

# Study: Americans less healthy than others

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Americans are in worse health, die earlier and suffer from more disease than residents of other wealthy nations, according to a new study out Wednesday.

The disadvantage spans all ages from birth to 75, said the report, conducted jointly by the National Research Council and the Institute of Medicine.

Some details were surprising: even wealthier Americans and those with health insurance were not as healthy as counterparts in other prosperous nations, it found.

"We were struck by the gravity of these findings," said Steven Woolf, professor of family medicine at Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond and chair of the panel that wrote the report.

"Americans are dying and suffering at rates that we know are unnecessary because people in other high-income countries are living longer lives and enjoying better health. What concerns our panel is why, for decades, we have been slipping behind," Woolf stressed.

The report is the first of its kind to look at a range of illnesses, injuries and behaviors of people of all ages in the United States to run a comparison with counterparts in rich countries such as Australia, Canada, Japan and several countries in western Europe.

Among the countries studied, the United States was in last place or close

to last in nine key benchmark areas.

They were: [infant mortality](#) and [low birth weight](#); injuries and homicides; teenage pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections; prevalence of HIV and AIDS; drug-related deaths; obesity and diabetes; heart disease; [chronic lung disease](#); and disability.

Many of the health problems disproportionately plague children, the report found.

The United States has the highest infant mortality among rich countries despite the fact that it spends more on health care than any other country.

The report urges authorities to step up efforts to identify and pursue national health goals.

US President [Barack Obama](#)'s landmark overhaul of the health care system, which aims to provide insurance to the majority of those currently without, is due to come into force next year after being upheld by the Supreme Court.

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