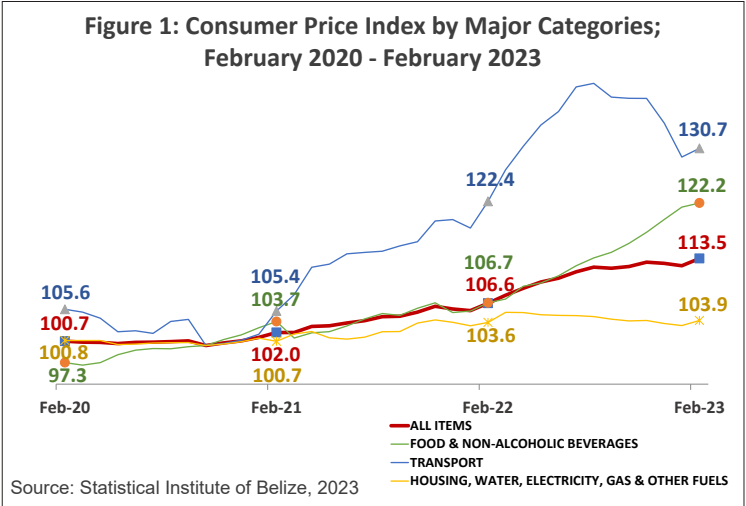




CONSUMER PRICES UP 6.5% IN FEBRUARY 2023:
FOOD, FUELS, AND RESTAURANT SERVICES MOST AFFECTED

Overall National Inflation Rate¹ (All-Items):

For the month of February 2023, the Statistical Institute of Belize’s monthly Consumer Price Index (CPI) survey showed that the All-Items CPI, which summarizes price levels across all categories of consumer goods and services, stood at 113.5 (see Figure 1). This was an increase from 106.6 in February 2022, indicating a 6.5 percent national inflation rate for goods and services regularly bought by Belizean households. The category of ‘Food and Non-Alcoholic Beverages’ continued to make the largest contribution to the overall increase in consumer prices, accounting for well over one-half of the national inflation rate for the month, as food prices continue to rise rapidly. This was followed by ‘Transport’, which was responsible for about one-sixth of the country’s inflation in February.



Food and Non-Alcoholic Beverages:

‘Food and Non-Alcoholic Beverages’ had an inflation rate of 14.6 percent for the month of February 2023, one of the steepest increases for this category in recent years, as food prices continued to rise at an accelerating rate (see Figure 2). The ‘Food’ sub-category alone recorded an increase of 16.9 percent for the month, with substantially higher prices being seen across all categories of food items. Prices for cereal products rose by 19.7 percent, while fresh vegetables were up by 16.5 percent. Dairy products were 20.6 percent more costly than they were in February of last year and prices for meat products rose by 9.7 percent. Across the various groups of food items, notable increases were recorded for products such as rice, flour, bread, tortillas, fresh produce, natural milks, cheeses, eggs, beef, poultry, pork, fish and seafood products, and cooking oils (see Table 1).

Transport:

Prices within the ‘Transport’ category rose by 6.7 percent, primarily due to higher prices for diesel fuel, premium gasoline, and passenger transport services (see Figure 2). At the pump, diesel prices were up by \$1.60, with the average price per gallon rising from \$11.60 in February of last year to \$13.21 in February of this year. Premium gasoline was up by \$1.49, from \$12.76 to \$14.24, while regular gasoline rose by a marginal \$0.10, from \$12.29 in February 2022 to \$12.39 in February 2023 (see Table 1). Also within this category, prices for passenger transport services were 16.3 percent higher than they were in February of last year, reflecting a rise in bus, taxi, sea, and airfares. Additionally, the cost of purchasing new motor vehicles increased by 2.2 percent.

Restaurants and Accommodation Services:

For the month of February 2023, the category of ‘Restaurants and Accommodation Services’ recorded an inflation rate of 10.4 percent, primarily due to rising prices for restaurant and cafe services as well as substantially higher rates for hotel accommodations (see Figure 2).

Table 1: Average Prices of Selected Foods and Fuel (BZ \$);
February 2022 and February 2023

Item	Unit of Measurement	Average Prices		% Change
		February 2022	February 2023	
Rice	1 Lb	\$1.39	\$1.62	16.2%
Flour	1 Lb	\$1.09	\$1.50	37.3%
Ground Beef	1 Lb	\$5.56	\$6.73	21.0%
Beef Steak	1 Lb	\$8.53	\$9.47	10.9%
Chicken Cuts	1 Lb	\$3.23	\$3.60	11.3%
Turkey	1 Lb	\$5.21	\$5.65	8.4%
Chicken, Legs	1 Lb	\$3.25	\$3.31	1.8%
Chicken, Wings	1 Lb	\$5.19	\$6.06	16.9%
Chicken, Breast	1 Lb	\$3.90	\$4.49	15.1%
Whole Chicken	1 Lb	\$2.97	\$3.11	4.7%
Pigtail	1 Lb	\$7.15	\$6.67	-6.7%
Whole Fish	1 Lb	\$7.30	\$8.85	21.2%
Cheese	1 Lb	\$12.43	\$13.77	10.7%
Natural Milk	1 L	\$3.01	\$3.22	6.8%
Egg	1 Unit	\$0.29	\$0.38	29.9%
Vegetable Oil	1 L	\$4.65	\$6.35	36.5%
Watermelon	1 Lb	\$0.69	\$0.85	23.8%
Cabbage	1 Lb	\$1.44	\$2.03	41.0%
Tomatoes	1 Lb	\$2.32	\$2.84	22.3%
Cilantro	1 Lb	\$5.16	\$5.61	8.7%
Habanero	1 Lb	\$4.88	\$5.05	3.5%
Onion	1 Lb	\$2.14	\$2.70	26.0%
Irish Potatoes	1 Lb	\$2.40	\$2.76	14.7%
Banana	1 Unit	\$0.15	\$0.21	37.2%
Pineapple	1 Lb	\$1.26	\$1.24	-1.6%
Orange	1 Unit	\$0.17	\$0.22	26.1%
Sweet Pepper	1 Lb	\$2.90	\$3.86	32.9%
Black Beans	1 Lb	\$2.10	\$2.02	-3.7%
Red Kidney Beans	1 Lb	\$2.01	\$1.88	-6.4%
Soy Sauce	10 Fl Oz	\$5.21	\$6.47	24.3%
Coconut Milk	400 MI	\$3.45	\$4.73	37.3%
Premium Gasoline	1 Gallon	\$12.76	\$14.24	11.6%
Regular Gasoline	1 Gallon	\$12.29	\$12.39	0.8%
Diesel	1 Gallon	\$11.60	\$13.21	13.8%
Liquified Petroleum Gas (LPG)	100 Lbs	\$133.49	\$126.06	-5.6%

Source: Statistical Institute of Belize, 2023

Recreation, Sport, and Culture:

Items within the ‘Recreation, Sport, and Culture’ category were up by 9.3 percent when compared to February 2022, mainly as a result of increased pet food prices and higher cinema and nightclub entrance fees (see Figure 2).

Furnishings, Household Equipment, and Routine Household Maintenance:

The category of ‘Furnishings, Household Equipment, and Routine Household Maintenance’ had an inflation rate of 4.8 percent for February 2023 (see Figure 2), attributed to an increase in the prices of laundry products, soaps, detergents, and household services.

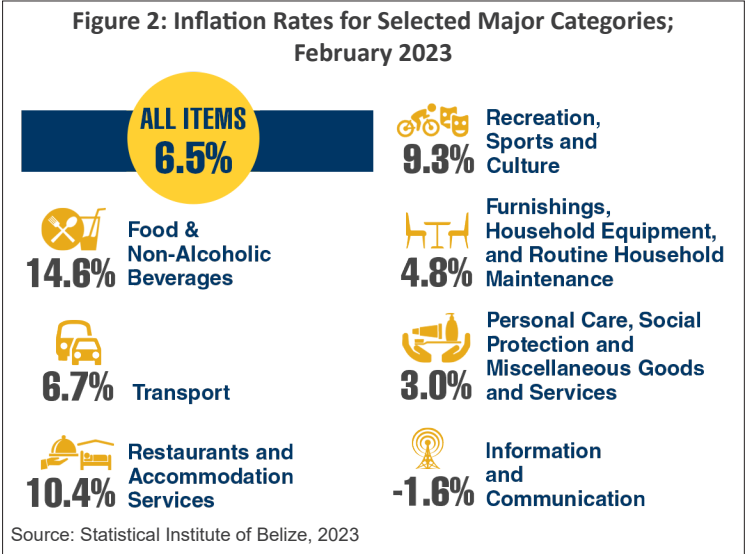
¹ The national inflation rate for the month measures the percent change in the CPI between February 2022 and February 2023.

Personal Care, Social Protection and Miscellaneous Goods and Services:

Prices for items in the ‘Personal Care, Social Protection, and Miscellaneous Goods and Services’ category rose by 3 percent (see Figure 2), due mostly to increased prices for personal hygiene products and men’s and women’s haircuts.

Information and Communication:

‘Information and Communication’, which declined by 1.6 percent when compared to February of 2022, continued to be the only category recording an overall reduction in prices, as a result of lower costs for internet provision services (see Figure 2).



Inflation Rates by Municipality:

Among the municipalities, the highest rate of increase in consumer prices for February 2023 was seen in Independence Village, which recorded an inflation rate of 9.3 percent. Residents of this community experienced higher than average price increases for various food items, taxi fares, restaurant services, laundry products, soaps, detergents, home rental costs, and personal hygiene products. On the other hand, Belmopan had the lowest inflation rate of 4.3 percent for the month, with consumers in this city experiencing lower than average increases in prices for food items, taxi fares, pet food, and restaurant services (see Figure 3).

Month-Over-Month Inflation Rates²:

While inflation rates are generally calculated as the percent change in prices for specific items between the current time period and the same period of the previous year, another useful measure for tracking short-term changes in consumer prices is the month-over-month or inter-monthly inflation rate, which measures the percent change in prices between the previous month and the current month.

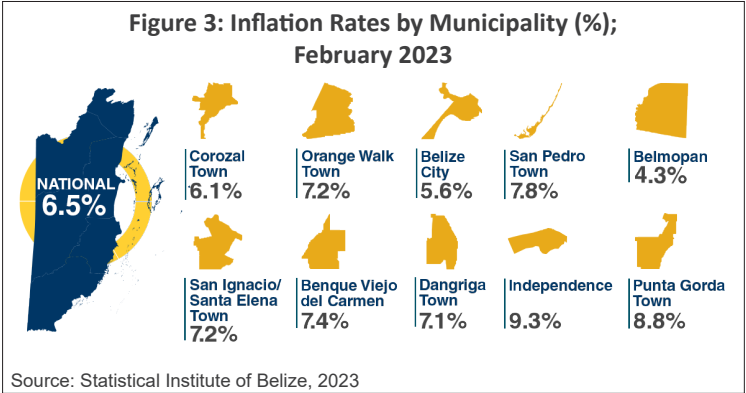


Table 2: Month to Month Inflation Rates by Category (%); February 2023

	February 2023
ALL ITEMS	1.0%
Food and Non-Alcoholic Beverages	0.5%
Alcoholic Beverages, Tobacco and Narcotics	0.2%
Clothing and Footwear	0.7%
Housing, Water, Electricity, Gas and Other Fuels	0.8%
Furnishings, Household Equipment and Routine Household Maintenance	1.5%
Health	1.2%
Transport	1.0%
Information and Communication	0.8%
Recreation, Sport and Culture	0.9%
Education Services	0.2%
Restaurants and Accommodation Services	3.8%
Insurance and Financial Services	0.0%
Personal Care, Social Protection and Miscellaneous Goods and Services	1.6%

Source: Statistical Institute of Belize, 2023

Over the one-month period between January 2023 and February 2023, consumer prices rose by 1 percent on average (see Table 2). The category of ‘Restaurants and Accommodation Services’ had a month-over-month inflation rate of 3.8 percent, reflecting higher prices for restaurant services. The ‘Transport’ category increased by 1 percent during this period, the result of higher international airfares and a small increase in the average price of regular gasoline. The category of ‘Housing, Water, Electricity, Gas and Other Fuels’ was up by 0.8 percent, due to slightly higher home rental costs and liquified petroleum gas prices, while ‘Food and Non-Alcoholic Beverages’ went up by a marginal 0.5 percent.

Year-To-Date (Cumulative) Inflation Rate³:

The year-to-date inflation rate for the first two months of 2023 stood at 6.5 percent. Prices for ‘Food and Non-Alcoholic Beverages’ were 14.9 percent higher than they were in the first two months of 2022, primarily due to higher prices for cereal products, dairy products, meats, vegetables, cooking oils, and fresh fruits. The ‘Transport’ category recorded a year-to-date inflation rate of 8 percent, reflecting higher prices for diesel fuel, premium gasoline, and passenger transport services. ‘Restaurants and Accommodation Services’ recorded a cumulative inflation rate of 9.1 percent, due to higher prices for restaurant services. Among the remaining categories, notable price increases were seen in items such as pet food, household cleaning and maintenance products, and personal hygiene products (see Table 3).

Table 3: Year to Date Inflation Rates by Category (%); February 2023

	February 2023
ALL ITEMS	6.5%
Food and Non-Alcoholic Beverages	14.9%
Alcoholic Beverages, Tobacco and Narcotics	0.5%
Clothing and Footwear	0.0%
Housing, Water, Electricity, Gas and Other Fuels	0.2%
Furnishings, Household Equipment and Routine Household Maintenance	4.3%
Health	2.0%
Transport	8.0%
Information and Communication	-2.4%
Recreation, Sport and Culture	9.1%
Education Services	0.3%
Restaurants and Accommodation Services	9.1%
Insurance and Financial Services	0.2%
Personal Care, Social Protection and Miscellaneous Goods and Services	2.3%

Source: Statistical Institute of Belize, 2023

² The month-over-month inflation rate measures the percentage change in prices between the previous month and the current month. It is useful for capturing short-term price changes but is also affected by seasonal price movements.

³ The year-to-date inflation rate as of February 2023 measures the percent change in the average CPI for the first two months of 2022 compared to the average CPI for the first two months of 2023.