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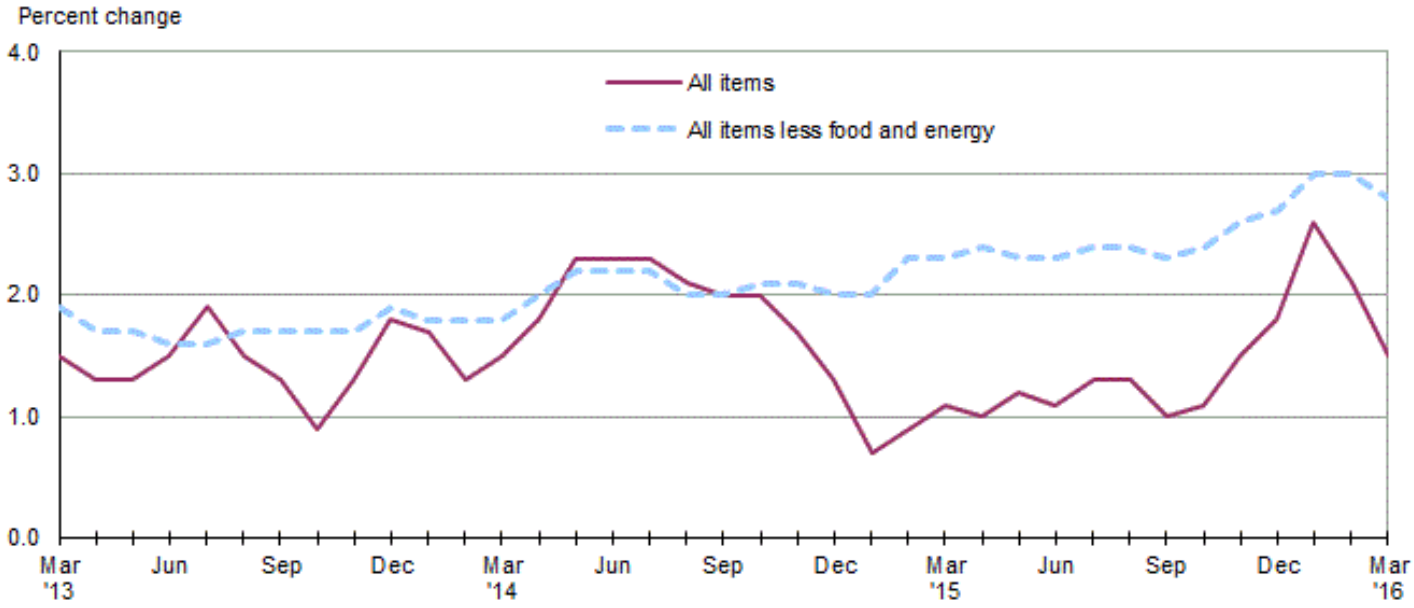
Consumer Price Index, West Region — March 2016

Area prices were up 0.2 percent over the past month, up 1.5 percent from a year ago

Prices in the West Region, as measured by the Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U), inched up 0.2 percent in March, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reported today. (See table A.) The March increase was influenced by higher prices for gasoline and shelter. (Data in this report are not seasonally adjusted. Accordingly, month-to-month changes may reflect seasonal influences.)

Over the last 12 months, the CPI-U rose 1.5 percent. (See chart 1.) Energy prices dropped 13.1 percent, largely the result of a decrease in the price of gasoline. The index for all items less food and energy rose 2.8 percent over the year. (See table 1.)

Chart 1. Over-the-year percent change in CPI-U, West region, March 2013–March 2016



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Food

Food prices declined 0.4 percent for the month of March. (See table 1.) Prices for food at home decreased 0.9 percent, but prices for food away from home inched up 0.2 percent for the same period.

Over the year, food prices increased 1.4 percent. Prices for food away from home advanced 3.3 percent since a year ago, yet prices for food at home were unchanged.

Energy

The energy index increased 2.4 percent over the month. The increase was mainly due to higher prices for gasoline (6.1 percent). Prices for electricity advanced 0.6 percent, but prices for natural gas service decreased 5.8 percent for the same period.

Energy prices dropped 13.1 percent over the year, largely due to lower prices for gasoline (-22.9 percent). Prices for natural gas service decreased 8.9 percent, but prices paid for electricity rose 1.8 percent during the past year.

All items less food and energy

The index for all items less food and energy inched up 0.2 percent in March. Higher prices for used cars and trucks (1.4 percent), apparel (0.9 percent), and shelter (0.4 percent) were partially offset by lower prices for recreation (-0.5 percent) and medical care (-0.4 percent).

Over the year, the index for all items less food and energy rose 2.8 percent. Components contributing to the increase included shelter (4.7 percent) and medical care (3.1 percent).

Table A. West Region CPI-U monthly and annual percent changes (not seasonally adjusted)

Month	2011		2012		2013		2014		2015		2016	
	Monthly	Annual	Monthly	Annual	Monthly	Annual	Monthly	Annual	Monthly	Annual	Monthly	Annual
January	0.5	1.4	0.4	2.6	0.3	1.7	0.3	1.7	-0.3	0.7	0.5	2.6
February	0.6	1.9	0.4	2.5	0.8	2.0	0.4	1.3	0.6	0.9	0.1	2.1
March	0.9	2.6	0.9	2.4	0.4	1.5	0.6	1.5	0.8	1.1	0.2	1.5
April	0.6	3.0	0.2	2.1	0.0	1.3	0.3	1.8	0.3	1.0		
May	0.3	3.2	0.2	2.0	0.2	1.3	0.6	2.3	0.8	1.2		
June	-0.2	3.1	-0.2	2.0	0.1	1.5	0.1	2.3	0.0	1.1		
July	-0.1	2.9	-0.3	1.8	0.0	1.9	0.1	2.3	0.3	1.3		
August	0.2	3.0	0.5	2.1	0.1	1.5	-0.1	2.1	-0.1	1.3		
September	0.4	3.5	0.5	2.2	0.2	1.3	0.1	2.0	-0.2	1.0		
October	0.0	3.4	0.4	2.5	-0.1	0.9	-0.1	2.0	0.0	1.1		
November	-0.2	3.2	-0.7	1.9	-0.4	1.3	-0.6	1.7	-0.2	1.5		
December	-0.3	2.7	-0.5	1.7	0.0	1.8	-0.5	1.3	-0.1	1.8		

The April 2016 Consumer Price Index for the West Region is scheduled to be released on May 17, 2016.

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 89 percent of the total population and (2) a CPI for Urban Wage Earners and Clerical Workers (CPI-W) which covers 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 87 urban areas across the country from about 6,000 housing units and approximately 24,000 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/homch17_a.htm.

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 West Region covered in this release is comprised of the following thirteen states: Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming.

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Table 1. Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U): Indexes and percent changes for selected periods West (1982-84=100 unless otherwise noted)

Item and Group	Indexes			Percent change from-		
	Jan. 2016	Feb. 2016	Mar. 2016	Mar. 2015	Jan. 2016	Feb. 2016
Expenditure category						
All Items	244.600	244.821	245.404	1.5	0.3	0.2
All items (December 1977=100)	395.382	395.739	396.681			
Food and beverages	252.297	252.898	251.809	1.4	-0.2	-0.4
Food	252.408	252.966	251.882	1.4	-0.2	-0.4
Food at home	249.584	250.045	247.901	0.0	-0.7	-0.9
Food away from home	255.149	255.841	256.275	3.3	0.4	0.2
Alcoholic beverages	247.478	248.670	247.520	1.7	0.0	-0.5
Housing	259.985	261.126	261.671	3.9	0.6	0.2
Shelter	295.183	296.707	297.777	4.7	0.9	0.4
Rent of primary residence [1]	310.112	311.351	312.443	4.9	0.8	0.4
Owners' equiv. rent of residences [1] [2]	309.485	310.751	311.834	4.7	0.8	0.3
Owners' equiv. rent of primary residence [1] [2]	309.472	310.742	311.831	4.7	0.8	0.4
Fuels and utilities	277.144	278.267	276.515	0.8	-0.2	-0.6
Household energy	238.794	239.532	237.235	-0.8	-0.7	-1.0
Energy services [1]	240.609	241.383	239.236	-0.8	-0.6	-0.9
Electricity [1]	265.864	266.632	268.322	1.8	0.9	0.6
Utility (piped) gas service [1]	195.589	196.429	184.968	-8.9	-5.4	-5.8
Household furnishings and operations	130.436	130.220	129.960	0.5	-0.4	-0.2
Apparel	116.407	119.697	120.739	-0.3	3.7	0.9
Transportation	194.907	190.635	193.690	-5.0	-0.6	1.6
Private transportation	188.555	184.063	187.324	-5.4	-0.7	1.8
New and used motor vehicles [3]	99.730	100.691	101.601	0.0	1.9	0.9
New vehicles	146.138	147.376	148.043	0.3	1.3	0.5
New cars and trucks [3] [4]	101.496	102.354	102.815	0.2	1.3	0.5
New cars [4]	144.848	146.173	146.169	-0.7	0.9	0.0
Used cars and trucks	137.043	138.133	140.089	-1.4	2.2	1.4
Motor fuel	198.078	173.893	184.310	-23.0	-7.0	6.0
Gasoline (all types)	197.513	173.287	183.791	-22.9	-6.9	6.1
Gasoline, unleaded regular [4]	194.666	170.322	180.770	-23.5	-7.1	6.1
Gasoline, unleaded midgrade [4] [5]	190.843	168.365	179.465	-21.1	-6.0	6.6
Gasoline, unleaded premium [4]	196.123	174.285	183.889	-20.5	-6.2	5.5
Medical Care	460.641	466.390	464.715	3.1	0.9	-0.4
Medical care commodities	347.688	351.417	351.389	1.7	1.1	0.0
Medical care services	496.693	503.121	500.851	3.5	0.8	-0.5
Professional services	342.595	345.538	345.751	2.7	0.9	0.1
Recreation [3]	111.498	111.764	111.247	1.3	-0.2	-0.5
Education and communication [3]	138.896	138.429	138.530	0.3	-0.3	0.1
Other goods and services	406.263	405.812	406.765	1.3	0.1	0.2
Commodity and Service Group						
All Items	244.600	244.821	245.404	1.5	0.3	0.2
Commodities	177.738	176.682	177.373	-2.0	-0.2	0.4
Commodities less food & beverages	140.849	139.193	140.548	-4.4	-0.2	1.0
Nondurables less food & beverages	175.510	171.339	173.836	-6.9	-1.0	1.5
Nondurables less food, beverages, and apparel	217.336	208.314	211.798	-9.1	-2.5	1.7
Durables	108.737	109.165	109.556	-0.7	0.8	0.4
Services	306.318	307.770	308.242	3.6	0.6	0.2
Rent of shelter [2]	314.055	315.685	316.831	4.7	0.9	0.4

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 West (1982-84=100 unless otherwise noted) - Continued

Item and Group	Indexes			Percent change from-		
	Jan. 2016	Feb. 2016	Mar. 2016	Mar. 2015	Jan. 2016	Feb. 2016
Transportation services	285.013	286.440	287.083	2.7	0.7	0.2
Other services	339.939	339.607	339.874	1.7	0.0	0.1
Special aggregate indexes:						
All items less medical care	234.724	234.701	235.382	1.4	0.3	0.3
All items less food	243.561	243.730	244.570	1.6	0.4	0.3
All items less shelter	225.244	224.910	225.290	-0.2	0.0	0.2
Commodities less food	144.822	143.228	144.528	-4.1	-0.2	0.9
Nondurables	213.626	211.634	212.485	-2.4	-0.5	0.4
Nondurables less food	180.714	176.818	179.126	-6.2	-0.9	1.3
Nondurables less food and apparel	219.885	211.786	214.852	-8.0	-2.3	1.4
Services less rent of shelter [2]	331.083	332.466	332.098	2.3	0.3	-0.1
Services less medical care services	293.083	294.210	294.857	3.6	0.6	0.2
Energy	218.529	205.191	210.052	-13.1	-3.9	2.4
All items less energy	248.555	249.793	250.060	2.6	0.6	0.1
All items less food and energy	248.661	250.019	250.516	2.8	0.7	0.2
Commodities less food and energy commodities	139.460	140.513	140.772	-0.3	0.9	0.2
Energy commodities	202.420	178.266	188.493	-22.5	-6.9	5.7
Services less energy services	311.280	312.779	313.415	3.8	0.7	0.2

Footnotes
(1) This index series was calculated using a Laspeyres estimator. All other item stratum index series were calculated using a geometric means estimator.
(2) Index is on a December 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.
Regions defined as the four Census regions. West includes Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming.
NOTE: Index applies to a month as a whole, not to any specific date. Data not seasonally adjusted.