

Abstract

Living Standards Domain of the Canadian Index of Wellbeing

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This paper, which represents the living standards domain of the new Canadian Index of Wellbeing, provides a comprehensive overview of trends in a number of indicators of living standards over the 1981-2005 period in Canada. Part one examines trends in average and median income and wealth indicators in Canada. Part two looks at the distribution of the income and wealth of Canadians over time, including trends in poverty. Part three discusses trends in income fluctuations of volatility. Part four analyzes trends in the economic security of Canadians, including labour market security, food security, housing security, and the security provided by the social safety net.

Five main conclusions have emerged related to the evolution of living standards in Canada over the last quarter century: Canadians are on average somewhat better off in terms of income and wealth, income and wealth inequality has increased, virtually no progress has been made in reducing poverty, there was little overall improvement in labour market conditions and a frayed social safety net now provides less support for the disadvantaged.