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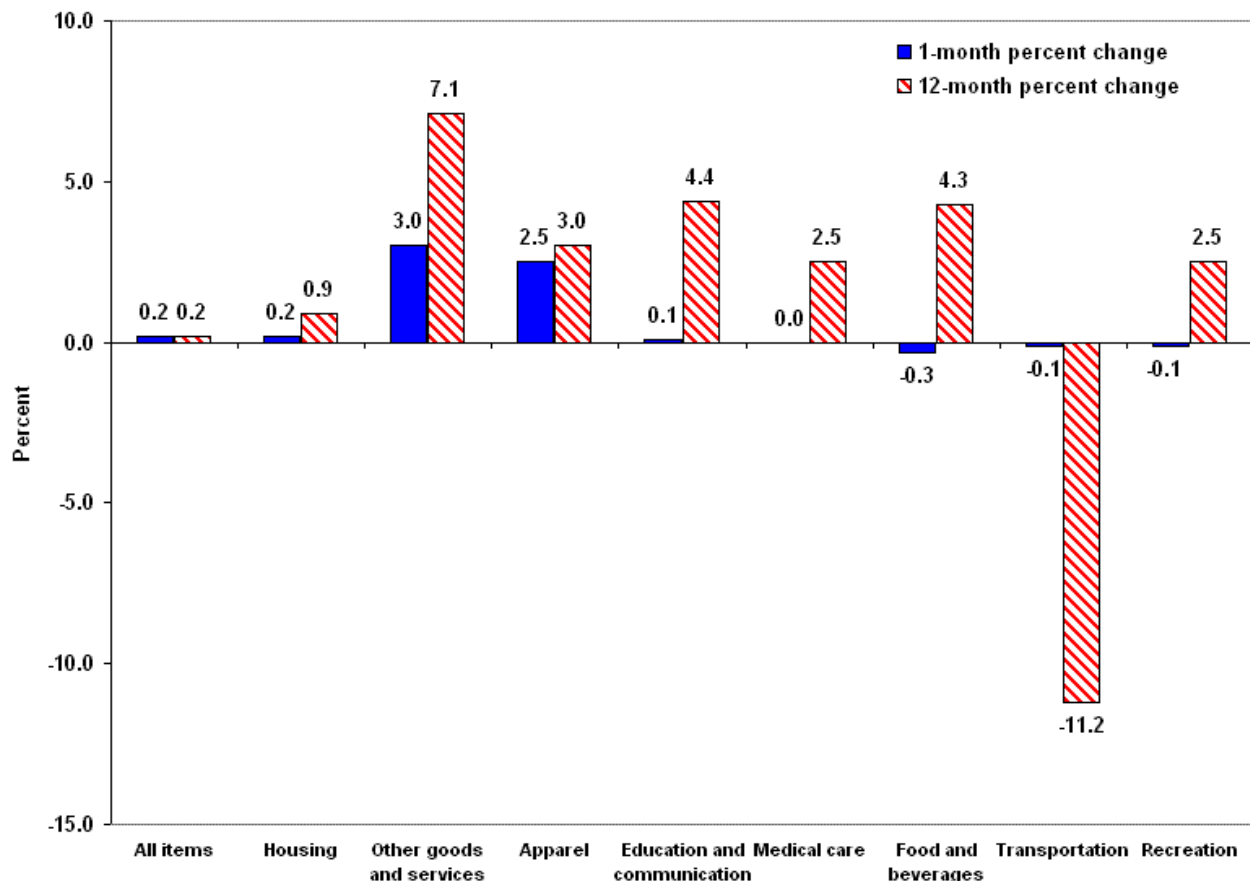
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NORTHEAST REGION CONSUMER PRICE INDEX: MARCH 2009

Smallest Ever Over-the-Year Increase

Retail prices in the Northeast region, as measured by the Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U), increased 0.2 percent in March, the Bureau of Labor Statistics of the U.S. Department of Labor reported today. Michael L. Dolfman, the Bureau's regional commissioner, noted that higher prices for housing, other goods and services, and apparel were partially offset by lower prices for food and beverages; the four remaining major categories had little or no change over the month. (See chart A.) The March level of 227.309 (1982-84 = 100) was 0.2 percent higher than in March 2008—the smallest 12-month increase since the inception of the index in December 1966. Over the same period, the core inflation rate, as measured by the all items less food and energy index, rose 2.1 percent. (See table 1.)

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



Round-the-clock recorded messages for the Consumer Price Index and a variety of other *Bureau of Labor Statistics* data are available by dialing the *New York Information Office's* main telephone number: (646) 264-3600. For recorded messages, press '2'.

The housing index rose 0.2 percent since February, due entirely to a 0.6-percent increase in shelter prices. 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 1.6 percent over the year. Prices for fuels and utilities decreased 1.2 percent over the month, as lower utility (piped) gas service prices more than offset higher electricity prices. Utility gas service prices decreased for the fourth straight month, down 9.2 percent since November and 2.9 percent since February. Despite the recent declines, utility gas service prices were 0.2 percent higher than last March. Electricity prices were 0.2 percent higher over the month and 6.7 percent higher over the year. The fuels and utilities index fell 3.0 percent over the year—the largest 12-month decrease since September 2002. The household furnishings and operations index declined 0.4 percent in March but was 0.8 percent higher from its year-ago level. The overall housing index rose 0.9 percent over the last 12 months.

The other goods and services index (which includes tobacco and smoking products, personal care products, personal care services, and miscellaneous personal services such as legal, funeral, and laundry and dry cleaning services) rose 3.0 percent in March—the largest one-month gain since December 1998. Over the year, the other goods and services index advanced 7.1 percent.

Following a 5.4-percent increase in February, apparel prices rose 2.5 percent in March. The recent one-month advance was lower than the 3.9-percent average seasonal increase in March for the previous five years. Over the year, apparel prices rose 3.0 percent.

Following a 0.1-percent decrease in February, the education and communication index inched up 0.1 percent in March to a level 4.4 percent higher than last year.

Medical care prices were unchanged over the month as lower prices for medical care commodities were offset by higher prices for medical care services. Following four months of increases totaling 2.2 percent, medical care commodities prices were down 0.6 percent in March. Over the year, medical care commodities prices were 1.9 percent higher. Medical care services prices edged up 0.2 percent over the month and were 2.7 percent higher than last year. The medical care index rose 2.5 percent over the last 12 months.

The remaining indexes had lower prices in March. Food and beverages prices were down 0.3 percent in March dominated by a 0.7-percent decrease in food at home prices. Despite the recent decline, food at home prices were 4.3 percent higher over the year. Prices for alcoholic beverages were 0.4 percent lower since February but were 3.2 percent higher since last year. Prices for food away from home inched up 0.1 percent since February and were 4.4 percent higher since March 2008. The overall food and beverages index increased 4.3 percent from its year-ago level.

Transportation prices declined 0.1 percent over the month as lower prices for new and used motor vehicles, particularly used cars and trucks, were nearly offset by higher gasoline prices. Used cars and trucks prices declined for the eighth straight month, down 10.2 percent since July and 1.4 percent since last month. Over the year, prices for used cars and trucks were down 11.1 percent. Following a 9.0-percent jump in February, gasoline prices increased 1.0 percent in March. Despite the recent increases, gasoline prices were 38.2 percent lower than 12 months ago. The overall transportation index declined 11.2 percent over the year.

The recreation index inched down 0.1 percent since February and was 2.5 percent higher than a year ago.

Following a 2.0-percent rise in February, the energy index, which reflects prices for gasoline and household fuels, fell 0.6 percent in March. The recent decline was dominated by lower utility gas service prices (-2.9 percent). Moderating the decrease in the overall energy index were higher prices for gasoline (1.0 percent) and electricity (0.2 percent). Over the year, energy prices were down 20.6 percent—the largest 12-month decline since December 1986.

The Northeast region is comprised of Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and Vermont.

The relative importance of a component of the CPI is its expenditure or value weight expressed as a percentage of all items within an area. Relative importance ratios show approximately how the index population distributes expenditures when the value weights are collected and represent an estimate of how consumers would distribute their expenditures as prices change over time. Relative importance ratios cannot be used as estimates of current spending patterns or as indicators of changing consumer expenditures in the intervals between weight revisions because consumption patterns are influenced by factors—including income, variations in climate, family size, and availability of new and different kinds of goods and services—other than price change. (See table A.)

Table A (2005-2006 weights). Relative importance of components in the Consumer Price Index: Northeast region, December 2008

| Item and group | CPI-U |
|--|--------------|
| Expenditure category | |
| All items | 100.000 |
| Food and beverages | 15.794 |
| Food | 14.702 |
| Food at home | 8.174 |
| Food away from home | 6.528 |
| Alcoholic beverages | 1.093 |
| Housing | 44.880 |
| Shelter | 35.109 |
| Rent of primary residence | 6.747 |
| Owners' equivalent rent of primary residence | 24.949 |
| Fuels and utilities | 5.834 |
| Household energy | 5.137 |
| Gas (piped) and electricity | 4.262 |
| Electricity | 2.758 |
| Utility (piped) gas service | 1.504 |
| Household furnishings and operations | 3.937 |
| Apparel | 3.712 |
| Transportation | 14.128 |
| Private transportation | 12.779 |
| New and used motor vehicles | 6.150 |
| New vehicles | 3.963 |
| Used cars and trucks | 1.205 |
| Motor fuel | 2.756 |
| Gasoline (all types) | 2.624 |
| Medical care | 5.885 |
| Medical care commodities | 1.498 |
| Medical care services | 4.387 |
| Professional services | 2.561 |
| Recreation | 5.505 |
| Education and communication | 6.700 |
| Other goods and services | 3.395 |
| Commodity and service group | |
| Commodities | 37.438 |
| Commodities less food and beverages | 21.644 |
| Nondurables less food and beverages | 12.954 |
| Durables | 8.690 |
| Services | 62.562 |
| Special aggregate indexes | |
| All items less medical care | 94.115 |
| All items less shelter | 64.891 |
| Commodities less food | 22.736 |
| Nondurables | 28.748 |
| Nondurables less food | 14.046 |
| Services less rent of shelter | 27.734 |
| Services less medical care services | 58.175 |
| Energy | 7.893 |
| All items less energy | 92.107 |
| All items less food and energy | 77.405 |

Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U): Indexes and percent changes for selected periods

Northeast (1982-84=100 unless otherwise noted)

| Item and Group | Indexes | | | Percent change from— | | |
|---|-----------|-----------|-----------|----------------------|-----------|-----------|
| | Jan. 2009 | Feb. 2009 | Mar. 2009 | Mar. 2008 | Jan. 2009 | Feb. 2009 |
| Expenditure category | | | | | | |
| All items | 225.436 | 226.754 | 227.309 | 0.2 | 0.8 | 0.2 |
| All items (December 1977=100) | 354.993 | 357.068 | 357.943 | - | - | - |
| Food and beverages | 224.635 | 224.135 | 223.369 | 4.3 | -6 | -3 |
| Food | 224.347 | 223.792 | 223.030 | 4.4 | -6 | -3 |
| Food at home | 225.544 | 223.870 | 222.341 | 4.3 | -1.4 | -7 |
| Food away from home | 225.957 | 226.805 | 226.997 | 4.4 | .5 | .1 |
| Alcoholic beverages | 227.236 | 227.482 | 226.674 | 3.2 | -2 | -4 |
| Housing | 241.470 | 242.192 | 242.790 | .9 | .5 | .2 |
| Shelter | 286.241 | 287.816 | 289.419 | 1.6 | 1.1 | .6 |
| Rent of primary residence ¹ | 280.655 | 281.059 | 282.177 | 4.1 | .5 | .4 |
| Owners' equivalent rent of primary residence ^{1 2} | 297.258 | 298.020 | 299.165 | 2.4 | .6 | .4 |
| Fuels and utilities | 219.799 | 214.454 | 214.764 | -3.0 | -2.3 | -1.2 |
| Household energy | 205.871 | 203.047 | 200.153 | -4.3 | -2.8 | -1.4 |
| Gas (piped) and electricity ¹ | 214.030 | 211.253 | 209.525 | 4.5 | -2.1 | -8 |
| Electricity ¹ | 192.769 | 191.306 | 191.754 | 6.7 | -5 | .2 |
| Utility (piped) gas service ¹ | 252.562 | 246.651 | 239.528 | .2 | -5.2 | -2.9 |
| Household furnishings and operations | 129.562 | 129.640 | 129.155 | .8 | -.3 | -.4 |
| Apparel | 113.182 | 119.300 | 122.298 | 3.0 | 8.1 | 2.5 |
| Transportation | 167.860 | 170.713 | 170.563 | -11.2 | 1.6 | -.1 |
| Private transportation | 161.141 | 164.479 | 164.358 | -11.7 | 2.0 | -.1 |
| New and used motor vehicles ³ | 92.394 | 92.792 | 92.407 | -.5 | .0 | -.4 |
| New vehicles | 132.874 | 133.606 | 133.613 | -.7 | .6 | .0 |
| New cars and trucks ^{3 4} | 92.065 | 92.581 | 92.584 | -.8 | .6 | .0 |
| New cars ⁴ | 132.008 | 132.234 | 132.230 | -.5 | .2 | .0 |
| Used cars and trucks | 130.200 | 128.260 | 126.522 | -11.1 | -2.8 | -1.4 |
| Motor fuel | 150.517 | 162.892 | 164.039 | -38.3 | 9.0 | .7 |
| Gasoline (all types) | 147.842 | 161.170 | 162.810 | -38.2 | 10.1 | 1.0 |
| Gasoline, unleaded regular ⁴ | 146.614 | 160.444 | 162.143 | -39.0 | 10.6 | 1.1 |
| Gasoline, unleaded midgrade ^{4 5} | 153.995 | 167.095 | 168.526 | -36.8 | 9.4 | .9 |
| Gasoline, unleaded premium ⁴ | 149.944 | 161.190 | 162.710 | -35.6 | 8.5 | .9 |
| Medical care | 393.464 | 395.126 | 395.059 | 2.5 | .4 | .0 |
| Medical care commodities | 322.969 | 325.899 | 324.067 | 1.9 | .3 | -.6 |
| Medical care services | 412.216 | 413.277 | 413.980 | 2.7 | .4 | .2 |
| Professional services | 321.954 | 321.836 | 321.854 | 2.3 | .0 | .0 |
| Recreation ³ | 116.976 | 117.482 | 117.408 | 2.5 | .4 | -.1 |
| Education and communication ³ | 130.356 | 130.210 | 130.347 | 4.4 | .0 | .1 |
| Other goods and services | 374.995 | 375.980 | 387.325 | 7.1 | 3.3 | 3.0 |
| Commodity and service group | | | | | | |
| All items | 225.436 | 226.754 | 227.309 | .2 | .8 | .2 |
| Commodities | 169.361 | 171.192 | 171.538 | -3.5 | 1.3 | .2 |
| Commodities less food and beverages | 138.384 | 141.210 | 142.048 | -8.4 | 2.6 | .6 |
| Nondurables less food and beverages | 163.769 | 169.398 | 171.383 | -11.7 | 4.6 | 1.2 |
| Nondurables less food, beverages, and apparel | 204.118 | 209.546 | 210.862 | -16.6 | 3.3 | .6 |
| Durables | 107.671 | 107.654 | 107.342 | -2.6 | -.3 | -.3 |
| Services | 280.383 | 281.194 | 281.955 | 2.5 | .6 | .3 |
| Rent of shelter ² | 299.416 | 301.072 | 302.760 | 1.6 | 1.1 | .6 |
| Transportation services | 236.822 | 237.263 | 236.479 | 3.4 | -.1 | -.3 |
| Other services | 322.163 | 322.503 | 322.942 | 3.6 | .2 | .1 |

See footnotes at end of table.

Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U): Indexes and percent changes for selected periods-Continued

Northeast (1982-84=100 unless otherwise noted)

| Item and Group | Indexes | | | Percent change from— | | |
|--|--------------|--------------|--------------|----------------------|--------------|--------------|
| | Jan. 2009 | Feb. 2009 | Mar. 2009 | Mar. 2008 | Jan. 2009 | Feb. 2009 |
| Special aggregate indexes | | | | | | |
| All items less medical care | 217.938 | 219.234 | 219.807 | 0.0 | 0.9 | 0.3 |
| All items less food | 225.928 | 227.574 | 228.359 | -.5 | 1.1 | .3 |
| All items less shelter | 204.787 | 206.022 | 206.178 | -.6 | .7 | .1 |
| Commodities less food | 141.620 | 144.379 | 145.171 | -7.9 | 2.5 | .5 |
| Nondurables | 193.918 | 196.661 | 197.347 | -3.7 | 1.8 | .3 |
| Nondurables less food | 167.350 | 172.664 | 174.487 | -10.8 | 4.3 | 1.1 |
| Nondurables less food and apparel | 204.603 | 209.489 | 210.590 | -15.0 | 2.9 | .5 |
| Services less rent of shelter ² | 284.050 | 283.929 | 283.657 | 3.6 | -.1 | -.1 |
| Services less medical care services | 270.838 | 271.628 | 272.384 | 2.5 | .6 | .3 |
| Energy | 182.447 | 186.018 | 184.825 | -20.6 | 1.3 | -.6 |
| All items less energy | 232.149 | 233.236 | 233.985 | 2.5 | .8 | .3 |
| All items less food and energy | 234.949 | 236.368 | 237.422 | 2.1 | 1.1 | .4 |
| Commodities less food and energy commodities | 141.835 | 143.560 | 144.624 | 1.4 | 2.0 | .7 |
| Energy commodities | 166.892 | 176.705 | 175.924 | -37.4 | 5.4 | -.4 |
| Services less energy services | 287.005 | 288.168 | 289.173 | 2.4 | .8 | .3 |

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

² Index is on a December 1982=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.

- Data not available.

Regions defined as the four Census regions. Northeast includes Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and Vermont.

NOTE: Index applies to a month as a whole, not to any specific date.