

The UN Network of Economic Statisticians: Beyond GDP

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UN Network of Economic Statisticians

Why do we need a new approach to Beyond GDP?

- **Different users have different needs** – the current SNA process demonstrates how difficult it is to try and reach a compromise between those who desire a pure ‘economic GDP’ for use in fiscal and monetary policy and those who seek a wider perspective.
- UN SG’s ‘Our Common Agenda’ recognises **the need for a wider-ranging set of complements to GDP and the traditional economic measurements**, including reaching out beyond the economic statistics domains.
- The answer for all questions should not and cannot always be changing the core SNA accounts. We need to build on SNA, SEEA and other manuals.
- The UN has delivered a [report](#) taking this agenda forward, and is likely to identify key metrics it will encourage all countries to use on their dashboards.

What is the UN Network of Economic Statisticians?

The United Nations Network of Economic Statisticians (Network) was established in 2021 to facilitate networking, co-ordination and communication on new innovations, experiments and best practices for the purpose of making progress on priorities to keep economic statistics relevant.

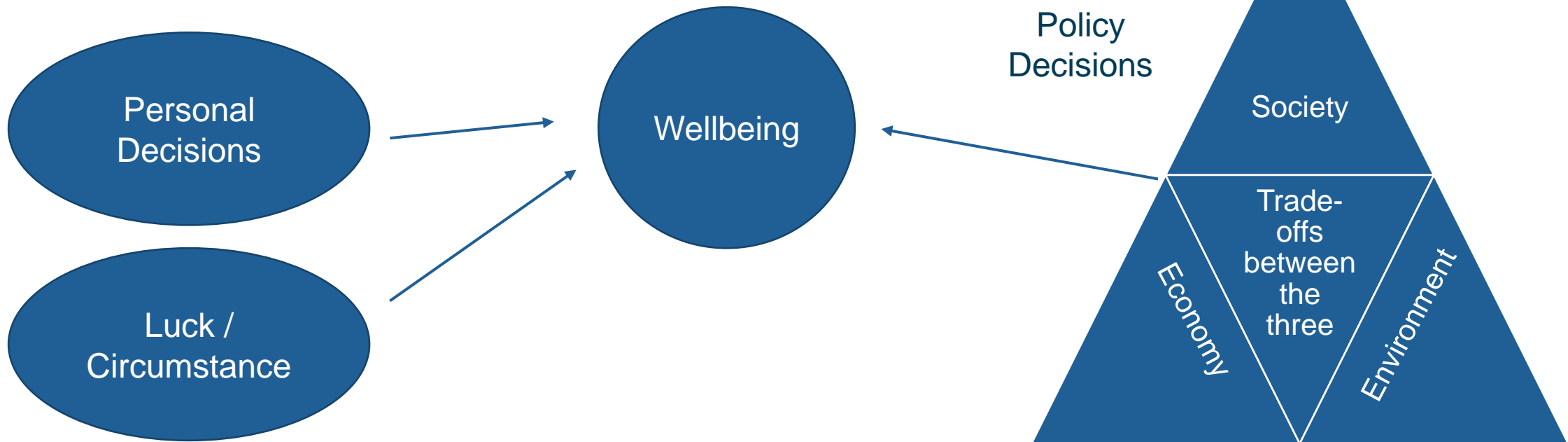
The network has an agreed agenda of topics to explore, where task teams have responsibility for a year-long programme which is inclusive of a number of sprints and delivery of a summary report.

In 2022 we undertook a sprint on 'Beyond GDP' and will run a second series between June and October. Our work is aiming to complement the UN's drive through bottom-up work to ensure coherency and consistency between metrics, so we can explain trade-offs and ensure that selected metrics have a firm statistical foundation.

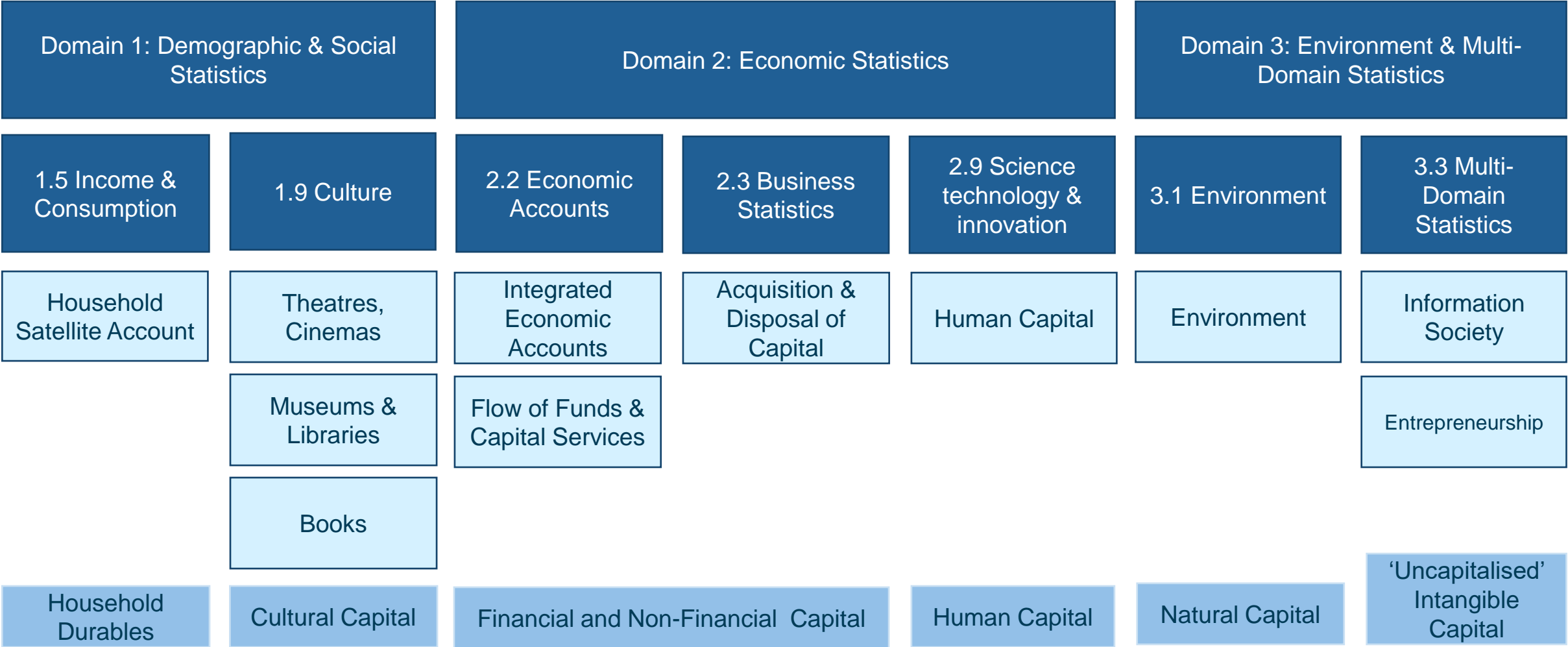
Key findings (1): How far ‘Beyond’ GDP?

“Beyond GDP” is not just an economic question – it explicitly requires us to break down barriers to better understand trade-offs through integrating across environmental, economic and social perspectives.

“The interesting thing about the sprints is realising that I am part of what you call the ‘Beyond GDP’ community. I just didn’t see the connection before.”



Bringing together a complex landscape – a capital example



Key findings (2): Helping users navigate

Users find the current landscape overly complex – both in terms of metrics, but also types of metrics:

- *Composite indices* – OECD WISE, ONS, GPI
- *Distributional accounts and Disaggregation accounts* – NTA, NTTA, DINA, Democratic weighted models
- *Capabilities Models* - Human Development Index
- *Multi-dimensional frameworks* – SDGs, vulnerability indices, wellbeing indices,
- *Wealth-based measures* – Comprehensive and Inclusive Wealth
- *Satellite Accounts and Time-Use* methods

Key requirements:

- *Map existing landscape*
- *Identify (and fill) gaps*
- *Identify methods to signpost users to the best metric for their needs*

Key Finding (3): History didn't begin with Stiglitz, Sen and Fitoussi

“What we measure affects what we do. If we have the wrong metrics, we will strive for the wrong things.”

(Stiglitz, Fitoussi & Sen 2010)

1948 -1968:
Development of
System of National
Accounts (SNA)

1968-1974:
Development of
System of
Demographic and
Social Statistics
(SDSS), and
ratification by UNSC,
comprising ten
'domains'

1974-1990s:
Attempts to deliver
SDSS stall due to
data challenges.
Evolution of
indicators drawn
from system.

1993 - 2008:
SNA (partially)
incorporates six of
the ten SDSS
domains as 'satellite
accounts'

2010:
Stiglitz, Sen and
Fitoussi report
highlights need for
extended indicator
sets, multi-
dimensional
dashboards and re-
invigorates debate,
without being
prescriptive in terms
of approaches.

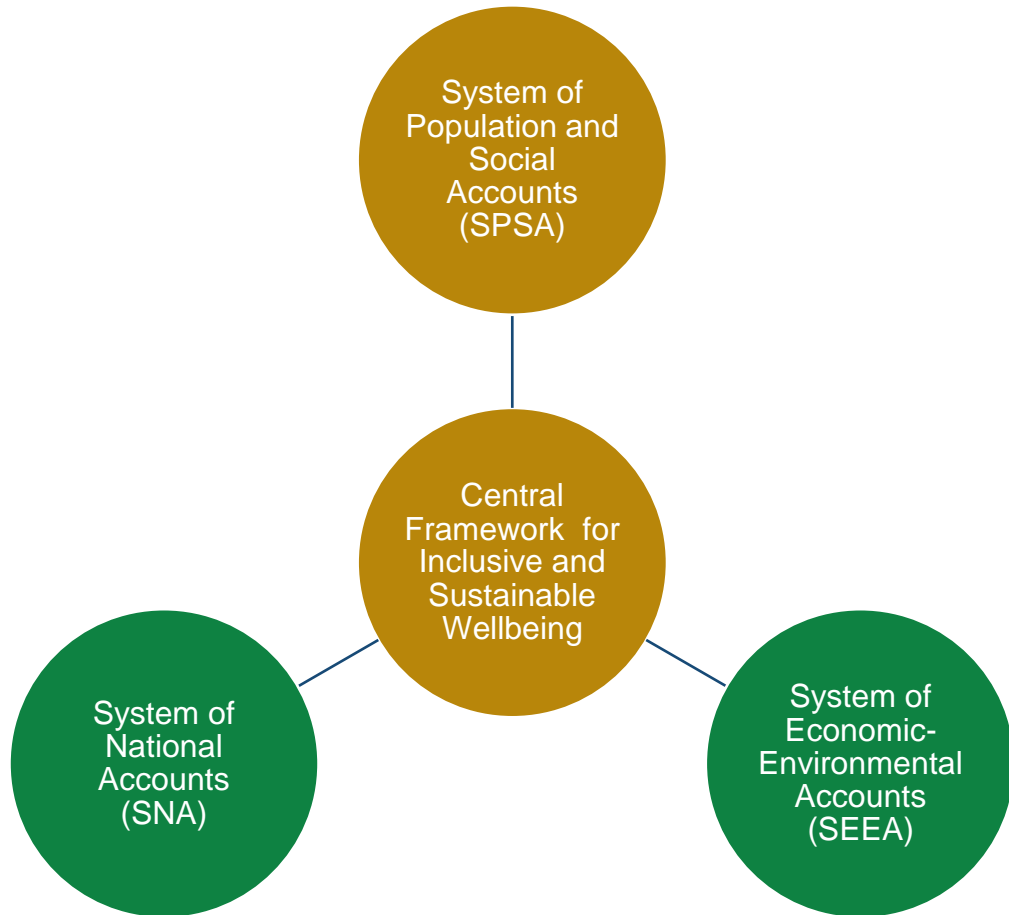
Proposed Way forward

The requirement is for a ‘**system of systems**’ or integrated statistical system which gives clarity around how the range of statistical standards and outputs can be utilised to give a comprehensive picture of the modern world, and deliver a coherent framework within which users can utilise different data in varied ways to meet complex policy questions.

The objective is to develop a framework to integrate across the economic, environmental and social spheres:

- Highlighting consistent methods and outputs to aide bringing together a clearer picture of wellbeing in a cross-disciplinary way.
- Extending existing methods where efforts to integrate *within* a domain may have constrained these.
- Mapping and filling gaps between existing Standards / Manuals
- Re-using statistical materials wherever this is efficient.
- Providing the underlying framework for Beyond GDP metrics to be selected from.

Core Proposal



- The development of a **System of Population and Social Accounts (SPSA)**, delivering data which can be integrated with the SNA and SEEA, that brings together the various extended SNA accounts and other existing socio-demographic accounts available today and promotes their potential use
- The development of a **Central Framework for Inclusive and Sustainable Wellbeing** that includes:
 - a comprehensive dashboard, linked to the SDGs, of core wellbeing indicators and potentially new composite indices,
 - distributional breakdowns of aggregated and disaggregated accounting and wellbeing indicators,
 - measures of flows and stocks, building on measures obtained from comprehensive and inclusive wealth accounting, considering a wider landscape of capitals than those covered by the SNA, with a focus on consistency of measurement for the derivation of ‘objective’ composite indices to provide a fuller landscape of the trade-offs involved in achieving economic welfare and people’s wellbeing (now and later).

Utilising new data sources and measures

- Opportunity to test feasibility of moving faster and wider than previous attempts, using digitalised administrative data and private sector data (e.g. price scanner data)
- Opportunity to explore both subjective measures of wellbeing and to contextualise these with measures which cover a range of policy levers which impact on wellbeing.
- Also, potential to explore composite measures which internalise the trade-offs between economy, environment and society.

Building on Strong Foundations

Enhanced Accounts whose 2025 proposed form meets both social and economic needs	Enhanced Accounts whose 2025 proposed form meets economic needs but require augmentation to meet social requirements –	Domains for which there is no SNA 2025 Enhanced Account –
C. Earning activities and the Employment Services	B. Learning and the Educational Services	A. Population
	D. Distribution of Income, Consumption and Wealth	E. Social security and welfare services
	F. Health and health services	H. Public order and safety
	G. Housing	J. Social stratification and mobility
	I. The allocation of time and leisure	

*Prospective pilot deep dives highlighted in yellow.

Any Questions?