

## TECHNICAL NOTE ON POST CENSUS VACANT SURVEY (PCVS)

### **Background**

At the time of the 2001 Census, a number of properties were classified by Census enumerators as being vacant. Shortly after the Census took place, a follow up survey of a sample of these properties was conducted by the General Register Office for Scotland (GROS) on behalf of the Scottish Executive's Housing Statistics Unit. The main aim of the Post Census Vacant Survey was to obtain more information about the characteristics of vacant properties such as ownership, reason for and length of vacancy, and characteristics of the property.

The PCVS was also carried out after the 1981 and 1991 Censuses. Results of these were published by Housing Statistics Unit.

PCVS is the most comprehensive source of data on vacant properties available, as it covers the whole of Scotland and encompasses all tenures. It is the key source of information on properties which were vacant on Census night, including vacant private sector properties. As the survey was Census based, it is possible to consider the PCVS results in conjunction with Census data to obtain a more complete picture of Scottish housing than provided by the Census alone.

In the 2001 Census, household spaces could either be classed as:

1. Occupied, or
2. Second residence / holiday accommodation, or
3. Vacant.

PCVS was a voluntary survey which was intended to survey 1 in 20 of the household spaces which the Census classed as being **vacant**. A number of local authorities paid for a boost to double the sample of household spaces which were surveyed in their areas. The survey gives an indication of the accuracy of the enumerators' initial assessment as "vacant", and provides essential information about the characteristics of vacant household spaces.

PCVS was based on a sample of "household spaces" and not "dwellings" which were classified as vacant. The Census defines a household space as "the accommodation available for a household", while a dwelling is one or more household spaces comprising structurally separate accommodation. Thus, while most dwellings contain just one household space, there are some which contain more than one.

Although the number of dwellings does tie up very closely with the number of household spaces, basing the PCVS on vacant household spaces means that the survey is potentially more wide reaching. This is because it will not just cover wholly vacant dwellings but also partly vacant dwellings i.e. those which contain two or more household spaces, one or more of which is vacant.

## Sampling

For the purposes of creating the sample for PCVS, all household spaces which were vacant at Census time were given an indicator of either “urban” if they were within a settlement of at least 500 people or “rural” if they were not. The category “urban” was then subdivided into “urban deprived” and “urban non-deprived” using a measure of deprivation which was used in the 1991 Census.

Then, for each of the local authority areas where the authority did not pay to have their sample boosted, the sample was chosen by randomly selecting every 15<sup>th</sup> rural household space, every 15<sup>th</sup> urban deprived space and every 27<sup>th</sup> urban non-deprived space. For those areas where a boost was paid for, approximately twice as many sample members were chosen from each group.

### *Achieved sample sizes*

Table 1 contains counts of the sample sizes actually achieved. Local authorities that paid for a boosted sample are highlighted.

**Table 1**

Local authority	Census vacants	Selected sample size	Proportion sampled	Number of interviews achieved	Response rate	Number in achieved sample vacant	% of achieved sample assessed as vacant
<b>Scotland</b>	<b>87,394</b>	<b>5,481</b>	<b>6.3%</b>	<b>4,316</b>	<b>78.7%</b>	<b>3,629</b>	<b>84.1%</b>
Aberdeen City	6,912	231	3.3%	189	81.8%	164	86.8%
Aberdeenshire	4,182	173	4.1%	145	83.8%	134	92.4%
Angus	2,418	227	9.4%	198	87.2%	185	93.4%
Argyll & Bute	2,447	116	4.7%	110	94.8%	97	88.2%
Clackmannanshire	676	68	10.1%	52	76.5%	51	98.1%
Dumfries & Galloway	2,507	168	6.7%	141	83.9%	108	76.6%
Dundee City	3,147	166	5.3%	123	74.1%	111	90.2%
East Ayrshire	2,123	180	8.5%	138	76.7%	129	93.5%
East Dunbartonshire	589	17	2.9%	17	100.0%	15	88.2%
East Lothian	998	35	3.5%	35	100.0%	24	68.6%
East Renfrewshire	647	29	4.5%	22	75.9%	20	90.9%
Edinburgh	8,741	748	8.6%	546	73.0%	420	76.9%
Eilean Siar	969	49	5.1%	49	100.0%	43	87.8%
Falkirk	1,723	59	3.4%	54	91.5%	50	92.6%
Fife	4,741	259	5.5%	221	85.3%	179	81.0%
Glasgow	10,080	593	5.9%	383	64.6%	306	79.9%
Highland	4,000	226	5.7%	198	87.6%	152	76.8%
Inverclyde	2,093	190	9.1%	141	74.2%	136	96.5%
Midlothian	548	23	4.2%	23	100.0%	19	82.6%
Moray	1,907	179	9.4%	156	87.2%	134	85.9%
North Ayrshire	2,104	99	4.7%	90	90.9%	67	74.4%
North Lanarkshire	3,376	314	9.3%	221	70.4%	197	89.1%
Orkney Islands	576	33	5.7%	33	100.0%	26	78.8%
Perth & Kinross	2,422	245	10.1%	222	90.6%	183	82.4%
Renfrewshire	4,790	437	9.1%	297	68.0%	263	88.6%

Local authority	Census vacants	Selected sample size	Proportion sampled	Number of interviews achieved	Response rate	Number in achieved sample vacant	% of achieved sample assessed as vacant
Scottish Borders	2,627	120	4.6%	102	85.0%	79	77.5%
Shetland Islands	572	32	5.6%	32	100.0%	27	84.4%
South Ayrshire	1,648	88	5.3%	72	81.8%	43	59.7%
South Lanarkshire	3,347	166	5.0%	138	83.1%	121	87.7%
Stirling	1,032	47	4.6%	41	87.2%	39	95.1%
West Dunbartonshire	2,355	102	4.3%	75	73.5%	68	90.7%
West Lothian	1,097	62	5.7%	52	83.9%	39	75.0%

### Information available from the PCVS

For all household spaces sampled, information was collected on:

1. The type of accommodation.
2. Whether the accommodation was self-contained.
3. The lowest floor level of living accommodation.

Where dwellings had been demolished, this information was gathered from surrounding dwellings where possible. Where this was not possible, the information was taken from the original dummy form which was completed on census night. No further information was collected for any household space which had been demolished. Similarly, no further information was collected for a new building which was incomplete.

For the remaining household spaces, information was collected on whether the dwelling was:

- a. Derelict.
- b. Newly built.
- c. Being rebuilt / converted / improved.
- d. Door(s) and/or window(s) boarded up for security.
- e. 'For sale' sign displayed.
- f. For rent or lease.
- g. Other

Attempts were made to conduct an interview to obtain information about the household space(s) in question. Enumerators tried to conduct interviews with:

1. The occupier, where the property was not vacant at the time the enumerator called there.
2. The owner, where either the property was vacant at the time the enumerator called or the property wasn't vacant but the occupier was not available for interview.
3. Another responsible person, where it had not been possible to get an interview with either an owner or an occupier.

A total of 5,481 household spaces were selected for inclusion in PCVS. Interviews were successfully obtained for 4,316 spaces (79 per cent). For all household spaces where an interview was obtained, information was collected on:

1. The actual status of the dwelling on Census night.
2. Where the dwelling was actually a main residence or a second home, whether it was owner occupied or rented on Census night.
3. Where no-one was present in the dwelling on Census night or the status was unknown:
  - a. How long the dwelling had been vacant.
  - b. The reason(s) for vacancy.
  - c. Who the dwelling was owned by.
  - d. The size of the dwelling.

### **Imputation of missing values**

There were a number of unknowns in the data where the Census enumerators had been unable to enter a value. In many cases, enough information had been provided by the enumerator in the comments box provided at the end of the survey to allow the missing values to be completed.

During the main Census, where an enumerator found a property which was vacant, a 'dummy' form was completed and this contained basic information about type of accommodation, whether the property was self contained and the lowest floor level of the accommodation. For questions C1 to C3 on the PCVS form (see Annex A for VFUS1 form used), any unknown values have been filled in using the information provided on the corresponding dummy form filled in for the property during the main census.

Any other unknown value in a vacant was imputed using the value from a property with similar characteristics and as close geographically as possible as the PCVS sample would allow. However, question D4 (length of vacancy) was not imputed as it was felt that this variable was perhaps something which was unique to any particular property. A new category of 'not known' was created for properties where length of vacancy was missing.

### **Weighting**

Of the 5,481 household spaces surveyed by the PCVS, a total of 3,629 household spaces were found to be vacant (66%) In order to gross up this figure to the 87,394 vacant household spaces found in the census, a series of weights was calculated. Counts for both the PCVS and the census were extracted by local authority and Urban/Rural/Deprived area. These two tables allowed simple weights to be calculated and the 96 weights (3 for each local authority area) were applied to the PCVS counts.

The 3,629 PCVS sampled properties which were found to be vacant provide the sample from which tables have been extracted. As these are weighted, the counts in the table will total to 87,394.

### **Multi-tick questions**

Due to the small sample size and large selection of responses, it was necessary to group up some the categories for dissemination purposes. However, questions C6 and D5 ('current state of dwelling' and 'reason for vacancy' respectively) allow more than one answer. This makes the grouping up of categories more difficult as any one vacant could fit into more than one category.

In order to get round this problem, multi-ticked responses were 'preferenced' to give one response per vacant. For example, if 'derelict' and 'in the process of conversion or improvement' were both ticked, records with this combination would be given 'in the process of conversion or improvement' as the reason for vacancy.

Once these preferences had been implemented, each property surveyed had only one value for each question. This makes grouping up categories to remove small counts much easier.

### **Misclassifications**

There was no systematic means of identifying cases where a household space was categorised by the enumeration as being occupied as a main residence or second home or short-term holiday let but was later determined as vacant. The only post-Census activity where a later identification as vacant might have been possible was the Census Coverage Survey (CCS). However, the purpose of this survey was to identify the characteristics of individuals missed in the Census. The data collected by the CCS does not lend itself to a secondary purpose of identifying accommodation classified by the Census as occupied main residences or second/holiday homes but which was actually vacant.