



Rhode Island Young Adult Survey

Rhode Island Young Adult Survey (RIYAS)

The 2022 Rhode Island Young Adult Survey (RIYAS) is a behavioral health survey of adults aged 18-25 years (n=1,022), residing in Rhode Island for at least part of the year.

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)

Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) are potentially **traumatic events** that occur during **childhood** from age 0-17. ACEs also fall under a **child's environment**, which has a significant impact on a child's safety.



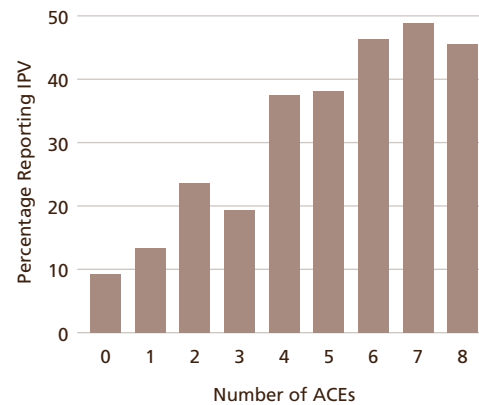
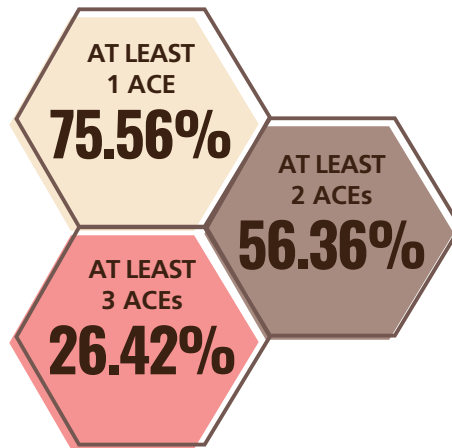
Cumulative ACEs have been shown to significantly raise the likelihood of engaging in physical IPV, especially when combined with other risk factors such as low social support, unstable relationships, and poor conflict resolution skills. Individuals who experience higher ACE counts exhibit increased rates of emotional dysregulation, partner conflict, and substance use, all of which contribute to high risk of IPV.^{3,4}

Childhood Adversity and Intimate Partner Violence in Young Adults

Intimate Partner Violence (IPV)

IPV includes **physical, sexual, and emotional abuse** or aggression from a **current or former partner**. IPV is especially dangerous during young adulthood and pregnancy, when people are forming intimate relationships and facing increased social and physiological stress.¹

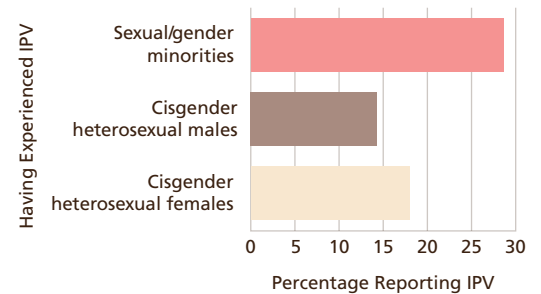
Key Findings of IPV from RIYAS



How IPV is measured in RIYAS:

"Have you ever experienced verbal or physical abuse or threats from a romantic partner?"

Intimate Partner Violence Reporting



More than **one in four** report four or more aces



ACE's including exposure to **household violence**, are linked to **long-lasting effects** on health and **relationships**.^{1,2} These have been shown to increase the likelihood of involvement in **IPV**, both as the victim or the perpetrator.^{3,4}

IPV Risk Factors

- Pregnancy/postpartum increases stress and partner dependence
- Sexual/gender minorities are twice as likely to experience IPV compared to cisgender heterosexual males.⁴
- Individuals with disabilities often experience higher rates of IPV and face unique barriers to seeking help.^{4,5,6}
- History of ACEs increases risk; all ACEs matter, sexual abuse and physical neglect particularly
- IPV is not isolated because it's connected to mental health, maternal mortality, and long-term health outcomes like chronic illness.²

EVERY ACE MATTERS —
THE RISK OF INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE INCREASES WITH EACH ADDITIONAL TYPE OF CHILDHOOD ADVERSITY.



How ACEs Shape the Body and the Brain

Experiencing ACEs reshapes the body's biology, increasing vulnerability to violence later in life.

- Altered brain development in regions like the amygdala and prefrontal cortex, reducing threat perception and self-control.
- Impaired attachment systems, increasing dependence on harmful or controlling partners.^{2,8}
- Heightened stress response, which primes the nervous system to overreact to normal interpersonal stressors.

These neurobiological effects make it harder to set boundaries, leave unsafe relationships, or respond calmly to conflict. This increases both victimization and perpetration risk.

Which ACEs Are Most Prevalent?

RIYAS data and other literature identify sexual abuse and physical neglect as the ACEs most strongly associated with IPV in young adulthood.³ These may interfere most directly with:

- Personal safety perception
- Trust development
- Conflict resolution skills
- Stress coping and self-regulation

Why This Matters

Childhood adversity alters brain development, stress physiology, and emotional regulation, increasing IPV risk.

In Rhode Island, IPV is a public health issue.

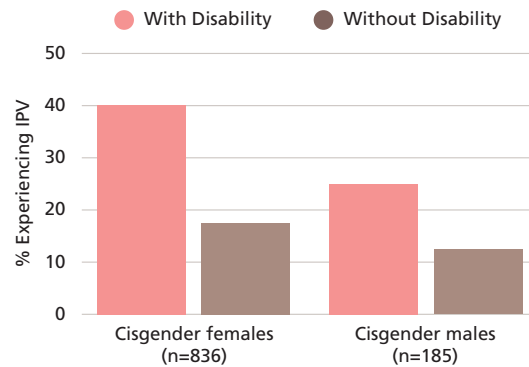
Intervening early with trauma-informed, developmentally appropriate support can help create lasting change by reducing violence and preventing the longterm effects of childhood adversity.



Rhode Island Data Brief

continued

IPV Prevalence in Disability by Gender



IPV Prevalence in Disability

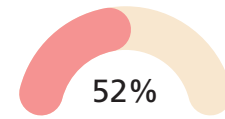
Women with disabilities experience IPV at much higher rates than those without disabilities, and the same pattern is seen among men. **Both men and women with disabilities are about twice as likely to experience IPV** compared to those without disabilities. This highlights a greater vulnerability among individuals with disabilities and shows the need for prevention and support programs tailored to their specific needs.⁵ **Dependence on partners** for care or financial support can make it difficult to leave abusive relationships and lead to an increased **risk of continued victimization**.⁷

IPV Prevalence in Pregnancy

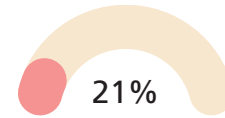
Young adulthood is a critical period for relationship formation and vulnerability.⁸ Pregnant young adults face major vulnerability to IPV, as the physical, emotional, and social demands of pregnancy and early parenthood can increase stress and dependence on partners. During this critical period, they are in need of comprehensive support, including safe housing, mental health care, trauma-informed services, and strong social networks, to protect their well-being and that of their infants.⁹ Young adults with a self-reported pregnancy in the past year are four times as likely to report IPV.

Percentage of IPV Reported

While Pregnant in the Past Year (n=23)



While Not Pregnant in the Past Year (n=814)



IPV Prevention and Recommendations

Community Organizations should have:	Individuals and Families should:	Schools and Youth Programs should have:	Healthcare Professionals should have:	Policy Makers should:
Tailored IPV support for high-risk youth populations	Encourage supportive parenting programs; teach healthy relationship skills	Early screening for ACEs, integrate trauma-informed approaches	Frequent screenings for pregnant/post-partum women for IPV; connect with local resources	Invest in ACEs prevention + IPV intervention programs

¹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Preventing Adverse Childhood Experiences. Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). Published April 24, 2024. <https://www.cdc.gov/aces/prevention/index.html>

² Hughes K, Bellis MA, Hardcastle KA, et al. The effect of multiple adverse childhood experiences on health: a systematic review and meta-analysis. *Lancet Public Health*. 2017;2(8):e356- e366. doi:10.1016/S2468-2667(17)30118-4

³ Angela M. Kaufman-Parks, Monica A. Longmore, Wendy D. Manning, Peggy C. Giordano, Understanding the effect of adverse childhood experiences on the risk of engaging in physical violence toward an intimate partner: The influence of relationship, social psychological, and sociodemographic contextual risk factors, *Child Abuse & Neglect*, Volume 144, 2023, 106381, ISSN 0145-2134, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2023.106381>

⁴ Zhu J, Exner-Cortens D, Dobson K, Wells L, Noel M, Madigan S. Adverse childhood experiences and intimate partner violence: A meta-analysis. *Development and Psychopathology*. 2024;36(2):929-943. doi:10.1017/S0954579423000196 Adverse childhood experiences and intimate partner violence: A meta-analysis | *Development and Psychopathology* | Cambridge Core

⁵ Breiding MJ, Armour BS. The association between disability and intimate partner violence in the United States. *Ann Epidemiol*. 2015;25(6):455-457. doi:10.1016/j.annepidem.2015.03.017

⁶ Nash SP, Seavard EE, Longmore MA, Manning WD, Giordano PC. The Stress of Motherhood and Intimate Partner Violence During Emerging Adulthood. *Emerging Adulthood*. 2021;10(5):216769682098485. doi:https://doi.org/10.1177/2167696820984859

⁷ Center for Disease Control and Prevention. Sexual Violence and Intimate Partner Violence Among People with Disabilities. *Sexual Violence Prevention*. Published June 7, 2024. <https://www.cdc.gov/sexual-violence/about/sexual-violence-and-intimate-partner-violence-among-people-with-disabilities.html>

⁸ Rauer AJ, Pettit GS, Lansford JE, Bates JE, Dodge KA. Romantic relationship patterns in young adulthood and their developmental antecedents. *Developmental Psychology*. 2013;49(11):2159-2171. doi:https://doi.org/10.1037/a0031845

⁹ Narayan AJ, Hagan MJ, Cohodes E, Rivera LM, Lieberman AF. Early Childhood Victimization and Physical Intimate Partner Violence During Pregnancy: A Developmental and Person-Oriented Approach. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*. 2016;34(1):3-26. doi:https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260516639261

