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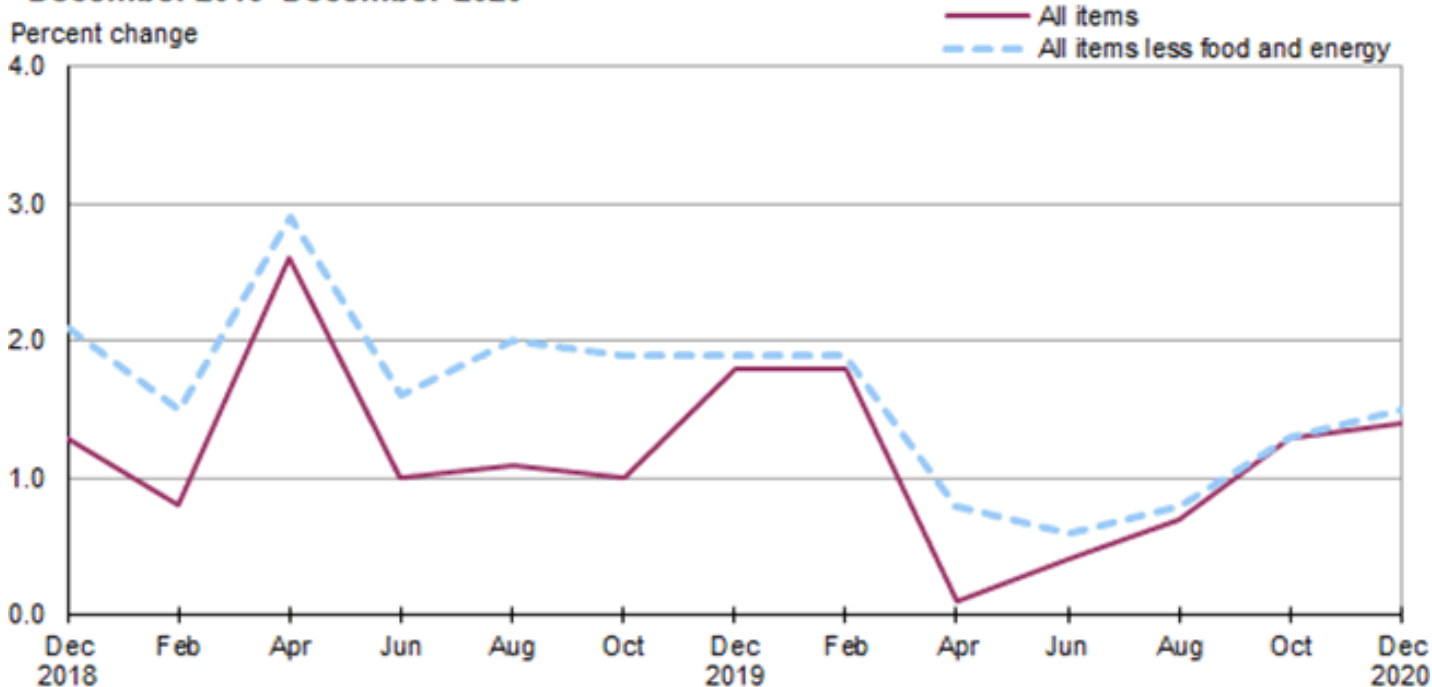
Consumer Price Index, Baltimore-Columbia-Towson – December 2020

Area prices increased 0.2 percent since October; up 1.4 percent over the year

The Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U) for Baltimore-Columbia-Towson edged up 0.2 percent from October to December, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reported today. Acting Regional Commissioner Frank Waligorski noted that the recent bi-monthly increase was mostly due to a rise in the all items less food and energy index, up 0.4 percent. The energy index also rose since October, up 2.2 percent, while the food index declined 1.3 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 increased 1.4 percent. The over-the-year rise was due to increases in the all items less food and energy index (1.5 percent) and the food index (2.5 percent). (See [chart 1](#).) The energy index dropped over the year, down 2.2 percent. (See [table 1](#).)

Chart 1. Over-the-year percent change in CPI-U, Baltimore-Columbia-Towson, MD, December 2018–December 2020



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Food

The food index decreased from October to December, down 1.3 percent. Prices declined for food at home, down 3.1 percent since October, while prices rose for food away from home, up 0.6 percent. Within the food at home component, prices were lower for uncooked beef steaks, while prices were higher for canned fruits and vegetables, among other food categories.

Over the year, the food index increased 2.5 percent. Prices rose for both food away from home (2.7 percent) and for food at home (2.2 percent).

Energy

The energy index, which includes prices for household and transportation fuels, increased 2.2 percent since October, led by higher prices for gasoline (2.5 percent) and utility (piped) gas service (8.7 percent). Electricity prices also increased over the last two months, inching up 0.1 percent.

Over the year, the energy index decreased 2.2 percent. Prices were lower for gasoline, down 6.0 percent. Prices also decreased for electricity (-0.2 percent), while they increased for utility (piped) gas service (16.3 percent) since December 2019.

All items less food and energy

The index for all items less food and energy rose 0.4 percent from October to December. Higher prices for new vehicles (4.4 percent), apparel (8.5 percent), and other goods and services (2.8 percent) among others, led the bimonthly increase in the all items less food and energy index.

The index for all items less food and energy increased 1.5 percent since December 2019, led by higher prices for shelter (1.8 percent). Prices were also higher for education and communication (2.7 percent) and other goods and services (8.1 percent), while prices were lower for recreation (-1.9 percent) over the year.

The Consumer Price Index for February 2021 is scheduled to be released Wednesday, March 10, 2021 at 8:30 am (ET).

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

Data collection by personal visit for the Consumer Price Index (CPI) program has been suspended since March 16, 2020. When possible, data normally collected by personal visit were collected either online or by phone. Additionally, data collection in December 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 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/covid19/effects-of-covid-19-pandemic-on-consumer-price-index.htm.

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. 2020	Nov. 2020	Dec. 2020	Dec. 2019	Oct. 2020	Nov. 2020
All items.....		260.892		261.535	1.4	0.2	
Food and beverages		275.192		271.703	2.7	-1.3	
Food		274.166		270.572	2.5	-1.3	
Food at home		246.575	243.323	238.904	2.2	-3.1	-1.8
Cereals and bakery products		299.277		290.919	2.8	-2.8	
Meats, poultry, fish, and eggs.....		241.380		233.468	1.5	-3.3	
Dairy and related products		243.292		237.810	-1.1	-2.3	
Fruits and vegetables		293.128		290.371	3.1	-0.9	
Nonalcoholic beverages and beverage materials(1)		184.636		177.425	4.0	-3.9	
Other food at home		226.076		215.183	2.7	-4.8	
Food away from home.....		315.051		316.905	2.7	0.6	
Alcoholic beverages		287.384		285.521	6.6	-0.6	
Housing(1).....		265.397		265.303	1.7	0.0	
Shelter		316.324	314.970	314.960	1.8	-0.4	0.0
Rent of primary residence		372.278	367.550	366.082	0.1	-1.7	-0.4
Owners' equivalent rent of residences(2).....		334.954	333.635	333.963	2.5	-0.3	0.1
Owners' equivalent rent of primary residence(2)		334.954	333.635	333.963	2.5	-0.3	0.1
Fuels and utilities.....		221.130		224.587	1.9	1.6	
Household energy		190.942	192.390	194.215	1.6	1.7	0.9
Energy services.....		205.795	207.360	208.849	2.3	1.5	0.7
Electricity		191.320	191.540	191.540	-0.2	0.1	0.0
Utility (piped) gas service		191.042	198.963	207.603	16.3	8.7	4.3
Household furnishings and operations.....		119.282		121.945	0.4	2.2	
Apparel.....		111.620		121.090	-1.9	8.5	
Transportation		198.059		199.956	-0.9	1.0	
Private transportation		199.406		202.693	0.6	1.6	
New and used motor vehicles(3).....		98.967		100.980	3.5	2.0	
New vehicles(1).....		191.475		199.934	0.9	4.4	
Used cars and trucks(1).....		267.852		261.673	10.1	-2.3	
Motor fuel		197.717	194.483	203.092	-6.0	2.7	4.4
Gasoline (all types).....		193.653	190.419	198.577	-6.0	2.5	4.3
Gasoline, unleaded regular(4).....		194.374	190.873	199.167	-6.5	2.5	4.3
Gasoline, unleaded midgrade(4)(5).....		222.530	219.959	232.048	1.1	4.3	5.5
Gasoline, unleaded premium(4).....		209.538	208.180	215.492	-3.6	2.8	3.5
Motor vehicle insurance(1).....		844.112		747.828	-17.7	-11.4	
Medical care		479.216		479.745	2.2	0.1	
Recreation		128.501		128.590	-1.9	0.1	
Education and communication(3).....		154.284		154.875	2.7	0.4	
Tuition, other school fees, and child care(1).....		1,268.771		1,268.203	2.3	0.0	
Other goods and services		435.643		447.627	8.1	2.8	
Commodity and service group							
Commodities		184.435		185.994	1.6	0.8	
Commodities less food and beverages		144.182		147.392	0.8	2.2	

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. 2020	Nov. 2020	Dec. 2020	Dec. 2019	Oct. 2020	Nov. 2020
Nondurables less food and beverages...		183.173		187.019	-1.4	2.1	
Durables		102.177		104.565	2.8	2.3	
Services.....		335.442		335.178	1.4	-0.1	
Special aggregate indexes							
All items less shelter.....		239.983		241.492	1.2	0.6	
All items less medical care		249.974		250.624	1.4	0.3	
Commodities less food		148.292		151.421	1.1	2.1	
Nondurables		225.964		226.264	0.9	0.1	
Nondurables less food.....		188.957		192.490	-0.8	1.9	
Services less rent of shelter(2).....		369.578		370.904	0.8	0.4	
Services less medical care services.....		321.228		321.029	1.2	-0.1	
Energy(1).....		198.677	197.887	203.047	-2.2	2.2	2.6
All items less energy		267.611		267.956	1.7	0.1	
All items less food and energy		266.471		267.429	1.5	0.4	

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.