

More than eight in 10 men in prison suffered childhood adversity – new report

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Male prisoners are much more likely than men in the wider population to have suffered childhood adversities such as child maltreatment or living in a home with domestic violence, according to a new report by Public

Health Wales and Bangor University.

The findings suggests that preventative action and early intervention to tackle Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) could prevent crime and reduce costs for the [criminal justice system](#).

In this new survey of men in Her Majesty's (HM) Prison Parc in Bridgend, South Wales, more than 8 in 10 (84 per cent) said they had experienced at least one Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE) compared with a Welsh average of 46 per cent.

Nearly half of prisoners (46 per cent) reported they had experienced four or more ACEs. This compares to just over 1 in 10 (12 per cent) in the wider population.

The report also found that prisoners with multiple ACEs (four or more) were four times more likely to have spent time in a young offender institution than those with no ACEs.

ACEs are traumatic experiences that occur before the age of 18. They range from child verbal, mental, physical and [sexual abuse](#), to being exposed to alcoholism, drug use and domestic violence at home.

Children who experience ACEs are more likely to adopt health-harming and anti-social behaviours as adults, are at much greater risk of poor health throughout life, and may have greater needs for support from healthcare and other public services.

Dr. Kat Ford, lead author of the report at Bangor University, said:

"Nearly half of prisoners had experienced high levels of ACEs such as abuse, neglect and [domestic violence](#) in their childhood – levels much higher than observed in populations outside of prison.

"Amongst prisoners we found that having spent time in a young offender institution and having a history of prolific offending or violent offences were all linked with even higher levels of ACEs. These relationships add weight to the need for prisons to offer trauma-informed services to help ensure that those with ACEs are appropriately supported and are not re-traumatised when incarcerated."

Professor Mark Bellis, Director of Policy and International Development for Public Health Wales, said:

"A third of all prisoners surveyed reported one of their adverse childhood experiences was growing up in a household where someone had been incarcerated. These intergenerational cycles can be broken through health and [criminal justice](#) systems working together and helping parents provide a safe and nurturing environment for every child."

The Prisoner ACE survey was undertaken to help policy makers and those working in criminal justice and related sectors understand the relationship between ACEs and offending.

Public Health Wales, policing, and key criminal justice organisations in Wales have made a commitment to work together using a public health approach to change the way people with ACEs are identified, understood and supported.

This survey will help inform this partnership working in Wales, which is being facilitated by the Early Action Together (E.A.T) programme. EAT is already supporting the criminal justice sector to create an ACE aware workforce and develop trauma informed practice within prisons and probation in Wales.

HM Prison Parc worked collaboratively with Public Health Wales to

facilitate the research. Janet Wallsgrove, Director of HMP & YOI Parc, said: "Shining a light on the negative impact of ACEs in later life is crucial as it allows us to provide the right rehabilitative support for the men in our care.

"I am proud of my team for their work with HMPPS Wales and Public Health Wales in facilitating this research."

Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) in Wales, is a key partner in the E.A.T programme and is working alongside HMP Parc, to support individuals affected by ACEs who come into the prison system.

Chris Jennings, Executive Director, HMPPS in Wales, said: "By improving our understanding of ACEs and working in partnership with other agencies on initiatives such as E.A.T, we can continue to positively impact people's lives and support the men in our care to build better futures.

"On behalf of HM Prison and Probation Service in Wales, I would like to thank our partners at Public Health Wales and Bangor University for conducting this survey at HMP Parc."

Other findings from the report include that, compared with prisoners with no ACEs, those with four or more were:

- Four times more likely to have ever been convicted of criminal damage
- Three times more likely to have ever been convicted of violence against the person
- Three times more likely to have ever been convicted of theft
- Twice as likely to have ever been convicted of drugs offences

Data were collected between February and June 2018 in face-to-face

interviews with a sample of 468 18-69 year old prisoners in HM Prison Parc, Bridgend, South Wales.

Provided by Bangor University

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