

Research headlines: what does research tell us about corporal punishment of children?

Corporal punishment is by far the most common form of violence against children. UNICEF report that 1.6 billion children are subjected to it on a regular basis.

The message from research is clear - **corporal punishment carries multiple risks of harm and has no benefits.**

There is strong evidence connecting corporal punishment and multiple forms of harm:



Direct physical harm – thousands of children are killed, injured or disabled by corporal punishment each year



Mental harm – strong links with childhood and youth behavioural and anxiety disorders, depression, hopelessness, low self-esteem, self-harm and suicide attempts, alcohol and drug dependency, hostility and emotional instability, which continue into adulthood



Indirect physical harm – connections with wider health impacts such as asthma, smoking, fighting, developing cancer, alcohol-related problems, migraine, cardiovascular disease, arthritis and obesity that continue into adulthood



Damage to education – including multiple negative impacts on cognitive development, lower educational achievement and decreased likelihood of graduating or attaining a high-status job. School corporal punishment is associated with mental health and behavioural problems, school drop-out and lower test scores



Damage to the parent-child relationship - corporal punishment can make children feel rejected by their parents and teach them to fear and avoid their parents: children report feeling hurt, angry and frightened of their parents after being physically punished

Research also clearly shows corporal punishment:

- makes children's behaviour worse over time
- leads to increased aggression in children, that continues into adulthood
- is strongly associated and often co-exists with intimate partner violence
- is connected to wider violence in society

The evidence that corporal punishment is harmful is overwhelming. For the wellbeing of children and adults, and to support the building of non-violent societies, all states should put in place measures to prohibit and eliminate corporal punishment without delay.

These research headlines are taken from End Corporal Punishment's [summary of research](#) and [full working paper](#), which both examine the research on corporal punishment's impacts and associations in greater depth and provide full references.