

# Harm Caused by Corporal Punishment

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Joan E. Durrant, PhD

Developmental & Child-Clinical Psychologist

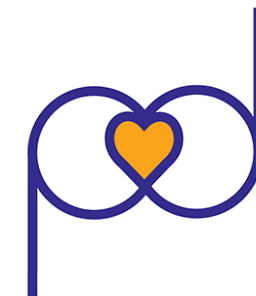
Senior Scholar, Department of Community Health Sciences, University of Manitoba

Executive Director, Positive Discipline in Everyday Life



**University  
of Manitoba**

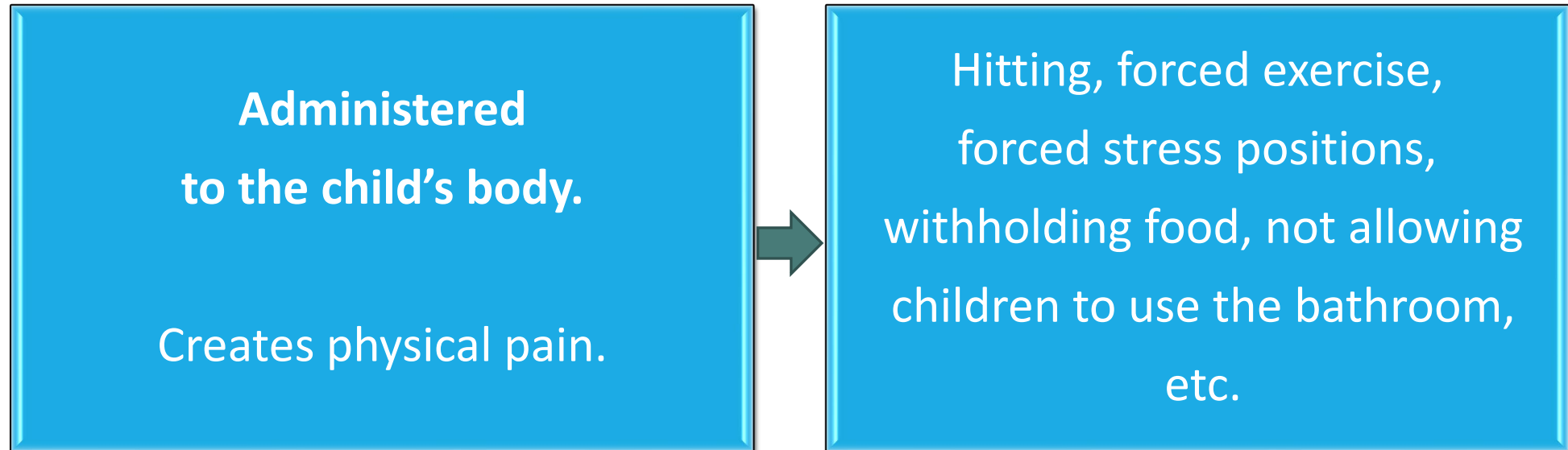
Rady Faculty of  
Health Sciences



Positive  
Discipline In  
Everyday Life

# What is Corporal Punishment?

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## Physical punishment and child outcomes: a narrative review of prospective studies

Anja Heilmann, Anita Mehay, Richard G Watt, Yvonne Kelly, Joan E Durrant, Jillian van Turnhout, Elizabeth T Gershoff

Physical punishment is increasingly viewed as a form of violence that harms children. This narrative review summarises the findings of 69 prospective longitudinal studies to inform practitioners and policy makers about physical punishment's outcomes. Our review identified seven key themes. First, physical punishment consistently predicts increases in child behaviour problems over time. Second, physical punishment is not associated with positive outcomes over time. Third, physical punishment increases the risk of involvement with child protective services. Fourth, the only evidence of children eliciting physical punishment is for externalising behaviour. Fifth, physical punishment predicts worsening behaviour over time in quasi-experimental studies. Sixth, associations between physical punishment and detrimental child outcomes are robust across child and parent characteristics. Finally, there is some evidence of a dose-response relationship. The consistency of these findings indicates that physical punishment is harmful to children and that policy remedies are warranted.

## CHILD DEVELOPMENT



Child Development, xxxx 2021, Volume 00, Number 0, Pages 1–12

## Corporal Punishment and Elevated Neural Response to Threat in Children

Jorge Cuartas , and David G. Weissman  
Harvard University

Margaret A. Sheridan  
University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill

Liliana Lengua  
University of Washington

Katie A. McLaughlin  
Harvard University

Spanking remains common around the world, despite evidence linking corporal punishment to detrimental child outcomes. This study tested whether children ( $M_{\text{age}} = 11.60$ ) who were spanked ( $N = 40$ ) exhibited altered neural function in response to stimuli that suggest the presence of an environmental threat compared to children who were not spanked ( $N = 107$ ). Children who were spanked exhibited greater activation in multiple regions of the medial and lateral prefrontal cortex (PFC), including dorsal anterior cingulate cortex, dorsomedial PFC, bilateral frontal pole, and left middle frontal gyrus in response to fearful relative to neutral faces compared to children who were not spanked. These findings suggest that spanking may alter neural responses to environmental threats in a manner similar to more severe forms of maltreatment.

Journal of Youth and Adolescence  
https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-022-01664-8

## EMPIRICAL RESEARCH



## Early Childhood Predictors of Teen Dating Violence Involvement at Age 17

Noemí Pereda <sup>1,2</sup> · Ana M. Greco <sup>1,3</sup> · Diego A. Diaz-Faes <sup>1,2</sup> · Manuel Eisner <sup>4</sup> · Denis Ribeaud <sup>5</sup>

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## Abstract

The distal relationship between risk factors in childhood and subsequent dating violence in late adolescence has not often been explored using longitudinal data. This study aims to shed light on the problem of dating violence by examining children's backgrounds at age 7 and the link to the future involvement in dating violence at age 17 using the first and seventh waves of the Zurich Project on the Social Development from Childhood to Adulthood (*z-proso*,  $n = 644$ ). The sample consists of 644 multiethnic adolescents (57.14% female,  $M = 17.47$ ,  $SD = 0.37$ ), mainly Swiss-born (90%), though more than half of their parents (60%) were born in another country. A latent class analysis was applied to identify three different profiles (a) zero (or minimal) involvement in teen dating violence, (b) perpetrators/victims of controlling behaviors, and (c) perpetrators/victims of controlling behaviors and of physical violence. Participants who were corporally punished and/or victims of bullying at age 7 were significantly more likely to belong to the controlling and physical violence profile than children in the non-violent class. These results suggest a certain chronicity of the effects of violent experiences in early childhood on the pattern of romantic relationships at 17 years old.

Psychological Bulletin  
2022, Vol. 128, No. 4, 539–579

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0033-2909/22/\$5.00 DOI: 10.1037/bul0033-2909.128.4.539

## Corporal Punishment by Parents and Associated Child Behaviors and Experiences: A Meta-Analytic and Theoretical Review

Elizabeth Thompson Gershoff  
Columbia University

Although the merits of parents using corporal punishment to discipline children have been argued for decades, a thorough understanding of whether and how corporal punishment affects children has not been reached. Toward this end, the author first presents the results of meta-analyses of the association between parental corporal punishment and 11 child behaviors and experiences. Parental corporal punishment was associated with all child constructs, including higher levels of immediate compliance and aggression and lower levels of moral internalization and mental health. The author then presents a process-content model to explain how parental corporal punishment might cause particular child outcomes and considers alternative explanations. The article concludes by identifying 7 major remaining issues for future research.

Journal of Family Psychology  
2016, Vol. 30, No. 4, 453–469

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0893-3200/16/\$12.00 http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/fam0000191

## Spanking and Child Outcomes: Old Controversies and New Meta-Analyses

Elizabeth T. Gershoff  
University of Texas at Austin

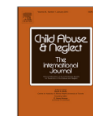
Andrew Grogan-Kaylor  
University of Michigan

Whether spanking is helpful or harmful to children continues to be the source of considerable debate among both researchers and the public. This article addresses 2 persistent issues, namely whether effect sizes for spanking are distinct from those for physical abuse, and whether effect sizes for spanking are robust to study design differences. Meta-analyses focused specifically on spanking were conducted on a total of 111 unique effect sizes representing 160,927 children. Thirteen of 17 mean effect sizes were significantly different from zero and all indicated a link between spanking and increased risk for detrimental child outcomes. Effect sizes did not substantially differ between spanking and physical abuse or by study design characteristics.



Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

## Child Abuse & Neglect



## Spanking and adult mental health impairment: The case for the designation of spanking as an adverse childhood experience



Tracie O. Afifi<sup>a,\*</sup>, Derek Ford<sup>b</sup>, Elizabeth T. Gershoff<sup>c</sup>, Melissa Merrick<sup>d</sup>, Andrew Grogan-Kaylor<sup>e</sup>, Katie A. Ports<sup>f</sup>, Harriet L. MacMillan<sup>g</sup>, George W. Holden<sup>b</sup>, Catherine A. Taylor<sup>i</sup>, Shawna J. Lee<sup>j</sup>, Robbyn Peters Bennett<sup>k</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Department of Community Health Sciences and Psychiatry, University of Manitoba, Canada

<sup>b</sup> Division of Violence Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Atlanta, GA, USA

<sup>c</sup> Department of Human Development and Family Sciences, University of Texas at Austin, USA

<sup>d</sup> Division of Violence Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Atlanta, GA, USA

<sup>e</sup> School of Social Work, University of Michigan, USA

<sup>f</sup> Division of Violence Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Atlanta, GA, USA

<sup>g</sup> Department of Psychiatry and Behavioural Neurosciences and Department of Pediatrics, McMaster University, Hamilton, Canada

<sup>h</sup> Department of Psychology, Southern Methodist University, Dallas, TX, USA

<sup>i</sup> Department of Global Community Health and Behavioral Sciences, Tulane University School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine, USA

<sup>j</sup> School of Social Work, University of Michigan, USA

<sup>k</sup> Child Mental Health Specialist, Psychotherapist Private Practice, Portland, OR, USA

# Summary of Research on Outcomes of ‘Spanking’

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## NEGATIVE OUTCOMES

<b>Disruptive behaviour problems</b>
<b>Aggression &amp; antisocial behaviour</b>
<b>Teen dating violence; adult spousal violence</b>

## POSITIVE OUTCOMES

## What children say . . .

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“They might break something or hurt their parents. It’s like getting your own back.”

“They might smack their parents back because they did it to them  
so they think it’s a good thing to do it back.”

“You hurt your sister. You take it out on somebody else.”

“You feel like you wanna smash something or kick the wall or break something.”

“You get a lot of anger build-up.”

# Summary of Research on Outcomes of ‘Spanking’

## NEGATIVE OUTCOMES

Disruptive behaviour problems
Aggression & antisocial behaviour (child & adult)
Teen dating violence; adult spousal violence
<b>Lower moral internalization</b>
<b>Impaired social-emotional development</b>
<b>Mental health problems</b>

## POSITIVE OUTCOMES

## What children say . . .

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“They feel abandoned and alone.”

“They feel alone, helpless and sad.

They become isolated and no one can reach them anymore.”

“I feel like I have no one to lean on for the future.

It’s like my world, it’s ended.”

# Summary of Research on Outcomes of ‘Spanking’

## NEGATIVE OUTCOMES

Disruptive behaviour problems
Aggression & antisocial behaviour (child & adult)
Teen dating violence; adult spousal violence
Lower moral internalization
Impaired social-emotional development
Mental health problems
<b>Weakened relationships</b>

## POSITIVE OUTCOMES





When adults shake/strike/hurt children as punishment,  
they are focused on the child's *behaviour*,  
not on the child's *feelings*.



But the child is responding *emotionally*  
to the adult's action.

## What children say . . .

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“They try not to go near the adults again, but they have to.”

“They kind of go away from their parents because they don’t want to be hit again.”

“They don’t go near bigger people than themselves  
because they’re scared they might get smacked again.”

“You feel really mad and you feel like hitting them back.”

“You want payback and revenge.”

# Summary of Research on Outcomes of ‘Spanking’

## NEGATIVE OUTCOMES

Disruptive behaviour problems
Aggression & antisocial behaviour (child & adult)
Teen dating violence; adult spousal violence
Lower moral internalization
Impaired social-emotional development
Mental health problems
Weakened relationships
<b>Heightened brain reactivity</b>

## POSITIVE OUTCOMES

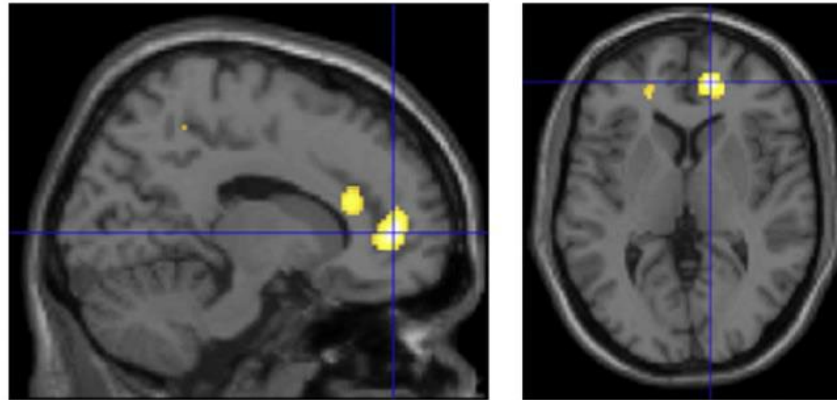
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Children who are 'spanked' show atypical brain activity  
in the prefrontal cortex.

Their brains are hyper-responsive  
to perceived threats  
(Cuartas et al., 2021).



The volume of the prefrontal cortex is reduced by 15%-19%  
in children who have been hit with objects  
(Tomoda et al., 2009).



# Summary of Research on Outcomes of 'Spanking'

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## NEGATIVE OUTCOMES

Disruptive behaviour problems
Aggression & antisocial behaviour (child & adult)
Teen dating violence; adult spousal violence
Lower moral internalization
Impaired social-emotional development
Mental health problems
Poor parent-child relationships
Heightened brain reactivity
<b>Physical injury</b>
<b>Fatality</b>

## POSITIVE OUTCOMES

# Spanking and Physical Abuse

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75% of substantiated physical abuse occurs in the context of punishment.

*(Canadian Incidence Study of Reported Child Abuse & Neglect, 1998, 2003, 2008)*

Children who are spanked are 7 times more likely to be severely assaulted than children who are not spanked.

*(La violence familiale dans la vie des enfants du Quebec, 1999)*

# Summary of Research on Outcomes of 'Spanking'

## NEGATIVE OUTCOMES

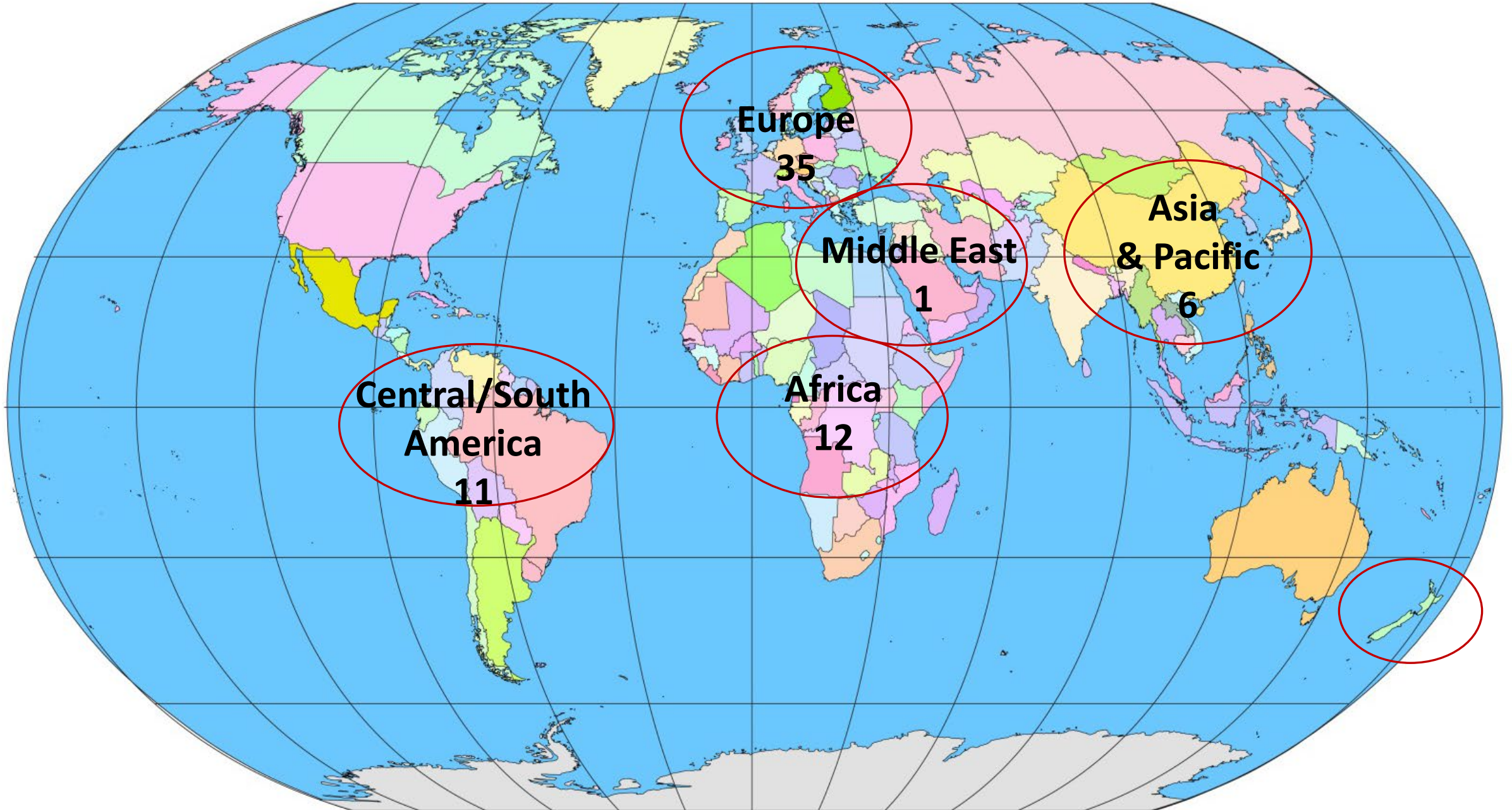
Disruptive behaviour problems
Aggression & antisocial behaviour (child & adult)
Teen dating violence; adult spousal violence
Lower moral internalization
Impaired social-emotional development
Mental health problems
Poor parent-child relationships
Slower cognitive development
Physical injury
Fatality

## POSITIVE OUTCOMES

[illegible]



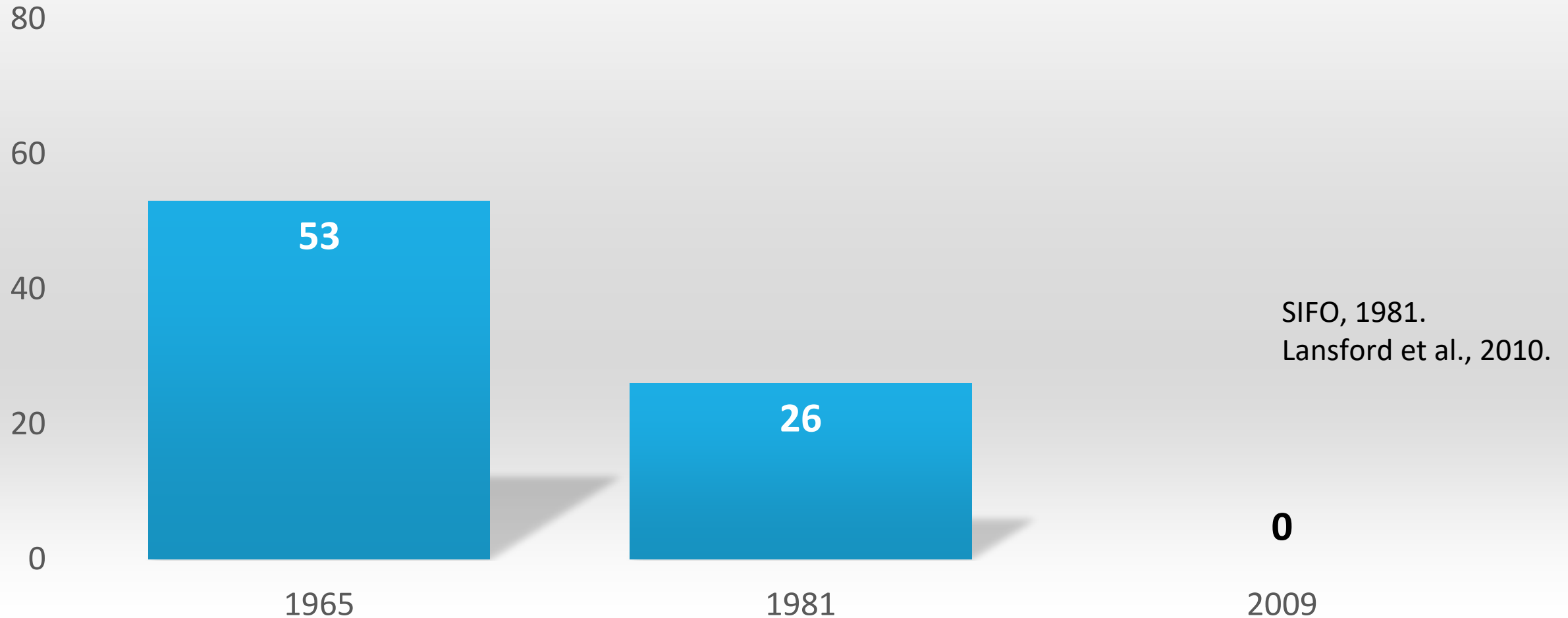
# 65 Countries with Full Prohibitions



## Sweden

(prohibited all corporal punishment in 1979)

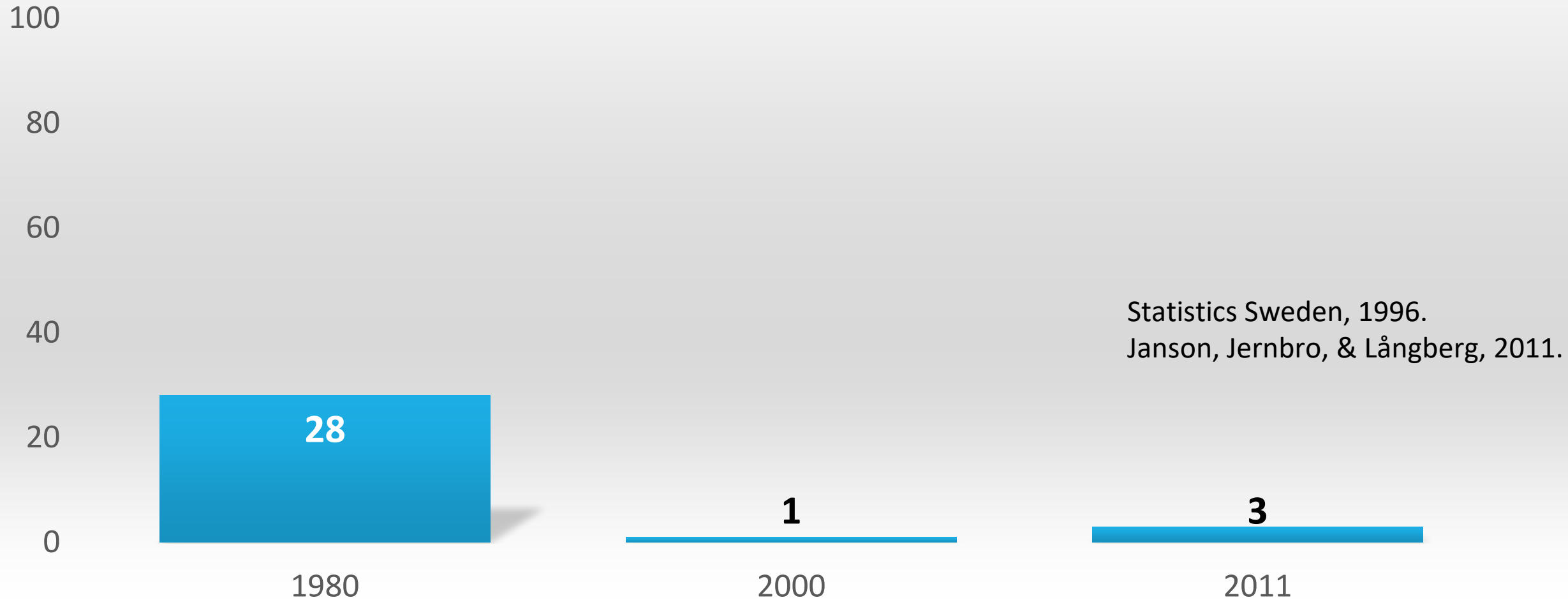
Percent of adults believing that corporal punishment is necessary.



## Sweden

(prohibited all corporal punishment in 1979)

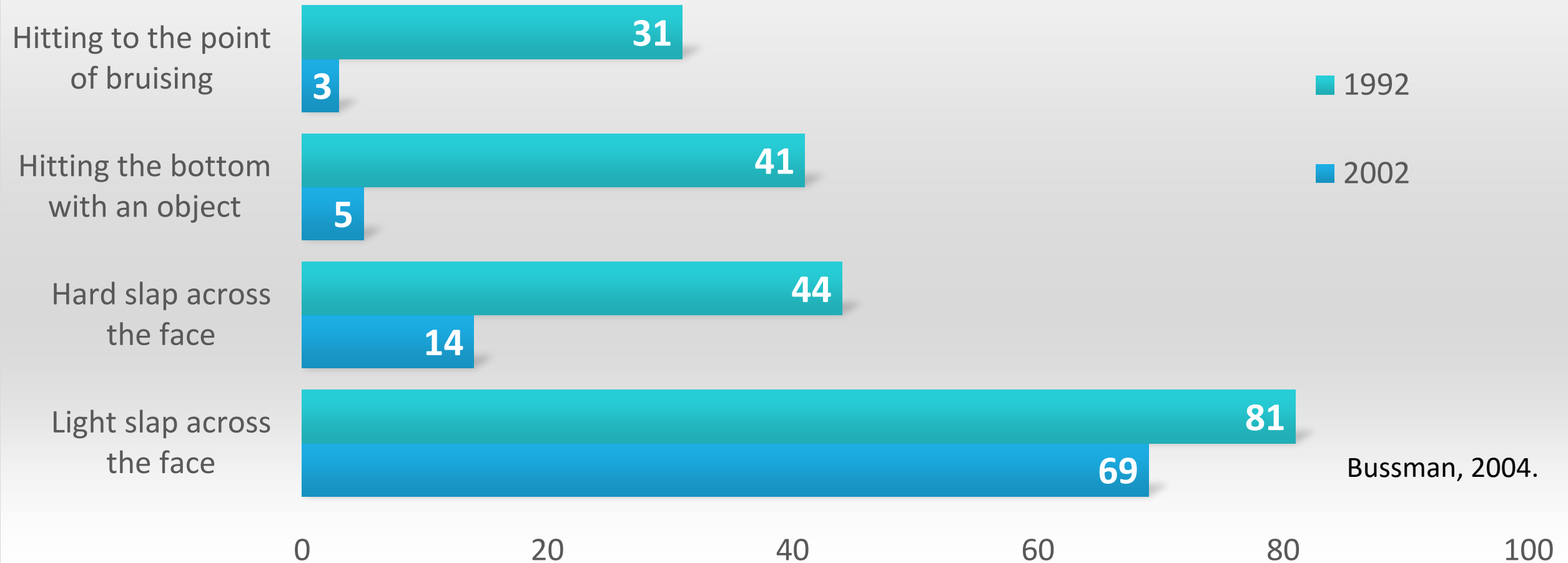
Percent of parents who report hitting their children in the previous year.



## Germany

(prohibited all corporal punishment in 2000)

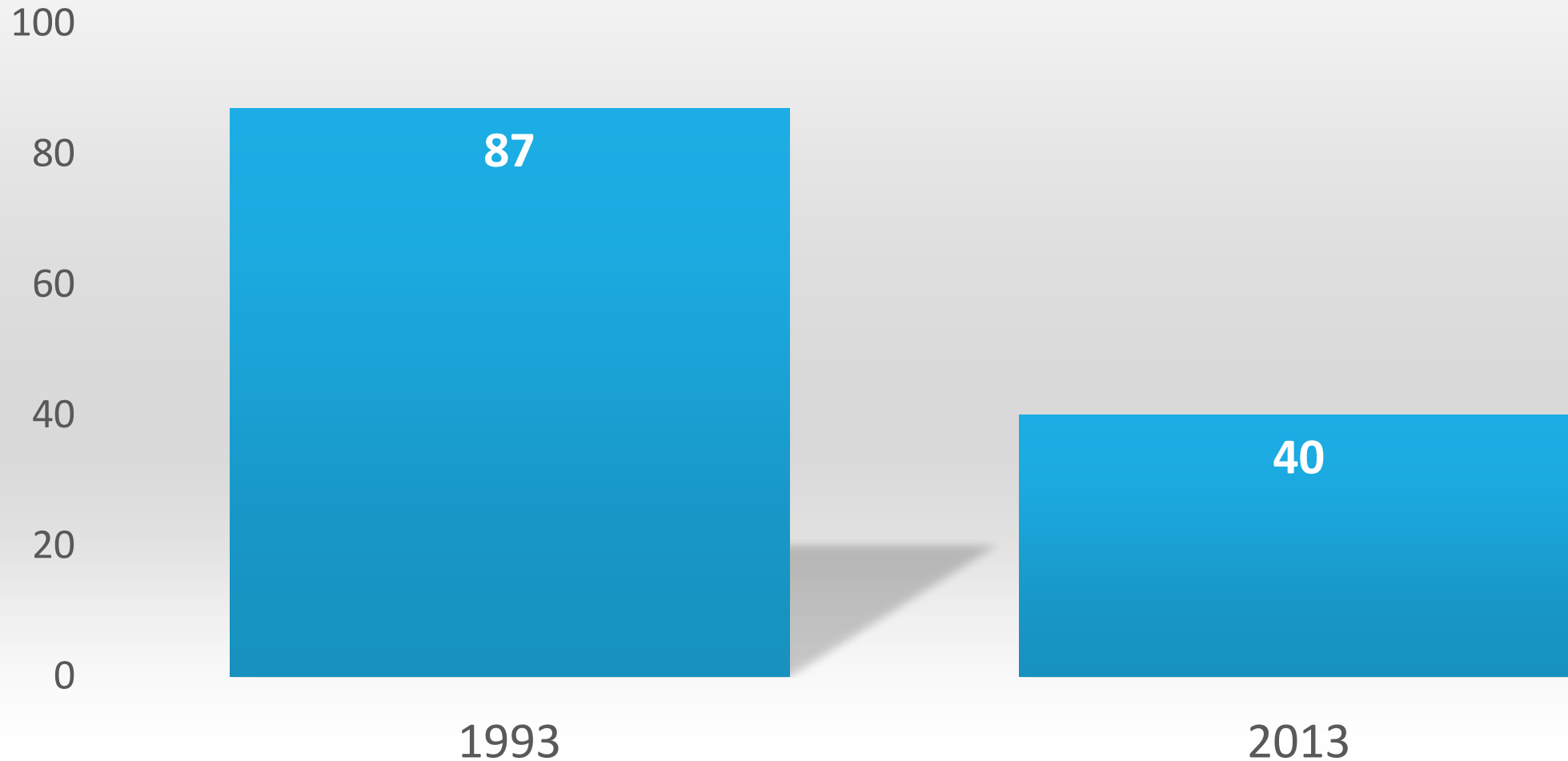
Percent of youth who had ever experienced various types of corporal punishment.



## New Zealand

(prohibited all corporal punishment in 2007)

Percent of adults agreeing that there are certain circumstances when it is alright for a parent to physically punish a child.

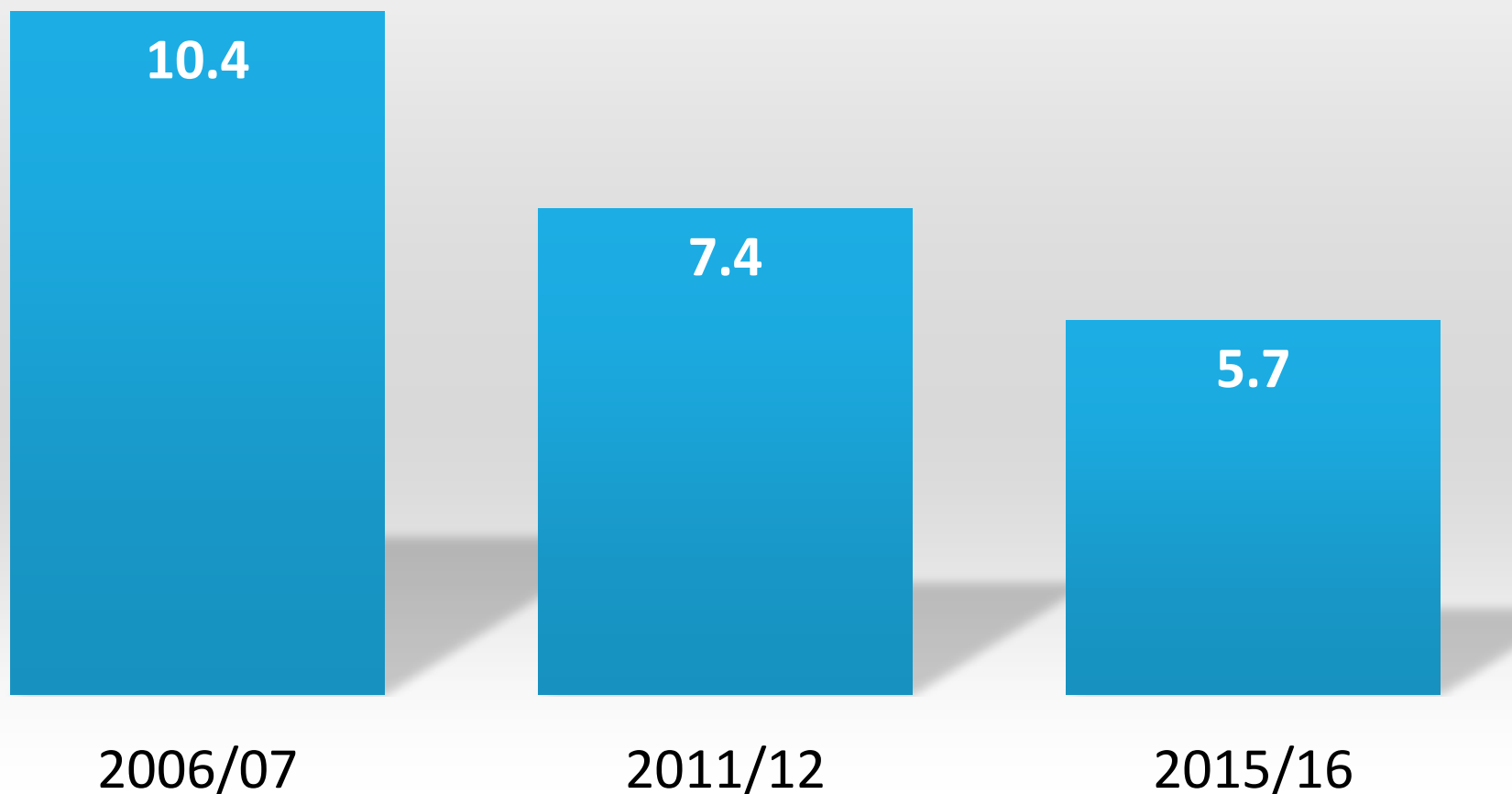


D'Souza et al., 2016.

# New Zealand

(prohibited all corporal punishment in 2007)

Percent of parents of children aged 1-14 who physically punished their children in the previous four weeks.



Ministry of Health, 2016.

# To change attitudes and behavior

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