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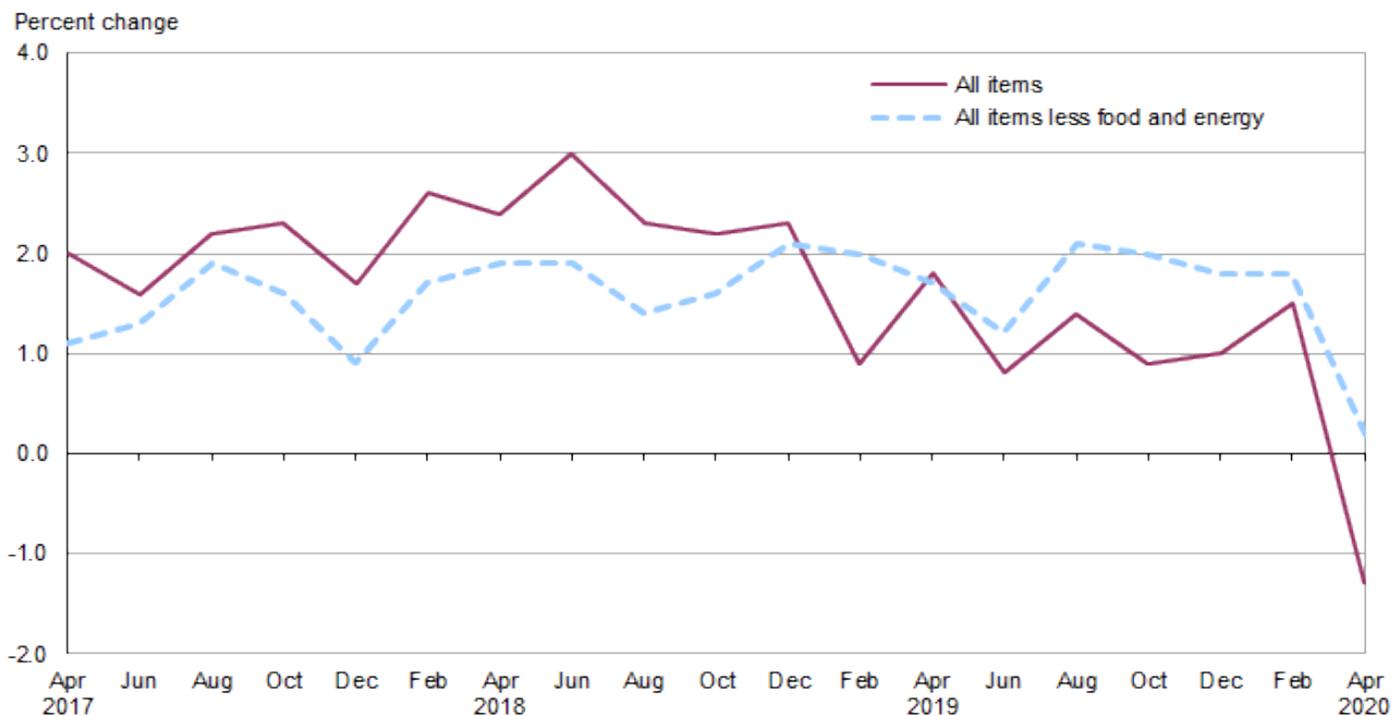
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Consumer Price Index, Houston-The Woodlands-Sugar Land – April 2020 **Area prices decline 1.6 percent in March and April; down 1.3 percent over the year**

Prices in the Houston-The Woodlands-Sugar Land area, as measured by the Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U), fell 1.6 percent for the two months ending in April 2020, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reported today. Acting Regional Commissioner Susan Mendez noted that a decline of 1.5 percent in the index for all items less food and energy, combined with a drop of 10.4 percent in energy costs, easily offset the 1.7-percent increase in food costs. (Data in this report are not seasonally adjusted. Accordingly, bi-monthly changes may reflect seasonal influences.)

Over the last 12 months, the all items CPI-U fell 1.3 percent, the first annual decline since October 2015. (See [chart 1](#).) The index for all items less food and energy edged up 0.2 percent over the year, while food prices increased 2.4 percent. In sharp contrast, the energy index dropped 21.6 percent during the last year. (See [table 1](#).)

Chart 1. Over-the-year percent change in CPI-U, Houston, TX, April 2017–April 2020



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Food

Food prices increased 1.7 percent in March and April, after registering little change in January and February (0.1 percent). Between the two components of the index, prices for food at home (grocery stores) climbed 2.7 percent, while prices for food away from home rose 0.7 percent. The price increase for food at home was the largest bi-monthly increase since June and July 2008.

Over the year, food prices rose 2.4 percent. The annual advance reflected the combined effects of a 2.9-percent increase in prices for food away from home and a 1.6-percent rise in prices for food at home.

Energy

The energy index dropped 10.4 percent in March and April, following a 4.6-percent decrease in January and February. The latest decline was entirely the result of a 21.0-percent drop in motor fuel prices, as electricity costs rose 1.0 percent during the period and prices for utility (piped) gas service were unchanged.

From April 2019 to April 2020, the energy index sank 21.6 percent, the sharpest annual decrease since the year ended in December 2015. The movement was the result of price declines in all three of the energy sub-components. During the period, motor fuel costs plunged 34.6 percent, electricity costs fell 5.7 percent, and prices for utility (piped) gas service were down 10.0 percent.

All items less food and energy

The index for all items less food and energy fell 1.5 percent in March and April, after rising 1.1 percent in January and February. Declines were widespread, but among the largest factors were decreases in prices for apparel and motor vehicle insurance. Prices also fell for recreation (-2.2 percent) and education and communication (-1.5 percent). Partially offsetting these declines, prices rose in the bi-monthly period for shelter (0.5 percent) and medical care (1.3 percent).

During the 12 months ending in April 2020, the index for all items less food and energy rose 0.2 percent. The largest factor in the annual increase was a 2.9-percent rise in shelter costs, but higher medical care costs (4.4 percent) also contributed. These increases were nearly balanced by price declines for apparel, motor vehicle insurance, and used cars and trucks.

The June 2020 Consumer Price Index for All Items for Houston-The Woodlands-Sugar Land is scheduled to be released Tuesday, July 14, 2020.

Coronavirus (COVID-19) Impact on April 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 April 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/bls/effects-of-covid-19-pandemic-on-bls-price-indexes.htm#CPI.

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 93 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 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 **Houston-The Woodlands-Sugar Land, Texas, Core Based Statistical Area** includes the counties of Austin, Brazoria, Chambers, Fort Bend, Galveston, Harris, Liberty, Montgomery, and Waller.

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, Houston-The Woodlands-Sugar Land, TX (1982-84=100 unless otherwise noted)

Item and Group	Indexes			Percent change from -		
	Feb. 2020	Mar. 2020	Apr. 2020	Apr. 2019	Feb. 2020	Mar. 2020
All items.....	230.147	-	226.387	-1.3	-1.6	-
All items (1967 = 100).....	738.165	-	726.104			
Food and beverages.....	235.511	-	239.212	2.7	1.6	-
Food.....	235.471	-	239.538	2.4	1.7	-
Food at home.....	224.901	227.059	230.928	1.6	2.7	1.7
Cereals and bakery products.....	267.005	-	277.342	3.7	3.9	-
Meats, poultry, fish, and eggs.....	245.861	-	250.857	1.2	2.0	-
Dairy and related products.....	174.540	-	182.907	4.6	4.8	-
Fruits and vegetables.....	285.885	-	297.505	5.0	4.1	-
Nonalcoholic beverages and beverage materials(1).....	266.698	-	280.158	-1.6	5.0	-
Other food at home.....	200.134	-	199.238	-0.7	-0.4	-
Food away from home.....	242.033	-	243.834	2.9	0.7	-
Alcoholic beverages.....	223.723	-	222.797	8.0	-0.4	-
Housing.....	226.723	-	226.910	1.5	0.1	-
Shelter.....	271.677	273.306	273.089	2.9	0.5	-0.1
Rent of primary residence.....	267.301	268.646	268.517	3.4	0.5	0.0
Owners' equivalent rent of residences(2).....	252.770	253.165	253.701	2.7	0.4	0.2
Owners' equivalent rent of primary residence(2).....	252.770	253.165	253.701	2.7	0.4	0.2
Fuels and utilities.....	170.256	-	171.160	-5.0	0.5	-
Household energy.....	146.041	140.433	147.084	-6.3	0.7	4.7
Energy services.....	143.586	138.022	144.835	-6.2	0.9	4.9
Electricity.....	143.813	137.326	145.281	-5.7	1.0	5.8
Utility (piped) gas service.....	129.923	129.894	129.872	-10.0	0.0	0.0
Household furnishings and operations.....	139.573	-	135.297	-1.6	-3.1	-
Apparel.....	191.257	-	166.064	-14.7	-13.2	-
Transportation.....	181.471	-	167.698	-11.0	-7.6	-
Private transportation.....	180.035	-	167.649	-10.8	-6.9	-
New and used motor vehicles(3).....	86.724	-	86.910	-1.8	0.2	-
New vehicles(1).....	163.426	-	166.570	1.1	1.9	-
Used cars and trucks(1).....	224.373	-	227.286	-1.4	1.3	-
Motor fuel.....	190.695	187.641	150.591	-34.6	-21.0	-19.7
Gasoline (all types).....	190.325	187.322	150.020	-34.9	-21.2	-19.9
Gasoline, unleaded regular(4).....	191.056	187.995	149.456	-36.1	-21.8	-20.5
Gasoline, unleaded midgrade(4)(5).....	211.127	209.324	169.232	-30.6	-19.8	-19.2
Gasoline, unleaded premium(4).....	220.837	217.483	185.122	-25.0	-16.2	-14.9
Motor vehicle insurance(1).....	754.132	-	589.696	-16.8	-21.8	-
Medical care.....	522.778	-	529.343	4.4	1.3	-
Recreation(3).....	108.874	-	106.477	1.0	-2.2	-
Education and communication(3).....	121.251	-	119.403	-0.6	-1.5	-
Tuition, other school fees, and childcare(1).....	1,245.819	-	1,246.133	-1.1	0.0	-
Other goods and services.....	417.520	-	414.637	-0.5	-0.7	-
Commodity and service group						
Commodities.....	174.383	-	168.853	-5.2	-3.2	-
Commodities less food and beverages.....	145.186	-	136.715	-9.5	-5.8	-
Nondurables less food and beverages.....	195.691	-	173.391	-16.9	-11.4	-
Durables.....	99.238	-	98.871	-1.4	-0.4	-
Services.....	287.233	-	285.261	1.3	-0.7	-
Special aggregate indexes						
All items less shelter.....	214.560	-	208.759	-3.2	-2.7	-
All items less medical care.....	216.305	-	212.223	-1.7	-1.9	-
Commodities less food.....	147.809	-	139.499	-8.9	-5.6	-

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, Houston-The Woodlands-Sugar Land, TX (1982-84=100 unless otherwise noted) - Continued

Item and Group	Indexes			Percent change from -		
	Feb. 2020	Mar. 2020	Apr. 2020	Apr. 2019	Feb. 2020	Mar. 2020
Nondurables	215.728	-	206.005	-6.9	-4.5	-
Nondurables less food.....	197.048	-	176.239	-15.4	-10.6	-
Services less rent of shelter(2).....	301.773	-	295.588	-0.5	-2.0	-
Services less medical care services.....	263.754	-	261.160	0.7	-1.0	-
Energy	166.085	161.605	148.835	-21.6	-10.4	-7.9
All items less energy	239.794	-	237.284	0.5	-1.0	-
All items less food and energy	240.332	-	236.770	0.2	-1.5	-

Footnotes

- (1) Indexes on an April 1978=100 base.
 - (2) Indexes on a December 1982=100 base.
 - (3) Indexes on a December 1997=100 base.
 - (4) Special index based on a substantially smaller sample.
 - (5) Index on a December 1993=100.
- Data not available.