

News

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EMPLOYMENT COST INDEX FOR THE REGIONS – SEPTEMBER 2004

Total compensation costs for private nonfarm workers rose 3.9 percent in the West for the year ended September 2004, according to the U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics. The Northeast posted a 4.1 percent increase, followed by the South which matched the West with 3.9 percent, and the Midwest with 3.4 percent. Regional Commissioner Richard J. Holden noted that the difference between the size of the increases in the four regions, 0.7 percentage point in September 2004, was considerably smaller than the 2.3 percentage point spread just one year earlier. Nationally, total compensation costs advanced 3.7 percent from September 2003 to September 2004. The Employment Cost Index (ECI), a component of the National Compensation Survey, measures quarterly changes in compensation costs, which include wages, salaries, and employer costs for employee benefits. (See chart 1. Definitions of the four geographic regions are contained in the Technical Note.)

The ECI for wages and salaries, a component of the total index that excludes benefit costs, rose 3.1 percent in the Northeast, 2.7 percent in both the South and the West, and 1.9 percent in the Midwest. (See chart 2.)

Chart 1. Over-the-year percent change in ECI for total compensation in the regions, private industry workers, 1999-2004

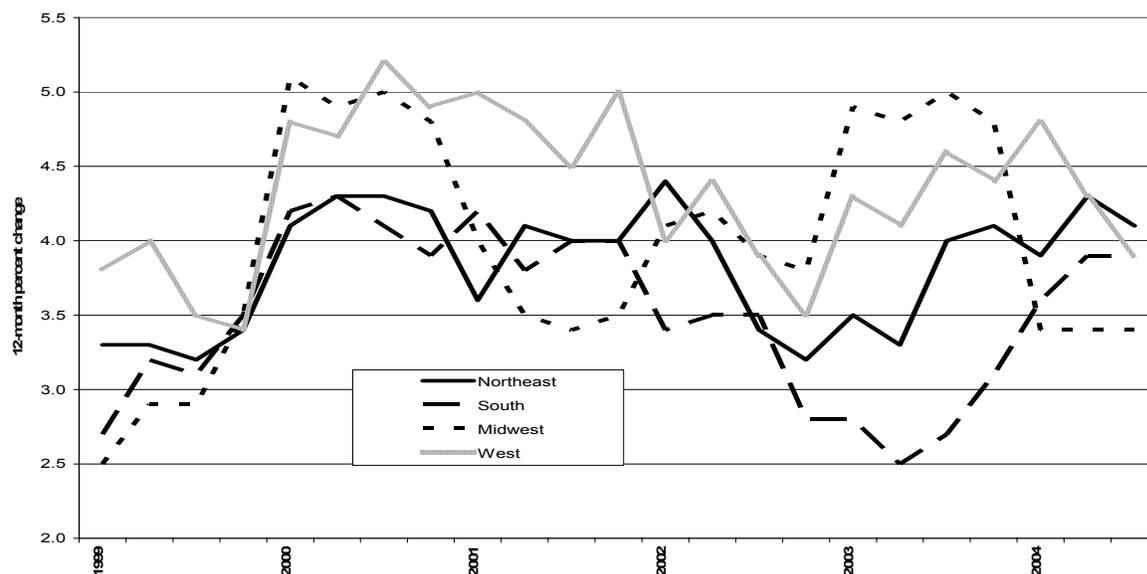
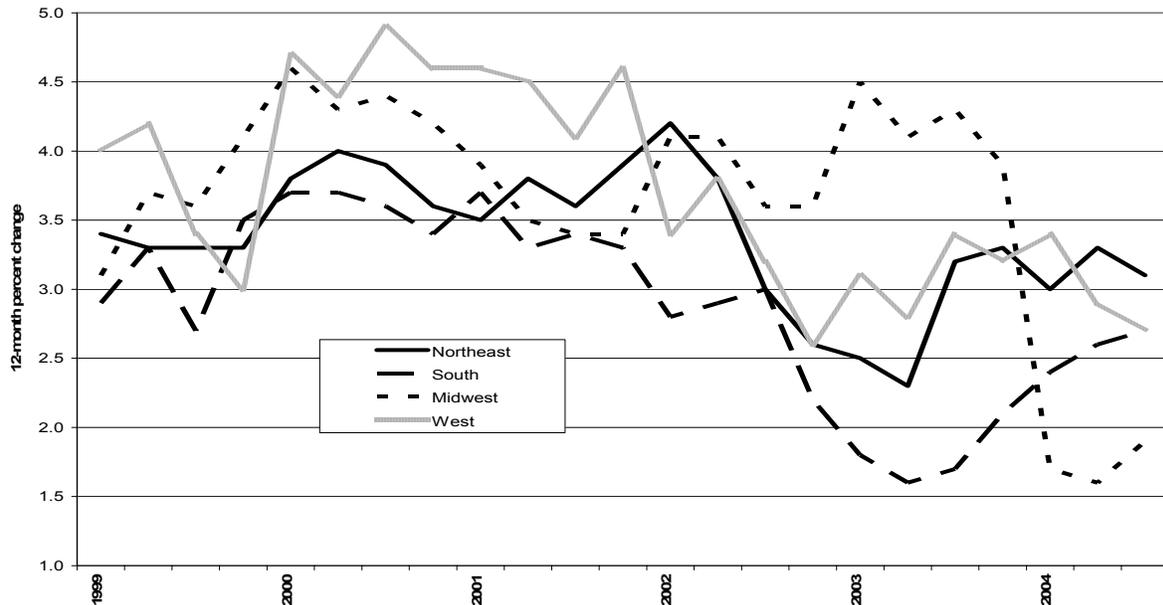


Chart 2. Over-the-year percent change in ECI for wages and salaries in the regions, private industry workers, 1999-2004



Since September a year ago, wages and salaries rose 2.7 percent in the West and total compensation, 3.9 percent, which compared favorably with a 2.2 percent rise in the region's retail prices. Over the last five years, the Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U) for the region has increased 14.0 percent compared with 19.7 percent for the ECI for wages and salaries and 24.3 percent for the ECI for total compensation. (See tables 1 and 2)

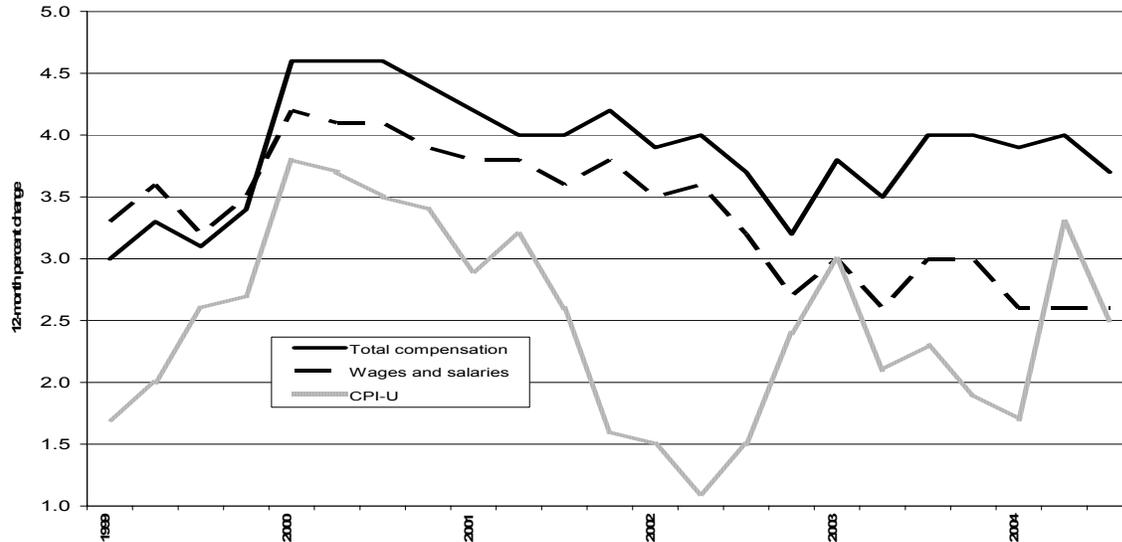
The 3.1 percent 12-month advance in wages and salaries costs in the Northeast was virtually identical to the CPI-U for the region, which rose 3.2 percent since last September. The ECI for total compensation in the Northeast increased at a faster rate, up 4.1 percent over the year. Since September 1999, the CPI-U for the Northeast has risen 15.1 percent compared with 17.9 percent for the ECI for wages and salaries and 21.3 for the ECI for total compensation.

In the South, the over-the-year increases in both wages and salaries (2.7 percent) and total compensation (3.9 percent) were higher than the rise in retail prices, which rose 2.5 percent since last September. Over the last five years, the CPI-U in the South has advanced 12.0 percent while the ECI for wages and salaries increased 15.3 percent and the ECI for total compensation, 19.5 percent.

The 12-month rise in the cost of wages and salaries in the Midwest (1.9 percent) was outpaced by the gain in retail prices, which rose 2.3 percent since last September. However, the increase in the ECI for total compensation in the Midwest (3.4 percent) was 1.1 percentage points higher than the regional increase in retail prices. Over the last five years, the CPI-U for the Midwest has increased 11.7 percent compared with 18.8 percent for the ECI for wages and salaries and 22.5 percent for the ECI for total compensation.

For the United States as a whole, the 2.6 percent over-the-year advance in wages and salaries costs was virtually identical to the increase in retail prices, which rose 2.5 percent from September a year ago. Over the same time period, total compensation increased 3.7 percent nationwide. (See chart 3.) Since September 1999, the CPI-U has advanced 13.1 percent compared with 17.7 percent for the ECI for wages and salaries and 21.7 percent for the ECI for total compensation.

Chart 3. Over-the-year percent change in the ECI for private industry workers, compensation and wages and salaries, and the CPI-U, U.S. City average, 1999-2004



In addition to these regional data, a comprehensive national report is available that provides data by industry, occupational group, union status, and all metropolitan and non-metropolitan areas combined. This report also presents data for both private and state and local government employees. The report on the Employment Cost Index and further technical information may be obtained from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, San Francisco Information Office, 71 Stevenson Street, Suite 600, San Francisco, California, 94105 or via fax-on-demand at (415) 975-4567, request code 9360 for the text of the release. Requests may be faxed to (415) 975-4371. The release is also available on the Internet at <http://www.bls.gov/ncs/ect/home.htm>. The ECI for December 2004 is scheduled to be released Friday, January 28, 2005 at 5:30 a.m. (PST).

TECHNICAL NOTE:

The Employment Cost Index (ECI) is a measure of the change in the cost of labor, free from the influence of employment shifts among occupations and industries. The compensation series includes changes in wages and salaries and employer costs for employee benefits. The ECI wage and salary series is limited to changes in wage and salary rates, defined as straight-time average hourly earnings. Straight-time wage and salary rates are total earnings before payroll deductions, excluding premium pay for overtime, work on weekends and holidays, and shift differentials. Production bonuses, incentive earnings, commission payments, and cost-of-living adjustments are included in straight-time earnings, whereas nonproduction bonuses (such as Christmas or year-end bonuses) are excluded. Also excluded are such items as payments-in-kind, free room and board, and tips.

Since the March 1995 news release, ECI estimates are based on 1990 counts of occupational employment by industry, rather than on 1980 employment counts. The ECI sample is rotated over approximately five years to make it more representative and reduce respondent burden. The sample is replaced on a cross-area, cross-industry basis.

Seasonally adjusted indexes for 1999-2003 were revised with the March 2004 estimates to reflect updated seasonal factors. New seasonally adjusted factors for 2003 and revised seasonally adjusted indexes for the past five years are available on the Internet at <http://www.bls.gov/ect/home.htm> or upon request.

Regional definitions:

Northeast: Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and Vermont.

South: Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, the District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, and West Virginia.

Midwest: Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, and Wisconsin.

West: Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming.

We encourage users interested in learning more about changes to the Employment Cost Index to contact the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Information on the ECI and other surveys are available on our web site at <http://www.bls.gov>. Current and historical BLS data are also posted on our Internet page at <http://www.bls.gov/ro9/home.htm>. ECI data are also available through our fax-on-demand system. For a catalog of items available to be faxed to you, call our fax-on-demand number at (415) 975-4567. If you have additional questions, you can contact the Western information office directly by dialing (415) 975-4350. Information from the Employment Cost Index program is available to sensory impaired individuals upon request. Voice phone: 202-691-5200, Federal Relay Services: 1-800-877-8339.

Table 1. Employment Cost Index for total compensation¹, private industry workers², United States and Census regions, 1991-2004, not seasonally adjusted

Month and year	Index (June 1989=100)					3-month percent change					12-month percent change				
	U.S.	North-east	South	Mid-west	West	U.S.	North-east	South	Mid-west	West	U.S.	North-east	South	Mid-west	West
1991-March	108.5	109.4	108.4	108.5	107.5	1.4	1.7	1.4	1.3	1.1	4.4	4.8	4.2	4.8	4.1
-June	109.8	110.6	109.8	109.7	108.9	1.2	1.1	1.3	1.1	1.3	4.4	5.0	3.9	4.7	4.2
-September	111.0	111.7	110.7	111.2	110.0	1.1	1.0	0.8	1.4	1.0	4.5	4.9	4.1	4.6	4.2
-December	111.7	112.5	111.2	112.2	110.9	0.6	0.7	0.5	0.9	0.8	4.4	4.6	4.0	4.8	4.3
1992-March	113.1	113.9	112.5	113.8	111.9	1.3	1.2	1.2	1.4	0.9	4.2	4.1	3.8	4.9	4.1
-June	113.9	114.5	113.3	114.6	112.9	0.7	0.5	0.7	0.7	0.9	3.7	3.5	3.2	4.5	3.7
-September	114.8	115.5	114.1	115.3	114.1	0.8	0.9	0.7	0.6	1.1	3.4	3.4	3.1	3.7	3.7
-December	115.6	116.4	114.8	116.1	114.9	0.7	0.8	0.6	0.7	0.7	3.5	3.5	3.2	3.5	3.6
1993-March	117.1	117.8	116.2	117.9	116.2	1.3	1.2	1.2	1.6	1.1	3.5	3.4	3.3	3.6	3.8
-June	118.0	119.1	117.0	119.3	116.4	0.8	1.1	0.7	1.2	0.2	3.6	4.0	3.3	4.1	3.1
-September	119.1	120.2	118.1	120.1	117.8	0.9	0.9	0.9	0.7	1.2	3.7	4.1	3.5	4.2	3.2
-December	119.8	120.7	118.8	121.2	118.1	0.6	0.4	0.6	0.9	0.3	3.6	3.7	3.5	4.4	2.8
1994-March	121.0	121.6	120.0	122.8	119.4	1.0	0.7	1.0	1.3	1.1	3.3	3.2	3.3	4.2	2.8
-June	122.0	122.8	120.8	123.6	120.5	0.8	1.0	0.7	0.7	0.9	3.4	3.1	3.2	3.6	3.5
-September	123.0	124.0	121.8	124.6	121.3	0.8	1.0	0.8	0.8	0.7	3.3	3.2	3.1	3.7	3.0
-December	123.5	124.3	122.5	125.0	121.7	0.4	0.2	0.6	0.3	0.3	3.1	3.0	3.1	3.1	3.0
1995-March	124.5	125.6	123.7	125.8	122.6	0.8	1.0	1.0	0.6	0.7	2.9	3.3	3.1	2.4	2.7
-June	125.4	126.6	124.3	126.9	123.4	0.7	0.8	0.5	0.9	0.7	2.8	3.1	2.9	2.7	2.4
-September	126.2	127.4	125.2	127.7	123.9	0.6	0.6	0.7	0.6	0.4	2.6	2.7	2.8	2.5	2.1
-December	126.7	127.8	125.6	128.3	125.0	0.4	0.3	0.3	0.5	0.9	2.6	2.8	2.5	2.6	2.7
1996-March	127.9	128.9	127.0	129.5	125.9	0.9	0.9	1.1	0.9	0.7	2.7	2.6	2.7	2.9	2.7
-June	129.0	129.7	127.8	130.7	127.3	0.9	0.6	0.6	0.9	1.1	2.9	2.4	2.8	3.0	3.2
-September	129.8	130.6	128.8	131.3	128.3	0.6	0.7	0.8	0.5	0.8	2.9	2.5	2.9	2.8	3.6
-December	130.6	131.1	129.7	132.1	128.9	0.6	0.4	0.7	0.6	0.5	3.1	2.6	3.3	3.0	3.1
1997-March	131.7	132.2	130.8	133.3	130.3	0.8	0.8	0.8	0.9	1.1	3.0	2.6	3.0	2.9	3.5
-June	132.8	133.1	131.5	134.7	131.4	0.8	0.7	0.5	1.1	0.8	2.9	2.6	2.9	3.1	3.2
-September	133.9	134.0	132.5	136.2	132.5	0.8	0.7	0.8	1.1	0.8	3.2	2.6	2.9	3.7	3.3
-December	135.1	135.0	134.6	136.9	133.4	0.9	0.7	1.6	0.5	0.7	3.4	3.0	3.8	3.6	3.5
1998-March	136.3	136.0	135.5	138.3	135.2	0.9	0.7	0.7	1.0	1.3	3.5	2.9	3.6	3.8	3.8
-June	137.5	137.0	136.4	139.6	136.6	0.9	0.7	0.7	0.9	1.0	3.5	2.9	3.7	3.6	4.0
-September	139.0	138.7	137.6	140.9	138.5	1.1	1.2	0.9	0.9	1.4	3.8	3.5	3.8	3.5	4.5
-December	139.8	139.5	138.1	141.4	140.0	0.6	0.6	0.4	0.4	1.1	3.5	3.3	2.6	3.3	4.9
1999-March	140.4	140.5	139.1	141.7	140.3	0.4	0.7	0.7	0.2	0.2	3.0	3.3	2.7	2.5	3.8
-June	142.0	141.5	140.7	143.6	142.1	1.1	0.7	1.2	1.3	1.3	3.3	3.3	3.2	2.9	4.0
-September	143.3	143.2	141.8	145.0	143.3	0.9	1.2	0.8	1.0	0.8	3.1	3.2	3.1	2.9	3.5
-December	144.6	144.3	143.0	146.3	144.7	0.9	0.8	0.8	0.9	1.0	3.4	3.4	3.5	3.5	3.4
2000-March	146.8	146.3	145.0	148.9	147.0	1.5	1.4	1.4	1.8	1.6	4.6	4.1	4.2	5.1	4.8
-June	148.5	147.6	146.7	150.7	148.8	1.2	0.9	1.2	1.2	1.2	4.6	4.3	4.3	4.9	4.7
-September	149.9	149.3	147.6	152.2	150.8	0.9	1.2	0.6	1.0	1.3	4.6	4.3	4.1	5.0	5.2
-December	150.9	150.3	148.6	153.3	151.8	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.7	4.4	4.2	3.9	4.8	4.9
2001-March	153.0	151.6	151.1	154.8	154.3	1.4	0.9	1.7	1.0	1.6	4.2	3.6	4.2	4.0	5.0
-June	154.5	153.7	152.3	156.0	156.0	1.0	1.4	0.8	0.8	1.1	4.0	4.1	3.8	3.5	4.8
-September	155.9	155.2	153.5	157.4	157.6	0.9	1.0	0.8	0.9	1.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	3.4	4.5
-December	157.2	156.3	154.6	158.6	159.4	0.8	0.7	0.7	0.8	1.1	4.2	4.0	4.0	3.5	5.0
2002-March	158.9	158.3	156.2	161.1	160.4	1.1	1.3	1.0	1.6	0.6	3.9	4.4	3.4	4.1	4.0
-June	160.7	159.9	157.6	162.6	162.9	1.1	1.0	0.9	0.9	1.6	4.0	4.0	3.5	4.2	4.4
-September	161.6	160.5	158.9	163.5	163.8	0.6	0.4	0.8	0.6	0.6	3.7	3.4	3.5	3.9	3.9
-December	162.3	161.3	159.0	164.6	165.0	0.4	0.5	0.1	0.7	0.7	3.2	3.2	2.8	3.8	3.5
2003-March	165.0	163.8	160.6	169.0	167.3	1.7	1.5	1.0	2.7	1.4	3.8	3.5	2.8	4.9	4.3
-June	166.4	165.2	161.6	170.4	169.5	0.8	0.9	0.6	0.8	1.3	3.5	3.3	2.5	4.8	4.1
-September	168.1	166.9	163.2	171.7	171.4	1.0	1.0	1.0	0.8	1.1	4.0	4.0	2.7	5.0	4.6
-December	168.8	167.9	163.9	172.5	172.2	0.4	0.6	0.4	0.5	0.5	4.0	4.1	3.1	4.8	4.4
2004-March	171.4	170.2	166.4	174.7	175.3	1.5	1.4	1.5	1.3	1.8	3.9	3.9	3.6	3.4	4.8
-June	173.0	172.3	167.9	176.2	176.8	0.9	1.2	0.9	0.9	0.9	4.0	4.3	3.9	3.4	4.3
-September	174.4	173.7	169.5	177.6	178.1	0.8	0.8	1.0	0.8	0.7	3.7	4.1	3.9	3.4	3.9

¹ The index measures change in total compensation costs: wages, salaries, and employer costs for employee benefits.² Excludes self-employed, unpaid family members and private household employees.

Table 2. Employment Cost Index for wages and salaries only, private industry workers¹, United States and Census regions, 1991-2004, not seasonally adjusted

Month and year	Index (June 1989=100)					3-month percent change					12-month percent change				
	U.S.	North-east	South	Mid-west	West	U.S.	North-east	South	Mid-west	West	U.S.	North-east	South	Mid-west	West
1991-March	107.3	108.3	107.4	106.9	106.4	1.1	1.3	1.2	1.0	0.9	4.0	4.1	3.8	4.2	3.8
-June	108.4	109.4	108.5	107.7	107.6	1.0	1.0	1.0	0.7	1.1	3.7	4.4	3.1	3.9	3.5
-September	109.3	110.3	109.2	108.9	108.6	0.8	0.8	0.6	1.1	0.9	3.7	4.2	3.3	3.6	3.6
-December	110.0	110.9	109.6	109.9	109.4	0.6	0.5	0.4	0.9	0.7	3.7	3.7	3.3	3.9	3.8
1992-March	110.9	111.7	110.8	110.7	110.2	0.8	0.7	1.1	0.7	0.7	3.4	3.1	3.2	3.6	3.6
-June	111.6	112.2	111.5	111.3	111.1	0.6	0.4	0.6	0.5	0.8	3.0	2.6	2.8	3.3	3.3
-September	112.2	113.0	112.0	111.8	112.2	0.5	0.7	0.4	0.4	1.0	2.7	2.4	2.6	2.7	3.3
-December	112.9	113.7	112.7	112.5	112.8	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.5	2.6	2.5	2.8	2.4	3.1
1993-March	113.9	114.6	113.6	113.5	113.6	0.9	0.8	0.8	0.9	0.7	2.7	2.6	2.5	2.5	3.1
-June	114.6	115.7	114.3	114.6	113.7	0.6	1.0	0.6	1.0	0.1	2.7	3.1	2.5	3.0	2.3
-September	115.7	116.8	115.3	115.2	115.3	1.0	1.0	0.9	0.5	1.4	3.1	3.4	2.9	3.0	2.8
-December	116.4	117.3	116.0	116.5	115.7	0.6	0.4	0.6	1.1	0.3	3.1	3.2	2.9	3.6	2.6
1994-March	117.2	117.8	116.6	117.5	116.6	0.7	0.4	0.5	0.9	0.8	2.9	2.8	2.6	3.5	2.6
-June	118.1	118.8	117.4	118.3	117.9	0.8	0.8	0.7	0.7	1.1	3.1	2.7	2.7	3.2	3.7
-September	119.1	120.0	118.5	119.5	118.1	0.8	1.0	0.9	1.0	0.2	2.9	2.7	2.8	3.7	2.4
-December	119.7	120.2	119.1	120.1	119.0	0.5	0.2	0.5	0.5	0.8	2.8	2.5	2.7	3.1	2.9
1995-March	120.6	121.3	120.0	120.9	119.9	0.8	0.9	0.8	0.7	0.8	2.9	3.0	2.9	2.9	2.8
-June	121.5	122.1	120.8	122.2	120.9	0.7	0.7	0.7	1.1	0.8	2.9	2.8	2.9	3.3	2.5
-September	122.4	123.1	121.8	123.0	121.4	0.7	0.8	0.8	0.7	0.4	2.8	2.6	2.8	2.9	2.8
-December	123.1	123.6	122.4	123.6	122.7	0.6	0.4	0.5	0.5	1.1	2.8	2.8	2.8	2.9	3.1
1996-March	124.4	124.9	124.1	125.1	123.3	1.1	1.1	1.4	1.2	0.5	3.2	3.0	3.4	3.5	2.8
-June	125.6	126.0	125.1	126.2	124.8	1.0	0.9	0.8	0.9	1.2	3.4	3.2	3.6	3.3	3.2
-September	126.5	127.0	126.0	126.9	125.8	0.7	0.8	0.7	0.6	0.8	3.3	3.2	3.4	3.2	3.6
-December	127.3	127.7	127.0	127.7	126.5	0.6	0.6	0.8	0.6	0.6	3.4	3.3	3.8	3.3	3.1
1997-March	128.6	128.8	128.5	129.0	127.7	1.0	0.9	1.2	1.0	0.9	3.4	3.1	3.5	3.1	3.6
-June	129.7	129.8	129.4	130.4	128.9	0.9	0.8	0.7	1.1	0.9	3.3	3.0	3.4	3.3	3.3
-September	131.0	130.7	130.6	132.2	130.2	1.0	0.7	0.9	1.4	1.0	3.6	2.9	3.7	4.2	3.5
-December	132.3	131.6	133.0	133.0	131.2	1.0	0.7	1.8	0.6	0.8	3.9	3.1	4.7	4.2	3.7
1998-March	133.7	132.6	134.0	134.7	132.9	1.1	0.8	0.8	1.3	1.3	4.0	3.0	4.3	4.4	4.1
-June	134.9	133.8	134.9	136.0	134.5	0.9	0.9	0.7	1.0	1.2	4.0	3.1	4.3	4.3	4.3
-September	136.6	135.4	136.5	137.5	136.7	1.3	1.2	1.2	1.1	1.6	4.3	3.6	4.5	4.0	5.0
-December	137.4	136.4	136.7	138.0	138.4	0.6	0.7	0.1	0.4	1.2	3.9	3.6	2.8	3.8	5.5
1999-March	138.1	137.1	137.9	138.9	138.2	0.5	0.5	0.9	0.7	-0.1	3.3	3.4	2.9	3.1	4.0
-June	139.7	138.2	139.4	141.0	140.2	1.2	0.8	1.1	1.5	1.4	3.6	3.3	3.3	3.7	4.2
-September	141.0	139.9	140.2	142.4	141.3	0.9	1.2	0.6	1.0	0.8	3.2	3.3	2.7	3.6	3.4
-December	142.2	140.9	141.5	143.6	142.6	0.9	0.7	0.9	0.8	0.9	3.5	3.3	3.5	4.1	3.0
2000-March	143.9	142.3	143.0	145.3	144.7	1.2	1.0	1.1	1.2	1.5	4.2	3.8	3.7	4.6	4.7
-June	145.4	143.7	144.6	147.1	146.3	1.0	1.0	1.1	1.2	1.1	4.1	4.0	3.7	4.3	4.4
-September	146.8	145.3	145.3	148.6	148.2	1.0	1.1	0.5	1.0	1.3	4.1	3.9	3.6	4.4	4.9
-December	147.7	146.0	146.3	149.6	149.2	0.6	0.5	0.7	0.7	0.7	3.9	3.6	3.4	4.2	4.6
2001-March	149.4	147.3	148.3	150.9	151.3	1.2	0.9	1.4	0.9	1.4	3.8	3.5	3.7	3.9	4.6
-June	150.9	149.2	149.3	152.3	152.9	1.0	1.3	0.7	0.9	1.1	3.8	3.8	3.3	3.5	4.5
-September	152.1	150.6	150.2	153.6	154.3	0.8	0.9	0.6	0.9	0.9	3.6	3.6	3.4	3.4	4.1
-December	153.3	151.7	151.2	154.7	156.0	0.8	0.7	0.7	0.7	1.1	3.8	3.9	3.3	3.4	4.6
2002-March	154.7	153.5	152.5	157.1	156.4	0.9	1.2	0.9	1.6	0.3	3.5	4.2	2.8	4.1	3.4
-June	156.3	154.9	153.6	158.5	158.7	1.0	0.9	0.7	0.9	1.5	3.6	3.8	2.9	4.1	3.8
-September	157.0	155.1	154.7	159.2	159.3	0.4	0.1	0.7	0.4	0.4	3.2	3.0	3.0	3.6	3.2
-December	157.5	155.7	154.6	160.2	160.1	0.3	0.4	-0.1	0.6	0.5	2.7	2.6	2.2	3.6	2.6
2003-March	159.3	157.3	155.3	164.1	161.3	1.1	1.0	0.5	2.4	0.7	3.0	2.5	1.8	4.5	3.1
-June	160.4	158.4	156.1	165.0	163.1	0.7	0.7	0.5	0.5	1.1	2.6	2.3	1.6	4.1	2.8
-September	161.7	160.0	157.4	166.1	164.7	0.8	1.0	0.8	0.7	1.0	3.0	3.2	1.7	4.3	3.4
-December	162.3	160.9	157.9	166.5	165.2	0.4	0.6	0.3	0.2	0.3	3.0	3.3	2.1	3.9	3.2
2004-March	163.4	162.0	159.1	166.9	166.8	0.7	0.7	0.8	0.2	1.0	2.6	3.0	2.4	1.7	3.4
-June	164.5	163.6	160.1	167.7	167.9	0.7	1.0	0.6	0.5	0.7	2.6	3.3	2.6	1.6	2.9
-September	165.9	164.9	161.6	169.2	169.1	0.9	0.8	0.9	0.9	0.7	2.6	3.1	2.7	1.9	2.7

¹Excludes self-employed, unpaid family members and private household employees.