

# DÁIL ÉIREANN

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## AN COMHCHOISTE UM THITHÍOCHT, PLEANÁIL, POBAL AGUS RIALTAS ÁITIÚIL

## JOINT COMMITTEE ON HOUSING, PLANNING, COMMUNITY AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

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*Dé Céadaoin, 10 Bealtaine 2017*

*Wednesday, 10 May 2017*

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The Joint Committee met at 9.30 a.m.

### MEMBERS PRESENT:

Deputy Pat Casey,	Senator Victor Boyhan,
Deputy Ruth Coppinger,	Senator Paudie Coffey,
Deputy Eoin Ó Broin,	Senator Jennifer Murnane O'Connor,
Deputy Fergus O'Dowd,	Senator Grace O'Sullivan.

DEPUTY MARIA BAILEY IN THE CHAIR

**Housing in Ireland - Census 2016 Results: Central Statistics Office**

**Chairman:** I welcome from the Central Statistics Office, CSO, Mr. Pádraig Dalton, director general; Mr. Richard McMahon, assistant director general, social and demographic statistics; Mr. Paul Morrin, assistant director general, statistical system co-ordination; Ms Deirdre Cullen, senior statistician, census of population; and Mr. Cormac Halpin, senior statistician, census of population.

By virtue of section 17(2)(l) of the Defamation Act 2009, witnesses are protected by absolute privilege in respect of their evidence to the joint committee. If, however, they are directed by it to cease giving evidence on a particular matter and continue to do so, they are entitled thereafter only to qualified privilege in respect of their evidence. They are directed that only evidence connected with the subject matter of these proceedings is to be given and asked to respect the parliamentary practice to the effect that, where possible, they should not criticise or make charges against any person or an entity by name or in such a way as to make him, her or it identifiable.

Members are reminded of the long-standing parliamentary practice to the effect that they should not comment on, criticise or make charges against a person outside the Houses or an official, either by name or in such a way as to make him or her identifiable.

I invite Mr. Dalton to make his opening statement.

**Mr. Pádraig Dalton:** I thank the Chairman and committee members for inviting representatives of the CSO to appear before them.

On 20 April 2017 the Central Statistics Office, CSO, published a census 2016 thematic report on housing in Ireland. It was the first of a series of 13 reports due to be published in the following eight months. It forms not only an important component of the census results but also acts as an important addition to the full suite of statistics the CSO produces for housing, including 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 had 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 or occupied dwellings had indicated that their home had been built in the previous five years. It should be noted that this increase in stock represents a net gain over the period. Accordingly, it will exclude dwellings which 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, 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 for rents and how they had changed over the five years, with the overall State figure up by 16.8% and in Dublin by 29%. The data also showed that home ownership rates had fallen back to below 1971 levels and stood at 67.6%.

The report included a new analysis of 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 a new analysis of age by tenure and the status of dwellings vacant five years ago, examining whether they were still vacant in 2016.

The methodology used to collect the 2016 census data was the same as that used for 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 24 April and every person and householder 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 not only for 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 the light of the increasing demand for data for housing, the CSO engaged with the Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government and the Housing Agency on providing a new analysis of the reasons dwellings might be vacant. This resulted in a special exercise whereby information from the notes in the enumerator record books was captured and categorised. Data for 57,246 of the 183,312 habitable vacant dwellings were captured. The notes were blank for the remainder. Of these, 10,948 were categorised as being for sale and 10,350 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 for housing stock and vacant dwellings. Data will be provided for some 18,300 small areas and released tomorrow, 11 May, in conjunction with the second of our thematic reports entitled, Population Distribution and Movement. Throughout 2017 the CSO will publish a further ten 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, 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. They are due out in early November. The CSO provides for *ad hoc* queries about census data on an ongoing basis.

In September 2016 the CSO launched a new residential property price index, RPPI, which has been acknowledged as a significant methodological improvement on the original index and comprises individual regional and Dublin administrative area indices, with new indicators for 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. These are compiled from data provided by local authorities and An Bord Pleanála and provide a short-term indicator of potential future construction of houses and apartments.

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 on 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.

**Chairman:** I will take two members and then come back to Mr. Dalton. Usually, we take a larger group but because this is so statistically based, we will take two at a time.

**Senator Victor Boyhan:** I thank the representatives from the CSO for their submission, which makes for very interesting reading. Without data analytics, we cannot fully understand and address the complexity of the housing problem. That is really important. Figures and data do not lie when presented in this manner by the CSO. I acknowledge the infographics. The way in which the CSO has distilled and communicated this information is very helpful and makes it easy for people to understand. One can get lost in the haze of figures. I am not a great man for figures, but what gets measured gets managed. That is a really important line. If we want to understand this fully, we need to know what to measure and the facts and data around that. As such, the CSO has done us and the country a great service. It is an amazing and important organisation. So many decisions, in particular political decisions, are made on an emotional basis rather than on the basis of fact. The more facts we have to address these problems through housing policy, the better equipped we will be to come up with solutions. It is worth saying that.

The recent census figures exposed the State's historically dysfunctional housing policy. We are hopefully in a period of change in terms of addressing the issue but it is important to note the historic position. Looking at the figures, it is clear that the whole scheme has been dysfunctional in the way it has been managed across many sectors, bodies, agencies and local authorities. This has shown up major problems. The census found that there were approximately 250,000 vacant homes in the State, of which 62,000 were vacant holiday homes. That is set out clearly in the CSO's infographic. This is at a time when we have a housing crisis and people living in hotels, hostels and bed-and-breakfast accommodation. What is really interesting when one breaks down the figures in more detail is the fact that total number of vacant dwellings in Dublin, including holiday homes, is approximately 36,000. In real terms, that is in the region of 10% of the available housing stock. It is a staggering figure for the city of Dublin, where we live and in which we are operating. The figure for Leinster is over 90,000. The figure for Munster is 83,000. The figure in Connacht is 52,000 and in the parts of Ulster relevant to the CSO's work it is over 33,000. This is against the background of a situation where over 100,000 people are on the housing lists of the 31 local authorities. That is clearly unacceptable but the issues there are for another day. We are dealing with figures here today rather than detailed policy.

What is the reason for the vacancies? The question relates to the CSO's desktop work and the engagement and site visits of census enumerators who identified rural houses which have been abandoned or boarded up. The CSO provided some statistics, including, for example, the fact that there were 4,165 people in nursing homes. There was another group of 1,469 people in

hospitals. That is very interesting information and a new way of doing business for the CSO as I understand it. How does it glean that sort of information? The enumerator came to my house six times before finding me in. That is a challenge in a small cul-de-sac of 28 houses. I note the categories “for sale”, “deceased”, “vacant long term”, “rental properties”, “renovations”, “new builds”, “boarded up”, “habitable”, “not inhabitable”, and “relatives”. There is a huge amount of information there and it strikes me as a very intense and detailed piece of work. Can Mr. Dalton share with the committee how the CSO pulled all of that together? While I know it is accurate, how was that accuracy assured? That is the most pertinent and important aspect of the CSO’s work to housing policy. I thank the CSO for its input and this very important information.

**Deputy Fergus O’Dowd:** I welcome the representative from CSO and I note the extent to which the organisation’s integrity and professionalism is without challenge. I welcome the data presented.

I wish to deal with the issue of empty homes. The figure for the Dublin city local authorities is 34,000 to 35,000. There are more vacant houses in Dublin than there are in the city of London, which has 20,000 vacant homes according to information published in recent days. There is a huge variation in the number of vacant homes in Dublin in comparison with London. The London rate is 2% to 3% whereas it is much higher here. There is a report in *The Irish Times* this morning to the effect that an auctioneer walking around a nice part of Dublin says that the CSO’s data for the area is wrong. It might be wrong here and there, but it cannot be wrong 31,000 times. However, we need absolute clarity.

According to the data to which I have already referred, there are over 200,000 empty homes in the whole of England. The figure for Ireland is very close to that. There is something hugely amiss if the statistics are correct. The CSO has analysed the reasons for which homes are left empty. I understand that a lot of homes which were buy-to-let are lying empty and that a lot of banks have many empty homes throughout the country. The CSO may not have that data, but it might be able to fine tune the information to give us a figure. Does it have any other interpretation of the huge difference between Britain and Ireland? It is the biggest scandal we have had in this country that so many homes are empty while so many families are sleeping rough and cannot get a roof over their heads. I thank the CSO for bringing clarity to the issue, but I wonder if it can provide us with further analysis.

**Mr. Pádraig Dalton:** I will hand over to Mr. Halpin, who managed the field force and field operation for census 2016, in a moment. On the comment about the accuracy of the vacancy data, it goes back to what I said at the outset. We had 5,000 people working in every part of the country and visiting every single house over a period of ten weeks. We can certainly stand over the methodology we applied to identify vacant houses. Mr. Halpin can provide more detail on that. I am not sure what methodology the individual to whom Deputy O’Dowd referred had for identifying vacant houses.

**Deputy Fergus O’Dowd:** He just walks around saying they are all full.

**Mr. Pádraig Dalton:** We had 5,000 people working around the country and we are quite happy with that. Tomorrow, we will produce vacancy data down at small area level. As such, it will be at a much lower level than the provincial or county-level data published to date. Would Mr. Halpin like to comment on how we identified the vacant houses?

**Mr. Cormac Halpin:** The starting point for the field operation is that we overlay a map



of the country with all of the residential address points taken from the geo-directory, which is recognised as the most comprehensive database of addresses in Ireland. We cut the address points up into manageable work areas of approximately 450 dwellings, which we call “numeration areas”. These are, in essence, the work units for every enumerator we employ. We create enumerator record books which contain a list of each of those 450 dwellings and an accompanying map which goes with the enumerator record book. The essential job of the enumerators is to account for every one of those dwellings in their areas. As such, they are required to visit each. We employ approximately 4,500 enumerators who are each assigned a work area. Enumerators receive a standard training which is provided by both the CSO and their area managers.

Part of that training required enumerators to learn the different definitions we apply to the dwellings in their areas. For a particular dwelling to be deemed to be vacant, it must be habitable. That means it must have a door, a roof, walls and windows. I accept that this might not be a particularly nuanced definition in some senses. This is a ten-week operation. The enumerators are not quantity surveyors. We have to be quite blunt in how we define what is a vacant dwelling. That is consistent across the country. Enumerators are not left to their own devices. They are managed quite closely by their area supervisors and are subject to stringent quality control. Area managers visit a sample of the dwellings that each enumerator has declared to be vacant to ensure they are in fact vacant. An enumerator will call to a dwelling at least three times before declaring it to be vacant. I am glad Senator Boyhan said his enumerator called six times. Our experience is that enumerators call many more than three times, partly because they are incentivised to find people in dwellings. They are paid more to collect census forms than to declare dwellings to be vacant. They visit dwellings suspected of being vacant at least three times. They have the capacity to drop in census forms if they believe dwellings may be vacant. They look out for signs that dwellings might be vacant. For example, post might be building up in the letterbox, there might be no cars in the driveway or windows might not be open. They are also required to visit dwellings after census night to ultimately confirm that the dwelling is vacant. It is not a flippant decision. Quite a lot of rigour goes in before a dwelling is declared to be vacant.

Senator Boyhan asked about the reasons dwellings are vacant. We decided to collate this information almost on the hoof during the processing of the census data. We were mindful of the demand for information. We looked at the notes sections of the enumerator reference books, which I mentioned earlier, to see why dwellings were vacant in 60,000 cases. We coded that information as we do with other information across the census and we produced information on that basis. We labelled it quite clearly in our publication that it was experimental data. This is not something we have done previously. We produced this information because we thought it would meet public demand. We think it is a useful contribution to the public debate on this issue. It is certainly something we will seek to formalise to a greater extent in future censuses. I mentioned earlier that we give enumerators quite clear instructions on how to declare a dwelling to be vacant. Determinations in respect of holiday homes are usually made on foot of local consultation. An enumerator will knock on neighbours’ doors to make an inquiry about a dwelling that is vacant. He or she might be told by a neighbour that a dwelling is occupied by the owner for certain parts of the year. It is only on the basis of such information that an enumerator will declare a dwelling to be a holiday home. Mr. Dalton mentioned several other dwelling statuses. In all such cases, enumerators are given very clear, simple and straightforward instructions to follow before declaring dwellings to fall into one of those categories.

**Deputy Fergus O’Dowd:** Would Ms Cullen like to make a comment on the data?

**Ms Deirdre Cullen:** The CSO first started looking at this data on foot of the 2002 census, which of course was taken during the building boom in Ireland. At that time, I was looking at housing estates going up around our office building in Swords and wondering what was their status. We went through the enumerator record books back then to compile data on vacant dwellings. We handed that data to organisations like the ESRI for particular analysis. We first published those statistics in 2006. There is a series on vacant dwellings in Ireland that goes back to 1991. It shows that as long ago as 1991, some 10% of dwellings were vacant. The committee can see the analysis we have done on vacant dwellings this time around. Even though it was a no-change census, we felt we needed to add value to the data. On that basis, we decided to capture information on dwelling types which we did not have the last time. We can now see data on detached dwellings in rural areas. Tomorrow, the committee will get data on detached dwellings in small areas. That will help us to inform policy makers on these matters. In 1991, some 10% of dwellings were vacant. That figure reached a maximum of 15% in 2006. Now it has fallen back to approximately 12.5%. While the London figures are interesting, I surmise that they come from administrative data because UK censuses are held every ten years.

**Deputy Fergus O'Dowd:** They are official data.

**Ms Deirdre Cullen:** Yes, but they are based on administrative sources. Our data are based on someone knocking on a door and determining that no one is living in the dwelling. If somebody turns the key in the lock before going to England to work for a year, administratively there might appear to be someone living in that house even though it is vacant. The UK data are compiled on a different basis. I doubt they are directly comparable. I suppose that is the comment I would make in that regard.

**Deputy Fergus O'Dowd:** The difference is significant. I think one of the differences with the data for England is that one might have to pay additional council tax if one's house is unoccupied for six months or more. I do not actually know. Could the CSO do a study on it? Could it direct us to an analysis so we might try to understand why there is such a huge difference?

**Mr. Pádraig Dalton:** We can make contact with our colleagues in the UK Office for National Statistics to get information on its methodology-----

**Deputy Fergus O'Dowd:** I would like to try to understand it.

**Mr. Pádraig Dalton:** -----and try to get behind its figures and understand what is its methodology. It is sometimes difficult to make comparisons across different countries. As Ms Cullen has said, there can be differences from one data source to another. Data can come from an administrative source, or from a census that takes an exhaustive approach.

**Deputy Fergus O'Dowd:** I do not doubt the CSO's figures. I think they are very accurate.

**Mr. Pádraig Dalton:** It is the comparison-----

**Deputy Fergus O'Dowd:** The problem seems to arise from the fact that there are no penalties in this country for leaving homes vacant. In the UK, there are such penalties. That is the difference I see.

**Ms Deirdre Cullen:** We can follow that up.

**Deputy Fergus O'Dowd:** I thank the officials for their answers.

**Deputy Eoin Ó Broin:** I thank the representatives of the CSO for their presentation. We

often give officials from Government agencies a hard time when they come before this committee, but on this occasion I join Senator Boyhan in commending the work of the CSO and its staff. I think most of us in here are big fans of the work it does. It certainly assists us in our deliberations. I know from my experience of the last census that the small-area figures are absolutely invaluable to our work as local politicians, policy people and legislators. Many of us are looking forward to getting that information from last year's census.

I commend my local enumerator, who called to me three times. He was very persistent. It is important to mention that I was struck by the degree of professionalism in what he did. It was not a case of somebody filling out a form because he was getting a few euro. He treated the job of the census really seriously as an important piece of public information. That is not only to his credit but also to the credit of the supervisors and the CSO as a whole.

The use of infographics as part of the release of the census information has been brilliant. It is very hard to try to digest the statistics. I also commend the CSO's response to public commentary, including in circumstances when we were not even asking for responses online. As the debate was flowing, some of us were asking rhetorical questions on Twitter and other forms of social media. The manager of the CSO's Twitter account sent out private messages and helpful responses online. I commend the CSO on that.

I would like to ask a couple of questions on the thorny issue of new builds, which has been a hotly debated topic. There is a discrepancy between the figures for the housing stock provided in the CSO returns and those provided by the Department. The CSO's figures suggest that there has been an overall increase of approximately 50,000, whereas the Department's figure is approximately 30,000. I was trying to get my head around that difference in order to understand it. I appreciate that because the census involves self-reporting, people have to say whether they think they are living in a new house. The data from the Department are different. I would be interested to hear the witnesses comment further on that. There is probably a bigger discrepancy between the net increase in stock calculated by the CSO and the flow of new housing that is calculated annually by the Department. I think the CSO calculated a net increase of approximately 8,000 units, whereas the Department calculated that last year's flow of new units was 15,000. I know they are not the same thing, but I think the gap between the flow and the net increase seems to be too big. I wonder whether that is a concern for the CSO. I know its staff are working with the Department and the Housing Agency to try to find a better methodology to get a sense of how many new units are coming on stream. I would be interested to hear the witnesses' thoughts on all of that.

There seems to be a discrepancy between the Department's figures for social housing and the CSO's figures for the same category. I wonder whether that can also be attributed to self-reporting. It is possible that a significant number of people who are living in social housing-supported accommodation, such as that provided under the rental accommodation and housing assistance payment schemes, are reporting it as social housing. I think there is a difference of 10,000 or 20,000 units between the Department's figures and those of the CSO. I am not suggesting that either set of figures is wrong. I think the two bodies are counting differently. I would be interested to know more about that.

One of the most startling revelations in the census figures relates to overcrowding. Almost 10% of the population live in homes with more people than rooms. The legal definition of overcrowding that is set out in section 63 of the Housing Act 1966 has significant legal consequences from an enforcement point of view. I would like to compare the CSO's definition of overcrowding with the definition in the 1966 Act. Do the witnesses consider them to be the



same or to be similar? The only reason I ask is that if they are similar - I am not clear on that from reading the two documents - it would mean 10% of occupied homes out there are potentially in breach of section 63 of the Act and, therefore, the owners are committing an offence. If they are not, I am wondering if there is a value, with future censuses, in having a measure that is similar. The more compatibility between different data sources or definitions, the better. I am interested in that.

I have two questions on vacant dwellings. I have always been interested to know whether the same properties are vacant over long periods or if there is a dynamic element between each census period. Are dwellings falling out and coming into that vacancy area? It is quite an important policy point for us to understand. The other figure that struck me is that 30% of converted flats are vacant, which is a remarkable number. We would clearly expect over-the-shop units in town centres or slightly older houses that might be stuck in probate or the fair deal process to be vacant but I would have thought a large number of converted flats might be newer or newer conversions. Is there any more data on that? The overall vacancy rate is above what it should be but the vacancy rate for converted flats is more than double the standard rate. That is something about which we would like to know more.

**Senator Paudie Coffey:** I thank the delegates from the Central Statistics Office for coming before the committee this morning. I commend the entire agency, as others have done, on its work. The data and analysis produced is critical for policymakers in informing correct and official decisions in the interests of our country. I will focus on a couple of areas.

There is much focus on vacant dwellings because in light of the current housing crisis, it would be logical for us to find ways and mechanisms to ensure those vacant dwellings are taken up in order that people might live in them again. I accept the explanations given with regard to what constitutes a vacant dwelling and perhaps we could focus on that and tease it out further.

I welcome that for the first time, the office has examined the type of vacant dwellings, as that is important, and it noted whether they are detached houses, apartments or other types of dwellings. The witnesses indicate that the enumerators received some training in looking at conditions and how a vacant dwelling is identified. Did the office go as far as to look at whether dwellings are connected to utilities such as electricity, telecoms or other public services? I had reason to do quite a substantial tour of Munster recently and I noticed in rural areas there are many vacant dwellings that to the eye look uninhabitable. Where do they fall into the analysis carried out by the office? There is also the location of vacant dwellings and I accept that the census indicates which are rural and which are urban. It seems there are many more vacant dwellings in rural areas. Will the witnesses confirm if that is the case? Since the previous census in 2011, has there been a shift towards more habitation in towns and villages than in rural areas? I would be interested to see the comparison in that regard.

How the information is shared is very important in terms of informing future decisions relating to proper planning. The witnesses indicated that the office shares much information with the Housing Agency, which is welcome. That must happen in order to identify the future housing needs of particular demographics. I presume the office looks at future household size and needs, as well as current family formation numbers, including how many children are in a family and how that will convert to future need in the next ten, 20 or 30 years. By extension, does the office share information with the planning authorities, including regional authorities? The national planning framework is being drafted at present. Is there sharing of information in respect of decisions that might be made as a result of planning decisions and future development plans? If that happens, how long has the sharing of data with, for example, the Housing

Agency or regional authorities been happening? Is this a new departure or has the office been doing it for a number of years or decades? It is important that there is ongoing proactive interaction between the office and those various authorities to inform proper decision-making on planning, infrastructure investment and meeting the housing need we all know exists.

These are my areas of focus with the representatives from the Central Statistics Office. I visit the office's website regularly. It is a major asset for any citizen, school, academic or others in the country. There is a raft of information on it and I welcome the way it is portrayed in an easily accessible way. That is important to note. The more accessible the statistics from the office are for the citizen, the better in general.

**Mr. Pádraig Dalton:** I will try to answer some of Deputy Ó Broin's questions if I can. His final question concerned the dynamic nature of vacant dwellings and that is absolutely the case. We produced statistics in the report indicating that 105,000 dwellings which were vacant in 2011 were occupied in 2016. We have some additional data on that and Ms Cullen might give some more details on it.

**Deputy Eoin Ó Broin:** Is there data for the other way around? I am interested in dwellings becoming vacant as opposed to becoming occupied.

**Mr. Pádraig Dalton:** Yes, we have that as well and Ms Cullen can get into the detail. With the other questions, in a sense it is about comparing data from the census with administrative data sources. As the Deputy highlighted, it is always difficult to compare data from different sources, whether it is an administrative data source, a survey or a census. The census was not designed to produce statistics on new builds or connections. One of the figures focused on by people is that of 33,000, which is the increase in the number of occupied dwellings built between 2011 and 2016. That, of course, excludes vacant dwellings that would have been built between 2011 and 2016. The other issue to note is there were 114,000 households where we did not get any information from the householder as to when the property was built. For that reason, we do not try to collect, or purport to collect, information on new builds, connections or completions. It is not the focus of the census as we do not have the information to allow us to do it. The figures of the Central Statistics Office and the Department measure two different things.

**Deputy Eoin Ó Broin:** Would it be fair to say that the difference between the 30,000-odd or the 50,000-odd are the people who did not respond to the census and vacant new builds? Is that essentially what is being said?

**Mr. Pádraig Dalton:** It is certainly potentially one of the explanations but we do not have access to the data source being used by the Department, nor are we familiar with its methodology. We are not really in a position to comment on the differences between its figure and ours. All we can say is the 33,000 figure excludes vacant dwellings built between 2011 and 2016, and there are also 114,000 households where we did not get information. It would be naive of us to assume none of those was built between 2011 and 2016. That captures some of the Deputy's questions. The Deputy answered the social housing issue himself. It is a self-completion question and if a householder is in receipt of support, perhaps from the State, he or she may well describe himself or herself as living in social housing. It is very difficult for us to determine how the householder perceived that particular status. It could be part of the difference between the two. I do not know if the overcrowding issue is in line with the legislative requirement. Perhaps the other witnesses know but if we do not, we can come back to the Deputy on it.

Senator Coffey mentioned the sharing of data. The Central Statistics Office shares data

but only at an aggregate level. We never provide information at an individual level, whether it relates to an individual household or person. It is important to put that on record. One of the principles of the office is equality of access. As a result, everything we publish we put into the public domain so it is accessible for absolutely everybody to research. We do that through the StatBank and small-area population statistics. It is there for all, including planning authorities, etc., to see. We engage with the Housing Agency and the local authorities and we receive many demands from a broad range of institutions that would be involved with a broad range of policy issues and not just housing; they would take in health and education as well. We undertake bespoke analysis and, again, the data is at aggregate level for those. If we feel it is in the public interest, we can put data into the public domain and we do so in many cases. We do a lot of bespoke analysis and have been doing that since before I joined the CSO, which was 26 years ago. We share data but only at an aggregate level.

Mr. Halpin will answer the question on whether vacant dwellings are connected to public services and whether they are habitable or uninhabitable. There is a clear shift from rural to urban living, which has been going on for a number of years and on which we published details in the censuses of 2016 and 2011.

**Ms Deirdre Cullen:** I thank the members for their complimentary comments about the census. It is always nice to be acknowledged for one's work.

Mr. Dalton covered Deputy Ó Broin's question on the two different figures for new builds. Householders self-report and the Department has acknowledged that its figure of 50,000 is not necessarily for new builds. There is a reconnection component which means we are not comparing like with like. We have had to explain the increase of 8,000 in stock. It is a net increase and there is always obsolescence in the housing market. I am surrounded by many pages of numbers, which is testimony to the amount of data we produce. The 2011 census showed 150,000 dwellings built prior to 1911 but now it is 141,000, so 9,000 are missing from that year-build category alone. Our enumerators see an old cottage with a new bungalow down by the gate and make a determination as to whether it is habitable. As time goes on, some come out of the housing stock.

There are explanatory notes at the back of the forms relating to the HAP and RAS schemes. People are given instructions for cases where their landlord is private but people do not always read instructions. The definition of overcrowding which we use is a UN, internationally recognised one that looks at whether there are more persons than rooms. We will have a look at the section 23 definition again and, perhaps, do another little bit of work on that.

On the churn in vacant properties, we looked at dwellings which were vacant in 2011 but occupied this time around. There were originally 105,000 and 65,000 were vacant five years later. We produced a thematic map, which is on the website and where one can click on the different areas. One can see the darker colours on the eastern seaboard - they indicate where the churn is. Tomorrow, data will come out on how many of the 183,000 vacant dwellings were occupied five years ago. We have also looked at the household composition of those dwellings, the age of the householder, the year they were built and a whole range of things.

Details at small-area level on the 30,000 properties converted to flats will be available tomorrow. We need more data to be able to understand it. The population increased by 3.8% but the urban population increased by 4.9%, with the rural population increasing by 2%. Large towns with 10,000 or more people increased by 6.6%. Cork city grew at a faster rate than Cork county and Galway city grew at a faster rate than Galway county. Two very large tables will

come out tomorrow which show the population of every town and village in Ireland between 2011 and 2016. They will also show the urban-rural divide and the population by area, which is one of our most important outputs. This will be the second of our thematic releases and it relates to population distribution and movements.

We were asked about our engagement with the Housing Agency. The topic of housing and the importance of data have landed on the public agenda in the past year. We reached out to the Department and have engaged with the Housing Agency, whose members have been out with us. Tomorrow, we will put out the results of our engagement with the agency and we will see how we can best serve their needs, without handing record data to them, which we are forbidden to do. The engagement has been more intense over the past six to nine months and that is normal as the topic has become more important. We do not cross-check any of the census data with administrative data except at a very aggregate and high level. We do not cross-check with the ESB or utility connections. We publish the data people give us - we do not second-guess whether somebody is divorced, whether they are Roman Catholic, etc. We observe, capture and report data.

**Senator Paudie Coffey:** Every member of the committee is focused on vacant dwellings. We understand that there is a big demand for housing and we want to exploit the potential to assist in that. It is important that the CSO only publish aggregate data but in the interests of accuracy, would it be appropriate to define a habitable dwelling? It is already defined by Revenue by property tax so would it be possible to collaborate with Revenue, in the interests of accuracy and at an aggregate level, to see what it collects for habitable dwelling versus what the CSO records show? If there is a serious difference or mismatch it might require more focus. I commend Deputy O'Dowd on bringing forward legislation to incentivise people to bring vacant houses back into the stock because this will become very important for public policy making and legislation. We are trying to utilise the information the CSO has collected in a way that will benefit the public through the provision of housing.

**Mr. Pádraig Dalton:** The CSO is very conscious of the need to provide the best evidence possible to inform decision-making. Mr. Paul Morrin is the newly appointed assistant director general for statistical co-ordination and he is working directly with the Department to look at all available data sources. One of the strengths of the CSO is cross-referencing and linking multiple data sources. We have noticed the fragmented nature of the data sources and there is significant difficulty in linking the various sources together because we lack the data infrastructure to identify the same house across individual data sources. This is a key problem for us. One of the answers is to ensure we capture the Eircode postcode in all available data sources so that we can pull together the data on house A with the same house on a different data source. Individual data sources are of value but when one combines them their value increases significantly. Some 50% of our outputs are now blended outputs, where data linkage has been done.

Mr. Morrin and his team will look at the available data sources, not just in respect of housing but beyond, in education and other areas. We will spend time assessing the sources to see what value can be added by linking certain sources with others. We see ourselves not as producers of data but as producers of insight and evidence. Increasingly, national statistical institutes around the globe are shifting their mindsets from the production of statistics to the production of insight, because statistics are not relevant without insight. A key part of that is linking data sources, which requires national data infrastructure to be in place. It is a long road and our experience of developing administrative data sources for statistical purposes is that it takes time and a lot of intensive work and resources. We are now growing the resources and are devoting

a team to this block of work. We will look at all opportunities to improve the range of insight and evidence available for policymakers who are trying to get behind the statistics.

**Mr. Cormac Halpin:** Senator Coffey asked about vacant dwellings. I outlined the methodology we give to enumerators to define a vacant dwelling. It was agreed to prior to the 2011 census with a group of expert users of the data. As I mentioned, the census is a ten week operation. To an extent, the nuance we can collect on vacant dwellings is somewhat limited. While I would certainly “never say never” in terms of the methodology used, it strikes me that it might be difficult to find out if some vacant dwellings are connected to a utility. It is certainly something at which we can look in the context of ongoing methodological improvements before 2021. It has not been done in the past largely because of the time pressures on enumerators to do what they have to do in terms of the collection of data. To a certain extent, there is an impetus on us to keep their instructions straightforward in order that we obtain consistent data throughout the entire country. There is value in the broader suite of data which we referenced. There would be value in looking at including something like this. It is certainly something at which we can look in the context of future methodology.

**Deputy Pat Casey:** I thank the CSO for the information it provides for us. Without the facts and data provided, it would be very hard to make decisions. I have taken a number of points from the information provided.

Home ownership is at its lowest level since 1971, while average household size has increased for the first time since 1966. The average age of home owners is also increasing. There is a movement towards rental accommodation in urban centres as the main source of accommodation. There are one or two other interesting figures, specifically that there has been an increase of 270% in the number of holiday homes in Dublin city centre. We all know about the advent of Airbnb and how it is impacting on the housing market. We will probably need to look at it a little more closely.

We are all coming back to vacant properties. The figure for converted flats is 30% and for apartments, 13.5%. We hope that in dealing with the housing crisis there will offer easy win solutions. What is interesting about the statistics - this is why it is fantastic to have them - is that the CSO has been able to break down the vacancies into various categories. Almost 45% of vacant properties are in rural areas, outside small towns. This might make it more difficult to get our hands on them and convert them. The CSO was able to assign a reason for vacancy to more than 30% of properties. The enumerators were able to obtain this information. When we exclude rural areas - the figures would distort other trends - the reasons are almost the same, with variations of 1.5% to 2%, in city centre areas, small and large towns. This gives us a great indication as to the reasons houses are vacant and how we can tackle the issue.

I thank the CSO for the information provided which is critical in enabling us to make decisions. I do not know whether we can extrapolate information from the data and assign reasons for vacancy to the other 70% of properties. That might be a step too far. My background is working in a hotel and we used to dread census night. It was an absolute nightmare. Thankfully, I did not have to do it last year. Is the number of families living in hotels recorded in the census?

**Deputy Ruth Coppinger:** The census data are invaluable and not only for housing. They also show major social trends such as those being discussed in the case of religion. On housing, it is worth drawing out a couple of trends and statistics and drawing conclusions from them. Otherwise, why are we in the housing committee discussing them?



There are more than 245,000 vacant units. This figure represents approximately 10% of the housing stock, if we leave out holiday homes, this at a time when we have the biggest homelessness and housing crisis in the State. It obviously developed in the five years before the census. The population has increased by approximately 4%, but the total housing stock has only increased by 0.4%. Half of all housing has been built in rural areas, in other words, not where it is really needed.

The reasons for vacancies that the enumerators tried to draw out are interesting. I assume the reason most units were vacant could not be ascertained because the owners were not present, particularly on large estates. We have to conclude in also looking at Housing Agency figures that the reason there are these vacancies has much to do with hoarding by developers and NAMA which are waiting for house prices to rise again. Obviously, the CSO does not have this data and I would not expect it to have them. That is the only conclusion that can be drawn based on other discussions we have had at this and in the housing and homelessness committee established last summer.

The fall in the number of young households and the increasing age and size of households are issues I raised in the Dáil several weeks ago with the Minister with responsibility for housing. I had noticed the trend. One would have to say this is no country for young people. The number of home owners aged from 25 to 34 years has fallen by almost 100,000 in five years. As has been said, household size has increased for the first time in 50 years. So much for the home-owning loving Irish people. In fact, 30% of all occupied housing stock is rented accommodation. This means that the rental market is huge and, according to the data, mainly confined to urban areas. The number of mortgages fell by 24% in five years

The rent rises are interesting. It confirms what we have seen anecdotally when dealing with homeless people in Dublin West and elsewhere. The biggest rises were in Dublin city and, not surprisingly, the Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown local authority area. I know people who live in that area where houses are being rented for €2,000 or more a month. In my area of Fingal rents have risen by 22.8% in five years, at a time when people's incomes were being slashed through pension-related deductions or the universal social charge. We can see the misery being heaped on them.

The conclusion we have to draw as a committee, if we want action, is that the Government utterly failed to act throughout the five years on three levels. It did nothing to stop rents from escalating; it did nothing to intervene to build houses for those decimated by the housing crisis by giving local authorities money, and it allowed most of the vacant dwellings to remain vacant for five years. It seems little or no attempt has been made to buy these units at knockdown prices, although I know that efforts have been made by some local authorities. Was it not a great opportunity for the Government to acquire them in whatever way it could? Now there is a discussion about incentivising people to release them in order that homeless persons or those who need them can actually live in them. For five years or more the people concerned have held onto them. Yesterday on radio the Minister of State with responsibility for housing spoke about giving carrots to have them released. It is past time when a vacant house tax should be imposed to stop people from holding onto valuable accommodation at a time when there is a housing crisis-----

**Chairman:** I am not going to stop the Deputy, but the representatives of the CSO will not be able to answer many of the questions she is asking.

**Deputy Ruth Coppinger:** I know that, but we are not having an academic discussion. I am

speaking about the housing committee using the information provided.

**Chairman:** I am not cutting off the Deputy, I am just letting her know that the representatives will probably not be able to answer some of the points raised.

**Deputy Ruth Coppinger:** I am discussing the matter with everybody on the committee. I want to make this point because I do not want to hear again about Airbnb causing the housing crisis; talk about clutching at straws. The reasons there is a housing crisis are the three reasons I have outlined. Nothing has been done about rent, nothing is being built and the vacant units are being allowed to sit there. Airbnb is completely and utterly irrelevant in the whole equation. There is no Airbnb in Fingal or Blanchardstown because it is hardly a tourism destination but it is the area with the biggest housing emergency in the State. Most of the homeless people come from such areas. Throwing up straw men is not helpful.

My final question relates to Traveller accommodation. Perhaps the witnesses do not have the information but if they have I would welcome it. We know from the figures that Traveller-specific accommodation has not been built by local authorities and I wonder what has been found in that regard in the census.

**Senator Jennifer Murnane O'Connor:** I agree with previous speakers. Most of what I was going to say has been said. I am interested in the 84,000 fewer homes headed by persons aged 35 years or younger in 2016 compared with 2011. That is a massive issue because younger people now are either still emigrating or they just cannot afford to buy a house. Local authorities have increased the number of houses they rent. They are renting more houses since 2011 than was ever the case previously. There is an increase of more than 500,000 people renting properties. That is a massive issue.

Some members have called for a property tax but when one looks at nearly 90,000 vacant houses in rural areas, many of them have just been closed up because people have emigrated as they cannot afford to stay in this country. There are not as many vacant houses in urban areas as people are living in cities where they can find work and pay bills. How does one protect people in rural areas who through no fault of their own find themselves in a housing crisis and have had to either emigrate or hand back their keys? What can we do? We have to make sure there is balance.

This information is crucial. We are in a homeless crisis and it is very hard to define it, but it is telling when one can say there are 245,000 vacant homes and properties. We also need to ensure that local authorities, through all the various agencies, gain from this, whether that is by means of disseminating this crucial information to local authorities, housing committees and the various bodies. We must consider how we use the information and ensure that most of the houses are either given back to local authorities or used by various bodies so that people can gain access to housing.

As other speakers have said, how are we going to ensure people are not paying so much money for rental properties when there are so many vacant properties that could be renovated but there are no penalties on local authorities to renovate houses? A law must be introduced in that regard given that there are 245,000 vacant properties. We do not have sufficient measures in place. We are not introducing sufficient measures. A balance is required. Something must be put in place to help people, including in rural areas, who are in need through no fault of their own. I am not aware of the scheme in England but we must introduce some measures.

**Chairman:** The CSO witnesses will not be able to answer that question for the Senator. Does she wish to make any other points?

**Senator Jennifer Murnane O'Connor:** No. I again thank the witnesses for the very good information but we must ensure that it is utilised and that we get the best outcome for people who are homeless or in vulnerable situations.

**Chairman:** I have a couple of brief questions as much of what I intended to ask has already been said. The 2011 census was more focused on unemployment figures than vacant houses as that was our biggest concern. The figures are very stark and that is probably the reason the figures for mortgages are down as are the number of people under 35 who buy their home. We did not foresee that the housing crisis would follow on from the unemployment crisis.

Deputy Coppinger mentioned rent prices in Dún Laoghaire and I will not get into a conversation about it but as someone who was on the local authority in that area for many years, we were starved of local government funding prior to 2011. I know the witnesses cannot answer that but the money was not there after that either to give to local authorities to build. We must be factual about the state we were in in 2011.

I very much welcome the statistics and information the witnesses have given us today. Like many committee colleagues I had a couple of visits from the enumerator and I probably did not have the census form filled out in time. I left it to my husband which I probably should not have done. I very much welcome the manner of the person who did come to my house. An exceptionally professional service was provided on behalf of the CSO. We are very quick to criticise and very slow to thank but the committee members have all praised the manner in which the organisation has conducted its census business.

We have had the Department in before us countless times and I know it is working with DPER on homes that are vacant, possibly due to the fair deal scheme, where there are deceased family members or the family home is going through various processes. It is interesting to have the figures before us. As policy makers, that is something we can work towards and help out in that area given the substantial number of homes that are vacant due to the fair deal scheme, mainly in Dublin but possibly throughout the country. A number of questions have been asked and then I will allow a couple of more speakers to come back in.

**Mr. Pádraig Dalton:** Members have all articulated the value of the census data which have highlighted the changing nature of our society, with a particular focus on housing. That is one of the real values of the information. We cannot comment on the debate the information has started and the reason for some of those things as that is outside of our remit. We try to provide as much insight as we can but we cannot veer into commentary on policy or anything of that nature.

I will take a few questions and deal with them briefly and then I will hand over to Ms Cullen to speak about holiday homes. Percentage increases can be very large on low volumes and the volume of vacant houses in Dublin is relatively low. If one gets any increase on a low number it seems like a very high percentage increase, but that is not to say it is not a high increase percentage-wise but members should be conscious of the volume side.

We have already produced data on Travellers and we will produce more. Ms Cullen will provide more detail on that. I invite her to go into some of the detail on the statistical side.

**Ms Deirdre Cullen:** With regard to extrapolating, we collected data for approximately

57,000 of the 183,000 dwellings and the question was whether one could extrapolate that out. We deliberately did not do that. The notes were taken by the enumerators to assist them with their work. They wrote themselves notes to say, for example, that they should call back on Thursday at 2 p.m. or they took the householder's phone number, as members will attest. Householders engaged with their enumerator. Sometimes, if the enumerator could not get an answer he or she spoke to the neighbour and jotted it down in the book but we do not know what the blank panels mean and so we deliberately did not extrapolate out from that. I would be wary of doing that.

With regard to holiday homes, as Mr. Dalton said, one should be careful of percentage increases. The determination of a holiday home would clearly be easier to do in Courtown, Westport or Achill Island, it is harder to do in Dublin city centre. Country people can have holiday homes in Dublin in the same way Dublin people can have holiday homes down the country and so one relies on information from neighbours. That said, we have seen an increase and there is no doubt part of that is due to Airbnb. It is there and we are aware of it.

In regard to Deputy Coppinger's comment about hoarding, the data we are bringing out tomorrow will enable local authorities to zone in on where the vacancy is and whether dwellings are detached, semi-detached, terraced, apartments or whatever else. That will be down to street level - as good as. A small area will have 100 dwellings and people will be able to zoom in very quickly. The digital boundaries for those small areas are going up tomorrow as well. People who can manipulate the data will be able to zone in and get the data. That is as far as we can go. In terms of Deputy Coppinger's comment on hoarding, we cannot surmise.

We did put up data about Blacklion as part of the report and that was just a flavour of the type of data we can produce. People then went out and walked the streets of Blacklion and they could see the new houses up there that nobody was living in so I presume local housing officers will continue that work.

**Mr. Pádraig Dalton:** One of the interesting things about our enumerators is that we get a lot of repeat enumerators who have done multiple censuses and that is a real value to us because it builds up an expertise. They did a very professional job in difficult circumstances. Knocking on doors is not an easy job.

**Senator Paudie Coffey:** Tell us about it.

**Senator Jennifer Murnane O'Connor:** It is the electric gates in rural Ireland-----

**Mr. Pádraig Dalton:** Perhaps the Senators will sign up as enumerators the next time, given their expertise in that regard. All of the field staff did a fantastic job, as did the staff in Swords. Collecting the data is the critical part of the process. Turning it into insights is the job of Mr. McMahon, Mr. Halpin and Ms Cullen and all of the staff in Swords. They are working flat out at the minute to complete the very challenging dissemination programme and to get everything out by the end of December. As the director general of the CSO, I want to thank all of the field staff and all of my own staff who are doing a fantastic job.

**Ms Deirdre Cullen:** Regarding the Traveller community, profile No. 6 is coming out on 12 October and that will have a profile of the Traveller population in terms of level of education, marital status, health, disability and so on. It will contain the full set of data that we produced in 2011. Our publication schedule is on our website for those who are interested. The aforementioned profile will also include information on tenure and accommodation. There is also some

Traveller information at the back of this report. It contains some high-level Traveller data.

**Mr. Cormac Halpin:** I would like to go back to Deputy Casey's point on homeless families, if I may. In census 2011 and census 2016 we put in a lot of effort, along with a lot of the key stakeholders including the Department, the Dublin Regional Homeless Executive, the local authorities and homeless service providers to count homeless people as part of the census. In census 2016 we had special enumerators who went into hotels where we knew there were homeless people living. It is correct to say that we have not produced the data to date but we will be producing a dedicated release on homelessness in August. As part of that, we will release information on the number of families in homeless accommodation that were enumerated. As with every census release, we will try to be as detailed as we can but issues of disclosure and the maintenance of confidentiality would prevent us going into extremely granular detail. That said, we are very aware of the interest in that data and we will address it in the report.

**Deputy Fergus O'Dowd:** One of the issues highlighted by the census data is the increase in the number of adult children living at home. The fact that adults in their 20s and 30s are still living with their parents is another indication of the housing crisis. There has been a significant increase in that cohort which highlights the problem to which my colleagues have referred, namely, that people cannot rent accommodation. I am not talking about people who are married but about single people who are being driven out of the cities because of rent increases. Despite the rent controls that are in place, Airbnb is creating a huge problem. I have personal knowledge of four adults living in a house in Dublin who were paying the average rent. The landlord opted for Airbnb and their rent doubled overnight. They were told they could either pay double the rent or bugger off and they had to leave. Airbnb is significantly distorting the rental market for single people in Dublin, so many of whom are not able to rent accommodation. They have good jobs but they cannot live near their workplaces. I agree with everything that was said about empty homes, taxation and so forth but we must not ignore the Airbnb problem.

In terms of the debate about an empty home tax, I would suggest that such a tax be limited to the designated rent pressure zones. In that way, people who own properties in remote rural areas that have not seen any population growth would not have a difficulty. We also need to consider rural resettlement. There are many rural towns that have infrastructure in place and vacant properties available. People might like to move there if, by way of Government policy, there were jobs available. In that way we would have inward population and inward investment. We must change our strategy for tackling the issue of depopulation in rural Ireland, particularly in the West. The data being provided by the CSO is very important in that context.

Finally, as a student of history I loved looking at the 1911 census returns and finding out about my grandparents and great grandparents. I think the next census after 1911 was in 1926. When will we be able to read the data contained therein? Are any of the witnesses here today in charge of that?

**Mr. Pádraig Dalton:** The census data is released 100 years after it is collected so the 1926 data will be released in 2026. That is set down in legislation-----

**Deputy Fergus O'Dowd:** There is a strong argument for earlier release, as I understand it.

**Mr. Pádraig Dalton:** One of the things we discussed here this morning is the value of official statistics. At the time of the 1926 census when the data was collected, the guarantee that was given to householders was that the data would never be disclosed. That was changed, with the introduction of the Statistics Act in 1993, to strike a balance between genealogy and



confidentiality. The balance that was struck at that time was the 100-year rule and with good reason. One of the reasons people comply with the requirement to provide data to the CSO is our guarantee on confidentiality. If we breach the trust of our respondents we put in jeopardy the type of data that members have all welcomed here this morning. The law has been changed once on this issue. First of all respondents were told that their data would never be given; now it will be given after 100 years. We cannot change that again - once can be seen as a one-off incident but twice would be seen as the emergence of a trend in terms of the dilution of the guarantee on confidentiality. We are always treading that line between the need to provide as much information as possible while at the same time protecting the confidentiality of our respondents. As I said, it was agreed in 1993 when the Statistics Act was being debated that the appropriate balance was 100 years.

**Deputy Fergus O'Dowd:** I accept that but what is custom and practice in other countries?

**Mr. Pádraig Dalton:** It varies from country to country but generally if one changes the legislation, one does not apply it retrospectively. For example, if we agreed now to change it and to release the data after 75 years, that would only apply from 2021 forward. To do it retrospectively is to change the goalposts.

**Deputy Fergus O'Dowd:** Fair enough.

**Chairman:** Are there any further questions? Would the witnesses like to add anything further before we wrap up?

**Mr. Pádraig Dalton:** No.

**Chairman:** On behalf of the committee I thank the witnesses from the CSO for attending today. Everyone will agree that it was a very in-depth and fascinating meeting. All of the members of this committee love data and statistics. I also thank the CSO for the level of detail in the documentation provided to us prior to the meeting. The witnesses could probably tell that we all actually read it. I thank everyone for their attendance and look forward to the next follow-up meeting.

The joint committee meeting adjourned at 11 a.m. until 9.30 a.m. on Wednesday, 18 May 2017.