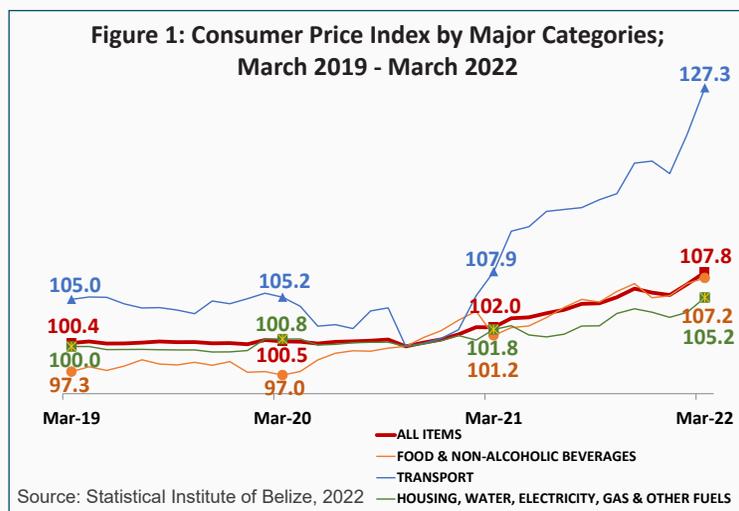




CONSUMER PRICES UP 5.7% IN MARCH 2022: FUEL, FOOD, AND LPG PRICES MOST AFFECTED

All-Items:

Results from the Statistical Institute of Belize’s monthly Consumer Price Index (CPI) survey showed that, in March 2022, the All-Items CPI, which summarizes price levels across all categories of goods and services, stood at 107.8, up from 102.0 in March of 2021 (see Figure 1). This indicates that, for the month of March 2022, the country experienced an overall national inflation rate¹ of 5.7 percent on the cost of goods and services regularly purchased by Belizean households. This was primarily driven by higher prices for motor vehicle fuels, food items, and liquefied petroleum gas (LPG). Increases were also seen in the cost of restaurant services, household cleaning products, and women’s clothing.



Transport:

Prices within the ‘Transport’ category continued to see the most dramatic increase among the major CPI categories, rising by 18 percent for the month of March 2022 when compared to March 2021. This was mainly due to the steady rise within the ‘Fuels and Lubricants’ sub-category, which was up by 27.9 percent as substantial price increases were seen across all types of motor vehicle fuels. At the pump, diesel registered the highest increase, with the average price per gallon rising by \$3.10 from \$10.29 in March 2021 to \$13.40 in March 2022. Premium gasoline was up by \$2.91 from \$10.58 to \$13.49, while regular gasoline rose by \$2.78 from \$10.21 in March 2021 to \$12.99 in March 2022 (see Table 1). Also within this category, the cost of new motor vehicles was up by 8.1 percent.

Food and Non-Alcoholic Beverages:

Prices for ‘Food and Non-Alcoholic Beverages’ increased by 6 percent when compared to March 2021 (see Figure 2), mainly as a result of higher costs for basic food items. The most striking increases were recorded for meats, cereal products, cooking oils, fresh fruits and vegetables, and fish and other seafood. Specific products for which notably higher prices were seen compared to March of last year included pigtailed, vegetable oils, rice, chicken wings, tomatoes, watermelons, and Irish potatoes. Nonetheless, there were some price decreases noted among a few food items, including some fresh produce such as red kidney beans, black beans, onions, and cabbages (see Table 1).

Housing, Water, Electricity, Gas and Other Fuels:

In comparison to March 2021, the ‘Housing, Water, Electricity, Gas and Other Fuels’ category saw an overall increase of 3.3 percent (see Figure 2). This was driven largely by the continued rise in LPG prices, which were up by a significant 34.2 percent for the month of

Table 1: Average Prices of Selected Foods and Fuel (BZ \$); March 2021 and March 2022

Item	Unit of Measurement	Average Prices		%
		March 2021	March 2022	
Rice	1 Lb	\$1.37	\$1.54	12.6%
Chicken Cuts	1 Lb	\$3.07	\$3.21	4.5%
Chicken, Legs	1 Lb	\$3.23	\$3.21	-0.5%
Chicken, Wings	1 Lb	\$4.68	\$5.14	9.8%
Chicken, Breast	1 Lb	\$3.81	\$3.87	1.6%
Whole Chicken	1 Lb	\$2.78	\$2.93	5.7%
Pigtail	1 Lb	\$4.45	\$7.56	69.8%
Coconut Oil	1 L	\$10.12	\$11.54	14.1%
Vegetable Oil	1 L	\$3.48	\$4.74	36.2%
Flour	1 Lb	\$1.94	\$2.02	3.9%
Cake Baking Mix	15.25 Oz	\$5.10	\$4.94	-3.3%
Cake	1 Slice	\$3.55	\$3.64	2.5%
Banana	1 Unit	\$0.15	\$0.15	0.0%
Pineapple	1 Lb	\$1.23	\$1.27	2.9%
Orange	1 Unit	\$0.17	\$0.18	6.4%
Watermelon	1 Lb	\$0.65	\$0.74	14.0%
Cabbage	1 Lb	\$1.44	\$1.42	-1.7%
Sweet Pepper	1 Lb	\$2.83	\$2.83	0.0%
Onion	1 Lb	\$2.20	\$2.05	-7.0%
Irish Potatoes	1 Lb	\$1.75	\$2.38	35.4%
Tomatoes	1 Lb	\$1.34	\$2.56	91.2%
Black Beans	1 Lb	\$2.27	\$2.06	-9.3%
Red Kidney Beans	1 Lb	\$2.27	\$1.99	-12.2%
Premium Gasoline	1 Gallon	\$10.58	\$13.49	27.5%
Regular Gasoline	1 Gallon	\$10.21	\$12.99	27.2%
Diesel	1 Gallon	\$10.29	\$13.40	30.2%
Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG)	100 Lbs	\$111.32	\$149.40	34.2%

Source: Statistical Institute of Belize, 2022

March 2022. The average cost of a hundred-pound cylinder of LPG rose by \$38.08, from \$111.32 in March 2021 to \$149.40 in March 2022 (see Table 1). Additionally, prices for construction materials for household use were up by 14.2 percent. These increases overshadowed smaller reductions in home rental costs and electricity tariffs, which were down by 0.5 percent and 3.5 percent, respectively, from March of last year.

Restaurants and Accommodation Services:

The category of ‘Restaurants and Accommodation Services’ recorded an overall inflation rate of 5.1 percent for the month of March 2022, driven mainly by higher prices for restaurant services.

Furnishings, Household Equipment, and Routine Household Maintenance:

Prices for goods and services in the ‘Furnishings, Household Equipment, and Routine Household Maintenance’ category went up by 2.9 percent (see Figure 2). This was attributed to a 6.3 percent increase in prices for ‘Non-durable Household Goods’, including various laundry products, soaps, and detergents.

¹ The national inflation rate for the month measures the percent change in the CPI between March 2020 and March 2021.

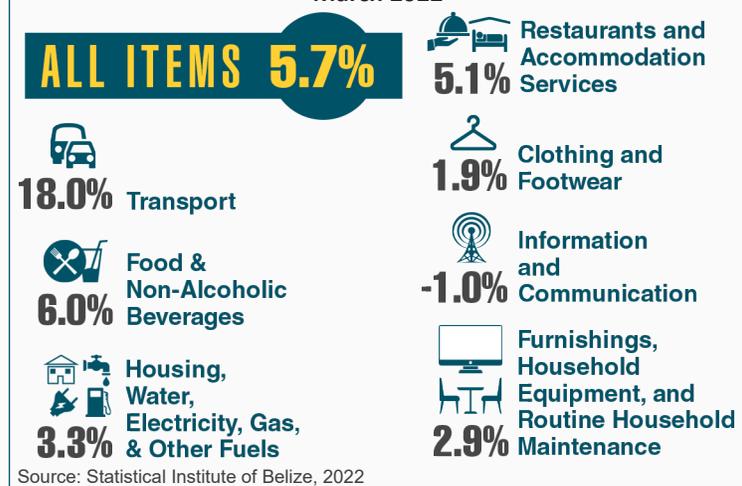
Clothing and Footwear:

For the month of March 2022, prices for 'Clothing and Footwear' rose by 1.9 percent overall when compared to March 2021, due mainly to higher prices for women's clothing and footwear (see Figure 2).

Information and Communication:

Prices in the 'Information and Communication' category, on the other hand, went down by 1 percent for the month of March 2022, as a result of lower prices for internet provision services, computers, laptops, tablets, and external storage devices (see Figure 2).

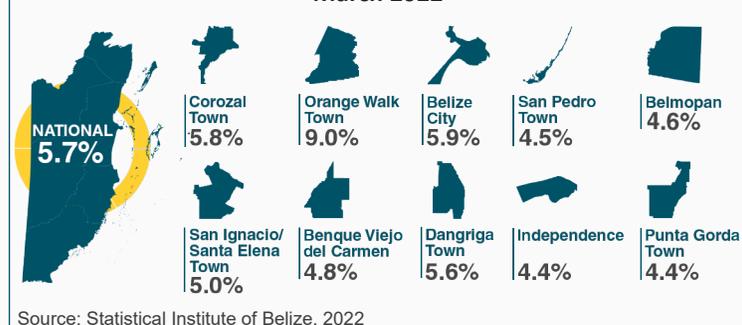
Figure 2: Inflation Rates for Selected Major Categories; March 2022



Inflation Rates by Municipality:

Among the country's municipalities, Orange Walk Town experienced the highest rate of increase in consumer prices for March 2022, with an inflation rate of 9 percent. Consumers in this town saw above average increases in prices for various food items, restaurant services, women's clothing, laundry products, soaps, detergents, and men's and women's haircuts. Home rental costs for this municipality were also up by 3.7 percent. On the other hand, Independence Village and Punta Gorda Town recorded the lowest inflation rates, with prices overall going up by 4.4 percent in both communities. Consumers in these areas saw lower than average increases in prices for food items, clothing, and restaurant services (see Figure 3).

Figure 3: Inflation Rates by Municipality (%); March 2022



Month-Over-Month Inflation Rates:

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 inflation rate², which measures the percent change in prices between the previous month and the current month.

Over the one-month period between February 2022 and March 2022, consumer prices increased by 1.1 percent on average. Prices for goods and services within the 'Transport' category rose by 4 percent, with motor vehicle fuels increasing by almost 6.8 percent between February and March of 2022. The average price per gallon of diesel, in particular, rose by 15.7 percent over the one-month period. The 'Housing, Water, Electricity, Gas and Other Fuels' category saw a 1.5 percent increase over the previous

Table 2: Month to Month Inflation Rates by Category (%); March 2022

Category	March 2022 (%)
ALL ITEMS	1.1%
Food and Non-Alcoholic Beverages	0.5%
Alcoholic Beverages, Tobacco and Narcotics	0.0%
Clothing and Footwear	0.0%
Housing, Water, Electricity, Gas and Other Fuels	1.5%
Furnishings, Household Equipment and Routine Household Maintenance	0.0%
Health	0.0%
Transport	4.0%
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, 2022

month, due to a 12.2 percent rise in LPG prices, while 'Food and Non-Alcoholic Beverages' had 0.5 percent month-over-month inflation rate, as a result of higher prices for fresh fruits, and cereal products (see Table 2).

YEAR-TO-DATE INFLATION RATE:

The year-to-date inflation rate³ for the first three months of 2022, when compared to the same period in 2021, stood at 4.8 percent, driven mostly by higher costs for fuel, food, LPG, and restaurant services. The 'Transport' category was up by a significant 16.8 percent, reflecting higher prices for all motor vehicle fuels and for new motor vehicles. The 'Food and Non-Alcoholic Beverages' category had a year-to-date inflation rate of 4.1 percent, primarily due to higher prices for meats, cereal products, cooking oils, and seafood items. Prices for 'Housing, Water, Electricity, Gas and Other Fuels' were up by 2.4 percent, due to higher costs for LPG and construction materials for household use. The 'Restaurant and Accommodation Services' category was up by 5 percent compared to the first three months of last year, as a result of higher prices for restaurant services, while 'Furnishing, Household Equipment and Routine Household Maintenance' had a year-to-date inflation rate of 2.7 percent, reflecting higher prices for laundry products, soaps, and detergents (see Table 3).

Table 3: Year to Date Inflation Rates by Category (%); March 2022

Category	March 2022 (%)
ALL ITEMS	4.8%
Food and Non-Alcoholic Beverages	4.1%
Alcoholic Beverages, Tobacco and Narcotics	0.9%
Clothing and Footwear	1.6%
Housing, Water, Electricity, Gas and Other Fuels	2.4%
Furnishings, Household Equipment and Routine Household Maintenance	2.7%
Health	1.1%
Transport	16.8%
Information and Communication	-0.7%
Recreation, Sport and Culture	0.2%
Education Services	-0.1%
Restaurants and Accommodation Services	5.0%
Insurance and Financial Services	-0.1%
Personal Care, Social Protection and Miscellaneous Goods and Services	0.4%

Source: Statistical Institute of Belize, 2022

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 March 2022 measures the percent change in the average CPI for the first three months of 2021 compared to the average CPI for the first three months of 2022.