

Ten Takeaways from Recent PCE Research

Positive Childhood Experiences (PCEs) associated with lower rates of chronic physical and mental health conditions, better life opportunity outcomes, and savings on medical spending.

The HOPE National Resource Center led a collaboration that analyzed survey data to study the lifelong health effects of positive childhood experiences (PCEs). Looking at survey data from four states (Kansas, Montana, South Carolina, and Wisconsin), the research team found further evidence that Positive Childhood Experiences (PCEs) are associated with long-term health and wellbeing. These results complement prior studies, conducted using similar methods, that showed the long-term harmful effects of adverse childhood experiences.

1. PCEs help everyone!

The analysis used an advanced statistical technique called propensity matching that compared outcomes of demographically similar respondents who differed only in their PCE scores. In this way, the paper showed that PCEs improved health outcomes across age, race and ethnicity, sex, and geographic location. Any difference in outcomes among groups with different reported PCEs was associated with their childhood experiences—PCEs are protective across demographic groups.



Who might care? Funders who want to fund projects that promote health equity; community partners who work with communities of color.



2. Higher PCEs reduced the risk of adult diabetes

The more PCEs someone reported, the lower the rate of adult diabetes. Diabetes rates fell by 20% for adults who reported 3-5 PCEs and by 27% for adults who reported 6-7 PCEs, compared to those with 0-1 PCEs.



Who might care? Funders with a specific focus on diabetes; healthcare providers and community partners supporting reducing chronic conditions.

3. One in five cases of COPD avoided by any PCEs

Experiencing 1 or more PCEs lowered the chance of developing COPD, with any amount of PCEs avoiding up to one in five cases of COPD.



Who might care? Funders with a specific focus on improving respiratory health; public health agencies that work to reduce chronic lung disease.

4. PCEs lower the risk of cancer

Compared to those reporting no PCEs, those who reported having 3-5 PCEs were 29% less likely to have any form of cancer. Those who reported 6-7 PCEs were 34% less likely to report any form of cancer compared to those reporting no PCEs.



Who might care? Funders with a specific focus on cancer prevention; public health agencies, healthcare providers and community partners who focus on cancer prevention.



5. Higher PCEs reduced the risk of heart disease

Heart disease rates fell by 35% for adults who reported 3-5 PCEs and by 47% for adults who reported 6-7 PCEs. The more PCEs someone reported, the lower the odds they had heart disease. There was a direct relationship with more PCEs meaning less chance of heart disease.



Who might care? Funders with a specific focus on preventing heart disease; healthcare providers and community partners working on efforts to reduce chronic conditions.

6. Higher PCEs are associated with higher adult incomes

The likelihood of earning an income over \$50,000 for those who reported no PCEs was 28%, which rose to 46% for those reporting 3-5 PCEs and rose to 59% for those reporting 6-7 PCEs. The methods used in this paper helped isolate the contribution of PCEs to adult income from the effects of racial and gender bias.



Who might care? Funders with a focus on economic outcomes and measures of success; community partners who work on promoting positive outcomes, like education and social services; even families and guardians who find this motivational.



7. Higher PCEs associated with college education

The likelihood of receiving a college education for those who reported no PCEs was 40%, which rose to 58% for those reporting 3-5 PCEs and rose to 67% for those reporting 6-7 PCEs. The methods used in this paper helped isolate the contribution of PCEs to college education from the effects of racial and gender bias.



Who might care? Funders with a focus on educational outcomes; community partners working in education, social services, and youth engagement; even families and guardians who find this motivational.

8. Higher PCEs associated with better adult mental health

Depression is the most common mental illness in the US. Compared to respondents with 0-1 PCEs, Those who reported 3-5 PCEs were 40% less likely to report depression, and those reporting 6-7 PCEs were 68% less likely to report depression.



Who might care? Funders with a focus on promoting mental and behavioral health; community partners and healthcare providers involved with mental and behavioral health services or initiatives; those working directly with children and family in response to mental and behavioral health needs.



9. PCEs reduce smoking later in life

Adults who reported having 3-5 PCEs were 21% less likely to smoke 100 cigarettes over their lifetime, and those with 6-7 PCEs reduced their chance of smoking 100 cigarettes by over a third (36%).



Who might care? Funders with a focus on substance use prevention and public health, particularly smoking; community partners that work directly on substance use prevention initiatives.

10. PCEs save money!

This study found that people with 3 or more PCEs averted nearly \$ 216 billion in economic losses in these four states. Each year, the averted medical spending and more years of healthy life amounted to \$215,900,000,000 for the total population of Kansas, Montana, South Carolina, and Wisconsin combined! This breaks down to \$28,132 saved per person each year, and over $\frac{3}{4}$ of a million dollars for that person's entire lifetime (\$782,00).



Who might care? Statewide departments and initiatives that work on economic planning and on population health.

Sege RD, Aslam MV, Peterson C, et al. Positive Childhood Experiences and Adult Health and Opportunity Outcomes in 4 US States. JAMA Netw Open. 2025;8(7):e2524435.



HEALTHY OUTCOMES
FROM POSITIVE EXPERIENCES

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