

**Bachelor of Management  
MGMT 2605 Working with Data  
Fall 2020/2021**

Instructor: Colin Conrad

## **Mid-Term Assignment – Is Life in Canada Becoming Too Expensive?**

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### **OVERVIEW**

This assignment will test your ability to evaluate and validate claims made using data. Based on the case given, identify whether the data and information cited by the organizations supports their claims. Answer the question provided following the case study.

### **DEADLINE & SUBMISSION**

Completion: Individual

Due date: November 2<sup>nd</sup>, 8:00 am.

Submit: Upload a PDF to Brightspace

### **CASE STUDY**

There is a growing belief that life in Canada is becoming more expensive; a belief that has been exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic. The general increase in the cost of goods and services is often referred to as *inflation* and is a normal phenomenon in a healthy economy. However, when inflation increases faster than wages, it becomes harder for people to afford their basic living expenses. During the 2019 federal election CBC news held a poll on issues that were most pressing to Canadians, and discovered that increases in the cost of living was the top issue on Canadian's minds by a wide margin (Grenier, 2019). Recent polls have suggested that this perception has increased, and that Canadians have continued to experience rapid increases in living costs since Covid-19 began (Ipsos Reid, 2020).

However, authorities have largely disagreed with the public's assessment that prices are rapidly increasing and has even suggested that inflation decreased during much of the pandemic. In May 2020, the Bank of Canada's measured inflation rate was negative, suggesting that goods and services were on average becoming less expensive, while in June they increased at an annualized rate of only 0.7% before shrinking to 0.1% in July; well below the Bank's target rate of 2% (Evans, 2020). The gap between the Bank's measured rates and the public's perception of inflation has sparked a debate about whether the Bank's method for measuring inflation accurately reflects the experiences of Canadians (Pittis, 2020). Those who take this position have pointed to the fact that increases in the costs of food and housing have disproportionately affected Canadians. The Bank of Canada and Statistics Canada nonetheless continue to use their traditional consumer price index, which accounts for many goods and services, to measure inflation and assess the overall cost of living (Bank of Canada, 2020).

With such a gap between the perceptions of Canadians and the position of experts, it is clear that there is a problem either with the way that inflation is measured or in the way that Canadians perceive it. Fortunately, we have access to open data from Statistics Canada concerning the consumer price index (Statistics Canada, 2020a) and food prices (Statistics Canada, 2020b), as well as rental data from the

Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC, 2020). Using this data, we could assess whether Canadians' perception is justified.

## TASK

From what you have learned in the first unit of *Working with Data*, prepare a brief paper that uses data to assess whether or not Canadians should be concerned about rising prices. To support your argument, you are strongly encouraged to use data that is referenced in the case study, though you are also welcome to draw from external sources. Your paper should be between 1000 and 1500 words (excluding references) and should include at least one but fewer than three data visualizations. It will be evaluated using the rubric below.

## PAPER STRUCTURE

Great papers will always have a beginning, a middle and an end. In the case of a short paper, such as a 1000 to 1500-word MGMT 2605 paper, it makes sense to have three sections: *Introduction*, *Analysis*, and *Conclusion*. All sections should be clearly outlined with headings and subheadings (when appropriate). These sections will be discussed in turn.

### *The Introduction Section*

An Introduction should be no more than three paragraphs. The Introduction should outline a clear position (e.g. that whether or not Canadians are justified in being concerned) and will generally end with a thesis statement (e.g. "In this paper, I will establish that Batman is not real, as evidenced by the fact that nobody has that much money and because grappling guns defy physics.").

### *The Analysis Section*

This is the meat of your paper. The analysis section will outline your logic using one paragraph per major idea. A well-structured argument will present the appropriate evidence clearly and lead to a logical conclusion based on this evidence. A well-structured argument would also not overstate the evidence, taking care to establish a reasonable conclusion. All new evidence (i.e. not deduced from logic alone) should be sourced using APA format. All visualizations should be presented as image files (e.g. .png or .jpg) and should contain a title which describes the picture.

### *The Conclusion Section*

The conclusion will very briefly summarize what was said in the paper and clearly restate your position. Your conclusion should also highlight limitations of your argument. Ultimately, the goal of a good conclusion is to leave the reader persuaded by the thesis statement made in the introduction.

## TIPS

1. Read the materials provided in the references for the case. Though you may have to do some independent research (though not much) to support your position, these are sufficient to draft a good argument for one position or another based on data provided in the links.
2. If you choose to use external sources, consider their credibility.
3. The paper is short by design. Ensure that your writing is brief and specific.
4. At this point in MGMT 2605 you should know a thing or two about data visualization. You must use at least one image in your paper; they should be visualizations of your findings.

## ASSESSMENT

| Description  | Excellent<br>(80%-100%)  | Good<br>(70%-79%)   | Satisfactory<br>(55%-69%)   | Marginal Pass<br>(50%-54%)                                      | Unsatisfactory<br>(0%-49%)  |
|--|--|---|---|---|---|
| <b>Use of data<br/>(10 points)</b>                             | The paper makes great use of appropriate data to tell its story. The paper contains at least one figure but fewer than three figures. All figures were generated by the author.                  | The paper makes use of appropriate data to tell its story. The paper contains at least one figure that was generated by the author. | The paper has evidence that data was used to reach conclusions. The paper contains at least one figure. | The paper has evidence that data was used to reach conclusions. | There is no evidence that data was used in the paper's analysis.    |
| <b>Quality of analysis<br/>(8 points)</b>                      | The paper is specific and offers good insight into the issues discussed. The argument is well-constructed and considers the other side of the argument (though does not necessarily support it). | The paper offers insight into the issues discussed and offers a clear argument for its position.                                    | The paper references relevant materials to support its position.  | The paper discusses changes in the cost of living in Canada.    | The paper does not discuss changes in the cost of living in Canada. |
| <b>Consideration of the limitations of data<br/>(7 points)</b> | Paper cites sources that point to limitations in the data used. All data used to support the argument is clearly described.  | Paper points out limitations in the data used in analysis. All data used to support the argument is clearly described.              | Paper points out limitations in the data used or points to data that could improve the analysis.        | Paper discusses limitations of the analysis conducted.          | Paper did not discuss limitations of the analysis conducted.        |
| <b>Spelling, grammar and citations<br/>(5 points)</b>          | Paper reads well and does not have noticeable spelling or grammar mistakes. The paper is between 1000 and 1500 words.  | Paper reads well and has one or two noticeable spelling or grammar mistakes.  | Paper is readable and fewer than five noticeable spelling or grammar mistakes.                          | Paper is readable.  | It is very difficult to read this paper.                            |

## REFERENCES

Bank of Canada (13 August 2020). Understanding the consumer price index. <https://www.bankofcanada.ca/2020/08/understanding-consumer-price-index/>

CMHC (15 January 2020). Rental market report data tables. <https://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/en/data-and-research/data-tables/rental-market-report-data-tables>

Evens, P. (19 August 2020). Canada's inflation rate cools to just 0.1% annual pace in July. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/business/canada-inflation-july-1.5691748>

Grenier, É (30 June 2019). Conflicted and worried: CBC News poll takes snapshot of Canadians ahead of fall election. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/cbc-election-poll-1.5188097>

Ipsos Reid (1 July 2020). Cost of living: Majority say cost of food, goods and services have increased since COVID-19 began. <https://www.ipsos.com/en-be/cost-living-majority-say-cost-food-goods-and-services-have-increased-covid-19-began>

Pittis, D. (14 September 2020). Why inflation doesn't feel low and what you can do about it: Don Pittis. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/business/why-inflation-doesn-t-feel-low-and-what-you-can-do-about-it-don-pittis-1.5721240>

Statistics Canada (16 September 2020). Consumer price index, August 2020. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/200916/dq200916a-eng.htm>

Statistics Canada (29 September 2020). Table 18-10-0002-01 Monthly average retail prices for food and other selected products. <https://doi.org/10.25318/1810000201-eng>