

The Consumer Council's Home Energy Index

September 2021



Overview: The Consumer Council's Home Energy Index tracks changes in household gas, electricity and home heating oil (HHO) prices in Northern Ireland. A composite index is calculated, meaning that all three energy prices are combined to create one overarching figure which uses appropriate weighting to reflect usage and market share.

A new analysis was undertaken in June 2020 which separated the composite index (Figure 1) into two separated variables, one representing the energy costs of households using electricity and gas and the second for households using electricity and home heating oil. This is shown in Figure 2.

Trend: Over the last 5 years (since January 2016), Northern Ireland's Home Energy Index (HEI) has increased by 36.06. Following a sharp decrease in early 2020, the index remained low until January 2021 when it began to rise again. The HEI has returned to late-2019 levels.

September 2021 Findings: When last analysed in March 2021, the composite HEI stood at 121.66 (Figure 1). At the end of September 2021 it was 136.06. This represents an increase of 14.4 over a 6-month period which is a comparatively steep rise. This is a reflection of increases in HHO and electricity prices throughout the period.

- **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 since the index began in January 2016 and following a small decrease in April, have been rising throughout 2021 (Figure 3).
- **Gas:** Gas prices increased in April 2021 and have remained constant since then.
- **Electricity:** Electricity prices decreased slightly in April then increased in July, August and September.

Figure 1: Home Energy Index (composite of electricity, gas and HHO) for Northern Ireland (January 2016 – September 2021).

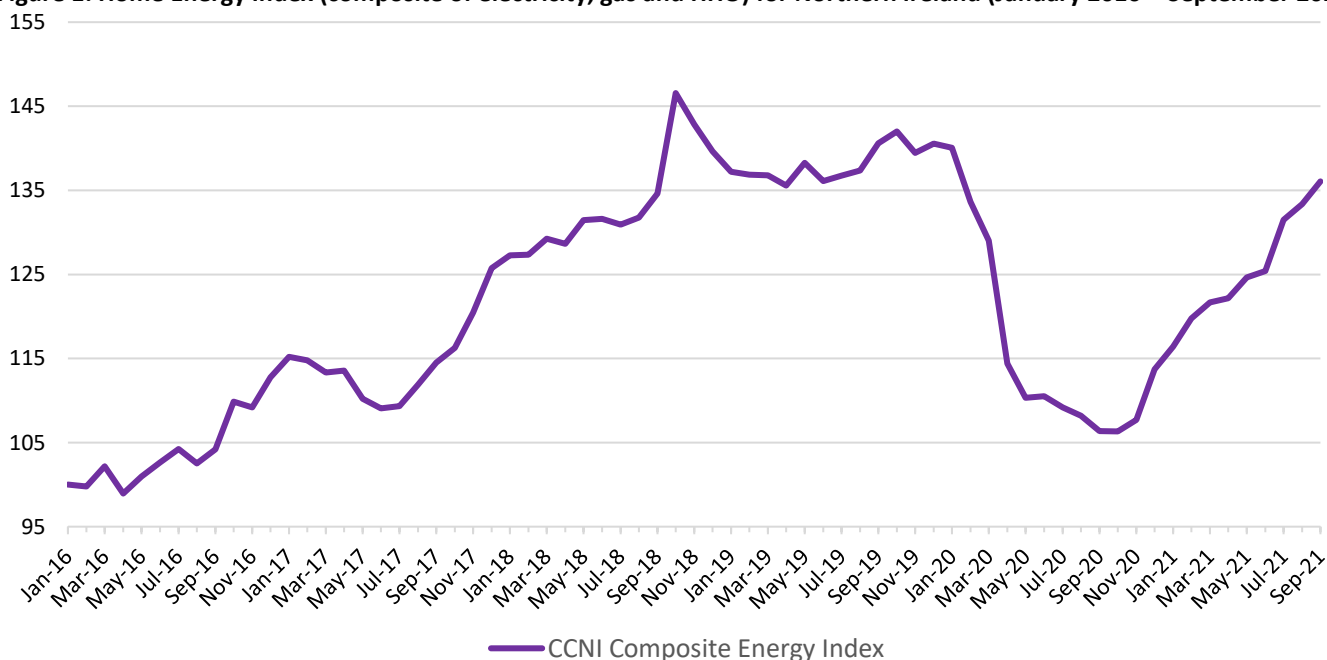


Figure 2: Home Energy Index for (a) Electricity and Gas and (b) Electricity and Home Heating Oil for Northern Ireland (January 2016 – September 2021).

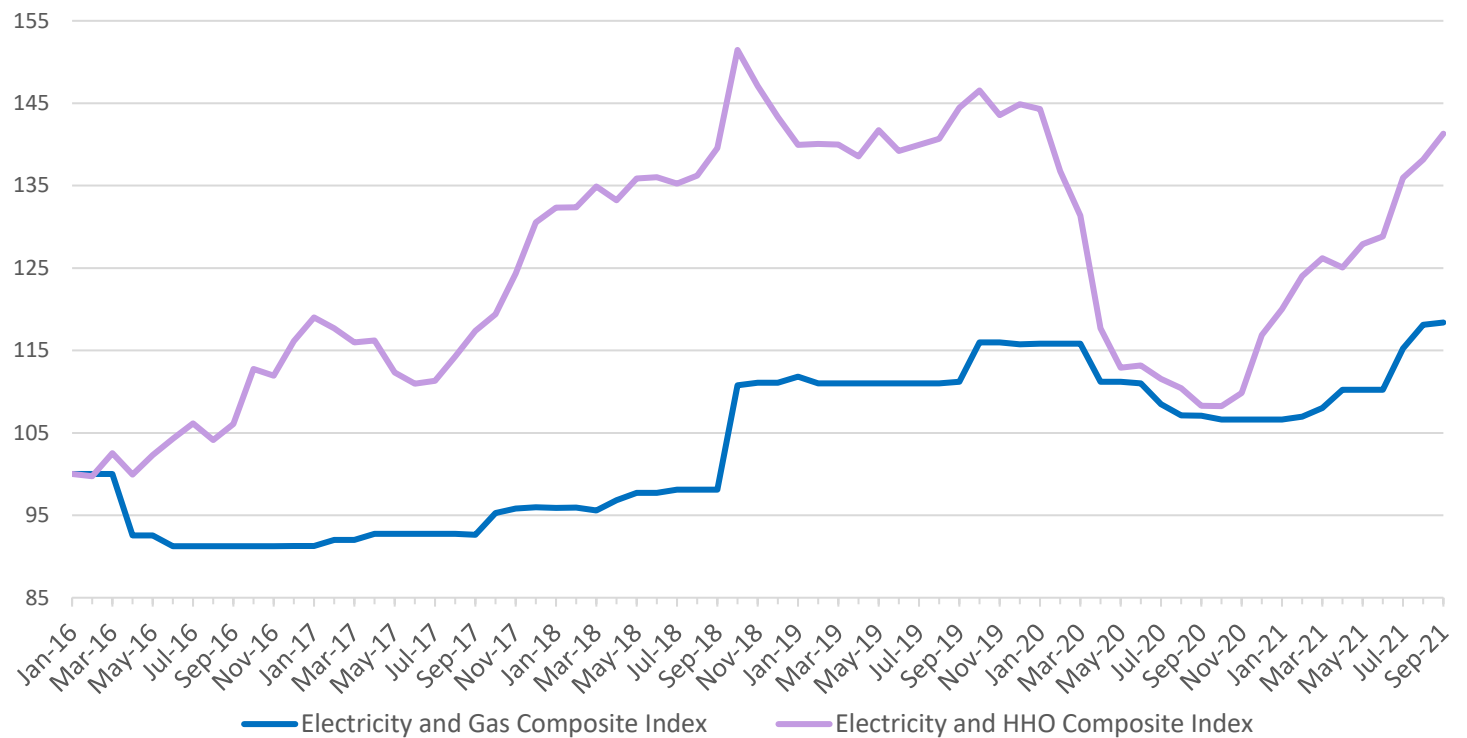
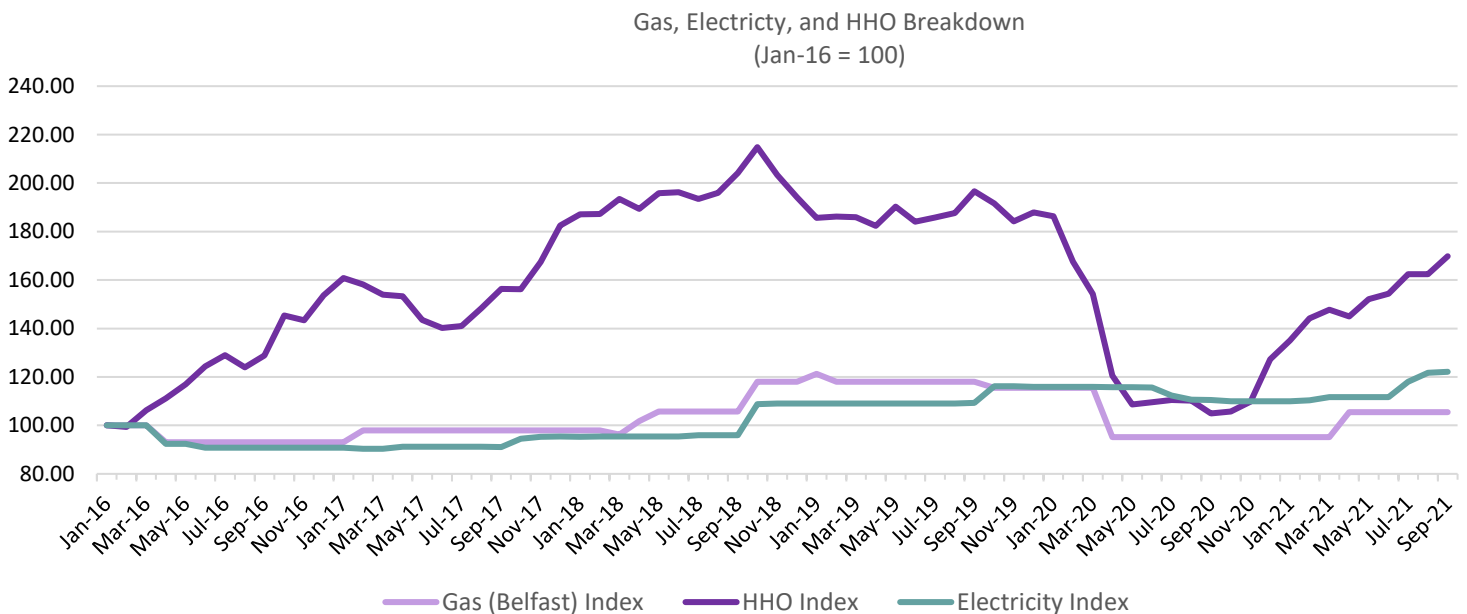


Figure 3: Gas, electricity and home heating oil (HHO) indices for Northern Ireland (January 2016 – September 2021).



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. The base period for the Home Energy Index is January 2016.

How was the 'Home Energy Index' created?

The Consumer Council records gas and electricity tariffs monthly from different energy suppliers across Northern Ireland. Prices of home heating oil are recorded weekly from different suppliers. 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 2021) revealed that one of consumers top 'household expenditure worries' was paying energy bills. It also showed that consumers shop around to try to get better energy deals – 32% do so for home heating oil and 26% for gas/electricity. Further information on the survey results are available on The Consumer Council website 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 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](#)

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