

i CANADIAN
Index
OF WELLBEING

Measuring what matters
Making measures matter



HOW ARE CANADIANS *REALLY* DOING?

THE 2016 CIW NATIONAL REPORT



UNIVERSITY OF WATERLOO
FACULTY OF APPLIED HEALTH SCIENCES

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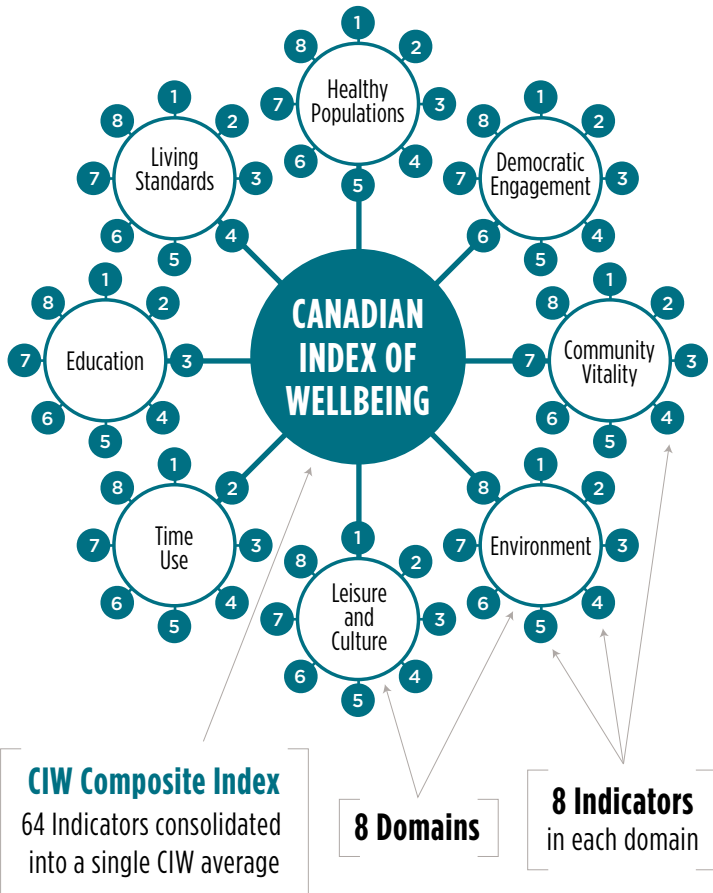




EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

THE GAP BETWEEN ECONOMIC GROWTH AND WELLBEING IS WIDENING

There is a *feeling* that all is not well in Canada. But it's more than a feeling; it's a fact. When we compare trends in the wellbeing of Canadians to economic growth in the period from 1994 to 2014, the gap between GDP and our wellbeing is massive and it's growing. When Canadians go to bed at night, they are not worried about GDP. They are worried about stringing together enough hours of part-time jobs, rising tuition fees, and affordable housing. They are thinking about the last time they got together with friends or the next time they can take a vacation. Maybe that's why we are getting less sleep than 21 years ago.



WE NEED TO FOCUS ON WHAT IS MEANINGFUL TO CANADIANS

For more than 10 years, the Canadian Index of Wellbeing (CIW), based at the University of Waterloo, has provided comprehensive analyses of how we are really doing in the areas of our lives that matter most. It draws from almost 200 reliable data sources, primarily from Statistics Canada, that provide 64 indicators representing eight interconnected domains of vital importance to our quality of life. The CIW framework is the result of broad consultations with Canadians from across the country as well as with national and international experts. It is rooted in Canadian values and reflects what really matters in our lives.

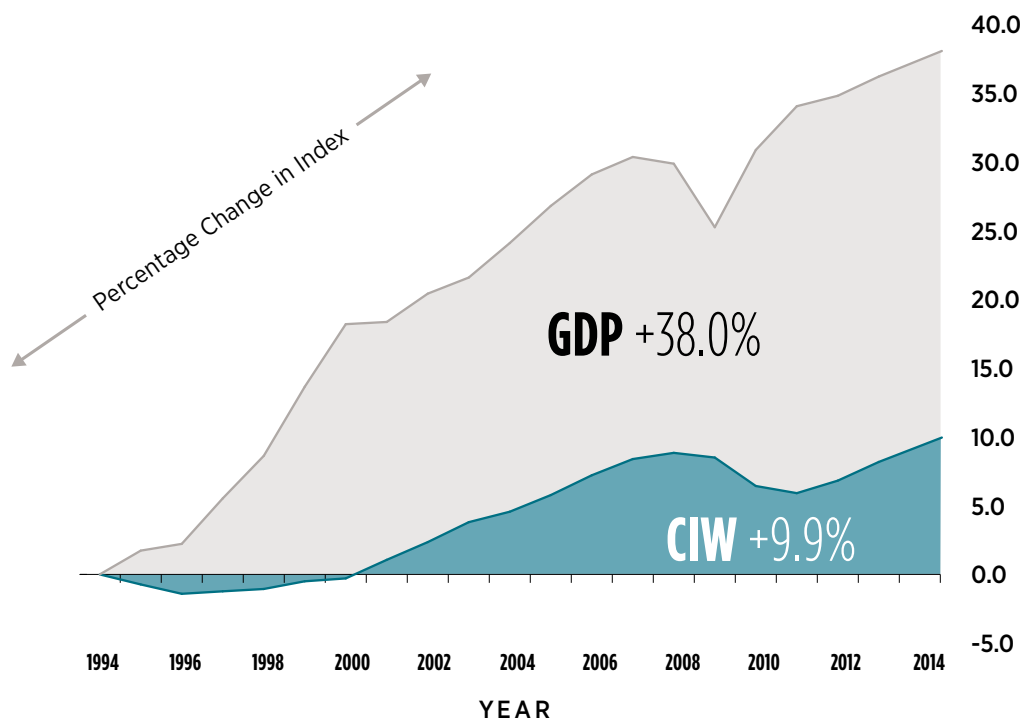
The CIW takes a systems approach and identifies key leverage points that have a positive impact on our wellbeing across several domains – Community Vitality, Democratic Engagement, Education, Environment, Healthy Populations, Leisure and Culture, Living Standards, and Time Use. When we tackle challenges in one part of the system, the improvements can translate across a number of domains and to overall wellbeing.

In this 2016 CIW report, we describe how well Canadians are really doing based on trends in all domains from 1994 to 2014.

AFTER 2008, THE ECONOMY RECOVERED, BUT THE WELLBEING GAP GREW

Despite faltering briefly after the 2008 recession, the economy has since recovered based on GDP. The wellbeing of Canadians took a significant step backwards, however, and has only begun to recover. From 1994 to 2014, GDP grew by 38.0%; yet, our wellbeing rose by only 9.9%. In fact, the gap between the growth in per capita GDP and Canadians' wellbeing is even wider than during the period immediately before the recession. In 2007, the gap between GDP and the CIW was 22.0%. By 2010, the gap had risen to 24.5%, and by 2014, it had jumped to 28.1%.

Trends in the Canadian Index of Wellbeing and GDP (per capita) from 1994 to 2014



The wellbeing of Canadians has suffered in some areas more so than others. We are losing valuable time in Leisure and Culture. We are feeling the time crunch as much as ever, and despite improvements in the overall health of the population, there are troubling indicators that all is not well. On the upside, Education shows positive signs, our Community Vitality is better, and Engagement in our Democratic process has improved. However, the upward trends in these domains of our lives have not helped Canadians' wellbeing keep pace with the recovery of the economy.

THE RECESSION HAMMERED OUR LIVING STANDARDS

Like the economy, Living Standards were on a good trajectory in Canada, increasing 25% until the recession in 2008. Immediately after 2008, they dropped almost 11%. Since the recession, work is more precarious as all of the gains made in curbing long-term unemployment and securing full-time employment prior to 2008 were lost. Despite a 30% increase in median family incomes and a decrease in those living in poverty, income inequality is growing. And more Canadians are struggling with the cost of and access to quality food and to housing. As Canadians face these concerns on a daily basis, the impacts on other aspects of their lives become even more pronounced.

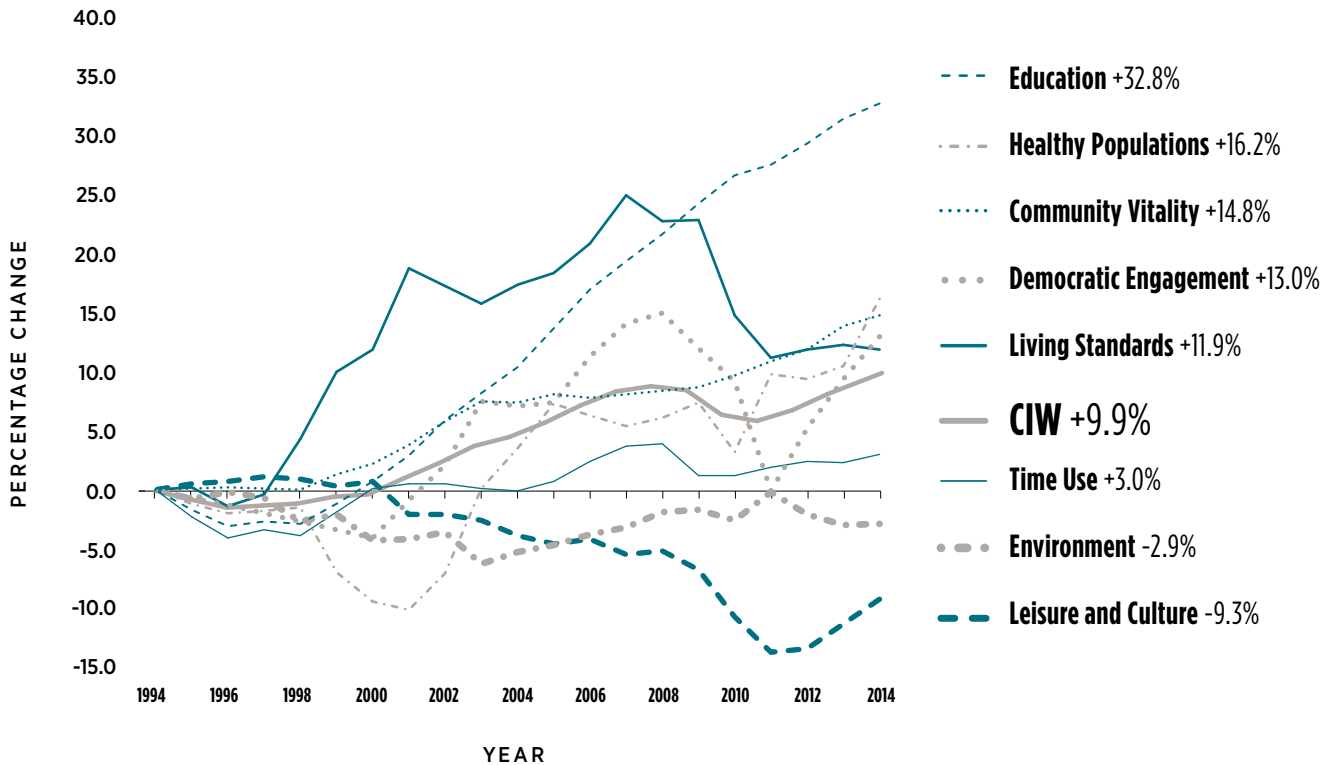
LEISURE AND CULTURE DROPPED MORE THAN 9% ...

At the same time, Canadians sacrificed the things that often make life worthwhile: leisure, arts and culture, volunteering, and vacation. From 1994 to 2014, the Leisure and Culture domain saw an overall decline of more than 9%. Six of its eight indicators are down. Canadians are spending less time engaged in the arts, culture, and social leisure. Time spent volunteering for culture and recreation organizations is down almost 30% and we are spending fewer nights away on vacation. While the frequency of physical activity is increasing and there are encouraging signs that Canadians are again attending the performing arts and visiting national parks and historic sites, in 2014 household spending on recreation, culture, and sport was at its lowest point over the entire 21-year period.

... AND WE CONTINUE TO FEEL THE TIME CRUNCH

The recession did not change how many hours there are in a day; but it did change how we use that time. Despite a 3.0% gain in the Time Use domain, Canadians are struggling with time crunch. We see it across all domains, in how we spend our leisure time, in how much we talk to our kids, our engagement in adult education, and our involvement in the community.

Trends in the Canadian Index of Wellbeing and its Eight Domains, 1994 to 2014



Time Use indicators show we are spending almost 30% less time with our friends. Our commute times to work are longer and only 35% of us are getting enough sleep — down from 44% in 1994. Gains in the domain come from fewer people working more than 50 hours each week and more people with flexible work hours. At the same time, work is more precarious. One in 20 people work less than 30 hours per week, and not by choice. One in three workers do not have regular, weekday work hours, up from one in four in 1994. And while the percentage of people reporting high levels of time pressure has declined somewhat since the peak of the late 1990s, overall, the numbers have returned to 1994 levels.

EDUCATION IS THE ONLY DOMAIN TO KEEP PACE WITH THE ECONOMY

The Education domain, which encompasses learning from early years throughout adulthood, largely kept pace with GDP for an overall increase of 32.8% between 1994 and 2014. Six of its eight indicators show progress including improvements in the ratio of students to educators, 15% higher per capita investment in elementary school students and greater participation in adult education. Nine out of 10 students now complete high school and almost one in three Canadians (28%) holds a university degree — up from 17% in 1994. However, tuition fees nearly tripled in the same period. The percentage of children with access to regulated centre-based child care space has more than doubled since 1994, but this increase still only provides one in four children with access — and then only if a family can afford the fees.

COMMUNITY VITALITY SHOWS CANADIANS PULLING TOGETHER ...

Overall, the almost 15% increase in Community Vitality shows that Canadians pull together and feel they belong. Two out of three people have a strong sense of community belonging — an important factor contributing to both individual and community wellbeing. The Crime Severity Index is down substantially from 1994. People feel safer in their neighbourhoods and are experiencing less discrimination. More people provide unpaid help to others — peaking at 84% in 2007 — but still up 8.4% overall since 1994. While both the percentage of the population with five or more close friends and general trust levels hit their lowest points in 2008, both have been rising steadily since. What has not recovered is the percentage of the population engaged in formal volunteering for organizations. Volunteering rose by 15% from 1994 to 2008 to reach a high of 65%. Over the next six years, all of the gains of the previous years were lost and volunteering has ended up almost exactly where it was in 1994. Whatever the root cause — concerns over work or increased time pressure — Canadians' commitment to volunteering appears to be another victim of the recession.

... BUT WE ARE AMBIVALENT ABOUT DEMOCRATIC ENGAGEMENT

A thriving democracy relies on trust, confidence, and participation in our institutions. We are seeing real challenges in those areas, even though voter turnout has increased in recent years and younger voters are increasingly engaged. The Democratic Engagement domain rose by 15% from 1994 to 2008, but collapsed until 2011 when it began to return to previous levels. Overall, Canadians seem ambivalent about their democracy. By 2014, barely one-third expressed confidence in federal Parliament — down by 14% since 2003. Fewer people are

satisfied with the way democracy is working in Canada — down 5% since 2008. Fewer than 2% of Canadians volunteer for political or advocacy organizations. The ratio of registered to eligible voters is down. Despite gender equity in the current Cabinet, women remain significantly under-represented in Parliament. If we are to see real change in the country, Canadians need to feel that their voices and participation matter in the democratic process, and in more ways than just voting.

THERE ARE MIXED RESULTS FOR HEALTHY POPULATIONS ...

Results in the Healthy Populations domain also are mixed. Up by 16.2% overall, the domain points to longer life-expectancy, a steep decline in teen smoking — especially among girls — slightly better ratings for mental health and modest gains in flu shot rates. Unfortunately, the positive results mask important contradictions. Canadians are not rating their overall health as positively as before. Diabetes rates have gone up by two and half times to affect 6.7% of the population by 2014. More than one in five people have a health or activity limitation, and access to a family doctor is down slightly. People in low income have been most affected by the inconsistent trends in this domain over the past two decades. Achieving good health is an important goal to strive for in order for Canadians to enjoy full participation in school, work, family, and community.






... AND THE ENVIRONMENT IS FLATLINING

From 1994 to 2014 the Environment domain declined by 2.9% overall. With 21 years to take on the most urgent issue on the planet — the planet itself — the results are disheartening. Our environmental footprint, the fourth-largest in the world, remains massive and unchanged. Greenhouse gas emissions are up. Smog levels and freshwater yields have remained essentially the same. The amount of farmland is shrinking, although production is up on larger, consolidated farms. The few improvements in the domain were largely due to reduced fossil fuel production following the recession. Individual Canadians are doing their part, reducing residential energy use by 20%, but much more progress needs to come from those industries that generate 60% of emissions. We have seen decisive government leadership recently on tackling climate change, and must demand ongoing action on the part of industry, governments, and individuals.

THE CIW OFFERS NEW POLICY DIRECTIONS

The single-minded pursuit of economic growth has largely defined public policy in Canada over the past several decades. Yet, while Canada can boast being one of the most prosperous countries in the world and having avoided the worst of the economic impacts of the 2008 recession, we cannot boast that the wellbeing of Canadians has kept pace.

By recognizing that wellbeing is based on an interconnected system of domains critical to Canadians' quality of life, the CIW provides a process for the advancement of influential policy directions. A central theme emerging from the findings of this report is the need to close the growing inequality gap for all Canadians. Innovative and integrated policy directions that must be considered include:

-  a universal basic income that is embedded within the social safety net — a companion to successful programs supporting children and older adults
-  a Pan-Canadian education strategy to create more, accessible opportunities for Canadians throughout life
-  adoption of an “upstream” perspective on health promotion
-  fostering inter-sectoral collaboration within communities to leverage resources and facilitate citizen engagement and cooperation
-  universal access to leisure, arts, culture, sport, parks, and recreation to enrich lives.

Some of the policies are not new. However, the case for them extends beyond single solutions and recognizes the multitude of ways that they can enhance the wellbeing of Canadians. By placing wellbeing at the heart of policy, we see the possibilities that a universal basic income can provide beyond lifting people out of poverty. It creates opportunity. It provides people with choice. It enriches their lives and their family's lives beyond paying the bills.

In early 1904, Sir Wilfrid Laurier expressed the optimistic view, “... I think we can claim that Canada will fill the twentieth century.” As we look to Canada's next 150 years, by putting wellbeing at the heart of public policy, the 21st century could, in fact, be Canada's.



WHAT IS WELLBEING?

There are many definitions of wellbeing. The Canadian Index of Wellbeing 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.

WHY WE NEED THE CANADIAN INDEX OF WELLBEING (CIW)

In 1930, in an essay entitled *Economic possibilities for our grandchildren*, economist John Maynard Keynes predicted that in a century's time, Gross Domestic Product (GDP) would be four to eight times greater and by 2010 the average workweek would be 15 hours¹. The great challenge would be to fill up people's leisure time with meaningful activities.

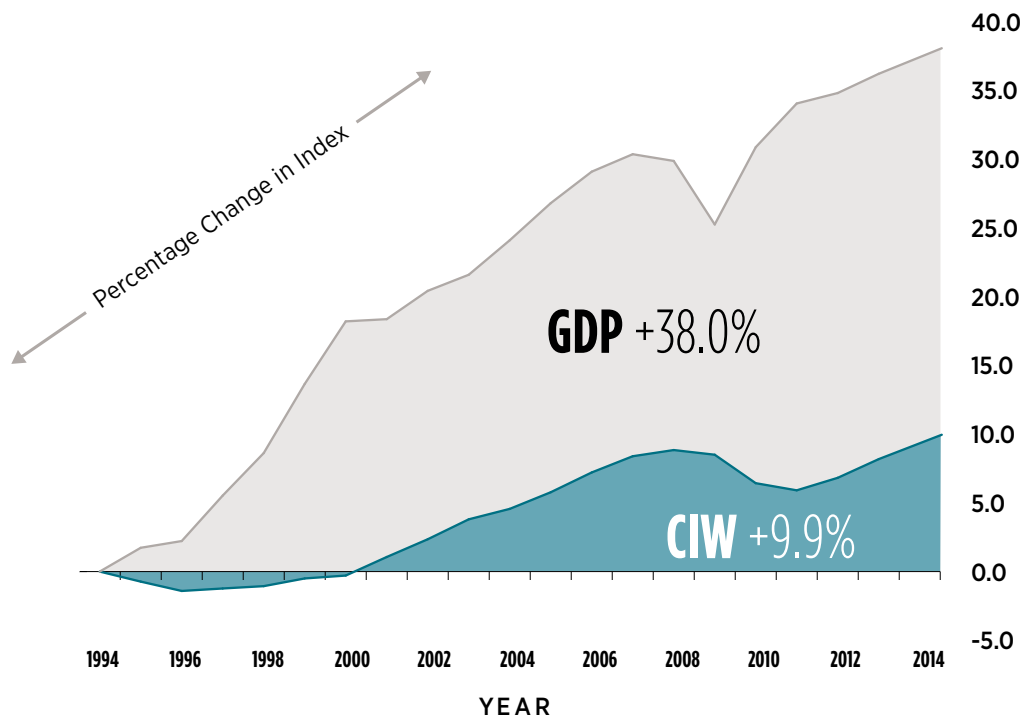
While the first half of Keynes's prediction has come true, the corresponding quality of life improvement has never come close. As the figure below clearly indicates, GDP per capita in Canada has been rising much faster than wellbeing as measured by the CIW. In the 21-year period from 1994 to 2014, GDP grew by 38.0% while the Canadian Index of Wellbeing (CIW) rose by only 9.9% (see Figure 1). Up to the recession of 2008, GDP grew by 29.9% and the CIW by 8.8%. Since the recession, GDP, after faltering, has grown by another 8.1% whereas our wellbeing has grown by barely 1.1%. The gap between these measures reveals a deeper issue: GDP alone cannot measure how well our population is faring as a whole².

1. Keynes, J.M. (1930/1963). *Economic possibilities for our grandchildren*. In J.M. Keynes, *Essays in persuasion* (pp. 358-374) London: Macmillan.

2. For a description of GDP, as well as some of the myths surrounding it, see Appendix A.

Increasingly, citizens and their government are thinking “beyond GDP” as a measure of our progress and quality of life. Even though GDP is an important measure of our economic performance, it does not capture those areas of our lives that we care about most, like education, health, the environment, and the relationships we have with others. GDP also is not sensitive to the costs of economic growth such as environmental degradation, loss of farmland, or growing income inequality.

Figure 1. Trends in the Canadian Index of Wellbeing and GDP (per capita) from 1994 to 2014




CORE VALUES AND DOMAINS IDENTIFIED BY CANADIANS

Since its inception in 1999 and throughout the development of the CIW, the process has been designed to ensure everyday Canadians hear their own voices and see themselves reflected in the measure.

The CIW was created through the combined efforts of national leaders and organizations, community groups, research experts, indicator users, and importantly, the Canadian public. Through three rounds of public consultations, everyday Canadians across the country candidly expressed what really matters to their wellbeing. The process culminated in the identification of core Canadian values and eight domains of life that contribute to and affect the wellbeing of Canadians: Community Vitality, Democratic Engagement, Education, Environment, Healthy Populations, Leisure and Culture, Living Standards, and Time Use (see Figure 2). This framework shifts the focus solely from the economy to what matters most to Canadians.

- 
COMMUNITY VITALITY means vital communities that have strong, active, and inclusive relationships among people, private, public, and non-governmental organizations that foster individual and collective wellbeing.

- 
DEMOCRATIC ENGAGEMENT means being involved in advancing democracy through political institutions, organizations, and activities.

- 
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 adulthood.

- 
ENVIRONMENT is the foundation upon which human societies are built and the source of our sustained wellbeing. On a broader level, environmental protection involves the prevention of waste and damage while revitalizing our ecosystems and working towards the sustainability of all our resources.

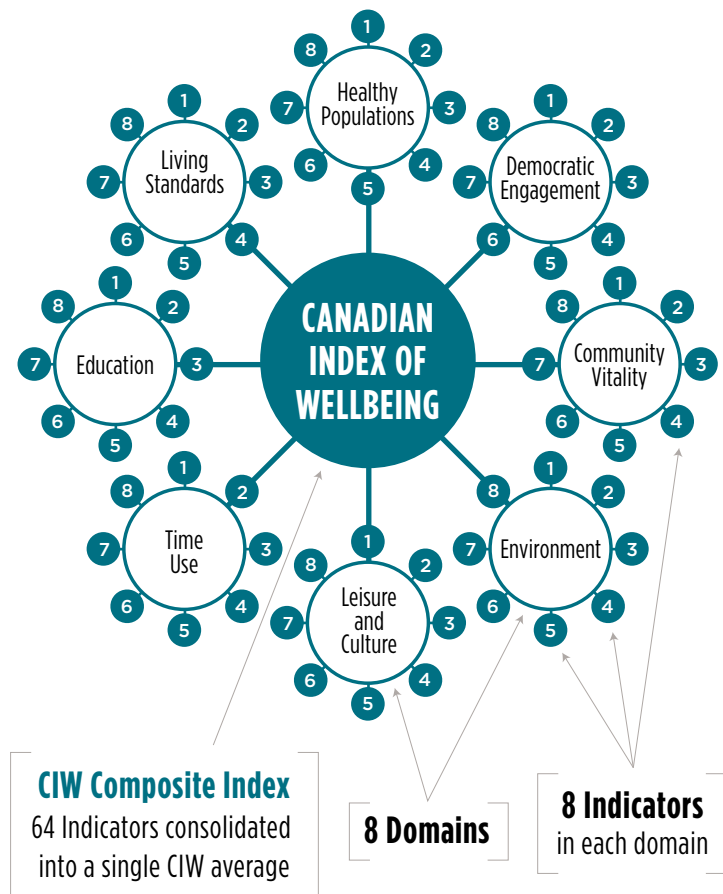
- 
HEALTHY POPULATIONS considers the physical, mental, and social wellbeing of the population. It examines life expectancy, lifestyle and behaviours, and the circumstances that influence health such as access to health care.

- 
LEISURE AND CULTURE considers how participating in leisure and cultural activities, whether arts, culture, or recreation, contributes to our wellbeing as individuals, to our communities, and to society as a whole. The myriad of activities and opportunities we pursue and enjoy benefit our overall life satisfaction and quality of life.

- 
LIVING STANDARDS examines Canadians' average and median income and wealth; distribution of income and wealth including poverty rates, income fluctuations and volatility; and economic security, including the labour market, and housing and food security.

- 
TIME USE considers how people experience and spend their time. It examines how the use of our time affects physical and mental wellbeing, individual and family wellbeing, and present and future wellbeing.

Figure 2. The Canadian Index of Wellbeing Framework



Together, these eight domains provide a more complete picture of wellbeing, incorporating a comprehensive set of the key social, health, economic, and environmental factors contributing to overall quality of life. Teams of nationally and internationally renowned experts then identified eight valid, reliable, and relevant indicators within each domain that are directly related to wellbeing. By integrating the 64 indicators and eight domains and revealing their complex interconnections, the CIW composite index provides a comprehensive portrait of quality of life in Canada.

The CIW composite index tracks all indicators and domains of wellbeing to measure our progress over time, highlighting where we are doing well and where we could be doing better.

An ongoing cycle of public engagement, consultation, and refinement is one of the defining characteristics of the CIW. It ensures that the Index is rooted in Canadian values, grounded in community experience, shaped by technical expertise, and responsive to emerging knowledge. The CIW is not a static measure. As new issues emerge and new knowledge, understandings, and data become available, the CIW adapts to strengthen its measure of wellbeing without veering from the values on which it is grounded. Hence, validating and continually improving the CIW is an ongoing process.

In this report, we describe trends in wellbeing from 1994 to 2014 based on the most valid and updated indicators of wellbeing in each of the domains.



TRENDS AND STATISTICAL HIGHLIGHTS





EDUCATION

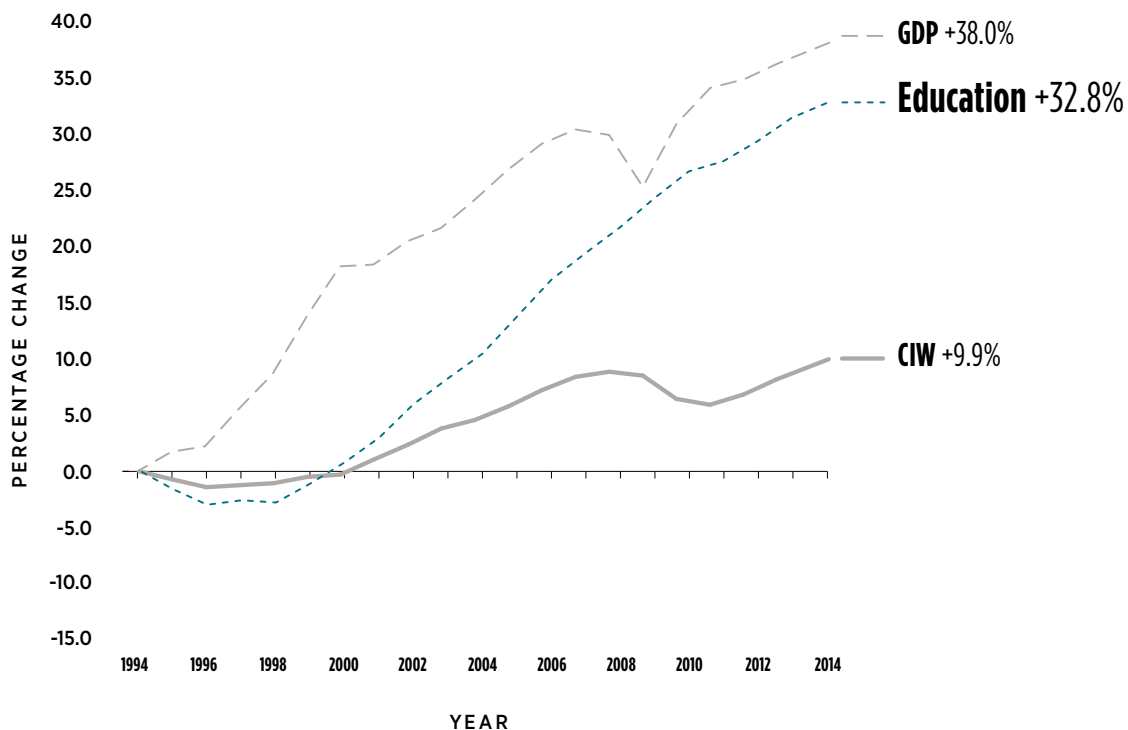
Education is the systematic instruction, schooling, or training given to the young in preparation for the work of life, and by extension, similar instruction or training obtained in adulthood.

Societies that thrive encourage a thirst for knowledge — at every age and stage of life. Education is a process that begins before school age and is reflected in pre-school arrangements such as child care and early childhood education. It also continues beyond elementary and high school, to college, university, and professional training through apprenticeships. Education continues as lifelong learning. As the world changes, education helps Canadians adapt to new challenges.

CANADA GETS HIGHEST MARKS FOR EDUCATION

Education is the only domain that was relatively close to matching the growth in GDP since 1994. After slight declines following 1994, the Education domain has grown every year since 1998.

TRENDS IN EDUCATION, THE CIW, AND GDP (PER CAPITA) FROM 1994 TO 2014



OVERALL IMPROVEMENT IN EDUCATION FROM 1994 TO 2014:
▲ 32.8%

CHANGE UP TO RECESSION 1994 TO 2008:
▲ 21.7%


CHANGE SINCE RECESSION 2008 TO 2014:
▲ 11.1%


DESPITE SIGNIFICANT IMPROVEMENTS, CHILD CARE IN CANADA REMAINS INADEQUATE

i **Only one in four children has access to regulated, centre-based child care.** Despite more than doubling the percentage of 0 to 5-year-olds for whom there is regulated, centre-based child care since 1994 — rising from 11.5% in 1994 to 24.1% by 2014 — the number of spaces remains seriously inadequate. The shortage of spaces is critical because early childhood education contributes to later educational achievement, provides a foundation for lifelong learning, and improves overall health. Nowhere is the need greater than in Saskatchewan where only 12.6% of children have access to regulated child care spaces.


i **Only about 34 minutes per day on average is spent by adults in interactive, talk-based activities with children from 0 to 14 years of age.** The average amount of time has edged up from 33.0 minutes in 1998 to 35.4 minutes in 2010 with much more time interacting with female adults (43.4 minutes) than male adults (26.6 minutes). After 2005, the time spent by adults talking with children began to decline.


RESOURCES FOR ELEMENTARY SCHOOL CHILDREN HAVE IMPROVED...

 **We continue to invest in our youngest students.** Expenditures per elementary school student rose from an average of \$9.36 in 1997 to \$13.58 in 2014 — an increase of more than 45%.

 **Student-teacher ratios are improving.** The ratio of elementary school students to educators has improved from 15.9 students per educator in 1997 to 11.8 students per educator in 2013 — an overall improvement of over 35.2%.

... HIGH SCHOOL AND UNIVERSITY COMPLETION CONTINUE TO INCREASE ...


 **Almost 90% of Canadian youth are completing high school.** The percentage of the Canadian population between 20 and 24 years of age that have completed high school grew slowly, but steadily from 81.1% in 1994 to 89.3% in 2014. This represents an overall increase of 8.2% in the completion rate over the 21-year period.

 **University graduation rates among 25 to 64-year-olds have almost doubled.** In 1994, 16.7% of Canadians had a university degree and by 2014, the percentage had grown to 28.5%. Notably, 4.4% more women (31.7%) than men (27.3%) aged 25 to 64 years had university degrees in 2014.

... BUT TUITION FEES HAVE ALMOST TRIPLED

» **Undergraduate student tuition fees have almost tripled from 1994 to 2014.** From an average of \$2,221 in 1994 to \$5,998 by 2014, tuition fees have been steadily rising. As this financial burden increases, access to university presents an even greater challenge for many young Canadians. In addition, the significant student debt they carry after completing their studies hinders their ability to participate fully in all aspects of society.

MORE ADULTS ARE PARTICIPATING IN EDUCATION-RELATED ACTIVITIES

 **More Canadians 25 years of age and older are participating in education-related activities.** There has been a steady increase in the number of adults who attend lectures in the community, engage in professional development work, take special interest courses, and use the internet for research or homework. However, despite the upward trend since 1994 — rising from 3.8% to 5.0% in 2010 — the percentage of Canadian adults participating in life-long learning activities remains very low.



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. Access to education over the life course contributes to better health, a greater sense of belonging to community, a more tolerant and welcoming society, and an enriching and rewarding life.

The early years set the foundation for our development and predict later educational outcomes as well as overall health. In Canada, the availability of child care has increased steadily, but by 2014, there is still only about one space for every four children. Further, in the absence of a national child care program, availability of child care varies significantly from province to province. Adequate child care and early childhood education support gender equity by providing women with more opportunities to become fully engaged in the workforce. Along with these opportunities comes a wide array of individual, family, and societal benefits.

Despite regular increases in tuition fees, university completion rates have improved significantly since 1994 — something that bodes well for an economy that requires an increasingly skilled workforce. However, given the debt that many graduates will face, what will be the expense to their individual wellbeing and to our society's ability to provide them with the support they may need?

EDUCATION

INDICATORS TRACKED 1994 TO 2014

- » Percentage of children aged 0 to 5 years for whom there is a **regulated centre-based child care space**
- » Amount of **time spent in talk-based activities** with children aged 0 to 14 years
- » **Average expenditure** per public school student (2013\$)
- » **Ratio of students to educators** in public schools
- » Average annual Canadian **undergraduate tuition fees** (2015\$)
- » Percentage of Canadians 20 to 24 years of age in **labour force completing high school**
- » Percentage of 25 to 64-year-olds in population with a **university degree**
- » Percentage of population aged 25 and older participating in **education-related activities**



HEALTHY POPULATIONS

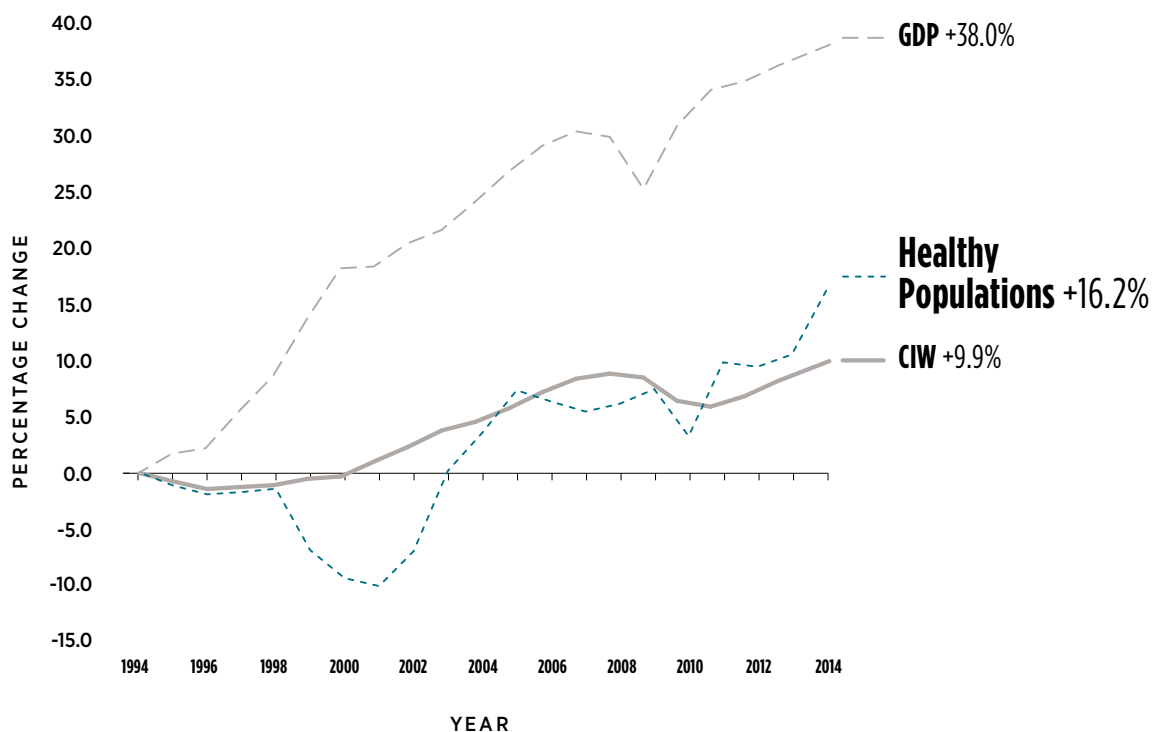
The Healthy Populations domain considers the physical, mental, and social wellbeing of the population. It examines life expectancy, lifestyle and behaviours, and the circumstances that influence health such as access to health care.

Healthy Populations captures both the overall health of the population (“health status”) as well as factors that influence health (“health determinants”). This broad perspective is used because individuals’ lifestyles and behaviours are constrained and shaped by broader social factors such as how food is distributed and priced, how houses are constructed and located, how urban transportation is designed, how accessible health care and recreational services are, and how we interact with the natural environment.

HEALTHY HABITS MEET TROUBLING TRENDS

The overall trend for Healthy Populations is positive, but it masks troubling changes in recent years. Even though flu shot rates are up, fewer teens than ever are smoking, and we are living longer, not all of the signs are good. Canadians' ratings of their overall health status and their mental health have declined since the late 2000s, coinciding with the downturn in the economy. Diabetes has more than doubled. One in five people have a health or activity limitation, and fewer people have a family doctor. And certain groups of Canadians are hurting more than others.

TRENDS IN HEALTHY POPULATIONS, THE CIW, AND GDP (PER CAPITA) FROM 1994 TO 2014



OVERALL CHANGE
 IN HEALTHY
 POPULATIONS FROM
 1994 TO 2014:

▲ 16.2%

CHANGE UP TO
 RECESSION
 1994 TO 2008:

▲ 6.1%

CHANGE SINCE
 RECESSION
 2008 TO 2014:


▲ 10.1%


CANADIANS ARE LIVING LONGER ...

i **Life expectancy for Canadians at birth is now over 82 years — one of the highest in the world.** We have seen a steady increase every year since 1994 when life expectancy was just over 78 years. Life expectancies do not vary much regardless of where Canadians live with the exception of our northern territories. In Yukon, Northwest Territories, and Nunavut, life expectancy is on average 75.1 years — more than 7 years less than the national average.


i **Women continue to live longer than men — 83.6 years compared to 79.4 years in 2012 — but the gap is closing.** Between 1994 and 2009, life expectancy for men increased by 3.8 years, compared to 2.3 years for women.

... BUT DO NOT NECESSARILY FEEL HEALTHIER


 **The percentage of Canadians reporting their health as very good or excellent in 2014 is 4.1% lower than in 1994.** The percentage peaked in 1998 at 69.1% of Canadians who considered themselves as having better health and dove in 2003 to 58.4%. Since then, the percentage has shifted very little, remaining between 59% and 60%.

 **Gender, age, and income are all related to Canadians' ratings of their health.** Slightly more women than men report better health as do Canadians under the age of 45 years. Self-rated health is very much linked to income. More than two-thirds of Canadians (68.7%) with household incomes over \$80,000 per year report very good or excellent health while well under half of Canadians (43.9%) in households with annual incomes less than \$40,000 feel as healthy.


MORE THAN 1 IN 5 CANADIANS LIVE WITH A HEALTH OR ACTIVITY LIMITATION

 **Increasing numbers of Canadians are living with health or activity-related limitations, and as the population ages, the numbers could continue to increase.** In 1994, 84.9% of Canadians reported no limitations, but by 2014, that percentage had fallen to 78.5% — a drop of 6.4%. As with self-reported health, people living in low income households were more likely to have health or activity limitations.

DIABETES IS SKYROCKETING ...

 **Diabetes rates more than doubled over the past 21 years — from 2.6% of the population in 1994 to 6.7% in 2014.** Diabetes rates are higher among men (7.5%) and especially for those living in low income households (10.4%). More critically, the incidence of diabetes is especially high among First Nations peoples over 45 years of age at 19%. In comparison, only 11% of non-Indigenous people over 45 report having diabetes.

... AND DESPITE IMPROVEMENTS, MENTAL HEALTH SAW A POST-RECESSION SETBACK

 **Almost 7 in 10 Canadians rate their mental health as very good or excellent.** In 2001, over two-thirds of Canadians (67.1%) reported that their mental health was very good or excellent and by 2014, the percentage had risen by 4% to 71.1%. The percentage of people with better mental health had in fact reached a peak of 74.8% in 2007, however, and has steadily declined following the 2008 recession. The decline was evident among both men and women, and was felt most significantly by people living in low income households.



HEALTHY POPULATIONS

INDICATORS TRACKED 1994 TO 2014

- » Life expectancy at birth in years
- » Percentage of population that rates their **overall health as very good or excellent**
- » Percentage of population that rates their **mental health as very good or excellent**
- » Percentage of population with an **absence of health or activity-based limitations**
- » Percentage of **daily or occasional smokers among teens** aged 12 to 19 years
- » Percentage of population with **self-reported diabetes**
- » Percentage of population getting **influenza immunization** in past year
- » Percentage of Canadians with a **regular medical doctor**

TEEN SMOKING IS DOWN SIGNIFICANTLY ...

i **By 2014, only 7.7% of Canadians aged 12 to 19 years were smoking occasionally or daily.** This represents a 171% rate of decline from the 20.9% of teens who were smokers in 1994. The change was even more pronounced for young women — just over 7% reported that they smoked in 2014.

... BUT PROMOTING GOOD HEALTH REMAINS A CHALLENGE

i **Only 1 in 3 people are getting their flu shot.** While the percentage of Canadians getting immunized against influenza increased by 6.7% between 2001 and 2014, the overall percentage remains strikingly low — only about one-third (32.5%) got their flu shot in 2014. Rates are generally higher among women and much higher among older Canadians — more than half of those over the age of 65 were immunized against influenza in 2014 (58.6%).

i **Access to family doctors is declining.** While the majority of Canadians do report having a regular doctor, since 1994, that majority has slowly been declining. Almost 9 in 10 Canadians (88.6%) had a doctor in 1994, but that number slipped to 85.1% by 2014. More residents in Ontario and in all of the Atlantic provinces report having a regular doctor than in the western provinces. Of greater concern, however, is a majority of residents of the Northwest Territories (58.1%) and especially Nunavut (84.6%) do not have a regular doctor. This lack of access in northern Canada represents a serious gap in health provision.

CONCLUSION

Overall progress for the Healthy Populations domain is positive despite roller-coaster trends since 1994 that mask troubling recent changes in Canadians' health. Life expectancy continues to increase and teen smoking is plummeting, but gains made in overall and mental health have fallen back, especially since the recession of 2008. While most Canadians enjoy reasonably good health, almost 12% of Canadians — nearly 3.5 million people — feel their health is poor or just fair. Even more Canadians report having very good or excellent mental health, but the percentage of Canadians whose mental health is poor or fair has risen since the recession to more than 6% — almost 2 million people. Further, more Canadians than ever before — 6.5 million in 2014 — are reporting a health-related limitation that prevents them from fully participating at home, work, school, or in other activities.

While individuals must be proactive in taking responsibility for their own health by eating more nutritious foods, exercising, and getting immunized, communities have a similar responsibility to ensure access to those nutritious foods, to develop and maintain livable and walkable environments, and to create the conditions that support population health. Most urgently needed, however, are new and innovative policies and programs that are tailored to reduce disparities in health status for different social groups — especially where it concerns Canada's Indigenous people.

Action is needed on social justice and equity-oriented measures, a point strongly reinforced in the final report of the World Health Organization's Commission on *Social Determinants of Health*.³ Focusing on the social determinants of health — factors such as income, education, employment, housing, social connectedness, and our community spaces — is “upstream” thinking⁴ that recognizes these are the conditions that most affect our health and wellbeing. By developing policy that strives to reduce inequalities in these conditions, we can create healthier lives and communities.

3. Commission on Social Determinants of Health. (2008). *Closing the gap in a generation: Health equity through action on the social determinants of health*. Final Report of the Commission on Social Determinants of Health. Geneva, CH: World Health Organization.

4. Meili, R. (2012). *A healthy society: How a focus on health can revive Canadian democracy*. Saskatoon, SK: Purich Publishing.



COMMUNITY VITALITY

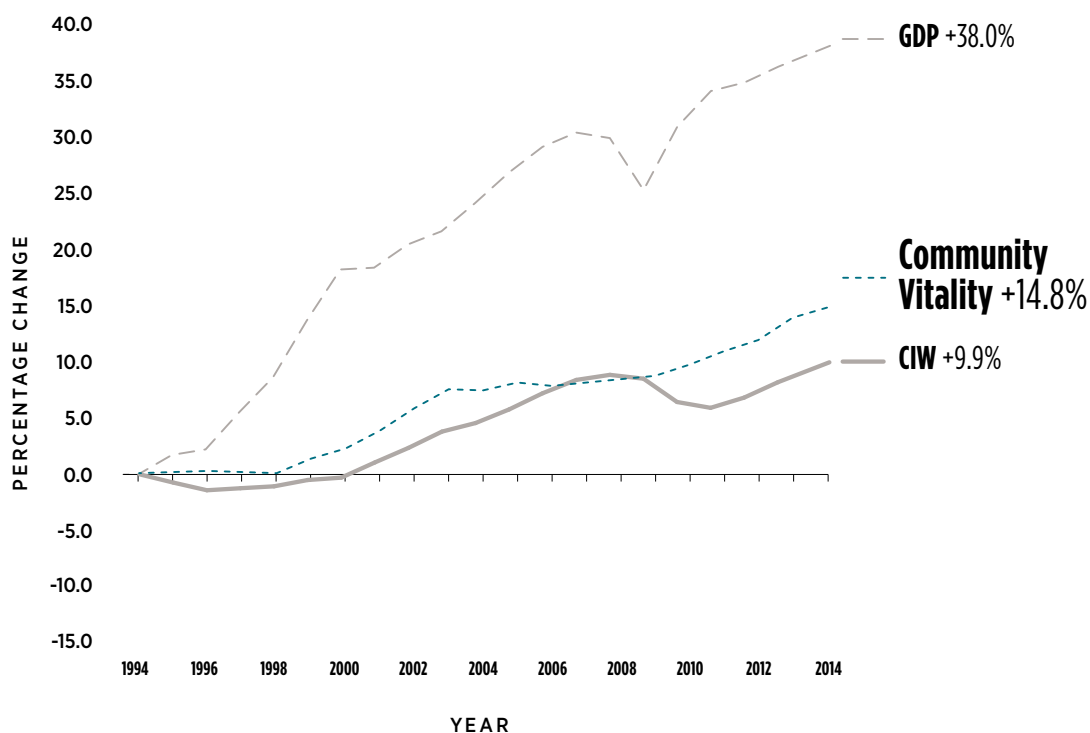
Vital communities are those that have strong, active, and inclusive relationships among people, private, public, and non-governmental organizations that foster individual and collective wellbeing.

Vital communities are able to cultivate and marshal these relationships in order to create, adapt, and thrive in the changing world. They do so by focusing on social relationships and support, including community safety and social engagement, and on social norms and values, including feelings towards others and residents' sense of belonging to their communities.

SAFER, MORE CARING COMMUNITIES

Community Vitality has improved steadily since 1994, including the years following the recession of 2008, increasing by 14.8% over the 21-year period. As people pulled together to help each other following the recession, two indicators saw the reversal of previous downward trends: the number of close friends and levels of trust in others both increased. The unfortunate flip-side of the recession story is that formal volunteering for groups or organizations has never recovered to its pre-2008 levels. Nevertheless, today overall, Canadians help one another. They feel connected to and more trusting of others. They also feel more connected to their communities and feel safe in them.

TRENDS IN COMMUNITY VITALITY, THE CIW, AND GDP (PER CAPITA) FROM 1994 TO 2014



OVERALL CHANGE IN
 COMMUNITY VITALITY
 FROM 1994 TO 2014:

▲ 14.8%

CHANGE UP TO
 RECESSION
 1994 TO 2008:

▲ 8.4%

CHANGE SINCE
 RECESSION
 2008 TO 2014:


▲ 6.4%

MORE CANADIANS FEEL A STRONG SENSE OF BELONGING TO THEIR COMMUNITIES


2 in 3 Canadians have a strong sense of belonging to their communities. Rising steadily over the years, sense of belonging has grown from 57.8% of Canadians in 2001 to its highest level ever — 66.4% in 2014. These feelings of belonging are even stronger among older Canadians.

CANADIANS NOT ONLY FEEL SAFER — THEY ARE SAFER


 **The Crime Severity Index has fallen 78.2% since 1998.** In fact, the severity of crimes committed has declined even more so than the overall crime rate, which fell by just over one-half (54.0%) between 2003 and 2014.⁵

 **Almost 4 in 5 Canadians feel safe walking alone after dark in their communities.** Overall, feelings of safety have increased by 6.5% since 1994, with almost four in five Canadians (78.7%) saying they feel safe in 2014. Not surprisingly, men feel safer than women. In 2014, over 90% of Canadian men said they felt safe whereas only about two-thirds of women (67.8%) felt safe walking alone after dark.

PEOPLE ARE EXPERIENCING LESS DISCRIMINATION

 **Experiences of discrimination based on ethnicity dropped from 13.3% in 2002 to 8.0% in 2014.** Among those individuals who did experience discrimination in 2014, most were under the age of 35 (37.5%). More critically, more than 1 in 4 members of a visible minority report experiences of discrimination. Clearly, we still have much work to do to ensure an inclusive society.

WE ARE MORE CONNECTED TO OTHERS IN OUR COMMUNITIES

 **Since the recession, people have more friends and are more trusting of others.** Although both of these indicators are essentially back to 1994 levels, the recession marked an important turning point. Since 2008, slightly more Canadians (52.5%) are reporting they have five or more friends — up from 48.3%. Similarly, in 2014, 54.7% of people believe most or many people can be trusted, up from just 47.7% in 2008. While this positive trend in trust is encouraging, there is still considerable room for improvement especially when sense of belonging and feelings of safety have shown such marked progress.

5. Statistics Canada. (2009). Measuring crime in Canada: Introducing the Crime Severity Index and improvements to the Uniform Crime Reporting Survey. Catalogue no. 85-004-X. Ottawa, ON: Ministry of Industry.



COMMUNITY VITALITY

INDICATORS TRACKED 1994 TO 2014

- » Percentage of population that reports very or somewhat strong **sense of belonging to community**
- » Percentage of population with **5 or more close friends**
- » Percentage of population that **feels safe walking alone after dark**
- » **Crime Severity Index**
- » Percentage **experiencing discrimination** in past 5 years based on ethno-cultural characteristics
- » Percentage of population that believes that most or many **people can be trusted**
- » Percentage of population reporting **unpaid, formal volunteering** for groups or organizations
- » Percentage of population that provides **unpaid help to others** on their own

WE ARE HELPING ONE ANOTHER ...

More than 8 in 10 Canadians provide unpaid help to others who are on their own. The percentage of people lending support has risen steadily since the mid-1990s reaching its highest level in 2007 (84.0%). Following the recession, the percentage has dropped slightly to 81.7%, but providing unpaid help to others who are on their own remains an important activity for most Canadians.

... BUT PARTICIPATION IN FORMAL VOLUNTEERING FELL DRAMATICALLY AFTER 2008

The recession wiped out increases in unpaid, formal volunteering for groups or organizations. In 1994, half of all Canadians (50.5%) volunteered for groups devoted to activities such as arts and culture, sport and recreation, education, or environmental advocacy. By 2008, that percentage had climbed to almost two-thirds (65.0%), but by 2014, had tumbled to below half (49.1%) — the lowest participation rate since 2000. This is troubling, because formal volunteering — at all ages — is critically important to community belonging, to democratic participation, to combat social isolation, and to maintain physical and mental health.

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. Even following the economic recession, Canadians feel connected to their communities and to others — suggesting a strong commitment to the core Canadian value of a “shared destiny”.

Building greater trust would be an important factor in helping people to flourish. Trust is the foundation of a thriving society. We are safe on our roads because we trust others to obey traffic laws. We trust we will be paid for the work we do. We trust our food is safe. When that basic trust is eroded, monitoring increases, participation decreases, and suspicion grows — there are real human and economic costs when trust is lost. Despite the progress in other areas, our communities cannot be really vital and thrive when trust is eroded. Individuals, employers, organizations, and policy makers need to explore new ways to extend, build, and preserve trust and thereby maintain and enhance the gains we have seen in community vitality.

Importantly, we must recognize that while the growing trend to provide unpaid care and assistance to others helps strengthen community vitality, it also has the potential to exacerbate feelings of time crunch. With the bulk of unpaid care being provided by older adults, as Canada’s population ages, that crunch could be felt by millions of people. With greater accessibility to community supports such as daily respite, elder care, and more flexible child care and workplace arrangements, those Canadians providing support to others could better enjoy these caring relationships.

Finally, volunteering for groups and organizations is an important way for people to build relationships and participate in groups dedicated to leisure, the arts, the environment, education, democracy, or a variety of other spheres of the civic arena. At all ages, volunteering provides Canadians with opportunities to develop new skills, meet new people, express themselves, and grow. Participating with friends or family members is one of the essential ways to further sense of belonging, enhance health, build community vitality, and to participate in leisure or culture.



DEMOCRATIC ENGAGEMENT

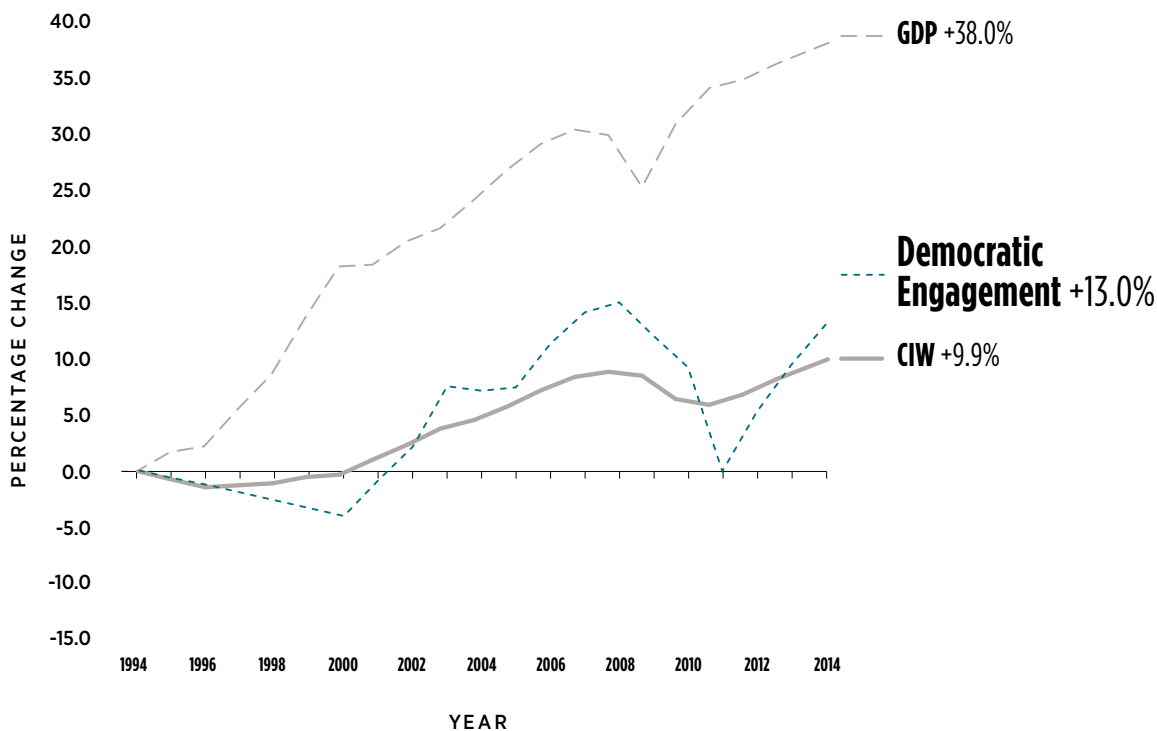
Democratic Engagement means being involved in advancing democracy through political institutions, organizations, and activities.

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; where governments build relationships, trust, shared responsibility, and participation opportunities with citizens; and where citizens, governments, and civil society uphold democratic values at local, provincial, and national levels. A healthy democracy needs citizens who feel their votes count, are informed, participate, debate, and advocate. It needs governments at all levels to be transparent, inclusive, consultative, and trustworthy. In essence, political leadership, citizen participation, and communication demonstrate the level of democratic engagement.

PARTICIPATION IS UP, BUT CONFIDENCE IS DOWN: THE DEMOCRATIC ENGAGEMENT PARADOX

Trends in Democratic Engagement in Canada are somewhat more volatile than other domains of wellbeing, reflecting the ebb and flow of political cycles. Overall, after a steep decline following the recession, Canadians' engagement with their democracy has risen steadily since 2011, up by over 13%. While the overall trend is positive, the increase masks the serious concerns Canadians have regarding federal Parliament and how our democracy works. The persistent challenge of electing more women to Parliament also continues.

TRENDS IN *DEMOCRATIC ENGAGEMENT*, THE CIW, AND GDP (PER CAPITA) FROM 1994 TO 2014



OVERALL CHANGE IN DEMOCRATIC ENGAGEMENT FROM 1994 TO 2014:

▲ 13.0%


CHANGE UP TO RECESSION 1994 TO 2008:


▲ 15.0%


CHANGE SINCE RECESSION 2008 TO 2014:

▼ 2.0%


WE ARE PARTICIPATING MORE IN OUR DEMOCRACY ...

 **Voter turnout is increasing.** Turnout at federal elections hit its lowest point since 1994 when just 58.8% of Canadians voted in 2008. However, voter turnout rose to 61.1% in 2011 and then to 68.0% in 2015. The 6.9% increase in voter turnout in 2015 was due to much greater numbers of people under 45 years of age voting than in previous elections.


 **Voter age gap is decreasing.** With the higher turnout of younger voters in recent elections, we are moving closer to better representing Canadians of all ages in our federal Parliament. The percentage gap between younger and older voters was 38.7% in the 2004 election and 36.3% in 2011, but dropped to just 21.7% in 2015.

 **But slightly fewer eligible voters are registered.** The number of eligible Canadians registered to vote has always been high, but has edged downwards in recent years. In 1994, 91.5% of eligible voters were registered and in 2014, the percentage had dropped to 88.5%.

... BUT ONLY 2% OF CANADIANS VOLUNTEER FOR A POLITICAL PARTY OR ADVOCACY GROUP

 **The percentage of Canadians volunteering for a political party or advocacy group is up, but dismal.** Since 2011, the number of Canadians volunteering for a political party or advocacy group is up very slightly, but overall, the numbers remain very low. Only about 2% of Canadians volunteered over the years between 1994 and 2014.

MPs' COMMUNICATIONS INCREASED — ESPECIALLY AROUND ELECTION TIME

 **Overall, MPs are spending more to communicate with constituents.** Members of Parliament (MPs) are expected to reach out to Canadians to invite their participation, report on their activities as representatives, and work to understand their constituents' concerns and ideas.⁶ Even though MPs' budgets for print communications mailed to Canadian householders increased overall by 23.4% between 2001 and 2014, they were much more frequent before and during election years and more sporadic in intervening years.

6. Samara Canada. (2015). Samara's Democracy 360: The numbers. Toronto, ON: Samara Canada. Retrieved from: <http://www.samaracanada.com/research/samara-democracy-360>



DEMOCRATIC ENGAGEMENT

INDICATORS TRACKED 1994 TO 2014

- » Percentage of **voter turnout at federal elections**
- » Ratio of **registered to eligible voters**
- » **Gap in percentage turnout between older and younger voters**
- » Percentage of **women in federal Parliament**
- » Percentage of Members of Parliament's office **budget devoted to sending communications to constituents**
- » Percentage of population that **volunteers for a law, advocacy, or political group**
- » Percentage of population that is very or fairly **satisfied with way democracy works in Canada**
- » Percentage of population with a great deal or quite a lot of **confidence in federal Parliament**

CONFIDENCE IN DEMOCRACY AND PARLIAMENT HAS ERODED ...

i **We have lost ground in our satisfaction with how democracy is working.** In 1994, six in 10 Canadians (59.7%) said they were satisfied with the way democracy is working in Canada and by 2008, that percentage had risen by over 10%. By 2014, the numbers had slipped back to barely two-thirds of Canadians who felt satisfied with how democracy works in Canada.

i **Barely 1 in 3 people had confidence in Parliament in 2014 — a new low.** In 2003, almost half of Canadians (49.2%) reported they had a great deal of confidence in our federal Parliament. By 2014, that figure had dropped to just over one-third (35.5%) with most of that decline occurring after 2008.

i While these percentages do not include the 2015 election, they suggest a strong disconnect between the activities of Canada's Parliament and how confident Canadians feel about the government's policies and priorities. As our confidence wanes, it is eroding our belief in the way democracy is working in Canada.

... AND WOMEN ARE STILL UNDER-REPRESENTED IN PARLIAMENT

i **The percentage of women in federal Parliament is up, but nowhere near parity.** In 1994, 20.3% of MPs were women. By 2011, that figure had risen to 24.8% — a paltry increase of 4.5% in 16 years. The 2015 federal election saw 88 women elected, representing 26.0% of the seats in the House of Commons.⁷ While these small increases are encouraging, female representation in government still falls well short of the over 50% of the population that women comprise. At this rate, we will not reach gender parity for another 80 years.

7. Parliament of Canada. (2016). Women candidates in general elections — 1921 to date. Ottawa, ON: Library of Parliament. Retrieved from: <http://www.loppar.gc.ca/About/Parliament/FederalRidingsHistory/hfer.asp?Language=E&Search=WomenElection>

CONCLUSION

There are signs that Canadians might be re-engaging with the democratic process. Voter turnout is increasing, the gap between younger and older voters is narrowing, slightly more people are volunteering for political and advocacy groups, and more women are MPs.

However, some caution must be exercised before seeing these trends as sustainable. Voter turnout is increasing largely because younger people are showing up, not necessarily because of widespread re-engagement by all Canadians. We must focus on retaining these young people and on reaching out to others who feel disenfranchised. The current government's commitment to electoral reform may have some impact on fostering more engagement by Canadians.

While volunteering for democratic groups has edged upwards, it remains a tiny proportion of Canadians. At the same time, engaging people to advocate for change on the environment, health issues, or other public policy issues locally or on the global scale could yield important benefits, not just for Democratic Engagement, but also for other domains of wellbeing.

Canadians cannot take great pride in ranking 64th in the world in the percentage of women serving as representatives in lower or single Houses of Parliament⁸. Even though more women sit in our federal Parliament, progress towards parity is slow and women are still seriously under-represented. The same can be said for other groups in Canada such as Indigenous peoples, visible minorities, and Canadians born outside the country, all of whom also are under-represented.

Given Canadians' declining confidence in the federal government and satisfaction with the way democracy is working, more effort must be made to engage citizens. Increased use of social media by MPs has provided Canadians — especially younger Canadians — with a platform to engage with their representatives and might in part be behind the modest increases in participation. In addition, some governments are embracing more open data policies and practices in order to empower citizens and increase transparency. According to the OECD, Canada is among the world leaders in this movement.⁹

8. Inter-Parliamentary Union. (2016). Women in national parliaments. Geneva, CH: IPU. Retrieved from: <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm>

9. OECD. (2015). Government at a glance 2015. Paris, FR: OECD Publishing. Available at: http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/gov_glance-2015-en



LIVING STANDARDS

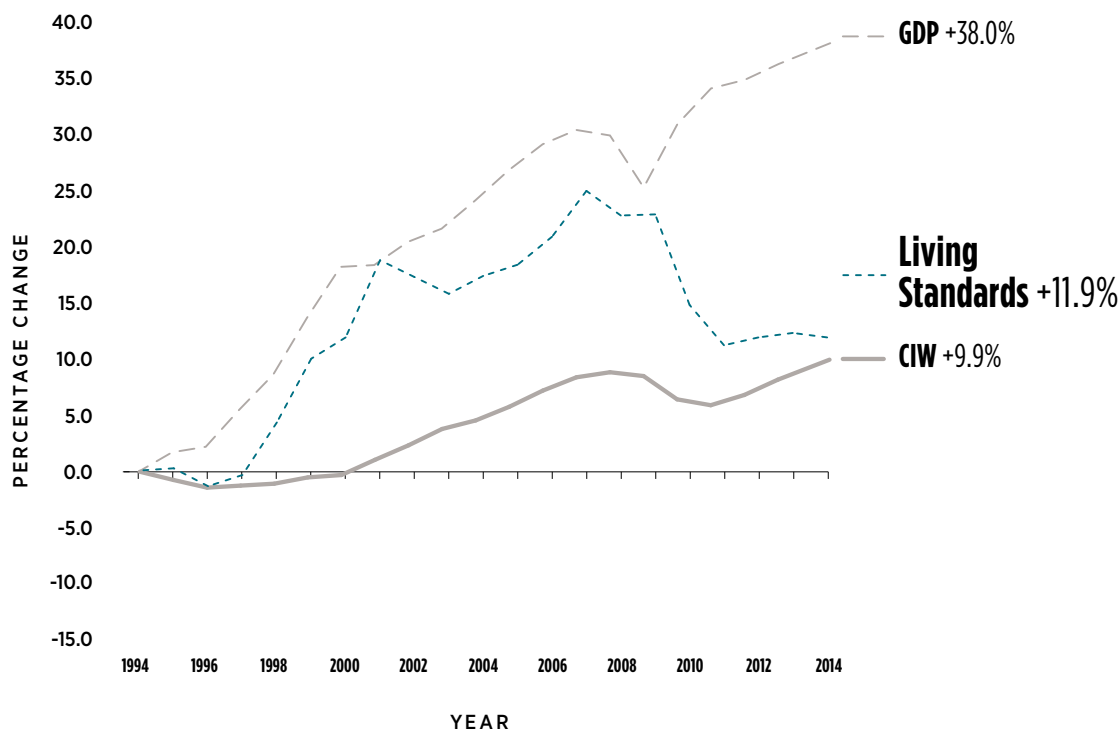
Living Standards examines Canadians' average and median income and wealth, distribution of income and wealth including poverty rates, income fluctuations and volatility. It considers economic security, including labour market security, and housing and food security.

Our living standards should reflect our capacity to transform economic growth into stable current and future income streams for everyone. Economic growth does not automatically translate into better living standards. A higher average income, for example, may be achieved at the cost of increased social inequality or greater economic insecurity. In contrast, achieving greater job quality, reducing poverty, and providing basic affordable housing and food security to individuals and families will raise wellbeing for everyone.

NO RECOVERY YET FROM THE RECESSION'S BLOW

Canadian Living Standards improved considerably between 1994 and 2008. Sadly, the recession sparked a steep decline from which we have yet to recover. More so than any other domain of wellbeing, this trend dramatically reveals how our standard of living is not necessarily tied to the improving performance of the economy overall.

TRENDS IN *LIVING STANDARDS*, THE CIW, AND GDP (PER CAPITA) FROM 1994 TO 2014



OVERALL CHANGE IN LIVING STANDARDS FROM 1994 TO 2014:

▲ 11.9%

CHANGE UP TO RECESSION 1994 TO 2008:

▲ 22.8%

CHANGE SINCE RECESSION 2008 TO 2014:


▼ 10.9%

FAMILY INCOMES ARE HIGHER


After-tax median family incomes rose by almost one-third (29.9%) from 1994 to 2014.

In 1994, the median family income was \$55,500. By 2014, it was up to \$72,100.


FEWER CANADIANS ARE LIVING IN POVERTY ...


 **Overall, the incidence of poverty declined by 44% between 1994 and 2014.** The poorest Canadians benefited from the real increases in income over the time period, but these increases were not equally felt by all. Among those who are still most at risk from poverty are children, lone-parent families — especially those led by women — older adults, Indigenous people, and people with disabilities. In fact, despite changes in the tax system targeting seniors, the poverty rate among Canada's seniors has risen since the 1990s, and again, is most pronounced among women.¹⁰

... BUT INEQUALITY HAS INCREASED

 **Income inequality is up by almost 10% since 1994.** Much of the increase occurred in the 10-year period from 1994 to 2004 and has since remained relatively unchanged. Even as incomes rise, the top 20% of Canadians have received the lion's share. According to the Conference Board of Canada, the gap in real after-tax average income between the richest and the poorest grew by over 40% between 1994 and 2009.¹¹

ACCESS TO AFFORDABLE HOUSING IS WORSENING ...

 **Canadians are devoting a greater proportion of their net income to meet their housing needs.** Housing is becoming less affordable for Canadians as they devote a greater proportion of their net income (after covering other necessities such as food, clothing, and child care) to costs associated with their shelter needs. In 1994, Canadians devoted 36.7% of their net incomes to shelter costs, which fluctuated very little until 2003 when it rose to 37.7%. The percentage rose again after 2010 and by 2014, Canadians were putting 39.2% of their net incomes towards their shelter needs. Despite increases in family incomes, over the entire 21-year time period, shelter costs rose by 6.3%.

 **Nowhere were these increases felt more severely than by residents of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, and British Columbia.** In these provinces, shelter costs exceeded 40% of net incomes. Alberta was the only province where its residents saw their shelter costs decline — from 36.6% in 1994 to 33.4% in 2014.¹²

10. Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities. (2010). Federal poverty reduction plan: Working in partnership towards reducing poverty in Canada. Ottawa, ON: Communications Canada. Retrieved from <http://www.parl.gc.ca/HousePublications/Publication.aspx?DocId=4770921>

11. Conference Board of Canada. (2011). Canadian income inequality. Is Canada becoming more unequal? Retrieved from <http://www.conferenceboard.ca/hcp/hot-topics/caninequality.aspx>

12. Smetanin, P., Moca, I., Yusuf, F., & Kobak, P. (2015). Understanding shelter affordability issues. Research Report Executive Summary. Toronto, ON: The Canadian Centre for Economic Analysis. Retrieved from: <http://www.cancea.ca/?q=node/96>



LIVING STANDARDS

INDICATORS TRACKED 1994 TO 2014

- » **After-tax median income** of economic family (2013\$)
- » Percentage of **persons living in poverty** based on low income cut-off (LICO)
- » **Gini coefficient** (income gap)
- » Percentage of households that are **moderately or severely food insecure**
- » Housing affordability based on **Shelter Consumption Affordability Ratio (SCAR)**
- » Percentage of **labour force employed**
- » Percentage of **labour force in long-term unemployment**
- » **CIBC index of employment quality** (1994 QI=100)

... AND FOOD INSECURITY IS ON THE RISE


Over 2 million Canadians struggle with food insecurity.


Reliable national data on food security have only been available since 2007, but even in that short time period, the percentage of Canadians who are experiencing moderate or severe food insecurity rose from 7.1% in 2007 to 7.7% in 2014. This increase means even more Canadians did not have access to enough affordable and nutritious foods.

Food insecurity is highest in Nunavut and among single parents of young children.


In 2012, over one-third of the population of Nunavut (36.7%) was facing food insecurity — more than four times the national average. Also at risk are households led by a lone parent with children under 18 years of age. Almost one quarter of these households (22.6%) are food insecure.¹³ And even though children are at greater risk of living in poverty, Canadian adults 18 years of age and older were more likely to be food insecure than children.

TROUBLING SIGNS FOR EMPLOYMENT SINCE THE RECESSION

 **Precarious employment on the rise?** Even though the percentage of the working age population that is employed increased overall by 5% from 1994 to 2008, it dropped following the recession and has yet to recover to pre-recession levels. Employment reached 63.4% in 2008, up from 58.4% in 1994, but has dropped to 61.5% immediately following the recession and remains at 61.4% in 2014.

 **The return of long-term unemployment.** While long-term unemployment has not returned to early 1990s levels when it hovered between 15% and 17%, by 2014, 12.4% of Canadians were in long-term unemployment. This percentage has almost doubled since 2008 when long-term unemployment sat at 6.9%. Men, older workers, and individuals with lower levels of education are at greater risk of long-term unemployment.

13. Roshanafshar, S., & Hawkins, E. (2015). Health at a glance: Food insecurity in Canada. Statistics Canada, Catalogue no. 82-624-X. Ottawa, ON: Ministry of Industry. Retrieved from <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/82-624-x/2015001/article/14138-eng.htm>

 **Employment quality is declining.** The CIBC Job Quality Index peaked in 2001 and then has slowly declined, falling 2.4% overall from 1994 to 2014. After 2008, coincident with lower levels of employment, job quality fell by 2% in two years and has remained there since.

CONCLUSION

Looking over the years between 2008 and 2014, the recession and subsequent recovery have taken an enormous toll on the living standards of Canadians. Many dimensions of the Living Standards of Canadians worsened between 1994 and 2014, especially following the recession in 2008. Canadians experienced a widening of income inequalities, lower employment, much higher long-term unemployment, and lower security for both housing and food. Even though there have been notable poverty reductions over the period and increases in the median income of economic families, arguably the poorest Canadians are much worse off as the income gap widens and they fall further behind.

By failing to reduce income inequality, Canada is not using the skills and capabilities of its citizens to their fullest potential. Income inequality weakens social cohesion, thereby contributing to greater social tensions, especially in times of economic uncertainty.¹⁴ Perhaps even more importantly, higher levels of income inequality beg a moral question concerning fairness and equity, which are core Canadian values.

We see the impact of falling Living Standards on other domains of wellbeing. Canadians' overall health and mental health have declined, engagement in many leisure and cultural opportunities has fallen, provision of support to others in need has decreased, and time spent with friends has dropped. These trends reflect the pervasive impact of the recession on many aspects of Canadians' lives as they adjust to more difficult circumstances and face making more difficult choices.

Judging from the growth in GDP post-recession, which has increased by 8.1% between 2008 and 2014, our economy has rebounded. However, our living standards continue to be mired in a slump. Living Standards fell by 11.6% between 2008 and 2011, and rose only 0.7% since 2011. The stark contrast between economic recovery and our Living Standards underlines how our wellbeing and progress towards higher quality of life is not reflected in GDP.

14. Wilkinson, R., & Pickett, K. (2010). *The spirit level: Why equality is better for everyone*. London: Penguin.



TIME USE

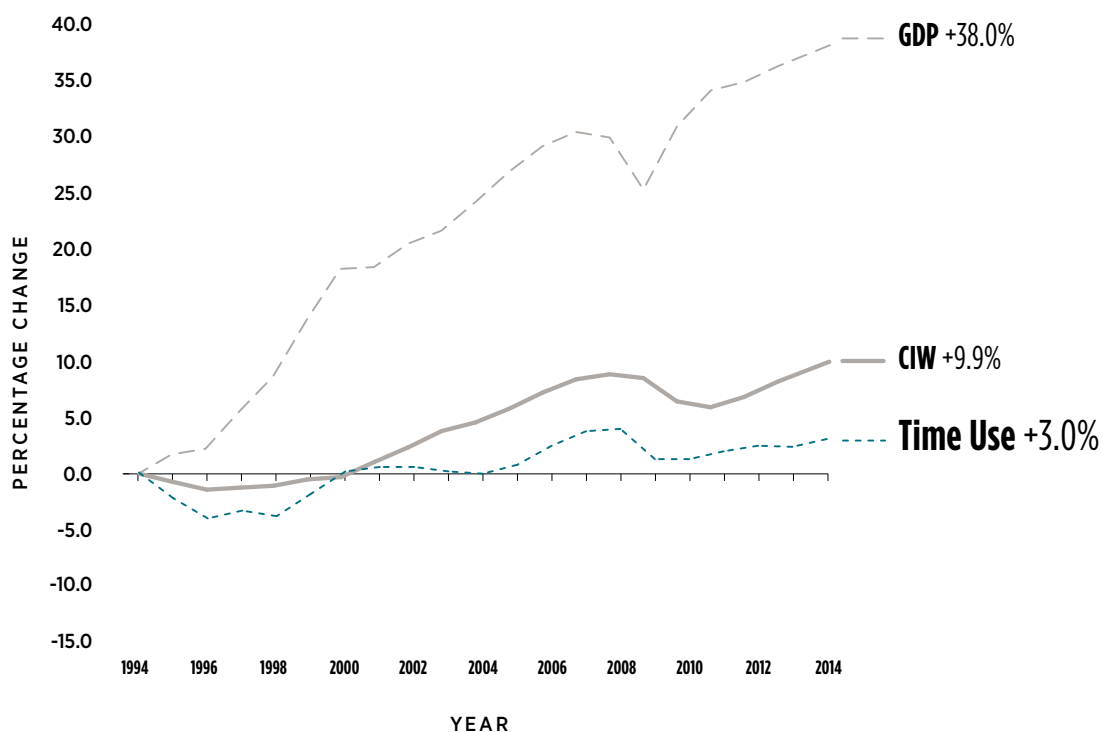
Time Use considers how people experience and spend their time. It means how the use of our time affects physical and mental wellbeing, individual and family wellbeing, and present and future wellbeing. It examines the length of our work week, our work arrangements, our levels of time pressure, and the time we spend with friends and in other free-time activities.

The implicit assumption with Time Use is the notion of balance. Most activities are beneficial to wellbeing when done in moderation, but are detrimental when done excessively or not at all. There are only 24 hours in a day, so too much time directed towards one activity can mean not enough or no time at all allocated for other activities that are also critical for our wellbeing. Not only does the amount of time matter, but the pace of and relative control over timing of activities throughout the day can affect overall quality of life.

THE TIME CRUNCH TRADE-OFF

Despite a recent upturn in the Time Use domain, it has had, overall, an adverse effect on the wellbeing of Canadians. Some indicators of time use have improved, but others have deteriorated. What has improved? Fewer Canadians are working more than 50 hours each week and more Canadians have flexible work hours. However, we are spending more time commuting to jobs and employment has become more precarious. While the time pressure indicator improved very slightly, how our time gets used has left us less time for friends and for quality sleep.

TRENDS IN *TIME USE*, THE CIW, AND GDP (PER CAPITA) FROM 1994 TO 2014



OVERALL CHANGE
IN TIME USE FROM
1994 TO 2014:

▲ 3.0%


CHANGE UP TO
RECESSION
1994 TO 2008:


▲ 3.9%

CHANGE SINCE
RECESSION
2008 TO 2014:


▼ 0.9%


FEWER OF US ARE WORKING LONG HOURS AND WE HAVE MORE FLEXIBILITY ...


 **Fewer Canadians are working more than 50 hours per week.** The percentage of Canadians in the labour force who are working more than 50 hours per week has been dropping steadily since its highest point in 1994 of 14.6%. Throughout the mid-2000s, the percentage had levelled off to a little more than 10% of the labour force, but it then dropped continuously following the recession to its lowest point in the 21-year period of 8.7% in 2014. Regardless of the specific reasons for the decline, this downward trend is positive because it reduces the risk of work-related injuries and poor health associated with long hours.

 **Flexible work hours are more widely available.** Whether Canadians are working shorter or longer hours, they increasingly have flexible work hours, allowing them to schedule when their workday begins and ends. The percentage of Canadians working for pay with flexible hours has increased from 35.8% in 1994 to 43.2% in 2010, with every indication that the percentage will continue to rise. While such flexibility does not reduce the number of hours typically required for most work, it does provide employees with a greater sense of control over how they use their time.

... BUT MORE ARE WORKING IRREGULAR HOURS AND SHORTER HOURS NOT BY CHOICE

 **Fewer workers have regular daytime hours.** Since 1994, a smaller percentage of the labour force has regular, Monday to Friday, daytime work hours. By 2014, the percentage had fallen to 66.5% of the labour force from its peak of 74.5% in 1994. This 8% drop means that more working Canadians are working on evenings and weekends, and on rotating schedules, and that fewer people can synchronize their daily routines with the regular timing of needed services and programs as well as other family and community-based activities.

 **The greatest impact is in low income households.** Both men and women have been equally affected by the changes in regular, weekday work hours. Employees in higher income groups generally are more likely to keep regular hours. Working Canadians in households with the lowest annual incomes are much less likely to have regular weekday work hours (60.4%).

 **Women are more likely to be underemployed.** The numbers of Canadians in the labour force who are working less than 30 hours per week not by choice increased significantly following the recession. More people — especially women — are working part-time because more secure, full-time employment is not available. Before 2008, the percentage of such under-employed workers had been falling steadily since 1997. Following the recession, however, the numbers rose steeply (13.1%) and have remained there.



TIME USE

INDICATORS TRACKED 1994 TO 2014

- » Percentage of Canadians 25 to 64 years of age **working over 50 hours per week** at main job
- » Percentage of labour force **working under 30 hours per week, not by choice**
- » Percentage of **labour force with regular, weekday work hours**
- » Percentage of individuals **working for pay with flexible work hours**
- » **Mean workday commute time** for individuals working for pay
- » Percentage of Canadians who report **7 to 9 hours of good quality essential sleep**
- » Average **daily amount of time with friends** (minutes per day)
- » Percentage of 15 to 64 year olds **reporting high levels of time pressure**

CANADIANS CONTINUE TO FEEL THE “TIME CRUNCH”

i **1 in 5 Canadians feel high time pressure.** The percentage of Canadians feeling the “time crunch” has remained largely unchanged over the years, with just under 20% of Canadians 15 to 64 years of age reporting high levels of time pressure. The percentage of Canadians feeling high levels of time pressure peaked in 1998 (21.1%) before decreasing slightly in the years that followed. By 2010, 17.4% of the people felt time pressured. Women and single parents feel the “time crunch” most severely.


TIME SPENT COMMUTING TO WORK CONTINUES TO RISE

i **By 2014, daily commute times were nearing 1 hour for working Canadians.** Between 1994 and 2010, the average daily commute time to and from work for Canadians with paid employment increased steadily every year to 52.0 minutes from 42.6 minutes in 1994. The upward trend is continuing and by 2014, commute times were nearing one hour each day for working Canadians — a 40% increase. Since 1994, this increase represents almost 20 additional minutes per day spent commuting, or about 80 hours per year. In other words, working Canadians are losing about two weeks of their free time each year to commuting.

WE ARE GETTING LESS QUALITY SLEEP

i **Only 1 in 3 Canadians are getting enough sleep.** The percentage of Canadians who report getting between seven and nine hours of good quality sleep has steadily declined since 1994 from 44.2% to 35.9% in 2010. By 2014, barely one-third of Canadians are getting sufficient sleep and are therefore at risk of poorer physical and mental health.

... AND ARE SPENDING LESS AND LESS TIME WITH FRIENDS

 **Time spent with friends each day is down 30%.** Maintaining strong social connections with friends is an important way to help offset the negative impacts of time pressure, sleep loss, and a decreased sense of work-life balance. Yet, the average amount of time spent with friends each day has dropped from just under two hours in the early 1990s to just over 80 minutes by 2014 — a drop of 28.2% over the 21-year time period. This loss of valued social support has been felt more so by women and by adults between the ages of 35 and 64 years — the years when pressures at work are higher and such support is most important.

CONCLUSION

The way in which Canadians spend their time and their perceptions of that time have changed dramatically over the last two 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 the workplace is forcing more Canadians to accept less than desirable working conditions. Increasing commute times and an expansion of the service sector to a 24-hour/7-day cycle — such as banks offering extended hours or grocery stores open 24 hours a day — are big contributors to more people working non-standard hours. Increasing commute times are of concern because as they rise, Canadians feel a decreased sense of work-life balance, more time pressure, greater stress, and lower overall life satisfaction. When commutes get longer, especially in congested traffic, there is a corresponding increase in environmentally damaging outcomes like smog and pollution, which jeopardizes public health.

Today, there are fewer families that have a parent at home to help manage the household, or provide child care and eldercare. These factors have all contributed to feelings of time crunch. The effects of changing time use patterns — coupled with the continued declines in time spent with friends for social support, in formal volunteering, in providing support to others in need, and interactions with our children — point to troubling outcomes for the wellbeing of all Canadians.



ENVIRONMENT

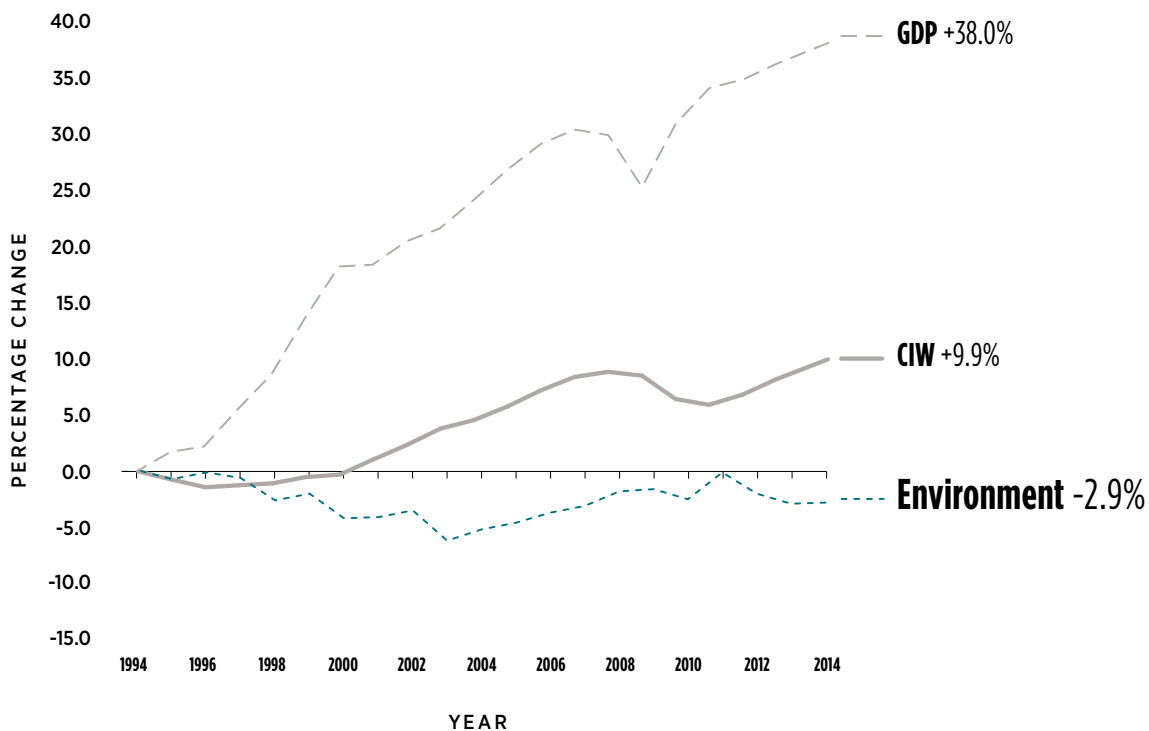
The Environment is the foundation upon which human societies are built and the source of our sustained wellbeing. On a broader level, environmental protection involves the prevention of waste and damage while revitalizing our ecosystems and working towards the sustainability of all of our resources.

The Environment is the basis for our health, our communities, and our economy. Despite its fundamental importance to human existence and the natural resource wealth it provides to Canada, we often fail to appreciate the various ecosystem services provided by nature that sustain human wellbeing. Indeed, how great is our wellbeing if we cannot breathe the air or drink the water?

ENVIRONMENTAL PROGRESS IS FLATLINING

Of all the domains in the CIW framework, only the Environment and Leisure and Culture showed declines over the 21-year period beginning in 1994. Despite some modest improvements after 2003, the Environment domain continues to struggle in the face of numerous pressures. Canada's ecological footprint remains among the largest in the world. We have not made a dent in smog levels and are nowhere near meeting our greenhouse gas emissions targets. Individual Canadians are reducing their residential consumption but decisive action with greater impact is urgently needed.

TRENDS IN THE *ENVIRONMENT*, THE CIW, AND GDP (PER CAPITA) FROM 1994 TO 2014



OVERALL CHANGE IN THE ENVIRONMENT FROM 1994 TO 2014:

▼ 2.9%


CHANGE UP TO RECESSION 1994 TO 2008:

▼ 1.9%

CHANGE SINCE RECESSION 2008 TO 2014:


▼ 1.0%

OUR ECOLOGICAL FOOTPRINT IS MASSIVE — AND UNCHANGED


 **Canada has the world's 4th largest Ecological Footprint per capita.** The Ecological Footprint measures human demand on the earth's ecosystems. Canada's has fluctuated over the years, and by 2014, remains at approximately the same level as 1994. Even though this relative stability reflects variations in our consumption and production efficiency, our biocapacity — the ecosystem's ability to produce useful biological materials and to absorb carbon dioxide emissions — has been steadily dropping over the same time period.¹⁵

GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS REMAIN HIGH

 **We are nowhere near our emissions targets.** Canada is far from the trajectory it needs to reduce emissions to a rate that avoids dangerous climate change. Overall, absolute GHG emissions increased by 11.7% from 1994 to 2014, despite a significant decrease in 2009. The rise in GHG emissions since 2009 is especially troubling given Canada's commitment to reach its Copenhagen target of 17% below 2005 levels by 2020. More positively, GHG emissions per capita have remained largely unchanged since 2009.

 **Three industries produce 60% of Canada's GHGs.** By 2013, 60% of the total GHG emissions in Canada were produced by three sectors: fossil fuel industries (26%), transportation (23%), and electricity production via utilities (11%), which has actually fallen by over 7% since 1990.¹⁶

CANADA REMAINS FOCUSED ON HYDROCARBON ENERGY PRODUCTION

 **There has been an overall increase of 15.6% in primary energy production from 1994 to 2014.** However, virtually all of the growth has come through the exploitation of non-renewable fossil fuels, which make up some 86% of the primary energy available to us. Overall production might have been even greater but for the decline following the 2008 recession, and even greater reductions have occurred after 2014 with the drop in oil prices. Electricity from wind, solar, and tidal sources represented less than 0.5% of overall energy generation.

15. Global Footprint Network. (2016). National Footprint Accounts, 2016 Edition. Retrieved from <http://www.footprintnetwork.org/en/index.php/GFN/page/trends/canada/>

16. Environment and Climate Change Canada. (2016). National Inventory Report 1990-2014: Greenhouse Gas Sources and Sinks in Canada. Canada's Submission to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. Executive Summary. Cat. No. En81-4/1E-PDF. Ottawa, ON. Retrieved from http://www.ec.gc.ca/ges-ghg/662F9C56-B4E4-478B-97D4-BAABE1E6E2E7/2016_NIR_Executive_Summary_en.pdf



ENVIRONMENT

INDICATORS TRACKED 1994 TO 2014

» Ecological Footprint

» Absolute **greenhouse gas emissions** (megatonnes of CO₂ per year)

» **Ground level ozone** (population weighted in parts per billion)

» **Primary energy production** (petajoules)

» **Viable Metal Reserves Index**

» **Residential energy use**

» **Total farm land** (hectares)

» Annual **water yield in Southern Canada** (km³)

Residential use of energy declined by almost 20%.

Canadian households are doing their part by helping to reduce the impact on the environment. Even though where people live has an effect on household energy consumption, by 2011, 82% of Canadians were taking measures to reduce energy consumption, such as using programmable thermostats and clotheslines or drying racks, installing more efficient heating and cooling systems, upgrading a home's insulation, and re-caulking windows and doors.¹⁷

Stocks of viable metal reserves have fallen dramatically since 1994.

Metals provide the foundation for technology, and the decline in reserves signals not just a threat to our economy, but to many aspects of our lives. The over 40% decline in reserves of specific metals (such as copper, nickel, lead, zinc, and gold) after 1994 indicates that our ability to reuse or recycle rather than dispose of the products in which metals are found has not kept pace with their extraction.


AGRICULTURE IN CANADA IS EVOLVING AS FARMLAND SHRINKS


The total land base in Canada devoted to farmland fell by 7.0% between 1994 and 2014.

With increasing urbanization and development putting strains on land available for agriculture, farming has become more resilient. Even as the amount of farmland decreases, the average size of farms is increasing as consolidation occurs — either by choice or by necessity — in response to market forces.

17. Statistics Canada. (2015). Households and the Environment Survey: Energy Use — Analysis. Ottawa, ON. Available online at: <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/11-526-s/2013002/part-partiel-eng.htm>

FRESH WATER YIELDS AND AIR QUALITY FLUCTUATE OVER THE YEARS

 **Our stock of fresh water is vulnerable to climate change.** Over the entire time period from 1994 to 2014, the availability of fresh water in southern Canada is unchanged, but there have been dramatic annual fluctuations. We have seen decreases in fresh water yields of almost 20% in one year followed by increases of up to 15% in subsequent years. Fluctuations are increasingly linked to climate change and its effect on the water cycle, which in turn has an impact on our freshwater supply.

 **Smog levels have not improved.** Air quality as reflected in ground-level ozone — or smog — has fluctuated over the years and remains at 1994 levels. However, it still represents a potential problem for the respiratory health of Canadians and can contribute to crop damage.

CONCLUSION

A sustainable environment is linked very closely to our physical and mental health and to Community Vitality. As climate change unleashes increasingly damaging storms, droughts, fires, and other events, it threatens critical infrastructure and social networks¹⁸. It can affect our food, the air, and our water supply. It is also one of the greatest threats to our economy, and thus, to our Living Standards.

The Environment domain paints a picture of Canada's environment that is largely deteriorating. Some aspects are improving, but most are degrading. The choices we make, especially in facing the challenge of climate change, in terms of protecting, managing, and/or restoring these aspects of the environment will dictate not only the state of our lands and waters, but also will play a significant role in determining our wellbeing as Canadians. Recent plans announced by the federal government in the fall of 2016 to establish a Pan-Canadian framework for reducing greenhouse gas emissions through the pricing of carbon¹⁹ reflects the leadership we need not only for addressing climate change, but also for recognizing how such action can stimulate innovation, build cleaner transportation systems and infrastructure, and create jobs in a greener economy. Canadians expect and understand the need for such leadership, and endorse it.²⁰

While Canada is not a country in crisis, there are warning signs that not all is well when it comes to the environment and our 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.

18. Health Canada. (2009). Understanding the health effects of climate change. Ottawa, ON. Available online at: <http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/ewh-semt/climat/impact/index-eng.php>

19. Government of Canada. (2016). Backgrounder: Pan-Canadian Approach to Pricing Carbon Pollution. Ottawa, ON: Environment and Climate Change Canada. Retrieved from: <http://news.gc.ca/web/article-en.do?nid=1132169>

20. Anderson, B., & Coletto, D. (2016). Climate, Carbon, and Pipelines: A Path to Consensus? Ottawa, ON: Abacus Data. Retrieved from: <http://abacusdata.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Abacus-Release-Carbon-and-Energy-Shift-Oct-2016.pdf>



LEISURE AND CULTURE

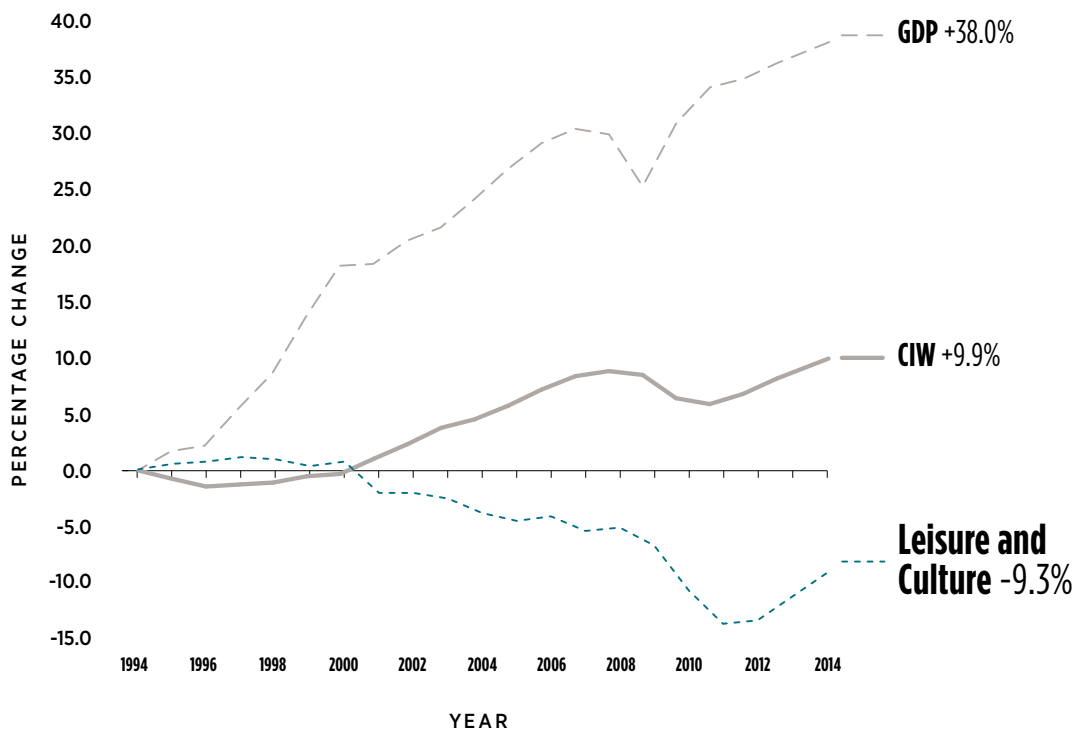
By participating in Leisure and Culture activities, whether arts, culture, or recreation, we contribute to our wellbeing as individuals, to our communities, and to society as a whole. The myriad of activities and opportunities we pursue and enjoy benefit our overall life satisfaction and quality of life.

As forms of human expression, leisure and cultural activities help to more fully define our lives, the meaning we derive from them, and ultimately, our wellbeing. This remains true throughout our lives regardless of age, gender, or social group. The impact of participation in leisure and cultural activities is even greater for people in marginalized groups, such as those living with disabilities, living in poverty, or as members of a minority population.

LEISURE TIME TAKES THE GREATEST HIT

Of all the domains, Leisure and Culture has seen the most dramatic decline since 1994 — six of the eight indicators of leisure and cultural engagement are worse now. The good news is we are more physically active and average attendance at performances is showing signs of recovery after a dramatic post-recession drop. The bad news is that we are spending less time in arts, culture, and social leisure. We are spending less time volunteering for culture and recreation organizations and taking fewer nights away on vacation. Most troubling, household spending on culture and recreation is at its lowest point since 1994. The 2008 recession hit Canadians’ opportunities for Leisure and Culture hard and accelerated the domain’s decline. Only in the past couple of years have we seen it begin to recover very slowly.

TRENDS IN *LEISURE AND CULTURE*, THE CIW, AND GDP (PER CAPITA) FROM 1994 TO 2014



OVERALL CHANGE IN LEISURE AND CULTURE FROM 1994 TO 2014:

▼ 9.3%


CHANGE UP TO RECESSION 1994 TO 2008:


▼ 5.2%

CHANGE SINCE RECESSION 2008 TO 2014:

▼ 4.1%


WE ARE SPENDING LESS TIME ENGAGED IN SOCIAL AND ARTS AND CULTURE ACTIVITIES

 **Canadians are spending less time socialising with others.** The average portion of total time that Canadians spent on the previous day on social leisure activities dropped every year from 16.1% in 1998 to 13.2% in 2014. While an almost 3% drop in time might seem small, it represents almost three-quarters of an hour on a typical day.

 **Arts and culture participation now represents less than 4% of Canadians' time.** Time spent engaged in arts and culture activities dropped every year from 1994 to 2005. On average, Canadians are spending about one hour less each month engaged in the arts. Since 2005, participation has remained comparatively stable.

 **The decline in social leisure activities is felt most by women.** Women spend on average a much greater percentage of their time than men on both social leisure and arts and culture activities, but the drop in social leisure activities from 1998 to 2014 was higher among women; in fact, the decline in social leisure activities by all Canadians was felt mostly by women.

WE VOLUNTEER LESS FOR CULTURE AND RECREATION ORGANIZATIONS ...

 **Volunteering for culture and recreation is down almost 30%.** Overall volunteering in Canada increased until 1998 before dropping off significantly by 2013, but volunteering specifically for culture and recreation organizations has not followed the same trend. The average number of hours devoted to volunteering for culture and recreation organizations dropped by 29.8% from 1997 to 2007, but rebounded slightly following the recession, only to drop again by 2013. Overall, time spent volunteering dropped by 29.5% between 1998 and 2013.

 **Age and gender gaps emerge among volunteers.** Although the amount of time for both men and women has dropped over time, in 2013, men reported on average twice as much time volunteering for culture and recreation organizations as women. Time spent volunteering for culture and recreation is lowest among Canadians between 16 and 35 years of age, but continues to be much higher among those over age 45.



LEISURE AND CULTURE

INDICATORS TRACKED 1994 TO 2014

- » Average percentage of time spent on the previous day in **social leisure activities**
- » Average percentage of time spent on the previous day in **arts and culture activities**
- » Average monthly frequency of participation in **physical activity lasting over 15 minutes**
- » Average attendance per performance at **all performing arts performances**
- » Average number of hours **volunteering for culture and/or recreation organizations**
- » Average visitation per site to **National Parks and National Historic Sites**
- » Average number of nights away on **vacation trips to destinations at least 80km from home**
- » **Expenditures on all culture and recreation** as a percentage of total household expenditures

... AND VACATION TIME COLLAPSED AFTER THE RECESSION

Nights away on vacation are down by almost a third.


The total number of nights Canadians spent away from home on each vacation trip was relatively stable from 1994 to 2008, averaging between 4.3 and 4.6 nights. However, after the 2008 recession, nights away dropped severely by almost a third (32.0%), with nights away averaging less than three by 2014. Canadians have traditionally been able to protect their vacations against fluctuations in the economy, but the recession seriously affected their ability to do so.

BY 2014, HOUSEHOLD SPENDING ON CULTURE AND RECREATION WAS LOWER THAN IN 1994

 **Canadians are spending 15% less on culture and recreation.** Regardless of whether household income went up or down over the years, the percentage of that total income devoted to culture and recreation remained at approximately 5% to 6% from 1997 to 2008. Following the recession, that percentage fell every year to 4.8% by 2014 — the first time it has been below 5% over the entire 21-year period. While a drop of just under 1% in expenditures for culture and recreation activities appears small, it represents an average decline of almost \$6,000 of total household expenditures over that period. Canadians are spending substantially less of their incomes on culture and recreation, down 15.1% from 1994 levels, the bulk of which has occurred in the years since the recession.


BUT MORE POSITIVELY...


CANADIANS ARE RETURNING TO PERFORMANCES AND TO OUR NATIONAL PARKS AND HISTORIC SITES ...

 **Post-recession, Canadians are returning to the arts.** Average attendance per performance fluctuated slightly in the early 2000s, then peaked in 2006 showing a 6.7% increase over 1998 levels. Between 2006 and 2012, and especially since the 2008 recession, attendance has plummeted, dropping by 22.9%. Up to 2014, attendance to the performing arts had begun to recover, but still remains below 2006 levels.

 **Interest in Canada's National Parks and Historic Sites is on the rise.** Annual visits to Canada's National Parks and National Historic Sites remained steady throughout the 1990s, but dropped significantly immediately after 2000. By 2010, they were at their lowest levels since 1994 — a decline of almost 30% in visitation. Several factors contributed to the decline during this period including 9/11, the outbreaks of SARS, West Nile virus, and the economic slump. However, since 2011, visitation has been steadily increasing and saw a significant jump of 11.5% in 2014 following renewed marketing efforts by Parks Canada, especially to attract both new and young Canadians for whom the park experience was unfamiliar.

... AND PARTICIPATION IN PHYSICAL ACTIVITIES CONTINUES TO INCREASE — FOR ALL AGES

 **Canadians engage in physical activity almost daily.** Overall participation in at least 15 minutes of physical activity rose steadily from 21 to almost 28 times per month from 1994 to 2014, for an overall increase of 31.2%. Participation rates in activities such as walking, bicycling, exercising, various sports, gardening, and social dancing have remained fairly consistent since 2003.

 **Younger Canadians are the most active, but older people are also embracing active lifestyles.** Men reported almost two more episodes of physical activity per month than women in 2014, but the rising trends were the same for both genders. While frequency of participation is highest among Canadians under 25 years of age, rates are almost identical for all other age groups from 25 to 74 years. Older adults are increasingly embracing more active lifestyles, which bodes well for the health of Canadians as they approach later life.

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.

There is some comfort in knowing that participation in physical activity has increased for all age groups over recent years, especially given the challenge of an ageing population and increases in chronic diseases such as diabetes and obesity-related health challenges. Especially since the recession, the ability of Canadians to maintain or even enhance their wellbeing through leisure opportunities has been seriously undermined as vacations and expenditures on desired free-time activities and services have both collapsed. 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 a decline in the volunteers on whom they rely and an ongoing shift away from core funding.

These trends bode poorly for the wellbeing of individuals, communities, 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 and accessible venues and opportunities for leisure and culture for all Canadians. Indeed, fundamental human rights to leisure and to participation in a community's cultural life, especially the arts, are enshrined in the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Articles 24 and 27)²¹ as well as its Declaration of the Rights of the Child (Principle 7).²² We must therefore strive to ensure Leisure and Culture engagement is protected and celebrated so the wellbeing of all Canadians is enhanced.

21. United Nations. (1948). The Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Resolution adopted by the General Assembly, A/RES/3/217A. Paris, FR. Available at: <http://www.un-documents.net/a3r217a.htm>

22. United Nations. (1959). Declaration of the Rights of the Child. Resolution adopted by the General Assembly, A/RES/14/1386. Paris, FR. Available at: <http://www.un-documents.net/a14r1386.htm>

CLOSING THE GAP: INNOVATIVE AND INTEGRATED POLICY DIRECTIONS

The myth that economic gains “trickle down” has been exposed.

Undeniably, there is a massive gap between Canada’s GDP and the wellbeing of Canadians — and it has been exacerbated by the 2008 recession. While the economy recovered post-recession, living standards plummeted and have failed to recover. No meaningful progress has been made on the environment. Fewer Canadians report having very good overall and mental health and people are sacrificing the things that often make life worthwhile: leisure, arts and culture, volunteering, and social connections.

We can do better. Reductions in the numbers of people living in poverty and our success in ensuring greater access to education demonstrate that sound public policy can enhance the wellbeing of Canadians. Recent commitments by the federal government to tackle climate change also promise to bring an array of positive benefits to current and future Canadians. So we do have the ability to raise Canadians’ wellbeing in meaningful ways.

WELLBEING AT THE HEART OF POLICY

To reverse worsening trends and to narrow the gap, we need to understand that wellbeing is a system of interconnected systems. If we place wellbeing rather than the problem at the centre of decision-making, we begin to see the possibilities for solutions that cut across those systems. Ultimately, if we place wellbeing at the heart of policy development, then comprehensive, innovative, evidence-based policy emerges that can benefit all Canadians in multiple ways.

This is an invitation to all levels of government and all stakeholders to engage in broader dialogue and collaboration across boundaries, across departments, and across sectors. Our country deserves no less.

CREATING A VISION FOR POSITIVE CHANGE

In the fall of 2016, the CIW invited 18 people with expertise in one or more of the eight domains to a workshop to reflect on potential policy directions that would enhance the wellbeing of all Canadians. They were asked to consider the findings in this report — not only in their own area of expertise, but in all domains — to identify connections among domains, and to propose strategies and policy directions that could address multiple challenges simultaneously.

A central theme that emerged from the discussions was *inequality*, not just in income, but in health, in access to community resources, and in opportunities for leisure and culture. In response, the group recommended policy directions that considered the impact on multiple domains of wellbeing — an innovative and integrated approach to policy that would create multiple benefits for Canadians and reaffirm their core values.

With respect to income inequality, the group identified two specific policy directions:


 a universal basic income and extension of benefits to low-income Canadians.

The group also put forth policy directions to tackle inequality in other, interconnected aspects of Canadians' lives:

 build on the strength of the education domain and develop a Pan-Canadian education strategy;

 focus on an “upstream” approach to health;

 leverage the collaborative power of communities for social change;

 provide universal access to leisure and culture; and

 improve the collection of social and environmental data.

If we place wellbeing at the heart of policy development, then comprehensive, innovative, evidence-based policy emerges that can benefit all Canadians in multiple ways.

PROVIDE A UNIVERSAL BASIC INCOME AS PART OF SOCIAL ASSISTANCE TO REDUCE INCOME INEQUALITY

Basic income can
reduce poverty,
stimulate economic
growth, lower
health care costs,
improve education,
and reduce gender
inequality —
and all with less
bureaucracy.

UNIVERSAL BASIC INCOME

A universal basic income is, in essence, a government policy that guarantees a regular income to all Canadians to help them live a basic and dignified life. Beyond improving living standards, basic income can enhance an individual or a family's ability to make choices that meet their needs. A basic income lifts many Canadians out of poverty and increases access to opportunity — in work, in health, and in community life. Canadians, especially those living with low incomes, would have greater access to, and choice of, opportunities to participate more fully in education, leisure, arts and culture, and community events — all of which also enhance health, community vitality and overall wellbeing.

A basic income can also alleviate time pressure, allowing more time with friends, and creating more time for other important areas of a person's life like child care, eldercare, education, and volunteering. Among the broader social benefits it can provide, basic income can reduce poverty, stimulate economic growth, lower health care costs, improve education, and reduce gender inequality — and all with less bureaucracy.²³

There is widespread support for the idea of a universal basic income among Canadians as well as across political lines, and the debate is now focused on how to implement such a strategy in a cost effective way. While several approaches have been suggested, they fall into two essential types: (1) a fixed amount given to every person regardless of income, assets, employment status, or need; and (2)

23. Forget, E.L., Marando, D., Surman, T., & Urban, M.C. (2016). Pilot lessons: How to design a basic income pilot project for Ontario. Mowat Research #126. Toronto, ON: Mowat Centre. Retrieved from: <https://mowatcentre.ca/pilot-lessons/>

a refundable tax credit where every person receives an amount geared to income — the poorest receive the maximum amount and the richest receive none. This approach is also referred to as a negative income tax, and while it is more complicated to implement, it is seen as less costly. It is also the approach that is garnering the greatest interest and support.²⁴

While a universal basic income would ensure that fewer people slip into poverty, it must not be regarded as a panacea or a replacement for all social assistance programs. Rather, it is a policy to be woven into the existing social assistance fabric. Like other effective assistance programs, such as the Canada Child Benefit and Guaranteed Income Supplement that are lowering the poverty rate among children and seniors, a universal basic income fills gaps that persist and ensures that people ineligible for targeted funds do not fall through holes in the social safety net.²⁵

EXTENSION OF BENEFITS TO LOW INCOME CANADIANS

By integrating basic income into the existing system of assistance programs, it would fill gaps in support that inevitably emerge as a result of changes in broader economic and social circumstances. However, many such benefits are not currently available to low income Canadians. For example, as part-time and precarious work becomes more common, fewer Canadians have access to employment-based benefits that provide them with health and dental care, pensions, and other benefits. Those most at risk are women, single parents, Indigenous peoples, racialized groups, and people with disabilities. These inequalities challenge our Canadian values of equity and fairness for all. Extension of benefits to low income Canadians would help protect vulnerable people from the risks associated with the loss of those benefits.²⁶

When Canadians cannot access a basic income and the benefits they need, their physical and mental health suffers; the risk of housing and food insecurity increases; participation in community, arts, culture and recreation declines; and stress is magnified. The effect on individual wellbeing cannot be overstated, nor should the impact on the community be underestimated.

Taken together, these two policy directions indicate that we must:



introduce a universal basic income for all Canadians as part of the social assistance system; and



further extend health and social benefits to low and modest income Canadians.

24. Macdonald, D. (2016). A policymaker's guide to basic income. Ottawa, ON: Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives. Retrieved from: <https://www.policyalternatives.ca/publications/reports/policymaker%E2%80%99s-guide-basic-income>

25. Zon, N. (2016). Would a universal basic income reduce poverty? Policy Brief. Toronto, ON: Maytree. Retrieved from: <http://maytree.com/policy-and-insights/publications/policy-brief-basic-income.html>

26. Granofsky, T., Corak, M., Johal, S., & Zon, N. (2015). Renewing Canada's social architecture. Framing paper. Toronto, ON: Mowat Centre. Retrieved from: <https://mowatcentre.ca/renewing-canadas-social-architecture/>

ADOPT A PAN-CANADIAN EDUCATION STRATEGY

Education has shown the greatest progress over the years. Given its importance to so many other aspects of Canadians' lives, it is an area that should be leveraged to realize a number of wellbeing goals. By building on the existing education infrastructure and maximizing the power of curricula, Canadians' preparation for life, work, and their full participation in society can be enhanced.

The means to achieve these outcomes is a Pan-Canadian education strategy spanning from early years to later life, creating opportunities for formal education as well as life-long learning and skills development. The strategy would recognize and celebrate education as process throughout life that begins informally within the family, and then continually transitions through early childhood education, elementary and secondary school, various post-secondary educational opportunities, and ongoing adult learning.

The objective for the strategy is three-fold:

1. Increase the availability and affordability of formal and informal learning opportunities at all levels of education;
2. Enhance curricula to strengthen its links to wellbeing outcomes; and
3. Reduce interprovincial barriers to both education and labour opportunities, allowing greater cross-country mobility for Canadians.

The strategy includes elements at all levels of education:

Early Childhood Education

- » Make play-based education an integral part of the public education system to all children ages 3 to 6 regardless of where they live in Canada.²⁷

Kindergarten to Grade 12

- » Strengthen learning opportunities in: civics education; physical, arts and cultural education; human rights education; environmental stewardship; and social cohesion throughout the curricula.
- » Integrate school and community leadership development and training opportunities to supplement civics education.
- » Include opportunities for successful development of students' social and emotional skills and wellbeing.

²⁷ Council of Ministers of Education Canada. (2012). CMEC statement on play-based learning. Toronto, ON: Council of Ministers of Education Canada. Retrieved from http://www.cmec.ca/Publications/lists/publications/attachments/282/play-based-learning_statement_EN.pdf

Post-secondary

- » Ensure affordable post-secondary education and increase access to financial support, including subsidies for postsecondary apprenticeships, skills development, and trades, and interest-free student loans.
- » Extend affordable and available child care to university and college students with young children.

Training

- » Improve seamless transfer of students across provinces and territories to ensure continuity and enhancement of educational experiences.
- » Reconcile jurisdictional barriers to improve mobility of qualified teachers across provinces and territories.

A necessary companion to this strategy is to increase availability and affordability of regulated centre-based child care at the national level. Child care provides important developmental benefits for pre-schoolers. It improves children’s wellbeing, contributes to future academic success, helps to create a foundation for lifelong learning, and makes learning outcomes more equitable. In addition, available child care supports gender equity by providing more opportunities to women to enter the labour force, reduces the risk of poverty, and importantly, reduces inequality.²⁸ Therefore, child care resources should be considered as a broader component within a Pan-Canadian strategy on education that leads to greater wellbeing for all.

Education is a key determinant for health, living standards, participation in democracy and cultural activity. Positive impacts of education are also felt in the individual’s family — often for generations. Further, when schools become a community hub offering programs before and after school, undertaking community partnerships and hosting events, the positive effects are amplified in community belonging and vitality. Health, culture and recreation are also enhanced.

A Pan-Canadian dialogue regarding global competencies in schools is already occurring at the Council of Ministers of Education, which has produced framework with a set of “guiding principles for education policy and curriculum to support the development of quality early learning programs.”²⁹ By developing a national education strategy, we would facilitate progress towards many important wellbeing outcomes.

Child care supports gender equity by providing more opportunities to women to enter the labour force, reduces the risk of poverty, and importantly, reduces inequality

28. Friendly, M. (2016). Early childhood education and care as a social determinant of health. In D. Raphael (Ed.), *Social determinants of health: Canadian perspectives* (3rd ed., pp. 192-217). Toronto, ON: Canadian Scholars’ Press.

29. CMEC Early Childhood Learning and Development Working Group. (2014). *CMEC early learning and development framework*. (p. 4). Toronto, ON: Council of Ministers of Education Canada. Retrieved from <http://cmec.ca/Publications/Lists/Publications/Attachments/327/2014-07-Early-Learning-Framework-EN.pdf>

FOCUS ON AN “UPSTREAM” APPROACH FOR HEALTH PROMOTION

The places and conditions within which we live, learn, work, and play are the most important determinants of our health.³⁰ In turn, our physical and mental health affects our ability to work, our ability to learn, to engage fully with our friends and in our communities. Regrettably, our current health care system was not designed to consider these factors. It focuses principally on acute care and a “downstream approach” to restore health once it has been lost. Conversely, an “upstream approach” could prevent illness, disease, and injury before they take hold.

The places and conditions within which we live, learn, work, and play are the most important determinants of our health.



Upstream thinking shifts the focus to the conditions and circumstances in which Canadians are living, and identifies those factors that contribute most to poor health. Once identified, health promotion and care decisions are made to minimize the impact of those factors before they affect people’s health. Among the most critical factors associated with poor health are living in poverty and limited access to education. By acting on the policy directions already mentioned — universal basic income and a Pan-Canadian education strategy — we take an important step towards upstream thinking for health promotion.

An upstream approach provides broader access to a range of community-based health and social supports and helps reduce pressure on the primary health care system. It provides Canadians with support in settings that are more convenient and accessible to them, such as their homes, community health centres, and their places of work and school. A community-based health model has many associated benefits that speak directly to the core values of Canadians. Canadians value more independence in their self-care, which provides a greater sense of comfort, control, and dignity; greater focus on health promotion and illness prevention; and consequently, better health outcomes.³¹ Ultimately, an upstream approach can reduce health inequities.

30. Raphael, D. (Ed.). (2016). *Social determinants of health: Canadian perspectives* (3rd ed.). Toronto, ON: Canadian Scholars’ Press.

31. MacIntosh, E., Rajakulendran, N., & Salah, H. (2014). *Transforming health: Towards decentralized and connected care*. MaRS Market Insights. Toronto, ON: MaRS Discovery District. Retrieved from: <https://www.marsdd.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/Sep15-MaRS-Whitepapers-SmartHealth.pdf>

To encourage the shift to upstream thinking in the promotion of the long-term health of Canadians, we must:

-  adopt a proactive and preventative approach to health care that identifies and addresses social and economic factors contributing to poor health; and
-  expand access by creating a comprehensive community-based network of health and social supports that enables people — especially those facing barriers to better health — to access its benefits where they live. Such a network would include better access to:
 - health care alternatives, such as nurse practitioners, family health teams, nutritionists, and social workers, for a more holistic approach to health promotion and care — regardless of where people live, their income level, or life circumstances;
 - supports and services for people in their homes and their communities, reducing the reliance on long-term care facilities;
 - mental health services in various settings throughout the community; and
 - supports for both formal care providers and informal, family caregivers to ensure the maintenance of their physical and mental health and to enhance their ability to participate fully in the community.

There is already some evidence that an upstream approach can be an effective, efficient, and affordable means of delivering health and social support. Community Health Centres (CHCs) across Canada partner with other agencies and with the community to fully integrate a wide range of health promotion and community development services. These services proactively help persons in need to overcome barriers to greater wellbeing attributable to social and economic factors like income levels, access to shelter/housing, education, language, and geographic location. While CHCs have been very successful in meeting the health needs of vulnerable populations and in managing complex and multiple health concerns, too few Canadians have access to them. Extending the CHC model and network would serve to shift the focus to upstream thinking for health promotion, reduce inequities, and improve overall wellbeing.

LEVERAGE COMMUNITY RESOURCES THROUGH COLLABORATION

Canadian communities are the primary settings to enhance our access to arts and recreation, nutritious food and affordable housing, accessible and affordable public transit, and to foster civic engagement. The wellbeing of citizens and communities can collectively be enhanced through innovative social planning and enhanced urban design that embraces sustainability³², the provision of more built and natural public spaces, and the walkability of neighbourhoods. The path to realize these outcomes at the community level is by building collaboration and cooperation among stakeholders, to break down the silos between sectors, and to experiment with social innovation. By investing in and sharing resources, both human and physical, we are better positioned to achieve a shared vision of enhanced individual and community quality of life.

Collaboration and cooperation among community agencies and organizations is critical in leading to social change and helping build community vitality. To bring about such change, organizations must abandon operating in isolation, regardless of how laudable their goals might be, and work towards solving complex problems through collective impact — a process that “focuses on the relationships between organizations and the progress toward shared objectives.”³³ Community-based organizations and agencies all share a common vision of wanting the highest quality of life for citizens and this vision can be the impetus for them to work more collaboratively. Working together, they achieve the social change they desire.

By investing in and sharing resources, both human and physical, we are better positioned to achieve a shared vision of enhanced individual and community quality of life.

32. Hicks, C.C., Levine, A., Agrawal, A., Basurto, X., Breslow, S.J., Carothers, C, ... , & Levin, P.S. (2016). Engage key social concepts for sustainability: Social indicators, both mature and emerging are underused. *Science*, 352(6281), 38-40.

33. Kania, J., & Kramer, M. (2011). Collective impact. *Stanford Social Innovation Review*, Winter, 36-41. Available at: https://ssir.org/images/articles/2011_WI_Feature_Kania.pdf

Five conditions are necessary for organizations to achieve collective impact:

1. common agenda — setting goals based on a shared vision;
2. shared measurement — gathering and sharing the evidence necessary to monitor progress;
3. mutually reinforcing activities — building on unique contributions of each organization;
4. continuous communication — building trust, reinforcing motives, and assuring progress; and
5. backbone support — creating and defining the leadership necessary to foster and maintain cooperation.³⁴

Municipal governments must also play a role. By placing wellbeing at the heart of municipal policy and by providing political leadership, municipalities can support collaborative efforts to achieve community quality of life — something governments also aspire to, but frequently have difficulty achieving alone. At the same time, not-for-profits, voluntary groups, funders, and the private sector can advocate with municipal governments for programs and services and policy development that address their common agenda and ultimately enhance wellbeing in a number of domains simultaneously.

By embracing collaboration and leveraging local resources to enhance wellbeing, municipalities can:

-  involve citizens and community organizations more fully in planning, developing, and sharing important assets like schools, libraries, and community centres; parks, trails, and bike lanes; open spaces for the arts and public meetings; and alternative land uses like urban agriculture;
-  consider how the natural and built environment affects many aspects of wellbeing across all domains, and working towards the development of greener buildings, more walkable communities, mixed use neighbourhoods, and integrated spaces where residents can meet, plan, and play;
-  provide affordable and accessible public transit as a pathway towards improved health, greater engagement in leisure and cultural opportunities, access to better food and employment, reduced greenhouse gas emissions, and more effective time use for improved work-life balance;
-  ensure all citizens, regardless of social or economic status, have access to opportunities for decent work; secure food and housing; access to leisure, arts and culture; enriched civic engagement; and
-  monitor progress towards wellbeing goals through the regular collection of community-based data to establish baseline evidence of local needs, to identify gaps in access to opportunities that support wellbeing, and to guide local policy and initiatives especially in support of marginalized groups that might be falling behind.

34. Kania, J., & Kramer, M. (2013). Embracing emergence: How collective impact addresses complexity. *Stanford Social Innovation Review*, January, 1-7. Available at: https://ssir.org/pdf/Embracing_Emergence_PDF.pdf

PROVIDE UNIVERSAL ACCESS TO LEISURE AND CULTURE

Everyone has the right to rest and leisure, including reasonable limitation of working hours and periodic holidays with pay.³⁵

Leisure should be regarded not just as a basic human right, but should be considered a public good.

Our time spent in leisure and culture is often when our lives are most fulfilling, when we can really be ourselves with friends, family, and people in the community, and pursue activities and interests that enrich our quality of life. Participation in culture, leisure, and recreational activities not only enriches us personally, but collectively. It is inevitably social in nature — it brings us into regular contact with others who share similar interests and values. These connections help build social cohesion by creating stronger ties to the community, nurturing more trusting relationships, and fostering greater understanding of diverse groups within the community. Unfortunately, as more people struggle to make ends meet, face precarious work, and worry about their homes and families, leisure is often sacrificed.

Yet we know the time spent volunteering or participating in leisure, culture, and recreation is important to our physical and mental health, to our social ties, to our ability to learn and grow, and to our sense of belonging. Recreation is a powerful venue to integrate new Canadians or marginalized people. The public places where we frequently engage in leisure are where trust, reciprocity, and friendships grow. Spending more time with friends in activities we enjoy alleviates stress and the feeling of time crunch. Therefore, a more than 9% drop in the Leisure and Culture domain is of particular concern because it represents where our wellbeing can be boosted the most.

To help reverse the downward trend over the past 21 years, leisure should be regarded not just as a basic human right, but should be considered a public good. Leisure is not something to be bought and sold in the marketplace. It is a fundamental expression of who we are and should be accessible to everyone regardless of their circumstances. All Canadians should have equal opportunity to freely engage in leisure and culture as a fundamental means to enhance individual and community wellbeing.

35. United Nations. (1948). Article 24. In The Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Resolution adopted by the General Assembly, A/RES/3/217A. Paris, FR. Available at: <http://www.un-documents.net/a3r217a.htm>

Consequently, to reverse the decline in Leisure and Culture, governments need to:

-  ensure public recreation programs, services, and facilities are accessible to everyone in the community by, for example, eliminating or subsidizing user fees for people in low income and broadening opportunities for marginalized groups;
-  maintain and extend funding to upgrade parks, recreation, and arts infrastructure in our communities;
-  enhance opportunities for children's active and outdoor play;
-  support the development of non-traditional cultural and recreational activities to celebrate diversity and foster social connections;
-  expand the availability and accessibility of public built and natural open space to ensure new and redeveloped communities include an integrated network of spaces where citizen engagement, social interactions, and play can occur; and
-  leverage community resources by supporting collaboration among community groups and public agencies that identify local needs and facilitate access to leisure and culture opportunities, especially for marginalized groups and new Canadians.

These policy directions align with *A Framework for Recreation in Canada 2015: Pathways to Wellbeing*³⁶ developed by the Canadian Parks and Recreation Association and the Interprovincial Sport and Recreation Council, and subsequently endorsed by federal and provincial ministers responsible for sport, physical activity and recreation in Canada. The Framework envisions recreation as a pathway to individual and community wellbeing, as well as the wellbeing of natural and built environments. Amongst its goals, the Framework advocates for active living, greater inclusion and access to recreation, supportive environments that encourage participation and community building, and making connections between people and nature.

An indication that the federal government recognizes the importance of supporting leisure and culture for all Canadians is a recent announcement to ensure that funding is available to support the recreation and cultural infrastructure within Canadian communities. For example, the New Building Canada Fund, part of which has committed approximately \$13 billion to support projects of national, regional, and local significance, was extended in April 2016 to include culture, recreation, and tourism infrastructure. In addition, beginning in May 2016, the Canada Cultural Spaces Fund began investing \$162.8 billion for cultural infrastructure thereby improving the physical conditions necessary for artistic creativity and innovation, and ultimately, better access for all Canadians to performing, visual, and media arts, museums, galleries, and heritage displays. When such funds are made available, communities should embrace collaboration in order to bring multiple sectors together — and hence, stakeholders of different domains of wellbeing — and leverage the necessary resources which will lead to social change.

36. Canadian Parks and Recreation Association / Interprovincial Sport and Recreation Council. (2015). *A Framework for Recreation in Canada. 2015: Pathways to Wellbeing*. Ottawa, ON: Canadian Recreation and Parks Association. Available at: <http://www.cpra.ca/main.php?action=cms.framework>





Evidence-based decision-making is critical to ensure that policy development and implementation are guided by the most current and relevant indicators of wellbeing.

IMPROVE SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL DATA COLLECTION

We are living in an era of “big data.” Wearable computers literally track our every step and breath. Credit card companies monitor every transaction and our cell phones use a satellite-based global positioning system to map our every move. Yet Canada and the provinces lack an integrated system of comprehensive social and environmental data that would provide a clearer picture of our wellbeing. Data should be collected across the country regularly, in a standardized format, and at a geographic scale that would allow us to monitor progress from the national to the local level in all domains of wellbeing.


Evidence-based decision-making is critical to ensure that policy development and implementation are guided by the most current and relevant indicators of wellbeing. That’s why we must place greater priority on the regular collection and publication of high quality, reliable data. Statistics Canada, Environment Canada, and other federal agencies do provide some excellent data sources. Unfortunately, there are few robust, multiyear, and fully accessible national data sets on a wide array of social and environmental aspects that affect our lives.

Without such data, our efforts to report on changes to quality of life in Canada are hampered. We therefore must:

-  place greater priority on the regular collection of high quality, reliable social and environmental data to better inform decision-making and the development of new policy;
-  ensure the continued availability and accessibility of reliable, valid, and timely data on all aspects of wellbeing;
-  gather data from the national to the local level to ensure the monitoring of progress in wellbeing at all geographic scales and sufficient comparability; and
-  further develop systems to integrate administrative data and national survey data to provide more comprehensive and robust data sources without increasing the number of surveys or the redundancy in information gathered.

Even if these recommendations are implemented, a major gap still exists in our understanding of the wellbeing of all Canadians. Specifically, comprehensive data are lacking concerning Canada's Indigenous peoples. Many national surveys exclude persons living on reserves and in designated settlements within the provinces. They also frequently do not include the people living in Nunavut, Yukon, and the Northwest Territories. Consequently, their voices are rarely included in national profiles of Canadians. Given that Canada's Indigenous peoples face severe challenges to their health, living standards, and opportunities for quality education, their lack of representation in our data — and hence, our understanding — is unacceptable.

Better data — and better understanding of it through ongoing relationship and trust building — would inform policy designed to improve wellbeing for all Canadians.

-  Improve the coverage, quality, and availability data on the wellbeing of Indigenous peoples.

CONCLUSION

The CIW promotes constructive and informed 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 a higher quality of life for all Canadians.

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. By looking at the CIW findings through a policy lens and considering how change occurs within a complex system of interconnected domains, we can make better decisions about how to improve the quality of life for everyone. We can determine how the various levels of government, the private sector, the community, and non-profit sectors can work collaboratively on improving those areas where we have lost ground since 1994, while building on those areas that have improved during the same period. The inter-related nature of the CIW domains requires this level of cooperation to achieve the best outcomes for all Canadians. Doing so will guide the development and implementation of good public policy and will measure progress on what really matters to Canadians for years to come.



APPENDIX A: GDP: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

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 the aggregate production of an economy — meaning the value of all final goods and services — produced in a country in a given period of time. More technically, GDP can be determined in three ways, all of which should, in principle, give the same result. The three approaches to measuring GDP are: (1) the production or value-added approach, (2) the income approach, and (3) the final expenditure approach.³⁷ To illustrate, using the expenditure approach, GDP is:

GDP = private consumption + gross investment + government spending + (exports - imports)

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 expenditures 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 earlier in Figure 1, 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.

37. Statistics Canada. (2008). Guide to the income and expenditure accounts. Catalogue no. 13-017-x. Ottawa, ON: Ministry of Industry.

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. As early as 1934, Nobel laureate Simon Kuznets recognized that “The welfare of a nation can scarcely be inferred from a measurement of national income” such as that defined by GDP.³⁸

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 how well or poorly we are doing in a wide variety of other economic, social, health, and environmental determinants that shape our country, our communities, and our everyday lives. 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.

38. Kuznets, S. (1934). National income, 1929-1932. 73rd US Congress, 2d Session, Senate Document no. 124, p. 7.



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:

... Gross National Product counts air pollution and cigarette advertising, and ambulances to clear our highways of carnage. It counts special locks for our doors and jails for the people who break them. It counts the destruction of the redwood and the loss of our natural wonder in chaotic sprawl ... Yet the Gross National Product does not allow for the health of our children, the quality of their education, or the joy of their play. 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 ... It 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.³⁹

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.

39. Kennedy, R.F. (1968, March 18). Remarks of Robert F. Kennedy at the University of Kansas. Lawrence, KS. Retrieved from <http://www.jfklibrary.org/Research/Ready-Reference/RFK-Speeches/Remarks-of-Robert-F-Kennedy-at-the-University-of-Kansas-March-18-1968.aspx>



APPENDIX B:

THE CIW: METHODS

The base year selected for monitoring trends in wellbeing is 1994, the year the National Population Health Survey began. In this report, we update on trends until 2014, which is the most recent for which the latest full set of data across all eight domains are available.

The indicators used in the Index are taken principally from data sources provided by Statistics Canada. National surveys conducted over time from which data are drawn include the Canadian Community Health Survey, the Labour Force Survey, various cycles of the General Social Survey (e.g., Time Use, Social Networks and Identity, Victimization), Travel Survey of Residents of Canada, and the Survey of Labour and Income Dynamics. Indicators also are taken from data sources provided by Environment Canada, the Board of Internal Economy, Elections Canada, and Parks Canada. Finally, selected indicators are provided by independent groups and organizations such as the OECD, the Global Footprint Network, CIBC, Canadian Centre for Economic Analysis, and the Childcare Resource and Research Unit.

With many of the indicators measured in very different ways, a first step is to set each indicator to a value of 100 at the base year. Percentage changes are then calculated for each subsequent year with positive reflecting some improvement in wellbeing while negative percentage changes indicate a deterioration. This approach applies to all 64 indicators as well as the eight domains, and ultimately, the CIW composite index.

All of the indicators are weighted equally. 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 weighting 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 this time.

Throughout the report, trends for the eight domains are presented and specific indicators highlighted to reflect how Canadians' wellbeing has changed — for better and for worse — over the 21-year period from 1994 to 2014. The domains are presented in the order reflecting how well we have progressed since 1994 — from the greatest increase in Education to the continuing deterioration of Leisure and Culture. Along with tracking changes in wellbeing, we are able to see where the impact of the 2008 recession was felt most.

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