

Abstract

As sustainable development becomes a central concern, GDP and other traditional indicators of growth are increasingly seen as inadequate measures a society's progress toward its goals. These tools were meant to measure a less complete form of growth than is now expected. This thesis examines the history of economic measurement, and analyses new indicators that focus on the concepts of social welfare and progress.

These tools began to emerge twenty years after Kuznets developed his measure of gross national income, the first comprehensive framework for measuring growth. The alternatives to this system generally adopted its basic framework, but added different variables, from the value of housework to the cost of environmental degradation. The Genuine Progress Index is one such US-developed indicator that incorporates into GDP the monetized value of different growth and environmental measures.

Two Canadian organisations are each independently improving upon the initial US GPI. The Pembina Institute has developed a complete framework for progress-oriented accounting, focusing on indices and avoiding monetization. GPI Atlantic has focused on developing community-based indicators, surveying residents of two Nova Scotia counties to determine the values appropriate for use in the GPI. This thesis advocates the combination of these two efforts to develop a goal-based, weighted index, which could prove a valuable tool in sustainable policy development.