

In review for: *Ecological Economics*
**Socioeconomic well-being across the Northern Forest urban-rural gradient:
Estimates of the Genuine Progress Indicator (GPI) for northern Vermont**

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Abstract: The Genuine Progress Indicator (GPI) and closely related Index of Sustainable Economic Welfare (ISEW) provide monetized estimates of societal well-being based on economic, social, and environmental criteria. GPI and ISEW studies have been completed for over two dozen countries and sub-national political units. This study reports the first multi-county time-series analysis for GPI in a U.S. rural region, the six Northern Forest counties of Vermont. We compare these results to an earlier study of relatively urban Chittenden County, Vermont, providing an urban-rural GPI comparison. Rural Vermont counties generally have lower per capita GPI than urban Chittenden County, owing largely to lower income and personal consumption levels. Rural areas generally have lower absolute levels of pollution and land loss, but these costs may be higher on a per capita basis due to low population levels. Rural areas may also have greater social capital than their urban counterparts, but local data availability on social metrics was typically poor. For these six Vermont counties, GPI has generally risen continually over the last 50 years, in contrast to the stable or declining GPI observed by others in the last 30 years at the national level. This shows that well-being as measured by GPI is still improving in Vermont. Finally, we discuss implications for measuring GPI at the local level, as well as recommendations to improve methodology and data collection, consistency, and quality.

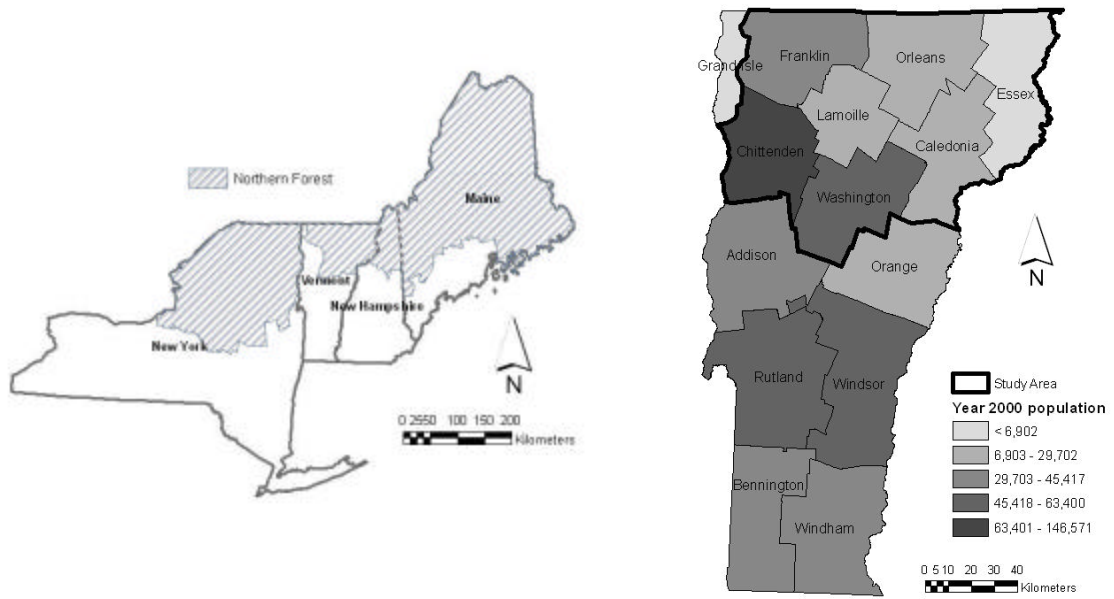


Figure 1. Northern Forest boundary and Vermont counties within the Northern Forest.

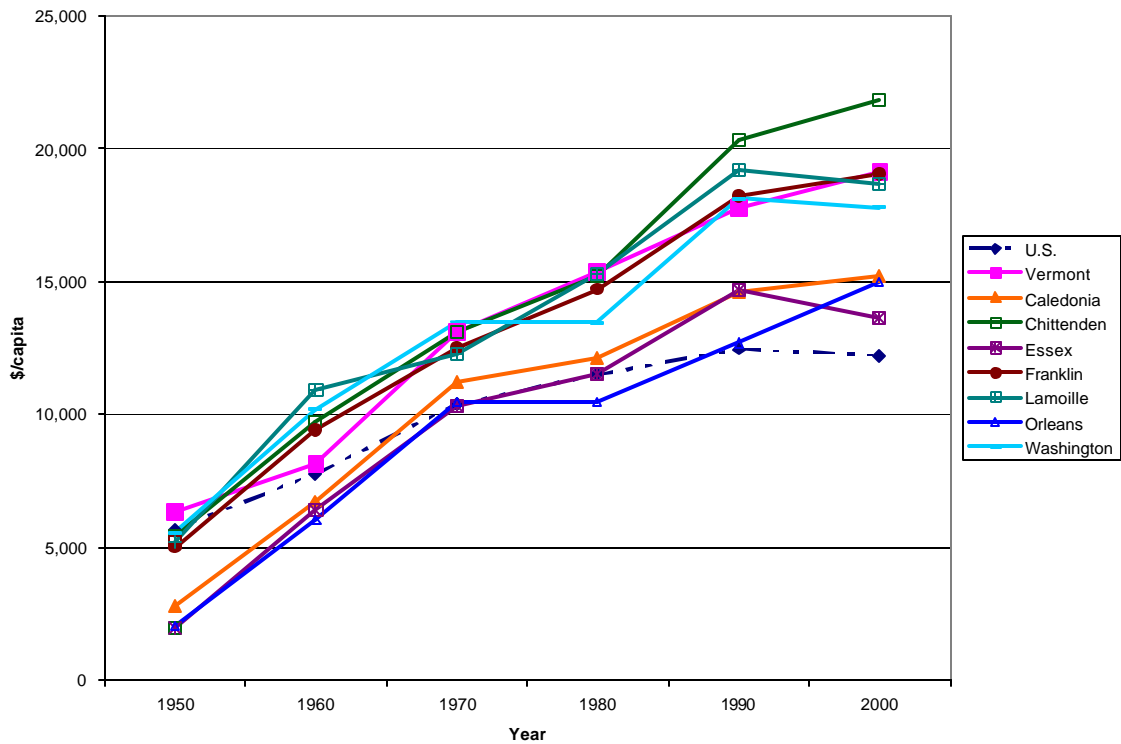


Figure 2. GPI per capita for U.S., Vermont, and seven Vermont counties for 1950-2000.