

Adverse childhood experiences

and the lifelong consequences for lifestyle and health

What are adverse childhood experiences?

If a child grows up with a lot of...



Adverse Childhood Experience = ACE

Most common adverse childhood experiences (ACEs)



How often do ACEs occur in the Netherlands?

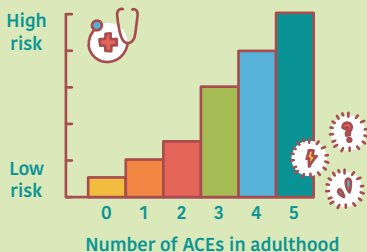
Number of ACEs per person

- Four or more: 11%
- Three: 6%
- Two: 9%
- One: 17%
- None: 56%



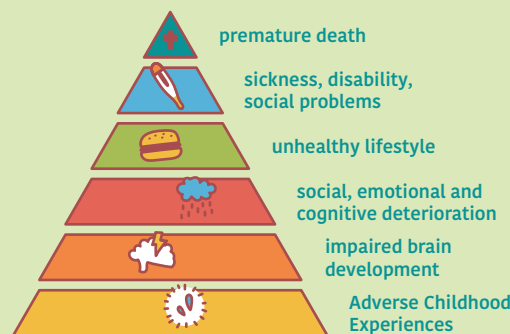
ACEs occur everywhere: in every street, neighbourhood, school and work place.

Impact on health



An accumulation of ACEs is dangerous. The more ACEs, the higher the risk is of a negative impact on health, unhealthy behaviour and lower life expectancy.

Impact on life expectancy



The impact of ACEs is lifelong. Those with 4 or more ACEs have an increased risk of dying 20 years earlier and of passing ACEs on to the next generation.

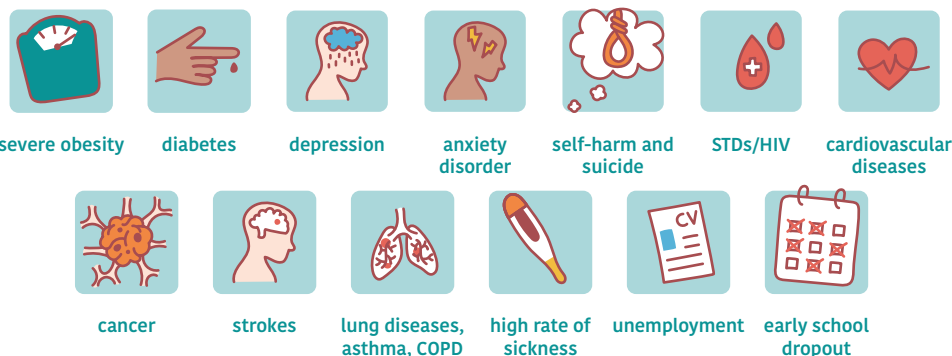
The impact of ACEs on high-risk behaviour and health

People with four or more ACEs run a much higher risk of an unhealthy lifestyle and various serious diseases and chronic disorders.

High-risk/unhealthy behaviour



Negative physical, psychological and social health outcomes



Adverse childhood experiences

and the impact on a child's performance in school

Experiencing ACEs impacts a child's learning in three ways:

Brain development & learning ability

Changes in brain

- Reduced **memory** function (hippocampus)
- Disrupted **stress system** (amygdala)
- Speech and language problems (Broca area)
- Reduced **concentration and focus** (prefrontal cortex)
- Reduced **attention and impulse control** (sensory information processing)

Emotions & behaviour

Dysregulation of stress system ⚡ ⚡ **Child is continually alert for danger**

As a result, a child in school may:

- have problems with rules and discipline
- display hyper or aggressive behaviour
- display evasive behaviour or withdrawn
- experience difficulties relating to other children
- have a fear of failure or low self-confidence
- bully or be bullied

Broader development

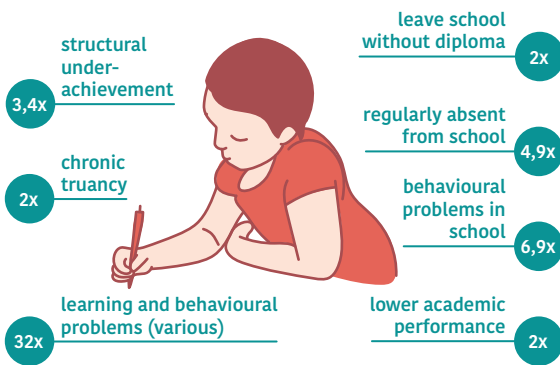
Parents are less available - child experiences lack of support and motivation

Has negative impact on:

- Cognitive development
- Social emotional development
- Self-motivation development
- Identity development

Increased risk of problems in school

Experiencing ACEs increases the risk of a child or youth having problems in school. A child with 4+ ACEs, for example, is 2x more likely to leave school without a diploma than children without ACEs.

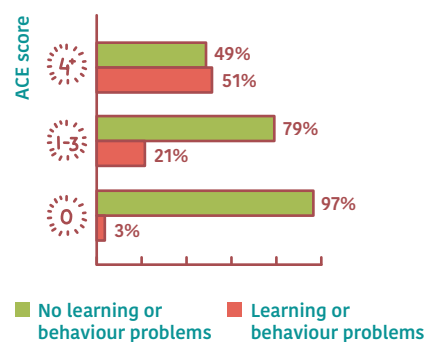


Children with a deceased parent, divorced parents, or who experience parental rejection, receive on average 1,5 years less education than children without such experiences.

Children experiencing multiple ACEs have a higher risk of being wrongly diagnosed with ADHD, a behaviour disorder, or autism (ASD).

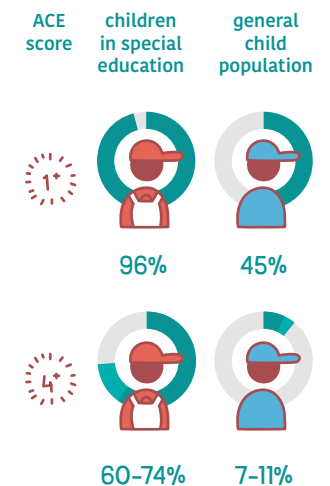
Increased risk of learning and behaviour problems

The percentage of children with learning and behaviour problems in school, broken down into the number of ACEs experienced.



ACEs and special education

Many children (8-18 years old) in special education (primary & secondary) have experienced ACEs.



Children with 4+ ACEs are 3x more likely to be using ADHD medication.

Help improve children's learning achievements and development

All children benefit from trusted adults to help them build their resilience. This applies even more to children with ACEs. Teachers, in particular, can play an essential role in this respect. Resilience helps children to recover from adverse experiences as well as to reduce and prevent health- and developmental damages.

- Be a stable and reliable adult
- Stimulate positive contact with same age peers
- Create a safe environment
- Teach a child to recognise, name and regulate emotions
- Let a child know that they are loved and heard
- Nurture talent and skills
- Foster a sense of belonging: so that a child knows they belong somewhere