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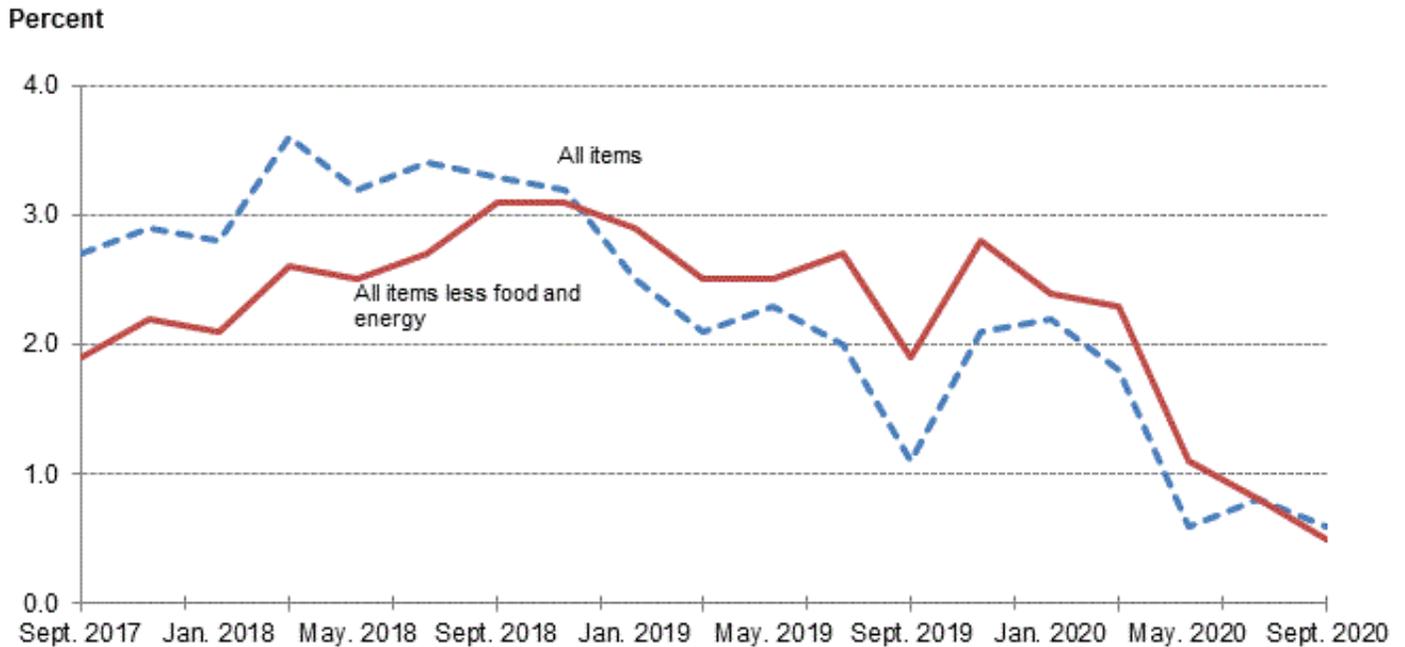
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Consumer Price Index, Boston-Cambridge-Newton — September 2020 **Area prices up 0.1 percent over two months; up 0.6 percent from a year ago**

The Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U) in the Boston-Cambridge-Newton area inched up 0.1 percent in September, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reported today. Regional Commissioner William J. Sibley noted that the September increase was influenced by higher prices for all items less food and energy. (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 rose 0.6 percent. Food prices rose 6.9 percent. The index for all items less food and energy increased 0.5 percent over the year. Energy prices dropped 11.2 percent, largely the result of a decrease in the price of gasoline. (See [chart 1](#).)

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



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Food

Food prices decreased 1.3 percent for the two months ending in September. (See table 1.) Prices for food at home decreased 2.3 percent, and prices for food away from home advanced 0.3 percent for the same period.

Over the year, food prices rose 6.9 percent. Prices rose due mainly to higher food at home prices (+8.2 percent), and, to a lesser extent, higher prices for food away from home (+5.0 percent) since a year ago.

Energy

The energy index rose 0.7 percent for the two months ending in September. The increase was mainly due to higher prices for gasoline (3.0 percent). Prices for natural gas service decreased 0.7 percent, and prices for electricity decreased 1.6 percent for the same period.

Energy prices dropped 11.2 percent over the year, largely due to lower prices for gasoline (-16.8 percent). Prices paid for electricity decreased 2.4 percent, and prices for natural gas service declined 6.2 percent during the past year.

All items less food and energy

The index for all items less food and energy increased 0.3 percent in the latest two-month period. Higher prices for apparel (4.3 percent) and household furnishings and operations (1.5 percent) were partially offset by lower prices for new and used motor vehicles (-1.3 percent); other goods and services (-0.7 percent) and medical care (-0.1 percent).

Over the year, the index for all items less food and energy increased 0.5 percent. Components contributing to the increase included shelter (1.9 percent) and education and communication (1.9 percent). Partly offsetting the increases were price decreases in apparel (-11.0 percent) and recreation (-3.5 percent).

CPI-W

In September, the Consumer Price Index for Urban Wage Earners and Clerical Workers (CPI-W) was 281.670. The CPI-W remained flat (0.0 percent) over two months and increased 0.6 percent over the year.

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

Coronavirus (COVID-19) Pandemic Impact on September 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 September 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 (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	Jul. 2020	Aug. 2020	Sep. 2020	Sep. 2019	Jul. 2020	Aug. 2020
All items.....		283.175		283.391	0.6	0.1	
All items (1967 = 100).....		823.056		823.682			
Food and beverages		285.837		283.178	6.7	-0.9	
Food		288.878		285.154	6.9	-1.3	
Food at home		273.460	264.259	267.186	8.2	-2.3	1.1
Cereal and bakery products		324.743		320.074	7.7	-1.4	
Meats, poultry, fish, and eggs.....		297.522		285.734	12.4	-4.0	
Dairy and related products		293.892		291.053	3.7	-1.0	
Fruits and vegetables.....		351.155		354.133	21.0	0.8	
Nonalcoholic beverages and beverage materials(1)		170.999		162.718	0.0	-4.8	
Other food at home		212.319		205.611	1.8	-3.2	
Food away from home.....		315.781		316.585	5.0	0.3	
Alcoholic beverages		257.049		265.514	4.5	3.3	
Housing		297.149		297.786	1.1	0.2	
Shelter		358.626	359.574	358.916	1.9	0.1	-0.2
Rent of primary residence(2).....		370.972	372.555	375.284	3.2	1.2	0.7
Owners' equivalent rent of residences(2)(3)(4)		384.724	385.086	385.336	3.2	0.2	0.1
Owners' equivalent rent of primary residence(2)(3)(4).....		384.724	385.086	385.336	3.2	0.2	0.1
Fuels and utilities.....		262.049		261.519	-5.0	-0.2	
Household energy		215.296	213.755	213.780	-7.0	-0.7	0.0
Energy services(2)		232.863	229.423	229.664	-3.1	-1.4	0.1
Electricity(2).....		286.886	281.785	282.198	-2.4	-1.6	0.1
Utility (piped) gas service(2).....		143.256	142.251	142.251	-6.2	-0.7	0.0
Household furnishings and operations.....		126.530		128.480	-1.9	1.5	
Apparel.....		123.640		128.971	-11.0	4.3	
Transportation		181.952		180.884	-4.6	-0.6	
Private transportation		184.405		184.528	-3.1	0.1	
New and used motor vehicles(5).....		105.263		103.868	2.1	-1.3	
New Vehicles(1)		214.609		204.111	1.2	-4.9	
Used cars and trucks(1)		322.507		347.173	9.0	7.6	
Motor fuel		183.054	184.577	188.492	-16.8	3.0	2.1
Gasoline (all types).....		180.786	182.309	186.222	-16.8	3.0	2.1
Gasoline, unleaded regular(6).....		173.189	174.830	178.631	-17.6	3.1	2.2
Gasoline, unleaded midgrade(6)(7).....		205.885	206.353	210.033	-12.7	2.0	1.8
Gasoline, unleaded premium(6).....		204.765	205.213	209.347	-11.9	2.2	2.0
Motor vehicle insurance(1).....							
Medical care		695.700		694.815	0.6	-0.1	
Recreation(5).....		116.746		116.973	-3.5	0.2	
Education and communication(5).....		171.624		173.025	1.9	0.8	
Tuition, other fees, and child care(1).....		1,400.341		1,422.666	2.0	1.6	
Other goods and services		516.473		513.063	2.1	-0.7	
Commodity and service group							
Commodities		190.932		191.749	0.1	0.4	
Commodities less food and beverages		143.674		145.869	-4.7	1.5	

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	Jul. 2020	Aug. 2020	Sep. 2020	Sep. 2019	Jul. 2020	Aug. 2020
Nondurables less food and beverages...		180.178		183.602	-9.1	1.9	
Durables		107.108		108.257	1.4	1.1	
Services.....		366.236		365.925	0.9	-0.1	
Special aggregate indexes							
All items less shelter.....		255.248		255.434	-0.1	0.1	
All items less medical care		267.523		267.775	0.7	0.1	
Commodities less food		148.117		150.536	-4.2	1.6	
Nondurables		231.457		231.952	-0.3	0.2	
Nondurables less food.....		184.944		188.725	-7.8	2.0	
Services less rent of shelter(3).....		391.109		389.959	-0.3	-0.3	
Services less medical care services.....		342.500		342.153	0.8	-0.1	
Energy		199.790	199.560	201.231	-11.2	0.7	0.8
All items less energy		294.384		294.507	1.3	0.0	
All items less food and energy		296.354		297.102	0.5	0.3	

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.