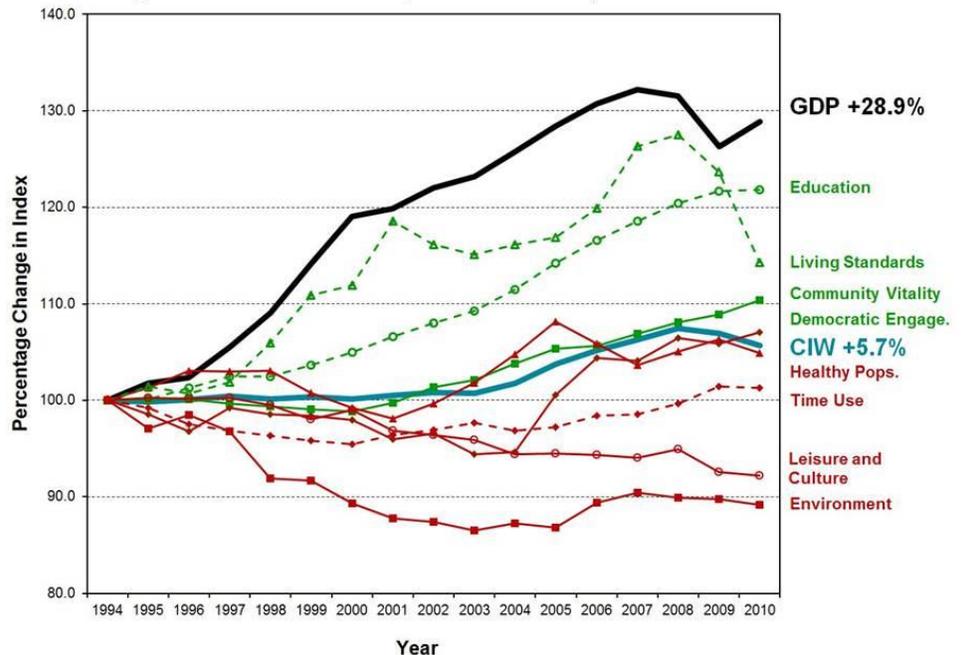


Why Canada Needs the Canadian Index of Wellbeing (CIW)

We use economic indicators, especially Gross Domestic Product (GDP), to track Canada's progress over time. A purely economic lens does not, however, capture how well we are really doing in our lives. ***Are communities in Canada thriving? Is the economy growing at the cost of the environment, our health, and education?*** The **Canadian Index of Wellbeing (CIW)** paints a broader picture of the things that matter to Canadians to provide a more realistic view of how the quality of our lives is changing.

The CIW monitors 64 indicators from eight interconnected domains that are central to our everyday lives – *Community Vitality, Democratic Engagement, Education, Environment, Healthy Populations, Leisure and Culture, Living Standards, and Time Use*. Focusing attention on these domains reminds us that a healthier population will take pressure off those resources dedicated to health care treatment, allowing funds to flow to other policy areas that promote long-term wellbeing such as education, leisure and cultural pursuits, and environmental sustainability. As Angel Gurría, Secretary General of the OECD, recently stated, “We need to rethink how to place people’s needs at the heart of policymaking”. The CIW is positioned to do precisely that.

Trends in the Canadian Index of Wellbeing (CIW) with Eight Domains and Compared with GDP, 1994-2010



Since 1994, GDP has been rising steadily faster than the CIW. Our wellbeing consistently lags behind measures of economic productivity and demonstrates what we already know: a good life is not just about our economy. As the central measure of what we call “productivity”, GDP is guiding economic and social policies, but it does not necessarily result in us becoming better off as a nation. Over time, our economic performance is clearly outpacing the things that *really* matter to our wellbeing. This is at the very heart of the concerns over growing inequality where some of us do extremely well while most of us fare less well.

GDP is not a bad measure. However, with the CIW growing much more slowly than GDP, the value of *measuring what matters* to Canadians becomes even more critical. By understanding the complex nature of wellbeing, Canadians can choose to question the status quo and consider alternate ways to promote both a higher wellbeing status for *all* Canadians and a healthy economy.

The CIW offers a range of detailed research reports and user-friendly materials at www.ciw.ca. For more information, please contact: **Dr. Bryan Smale, Director, Canadian Index of Wellbeing**, at smale@uwaterloo.ca or **Linda McKessock, Project Manager**, at ciwlinda@uwaterloo.ca.

The Canadian Index of Wellbeing (CIW) Framework

The Canadian Index of Wellbeing (CIW) Network is a national initiative supported by an independent, non-partisan group of national and international leaders, researchers, organizations, and grassroots citizens who are developing a new way of measuring wellbeing in Canada. The CIW Network is based at the University of Waterloo within the Faculty of Applied Health Sciences and is seen to be a global pioneer in developing a holistic and integrated approach to measuring wellbeing.

The CIW goes beyond narrow economic measures like GDP and provides the *only* national index that measures wellbeing across a wide spectrum of domains. The eight domains comprising the CIW have been defined to capture those essential aspects that contribute to the wellbeing of Canadians. Drawing on primary data from Statistics Canada and several other credible sources, the CIW uses 64 separate headline indicators within eight interconnected domains central to the lives of Canadians:



- ✓ **COMMUNITY VITALITY** measures the strength, activity and inclusiveness of relationships between residents, private sector, public sector and civil society organizations that fosters individual and collective wellbeing.
- ✓ **DEMOCRATIC ENGAGEMENT** measures the participation of citizens in public life and in governance; the functioning of Canadian governments; and the role Canadians and their institutions play as global citizens.
- ✓ **EDUCATION** measures the literacy and skill levels of the population, including the ability of both children and adults to function in various contexts and plan for and adapt to future situations.
- ✓ **ENVIRONMENT** measures the state of and the trends in Canada's environment by looking at the stocks and flows of Canada's environmental goods and services.
- ✓ **HEALTHY POPULATIONS** measures the physical, mental, and social wellbeing of the population by looking at different aspects of health status and certain determinants of health.
- ✓ **LEISURE AND CULTURE** measures activity in the very broad area of culture, which involves all forms of human expression; the more focused area of the arts; and recreational activities.
- ✓ **LIVING STANDARDS** measures the level and distribution of income and wealth, including trends in poverty; income volatility; and economic security, including the security of jobs, food, housing and the social safety net.
- ✓ **TIME USE** measures the use of time, how people experience time, what controls its use, and how it affects wellbeing.