

# Housing, Health, and Happiness: How (In)adequate Housing Shapes Child and Parental Wellbeing

## DATE and TIME

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## EVENT

Report Launch

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# Introduction

- Housing adequacy:
  - “Adequate housing incorporates not only the physical condition of the housing and the facilities within the home, but also dimensions of security and the suitability of housing for family needs...[alongside] the quality of the local environment” (Laurence et al. 2023)
- International research: strong on adults - poor housing conditions/overcrowding; neighbourhood disadvantage; frequent moves = increased depression (Evans et al., 2000; Suglia et al., 2011).
  - Less evidence for children – poorer home/neighbourhood quality linked to worse health and wellbeing (Leventhal & Newman, 2010 ; Sammons, 2012; Sylva et al., 2012). Recent work in Ireland: poorer child mental and physical wellbeing (Laurence et al. 2023)
  - However, little work examining the pathways through which inadequate housing affects children’s wellbeing
- **Key aim:** How and why do experiences of inadequate housing in Ireland shape the wellbeing of families?

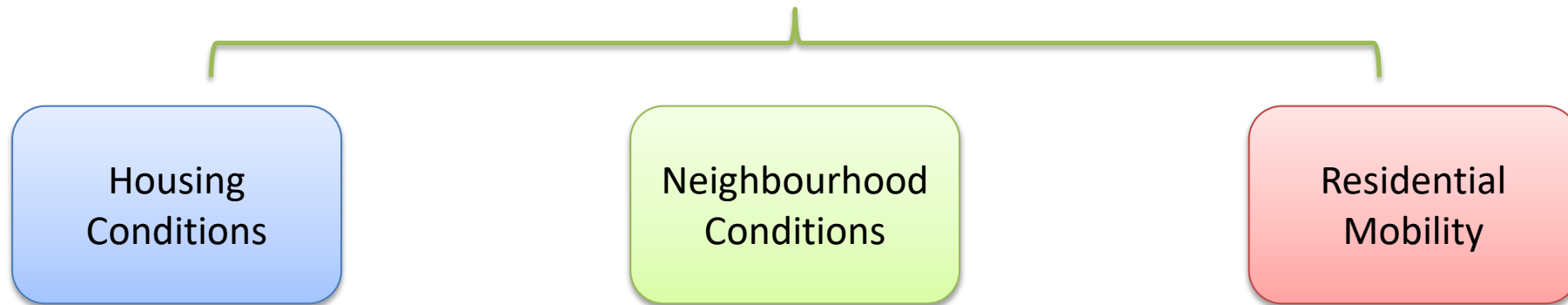
# Housing, wellbeing and the 'family stress' model

- 'Family stress' (FS) model developed to explain poorer child outcomes among disadvantaged families (Conger et al., 2010; Masarik and Conger, 2017)
  - Posits that economic hardship → acute and chronic stressors (e.g. being unable to pay bills or buy necessities) among families
  - Stressors → constellation of negative outcomes, such as depression, partner conflict, and negative relationships with children
  - Negative parental wellbeing → negative child wellbeing
- Inadequate housing can act as additional source of stressors negatively impacting parents' social, emotional and relational wellbeing (Leventhal and Newman, 2010)
  - Inadequate housing → negative parental outcomes → worse child developmental outcomes

# Key Questions: inadequate housing and families' wellbeing in Ireland

1. What kinds of families are most at risk of experiencing inadequate housing?
2. How does inadequate housing shape children's social and emotional wellbeing?
3. How does inadequate housing shape parents' social/relational and mental wellbeing?
4. Can the impact of inadequate housing on parents' wellbeing explain how it affects children's developmental outcomes?
5. Does longer exposure to inadequate housing predict worse familial wellbeing outcomes?

# Measuring (in)adequate housing: a multidimensional indicator



Housing  
Conditions

**Housing tenancy:** owned home, privately rented, social housing, living with child's grandparents

**Housing suitability:** poor conditions (e.g., damp, leaks), 'too small', 'not child friendly'

**Able to keep home adequately warm**

**No garden/outdoor play space**

Neighbourhood  
Conditions

**Perceived neighbourhood disorder,** e.g., rubbish/litter lying about; vandalism/deliberate damage to property

**Low social capital,** e.g., trust in neighbours, willingness of neighbours to help

**Amenities in local area,** e.g., transport, groceries, schools

Residential  
Mobility

**Number of times moved home**

# Child and Parent Wellbeing Outcomes

## PARENTAL OUTCOMES

### MENTAL

Depression symptomology

### SOCIAL/ RELATIONAL

Partner Relationship quality

Stressful parenting

Parenting style: warm, hostile, consistent

Relationship with child: closeness and conflict

### PHYSICAL

Self-rated health

## CHILD OUTCOMES

### MENTAL

Strengths and Difficulties (social and emotional)

# Data

- Data: Growing Up in Ireland, 2008 Cohort
  - We use four waves of data from this study, when child was:
    - 9-months-old (2008-09); 3-years-old (2010-11); 5-years-old (2013-14); 9-years-old (2017-18)
  - Surveyed both mothers and fathers, only show mothers outcomes here
  - Parent(s) and child outcomes measured at wave 5 (child 9-years old)
- Data limitations:
  - Numbers from Traveller Community and families in direct provision too small to be identified separately
  - Data do not contain families directly experiencing homelessness
  - Families with more unstable housing trajectories more likely to drop out of the study over time
  - Can't capture housing affordability e.g., proportion of income on rent



## RESULTS

Which families are more at risk of prolonged experiences of inadequate housing?



# Risks of experiencing inadequate housing (1)

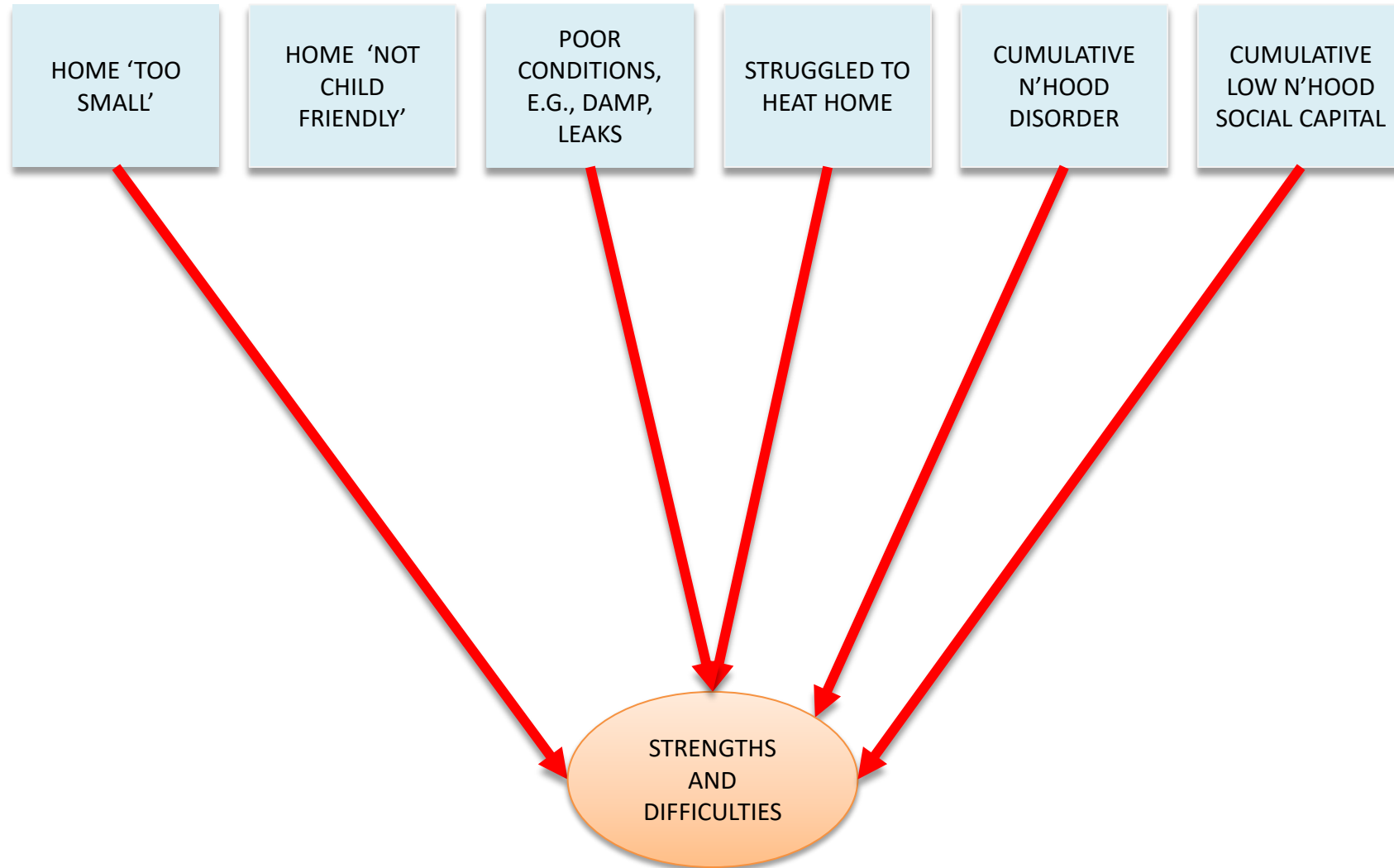
	Unsuitable Housing	Struggle to HH Warm	N of moves	Disorderly areas	Low social capital areas
<b>Low Income</b>	+	+		+	+
<b>Parents out of work</b>	+	+	+		
<b>Lone parenthood</b>		+	+	+	+
<b>Parent(s) with Disability</b>	+	+	+	+	+
<b>Child with Disability</b>	+		+	+	+
<b>Parent(s) non-Irish Nationals</b>	+ African	+ African + Asian	+ EU East	+ Asian	+ Asian
<b>Urban</b>	+		+	+	+
<i>Compared to owned homes:</i>					
<b>Social housing</b>	+	+	+	+	+
<b>Private rented</b>	+	+	+		
<b>Living with child's G'parents</b>	+	-	+		



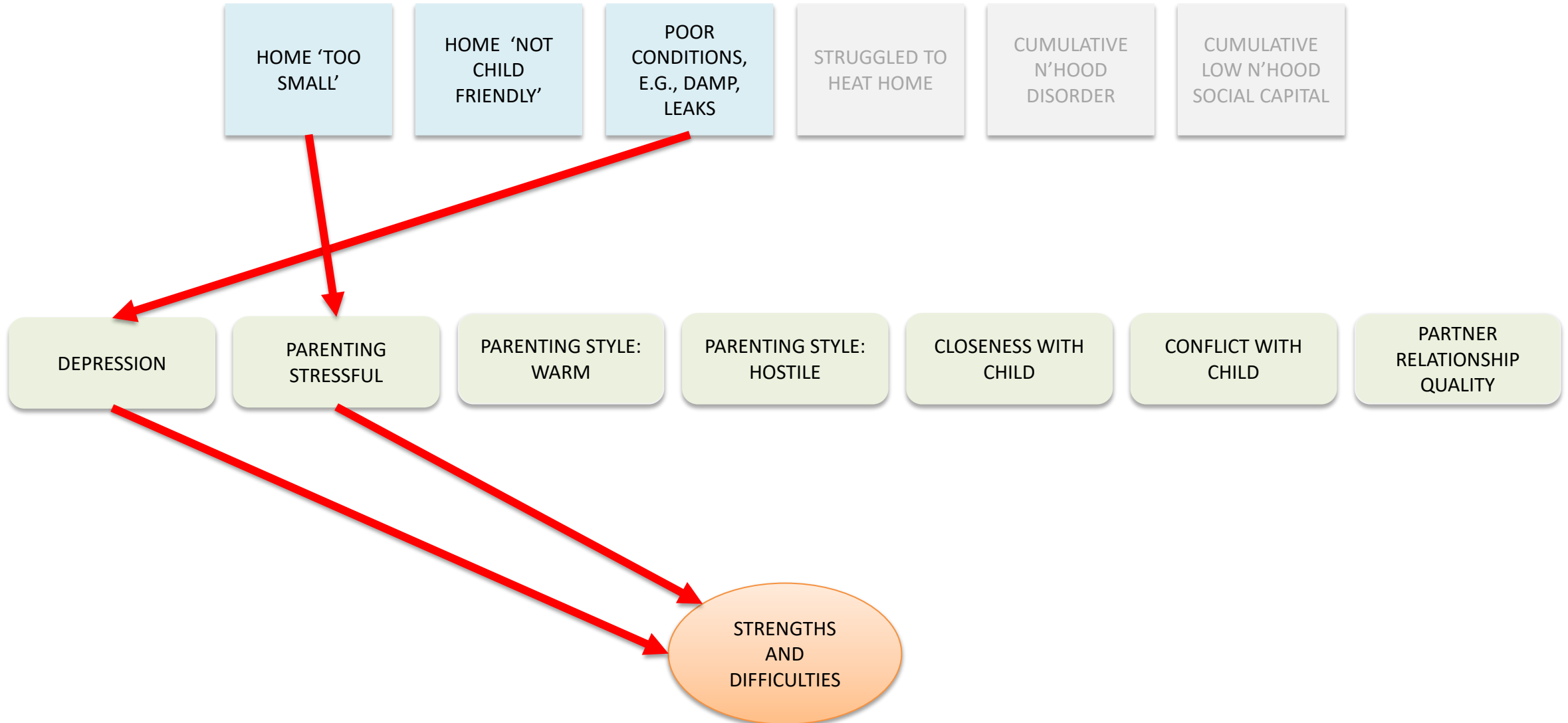
## RESULTS

How are experiences of inadequate housing related to child and parental wellbeing?

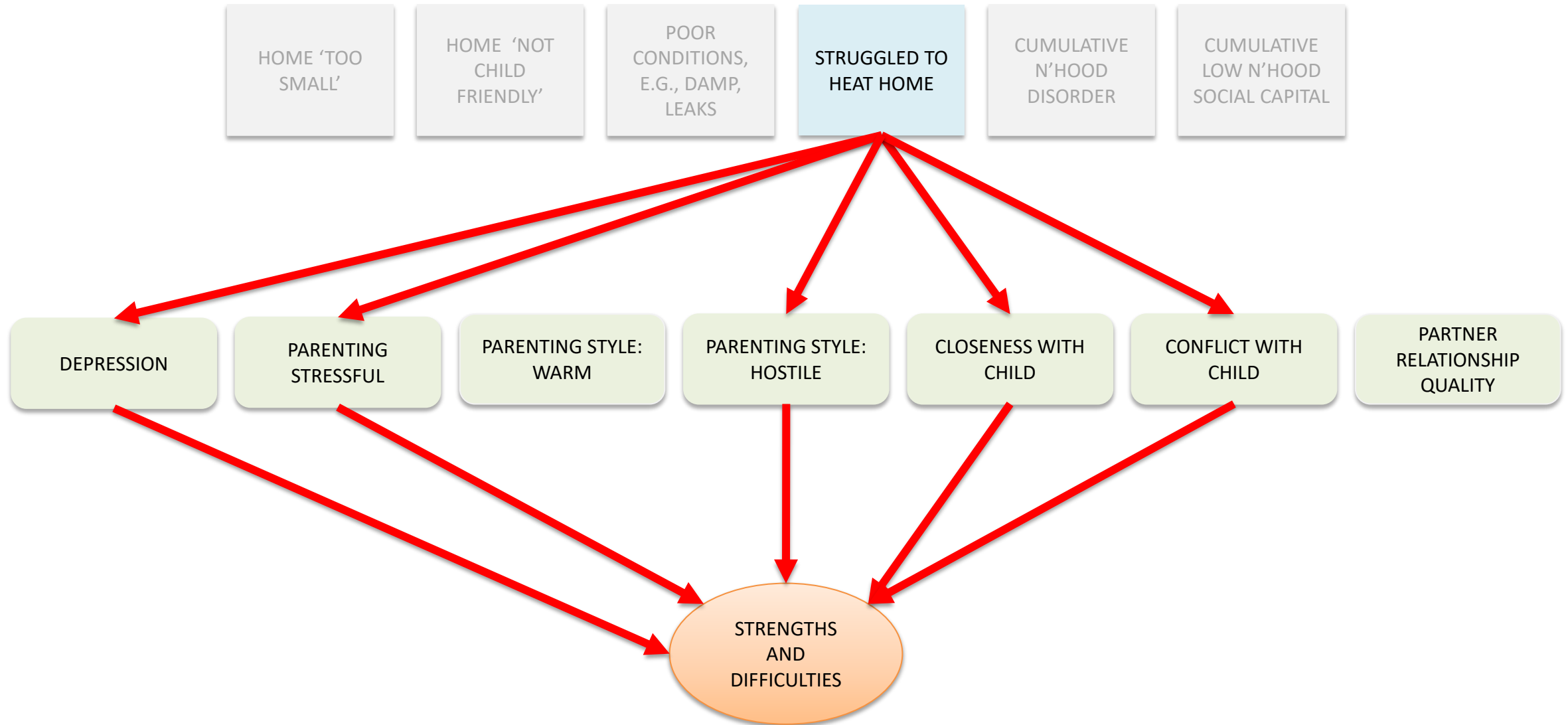
# How does inadequate housing affect children's social and emotional wellbeing?



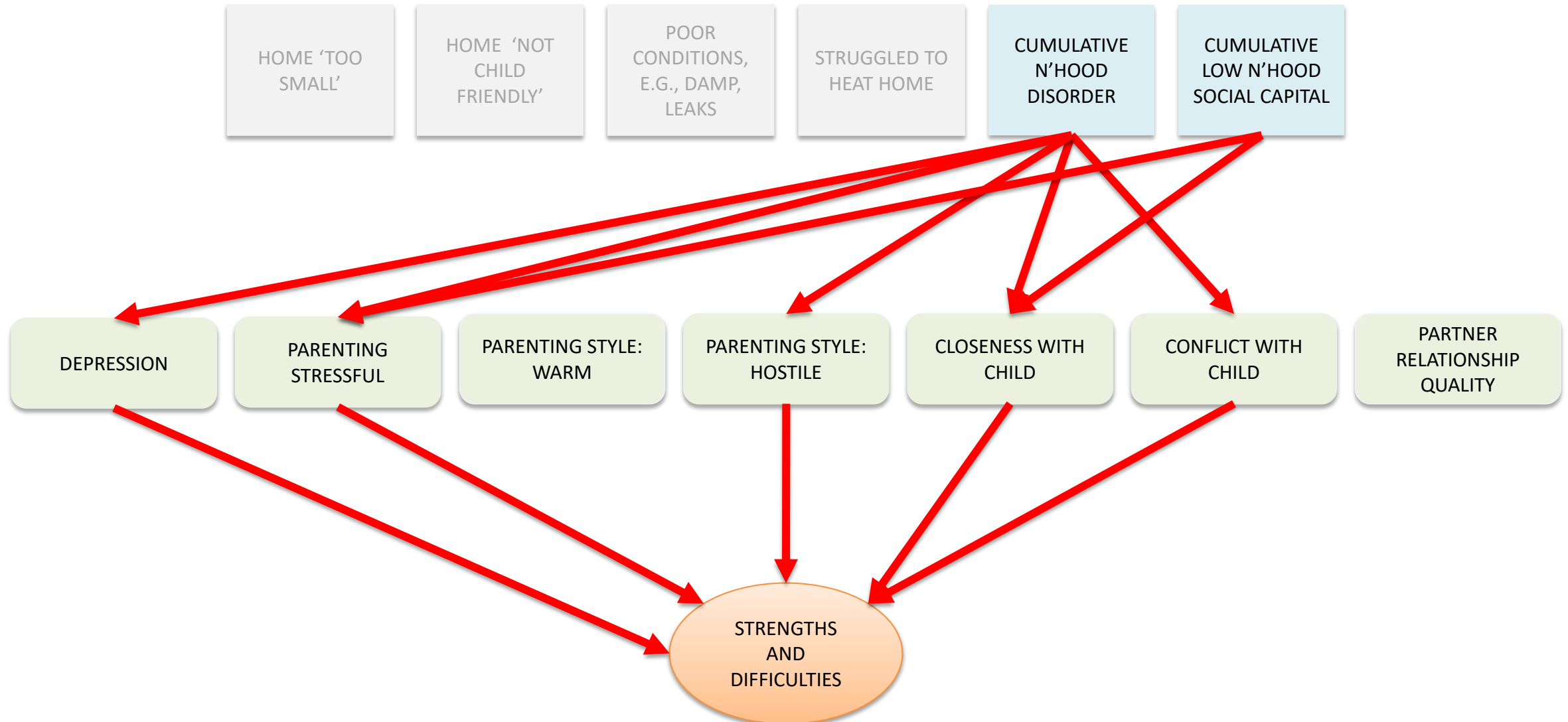
# Effect of inadequate housing on children's outcomes via mother's outcomes - **Types of housing suitability**



# Effect of inadequate housing on children's outcomes via mother's outcomes - Heating poverty



# Effect of inadequate housing on children's outcomes via mother's outcomes - Heating poverty





# CONCLUSIONS

# Conclusions (1)

- Some families more at risk of inadequate housing than others
  - Especially families in lower income HH; lone parent HH; and families with parent/child disabilities
- Inadequate housing is associated with a range of poorer wellbeing outcomes among families
  - Children:
    - Poorer social and emotional wellbeing
  - Mothers:
    - Worse mental health (depressive symptoms)
    - Worse social/relational wellbeing (more conflict and less closeness with their child; parenting more stressful; more hostile and less warm or consistent parenting styles; and poorer quality relationship with their partner)
- Longer time families spend in inadequate housing the worse their wellbeing outcomes
- Impt. of communities when considering housing



## Conclusions (2)

- Evidence that inadequate housing → poorer child socio-emotional wellbeing link explained by its impact on parental wellbeing
  - Some dimensions operate through single pathways e.g.,
    - Home 'too small' → stressful parenting; Poor conditions → depression
  - Struggle to heat HH or neighbourhood disorder have multiple pathways
    - → depression, stressful parenting, less closeness and more conflict with child, more hostile parenting style
- Mothers' wellbeing, depression, parenting style and relationships with children ∴ associated with time spent in inadequate housing, which spills over into poorer socio-emotional wellbeing among children
- Causality and bi-directional relationships

# Policy implications

- Strong policy focus on housing supply and affordability; also need to address housing quality
- Lack of heating and damp housing have detrimental impact on parents' and children's wellbeing (and physical health) - targeted supports to address fuel poverty among families will have long-term benefits for families
- 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]
- Lone parents are another structurally vulnerable group and are disadvantaged across nearly all of the indicators of housing adequacy. A second-tier targeted child benefit payment to lower income families would be a highly effective way of lifting children and their families out of poverty (Roantree and Doorley, 2023)



Thank-you for listening



ADDITIONAL SLIDES

## Risks of experiencing inadequate housing (2)

	Compared to owning a home:		
	Social housing	Private rental	Living with child's G'parents
<b>Low Income</b>	+	+	+
<b>Parents out of work</b>		+	
<b>Lone parenthood</b>	+	+	+
<b>Parent(s) with Disability</b>	+		-
<b>Child with Disability</b>			
<b>Parent(s) non-Irish Nationals</b>	- EU West + African	+ all groups	- most groups
<b>Urban</b>	+	+	

# Housing context of Ireland

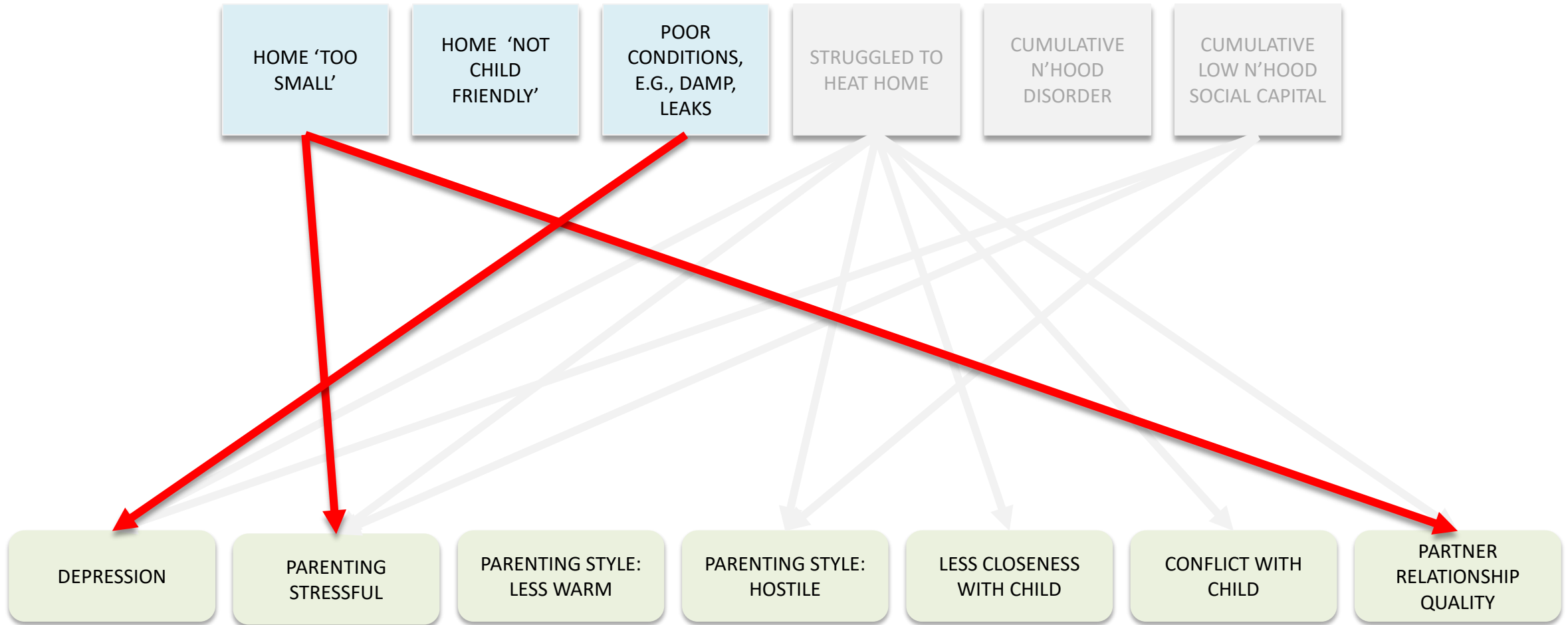
- Traditionally high home ownership society BUT declining from peak of 80% of households in 1991 to 66% in 2022
- Sharp recent rise in private renting increased from 10% to 19% of household between 2006 and 2022
- Falling supply of social housing and increasing reliance rent-supported private housing as substitute for social housing
- Recent years have seen several indicators which suggest Ireland is in the midst of a housing crisis (Doolan et al., 2022; Roantree et al., 2021; Slaymaker et al., 2022)
  - Rising housing costs, lack of secure tenure, a shortage of affordable rental accommodation, and a large rise in the number of homeless families

# Methodology

- Housing inadequacy indicators: cumulative waves (0-3) experiencing different forms of inadequacy e.g., n of waves reporting 'overcrowding', or n of waves 'inadequate heating'
- Modelling approach:
  - Parent(s) and child outcomes measured at wave 5 (child 9-years old)
  - Lagged outcome variable included at earliest period housing inadequacy is measured
  - Overall effects (housing inadequacy on child outcomes) modelled through OLS
  - Path analysis (within SEM framework) tests for significance of indirect effects
    - Bootstrapped estimates indirect effects w/ bias-corrected confidence intervals - multiple mediators simultaneously (Preacher and Hayes 2008)
- Controls (measured at time of outcome – wave 5):
  - Parents' nationality, household composition (e.g., lone-parent), parents' qualifications, parents' disability status, parents' employment status, **household income**, urban/rural community, **material deprivation (able to afford key items)**, child's gender (for child models)

# How does inadequate housing affect MOTHERS' wellbeing?

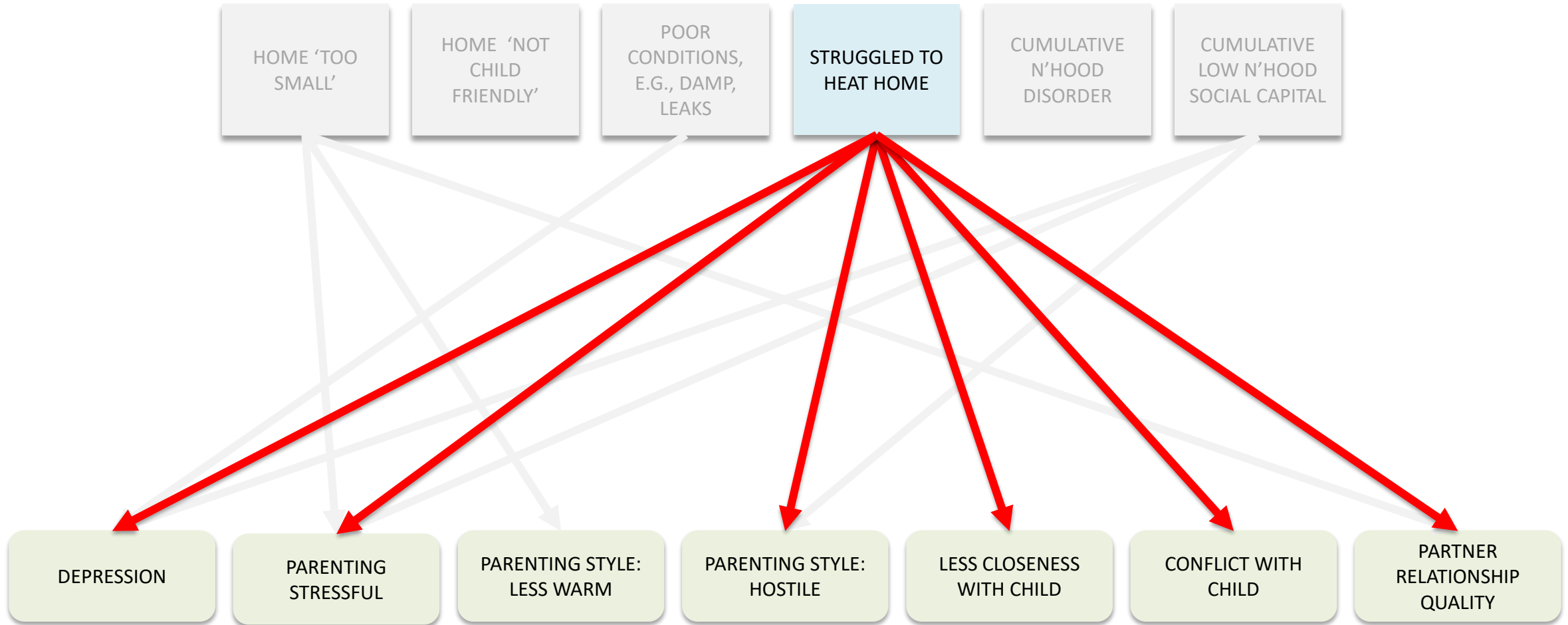
## Types of housing suitability



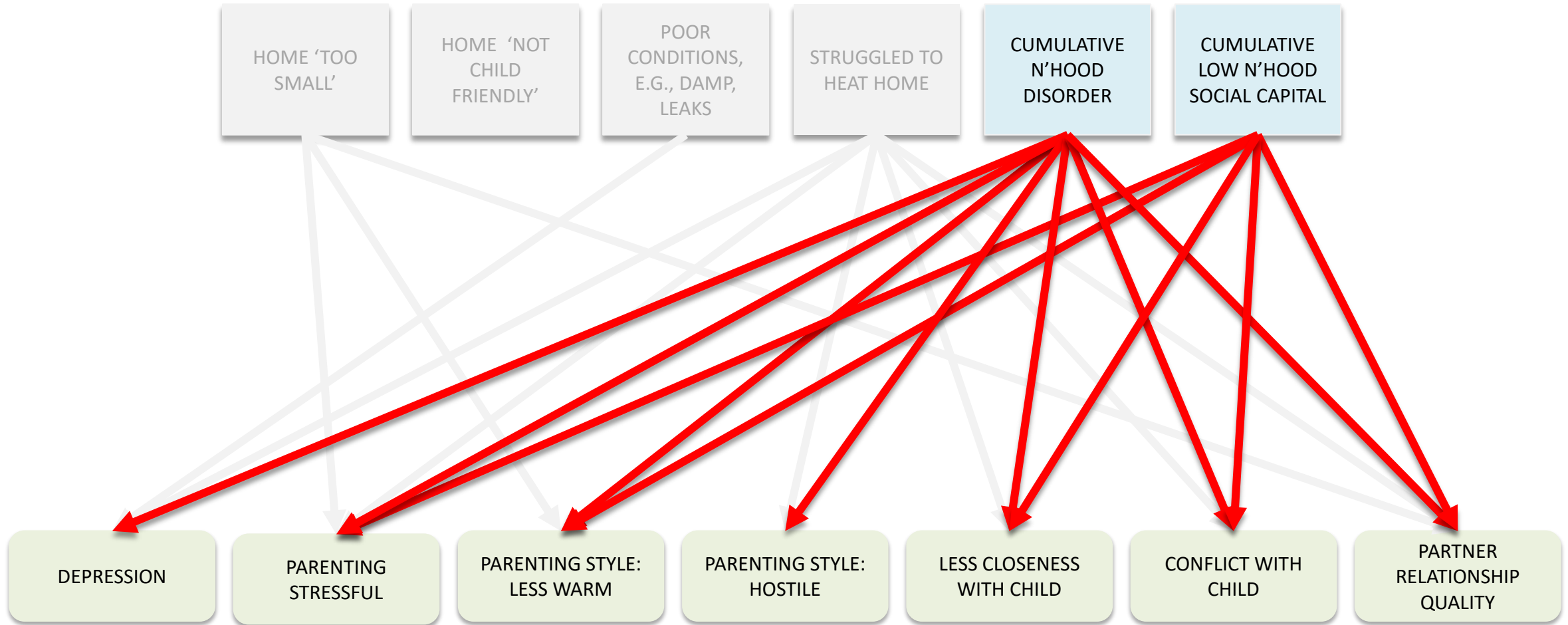


# How does inadequate housing affect MOTHERS' wellbeing?

## Heating poverty



# How does inadequate housing affect MOTHERS' wellbeing? Community disorder and social capital



## Conclusion (3)

- Limitations:
  - Data likely misses most socially excluded experiencing worse housing outcomes
    - HAP in private rentals; housing affordability
  - Analysed focused primarily on mothers
  - Causality, bi-directional relationships, and missing variables
    - Mental health ↔ inadequate housing
    - Mother's wellbeing ↔ child's wellbeing
  - Perceptions of neighbourhoods