

*Monika Sajkowska*

**The Problem of Child Abuse:  
Attitudes and Experiences  
in Seven Countries of Central and Eastern Europe**

*Comparative report*

- Centre Against Abuse “Dardedze”, *Latvia*
- Child Support Centre (Paramos Vaikams Centras), *Lithuania*
- Christian Children’s Fund, *Ukraine*
- National Center for Prevention of Child Abuse (Centrum National de Prevenire a Abuzului fata de Copii), *Moldova*
- Nobody’s Children Foundation (Fundacja Dzieci Niczyje), *Poland*
- Partners Bulgaria Foundation, *Bulgaria*
- Safe Childhood Association (Bezbedno detstvo), *Macedonia*

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## **1. Introduction**

The democratization of public life, which is an integral part of the processes of systemic transformation in East European countries, has led to a recognition of many social problems which were previously unnoticed, hidden, or underestimated.

One such problem is broadly understood child abuse. The last decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was a period when the problem became a major focus of attention for the media, NGOs, and authorities in all the countries of Eastern Europe. However, the intensity of this attention and its effects – the range of available help services, the scale of educational activities, etc. – differ from country to country. In order to explain this variety we would have to analyze a range of factors, from cultural conditions to the stage of the democratization process. Such an analysis should include catalysts such as the presence and reach of projects supporting the development of the civil society and offering both access to West European and American experience in assessing and solving social problems and financial support for such undertakings.

Assessment of the stage of progression in the process of regulating the child abuse problem in East European countries – including analyses of the content of relevant legislation and evaluations of the forms and effects of the system of institutional child protection – has been the focus of many studies and assistance programmes (Sicher, Lewis, et al. 2000; *Eliminating corporal punishment..* 2003; *Mapping ...* 2005; Vermeulen 2005). This article presents selected findings from a comparative research programme carried out in seven East European countries within the *Childhood without abuse: Toward a Better Child Protection System in Eastern Europe* project. Coordinated by the Nobody's Children Foundation and financed by the OAK Foundation, this five-year project has been implemented since 2005.

## **2. Methodology**

The studies were conducted in 2005/2006 in seven East European countries: Bulgaria, Lithuania, Latvia, Macedonia, Moldova, Poland, and Ukraine.

Their main objective 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 the child protection system in their countries.

The studies sought answers to the following research questions:

- How do the respondents estimate the scale of a wide range of abusive behaviours towards children in the countries participating in the project?
- How do they evaluate the dynamics of various aspects of child abuse?
- What is the level of social acceptance of controlling parents' behaviours toward their children by state and other people?
- 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?

Answers to the research questions were sought in two groups of respondents:

In each of the seven countries a nationwide, representative sample of adult citizens provided answers to two questions: (1) a question concerning their attitudes toward parental use of corporal punishment of children, and (2) a question concerning their perceptions of the scale of such behaviours among parents. The respondents provided answers to these two questions within Omnibus studies conducted in the participating countries by various research agencies. Table 1 presents the sample size, the selection criteria, and the research technique applied in each of the countries. Unfortunately, the fact that the studies had to be commissioned to local research companies and the resulting differences in the methodology applied by these agencies, made it impossible to fully unify the sample characteristics and the ways of data collection.

Table 1. Characteristics of nationwide studies.

<b>Country</b>	<b>Population</b>	<b>Sampling method</b>	<b>Sample size</b>	<b>Research methodology</b>
Poland	Polish citizens over 18	Representative, random sample	955	Face-to-face questionnaire-based interviews in respondents' homes
Latvia	Latvian citizens, ages 18–74	Representative, random sample	1015	Face-to-face questionnaire-based interviews in respondents' homes
Lithuania	Lithuanian citizens, ages 15–74	Representative, random sample	500	CAPI (computer assisted personal interview) in respondents' homes
Bulgaria	Bulgarian citizens, over 15	Representative, random sample	994	Face-to-face questionnaire-based interviews in respondents' homes

Macedonia	Macedonian citizens over 18	Representative, random sample	519	Face-to-face questionnaire-based interviews in respondents' homes
Moldova	Moldovan citizens, ages 16–74	Representative, random sample	1106	Face-to-face questionnaire-based interviews in respondents' homes
Ukraine	Ukrainian citizens over 18	Representative, random sample	2057	Face-to-face questionnaire-based interviews in respondents' homes

**II.** The other group of studies concerned the full range of the research questions. In each of the participating countries the respondents were teachers working at capital-city primary schools. 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 programme coordinator. Developed by Monika Sajkowska, the questionnaire consisted of 87 items which had been previously used in Polish research programmes concerning child abuse (Sajkowska, Siemaszko, 1998; Fluderska, Sajkowska, 2001).

Here are the sample sizes in the countries participating in the project: Poland – 158, Lithuania – 172, Latvia – 152, Bulgaria – 241, Ukraine – 137, Macedonia – 203, and Moldova –151.

In each of the countries a vast majority of the respondents (90%, on average) were women.

The teachers participating in the study represented various age groups. As shown in Table 2, the categories of young, middle-aged, and elderly respondents were comparable in terms of size, and their proportions were similar in all the countries included in the study.

Table 2. Respondents by age (%).

<b>Country</b>	<b>25-35</b>	<b>36-45</b>	<b>46-55</b>	<b>Over 55</b>	<b>No data</b>
Poland	39.9	36.1	19.0	4.4	0.6
Lithuania	31.4	32.6	25.6	7.6	2.9
Latvia	41.4	23.7	19.1	10.5	5.3
Bulgaria	13.3	49.0	25.7	10.0	2.1
Ukraine	40.1	24.1	19.0	10.9	5.8
Macedonia	27.6	36.5	25.1	9.4	1.5
Moldova	37.1	21.2	23.2	14.6	4.0
Total	31.2	33.4	22.8	9.6	3.0

Most respondents (74%) had their own children.

Seventy four percent of the respondents characterized themselves as believers or deep believers. Such declarations were most frequent in Macedonia (92.6%) and Poland (81.7%).

Table 3. Respondents' attitudes toward faith (%).

Country	Deep believer	Believer	Hesitant	Non-believer	No data
Poland	12.7	69.0	8.2	7.0	3.2
Lithuania	9.9	68.0	14.0	2.9	5.2
Latvia	3.9	55.3	19.1	13.8	7.9
Bulgaria	5.4	65.1	17.4	4.1	7.9
Ukraine	1.5	73.0	13.9	6.6	5.1
Macedonia	68.5	24.1	4.9	0.5	2.0
Moldova	3.3	63.6	19.2	9.9	4.0
Total	16.6	58.6	13.7	5.9	5.1

### 3. Corporal punishment

#### 3.1. How many children, in the respondents' opinions, experience corporal punishment?

##### Is the scale of the problem changing?

This section of the report focuses on the analysis of research findings pertaining to the use of corporal punishment of children. This aspect of the child abuse problem continues to stir up controversies, and a significant proportion of the studied societies accept parental use of corporal punishment as a disciplinary measure. The legislation concerning corporal punishment of children varies from country to country. So far fourteen European countries have imposed a statutory ban on using this form of punishment. Among them there are countries participating in the *Childhood without Violence* project; in 1998 the group of countries, in which beating children is legally banned, was joined by Latvia, in 2000 – by Bulgaria, and in 2004 – by Ukraine (in the region of Central and Eastern Europe corporal punishment of children is also illegal in Romania and Hungary).

Subjective ratings of the prevalence of corporal punishment of children in a country is a major component of attitudes toward this phenomenon. The respondents' opinions on the prevalence of spanking and beating children by their parents as a disciplinary measure depend on a variety of factors. The most important ones include the respondents' knowledge about the realities of children's life in their country and the content and quantity of media messages concerning beating children by their parents.

The respondents in the nationwide studies (representative samples of adults) were asked about their estimations concerning the percentage of children who may experience corporal punishment in families.

The results of the analysis of data pertaining to the prevalence of corporal punishment of children, as estimated by the general adult population, are presented in Figure 1.

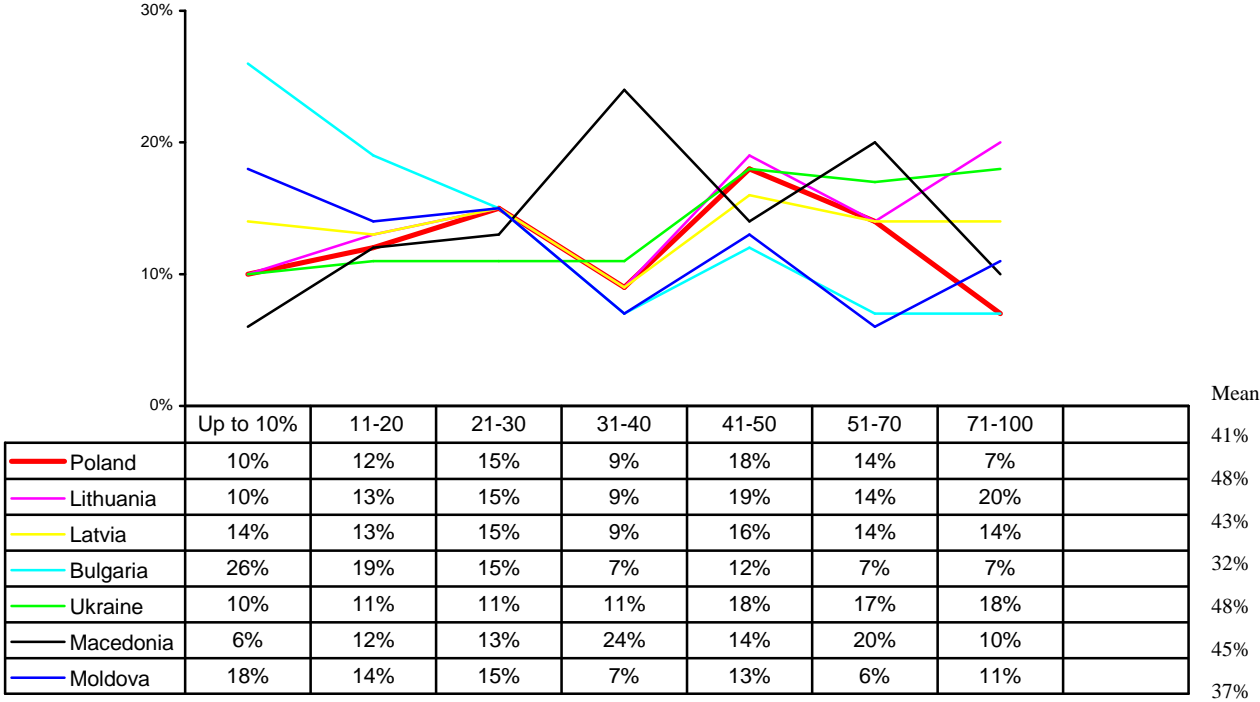


Figure 1. *If all the children living in our country constitute 100% of the population, what percentage, do you think, experience **corporal punishment by parents** ?*

The above data point to both differences and similarities in the respondents’ ratings of the prevalence of corporal punishment of children in the countries included in the research programme. As illustrated in Figure 1, the result lines for all seven countries form a relatively cohesive bundle. This suggests a similarity in the patterns of opinions about the percentage of children experiencing corporal punishment across the countries participating in the study. As could be easily predicted, even greater consistency of opinions was found in the studies conducted among primary school teachers, reported later in this paper.

The analysis of the distributions of answers provided by the respondents in the nationwide samples, as well as the comparison of measures of central tendencies (mean estimated percentages – the last column) lead to the conclusion that the estimated prevalence

of corporal punishment is the lowest in Bulgaria (32%) and the highest in Lithuania and Ukraine (48%).

In nearly all the countries the estimated scale of corporal punishment of children was related to the respondents' age – younger respondents provided higher ratings; their education – the higher the education the bigger the estimated prevalence of the phenomenon; and their place of living – people living in cities provided higher estimations of the number of beaten children than respondents from small towns and rural communities.

Due to their professional role teachers may be expected to have more accurate knowledge on children's experiences in families, so their opinions on disciplinary measures used by parents should be closer to reality. Questions addressed to this group of respondents concerned two forms of corporal punishment: spanking and severe beating, which may result in injuries. The respondents provided their opinions on the prevalence of such disciplinary measures in the country in general and in the families of children attending their schools. Consequently, the analysis of teachers' responses to this set of questions provided information on the diversity in the respondents' opinions in three perspectives: spanking vs. severe beating, students attending the respondent's school vs. the general child population, and differences among the seven countries.

As shown in Figures 2 and 3, the respondents' ratings of the prevalence of spanking in the general national population of children differ significantly from their ratings concerning students attending the schools they work at. Many respondents believe that getting a spank is a common experience of children in their country. In a majority of countries these ratings exceeded 50%. The most pessimistic picture of the prevalence of corporal punishment was provided by teachers in Poland; more than 75% estimated that this disciplinary measure was experienced by over 50% of Polish children, and as many as 60% believed the proportion was over 70% (mean rating: 71.2%, see Table 1). The most optimistic ratings were provided by teachers in Ukraine – less than 30% estimated that corporal punishment was experienced by more than half of Ukrainian children (mean rating: 44%).

The respondents' opinions on the prevalence of corporal punishment were significantly different when the question concerned students attending the schools they worked at. The participants' personal experience, their knowledge (rather than popular notions) made them estimate the percentage of children punished by parents with spanking significantly lower than for the general population.

Table 4. Ratings of the prevalence of corporal punishment on a national scale and at schools where the respondents teach.

*If all the children in our country/your school constitute 100% of the population, what percentage, do you think, experience...? (mean ratings, %)*

Country	Spanking by parents		Severe corporal punishment	
	Country population	School population	Country population	School opulation
Poland	72.1	55.1	26.4	12.9
Lithuania	62.3	35.4	23.0	6.2
Latvia	53.3	29.5	26.3	10.4
Bulgaria	58.3	43.3	12.8	7.5
Ukraine	44.0	24.8	22.3	10.3
Macedonia	82.3	43.49	20.7	12.8
Moldova	56.2	41.9	27.4	16.1
Total	63.0	40.0	22.3	11.0

The mean ratings were significantly lower when the respondents evaluated the experiences of children they knew personally, with the decrease being smaller for spanking; according to the participants, spanking was experienced by 63% of all the children in the researched countries and by 40% of the students attending their schools (on average). The rating of the prevalence of severe corporal punishment in national populations of children is twice as high as for the respondents' schools (mean values of 22% and 11%, respectively). We should bear in mind that the participants' students live in capital cities and the socio-economic status of their families is likely to be above the average country level, just as their parents' access to psychological support. In this case the tendency to idealize one's own situation and the situation of one's closest environment – well documented by sociological studies – seems to be based on rational premises.



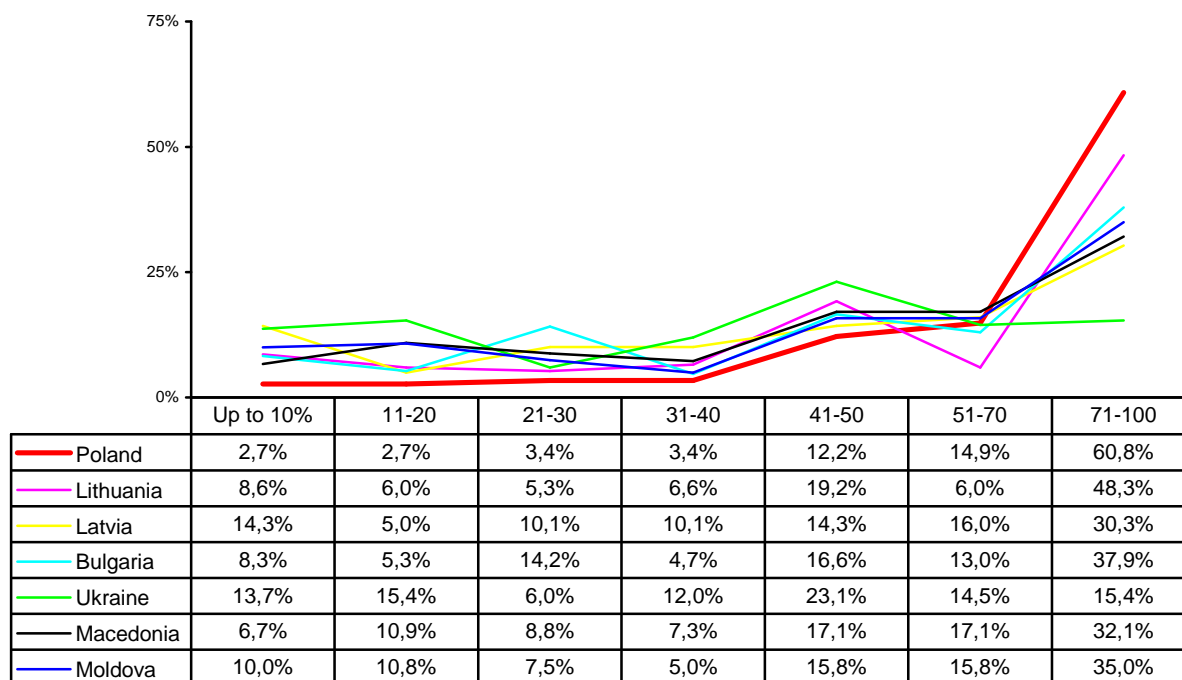


Figure 2. If all the children living in our country constitute 100% of the population, what percentage, do you think, experience **spanking by parents as a form of punishment?**

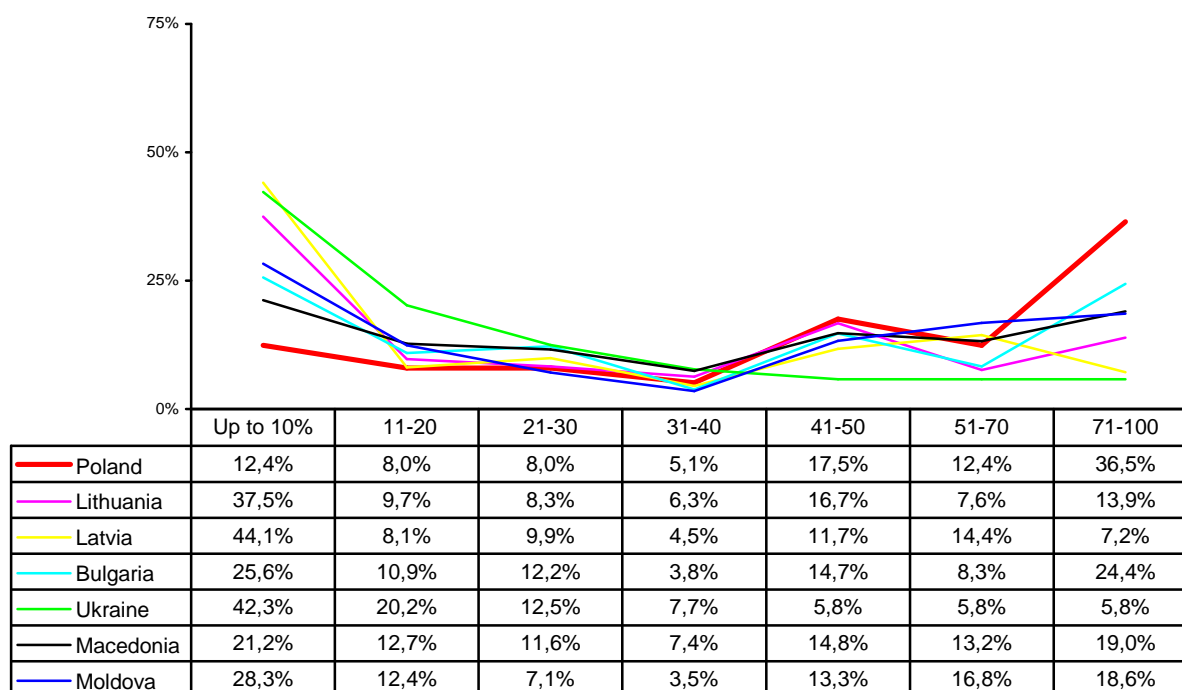


Figure 3. If all the children attending your school constitute 100% of the population, what percentage, do you think, experience **spanking by parents as a form of punishment?**

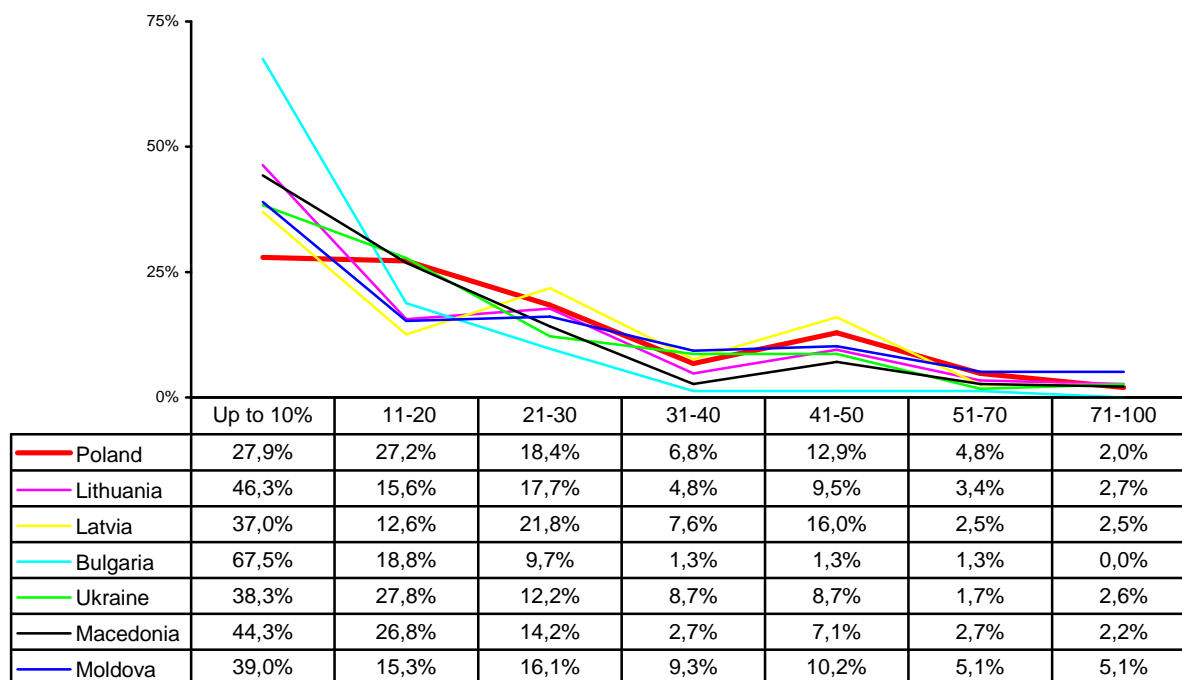


Figure 4. If all the children living ***in our country*** constitute 100% of the population, what percentage, do you think, experience ***severe corporal punishment (e.g., resulting in bruises or injuries)***?

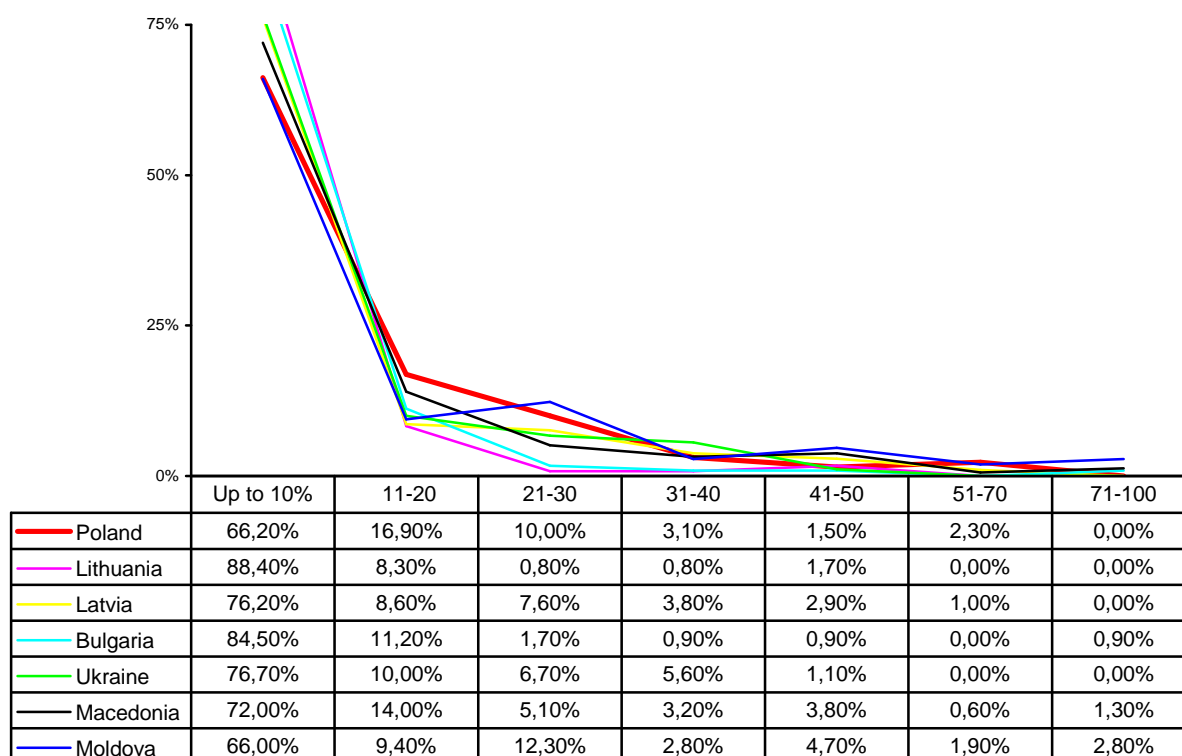


Figure 5. If all the children attending ***your school*** constitute 100% of the population, what percentage, do you think, experience ***severe corporal punishment (e.g., resulting in bruises or injuries)***?

The respondents' perceptions of the prevalence of severe corporal punishment of children, which may be categorized as battering due to its physical consequences (injuries), are significantly different from their ratings concerning the prevalence of spanking (as illustrated by the above mean values). One similarity between these ratings is the divergence between the perceived scale of maltreatment of the general child population in the country and the children attending the respondents' own schools. The distributions of the participants' responses are surprisingly consistent across the countries included in the study, especially when rating the experiences of their own students. Severe beating that breaches the boundaries of the disciplinary function of corporal punishment of children seems to violate norms recognized in all the countries participating in the study. Severe beating, however, does occur and – in the opinion of a significant group of teachers – is not a marginal problem.

Interesting findings were obtained through asking the participants about the dynamics of the use of corporal punishment against children in their countries. Has the prevalence of this disciplinary method changed over the past ten years? If yes, what is the direction of this change – has the frequency of beating children by their parents grown or decreased? The opinions of those of the respondents, who had a clear view on this issue (many participants – from 15% to 30% – chose the “hard to say” option), were polarized. Most participants believed that the prevalence of the use of corporal punishment of children had been changing, but they differed dramatically in their perceptions of the direction of the changes. Opinions that the prevalence had decreased and views that it had actually grown were distributed nearly symmetrically.

Therefore, the findings certainly cannot be perceived as a reliable basis for drawing conclusions about the actual dynamics of the problem. When seeking an explanation for such a great diversity of views on the issue, one may presume that the respondents do not know the real situation but rather try to infer the answer from popular opinions about the surrounding world. If the respondents relate to popular views about the effects of the systemic transformation – occurring in all the countries included in the study – such as stress-generating impoverishment of families, or to extensive media coverage of cases of violence against children, they are likely to respond that the prevalence of corporal punishment is growing. If, however, they rely on their knowledge about educational activities targeted at parents, the growing range of services available to families, and the legislative or political changes aimed at better child protection, they will probably answer: „The problem is decreasing”.

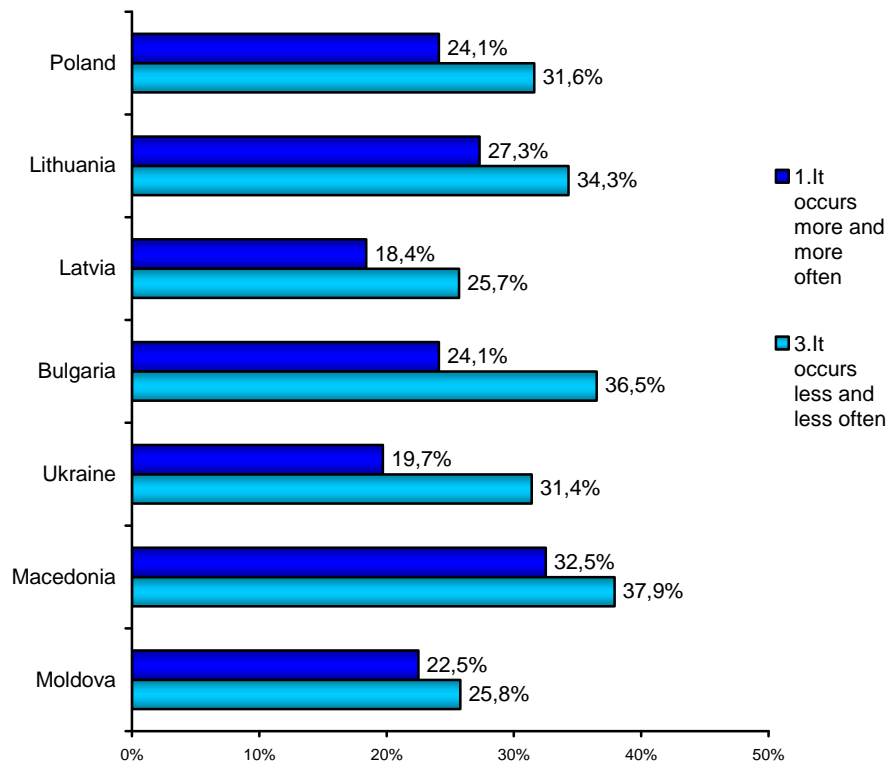


Figure 6. *Do you think that over the past 10 years parents' behaviours toward children have changed, as far as the use of corporal punishment is concerned?*

### 3.2. Social acceptance of corporal punishment of children

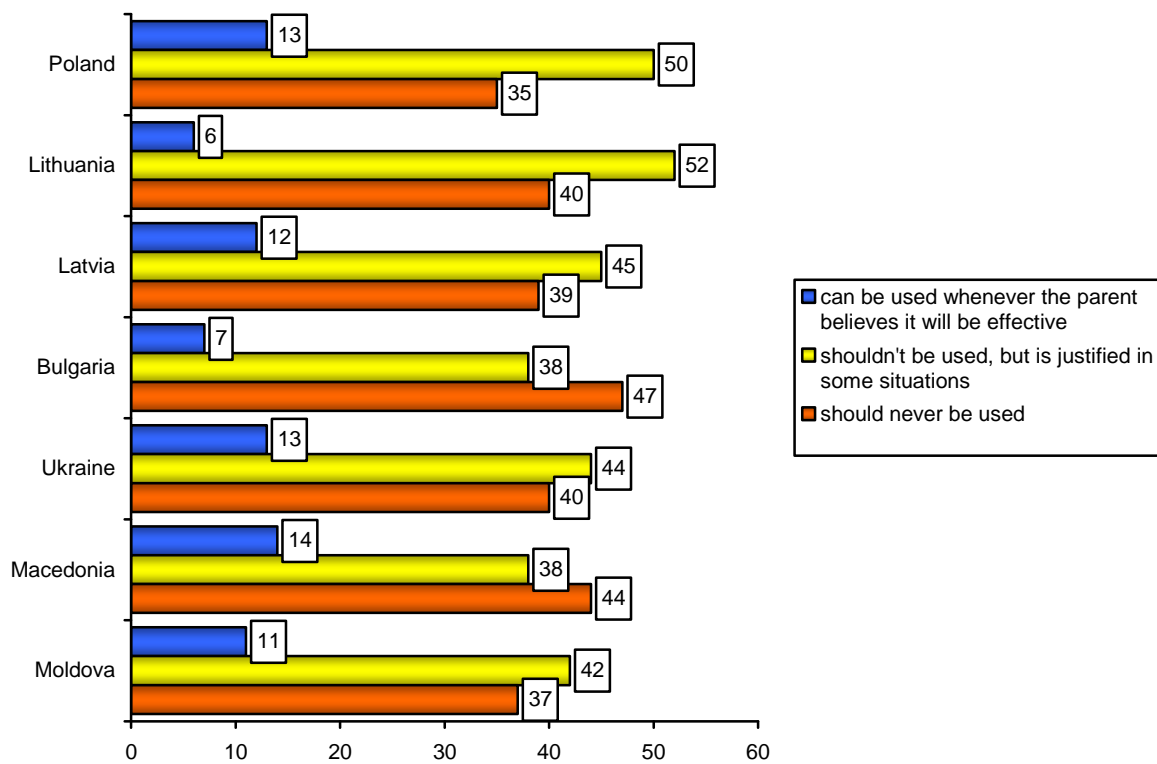
What are the respondents' opinions about proper relationships between children and their parents? Do adults in the countries included in the study perceive beating children as an acceptable child-rearing method? Answers to these questions were sought by assessing various dimensions of attitudes held by the general adult population in each country and by the sample of capital-city teachers.

First, let us have a look at the opinions held by the adult participants in the nationwide studies concerning the acceptability of corporal punishment. Data presented in Figure 7 point to a general similarity of the patterns of views on using corporal punishment across the seven countries. In most countries (except for Bulgaria and Macedonia) the dominating view could be described as a middle option – “Parents shouldn't beat their children, but sometimes they have to”. People supporting the opinion that parents should use corporal punishment whenever they think it is the right thing to do are in the minority in each of the seven countries; their overall share in the studied population does not exceed 14%. It may be concluded that the factors shared by the seven countries in the fields of culture, legal

regulations, children’s social status, etc., play a crucial role in shaping adults’ perceptions of the acceptability of beating children in the process of child rearing.

However, it is worth noting a few differences, which will be confirmed by findings from the studies conducted among teachers (reported later in this paper). The largest proportions of convinced opponents of corporal punishment of children were found in Bulgaria (47% of the sample strongly objected to beating children) and Macedonia (44%). Poles and Moldavians were most likely to justify beating children (35% and 37% opponents of corporal punishment, respectively).

Figure 7. *Do you believe beating a child by a parent as a „punishment” is a disciplinary measure that...*



In most countries a relationship was found between the level of education and the respondents’ views on the acceptability of corporal punishment of children. Better educated participants were more likely to strongly object to beating children by parents. The proportion of opponents of corporal punishment was also larger among people with higher income and living in big cities. The only exception was Bulgaria, where a reverse relationship was found – the proportion of opponents of corporal punishment of children was significantly higher among people living in rural areas (53%) than among respondents from the capital (Sofia) and other Bulgarian cities (42%).

In the countries, in which such a relationship was analyzed (i.e., Lithuania, Poland, and Latvia), it was found that the more the respondents accepted using corporal punishment of children, the larger prevalence they attributed to the phenomenon.

In the studies conducted among teachers working at capital-city schools a much wider range of attitudes concerning children-parents relationships – especially the use of corporal punishment by parents – was assessed. One important dimension of such attitudes is the respondents’ views on parental authority and on toughness and distance as components of rearing methods shaping the child-parent relationship.

As shown in the following charts (Figures 8–9), illustrating the proportions of teachers who agreed with two opinions concerning parent-child relationships (as specified in the chart descriptions), a small part of the respondents across the seven countries supported the view that children should be disciplined by use of fear. The respondents were more likely to support a tough child-rearing style, which was supposed to strengthen children and help them cope with future life difficulties. Nearly half of the teachers in the Moldavian and Latvian samples agreed with the notion of tough child rearing. It was the least likely to be supported by Polish and Bulgarian participants.

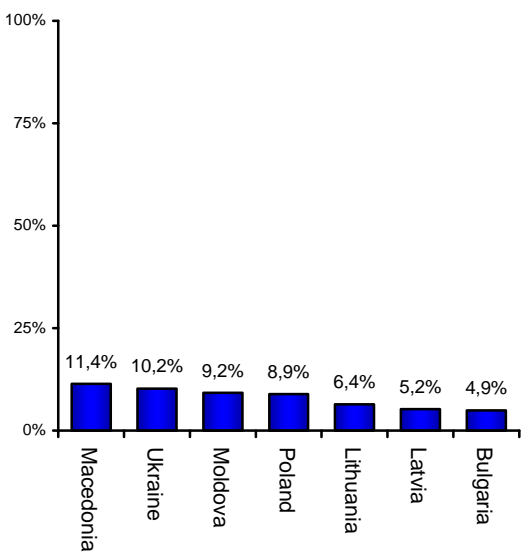


Figure 8. *Children should be afraid of their parents, because fear fosters obedience.* (total percentage of “definitely agree” and “rather agree” responses)

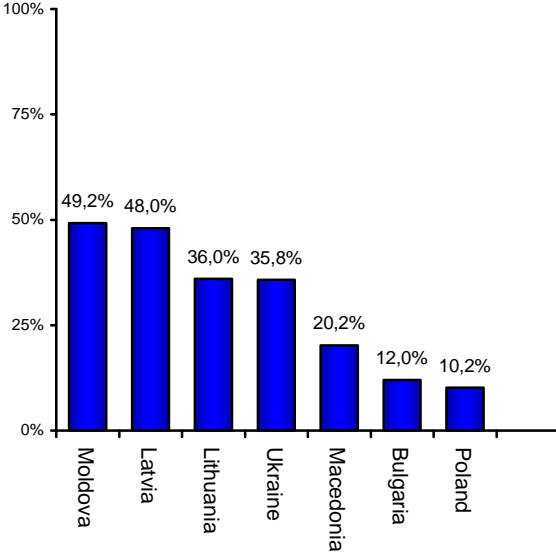


Figure 9. *Tough treatment by parents strengthens the child and, ultimately, is of benefit to him or her.* (total percentage of “definitely agree” and “rather agree” responses)

The teachers were also asked about their attitudes toward parental authority. A significant proportion believed that children were their parents' "property", and thus parents should be the only ones to make decisions about their fate. Understood in this way, parental authority was the most likely to be supported by participants from Moldova, Macedonia, Bulgaria, and Ukraine.

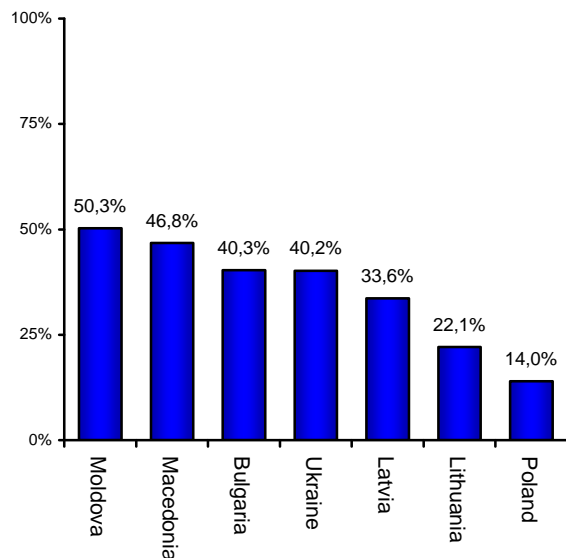


Figure 10. *A child is his/her parents' property, so the parents should be the only ones to make decisions about his/her fate.* (total percentage of "definitely agree" and "rather agree" responses)

However, contrary to what could be logically expected, the respondents' agreement with this statement did not mean that they supported lack of monitoring of how parents treat their children. A vast majority of the participants believed that law should regulate parents' behaviour toward their children, performing a monitoring and protective function. Interestingly, this position was most frequently supported by teachers in Moldova (87%), who were also the most likely to perceive children as their parents' property and – as documented further in this report – to accept beating children for a variety of reasons. The high level of agreement about the need to legally regulate parents' behaviour towards children was accompanied by a slightly weaker, yet significant support for a legal ban on using corporal punishment by parents (64% supporters, on average). Please bear in mind that among the countries participating in the study, such a ban has been introduced in Latvia, Bulgaria, and Ukraine. In the remaining four countries there has been an intense public debate on this issue. In 2005 a Polish legislative proposal to impose such a ban was strongly opposed by a large proportion of the country's MPs. Meanwhile, a majority of the respondents supported imposing a legal ban on beating children by parents. The weakest support for such legislation – and for any legal control of the way parents treat their children – was expressed by the

teachers in Latvia, where a legal ban on beating children has been in force since 1998. Have the effects of the regulation disappointed Latvian teachers? Or have they always opposed it? Unfortunately, no empirical data are available to help us interpret this intriguing finding.

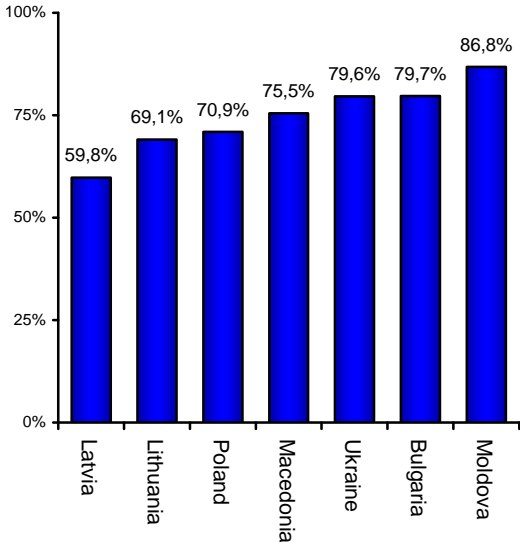


Figure 11. *Should the way parents treat their children be regulated by law?* (total percentage of “definitely yes” and “rather yes” responses)

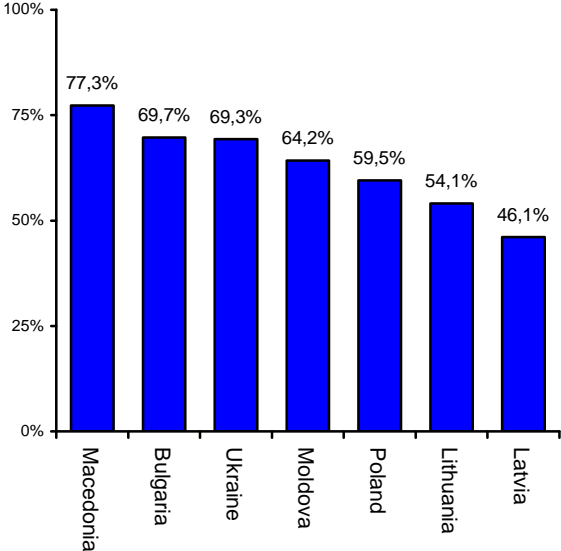


Figure 12. *Do you think that using corporal punishment by parents should be legally banned?* (total percentage of “definitely yes” and “rather yes” responses)

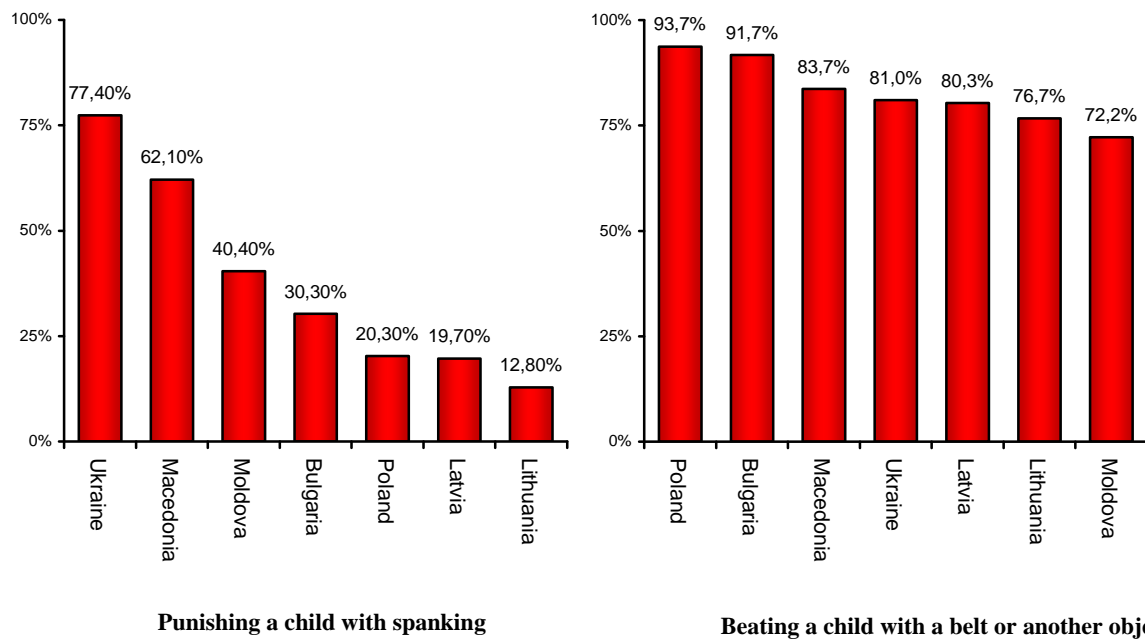
Another indication of the respondents’ attitudes toward parental authority was their view on third parties’ interference in the family in cases of child maltreatment by parents.

A relatively low level of approval for such an interference in cases of spanking (it was supported by 37% of the sample, on average) grew to virtual unanimity in response to beating with a belt (85%).

The level of support for a third-party interference if a parent punishes a child with spanking diversifies the sample of teachers across the seven countries. Interestingly, the fact that a country has imposed a legal ban on corporal punishment of children does not significantly influence the level of public consent to controlling parents’ behaviour in this respect. To illustrate this, in Ukraine such a consent was expressed by more than 77% of the respondents, in Latvia – by 20%, and in Bulgaria – by 30%. As you probably remember, these are the countries where the ban has been already imposed. The strongest resistance to interfering when a parent punishes a child with spanking was expressed by Lithuanians, Latvians (!), and Poles.



Figure 13. Do you think third parties (persons not being family members) should intervene when they see a parent... (total percentage of “definitely yes” and “rather yes” responses)



As demonstrated by the results of the evaluation of corporal punishment as a child-rearing method – illustrated in Figures 14 and 15 – using corporal punishment of children is often perceived as parents’ failure and as humiliating to the child. Nearly 80% of the respondents in Bulgaria, Macedonia, and Ukraine considered beating as a parental behaviour that humiliates the child. In the remaining countries the support for such a perception of beating a child was also relatively high (71%, on average). Parents who use corporal punishment are not good at rearing children – this belief was shared by almost two thirds of the respondents. Again, it was most likely to be expressed by people in Ukraine, Bulgaria, and Macedonia.

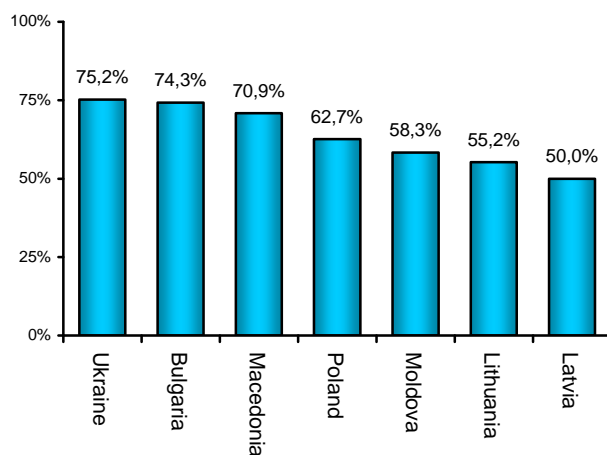


Figure 14. Do you believe using corporal punishment of children or giving a child a hiding means that:

1. the parents are not good at rearing children or
2. it is as good an educational method as any other?

(% of responses: „the parents are not good at rearing children”)

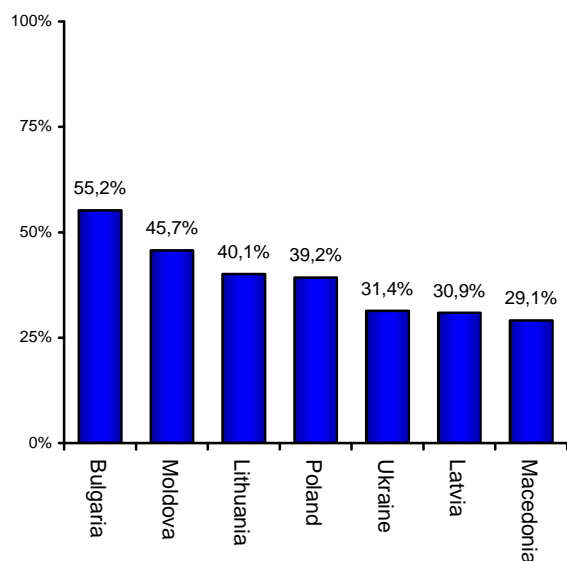


Figure 15. *Do you believe that using corporal punishment or giving a child a hiding is or is not humiliating to the child? (% of responses: „It is humiliating”)*

### 3.3. When is beating acceptable?

Widespread condemnation of using corporal punishment in the process of child rearing, which seems to be emerging from the presented analyses, is not fully reflected in the respondents' views on acceptable ways of punishing a child for specific offences.

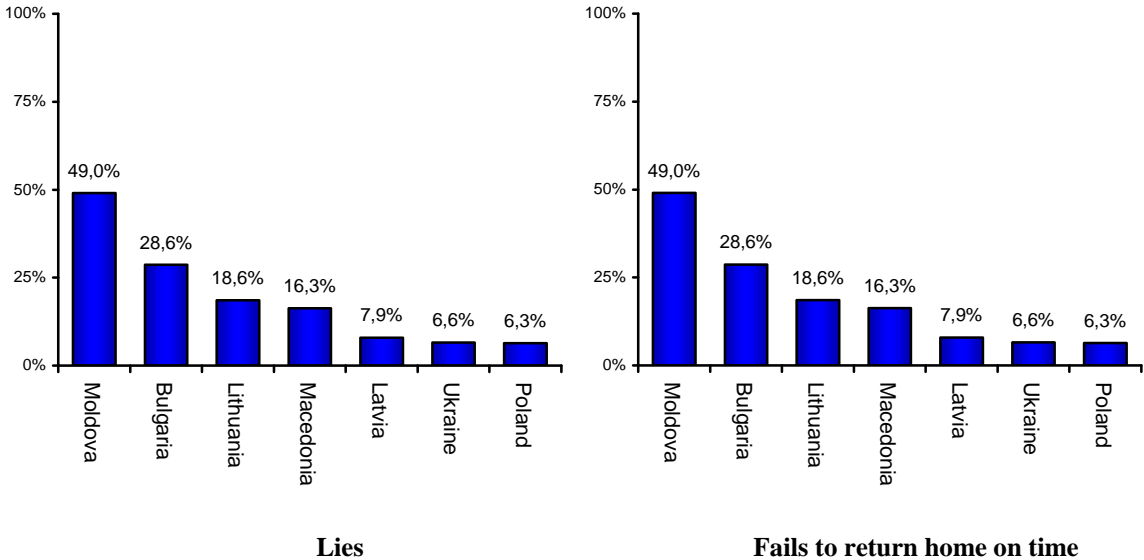
The respondents were asked about how much it was justified to give a child a hiding and if they were prepared to do so in response to specific forms of the child's misbehaviour. As shown in the charts below, in the light of the teachers' previously reported opinions, a relatively high proportion of the respondents claimed they would be ready to hit a child as a punishment. This response was most likely to be triggered by children's behaviours perceived as signs of moral corruption, such as theft (from 67% to 20% of the respondents accepted using corporal punishment in such cases), drinking alcohol (from 61% to 22%), or playing truant (from 50% to 7%). Interestingly, however, a significant proportion of the respondents believed that disobedience to parents (40%–14%) and explicit disrespect toward them also deserved a spanking. The participants were most reluctant to use corporal punishment if a child damaged something, did not look after his or her clothes, or had poor marks at school. It seems that what these offences have in common is the absence of explicit bad intentions. People are most likely to find beating justified when a child breaches the fundamental norms of social adaptation or questions his/her parents' authority.

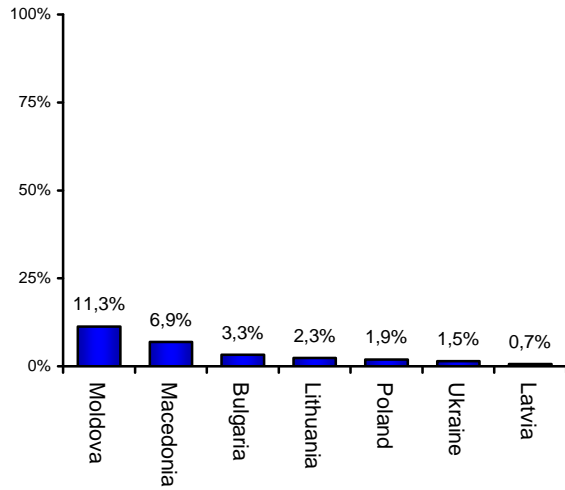
As follows from the charts presented below, the teachers in Moldavia were most willing to punish children with beating. For each of the assessed children's offences the percentage of such responses in the Moldavian sample was higher than in the remaining

countries, and nearly two thirds of the Moldavian teachers would apply corporal punishment if a child committed a theft or drank alcohol. Please remember that the Moldavian sample had the largest proportion of teachers who regarded children as their parents’ property (50%). At the same time, this group of respondents was characterized by one of the highest rates of disagreement with corporal punishment of children (37%). We should also remember that 64% of the Moldavian respondents supported introducing a legal ban on corporal punishment of children. Clearly, some of them would be also willing to violate such a regulation.

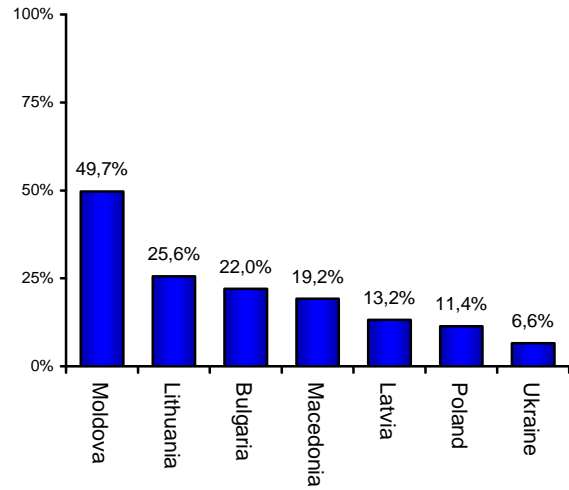
The respondents from Ukraine, Latvia, and Poland were the most lenient in their decisions about using corporal punishment. Still, more than 40% of the Ukrainian and Latvian teachers would punish a child with beating if he or she committed a theft, and nearly one fourth of the respondents in these three countries would beat a child for drinking alcohol.

Figure 16.  
*Most people at least once in their lives got a hiding from their parents or caregivers. 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 ...*

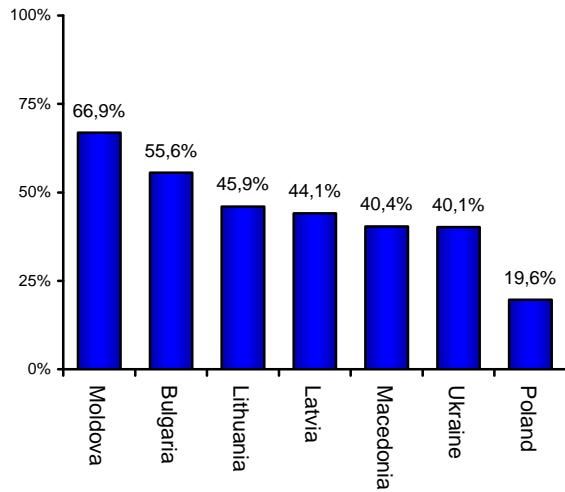




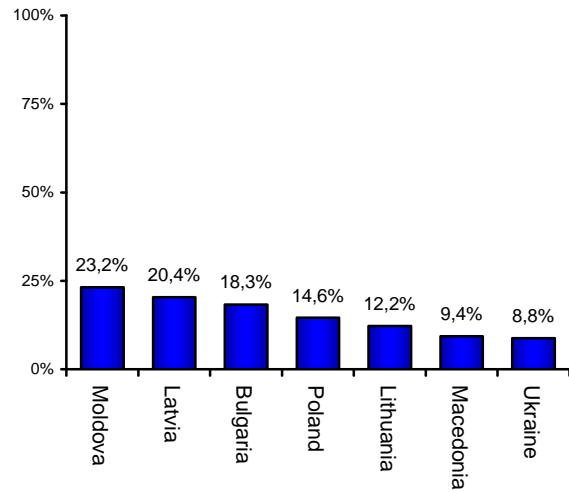
**Has poor marks at school**



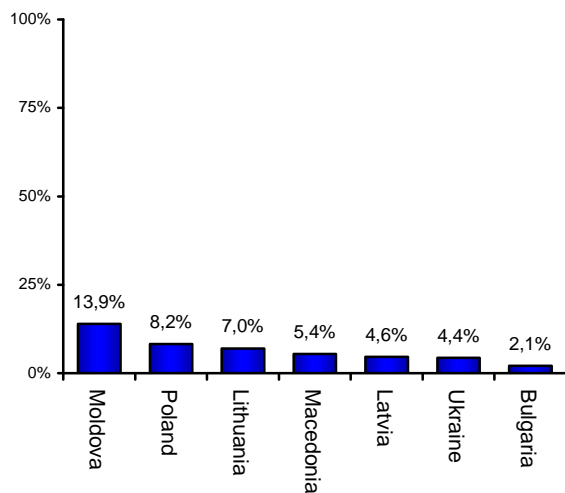
**Plays truant**



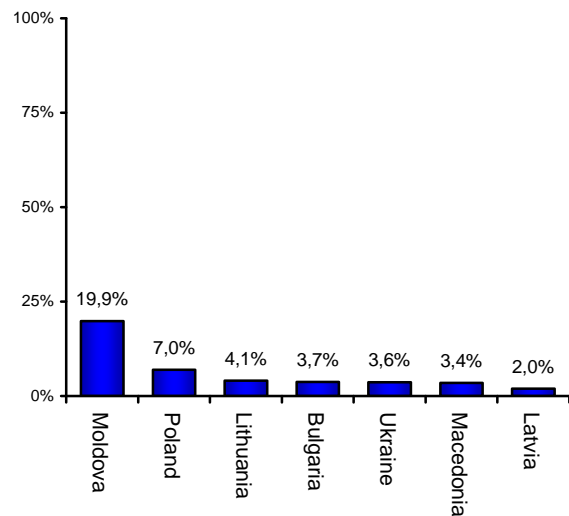
**Commits a petty theft**



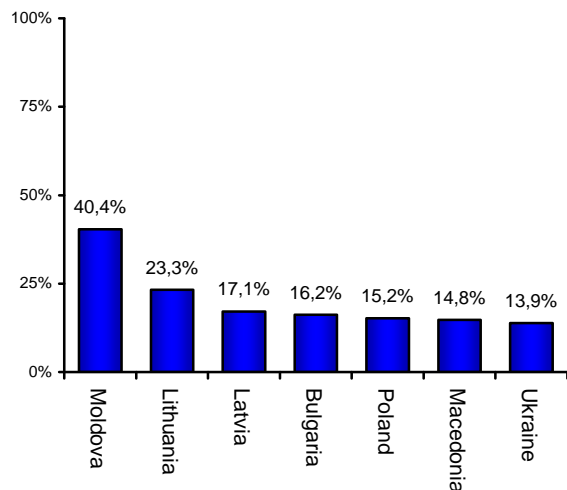
**Shows disrespect toward parents**



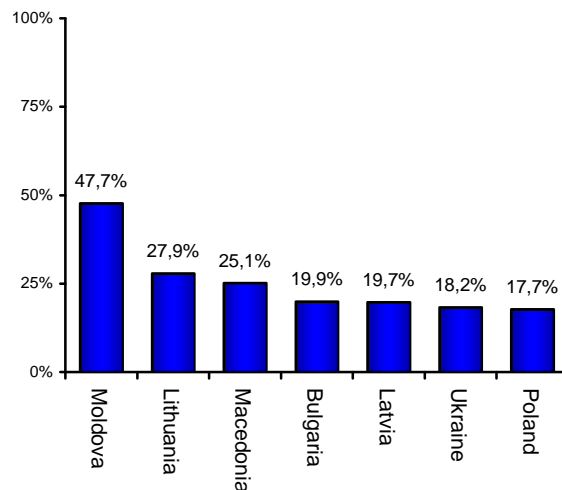
**Damages something of significant value**



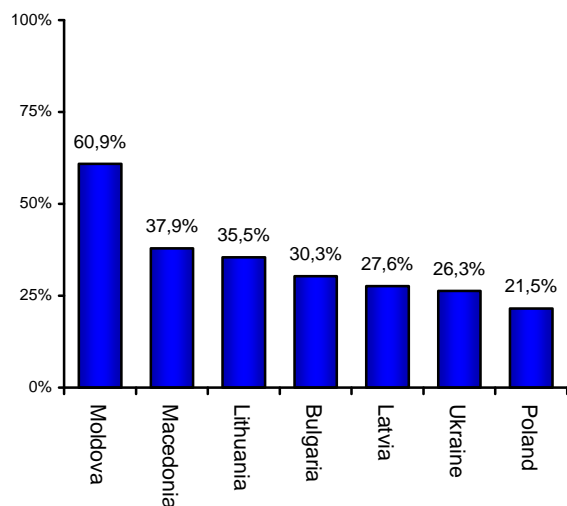
**Doesn't look after his/her clothes**



**Doesn't obey his/her parents**



**Starts smoking cigarettes**



**Drinks alkohol**

## 4. Emotional abuse, sexual abuse and neglect

### 4.1. How many children, as perceived by the respondents, experience emotional abuse, sexual abuse, and neglect? Is the prevalence of these problems changing?

In the respondents' opinions emotional abuse of children, in the forms assessed in the study – i.e., humiliating verbal abuse and emotional neglect (lack of interest in the child's problems) – is prevalent in their countries (it should be emphasized, however, that punishing with spanking, discussed in the section focused on corporal punishment, remains the most

frequent form of child maltreatment). High ratings of the prevalence of emotional abuse of children show a slight diversification across countries. Verbal abuse is experienced by nearly all children – that is the opinion expressed by 20% – 30% of the participants. There is one notable exception – teachers from Poland, who are significantly less likely to formulate such radical opinions (8.2%). According to the respondents, children in Moldova are most likely to experience their parents’ lack of interest in their problems (56% of children, on average); in the remaining countries the estimated percentage of such children – though lower than in Moldova – is also relatively high, amounting to nearly 50%.

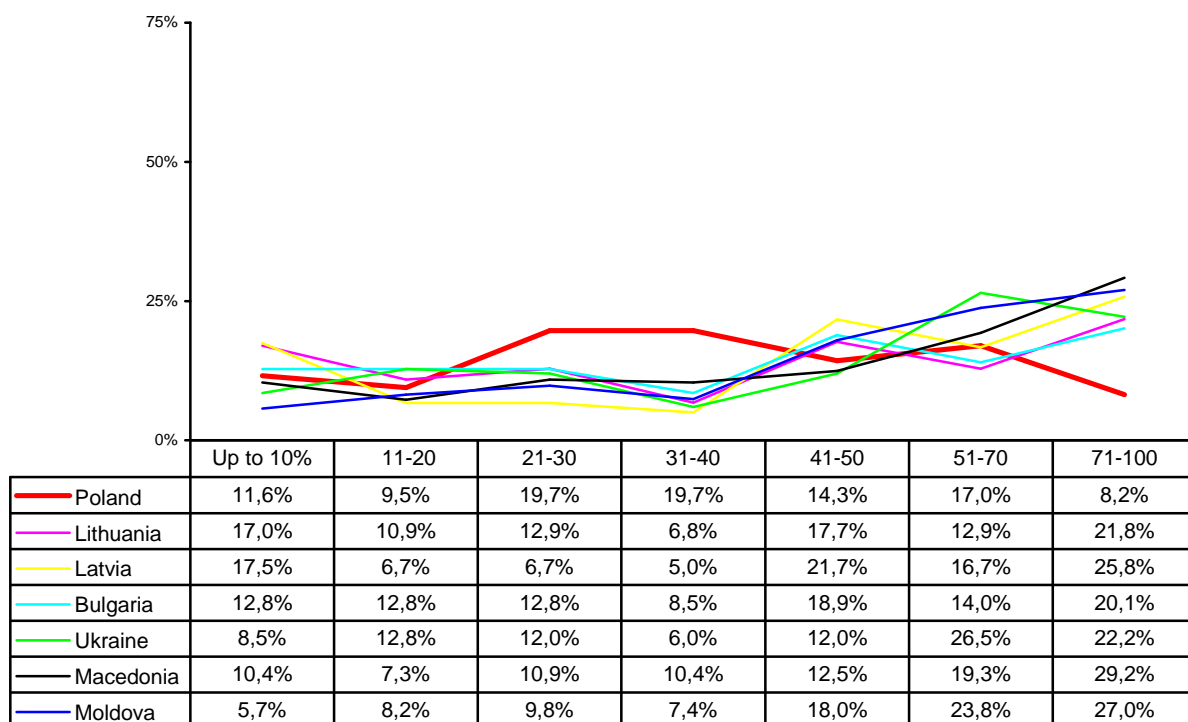
Similarly to corporal punishment, the respondents (teachers) estimate the prevalence of emotional abuse in the general population of children in their countries as higher than for the population of children attending the schools where they work. However, as shown in Table 5, those gaps are narrower than in the assessment of corporal punishment, which may be accounted for by the respondents’ self-reported experiences discussed in the next section of this paper.

As we will find out, emotional abuse and neglect are the most frequent forms of abuse encountered by the participants in their work with children.

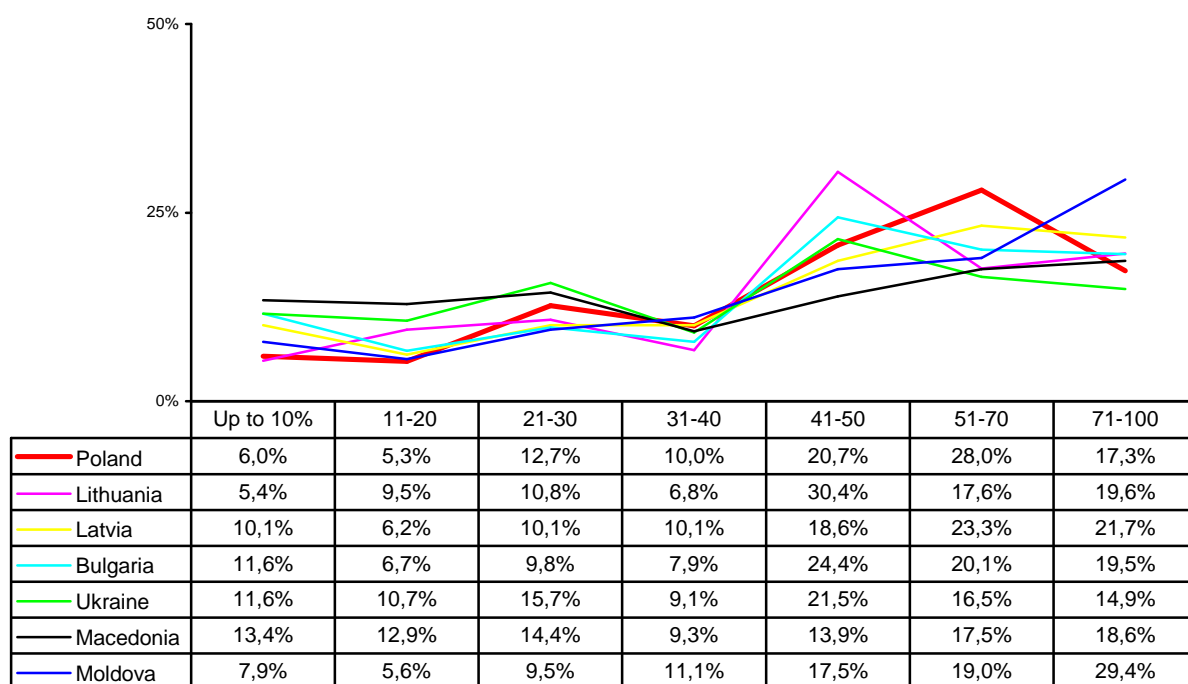
Table 5. Perceived prevalence of emotional abuse of children in the general (national) population of children and in the schools where the respondents work.

*If all the children living in our country constitute 100% of the population, what percentage, do you think, experience ...? (mean estimations)*

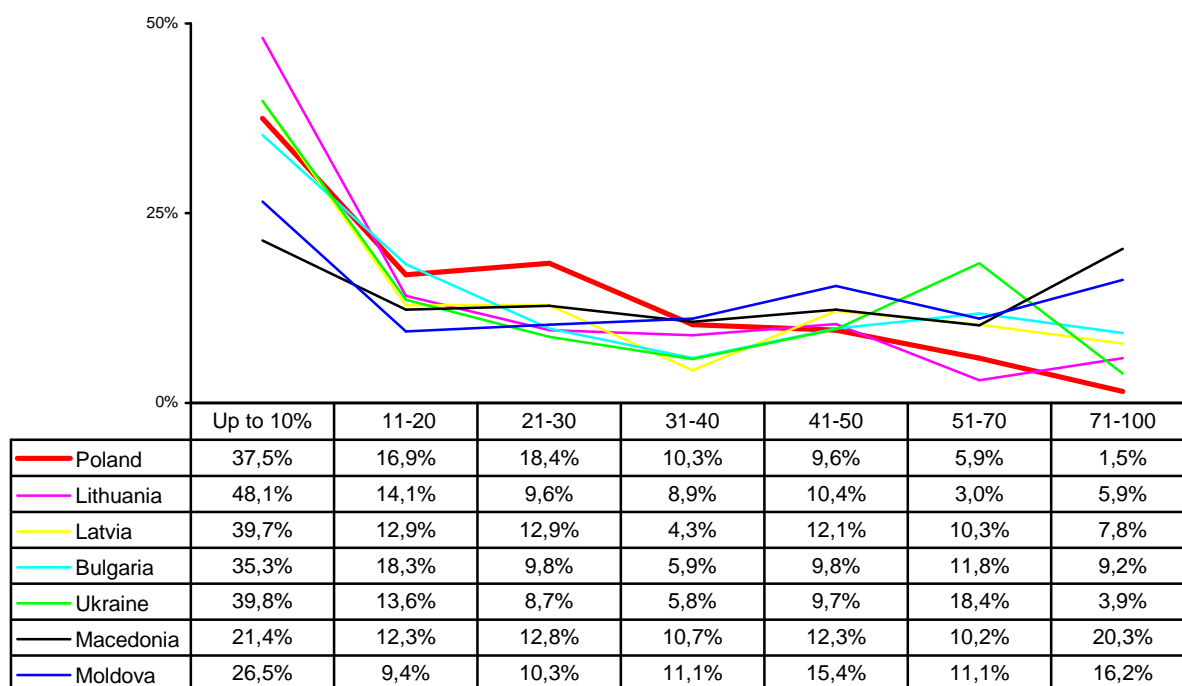
Country	Calling names, verbal humiliation (%)		Lack of interest in children’s problems (%)	
	Country population	School population	Country population	School population
Poland	40.99	24.75	52.42	37.03
Lithuania	46.01	23.56	51.62	33.81
Latvia	51.17	29.11	51.51	40.73
Bulgaria	47.13	31.80	50.10	36.09
Ukraine	52.12	30.25	45.70	30.21
Macedonia	54.95	42.53	45.76	41.76
Moldova	56.38	40.32	55.48	42.79
Total	49.74	32.29	50.16	37.79



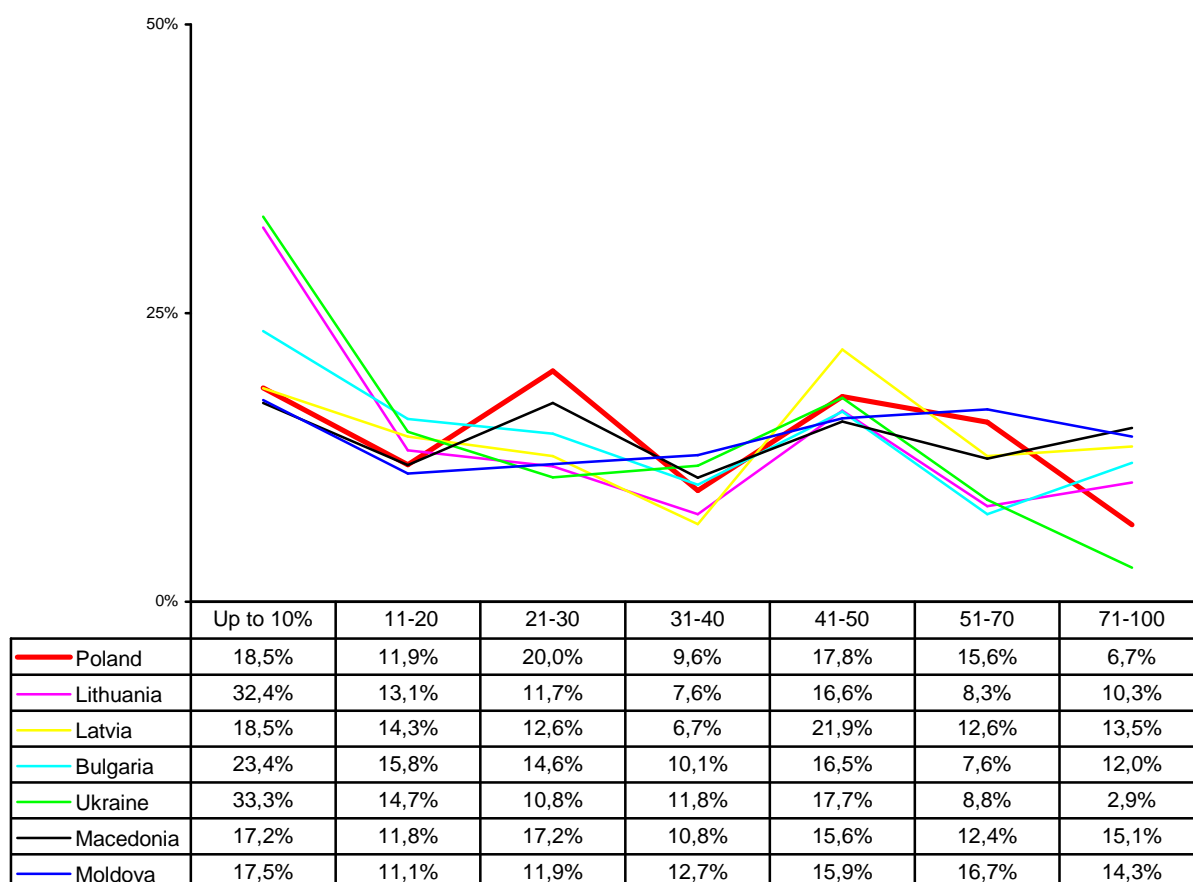
**Figure 17.** *If all the children living **in our country** constitute 100% of the population, what percentage, do you think, experience calling names or verbal humiliation?*



**Figure 18.** *If all the children living **in our country** constitute 100% of the population, what percentage, do you think, experience lack of interest in the child's problems?*



**Figure 19.** If all the children attending your school constitute 100% of the population, what percentage, do you think, experience *calling name or verbal humiliation*?



**Figure 20.** If all the children attending your school constitute 100% of the population, what percentage, do you think, experience *lack of interest in the child's problems*?



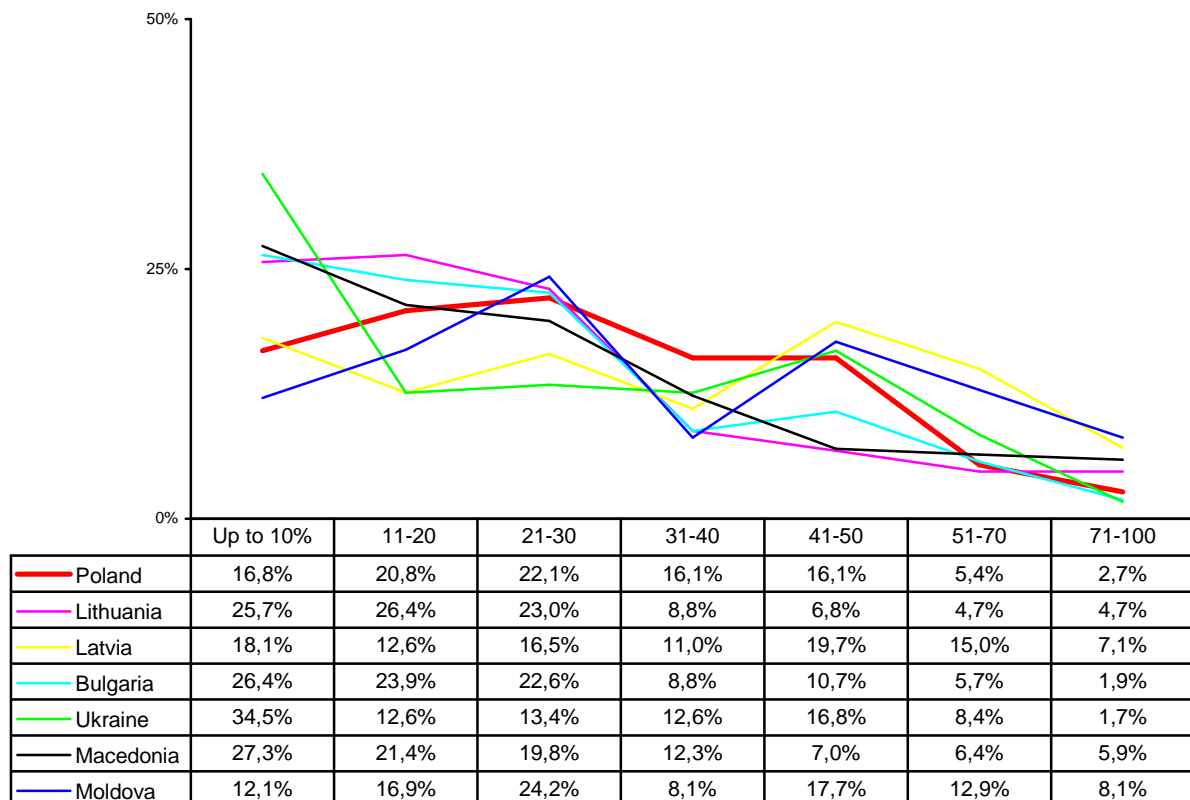
**Physical neglect**, i.e., insufficient care of the child’s hygiene, clothing, and nutrition, as well as leaving the child unattended, is experienced by one third (on average, as estimated by the respondents) of the children living in the countries included in the study. The respondents’ ratings in all seven countries are similar, as illustrated in Figures 21–24.

Physical neglect is perceived as the most prevalent by teachers in Macedonia and Latvia (38% of children, on average), while the problem of leaving children unattended is assessed as the most frequent by teachers in Poland (35%).

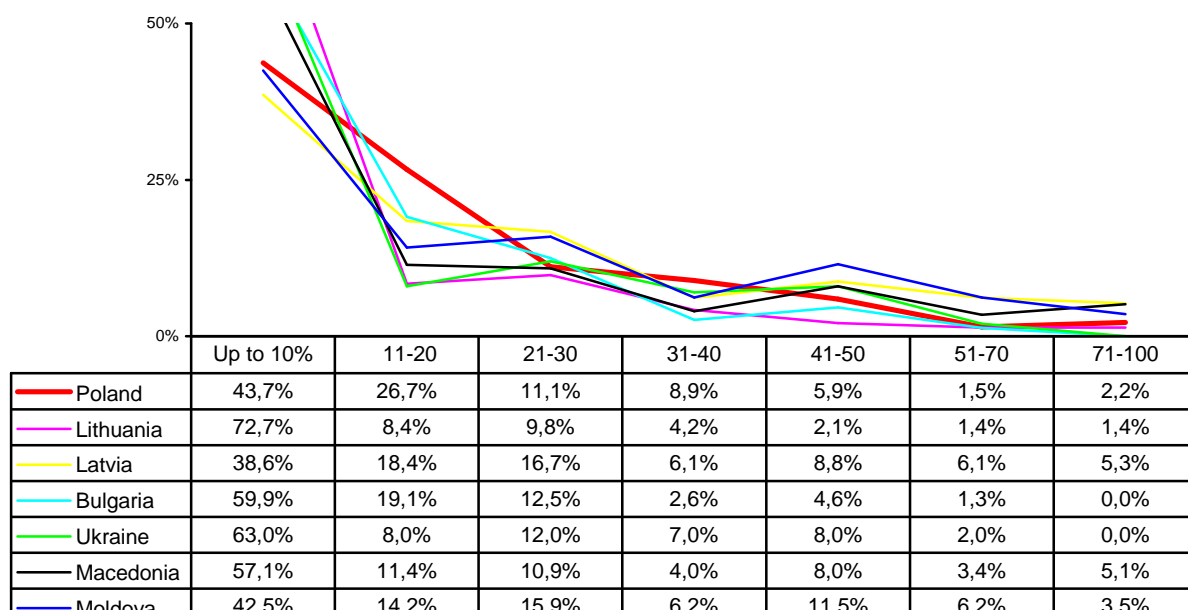
**Table 6. Perceived prevalence of child neglect in the general (national) population of children and in the respondents’ schools.**

*If all the children living in our country constitute 100% of the population, what percentage, do you think, experience...? (mean estimations)*

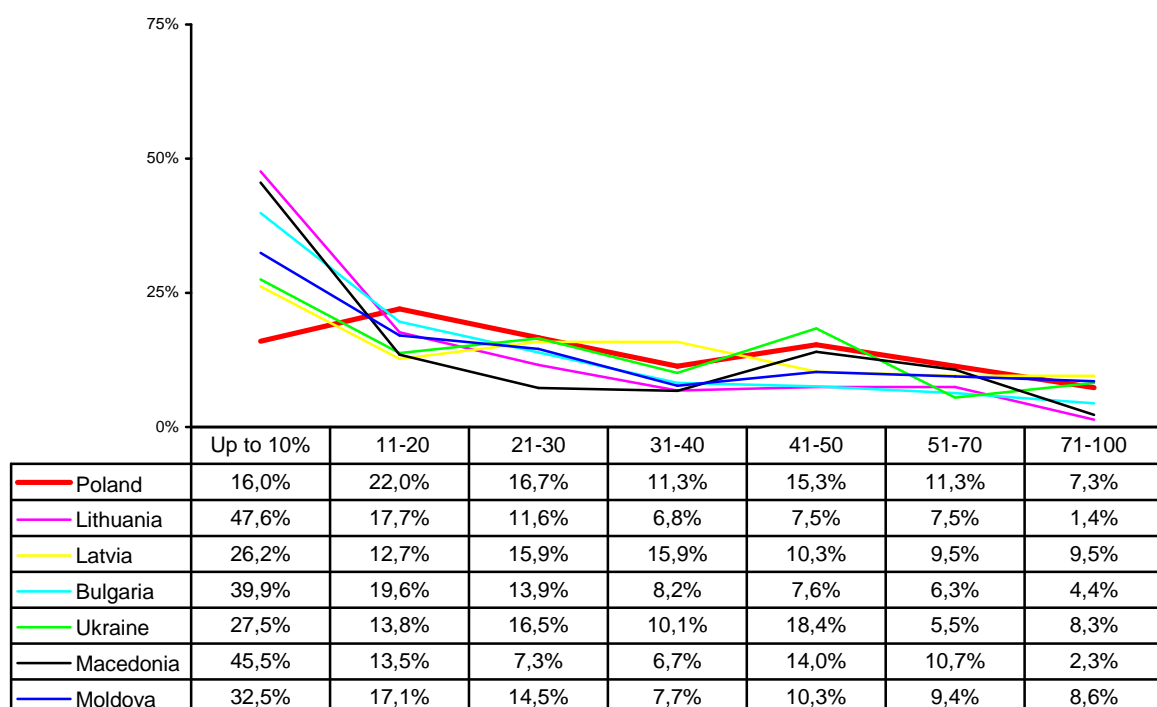
Country	Physical neglect (%)		Leaving children unattended (%)	
	Country population	School population	Country population	School population
Poland	31.88	19.83	35.69	23.65
Lithuania	27.53	12.90	22.50	7.19
Latvia	38.47	25.93	34.91	17.73
Bulgaria	27.15	14.90	25.82	15.28
Ukraine	29.66	16.35	27.80	17.83
Macedonia	29.78	21.63	26.20	15.98
Moldava	38.48	25.43	31.46	20.06
Altogether	31.49	19.35	29.19	16.85



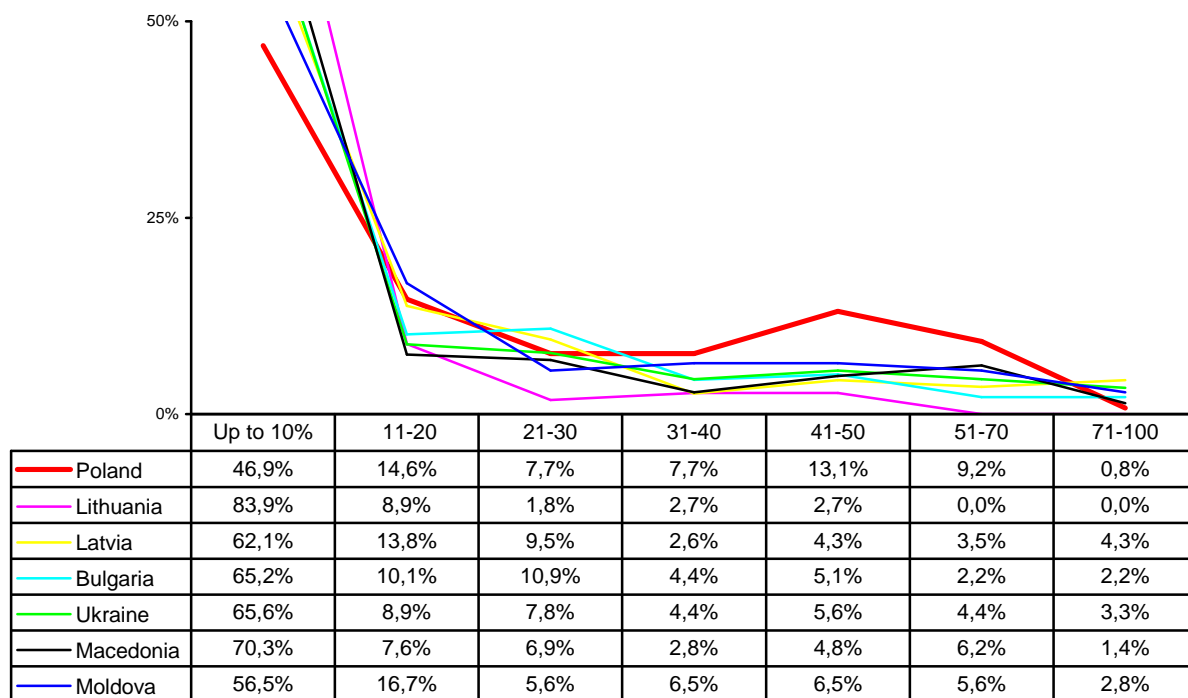
**Figure 21.** *If all the children living in our country constitute 100% of the population, what percentage, do you think, experience physical neglect – insufficient care of their hygiene, clothing, and nutrition?*



**Figure 22.** If all the children attending your school constitute 100% of the population, what percentage, do you think, experience *physical neglect – insufficient care of their hygiene, clothing, and nutrition*?



**Figure 23.** If all the children living in our country constitute 100% of the population, what percentage, do you think, experience *being left unattended*?



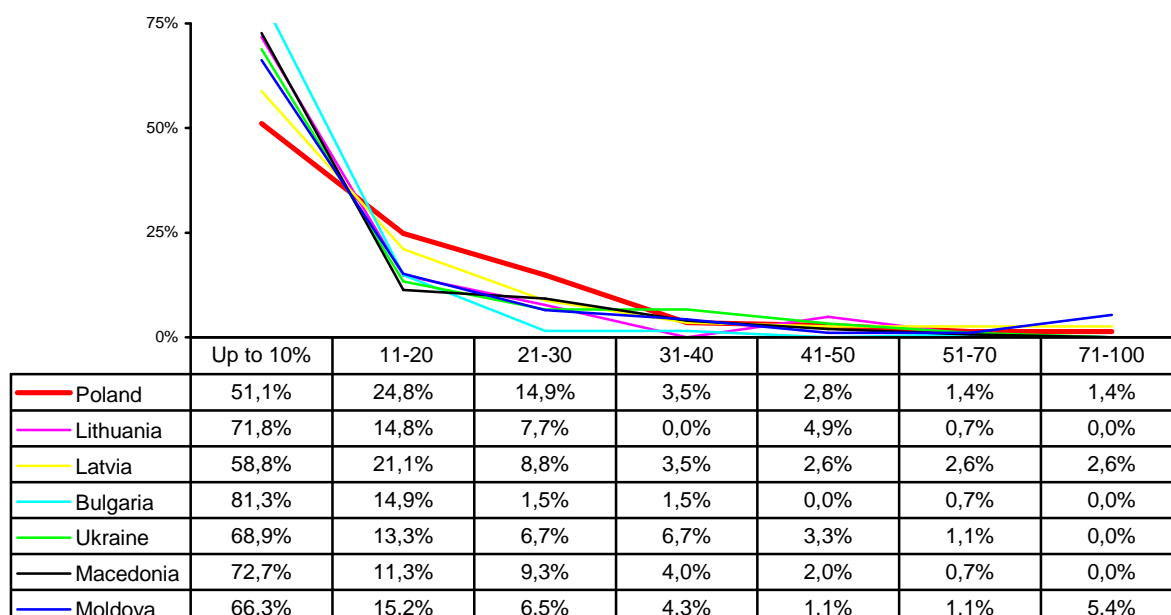
**Figure 24.** *If all the children attending your school constitute 100% of the population, what percentage, do you think, experience being **left unattended**?*

**Sexual abuse** is the least frequently noticed form of child abuse. The respondents' perceptions of its prevalence show the widest gap between the estimations for the general population of children in the country and the population of children attending the respondent's school. "Though relatively infrequent, sexual abuse does occur in my country. However, it does not occur among my students" – this is how the participants seem to perceive the problem, as we may conclude from the findings. The prevalence of the problem, as perceived by the teachers participating in the study – is the highest in Poland and Moldavia (17% of children, on average), and the lowest in Bulgaria (8%).

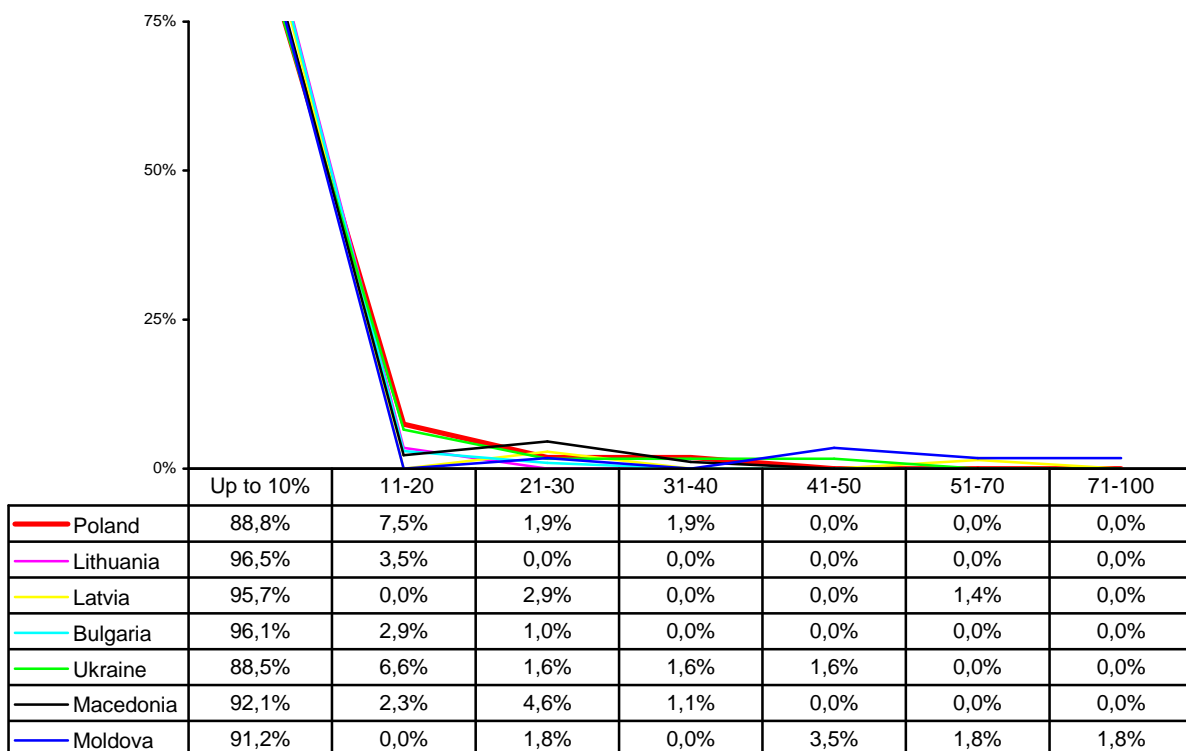
Table 7. Perceived prevalence of child sexual abuse in the general (national) sample and in the respondents' schools.

*If all the children living in our country constitute 100% of the population, what percentage, do you think, experience...? (mean estimations)*

Country	Sexual abuse (%)	
	Country population	School population
Poland	16,9	4,7
Lithuania	12,1	2,0
Latvia	16,8	3,7
Bulgaria	8,6	1,8
Ukraine	13,2	4,9
Macedonia	11,9	4,1
Moldova	16,9	7,6
Altogether	13,6	3,9



**Figure 25.** *If all the children living in our country constitute 100% of the population, what percentage, do you think, experience sexual abuse by adults?*



**Figure 26.** *If all the children attending your school constitute 100% of the population, what percentage, do you think, experience **sexual abuse by adults**?*

Many respondents found it difficult to assess the **dynamics** of various forms of child abuse in the past decade. This difficulty concerned mainly the evaluation of the actual scale of the child abuse problem. A large proportion (39%) of the respondents answered: “It’s hard to say”.

The highest proportion of the respondents notice a negative growth trend in relation to the problem of leaving children unattended. On average, 61% of the respondents believe that children in their country are more and more likely to be left without care. This opinion is expressed by as many as 78% of the Moldovan sample. The lowest proportion (though still a 53% majority) of the respondents notice a growing problem of leaving children without care in Poland and Bulgaria.

Nearly half of the respondents think that during the past few years parents have become more and more likely to yell at their children. Teachers in Bulgaria perceive this negative trend most frequently (66%). They are also likely to notice undesirable changes in humiliating forms of verbal abuse by parents, such as calling names (50%).

We should note, however, that a proportion of the sample perceive positive changes: on average, 13% believe that parents are getting better in taking care of their children, 10%

perceive a decreased frequency of communicating with children by yelling, and 14% think that children are less and less likely to be humiliated verbally.

The lowest polarization of opinions was found in relation to the dynamics of child sexual abuse. Although many respondents feel unable to estimate it, a majority of those who attempt to do it, believe that the problem is growing. Obviously, such evaluations may result more from the growing public perception of the problem and its extensive media coverage than from increased actual numbers of victims.

**Table 8.** *Do you think that in the past 10 years parents' behaviours toward children have changed with regard to:*

<b>Leaving children unattended (%)</b>					
	Occurs more and more often	Remains at unchanged level	Occurs less and less often	It's hard to say	No answer
Poland	53.8	20.3	13.3	12.0	0.6
Lithuania	65.7	13.4	8.7	11.6	0.6
Latvia	67.1	14.5	10.5	6.6	1.3
Bulgaria	53.1	11.6	12.9	11.6	10.8
Ukraine	59.9	16.8	11.7	8.8	2.9
Macedonia	58.6	9.4	24.6	5.9	1.5
Moldova	78.1	10.6	8.6	2.0	0.7
Total	61.5	13.4	13.3	8.6	3.1

<b>Verbal abuse / Yelling</b>					
	Occurs more and more often	Remains at unchanged level	Occurs less and less often	It's hard to say	No answer
Poland	34.2	50.0	5.7	9.5	0.6
Lithuania	43.0	29.1	12.2	15.7	
Latvia	36.8	35.5	11.8	13.2	2.6
Bulgaria	66.0	16.2	9.5	7.5	0.8
Ukraine	43.8	38.7	9.5	7.3	0.7
Macedonia	54.2	18.7	16.3	7.4	3.4
Moldova	50.3	26.5	5.3	13.9	4.0
Total	48.5	29.1	10.3	10.4	1.7

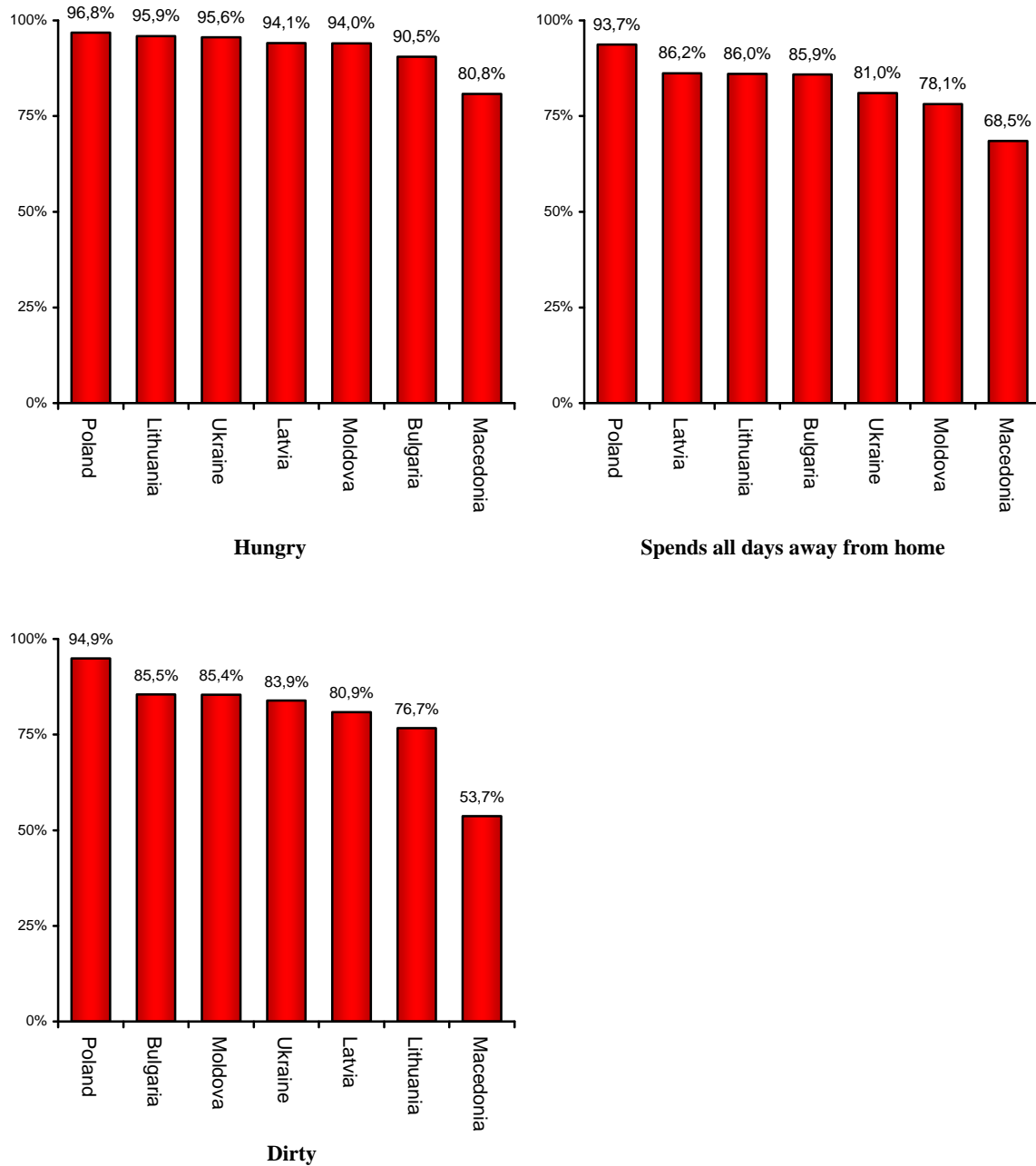
<b>Calling names, humiliating</b>					
	Occurs more and more often	Remains at unchanged level	Occurs less and less often	It's hard to say	No answer
Poland	32.3	36.7	10.1	19.6	1.3
Lithuania	29.7	27.3	12.8	30.2	
Latvia	27.6	33.6	13.2	23.0	2.6
Bulgaria	50.2	21.2	14.5	13.3	0.8
Ukraine	34.3	38.0	15.3	10.9	1.5
Macedonia	47.3	17.7	20.7	11.3	3.0
Moldova	49.0	25.2	9.9	13.2	2.6
Total	39.7	27.4	14.1	17.1	1.6

<b>Child sexual abuse</b>					
	Occurs more and more often	Remains at unchanged level	Occurs less and less often	It's hard to say	No answer
Poland	45.6	17.1	2.5	33.5	1.3
Lithuania	57.0	8.7	2.9	31.4	
Latvia	46.7	10.5	4.6	36.2	2.0
Bulgaria	32.8	9.1	13.7	40.2	4.1
Ukraine	24.1	13.9	5.8	51.8	4.4
Macedonia	33.0	9.4	15.3	39.9	2.5
Moldova	35.1	9.9	9.3	41.1	4.6
Total	39.0	11.0	8.4	39.0	2.7

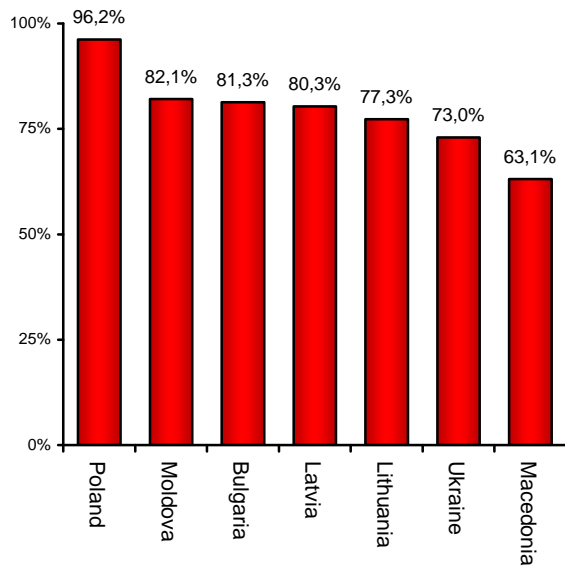
In the section concerning corporal punishment of children, we analyzed the respondents' opinions on third parties' interference in the family as an indication of their attitude toward the borders of parental authority. A similar analysis may be conducted in relation to the respondents' acceptance of such an interference in case of other forms of child maltreatment by parents. As shown in Figure 27, the respondents express a nearly general acceptance of such an interference in response to various forms of child neglect. If a child shows signs of malnutrition or poor hygiene, or if his/her parents do not provide adequate care and supervision, third parties' interventions are perceived as acceptable or even necessary.

The respondents are almost unanimous about this issue; nearly all of them believe that such treatment of children signals abuse of parental authority. The participants' opinions show little variation across countries. We should note, however, that parents and family members' exclusive right to make decisions about the child is most likely to be supported by the respondents in Macedonia, whereas Poles are unanimously in favour of restricting this right.

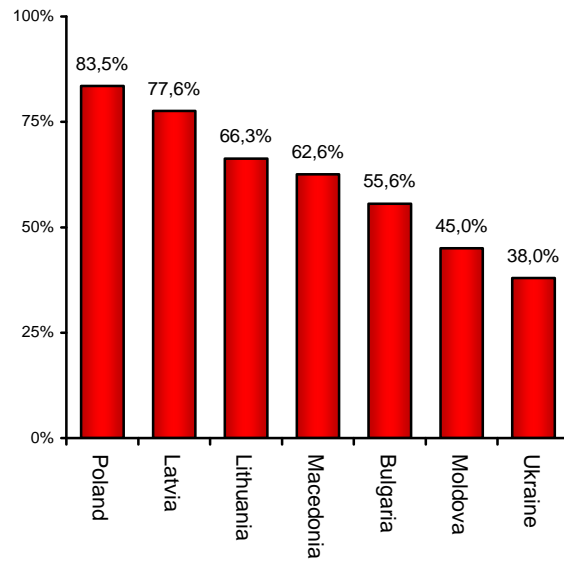
**Figure 27.** Do you think third parties (persons not being family members) should intervene when they see that a child is... (total percentage of “definitely yes” and “rather yes” responses)



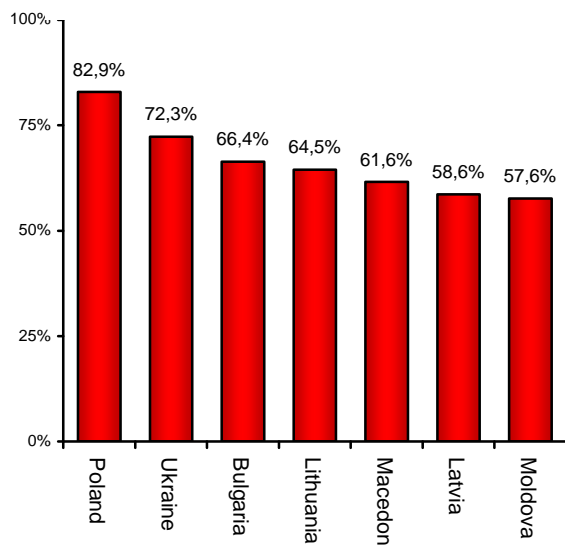




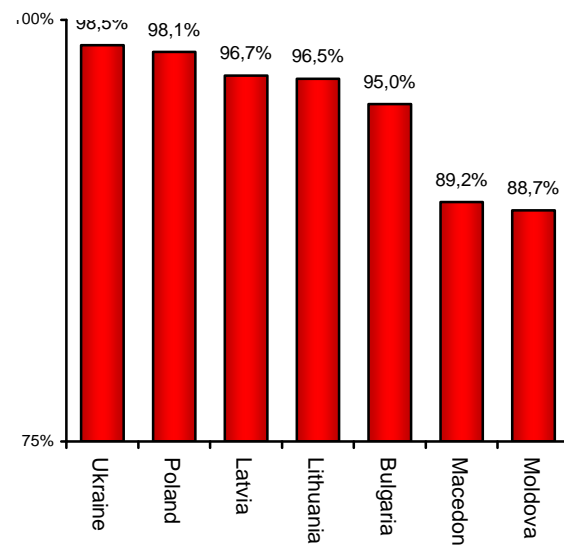
**A parent is using rude language with the child**



**Forced to permanently look after younger siblings**



**Is never allowed to meet with peers**



**Is sexually abused by a family member**

The respondents speak in one voice not only in relation to various forms of child neglect, but also with regard to child sexual abuse by a family member. “You can’t turn a blind eye on such cases. Family members have no right to have sexual contact with the child” – this is the opinion expressed by a vast majority of respondents. Yet, we should note that more than 10% of teachers in Moldavia and Macedonia do not share this view.

There is a larger variation of opinions about such abusive behaviours as restricting the child’s freedom or overloading the child with duties. The respondents are not unanimous about parents’ right to burden children with the task of looking after younger siblings. An

average of 61% of the participants believe that third parties should intervene in such cases. The proportion, however, is significantly lower in Ukraine (38%) and Moldova (45%). Sixty six percent of the sample (on average) condemned the parental practice of restricting children's contact with peers.

## **5. Teachers' personal experience in undertaking interventions in cases of child abuse**

### **5.1. The scale of respondents' personal experience**

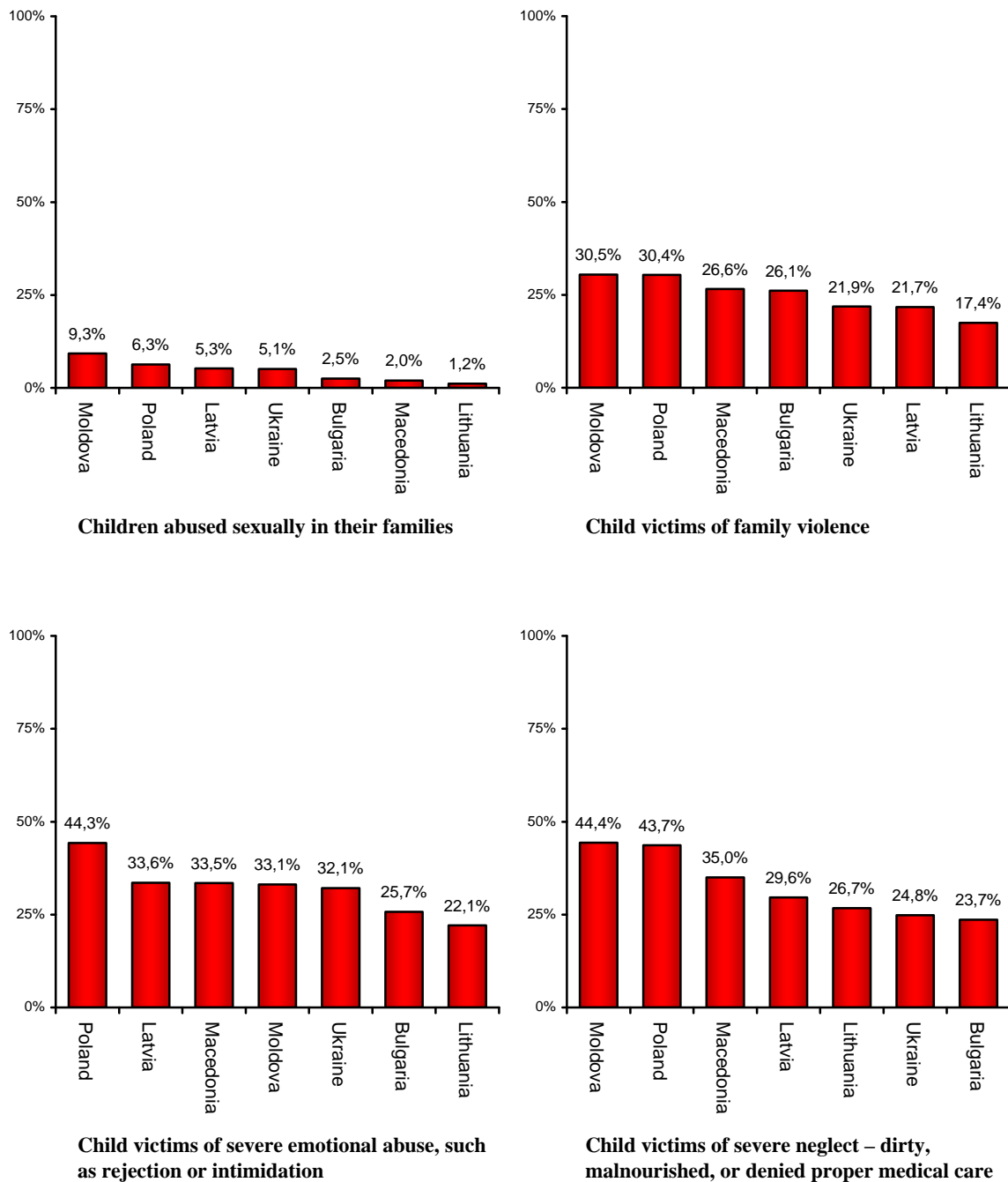
Due to their frequent, direct contact with children teachers are most likely – as compared with other professional groups – to identify cases of child abuse. They know children under their care, they see them almost every day, and they know their parents. So teachers may observe not only physical symptoms of abuse (bruises, lack of hygiene, etc.), but also changes in the child's behaviour, school performance, and peer relations. These areas of the child's psychological and social functioning may also signal his/her experiences, especially emotional, physical, and sexual abuse. Moreover, teachers are persons to whom children themselves, as well as members of their families and other educators may report actual or suspected abuse.

As shown in Figure 28, relative frequencies of encountering various forms of abuse among children under teachers' care are similar across countries. In all seven countries teachers were least likely to have contact with cases of child sexual abuse, and most likely – with cases of neglect and emotional abuse. Interestingly, contact with abused children was most likely to be reported by teachers in Poland and Moldova. Please remember that these two samples provided the highest estimations of the prevalence of many of the assessed forms of child abuse. This suggests that those perceptions were based on the participants' personal experiences with cases of child abuse among their students.

Teachers from Lithuania, Bulgaria, and Ukraine were least likely to report personal experiences with abused children.

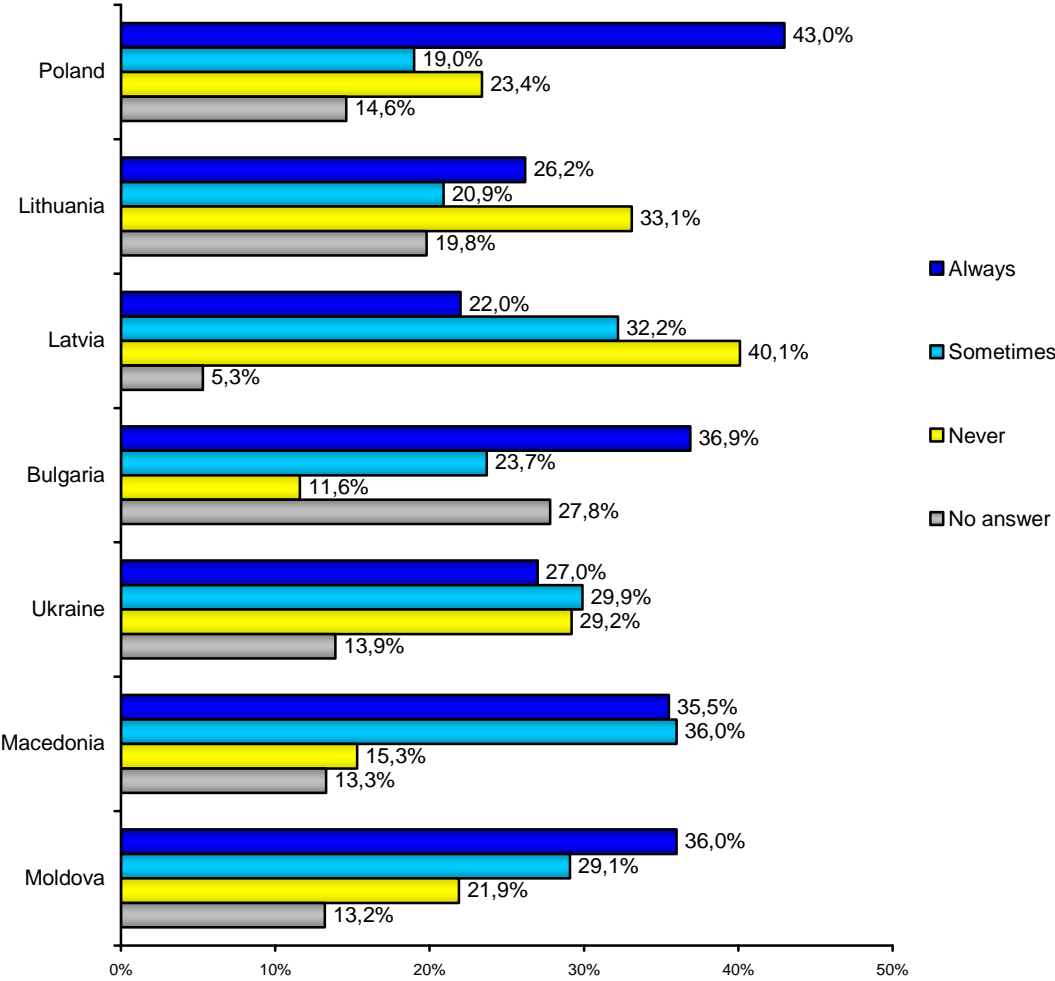
**Figure 28.**

*Have you encountered cases of ... in your professional practice in the past year?*



Teachers, who had encountered cases of child abuse, were asked about whether they undertook any interventions. The highest proportions of teachers from Poland, Macedonia and Moldavia declare that they intervene whenever they perceive or suspect child abuse. However, the percentage of the “never” response was relatively high (40%–12%). It is difficult to interpret such findings conclusively. It would be dramatically alarming to conclude

that more than one third of teachers in Lithuania and Latvia never react to perceived or suspected abuse of their students. However, it may be also presumed that in some situations teachers do not intervene because they know that another teacher, the school director or other services have already taken adequate action.

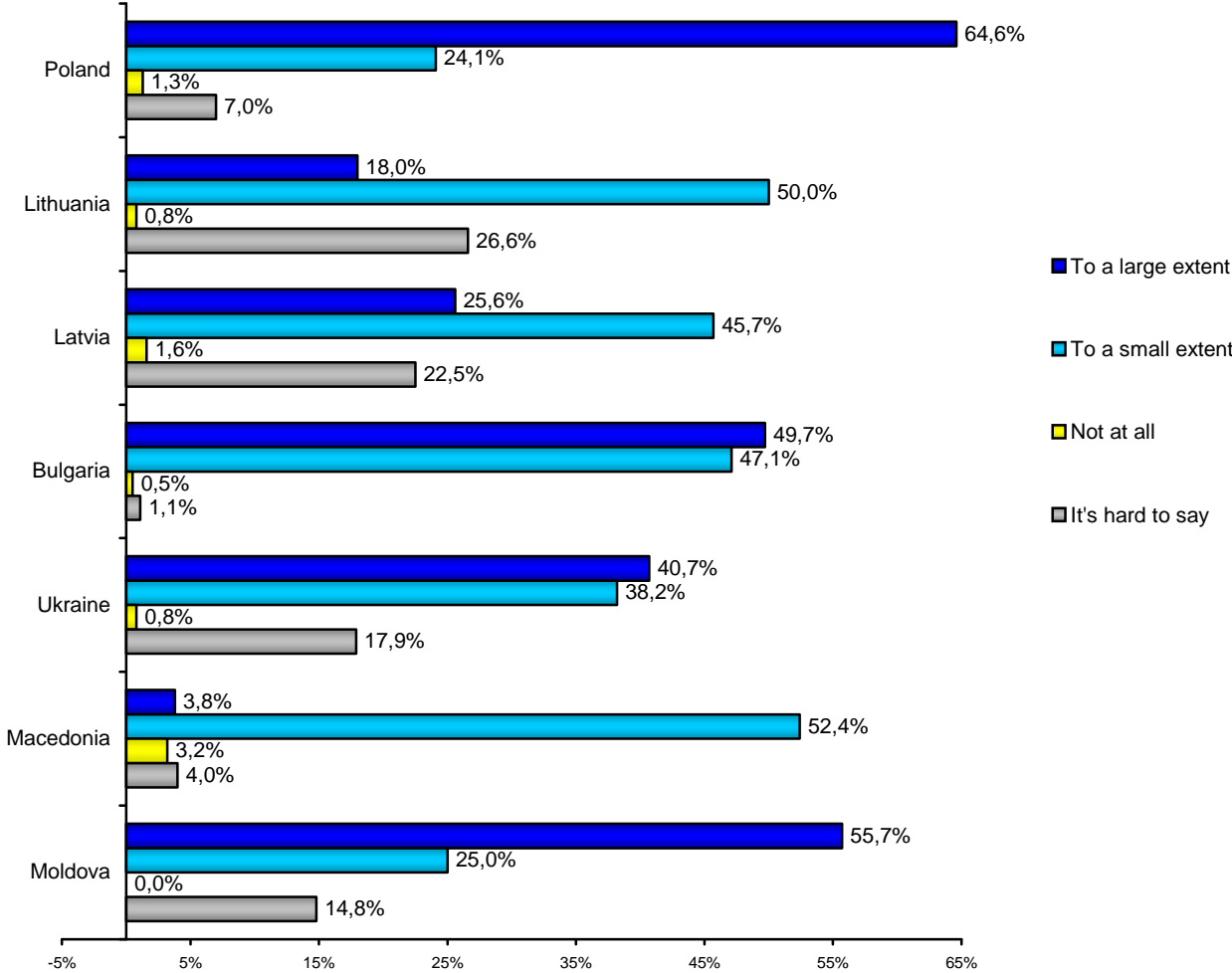


**Figure 29 .** *In cases of child abuse that you have encountered in the past year, did you take any action?*

**5.2. Assessment of institutional help provided for abused children by various services**

Many respondents had difficulties with assessing potential effectiveness of actions aimed at preventing child abuse. Is the problem preventable in the first place? “It’s hard to say” was the answer chosen by nearly one fourth of the respondents in Lithuania and Latvia and almost 18% in Ukraine. At the same time, however, few people believed that nothing

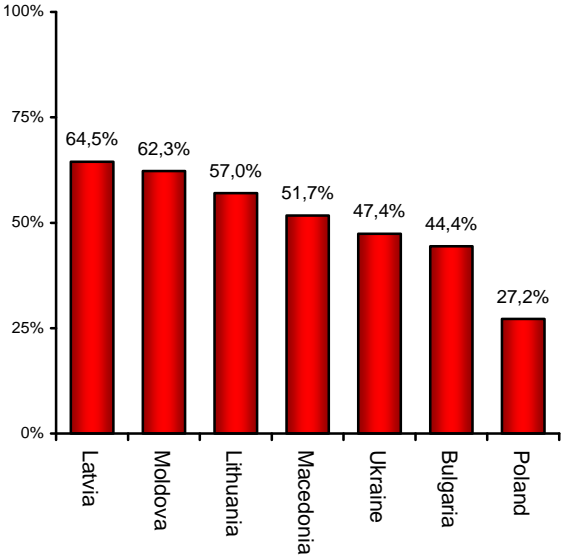
could be done to prevent child abuse. Teachers from Poland, Moldova, Bulgaria, and Ukraine were the most optimistic about this issue. They were most likely to express the opinion that it was possible to reduce the prevalence of child abuse.



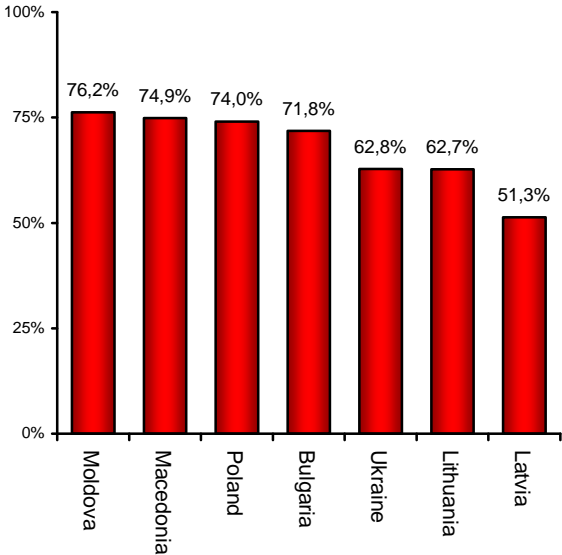
**Figure 30 . Do you think it is possible to prevent child abuse?**

However, optimism in the assessment of the nature of the child abuse problem, did not translate into positive evaluations of the help services available to abused children in the participants’ countries. The respondents who were most likely to believe that it was possible to significantly reduce the prevalence of child abuse (teachers from Poland, Bulgaria, Ukraine, and Macedonia), were also least likely to report that effective assistance is available to children in their country. The respondents’ belief that something could be done is associated with criticism about what has actually been done. A majority of the respondents in

each of the seven countries – and nearly 75% in Moldova, Macedonia, and Poland – think that institutions helping abused children rarely cooperate with each other.



**Figure 31.** Do you think the existing institutional help services enable providing effective assistance for abused children in your country? (total percentage of “definitely yes” and “rather yes” responses).



**Figure 32.** Do you agree with the statement: “Child protection institutions rarely cooperate with each other”? (total percentage of “definitely yes” and “rather yes” responses).

Asked about how well various services’ in their country are prepared to provide help or undertake interventions in cases of child abuse, the respondents had serious difficulties with assessing the work of police and health care services. Nearly one fourth of them chose the “hard to say” response. At the same time, the police and health care professionals are the two professional groups that were most likely to be criticized by the teachers in our sample. On average, only 11% of the participants believe that the police provide help in cases of child maltreatment in families. The most positive assessment of the police forces’ actions are expressed by the Bulgarian teachers (22% believe the police do help), who are also most likely to perceive other services as prepared to provide assistance for children. On average, 16.3% of the respondents think that even though the police are capable of helping children, child victims cannot count on their interventions in actual abuse situations.

A similar pattern of responses was found in relation to health care professionals’ engagement in helping children. On average, about 16% of the teachers in our sample believe that children may count on health care professionals’ assistance, while 14% think that medical

practitioners do not fully use their competences and their potential to help abused children. The most positive assessments were expressed by teachers from Bulgaria (23% of the sample chose the response: “they help”) and Macedonia. The most critical judgments were made by Poles (25% - “they don’t help despite their potential to help) and Ukrainians (21%).

**Table 9. The evaluations of assistance offered to abused children by various services (%).**

*How do you evaluate assistance offered by the following services to children maltreated in their families?*

	1.They don't help since they have no potential to help.	2.They don't help at all though they have some potential.	3.They try to help though their potential is limited.	4.They help.	5. It's hard to say.	6. No answer.
<b>THE POLICE</b>						
Poland	12.0	17.7	35.4	10.1	24.1	0.6
Lithuania	2.9	6.4	44.8	10.5	29.1	6.4
Latvia	9.2	13.2	44.7	6.6	23.7	2.6
Bulgaria	5.0	7.5	34.9	22.0	23.7	7.1
Ukraine	9.5	30.7	23.4	8.8	19.7	8.0
Macedonia	11.8	25.6	31.5	8.9	13.3	8.9
Moldova	7.3	17.9	32.5	5.3	25.2	11.9
Total	8.1	16.3	35.4	11.1	22.5	6.6
<b>DOCTORS IN LOCAL CLINICS</b>						
Poland	13.9	25.9	18.4	8.9	31.6	1.3
Lithuania	7.6	8.7	30.2	15.7	28.5	9.3
Latvia	7.9	3.9	34.2	17.8	32.9	3.3
Bulgaria	6.2	10.8	17.8	23.2	34.0	7.9
Ukraine	9.5	21.2	27.0	12.4	17.5	12.4
Macedonia	10.3	17.2	24.6	20.2	15.8	11.8
Moldova	15.9	11.9	32.5	7.3	21.9	10.6
Total	9.9	14.0	25.7	15.9	26.4	8.2
<b>SOCIAL WORKERS</b>						
Poland	1.3	12.0	36.7	34.2	14.6	1.3
Lithuania	0	2.3	36.0	50.6	7.0	4.1
Latvia	0		42.8	47.4	9.2	0.7
Bulgaria	0.4	7.1	25.3	44.8	15.8	6.6
Ukraine	2.9	13.9	39.4	20.4	13.9	9.5
Macedonia	3.4	13.8	39.9	31.5	6.4	4.9
Moldova	4.0	7.3	30.5	19.9	22.5	15.9
Total	1.6	8.1	35.2	36.5	12.6	6.0

<b>SCHOOL COUNSELLORS AND PSYCHOLOGISTS</b>						
Poland	1.9	4.4	30.4	57.6	5.1	0.6
Lithuania	0.6	0	45.3	42.4	7.0	4.7
Latvia	0	1.3	49.3	43.4	5.3	0.7
Bulgaria	0.8	1.2	28.6	63.9	3.3	2.1
Ukraine	2.9	14.6	41.6	27.7	7.3	5.8
Macedonia	3.0	6.9	55.7	30.0	3.0	1.5
Moldova	3.3	2.6	44.4	42.4	1.3	6.0
Total	1.7	4.1	41.8	45.1	4.4	2.9
<b>TEACHERS</b>						
Poland	2.5	4.4	46.8	39.2	7.0	0
Lithuania	1.7	1.2	51.7	40.1	2.9	2.3
Latvia	2.0	1.3	58.6	30.9	6.6	0.7
Bulgaria	0	0	38.2	55.2	2.9	3.7
Ukraine	3.6	13.9	42.3	31.4	3.6	5.1
Macedonia	1.0	7.4	56.2	29.1	3.4	3.0
Moldova	0.7	2.0	45.7	45.7	0.7	5.3
Total	1.5	4.0	48.2	39.7	3.8	2.9

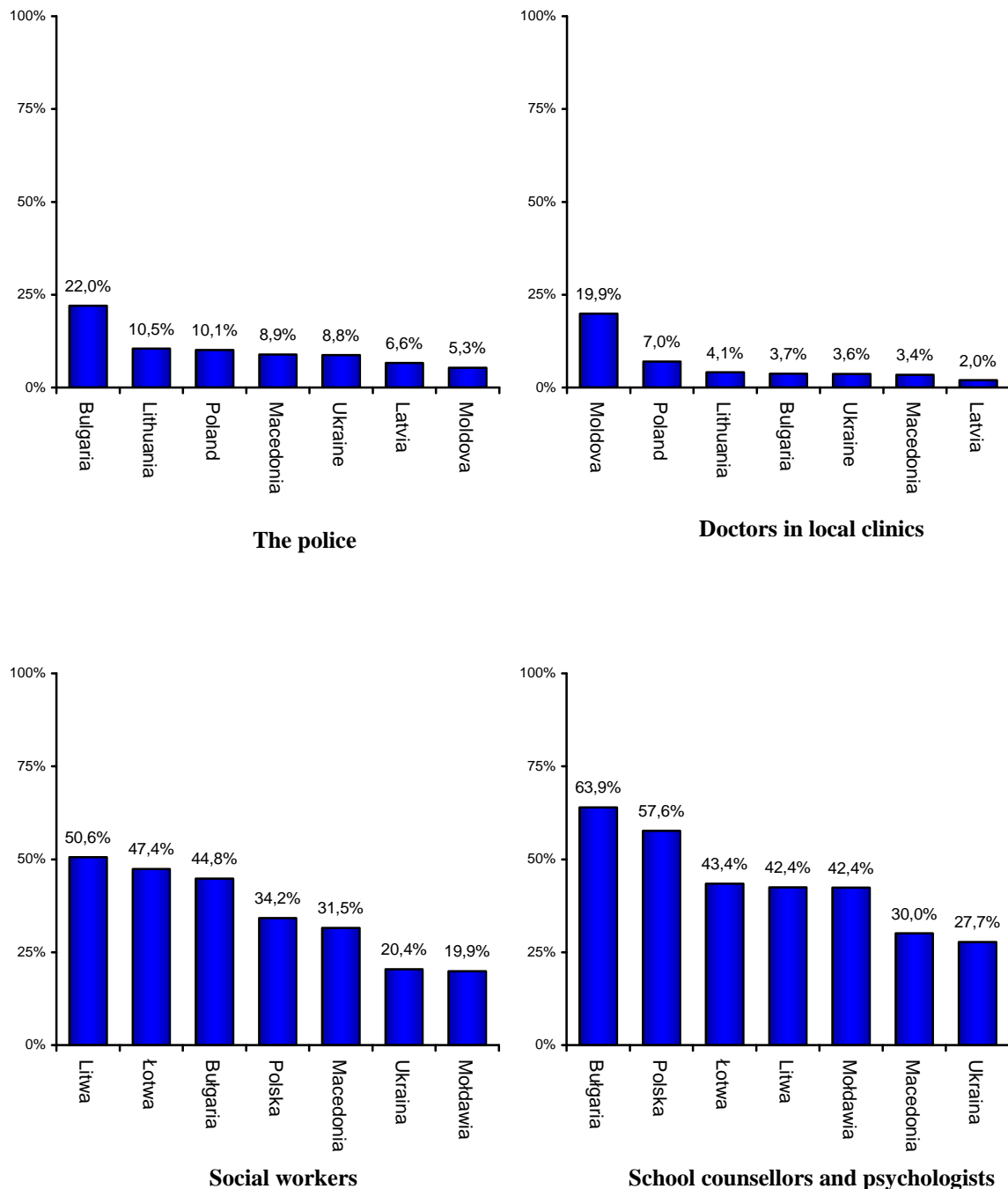
Professionals working at schools – teachers and school counsellors, as well as school psychologists – are the two groups judged most positively with regard to their actual level of readiness to provide help for maltreated children. The respondents did not find it difficult to evaluate these groups of professionals. After all, they were judging their colleagues and workmates. On average, 45% of the participants believed that in a critical situation children could count on school counsellors’ assistance, with only 4% of the sample expressing the opposite opinion. The most optimistic evaluations of school counsellors’ work were expressed by teachers in Bulgaria (nearly 64% believed that this group of professionals help abused children) and Poland (58%). This opinion was shared by only just under two thirds of the respondents from Ukraine and Macedonia.

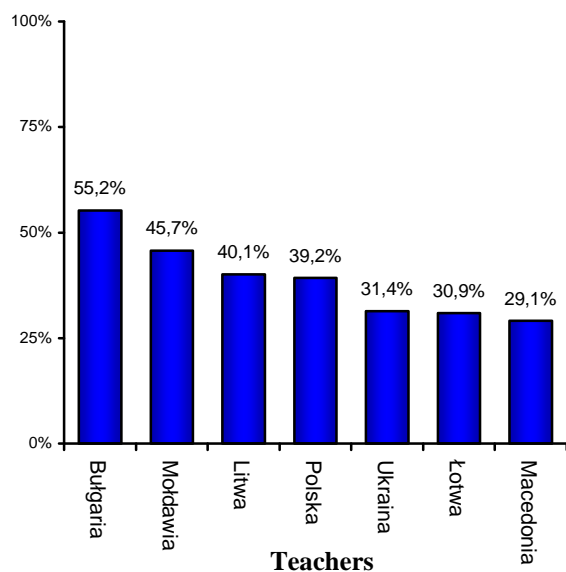
As regards teachers’ activity, the highest proportion of the participants think that teachers try to help abused children, but they have limited capability to do so (48%, on average). However, a significant proportion of teachers participating in the study (nearly 40%) believe that their colleagues provide students with real, effective help. Notably, substantial variation of opinions was found across the seven countries – teachers’ interventions were evaluated positively by more than half of the Bulgarian respondents (55%), but only 29% of Macedonians. A slight group of participants (4%, on average) is critical about teachers’ willingness to help abused children.



Social workers were also assessed positively, though a bit more critically than school professionals. On average, 36% of the respondents believe that children may count on social workers' help.

**Figure 33.** How do you evaluate assistance offered by the following professional groups to children maltreated in families? (percentage of “they help” responses).





A substantial proportion of teachers participating in the study notice dysfunctions in the procedures of legal intervention in cases of child abuse. Severe forms of physical violence and child sexual abuse are legally banned in all seven countries. As criminal offences, they should be persecuted, investigated, and adjudicated. A detailed presentation of national regulations for protecting children or legal procedures applied in these seven countries would go beyond the scope of this report. It is obvious, however, that in each country the police, prosecutors, and courts play specific roles at various stages of such interventions. The efficiency and effectiveness of actions undertaken by these institutions are often critical for ensuring safety for the child and adequate punishment for the offender. Do the respondents have knowledge about such actions? How do they evaluate them? What dysfunctions do they perceive as the most frequent?

Presumably, the fact that the respondents are relatively unlikely to identify cases of child abuse and even more unlikely to participate in interventions, contributes to their lack of knowledge about the realities and legal frameworks in this area. Asked about prosecutors' actions, more than 40% of the participants respond: "It's hard to say". Percentages of such answers are also high for other questions concerning dysfunctions in legal procedures.

A majority of the respondents who have a clear opinion on this issue are critical about interventions undertaken by the police at the stage of investigating criminal offences against children. This is consistent with their opinions about the police's activity in child protection,

reported earlier in this report. On average, one fifth of the participants believe that the police often fail to intervene in cases of child maltreatment in families (30% of the participants who have an opinion on this issue). Few people think this is hardly ever a case. Dysfunctions in the police’s work are most likely to be denied by respondents from Bulgaria (21%) and Macedonia (16%).

An abused child’s situation may remain difficult if despite the offence having been reported and legal intervention undertaken the case is dismissed (most often for lack of evidence) by the prosecution. “This is a common situation in my country” – that is the opinion expressed by 16% of the participants (i.e., one third of those who have a clear view on this issue). Prosecutors’ work is most likely to be criticized by respondents from Poland, who also report the highest level of knowledge about the issue (the fewest “hard to say” responses).

One fourth of the participants (and a half of those who have an opinion on this matter) perceive the conditions of interviewing children during legal procedures as inappropriate. Although it is not clear what contributes to the respondents’ negative opinions, we should bear in mind that the idea of child-friendly interviewing is just entering countries of the region. Teachers from Poland are the most critical about this issue. Presumably, their criticism results from the campaign for changing child interviewing procedures, which has been carried out in Poland for the past couple of years, rather than illustrating an especially bad situation in the country (as compared to the other countries included in the study).

The respondents generally criticize the practices of multiple interviewing and lengthy court proceedings in cases of child abuse. More than half of the general sample report this is a common problem in their countries. Only 2% think that courts work fast enough. The problem of lengthy legal procedures is most likely to be noticed by Poles (71% of the Polish participants think such procedures take too much time).

**Table 10. Perceptions of dysfunctions in legal procedures in cases of child abuse.**

*Do you think that in the process of intervention in child abuse cases the following problems occur in our country?*

<b>Failure to undertake intervention by the police when a child abuse case has been reported</b>	Often	Sometimes	Hardly ever	It’s hard to say	No answer
Poland	14.6	40.5	12.7	30.4	1.9
Lithuania	16.3	34.3	5.8	36.6	7.0
Latvia	21.1	35.5	6.6	34.2	2.6
Bulgaria	19.1	27.0	20.7	30.3	2.9
Ukraine	27.0	33.6	10.9	22.6	5.8
Macedonia	25.1	35.5	16.3	23.2	0
Moldova	17.2	42.4	11.9	19.9	8.6
Total	20.0	34.9	12.9	28.3	3.9

<b>Cases are discontinued by prosecutors (despite actual abuse experienced by the child)</b>					
	Often	Sometimes	Hardly ever	It's hard to say	No answer
Poland	22.8	39.2	9.5	26.6	1.9
Lithuania	14.0	32.0	6.4	41.9	5.8
Latvia	4.6%	19.1	7.2	65.1	3.9
Bulgaria	18.7	20.3	7.5	48.1	5.4
Ukraine	18.2	29.9	13.1	29.9	8.8
Macedonia	10.3	26.6	16.3	44.3	2.5
Moldova	23.2	19.9	7.3	36.4	13.2
Total	15.9	26.4	9.6	42.4	5.7

<b>Inappropriate conditions and procedures of interviewing children</b>					
	Often	Sometimes	Hardly ever	It's hard to say	No answer
Poland	36.1	30.4	3.2	29.1	1.3
Lithuania	14.5	22.1	1.2	54.1	8.1
Latvia	17.1	22.4	4.6	51.3	4.6
Bulgaria	26.6	17.4	5.8	42.3	7.9
Ukraine	29.9	17.5	2.9	40.9	8.8
Macedonia	33.0	26.1	5.4	34.0	1.5
Moldova	24.5	19.2	6.6	33.1	16.6
Total	26.1	22.1	4.4	40.7	6.8

<b>Lengthy investigation and court procedures</b>					
	Often	Sometimes	Hardly ever	It's hard to say	No answer
Poland	71.5	15.2	0.6	11.4	1.3
Lithuania	52.3	11.6	0.6	29.1	6.4
Latvia	45.4	12.5	2.0	33.6	6.6
Bulgaria	60.2	11.6	0.8	22.0	5.4
Ukraine	39.4	24.1	2.9	24.1	9.5
Macedonia	61.1	13.8	3.4	19.7	2.0
Moldova	39.1	16.6	4.6	25.8	13.9
Total	53.9	14.6	2.1	23.4	6.1

<b>Lack of possibility to isolate the offender from the victim</b>					
	Often	Sometimes	Hardly ever	It's hard to say	No answer
Poland	63.3	17.1	3.8	15.2	0.6
Lithuania	30.2	20.9	3.5	38.4	7.0
Latvia	42.1	20.4	3.9	28.3	5.3
Bulgaria	36.9	20.7	8.7	27.4	6.2
Ukraine	46.0	19.0	5.1	23.4	6.6
Macedonia	33.0	23.6	14.8	23.6	4.9
Moldova	33.8	23.8	4.0	23.8	14.6
Total	40.0	20.9	6.8	25.9	6.3

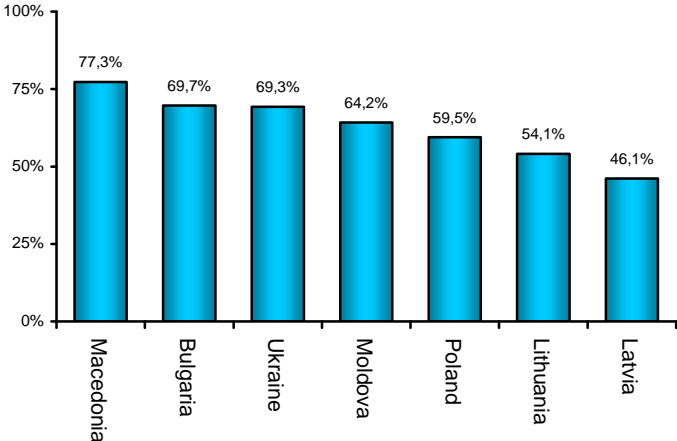
<b>Lack of possibility to provide treatment for the offender</b>					
	Often	Sometimes	Hardly ever	It's hard to say	No answer
Poland	53.8	24.7	4.4	15.8	1.3
Lithuania	20.9	20.9	5.2	44.2	8.7
Latvia	23.7	19.1	7.9	44.1	5.3
Bulgaria	34.4	12.9	6.6	36.9	9.1
Ukraine	46.0	17.5	2.9	22.6	10.9
Macedonia	39.4%	24.1	14.3	19.2	3.0
Moldova	20.5	17.9	5.3	38.4	17.9
Total	34.1	19.4	7.0	31.7	7.8

<b>Too mild sentences</b>					
	Often	Sometimes	Hardly ever	It's hard to say	No answer
Poland	69.0	19.6	0	10.8	0.6
Lithuania	48.8	19.8	0.6	24.4	6.4
Latvia	52.6	15.1	0.7	25.7	5.9
Bulgaria	58.9	10.0	3.3	22.4	5.4
Ukraine	47.4	16.8	2.2	26.3	7.3
Macedonia	62.1	16.3	6.9	13.3	1.5
Moldova	41.1	17.9	3.3	21.2	16.6
Total	55.0	16.1	2.6	20.3	5.9

<b>Failure to execute family courts' decisions</b>					
	Often	Sometimes	Hardly ever	It's hard to say	No answer
Poland	69.0	19.6	0	10.8	0.6
Lithuania	48.8	19.8	0.6	24.4	6.4
Latvia	52.6	15.1	0.7	25.7	5.9
Bulgaria	58.9	10.0	3.3	22.4	5.4
Ukraine	47.4	16.8	2.2	26.3	7.3
Macedonia	62.1	16.3	6.9	13.3	1.5
Moldova	41.1	17.9	3.3	21.2	16.6
Total	55.0	16.1	2.6	20.3	5.9

The respondents are also critical about the countries' policies toward child abusers. Lack of possibility to isolate the offender from the victim right after the case is reported or during the investigation, lack of treatment services for offenders, and too mild sentences in child abuse cases are the gaps and dysfunctions in the child protection system which are noticed by nearly all the respondents with sufficient knowledge to express an opinion on this issue. Similar consistency was found in the assessment of ineffective execution of family courts' rulings. More than half of the respondents believe that the child's situation often remains unchanged despite the court's decision.

The respondents' evaluations of the law-enforcement and judicial systems' activities do not tell us, however, what policy toward child offenders they would personally support. What decisions should courts make, adjudicating cases of child maltreatment by parents? One important indication of the respondents' attitudes toward law-enforcement institutions' strategies in this area is their opinions on protecting children exposed to abusive behaviour by parents. The participants' responses to the statement that keeping the child in the family should be the main priority in all such cases, notwithstanding his/her parents' behaviour, differentiate the seven countries included in the study. Nearly one third of respondents in Bulgaria, Macedonia, and Moldova believe that, regardless of the circumstances, children should never be taken away from their parents. As you probably remember, respondents in these three countries are also most likely to agree with the statement that children are their parents' property and, as such, parents should be the only ones to make decisions about the child. This opinion was least likely to be shared by respondents in the countries characterized by the lowest rates of support for keeping the family together at any cost, i.e., Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland (as shown in Figure 34).

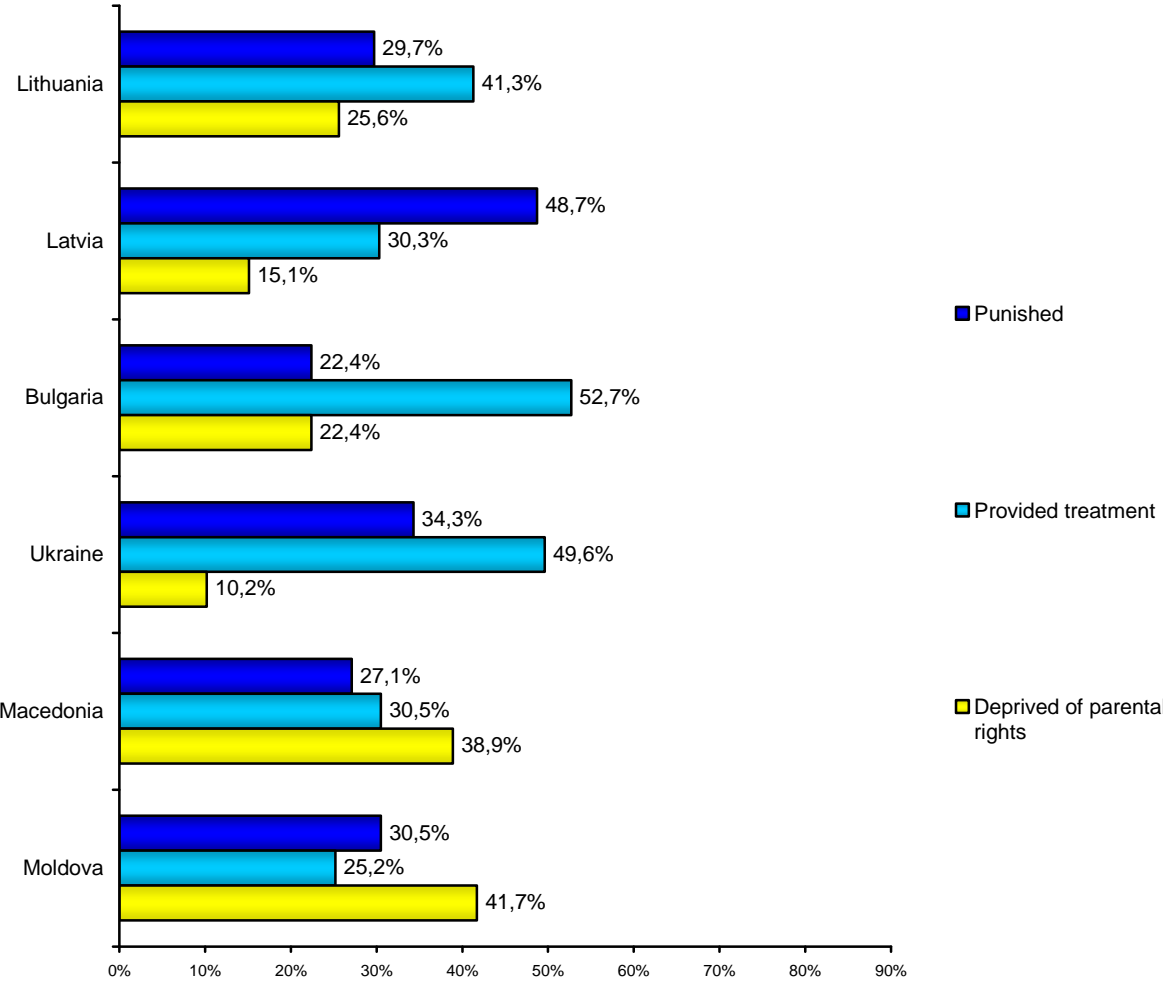


**Figure 34.** Do you agree with the statement: “One should always try to keep the child in the family, notwithstanding his/her parents’ behaviour”? (total percentage of “definitely yes” and “rather yes” responses).

However, as shown in Figures 35 and 36, a proportion of the respondents would deprive a parent of parental authority for committing an offence against his/her child, such as severe beating or sexual abuse. Interestingly, in the hypothetical situation of severe beating leading to injuries, deprivation of parental authority was most likely to be supported by teachers in Macedonia and Moldova! At the same time, participants from these two countries would be least willing to offer psychological and therapeutic help to abusive parents responsible for severe beating of a child. The strategy of psychological support for abusive parents is most likely to be favoured by respondents from Bulgaria, Ukraine, and Latvia. In

these three countries the percentage of participants who support this form of intervention and prevention in child abuse cases is significantly higher than the percentage of those who believe that abusive parents should be punished or deprived of parental rights.

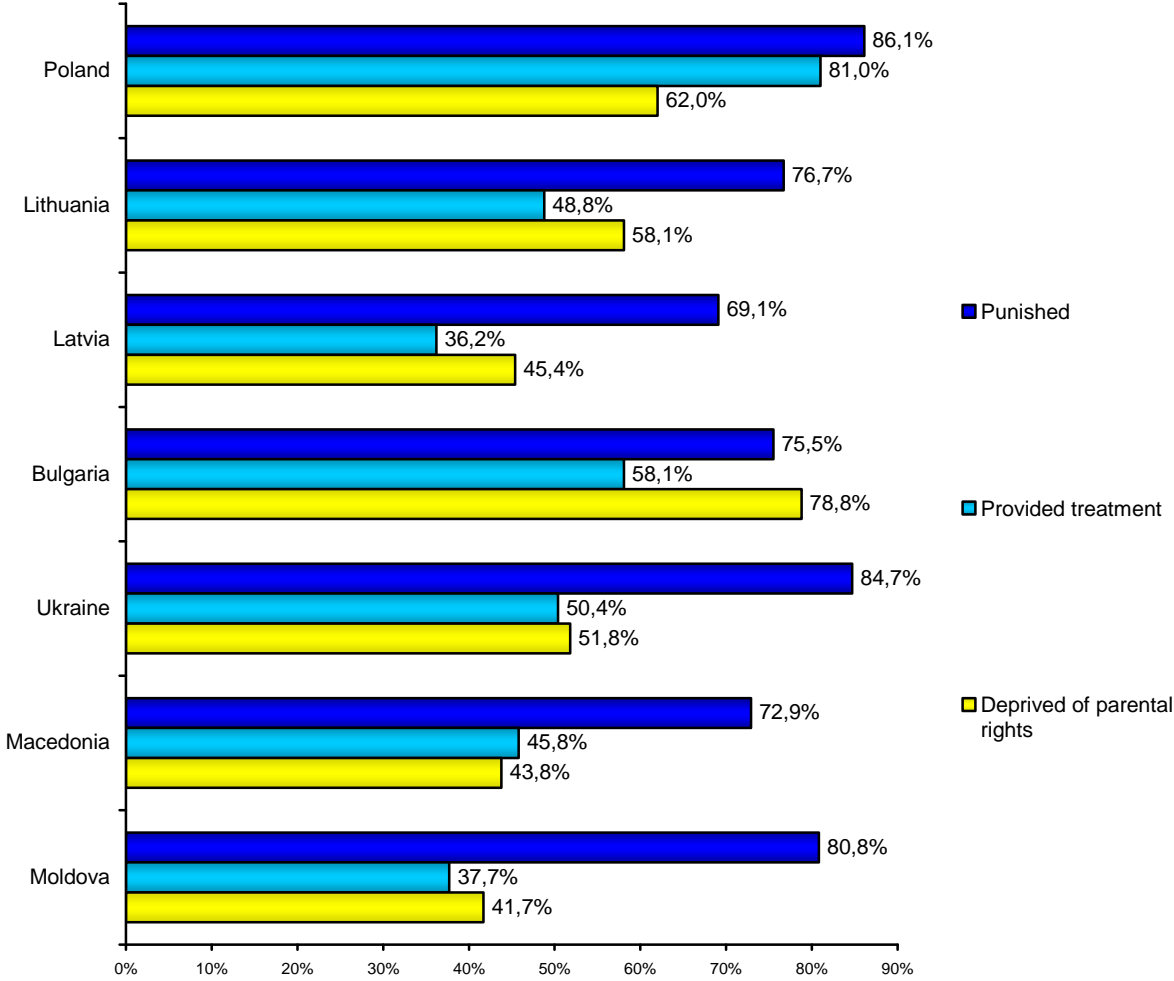
**Figure 35.** *Do you believe a parent who has beaten a child severely, leading to physical injuries, should be...*



The proportions of respondents who think that abusive parents should be punished are significantly higher in relation to a father who has sexually abused his child. In this case the strategy of punishing is favoured by a vast majority of respondents in each of the seven countries included in the study (from 69% in Latvia to 86% in Poland). The support for the punishment strategy is often accompanied by a belief that psychological treatment and deprivation of parental authority should also be applied. More than half of respondents in Poland (81%!), Bulgaria and Ukraine think that a father who has committed incestuous sexual abuse should be provided treatment. At the same time, participants from these three countries

argue for depriving such a father of his parental rights. Interestingly, deprivation of parental authority in case of an incestuous father is least likely to be supported by respondents from Macedonia and Moldova, who – as you might remember – are also most inclined to argue for such a measure against parents using physical violence against their children!

**Figure 36.** *Do you think a father who has sexually abused his child should be...*



The respondents’ opinions on how to deal with child sexual abusers, though diversified, point to consistent, strong condemnation for adults’ sexual behaviours involving children. All the indicators of attitudes toward this issue, which were used in the study, point to a lack of controversy among the participants.

Such unanimity, however, was not found in relation to the respondents’ attitudes toward beating children. Their opinions on various aspects of using corporal punishment suggest that such behaviours are seen as acceptable by significant proportions of the societies



included in the study. The level of approval for unpunished severe physical maltreatment of the abuser's own child is also relatively high.

### Conclusions:

1. Subjective **evaluations of the prevalence of corporal punishment of children** in the countries included in the study show that both in the general adult samples and among primary school teachers working in capital cities the lowest percentage of children experiencing such forms of punishment is reported by Bulgarian participants, and the highest – by respondents from Lithuania, Ukraine, and Macedonia, and by teachers in Macedonia and Poland. At the same time, it is worth emphasizing the low variation of assessments of the prevalence of corporal punishment across all seven countries.
2. Most teachers participating in the study believe that the prevalence of corporal punishment in their countries is changing. However, their opinions concerning the direction of these changes are polarized.
3. The highest proportion of strong opponents of beating children has been found in Bulgaria, while the lowest proportions of respondents strongly opposing corporal punishment have been found in the Polish and Moldovan samples.
4. A vast majority of teachers in all seven countries agree that **parents' behaviours toward children should be regulated by law**. Moreover, a high proportion of respondents supports a legal ban on beating children (which has been so far imposed in three of the countries: Latvia, Bulgaria, and Ukraine). Interestingly, the lowest level of support for legal regulation of parents' behaviours – including the use of corporal punishment – has been expressed by respondents from Latvia, where beating children has been legally banned for the longest time (since 1998).
5. Teachers in all seven countries are nearly unanimous that **third parties should intervene** when a child is beaten with a belt. Acceptance of interfering in the way parents treat their children is more than 50% lower when the punishment applied is spanking. Interfering in situations of beating is most likely to be supported by teachers from Poland (93%) and Bulgaria (91%).
6. Most teachers perceive beating as humiliating to the child and reflecting the parents' educational failure. This opinion is most likely to be shared by Bulgarian and Ukrainian teachers, and least likely – by teachers from Latvia (!).

7. General disapproval of using corporal punishment of children and negative perceptions of its effects **do not result in** respondents' **readiness to eliminate such forms of punishment**. Surprisingly, many teachers participating in the study report they would be prone to punish a child with beating, especially for behaviours implying moral corruption, such as drinking alcohol, theft or playing truant. According to a significant proportion of the respondents such punishment would be also justified if a child was disobedient or disrespectful toward his/her parents.
8. The perceived prevalence of **emotional abuse** of children by their parents is similar across the seven countries. In the respondents' opinions humiliating verbal abuse is experienced, on average, by half of the children living in their countries and by about one third of the students attending their schools. The prevalence of emotional neglect is perceived at a similar level.
9. **Physical neglect**. i.e., insufficient care of the child's hygiene, clothing or nutrition, as well as leaving the child unattended, is thought to be experienced by one third of the national child populations, on average. The respondents' perceptions are similar across all seven countries.
10. Among various forms of child abuse, **sexual abuse** is least likely to be noticed by the respondents. According to teachers participating in the study, this problem is most prevalent in Poland and Moldavia (17% of children, on average), and least prevalent in Bulgaria (8%).
11. The highest proportion of the respondents perceive an undesirable growth trend in the prevalence of **leaving children unattended**. On average, 61% of the respondents believe that children in their country are more and more likely to be left without care.
12. **In their work**, teachers participating in the study were least likely to encounter cases of child sexual abuse (on average, 4.5% of the respondents) and most likely to have contact with cases of neglect and emotional abuse (about 32% of the respondents).
13. Only half of the respondents assessed the **range of services available to abused children** as sufficient. Judgments concerning this issue were quite diversified – available services were perceived as sufficient by 64% of teachers in Latvia, and only 27% in Poland. Much criticism was also expressed about interdisciplinary cooperation in the process of helping abused children. Most respondents in each of the seven countries – and nearly three fourths in Moldova, Macedonia, and Poland – believe that child protection institutions rarely cooperate with each other.

14. The police and health care professionals (doctors in local clinics) are the two most heavily criticized professional groups. On average, only 11% of the respondents believe that the police provide help in cases of child maltreatment in families. Only 16% of the participants think that in such situations children may count on health care professionals' help.
15. A significant proportion of the respondents can see **dysfunctions in procedures of legal interventions** undertaken in response to child abuse. On average, one fifth of the participants believe that the police often fail to intervene, 16% think that such cases are likely to be erroneously discontinued by the prosecution, and one fourth perceives the conditions of interviewing children during legal procedures as inappropriate. More than half of the general sample criticize lengthy investigations and court proceedings in cases of crimes against children.
16. The respondents' opinions on **how to deal with child sexual abusers** suggest strong condemnation for any form of adults' sexual behaviour involving children. In each of the seven countries the strategy of punishment is supported by a vast majority of respondents (from 69% in Latvia to 86% in Poland). The opinion that child sexual abusers should be punished is often accompanied by the belief that they need to be provided treatment and deprived of their parental rights.

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