

Citizen progress measures: a new democratic paradigm?

Mike Salvaris

Adjunct Professor
School of Global Studies, Social Science and Planning,
RMIT University, Melbourne, Australia
salvaris@optusnet.com.au

*International Conference 'Building together:
local indicators for societal progress'*
University of Rennes2
Rennes, France, 30-31 October 2008

Links between democracy and measuring progress

- (1) Defining progress is the proper responsibility of democratic citizens.
- (2) Democratic development is part of the meaning of social progress.
- (3) Healthy democracy improves progress and wellbeing in other areas.
- (4) Social progress indicators are a tool for better and more accountable governance.
- (5) Engaging citizens in progress measurement strengthens their democratic capacity.

Ending the ‘mismeasure’ of progress

Human advance is conditioned by our conception of progress... It is time to end the mismeasure of human progress by economic growth alone.

The paradigm shift in favour of sustainable human development is still in the making.

But more and more policy makers in many countries are reaching the unavoidable conclusion that, to be *valuable* and *legitimate*, development progress—both nationally and internationally—must be people centred, equitably distributed, and environmentally and socially sustainable.

(UNDP, 1996, Human Development Report)

The political power of definitions:

‘Just’ or ‘right’ means nothing but what is in the interest of the stronger party. (Plato)

The most powerful instrument of political authority is the power to give names and to enforce definitions. (Hobbes)

Progress indicators as structural DNA codes

Statistical indicators are the structural DNA codes of nations. They reflect a society's values and goals and become the key drivers of economic and technological choices.

(Hazel Henderson)

Statistics are about people

Statistics are people with
the tears washed away

Victor Sidel

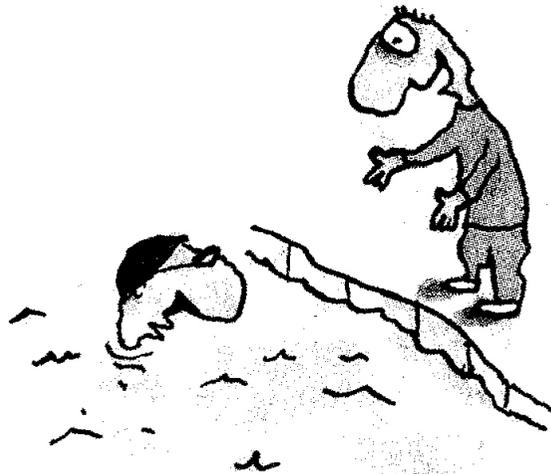
What counts and what is counted

Not everything that counts can be counted,
and not everything that can be counted
counts.

(Albert Einstein)

Measurements that MATTER

That's exactly .0001
of a second off
the world record...



That's somewhere
between thirteen
and thirty thousand
Iraqi citizens killed
in the invasion....



AGE, 13-5-2004

Leunig

Social indicators are about values

Social indicators ... enable us to assess where we stand and are going with respect to our values and goals.

(Raymond Bauer, 1966)

To measure social progress, you need a theory of a good society

In order to measure quality of life, one must have a theory of what makes up a good life.

(Clifford Cobb)

To develop social indicators that can evaluate the health of society, we are faced with the necessity of spelling out some more or less explicit working model of society.

(Kenneth Land)

Democratic debate needs shared realities

Without a shared understanding of reality, fruitful democratic debate is almost impossible.

(OECD, 'The OECD Global Project on Measuring Societies', Paris, 2007)

Most important qualities for Australia's progress

<i>Rank</i>	<i>Quality</i>	<i>Avg</i>
1	Honesty and ethics in public life	9.42
2	Security and stability	9.33
3	Environmental responsibility	9.25
4	Democracy, open, accountable government	9.17
5	Efficiency in government, management etc	9.10
6	Economic strength	9.04
7	Happiness and health	9.02
8	Fairness	8.90
9	Education and creativity	8.74
10	Inclusiveness and community	8.65
11	International responsibility	8.65
12	High living standards	8.59
13	Diversity and tolerance	8.50
14	High technology	8.43
15	Political power	7.69
16	Competitiveness	7.68

Source: Mike Salvaris, Swinburne Institute for Social Research, 'Community Indicators and Local Democracy' 2002.

Two great obstacles to democracy

The two greatest obstacles to democracy in the United States are, first, the widespread delusion among the poor that we have a democracy, and second, the chronic terror among the rich, lest we get it.

(Edward Dowling, 1941)

How do Australians rate their democracy?

A = How important; **B** = How we perform; **C** = The gap (Average rating out of 10)

	A	B	C
Fair taxation	9.0	3.4	- 5.6
Honesty in public life	9.3	4.3	- 5.0
Trust in other people	8.4	3.9	- 4.5
Diverse media	7.9	3.7	- 4.2
Equal treatment before the law	9.3	5.4	- 3.9
Confidence in public institutions	9.0	5.1	- 3.9
Good basic services (health, education etc) for all	9.1	5.5	- 3.6
People taking responsibility for others	8.7	5.1	- 3.6
Reasonable equality in wealth and power	6.8	3.3	- 3.5
Upholding and respecting the law	8.6	5.5	- 3.1
People participating in decision-making	8.1	5.1	- 3.0
Equal opportunities for men and women	9.0	6.4	- 2.6
Protecting basic human rights of all citizens	9.1	6.6	- 2.5
Freedom of speech	8.1	6.3	- 1.8
Religious freedom	8.2	7.5	- 0.7
Freedom to do what we like if we don't harm others	7.4	7.1	- 0.3
Having similar values and lifestyles	4.5	4.6	+ 0.1

Source: Mike Salvaris, Institute for Social Research, Swinburne University of Technology. Results from study 'Citizen Benchmarks Survey' carried out in 1998-99 as part of the project 'National Citizenship Indicators' project.

What makes a healthy democracy?

- Fair and representative elections
- Competent and honest governments
- Fair and equal laws
- Active and knowledgeable citizens
- Shared belief in the public interest
- Reasonable equality in wealth and power
- Openness and transparency
- Devolution of power, 'subsidiarity'
- Trust between citizens and governments
- Innovation, evaluation and change

IDEA healthy democracy assessment framework

I. Citizenship, law and rights	II. Representative and accountable government	III. Civil society and popular participation	IV. Democracy beyond the State
1. Nationhood and common citizenship	5. Free and fair elections	10. Democratic media	14. Democracy of international relations
2. The rule of law and access to justice	6. Democratic role of political parties	11. Citizen participation in public life	
3. Civil and political rights equal, guaranteed	7. Government effectiveness and accountability	12. Government responsiveness to citizens	
4. Economic and social rights equal, guaranteed	8. Civilian control of the military and police	13. Decentralisation to most appropriate levels	
	9. Minimising corruption		<small>Source: International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA), Stockholm), <i>State Of Democracy: Trends From The Pilot Countries</i> www.idea.int/ideas_work/14_political_state.htm Accessed 29/1/02</small>

Human rights and democracy are

part of the **meaning**
of progress and wellbeing

and an important **contributor**
to progress and wellbeing
in other fields.

Health and social justice links

‘Social justice is a matter of life and death ... Inequities are killing people on a grand scale’.

(World Health Organisation, 2008: ‘Closing the gap in a generation’)

National wellbeing compared to other progress dimensions 1

Selected OECD countries, ranked by performance, c. 2000- 2007

	1
<i>Country</i>	<i>Overall wellbeing</i>
Sweden	1
Norway	2
Denmark	3
Finland	4
Netherlands	5
Austria	6
Germany	7
Canada	8
Belgium	9
France	10
UK	11
Australia	12
Italy	13
USA	14
<i>OWB correlation</i>	NA

National wellbeing compared to other progress dimensions 1

Selected OECD countries, ranked by performance, c. 2000- 2007

	1	2
Country	Overall wellbeing	National wealth
Sweden	1	12
Norway	2	2
Denmark	3	3
Finland	4	10
Netherlands	5	5
Austria	6	6
Germany	7	9
Canada	8	4
Belgium	9	8
France	10	14
UK	11	13
Australia	12	7
Italy	13	11
USA	14	1
<i>OWB correlation</i>	NA	6

National wellbeing compared to other progress dimensions

Selected OECD countries, ranked by performance, c. 2000- 2007

	2	1	3
Country	National wealth	Overall wellbeing	Environm't
Sweden	12	1	3
Norway	2	2	7
Denmark	3	3	2
Finland	10	4	10
Netherlands	5	5	8
Austria	6	6	1
Germany	9	7	6
Canada	4	8	12
Belgium	8	9	11
France	14	10	5
UK	13	11	3
Australia	7	12	14
Italy	11	13	8
USA	1	14	13
<i>OWB correlation</i>	6	NA	5

National wellbeing compared to other progress dimensions 1

Selected OECD countries, ranked by performance, c. 2000- 2007

	2	3	1	4
Country	National wealth	Environm't	Overall wellbeing	Gov't spending
Sweden	12	3	1	1
Norway	2	7	2	9
Denmark	3	2	3	2
Finland	10	10	4	3
Netherlands	5	8	5	5
Austria	6	1	6	6
Germany	9	6	7	11
Canada	4	12	8	10
Belgium	8	11	9	4
France	14	5	10	8
UK	13	3	11	12
Australia	7	14	12	13
Italy	11	8	13	7
USA	1	13	14	14
<i>OWB correlation</i>	6	5	NA	10

National wellbeing compared to other progress dimensions

Selected OECD countries, ranked by performance, c. 2000- 2007

	2	3	4	1	5
Country	National wealth	Environm't	Gov't spending	Overall wellbeing	Democracy
Sweden	12	3	1	1	3
Norway	2	7	9	2	4
Denmark	3	2	2	3	2
Finland	10	10	3	4	1
Netherlands	5	8	5	5	5
Austria	6	1	6	6	12
Germany	9	6	11	7	9
Canada	4	12	10	8	7
Belgium	8	11	4	9	10
France	14	5	8	10	13
UK	13	3	12	11	8
Australia	7	14	13	12	6
Italy	11	8	7	13	14
USA	1	13	14	14	11
<i>OWB correlation</i>	6	5	10	NA	12

National wellbeing compared to other progress dimensions 1

Selected OECD countries, ranked by performance, c. 2000- 2007

	2	3	4	5	1	6
Country	National wealth	Environm't	Gov't spending	Democracy	Overall wellbeing	Income equality
Sweden	12	3	1	3	1	1
Norway	2	7	9	4	2	2
Denmark	3	2	2	2	3	6
Finland	10	10	3	1	4	3
Netherlands	5	8	5	5	5	5
Austria	6	1	6	12	6	8
Germany	9	6	11	9	7	7
Canada	4	12	10	7	8	10
Belgium	8	11	4	10	9	4
France	14	5	8	13	10	9
UK	13	3	12	8	11	12
Australia	7	14	13	6	12	11
Italy	11	8	7	14	13	12
USA	1	13	14	11	14	14
<i>OWB correlation</i>	6	5	10	12	NA	13

National wellbeing compared to other progress dimensions 1

Selected OECD countries, ranked by performance, c. 2000- 2007

	2	3	4	5	6	1	7
Country	National wealth	Environm't	Gov't spending	Democracy	Income equality	Overall wellbeing	Peace
Sweden	12	3	1	3	1	1	4
Norway	2	7	9	4	2	2	1
Denmark	3	2	2	2	6	3	2
Finland	10	10	3	1	3	4	3
Netherlands	5	8	5	5	5	5	8
Austria	6	1	6	12	8	6	5
Germany	9	6	11	9	7	7	9
Canada	4	12	10	7	10	8	6
Belgium	8	11	4	10	4	9	7
France	14	5	8	13	9	10	12
UK	13	3	12	8	12	11	13
Australia	7	14	13	6	11	12	10
Italy	11	8	7	14	12	13	11
USA	1	13	14	11	14	14	14
<i>OWB correlation</i>	6	5	10	12	13	NA	14

National wellbeing compared to other progress dimensions

Selected OECD countries, ranked by performance, c. 2000- 2007

	2	3	4	5	6	7	1	8
Country	National wealth	Environm't	Gov't spending	Democracy	Income equality	Peace	Overall wellbeing	Human Rights
Sweden	12	3	1	3	1	4	1	4
Norway	2	7	9	4	2	1	2	4
Denmark	3	2	2	2	6	2	3	2
Finland	10	10	3	1	3	3	4	1
Netherlands	5	8	5	5	5	8	5	3
Austria	6	1	6	12	8	5	6	9
Germany	9	6	11	9	7	9	7	6
Canada	4	12	10	7	10	6	8	8
Belgium	8	11	4	10	4	7	9	7
France	14	5	8	13	9	12	10	10
UK	13	3	12	8	12	13	11	11
Australia	7	14	13	6	11	10	12	13
Italy	11	8	7	14	12	11	13	11
USA	1	13	14	11	14	14	14	14
<i>OWB correlation</i>	6	5	10	12	13	14	NA	14

Citizen measurement: a new form of democratic engagement

The idea of people taking charge of their own measurements of progress is a powerful and far reaching innovation that can bring about a new sense of civic engagement.

(Sustainable Seattle. 2000)

Community participation and wellbeing links.

Six hypotheses have been developed about the link between neighbourhood working and community empowerment, and wellbeing:

1. Wellbeing is higher in areas where residents have greater opportunities to become directly involved in the democratic process.
2. Participation in civil society and having more opportunities to influence neighbourhood services increases wellbeing.
3. Collective efficacy – social capital plus a willingness to take action – is linked to wellbeing.
4. Wellbeing is higher amongst people who have regular contact with their neighbours.
5. There is a link between contact between neighbours and people's sense of belonging, and a relationship between belonging and wellbeing.
6. Changing behaviour or mobilising residents around green issues is often the basis of community engagement and empowerment and that this can have a beneficial impact on wellbeing.

Source: Young Foundation, UK. See: www.youngfoundation.org/work/local_innovation/consortiums/wellbeing/neighbourhoods

The democratic value of local participation

The democratic ideal in local government implies that active participation of the citizens in local affairs is both a goal in itself and an instrument for strengthening democracy in society at large.

(Kjellberg, F. 1995. "The Changing Values of Local Government" in *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, vol 540, 40)

Purposes of a community wellbeing framework

<i>Purposes</i>	<i>Applications</i>
Reporting conditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ In selected issues, localities or policy fields ▪ Current wellbeing of whole state or municipality (social, economic, environmental, democratic)
Measuring progress and performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Selected government programs or policies ▪ Selected issues and localities ▪ Across all government agencies (or local governments) ▪ Current wellbeing of whole state or municipality (social, economic, environmental, democratic)
Planning and priority setting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Government agencies, LG departments ▪ For whole of state (or local) government ▪ As basis for local community plans ▪ As basis for long-term state or local plan for whole community
Enhancing democracy and accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ More transparent & systematic gov't reporting and performance evaluation ▪ More honest and accountable government ▪ Giving citizens full and accurate information about conditions in their state ▪ Involving citizens in decision-making about goals and indicators
Building communities and social cohesion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A framework for local community building and community planning ▪ Citizens together identify local community issues & priorities ▪ Citizens define a common vision for Victoria (or their LGA) as a whole

Source: Swinburne Institute for Social Research. 2000. *Measuring Victoria's Progress*. Hawthorn, Victoria: SISR (adapted)

More than customers: Citizens as partners in achieving public outcomes

Citizens are ...	How?	Examples
Customers	Citizens are principal users and clients of public services and should be treated as valued customers by providers	Citizens' charters for service standards (UK)
Owners and shareholders	Citizens are owners: through their taxes, they invest in public service and assets. They are shareholders too: through their votes, they elect the 'boards of directors' who govern	Community reps on public services and utilities boards. Federal, state and local elections
Issue framers	As 'vision builders': helping define desirable future, strategic plans. As advisers on government policy committees etc.	Community indicator projects (USA, Canada etc.); community advisory groups
Co-producers of services	Citizens and community bodies are direct providers of community services on both a paid and voluntary basis, in cooperation with government	Non-government community services. 'Healthy cities program.
Service quality evaluators	As primary users of government services, citizens are best placed to assess their quality and effectiveness	Service user assessment forms. Students interviewing park users.
Independent auditors	Grassroots measurement by citizen groups is more likely to be independent and oriented towards actual community wellbeing outcomes	Citizen environment monitoring

Source: Epstein, P., Wray, L. et al. 2000. *Engaging Citizens in Achieving Results that Matter: A Model for Effective 21st Century Governance*. Minneapolis, Minnesota: Citizens League.

Canada: the case for citizen based progress measures

There is a growing sense that traditional measures of economic performance such as GDP, employment and income data do not capture the full story of what is happening in society. This has provoked a desire to monitor the state of social and economic well-being of society.

To be legitimate, societal indicators require the explicit involvement of citizens to determine what matters to them. Then experts can try to devise the measures that citizens need.

While there is much activity on quality of life indicators in Canada, there is no project that is national in scope, nor is there one that seeks input from citizens’.

What makes a community a good place to live in?

% respondents who considered specific factors important

<i>Community quality</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>rank</i>
People are friendly, good neighbours, help others	91	1
Good local facilities: shops, schools, services, parks	89	2
People feel safe and secure	89	3
Nice environment, streets, well planned, no pollution	86	4
People look after their properties	82	5
Local government is responsive to people's needs	80	6
People can participate in local government decisions	74	7
Good local support: clubs, sports, neighbourhood houses	71	8
Community has a distinct character, a 'special place'	70	9
People get involved in local issues, activities	69	10
Good mix: different ages, groups, incomes, cultures	63	11
Good work opportunities available locally	59	12

Source: Institute for Social Research, Swinburne University of Technology. 2002. 'Community Indicators and Local Democracy' Melbourne. Data from a sample of approx. 3000 across three Victorian municipalities (Moreland, Surf Coast and Geelong) in 2001. Averages are unweighted.

‘Healthy community’ model

A healthy community is the product of six key factors:

1. Health, well-being and opportunities of individuals and families
2. Social relations: neighbourliness, networks, participation and trust, a sense of shared community in the neighbourhood
3. The environment and physical living conditions
4. Special ‘sense of place’, culture etc of the community
5. Services and facilities available
6. Governance and community participation in decision-making.

Victorian Community Wellbeing Framework

Wellbeing Domain	A. Social	B. Economic	C. Environmental	D. Cultural	E. Democratic
Goal	<i>Healthy, safe and inclusive communities</i>	<i>Dynamic, resilient and fair local economies</i>	<i>Sustainable built and natural environments</i>	<i>Culturally rich and vibrant communities</i>	<i>Healthy democracy and active citizens</i>
Policy areas	A1: Personal health & wellbeing	B1: Economic activity	C1: Access to open space	D1: Arts and cultural activities	E1: Healthy democracy
	A2: Community connectedness	B2: Employment	C2: Transport accessibility	D2: Recreational & leisure activities	E2: Active citizens
	A3: Early childhood development	B3: Income and wealth	C3: Energy use	D3: Cultural diversity	
	A4: Personal and community safety	B4: Work-life balance	C4: Housing affordability		
	A5: Lifelong learning		C5: Air quality		
	A6: Services availability		C6: Water quality		
			C7: Biodiversity		
			C8: Waste management		

Source: VicHealth et al. 'Measuring Wellbeing, Engaging communities'. Final report of the Victorian Community Indicators Project (VCIP). VicHealth, Carlton. July 2006, pp. 39-40

Perceived changes in key NRP goal areas in last 12 months Latrobe & Wendouree areas, aggregate (%)

	<i>Better</i>	<i>Same</i>	<i>Worse</i>	<i>Net</i>
Housing	36	53	9	+ 27
Physical environment	22	64	11	+ 11
Public transport	12	75	2	+ 10
Government performance	16	66	11	+ 5
Local education, training opportunities	24	58	7	+ 17
Local economy	14	62	21	- 7
Health and welfare services	13	70	8	+ 5
Own health	21	54	26	- 5
Crime and safety	14	67	17	- 3
Community pride	27	61	8	+ 19
Community participation	20	55	13	+ 7

Source: Victoria, Department of Human Services, Neighbourhood Renewal Program, Consultant Report, 2004.

Science, experts and human problems

We should be on our guard not to overestimate science and scientific methods when it is a question of human problems: and we should not assume that experts are the only ones who have a right to express themselves on questions affecting the organisation of society.

(Albert Einstein)