



New CSLS Research: Economic Well-Being in Canada and the Provinces

There has been much concern about Canada's poor performance in real GDP per capita over the past decade. But how well are Canadians actually doing, if we look beyond this single GDP measure?

A new **CSLS Research Report**, *Trends in Well-Being in Canada and the Provinces Through the Lens of the Index of Economic Well-Being*, examines four decades of economic progress in Canada using a much more comprehensive measure: the Index of Economic Well-Being (IEWB).

Developed by the CSLS, the IEWB combines 28 indicators to assess the economic well-being of Canadians through the lens of consumption, wealth, economic equality, and economic security to provide a richer, more nuanced view of economic progress than GDP.

Canada's Long-Term Economic Performance: Slower Than GDP Suggests

Taking into account these broader considerations, the CSLS estimates that between 1981 and 2023, the IEWB for Canada grew at a compound annual rate of just 0.62%, compared with the 1.12% growth in real GDP per capita. Growth in the index over this period was driven by increased consumption and wealth, while declines in economic equality, and especially economic security, hindered overall progress.

These results suggest that traditional economic growth measures — disappointing as they have been — have actually overstated true progress in Canada's economy, which has not been fully translated into broader improvements in well-being. Despite material improvements in consumption and wealth accumulation in recent decades, Canadians face rising inequality and greater exposure to financial risk — issues that are also critical determinants of the overall health of an economy and society.

Other key findings:

- Growth in the consumption domain slowed significantly after the global financial crisis. Slower gains in life expectancy, including a fall during the pandemic, and shrinking household sizes further limited improvements.
- Poverty fell significantly in 2010s due to national child benefit enrichments.
- All provinces saw increases in their consumption, but many experienced stagnation or declines in wealth, equality, and security.
- The IEWB in 2023 is highest on the coasts of the country: led by British Columbia in first place, followed by Newfoundland and Labrador in second.

Our analysis underscores the need for comprehensive, multidimensional policy approaches that address not only economic growth, but also distribution and risk. This reinforces the case for using “beyond GDP” measures to inform decision-making and promote more inclusive prosperity.

Read the full report: <https://csls.ca/reports/csls2025-05.pdf>



Centre for the Study of Living Standards

170 Laurier Ave W Suite 604, Ottawa, ON K1P 5V5

Tel: 613-233-8891 | **Email:** info@csls.ca

For more information contact:

Andrew Sharpe

Executive Director Emeritus

Centre for the Study of Living Standards

Andrew.Sharpe@csls.ca

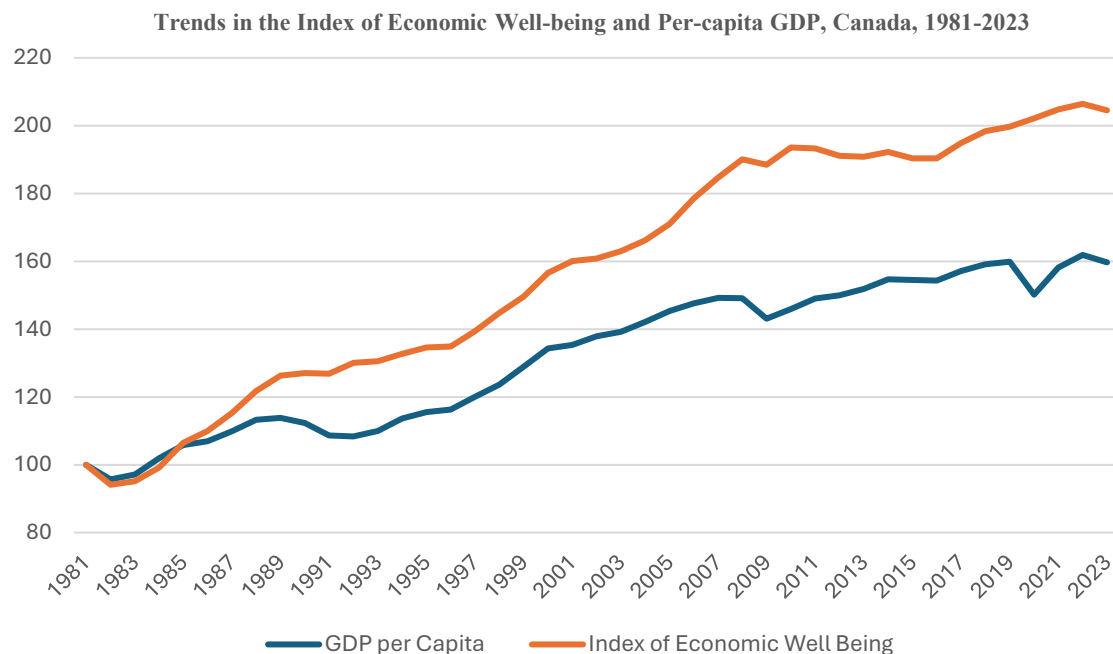
613-233-8891



Annex: Details on the CSLS Index of Economic Well-Being (IEWB)

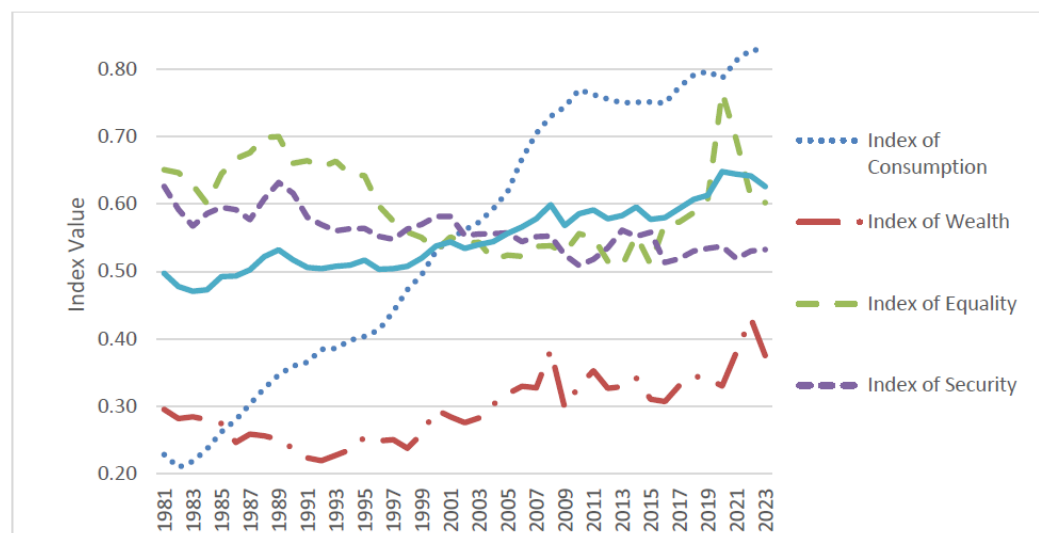
The IEWB provides a richer, more nuanced measure of economic progress than GDP by combining 28 indicators in the follow four domains:

1. **Consumption** — including household spending, public services, unpaid work, household economies of scale, “regrettable expenditures,” and life expectancy
2. **Wealth** — physical and human capital, natural capital, environmental degradation, and Canada’s net international investment position
3. **Economic (in)equality** — distributional considerations that track the incidence and depth of poverty and income inequality
4. **Economic security** — reflecting the financial risks households face from unemployment, illness, family dissolution, and poverty in old age





Index of Economic Well-being Components for Canada, 1981 to 2023

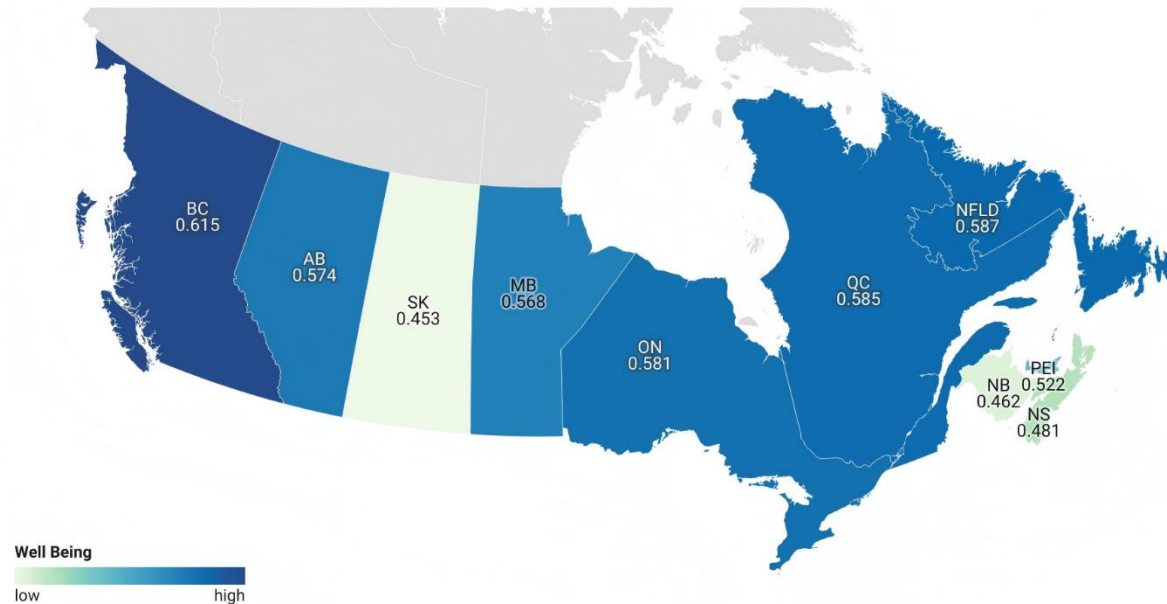


Index of Economic Well-Being and Components compound annual growth for Canada, 1981 to 2023

Period	Index of Consumption	Index of Wealth	Index of Economic Equality	Index of Economic Security	Index of Economic Well-Being
1981-2000	4.53	-0.01	-1.06	-0.38	0.39
2000-2008	4.80	3.33	0.17	-0.65	1.62
2008-2019	0.80	-1.05	1.10	-0.30	0.31
2019-2023	0.96	2.42	-0.22	-0.08	0.63
1981-2023	3.11	0.57	-0.18	-0.38	0.62



CSLS Index of Economic Well-being Rankings for Canada's Provinces in 2023



Levels in 2023					
Rank	Index of Economic Well-being	Index of Consumption	Index of Wealth	Index of Economic Equality	Index of Economic Security
1	British Columbia	British Columbia	Newfoundland and Labrador	Alberta	Alberta
2	Newfoundland and Labrador	Alberta	British Columbia	Quebec	Manitoba
3	Quebec	Ontario	Canada	Manitoba	Saskatchewan
4	Canada	Canada	Quebec	Canada	Prince Edward Island
5	Ontario	Nova Scotia	Ontario	Prince Edward Island	Quebec
6	Alberta	Manitoba	Manitoba	Ontario	Ontario
7	Manitoba	Quebec	Prince Edward Island	British Columbia	Canada
8	Prince Edward Island	Newfoundland and Labrador	New Brunswick	Newfoundland and Labrador	Newfoundland and Labrador
9	Nova Scotia	Saskatchewan	Alberta	New Brunswick	British Columbia
10	New Brunswick	Prince Edward Island	Nova Scotia	Nova Scotia	New Brunswick
11	Saskatchewan	New Brunswick	Saskatchewan	Saskatchewan	Nova Scotia



Centre for the Study of Living Standards

170 Laurier Ave W Suite 604, Ottawa, ON K1P 5V5

Tel: 613-233-8891 | **Email:** info@csls.ca

Index of Economic Well-being and Components Growth Rankings for Canada and the Provinces, 1981 to 2023 (compound annual growth rates)

Compound Annual Growth Rates, 1981-2023					
Rank	Index of Economic Well-being	Index of Consumption	Index of Wealth	Index of Economic Equality	Index of Economic Security
1	Newfoundland and Labrador	Newfoundland and Labrador	Prince Edward Island	New Brunswick	Newfoundland and Labrador
2	Prince Edward Island	New Brunswick	Newfoundland and Labrador	Prince Edward Island	Prince Edward Island
3	New Brunswick	Quebec	Quebec	Newfoundland and Labrador	Manitoba
4	Quebec	Manitoba	British Columbia	Saskatchewan	Quebec
5	Manitoba	Ontario	Ontario	Quebec	New Brunswick
6	British Columbia	Canada	Canada	Manitoba	British Columbia
7	Canada	Prince Edward Island	Manitoba	Nova Scotia	Canada
8	Nova Scotia	Nova Scotia	Nova Scotia	Alberta	Alberta
9	Ontario	Saskatchewan	New Brunswick	Canada	Ontario
10	Saskatchewan	British Columbia	Saskatchewan	British Columbia	Saskatchewan
11	Alberta	Alberta	Alberta	Ontario	Nova Scotia