



Statistical Deception Breakdown

Gas Prices and Misleading Averages

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Deception:

Gas Hits \$4.54 – But Is That the Full Story?

⚠️ CBS News MoneyWatch reported a national average of **\$4.54 per gallon** – the highest since July 2022 – with regular gas up **52% (\$1.56/gal)** since the start of the Iran war in late February 2026.

The statistical issue: The national average is accurate, but it can make gas prices appear more uniform nationwide while minimizing regional differences caused by taxes, supply chains, refinery access, and local demand.

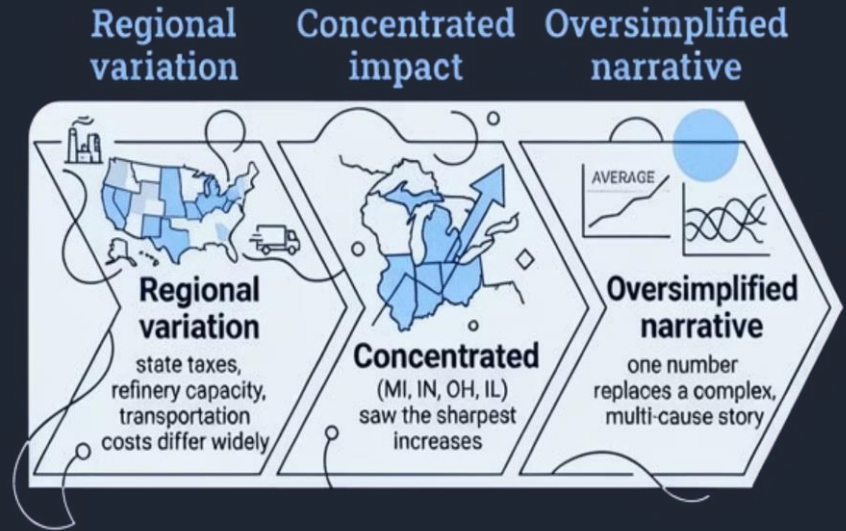


Analysis:

The Fallacy: Misleading Average + Missing Context

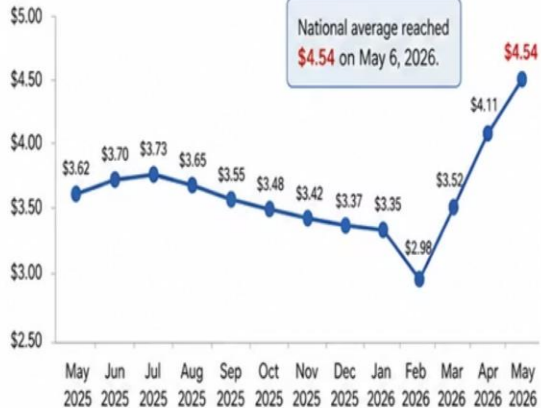
- The national average is not *false* – but it is incomplete. Gas prices are shaped by local taxes, refinery access, and regional supply disruptions. CBS noted that prices rose in every state, yet the **fastest increases were concentrated in the Great Lakes region.**

When a single aggregate number becomes the main takeaway, audiences may conclude that the surge was **identical everywhere** – a broader conclusion than the data supports.

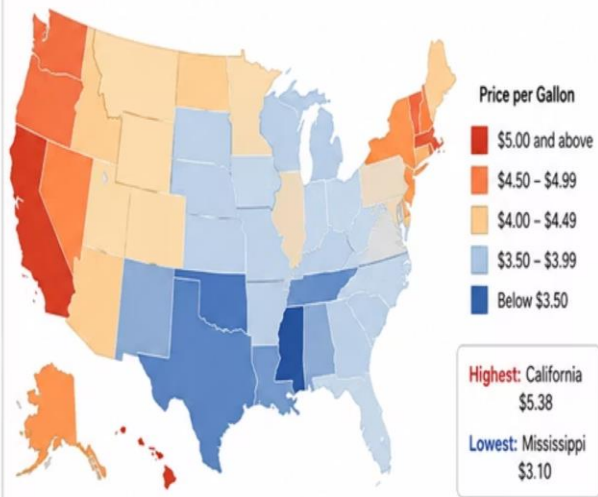


1. National Average Trend (12 Months)

Average Price (USD per Gallon)



2. Average Gas Price by State (USD per Gallon)



3. Highest and Lowest State Averages (May 2026)

Top 5 Highest

- California \$5.38
- Hawaii \$5.19
- Washington \$4.89
- Oregon \$4.73
- Nevada \$4.63

Top 5 Lowest

- Mississippi \$3.10
- Texas \$3.14
- Oklahoma \$3.18
- Louisiana \$3.22
- Arkansas \$3.24



Prices vary by taxes, refinery capacity, regional supply, and local demand.

4. Key Drivers Behind Price Changes



Crude Oil Prices

Global oil prices directly impact pump prices.



Refinery Capacity

Refinery outages or maintenance reduce supply.



Geopolitical Events

Events like the Iran conflict can disrupt global oil supply.



Seasonal Demand

Summer travel increases gasoline demand.



State Taxes & Fees

State fuel taxes vary widely across the U.S.

Correction:

What a More Accurate Presentation Looks Like



Corrected claim: "The national average reached \$4.54/gal, but prices and the scale of increases varied significantly by state and region."

Ethical Implications

Why Framing Matters Beyond the Numbers



Trigger Unnecessary Panic

A single large number amplifies alarm without explaining local relevance.



Oversimplify Complex Causes

Obscures the role of oil supply, refinery issues, seasonal demand, and regional taxes.



Distort Political Assumptions

Audiences may attribute the surge to a single policy or actor rather than a multi-factor system.

References

Sources

CBS News MoneyWatch

Picchi, A. (2026, May 6). *Gas prices top \$4.50 a gallon, reaching highest level since July 2022.* [Cbsnews.com](https://www.cbsnews.com/news/gas-prices-450-when-will-gas-prices-go-down/).
<https://www.cbsnews.com/news/gas-prices-450-when-will-gas-prices-go-down/>

AAA Gas Prices Data

AAA. (2026). *Gas prices data.* <https://gasprices.aaa.com>
Underlying data source cited by CBS News for the \$4.54/gallon national average figure.

- ❏ Analysis focused on how aggregate national averages can mislead audiences by concealing significant regional variation in both price levels and rates of increase.