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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

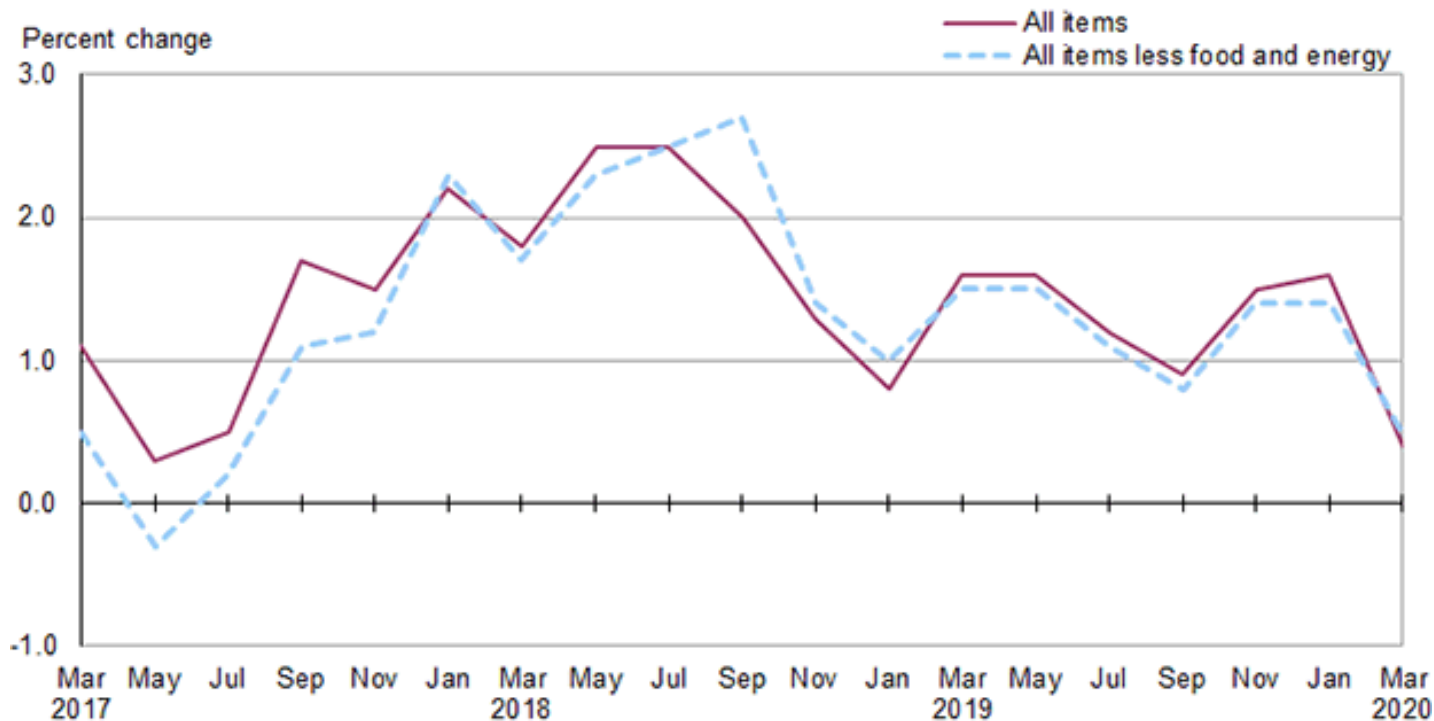
Consumer Price Index, Washington-Arlington-Alexandria – March 2020

Area prices down 0.4 percent since January, up 0.4 percent over the year

The Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U) for Washington-Arlington-Alexandria declined 0.4 percent from January to March, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reported today. Sheila Watkins, the Bureau's regional commissioner, noted that the recent decrease was due to declines in the all items less food and energy index (-0.3 percent) and energy index (-4.9 percent). The food index increased since January, up 0.7 percent. (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 advanced 0.4 percent, due largely to a 0.5-percent increase in the all items less food and energy index. (See [chart 1](#) and [table A](#).) Since March 2019, the food index also advanced, up 1.4 percent, while the energy index declined 3.9 percent. (See [table 1](#).)

Chart 1. Over-the-year percent change in CPI-U, Washington-Arlington-Alexandria, DC-VA-MD-WV, March 2017–March 2020



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Food

Following a 0.4-percent increase from November to January, the food index advanced 0.7 percent over the last two months. Prices for food at home increased 0.8 percent, and those for food away from home rose 0.6 percent. Within the food at home component, prices were higher for uncooked beef steaks, citrus fruits, and eggs, while prices were lower for rice, pasta, cornmeal, among others.

Food prices increased 1.4 percent over the year. Prices were higher for food away from home (2.8 percent), and those for food at home inched up 0.1 percent since March 2019.

Energy

Since January, the energy index, which includes prices for household and transportation fuels, declined 4.9 percent, due mostly to lower prices for gasoline (-8.4 percent) and utility (piped) gas service (-7.3 percent). Prices were higher for electricity (0.4 percent) over the past two months.

Energy prices decreased 3.9 percent since March 2019, due to lower prices for gasoline, down 6.3 percent. Over the year, prices also declined for utility (piped) gas (-8.3 percent), while electricity prices rose 0.7 percent.

All items less food and energy

The index for all items less food and energy decreased 0.3 percent since January. The decline was led by lower prices for shelter (-0.4 percent) and household furnishings and operations (-1.7 percent) over the last two months. Increased prices for several categories, including new and used motor vehicles (0.8 percent), moderated the decrease in the all items less food and energy index from January to March.

Since March 2019, the index for all items less food and energy rose 0.5 percent. Prices were higher for shelter (1.2 percent) and education and communication (2.9 percent), among others. Prices decreased for apparel (-5.2 percent) and recreation (-2.6 percent) since March 2019.

Table A. Washington-Arlington-Alexandria, DC-VA-MD-WV, CPI-U 2-month and 12-month percent changes, all items index, not seasonally adjusted

Month	2016		2017		2018		2019		2020	
	2-month	12-month	2-month	12-month	2-month	12-month	2-month	12-month	2-month	12-month
January.....	-0.2	1.5	0.2	1.5	0.9	2.2	0.5	0.8	0.5	1.6
March	0.8	1.1	0.4	1.1	-0.1	1.8	0.7	1.6	-0.4	0.4
May.....	0.8	1.2	0.0	0.3	0.7	2.5	0.6	1.6		
July	-0.2	1.3	0.0	0.5	0.1	2.5	-0.3	1.2		
September.....	-0.3	0.5	0.9	1.7	0.4	2.0	0.1	0.9		
November.....	0.2	1.1	0.0	1.5	-0.7	1.3	-0.2	1.5		

The Consumer Price Index for May 2020 is scheduled to be released on Wednesday, June 10, 2020, at 8:30 a.m. (EDT).

Coronavirus (COVID-19) Impact on March 2020 Consumer Price Index Data

The Consumer Price Index (CPI) program suspended data collection by personal visit on March 16, 2020. When possible, data normally collected by personal visit were collected either online or by phone. Additionally, data collection in March was affected by the temporary closing or limited operations of certain types of establishments. These factors resulted in an increase in the number of prices being considered temporarily unavailable and imputed. While the CPI program attempted to collect as much data as possible, many indexes are based on smaller amounts of collected prices than usual, and a small number of indexes that are normally published were not published this month. Additional information is available at www.bls.gov/bls/effects-of-covid-19-pandemic-on-bls-price-indexes.htm#CPI.

Technical Note

The Consumer Price Index for Washington-Arlington-Alexandria 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 94 percent of the total population and (2) a CPI for Urban Wage Earners and Clerical Workers (CPI-W) which covers approximately 28 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 **Washington-Arlington-Alexandria, DC-VA-MA-WV, Core Based Statistical Area** includes the District of Columbia; the counties of Calvert, Charles, Frederick, Montgomery, and Prince George's in Maryland; the cities of Alexandria, Fairfax, Falls Church, Fredericksburg, Manassas, and Manassas Park and the counties of Arlington, Clarke, Culpeper, Fairfax, Fauquier, Loudoun, Prince William, Rappahannock, Spotsylvania, Stafford, and Warren in Virginia; and the county of Jefferson in West Virginia.















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Table 1. Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U): Indexes and percent changes for selected periods, Washington-Arlington-Alexandria, DC-VA-MD-WV, (1982-84=100 unless otherwise noted) (not seasonally adjusted)

Expenditure category	Indexes				Percent change from		
	Historical data	Jan. 2020	Feb. 2020	Mar. 2020	Mar. 2019	Jan. 2020	Feb. 2020
All items.....		266.433		265.385	0.4	-0.4	
Food and beverages		254.624		255.983	1.2	0.5	
Food		260.038		261.802	1.4	0.7	
Food at home		245.792	250.351	247.673	0.1	0.8	-1.1
Cereals and bakery products		313.834		298.796	-7.6	-4.8	
Meats, poultry, fish, and eggs.....		267.455		279.805	7.4	4.6	
Dairy and related products		235.751		245.925	6.2	4.3	
Fruits and vegetables		271.505		262.300	-5.6	-3.4	
Nonalcoholic beverages and beverage materials(1)		215.619		215.465	-0.6	-0.1	
Other food at home		201.073		204.270	-0.3	1.6	
Food away from home.....		278.852		280.506	2.8	0.6	
Alcoholic beverages		201.676		199.806	-1.5	-0.9	
Housing		281.319		279.541	0.8	-0.6	
Shelter		338.393	338.262	336.903	1.2	-0.4	-0.4
Rent of primary residence		372.756	373.658	373.812	2.9	0.3	0.0
Owners' equivalent rent of residences(2).....		345.226	345.850	345.797	2.1	0.2	0.0
Owners' equivalent rent of primary residence(2)		345.226	345.850	345.797	2.1	0.2	0.0
Fuels and utilities.....		238.722		235.829	-0.3	-1.2	
Household energy		185.516	182.604	182.672	-1.6	-1.5	0.0
Energy services.....		190.046	186.710	186.709	-1.9	-1.8	0.0
Electricity		212.708	211.953	213.653	0.7	0.4	0.8
Utility (piped) gas service		137.635	130.396	127.643	-8.3	-7.3	-2.1
Household furnishings and operations		111.397		109.537	-1.2	-1.7	
Apparel		156.581		158.328	-5.2	1.1	
Transportation		215.812		211.419	-1.4	-2.0	
Private transportation		215.271		213.440	-0.1	-0.9	
New and used motor vehicles(3).....		93.224		94.007	-0.9	0.8	
New vehicles(1).....		195.813		195.231	-2.3	-0.3	
Used cars and trucks(1)		292.626		302.329	0.7	3.3	
Motor fuel		239.133	227.031	219.235	-6.3	-8.3	-3.4
Gasoline (all types).....		236.395	224.309	216.592	-6.3	-8.4	-3.4
Gasoline, unleaded regular(4).....		230.246	218.153	210.387	-6.6	-8.6	-3.6
Gasoline, unleaded midgrade(4)(5).....		239.566	226.687	219.867	-7.1	-8.2	-3.0
Gasoline, unleaded premium(4).....		255.575	245.968	239.926	-3.6	-6.1	-2.5
Motor vehicle insurance(1).....		876.170		897.449	6.1	2.4	
Medical care		467.222		466.517	2.3	-0.2	
Recreation(3).....		116.019		116.268	-2.6	0.2	
Education and communication(3).....		152.560		152.898	2.9	0.2	
Tuition, other school fees, and child care(1)		1,407.834		1,407.834	3.3	0.0	
Other goods and services		424.054		427.390	2.6	0.8	
Commodity and service group							
Commodities		180.522		180.294	-0.8	-0.1	

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, Washington-Arlington-Alexandria, DC-VA-MD-WV, (1982-84=100 unless otherwise noted) (not seasonally adjusted) - Continued

Expenditure category	Indexes				Percent change from		
	Historical data	Jan. 2020	Feb. 2020	Mar. 2020	Mar. 2019	Jan. 2020	Feb. 2020
Commodities less food and beverages		143.273		142.299	-2.2	-0.7	
Nondurables less food and beverages...		190.872		187.904	-2.8	-1.6	
Durables		99.582		99.909	-1.7	0.3	
Services		344.641		342.738	1.1	-0.6	
Special aggregate indexes							
All items less shelter		237.539		236.658	0.0	-0.4	
All items less medical care		256.943		255.878	0.3	-0.4	
Commodities less food		145.978		144.960	-2.2	-0.7	
Nondurables		221.759		221.139	-0.5	-0.3	
Nondurables less food		191.665		188.833	-2.6	-1.5	
Services less rent of shelter(2)		363.262		360.379	0.8	-0.8	
Services less medical care services		332.442		330.342	0.8	-0.6	
Energy		212.881	205.894	202.529	-3.9	-4.9	-1.6
All items less energy		273.970		273.522	0.7	-0.2	
All items less food and energy		277.780		276.872	0.5	-0.3	

Footnotes

- (1) Indexes on a November 1977=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.