

# Describing similarities and differences

## – Comparing two countries



### Canada V the United States

Two of the largest countries in the world, Canada and the United States, share the longest international border, 5,525 miles (8,891 km) and the world's largest waterfall, the Niagara Falls. In neither country is the capital city the largest city. In the case of Canada, its capital, Ottawa, has a population of over 800,000, nearly 2 million fewer than Toronto, its largest city. In the USA, Washington D.C., the capital, has a population of a **paltry** 632,323 compared with New York's 8.4 million.

While both countries are democracies, their style of government is different. Canada has a parliamentary system similar to the British model. The USA, on the other hand, has a presidential system. Both countries have English as their main language. However, both English and French are official languages in Canada, used by 56.9% and 21.3% **respectively**, and in the USA, Spanish is used increasingly; it is now the primary language for 38.3 million Americans, about 12% of the population. This is a result of a **surge** in the Hispanic population.

Although they are such close neighbours, Canadians and Americans don't always share the same interests, especially in sports. For Americans, football (American football not 'soccer'!), baseball, and basketball are **foremost in the popularity stakes**, whereas for Canadians, ice-hockey is the **predominant** winter sport, and lacrosse its oldest, and indeed official, summer sport.



Like many close neighbours, Canadians and Americans often **poke fun** at each other, usually in stereotypical fashion. Canadian television frequently portrays Americans as loud, **self-opinionated** people with limited knowledge of the world outside the USA. Americans joke that they don't know much about Canadians at all, aside from their passion for ice-hockey, their eternal winters, and the **weird** way they pronounce their vowel sounds, saying, 'aboot the hoose' instead of 'about the house'.

It would be difficult to **quantify** whether Canada and the USA, two of the largest and closest countries in the world, have more similarities or differences. However, recently The Economist magazine **ranked** Canada as the third most democratic nation worldwide, ahead of all the other countries in North and South America.