

CPI

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CONSUMER PRICES UP 2.3% IN FEBRUARY 2017

The latest figures on consumer prices released by the Statistical Institute of Belize show that, on average, prices for goods and services regularly purchased by households in Belize were 2.3 percent higher during the month of February 2017 than they were in February of 2016. The All-Items consumer price index stood at 105.1 for the month, an increase from 102.7 during the same period last year (see Figure 1). Higher prices were recorded across the three largest categories, namely 'Transport', 'Food and Non-alcoholic Beverages' and 'Housing, Water, Electricity Gas and other Fuels', which together account for almost two thirds of all household purchases.

The 'Transport' category saw prices jumping by almost 20 percent during February 2017 (see Figure 2), and was the major contributing factor to the overall rise in consumer prices for the month. 'Fuel' prices for the month were up more than 16 percent, with the most notable increase observed in the price of diesel fuel, which jumped by 43 percent from \$6.36 in February 2016 to \$9.11 in February 2017 (see Table 1). International airfares, which had been trending downwards for an extended period due to increasing competition, saw a significant hike in the prices for some destinations, further contributing to the overall increase in 'Transport' prices. Prices for the purchase of new motor vehicles were also up, recording a seven percent increase during the month.

An overall decline of 2.1 percent in the prices of 'Food and Non-Alcoholic Beverages' was able to offset some of the effects of rising transport costs during the period. Most notably, across the 'Meat' category, consumers saw lowered prices for items such as ground beef, beef steak, whole chicken and chicken breast (see Table 1). Decreases were also observed in the prices of eggs and milks.

The 'Housing, Water, Electricity, Gas and Other Fuels' category recorded an overall increase of 0.9 percent for the month of February 2017, when compared to February 2016. Within this category, the price of Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) was up considerably, with the cost of a 100-pound cylinder of LPG rising 12 percent from \$82.60 in February 2016 to \$92.35 in February 2017. Consumers also saw home rental prices rising by half a percent on average.

Across all municipalities, Belmopan recorded the highest inflation rate of 3.5 percent for the month of February 2017, with Dangriga not far behind at 3.3 percent. These two municipalities recorded increases in home rental prices during the period that were well above the national average, while Dangriga also experienced the highest increase in 'Transport' prices for the month.

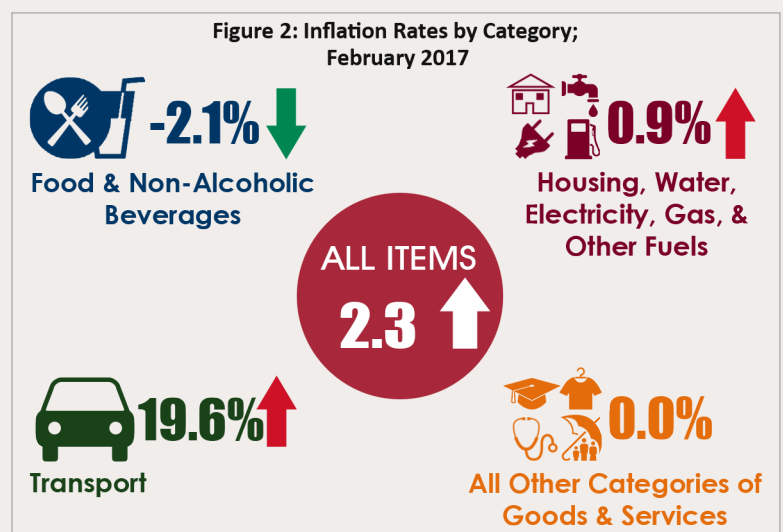
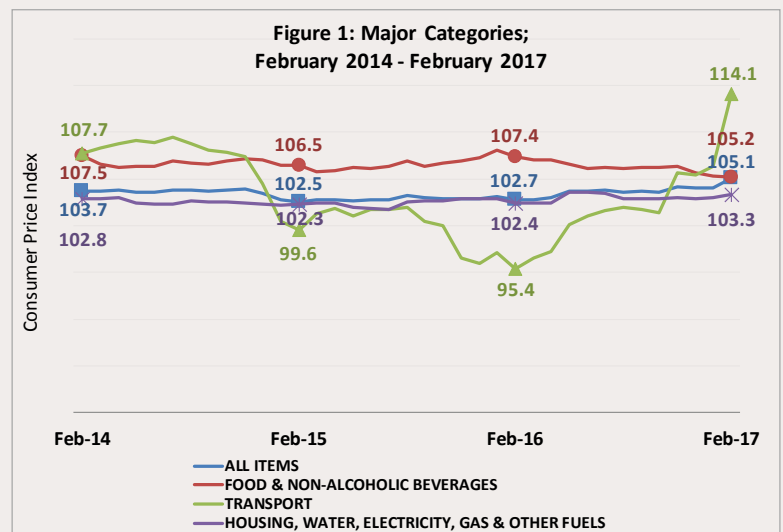


Figure 3: Inflation Rates by Municipality (Percent); February 2017

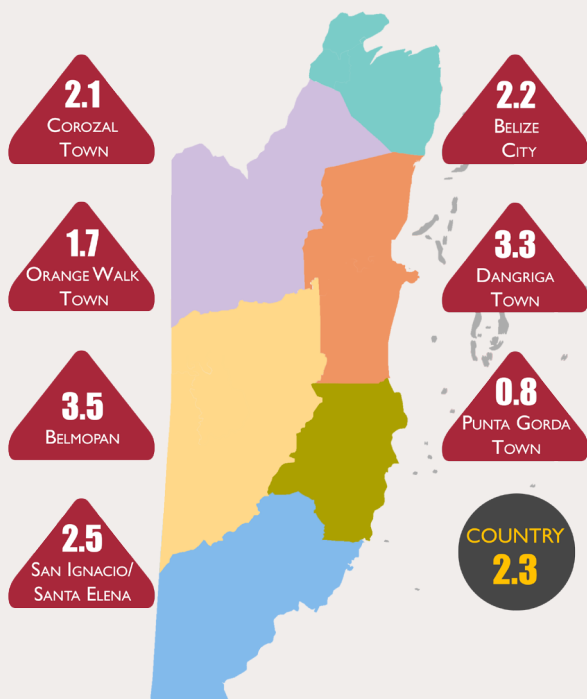


Table 1: Average Prices of Selected Foods and Fuel, February 2016 and February 2017

Item	February 2016	February 2017	% Change
Ground Beef	1 Lb 6.48	5.71	↓ -11.8
Beef Steak	1 Lb 8.32	8.05	↓ -3.2
Pork Chops	1 Lb 6.90	7.04	↑ 2.1
Pig Tail	1 Lb 4.38	4.38	↑ 0.1
Whole Chicken	1 Lb 2.76	2.70	↓ -2.2
Chicken Breast	1 Lb 3.46	3.17	↓ -8.4
Rice (Retail)	1 Lb 1.08	1.15	↑ 6.5
Flour (Gitana)	1 Lb 0.95	0.95	↓ -0.5
Red Kidney Beans	1 Lb 1.50	1.46	↓ -2.8
Eggs	1 Dozen 3.67	3.19	↓ -13.2
Condensed Milk (Dutch Lady)	397 G 2.47	2.40	↓ -2.9
Milk (La La Light)	1 Litre 2.88	2.60	↓ -9.6
Mixed Vegetables (Del Monte)	411 G 2.62	2.23	↓ -14.9
Yellow Onions	1 Lb 2.01	1.90	↓ -5.5
Sweet Pepper	1 Lb 3.96	3.93	↓ -0.9
Cabbage	1 Lb 1.43	1.22	↓ -14.4
Orange	1 unit 0.16	0.15	↓ -1.9
Potatoes	1 Lb 1.55	1.40	↓ -9.7
Watermelon	1 Lb 0.78	0.83	↑ 7.0
Premium Gasoline	1 Gal 9.43	10.48	↑ 11.1
Regular Gasoline	1 Gal 7.78	9.71	↑ 24.7
Diesel	1 Gal 6.36	9.11	↑ 43.4
Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG)	100 Lbs 82.60	92.35	↑ 11.8