Consumer Price Index (2002=100)

Highlights

British Columbia’s consumer price index (CPI) was 1.2% higher (unadjusted) in March 2020 than in the same month of 2019. On a monthly basis, the CPI fell 0.5% from February 2020. The overall annual inflation rate increased to 1.6% when food and energy were excluded from the index.

The cost of food climbed 2.9% compared to March of 2019. Prices for groceries purchased from stores (+2.8%) and meals purchased from restaurants (+3.1%) were both up from the previous year. The highest rise in food prices was for non-alcoholic beverages (+9.7%), followed by meat (+6.4%), fresh vegetables (+5.7%), and bakery and other cereal products (+4.4%). The price of coffee and tea (-6.5%) and fresh fruit (-5.3%) were down from the previous year, while the price of fish and other seafood (+0.0%) remained steady.

The cost of shelter continued to climb in March (+1.3%), as the price for renters (+3.8%) and home owners (+0.3%) increased. Within the shelter category, the cost of electricity (+2.2%) and piped gas (+0.5%) increased, and the cost of fuel oil and other fuel (-12.9%) decreased.

The overall cost of clothing and footwear was also on the rise (+3.9%) compared to March 2019, with increases in for clothing (+5.2%) and footwear (+2.3%).

The transportation index decreased 0.7% in March, as the price of private transportation (-1.4%) decreased and public transportation (+7.7%) increased. The price of gasoline (-15.1%) dropped since March of last year, but public transportation passengers paid more to travel within (+2.1%) and between (+5.1%) cities.

Compared to a year ago, consumers paid more for recreation, education and reading (+1.8%), health and personal care (+1.8%), alcoholic beverages and tobacco products (+1.8%), and household operations and furnishing (+0.2%). Within these categories, items with significant price increases include cigarettes (+7.6%), recreation (+2.2%), and personal care (+2.0%). The only categories to see a price decrease over March 2019 were reading material and other printed matter (-5.8%) and beer purchased from stores (-0.5%), while the price of household operations (+0.0%) remained stable.

Consumer prices rose in both Vancouver (+1.1%) and Victoria (+1.6%) in March compared to the same month of 2019. Canada’s CPI was up 0.9% (unadjusted) in March. The rate of inflation in British Columbia (+1.2%), Quebec (+1.1%), and Manitoba (+1.0%) were highest among the provinces.

The March release of the Consumer Price Index is the first in which the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak is clearly visible. While the majority of prices were collected prior to local travel restrictions, Statistics Canada adopted certain measures to reflect the limitations faced by consumers in Canada.

Note: Statistics Canada will release the April Consumer Price Index on May 20, 2020.
### Consumer Price Index

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2002=100</th>
<th>All-Items Index March 2020</th>
<th>% Change from February 2020</th>
<th>March 2019</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>136.6</td>
<td>-0.6</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BC</td>
<td>132.3</td>
<td>-0.5</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vancouver</td>
<td>134.7</td>
<td>-0.4</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victoria</td>
<td>130.4</td>
<td>-0.1</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada-X¹</td>
<td>135.6</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BC (excluding energy)</td>
<td>130.1</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹ Defined by the Bank of Canada as the All-Items index excluding the eight most volatile components (fruit, vegetables, gasoline, fuel oil, natural gas, mortgage interest, inter-city transportation and tobacco products). Also excluded is the effect of changes in indirect taxes on the remaining components.

### Did You Know?
From April 3 to 16, Statistics Canada is collecting data on the impacts of COVID-19 on Canadians. All Canadians living in the 10 provinces and 3 territories can participate by completing a short online questionnaire. To find out more and to participate, visit the [online platform](https://www150.statcan.gc.ca).  

### Terms and definitions

#### Base effect
The 12-month variation in the CPI is calculated by comparing the current month’s index with the index for the same month of the previous year. The 12-month change is represented by the difference in the indexes of the reference months. Thus, the 12-month variation can decrease from one month to the next merely because the base serving as the point of comparison increased.

*Source: Statistics Canada*

#### Twelve-Month Percent Changes
Also referred to as "year-over-year", twelve-month percent changes compare indexes for a given month to indexes for the same month of the previous year. As they compare two points in time, they are influenced by unusual or temporary events that can affect either of the two months. Their calculation does not include any of the intervening monthly indexes.

*Source: Statistics Canada*
**Annual Average Index**

Annual average indexes are calculated by averaging index levels over the 12 months of the calendar year. These data should not be confused with the 12-month change in the CPI. By the nature of the calculation, averaging indexes over the calendar year gives a better representation of price behaviour over the whole year and is closer to the concept of an average price. The use of annual averages is considered the preferred option for indexation purposes.

*Source: Statistics Canada*

**Latest Twelve-Month Average Index**

The latest twelve-month average index (ending in the current month) is a 12-month moving average of the indexes of the most recent 12 months. It is calculated like the annual average index. Hence, in theory, the December twelve-month average index would be equal to the annual average index for the calendar year. However, in practice, when BC Stats makes these calculations from published data, the December 12-month average index may differ from Statistics Canada’s published annual average index due to rounding.

*Source: Statistics Canada*

**Harmonized Sales Tax**

On July 1, 2010, the Harmonized Sales Tax (HST) came into effect in British Columbia and Ontario. As well, Nova Scotia increased its HST by two percentage points.

On April 1, 2013, the Harmonized Sales Tax came into effect in Prince Edward Island, while British Columbia returned to the Provincial Sales Tax and the Goods and Services Tax.

*Source: Statistics Canada*

**Additional information**


With the release of the May 2011 CPI, Statistics Canada updated the basket of goods & services used in the calculation of the Index. [Learn more.](https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/62-001-x/62-001-x2011001-eng.pdf)

Prepared by: BC Stats, April 2020