

Verbal opening statement by DG CSO

Joint Committee on Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government

May 10th, 2017

CSO attendees:

Pádraig Dalton, Director General

Richard McMahon, Assistant Director General, Social and Demographic Statistics

Paul Morrin, Assistant Director General, Statistical System Coordination

Deirdre Cullen, Senior Statistician, Census of Population

Cormac Halpin, Senior Statistician, Census of Population

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At the outset, I wish to thank the Chairperson and the Committee for inviting the Central Statistics Office here today. I am accompanied by my colleagues Richard McMahon, Paul Morrin, Deirdre Cullen and Cormac Halpin.

On April 20th 2017, the Central Statistics Office published a Census 2016 thematic report on Housing in Ireland. This was the first of a series of 13 reports due to be published over the coming 8 months and forms not only an important component of the census results, but also acts as an important addition to the full suite of statistics that the CSO produces on housing such as the monthly Residential Property Price Index and the quarterly series on Planning Permissions.

The publication of the census housing report was brought forward by four and a half months (compared to the equivalent release for census 2011) in recognition of the demand for statistics in this critical area.

The census results on housing attracted a lot of attention, not only across the user spectrum, but also among the general public and the media. The headline figures showed that Ireland's housing stock increased by 8,800 units between 2011 and 2016, a rise of just 0.4%, while at the same time showing that some 33,000 householders indicated their home had been built in the previous five years. It should be noted that this increase in the stock represents a net gain over the period and so will exclude dwellings which will have fallen out of the housing stock through dereliction and depreciation.

The number of occupied private households grew by 2.9% or 48,000, exceeding the growth in the housing stock. This growth in households contributed to the decline in the number of vacant dwellings, which fell by 47,000. The overall population increased by 3.8%, which entailed that on average there were more people in each occupied household, up from 2.73 to 2.75. This marked the first increase in household size since 1966.

There were 245,460 vacant dwellings, of which 62,148 were categorised as holiday homes. The vacancy rate, which is the percentage of the housing stock which was vacant, was 12.3%. The equivalent rate in 2011 was 14.5%. The report also included data on rents and how they have changed over the five years with the overall State figure up by 16.8% and Dublin city rents up by 29%. The data also showed that home ownership rates have fallen back to below 1971 levels and stood at 67.6%.

The report included a new analysis on a breakdown of vacant dwellings by type of dwelling (into detached, semi-detached, etc.) and information on the distance to the nearest settlement. There was also new analysis on age by tenure and the status of dwellings that were vacant five years ago – looking at whether or not they were still vacant in 2016.

The methodology used to collect the 2016 census data was the same as that used in previous censuses. The purpose of the census is to count all persons and habitable dwellings in the country on census night. The 2016 census took place on April 24th and every person and householder in Ireland was obliged under statute to participate. Some 4,660 enumerators were recruited to deliver and collect census forms, supported by 480 local and area supervisors. Enumerators were provided with address lists of every known dwelling in their area (typically about 450 addresses – which had been extracted from the Geodirectory). They were responsible for not only enumerating all occupied dwellings, but also for identifying new dwellings not on their list as well as accounting for and categorising all unoccupied dwellings. The categories used were: temporarily absent, vacant, holiday home, derelict, under construction, commercial only, or does not exist. The housing stock was ultimately deemed to be all dwellings categorised as occupied, temporarily absent, vacant or holiday home with derelict, commercial, under construction and does not exist removed from the count.

In preparation for the housing publication, and in light of the increasing demand for data on housing, the CSO engaged with the Department of Housing and the Housing Agency on providing new analysis on the reasons why dwellings might be vacant. This resulted in a special exercise whereby information from the notes in the Enumerator Record Books were captured and categorised. Data for 57,246 of the 183,312 habitable vacant dwellings was captured (the notes were blank for the remainder) and of these 10,948 were categorised as For

Sale, 10,350 were For Rent, with other categories being owner deceased, under renovation and in a nursing home.

The CSO, following further engagement with the Housing Agency is also bringing forward the release of Small Area data on housing stock and vacant dwellings. Data will be provided for some 18,300 Small Areas and will be released tomorrow, May 11th, in conjunction with the second of our thematic reports titled Population Distribution and Movement.

Throughout 2017 the CSO will publish a further 10 reports many of which will provide further information on housing, households and tenure for different age cohorts of the population such as primary and secondary school students, non-Irish nationals, the disabled, Irish Travellers and the unemployed. Detailed Small Area statistics will be published in July in an interactive mapping tool and as a download. It is also planned to reproduce the Area Profiles which provide a two-page demographic and socio-economic summary for counties, towns and constituencies and this is due out in early November. Finally the CSO provides for ad hoc queries of the census data on an on-going basis.

I would now like to briefly describe some other housing indicators that the CSO produces. In September 2016 the CSO launched a new Residential Property Price Index (RPPI) for Ireland which has been acknowledged as a significant methodological improvement on the original index and comprises individual regional and Dublin administrative area indices along with new indicators on volume, value and average prices.

Using our House Price by Eircode interactive tool, the public can now readily access average house prices by Eircode area.

The CSO also compiles quarterly statistics on planning permissions, compiled from data provided by the Local Authorities and An Bord Pleanála, and these provide a short-term indicator of potential future construction of houses and apartments.

Both the CSO and the Department recognise the importance and urgency of producing robust housing statistics for decision and policy making purposes. In light of this a Housing Analytics Group was established by the Department in early May with active CSO participation. Part of the remit of the group is to explore how best to expand and improve the data in relation to all aspects of housing in Ireland.

The CSO is committed to working closely with all our users including the Department to address the challenges around the production of quality housing statistics. This commitment includes progressing the secondment of professional statisticians from the CSO to the Department.