality. **Vladimir Filonov**

Despite the government's ongoing efforts to lure foreign investors to Moscow, the city remains behind most European capitals in terms of the quality of life, hampering its economic development.

More than a half of Moscow's residents said they were not satisfied with living standards in the city — the highest figure compared with global capitals like London, Berlin and Paris, according to a survey released Tuesday.

A total of 64 percent of those surveyed assessed the quality of life in the city as poor, with 35 percent saying they are satisfied, consulting company Strategy Partners Group said in the survey. One percent of respondents were undecided.

The company compared those results with similar polls in European cities, concluding that

the number of people satisfied with living standards in their city is the highest in Vienna, reaching 89 percent. Moscow is preceded by Warsaw, where 56 percent of residents assessed the quality of life as unsatisfactory.

Muscovites view poor environment, bad medical services and low affordability of housing as the key problems that have a negative impact on the quality of life in the city.

The survey by Strategy Partners Group, a subsidiary of state-controlled lender Sberbank, showed that 19 percent of the participants believe that ecological issues are the biggest problem in Moscow. A total of 15.4 percent said they were not satisfied by the quality of medical services, while unaffordable housing received 13.3 percent of the vote.

The consulting company surveyed 5,500 city residents living in all the 13 Moscow districts, who were asked to assess various aspects that make up the quality of life, with respondents also taking a negative stance on factors like job opportunities, personal safety, transportation and school education.

Despite releasing the survey days before mayoral elections scheduled for Sunday, Strategy Partners Group said the poll was its own initiative and did not get the city's financing.

Meanwhile, City Hall officials have repeatedly claimed that they had made the quality of life a top priority, acknowledging that there is still a long way to go.

"Moscow can be included in the top 20 cities comfortable for making money. But at the same time Moscow is at the bottom on the list of the 100 cities ranked by the quality of life," acting Deputy Mayor Andrei Sharonov said earlier this year.

In the global competition for human resources, the quality of life is a critical factor, said Alexei Prazdnichnykh, a partner at Strategy Partners Group. A city comfortable for living tends to attract skilled people, which boosts its economic development, he told journalists at the company's office.

At the moment the capital looks more competitive compared with most other Russian cities, but it is seldom preferred when it comes to comparison with foreign destinations, Prazdnichnykh said.

Many tend to exchange a higher salary in Moscow for better life quality in other big cities abroad, he added.

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