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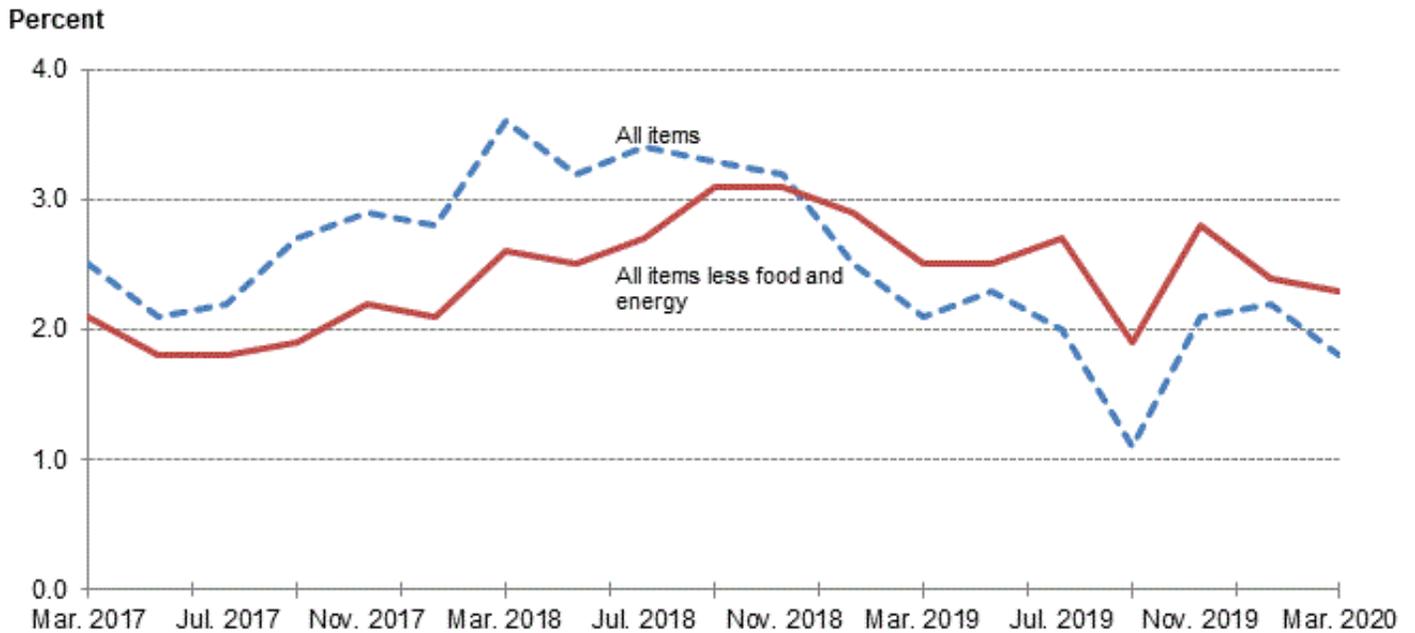
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Consumer Price Index, Boston-Cambridge-Newton — March 2020 **Area prices little changed over two months; up 1.8 percent from a year ago**

The Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U) in the Boston-Cambridge-Newton area was little changed in March, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reported today. Regional Commissioner William J. Sibley noted that this was mainly attributable to higher food prices, up 1.7 percent and to a lesser extent, higher all items less food and energy prices, up 0.2 percent. Lower energy prices down 4.1 percent nearly offset the increase. (Data in this report are not seasonally adjusted. Accordingly, bimonthly changes may reflect the impact of seasonal influences.)

Over the last 12 months, the Boston CPI-U rose 1.8 percent. The increase was largely attributable to higher shelter costs within all items less food and energy, up 3.6 percent, and, to a lesser extent, higher food costs, up 2.3 percent. Lower energy prices down 4.4 percent partially offset the increase. (See [chart 1](#).)

Chart 1. Over-the-year percent change in CPI-U, Boston-Cambridge-Newton, March 2017 - March 2020



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Food

Food prices increased 1.7 percent since January, mainly due to higher food at home or grocery store prices, up 2.7 percent. Higher food at home prices were mainly driven by higher prices for fruits and vegetables category, up 5.7 percent.

Food prices increased 2.3 percent over the year, mainly due to higher grocery store and food away from home or restaurant prices, up 2.0 percent and 2.8 percent, respectively.

Energy

The energy index decreased 4.1 percent over the two months, mainly due to lower gasoline prices, down 4.9 percent.

Energy prices decreased 4.4 percent from a year ago, mainly due to lower gasoline prices, down 2.9 percent.

All items less food and energy

The index for all items less food and energy edged up from January (0.2 percent) mainly due to higher apparel costs, up 5.3 percent, and to a lesser extent, shelter costs, up 0.3 percent. Within shelter, higher costs for owners' equivalent rent of residences, up 0.3 percent led the increase. Also contributing to the overall increase was medical care costs, up 1.4 percent. Lower public transportation costs partially offset the overall increase.

Over the year, the index for all items less food and energy rose 2.3 percent, with higher shelter costs being the main driver of the increase, up 3.6 percent. Within shelter, higher costs for owners' equivalent rent of residences, up 3.8 percent, and to a lesser extent, rent of primary residence, up 2.8 percent, led the increase. Also contributing to the overall increase in prices within all items less food and energy were higher medical care costs, up 8.2 percent, and, to a lesser extent, higher costs within education and communication, up 3.0 percent. Lower apparel prices, down, 7.8 percent partially offset the overall increase.

CPI-W

In March, the Consumer Price Index for Urban Wage Earners and Clerical Workers (CPI-W) was 284.368. The CPI-W remained unchanged over two months and increased 1.8 percent over the year.

The May 2020 Consumer Price Index for Boston-Cambridge-Newton is scheduled to be released on Wednesday, June 10, 2020, at 8:30 a.m. (ET).

Coronavirus (COVID-19) Impact on March 2020 Consumer Price Index Data

The Consumer Price Index (CPI) program suspended data collection by personal visit on March 16, 2020. When possible, data normally collected by personal visit were collected either online or by phone. Additionally, data collection in March 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 being 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/bls/effects-of-covid-19-pandemic-on-bls-price-indexes.htm#CPI. Specific information about the impact of COVID-19 on March 2020 CPI data collection is available at <https://www.bls.gov/cpi/additional-resources/covid19-statement-march-2020.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 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 Boston-Cambridge-Newton, Mass.-N.H. Core Based Statistical Area covered in this release is comprised of Essex, Middlesex, Norfolk, Plymouth, Suffolk Counties in Massachusetts; Rockingham, Strafford Counties in New Hampshire.

Information from this release will be made available to sensory impaired individuals upon request. Voice phone: 202-691-5200; Federal Relay Service: 1-800-877-8339.

Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U): Indexes and percent changes for selected periods, Boston-Cambridge-Newton, Ma.-N.H. (1982-84=100 unless otherwise noted) (not seasonally adjusted)

Expenditure category	Indexes				Percent change from		
	Historical data	Jan. 2020	Feb. 2020	Mar. 2020	Mar. 2019	Jan. 2020	Feb. 2020
All items.....		285.181		285.544	1.8	0.1	
All items (1967 = 100).....		828.885		829.940			
Food and beverages		272.010		276.001	2.3	1.5	
Food		273.800		278.502	2.3	1.7	
Food at home		255.070	259.914	262.069	2.0	2.7	0.8
Cereal and bakery products		298.315		307.226	0.6	3.0	
Meats, poultry, fish, and eggs.....		259.386		263.672	4.2	1.7	
Dairy and related products		284.306		288.207	2.0	1.4	
Fruits and vegetables		325.557		344.076	-0.5	5.7	
Nonalcoholic beverages and beverage materials(1)		166.393		167.698	0.0	0.8	
Other food at home		205.235		210.754	4.4	2.7	
Food away from home.....		306.598		307.221	2.8	0.2	
Alcoholic beverages		256.173		252.768	2.4	-1.3	
Housing		299.489		299.526	2.8	0.0	
Shelter		355.029	356.552	356.239	3.6	0.3	-0.1
Rent of primary residence(2).....		368.015	368.169	367.496	2.8	-0.1	-0.2
Owners' equivalent rent of residences(2)(3)(4)		379.229	379.875	380.553	3.8	0.3	0.2
Owners' equivalent rent of primary residence(2)(3)(4).....		379.229	379.875	380.553	3.8	0.3	0.2
Fuels and utilities.....		305.656		296.581	-4.5	-3.0	
Household energy		258.711	254.570	249.266	-5.5	-3.7	-2.1
Energy services(2)		273.616	271.991	273.424	-1.5	-0.1	0.5
Electricity(2).....		312.677	309.899	312.350	-1.1	-0.1	0.8
Utility (piped) gas service(2).....		199.773	199.773	199.773	-2.4	0.0	0.0
Household furnishings and operations.....		130.559		130.569	3.9	0.0	
Apparel.....		129.316		136.220	-7.8	5.3	
Transportation		192.241		186.954	-3.3	-2.8	
Private transportation		193.330		190.475	-2.1	-1.5	
New and used motor vehicles(5).....		105.369					
New Vehicles(1)		220.052					
Used cars and trucks(1)		311.192		320.588	0.1	3.0	
Motor fuel		223.300	218.103	212.385	-2.9	-4.9	-2.6
Gasoline (all types).....		220.711	215.603	209.953	-2.9	-4.9	-2.6
Gasoline, unleaded regular(6).....		213.570	208.264	202.771	-3.2	-5.1	-2.6
Gasoline, unleaded midgrade(6)(7).....		236.923	235.470	231.014	0.5	-2.5	-1.9
Gasoline, unleaded premium(6).....		235.483	232.167	226.075	-1.2	-4.0	-2.6
Motor vehicle insurance(1).....							
Medical care		703.603		713.316	8.2	1.4	
Recreation(5).....		123.000		122.892	-1.4	-0.1	
Education and communication(5).....		170.780		170.337	3.0	-0.3	
Tuition, other fees, and child care(1).....		1,398.308		1,398.308	3.7	0.0	
Other goods and services		512.043		513.228	2.6	0.2	
Commodity and service group							
Commodities		192.467		192.525	-0.6	0.0	
Commodities less food and beverages		151.395		149.849	-2.8	-1.0	

Note: See footnotes at end of table.

Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U): Indexes and percent changes for selected periods, Boston-Cambridge-Newton, Ma.-N.H. (1982-84=100 unless otherwise noted) (not seasonally adjusted) - Continued

Expenditure category	Indexes				Percent change from		
	Historical data	Jan. 2020	Feb. 2020	Mar. 2020	Mar. 2019	Jan. 2020	Feb. 2020
Nondurables less food and beverages...		195.641		192.606	-5.2	-1.6	
Durables		108.668		108.310	0.7	-0.3	
Services.....		368.670		369.304	3.0	0.2	
Special aggregate indexes							
All items less shelter.....		259.784		259.778	0.7	0.0	
All items less medical care		269.316		269.356	1.4	0.0	
Commodities less food		155.571		153.955	-2.5	-1.0	
Nondurables		232.817		233.166	-1.0	0.1	
Nondurables less food.....		199.108		196.062	-4.5	-1.5	
Services less rent of shelter(3).....		401.880		401.738	2.1	0.0	
Services less medical care services.....		344.832		344.620	2.2	-0.1	
Energy		241.489	236.936	231.503	-4.4	-4.1	-2.3
All items less energy		293.324		294.501	2.3	0.4	
All items less food and energy		297.564		298.174	2.3	0.2	

Footnotes

(1) Indexes on a January 1978=100 base.

(2) This index series was calculated using a Laspeyres estimator. All other item stratum index series were calculated using a geometric means estimator.

(3) Indexes on a November 1982=100 base.

(4) This index series underwent a change in composition in January 2010. The expenditure class now includes weight from secondary residences, and has been re-titled "Owners' equivalent rent of residences." The item stratum "Owners' equivalent rent of primary residence" excludes secondary residences.

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

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

(7) Indexes on a December 1993=100 base.

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