



# HOUSEHOLD AFFORDABILITY INDEX

JOHANNESBURG | DURBAN | CAPE TOWN | SPRINGBOK | PIETERMARITZBURG

SEPTEMBER 2020

Release date: 30 September 2020

Supported by the Heinrich Böll Foundation Southern Africa and Foundation for Human Rights.



HEINRICH BÖLL STIFTUNG  
SOUTHERN AFRICA

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### About the Household Affordability Index

The Household Food Basket in the Household Affordability Index is a **new basket** and has been designed together with women living on low incomes in Johannesburg (Soweto, Alexandra, Tembisa and Hillbrow), Cape Town (Gugulethu, Philippi, Khayelitsha, Delft, Dunoon), Durban (KwaMashu, Umlazi, Isipingo, Durban CBD, and Mtubatuba), and Springbok (in the Northern Cape), and Pietermaritzburg. It includes the foods and the volumes of these foods which women living in a family of seven members (an average low-income household size) tell us they typically try and secure each month. The basket was designed through a pilot project which ran from April 2020 to August 2020. ***It cannot however be considered the basket for every family living on a low income in each area and for all areas covered. It is however considered a reasonable proxy for a food basket which women identified as including the most important typical foods which most households try and buy each month, given affordability constraints.*** The Household Food Basket is not nutritionally complete.

Food prices are tracked directly by women data collectors off the shelves of **44 supermarkets and 30 butcheries** that target the low-income market and which women identified as those they shop at in the areas where they live. Food selection at the supermarket shelves mirrors how women themselves make decisions at the supermarket shelves given affordability constraints viz. that the foods are chosen on relative affordability and reasonable quality, and food brands are switched to seek out the cheapest prices and special deals. The selection of food brands is dynamic and subjective. Women are smart and savvy, and shop around for bargains: this specific methodology used provides an accurate cost of a monthly household food basket, as purchased by women living on low incomes.

**There are 43 foods in the Household Food Basket.** The date for data collection is between the 1st and 4th day of each month. Data is collected and released in the same month. Data is presented for each area, and it is also weighted and averaged for all 5 areas. *For more on methodology, see page 6-7.*

**September 2020 is the first release of the Household Affordability Index for Joburg, Durban, Cape Town, Springbok and Pietermaritzburg.**

**Please note:** We will continue to publish the Pietermaritzburg Household Affordability Index on our website [www.pmbejd.org.za](http://www.pmbejd.org.za). The Pietermaritzburg Household Affordability Index prioritises Pietermaritzburg-based data, which we have been running for several years. The index is useful as it is able to measure inflation over a longer period, it also serves as a good proxy for food price inflation in general. **The foods in the Pietermaritzburg household food basket are different to that of the new basket in the Household Affordability Index.** The index further publishes more household affordability data, including income, social grant, and basic household expenditure data. Pietermaritzburg remains our core base of research, and it is important that we continue with this work. In time, perhaps in a year or two, the Household Affordability Index will replace the Pietermaritzburg Household Affordability Index.

### About the Pietermaritzburg Economic Justice & Dignity Group

The Pietermaritzburg Economic Justice & Dignity Group is a Civil Society initiative founded in July 2018. This initiative focusses on issues of economic justice, the low-wage regime and on the increasing household affordability and food price crisis, with its attendant nutritional deficiencies, health and developmental consequences, and the lack of imaginative policy and systemic responses to deal with this crisis.

The Pietermaritzburg Economic Justice & Dignity Group envisions and work towards *a society of solidarity, based on a politics of love and universality, and an economy which provides justice, equity, and dignity for all.*

# 1. SEPTEMBER 2020 Summary Data Reference Sheet

## Summary of Household Affordability Data

National Minimum Wage in September 2020 (21 days)	
General workers at R20,76/hr	<b>R3 487,68</b>
General workers at 10% exemption at R18,68/hr	R3 138,24
Domestic workers at R15,57/hr	R2 615,76

Cost of Household Food Basket in September 2020	
Average cost of Household Food Basket (all areas).	<b>R3 783,16</b>
Cost of Joburg Household Food Basket	R3 808,26
Cost of Durban Household Food Basket	<b>R3 731,40</b>
Cost of Cape Town Household Food Basket	R3 834,10
Cost of Springbok Household Food Basket	R3 989,84
Cost of Maritzburg Household Food Basket	R3 601,38

### Cost of core foods in Household Food Basket: these foods are bought first & essential to households

Core foods	Sep 2020
	cost
Maize meal (35kg)	R 212,68
Rice (10kg)	R 135,99
Cake Flour (10kg)	R 92,45
White sugar (10kg)	R 151,80
Sugar beans (5kg)	R 116,77
Samp (5kg)	R 42,52
Cooking oil (5L)	R 104,43
Salt (1kg)	R 12,27
Potatoes (10kg)	R 67,20
Onions (10kg)	R 70,07
Frozen chicken pieces (10kg)	R 314,61
Curry powder (200g)	R 30,25
Stock cubes (24 cubes x2)	R 37,87
Soup (400g x2)	R 37,47
Tea (250g)	R 23,12
White bread (25 loaves)	R321,69
Brown bread (25 loaves)	R294,52
<b>Subtotal of core foods</b>	<b>R 2 065,71</b>

Cost of Household Domestic and Personal Hygiene Products Basket in Sep 2020	<b>R682,30</b>
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Cost of feeding a family a basic nutritious diet per month	
Household size with 4 members	R2 730,66
Household size with 5 members	R3 450,98
Household size with 7 members	<b>R4 774,55</b>
In September 2020, families with 7 members <b>underspent</b> on basic nutritious food by <b>21%</b> (-R991,39).	

Average cost of feeding a child a basic nutritious diet per month in September 2020	
Small child aged 3-9 years	R615,77
Small child aged 10-13 years	R668,04
Girl child aged 14-18 years	R707,81
Boy child aged 14-18 years	R791,33
<b>Average for all children</b>	<b>R695,74</b>

In September 2020, the Child Support Grant is **25% below** the food poverty line & **37% below** the average cost to secure a basic nutritious diet for a child.

## Summary of Statistics South Africa's Economic and Social Data

All South Africans	
Population size	59,6 million
Unemployment rate	23,3%
Expanded unemployment rate	<b>42,0%</b>
Numbers of people unemployed	10,3 million
Numbers of people employed	14,1 million
Number of people one wage supports	<b>4,2 people</b>
The median wage	R3 500,00
Median wage dispersed through a family	<b>R833,33</b>

Black South Africans	
Population size	48,2 million
Unemployment rate	26,3%
Expanded unemployment rate	<b>46,3%</b>
Numbers of people unemployed	9,1 million
Numbers of people employed	10,6 million
Number of people one wage supports	<b>4,6 people</b>
The median wage	R3 200,00
Median wage dispersed through a family	<b>R695,65</b>

White South Africans	
Population size	4,7 million
Unemployment rate	6,1%
Expanded unemployment rate	<b>14,3%</b>
Numbers of people unemployed	282 000
Numbers of people employed	1,7 million
Number of people one wage supports	<b>2,8 people</b>
The median wage	R12 000,00
Median wage dispersed through a family	<b>R4 285,71</b>

The maximum value of the National Minimum Wage [NMW]: general workers R20,76/hour  
Level of NMW at 10% exemption R18,68/hour

The value of the Child Support Grant [CSG] R440,00  
The value of the Old-age Grant [OAG] R2 110,00

The number of children receiving a CSG 12,78 million  
The number of pensioners receiving an OAG 3,67 million

The upper bound poverty line [UBPL] R1 268,00  
The food poverty line [FPL] R585,00

% of people living below the UBPL (30,4m) 55,5%  
% of people living below the FPL (13,8m) 25,2%  
% of Black South Africans living below the UBPL (±29,9m) 64,2%

Stunting levels in boy children under 5 years 30%  
Stunting levels in girl children under 5 years 25%

Estimated overall HIV prevalence rate among population (7,8m) 13,0%

Any errors in data entry or calculations are our own. See reference page 8 for Statistics South Africa data references.

All efforts are made to source the latest available data.

## 2. SEPTEMBER 2020 Household Food Basket

Foods tracked	Quantity tracked	Joburg	Durban	Cape Town	Springbok	Maritzburg	Average
Maize meal	30kg	R 205,46	R 189,22	R 244,97	R217,97	R 224,97	R212,68
Rice	10kg	R 138,32	R 137,99	R 143,66	R138,65	R 110,19	R135,99
Cake Flour	10kg	R 94,82	R 91,24	R 92,88	R97,32	R 85,99	R92,45
White sugar	10kg	R 151,41	R 143,16	R 160,21	R169,99	R 147,39	R151,80
Sugar beans	5kg	R 118,08	R 103,08	R 124,56	R146,57	R 115,19	R116,77
Samp	5kg	R 41,14	R 43,91	R 43,99	R48,97	R 34,74	R42,52
Cooking oil	5L	R 105,07	R 100,66	R 106,12	R111,65	R 104,59	R104,43
Salt	1kg	R 13,99	R 12,74	R 6,42	R15,49	R 15,59	R12,27
Potatoes	10kg	R 60,58	R 64,70	R 73,10	R74,27	R 72,87	R67,20
Onions	10kg	R 60,44	R 74,45	R 75,22	R98,39	R 57,44	R70,07
Frozen chicken portions	10kg	R 317,74	R 315,46	R 306,65	R325,18	R 313,30	R314,61
Curry powder	200g	R 31,32	R 29,82	R 29,82	R29,66	R 29,59	R30,25
Stock cubes	24 cubes x2	R 40,60	R 34,65	R 38,87	R43,31	R 33,98	R37,87
Soup	400g x2	R 42,29	R 36,65	R 40,48	R31,31	R 26,78	R37,47
Tea	250g	R 23,82	R 22,49	R 24,05	R17,99	R 24,39	R23,12
Low fat milk	6L	R 72,10	R 85,47	R 83,97	R73,97	R 80,97	R79,62
Maas	4L	R 48,99	R 43,57	R 49,36	R49,99	R 43,39	R46,81
Eggs	60 eggs	R 98,22	R 98,48	R 103,41	R107,31	R 92,59	R99,21
Chicken feet	2kg	R 89,57	R 75,36	R 34,99	R79,98	R 73,94	R73,32
Gizzards	2kg	R 57,49	R 62,94	R 52,65	R60,00	R 63,89	R59,07
Livers	2kg	R 52,49	R 55,36	R 42,31	R63,94	R 50,59	R51,57
Beef	2kg	R 142,15	R 127,94	R 129,98	R140,94	R 148,89	R136,36
Wors	2kg	R 109,99	R 114,69	R 98,98	R98,94	R 120,89	R109,74
Inyama yangaphakathi	2kg	R 83,99	R 75,10	R 65,98	R107,90	R 78,39	R77,96
Fish	2kg	R 67,98	R 98,46	R 71,49	R118,94	R 113,99	R86,80
Tomatoes	6kg	R 67,09	R 83,23	R 102,80	R99,94	R 58,74	R80,48
Carrots	5kg	R 30,06	R 34,82	R 34,32	R36,47	R 20,19	R31,53
Butternut	10kg	R 57,84	R 64,85	R 78,90	R96,06	R 65,12	R67,93
Spinach	8 bunches	R 86,47	R 78,11	R 81,93	R103,92	R 57,28	R81,93
Cabbage	2 heads	R 29,43	R 26,65	R 43,76	R38,65	R 29,58	R32,53
Green pepper	2kg	R 48,48	R 46,69	R 55,98	R53,31	R 37,58	R48,49
Cremora	800g	R 34,91	R 33,99	R 34,43	R33,32	R 34,39	R34,36
Tinned pilchards	400g x6	R 112,42	R 115,94	R 115,81	R99,94	R 99,54	R111,71
Canned beans	410g x6	R 68,37	R 62,83	R 67,61	R67,94	R 67,14	R66,40
Bananas	4kg	R 55,72	R 54,29	R 55,96	R65,29	R 40,69	R53,93
Apples	3kg	R 42,48	R 39,48	R 32,87	R34,65	R 30,38	R37,44
Orange	7kg	R 70,29	R 94,63	R 76,95	R109,60	R 62,62	R82,71
Margarine	1kg	R 33,32	R 31,49	R 32,65	R21,66	R 36,19	R32,14
Peanut butter	400g x2	R 58,65	R 58,48	R 60,20	R51,98	R 63,58	R59,05
Polony	2.5kg	R 50,84	R 50,89	R 41,49	R50,65	R 54,99	R49,34
Apricot jam	900g	R 26,78	R 27,74	R 26,21	R24,99	R 28,59	R27,03
White bread	25 loaves	R 348,38	R 308,73	R 335,86	R274,75	R 291,40	R321,69
Brown bread	25 loaves	R 318,71	R 281,02	R 312,25	R258,08	R 258,85	R294,52
<b>Total household food basket</b>		<b>R 3 808,26</b>	<b>R3 731,40</b>	<b>R3 834,10</b>	<b>R 3 989,84</b>	<b>R 3 601,38</b>	<b>R 3 783,16</b>

The **Household Food Basket** has been designed together with women living on low incomes in **Johannesburg, Durban, Cape Town, Springbok and Pietermaritzburg**. It includes the foods and the volumes of these foods which women living in a family of seven members (an average low-income household size) tell us they typically try and secure each month, given affordability constraints. Food prices are tracked directly by women data collectors off the shelves of **44 supermarkets and 30 butcheries that target the low-income market** and which women identified as those they shop at where they live. Food selection at the supermarket shelves mirrors how women themselves make decisions at the supermarket shelves viz. that the foods are chosen on relative affordability and reasonable quality, and food brands are switched to seek out the cheapest prices and special deals. The date for data collection is between the 1st and 4th day of each month. There are 43 foods in the household food basket. **The Household Food Basket accurately captures the real costs of a food basket for households living on low incomes.** (For more on Methodology see page 6-7).

**Note that The Household Food Basket is not nutritionally complete. It is a basket of food which women try and secure each month for their families given affordability constraints.**

### 3. SEPTEMBER 2020 Household Food Basket: by food groups.

Food groups	Quantity tracked	Joburg	Durban	Cape Town	Springbok	Maritzburg	Average
<b>Core staple foods</b>							
Maize meal	30kg	R205,46	R189,22	R244,97	R217,97	R224,97	R212,68
Rice	10kg	R138,32	R137,99	R143,66	R138,65	R110,19	R135,99
Cake Flour	10kg	R94,82	R91,24	R92,88	R97,32	R85,99	R92,45
White sugar	10kg	R151,41	R143,16	R160,21	R169,99	R147,39	R151,80
Sugar beans	5kg	R118,08	R103,08	R124,56	R146,57	R115,19	R116,77
Samp	5kg	R41,14	R43,91	R43,99	R48,97	R34,74	R42,52
Cooking oil	5L	R105,07	R100,66	R106,12	R111,65	R104,59	R104,43
<b>Subtotal</b>		<b>R854,31</b>	<b>R809,25</b>	<b>R916,39</b>	<b>R931,12</b>	<b>R823,06</b>	<b>R856,63</b>
<b>Milk, maas &amp; eggs</b>							
Low fat milk	6L	R72,10	R85,47	R83,97	R73,97	R80,97	R79,62
Maas	4L	R48,99	R43,57	R49,36	R49,99	R43,39	R46,81
Eggs	60 eggs	R98,22	R98,48	R103,41	R107,31	R92,59	R99,21
<b>Subtotal</b>		<b>R219,30</b>	<b>R227,52</b>	<b>R236,74</b>	<b>R231,27</b>	<b>R216,95</b>	<b>R225,64</b>
<b>Meats</b>							
Frozen chicken portions	10kg	R317,74	R315,46	R306,65	R325,18	R313,30	R314,61
Chicken feet	2kg	R89,57	R75,36	R34,99	R79,98	R73,94	R73,32
Gizzards	2kg	R57,49	R62,94	R52,65	R60,00	R63,89	R59,07
Livers	2kg	R52,49	R55,36	R42,31	R63,94	R50,59	R51,57
Beef	2kg	R142,15	R127,94	R129,98	R140,94	R148,89	R136,36
Wors	2kg	R109,99	R114,69	R98,98	R98,94	R120,89	R109,74
Inyama yangaphakathi	2kg	R83,99	R75,10	R65,98	R107,90	R78,39	R77,96
Fish	2kg	R67,98	R98,46	R71,49	R118,94	R113,99	R86,80
<b>Subtotal</b>		<b>R921,37</b>	<b>R925,28</b>	<b>R803,02</b>	<b>R995,82</b>	<b>R963,87</b>	<b>R909,42</b>
<b>Vegetables &amp; fruit</b>							
Potatoes	10kg	R60,58	R64,70	R73,10	R74,27	R72,87	R67,20
Onions	10kg	R60,44	R74,45	R75,22	R98,39	R57,44	R70,07
Tomatoes	6kg	R67,09	R83,23	R102,80	R99,94	R58,74	R80,48
Carrots	5kg	R30,06	R34,82	R34,32	R36,47	R20,19	R31,53
Butternut	10kg	R57,84	R64,85	R78,90	R96,06	R65,12	R67,93
Spinach	8 bunches	R86,47	R78,11	R81,93	R103,92	R57,28	R81,93
Cabbage	2 heads	R29,43	R26,65	R43,76	R38,65	R29,58	R32,53
Green pepper	2kg	R48,48	R46,69	R55,98	R53,31	R37,58	R48,49
Bananas	4kg	R55,72	R54,29	R55,96	R65,29	R40,69	R53,93
Apples	3kg	R42,48	R39,48	R32,87	R34,65	R30,38	R37,44
Orange	7kg	R70,29	R94,63	R76,95	R109,60	R62,62	R82,71
<b>Subtotal</b>		<b>R608,90</b>	<b>R661,89</b>	<b>R711,79</b>	<b>R810,55</b>	<b>R532,50</b>	<b>R654,24</b>
<b>Meal preparation &amp; tea</b>							
Salt	1kg	R13,99	R12,74	R6,42	R15,49	R15,59	R12,27
Curry powder	200g	R31,32	R29,82	R29,82	R29,66	R29,59	R30,25
Stock cubes	24 cubes x2	R40,60	R34,65	R38,87	R43,31	R33,98	R37,87
Soup	400g x2	R42,29	R36,65	R40,48	R31,31	R26,78	R37,47
Tea	250g	R23,82	R22,49	R24,05	R17,99	R24,39	R23,12
Cremora	800g	R34,91	R33,99	R34,43	R33,32	R34,39	R34,36
<b>Subtotal</b>		<b>R186,93</b>	<b>R170,34</b>	<b>R174,08</b>	<b>R171,09</b>	<b>R164,72</b>	<b>R175,34</b>
<b>Tinned foods</b>							
Tinned pilchards	400g x6	R112,42	R115,94	R115,81	R99,94	R99,54	R111,71
Canned beans	410g x6	R68,37	R62,83	R67,61	R67,94	R67,14	R66,40
<b>Subtotal</b>		<b>R180,79</b>	<b>R178,77</b>	<b>R183,41</b>	<b>R167,88</b>	<b>R166,68</b>	<b>R178,11</b>
<b>For bread</b>							
Margarine	1kg	R33,32	R31,49	R32,65	R21,66	R36,19	R32,14
Peanut butter	400g x2	R58,65	R58,48	R60,20	R51,98	R63,58	R59,05
Polony	2.5kg	R50,84	R50,89	R41,49	R50,65	R54,99	R49,34
Apricot jam	900g	R26,78	R27,74	R26,21	R24,99	R28,59	R27,03
<b>Subtotal</b>		<b>R169,59</b>	<b>R168,60</b>	<b>R160,56</b>	<b>R149,28</b>	<b>R183,35</b>	<b>R167,55</b>
<b>Bread</b>							
White bread	25 loaves	R348,38	R308,73	R335,86	R274,75	R291,40	R321,69
Brown bread	25 loaves	R318,71	R281,02	R312,25	R258,08	R258,85	R294,52
<b>Subtotal</b>		<b>R667,08</b>	<b>R589,75</b>	<b>R648,11</b>	<b>R532,83</b>	<b>R550,25</b>	<b>R616,21</b>
<b>Total household food basket</b>		<b>R3 808,26</b>	<b>R3 731,40</b>	<b>R3 834,10</b>	<b>R3 989,84</b>	<b>R3 601,38</b>	<b>R3 783,16</b>

#### 4. SEPTEMBER 2020 Household Domestic & Personal Hygiene Basket

Products tracked	Quantity tracked	Joburg	Durban	Cape Town	Springbok	Maritzburg	Average
Green bar soap	500g x8	R 56,66	R 59,31	R 58,71	R 85,28	R 57,58	R60,21
Washing powder	3kg	R 63,99	R 61,32	R 64,71	R 56,15	R 60,59	R62,38
Dishwashing liquid	750ml	R 25,72	R 27,63	R 26,55	R 27,66	R 26,19	R26,64
Handy Andy	750ml	R 23,15	R 21,81	R 22,43	R 19,99	R 22,39	R22,29
Jik	1,5L	R 44,98	R 41,38	R 39,09	R 39,98	R 45,98	R42,44
Toilet paper	24 rolls	R 83,76	R 80,95	R 77,98	R 82,64	R 98,79	R83,72
Bath soap	500g x4	R 54,73	R 55,96	R 55,07	R 54,63	R 51,96	R54,82
Toothpaste	100ml x3	R 43,10	R 40,72	R 44,64	R 32,97	R 41,37	R41,79
Vaseline	500g	R 30,49	R 38,81	R 33,85	R 34,49	R 28,99	R33,79
Cream	big bottle x2	R 36,64	R 38,73	R 39,76	R 39,31	R 33,18	R37,71
Roll-on deodorant	x4	R 62,76	R 62,63	R 58,18	R 62,63	R 68,76	R62,44
Spray-on deodorant	big spray x3	R 73,20	R 76,88	R 67,85	R 55,97	R 77,37	R72,35
Sanitary pads	2 big packs	R 56,48	R 53,47	R 56,41	R 54,64	R 61,58	R56,07
Shoe Polish	100ml	R 26,08	R 24,41	R 26,32	R 26,32	R 26,19	R25,67
<b>Total household domestic and hygiene products</b>		<b>R 681,72</b>	<b>R 684,00</b>	<b>R 671,55</b>	<b>R 672,66</b>	<b>R 700,92</b>	<b>R682,30</b>

Domestic and personal hygiene products are critical expenses for safe hygiene and overall health and well being. The money needed to secure domestic and personal hygiene products are sourced from within the food budget. These products compete with the food budget.

## 5. SEPTEMBER 2020 Basic Nutritional Food Index: families

By number of family members	Sep_2020
Four (4)	R2 730,66
Five (5)	R3 450,98
Seven (7)	<b>R4 774,55</b>

In **September 2020** the difference in cost between the foods which families living on low incomes try and buy each month (the household food basket) and the foods which families would like to buy and should buy to meet basic nutrition (a basic nutritional food basket) was **R3 783,16 vs. R4 774,55** (-R991,39).

It means that in **September 2020**, families with seven members underspent on basic nutritional food by **21%** (R991,39).

## 6. SEPTEMBER 2020 Basic Nutritional Food Index: children

By age of child	Sep_2020
Small child aged 3-9 years	R615,77
Small child aged 10-13 years	R668,04
Girl child aged 14-18 years	R707,81
Boy child aged 14-18 years	R791,33
<b>Average for all children</b>	<b>R695,74</b>

As children grow older, their nutritional requirements increase. It means that the cost of feeding a child increases in price as a child grows older and is also different for teenage girls and boys.

The Child Support Grant is **R440**. Government only provided the top-up of R300 for May, from June the CSG went back to R440. From June to October 2020, mothers/caregivers receive **R500** to split amongst her family.

The food poverty line calculated by Statistics South Africa is **R585** per capita per month (latest April 2020).

In **September 2020** the average cost to feed a child a basic nutritious diet per month cost **R695,74**.

The Child Support Grant of R440 is set below the food poverty line of R585, and further below the average cost of R695,74 to secure a basic nutritious diet for a child in September 2020.

In **September 2020**, the Child Support Grant is **25% below** the food poverty line and **37% below** the average cost to secure a basic nutritious diet for a child.

## 7. SEPTEMBER 2020 Basic Nutritional Food Index: adults

By sex, activity level & lifestage	Sep_2020
Adult women and Elderly women >65 yrs	R668,04
Very active women, Adult men and Elderly men >65 yrs	R707,81
Very active men and Pregnant & lactating women	R791,33

### About the Basic Nutritional Food Index

**Households living on low incomes change their purchasing patterns in response to changes in affordability conditions.** On low incomes, women buy the core staple foods first so that their families do not go hungry and for basic meals to be prepared. Where the money remaining is short, women have no choice but to drop foods from their trolleys or reduce the volumes of nutritionally rich foods in their trolleys. This has negative consequences for health, well-being, and nutrition.

As financial and economic circumstances worsen, so too does household health and nutrition. The gap between what women are able to buy and what they need to buy for proper nutrition widens. The Basic Nutritional Food Basket is an attempt to track the cost of foods required for balanced nutrition, viz. the foods and the cost of these foods for families to ensure their health and nutrition and for children to grow and develop properly. The basket was designed in consultation with a Registered Dietician Philippa Barnard.

**The Basic Nutritional Food Basket is an index on which we can start talking realistically about the cost of nutritious food, and the inadequacies of low wages and social grants. Importantly it ensures that current food expenditure patterns are not conflated with the food expenditure required to secure proper nutrition.**

The Basic Nutritional Food Basket includes a greater variety of better quality nutritionally rich foods and in higher quantities to provide a family with a basic but nutritionally complete monthly diet. The basket can be amended to respond to families of various sizes, genders, ages, and life stages through its connection to four energy groups. Food price data for the Basic Nutritional Food Basket is collected with the Household Food Basket and conforms to the same methodology.

## 8. Food Price Methodology

In 2019 we began a process of thinking through how to expand the scope of the Pietermaritzburg-based Household Affordability Index. The reason to expand the scope of the Pietermaritzburg data was to seek greater empirical evidence of the national picture of household affordability constraints and how families, living on low incomes, were responding to a deepening financial and economic crisis, given rising expenditure costs, job losses, stagnant employment, a deepening food crisis, deepening poverty and entrenched inequality.

The Pietermaritzburg Household Affordability Index is a realistic and accurate tool to measure inflation on basic expenditure items for households living on low incomes, whilst able to provide a picture of how families living on low incomes are responding to a deepening household affordability crisis. The data that we release monthly is important and provides a reflection of what is playing out in Pietermaritzburg but it is also able to provide a reasonable reflection of what might be playing out nationally. Expanding the scope of our data beyond Pietermaritzburg is an attempt to better track and analyse the national picture of household affordability.

In April 2020, PMBEJD started a process of expanding the scope of food price data collection and having conversations with women in four new areas: Johannesburg, Durban, Cape Town, and Springbok. Women living in low income households within these areas were approached to work with us, talk with us, think with us, and track food prices and other expenditures in the areas in which they lived. The areas include Soweto, Alexandra, Tembisa and Hillbrow; Gugulethu, Philippi, Khayelitsha, Delft, Dunoon; KwaMashu, Umlazi, Isipingo, Durban CBD, and Mtubatuba; and Springbok, and includes Pietermaritzburg.

Between April and August 2020 we ran a pilot, based on the Pietermaritzburg methodology, to (1) test which foods constitute the core foods and the volumes of these foods in the trollies of low income households in the new areas; (2) identify, test and verify supermarkets and butcheries which target the low-income market and where women living on low incomes do their shopping; and (3) collect food prices from the supermarkets and butcheries every two weeks (for 5 months), whilst improving the practice of selection of foods for greater accuracy of data (this included buying and cooking selected cheaper food brands to check quality), as well as to continually track and reflect how women themselves make decisions at the supermarket shelves.

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*The pilot was successful.*

The outcomes of which were that the core foods identified by women as constituting those in the area-based household food baskets were very closely reflective of the foods and volumes of foods in the Pietermaritzburg Household Food Basket. Women agreed that the Pietermaritzburg Household Food Basket was a good proxy for the baskets in new areas, but that a few modifications should be made to improve its accuracy of area-based food purchasing dynamics to better reflect the core foods in the basket. In this regard several new foods were added to the new Food Basket, and some foods originally in the Pietermaritzburg Household Food Basket were increased/decreased in volume, or dropped from the trolley.

The new Food Basket retains the core of the Pietermaritzburg Household Food Basket with the following modifications: **New foods** added are 6L Low fat milk, 2kg livers (chicken or beef), 2kg fish (seasonal), 2kg green pepper and 7kg oranges. **Increased volumes** are 3kg apples (up from 1,5kg), 4 bars of 500g green bar bath soap (up from 2 bars of 500g), and 1,5L of *jik* (up from 750ml). **Reduced volumes** are 30kg maize meal (down from 35kg), 2kg chicken feet (down from 5kg), 1kg margarine (down from 2 x 1kg), and 1 x 900g apricot jam (down from 2 x 900g). **Removed item** is *jeyes fluid*. **The new Food Basket includes 43 foods & the Domestic & Hygiene Products Basket includes 14 products.**

The new basket reflects the most important foods in the trollies of families living on low incomes in the new areas. Because we have universalised the new basket (the basket is the same for all 5 areas: Joburg, Durban, Cape Town, Springbok and Pietermaritzburg), it is important to note that whilst the new basket reflects the core foods in the trollies across the five areas; there will be nuances within households and areas. For example, there will be differences in the volumes of starches (viz. maize meal and rice); types of meats (viz. chicken feet, fish, offal, and red meats); and purchasing of types of fruits and vegetables (seasonality). This is expected. The new basket therefore is a proxy of the foods, the volumes of foods and the cost of foods which form a household basket in each area and averaged for all areas. ***It cannot however be considered the basket for every family living on a low income in each area and for all areas covered. It is however considered a reasonable proxy for a food basket which women identified as including the most important typical foods which most households try and buy each month.***

The supermarkets and butcheries selected by women are those which most households, in the areas in which they live, do their shopping in, and which offer the cheapest/or most affordable prices. These are all supermarkets which target the low-income market. In total, prices are tracked in 44 supermarkets and 30 butcheries.

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The methodology used to collect food prices is unique and has some significant implications: (1) food price inflation is tempered by switching to cheaper brands if monthly prices increase beyond what women consider affordable or reasonable; and (2) [linked to 1] the cost of the household food basket month-to-month is relatively stable, and therefore provides an accurate measure of



inflation, whilst also better able to show spikes (because women absorb price shocks by switching to cheaper brands – if there is a spike, then there really is a spike because the shock was not absorbed by switching as most brands of that food would have increased); and (3) the household food basket is accurately able to capture the real costs of food and other basic expenditures for households living on low incomes.

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### **Implications of expanding the scope of the Household Affordability Index**

Expanding the scope of the food price work provides a better lens into the national picture of food price inflation, the cost of a food basket, household affordability, low wages, and low social grants. Conversing with women in Johannesburg, Durban, Cape Town and Springbok further provides a deeper level of understanding on inflation on different foods, the vagaries of local contexts, the different ways women respond to food price and other expenditure fluctuations and how women cope on low incomes; and what different local situations look like and what women think about what is happening, and what should be done about it. Through dialogue and confirming stories and insights with all women data collectors we are also able to provide a joint narrative of what is happening (what the situation is like), whilst pulling out the nuances. The Household Affordability Index is better able to reflect the national picture of the deepening household affordability crisis.

Whilst we intend to continue broadening the scope of the Household Affordability Index, to include more areas in South Africa as well as including more expense and income data; and therefore improving data capacity to better reflect a wider national picture, whilst continually improving the accuracy of data collected and analysis, we are confident that the data and analysis which we now release to the public from September 2020 is sound, grounded, verifiable and accurate in capturing the real cost of foods as purchased by women living on low incomes, and the decisions taken by women at the supermarket shelves in Johannesburg, Durban, Cape Town, Springbok and Pietermaritzburg.

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### **Summary of the new Household Food Basket**

The Household Food Basket has been designed together with women living on low incomes in Johannesburg (Soweto, Alexandra, Tembisa and Hillbrow), Cape Town (Gugulethu, Philippi, Khayelitsha, Delft, Dunoon), Durban (KwaMashu, Umlazi, Isipingo, Durban CBD, and Mtubatuba), and Springbok (in the Northern Cape), and Pietermaritzburg. It includes the foods and the volumes of these foods which women living in a family of seven members (an average low-income household size) tell us they typically try and secure each month. **The Household Food Basket is not nutritionally complete. It is a basket of food which women try and secure each month for their families given affordability constraints.**

Food prices are tracked directly by women data collectors off the shelves of 44 supermarkets and 30 butcheries that target the low-income market and which women identified as those they shop at. Food selection at the supermarket shelves mirrors how women themselves make decisions at the supermarket shelves given affordability constraints *viz.* that the foods are chosen on relative affordability and reasonable quality, and food brands are switched to seek out the cheapest prices and special deals. The selection of food brands is dynamic and subjective. Women are smart and savvy, and shop around for bargains: this specific methodology used provides an accurate cost of a monthly household food basket, as purchased by women living on low incomes.

There are 43 foods in the Household Food Basket. The date for data collection is between the 1st and 4th day of each month. Data is collected and released in the same month. Data is presented for each area, and it is also weighted and averaged for all 5 areas. Weighting is as follows: 27% for Joburg, Durban & Cape Town; 12% Pietermaritzburg, and 7% Springbok.

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