
Vacant Follow Up Survey to 2001 Census

Introduction

1. The purpose of this paper is to provide information about the follow up survey of properties identified as vacant in the 2001 Census (VFUS), **and to seek comments on the output which will be commissioned from the results.**

Background

2. The 2001 Census results will provide a basic count of the number of dwellings identified by enumerators as being vacant on census night. The vacant dwellings were classified in three ways: (a) by building type (detached etc), (b) by whether or not the accommodation is self-contained and (c) by the lowest floor level of the household living accommodation. No further information was collected about vacant dwellings in the Census. However, a follow up survey has been carried out in order to obtain more information about the vacant dwellings; in particular information about the reasons for vacancy, the physical state of the building, the length of vacancy to date, and the tenure.

3. GROS has managed this Vacant Follow up Survey (VFUS) on behalf of the Scottish Executive, and will also be managing the processing of the data and the production of the specified output.

4. The survey which was carried out in the period 22 June to 7 July was a 4% sample survey. The results will be grossed up to provide estimates at national level. Additionally, due to the way in which the sample was selected, estimates will also be produced for rural and urban Scotland separately.

5. Similar surveys were carried out following both the 1981 and 1991 Censuses. In those years a much larger sample was used - 10% of all vacant dwellings were included. This enabled results to be derived at local authority level. This time insufficient funds were made available for such a large survey. However, local authorities were invited to buy a boost to the sample. Nine authorities took up this offer, and hence for those 9 councils results will be available for their area.

6. The benefits of the survey are to provide robust, comprehensive information to support the development of policy on empty housing, and to provide data to underpin the re-basing of the household estimates at national, rural/urban and possibly local levels.

Information Collected

7. The information which has been collected about the vacant dwellings surveyed is as follows:

- Tenure of Dwelling
- Type of Dwelling
- Size of Dwelling

- Length of Vacancy
- Reason for Vacancy
- Current Status of Dwelling

8. VFUS field staff were asked to visit the property up to 3 times in order to obtain the required information from either the current occupier (if no longer vacant), the owner (if identifiable) or a neighbour. If the field staff were informed that a property was not actually vacant on Census night, then this would have been noted and the only further information which would have been collected, if possible, about the property was the tenure.

9. The survey form is attached for information.

Local Authority Boosts

10. The local authorities which bought a boost were as follows:

- Angus
- Clackmannanshire
- East Ayrshire
- City of Edinburgh
- Inverclyde
- Moray
- North Lanarkshire
- Perth and Kinross
- Renfrewshire

Availability of Results

11. The timing of the availability of results is not yet certain. It is possible that the release of the results will have to wait until March 2003 when the rest of the Census information will be made available. GROS will keep us informed, and we will duly pass on any further information about timing of results to members of HARG.

Proposed Tables

12. Summary statistics only will be passed to the Scottish Executive; we will not receive any information about individual properties.

13. GROS are considering the possibility of producing a weight for each sampled property, so that the tables which they produce will be grossed up, rather than providing the SE simply with sample proportions.

14. The Annex provides an outline of the tables which GROS have been requested to provide. **Any comments on these would be welcome.**

Additional Information

15. The possibility of combining the data set with other data sources to obtain further information about the vacant properties in the sample has been discussed.

15.1 Vacancy Rate in Surrounding Area. This could not be consistently or reliably obtained by means of the survey. However, the main Census would deduce a vacancy rate for each output area (an output area covers roughly 3 or 4 postcodes) from the initial total and vacant dwelling counts on Census night. The output area for each vacant dwelling in the follow up survey would be known and so a surrounding vacancy rate could be attached to the record. This additional work in matching records may carry a small additional cost (to be confirmed).

15.2 Age of Dwelling. This was not collected as part of the survey as it was thought that estimates which would be made by neighbours and occupiers would not be very reliable on the whole. The possibility of obtaining the information from the Registers of Scotland's database was considered early in the project. **However, GROS advise that this is not looking like a very feasible option. It is unlikely therefore that we will have anything about age of vacant properties.**

15.3 Valuation. Local authority assessors have information on valuations of properties. This information could be matched to the vacant properties in the sample. We need to assess the usefulness of this information before proceeding to commission this work.

Conclusion

16. Members are invited to note the contents of this paper, and to comment on the output which SE are planning to commission from GROS, as set out in the Annex.

Annex**Tables**

For each of the following geographies:

Scotland
Rural Scotland
Urban Deprived Scotland
Urban non-deprived Scotland
Boosted Local authority 1
Boosted Local authority 2
Etc.

The following all cross-tabulated by tenure:

Type of Dwelling
Size of Dwelling
Length of Vacancy
Reason for Vacancy
Current Status of Dwelling