

CORPORAL DISCIPLINE



Since 1997, various bills have been introduced to ban physical discipline, including spanking, in Canada. Some have called for the repeal of section 43 of the Criminal Code, which permits parents to use reasonable disciplinary force in correcting their children. But Canada already has strict limitations on the use of corporal discipline as determined by the Supreme Court of Canada, such as defining what constitutes force and what age a child must be for parents to use any force.

The research surrounding corporal discipline often conflates controlled spanking, as allowed in the *Criminal Code*, with physically aggressive hitting that constitutes abuse. But research that properly studies the effects of appropriate spanking shows it to be as good as other forms of discipline in its positive long-term effects and ability to reduce noncompliance or antisocial behaviour. Spanking which is non-abusive and controlled is associated with reductions in anti-social behaviour and noncompliance. This association is stronger when spanking is used than in many other forms of discipline.

Other countries, like Sweden, have banned all forms of physical discipline. However, the measurable outcomes for children have been worse.

The family, not the civil government, is in the best position to raise children. Parents make informed decisions on how to raise their children, including how to discipline them, in the context of a deep biological, emotional, and relational connection. The State should respect the institution of the family and the role of parents and should not interfere except in cases of criminal abuse and neglect. ARPA Canada recommends upholding section 43 of the *Criminal Code*, permitting parents to use conditional physical discipline if they believe it necessary in raising their children.

For more information about this topic, please refer to our related policy report document. This report can be found on our website at [ARPACanada.ca/publication/corporal-discipline](https://arpacanada.ca/publication/corporal-discipline).