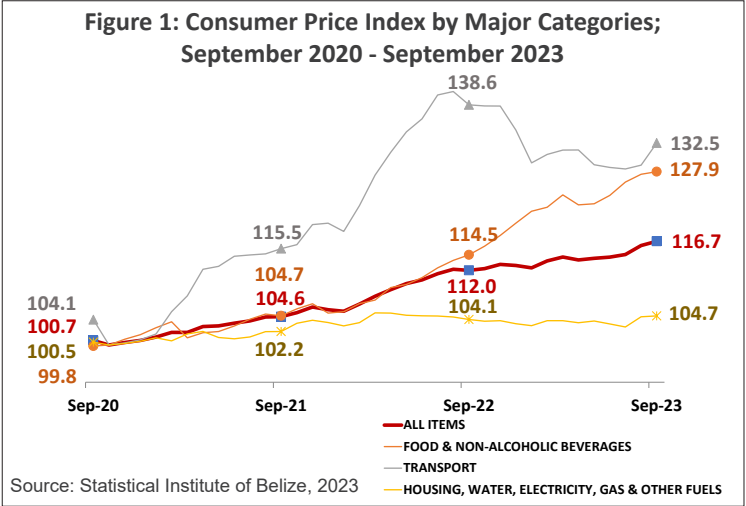




CONSUMER PRICES UP 4.2% IN SEPTEMBER 2023: FOOD AND RESTAURANT SERVICES UP, FUEL DOWN

Overall National Inflation Rate¹ (All-Items):

Data from the Statistical Institute of Belize's most recent Consumer Price Index (CPI) survey showed that, for the month of September 2023, the overall national inflation rate for the month was 4.2 percent. The All-Items CPI, which summarizes price levels across all categories of consumer goods and services, stood at 116.7, up from 112 in September 2022 (See Figure 1). After several consecutive months of continuous deceleration in the overall rate at which prices were rising, this month saw that trend halted, despite the fact that fuel prices remained lower than they were a year ago, and despite a slight slowdown in the rate of increase for food prices (See Figure 2). This was due mostly to rising prices for 'Restaurant and Accommodation Services', 'Furnishings, Household Equipment and Routine Household Maintenance', and 'Health' goods and services.

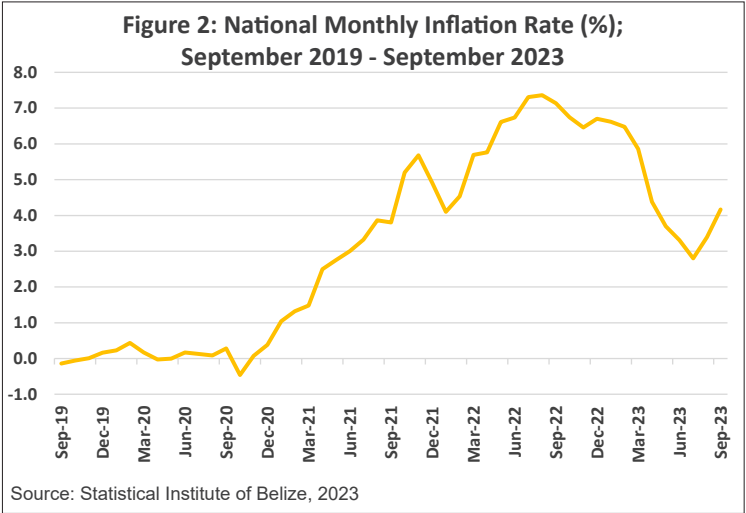


Food and Non-Alcoholic Beverages:

For the month of September 2023, prices within the category of 'Food and Non-Alcoholic Beverages' rose by 11.7 percent, as food costs remained considerably higher than they were during the same month of last year (see Figure 3). The 'Food' sub-category recorded an inflation rate of 12.7 percent, as notable increases were observed in the cost of cereal products, such as rice, flour, bread, and tortillas (11.7 percent); fresh vegetables, including cilantro, habanero peppers, cabbages, and carrots (16.7 percent); dairy products, including milks, cheeses, and eggs (20.5 percent); meat products, such as beef, poultry, and pork (7.7 percent); other food products, including mayonnaise, salad dressing, soy sauce, and coconut milk (14.7 percent); fresh fruits including plantains, limes, and grapes (11.7 percent); and cooking oils (16.3 percent).

Restaurants and Accommodation Services:

'Restaurants and Accommodation Services' recorded an inflation rate of 13.7 percent for the month of September 2023, reflecting higher prices for restaurant and cafe services, coupled with a rise in hotel accommodation rates (see Figure 3).



Furnishings, Household Equipment, and Routine Household Maintenance:

The 'Furnishings, Household Equipment, and Routine Household Maintenance' category had an inflation rate of 6 percent (see Figure 3), attributed to rising prices for household cleaning and maintenance products, as well as increased costs for domestic services.

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

Item	Unit of Measurement	Average Prices		% Change
		August 2022	August 2023	
Rice	1 Lb	\$1.51	\$1.73	14.3%
Oats	18 Oz	\$6.71	\$8.46	26.1%
Flour	1 Lb	\$1.25	\$1.36	8.3%
Ground Beef	1 Lb	\$6.09	\$7.00	15.1%
Beef Steak	1 Lb	\$8.78	\$9.42	7.3%
Chicken Cuts	1 Lb	\$3.39	\$3.70	9.3%
Chicken, Legs	1 Lb	\$3.43	\$3.68	7.4%
Chicken, Wings	1 Lb	\$5.53	\$6.40	15.7%
Chicken, Breast	1 Lb	\$4.22	\$4.57	8.1%
Whole Chicken	1 Lb	\$3.03	\$3.25	7.3%
Pigtail	1 Lb	\$7.09	\$6.19	-12.7%
Whole Fish	1 Lb	\$7.86	\$8.31	5.7%
Cheese	1 Lb	\$13.53	\$14.83	9.7%
Natural Milk	1 L	\$3.16	\$3.91	23.6%
Powdered Milk	360 Grams	\$8.03	\$8.83	9.9%
Evaporated Milk	360 Grams	\$2.17	\$3.15	45.6%
Egg	1 Unit	\$0.38	\$0.40	5.6%
Vegetable Oil	1 L	\$5.94	\$6.56	10.6%
Guavas	1 Lb	\$3.34	\$3.92	17.4%
Lime	1 Unit	\$0.29	\$0.39	36.4%
Grapes	1 Lb	\$7.00	\$8.37	19.6%
Watermelon	1 Lb	\$0.82	\$0.69	-15.9%
Cabbage	1 Lb	\$2.11	\$2.82	33.7%
Broccoli	1 Lb	\$4.23	\$4.70	11.2%
Cauliflower	1 Lb	\$4.03	\$4.71	16.8%
Tomatoes	1 Lb	\$3.36	\$4.18	24.3%
Cilantro	1 Lb	\$8.27	\$16.07	94.3%
Carrots	1 Lb	\$2.04	\$2.68	31.0%
Habanero	1 Lb	\$5.43	\$7.67	41.2%
Onion	1 Lb	\$2.73	\$2.92	7.0%
Plantain	1 Unit	\$0.33	\$0.56	69.4%
Irish Potatoes	1 Lb	\$2.78	\$3.05	9.4%
Pineapple	1 Lb	\$1.43	\$1.22	-14.6%
Orange	1 Unit	\$0.21	\$0.27	28.1%
Sweet Pepper	1 Lb	\$4.73	\$5.13	8.3%
Black Beans	1 Lb	\$2.05	\$2.23	8.8%
Coffee	170 Grams	\$6.49	\$8.25	27.2%
Premium Gasoline	1 Gallon	\$16.89	\$14.50	-14.1%
Regular Gasoline	1 Gallon	\$13.54	\$13.20	-2.5%
Diesel	1 Gallon	\$13.52	\$13.01	-3.7%
Liquified Petroleum Gas (LPG)	100 Lbs	\$138.19	\$119.42	-13.6%

Source: Statistical Institute of Belize, 2023

Recreation, Sport, and Culture:

'Recreation, Sport, and Culture' rose by 5.2 percent in September 2023 when compared to September 2022, reflecting higher pet food prices and night club entrance fees (see Figure 3).

Personal Care, Social Protection and Miscellaneous Goods and Services:

Prices within the 'Personal Care, Social Protection, and Miscellaneous Goods and Services' category were up by 4.3 percent, due to higher costs for personal hygiene products and men's and women's haircuts (see Figure 3).

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

Health:

‘Health’-related costs were up by 7.5 percent for the month, the result of higher prices for various types of over-the counter medications. (see Figure 3).

Alcoholic Beverages, Tobacco, and Narcotics:

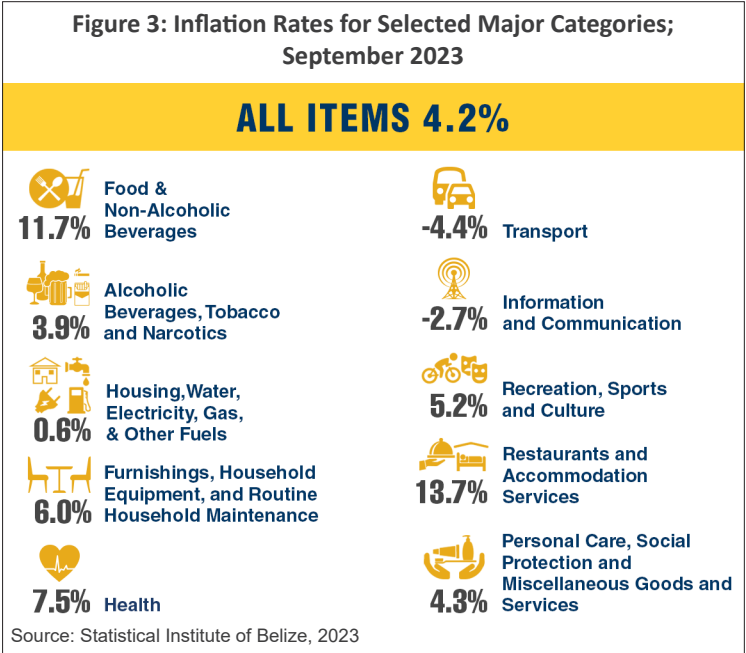
Prices for ‘Alcoholic Beverages, Tobacco, and Narcotics’ were 3.9 percent higher than they were in the same month last year, primarily due to a rise in the cost of cigarette products (see Figure 3).

Housing, Water, Electricity, Gas and Other Fuels:

‘Housing, Water, Electricity, Gas and Other Fuels’ recorded a marginal increase of 0.6 percent (see Figure 3). This was the result of higher home rental costs, which were slightly offset by considerably lower prices for liquified petroleum gas (LPG). The average cost of a 100-pound cylinder of LPG decreased by \$18.77 for the month, from \$138.19 in September 2022 to \$119.42 in September 2023 (see Table 1).

Transport:

For the fifth consecutive month, ‘Transport’ recorded an overall decline. Prices within this category were down by 4.4 percent on average, as fuel prices remained lower than they were in September of 2022 (see Figure 3). At the pump, the average price per gallon of premium gasoline declined by \$2.39, from \$16.89 in September 2022 to \$14.50 in September 2023, while diesel was down by \$0.51, from \$13.52 to \$13.01, and regular gasoline decreased by \$0.34 from \$13.54 to \$13.20 (see Table 1). Additionally, reductions were seen in prices for some short bus runs, taxi fares, and international airfares. In contrast, prices for new motor vehicles increased by 6.3 percent when compared to September of 2022.



Information and Communication:

Prices within the category of ‘Information and Communication’ were down by 2.7 percent, due to lower costs for internet provision services (see Figure 3).

Inflation Rates by Municipality:

Among the municipalities, Belmopan recorded the highest rate of increase in consumer prices, with an inflation rate of 7.8 percent, well above the nation average. Consumers within this city experienced higher than average increases in prices for various food items, home rental costs, restaurant services, hotel accommodation rates, pet food, laundry products, soaps, domestic services, personal care products, medicines, medical services, and clothing. On the other hand, Benque Viejo Del Carmen had the lowest inflation rate of 2.2 percent for the month, with consumers in this municipality experiencing lower than average increases in prices for food items, restaurant services, pet food, laundry products, soaps, and personal hygiene products (see Figure 4).

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

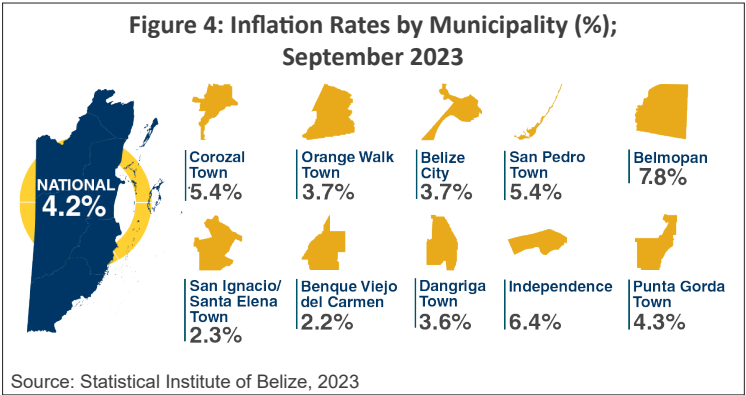


Table 2: Month to Month Inflation Rates by Category (%); September 2023

	September 2023
ALL ITEMS	0.6%
Food and Non-Alcoholic Beverages	0.3%
Alcoholic Beverages, Tobacco and Narcotics	0.0%
Clothing and Footwear	0.0%
Housing, Water, Electricity, Gas and Other Fuels	0.1%
Furnishings, Household Equipment and Routine Household Maintenance	0.0%
Health	0.0%
Transport	2.8%
Information and Communication	0.0%
Recreation, Sport and Culture	0.0%
Education Services	0.0%
Restaurants and Accommodation Services	0.0%
Insurance and Financial Services	0.0%
Personal Care, Social Protection and Miscellaneous Goods and Services	0.0%

Source: Statistical Institute of Belize, 2023

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.

Over the one-month period between August 2023 and September 2023, consumer prices increased on average by 0.6 percent (see Table 2). This increase was attributed mainly to the ‘Transport’ category which was up by 2.8 percent, the result of a 4.7 percent rise in fuel prices over the one-month period. Additionally, prices for ‘Food and Non-Alcoholic Beverages’ recorded a month-over-month inflation rate of 0.3 percent, mainly due to a rise in prices for fresh vegetables and non-alcoholic drinks.

Year-to-Date Inflation Rates³:

The year-to-date or cumulative inflation rate for the first nine months of 2023, stood at 4.5 percent. The category of ‘Food and Non-Alcoholic Beverages’ was up by a considerable 13.1 percent, driven by higher prices across all types of food products. Similarly, ‘Restaurants and Accommodation Services’ recorded an 11.6 percent increase, due largely to higher costs for restaurant services. The ‘Recreation, Sport and Culture’ category rose by 7.1 percent, reflecting higher pet food prices when compared to the first nine months of last year. Prices for ‘Furnishings, Household Equipment, and Routine Household Maintenance’ increased by 4.9 percent, driven mostly by higher costs for household cleaning and maintenance products, and for domestic services. ‘Personal Care, Social Protection, and Miscellaneous Goods and Services’ went up by 3.2 percent in the first nine months of the year, driven by the continued rise in prices for personal hygiene products. On the other hand, the ‘Transport’ category was down by 1.6 percent, as average fuel prices for the nine-month period were lower than they were during the first nine months of 2022. ‘Housing, Water, Electricity, Gas and Other Fuels’ was down by 0.6 percent, the result of lower LPG prices, while prices for ‘Information and Communication’ were 2.2 percent lower than they were in the first nine months of last year (see Table 3).

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

	September 2023
ALL ITEMS	4.5%
Food and Non-Alcoholic Beverages	13.1%
Alcoholic Beverages, Tobacco and Narcotics	1.8%
Clothing and Footwear	-0.3%
Housing, Water, Electricity, Gas and Other Fuels	-0.6%
Furnishings, Household Equipment and Routine Household Maintenance	4.9%
Health	4.1%
Transport	-1.6%
Information and Communication	-2.2%
Recreation, Sport and Culture	7.1%
Education Services	0.3%
Restaurants and Accommodation Services	11.6%
Insurance and Financial Services	3.0%
Personal Care, Social Protection and Miscellaneous Goods and Services	3.2%

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 September 2023 measures the percent change in the average CPI for the first nine months of 2023 compared to the average CPI for the first nine months of 2022.