

## **An Analysis of the Inequality of Adverse Childhood Experiences Facing African Americans in Illinois and the Impact of State Economic Policy**

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### **Abstract**

In the words of a past president of the American Academy of Pediatrics, Dr. Robert Block; “Adverse Childhood Experiences are the single greatest unaddressed public health threat facing our nation today”. Adverse Childhood Experiences or “ACEs” are potentially traumatic events that occur before a child turns 18. With that in mind, we want to look at the connections between economic policy, both current and historic, and their effect on ACEs, specifically within the Black community in Illinois. Although ACEs are not solely confined to the Black community, through data reports of ACEs across all racial populations in our state, it is found that Black people experience ACEs more often than any other racial population. We know that ACEs increases risk factors in various medical diseases and mental health issues, which makes researching solutions to reduce elevated ACEs rates in Black individuals that much more vital. By looking at recent data on ACEs from Illinois as well as economic policies, we hope to discover what impact state policy can play in reducing the elevated ACEs score in Black individuals, with hope to reduce this elevated number, leading to less harmful effects on Black people because of a high ACEs score.

*Keywords:* Adverse Childhood Experiences, Illinois Black community, Illinois economic policy

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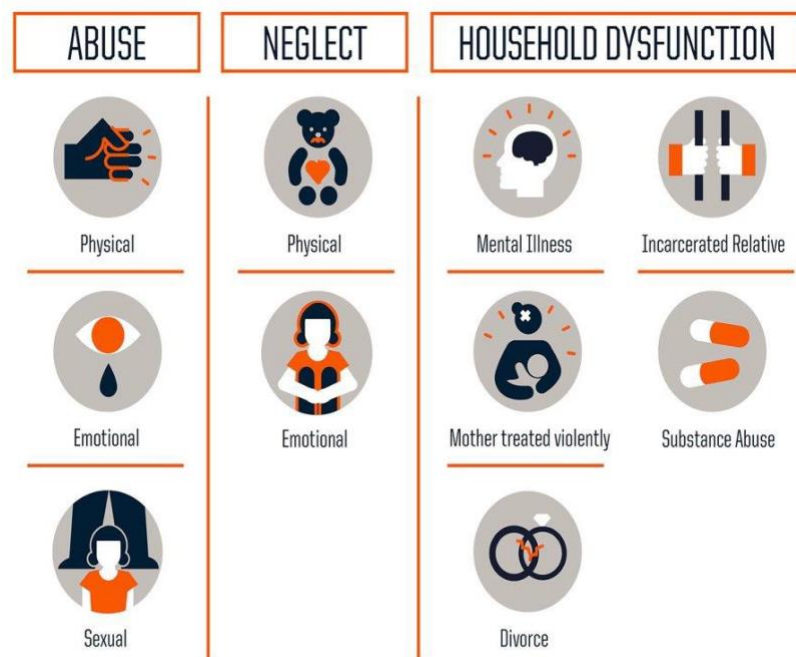
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# An Analysis of the Inequality of Adverse Childhood Experiences Facing African-Americans in Illinois and the Impact of State Economic Policy

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## INTRODUCTION

- “Adverse Childhood Experiences are the single greatest unaddressed public health threat facing our nation today”. - Dr. Robert Block (1)
- Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) are experiences that occur in childhood and produce toxic levels stress that negatively alters brain development. (2).
- ACEs are linked to higher amounts of chronic health problems, mental illness, and substance abuse in adulthood. (3).
- We expect to find a connection between the ACEs scores, economic factors, and race in Illinois.



1. Harris, 2014  
2. CDC, 2019  
3. CDC, 2019

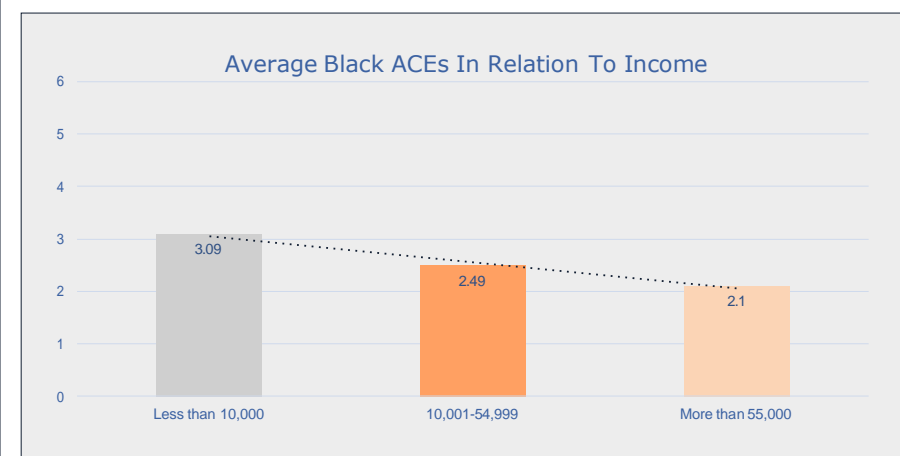
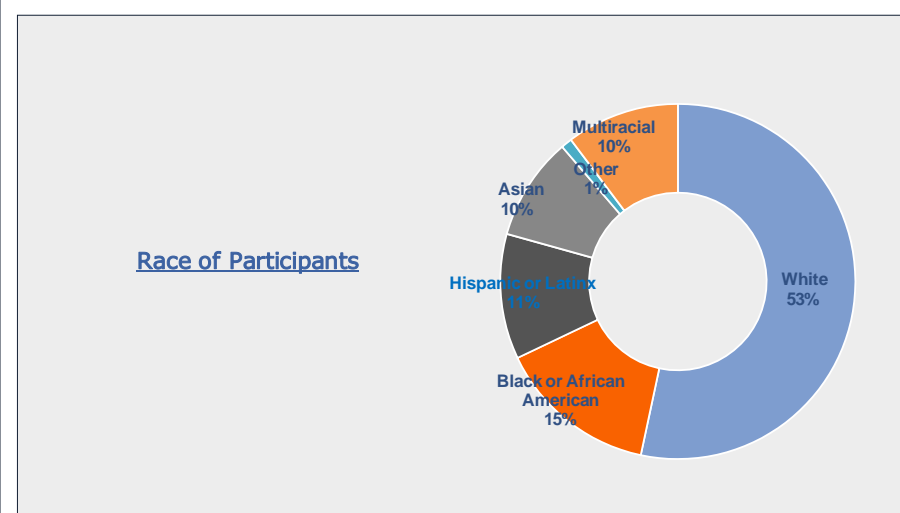
## CURRENT STUDY

- We focused our research on the interaction of economic factors and ACEs in the Black community of Illinois. We looked at income, but after reviewing the literature we now wonder if economics is too singular a lens through which to understand the elevated ACEs scores that we see in the Black population not only in Illinois but across the nation.



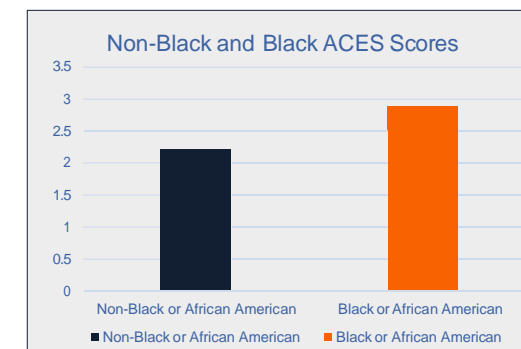
## METHODS

- The survey was administered utilizing Qualtrics survey software.
- Sample Size: **712** Adults.
- The mean age of participants was **40.1** years old.
- The **participants** in the survey are **exclusively** living in **Illinois**.



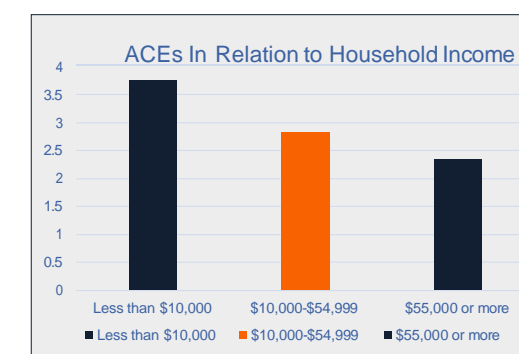
- Black participants reported, on average, higher ACEs scores than any other population by race.
- Black participants were also more likely to be in lower income brackets.
- As Income goes down ACEs scores go up.

## RESULTS

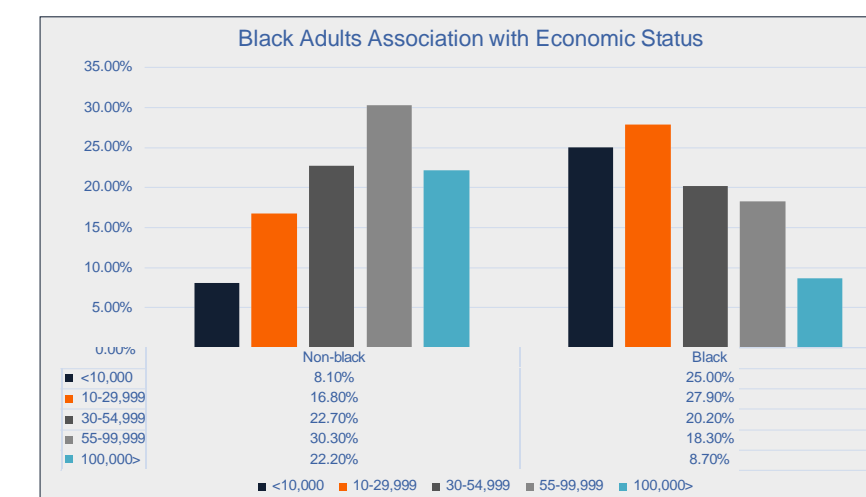


- An independent-samples t-test was conducted to compare ACEs between non-Black adults and Black adults.
- There was a significant difference in ACEs between non-Black adults (M = 2.22) and Black adults (M = 2.89),  $t(700) = -2.43, p < .05$

➤ A one-way ANOVA was conducted to compare levels of ACEs by three economic categories. The three conditions were 1) less than \$10,000, 2) \$10,000-\$54,999, and 3) \$55,000 or more.



➤ There was a significant effect of economic categories on ACEs,  $F(2, 699) = 5.03, p < .05$ .



- There was a significant association between race and ACEs,  $B = .572, p < .05$ .
- There was a significant association between economic level and ACEs,  $B = -.41, p < .05$ .
- The interaction between race and economic level was not statistically significant,  $B = -.43, p = .48$ .

## DISCUSSION

- Our sample shows a clear inequality for Black people in experiencing increased levels of ACEs.
- Our research found that within the Black population of Illinois, a lower annual household income is associated with elevated ACEs scores, showing an economic role in ACEs for Black individuals.
- With that in mind, it is a necessity for future studies to acknowledge and research the effects of various racist economic policies that are furthering Income & ACEs inequalities in the Black population.
- Looking at the relationship between the Black population and economic factors in Illinois, we found that there is research in both areas but no concrete link between them.
- Socioeconomic status and poverty play an important role in rates of ACEs, neighborhoods of concentrated poverty heightens the risk of elevated ACEs scores for their residence. (1)
- There is little data looking at the relationship between the higher ACEs scores found in Black individuals and contributing economic factors.
- Socioeconomic factors, as they relate to ACEs and race have a complex interplay. (2)

1. (Maguire-Jack, K et al., 2021).  
2. (Slack S et al. 2017)

## LIMITATIONS

- With our strictly statewide sample our study is not generalizable beyond areas with similar regional demographics to Illinois. Future studies should include state diversity and a larger sample size.
- It's clear that income plays a role in higher ACEs scores for the Black population of Illinois but there are clearly other factors that influence ACE scores as well. Economic factors beyond income should be looked at.
- Our research emphasizes the need to include additional expansive ACEs. These expansive ACEs should include items purely revolving around racism and the effects of racist violence/abuse. (Bernard et al., 2020; Karatekin & Hill, 2018)

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