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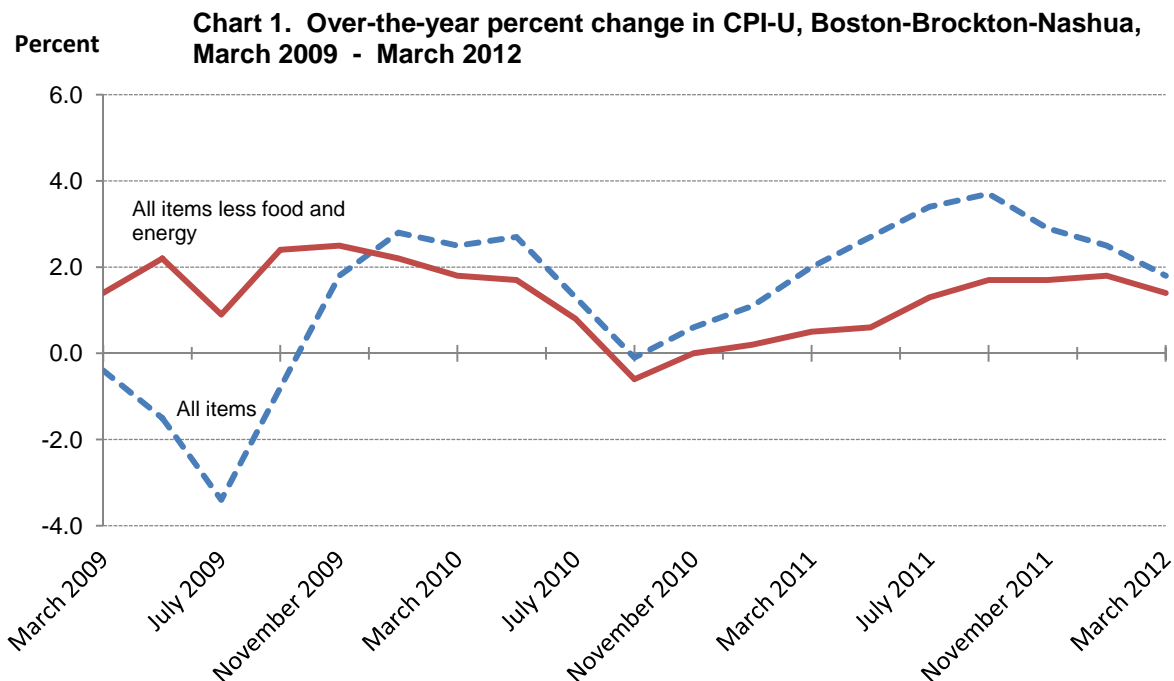
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CONSUMER PRICE INDEX, BOSTON-BROCKTON-NASHUA— MARCH 2012
Area prices rose 0.5 percent over two months; up 1.8 percent from a year ago

The Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U) in the Boston-Brockton-Nashua area increased 0.5 percent in March, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reported today. Deborah A. Brown, the Bureau's acting regional commissioner, noted that the two-month increase was mainly due to higher prices for gasoline, and was partially offset by a decrease in food prices. (Data in this report are not seasonally adjusted. Accordingly, bimonthly changes may reflect the impact of seasonal influences.)

Over the last 12 months the CPI-U was up 1.8 percent, largely due to higher prices for shelter, food, and gasoline. The all items less food and energy index rose 1.4 percent over the year. (See chart 1.)



Food

Food prices declined 0.9 percent in March, the largest bimonthly decrease in this category since March 2002. Lower grocery prices, down 1.2 percent, led the decrease. Restaurant prices, also known as food away from home, fell 0.4 percent.

From March 2011 to March 2012, the index for food increased 3.0 percent, mainly attributable to grocery store prices, up 3.5 percent, and to a lesser extent, restaurant prices, up 2.2 percent.

Energy

The energy index rose 4.5 percent in March, as rising gasoline prices were partially offset by a decrease in the price of natural gas. Within energy, the price of gasoline increased 9.7 percent over the two-month period as Boston area motorists paid an average of \$3.773 per gallon of gasoline. Household energy edged down 0.5 percent as higher prices for fuel oil and electricity moderated a 7.4-percent decline in natural gas.

Over the year the energy index rose 3.2 percent, as a 7.7-percent increase in gasoline was partially offset by falling natural gas prices, down 13.4 percent. Electricity prices rose 1.0 percent from March 2011.

All items less food and energy

The index for all items less food and energy increased 0.3 percent in March, mainly reflecting higher shelter and apparel costs, which rose 0.5 and 4.8 percent, respectively.

Over the year, the index for all items less food and energy rose 1.4 percent. The increase was attributed to a 2.0-percent gain in shelter costs, and to a lesser extent, increases in education and communication, apparel, and medical care.

CPI-W

In March, the Consumer Price Index for Urban Wage Earners and Clerical Workers (CPI-W) was 248.800, up 0.7 percent from January. The CPI-W increased 1.8 percent over the year.

The May 2012 Consumer Price Index for Boston-Brockton-Nashua is scheduled to be released on Thursday, June 14, 2012, at 8:30 a.m. (ET).

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 88 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 87 urban areas across the country from about 4,000 housing units and approximately 26,000 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 change 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 Boston-Brockton-Nashua, Mass.-N.H.-Maine-Conn. consolidated area covered in this release is comprised of Essex, Middlesex, Norfolk, Plymouth and Suffolk Counties and parts of Bristol, Hampden, and Worcester Counties in Massachusetts; parts of Hillsborough, Merrimack, Rockingham, and Strafford Counties in New Hampshire; part of York County in Maine; and part of Windham County in Connecticut.

Information in this release will be made available to sensory impaired individuals upon request. Voice phone: 617-565-2072; TDD message referral phone number: 1-800-877-8339.

For personal assistance or further information on Consumer Price Indexes, as well as other Bureau products, contact the New England Information Office at (617) 565-2327 from 8:30 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. and 1:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. ET.

Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U): Indexes and percent changes for selected periods

Boston-Brockton-Nashua, MA-NH-ME-CT (1982-84=100 unless otherwise noted)

Item and Group	Indexes			Percent change from—		
	Jan. 2012	Feb. 2012	Mar. 2012	Mar. 2011	Jan. 2012	Feb. 2012
Expenditure category						
All items	245.891	-	247.166	1.8	0.5	-
All items (1967=100)	714.689	-	718.394	-	-	-
Food and beverages	244.755	-	242.782	2.9	-8	-
Food	245.150	-	243.008	3.0	-9	-
Food at home	237.765	236.439	234.927	3.5	-1.2	-0.6
Food away from home	257.400	-	256.447	2.2	-4	-
Alcoholic beverages	243.309	-	243.448	1.7	.1	-
Housing	238.378	-	239.011	1.5	.3	-
Shelter	275.644	276.300	277.091	2.0	.5	.3
Rent of primary residence ¹	284.273	285.082	285.805	2.4	.5	.3
Owners' equivalent rent of residences ^{1 2}	294.130	294.535	294.615	1.9	.2	.0
Owners' equivalent rent of primary residence ^{1 2}	294.130	294.535	294.615	1.9	.2	.0
Fuels and utilities	250.809	-	249.645	-2	-5	-
Household energy	214.536	211.508	213.374	-1.3	-5	.9
Energy services ¹	194.774	188.919	189.470	-4.8	-2.7	.3
Electricity ¹	187.425	187.426	188.309	1.0	.5	.5
Utility (piped) gas service ¹	200.410	185.620	185.639	-13.4	-7.4	.0
Household furnishings and operations	127.219	-	126.104	.3	-9	-
Apparel	141.214	-	148.005	4.7	4.8	-
Transportation	200.029	-	206.218	2.8	3.1	-
Private transportation	200.158	-	206.181	3.4	3.0	-
Motor fuel	291.638	307.631	319.870	7.7	9.7	4.0
Gasoline (all types)	288.141	303.999	316.131	7.7	9.7	4.0
Gasoline, unleaded regular ³	286.570	302.966	315.230	7.6	10.0	4.0
Gasoline, unleaded midgrade ^{3 4}	292.333	306.934	318.870	9.0	9.1	3.9
Gasoline, unleaded premium ³	279.363	292.857	303.925	7.2	8.8	3.8
Medical care	568.474	-	567.370	1.7	-2	-
Recreation ⁵	115.814	-	115.084	-3.3	-6	-
Education and communication ⁵	143.673	-	142.725	2.4	-7	-
Other goods and services	422.442	-	423.659	.1	.3	-
Commodity and service group						
All items	245.891	-	247.166	1.8	.5	-
Commodities	193.254	-	195.463	2.8	1.1	-
Commodities less food and beverages	165.586	-	169.561	2.6	2.4	-
Nondurables less food and beverages	218.691	-	226.994	3.1	3.8	-
Durables	113.768	-	113.974	1.8	.2	-
Services	292.409	-	292.751	1.2	.1	-
Special aggregate indexes						
All items less medical care	233.276	-	234.608	1.8	.6	-
All items less shelter	236.768	-	237.988	1.7	.5	-
Commodities less food	168.677	-	172.549	2.5	2.3	-
Nondurables	230.424	-	233.738	3.1	1.4	-
Nondurables less food	218.977	-	226.711	3.0	3.5	-
Services less rent of shelter ²	327.715	-	326.684	.3	-3	-
Services less medical care services	273.500	-	273.809	1.0	.1	-
Energy	246.464	251.365	257.552	3.2	4.5	2.5
All items less energy	249.373	-	249.696	1.7	.1	-
All items less food and energy	250.733	-	251.524	1.4	.3	-

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 November 1982=100 base.

³ Special index based on a substantially smaller sample.

⁴ Indexes on a December 1993=100 base.

⁵ Indexes on a December 1997=100 base.

- Data not available.

NOTE: Index applies to a month as a whole, not to any specific date.