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Originally designed as a tool to help companies assign hardship allowances as part of expatriates' relocation packages, the EIU'S index rates living conditions in 172 cities (up from 140 last year) based on more than 30 factors. These are grouped into five categories: stability, health care, culture and environment, education and infrastructure. This is the second year in which the index incorporates indicators related to covid; these assess how each city has coped with increased demand on health-care facilities and with closures or capacity limits for schools, restaurants and cultural venues.

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The war in Ukraine is also weighing on liveability. There is no score in 2022 for Kyiv because the EIU's correspondent had to abandon the survey when fighting broke out. Moscow and St Petersburg have dropped 15 and 13 places to 80th and 88th, as hundreds of Western firms have pulled out of Russia and censorship has increased. Other cities affected by the contagion of war, such as Budapest and Warsaw, saw their stability scores slip as geopolitical tensions increased.

If the war continues throughout this year, more cities could suffer disruption to food and fuel supplies. The welcome rise in liveability this year might be short-lived.

