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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, Baltimore-Columbia-Towson – February 2020 **Area prices increased 0.5 percent since December; up 1.8 percent over the year**

The Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U) for Baltimore-Columbia-Towson advanced 0.5 percent from December to February, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reported today. Regional Commissioner Sheila Watkins noted that the recent two-month increase was due largely to the all items less food and energy index, up 0.5 percent. The food index and energy index also rose since December, up 0.5 and 0.9 percent, respectively. (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 1.8 percent. The over-the-year rise was due largely to an increase in the all items less food and energy index (1.9 percent). The food index and energy index also rose over the year, up 1.2 and 1.9 percent, respectively. (See [table 1.](#))

Food

The food index advanced 0.5 percent over the last two months. Prices increased for food away from home, up 0.8 percent, and food at home, up 0.2 percent. Within the food at home component, prices were higher for breakfast cereal, among others, while prices were lower for chicken and milk.

Over the year, the food index increased 1.2 percent. Prices rose for food away from home (3.7 percent) while those for food at home declined (-1.0 percent).

Energy

The energy index, which includes prices for household and transportation fuels, increased 0.9 percent since December. Prices were higher over the last two months for electricity (5.9 percent); prices for utility (piped) gas service also increased, up 9.1 percent, while those for gasoline were down 4.3 percent.

Over the year, the energy index rose 1.9 percent. Prices were higher for gasoline, up 4.7 percent, and utility (piped) gas service, up 6.6 percent. Prices decreased for electricity (-1.8 percent) since February 2019.

All items less food and energy

The index for all items less food and energy rose 0.5 percent from December to February. Higher prices for apparel (9.1 percent) and shelter (0.4 percent) were moderated by lower prices for medical care (-2.6 percent), among others.

The index for all items less food and energy increased 1.9 percent since February 2019, led by higher prices for shelter (1.1 percent), medical care (3.6 percent), and education and communication (3.2 percent). Prices were lower for new and used motor vehicles (-1.5 percent).

The Consumer Price Index for April 2020 is scheduled to be released Tuesday, May 12, 2020 at 8:30 am (ET).

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	Dec. 2019	Jan. 2020	Feb. 2020	Feb. 2019	Dec. 2019	Jan. 2020
All items.....		257.847		259.121	1.8	0.5	
Food and beverages		264.502		265.763	1.2	0.5	
Food		264.079		265.351	1.2	0.5	
Food at home		233.690	235.435	234.132	-1.0	0.2	-0.6
Cereals and bakery products		282.873		288.334	-1.9	1.9	
Meats, poultry, fish, and eggs.....		230.123		232.050	2.6	0.8	
Dairy and related products		240.367		234.638	0.7	-2.4	
Fruits and vegetables		281.733		277.825	-3.8	-1.4	
Nonalcoholic beverages and beverage materials(1)		170.550		172.116	-5.2	0.9	
Other food at home		209.613		211.114	0.2	0.7	
Food away from home.....		308.602		311.010	3.7	0.8	
Alcoholic beverages		267.725		268.804	1.1	0.4	
Housing(1).....		260.902		262.891	0.9	0.8	
Shelter		309.363	310.450	310.636	1.1	0.4	0.1
Rent of primary residence		365.802	366.411	367.044	1.5	0.3	0.2
Owners' equivalent rent of residences(2).....		325.867	327.118	326.985	2.2	0.3	0.0
Owners' equivalent rent of primary residence(2)		325.867	327.118	326.985	2.2	0.3	0.0
Fuels and utilities.....		220.383		232.431	-0.1	5.5	
Household energy		191.118	195.155	203.091	-0.9	6.3	4.1
Energy services.....		204.227	208.675	217.325	-0.9	6.4	4.1
Electricity		191.973	194.755	203.372	-1.8	5.9	4.4
Utility (piped) gas service		178.522	189.738	194.755	6.6	9.1	2.6
Household furnishings and operations.....		121.427		121.349	0.9	-0.1	
Apparel.....		123.463		134.724	2.5	9.1	
Transportation		201.787		202.302	2.9	0.3	
Private transportation		201.395		198.849	1.7	-1.3	
New and used motor vehicles(3).....		97.565		96.955	-1.5	-0.6	
New vehicles(1).....		198.188		196.453	-1.9	-0.9	
Used cars and trucks(1).....		237.770		238.809	-0.6	0.4	
Motor fuel		216.101	220.057	206.690	4.4	-4.4	-6.1
Gasoline (all types).....		211.286	215.180	202.110	4.7	-4.3	-6.1
Gasoline, unleaded regular(4).....		212.915	216.881	203.480	4.7	-4.4	-6.2
Gasoline, unleaded midgrade(4)(5).....		229.581	234.268	222.571	5.0	-3.1	-5.0
Gasoline, unleaded premium(4).....		223.560	227.214	214.962	4.0	-3.8	-5.4
Motor vehicle insurance(1).....		908.685		908.685	9.1	0.0	
Medical care		469.392		457.298	3.6	-2.6	
Recreation		131.039		129.114	2.1	-1.5	
Education and communication(3).....		150.852		152.048	3.2	0.8	
Tuition, other school fees, and child care(1).....		1,240.184		1,247.158	4.3	0.6	
Other goods and services		414.238		430.662	2.6	4.0	
Commodity and service group							
Commodities		183.136		184.087	1.0	0.5	
Commodities less food and beverages		146.164		146.962	0.9	0.5	

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	Dec. 2019	Jan. 2020	Feb. 2020	Feb. 2019	Dec. 2019	Jan. 2020
Nondurables less food and beverages...		189.609		192.356	3.1	1.4	
Durables		101.680		101.402	-1.2	-0.3	
Services.....		330.683		332.272	2.3	0.5	
Special aggregate indexes							
All items less shelter.....		238.581		239.869	2.3	0.5	
All items less medical care		247.277		249.250	1.7	0.8	
Commodities less food		149.835		150.644	0.9	0.5	
Nondurables		224.139		226.153	2.1	0.9	
Nondurables less food.....		193.960		196.617	3.0	1.4	
Services less rent of shelter(2).....		367.965		369.995	3.6	0.6	
Services less medical care services.....		317.286		320.063	2.0	0.9	
Energy(1).....		207.695	211.786	209.568	1.9	0.9	-1.0
All items less energy		263.569		264.803	1.8	0.5	
All items less food and energy		263.371		264.598	1.9	0.5	

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.