

# VOTE for OHIO KIDS



## Family resilience and safe, stable, and nurturing environments

**KNOW**  
THE ISSUES

Family resilience and safe, stable, and nurturing environments are vital to supporting and maintaining a child's overall mental health and well-being and contribute to the long-term vitality of our state. Unfortunately, many children in Ohio are exposed to trauma or adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), such as child abuse and neglect, parental incarceration, and living in a household with someone who has a substance use disorder or mental health problem. Experiencing trauma or adversity, particularly in a child's first few years of life, can alter the physiological structure and functioning of the body's systems and increase a child's risk for poor outcomes later in life.



*The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed the fragility of our systems in both responding to and preventing a behavioral health crisis and has caused our youngest Ohioans to endure greater isolation, and bear witness to the impacts of adversity, toxic stress, and trauma within their families and communities.*

### What does the data tell us?

Unfortunately, even prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, Ohio's children were experiencing adversity and trauma at incredibly high rates:



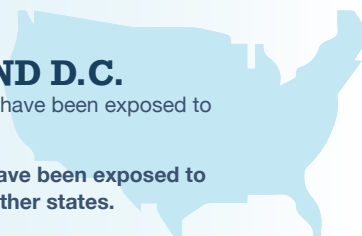
Ohio ranks in the bottom half of states

**33 OUT OF 50 STATES AND D.C.**

on the percent of children, ages 0-17, who have been exposed to

**TWO OR MORE ACEs.**<sup>1</sup>

This means that more children in Ohio have been exposed to multiple ACEs compared to children in other states.



In 2019, nearly



**1 IN 5** (17%) of Ohio's

youngest children, ages 0 to 5, had been

exposed to **two or more ACEs.**<sup>2</sup> According to a

Groundwork Ohio [poll](#) in 2021, the vast majority of

Ohio parents with children under the age of 5, nearly

said they were worried about the mental or emotional health of their children.<sup>3</sup>







**7-IN-10**

More recent data suggests that the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the existing challenges and stressors facing Ohio's families that increase a child's risk for exposure to ACEs, such as economic hardship, social isolation, and increased substance use and mental health challenges among adult household members.<sup>4</sup>

Children of color, who live in Appalachian or rural regions of the state, with disabilities, who are from families with low incomes, and LGBTQ+ youth are more likely to experience adversity and trauma compared to their peers.

## *To improve mental health and well-being, Ohio's next governor should support family resilience and safe, stable, and nurturing environments by:*

-  Expanding access to quality early childhood education programs, home visiting, and other evidence-informed programs to ensure children have strong, stable connections with caring adults.
-  Investing in violence-reduction and substance use prevention programs to promote safe and healthy families and communities.
-  Strengthening economic supports for families with children.
-  Building a trauma-competent child-serving workforce that meets the diverse needs of children.

## Sources

1. 2019-2020 National Survey of Children's Health.
2. [Groundwork Ohio's Early Childhood Dashboard Preview \(2022\)](#)
3. [Groundwork Ohio Statewide Poll \(2021\)](#)
4. Health Policy Institute of Ohio, *The Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on Adverse Childhood Experiences* (2021)

Presented by:



# #Vote4OhioKids