It takes a world
to end violence against children

World Vision
الرؤية العالمية

شغلتي وعملتي
حماية الطفل من العنف

A MIXED METHOD
NATIONAL STUDY

**Violent Child Discipline
in Lebanon**
March 2019

**UNDERSTANDING PERCEPTIONS,
CHILDREN'S REACTIONS AND
IDENTIFYING PREDICTORS**

About World Vision

World Vision is an international Christian humanitarian organization working to create lasting change in the lives of children, families and communities living in poverty. Inspired by our Christian values, we are dedicated to working with the world's most vulnerable people. World Vision serves all people regardless of religion, race, ethnicity or gender. World Vision was founded in 1954 and has been active in Lebanon since 1975. World Vision promotes the well-being of Lebanon's children and their communities through emergency relief, community development and advocacy.

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Why Violent Child Discipline?

A child's first human interaction experience, typically in a caring and nurturing context, occurs at home. However, it is the same place where a child is most likely to experience violence for the first time. World Vision Lebanon (WVL) defines **Violent Child Discipline (VCD)** as any form of physical or emotional/psychological violence exercised by caregivers whether parents or teachers or caregivers of children in institutions in the treatment and discipline of children. Despite its high prevalence, VCD is often unseen or under-reported worldwide. The impacts of VCD are devastating and lead to a range of direct and indirect health and social problems in addition to mental health problems (WHO 2016). The objective of this research is to understand the perceptions of Lebanese parents on VCD and the children's reactions to VCD as well as to identify the predictors of VCD. This research has informed WVL programs on child protection and its three year 'It Takes a World to end violence against children' national campaign.

About this research

Methodology	A mixed method research design was developed adopting both quantitative and qualitative assessments to better understand the perceptions of Lebanese parents and children's reactions around the use of violence for child discipline
Data collection timeframe	Phone surveys with Lebanese parents (25-54 years old) conducted in December 2018 Focus Group Discussions with Lebanese children (8-16 years old) enrolled in formal education conducted in February 2019
Sample size	997 parents 36 children

Demographic and socio-economic characteristics of parent respondents

Gender	Male	46.2%	
	Female	53.8%	
Governorate	Beirut	10.1%	
	Mount Lebanon	32.2%	
	North	12.2%	
	South	15.2%	
	Bekaa	12.0%	
	Nabbatieh	5.5%	
	Baalbeck and Hermel	9.5%	
	Akkar	3.1%	
Age groups of respondents	25-30	11.1%	
	31-40	33.9%	
	41-50	42.8%	
	51-54	12.1%	
Social Status	Married	98.3%	
	Separated	0.3%	
	Divorced	0.2%	
	Widowed	1.2%	
Number of children	1	9.3%	
	2-3	62.9%	
	4-5	24.5%	
	5-6	2.2%	
Education	Illiterate	1%	
	Primary	1.0%	
	Intermediate	24.4%	
	Secondary	20.6%	
	University	39.0%	
	Vocational	4.0%	
	Technique	0.9%	
Occupation	Full-time employee	38.2%	
	Company owner	6.9%	
	Freelancer	15.7%	
	Housewife	35%	
	Retired	2.1%	
	Unemployed	2.1%	
Top income contributor	Father	95.7%	
	Mother	1.6%	
	Adult children	2%	
	Spouse's family	0.3%	
	Siblings	0.2%	

Total Family Income		
< USD 500		4.3%
USD 500 - 1000		27.8%
USD 1001 - 2000		43.4%
USD 2001 - 4000		14.2%
USD 4001 – 6000		1.4%
>USD 6000		0.6%
I don't know / no answer		8.2%

Parents' exposure to multiple stress factors

76.7%
of parents have overall moderate to high exposure to stress factors

Distribution of parents as per their extent of exposure to stress factors

■ *Exposed to a small extent*   ■ *Exposed to a medium extent*   ■ *Exposed to a large extent*

	Small extent	Medium extent	Large extent
Securing the basic needs of children	23.1%	15.1%	61.8%
Debt and / or financial commitments	25.7%	15.9%	58.4%
Financial factors / low income	22.8%	18.8%	57.4%
Political / security situation	35.6%	11.7%	52.7%
The unknown future	30.8%	16.5%	52.6%
Health or family member suffers from a health condition	35.2%	14.3%	50.5%
Being a bad parent	42.3%	13%	44.7%
The fact that my work is not appreciated enough	34.9%	20.4%	44.7%
Fear of losing control of my actions and emotions	37.4%	18.4%	44.2%
Inequality between the mother and the father in the family in terms of responsibility sharing	46.8%	15.2%	38%
Living according to the expectations of my community / family	48.2%	17.8%	33.9%

The main type of stressors that parents are exposed to are:

FINANCIAL STRESSORS	HEALTH-RELATED STRESSORS	STRESSORS RELATED TO PARENTING SKILLS

Parents' beliefs around VCD

15.2% of parents were undecided that the only way to discipline a child is to beat them

17.3% of parents agreed that their parents used to beat them and they are currently doing very well

26.5% of parents did not agree that children imitate their parents behavior including violent behavior

1.8% of parents agreed that it is religiously justified to use VCD with their children

Parents' perceptions on different means of violence

44.9%

OF PARENTS **DID NOT** CONSIDER

beating their children on the buttock as a form of violence
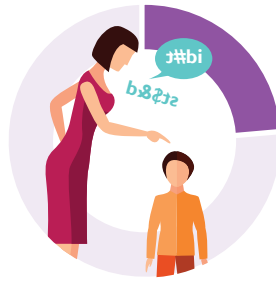
23.7%

OF PARENTS **DID NOT** CONSIDER

screaming at their children as a form of violence

12.9%

OF PARENTS **DID NOT** CONSIDER

being pre-occupied and neglecting their children's need as a form of violence

8.9%

OF PARENTS **DID NOT** CONSIDER

emotional violence when you behave badly with a child as a form of violence

8.0%

OF PARENTS **DID NOT** CONSIDER

beating that leave traces and scars on the child as a form of violence

6.9%

OF PARENTS **DID NOT** CONSIDER

the use of objects to hit the children as a form of violence

6.8%

OF PARENTS **DID NOT** CONSIDER

that violence can affect other family members and not only the child

NO REASON

6.6%

OF PARENTS **DID NOT** CONSIDER

beating the child for no-reason as a form of violence

5.5%

OF PARENTS **DID NOT** CONSIDER

beating that leads to psychological trauma as a form of violence

Parents' exposure to VCD during childhood

Parents' exposure to violent behavior during their childhood
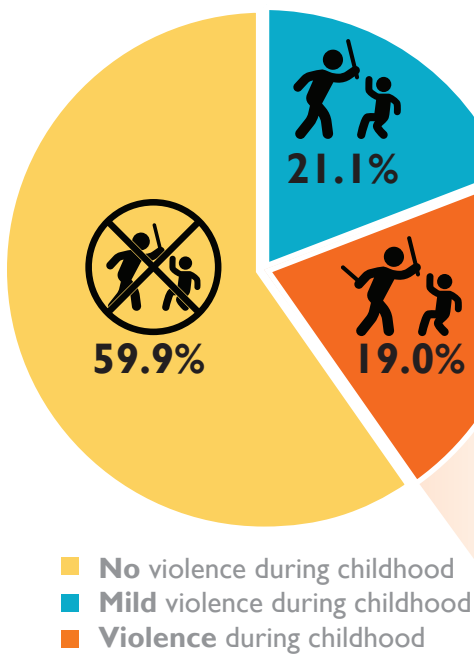
Parent's perceptions of violent behavior they were exposed to during childhood

59.9%
21.1%
19.0%

- **No** violence during childhood
- **Mild** violence during childhood
- **Violence** during childhood

36.1% Violence was not necessary

31.3% Sometimes i deserved it

27.9% I agree with it. It made me a better person

4.7% It affected me negatively

Noticing VCD in other parents

Reactions to VCD among other parents

47.1% of parents reported that they would interfere for any form of violence

20.8% of parents reported that they would interfere only for serious form of violence (strong beating)

14.3% of parents reported that they would not interfere, because it is not their job, or because they are afraid to provoke a scandal with the aggressive parents
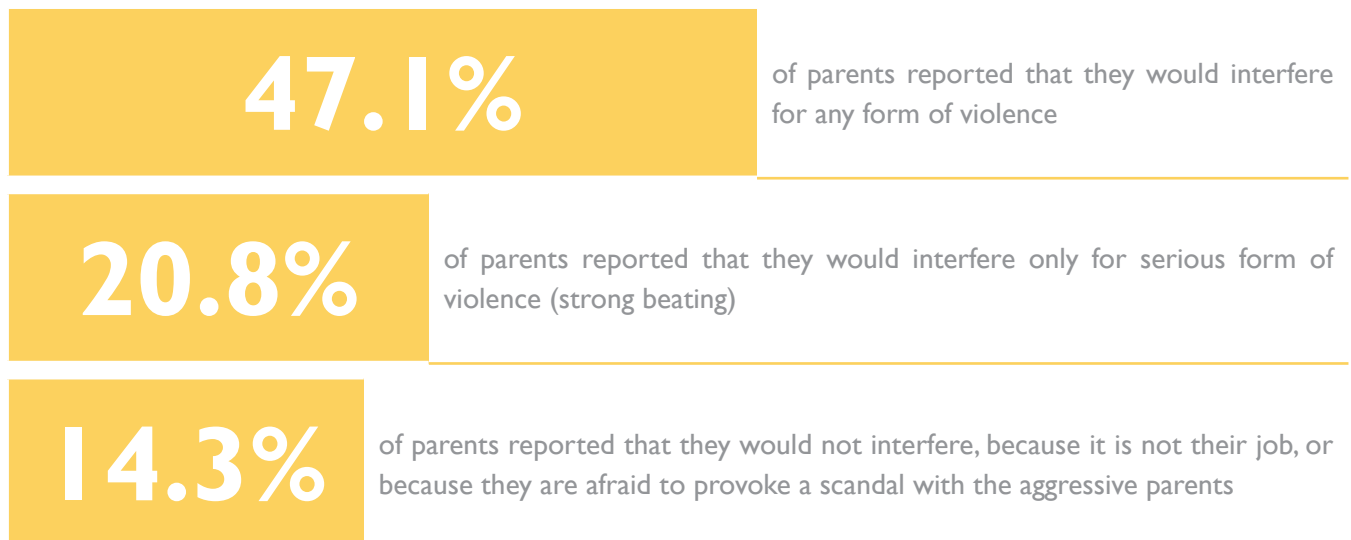
Parents' perception on proper reasons to use violence towards children

When he / she tries to annoy you intentionally

When the child does not understand that the parent is tired or has something else to do

When the child interferes in the problems of adults

When he / she is ungrateful for the parents' efforts

When he / she has too many demands

When the child gets bad grades

When he / she does not take care of the things that you buy them

When it's for his / her own good

When the child speaks or behaves badly

When the child does not listen to parents

6.9% 6.9%

8.0%

9.7%

10.0%

10.5%

12.2%

22.5%

28.9%

31.7%

34.3%

ONLY
22.5% of parents reported that VCD **is NEVER appropriate**

VCD reported by parents and children

Distribution of parents based on whether they resort to violent behavior with children or not

Parents feeling after resorting to violence

72.2%

27.8%

- ☐ Do not resort to violent behavior with children
- ☐ Resort to violent behavior with children

78.3% ⊗ Guilty, wish you did not do so

12.6% ✓ Relieved that the children deserved it

7.9% ✓ It is the child's fault, they brought it on themselves

1.1% ✓ I am not the only on that does it, everyone does

10
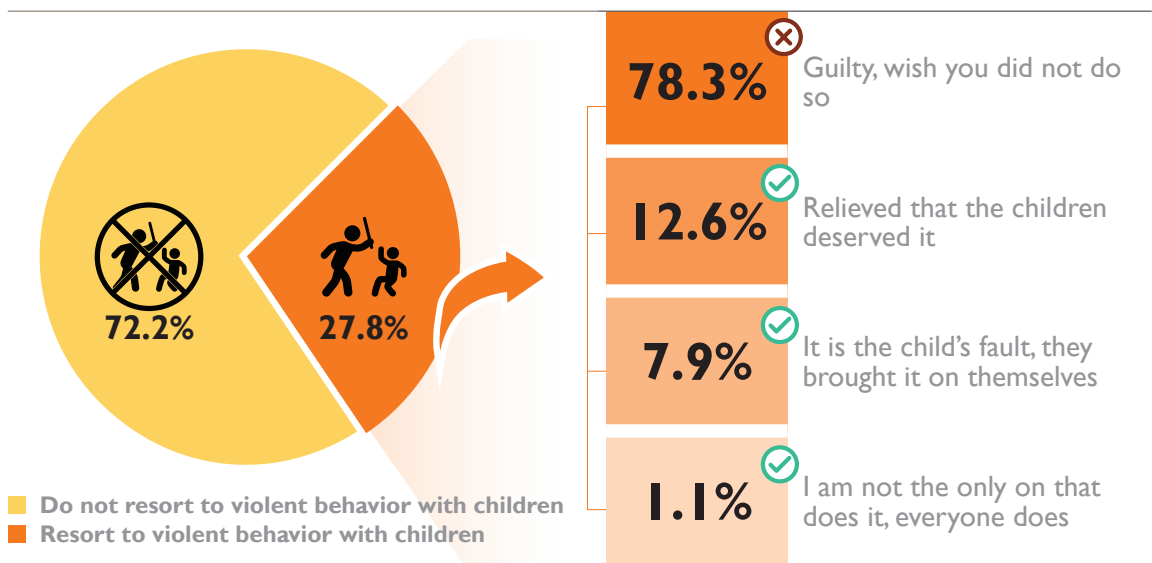
Profile of parents who resort to VCD

78.3%
Guilt-Ridden
"I feel terrible after hitting my child and I regret it"

12.6%
Moral Justifiers
"I'm doing it because this is best for my child"

7.9%
Blamers
"It's the child's fault he provoked me"

1.1%
Social Justifiers
"Everyone does this and so do I"
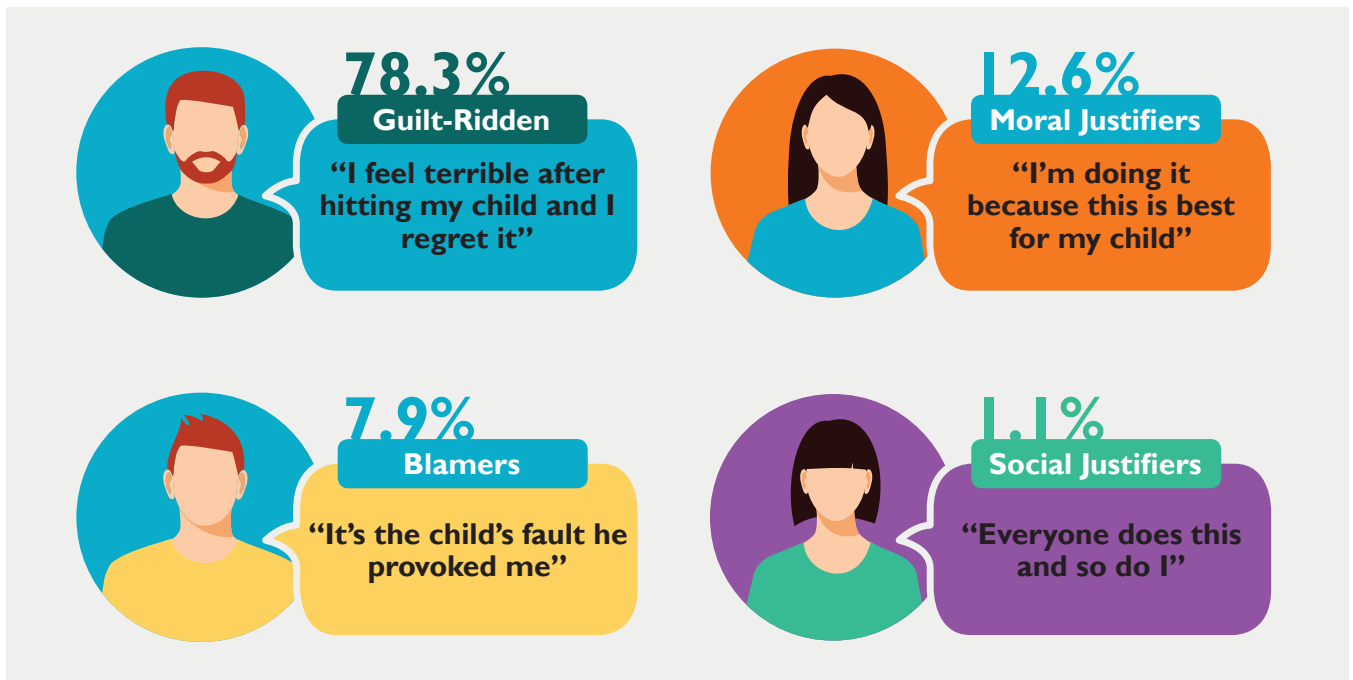
Favorite source of information used by parents regarding child rearing

62.8%
RELY ON
ADVICES FROM OLDER PEOPLE
(MOTHER, MOTHER-INLAW, ETC.)

13.8%
RELY ON
ONLINE MATERIAL

11.7%
RELY ON
BOOKS AND MAGAZINES
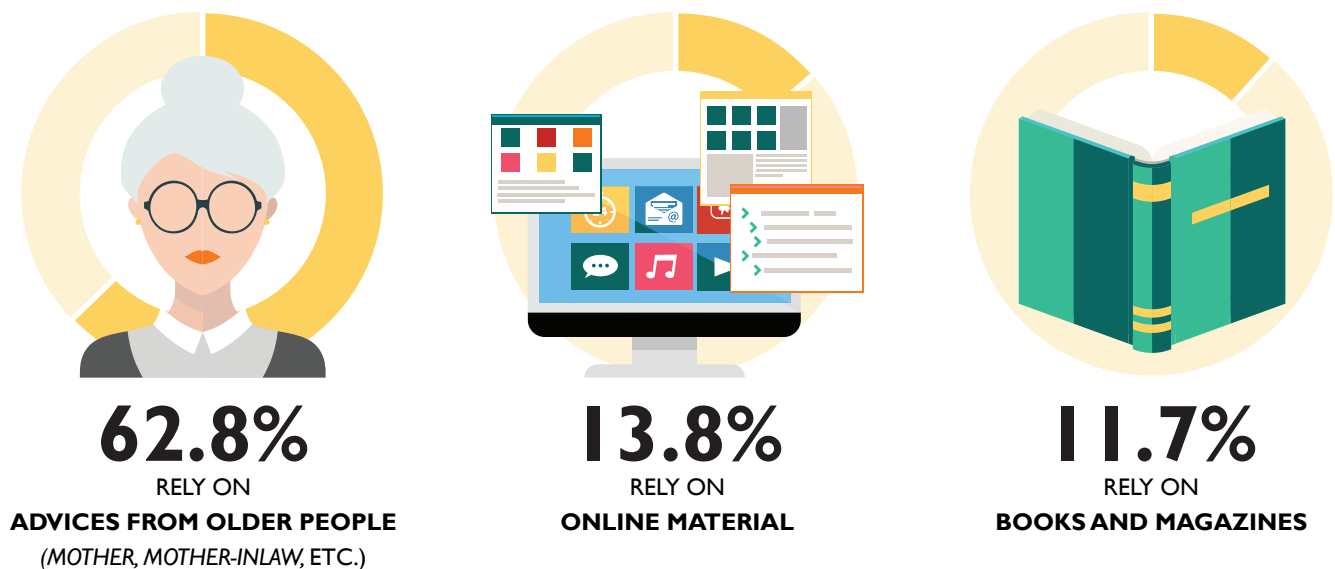
Parents' participation in addressing VCD

40.3% of parents reported that they never contribute in activities against VCD
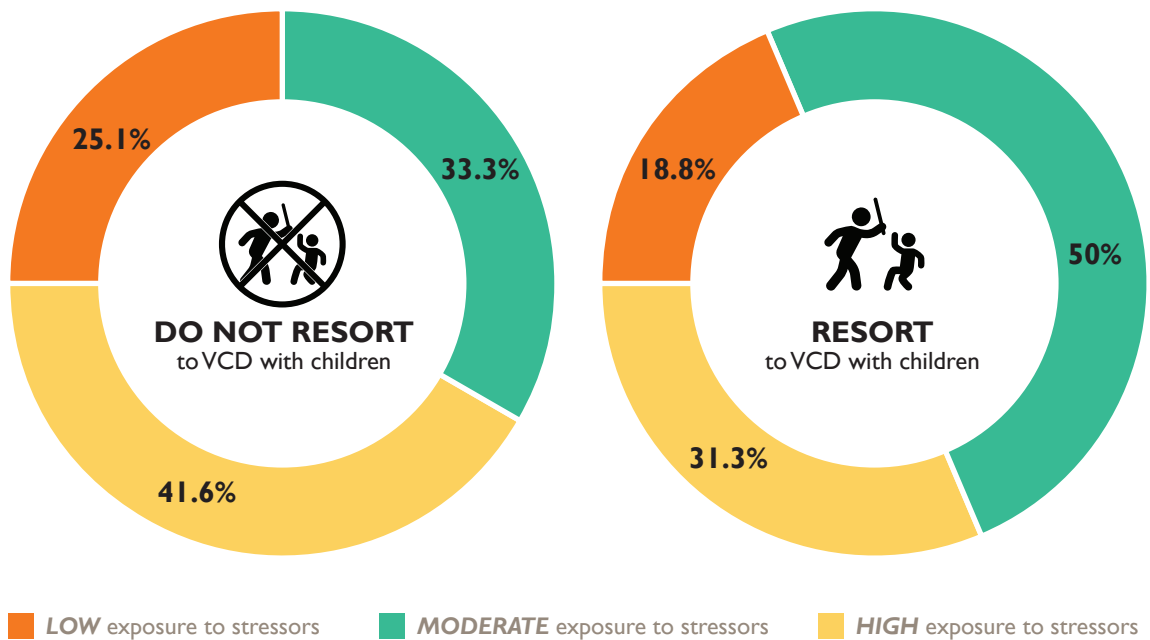
37.8% of parents reported that they support and participate in activities against VCD
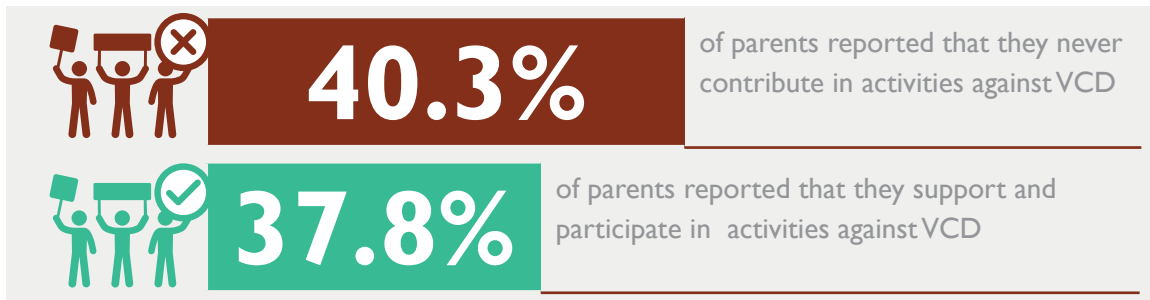
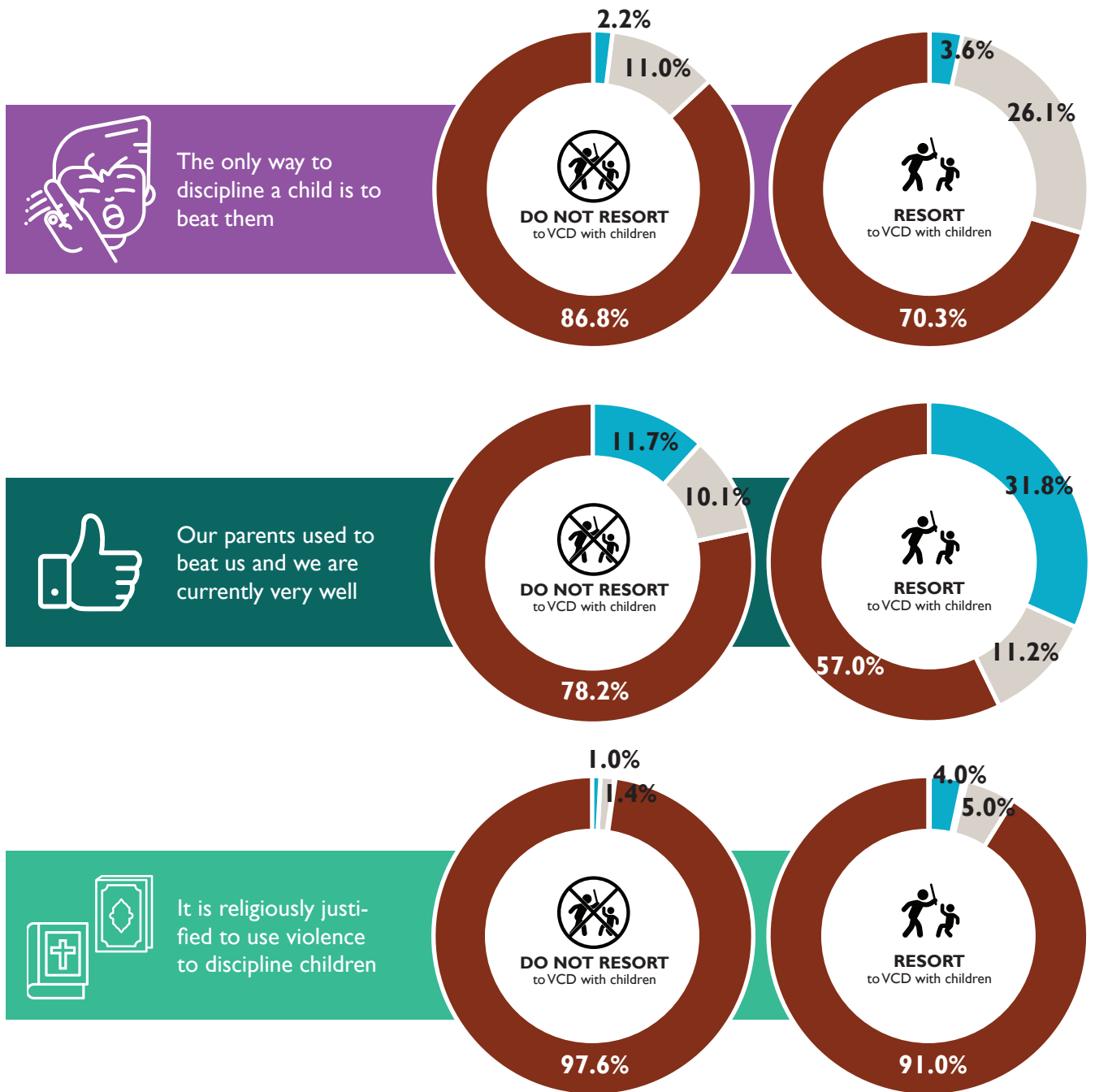# Association between demographic factors and VCD

Stress factor score
Parents who are exposed to moderate stress are **more likely** to resort to violence

DO NOT RESORT
to VCD with children

- 25.1%
- 33.3%
- 41.6%

RESORT
to VCD with children

- 18.8%
- 50%
- 31.3%

■ *LOW* exposure to stressors   ■ *MODERATE* exposure to stressors   ■ *HIGH* exposure to stressors

Parents' beliefs around VCD

Parents who agree or are undecided with wrong beliefs about child discipline are more likely to resort to VCD

Legend:
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree

The only way to discipline a child is to beat them

DO NOT RESORT to VCD with children:
- 2.2% (Agree)
- 11.0% (Neutral)
- 86.8% (Disagree)

RESORT to VCD with children:
- 3.6% (Agree)
- 26.1% (Neutral)
- 70.3% (Disagree)

Our parents used to beat us and we are currently very well

DO NOT RESORT to VCD with children:
- 11.7% (Agree)
- 10.1% (Neutral)
- 78.2% (Disagree)

RESORT to VCD with children:
- 31.8% (Agree)
- 11.2% (Neutral)
- 57.0% (Disagree)

It is religiously justified to use violence to discipline children

DO NOT RESORT to VCD with children:
- 1.0% (Agree)
- 1.4% (Neutral)
- 97.6% (Disagree)

RESORT to VCD with children:
- 4.0% (Agree)
- 5.0% (Neutral)
- 91.0% (Disagree)

Parents' perceptions of VCD

Parents with moderate perception of violence are **more likely** to resort to VCD, however those with low perception of violence are **less likely** to resort to VCD


DO NOT RESORT
to VCD with children

3.0%
6.8%
90.2%

RESORT
to VCD with children

1.5%
7.7%
90.8%
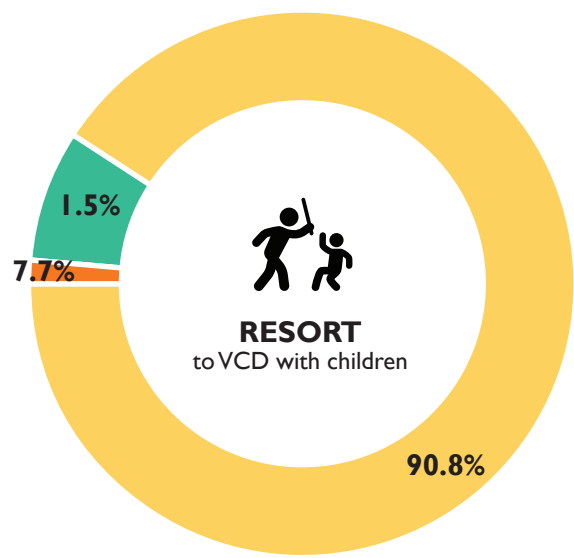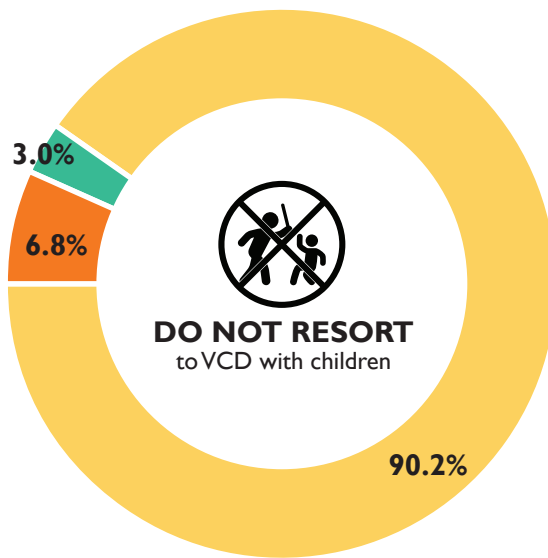
■ *LOW* perception of violence   ■ *MEDIUM* perception of violence   ■ *HIGH* perception of violence

Violence during childhood

Parents who have been exposed to mild or severe violence during childhood are more likely to resort to violence than those who were not exposed

DO NOT RESORT
to VCD with children

65.5%
15.3%
19.1%

RESORT
to VCD with children

45.5%
26.0%
28.5%
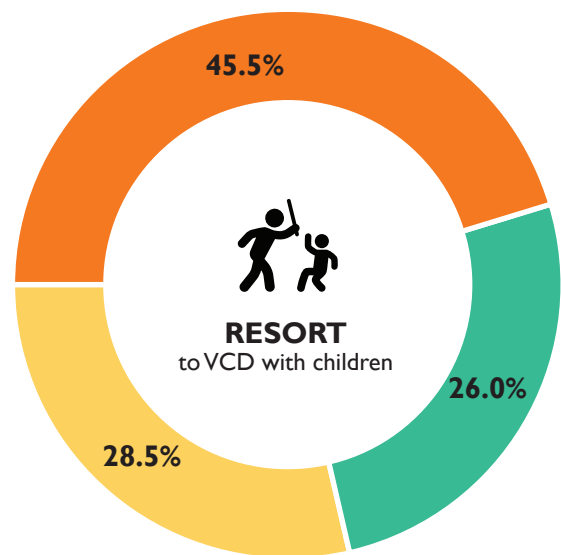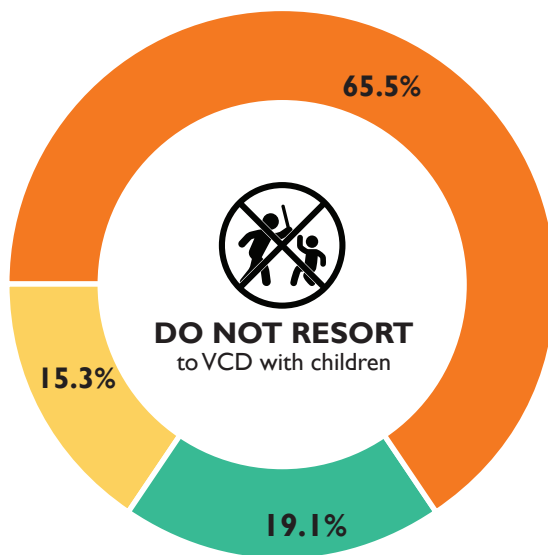
■ *NO* violent behavior during childhood   ■ *MILD* violent behavior during childhood   ■ *SEVERE* violent behavior during childhood

Predictive factors to VCD

Protective factors to resorting to violence

Older parents (51-54 years old) are **41% LESS LIKELY TO RESORT TO VIOLENCE** compared to younger ones (31-40 years old).

Retired parents are **89% LESS LIKELY TO RESORT TO VIOLENCE** compared to full employee parents.
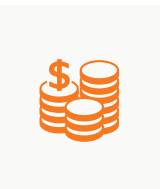
UNEMPLOYED | FULL EMPLOYEE

Parents with low exposure to stressors are **59% LESS LIKELY TO RESORT TO VIOLENCE** compared to parents with moderate exposure to stressors.

LOW | MEDIUM

Risk factors to resorting to violence

Parents in Baalback-Hermel province are **72% MORE LIKELY TO RESORT TO VIOLENCE** than parents in Mount-Lebanon province.

Parents with 4-5 children are **58% MORE LIKELY TO RESORT TO VIOLENCE** than parents with 2-3 children.

3-4 CHILDREN | 2-3 CHILDREN

Parents with secondary education only are **56% MORE LIKELY TO RESORT TO VIOLENCE** than parents with university education.

Parents with higher income (2001-4000 USD) **97% MORE LIKELY TO RESORT TO VIOLENCE** compared to parents with lower income to USD 1001-2000.

Parents who were exposed to violence during childhood are **111% MORE LIKELY TO RESORT TO VIOLENCE** than parents who were not exposed to violence during childhood.

Children's perceptions of VCD

Children's reaction to parents' perceptions on means of violence

- Children agreed that violence is not only physical, and concentrated that their parents most of the time do not have that same perception.
- Children said that in their communities physical violence is less common, while emotional abuse is very frequent and happens all the time.

> I feel like I don't own my future when they keep **threatening** me to drop me from school
> *- 12 y.o girl in Arida -*

> I often hear **insults** and name calling such as **dumb, animal, go to hell,** etc…
> *- 15 y.o boy in Kabb Elias -*

Children's perceptions on the reasons parents refer to VCD

- The main reason that was repeated by children was getting bad grades and not performing well at school.
- The second most frequent reason was demanding a lot from parents. Some children considered their demands as additional stressors, and reported feeling guilty for being consistently disruptive for their parents.

> I feel **emotionally exhausted** when my dad keeps telling me that I am a loser not worth an education
> *- 14 y.o boy in Kabb Elias -*

> My dad **threatens** that he would get me some cows to raise since **I don't deserve going to school**
> *- 10 y.o boy in Ferzol -*

Children's reaction to physical violence

- When physically punished, children reported unfairness and injustice especially when they are not able to explain themselves and were not given the chance to share their thoughts.
- Other children reported the feelings of guilt that they have deserved the punishment by their acts and feel bad about themselves and their parents.

> I feel like **I don't want to exist anymore**
> *- 10 y.o girl in Kabb Elias -*

> **I feel guilty** because I got bad grades and **my dad slapped me, I deserve it**
> *- 10 y.o boy in Ferzol -*

Children's reaction to emotional and verbal violence

- Defined by children as constant rejection, hostility, yelling, criticism, threat, teasing and bullying from their parents, teachers and even friends. They also mentioned constant comparison with their siblings and friends as a serious form of emotional abuse.
- Children stated that insults and bad words are sometimes more harmful than physical punishment and can seriously affect their well-being and make them feel humiliated and worthless or unloved by their parents and teachers.

> If I had to choose between **physical discipline and emotional abuse** I would definitely choose the first because **emotional violence is 3 times harder on me**
> *- 11 y.o boy in Kabb Elias -*

> **I regret to live** when they yell at me and **insult me**
> *- 12 y.o girl in Arida -*

Children's reaction to neglect

- Children also reported experiencing loneliness and lack of tenderness when their parents are busy doing their jobs or household chores instead of spending time with them.
- Children often cited the excessive use of the smartphones by parents making them not responsive to their needs.
- When their physical and emotional needs are neglected, they reported to end up feeling deeply alone and sad. They reported feeling like their needs are not important, their feelings do not matter, or that they should never ask for help.

> I don't tell my parents when I am happy because they are **always busy and never capable to listen to me**
> *- 11 y.o boy in Kabb Elias*

Recommendations

Local and national levels

- In line with the Convention on the Rights of the Child ratified by Lebanon in 1991, SDG 16.2, and the recommended actions by the Committee on the Rights of the Child for the combined fourth and fifth periodic reports of Lebanon during the seventy-fifth session, Lebanese parliamentarians must vote to repeal Article 186 of the Lebanese penal code which permits parents and caregivers to refer to violence as a mean of disciplining children

- Inter- ministerial coordination and consultation between the Ministry of Social Affairs, the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, and the Ministry of Public Health is essential to update the national child protection strategy of 2012 with emphasis on the issue of violent child discipline and develop a national action plan with civil society organizations to align all child protection efforts and achieve progress.

- Relevant Ministries should roll out and monitor the implementation of child protection policies across all private, semiprivate and public schools, day care centers and residential institutions in Lebanon and mandating child protection policies in the registration process of any new institution.

- Ministry of Social Affairs should consider remobilizing the currently inactive national committee for child protection under the Higher Council of Childhood for proper coordination and monitoring of progress on the implementation of the national strategy (once updated) and child protection programs across different organizations.

- With Child protection being one of the least funded sectors globally, the international community and donors should provide adequate funding to relevant ministries and organizations for the strengthening of the child protection system and improved primary prevention capacity and programs

- Lebanese faith leaders and religious courts must denounce any form of abuse against children and must contribute to creating a culture of child protection in law and in practice. Faith leaders must endorse the repelling of Article 186 of the Lebanese penal code and become primary allies of the country's largest vulnerable population that is children

- Local government institutions such as, social development centers, primary healthcare centers and even schools must seek innovative approaches to outreach working and non-working parents and other caregivers to organize necessary activities or offer adequate services and programs.

- Government institutions, civil society organizations and academic institutions collaborate for the development of evidence based behavior change approaches and positive discipline programs outreaching to caregivers in different settings while adopting different modalities (couple to couple programs, peer to peer mentoring programs, parent helplines, pre-marital counseling, etc.) while expanding the outreach to grandparents, being the primary source of information and guidance for parents and for taking a large role in child rearing among working parents.

Programming level

- Local and international organizations must support the Lebanese government to look into advanced ways to contribute to the reduction of financial stress factors through increased access of vulnerable households to income-generating opportunities

- Local and international organizations should support caregivers through holistic interventions including livelihoods, education, stress management and child protection campaigning

- Municipalities, local government and civil society organizations must intensify interactive activities in existing public spaces where both male and female caregivers and children can improve their quality of life, release their stress, and interact in a child-friendly and safe environment
- Local and civil society organizations must consult with parents on their parenting struggles and identify issues they would like to tackle and tailor parenting sessions and parenting tools based on their needs
- Local and civil society organizations must coordinate closely with faith leaders on child protection activities and include topics on the effects of violence on children's development during religious rituals
- Local and civil society organizations should activate community conversations where couples discuss with other couples on best positive parenting practices, couples to parents (children's grandparents), public health and mental health professionals or faith leaders to parents and grandparents
- Civil society organizations and faith based organizations must identify and promote awareness on the various forms of violence against children and violent child discipline and their effects on child development and well-being
- Public, semiprivate, and private schools must activate or strengthen parents committees as frontliners in the mobilization of other parents in addressing and acting against violent child discipline

Children's Voices and recommendations
- Parents should not resort to violence in all its forms (physical, verbal, sexual and neglect), as it's the primary source of trauma experienced by children of all ages
- Parents must not use comparison as a mean to inspire their children, as it contributes to breaking the child's self-esteem and promoting personality disorders that hinders their engagement in a particular activity
- Parents must not threaten their children on the grounds of low grades at school as it appeared to be another source of anxiety
- Parents must avoid involving their child directly or indirectly in their problems, especially when both parents refer to violence as a mean of communication
- Parents must actively promote independence as their child grows older in age and reaching adolescence
- Parents must offer children enough time and space to express their experiences and concerns and avoid postponing this time without determining when they will have the opportunity to express themselves.
- Parents must moderately use their smartphones when children are around as it appeared to cause feelings of neglect among children