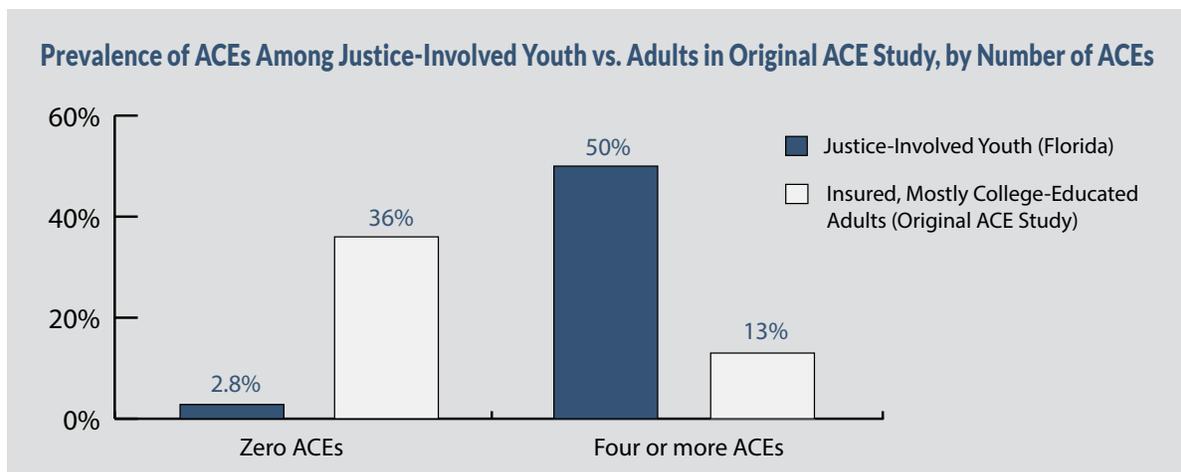


High Rates of Adverse Childhood Experiences Among Justice-Involved Youth Increase Risk for Health, Social Problems

A study recently published in the *Journal of Juvenile Justice* reported that justice-involved youth had significantly elevated rates of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs),¹ much greater than the insured, mostly college-educated adults participating in the original ACE study in the late 1990s.² In examining the prevalence of ACEs among 64,329 justice-involved youth in Florida,³ researchers found that they were 13 times less likely to report zero ACEs (2.8% vs. 36%) and four times more likely to report four or more ACEs (50% vs. 13%) than the adults in the original study. Among juveniles in the current study, the most prevalent ACEs were family violence, parental separation or divorce, and household member incarceration, which were all reported by more than two-thirds of them. Additionally, female youth had a higher prevalence than their male peers on all ACEs. Because high ACE scores have been associated with numerous negative health and social outcomes, including increased risks for substance use, heart disease, and incarceration, authors stressed early detection, intervention, and treatment of ACEs for all youth—and universal trauma assessments for justice-involved youth—to help prevent and address health and social problems including future offending.



Source:

Baglivio, M. T., Epps, N., Swartz, K., Huq, M. S., Sheer, A., and Hardt, N. S. (2014). The prevalence of adverse childhood experiences (ACE) in the lives of juvenile offenders. *Journal of Juvenile Justice*, 3(2), 1-23. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.

Notes:

¹ Researchers have identified 10 ACEs as risk factors for chronic disease in adulthood: emotional abuse, physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional neglect, physical neglect, violent treatment towards mother, household substance abuse, household mental illness, parental separation or divorce, and having an incarcerated household member. An individual's ACE score is conveyed as the total number of reported ACEs (a positive response scores one point, regardless of the number of incidents).

² Felitti, Anda, et. al. (1998). Relationship of childhood abuse and household dysfunction to many of the leading causes of death in adults: The Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Study. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, 14(4), 245-258.

³ Youth included in the current study were those with official referrals – the equivalent of an adult arrest – who had received a full risk/needs assessment between January 1, 2007, and December 31, 2012. Youth with official referrals who were screened but not fully assessed were excluded. Authors urge caution when generalizing results to all justice-involved youth or youth in other states.

Prepared by the Center for Health and Justice (CHJ) at TASC. CHJ works to build, enhance, and sustain strong and vibrant communities by promoting policies and practices that stop the cycle of drugs and crime. We conduct research and evaluations, and offer policy analysis, trainings, and technical assistance in the fields of health and justice. For more information, visit us online at www.centerforhealthandjustice.org.

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