

Canadians lead longer, healthier lives than Americans

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Compared to their neighbours south of the border, Canadians live longer, healthier lives. Research published in BioMed Central's open access journal *Population Health Metrics* has found this disparity between the two countries, suggesting that America's lack of universal health care and lower levels of social and economic equality are to blame.

David Feeny, from Kaiser Permanente Center for Health Research, Oregon, USA, worked with a team of American researchers to study data from the Joint Canada/United States Survey of Health 2002/03. He said, "Canada and the US share a common border and enjoy very similar standards of living, yet life expectancy in Canada is higher than in the US. There are two distinct potential explanations for the gap: differences in access to [health care](#) and in the prevalence of poverty".

Canadians have a universal 'prenatal to grave' health service, which is free at point of care, while Americans' access to health insurance is typically based on employment, income (Medicaid), or age (Medicare), and is not universal. The degree of [social inequality](#) is also more pronounced in the US.

The researchers found that Canadians can expect 2.7 more years of 'perfect health' than Americans - more than half of the gap found between the richest and poorest people in Canada. Speaking about the results, Feeny said, "The difference in health between the two countries seems to be associated with substantial differences in access to care as well as substantial differences in social and [economic inequality](#). Yet

distinguishing among the potential explanations for the differences in health between the two countries would require longitudinal data. Perhaps it is time for Canada and the US to contemplate a joint [longitudinal survey](#)."

More information: Comparing population health in the United States and Canada, David H Feeny, Mark S. Kaplan, Nathalie Huguet and Bentson H McFarland, Population Health Metrics (in press), www.pophealthmetrics.com/

Provided by BioMed Central

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