



CPI CONSUMER PRICE INDEX

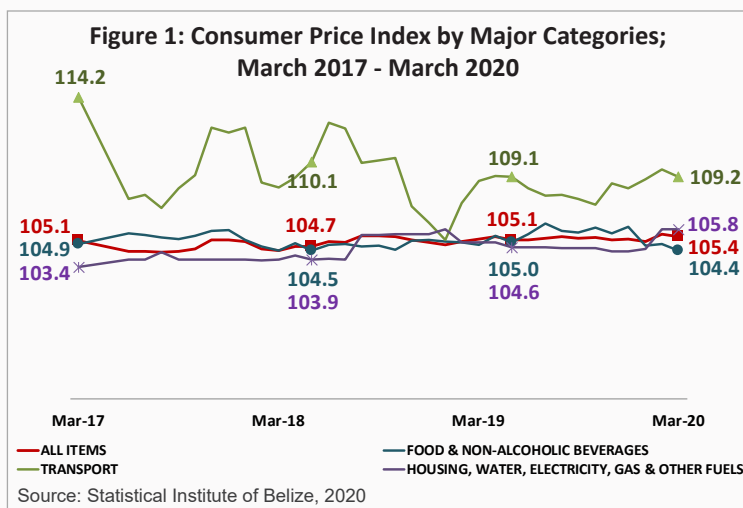
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CONSUMER PRICES UP 0.2% IN MARCH 2020: AIRFARE, EDUCATION AND HOME RENTAL UP, FOOD, FUEL AND LPG DOWN

ALL-ITEMS:

Results from the Statistical Institute of Belize's monthly Consumer Price Index (CPI) survey show that, for the month of March 2020, the All-Items Consumer Price Index stood at 105.4. This was a marginal increase of 0.2 percent from March 2019, when a CPI of 105.2 was recorded (see Figure 1). This indicated that, on average, prices for items comprising the basket of selected goods and services commonly purchased by Belizean households were 0.2 percent higher than they were in March 2019. While higher prices were seen for items such as home rental costs, international airfares and tertiary education fees, the effect of these were balanced off by lower prices for several food items, Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) and fuel.

It should be noted that price collection for the CPI survey is done at the start of the second week of each month. As a result, price distortions to goods and services contained within the CPI basket that may have resulted from the COVID-19 pandemic may not be evident until subsequent months. Price changes occurring in goods and services not normally purchased by households in Belize, but which have seen an increase in demand due to the pandemic, may also not be reflected in the CPI.



FOOD AND NON-ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES:

For the month of March 2020, the 'Food and Non-Alcoholic Beverages' category saw a marginal overall decrease of 0.4 percent when compared to March 2019 (see Figure 2). The downward change was due to lower prices for breakfast cereals, pork chops, pig tails, as well as some fresh vegetables and fruits such as red kidney beans, pineapples, watermelons, limes, sweet peppers and onions. Notwithstanding the lower prices recorded for these items, these reductions were partially balanced out by higher prices in other food items, including ground beef, whole chickens, eggs and tomatoes (see Table 1).

TRANSPORT:

Prices within the 'Transport' category saw a marginal overall increase of 0.2 percent for the month of March 2020 when compared to March 2019. A significant rise of 11.1 percent in international airfares was the main source of upward pressure within this category. Additionally, costs associated with the maintenance and repair of personal transport equipment rose by 6.2 percent, due to higher prices for servicing of motor vehicles and engine repairs, while the purchase prices of new motor vehicles went up by 2.8 percent on average when compared to March 2019. These increases were, however, mostly offset

by a 3.5 percent decrease in the 'Fuel and Lubricants' sub-category. Lower prices were seen for motor oils and, among the various fuel types, Diesel saw a significant price drop for the month, going down by 9.8 percent from \$10.36 in March 2019 to \$9.35 in March 2020. On the other hand, Regular gasoline saw a marginal increase of 0.7 percent from \$10.27 to \$10.33 and Premium gasoline increased by 1.5 percent from \$10.96 to \$11.12 (see Table 1).

Table 1: Average Prices of Selected Foods and Fuel (BZ \$), March 2019 and March 2020

Item	March 2019	March 2020	% Change	
Ground Beef	1 Lb	5.17	5.77	↑ 11.7
Beef Steak	1 Lb	8.07	7.93	↓ -1.7
Pork Chops	1 Lb	7.12	6.89	↓ -3.2
Pig Tail	1 Lb	4.24	4.17	↓ -1.7
Whole Chicken	1 Lb	2.64	2.74	↑ 3.9
Sugar, White	1 Lb	0.79	0.79	0.0
Sugar, Brown	1 Lb	0.53	0.54	↑ 2.6
Flour (Gitana)	1 Lb	0.92	0.95	↑ 3.0
Rice	1 Lb	1.17	1.20	↑ 2.5
Eggs	1 Dozen	3.19	3.39	↑ 6.3
Natural Milk	1 Litre	2.49	2.48	↓ -0.6
Red Kidney Beans	1 Lb	1.58	1.48	↓ -6.4
Pineapple	1 Lb	1.18	0.96	↓ -18.6
Orange	1 unit	0.15	0.16	↑ 4.0
Watermelon	1 Lb	0.97	0.71	↓ -27.4
Sweet Pepper	1 Lb	3.39	2.98	↓ -12.2
Onions	1 Lb	1.95	1.79	↓ -7.9
Tomato	1 Lb	1.69	1.89	↑ 11.8
Cabbage	1 Lb	1.24	1.22	↓ -1.5
Limes	1 unit	0.36	0.26	↓ -29.4
Potatoes	1 Lb	1.55	1.58	↑ 1.8
Belikin Beer (w/out bottle)	284 ml	2.94	2.98	↑ 1.5
Premium Gasoline	1 Gal	10.96	11.12	↑ 1.5
Regular Gasoline	1 Gal	10.27	10.33	↑ 0.7
Diesel	1 Gal	10.36	9.35	↓ -9.8
Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG)	100 Lbs	115.44	97.97	↓ -15.1

Source: Statistical Institute of Belize, 2020

HOUSING, WATER, ELECTRICITY, GAS & OTHER FUELS:

With an increase of 0.8 percent, 'Housing, Water, Electricity, Gas and Other Fuels' was the category experiencing the most significant increase in prices for the month of March 2020. This was mainly the result of a 1.2 percent rise in average home rental costs, as higher prices were observed in the municipalities of Orange Walk Town, Belize City, San Ignacio/Santa Elena Town, Dangriga Town and Punta Gorda Town. Nonetheless, the effect of this increase was somewhat dampened by a significant decrease in LPG prices, as the average cost of a 100-pound cylinder dropped by \$17.47 from \$115.44 in March 2019 to \$97.97 in March 2020 (see Table 1).

ALL OTHER GOODS AND SERVICES:

Together, the remaining categories of goods and services combined recorded a slight increase of 0.2 percent in consumer prices for the month of March 2020 (see Figure 2). The 'Education' category was the primary contributor, with goods and services within this category up by 3.4 percent when compared to March 2019. An increase in tertiary education fees was partially offset by decreases in the 'Recreation and Culture' category, which saw lower prices for audio-visual equipment, such as television sets.

Figure 2: Inflation Rates by Major Categories;
March 2020

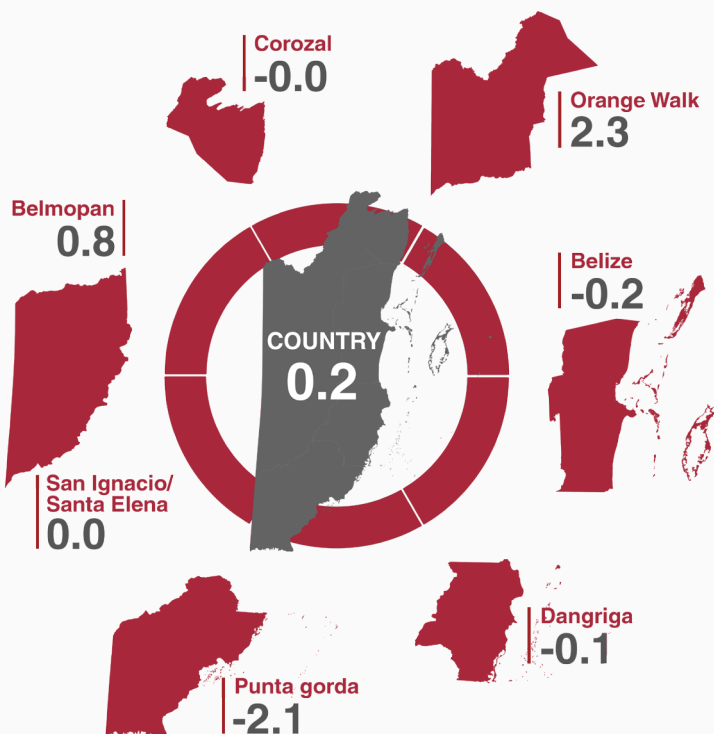


Source: Statistical Institute of Belize, 2020

INFLATION RATES BY MUNICIPALITY:

The highest rate of increase in consumer prices was experienced in Orange Walk Town, with an inflation rate of 2.3 percent for March 2020. Consumers in this town saw above average increases in prices for home rentals, food items, laundry services and maintenance and repairs of motor vehicles. Meanwhile, Punta Gorda Town experienced a deflation during the month, with prices going down by 2.1 percent when compared to March 2019. Consumers in this town saw greater than average reductions in food items and women's clothing and footwear.

Figure 3: Inflation Rates by Municipality (Percent);
March 2020



Source: Statistical Institute of Belize, 2020

YEAR TO DATE INFLATION RATES:

The cumulative inflation rate for the first three months of 2020, when compared to the same period in 2019, stood at 0.3 percent (see Table 2). Among all the categories, the most significant change was a 1.9 percent increase seen in the 'Transport' category, as higher prices for fuels, international airfares, purchase of new motor vehicles, and maintenance and repair of motor vehicles were recorded. Additionally, 'Education' was up by 3.9 percent for the first three month of the year 2020, as a result of higher fees for sixth form and tertiary education institutions. Meanwhile, the 'Food and Non-Alcoholic Beverages' category went down by 0.3 percent, as lower prices for several cereals and fresh fruits and vegetables were recorded for the three-month period. The 'Recreation and Culture' category also declined by 0.7 percent, as lower prices for audio-visual equipment, such as television sets were recorded for the first three months of 2020 when compared to the same period of the year 2019.

Table 2: Year to Date Inflation Rates by Category (%)
January to March 2020

Category	Year to Date Inflation Rate
All Items	0.3
Food & Non-Alcoholic Beverages	-0.3
Alcoholic Beverages & Tobacco	0.1
Clothing & Footwear	-0.3
Housing, Water, Electricity, Gas & Other Fuels	0.1
Furnishing Household Equipment & Routine Household Maintenance	0.4
Health	-0.1
Transport	1.9
Communication	0.5
Recreation & Culture	-0.7
Education	3.9
Restaurants & Hotels	0.6
Miscellaneous Goods & Services	0.5

Source: Statistical Institute of Belize, 2020