

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

## **Research report**

National Center for Child Abuse Prevention

Nobody's Children Foundation

This report presents findings from studies conducted in Moldova 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 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:

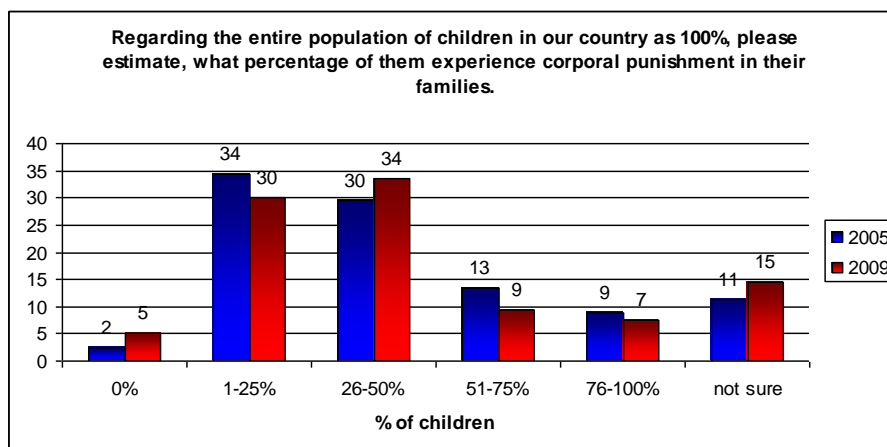
- What percentage of children in our country experience corporal punishment (or beating as punishment) in their families?
- In your opinion, is beating a child as punishment a childrearing method, which:
  - 1) may be used whenever the parent believes it is going to be effective
  - 2) should not be 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.

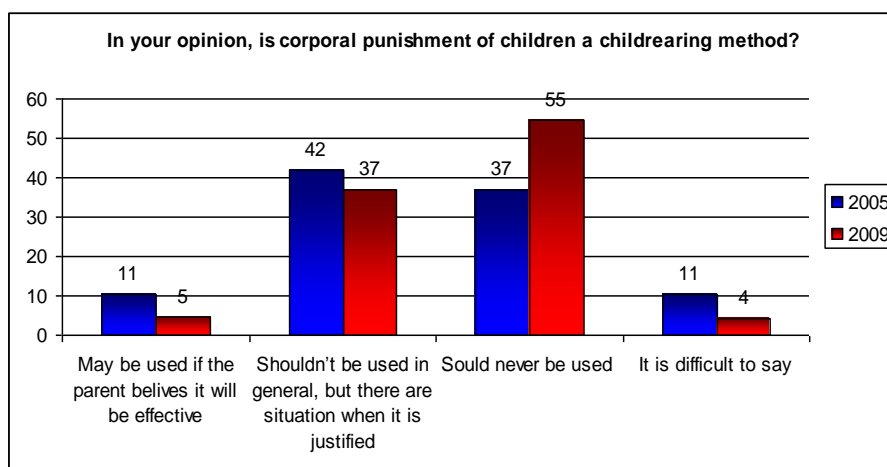
Developed by Monika Sajkowska, the questionnaire consisted of 31 items which had been previously used in Polish research programs concerning child abuse (Sajkowska, Siemaszko, 1998; Fluderska, Sajkowska, 2001).

## **Moldovans' opinions about the use of corporal punishment of children**

The survey of Moldovans' attitudes toward the use of corporal punishment of children was conducted by National Center for Child Abuse Prevention – in 2005 and 2009



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



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

The majority of country's population (69%) believe that less than a half of all children experience violent punishment. Compared with 2005 results, the number of those expressing opposite view (that more than 50% of the children are corporally punished) has decreased from 22 to 16%. This may indicate that such behaviors have become less frequent.

Even more significant changes in respondents' beliefs was observed in the field of justification of using corporal punishment. Over the past 4 years both the opinion that parents may decide on using such punishment and that it is justified in some situations have become less prevalent. In the same time the proportion of Moldovans' declaring that corporal punishment shall never be used has noticeably increased. In 2009, people of such opinion constitute the majority (55%) whereas in 2004 this group was only 37%. Eventually, the number of those hesitant in this topic has also decreased.

To conclude, changes in answers for both questions are mutually consistent and appear to show that, in comparison to 2004, less Moldovans accept corporal punishment as child-raising method and simultaneously estimate that less children experience using it in their families.

**Moldovan teacher’s attitudes toward corporal punishment of children**

**The sample**

The 2009 survey was conducted on a sample of 206 teachers working at Chişinău schools. A vast majority of the sample (89%) were women, just as in the 2005 study (95%). Invariably, teachers between 25-35 constituted the largest subgroup of the respondents – two fifths of the whole group. Also the proportions concerning teachers' work experience remained unchanged.

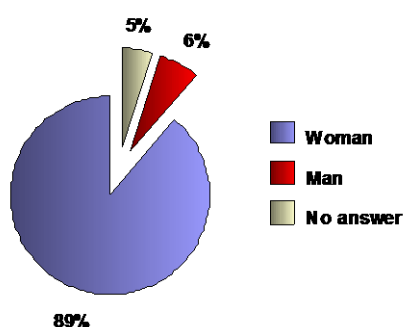


Figure 1: Respondents by sex

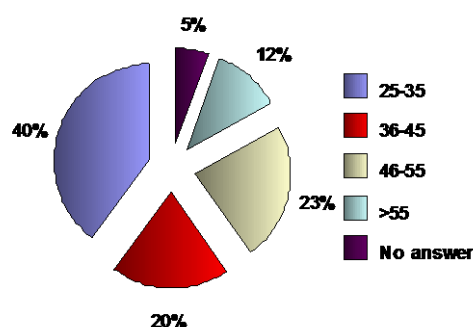


Figure 2: Respondents by age

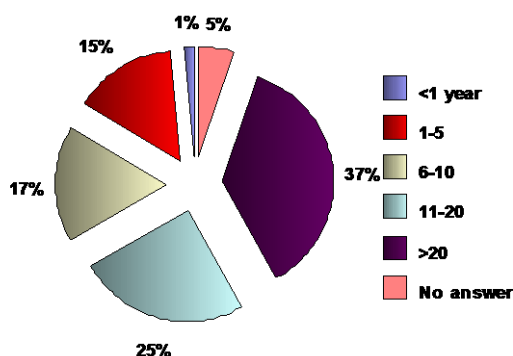


Figure 3: Respondents by job experience

Most respondents (69%) had their own children. 76% of the participants described themselves as believers or deep believers. In both these aspects a slight increase was noted.

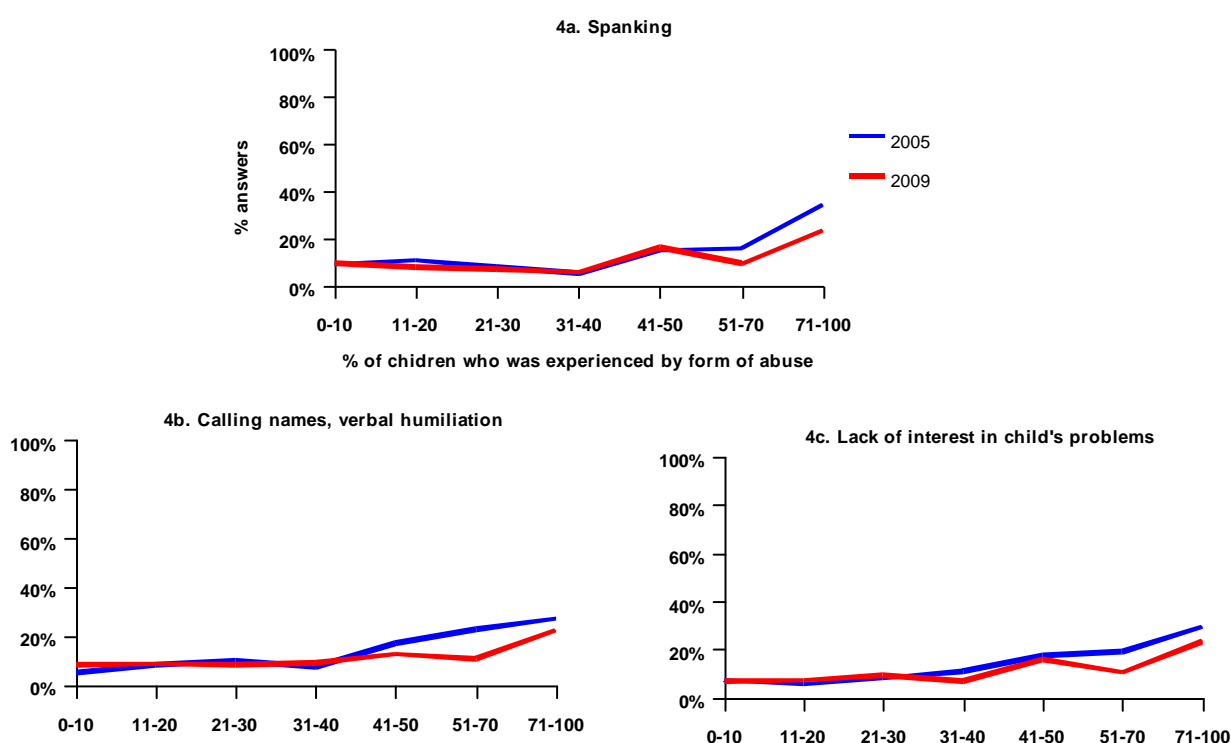
## Opinions on prevalence of child abuse

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.

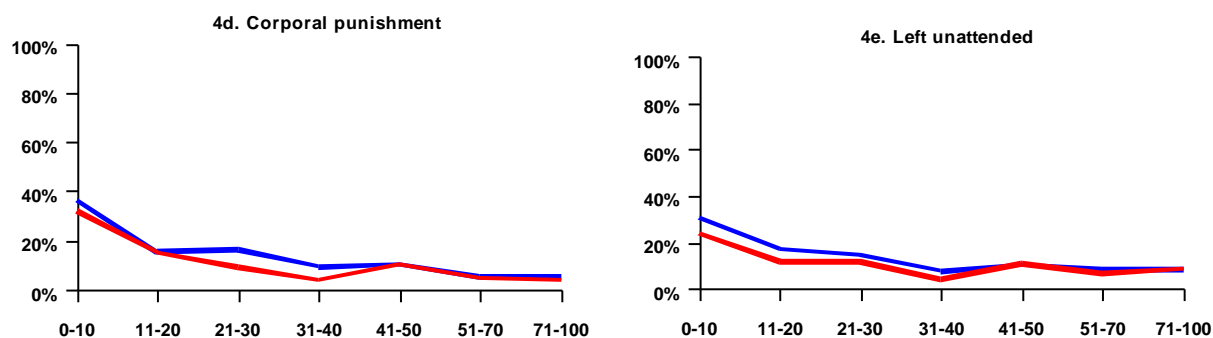
In one of the first questions the respondents were asked to estimate the prevalence and dynamics of the child abuse problem. As presented below (Figures 4 a-h), teachers vary in their opinions about what percentage of children experience abuse. In the past 4 years, changes in estimations of the prevalence of various forms of child abuse in Moldova point that they have become less frequent.

According to teachers, children in Moldova are most likely to experience spanking, verbal humiliation and lack of interest. In this fields, however, the positive change is most likely to observe. Whereas in 2005 about a half of the respondents believed that more than 50% are being harmed in these ways, in 2009 such belief was held by only about 30%.

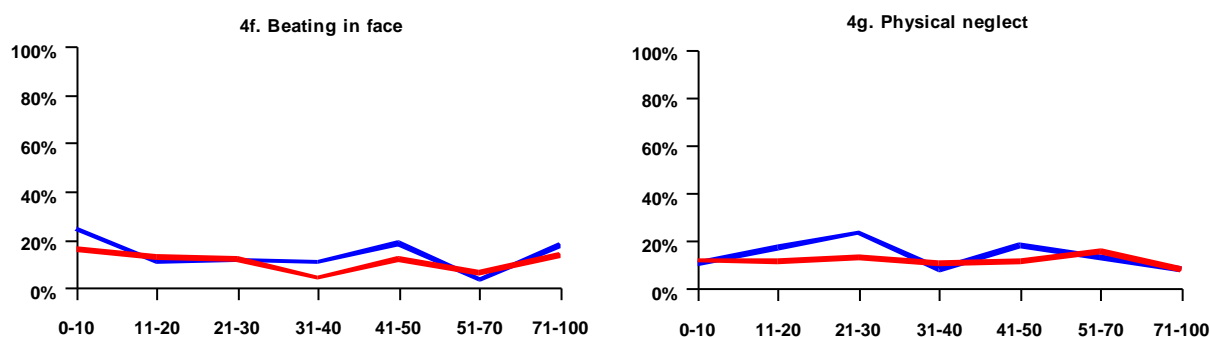
**Figures 4: Estimated prevalence of different forms of child abuse - in percentage terms - with the entire population of children in Moldova constituting 100%**



The most optimistic estimations concern the prevalence of severe corporal punishment and leaving children; the largest proportion of the respondents (35-50%) believe that this form of abuse is experienced by fewer than 20% of children in Moldova. However, one have to mention that opposite trend, than in the previous estimations, is to be seen here. In 2009 respondents' estimations were less optimistic.

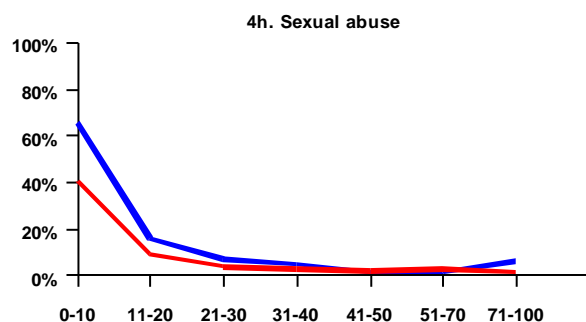


The respondents found it the most difficult to estimate the prevalence of slapping in face and physical neglect: for these questions their responses were either evenly distributed along the 0% to 100% scale or the distribution seemed random, which suggest that respondents do not have clear idea about how common these phenomena are.



Eventually, sexual abuse was estimated to occur rather rarely. About two thirds of all respondents think that less than 10% of children are being affected by this pathological behavior. In comparison to 2005 surveys, more respondents found it impossible to estimate the scale of phenomenon.



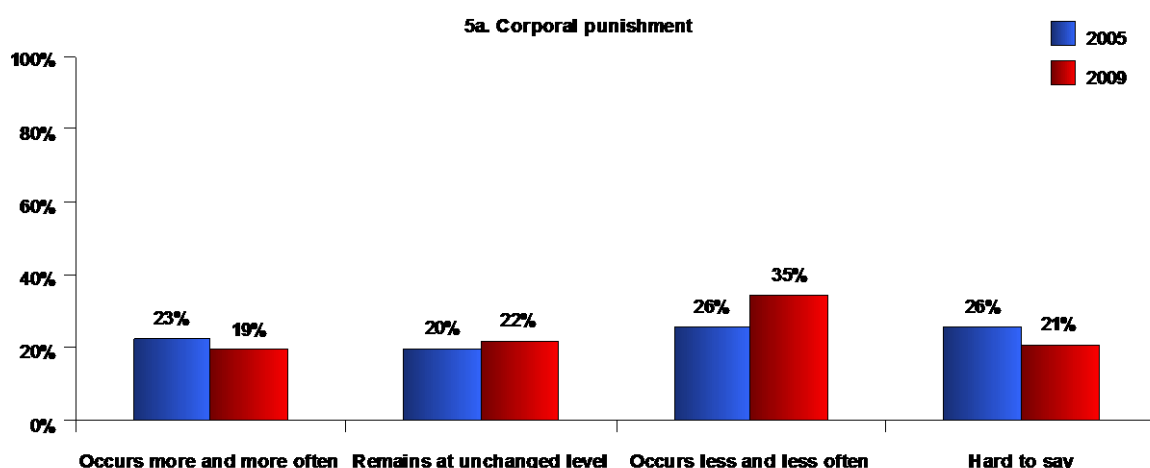


The respondents were also asked to assess the dynamics of child abuse over the past 10 years: is the prevalence of the problem changing? If yes, is the problem – in their opinion – becoming more or less prevalent? How has the perceived dynamics changed over the past 4 years?

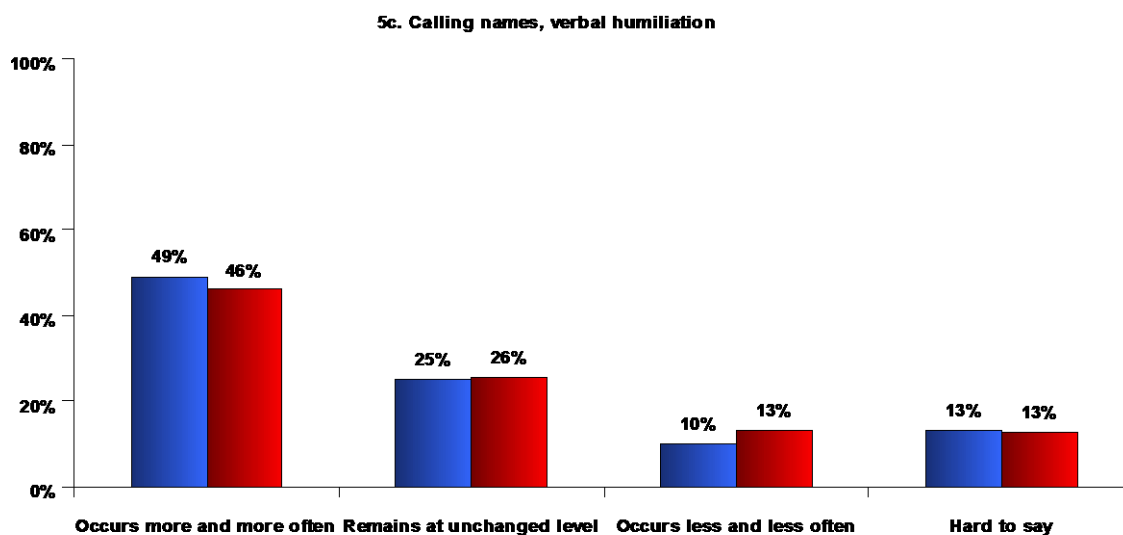
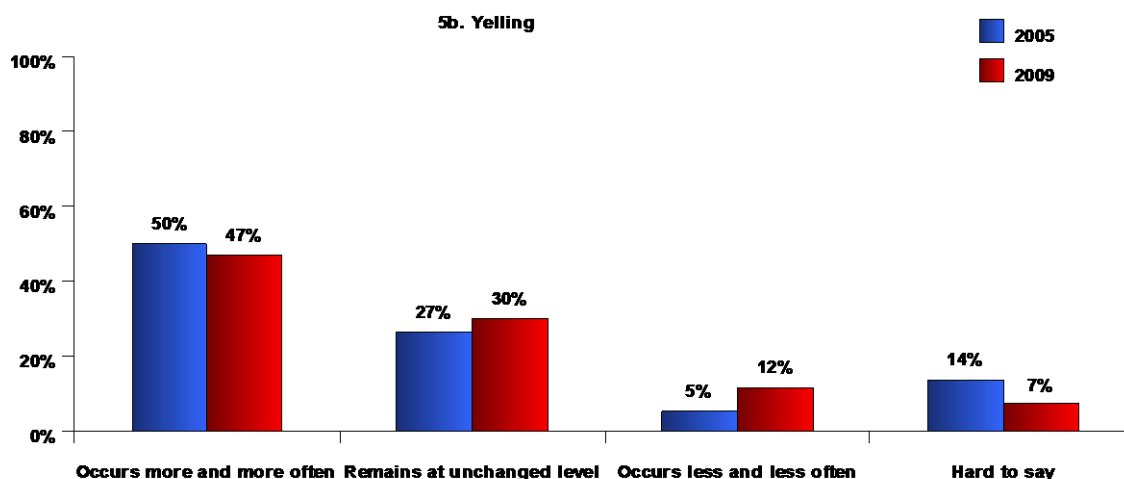
Although, as we could previously see, the estimations of the prevalence of child abuse became more optimistic, the feelings about tendencies concerning different forms of child abuse remained firmly pessimistic. Generally, the opinions in this block of questions changed only slightly during the past 4 years. These changes were, however, in the positive directions.

The single case in which the feeling of decrease was dominant concerned the use of corporal punishment. Nevertheless, even in that case, as it can be seen on chart below, the respondents were not fully decided and the answers were distributed almost evenly.

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



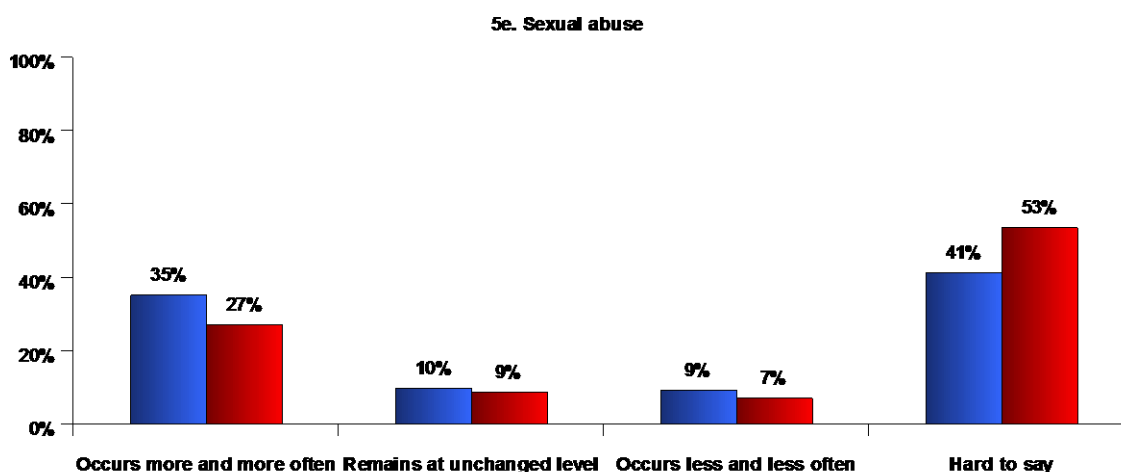
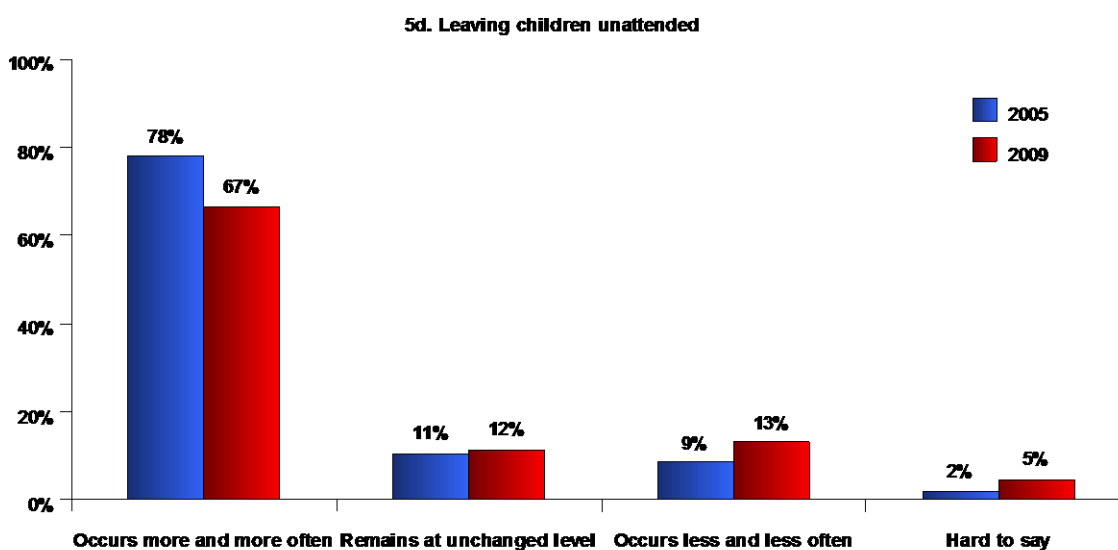
Considering opinions the changes in frequency of other forms of child abuse, it can be easily noted that most respondents see them occurring “more and more often”. The above is true for cases of yelling at children and verbal humiliation - about 50% of respondents perceive them as occurring with increasing intensity.



Interestingly, the most negative tendencies are observed by the respondents in the area of leaving children unattended (5d). It seems inconsistent with the previous responses (concerning the scale of this negligence), where it was estimated as being rather less prevalent.

Different findings are related to the problem of sexual abuse. In 2009, more than a half of respondents chose the abstain from the answer. It may mean that respondents had

very little contact with this type of abuse or it could also mean that this topic rarely appear in media, being the cause of not possessing the opinion on it by the surveyed.

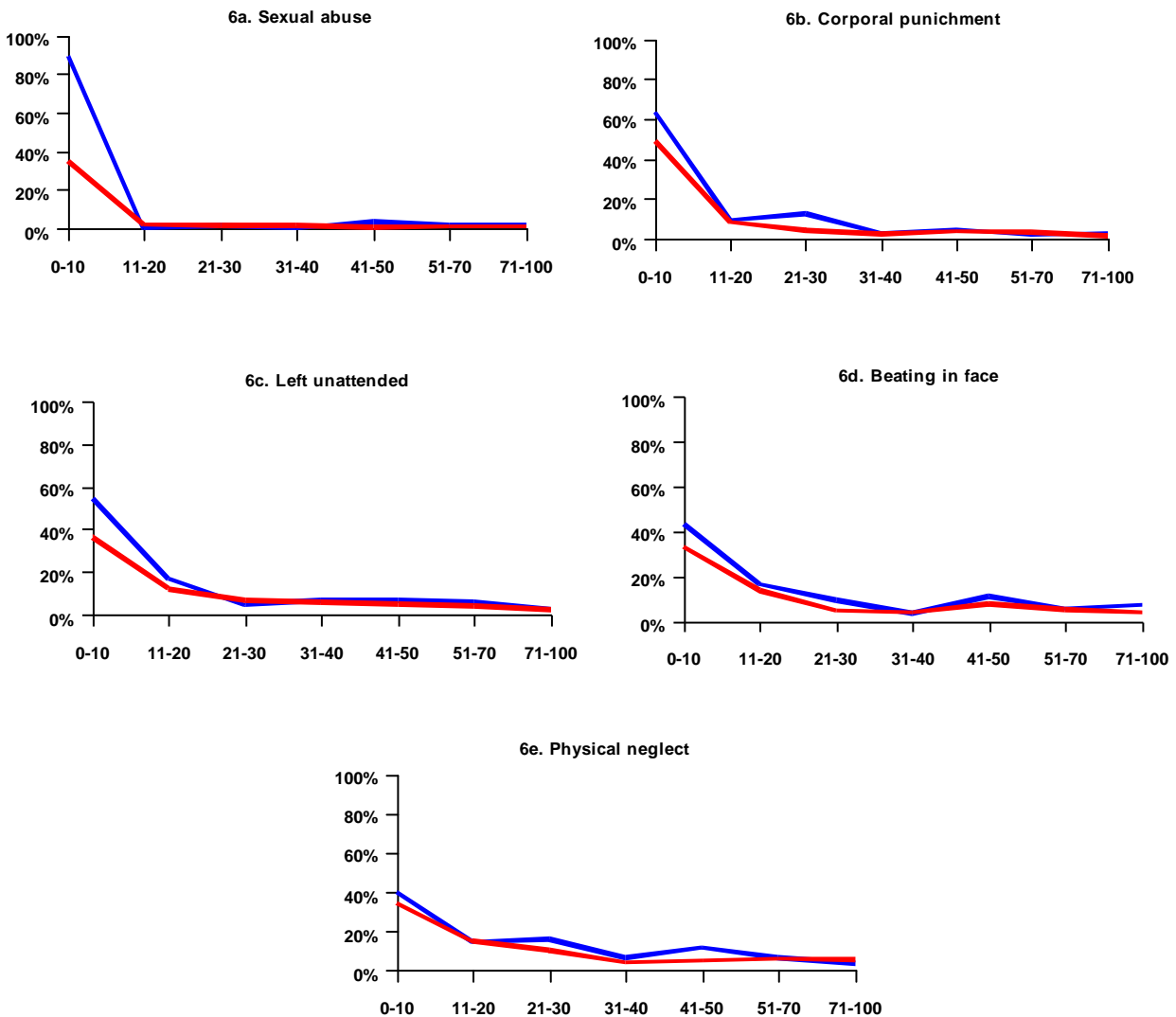


The respondents were also asked to estimate the prevalence of abuse experienced by children attending their schools. Is it the same as in the general children population? If not, what differences have been noticed by the respondents? Is there any relationship between the estimated prevalence of child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

Assessing the scale of child abuse problems among pupils from their schools, teachers tend to paint more positive picture than concerning the whole population.

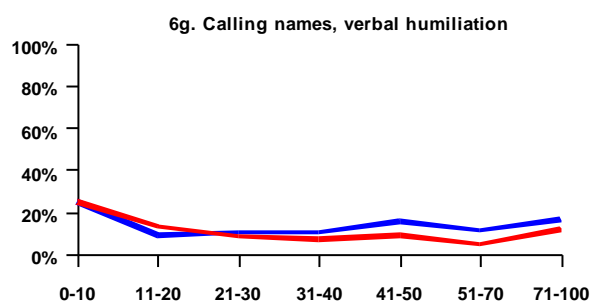
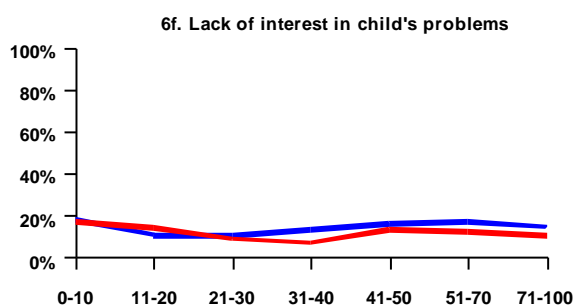
According to firm majority of those who responded, less than 20% of their pupils experience sexual abuse, corporal punishment, slapping in the face or are left unattended or physically neglected. These most severe abuses are perceived most scarce.

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

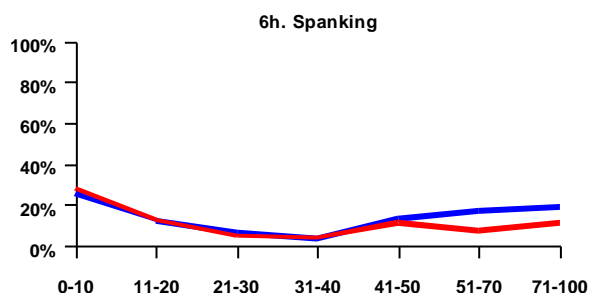


Another group of responses concerned lack of interest in child's problems and verbal abuse (figures.6f and 6g). The teachers seem to be confused, as the responses vary and in consequence the estimations are almost equally distributed. This means there is no consent on how frequent the problem is.

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One can see an uncommon distribution of responses on the chart representing estimations of prevalence of the problem of spanking (6h). It seems that two groups of opinions can be distinguished. The first, more numerous, group believes that spanking seldom becomes children's experience, whereas the second is the opinion that it concerns more than 40% of pupils.



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

If all the children living in our country constitute 100% of the population, what percentage do you think experience?	Country population (mean estimation)		School population (mean estimation)	
	2005	2009	2005	2009
Spanking	52%	38%	38%	25%
Corporal punishment	23%	18%	14%	11%
Slapping in face	35%	28%	23%	16%
Calling names, verbal humiliation	52%	38%	37%	24%
Lack of interest in child's problems	52%	38%	39%	28%
Physical neglect	35%	30%	22%	18%
Sexual abuse	15%	8%	9%	4%
Being left unattended	28%	23%	18%	13%

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

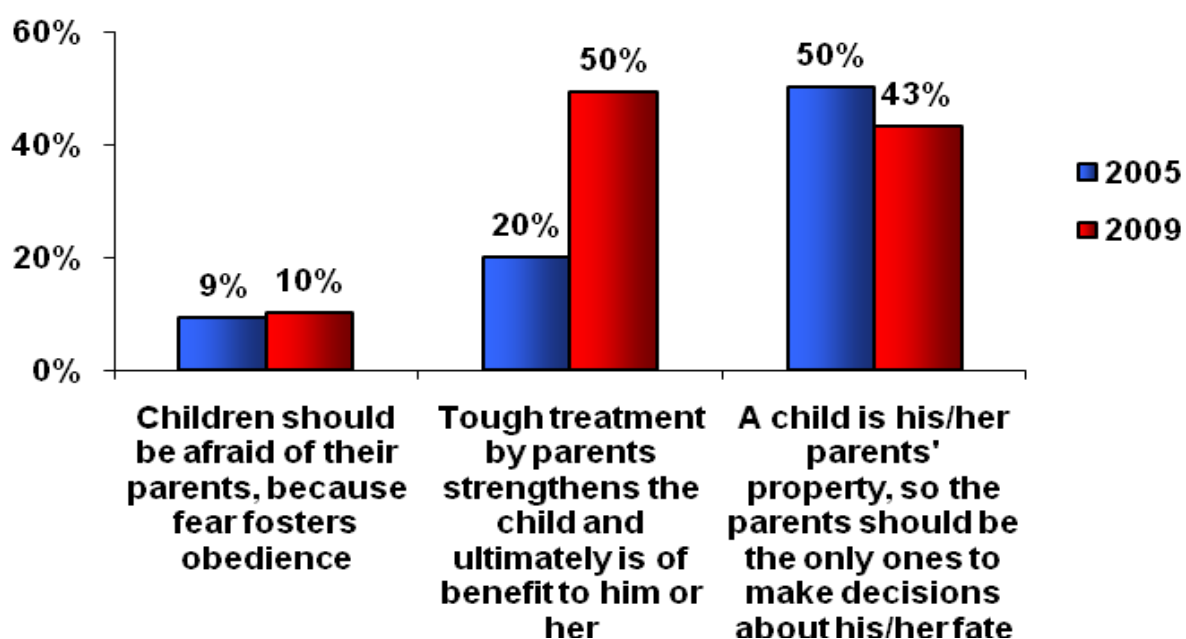
each form of abuse, the subjects perceive the situation in their closest environment much better than in the country as a whole. The difference tends to be rather constant – in all cases “school estimations” are about one third lower than “country estimations”. The table also clearly shows that, in general, the prevalence of all forms of abuse were estimated lower in 2009 than in 2005 both at country and school level.

### **When to intervene?**

Teachers (especially those who work with younger children) have extensive knowledge about child-rearing 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 decided to intervene and help the child.

#### **Do you agree with the agree with the statement:**



**Figure 7: Teachers’ opinions on selected views concerning child-rearing. (the aggregate of “rather yes” and “definitely yes” responses).**

In the questionnaire, the teachers were asked about their opinions on three beliefs concerning child rearing.

As illustrated in Figure 7, about 10% of teachers supports the view that “fear fosters obedience”. Most alarmingly the proportion of those supporting the second view (“Tough treatment by parents strengthens the child and ultimately is of benefit to him or her”) is much higher and has even increased to 50% in 2009. The support for third statement (that child is parents' property) has slightly decreased from 50% to 43%. Nevertheless it can still be described as surprisingly high.

These findings are very important, as they can mean that nearly half of all teachers would be likely to refrain from intervention seeing a child threatened by aggressive parents' behavior. This is because they believe that the child is parents' property and that tough treatment is ultimately benefiting.

The respondents were also asked about situations related to child rearing, which – in their opinion – justified interventions by third parties (non-family members). Generally

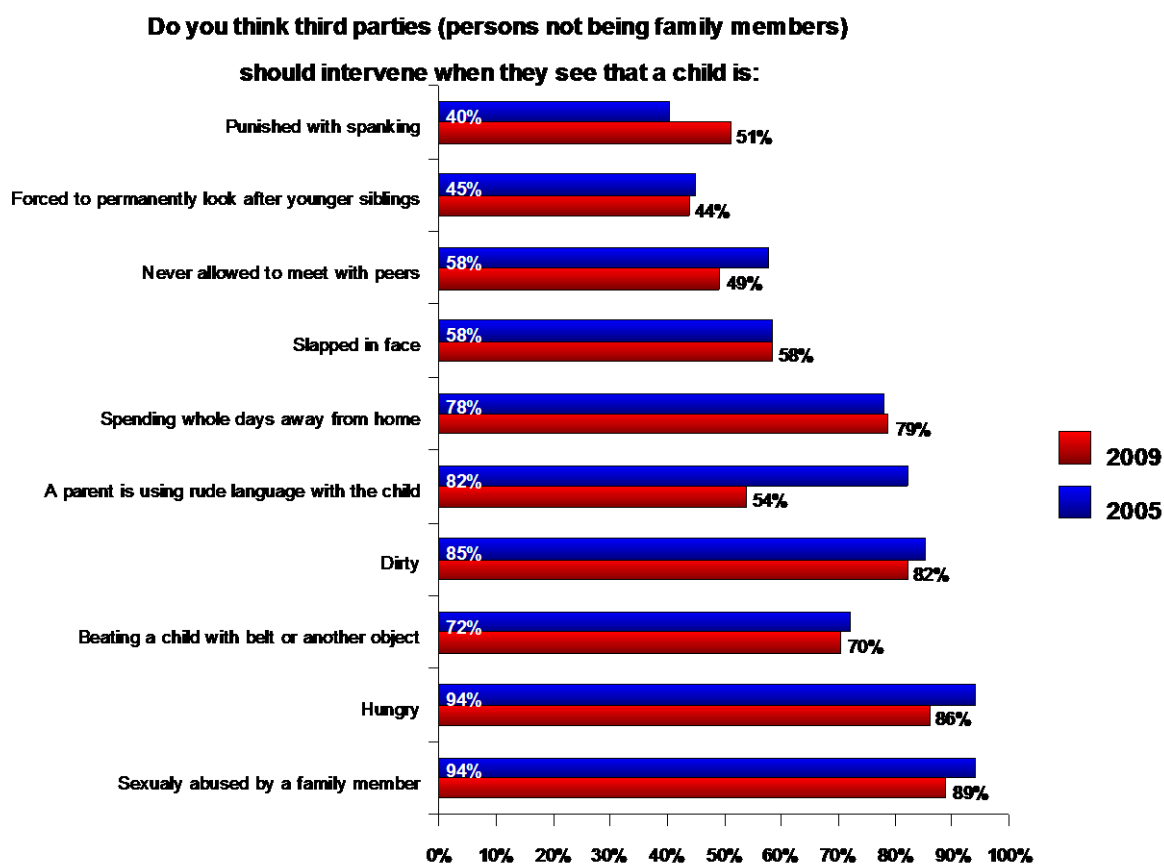


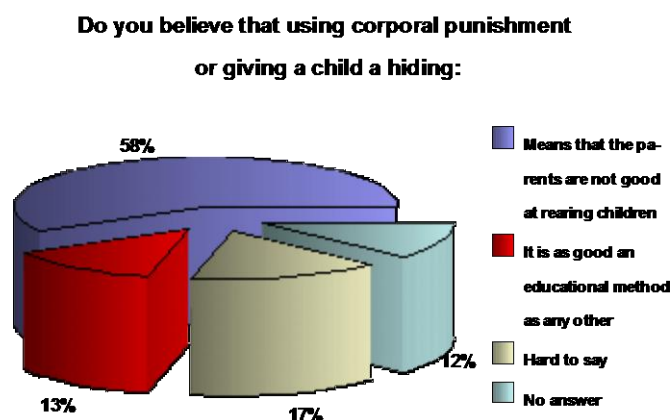
Figure 8: Situations in which the respondents perceive third parties' or strangers' interventions as justified.

these beliefs have not changed much in the past four years, although the proportions of those supporting third party interventions have slightly decreased in nearly all situations. More evident changes in comparison to 2005 study are major, 34% decrease in the will to intervene in the situation of the use of rude language and – single optimistic accent – 27% growth of these in favor of not allowing the parents for spanking.

Generally the findings are consistent with those from previous question and show high concession for parental abusing behaviors from teachers. Only 40 to 58% believe that intervention is justified in the situations of spanking, forcing to look after younger siblings, not allowing to meet peers, slapping in face and using rude language. This fact is to be linked with the previous finding that 43% believe that child is parents' property. Intervention is perceived more justified in the cases of beating with the belt, leaving the child unattended away from home and hygienic neglect (70-85%).

The only cases where respondents were almost unanimous that the intervention is vital and necessary were leaving the child hungry and sexual abuse by the member of family (86% and 89% respectively). Even in these cases one has to remark that in 2005 such belief was held by 94% in both cases.

Although above mentioned findings may give a rather negative view of Moldovan teachers' attitude toward corporal punishment, asked directly about the opinion on such treatment they tend to have negative or undecided attitude toward it. Only 8% of



**Figure 9: Attitudes toward corporal punishment**



respondents claimed that it is normal educational method and 13% percent agreed that it is as good an educational method as any other. 68% claim that corporal punishment is humiliating and 58% think that its use discredit parents. It is also to notice that comparatively high proportion is undecided in this field.



**Figure 10: Opinions on 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 (figure 11). Again, the respondents' opinions lacked consistency with previous statements. Despite the above mentioned attitude toward corporal punishment, as much as 69% agreed that a child deserves hiding if he or she committed a petty theft. For 61% drinking alcohol was a sufficient reason for corporal punishment. This means that there is a proportion of teachers who simultaneously find corporal punishment humiliating and would use it in certain situations. Unfortunately, nearly all of the other offenses on the justify the use of physical force for more than 40% of respondents. The only milder assessed offenses were damage of a precious object, having poor marks at school and negligence of child's own clothes.

These, rather appalling, attitudes have not significantly changed since 2005. In most cases the proportions of those in favor of beating have even slightly increased. In the case of "showing disrespect to parents" the support for a hiding has increased nearly twice.

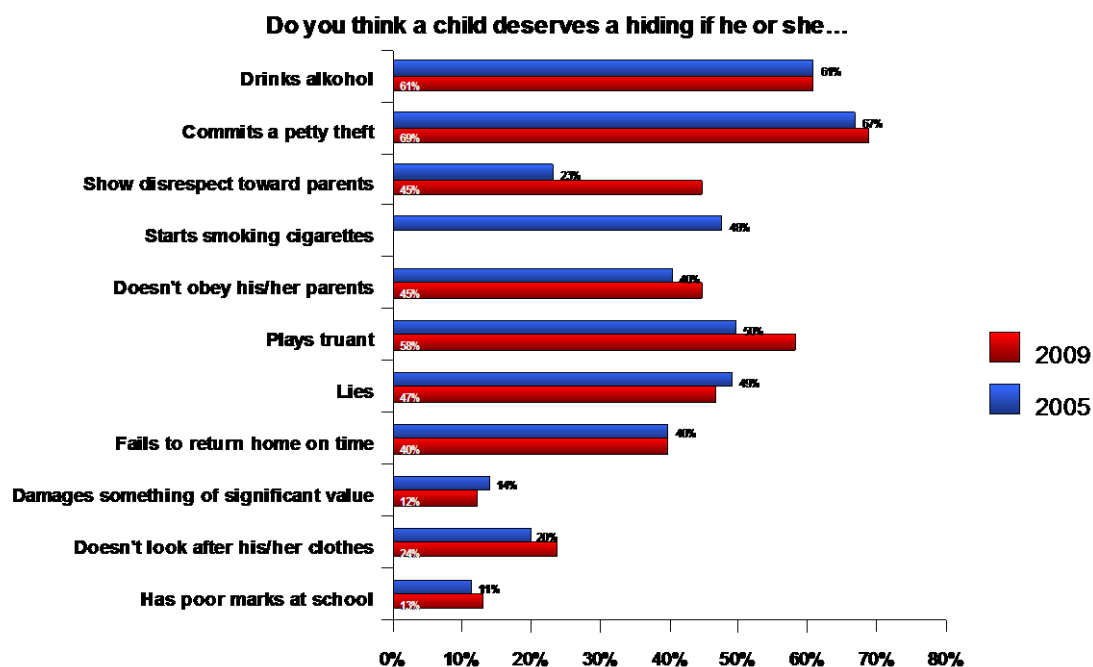


Figure 11: In what situations do you consider beating a child justified or would use this form of punishment yourself?

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
Lies	49%	47%	36%	32%	10%	16%	5%	6%
Fails to return home on time	40%	40%	37%	37%	14%	17%	9%	6%
Has poor marks at school	11%	13%	70%	72%	9%	9%	10%	6%
Plays truant	50%	58%	32%	26%	9%	10%	9%	6%
Commits a petty theft	67%	69%	21%	15%	5%	8%	8%	9%
Show disrespect toward parents	23%	31%	46%	37%	18%	25%	13%	7%
Damages something of significant	14%	12%	58%	70%	18%	11%	10%	7%
Doesn't look after his/her clothes	20%	24%	54%	50%	16%	18%	11%	8%
Doesn't obey his/her parents	40%	45%	33%	30%	15%	18%	11%	7%
Starts smoking cigarettes	48%	56%	30%	27%	15%	11%	8%	5%
Drinks alcohol	61%	61%	22%	23%	9%	10%	8%	6%

Table 2: Attitudes toward corporal punishment (giving child a hiding)

### 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.

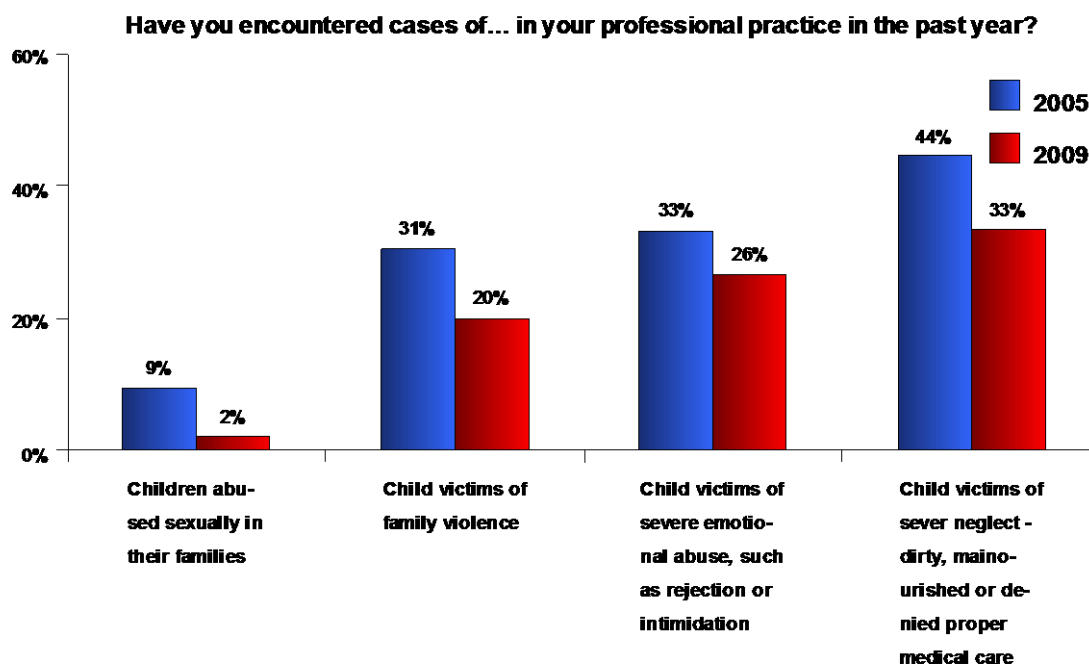


Figure 13: Contact with specific cases of child abuse during the past 12 months

The teachers were the most likely to deal with neglect and emotional abuse (intimidation, rejection, etc.), and the 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

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

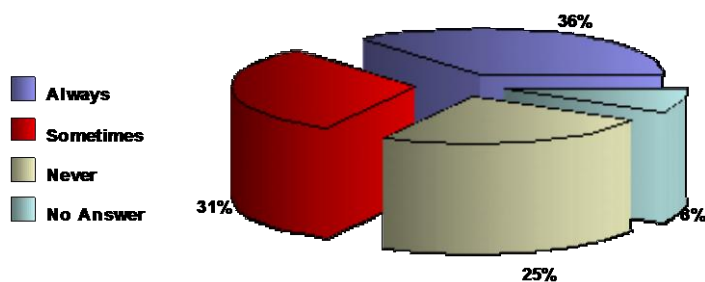


Figure 12: Teachers' reactions to child abuse

likely to be disclosed by the victims. One third of the respondents had contact with child victims of domestic violence (see Figure 12). As compared to the 2005 survey, in the late 2008 and early 2009 the subjects were less likely to encounter all cases of child abuse . On the one hand, the finding is quite encouraging as it may reflect a decrease in the prevalence of child abuse. On the other hand, we should be aware that these are only the reports and they can also reflect the teachers' lower awareness to the problem.

Thus, teachers are witnesses to abuse, but does their increased awareness lead to any actions? The respondents' reports are quite ambiguous (Figure 13). More than one third of them (36%) claim that they always respond to cases to abuse, and about another one third (31%) say they intervene sometimes. About one forth admit that they do not intervene. These figures are quite similar to those from 2005 studies. It should be stressed that this is only a self-report, so the results may be treated as inflated in comparison to the actual behavior.

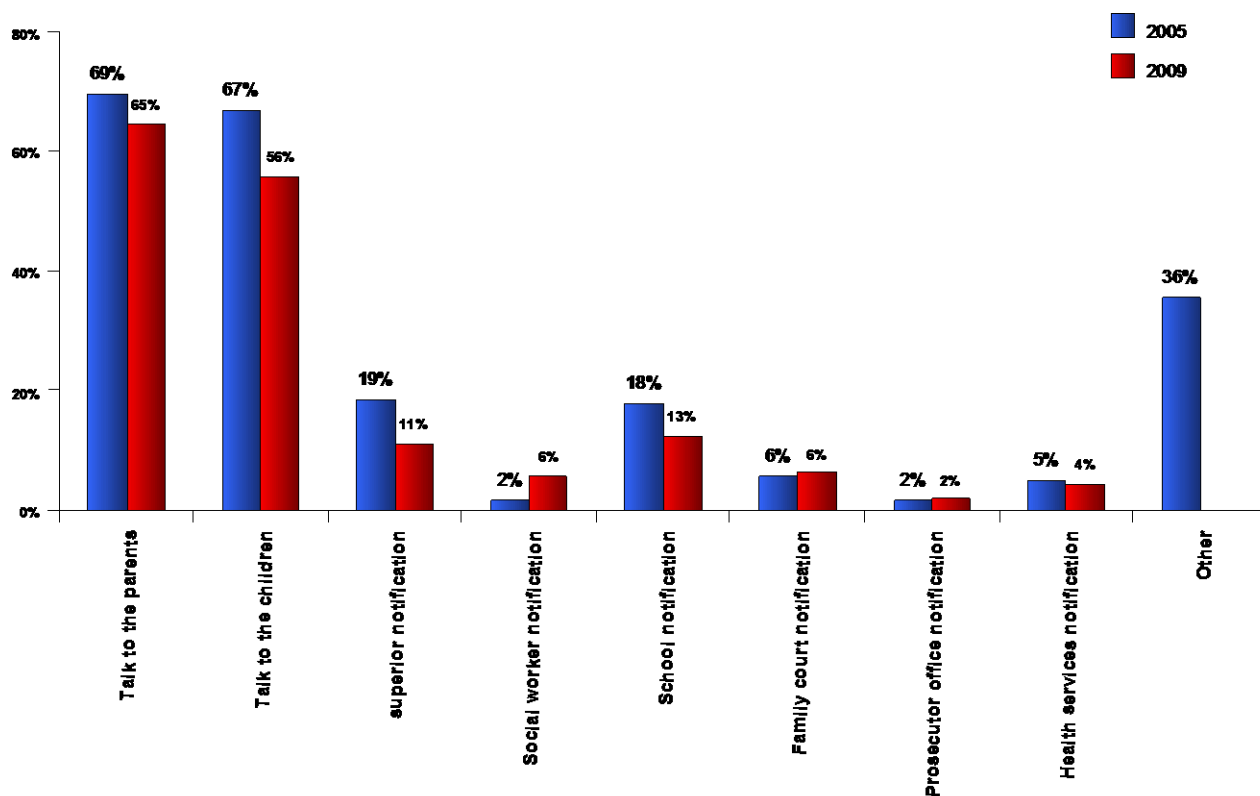
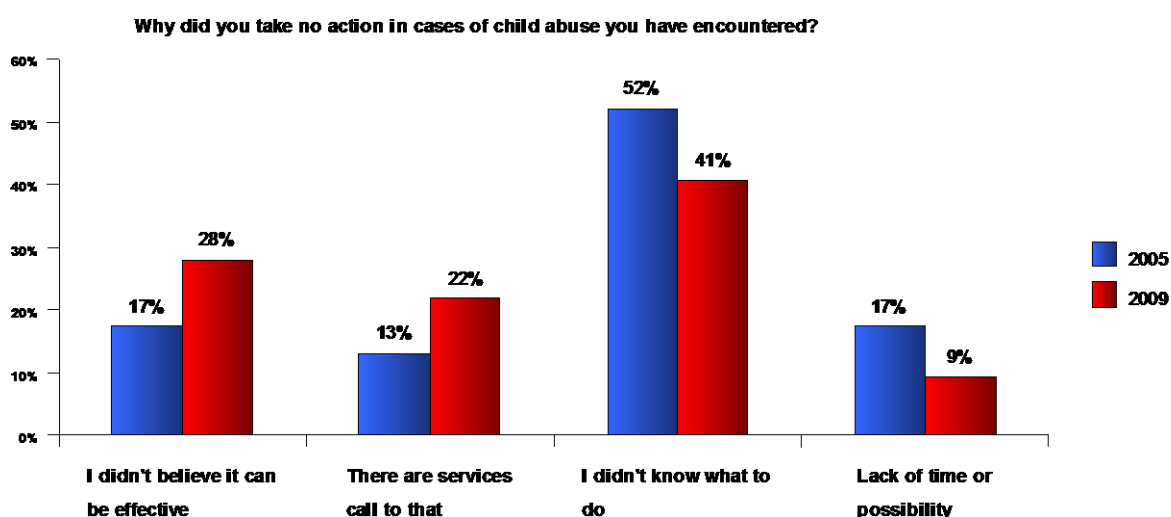


Figure 14: Types of interventions undertaken by teachers

The teachers who said they intervened „always” or „sometimes”, were asked about the types of actions taken (Figure 14). In most cases, they talked to the parents or the child (more than half of responses). These two types of interventions were the only ones truly common. It seems that the information about children maltreatments rarely go beyond the child-parent-teacher triangle. Only about ten percent of educators inform their superiors or school. What is most alarming, the official institutions dedicated to cope with these cases, such as family courts, social workers or health institutions are hardly ever informed by the respondents. Such actions have been undertaken by 6% or less teachers. Moreover, the percentage of respondents who undertook nearly all types of interventions has decreased over the past 4 years.



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

We should not ignore the alarming fact that as many as 25% of the respondents reported to have failed to intervene despite knowing that a child was a victim of abuse (plus 8% who do not provide any answer). In the light of these findings, it seems essential to determine why so many teachers (about one fourth of the respondents) fail to respond to child abuse and help the victim. The chart in Figure 15 shows the numbers of respondents who selected each of the answers provided in the questionnaire.

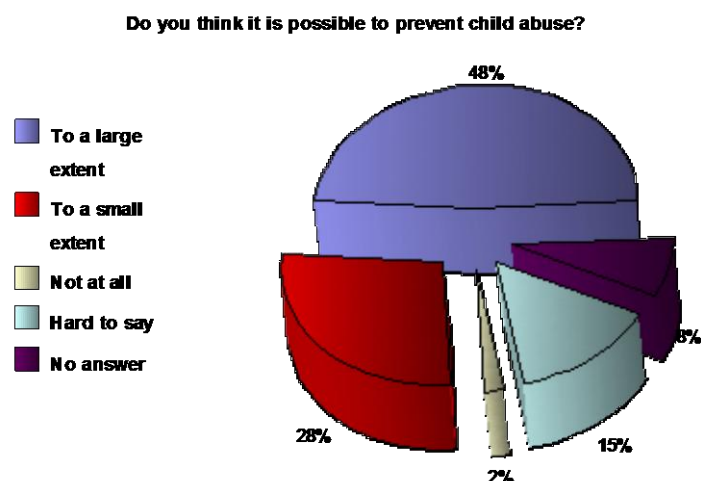
In most cases, their inaction resulted from lack of knowledge of what should be done. Another reasons were feelings of ineffectiveness of hypothetical intervention and the fact that teachers do not see themselves as responsible for taking action in such cases (“There are other appointed services”). The latter problem has a nature of vicious circle:

when teachers do not report cases of child abuse to relevant services, the latter cannot take any action. Another self-reported reason for failing to take action was lack of time or opportunity.

### **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 Moldova? Do they think that the state should control – through legal regulations – the ways parents treat their children?

The respondents were asked to assess institutional help services available to abused children in Moldova. They could express their opinions on the work of several professional groups responsible for child protection. At the same time, they evaluated the level of professional knowledge presented by these groups.

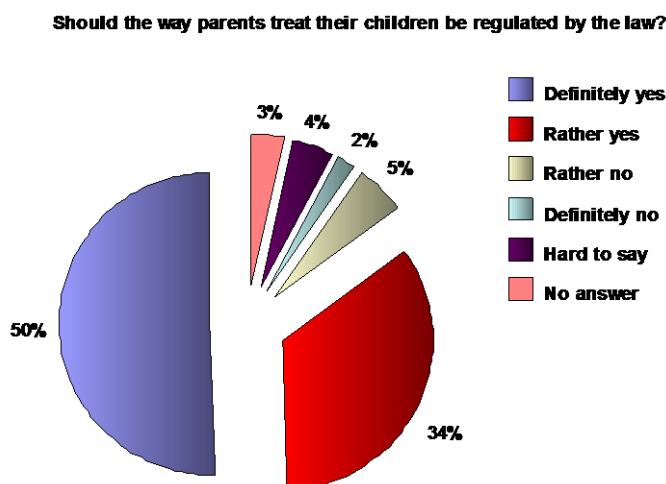


**Figure 16: Opinions on the extend to which child abuse can be prevented**

Although the respondents' belief that child abuse can be effectively prevented has decreased slightly during past 4 years, it is still strong among this population. Only 2% responded that nothing could be done to prevent the problem, about one forth believe that prevention can be effective only to a limited degree, and almost fifty percent of the

teachers perceive child abuse as highly preventable (a 10 percent points decrease in comparison to 2005). The belief that child abuse may be effectively reduced is crucial to fighting with the problem successfully. If a teacher does not believe that an abused child may be helped, cannot be expected to undertake any action to actually help such a child.

One method of preventing child abuse are 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 Moldovan teachers?

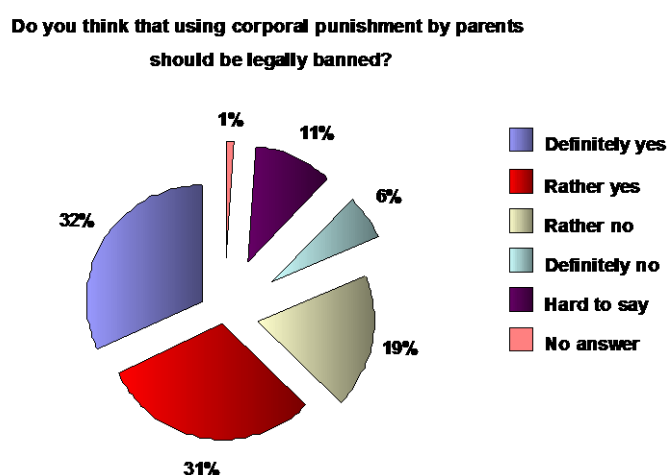


**Figure 17: Support for the legal regulations of parental children treatment**

A vast majority 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. Compared with 2005 results, the

percentage of those with sure support for law regulations (the “definitely yes” answers) has slightly increased.

Consequently, the majority of respondents also express support for specific aspect of legal regulations – whether parental use corporal punishment should be banned. More than sixty percent of the respondents still support the idea of imposing a legal ban on corporal punishment, at the same time, however, a higher proportion (as compared to responses concerning general legislation) definitely oppose making such forms of punishment illegal. Summing the “definitely no” and “rather no” answers the opponents of such regulations amount to as much as one quarter of all teachers. These figures have not changed significantly since 2005.



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

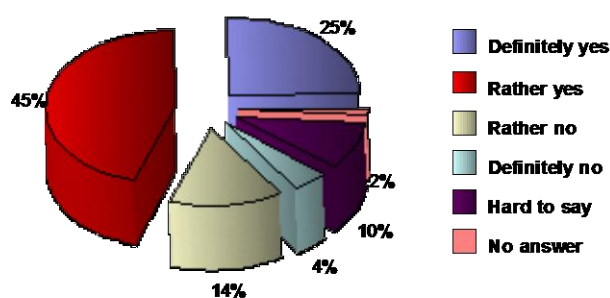
Nevertheless, even the best legal regulations are not enough to reduce child abuse effectively. Apart from a clear definition of how a child may not be treated, it is crucial to provide available and effective services and institutions, able to respond to any information suggesting that a child may be a victim of abuse.

The respondents were asked to evaluate help services available to abused children in Moldova. More than half of the participants (62,2 %) believe that the available services ensure that child victims are offered effective help. Only minor percentage will state that institutions definitely fail to provide it. As it was previously shown, despite these positive



opinions about state services, still very few teachers would notify the representatives of these institutions about child abuse.

**Do you think the existing institutional help service enable providing effective assistance for abused children in your country?**



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

The next block of questions was to assess how the teachers see the responsibility of specific institutions for providing help in four different types of child abuse. The respondents were asked to point to the most competent service to intervene in situations of frequent use of corporal punishment, forcing to sexual practices, physical neglect and verbal humiliation.

In three out of four these situations the distribution of responses was to some extent similar. Also, the change tendencies remained alike. Different opinions concerned cases of sexual abuse. This abuse is probably seen as most law violating as 80% of respondents pointed out to police and 40% to prosecutor's office as institutions bound to intervene. Also the family court has high percentage of teachers' indications (35%).

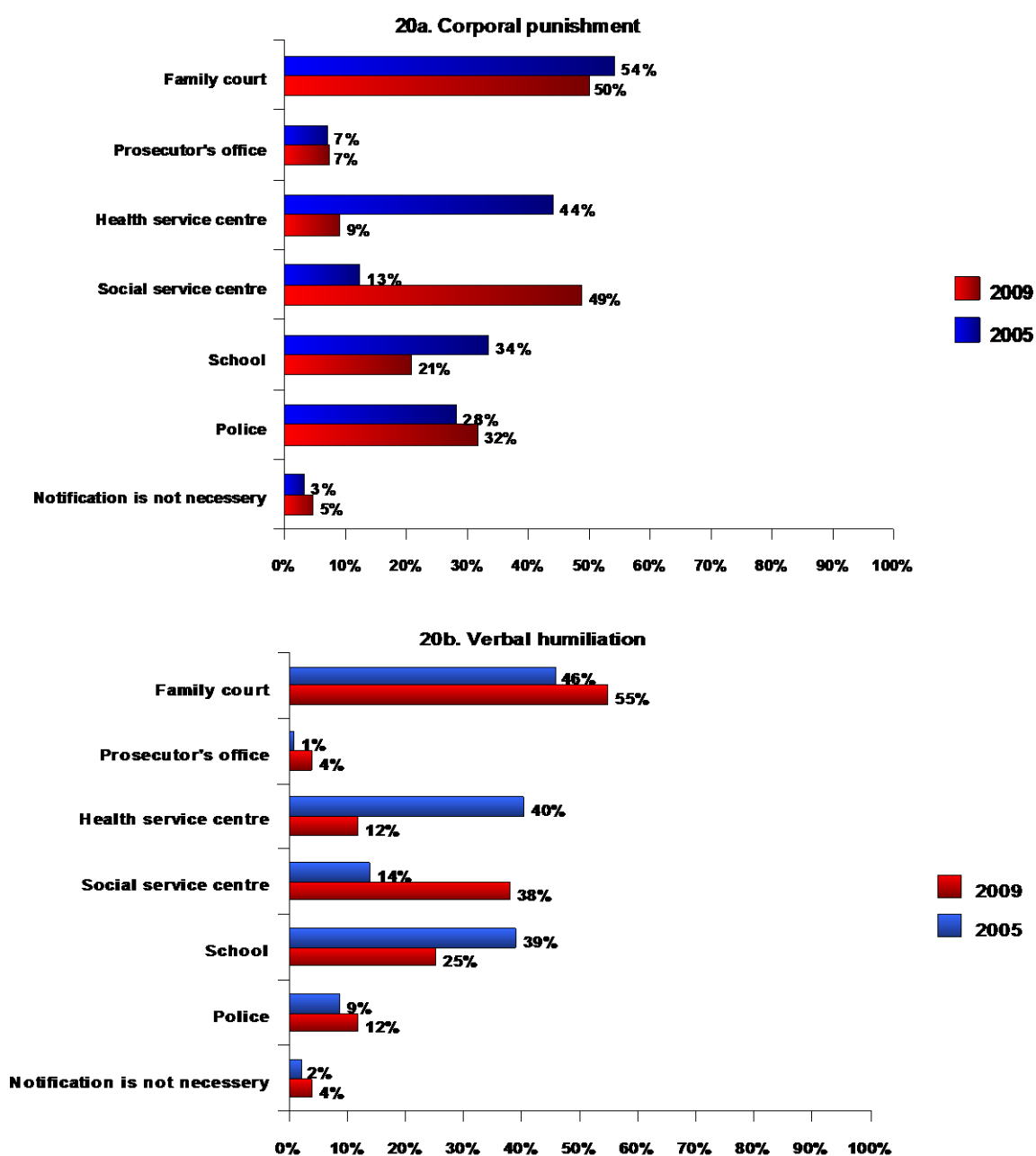
This specific institution seems to gather teachers' trust. In all other three cases it is the family court which is seen as most appropriate for intervention. Such opinion is held about half of respondents. Second most frequently mentioned institution was social service center (38-64%). Interesting change is to be noticed here. The results for social service centers have increased to the level of those for health service centers and inversely. It seems that social service institutions were during past 4 years credited with the

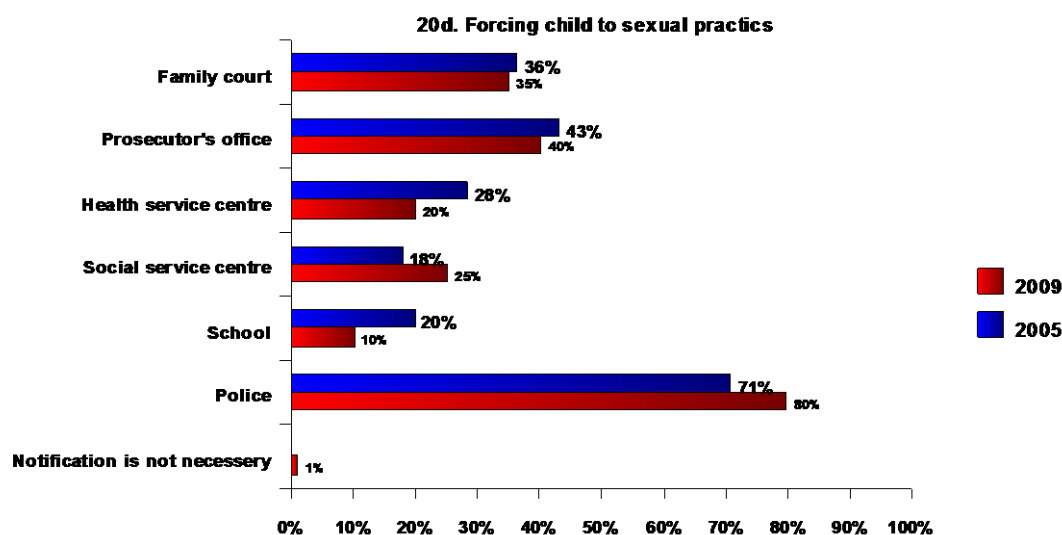
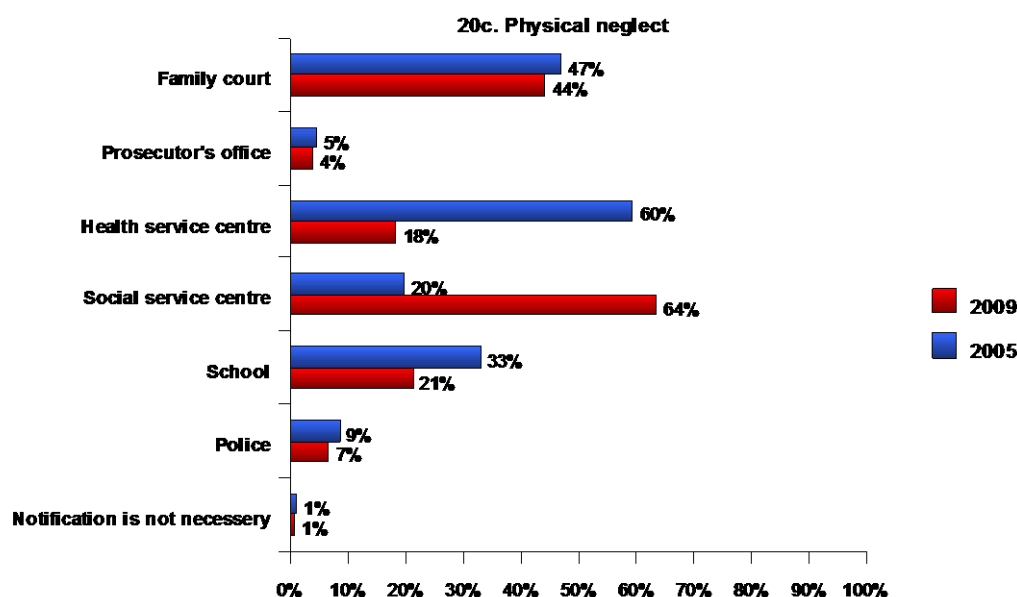
competence previously attributed to health centers.

Eventually the schools were also institutions seen as responsible for taking action by 10-25% of teachers. These proportions have decreased since 2005, which may mean that also teachers see themselves less competent to act.

What is optimistic, very minor percentage expressed the opinion that these four abuses doses not need any intervention.

**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,**





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 fulfil their tasks. Thus, the teachers were requested to evaluate help services provided by each professional group for children who are maltreated in their families

The dominating proportion of respondents believe that the professional groups listed in the questionnaire try to help or actually provide help for children. School counsellors and psychologists were evaluated the most favourably; more than 90% of the subjects think they try to help or do help, despite their limited potential! Notably, in comparison to the 2005 survey, in 2009 opinion about teachers has not changed whereas

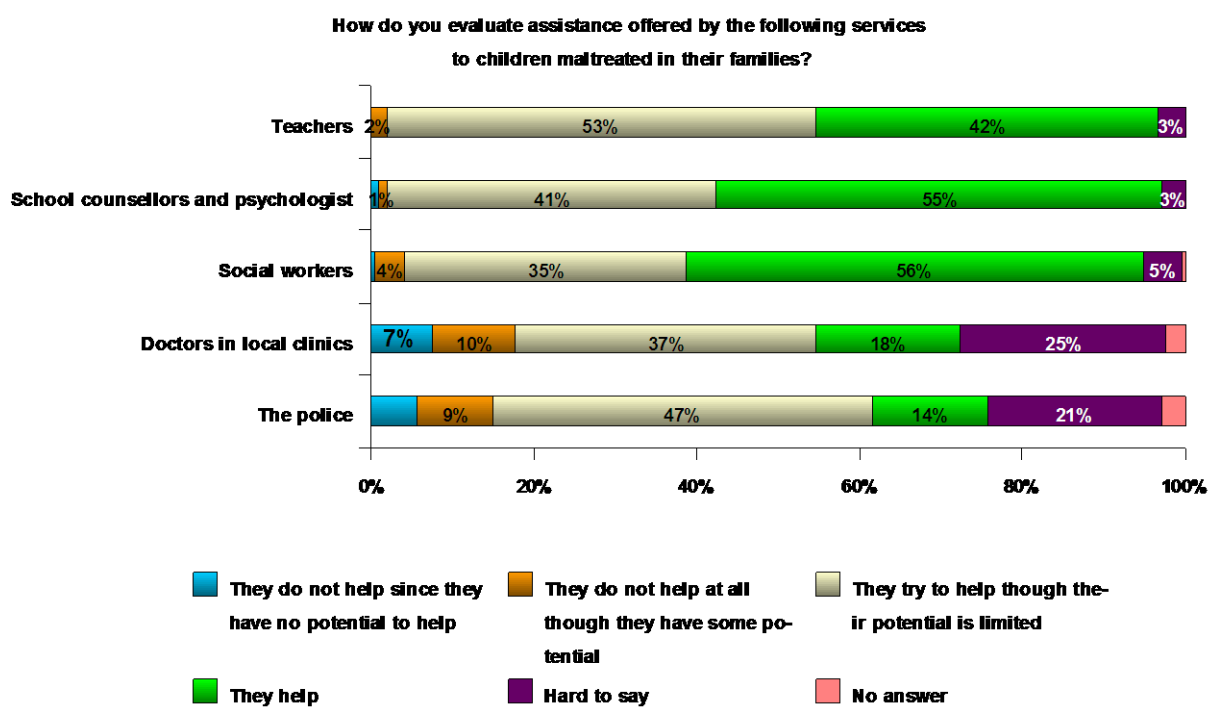


Figure 21: Evaluation of assistance of different professional groups

the respondents were more likely to say that school counsellors and psychologists actually help (from 42% in 2005 up to 55% in 2009). This is significant when we consider the fact that teachers have direct contact with these two professional groups. The largest and very interesting improvements concern opinions about social workers. In comparison to the 2005 findings proportion of those claiming that they do help increased from 20% to 56% in 2009, i.e. more than 150%. In the same time percentage of “hard to say” responses dropped from 23% to only 5%. These findings are very consistent with the changes in assessment of institutional competence (Figure 19) and lead to a conclusion that during the past 4 years the perception of social service in Moldova has significantly improved.

As in 2005 the two worst assessed groups were doctors and policemen. Their reputation has even worsen, as the proportion of those who think that they do not provide help increased from about 20% to nearly 30%. Notably, also the number of undecided in these questions has increased.

After assessing willingness and attitude of professionals working with children, respondents were asked to assess their knowledge in two fields: diagnosis of child abuse

and types of action that should be taken in case of it. Apparently the respondents have treated these two types of knowledge jointly because the distribution of responses for both questions were very similar.

Another important point is that there is a strong link between the opinions concerning willingness to help and knowledge about how to do it. Consequently, groups evaluated as most apt to help are also seen as most educated in that field. For about 50% of respondents teachers, school counselors and psychologists comprise the group which have sufficient knowledge concerning the problems of child abuse. Also in this subject the advancement of opinions about social workers, compared to 2005 studies, became visible.

Other groups, including police officers and physicians were judged to have “not enough knowledge”. Nonetheless less respondents than in 2005 claimed that these groups do not have knowledge at all. In 2009 only 7% hold such view. Eventually, quite significant proportion of teachers chose the answer “hard to say” or refused to answer.

How do you evaluate the knowledge of professionals related to ways of action in cases of child abuse?										
	They have enough knowledge		They have not enough knowledge		They do not have knowledge		Hard to say		No answer	
	2005	2009	2005	2009	2005	2009	2005	2009	2005	2009
Police	11%	17%	<b>52%</b>	<b>40%</b>	17%	7%	8%	18%	11%	18%
Doctors from local clinics	18%	20%	<b>45%</b>	<b>40%</b>	13%	7%	11%	17%	13%	16%
Doctors from hospitals	18%	25%	<b>35%</b>	<b>33%</b>	16%	7%	17%	18%	14%	17%
Social Workers	34%	<b>39%</b>	<b>40%</b>	32%	2%	2%	10%	13%	14%	15%
School counsellors and psychologist	<b>49%</b>	<b>49%</b>	33%	29%	5%	0%	14%	8%	14%	13%
Teachers	<b>44%</b>	<b>46%</b>	34%	34%	2%	0%	8%	6%	11%	14%

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

How do you evaluate the knowledge of professionals related to diagnosis of child abuse?										
	They have enough knowledge		They have not enough knowledge		They do not have knowledge		Hard to say		No answer	
	2005	2009	2005	2009	2005	2009	2005	2009	2005	2009
Police	15%	17%	<b>51%</b>	<b>43%</b>	17%	12%	13%	18%	5%	9%
Doctors from local clinics	22%	25%	<b>43%</b>	<b>42%</b>	16%	6%	10%	16%	9%	11%
Doctors from hospitals	18%	26%	<b>33%</b>	<b>33%</b>	20%	7%	20%	20%	8%	14%
Social workers	35%	<b>43%</b>	<b>42%</b>	27%	2%	2%	13%	15%	8%	13%
School counsellors and psychologists	<b>58%</b>	<b>54%</b>	35%	27%	0%	2%	2%	7%	5%	10%
Teachers	<b>50%</b>	<b>49%</b>	38%	33%	2%	0%	5%	6%	6%	11%

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

Bearing in mind that more than 20% of respondents could not evaluate police officers and physicians in the last question either (see Figure 21) we may speculate that about one fifth of the sample did not have any contact with interventions conducted by these services.

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. There were also high proportions of those who denied answers. Most remarkable exception concerns question of failure of police intervention. Possibly teachers have contact with such situations. Other problems reported by respondents are too mild sentences and lengthy investigation and court procedures. These were described as occurring “often” by about 40% 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.

Do you think that in process of intervention in child abuse cases the following problems occur in your country?										
	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	17%	19%	<b>42%</b>	<b>44%</b>	12%	9%	20%	20%	9%	8%
Withdrawal of the offence notification by the reporting person (despite the actual abuse)	22%	24%	30%	27%	2%	7%	<b>33%</b>	<b>30%</b>	13%	12%
Cases are discontinued by prosecutors (despite actual abuse experienced by the child)	23%	16%	20%	21%	7%	9%	<b>36%</b>	<b>40%</b>	13%	14%
Inappropriate conditions and procedures of interviewing children	25%	22%	19%	21%	7%	4%	<b>33%</b>	<b>40%</b>	17%	13%
Lack of possibility to isolate the offender from the victim	25%	<b>32%</b>	19%	20%	7%	7%	<b>33%</b>	29%	17%	12%
Lack of possibility to provide treatment for the offender	21%	19%	18%	17%	5%	8%	<b>38%</b>	<b>42%</b>	18%	15%
Too mild sentences	41%	53%	18%	13%	3%	2%	21%	20%	17%	11%
Failure to execute family courts' decisions	22%	31%	27%	18%	9%	3%	<b>28%</b>	<b>33%</b>	13%	15%
Lengthy investigations and court procedures	<b>39%</b>	<b>37%</b>	17%	16%	5%	3%	26%	33%	14%	11%

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

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

Questions concerning the policy toward victims and perpetrators of child abuse were an important component of the survey.

The most firm respondents' agreement concerned the statement that parent suspected of sexual abuse should be isolated from the family. Nearly 90% of teachers agree with that. Another widely supported claim was that many children suffer violence because of people's indifference. The subjects also agree that child protection institutions rarely cooperate. The most diverse opinions concerned the statement that a child should always be kept in the family no matter the circumstances. Although 47% of teachers disagree with that, relatively high proportion (31%) express the opposite view.

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	10%	12%	21%	19%	<b>42%</b>	<b>38%</b>	13%	9%	11%	15%	3%	7%
Parent suspected of sexual abuse should be isolated from the family until the case will be finished	<b>72%</b>	<b>70%</b>	19%	15%	2%	5%	3%	2%	3%	2%	1%	5%
Many children suffer violence in their families because other do not react	38%	33%	<b>42%</b>	<b>46%</b>	7%	5%	0%	3%	11%	7%	1%	6%
Child protection institutions rarely cooperate with each other	32%	23%	<b>44%</b>	<b>45%</b>	8%	7%	1%	1%	12%	18%	3%	6%

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

The last part of the questionnaire concerned suggested ways of dealing with perpetrators of child sexual abuse. A majority of 74% is supporting punishment in this case, about 40% deprivation of parental rights and 19% suggest therapy treatment. What is disturbing, in comparison to 2005 proportion of those in favor of the latter option dropped dramatically from 38%.

Such level of support for applying therapy remained unchanged in the case of physical abuse. In that case less teachers support deprivation of parental rights (20%) and punishment (60%). This figure has increased nearly twice in the last 4 years. In 2005 only 30% of respondents supported the idea that parent guilty of severe physical abuse should be punished.

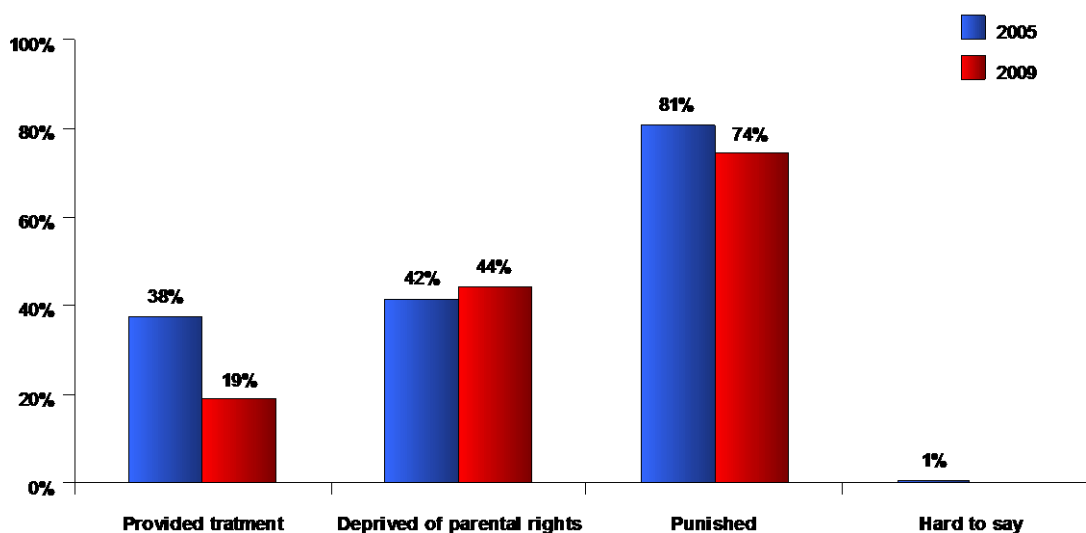


Figure 23: Supported ways of dealing with fathers guilty of sexual abuse against children

Respondents were also asked about their opinion on how to treat perpetrators of physical abuse. In 2005 the opinions varied but providing therapy 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.

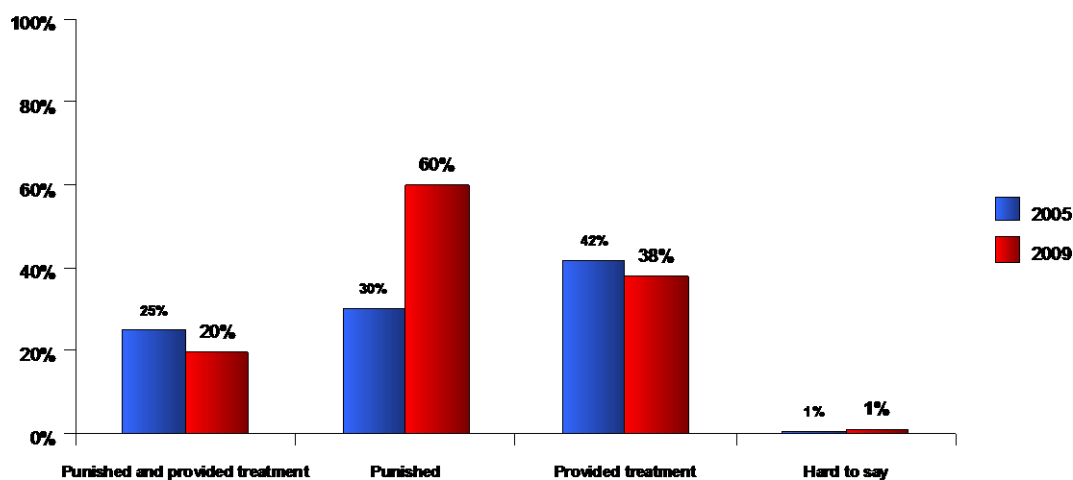


Figure 22: Supported ways of dealing with parents guilty of physical abuse against children



## **Conclusions**

- Majority of adult Moldovans are firmly against using corporal punishment toward children. This proportion is increasing. The majority thinks also that the problem of child abuse is not very prevalent.
- According to Moldovan teachers spanking, verbal humiliation and lack of interest are most frequent harms against children.
- More than 40% of teachers believe that child is parents' property, 50% believe that tough treatment strengthens a child. The latter belief became more popular during past 4 years.
- Most teachers believe that corporal punishment is humiliating for the child and treat it as parental failure.
- At the same time there are situations in which more than 60% of teachers would give child a hiding themselves.
- 77% of teachers intervene always or sometimes in the cases of child abuse. Their intervention is mostly limited to the conversation with child or parent.
- One fourth of teachers never intervene. This is mostly due to the lack of knowledge of what to do.
- About a half of teachers support legal regulations of children-parents relations and legal ban for corporal punishment.
- More than a half of teachers express the opinion that institutional help functions well. In most cases family court is seen as the most competent institution. Since 2005 the evaluation of social service centers and social workers has significantly increased.
- Teachers, school counselors and psychologists are seen as the most competent professional groups to deal with the child abuse.
- Moldovan teachers are not generally decided on what are the most frequent problems concerning dealing with child abuse
- Teachers see punishment as the best way to deal with parents-perpetrators of child abuse. Minority of them support therapy treatment and deprivation of parental rights.