UNCOMMON ECON

RESEARCH BRIEF
Season 2 Episode 3
Consumer Price Index

TRACKING INFLATION FOR TECHNOLOGY SERVICES BASED ON MORE THAN PRICE

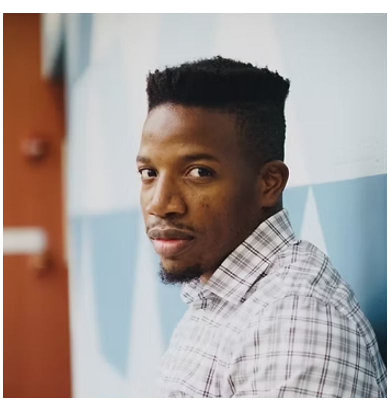
Measuring inflation in a digital economy requires knowing more than just the cost of goods and services. The Consumer Price Index (CPI) has long tracked price changes for everyday goods, but it struggles to capture rapid improvements in digital services like streaming and mobile plans. Prices may stay the same while quality and functionality increase, meaning consumers get more value without higher costs. Economists are using new data sources and models to account for these quality changes. Accurate measurement matters because the CPI affects wages, benefits, taxes, and economic policy.

Brad Akin, PhD
Senior Economist, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

Dr. Akin became a research economist because he enjoyed solving optimization puzzles and was encouraged early on by his father, who introduced him to economic thinking. He was fascinated by how countless small price signals, each insignificant on its own, combined to create order in complex economies. Learn more: *"Improvements to the CPI Index Series …" 2023. Monthly Labor Review.* doi.org/10.21916/mlr.2023.13.

Carol Corrado, PhD
Senior Policy Scholar, Center for Business and Public Policy at Georgetown's McDonough School of Business

Dr. Corrado studies how investments in software, data, AI, and other non-physical assets drive economic growth. She aims to improve the ways economists measure the value and quality of rapidly changing digital products and services in the U.S. and around the world. Learn more: *"The increasing deflationary influence of consumer digital access services." 2020. Economics Letters.* doi.org/10.1016/j.econlet.2020.109447.



Andre Harrison, PhD
Associate Professor, California State University, Long Beach

Prof. Harrison was always interested in the distribution of wealth and the powers that control the amount of money circulating in an economy, specifically the "dependence" of developing countries on the advanced world. His research explores the connections between advanced and developing economies, how these connections matter for economic prosperity, and how global issues and monetary policy play a role. Learn more: *"Do Consumer Price Indices in Oil-Producing Economies Respond Differently to Oil Market Shocks?" 2024. Empirical Economics, 67(5).* doi.org/10.1007/s00181-024-02606-y.

 This work is funded by the National Science Foundation, Division of Undergraduate Education under grant DUE-2315696 and the CSWEP-SSRC Women in Economics and Mathematics Research Consortium.