

Russia must tackle 'critical' suicide rate: experts

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Russia must launch a public health campaign to reduce the country's suicide rate, among the highest in the world, top psychiatrists said on Thursday.

In 2010, the suicide rate reached 23.5 per 100,000 people, the sixth highest in the world and well above the "critical" limit of 20 set by the [World Health Organisation](#), Boris Polozhy of the [Serbsky psychiatric hospital](#) told a news conference in Moscow.

The suicide rate peaked in Russia during the economic and social maelstrom of the 1990s after the breakup of the Soviet Union, when the rate rose to 42 per 100,000 in 1995.

But the high rates have remained stable among children, with the suicide rate standing at 20 per 100,000 among 15-19 year-olds, against a global average of 7.3, said Polozhy, who heads a mental health research centre at the hospital.

The world average suicide rate for adults is 14 per 100,000, Polozhy told journalists.

Experts urged Russia to introduce a public health campaign aimed at prevention of suicides, which they said could be put in place in the next two years.

But they complained that the Russian government was too slow to change and had not made any real progress.

It will likely take Russia "five to 10 years" to launch a state-funded programme, said Zurab Kekelidze, the health ministry's chief psychiatrist and the acting head of the hospital.

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