

Wellness Policy Series

Defining Wellness Policy

November 2022



**GLOBAL WELLNESS
INSTITUTE™**

EMPOWERING WELLNESS WORLDWIDE

Defining Wellness Policy

NOVEMBER 2022



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About the Authors

About the Global Wellness Institute

The Global Wellness Institute (GWI), a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, is considered the leading global research and educational resource for the global wellness industry and is known for introducing major industry initiatives and regional events that bring together leaders and visionaries to chart the future. GWI positively impacts global health and wellness by advocating for both public institutions and businesses that are working to help prevent disease, reduce stress, and enhance overall quality of life. Its mission is to empower wellness worldwide.

www.globalwellnessinstitute.org

About the Authors

Defining Wellness Policy was prepared by Ophelia Yeung and Katherine Johnston, with assistance from Tonia Callender. As Senior Research Fellows at the Global Wellness Institute, Ms. Yeung and Ms. Johnston bring decades of research and strategy experience in the public and private sectors to pioneer groundbreaking methodologies in measuring the size of the global wellness economy. Their academic and professional background is in public policy and international development. Ms. Callender, Research Fellow, contributed research expertise in multiple wellness sectors. Statistical analyses were conducted by Dr. Shun Wang, KDI School of Public Policy and Management, Republic of Korea.

Preface

Why this report?

Since its inception, the Global Wellness Institute (GWI) has embraced the vision of “empowering wellness worldwide.” Even as we study and advocate for the \$4.4 trillion wellness economy, we also recognize that the private wellness market and consumer action alone cannot bring about wellness for all. Widespread adoption of preventive approaches and healthy lifestyles is essential if we are to address our mounting global health crises and spiraling economic costs. And yet, not everyone has the resources, motivation, knowledge, or enabling environment to do so. Public policy is essential to fill these gaps. This realization is the genesis of this report and the forthcoming *GWI Wellness Policy Series*.

What is in this report?

Defining Wellness Policy is the first-ever study to define wellness policy and argue for why it is needed. Using GWI’s wellness economy data, the report provides, for the first time, a quantitative analysis showing the relationships among wellness spending, happiness, and health outcomes across countries. It makes a compelling case for why wellness policy is essential not only for governments, but also for businesses. The report situates wellness policy in the context of several major global movements that have been working toward improved human health and well-being. It articulates how wellness policy can complement public health and health policy, as well as support the happiness/well-being policy efforts that are gathering steam in different parts of the world.

Who is this report for?

If you are a **government leader**, this report will make the case for why wellness policy is crucial for your citizens’ health and well-being (whether your country is ready to reorient national priorities toward well-being or not). If you are a **policymaker or public servant**, this report will provide ideas on how you can advance the cause of wellness, working within existing policy siloes, departments, and funding structures. If you are a **private business or nonprofit**, this report shows why you should care about wellness policy, become an advocate, and partner with governments and communities. If you are a **concerned citizen or community member** seeking to advocate for wellness, this study provides the framework and compelling evidence to make your case.

What next?

This report sets the stage for a series of *Wellness Policy Toolkits*, to be released by GWI in 2023. The toolkits will address seven domains of wellness: physical activity, healthy eating, mental wellness, traditional and complementary medicine, wellness in the built environment, wellness at work, and wellness in tourism. Each toolkit will address both the *why* and *how* of wellness policy: What is the rationale and need for wellness policy action in each domain? How can stakeholders (governments, businesses, communities, nonprofits) take action to address important issues and gaps? This report and the toolkits are intended to be just the beginning of a cross-cutting, global conversation. We hope that they will spark a wellness policy movement that can be championed by any interested stakeholder groups.

I. Why Do We Need Wellness Policy?

Introduction

Wellness is a powerful consumer movement and a growing force in the global economy. Prior to the pandemic-induced downturn, the wellness economy and its component sectors consistently grew faster than global GDP over the last decade, peaking at \$4.9 trillion (or 5.6% of global GDP) in 2019.¹ The rapid rise of consumer spending on all things related to wellness has attracted widespread attention of media, businesses, investors, and, increasingly, the health sector – all of whom are interested in opportunities to grow the wellness economy and their share in it.

In a world that has not yet emerged from the COVID-19 pandemic, and that continues to face economic volatility, it is time to step away from the hype of wellness as a consumer trend and a business investment opportunity. The impact of the pandemic on wellness has been complex. It temporarily put a pause on many wellness services, businesses, and activities, while simultaneously accelerating our interest in self-care, prevention, and immunity. We are grappling with the massive failures of public health systems, millions of deaths, and widespread suffering, while also recognizing the critical importance of healthy lifestyles, personal resilience, community support, and social safety nets.

In the midst of these complex forces, we now face many important questions related to the future of wellness and the wellness economy.

- **Wellness efficacy:** Is all of this spending actually making people well? When we are spending trillions of dollars on wellness, why do the rates of chronic disease and related health expenditures also continue to rise unsustainably? Are our wellness dollars spent on the right things? Who benefits from this spending?
- **Wellness equity and justice:** Is wellness a right or a privilege? Why does wellness continue to feel so white and rich and exclusive? What about those who don't have the money or time to spend on wellness?
- **Wellness of people and planet:** Can we be well if the planet is not well? Can humankind stay healthy if our air, water, and soil are poisoned and our biodiversity is depleted? How can we feel physically and mentally safe when we are threatened by weather shocks and climate change?

The Global Wellness Institute (GWI) has always advocated for “wellness for all.” Unfortunately, there is still a large gap to fill before there is universal access to wellness – when everyone who desires a healthy lifestyle knows how to live it, is motivated and empowered to do it, and lives in an environment where they are enabled and supported to do so. **Public policy has a critical role to play in moving us closer to the goal of wellness for all.**

¹ Yeung, O., and Johnston, K. (2021). *The Global Wellness Economy: Looking Beyond COVID*. Miami, FL: Global Wellness Institute. <https://globalwellnessinstitute.org/industry-research/the-global-wellness-economy-looking-beyond-covid/>.

In this *Wellness Policy* series, GWI aims to build a common language, framework, and set of strategies for governments, industry, and communities to collaborate and work toward the goal of wellness for all. This report, *Defining Wellness Policy*, sets the stage by articulating what wellness policy is and establishing the case for why it is so important, not only from a public health perspective but also for the wellness economy and its related business and consumer interests.

When we talk about policy, the implication is that we are speaking to governments, but this series is not just for government stakeholders. **Policies to advance the cause of wellness for all require the attention, participation, and cooperation of public, private, and nonprofit/community stakeholders.** In fact, the separate development streams and “siloes” across consumer/business wellness, public health systems, and preventive health/medicine have impeded us from making greater strides toward this goal.

This definitional report will be complemented by seven policy toolkits (forthcoming in 2023), each covering a separate domain of wellness (see *table below*).

Wellness Policy Domains Covered in GWI’s <i>Wellness Policy</i> Series	
Wellness Activities and Lifestyles	Wellness-Supporting Environments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Healthy Eating • Physical Activity • Mental Wellness • Traditional & Complementary Medicine 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wellness in the Built Environment • Wellness at Work • Wellness in Tourism

Each toolkit will address both the **why** and **how** of wellness policy: What is the rationale and need for wellness policy action in each domain? How can stakeholders (governments, businesses, communities, nonprofits) take action to address important issues and gaps? Within the seven domains, we also address the wellness needs of specific populations and lifespan groups, including underserved and vulnerable groups such as children and seniors, wherever relevant.

This report and the toolkits are intended to be just the beginning of a cross-cutting, global conversation about wellness policy and how it can be pursued. Much more work needs to be done in wellness policy to ensure that it is embedded in all policymaking and government investment decisions. We hope that this *Wellness Policy* series will spark a wellness policy movement that can be championed by any interested stakeholder groups. We invite all stakeholders in the public, private, nonprofit, and academic communities to join in this movement.

The wellness movement has brought a lot of benefits to the world.

The explosion of wellness in the economy has generated an ever-increasing array of criticisms of the “wellness-industrial complex.” Critics complain about wellness businesses preying on consumer fears to make a profit, and they attack celebrity influencers for peddling “snake oil” and false promises without any scientific evidence of safety or efficacy. In many cases, these criticisms are well-warranted. But amidst all of the fads and trends and hype around commercialized wellness, we need to remember that the wellness concept and global wellness movement are not rooted in selling things or making money. **The core of wellness is a holistic, multi-dimensional, and proactive approach to health and well-being.** Beyond the significant economic activities it has generated, the modern wellness movement has brought its share of good to the world over the last decade.

- **Embracing holistic health.** The concept of health as holistic dates back thousands of years, but this understanding was largely lost in developed and Westernized societies with the advent of modern, evidence-based medicine. The modern wellness movement has revived and popularized among mainstream consumers an understanding of their health as being holistic, multidimensional, and interconnected. For example, when people are asked why they visit the gym or take exercise classes, they are now just as likely to mention the mental and social benefits as they are exercise.
- **Mainstreaming traditional modalities for prevention and self-care.** Many of the practices and products that we associate with wellness today – e.g., meditation, yoga, herbal supplements, plant-based medicines, spirituality, looking to nature for healing, psychedelic mushrooms – date from ancient times. Most were considered fringe or “woo woo” in Westernized societies until they were embraced and mainstreamed by the wellness movement. Even in their countries of origin, many traditional healing practices had fallen out of favor among younger generations, until they were modernized and brought back by the wellness industry (e.g., TCM in China, Ayurveda in India). The increasing popularity of ancient and traditional wellness practices has greatly expanded our understanding of self-care and strategies to improve resilience. It has also forced the scientific and medical communities to take a new look at traditional healing modalities and their scientific efficacy for both prevention and treatment purposes.
- **Increasing consumer choice and business innovations.** The desire for healthier lifestyles and for alternatives/complements to allopathic care has spurred demand for new wellness services, products, practices, and businesses. The wellness market is driven by personal agency; the desire for choices; experimentation with ancient and new modalities; and a delivery that meets the need for convenience, customization, privacy, and access. This dynamic environment has stimulated countless new business innovations, research, investments, and products/services, mostly to the benefit of consumers. Everyone wants and needs something different when it comes to their personal wellness, and the wellness market provides an ever-expanding array of options to meet those needs, as well as the opportunity to scale and expand services and access for different populations.

- **Destigmatizing mental health.** Wellness is not only about preventing disease, but also about moving toward a higher state of health and well-being across many dimensions (physical, mental, social, etc.). The mental dimension of wellness, in particular, has received increased attention during the pandemic. Rather than just coping with or stigmatizing mental health conditions, mental wellness helps shift our focus toward a more positive and empowering approach. It highlights the pervasiveness of stress and social isolation, the importance of resilience, the value of finding purpose and meaning, and the need to build social connections. This increased awareness helps to build understanding, compassion, and support toward shared human conditions, no matter what our mental health challenges might be.
- **Moving from “sick care” to prevention.** Research has shown that 80-90% of our individual health outcomes are determined by environmental, socioeconomic, and lifestyle factors (also known as the social determinants of health).² Healthcare systems have little influence on the social determinants that so heavily influence our health and longevity. Currently, our healthcare systems are primarily “sick care” systems, emphasizing diagnosis and treatment of illness and injuries, while doing a very poor job at prevention. The wellness movement has raised awareness of the shortcomings of our “sick care” model and the importance of self-care and community care approaches, emphasizing prevention and health-enhancing practices. This shift can potentially help more people live longer and healthier lives while lessening the costs on our overburdened healthcare systems.
- **Building pathways for sustainability and health equity.** The modern wellness movement may have started out as a self-centered approach for individuals to pursue healthier and happier lives, but it is steadily evolving from a personal aspiration toward a recognition of our connection to the collective. Increasingly, we are recognizing that our individual health and well-being are inextricably linked to the well-being of other people, our communities, and the planet. We cannot be truly well if we confine our existence to a personal wellness bubble. For example, people are now asking important questions about their neighborhoods and living environments: *Is our indoor and outdoor air safe to breathe? Why don't we have good public spaces to socialize or to exercise? A growing segment of consumers is shifting from a “me” to a “we” perspective about wellness: How can people be healthy if they cannot afford healthy foods? Why is there so little green space in poor neighborhoods? Is the person doing my massage or serving my food treated fairly at work?* As these perspectives evolve, the wellness movement is bringing sustainability and health equity issues closer to home.

² Magnan, S. (2017). Social Determinants of Health 101 for Health Care: Five Plus Five. *NAM Perspectives*. Washington, DC: National Academy of Medicine. <https://nam.edu/social-determinants-of-health-101-for-health-care-five-plus-five/>. See also: Hood, C.M., et al (2016). County health rankings: Relationships between determinant factors and health outcomes. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, 50(2), 129-135. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.amepre.2015.08.024>.

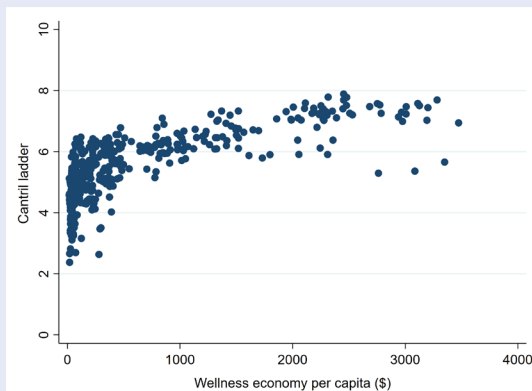
Expenditures on wellness are positively correlated with happiness and life expectancy.

As spending on wellness continues to grow, it raises many important questions. *Is a growing wellness economy a good thing? Who is benefitting from the trillions of dollars spent on wellness every year? Is this spending even making people well? Does it improve our health or well-being?*

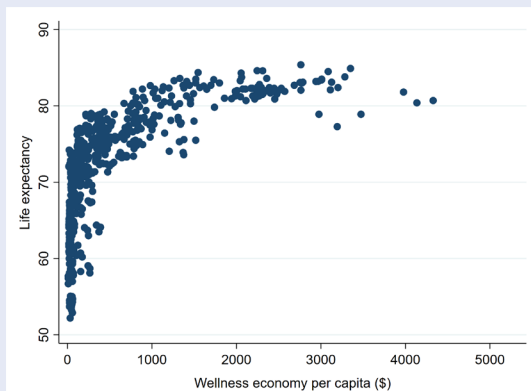
To shed light on these questions, GWI collaborated with a key author and statistician of the *World Happiness Report*³ to examine the relationships among wellness spending, happiness measurements, and health outcomes. Utilizing data from GWI, Gallup, and the World Bank, and adjusting for population size and wealth level, the analyses led to some key findings. Regression analyses show that, across countries, **for every \$844 increase in wellness economy per capita, the average happiness level increases by nearly 7%.** Furthermore, **an increase of \$769 in wellness economy per capita is associated with 1.26 years of extra life.** The results are statistically significant at the 1% level.

These results indicate that wellness spending across countries is strongly and positively correlated with both health and happiness (*see box below for details*). Correlation does not mean causation, so we cannot definitively say that wellness spending *caused* happiness levels to rise or life expectancies to increase. Nonetheless, these important results signal that there are health and well-being benefits from wellness spending.

WELLNESS ECONOMY & HAPPINESS



WELLNESS ECONOMY & LIFE EXPECTANCY



These two scatterplots visually depict the positive correlations between wellness economy per capita spending and measurements of happiness (Cantril Ladder) and health/longevity (life expectancy), using data from the Gallup World Poll, the World Bank, and GWI.

Source: Shun Wang and Global Wellness Institute

³ Helliwell, J.F., Layard, R., Sachs, J.D., De Neve, J.-E., Aknin, L.B., and Wang, S. (Eds.). (2022). *World Happiness Report 2022*. New York: Sustainable Development Solutions Network. <https://worldhappiness.report/ed/2022/>.

Wellness Economy, Happiness, and Health: Preliminary Analysis*

Measures:

In this analysis we employ the Cantril ladder as the measure of happiness, using survey data drawn from the Gallup World Poll. Respondents are asked to self-evaluate their current lives on a scale from 0 (worst possible life) to 10 (best possible life). Life expectancy is used as the measure of health, drawn from the World Bank's *World Development Indicators* (WDI) 2022. Income level is measured by GDP per capita, purchasing power parity (PPP) adjusted for 2017 international dollars, also drawn from WDI 2022. Global wellness economy data (2017, 2019, and 2020) are compiled by the Global Wellness Institute. The overall wellness economy and its subsectors are all measured on a per capita basis, to adjust for population size across countries. The wellness economy data used for this analysis excludes the wellness tourism sector, because tourism includes a large amount of spending by non-residents and therefore may skew the results in highly tourism-dependent countries.

Empirical Framework:

We conduct the following empirical analysis on the correlations between the wellness industry and happiness and health outcomes, using the following Pooled Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) model:

$$Y_{ijt} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 x_{ijt} + \beta_2 \ln gdp_{ijt} + \delta_j + \mu_t + \varepsilon_{ijt}$$

where i , j , and t denote country, region, and year, respectively. The dependent variable Y is a national-level outcome such as happiness measures or life expectancy. x denotes the per capita value of the overall wellness economy. $\ln gdp$ is the natural log of GDP per capita in 2017 international dollars, adjusted for PPP. GDP per capita is controlled for, since it is an important determinant of happiness and health, and it is also likely to be highly correlated with the wellness economy. δ_j and μ_t denote region and year dummies, respectively. ε_{ijt} is the error term. β_1 denotes the coefficient of correlation between the wellness economy and the outcome variable.

Regression Results:

Regression results show that the coefficient of wellness per capita is 0.000447, which is statistically significant at 1% level. It implies that for an increase of one standard deviation (\$844) in wellness economy per capita, the average Cantril ladder will increase by 0.377 (=1,000*0.000447) units on the scale of 0 to 10. This is equivalent to 6.7 percent changes in Cantril ladder evaluated at the sample average (5.594). Regression results also show that wellness economy per capita is significantly correlated with life expectancy. An increase of one standard deviation (\$769) in wellness economy per capita is associated with 1.26 years of extra life (=769*0.00164). In summary, regression analyses show that the wellness economy has statistically significant effects on both happiness and health.

**These are the results of a preliminary analysis conducted by Shun Wang, KDI School of Public Policy and Management (Republic of Korea), in collaboration with Ophelia Yeung and Katherine Johnston of GWI. The full results will be released in an upcoming GWI White Paper.*

Powerful macro forces are shifting wellness from a consumer movement to a policy imperative.

In the last 50 years, wellness has gone from fringe to ubiquitous in the consumer market, and this shift has only accelerated since the COVID-19 pandemic. Wellness is no longer just a leisure-time activity (like getting a massage or going to the gym) but is now a dominant lifestyle value. It has permeated the global consumer consciousness, as people increasingly filter all of their daily routines and decision-making through the lens of wellness – including housing, vacations, food purchases, exercise, personal care, social activities, and more. The rise of wellness has occurred in an era of vast economic, technological, social, demographic, and environmental changes, which have transformed every aspect of our lives, and which have had both positive and negative impacts on our individual and societal health and well-being. The growth of the wellness movement is fundamentally a consumer response to these megatrends (see figure below).⁴ To address the immense challenges posed by these macro forces, **we must shift our understanding of wellness from just a consumer trend to a policy imperative for governments, businesses, and communities alike.**

MACRO FORCES MAKING WELLNESS A POLICY IMPERATIVE



<p>The world's population is growing sicker, lonelier, and older.</p> <p>Deteriorating health, the spread of loneliness and mental illness, and the ramifications of aging all negatively impact people's happiness and wellbeing. In response, consumers around the world are proactively turning to wellness modalities as alternatives to address these challenges.</p>	<p>Health systems are failing to keep up, while the economic burden rises.</p> <p>Health systems are failing in countries all around the world, and the economic burden is unsustainable. Therefore, it is not surprising that consumers, employers, and even governments are turning to wellness approaches to complement and address deficiencies in healthcare and to turn from "sick care" to prevention.</p>	<p>Demographics, value systems, & lifestyles are evolving toward wellness.</p> <p>Consumer values are changing, moving toward a lifestyle of wellness that is fundamentally shifting consumer behaviors and consumption patterns. This shift is bolstered by the rise of the middle class, the accessibility of new options, and a burgeoning concern about the impacts of ubiquitous technology.</p>	<p>The environmental crisis is also a health crisis.</p> <p>Environmental degradation directly and indirectly affects us, through the air we breathe, how we procure and consume food, and how we live and travel. As people become aware of these risks, they are seeking out alternative lifestyles that are simultaneously healthier for themselves and more sustainable for the planet.</p>
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Source: Global Wellness Institute

⁴ Yeung, O., and Johnston, K. (2019). *Understanding Wellness: Four Global Forces Driving the Growth of the Wellness Economy*. Miami, FL: Global Wellness Institute. <https://globalwellnessinstitute.org/industry-research/understanding-wellness-four-global-forces-driving-the-growth-of-the-wellness-economy/>.

Wellness policy can be a unifying force for existing movements to improve human health and well-being.

Many movements are seeking to address our global crisis of human health and well-being.

The quest for a happier and healthier human existence is as old as mankind itself. The wellness movement is just one among several major movements over the last century that have sought to improve human health and well-being (see *figure below*). These movements cut across government, business, academia, science, and medicine, and they have made significant strides and achievements.

Achievements: Health and Longevity Movement. The development of modern medicine has been one of the greatest human achievements in the last 150 years. Advances in science and medicine, alongside the development of the public health system, have allowed us to prevent, treat, cure, and eradicate many health threats. The infectious diseases and hazards that killed most people just a century ago have mostly been eliminated or controlled, while global life expectancy has more than doubled since 1900, from 32 years to more than 72 years.⁵

Achievements: Modern Consumer Wellness Movement. The modern wellness movement has emerged largely in response to the failures of our “sick care” medical systems, and it has manifested in a consumer-driven and private sector-based wellness economy worth \$4.4 trillion in 2020. In addition to generating trillions of dollars in economic activity and endless new business innovations, the wellness movement has had a major impact on reshaping our individual and collective understanding of health and well-being (see *Pages 5-6*).

Achievements: Happiness and Well-Being Movement. The modern happiness and well-being movement has emerged from parallel developments in psychology and academia (e.g., shifting the focus from mental illness toward evolving theories of subjective well-being, positive psychology, etc.) and in governments (e.g., the advent of “Gross National Happiness” in Bhutan in 1972). Like “wellness,” the importance of “happiness” has proliferated in popular culture and consumer mindsets, fueled by media, influencers and celebrities, self-help books, podcasts, and more. In the policy arena, the United Nations’ *World Happiness Report*⁶ – which recently celebrated its 10th anniversary – has brought increased attention to the importance of subjective well-being and happiness in policymaking. It has fueled the call to reassess the goals of government policymaking and turn governments away from Gross Domestic Product (GDP) as the dominant measure of human progress and societal achievements.⁷ In recent years, a few countries have established

⁵ Roser, M., Ortiz-Ospina, E., and Ritchie, H. (2019). Life Expectancy. *Our World in Data*. <https://ourworldindata.org/life-expectancy>. Accessed 14 September 2022.

⁶ Helliwell, J. F., et al (2022).

⁷ See, for example: 1) Diener, E., and Seligman, M.E.P. (2004). Beyond Money: Toward an Economy of Well-Being. *Psychological Science in the Public Interest*, 5(1), 1-31. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0963-7214.2004.00501001.x>. 2) Global Wellbeing Initiative, <https://www.globalwellbeinginitiative.org/>. 3) Wellbeing Economy Alliance, <https://weall.org/>.

MOVEMENTS TO IMPROVE HEALTH AND WELL-BEING: ACHIEVEMENTS AND GAPS

Health & Longevity Movement

Led By: Scientists, researchers, medical professionals, governments

Achievements:

- Advanced medical care, vaccinations, & drugs.
- Public health system; modern sanitation; urban planning.
- Reduction/eradication of infectious diseases.
- Increased lifespans.

Gaps:

- Inequities in lifespans & health risks.
- Unsustainable/rising health care costs.
- Rampant chronic disease.
- Healthcare model focused on sick care & pharmaceuticals rather than prevention.
- Over-emphasis on individual behaviors over community/environmental influences.

Happiness & Well-being Movement

Led By: Governments, academics

Achievements:

- Reshaping government priorities for policymaking.
- Emphasis on human happiness, well-being, & quality of life over economic aims & GDP.
- Better metrics for understanding well-being.
- Increased focus on mental/emotional health.

Gaps:

- Very few governments (in small countries) have adopted the approach.
- Still mainly a theoretical conversation about priorities & metrics.
- Requires systemic change that will be very slow and challenging.

Source: Global Wellness Institute

1900

1950

2000

Modern Consumer Wellness Movement

Led By: Consumers, businesses, media

Achievements:

- Empowering & educating individuals to focus on their own preventive health.
- Building understanding of health as holistic.
- Mainstreaming wellness modalities.
- Market innovations, making wellness more accessible.
- Growth of a massive, multi-dimensional \$4.4t global industry.

Gaps:

- Inequities in access to wellness modalities & services.
- Many consumers are left out of the private market for wellness.
- Has failed to slow the rise of chronic disease.

Stakeholder Welfare & Sustainability Movement

Led By: Consumer activists, NGOs, businesses, investors

Achievements:

- Reshaping business & investor priorities.
- Growing emphasis on planetary health & stakeholder welfare alongside profits & stock prices (stakeholder/conscious capitalism, B Corp, etc.).
- New frameworks/metrics (ESG, 3BL) and better transparency.

Gaps:

- Do businesses really embrace these values or is it a branding strategy?
- Not yet a mainstream or widespread movement (primarily large, multinational corps. in wealthy countries).
- Emphasis largely on planetary health rather than human health/well-being.
- Requires systemic change that will be very slow and challenging.

ministries of happiness (e.g., United Arab Emirates, Ecuador, Nigeria, Venezuela), and a few others have adopted “well-being budgeting” as a way to allocate public resources toward improving well-being, as measured by specific metrics (e.g., New Zealand, Scotland, Iceland, Finland, Wales).⁸

Achievements: Stakeholder Welfare and Sustainability Movement. In recent years, many businesses have been responding to a rising call for corporate social responsibility, as consumer activism and escalating business risks (e.g., climate change, workforce, supply chain, reputation, etc.) converge in a growing stakeholder welfare and sustainability movement. The concept of corporate social responsibility (CSR) has been around for decades, and it broadly translates into practices that promote ethical business behavior, environmental sustainability, fair labor practices, and social impact in the community. Some businesses have begun to reframe their missions and visions in terms of broader societal and environmental impacts, moving toward a purpose-driven mission rather than a profit-driven one (e.g., “benefit corporations”). The spread of Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) reporting, the development of ESG guidelines, and the growth of socially responsible investing and impact investing are also helping to encourage companies to consider their business mission, practices, and impacts. Even the World Economic Forum has sponsored the development of Stakeholder Capitalism Metrics aimed at measuring the ESG achievements of businesses.⁹ These developments in the private sector largely parallel the happiness and well-being movement in the government arena – that is, encouraging businesses to reprioritize their missions and contribute positively to individual, social, and planetary health and well-being, and establishing new mechanisms for tracking and measuring progress toward those aims.

Each of these movements on their own cannot solve our global crises.

In spite of the positive changes resulting from all of these movements, many gaps and challenges endure.

Gaps: Health and Longevity Movement. Unfortunately, the benefits of modern medicine and healthcare have not been enjoyed by all. Marginalized and poorer populations, and those living in less developed regions, face significant health inequities, including lower life expectancies; higher rates of infectious and chronic disease; higher rates of infant/child/maternal mortality; and lack of access to preventive, primary, acute, and mental health care. Our healthcare systems are primarily “sick care” systems, focusing on acute care over chronic care and prevention. We are failing to address the mounting challenges of our modern era: aging populations, rising rates of noncommunicable disease and mental health conditions, global pandemics, and unsustainable healthcare costs. As evidenced during the COVID-19 pandemic, our public health systems are under-resourced and lack the strength or mandate to deliver prevention on a large scale.¹⁰ GWI

⁸ See: Durand, M., and Exton, C. (2019). Chapter 8: Adopting a well-being approach in central government: policy mechanisms and practical tools. In Global Council for Happiness and Wellbeing, *Global Happiness and Wellbeing Policy Report 2019* (pp. 141-161). New York: Sustainable Development Solutions Network. <https://www.happinesscouncil.org/report/2019/global-happiness-and-well-being-policy-report>.

⁹ WEF (2020, Sept.). *Measuring Stakeholder Capitalism: Toward Common Metrics and Consistent Reporting of Sustainable Value Creation*. Geneva: World Economic Forum. https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_IBC_Measuring_Stakeholder_Capitalism_Report_2020.pdf.

¹⁰ Sachs, J.D., et al (2022, Sept. 14). The *Lancet* Commission on lessons for the future from the COVID-19 pandemic. *The Lancet*. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(22\)01585-9](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(22)01585-9).

estimates that only about 4% of annual global health expenditures are on prevention, risk reduction, and public health.¹¹ The human and economic costs of these failings are enormous.

Gaps: Modern Consumer Wellness Movement. The wellness economy may be massive and growing, but it is not bringing wellness to all. Among the \$4.4 trillion of wellness economy spending in 2020, 68% was concentrated in the countries designated as “high-income” by the World Bank. Just over 26% of wellness spending was in “upper-middle-income countries,” while only 6% was in “lower-middle” and “low-income” countries.¹² Additionally, GWI analysis has found that there is a strong, positive correlation between wellness spending (measured by wellness economy per capita) and consumer wealth (measured by GDP per capita).¹³

Across the world, most segments of the wellness economy continue to cater to the wealthy, following the global trend of bifurcating wealth and incomes between the richest and poorest populations. While an interest in self-care may be rising across the population, the fact remains that only people with means (i.e., at least some disposal income beyond basic needs) can buy wellness services and products. Meanwhile, over 29% of the world’s population faces food insecurity, and 42% cannot afford a healthy diet.¹⁴ 22% of the population lacks basic sanitation services,¹⁵ and 26% uses a drinking water source contaminated with feces.¹⁶ Nearly the entire global population (99%) breathes unhealthy air outdoors.¹⁷ Billions have no time or place to exercise, or work in a toxic environment, or endure all of the above. How can we laud the growth and achievements of the wellness economy when even the most basic health needs are not being met for such a large share of the world’s population?

Gaps: Happiness and Well-Being Movement. While happiness and well-being are now in the mainstream lexicon of consumers, businesses, and governments, much of the impact has been just “conversation” or discourse about the topic. A very small number of countries (and mostly small, wealthy countries, at that) have embedded well-being into their national budgeting priorities and processes, while some of the nations that established new ministerial positions have either paused or refocused these efforts (e.g., UAE, Venezuela). All of these experiments are still in their early stages, and it is too soon to see measurable change or progress. In addition, much of the discussion remains theoretical, or focuses largely on changing priorities, outcomes, and metrics. The kinds of changes sought by the happiness and well-being movement are systemic and require political will and compromises. It will take a long time and monumental effort to radically change the way governments operate and allocate resources, given entrenched organizational structures and interests.

¹¹ Yeung, O., and Johnston, K. (2021).

¹² GWI analysis of 2020 global wellness economy data, using 2020 World Bank income groups (see: <https://datahelpdesk.worldbank.org/knowledgebase/articles/378834-how-does-the-world-bank-classify-countries>).

¹³ Yeung, O., and Johnston, K. (2022). *The Global Wellness Economy: Country Rankings*. Miami, FL: Global Wellness Institute. <https://globalwellnessinstitute.org/industry-research/2022-global-wellness-economy-country-rankings/>.

¹⁴ FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP, and WHO (2022). *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World: Repurposing food and agricultural policies to make healthy diets more affordable*. Rome: FAO. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cc0639en>.

¹⁵ WHO (2022, March 21). *Fact Sheets: Sanitation*. <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/sanitation>.

¹⁶ WHO (2022, March 21). *Fact Sheets: Drinking-water*. <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/drinking-water>.

¹⁷ WHO (2021, Sept. 22). *Fact Sheets: Ambient (outdoor) air pollution*. [https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/ambient-\(outdoor\)-air-quality-and-health](https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/ambient-(outdoor)-air-quality-and-health).

Gaps: Stakeholder Welfare and Sustainability Movement. Similar to the happiness and well-being movement, the stakeholder welfare and sustainability movement has fueled growing discourse globally on the values, responsibilities, and impacts of business. But adoption and implementation of these new value systems, frameworks, and metrics has been far more limited, confined mostly to larger, multinational corporations based in wealthy countries. The reality is that only a very small portion of the world's businesses will engage in voluntary ESG initiatives and stakeholder capitalism.¹⁸ Many companies may be pushed into ESG reporting by activist consumers or investors, or by regulatory efforts, but that does not necessarily mean they are meaningfully integrating ESG aims into their corporate values, structures, or supply chains. Some recent analyses have found that companies in ESG fund portfolios actually perform poorly on labor and environmental metrics, and that companies may publicly embrace ESG aims as a cover for poor business performance.¹⁹ In addition, ESG reporting frameworks have been skewed toward environmental metrics, while the "Social" component of ESG remains very limited and basic (e.g., focusing on occupational safety). Perhaps we can hope that rising pressure for corporate responsibility could lead to less harm on people and the planet, but given the entrenched structures and incentives of our globalized, capitalist economy, it would be unrealistic to expect that the private sector will deliver wellness to their employees or their communities at any meaningful scale at any time in the near future. Indeed, can we even expect the private sector to take responsibility for the dire health and well-being needs of the world's poor, marginalized, and disadvantaged populations who are not their direct customers or stakeholders?

¹⁸ See: Bebchuk, L.A., Kastiel, K., and Tallarita, R. (2022, August). Stakeholder Capitalism in the Time of COVID. *Harvard Law School Program on Corporate Governance Working Paper 2022-2*. Forthcoming, *Yale Journal on Regulation*, 40(1), 2023. <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.4026803>.

¹⁹ See: Bhagat, S. (2022, March 31). An Inconvenient Truth About ESG Investing. *Harvard Business Review*. <https://hbr.org/2022/03/an-inconvenient-truth-about-esg-investing>.

Wellness policy can be a unifying force that will build on the strengths of these movements to promote greater health and well-being for all.

The need for new solutions grows even more pressing, as we grapple with the escalating macro crises that threaten our health and well-being (see *Page 9*): aging populations, rising chronic disease, mental health challenges, the health impacts of environmental degradation, failing health systems, socioeconomic turmoil, and the pressures of technology. **As a consumer-friendly concept that is holistic and multidimensional, wellness can be a unifying force in public policy that can help to cut across the existing siloes, while building on the strengths of each of these movements.**

- Complementary to the **health and longevity movement**, wellness policy can help shift public resources toward prevention, self-care, and community care, with the potential to address the unsustainable, rising burdens and costs borne by our healthcare and public health systems.
- Leveraging the **modern consumer wellness movement**, wellness policy can help expand access to self-care, prevention, and health-enhancing environments, practices, products, and modalities for the underserved and marginalized populations who need them the most.
- Alongside the **happiness and subjective well-being movement**, wellness policy provides tools for making incremental, bottom-up changes within existing policy/governmental structures toward better human health and well-being, while we continue work at the macro, top-down level to reprioritize governmental and economic structures toward non-financial measure of progress (i.e., happiness and well-being).
- Expanding on the **stakeholder welfare and sustainability movement**, wellness policy can bring support to populations and regions that cannot wait for corporate largess, while bringing greater focus on the “Social” aspect of ESG beyond the basics.

Why should governments care about wellness policy?

Wellness is not well understood by governments and, therefore, has not been broadly incorporated into policymaking as an overarching framework or priority.

To date, there has been virtually no research on “wellness policy” or evidence that governments have adopted wellness as an overall policy goal, strategy, or priority at the national, regional, or local levels. The first and only broad-based study on wellness policy was produced by the authors of this report as a background paper for the Asian Development Bank’s *Asian Development Outlook* in 2020 (and later published in book form in 2021).²⁰ A Google search on the keywords “wellness policy” turns up thousands of documents on developing wellness policies within local school districts (e.g., health-promoting policies to encourage good nutrition and physical activity among schoolchildren), but nothing on wellness as a cross-cutting framework for policymaking in other governmental departments or functions. Insofar as governments are paying attention to wellness at all, they tend to view it through the lens of industry sectors that can bring economic development impacts (e.g., foreign investments, tourism receipts, employment, tax revenues, etc.). For this reason, the wellness sector that seems to have garnered the most government attention is wellness tourism, and to a smaller extent, the associated spa and thermal springs sectors that are also associated with recreation and hospitality. This is an unfortunate and extremely narrow view of the potential impact of wellness on society and the economy, or the potential space for policy interventions.

As a primarily consumer-driven and private sector activity, wellness is not well understood by governments, even though the wellness movement and industry have arisen to address the gaps left by healthcare systems in addressing the increasingly dire physical and mental health challenges faced by people around the world. Chronic diseases and mental health conditions stem from a confluence of factors and are closely linked with lifestyle and environment. These factors do not fit neatly within traditional policy siloes. For example, our ability to engage in physical activity depends upon urban planning, infrastructure, transportation, parks and recreation, and youth/education policies and programs, while our eating habits are heavily shaped by agriculture, economic, trade, and food-related government agencies and policies. All of these policies are far outside the realm of our public health and healthcare systems, and they also span multiple levels of government (from local to national). **Simply put, the policies that shape our wellness cut across numerous government domains, and they have not been effectively put under a unifying framework for policymaking or prioritization.**

²⁰ See: Johnston, K., Yeung, O., and Bodeker, G. (2020). *Policy Options to Promote Wellness in Asia*. ADB Background Paper. <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/institutional-document/633886/adou2020bp-policy-options-wellness-asia.pdf>.

Wellness policy is an opportunity to unify converging global values and implement a new vision centered on human and environmental health and well-being.

Wellness offers a unifying vision and a framework through which governments can prioritize policies centered on the well-being of both people and planet. One of the longstanding challenges facing the environmental and sustainability movement has been consumers' reluctance to be inconvenienced or to pay more for things that do not bring immediate, personal benefits. Wellness, on the other hand, rallies us around a shared desire to be healthier and happier. For example, consumers may be reluctant to pay more for a “green home” that may help to reduce future pollution, but they are more willing to pay a premium for a “healthy home” that may reduce their risk of cancer.

Wellness is a powerful concept for policy action because it uses the language of consumers, and it appeals to personal agency and empowerment. This vision is focused on prevention, lifestyle changes, and the environmental factors that affect our well-being and our ability to live healthy lives. It ensures that wellness is equitable, inclusive, and culturally appropriate. It aims to reframe the perception of wellness as not just a leisure or luxury activity for the wealthy, but as an everyday behavior and lifestyle that we can all adopt. A wellness policy approach can help to reset the relationship between human health and planetary health, by recognizing that these aims go hand-in-hand and can have both short-term benefits for individuals and long-term benefits for society.

Wellness policy provides a range of solutions that can be led by multiple actors, at different levels of government, and for the benefit of different groups.

Wellness policy does not require wholesale, transformative change in government structures and systems. It can be implemented immediately and incrementally, within the existing system, and by actors at any level/unit of government. For example, government stakeholders working in the departments of transportation, tourism, parks and recreation, city planning/management, and others can easily incorporate wellness policy approaches within their existing policy frameworks and portfolios, no matter what level of government they are in (local/municipal, regional/provincial, or national). Businesses, nonprofits, and local communities can partner and collaborate with governments on specific projects and initiatives.

Governments have many important roles to play in facilitating wellness and many policy tools to deploy, such as: encouraging new innovations; funding new research; scaling effective services and activities; educating and building awareness of healthy lifestyles; increasing access through public investments in infrastructure, services, and programs; collaborating with the private and nonprofit sectors for delivering services; and using tax and regulatory tools to create incentives/disincentives where appropriate. There are already ample examples of successful wellness-enhancing initiatives in many areas, and governments can leverage this experience and knowledge to benefit target populations. This report and the related policy toolkits aim to serve as a starting point, providing operational help and the tools for governments and communities to consider, plan, and implement wellness policy in their jurisdictions.

Wellness policy and the wellness industry can support and cross-fertilize a wide range of government priorities, from health, to economic growth, workforce development, and quality of life.

Population health and well-being is just one among many priorities that governments must balance. As both an economic activity and a policy tool, wellness has many cross-cutting implications and impacts on growth and development, extending far beyond public health, prevention, and well-being. Using a wellness-driven approach for policy can also support and reshape important priorities in the areas of economic development, competitiveness, and growth; small business development; workforce development; urban development; civic engagement; environmental and cultural sustainability; social and cultural affairs; equity and diversity; female empowerment; and much more (see figure below).²¹ Broadly, wellness provides a new lens through which all types of development policies can bring wide-ranging benefits for people, society, and planet, alongside traditional economic growth objectives.

WELLNESS SUPPORTS MANY PUBLIC POLICY PRIORITIES

Wellness is an economic growth driver.

- Employment creation & small business development
- Promotion of locally-sourced, produced, & branded products
- Women’s empowerment & benefits to families

Wellness improves public health.

- Mitigating rising healthcare costs
- Improving health equity by engaging wellness workers in the community
- Addressing the growing mental health epidemic
- Harnessing indigenous wellness knowledge, traditions, & modalities

Wellness supports protection of natural & cultural assets.

- Environmental protection
- Preserve & celebrate local culture & heritage
- Mitigate tourism-related challenges

Wellness supports workforce development and worker welfare.

- Worker development, retention, & recruitment
- Worker welfare

Wellness enhances quality of life & social capital.

- Urban/community planning, zoning & infrastructure
- Social capital & trust

Source: Global Wellness Institute

²¹ Yeung, O., and Johnston, K. (2019). *Understanding Wellness: Opportunities & Impacts of the Wellness Economy for Regional Development*. Miami, FL: Global Wellness Institute. <https://globalwellnessinstitute.org/industry-research/understanding-wellness-opportunities-impact-wellness-economy-for-regional-development/>.

Why should the private sector care about wellness policy?

The private sector often takes a negative view of public policy because they view government actions as unfriendly to business (e.g., taxes, regulations, bureaucracy, COVID-era shut-downs, vaccine and mask mandates, etc.). In fact, policy can be beneficial to the private sector in many ways, and businesses in the wellness economy should approach it with a positive outlook. When wellness businesses become advocates for wellness policies, and partners in their implementation, it can be a win-win situation for both the private and public sectors, customers, and their communities in delivering the benefits of wellness to all.

Public investments in infrastructure, workforce, and research support wellness businesses.

Governments at all levels (national, state/provincial, and local/municipal) are major investors in the critical assets that underpin wellness activities and the wellness economy. All around the world, governments build the essential **infrastructure** in communities – including public squares, parks and playgrounds, trails and bicycle lanes, and public sports facilities – where people conduct their exercise and leisure activities. Public educational institutions train a large, growing, and desperately needed wellness **workforce**, including hospitality workers, massage therapists, traditional and complementary medicine providers, nutritionists, exercise professionals, psychologists, architects and urban planners, and public health professionals. Governments are also one of the largest investors in the basic scientific **research** that powers today's innovations and technologies and generates new products, services, and business models. Importantly, government-supported research on public health provides the data that underlies much of the current wisdom on which the wellness economy is built (e.g., physical activity, healthy diets, sleep hygiene, mental health, healthy built environments, etc.). The private sector should advocate and partner with government for these investments, because better infrastructure, workforce, and research not only underpin their businesses, but also strengthen and expand the consumer landscape for wellness.

Public policies can increase consumer confidence and protect the integrity of the wellness industry.

The growth of the global wellness industry has been propelled by increasing consumer adoption of novel wellness modalities and the proliferation of wellness services and products. The past decade has brought a plethora of new wellness products, services, and therapies that were previously unheard of or considered fringe, with businesses sometimes stretching science to satisfy rising consumer demand and curiosity (e.g., different types of supplements, fortified foods, and fad diets; extreme workouts; and therapies involving oxygen, light, manual techniques, extreme temperatures, shamanism, psychedelics, and even insect stings). Many products and therapies are innocuous, even if they are ineffective, while others can be risky or harmful when used the wrong way, by the wrong people, or in combination with the wrong things. Suffice it to say, market demand and business innovations have outpaced science and evidence in many areas.

While businesses often dislike any type of government controls on their products/services, public policies and regulations can increase consumer confidence in the wellness market and strengthen it. For example, public education and awareness campaigns can help people become informed

consumers, by giving them the knowledge and data to choose effective products and modalities, and to identify qualified providers. Good policies help ensure that companies make appropriate product and efficacy claims that do not mislead consumers. Registration, credentialing, inspection, labelling, and quality assurance systems can protect consumers, while still enabling market innovation. Regulation is a critical component of maintaining the integrity, honesty, and reputation of the wellness industry. If wellness businesses do not partner with governments to ensure proper levels of evidence, regulation, labelling, credentialing, etc., they risk losing the trust of their customers and will increasingly be seen as selling false promises and “snake oil” rather than valuable solutions for prevention and health promotion.

Public policies can promote business growth and development.

Whether businesses like it or not, governments set rules for the private market. These rules not only govern how businesses are run, but they can also support/favor sectors that are deemed to be important to society. This was clearly demonstrated during the pandemic, in terms of which businesses faced shutdowns and which were allowed to remain open. Unfortunately, the physical activity sector (including for-profit gyms, community sports centers, sports leagues, etc.) was among the first to shut down and the last to reopen in many countries. Exercise facilities were treated as places of leisure, like bars and restaurants, and not as an essential service that supports the physical activity and social connections that have been so vital to maintaining good health during the pandemic. A wellness policy approach would help to change the perception of physical activity from an optional leisure pursuit to an integral part of protecting public health, and it would allow the physical activity sector to receive greater recognition, priority, and support from government.

Public policies can protect key assets and resources that enable the wellness industry.

Wellness consumers increasingly demand and expect offerings that are unique, authentic, local, and sustainable. Virtually every sector in the wellness economy depends upon natural, cultural, and historical resources for its offerings: thermal/mineral springs, wellness tourism, wellness real estate, outdoor exercise and recreation, natural personal care and beauty products, traditional and plant-based supplements and medicines, and so on. Government policies on conservation, biodiversity, and environmental and cultural sustainability protect the treasures that are essential to our wellness and ensure that they are utilized by businesses in a responsible manner. The design and quality of urban environments is also critical to our health and well-being and can either support or inhibit the development of new wellness innovations and businesses. Public policies and partnerships with the private sector on urban planning and transit development can create walkable communities, protect diversity, and support safe and accessible public spaces where residents and businesses can thrive together.

Governments are stakeholders and clients in the wellness market.

Governments not only tax but also spend. Public spending on healthcare can spill over to wellness sectors, such as public health systems offering or paying for traditional and complementary medicine, or subsidizing visits to health resorts and thermal spas for chronic illness and rehabilitation (e.g., “Kur” and health tourism in Central, Southern, and Eastern Europe). In many countries, the operations of public/subsidized gyms, community centers, and sports/recreation services are contracted out to private operators. Governments invest in subsidized housing, and a prioritization of wellness in the built environment will spur opportunities for wellness real estate development in the affordable segment. Governments are major employers, and they operate and procure goods and services for a wide range of public institutions (e.g., public schools, universities, and childcare facilities; hospitals; military facilities; government departments; etc.); they therefore represent a potentially large market for healthy eating, wellness architecture/design, workplace wellness innovations, and more. In short, governments need the private sector in order to deliver and implement services that are deemed to be in the public interest. While many wellness sector innovations originate from the private sector, governments have the resources to scale the adoption of wellness products/services and to reach a broader customer base, especially those who cannot afford these things on their own.

The time to act on wellness policy is now.

Globally, the metrics for health and well-being, which were precarious even before 2020, have been deteriorating on multiple fronts. The United Nations' *Sustainable Development Goals Report 2022*²² paints an alarming picture of humanity, with COVID-19, climate change, and global conflicts triggering cascading crises in physical and mental health, food and nutrition, poverty, environment, and so on – prompting the UN Secretary-General to call for an “urgent rescue effort for the SDGs” among all stakeholders. Clearly, while consumer actions and private sector innovations in the wellness arena are important, they are woefully insufficient in the face of this grim reality.

These cascading crises have caused widespread loss of life and human suffering that are unconscionable to ignore, and they will only worsen if we do not change course. Unwellness on many fronts (e.g., malnutrition, sedentary behavior, mental unwellness, chronic disease, rising health expenditures, and environmental degradation), also imposes staggering and unsustainable economic costs, for which all of us are paying the price directly or indirectly (*see figure below*).

It is urgent that we act immediately to reorient public policy and our public and private resources toward health, wellness, and well-being.

²² UN (2022). *The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2022*. New York: United Nations. <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2022/>.


THE GLOBAL COSTS OF POOR HUMAN HEALTH & WELL-BEING ARE ENORMOUS



\$2.3 TRILLION

Major Chronic Diseases & Mental Conditions

Projected to reduce global economic output by an average of **\$2.3 trillion** annually from 2011-2030.



\$3.5 TRILLION

All Forms of Malnutrition (Includes Premature Deaths from Diet-related NCDs)

Cause economic losses of **\$3.5 trillion** annually (\$500 per person).



\$8.1 TRILLION

Indoor & Outdoor Air Pollution

Responsible for an estimated **\$8.1 trillion** per year in health costs.



\$67.5 BILLION

Physical Inactivity

Creates a **\$67.5 billion** annual burden, including direct healthcare costs and productivity losses.



\$8.5 TRILLION

Global Health Expenditures

More than doubled in real terms from 1999-2019, reaching **\$8.5 trillion** annually (nearly 10% of global GDP).



\$7.8 TRILLION

Employee Disengagement at Work

Costs an estimated **\$7.8 trillion** each year.

Source: Global Wellness Institute

Data sources for the graphic: 1) Bloom, D.E., et al (2011). *The Global Economic Burden of Non-communicable Diseases*. Geneva: World Economic Forum. <https://www.weforum.org/reports/global-economic-burden-non-communicable-diseases/>. 2) World Bank (2022). *The Global Health Cost of PM2.5 Air Pollution: A Case for Action Beyond 2021*. International Development in Focus. Washington, DC: World Bank. <https://doi.org/10.1596/978-1-4648-1816-5>. 3) WHO (2021). *Global expenditure on health: Public spending on the rise?* Geneva: World Health Organization. <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240041219>. 4) FAO (2013). *State of Food and Agriculture 2013: Food systems for better nutrition*. Rome: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. <https://www.fao.org/3/i3300e/i3300e00.htm>. 5) Ding., D., et al (2016, July 27). The economic burden of physical inactivity: a global analysis of major non-communicable diseases. *The Lancet*, 388, 1311-1324. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(16\)30383-X](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(16)30383-X). (Note that this study expresses the \$67.5 billion of economic losses in "international dollars," which means that the values in each country are converted to dollars at a purchasing power parity rate that accounts for differentials in the prices of goods and services across countries.) 6) Gallup (2022). *State of the Global Workforce: 2022 Report*. Washington, DC: Gallup. <https://www.gallup.com/workplace/349484/state-of-the-global-workplace.aspx>.

Investing in health and well-being has massive potential benefits.

It is notoriously difficult to estimate the return on investment (ROI) for wellness. The impacts typically manifest over a long time horizon, and they are shaped by the specific approaches, local conditions, population characteristics, and many other factors. There is no question that the benefits are enormous, especially for disadvantaged and lower-income populations. **Various studies by the WHO and other organizations have estimated an ROI of \$4-\$14 for every \$1 invested in public health, prevention, managing NCDs, and other health promotion efforts.** More important than the measurable economic impacts are the intangible benefits for humankind, by reducing the suffering caused by disease, disability, and premature deaths, and by improving well-being and quality of life for all.

- Interventions to prevent and manage NCDs in low-/lower-middle income countries could achieve a 15% reduction in premature mortality and \$350 billion in economic growth over twelve years (an ROI of \$7 for every \$1 invested).²³
- Public health interventions at the local and national levels are highly cost-saving, with an estimated ROI of \$14 for every \$1 invested.²⁴
- Investing in health in general brings economic returns to the health sector, other sectors, and the wider economy, with an estimated ROI of \$4 for every \$1 invested.²⁵
- Investments to meet UNSDG 3 targets (“healthy lives & well-being”) in low-/middle-income countries could prevent 97 million premature deaths globally and add up to 8.4 years of life expectancy in some countries over fourteen years.²⁶

²³ WHO (2018). *Saving lives, spending less: a strategic response to noncommunicable diseases*. Geneva: World Health Organization. WHO/NMH/NVI/18.8. <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/WHO-NMH-NVI-18.8>.

²⁴ Masters, R., et al (2017). Return on investment of public health interventions: a systematic review. *Journal of Epidemiology & Community Health*, 71(8), 827-834. <https://doi.org/10.1136%2Fjech-2016-208141>.

²⁵ Reeves, A., et al (2013). Does investment in the health sector promote or inhibit economic growth? *Globalization and Health*, 9(43). <https://doi.org/10.1186/1744-8603-9-43>.

²⁶ Stenberg, K., et al (2017). Financing transformative health systems towards achievement of the health Sustainable Development Goals: a model for projected resource needs in 67 low-income and middle-income countries. *The Lancet Global Health*, 5(9), E875-E887. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S2214-109X\(17\)30263-2](https://doi.org/10.1016/S2214-109X(17)30263-2).

II. What Is Wellness Policy?

Defining wellness.

To understand wellness policy, we must first understand wellness. The Global Wellness Institute (GWI) defines wellness as: **the active pursuit of activities, choices, and lifestyles that lead to a state of holistic health.** There are two important aspects to this definition. First, wellness is not a passive or static state, but rather an “active pursuit” that is associated with intentions, choices, and actions as we work toward an optimal state of health and well-being. Second, wellness is linked to holistic health – that is, it extends beyond physical health and incorporates many different dimensions that should work in harmony (*see figure below*).

Wellness is multidimensional.

- **Physical:** Nourishing a healthy body through exercise, nutrition, sleep, etc.
- **Mental:** Engaging the world with the intellectual mind.
- **Emotional:** Being aware of, accepting, and expressing our feelings, and understanding the feelings of others.
- **Spiritual:** Searching for meaning and higher purpose in human existence.
- **Social:** Connecting and engaging with others and our communities in meaningful ways.
- **Environmental:** Fostering positive interrelationships between planetary health and human actions, choices, and well-being.



Wellness functions on a continuum.

Wellness is often confused with terms like health, well-being, and happiness. While there are common elements among them, wellness is different in that it is not associated with a static state (i.e., being happy, in good health, or a state of well-being), but rather an active process of being aware and working toward optimal holistic health and well-being.

Wellness is best viewed as a continuum that extends from poor health to an optimal state of well-being (*see figure*).²⁷ The “sick” end of the continuum is addressed by the medical paradigm, with a focus on treating disease (the *pathogenic* approach). The right-hand side of the continuum



Source: Global Wellness Institute, adapted from Dr. Jack Travis

²⁷ The continuum concept is adapted from Dr. Jack Travis’ Illness-Wellness Continuum. Travis was one of the pioneers of the modern wellness movement in the 1970s.

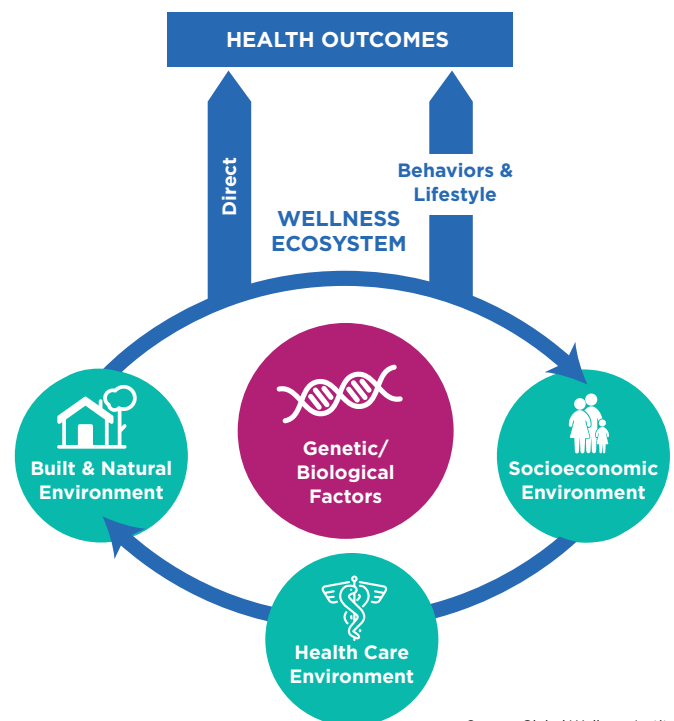
requires wellness – i.e., individuals proactively adopting activities and lifestyles that benefit their body, mind, and spirit (the *salutogenic* approach).²⁸

Wellness is both behavioral and environmental.

Wellness is an individual pursuit based on self-responsibility, but it is also significantly influenced by the physical, social, and cultural environments in which we live. While we may carry genetic tendencies for many types of disease, our health outcomes are not pre-determined. Emerging research on epigenetics and neuroplasticity tells us that our environment, lifestyle, and lived experiences not only can alter gene expression in our body but also can rewire our brain – for better or for worse – and these effects can be passed down to our children and future generations along with our genes.²⁹ Indeed, research on the determinants of health indicates that environmental, socioeconomic, and lifestyle factors can account for 80-90% of our disease risks and health outcomes.³⁰ Those who are very young, elderly, disabled, or poor are particularly vulnerable to these external factors.³¹

A complex web of factors (access to healthcare, socioeconomic factors, and our natural and built environments) form a “wellness ecosystem” that can augment or mitigate our genetic disposition for disease. **Our wellness ecosystem has a *direct* effect on our health by transmitting communicable and environmental diseases. It also *indirectly* affects our health by influencing our behaviors and lifestyles, which can lead to noncommunicable diseases.** It can make healthy habits easy, convenient, and the “default” option – or not. Governments and public policy exert enormous influence on our wellness ecosystem and all of these external and behavioral factors – from economic and social policies, to urban planning and transportation infrastructure, to health systems, to environmental regulations, and much more.

Up to **80-90%** of our health outcomes depend upon the external and environmental factors in our wellness ecosystem



Source: Global Wellness Institute

²⁸ For more information on *pathogenesis vs salutogenesis*, see: 1) Bhattacharya, S., et al (2020, Jan.). Salutogenesis: A bona fide guide towards health preservation. *Journal of Family Medicine and Primary Care*, 9(1), 16-19. https://doi.org/10.4103/jfmpc.jfmpc_260_19. 2) Mittelmark, M.B., et al (Eds.) (2017). *The Handbook of Salutogenesis*. Cham, Switzerland: Springer. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-04600-6>. 3) Fries, C.J. (2020). Healing Health Care: From Sick Care Towards Salutogenic Healing Systems. *Social Theory & Health*, 18(1), 16-32. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41285-019-00103-2>.

²⁹ See: 1) Pelletier, K. (2018). *Change Your Genes, Change Your Life: Creating Optimal Health with the New Science of Epigenetics*. San Rafael, CA: Origin Press. 2) Choy, L., and Bodeker, G. (2020, May). *Resetting the World with Wellness: Mental resilience in a time of stress and trauma*. Global Wellness Institute White Paper Series. Miami, FL: Global Wellness Institute. <https://globalwellnessinstitute.org/industry-research/resetting-the-world-with-wellness/>.

³⁰ Magnan, S. (2017) and Hood, C.M., et al (2016).

³¹ See: 1) Braveman, P., et al (2011). *Issue Brief #8: Neighborhoods and Health*. Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. <http://www.rwjf.org/en/library/research/2011/05/neighborhoods-and-health-.html>. 2) Institute of Medicine and National Research Council (2013). *U.S. Health in International Perspective: Shorter Lives, Poorer Health*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. <https://doi.org/10.17226/13497>.

Wellness policy 101.

Definition of wellness policy.

The Global Wellness Institute defines wellness policy as follows:

Wellness policy is a set of cross-cutting actions that encourage healthy lifestyles and create supportive environments for human health and well-being.

Levels of action for wellness policy.

Public policies can be formulated to shape our wellness at three different levels (*as explained in greater detail later in this chapter*):

- 1. Micro-level wellness policy:** Encouraging individuals to proactively make healthy choices, establish healthy habits, and live healthy lifestyles.
- 2. Meso-level wellness policy:** Creating living environments that support and encourage healthy behaviors and lifestyles.
- 3. Macro-level policy:** Reshaping all policies related to our wider society and economy, with the aim of improving human health and well-being.

In many cases, macro-level policies (such as reducing poverty, stopping armed conflicts, or addressing climate change) will have a greater impact on our health and well-being than the meso- and micro-level policies targeting individual behaviors and community environments. As noted in *Chapter 1*, the happiness and well-being movement has drawn attention to the importance of changing overarching public priorities and approaches to address macro-level issues that affect well-being. This kind of top-down policy approach is critical, but it requires long-term, systemic changes, as well as political will and compromises, which can be difficult to achieve. To date, only a few small countries have attempted this type of high-level change (e.g., New Zealand, Scotland, etc.).

Macro-level policies – covering the entire range of public policy action – are vitally important to human health and well-being. But in this study, we focus primarily on two levels of action (micro and meso), which can complement national-level well-being policy efforts, and can also be implemented independent of those longer-term endeavors.

Who benefits from wellness policy.

Wellness policies can target the needs of specific populations and lifespan groups, including underserved and vulnerable groups such as children and seniors. Wellness policy is especially critical for lower-income and disadvantaged populations, who are at higher risk for poor health and are not well-served by the private wellness market.

Wellness is not a luxury. It is not a “hierarchy of needs,” where basic needs (e.g., safety, employment, food) must be met before we can pursue “loftier” wellness practices like exercise, healthy diets,

or meditation. To the contrary, wellness is a basic and critical resource that we all need, no matter our life circumstances. Even those living in the worst macro-level circumstances (e.g., war zones, refugee camps) can benefit from individual wellness practices and pathways to help them cope, build resilience, and deal with adversity. **Wellness policies at the micro- and meso-levels can be implemented and have benefits for people immediately, even while we wait for the glacial progress in solving our long-term macro crises and shifting our overarching policy priorities toward well-being.**

Wellness policy versus health, public health, and happiness/well-being policies.

Wellness is a lens through which we can reshape public policy and work toward improving human health, happiness, and well-being outcomes. Wellness policy complements and supports health, public health, and happiness/well-being policies (*as explained in greater detail later in this chapter*):

- Wellness policy provides a framework and policy options that can be adopted across existing government agencies and economic sectors, at every level of government, and in partnership with the private and nonprofit sectors.
- Wellness policy complements health and public health policy by drawing attention to the many lifestyle factors and the environmental determinants of health that are beyond the mandate of both healthcare and public health, and that cut across many government silos.
- Wellness policy supports the well-being and happiness movement by offering tools for incremental and immediate changes within existing policy structures, without waiting for the challenging political process of reorienting national government priorities toward human health and well-being.

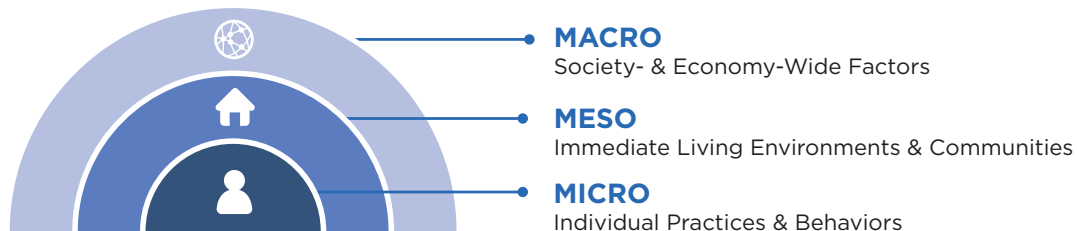
Key focus areas for wellness policy.

Wellness policy focuses on seven domains that affect both individual behaviors and supporting environments (*as explained later in this chapter*). These domains are closely interrelated, and policy actions within one domain can have impacts across other areas. GWI's *Wellness Policy Toolkits* (forthcoming in 2023) will address these seven domains in detail. Stakeholders working in many government functions, industry sectors, and communities can take action across these domains, in both large and small ways, to spearhead bringing wellness to all.

Wellness Policy Domains Covered in GWI's <i>Wellness Policy Series</i>	
Wellness Activities and Lifestyles	Wellness-Supporting Environments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Healthy Eating • Physical Activity • Mental Wellness • Traditional & Complementary Medicine 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wellness in the Built Environment • Wellness at Work • Wellness in Tourism

Wellness policy: Three levels of action.

Public policies can be formulated to shape our wellness at three different levels, envisioned as a set of three concentric circles (see figure below).



Source: Global Wellness Institute

- **Micro-level policies affect individual practices and behaviors.** As individuals, we make a daily choice to behave in ways that either enhance or reduce our personal health and well-being. There are many factors that can affect our behaviors, including time, money, knowledge, motivation, interest, energy, access to facilities, and physical or health conditions. Policies can encourage healthy behaviors by making these choices more convenient and accessible for different populations. However, the importance of individual practices does not absolve society, governments, and businesses of responsibility for dealing with problems at the meso and macro levels.
- **Meso-level policies shape our immediate living environments, including our communities, neighborhoods, workplaces, schools, and families.** As mentioned previously, environmental factors (including built environment, natural environment, and social environment) are a major determinant of our physical and mental health. We depend upon our local governments, employers, community organizations, and families to help build environments that are supportive of our health and well-being. Public policies and investments can play a huge role by investing in infrastructure and environments that create a healthy “wellness ecosystem” (see *Page 26*), enable access to healthy choices, and nudge us toward healthy lifestyles. Healthy environments are especially critical for those living in marginalized/underserved areas and those who do not have the financial means to participate in the private wellness market.
- **Macro-level policies define our wider society and economy.** Numerous broad, macro-level factors influence our health and well-being: poverty, unemployment, inequality, hunger, war and conflict, crime and safety, education, gender, economy, weather and climate, environment, etc. Our individual wellness practices and lifestyles cannot solve these problems because they are largely outside of our own control. Addressing macro-level issues requires top-down, systemic efforts to reorient national priorities away from conventional economic objectives and toward comprehensive human well-being.

Wellness policy complements health and public health policy.

Both public health and healthcare are well-defined policy fields, with dedicated government agencies, professionals, and funding streams to formulate and implement them. Medical advances have allowed us to treat, cure, and even eradicate many illnesses and health conditions, while dramatically increasing human life expectancy (see *Chapter 1*). Across the world, public health has accomplished a lot in the prevention and control of infectious diseases (e.g., via immunization, sanitation, etc.), and in addressing major health threats such as workplace safety, food safety, sanitation and water safety, and motor vehicle safety. In many countries, the public health sector is at the center of educating consumers on entrenched lifestyle risks such as smoking, alcohol abuse, and recreational drug use. Unfortunately, healthcare and public health are less able to combat the rise of non-communicable diseases (NCDs), which have become the greatest future challenge to global health.³² NCDs are largely preventable, and they mostly stem from key risk factors related to our modern, unhealthy lifestyles (e.g., sedentary behavior, poor eating habits, stress, lack of sleep, loneliness, addiction, environmental toxins, etc.).³³

In an ideal world, our healthcare and public health systems would succeed at prevention and health promotion and would address the entire wellness continuum. The reality is that they do not, and in fairness, they cannot. The public health community is no match for the entrenched systems and massive commercial interests that profit from things that are bad for our health (e.g., unhealthy/processed foods, sugary drinks, tobacco, etc.), especially in developing countries.³⁴ Moreover, our public health and medical care systems are not designed, equipped, funded, or mandated to address the underlying factors and policy issues that lead to these challenges, or to change the environments that shape people's health-related behaviors.

Wellness policy can help fill these gaps, by providing a framework and policy options that can be adopted across existing government agencies and economic sectors (e.g., transportation, urban planning, education, parks and recreation, etc.), and at every level (national, regional/provincial, and municipal/local), with the aim of improving human health and well-being. By leveraging the power and momentum of the consumer- and business-driven wellness movement, wellness policy also provides a platform for building essential partnerships between government and non-government stakeholders.

³² See: 1) WHO (2005). *Preventing Chronic Diseases: A Vital Investment*. <https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/43314>. 2) Adler-Waxman, A. (2017, Dec. 7). This is the biggest challenge to our health. *World Economic Forum: Shaping the Future of Health and Healthcare Initiative*. <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2017/12/healthcare-future-multiple-chronic-disease-ncd/>. 3) United Nations (2018, Feb. 16). *New UN high-profile panel set to take on noncommunicable diseases, cause of seven in 10 deaths globally*. <https://news.un.org/en/story/2018/02/1002921>. 4) Council on Foreign Relations (2014, Nov.

³³ WHO (2005).

³⁴ See: 1) Tangcharoensathien, V., et al. (2019). Addressing NCDs: challenges from industry market promotion and interferences. *International Journal of Health Policy and Management*, 8(5), 256-260-731. <https://doi.org/10.15171/ijhpm.2019.02>. 2) Delobelle, P. (2019). Big tobacco, alcohol, and food and NCDs in LMICs: an inconvenient truth and call to action. *International Journal of Health Policy and Management*, 8(12), 727-731. <https://doi.org/10.15171/ijhpm.2019.74>.

Wellness policy supports well-being and happiness policy.

“Wellness” is often conflated with “well-being” and “happiness” because all three concepts reflect human experience in a complex, subjective, and holistic way, including physical, mental, emotional, social, financial, environmental, spiritual, and other aspects. In recent years, the burgeoning fields of subjective well-being and happiness have garnered significant attention from governments, policy communities, researchers, and consumers (*as discussed in Chapter 1*). The main focus has been on measuring happiness and exploring the role of government and policy in increasing people’s happiness.

Happiness was first embraced as a policy goal by Bhutan (1972), which later introduced its Gross National Happiness Index as an alternative to Gross National Product for assessing the country’s level of progress. Country-level happiness is now measured globally by the Gallup World Poll and published annually in the United Nations’ *World Happiness Report*. In 2017, the Global Happiness Council was founded by the ruler of the Emirate of Dubai. Led by economists, psychologists, and happiness experts, the Council sponsors research on the policy approaches and best practices that could enhance happiness and individual well-being. To date, the Council has published a few editions of its policy report and convened discussions at the World Government Summit.³⁵ The Council’s policy research efforts are grouped under six themes: education, workplace, personal happiness, public health, city design, and management.³⁶ As discussed in *Chapter 1*, several countries have institutionalized well-being and happiness as a policy priority by: establishing new government departments, ministerial positions, or external agencies (e.g., the What Works Centre for Wellbeing in the UK); embedding well-being in national budgeting priorities and processes (e.g., well-being budgeting in New Zealand); and instituting new accountability mechanisms (e.g., appointing new Future Generations Commissioners in Wales and Scotland).

Wellness policy does not aim to duplicate or replace these important efforts in happiness and well-being policy. Rather, wellness policy is a complement to the current discourse on happiness and well-being and helps to fill gaps and work toward this common goal:

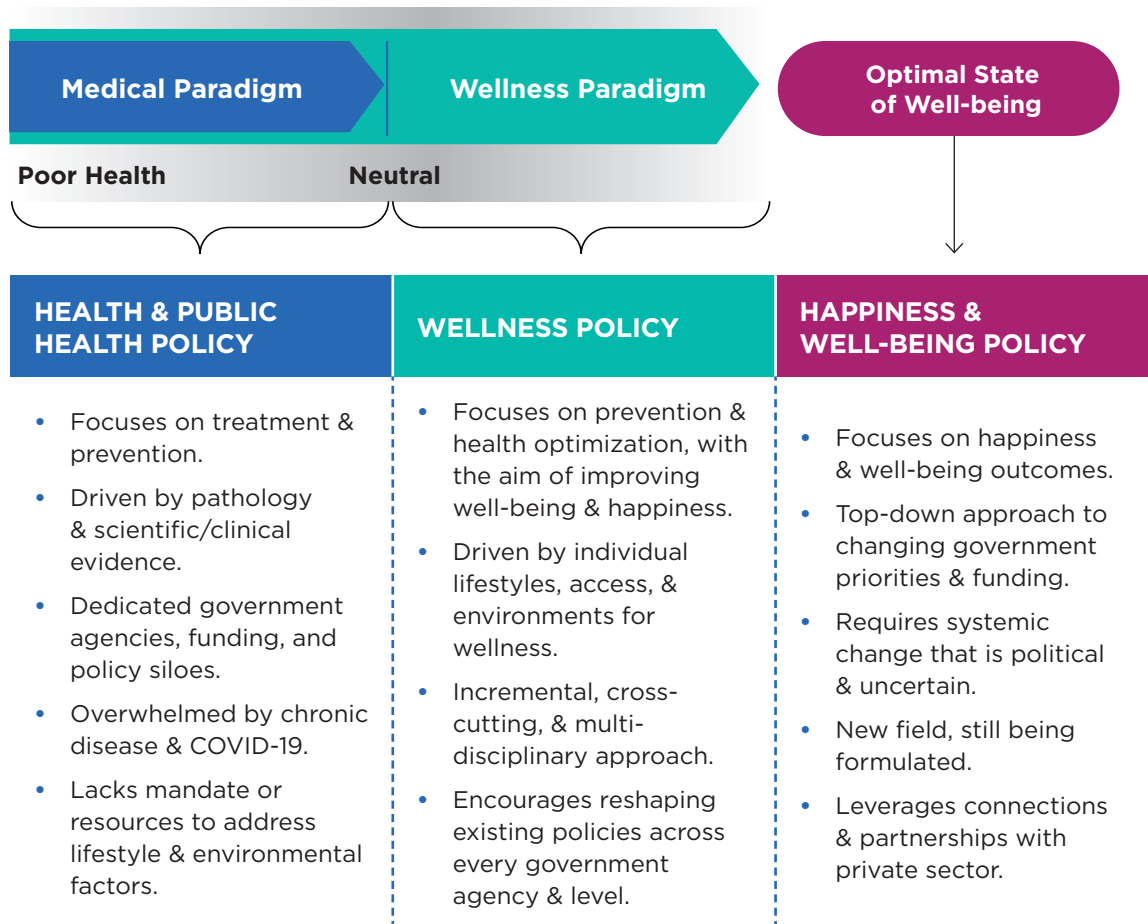
- **Happiness and well-being are outcomes that we seek to improve.** That is why the happiness and well-being policy conversation primarily focuses on outcomes and metrics (*What should be the main goal of government policy? How can we improve measurements of happiness or well-being among our citizens?*). **In contrast, wellness is a process and an activity.** Wellness policy provides direction for what we can do to work toward the goal of improved happiness and well-being outcomes.
- The current discourse about happiness and well-being focuses on priority-setting at the highest levels of government. **Happiness and well-being policy takes a top-down approach that requires long-term, systemic change in how governments set priorities, allocate resources, and measure progress.** This process is challenging and even uncertain, requiring political will, new mandates, and political compromises. **In contrast, wellness policy offers tools for**

³⁵ See: Global Council for Happiness & Well-being, *Global Happiness & Well-being Policy Reports* (2022, 2019, 2018), <https://www.happinesscouncil.org>.

³⁶ See: <https://www.happinesscouncil.org/council>.

making incremental, immediate, bottom-up changes within existing policy structures toward improving human health and well-being. The wellness policy toolkits developed by GWI in this *Wellness Policy* series (forthcoming in 2023) offer options for stakeholders in any government department (or in the nonprofit and private sectors), and at any level (national to local), to take action immediately and seek out partnerships to work incrementally toward improved health, happiness, and well-being.

WELLNESS POLICY LEVERAGES & FILLS GAPS IN EXISTING EFFORTS IN HEALTH, PUBLIC HEALTH, & HAPPINESS/ WELL-BEING POLICIES ACROSS THE WELLNESS CONTINUUM



Source: Global Wellness Institute

Wellness is a lens to reshape public policy and work toward well-being.

The fields of wellness and happiness/well-being can work together to reshape both the process and the outcomes of policymaking.

Well-being as a main outcome of policymaking.

As the saying goes, “if you can’t measure it, you can’t improve it.” Outcomes are the main changes, improvements, and impacts we are seeking to achieve through public policy. Champions of the happiness and well-being movement have argued that better well-being should be a top priority of governments and policymaking – equal to, or supplanting, GDP growth.³⁷ Why are we using economic growth and GDP as our key metrics for “progress” when they are increasingly detached from people’s quality of life, happiness, and well-being?

If we are to make well-being our top policy goal, we will need to measure progress. There are many different approaches for measuring and tracking well-being at the country level (see figure below).

MEASURING WELL-BEING AT THE COUNTRY LEVEL

Well-being Outcomes	Well-being KPIs
Subjective Well-Being/Happiness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Life satisfaction (e.g., Cantril ladder) • Negative/positive affect (or emotions)
Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Life expectancy • Self-reported health • Premature deaths from non-communicable diseases • Child/maternal mortality rates
Community & Connection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social support network/connections • Loneliness • Prosocial behaviors/kindness • Participation in community orgs., volunteering, etc.
Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pollution, greenhouse gas emissions, etc. • Water quality • Protection of natural resources, biodiversity
Opportunities/Equity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discrimination, inequality, human rights • Political rights, freedom of expression, etc. • Civic engagement, voter turnout, trust in government
Basic Needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shelter/housing • Nutrition • Sanitation/water • Basic safety (crime, violence, etc.)
Education & Employment & Income	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educational attainment/access, knowledge/skills • Employment/unemployment • Job satisfaction, work-life balance • Income/wealth

Source: Global Wellness Institute

³⁷ For some of the foundational thinking on this topic, see: 1) Diener, E., and Seligman, M.E.P. (2004). Beyond Money: Toward an Economy of Well-being. *Psychological Science in the Public Interest*, 5(1), 1-31. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0963-7214.2004.00501001.x>. 2) Adler, A., and Seligman, M.E.P. (2016). Using wellbeing for public policy: Theory, measurement, and recommendations. *International Journal of Wellbeing*, 6(1), 1-35. <https://doi.org/10.5502/ijw.v6i1.429>. 3) Stiglitz, J.E., Sen, A., and Fitoussi, J. (2010). *Mismeasuring our lives: Why GDP doesn't add up*. New York: The New Press.

The narrowest measurement of well-being focuses on the psychological concept of “subjective well-being” (*top row of boxes in the figure above*).³⁸ When researchers and reports measure “happiness,” this is the metric they typically use, gathered via self-reported survey data (e.g., the Gallup World Poll and the UN World Happiness Report). Other studies use a very broad concept of well-being that includes many categories and metrics, drawn from a wide range of surveys and government datasets (e.g., the OECD’s *Better Life Index* and *How’s Life?* Indices). This approach roughly equates with our understanding of “quality of life,” and in many ways it aligns with the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDGs). Research has shown that improvements in one sub-category of well-being often have corresponding improvements in the metrics for other categories (e.g., higher levels of social support correspond with higher levels of subjective well-being).

Wellness as a lens for policymaking.

As discussed above, wellness policy is not a new government function that requires creating new government departments, ministries, or funding streams. Wellness policy is also not the function of the ministry/department of health. Rather, wellness policy is a cross-cutting lens through which **any and all existing government departments and agencies** can assess their current activities, institute new priorities, reshape policies/activities, and develop partnerships to work toward the aim of improving human health and well-being (*see figure below*). The wellness policy lens can be applied across nearly every government agency and at every level of government.

RESHAPING POLICYMAKING WITH A WELLNESS LENS

Policy Fields

Representative list, not exhaustive

Health/Public Health
Agriculture/Food
Housing/City Planning
Transport./Infrastructure/ Public Works
Education
Recreation/Sports/Youth
Tourism
Trade/Commerce/Industry
Labor/Employment
Energy/Natural Resources
Criminal Justice/Safety
Finance/Treasury

Well-being Outcomes

Wellness policy **directly** influences:

Subjective Well-Being/Happiness

Health

Community & Connection

Wellness policy **indirectly** influences:

Environment

Opportunities/Equity

Basic Needs

Education & Employment & Income



Source: Global Wellness Institute

³⁸ See: Diener, E., et al (2009). Subjective Well-Being: The Science of Happiness and Life Satisfaction. In S.J. Lopez and C.R. Snyder (Eds.), *Oxford Handbook of Positive Psychology*, 2nd edition (pp. 187-194). New York: Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780195187243.013.0017>.

Using wellness as a lens for policymaking will lead to improvements in well-being outcomes.

The categories of well-being where we would expect to see the greatest impacts from wellness policy include subjective well-being/happiness, health, and community/connection. Wellness policy may also bring positive outcomes in other categories, such as environment, opportunities/equity, or basic needs, even though these are not the direct focus of wellness policy activities.

Numerous academic and research studies have established the connections between wellness activities/investments and these types of well-being outcomes. For example, GWI's own statistical analysis (presented in *Chapter 1*) showed a strong positive correlation between spending on wellness, subjective well-being (measured by the Cantril ladder), and health (measured by life expectancy). Multitudes of other studies have found positive correlations and impacts from specific types of wellness investments, especially in the area of built environment. For example, walkable communities contribute to better physical, mental, and social health, along with environmental benefits such as reduced carbon emissions per capita.³⁹ Investments in attractive and well-maintained public spaces, parks, and public art can increase civic engagement and trust.⁴⁰

There is incontrovertible evidence that healthy behaviors and lifestyles (including sufficient physical activity, a nutritious diet, and good sleep) are essential for improving health outcomes and longevity. But the science of behavior change – i.e., how to encourage healthy behaviors among individuals and communities – is far less clear. Countries and regions around the world have experimented with various types of public policies, investments, and initiatives to support, enable, and motivate lasting behavior change and wellness. Far more study is needed to understand what approaches work in different socio-cultural contexts, for different population groups, for different behavioral goals, etc.

Where does sustainability fit into this picture?

Like wellness, sustainability is a cross-cutting and multi-dimensional issue that does not fit neatly into government departments and siloes. In our proposed framework (*illustrated in the figure above*), sustainability is an additional policy lens, which sits alongside wellness, and can be used to filter, shape, and formulate policies across all functions of government. Wellness policy aims to improve human health and well-being, while sustainability policy aims to improve planetary health – but those two aims go hand-in-hand, because a healthy environment is essential for the health and well-being of humankind, and initiatives that promote human health can also be beneficial for the environment. There are other cross-cutting issues, such as human rights and equity, which can also be deployed as a policy lens to work toward other aspects of well-being. Other policy lenses (like sustainability and human rights) are important because they influence different types of well-being outcomes that are not the primary focus of the wellness policy lens.

³⁹ See, for example: 1) Claris, S., and Scopelliti, D. (2016). *Cities Alive: Toward a Walking World*. London: ARUP. <https://www.arup.com/perspectives/publications/research/section/cities-alive-towards-a-walking-world>. 2) Baobeid, A., et al (2021). Walkability and Its Relationships With Health, Sustainability, and Livability: Elements of Physical Environment and Evaluation Frameworks. *Frontiers in Built Environment*. 7(721218). <https://doi.org/10.3389/fbuil.2021.721218>. 3) Howell, N.A., and Booth, G.L. (2022). The Weight of Place: Built Environment Correlates of Obesity and Diabetes. *Endocrine Reviews*, bnac005. <https://doi.org/10.1210/edrev/bnac005>.

⁴⁰ See: Center for Active Design (2016). *Assembly: Research Brief 1*. New York: Center for Active Design.

Wellness policy focuses on seven domains that affect both individual behaviors and supporting environments.

GWI's definition of wellness policy encompasses actions that **encourage healthy behaviors and lifestyles** and that **create wellness-supporting environments**. As such, our wellness policy framework lays out seven detailed domains for wellness policy that support these two aims (see *table below*). Within these seven domains, we also address the wellness needs of specific populations and lifespan groups, including underserved and vulnerable groups such as children and seniors, wherever relevant.

These seven domains do not function independently from one another. They are closely interrelated, and policy actions within one domain can have impacts across other areas. For example, policies focusing on the built environment can affect our individual behaviors related to physical activity, mental wellness, and healthy eating. Policies that encourage physical activity can have an impact on mental wellness. Our *Wellness Policy Toolkits* (forthcoming in 2023) address these intersectionalities wherever they appear.

The seven wellness policy domains cut across many different government agencies and departments. They also depend upon many different businesses and sectors within the wellness economy. The table below outlines the seven domains and the key government departments and wellness economy sectors that play a leading role in each area (this list is illustrative, not exhaustive). Stakeholders working in these government functions and industry sectors are encouraged to utilize the *Wellness Policy Toolkits* as a jumping off point to spark new ideas and conversations about how they can take action in both large and small ways to spearhead bringing wellness to all.

WELLNESS POLICY DOMAINS COVERED IN GWI'S WELLNESS POLICY SERIES

Wellness Policy Domain	Key Stakeholders	
	Government Departments	Wellness Economy Sectors
<p>Healthy Eating</p> <p><i>Expanding access to nutritious diets and encouraging everyone to make healthy eating choices.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agriculture/food • Trade/commerce/industry • Health/public health • Education • Social services/social affairs • Environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Healthy eating, nutrition, & weight loss • Wellness real estate • Public health, prevention, & personalized medicine • Wellness tourism
<p>Physical Activity</p> <p><i>Supporting people of all ages to engage in the recommended levels of physical activity to stay healthy.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parks/recreation • Sports/youth • Housing/community development • City planning • Transportation/infrastructure • Education • Health/public health 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical activity • Wellness real estate • Mental wellness • Public health, prevention, & personalized medicine • Wellness tourism
<p>Mental Wellness</p> <p><i>Improving individual and community resilience, especially to address stress and loneliness.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education • Housing/community development • City planning • Parks/recreation • Sports/youth • Health/public health • Labor/employment • Social services/social affairs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mental wellness • Physical activity • Wellness real estate • Workplace wellness • Public health, prevention, & personalized medicine • Wellness tourism • Spas • Thermal/mineral springs
<p>Traditional & Complementary Medicine</p> <p><i>Increasing the safety, quality, and efficacy of T&CM; expanding consumer access; and protecting T&CM resources.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health/public health • Agriculture/food • Trade/commerce/industry • Environment • Indigenous peoples • Culture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Traditional & complementary medicine • Wellness tourism • Spas • Thermal/mineral springs • Personal care & beauty • Healthy eating, nutrition, & weight loss

WELLNESS POLICY DOMAINS COVERED IN GWI'S WELLNESS POLICY SERIES

Wellness Policy Domain	Key Stakeholders	
	Government Departments	Wellness Economy Sectors
Wellness-Supporting Environments		
<p>Wellness in the Built Environment</p> <p><i>Creating physical environments that support all dimensions of wellness and encourage healthy lifestyles.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing/community development • City planning • Transportation/infrastructure/ public works • Public safety • Parks/recreation • Sports/youth • Environment • Culture/arts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wellness real estate • Physical activity • Mental wellness • Public health, prevention, & personalized medicine • Wellness tourism
<p>Wellness at Work</p> <p><i>Enabling everyone to work in an environment that improves rather than reduces their health and well-being.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trade/commerce/industry • Labor/employment • Social services/social affairs • Occupational & industrial safety • Health/public health 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workplace wellness • Wellness real estate • Mental wellness • Physical activity
<p>Wellness in Tourism</p> <p><i>Ensuring that all tourism is wellness-enhancing for visitors, destinations, and local communities.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tourism • Parks/recreation • Sports/youth • Culture/arts • Environment • Trade/commerce/industry • Labor/employment • Agriculture/food 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wellness tourism • Spas • Thermal/mineral springs • Personal care & beauty • Mental wellness • Physical activity • Wellness real estate • Workplace wellness • Traditional & complementary medicine

Who is responsible for wellness policy?

Wellness policy is not just a function of governments. While some wellness policy actions may require government leadership, funding, or mandates, the participation of the private and nonprofit sectors is also essential. Many actors and stakeholders must work in parallel and in partnership in order to expand access to wellness for all and to improve our health and well-being. It is important to recognize that the responsibility for spearheading and implementing wellness policy rests with many different agencies, businesses, organizations, professions, and stakeholders who probably do not even see themselves as playing a role in facilitating better health and well-being.

- **All levels and departments of government:** Wellness policy can be implemented across nearly every government department, agency, and function (*as illustrated in the figure on Page 33*). Policies that affect our health and well-being are also formulated at every level of government (national, regional/provincial, and local/municipal). Some important wellness policy areas are typically the domain of the national government (e.g., agriculture and trade policy; regulation of foods, supplements, and traditional/complementary medicine; etc.). But we do not have to wait for a national-level initiative to take action on wellness policy. Many important wellness policy actions can be pursued within the jurisdiction of cities and municipalities (e.g., zoning/planning, small business assistance/incentives, permits/licenses, infrastructure investments, parks and recreation, education, etc.).
- **Private and nonprofit sectors:** In most cases, wellness policy cannot be implemented without the cooperation and participation of the private sector. As evidenced by the multi-trillion dollar wellness economy, the private sector provides the channel through which most wellness services, products, and modalities are delivered to individuals. Governments, businesses, and nonprofits can partner to deliver wellness services and facilities to populations, communities, and regions that have been left out of the private wellness market. In addition, there are many wellness policies that can be implemented by businesses voluntarily without waiting for governments to encourage or require them to do so (e.g., wellness at work initiatives, healthier built environments, scientific evidence/efficacy, etc.).
- **Individuals and communities:** Wellness is ultimately an individual choice. It depends upon personal agency, behaviors, and lifestyles, which cannot be mandated by governments. However, public policies can support these choices by removing barriers, increasing access, and creating nudges/incentives for healthy behaviors. In places where individuals have the opportunity to vote, we as citizens can choose leaders who favor policies that support wellness. Finally, we as consumers have the power to support businesses and nonprofits who value and support better health and well-being through their policies and actions.

GWl's *Wellness Policy Toolkits* (forthcoming in 2023) are designed to help all interested and motivated stakeholders – governments, businesses, nonprofit organizations, communities, and individuals – to advocate for wellness policies, partner with one another, and take action in any of the seven key domains mentioned above, in order to work toward improved health, happiness, and well-being.

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Last but not least, we thank our **research sponsors** for making this study possible and for making it widely available to the public.

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The Wellness Company

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We are honored to support the Global Wellness Institute on its mission to empower wellness strengthening the basis of our industry by research. Art of Cryo is the high-performance cryo-chamber brand by L&R Kältetechnik. We stand for our maxim "More than cold". More than cold stands not only for reliable service friendly lasting top edge products, but as well for thinking outside the box adding breath exercise and oxygen plasma during cryo treatments, individualized treatment times and treatment combinations. We are working on monitoring solutions to enhance the customer experience and giving real feedback to the guest and operator.

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Located along the shores of Miami Beach, Carillon Miami Wellness Resort presents an authentic and progressive approach to complete well-being welcoming guests to enjoy luxury travel and world-class wellness experiences. The resort is home to the largest spa on the Eastern Seaboard (70,000 sq. ft.) with an innovative touchless wellness division and a curated team of gifted practitioners and Board-Certified physicians, a one-of-a-kind Thermal Experience; personalized health retreats, and more. The resort features 150 spacious one- and two-bedroom luxury apartments, (720 - 1,200 sq. ft.), an array of recreational activities including a two-story indoor rock wall, group fitness classes and resort pools. Carillon promotes a path to a healthier lifestyle extending beyond each guest's stay.

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JOHN W. BRICK FOUNDATION

johnwbrickfoundation.org

The John W. Brick (JWB) Mental Health Foundation was founded by Victor and Lynne Brick, in honor of Victor's oldest brother John, who died of complications of schizophrenia. In all the years of his treatment, never once was he put on a well-rounded, fully integrated program that included healthy lifestyle practices. JWB is a non-profit organization that is changing the way the world treats mental health. Our purpose is to integrate salutogenic approaches, such as exercise, nutrition, and mind-body practices, into treating mental illness and promoting mental wellness.



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RANCHO MISSION VIEJO

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Rancho Mission Viejo, a 23,000-acre master planned community in south Orange County, California, was intentionally developed on a foundation of wellness. The Ranch promotes living well with incomparable access to nature, amenities, people and programs that make pursuing all dimensions of wellness a part of every age and stage of life. The land is our brand - 17,000 acres of it are permanently preserved through the Reserve at Rancho Mission Viejo, ensuring it remains so, forever.



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Magleby Development recently announced the groundbreaking of Velvære, a thoughtfully-envisioned wellness community adjacent to Park City's iconic Deer Valley Resort, positioned within America's newest ski resort currently under development by Extell Utah. Dedicated to providing residents and members a wellbeing and adventure-centric lifestyle, Velvære embraces nature and intentional living. The 60-acre community features 115 residences, along with two amenity centers: a state-of-the-art Wellness Center featuring holistic and transformative hyper-wellness experiences and an Adventure Center, providing the perfect jumping off point for year-round outdoor recreation, from direct ski-in/ski-out access, hiking, and mountain biking to other wilderness activities, serving as the ultimate Utah basecamp.

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