Northern Ireland Housing Executive

Introduction

1. This paper presents preliminary findings from the 2011 House Condition Survey. The 2011 Survey was completed using mobile field computers. This technology was first employed for the 2009 HCS and was reviewed and enhanced for 2011. Benefits achieved by moving to the e-form include administrative efficiencies in the collection of data, an improvement in data quality and a faster turn-around of survey results. Key stock findings are presented here four months after the fieldwork was completed.

Survey Objectives

a. To provide a comprehensive picture of the dwelling stock and its condition in 2011 and to provide modelled District Council level figures (these will be produced in conjunction with the 2011 Census and will be available in 2013);
b. To facilitate a comparative analysis of housing conditions in Northern Ireland with other parts of the UK;
c. To examine the association between dwelling conditions and the social and economic circumstances of households;
d. To examine changes in the condition of the stock over time in terms of key Government measures: Decent Homes and the Housing Health and Safety Rating Standard (HHSRS);
e. To examine the role of renovations including those funded by home improvement grants in improving housing conditions;
f. To provide a reliable assessment of the energy efficiency of the stock and the level of Fuel Poverty in Northern Ireland on a comparable basis with the rest of the UK.

The objectives have remained broadly consistent with those in the last four Surveys (2001, 2004, 2006 and 2009).

Preliminary Findings

2. The following section draws out some of the more important preliminary findings of the 2011 House Condition Survey in relation to the stock as a whole and dwelling unfitness. Findings in relation to disrepair, Decent Homes, SAP, Fuel Poverty and HHSRS will emerge over the next 6 months. The tendering process for this modelling work was completed in February 2012 and the contract has been awarded to the Building Research Establishment (BRE) in London. BRE have a track record in HCS modelling work, not only in Northern Ireland but also in England, Scotland and Wales. BRE is also working in partnership with the Housing Executive to develop regression models which will enable Northern Ireland level data to be disaggregated to District Council level.

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Northern Ireland’s Dwelling Stock and Tenure

3. In 2011 Northern Ireland’s total dwelling stock was approximately 760,000, a net increase of 20,000 (10,000 per annum) since 2009. This represents a slightly lower rate of growth than for the decade as a whole and reflects the lower number of dwelling completions in the period after the end of the housing boom.

Table 1: Tenure showing vacants by tenure 2011

	Total Stock	Vacant	(%)
Owner occupied	498,600 (65.6%)	29,500 (54.0%)	5.9
Private Rented & Other	144,500 (19.0%)	19,100 (34.8%)	13.2
Housing Executive	88,400 (11.6%)	2,500 (4.5%)	2.8
Housing Association	28,500 (3.7%)	3,600 (6.7%)	[1]12.8
Total	**760,000 (100.0)**	**54,700 (100.0)**	**7.2**

Table 2 Tenure excluding vacants 2006-2011

	2006 (%)		2009 (%)		2011 (%)	
Owner occupied	468,800	66.5	461,800	62.4	469,100	61.7
Private Rented & Other	80,800	11.5	124,600	16.8	125,500	16.5
Housing Executive	93,400	13.3	85,650	11.6	85,900	11.3
Housing Association	21,500	3.1	24,550	3.3	24,800	3.3
Vacant	40,400	5.7	43,400	5.9	54,700	7.2
Total	**705,000**	**100**	**740,000**	**100**	**760,000**	**100**

Tables 1 and 2 show the following changes from 2006 to 2011:

a. The number and proportion (62%) of owner occupied dwellings has remained broadly the same.
b. The number and proportion of private rented sector dwellings have also remained broadly the same as 2009 at around 17%. If vacant properties whose previous tenure was private rented, are included, the figure rises to 144,500 (19%).

[1] This figure is not statistically valid (S.E.= +/- 9.8%) because of the small number of Housing Association properties in the sample.

c. The numbers and percentage of tenanted social dwellings have remained similar between 2009 (110,200: 14.9%) and 2011(110,700: 14.6%).
d. The 2011 HCS shows a continued steady increase in the total number of vacant properties between 2009 and 2011. Approximately 43,400 properties were vacant in 2009 rising to 54,700 in 2011, giving a total increase of 11,300 in two years. The vacancy rate has risen from 5.9 per cent in 2009 to 7.2 per cent in 2011. A high vacancy rate is particularly evident in the private rented sector where approximately 19,000 properties (13.2%) are vacant.

Dwelling Age

Table 3: Northern Ireland's Dwelling Stock by Age

	2009 (%)		2011 (%)	
Pre 1919	106,500	14.4	87,700	11.5
1919-44	78,200	10.6	68,100	9.0
1945-64[2]	125,100	16.9	134,000	17.6
1965-80	181,800	24.6	169,500	22.3
1981-90	86,300	11.7	94,500	12.4
Post 1990	162,100	21.9	206,200	27.1

Table 3 confirms the following:
a. The continuing decline in the proportion of the stock built before 1919 from; 14.4% in 2009 to 11.5% in 2011. As in 2009, there is a disproportionately high percentage of these older dwellings in the private rented sector (14.6% of all dwellings in this sector were built before 1919 compared to 10.0% for the owner-occupied sector). More than one-third (36.0%) of all vacant properties were also built before 1919.
b. The increase in the post-1990 dwelling stock as a result of the new construction (less demolitions, closures and conversions) an increase of 44,100 dwellings 2009-2011.

[2] The apparent increase in the number of dwellings built between 1945 and 1964 and 1981 and 1990 is the result of minor statistical distortions which result from sample surveys and the difficulties surveyors sometimes have in the field allocating dwellings to relatively narrow age bands.

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Dwelling Location

The 2011 HCS highlights a number of trends:

a. The continued growth in the number of dwellings in District and other towns since 2001. The number and proportion in 2001 was 192,700 (29.8%) increasing to 238,400 (32.2%) in 2009 and again to 261,000 (34.3%) in 2011.
b. The continued increase in the number of dwellings in smaller rural settlements 2009 to 2011, although the proportions have remained similar at around 16 per cent. Also, the number of dwellings in isolated rural areas shows a decrease between 2009 and 2011, although again proportions are fairly similar at around 15 per cent.

Dwelling Unfitness

4. In 2011 there were an estimated 35,200 unfit dwellings in Northern Ireland, representing a headline rate of 4.6 per cent. This is similar to the unfitness rate ten years ago in 2001 (4.9%: 31,600). Unfitness declined between 2001 and 2009 reaching a low of 2.4 per cent in 2009 (17,500 properties). The 2011 HCS shows a small increase in unfitness which reflects the current economic environment, the higher rate of vacancy, particularly in the private sector, and the reduced availability of home improvement grants.

Table 5: Northern Ireland's dwelling stock – unfitness by tenure

	2009	(%)	2011	(%)
Owner-occupied	4,400	0.9	4,600	1.0%
Private rented	2,700	2.2	2,500	2.0%
Housing Executive	50	0.1	100	0.2%
Housing Association	50	0.2	0	0%
Vacant	10,300	23.8	28,000	51.2%
Total	**17,500**	**2.4**	**35,200**	**4.6%**

Table 6: Northern Ireland's dwelling stock – unfitness by tenure

	Occupied	Occupied Unfit	Vacant	Vacant Unfit	Total
Owner occupied	469,100 (66.5%)	4,600 (1.0%)	29,500 (54.0%)	18,700 (63.4%)	23,300
Private Rented & Other	125,500 (17.8%)	2,500 (1.9%)	19,100 (34.8%)	6,700 (35.1%)	9,200
Housing Executive	85,900 (12.2%)	100 (0.1%)	2,500 (4.5%)	500 (20.0%)	600
Housing Association	24,800 (3.5%)	0 (0%)	3,600 (6.7%)	2,100 (58.3%)	2,100

Table 5 shows that since 2009 unfitness has remained unchanged in the **occupied** owner-occupied, private rented and social sectors. Table 6 shows that unfitness is associated with vacancy, particularly in the private sector.

a. Unfitness is increasingly associated with vacancy. The proportion of vacant dwellings recorded as unfit in 2011 (51%: 28,000) is higher than the 2001 figure of 44 per cent (14,000). The rate of unfitness in vacant dwellings declined to a low of 24 per cent (10,300) in 2009. The substantial increase in the rate of unfitness in vacant dwellings to 51 per cent in 2011 is largely due to an increase in the number of properties described as vacant 'being modernised'.
b. Overall, the proportion of unfit dwellings which are vacant has risen from 59 per cent in 2009 to 80 per cent in 2011. As would be expected most unfit dwellings (18,500; 52%) were built before 1919. This compares to 48 per cent (8,500) in 2009. A further 17 per cent of unfit dwellings in 2011 were built between 1919 and 1944, compared to 18 per cent in 2009.

Summary

5. The 2011 House Condition Survey confirms the changing tenure structure of Northern Ireland's housing stock with one in six dwellings now in the private rented sector. It also confirms the trend of a higher vacancy rate in the private rented sector, with 13 per cent of this sector lying vacant. Numbers show an increase between 2009 and 2011 from 17,500 to 19,100.

6. Headline unfitness had reduced to 2.4 per cent in 2009, but as vacancy has increased so has unfitness. The unfitness rate in 2011 was estimated at 4.6 per cent. The rate of unfitness in the **occupied** private and social sectors was fairly similar in both 2009 and 2011, but continues to be associated with vacant dwellings.

7. This paper provides a summary of some of the more important preliminary findings on dwelling stock and unfitness. Further modelling work by BRE is required to produce key results on disrepair, Housing Health and Safety Rating, Decent Homes, SAP and Fuel Poverty and these will emerge during the summer/autumn months. A final report providing an overall assessment of the key housing indicators will be produced at the Northern Ireland level in March 2013. A supplementary District Council level report will be produced at a later stage.