

Moving Beyond
Punishment:

A Rights-Respecting
Approach
to Teaching
and Guiding Children

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A Historical Perspective on Punishment



I The Age of Violence

Discipline = Pain

People learn
through suffering.

Children most of all.



II The Age of Abolition



1948

Universal Declaration of Human Rights

1966

International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

“Cruel and degrading treatment and punishment”
become violations of international law.

Countries increasingly abolish . . .

Corporal punishment of wives

Judicial corporal punishment, including capital punishment

Corporal punishment in schools

As of today: 132/199 countries (66%)

Corporal punishment in homes

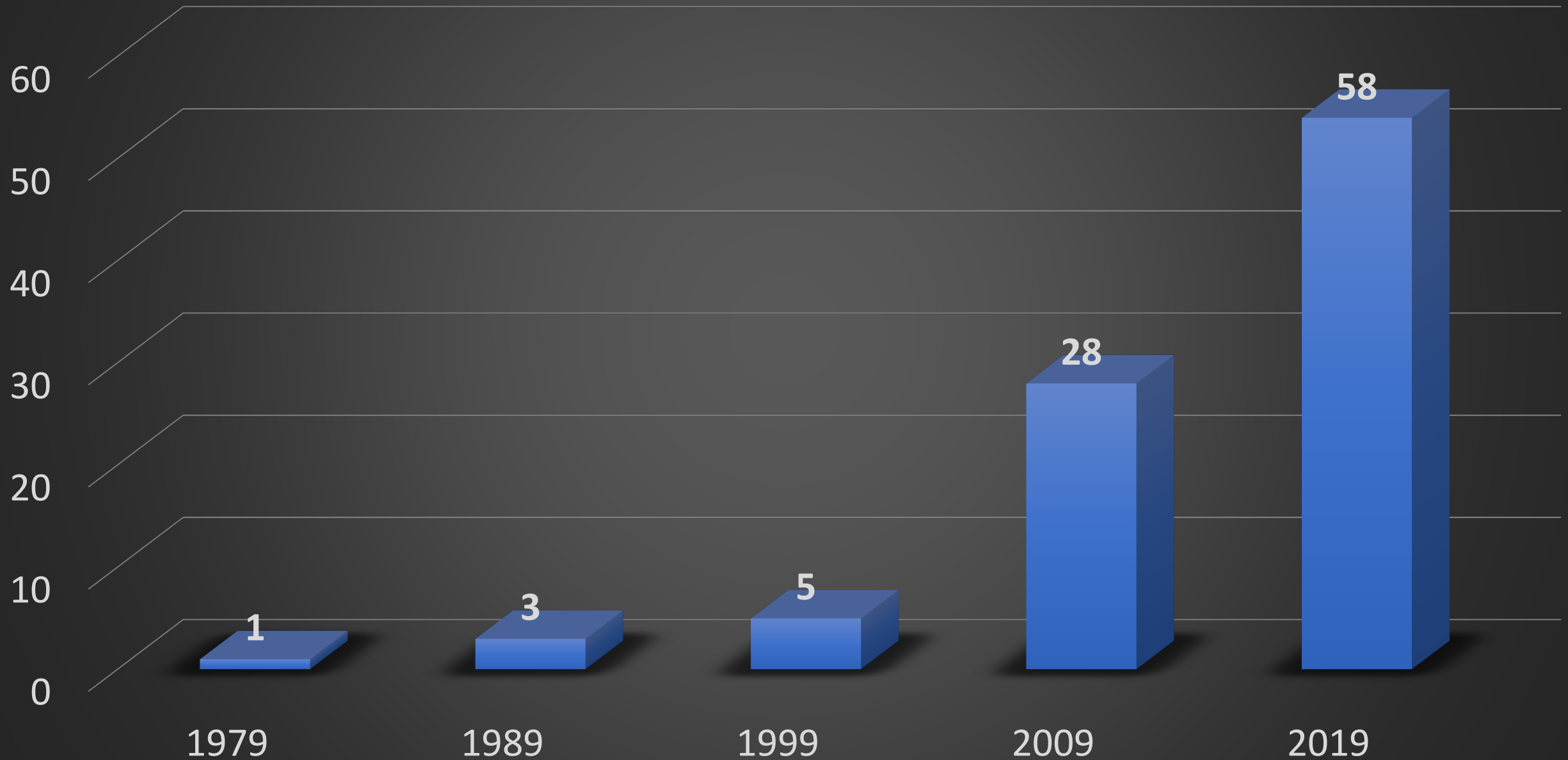
As of today: 58/199 countries (29%)

Sweden, 1979

Children are entitled to care, security
and a good upbringing.
Children are to be treated with respect
for their person and individuality
and may not be subjected to
physical punishment or other
injurious or humiliating
treatment.

- *Parenthood and Guardianship Code,
1979*

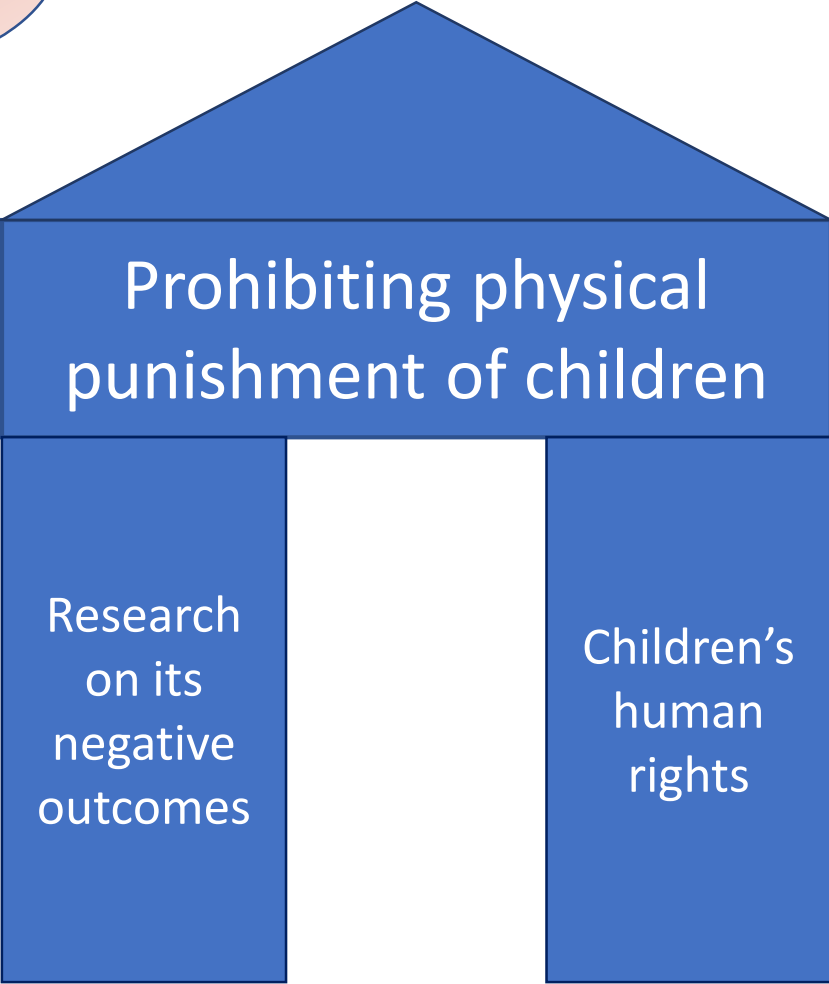
Cumulative Number of Countries with Bans



Sweden
Finland
Norway
Austria
Cyprus
Denmark
Latvia
Croatia
Bulgaria
Israel
Germany
Iceland
Ukraine
Romania
Hungary
Greece
Netherlands
New Zealand
Portugal

Uruguay
Venezuela
Spain
Costa Rica
Moldova
Luxembourg
Liechtenstein
Poland
Albania
Tunisia
Kenya
Togo
Congo
South Sudan
Turkmenistan
Macedonia
Honduras
Malta
Brazil

Bolivia
Cabo Verde
Argentina
San Marino
Nicaragua
Estonia
Benin
Ireland
Peru
Andorra
Mongolia
Paraguay
Slovenia
Lithuania
Montenegro
Nepal
Kosovo
France
South Africa
Georgia



aggression

externalizing problems

physical injury

negative relationships with parents

slower cognitive development

weaker moral internalization

internalizing problems

protection

security

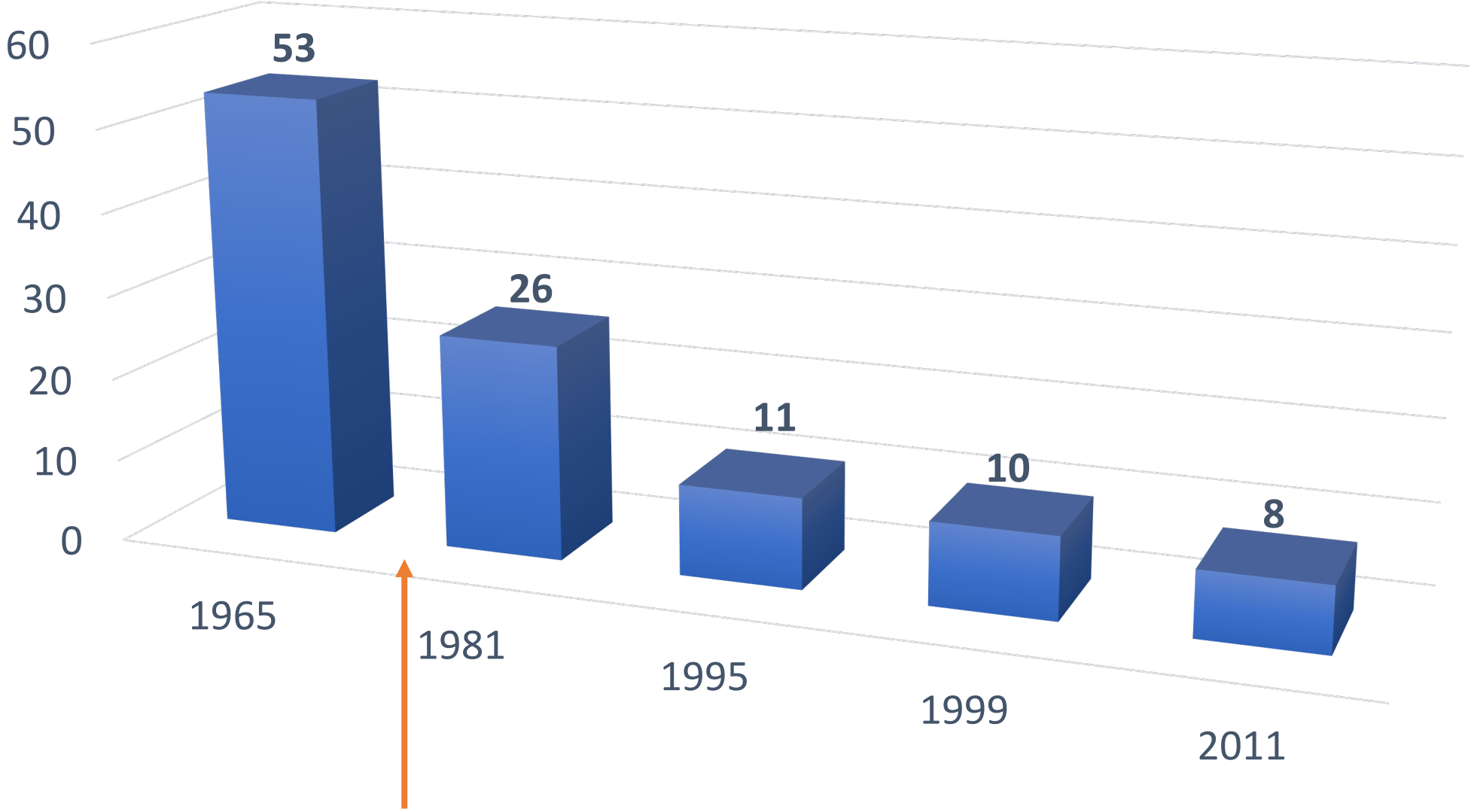
dignity



What has happened in Sweden?

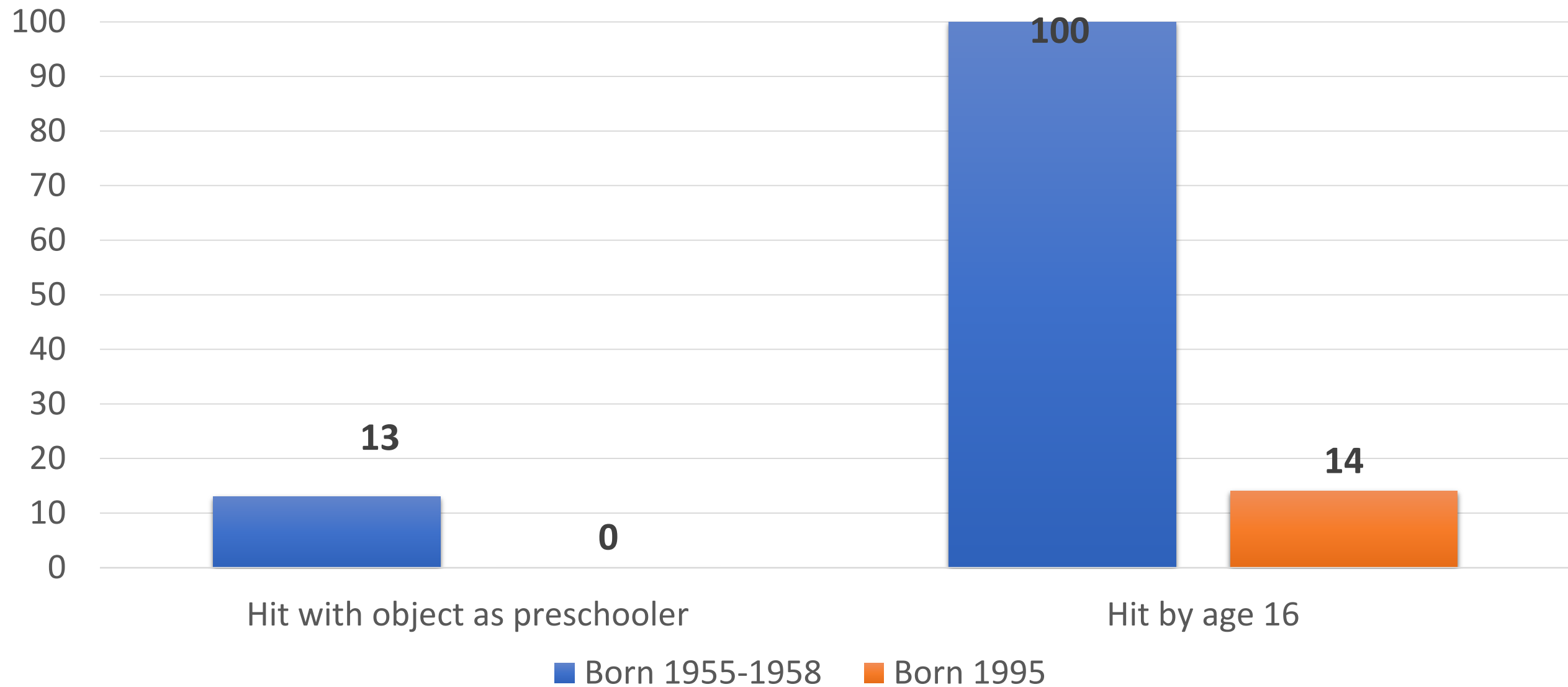
Prohibition: 1979

Percentage of Adults Approving of Physical Punishment



Swedish Opinion Research Surveys (1981); Statistics Sweden (1996); Janson et al. (2011)

Percentage of Children Physically Punished

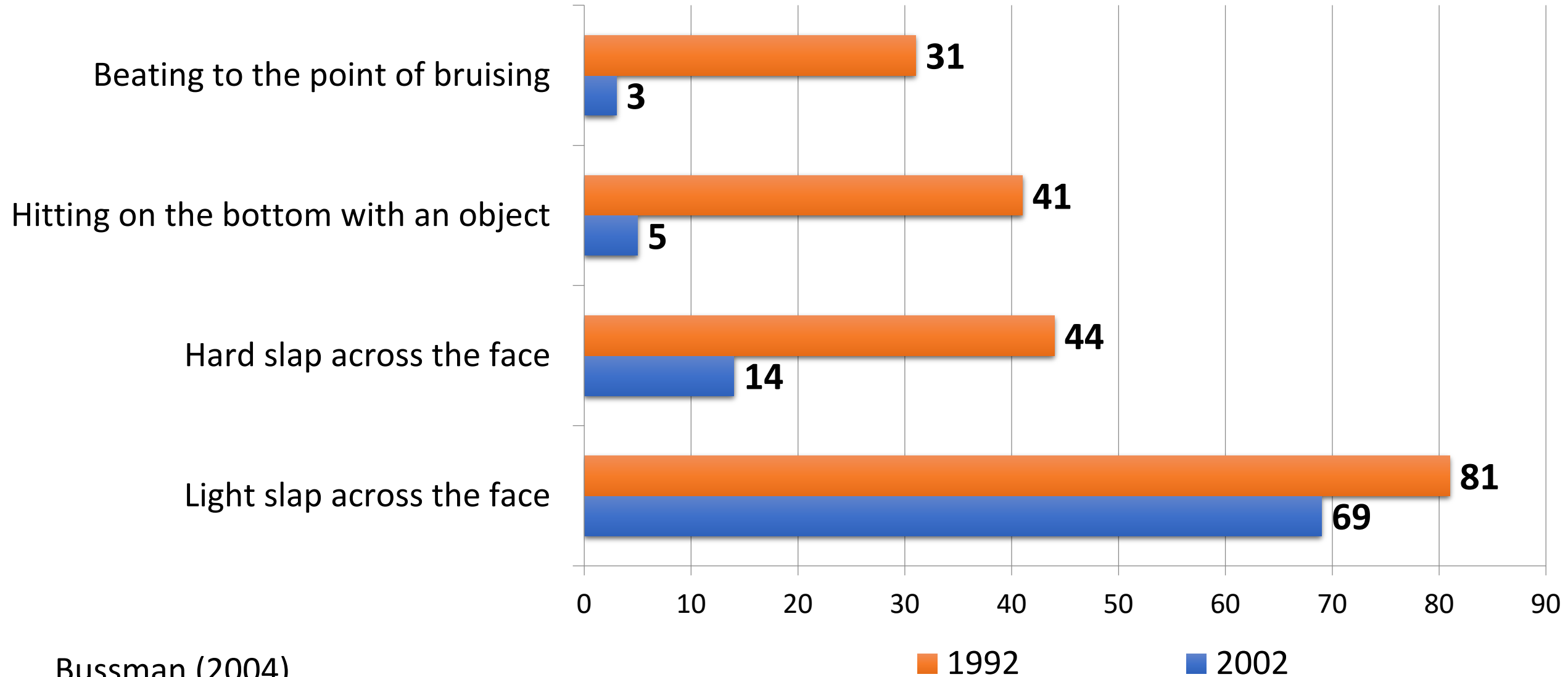




**What has happened in
Germany?**

Prohibition: 2000

Percentage of youth reporting that they had ever experienced . . .

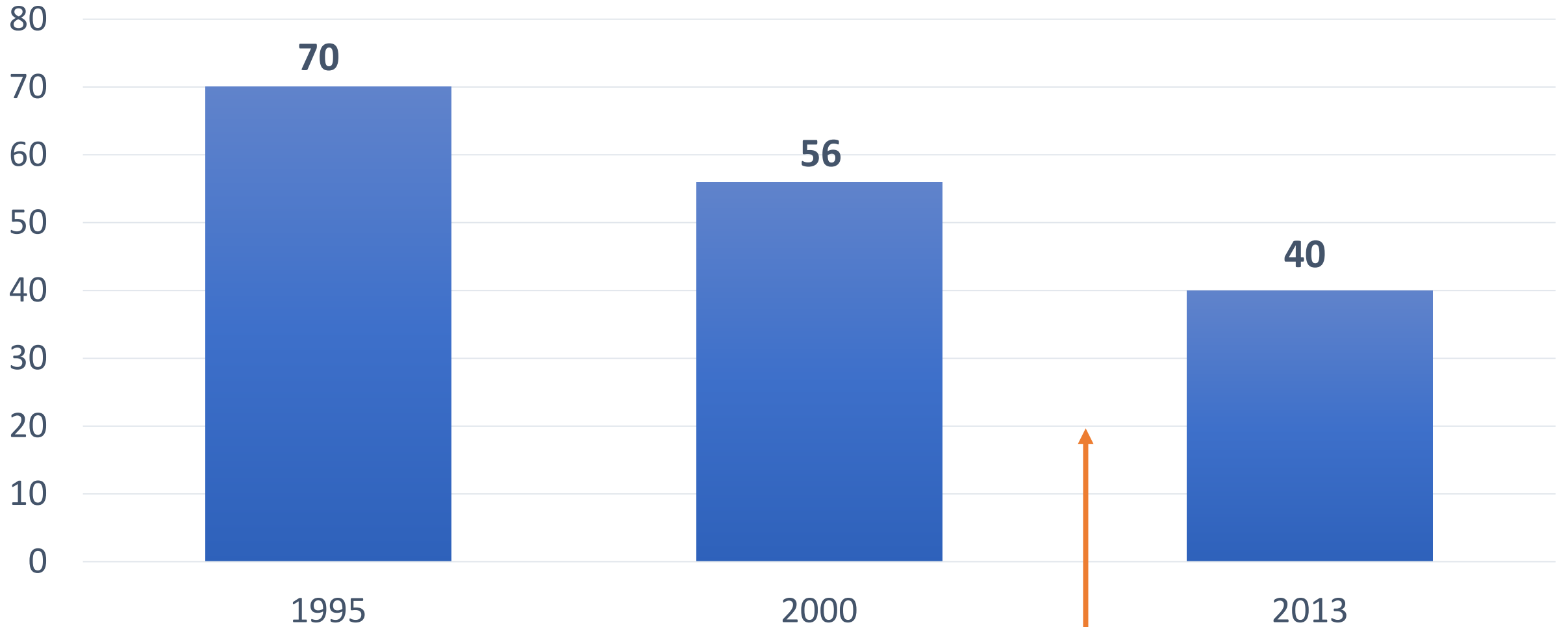




**What has happened
in New Zealand?**

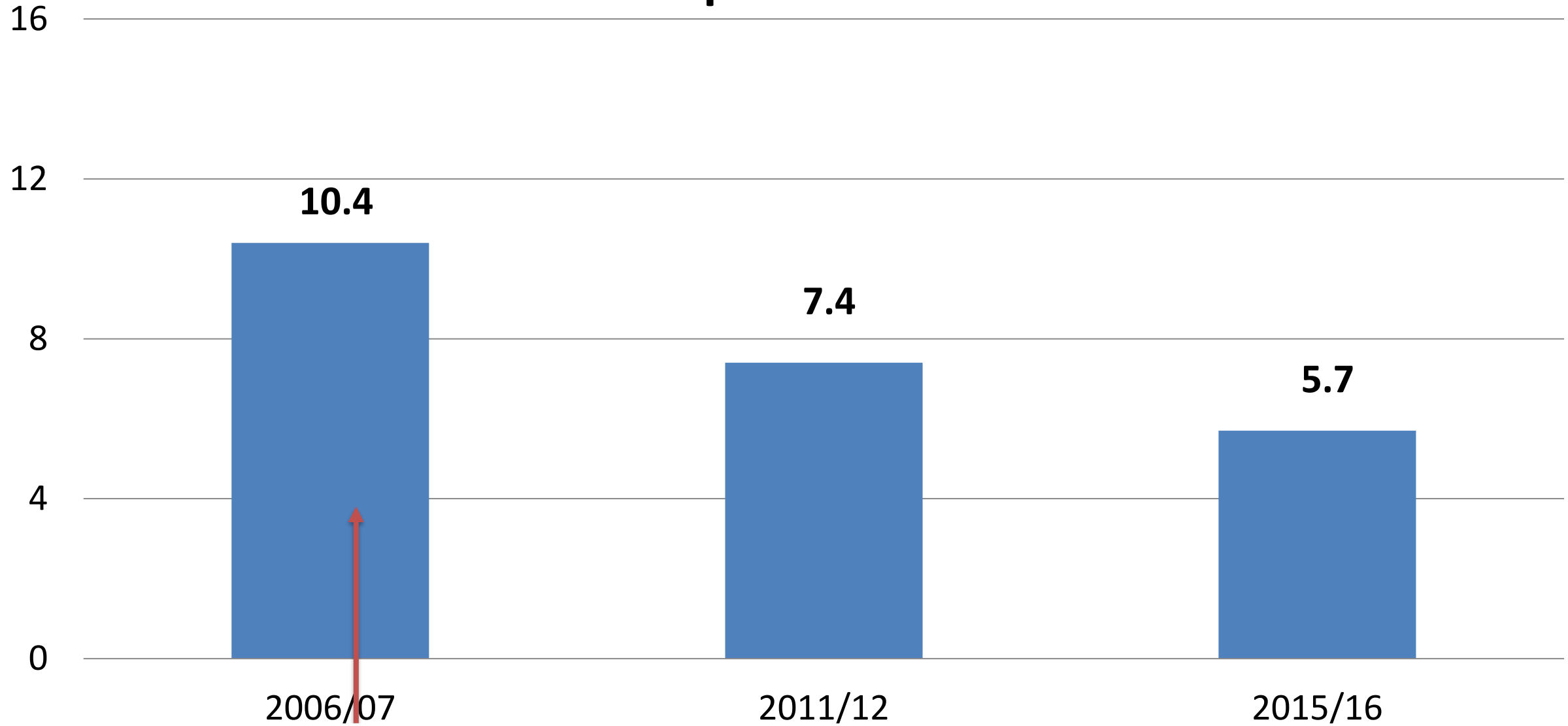
Prohibition: 2007

Percentage of adults who believe there are certain circumstances when it is alright for a parent to use physical punishment



D'Souza et al. (2016)

Percentage of parents who physically punished their children in the previous four weeks





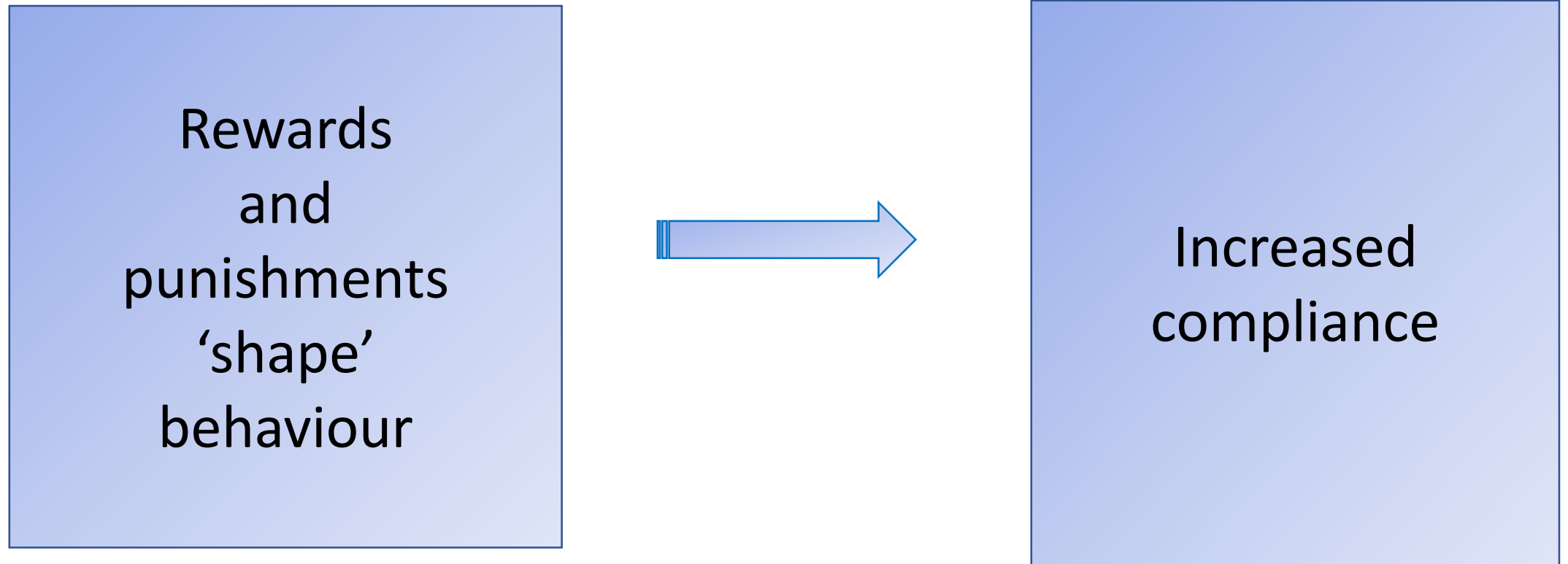
III The Age of Behaviourism

Discipline = Training

Children learn through
externally imposed
consequences.

Behaviourism

Focus on behaviour – what can be observed, not what lies behind it.



In schools and homes,
physical punishments are replaced by
emotional punishments.

Exclusion

Isolation

Taking away
things of value





Isolation rooms
begin to replace
the strap in
schools

“The ‘isolation room’,
if it is to be effective,
should be an unpleasant place,
providing an atmosphere
that is far less enjoyable
than that of the study room.
A small, poorly lighted closet
with a single chair will serve quite well.”
- Bereiter & Engelmann, 1966

Time out chairs
begin to precede
spankings in
homes

The Hanf Procedure

If the child does not obey a command after 5 seconds:

1. Warning

“If you don’t obey, you’ll go to time out.”

2. Time out

Make the child sit on a time-out chair.

3. Command again

If child complies → “That’s it.”

If child does not comply → strike child on bare buttocks



Other
behaviourist
methods

Active ignoring

Group punishments

Overcorrection

Shaping to
the adult's will



IV The Age of Constructivism

Lev Vygotsky



Jean Piaget



While behaviourism predominated in North America, other perspectives were influential in Europe.



Constructivism

Focus is on what goes on inside the child's mind.

Child's behaviour is an indicator of their understanding.

Children are active observers and processors of information.

Children learn through experiencing – touching, tasting, dropping, throwing, tearing, splashing.

Behaviourists

- Focus on external behaviour
- Define behaviour as appropriate or inappropriate; compliant or non-compliant
- Shape behaviour through rewards and punishments

Constructivists

- Focus on internal mental processes
- Understand behaviour as reflecting the child's innate drive to construct knowledge, gain understanding
- Provide a safe space for exploration and experimentation

What does this mean for “discipline”?

Example: Child dropping food

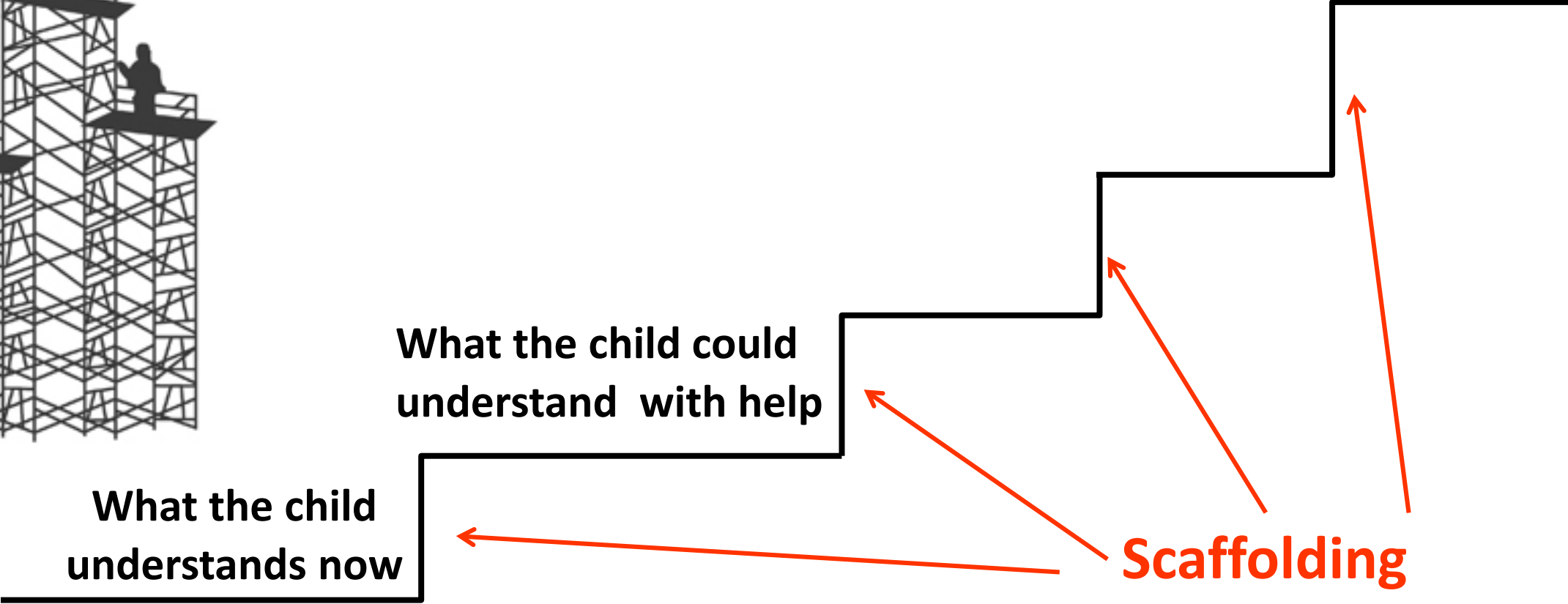
Behaviourist Approach

- Behaviour is inappropriate
- Goal: stop behaviour
- Punish the child every time she drops food (slap hand, send to time-out chair, take away toy)
- Reward the child when she doesn't drop food (praise her, give stickers or treats)

Constructivist Approach

- Behaviour reflects innate drive for understanding
- Goal: facilitate child's understanding
- Provide objects that she can drop safely to observe their properties
- Engage with child in safe experimentation (balloon, paper, fork)
- Engage with child to observe rain, snow, airplanes

Scaffolding



What the child understands now

What the child could understand with help

Scaffolding

Facilitating the
unfolding of knowledge

Child

- From object to agent

Adult

- From punisher to mentor



V The Age of Neuroscience



Brain Architecture

Children's experiences affect their brain development.

Through scaffolding, connections are gradually built between the "emotional brain" and the "thinking brain".

These connections can strengthen or impair their emotion regulation and problem solving.

Threat, pain, fear

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graph TD; A[Threat, pain, fear] --> B[Activate stress response system]; B --> C[Brain and body 'downshift' to self-protective mode];
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Activate stress response system

Brain and body 'downshift' to self-protective mode

This happens whether the stress
comes from physical pain
or relational pain.

Ignoring and isolating a child
has the same disruptive effect
on the brain as physical pain.

What does this mean for “discipline”?

Example: Child having an emotional outburst

Behaviourism

- Adult punishes (hits, isolates, removes something of value to the child)
- Child cries, reaches out to parent
- Adult punishes for “defiance.”
- Child learns to not express emotions.
- Opportunity to teach emotion regulation is lost.

Neuroscience

- Adult comforts, connects, reflects with child to help him understand his emotions.
- Adult talks with child to build connections between his emotional and thinking brains.
- Adult helps child understand, regulate and express emotions.

Discipline is
embedded in

relationships

creative problem solving

emotional connection

modelling self-regulation



VI The Age of Children's Rights



Children as:

- fully human
- unique individuals
- having valid perspectives
- active contributors to solutions

The Right to Provision

education

a respectful
learning
environment

The Right to Protection

from
violence

of dignity

The Right to Participation

inclusion

a voice

What does this mean for “discipline”?

Five Principles of Rights- Respecting Discipline

(Durrant & Stewart-
Tufescu, 2017)

1. It is physically and emotionally non-violent (Articles 19, 37).

2. It respects the child's evolving capacities (Articles 5 & 14).

3. It respects the child's individuality (Article 29).

4. It fosters the child's participation (Articles 12, 13, 14).

5. It respects the child's dignity (Article 28).

A transformation
to non-violent parenting
requires more than
replacing physical punishment
with emotional punishment.

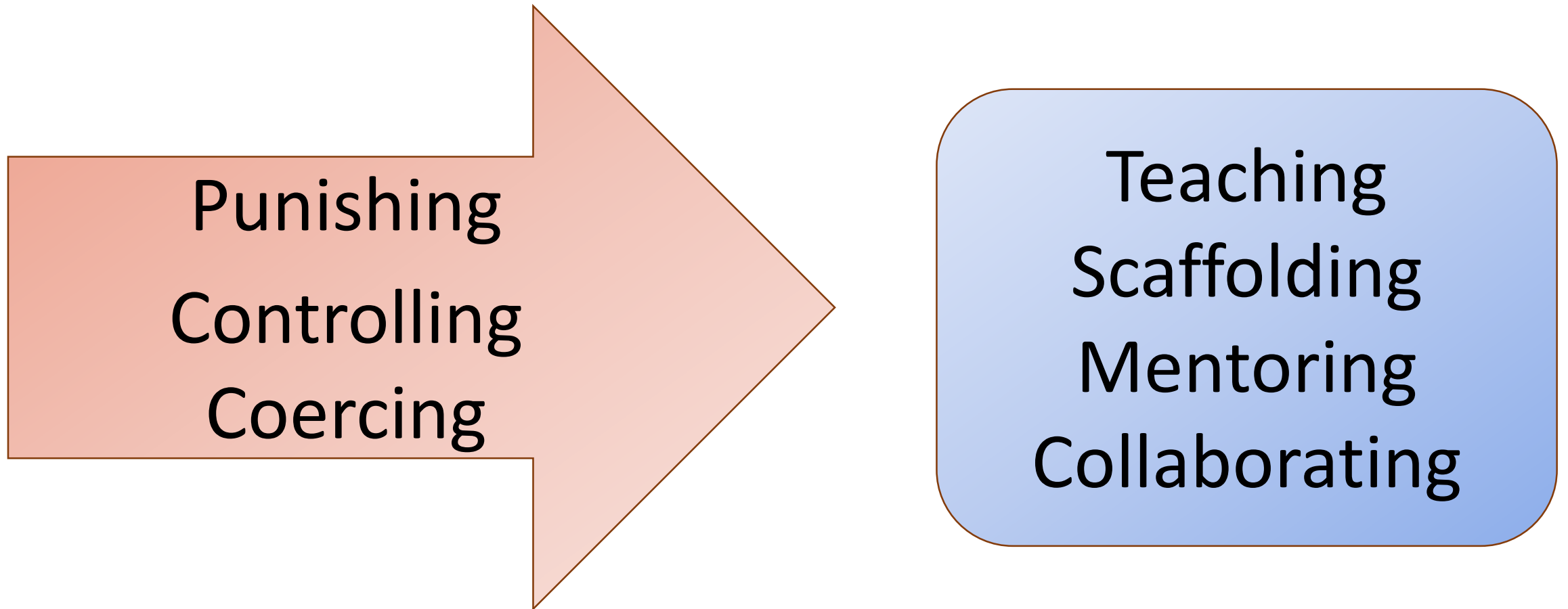
POSITIVE DISCIPLINE *IN EVERYDAY PARENTING*



Durrant, 2007, 2016

Objective of PDEP

Parental Role Transformation



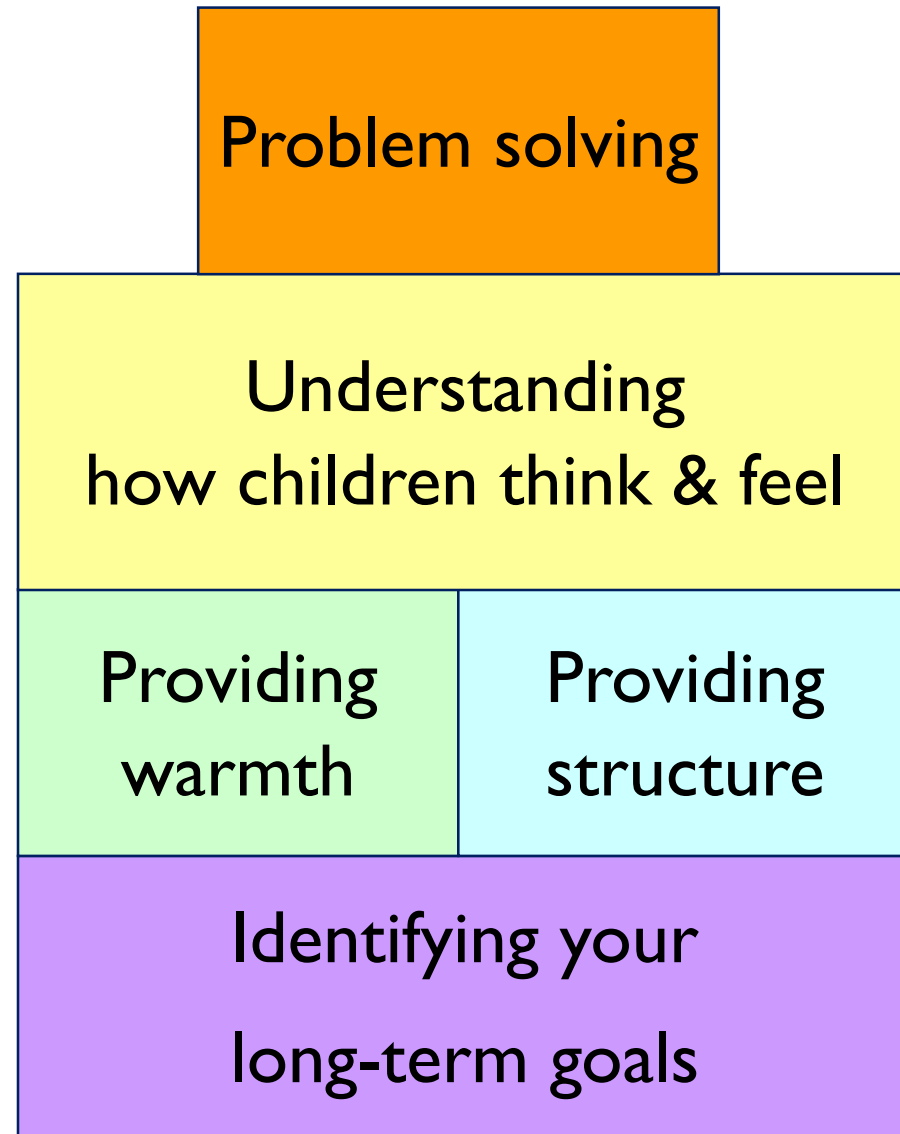


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By increasing parents'

- knowledge of development
- knowledge of child rights
- respect for children's perspectives
- insight into how their actions affect the relationship
- problem-solving skills

The PDEP Model



Prohibition
| or Public
Education?

A Multi-country
Study

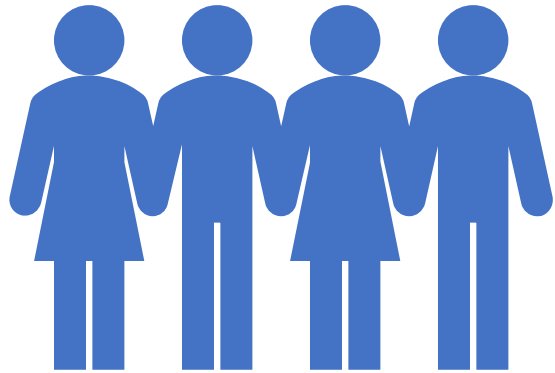
Bussman Erthal,
& Schroth, 2011

At the
time of the
study
(2007)

	SWEDEN	GERMANY	AUSTRIA	SPAIN	FRANCE
Legal prohibition?	yes	yes	yes	no	no
Public education?	yes	yes	no	yes	no

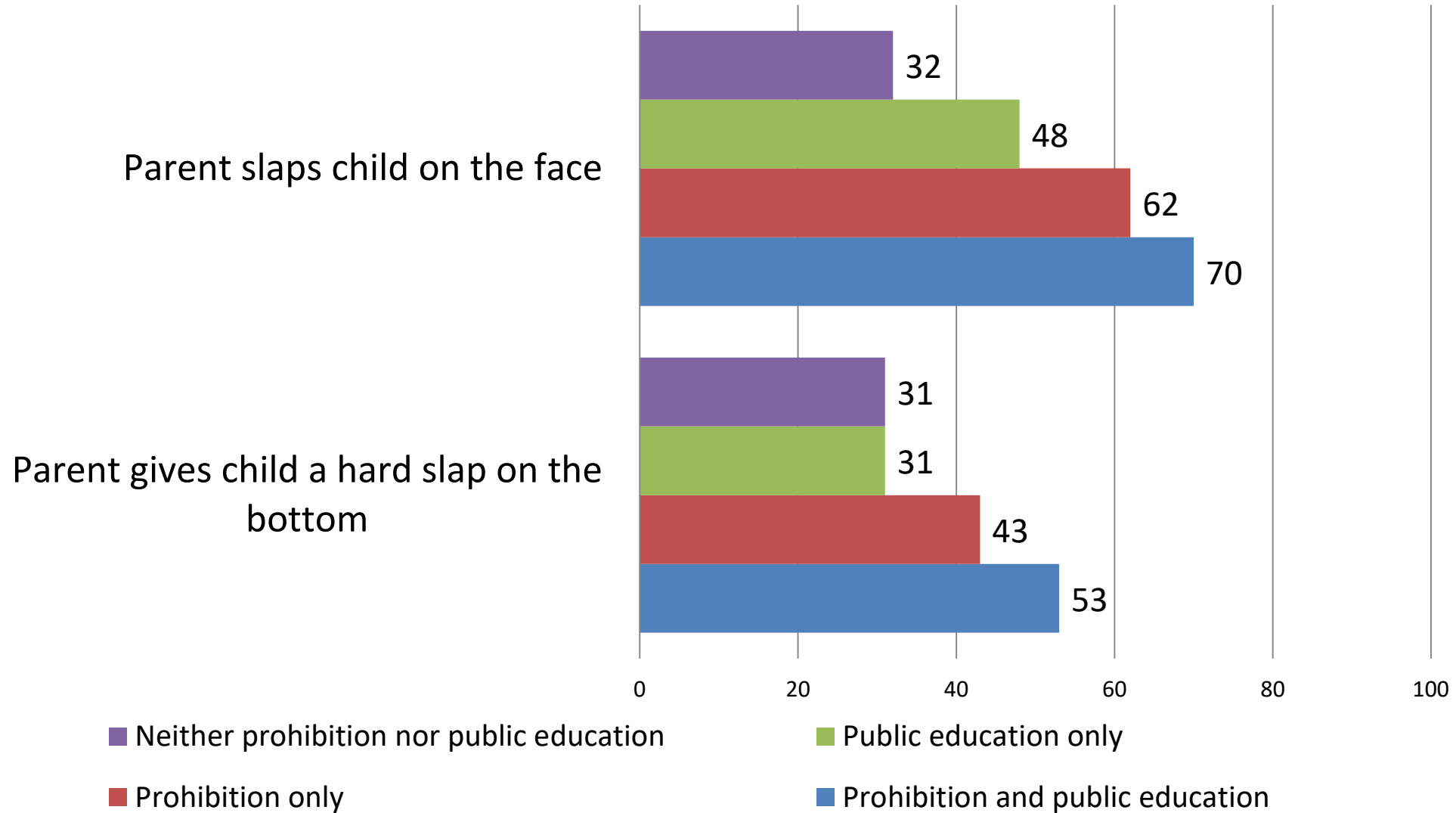
Method

Random sample of 1,000 parents in each country

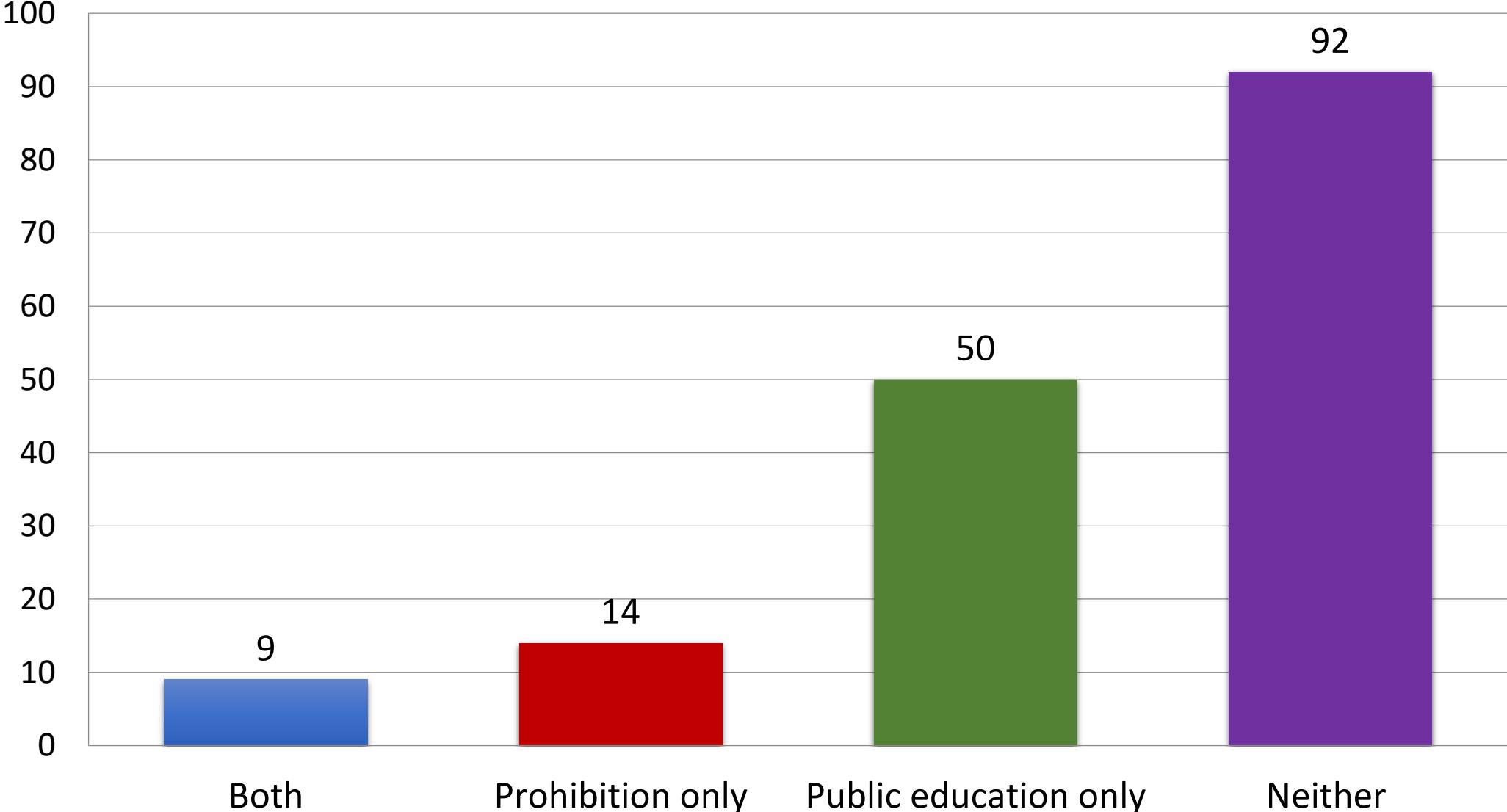


Standardized questionnaire administered through face-to-face interviews

Percentage of Parents Defining Acts as Violence



Percentage of Parents Who Reported Using Physical Punishment



To change attitudes and behavior

