



The Millennium Project has Developed the "State of the Future Index (SOFI)," A New Way to Measure and Forecast Global and National Progress

This year, The Millennium Project's work on SOFI introduces new methods, software, and programs to provide deeper insight than ever before. It shows that humanity is winning in more areas than losing. It is all explained in the 2011 State of the Future, found at <http://www.millennium-project.org>.

(PRWEB) February 28, 2012

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Gross Domestic Product is the classical way of measuring the standard of living in a country. It is a measure of the value of all goods and services produced by a country in a year; GDP per capita correlates with other factors such as poverty, longevity, morbidity, and corruption. But The Millennium Project has found that GDP does not account for important factors that contribute to the quality of life. For example, it does not consider production costs of pollution or depletion of resources. It is nevertheless perhaps the most widely used measure in international economics.

The exclusive focus of GDP on financial value has led many economists and political scientists to argue that GDP is inadequate in assessing national progress and quality of life. There have been many suggestions on how to improve the measure; for example the country of Bhutan has developed a Gross National Happiness Index. But none of these new measures capture the essence of the future: does life appear to be improving or not? SOFI is designed to create a systematic and rational answer to the question: is the outlook for the future likely to improve over the next ten years?

The Millennium Project began its work on SOFI in 2001 by asking hundreds of experts around the world to help select and weigh the variables for the index, rather than relying on judgments of a few staff members. The SOFI includes 28 variables similar to (the complete list is on the project's web site):

Poverty headcount ratio at \$1.25 a day (PPP) (percent of population) (low- and mid-income countries),



Countries having or thought to have plans for nuclear weapons (number),
Carbon dioxide emissions (global, kt),
Unemployment, total (percent of total labor force),
People killed or injured in terrorist attacks (number),
Undernourishment (percent of population),
Global surface temperature anomalies,
GDP per capita (constant 2000 US\$),
Internet users (per 1,000 population),
Infant mortality (deaths per 1,000 births),
Women in parliaments (percent of all members),
Number of refugees (per 100,000 total population),
Prevalence of HIV (percent of population of age 15–49).

Each of these variables is forecasted individually using statistical tools and judgments about future events that could change past trends; characteristically, the global SOFI's have shown slower growth in the next decade than in the past, but growth, nevertheless. Furthermore it has been possible to find where the world seems to be "winning" or "losing." The results have surprised some people since the world is winning in far more areas than it is losing. Worldwide, variables that have been and promise to continue to be improving include: access to pure water, literacy, infant mortality, life expectancy, women in parliaments, number of armed conflicts, and more. We are losing, however, in carbon dioxide emissions, corruption, and in the number of people killed in terrorist attacks, among others. A new global SOFI, constructed in 2010–11, shows on the whole a positive outlook for the next ten years.

National SOFI's have also been constructed in Kuwait for the Prime Minister's Office, in Azerbaijan (where the results were presented to the President), and in Turkey, several Latin American countries, South Africa, and Timor-Leste. When national SOFI's are constructed, national experts choose the variables, their weights and key future developments, both national and world, that may changes the course of the variables.

This work is detailed in The Millennium Project's 2011 [State of the Future](#) report which comes in two parts: a print book and a CD. The print edition summarized the year's research on SOFI and other topics, such as updates on 15 global challenges tracked by the Project, emerging security issues, and Delphi studies on the future of arts, media and entertainment, Latin America scenarios through 2030, and a study in Egypt after the uprisings on their hopes for the new government. The 8,500 page CD is a reference which presents the complete details of these projects as well as an accumulation of The Millennium Project's research over the past 15 years.

Forty Nodes around the world contribute to The Millennium Project. The Nodes are a major strength of the Project; they are groups of individuals and organizations that interconnect global and local perspectives. They identify participants, conduct interviews, translate and distribute questionnaires, and conduct research and conferences. It is through their contributions that the world picture of this report and indeed all of The Millennium Project's work emerges.

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