

# ST. LOUIS COUNTY YOUTH: Adverse Childhood Experiences + Protective Factors

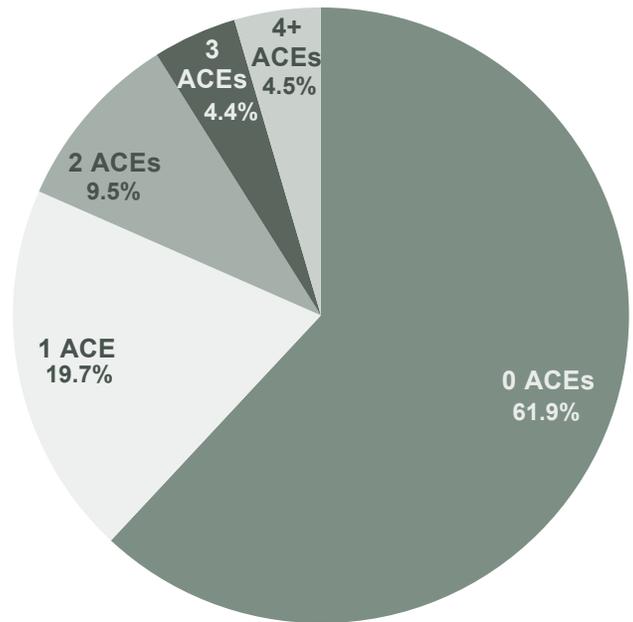


## Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)

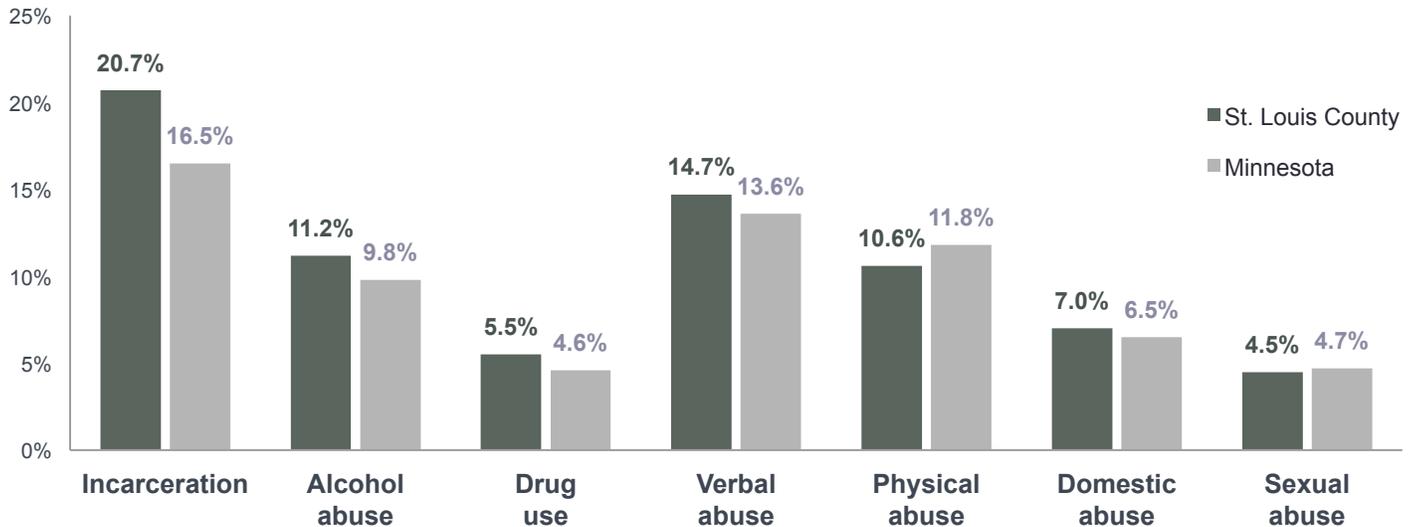
ACEs are stressful or traumatic experiences, including abuse, neglect and a range of household dysfunction. ACEs data included in this fact sheet are from the 2016 Minnesota Student Survey (MSS; see Definitions section for a description of the survey). ACE scores are calculated by adding the number of the following adverse experiences reported by each student (from zero to seven):

- Having a parent/guardian who is or has been in jail
- Witnessing domestic abuse of parents/adults in household
- Living with someone who drinks too much alcohol
- Living with someone who uses illegal drugs or abuses prescription drugs
- Having been verbally abused by a parent or adult in the household
- Having been physically abused by a parent or adult in the household
- Having been sexually abused by an older or stronger family member and/or an adult or other person outside the family

ACEs in St. Louis County, 2016 MSS



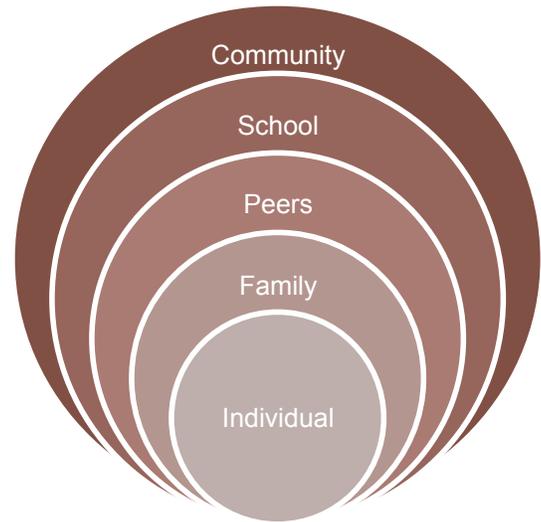
## Adverse Childhood Experiences, 8th, 9th, and 11th Graders, 2016 MSS



## Protective Factors

ACEs put individuals at risk for a number of negative outcomes across the lifespan, including alcohol, tobacco and other drug use, as well as depression and suicidal behaviors. The table below illustrates how protective factors can buffer the risk associated with having two or more ACEs by using risk ratios (RRs) to specify how much less likely students are to experience negative outcomes of ACEs if they ALSO experience certain protective factors.

For instance, among students with 2 or more ACEs, 36% of those who feel adults in their communities care about them reported depressive symptoms in the past 2 weeks; of those who have 2 or more ACEs and feel community adults DON'T care about them, 51% (which is 1.4 times as many, or 40% more) reported depression. Therefore, *students with 2+ ACEs who feel community adults care are 1.4 times less likely to say they've experienced depression in the past 2 weeks.*



The socio-ecological model

Please see the Definitions section for more detail on the protective factors used in this fact sheet.

Prevalence of Protective Factors and Their Risk Buffering, 2016 MSS				
	Prevalence		Reduction in Risk among Northeast Students with 2+ ACEs <sup>^</sup>	
	St. Louis County	Minnesota	Depression (past 2-week)	Marijuana Use (past month)
	%	%	Risk Ratio	Risk Ratio
<b>Community</b>				
Feel adults in the community care	42.4%	45.2%	1.4x less	2.1x less
Participate in 1-5 activities/week	77.5%	77.9%	1.2x less	1.5x less
<b>School</b>				
Educational engagement	75.7%	78.2%	1.4x less	2.3x less
Feel school staff care about them	51.1%	53.7%	1.4x less	1.7x less
<b>Peers</b>				
Feel that friends care about them	77.4%	77.2%	1.5x less	1.4x less
<b>Family</b>				
Feel that parents care about them	90.9%	91.1%	1.5x less	1.4x less
Can talk to at least one parent	91.0%	90.8%	1.5x less	1.3x less
Feel relatives care about them	85.9%	84.8%	1.6x less	1.6x less
<b>Individual</b>				
Positive Identity	30.7%	33.8%	3.2x less	2.0x less
Social Competence	30.4%	34.3%	2.1x less	3.2x less
Empowerment	54.4%	56.9%	2.3x less	2.0x less

<sup>^</sup> Because the population of individual counties is relatively small, rate ratios are calculated for the Prevention Region, rather than the County alone, to ensure accuracy

## Definitions

### **Minnesota Student Survey**

The Minnesota Student Survey (MSS) is an anonymous census survey that includes questions about a wide variety of youth behaviors, perceptions, and risk and protective factors related to health, safety, and academics. The MSS is collaboration between Minnesota schools and the Minnesota Departments of Education, Health, Human Services, and Public Safety.

Students are surveyed in grades 5, 8, 9, and 11. All public school districts in Minnesota are invited to participate. In 2016, 282 of 330 Minnesota school districts (85.5%) agreed to participate; nearly 169,000 students took the survey. In St. Louis County, 4,549 students participated. The MSS was completed by 7,930 students in the Northeast Prevention Region (including Aitkin, Carlton, Cook, Itasca, Koochiching, Lake, and St. Louis Counties).

### **Protective Factors/Indicators**

**Can talk to parents:** This indicator combines two MSS questions (one referring to the students' mothers, and one to their fathers) and includes students who say they can talk to at least one of their parents *most of the time* or *some of the time* about problems they are having. The indicator does not include youth who answer *not very often*, *not at all*, or *my father/mother is not around* to both questions.

**Depression:** This indicator is a modified version of the 2-question Patient Health Questionnaire for depression (PHQ-2). For each question, students may answer from *not at all* (score of 1) to *nearly every day* (score of 4). Students meet the criteria for depression if they get a combined score of 5 or higher on the following 2 questions:

- Over the last 2 weeks, how often have you been bothered by little interest or pleasure in doing things?
- Over the last 2 weeks, how often have you been bothered by feeling down, depressed, or hopeless?

**Educational engagement:** Students have greater educational engagement if they answered *all the time* or *most of the time*, or *strongly agree* or *agree* to each the following questions:

- How often do you care about doing well in school?
- How often do you pay attention in class?
- How often do you go to class prepared?
- If something interests me, I try to learn more about it.
- I think the things I learn at school are useful.
- Being a student is one of the most important parts of who I am.

**Feel that [ ] care about them:** This set of questions asks about how much students feel people in their lives care about them. Indicators include students who feel *adults in the community*, *friends*, *relatives*, *parents*, or *teachers and other school staff* care about them *very much* or *quite a bit* (as compared to *some*, *a little* or *not at all*).

**Participate in 1-5 activities:** This indicator includes students reporting that they participate in one to five activities (outside of the regular school day) on one or more days per week, during a typical week. Data show that participation in some activities is beneficial, but that participation in too many activities can pose as much risk as no participation at all. Activities asked about on the MSS include:

- Sports teams (i.e., park and rec teams, school teams, in-house teams or traveling teams)
- School-sponsored activities or clubs other than sports (i.e., drama, music, chess, science club)
- Tutoring, homework help or academic programs
- Leadership activities such as student government, youth councils or committees
- Artistic lessons (i.e., music, dance)
- Physical activity lessons (i.e., tennis, karate)
- Other community clubs and programs (i.e., 4-H, Scouts, Y-clubs or Community Ed)
- Religious activities (i.e., religious services, education or youth groups)

**Prescription drug misuse (Rx drug misuse):** This indicator includes students who reported any use when posed with the following question: During the last 30 days, on how many days did you use prescription drugs not prescribed for you?

**Empowerment\*:** Students responding with *very or often* or *extremely or always* to each of the three MSS items below are considered to have higher levels of empowerment:

- I feel valued and appreciated by others
- I am included in family tasks and decisions
- I am given useful roles and responsibilities

**Positive identity\*:** Students responding with *very or often* or *extremely or always* to each of the six MSS items below are considered to have higher levels of positive identity:

- I feel in control of my life and future
- I feel good about myself
- I feel good about my future
- I deal with disappointment without getting too upset
- I find ways to deal with the things that are hard in my life
- I am thinking about what my purpose in life is

**Social Competency\*:** Students responding with *very or often* or *extremely or always* to each of the eight MSS items below are considered to have higher levels of social competency:

- I say no to things that are dangerous or unhealthy
- I build friendships with other people
- I express my feelings in proper ways
- I plan ahead and make good choices
- I stay away from bad influences
- I resolve conflicts without anyone getting hurt
- I accept people who are different from me
- I am sensitive to the needs and feelings of others

\*Positive Identity, Social Competence, and Empowerment are categories of skills and behaviors based on a Search Institute framework of adolescent development. They are used and adapted here with permission from Search Institute (2004). *The Developmental Assets Profile*. Minneapolis: Author. Copyright © 2004 by Search Institute ([www.search-institute.org](http://www.search-institute.org)). All rights reserved. For more information on how these development scales are used on the Minnesota Student Survey, find the Developmental Assets fact sheets at [SUMN.org](http://SUMN.org).