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A new study by Steven H. Woolf MD examined the historical evolution in U.S. life expectancy rates compared to other countries. Woolf finds that the fact that the U.S. lags behind other comparable countries in life expectancy is not a recent phenomenon and dates back decades. The rate at which U.S. life expectancy increases has slowed since the 1950s. For example from 1950 to 1954 the average increase in life expectancy was 0.21 years/annum which slowed to 0.10 years/annum between 1955 and 1973. Increases in life expectancy accelerated between 1974 to 1982 at a rate of 0.34 years/annum however have deteriorated since. From 1983 to 2009 the rate was 0.15 years/annum which slowed to 0.06 years/annum between 2009-2019. In 2020 and 2021 the rate went negative at -0.97 years/annum as U.S. life expectancy declined at a stark rate.

Over this period of time the U.S. has fallen behind countries all over the world in terms of life expectancy. As a matter of fact, 56 countries across 6 different continents have surpassed the U.S. life expectancy from 1933-2021. However, such declines in life expectancy growth are not evenly distributed across the population in the U.S. with residents of the South and Midwest having the lowest growth in life expectancy.

The historical perspective of the study documents that the failure of the capitalist system to provide for longer and healthier lives for the people is not a new phenomenon. Public health has suffered for decades and the declines in life expectancy growth are now just turning into declines. While the capitalist system is failing to provide adequate health care and create the conditions for increasing life expectancies, it does continue to make massive profits for the private owners. Only by replacing the capitalist system with a socialist system can the U.S. reverse its trajectory and provide the masses longer, more enjoyable lives.

Source: 1