

# The Consumer Council's Home Energy Index

## February 2019



**Trend:** Over the last 37 months (since January 2016), Northern Ireland's Home Energy Index has increased by 37. The HEI peaked in October 2018 at 145 and is currently on a downward trend (Figure 1).

**Overview:** The Consumer Council's Home Energy Index tracks changes in household natural gas, electricity and home heating oil (HHO) prices in Northern Ireland. It also creates a composite index; meaning that all three energy prices are combined to create one overarching figure, weighted for usage and market share.

**February 2019 Findings** In February 2019, the Home Energy Index composite stood at 137.45 (Figure 1). This is similar to the previous month (137.34). This is a reflection of minimal increases in the price of HHO while gas and electricity have remained stable since October.

- **HHO:** Due to the reliance on HHO in Northern Ireland (approximately 68% of households), the index is particularly sensitive to changes in the price of HHO. Prices of oil have seen considerable fluctuations and increases since the index began in January 2016 (Figure 2). There was a small increase in the price HHO during January 2019.
- **Gas:** Gas suppliers Firmus Energy and SSE Airtricity increased their gas tariffs in October 2018 by 12% and 10.8%, respectively. This has affected over 247,000 consumers in NI Belfast. Gas bills in Ten Towns rose on average by £72 and in Greater Belfast by £56. The main driver behind the increase is the significant rise in wholesale gas costs between April 2018 and August 2018. There have been no further changes in February.
- **Electricity:** The three largest electricity suppliers in NI – Power NI, SSE Airtricity and Electric Ireland – with a combined market share of 86%, increased their prices by 13.8%, 18.2% and 13.3% respectively on the 1 October 2018. As a result, consumers will pay on average between £64 and £92 extra a year to pay for their electricity. The increases are a result of a 33% rise in the price of wholesale electricity in the past year. There have been no further changes in February 2019.

Figure 1: Home Energy Index (composite of electricity, gas and HHO) for Northern Ireland (January 2016 – February 2019).

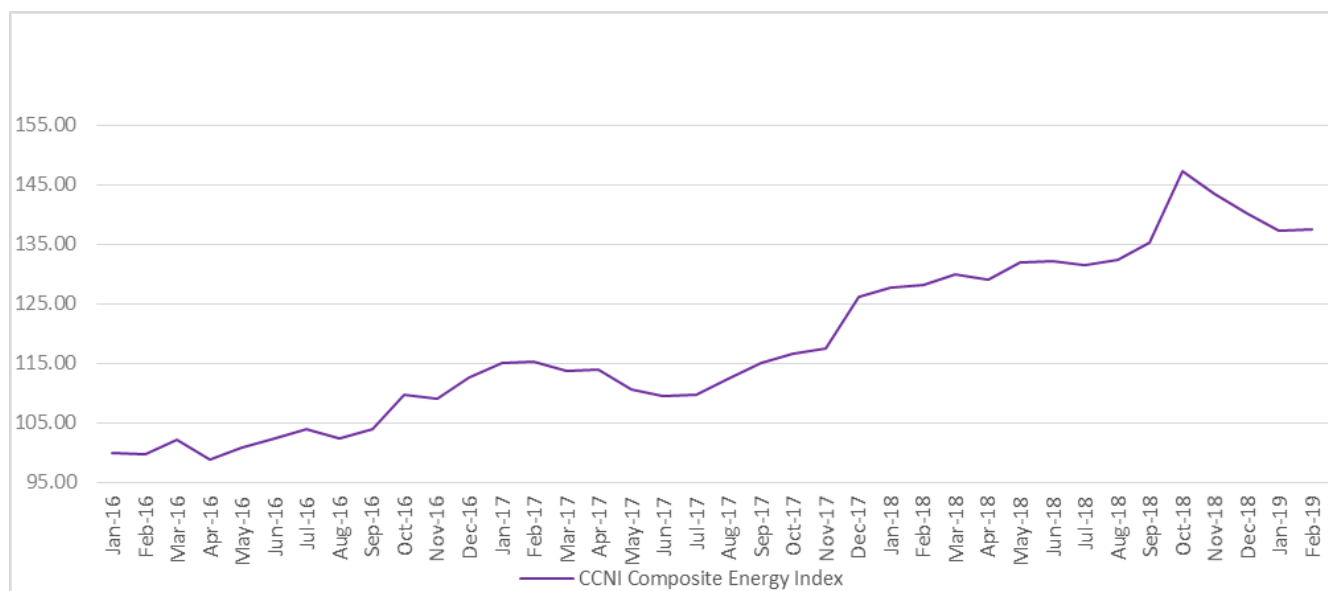
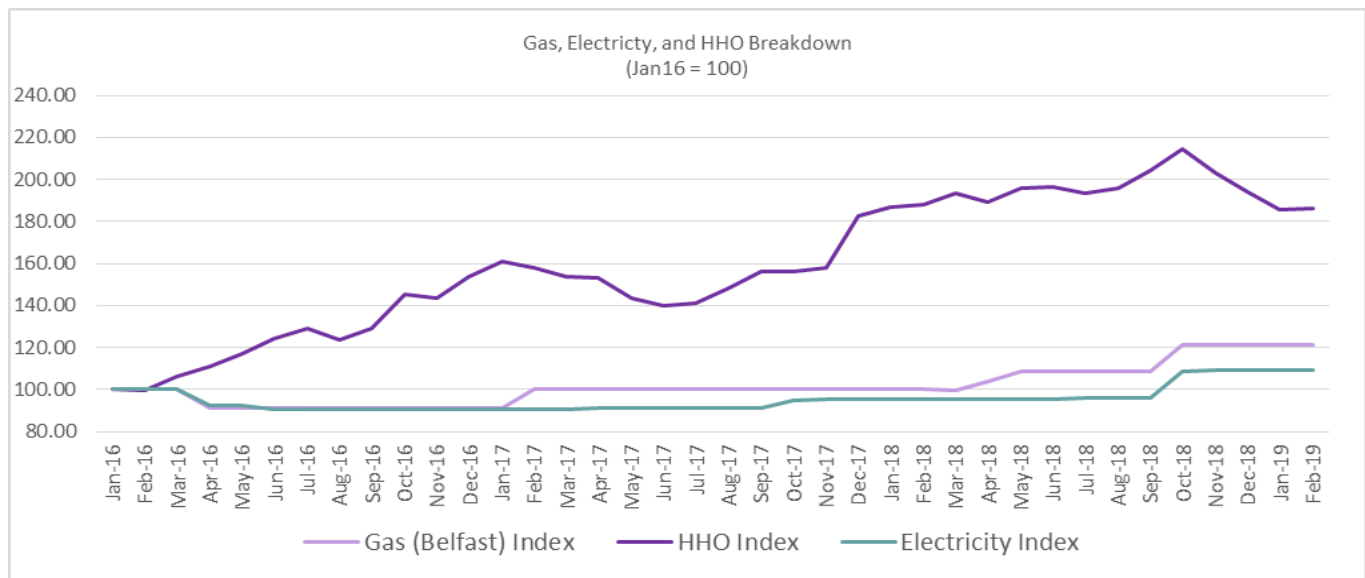


Figure 2: Gas, electricity and home heating oil (HHO) breakdown for Northern Ireland (January 2016 – February 2019).



### What is a price index?

A price index is a number that shows the extent to which a price has changed from a base over a given period. The base period is set at 100 and changes in price are shown relative to that number, i.e. above or below 100.

### How was the 'Home Energy Index' created?

The Consumer Council records tariffs from different energy suppliers across Northern Ireland. These are available on our website, please see below. Prices are weighted to take consideration of usage and market share of suppliers, so that changes in the index number better reflect the change impacting the consumer over time.

### Consumer Information:

The Consumer Council's annual *Consumer Insight Survey* (May 2018) revealed that consumers' top concern in 2018 was the rising price of goods and services; and one of consumers top 'household expenditure worries' was paying energy bills. Further information on the survey results are available on The Consumer Council website [www.consumerCouncil.org.uk](http://www.consumerCouncil.org.uk).

The Consumer Council has a variety of tools available to help consumers make better choices, shop around and save money. Please visit our website [www.consumerCouncil.org.uk](http://www.consumerCouncil.org.uk) to avail of the following:

- [Energy Price Comparison Tool](#)
- [Home Heating Oil Survey](#)
- [Energy Efficiency Information](#)
- [Shopping around to save money on transport costs](#)
- [Shopping around to save money on food, insurance, and postal services](#)
- [Household budgeting](#)

For further information please contact The Consumer Council:



028 9025 1600



[contact@consumerCouncil.org.uk](mailto:contact@consumerCouncil.org.uk)



[www.consumerCouncil.org.uk](http://www.consumerCouncil.org.uk)