

# Public Health Issue and Scope: ACES (Adverse Childhood Experiences)

Madeleine Pollitzer



# What are Adverse Childhood Experiences?

Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) are preventable, potentially traumatic events that occur during childhood.

## What is a traumatic event?

An experience that causes extreme or chronic stress, affecting a child physically and/or emotionally.

## Examples of Traumatic Events

Natural disaster, domestic violence, shootings, bullying, car accident, sexual abuse, war, death of a family member, parents that have divorces, parents with substance abuse/mental health disorders

## Signs of ACES

1. Fear of other people
2. Difficult sleeping or frequent nightmares
3. Bed wetting
4. Changes to their mood
5. Difficulty showing affection
6. Difficult learning in school
7. Avoiding situations that relate to a traumatic experience

**Negative experiences that happen between the ages of 1 and 17 years**

# Common Outcomes in Adults as a Result of ACEs

Anxiety

Phobias

Depression

PTSD

Substance Use  
Disorder

Insomnia

Mood Disorders



# ACES in America

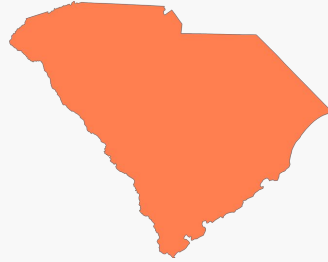
National Health Statistics Related to having Adverse Childhood Experiences

<b>% of smokers who report having ACEs</b>	76%
<b>% of those with depressive disorders that report having ACEs</b>	79%
<b>% of those with asthma or COPD who report having ACEs</b>	68%
<b>% of those who cannot afford access to healthcare who report having ACEs</b>	81%
<b>% of those that use injectable drugs who report having ACEs</b>	33%
<b>Life Expectancy of those with 6 or more ACEs</b>	60.6 years (avg: 79.1 years)

# ACES in South Carolina

**62%**

Of South Carolina adults report  
having 1 ACE as a child



**16%**

Of South Carolina adults report  
having 4 or more ACEs as a child

**22%**

Of South Carolina adults report  
having at 2 or more ACEs as a child

# Prevalence of ACE Types in South Carolina

## Prevalence of ACE types



**DIVORCE/SEPARATION**

**30%**



**MENTAL ILLNESS**

**16%**



**EMOTIONAL ABUSE**

**30%**



**PHYSICAL ABUSE**

**15%**



**SUBSTANCE USE**

**28%**



**SEXUAL ABUSE**

**14%**



**DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**

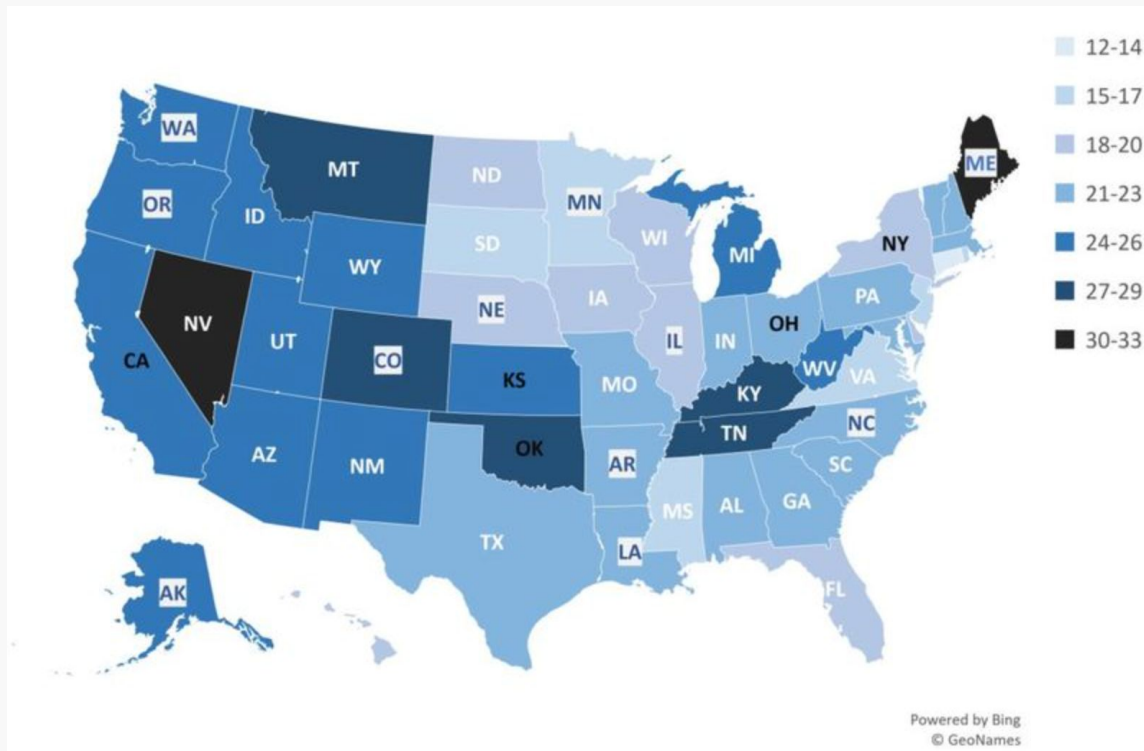
**20%**



**INCARCERATION**

**9%**

# Population Distribution of ACEs in the USA



\*\*\*more concentrated in midwest, northeast, and other areas

# Political Perspectives on this Public Health Issue

A study surveying state legislatures assessed whether or not these legislatures considered specific experiences increased the risk for adult behavioral conditions...

- 77%** thought that sexual abuse increased the risk.
- 60%** thought that physical abuse increased the risk.
- 39%** thought that witnessing domestic violence increased the risk.
- 38%** thought that neglect increased the risk.

## ACEs and Crime

It is known that ACEs are not an excuse for crime, but important to note that 90% of juvenile offenders in the United States have experienced some sort of traumatic event in childhood.





73.8% of those  
living below the  
poverty line report  
to have had ACEs

Total Population Affected by ACEs

63.9% of U.S. adults

\$88,000 per adult (capita) affected

3.5% of USAs GDP spent on  
poor health outcomes  
caused by ACEs





# Health Insurance Coverage

**Insured:**  
85.8%

**Uninsured:**  
14.18%

Out of those with recorded  
ACEs in America

History of  
Adverse  
Childhood  
Experiences:

# The Original ACE Study

one of the largest investigations of childhood abuse and neglect

## When was it?

1995 - 1997

## What did it do?

Proved a direct link between childhood trauma and adult onset of chronic disease, incarceration, and employment challenges. As well as develop the ACE score

## What was it?

A study done by the CDC on 17,000 patients to see how ACEs negatively impact health outcomes. The CDC categorized ACEs into three groups: abuse, neglect, and household challenges, all with corresponding subgroups.

The CDC found at risk individuals for ACEs included: women, American Indian or Alaska natives, and multiracial people.

## The ACE Score

Calculated by answering a series of yes or no questions. Each “yes” counts as an ACE. The ACEs are tallied up to see how many the participant has experienced. The ACE score does not reflect the severity of the experiences.

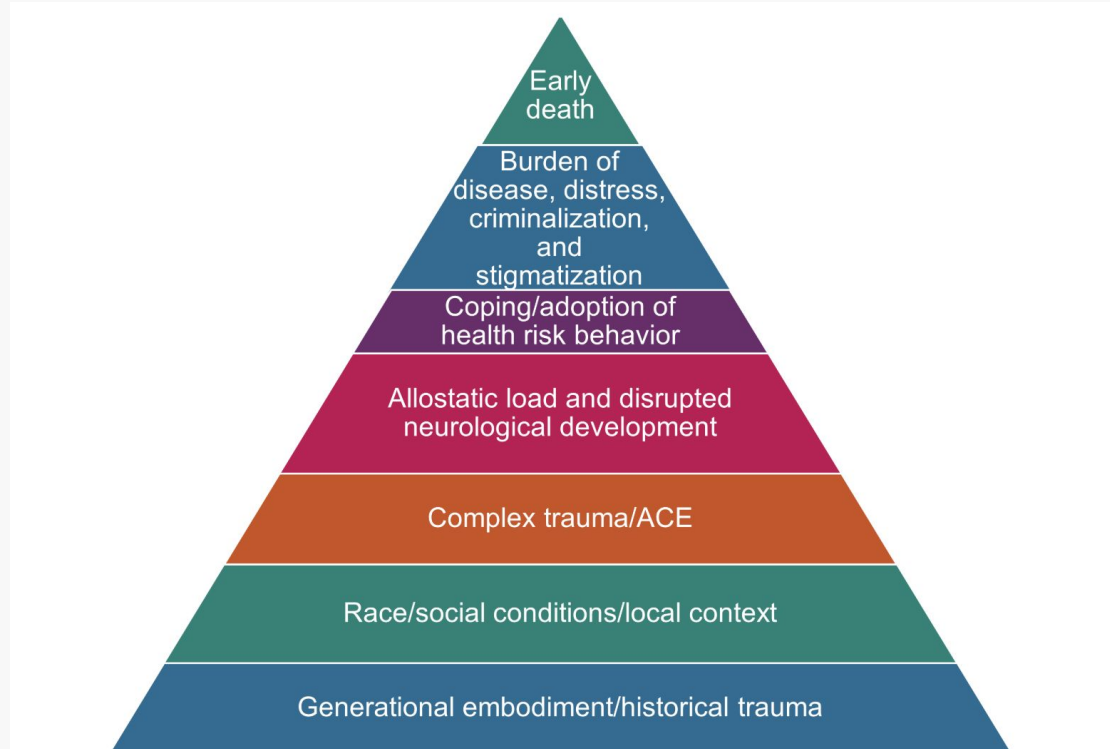


# The ACE pyramid (adapted as a result of the ACEs study)

Death



Conception



# Social Determinants of Health and ACEs



Preventing ACEs would reduce unemployment rates by **15%**



Preventing ACEs would reduce the percentage of those without a high school education by **5%**



Preventing ACEs would reduce the amount of people without health insurance by **4%**



Likeness of urban children to have ACEs: **40.7%**  
Likelihood of rural children to have ACEs: **45.2%**

# Strategies of Prevention of ACEs by the CDC

1. **Strengthen economic supports to families:** strengthening household financial security, and promote family friendly work policies
2. **Promote social norms that protect against violence and adversity:** public education campaign, legislative approaches, bystander approaches
3. **Ensure a strong start for children:** early childhood home visitation, high quality childcare, family engagement in preschool
4. **Teach skills:** Social-emotional learning and healthy relationships promotion
5. **Connect youth to caring adults and activities:** mentoring and after school programs
6. **Intervene to lessen immediate and long-term harms:** victim centered services and family centered services



## Resources

- <https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/symptoms/24875-adverse-childhood-experiences-1>
- <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC9109307/>
- <https://scchildren.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/SC-ACE-Data.pdf>
- <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC6773502/>
- [https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC8573710/#:~:text=However%2C%20a%202019%20study%20estimated,gross%20domestic%20product%20\(GDP\).](https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC8573710/#:~:text=However%2C%20a%202019%20study%20estimated,gross%20domestic%20product%20(GDP).)
- <https://leb.fbi.gov/articles/featured-articles/adverse-childhood-experiences-and-crime>
- <https://nhtta.acf.hhs.gov/soar/eguide/stop/adverse-childhood-experiences>
- <https://statehealthcompare.shadac.org/table/247/percent-of-children-with-adverse-childhood-experiences-aces-by-poverty-level#1/32,185,181,182,183,184,173,172,171/77/288>
- <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/aces/about.html>
- <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC6306082/#fdx155s8>
- [https://sc.edu/study/colleges\\_schools/public\\_health/research/research\\_centers/sc\\_rural\\_health\\_research\\_center/documents/crouchacepce1.pdf](https://sc.edu/study/colleges_schools/public_health/research/research_centers/sc_rural_health_research_center/documents/crouchacepce1.pdf)