

Executive Summary

2013 BRFSS Adverse Childhood Experiences among Alaska Native People

An adverse childhood event (ACE) describes a traumatic experience in a person’s life occurring before the age of 18 that the person recalls as an adult.¹

The original Adverse Childhood Events (ACEs) study conducted during 1995–1997 in California by Kaiser Permanente and the U.S. Centers for Disease Prevention and Control (CDC) found that negative experiences in childhood were linked to negative adult outcomes, including a multitude of health and social problems. Furthermore, the likelihood of a negative adult outcome increased in a strong and graded fashion as the number of reported ACEs increased.² Figure 1 illustrates the ACEs pyramid.

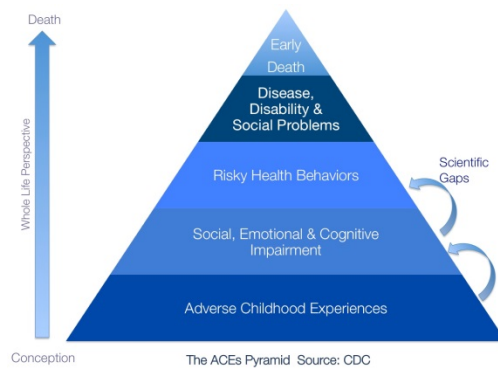


Figure 1. ACEs Pyramid.

In 2008, the CDC developed an optional set of 11 ACE questions covering 8 domains of childhood abuse and household dysfunction for use by states in the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS). The domains of childhood abuse and household dysfunction covered in the survey are listed in Table 1. Actual questions included in the ACEs Optional Module can be found in Appendix A. In Alaska, the ACEs module was included for the first time on the 2013 BRFSS survey. This report is an initial summary of 2013 ACEs survey results specifically for Alaska Native people.

Table 1. Adverse childhood experiences (ACE) domains covered on the 2013 BRFSS survey

Childhood Abuse (experienced during childhood by respondent)	Household dysfunction (events during childhood observed by respondent among adults living in the household)
Physical abuse	Substance abuse
Psychological abuse	Household member imprisoned
Sexual abuse	Mental illness
	Adult violence
	Parental separation or divorce

Number of ACEs Reported

First, **ACEs are common in Alaska**. The highest number of ACEs that could be experienced is 8. Overall, an estimated **64.4% of all Alaskans and 75.4% of Alaska Native people** experienced one or more ACE. Significantly, an estimated 24.6% of Alaska Native (AN) people in Alaska experienced no ACEs compared with 37.3% of non-AN Alaskans whereas the prevalence of 4 or more ACEs was 27.9% for AN people compared with 15.6% among non-AN Alaskans. Figure 2 below illustrates the estimated prevalence of ACEs by category for AN and non-AN people. Categories were selected to be comparable with reports from other states.

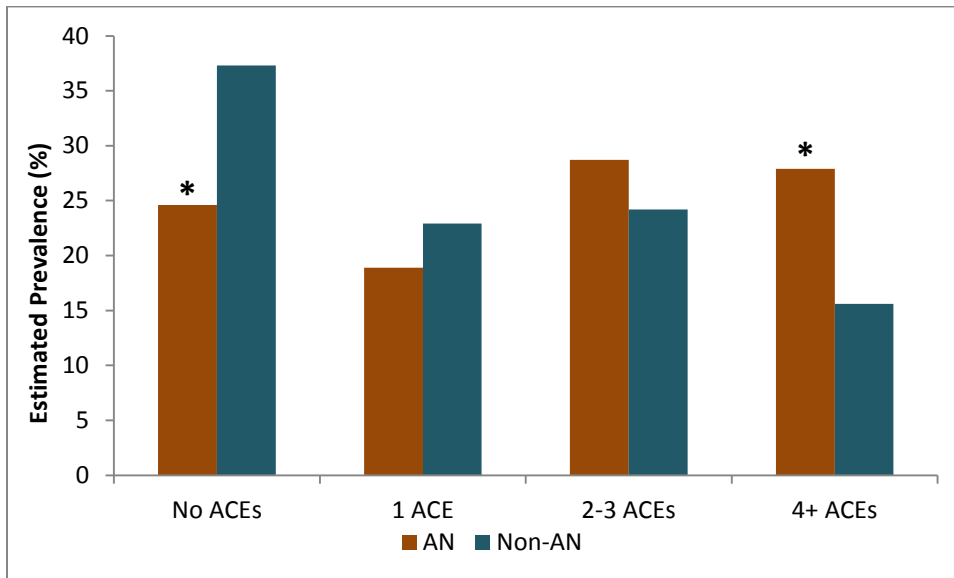


Figure 2. Estimated prevalence of ACEs in 4 categories for Alaska Native people compared with non-Alaska Native people, 2013 BRFSS.

*Estimates for AN compared with non-AN differed significantly based on non-overlapping confidence intervals

Types of ACEs

Parental divorce or separation (31.7%) and verbal abuse (31.0%) were the most prevalent ACEs among all Alaskans. **Among AN people, living with someone a substance abuse problem (drugs or alcohol) was the most common ACE with an estimated prevalence of 49.8%**. Compared with non-AN Alaskans, AN people experienced significantly higher prevalences of living with someone with a substance abuse problem, parental separation or divorce, witnessing domestic violence, sexual abuse, and having an incarcerated household member. Figure 3 illustrates the estimated prevalence of the 8 ACEs for AN and non-AN Alaskans.

Living with someone with a substance abuse problem (drugs or alcohol) was the most common ACE reported by AN females (55.5%) and males (44.1%). When comparing AN females with AN males, the only significant difference was the prevalence of sexual abuse. The estimated prevalence of sexual abuse was 32.3% for females compared with 11.7% for males. Figure 4 illustrates the estimated prevalence of the 8 ACEs for AN women and men.

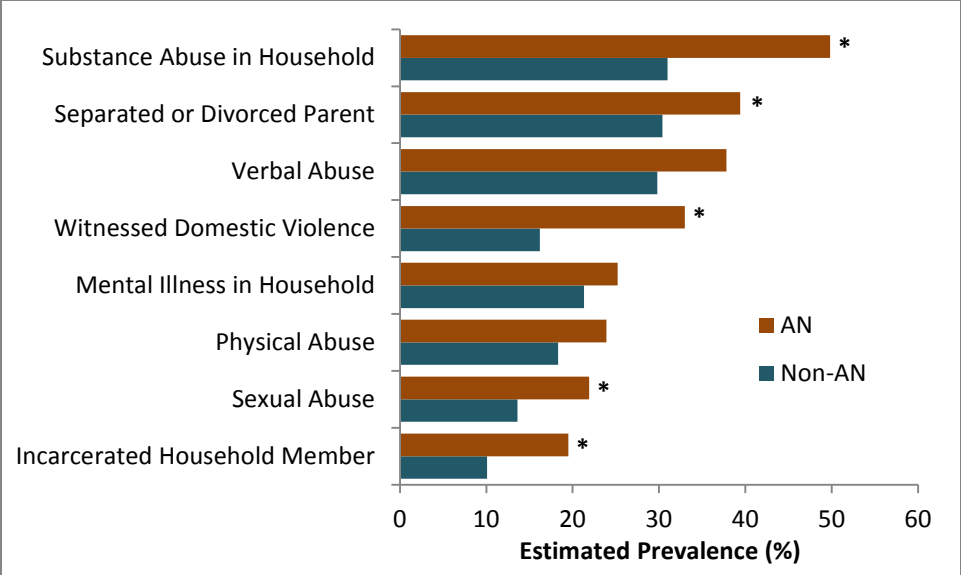


Figure 3. Estimated prevalence of the 8 ACEs comparing AN people with non-AN people in Alaska, 2013 BRFSS.

*Estimates for AN compared with non-AN differed significantly based on non-overlapping confidence intervals.

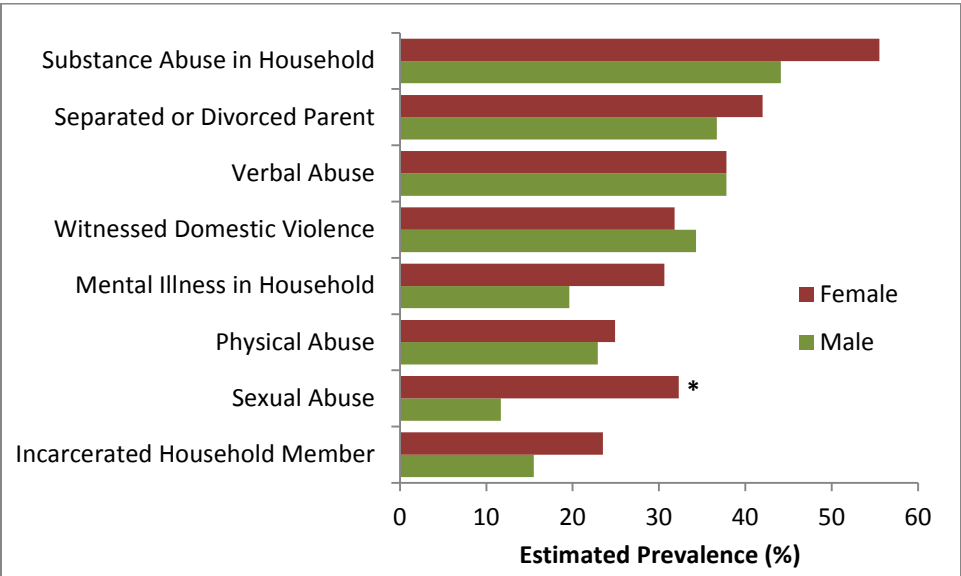


Figure 4. Estimated prevalence of the 8 ACEs, by sex, Alaska Native people in Alaska, 2013 BRFSS.

*Estimates for males compared with females differed significantly based on non-overlapping confidence intervals.

ACEs and Health

The original ACEs study conducted at Kaiser Permanente and subsequent analyses of BRFSS data in other states documented associations between an increasing number of ACEs and strong and graded risks for mental and physical health problems. Figure 5 illustrates an apparent association between increased number of ACEs and increased frequency of “frequent mental distress”, “fair to poor” general health, and smoking among Alaska Native people; however due to small sample sizes these trends are not statistically significant.

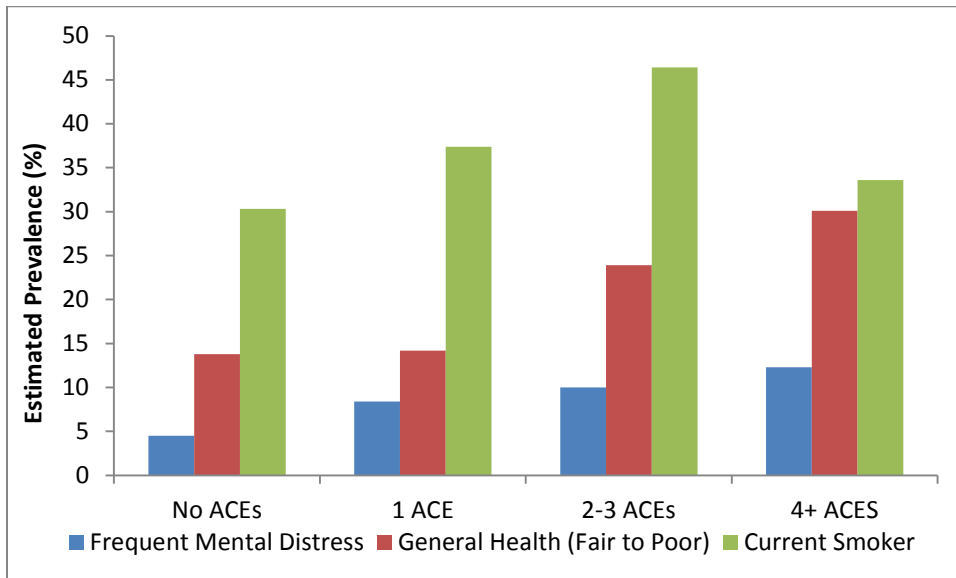


Figure 5. Trends in selected health outcomes by increasing numbers of ACEs among Alaska Native people illustrated as the estimated prevalence of the selected health condition within the ACEs category.

Collecting and analyzing ACEs data can help improve our knowledge of the prevalence of ACEs in Alaska and their impact on the health and well-being of Alaskans. In turn, we can use this information to help communities and health care organizations develop strategies to prevent and respond to ACEs.

The State of Alaska BRFSS is collecting ACEs data in 2014 and has committed to collecting a third year of ACEs data in 2015. To ensure improved data on ACEs among Alaska Native people, ANTHC has committed to assist in funding the third year of data collection through its Office of Minority Health National Umbrella Cooperative Agreement grant. ANTHC, through the Alaska Native Epidemiology Center, also funds oversampling in rural regions of Alaska to increase the number of Alaska Native people included in the sample.

References

1. Minnesota Department of Health. Adverse Childhood Experiences in Minnesota. January 2013. Accessed at: http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/chs/brfss/ACE_ExecutiveSummary.pdf
2. CDC. ACE Study. Accessed at: <http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/cestudy/index.html>



Module 22: Adverse Childhood Experience

I'd like to ask you some questions about events that happened during your childhood. This information will allow us to better understand problems that may occur early in life, and may help others in the future. This is a sensitive topic and some people may feel uncomfortable with these questions. At the end of this section, I will give you a phone number for an organization that can provide information and referral for these issues. Please keep in mind that you can ask me to skip any question you do not want to answer.

All questions refer to the time period before you were 18 years of age. Now, looking back before you were 18 years of age—

1. Did you live with anyone who was depressed, mentally ill, or suicidal? (381)
 - 1 Yes
 - 2 No
 - 7 Don't know / Not sure
 - 9 Refused

2. Did you live with anyone who was a problem drinker or alcoholic? (382)
 - 1 Yes
 - 2 No
 - 7 Don't know / Not sure
 - 9 Refused

3. Did you live with anyone who used illegal street drugs or who abused prescription medications? (383)
 - 1 Yes
 - 2 No
 - 7 Don't know / Not sure
 - 9 Refused

4. Did you live with anyone who served time or was sentenced to serve time in a prison, jail, or other correctional facility? (384)
 - 1 Yes
 - 2 No
 - 7 Don't know / Not sure
 - 9 Refused

5. Were your parents separated or divorced? (385)
 - 1 Yes
 - 2 No
 - 8 Parents not married
 - 7 Don't know / Not sure
 - 9 Refused

Appendix A cont.



6. How often did your parents or adults in your home ever slap, hit, kick, punch, or beat each other up? (386)
- 1 Never
 - 2 Once
 - 3 More than once
- Do not read:
- 7 Don't know / Not sure
 - 9 Refused
7. Before age 18, how often did a parent or adult in your home ever hit, beat, kick, or physically hurt you in any way? Do not include spanking. Would you say--- (387)
- 1 Never
 - 2 Once
 - 3 More than once
- Do not read:
- 7 Don't know / Not sure
 - 9 Refused
8. How often did a parent or adult in your home ever swear at you, insult you, or put you down? (388)
- 1 Never
 - 2 Once
 - 3 More than once
- Do not read:
- 7 Don't know / Not sure
 - 9 Refused
9. How often did anyone at least 5 years older than you or an adult, ever touch you sexually? (389)
- 1 Never
 - 2 Once
 - 3 More than once
- Do not read:
- 7 Don't know / Not sure
 - 9 Refused



10. How often did anyone at least 5 years older than you or an adult try to make you touch them sexually? (390)

- 1 Never
- 2 Once
- 3 More than once

Do not read:

- 7 Don't know / Not sure
- 9 Refused

11. How often did anyone at least 5 years older than you or an adult force you to have sex? (391)

- 1 Never
- 2 Once
- 3 More than once

Do not read:

- 7 Don't know / Not sure
- 9 Refused

As I mentioned when we started this section, I would give you a phone number for an organization that can provide information and referral for these issues. You can dial (place state or local hotline here) to reach a referral service to locate an agency in your area. [Note: if no local or state hotline is available, give respondent the National Hotline for child abuse 1-800-422-4-A-CHILD (1-800-422-4453)].