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What we heard report: Engagement activities for the third comprehensive review of the Market Basket Measure



by Chanel Christophe, Nancy Devin, Burton Gustajtis, Benjamin Kow, José Mendoza Rodríguez, Lucie Raymond-Brousseau and Madeleine Steinmetz-Wood

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Summary

The regular updating of the Market Basket Measure (MBM) methodology starts with a comprehensive review. The ongoing comprehensive review of the MBM officially began in June 2023 with the release of the paper, [Launch of the Third Comprehensive Review of the Market Basket Measure](#), which outlined the objectives and guiding principles of the review process. The paper also included a high-level summary of the planned engagement activities and anticipated timelines for the comprehensive review.

This report details the outreach and engagement activities undertaken since the launch of the third comprehensive review of MBM in June 2023 and provides a summary of what Statistics Canada and Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) heard during this period. It also outlines the next steps of the review process, which will lead to the creation of the 2023-base methodology.

Introduction

The MBM establishes poverty thresholds based on the cost of a basket of food, clothing, shelter, transportation and other necessities 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 of residence is considered to be living in poverty.¹

The MBM was adopted as Canada's Official Poverty Line following the release of [Opportunity for All – Canada's First Poverty Reduction Strategy](#) in 2018. In 2019, the [Poverty Reduction Act](#) became law and stated that the MBM should be reviewed on a regular basis as determined by Statistics Canada.² This review process ensures that the MBM continues to reflect, over time, the up-to-date cost of a basket of goods and services representing a modest, basic standard of living.

As was the case with the first and second comprehensive reviews,³ the third comprehensive review of the MBM is being conducted by Statistics Canada in collaboration with Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC)—the federal department leading Canada's Poverty Reduction Strategy.

For the current review process, Statistics Canada is responsible for launching the review, leading public engagements with Canadians and stakeholders, and updating the statistical methodology of the MBM using the latest available data and robust, up-to-date methodologies. On the other hand, ESDC is responsible for setting the scope of the review, supporting the review activities with subject-matter expertise and ensuring that the proposed changes to the MBM align with the policy intent of the measure (for more information, please see the **Roles and responsibilities** text box).

This paper provides an overview of the engagement activities undertaken as part of the third comprehensive review process and provides a summary of the feedback received by Statistics Canada. It is important to remember that this feedback was in some cases based on empirical and statistical evidence, while in other cases it was based on the stakeholder's sentiment or opinion. All feedback received is highly appreciated by Statistics Canada and ESDC, and therefore in this report it is repeated without challenging its empirical or statistical accuracy. Stakeholders' perceptions of shortcomings in the MBM are valuable, whether or not they are empirically verified, as they point to areas where we must improve our communications. The paper concludes with next steps and items being considered for the 2023-base methodology, as well as future research topics envisioned in preparation for the 2028 base.

1. For more information on the 2018-base methodology, please see [Report on the second comprehensive review of the Market Basket Measure](#).

2. Following the recommendations set forth during the first comprehensive review, Statistics Canada determined that the frequency of MBM comprehensive reviews should be every five years following the release of the most recent census.

3. The first comprehensive review for the 2008 base was conducted between 2008 and 2010. The second comprehensive review for the 2018 base occurred between 2018 and 2020.

Roles and responsibilities

When it comes to comprehensive reviews of the Market Basket Measure (MBM), there is a clear and established division of responsibilities between Statistics Canada and Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC):

ESDC is responsible for defining the overall concept of the MBM, as well as setting the direction and scope of comprehensive reviews. This includes, for example, decision making on changes to the contents of the basket, the research topics to investigate or focus on as part of the MBM research agenda, and consideration of proposals that could potentially impact what is measured by the MBM.

Statistics Canada is responsible for ensuring that the poverty measure as defined by ESDC is estimated accurately using the most up-to-date data sources and following the best practices in statistical methodology. For example, Statistics Canada is responsible for determining “how to best measure” a particular concept or cost, keeping track of changes to standards that might trigger a revision to the methodology, and implementing the best statistical approaches available to properly measure the basket cost and the disposable income of families.

The Chief Statistician and the Deputy Minister of ESDC are each responsible for approving changes to the MBM within their own organization, as they relate to their respective areas of responsibility.

Overview of engagement activities

The engagement activities conducted as part of the third comprehensive review were tailored towards capturing ideas, proposals and recommendations from academic experts, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), government officials (federal, provincial or territorial) and the public. In the following section, the different engagement activities conducted to fulfill the key guiding principles of the MBM review will be explained in more detail, while the next section will provide a summary of what was heard and discussed during those activities.

Expert engagement

Initial collection of feedback and recommendations for methodological updates

The objective of the initial call for feedback from experts was to identify proposals for methodological updates to the MBM early in the process. The initial call for feedback ran from June 2023 to the end of July 2023. Overall, 18 responses were received from federal and provincial representatives, NGOs and academics.⁴

Virtual workshops with stakeholders

The key objective of the workshops was to conduct detailed discussions on current methodological approaches, standards and data, and to expand on previous MBM research work and proposals for new research topics. The thematic workshops were held over a five-day period from February 26 to March 1, 2024. The workshop sessions covered various topics related to the MBM methodology, including detailed information on approaches to cost basket components and measure family disposable income, the geographical dimensions and implications of the current methodology, and forward-looking research topics identified during the second comprehensive review for the 2023 base.⁵ The workshops were entirely virtual and were attended by an average of 40 to 70 individuals, depending on the session. Participants came primarily from academic and research institutions, while others represented federal, provincial and territorial (FPT) government areas with relevant linkages to poverty measurement. Each session consisted of a presentation portion and a discussion period, where open discussions were encouraged and feedback was collected.

4. See Appendix C for the invitation sent to experts to take part in this initial call.

5. For a complete list of research topics presented and discussed during the second comprehensive review, please see Appendix B.

General public

Information sessions for members of the public

A series of more targeted information sessions were held to provide members of the public the opportunity to learn about the MBM methodology. The in-person information sessions were held across Canada in six locations (Halifax, Montréal, Ottawa, Yellowknife, Vancouver and Saskatoon) every Tuesday, from October 31 to December 5, 2023. To ensure that at-risk populations were included in the conversations, a vendor was hired to recruit persons with recent lived experiences of financial hardship. Close to 80 Canadians attended these sessions. While the sessions were in-person, virtual attendance was also facilitated.

During these sessions, representatives from Statistics Canada and ESDC presented the MBM methodology at a high level and allocated time to engage with participants and gather feedback. Each session lasted approximately 90 minutes, beginning with an initial 30-minute presentation and was followed by an open discussion where stakeholders shared their views on how to improve the measure. The perspectives provided through these discussions were a valuable complement to the feedback collected from the expert community.

Online crowdsourcing survey and forums

An online crowdsourcing survey and multiple social media forums were conducted in parallel to the previously mentioned engagement activities. This offered another avenue for Canadians to provide input and feedback on how poverty is measured by the MBM.

The anonymous, online crowdsourcing survey was launched on September 19, 2023, and ran until March 31, 2024. The survey was publicized through Statistics Canada's and ESDC's social media platforms and through an email campaign.⁶ For the survey, respondents specified their province or territory, city, family size and housing tenure, and were presented with the poverty threshold that a similar family would need to live above the poverty line in their community. They were also asked to answer questions regarding the adequacy of these amounts based on their own family experience. Throughout the questionnaire, respondents also had the opportunity to provide feedback through multiple open text questions. Close to 5,400 respondents from all provinces and territories completed the survey. More information on the survey instrument (e.g., methods used, questionnaire, etc.) is available at the following link: [Survey on the Market Basket Measure of Poverty \(SMBMP\)](#).

Additionally, Statistics Canada posted five series of Reddit forums highlighting the MBM comprehensive review process in June 2023. The forums encouraged people to fill in the online crowdsourcing survey and to provide feedback on the MBM and the review process. In addition to the responses from the online survey, Statistics Canada received close to 500 comments across 53 different threads.

Summary of feedback

This section summarizes the information and feedback collected throughout the engagement phase of the review, including the methodological proposals submitted for consideration for the 2023 base of the MBM.

Expert engagement

Initial collection of feedback and recommendations for methodological updates

A call for expert feedback was sent out by email to encourage recommendations and advice on how stakeholders would improve the MBM methodology. The recipients were selected from a list of academic experts, NGOs and FPT partners who have engaged with Statistics Canada and ESDC in previous years on the MBM measure.

In general, feedback from most submissions highlighted that the MBM remains a valuable tool for measuring poverty and for monitoring progress in poverty reduction. Furthermore, experts appreciated the work led by Statistics Canada and ESDC to plan and conduct engagement activities and were pleased to be involved in the engagement phase of the review.

6. The social media platforms used included X (formerly Twitter), Facebook, Reddit, LinkedIn, YouTube and Instagram. The unsolicited email campaign contacted around 4,000 email addresses from academic, FPT and NGO communities. Targeted contacts were encouraged to share the survey link with their peers, colleagues and clients.

The ideas and recommendations received were incorporated into the virtual workshop sessions, where they were discussed in greater detail. The feedback received through this call touched on a variety of topics, such as recommendations to change how the shelter component was calculated in the 2018 base, areas requiring more research and the need to develop additional tools to supplement how Canada measures and tracks poverty. For example, participants recommended that Statistics Canada investigate different ways to carry out annual updates to the shelter component of the MBM basket. Feedback on the topic of shelter also included recommendations on the collection and dissemination of shelter cost estimates, a suggestion to use data beyond the second income decile to better capture costs, and concerns regarding the use of rental data to estimate shelter costs when there is a limited supply of rental units available for lower-income families (for more information, please see the **Calculation of the shelter component** text box).

Additionally, it was mentioned that using the four-person MBM reference family could result in the MBM not adequately capturing the costs of families with different family compositions. It was recommended that Statistics Canada investigate ways to cost out baskets for specific groups, such as seniors, singles, people with disabilities and Indigenous people living on-reserve.

Other feedback centered around the need for greater geographical delineation of MBM regions to account for the unique cost of living in remote communities within the provinces. It was recommended that specific remote-region MBM thresholds be created.

Finally, some contributors argued that current income-based indicators do not adequately capture families' experiences in poverty and recommended that non-income-based indicators (e.g., material deprivation) be developed to properly capture the experience of children or intra-household variations in standards of living.

Calculation of the shelter component

The calculation of the shelter component of the MBM estimates the non-subsidised rental cost, using both new and existing renters, in a given MBM region. Specifically, the 2018-base MBM uses the 2016 Census's renters in the 2nd decile of income living in a non-subsidised 3-bedroom unit for each MBM region. In MBM regions where there are too few observations to have a high-quality direct estimate, a regression model was constructed using other variables (e.g., other bedroom sizes, income deciles, etc.) to estimate the cost of a 3-bedroom unit.

After being estimated for the base year, the shelter costs are annually adjusted using the appropriate provincial all-items Consumer Price Index (CPI).

Virtual workshops with stakeholders

The initial call for proposals laid the groundwork for the subsequent workshops held with representatives from the academic community; NGOs; and federal, provincial and territorial stakeholders. These workshops provided the space to discuss the current MBM methodology and previously published papers in greater detail by exploring specific topics from the MBM research agenda. The following is a high-level synopsis of the feedback and recommendations collected during the workshop sessions.

During the virtual workshops with stakeholders, the shelter component of the MBM basket was identified as the component that required the most attention for the development of the 2023 base. It was argued that current market rental prices were not being captured properly under the 2018-base methodology. Furthermore, it was suggested that a future MBM methodology should account for the mobility of renters and the diverse characteristics of dwellings (e.g., duplexes, apartments, etc.) when estimating shelter costs. It was also recommended that Statistics Canada research how to include necessary home maintenance costs in the shelter costs calculation (e.g., new roof, toilet repairs, etc.).

There were also recommendations for changing other basket components. For example, participants mentioned that online purchases of food and clothing items were becoming more prevalent and that these should be included in the cost estimation of basket components. It was also mentioned that more regionally specific data on food prices and indexation approaches would improve the estimation of food costs.

During the workshop on clothing and footwear, participants stated that the standard used for determining clothing needs (i.e., 2012 Winnipeg Harvest Acceptable Living Level) needed to be updated to a more recent standard and the replacement schedule of clothing items should be adapted to better reflect variations across geographical

regions. The increased use of “fast fashion”⁷ clothing was also raised, but it was suggested that further research on how it impacts clothing lifespans would be needed before it could be integrated into the MBM basket.

Discussions on the transportation component varied widely depending on whether public or private transportation was being evaluated. For example, participants made suggestions on how to evaluate and incorporate the comprehensiveness of a public transit system (e.g., amenity density, walkability, number of public transit stops, etc.), and it was suggested that more active forms of transportation be examined and potentially reflected in the transportation component. When it comes to private transportation, it was suggested that additional private transportation costs (e.g., parking costs, etc.) be included, that gasoline amounts for rural regions be increased (currently at 1 200 litres per year), and that Statistics Canada should evaluate whether the frequency of car repairs should be increased given the age of the car costed by the component (i.e., an 8-year-old car).

The other necessities component of the MBM estimates the cost for goods and services that are not captured under the shelter, clothing, food and transportation components (e.g., household items, personal care, reading materials, etc.). It does not price specific items as the other components of the MBM do, but rather uses a “multiplier,” which is calculated as a proportion of the costs spent on food and clothing.⁸ During the previous comprehensive review, the multiplier was determined to still approximate expenditures on other necessities appropriately, except for telephone services because of the changing technology and growing prominence of cell phone usage at the time.⁹ Therefore, an amount was added for cell phone services.

During the consultations, there were recommendations that the component be renamed since it represents other expenses and not just “other necessities.” In addition, it was suggested that future documentation around the component should emphasize that there is a social inclusion aspect to it (e.g., items necessary to host a dinner with friends). There was also general agreement that a separate [communications services component](#) be created and that the multiplier used in the other necessities component be updated to the most recent Survey of Household Spending data.

During the workshop sessions focusing on the Northern MBM methodologies (MBM-N), participants emphasized the importance of continued research on poverty measurement for [Yukon, the Northwest Territories](#) and [Nunavut](#) (e.g., accounting for community freezers, evaluating the appropriateness of the revised northern food basket, etc.) and the need to identify methodological approaches from existing MBM-Ns which could be adapted to poverty measurement across the territories and northern areas of some provinces (e.g., expand Nunavut’s traditional clothing methodology to the other territories and the northern parts of some provinces).

Discussions regarding MBM disposable income focused on the benefits and shortcomings of the current approach to deriving it. Some participants generally appreciated the accuracy and the overall simplicity of accounting for family-specific expenses (e.g., medical expenses, child care expenses) through adjusting disposable income. However, those benefits were weighted against perceived limitations, such as the reduced public visibility from not having these expenses accounted for in the MBM basket or the difficulty of applying the MBM income concept to other data sources or surveys. For example, when discussing the [current approach of deducting child care costs from after-tax income to derive MBM disposable income](#), it was mentioned that these costs should be included on the basket side, even if a family cannot afford child care, since child care costs are common and families with children often incur non-discretionary expenses related to child care. It was recognized, however, that accounting for child care costs in the MBM is a complex task and that there may not be a perfect way to capture them effectively for all families.

Participants also believed there should be differing medical expense imputation amounts depending on the age of the respondent, since some seniors might not have insurance coverage and medical expenses tend to increase as a person gets older.¹⁰ In addition to investigating age differentials, some participants recommended that Statistics Canada investigate whether there are variations in medical expenditures in the lower income deciles and, if so, to relax imputation specifications to include more deciles for the imputation calculation. Finally, while

7. For more information on “fast fashion,” please see <https://www.britannica.com/art/fast-fashion>.

8. The spending data for the current MBM base is derived from the 2008 and 2009 Survey of Household Spending.

9. The methodology used for the other necessities component is meant to approximate average expenditures on a wide range of necessary goods and services. It is not an outline of specific items to be included in the MBM, since creating such a list would be extremely complex given the large number of items that would need to be priced and the likelihood that many of these items could be considered necessities for some families but not for others. For more information on the other necessities methodology, please see [Market Basket Measure Technical Paper: The other necessities component](#) (statcan.gc.ca).

10. For all adult respondents (people aged 15 years of age or older) who were not linked to tax data or for whom the claim was zero for tax purposes, an imputation amount is provided.

participants encouraged Statistics Canada to continue to account for health and dental insurance premiums as nondiscretionary expenses in disposable income, they also thought that it could be useful to have these amounts more prominently captured in a separate component of the MBM basket to improve their visibility and transparency.

The MBM-2018 methodology establishes basket costs for 66 distinct regions (53 across the 10 provinces and 13 in the 3 territories). During consultations for the second comprehensive review of the MBM, one of the research topics identified for further study was to investigate whether adjustments could be made to the MBM methodology to account for differential costs associated with living in “remote” regions. The current MBM methodology assigns the same MBM threshold to all communities denoted as “rural” within the same province, meaning that relatively accessible rural areas have the same thresholds as communities in more isolated areas. During the workshop session on expanding the MBM regions to include “remote” areas, participants thought that there was a benefit to adding “remote” regions to the current MBM methodology. With regards to existing research on [delineating remote regions](#), they suggested further exploration and analysis on communities located at the border of “rural” and “remote” areas to ensure that they are distinct and to validate the delineation with other sources of data. Participants thought there was an added benefit to the remoteness project despite the [current limitations](#) (e.g., basket cost data limitations), but suggested more research could be done and additional data sources could be used before finalizing the methodology. Conversely, many participants did not see a value added to [delineating urban and suburban regions for the MBM’s census metropolitan areas](#), especially when considered alongside more pressing methodological topics (e.g., shelter cost estimation).

There were also diverse opinions from participants on whether they thought the [poverty index](#) was a useful analytical tool for tracking Canada’s poverty rate over time and across different MBM bases. For example, many FPT officials believed it was a useful tool for evaluating poverty trends over a longer period, while many nongovernmental and academic participants voiced concerns that it could be politicized or that it could mask large increases in poverty rates for specific years.

On the topic of MBM thresholds, there was a general appreciation of Statistics Canada’s [square root equivalization research paper](#), which addressed misconceptions regarding the effectiveness of square root equivalization for deriving appropriate thresholds for families of different sizes. Participants encouraged ESDC and Statistics Canada to direct further research on ways to “equivalize” the MBM’s reference family’s composition (i.e., two adults and two children, each without a disability) into other family compositions that are more at-risk of living in poverty (e.g., families with seniors, unattached individuals, persons with disabilities, single parents, multi- or inter-generational families, etc.).

During the session devoted to the proposal to include [additional income inequality indicators using the MBM](#), workshop participants thought the indicators provided valuable insights on the distance between disposable income and the MBM thresholds for the population that is just above or below the poverty line and on the number of baskets that different segments of the population could afford. Further to the discussions held during the dedicated session on this topic, the need to have statistics on the number of people at risk of falling into poverty (i.e., those just above the threshold) was raised during other sessions of the five-day workshop.

On the use of administrative data for the MBM, there was wide acceptance and appeal in continuing the work to apply the [MBM to administrative data sources](#) (i.e., using the [T1 Family File](#)). Discussions revolved around the additional analytical capacity this product could provide the user community in terms of measuring poverty entry and exit rates, conducting longitudinal analyses on poverty, increasing geographical granularity, and expanding coverage for at-risk groups, such as Indigenous populations living off-reserve, among others.

The final session of the workshops dealt with topics raised during the initial call for feedback from experts that fell outside the scope of previous sessions. During this session, participants expressed interest in developing and disseminating outcome-based indicators of poverty in addition to the income-based indicators currently available on [Canada’s Official Poverty Dashboard](#). Specifically, material deprivation indicators or measures were highlighted as important complements to the MBM since they capture outcome-based deprivations that impact living standards (e.g., lack of means to cover unexpected expenses, inability to participate in celebrations or social gatherings, inability to get regular dental care). During this session, participants also expressed interest and willingness to collaborate in the exploration of an MBM methodology specific to on-reserve populations.

General public

Information sessions for members of the public

The MBM information sessions offered to the public, many of whom had lived experiences of financial hardship, provided a valuable opportunity to not only explain the MBM methodology to a wider audience, but also to collect broader feedback on how poverty is measured in Canada.¹¹ This section highlights the discussions.

Session participants stated that shelter costs as currently calculated by the MBM were much lower than the amounts they currently pay for rented units. They indicated that many low-income families are dedicating more than one-third of their income towards shelter costs and that many marginalized populations are more likely to move and not benefit from rent control legislation.

While no substantial feedback was recorded on the estimation of food costs, participants did recommend that Statistics Canada consider cost impacts related to nonstandard dietary needs (e.g., dietary restrictions, culturally appropriate foods, etc.). Conversely, the standard used for the clothing and footwear component was viewed as outdated, both in terms of the clothing items included and their replacement schedule. It was also mentioned that since the MBM methodology assumes a preexisting wardrobe, costs for certain at-risk groups are likely undervalued (e.g., new immigrants, people in domestic violence situations, refugees, growing children, etc.).

Participants also stated that the costing methodology for the other necessities component was less straightforward than the approaches adopted for other components. In particular, they considered the component's lack of specificity on items and services difficult to conceptualize (e.g., participants frequently wanted to know whether a particular item they thought important was included). They also recommended that there should be a separate communications services component that would include Internet and phone plans, with some participants also advocating for streaming services such as Netflix to be included. Finally, many participants also believed that activities supporting social inclusion should be explicitly included in the MBM, since they help support mental health and quality of life and are essential for achieving a modest, basic standard of living.

In relation to health, some participants recommended that costs associated with maintaining both physical and mental health should be included in a separate health care component, since they are too essential to be mixed or combined with "other necessities" or accounted for on the disposable income side. They raised concerns that many at-risk populations are not aware that medical expenses can be claimed on their taxes and that insurance coverage for certain medical procedures (e.g., dental or elective surgeries) is not universal.

As was the case during the workshops, participants believed that there should be remote regions in the MBM methodology and that the costs of living for smaller urban communities may be more closely linked to their proximity to an urban centre than to the size of their population centres.¹² They also suggested that the provincial CPIs, which are used to inflate costs between base years, may not be accurately capturing the rising costs of living for all communities within a province.

Many participants voiced concerns around the use of the MBM reference family. In particular, they considered it inappropriate to use the MBM reference family composition as the basis to estimate poverty thresholds when this family type is not typically found to be living in poverty (e.g., two adults and two children, all able-bodied and in good health). They recommended that Statistics Canada research ways to account for other family compositions (e.g., seniors, persons with disabilities, students and families with student loans, recent immigrants and refugees, Indigenous and on-reserve population, families with young children including single-parent families, families with pets, homeless people, and people belonging to 2SLGBTQIA+ communities).

On the topic of disposable income, concerns were raised that familial responsibilities (e.g., informal caregiving) are not captured and that opportunity costs associated with these responsibilities (e.g., decreased income) are not considered. Participants also recommended that Statistics Canada research ways of incorporating debt-servicing payments (e.g., interest payments) into the MBM methodology. They mentioned that interest payments could put people into poverty and keep them in poverty. They also stated that such payments could cause financial stress, contribute to poor mental health and a reduced ability to earn income.

11. For more information on the material presented during these sessions, please see the handouts provided in Appendix D.

12. The 2018-base MBM methodology has 19 specific communities and 33 population-centre size and province combinations. The population centre sizes are based on the size and density for a given community (e.g., rural, less than 30,000, 30,000 to 99,999, 100,000 to 499,999 and 500,000 or more).

Finally, some participants recommended that Statistics Canada also produce estimates of the population living just above the MBM thresholds, who are likely on the verge of poverty and could easily slip into poverty if they were to face an unforeseen shock to their finances (e.g., car accident, dental emergency, veterinary costs).

Online crowdsourcing survey and forums

To offer a wider cross-section of Canadians an opportunity to provide feedback and contribute to the third comprehensive review of the MBM, Statistics Canada launched the voluntary and anonymous Survey on the Market Basket Measure of Poverty (SMBMP) on its [Consulting Canadians web page](#). The link to the survey was widely distributed on social media and via an email campaign.

Although the SMBMP was a non-sampled (i.e., nonrepresentative) survey, the data collected was used to gather opinions on the current MBM base. In addition, several open-ended text questions were available for respondents to provide more detailed feedback.¹³ The survey was available for a six-month period and collected responses from 5,390 participants across all provinces and territories.

In the following section, some of the data collected through the survey are presented and described.¹⁴ It should be noted that these results will be used to inform the review process, but will not be used to determine components costs for the 2023-base MBM.

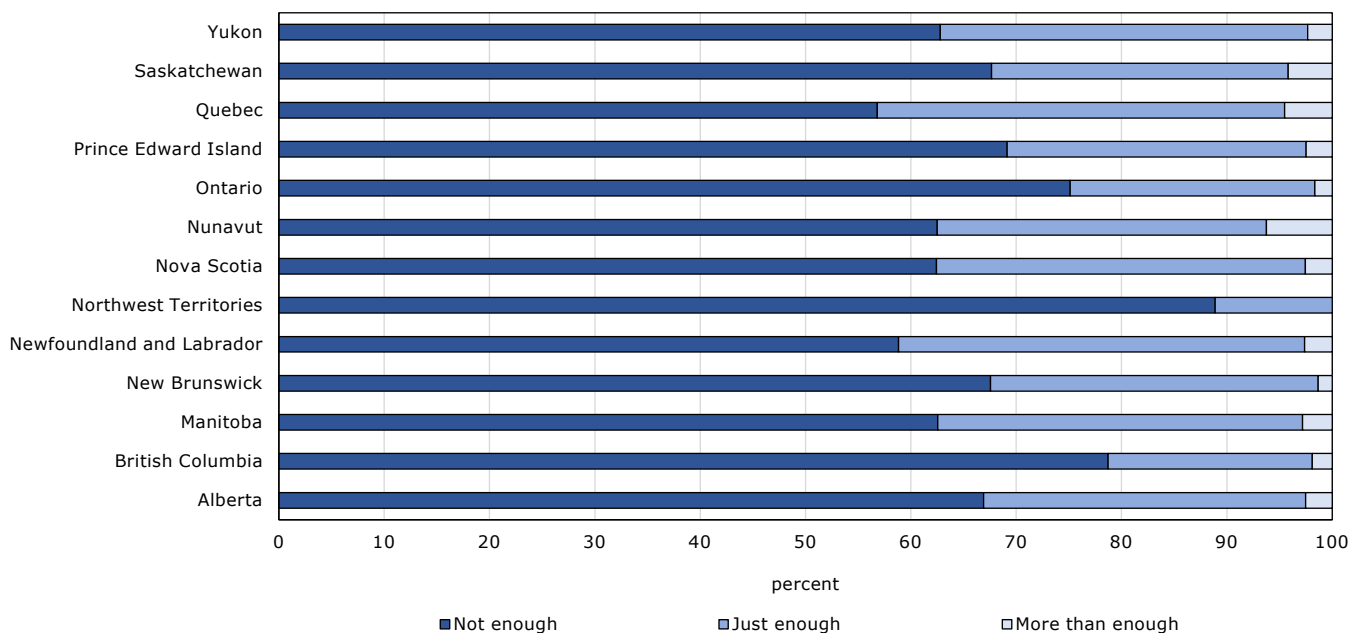
Responses on overall Market Basket Measure thresholds

The survey indicated that less than half (43.3%) of the respondents had previously heard of Canada's Official Poverty Line (i.e., the MBM). In addition, over two-thirds (68.8%) of the respondents did not think that the 2018-base MBM threshold amounts for 2022 were sufficient to cover a family's basic needs. Furthermore, respondents that thought that the MBM thresholds were not enough thought that the MBM thresholds should be, on average, around \$16,700 higher.

Chart 1 shows the provincial or territorial breakdown of the percentage of respondents who believed the 2018-base MBM poverty thresholds represented just enough, not enough or more than enough money to afford a modest, basic standard of living. Among the provinces, participants from Ontario and British Columbia were more likely to state that the MBM thresholds were not enough (75% or over).

Chart 1

Does the respondent consider their adjusted Market Basket Measure 2018-base threshold to be enough to cover a family's basic needs, by province or territory



Source: Statistics Canada, Survey on the Market Basket Measure of Poverty (SMBMP), 2024.

13. The SMBMP questions are publicly available here: [Survey on the Market Basket Measure of Poverty](#) (statcan.gc.ca)

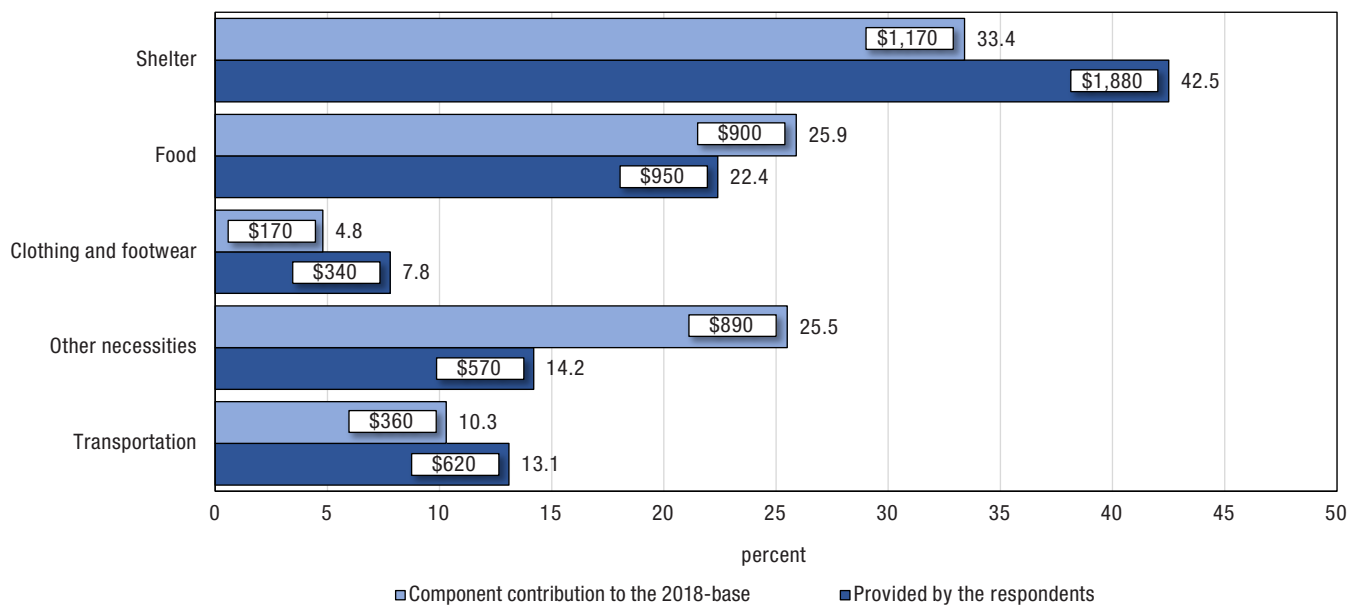
14. For additional tables and information please see, Appendix A.

Responses on specific Market Basket Measure components

Once the survey respondents had specified their province or territory, city and family size, they were presented with the monthly amount for their overall MBM threshold. Next, they were asked to provide how they would divide this overall amount between the MBM components. Finally, they were provided with the resulting monthly component amounts and asked to consider whether these amounts were adequate. Most respondents considered the amounts for food, transportation, clothing and footwear, and other necessities to be around what a family would need to spend to cover basic needs. The exception was the shelter component, with over half (56.1%) of respondents considering shelter amounts to be less than what a family would need to spend.

There were also noted differences in how respondents would allocate their monthly budgets across the various components, versus the actual allocation in the 2018-MBM base. Chart 2 shows that, on average, respondents thought that close to 43% of the total MBM threshold amount should be dedicated to the shelter component. On the other hand, the 2018-base MBM currently allocates about 33% of the total MBM threshold to shelter, which is about \$710 less per month than what survey respondents deemed necessary. Respondents also tended to allocate a smaller cost share to the other necessities and food components compared with the current amounts allocated in the 2018 base. The discrepancies in the amounts that respondents would spend on different components compared with the 2018-base MBM reflect both an overall increase in the monthly expenses (mainly driven by the shelter component) and differences in how the respondents would allocate their expenses across the components.

Chart 2
Comparison of respondents' average monthly allocation of the total Market Basket Measure threshold across Market Basket Measure components versus average allocation based on the 2018-base Market Basket Measure, Canada



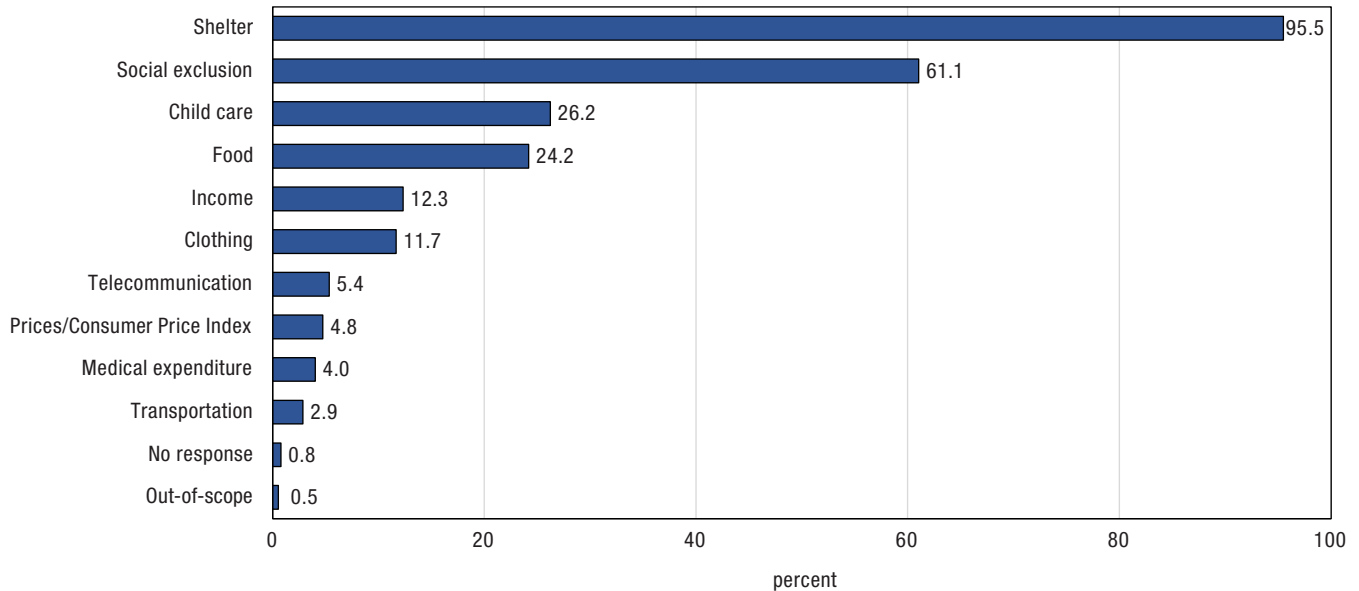
Note: The dollar amounts represent average monthly amounts allocated across the Market Basket Measure components.
Source: Statistics Canada, Survey on the Market Basket Measure of Poverty (SMBMP), 2024.

Responses on poverty alleviation

Respondents were also asked to comment on what type of financial assistance measures they considered most needed by those living in poverty in their communities. The overwhelming majority (95.5%) of text responses referred to assistance with shelter-associated needs (Chart 3). Other responses referred to assistance to address social exclusion (61.1%), child care needs (26.2%) and food (24.2%).

Chart 3

Type of financial assistance most needed for people living in poverty in the respondent's community



Notes: Interpretation: 95.5% of the respondents wrote in the text box a word that was related to shelter, and 24.2% of respondents mentioned a word related to Food. See Table A.2 in the appendix for the list of words included in each type of financial assistance.

Source: Statistics Canada, Survey on the Market Basket Measure of Poverty (SMBMP), 2024.

Towards a new Market Basket Measure base

The guiding principles supporting the objectives of the third comprehensive review of the MBM were outlined with the launch of the review in mid-2023. These principles included holding a **publicly informed process** to provide Canadians of different backgrounds and expertise the opportunity to identify and recommend necessary updates to the MBM methodology, adopting an **evidence-based lens** to ensure that the most robust data and expert-developed standards are used to inform methodological changes to the MBM methodology, and **supporting transparency** through the open communication of proposed changes and decision making for the next MBM base. The work remaining to complete the review will continue to be guided by these principles in the coming months.

Priority items for the 2023 base of the Market Basket Measure and next Market Basket Measure research agenda

The engagement phase of the third comprehensive review of the MBM produced a wealth of input and suggestions for improving and updating the MBM methodology. It is important that any potential updates to the MBM methodology resulting from this input are informed by existing data, rely on expert-developed standards or methods, and can be implemented in a methodologically robust way.

Considering the above, this phase of the review has identified priority areas for the 2023 base of the MBM, as well as several other areas requiring further research. These items are in addition to statistical updates that are routinely undertaken as part of the MBM review process, such as the updating of the costs and income data sources, the benchmarking of MBM parameters according to the latest available standards and data, and the updating of the imputation approaches where these exist.

Discussion paper on proposed updates for the 2023-base Market Basket Measure

This summary of feedback paper is the first of two being released as part of the third comprehensive review.

In spring 2025, a discussion paper will be released detailing the proposed 2023-base methodology, including threshold costs and poverty estimates. After its publication, a shorter consultation will be held to discuss the results with academic, non-governmental, provincial and territorial consultees. After that review period, the proposed methodology could be updated (if necessary) and will become final.

Market Basket Measure basket components

One of the items that garnered the most interest was the estimation and indexation of shelter costs in the MBM basket. Statistics Canada will assess how cost measurement for this component could be changed, taking into account the helpful feedback heard during consultations.

There was also strong feedback on the need to create a separate communications services component to include Internet, cell phone and landline services that are now deemed to be considered essential for a basic, modest standard of living. Statistics Canada will consider how this feedback could be incorporated into the MBM methodology in a robust and evidence-based manner.

Market Basket Measure disposable income

Child care costs are currently accounted for as part of the disposable income calculation in the MBM. This perceived lack of visibility of child care costs has led to calls for the creation of a separate MBM child care component. The inability to properly account for the diversity of child care arrangements and needs across different families using a single and separate basket component is problematic from a methodological point of view. This issue points to preserving the current methodological approach for treating these costs as a deduction to after-tax income for each family. The importance of providing greater visibility to this critical cost for families is recognized and options will be explored on how to provide greater transparency to the current treatment of child care costs in the MBM.

Other items

Other complementary products will also be considered for release with the production of the 2023-base MBM. This includes MBM-based inequality indicators discussed and supported by many experts and stakeholders (e.g., distance and basket coefficient indicators), which will be published in Common Output Data Repository (CODR) tables by Statistics Canada. It also includes the addition of a poverty index to the Official Poverty Dashboard to track long-term trends in Canada's overall poverty rate.

While there is support for the expansion of the MBM geographic regions, the current data limitations associated with the derivation of remote-region basket costs and the limited value associated with delineating urban and suburban regions within census metropolitan areas restrict the expansion of MBM geographical regions for the upcoming MBM base. Changes in data collection and methodologies may warrant further examination of these items in future MBM reviews.

Items for the next Market Basket Measure research agenda

Feedback collected from various engagement streams pointed to certain proposals that would require further research or exploration given their overall complexity and the methodological challenges they present to the MBM. The following items are envisioned for inclusion into the next forward-looking MBM research agenda to further explore their implications and identify potential opportunities:

- exploring methods for the derivation of poverty thresholds for families of a different composition than the MBM reference family (e.g., seniors, persons with disabilities)
- evaluating the appropriateness of the continued use of second income decile data to derive key parameters for the MBM
- continuing research on poverty measurement for Yukon, the Northwest Territories and Nunavut to reflect community-based approaches for the procurement of certain goods and services included in the Northern MBM basket
- exploring the feasibility and merit of including expenses related to servicing debt in the calculation of MBM poverty rates
- exploring the development of material deprivation indicators as complementary indicators to the MBM
- advancing work to derive MBM indicators using administrative income data.

This list of items is not exhaustive and other topics will likely be added as resources allow.

Conclusion

This paper described the engagement activities related to the third comprehensive review of the MBM, provided summaries of the feedback collected from such engagement activities and outlined the priority items being considered for the 2023-base methodology and areas for further research in preparation for future bases.

Following this publication, a discussion paper will be released in spring 2025 to describe a proposed 2023-base methodology for the MBM, with accompanying poverty thresholds and poverty rate estimates. The release of the new MBM base will be followed by a consultation period during which academics, NGOs, and provincial and territorial stakeholders would be able to provide additional feedback.

Although this paper marks the end of the formal engagement phase for the third comprehensive review of the MBM, Statistics Canada and ESDC continually encourage readers to provide feedback and suggest potential areas for future research. The ongoing support from the general and expert communities is greatly appreciated and helps Statistics Canada and ESDC improve poverty measurement across Canada.

Those who are interested in contacting us are encouraged to email statcan.market.basket.measure-mesure.du.panier.de.consommation.statcan@statcan.gc.ca.

Appendix A – Survey on the Market Basket Measure of Poverty (SMBMP)

Table A.1.1
Demographic descriptive statistics

Demographic	Counts	Percent
Gender		
Men	2,317	43.0
Women	2,884	53.6
Other	184	3.4
Missing	4	..
Age of the highest income earner in the family		
Under 25	167	3.1
25-44	3,211	59.6
45-65	1,653	30.7
Over 65	357	6.6
Missing	1	..
Language used to answer the survey		
English	4,696	87.1
French	693	12.9
Number of family members living in the household		
1	1,485	28.8
2	1,804	34.9
3	802	15.5
4	707	13.7
5 or more	366	7.1
Missing	2	..
At least one family member living in the household is indigenous		
No	4,962	92.1
First Nations	163	3.0
Métis	240	4.5
Inuit	23	0.4
Missing	1	..
At least one family member living in the household is a member of a racialized group		
Yes	1,333	24.7
No	4,054	75.3
Missing	2	..
At least one family member living in the household has a disability		
Yes	1,940	36.0
No	3,447	64.0
Missing	2	..

.. not available for a specific reference period

Source: Statistics Canada, Survey on the Market Basket Measure of Poverty (SMBMP), 2024.

Table A.1.2
Dwelling descriptive statistics

Dwelling	Counts	Percent
Dwelling owned by a member of the family		
Yes	3,106	57.6
No	2,283	42.4
Mortgage on the dwelling		
Yes	2,457	79.1
No	649	20.9
Subsidized rent		
Yes	272	11.9
No	2,011	88.1

Source: Statistics Canada, Survey on the Market Basket Measure of Poverty (SMBMP), 2024.

Table A.1.3
Income descriptive statistics

Income - Decile adjusted to the province or territory of the respondent	Counts	Percent
Decile 1	538	10.0
Decile 2	351	6.5
Decile 3	362	6.7
Decile 4	453	8.4
Decile 5	545	10.1
Decile 6	611	11.3
Decile 7	641	11.9
Decile 8	618	11.5
Decile 9	648	12.0
Decile 10	620	11.5
Missing	2	..

.. not available for a specific reference period

Source: Statistics Canada, Survey on the Market Basket Measure of Poverty (SMBMP), 2024.

Table A.1.4
Geography descriptive statistics

Geography	Counts	Percent
Remoteness		
Not applicable	4,961	92.1
More remote than rural	61	1.1
More rural than remote	367	6.8

Source: Statistics Canada, Survey on the Market Basket Measure of Poverty (SMBMP), 2024.

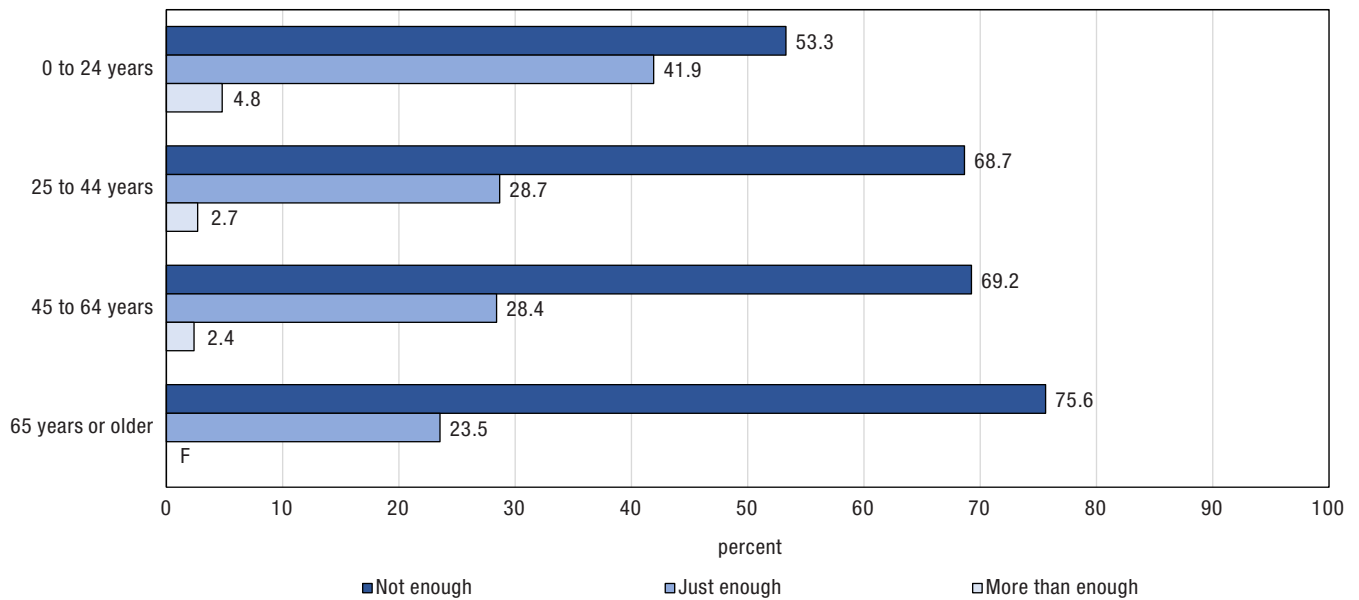
Table A.2
Variation of words included in the type of financial assistance needed for persons in poverty

Financial assistance category	Words included
Shelter	Housing, house, rent, shelter, accomodation, mortgage, utility, utilities, apartments, home, logement, loyer, crise du, hypo, logis
Income	Income, wage, tax, debt, financial assistance, salary, financial, money, interest, revenu, taxe, impôt, dette, financière, imposition, impot, salaire, argent, allocation
Social exclusion	Homelessness, homeless, social assistance, disability, welfare, disable, social service, assistance sociale, sans-abris, prestation, handicapé, aide sociale
Food	Food, grocery, groceries, alimentation, nourriture, alimentaire, épicerie, nutrition
Medical expenditure	Medical, healthcare, health care, dental, insurance, prescription, dentaire, assurance, médicaux, médical
Child care	Child, childcare, enfant service de garde
Prices/Consumer Price Index	Cost of living, price, inflation, coût de la vie, cout de la vie, prix, IPC
Transportation	Transportation, public transit, car, transit, driving, vehicule, transport
Telecommunication	Telecommunication, internet
Clothing	Clothing, clothe, vêtement
Out of scope	Employment, job, mental health, education, immigration, bureaucracy, visa, workforce, government, skill, drug, addiction, rehab, santé mentale, emploi, éducation, service sociaux
No response	I don't know, no, n/a, idk, unsure, je ne sais pas

Source: Statistics Canada, Survey on the Market Basket Measure of Poverty (SMBMP), 2024.

Chart A.1

Does the respondent consider their adjusted Market Basket Measure 2018-base threshold to be enough to cover a family's basic needs, by age group, Canada

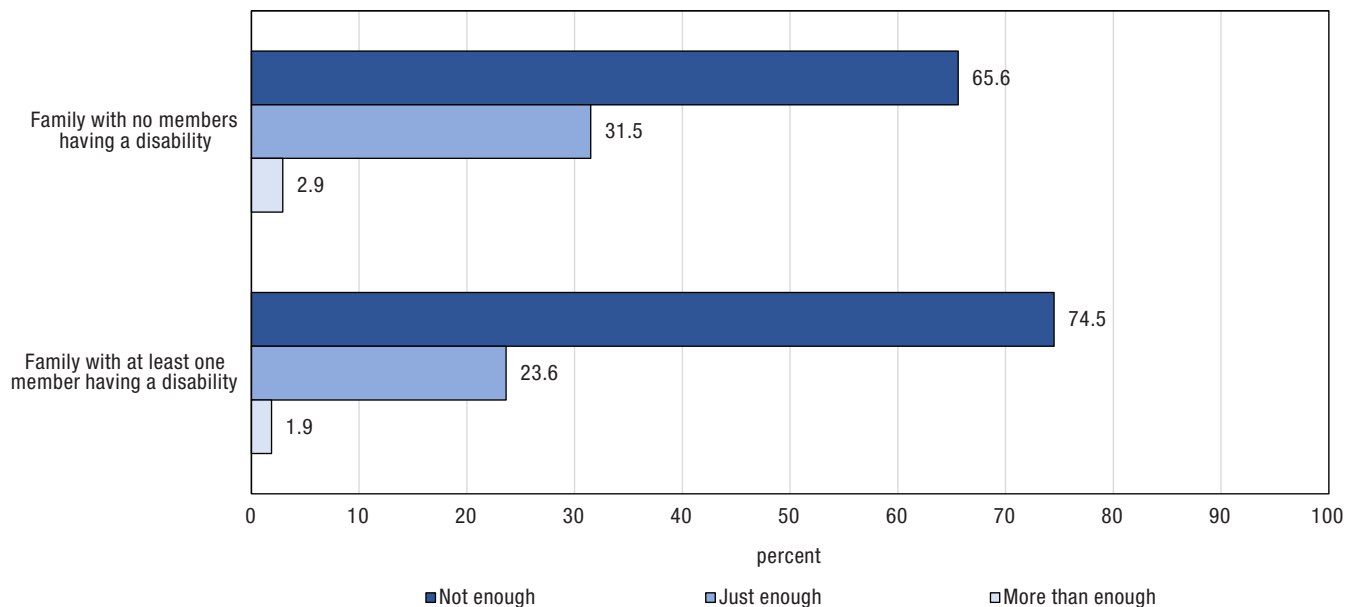


F too unreliable to be published

Source: Statistics Canada, Survey on the Market Basket Measure of Poverty (SMBMP), 2024.

Chart A.2

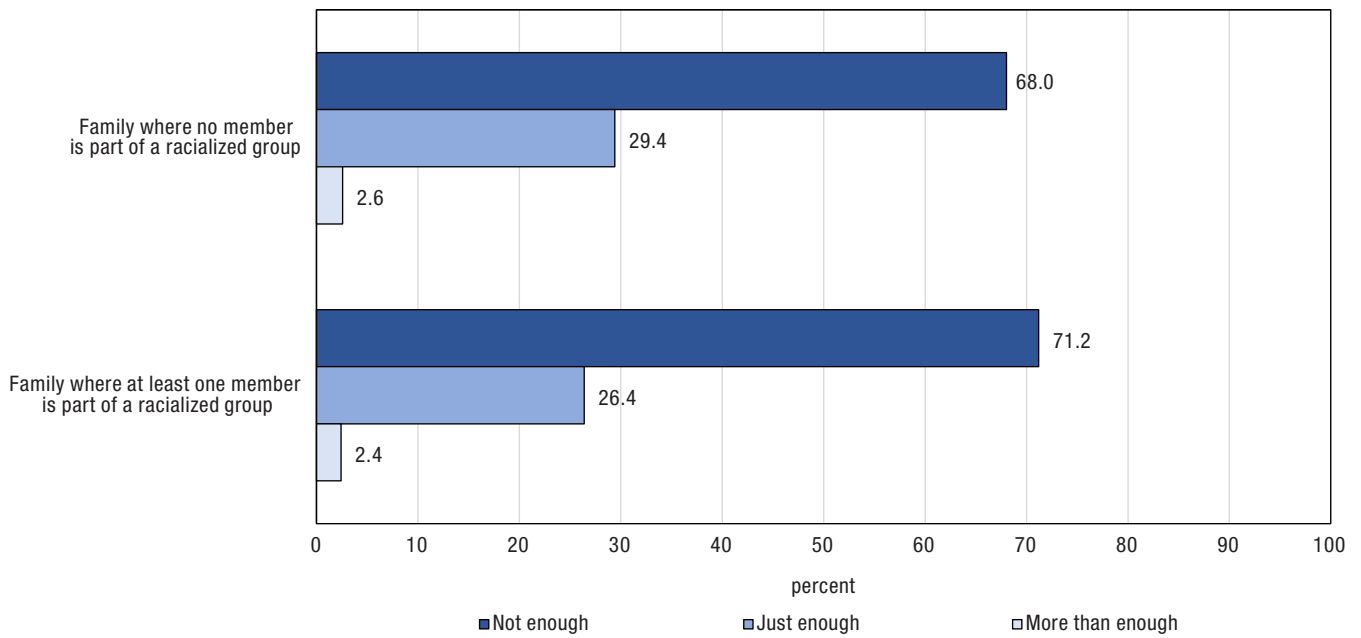
Does the respondent consider their adjusted Market Basket Measure 2018-base threshold to be enough to cover a family's basic needs, by presence in the family of at least one person with a disability, Canada



Source: Statistics Canada, Survey on the Market Basket Measure of Poverty (SMBMP), 2024.

Chart A.3

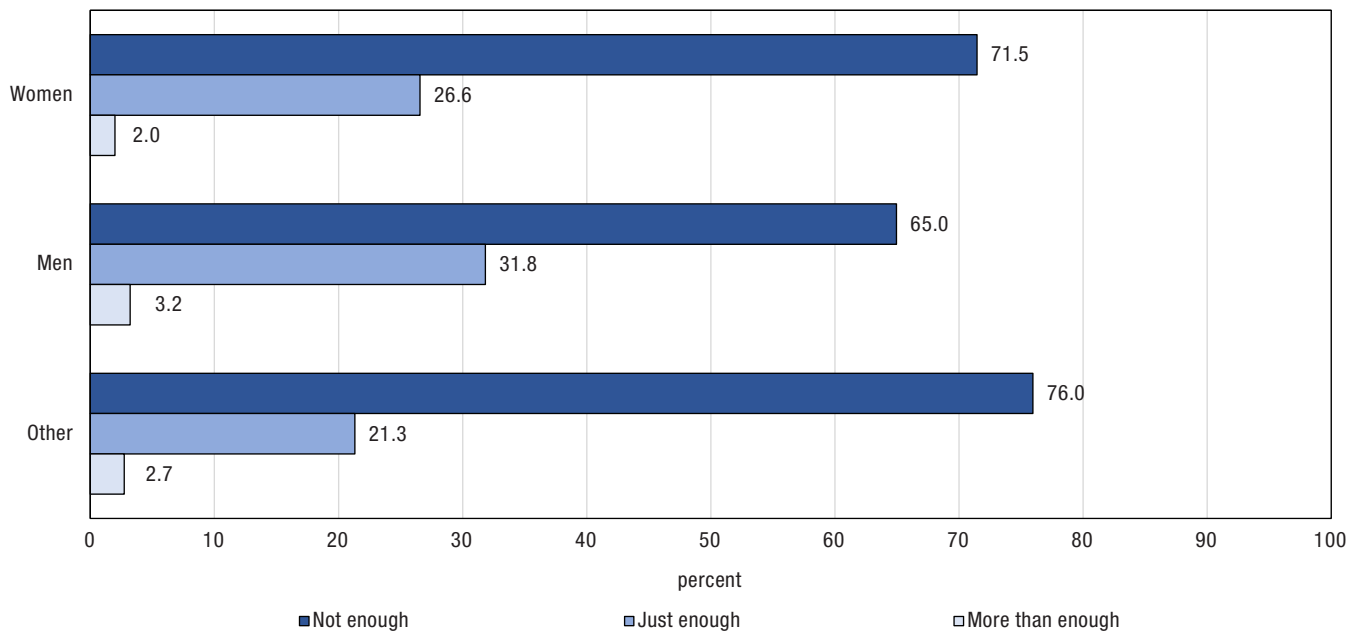
Does the respondent consider their adjusted Market Basket Measure 2018-base threshold to be enough to cover a family's basic needs, by presence in the family of at least one racialized person



Source: Statistics Canada, Survey on the Market Basket Measure of Poverty (SMBMP), 2024.

Chart A.4

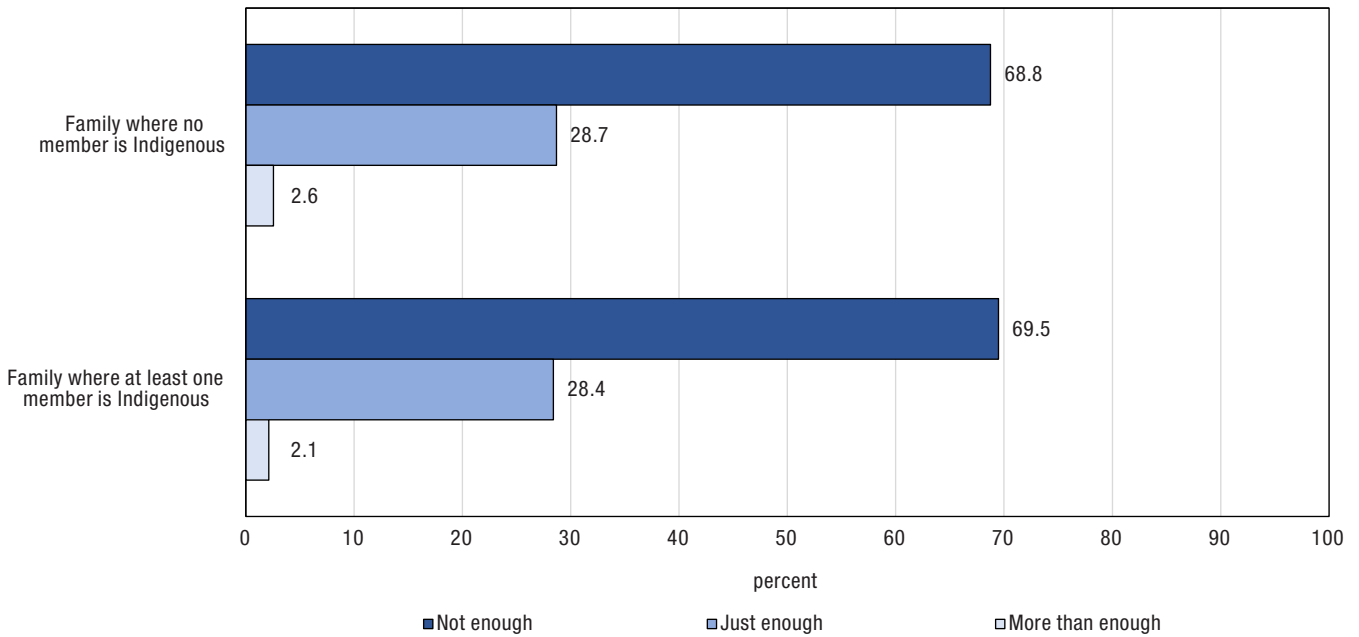
Does the respondent consider their adjusted Market Basket Measure 2018-base threshold to be enough to cover a family's basic needs, by gender, Canada



Source: Statistics Canada, Survey on the Market Basket Measure of Poverty (SMBMP), 2024.

Chart A.5

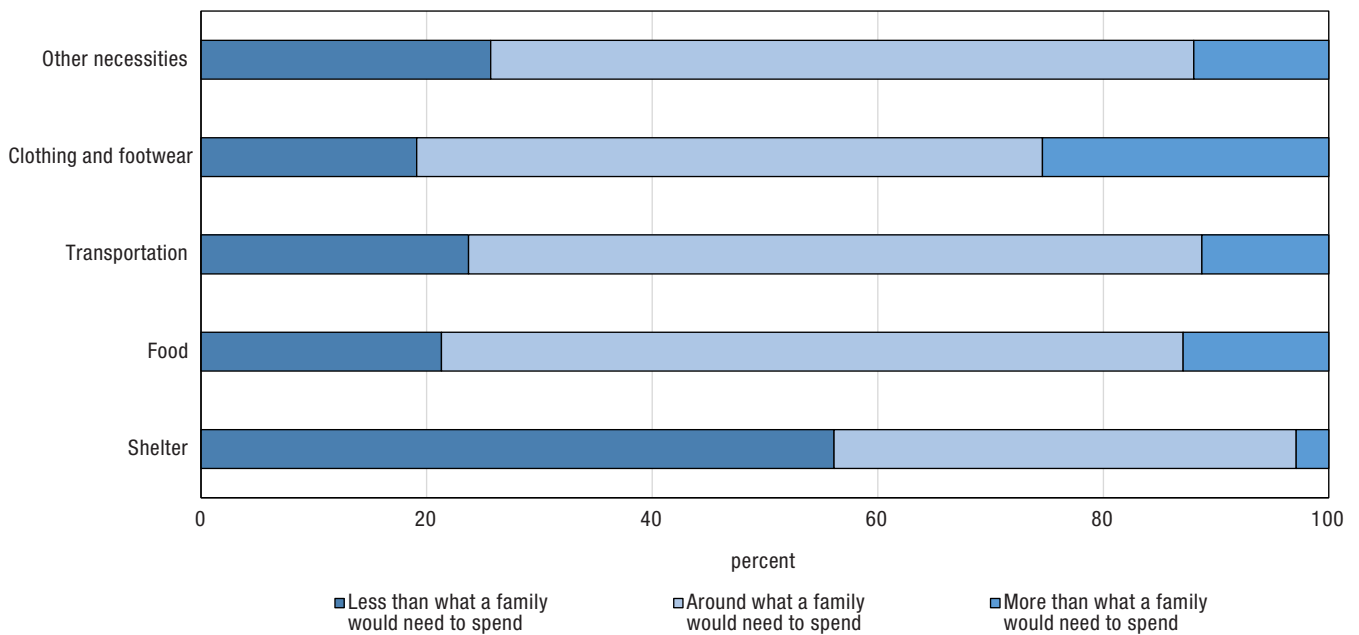
Does the respondent consider their adjusted Market Basket Measure 2018-base threshold to be enough to cover a family's basic needs, by presence in the family of at least one Indigenous person



Source: Statistics Canada, Survey on the Market Basket Measure of Poverty (SMBMP), 2024.

Chart A.6

Based on the percentage of the component monthly expenses that the respondent provided, does the respondent consider the monthly component amount sufficient for their family size and community



Source: Statistics Canada, Survey on the Market Basket Measure of Poverty (SMBMP), 2024.

Appendix B

Table B

List of forward-looking research agenda items for the 2023-base

Research topic	Short description
Child care expenses	Currently, child care costs are represented in the Market Basket Measure (MBM) as a direct deduction from disposable income. This way, a family's needs are compared with an income measure that reflects their available resources. Experts have asked Statistics Canada whether this is the best way to deal with child care expenses in the MBM. Could child care costs be treated as a separate basket item instead?
Remoteness - Delineating Remote Regions for the Market Basket Measure Remoteness - Market Basket Measure thresholds for remote regions	Statistics Canada will research whether adjustments should be made to the Market Basket Measure to account for higher costs faced by families living in remote regions and communities to derive (for example) better estimates for the northern parts of the provinces.
Different family types Equivalization analysis	Currently, Statistics Canada estimates Market Basket Measure thresholds for a family of four and uses the square root equivalization scale to derive thresholds for families of different sizes. Does this method lead to the best possible thresholds for smaller families and unattached individuals? An additional study could also be conducted on whether it may be appropriate to construct separate basket values for families of the same size but with different compositions (e.g., one-parent family with three children versus a couple with two children) or other characteristics (e.g., age of family members).
Communications technology	Statistics Canada will look at how a separate communications component could best be added to the Market Basket Measure. Presently, the need for communication goods and services is reflected in the "other necessities" component.
The other component	The other necessities component is meant to represent the costs of goods and services other than food, shelter, transportation and clothing. The list of items that could potentially be included in the other necessities component is large and could vary depending on the structure, age, location or other circumstances of a family. Ongoing research on the methodology underpinning the other component could verify whether the current method for setting the value of the other necessities component is adequate or must be improved.
Poverty Index	Anchoring the Market Basket Measure (MBM) to specific base years, yet updating it regularly to reflect changes in the standards of living to ensure it remains relevant, is an underlying strength of the MBM. However, periodically rebasing the MBM leads to the creation of various poverty lines that can make it difficult to track poverty trends over longer periods. To improve transparency and help track poverty trends over longer periods, the implementation of a poverty reduction index will be considered.
Inverse correlation of shelter and transportation costs	Often, people in areas where shelter costs are relatively higher have transportation costs that are relatively lower and vice versa. For instance, people in rural areas typically pay lower rents or mortgages but must spend more on fuel and seldom access public transportation. We propose to explore whether the Market Basket Measure could be improved by more precisely considering these differences in costs.
Using the Market Basket Measure with administrative data	As the Market Basket Measure (MBM) currently exists, its poverty rates can be accurately calculated using a combination of survey and administrative data. We propose to explore the feasibility of applying MBM thresholds to administrative data only.
Additional income inequality indicators using the Market Basket Measure	Because the majority of the current analytical products based on the Market Basket Measure (MBM) do not describe the full income distribution, since they typically compare the MBM threshold with disposable income, they do not fully describe income inequality. Proposed additional inequality indicators will be presented, allowing income disparities among Canadians to be better identified.

Appendix C

Initial Call for Feedback - Third Comprehensive Review of the Market Basket Measure

Hello,

Statistics Canada and Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) would like to invite you to participate in the third comprehensive review of the Market Basket Measure (MBM), Canada's Official Poverty Line. Given your expertise and experience working in fields related to low-income measurement, income security and poverty reduction, we would like to hear from you.

The outreach activities for the third comprehensive review of the MBM have begun and are scheduled to conclude in 2025. The review will involve a series of engagement activities with Canadians of different backgrounds and expertise to ensure the MBM methodology continues to accurately measure a modest, basic standard of living across Canada.

One phase of the engagement process is to request input from experts like you, in the form of **feedback and recommendations for methodological updates or improvements to the MBM methodology**. Your input will allow Statistics Canada to identify key themes for discussion and will help steer the MBM review process.

We are encouraging feedback and recommendations that meet the following guidelines:

- Be limited to a maximum of 750 words
- Be evidence-based recommendations, including references to published work (where possible)

Please submit your feedback and recommendations as an attachment (e.g., Word document, PDF, etc.) to the [MBM email address](#) before the end of July 2023.

You may find the following references helpful in preparing your recommendations:

- [Launch of the Third Comprehensive Review of the Market Basket Measure](#) provides more information on the upcoming review process
- [Report on the second comprehensive review of the Market Basket Measure](#) contains the methodological updates resulting from the second comprehensive review (2018-base)
- A [short MBM explainer video](#) provides a high-level explanation of the MBM methodology

For more information regarding the comprehensive review process or this initial call for feedback, please reply directly to this email.

Thank you in advance for your contribution and support of the third comprehensive review of the MBM.

Centre for Income and Socioeconomic Wellbeing Statistics

statcan.market.basket.measure-mesure.du.panier.de.consommation.statcan@statcan.gc.ca

Statistics Canada / Government of Canada



Statistics
Canada

Statistique
Canada

Appendix D – Sample of materials used for public information sessions

THE MARKET BASKET MEASURE (MBM) 3rd Comprehensive Review



How are poverty thresholds determined by the Market Basket Measure?

The Market Basket Measure (MBM), Canada's official measure of poverty, uses a basket of goods and services composed of five main components:

- food
- clothing and footwear
- shelter
- transportation
- other necessities

The costs of these five components are added up to produce a MBM threshold, which is considered to be the minimum amount of money required by a family to have a modest, basic standard of living.

The cost of the MBM basket, or poverty thresholds, are calculated for a reference family of four, while adjustments are made for other family sizes. Since the standard of living could differ based on the community (e.g., availability of public transportation), the contents of the basket and costs vary from coast-to-coast-to-coast across Canada.

The five components of the Market Basket Measure poverty threshold



THE MARKET BASKET MEASURE (MBM)

3rd Comprehensive Review

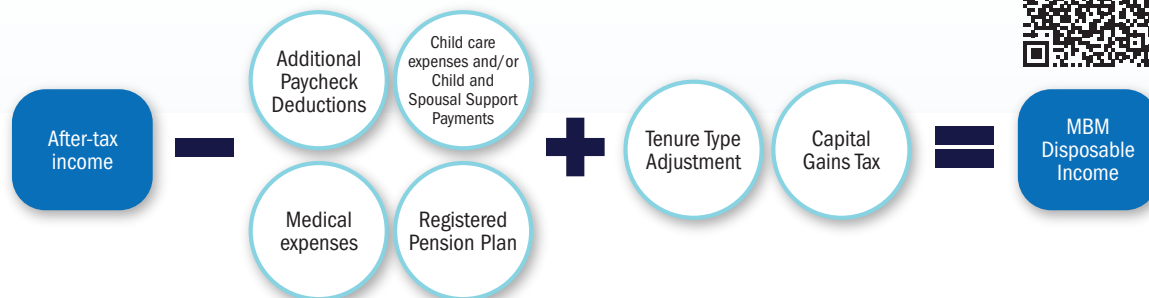


How is disposable income calculated when determining poverty status?



Disposable income is the income an individual or family has left over to purchase the goods and services found in the MBM basket after unavoidable expenses have been deducted (e.g., income taxes, pension plan contributions, medical expenses, child care expenses, etc.).

Calculation of disposable income for the Market Basket Measure of poverty



After-tax income is total income (including government transfers) after deducting income taxes.



Additional paycheck deductions include Canada Pension Plan and Quebec Pension Plan contributions, Employment Insurance, and union dues.



Medical expenses include public health insurance premiums, and direct medical expenses including private insurance premiums.



Capital gains tax is added to prevent families with large capital gains (and therefore large capital gains taxes) appearing to be living in poverty, since capital gains are not included in after-tax income.



Tenure Type Adjustment (TTA) accounts for the fact that different families have different shelter costs. Since the MBM basket's shelter costs represent non-subsidized rents, the TTA is used to account for differing type of tenures (e.g., homeowners with or without mortgages, and subsidized renters).

THE MARKET BASKET MEASURE (MBM)

3rd Comprehensive Review

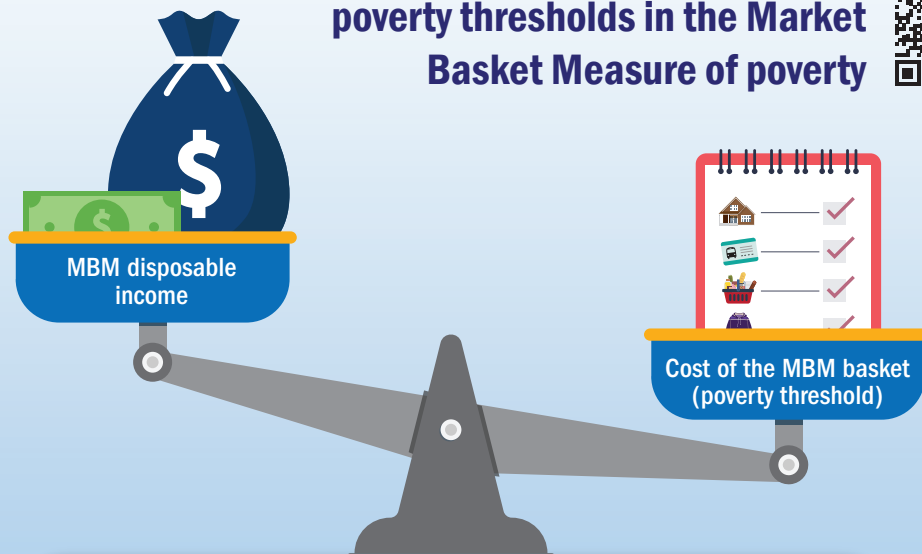


How does the MBM determine who lives in poverty?



An individual or family is considered to be living below the poverty line if their **disposable income is less than the poverty threshold** for their family size and community. In other words, if the income remaining after unavoidable expenses have been removed is insufficient to purchase the goods and services found in the basket, a family is considered to be living in poverty.

Comparing disposable income to poverty thresholds in the Market Basket Measure of poverty



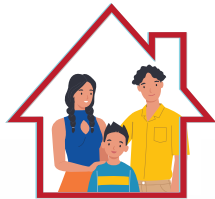
Disposable income < Basket costs = Poverty

THE MARKET BASKET MEASURE (MBM)

3rd Comprehensive Review

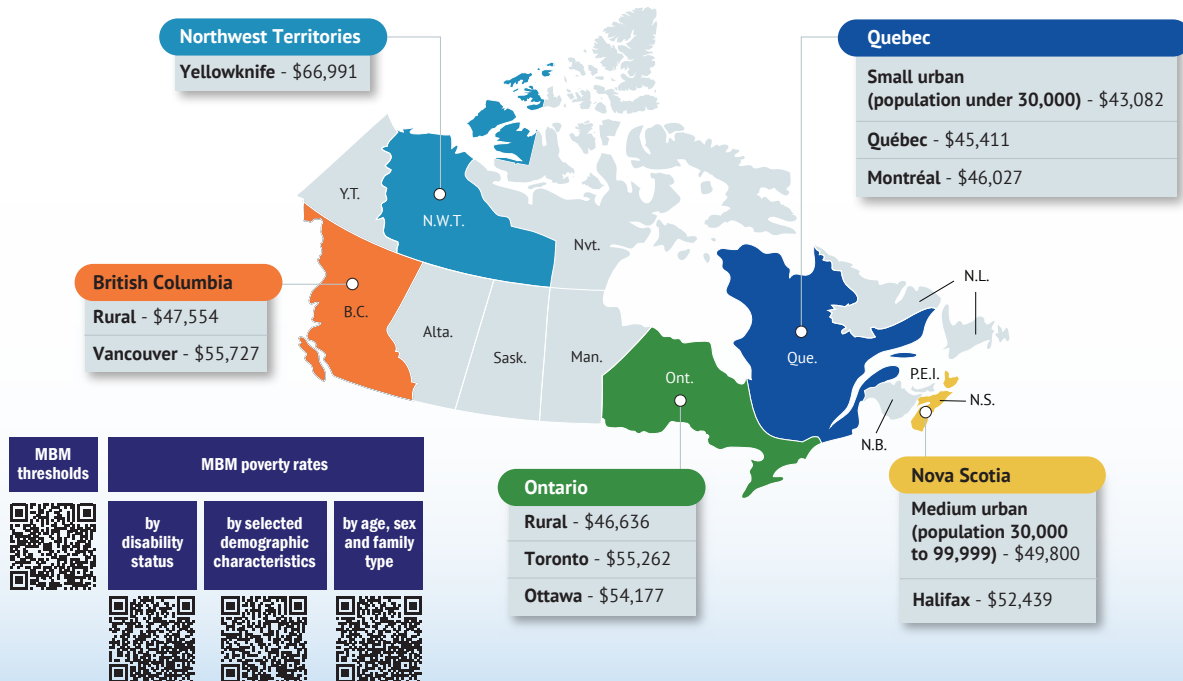


Poverty thresholds based on the Market Basket Measure differ across Canada



The Market Basket Measure (MBM) poverty thresholds are currently estimated for **66 different regions** across Canada, **53 in the provinces** and **13 in the territories**. The MBM regions account for geographical price and standard of living differences. This is a major strength of the MBM as it reflects differences in living costs across Canada.

Selected Market Basket Measure of poverty thresholds for the reference family, 2022, Canada



MBM thresholds	MBM poverty rates		
	by disability status	by selected demographic characteristics	by age, sex and family type

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