

Adverse Childhood Experiences and Adult Mental Well-Being in Wales

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) have harmful impacts on health and well-being across the life course. The Welsh ACE Study measured exposure to nine ACEs in the Welsh population and their effect on mental well-being in adulthood.

47% of adults in Wales suffered at least one ACE during their childhood and 14% suffered 4 or more.

How many adults in Wales have been exposed to each ACE?

CHILD MALTREATMENT



Verbal abuse
23%



Physical abuse
17%



Sexual abuse
10%

CHILDHOOD HOUSEHOLD INCLUDED



Parental separation
20%



Domestic violence
16%



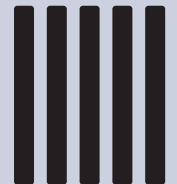
Mental illness
14%



Alcohol abuse
14%



Drug use
5%

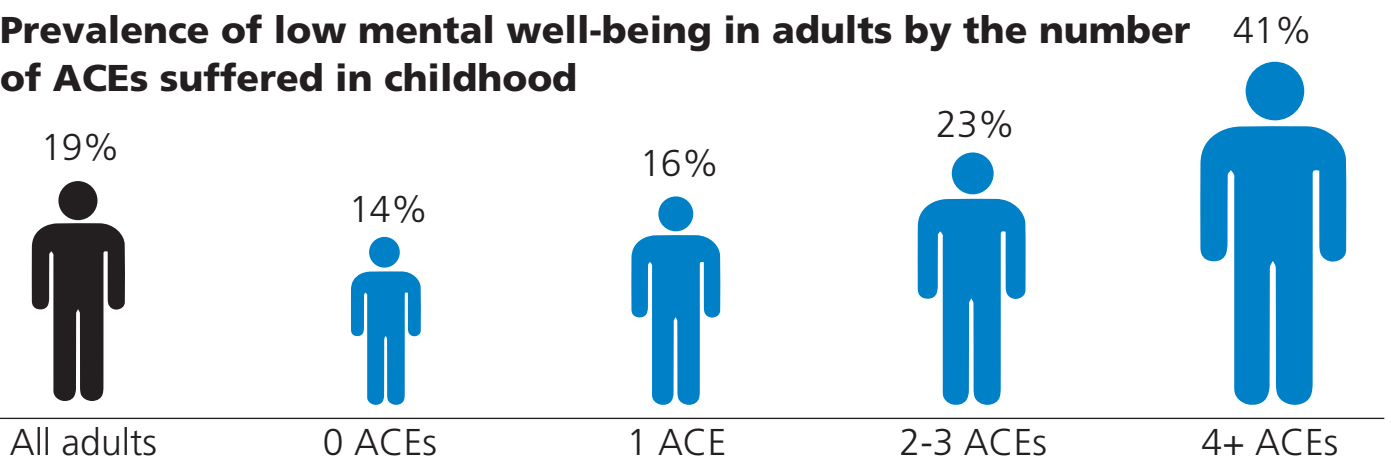


Incarceration
5%

The prevalence of low mental well-being in adults increased with the number of ACEs suffered in childhood

Mental well-being was measured using the Short Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (SWEMWBS) which includes seven questions to assess mental wellbeing over the last two weeks. Scores for these questions are combined to provide an overall mental well-being score ranging from 7 to 35. Individuals scoring below 20 were categorised as having low mental well-being.*

Prevalence of low mental well-being in adults by the number of ACEs suffered in childhood



*Low mental well-being was classified as >1 standard deviation below the mean overall mental well-being SWEMWBS score of all respondents (mean = 24.47, SD = 4.57, low <20).

Adults with 4+ ACEs were five times^s more likely to have low mental well-being than those with no ACEs

Over the past two weeks, compared to people with no ACEs, those with 4+ ACEs were also:

- 3 times more likely** to have never or rarely felt relaxed
- 3 times more likely** to have never or rarely felt close to other people
- 4 times more likely** to have never or rarely been thinking clearly
- 5 times more likely** to have never or rarely to have dealt with problems well
- 5 times more likely** to have never or rarely been able to make up their own mind about things
- 6 times more likely** to have never or rarely felt optimistic about the future
- 6 times more likely** to have never or rarely felt useful

Preventing ACEs in future generations could reduce levels of:



Low mental well-being by 27%



Not feeling optimistic about the future by 43%



Not feeling useful by 48%



Not feeling relaxed by 38%



Not dealing with problems well by 31%



Not thinking clearly by 34%



Not feeling close to other people by 25%



Not being able to make their mind up about things by 26%

The national survey of Adverse Childhood Experiences in Wales interviewed approximately 2000 people (aged 18-69 years) from across Wales at their homes in 2015. Of those eligible to participate, just under half agreed to take part and we are grateful to all those who freely gave their time. Information in this info-graphic is supplementary to the first report on *Adverse Childhood Experiences and their association with health-harming behaviours in the Welsh adult population* published in January 2016.

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^sAfter taking demographic factors (age, sex, ethnicity and residential deprivation) into account