

News

United States
Department
of Labor



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Average Energy Prices in the Washington-Baltimore Area, July 2008

Washington-Baltimore area consumers paid more for utility (piped) gas (19.4 percent) and electricity (9.2 percent) than the U.S. city average, while the price of gasoline (-0.8 percent) was slightly below the average price for the nation in July 2008 as measured by the Consumer Price Index (CPI), the Bureau of Labor Statistics of the U.S. Department of Labor reported today. Sheila Watkins, the Bureau's regional commissioner, noted that 2008's 9.2-percent gap between local and national electricity prices was the largest difference during July in the past ten years. (See table A.)

Table A. Average prices for utility (piped) gas, electricity, and gasoline, United States and Washington-Baltimore area, July 1998-2008

Year	Utility (piped) gas per therm			Electricity per kWh			Gasoline per gallon		
	United States	Washington -Baltimore	Percent Difference	United States	Washington -Baltimore	Percent Difference	United States	Washington -Baltimore	Percent Difference
1998	\$0.671	\$0.902	34.4	\$0.091	\$0.096	5.5	\$1.134	\$1.132	-0.2
1999	0.675	0.931	37.9	0.090	0.095	5.6	1.244	1.200	-3.5
2000	0.813	1.103	35.7	0.091	0.095	4.4	1.642	1.683	2.5
2001	0.888	1.049	18.1	0.099	0.093	-6.1	1.565	1.642	4.9
2002	0.772	1.002	29.8	0.095	0.093	-2.1	1.496	1.550	3.6
2003	0.986	1.139	15.5	0.098	0.093	-5.1	1.567	1.601	2.2
2004	1.058	1.308	23.6	0.099	0.094	-5.1	1.982	2.012	1.5
2005	1.168	1.378	18.0	0.105	0.097	-7.6	2.357	2.393	1.5
2006	1.213	1.256	3.5	0.118	0.112	-5.1	3.046	3.150	3.4
2007	1.279	1.380	7.9	0.122	0.130	6.6	3.013	3.021	0.3
2008	1.703	2.033	19.4	0.131	0.143	9.2	4.142	4.108	-0.8

A therm—a measure of constant heating value—of utility (piped) gas, commonly referred to as natural gas, in the Washington-Baltimore area averaged \$2.033 in July 2008, 47.3 percent higher than one year earlier and 125.4 percent more than in 1998. Nationwide, natural gas prices have risen 33.2 percent over the year to \$1.703. Local area natural gas prices have been consistently above the July price levels in the United States over the last decade, though the differentials varied considerably. (See chart A.)

A kilowatt-hour (kWh) of electricity cost Washington-Baltimore area consumers \$0.143 in July 2008, rising 10.0 percent over the year. Washington-Baltimore area electricity prices were below the U.S. average from July 2001 to July 2006; however, over the last two years local electricity prices have surpassed national levels, rising 27.7 percent. Nationwide, electricity cost 7.4 percent more in July 2008 than it did one year earlier and 11.0 percent more than two years ago. (See chart B.)

Chart A. Average prices for utility (piped) gas, United States and Washington-Baltimore area, July 1998-2008

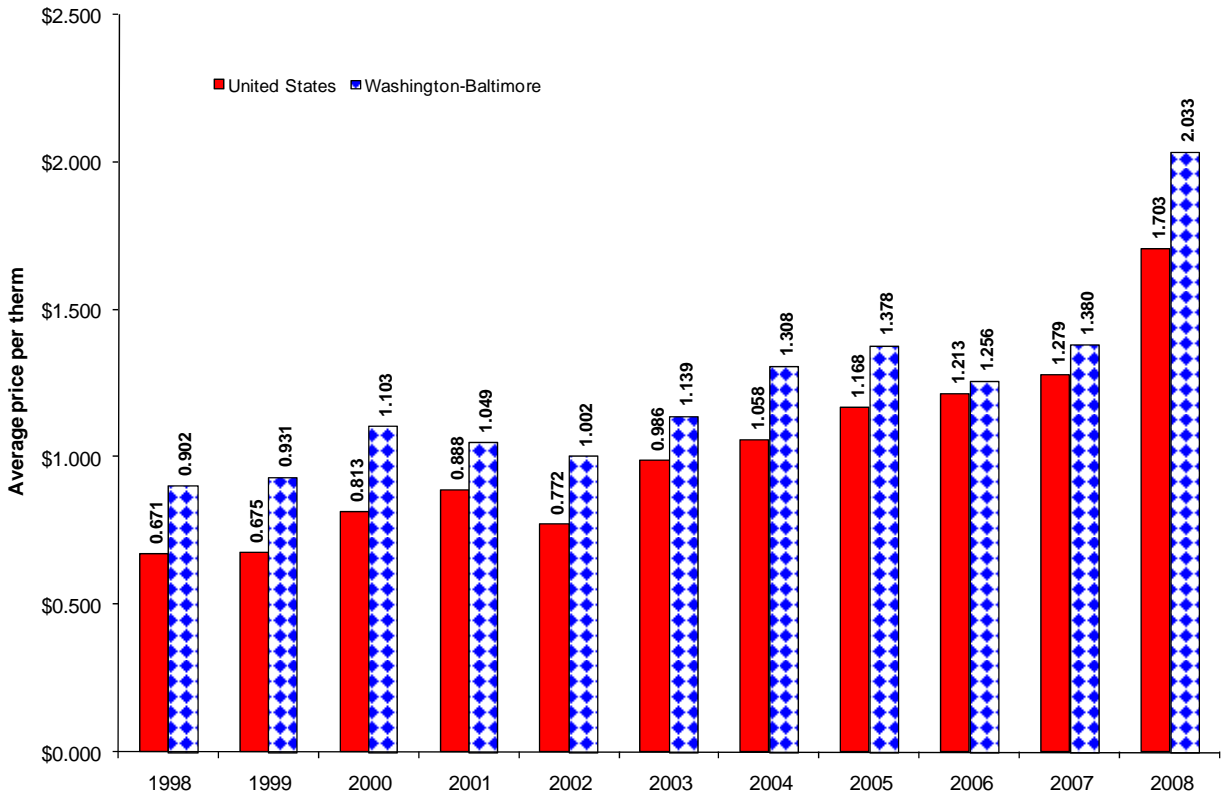
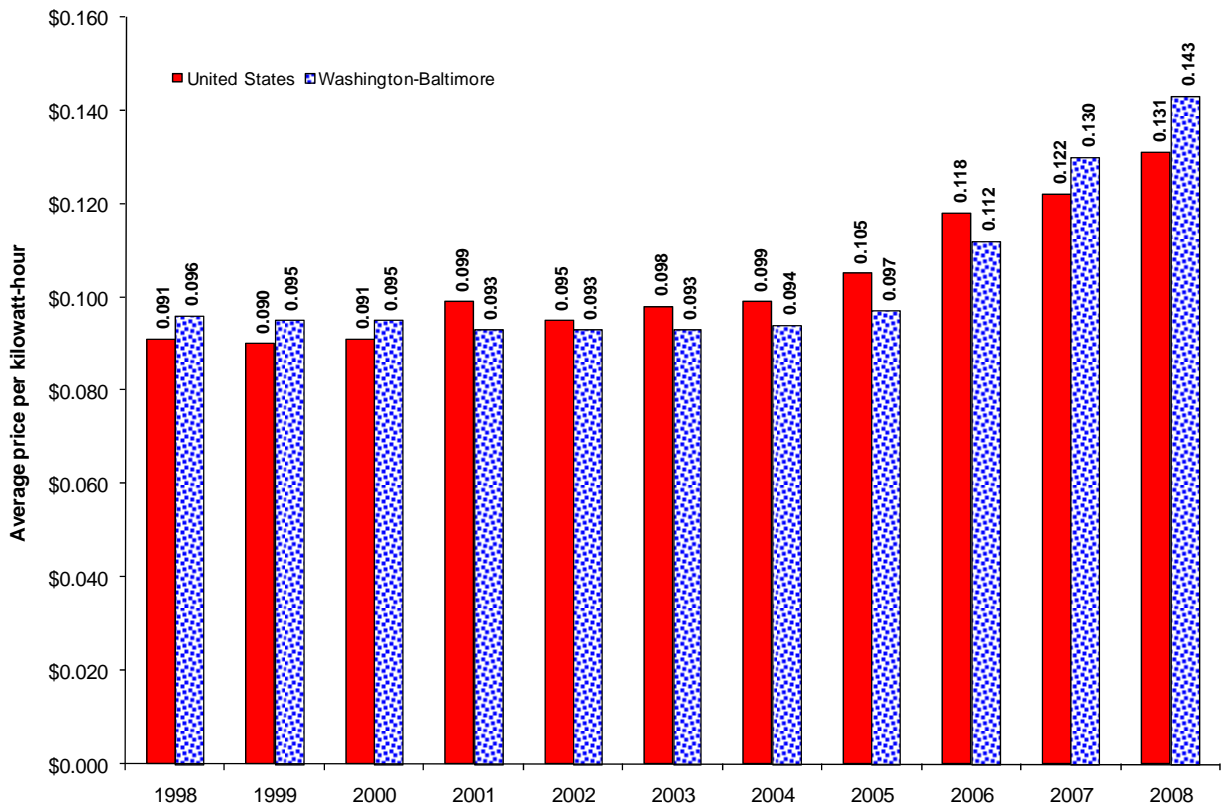
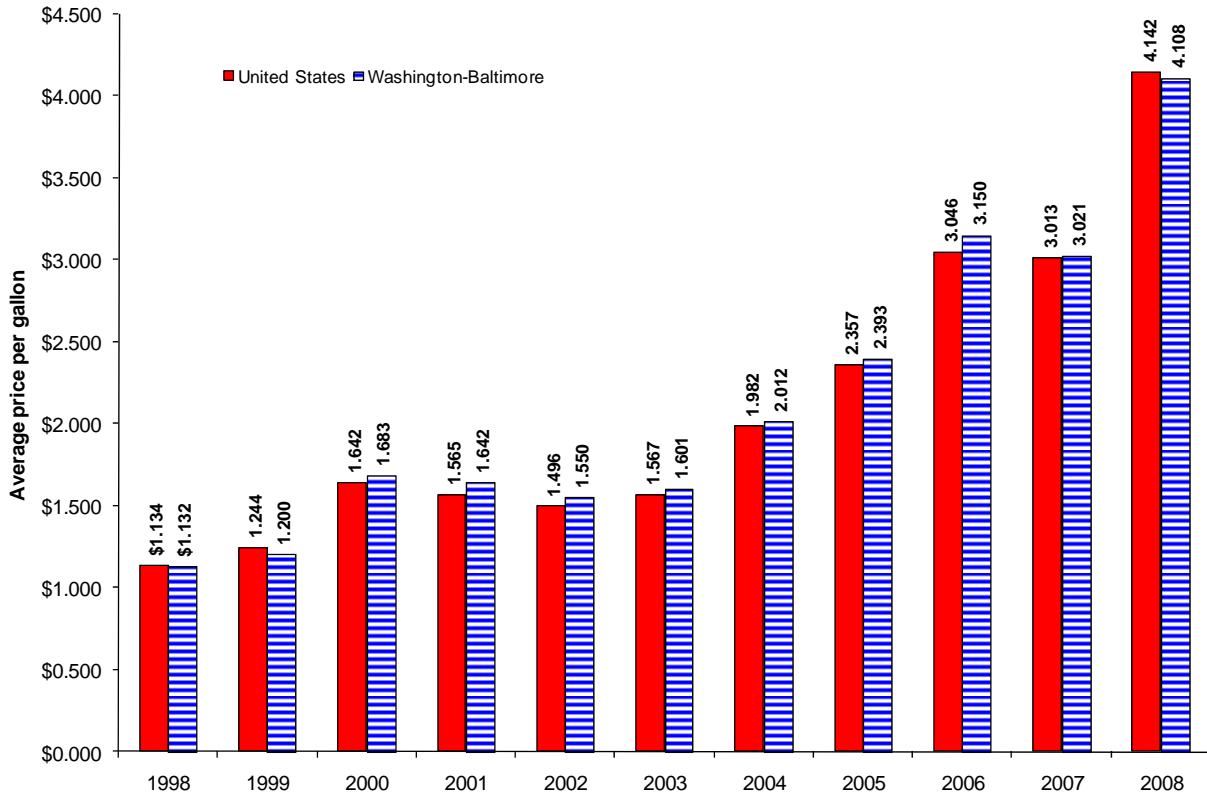


Chart B. Average prices for electricity, United States and Washington-Baltimore area, July 1998-2008



Gasoline prices are subject to rapid monthly fluctuations; however, over the last 10 years, the price per gallon in the Washington-Baltimore area has generally trended upward—from \$1.132 in July 1998 to \$4.108 in July 2008. The July 2008 price locally was \$1.087 higher than one year earlier and \$2.976 higher than in July 1998. Nationally, the average price for a gallon of gasoline rose \$1.129 since July 2007 and \$3.008 since July 1998. Gasoline prices in the Washington-Baltimore area have been close to those for the nation as a whole in July over the last 10 years. (See chart C.)

Chart C. Average prices for gasoline, United States and Washington-Baltimore area, July 1998-2008



The Washington-Baltimore, D.C.-Md.-Va.-W.Va., Consolidated Metropolitan Statistical Area (CMSA) includes the District of Columbia; Baltimore City and the counties of Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Calvert, Carroll, Charles, Frederick, Harford, Howard, Montgomery, Prince George's, Queen Anne's, and Washington in Maryland; the cities of Alexandria, Fairfax, Falls Church, Fredericksburg, Manassas, and Manassas Park and the counties of Arlington, Clarke, Fairfax, Fauquier, King George, Loudoun, Prince William, Rappahannock, Spotsylvania, Stafford, and Warren in Virginia; and the counties of Berkeley and Jefferson in West Virginia.

Additional information

Information in this release will be made available to sensory impaired individuals upon request. Voice phone: 202-691-5200; TDD message referral phone number: 1-800-877-8339.

For personal assistance or further information on the CPI data, as well as other Bureau data, contact the Mid-Atlantic Information Office at 215-597-3282 from 8:30 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. and 1:00 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. ET. Information on the Consumer Price Index and other surveys and programs is available on our Web site at www.bls.gov/ro3/.

Technical Information

Average prices for electricity, utility (piped) gas, and gasoline are published monthly for the U.S. city average, the 4 regions, the 3 population size classes, 10 region/size-class cross-classifications, and the 14 largest local index areas. For electricity, average prices per kilowatt-hour (kWh) and per 500 kWh are published. For utility (piped) gas, average prices per therm, per 40 therms, and per 100 therms are published. For gasoline, the average price per gallon is published. Average prices for commonly available grades of gasoline are published as well as the average price across all grades.

Price quotes for 40 therms and 100 therms of utility (piped) gas and for 500 kWh of electricity are collected in sample outlets for use in the average price programs only. Since they are for specified consumption amounts, they are not used in the CPI. All other price quotes used for average price estimation are regular CPI data.

With the exception of the 40 therms, 100 therms, and 500 kWh price quotes, all eligible prices are converted to a price per normalized quantity. These prices are then used to estimate a price for a defined fixed quantity.