

1 Problem

Our top-level national performance indicators tend to be based on big aggregate GDP/GNP type numbers which don't really tell us how we are doing as a society and don't resonate with people as indicators of progression.

The platitude, "*we've turned the corner but people aren't feeling it*" speaks to this latter disconnection. Citizens can have their own perception of whether we are advancing or regressing as a society, but there is no quantitative way to express that or to compare it over time. In this age of technology and big data, there is no reason for citizens to be disconnected from real-time measures of where we are trending as a nation.

The benefits of solving this problem are (A) greater transparency for citizens, (B) increased sense of engagement of citizens with the political process, (C) availability of an objective measure to benchmark against as governments come and go.

2 Complications

Various arms of the state produce an array of statistics and measures, most of which never make their way into public awareness or discourse. This is at least partly because the statistics generally have both complexity and volume – thereby not lending themselves to quick and easy consumption.

3 Solution

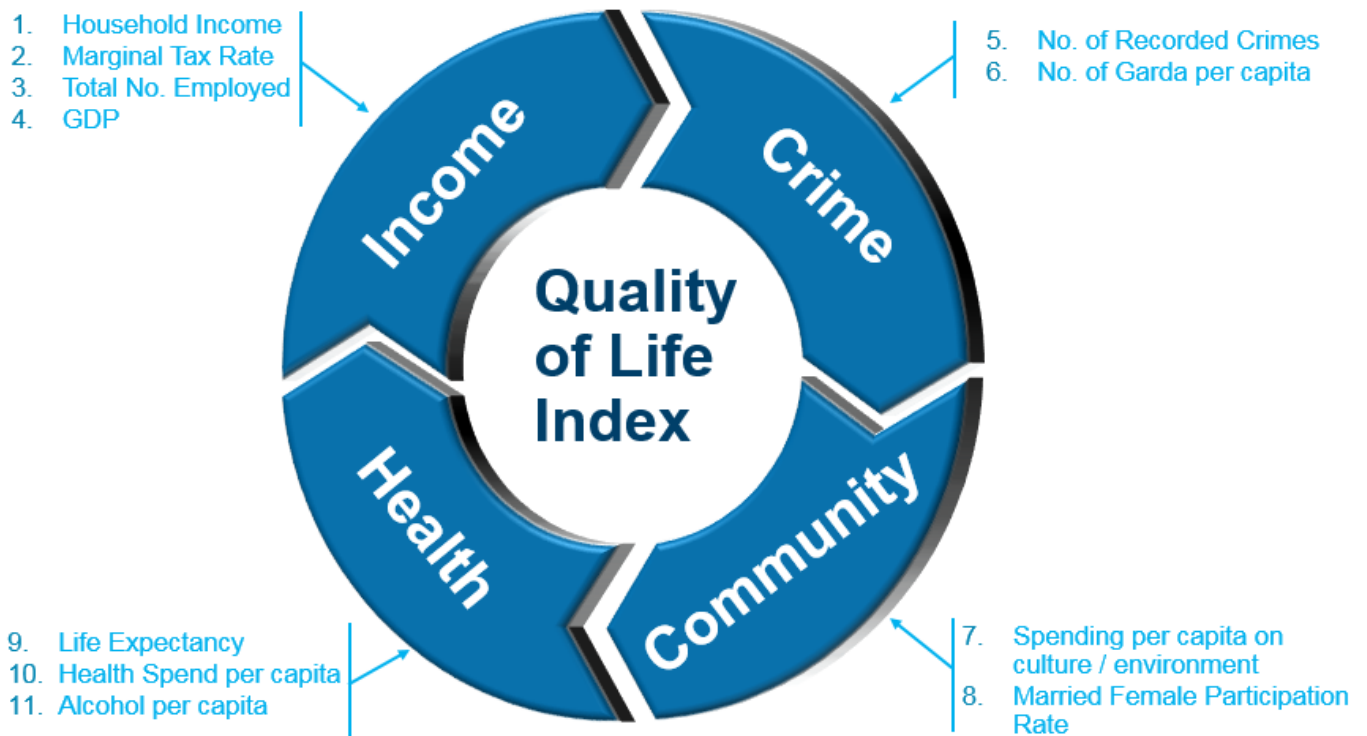
Define and, over time, build general familiarity with a composite statistical measure that captures important dimensions around quality of life. As the measure becomes accepted, trends can be pointed to over time as an insightful measure of whether we are improving our society or not. This index allows us to measure ourselves over time, as opposed to enabling comparisons with conditions in other countries.

Ideas around alternatives to blunt growth statistics regularly pop into political discourse – the most high profile recent go-around for this topic was the Sarkozy/Stiglitz initiative from 2009 ([link to report](#)), the objective of which was "*to identify the limits of GDP as an indicator of economic performance and social progress, including the problems with its measurement; to consider what additional information might be required for the production of more relevant indicators of social progress; to assess the feasibility of alternative measurement tools, and to discuss how to present the statistical information in an appropriate way.*"

The solution proposed here does not envisage a similar blank-page consideration of what the perfect measure would be. Instead, the proposal is to:

- Re-use statistics that we are already capturing and publishing
- Combine the statistics and make the output available to citizens in an engaging way – possibly via a simple mobile app

The best make-up of the composite statistic is a subjective matter that would need to be thrashed out. For illustration, the infographic on the next page gives an example of the kind of measure that could be created using existing data sources.



#	Notes	Source
1	Hourly Earnings / Household Income data. Higher is good.	Link
2	Calculated tax rate applicable on incremental income. Lower is good.	n/a
3	Total Number of People at Work. Higher is good.	Link
4	National Accounts data. Higher is good.	Link
5	Total Recorded Crime Offences across Garda Divisions. Lower is good.	Link
6	Garda population / Total Population. Higher is good.	Gardai, Per Capita
7	Calculated total spend by government on culture & environment. Higher is good.	n/a
8	From perspective of higher participation rates being socially negative	Link
9	Life expectancy at birth for total population. Higher is good.	Link
10	Total Public Health Budget / Total Population. Higher is good.	Spend, Per Capita
11	Alcohol consumption per capita. Trend lower is good.	Link