

CPI

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CONSUMER PRICES UP 0.9% IN JANUARY 2017

The latest figures released by the Statistical Institute of Belize show that, on average, the prices of goods and services purchased by Belizean Households were 0.9 percent higher in January 2017 than they were in January of 2016. The All-Items consumer price index stood at 104.1, an increase from 103.2 in January 2016.

The 'Fuel' sub-category continues to follow last year's pattern, trending upward. Diesel prices recorded the highest increase when compared to January 2016, rising 40 percent from \$6.52 to \$9.12. The average price of premium gasoline stood at \$10.12 for the month of January 2017, an 18 percent increase from \$8.57 in January 2016, while regular gasoline stood at \$9.96, a 23 percent increase from \$8.11 in the same month of 2016. Further driving the category upwards, international airfare prices recorded a 47 percent increase when compared to last January, while the rise in bus fares in October of last year was reflected in a 5.6 percent increase in the 'Passenger Transport by Road' sub-category. As a result of these increases, the 'Transport' category recorded an overall 9.4 percent increase for the month.

The 'Food and Non-Alcoholic Beverages' category falling by 2.5 percent was able to slightly offset the rise in that of 'Transport' during the month. 'Food' prices fell by more than 2 percent, mainly due to decreases in the average prices of certain meats and vegetables. The average price per pound of beef steak, for example, dropped by 9 percent from \$8.65 in January of last year to \$7.86 in the same month of 2017, while that of pork chops fell from \$7.18 to \$6.93. Among vegetables and fruits, prices for sweet pepper and watermelon each saw significant decreases during the month (see Table 1). The cost for a dozen eggs also declined, falling by 14 percent during the month.

The 'Housing, Water, Electricity, Gas and Other Fuels' category recorded a 0.1 percent increase in comparison to January of 2016. While electricity tariffs were up by 5.9 percent compared to January of 2016, the average price of a 100-pound cylinder of Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) increased by 2.1 percent¹. Home rental prices were down slightly by 0.2 percent during the period.

Although most municipalities saw increases in consumer prices during the month of January 2017, Punta Gorda and Dangriga Town both recorded decreases of 0.4 percent. Orange Walk Town had the highest rate of inflation, at 2.6 percent, with Belmopan not far behind at 2.4 percent (see figure 3). 'Transport' once again played a key role in the varying inflation rates across the country. Orange Walk Town recorded the highest increase in the 'Transport' index while Punta Gorda experienced one of the smallest.

¹ The increase in LPG prices, which took effect January 11th, was after the price collection period for the month but will be captured in the CPI for February.

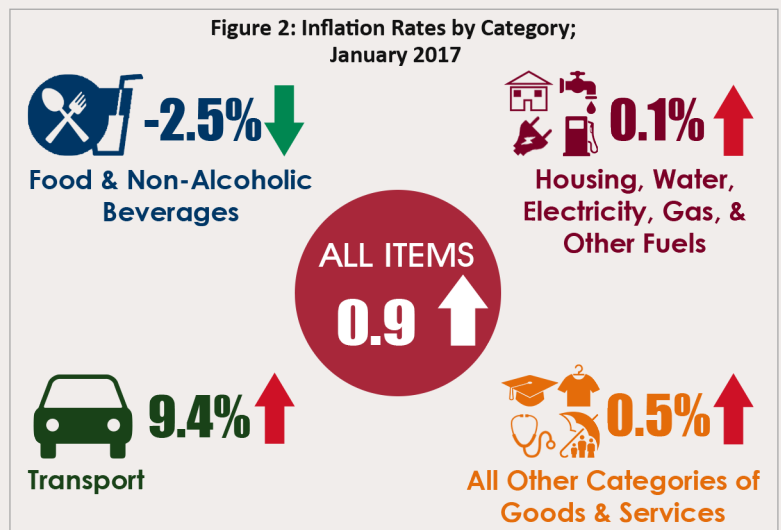
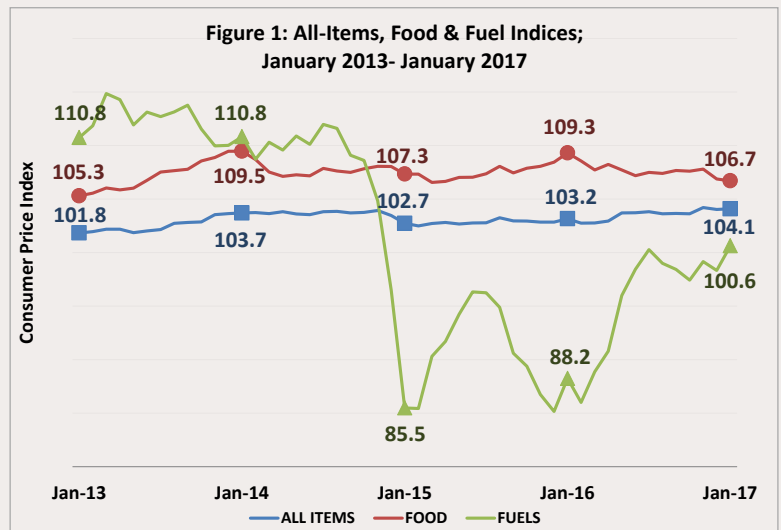


Figure 3: Inflation Rates by Municipality (Percent); January 2017

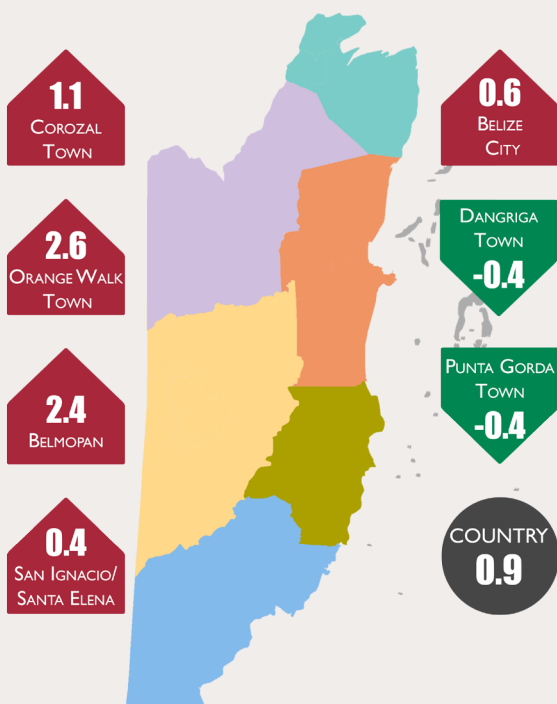


Table 1: Average Prices of Selected Foods and Fuel, January 2016 and January 2017

Item	Quantity	January 2016	January 2017	% Change
Ground Beef	1 Lb	6.01	6.08	↑ 1.2
Beef Steak	1 Lb	8.65	7.86	↓ -9.1
Pork Chops	1 Lb	7.18	6.93	↓ -3.4
Pig Tail	1 Lb	4.34	4.38	↑ 0.9
Whole Chicken	1 Lb	2.69	2.67	↓ -0.7
Chicken Breast	1 Lb	3.73	3.33	↓ -10.7
Rice (Retail)	1 Lb	1.11	1.16	↑ 5.0
Flour (Gitana)	1 Lb	1.97	0.95	↓ -51.9
Red Kidney Beans	1 Lb	1.51	1.42	↓ -5.7
Eggs	1 Dozen	3.75	3.22	↓ -14.2
Condensed Milk (Dutch Lady)	397 G	2.45	2.40	↓ -1.8
Milk (La La Light)	1 Litre	2.84	2.65	↓ -6.7
Mixed Vegetables (Del Monte)	411 G	2.60	2.53	↓ -2.8
Yellow Onions	1 Lb	1.98	1.97	↓ -0.7
Sweet Pepper	1 Lb	4.81	3.99	↓ -17.1
Cabbage	1 Lb	1.32	1.23	↓ -6.4
Orange	1 Lb	0.16	0.14	↑ -7.9
Potatoes	1 Lb	1.49	1.37	↓ -7.8
Watermelon	1 Lb	0.84	0.67	↓ -20.4
Premium Gasoline	1 Gal	8.57	10.12	↑ 18.2
Regular Gasoline	1 Gal	8.11	9.96	↑ 22.8
Diesel	1 Gal	6.52	9.12	↑ 39.8
Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG)	100 Lbs	83.91	85.71	↑ 2.1