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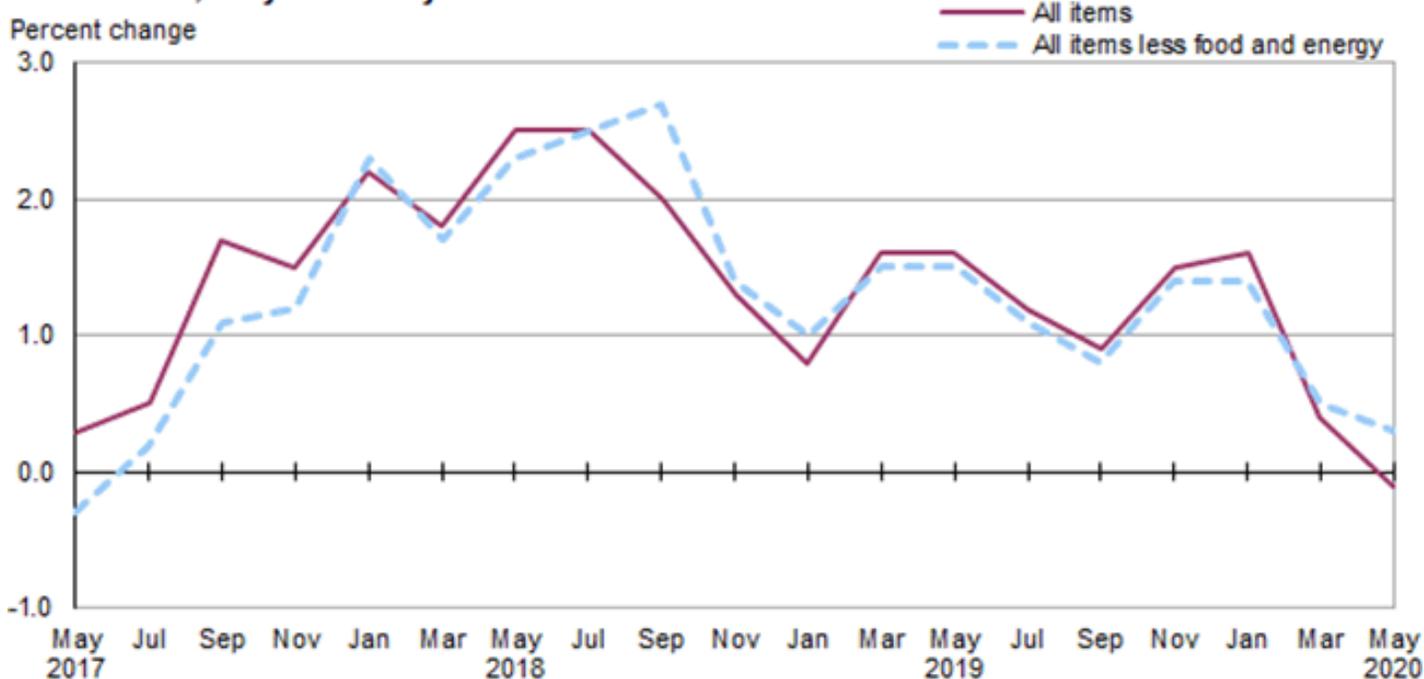
Consumer Price Index, Washington-Arlington-Alexandria – May 2020

Area prices up 0.1 percent since March, down 0.1 percent over the year

The Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U) for Washington-Arlington-Alexandria inched up 0.1 percent from March to May, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reported today. Sheila Watkins, the Bureau’s regional commissioner, noted that the recent increase was due almost entirely to an advance in the food index, up 2.7 percent. The all items less food and energy index also increased since March, up 0.1 percent, while the energy index decreased 7.3 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 declined 0.1 percent, due to a 15.8-percent drop in the energy index. (See [chart 1](#) and [table A](#).) Since May 2019, the food index and all items less food and energy index both increased, up 3.3 and 0.3 percent, respectively. (See [table 1](#).)

Chart 1. Over-the-year percent change in CPI-U, Washington-Arlington-Alexandria, DC-VA-MD-WV, May 2017–May 2020



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Food

Following a 0.7-percent increase from January to March, the food index advanced 2.7 percent over the last two months. Prices for food at home increased 4.4 percent, and those for food away from home rose 1.0 percent. Within the food at home component, prices were higher for fresh fish and seafood, uncooked beef steaks, and apples, while prices were lower for cakes, cupcakes, and cookies, among others.

Food prices increased 3.3 percent over the year. Prices were higher for both food at home (3.3 percent) and for food away from home (3.6 percent) since May 2019.

Energy

Since March, the energy index, which includes prices for household and transportation fuels, declined 7.3 percent, due almost entirely to lower prices for gasoline (-15.3 percent). Prices were also lower for electricity (-3.2 percent), while they were higher for utility (piped) gas service (8.6 percent) over the past two months.

Energy prices decreased 15.8 percent since May 2019, due to a drop in gasoline prices, down 29.1 percent. Over the year, prices also declined for both electricity and utility (piped) gas service, down 1.6 percent each.

All items less food and energy

The index for all items less food and energy increased 0.1 percent since March. The advance was led by higher prices for medical care (6.0 percent) and shelter (1.0 percent) over the last two months. Lower prices for several categories, including apparel (-8.0 percent), moderated the decrease in the all items less food and energy index from March to May.

Since May 2019, the index for all items less food and energy rose 0.3 percent. Prices were higher for shelter (2.2 percent) and medical care (8.1 percent), among others. Prices decreased for apparel (-14.5 percent) and new and used motor vehicles (-2.2 percent) since May 2019.

Table A. Washington-Arlington-Alexandria, DC-VA-MD-WV, CPI-U 2-month and 12-month percent changes, all items index, not seasonally adjusted

Month	2016		2017		2018		2019		2020	
	2-month	12-month								
January.....	-0.2	1.5	0.2	1.5	0.9	2.2	0.5	0.8	0.5	1.6
March.....	0.8	1.1	0.4	1.1	-0.1	1.8	0.7	1.6	-0.4	0.4
May.....	0.8	1.2	0.0	0.3	0.7	2.5	0.6	1.6	0.1	-0.1
July.....	-0.2	1.3	0.0	0.5	0.1	2.5	-0.3	1.2		
September.....	-0.3	0.5	0.9	1.7	0.4	2.0	0.1	0.9		
November.....	0.2	1.1	0.0	1.5	-0.7	1.3	-0.2	1.5		

The Consumer Price Index for July 2020 is scheduled to be released on Wednesday, August 12, 2020, at 8:30 a.m. (EDT).

Coronavirus (COVID-19) Pandemic Impact on May 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 May 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 Washington-Arlington-Alexandria 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 94 percent of the total population and (2) a CPI for Urban Wage Earners and Clerical Workers (CPI-W) which covers approximately 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 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 **Washington-Arlington-Alexandria, DC-VA-MA-WV, Core Based Statistical Area** includes the District of Columbia; the counties of Calvert, Charles, Frederick, Montgomery, and Prince George's in Maryland; the cities of Alexandria, Fairfax, Falls Church, Fredericksburg, Manassas, and Manassas Park and the counties of Arlington, Clarke, Culpeper, Fairfax, Fauquier, Loudoun, Prince William, Rappahannock, Spotsylvania, Stafford, and Warren in Virginia; and the county of Jefferson in West Virginia.

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, Washington-Arlington-Alexandria, DC-VA-MD-WV, (1982-84=100 unless otherwise noted) (not seasonally adjusted)

Expenditure category	Indexes				Percent change from		
	Historical data	Mar. 2020	Apr. 2020	May 2020	May 2019	Mar. 2020	Apr. 2020
All items.....		265.385		265.733	-0.1	0.1	
Food and beverages		255.983		262.716	3.2	2.6	
Food		261.802		268.742	3.3	2.7	
Food at home		247.673	253.587	258.490	3.3	4.4	1.9
Cereals and bakery products		298.796		331.780	2.6	11.0	
Meats, poultry, fish, and eggs.....		279.805		288.337	6.0	3.0	
Dairy and related products		245.925		248.392	6.7	1.0	
Fruits and vegetables		262.300		274.317	-3.0	4.6	
Nonalcoholic beverages and beverage materials(1)		215.465		230.958	7.0	7.2	
Other food at home		204.270		209.750	3.0	2.7	
Food away from home.....		280.506		283.206	3.6	1.0	
Alcoholic beverages		199.806		204.642	1.3	2.4	
Housing		279.541		281.831	1.7	0.8	
Shelter		336.903	339.083	340.432	2.2	1.0	0.4
Rent of primary residence		373.812	374.170	376.139	3.1	0.6	0.5
Owners' equivalent rent of residences(2).....		345.797	346.608	347.301	2.3	0.4	0.2
Owners' equivalent rent of primary residence(2)		345.797	346.608	347.301	2.3	0.4	0.2
Fuels and utilities.....		235.829		235.985	-0.1	0.1	
Household energy		182.672	184.156	182.153	-1.5	-0.3	-1.1
Energy services.....		186.709	188.846	186.651	-1.5	0.0	-1.2
Electricity		213.653	212.930	206.758	-1.6	-3.2	-2.9
Utility (piped) gas service		127.643	134.233	138.659	-1.6	8.6	3.3
Household furnishings and operations.....		109.537		109.108	-0.9	-0.4	
Apparel		158.328		145.728	-14.5	-8.0	
Transportation		211.419		199.491	-9.5	-5.6	
Private transportation		213.440		200.810	-8.3	-5.9	
New and used motor vehicles(3).....		94.007		92.793	-2.2	-1.3	
New vehicles(1).....		195.231		193.697	-2.5	-0.8	
Used cars and trucks(1)		302.329		296.938	-0.3	-1.8	
Motor fuel		219.235	190.963	185.973	-29.0	-15.2	-2.6
Gasoline (all types).....		216.592	188.432	183.554	-29.1	-15.3	-2.6
Gasoline, unleaded regular(4).....		210.387	182.036	177.454	-29.9	-15.7	-2.5
Gasoline, unleaded midgrade(4)(5).....		219.867	203.999	196.620	-23.9	-10.6	-3.6
Gasoline, unleaded premium(4).....		239.926	215.806	209.387	-23.6	-12.7	-3.0
Motor vehicle insurance(1).....		897.449		716.556	-14.9	-20.2	
Medical care		466.517		494.352	8.1	6.0	
Recreation(3).....		116.268		116.638	-1.4	0.3	
Education and communication(3).....		152.898		153.315	1.6	0.3	
Tuition, other school fees, and child care(1).....		1,407.834		1,408.013	2.1	0.0	
Other goods and services		427.390		421.483	0.9	-1.4	
Commodity and service group							
Commodities		180.294		178.880	-3.1	-0.8	

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, Washington-Arlington-Alexandria, DC-VA-MD-WV, (1982-84=100 unless otherwise noted) (not seasonally adjusted) - Continued

Expenditure category	Indexes				Percent change from		
	Historical data	Mar. 2020	Apr. 2020	May 2020	May 2019	Mar. 2020	Apr. 2020
Commodities less food and beverages		142.299		137.058	-7.8	-3.7	
Nondurables less food and beverages...		187.904		176.585	-12.1	-6.0	
Durables		99.909		98.872	-2.5	-1.0	
Services.....		342.738		345.058	1.6	0.7	
Special aggregate indexes							
All items less shelter.....		236.658		235.921	-1.3	-0.3	
All items less medical care		255.878		254.935	-0.8	-0.4	
Commodities less food.....		144.960		140.240	-7.2	-3.3	
Nondurables		221.139		219.595	-3.3	-0.7	
Nondurables less food.....		188.833		179.438	-10.7	-5.0	
Services less rent of shelter(2).....		360.379		361.365	0.8	0.3	
Services less medical care services.....		330.342		329.913	0.6	-0.1	
Energy		202.529	191.050	187.699	-15.8	-7.3	-1.8
All items less energy		273.522		274.879	0.8	0.5	
All items less food and energy		276.872		277.075	0.3	0.1	

Footnotes

- (1) Indexes on a November 1977=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.