

# Charter for People's Measures of Societal Success

2<sup>nd</sup> May 2024

Today, we at the Hot or Cool Institute launch the sixth edition of the Happy Planet Index (HPI), which measures the extent to which countries achieve long happy lives within a fair consumption space. The HPI makes it patently clear that we need to rethink how we measure national success. The countries that are normally considered as models of economic success – either in terms of their high GDP's or their racing GDP growth rate – typically don't stack up so well when evaluated in terms of what really matters – achieving good lives with a minimal environmental impact.

But the HPI is not intended to be the end of the conversation. Rather the beginning. The HPI aims for simplicity, combining three indicators into a single index, but of course we know that our societies and environments are more complex. The HPI includes what we think is important, but we don't claim to represent our own countries, let alone the global population. For too long, the debate around GDP has been dominated by 'experts' who may well know a lot about wellbeing and sustainability, but cannot claim to speak for the broader public.

Because of that, alongside the HPI, we are also launching a call for communities around the world to begin the path to their *own* citizen-led measures of success. From Chile to Ireland to Sweden, a deliberative wave is currently sweeping the world, engaging citizen's assemblies and juries in the important decisions that affect nations. It's time to start applying these approaches to one of the biggest decisions: our visions of national success.

We think there are just four important requirements:

1. **Genuine, deliberative and transparent citizen involvement from a large and representative sample of the population**, such as through a citizen's assembly or other deep participation processes.
2. The primary role of citizens in this process is to define the good life. Each process needs to define the extent to which citizens' priorities shape the framework, versus scientific expertise. For example, experts may be more important for defining priorities in terms of sustainability outcomes. Meanwhile, whilst citizens may be expected to define priorities, experts may be better placed to select specific indicators that best measure those priorities. Each process needs to define the best way to coproduce a framework that **integrates citizen's opinions with scientific expertise**.
3. Society is complex and there are many processes and outcomes that need to be measured. A complete measurement system will no doubt require dashboards and/or modified national accounts systems, to be used for policy analysts and sectoral specialists. But such dashboards are too detailed for the broader public, and for general political debate. For that, we require a **small number of headline indicators** (we anticipate between three and six) which reflect society's priorities and are memorable to a large audience.
4. An understanding of the **distinction between goals (e.g. people's wellbeing) and means** (e.g. a stable economy), and an approach that recognises that **our natural environment sets finite constraints** on our activities.

Ultimately, we want governments to buy into and endorse this process, but academic and civil society-led initiatives can pave the way. Ultimately, they need to occur at the level at which key decisions are made, including decisions that affect the economy, be it national, regional or local.

Elements of this approach are already beginning to emerge. From the development of Oxfam's Humankind Index in Scotland in 2012, to the Wales we Want in 2015, to the Index of Conditions for



Wellbeing developed in the Walloon region of Belgium in 2011, to ongoing work on Australia's National Development Index. It's time to consolidate these efforts and create the first citizen's assembly to define societal success!

If you agree with this position, the Hot or Cool Institute invites you to sign the Charter for People's Measures of Societal Success. You don't have to be an expert in indicators or citizen participation – the more support from a broad range of institutions and even ordinary citizens that we can demonstrate for this idea, the more we can secure funding to work on it, and encourage political actors to take it seriously. So sign up and join the new movement!

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