



Bureau of Labor Statistics

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Wednesday, April 29, 2009www.bls.gov/ro5

AVERAGE ENERGY PRICES IN THE CHICAGO-GARY-KENOSHA AREA, MARCH 2009

Chicago area consumers paid more for electricity (15.1 percent) than the U.S. city average in March 2009. Gasoline prices were 3.1 percent above the national average in March while the price of utility (piped) gas was 27.7 percent below the average price for the nation, as measured by the Consumer Price Index, the Bureau of Labor Statistics of the U.S. Department of Labor reported today. Regional Commissioner Jay A. Mousa noted that with one exception, the local area has continued to experience above-average costs for electricity over the last 10 years. Prices for gasoline have been in-line with the national average for the month of March with only a couple of exceptions when Chicagoans paid just over eight percent more per gallon. Costs for utility (piped) gas have been below average during the same time period with one exception. (See table A.)

Table A. Average prices for electricity, gasoline, and utility (piped) gas, United States and Chicago-Gary-Kenosha area, March 1999-March 2009

Year	Electricity per kWh			Gasoline per gallon			Utility (piped) gas per therm		
	United States	Chicago	Percent difference	United States	Chicago	Percent difference	United States	Chicago	Percent difference
1999	\$0.084	\$0.100	19.0	\$1.048	\$1.136	8.4	\$0.663	\$0.448	-32.4
2000	0.085	0.103	21.2	1.594	1.639	2.8	0.712	0.526	-26.1
2001	0.089	0.103	15.7	1.503	1.477	-1.7	1.078	0.966	-10.4
2002	0.089	0.101	13.5	1.324	1.432	8.2	0.755	0.560	-25.8
2003	0.089	0.101	13.5	1.791	1.797	0.3	1.028	1.059	3.0
2004	0.091	0.101	11.0	1.809	1.800	-0.5	0.992	0.868	-12.5
2005	0.094	0.101	7.4	2.107	2.119	0.6	1.096	0.977	-10.9
2006	0.109	0.101	-7.3	2.444	2.500	2.3	1.335	1.140	-14.6
2007	0.113	0.125	10.6	2.639	2.575	-2.4	1.291	1.215	-5.9
2008	0.116	0.129	11.2	3.307	3.315	0.2	1.358	1.306	-3.8
2009	0.126	0.145	15.1	2.000	2.061	3.1	1.208	0.873	-27.7

A kilowatt-hour (kWh) of electricity cost Chicago area consumers \$0.145 in March 2009, 12.4 percent higher than one year earlier and 45.0 percent higher than in 1999. Nationwide, electricity prices averaged \$0.126 in March 2009, increasing 8.6 percent over the year and 50.0 percent over the previous ten years. In 2000, electricity prices were 21.2 percent higher in Chicago than in the United States, but by March 2009, the difference dropped to 15.1 percent. (See chart A.)

In March 2009, the average price of a gallon of gas in the Chicago area was \$2.061, down \$1.254 or 37.8 percent over the year. The average price of a gallon of gas in the

Chicago area was at its lowest March level since 2004 when prices at the pump were \$1.800. Nationally, a similar trend can be observed with gasoline prices falling 39.5 percent from March a year ago. Since 1999, the cost of gasoline in the Chicago area has typically tracked the national average in March. The largest differences were experienced in March 1999 and 2002 when Chicago area consumers paid 8.4 and 8.2 percent more for a gallon of gasoline than the U.S. average, respectively. (See chart B.)

A therm—a measure of constant heating value—of utility (piped) gas, commonly referred to as natural gas, in the Chicago area averaged \$0.873 in March 2009. Locally, natural gas prices were down 33.2 percent from March 2008, one of the highest March levels recorded for this series. Nationwide, natural gas cost 11.0 percent less in March 2009 than it did one year earlier. However, except for 2003, local natural gas prices have been below the national price level each March during the previous 10 years. (See chart C.)

Chart A. Average prices for electricity, United States and Chicago-Gary-Kenosha area, March 1999-2009

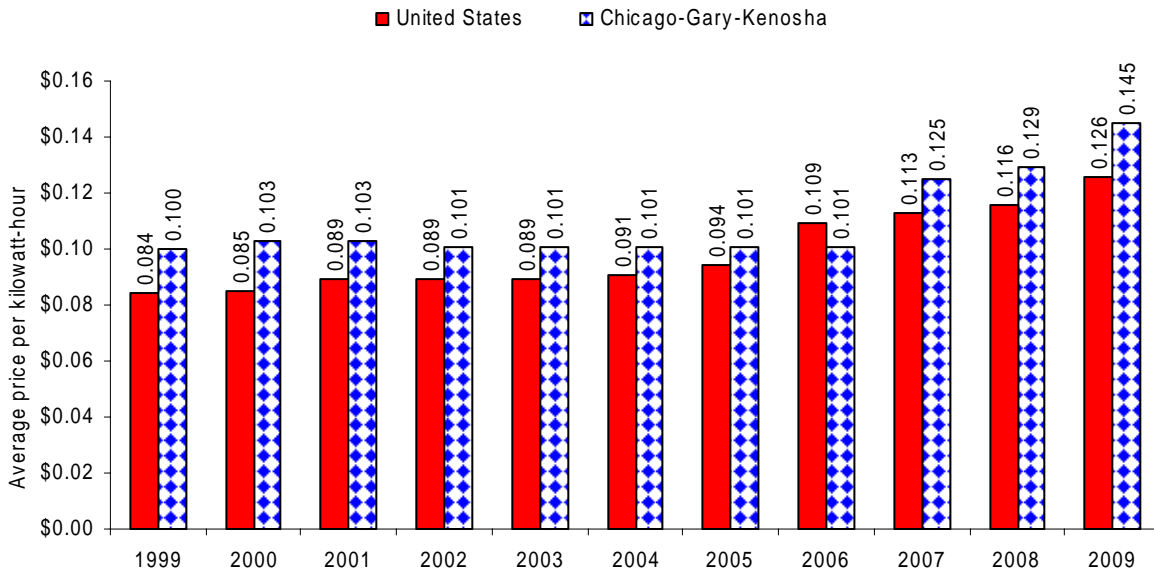
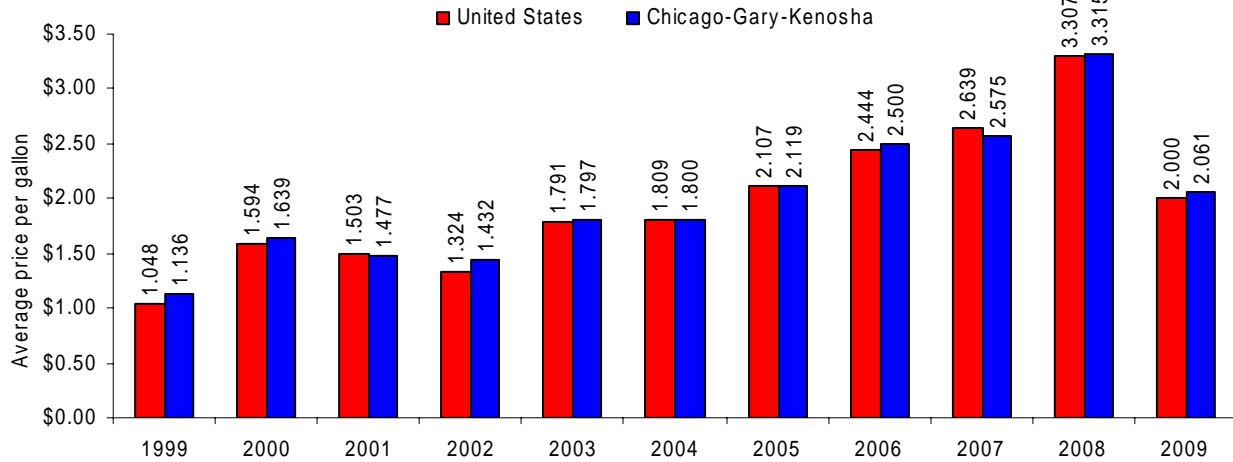
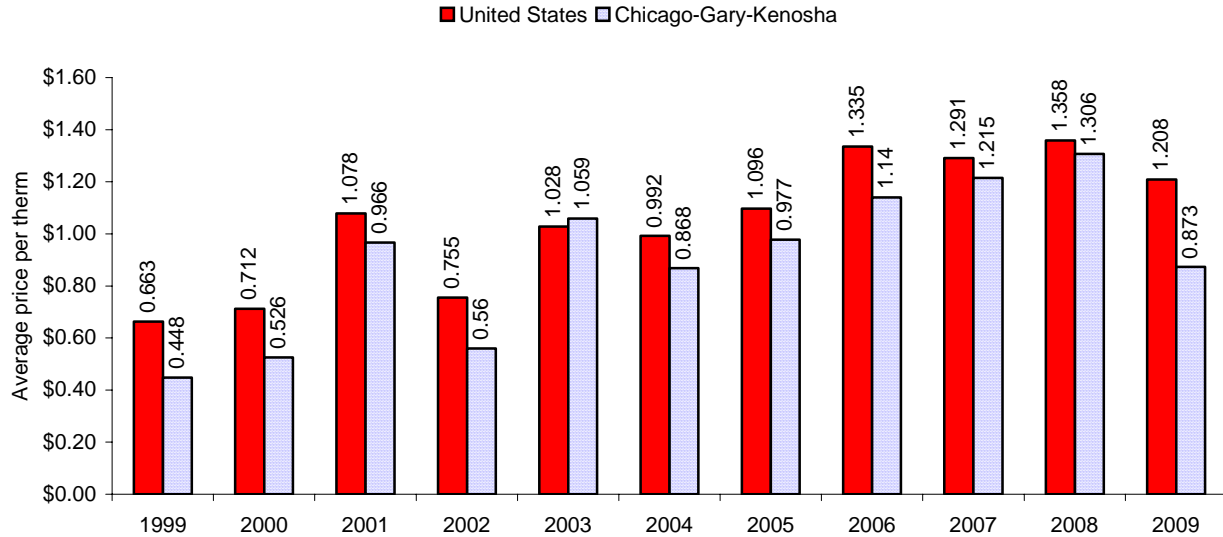


Chart B. Average prices for gasoline, United States and Chicago-Gary-Kenosha area, March 1999-2009**Chart C. Average prices for utility (piped) gas, United States and Chicago-Gary-Kenosha area, March 1999-2009**

The Chicago-Gary-Kenosha, IL-IN-WI, Consolidated Metropolitan Statistical Area (CMSA) is comprised of Cook, De Kalb, Du Page, Grundy, Kane, Kankakee, Kendall, Lake, McHenry, and Will Counties, in Illinois; Lake and Porter Counties in Indiana; and Kenosha County in Wisconsin.

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 CPI data, as well as other Bureau data, contact the Midwest Information Office at 312-353-1880 from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., Central Time.

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.