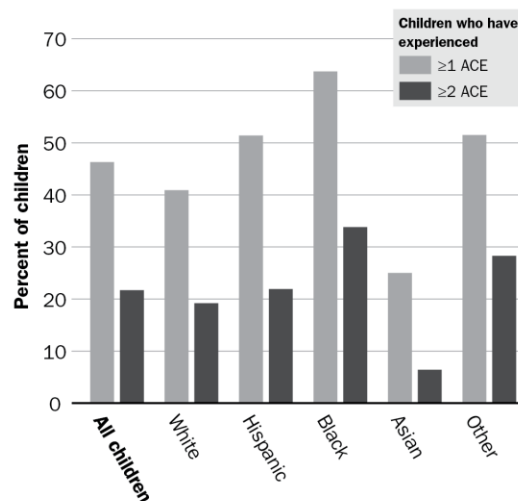


# DAY 15: Adverse Childhood Experiences

In order for children to meet developmental milestones, learn, grow and lead productive lives, it is critical that they be healthy. Good social-emotional and mental health is a key component of children's healthy development. [Poverty, trauma, and inadequate treatment are three factors](#) that have been shown to have a sustained, negative impact on children's social, emotional and mental health. Unfortunately, racism is now recognized as an Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE) - a toxic source of stress with the potential to disrupt a child's ability to learn, relate, grow, play, communicate, and problem-solve. [ACEs disproportionately impact children of color.](#) This is a downstream impact of the toxic environments created by institutions and systems that shape our lived experience in Washtenaw County (e.g. the justice, education, and healthcare systems).

## Adverse Childhood Experiences show race/ethnicity disparity

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) happen most frequently among black children, according to The Child and Adolescent Health Measurement Initiative.



Source: THE CHILD AND ADOLESCENT HEALTH MEASUREMENT INITIATIVE ZECHANG FU/Missourian

Source: *Missourian*; Original Data from *The Child and Adolescent Health Measurement Initiative*

Healthy school, community and home environments are critical to preventing children from experiencing ACEs and appropriately supporting students living with chronic stress, so that it does not get in the way of them achieving their aspirations. Recent surveys of Washtenaw County students revealed that 29% of middle school students reported being bullied on school property in the past year, while 68% of African-American students witnessed in-school physical abuse. Among middle and high school students in Washtenaw County, 25% report depression and 15% have seriously considered suicide within the past year. An increased focus on mental health and support is critical for helping our youth achieve their fullest potential.

**Did you know?** Today marks the 25th anniversary of the day of service that celebrates Martin Luther King, Jr.'s life and legacy. Observed each year on the third Monday in January as "a day

on, not a day off,” [MLK Day is the only federal holiday designated as a national day of service](#) to encourage all Americans to volunteer to improve their communities. Turn this into a “day on” and [list of ways to serve or engage in learning in our community](#).

## Today’s Challenge:

**Option 1:** Go deeper and [assess your ACEs score](#) to see how childhood trauma may be impacting your life. Then, assess your resilience score and explore resources on how to support yourself and others by [building resilience](#).

**Option 2:** View this [info-graphic that explains how ACEs affect our lives](#) and society and summarizes findings from a landmark Kaiser study that looks at the link between ACEs and long-term well-being.

**Option 3:** Learn about [resources in Washtenaw County to support children](#) through ACEs like trauma, abuse, and drivers of toxic stress. As a starting point, [here are a few simple Everyday Gestures](#) to help a child heal.

**Option 4:** [On the TED stage, Pediatrician Nadine Burke Harris](#) explains that the repeated stress of abuse, neglect and parents struggling with mental health or substance abuse issues has real, tangible effects on the development of the brain.

**Option 5:** [Listen to the Washtenaw United interview with Jason Gold](#), a student advocate and Adverse Traumatic Experiences master trainer on how to best identify and combat ACEs, or [listen to this interview on how the “Telling It” program](#) uses the arts to support children through trauma.

**Share your reflections** on today’s topic on social media using the hashtag [#unitedforequity](#) and tag [@uwwashtenaw](#).