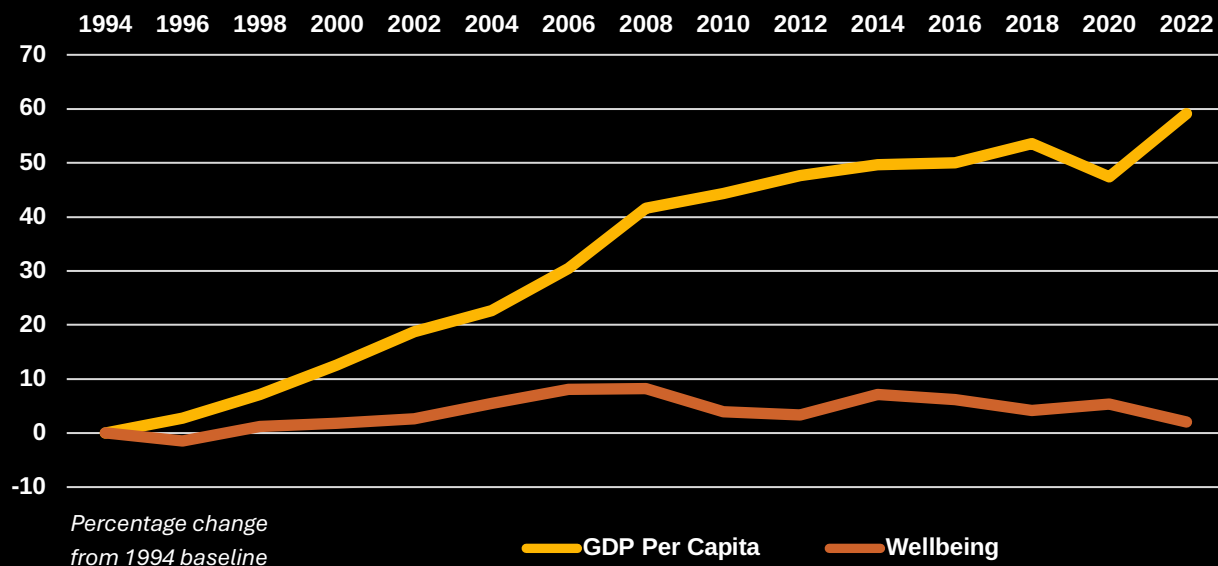


LEISURE AND CULTURE INTEGRAL TO WELLBEING

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 per capita 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 Per Capita v. Wellbeing in Saskatchewanⁱ



Leisure and Culture & Wellbeing

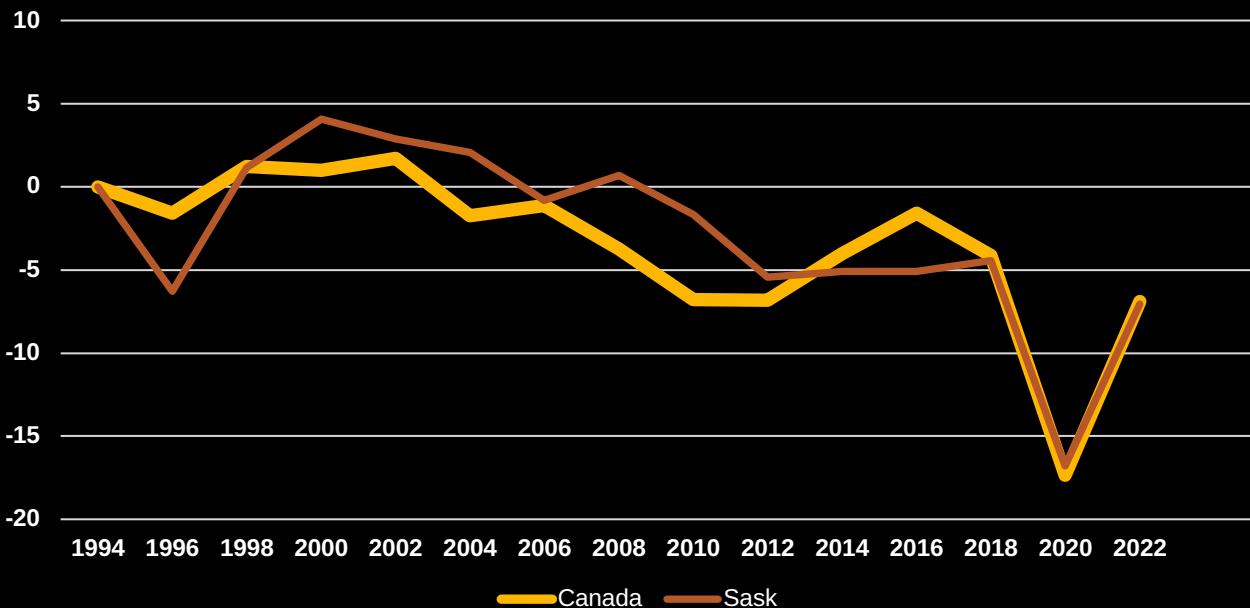
What trends do we see in leisure and culture from 1994 onwards?

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

How do we describe leisure and culture in the context of this analysis?

By participating in leisure and cultural activities, whether arts, culture, or recreation, we contribute to our wellbeing as individuals, to our communities, and to society as a whole. The myriad of activities and opportunities we pursue and enjoy benefit our overall life satisfaction and quality of life.ⁱⁱⁱ

Rate of Decline in Leisure and Culture^{iv}



Both Saskatchewan and Canada have experienced a noticeable decline in leisure and culture metrics since data collection began. Although some metrics have improved, the overall trend points to many areas of concern since analysis began. Please note the results are not uniform, with Saskatchewan and Canada showing different outcomes in certain metrics. For the purpose of this analysis, whether a metric is considered an area of success or concern is based on how Saskatchewan has fared. Changes are calculated from the first year for which data is available through 2022.

Metrics of Success^v

Percentage of population engaged in moderate to active daily physical activity: +9.7 percentage points in Saskatchewan; +12.4 percentage points in Canada

Average number of hours in past year volunteering for culture/recreation organisations: +1.4 hours in Saskatchewan; -17.8 hours in Canada

Average visitation per site in past year to all National Parks/National Historic Sites: +6,600 visits per site in Saskatchewan; -17,100 visits per site in Canada

Metrics of Concern^{vi}

Average time spent on previous day in social leisure activities: -9.9 minutes in Saskatchewan; -3 minutes in Canada

Average time spent on previous day in arts and culture activities: -4.2 minutes in Saskatchewan; -2 minutes in Canada

Total expenditures in past year on all culture/recreation as a percentage of total household expenditures: -0.65 percentage points in Saskatchewan; -0.91 percentage points in Canada

Average attendance per performance in past year at all performing arts: 123.6 fewer people per performance in Saskatchewan; 81 fewer people per performance in Canada

Average nights away per trip in past year on vacation trips to destinations within Canada over 80km from home: 0.74 fewer nights in Saskatchewan; 0.07 fewer nights in Canada

How Do We Build Stronger Leisure and Culture for the Future?

Most metrics of leisure and culture have declined in Saskatchewan, highlighting the need for renewed attention, investment, and intervention. **Reversing these trends will require coordinated action from governments, nonprofits, and communities, with emphasis on volunteerism and civic participation to support leisure and culture for the wellbeing of all Saskatchewanians.**

Possible Policy Solutions

Connecting nature, arts, and healthcare: the BC Parks Foundation's PaRx program allows healthcare professionals to prescribe cultural and nature experiences, including free visits to art galleries and national parks, reducing barriers to participation while supporting health and wellbeing.^{vii}

Recognizing leisure as fundamental to community wellbeing: The Canadian Parks and Recreation Association's Framework for Recreation and Parks encourages governments and communities to work together to make recreation more accessible, build social connections, and support healthy communities nationwide.^{viii}

Supporting festivals and community events: Manitoba's Community Festivals and Events Program supports communities in organizing local festivals and celebrations to strengthen community identity while creating opportunities for social connection and local economic activity.^{ix}

Encouraging local tourism: Newfoundland and Labrador's Tourism Product Development Plan allows for the creation of new tourism experiences and attractions, encouraging visitors to stay longer and explore more communities, thus strengthening local economies and promoting cultural and recreational participation.^x

Mobilizing communities via recreation: ParticipACTION's Community Challenge encourages communities across Canada to come together through physical activity and sport, while providing prize grants and funding to support local organizations in creating opportunities for recreation.^{xi}

What's Next?

Leisure and culture are vital parts of overall wellbeing. Looking to other provinces for comparison and policy inspiration can help guide efforts to build a more resilient state of wellbeing for all. Further, thoughtful consideration and investment in areas to support leisure and culture can impact and uplift other domains. **No domain exists in a vacuum, with leisure and culture influencing metrics in domains such as living standards and community vitality.**



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." ^{xii}

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>II. Smale, Bryan (2025).</p> <p>III. Smale, Bryan (2025).</p> <p>IV. Smale, Bryan (2025).</p> <p>V. Smale, Bryan (2025).</p> <p>VI. Smale, Bryan (2025).</p> <p>VII. BC Parks Foundation. (n.d.). <i>About PaRx</i></p> | <p>VIII. Canadian Parks & Recreation Association. (2024). <i>Framework for Recreation and Parks in Canada</i>.</p> <p>IX. Government of Manitoba. (2026). <i>Community Festivals and Events Program</i>.</p> <p>X. Government of Newfoundland and Labrador. (2026). <i>Tourism Product Development Plan</i>.</p> <p>XI. ParticipACTION. (2026). <i>Community Challenge</i>.</p> <p>XII. SaskWellbeing. (2025). <i>Definition of Wellbeing</i>.</p> |
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