

# **Vilnius teachers' attitudes toward child abuse**

## **Research report**

Children Support Center  
Nobody's Children Foundation

This report presents findings from studies conducted in Lithuania in 2009 compared to the results of 2005 similar studies. Both are part of a wider research project carried out in seven East European countries (Bulgaria, Macedonia, Latvia, Poland, Lithuania, Moldova, and Ukraine). The studies were part of the program *Childhood without Violence. Toward Better Protection of Children in Eastern Europe*, which has been implemented since 2005 as a five-year project. The program is coordinated by the Nobody's Children Foundation and financed by the OAK Foundation. More details about the program are available at [www.fdn.pl](http://www.fdn.pl) and [www.canee.net](http://www.canee.net).

## **Methodology**

The main objective of the surveys was to assess public attitudes, especially those held by professionals working with children, toward the problem of child abuse, as well as professionals' experience in undertaking interventions in such cases and their evaluation of the effectiveness of child protection systems in their countries.

The surveys sought answers to the following research questions:

- How do the respondents estimate the scale of a wide range of abusive behaviors in the participant countries?
- How do they evaluate the dynamics of various aspects of child abuse?
- What is the level of social acceptance of controlling parents' behaviors toward their children?
- What are the respondents' self-reported attitudes toward parental use of corporal punishment of children?
- How do they evaluate various professional groups' sensitivity and competence in the area of child protection?

The studies comprised two parts:

1. Two omnibus questions asked to a nationwide, representative sample of adults.

In each of the seven countries the same two questions were asked:

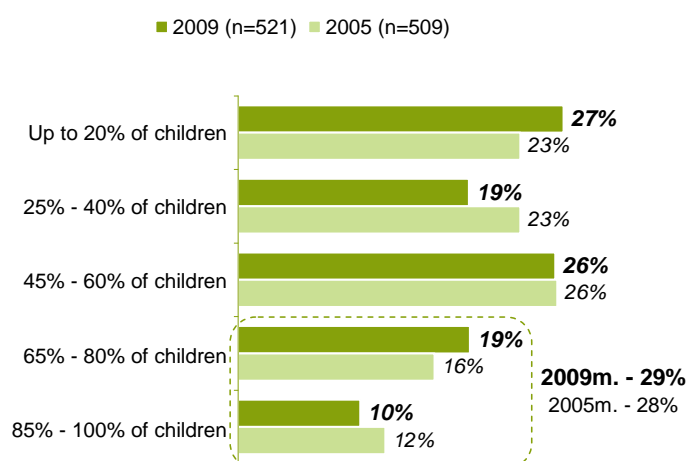
- What percentage of children in our country experience corporal punishment (or beating as punishment) in their families?
  - In your opinion, is beating a child as punishment a childrearing method, which:
    - 1) may be used whenever the parent believes it is going to be effective
    - 2) should not be used in general, but is justified in some situations
    - 3) should never be used
    - 4) it's difficult to say
2. A survey of teachers' attitudes toward child abuse; in each participant country the sample consisted of teachers working at primary schools in the capital city. In each capital city ten schools were selected from different districts, using the layered random sampling method. The respondents were teachers working at each of the selected schools. They filled self-administered questionnaires individually and then returned the set of completed questionnaires from their school to the program coordinator.

Developed by Monika Sajkowska, the questionnaire consisted of 31 items which had been previously used in Polish research programs concerning child abuse (Sajkowska, Siemaszko, 1998; Fluderska, Sajkowska, 2001).

### Lithuanians' opinions about the use of corporal punishment of children

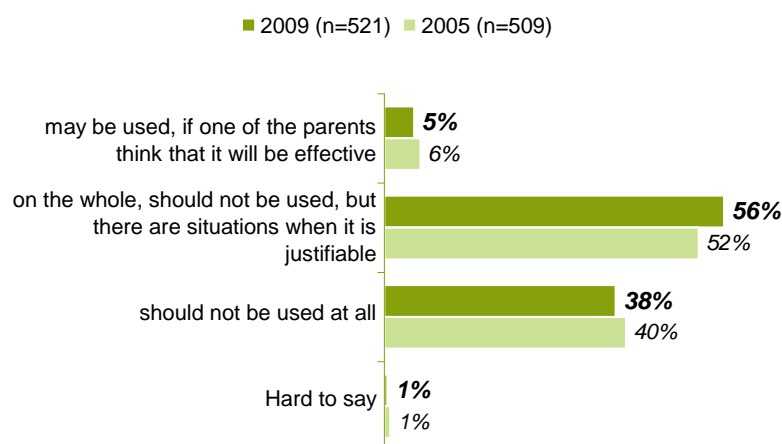
The survey of adult Lithuanians' attitudes toward the use of corporal punishment of children was conducted by TNS Gallup research agency on November 14-28, 2005 and June 5-11, 2009. Omnibus poll approach has been chosen and multi-stage random sampling was used. In result, two five hundred people samples representing total Lithuanian population were created. Maximal statistical error amounts to 4.4 percent points.

**Please estimate the percentage of children in Lithuania, exoerencing physical punishment in their families?**



**Figure I: Estimation of the percentage of corporally punished children**

**Physical punishment is a method of educating children, which...**



**Figure II: Opinions on corporal punishment as child-rearing method**

Lithuanians were asked to estimate the percentage of children experiencing corporal punishment in their country. The results do not show any explicit opinion held by the society in this field. Quite the contrary, answers to this question were distributed rather equally. One fourth of those who responded believes that less than 20% of children are being hurt, one fifth thinks that such is the experience of 25%-40%, another one fifth estimates this proportion to about 50% and 30% of respondents point to the proportion of more than 65% of the children. As we can see the answers are different, though with the dominance of highest estimations. These opinions have changed slightly during the past four years, though those changes do not reveal any particular tendency.

Second question concerned evaluation of corporal punishment as a child-raising method. Only minor proportion of society (6%) believes that parents have arbitrariness in disciplining children physically. More than 50% of respondents generally condemn corporal punishment but simultaneously claim that there are situations which justify its use. The rest of the population agree with the statement that such form of the punishment should be totally abandoned. In comparison to the 2005 study the popularity of the latter belief increased by 2 percent points, and the support for the situational permission of corporal punishment decreased by 4 percent points.

**Lithuanian teachers' attitudes toward corporal punishment of children**

**The sample**

The 2009 survey was conducted on a sample of 123 teachers working at Vilnius schools. The sample constituted almost exclusively of women (99%), just as in the 2005 study. Invariably, the sample represented teachers of different age subgroups. The proportions concerning teachers' work experience changed slightly – in 2009 more teachers with longer job experience were included in the sample.

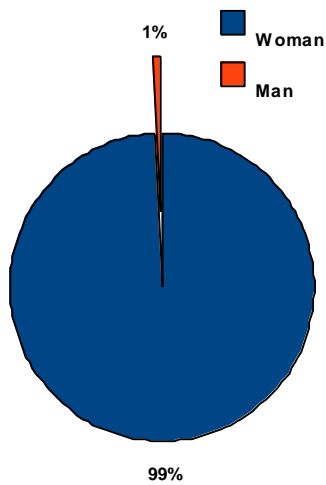


Figure 1: Respondents by sex

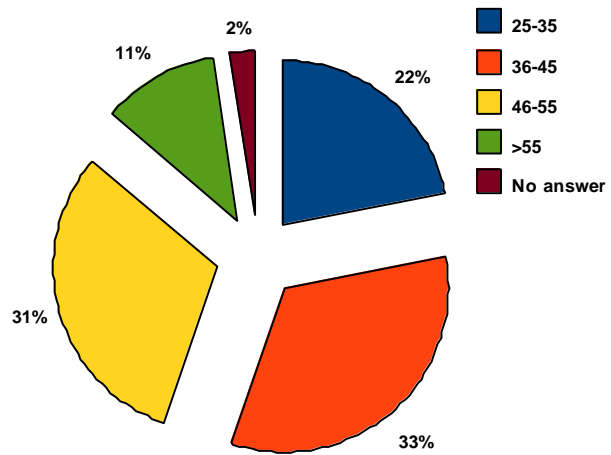


Figure 2: Respondents by age

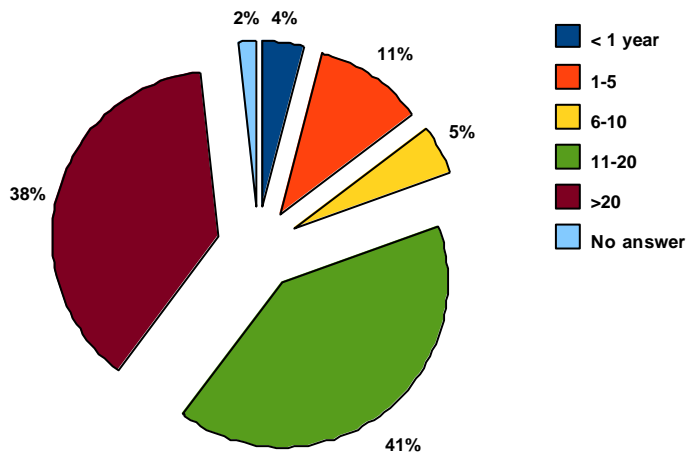


Figure 3: Respondents by work experience

Most teachers declared possessing children (78%), simultaneously great majority of 73% claimed their civil status to be “single”. This may mean (although it is not certain) that at least some proportion of teachers may be single mothers.

The vast majority of teachers claimed themselves to be “believers” or “deep believers” (jointly 84%).

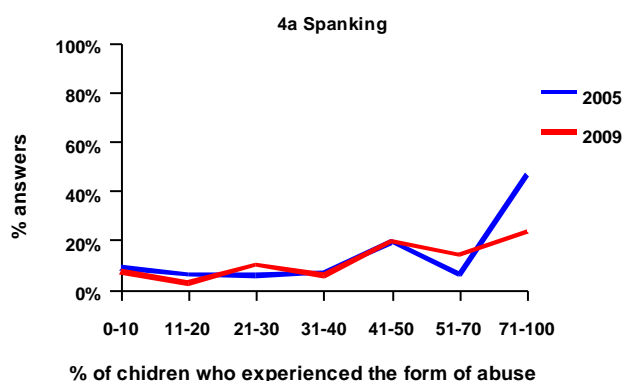
### **Opinions on prevalence of child abuse**

How is child abuse perceived by the respondents? Do they see it as a serious social problem? What has changed over the past 4 years? The perceived importance of the child abuse problem has a direct effect on teachers’ responses to the phenomenon. A teacher who believes that child abuse is a marginal problem may ignore or underestimate its symptoms and, consequently, fail to help a child who needs help.

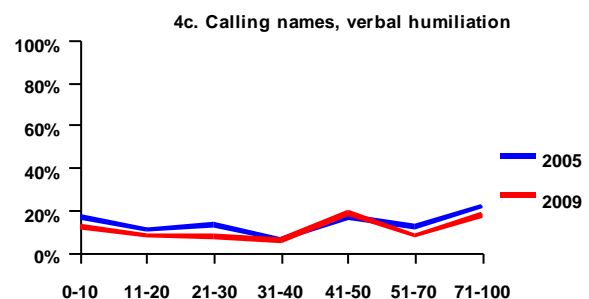
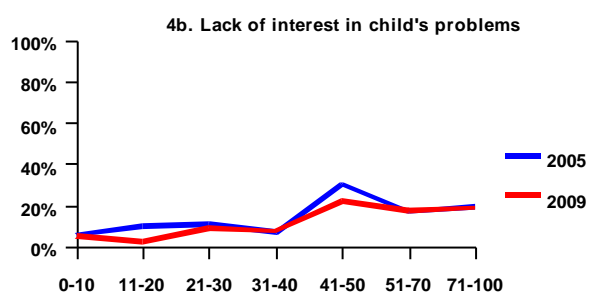
In one of the first questions the respondents were asked to estimate the prevalence and dynamics of the child abuse problem in Lithuania. As presented below (Figures 4 a-h), teachers vary in their opinions about what percentage of children experience abuse. In the past 4 years, changes in estimations of the prevalence of various forms of child abuse were only minor. In comparison to 2005 more respondents failed to provide their estimations.

According to teachers, children in Lithuania are most likely to experience spanking as punishment. More than 50% of teachers believe that more than a half of all children are being spanked by their parents.

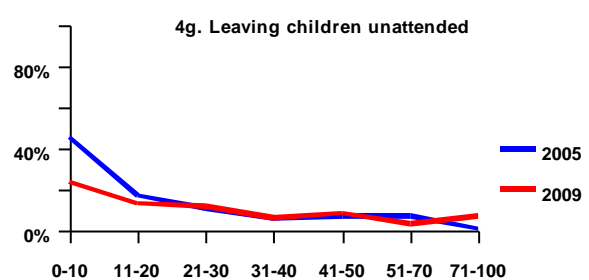
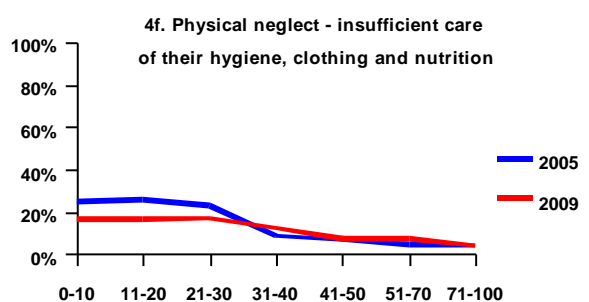
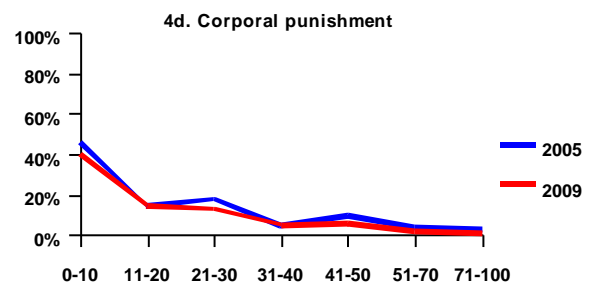
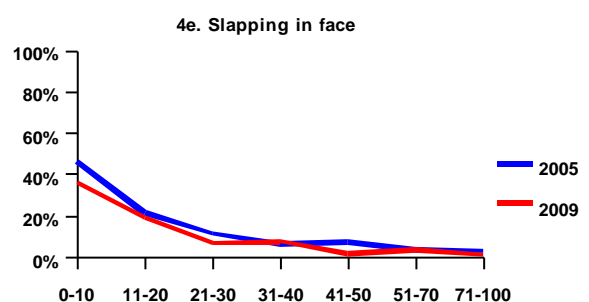
**Figures 4: Estimated prevalence of different forms of child abuse - in percentage terms - with the entire population of children in Lithuania constituting 100%**



Another two forms of child abuse seen to frequently appear in Lithuania are verbal humiliation and lack of interest in child's problems. For both these forms about half of respondents estimate their scope to more than 40% of children. Generally, however, the teachers are not so unanimous as in the case of spanking.

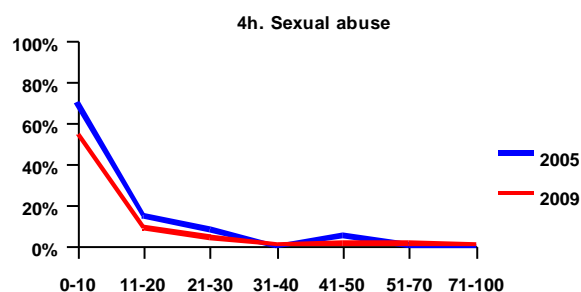


Problems such as: severe corporal punishment, slapping children in the face, physical neglect and leaving children unattended are seen to be less prevalent. In all these cases the majority of teachers believe that they affect only the minority of Lithuanian children.





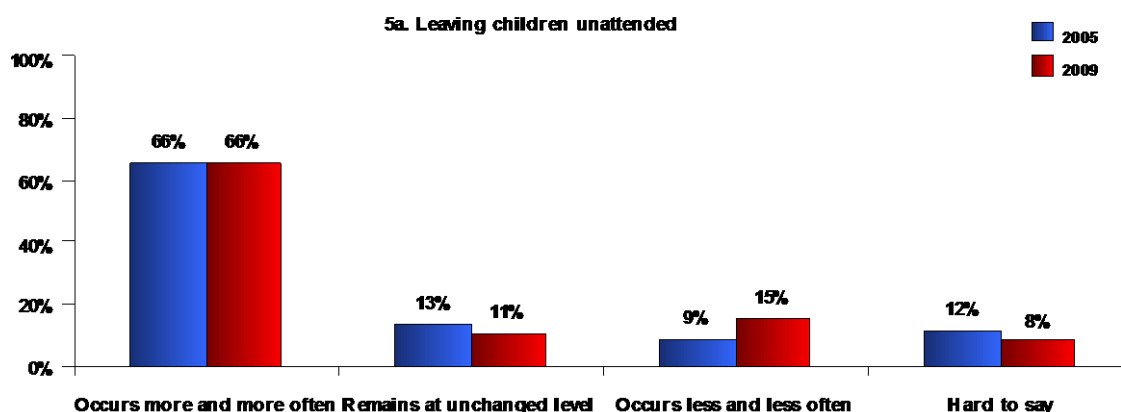
According to the teachers the least experienced by Lithuanian children form of abusing behavior is sexual abuse. The vast majority of respondents estimate that this problem concerns less than 10% of the whole children population.



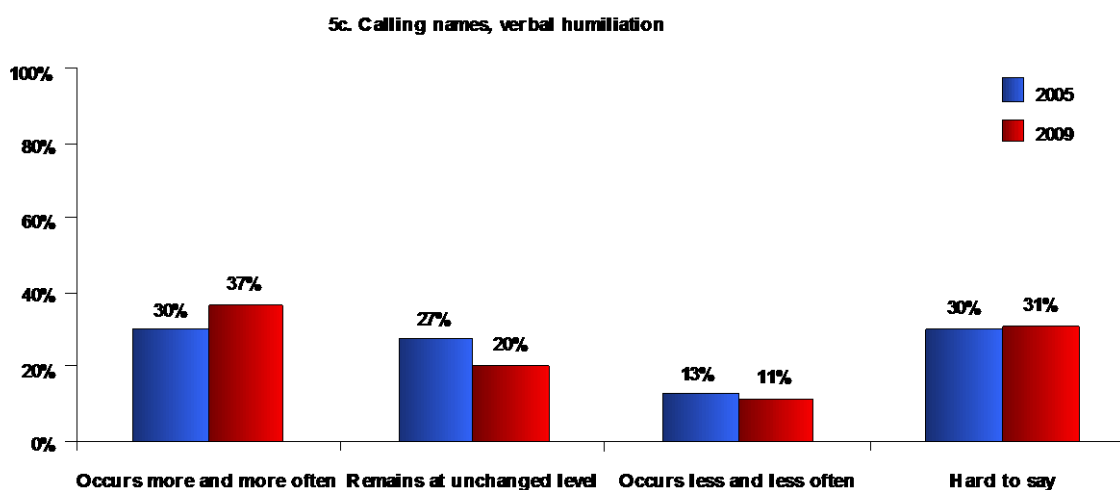
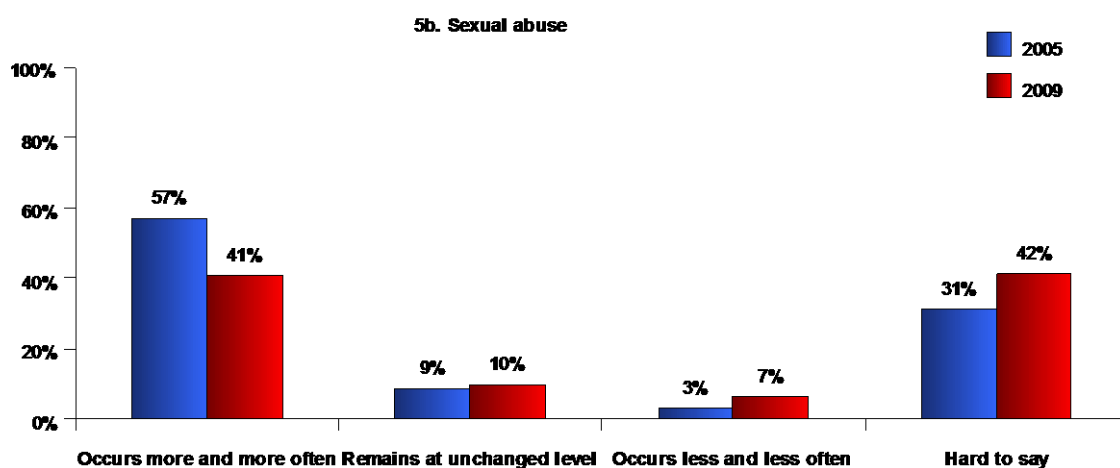
The respondents were also asked to assess the dynamics of child abuse over the past 10 years: is the prevalence of the problem changing? If yes, is the problem – in their opinion – becoming more or less prevalent? How has the perceived dynamics changed over the past 4 years?

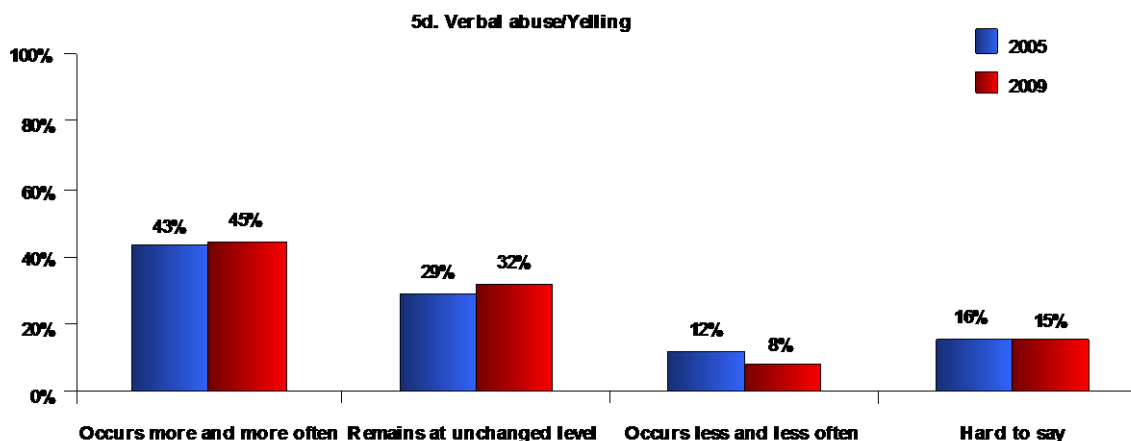
Quite shockingly, despite rather low estimates concerning scale of child abuse, and not significant changes in those estimations in four-year time, asked straightly about changes in abusive behaviors the respondents point that they occur more and more often in four out of five cases. The domination of these responses is the highest for leaving children unattended and has not changed since 2005.

Figures 5: Perceived changes in parents' behavior toward children over the past ten years

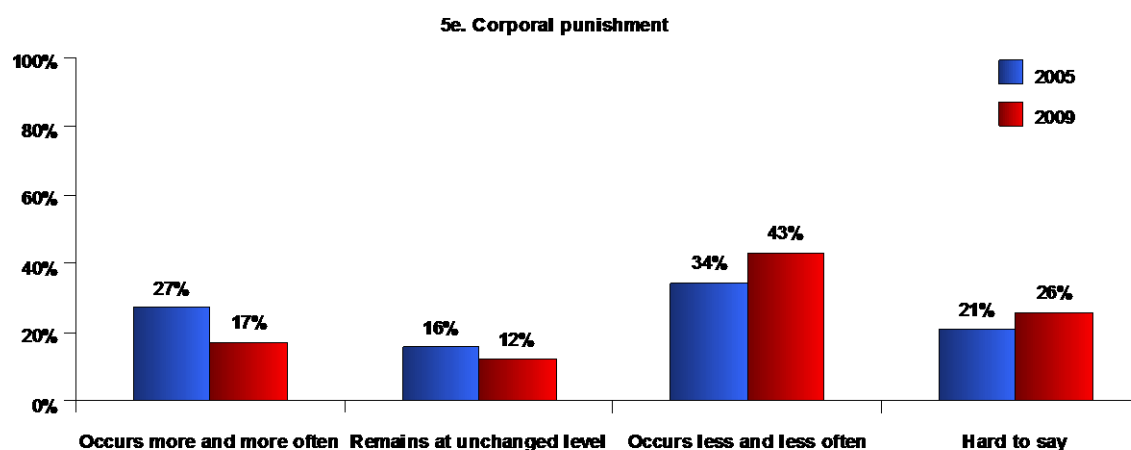


The belief that given phenomenon occurs with increasing frequency concerned also sexual abuse, yelling and verbal humiliation. It is, however, to notice that proportion of those answers for question about sexual abuse decreased during past four years. One should also draw attention to the fact that for sexual abuse and verbal humiliation very significant proportion of teachers choose “hard to say” option. It may mean that these forms of abuse are less known by them.





Single case in which the respondents observed opposite tendency i.e. the decreasing frequency was corporal punishment (see Figure 5e.). Most teachers saw the declining tendency in using this form of punishment and this proportion has even increased in last 4 years.

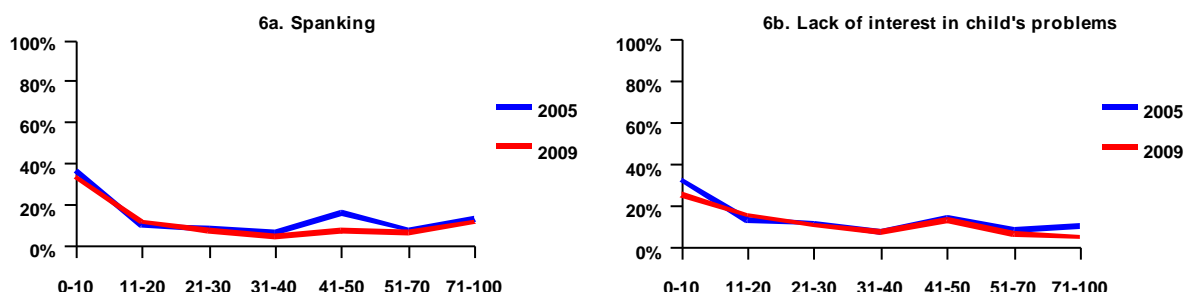


Generally, those findings show that although the teachers estimate most of the child abuse problems as rather of low prevalence, in the same time they see this problems as becoming increasingly present in social environment. The exception may be corporal punishment. In this case the results are quite opposite – spanking is seen as most widespread problem but simultaneously the corporal punishment is believed to be a problem with the declining tendency.

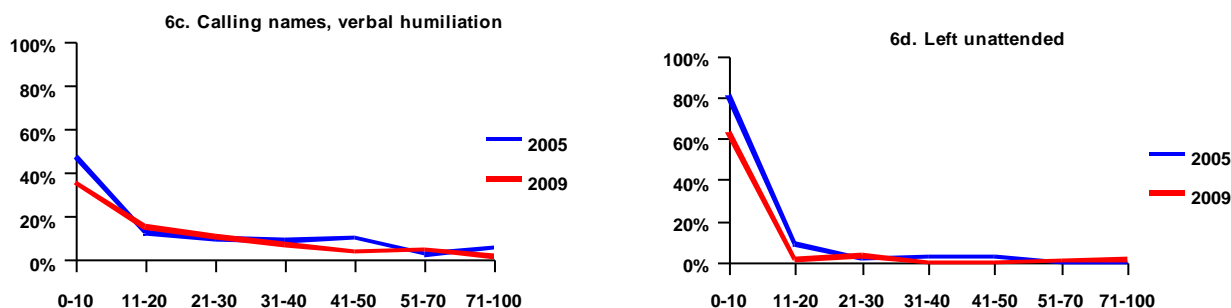
The respondents were also asked to estimate the prevalence of abuse experienced by children attending their schools. Is it the same as in the general child population? If not, what differences have been noticed by the respondents? Is there any relationship between the estimated prevalence of child abuse in Poland and in the schools where the subjects work?

As it was stressed before, Lithuanian teachers' estimations concerning whole children population were rather low. Analogical estimations concerning children from respondents' schools are even lower. Once again, the exceptions were spanking and the lack of interest in child's problems. In both cases a significant subgroup of about 30% judged the number of hurt children to more than 40%.

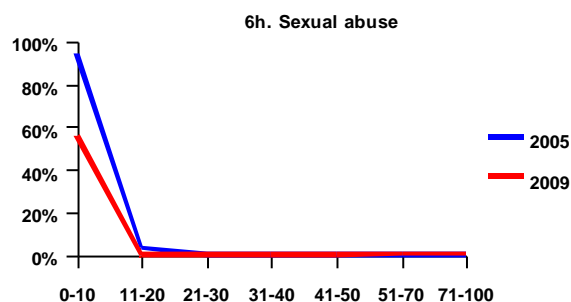
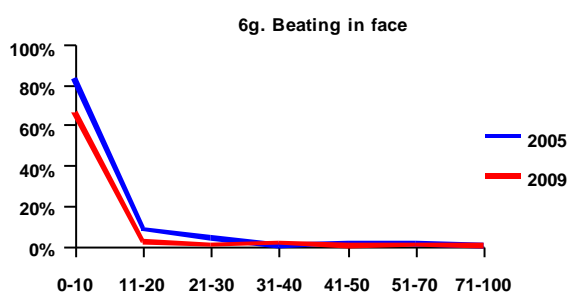
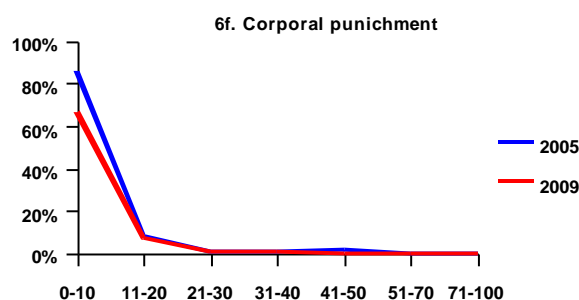
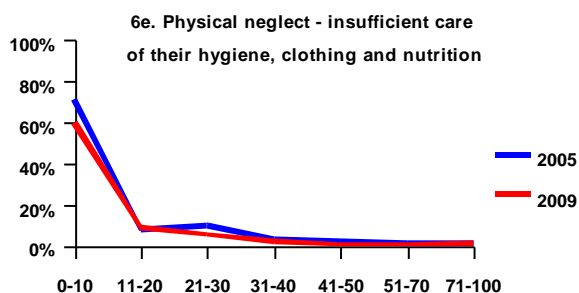
**Figures 6: Estimated prevalence of different forms of child abuse - in percentage terms - with the children from respondent's school constituting 100%**



As illustrated at the charts below teachers have had very little contact with six other forms of child abuse. Apparently, teachers have encountered problem of calling names and verbal humiliation – estimations of this problem are not unanimous. The rest of findings suggest that nearly all of the teachers believe that less than 10% of their pupils are affected by respective threats.



*Childhood without Violence: Toward Better Protection of Children in Eastern Europe*



It is interesting to compare the respondents' estimates concerning the prevalence of child abuse in the general child population and in their schools. Table 1 shows that for each form of abuse, the subjects perceive the situation in their closest environment much better than in the country as a whole. The difference tends to be rather constant – in all cases “school estimations” are about 50% lower than “country estimations”.

If all the children constitute 100% of the population, what percentage do you think experience?	Country population (mean estimation)		School population (mean estimation)	
	2005	2009	2005	2009
Spanking	58%	42%	32%	24%
Corporal punishment	19%	13%	7%	5%
Beating in face	18%	12%	8%	5%
Verbal humiliation	42%	34%	22%	15%
Lack of interest in child's problems	48%	41%	30%	23%
Physical neglect	24%	23%	12%	9%
Sexual abuse	10%	8%	5%	4%
Left unattended	19%	21%	8%	6%

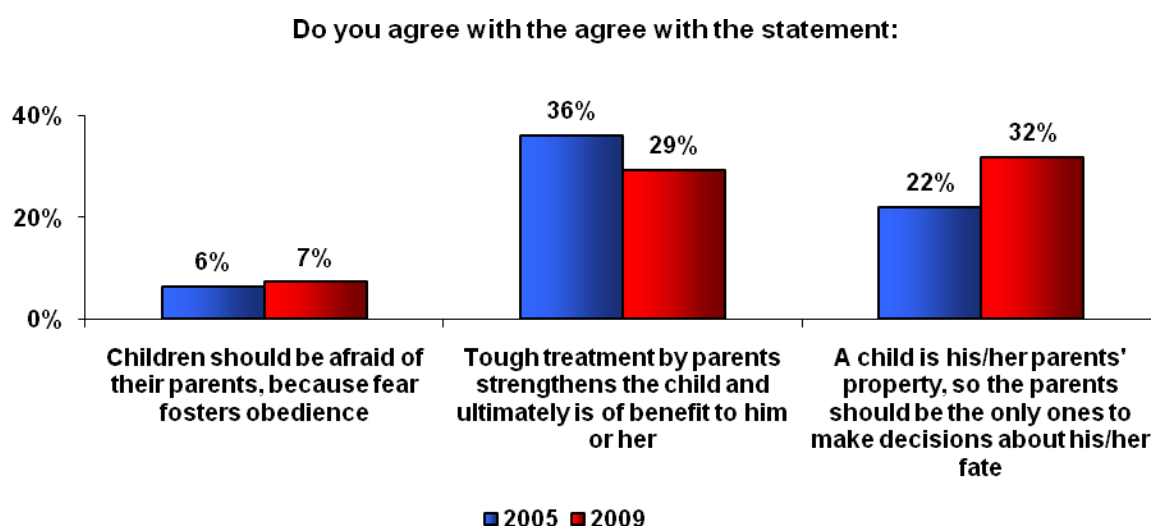
**Table 1: Estimated prevalence of various forms of child abuse - the general child population vs. the respondent's school**

The table also clearly shows that, in general, the prevalence of all forms of abuse were estimated lower in 2009 than in 2005 both at country and school level (although it is not to be forgotten that this was mainly due to the fact that higher proportion of respondents did not provide any answer to the questions).

### **When to intervene?**

Teachers (especially those who work with younger children) have extensive knowledge about child-raising methods used by parents. In their professional work, teachers have many opportunities to observe behaviors and verbal expressions of both children and their parents.

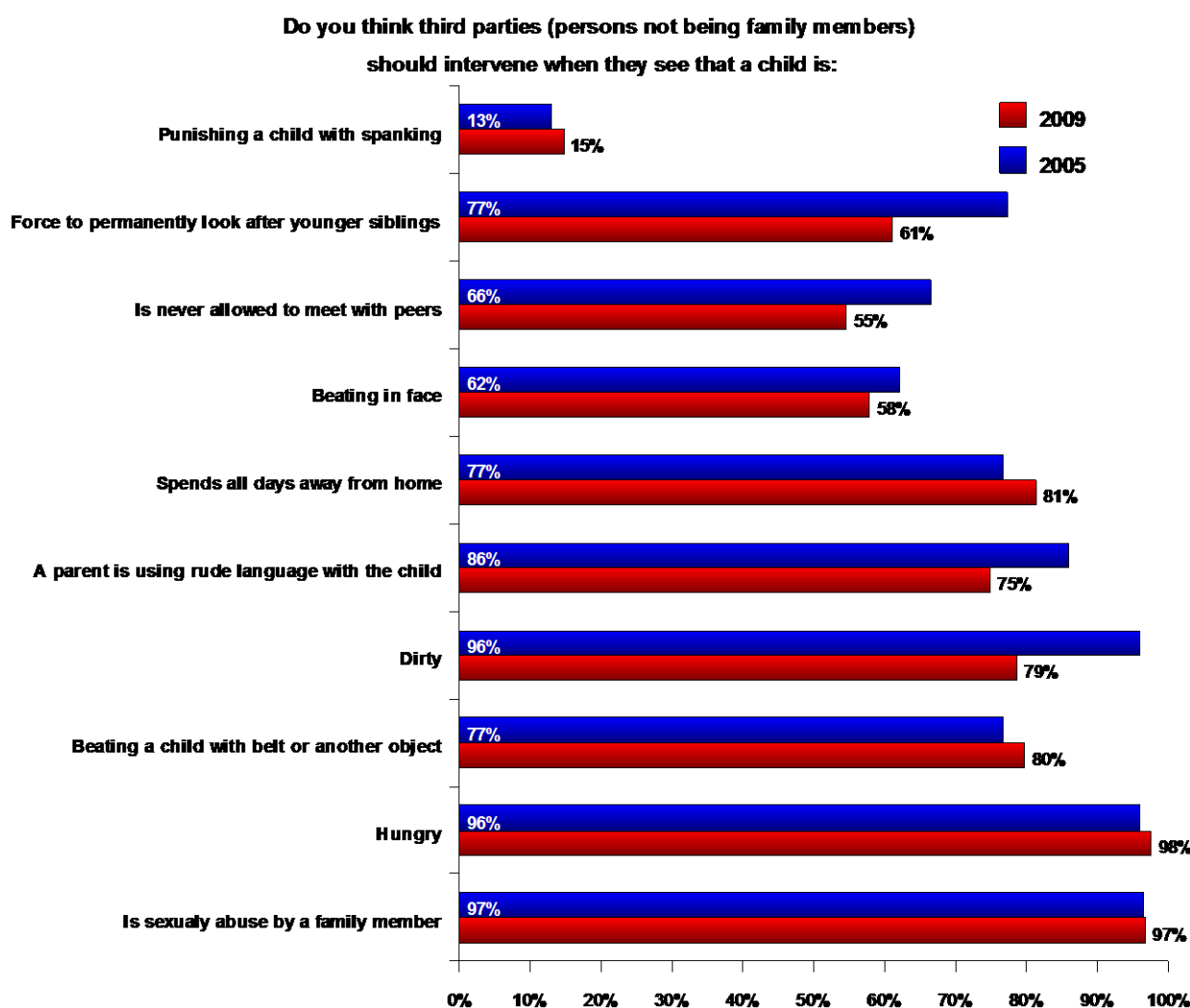
Teachers' perception of the parent-child relationship is extremely important as it determines whether and when the teacher will be prepared to intervene and help the child. The questionnaire asked the respondents about their opinions on three beliefs concerning child rearing. As illustrated by Figure 7, about one third of teachers support both the statement that tough treatment strengthens the child and that child is parents' property. This figures are alarming and during the past four years changes have had twofold nature. Although support for the first statement dropped by 7 percent points, in the same time



**Figure 7: Teachers' opinions on selected views concerning child-rearing.**

support for the latter increased by 10. It is therefore impossible to determine what is the direction of changes in teachers' opinions. Notably, more than 90% of the teachers do not agree with the opinion that fear is a prerequisite for obedience.

The respondents were also asked about situations related to child-rearing which – in their opinion – justified interventions by third parties (non-family members). Once again, there were changes in opinions in comparison to 2005 study, but they did not have any explicit tendency. Both findings of 2005 and 2009 are presented on Figure 8. Nearly all the teachers in both surveys believed that such an intervention was justified in case of sexual abuse (97%) and when a child is hungry (98%).



**Figure 8: Situations in which the respondents perceive third parties' or strangers' interventions as justified.**

A smaller proportion of respondents (75%-81%) saw an intervention by a third party as required when a parent beats his/her child with the belt or another object, spends all days away from home, uses rude language with the child, as well as when a child looks dirty. Disturbingly, in the latter two cases a significant drop were noted.

The respondents were not as unanimous in their assessments of such parental behaviors as slapping the child in the face (58%), grounding the child (imposing a ban on meetings with peers - 61%) and forcing the child to take care of younger siblings (61%).

The respondents' attitudes toward spanking as punishment are completely different. Only 15% (2009) believe that third parties should intervene in such cases; at the same time, the teachers estimate that nearly half of children in Lithuania experience this form of abuse (see Table 1). This is a very pessimistic finding which, unfortunately, has been confirmed by the results of other studies; 56% of adult Lithuanians think that beating a child "as punishment" may be justified (Figure 1). Such low support for intervention in the situation of spanking indicates that, for teachers, this child-raising method is treated as normal and socially permitted.

### **Is spanking acceptable?**

As illustrated by the chart above, the respondents treat spanking differently than other forms of child abuse. One could conclude that teachers accept this form of punishment of children. However, their responses to further questions about their attitudes toward corporal punishment (giving someone a hiding) do not support this conclusion (see Figures 9 and 10). 64% of subjects believe it is humiliating for the child and only 7% express the opposite opinion. Simultaneously, according to 59% of the respondents, a parent who uses this form of punishment is not good at child rearing; only 10% have the opposite opinion. Attitudes toward corporal punishment has not changed significantly for the past 4 years. In the light of these findings, the perception of spanking as not requiring any intervention of a third party seems quite inconsistent. It is also important to notice that about one fourth of teachers cannot form an opinion in this field.



**Do you believe that using corporal punishment  
or giving a child a hiding is:**

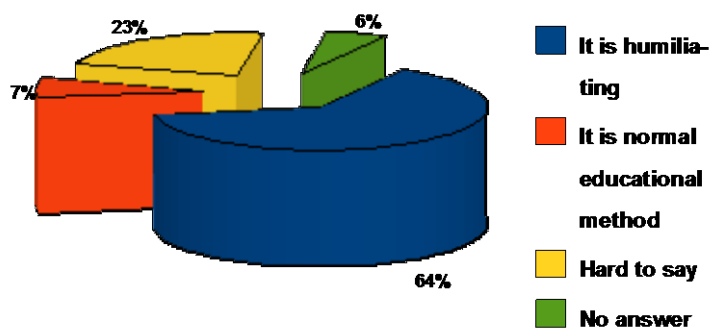


Figure 9: Attitudes toward parents using corporal punishment

**Do you believe that using corporal punishment  
or giving a child a hiding:**

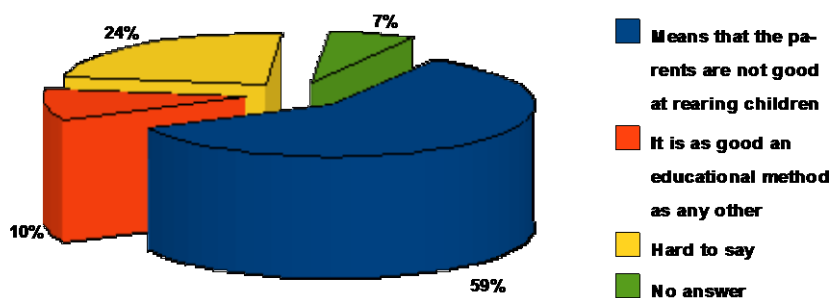


Figure 10: Attitudes toward parents using corporal punishment

In the next question teachers were asked about situation in which they would be personally apt to give child a hiding. Comparing the two studies, in 2009 the number of teachers who would use the corporal punishment has slightly decreased in most of the proposed in questionnaire offenses often committed by children. This is true for most

strictly assessed cases of petty theft, alcohol drinking, cigarette smoking and playing truant.

What is disturbing, the opposite trend is to be seen in the assessment of the situation when a child “does not obey his/her parents”. Proportion of teachers who justify giving child a hiding in such situation increased from 6 to 17%. It is an important observation when we consider that also the number of teachers supporting the view that child is “parents' property” has also increased during these four years.

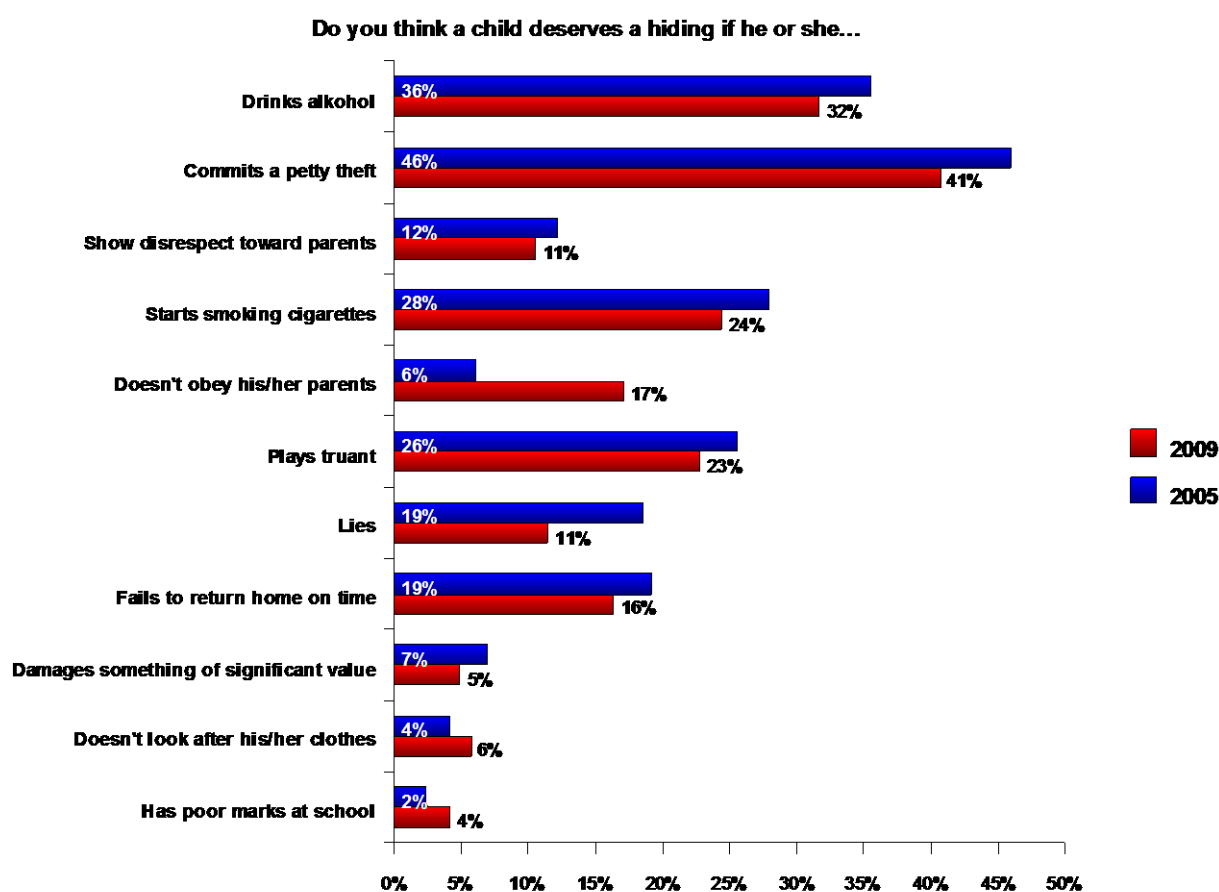


Figure 11: Attitudes toward corporal punishment (giving child a hiding) in specific situations

Do you think a child deserves a hiding if he or she...								
	Yes		No		Hard to say		No answer	
	2005	2009	2005	2009	2005	2009	2005	2009
Has poor marks at school	2%	4%	84%	78%	12%	11%	1%	6%
Doesn't look after his/her clothes	4%	6%	69%	72%	26%	17%	1%	7%
Damages something of significant value	7%	5%	66%	63%	25%	26%	2%	6%
Fails to return home on time	19%	16%	48%	47%	31%	32%	2%	5%
Lies	19%	11%	47%	55%	34%	29%	1%	4%
Plays truant	26%	23%	44%	50%	28%	24%	3%	4%
Doesn't obey his/her parents	6%	17%	37%	40%	39%	36%	1%	7%
Starts smoking cigarettes	28%	24%	36%	41%	35%	31%	1%	4%
Show disrespect toward parents	12%	11%	51%	52%	36%	33%	1%	5%
Commits a petty theft	46%	41%	26%	33%	27%	22%	1%	5%
Drinks alcohol	36%	32%	31%	35%	33%	29%	1%	5%

**Table 2: Attitudes toward corporal punishment (giving child a hiding) in specific situations**

### **The teachers' personal experience**

Perceptions of the problem of child abuse are determined by a variety of factors. Most importantly, it is influenced by direct contact with victims of abuse, personal experience, and the picture of the situation presented in the media.

One of the goals of the survey was to find out about teachers' personal experiences related to child abuse. The subjects were asked about their contact with specific cases of abuse, actions they had taken, and the reasons for taking (or not taking) such interventions during the past 12 months.

The teachers were most likely to deal with physical neglect and emotional abuse (23% and 24%), and least likely to encounter cases of sexual abuse, which may be associated both with the fact that the latter is experienced by fewer children (as shown by research evidence), and with the fact that it is more difficult to detect and less likely to be disclosed by the victims. 16% of the respondents had contact with child victims of domestic violence (see Figure 12). Generally the percentage of teachers having contact with specific cases of child abuse is low and, consequently, vast majority of them do not know this problem from their practice. One should remember that, judging some of the research findings that will be mentioned in the report. These finding are also consistent with teachers' estimations where they pointed to rather low percentage of children experiencing child abuse.

Have you encountered cases of... in your professional practice in the past year?

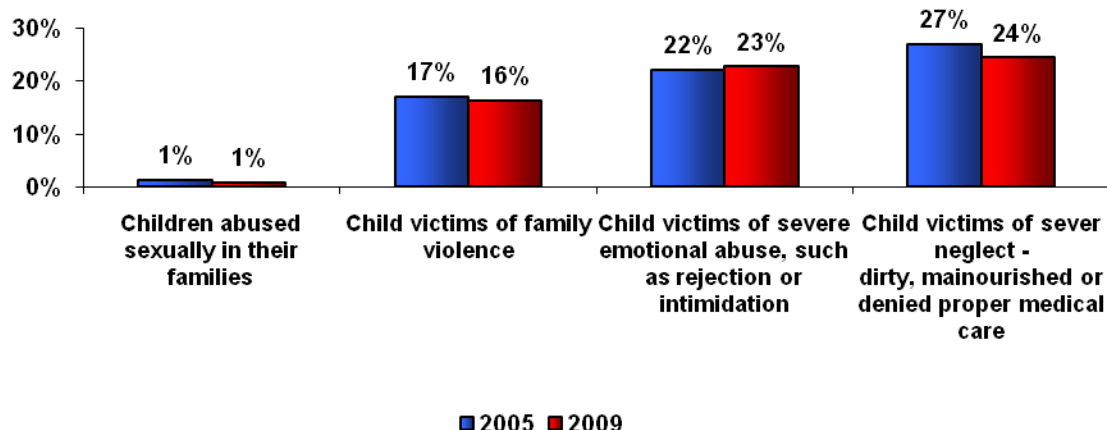


Figure 12: Contact with specific cases of child abuse during the past 12 months

Thus, teachers are witnesses to abuse, but does their increased awareness lead to any actions? The respondents' reports are quite ambiguous (Figure 13). About one third of respondents admit that they always help, another 17% claim to do it sometimes. Alarming high is the percent of those who declared that they have never helped (39%). It is worth noticing here that this is only a self-report and the reality may be even worse. Also the percentage of teachers who did not answer to the question is high: 21%. This finding may reflect the fact that it is difficult to admit to failing to respond to child abuse. These figures have not significantly changed since 2005.

In cases of child abuse that you have encountered in the past year, did you take any action?

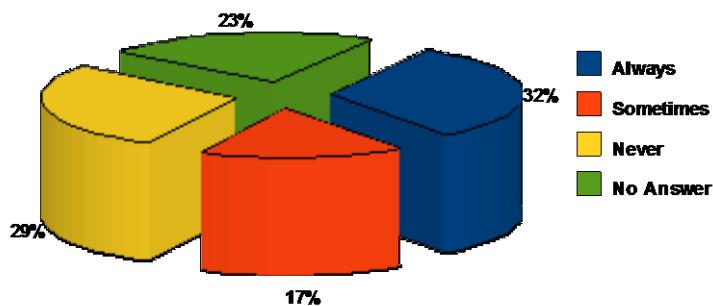
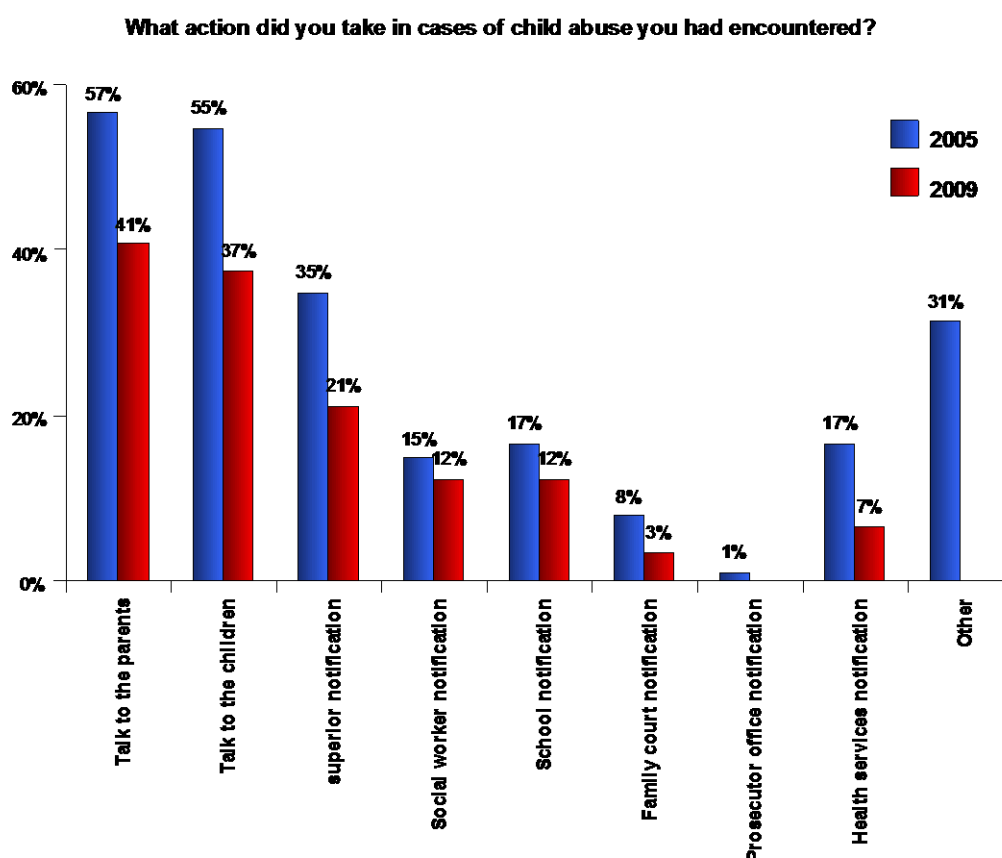


Figure 13: Teachers' reactions to child abuse

The teachers who said they intervened „always” or „sometimes”, were asked about the types of actions taken (Figure 14). First of all, it is noticeable that, in total, in 2009 fewer types of interventions were indicated (the respondents could point to more than one possibility). It means that intervening teachers in 2009 resorted to less possibilities than those in 2005.

In most cases the teachers talked to the children or their parents or notified their superiors. Alarming, teachers are less and less likely to report cases of child abuse to institutions responsible for dealing with the problem (to social welfare centers: 12%; to the school: 12%; to the family court: 3%) In 2009 not a single respondent reported child abuse case to the prosecutor's office.



**Figure 14: Types of interventions undertaken by teachers**

We should not ignore the alarming fact that as many as 29% of the respondents reported to have failed to intervene despite knowing that a child was a victim of abuse

(plus 23% who do not provide any answer). The respondents who reported that they intervened sometimes or never, were asked about their reasons for not trying to help abused children. As shown in Figure 15, a majority of them would not or could not explain why they did not intervene. Those of the respondents, who provided an answer, were most likely to mention their feeling of incompetence

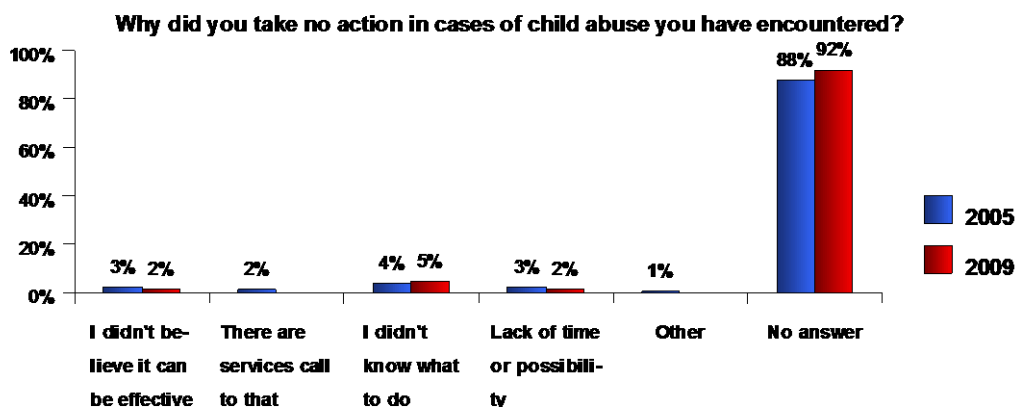


Figure 15: Reasons for not intervening in the cases of child abuse

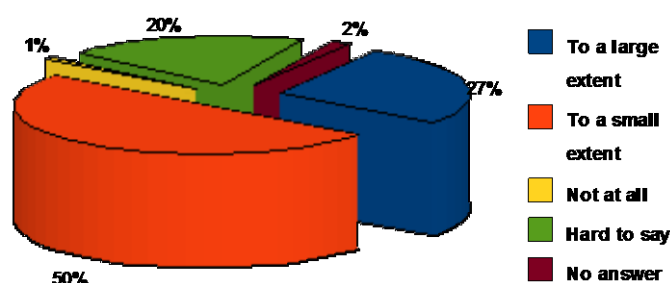
## Can children be protected from abuse?

The problem of undertaking or failing to undertake action is related to the way teachers perceive the problem of child abuse. Do they believe this problem can be effectively reduced? How do they perceive the potential to provide effective help for abused children in Lithuania? Do they think that the state should control – through legal regulations – the ways parents treat their children?

The respondents vary in their opinions about the extent to which child abuse can be effectively prevented. Only 1% responded that nothing could be done to prevent the problem, half of the respondents believe that prevention can be effective only to a limited degree. Twenty seven percent of the teachers perceive child abuse as highly preventable. That is quite optimistic as four years before this was a belief of only 18%.

The belief that child abuse may be effectively reduced is crucial to confronting with the problem successfully. If a teacher does not believe that an abused child may be helped, he/she cannot be expected to undertake any action to actually help such a child.

**Do you think it is possible to prevent child abuse?**



**Figure 16: Opinions on the extent to which child abuse can be prevented**

One method of preventing child abuse is through legal regulations, i.e., making various forms of child abuse criminal offenses. Enacting laws to protect children is a solution applied in many countries, primarily with regard to behaviors related to child sexual abuse, physical violence, and – less frequently – corporal punishment of children. Many European countries have introduced (or attempted to introduce) regulations concerning the use of corporal punishment in the past ten to twenty years. In each case such legislative initiatives triggered broad public debates on the extent to which the state should interfere in the parent–child relationship. Views expressed during such discussions vary tremendously and depend on many different factors. How is the problem perceived by Lithuanian teachers?

A vast majority (almost 70%) of the respondents support the general statement that the way parents treat their children should be regulated by law, and believe that if this can help fight child abuse, such legal measures should be applied. This attitude has not changed during the past 4 years.

Should the way parents treat their children be regulated by law?

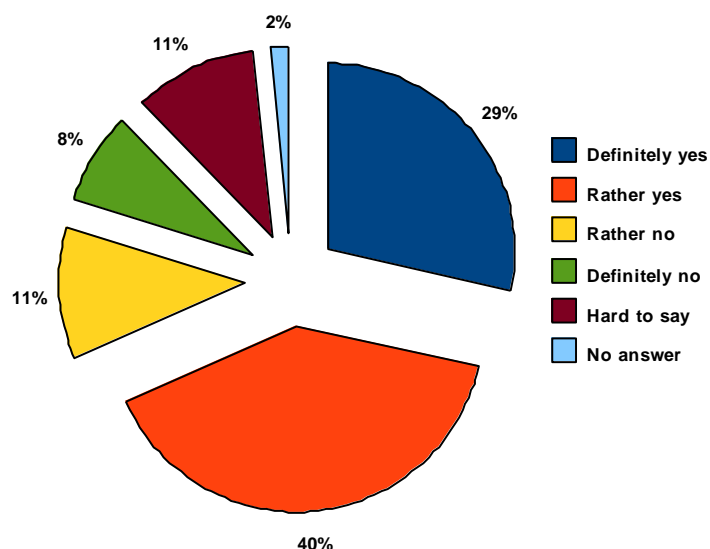


Figure 17: Support for the legal regulations of parental children treatment

The teachers are less uncompromising when it comes to the legal ban on the use of corporal punishment of children (Figure 18). It is supported by about 60% of the respondents (54% in 2005 and 59% in 2009); the opponents of the ban constituted 21% and 18% of the sample, respectively. This means that over the past 4 years the support for the legal ban on corporal punishment of children has increased.

Do you think that using corporal punishment by parents should be legally banned?

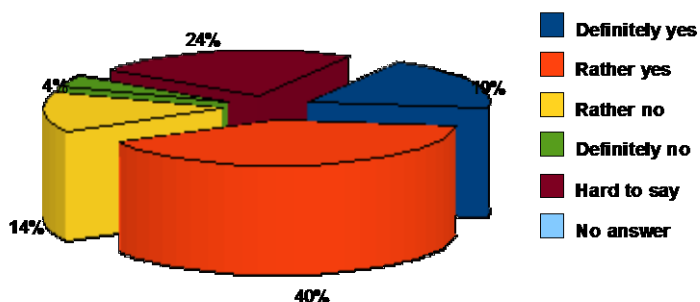
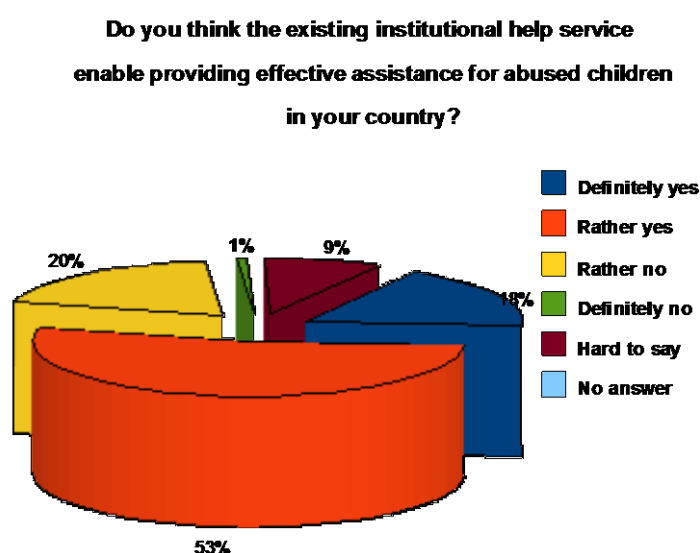


Figure 18: Support for the legal ban on using corporal punishment by parents



The subjects were also asked to evaluate institutional services available to child victims of abuse. It is especially important because even the best legal solutions cannot be effectively enforced without efficient institutions.

The respondents gave a good mark to institutional help services in Lithuania (Figure 17). More than 70% think that institutional services enable providing real help for children. Encouraging is the fact that the group has increased by more than 10 percent points since the 2005 survey. The positive evaluation of institutional help services inclines the question why so few teachers report cases of child abuse to relevant institutions (see Figure 14).



**Figure 19: Assessment of the existing institutional help services for abused children**

The next research question was: How do teachers evaluate the competences of various institutions responsible for helping children? To find the answer, the respondents were asked which of the institutions listed in the questionnaire should intervene when parents abuse their children (corporal punishment, sexual abuse, neglect, emotional abuse). The findings are depicted in Figures 20.

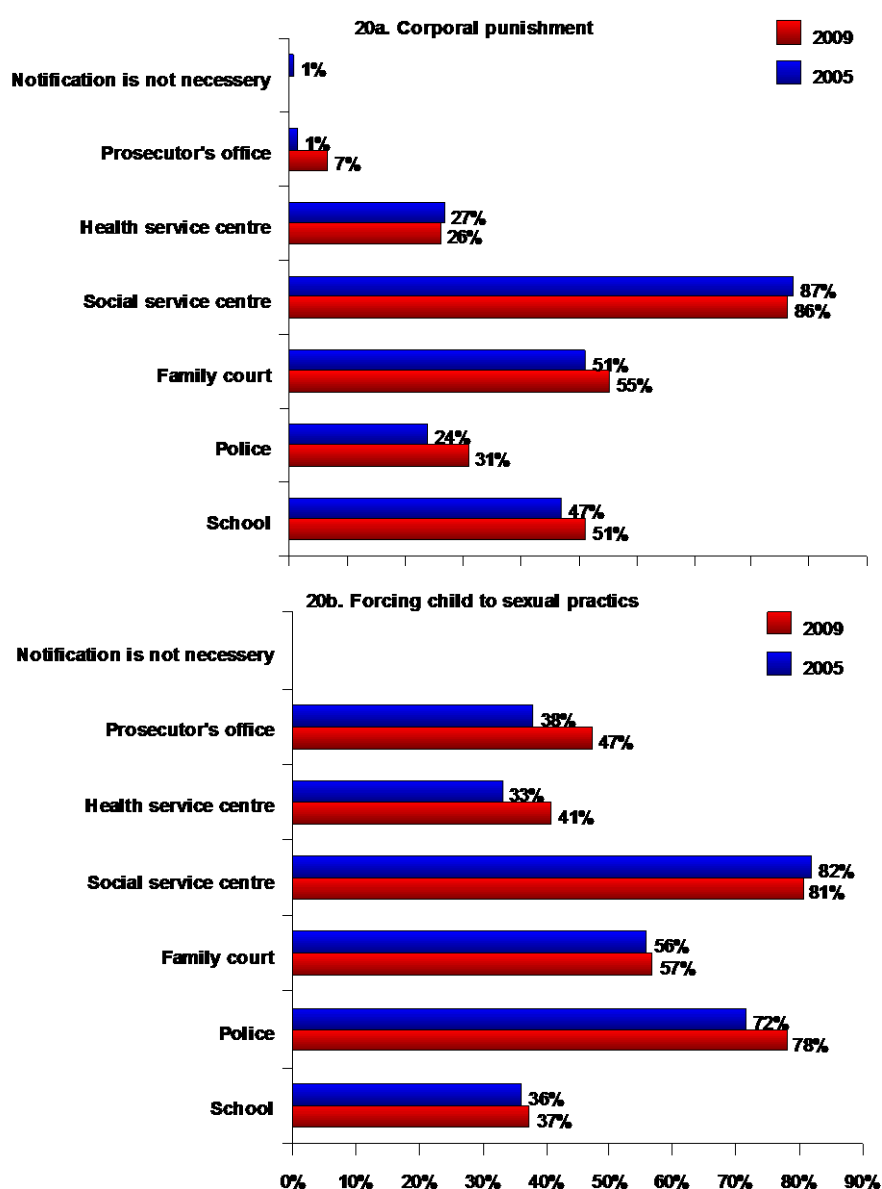
Only in the cases of sexual abuse a significant proportion of respondents pointed to police prosecutor's office as institutions bound to intervene. This abuse is probably seen as most law violating.

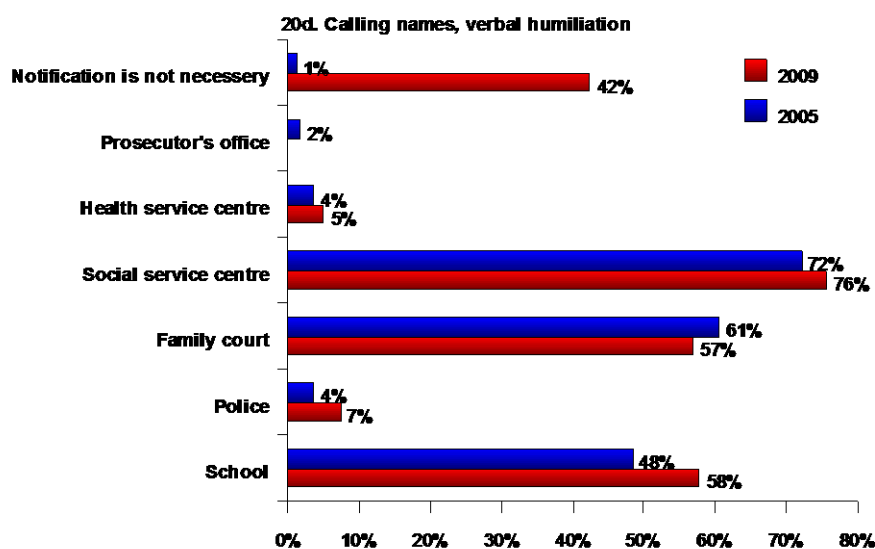
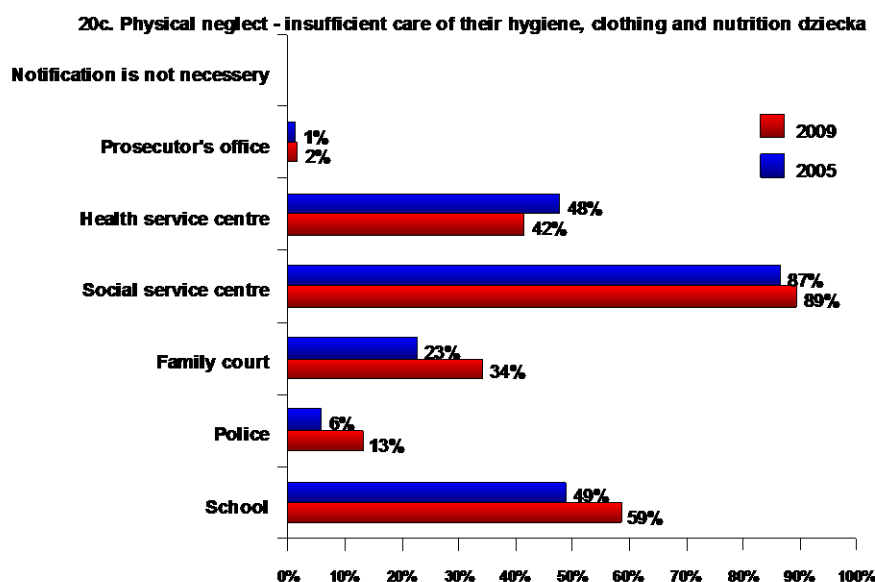
In all cases social service was judged to be the most responsible subject. This specific institution seems to gather teachers' trust as it was chosen by more than 80% of

them. In three out of four cases it is also the family court which is seen as most appropriate for intervention. Such opinion is held by more than 50% of teachers

Eventually the schools were also institutions seen as responsible for taking action by about half of teachers (excluding the case of sexual abuse where the percentage was lower).

**Figures 20: Respondents' opinions on which institutions should intervene when parents commit the given type of child abuse (the participants were asked to tick all institutions that, in their opinion, should take some action in such cases).**



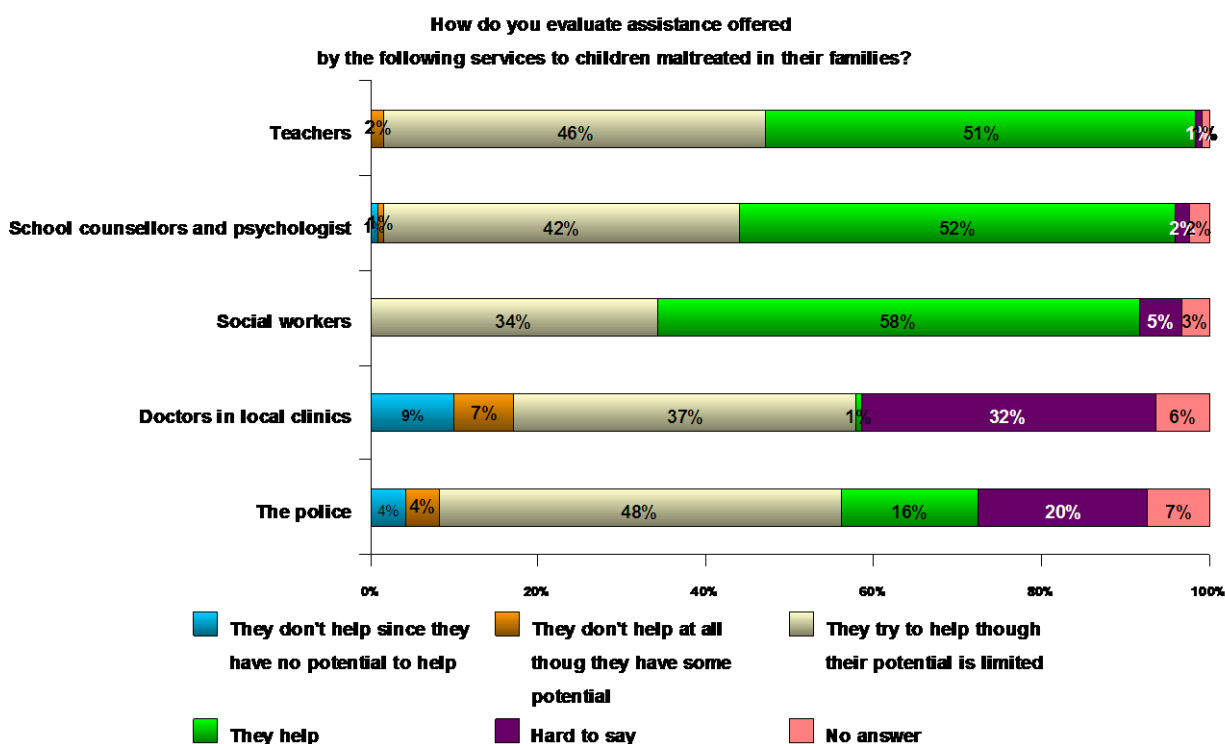


Knowing the respondents' views on the competences and responsibility of each institution, it was worth asking them to evaluate the extent to which these institutions fulfill their tasks. Thus, the teachers were requested to evaluate help services provided by each professional group for children who are maltreated in their families (Figure 21).

The largest proportion of respondents believe that the professional groups listed in the questionnaire try to help or actually provide help for children. School counselors, psychologists, teachers and social workers were evaluated the most favorably; more than

90% of the subjects think they try to help or do help, despite their limited potential! Counting only the “do help” answers the most helpful group are the social workers (58%). In comparison to the 2005 survey, in 2009 all these three groups obtained better evaluation. The subjects are most critical of health care professionals (physicians) at local clinics (16% of the respondents marked the answers stating that they do not help) and the police (although this group is positively assessed by 64%). For both this groups there is also high proportion of “hard to say” answers. Most probably some respondents did not have any experience with those professionals.

Notably, the percentage of the answer: „They try to help though their potential is limited”, has grown for nearly all professional groups (except for social workers, who are evaluated at the same level as in 2005). Nonetheless, it should be highlighted that respondents generally evaluated professionals help positively.



**Figure 21: Evaluation of assistance of different professional groups**

Judgments concerning actions undertaken by representatives of various professional groups depend not only on their scope of competence, but also on their level on engagement in helping abused children. Engagement in helping victims of child abuse

may be related to the level of knowledge about the problem (e.g., on how abuse affects children’s development). This relationship may also work in the opposite direction – lack of knowledge or insufficient knowledge about child abuse may lead to low levels of engagement in fighting this problem.

Respondents were asked to evaluate the knowledge of previously mentioned professional groups in two aspects: diagnosing the problems of child abuse and intervening in such cases (Tables 3 and 4).

Since 2005 study the evaluation of the ability to identify child abuse problems of all groups has significantly increased . The most praised group are social workers (71% indicate that they have enough knowledge) placing themselves before school counselors and psychologists (61%) and teachers (40%). Slightly worse review obtained police officers and physicians. Still, also for these groups proportion of those who think they “do not have knowledge” was minor. Instead, more respondents pointed to the “hard to say” option. That may mean that teachers have little contact with those groups.

The results considering interventions knowledge are basically similar. In this second question teachers assessed themselves slightly worse (drop from 41% to 37%). Also the

How do you evaluate the knowledge of professionals referring to ways of action in cases of child abuse?										
	They have enough knowledge		They have no enough knowledge		They don't have knowledge		Hard to say		No answer	
	2005	2009	2005	2009	2005	2009	2005	2009	2005	2009
Police	34%	35%	36%	37%	8%	5%	18%	21%	5%	2%
Physicians at local clinics	35%	25%	34%	42%	8%	6%	19%	24%	5%	3%
Physicians at hospitals	34%	29%	31%	37%	7%	6%	23%	27%	6%	2%
Social workers	64%	66%	24%	25%	2%	1%	7%	5%	3%	3%
School counsellors and psychologists	54%	61%	27%	28%	2%	0%	11%	10%	4%	2%
Teachers	43%	37%	41%	53%	3%	0%	8%	7%	5%	2%

**Table 4: Evaluation of the professionals' knowledge concerning child abuse intervention**

How do you evaluate the knowledge of professionals referring to diagnosis of child abuse?										
	They have enough knowledge		They have no enough knowledge		They don't have knowledge		Hard to say		No answer	
	2005	2009	2005	2009	2005	2009	2005	2009	2005	2009
Police	26%	32%	32%	41%	9%	4%	28%	23%	5%	1%
Physicians at local clinics	31%	34%	35%	37%	7%	7%	23%	22%	5%	1%
Physicians at hospitals	33%	37%	30%	33%	6%	7%	26%	21%	6%	2%
Social workers	68%	71%	17%	24%	2%	0%	9%	4%	3%	1%
School counsellors and psychologists	59%	61%	20%	31%	4%	0%	13%	7%	4%	2%
Teachers	38%	40%	45%	51%	5%	2%	8%	6%	5%	2%

**Table 3: Evaluation of the professionals' knowledge concerning child abuse diagnosis**

physicians are put here in slightly more negative light, as they are believed mostly to not have enough knowledge in this field.

To complete the picture, the respondents answered several questions about problems related to helping abused children (Table 5). The responses were apparently not unanimous. The teachers seemed not to have clear opinions about these problems, judging from the fact that for most problems the answers “hard to say” dominated. Exceptions include problems of too mild sentences and lengthy investigation and court procedures. These were described as occurring “often” by about 50% of respondents. It is not clear, however, whether it is opinion about child abuse problem or the question of more general opinions held by the teachers about functioning of judicial proceedings. All other problems were reported to occur “sometimes” by more than one fifth of teachers. More than 40% pointed to the problems of police failure of intervention and backing out of offense notification by the respondents. These figures increased since 2005.

<b>Do you think that in the process of intervention in child abuse cases the following problems occur in your country?</b>										
	Often		Sometimes		Hardly ever		Hard to say		No answer	
	2005	2009	2005	2009	2005	2009	2005	2009	2005	2009
Failure to undertake intervention by the police when a child abuse case has been reported	16%	12%	35%	41%	6%	5%	37%	40%	7%	2%
Applicants back out of notification	36%	21%	33%	43%	2%	2%	33%	31%	6%	3%
Cases are discontinued by prosecutors (despite actual abuse experienced by the child)	14%	17%	32%	31%	6%	3%	42%	45%	6%	4%
Inappropriate conditions and procedures of interviewing children	15%	20%	22%	22%	1%	5%	54%	49%	8%	4%
Lack of possibility to isolate the offender from the victim	30%	26%	21%	25%	2%	11%	38%	34%	7%	4%
Lack of possibility to provide treatment for the offender	21%	20%	21%	21%	5%	10%	44%	43%	9%	6%
Too mild sentences	49%	49%	20%	16%	1%	1%	24%	30%	6%	4%
Failure to execute family courts' decisions	15%	24%	23%	24%	2%	2%	29%	46%	10%	5%
Lengthy investigations and court procedures	52%	54%	12%	15%	1%	1%	29%	27%	6%	4%

**Table 5: Estimated occurrence of problems with dealing with child abuse.**

### **How to help? Strategies of helping children in the respondents' eyes.**

Questions concerning the policy toward victims and perpetrators of child abuse were an important component of the survey. The respondents were the most unanimous in their attitudes toward parents suspected of sexual abuse of their children; more than

90% responded that the suspect should be isolated from the family until the case is clarified (Table 6). Simultaneously, more than 50% of the teachers disagree with the statement that “one should always try to keep the child in the family, regardless of his/her parents’ behavior” (although there is also a significant proportion on those who had difficulties with forming the opinion on that topic).

Do you agree with the statement:												
	Definitely yes		Rather yes		Rather no		Definitely no		Hard to say		No answer	
	2005	2009	2005	2009	2005	2009	2005	2009	2005	2009	2005	2009
One should always try to keep the child in the family notwithstanding his/her parents behaviour	4%	3%	12%	15%	38%	32%	23%	23%	19%	24%	4%	2%
Parent suspected of sexual abuse should be isolated from the family till the time the case will be finished	67%	70%	12%	22%	2%	1%	5%	3%	3%	4%	2%	0%
Many children suffer violence in their families because other don't react	27%	35%	46%	43%	9%	7%	3%	1%	13%	14%	3%	0%
Child protection institutions rarely cooperate with each other	17%	22%	45%	43%	6%	9%	1%	6%	26%	20%	4%	0%

**Table 6: Opinions on policy towards victims and perpetrators**

The subjects also agree that many children suffer because of the lack of response to child abuse, and that help offered to children is poorly coordinated, with help institutions rarely cooperating in the process of intervention.

Next question tested respondents opinion on treatment of perpetrators of child abuse. It is an important aspect of reducing child abuse, which is recognized by the subjects. As far as child sexual abusers are concerned, punishing them was the most preferred option. Three out of five respondents also support deprivation of parental rights in such cases. These two figures have grown significantly since 2005. Apparently, the support for strict treatment of children sexual abusers has increased. However, the proportion of those in favor of providing them treatment has not changed. This option has the support of about half of the respondents.

Respondents were also asked about their opinion on how to treat perpetrators of physical abuse. In 2005 the opinions varied but punishing and providing therapy in the same time was the most preferable option. In 2009 respondents seem to have misunderstood the question (some of them have chosen more than one option although only one was possible), so it is hard to draw any conclusions.

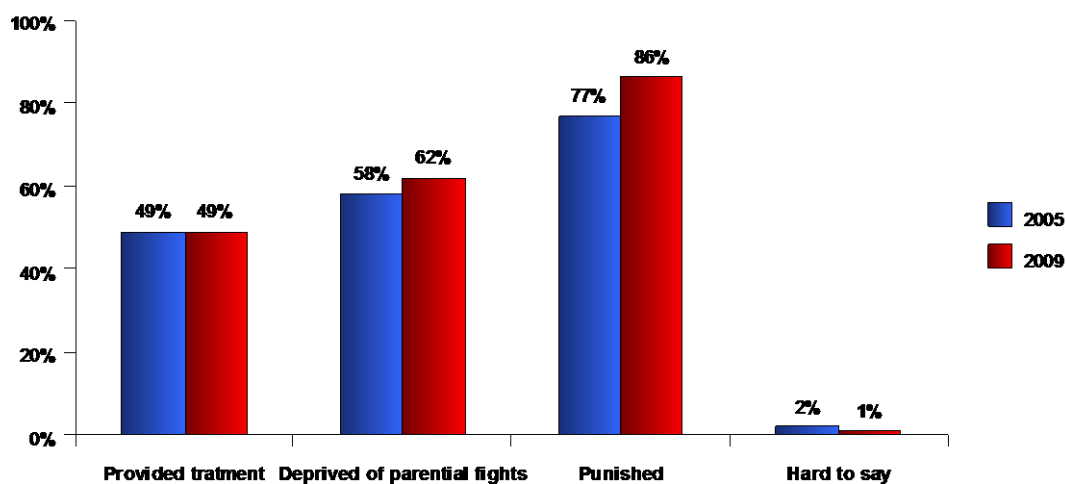


Figure 22: Supported ways of dealing with fathers guilty of sexual abuse against children

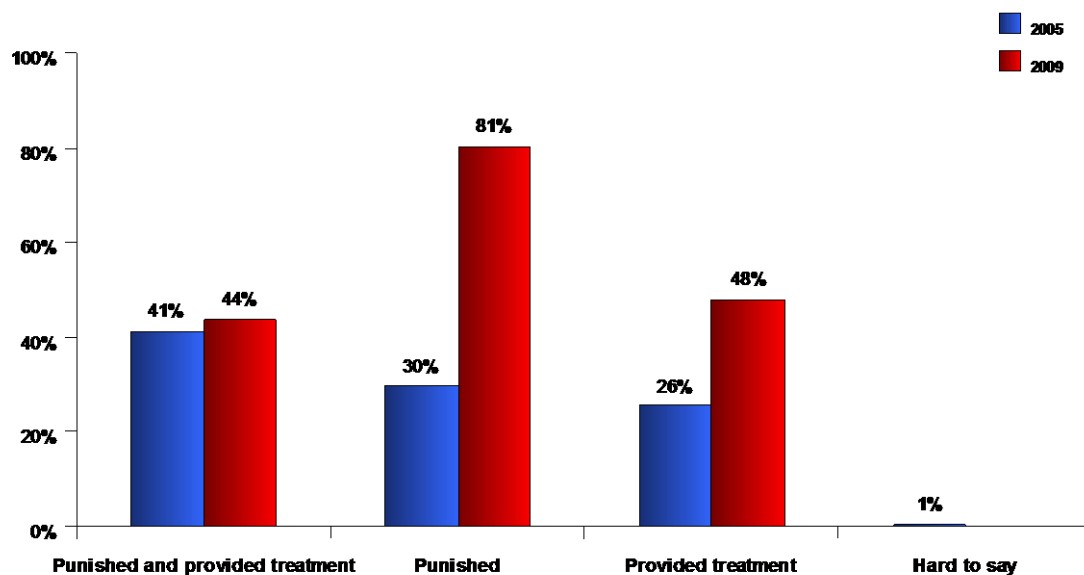


Figure 23: Supported ways of dealing with parents guilty of physical abuse against children



## **Conclusions**

- Half of adult Lithuanians believe that the use of corporal punishment is justified in some situations.
- According to teachers, spanking a child as punishment is the most frequent form of child abuse in Lithuania; other forms of child abuse are seen to appear rather rarely
- All forms of child abuse apart from spanking are thought to occur with increasing frequency
- One third of teachers agree that a child is his/her parents property, so parents are the only ones who can make decisions about the child and that tough treatment strengthens a child.
- Most teachers believe corporal punishment is humiliating for the child and see the use of corporal punishment as a sign that the parents are not good at child rearing.
- Only 15% of teachers thinks it is justified for the third party to intervene when child is being spanked by parents
- Only 32% of teachers report that they always intervene in cases of child abuse. Almost one out of three never takes any action.
- Two thirds of teachers believe that the problem of child abuse can be prevented.
- Almost 60% of teachers supports a legal ban on the use of corporal punishment of children.
- Almost all teachers think that school counselors and psychologists help or try to help children, despite their limited potential. Social workers are also evaluated increasingly high. Help provided by physicians at local clinics and the police has been evaluated the least positively.
- According to a majority of teachers, it is often the case that the applicant backs out his/her notification, the investigation and court proceedings are lengthy and sentences are too lenient.
- Over the past 4 years the proportion of teachers who support providing treatment for abusive fathers have not changed while the proportion of those who are in favor of only punishing them has increased.