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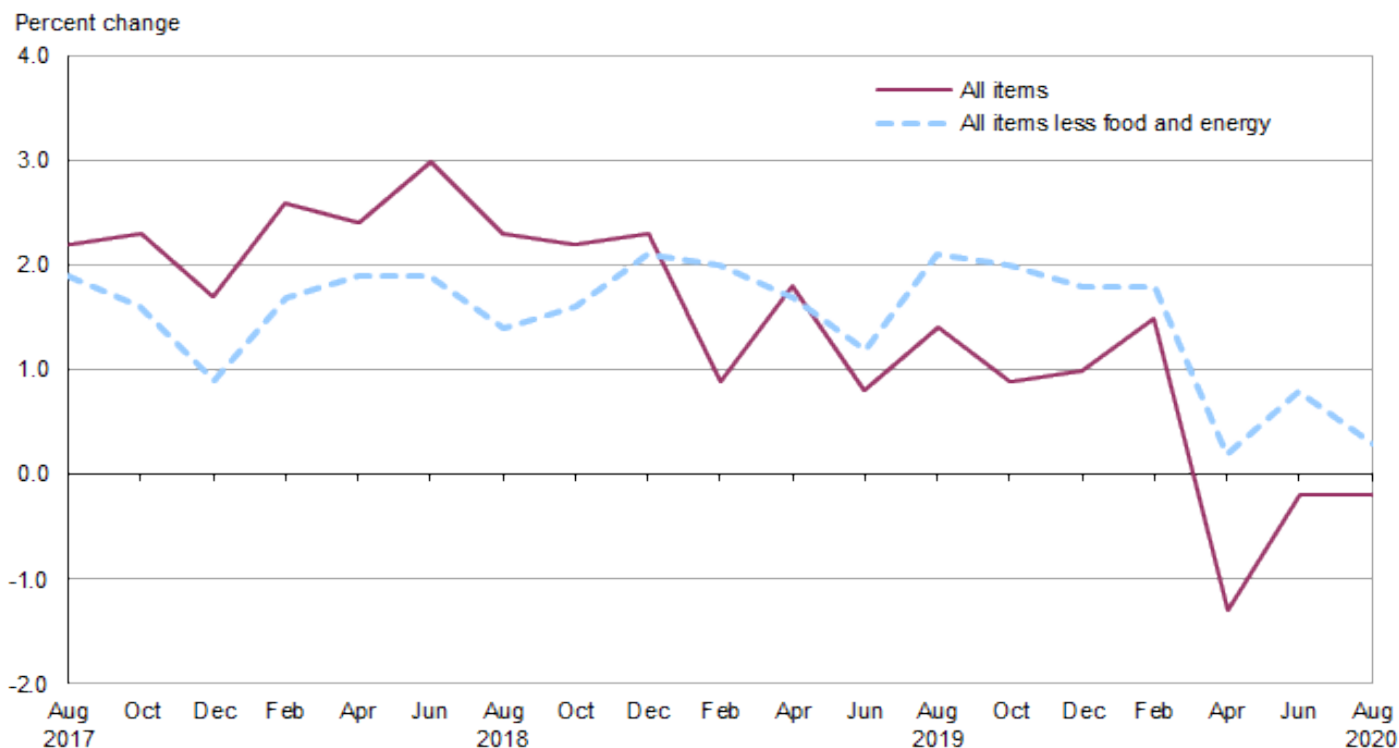
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Consumer Price Index, Houston-The Woodlands-Sugar Land – August 2020 **Area prices unchanged over the last two months, down 0.2 percent over the year**

Prices in the Houston-The Woodlands-Sugar Land area, as measured by the Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U), were unchanged for the two months ending in August 2020, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reported today. Regional Commissioner Michael Hirniak noted that higher energy costs were balanced by a decrease in food prices. The index for all items less food and energy was unchanged during the two-month period. (Data in this report are not seasonally adjusted. Accordingly, bi-monthly changes may reflect seasonal influences.)

Over the last 12 months, the all items CPI-U edged down 0.2 percent. (See [chart 1](#) and [table 1](#).) The index for all items less food and energy rose 0.3 percent over the year, while food prices rose 2.6 percent. In contrast, the energy index fell 11.5 percent.

Chart 1. Over-the-year percent change in CPI-U, Houston, TX, August 2017–August 2020



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Food

Food prices declined 0.8 percent in July and August, the largest two-month decline since June 2009. The latest movement was primarily the result of a 1.7-percent decrease in the index for food at home, with prices for food away from home edging up 0.2 percent during the same period.

Over the year, food prices rose 2.6 percent. Prices for food away from home increased 3.6 percent since a year ago and prices for food at home rose 1.5 percent.

Energy

The energy index advanced 2.4 percent in July and August, following a 3.1-percent rise in May and June. The increase was mainly due to higher prices for gasoline (3.7 percent), but all sub-components contributed to the rise. The indexes for electricity and for natural gas service rose 1.2 percent and 2.4 percent, respectively, during the period.

The energy index fell 11.5 percent over the year, primarily due to a drop of 25.4 percent in gasoline prices. Gasoline prices have experienced 12-month declines greater than 25 percent since April of this year. Partly countering these decreases, prices paid for electricity and natural gas service advanced 6.1 percent and 0.2 percent, respectively, during the past year.

All items less food and energy

The index for all items less food and energy was unchanged in July and August, after rising 1.0 percent in May and June. During the latest period, increases in the indexes for used cars and trucks (9.5 percent), and medical care (0.9 percent) were countered by declines in other indexes, including motor vehicle insurance (-7.2 percent) and apparel (-2.8 percent),

During the 12 months ending in August 2020, the index for all items less food and energy increased 0.3 percent. The largest contributors to the increase included higher prices for medical care (4.7 percent) and shelter (0.7 percent). Partly offsetting these increases were price declines for apparel (-4.3 percent) and education and communication (-1.7 percent).

The October 2020 Consumer Price Index for All Items for Houston-The Woodlands-Sugar Land is scheduled to be released Thursday, November 12, 2020.

Coronavirus (COVID-19) Impact on August 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 August 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 (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 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 **Houston-The Woodlands-Sugar Land, Texas, Core Based Statistical Area** includes the counties of Austin, Brazoria, Chambers, Fort Bend, Galveston, Harris, Liberty, Montgomery, and Waller.

Information in this release will be made available to sensory impaired individuals upon request. Voice phone: (202) 691-5200; Federal Relay Service: (800) 877-8339.

Table 1. Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U): Indexes and percent changes for selected periods, Houston-The Woodlands-Sugar Land, TX (1982-84=100 unless otherwise noted)

Item and Group	Indexes			Percent change from -		
	Jun. 2020	Jul. 2020	Aug. 2020	Aug. 2019	Jun. 2020	Jul. 2020
All items.....	228.898	-	228.978	-0.2	0.0	-
All items (1967 = 100).....	734.157	-	734.414			
Food and beverages.....	240.909	-	239.293	2.6	-0.7	-
Food.....	241.630	-	239.684	2.6	-0.8	-
Food at home.....	232.388	232.472	228.335	1.5	-1.7	-1.8
Cereals and bakery products.....	275.799	-	267.366	-0.4	-3.1	-
Meats, poultry, fish, and eggs.....	266.021	-	253.669	4.5	-4.6	-
Dairy and related products.....	183.798	-	191.726	9.9	4.3	-
Fruits and vegetables.....	280.564	-	274.276	-5.4	-2.2	-
Nonalcoholic beverages and beverage materials(1).....	282.627	-	277.778	4.4	-1.7	-
Other food at home.....	200.971	-	201.431	0.6	0.2	-
Food away from home.....	246.582	-	247.018	3.6	0.2	-
Alcoholic beverages.....	219.612	-	222.088	2.2	1.1	-
Housing.....	228.899	-	228.853	1.5	0.0	-
Shelter.....	273.664	272.755	272.459	0.7	-0.4	-0.1
Rent of primary residence.....	269.180	269.262	269.235	1.7	0.0	0.0
Owners' equivalent rent of residences(2)....	253.937	254.026	254.257	0.6	0.1	0.1
Owners' equivalent rent of primary residence(2).....	253.937	254.026	254.257	0.6	0.1	0.1
Fuels and utilities.....	173.757	-	180.997	7.1	4.2	-
Household energy.....	150.080	147.574	152.147	5.3	1.4	3.1
Energy services.....	147.749	145.185	149.723	5.4	1.3	3.1
Electricity.....	148.684	145.115	150.411	6.1	1.2	3.6
Utility (piped) gas service.....	129.857	133.011	133.006	0.2	2.4	0.0
Household furnishings and operations.....	141.725	-	140.718	1.1	-0.7	-
Apparel.....	176.694	-	171.732	-4.3	-2.8	-
Transportation.....	170.522	-	171.605	-7.9	0.6	-
Private transportation.....	170.519	-	172.138	-7.5	0.9	-
New and used motor vehicles(3).....	86.248	-	87.421	-1.5	1.4	-
New vehicles(1).....	164.961	-	161.492	-1.1	-2.1	-
Used cars and trucks(1).....	223.596	-	244.921	4.3	9.5	-
Motor fuel.....	157.322	168.256	163.030	-25.4	3.6	-3.1
Gasoline (all types).....	157.156	168.201	163.006	-25.4	3.7	-3.1
Gasoline, unleaded regular(4).....	157.079	168.250	162.588	-26.3	3.5	-3.4
Gasoline, unleaded midgrade(4)(5)....	178.347	191.327	188.714	-20.6	5.8	-1.4
Gasoline, unleaded premium(4).....	188.328	200.134	198.032	-18.5	5.2	-1.1
Motor vehicle insurance(1).....	714.366	-	662.834	-6.5	-7.2	-
Medical care.....	531.956	-	536.737	4.7	0.9	-
Recreation(3).....	107.237	-	107.209	0.3	0.0	-
Education and communication(3).....	119.835	-	120.790	-1.7	0.8	-
Tuition, other school fees, and childcare(1) ...	1,239.235	-	1,229.094	-0.3	-0.8	-
Other goods and services.....	421.989	-	423.463	2.3	0.3	-
Commodity and service group						
Commodities.....	171.653	-	171.823	-2.4	0.1	-
Commodities less food and beverages.....	139.768	-	140.548	-5.3	0.6	-
Nondurables less food and beverages.....	181.688	-	180.291	-10.1	-0.8	-
Durables.....	98.875	-	100.628	-0.3	1.8	-
Services.....	287.483	-	287.473	1.2	0.0	-
Special aggregate indexes						
All items less shelter.....	212.037	-	212.621	-0.7	0.3	-
All items less medical care.....	214.695	-	214.603	-0.6	0.0	-
Commodities less food.....	142.403	-	143.230	-5.0	0.6	-

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, Houston-The Woodlands-Sugar Land, TX (1982-84=100 unless otherwise noted) - Continued

Item and Group	Indexes			Percent change from -		
	Jun. 2020	Jul. 2020	Aug. 2020	Aug. 2019	Jun. 2020	Jul. 2020
Nondurables	211.119	-	209.610	-3.4	-0.7	-
Nondurables less food.....	183.745	-	182.610	-9.3	-0.6	-
Services less rent of shelter(2).....	299.856	-	301.357	1.7	0.5	-
Services less medical care services.....	263.219	-	262.834	0.6	-0.1	-
Energy	153.496	156.962	157.185	-11.5	2.4	0.1
All items less energy	239.624	-	239.355	0.7	-0.1	-
All items less food and energy	239.148	-	239.149	0.3	0.0	-

(1) Indexes on an April 1978=100 base.

(2) Indexes on a December 1982=100 base.

(3) Indexes on a December 1997=100 base.

(4) Special index based on a substantially smaller sample.

(5) Index on a December 1993=100.

- Data not available.