



# Who Is Talking About Adverse Childhood Experiences?

## Evidence from Twitter to Inform Health Promotion

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Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) are traumatic events that happen in a child's life before the age of 18, such as abuse, neglect and household dysfunction (Felitti et al., 1998). The more adversity a child experiences, the more likely that leads to negative health and social outcomes throughout the lifespan (Felitti et al., 1998).

Twitter has been a prominent platform for media sources, public figures and the general public to access and share information about ACEs and may be used to promote health awareness and health behaviors (Sinnenberg et al., 2016). Ample evidence suggests that Twitter can provide a unique glimpse into public awareness and understanding of public health concepts like ACEs. (Sinnenberg, et al., 2016).

This research brief aims to inform the general public about key takeaways from a recent research study, **"Who is Talking about Adverse Childhood Experiences? Evidence from Twitter to Inform Health Promotion,"** which examined how information about ACEs is commonly being used, shared and discussed on Twitter. The research team looked at tweets between January 1, 2018 and December 31, 2019 using Crimson Hexagon, a social media analysis system. The purpose of this study was to understand the extent to which the general public is talking about ACEs, to help inform future prevention efforts.

### Tweets About ACEs

# 195,816

Relevant tweets

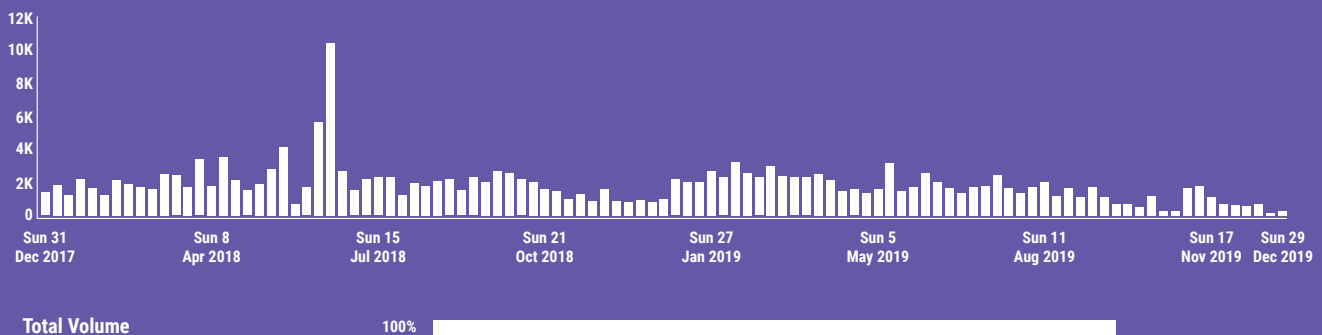
# 8,159

Average tweets per week

# 268

Average tweets per day

### Tweet Volume Characteristics



1. Children's Trust of South Carolina
2. College of Social Work, University of South Carolina
3. School of Mass Communication and Journalism, University of South Carolina



### Search Terms



ACEs  
adverse childhood experiences  
A.C.E.s.  
ace  
ace's  
toxic stress  
toxicstress  
adversechildhoodexperiences  
#healing  
childhoodtrauma  
(NOT itsjeffiedrich or KidsRpeople2)

### Sentiment



Negative 47%  
Neutral 45%  
Positive 8%

### Emotion



Fear 40%  
Joy 24%  
Neutral 22%  
Sadness 8%  
Disgust 4%  
Surprise 1%  
Anger 1%

### User Demographics



**Gender**  
Male 43%  
Female 57%

**Age**  
<35 86%  
>35 14%

### Primary Themes



Adverse Childhood Experiences 23%  
Childhood Trauma and ACEs 19%  
Long-Term Impact and ACEs 12%  
Preventing ACEs 11%  
Short-Term Effects of ACEs 8%  
ACEs Study 5%  
Students with ACEs 5%

### States of Origin



California 14%  
Florida 9%  
New York 8%  
Texas 6%  
District of Columbia 4%  
Michigan 4%  
Illinois 4%  
Ohio 4%  
Pennsylvania 3%  
Massachusetts 3%  
North Carolina 3%  
New Jersey 3%  
Tennessee 2%  
Georgia 2%  
Virginia 2%  
Washington 2%  
Maryland 2%  
Minnesota 2%  
Arizona 2%  
Indiana 2%



### Top Conversation Influencers



Pediatricians



Child Health Advocacy  
Organizations



National News Source



Federal Health Agency

### Key Takeaways

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and related issues are discussed on social media, although they are not as popular of a topic, relative to other topics that are discussed on social media.

- Examining tweets about ACEs and related topics can help us better understand the conversations that occur around childhood trauma, including who is leading these conversations, who is engaging in these conversations, and what is the tone of these conversations.
- While ACEs is a well-recognized term, the tweets suggest that toxic stress may be more commonly used in public conversations.
- The top two emotions associated with the tweets were fear and joy. This is consistent with the science of toxic stress and resilience.
- There was a spike in tweets about ACEs around the time that organizations and users began speaking about ACEs in relation to the “zero-tolerance” immigration policy and family separation at the border. This may present an opportunity to disseminate information about ACEs within the context of current events.
- Twitter conversations about ACEs include content sharing by public health experts; however, many of these conversations are taking place within specific fields and disciplines.
- More work is needed to expand knowledge about ACEs and related issues to the general public.
- Study findings suggest that social media can be leveraged as a tool to increase public engagement and awareness around ACEs and the health and well being of children and families.
- Individuals and organizations have the potential to increase knowledge and awareness of ACEs and related experiences through social media engagement.

### References

- Felitti, V. J., Anda, R. F., Nordenberg, D., Williamson, D. F., Spitz, A. M., Edwards, V., Koss, M. P., & Marks, J. S. (1998). Relationship of childhood abuse and household dysfunction to many of the leading causes of death in adults. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, 14(4), 245–258. [https://doi.org/10.1016/s0749-3797\(98\)00017-8](https://doi.org/10.1016/s0749-3797(98)00017-8)
- Sinnenberg, L., Buttenheim, A. M., Padrez, K., Mancheno, C., Ungar, L., & Merchant, R. M. (2016). Twitter as a Tool for Health Research: A Systematic Review. *American Journal of Public Health*, 107(1), e1–e8. <https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.2016.303512>
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