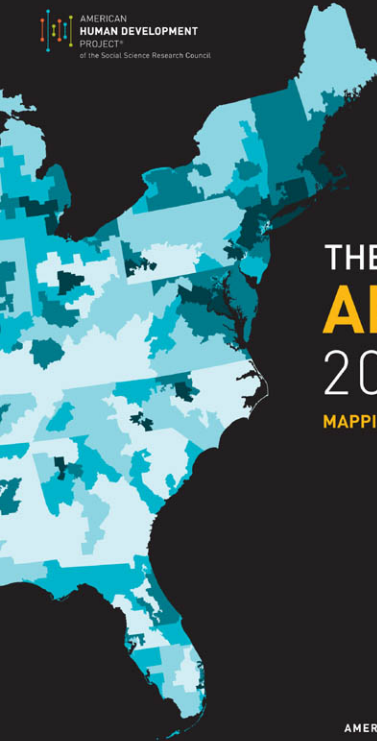




AMERICAN
HUMAN DEVELOPMENT
PROJECT[®]
of the Social Science Research Council



THE MEASURE OF **AMERICA** 2010–2011 MAPPING RISKS AND RESILIENCE

Kristen Lewis
Sarah Burd-Sharps

FOREWORD BY
Jeffrey D. Sachs

AMERICAN HUMAN DEVELOPMENT REPORT

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AMERICA
2010-2011
MAPPING RISKS AND RESILIENCE

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Foreword

by Jeffrey D. Sachs

Bravo to the American Human Development team for another breakthrough volume. *The Measure of America 2010–2011* could not be more timely. As poverty is rising and high unemployment is causing searing pain across society, we need an accurate understanding of America’s diverse and complex conditions. No other publication comes close to this one in documenting and explaining America’s disparate socioeconomic realities, especially the vast differences across regions and social groups and the alarming shortfall of America’s performance compared with other high-income countries.

The United States today is a country of great and increasing socioeconomic inequality, with unimagined wealth living side by side with entrenched poverty. The report’s rigorous and revealing maps, graphs, tables, and flowcharts open new and valuable perspectives on America’s fast-changing and crisis-ridden society. The insightful analysis in *The Measure of America 2010–2011* describes the key factors driving these changes.

Stunning data hit us between the eyes. Of America’s 435 congressional districts, the very richest and the very poorest are near neighbors in New York City: Manhattan’s East Side and the South Bronx, respectively. That kind of cheek-to-jowl inequality offers a metaphor for America as a whole—the paradox of a society of profound divisions struggling to find common ground and understanding.

For far too long, America coasted on an unexamined boast of being “number one,” with superlatives in every sphere of life. Only now, after the bursting of the financial bubble, are we waking up to a far more somber reality. Persistent inequalities of opportunity scar a country in which yawning gaps in income, educational attainment, and life expectancy far exceed those in any other high-income democracy, and insecurity is greater and more widespread. Moreover, most Americans are not fully aware of the interwoven social, political, and economic factors that tend to keep some groups and regions stuck in deep poverty, poor health, and low educational attainment.

The Measure of America opens our eyes and bids us to reconsider some basic realities. The report’s data powerfully depict the enormous differences in socioeconomic conditions across regions (including by states, congressional districts, and metropolitan areas), race and ethnicity, and gender. Asian Americans

are generally the highest earning, healthiest, and best educated of the racial and ethnic groups studied in the report, followed by whites—with Latinos, African Americans, and Native Americans trailing far behind in terms of well-being and access to opportunity. In general, the South still lags the rest of the nation in key socioeconomic indicators, but the report describes the tremendous diversity found within every region.

Like previous studies of the American Human Development Project, the report holds America up to a revealing comparison with European and other high-income countries. The comparative findings are deeply troubling and should give all Americans pause about our priorities and policy assumptions. America lags our peer countries on crucial dimensions of well-being, ranking as the worst or near-worst with regard to life expectancy, child mortality, health-care costs, obesity, science and math literacy, child poverty, carbon emissions per person, violent crime, and voter participation.

The current report does not carry much happy news, but its powerful messages are all the more urgent. Our society is divided deeply; income, health, and educational outcomes are under dire threat, and roads to opportunity are littered with obstacles for far too many Americans.

The report's crucial positive news is that America remains highly productive and innovative, two characteristics that are vital for America's economic, social, and political recovery. America's challenge, the report strongly implies, is to find a new pathway to broad social cooperation, one that encourages us once again to think, act, and solve problems as a united society in common pursuit of a better future for all Americans.

Jeffrey D. Sachs

Director of the Earth Institute at Columbia University and
Special Advisor to United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon

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thank you!

THE MEASURE OF
AMERICA
2010–2011
MAPPING RISKS AND RESILIENCE

Key Findings

Americans are one people, but given **vast gaps** in human development among them, they face starkly different challenges.

“You manage what you measure.” Among management consultants, this phrase has become something of a mantra. With the rapid advance in recent years of computerization and digital networks, the capacity of businesses, universities, governments, and other institutions to measure results has grown exponentially. You can see the thesis at work in school districts across the United States, where administrators are now measuring student achievement and adjusting pedagogy and resources on the basis of test results. They are managing what they measure.

This Human Development Report is the second produced for the United States, following the inaugural 2008–2009 report. It provides a gauge of core areas of well-being, or human development, across the nation, with data broken down by state, congressional district, race, gender, and ethnicity. **Three areas in particular form the basic building blocks of human development and contribute the data used to calculate the American Human Development Index:** health (the capacity to live a long and healthy life), education (access to knowledge), and income (the capacity to maintain a decent standard of living).

As America’s economy, educational infrastructure, and health-care system have expanded and evolved over many years, the average income, educational attainment, and life expectancy of Americans have risen. But they have sometimes risen in wildly divergent fashion for different people in different places. The typical Asian American in New Jersey lives one quarter century longer, is eleven times more likely to have a graduate degree, and earns \$33,149 more per year than the typical Native American in South Dakota, whose earnings are below the median American earnings of 1960. This is what is meant by a “gap” in human development; measured on the American Human Development Index, the gap between Asian Americans in New Jersey and Native Americans in South Dakota translates into an entire century of progress in health, education, and living standards.

Americans are one people, but given vast gaps in human development among them, they face starkly different challenges. This report provides measurements of some of the most important indicators of human development in the hope that such data will lead to better management of the conditions that create, or contribute to, those outcomes. **Particularly in times of budget cuts and hard choices, good data**

are indispensable for wise decisions. By presenting measurements of well-being beyond the narrow confines of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and other economic indicators, this report offers a tool to pinpoint areas, some chronic, that will require sustained attention if America is to realize the promise of genuine opportunity for all its citizens. Furthermore, a more holistic analysis of which groups are surging forward and which are stalled or left behind is essential to helping the most vulnerable develop the resilience necessary to prevail in the face of financial crisis, recession, environmental catastrophe, or other challenges.

Indeed, the theme of this year's report is Mapping Risks and Resilience. In the wake of Hurricane Katrina, the financial crash of 2008, and the BP oil spill in the Gulf, it is clear that the capacity to weather difficult times is crucial. Yet tens of millions of Americans lack even the most rudimentary shelter from a storm, be it meteorological or financial. Decreasing the risks Americans face and increasing their resilience in the face of adversity are keys to advancing human development.

We have included a number of **new features** since publication of the first human development report, *The Measure of America 2008–2009*:

- **New American Human Development Index scores and rankings** for states and congressional districts to facilitate comparisons with data in the first report
- **New analysis of race and ethnicity by state**
- **Encouraging examples of what is working** to address stubborn social and economic problems
- **A Dashboard of Risks**, a supplement to the American HD Index that measures risk in ten areas of health, education, and income. The Dashboard features faster-changing indicators to highlight pervasive risk factors, from low-birth-weight babies and children not enrolled in preschool to housing insecurity and those not counted in unemployment figures because they have stopped looking for work (see pages 34–35)
- **An appendix of indicators** for further analysis, including comparisons of the United States and other OECD nations

Along with these new features, the report and Index contain a wealth of data and analysis on human development to provide:

- Answers to questions of policy makers, teachers and students, journalists, and others;
- A roadmap of needs and vulnerabilities to guide philanthropies, government agencies, concerned citizens, and others to populations that are falling behind;

Decreasing the risks Americans face and increasing their resilience in the face of adversity are keys to advancing human development.

- A more comprehensive framework for diagnosing underlying causes of disadvantage and discussing poverty, encompassing noneconomic factors that both contribute to and define poverty.

KEY FINDINGS OF THE AMERICAN HUMAN DEVELOPMENT INDEX:

- Americans born today can expect to live 78.6 years on average, nearly nine years longer than in 1960.
- Eighty-five percent of adults have at least a high school education, and overall school enrollment is higher than at any other point in history.
- Once-rapid progress in median earnings of adults since 1960 has slowed to a crawl since 2000.
- Some of the largest gaps in well-being are found within a single city or among population groups living within a few miles of one another.

A Long and Healthy Life

The unprecedented attention to the nation's health-care structure over the last two years overlooked the country's most alarming health problem: huge disparities in health outcomes for different population groups. The most pervasive threats to health—everyday hazards such as tobacco, alcohol, poor diet, and lack of exercise—are often bundled together with environmental, social, and economic stresses, resulting in chronic illness and premature death. While we tend to credit medical research and advanced treatments for increased life expectancy, gains made in recent decades are due to a decrease in the risk of premature death. Decreasing risks and increasing resilience almost certainly remain the surest and most achievable path to improved health and longer lives for Americans.

KEY FINDINGS OF THE REPORT AND INDEX:

- Life expectancy in the United States is 78.6 years, on par with Chile, though Chile spends one-tenth what the United States spends on health care.
- In the country as a whole, Asian Americans live, on average, thirteen years longer than African Americans, more than twelve years longer than Native Americans, more than eight years longer than whites, and nearly four years longer than Latinos.
- The eleven states with the shortest life spans are in the South.
- Whites in Washington, DC, live, on average, twelve years longer than African Americans in the same city.
- Life expectancy in Virginia's Eighth Congressional District, in suburban Washington, DC, is a decade longer than life expectancy in West Virginia's Third Congressional District, in the rural southern part of the state.



There are huge disparities in health outcomes for different population groups.



More education correlates to better, healthier, happier, and longer lives as well as higher incomes.

Access to Knowledge

More education correlates to better, healthier, happier, and longer lives as well as higher incomes. In a knowledge economy, education provides a bulwark against economic downturns and disruptions, is a key factor in expanding opportunity, and remains a long-term source of resilience in the face of adversity. In the 2007–9 recession, college graduates faced a combined unemployment and underemployment rate of 10 percent; those with only a high school education faced rates twice as high, while 35 percent of high school dropouts were either unemployed or underemployed.

KEY FINDINGS OF THE REPORT AND INDEX:

- Washington, DC, scores highest on the Education Index developed for this report; 85.8 percent of adult residents are high school graduates, and 26.7 percent have graduate or advanced degrees. Arkansas ranks last, with 82 percent and 6.3 percent, respectively.
- The top five states in the Education Index spent an average of over \$14,500 per K–12 pupil. The bottom five spent under \$9,000 per pupil.
- In California’s Thirtieth Congressional District (Hollywood, Beverly Hills, Santa Monica, and Malibu), nearly three in five adult residents are college graduates, and more than one in four have advanced degrees. A few miles west in California’s District 34 (downtown Los Angeles), only three in one hundred residents have advanced degrees.
- In every ethnic and racial group studied except Asian Americans, women have higher educational attainment and enrollment than men.
- More than 90 percent of white adult women today are high school graduates; more than 40 percent of Latino men are not.
- More than a quarter of high school freshmen do not graduate in four years—if they graduate at all.

A Decent Standard of Living

Personal earnings, the measure employed in the American HD Index to represent standard of living, have risen from the median income of \$23,000 in the mid-1970s to nearly \$30,000 today. But the rise has been anything but even across diverse populations. Female earnings doubled in constant dollars, from \$12,800 to \$24,700, while male earnings rose by only \$2,500. Perceptions that the rich have gotten richer while the poor have gotten poorer are borne out—emphatically—by the data. And finally, while we frequently measure and devote policy attention to salaries and wages, wealth, or net worth, is vital for building long-term economic security and acts as a cushion when income is disrupted. Efforts to help those with few assets build greater economic security and set their children on a trajectory of opportunity and choice have received relatively less attention.



Personal earnings have risen from the median income of \$23,000 in the mid-1970s to nearly \$30,000 today.

KEY FINDINGS OF THE REPORT AND INDEX:

- The wealth of the top 1 percent of households rose, on average, 103 percent (to \$18.5 million per household) from 1983 to 2007. The poorest 40 percent of households experienced a 63 percent decline in wealth during the same period (to \$2,200 per household).
- Washington, DC, has the highest median earnings, at \$40,342; Arkansas has the lowest, at \$23,471.
- By the end of the 2007–9 recession, unemployment among the bottom tenth of U.S. households was 31 percent, which is higher than unemployment during the worst year of the Great Depression; for households earning \$150,000 and over, unemployment was just over 3 percent.
- Between 2005 and 2008, median earnings for men in Michigan fell more than 12 percent—from \$39,000 a year to \$34,000.
- The wealthiest 20 percent of U.S. households have slightly more than half of the nation's total income. The poorest 20 percent have 3.4 percent of total income.
- The wealthiest congressional district in the United States is NY-14 on Manhattan's East Side, with median earnings of \$60,000; the poorest is NY-16, a few subway stops away in the Bronx, with median earnings of \$18,000.



Just as the data in this report enable us to pinpoint problems in specific communities, they also point the way toward better outcomes.

Advancing Human Development

American history is frequently portrayed as a march of progress, as ever larger numbers of Americans claim their civil rights, advance through education and hard work, and secure unimpeded access to the American Dream. But progress on many fronts is growing more elusive and, for some Americans, has assumed the character of myth.

Incomes have been stagnant for a decade, and high unemployment due to the Great Recession has undermined the security of tens of millions of Americans. Chronic health problems associated with poor diet and lack of exercise, including diabetes and obesity, consume a disproportionate amount of health-care spending while condemning millions to poor health and sapping their income-earning potential, reducing their quality of life, and shortening their lives. Educational failure is epidemic in countless American cities and towns, relegating millions of American youth to a life of dead-end jobs, poverty, and social exclusion.

These problems are not new or unknown. Likewise, while their remedies may be complex and perhaps incompletely understood, they are not abject mysteries. Just as the data in this report enable us to pinpoint problems in specific communities, they also point the way toward better outcomes.

In **health**, we must address the “**Fatal Four**”—the risk factors that are the most significant contributors to premature death, namely, **smoking, poor diet, physical inactivity, and drinking to excess**. Part of the answer is personal responsibility. But health strategies built around personal responsibility alone are proven recipes for failure. People live their lives within a social context; to optimize health outcomes, we must change the attitudes and environments that undermine health—from senseless risk-taking among men who feel obligated to conform to masculine norms to environments in which sugary, salty, fatty foods are sometimes the only options.

In **education**, research shows that **quality preschool** is the single most decisive means to prepare disadvantaged children for elementary school. Providing universal access to quality preschool should be a national goal. Similarly, **high school graduation** is essential to lifetime success, yet the rate of on-time high school graduation has been fundamentally unchanged for three decades. Raising the compulsory age of education to 18 in states where it is earlier is an obvious way to improve the education prospects—and thus the life prospects—for millions of teens who would otherwise drop out, thereby all but ensuring lives of severely limited opportunities and low incomes.

In **income**, endemic poverty puts tens of millions of families at risk and strips them of the resilience they need to weather hard times. The negative consequences of this extend to health and education, as stress, poor diet, and other factors associated with poverty wear down health and chronic lack of resources undermines educational attainment. To build resilience, we must make basic financial literacy a part of high school curricula and enact programs like automatic enrollment in retirement plans that help low-income Americans build up assets.

This book concludes with a set of recommendations for priority actions required in order to improve scores on the American HD Index. The report provides a wealth of data on issues critically important to social policy. But knowing about problems and addressing problems are very different things. The information is at hand. The will to apply it is yet to be summoned.

INTRODUCTION

Human Development in America Today

In the chronicling of the American story, the human development approach seeks to shift focus from the financial sphere of growth and profits to the human sphere of opportunity and freedom.

Introduction

Part I: Understanding Human Development

The Ideas behind Human Development

Measuring Human Development

Part II: Reducing Risks, Increasing Resilience

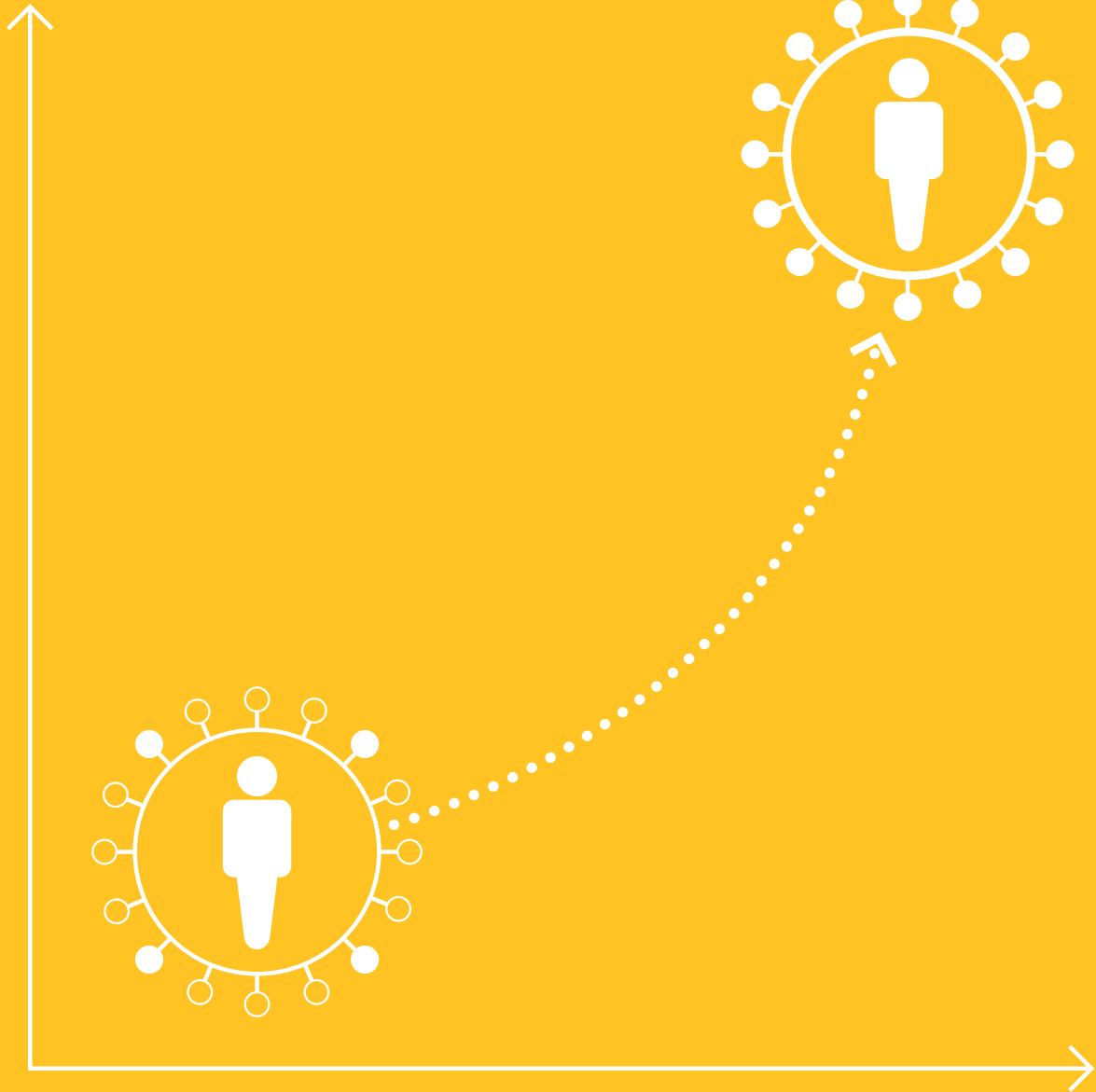
Safeguarding the Capabilities We Have

Overcoming Barriers to Access

Conclusion

IN THIS SECTION:

WELL-BEING



TIME

Introduction

“The success of an economy and of a society cannot be separated from the lives that members of the society are able to lead . . . We not only value living well and satisfactorily, but also appreciate having control over our own lives.”

AMARTYA SEN, *Development as Freedom*, 1999

America’s ability to fulfill its promise as a nation that offers everyone a fair chance relies on broadly shared freedom and opportunity. And today more than ever, raising our standard of living depends upon effective competition in the global marketplace. How are we faring in these two missions?

For too long, we have looked to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) to answer these and other crucial questions, tacitly equating market growth with progress. In December 2009, home foreclosures were still on the rise, and unemployment was holding steady at nearly 10 percent—only the second time since the Great Depression that the unemployment rate had reached double digits. Yet even as the bottom was falling out for countless American families, GDP was on the rise.

We won’t know the full extent of the damage, the degree to which the recession upended the foundations of daily life for millions of Americans, until at least 2011. Why? Because **while economic indicators—inflation, construction, retail trade, wholesale inventories, commodity prices, and much more—are released at least every quarter, vital signs of human well-being, such as the percentage of babies born with low birth weights or the number of young children living in extreme poverty, are measured annually at best, and released after a two- or three-year delay.**

Thus, we knew in January 2010 how much money Americans spent on their health in the fourth quarter of 2009. But we won’t know how long they were living in 2009—until 2012. We knew in July 2010 how many new houses were built, bought, and sold from April to June 2010. But we won’t know how many families had no home at all until late 2011.

Human well-being depends on the success of the economy, as measured by GDP and other economic indicators. But these indicators tell us only part of the American story—a part that for many reads as a footnote beneath the chapters of

Human development is the process of enlarging people’s opportunities and improving their well-being.

our daily lives. In the chronicling of the American story, the human development approach seeks to shift focus from the financial sphere of growth and profits to the human sphere of opportunity and freedom. Human development is the process of enlarging people’s opportunities and improving their well-being. Human development is dedicated not to how big an economy can swell, but to what ordinary people can do and what they can become. Human development explores the real-world opportunities people have to live in ways they themselves value and freely choose, and the extent to which they are able to realize their potential to the fullest. By placing people at the center of analysis on well-being, this people-centered approach redefines the way we think about and address human—and national—progress.

The human development approach was developed at the United Nations in the late 1980s, born of the frustration that economic progress in developing countries was not translating fully into human progress: healthier children, more literacy, greater political participation, cleaner environments, more widely shared prosperity, or greater freedom. Dr. Mahbub ul Haq, an economist who had worked at the World Bank and served as finance minister in his native Pakistan, developed the approach in response to the human lives he saw “shriveling even as economic production was expanding.”¹ He insisted that while **money and economic growth are essential means to an end, they are not ends in themselves**. Human beings are not inputs to economic growth in his view; rather, the opposite is true. Economic growth is only valuable if it enables more people to live long and healthy lives, more children to go to school, and more women to decide for themselves how to live. To Dr. Haq, the only development end worth seeking is the flourishing of human life.

Under Dr. Haq’s leadership, the first *Human Development Report*, a study of conditions affecting human well-being around the world, was published in 1990. Over the last two decades, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has commissioned and released twenty such global reports.

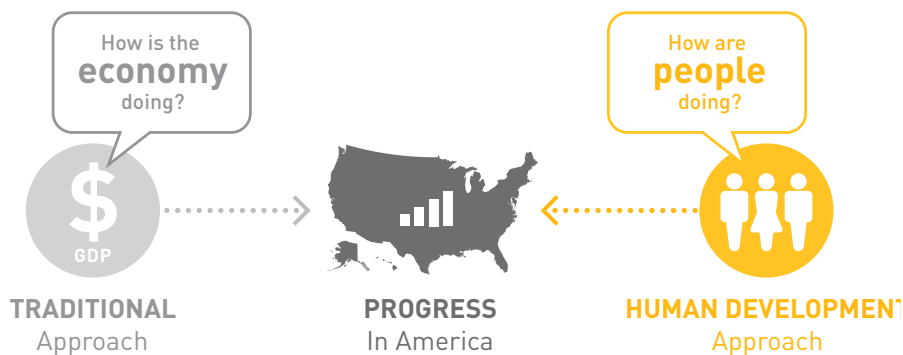
The American Human Development Project

The American Human Development Project released its first report, *The Measure of America: American Human Development Report 2008–09*, in July 2008, and followed in 2009 with state human development reports for Mississippi and Louisiana, both of which had fared poorly on the 2008–2009 state rankings. A California report is due out in early 2011.

Reports in the American Human Development Report series have spurred a national conversation about access to opportunity among Americans in different parts of the country. In 2010 the Department of Health and Human Services awarded multimillion-dollar grants to develop health-care infrastructure in Jackson, Mississippi, and Fresno, California, based in part on evidence presented in these national and state reports of the obstacles these communities face.

As the human development approach continues to gather momentum in the United States, communities can be expected to leverage these publications to guide business and other investments.

Two Approaches to Understanding Progress in America



Each year, the report takes on a new topic, ranging from climate change and globalization to political participation, gender equality, and cultural diversity. **More than any other product of the United Nations, the Human Development Report series has shaped the global development debate.** It championed the now-unremarkable idea that better lives for people should be the aim of the international community's efforts.

Starting in 1992, developing countries began to adopt this approach, using national human development reports to explore how people were faring in their own countries and to confront sensitive issues—including corruption, AIDS, and economic gulfs between religious or ethnic groups. Researchers in nearly 150 countries have produced national human development reports, leading to impressive results in the policy realm (see **BOX 1**). *The Measure of America: American Human Development Report 2008–2009*—this book's predecessor—was the first such report ever published for an industrialized country (see sidebar on page 13).

BOX 1 National and Regional Human Development Reports

This volume is only the second human development report prepared for the United States—the only affluent country to have a report. But *The Measure of America* has plenty of company: more than seven hundred regional, national, and subnational human development reports have been produced since Bangladesh first established the national model in 1992.

The world over, human development reports serve as a springboard for debate over development priorities, spurring discussion on sensitive development issues and strengthening the capacity of policy makers and citizens to understand and employ data and analysis.²

In **Uganda**, the 2002 national human development report explored the cultural and traditional factors fueling the AIDS epidemic and demonstrated the economic benefits of improved health care for those living with HIV. The report led to a national conference on HIV/AIDS, which in turn resulted in a program to provide universal access to antiretroviral therapy. The 2000 HDR in Botswana had a similar effect, breaking taboos that had hindered awareness and weakened response to the disease. The report paved the way for a national program providing life-saving treatments.

In **Mexico**, the federal government allocates special resources to indigenous municipalities with the lowest Mexican

human development index scores. Antipoverty efforts in the poorest state, Chiapas, are guided using the national HD index.

In **Brazil**, an HD index calculated for the country's five thousand municipalities is a chief mechanism for determining resource allocation, regardless of which political party is in power. During the Cardoso administration, the HD index was used to select states, municipalities, and families for four main federal projects, including one that reached 36 million people living in poverty. Since the start of the Lula administration the index has been used to target social programs for youth and adult education, electricity for all, basic sanitation, food security, and efforts to keep adolescents ages 15 to 17 in school.

The *Arab Human Development Report* series has been an invaluable tool for recognizing sensitive regional issues, such as governance, women's rights, and human insecurity. Regional experts and research institutions write the report, giving it regional legitimacy and opening a window through which the rest of the world can view the region's challenges as understood by the people who live there. Regional and international media highly regard the series, which attracts extensive coverage in the *Economist*, *the New York Times*, and *Time*, and on the BBC, among many other media outlets.

Part I:

Understanding Human Development

The Ideas behind Human Development

THE CAPABILITY APPROACH

The concept of human development rests on a conceptual framework that was derived from Harvard economist Amartya Sen's seminal work on capabilities.³ **Simply put, capabilities determine what a person can do and become. Capabilities shape the real possibilities open to people and determine the freedom they have to lead the kind of lives they want to live.**

Someone rich in capabilities has a full toolkit for making his or her vision of a "good life" a reality. Someone with few capabilities has fewer options, fewer opportunities; for such a person, many rewarding paths are blocked. What we can be and do—our capabilities—are expanded (or constrained) by our own efforts, by our family circumstances, and by the institutions and conditions of our society. Because different people value different things, no comprehensive, universal list of capabilities applies to everyone. In the human development framework, a central concept is the freedom to decide for oneself how to live; a good life is a life of genuine choice. Nonetheless, some basic and widely valued capabilities⁴ include being able to:

- Avoid premature death, live a life of normal length, and enjoy good health and physical safety
- Have access to knowledge, including a formal education
- Have adequate nutrition and shelter
- Have access to public space, and retain the ability to move from place to place freely and without fear
- Enjoy freedom of conscience, religion, and belief
- Be treated and protected fairly by the law
- Participate in decisions that affect one's life and have voice and influence in the democratic process
- Hold property, seek employment, and participate in markets
- Be treated with respect, and enjoy independence and equality
- Form personal relationships and a family
- Enjoy recreational activities and pleasurable experiences

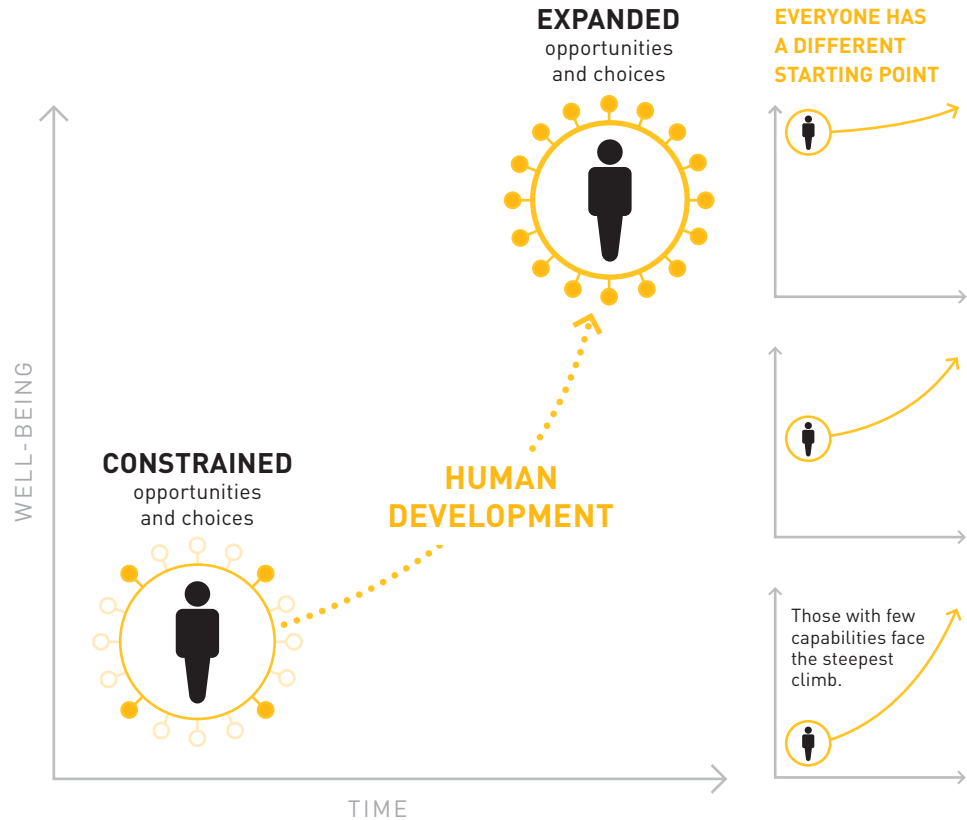


What Is Human Development?

Human development is about the real freedom ordinary people have to decide who to be, what to do, and how to live. These diagrams illustrate the central ideas of human development and visually depict how we measure it using the American Human Development Index.

CONCEPT

Human development is defined as *the process of enlarging people's freedoms and opportunities and improving their well-being.*



JOURNEY

Human development can be understood as a journey. Even before one's life begins, *parents* play a role in setting the trajectory of one's human development. Numerous factors and experiences alter the course of one's journey through life, *helping or hindering* one's ability to live a life of choice and value.



CAPABILITIES

Capabilities—*what people can do and what they can become*—are central to the human development concept. Many different capabilities are essential to a fulfilling life.

Our capabilities are expanded both by our own efforts and by the institutions and conditions of our society.

DIMENSIONS

Of all the capabilities, this report focuses in-depth on just *three*, all of which are relatively easy to measure. They are considered core human development dimensions.

LENSES

The results of the American Human Development Index reveal variations among regions, states, and congressional districts; between women and men; and among racial and ethnic groups.

INDEX

The modified American Human Development Index measures the same three basic dimensions as the standard HD Index, but it uses *different indicators* to better reflect the U.S. context and to maximize use of available data. The Index will serve as a *baseline* for monitoring future progress.

