

Life expectancy higher in Israel than in US, researcher says

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A new study conducted by a researcher at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev (BGU) for Jerusalem's Taub Center for Social Policy Studies in Israel reports that Israeli's have a higher life expectancy on average than Americans and residents of other OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development) countries.

According to the most recent data, from 2005, the average American [life expectancy](#) is now 78 years; for Israeli Jews, approximately 81 years and Israeli Arabs, 79 years. [Japan](#) has the highest life expectancy of OECD countries averaging 82 years.

Professor Dov Chernichovsky, a BGU lecturer and a health economist for the Taub Center, also revealed that while Israeli Arabs still lag behind Israelis – due in part to cultural, social and educational issues – they still live noticeably longer on average than Americans.

The UN Human Development Index uses life expectancy at birth as the accepted overall measure of national health and the public health indicator. In 1980, the life expectancy for Israeli Jews, Americans and residents of the other developed countries was almost identical, at approximately 74 years; but Israeli Arabs were two years less, or 72.

"Since then, the increase in Israeli life expectancy has far outpaced those of other countries," Chernichovsky explains. "Life expectancy in the U.S. grew by four years since 1980, and in the rest of the OECD it grew by six years. But for Israelis, both Jews and Arabs, the gain was more

than seven years."

According to Chernichovsky, "The national health system and other medical improvements have been notably successful in improving outcomes for all Israeli residents – both in absolute and relative terms compared to other developed countries and in narrowing the gaps within [Israel](#)." He has conducted a number of studies examining the U.S. healthcare delivery system in comparison with other countries.

Another widely used indicator is infant mortality, which aggregates information about health outcomes over the entire life cycle and focuses on the survival of infants during the first year of life. In 1960, infant mortality rates were nearly identical for Israeli Jews, Americans and residents of the other OECD countries, while the Israeli Arab rate was approximately double.

Since that time, all countries have shown substantial declines in infant mortality, from more than 25 per 1,000 live births to fewer than 10. Yet, the decline in Israel is greater than that for the U.S. and slightly exceeds that of the rest of the OECD.

"Arab Israelis have experienced the most significant decrease in infant mortality from over 50 to less than 10 per 1,000 live births, which can be directly attributed to Israel's preventative healthcare services, particularly those dealing with OB/GYN and pediatric services," Chernichovsky explains.

Provided by American Associates, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev

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