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Public attitudes to physical punishment of children: Wave 2 survey, 2019

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Public attitudes to physical punishment of children: Wave 2 survey, 2019

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Views expressed in this report are those of the researcher and not necessarily those of the Welsh Government

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background and objectives

1.1 The Children (Abolition of Defence of Reasonable Punishment) (Wales) Bill was introduced to the National Assembly for Wales on 25 March 2019. On the 20 March 2020 the Bill received Royal Assent and became the Children (Abolition of Defence of Reasonable Punishment) (Wales) Act 2020. The new law will come into force on 21 March 2022.

1.2 The overarching objective of the legislation is to help protect children's rights by prohibiting the use of physical punishment against children, through the removal of the defence of reasonable punishment. This would mean that the defence is no longer available within the territory of Wales to parents or those acting in loco parentis (acting with parental responsibility), as a defence to a charge of common assault and battery on a child in their care.

1.3 The Welsh Government intends to run a campaign, to raise awareness of the change in the law, both before and after it comes into force.

1.4 The objective of this research was to build on baseline research conducted in 2018 on public attitudes towards physical punishment of children including the proposed legislation. The fieldwork for this survey was carried out in November 2019 whilst the Bill was at stage 3 of the Bill scrutiny process, four months before the Bill received Royal Assent. The Bill process had started with introduction of the Bill on 25 March, followed by Stage 1 scrutiny through to the General Principles debate on 17 September and Stage 2 proceedings on 24 October. The Welsh Government intends to repeat these questions at regular intervals to track public awareness and opinion as the public awareness campaign progresses over a number of years.

1.2 About this report

1.5 The findings outlined in this report are based on research conducted on the November 2019 Beaufort Wales Omnibus survey which interviewed a representative quota sample of 1,002 adults aged 16+ across Wales in their own home. This includes both parents/guardians and non-parents/guardians. Findings from this survey are frequently compared in this report to an identical set of questions conducted on the November 2018 Beaufort Wales Omnibus survey. Each Wales Omnibus survey is conducted with separate samples of Welsh adults 16+ which are matched in terms of demographics such as age, gender, region and social grade. This work forms part of a suite of parenting research undertaken by the Welsh Government since 2013. A table of reports can be found at Annex A.

1.6 The questionnaire for this survey comprised a series of questions about attitudes towards smacking, awareness of legislation around physical punishment of children and awareness and opinion of proposed changes to legislation. Demographic questions were also included as standard in the Wales Omnibus survey. The questionnaire was available in English or Welsh at the participant's choice and can be found in Annex B of this document.

1.3 Statistical testing

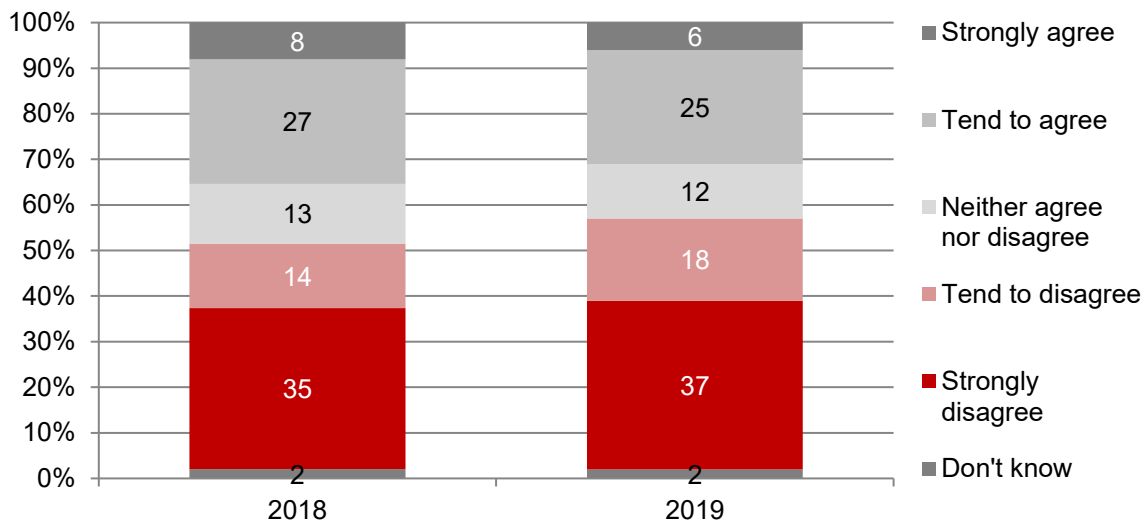
1.7 Throughout this report comparisons are made between different groups of the population (for example, those of different age groups or gender) to understand if they have varying attitudes, behaviours or knowledge. There are also comparisons between the 2019 and 2018 survey noted above to explore if there have been changes over time. The report uses statistical testing to compare results between groups of the population and also to compare results over time. When a difference between two groups or two time periods is described as 'significant' in this report, this means that the probability of obtaining the finding by chance is less than one in 20 and therefore it can be generalised to the wider population.

1.8 More information on the survey methodology is included in Annex C.

2. Attitudes towards smacking

2.1 All respondents were asked the degree to which they agreed or disagreed that *it is sometimes necessary to smack a child*. Opinion, to a certain extent, was split on this, although more disagreed with this statement (55%) than agreed with it (31%). The difference between the proportions disagreeing and agreeing with the statement is greater than existed at the 2018 survey (49% disagreed, 35% agreed). This difference over time was confirmed by statistical testing and therefore the finding can be generalised to the wider population.

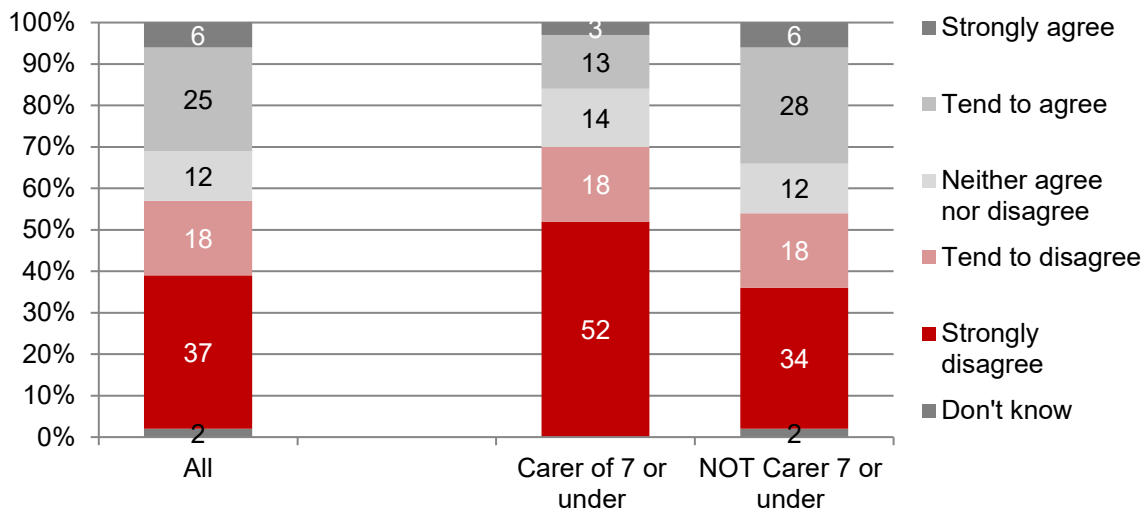
Figure 2.1: Percentage in agreement that 'it is sometimes necessary to smack a child' (All – 2018 vs. 2019)



Base: All – 2018 (1,002), 2019 (1,002)

2.2 Those who have caring responsibilities for children aged seven or under, namely parents, guardians or other family members who provide regular care, were more likely to disagree that *it is sometimes necessary to smack a child* – 70% compared with 53% among those who do not have caring responsibilities for those aged seven and under (figure 2.2). This difference is confirmed by statistical testing and therefore the finding can be generalised to the wider population.

Figure 2.2: Percentage in agreement that ‘it is sometimes necessary to smack a child’ (All and whether regular carer of child aged seven or under)

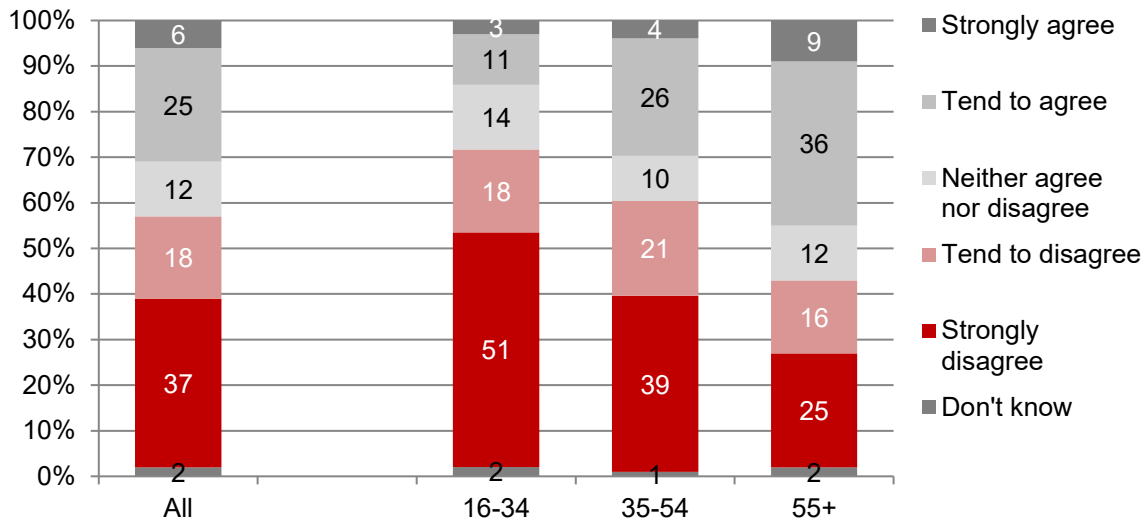


Base: All (1,002), Regular carer of 7 or under (179), Not a regular carer of 7 or under (823)

2.3 Whilst the above difference between those with or without caring responsibilities for under sevens was also found in the 2018 survey, both groups report a change in opinion since the previous survey. A total of 70% of those with caring responsibilities for children aged seven or under disagreed with the statement in 2019 compared with 59% in 2018. For those without these responsibilities, 53% now disagreed compared with 46% in 2018. Both of these differences over time were confirmed by statistical testing and therefore the finding can be generalised to the wider population.

2.4 As shown in figure 2.3, when we examine this by age of respondent, we find that those in the older age group (55+) were more likely to agree that *it is sometimes necessary to smack a child* – at 45% this was three times the number of 16-34s who held this view (15%). The differences reported by age were confirmed by statistical testing and therefore the finding can be generalised to the wider population. A difference by age group was also found in 2018, but this appears to have widened as outlined in paragraph 2.5.

Figure 2.3: Percentage in agreement that ‘it is sometimes necessary to smack a child’ (All and by age group)



Base: All (1,002), 16-34 (308), 35-54 (280), 55+ (414)

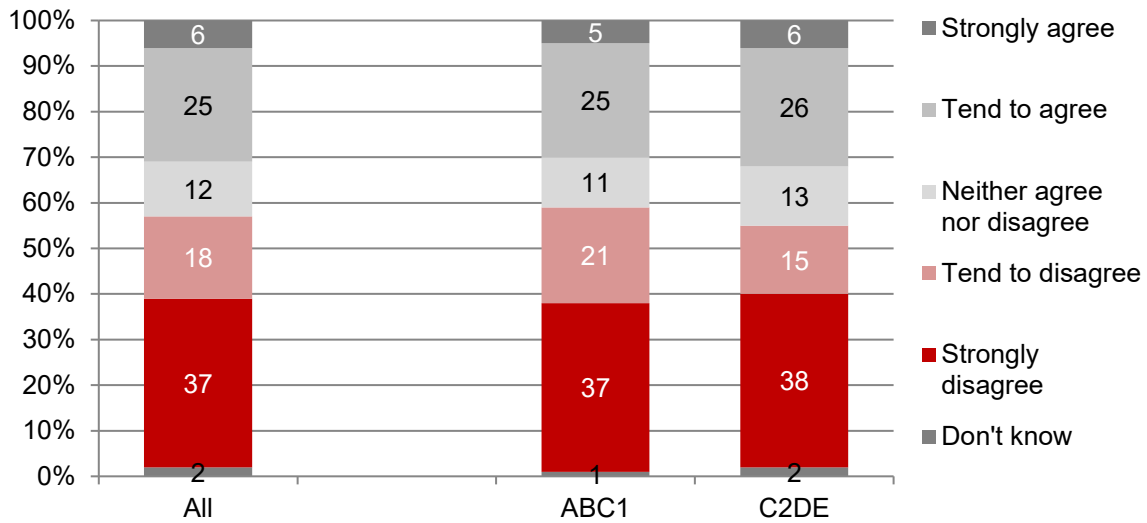
2.5 Whilst opinion among those in the 35-54 and 55+ age group has changed little since 2018, the younger age group (16-34s) are now even less likely to agree (and more likely to disagree) that *it is sometimes necessary to smack a child* – only 15% agree with this in 2019 compared with 24% in 2018. The difference found in this age group’s opinion over time is confirmed by statistical testing and therefore can be generalised to the wider population.

2.6 Figure 2.4 shows findings for the same measure by social grade¹. Opinion of those in social grades ABC1² was similar to those in social grades C2DE. This is in contrast to 2018 when the survey found that ABC1s were less likely to agree that *it’s sometimes necessary to smack a child*.

¹ Social grade is a classification system based on the occupation of the chief income earner in the household.

² Definitions of social grades A,B,C1,C2,D,E can be found in Annex E

Figure 2.4: Percentage in agreement that ‘it is sometimes necessary to smack a child’ (All and by social grade)



Base: All (1,002), ABC1 (516), C2DE (486)

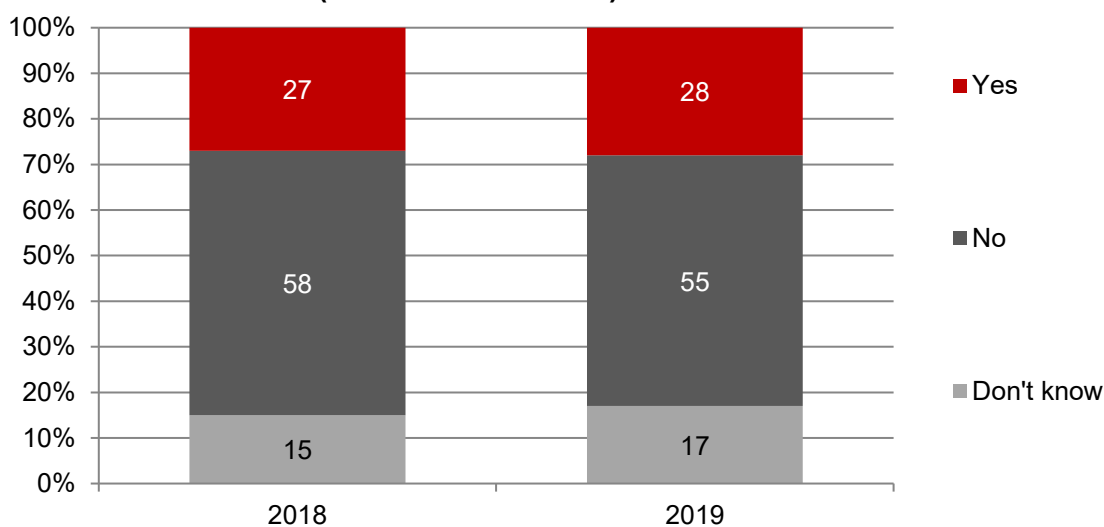
2.7 The coming together of views among ABC1s and C2DEs found in the 2019 survey reflects a change of opinion among C2DEs. In 2018, 39% agreed ‘it’s sometimes necessary to smack a child’ compared with 32% in 2019. This difference over time is confirmed by statistical testing and therefore can be generalised to the wider population.

3. Knowledge of current legislation

3.1 The current legal situation regarding smacking or other physical punishment of children in Wales, is that parents and adults acting in loco parentis (acting with parental responsibility) are able to rely on the defence of reasonable punishment against a charge of common assault. Parents who physically punish their children cannot use the reasonable punishment defence for charges of cruelty, wounding or assaults occasioning actual or grievous bodily harm. The Crown Prosecution Service guidance clarifies that “although any injury that is more than 'transient or trifling' can be classified as actual bodily harm, the appropriate charge will be one of Common Assault where no injury or injuries which are not serious occur”.

3.2 Just over half (55%) of people surveyed thought that the law did not allow parents to smack their children. Approaching 3 in 10 (28%) thought the law did allow parents to smack and the remaining 17% reported being unsure. These proportions are similar to those found in the 2018 survey.

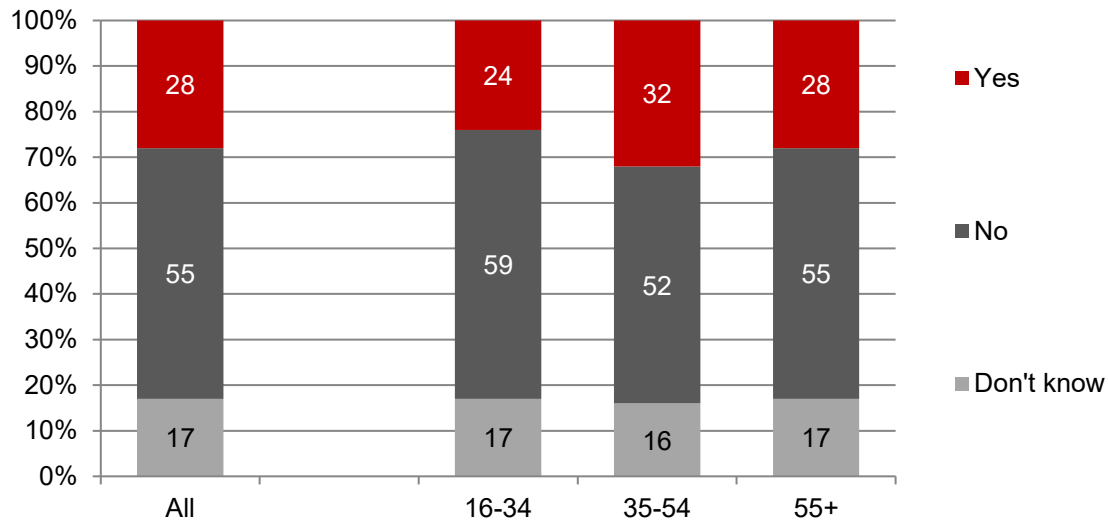
Figure 3.1: Percentage who believe that the law currently allows parents to smack their children (All – 2018 vs. 2019)



Base: All – 2018 (1,002), 2019 (1,002)

3.3 Those aged 35-54 were most likely to believe that smacking was allowed (32%), although were still in the minority. However, any differences by age were not confirmed by statistical testing and therefore cannot be generalised to the wider population.

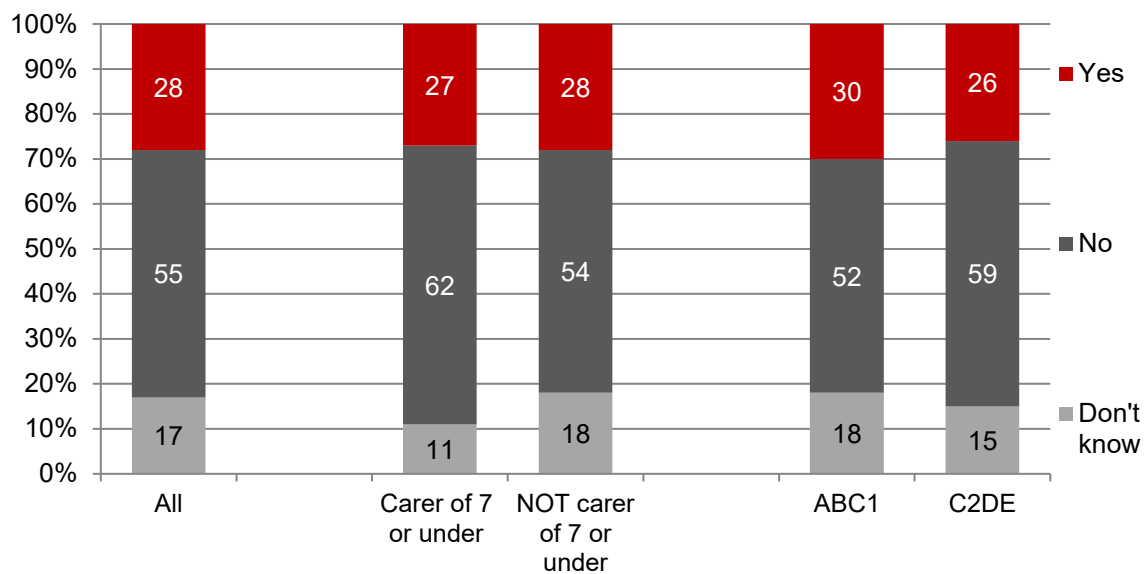
Figure 3.2: Percentage who believe that the law currently allows parents to smack their children (All and by age group)



Base: All (1,002), 16-34 (308), 35-54 (280), 55+ (414)

3.4 Knowledge of the law on smacking shows few differences by social grade and by whether an individual is a carer of children aged seven or under or not. Around 3 in 10 of each group, as shown in figure 3.3, believe the law allows parents to smack their children. This is similar to the findings in the 2018 survey.

Figure 3.3: Percentage who believe that the law currently allows parents to smack their children (All and by social grade and whether regular carer of child aged seven or under)

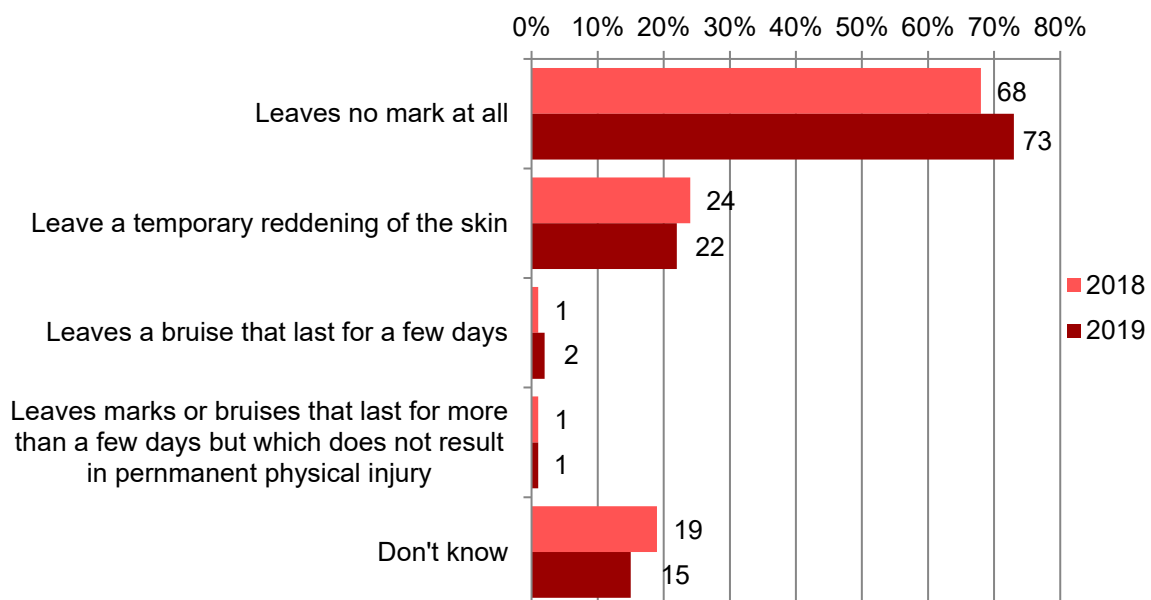


Base: All (1,002), Regular carer of 7 or under (179), Not a regular carer of 7 or under (823), ABC1 (516), C2DE (486)

3.5 Individuals were then informed that the law currently does allow parents to smack or physically discipline their children and questioned respondents on the level of punishment they felt the law allowed. The options they were given can be found in figure 3.4 together with the proportion of people who thought each level was allowed (respondents could choose more than one option).

3.6 Around three-quarters (73%) thought punishment that left no mark at all on the child would be allowed in law. Far fewer (22%) thought that leaving a temporary reddening of the skin would be allowed. Only a very small proportion thought that higher levels of physical punishment such as something that leaves a bruise for a few days (2%) or leaves marks or bruises that last for more than a few days but does not result in permanent physical injury (1%) would be allowed in law. Around 1 in 6 (15%) reported that they did not know what level of punishment would be allowed. The findings were similar to those found in the 2018 survey.

Figure 3.4: Percentage who thought that each level of punishment was currently allowed in law

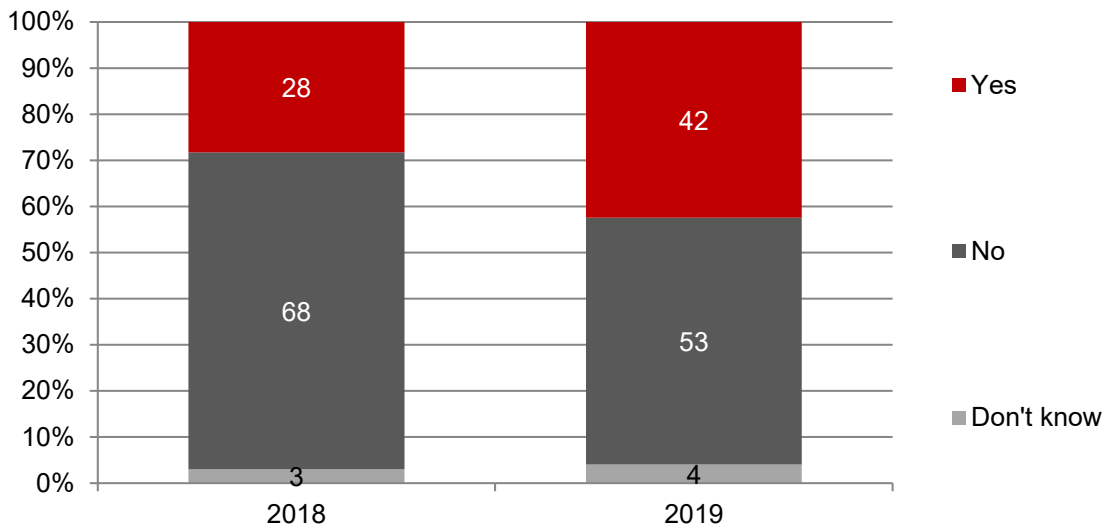


Base: All (1,002)

4. Awareness of proposed changes to legislation

4.1 Just over 4 in 10 (42%) people reported that they were aware of proposed changes to the law around physical punishment of children at an unprompted level³. This compared to an equivalent figure of 28% in the 2018 survey who were aware of the proposed changes. This increase over time in awareness of proposed changes is confirmed by statistical testing and therefore the finding can be generalised to the wider population.

Figure 4.1: Percentage aware of proposed changes in legislation around physical punishment of children [Unprompted] (All – 2018 vs. 2019)

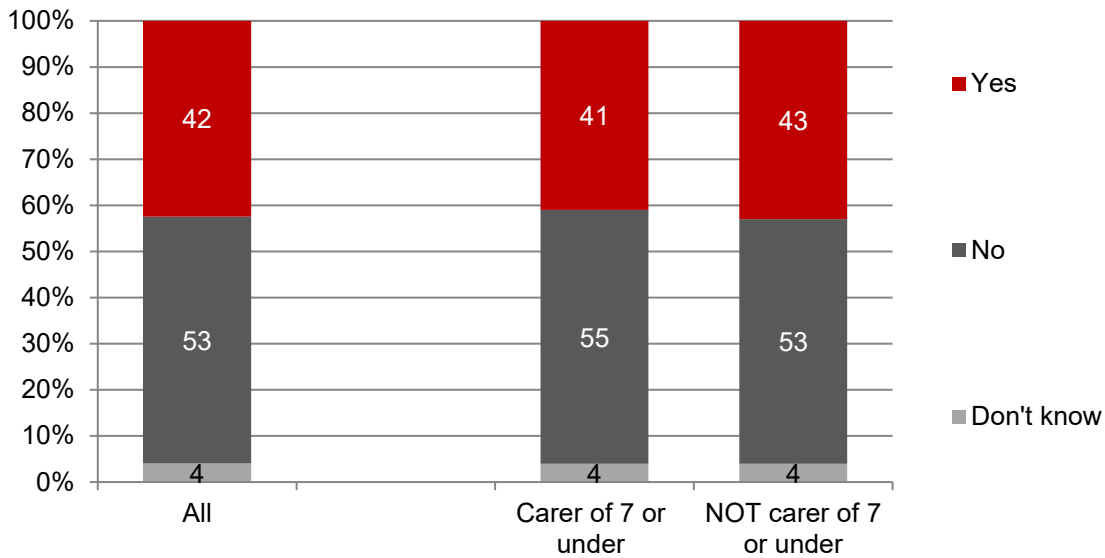


Base: All – 2018 (1,002), 2019 (1,002)

4.2 Awareness of proposed changes to the law around physical punishment of children was no greater among carers of children seven and under than those who did not have these responsibilities – 41% vs. 43% (figure 4.2)

³ Respondents were not given any details of potential changes at this point and were simply asked 'Are you aware of any proposed changes to the law around physical punishment of children?'

Figure 4.2: Percentage aware of proposed changes in legislation around physical punishment of children [Unprompted] (All and by whether regular carer of child aged seven or under)

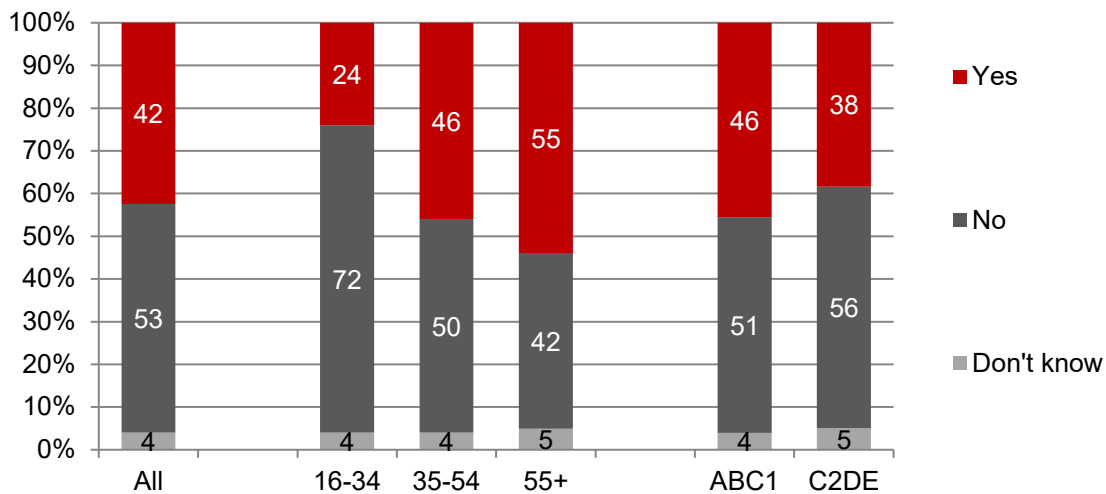


Base: All (1,002), Regular carer of 7 or under (179), Not a regular carer of 7 or under (823)

4.3 Both those who care for children aged seven and under and those who do not have these responsibilities have recorded increases in unprompted awareness of proposed changes since the 2018 survey (25% vs 41% and 29% vs 43% respectively). These differences are confirmed by statistical testing and therefore the finding can be generalised to the wider population.

4.4 As shown in figure 4.3, differences in awareness of proposed changes did occur by age and social grade as was the case with the 2018 survey. Those aged 16-34 (24%) were less likely to be aware of a potential change than older respondents. Similarly, those in social grades C2DE (38%) were less likely to be aware of a potential change than those in social grades ABC1. These differences were confirmed by statistical testing and therefore the finding can be generalised to the wider population.

Figure 4.3: Percentage aware of proposed changes in legislation around physical punishment of children [Unprompted] (All and by age and social grade)



Base: All (1,002), 16-34 (308), 35-54 (280), 55+ (414), ABC1 (516), C2DE (486)

4.5 Higher levels of awareness were reported in all age groups and all social grade groupings in 2019 compared with 2018. All differences except for 16-34s (2018 – 19%, 2019 – 24%) were confirmed by statistical testing and therefore the finding can be generalised to the wider population.

4.6 Those who reported being aware of potential changes in legislation (421 respondents) were asked to describe in their own words how they thought the law may change. Their responses were then grouped into themes and are shown in table 4.1. By far the most frequent response was that smacking would be [completely] banned \ it will be illegal. Around 7 in 10 (69%) of those aware of a change spontaneously mentioned this. A total of 8% who had previously said they were aware of a change could not name what that change would be.

Table 4.1: Can you tell me how you think the law may change? [Unprompted]

Response	Percentage of respondents (Number of respondents)
[Complete] ban on smacking \ physical punishment \ it will be illegal	69 (n.293)
Don't know	8 (n.32)
Other responses reported by less than 5 per cent of respondents	
Change is being discussed (unspecific)	
Good idea \ don't agree with smacking	
No physical contact at all	
Penalties for those who smack children	

Saw \ heard something about it (unspecific)
Thought it was already illegal to smack

Base: Those aware of proposed changes to the law around physical punishment of children – unprompted (421)
(a) Table may add up to more than 100 per cent as respondents were able to give more than one answer
(b) Other responses are presented alphabetically

4.7 Responses to this question were similar to those found in the 2018 survey when *smacking would be [completely] banned \ it will be illegal* was also by far the most frequently mentioned answer (73% of those aware of changes).

4.8 Those who reported being aware of potential changes in legislation were also asked to state how they had become aware of the change (table 4.2). Seeing something on a TV news / programme was by far the most frequent response (as it was in 2018) with six in ten (60%) of those aware of change reporting this as their source. This was followed by radio news / programme (12%) and word of mouth via family or friends (12%). Online sources such as website – news item (9%), social media excluding Facebook (7%) and Facebook (7%) were mentioned at lower levels.

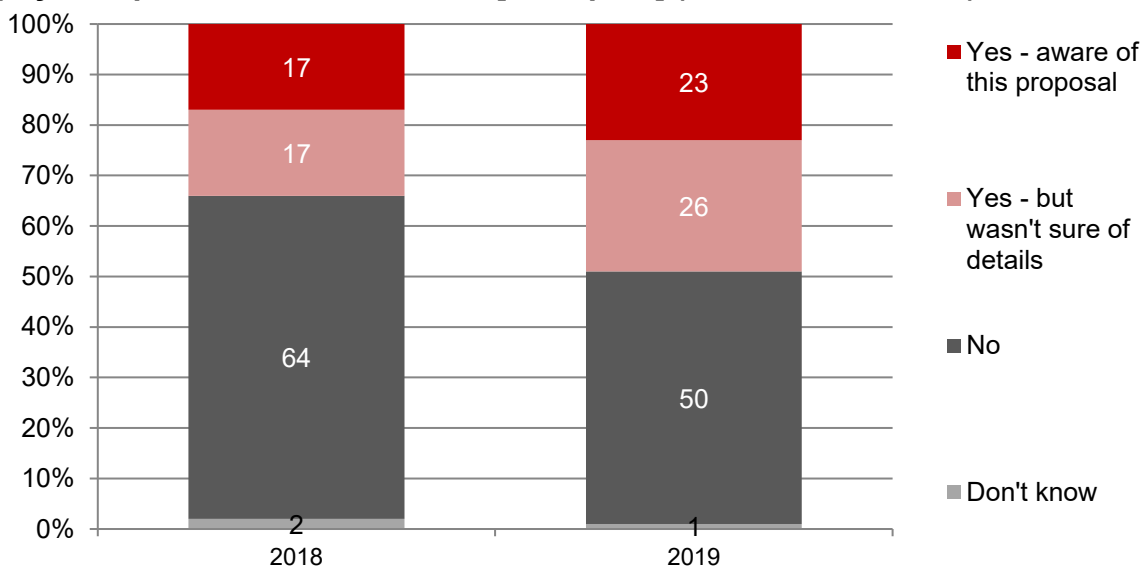
Table 4.2: How became aware of that law may change around physical punishment of children – percentage giving each answer [Unprompted]

Response	Percentage of respondents (Number of respondents)
On TV – news \ programme	60 (n.255)
On radio – news \ programme	12 (n.49)
Someone told me (family \ friends)	12 (n.53)
Online website - news item	9 (n.39)
Social media (excluding Facebook)	7 (n.30)
Facebook	7 (n.28)
Someone told me (professional)	6 (n.27)
National UK newspaper - news \ article	5 (n.20)
Don't know	5 (n.23)
Other responses reported by less than 5 per cent of respondents	
Local newspaper - advertising	
Local newspaper - news \ article	
National Wales newspaper - advertising	
National Wales newspaper - news \ article	
Online website - other	
On TV – advertising	
Radio - advertising	

Base: Those aware of proposed changes to the law around physical punishment of children – unprompted (421)
(a) Table may add up to more than 100 per cent as respondents were able to give more than one answer
(b) Other responses are presented alphabetically

4.9 After being asked their awareness at an unprompted level, respondents were then presented with a description of the proposed legislative change (which can be found in Annex D) and were asked if they had seen or heard anything about this proposal. At this prompted level, slightly more respondents reported that they were aware of the legislation than had done so on a spontaneous basis (see figure 4.1). Around half (49%) knew something about the proposal and this group was split fairly evenly into those who reported that they were aware of the proposal (23%) and those who were aware but not sure about the details (26%). This represents an increase in prompted awareness compared with the 2018 survey when 34% knew something (17% aware, 17% aware but not sure of details) – see figure 4.4. This difference is confirmed by statistical testing and therefore the finding can be generalised to the wider population.

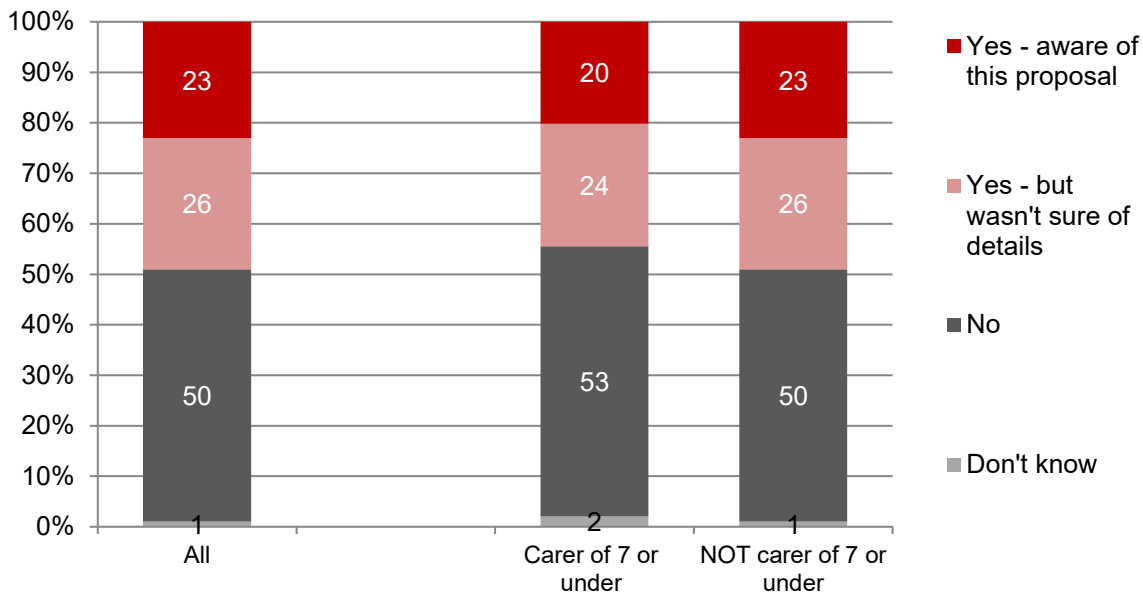
Figure 4.4: Percentage aware of proposed changes in legislation around physical punishment of children [Prompted] (All – 2018 vs. 2019)



Base: All – 2018 (1,002), 2019 (1,002)

4.10 At this prompted level those with caring responsibilities for children aged seven and under were slightly less likely to be aware of the legislation than those without these responsibilities although the difference was not statistically significant and therefore cannot be applied to the wider population (figure 4.5).

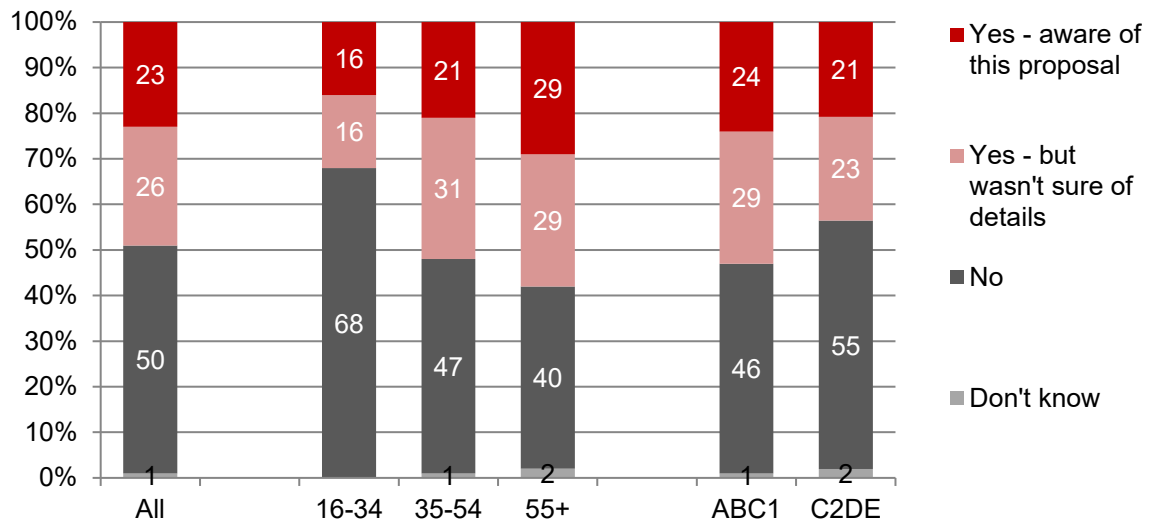
Figure 4.5: Percentage aware of proposed changes in legislation around physical punishment of children [Prompted] (All and by whether regular carer of child aged seven or under)



Base: All (1,002), Regular carer of 7 or under (179), Not a regular carer of 7 or under (823)

4.11 As with spontaneous awareness, differences do occur in terms of prompted awareness by age and social grade (figure 4.6). Among those aged 55+, prompted awareness of the proposed legislation stood at 58% compared with 32% among 16-34s. Similarly, 53% of those in social grades ABC1 were aware of the proposed legislation compared with 43% of those in social grades C2DE. These differences were confirmed by statistical testing and therefore the finding can be generalised to the wider population.

Figure 4.6: Percentage aware of proposed changes in legislation around physical punishment of children [Prompted] (All and by age group and social grade)



Base: All (1,002), 16-34 (246), 35-54 (264), 55+ (491), ABC1 (490), C2DE (505)

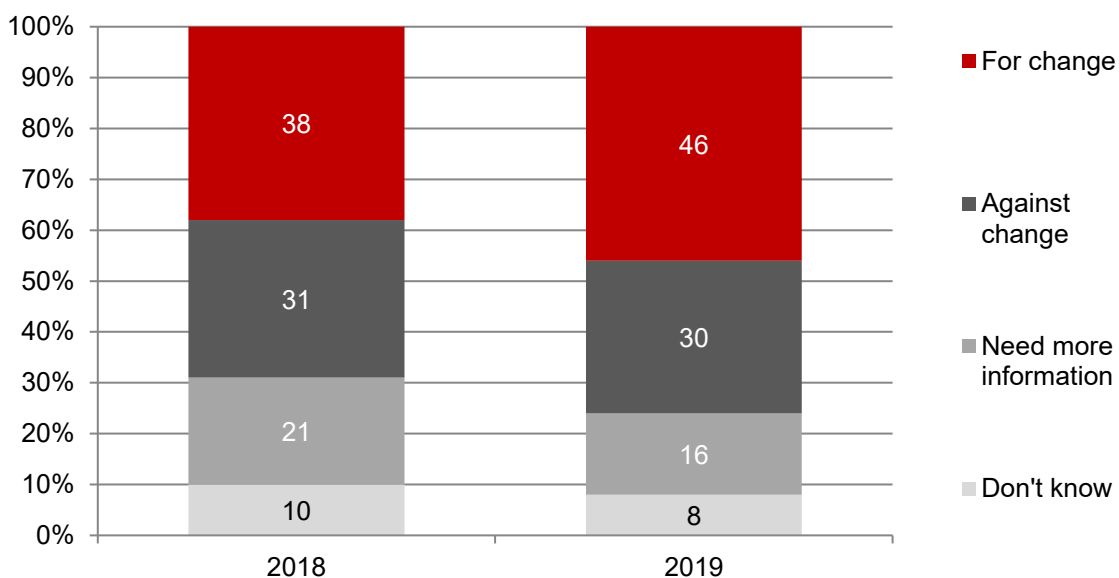
4.12 As was the case with spontaneous awareness, higher level of prompted awareness were reported in all age groups and all social grade groupings in 2019 compared with 2018. All differences except for 16-34s (2018 – 26%, 2019 – 32%) were confirmed by statistical testing and therefore the finding can be generalised to the wider population.

5. Opinion of proposed changes to legislation

5.1 Having been shown the description of the proposed change, respondents were asked whether they were in favour of the removal of the defence of reasonable punishment, against it or needed more information to decide. Overall, there was mixed opinion but more were in favour of the change (46%) than against it (30%). Around a quarter (24%) reported that they needed more information or didn't know yet.

5.2 As shown in figure 5.1, the proportion in favour of the removal of the defence of reasonable punishment has increased in 2019 (2018 – 38%, 2019 – 46%). However, the proportions opposing the change has changed little compared with the 2018 survey (2018 – 31%, 2019 – 30%), meaning that the increase in those in favour reflects that fewer respondents now claim to need more information / don't know (2018 – 31%, 2019 – 24%). The differences between opinion in 2018 and 2019 on the proposed legislative change were confirmed by statistical testing and therefore the finding can be generalised to the wider population.

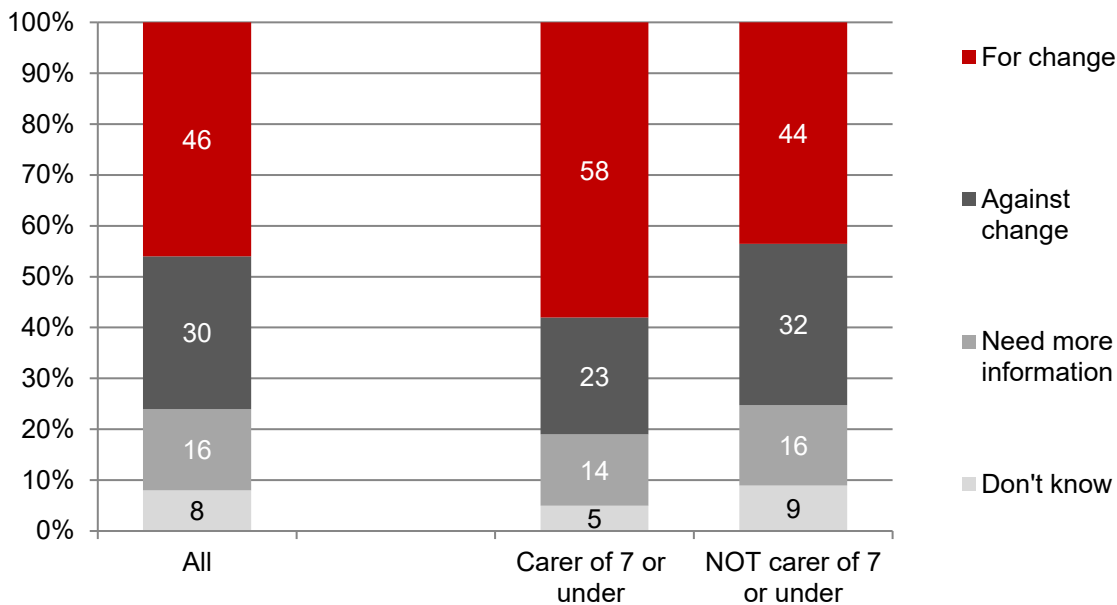
Figure 5.1: Opinion of proposed change in legislation on physical punishment of children (%) (All – 2018 vs. 2019)



Base: All - 2018 (1,002), 2019 (1,002)

5.3 Those with caring responsibilities for children aged seven and under were more likely to be in favour of the proposed change (58% in favour, 23% against) compared with those who did not have these responsibilities (44% in favour, 32% against). These differences were confirmed by statistical testing and therefore the finding can be generalised to the wider population.

Figure 5.2: Opinion of proposed change in legislation on physical punishment of children (%) (All and by whether regular carer of child aged seven or under)

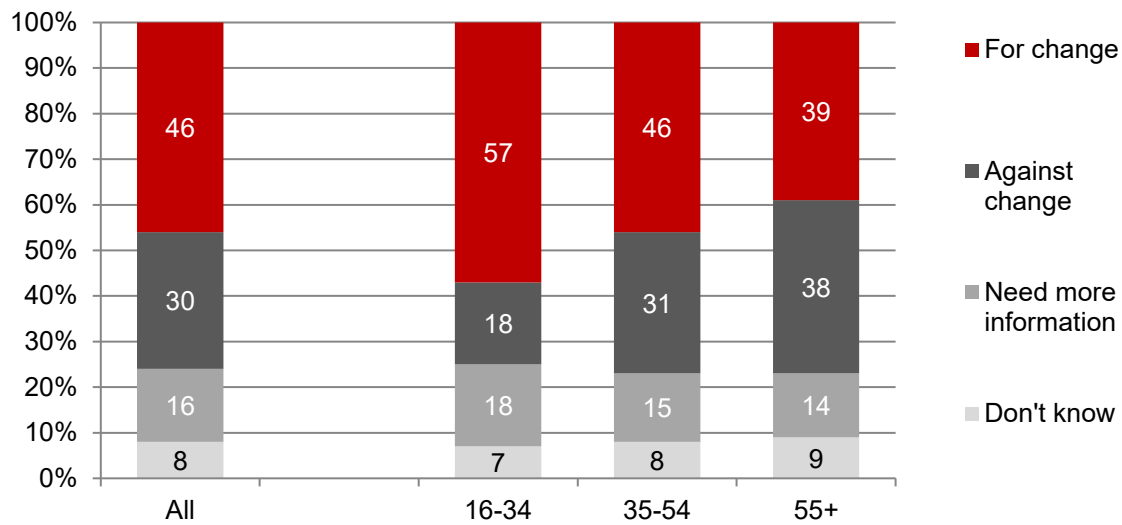


Base: All (1,002), Regular carer of 7 or under (179), Not a regular carer of 7 or under (823)

5.4 Both those with caring responsibilities for children aged under 7 and those without record increases over time in the proportions in favour of the legislative change. However, only the difference over time among those without responsibilities (2018 – 36%, 2019 – 44%) is confirmed by statistical testing and therefore can be generalised to the wider population.

5.5 Differences in opinion were also found by age. In both the 16-34 and 35-54 age groups, respondents were more likely to be *for* rather than *against* the change, as shown in figure 5.3. However, among those aged 55+ opinion was split evenly. These differences were confirmed by statistical testing and therefore the finding can be generalised to the wider population.

Figure 5.3: Opinion of proposed change in legislation on physical punishment of children (All and by age group)



Base: All (1,002), 16-34 (246), 35-54 (264), 55+ (491)

5.6 When comparing opinion of the three age groups over time, all three groups show increases in the proportions in favour of the removal of the defence of reasonable punishment (16-34s: 57% in favour in 2019 compared with 45% in 2018, 35-54s: 46% vs 41%, 55+: 39% vs 31%). Two of these changes over time, among the youngest (16-34s) and oldest age groups (55+) are confirmed by statistical testing and therefore can be generalised to the wider population.

5.7 In the 2019 survey, differences were not found in opinion of the proposed change in legislation by gender or social grade. However, as with national average figures, all groups recorded increases in those in favour of the change and decreases in those needing more information / don't know compared with the 2018 survey.

5.8 Respondents were asked to explain their reasons for their opinion on the proposed legislative change. Again, this was in their own words and responses have been grouped into common themes. Table 5.1 shows the reasons that were stated for being in favour of the proposed change (469 respondents). The most frequent response was that they did not agree with smacking or physical punishment of children (40% of those who were for the proposed change). This was also the most frequent response in the 2018 survey (38%). Others highlighted that there were other ways of ensuring good behaviour (19%) that it is not a good lesson and encourages violence (8%) as well as responses which focussed on the harm done to children such as it's abuse / can lead to abuse (9%) and some parents go too far (7%)

Table 5.1: Can you tell me why you are in favour of the change to the law on physical punishment of children in Wales? [Unprompted]

Response	Percentage of respondents (Number of respondents)
Don't agree with smacking \ physically punishing children	40 (n.184)
There are other ways of ensuring good behaviour \ discipline	19 (n.88)
It's abuse / can lead to abuse	9 (n.42)
Some parents go too far	7 (n.31)
It will help protect children	6 (n.26)
It doesn't work \ not necessary	5 (n.25)
Other responses reported by less than 5 per cent of respondents	
A tap is ok \ a little smack \ ok if don't go too far	
It's harmful to children	
It's needed	
It's not a good lesson \ encourages violence	
I was hit as a child	
Never smacked my kids	

Base: Those in favour of change to the law on physical punishment of children in Wales (469)

(a) Table may add up to more than 100 per cent as respondents were able to give more than one answer

(b) Other responses are presented alphabetically

5.9 Of those against the proposed change in legislation (298 respondents), for around 3 in 10 (28%) their opposition was qualified by saying that it's ok if it doesn't go too far / if reasonable punishment.

5.10 Other principal reasons for opposing the change included controlling behaviour and discipline. Two in ten (19%) of those against change thought the current situation was needed to control behaviour / discipline child / teach respect / show boundaries. Others commented on the broader lack of discipline in society – there’s no discipline / respect these days / kids are badly behaved (6%).

5.11 Outside of the reasons discussed in paragraph 5.9 and 5.10, the other main theme in terms of reasons for opposing the change centred on who should be responsible for disciplining children. A total of 18% of those against change thought parents should be allowed to make this decision and 4% thought government should not get involved. A full list of answers can be found in table 5.2

Table 5.2: Can you tell me why you are against the change to the law on physical punishment of children in Wales? [Unprompted]

Response	Percentage of respondents (Number of respondents)
Ok if doesn't go too far \ if reasonable punishment	28 (n.84)
Needed to control behaviour \ discipline child \ teach respect \ show boundaries	19 (n.56)
Parent should be allowed to punish child \ should have choice \ make decision	18 (n.53)
Doesn't do any harm \ didn't harm me \ my kids	8 (n.23)
There's no discipline these days \ kids are badly behaved \ no respect	6 (n.19)
Other responses reported by less than 5 per cent of respondents	
Difficult to police \ enforce \ resource	
Each circumstance \ child is different	
Government should not get involved	
Law is fine at moment \ new law not needed	
Not needed	
OK when child is in danger	
Over the top \ not reasonable	
Shouldn't be criminalised	
Use as last resort	

Base: Those against the change to the law on physical punishment of children in Wales (298)

(a) Table may add up to more than 100 per cent as respondents were able to give more than one answer

(b) Other responses are presented alphabetically

5.12 Those who needed more information before deciding (152 respondents) principally either wanted more detail or information on how it would work (39% of

those needing more information) or specifically would like greater clarity around definitions that were part of the legislation:

- What constitutes smacking \ assault, what is allowed vs. not allowed (18%)
- Definition of reasonable punishment (9%)

5.13 These responses are very similar to those received in the 2018 survey.

**Table 5.3: Can you tell me what additional information you need?
[Unprompted]**

Response	Percentage of respondents (Number of respondents)
More detail \ more info \ how it would work	39 (n.61)
What constitutes smacking \ assault, what is allowed vs. not allowed	18 (n.28)
Definition of reasonable punishment	9 (n.15)
How it will be policed \ enforced \ resourced	6 (n.9)
Don't know	16 (n.25)
Other responses reported by less than 5 per cent of respondents	
Definitions \ examples	
Info on current law	
Punishment \ charges for parents	
Research \ evidence into impact of smacking	
Safeguarding \ protection for parents	

Base: Those who need more information to decide if they are for or against change to the law on physical punishment of children in Wales (152)

(a) Table may add up to more than 100 per cent as respondents were able to give more than one answer

(b) Other responses are presented alphabetically

6. Conclusions

6.1 Views are mixed on whether 'it is sometimes necessary to smack a child' but the public were more likely to disagree (55%) with the statement than agree with it (31%). This difference between the proportions disagreeing and agreeing has widened in comparison to the 2018 baseline survey (49% disagreed, 35% agreed). Balance of opinion remains related to age of respondent with those aged over 55 being three times more likely to agree that 'it is sometimes necessary to smack a child' than those aged 16-34 (45% vs. 15%). Those who are involved in managing behaviour of young children (have caring responsibilities for children aged seven or under) were less likely to agree that smacking was sometimes necessary than those without these responsibilities.

6.2 There appears to be a degree of misunderstanding around the current status of legislation around smacking. Over half (55%) of those surveyed thought that the law currently did not allow parents to smack their children. This remains largely unchanged from the 2018 survey. Those with caring responsibilities for children aged seven or under were no more likely to be aware of the current legislative status than those without these responsibilities.

6.3 There is increased awareness of proposed changes to legislation which would see the removal of the defence of reasonable punishment. When prompted with what the change may entail, almost half (49%) report that they have any awareness of this compared with around a third (34%) in the baseline 2018 survey. Those with caring responsibilities for children aged seven or under were no more likely to be aware of the proposed change than those who did not have these caring responsibilities. In contrast, differences in awareness of the change were apparent by age (older respondents were more aware) and by social grade (ABC1s were more aware).

6.4 There has also been some change in opinion of the proposed legislation. The proportion *against* the change in legislation, 30%, remains consistent. However, those *for* the change have increased to 46% (from 38% in the baseline survey) and this reflects that there are now fewer respondents who claim to need more

information about the change in legislation or were unsure of their opinion. This 'coming off the fence' for a proportion of the population coincides with increased awareness of the proposed change that the survey has recorded. Those with caring responsibilities for the under 7s and younger respondents were more likely to favour the change in legislation.

6.5 The three most frequent reasons provided by those who were against the legislation were that the current status is needed to control / discipline children, that it's ok as long as things don't go too far and that it should be parents and not government who decide on these matters. For those in favour of the legislative change, reasons included not agreeing with physically punishing children, that there were other ways of ensuring good behaviour and that physical punishment doesn't work. Those who were undecided on the matter wanted more information on how it would work and greater clarity around definitions that were part of the legislation. These reasons were, on the whole, similar to those stated at the baseline survey in 2018.

Annex A - Welsh Government Social Research on parenting,

The Table below sets out the Government Social Research publications on parenting commissioned by the Welsh Government over the past six years.

Table A.1: Relevant Previous Welsh Government Research

Title	Method and sample	Purpose
<u>Attitudes to parenting practices and child discipline</u> Published: 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 14 focus groups (70 participants) • Parents of children under 18 • In 2013 	To explore parents' views on parenting practice including discipline. The findings were used to inform parenting support.
<u>Managing children's behaviour, attitudes and practices: Baseline Survey 2013</u> Published: 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quantitative Omnibus Survey • 1,022 adults (56% ever parents, 27% parents of under 18s) • In 2013 	To collect data on attitudes of the public (including parents and non-parents) towards parenting practices including discipline. The findings were used to inform parenting support.
<u>Parental attitudes towards managing young children's behaviour 2015</u> Published: 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quantitative – telephone survey • 387 parents/ guardians of children under 7 years old • Using National Survey for Wales re-contact list • In 2015 	To gauge the attitudes of parents with young children on parenting and managing children's behaviour. Fieldwork undertaken prior to Launch of parenting support campaign <i>Parenting. Give it time</i>
<u>Parental attitudes towards managing young children's behaviour 2017</u> Published: 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quantitative – telephone survey • 269 parents/ guardians of children under 7 years old • Using National Survey for Wales re-contact survey • In 2017 	To gauge the attitudes of parents with young children on parenting and managing children's behaviour. This survey was broadly a repeat of previous research undertaken in 2015 and helped inform the preparatory work for the proposal to prohibit physical punishment.
<u>Public attitudes to physical punishment of children: Baseline survey, 2018</u> Published: 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quantitative – face to face survey • 1,002 members of the general public aged 16+ • Conducted via the Beaufort Wales Omnibus Survey • In 2018 	Baseline survey among the Welsh general public to examine attitudes towards physical punishment of children, awareness of proposed changes in legislation to remove the defence of reasonable punishment and level of support for this change.

Annex B – Survey questionnaire

This section is about physical punishment which includes smacking

1. To what extent do you agree or disagree that it is sometimes necessary to smack a child?

- Strongly agree
- Tend to agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Tend to disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know (SPONTANEOUS ONLY) -

2. Do you think the law allows parents to smack their children?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

3. The law does currently allow parents to physically punish their children (which includes smacking). What level of punishment do you think the law allows? Choose as many as you think are relevant.

Physical punishment that:

- Leaves no mark at all on the child
- Leaves a temporary reddening of the skin
- Leaves a bruise that lasts for a few days
- Leaves marks and bruises that last for more than a few days but which does not result in permanent physical injury
- Don't know (DO NOT READ OUT)
- Refused (DO NOT READ OUT)

4. Are you aware of any proposed changes to the law around physical punishment of children?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

5. Can you tell me how you think the law may change?

6. How did you become aware of the proposed changes to the law around physical punishment of children?

DO NOT PROMPT

- On TV – news / programme
- On TV – advertising
- On the radio – news / programme
- On the radio – advertising
- In a local newspaper – news / article
- In a local newspaper – advertising
- In a national Wales newspaper – news / article
- In a national Wales newspaper – advertising
- In a national UK newspaper – news / article
- In a national UK newspaper – advertising
- Online website – news item
- Online website – other
- Social media (excluding Facebook)
- Facebook
- In a magazine
- Someone told me (professional)
- Someone told me (family/ friend)

In Wales, the government is considering changing the law around physical punishment including smacking. Parents are currently able to use the defence of reasonable punishment against a charge of common assault, but not against more serious charges of, for example, actual bodily harm. If the legislation is passed the defence of reasonable punishment would no longer be available in Wales to parents, carers and guardians, and those acting in loco parentis facing a charge of assault or battery against a child in their care. Where the police find sufficient evidence for a realistic prospect of conviction they will have to consider whether it is in the public interest to charge.

7. Before today, have you seen or heard anything about this proposal at all?

- Yes I am aware of the proposal
- Yes – but I wasn't sure of the details
- No
- Don't know

8. Which of these statements about proposed changes to the law around physical punishment of children in Wales best reflects your view?

- I am in favour of changing the law to remove the defence of reasonable punishment
- I am against changing the law to remove the defence of reasonable punishment
- I need more information to decide
- Don't know

9. a) Can you tell me why you are in favour of the change to the law on physical punishment of children in Wales?

OPEN ENDED

b) Can you tell me why you are against the change to the law on physical punishment of children in Wales?

OPEN ENDED

c) Can you tell me what additional information you need?

OPEN ENDED

Annex C – Research Method

A1.1 This research was conducted via the Beaufort Wales Omnibus Survey. Omnibus surveys are a well-established method of conducting market and social research. As their name implies, they enable a group of users to share the same survey vehicle, achieving the benefit of lower costs.

A1.2 Interviewing is spread across 69 separate locations throughout Wales, with points randomly selected each wave. The primary sampling unit is Lower Super Output Areas (LSOA). LSOAs are geographical areas developed by ONS following the 2001 Census and on average have populations of around 1,600. Sampling points are selected with probability proportionate to resident adult population after stratification by region (Local Authority) and social grade (proportion of ABs).

A1.3 Within each sampling location, there are interlocking quota controls on age within gender as well as social grade and working status. Quotas are set to reflect the known demographic profile of Welsh residents according to the latest Census information.

A1.4 All interviews are conducted face-to-face in the homes of respondents using CAPI (Computer Aided Personal Interviewing) technology. No more than one person per household is interviewed. A fresh sample of interviewing locations and individuals are selected for each survey.

A1.5 At the analysis stage, the data is weighted by age group within gender within Local Authority grouping to give each cell its correct incidence within the Wales total derived from the results of the 2011 Census. Figures in this report are presented to the nearest whole percentage.

Proportional quota sampling

A1.6 When survey data are tested for statistical significance, an assumption is made that the achieved sample represents a random sample of the relevant population. However, as the Wales Omnibus Survey uses proportional quota sampling (not random sampling), genuine statistical significance cannot, strictly speaking, be

established. Therefore, when a difference between two sub-groups is described as being 'significant' in this report, this refers to a pseudo-statistically significant difference at the 95 per cent confidence level. This means that, if the survey did use a random sample, the probability of obtaining the finding by chance would be less than one in 20.

Chi-square analysis

A1.7 The chi-square test has been used in the analysis to determine whether an observed relationship between two categorical variables in the sample is likely to reflect a genuine association in the population (i.e. the total adult population resident in Wales aged 16 years and over).

Annex D – Description of proposed change in legislation presented to respondents in November 2019 survey

In Wales, the government is considering changing the law around physical punishment including smacking. Parents are currently able to use the defence of reasonable punishment against a charge of common assault, but not against more serious charges of, for example, actual bodily harm. If the legislation is passed the defence of reasonable punishment would no longer be available in Wales to parents, carers and guardians, and those acting in loco parentis facing a charge of assault or battery against a child in their care. Where the police find sufficient evidence for a realistic prospect of conviction they will have to consider whether it is in the public interest to charge.

Annex E – Definition of social grades

Table A.2, below, provides a definition of the social grade classification⁴ used in the analysis

Table A.2: Social grade definitions

Social grade	Definition
ABC1	
A	High managerial, administrative or professional
B	Intermediate managerial, administrative or professional
C1	Supervisory, clerical and junior managerial, administrative or professional
C2DE	
C2	Skilled manual workers
D	Semi and unskilled manual worker
E	State pensioners, casual or lowest grade workers, unemployed with state benefits only

⁴National Readership Survey definitions - <http://www.nrs.co.uk/nrs-print/lifestyle-and-classification-data/social-grade/>

Annex F – Sub-sample sizes

Table A.3, below, shows the number of respondents for each sub-sample used in the analysis. The numbers of respondents are given for the unweighted and weighted samples.

Table A.3: Sub-group sample sizes

Sub-sample	Unweighted sample	Weighted sample
Gender		
Male	468	487
Female	534	515
Age		
16-34	308	293
35-54	280	327
55+	414	381
Social grade		
ABC1	516	518
C2DE	486	484
Caring responsibilities for 7 and under		
Yes	179	174
No	823	828