Does the CWI Use the Right Measures?

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Child Trends

What is at Stake in Getting the Measures Right?

- A poorly specified CWI can lead to false trends and misleading cross-group comparisons, subverting the fundamental functions of the index.

- The components of the CWI are its links to policy. What doesn't get measured doesn't get discussed, doesn't get addressed.

What Determines the Content of the CWI?

- ☐ Data Requirements: Data collected periodically (mostly annual) since the 1970s
- ☐ Framework: Quality of Life
- ☐ Child Well-being research

Observation

☐ The stock of periodically collected child well-being data and measures has grown substantially since the 1970s. Newer data sources include:

- Youth Risk Behavior Survey (1990)
- National Household Education Surveys (1991)
- National Immunization Survey (1994)
- National Health Interview Survey (1997 redesign with more child health outcomes)
- School Survey on Crime and Safety (2000)
- Children with Special Health Care Needs Survey(2001)
- National Survey of Children's Health (2003)
- American Community Survey (2003)

Conclusions

- Does the CWI include the right measures?
  - YES, or close enough, if limited to data from the 1970s.
  - NO, if one considers the possibilities offered by more recent data sources
  - Certainly NO if one considers what could be available in the future.

Recommendations

- ☐ **Develop New Indices**: Develop a set of complementary indices that take advantage of the richer stock of child well-being indicators currently available.
  - ■ Ten Year CWI (CWI-10) for trends
  - ■ State-of-the-Art CWI (SACWI) for group comparisons, and to refresh the CWI-10 periodically.
  - ■ Ideal CWI (ICWI) to drive future data collection
- ☐ **Adopt New Framework**: Consider a Developmental/Ecological Framework Grounded in Child and Youth Development Literatures
- ☐ **Separate Outcome and Social Context Indices**
  - ■ CWI, KIDS COUNT, and other indices mix the two freely.
  - ■ When we mix outcomes and context measures, what does the index represent?