

# Adverse Childhood Experiences in Arizona

Now more than ever, we are beginning to understand the impact of Adverse Childhood Experiences, or ACEs, on the developing bodies and brains of children. Traumatic experiences—whether due to abuse, neglect or household dysfunction—can have lasting impacts on

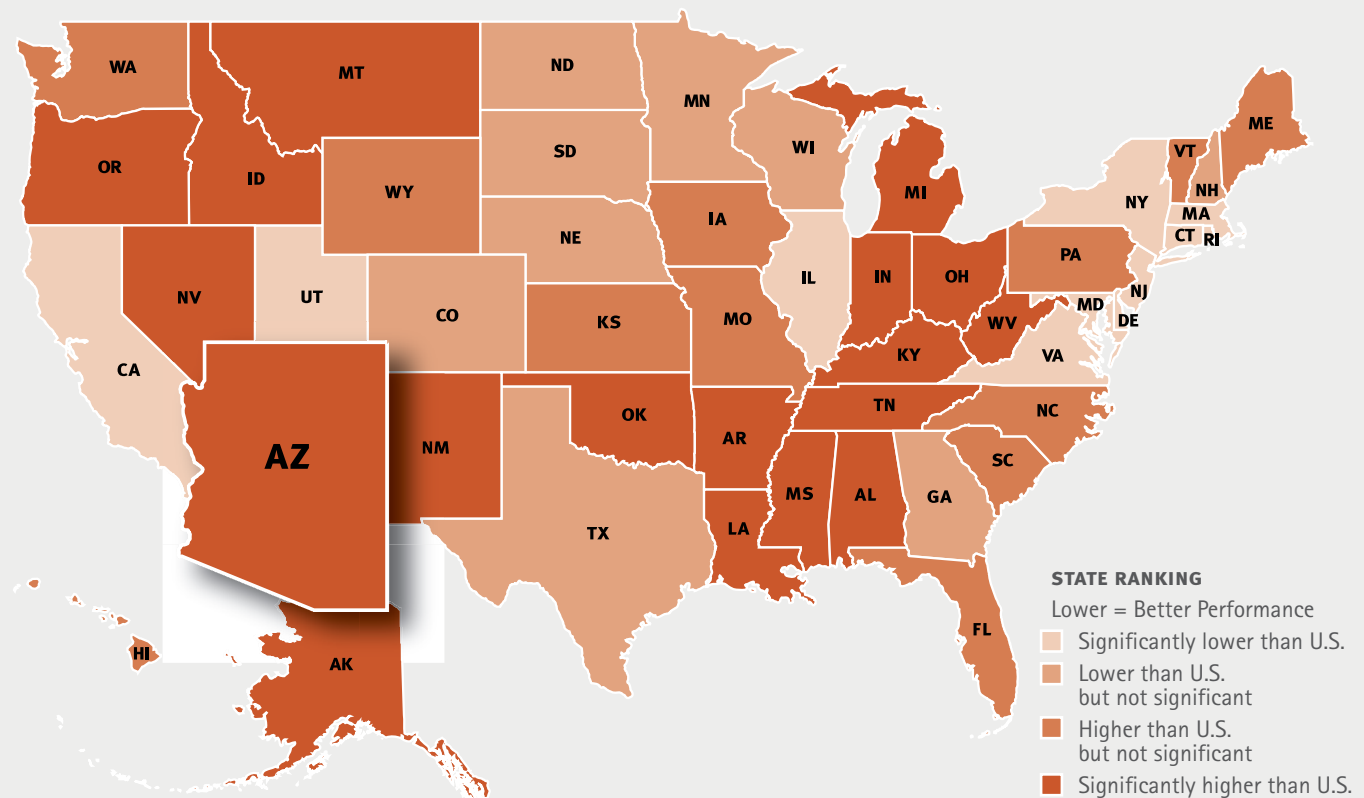
a person's health throughout his or her lifetime. While research remains to be done, the science is clear: Toxic stress caused by ACEs can profoundly change the otherwise healthy development of a child. Here's a look at how this toxic stress impacts Arizona.

## ACEs Are Prevalent in Arizona

- The number of Arizona children with two or more ACEs is significantly higher than in the U.S. as a whole. In Arizona children ages 12 to 17, 44.4% have experienced two or more ACEs, compared to the national average of 30.5%.
- As children age, the number of those who have experienced two or more ACEs increases.
- It is estimated that nearly **70,000** Arizona children have **more than five ACEs**.\*

2011/12 National Survey of Children's Health. Maternal and Child Health Bureau in collaboration with the National Center for Health Statistics. 2011/12 NSCH Data prepared by the Data Resource Center for Child and Adolescent Health, Child and Adolescent Health Measurement Initiative. [www.childhealthdata.org](http://www.childhealthdata.org)

\*Estimates generated from 2011/12 NSCH data set and 2010 Kids Count population estimates



## How Home Plays a Role

Children's bodies adapt and develop in direct relation to their environments. In fact, studies have shown a significant correlation between ACE scores and home

environment. Higher ACE scores were found in children who:

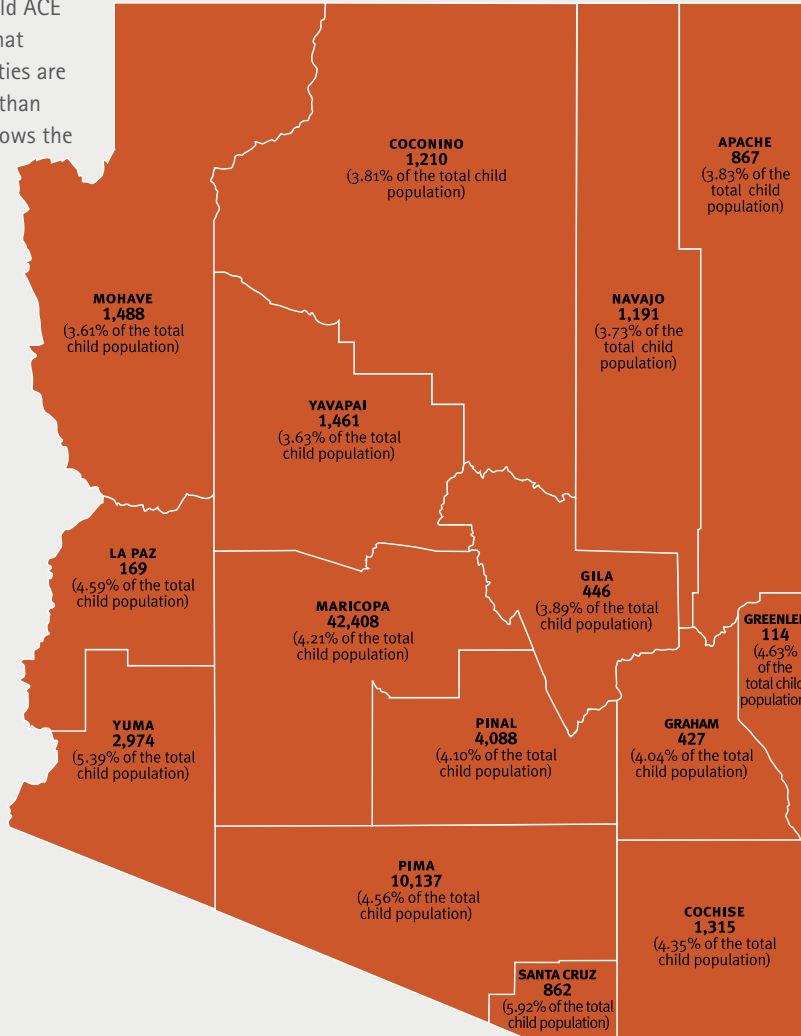
- Live in poverty.
- Live in unsupportive neighborhoods.
- Spend hours playing video games and watching television.

- Have a physically ill parent.
- Take medication for attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and body mass index (BMI).
- Have problems at school.

- Have fewer family supports.
- Are an ethnic minority. What's more, minority children have a disproportionately higher share of six or more ACEs.

## Arizona Has ACE Hot Spots

County-level child ACE estimates\* reveal that some Arizona counties are hit harder by ACEs than others. This map shows the number of children within Arizona counties who have **five or more ACEs**.



\*Estimates generated from 2011/12 NSCH data set and 2010 Kids Count population estimates

## How We Can Address the Impacts of Toxic Stress

The growing body of knowledge about ACEs offers suggestions about how Arizona can respond and make a positive impact on its citizens lives.

To effectively address ACEs and toxic stress, we must first understand the scope of the problem. Gathering data on the prevalence of ACEs throughout Arizona is a critical first step. Here are some other things we can do:

- Educate leaders, policymakers, pediatricians, other healthcare professionals, and the public about ACEs, brain development and effective interventions.
- Promote and bring to scale research-informed, community-driven and cost-effective trauma and adversity prevention and recovery strategies, services and programs.
- Engage elected and appointed officials, private-sector leaders and other influencers as champions for health, education, economic and related policy changes that improve community resilience, health equity and social justice.
- Build a comprehensive, integrated system for identifying, screening and treating adverse childhood experiences.
- Craft a statewide response to ACEs in Arizona.

## Connecting the Dots

The unhealthy stress ACEs bring can have devastating consequences later in life. Out of 100 people . . .

33% REPORT NO ACEs	51% REPORT 1-3 ACEs	16% REPORT 4-10 ACEs
With 0 ACEs:	With 3 ACEs:	With 7+ ACEs:
1 in 16 smokes	1 in 9 smokes	1 in 6 smokes
1 in 69 is alcoholic	1 in 9 is alcoholic	1 in 6 is alcoholic
1 in 480 uses IV drugs	1 in 43 uses IV drugs	1 in 30 uses IV drugs
1 in 14 has heart disease	1 in 7 has heart disease	1 in 6 has heart disease
1 in 96 attempts suicide	1 in 10 attempts suicide	1 in 5 attempts suicide

Statistics from "The High Cost of Adverse Childhood Experiences" compiled by Krista Goldstine-Cole, education director at the Washington State Family Policy Council



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Arizona Adverse Childhood Experiences Consortium  
www.azpbs.org/strongkids



Injury Prevention Center, Strong Families

### Phoenix Children's Hospital

1919 East Thomas Road, East Building, Room 1617 | Phoenix, AZ 85016

Office: 602.933.3342 | Fax: 602.933.3356 | www.azpbs.org/strongkids

Follow us on twitter at <http://twitter.com/kidsstaysafe>

For more information, write [mstanto@phoenixchildrens.com](mailto:mstanto@phoenixchildrens.com)