



Web site: www.bls.gov/ro3/

Information: Gerald Perrins
(215) 597-3282

Media Contact: Sheila Watkins
(215) 861-5600

PLS – 4524

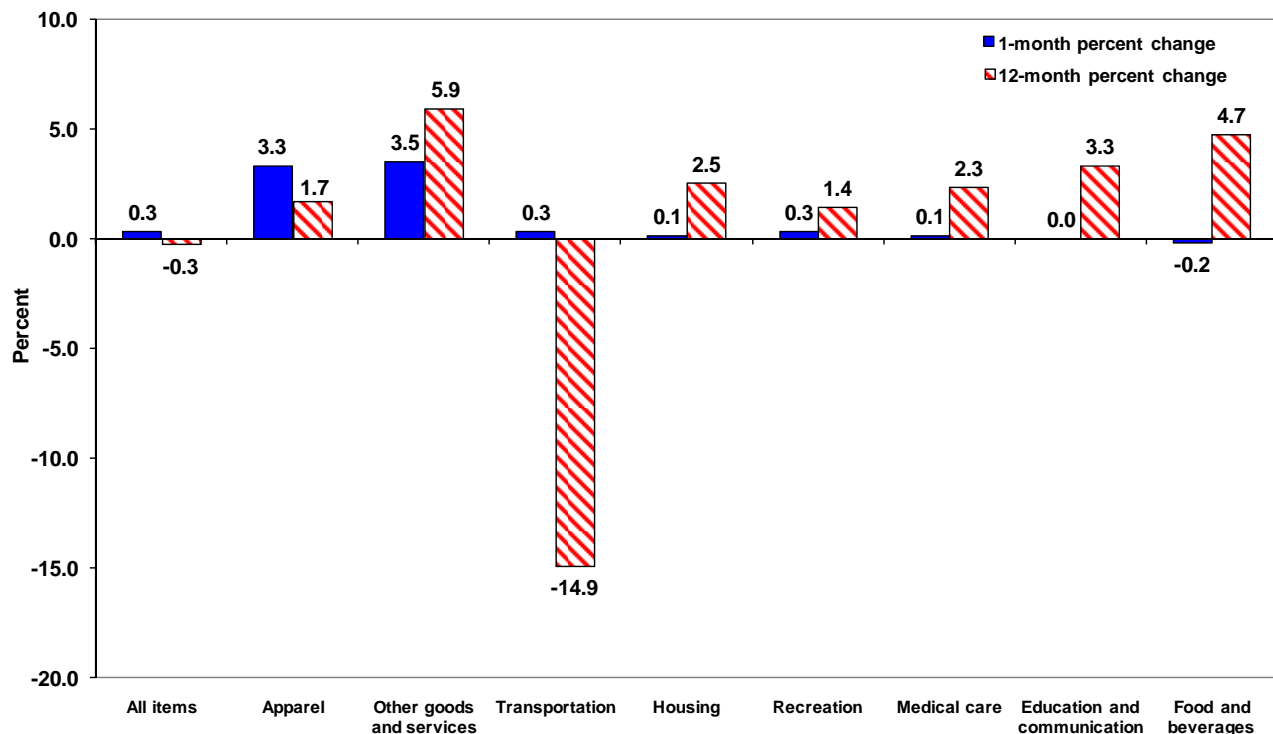
For Release:

Wednesday, April 15, 2009

SOUTH REGION CONSUMER PRICE INDEX: MARCH 2009

The Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U) for the South¹ increased 0.3 percent in March to 206.001 (1982-84=100), the Bureau of Labor Statistics of the U.S. Department of Labor reported today. Sheila Watkins, the Bureau's regional commissioner, noted that costs were higher for six of the eight categories. Only prices for food and beverages were lower over the month, while education and communication prices were unchanged. The energy index decreased 1.0 percent over the month, while food costs edged down 0.2 percent. Over the same period, the core inflation rate, as measured by the all items less food and energy index, rose 0.6 percent.

Chart A. 1-month and 12-month percent changes ended March 2009 for the major categories of the CPI-U for the South region, not seasonally adjusted



Over the last 12 months, prices in the South decreased 0.3 percent, as lower costs for transportation were partially offset by increases in the remaining categories. Energy costs in the region declined 22.2 percent, while food prices increased 4.8 percent since last March. Over the same period, the core inflation rate advanced 2.0 percent.

¹ South includes Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, and West Virginia.

Among the major categories, apparel costs increased 3.3 percent over the month, reflecting normal seasonal patterns. Prices for apparel rose 1.7 percent over the year.

The other goods and services index (which includes tobacco and smoking products, personal care products and services, and miscellaneous personal goods) rose 3.5 percent in March—the largest one-month increase since this index was first reported on a monthly basis in January 1987—to a level 5.9 percent higher than a year ago.

The transportation index increased 0.3 percent in March, as costs for motor fuel and new and used motor vehicles increased 1.0 percent and 0.2 percent, respectively. Over the year, transportation costs decreased 14.9 percent, primarily as a result of a 40.8-percent drop in motor fuel prices.

The index for housing was little changed over the month, up 0.1 percent. The shelter index, which includes rent of primary residence, lodging away from home, owners' equivalent rent of primary residence, and tenants' and household insurance, rose 0.4 percent since February. Household furnishings and operations costs increased 0.6 percent over the month. Nearly offsetting these advances, costs for fuels and utilities decreased 2.0 percent. Since March 2008, the housing index rose 2.5 percent in the South. Higher prices for shelter (2.1 percent) and fuels and utilities (4.7 percent) were largely responsible for the 12-month increase in the housing index. Costs for household furnishings and operations were also higher over the year, advancing 2.4 percent.

The recreation index rose 0.3 percent over the month. Since March 2008, the recreation index increased 1.4 percent.

The index for medical care inched up 0.1 percent over the month, due to identical increases (0.1 percent) in costs for medical care services and medical care commodities. Over the year, the medical care index rose 2.3 percent, as prices increased for medical care services (2.5 percent) and medical care commodities (1.8 percent).

Prices for education and communication remained unchanged over the month; since March 2008, this index increased 3.3 percent.

The food and beverages index edged down 0.2 percent in March, as a 0.6-percent decline in costs for food at home was partially offset by 0.3-percent increases in costs for food away from home and alcoholic beverages. Over the year, the food and beverages index advanced 4.7 percent, as prices for food at home rose 4.6 percent and costs for food away from home increased 4.9 percent. Since March 2008, alcoholic beverages costs increased 3.8 percent.

Population size groups

Over the month, consumer prices in the South increased 0.3 percent in the largest metropolitan areas, those with 1.5 million or more residents (Size Class A). Prices increased 0.4 percent in the mid-size areas, those with populations between 50,000 and 1.5 million (Size Class B/C), and inched up 0.1 percent in the smallest areas, those with populations of less than 50,000 (Size Class D). Over the past 12 months, consumer prices in the South edged down 0.3 percent in the largest areas (Size Class A) and decreased 0.4 percent in the mid-sized areas (Size Class B/C). In the smallest areas (Size Class D), prices were unchanged over the year.

Technical Note

The Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) has updated the consumption expenditure weights in the Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U) and Consumer Price Index for Urban Wage Earners and Clerical Workers (CPI-W) to the 2005-06 period. The updated expenditure weights for these indexes replace the 2003-2004 weights that were introduced effective with the January 2006 CPI release. As originally announced by BLS in December 1998, CPI expenditure weights will continue to be updated at two year intervals.

The CPI program completed its conversion to Computer Assisted Data Collection (CADC). Due to the efficiencies gained from conversion to CADC, BLS has extended data collection to cover the entire month, beginning with data for January 2004. CPI data collection is scheduled in terms of business days – weekdays excluding holidays. Formerly, data collection covered three pricing periods, each comprising six business days in most months and five days in November and December. Consequently, the last day of scheduled data collection was usually the 18th business day of the month. This allowed time during the end of the month for the mailing of paper schedules back to the Washington Office and the data entry of the information in these schedules. Starting in January 2004, the three pricing periods now have variable lengths, between six and eight business days long. The third pricing period normally will end on the last business day of the month.

Local area CPI indexes are by-products of the national CPI program. Because each local index is a small subset of the national index, it has a smaller sample size and is, therefore, subject to substantially more sampling and measurement error than the national index, although their long-term trends are quite similar. The Bureau of Labor Statistics strongly urges users to consider adopting the national average CPI for use in escalator clauses.

We encourage users interested in learning more about changes to the CPI to contact the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Information on the Consumer Price Index and other surveys are available on our Web site at www.bls.gov. Current and historical BLS data are also posted on our Web site at www.bls.gov/ro3/. If you have additional questions, you can contact the Mid-Atlantic information office directly by dialing (215) 597-3282. Information from the Consumer Price Index program is available to sensory impaired individuals upon request. Voice phone: 202-691-5200, Federal Relay Services: 1-800-877-8339.

Table 1. Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers and Urban Wage Earners and Clerical Workers, South Region, (1982-84=100 unless otherwise noted) (not seasonally adjusted)

Item and group	All Urban Consumers (CPI-U)			Urban Wage Earners and Clerical Workers (CPI-W)		
	Index	Percent change from		Index	Percent change from	
	Mar. 2009	Mar. 2008	Feb. 2009	Mar. 2009	Mar. 2008	Feb. 2009
All items	206.001	-0.3	0.3	201.737	-1.1	0.3
All items (December 1977=100)	334.163	-	-	326.736	-	-
Food and beverages	216.662	4.7	-0.2	215.425	4.7	-0.2
Food	217.255	4.8	-0.2	216.008	4.7	-0.2
Food at home	213.672	4.6	-0.6	211.982	4.5	-0.6
Food away from home	225.168	4.9	0.3	224.373	5.0	0.3
Alcoholic beverages	207.329	3.8	0.3	206.286	4.0	0.3
Housing	202.653	2.5	0.1	201.607	2.8	-0.1
Shelter	223.622	2.1	0.4	222.120	2.3	0.3
Rent of primary residence (1)	223.148	3.0	0.1	222.013	2.9	0.1
Owners' equivalent rent of primary residence (1) (2)	226.091	2.3	0.3	210.525	2.2	0.3
Fuels and utilities	215.970	4.7	-2.0	216.137	5.4	-2.0
Household energy	187.590	4.4	-2.5	186.007	5.1	-2.5
Gas (piped) and electricity (1)	188.886	5.5	-2.5	187.947	5.9	-2.4
Electricity (1)	184.681	10.5	-1.3	182.197	10.3	-1.3
Utility (piped) gas service (1)	201.437	-17.0	-8.9	205.719	-16.9	-9.6
Household furnishings and operations	130.141	2.4	0.6	124.754	2.3	0.4
Apparel	134.464	1.7	3.3	134.389	1.3	3.0
Transportation	165.612	-14.9	0.3	160.813	-16.9	0.2
Private transportation	163.725	-15.3	0.3	159.140	-17.2	0.2
New and used motor vehicles (3)	92.183	-3.0	0.2	88.204	-5.5	-0.2
New vehicles	139.858	0.0	0.6	139.505	0.1	0.6
New cars and trucks (3) (4)	95.143	-0.1	0.6	-	-	-
New cars (4)	143.538	1.0	0.1	-	-	-
Used cars and trucks	119.241	-12.5	-1.3	119.877	-12.5	-1.3
Motor fuel	165.767	-40.8	1.0	165.686	-40.8	1.0
Gasoline (all types)	165.012	-40.5	1.4	164.993	-40.6	1.5
Gasoline, unleaded regular (4)	162.861	-41.4	1.5	162.822	-41.4	1.5
Gasoline, unleaded midgrade (4) (5)	174.595	-39.2	1.5	174.563	-39.2	1.6
Gasoline, unleaded premium (4)	168.256	-37.9	1.0	168.039	-38.0	1.0
Medical care	354.392	2.3	0.1	357.299	2.4	0.1
Medical care commodities	291.027	1.8	0.1	284.082	1.8	0.1
Medical care services	374.813	2.5	0.1	379.341	2.6	0.1
Professional services	314.340	3.0	0.2	315.832	3.1	0.2
Recreation (3)	115.514	1.4	0.3	112.146	1.2	0.5
Education and communication (3)	121.773	3.3	0.0	117.459	2.9	-0.1
Other goods and services	349.784	5.9	3.5	364.982	7.4	4.8
Commodities	167.368	-4.5	0.7	166.256	-6.2	0.7
Services	245.493	2.8	0.1	244.026	3.0	0.0
All items less shelter	200.094	-1.4	0.3	195.582	-2.6	0.3
All items less medical care	197.441	-0.5	0.3	194.101	-1.3	0.3
Energy	171.992	-22.2	-1.0	171.058	-23.1	-0.9
All items less energy	210.539	2.4	0.4	205.966	2.3	0.4
All items less food and energy	209.726	2.0	0.6	204.123	1.8	0.6
South size A (more than 1,500,000)	208.529	-0.3	0.3	205.066	-1.1	0.3
South size B/C (50,000 to 1,500,000) (6)	130.873	-0.4	0.4	128.686	-1.2	0.3
South size D (nonmetropolitan, less than 50,000)	206.927	0.0	0.1	205.744	-0.9	0.2

Footnotes

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

(2) Indexes for CPI-U on December 1982=100 base; CPI-W on a December 1984=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.

(6) Indexes on a December 1996=100 base.

- Data not available.