

# Survey of Household Spending, 2019

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The pandemic has changed almost every facet of our lives, including how we spend our money.

For example, in 2019, Canadian households spent on average \$871 on air travel and \$300 on public transit. In 2020, [air travel](#) and [public transit](#) ridership fell drastically amid travel restrictions and border closures, as well as public health measures to contain the further spread of COVID-19. On the other hand, in 2019, households spent \$7,536 on food from stores and \$799 on alcoholic beverages from stores. Starting in March 2020, [monthly food and beverage store sales](#) have consistently surpassed the pre-pandemic February 2020 level.

New data from the Survey of Household Spending explores how we spent our money in 2019, and provides a benchmark to measure how much spending habits have changed since then.

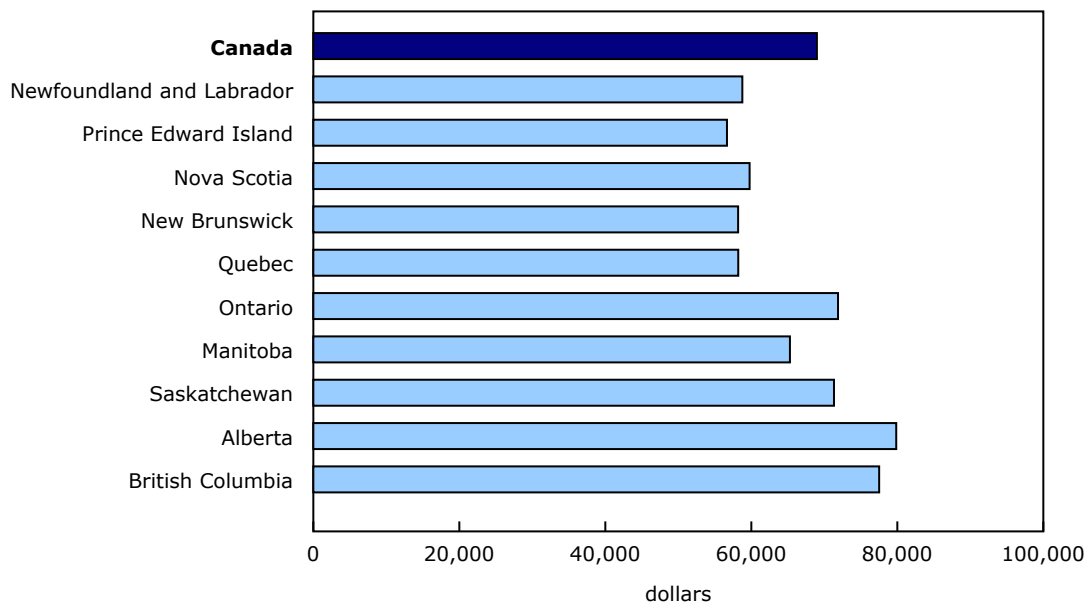
## Household spending rose at a faster pace than inflation from 2017 to 2019

Canadian households in the provinces spent an average of \$68,980 on goods and services in 2019, up 7.9% from 2017—the last year this information was collected.

Household spending rose at a faster pace than consumer price inflation (+4.3%) over this two-year period, indicating a real increase in average household spending of 3.4%.

Average household spending was highest in Alberta (\$79,849) and British Columbia (\$77,511).

**Chart 1**  
**Average spending on goods and services by province, 2019**



**Note(s):** National-level statistics include the provinces only.

**Source(s):** Table [11-10-0222-01](#).



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## Housing, transportation and food top household spending

Good times or bad, Canadian households dedicate the largest share of their spending to shelter, transportation and food.

In 2019, almost two-thirds of total household spending on goods and services were allocated to shelter (29.3%), transportation (18.5%) and food (14.9%).

The largest household expense was shelter (\$20,200), up 8.4% from 2017. Most shelter spending (90.9%) in 2019 was for a principal residence—which was an owned home for two-thirds of households.

Homeowners with mortgages allocated one-third of their total goods and services spending to shelter costs (\$30,734), with mortgage payments (\$16,959) accounting for more than half of this total. In comparison, owners without mortgages spent one-fifth of their total spending on shelter (\$13,325).

Renter households spent \$14,401 on shelter in 2019, as they set aside one-quarter of their total goods and services spending for rent payments (\$12,224).

In 2019, average household spending on transportation (\$12,737) was largely unchanged from 2017. Households spent \$11,258 on private transportation, almost equally split between buying or leasing a vehicle (\$5,434) and operating costs (\$5,707). Households owned or leased 1.4 vehicles on average.

Public transportation accounted for \$1,479 of household spending in 2019, with the amount dedicated to air travel (\$871) almost tripling that spent on public transit (\$300).

Households spent \$10,311 on food in 2019. More than one-quarter of food spending in 2019 was for food purchased from restaurants (\$2,775). Average spending for food purchased from stores was \$7,536, of which about one-fifth went to meat products (\$1,481).

## Households in Canada's largest census metropolitan areas spend the most on public transportation

In 2019, almost half of Canadian households lived in the largest census metropolitan areas (CMAs with a population of 1 million residents or more), while around 1 in 10 lived in rural areas.

Households in Canada's largest CMAs spent \$73,568 on goods and services in 2019, compared with \$60,335 for households in rural areas. Outlays for shelter accounted for the largest difference in spending between households in the largest population centres (\$23,379) and those in rural areas (\$14,516).

In 2019, households in the largest CMAs spent \$2,108 on public transportation. Of this total, \$1,214 was spent on air travel and \$517 on public transit. In contrast, households in rural areas paid \$489 for public transportation, largely for air travel (\$328).

Private transportation continued to make up the largest component of total transportation expenses for households in rural (96.2%) and the largest CMAs (83.6%).

While households in both areas spent similar amounts on food, those residing in the largest CMAs allocated more of their total food budget to food purchased from restaurants (28.9%) compared with those living in rural areas (23.3%).

## One-person households allocate the largest share of spending to shelter

In 2019, one-person households in Canada spent the least on goods and services on average at \$38,509, followed by lone-parent households (\$61,636). Couple families without children spent \$69,877 and those with children spent \$95,439.

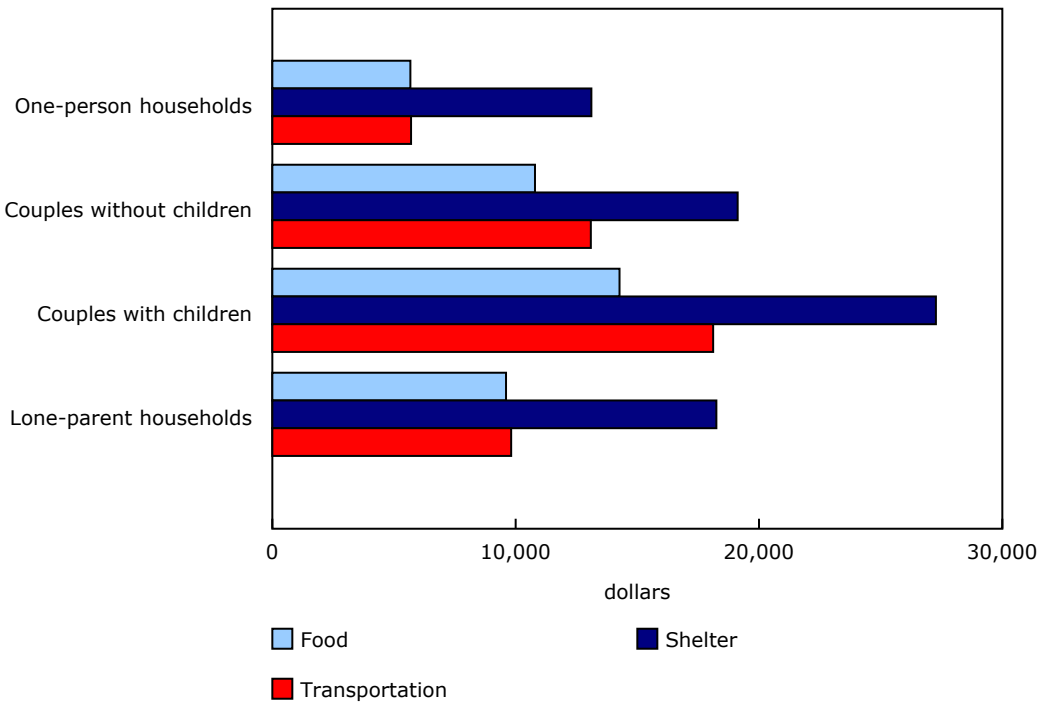
While shelter accounted for the largest expense for all family types, one-person households allocated a larger share of their household spending to shelter (34.0%) than lone-parent households (29.6%), couples with children (28.6%) and couples without children (27.4%).

One-person households accounted for nearly one-third of Canadian households in 2019, [a proportion that has grown over time](#). Over one-third of people living alone were aged 65 or older. People who lived alone and were aged 65 or older (\$31,672) spent less, on average, compared with those aged under 65 (\$42,743), while allocating a similar share of their total consumption to shelter costs.

Household spending on transportation varied widely by household type. One-person households spent \$5,701 on transportation compared with \$9,815 for lone-parent households, \$13,089 for couples without children and \$18,116 for couples with children.

Of these household types, the share of spending for transportation was lowest for one-person households (14.8%) and lone-parent families (15.9%) and highest for couples without children (18.7%) and those with children (19.0%).

**Chart 2**  
Average spending on major categories by selected household types, 2019



**Note(s):** Statistics include households in the provinces only.  
**Source(s):** Table 11-10-0224-01.

### Cellphones continue to replace landlines

Spending choices often change in tandem with technological developments and phones are one example. In 2019, Canadian households spent five times more on average for cellphone services (\$1,343) than they did on landline telephone services (\$257).

Cellphone usage continues to rise among Canadian households. The share of households that reported having a landline decreased from 63.3% in 2017 to 54.0% in 2019. Landline use was most prevalent among households in the Atlantic provinces, with New Brunswick (77.0%) and Newfoundland and Labrador (75.0%) topping the list. It was also most prevalent among Canadian households headed by a person aged 65 years or older (84.5%).

In contrast, the share of households that reported having at least one cellphone grew from 89.4% in 2017 to 91.3% in 2019. Cellphone ownership was highest in Alberta (96.1%).

The share of households who reported having only a cellphone and no landline increased from 35.7% in 2017 to 45.1% in 2019. While the shift from landline to cellphone ownership occurred in every province, households in Quebec reported the largest change, where the share rose from 30.6% in 2017 to 43.6% in 2019.

### **Spending highest in Yellowknife and Iqaluit among northern capitals**

Average household spending in Yellowknife (\$98,614) and Iqaluit (\$97,127) was more than one-quarter higher than in Whitehorse (\$76,196).

Approximately two-thirds of households in Whitehorse and Yellowknife were homeowners in 2019, compared with about one-fifth of households in Iqaluit. On average, households in Yellowknife spent the most on their principal residence, at \$28,720, compared with \$19,637 in Iqaluit and \$18,898 in Whitehorse.

Mortgage payments made up more than one-third of expenses for principal residences in Whitehorse and Yellowknife in 2019. Rent payments accounted for about two-thirds of this spending in Iqaluit.

Private transportation remained the largest share of total transportation expenses for all three territorial capitals in 2019. Households in Iqaluit spent the largest average amount on public transportation (\$5,887), largely for air travel (\$4,292). Household spending for public transportation was lowest in Whitehorse (\$2,385).

**Table 1**  
**Spending on goods and services by province, 2019**

	Average spending on goods and services	Shelter	Transportation	Food
	dollars	share of spending on goods and services (%)		
<b>Canada</b>	<b>68,980</b>	<b>29.3</b>	<b>18.5</b>	<b>14.9</b>
Newfoundland and Labrador	58,768	24.5	21.2	16.1
Prince Edward Island	56,662	24.8	21.0	16.3
Nova Scotia	59,763	26.8	18.9	15.2
New Brunswick	58,191	23.5	21.6	16.3
Quebec	58,208	27.2	18.0	16.9
Ontario	71,876	31.1	17.8	14.5
Manitoba	65,288	26.7	20.2	15.3
Saskatchewan	71,323	27.3	19.7	14.6
Alberta	79,849	28.3	19.6	14.2
British Columbia	77,511	30.8	18.4	13.7

**Note(s):** National-level statistics include the provinces only.

**Source(s):** Data were derived from table [11-10-0222-01](#).

**Table 2**  
**Landline and cellular telephone use by province, 2019**

	Households with landline telephone service	Households with a cellular telephone	Households with a cellular telephone but no landline telephone service
	% of households		
<b>Canada</b>	<b>54.0</b>	<b>91.3</b>	<b>45.1</b>
Newfoundland and Labrador	75.0	90.3	24.0
Prince Edward Island	59.4	90.2	39.2
Nova Scotia	62.3	90.6	36.7
New Brunswick	77.0	89.2	22.1
Quebec	54.8	87.6	43.6
Ontario	52.4	91.8	46.8
Manitoba	57.7	91.2	41.0
Saskatchewan	48.7	93.9	51.0
Alberta	49.5	96.1	50.4
British Columbia	52.4	92.9	46.9

**Note(s):** National-level statistics include the provinces only.

**Source(s):** Data were derived from table [11-10-0228-01](#).

**Table 3**  
**Spending on goods and services, largest census metropolitan areas vs. rural areas, 2019**

	Census metropolitan areas with 1 million residents or more	Rural areas
	average spending per household (dollars)	
<b>Total spending on goods and services</b>	<b>73,568</b>	<b>60,335</b>
Shelter	23,379	14,516
Principal accommodation	21,376	12,846
Other accommodation	2,002	1,670
Transportation	12,824	12,723
Private transportation	10,717	12,234
Public transportation	2,108	489
Food	10,792	10,059
Food purchased from stores	7,671	7,720
Food purchased from restaurants	3,120	2,339

**Note(s):** Statistics include households in the provinces only.

**Source(s):** Table [11-10-0226-01](#).

**Table 4**  
**Spending on goods and services, territorial capitals, 2019**

	Average spending on goods and services	Shelter	Transportation	Food
	dollars	share of spending on goods and services (%)		
Whitehorse, Yukon	76,196	28.5	17.4	15.4
Yellowknife, Northwest Territories	98,614	31.8	17.0	14.2
Iqaluit, Nunavut	97,127	28.3	18.0	15.8

Source(s): Data were derived from Table [11-10-0233-01](#).

### Note to readers

The 2019 Survey of Household Spending was conducted from January to December 2019. Information was gathered from a sample of 10,890 households in the provinces and 590 households in the three territorial capitals. The data collected include detailed household expenditures, as well as information on dwelling characteristics, household demographics and household equipment.

Estimates for some expenditure categories in 2019 may no longer be directly comparable to those from previous years due to changes implemented to the survey in 2019. Additional information on these changes is available upon request.

Average household spending estimates are in current dollars (not adjusted for inflation).

**Average spending** for a specific good or service is calculated for all households, including those with and those without expenditures for the category, unless otherwise specified. Average spending includes sales taxes.

**Total current consumption** refers to the sum of the expenditures for food, shelter, household operations, household furnishings and equipment, clothing and accessories, transportation, health care, personal care, recreation, education, reading materials and other printed matter, tobacco products, alcoholic beverages and cannabis for non-medical use, games of chance and miscellaneous expenditures.

**Rural areas** are areas outside of census metropolitan areas and census agglomerations that have fewer than 1,000 residents and/or a population density of less than 400 persons per square kilometer.

Available tables: [11-10-0125-01](#), [11-10-0222-01](#) to [11-10-0228-01](#) , [11-10-0233-01](#) and [11-10-0234-01](#).

Definitions, data sources and methods: survey number [3508](#).

The report "[User Guide for the Survey of Household Spending, 2019](#)," available as part of the *Household Expenditures Research Paper Series* ([62F0026M](#)), presents information about the survey methodology, concepts and data quality.

The infographic "[How Canadians spent their money in 2019](#)," which is part of *Statistics Canada — Infographics* ([11-627-M](#)), is also available.

For more information, or to enquire about the concepts, methods or data quality of this release, contact us (toll-free 1-800-263-1136; 514-283-8300; [STATCAN.infostats-infostats.STATCAN@canada.ca](mailto:STATCAN.infostats-infostats.STATCAN@canada.ca)) or Media Relations (613-951-4636; [STATCAN.mediahotline-ligneinfomedias.STATCAN@canada.ca](mailto:STATCAN.mediahotline-ligneinfomedias.STATCAN@canada.ca)).