Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

Budget 2021

Wellbeing and the Measurement of Broader Living Standards in Ireland

Prepared by the Department of Finance
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[1] The data and analysis set out in this document are compiled by Department of Finance staff. Every effort is made to ensure accuracy and completeness. When errors are discovered, corrections and revisions are incorporated into the digital edition available on the Department's website. Any substantive change is detailed in the online version.

Executive Summary

This paper examines the development of wellbeing measures internationally and investigates the options for introducing a national wellbeing measurement in Ireland. In recent years, the limitations of economic statistics alone to accurately reflect the wellbeing of a population have become apparent. Macroeconomic metrics fail to account inter alia for distributional outcomes, for the preservation of the environment and our natural resources, and for more subjective outcomes such as a population's life satisfaction.

As a result of these limitations, many countries have recently developed wellbeing indicators for use in tandem with macroeconomic statistics in evaluating performance. The OECD's biennial *How's Life* publication analyses the performance of OECD countries against a wellbeing dashboard of indicators, under which Ireland receives mixed results.

A spectrum of wellbeing measures in other countries are investigated to determine international best practise, focusing on New Zealand, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, and Canada. These measures all tend to select a wide range of wellbeing variables reflecting aggregate, distributional, subjective, and objective dimensions of society, similar to the OECD framework. The means by which those indicators and areas are then summarised, presented, and tracked through time diverge amongst wellbeing frameworks.

There have been some earlier advances towards wellbeing measurement in Ireland. The CSO created a dashboard of wellbeing indicators for their *Wellbeing of the Nation 2017* publication. They have also conducted survey modules on subjective wellbeing in household surveys in 2013, 2018, and 2020. This work can be leveraged but may not have the frequency of data and expansiveness of coverage observed in international best practice.

The options considered here for Ireland to measure and monitor wellbeing are a dashboard of indicators, a survey, or a composite indicator of wellbeing. These options and their relative advantages are discussed, with a dashboard the most common international choice. Ultimately selection will involve the trade-off between the parsimony of the measure and its accuracy, as well as the resources available for data collection.

This paper contributes to the commitment in the *Programme for Government 2020* to develop new measures of wellbeing. The Department of the Taoiseach will convene a group of experts from across the public and private sectors to further this development.

Section 1: Introduction[2]

In recent years, a growing international consensus has emerged that traditional economic indicators used to measure a country's performance, most commonly Gross Domestic Product (GDP), are insufficient to the task. There is mounting evidence for the need to measure a country's economic performance using multidimensional indicators which relate not only to the narrower economic situation, but to the overall living standards and wellbeing of a country's population (Stiglitz, et al., 2009; OECD, 2019). This encompasses more than simply income and material living standards, also including, for example, health, environmental and social wellbeing.[3]

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has been a global leader in bringing wellbeing into the economic and political mainstream. In 2011, it established a framework for measuring a country's level of wellbeing, identifying 11 key dimensions through which to analyse wellbeing on a national scale (OECD, 2013). The OECD has since produced biennial reports on their member countries' wellbeing and how they compare to one another across the spectrum of wellbeing dimensions.[4] Likewise, a large number of OECD countries have developed their own internal measures of wellbeing for use alongside more traditional economic variables. In 2019, New Zealand became the first government to launch a wellbeing budget (Government of New Zealand, 2019). Several countries have also linked their measures of wellbeing to their commitment to the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).[5]

The Government strives to improve living standards in Ireland, and promoting this improvement is one of the Department of Finance's objectives. To achieve this, it is necessary to accurately measure living standards to begin with. This issue is particularly salient in Ireland, where standard indicators of economic progress (e.g. GDP, GNP, GNI) are distorted by globalisation and increasingly disconnected from effective trends in living standards.[6] Wellbeing has the advantage of encapsulating both economic and social progress, as well as environmental and health outcomes, and overall quality of life. Its accurate measurement is therefore crucial to the effective monitoring of policy outcomes beyond aggregate economic statistics or limited policy-specific targets.

The *2020 Programme for Government* has announced the intention to create a set of wellbeing indicators for use in driving policy and evaluating outcomes.[7] The Programme notes the potential of the Covid-19 crisis to increase inequality and poverty and highlights wellbeing measurement as a

[2] This paper was produced by Clíona McDonnell and Ruth Lennon, economists in the Department of Finance and members of the Irish Government Economic and Evaluation Service ("IGEES"). Unless explicitly referenced by Government decision, any proposal contained in this document does not represent Government policy and should not be represented as such. The analysis and views set out in this paper do not necessarily reflect the views of the Minister for Finance. The authors would particularly like to thank Egle Gusciute for earlier contributions to the paper. The authors would also like to thank Brendan O'Connor, Noel Howard and the Performance Budgeting Unit of the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform for helpful comments.

[3] For the purposes of this paper, the terms wellbeing and living standards will be used interchangeably to refer to the same concept.

[4] See http://www.oecdbetterlifeindex.org/

[5] For example, Scotland, Iceland, Wales.

[6] See https://assets.gov.ie/4910/181218123252-71a2c297f26b419fa3696d7349e3e788.pdf

[7] See https://static.rasset.ie/documents/news/2020/06/draft-programme-for-govt.pdf

mechanism vital for ensuring a fair and balanced recovery from the crisis by capturing all dimensions of the Covid impact and subsequent recovery.

In view of the *Programme for Government*, this scoping paper has two main objectives. Firstly, to review international and domestic research and examples of wellbeing measurement, and to summarise the methodologies and approaches currently in use therein for the measurement of wellbeing. Secondly, to investigate within the Irish context possible methods of wellbeing measurement that would reflect a broad range of economic, social, health, and environmental indicators.

The rest of the paper is structured as follows. Section 2 provides background information on the concept of wellbeing and discusses its relevance in measuring overall living standards in a country. Section 3 constitutes a brief review of selected prominent international wellbeing frameworks. Section 4 provides an overview of national progress to date towards the measurement of wellbeing in Ireland. Section 5 investigates a range of possible options for Ireland to create its own measure of national wellbeing. Possible limitations and data gaps are also outlined in this section. Section 6 then provides some concluding remarks and identifies the next steps to be undertaken.

Section 2: Moving from GDP to Wellbeing

GDP is one of the most widely used and accepted indicators of economic progress and has often been used as a proxy for overall wellbeing (Costanza et al., 2009; Stiglitz, et al., 2018a).[8] There is no question that economic development benefits individual wellbeing; higher income is likely to lead to superior living standards, improved educational opportunities, and better health outcomes. Higher income is associated with higher levels of subjective wellbeing (Stevenson and Wolfers, 2008), although there is some evidence that happiness does not grow as income grows over the long-term.[9] However, there are two issues here. One is that the use of GDP as the single and definitive measure of economic and social progress is problematic. The second is that continued economic development may not always lead to improved overall wellbeing (for example, because economic growth is associated with increased greenhouse gas emissions). The focus here is on the former: moving beyond GDP as the primary economic policy target.

The 'beyond GDP' agenda began with the Stiglitz-Sen-Fitoussi Commission established in 2008 by the French Government to "identify the limits of GDP as an indicator of economic performance and social progress, including the problems with its measurement" (Stiglitz, et al., 2009: 7). The key message in the Commission's report was the need for the "measurement system to shift emphasis from measuring economic production to measuring people's wellbeing", particularly from a sustainability perspective (Stiglitz, et al., 2009: 12).

Simon Kuznets, the developer of the System of National Accounts that gave birth to GDP, recognised its limitations, stating that

> *"The welfare of a nation can scarcely be inferred from a measurement of national income"* (Kuznets, 1934).

However, given a lack of alternative measures of living standards and the appealing simplicity of a single, measurable indicator, GDP has become the de facto measure of welfare and living standards. This is in spite of the fact that GDP fails to measure key non-economic dimensions of overall wellbeing. To name but a few limitations specifically, GDP does not consider the distribution of outcomes, including income, in a society, the depletion of natural resources, or the value of unpaid labour including housework or volunteering. In addition, GDP treats expenditure positively without distinction between welfare-contributing and welfare-reducing activity (Berik, 2018). It is possible that by ignoring these important activities and resources, focusing on GDP could indeed drive activities which may have a negative impact on wellbeing in the long-term, for example by increasing greenhouse gas emissions as previously noted, or by increasing inequality if the distribution of income is ignored.

In the Irish context, the usefulness of GDP is further limited by the distortions caused by the large multinational sector. While there are other macroeconomic statistics which adjust for the distorting effects of globalisation (e.g. Modified Gross National Income, Modified Domestic Demand), and while these do provide a more accurate picture of the economic situation for Irish citizens, they equally fail to

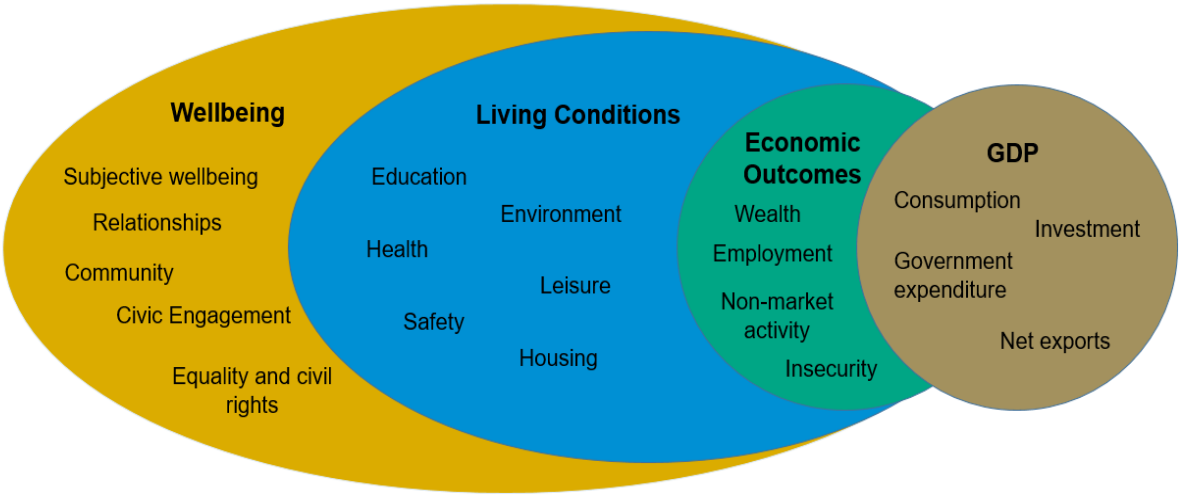
[8] GDP methodologies were developed in the 1930s/1940s in the US and the UK, respectively during a period of economic and social upheaval. In order to speed up economic progress post the Great Depression and WWII, GDP was adopted globally as an indicator of economic progress and became the primary measure used by the IMF and the World Bank. See Coyle (2014).
[9] This is known as the Easterlin paradox.

account for the broader concerns of wellbeing outlined here. The CSO will be producing new figures for income, savings, and consumption by household income distribution later this year, which will partially address this from an income point of view. If the growth of an economic output does not directly or indirectly improve living standards and wellbeing; then an alternative measure is necessary to ensure the drive for economic growth does not eclipse progress towards higher living standards for all.

2.1 Defining Wellbeing

Wellbeing is a multidimensional concept for which no single definition has emerged. At an individual level, it relates to a person's physical, social and mental state (National Economic and Social Council, 2009).[10] At the societal level, the concept of wellbeing encompasses objective and subjective features of current living conditions, including objective accounting of circumstances, such as income or life expectancy, but also reflecting subjective aspects of quality of life, such as feeling content. The components which make up wellbeing may also change over time, as society and the relative importance of different aspects of life evolve. Figure 1 below illustrates how wellbeing includes a wide range of dimensions.

Figure 1: A Multidimensional Understanding of Wellbeing



Source: Department of Finance and Deutsche Bank

Furthermore, the *economy of wellbeing* entails leveraging a balance between economic growth and overall wellbeing (Llena-Nozal, et al., 2019). The OECD (Llena-Nozal, et al., 2019:21) define the economy of wellbeing as an economy that:

i. Expands the opportunities available to people for upward social mobility and for improving their lives along the dimensions that matter most to them;

ii. Ensures that these opportunities translate into wellbeing outcomes for all segments of the population, including those at the bottom of the distribution;

[10] Note that wellbeing is a broad concept and should not be conflated with measures of happiness or subjective (self-reported) life satisfaction (O'Donnell, et al., 2014). In surveys both indicators are generally used to evaluate respondents' level of happiness and life satisfaction on a Likert-type scales. While both indicators are sub-dimensions of the overall wellbeing measure, they are unidimensional and thus do not encompass the broader dimensions of the concept.

iii. Reduces inequalities; and

iv. Fosters environmental and social sustainability.

The OECD's model of wellbeing will be discussed further in Section 3 and it may be useful to adopt a similar approach in Ireland to ensure international comparability.

Measures of wellbeing can be structured to include both macroeconomic indicators and many of the elements for which aggregate economic statistics fail to account, including quality of life factors, and to facilitate analysis of the distribution of living standards across societal groups. The OECD's model of wellbeing also encompasses indicators which have bearing on future wellbeing. This provides an opportunity for scrutiny of whether risks and resources affecting the continuation of high living standards in the future are being adequately managed, and traditionally includes indicators such as national debt and environmental quality.

Section 3: International Wellbeing Initiatives

What initially began as an academic push for economists to move beyond focusing on GDP to measure a country's economic performance has found its way firmly into the policy-making sphere. The OECD has taken the lead on using multidimensional indicators of wellbeing in recent years and a significant number of OECD countries have begun to incorporate these into economic monitoring and policy decisions. Australia, Canada, United Kingdom, Austria, Belgium, Finland, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Iceland, Scotland, Wales and New Zealand have all incorporated wellbeing measures in their national statistics, with work towards a national measurement of wellbeing initiated in others.

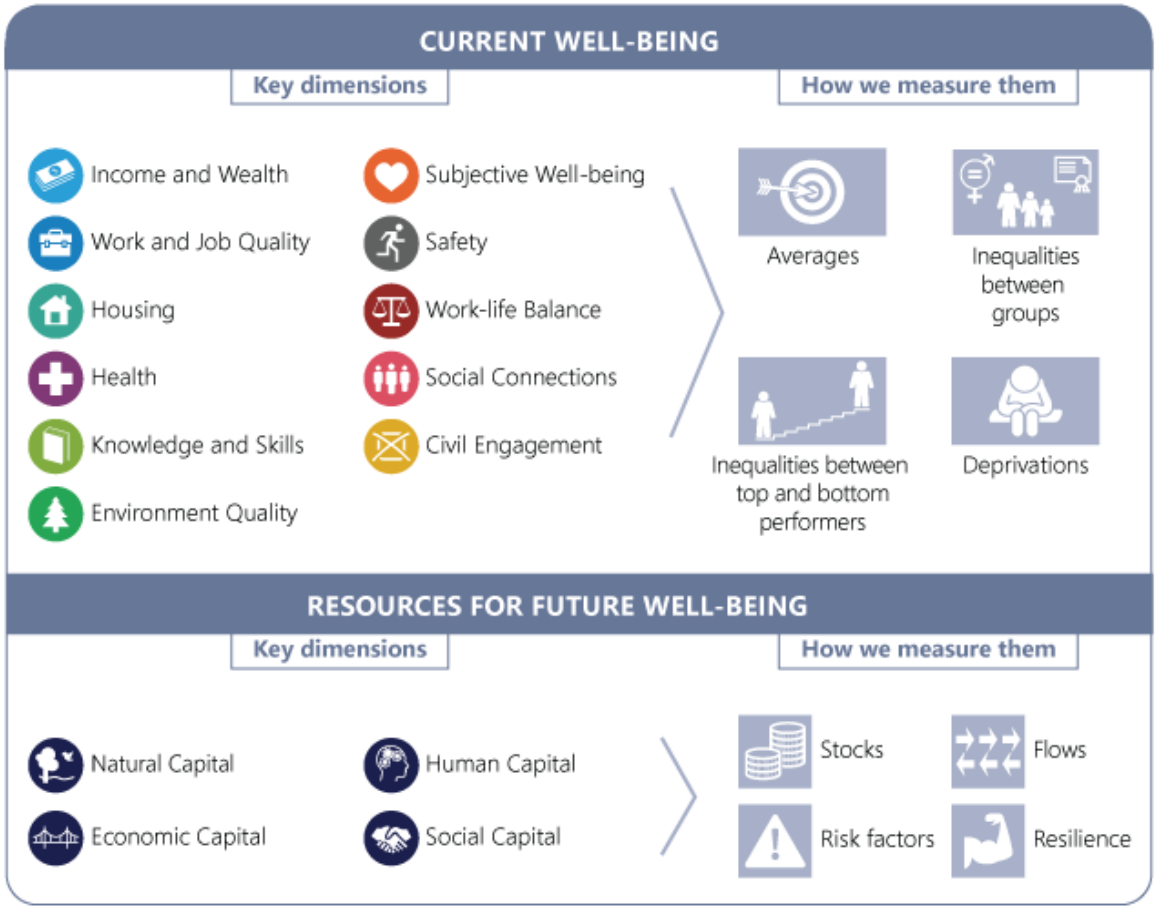
3.1 OECD

In 2011, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) developed a framework for measuring the wellbeing of a country, identifying 11 key dimensions through which to analyse *current* wellbeing on a national scale, as well as 4 domains to analyse *future* wellbeing (OECD, 2013). Since then, the OECD has produced biennial *How's Life* reports on indicators of wellbeing across these categories and for individual member countries, showing their relative performance. This research is of particular relevance to Ireland as it delivers the first comprehensive attempt at measuring Irish wellbeing, providing an initial springboard for national research.

In 2020, the OECD's *How's Life* report included country-level data on over 80 indicators of wellbeing across the spectrum of 11 dimensions and 4 domains. The 11 dimensions measuring current wellbeing, as shown in Figure 2, comprise Income and Wealth, Work and Job Quality, Housing, Health, Knowledge and Skills, Environmental Quality, Subjective Wellbeing, Safety, Work-Life Balance, Social Connections, and Civil Engagement. A key strength of the framework is that many of the individual indicators are also examined for inequalities between groups, both horizontal inequalities (differences by gender, age, and level of educational attainment) and vertical inequalities (differences between the top and bottom of the distribution of outcomes for that indicator).

The OECD also measures capacity for future wellbeing under 4 domains of capital: Economic (e.g. produced fixed assets), Natural (e.g. greenhouse gas emissions), Human (e.g. obesity prevalence), and Social (e.g. trust in others). The monitoring of these domains is key to the sustainability and expansion of current living standards, and through the measurement of risks and resources therein the four domains reflect the outlook of health for economic, natural and social systems.

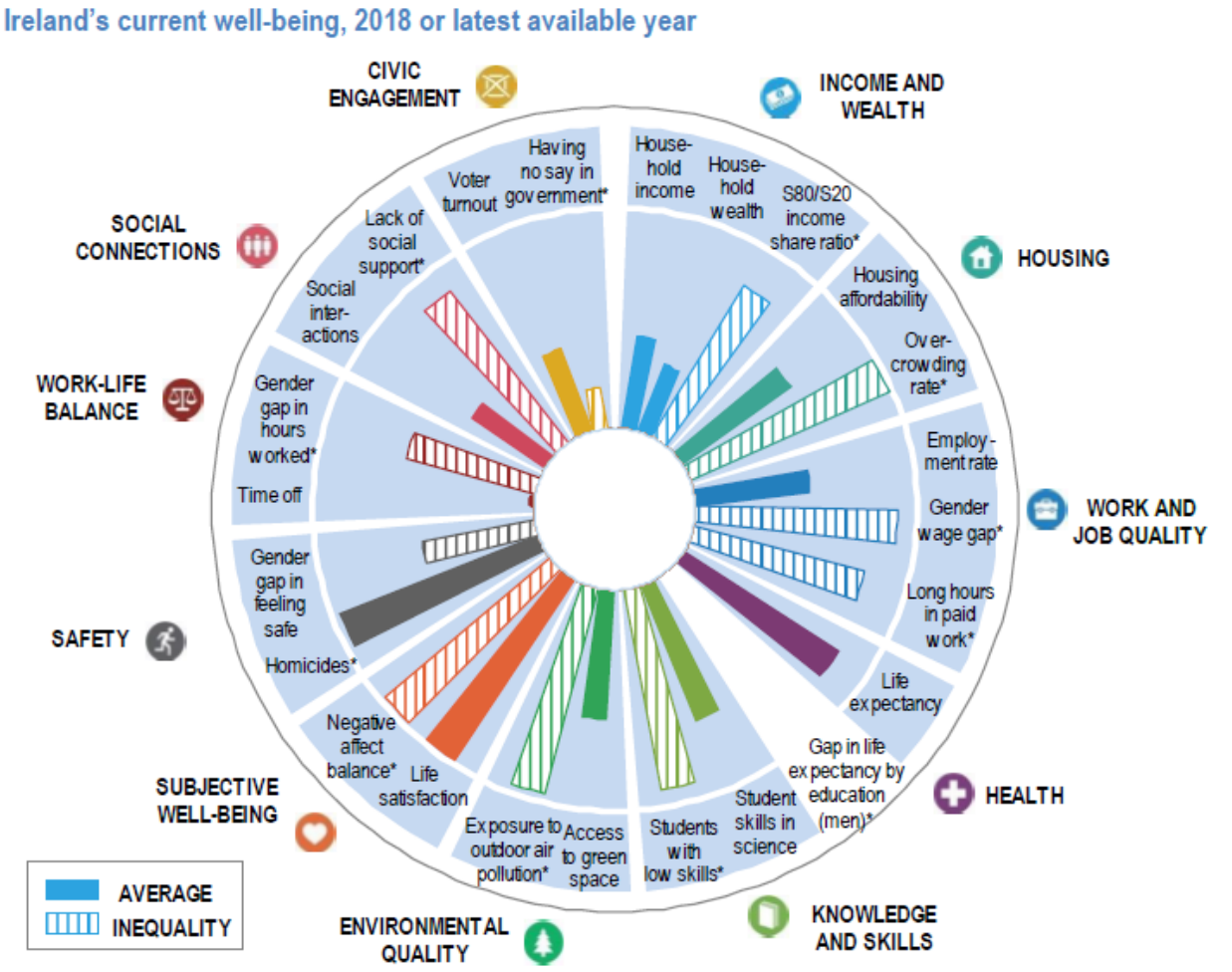
Figure 2: OECD Wellbeing Framework (How's Life 2020)



Source: OECD

Ireland's performance relative to other OECD countries is mixed. Figure 3 shows a selection of indicators for each domain. In 2018, Ireland was by and large performing relatively well in terms of life satisfaction, knowledge and skills, and health, but underperforming relative to the OECD average in terms of income and wealth, work-life balance and civic engagement. Table A2 in Appendix 2 discusses Ireland's performance on the 11 dimensions of wellbeing as per the OECD's 2020 country report for Ireland, *How's Life in Ireland.*

Figure 3: OECD (2020) How's Life in Ireland



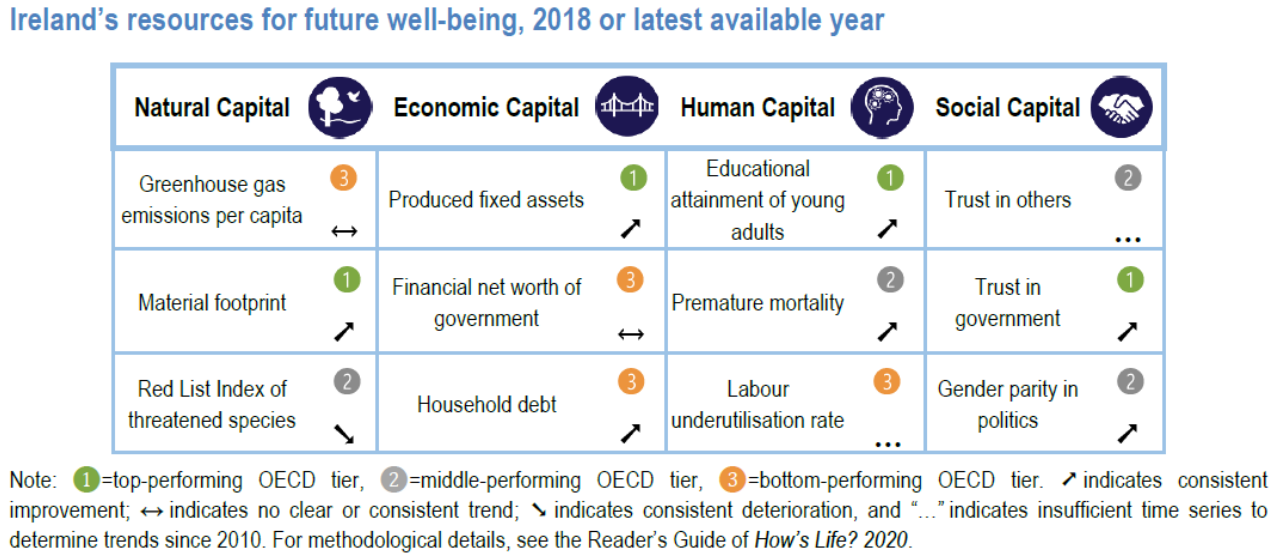
Note: This chart shows Ireland's relative strengths and weaknesses in well-being compared to other OECD countries. Longer bars always indicate better outcomes (i.e. higher wellbeing), whereas shorter bars always indicate worse outcomes (lower well-being) – including for negative indicators, marked with an *, which have been reverse-scored. Inequalities (gaps between top and bottom, differences between groups, people falling under a deprivation threshold) are shaded with stripes, and missing data in white.

Source: OECD. Note this chart shows only a selection of indicators from each dimension.

Even for those indicators in which Ireland is doing well when compared to the OECD mean, there often remains room for improvement with regard to inequalities; for example, as with the income gap in those reporting good health. It should additionally be noted that because OECD indicators were chosen for their broad relevance across varied OECD countries, certain dimensions may be seen to lack indicators specifically relevant to Irish wellbeing; for example housing does not include an indicator on homelessness, which is a current policy concern in Ireland. Finally, it should be noted that while the statistics above were drawn from the OECD's *2020 How's Life* report, many of them are dated figures; some of those for Ireland – such as the gender gap in hours worked – by as many as 15 years. Moreover, a single year's figure for any indicator does not reveal the existence or direction of a trend over time. A proposed wellbeing dashboard for Ireland could include trends over time insofar as possible.

The four capital domains also indicate a mixed outlook for Ireland's future wellbeing (see Figure 4). Economic capital shows Ireland performing well in terms of the stock of assets and investment, but poorly in terms of household debt and the financial net worth of government. Ireland's natural capital is above average in terms of naturally occurring resources – such as land cover – but below average in terms of greenhouse gas emissions and progress into renewable energy. Human capital is close to the mean across all indicators, barring a somewhat high labour underutilisation rate. Finally, Ireland's social capital is in a broadly strong position for future wellbeing, with high trust in others and government, although government stakeholder engagement and gender parity in politics are lower than the OECD average.

Figure 4: OECD (2020) How's Life in Ireland: Capital Domains



Source: OECD

3.2 National Examples

A selection of national wellbeing frameworks are discussed below to inform a view on international best practise. Table A1 in Appendix 1 provides a more comprehensive list of these. Many countries engaged in extensive consultation processes before the construction of their wellbeing frameworks in order to determine the aspects of wellbeing important to their own citizens.

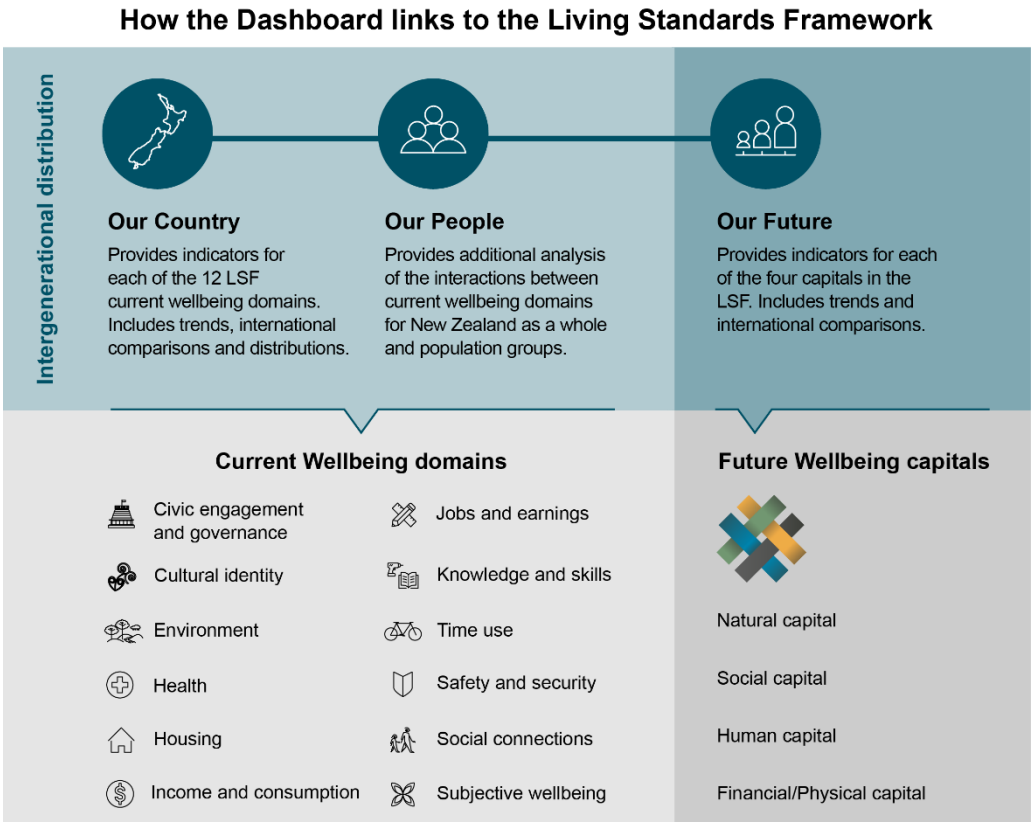
3.2.1 New Zealand

New Zealand was the first government to launch a wellbeing-focused national budget in 2019 and has charged its Treasury to produce a Wellbeing Report at least once every four years.[11] New Zealand's accounting of wellbeing spans 3 sections that make up a *Living Standards Framework (LSF)*: *Our Country*, *Our Future*, *and Our People*. *Our Country* and *Our Future* correspond near exactly to the OECD's 11 dimensions of wellbeing and four capital domains respectively. They have also added a 12th

[11] See https://treasury.govt.nz/information-and-services/nz-economy/higher-living-standards/measuring-well-being-lsf-dashboard

dimension, Cultural Identity, and added bespoke indicators to the OECD dimensions, such as measures of domestic violence, ability to express oneself, and water quality. The extension to a 12th dimension demonstrates how the OECD's framework can be tailored to a specific country. *Our People* is innovative in analysing overall wellbeing across dimensions and the relationships between wellbeing dimensions using extensive survey data from the biennial General Social Survey (GSS) conducted by Statistics New Zealand.[12] GSS questions are used to estimate individual wellbeing levels for different societal groups within each indicator. These wellbeing estimates are also aggregated into a cross-dimension summary wellbeing indicator. A key strength of the framework is the breakdown of indicators (both macroeconomic and survey-based) by cohort to facilitate detailed distributional analysis.

Figure 5: New Zealand Living Standards Framework Dashboard



Source: New Zealand Treasury

New Zealand's Treasury has a comprehensive online interactive dashboard of indicators from the LSF which allows the user to examine indicators over time, by cohort (including by age, sex, ethnicity, region), and compared to other countries. New Zealand's development of a wellbeing measure is particularly noteworthy given the advancements made towards the integration of the LSF into every-day governance. The wellbeing budget saw the LSF inform each stage of the budgeting process, from

[12] See https://lsfdashboard.treasury.govt.nz/well-being/#shiny-tab-op_subpop_select

initial goal formation to the assessment of proposed initiatives.[13] A new form of cost-benefit analysis which takes account of wellbeing has been introduced for policy analysis by government agencies.

3.2.2 United Kingdom

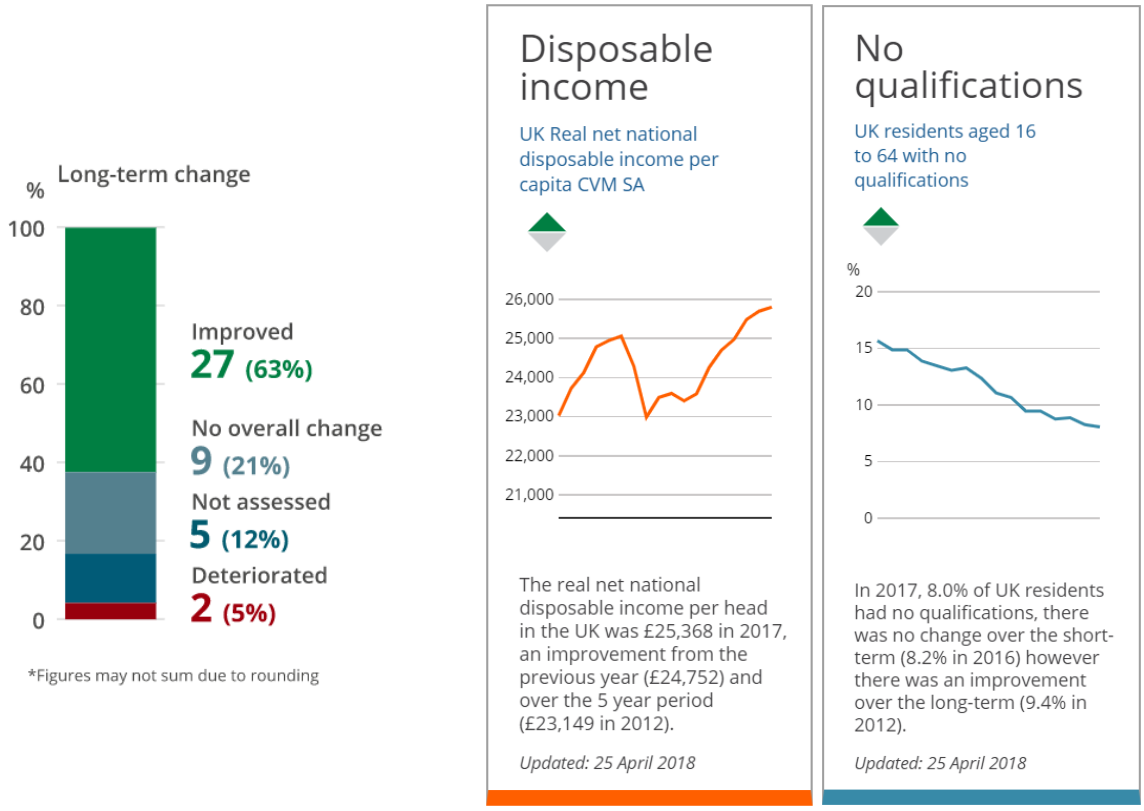
In 2011, the UK Government introduced a national framework of wellbeing indicators to be produced by the Office of National Statistics (ONS). The framework consists of 43 indicators across 10 dimensions: Personal Wellbeing, Our Relationships, Health, What We Do, Where We Live, Personal Finance, Economy, Education and Skills, Governance, and Environment.[14] Differing from the OECD framework, the UK dashboard contains very little information relating to inequalities. The indicators are published in an interactive online dashboard that is updated biannually, subject to data availability. Change is assessed over the short-term (1 year) and the long-term (5 years). An international comparison of the dashboard was also released in 2019, looking at UK outcomes relative to the EU and the OECD.

The UK has taken other steps to integrate wellbeing in national policy-making, but these have been more limited than in some countries. For example, the What Works Centre for Wellbeing was set up by the UK Government in 2014 to advance wellbeing research, and in 2018 the Treasury Green Book guidance on public sector evaluation was amended to include references to wellbeing. However, the 43 indicators of wellbeing are not explicitly in use for the formation and evaluation of policy.

[13] See https://treasury.govt.nz/information-and-services/nz-economy/higher-living-standards/embedding-well-being-public-sector

[14] See https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/wellbeing/articles/measuresofnationalwellbeingdashboard/2018-04-25

Figure 6: UK Measures of National Wellbeing Dashboard



Source: Office of National Statistics. The left hand side chart shows a summary of changes across all indicators.

3.2.3 The Netherlands

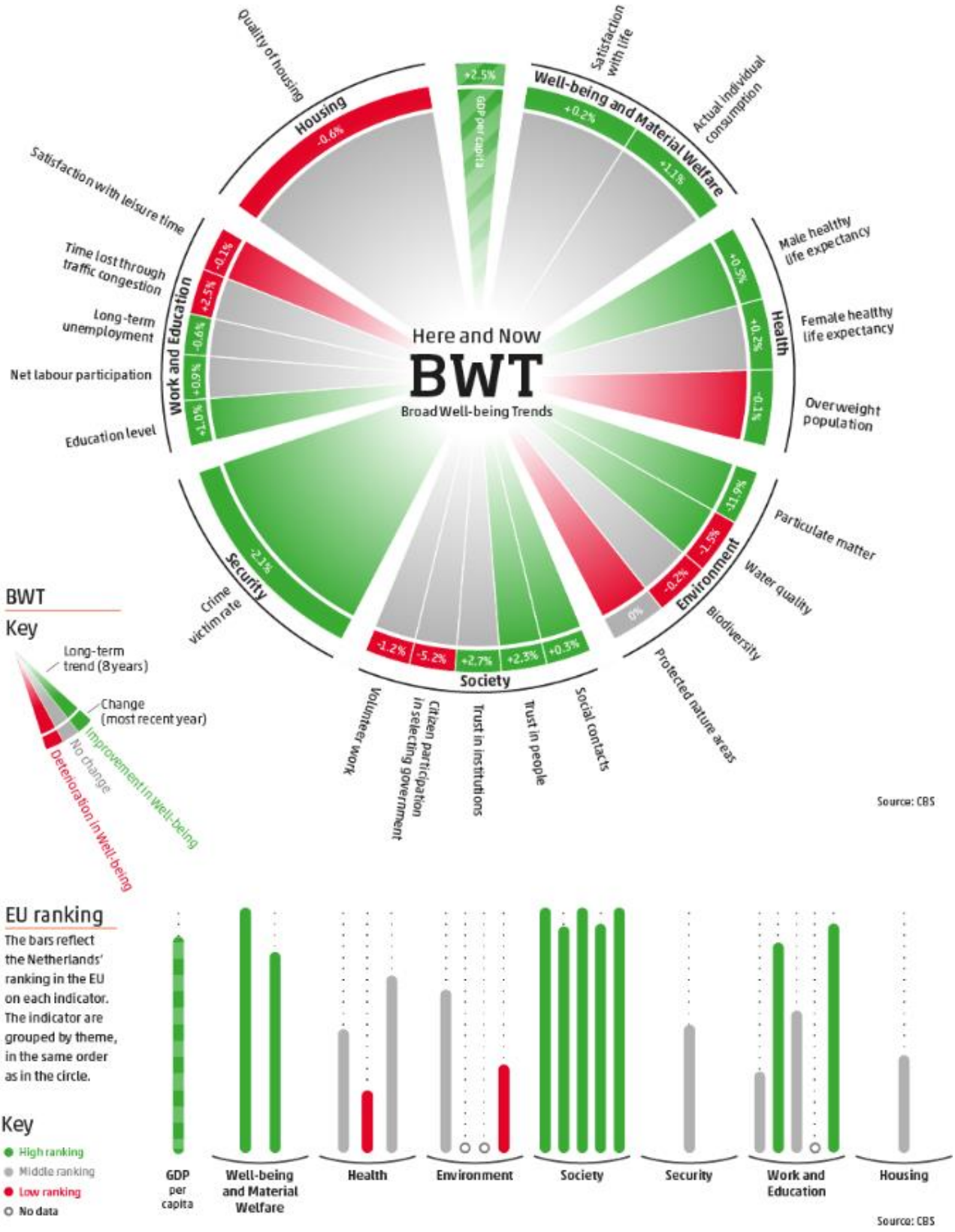
In 2018, Statistics Netherlands published the first of their annual publications monitoring wellbeing in the Netherlands. Their methodology tracks wellbeing over time across 3 aspects of Broad Wellbeing Trends (BWT): wellbeing of residents in the present day, the outlook for wellbeing of residents in the future, and unusually, the effect of the Netherlands on wellbeing elsewhere in the world, particularly regarding the environment and developing nations.

The BWT tracked for current wellbeing cover 20 indicators over 7 dimensions: Wellbeing and Material Welfare, Health, Environment, Society, Security, Work and Education, Housing.[15] The smaller number of indicators utilised mean the Netherlands has sacrificed greater coverage of the different elements of a dimension for simplicity of output. The BWT tracked for the future are divided across the standard 4 capitals: Economic, Human, Social, and Natural. Finally, the BWT tracked for their effect elsewhere span four dimensions: Trade and Aid, Raw Material Imports from LDCs, Raw Material Imports generally, and Carbon Footprint.[16]

[15] See https://www.cbs.nl/en-gb/news/2018/20/well-being-improving

[16] Raw material imports are viewed as removing natural capital from other countries; the benefits in monetary terms to this trade are captured in the total imports indicator which makes up part of the trade and aid dimension.

Figure 7: Broad Wellbeing Trends in the Netherlands

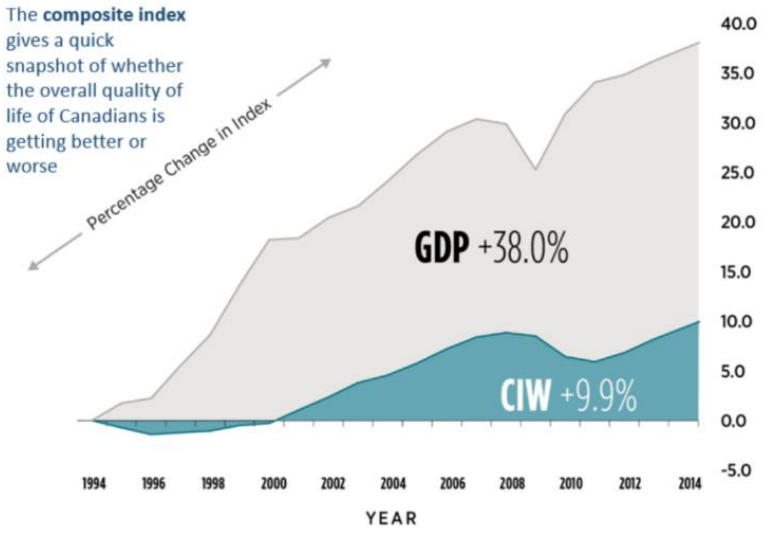


Source: Statistics Netherlands

3.2.4 Canada

The Canadian Index of Wellbeing (CIW) was created in 2011 and is run by the University of Waterloo.[17] The CIW is a single composite measure of wellbeing which can be compared directly to GDP (as seen in Figure 8). The index is created from 64 indicators spread evenly across 8 dimensions: Healthy Populations, Democratic Engagement, Community Vitality, Environment, Leisure and Culture, Time Use, Education, and Living Standards. The CIW composite is created through an equal weighting of the percentage change in all indicators relative to the base year (1994). While the CIW composite indicator bears the obvious drawback of generalization, it can also be analysed by individual dimension similar to a dashboard. The expansiveness of the Canadian dashboard is costly, however, as in 2019, the full range of data to complete the CIW was only available up to 2014.

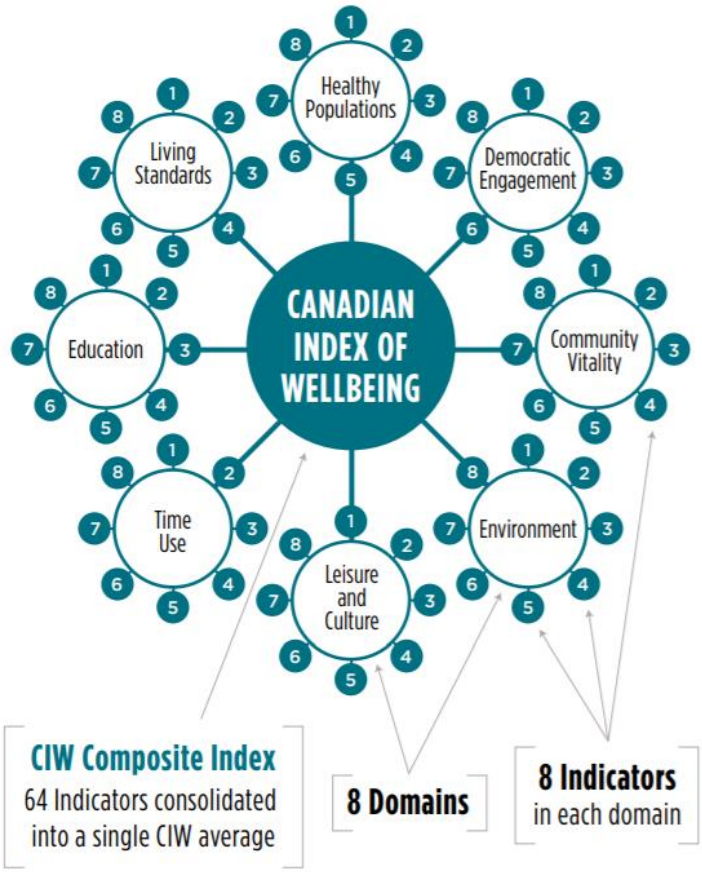
Figure 8: Growth in the Canadian Index of Wellbeing and GDP



Source: University of Waterloo, Faculty of Applied Health Sciences

[17] See https://uwaterloo.ca/canadian-index-well-being/about-canadian-index-well-being

Figure 9: Canadian Index of Wellbeing



Source: University of Waterloo, Faculty of Applied Health Sciences

Section 4: Irish Development of Wellbeing Measurement

While comprehensive research on broader wellbeing has not yet been undertaken by Government Departments, there are other Irish organisations who have researched wellbeing in Ireland, in particular the CSO. The CSO's work, outlined below, could be leveraged when building a national measure of wellbeing, as could its aforementioned forthcoming work on the distribution of household income. In addition, the CSO has also completed work on Ireland's progress toward fulfilling the Sustainable Development Goals. There have been 4 reports focussing on the first 4 SDGs individually and one comprehensive report covering progress on all 17 SDGs released in 2017.[18] The National Economic and Social Council (NESC) previously launched a wellbeing report in 2009 but this has not been repeated (see Appendix 3 for further detail).

4.1 CSO Wellbeing of the Nation

The Central Statistics Office produced an initial look at Irish wellbeing in 2018, *The Wellbeing of the Nation 2017*. The report follows various international examples in reporting on 8 dimensions composed of a range of indicators tracked over time. These dimensions are: Economy, Work, Education, Housing and Natural Environment, Government and Equality, Health, Public Safety, Time Use.[19] Table 1 below lists the full range of indicators which make up each of these dimensions.

The publication demonstrates how wellbeing measurement can be more accurately shaped to issues of concern for Irish citizens, e.g. homelessness, commuting time, binge-drinking, financial inclusion. The CSO does not summarise the data, show trends in dimensions, nor draw any conclusions from the data. This means that there is no snapshot indication of how Ireland is doing in terms of wellbeing. There are also some domains and indicators which are common in international measures and notably missing here, e.g. subjective wellbeing, specific crime rates (e.g. violent crime or domestic abuse which are particularly welfare reducing), wellbeing gaps between groups.[20] In general, there is very little focus on either the distribution of wellbeing among societal groups or resources for future wellbeing (the four capitals). A Government initiative on wellbeing could address these issues and create a wellbeing framework that serves the purposes of the wider public (and private) sector.

[18] See https://www.cso.ie/en/statistics/unsustainabledevelopmentgoals/. It is worth noting that the UN SDGs are distinct from the wellbeing agenda; the SDGs are a set of targets to promote global development and prosperity while the wellbeing agenda is about adapting the methodology used to measure living standards. However, there is overlap between the two on indicators of progress and they share a common vision of improving living standards.

[19] See https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-wbn/thewell-beingofthenation2017/

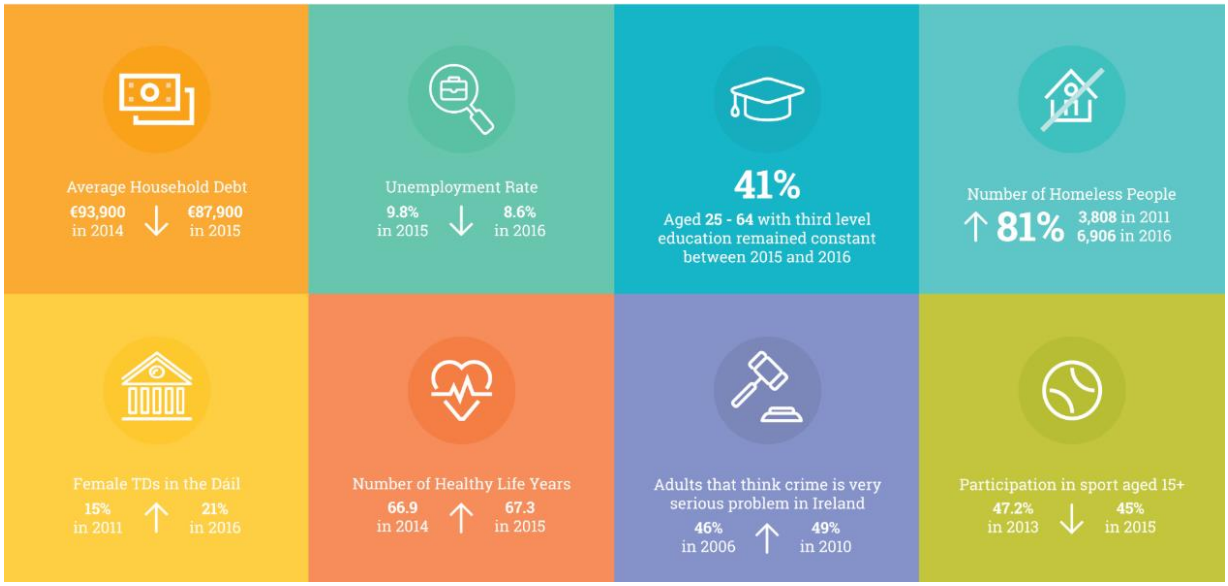
[20] For example, the measure of discrimination describes overall the number of people within a population experiencing discrimination (18% in 2019) but the aggregate figure obfuscates how high discrimination levels are for particular groups, e.g. 33.2% for LGBTI+, although the CSO also publishes this: https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/er/ed/equalityanddiscrimination2019/

Table 1: CSO dimensions and indicators of wellbeing in Ireland

Dimension	Indicator 1	Indicator 2	Indicator 3	Indicator 4	Indicator 5	Indicator 6
Economy	Average Debt per Household	GNI*	Average Total Earnings per Individual	Consumer Price Index		
Work	Unemployment Rate	Long-Term Unemployment Rate	Employment Rate for those with Disabilities	% Working Long Hours (+48 per Week)	Enforced Job Instability[21]	Discrimination in the Workplace
Education	Educational Attainment [22]	Early School Leavers	Digital Skills	PISA Maths Mean Score		
Housing and Natural Environment	Homelessness	Air Quality[23]	River Water Quality	Recovered Packaging Rates		
Government and Equality	Female Representation in the Dáil	Poverty Rate	Income Inequality	% Experiencing Discrimination		
Health	Self-Perceived Health	Healthy Life Years at Birth	Obesity Rate	% Engaging in Binge-Drinking	Deaths by Suicide	
Public Safety	Self-Reported Victimisation Rate	Fear of Becoming a Victim of Crime	Perception of the Level of Seriousness of Crime	Road Traffic Injuries/Fatalities		
Time Use	Volunteering	Participation in Sport	Expenditure on Sports/Leisure	Commuting Time		

Source: Department of Finance and CSO

Figure 10: CSO Wellbeing of the Nation (2017)



Source: CSO

[21] Enforced Job Instability refers to the percentage of people changing job each year who were forced to do so by their employer, it is inclusive of dismissals, redundancies, early retirements, or the closure of a business.
[22] This is measured as the percentage of people aged 25 to 65 with third level education.
[23] Note this is actually a measure of total CO2 emissions.

4.2 CSO Survey Modules on Subjective Wellbeing

The CSO has collected data on subjective wellbeing, i.e. how people perceive their own wellbeing, through its Survey on Income and Living Conditions (SILC) in 2013 and 2018. Respondents were questioned about their satisfaction with various aspects of their life, including:

- Satisfaction with life overall, financial situation, personal relationships, time use, and job
- Emotional wellbeing
- Access to material and non-material help
- Perceived social inclusion
- Trust in others
- How often one experiences a range of emotional states: happy, calm and peaceful, very nervous, down in the dumps, downhearted and depressed, lonely.

This wellbeing module in SILC has several key advantages: it allows for a comparison of indicators in Ireland over time and it facilitates comparison with other countries who have conducted similar surveys. It allows for welfare gaps to reveal themselves through the division of results by demographic class or societal grouping and it provides valuable data for wellbeing research. For example, in 2016 the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) published a paper using data from the SILC 2013 module on wellbeing to estimate a multidimensional level of quality of life deprivation in Ireland.[24]

The results of the SILC survey were broadly positive on the outlook for wellbeing in Ireland. The mean score for overall life satisfaction (rated on a scale 1-10) increased from 7.5 in 2013 to 8.1 in 2018, bringing Ireland level with Finland as the joint highest performing countries in the EU-27. 2018 also saw Ireland record the highest rate in the EU-27 of individuals reporting being happy either most or all of the time in the month preceding the survey. Satisfaction with all aspects of life bar personal relationships (which held steady) rose from 2013. However, there were also some negative results. The percentage of those feeling very nervous or downhearted/depressed at some point in the 4 weeks preceding the survey saw significant increases over the period. In terms of distribution, for example, individuals not at work due to a disability or permanent disease had significantly lower overall life satisfaction than the rest of the population, while significantly fewer individuals at risk of poverty reported being happy all or most of the time compared to those not at risk.

An additional survey on wellbeing was also conducted by the CSO in April 2020 in response to the COVID-19 pandemic to assess the pandemic's impact on wellbeing. Unsurprisingly, it has had a significant negative effect on the majority of indicators. In addition to covering the wellbeing questions previously asked in the SILC surveys, the April 2020 survey also investigated lifestyle changes in terms of consumption (of alcohol, tobacco, junk food, and fresh fruit and vegetables), behaviour (exercise and time spent), and levels of personal concern over certain issues provoked by the crisis (including health of oneself and others, the effect of an interrupted education, and domestic violence). As there is no consistent, systematic method of monitoring wellbeing, however, the effects of COVID-19 on wellbeing

[24] The paper was funded by the Department of Social Protection, see https://www.esri.ie/system/files/media/file-uploads/2016-07/BKMNEXT310.pdf

seen in the CSO survey – and likely more still not included – remain largely unobserved and so cannot be fully accounted for in the decision-making process.

4.4 Government Initiatives

In recent years, the Irish Government has developed and implemented a number of initiatives designed to advance aspects of wellbeing in Ireland. For example, Equality Budgeting has been introduced by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (DPER), while a Framework for Sustainable Development in Ireland was created under the remit of the Department of Communications, Climate Action and the Environment.

While these schemes have aimed to improve wellbeing in specific areas, they are individual initiatives that have been isolated from one another and from the broader picture of wellbeing. Coordination is restricted and therefore goals are limited to resource-plausible achievements for the responsible Department or organisation.

Section 5: Options for Wellbeing Measurement in Ireland

There are three primary options that emerge in respect of the development of a national measure of wellbeing in Ireland: a dashboard of indicators, a national survey, or a composite summary indicator. One option or a combination of the three could be chosen, with trade-offs between simplicity and breadth to consider. For example, a dashboard could be presented alongside a composite indicator, or a series of composite indicators each reflecting one dimension of a dashboard might provide a clearer set of wellbeing trends. A dashboard would put Ireland most in line with international approaches to wellbeing. For all of the options, improvements in data collection and availability are likely to be required, whether by the CSO or Government Departments. As in other countries, significant stakeholder engagement will be important to ensure any measure of wellbeing reflects the interests of as broad a range of Irish society as possible.

5.1 Dashboard

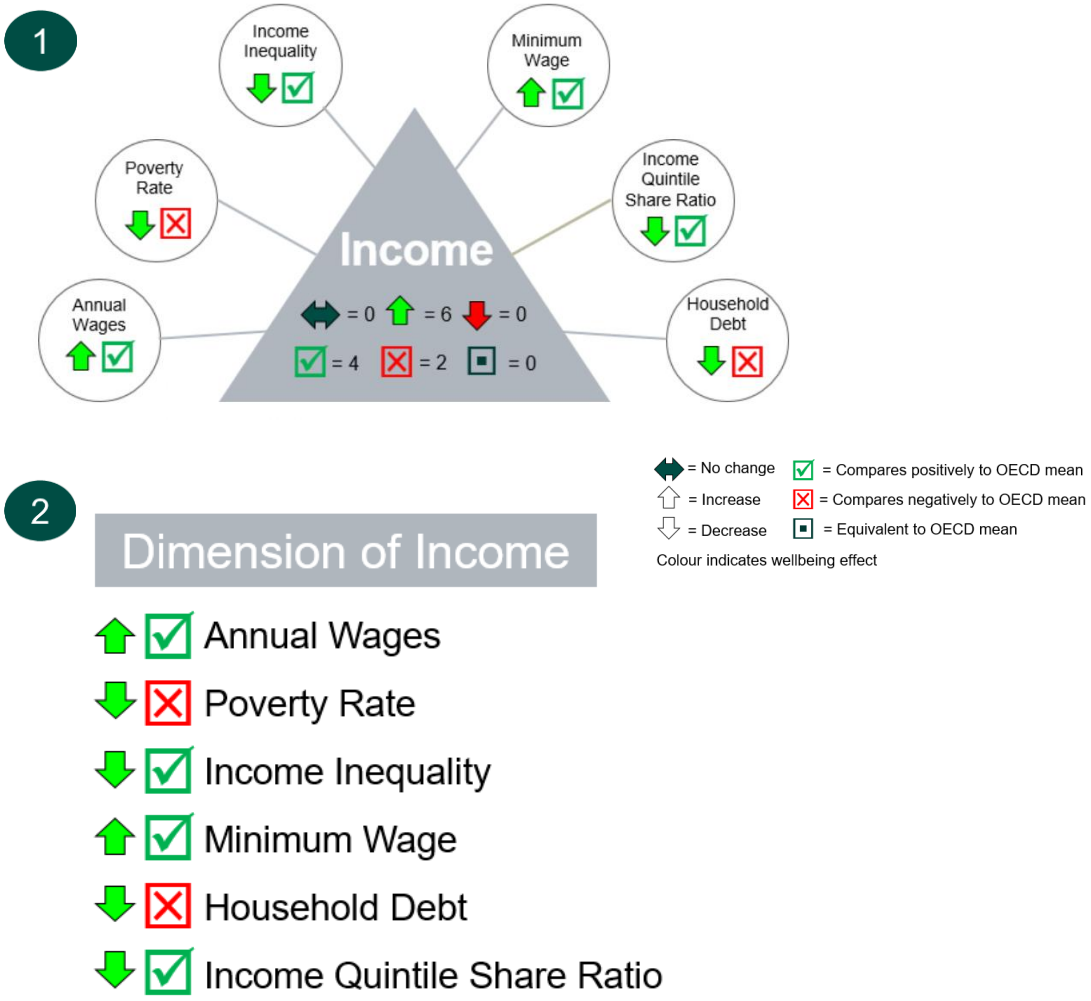
A dashboard or suite of indicators provides the most extensive overview of wellbeing; it is the mode of wellbeing measurement most commonly seen at the national level and aligns with the OECD's work. A dashboard is created from a series of unidimensional wellbeing indicators (e.g. average household disposable income, life expectancy) which are divided into different areas of wellbeing, typically referred to as dimensions (e.g. income, health). A dashboard offers flexibility in how results are best presented. It can be used to examine both how many indicators and how many dimensions are trending upwards over time (and how many are stationary, and how many declining). Indicators can also be shown by cohort to reveal inequalities across society for that indicator. A dashboard can also allow a comparison against other countries, for example how Ireland compares to the EU or OECD average.[25] Table A4 in Appendix 4 gives a work-in-progress summary of possible dashboard indicators for Ireland based on the OECD wellbeing framework. Ireland's wellbeing dashboard could leverage both the OECD and CSO's work but be tailored to Ireland-specific issues, e.g. data on the Irish Traveller group, or to Government policy priorities, e.g. homelessness. Figure 11 below displays two basic sample graphics of how a proposed income dimension could be displayed as part of a broader Irish measure of wellbeing.

A dashboard can also be complicated to analyse. Examining trends in dimensions can give an idea of whether wellbeing tends to improve over time, but misses some of the nuance between dimensions. For example, if the population's health is falling while all other dimensions are improving, actual wellbeing is likely to be low if people are not healthy enough to enjoy the benefits of rising incomes, an improving environment, etc. However, this would present as a very positive shift in wellbeing when viewed only as an aggregate of dimension trends. Similarly, a trend in a dimension could be misleading if it is driven by trends in some indicators within it, but masks diverging trends in other indicators. This danger can be guarded against by examining welfare outcomes by social group wherever possible, as this is a common source of indicator divergences within a dimension. To enable an easier interpretation of a dashboard, the simplest overview possible of wellbeing outcomes could be displayed, with analysis of the deeper levels also available and outliers or exceptions explained as required. An interactive

[25] Where countries depart from the OECD's framework and use bespoke indicators or domains, an international comparison will be more difficult.

dashboard that allows the user to choose the indicators or domains to focus on or the level of analysis would facilitate this. Graphical presentation is also crucial to facilitate understanding and interpretation.

Figure 11: Sample Dimension Graphic



Source: Department of Finance

5.2 Survey

Another option is to develop an iterative, representative national survey on subjective wellbeing, extending the CSO's initial survey work. This option would serve best as a complement to other statistical indicators. The survey could involve similar questions to the CSO SILC wellbeing module but at an increased frequency, as the SILC module is currently repeated only once every 5 years. The wellbeing measure could then be tracked over time or compared with international results. There are very few countries using survey data alone to measure wellbeing, although many countries do include survey data on subjective wellbeing within their indicators, e.g. New Zealand, the UK, Australia. New

Zealand uses a particularly comprehensive survey to estimate wellbeing for most dimensions and also build a composite indicator from this. The survey could be undertaken by the CSO or contracted to a private survey operator on behalf of Government Departments. In addition to the CSO's SILC surveys, there are also a number of other surveys and studies in operation which could be leveraged, for example, the European Social Survey, the Eurobarometer, the Healthy Ireland surveys, the Irish Longitudinal Study on Ageing, and the Growing Up in Ireland study.

There are clear advantages to the measurement of wellbeing through a survey, including that it is simple and directly represents the views of the people on their own wellbeing, which is difficult to proxy any other way. Additionally beneficial is the ability to include social group memberships – relating to age, gender, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation, etc – within the survey and therefore guarantee that individual wellbeing indicators can be broken down across such groups (as New Zealand have done). A survey also provides a means of obtaining more accurate figures of indicators for which the aggregate measures are viewed with scepticism; for example, sexual assault is widely acknowledged to be an underreported crime.[26]

Conversely, we can also expect that survey results will see less objectivity in certain domains, e.g. environment, health. For certain areas of wellbeing, such as greenhouse gas emissions, individuals may simply lack information, while in others, such as the reporting of exercise taken or alcohol consumed, there is risk of dishonesty. There is also a clear disconnect between certain real-world variables and the perception of those variables, for example, the crime rate does not necessarily correlate to the fear of crime.

5.3 Composite Indicator

A composite indicator is a single index summarising wellbeing derived from a range of individual wellbeing indicators. This approach is less common, with Canada and Bhutan the most prominent examples. Three possible methods by which such a composite statistic might be constructed are outlined below:

1. Simple weighting composition: this would mean that each indicator selected is weighted either equally or relative to its perceived importance for inclusion in the composite figure. Indicators can provide an up or down trend in wellbeing terms, or they can be taken as the percentage change from a base year, or on an annual change basis. Canada chose to weight each indicator equally and calculate the composite figure as a percentage change from a base year. Bhutan employs a more complex formula involving adding those who are categorised 'happy' (meeting a minimum criteria across 2/3 of indicators) to a sum of those who are unhappy, multiplied by a weighting (equal) of those categories in which 'unhappy' individuals have achieved the minimum criteria.
2. Principal component analysis: this involves the employment of the econometric technique of principal component analysis in order to estimate a broad wellbeing trend from a range of related indicators.

[26] See http://www.cosc.ie/en/COSC/Pages/WP08000146

3. Cross-domain wellbeing: this creates an overall wellbeing indicator based on the number of domains in which a person has high or low wellbeing (an approach taken by New Zealand). This would require survey data or panel data on the same individuals.

The key advantage of a composite indicator is that a single figure is clear and parsimonious, and easily comparable to aggregate economic statistics such as GDP. However, it loses a great deal of detail and severe deficiencies in one category can be obscured by unusually positive outcomes in another, and vice versa. As the OECD noted in its *How's Life in 2020?* publication:

"What is true on average is not always true for every member country - and even less so for different population groups within those countries."

Some wellbeing indicators are likely to have an inverse relationship, for example, greenhouse gas emissions and income per capita. Striking a balance between such opposing forces in society is one of the reasons it is important to measure wellbeing, but the result is that a composite indicator must be constructed with extreme care. Some indicators of relevance may have to be excluded to ensure effects do not cancel each other out.

Section 6: Conclusion

The *Programme for Government 2020* outlines the intention to develop new measures of wellbeing instruments, including wellbeing indices and a balanced scorecard for different areas of public policy. This development, to be guided by a group of experts from across the civil service, academia, NGOs, and the private sector, will bring Ireland in line with other European and OECD countries. This paper has sought to inform this process by outlining international progress on measuring wellbeing and the key learnings for Ireland from this. A dashboard of indicators has been identified internationally as likely the best way to achieve a well-rounded and informative wellbeing measure, however other options could also be considered, including a comprehensive national survey and a composite wellbeing indicator. There are some limitations, however, in particular regarding current data availability.

A national measurement of wellbeing has the potential to improve inter-Departmental co-operation and cohesion, and to further the whole-of-Government agenda to improve living standards for Irish residents and citizens. Wellbeing could become an entrenched consideration at all levels of public decision-making, operating continuously both in and out of the public eye. It will improve the analytical capacity of the Department of Finance by providing a more holistic view of Irish living standards and by adding to the information content and quality available to inform the Department's decision-making, in particular by facilitating a shift away from a narrower focus on GDP.

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Appendix 1: Summary Table of International Wellbeing Measures

Table A1: Measuring Wellbeing: International Examples

Country	Name	Based/Produced	Link
Australia	Measures of Australia's Progress (MAP)	Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS)	https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/1370.0
Austria	How's Austria?	Statistics Austria	http://www.statistik.at/web_en/statistics/------/hows_austria/index.html
Belgium	Complementary Indicators to GDP	Federal Planning Bureau	https://www.indicators.be/en/g/BGDP/
Bhutan	Gross National Happiness (GNH) Index	Centre for Bhutan & Gross National Happiness Studies	http://www.grossnationalhappiness.com/
Canada	Canadian Index of Wellbeing	Faculty of Applied Health Sciences, University of Waterloo	https://uwaterloo.ca/canadian-index-wellbeing/
Ecuador	Buen Vivir (Good Living)	National Institute of Statistics and Census (INEC)	https://www.ecuadorencifras.gob.ec/medidas-para-el-buen-vivir/
Finland	Findicator	Statistics Finland/Office of the Prime Minister	https://findikaattori.fi/fi/indicators
Germany	Wellbeing in Germany	Federal Chancellery	http://www.gut-leben-in-deutschland.de/en/
Iceland	Indicators for Measuring Wellbeing	Prime Minister's Committee on Indicators for Measuring Wellbeing	https://www.government.is/lisalib/getfile.aspx?itemid=fc981010-da09-11e9-944d-005056bc4d74
Italy	Benessere Equo Sostenibile (BES) (Equitable and Sustainable Wellbeing)	Italian National Institute of Statistics	https://www.istat.it/en/archivio/225140
Israel	Wellbeing, Sustainability and National Resilience Indicators	Central Bureau of Statistics	http://www.sviva.gov.il/English/env_topics/Sustainable%20Development/Pages/Wellbeing-and-Sustainability-Indicators.aspx#GovXParagraphTitle1
Japan	Measuring National Wellbeing – Proposed Wellbeing Indicators	Commission on Measuring Wellbeing	https://www5.cao.go.jp/keizai2/koufukudo/pdf/koufukudosian_english.pdf

Luxembourg	Luxembourg Index of Wellbeing	National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies	https://statistiques.public.lu/catalogue-publications/PIBien-etre/2018/PIBien-etre.pdf
The Netherlands	Monitor of Wellbeing	Statistics Netherlands (CBS)	https://www.cbs.nl/en-gb/corporate/2018/20/monitor-of-wellbeing-a-broader-picture
New Zealand	Living Standards Framework	The Treasury	https://lsfdashboard.treasury.govt.nz/wellbeing/
Northern Ireland	Towards a Wellbeing Framework	Office for National Statistics	https://www.nisra.gov.uk/statistics/uk-national-wellbeing-measures-northern-ireland-data/personal-wellbeing
Scotland	National Performance Framework	Scottish Government	https://www2.gov.scot/About/Performance/scotPerforms/NPFChanges
Slovenia	The Indicators of Wellbeing in Slovenia	Various	http://www.kazalniki-blaginje.gov.si/en/wb-slo.html
Sweden	New Measures of Wellbeing	Ministry of Finance	https://www.government.se/articles/2017/08/new-measures-of-wellbeing/
UK	Measuring National Wellbeing	Office for National Statistics	https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20160105160711/http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/user-guidance/wellbeing/index.html
Wales	Wellbeing of Wales	Welsh Government	https://gov.wales/wellbeing-wales

Source: Department of Finance

Appendix 2: Summary of Ireland's Performance on OECD Wellbeing Dashboard

Table A2: Ireland's Performance across the OECD Dashboard in 2020

Dimension	Ireland's Performance in 2020
Income and Wealth	This is a broadly negative dimension for Ireland, with the country performing poorly in terms of disposable income, financial insecurity, and the distribution of wealth, balanced by better outcomes in terms of relative income poverty and financial strain.
Housing	Ireland is performing well relative to the OECD mean in terms of affordability, overcrowding, access to sanitation, and access to internet.
Work and Job Quality	Ireland is performing very close to the OECD mean in terms of the employment rate, both standard, long-term, and youth. Labour market insecurity, job strain, working hours, and average earnings are in good position relative to the mean, however earnings inequality is comparatively high.
Health	Ireland is a strong performer in health, with above average life expectancy and self-reported health, and comparatively low figures for deaths of despair and reporting of depressive symptoms. Ireland also comes in below the OECD average for the gender gap in deaths of despair, and the income gap in reporting of good health.
Knowledge and Skills	Ireland is in a good relative position for this dimension, reporting strong statistics in terms of PISA Maths, Reading, and Science skills, and a very low vertical gap in cognitive skills. The share of those with low PISA scores is well below the OECD mean, as is the gender gap in reading scores, and the gap in reading scores according to parental education level.
Environmental Quality	Ireland is performing quite well on most indicators for this dimension, with an extremely below average share of the population exposed to outdoor air pollution and above average access to green spaces within urban areas. The vertical gap in those exposed to air pollution is mildly above average.
Subjective Wellbeing	Ireland has a strong position in this dimension, with an extremely above average outcome for mean life satisfaction and an extremely below average share of the population experiencing more negative feelings than positive feelings. The share of those reporting low life satisfaction and the S80/S20 satisfaction ratio are higher than the OECD mean, but remain in a cluster of country results very close to it.
Safety	Ireland is doing comparatively well in terms of safety, with relatively low levels of homicide and road deaths and an above average figure for those reporting feeling safe walking at night through their area. There are however pronounced gender gaps in homicide and in feeling safe, with the gender gap in homicide above the OECD average, showing a higher rate of homicide for men than women.
Work-Life Balance	This is a dimension in which Ireland performs poorly, with time off from work reported well below the OECD mean and the highest share of those with long unpaid working hours as compared to those countries with data available (which it should be noted is unusually limited for this statistic).
Social Connections	Ireland performs relatively well on most measures of this dimension, with the main negative outcome being a below average proportion of time spent socialising. Satisfaction with personal relationships and the share of the population reporting they have someone to count on are both well above the OECD mean, with low education and age gaps for the latter.
Civic Engagement	Ireland is in a poor relative position regarding civic engagement. Voter turnout is just under the OECD average and the proportion of those reporting they feel they have a say in government is below the OECD mean, with a significantly high number reporting they feel they have no say.

Source: Department of Finance and OECD

Appendix 3: NESC Wellbeing Report 2009

In 2009, the National Economic and Social Council (NESC) published the first holistic report into Irish wellbeing.[27] The report includes a great deal of information about the evolution of wellbeing as a concept, the recent trends in Irish history, and the various approaches to including wellbeing considerations in the policy-making process. Ultimately, the NESC created a dashboard of 6 dimensions which are outlined along with their selected indicators below.

Table A3: NESC Dimensions and Indicators of Wellbeing in Ireland

Dimension	Indicators
Economic Resources	Household Income, Income Inequality, Income Poverty, Consistent Poverty, Debt
Work/Participation	Unemployment, Employment, Job Satisfaction, Academic Achievement, Early School Leaving, Life-Long Learning, Time Use
Relationships/Care	Marital Status, Household Composition, Lone Parent Families, 65+ Living Alone, Loneliness, Carers
Community/Environment	Dwelling Unit Completion, House Prices, Housing Need, Community Involvement, Greenhouse Gas Emissions, Commuting, Municipal Waste
Health	Life Expectancy, Healthy Life Years, Perceptions of Good Health, Access to Health Services, Chronic Illness, Suicide, Smoking Cigarettes, Alcohol Consumption, Physical Exercise, Healthy Eating, Overeating/Obese
Democracy/Values	Trust in Political Institutions, Corruption, Voting, ICT, Beliefs, Sense of Fulfilment, Impact of the NI Conflict, Crime Incidents, Perceptions of Safety, Domestic Violence, Gender Wage Gap, Women in Decision-Making, Discrimination among Ethnic Minorities

Source: Department of Finance and National and Social Economic Council

As can be observed in Table A3, the indicators set by out the NESC are less specific than those of other wellbeing frameworks. For example, household income is named as a general indicator, but is then measured by average household income and GNI per capita, as well as looking at the likely causes behind the positive upward trend in income, including a rise in employment, changes in taxation, and an increase of two-earner households. This is extremely thorough, but the complexity of the wellbeing concept is not much reduced. Also key to understanding the NESC's work is awareness that indicators are generally being examined relative to their long-run trends from the 1980s up to the date of publication. As Ireland has transformed significantly and positively in terms of economic conditions and living standards since then, the results of the NESC's Report are broadly positive.

To summarise the NESC report across their 6 dimensions: In terms of economic resources, over recent decades average income has risen and correspondingly consistent poverty fallen - although not proportionately. Notably, certain groups are constant in the poverty categories: single parent households, unemployed people, and those with long-term illnesses or disabilities. There were additional concerns in high levels of the "working poor" and high debt levels. For work/participation, Ireland has seen major increases in employment in general and for women, raising issues in terms of time management. Ireland showed a high rate of early school leavers with a related issue in literacy

[27] See http://files.nesc.ie/nesc_reports/en/NESC_119_vol_I_2009.pdf

levels, and with a low reported level of participation in life-long learning. For relationships/care, the report details an increase in marriage rates and divorce and separation rates. The number of single parent-households and single person-households have both increased. In terms of community/environment, the prices and availability of private housing has increased, with the rental market in particular seeing an unfortunate combination of high rent and poor conditions in certain cases. Despite consistently high levels of volunteering and community engagement generally, the report notes a lack of community integration in Dublin commuter suburbs. There are also concerns for trends in Ireland's greenhouse gas emissions, the management of waste, and the lack of public transportation leading to heavy reliance on cars. In the dimension of health, life expectancy has increased, with positive subjective reporting on health status and more negative reporting on access to healthcare.

There are concerns associated with mental illness, including stress, anxiety disorders, and depression, and with lifestyle choices, including smoking, alcohol, exercise, and food intake. The distribution of wellbeing in terms of health is also troublesome, with social class operating through education, income, and skill level having a negative impact on health outcomes, access to care, and risk factors in terms of mental illness and lifestyle choices. Finally, for democracy/values, trust in institutions has declined along with voter turnout. Ireland has seen positive outcomes in terms of internet access, levels of spirituality, and peace in the North. However, issues relating to crime, and gender and racial discrimination have persisted. Overall, Ireland's wellbeing has seen major improvements across the board, but there remain specific areas of trouble and particular issues in poor outcomes for certain social groups under certain indicators, e.g. discrimination and ethnic groups, health and the lowest-income class, poverty and single-parent households.

The NESC's report is closer to an overview of wellbeing in Ireland in 2009 than a systematic attempt at wellbeing measurement. It does, however, provide useful insight into inter alia the selection of indicators and the understanding of national wellbeing idiosyncrasies. The report illustrates the distance Ireland has come in terms of wellbeing over the long-run and highlights certain persistent problem areas for Irish wellbeing – for example, poverty risk for single-parent households, time use, and the political representation of women.

Appendix 4: Draft Dashboard as per OECD Wellbeing Framework

Table A4: Partial Draft Dashboard for Ireland

Domain	Indicator	Most recent data	Average	Most recent European data	Ireland's progress over-time	Ireland's progress in a European context
Income	Average annual earnings					
	Average debt per household					
	Household disposable income					
Work	Employment					
	Unemployment					
	Long-term unemployment					
	Median hourly earnings					
	Job insecurity/strain					
	Discrimination in the workplace					
Housing	Rooms per person	2.1	2.1	1.7		
	Housing affordability (total) %	3.4	4.4	10.4		
	Housing affordability (owner) %	1.2	2.2	4.4		
	Housing affordability (tenant) %	14.3	19.6	27.7		
	Homelessness (adults)	6,511	5,019	N/A		
	Homelessness (families)	1,711	1,296	N/A		
	Homelessness (dependents)	3,777	2,733	N/A		
	Quality of housing (overcrowding total) %	2.7	4.1	15.5		
	Quality of housing (overcrowding below 60% of median income) %	4.2	7.4	26.2		
	Distribution of population by tenure status (owner – total %)	70.3	73.6	69.3		
	Distribution of population by tenure status (owner – below 60% of median income) %	48.3	52.9	49.3		
Health	Life expectancy at birth (total)	82.2	77.8	80.9		
	Life expectancy at birth (female)	84.0	80.3	83.5		
	Life expectancy at birth (male)	80.4	75.3	78.3		
	Self-reported health (% reporting v. good health)	39.8	42.8	22.4		
	Proportion of the population reporting poor mental health					
	Deaths per 100, 000 population due to mental health/ behavioural disorders	42.2	31.4	28.0		
	Deaths per 100, 000 population due to self-harm	9.3	11.0	12.2		
	Healthy life years at birth (f)	69.3	66.8	64.0		
	Healthy life years at birth (m)	67.9	65.1	63.5		
	Obesity (%)	23.0	23.0	15.4		
	Smoking (%)	14.0	17.4	18.0		
	Binge drinking (%)	37	38	N/A		
Leisure and recreation	Exercise (time spent)					
	Proportion of the population working long hours					
	Time in leisure					
	Work life balance					
	Commuting time					
Education and skills	Educational attainment of the adult population (tertiary) %	46.9	34.4	36.9		
	Educational attainment of the adult population (secondary) %	36.2	35.5	42.4		
	Early school leavers %	5.0	10.1	10.6		
	PISA mathematics (mean) score	504	499	490		
	PISA reading (mean) score	521	517	493		
	PISA science (mean) score	503	510	493		
	Digital skills (%)	48.0	45.0	57.0		
Society and equality	Volunteering					
	Gender equality					
	Time spent in unpaid/caring work					
	Discrimination					

	Social network support (meet socially several times a week or more %)	34.8	38.0	40.4		
	Trust	5.5	5.4	5.0		
Civic engagement and governance	Trust in institutions	4.6	4.3	4.6		
	Trust in police	6.3	6.4	6.6		
	Voter turnout					
	Perceived corruption					
	Having a say in government					
Environment	Air quality					
	National greenhouse gas emissions (million tonnes carbon dioxide equivalent (Mt CO2eq).	60.51	62.33			
	Tonnes of CO2 equivalent per capita	13.3		8.8		
	Share of energy from renewable sources (%)	10.7	6.1	17.5		
	Available facilities/local amenities/green spaces to close proximity					
	Water quality					
	Recycling					
Safety	Crime rate					
	Self-reported victimisation					
	Worry about becoming a victim of personal crime or theft and damage					
	Number of injuries and fatalities from road traffic accidents					
Subjective wellbeing	Mean life satisfaction	7.3	7.2	7.2		
	Mean happiness	7.7	7.5	7.5		
	Self-reported wellbeing					

Legend:

Improving | No Change | Deteriorating | No data

Source: Department of Finance, Eurostat, Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government, European Social Survey, OECD, and Department of Health. Note: All OECD domains are shown here, but data has not been collected for the domains left blank. For entire rows shaded in grey, no data has been identified for Ireland.

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