

Reducing inequalities by focusing on wellbeing: Evidence from the *Canadian Index of Wellbeing*

Bryan Smale, Ph.D.

Canadian Index of Wellbeing
University of Waterloo

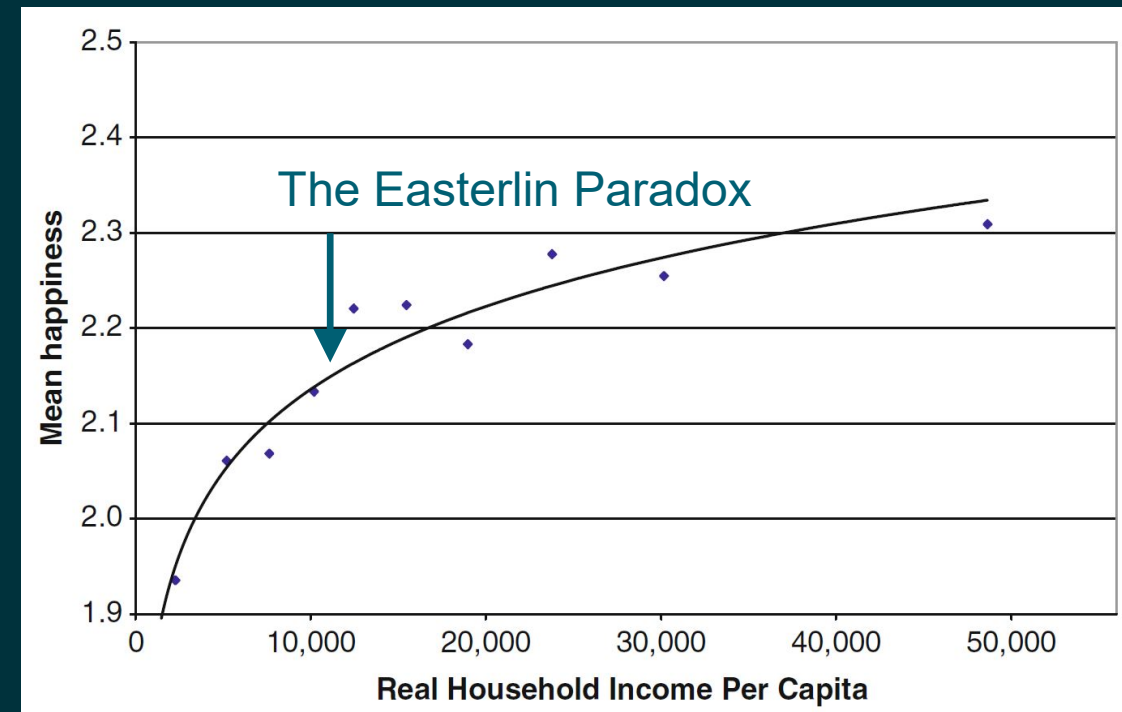
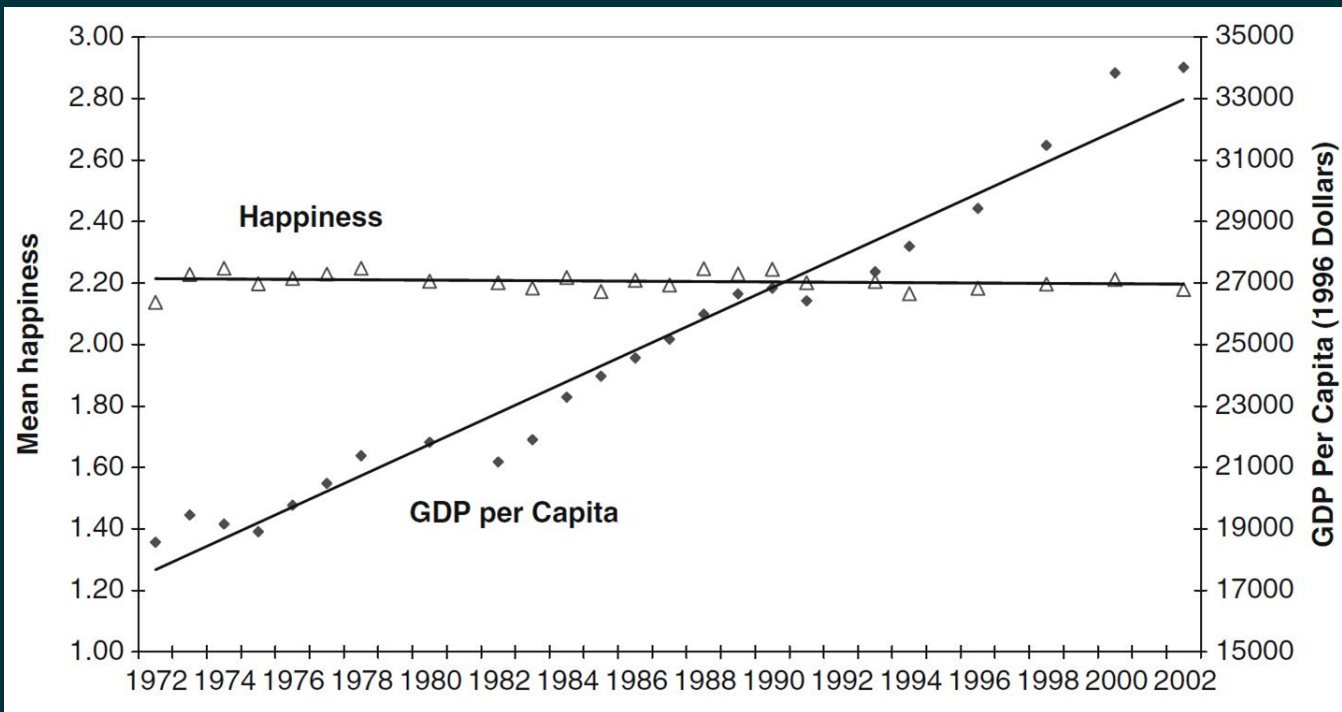


24th Annual PPX Symposium
Adaptation: Planning and Performance throughout and beyond COVID
May 26-27, 2021 [Online]

“Beyond GDP”

A prevailing belief has been that, as a country's GDP increases so too does the quality of life of its citizens.

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



“Beyond GDP” – National and international initiatives

International

OECD’S *Better Life* Index
Human Development Index (HDI)
World Happiness Report
Social Progress Index



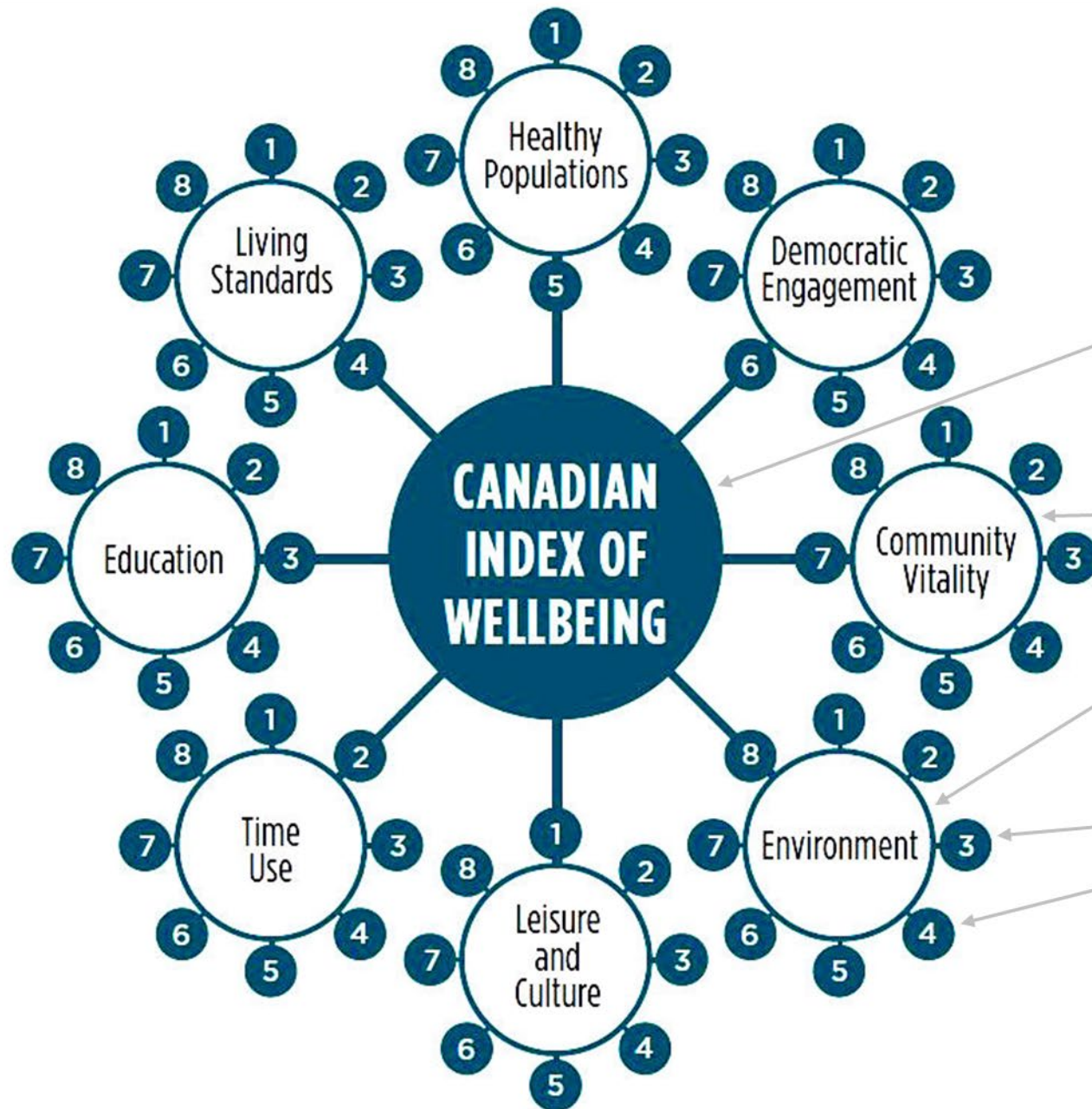
National

Bhutan – Gross National Happiness Index
New Zealand – Wellbeing Budget (Treasury)
Scotland – National Performance Framework
Iceland – Indicators for Measuring Well-being

Similar to many international and national initiatives, the CIW emerged in response to the pre-occupation with GDP as a measure of not just economic progress, but of **social progress**.

The CIW shifts the focus to our **wellbeing** – how are we *really* doing? – and reveals wellbeing inequities.

Unlike other initiatives, the CIW is based on the **advice of Canadians** – what *they* feel contributes to the quality of their lives.



CIW Composite Index
64 indicators consolidated
into a single index

8 Domains

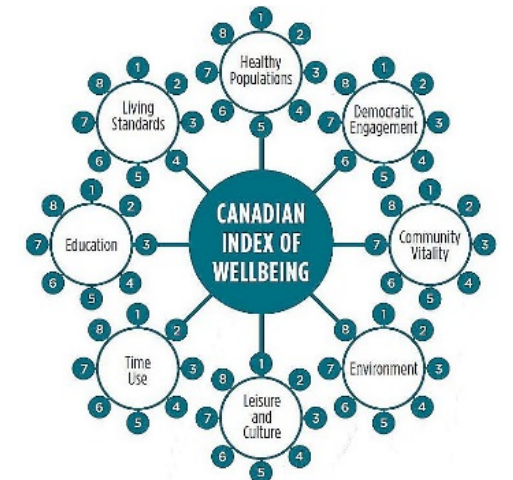
8 Indicators
in each domain

CIW vision

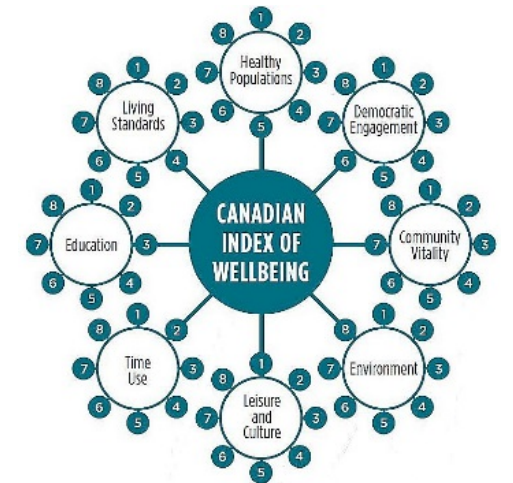
A circular word cloud featuring various sustainability-related terms. The words are arranged in a circular pattern, with some terms appearing more frequently and in larger fonts than others. The terms include: EQUITY, DEMOCRACY, INCLUSION, DIVERSITY, FAIRNESS, HEALTH, SECURITY, ECONOMIC, SUSTAINABILITY, and VALUES. The words are in different shades of blue and green, and their sizes vary, creating a dynamic and visually engaging composition.

Canadian Index of Wellbeing

Focus groups with Canadians to identify domains...



Research teams develop concepts and identify indicators...



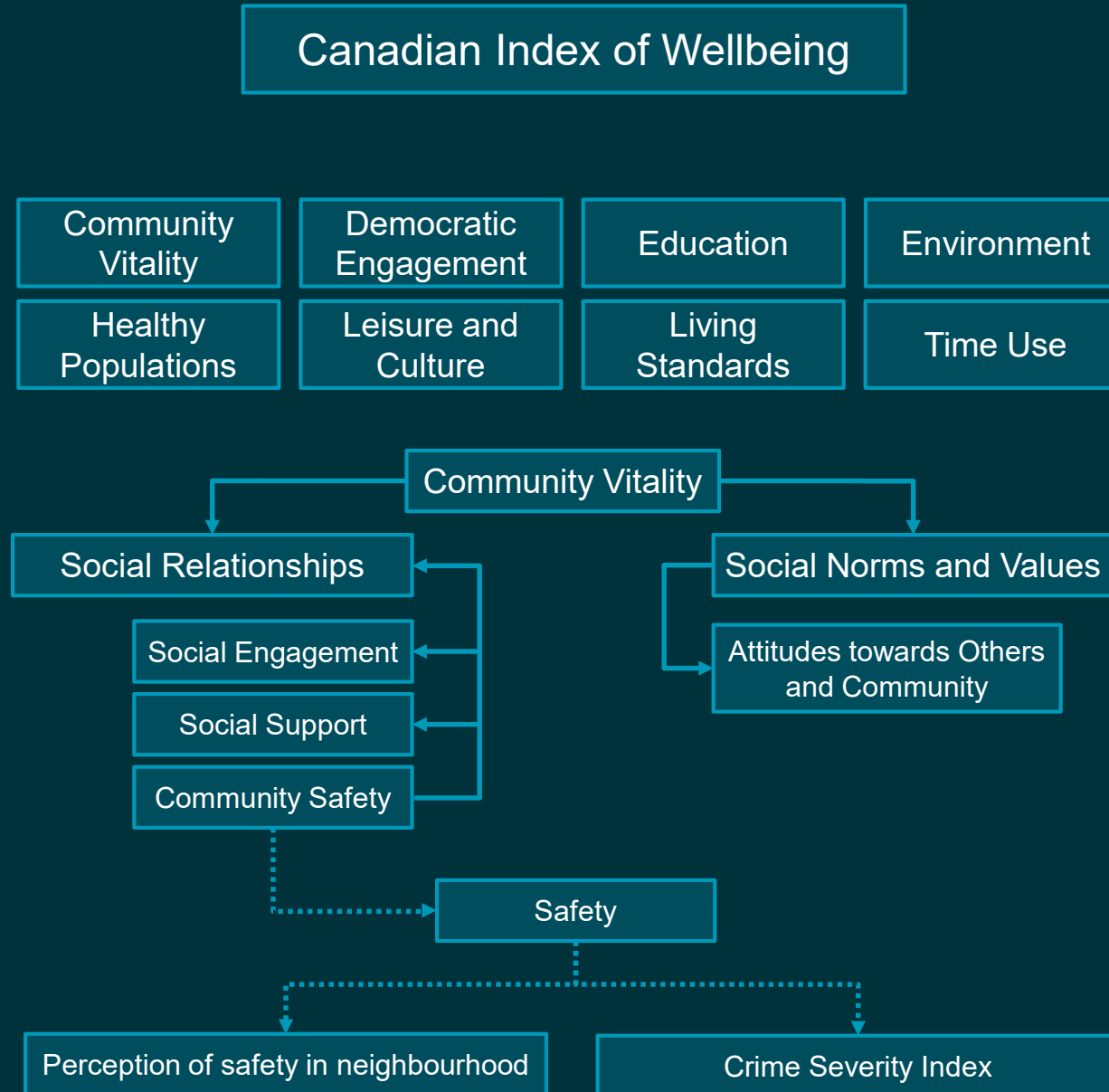
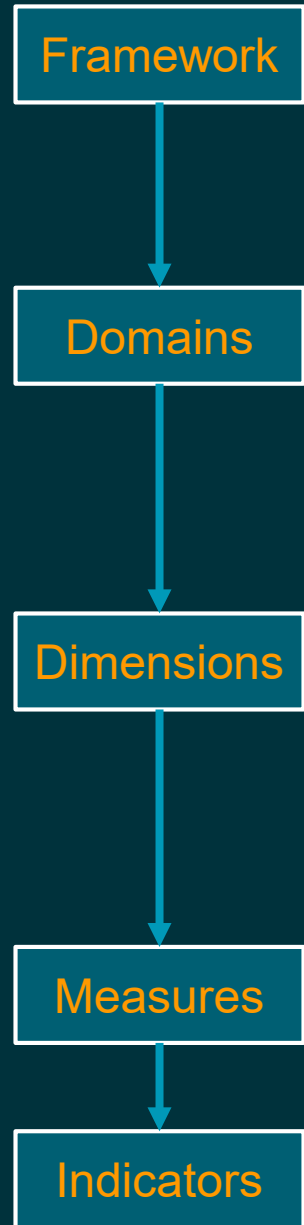
Indicator selection criteria

Essential:

- Conceptual fit to domain
- Clear contributor to or detractor from wellbeing
- Validity and reliability
- Gathered regularly and consistently over time
- Complete or (reasonably complete) coverage of geography
- Comparable across different jurisdictions and groups
- Desirable: (1) objective/subjective indicators, and (2) positive and negative indicators

Data challenges:

Availability of *valid* and *reliable* data sources ← economic data are abundant and gathered more regularly



COMMUNITY VITALITY

This domain looks at the quality of life we live in. It tells us how safe we feel, and how we are doing or becoming socially.

Domain components

The conceptual model is comprised of four dimensions. The first category includes three dimensions of this domain: *social support and community safety*, *Social Norms and Values*, and *towards others and community*.

Social Relationships

Social engagement

Social engagement refers to a range of activities in which people participate for their own enjoyment or benefit, or for the benefit of others in their community. People's sense of belonging to a community, their attitudes towards others, the strength of relationships with family and friends, and opportunities to develop and participate in community activities have been shown to foster individual and community wellbeing.

Social support

Social support describes the support people receive from friends and neighbours. It includes emotional and informational support.

Community safety

Community safety is about feeling safe from harm, and feeling safe in your community.

Dimension

Measure

Indicator

CANADIAN INDEX OF WELLBEING

Canadian Index of Wellbeing home

About the Canadian Index of Wellbeing >

What we do >

Framework

Domains and indicators

How it works >

Research community >

Community of users >

Reports >

Resources >

News >

Canadian Index of Wellbeing » [What we do](#) » [Domains and indicators](#) »

Percentage of population that reports very or somewhat strong sense of belonging to community

What it measures

Dimension: Social engagement

This indicator represents the proportion of the population who report a *somewhat strong* or *very strong* sense of belonging to their community. Sense of belonging reflects the social and environmental connections people have made and a sense of pride in their community, province, and country.

Why this matters

Research shows that a strong sense of community is linked to high levels of social participation and social engagement, stronger feelings of safety and security, and better health overall.

HOW ARE CANADA *REALLY* DOING?

THE 2016 CIW NATIONAL REPORT



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



CIW Composite Index
64 indicators consolidated
into a single CIW average

8 Domains

8 Indicators
in each domain

WE NEED TO FOCUS IS MEANINGFUL TO

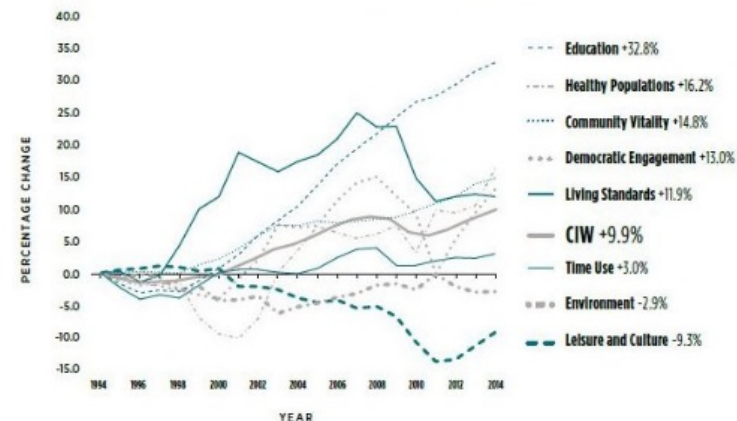
For more than 10 years, the Canadian Index of Wellbeing (CIW) at the University of Waterloo, has provided comprehensive analyses of what we are really doing in the areas that matter most. It is based on almost 200 reliable data points primarily from Statistics Canada. The CIW framework provides 64 indicators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

The CIW takes a systems approach and identifies key leverage points for positive impact on our lives across several domains — Community Vitality, Democratic Engagement, Environment, Healthy Populations, Leisure and Culture, Living Standards, Time Use, and Education. When we tackle change as part of the system, the impact can translate across a number of domains and to overall wellbeing.

In this 2016 CIW report, we see that well Canadians are really doing in all domains from

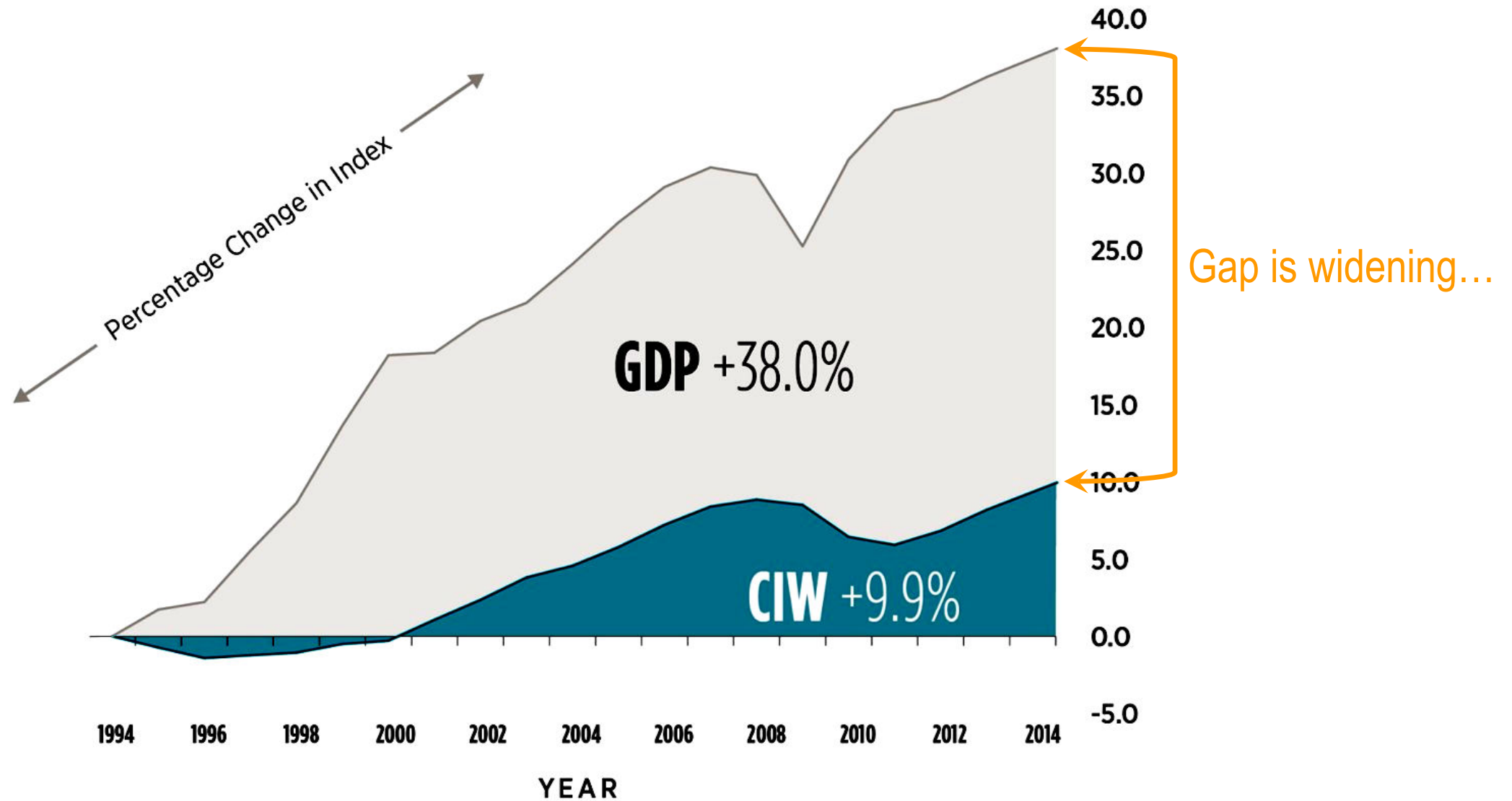
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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

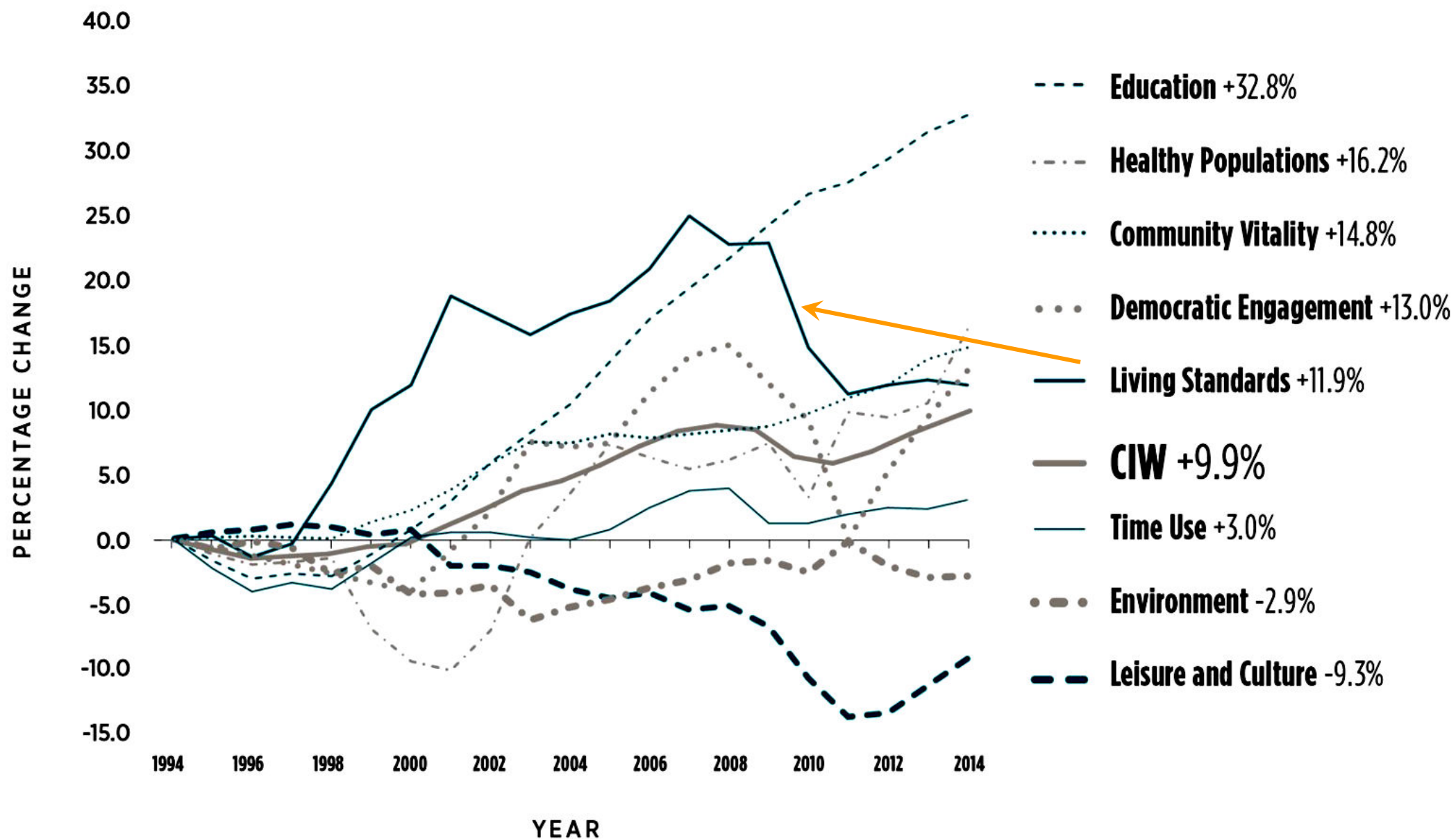


Time Use indicators show we are spending almost 30% less time with our friends. Our commute times to work are longer and only 35% of us are getting enough sleep — down from 44% in 1994. Gains in the domain come from fewer people working more than 50 hours each week and more people with flexible work 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.

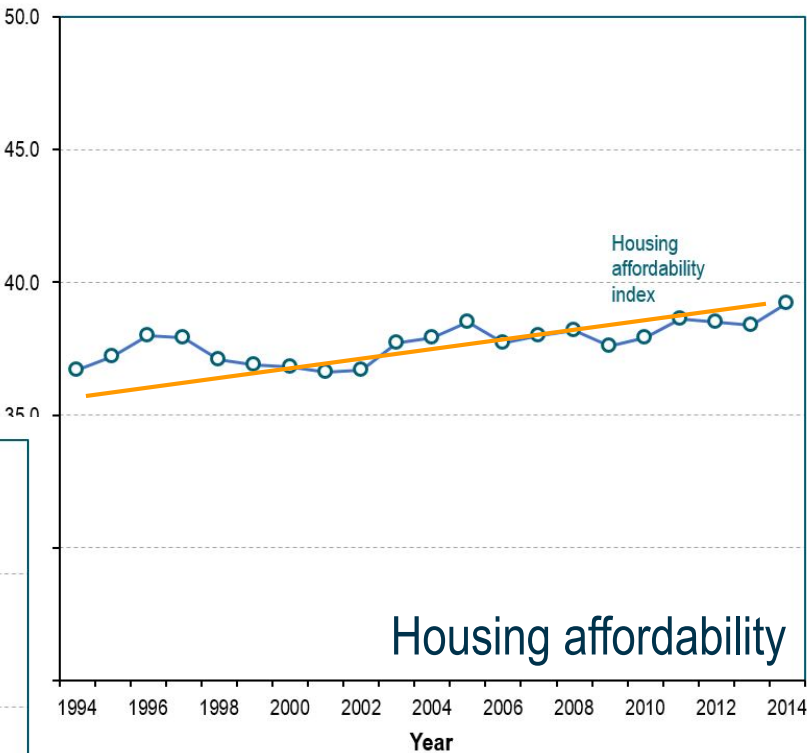
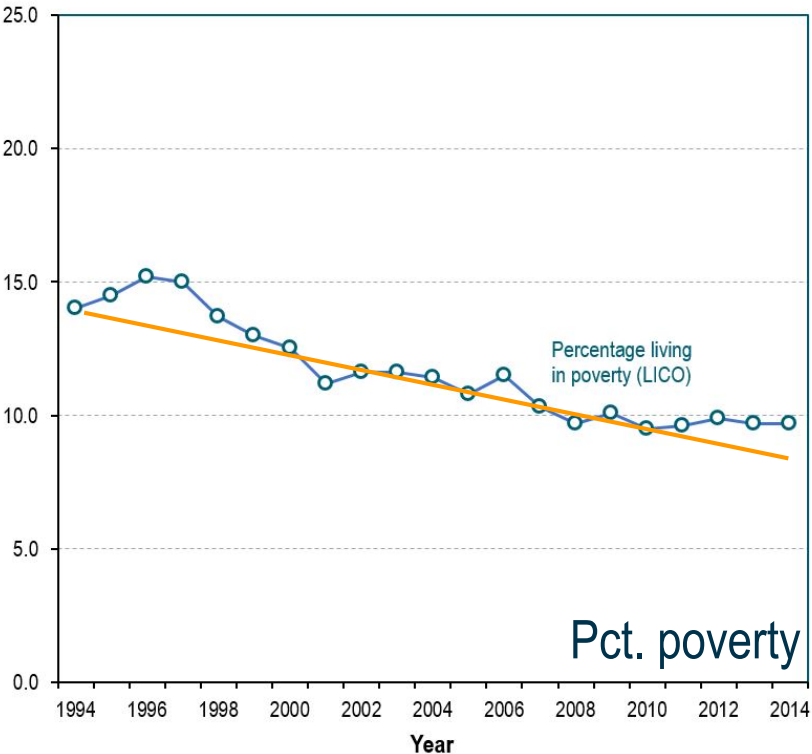
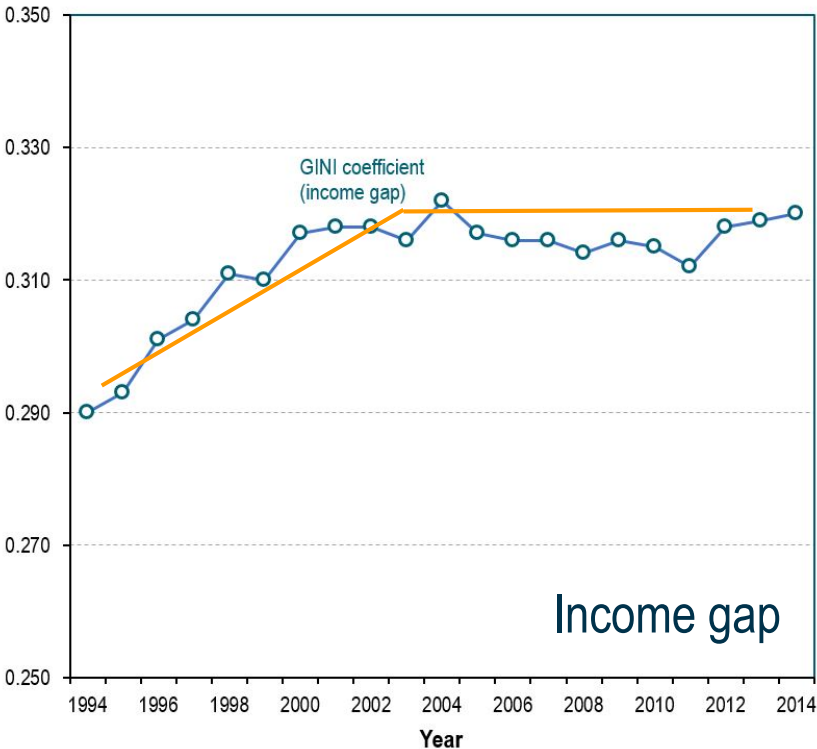
How are Canadians *really* doing?



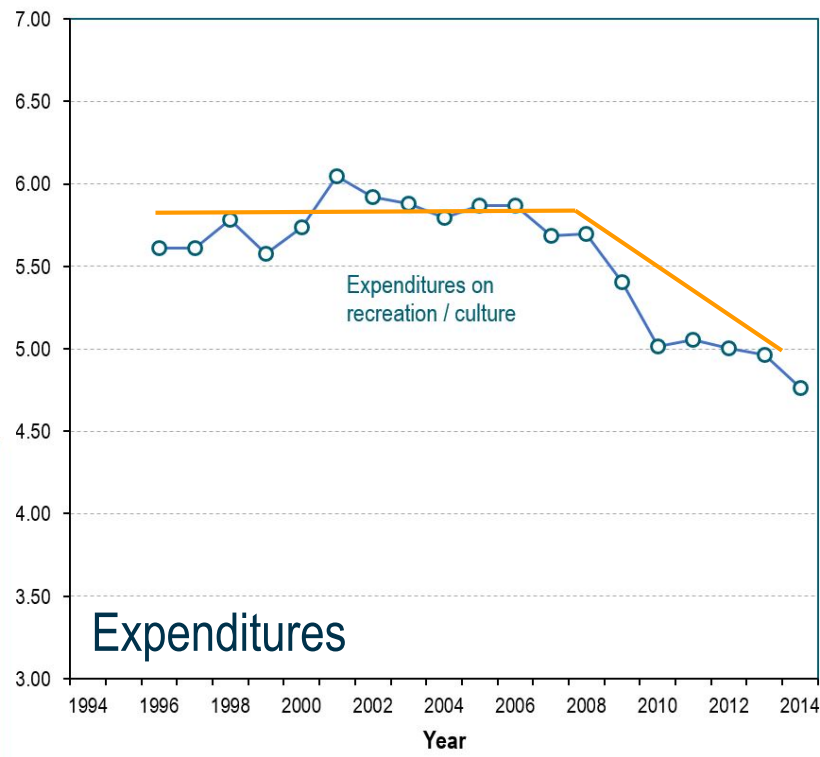
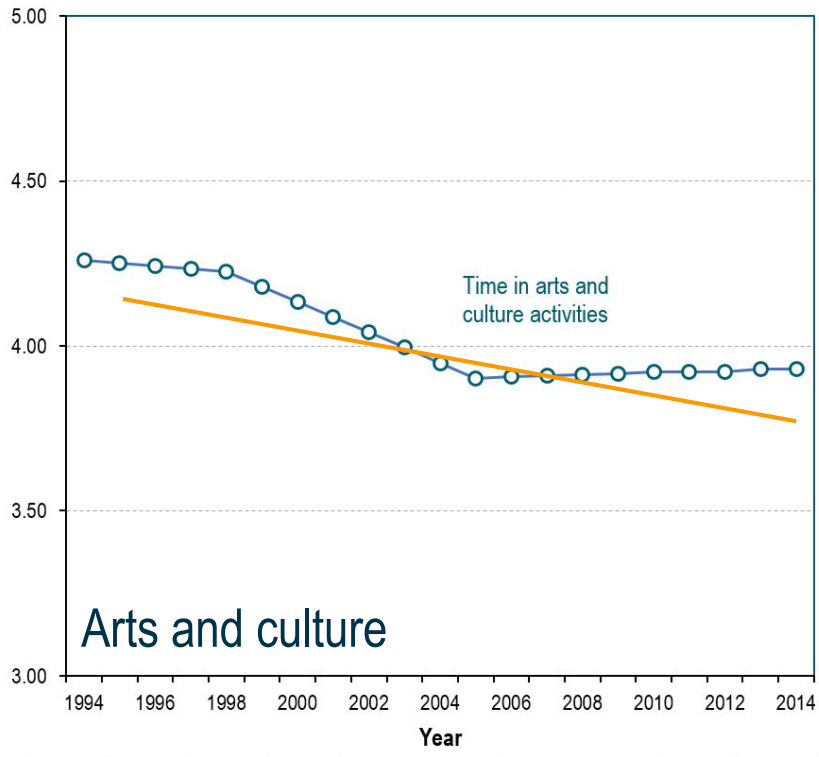
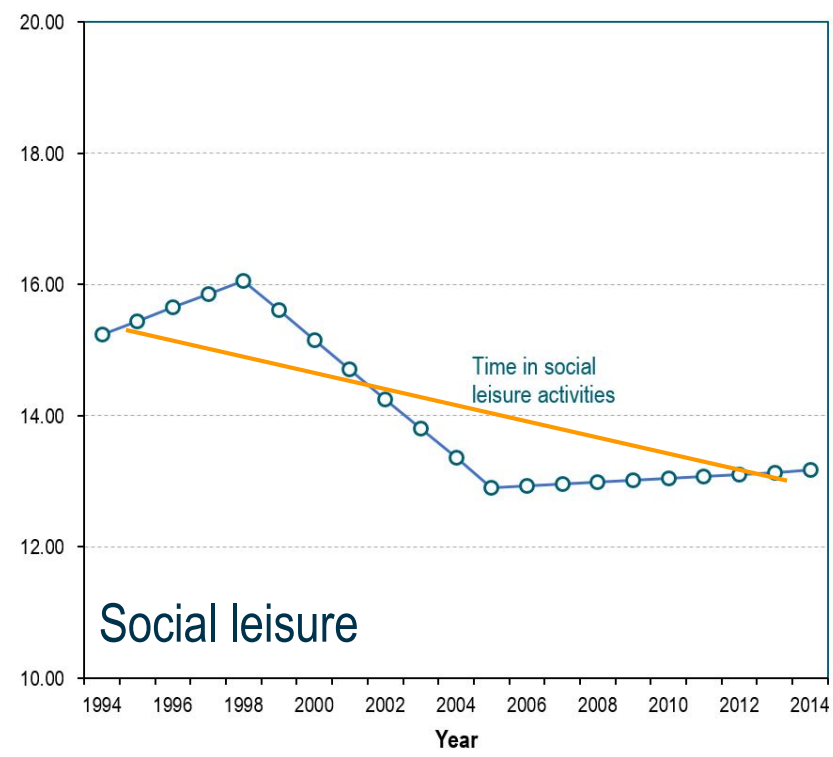
Trends in domains of wellbeing...



Selected indicators for *Living Standards*



Selected indicators for *Leisure and Culture*



How are Ontarians Really Doing?

A PROVINCIAL REPORT



NOVA
 SCOTIA
 QUALITY
 OF LIFE
 1994 - 2019



GOVERNMENT OF YUKON

Performance Plan

Update on priorities and progress –
2019 year in review and 2020 look ahead

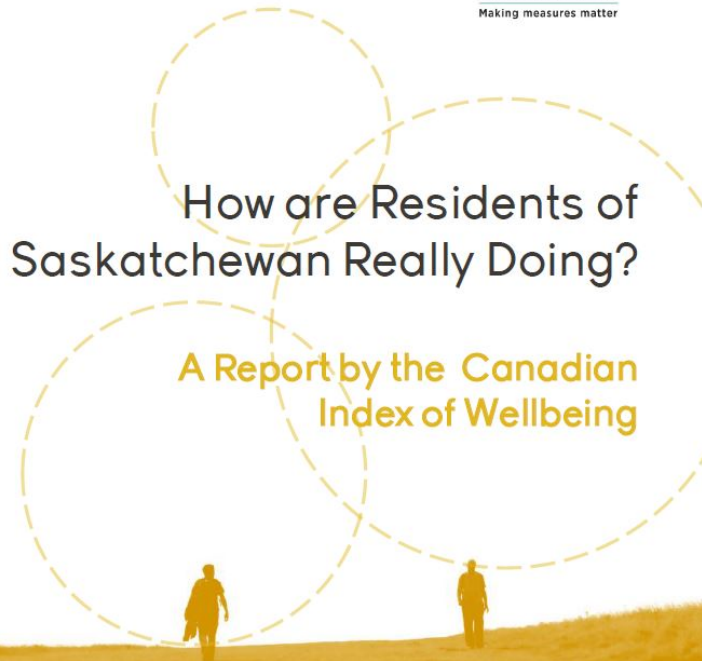


SASKATCHEWAN INDEX OF
WELLBEING


 CANADIAN
 Index
 OF WELLBEING
 MEASURING WHAT MATTERS
 MAKING MEASURES MATTER

How are Residents of Saskatchewan Really Doing?

A Report by the Canadian
Index of Wellbeing



October 2019

We have tried to
measure what matters...

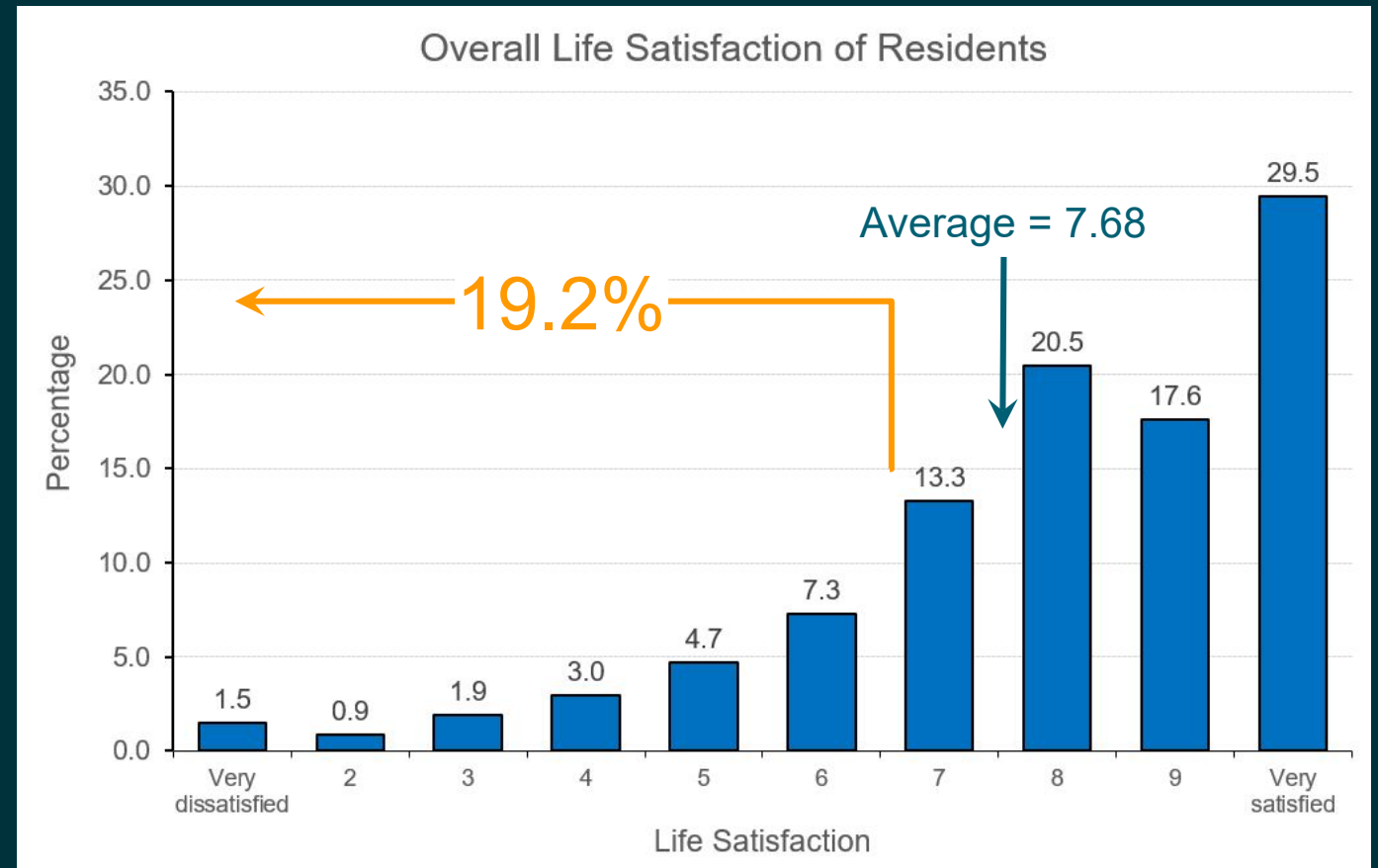
Now we must
make measures matter

Wellbeing and inequality

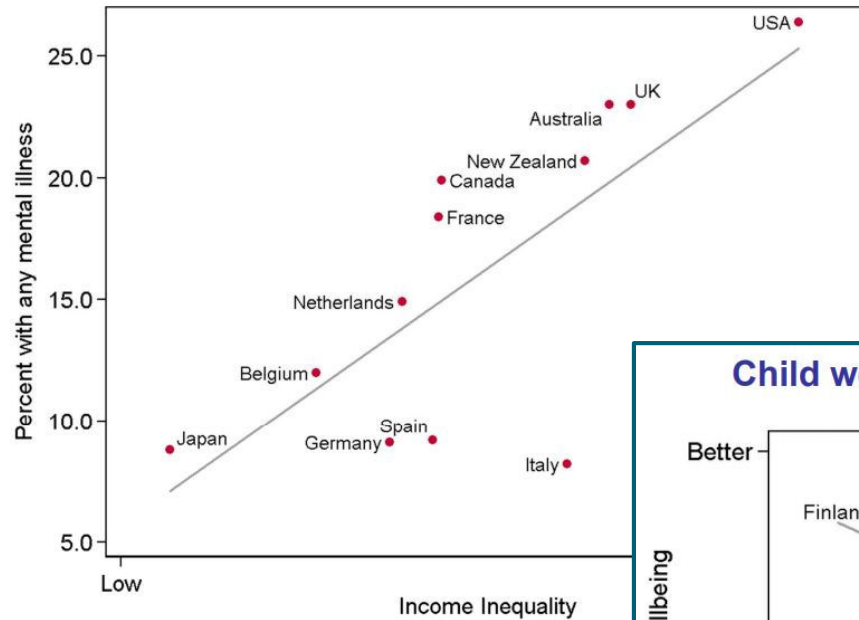
Most research has focused on *average* levels of wellbeing for entire populations or different groups of people or geographic areas and how overall wellbeing is associated with a variety of factors that are considered to be influential

The average level of life satisfaction for residents is 7.68 on this 10-point scale, which is fairly typical.

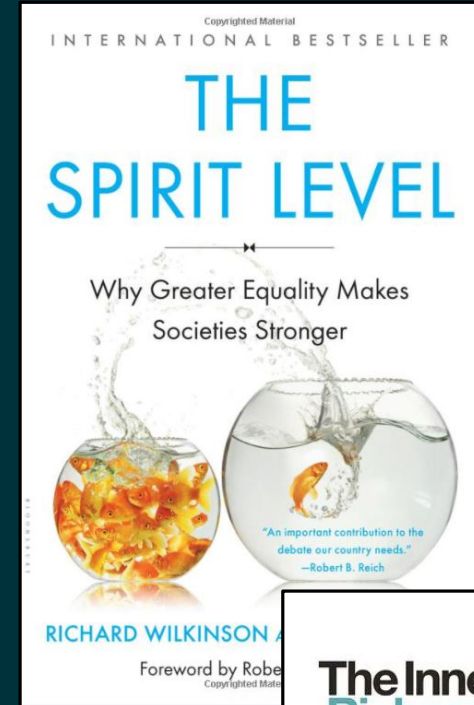
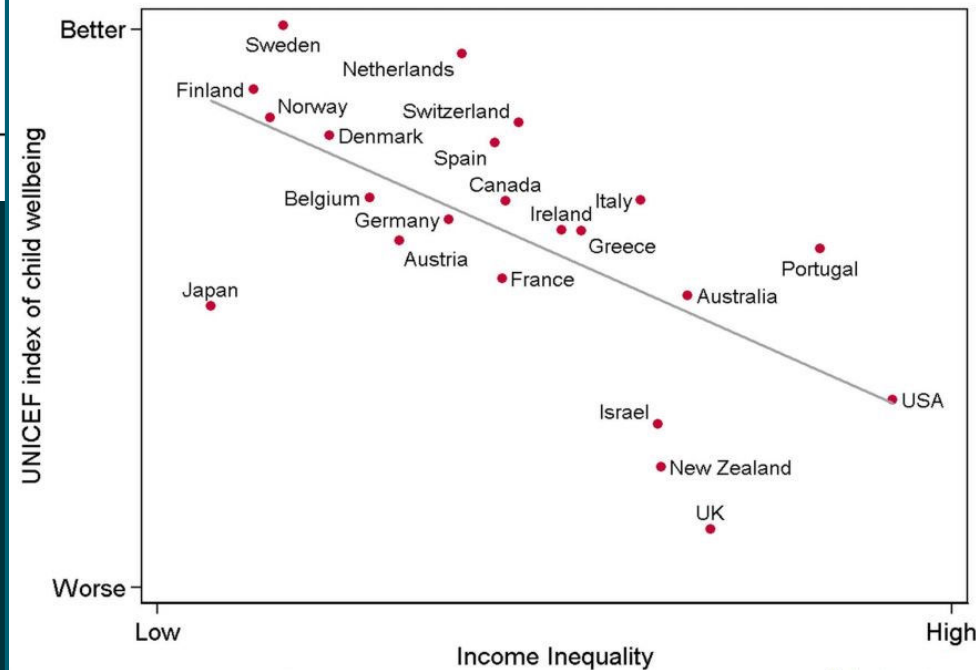
But not everyone shares that relatively high level of life satisfaction – almost 1 in 5 people (**19.2%**) are below average and *over 10%* are *well below* average.



Mental illness is more common in more unequal societies



Child well-being is better in more equal countries



The Inner Level
Richard Wilkinson & Kate Pickett
 How More Equal Societies Reduce Stress, Restore Sanity and Improve Everybody's Wellbeing



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. This gap has been exacerbated by the recession, living standards have not improved, and it has been exacerbated by the recession, living standards have not improved, and it has been exacerbated by the recession, living standards have not improved.

We can do better. Reimagining the future, ensuring greater accountability, and ensuring the wellbeing of Canadians change also promise a better future. So we do have the ability to do better.

66 | CIW.CA

CLOSING THE GAP

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

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.

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.

Section A: Community Vitality

A2. In the past 12 months, were you a member of or a part

A3. In the past 12 months, did you provide any *unpaid help*

with work at their home such as cooking, cleaning, gardening
shovelling snow, or car repairs?.....

by doing any shopping, driving someone to the store, or to an
appointment?.....

with paperwork tasks such as writing letters, doing taxes, filling
paying bills, or finding information?.....

with health-related or personal care, such as emotional support
advice, visiting the elderly, unpaid babysitting?.....

with unpaid teaching, coaching, tutoring, or assisting with real
estate?.....

Section I: Overall Health and Wellbeing

	Extremely dissatisfied	
	↓	↓
My <i>mental</i> wellbeing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My <i>physical</i> wellbeing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My leisure time	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My sense of belonging to this community	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My personal relationships	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My access to educational opportunities in the community	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The balance of activities in my daily life	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The way I spend my time	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My access to <i>arts and cultural</i> opportunities in the community	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My access to <i>parks and recreational</i> opportunities in the community	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My neighbourhood as a place to live	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The environmental quality of my neighbourhood	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The way my local government responds to community needs	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
How well democracy is working in our community	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My financial situation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My work situation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Not at all
↓
○ 2 3 4 5 6 7

Very dissatisfied

↓ 2 3 4 5 6 7

○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

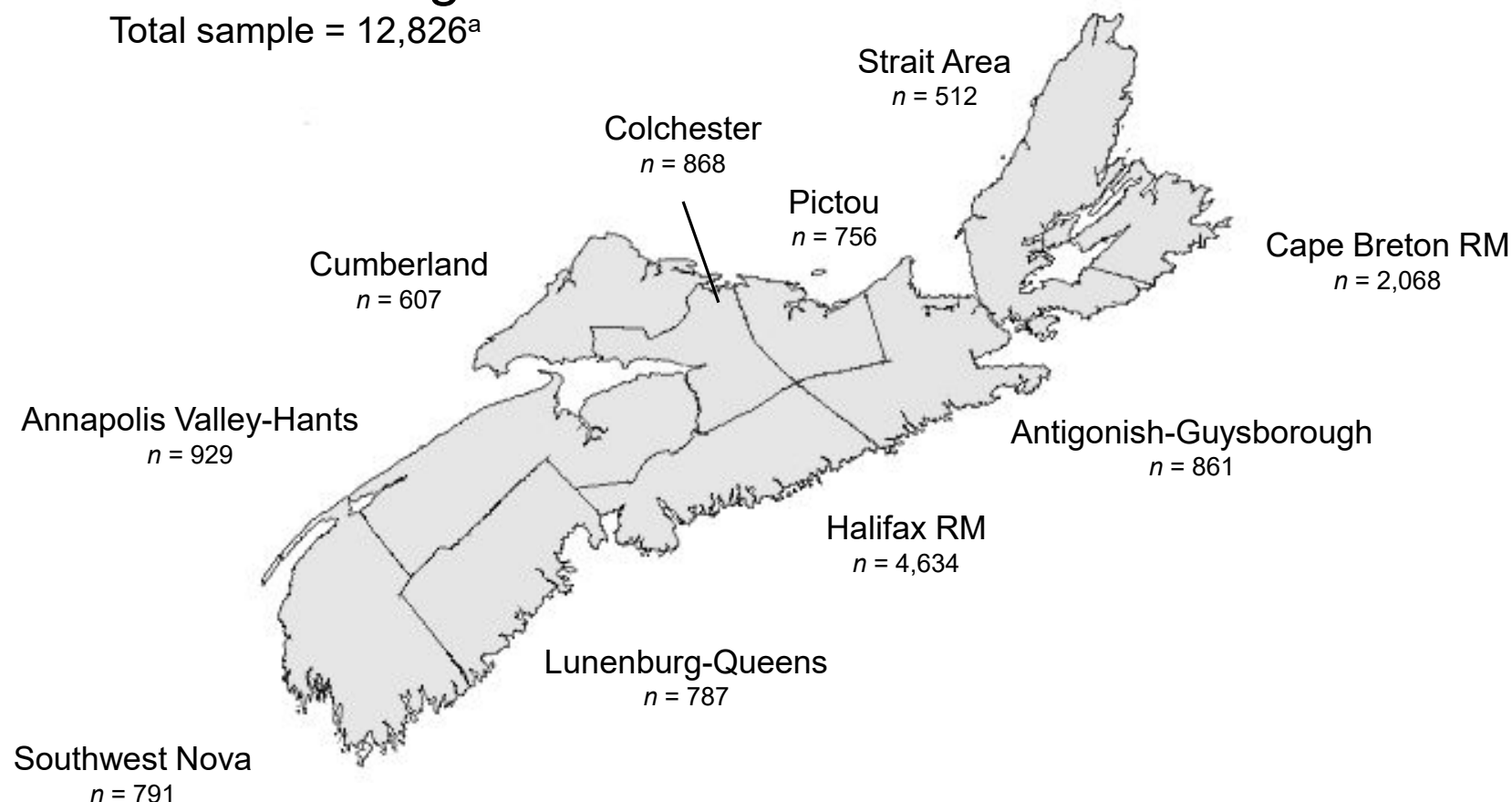
Do you have any other comments or suggestions to improve wellbeing in Waterloo Region?

18

Nova Scotia Quality of Life Survey

Nova Scotia Regions

Total sample = 12,826^a



^a 13 respondents could not be assigned to a region

Notes:

Over 80,000 households invited to participate

Final sample of 12,826 residents represents a 16% response rate

Data weighted by sex, age, and region to better represent province

Characteristics of Nova Scotia residents with **above** average and **below** average wellbeing

ABOVE average wellbeing

CIW Domain	Characteristics
Demographics	More older adults; more married, but not common-law); more have higher household income more have resided for a longer time in their community; less often unemployed
Community Vitality	Volunteer more; have more close relatives and friends, and neighbours they know well enough to ask for a favour; stronger sense of belonging to community
Democratic Engagement	Feel better informed about politics and government; more likely to attend municipal council meetings, more likely to participate in community events
Education	More likely to take courses for interest; perceive more opportunities are available to take <i>formal education courses</i> and <i>courses for interest</i>
Environment	Perceive quality of natural environment as higher; see more opportunities to enjoy nature in community; more regularly engage in sustainable activities
Healthy Populations	Better self-rated <i>physical</i> health; better self-rated <i>mental</i> health; more regularly engage in good quality exercise; more regularly prepare and eat healthy meals
Leisure and Culture	Use recreation/cultural facilities more frequently; perceive better access to recreation and cultural facilities; participate more in arts and cultural activities as well as social leisure activities
Living Standards	Have more work flexibility; more likely to have a regular weekday work schedule; have better job fit with more opportunities for promotion; shorter commute times; enough money to buy things they <i>need</i> and <i>want</i>
Time Use	Feel rushed less often; have more time to keep in shape, nurture spiritual and/or creative side, be with children, and form/sustain relationships; have higher perceived work-life balance

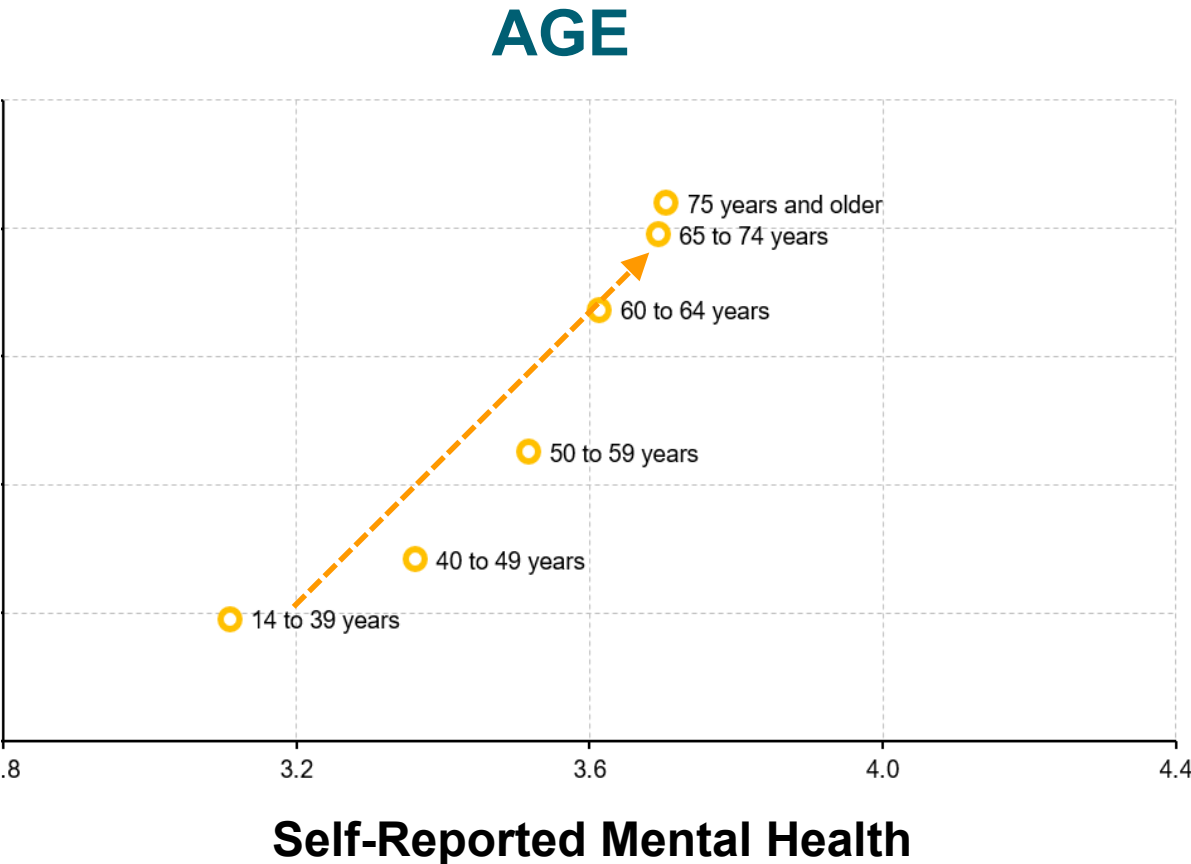
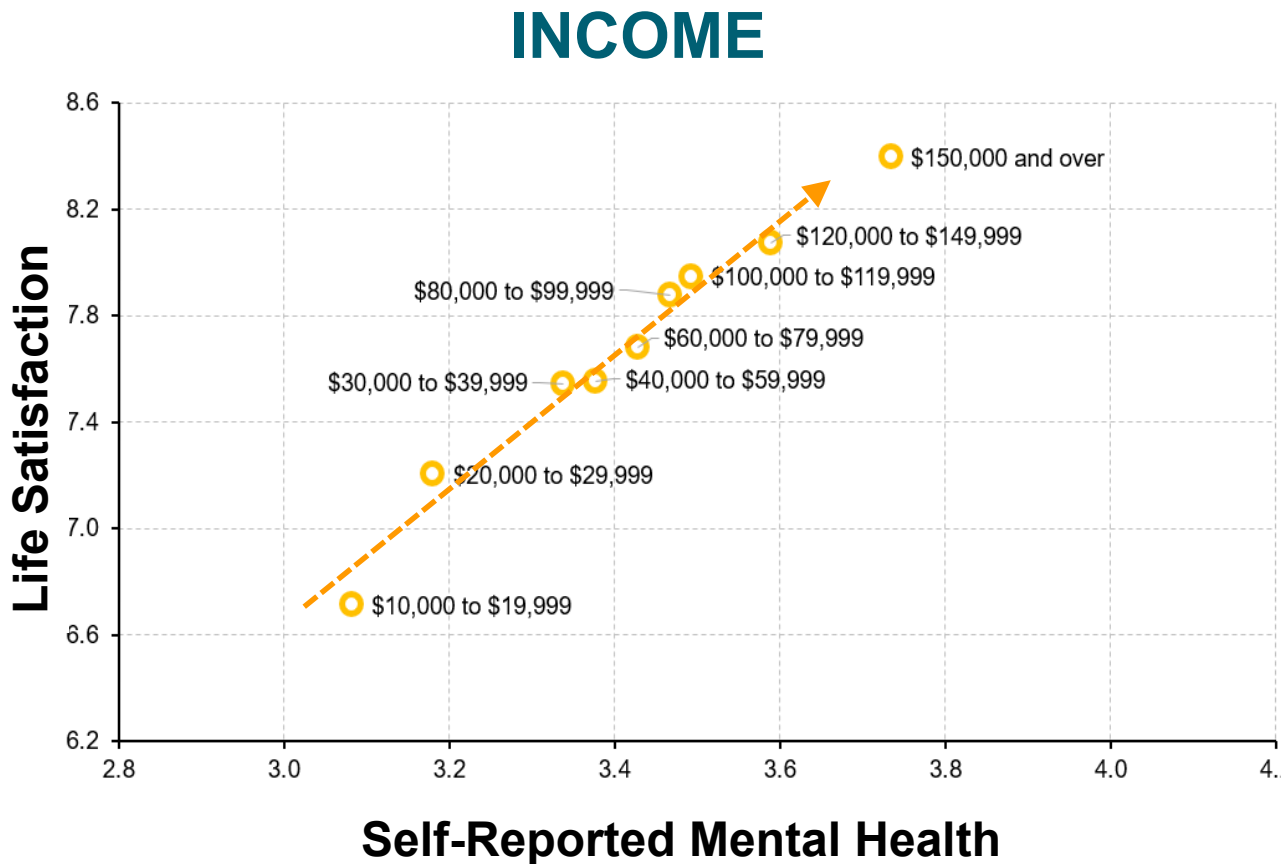
BELOW average wellbeing

CIW Domain	Characteristics
Demographics	More younger adults; more women; more often on their own (i.e., living alone, single parents); more living with a disability or chronic illness; more spending over 30% of their income on housing
Community Vitality	More socially isolated; more likely to experience discrimination in their community; have less trust in other people
Democratic Engagement	Have less trust in government; feel they do not have a say in what government does; feel public officials do not care what they think
Education	Less likely to take courses for interest; more likely to see obstacles to taking courses due to cost and scheduling
Environment	Perceive air quality and water quality as lower; fewer opportunities to enjoy nature in community; traffic congestion is a problem
Healthy Populations	<i>Quality</i> of and <i>access to</i> health care services perceived as lower; more likely to experience negative impacts due to their <i>own</i> or <i>family members'</i> mental health issues
Leisure and Culture	More likely to see obstacles to access recreation and cultural facilities; participate more in computer-based leisure (e.g., computer games, socializing online, searching internet for interest)
Living Standards	Less likely to have a regular weekday work schedule; less job security; less likely to pay bills and rent or /mortgage on time; less likely to have enough food or money for food
Time Use	Feel rushed more often; are more likely to provide unpaid care to children and dependent older adults; less time to socialize, prepare or eat healthy meals, and get enough sleep; lower work-life balance

Interconnections of critical issues faced by selected groups

Social isolation	Sense of community	Feelings of trust	Experience of discrimination	Poverty	Health
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Women	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Men	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Men	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Men	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Women	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Women
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Single	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Single	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Single	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Single	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Single	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Single
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Younger	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Younger	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Younger	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Younger	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Younger	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Younger
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Low income	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Low income	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Low income	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Low income	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Low income	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Low income
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Single parents	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Single parents	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Adults living alone	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Adults living alone	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Single parents	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Single parents
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Adults sharing accommodation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Adults sharing accommodation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Adults sharing accommodation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Adults sharing accommodation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Couples with children	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Adults living alone					

Self-reported mental health and wellbeing...

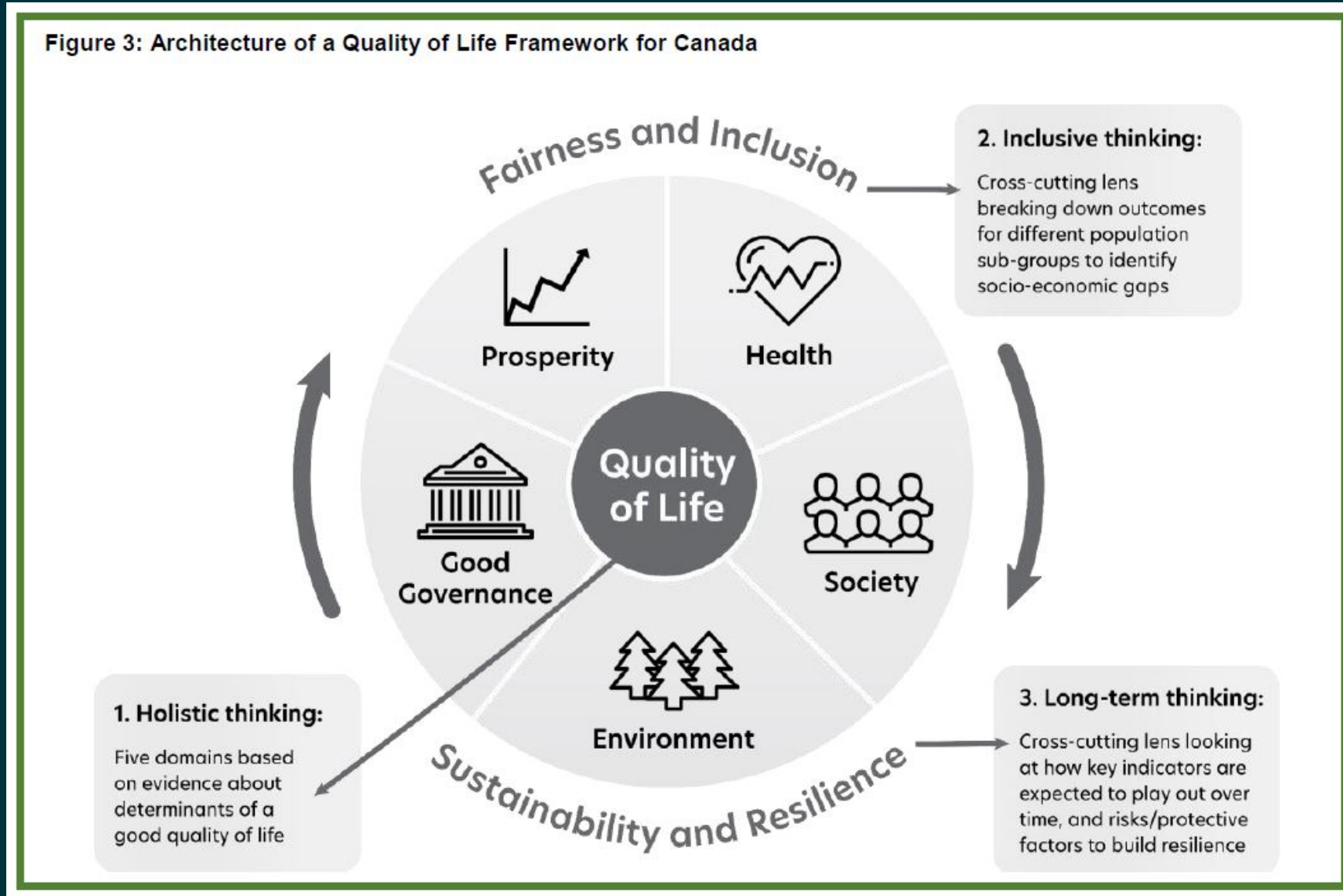


For positive social change...

“... place *wellbeing* at the centre
of policy development.”

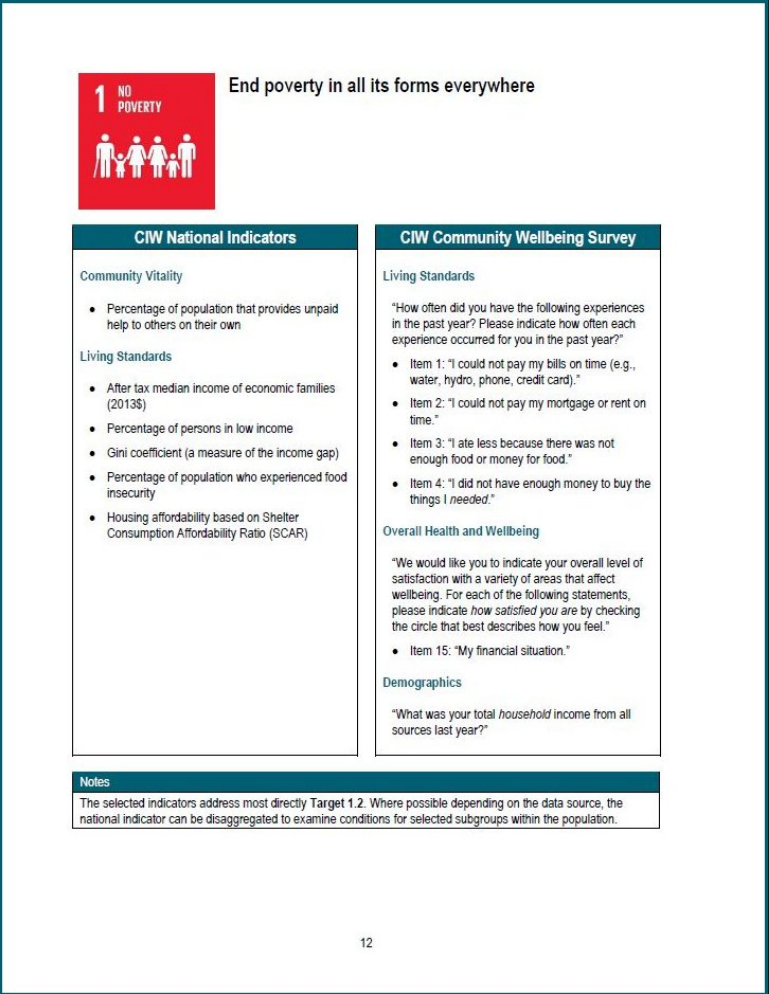
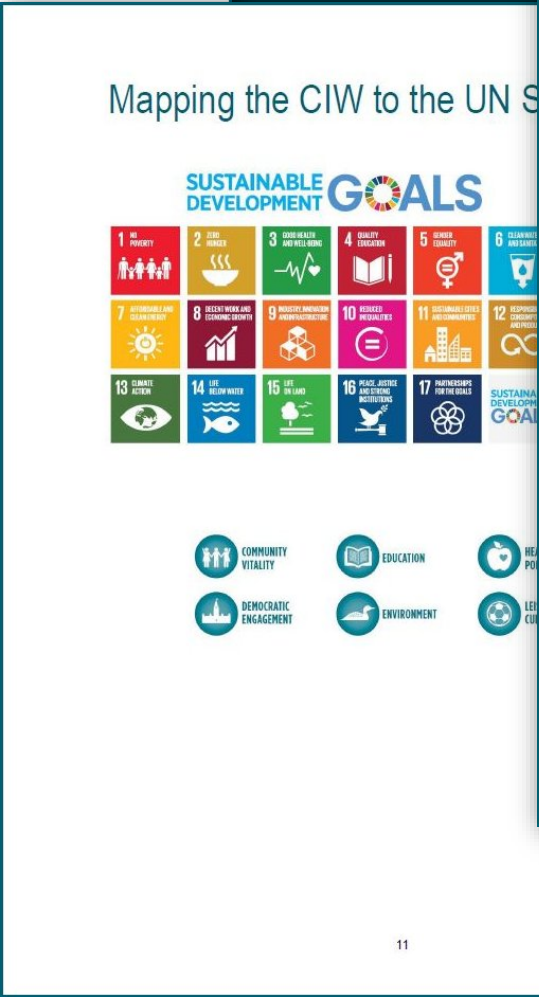
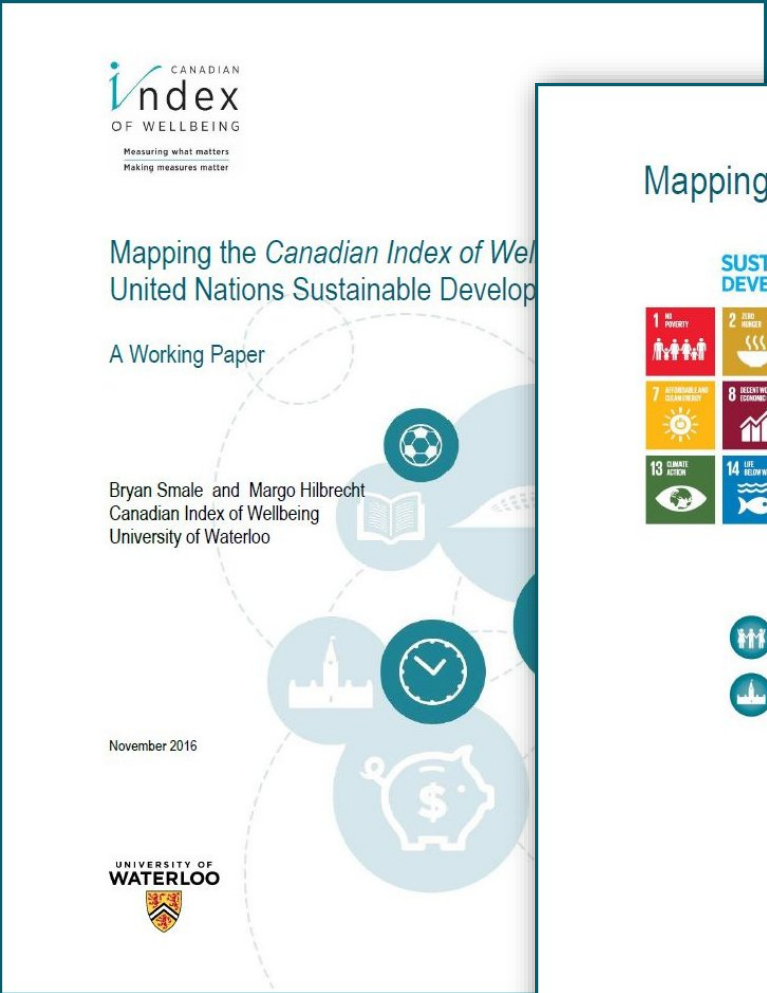
Canada's Quality of Life Framework

Figure 3: Architecture of a Quality of Life Framework for Canada

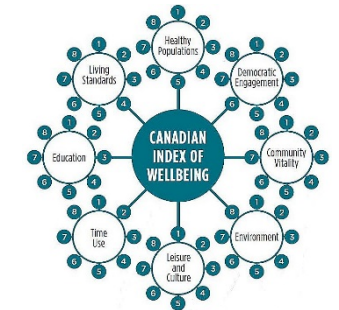
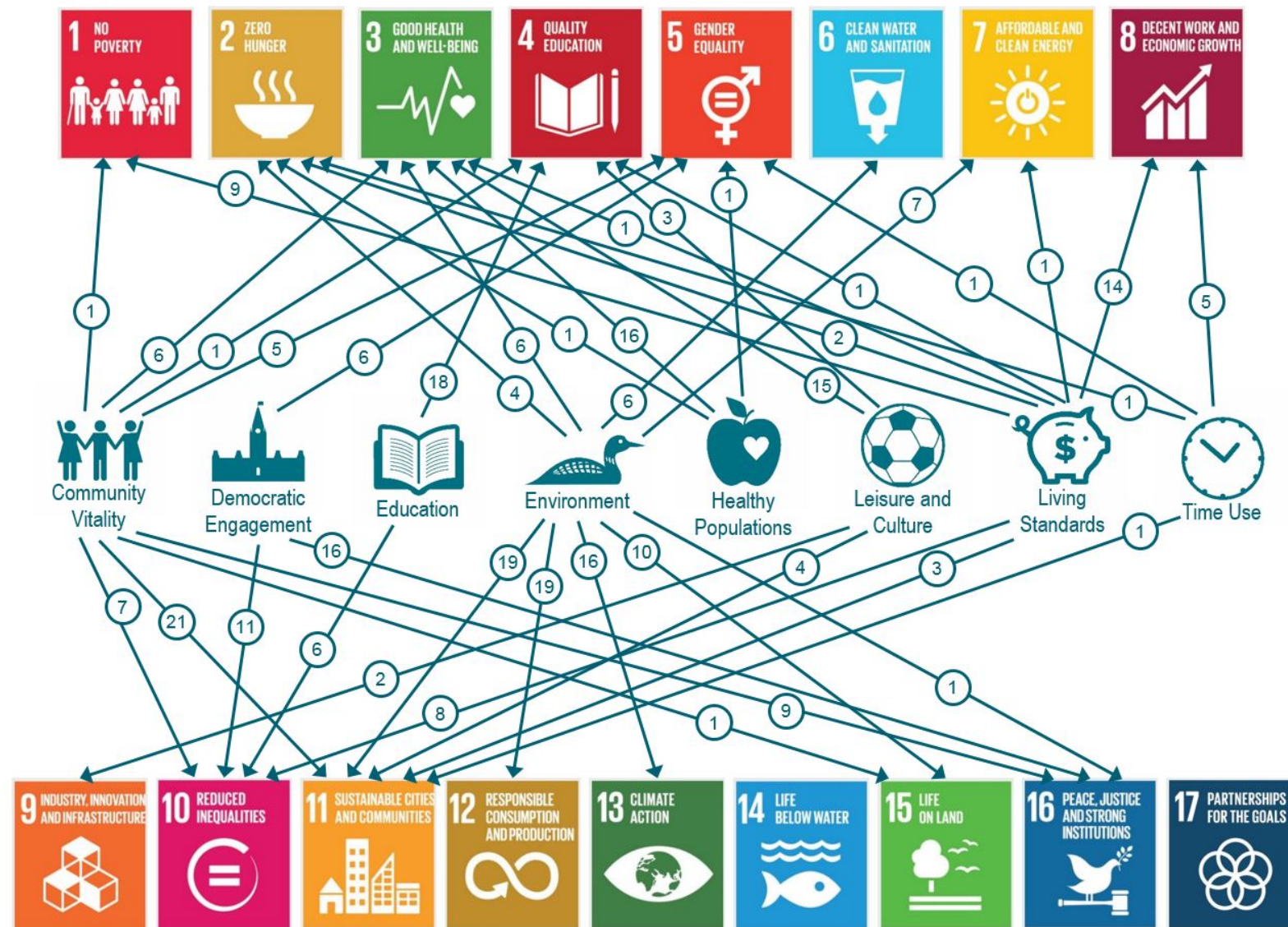


Source: Finance Canada. (2021). *Measuring what matters: Toward a quality of life strategy for Canada*. Ottawa: Department of Finance Canada. Available [here](#).

Mapping the CIW indicators to UN's SDGs...



Mapping the CIW indicators to UN's SDGs...



Oxford County Community Sustainability Plan

index

OF WELLBEING

Measuring what matters
Making measures matter

Oxford County Community Wellbeing Survey

A Comparison of
Oxford Residents on
Selected Aspects of their Wellbeing

A report for the
Community Oxford Committee

Margo Hilbrecht and Bryan Smale
Canadian Index of Wellbeing
University of Waterloo

September 2016

A partnership with

CommunityOxford

FutureOxford

United Way
Oxford

OxfordCounty

growing stronger...together

COMMUNITY EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

ROI

RURAL ONTARIO
INSTITUTE

Woodstock and Area
Community Health Centre

THEMES
derived from CIW domains

SUSTAINABILITY PLAN
PILLARS

Community Engagement
(civic engagement, sense of belonging)

Accessibility
(health services, recreation and culture)

Quality of Work
(flexibility, work-life balance)

Health Behaviours and Perceptions
(health status, healthy behaviours)

Environmental Concerns
(conservation, stewardship)

COMMUNITY

ENVIRONMENT

ECONOMY

quality

ute not only to the health and wellbeing of
e desirability of a community as a place to
a destination for others to visit. In general,
quality of the air more highly than they did

The quality of
drinking water (tap)
needs improvement.

Improve air quality.

d to SD Objectives, 3iA and 3iD: Protect
and, Ensure long-term protection of all

d to perceptions of air and water quality. People living on less than \$40,000
s often that the quality of air and water in the community was very good.
e group was significantly more likely to assess the quality of these resources
compared to either the lower or upper income groups (see Figure 25A).

agreed most often that air quality was very good, but agreed the least often
water quality. Perceptions of the quality of the water as very good increased
re 25B).

th another adult more often agreed that both the air and water quality were
ificantly lower percentage of residents with children in the household agreed
ity was very good (see Figure 25C).

centage of people who rated the air quality as very good differed little by
in Oxford County, a substantially higher percentage of established residents
lity as very good compared to new and recent residents (see Figure 25D).

rable variation by geographic location. Only about half of Ingersoll residents
lity was very good, compared to over three-quarters of Tillsonburg and rural
10 people living in Woodstock. The same geographic pattern held true for
ugh in this case, only one-quarter of Ingersoll residents (25.4%) thought the
very good (see Figure 25E).

of residents who agree that air and water quality in the community are very
come level

Percentage

63.0

56.0

78.6

71.1

67.2

62.1

Less than \$40,000

\$40,000 to \$99,999

\$100,000 or more

Household Income

Air quality

Water quality

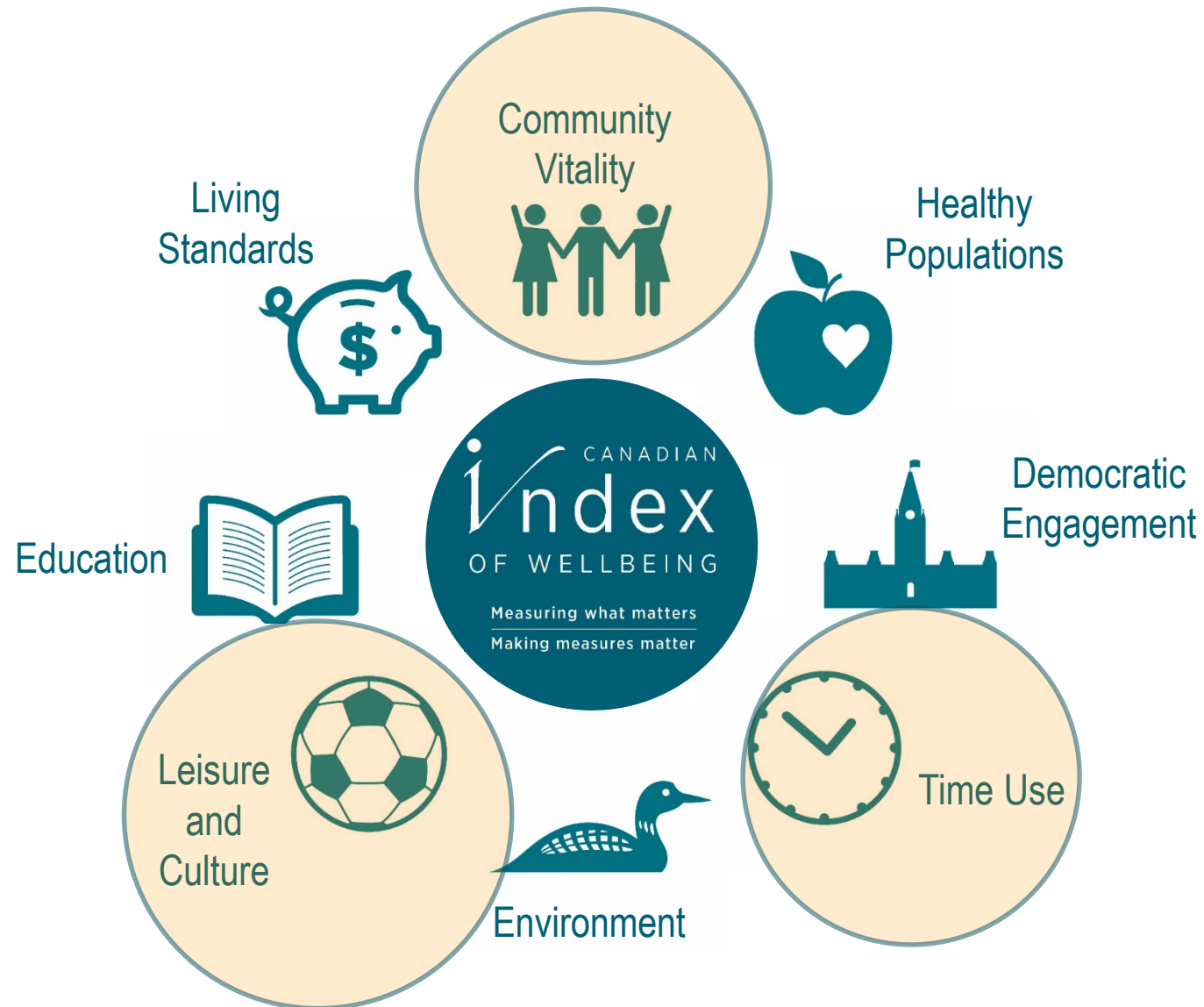
69

Canadian Index of Wellbeing

Faculty of Health

UNIVERSITY OF WATERLOO

Which domains are most critical to community wellbeing?





Measuring what matters
Making measures matter

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