



CALL FOR PAPERS

International Productivity Monitor Symposium on Productivity and Well-Being – Measurement and Linkages

The *Centre for the Study of Living Standards* (Canada) and *The Productivity Institute* (United Kingdom) are inviting proposals for papers on Productivity and Well-Being – Measurement and Explanations. Accepted papers, which should represent new and original work, will be published in a theme issue of the *International Productivity Monitor*, which is the joint flagship publication of both organizations in the Spring of 2022. An authors' workshop with first drafts of the paper will be held in November 2021.

Framing

Recent decades have seen an active debate on the adequacy (or inadequacy) of GDP as a metric to track changes in living standards and well-being over time or difference between places with important implications for how we measure, interpret and analyze productivity. Not only the numerator (output or GDP) may be affected by our changing views on what should be measured, whether it is health or well-being outcomes or environmental values. The denominator (inputs) may also be affected as some inputs, e.g. various intangibles, will matter more for creating those broader or more fundamental outcomes compared to GDP and productivity as traditionally measured.

An important strand of this narrative has focused on the need for broader measures that more fully capture well-being or social welfare than GDP currently does. At one end of that debate, some have argued that GDP is an outdated measure that should be scrapped and replaced, while at the other end some have defended GDP as a valuable measure and suggested improvements or extensions. Possible extensions include better measurement of prices (both shadow prices of “free” goods and prices of difficult-to-measure products), shifts in the production boundary, or satellite accounts that connect specific economic, social or welfare domains (such as health, human capital or environment) to the core GDP concepts as permitted in the SNA.

Possible changes in the concept of GDP—whether that be improving measures within the current framework, extending the current framework, or completely scrapping GDP—raise fundamental questions about how productivity should be measured and about how productivity and well-being are linked. This Symposium will investigate these questions from a range of perspectives.

To frame issues, we start with the idea that the concept of “productivity” can be broadened to the idea of outcomes and resources needed to achieve those outcomes. This broad concept can be operationalized in terms of a numerator which measure outcomes that go beyond the conventional measure of output as expressed by GDP and, similarly, a denominator which includes a wider range of inputs, leading to a potentially quite broad definition of productivity.

This framework connects to the literature on well-being and social welfare given that those measures can be the outcome measure. Even with a focus on a broad measure of well-being as the appropriate outcome, it still is important to consider the resources necessary to achieve that outcome. Ultimately, whatever type of outcomes we aspire to, we should aim for optimizing the usage of scarce resources (human, physical or natural capital), reduce waste and increase the scale at which those resources can be employed. From a policy perspective, this latter step is crucial.

An alternative to broadening the outputs and inputs is to retain the more traditional view of GDP as the preferred measure of economic performance. From this perspective, one would tend toward more conventional (or perhaps extended) measures of GDP in the numerator and labor (and perhaps capital) inputs in the denominator, and develop complementary and possibly broader measures reflecting non-economic outcomes and better understand how they can be achieved through economic means.

Symposium Outline

To facilitate the discourse on this important topic, the Centre for the Study of Living Standards and The Productivity Institute will launch a symposium of productivity and well-being with papers around a set of common questions. We hope that each paper will contribute to one or more elements of the debate outlined above and result in a thematically unified symposium, of which the final results will be published in International Productivity Monitor.

- Questions:
 - What concept of outcomes is most appropriate for the numerator of a broad productivity calculation? Something closer to a broad measure of well-being or something closer to GDP? Should GDP be improved, extended, or replaced? If GDP should be replaced, what should its replacement look like? If GDP should be improved or extended, what changes should be made?

- What concept of resource use (inputs) is most appropriate? Why does that preferred alternative dominate other possibilities?
- Within the framework you prefer, what are the linkages that run from productivity (however defined) to well-being (however defined)? What are the linkages that run from well-being to productivity?
- Would you advocate that NSOs produce any of these measures (outcomes, resources or inputs needed to achieve those outcomes, or the ratio) or other related measures?

We are inviting proposals for papers around one or more of those questions. However, submitters should not let these questions limit the range of what they want to cover on the topic of productivity and well-being.

Following the selection of proposals, a virtual authors workshop will be organized to discuss first drafts of the papers. Based on input from the workshop, authors will then submit revised papers for consideration for inclusion in the special issue of the International Productivity Monitor on productivity and well-being. These papers will then go through the standard IPM refereeing process.

Timeline and process

- Paper proposals (max 3 pages) by July 15th
- Editorial decision on acceptance of proposals by July 20st
- First draft of papers by October 31st
- Virtual authors workshop on November 16th and 17th 2021 (total 6-8 hours)
- Submit papers to International Productivity Monitor by January 15th 2022
- Review reports in by mid-March 2022
- Final version by April 30th 2022
- Publication June 2022

The editorial team which selects proposals, organizes the workshop and oversees editorial process consists of Prof. Dan Sichel (Professor of Economics, Wellesley College & Chair of the BEA Economy Advisory Committee), Dr. Andrew Sharpe (Executive Director, Centre for the Study of Living Standards) and Bart van Ark (Managing Director, The Productivity Institutes & Professor of Productivity Studies, University of Manchester).

Proposals (max 3 pages) should be submitted before July 15th to andrew.sharpe@csls.ca.