



Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), or early negative experiences, can lead to negative impacts later in life, such as **poor mental and physical health, lower academic achievements, and substance abuse.**

What are ACEs?

In the research discussed here, ACEs refer to these experiences:¹

- Homelessness
- Involvement in child welfare systems
- Medical trauma
- Natural disasters
- Neglect (physical/emotional)
- Household: substance abuse, mental illness, domestic violence, incarceration, parental abandonment, divorce, and loss
- Community violence
- Discrimination (including racism and sexism)
- Abuse (emotional/physical/sexual)
- Bullying/Violence of or by another child, sibling or adult

The Impact of Adverse Childhood Experiences

Children with ACEs are at an increased risk of negative outcomes in multiple areas of their lives: ^{2, 3}



- Poor health, including mental health
- Substance abuse



- Depression
- Risky behavior
- Difficulty concentrating or making decisions



- Poor academic achievement
- Employment problems

Prevalence of Adverse Childhood Experiences in Georgia⁴

Georgia collects data from adults about ACEs they experienced as children through the Georgia Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS).⁵ The most recent available data is from 2020. (This research does not include the ACEs of neglect and/or having a family member attempt or die by suicide.)⁶

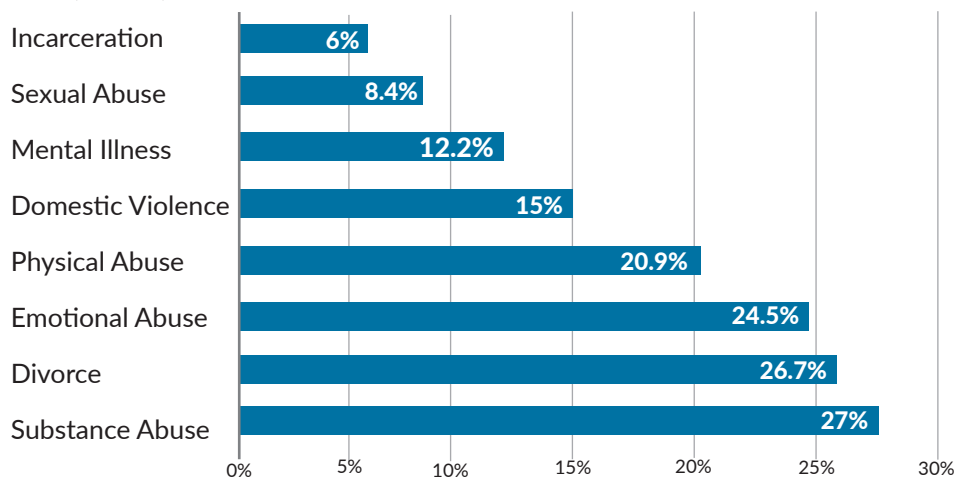
Nearly **3 in 5** surveyed Georgians reported having experienced at least one ACE.

16.3% of Georgians reported having experienced at least four ACEs.

18% experienced 4+ ACEs.

Types of ACEs Experienced by Georgians⁷

The ACEs reported being experienced most frequently: being insulted or sworn at by one's parents (28.9%) and divorced parents (27.4%).



Policy Recommendations

The following recommendations build protective factors around families. In order to adequately tackle ACEs and toxic stress, an adequate support system for each child should be at the center of any child policy platform.

Early Care and Learning

- Create an environment where the effects of toxic stress are buffered with appropriate supports

Early Intervention

- Increase access to health care and home visiting support, including screening, diagnosis, and intervention

Parental Health

- Address parental mental and behavioral health to minimize, or even prevent, a child's exposure to traumatic environments

Afterschool and Summer Learning Programs

- Increase funding and prevalence for quality afterschool and summer learning programs like the Boys and Girls Clubs and YMCAs to increase access and ensure affordability

Foster Youth Care

- Maximize implementation of the federal Family First Prevention Services Act
- Develop procedures that enable continuity of behavioral health and primary care while youth are in foster care and after they're transitioning out of the system

Juvenile Justice and School Discipline

- Train school resource officers and public safety officers who engage with children in child development and trauma awareness

Workforce and Systems Development

- Train caregivers and child-serving professionals on the effects of trauma and stress on children and youth to ensure they respond appropriately to behaviors and initiate effective interventions

Nutrition

- Increase funding for the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)

Stable Housing

- Improve Georgia's renter protection laws to reduce incidents of unsafe housing and eviction



References for Adverse Childhood Experiences and Childhood Stress

Suggested citation: Voices for Georgia's Children. (2023). Fact Sheet: ACEs and Childhood Stress. Voices for Georgia's Children. <https://adobe.ly/47UTmkU>.

- 1 "Understanding ACEs," Paces Connection, 2021. Retrieved September 21, 2023. https://www.pacesconnection.com/ws/Handouts_UnderstandingACEs_EN.pdf.
- 2 Ibid.
- 3 "ACEs and Toxic Stress: Frequently Asked Questions," Harvard University Center on the Developing Child. Retrieved September 21, 2023. https://harvardcenter.wpenginepowered.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/ACEsInfographic_080218.pdf.
- 4 "Preventing Adverse Childhood Experiences Through Positive Connections and Policies," Georgia Essentials for Childhood, 2020. <https://www.pacesconnection.com/login/context/GENERAL/redirect/https%3A%2F%2Fwww.pacesconnection.com%2Fdb%2Fflaws-and-resolutions-concerning-aces%2Frecord%2Fgeorgia>.
- 5 Emory University, Injury Prevention Research Center. Preventing Adverse Childhood Experiences: Data to Action. Retrieved September 21, 2023. <https://iprce.emory.edu/pace-d2a.html>.
- 6 "Preventing Adverse Childhood Experiences Through Positive Connections and Policies," Georgia Essentials for Childhood, 2020. <https://www.pacesconnection.com/login/context/GENERAL/redirect/https%3A%2F%2Fwww.pacesconnection.com%2Fdb%2Fflaws-and-resolutions-concerning-aces%2Frecord%2Fgeorgia>.
- 7 Emory University, Injury Prevention Research Center. Preventing Adverse Childhood Experiences: Data to Action. Retrieved September 21, 2023. <https://iprce.emory.edu/pace-d2a.html>.