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Market Basket Measure poverty thresholds and provisional poverty trends for 2021 and 2022

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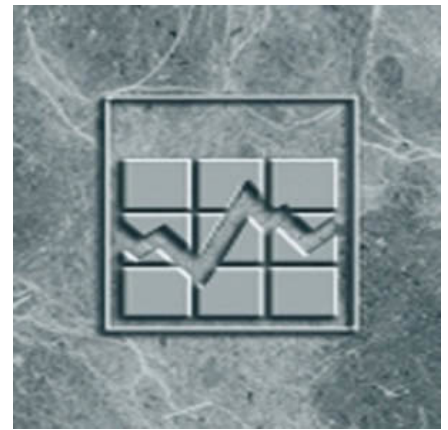
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Market Basket Measure poverty thresholds and provisional poverty trends for 2021 and 2022

by **Burton Gustajtis** and **Andrew Heisz**

The Market Basket Measure (MBM) establishes poverty thresholds based on the cost of a basket of food, clothing, shelter, transportation, and other items for a family of four that reflects a modest, basic standard of living. A family with a disposable income below the appropriate MBM threshold for the size of the family and the region where they live is deemed to be living in poverty.

Starting with reference year 2021, Statistics Canada will be releasing MBM thresholds separately from the annual release of income estimates from the Canadian Income Survey (CIS), advancing their release by 3-4 months. In future reference years, the release of MBM thresholds for a particular year will be advanced by as much as one year. This will allow users to anticipate possible movements in poverty rates using information on changes in MBM thresholds. It will also allow users to have more up-to-date information on the change in the cost of living associated with a "modest, basic standard of living", as captured by the MBM.[1] As in the past, MBM thresholds will continue to be published on Statistics Canada's website for public consumption in Table 11-10-0066-01 Market Basket Measure (MBM) thresholds for the reference family by Market Basket Measure region, component and base.

The objective of this paper is to provide provisional estimates of MBM thresholds for the 2022 reference year using Consumer Price Index (CPI) adjustors available up to September 2022. While these provisional thresholds will be finalized and updated in a few months, they are being released now to help inform discussions of the potential impacts of recent inflation trends on poverty. Using official MBM thresholds for 2021, provisional thresholds for 2022 and what we currently know about income trends during those two years, predicted changes in the overall poverty rate for 2021 and 2022 are also presented and discussed.

New estimates for 2021 (official) and 2022 (provisional)

In accordance with the recommendations stemming from the latest comprehensive review update of the MBM, the MBM basket's components are held constant in its base year and annual updates to the cost of basket components are made using the appropriate CPIs.[2] Therefore, the changes observed in the annual CPI will have a direct impact on the changes observed in the MBM thresholds.

The method for applying the CPI to the MBM thresholds is complex, with different CPI adjustors being used depending upon province[3] and MBM component. For example, the cost of the food component for Ontario is adjusted each year using the Ontario "food purchased from stores" CPI. Table 1 describes the CPI indexes used for each component.

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1. For more information on the 2018-base MBM methodology please see, *Report on the second comprehensive review of the Market Basket Measure*.
2. For more information on absolute measure of poverty please see, *Expert Group on Poverty Statistic (Rio Group): Compendium of best practices in poverty measurement.*
3. The Northern Market Basket Measure (MBM-N) use territorial level CPIs. For more information please see, *Construction of a Northern Market Basket Measure of poverty for Yukon and the Northwest Territories.*

Table 1
Market Basket Measure (MBM) component and its corresponding Consumer Price Index (CPI)

Market Basket Measure component	Consumer Price Index label	Consumer Price Index vector
Food	Food purchased from stores	v41693544, v41693679, v41693813, v41693948, v41694083 v41694219, v41694355, v41694491, v41694627, v41694762
Clothing and footwear	Clothing and footwear	v41693602, v41693737, v41693871, v41694006, v41694142 v41694278, v41694414, v41694550, v41694685, v41694821
Transportation	Private transportation	v41693611, v41693746, v41693880, v41694015, v41694151 v41694287, v41694423, v41694559, v41694694, v41694830
	Public transportation	v41693621, v41693756, v41693890, v41694025, v41694161 v41694297, v41694433, v41694569, v41694704, v41694840
Shelter	All-items	v41693542, v41693677, v41693811, v41693946, v41694081 v41694217, v41694353, v41694489, v41694625, v41694760
Other necessities	All-items	v41693542, v41693677, v41693811, v41693946, v41694081 v41694217, v41694353, v41694489, v41694625, v41694760

Note: The provincial MBM components use the provincial level CPI. The Northern Market Basket Measure (MBM-N) components use the territorial level CPI, their corresponding vectors are not provided in this table.
Source: Statistics Canada. Table 18-10-0005-01 Consumer Price Index, annual average, not seasonally adjusted.

A couple of points should be made regarding the CPIs used for updating MBM thresholds. First, during the comprehensive review for the 2018-base MBM, it was decided that the shelter component would use the provincial all-items index, instead of the rented accommodation price index. Shortly after the publication of the 2018-base methodology, the CPI redesigned the methodology for the rented accommodation index. In practice, the provincial all-items indexes have risen faster than the provincial rented accommodation indexes.[4] This decision to use the all-items price indexes over the rented/owned accommodation indexes will be revisited during the next comprehensive review of the MBM (i.e., in 2023).

Second, while other components are adjusted using standard CPI estimates, for transportation, a weighted average of public transportation and private transportation indexes is used. Aside from the transportation component, the MBM components will track their corresponding indexes exactly.

Growth in MBM thresholds can be compared to growth in the CPI all-items index to gauge the appropriateness of the MBM methodology in capturing changes in the cost of living. The CPI rose 3.4% on an average annual basis in 2021, the fastest pace since 1991 (+5.6%).[5] The average CPI for the first nine months of 2022 indicated a 6.0% increase for 2022.

Nearly the same growth rates were observed with the MBM thresholds as, on average, they increased 3.4% in 2021 and 6.4% in 2022. Chart 2 shows the simple average of the 53 MBM regions using final data for 2015 to 2021 and provisional data for 2022. Estimates for each region are provided in tables on the Statistics Canada website for 2015 to 2021[6] and in Table A.1 in the Appendix for 2022.
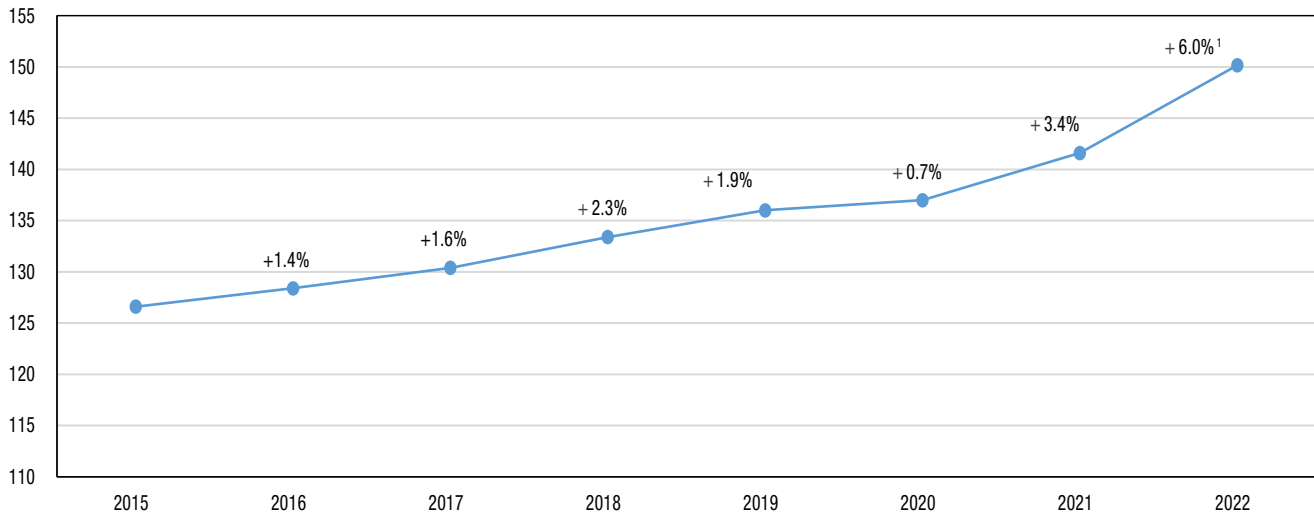
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4.   For more information please see, *New approach for estimating the rent component of the CPI.*
5.   Consumer Price Index: Annual review, 2021.
6.   Table 11-10-0066-01: Market Basket Measure (MBM) thresholds for the reference family by Market Basket Measure region, component and base year.

Chart 1
Consumer Price Index, 12-month change, all-items, 2015-2022

percent

[Line chart showing Consumer Price Index from 2015 to 2022. Values rise from approximately 126.5 in 2015 to 150 in 2022, with annual percentage changes labeled: +1.4%, +1.6%, +2.3%, +1.9%, +0.7%, +3.4%, +6.0%[1]. Y-axis ranges from 110 to 155.]

1. The annual CPI value and annual growth rate for 2022 are based on the arithmetic average of the monthly not seasonally unadjusted CPI from January to September 2022 only.
Source: Statistics Canada. Table 18-10-0005-01 Consumer Price Index, annual average, not seasonally adjusted Statistics Canada. Table 18-10-0004-01 Consumer Price Index, monthly, not seasonally adjusted.

Chart 2
Market Basket Measure (MBM) thresholds, 12-month change, average of the 53 MBM regions, 2015-2021 and provisional 2022

current dollars

[Line chart showing Market Basket Measure thresholds from 2015 to 2022. Values rise from approximately 41,000 in 2015 to 48,500 in 2022, with annual percentage changes labeled: +1.3%, +0.9%, +2.0%, +2.3%, +0.9%, +3.4%, +6.4%[1]. Y-axis ranges from 36,000 to 50,000.]

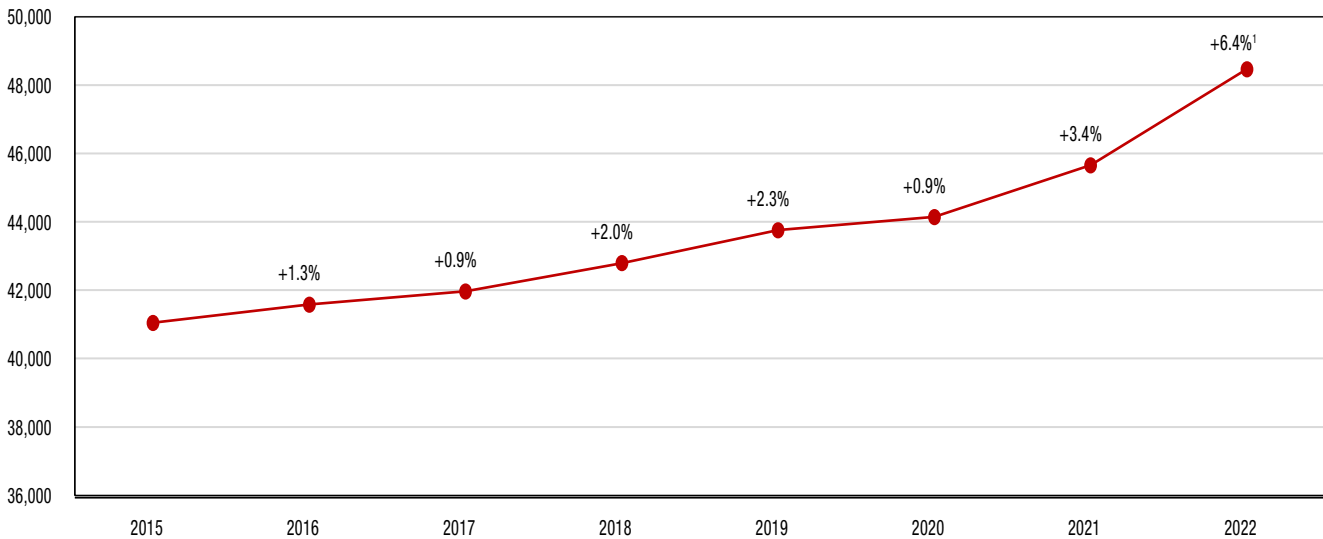1. The average MBM threshold and annual growth rate for 2022 are based on the arithmetic average of the monthly not seasonally unadjusted CPI from January to September 2022 only.
Source: Statistics Canada. Table 11-10-0066-01 Market Basket Measure (MBM) thresholds for the reference family by Market Basket Measure region, component and base year.

New MBM threshold estimates by component

Table 2 shows MBM threshold estimates by component for 2019 to 2022, where the 2022 estimates are provisional and based on an average of monthly CPI estimates only up to September.

Table 2
Market Basket Measure (MBM) thresholds and components, 12-month change, average of the 53 MBM regions, 2019-2021 (Official) and 2022 (Provisional)

Year	Total thresholds	Food component	Clothing and footwear component	Shelter component	Transportation component	Other necessities component
	current dollars					
2019	43,756	12,126	2,182	13,275	4,479	11,695
2020	44,141	12,440	2,141	13,354	4,446	11,760
2021	45,655	12,744	2,130	13,814	4,793	12,174
2022[1]	48,583	13,862	2,154	14,699	4,911	12,958

12-month change	Total thresholds	Food component	Clothing and footwear component	Shelter component	Transportation component	Other necessities component
	percent					
2019 to 2020	0.9	2.6	-1.9	0.6	-0.7	0.6
2020 to 2021	3.4	2.4	-0.5	3.5	7.8	3.5
2021 to 2022[1]	6.4	8.8	1.1	6.4	2.5	6.4

1. The average MBM threshold and annual growth rate for 2022 are based on the arithmetic average of the monthly not seasonally unadjusted CPI from January to September 2022 only.
Source: Statistics Canada. Table 11-10-0066-01 Market Basket Measure (MBM) thresholds for the reference family by Market Basket Measure region, component and base year.

The food component cost in the MBM basket makes up, on average, 28% of the MBM threshold, while the shelter component makes up about 30%. Accordingly, movements in the price of food and shelter have an important effect on the growth in MBM thresholds. In the MBM, the cost of the food basket rose 2.4% between 2020 and 2021 and 8.8% between 2021 and 2022. The shelter cost rose by 3.5% between 2020 and 2021 and 6.4% between 2021 and 2022.

The clothing and footwear component makes up the smallest proportion of the MBM basket and was the only component to experience a decrease between 2020 and 2021, with cost decreasing on average by 0.5% from 2020 to 2021 but increasing by around 1.1% between 2021 and 2022.

Transportation experienced the highest average (7.8%) increase in cost between 2020 and 2021. This increase was mostly driven by the large increases in private transportation costs (including gasoline costs) and, therefore, impacted the MBM regions that rely mostly or entirely on private transportation options. For example, communities in New Brunswick with a population less than 100,000[7] saw their transportation costs increase by 10.8% from 2020 to 2021 (Table A.1 in the Appendix). In comparison, between 2021 and 2022, average transportation costs for all the MBM regions rose by 2.4%.

Finally, the other necessities component uses a different pricing methodology compared to the defined components[8] and contributes, on average, about another 25% to the total MBM threshold. It uses the annual provincial all-items indexes for annual cost adjustments. Therefore, its year over year increase was 3.5% in 2021 and 6.4% in 2022.

Looking forward – predicted changes to the overall poverty rate

Overall, one could consider the MBM threshold growth rates of 3.4% in 2021 and 6.4% in 2022 as benchmarks to form expectations for changes in the poverty rate. These changes, in addition to information on growth in family income in 2021 and 2022, could be used to gauge the evolution of the overall poverty rate over those two years. If family income growth is predicted to be higher than the growth in the MBM thresholds, then the poverty rate is predicted to decrease. The greater this difference is, the greater the decrease is predicted to be. Conversely, if income growth rate is predicted to be less than the MBM threshold growth rate, then the poverty rate would be predicted to rise.

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7. The three smallest MBM regions in New Brunswick (i.e., rural, less than 30,000, and 30,000 to 99,999) have the same transportation cost.
8. For more information please see, *Market Basket Measure Technical Paper: The other necessities component*.

The CIS is the official data source used to estimate annual poverty rates in Canada. However, estimates from the CIS are available only 14-15 months following the end of the reference year, and the most recent data available (at time of writing in December 2022) is for 2020, preventing an analysis of up-to-date trends in inflation and poverty. An alternate source for estimating growth trends in family income is provided by the Distributed Household Economic Accounts (DHEA), a model that is able to output up-to-date estimates for the distribution of income using internationally accepted National Accounts concepts. DHEA income estimates are presently available through the second quarter of 2022. In this section we use up-to-date information from the DHEA to develop statistical predictions of the path of Canada's overall poverty rate in 2021 and 2022.

Chart 3
Bottom quintile after-tax income (CIS) and disposable income (DHEA), 12-month change, Canada, 2002-2022

current dollars
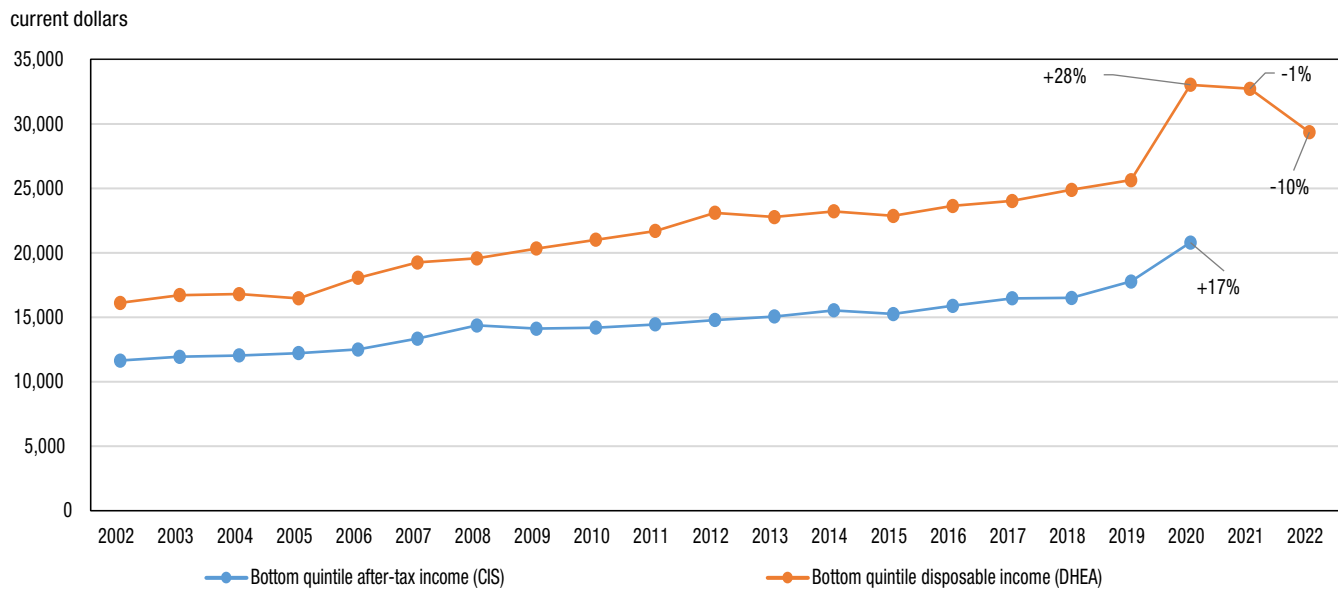
Source: *Bottom quintile after-tax income (CIS)* - Statistics Canada. Table 11-10-0192-01 Upper income limit, income share and average income by economic family type and income decile. *Bottom quintile disposable income (DHEA)* - Statistics Canada. Table 36-10-0587-01 Distributions of household economic accounts, income, consumption and saving, by characteristic, annual and Table 36-10-0662-01 Distributions of household economic accounts, income, consumption and saving, by characteristic, quarterly (x 1,000,000).

Chart 3 shows recent trends in income levels and growth rates for families in the bottom income quintile, using data from the CIS and the DHEA. Both series show a large increase in income in 2020, explained by the income support delivered through pandemic relief programs, which led to a significant decline in the overall poverty rate in that year. According to the DHEA model, the annual growth rate for bottom quintile income is predicted to fall by 1% in 2021 compared to 2020, and by 10% further in 2022, as pandemic relief programs ended or where phased-out. These predicted declines in income, coupled with the estimated 3.4% increase in MBM thresholds for 2021 and 6.4% estimated increase for 2022, point to a predicted increase in the overall poverty rate for both years. It should be noted that income level differences between the DHEA and the CIS are due to differences in the definitions of income (e.g., DHEA estimates include factors not included in the CIS income definition such as imputed rent), the reference unit (CIS uses economic families for MBM and other related income indicators, while the DHEA uses households), and other factors.

Chart 4 presents predicted values of the poverty rate from 2015 to 2022 based upon the results of a regression model which describes the MBM poverty rate as a function of bottom quintile income from the DHEA, the CPI and a time trend.[9] This model is calibrated using data from 2002 to 2020, and then predicted values for the poverty rate are calculated using DHEA and CPI estimates through 2022. According to this model, the poverty rate is predicted to change relatively little between 2020 and 2021, up by 9.2%. Between 2021 and 2022 a larger change is

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9. The regression results and raw data are provided in Appendix B.

predicted, with the poverty rate predicted to rise by an additional 41.5%. Annual growth rates of 9.2% and 41.5% imply a predicted poverty rate value of 7.0% in 2021 and 9.8% in 2022. It is underscored that these expectations are based on a model, and the official poverty rates would be different depending on the actual data.

Chart 4
Official and modelled poverty rates, Canada, 2015-2022
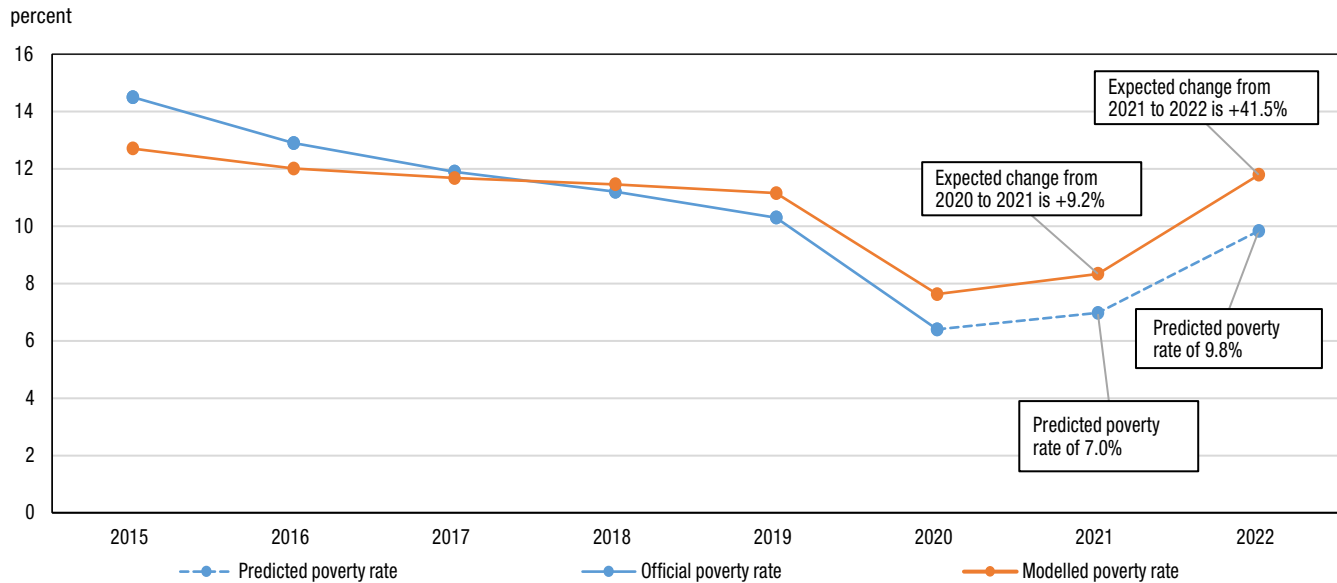
percent

Source: Statistics Canada. Table 18-10-0005-01 Consumer Price Index, annual average, not seasonally adjusted Statistics Canada. Table 18-10-0004-01 Consumer Price Index, monthly, not seasonally adjusted.

Conclusion

This paper introduces Statistics Canada's new practice of publishing MBM thresholds in advance of an annual income data release, making these estimates available as early as possible for policy analysts and others who are interested in the potential influence of price changes on the poverty rate. The poverty thresholds are shown to follow the CPI closely, which is to be predicted, given that various CPI adjustors are used to update the MBM thresholds. Other things being equal, poverty rates would fall as the incomes of lower-income Canadians increase and rise as inflation increases. Modelled results indicate that, based on current macro-economic conditions and price trends, Canada's poverty rate is predicted to rise in 2021 and 2022, returning to a level close to the pre-pandemic levels by 2022.

Appendix A: Provisional 2022 poverty thresholds for MBM regions

Table A.1
Provisional Market Basket Measure (MBM) thresholds for the reference family by MBM region and component for reference year 2022, based on price trends through to September 2022, using the 2018-base

MBM Geography		Total threshold	Food	Clothing and footwear	Shelter	Transportation	Other necessities
Province	Region			current dollars			
Newfoundland and Labrador	rural	47,684	15,304	2,103	11,429	5,171	13,677
	< 30,000	48,114	15,304	2,103	11,859	5,171	13,677
	30,000-99,999	49,489	15,304	2,103	13,872	4,533	13,677
	St. John's	50,167	14,582	2,103	15,607	4,717	13,158
Prince Edward Island	rural	48,312	15,377	2,147	12,006	4,886	13,896
	< 30,000	49,189	15,377	2,147	12,883	4,886	13,896
	Charlottetown	50,288	15,377	2,147	14,595	4,272	13,896
Nova Scotia	rural	47,533	14,935	2,194	11,151	5,407	13,846
	< 30,000	48,558	14,935	2,194	12,176	5,407	13,846
	30,000-99,999	48,909	14,935	2,194	13,047	4,887	13,846
	Halifax	51,597	14,307	2,194	17,348	4,353	13,396
	Cape Breton	47,428	14,007	2,194	13,328	4,716	13,182
New Brunswick	rural	46,665	15,120	2,425	10,183	5,163	13,774
	< 30,000	48,379	15,120	2,425	11,897	5,163	13,774
	30,000-99,999	48,124	15,120	2,425	11,642	5,163	13,774
	Fredericton	50,238	15,043	2,425	14,503	4,547	13,720
	Saint John	47,728	14,681	2,425	12,591	4,568	13,463
	Moncton	48,055	14,150	2,425	13,965	4,428	13,087
Quebec	rural	42,741	13,147	2,193	10,020	4,869	12,513
	< 30,000	42,280	13,147	2,193	9,559	4,869	12,513
	30,000-99,999	42,300	13,147	2,193	10,187	4,260	12,513
	100,000-499,999	42,842	13,147	2,193	10,634	4,356	12,513
	Québec	44,702	13,326	2,193	12,310	4,230	12,644
	Montréal	45,331	13,445	2,193	12,841	4,122	12,731
Ontario	rural	45,932	12,473	2,198	13,683	5,536	12,043
	< 30,000	46,693	12,473	2,198	14,443	5,536	12,043
	30,000-99,999	46,146	12,473	2,198	14,851	4,581	12,043
	100,000-499,999	48,592	12,985	2,198	16,077	4,921	12,411
	500,000+	50,752	12,985	2,198	18,146	5,011	12,411
	Ottawa	53,428	13,464	2,198	20,088	4,922	12,756
	Hamilton/Burlington	49,216	12,683	2,198	16,851	5,290	12,194
	Toronto	54,419	12,760	1,881	21,708	6,085	11,985
Manitoba	rural	44,436	12,801	2,071	11,674	5,604	12,286
	< 30,000	46,510	12,801	2,071	13,748	5,604	12,286
	30,000-99,999	46,582	12,801	2,071	13,820	5,604	12,286
	Brandon	46,017	12,801	2,071	14,089	4,770	12,286
	Winnipeg	50,129	13,260	2,071	17,216	4,958	12,623
Saskatchewan	rural	45,324	12,977	2,262	12,134	5,481	12,471
	< 30,000	47,241	12,977	2,262	14,051	5,481	12,471
	30,000-99,999	47,434	12,977	2,262	15,022	4,702	12,471
	Saskatoon	51,275	13,219	2,262	18,327	4,823	12,644
	Regina	50,353	13,098	2,262	17,550	4,887	12,556
Alberta	rural	51,230	14,646	1,882	16,403	4,865	13,434
	< 30,000	52,480	14,646	1,882	17,652	4,865	13,434
	30,000-99,999	51,046	14,646	1,882	16,992	4,092	13,434
	100,000-499,999	51,709	14,646	1,882	17,427	4,319	13,434
	Edmonton	54,343	13,637	1,882	21,427	4,678	12,719
	Calgary	54,888	13,756	1,882	21,778	4,669	12,803
British Columbia	rural	46,950	13,455	2,076	13,337	5,394	12,688
	< 30,000	48,240	13,455	2,076	14,627	5,394	12,688
	30,000-99,999	48,491	13,455	2,076	15,677	4,596	12,688
	100,000-499,999	53,350	14,320	2,076	19,066	4,580	13,308
	Vancouver	55,062	13,698	2,076	21,548	4,877	12,862

Source: Statistics Canada. Custom tabulation.

Appendix B: Predicted poverty trends based upon trends in bottom-quintile disposable income from the Distributed Household Economic Accounts (DHEA) model

For predicted poverty trends, a model is estimated which describes the poverty rate as a function of the average bottom quintile disposable income, in current dollars, per household from the DHEA, the CPI and a time trend. National (all provinces) MBM poverty rates from 2002 through 2020 are used from all of the three MBM bases available (i.e., the 2000, 2008 and 2018 base data were all used). The model expresses poverty rate, the DHEA disposable income and the CPI index in logs, the time trend is linear and dummy variables are added to account for differences in poverty rates from different MBM bases. Results of the regression are in Table B.1.

Table B.1
Regression results

	Parameter	Standard error
Intercept	-5,806	12.274
ln(disposable income	-1.322***	0.376
ln(CPI)	4.694*	2.726
2000-base	-0.364***	0.074
2008-base	- 0.142**	0.056
time	-0.079*	0.046
N	31	...
R²	0.742***	...

... not applicable

Note: Significant at 1% (***), 5% (**) and 10% (*).
Source: Authors' calculations.

The regression has a modest quality overall fit, with an R^2 of 0.742. As expected, disposable income enters the model with a negative coefficient, indicating poverty falls when disposable income rises, and CPI is estimated to have a positive coefficient indicating the poverty rate would fall when prices rise (all else being equal). Published and modelled data are shown in Table B.2.

Table B.2
Published and modelled data, Canada, 2002-2022

Year	Official poverty rates			Average disposable income per household in the bottom income quintile (DHEA)	All-items Consumer Price Index, 2002=100	Modelled poverty rates		
	2000-base	2008-base	2018-base			2000-base	2008-base	2018-base
2002	12.9	…	…	16,110	100.0	13.0	…	…
2003	12.5	…	…	16,719	102.8	13.0	…	…
2004	12.5	…	…	16,792	104.7	13.0	…	…
2005	11.8	…	…	16,468	107.0	13.6	…	…
2006	12.4	15.6	…	18,060	109.1	12.2	15.2	…
2007	10.8	13.9	…	19,253	111.5	11.5	14.3	…
2008	10.2	12.4	…	19,564	114.1	11.6	14.4	…
2009	11.3	13.4	…	20,329	114.4	10.3	12.8	…
2010	10.4	12.3	…	21,011	116.5	9.9	12.4	…
2011	10.5	12.7	…	21,689	119.9	10.1	12.6	…
2012	10.8	12.7	…	23,097	121.7	9.2	11.4	…
2013	…	12.1	…	22,766	122.8	…	11.2	…
2014	…	11.3	…	23,215	125.2	…	11.1	…
2015	…	12.1	14.5	22,867	126.6	…	11.0	12.7
2016	…	10.6	12.9	23,637	128.4	…	10.4	12.0
2017	…	9.7	11.9	24,025	130.4	…	10.1	11.7
2018	…	9.0	11.2	24,888	133.4	…	9.9	11.5
2019	…	8.3	10.3	25,633	136.0	…	9.7	11.2
2020	…	…	6.4	33,024	137.0	…	…	7.6
2021	…	…	…	32,716	141.6	…	…	8.3
2022	…	…	…	29,360*	150.2**	…	…	11.8

... not applicable

Note: * Based on Q1 and Q2 2022. ** Based on January-September 2022.
Sources: *Official poverty rates* - Statistics Canada. Table 11-10-0135-01 Low income statistics by age, sex and economic family type. *Average disposable income per household in the bottom income quintile (DHEA)* - Statistics Canada. Table 36-10-0587-01 Distributions of household economic accounts, income, consumption and saving, by characteristic, annual & Table 36-10-0662-01 Distributions of household economic accounts, income, consumption and saving, by characteristic, quarterly. *Consumer price index, 2002=100* - Statistics Canada. Table 18-10-0005-01 Consumer Price Index, annual average, not seasonally adjusted. *Modelled poverty rates* - Authors' calculations.

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