Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) and resilience: risk and protective factors for mental illness throughout life

Resilience is the ability to overcome serious hardship. Factors that support resilience include personal skills, positive relationships, community support and cultural connections. The Welsh ACE and Resilience Survey asked adults about a range of such resilience resources as children and adults, their exposure to 11 ACEs and their physical and mental health.

How many adults reported each ACE in 2017?

### Child maltreatment
- Verbal abuse: 20%
- Physical abuse: 16%
- Sexual abuse: 7%

### Household ACEs
- Parental separation: 25%
- Mental illness: 18%
- Domestic violence: 17%
- Alcohol abuse: 13%
- Drug abuse: 6%
- Incarceration: 4%

Neglect was measured for the first time in 2017. Most people who reported neglect had multiple ACEs.

For every 100 adults in Wales, 50 had at least one ACE and 14 had four or more.

### ACEs substantially increased risks of mental illness

1 in 3 adults reported having ever been treated for a mental illness

- Compared with people with no ACEs, those with four or more were:
  - 3.7 times more likely to currently be receiving treatment for mental illness
  - 6.1 times more likely to have ever received treatment for mental illness
  - 9.5 times more likely to have ever felt suicidal or self-harmed
Childhood resilience was associated with less mental illness across the life course in those both with and without ACEs.

**Percent**
- Ever treated for a mental illness
- Having ever felt suicidal or self-harmed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Low Childhood Resilience</th>
<th>High Childhood Resilience</th>
<th>0 ACEs</th>
<th>4+ ACEs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 ACEs</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4+ ACEs</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Welsh Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE) and Resilience Study interviewed approximately 2,500 adults (aged 18-69 years) across Wales in 2017. We are grateful to all those who voluntarily gave their time to participate. The information in this infographic is taken from *Sources of resilience and their moderating relationships with harms from adverse childhood experiences: Report 1 - Mental illness*.

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*Adjusted to sample demographics; Overall resilience was measured using child and adult scales including personal, relationship, community and cultural resilience factors; Regular participation in community groups or social clubs*