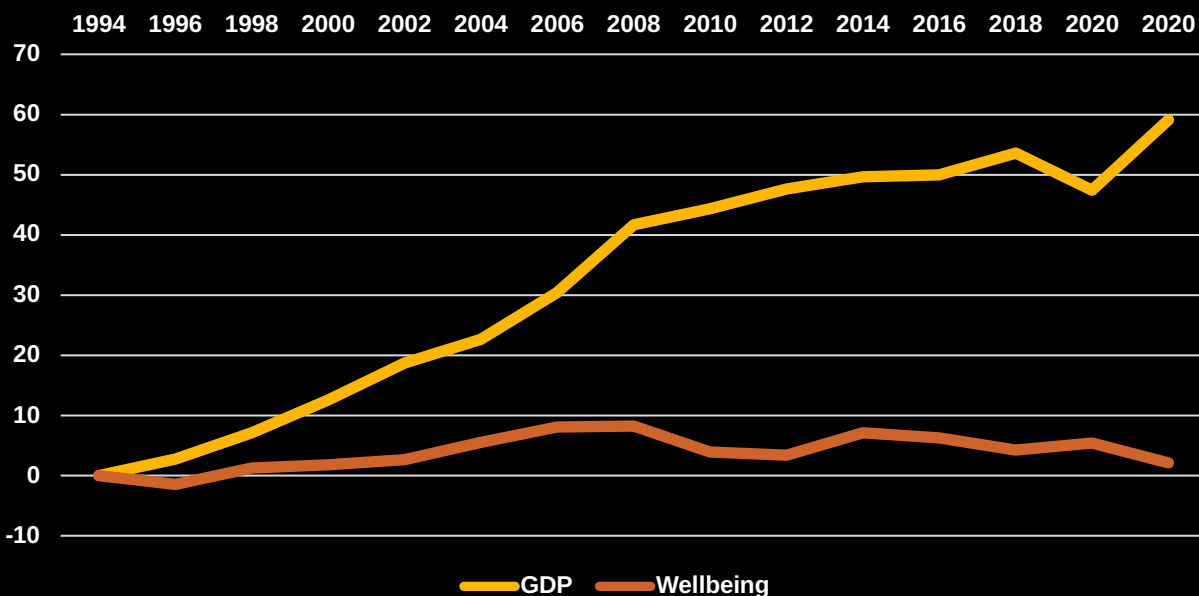


COMMUNITY VITALITY INTEGRAL TO WELLBEING

While GDP rises, does wellbeing rise alongside it? The answer surprises many. While GDP in many parts of Canada has increased, wellbeing has not followed suit. From 1994 to 2022, GDP in Saskatchewan increased by nearly 60%; during the same period, wellbeing metrics rose by just over 2%. Thus, the story becomes clear: **GDP alone fails to measure how well our population is faring.**

GDP v. Wellbeing in Saskatchewanⁱ



Community Vitality and Wellbeing

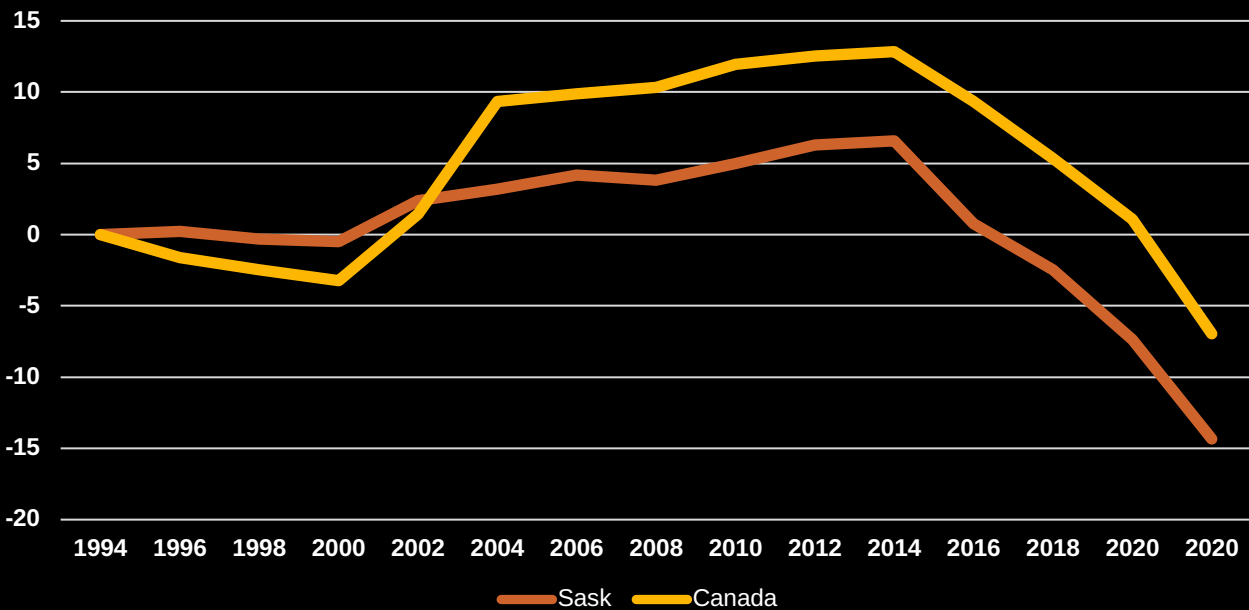
So, what trends do we see in community vitality from 1994 onwards?

How have outcomes in Saskatchewan's state of community vitality changed since 1994, and how do these outcomes compare to national metrics? Below we examine the statistical trends of community vitality and the story they tell. In the Saskatchewan Index of Wellbeing, community vitality is measured in eight metrics. These metrics have been compiled into a single numerical value with 1994 as the baseline.ⁱⁱ

How do we define community vitality in the context of this analysis?

Vital communities are those that have strong, active, and inclusive relationships among people, private, public, and non-governmental organisations that foster individual and collective wellbeing.ⁱⁱⁱ

Rate of Decline in Community Vitality^{iv}



Both Saskatchewan and Canada have shown a precipitous decline in community vitality metrics since 1994. Although some metrics have improved, the overall trend points to many areas of concern since analysis began in 1994.

Metrics of Success^v

Percentage of population that reports a somewhat or very strong sense of belonging to community: 2.1% increase in Saskatchewan; 6.6% increase in Canada

Percentage of population volunteering without pay for a charitable or non-profit organisation (i.e., volunteer rate): 6.1% increase in Saskatchewan; 4.7% increase in Canada

Crime Severity Index: 11.1% decrease in Saskatchewan; 33.7% decrease in Canada

Metrics of Concern^{vi}

Percentage of population experiencing discrimination in past 5 years based on ethno-cultural characteristics: 0.1% increase in Saskatchewan; 2.2% increase in Canada

Percentage of population that reports having no close friends: 3.3% increase in Saskatchewan; 2.5% increase in Canada

Percentage of population (tax-filers) that made a donation in the past year to a charitable or non-profit Organisation: 11.1% decrease in Saskatchewan; 8.6% decrease in Canada

Percentage of population that feels safe from crime walking alone in their area after dark: 12.6% decrease in Saskatchewan; 4.4% increase in Canada

Percentage of population that believes most or many people can be trusted: 21.4% decrease in Saskatchewan; 9% decrease in Canada

How Do We Build Stronger Community Vitality for the Future?

Most metrics demonstrate a decline in Saskatchewan's community vitality, with little sign of improvement without significant intervention. **Reversing these trends will require coordinated action from governments, nonprofits, and individual citizens, with emphasis on volunteerism and civic participation to support vitality and the wellbeing of all Saskatchewanians.**

Possible Policy Solutions

Supporting healthy and resilient family and community units: Alberta's Family and Community Support Services funds local initiatives that build social connections, prevent isolation, and build capacity to prevent and deal with crisis situations should they arise.^{vii}

Creating welcoming communities: Manitoba's "Welcoming Communities" model funds local partnerships between municipalities, nonprofits, and employers to reduce newcomer isolation and support integration.^{viii}

Enhanced provincial charitable tax credits: Quebec provides significantly higher provincial tax credits for donations (approximately 23%), compared to an average of approximately 14% in other provinces.^{ix}

Civic engagement funding: Ontario philanthropic efforts enable grants bolstering youth engagement, civic participation, and local leadership development to support trust and social cohesion.^x

Supporting volunteering: Volunteer Canada is addressing declining rates of volunteer participation through the development of a National Volunteer Action Strategy alongside related governmental advocacy to foster a more supportive environment for volunteering.^{xi}

Strengthening belonging: The Tamarack Institute is developing a Canada-Wide Strategy for Belonging aimed at addressing loneliness and social isolation. The initiative seeks to empower citizens, local decision-makers, and nonprofit organizations to better respond to the unique needs of communities across the country.^{xii}

What's Next?

Community vitality contributes to individuals' sense of belonging and is a vital part of overall wellbeing. Looking to other provinces for comparison and policy inspiration can help guide these efforts and build a more resilient state of wellbeing for all. Further, thoughtful consideration and investment in areas to support community vitality can impact and uplift other domains. **No domain exists in a vacuum, with community vitality influencing metrics in domains such as democratic engagement and healthy populations.**

Who Are We?

What is Saskatchewan's definition of wellbeing?

"Wellbeing is achieved when people are physically, emotionally and spiritually healthy; economically secure; have a strong sense of identity, belonging and place; and have the confidence and capacity to engage as citizens." ^{xi}

Who and What is SaskWellbeing?

SaskWellbeing is a Saskatchewan-based initiative that works to support collaboration across sectors to improve quality of life and inform decision-making for healthier, more resilient communities. Further information can be found at: saskwellbeing.ca

What is the Canadian Index of Wellbeing?

The Canadian Index of Wellbeing (CIW) is a framework that measures the quality of life for Canadians across eight interconnected domains. Further information can be found at: uwaterloo.ca/canadian-index-wellbeing/about-canadian-index-wellbeing

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| <p>I. Smale, Bryan. (2025). <i>Data and Trends in Wellbeing in Saskatchewan and Canada from 1994 to 2022: A Technical Report</i>. Canadian Index of Wellbeing, University of Waterloo. Prepared for Heritage Saskatchewan and Community Initiatives Fund.</p> | <p>IX. Revenu Québec. (2025). <i>Line 395 – Tax credits for donations and gifts</i>.</p> |
| <p>II. Smale, Bryan (2025).</p> | <p>X. Catherine Donnelly Foundation. (2025). <i>Catherine Donnelly Foundation fall 2024 environment, housing and civic engagement for social change grants support 45 organizations with \$2.3 million in funding</i>.</p> |
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| <p>V. Smale, Bryan (2025).</p> | <p>XIII. SaskWellbeing. (2025). <i>Definition of Wellbeing</i>.</p> |
| <p>VI. Smale, Bryan (2025).</p> | |
| <p>VII. Government of Alberta. (2025). <i>Family and community support services (FCSS) program</i>.</p> | |
| <p>VIII. Brandon University Rural Development Institute. (2011). <i>Building welcoming communities</i>.</p> | |