

Michael Moore's SiCKO (official trailer)



<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=joaAfBr9tAE>

EDITORIAL

World's Best Medical Care?

Many Americans are under the delusion that we have “the best health care system in the world,” as President Bush sees it, or provide the “best medical care in the world,” as Rudolph Giuliani declared last week. That may be true at many top medical centers. But the disturbing truth is that this country lags well behind other advanced nations in delivering timely and effective care.

Michael Moore struck a nerve in his new documentary, “Sicko,” when he extolled the virtues of the government-run health care systems in France, England, Canada and even Cuba while deploring the failures of the largely private insurance system in this country. There is no question that Mr. Moore overstated his case by making foreign systems look almost flawless. But there is a growing body of evidence that, by an array of pertinent yardsticks, the United States is a laggard not a leader in providing good medical care.

Seven years ago, the World Health Organization made the first major effort to rank the health systems of 191 nations. France and Italy took the top two spots; the United States was a dismal 37th. More recently, the highly regarded Commonwealth Fund has pioneered in comparing the United States with other advanced nations through surveys of patients and doctors and analysis of other data. Its latest report, issued in May, ranked the United States last or next-to-last compared with five other nations — Australia, Canada, Germany, New Zealand and the United Kingdom — on most measures of performance, including quality of care and access to it. Other comparative studies also put the United States in a relatively bad light.

Insurance coverage. All other major industrialized nations provide universal health coverage, and most of them have comprehensive benefit packages with no cost-sharing by the patients. The United States, to its shame, has some 45 million people without health insurance and many more millions who have poor coverage. Although the president has blithely said that these people can always get treatment in an emergency room, many studies have shown that people without insurance postpone treatment until a minor illness becomes worse, harming their own health and imposing greater costs.

Access. Citizens abroad often face long waits before they can get to see a specialist or undergo elective surgery. Americans typically get prompter attention, although Germany does better. The real barriers here are the costs facing low-income people without insurance or with skimpy coverage. But even Americans with above-average incomes find it more difficult than their counterparts abroad to get care on nights or weekends without going to an emergency room, and many report having to wait six days or more for an appointment with their own doctors.

Fairness. The United States ranks dead last on almost all measures of equity because we have the greatest disparity in the quality of care given to richer and poorer citizens. Americans with below-average incomes are much less likely than their counterparts in other industrialized nations to see a doctor when sick, to fill prescriptions or to get needed tests and follow-up care.

Healthy lives. We have known for years that America has a high infant mortality rate, so it is no surprise that we rank last among 23 nations by that yardstick. But the problem is much broader. We rank near the bottom in healthy life expectancy at age 60, and 15th among 19 countries in deaths from a wide range of illnesses that would not have been fatal if treated with timely and effective care. The good news is that we have done a better job than other industrialized nations in reducing smoking. The bad news is that our obesity epidemic is the worst in the world.

Quality. In a comparison with five other countries, the Commonwealth Fund ranked the United States first in providing the “right care” for a given condition as defined by standard clinical guidelines and gave it especially high marks for preventive care, like Pap smears and mammograms to detect early-stage cancers, and blood tests and cholesterol checks for hypertensive patients. But we scored poorly in coordinating the care of chronically ill patients, in protecting the safety of patients, and in meeting their needs and preferences, which drove our overall quality rating down to last place. American doctors and hospitals kill patients through surgical and medical mistakes more often than their counterparts in other industrialized nations.

Life and death. In a comparison of five countries, the United States had the best survival rate for breast cancer, second best for cervical cancer and childhood leukemia, worst for kidney transplants, and almost-worst for liver transplants and colorectal cancer. In an eight-country comparison, the United States ranked last in years of potential life lost to circulatory diseases, respiratory diseases and diabetes and had the second highest death rate from bronchitis, asthma and emphysema. Although several factors can affect these results, it seems likely that the quality of care delivered was a significant contributor.

Patient satisfaction. Despite the declarations of their political leaders, many Americans hold surprisingly negative views of their health care system. Polls in Europe and North America seven to nine years ago found that only 40 percent of Americans were satisfied with the nation’s health care system, placing us 14th out of 17 countries. In recent Commonwealth Fund surveys of five countries, American attitudes stand out as the most negative, with a third of the adults surveyed calling for rebuilding the entire system, compared with only 13 percent who feel that way in Britain and 14 percent in Canada.

That may be because Americans face higher out-of-pocket costs than citizens elsewhere, are less apt to have a long-term doctor, less able to see a doctor on the same day when sick, and less apt to get their questions answered or receive clear instructions from a doctor. On the other hand, Gallup polls in recent years have shown that three-quarters of the respondents in the United States, in Canada and in Britain rate their personal care as excellent or good, so it could be hard to motivate these people for the wholesale change sought by the disaffected.

Use of information technology. Shockingly, despite our vaunted prowess in computers, software and the Internet, much of our health care system is still operating in the dark ages of paper records and handwritten scrawls. American primary care doctors lag years behind doctors in other advanced nations in adopting electronic medical records or prescribing medications electronically. This makes it harder to coordinate care, spot errors and adhere to standard clinical guidelines.

Top-of-the-line care. Despite our poor showing in many international comparisons, it is doubtful that many Americans, faced with a life-threatening illness, would rather be treated elsewhere. We tend to think that our very best medical centers are the best in the world. But whether this is a realistic assessment or merely a cultural preference for the home team is difficult to say. Only when better measures of clinical excellence are developed will discerning medical shoppers know for sure who is the best of the best.

With health care emerging as a major issue in the presidential campaign and in Congress, it will be important to get beyond empty boasts that this country has “the best health care system in the world” and turn instead to fixing its very real defects. The main goal should be to reduce the huge number of uninsured, who are a major reason for our poor standing globally. But there is also plenty of room to improve our coordination of care, our use of computerized records, communications between doctors and patients, and dozens of other factors that impair the quality of care. The world’s most powerful economy should be able to provide a health care system that really is the best.

**MEASURING OVERALL HEALTH SYSTEM PERFORMANCE
FOR 191 COUNTRIES**

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**This study is based on the composite measure of
health care delivery, COMP.**

ANNEX

Table 1. Overall efficiency in all WHO member states

Overall efficiency					
Rank	Uncertainty Interval		Member State	Index	Uncertainty Interval
1	1	- 5	France	0.994	0.982 - 1.000
2	1	- 5	Italy	0.991	0.978 - 1.000
3	1	- 6	San Marino	0.988	0.973 - 1.000
4	2	- 7	Andorra	0.982	0.966 - 0.997
5	3	- 7	Malta	0.978	0.965 - 0.993
6	2	- 11	Singapore	0.973	0.947 - 0.998
7	4	- 8	Spain	0.972	0.959 - 0.985
8	4	- 14	Oman	0.961	0.938 - 0.985
9	7	- 12	Austria	0.959	0.946 - 0.972
10	8	- 11	Japan	0.957	0.948 - 0.965
11	8	- 12	Norway	0.955	0.947 - 0.964
12	10	- 15	Portugal	0.945	0.931 - 0.958
13	10	- 16	Monaco	0.943	0.929 - 0.957
14	13	- 19	Greece	0.933	0.921 - 0.945
15	12	- 20	Iceland	0.932	0.917 - 0.948
16	14	- 21	Luxembourg	0.928	0.914 - 0.942
17	14	- 21	Netherlands	0.928	0.914 - 0.942
18	16	- 21	United Kingdom	0.925	0.913 - 0.937
19	14	- 22	Ireland	0.924	0.909 - 0.939
20	17	- 24	Switzerland	0.916	0.903 - 0.930
21	18	- 24	Belgium	0.915	0.903 - 0.926
22	14	- 29	Colombia	0.910	0.881 - 0.939
23	20	- 26	Sweden	0.908	0.893 - 0.921
24	16	- 30	Cyprus	0.906	0.879 - 0.932
25	22	- 27	Germany	0.902	0.890 - 0.914
26	22	- 32	Saudi Arabia	0.894	0.872 - 0.916
27	23	- 33	United Arab Emirates	0.896	0.861 - 0.911
28	26	- 32	Israel	0.884	0.870 - 0.897
29	18	- 39	Morocco	0.882	0.834 - 0.925
30	27	- 32	Canada	0.881	0.868 - 0.894
31	27	- 33	Finland	0.881	0.866 - 0.895
32	28	- 34	Australia	0.876	0.861 - 0.891
33	22	- 43	Chile	0.870	0.816 - 0.918
34	32	- 36	Denmark	0.862	0.848 - 0.874
35	31	- 41	Dominica	0.854	0.824 - 0.883
36	33	- 40	Costa Rica	0.849	0.825 - 0.871
37	35	- 44	United States of America	0.838	0.817 - 0.859
38	34	- 46	Slovenia	0.838	0.813 - 0.859
39	36	- 44	Cuba	0.834	0.816 - 0.852
40	36	- 48	Brunei Darussalam	0.829	0.808 - 0.849
41	38	- 45	New Zealand	0.827	0.815 - 0.840
42	37	- 48	Bahrain	0.824	0.804 - 0.845
43	39	- 53	Croatia	0.812	0.782 - 0.837
44	41	- 51	Qatar	0.812	0.793 - 0.831
45	41	- 52	Kuwait	0.810	0.790 - 0.830
46	41	- 53	Barbados	0.808	0.779 - 0.834
47	36	- 59	Thailand	0.807	0.759 - 0.852
48	43	- 54	Czech Republic	0.805	0.781 - 0.826
49	42	- 55	Malaysia	0.802	0.772 - 0.830
50	45	- 59	Poland	0.793	0.762 - 0.819
51	38	- 67	Dominican Republic	0.789	0.735 - 0.845
52	41	- 67	Tunisia	0.785	0.741 - 0.832
53	47	- 62	Jamaica	0.782	0.754 - 0.809
54	50	- 64	Venezuela, Bolivarian	0.775	0.745 - 0.803

			Republic of			
55	41	- 75	Albania	0.774	0.709	- 0.834
56	51	- 83	Seychelles	0.773	0.747	- 0.797
57	47	- 77	Paraguay	0.781	0.714	- 0.806
58	55	- 87	Republic of Korea	0.759	0.740	- 0.776
59	50	- 78	Senegal	0.756	0.711	- 0.800
60	53	- 73	Philippines	0.755	0.720	- 0.789
61	52	- 74	Mexico	0.755	0.719	- 0.789
62	54	- 73	Slovakia	0.754	0.721	- 0.781
63	49	- 81	Egypt	0.752	0.707	- 0.798
64	50	- 80	Kazakhstan	0.752	0.699	- 0.802
65	55	- 80	Uruguay	0.745	0.702	- 0.782
66	59	- 74	Hungary	0.743	0.713	- 0.768
67	53	- 81	Trinidad and Tobago	0.742	0.695	- 0.784
68	59	- 75	Saint Lucia	0.740	0.717	- 0.765
69	58	- 81	Belize	0.736	0.697	- 0.772
70	60	- 81	Turkey	0.734	0.698	- 0.764
71	58	- 83	Nicaragua	0.733	0.698	- 0.770
72	64	- 84	Belarus	0.723	0.691	- 0.750
73	65	- 82	Lithuania	0.722	0.690	- 0.750
74	63	- 83	Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	0.722	0.686	- 0.754
75	66	- 81	Argentina	0.722	0.695	- 0.747
76	68	- 84	Sri Lanka	0.716	0.692	- 0.740
77	68	- 85	Estonia	0.714	0.684	- 0.741
78	57	- 99	Guatemala	0.713	0.642	- 0.774
79	70	- 88	Ukraine	0.708	0.674	- 0.734
80	68	- 93	Solomon Islands	0.705	0.664	- 0.739
81	70	- 92	Algeria	0.701	0.669	- 0.730
82	75	- 98	Palau	0.700	0.679	- 0.719
83	75	- 98	Jordan	0.698	0.675	- 0.720
84	75	- 91	Mauritius	0.691	0.665	- 0.719
85	74	- 96	Grenada	0.689	0.652	- 0.723
86	76	- 93	Antigua and Barbuda	0.688	0.657	- 0.718
87	79	- 96	Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	0.683	0.655	- 0.707
88	69	- 111	Bangladesh	0.675	0.618	- 0.732
89	83	- 107	The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	0.664	0.630	- 0.695
90	84	- 106	Bosnia and Herzegovina	0.664	0.632	- 0.694
91	85	- 104	Lebanon	0.664	0.638	- 0.688
92	85	- 107	Indonesia	0.660	0.632	- 0.689
93	83	- 110	Iran, Islamic Republic of	0.659	0.620	- 0.693
94	87	- 108	Bahamas	0.657	0.625	- 0.687
95	87	- 107	Panama	0.656	0.627	- 0.686
96	90	- 106	Fiji	0.653	0.630	- 0.674
97	78	- 123	Benin	0.647	0.573	- 0.710
98	94	- 107	Nauru	0.647	0.630	- 0.664
99	92	- 110	Romania	0.645	0.624	- 0.666
100	90	- 113	Saint Kitts and Nevis	0.643	0.611	- 0.678
101	92	- 114	Republic of Moldova	0.639	0.600	- 0.672
102	94	- 113	Bulgaria	0.639	0.617	- 0.660
103	91	- 117	Iraq	0.637	0.597	- 0.669
104	86	- 126	Armenia	0.630	0.566	- 0.682
105	94	- 118	Latvia	0.630	0.589	- 0.665
106	94	- 120	Yugoslavia	0.629	0.586	- 0.664
107	95	- 121	Cook Islands	0.628	0.583	- 0.664
108	94	- 120	Syrian Arab Republic	0.628	0.589	- 0.661
109	93	- 122	Azerbaijan	0.626	0.582	- 0.665
110	91	- 123	Suriname	0.623	0.571	- 0.671
111	88	- 125	Ecuador	0.619	0.565	- 0.684
112	105	- 118	India	0.617	0.599	- 0.638
113	95	- 127	Cape Verde	0.617	0.561	- 0.664
114	103	- 121	Georgia	0.615	0.583	- 0.642
115	94	- 130	El Salvador	0.608	0.544	- 0.667

116	106	- 121	Tonga	0.607	0.582	- 0.632
117	92	- 134	Uzbekistan	0.599	0.532	- 0.668
118	86	- 139	Comoros	0.592	0.509	- 0.689
119	114	- 126	Samoa	0.589	0.564	- 0.612
120	92	- 140	Yemen	0.587	0.497	- 0.672
121	114	- 129	Niue	0.584	0.549	- 0.614
122	109	- 132	Pakistan	0.583	0.541	- 0.626
123	114	- 131	Micronesia, Federated States of	0.579	0.543	- 0.610
124	111	- 136	Bhutan	0.575	0.520	- 0.618
125	111	- 136	Brazil	0.573	0.526	- 0.619
126	112	- 135	Bolivia	0.571	0.526	- 0.615
127	118	- 138	Vanuatu	0.569	0.512	- 0.594
128	119	- 140	Guyana	0.564	0.504	- 0.593
129	122	- 138	Peru	0.547	0.517	- 0.577
130	126	- 136	Russian Federation	0.544	0.527	- 0.563
131	115	- 145	Honduras	0.544	0.471	- 0.611
132	114	- 147	Burkina Faso	0.543	0.472	- 0.611
133	124	- 144	Sao Tome and Principe	0.535	0.482	- 0.575
134	119	- 151	Sudan	0.524	0.447	- 0.594
135	118	- 150	Ghana	0.522	0.462	- 0.596
136	130	- 145	Tuvalu	0.518	0.481	- 0.551
137	124	- 149	Côte d'Ivoire	0.517	0.463	- 0.572
138	120	- 152	Haiti	0.517	0.439	- 0.596
139	129	- 149	Gabon	0.511	0.466	- 0.553
140	130	- 148	Kenya	0.505	0.461	- 0.549
141	133	- 147	Marshall Islands	0.504	0.469	- 0.534
142	135	- 150	Kiribati	0.495	0.455	- 0.529
143	125	- 157	Burundi	0.494	0.411	- 0.572
144	125	- 162	China	0.486	0.375	- 0.567
145	134	- 154	Mongolia	0.483	0.429	- 0.531
146	135	- 154	Gambia	0.482	0.427	- 0.533
147	138	- 154	Maldives	0.477	0.430	- 0.516
148	137	- 159	Papua New Guinea	0.467	0.400	- 0.522
149	138	- 158	Uganda	0.464	0.404	- 0.526
150	138	- 159	Nepal	0.457	0.400	- 0.516
151	143	- 157	Kyrgyzstan	0.455	0.410	- 0.490
152	142	- 158	Togo	0.449	0.398	- 0.501
153	143	- 161	Turkmenistan	0.443	0.390	- 0.490
154	147	- 163	Tajikistan	0.428	0.381	- 0.470
155	143	- 167	Zimbabwe	0.427	0.362	- 0.497
156	145	- 166	United Republic of Tanzania	0.422	0.368	- 0.479
157	149	- 168	Djibouti	0.414	0.355	- 0.459
158	152	- 170	Eritrea	0.399	0.339	- 0.446
159	149	- 170	Madagascar	0.397	0.329	- 0.463
160	155	- 166	Viet Nam	0.393	0.366	- 0.420
161	155	- 170	Guinea	0.385	0.334	- 0.425
162	154	- 172	Mauritania	0.384	0.328	- 0.431
163	158	- 176	Mali	0.381	0.284	- 0.429
164	150	- 181	Cameroon	0.357	0.246	- 0.458
165	157	- 178	Lao People's Democratic Republic	0.356	0.298	- 0.410
166	160	- 176	Congo	0.354	0.302	- 0.401
167	157	- 180	Democratic People's Republic of Korea	0.353	0.278	- 0.414
168	158	- 180	Namibia	0.340	0.268	- 0.413
169	164	- 179	Botswana	0.338	0.288	- 0.373
170	158	- 180	Niger	0.337	0.266	- 0.416
171	163	- 180	Equatorial Guinea	0.337	0.277	- 0.384
172	161	- 182	Rwanda	0.327	0.268	- 0.389
173	164	- 181	Afghanistan	0.325	0.262	- 0.376
174	161	- 184	Cambodia	0.322	0.234	- 0.392
175	164	- 182	South Africa	0.319	0.251	- 0.374
176	164	- 183	Guinea-Bissau	0.314	0.230	- 0.375

177	166	- 164	Swaziland	0.305	0.234	- 0.369
178	167	- 183	Chad	0.303	0.231	- 0.363
179	167	- 186	Somalia	0.286	0.199	- 0.369
180	173	- 185	Ethiopia	0.276	0.215	- 0.326
181	172	- 186	Angola	0.275	0.198	- 0.343
182	170	- 186	Zambia	0.269	0.204	- 0.339
183	174	- 186	Lesotho	0.266	0.205	- 0.319
184	170	- 187	Mozambique	0.260	0.186	- 0.339
185	171	- 188	Malawi	0.251	0.174	- 0.332
186	180	- 189	Liberia	0.200	0.117	- 0.282
187	183	- 189	Nigeria	0.176	0.064	- 0.251
188	185	- 189	Democratic Republic of the Congo	0.171	0.100	- 0.232
189	179	- 190	Central African Republic	0.156	0.000	- 0.306
190	175	- 191	Myanmar	0.138	0.000	- 0.311
191	190	- 191	Sierra Leone	0.000	0.000	- 0.079

**THE COMPARATIVE EFFICIENCY OF NATIONAL HEALTH
SYSTEMS IN PRODUCING HEALTH**

AN ANALYSIS OF 191 COUNTRIES

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**This study is based on the measure of disability
adjusted life expectancy, DALE.**

Appendix: Efficiency or Performance Index and Uncertainty Intervals, 191 countries, 1993-97

Rank	Uncertainty Interval (80%)		Country	Performance Index	Uncertainty interval (80%)	
1	1	- 5	Oman	0.992	0.975	-1.000
2	1	- 4	Malta	0.989	0.968	-1.000
3	2	- 7	Italy	0.976	0.957	-0.994
4	2	- 7	France	0.974	0.953	-0.994
5	2	- 7	San Marino	0.971	0.949	-0.988
6	3	- 8	Spain	0.968	0.948	-0.989
7	4	- 9	Andorra	0.964	0.942	-0.980
8	3	- 12	Jamaica	0.956	0.928	-0.988
9	7	- 11	Japan	0.945	0.926	-0.983
10	8	- 15	Saudi Arabia	0.936	0.915	-0.959
11	9	- 13	Greece	0.936	0.920	-0.951
12	9	- 16	Monaco	0.930	0.908	-0.948
13	10	- 15	Portugal	0.929	0.911	-0.945
14	10	- 15	Singapore	0.929	0.909	-0.942
15	13	- 17	Austria	0.914	0.896	-0.931
16	13	- 23	United Arab Emirates	0.907	0.883	-0.932
17	14	- 22	Morocco	0.906	0.886	-0.925
18	16	- 23	Norway	0.897	0.878	-0.914
19	17	- 24	Netherlands	0.893	0.875	-0.911
20	15	- 31	Solomon Islands	0.892	0.863	-0.920
21	18	- 26	Sweden	0.890	0.870	-0.907
22	19	- 28	Cyprus	0.885	0.865	-0.898
23	19	- 30	Chile	0.884	0.864	-0.903
24	21	- 28	United Kingdom	0.883	0.866	-0.900
25	18	- 32	Costa Rica	0.882	0.859	-0.898
26	21	- 31	Switzerland	0.879	0.860	-0.891
27	21	- 31	Iceland	0.879	0.861	-0.897
28	23	- 30	Belgium	0.878	0.860	-0.894
29	23	- 33	Venezuela, Bolivarian Republic of	0.873	0.853	-0.891
30	23	- 37	Bahrain	0.867	0.843	-0.890
31	28	- 35	Luxembourg	0.864	0.847	-0.881
32	29	- 38	Ireland	0.859	0.840	-0.870
33	27	- 40	Turkey	0.858	0.835	-0.878
34	25	- 48	Belize	0.853	0.821	-0.884
35	33	- 40	Canada	0.849	0.832	-0.864
36	32	- 42	Cuba	0.849	0.830	-0.866
37	30	- 49	El Salvador	0.846	0.817	-0.873
38	29	- 52	Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	0.845	0.812	-0.876
39	35	- 43	Australia	0.844	0.826	-0.861
40	36	- 44	Israel	0.841	0.825	-0.858
41	39	- 47	Germany	0.836	0.819	-0.852
42	33	- 54	Dominican Republic	0.834	0.806	-0.863
43	37	- 53	Egypt	0.829	0.811	-0.849
44	41	- 50	Finland	0.829	0.812	-0.844
45	38	- 55	Algeria	0.829	0.808	-0.850
46	41	- 55	Tunisia	0.824	0.803	-0.844
47	38	- 58	Yugoslavia	0.824	0.798	-0.848
48	40	- 61	Honduras	0.820	0.793	-0.844
49	37	- 63	Grenada	0.819	0.789	-0.850
50	42	- 59	Uruguay	0.819	0.794	-0.842
51	41	- 64	Colombia	0.814	0.787	-0.843
52	42	- 65	Paraguay	0.813	0.785	-0.842
53	43	- 64	Qatar	0.813	0.786	-0.839

54	43	- 69	Saint Lucia	0.809	0.781	-0.837
55	41	- 70	Cape Verde	0.808	0.776	-0.842
56	47	- 64	Armenia	0.806	0.785	-0.823
57	51	- 61	Croatia	0.805	0.789	-0.821
58	48	- 65	Iran, Islamic Republic of	0.805	0.783	-0.827
59	45	- 73	Dominica	0.804	0.774	-0.833
60	49	- 67	Azerbaijan	0.803	0.781	-0.820
61	52	- 65	China	0.800	0.782	-0.813
62	55	- 66	Slovenia	0.797	0.781	-0.813
63	56	- 73	Mexico	0.789	0.771	-0.808
64	55	- 76	Albania	0.789	0.766	-0.808
65	61	- 72	Denmark	0.785	0.769	-0.801
66	57	- 80	Sri Lanka	0.783	0.761	-0.807
67	57	- 80	Panama	0.783	0.759	-0.807
68	56	- 83	Kuwait	0.782	0.753	-0.808
69	61	- 78	The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	0.781	0.761	-0.796
70	59	- 83	Bosnia and Herzegovina	0.780	0.754	-0.803
71	65	- 76	Argentina	0.779	0.762	-0.794
72	67	- 78	United States of America	0.774	0.758	-0.789
73	61	- 86	Bhutan	0.773	0.748	-0.797
74	63	- 84	Nicaragua	0.772	0.750	-0.793
75	65	- 84	Iraq	0.770	0.752	-0.791
76	67	- 85	Brunei Darussalam	0.768	0.749	-0.787
77	61	- 88	Suriname	0.768	0.740	-0.798
78	66	- 88	Brazil	0.767	0.745	-0.787
79	70	- 84	Trinidad and Tobago	0.767	0.750	-0.780
80	72	- 83	New Zealand	0.766	0.750	-0.780
81	73	- 83	Czech Republic	0.765	0.749	-0.779
82	66	- 91	Yemen	0.761	0.733	-0.789
83	72	- 88	Seychelles	0.759	0.739	-0.778
84	73	- 91	Georgia	0.758	0.736	-0.776
85	73	- 89	Pakistan	0.757	0.738	-0.777
86	75	- 92	Malaysia	0.751	0.731	-0.771
87	77	- 92	Barbados	0.749	0.730	-0.770
88	85	- 92	Slovakia	0.742	0.729	-0.757
89	84	- 94	Poland	0.742	0.723	-0.758
90	79	- 98	Indonesia	0.741	0.715	-0.766
91	85	- 99	Syrian Arab Republic	0.733	0.712	-0.755
92	89	- 96	Bulgaria	0.733	0.717	-0.747
93	89	- 103	Lithuania	0.724	0.705	-0.742
94	89	- 104	Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	0.723	0.699	-0.746
95	89	- 105	Cook Islands	0.722	0.696	-0.746
96	89	- 104	Ecuador	0.721	0.700	-0.742
97	91	- 105	Lebanon	0.719	0.697	-0.740
98	93	- 107	Nepal	0.714	0.691	-0.736
99	93	- 107	Guatemala	0.714	0.691	-0.735
100	94	- 107	Jordan	0.711	0.689	-0.732
101	97	- 104	Ukraine	0.711	0.695	-0.728
102	93	- 111	Thailand	0.710	0.682	-0.736
103	93	- 109	Bangladesh	0.709	0.684	-0.735
104	92	- 115	Guyana	0.704	0.672	-0.738
105	101	- 111	Hungary	0.698	0.682	-0.714
106	102	- 111	Republic of Moldova	0.696	0.680	-0.710
107	100	- 113	Republic of Korea	0.694	0.674	-0.711
108	93	- 121	Niue	0.693	0.650	-0.731
109	103	- 116	Gambia	0.687	0.671	-0.704
110	100	- 121	Micronesia, Federated States of	0.684	0.656	-0.717
111	107	- 117	Romania	0.682	0.668	-0.696
112	107	- 119	Uzbekistan	0.681	0.662	-0.700
113	105	- 120	Mauritius	0.679	0.657	-0.702
114	105	- 121	Tonga	0.677	0.651	-0.704
115	107	- 119	Estonia	0.677	0.657	-0.694
116	109	- 119	Belarus	0.676	0.657	-0.692
117	109	- 121	Sao Tome and Principe	0.671	0.651	-0.691
118	112	- 120	India	0.670	0.654	-0.683
119	111	- 123	Peru	0.665	0.643	-0.686
120	108	- 123	Vanuatu	0.665	0.639	-0.689
121	115	- 125	Latvia	0.655	0.631	-0.677
122	114	- 127	Saint Kitts and Nevis	0.650	0.621	-0.679

123	115	- 131	Antigua and Barbuda	0.641	0.606	-0.678
124	120	- 133	Fiji	0.632	0.600	-0.662
125	121	- 131	Palau	0.632	0.606	-0.656
126	122	- 131	Philippines	0.630	0.608	-0.653
127	124	- 131	Russian Federation	0.623	0.606	-0.638
128	123	- 134	Tuvalu	0.618	0.594	-0.644
129	124	- 137	Myanmar	0.612	0.584	-0.641
130	125	- 136	Viet Nam	0.611	0.587	-0.634
131	127	- 139	Samoa	0.602	0.579	-0.628
132	128	- 138	Senegal	0.601	0.584	-0.620
133	129	- 139	Côte d'Ivoire	0.598	0.580	-0.617
134	128	- 140	Kyrgyzstan	0.598	0.575	-0.620
135	129	- 138	Kazakhstan	0.598	0.581	-0.615
136	129	- 139	Benin	0.596	0.576	-0.616
137	127	- 142	Bahamas	0.593	0.564	-0.624
138	132	- 144	Mongolia	0.581	0.555	-0.607
139	134	- 143	Haiti	0.580	0.561	-0.599
140	131	- 144	Marshall Islands	0.579	0.549	-0.609
141	137	- 145	Comoros	0.570	0.550	-0.590
142	137	- 145	Bolivia	0.567	0.544	-0.590
143	139	- 146	Gabon	0.559	0.538	-0.579
144	138	- 148	Kiribati	0.554	0.525	-0.581
145	140	- 148	Tajikistan	0.551	0.523	-0.580
146	141	- 149	Papua New Guinea	0.548	0.520	-0.572
147	144	- 154	Maldives	0.524	0.496	-0.555
148	146	- 153	Eritrea	0.521	0.504	-0.538
149	146	- 154	Sudan	0.519	0.496	-0.543
150	146	- 155	Afghanistan	0.517	0.488	-0.547
151	147	- 153	Mauritania	0.517	0.501	-0.533
152	146	- 158	Turkmenistan	0.513	0.479	-0.548
153	147	- 156	Democratic People's Republic of Korea	0.510	0.485	-0.536
154	148	- 157	Somalia	0.506	0.480	-0.530
155	152	- 160	Lao People's Democratic Republic	0.489	0.466	-0.510
156	154	- 162	Guinea-Bissau	0.481	0.462	-0.499
157	153	- 162	Cambodia	0.481	0.460	-0.501
158	153	- 162	Ghana	0.479	0.457	-0.500
159	155	- 164	Togo	0.472	0.452	-0.492
160	157	- 164	Guinea	0.469	0.455	-0.483
161	156	- 165	Chad	0.465	0.444	-0.487
162	157	- 166	Burkina Faso	0.463	0.441	-0.483
163	158	- 167	Djibouti	0.457	0.434	-0.479
164	160	- 166	Central African Republic	0.454	0.436	-0.470
165	159	- 167	Angola	0.453	0.433	-0.473
166	162	- 168	Nauru	0.444	0.424	-0.464
167	164	- 170	Congo	0.433	0.411	-0.454
168	164	- 172	Mozambique	0.424	0.399	-0.450
169	167	- 171	Ethiopia	0.418	0.400	-0.435
170	168	- 172	Mali	0.410	0.393	-0.426
171	168	- 174	Burundi	0.403	0.374	-0.435
172	169	- 174	Cameroon	0.399	0.375	-0.421
173	170	- 174	Madagascar	0.394	0.378	-0.410
174	172	- 175	Equatorial Guinea	0.377	0.355	-0.400
175	174	- 176	Nigeria	0.353	0.331	-0.375
176	175	- 178	Liberia	0.337	0.318	-0.355
177	176	- 178	Niger	0.323	0.306	-0.340
178	176	- 178	Kenya	0.320	0.298	-0.343
179	179	- 180	Uganda	0.280	0.264	-0.295
180	179	- 180	United Republic of Tanzania	0.279	0.260	-0.298
181	181	- 185	Rwanda	0.240	0.214	-0.265
182	181	- 185	South Africa	0.232	0.209	-0.251
183	181	- 185	Sierra Leone	0.230	0.213	-0.247
184	181	- 186	Swaziland	0.229	0.205	-0.255
185	182	- 187	Democratic Republic of the Congo	0.217	0.198	-0.235
186	183	- 188	Lesotho	0.211	0.187	-0.236
187	186	- 189	Malawi	0.196	0.181	-0.211
188	187	- 189	Botswana	0.183	0.172	-0.194
189	185	- 189	Namibia	0.183	0.152	-0.214
190	190	- 190	Zambia	0.112	0.095	-0.129
191	191	- 191	Zimbabwe	0.080	0.057	-0.103

Europeans Perform Highest In Ranking of World Health

By PHILIP J. HILTS
Published: June 21, 2000

The World Health Organization issued figures yesterday that rank health care systems around the world for the first time. They indicate that European health systems are generally performing best and that the United States is lagging behind, largely because of unequal distribution of health care services.

The rankings are contained in the World Health Report 2000. The report measured not just overall spending on health but also how health care was distributed among different groups in each of the 191 nations that are members of the World Health Organization. The countries were judged according to five health-care categories that W.H.O. surveys found to be most important to the people in various nations.

Until now, argument over how well health systems and policies are working has been based on anecdotes and fractional bits of data, said Dr. Jeffrey Koplan, director of the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. He said the report was the first attempt to put the arguments on a factual footing. **According to the report, the five top nations for health care were France, Italy, San Marino, Andorra and Malta.** One surprise in the findings, said Dr. David Evans of the W.H.O.'s Global Program on Evidence for Health Policy, was the good rankings for southern European countries such as Italy and Spain. "People in those countries don't believe their health systems are doing very well," he said. Oman ranked No. 8, a surprise because its health care system was in a shambles in the 1970's, with very high infant mortality, and because it has a relatively small budget for health. Its spending per capita on health is one-ninth of that of the United States, for example.

Dr. Christopher J. L. Murray, an international health economist from the Harvard School of Public Health, who is one of two leaders of the project, said Oman demonstrates that great changes in a country's health can be produced in a short period of time. Another surprise was China's ranking of No. 144. A little more than a decade ago, China had a public health care system, but it has collapsed, and now people there pay for virtually all their care out of pocket. It was ranked No. 188 in fairness of financing.

The United States outspends the world and ranks near the top in average health measures, but fails to deliver good health care to a large proportion of its population and distributes the cost relatively unfairly, according to the report's measures, leaving it at number 37 in the rankings.

Using the measure "health life expectancy" -- that is, life expectancy minus years of sickness and disability, there are counties in the United States where Native American children at birth can look forward to only about 50 years of health life on average, while some Asian minorities in suburban New York can expect more than 90 years of healthy life, Dr. Murray said. The report demonstrates, Dr. Murray said, "that no one model is best, but the numbers will give us the means over time to test which innovation in health systems work best and which are failing."

The new rating system bases national scores on five measures, and in producing a ranking takes into account the financial resources it has available. The five measures used are: overall level of health or life expectancy; health fairness or life expectancy as measured across various populations within a country; responsiveness or how well people rated performance of their health care system; fairness in responsiveness among different groups in the same country; and fairness in financing among different groups, which looked at what proportion of income is devoted to health care.

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US Slipping in Life Expectancy Rankings

By STEPHEN OHLEMACHER
Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) -- Americans are living longer than ever, but not as long as people in 41 other countries.

For decades, the United States has been slipping in international rankings of life expectancy, as other countries improve health care, nutrition and lifestyles. Countries that surpass the U.S. include Japan and most of Europe, as well as Jordan, Guam and the Cayman Islands.

"Something's wrong here when one of the richest countries in the world, the one that spends the most on health care, is not able to keep up with other countries," said Dr. Christopher Murray, head of the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation at the University of Washington. A baby born in the United States in 2004 will live an average of 77.9 years. That life expectancy ranks 42nd, down from 11th two decades earlier, according to international numbers provided by the Census Bureau and domestic numbers from the National Center for Health Statistics. Andorra, a tiny country in the Pyrenees mountains between France and Spain, had the longest life expectancy, at 83.5 years, according to the Census Bureau. It was followed by Japan, Macau, San Marino and Singapore.

The shortest life expectancies were clustered in Sub-Saharan Africa, a region that has been hit hard by an epidemic of HIV and AIDS, as well as famine and civil strife. Swaziland has the shortest, at 34.1 years, followed by Zambia, Angola, Liberia and Zimbabwe. Researchers said several factors have contributed to the United States falling behind other industrialized nations. A major one is that 45 million Americans lack health insurance, while Canada and many European countries have universal health care, they say. But "it's not as simple as saying we don't have national health insurance," said Sam Harper, an epidemiologist at McGill University in Montreal. "It's not that easy."

Among the other factors:

- Adults in the United States have one of the highest obesity rates in the world. Nearly a third of U.S. adults 20 years and older are obese, while about two-thirds are overweight, according to the National Center for Health Statistics.
- "The U.S. has the resources that allow people to get fat and lazy," said Paul Terry, an assistant professor of epidemiology at Emory University in Atlanta. "We have the luxury of choosing a bad lifestyle as opposed to having one imposed on us by hard times."
- Racial disparities. Black Americans have an average life expectancy of 73.3 years, five years shorter than white Americans. Black American males have a life expectancy of 69.8 years, slightly longer than the averages for Iran and Syria and slightly shorter than in Nicaragua and Morocco.
- A relatively high percentage of babies born in the U.S. die before their first birthday, compared with other industrialized nations.

Forty countries, including Cuba, Taiwan and most of Europe had lower infant mortality rates than the U.S. in 2004. The U.S. rate was 6.8 deaths for every 1,000 live births. It was 13.7 for Black Americans, the same as Saudi Arabia.

"It really reflects the social conditions in which African American women grow up and have children," said Dr. Marie C. McCormick, professor of maternal and child health at the Harvard School of Public Health. "We haven't done anything to eliminate those disparities."

Another reason for the U.S. drop in the ranking is that the Census Bureau now tracks life expectancy for a lot more countries - 222 in 2004 - than it did in the 1980s. However, that does not explain why so many countries entered the rankings with longer life expectancies than the United States.

Murray, from the University of Washington, said improved access to health insurance could increase life expectancy. But, he predicted, the U.S. won't move up in the world rankings as long as the health care debate is limited to insurance. Policymakers also should focus on ways to reduce cancer, heart disease and lung disease, said Murray. He advocates stepped-up efforts to reduce tobacco use, control blood pressure, reduce cholesterol and regulate blood sugar. "Even if we focused only on those four things, we would go along way toward improving health care in the United States," Murray said. "The starting point is the recognition that the U.S. does not have the best health care system. There are still an awful lot of people who think it does."

