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AVERAGE ENERGY PRICES IN THE WASHINGTON-BALTIMORE AREA: FEBRUARY 2009

Washington-Baltimore area consumers paid more than the U.S. city average for utility (piped) gas (12.6 percent) and electricity (10.3 percent) but close to the national average for gasoline (-0.9 percent) in February 2009 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 local consumers have consistently paid more for utility gas and less for electricity than the national average during February over the last 10 years, with the exception of 2008 and 2009 when Washington-Baltimore electricity prices were higher than the national average. (See table A.) Local prices for gasoline in February over the last decade were closer to those for the United States as a whole.

Table A. Average prices for utility (piped) gas, electricity, and gasoline, United States and Washington-Baltimore area, February 1999-2009

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
1999	\$0.676	\$0.964	42.6	\$0.084	\$0.071	-15.5	\$1.014	\$1.004	-1.0
2000	0.714	0.995	39.4	0.085	0.076	-10.6	1.422	1.415	-0.5
2001	1.120	1.426	27.3	0.088	0.071	-19.3	1.538	1.550	0.8
2002	0.757	0.898	18.6	0.089	0.074	-16.9	1.210	1.166	-3.6
2003	0.902	1.054	16.9	0.089	0.073	-18.0	1.686	1.709	1.4
2004	1.021	1.262	23.6	0.091	0.074	-18.7	1.715	1.713	-0.1
2005	1.111	1.336	20.3	0.094	0.080	-14.9	1.960	1.982	1.1
2006	1.402	1.753	25.0	0.108	0.083	-23.1	2.354	2.404	2.1
2007	1.267	1.517	19.7	0.113	0.096	-15.0	2.333	2.294	-1.7
2008	1.310	1.505	14.9	0.116	0.124	6.9	3.083	3.085	0.1
2009	1.268	1.428	12.6	0.126	0.139	10.3	1.979	1.962	-0.9

A therm—a measure of constant heating value—of utility (piped) gas, commonly referred to as natural gas, in the Washington-Baltimore area averaged \$1.428 in February 2009. Locally, the cost of natural gas was 5.1 percent lower than last year but 48.1 percent higher since 1999. Nationwide, natural gas prices decreased 3.2 percent over the year to \$1.268 per therm. The local area's natural gas price has been above the national price level in February for the last 10 years. (See chart A.) However, over the last three years, prices have declined faster in Washington-Baltimore (-18.5 percent) than in the United States (-9.6 percent). As a result, the gap between local and national prices has narrowed from 25.0 percent in February 2006 to 12.6 percent in February 2009.

A kilowatt-hour (kWh) of electricity cost Washington-Baltimore area consumers \$0.139 in February 2009, 12.1 percent higher than one year earlier. Nationwide, electricity prices averaged \$0.126 in February 2009, up 8.6 percent from last year. From February 1999 to February 2007, Washington-Baltimore electricity prices were below the U.S. levels by an average of 16.9 percent. However, since 2008 electricity prices have been higher in the Washington-Baltimore area than the U.S. average. (See chart B.)

Chart A. Average prices for utility (piped) gas, United States and Washington-Baltimore area, February 1999-2009

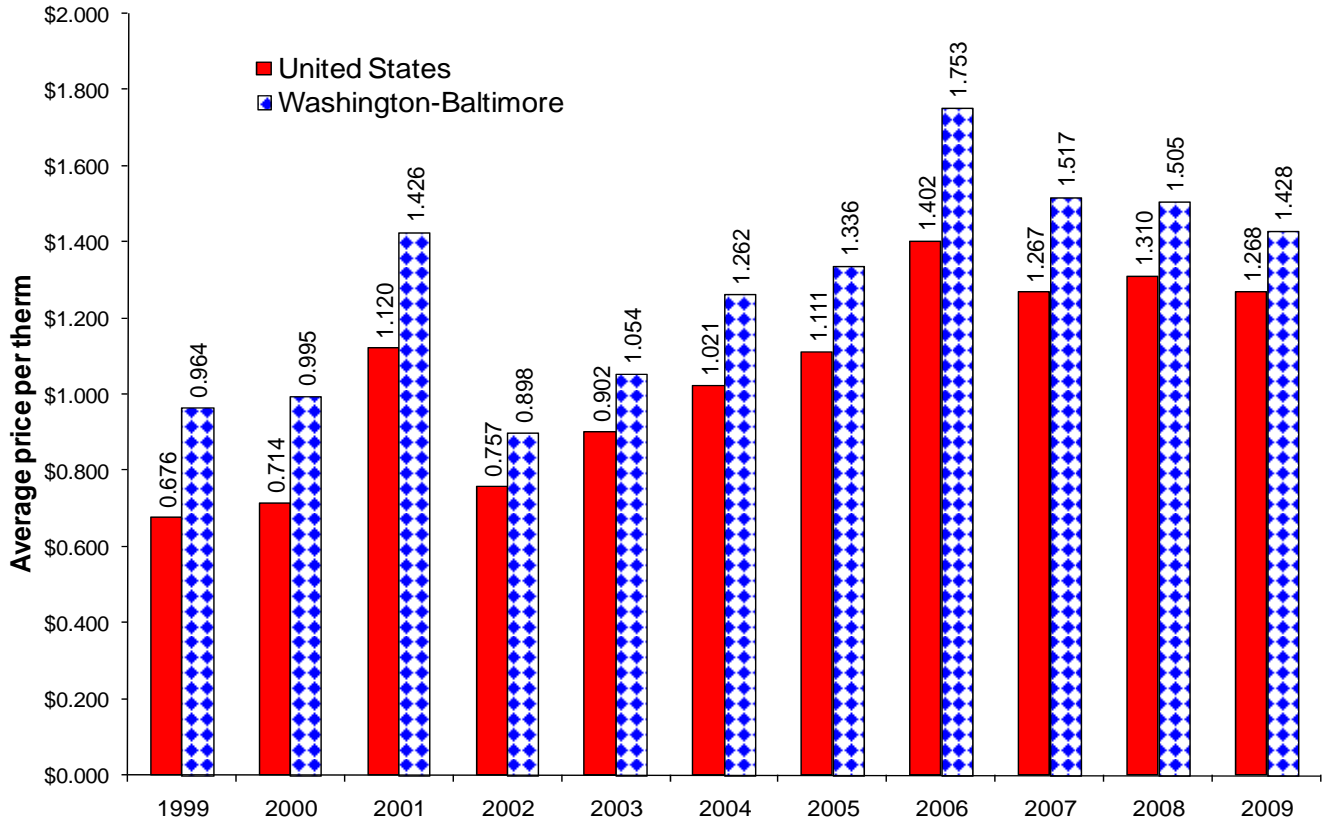
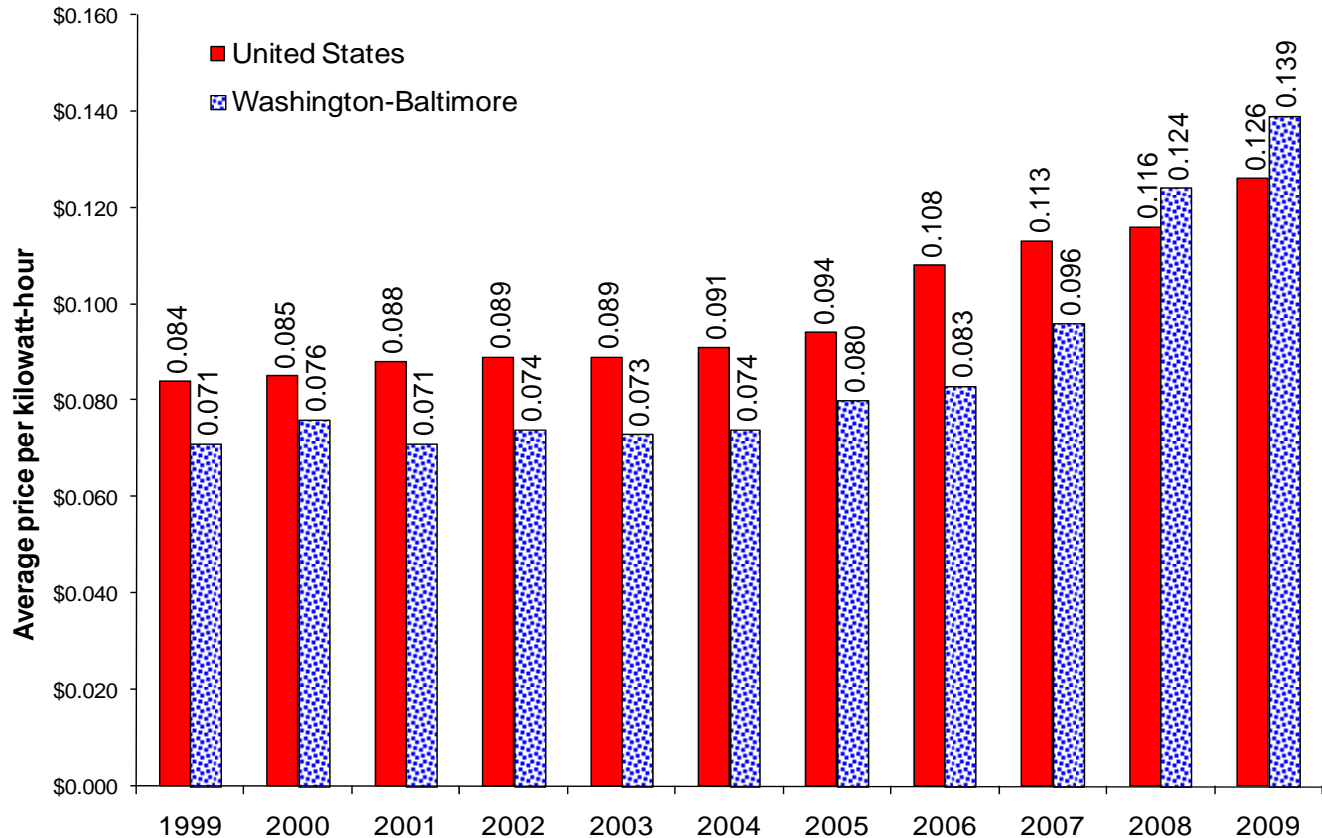
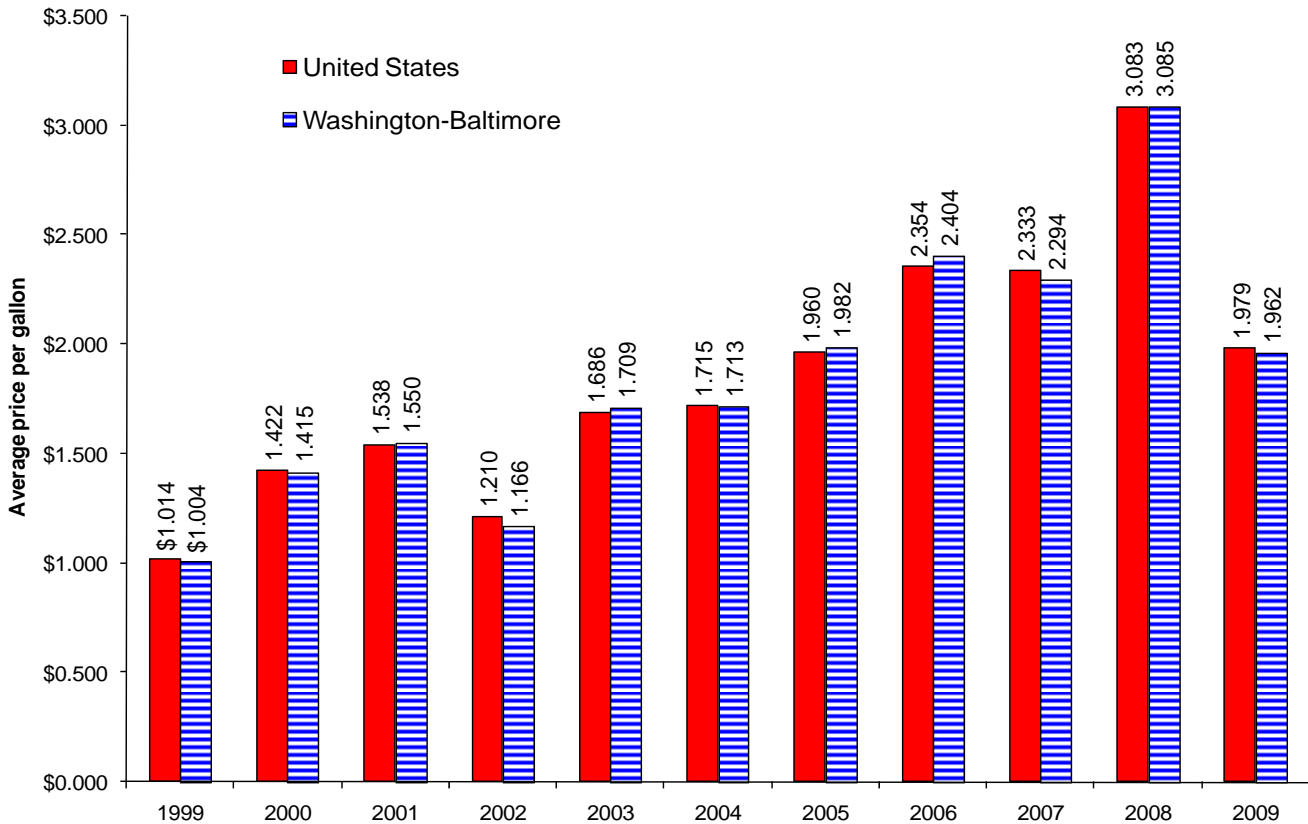


Chart B. Average prices for electricity, United States and Washington-Baltimore area, February 1999-2009



Gasoline prices are historically subject to rapid fluctuations. From February 2007 to February 2008, gasoline prices jumped 34.5 percent in the Washington-Baltimore area. In the year ended February 2009, the price of gasoline in the Washington-Baltimore area dropped 36.4 percent, contrary to the overall upward trend over the last ten years. The local price changes mirrored the nation, where gasoline prices increased 32.1 percent from February 2007 to February 2008, then declined 35.8 percent over the last 12 months. The February 2009 gasoline price in Washington was \$1.962 per gallon, slightly lower than the U.S. average of \$1.979. Since 1999, gasoline prices in Washington-Baltimore have been close to the national average, with differences ranging from -3.6 percent to 2.1 percent. (See chart C.)

Chart C. Average prices for gasoline, United States and Washington-Baltimore area, February 1999-2009



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.