

VIEWS ON CORPORAL PUNISHMENT, SEXUAL ABUSE AND JUVENILE OFFENDING

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BARBADOS HIGHLIGHTS



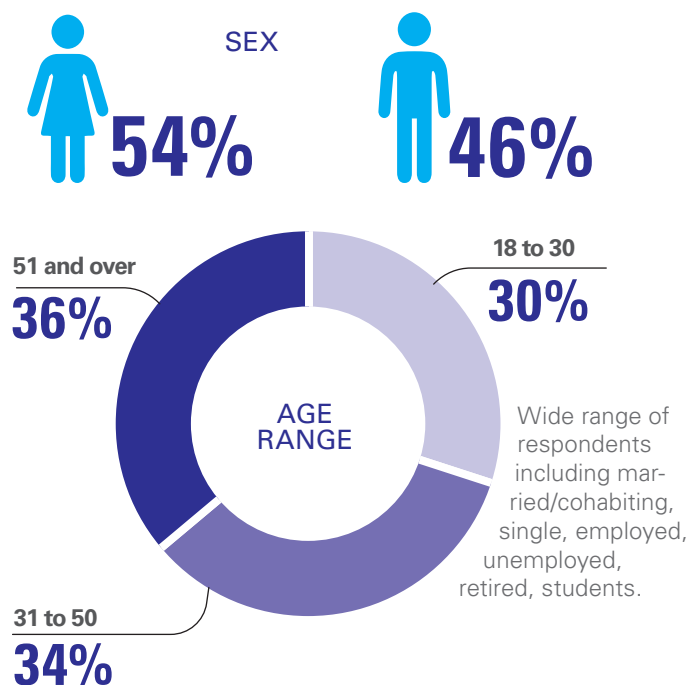
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subregional
summary

In 2024, UNICEF's Office for the Eastern Caribbean Area (ECA) commissioned Caribbean Development Research Services Inc (CADRES) to complete a study comparing findings on violence against children and sexual abuse with similar studies conducted in 2014 and 2019.

The scope was broadened to include newer threats to children, such as grooming, stalking and cyberbullying. Perceptions of the public on children in conflict with the law were also explored for the first time.

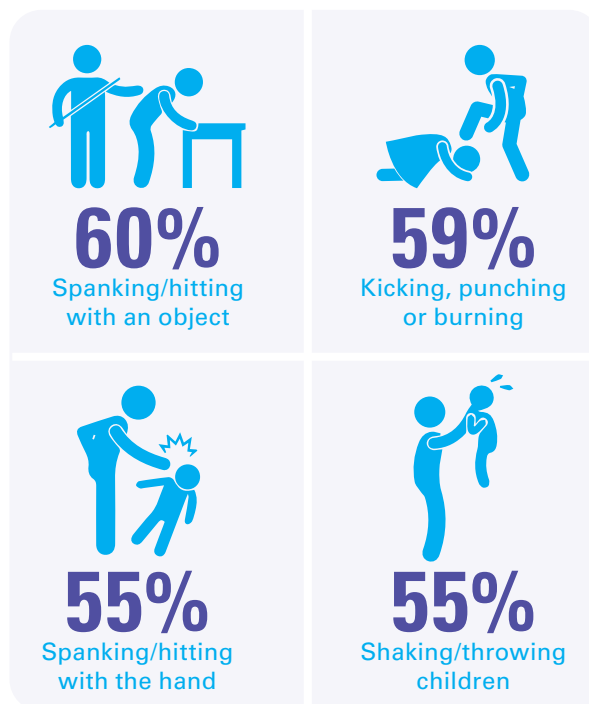
Barbados was one of eight countries surveyed, and 800 respondents were interviewed between October and November 2024.

DEMOGRAPHICS AND CHARACTERISTICS



CORPORAL PUNISHMENT (CP)

Definition



Current use of corporal punishment



Number of parents who never corporally punished their children has risen

25% to 30% ▲



Number of parents who use it regularly has halved

5% to 2% ▼

Attitudes towards corporal punishment in the home and at school (2024)



Increase in support for banning of CP in the home
2024: 29%
2019: 18%



Increase in support for a ban in schools
2024: 46%
2019: 40%

52%

18-30 age group more supportive of a ban on corporal punishment in schools

Women were also more supportive of a ban in both settings

Justification for the use of corporal punishment



65%
believed corporal punishment is an acceptable form of discipline

- ♦ Seen as an effective way of curbing misbehaviour, instilling discipline and encouraging obedience

How should corporal punishment be administered and to whom?



58%
said hitting with your hand should be used

- ♦ Most suited for primary and secondary school students (6-16 years)

- ♦ **18%:** Acceptable to hit children with an object

- ♦ Preferred methods: denial of privileges and of playtime (**81% and 63%, respectively**)

Social, cultural, religious norms and corporal punishment



- ♦ **44%** said it is a parent's right to discipline their child as they see fit
- ♦ **39%** said children need "a good lashing sometimes" to keep them in line

- ♦ **Only 9%** who use corporal punishment said it was expected/demanded
- ♦ In 2024, **only 16%** said such punishment was important for either educating or raising a child (**26% in 2019**)

RECOMMENDATIONS



At home:

- ♦ Promote positive parenting without appearing to challenge parent/caregiver authority over children
- ♦ Target parents in the 18-30 age group (especially women)
- ♦ Also target grandparents, partners and spouses, alongside faith-based organizations and other CSOs

At school:

- ♦ Promote training in positive behaviour management for all education stakeholders
- ♦ Show that it works and is not simply a time-consuming and less effective option than hitting children
- ♦ Promote best practices/success stories of schools/systems that have moved away from corporal punishment

CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

Understanding child sexual abuse



Over 90%

identified more traditional instances such as engaging in sexual activity with a child (**94%**), physical contact of a sexual nature (**95%**), showing/sending pornography (**91%**)

- ♦ Most continued to restrict their idea of private parts to the penis or vagina and a girl's breasts
- ♦ **There was little support for the suggestion that the mouth, back or a boy's chest could be considered private parts**

Perceptions of child sexual abuse as a national issue



52%
saw it as a major problem, **25%** saw it as a minor one

- ◆ **Over 40%** believed it was not taken seriously
- ◆ **62%** said that child sexual abuse was openly discussed actively or occasionally
- ◆ **53%** agreed that there is a stigma attached to talking about child sexual abuse
- ◆ **Only 21%** said they had suitable and accessible education in this area
- ◆ **1/4** now think that the way a girl dresses can invite abuse
- ◆ **69%** said the age of consent should be raised.

Sources of information



65%
Traditional media



52%
Social media



29%
Friends



22%
Church leader

Reporting



67%

would report an incident of child sexual abuse (**51% in 2014**)

- ◆ Respondents would primarily report to the police (**53%**) and **29%** would report to a child protection agency
- ◆ If people did not report abuse it was due to fear of the negative consequences (**51%**), embarrassment (**44%**), process would take too long (**44%**), not their business (**44%**)

Grooming

2/3



Around two-thirds of respondents said grooming was a problem **44%** reported it as a major one

- ◆ **34%** said they were unsure/wouldn't say, suggesting unfamiliarity with the concept
- ◆ **84%** did not know of any case of grooming, **6%** did, while **10%** were unsure
- ◆ **44%** believed that the police could investigate and charge someone
- ◆ **23%** said the police could investigate and charge but would not do so

Stalking



50%

of respondents considered stalking to be a problem (**21% major, 31% minor**)

- ◆ **85%** were personally unaware of a child being stalked and **7%** were aware
- ◆ **6%** said they had reported an incident to the relevant authorities such as the police/child protection agencies
- ◆ **57%** believed that the police have the capacity to investigate stalking and lay charges
- ◆ **24%** believed they could but would not

Cyberbullying



33%

said it is a major problem

- ◆ **30%:** Minor problem
- ◆ **26%:** Uncertain
- ◆ **10%** personally knew of a case of cyberbullying
- ◆ **61%** believed the police could investigate and charge someone
- ◆ **A quarter** argued the police could investigate and charge but would not

RECOMMENDATIONS



- ◆ Raise awareness of the range of actions which constitute child sexual abuse and that private parts can extend beyond the penis and vagina
- ◆ Engage public with suitable and accessible education
- ◆ Explore grooming, stalking and cyberbullying with the public
- ◆ Work with partners, such as faith-

based organizations, to create an environment where the issue can be discussed more openly.

- ◆ Although respondents were largely positive in their recommendations to treat children in conflict with the law with dignity and respect, there should be sensitization that such children have the right to privacy, in accordance with national laws and international conventions.

CHILDREN IN CONFLICT WITH THE LAW

How are these young people perceived?



73%

said they were young people in need of help/support/protection

- ◆ **8%** said they were a lost cause beyond redemption
- ◆ **7%** said they should be locked up

Where does responsibility lie?



37%

said the young people themselves

- ◆ **26%:** Their parents
- ◆ **29%** said society had failed them
- ◆ When specifically asked about parental responsibility, 15% said parents were fully responsible and 56% that they were partially responsible

Preferred response options



80%

Parenting interventions

- ◆ **82%:** Peer development
- ◆ **81%:** Community sports programmes
- ◆ **77%:** Rehabilitation through community service
- ◆ **13%:** Locked up in an institution
- ◆ **63%:** Highly supportive of child-friendly procedures which were said to be "absolutely necessary"

The 'right to know'



72%

said they had the right to know the identity of children who commit violent crimes

- ◆ **68%** said they had the right to know the identity of children who commit sexual crimes

RECOMMENDATIONS



- ◆ Increase support to parenting programmes and peer support programmes
- ◆ Continue to advocate diversion programmes, specialized court systems and attempting to deal with situations in schools before they escalate to conflict with the law
- ◆ There should be sensitization that such children have the right to privacy, in accordance with national laws and international conventions.