

# Cycles of violence in England and Wales: The contribution of childhood abuse to risk of revictimisation in adulthood

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Butler, N., Quigg, Z., Bellis, M. A. (2020) Cycles of violence in England and Wales: the contribution of childhood abuse to risk of revictimisation in adulthood. *BMC Medicine* 18, 325. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12916-020-01788-3>

# Interpersonal violence

- Major public health issue, claiming over 1.3 million lives globally each year
- Non-fatal forms of violence even more prevalent, globally 35% of women have experienced intimate partner violence or sexual violence in their lifetime
- Estimated cost of non-fatal violence amongst adults to the NHS and other health care providers in England and Wales was >£1.8 billion 2015/16
- High individual, societal and health service costs and represents an important public health issue
- Understanding the risk factors associated with interpersonal violence crucial to inform effective intervention strategies
- Using a lifecourse approach, evidence support the concept of revictimisation – individuals who experience victimization in childhood are at increased risk of range of adverse outcomes in later life including, violence revictimisation in adulthood

# Impact of individual types of abuse

- Historically, focus was on impact of individual types of child abuse in isolation
- Review of studies in 2001 – small minority included more than one form of abuse (*Higgins & McCabe, 2001*)
- Early studies on revictimisation focused on one specific type of child abuse and often a similar form of victimization in adulthood e.g.
  - Child sexual abuse associated with a between 2-11 fold increase risk of rape in adulthood (*Fergusson et al., 1997; Arata, 2002*)
  - Exposure to domestic abuse as a child associated with being a victim of abuse as an adult and exposing their own children to parental conflict (*Coker et al., 2000; Cannon et al., 2009*)
- Implies types of abuse occur individually, recent research shown child abuse and other adversity typically co-occur - attributing risk of revictimisation to one form of abuse may be misleading

# Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs)

Stressful events occurring during childhood that directly affect a child or affect the environment in which they live

## CHILD MALTREATMENT



Verbal abuse



Physical abuse



Sexual abuse

Consistently among the strongest predictors of poor outcomes:

- Education
- Employment
- **Violence**
- Crime
- Health & wellbeing

## CHILDHOOD HOUSEHOLD INCLUDED



Parental separation



Domestic violence



Mental illness



Alcohol abuse



Drug use



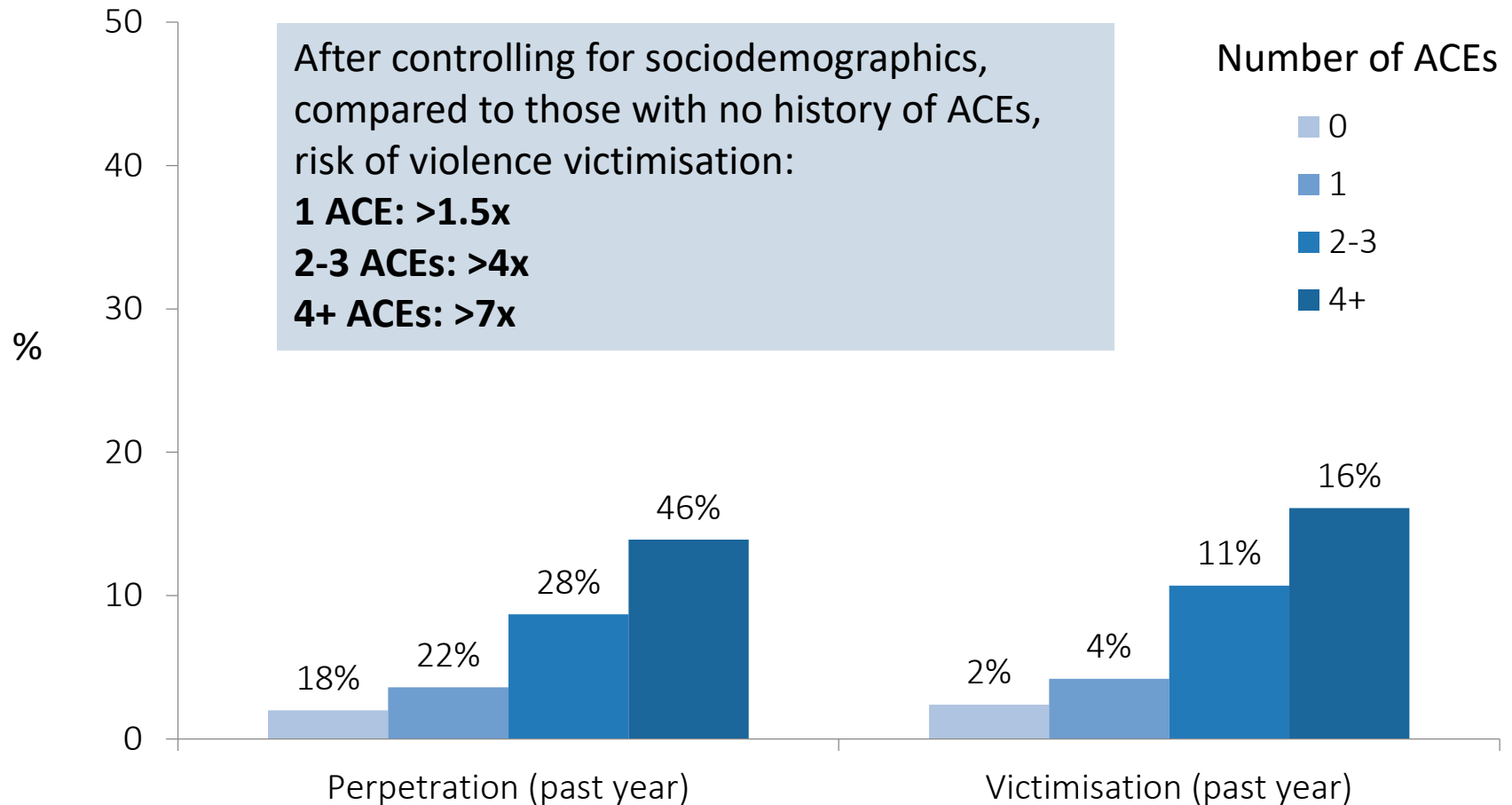
Incarceration

Framework for:

- Shared understanding
- Shared agenda

# ACE count and violence outcomes

## Prevalence of violence by ACE Count



# Rationale for and aim of current study

## Limitations of research to date

- Limited by focus on violence in general rather than specific types (e.g. intimate partner violence)
- Limited by use of specific samples (health care sample)
- Typically focus on cumulative burden of ACEs OR an individual ACE
- Suggested that ACE studies supplemented with research investigating potential differential impact of different types, or combination of types of abuse

## Study aim

To examine the association between being a victim of child abuse and violence revictimisation in adulthood, including intimate partner violence, sexual violence and physical assault, using data from a nationally representative general population sample

Consideration of impact both **type** of childhood abuse and **number** of types

# Methods

## Data source

Analysed data from the 2015/16 Crime Survey for England and Wales – a nationally representative survey of household residents aged 16+ years

## Sample

Adults aged 16-59 years who completed the self-complete module (**n=21,845**)

## Measures

### Abuse during childhood (<16 years):

*Response options yes, no, don't know, do not wish to answer*

- Physical abuse (1 item)
- Psychological abuse (1 item)
- Sexual abuse (3 items)
- Witnessing violence between parents (1 item)

Number of types of abuse (derived variable: categorised as none, single type, multiple types)

### Covariates

- Demographic characteristics controlled for in multivariate analysis included: age, sex, ethnicity, deprivation

### Violence victimisation in adulthood ( $\geq 16$ years)

- Intimate partner violence since 16 years (9 items)
- Sexual violence since 16 years (8 items)
- Physical assault in past 12 months (derived variable from non-victim form dataset)

## Statistical analyses

- SPSS (v.24)
- Missing values for childhood abuse coded as a negative response
- Logistic regressions with adulthood violence victimisation as dependent variable – 3 models ran for each violence outcome (controlling for sociodemographics)
  - Model 1: included child abuse count
  - Model 2: included all individual types of child abuse
  - Model 3: included both child abuse count and all individual types of child abuse

# Proportion of adults who experienced childhood abuse (study sample)



Of adults aged 16-59, before the age of 16 years:

**18.6% (n=4058) reported at least one form of childhood abuse**



Psychological abuse

**9.0%**



Physical abuse

**6.9%**



Sexual abuse

**6.9%**



Witnessing  
domestic violence

**8.1%**

One type: 10.6%

Two or more types: 8.0%

**All child abuse types were significantly associated with each other**  
*Strongest association between psychological abuse and physical abuse  
and weakest association between sexual abuse and witnessing domestic  
violence*





# Proportion of adults who experienced adulthood violence victimisation (study sample)



Of adults aged 16-59, since the age of 16 years:



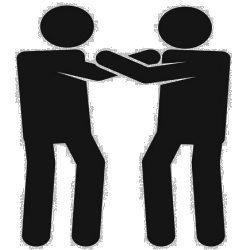
Intimate partner  
violence (lifetime)

**18.9%**



Sexual violence  
(lifetime)

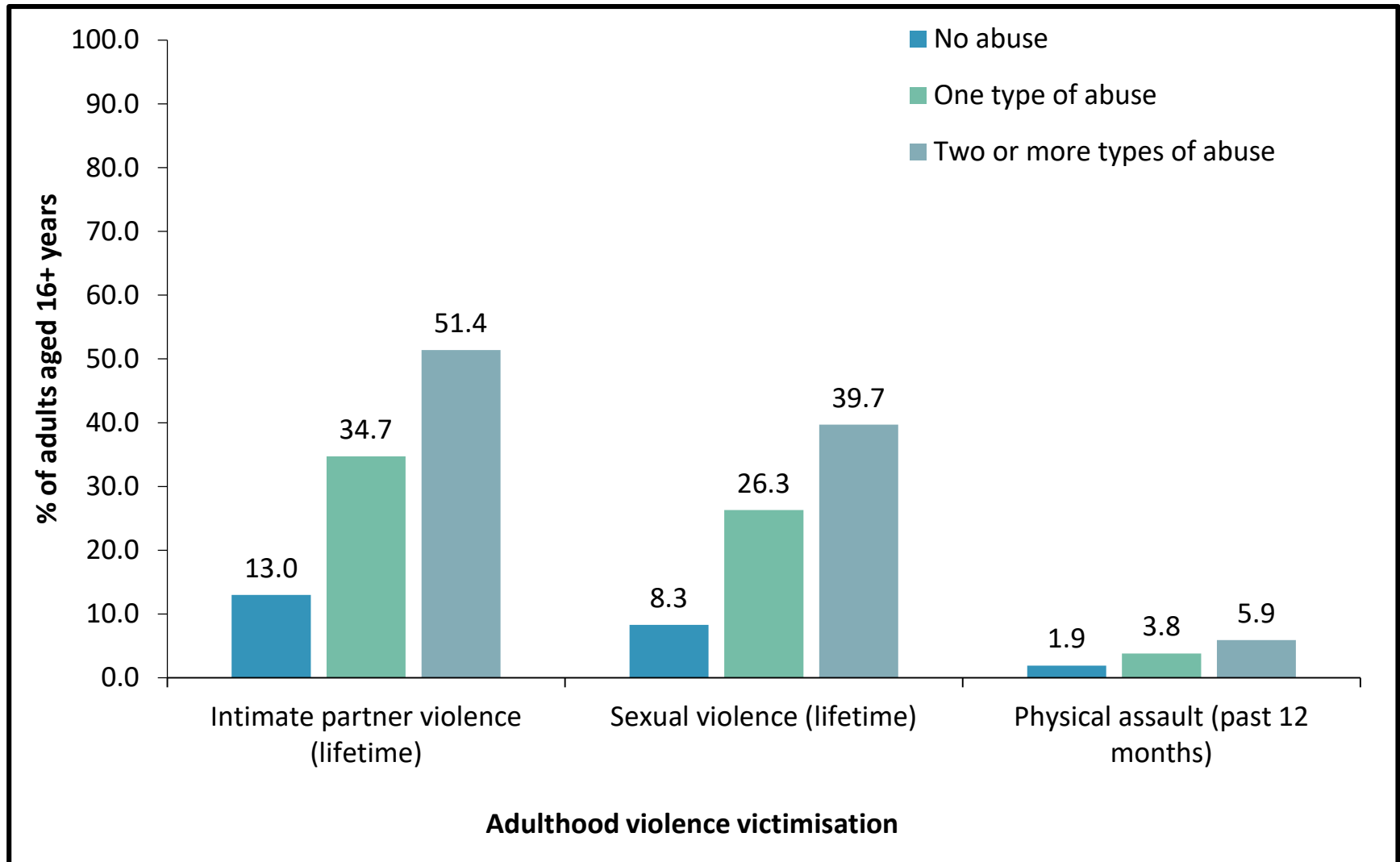
**13.0%**



Physical assault  
(past year)

**2.4%**

# Proportion of adults who experienced violence victimisation by number of types of child abuse



# Number of types of abuse and risk of intimate partner violence (lifetime)

After controlling for age, sex, ethnicity and deprivation, compared to individuals with no childhood abuse:

## Single type



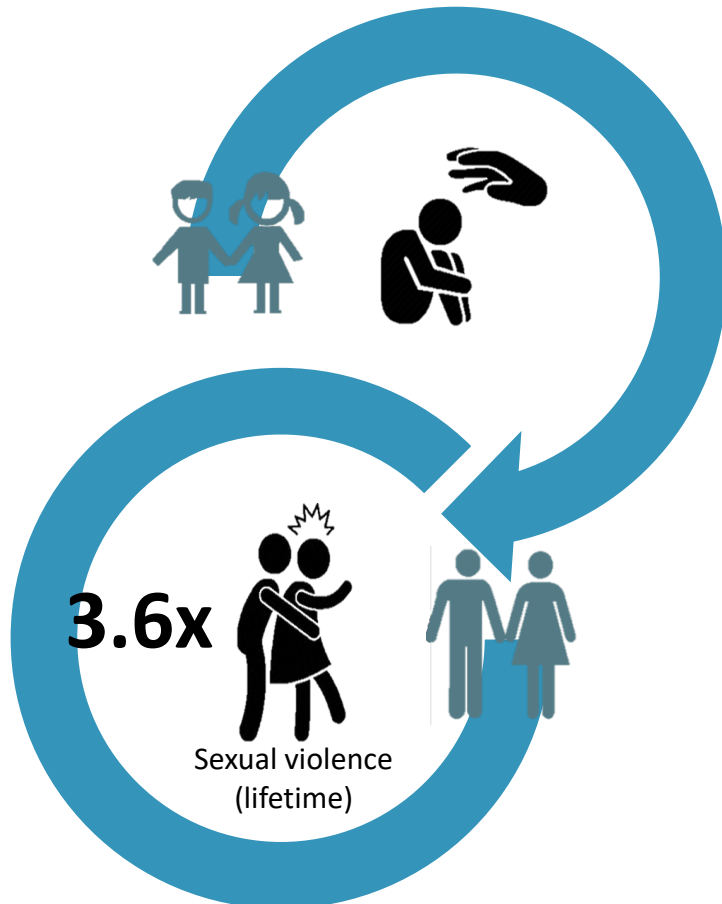
## Multiple types



# Number of types of abuse and risk of sexual violence (lifetime)

After controlling for age, sex, ethnicity and deprivation, compared to individuals with no childhood abuse:

## Single type



## Multiple types



# Number of types of abuse and risk of physical assault (past year)

After controlling for age, sex, ethnicity and deprivation, compared to individuals with no childhood abuse:

## Single type



## Multiple types



# Relationships between individual types of childhood abuse and violence victimisation in adulthood

Bivariate and adjusted associations between child abuse (<16 years) and adult violence victimisation (≥16 years), CSEW 15/16 adults aged 16-59 years.

		% (n)	Sig.	AOR	95% CIs	
					LL	UL
<b>Intimate partner violence since age 16</b>						
Childhood psychological abuse	Yes	49.9 (953)	<0.001	5.09	4.60	5.63
	No	15.5 (2728)				
Childhood physical abuse	Yes	46.4 (688)	<0.001	4.59	4.09	5.14
	No	16.6 (2993)				
Childhood sexual abuse	Yes	44.6 (665)	<0.001	3.21	2.87	3.60
	No	16.8 (3016)				
Childhood witnessing domestic violence	Yes	45.0 (781)	<0.001	3.85	3.46	4.28
	No	16.3 (2900)				
<b>Sexual violence since age 16</b>						
Childhood psychological abuse	Yes	35.9 (699)	<0.001	4.56	4.08	5.10
	No	10.6 (1924)				
Childhood physical abuse	Yes	31.5 (471)	<0.001	4.15	3.64	4.72
	No	11.5 (2152)				
Childhood sexual abuse	Yes	47.1 (707)	<0.001	5.80	5.16	6.52
	No	10.3 (1916)				
Childhood witnessing domestic violence	Yes	31.7 (557)	<0.001	3.40	3.03	3.83
	No	11.2 (2066)				
<b>Physical assault past 12 months</b>						
Childhood psychological abuse	Yes	6.2 (122)	<0.001	3.14	2.54	3.87
	No	2.1 (409)				
Childhood physical abuse	Yes	5.4 (82)	<0.001	2.51	1.97	3.20
	No	2.2 (449)				
Childhood sexual abuse	Yes	4.5 (68)	<0.001	2.41	1.84	3.16
	No	2.3 (463)				
Childhood witnessing domestic violence	Yes	5.4 (96)	<0.001	2.60	2.06	3.27
	No	2.2 (435)				

**Note.** AOR, adjusted odds ratio (adjusted for sex, age, ethnicity, and deprivation); 95% CIs, 95% confidence intervals; LL, lower limit; UL, upper limit.

# Relationships between individual types of childhood abuse and violence victimisation in adulthood

		Intimate partner violence (lifetime)				Sexual violence (lifetime)				Physical assault (past year)			
		Sig.	AOR	95% CIs		Sig.	AOR	95% CIs		Sig.	AOR	95% CIs	
				LL	UL			LL	UL			LL	UL
<b>Childhood psychological abuse</b>		<0.001	2.78	2.45	3.15	<0.001	2.53	2.19	2.92	<0.001	2.37	1.84	3.06
<b>Childhood physical abuse</b>		<0.001	1.79	1.55	2.07	<0.001	1.50	1.27	1.78	<i>NS</i>			
<b>Childhood sexual abuse</b>		<0.001	2.06	1.83	2.33	<0.001	4.20	3.71	4.75	<0.01	1.61	1.21	2.14
<b>Childhood witnessing domestic violence</b>		<0.001	1.76	1.55	2.00	<0.001	1.46	1.26	1.69	<0.01	1.50	1.14	1.98
<b>Sex</b>	Female	<0.001	2.53	2.33	2.76	<0.001	6.36	5.62	7.21	<0.001	0.67	0.56	0.80
<b>Age</b>	50-59 (ref.)	<0.001				<i>NS</i>				<0.001			
	16-19	<0.05	0.64	0.48	0.83					<0.01	2.08	1.36	3.19
	20-29	<i>NS</i>	0.96	0.85	1.08					<0.001	2.16	1.65	2.83
	30-39	<0.05	1.13	1.02	1.26					<0.01	1.55	1.18	2.03
	40-49	<0.001	1.24	1.12	1.37					<0.05	1.35	1.03	1.76
<b>Ethnicity</b>	White	<0.001	1.97	1.70	2.28	<0.001	1.55	1.32	1.84	<0.001	1.75	1.28	2.39
<b>Deprivation</b>	Least deprived (ref.)	<0.001				<0.001				<0.001			
	Most deprived – 1	<0.001	1.40	1.23	1.58	<0.001	0.71	0.61	0.82	<0.001	1.88	1.41	2.50
	2	<0.001	1.40	1.24	1.58	<i>NS</i>	0.91	0.79	1.05	<0.01	1.52	1.13	2.05
	3	<0.001	1.25	1.11	1.42	<i>NS</i>	0.98	0.85	1.12	<i>NS</i>	1.117	0.82	1.53
	4	<i>NS</i>	1.10	0.97	1.25	<i>NS</i>	1.14	0.99	1.30	<i>NS</i>	1.251	0.92	1.70

**Notes.** Limited to adults aged 16-59 years who completed the CSEW 2015/16 self-completion modules. AOR, adjusted odds ratio; 95% CIs, 95% confidence intervals; LL, lower limit; UL, upper limit.



# Consideration of both type of abuse and number of types experienced

After adjusting for sociodemographics, and for the effect of experiencing multiple types of abuse, each adulthood violence type was associated with different types of abuse:



Intimate partner violence  
(lifetime)



Sexual violence  
(lifetime)



Physical assault  
(past 12 months)



Child **psychological** and **physical** abuse



Child **psychological** and **sexual** abuse



Child **psychological** abuse only

# Implications for research

- All individual types of abuse significantly associated with each adult violence outcome but correlation and co-occurrence of types – **evidence multiple types should be considered together in research**
- When all individual types of abuse were considered together, most relationships with adult violence outcomes remained significant, suggesting child abuse in general, regardless of type, increases the risk of PA, IPV, and SV in adulthood.
- Findings showed a **cumulative impact** of child abuse on risk of violence revictimisation. Thus, whilst most abuse types were independently related to past year PA and IPV and SV since age 16 years, the strongest predictor of each adulthood violence outcome was **experiencing multiple forms of abuse** in childhood.
- When the effects of experiencing multiple forms of abuse were accounted for, type of abuse remained predictive of adult violence outcomes - suggests **effects of particular combinations of childhood abuse may be obscured when each type is given an equal weight**

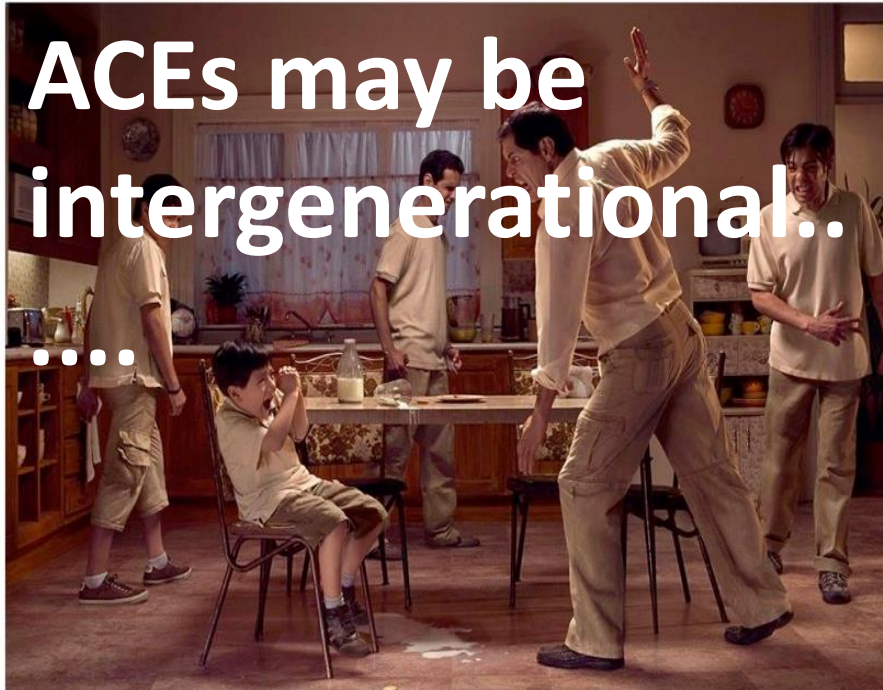
Both **type** of abuse AND **number** of types experienced seem to be important and both should be considered in future research

# Conclusions

- Interpersonal violence, including both childhood and adulthood victimisation, is **one of the most preventable causes of premature morbidity and mortality** and a key target of the Sustainable Development Goals
- Evidence from the current study suggests preventing child abuse will have **downstream effect** on preventing interpersonal violence across the lifespan
- Adulthood victimisation likely to compound effects of childhood abuse
- Compelling case for focusing global public health efforts on preventing childhood abuse
- Not only reduce risk of revictimisation across the lifecourse, but given that exposure to violence also represents adversities for the next generation it represents a crucial means of **disrupting intergenerational cycles of violence**

ACEs may be  
intergenerational..

.....



**BUT.....**

healing can occur &  
the cycle can be broken



Thank you

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With thanks to Professor Zara Quigg (Liverpool John Moores University) and Professor Mark A Bellis (Public Health Wales/Bangor University)