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Consumer Price Index, Baltimore-Columbia-Towson – February 2019 **Area prices up 0.5 percent since December; up 0.8 percent over the year**

The Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U) for Baltimore-Columbia-Towson increased 0.5 percent from December to February, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reported today. Regional Commissioner Sheila Watkins noted that the recent two-month increase was due largely to a 0.5-percent rise in the all items less food and energy index. The energy index and food index also increased since December, up 1.0 and 0.4 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 0.8 percent. The over-the-year rise was led by an increase in the all items less food and energy index (1.5 percent). The food index also rose over the year, up 1.6 percent, while prices for energy decreased since February 2018, down 7.7 percent. (See [table 1](#).)

Food

The food index increased 0.4 percent over the last two months. Prices rose for food at home, up 0.7 percent, while prices were unchanged for food away from home. Within the food at home component, prices were higher for various items including carbonated drinks; cakes, cupcakes, and cookies; and milk. Prices were lower for items including tomatoes and snacks, among others.

Over the year, the food index increased 1.6 percent. Prices rose for both food away from home and food at home, up 3.0 and 0.5 percent, respectively.

Energy

The energy index, which includes prices for household and transportation fuels, increased 1.0 percent, due largely to a 1.8-percent rise in electricity prices since December. Prices were also higher over the last two months for gasoline, edging up 0.2 percent, while those for utility (piped) gas service decreased 0.8 percent.

Over the year, the energy index declined 7.7 percent. Prices were lower for gasoline (-13.0 percent), electricity (-1.9 percent), and utility (piped) gas service (-7.5 percent), since February 2018.

All items less food and energy

The index for all items less food and energy increased 0.5 percent from December to February. Higher prices for medical care (2.3 percent) and new vehicles (2.2 percent) were moderated by lower prices for shelter (-0.4 percent), among others.

The index for all items less food and energy increased 1.5 percent since February 2018, led by higher prices for shelter, up 2.9 percent. Prices also rose over the year for medical care (4.8 percent), but were lower for apparel (-8.0 percent).

The Consumer Price Index for April 2019 is scheduled to be released Friday, May 10, 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	Dec. 2018	Jan. 2019	Feb. 2019	Feb. 2018	Dec. 2018	Jan. 2019
All items.....		253.218		254.433	0.8	0.5	
Food and beverages		261.595		262.572	1.8	0.4	
Food		261.140		262.149	1.6	0.4	
Food at home		234.660	234.403	236.383	0.5	0.7	0.8
Cereals and bakery products		288.530		293.843	1.0	1.8	
Meats, poultry, fish, and eggs.....		218.699		226.106	-2.2	3.4	
Dairy and related products		225.725		233.095	5.6	3.3	
Fruits and vegetables		292.083		288.740	0.8	-1.1	
Nonalcoholic beverages and beverage materials(1)		178.412		181.643	2.0	1.8	
Other food at home		215.339		210.725	-0.2	-2.1	
Food away from home.....		299.923		299.884	3.0	0.0	
Alcoholic beverages		265.245		265.813	4.6	0.2	
Housing(1).....		260.561		260.455	2.1	0.0	
Shelter		308.410	308.558	307.214	2.9	-0.4	-0.4
Rent of primary residence		362.040	362.781	361.731	4.4	-0.1	-0.3
Owners' equivalent rent of residences(2).....		320.597	320.807	320.084	2.5	-0.2	-0.2
Owners' equivalent rent of primary residence(2)		320.597	320.807	320.084	2.5	-0.2	-0.2
Fuels and utilities.....		229.197		232.675	-1.6	1.5	
Household energy		201.447	198.805	204.914	-2.4	1.7	3.1
Energy services.....		215.838	212.818	219.240	-2.5	1.6	3.0
Electricity		203.414	200.306	207.139	-1.9	1.8	3.4
Utility (piped) gas service		184.163	183.826	182.613	-7.5	-0.8	-0.7
Household furnishings and operations.....		118.217		120.272	-1.4	1.7	
Apparel.....		132.228		131.439	-8.0	-0.6	
Transportation		195.006		196.540	-3.9	0.8	
Private transportation		193.379		195.459	-3.9	1.1	
New and used motor vehicles(3).....		96.643		98.412	-2.0	1.8	
New vehicles(1).....		195.977		200.318	-1.7	2.2	
Used cars and trucks(1)		237.270		240.164	1.4	1.2	
Motor fuel		197.529	192.595	197.888	-12.8	0.2	2.7
Gasoline (all types).....		192.679	187.860	193.075	-13.0	0.2	2.8
Gasoline, unleaded regular(4).....		193.946	188.806	194.253	-13.2	0.2	2.9
Gasoline, unleaded midgrade(4)(5).....		210.247	206.085	211.960	-11.7	0.8	2.9
Gasoline, unleaded premium(4).....		205.677	202.950	206.664	-11.1	0.5	1.8
Motor vehicle insurance(1).....		835.797		832.794	-1.5	-0.4	
Medical care		431.275		441.386	4.8	2.3	
Recreation		124.271		126.507	2.2	1.8	
Education and communication(3).....		146.449		147.269	1.6	0.6	
Tuition, other school fees, and child care(1)		1,191.700		1,195.793	3.7	0.3	
Other goods and services		419.084		419.797	0.5	0.2	
Commodity and service group							
Commodities		180.013		182.263	-1.9	1.2	
Commodities less food and beverages		143.198		145.664	-3.9	1.7	

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	Dec. 2018	Jan. 2019	Feb. 2019	Feb. 2018	Dec. 2018	Jan. 2019
Nondurables less food and beverages...		184.762		186.575	-5.9	1.0	
Durables		100.166		102.643	-1.7	2.5	
Services.....		324.599		324.915	2.3	0.1	
Special aggregate indexes							
All items less shelter.....		232.244		234.552	-0.3	1.0	
All items less medical care		244.389		245.141	0.5	0.3	
Commodities less food		146.858		149.301	-3.6	1.7	
Nondurables		220.086		221.554	-2.1	0.7	
Nondurables less food.....		189.234		190.983	-5.2	0.9	
Services less rent of shelter(2).....		354.527		357.008	1.6	0.7	
Services less medical care services.....		314.170		313.792	2.0	-0.1	
Energy(1).....		203.600	199.743	205.564	-7.7	1.0	2.9
All items less energy		258.872		260.019	1.5	0.4	
All items less food and energy		258.449		259.613	1.5	0.5	

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.