

OCTOBER 2011



How are Canadians *Really* doing?

HIGHLIGHTS: CANADIAN INDEX OF WELLBEING 1.0

 CANADIAN
Index
OF WELLBEING
Measuring what matters

Measuring what matters



A Message from the CIW Advisory Board Chair and Deputy Chair

Dear Fellow Canadians,

We are living through complicated times in world economics, leaving many feeling uncertain about what the future holds. Canada seems to be faring better than many countries, which raises the question: is this true and if so, why?

Asking these questions highlights a weakness in how we currently measure the wellbeing of our country. Up until now, we have relied on Gross Domestic Product (GDP) as the sole indicator of how our nation is doing. As robust a tool as it is, the GDP only tells us about the economy; not about our people, our environment, our democracy, or other aspects of life that matter to Canadians.

The hallmarks of a good quality of life, in a country as prosperous as Canada, range from the right to the best public education and health care protection our tax dollars can buy, to the ability to balance work with family needs, to take the kids out to a ball game, to be able to afford a home and a vacation, to spend time with our grandparents, to volunteer in the service of others, to walk free of fear when the sun goes down, to live in a country committed to a cleaner environment, to know that having a say in shaping our future is really a reflection of how free we are and how strong our democracy truly is.

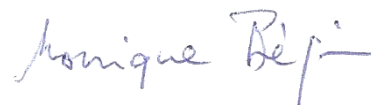
Are all citizens enjoying the same access to wellbeing? And is it the highest possible standard of wellbeing? This is one of Canada's most fundamental challenges moving forward in the 21st century.

That's why the Canadian Index of Wellbeing (CIW) has created a comprehensive composite index built to measure the wellbeing of the real life of our citizenry. Today, for the first time in our country's history, we have a transparent picture of how our quality of life – in all of its many dimensions – is changing. The CIW calculates not just how our economy is faring, but more importantly how our people and communities are faring. This will help governments at all levels make evidence-based policies that are responsive to the needs and values of Canadians. And, it will empower citizens to hold government accountable for achieving progress.

Already recognized as a global leader by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the CIW is a made-in-Canada innovation that we are proud to launch into the world.



The Honourable Roy J. Romanow
P.C., O.C., S.O.M., Q.C.
Chair, CIW Advisory Board



The Honourable Monique Bégin
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Deputy Chair, CIW Advisory Board

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What is **WELLBEING?**

**There are many definitions of Wellbeing.
The CIW has adopted the following as its
working definition:**

The presence of the highest possible quality of life in its full breadth of expression, focused on but not necessarily exclusive to: good living standards, robust health, a sustainable environment, vital communities, an educated populace, balanced time use, high levels of democratic participation, and access to and participation in leisure and culture.



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Measuring what matters



1.0 Executive Summary

The Canadian Index of Wellbeing (CIW): Not just another number.

There are times in history when destabilizing world events turn into defining moments for change and innovation.

Canada may be at the forefront of one of those defining moments.

Following the Great Depression and World War II – global events that destabilized entire nations – a consensus emerged. What the world needed was a good dose of peace and prosperity. Governments set out to pursue those objectives, and to determine ways of measuring progress.

By the mid-1940s, Gross Domestic Product, widely known as GDP, had become the standard way to assess economic prosperity. GDP is a composite index, based on a complicated formula that tells us whether an economy is growing or shrinking. It is really just a number, but in the relatively obscure world of economic indicators, GDP became “the defining indicator of the last century”¹, “a celebrity among statistics”.²

There is not a country on this planet that ignores GDP as a measure of economic health, but there is also an emerging consensus that, despite GDP’s celebrity status, its shortcomings are in need of a solution. For example, spending on tobacco, war, natural and human-made disasters – all of these activities make GDP go up. Yet if GDP were really a measure of progress, they would be subtracted. Meanwhile, beneficial activities like giving care to an ailing relative, unpaid housework, child care, volunteer work and leisure time would be added instead of ignored.

The 2008 global recession and the years of economic and social turmoil that have ensued, bring into sharp relief GDP’s limitations as a measure of wellbeing. GDP, with its focus on economic outputs, only shows us part of the picture. We can see how the economy is changing, but GDP sheds no light on the health of a population, on the vibrancy of a democracy, on the growing inequality within and between countries, or on the quality of life for a country’s people.

As robust a tool as it is, GDP has been asked to do far more than the purpose for which it was originally designed to fill.

A decade ago, some of Canada’s leading thinkers answered the call to create a composite index that could do all that GDP was never designed to do. With this paper, we launch the inaugural

¹ (www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2011/01/02/gdp_a_brief_history)

² (www.nytimes.com/2008/09/01/business/worldbusiness/01iht-gdp.4.15791492.html)

composite index – the **Canadian Index of Wellbeing (CIW)** – a true partner to GDP and one that provides a much fuller picture.

The CIW is not just a number; it reflects real life. It tells us how we as citizens are faring, how our country is faring as a whole, and where we might be headed. It's a useful tool for governments of all levels, here and around the world, by providing more comprehensive data to better assess the impact of their policies and programs. It also empowers people to hold their governments accountable for making progress or falling behind.

Recognized as a global leader by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the CIW puts Canada at the forefront of an international movement to measure the progress of societies by the quality of our lives as well as by the health of our economies. The governments of France and the UK are actively involved in designing initiatives to measure their quality of life, as are many other countries.

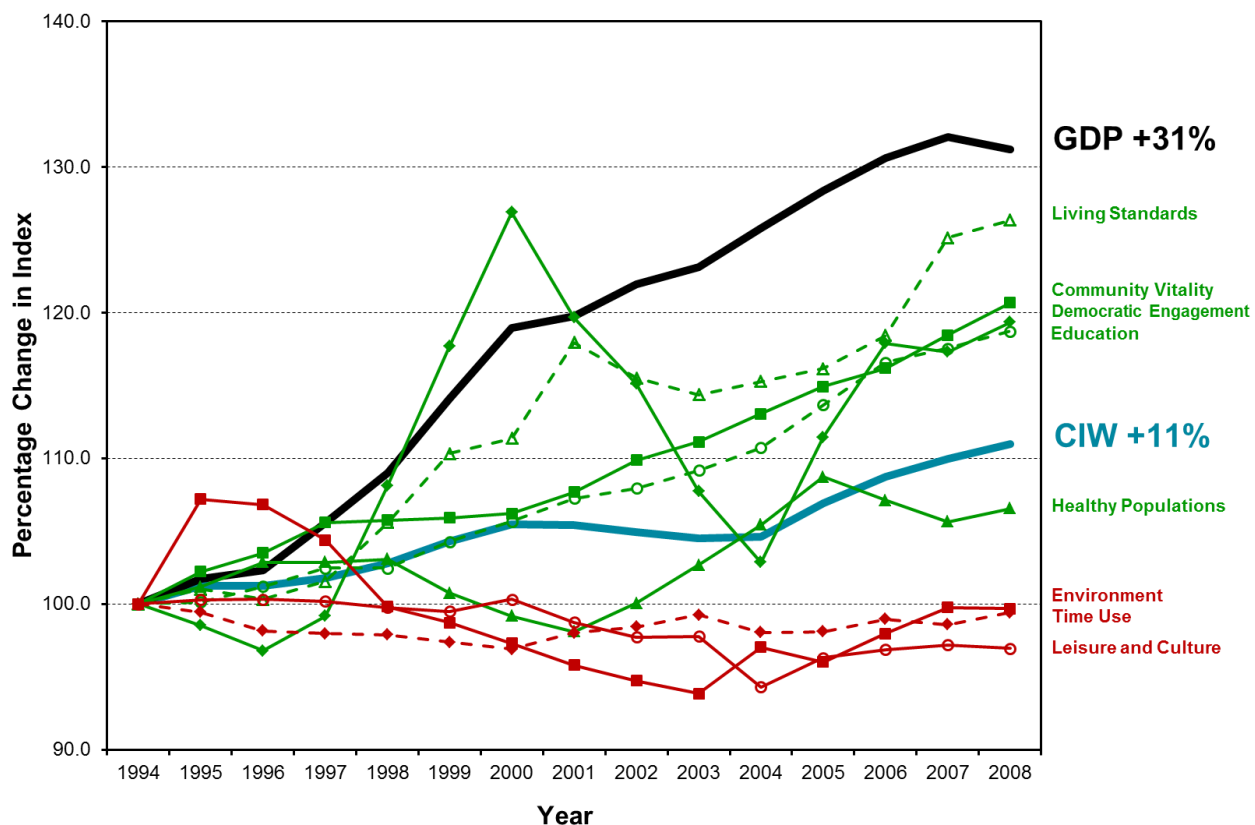
A lot of factors go into defining the CIW. We live in the information age, with plenty of rich data that reflect how we are doing in life. The CIW draws from that deep well of data – much of it primary data from Statistics Canada, and several other credible sources – using 64 separate headline indicators within eight interconnected categories (domains) central to the lives of Canadians: Community Vitality, Democratic Engagement, Education, Environment, Healthy Populations, Leisure and Culture, Living Standards, and Time Use. Thanks to the pioneering work of a team of Canadian and international experts, we can now measure these indicators and monitor each domain over time, starting with our base year of 1994. We can now take that information and turn it into a comprehensive composite index that's useful and realistic, something that guides us on questions that run deeper than economic growth.

The figure that follows shows the trend in the CIW between 1994 and 2008, and overall, there was some improvement in Canadians' wellbeing. The figure also gives a snapshot of the trends in each of the domains over this 15-year period, the final year that nearly complete data were available for all of the domains. It shows which aspects of our wellbeing improved and which got worse. It also shows how changes in each of the domains compared to the overall CIW trend as well as that of GDP per capita.

All told, our wellbeing improved in five areas: Living Standards, Community Vitality, Democratic Engagement, Education, and Healthy Populations; and we went backwards in Environment, Time Use, and Leisure and Culture.



Trends in the Canadian Index of Wellbeing with Eight Domains and Compared with GDP, 1994-2008



This should not be taken to mean that in the domains that went up everything was fine, while in the domains that went down everything was bad. In reality, in the domains that went down we still made progress in some of the headline indicators, whereas in the domains that went up we still went backward in some of the headline indicators. Indeed, this is the value of the CIW as a comprehensive, composite measure – it provides an integrated and more balanced understanding of our wellbeing that allows us to make better decisions about the future that we, as Canadians, want.

The eight domains, detailed below, tell us a story about how well we are living.

Community Vitality:

This domain brings to life our everyday reality from a community perspective. It tells us what is happening in our neighbourhoods, how safe we feel, and whether we are engaged as citizens or whether we are becoming socially isolated. Through close inspection of the data in this area, we can see that since 1994, more Canadians report being concerned about the needs of others, regardless of the pressures of their own lives – a measure of how caring a society we truly are.



We can also see that property crimes are down, violent crimes are down, more Canadians feel safe walking alone after dark, more of us volunteer to help others, and more Canadians feel a sense of belonging to their community.

In a political era where Canadians are being asked to build more prisons, measures within this domain can help guide decision-makers as to whether the need for more prisons is based on subjective impressions or real. It can help governments understand, whether there is growing “moral decay” or “social malaise” in their jurisdictions, as some politicians in the U.K. now suggest, or whether their communities are alive with the vibrancy of volunteers, engaged citizens, and people who feel safe in their own neighbourhoods. Again, it’s a story GDP was never designed to tell.

Domain percentage change: ↑ 20.7

Democratic Engagement:

This domain helps gauge whether a democracy is strong and healthy or in decline. By examining several indicators, we can see improvements since 1994: more Canadians report federal government policies have made them better off, though the portion who say so is still pretty small, there are more women in Parliament (though it is still far from equal), fewer Canadians say they are not interested in politics at all, and more Canadians feel it is every citizen’s duty to vote in federal elections.

Part of the value of these indicators is that they help us determine whether these improvements are strong or limited. We can see that more Canadians are satisfied with the way democracy works in this country, but that measure improved by only 3 per cent between 1994 and 2008 – a modest improvement. Meanwhile, other very significant indicators point to two troubling signs: International Aid (Net Official Development Aid as a percentage of our Gross National Income) is on the decline and voter turnout at federal elections has been dropping, hitting record lows.

Democracies do not run on autopilot – they are only as vibrant as the level of citizen participation. Once again, the CIW does what GDP was never designed to do: it gives us warnings about aspects of our democracy that could be in peril and points decision-makers to solutions. In this case, improving Canada’s commitment to international development aid and considering better mechanisms to get more Canadians excited about voting in their own democracy would be two clear paths to follow in order to further improve the results within this domain.

Domain percentage change: ↑ 19.3

Education:

One of the crowning achievements of modern Canadian society has been our ability to become one of the more educated countries on the face of the planet. It is what the promise of economic growth always entailed, but GDP in and of itself tells us nothing about whether the promise is real or optimistically misleading.

The good news in this domain is that high school graduation rates are up by about 6% while university graduation rates are up by an impressive 47%. Canadians are doing well, especially when it comes to Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) scores by socioeconomic background. Student-teacher ratios are generally improving.

Canadians value education, from early childhood on up, and the CIW shows us just how committed we are to the pursuit of higher knowledge. But the indicators tell us more work is needed to improve social and emotional competencies and basic knowledge and skills for our tweens and teens. Our student basic education scores may still be above the international average, but they are declining in each of the areas tested: literacy, math and science.

In a nation as prosperous as ours, the indicators within this domain help us to understand there is room to invest more – not less – in the education of Canadians at every single stage of life.

Domain percentage change: ↑ 18.7

The Environment:

The Environment domain speaks volumes about the tension between the relentless pursuit of economic growth and the finite reality of a planet experiencing massive climate change and dwindling natural resources. GDP was never designed to measure the impact of economic growth on our environment, but the CIW has been designed to shed light on practices that are socially and environmentally unsustainable.

The good news is that, since 1994, many of Canada's non-renewable energy reserves such as crude bitumen, oil and uranium have increased thanks to continual discoveries of new viable deposits. But our viable metal reserves have dropped and are at or near historic lows for virtually all metals. Species abundance levels have declined on all fronts, we have fished down the food chain, greenhouse gas emissions have soared, and ground level ozone has risen.

Looking at all of the data, we see that Canada is leaving behind one of the biggest ecological footprints in the world, raising the question: is this the Canada we aspire to be? The CIW does us a great service by pointing our governments to the way forward. Through the implementation of programs and policies to improve these indicators, governments will not only improve the lives of Canadians by cleaning up our toxin exposure and helping sustain the natural resources we cherish, but they will also become leaders in creating a healthier planet.

Domain percentage change: ↓ 0.3



Healthy Populations:

This domain looks at the health of a population and assesses whether things are improving or deteriorating. When we break it down into indicators, we can see troubling trends policy makers could well address, such as a rise in self-reported diabetes incidence since 1994 – particularly among Aboriginal Canadians on reserves where rates are triple that of the general population – an increase in depression, and a drop in the number of remaining years expected to be lived in good health.

On the other hand, we can also track health improvements in our population over time. Canadians are living longer than ever. We can see that fewer teenagers smoke today than in 1994, that more seniors are getting flu shots, and that more Canadians rate Canada's public health services as excellent or good. These indicators can be immensely helpful to health care decision-makers, acting as a guide over time to help us improve Canadians' health and to address major health care issues as they emerge. But judging by the comparatively low overall percentage increase in the domain since 1994 – 6.6 – there is clearly room for improvement within this domain.

Improving the health of Canadians will require action in many fields outside of health care. Our health is still very much related to our income and education levels. People with higher incomes and education tend to live longer, are less likely to have diabetes and other chronic conditions, and are consistently more likely to report excellent or very good health. The stark reality is that household income continues to be the best predictor of future health status. The formula is straightforward: more income equals better health, less income equals worse health. This is true in all age groups and for both women and men.

Domain percentage change: ↑ 6.6

Leisure and Culture:

This domain is the perfect example of the shortcomings of GDP – it might tell us that an economy is growing, but it would never tell us that families are giving up some of their leisure time and cultural activities and that among those activities they keep, they are costing more.

This domain points to several troubling trends in Canada since 1994. While we are working out more and enjoying slightly longer vacation trips, we volunteer less for culture and recreation organizations, we spend less time in social leisure activities and engaged in arts and culture activities. In other words, we are not getting inspired by the arts as much as we used to and we are not having as much fun.

Between 1994 and 2008 we went through one of the most economically prosperous periods in our history, yet it did not lead to our engaging more in the activities we enjoy. When we connect the dots between this domain and the one on Time Use, we see that many Canadians

are simply too caught up in a time crunch to enjoy leisure and culture activities in the company of friends and family. The question raised by the results of this domain: Is that progress?

Domain percentage change: ↓ 3.0

Living Standards:

The indicators in this domain tell us whether income inequality is getting worse or better; whether family incomes are going up or down; whether more or fewer families are living in poverty in Canada; whether unemployment is on the rise or not; whether housing is becoming more affordable or out of reach. By breaking down the domain, and tracking each indicator's progress over time, we can see whether our wellbeing by these measures is improving or deteriorating.

Between 1994 and 2008, the set of indicators in the Living Standards domain collectively showed an overall increase of 26.4 per cent. Canadians' living standards have improved moderately, mostly because fewer families were living in poverty, fewer Canadians were unemployed for a long period of time, and the after-tax median income of Canadian families had improved by 2008. The gains in wealth and income, however, were not evenly distributed among all Canadians, with the lion's share going to the wealthiest. GDP cannot give us this level of detail about our living standards.

Within this domain, we have also found deterioration on several fronts that can help guide government decision-making. We can see that income inequality, measured here as the gap between the richest 20 per cent and the poorest 20 per cent of Canadian families, got worse, as did economic security, employment quality, and housing affordability. By breaking down the CIW into these individual aspects, we can start seeing our life getting reflected back to us. It creates a useful guide for decision-makers at all levels.

Domain percentage change: ↑ 26.4

Time Use:

This domain echoes some of the warnings of the Leisure and Culture domain. Though we emerged from an incredibly prosperous time in economic terms, we sacrificed in terms of how we used one of our most precious resources – time.

First the good news: Parents are reading more to their young children, and kids aged six to nine are engaged in more structured activities such as organized sports, music, art and dance. Fewer Canadians are working over 50 hours per week or more, which harkens an era when, a generation ago, we were promised a more leisurely life. However, this decrease could be a consequence of more part-time employment and more recent trends in unemployment.



More Canadians are caught in a time crunch, feeling higher levels of time pressure, spending less time giving unpaid care to the seniors in their life, and less time on daily leisure activities. The consequences include less contact with spouse and children, worse health, higher levels of stress, depression, and lower life satisfaction. Tweens and teens are spending more time playing video games and watching TV, and spending less time engaging in an active life.

When there is work to be done, Canadians will do it, but at what cost? And are we on a path that is socially unsustainable? This domain sends us a warning about where we are headed as a society and reveals the limitations of GDP on this front. Economic growth, on paper, is laudable. But what does it mean to a society if it comes at the expense of time, personal satisfaction, and a more stressful life?

Domain percentage change: ↓ 0.6

Overall findings:

Tabulating all eight domains and their 64 indicators gives us a more complete picture of how Canadians are doing in real life, not just as cogs in the economy.

Using 1994 as the base year from which we began measuring our results, the CIW score is 100 for that year. By 2008, the sums of the domains show us that our wellbeing improved on many counts but declined on others. Pulling together all eight domains we see the CIW average increases to a score of 111.0 – an **11.0 per cent improvement** over the fifteen-year period.

During that time period, Canada managed to recover from a difficult recession in the early-1990s, get out of its long-term federal deficit and post a budgetary surplus as early as 1997-98, entering one of the most unprecedented periods of economic growth in our history. Given that, we would expect a corresponding improvement in our wellbeing. What becomes more interesting is when you compare this modest 11.0 per cent growth in our quality of life to the corresponding robust 31.2 per cent growth in Canada's GDP over the same time period.

Up until now, we have gauged our success by GDP alone, presuming economic growth = better quality of life. Until now, we have never had a way to measure the validity of this assumption, let alone a way to measure how our citizenry is actually faring in comparison to the economy. What the CIW delivers is a broader depth of understanding that, when partnered with GDP, gives citizens and decision-makers the full package of information they need to plan for a better and sustainable future.

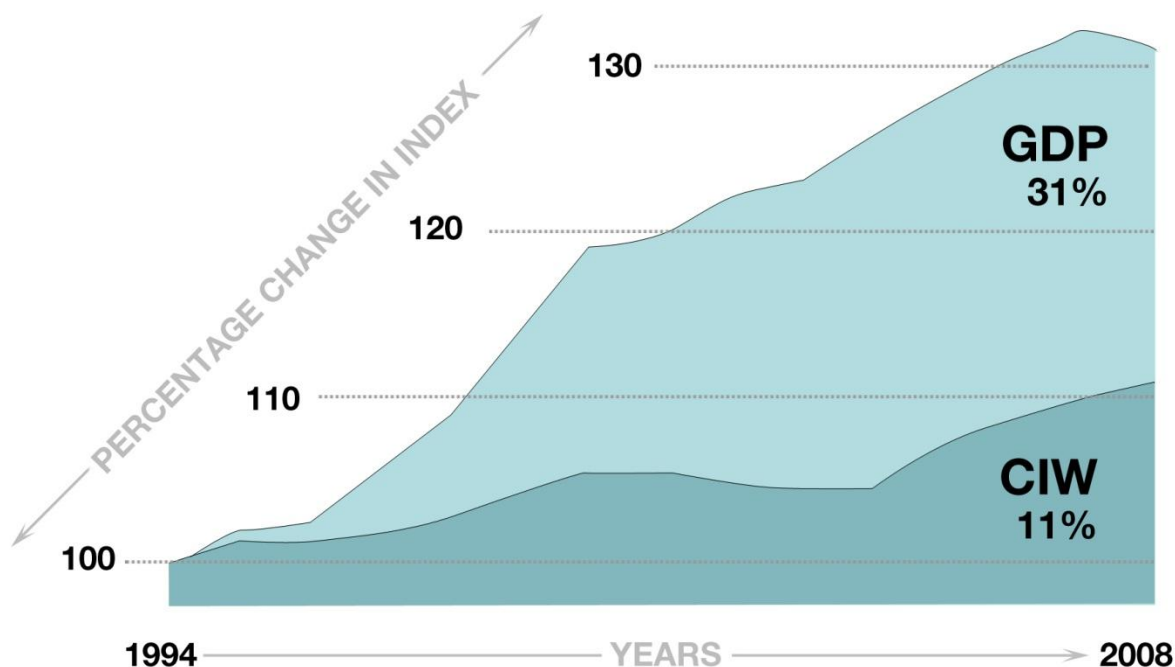
GDP will always be an important measure of how well our economy is performing. Now, with the introduction of the CIW, Canadians can also consider how well they're doing in their own lives, individually and as a society. Governments of all levels can use the information to guide them towards smarter, more perceptive, caring, and time-sensitive decision-making. It's why

the CIW is more than just a number; it's a reflection of how we live, regardless of whether GDP is growing or shrinking. It's a made-in-Canada innovation, and we are proud to launch it into the world during a defining moment such as this.





2.0 Why Canada Needs the CIW



2.1 GDP: What You Need to Know

The figure above clearly indicates that GDP per capita is rising faster than the CIW. The gap between these measures reveals a deeper issue: GDP, alone, cannot measure how well our population is faring as a whole.

In order to understand the differences between GDP and the CIW, it is important to understand how GDP is defined. Put simply, GDP refers to all of the economic activities – meaning all final goods and services – produced in a country in a given period of time.³ More technically, GDP can be determined in three ways, all of which should, in principle, give the same result. The three measures are: (1) the production or output measure, (2) the income measure, and (3) the expenditure measure. To illustrate, using the expenditure method, GDP is:

$$\text{GDP} = \text{private consumption} + \text{gross investment} + \text{government spending} + (\text{exports} - \text{imports})$$

³ Kollewe, J. (2009, October 23). Q&A: what is GDP and why does it matter? *The Guardian*. Retrieved from <http://www.guardian.co.uk/business/2009/oct/23/recession-what-is-gdp>



The CIW, on the other hand, tracks eight domains that together form a comprehensive measure of wellbeing. While the CIW measures how well we fare as engaged citizens in our private, public, and voluntary lives, GDP measures the aggregate of how much money we receive, what we buy with it, or how much we pay for it.

The fact that our wellbeing consistently lags behind expenditure and consumption does not just demonstrate that money cannot buy happiness, but reveals that when GDP is used to guide economic and social policies, we are not necessarily better off as a nation. As illustrated in the preceding figure, over time, our economic performance outpaces our quality of life. *This is at the very heart of the issue of growing inequality – where some of us do extremely well while many of us fare less well.*

Popular GDP Myths

MYTH #1: GDP SHOWS HOW WELL A COUNTRY IS DOING

REALITY: GDP is not a measurement of a society’s progress or wellbeing. It was never meant to be. Even the “father of GDP”, Nobel laureate Simon Kuznets, recognized that “The welfare of a nation can scarcely be inferred from a measurement of national income as defined by GDP.”⁴

GDP was first introduced in the U.S. during the Great Depression as a way of measuring how much and how quickly the U.S. economy was shrinking. It was later adopted by the rest of the world because it’s very good at doing what it does – adding up the value of all goods and services produced in a country in a given period.

But GDP does not tell us anything about whether or not we have jobs, and if those jobs are meaningful and well-paying or precarious and minimum wage. It does not tell us if we live in adequate and safe housing in supportive communities, or in sub-standard and unsafe housing in crime-filled neighbourhoods where we are afraid to go out in the streets, or in communities where the lack of clean water threatens the health of children.

GDP does not tell us anything about whether we have enough leisure time to engage with our friends and families in recreational and cultural activities. Or whether our environment is clean, green, and sustainable or polluted and toxic with rapidly vanishing natural resources.

It tells us nothing about whether or not our kids are given quality early learning opportunities and a chance to reach their full potential in a rapidly changing world. It does not tell us if we are able to engage in a democratic society and fully participate in determining the directions and decisions that shape our lives, or whether we are marginalized by virtue of being poor,

⁴ Kuznets, Simon. “National Income, 1929-1932”. 73rd US Congress, 2d Session, Senate Document no. 124, 7, accessed August 2, 2010, <http://library.bea.gov/u/?SOD,888>

disabled, an immigrant, a racialized minority, young, female, or any of the other characteristics that in an unequal society can push one to the sidelines.

In short, GDP tells us nothing about the kind of world we are creating for ourselves and future generations, and whether we are progressing forward or moving back. The CIW does.

MYTH #2: ALL GROWTH IS GOOD

REALITY: GDP rests on the philosophic assumption that all growth is good – a rising tide lifts all boats. But is all growth really good? And are all activities where no money changes hands of no value?

If you're talking about GDP, the answer to both questions is "yes". GDP makes no distinction between economic activities that are good for our wellbeing and those that are harmful. Spending on tobacco, natural and human-made disasters, crime and accidents, all make GDP go up.

Conversely, the value of unpaid housework, child care, volunteer work, and leisure time are not included in GDP because they take place outside of the formal marketplace. Nor are subtractions made for activities that heat up our planet, pollute our air and waterways, or destroy farmlands, wetlands, and old-growth forests. The notion of sustainability – ensuring that precious resources are preserved for future generations – does not enter the equation.

The shortcomings of GDP, and its cousin GNP, were summarized most eloquently by Senator Robert Kennedy in a speech he gave nearly half a century ago:

The Gross National Product includes air pollution and advertising for cigarettes, and ambulances to clear our highways of carnage. It counts special locks for our doors, and jails for the people who break them. GNP includes the destruction of the redwoods and the death of Lake Superior...And if GNP includes all this, there is much that it does not comprehend. It does not allow for the health of our families, the quality of their education, or the joy of their play. It is indifferent to the decency of our factories and the safety of our streets alike. It does not include the beauty of our poetry or the strength of our marriages, or the intelligence of our public debate or the integrity of our public officials... GNP measures neither our wit nor our courage, neither our wisdom nor our learning, neither our compassion nor our devotion to our country. It measures everything, in short, except that which makes life worthwhile.⁵

⁵ Robert F. Kennedy, Address to the University of Kansas, March 18, 1968

MYTH #3: CUTTING SPENDING WILL FIRE UP THE ECONOMY AND BOOST GDP

REALITY: There is no doubt that governments spend a lot of money. But what do they spend it on? Mostly on building schools, hospitals, roads, bridges, public transportation, and paying the salaries of teachers, doctors, nurses, police, firefighters, and a host of other valuable public servants. They in turn return the money to the economy by buying food, clothes, housing, movie and hockey tickets, and generally supporting the many small businesses that dot every street.

Government spending makes up a large part of GDP. This means that when significant cuts are made to reduce deficits, pay down debt, or otherwise “get our fiscal house in order,” a lot of money is siphoned out of the economy and GDP can shrink. If government cuts are big enough to reduce overall GDP, they will automatically push Canada into a painful recession. So instead of firing up the economy, massive public spending cuts can actually achieve the opposite.

The reality is we cannot shrink ourselves bigger. To pay off our public debts, we have to grow our economy. Governments must be part of the equation, but they have to spend and invest in those areas that improve our collective quality of life, so that we have a citizenry with the strength to meet both our challenges and obligations. It is really not that different than a family paying for its mortgage and household costs by getting higher value jobs instead of by cutting back on food and prescriptions.

The divergence in the CIW and GDP tells us emphatically that we have not been making the right investments in our people and in our communities – and we have not been doing it for a long time. It is time public policy focused more on the quality of our lives. A high standard of living, combined with economic growth, would improve Canada’s competitive advantage while attracting the best and brightest talents to settle and work here. It would also help deter the brain drain of Canadians looking for better opportunities elsewhere.

By looking at the CIW findings through a policy lens, we can determine how the various levels of government, the private sector, the community, and non-profit sectors can work together on improving those areas where Canada has lost ground since 1994, while bolstering those areas that have improved during the same period.

2.2 The CIW Framework and Methodology

Throughout the development of the CIW, the process has been designed to ensure that ordinary Canadians hear their own voices and see themselves reflected in the CIW.

The CIW has been created through the combined efforts of national leaders and organizations, community groups, research experts, indicator users, and the Canadian public. Through three rounds of public consultations, ordinary Canadians across the country have candidly expressed what really matters to their wellbeing. Meanwhile, teams of nationally and internationally



renowned experts have and will continue to devise the best ways of measuring and reporting on those things that matter.

This ongoing cycle of public engagement, consultation, and refinement is one of the key characteristics of the CIW. It ensures that the CIW is rooted in Canadian values, grounded in community experience, and shaped by technical expertise. The CIW is not a static measuring tool, carved in stone for all time. It will grow and change as more becomes known about how to measure changes in our quality of life, and more sources of data become available.

The development of the CIW has been and probably will remain pragmatic. Practically speaking, that means that we proceed patiently, transparently, and flexibly, testing any ideas presented both against the hard evidence yielded by empirical research and against the common sense of the CIW's Canadian Research Advisory Group (CRAG) and as broad a constituency beyond it as our resources allow.

It was agreed relatively early that most of the phenomena relevant to human wellbeing at the present time could be conceptualized in eight categories or domains of life: living standards, healthy populations, community vitality, democratic engagement, leisure and culture, time use, education, and the environment.

It also was agreed that any acceptable indicator or index of wellbeing should be a statistical measure that satisfies some familiar acceptability criteria, including for example, relevance to the concerns of our main target audiences (i.e., ordinary Canadians, elected officials, unelected administrators, experts), easy to understand, reliable and valid, and politically unbiased.

For each domain, the CIW commissioned a literature review or environmental scan and a domain report by one or more experts in the field. These reviews, scans, and reports provided state-of-the-art overviews of relevant research, particularly Canadian research, and available time series data, recommended a set of indicators for the domain where data are available, as well as identified additional indicators for when data become available. In selecting indicators to represent each domain, authors used a set of criteria to ensure validity, reliability, relevance, and feasibility.

The CIW has gone through an extensive and lengthy process of validation and legitimization. The model was presented to and feedback sought from international experts at gatherings such as the 2005 workshop led by composite index experts from the Joint Research Centre of the European Commission, at a November 2006 workshop with NGO leaders and government officials, and the OECD Second World Forum on Measuring and Fostering the Progress of Societies in Istanbul in 2007.

Each commissioned draft domain report was circulated among the CRAG as a peer review body and then by a group of independent Canadian and international expert reviewers. These external expert reviews were used to validate the work against rigorous academic and technical standards. External reviewers were selected through a broad outreach process using the



suggestions of senior staff from Statistics Canada, CRAG, and the CIW's international partners. To date, over 60 reviews by broad-based groups of people with diverse backgrounds have ensured the work is validated against the common sense and sentiments of all Canadians.

Based on the validation process above, the domain research reports were revised and finalized.

As the world changes, new issues become salient and new knowledge and technology become available, some of the things that matter most to people today may be supplanted by other things in the future. Validating and continually improving the CIW is an ongoing process.

How the CIW Works

Because most of our health statistics were drawn from the various cycles of the National Population Health Survey, which began in 1994, 1994 was selected as our base year. Selection of 2008 as our final year of review was determined by the latest full set of data across all eight domains. To create comparable index values from our raw data values, the baseline values of each of the 64 headliners has been set at 100. Positive percentage changes for each one indicate some improvement in wellbeing while negative percentage changes indicate some deterioration.

There are many reasons for regarding one or another indicator as more important in some way or other, but what is missing is a good reason for assigning any particular indicator a particular numerical value greater or less than that of some or all other indicators. The absence of such a reason justifies the equal treatment of all indicators at the current time. With the greater understanding of the relationships among all indicators that is bound to come as development of the CIW proceeds, sufficient reasons for diverse weights may appear.

A more detailed description of the methodology can be found in the full technical composite paper, *The Canadian Index of Wellbeing*, which is available at www.ciw.ca.

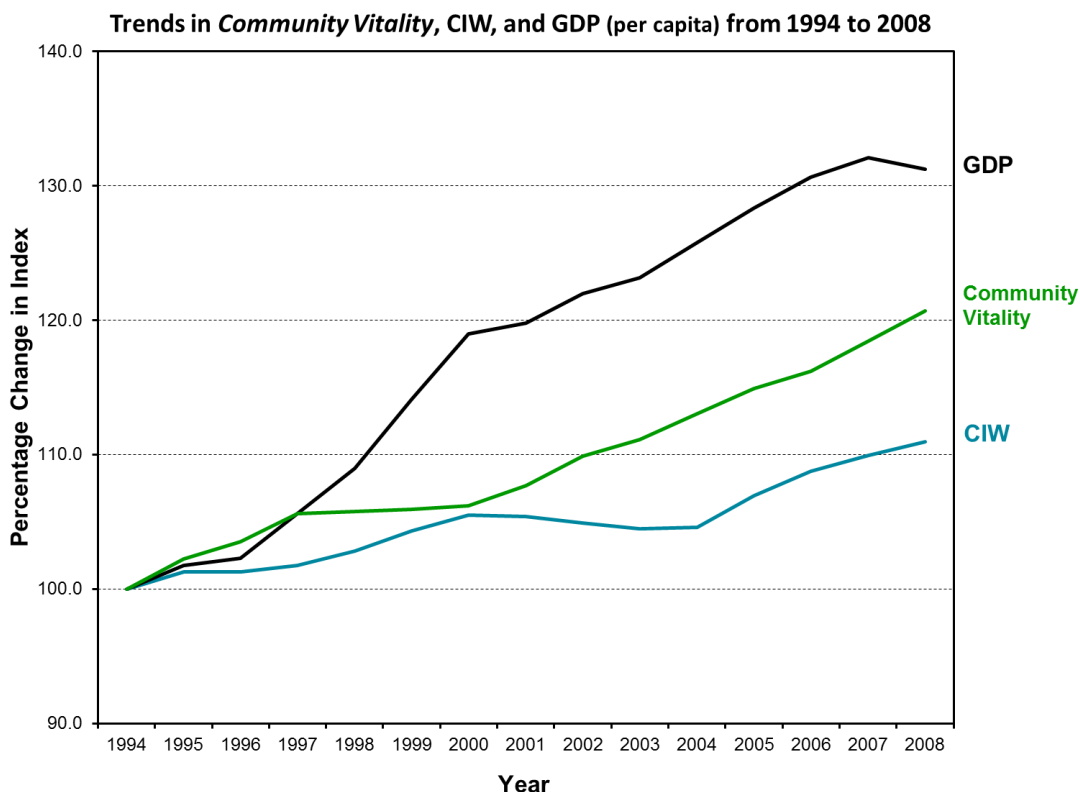
3.0 First Results – Trends and Statistical Highlights



Community Vitality

Vital communities are those that have strong, active and inclusive relationships among residents, private sector, public sector and civil society organizations – relationships that promote individual and collective wellbeing. Vital communities are able to cultivate and marshal these relationships in order to create, adapt and thrive in the changing world. They do so in ways that are inclusive and respectful of the needs and aspirations of diverse communities.

The first CIW research study on Community Vitality focuses on issues of social relationships and networks, and on the conditions that promote these relationships and facilitate community action on behalf of current and future residents.



**Overall Percentage Change in Community Vitality Domain
1994 to 2008:**

20.7% ↑



The headline indicators reveal that Canadians, by and large, have strong social relationships with their families and their communities. The following specific trends can be seen:

- ✓ The rate of membership in voluntary groups and organizations is relatively high and the proportion of Canadians engaged in volunteering continues to go up.
- ✓ The size of social networks appears to be increasing.
- ✓ Canadians report high levels of giving social support, extending assistance to family, friends and neighbours. Compassion for others is growing.
- ✓ Levels of crime are down, an indicator of enhanced community relationships.
- ✓ Canadians report a strong sense of belonging to their local communities across the country, but the feeling is least strong in Quebec.

Our Social Networks are Growing

- ✓ 43.7% of Canadians reported having close contact with six or more close friends in 2008, up from 39.7% in 1994 for an overall increase of 10.1% during the fifteen year period.



We Provide More Help and Care More about Others

- ✓ 84% of Canadians reported that they extended unpaid care and assistance to family, friends and neighbours in 2008, an increase from 73% in 1994 for an overall increase of 15.1% during the fifteen year period.
- ✓ 42% of Canadians in 2008 reported being concerned about the needs of others, regardless of the pressures of their own lives, an increase from 27% in 1994 for an overall increase of 55.6% during the fifteen year period.

Crime is Going Down

- ✓ Between 1994 and 2008, the rate of property crime dropped from 5,692 per 100,000 to 4,247, a decrease of 34%.
- ✓ The 2008 rate of 1,331 violent offences per 100,000 population was 1.1% lower than the rate recorded in 1994 of 1,345 crimes per 100,000 population.
- ✓ Canadians report high levels of personal safety; the proportion feeling safe walking alone after dark increased from 71.9% in 1994 to 79.3% in 2008, for an overall increase of 10.3% during the fifteen year period.

We Feel We Belong

- ✓ 65% of Canadians expressed strong attachment to their local community in 2008, up from 57.9% in 1994, for an overall increase of 12.3% during the fifteen year period.
- ✓ The percentage was lowest in Quebec at 56%, but this is up from 47% in 2001.

Conclusion

The way we associate with each other, and on what terms, has enormous implications for our wellbeing.

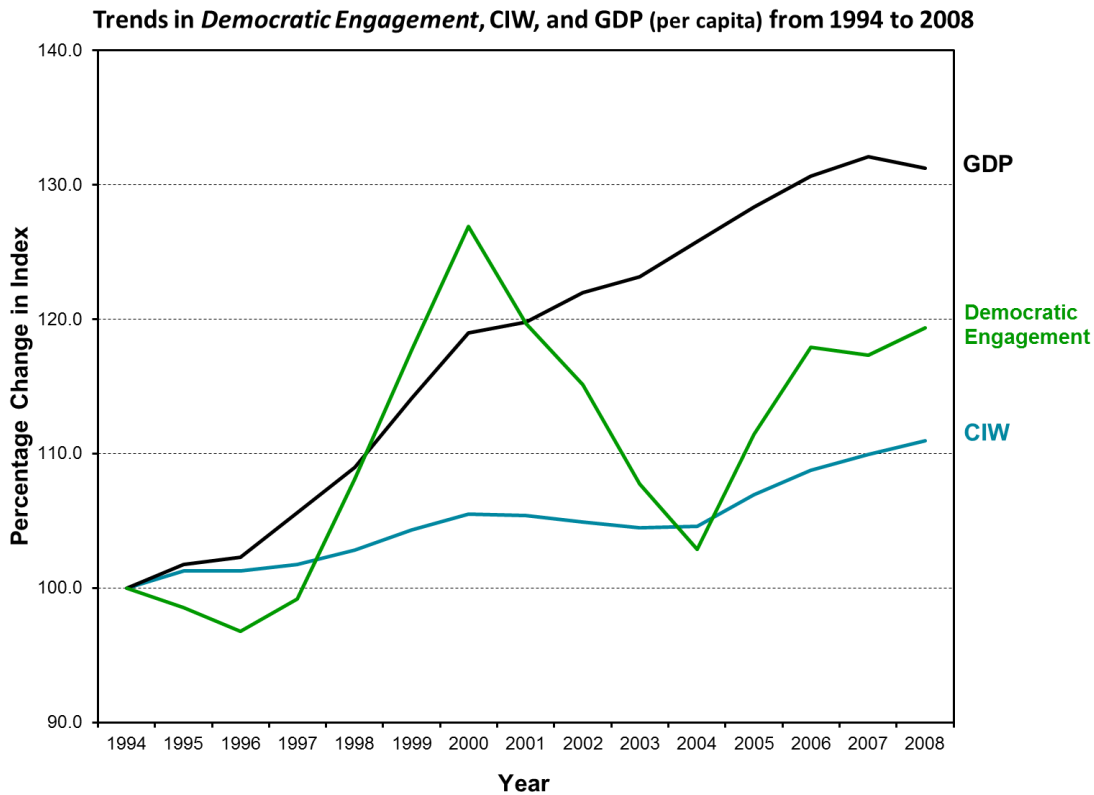
On balance, the positive trend of most of the indicators in the Community Vitality Domain is heartening, suggesting that the wellbeing of Canadians, as measured by the quality of their relationships, is improving over time.



Democratic Engagement

Democratic Engagement is the state of being involved in advancing democracy through political institutions, organizations and activities. A society that enjoys a high degree of democratic engagement is one where: citizens participate in political activities, express political views, and foster political knowledge; governments build relationships, trust, shared responsibility and participation opportunities with citizens; and democratic values are sustained by citizens, government and civil society at a local, national and global level.

A healthy democracy requires more than participation in elections. A healthy democracy requires ongoing democratic engagement both during and between elections.



Overall Percentage Change in Democratic Engagement Domain 1994 to 2008:

19.3% ↑



The following specific trends can be seen:

- ✓ Fewer Canadians are voting in elections for all levels of government.
- ✓ More people may be interested in politics, but there doesn't appear to be any direct relationship between voter interest and voter turnout.
- ✓ Many Canadians are not satisfied with the state of their democracy.
- ✓ An overwhelming majority of Canadians feel that the policies of the federal government have not made their lives better.
- ✓ The percentage of women in Parliament has remained relatively low and flat.
- ✓ Canada's global engagement record is poor.

Fewer of us are Voting

- ✓ From a high of 67.0% in the 1994 federal election, voter turnout has declined to an all time low of 59.1% in the 2008 federal election, for an overall decrease of 11.8% over the fifteen year period. Federal elections generally have the highest voter turnout, with provincial elections lower and municipal elections lower still.
- ✓ The 2006 Canadian Election study reported that 86% of respondents considered it their duty to vote, yet only 64.7% of Canadians actually voted that year.



Voter Interest Doesn't Mean Voter Turnout

- ✓ The percentage of Canadians who say they are “not interested in politics” went from 9.7% in 1994 down to 7.1% in 2008, for an overall improvement of 36.6% over the fifteen year period. But there is no correlation between voter interest and voter turnout. In 2000, voter interest increased from the previous election but voter turnout decreased. Yet in the 2006 election year, both voter turnout and voter interest increased.

Many of us are not Satisfied with Canadian Democracy

- ✓ The percentage of Canadians who were very satisfied or fairly satisfied with how democracy works in Canada varied from 54.2% to 62.6% between 1994 and 2008, for an overall increase of 3.1% over the fifteen year period.

We Don't Believe Federal Policies Have Made our Lives Better

- ✓ The percentage of Canadians who feel that the policies of the Federal government have made their lives better (as opposed to making not that much difference) ranged from a low of 6.1% to a high of 20.2% between 1994 and 2008. While this is an overall increase of 106.6% over the fifteen year period, it continues to be a very low number. This suggests a strong disconnect between the activities of government and how this trickles down to the perception at the individual level.

Women are Significantly Under-Represented in Parliament

- ✓ Women make up half of the Canadian population and are the largest group of citizens underrepresented in our democracy. While the percentage of women Members of Parliament has increased from 18% in 1994 to 22.4% in 2008 – a 24.4% increase over the fifteen year period – it remains very low. In the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report 2007, Canada ranked only 18th in gender equality on the Global Gender Gap Index and 36th on the political empowerment sub-index.

Canada's Global Engagement is Poor

- ✓ The Government of Canada's commitment to global development is measured by the percentage of Gross National Income (GNI) devoted to Official Development Assistance (ODA). The proportion of Canadian GNI devoted to ODA fell from a high of .43% in 1994 to .32% in 2008, for an overall decrease of 25.6% over the fifteen year period.
- ✓ This commitment to ODA fell short on two fronts: First, there is a long-standing United Nations target for developed countries to devote 0.7% of their GNI to ODA – more than twice the current level of Canadian assistance. Second, in 2008, Canada ranked poorly in

terms of GNI devoted to ODA – 16th out of 22 Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) member countries.

Conclusion

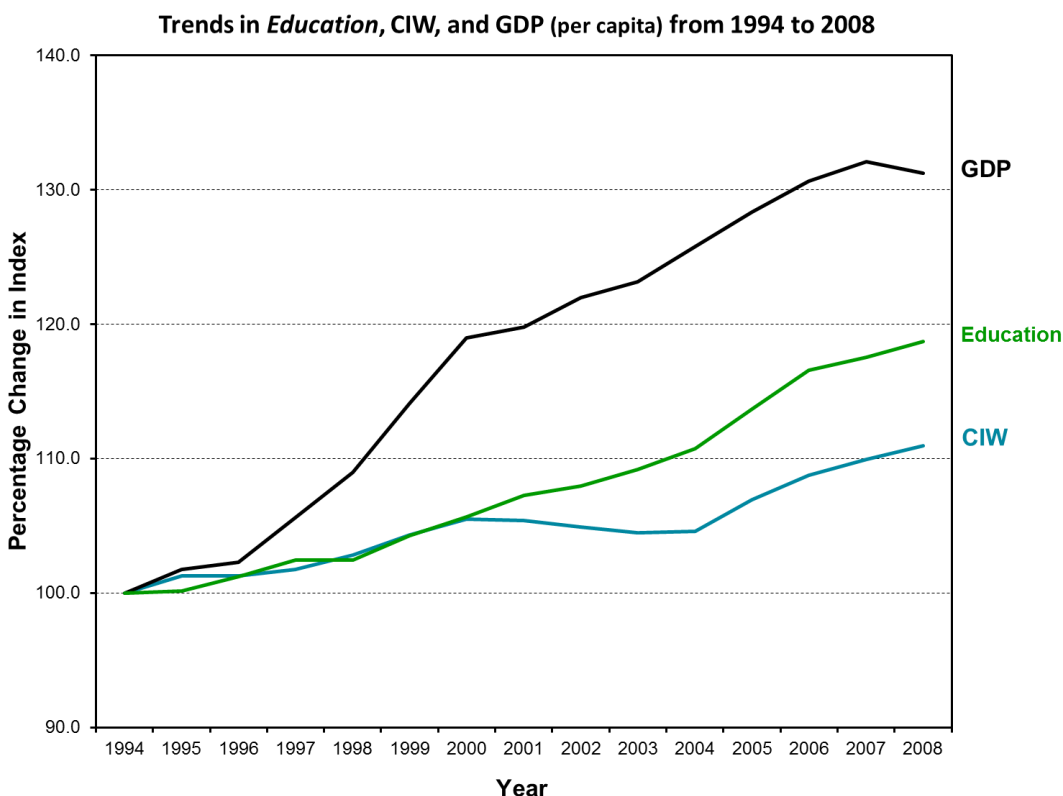
The research undertaken in this report clearly demonstrates that efforts have amassed at the individual, government and global level to respond to changing values, decreased satisfaction, and increased expectations of democracy by citizens. Yet, the results of these efforts have not translated into stronger democratic engagement.

Voter participation reached an all-time low in the 2008 federal election. The participation of women in Parliament is far below the 50 percent of the population women comprise. There is a strong disconnect between the public's belief that it is their duty to vote and actual voter turnout. Some suggest that low participation is a sign of public content, yet satisfaction with democracy in Canada is modest and less than 1 in 5 Canadians believe that government policies have made their lives better.



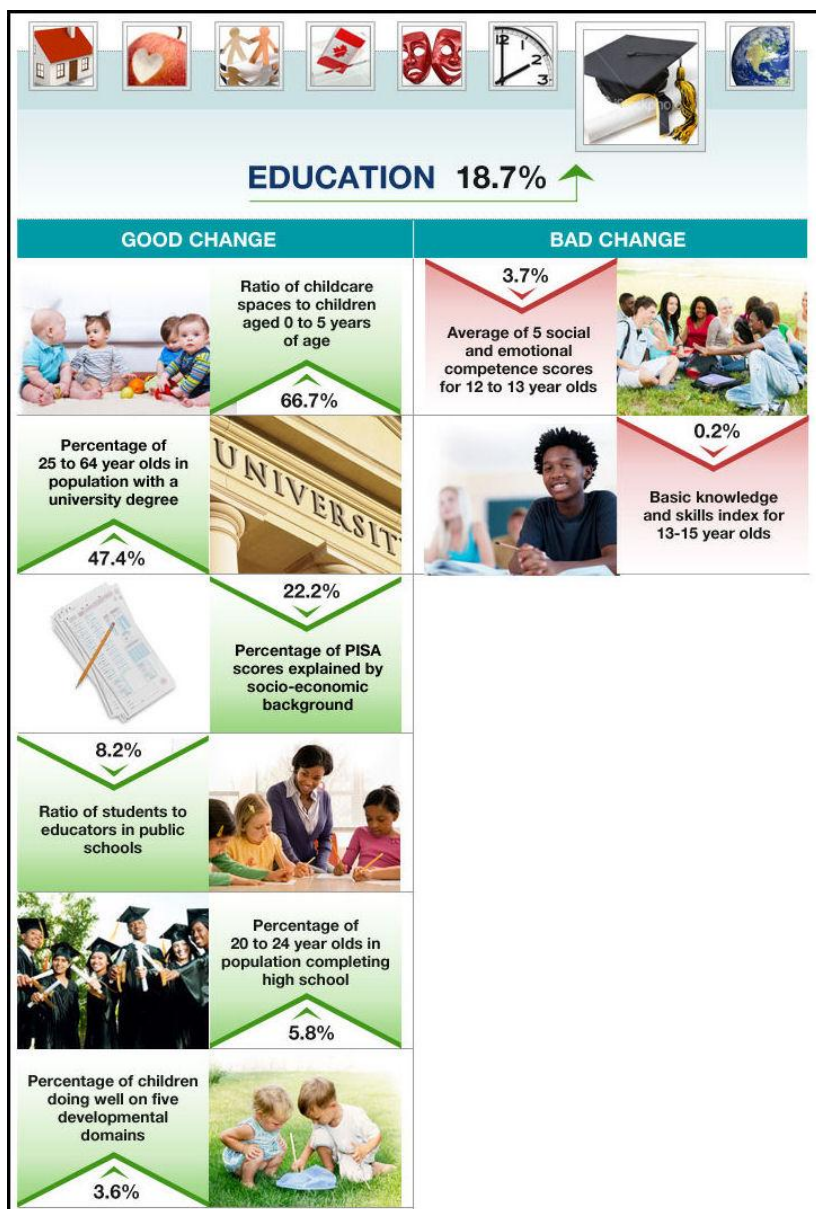
Education

Education is the systematic instruction, schooling or training given to the young in preparation for the work of life; and by extension, similar instruction or training obtained in adult age. Education should not be equated with schooling. It is a process that begins before school age and extends beyond high school, university, and apprenticeships. Before the start of formal schooling in kindergarten, education is reflected in pre-school arrangements such as childcare and early childhood education. Beyond high school, college or university, and professional training through apprenticeships, education takes place in the form of adult learning and lifelong learning.



**Overall Percentage Change in Education Domain
1994 to 2008:**

18.7% ↑



The following specific trends can be seen:

- ✓ The percentage of childcare spaces increased, but varied considerably among provinces.
- ✓ Developmental health in kindergarten rose in the 1990s, but levelled off in the 2000s.
- ✓ The student-teacher ratio steadily improved, but B.C. fell further behind the national average.
- ✓ Social and emotional competencies among children 12 to 13 declined.
- ✓ Math, science, and reading scores remained above the international average, but the margin dropped.
- ✓ Parental socio-economic status became less important to student performance. Parental education attainment remained important.

✓ High school and university completion rates increased.

Childcare Spaces are Up

- ✓ Over the last two decades, the availability of childcare spaces increased. The percentage of children aged 0 to 5 years with a childcare space rose steadily from 12% in 1994 to 20% in 2008, for an overall increase of 66.7% over the fifteen year period.



Developmental Health in Kindergarten has Levelled off

- ✓ The percentage of children in kindergarten who did well on developmental health scores in the National Longitudinal Study of Children and Youth increased consistently from 83% in 1994 to 86% in 2000, but remained at 86% in 2008. This is an overall increase of 3.6% over the fifteen year period. The fact that data show a consistently increasing trend over one decade (1990s) and a consistent plateau during the following decade (2000s) raises important questions about the social and political changes that accompanied this pattern.

Student-Educator Ratio is Improving – Except in British Columbia

- ✓ The number of students per educator steadily dropped from 15.9 in 1994 to 14.7 in 2008, for an overall decrease of 8.2% over the fifteen year period.
- ✓ While the student-educator ratio steadily improved in Ontario (from 15.8 to 14.5), in British Columbia it strongly fluctuated and did not improve (16.9 in 1997 and 16.6 in 2007). B.C. already had one of the poorest student-educator ratios in the country so the gap between it and other provinces widened over the past 15 years.

Social and Emotional Competencies are Declining in Middle Childhood

- ✓ Social and emotional competency scores among children 12 to 13 declined slowly but steadily from 3.25 in 1994 to 3.13 in 2008, for an overall decrease of 3.7% during the fifteen year period. The trend was not reflected equally in the five individual components: self-concept and peer belonging stayed at a steadily high level, while bullying (victimization), friendship intimacy, and empathy went down over time.

Canadian Basic Education Scores are Above the International Average – But the Margin is Dropping

- ✓ Canadian scores were above the international average of 500 on an index of tests taken between 1995 and 2006. But scores progressively declined from a high of 533 in 1999 to 522 in 2006, the most recent test year. During that period of time, the decline was 0.2%.
- ✓ Canadian scores declined in each of the test areas from 1999 to 2006: in literacy from 534 to 527; in math from 531 to 523; and in science from 533 to 517.

Parental Socio-economic Status is Becoming Less Important to Student Performance.

- ✓ The amount of variation in PISA Grade 9 literacy/reading test scores that can be attributed to differences in parental socio-economic background dropped from 11% in



2000 to 9% in 2006 for Canadian students. This is an overall improvement of 22.2%. Canada is in the mid-range among OECD countries

- ✓ Students whose parents have completed high school or less are only 70% as likely to participate in the post-secondary education process as students whose parent(s) has/have completed university.

High School Completion Rates are Up

- ✓ The percentage of the Canadian population between 20 and 24 years old that reported having completed high school has gone up slowly but steadily from 86% in 1994 to 91% in 2008, for an overall increase of 5.8% during the fifteen year period.

University Completion Rates are Up

- ✓ University graduation rates among 25 to 64 year-olds have gone up steadily from 19% in 1994 to 28% in 2008, for an overall increase of 47.4% during the fifteen year period.

Conclusion

Education is one of the core personal resources that each of us needs to manage our personal wellbeing. As life expectancy has significantly increased over the past century, it is equally important that we embrace a lifetime development approach to education.

The early years are developmentally foundational and predictive with regard to later educational outcomes as well as health. In Canada, the availability of childcare has increased considerably, but in the absence of a national childcare program it varies significantly from province to province. Also variable has been the developmental health of children in the important transitional year of kindergarten. The fact that it consistently improved in the 1990's but flat-lined in the 2000's demands further investigation.

Social and emotional competency scores among children 12 to 13 have declined slowly but steadily. In an increasingly globalizing, diverse Canadian society, fostering interpersonal competencies is critical for building trust and social capital across different groups within our society. If the trend that is shown for children in middle childhood reflects a general societal trend, it will be important to understand and address the underlying processes and causes.



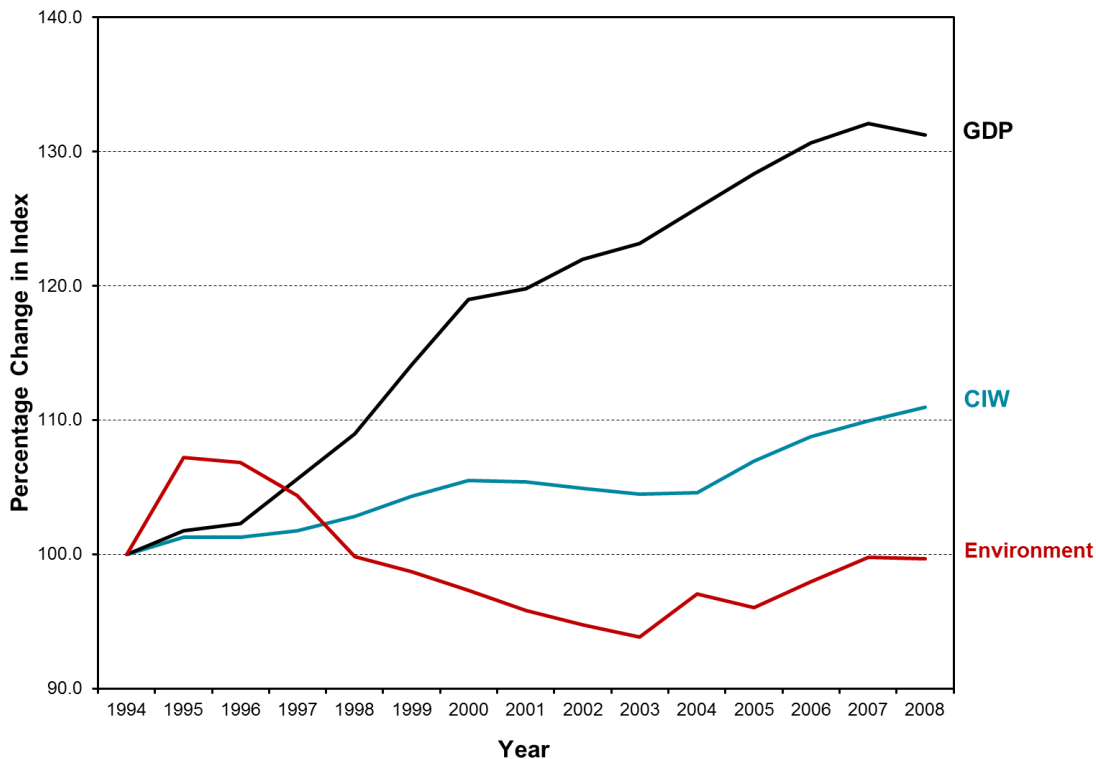
Environment

The environment is the foundation upon which human societies are built. We are a part of the planet, made up of the same materials and energy as the earth, plants, and animals around us. Indeed, the dictionary defines the environment as: “the complex of physical, chemical, and biotic factors (as climate, soil, and living things) that act upon an organism or an ecological community and ultimately determine its form and survival.”

Despite its fundamental importance to us as a species, and despite estimates that Canada’s natural resource wealth exceeds one trillion dollars, we often take our environment for granted. We fail to appreciate the various ecosystem services provided by nature that sustain human wellbeing.

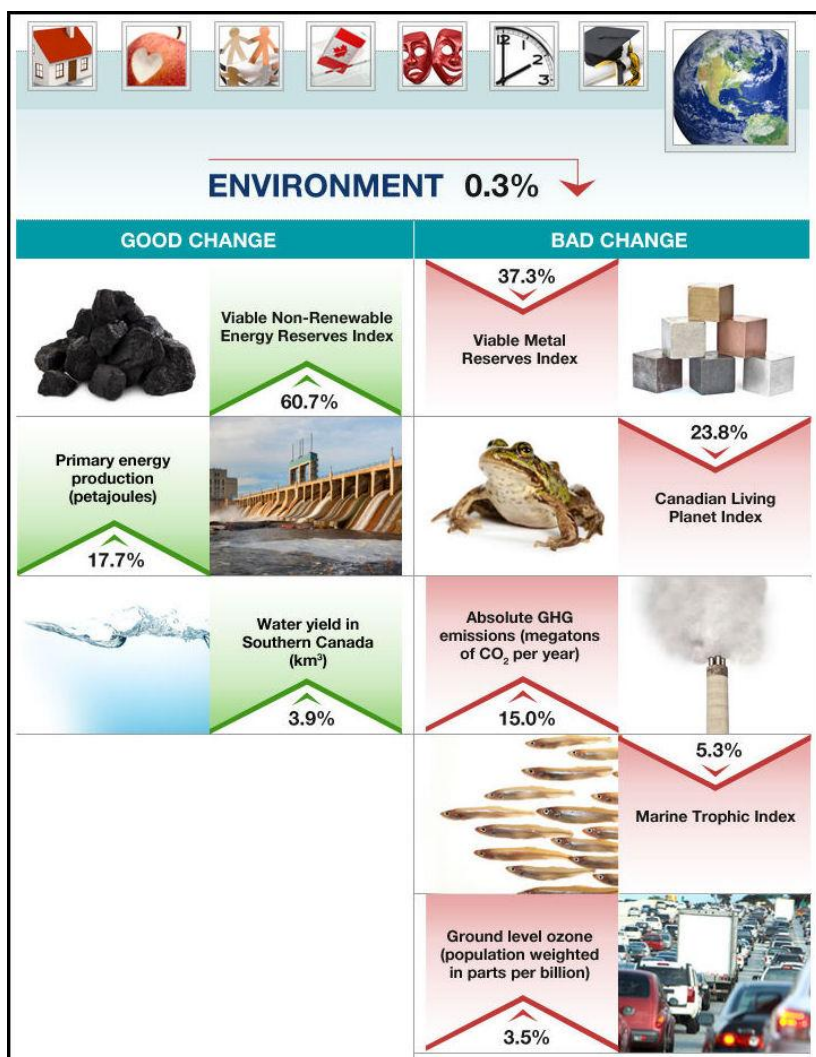


Trends in *Environment*, CIW, and GDP (per capita) from 1994 to 2008



**Overall Percentage Change in Environment Domain
1994 to 2008:**

-0.3% ↓



The following specific trends can be seen:

- ✓ Air quality is showing mixed signs but is still problematic and is costly to Canadians' health, particularly in large traffic-congested cities.
- ✓ Greenhouse gas emissions continue to rise. Canada is heading in the wrong direction to avoid dangerous climate change.
- ✓ Canadians continue to be large consumers and producers of hydrocarbon energy. Reserve levels are increasing but their projected lifespan is declining due to growing demand.
- ✓ Water supplies are shrinking in parts of the country and, combined with high demand, raise concerns for the future.

- ✓ Many Canadian species are struggling, especially freshwater fish, grassland birds, reptiles and amphibians.
- ✓ There is not enough environmental monitoring and existing data is largely old and inaccessible – in contrast to economic data.

Ground-Level Ozone is Increasing

- ✓ Ground-level ozone can be directly linked to human health – such as respiratory problems – and ecosystem degradation. It can impose billions of dollars of costs on society, especially in large municipalities with traffic congestion such as Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver. It rose from 36.1 ppb in 1994 to 37.5 ppb in 2008, for an increase of 3.5% during the fifteen year period.



GHG Emissions are Growing and we are Far from Meeting Kyoto Commitments

- ✓ Canada is far from the trajectory it needs to reduce emissions to a rate that avoids dangerous climate change. Absolute GHG emissions increased by 15% during 1994 to 2008. This puts us far off meeting our country's Kyoto commitment of being 6% below 1990 levels by 2012.
- ✓ Canada's Arctic has already experienced a warming of more than 1.7°C and an increase of 4 or 5°C is projected. This will have very large ramifications for infrastructure, communities and species throughout the Arctic, causing disruption to cultural, economic and general wellbeing.
- ✓ The main driver of GHG emissions has been certain industries with more than half of the GHG emissions produced by fossil fuel industries (22%), transportation (22%) and electricity production via utilities (16%). Household emissions have remained relatively the same over the 1994 to 2008 period.
- ✓ From a purely economic perspective, climate change is expected to decrease global GDP by up to 20%.

We are Large Consumers and Producers of Hydrocarbon Energy

- ✓ There has been an overall increase of 17.7% in primary energy production from 1994 to 2008. But virtually all of the growth has come through the exploitation of non-renewable fossil fuels which make up some 90% of our primary energy production. Electricity generation from wind, solar and tidal sources represented less than 0.5%.
- ✓ Such voracious energy use is the primary reason for Canada's inability to meet its Kyoto targets and stem the rising tide of GHGs noted above.

Our Freshwater Supply is Variable

- ✓ From 1994 to 2008, the supply of water in Southern Canada increased by 3.9% but there was considerable variability year-to-year, with the greatest variability throughout the prairies where supply went from extreme scarcity (drought) to extreme abundance (flooding). Climate change predictions suggest increasing variability in terms of both temperature and precipitation.

Our Non-Renewable Energy Reserves Remain High but Metal Reserves are Declining

- ✓ Overall reserve levels of non-renewable resources increased by 60.7% from 1994 to 2008, in part, due to continual discoveries of new viable deposits.
- ✓ Unlike energy reserves, metal reserves have declined by 37.3% from 1994 to 2008 and are at or near historic lows for virtually all metals. For the time being, the declining reserves in Canada are balanced through international trade with developing countries.

Some Species Populations are Increasing While Others are Declining

- ✓ While the Living Planet Index – which measures the population levels of select species – was relatively close in 2000 to where it was in 1970, it has been declining on all fronts since the mid-1990s, with reptiles, amphibians and fish showing the greatest decrease. The overall decrease for 1994 to 2008 was 23.8%.
- ✓ An estimated 20% of native frogs, toads and salamanders are at risk of extinction, while 18% of non-marine fishes are listed as Endangered or Threatened. Birds of grasslands and other open habitats lost 40% of their populations, 35% of shorebirds have experienced recent declines somewhere in their range, and seabirds also show a greater number of populations in decline since the 1980s. Waterfowl and forest birds are mainly healthy.
- ✓ We have been fishing-down the food chain, reducing the population of the larger more desirable species such as swordfish, while turning to smaller, short-lived species such as clams, shrimps and crabs. The marine trophic index has decreased by 5.3% from 1994 to 2008.
- ✓ Declining levels of large predatory fish suggest that food chains are becoming shorter, leaving ecosystems less able to cope with natural or human-induced change.

Our Environment Needs Closer Monitoring and Data More Available

- ✓ Considerable gaps exist in environmental data in Canada. Canadians, like citizens in other countries, do not have access to current data (most are at least two to four years old).
- ✓ This situation is in stark contrast with economic data which is readily available, timely, and abundant. Statistics Canada and Environment Canada do provide some excellent environmental data, and on very limited resources, which is to be commended. There are, however, few robust, multi-year and fully accessible national data sets for public use, making a report such as this very difficult.



Conclusion

The Environment Domain paints a mixed picture of Canada's environment. Some aspects are improving while others are degrading. The choices we make in terms of protecting, managing or restoring these aspects of the environment will dictate not only the state of our lands and waters, but also play a significant role in determining our wellbeing as Canadians.

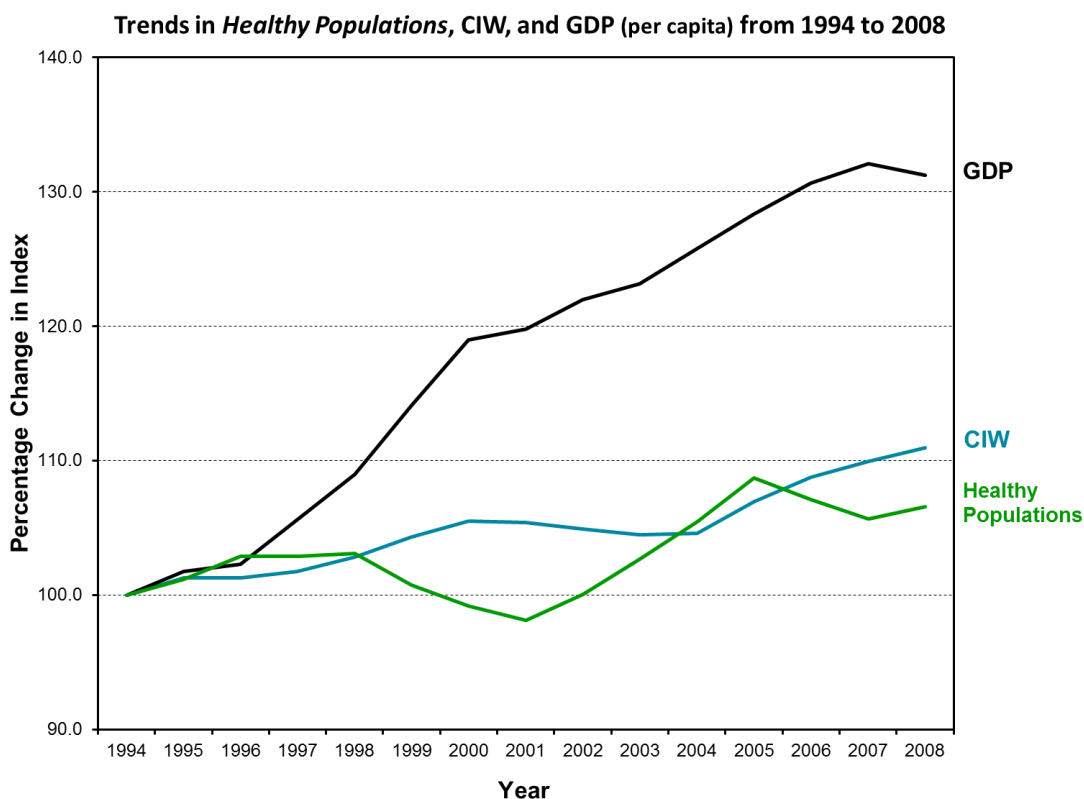
While Canada is not a country in crisis, there are warning signs that not all is well when it comes to the environment and wellbeing. Given that there is an increasingly large global population with a voracious and growing demand for our natural capital, it is critical that policy makers assess the consequences of how we use the environment to better the wellbeing of all Canadians.



Healthy Populations

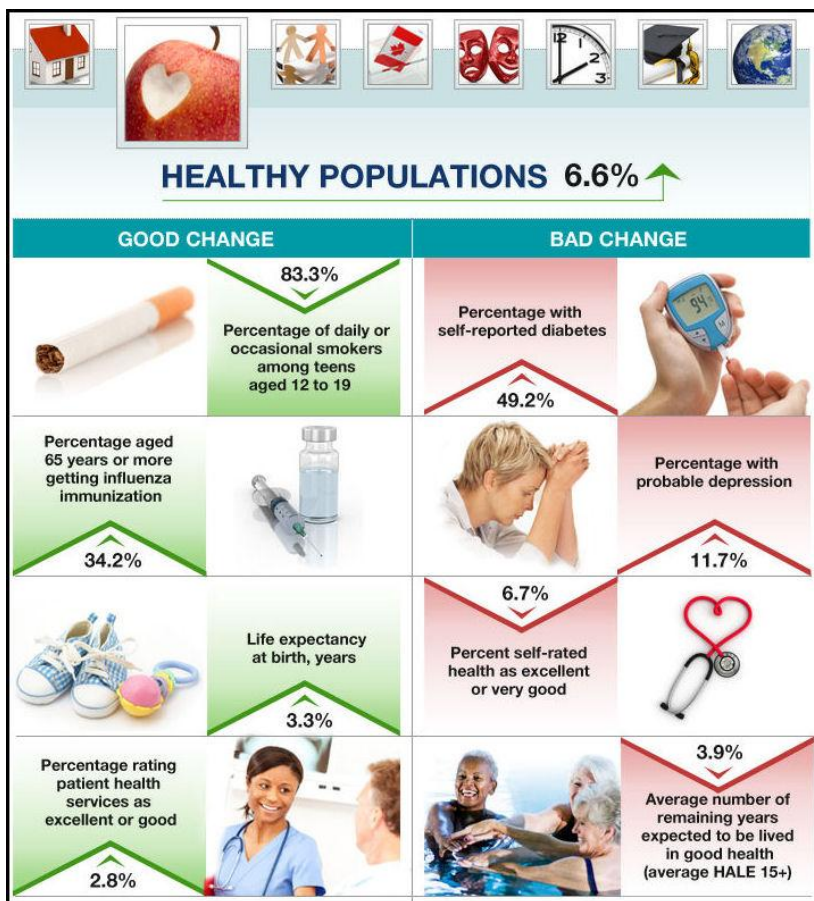
The Healthy Populations Domain measures the physical and mental wellbeing of the population, life expectancy, behaviours and life circumstances that influence health, health-care quality and access, and public health services. The Domain focuses on a set of key indicators that illustrate the overall health of the population (“health status”) and factors that influence health (“health determinants”).

An individual’s lifestyle and behaviour clearly affects his or her health. Good dietary practices, regular physical activity and refraining from smoking are all linked to better health. But there is also a growing recognition that individual choices and behaviours are constrained and shaped by broader social factors including how food is distributed and priced, where houses are constructed and located, how urban transportation is designed, and how carefully humans interact with the planetary ecosystem.



**Overall Percentage Change in Healthy Populations Domain
1994 to 2008:**

6.6% ↑



The relatively high standard of living enjoyed by Canadians is matched by life expectancy rates that are among the best in the world. But a closer look at additional health indicators reveals a more mixed picture:

- ✓ While Canadians generally have high levels of health, there are discrepancies in health according to social groupings and gender – despite the availability of universal health services.
- ✓ People with higher incomes and education live longer, are less likely to have diabetes and other chronic conditions, are more likely to be physically active, and report better levels of health overall.

- ✓ Canadians’ rating of their health status has declined since the late 1990s, but stabilized in more recent years. This trend runs across the population.
- ✓ The decline is most marked among teenagers, which is a worrisome trend, given that this age group is generally considered healthier than most.
- ✓ The majority of Canadians rate the quality of their health care system as high and most are satisfied with their health care services.

We’re Living Longer

- ✓ Canada’s life expectancy rates are among the best in the world. We have made consistent gains over the past decades. On average, a Canadian born in 2006 could expect to live to 80.8 years, up 3.3% from 1994.
- ✓ Women continue to live longer than men – 83 years compared to 78 years in 2006. But men are catching up – life expectancy for men increased by 7 years between 1979 and 2006, compared to 4.2 years for women. Life expectancies are substantially shorter in all

three northern territories – shockingly shorter in Nunavut where a child born in 2004 could expect to live only 70.4 years – more than 10 years less than the national average.

But We're Not Living Better

- ✓ Although Canadians are living longer, these additional years are not necessarily spent in the best of health. Gains in health-adjusted life expectancy for Canadian women and men peaked in 1996 (59.7 and 55.7 years of expected good health respectively) and overall, have dropped 3.9% from 1994 to 2008. The most dramatic drop has been for women aged 85 and older. Canadians are increasingly likely to develop a chronic disease or mental illness during their lifetime.

We Don't Feel as Healthy as We Used To

- ✓ The proportion of Canadians who consider themselves as having very good or excellent health peaked in 1998 at 65.2% and decreased dramatically in 2003 to 58.4%. Self-rated health rebounded slightly in 2005 and has started to slip again. Overall it is still 6.7% lower than it was in 1994.
- ✓ Diabetes rates have increased 49.2% over the past 15 years – from 3% in 1994 to 5.9% in 2008 – with the greatest rise in the 35 and over age groups. Diabetes rates are especially high among Aboriginal Canadians. In 2001, 11% of adults on selected reserves reported diabetes – more than three times the level of the general population. Among First Nations people living off reserve, diabetes rates were over 8%.

More Canadians are Likely to be Depressed

- ✓ The likelihood of depression has increased 11.7% among Canadians of all ages from 1994 to 2008. Throughout this period, the prevalence of depression has been consistently higher among women than in men.

Some of us are Adopting Healthier Lifestyles

- ✓ The percentage of Canadians who use tobacco continues to decline among all age groups, particularly among youth, where the rates dropped by 83.3% between 1994 and 2008.

We're Happy with our Health-Care Services

- ✓ 87% of Canadians in 2007 said that they rated the quality of health care in their province or territory as excellent or good, up 2.8% since 1994. The rates were equally high when asked about community-based health care and access to a regular family physician.



Conclusion

Disparities in health status by social groupings points to the need for new policies and programs that are tailored to closing the gaps. Action is needed on social justice and equity-oriented measures, a point strongly reinforced by the recently released Final Report of the World Health Organization's Commission on Social Determinants of Health.

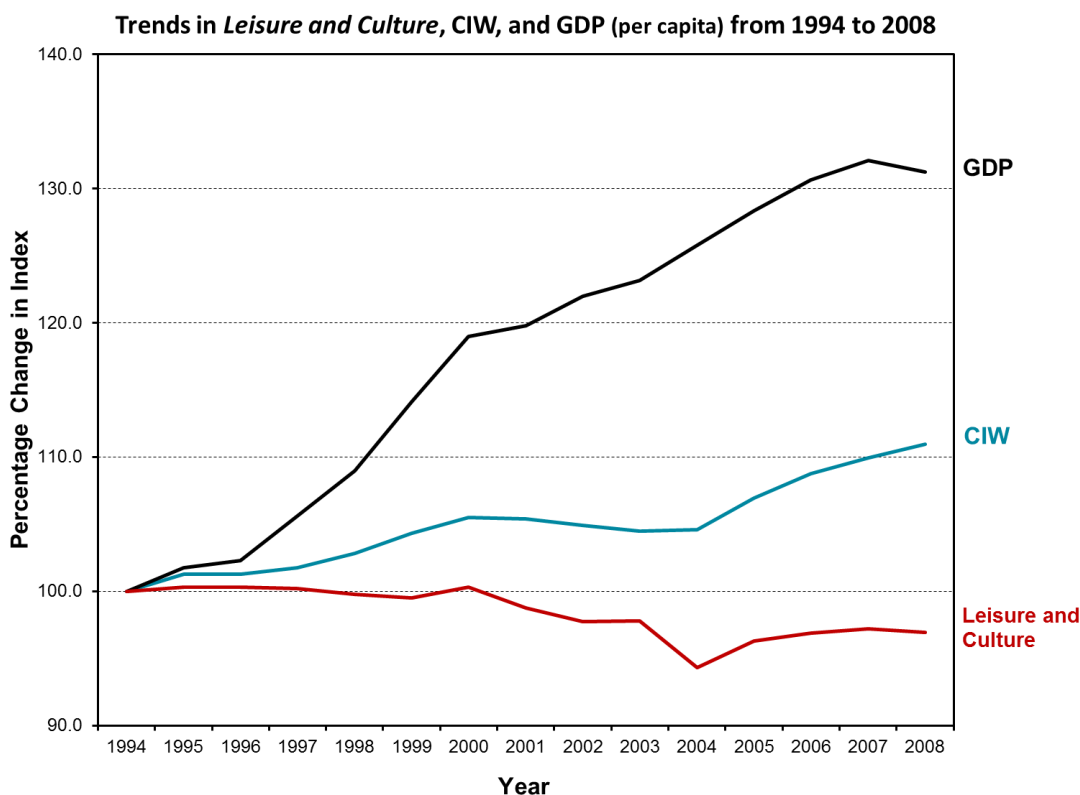
There is wide consensus that reducing health disparities is key to improving Canadians' overall health and wellbeing. This suggests both the need for health interventions tailored to socially excluded groups and the potential health benefits of initiatives outside the health field.



Leisure and Culture

Participation in leisure and culture activities, whether arts, culture, or recreation, contributes to the wellbeing of individuals, communities, and societies. The myriad of activities and opportunities that we pursue and enjoy today all contribute to our overall life satisfaction and quality of life. They help to fully define our lives, the meaning we derive from them, and ultimately our wellbeing. This is true for all age groups and both genders.

Participation in leisure and culture throughout one's lifetime promotes higher levels of life satisfaction and wellbeing into later life. There is also emerging evidence that leisure and culture can play an even greater role in improving the quality of life for marginalized groups, such as lower income groups, children and older adults living with disabilities, and minority populations.



**Overall Percentage Change in Leisure and Culture Domain
1994 to 2008:**

-3.0% ↓



The following specific trends can be seen:

- ✓ Canadians are spending less time on social leisure activities.
- ✓ Volunteering for culture and recreation organizations has dropped, especially among those 25 to 34 years of age.
- ✓ Participation in physical activities has increased.
- ✓ Visits to National Parks and National Historic Sites dropped significantly after September 11 and are not expected to rise to levels seen in the 1990s for some time, if at all.

✓ Household spending on culture and recreation is increasing.

We are Spending Less Time on Social Leisure Activities

- ✓ The average portion of total time that Canadians spent on the previous day on social leisure activities dropped from 15.2% in 1994 to 12.4% in 2008 for an overall decrease of 18.5% during the fifteen year period. Participation in arts and culture activities remained comparatively stable at less than 5%.
- ✓ Women spent a greater percentage of time than men on both social leisure and arts and culture activities, but the drop in social leisure activities from 1998 to 2005 was greatest among women, from 18% to 14%.

Attendance at Performing Arts Performances has Dropped

- ✓ Average attendance per performance went down steadily from 2001 to 2004, but showed a marked increase in 2006, for an overall increase of 0.5% from 1994 to 2008, but overall the trend is not encouraging.



We Volunteer Less for Culture and Recreation Organizations

- ✓ Despite the fact that overall volunteering in Canada has increased, the percentage of volunteering time given specifically to culture and recreation organizations dropped dramatically from 47% in 1994 to 37% in 2008, for an overall decrease of 19.5% during the fifteen year period. Men reported a much greater percentage of their volunteering time given to culture and recreation organizations than did women, though the numbers for both groups dropped.

Our Participation in Physical Activities has Increased

- ✓ Overall participation in physical activity rose steadily from 20.7 to 25.8 times per month (1994 to 2008), for an overall increase of 24.5% during the fifteen year period. Physical activities measured included walking, bicycling, exercising, various sports, gardening and social dancing.
- ✓ Men reported two more episodes of physical activity per month, but the pattern of growth and levelling off was the same for both genders. Older adults participated in physical activity at much lower levels than all other age groups. As the population ages, overall levels of physical activity among Canadians might begin to decline.

Visits to National Parks and Historic Sites are far below Pre-9/11 Levels

- ✓ Annual visits to National Parks and National Historic Sites of Canada stayed steady throughout the 1990s, but dropped significantly immediately after 9/11 and are still far below pre-9/11 levels. There was an overall decrease in annual visits of 21.4% over the fifteen year period. Other contributing factors included the outbreaks of SARS, West Nile virus, and mad cow disease.
- ✓ The number of visitors is not expected to rise to levels seen in the 1990s for some time, if at all. Recovery to previous levels would require a huge upswing which is not likely to happen given a variety of factors including the introduction of fees and charges and greater restrictions when visiting Parks and Sites.

We're Taking Slightly Longer Vacations

- ✓ The total number of nights Canadians spent away from home was relatively stable in the 1990s. It was generally higher from 2000 to 2007 although the average number of nights away per trip declined until 2003, but has rebounded since 2004. While the total number of trips taken by Canadians varies, the trips on average are longer by 11.3% from 1994 to 2008.



- ✓ When women vacationed they spent more nights away than men. Adults 65 years and over – most of whom are in retirement – spent significantly more nights away on average than other age groups.

We're Spending More on Culture and Recreation

- ✓ Regardless of whether household income has gone up or down over the years, the percentage of that income spent on culture and recreation has increased by 4.2% over the 1994 to 2008 period.
- ✓ Mid-aged adults from 35 to 49 years reported spending significantly more on culture and recreation than any other age groups. This may be because they were the ones most likely to have children in the household. Adults 65 years of age and older reported spending significantly less on culture and recreation despite having more free time for such activities. This was largely due to their having less disposable income than other age groups.

Conclusion

Leisure and culture make significant contributions to the wellbeing of Canadians and their communities. They also help shape our national identity and sense of who we are as a people. Thus, the overall decline in the engagement of Canadians in such activities is of considerable concern.

The significant drop in leisure activity among women is noteworthy. It may well reflect their increased feeling of time crunch reported upon in the previous section. While there is some comfort in knowing that participation in physical activity has not gone down in recent years for either gender, given the challenge of an aging population and increased chronic diseases such as diabetes and obesity has been called everything from “a ticking time bomb” to “the greatest health challenge facing our generation”, it would be more comforting to see an increase – and a substantial one – in physical activity. Equally worrying is that over the past several years, public agencies and non-profit, voluntary organizations responsible for the provision of leisure and culture programs, services, facilities, and other opportunities have seen an ongoing shift away from core funding.

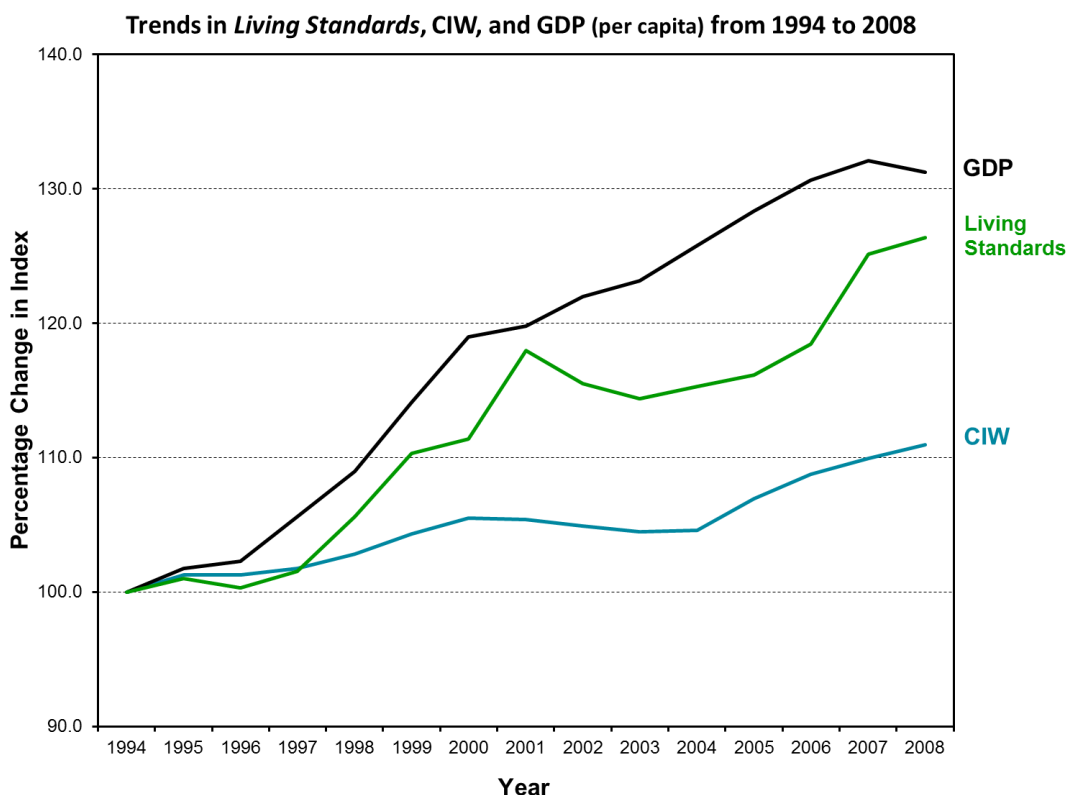
These trends bode poorly for the wellbeing of individuals, community, and society. Should they continue, the benefits associated with having leisure and culture as key components in the lifestyles of Canadians and in our communities will simply not be realized. We must strengthen our capacity to provide meaningful venues and opportunities for leisure and culture.



Living Standards

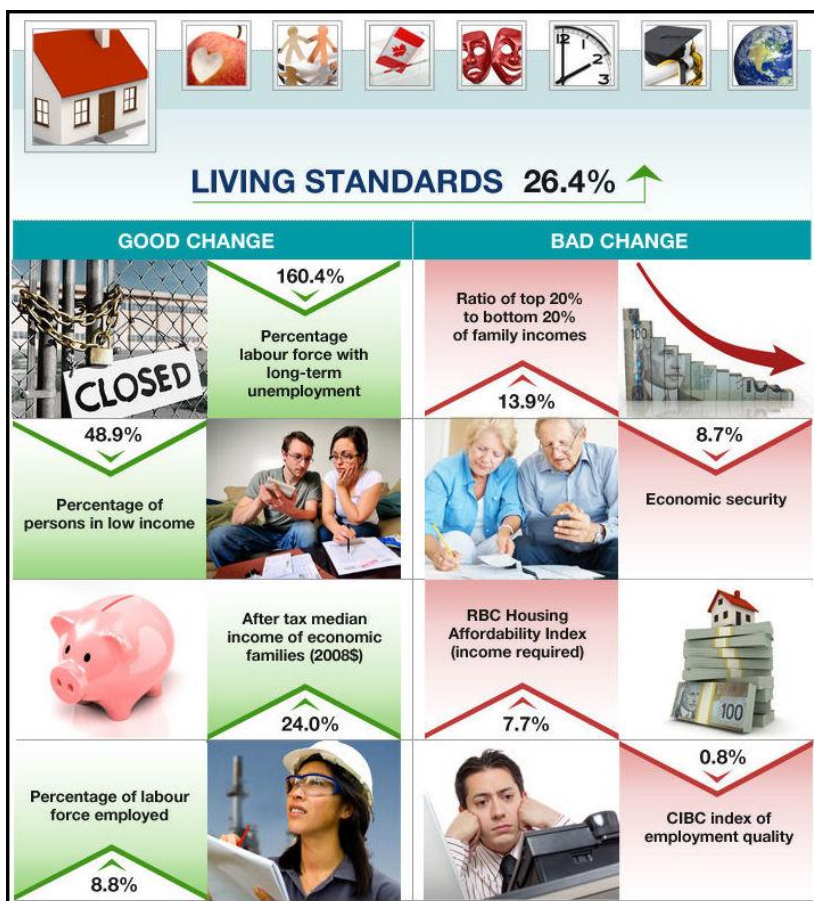
The Living Standards Domain Report looks at trends in living standards at the national level, including: average and median income and wealth, distribution of income and wealth including poverty rates, income fluctuations and volatility, and economic security, including labour market security, food security, housing security and the security provided by the social safety net.

The objective of the Living Standards Domain is to track not only the capacity of the Canadian economy to grow, but more importantly its capacity to transform economic growth into stable current and future income streams for Canadians. Economic growth does not automatically translate into better living standards for all Canadians. A given level of national income, for example, may be obtained at the cost of increased inequality or greater economic insecurity. It may be fuelled by poor quality job creation or fail to achieve basic economic outcomes, such as reducing poverty or providing basic housing to individuals and family.



**Overall Percentage Change in Living Standards Domain
1994 to 2008:**

26.4% ↑



An examination of data covering 1994 to 2008 revealed the following mixed trends regarding the evolution of living standards in Canada:

- ✓ Canadians are on average better off in terms of income and wealth, *but* income and wealth inequality has increased.
- ✓ Some progress has been made in reducing poverty and unemployment, *but* economic security (risk imposed by unemployment, illness, single parent poverty, and poverty in old age) decreased, as did housing affordability.

We were Wealthier on Average

- ✓ The after tax median income of economic families increased 24% from 1994 to 2008.

Inequality Increased – the Rich Got Richer but Most Poor Stayed Poor

- ✓ The ratio of after-tax income of the top 20% of households to the bottom 20% of households rose 13.9%, from 1994 to 2008. It is the top 20% that received the lion’s share of rising income and wealth.
- ✓ There was some progress in the fight on poverty. The poverty rate for all persons was 9.4% in 2008, down from 14% in 1994, a 48.9% decrease over the fifteen year period.
- ✓ The poverty gap – the amount of money by which the average poor family fell short of the poverty line as a proportion of the line – was almost the same in 2009 (33.6 %) as in 1981 (32.8 per cent).



Most Labour Market Conditions Improved, But Job Quality was Down

- ✓ The unemployment rate fell from 17.4% in 1994 to 6.7% in 2008. The proportion of long-term unemployed – those unemployed more than 52 weeks – decreased by 160.4% over the fifteen year period.
- ✓ The employment rate, that is, the ratio of the employed to the working age population, increased by 8.8%. This rate reached 63.5% in 2008, up from 58.4% in 1994 due to the increased participation of women in the labour force.
- ✓ But, job quality, as measured by the CIBC Job Quality Index, peaked in 2001 and then has slowly declined, falling 0.8% from 1994 to 2008.

Economic Security Declined

- ✓ The scaled value of economic security decreased by 8.7% from 1994 to 2008. This decline was driven by the decline in the security from unemployment, and the decline in the security from illness.

Fewer could Afford Home Ownership

- ✓ The RBC housing affordability index increased 7.7% between 1994 and 2008, indicating that it took more income to afford a house.

Conclusion

Many dimensions of the living standards of Canadians did not improve between 1994 and 2008. Indeed, Canadians experienced a widening of income and wealth inequalities. While, there have been notable poverty reductions over the period and increases in the median income of economic families, economic security and the ratio of the top 20% to the bottom 20% of income earners have worsened with time.

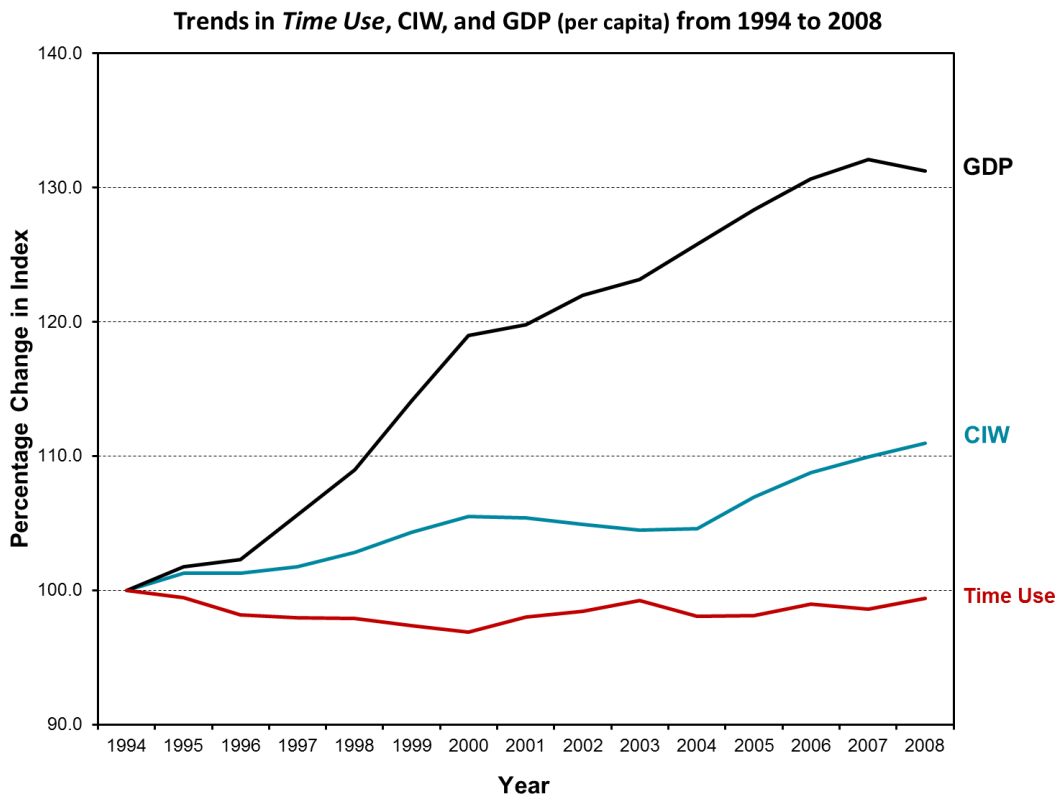


Time Use



The way in which people use and experience time has a significant impact on their wellbeing and that of their community. This includes physical and mental wellbeing, individual and family wellbeing, and present and future wellbeing. The impact may be positive or negative.

The Time Use Domain of the Canadian Index of Wellbeing measures the use of time, how people experience it, what controls its use, and how it affects wellbeing. The implicit assumption is the notion of balance. Most activities are beneficial to wellbeing when done in moderation, but are detrimental when done excessively. Given the finite number of hours in a day, excessive amounts of time directed towards one activity can mean insufficient amounts of time for other activities that are also critical for wellbeing.



**Overall Percentage Change in Time Use Domain
1994 to 2008:**

-0.6% ↓



The following specific trends can be seen:

- ✓ Fewer Canadians are working long hours.
- ✓ More people are feeling caught in a 'time crunch'.
- ✓ More Canadians – especially women – are providing unpaid care to seniors.
- ✓ The percentage of children participating in organized, extra-curricular activities has increased slightly.
- ✓ Adolescents are increasingly exceeding recommended times for TV, video games and computer use.

- ✓ The percentage of parents reading to pre-school children has remained stable.
- ✓ The percentage of retired adults 65 years of age and over engaged in active leisure has declined slightly, but more seniors are volunteering.

Fewer of us are Working Long Hours

- ✓ The proportion of Canadians working more than 50 hours a week declined from a high of 14.7% in 1994 to 12.1% in 2008, for an overall decrease of 21.5% during the fifteen year period.
- ✓ Males (15.8%) were almost three times as likely as females (5.7%) to work long hours in 2009.

More People are Suffering from a 'Time Crunch'

- ✓ The proportion of males and females experiencing high levels of 'time crunch' grew from 16.4% in 1994 to 19.6% in 2008, for an overall increase of 16.3% during the fifteen year period.

- ✓ The most time-crunched group was single individuals with young children. The least was singles 65 and over.
- ✓ A higher proportion of females (22.7%) than males (16.6%) reported time pressure in 2005.

More Adults – Especially Women – are Providing Unpaid Care to Seniors

- ✓ The proportion of working-age adults providing unpaid care to seniors grew from 17.4% in 1994 to 19.5% in 2008, for an overall increase of 10.8% during the fifteen year period.
- ✓ A higher proportion of females (22.5%) than males (16.3%) provided unpaid care to seniors and for more hours per week in 2006.
- ✓ About one in four (27.8%) employed Canadians had responsibilities for the care of an elderly dependent and one in five (16.8%) had responsibility for both childcare and eldercare in 2009. A significant portion (25%) of caregiving to seniors was provided by fellow seniors.

Slight Increase in Children Engaged in Organized, Extracurricular Activities

- ✓ The proportion of children who participated at least weekly in an organized extracurricular activity increased by 9% from 1994 to 2008, from a low of 75.7% to a high of 82.5% of 6 to 9-year-olds taking part in such activities. Gender differences were not significant.

Our Children are Spending More Time on TV and Video Games

- ✓ The proportion of adolescents who exceeded the maximum recommended 2 hours a day on TV and video games rose from 27.2% in 1994 to 31.7% in 2008, for an increase of 14.2% during the fifteen year period.
- ✓ When all screen time (TV, computer use, video games) was included, those who exceeded 2 hours a day jumped from 54.5% to 63.7%, with about 70% of boys and 57% of girls exceeding the 2-hour threshold.

No Significant Increase in Parents Reading to Pre-School Children

- ✓ The proportion of parents who reported reading daily to their pre-school children remains stable at between 60% and 66% (1994 to 2008). Overall there has been an increase of 1.5% over the fifteen year period.



The Numbers of Seniors Engaged in Active Leisure Slightly Declined but More Seniors are Volunteering

- ✓ The proportion of retired seniors engaged in active leisure and their average number of hours declined slightly from 89.7% in 1994 to 85.7% in 2008, for an overall decrease of 4.5% over the fifteen year period. Only minor differences were reported by gender.
- ✓ The percentage of retired seniors participating in formal volunteering activities rose from 31.6% in 1994 to 34.5% in 2008, for an overall increase of 9.2% over the fifteen year period. Only minor differences were reported by gender.

Conclusion

The way in which Canadians spend their time and their perceptions of time have changed dramatically over the last few decades. While individuals make choices, these choices are often shaped and constrained by their economic, health, social, cultural, and family conditions. These include the social environment in which they live, the workplace environment, the local neighbourhood, and the broader society.

The changing nature of work and workplace is forcing more Canadians to choose less than desirable working conditions. The increasing shift in the service sector to a 24 hour/7 day basis – such as banks offering extended hours or grocery stores open 24 hours/day – has been a big contributor to more people working non-standard hours. Today, there are fewer families who have a parent at home to help manage the household, provide childcare and eldercare. Meanwhile, Canada's aging population has also brought with it a larger need for care. These factors have all contributed to the feeling of time crunch.

A number of positive trends were noted among some populations. The fact that a substantial proportion of parents continue to read daily to their pre-schoolers despite women's increased labour force participation and reliance on early childhood education and care, is positive. And, while the proportion of people who volunteer their time to charities or other non-profit organizations tends to decline with age, an increasing number of seniors are actively engaged in volunteering activities, and this is especially the case among those aged 65 to 74.





4.0 Connecting the Dots: From Research to Policy

One of the key goals of the CIW is to connect the dots among the many factors that influence wellbeing. The intention is to go beyond the traditional “silo approach” that has too often shaped public policy decisions, toward more comprehensive solutions. It is only by understanding how a variety of factors combine and interact that policy shapers and decision makers can bring forward policies and programs that meet the challenges of the 21st century.

The CIW differs from other conventional “wellbeing” indices because it captures a broad range of indicators from diverse areas that reflect our everyday lives. Since the index is broad in focus and its domains are interrelated, we can consider multiple aspects of wellbeing when analyzing policy options.

For example, a healthier population will lessen the pressure on resources dedicated to health care treatment, allowing funds to flow to other areas of wellbeing that matter to Canadians, such as education. A more educated workforce increases our innovative capacity, making us more productive and prosperous. A wealthier economy can afford more robust social programs and cultural activities for all residents whose health outcomes, in turn, benefit from enjoying closer ties to their communities. A more sustainable environment can protect jobs and exports, produce nutritious foods and offer myriad activities for leisure, recreation and quality family time. An ongoing cycle can begin with improved health and clearly demonstrates the overlap between indicators.

It is clear that despite the availability of universal health care services, with which a large majority of Canadians are satisfied, persistent health gaps continue to exist among different social groups. This suggests that while improvements in the various provincial health-care systems may be badly needed and highly desirable, they alone will not eliminate or significantly reduce these disparities.

Many socio-economic conditions greatly influence health. These conditions have been shaped both by private economic practices (i.e., “the market”) and by public policies (i.e., regulations, taxes, transfers). Delivering better health outcomes for Canadians will require activity in both of these areas. The effects of these conditions on health can be further mitigated by government programs and services, and by belonging to a cohesive and inclusive community.

There is, in short, a need for both public policy interventions tailored to socially excluded groups, as well as initiatives outside the health field, including poverty reduction measures such as a living wage, affordable housing, food security, early learning initiatives, and more available, affordable childcare. The challenge to Canadian policy shapers and decision makers is to take this knowledge and use it to produce more comprehensive policies that will improve the lives of all Canadians. We have taken the liberty of starting the discussion by offering some progressive policy solutions where the CIW can inform *Ideas for Positive Change*.



4.1 Ideas for Positive Change

Reduce income inequality

The consequences of growing inequality do not end in the Living Standards domain. Income inequality causes larger gaps between the educational attainment of the rich and poor, their health outcomes and access to leisure and cultural activities. In the long run, a larger divide between income earners at the top and bottom may cause the wealthy to become reluctant to contribute to public programs that our communities depend on. This is very destructive to our society and long term prosperity.

Nobel laureate Joseph Stiglitz calls growing inequality the flip side of shrinking opportunity. Meaning, we are not using the talents of some of our people in the most productive way and as a result preventing ourselves from reaching our full potential. Therefore if we are serious about enjoying higher living standards in the future, we must recognize the perils of growing inequality and move towards becoming a rich and fair country.

Enhance intergovernmental cooperation to achieve equity, efficiency, and effectiveness in opportunities for health

By implementing greater intergovernmental efforts in benchmarking, streamlining, and coordinating health programming and targets, we will enhance equity, efficiency, and effectiveness across regions and populations. Also, by working together, governments can implement public policies that have a positive effect on the distribution of opportunities for health by addressing the social determinants of wellbeing. Finally, jurisdictional disputes causing inequitable access to education and health care services by Aboriginal peoples living on reserves can be mitigated by greater intergovernmental cooperation.

Deploy technology more effectively

Better use of technology can enhance democratic engagement. The Internet is a powerful tool: it can provide a forum for citizens to debate the issues of the day, enhance civic literacy, and permit government to interact more meaningfully with the electorate. The Internet is particularly useful for engaging and educating younger Canadians, and politicians and government have only begun to tap its potential. Technology can also help narrow the gap between belief in the importance of voting and the actual act of voting: options include online voter registration, making information about polling locations and hours more accessible, and enabling full online voting.



Provide leisure and culture activities to all income groups

To improve our collective quality of life, we must ensure that all citizens, regardless of socioeconomic status, have access to opportunities to include leisure and culture in their lives. This is especially critical as governments at all levels face the challenges of fiscal constraints and often consider eliminating what they erroneously regard as “unessential” services and programs. The CIW has established that Leisure and Culture, as well as other domains, are in fact crucial to our wellbeing and their performance has long term implications for the quality of our lives. Growing inequality, fraying social safety nets, and cuts to social programs will make it increasingly difficult for many citizens, and especially marginalized groups, to take part in leisure and cultural activities. This is a troubling trend that can have detrimental consequences to our individual and community wellbeing.

Coordinate National Early Childhood Education (ECE) programming

Canada would benefit from a Federal-Provincial-Territorial ECE program. Coordinated programming could lead to medium- and long-run benefits by reducing pressures on the health care system, enhancing school readiness, and ultimately leading to better academic success.⁶ Comprehensive, coordinated early child care, education, and family support policies have been shown to have positive effects on education and health outcomes across the entire socioeconomic spectrum in a society.⁷ For example, comprehensive parental leave policies allow parents to care for their children without sacrificing or jeopardizing their employment opportunities. Also, ECE programming supports gender equity by offering mothers an equal opportunity to pursue full-time work, thereby actively building on their human capital and full engagement in the workforce. In addition, more comprehensive family policies help to reduce childhood poverty, which remains a great challenge in Canadian society (e.g., in BC, childhood poverty is at about 20%).⁸ In combination, comprehensive early childcare, education, and family policies will encourage the cultivation of human capital by developing a stronger and more equitable playing field in the formative years of children’s development, and better preparing our future workforce.

Reduce our dependence on non-renewable energy reserves

As a policy matter, we must balance immediate energy needs and economic benefits against future wellbeing. We need to find ways to maintain high levels of energy production while also

⁶ Evans et al. “Improving Health Outcomes in Canada.”

⁷ Heymann, J., Hertzman, C., Barer, M. L., & Evans, R. G. (Eds.). (2006). *Healthier societies: From analysis to action*. New York: Oxford University Press.

⁸ CCSD. (2004). Data from the Canadian Council on Social Development. Retrieved on February 15, 2008, from http://www.ccsd.ca/factsheets/economic_security/poverty/index.htm

decreasing our greenhouse gas emissions. Using revenues from fossil fuels to invest in more sustainable forms of energy (such as wind, solar, tidal and biomass) is one option, while shifting energy demand (through policies such as carbon taxes or other subsidies) helps drive investment that decouples energy production from greenhouse gas emissions.⁹

Strengthen institutional capacity – from data to policy enforcement

In many areas, there is insufficient capacity. Beginning with limited data, these capacity gaps hinder efforts to paint a complete picture of our wellbeing. While Canada collects an abundance of economic data, social and environmental data is poor in comparison. We must prioritise the regular collection and publication of high-quality data sufficient to inform policymaking and hold violators accountable by enforcing the good policy that is in place in many areas.

4.2 Conclusion

The CIW promotes constructive and informative dialogue that can lead to positive societal change. With the CIW, we can choose to stop and question the status quo and consider alternative ways to promote both a higher quality of life for all Canadians and a healthy economy.

The CIW is therefore a valuable tool for informing policy change. Continued success will result from our policy shapers and decision makers understanding the complex nature of wellbeing and its relation to our economy. We will not make sustainable improvements to our quality of life if we only aim for economic progress and hope these gains will result in social progress. The interrelated nature of the CIW domains requires the cooperation of policymakers and the coordination of strategies to achieve the best outcomes for all Canadians.

⁹ Morgan, A. (2011). *Environment*. CIW Domain Report. Waterloo, ON: Canadian Index of Wellbeing and the University of Waterloo.



5.0 How to Use the CIW

5.1 A First Community User – Barrie-Simcoe

Barrie, Ontario, is a rapidly growing community of about 200,000 roughly an hour north of Toronto. A key concern is how to manage growth in a way that preserves and improves the values and quality of life in the community.

The Barrie Community Health Centre (BCHC) created the first local CIW group in Canada. They brought together a number of important organizations, including the county government, the United Way, the local community college, the public health unit, an environment network, and the school board. They call themselves *The Resilience Collaborative*. Their main goal is to reach out and engage large segments of the population that might not otherwise be involved in the decisions that shape their lives.

Whenever the CIW produces a national report on a specific wellbeing domain, the *Collaborative* piggy-backs its own report onto it that compares regional data to the national data and makes suggestions for local policy changes. So, for example, when the CIW released the Environment Domain Report in April 2011, the *Collaborative* released its own report the same day. Their effort was made possible by the Simcoe County government which provided a researcher who helped assemble and analyze all of the relevant regional data.

The report was followed with several presentations about the reports to local citizen groups by the Chair of the *Resilience Collaborative*, Gary Machan. “At the end of the day what really matters is not so much the information, as much as it’s a case of what you do with it,” Machan said. “And it is here that the involvement of the civic sector becomes absolutely imperative. I try to tap into the specific areas that people feel passionate about in our community. In Simcoe there is a great deal of interest in building more sustainable food systems, hence, we are working with a variety of stakeholders in crafting local food procurement policies both at the municipal and institutional levels.”

The BCHC also incorporated a number of questions taken from the each of the domains of the CIW into their process for signing on new clients. They ask people about their income and education levels, access to friends and family, access to nutritious food, and their levels of time stress. Added Machan, “Not only does this provide us with a far better profile of who it is that uses our services, to which we in turn can be more responsive, but we are also finding that the very act of asking the questions performs a valuable educational function in terms of helping people connect the dots between their health and the determinants of health.”



5.2 Other Ideas

The possibilities are endless. The CIW was designed to collect data at the national level to help refocus dialogue on broad societal issues. But don't let lack of data at the regional, provincial, or local level stop you. Our Barrie-Simcoe group is proof that you can accomplish all sorts of things, by just using the framework to bring the right people around the table to refocus dialogue on your particular issue.

Imagine...

Private Sector

- **design** a corporate HR plan to embrace elements from all eight categories of the CIW: create modules on money management, philanthropy, time management, and civics; start a subsidized onsite daycare; make it a policy to hire full-time employees (i.e., salaries with benefits); have a generous flex-time policy; subsidize public transportation to work (i.e., carpool, bus passes); encourage professional development; and only offer healthy food at work.

Public Sector

- **start** your own local CIW Group to bring together a cross-sectoral group of people who might not normally collaborate, and tackle a complex issue in your community.

Individuals

- **create** a personal development checklist for yourself or your family: take a course on how to plan for retirement; join your local community centre yoga class for stress release and to meet people; read to your children; eat simple homemade meals as a family; make time for long brisk walks; volunteer your time to a cause you care about; reduce your ecological footprint; go to a free concert in a park; turn off your smartphone when you leave the office.

Everyone

- **talk** about the CIW with your local MP, MPP, or Councillor as a tool to inform policy development.
- **chat** about the CIW with your colleagues, friends, and family to improve your workplace or personal life.

Now that the CIW is available online at www.ciw.ca, we challenge you to **Start the Conversation.**



6.0 What's Next for the CIW?

With the release of the first CIW composite index, there are a number of areas where we intend to expand our efforts in the coming years. These include:

CIW Updates

Our hope is to update the CIW on an annual basis. However, the frequency and timeliness of data is the key determinant for regular updates and varies for each domain. This means that certain domains can be updated and released more frequently than others. For example, data sources for the Living Standards domain are the most frequently released and up-to-date. Principal statistics for health, education, crime and the environment are available on regular basis and can be factored into annual estimates. In contrast, the data required to update indicators in other domains are less frequently available. These include the Time Use, Community Vitality, Leisure and Culture, and Democratic Engagement domains where data come from both public and private sources that are not necessarily collected on an annual basis. Nevertheless, well-established statistical techniques for data interpolation and extrapolation can be used to fill data gaps as a means of maintaining and updating headline indicators where regular and timely data are not available.

In-Depth Research Studies

One of the basic starting points for designing the CIW was the recognition that society, the economy, and the environment are interdependent. A number of interconnected indicators were identified in the domain reports, but these connections can be explored more deeply through theme studies. There is scope for research to expand on weaving together the eight CIW domains to gain a more in-depth understanding of the inter-relationships among wellbeing measures. In addition, there is opportunity to explore how different sub-populations within Canada, such as youth, older adults, lower income groups, racialized groups, and Aboriginal Peoples fare on various indicators of wellbeing relative to the rest of the population.

Focusing on Geographic Regions

The initial priority of the CIW was to establish a solid framework and to examine the wellbeing of Canadians at the *national* level. However, the framework and many of the indicators of the national CIW domains lend themselves to be applied in studies of wellbeing at the provincial, regional, and community levels. Many of the datasets that provide data at the national level can be disaggregated to different geographic regions within Canada. This would create opportunities for geographic extensions of the CIW, albeit with some limitations due to sampling reliability and data confidentiality. Sub-national estimates may also be restricted due to less frequent updating.



Knowledge Mobilization

With the release of the full composite index, one of the CIW's top priorities will be to ensure that knowledge generated through the activities of the CIW is translated and transferred to the public in an accessible fashion, is capable of adoption by communities and groups committed to social change, and contributes to real change through public engagement and policy development. Ultimately, *knowledge mobilization* stimulated by the release of the CIW and its foundational research can bring about the social and political changes that will enhance the wellbeing of all Canadians.

For More Information

To find out more about the Canadian Index of Wellbeing, please go to www.ciw.ca or e-mail info@ciw.ca.

Based in the Faculty of Applied Health Sciences at the University of Waterloo, the Canadian Index of Wellbeing Network is an independent, non-partisan group of national and international leaders, researchers, organizations, and grassroots Canadians. Its mission is to report on quality of life at the national level and promote a dialogue on how to improve it through evidence-based policies that are responsive to the needs and values of Canadians.

The Network's signature product is the Canadian Index of Wellbeing (CIW). The CIW measures Canada's quality of life and tracks progress in eight interconnected categories. It allows us, as Canadians, to see if we are better off or worse off than we used to be — and why. It helps identify what we need to change to achieve a better outcome and to leave the world a better place for the generations that follow.

The Honourable Roy J. Romanow, Chair
The Honourable Monique Bégin, Deputy Chair



WATERLOO
APPLIED HEALTH
SCIENCES

CANADIAN
index
OF WELLBEING