

Suicide Trends in the Former Soviet Slavic Republics

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Introduction: High suicide rates in the former Soviet Slavic republics (fSSr) Russia, Ukraine, Belarus and its profound fluctuations over the past decades have attracted considerable interest. There is suggestion that mass privatization as an economic strategy was a crucial determinant of differences in mortality trend in post-communist countries during transition. **Objectives:** We investigated whether population drinking can account for the fluctuations in suicide mortality in the fSSr Russia, Ukraine and Belarus during the recent decades. **Methods:** Trends in overall and sex-specific age-adjusted suicide mortality rates and recorded alcohol consumption per capita from 1980 to 2010 were analyzed. **Results:** The temporal pattern of suicide mortality fluctuations were similar for three countries: sharp decrease in the mid-1980s, dramatic increase in the first half of the 1990s and downward trend in the past decade. Russia experienced the sharpest suicide mortality fluctuations during anti-alcohol campaign and transition. In Russia, there was also a spike in suicide mortality between 1999 and 2001, which might be explained by the financial crisis in 1998. The results of the time-series analysis suggest that the dramatic mortality fluctuations in the fSSr in the mid-1980s and in the first half of the 1990s were attributable to alcohol. In contrast, alcohol can not fully explain the downward trend in suicide mortality observed in the fSSr during the last decade. **Conclusions:** Similar regional pattern of suicide trends do not support the hypothesis that alcohol control policy was responsible for the decline in Russian suicide mortality during recent decade.