

US ECONOMY

INFLATION ACCELERATES AMID WAR WITH IRAN



SPENCER PLATT, GETTY IMAGES

A woman shops Feb. 27 at a grocery store in Manhattan in New York City.

Consumer prices rise at fastest annual rate in three years

LUCIA MUTIKANI
Reuters

WASHINGTON — U.S. consumer inflation increased further in April, with prices rising at the fastest annual rate in three years, heightening political risks for President Donald Trump and his Republican Party ahead of November's midterm elections.

The back-to-back rises in the Consumer Price Index reported by the Labor Department on Tuesday reflected large increases in the costs of energy products amid the U.S.-Israeli war with Iran. Food prices surged last month and inflation also spilled over to the services sector, with higher rental costs and airfares.

Trump won reelection in 2024 in large part because of his promise to reduce inflation, but Americans have soured on his handling of the economy and many blame him for the pain at the pump.

Trump said he's not thinking about Americans' financial concerns about rising gas prices and is only worried about preventing Iran from building a nuclear weapon as he negotiates a deal with Iran.

"Not even a little bit," Trump told reporters Tuesday when asked to what

extent he's motivated by Americans' financial situation to reach a deal that ends the war.

"I don't think about Americans' financial situation. I don't think about anybody. I think about one thing. We cannot let Iran have a nuclear weapon. That's all," the president added.

Rising inflation outpaced wage gains for the first time in three years and underscored the financial strain on households.

With no end in sight to the conflict, economists warned prices would continue to push higher and broaden in the months ahead.

Trump on Monday proposed reducing the 18.4-cent federal gasoline tax to lower prices at the pump.

"Prices are going up everywhere you look, and families everywhere are struggling to keep up," said Janelle Jones, a visiting senior fellow at the Century Foundation.

"Measures like suspending the gas tax will provide short-term relief, but it's robbing Peter to pay Paul," she said. "What families really need is an end to this war and leaders that are committed to ending

the affordability crisis."

The CPI increased 0.6% last month after surging 0.9% in March, the Labor Department's Bureau of Labor Statistics said. Economists polled by Reuters forecast the CPI rising 0.6%. Estimates ranged from a 0.4% gain to a 0.9% increase.

The moderation after posting the largest increase since June 2022 was mechanical. Oil prices shot above \$100 a barrel in March after strikes against Iran, before pulling back to still-high levels after a ceasefire in early April.

While the conflict's effect was immediately reflected in more expensive gasoline, diesel and jet fuel, economists said the second-round effects were around the corner, including for goods trucked by road. Shipping disruptions in the Strait of Hormuz are straining supply chains.

A 3.8% increase in energy prices accounted for more than 40% of the rise in the CPI last month. That followed a 10.9% jump in March.

Gasoline prices rose 5.4% after a record 21.2% surge in March.

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Wood ticks unusually active in southern Wis. this spring

ER visits for bites hit highest known level

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Already had a run-in with a tick this year?

You're not alone.

Emergency room visits for tick bites hit their highest known level in southern Wisconsin and have been up across the state in recent weeks, according to data from the Wisconsin Department of Health Services, which began tracking tick-related ER visits in 2022.

Most of the country has seen a similar trend, but it's been especially pronounced in the Midwest, data from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention shows.

Experts say the evidence in Wisconsin

suggests people are having more encounters than usual with the American dog tick, also known as the wood tick.

The wood tick "is a really common human-biter," said Susan Paskewitz, a professor in the UW-Madison Department of Entomology and a director of the Midwest Center of Excellence for Vector-Borne Disease. "It's also very common on animals, including pets."

Of Wisconsin's two main tick species, wood ticks are the lesser evil.

Wood ticks are relatively large and can be alarming to spot on your skin, clothes or pets. Their bites can, rarely, cause illness, including tularemia, or rabbit fever. But wood ticks don't transmit Lyme disease and are significantly less likely to make people sick than the smaller blacklegged

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24K PRODUCTION

Emergency room visits for tick bites have hit their highest known level in southern Wisconsin and have been up across the state in recent weeks, according to the Wisconsin Department of Health Services. The good news: Wood ticks, the less worrisome of the two main tick species in the state, seem to be the main driver of the increase.