

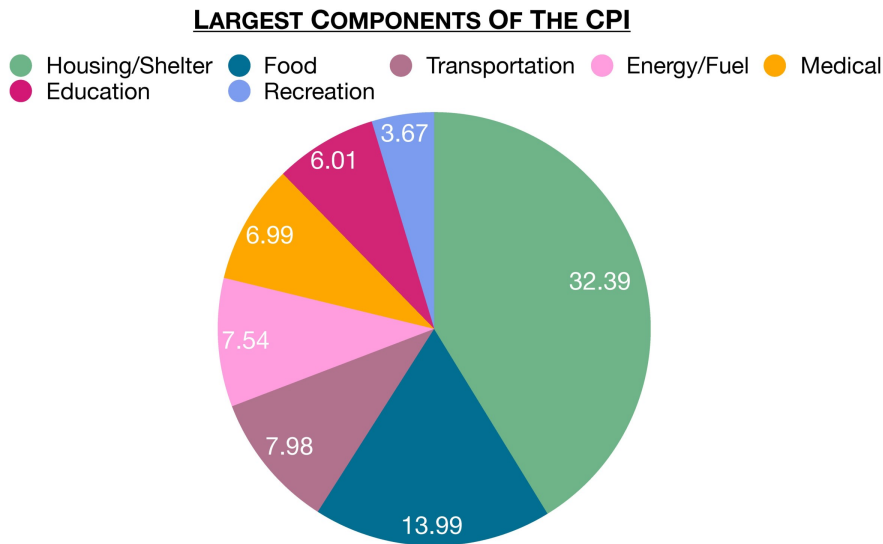
Food & Gasoline Making Up More Of Consumer Expenditures - Consumer Inflation

Food and energy have become the two fastest rising expenses for consumers nationwide, as well as representing a larger proportion of total living costs. Currently, 21.5% of the Consumer Price Index (CPI) is composed of food and energy expenditures, where the cost of groceries alone were 6.5% higher and the price of gasoline 50.8% higher than a year ago.

The concern that many economists have identified is that as millions of Americans are spending more on food and energy, they have less to spend on what they'd truly desire or want, also known as discretionary goods. As funds for discretionary items become scarce, economic growth suffers as sales of cars, furniture, clothing, and dining out become less affordable for millions of consumers.

Historically, food and energy prices have always been very volatile, making up more or less of consumer expenditures over time. Where consumers live and how old they are also dictates how influential components of the CPI are. Gasoline for example is less expensive in Oklahoma than in California, and seniors may not spend any funds on education but may spend more on medical expenses.

Sources: Dept. of Labor, BLS



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