

Adverse Childhood Experiences and Youth Mental Health: Findings from the 2022 Minnesota Student Survey

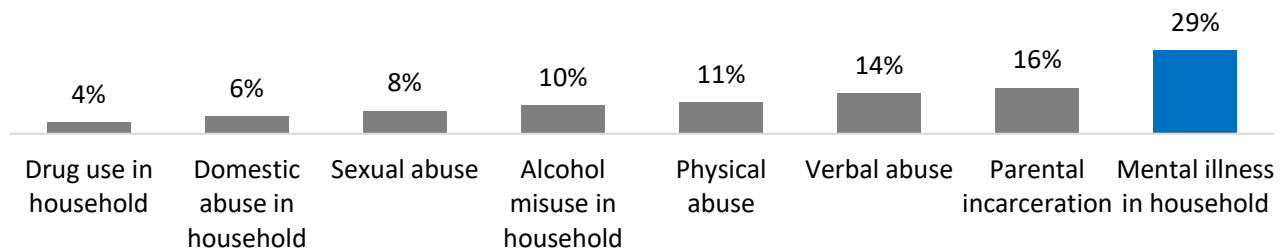
The Minnesota Student Survey (MSS) asks about students’ feelings and experiences related to health and well-being, supportive and caring relationships, safety, and engagement in school and activities. The most recent MSS was conducted during the first half of 2022, and about 135,000 students from across the state participated. This fact sheet summarizes findings related to adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) and the mental health of 8th, 9th, and 11th graders in Minnesota.

ACEs

ACEs are stressful or traumatic experiences, including abuse, neglect and a range of household dysfunction. Most people have experienced at least one, and they often occur in clusters. The higher an individual’s ACE score, the higher the likelihood of developing health problems, like substance abuse, diabetes, cancer, and depression.

This fact sheet presents findings for eight ACE items from the MSS. These items can be summed to calculate an ACE score. Among these ACEs, mental illness in the household is the most common type (Figure 1). Further, the percentage of students reporting mental illness in the household increased from 26% in 2019 to 29% in 2022.

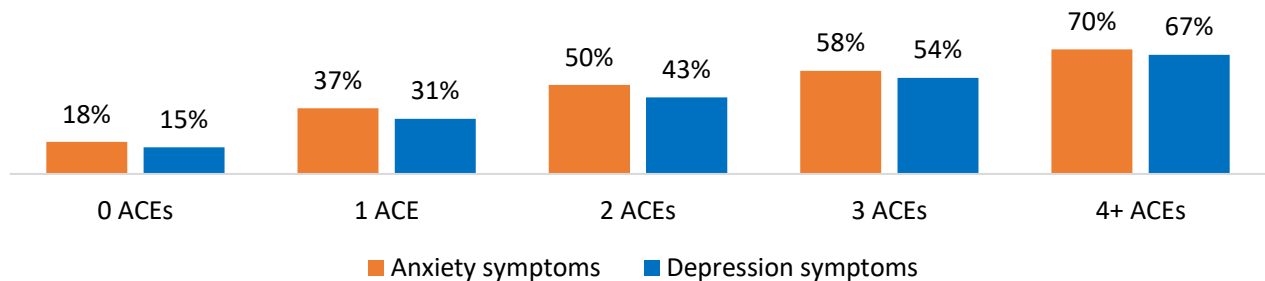
Figure 1. Living with someone who is depressed or has other mental health issues



ACEs and youth mental health

In addition to mental illness in the household, the overall number of ACEs experienced by young people have a cumulative impact on their own mental health. Students with four or more ACEs were almost four times more likely to report past two-week anxiety and over four times more likely to report past two-week depression (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Past two-week anxiety and depression symptoms, by ACE score



MSS results have also revealed an increased in mental health concerns among youth people. While female students are more likely than males students to report past two-week symptoms of anxiety and depression, rates have increased for both (Figures 3 and 4). Questions about anxiety were not included on the 2016 MSS.

Figure 3. Past two-week anxiety, by sex

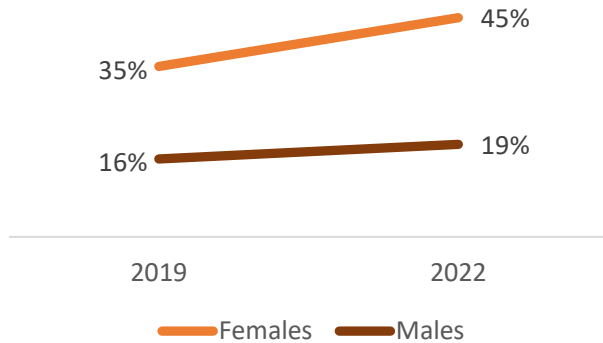
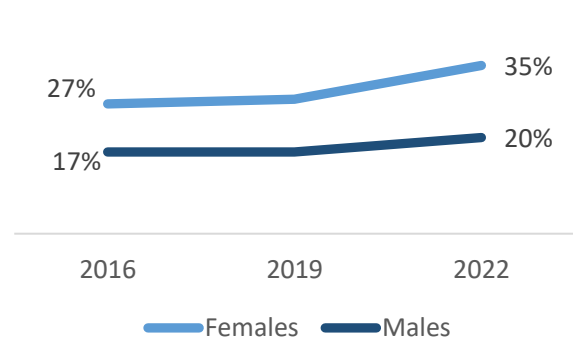


Figure 4. Past two-week depression, by sex



New to the 2022 survey, 8th graders were asked how comfortable they would feeling talking to a counselor or social worker at school if they were feeling upset, stressed, or having problems. The higher a student’s ACE score, the more likely they were to say they would feel “not at all” comfortable doing so (Figure 5). Students were also asked whether they would feel comfortable going to their school resource officer (SRO) if they were having problems or needed help. Similarly, the higher a student’s ACE score the more likely they were to report not feeling comfortable seeking help (Figure 6).

Figure 5. Feeling “not at all” comfortable talking with a school mental health resource (8th grade only)

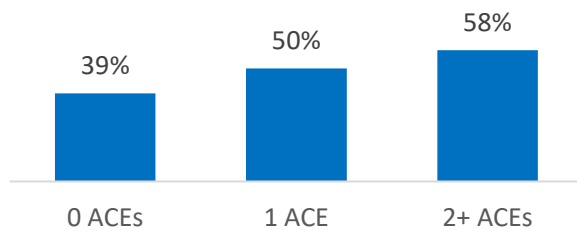
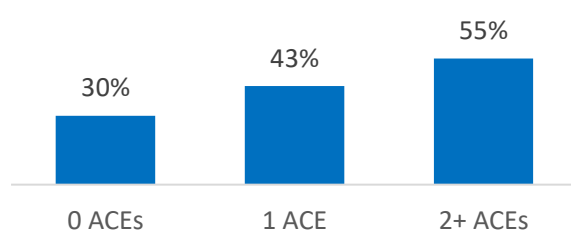


Figure 6. Not feeling comfortable going to a SRO for help with a problem



Mental health resources for schools

[Comprehensive School Mental Health Systems](#) (CSMHS) resources and training are available to schools through the Minnesota Department of Education. CSMHS supports promote positive school climate, social and emotional learning, and mental health and well-being. CSMHS empower school staff to work with students, and provide opportunities for staff and students to build and restore healthy relationships.