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MID-ATLANTIC INFORMATION OFFICE: Philadelphia, Pa.

Technical information: (215) 597-3282 BLSInfoPhiladelphia@bls.gov www.bls.gov/regions/mid-atlantic

Media contact: (215) 861-5600 BLSMediaPhiladelphia@bls.gov

Consumer Price Index, Baltimore-Columbia-Towson – December 2018

Area prices down 0.8 percent since October; up 1.3 percent over the year

The Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U) for Baltimore-Columbia-Towson decreased 0.8 percent from October to December, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reported today. Regional Commissioner Sheila Watkins noted that the recent two-month decline was due almost entirely to a 10.9-percent decrease in the energy index. Both the all items less food and energy index and food index increased since October, up 0.1 and 0.5 percent, respectively. (Data in this report are not seasonally adjusted. Accordingly, month-to-month changes may reflect the impact of seasonal influences.)

Over the last 12 months, the CPI-U increased 1.3 percent. The over-the-year rise was led by an increase in the all items less food and energy index (2.1 percent). The food index also rose over the year, up 0.9 percent, while prices for energy decreased since December 2017, down 6.5 percent. (See [table 1](#).)

Food

The food index increased 0.5 percent over the last two months. Prices rose for both food away from home and food at home, up 1.0 and 0.1 percent, respectively. Within the food at home component, prices were higher for various items including carbonated drinks and cakes, cupcakes, and cookies, while prices were lower for items including milk, among others.

Over the year, the food index increased 0.9 percent. Prices for food away from home rose 2.3 percent, while those for food at home edged down 0.3 percent.

Energy

The energy index, which includes prices for household and transportation fuels, decreased 10.9 percent due to a 20.0-percent drop in gasoline prices since October. Prices were also lower over the last two months for electricity, down 1.1 percent, while those for utility (piped) gas service increased 11.6 percent.

Over the year, the energy index declined 6.5 percent. Prices were lower for gasoline (-7.4 percent), electricity (-6.2 percent), and utility (piped) gas service (-6.8 percent) since December 2017.

All items less food and energy

The index for all items less food and energy inched up 0.1 percent from October to December. Higher prices for education and communication (1.7 percent) and medical care (1.1 percent) were moderated by lower prices for apparel (-8.4 percent) and new vehicles (-1.2 percent), among others.

The index for all items less food and energy increased 2.1 percent since December 2017, led by higher prices for shelter, up 3.1 percent. Prices also rose over the year for medical care (7.2 percent), but were lower for new and used motor vehicles (-3.1 percent).

The Consumer Price Index for February 2019 is scheduled to be released Tuesday, March 12, 2019 at 8:30 am (ET).

Technical Note

The Consumer Price Index for Baltimore-Columbia-Towson is published bi-monthly. The Consumer Price Index (CPI) is a measure of the average change in prices over time in a fixed market basket of goods and services. The Bureau of Labor Statistics publishes CPIs for two population groups: (1) a CPI for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U) which covers approximately 93 percent of the total population and (2) a CPI for Urban Wage Earners and Clerical Workers (CPI-W) which covers approximately 29 percent of the total population. The CPI-U includes, in addition to wage earners and clerical workers, groups such as professional, managerial, and technical workers, the self-employed, short-term workers, the unemployed, and retirees and others not in the labor force.

The CPI is based on prices of food, clothing, shelter, and fuels, transportation fares, charges for doctors' and dentists' services, drugs, and the other goods and services that people buy for day-to-day living. Each month, prices are collected in 75 urban areas across the country from about 5,000 housing units and approximately 22,000 retail establishments--department stores, supermarkets, hospitals, filling stations, and other types of stores and service establishments. All taxes directly associated with the purchase and use of items are included in the index.











































The index measures price changes from a designated reference date (1982-84) that equals 100.0. An increase of 16.5 percent, for example, is shown as 116.5. This change can also be expressed in dollars as follows: the price of a base period "market basket" of goods and services in the CPI has risen from \$10 in 1982-84 to \$11.65. For further details see the CPI home page on the Internet at www.bls.gov/cpi and the BLS Handbook of Methods, Chapter 17, The Consumer Price Index, available on the Internet at www.bls.gov/opub/hom/pdf/homch17.pdf.

In calculating the index, price changes for the various items in each location are averaged together with weights that represent their importance in the spending of the appropriate population group. Local data are then combined to obtain a U.S. city average. Because the sample size of a local area is smaller, the local area index is subject to substantially more sampling and other measurement error than the national index. In addition, local indexes are not adjusted for seasonal influences. As a result, local area indexes show greater volatility than the national index, although their long-term trends are quite similar. **Note: Area indexes do not measure differences in the level of prices between cities; they only measure the average change in prices for each area since the base period.**

The **Baltimore-Columbia-Towson, MD, Core Based Statistical Area** includes Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Baltimore City, Carroll, Harford, Howard, and Queen Anne's Counties in Maryland.














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Table 1. Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U): Indexes and percent changes for selected periods, Baltimore-Columbia-Towson, MD, (1982-84=100 unless otherwise noted) (not seasonally adjusted)

Expenditure category	Indexes				Percent change from		
	Historical data	Oct. 2018	Nov. 2018	Dec. 2018	Dec. 2017	Oct. 2018	Nov. 2018
All items		255.140		253.218	1.3	-0.8	
Food and beverages		260.387		261.595	1.3	0.5	
Food		259.888		261.140	0.9	0.5	
Food at home		234.500	231.316	234.660	-0.3	0.1	1.4
Cereals and bakery products		293.294		288.530	-0.8	-1.6	
Meats, poultry, fish, and eggs		229.024		218.699	-3.2	-4.5	
Dairy and related products		232.163		225.725	0.1	-2.8	
Fruits and vegetables		273.648		292.083	-2.8	6.7	
Nonalcoholic beverages and beverage materials(1)		178.388		178.412	1.7	0.0	
Other food at home		212.188		215.339	3.6	1.5	
Food away from home		297.066		299.923	2.3	1.0	
Alcoholic beverages		264.592		265.245	7.2	0.2	
Housing(1)		260.849		260.561	1.9	-0.1	
Shelter		308.917	307.305	308.410	3.1	-0.2	0.4
Rent of primary residence		360.446	360.724	362.040	4.8	0.4	0.4
Owners' equivalent rent of residences(2)		319.514	319.938	320.597	2.7	0.3	0.2
Owners' equivalent rent of primary residence(2)		319.514	319.938	320.597	2.7	0.3	0.2
Fuels and utilities		229.903		229.197	-5.0	-0.3	
Household energy		202.150	202.531	201.447	-5.9	-0.3	-0.5
Energy services		215.848	216.058	215.838	-6.2	0.0	-0.1
Electricity		205.663	204.685	203.414	-6.2	-1.1	-0.6
Utility (piped) gas service		164.981	175.234	184.163	-6.8	11.6	5.1
Household furnishings and operations		117.447		118.217	-1.1	0.7	
Apparel		144.379		132.228	-2.5	-8.4	
Transportation		204.134		195.006	-1.6	-4.5	
Private transportation		203.446		193.379	-2.4	-4.9	
New and used motor vehicles(3)		97.289		96.643	-3.1	-0.7	
New vehicles(1)		198.381		195.977	-2.6	-1.2	
Used cars and trucks(1)		234.678		237.270	1.3	1.1	
Motor fuel		245.959	219.043	197.529	-7.2	-19.7	-9.8
Gasoline (all types)		240.712	213.928	192.679	-7.4	-20.0	-9.9
Gasoline, unleaded regular(4)		243.571	215.526	193.946	-7.4	-20.4	-10.0
Gasoline, unleaded midgrade(4)(5)		255.875	230.866	210.247	-8.6	-17.8	-8.9
Gasoline, unleaded premium(4)		246.990	227.144	205.677	-7.1	-16.7	-9.5
Motor vehicle insurance(1)		810.309		835.797	2.3	3.1	
Medical care		426.536		431.275	7.2	1.1	
Recreation		122.662		124.271	2.0	1.3	
Education and communication(3)		144.004		146.449	0.2	1.7	
Tuition, other school fees, and child care(1)		1,177.231		1,191.700	3.8	1.2	
Other goods and services		417.915		419.084	-0.5	0.3	
Commodity and service group							
Commodities		186.023		180.013	-1.5	-3.2	
Commodities less food and beverages		150.914		143.198	-2.9	-5.1	

Note: See footnotes at end of table.

Table 1. Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U): Indexes and percent changes for selected periods, Baltimore-Columbia-Towson, MD, (1982-84=100 unless otherwise noted) (not seasonally adjusted) - Continued

Expenditure category	Indexes				Percent change from		
	Historical data	Oct. 2018	Nov. 2018	Dec. 2018	Dec. 2017	Oct. 2018	Nov. 2018
Nondurables less food and beverages...		203.289		184.762	-3.4	-9.1	
Durables		100.849		100.166	-2.3	-0.7	
Services.....		322.903		324.599	2.8	0.5	
Special aggregate indexes							
All items less shelter.....		234.825		232.244	0.3	-1.1	
All items less medical care		246.663		244.389	0.8	-0.9	
Commodities less food		154.449		146.858	-2.5	-4.9	
Nondurables		230.216		220.086	-1.0	-4.4	
Nondurables less food.....		206.764		189.234	-2.7	-8.5	
Services less rent of shelter(2).....		349.637		354.527	2.5	1.4	
Services less medical care services.....		312.673		314.170	2.2	0.5	
Energy(1).....		228.487	215.052	203.600	-6.5	-10.9	-5.3
All items less energy		258.585		258.872	2.0	0.1	
All items less food and energy		258.287		258.449	2.1	0.1	

Footnotes

- (1) Indexes on a March 1978=100 base.
- (2) Indexes on a November 1982=100 base.
- (3) Indexes on a December 1997=100 base.
- (4) Special index based on a substantially smaller sample.
- (5) Indexes on a December 1993=100 base.