

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)



Risk Factors

- **Sex**
Females are at greater risk of experiencing ACEs compared to males.
- **Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity**
Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people experience more ACEs than straight and cisgender people.
- **Race/Ethnicity**
Individuals who are Black, Hispanic/Latino, and multiracial are at greater risk of experiencing significantly more ACEs than individuals who are White.
- **Socioeconomic Status**
Households earning less than \$15,000 each year have a higher mean ACE score compared to households with other earnings.
- **Employment Level**
Those that are unemployed or unable to work have a higher mean ACE score compared to those that are employed.
- **Educational Attainment**
Lower education is associated with a higher prevalence of ACEs.

Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) are potentially traumatic experiences that occur before the age of 18. ACEs range from physical and sexual abuse to household challenges experienced by parents, caregivers, or other adults living with the child. Experiencing a higher number of ACEs is associated with chronic health conditions, mental illness, and health risk behaviors.

Facts

- From 2015-2017, about 61% of adults in the United States had experienced 1 or more ACEs, and 1 in 6 adults in the United States had experienced 4 or more ACEs.
- In 2020, about 53% of adults in San Diego County experienced 1 or more ACEs, and roughly 1 in 4 adults reported experiencing 4 or more ACEs.
- From 2015-2019, emotional abuse was the most common ACE among adults in San Diego County, followed by parental divorce/separation.

Resources

County of San Diego,
Child Welfare Services
[Child Welfare Services](#)

Family Support—NAMI San Diego
namisandiego.org

For more information and data go to

www.SDHealthStatistics.com

Community Health Statistics Unit:
619-692-6667

Prevention

- **Strengthen economic support for families**
- **Promote family-friendly work policies**
 - Paid family leave
- **Raise awareness of ACEs**
 - Public education campaigns
- **Access to high-quality mental and physical healthcare**
- **Screening for ACEs**
 - ACE screening can identify individuals who may be at increased risk of having a toxic stress response.
 - Early detection improves outcomes related to toxic stress, can strengthen existing protective factors, and initiate early stress buffering interventions.
- **Teaching and practicing stress-mitigation strategies**
 - Enhancing supportive relationships
 - Regular exercise
 - Access to nature
 - Sufficient and high-quality sleep
 - Eating balanced meals
 - Practicing mindfulness