

HOUSING ADEQUACY AND CHILD OUTCOMES IN EARLY AND MIDDLE CHILDHOOD

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Introduction

- Home is more than a place of shelter – centre of family life and of child development.
- Large international literature on the impact of poor housing on outcomes
- Evidence is particularly strong on physical housing quality and health outcomes (Leventhal & Newman, 2010)
- Small but consistent negative effects of poor neighbourhood environment are found for on educational and social-emotional outcomes (Sammons, 2012; Sylva et al., 2012)
- Residential mobility in childhood associated with emotional-behavioural (Simsek et al., 2021) & education outcomes (Leventhal & Newman, 2010; McMullin et al., 2021) but varies with age, frequency of moves, & context
- However, little research in Irish context of high level of home ownership and lower residential mobility.

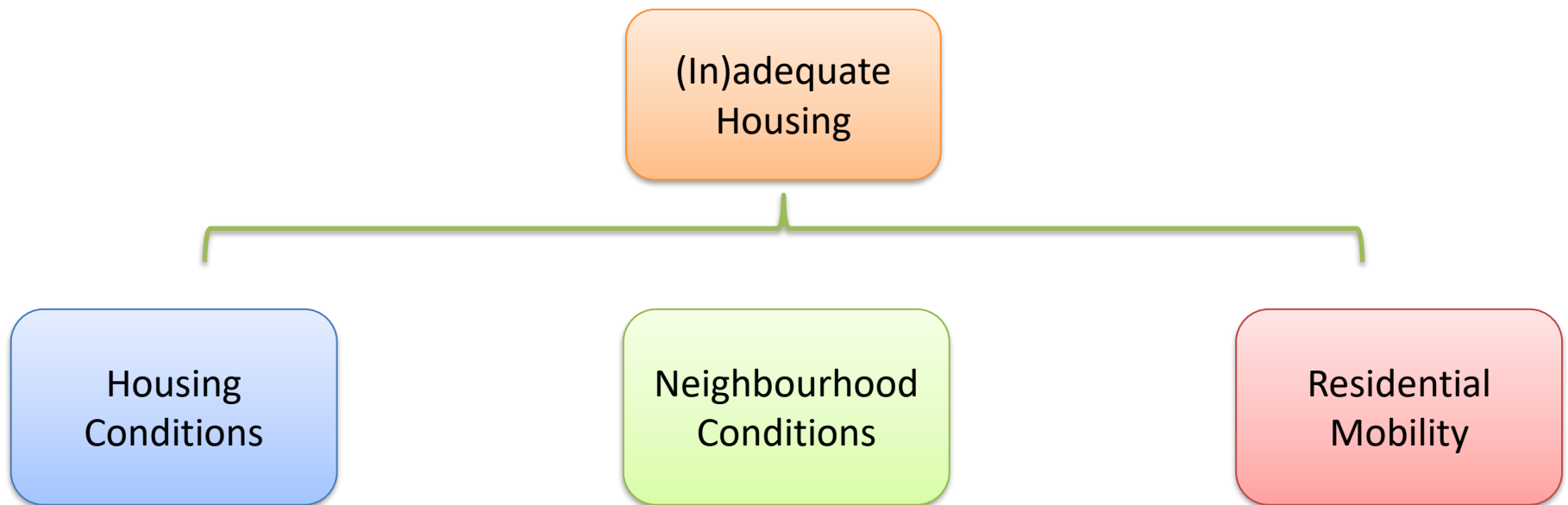
Housing context of families in the study

- Born into the housing crash, followed by a period of prolonged recession and very low level of investment in social housing.
- Decline in the level of home ownership from peak of 80% of households in 1991 to 68% in 2016.
- Sharp recent rise in private renting increased from 10% to 19% of household between 2006 and 2016.
- Issues of affordability have been present throughout the period; however, rising costs have been particularly acute in the private rented sector in recent years.

Data and Methods, Data

- Growing Up in Ireland, 2008 Cohort
 - A representative sample of children born in Ireland in 2007-2008
- We use four waves of data from this study - looking at families and their children when the study child was:
 - 9-months-old (2008-09); 3-years-old (2010-11); 5-years-old (2013-14); 9-years-old (2017-18)
- Data limitations:
 - Under-representation of Traveller Community, and families in direct provision
 - Data do not contain families directly experiencing homelessness
 - Families with more unstable housing trajectories more likely to drop out of the study over time

Measuring (in)adequate housing: a multi-dimensional indicator



Measuring (in)adequate housing: housing conditions and tenancy type

- Housing Tenancy
 - Owned homes, private renting, social renting, living with child's grandparents
- Accommodation Suitability
 - ...is accommodation (excluding location) suitable for your family's needs? If not, why?
 - ...too small?
 - ...not child-friendly?
 - ...poor conditions in the home, e.g., damp, drafts, leaks, etc.?
- Ability to keep the household adequately warm
 - Capturing experiences of fuel poverty

Measuring (in)adequate housing: neighbourhoods and residential mobility

- Neighbourhood disorder (combined score of parental reports)
 - ...Rubbish and litter lying about
 - ...Homes and gardens in bad condition
 - ...Vandalism and deliberate damage to property
 - ...People being drunk or taking drugs in public

Scored 1 to 4 – scores of 3-4 (Fairly common/Very common) considered to indicate disorderly neighbourhood

- Experiences of residential mobility
 - Between 9-months and 9-years of age

Data and Methods, Methods

- Multivariate regression modelling:
 - What parental/household characteristics predict families' (in)adequate housing?
 - What experiences of (in)adequate housing predict children's health and social, emotional and cognitive developmental outcomes?
 - Can tease out which factors matter most for inadequacy, and whether housing conditions matter after accounting for other parental and HH characteristics
- Key note: the data follows the same families over time (when child aged 9-months to 9-years)
 - It is not a snapshot of all children of Ireland at multiple points in time

Children's Health and Developmental Outcomes – at AGE 9

DEVELOPMENTAL

Strengths and
Difficulties
(social and
emotional)

Prosocial
Behaviour

Drumcondra
Reading Test
Score

HEALTH

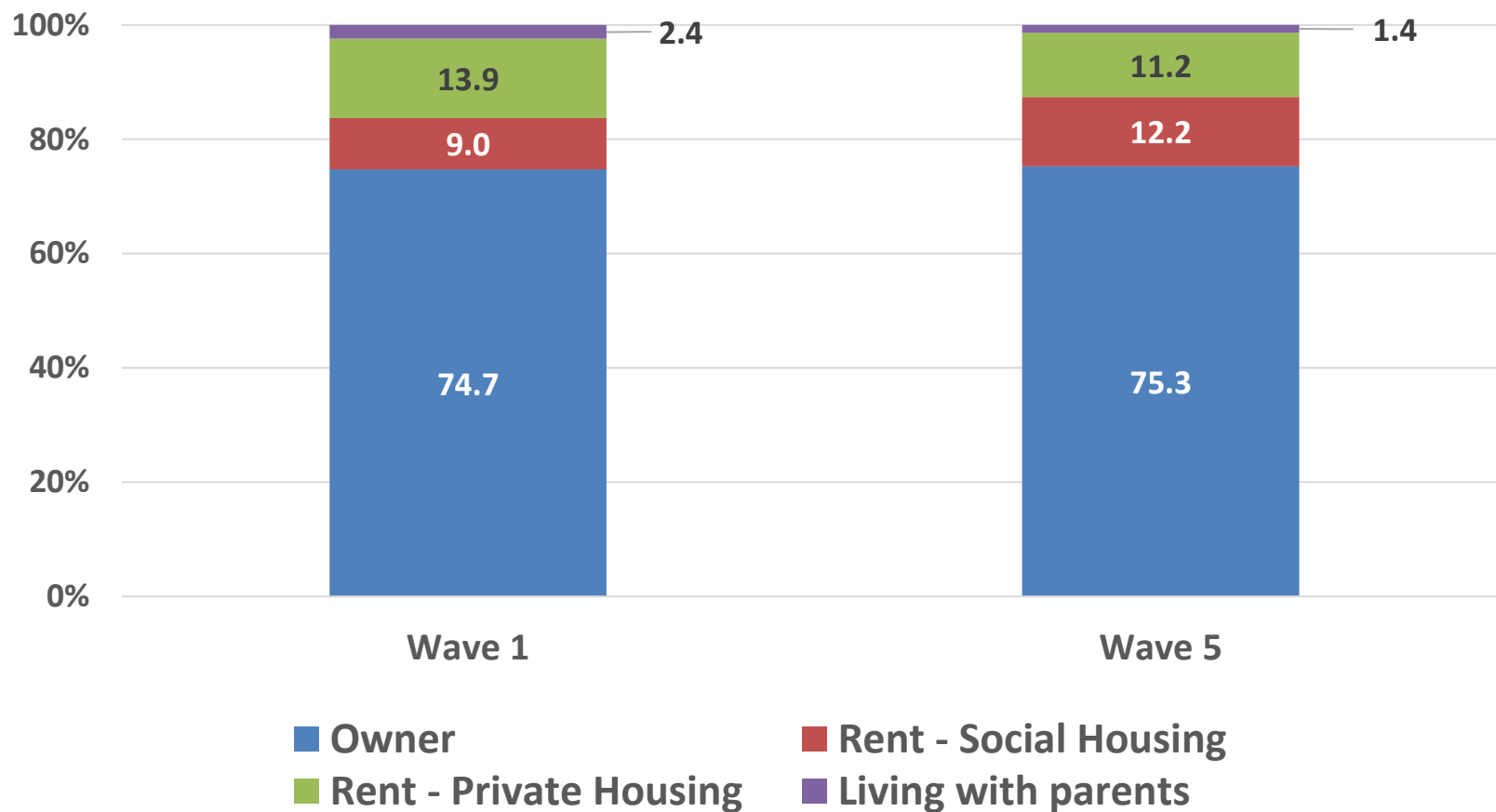
Respiratory
problems

Parents' rating
of child's health

N of Accidents

Families' Experiences of (In)adequate Housing in Ireland

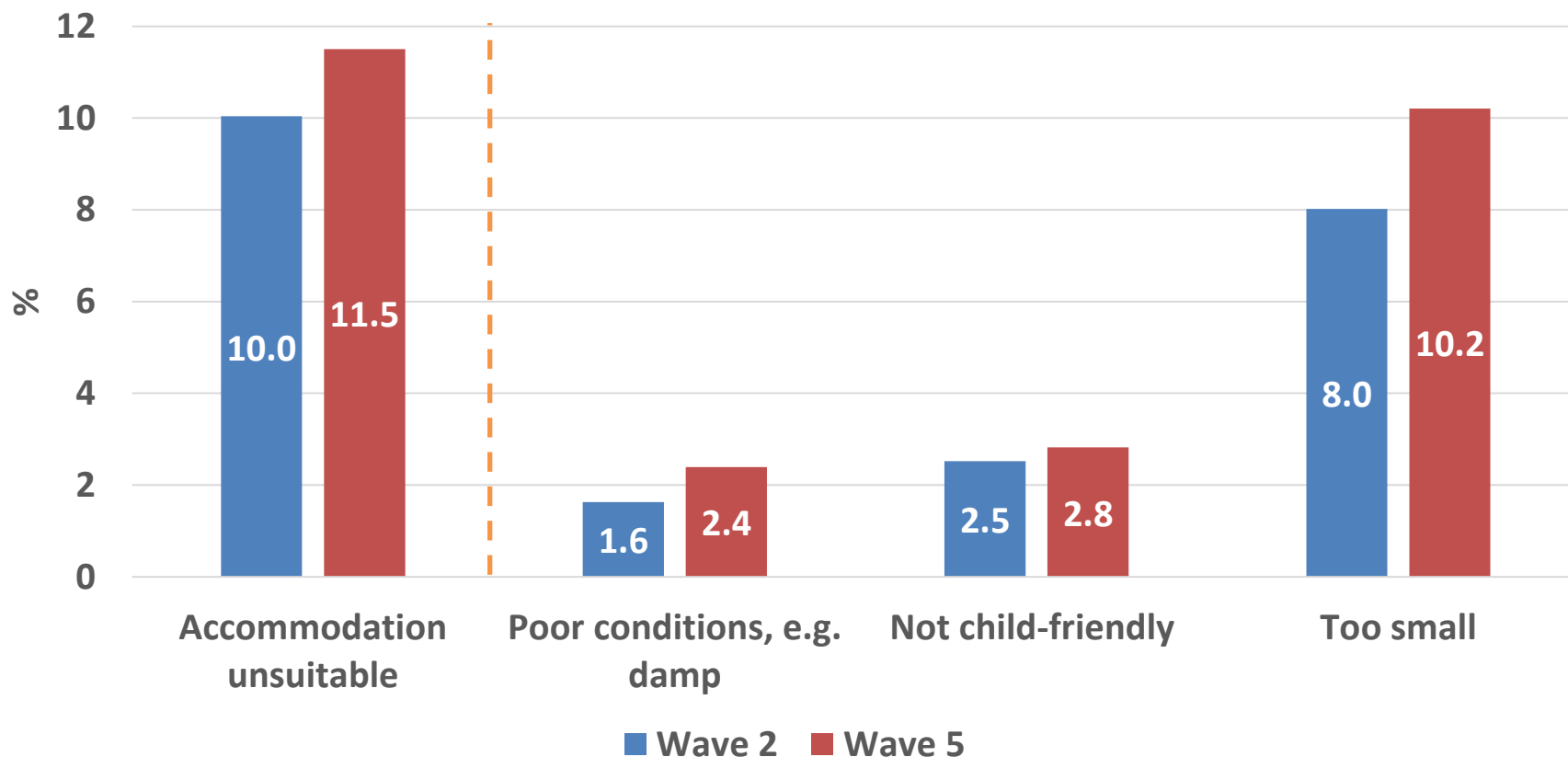
Housing Tenure at 9-months and 9-years of age



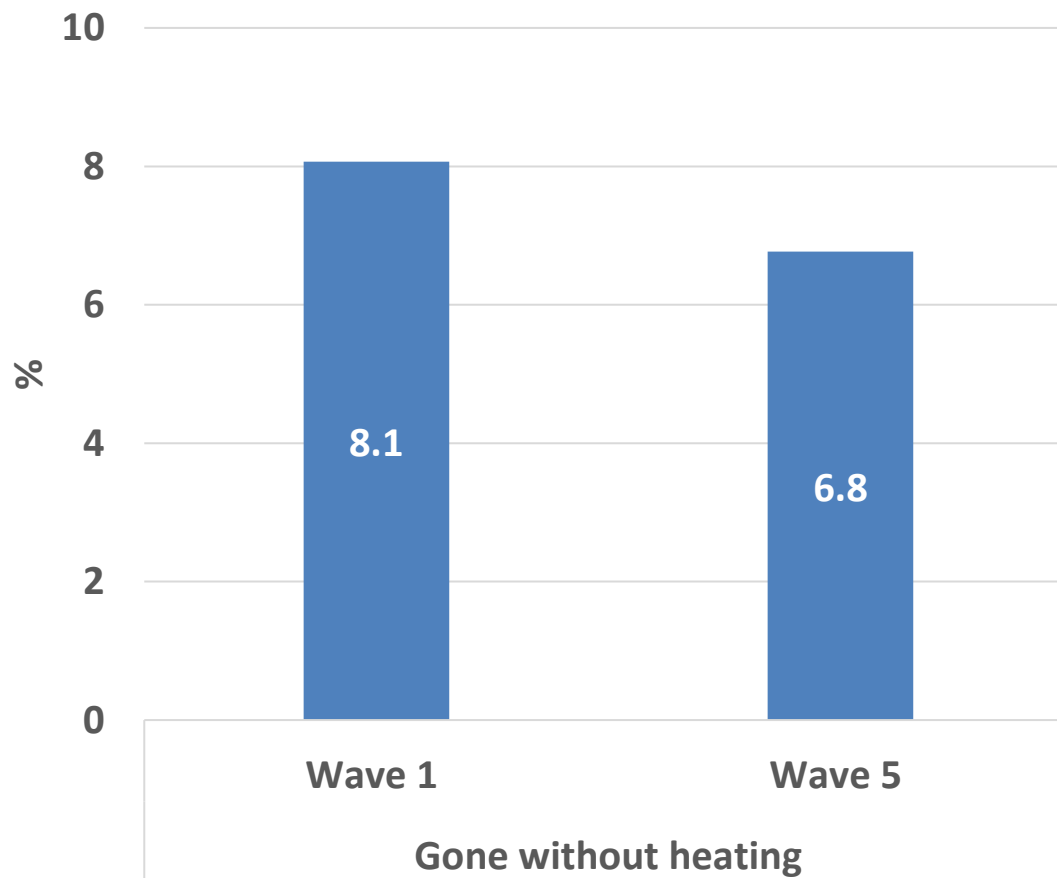
What factors drive families' type of housing tenancy?

- HH composition: Lone parents 4-5 times more likely to be in social and private rental housing, and much more likely to be living in with child's g'parents
- Non-white mothers and families with migrant-origin parents more likely to be in rented homes (particularly private renting)
- Families where one/both parent(s) have limiting long-term illnesses more likely to be renting
- Lower socio-economic status groups more likely to be in private, and especially social, rented accommodation

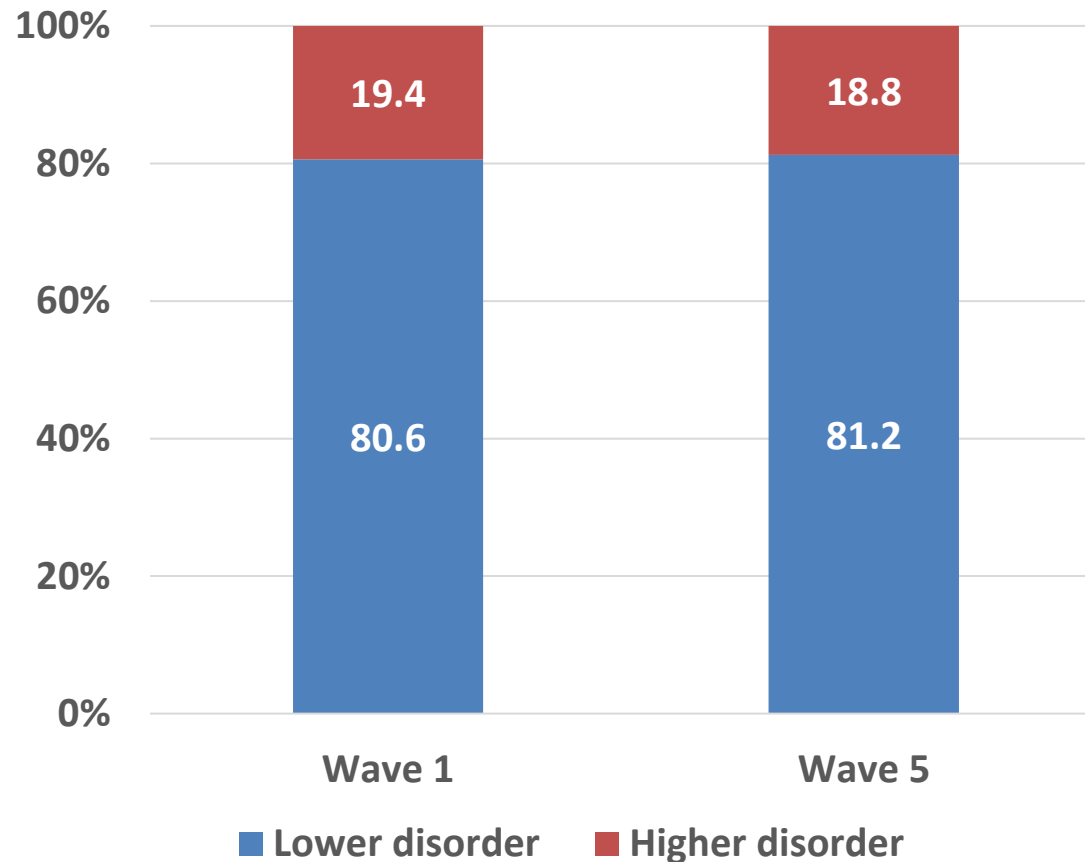
Unsuitable accommodation at 3-years and 9-years of age



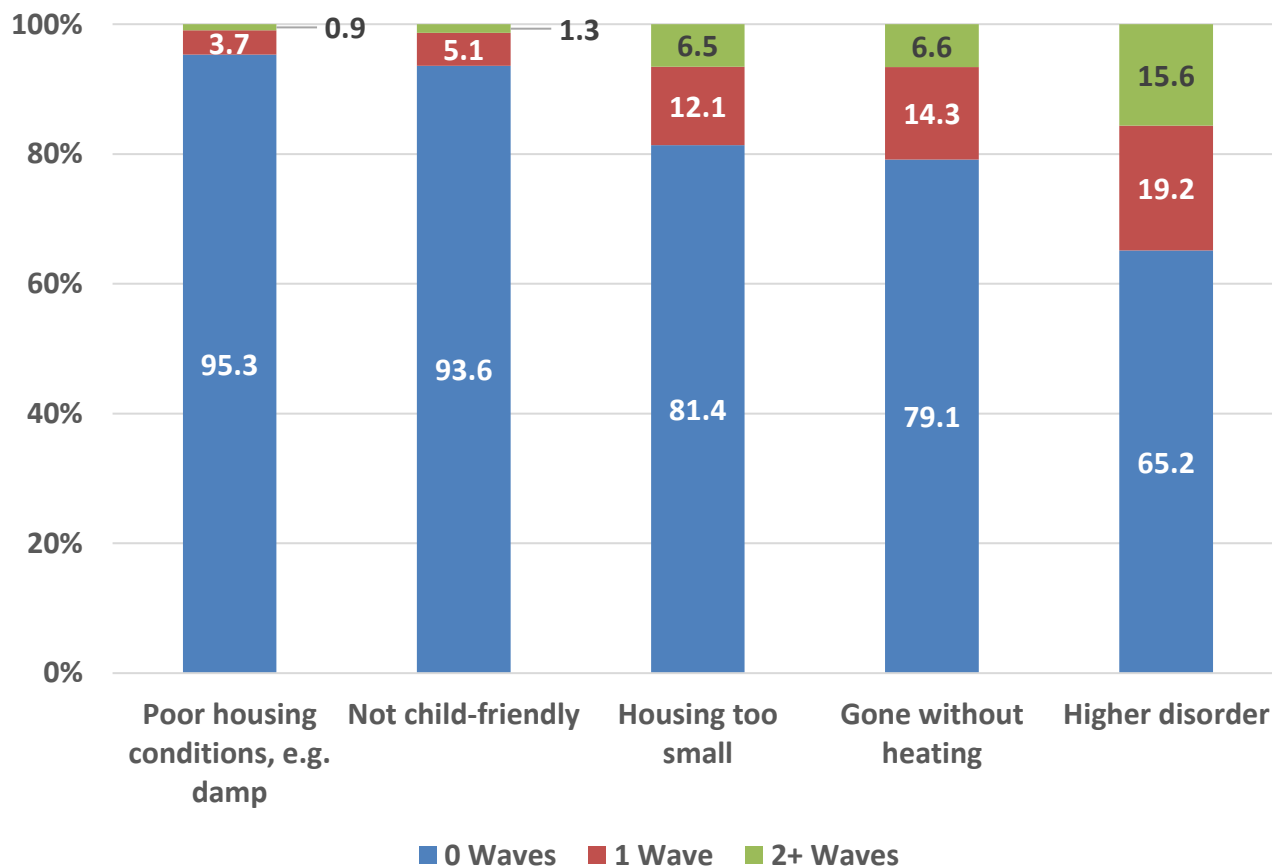
Unable to adequately heat home at 9-months and 9-years of age



Living in disorderly neighbourhoods at 9-months and 9-years of age



Persistent exposure to (in)adequate housing (9-months to 9-years of age)



What factors drive families' experiences of inadequate housing?

	Unsuitable Housing	Struggle to Warm	Neighbourhood Disorder
Lone parenthood	+	+	+
Low Income	+	+	+
Parent(s) with Disability	+	+	+
Parent(s) non-Irish Nationals	+		
Urban	+	+	+
<i>Compared to owned homes:</i>			
Social housing	+	+	+
Private rented	+	+	
Living with child's g'parents	+	+	

Experiences of residential mobility in Ireland

Moving house during early and middle childhood, (1)

- Nearly 30 per cent of children experienced moving house between the ages of 9-months- and 9-years-old
- Moving more common among children born into...
 - ...households with parents with disabilities
 - ...households where one or both parents are not Irish citizens
 - ...town and cities (compared to rural areas)
- Family dissolution (but also formation) is a key driver of residential mobility
 - Low parents = x2 more likely
 - 2-parents -> lone-parents = x5 more likely
 - Lone-parent -> 2-parents = x5 more likely

Moving house during early and middle childhood, (2)

- The type of housing tenancy children are born into a strong predictor of experiencing moving house during early/middle childhood
- Compared to being born into an owned home...
 - ...Children born into socially rented housing = 3 times more likely
 - ...Children born into private rented housing = 7.5 times more likely
 - ...Children born living with their grandparents = 5 times more likely
- Families' socio-economic status has a mixed effect on residential mobility

How (in)adequate housing shapes children's health and social, emotional and cognitive development

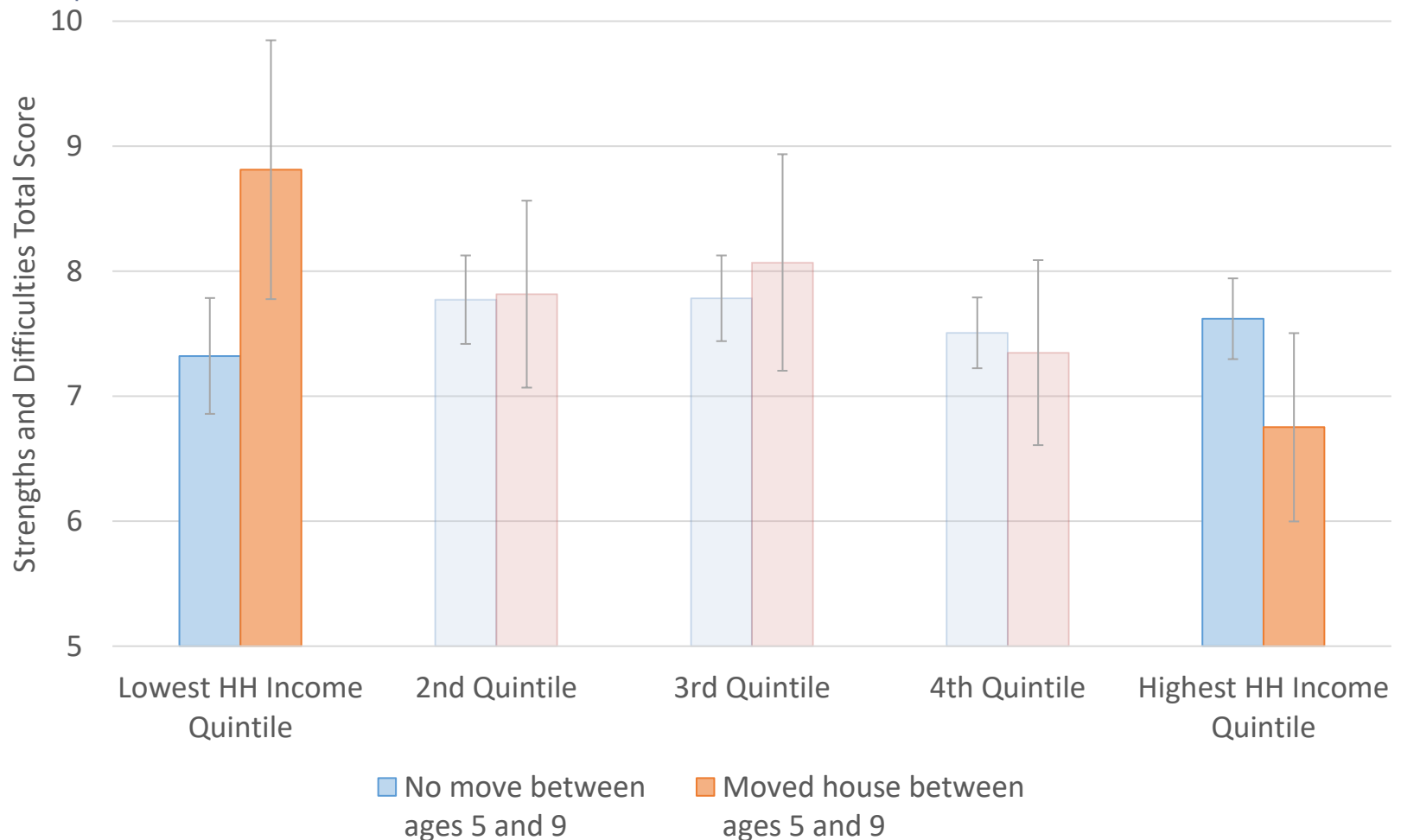
Inadequate housing and children's health at age 9

- Children's health much worse when more time spent growing up in homes which HH struggled to warm
 - Parents more likely to report child has respiratory problems, experienced more accidents requiring medical attention, and that child has worse health (subjective) at age 9
- Children who spent more of their childhood in accommodation with poor conditions (e.g., damp) more likely to have respiratory problems
- Child who spent longer growing up in disorderly neighbourhoods experienced more accidents that required medical attention

Inadequate housing & children's **Socio-Emotional & Cognitive Devt** at age 9

- Children who spent more time growing up in homes that were 'too small', where the HH struggled to keep the home warm, and where neighbourhood disorder was higher...
 - ...more likely to have social and emotional difficulties at age 9
- Children who spent more time growing up in accommodation that was 'not child friendly' and in more disorderly neighbourhoods...
 - ...more likely to have difficulties relating to peers (prosocial behaviour)
- Children who spent less time growing up in owned homes have worse developmental outcomes at age 9, incl. lower reading scores

Housing Mobility and children's **Socio-Emotional** scores at age 9, by Income



Summary

Key Messages

- The majority of children in Ireland grow up experiencing adequate housing conditions. However...
 - ...a significant minority do experience poorer housing outcomes
 - ...at the aggregate-level, the proportion changed little over their childhood
 - ...some children experienced persistently worse housing conditions throughout their early and middle childhood
- Certain types of families much more likely to experience worse housing outcomes
 - Lone parents, lower socio-economic status, parents with disabilities, migrants
 - Tenancy (particularly socially and private rented) linked with worse outcomes

Key Messages

- Moving house is quite common (30%) during childhood – however, some groups are much more likely to experience it
 - Especially lone parents, families which dissolve but also new families which form, and those in rented (especially private) accommodation
- Children living in inadequate housing and in more disorderly neighbourhoods have worse health and developmental outcomes at nine years old than their peers
 - The longer children are exposed to inadequate housing during childhood the more harm they experience
 - Housing adequacy matters for children's outcomes even after accounting for their SES background, family type, etc.

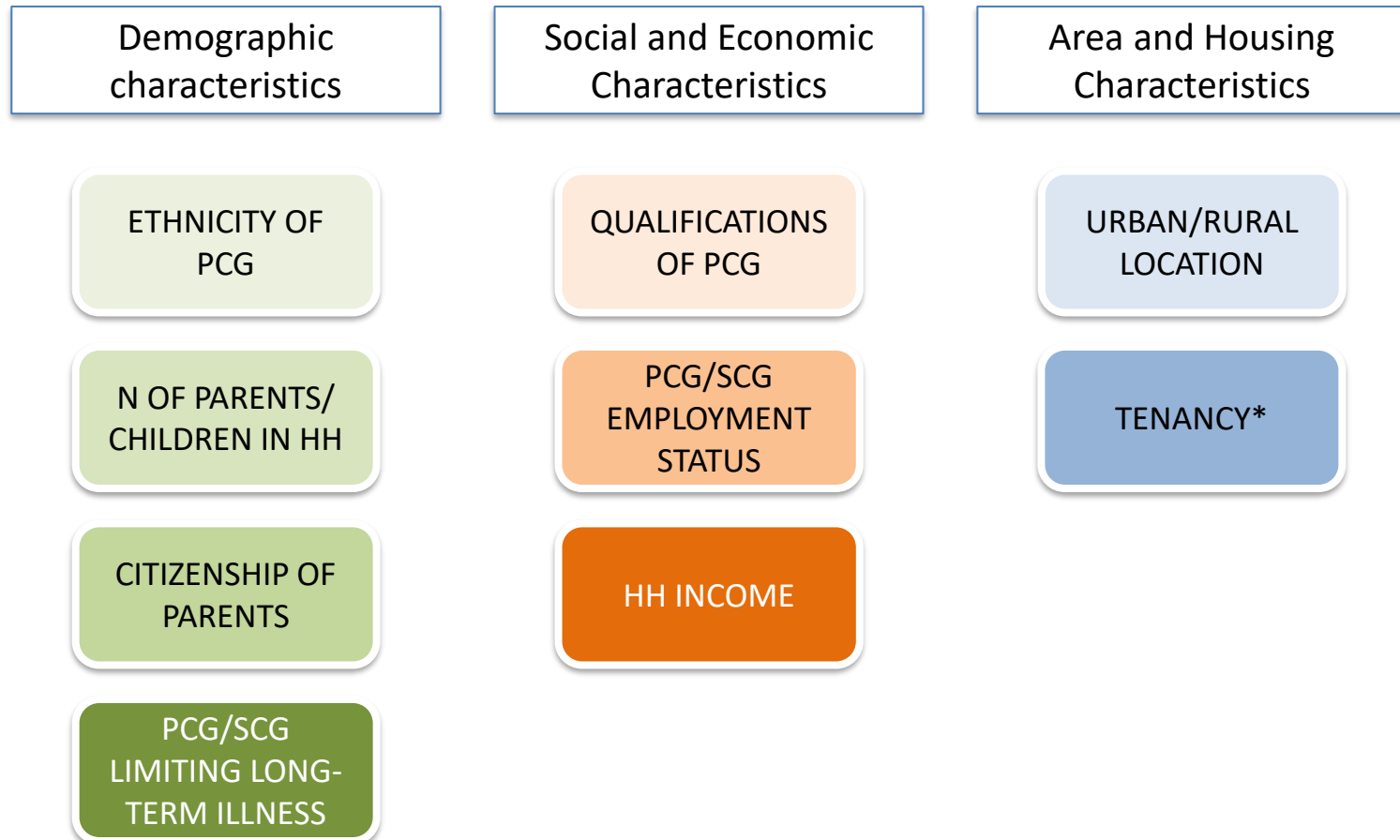
Implications for Policy

- Strong policy focus on housing supply and affordability, also need to address housing quality
- Lack of heating and damp housing have detrimental impact on children's health – targeted supports to address current fuel poverty among families will have long-term benefits for children
- Multiple house moves have a negative effect on child development in low income households which points to the importance of housing security
- Need to monitor and maintain housing standards in the private-rented and social rented sectors
- Improving the physical and social infrastructure of neighbourhoods will also pay dividends in terms of child health and development [*especially in areas with social housing*]
- People with disabilities and lone-parent families require additional supports to ensure housing adequacy
- Funding Deis schools a key pathway through which to improve early years education and outcomes; especially for children in disadvantaged areas

Thank-you for listening

Additional Slides

What drives experiences of (in)adequate housing? Factors considered



Moving house and (in)adequate housing

- Moving house more likely to be associated with improvements in some housing outcomes
 - Improvements in housing suitability
 - Reductions in neighbourhood disorder
- However, when moves do occur, families more likely to move to a home with the same type of tenancy (renting/owning) than move to a different type of tenancy