



Homeschool Alumni Reaching Out
presents

A Complex Picture:

Results of a 2014 Survey of Adult Alumni of the Modern Christian Homeschool Movement

Installment 9: Abuse

April 1, 2016

Data analysis provided by:



Coalition for Responsible Home Education

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The first installment, which includes a description of the survey methodology, can be found [here](#).

The second installment, which focuses on demographic variables, is [here](#).

The third installment, which discusses academics and other non-academic educational aspects, is [here](#).

The fourth installment, focusing on food and health, is [here](#).

The fifth installment, on the topic of religion, is [here](#).

The sixth installment, discussing respondents' current families and careers, is [here](#).

The seventh installment, which describes respondents' sexuality, is [here](#).

The eighth installment, focusing on mental health, is [here](#).

Note that this survey should not be used to make any generalized statements about homeschoolers as a whole; the only people it can be used to make claims about are the 3,702 people who took the survey.

0. Introduction to Installment 9: Abuse

In this installment, we discuss respondents' reports of child abuse, their feelings about spanking, and their understanding of child protective services. Approximately half of respondents reported experiencing abuse either within or outside their homeschooling environment; the most common types of abuse were emotional abuse and educational neglect. Respondents were less likely than their parents to use corporal punishment as a disciplinary method and more likely to have positive views of child protective services.

1. Experiences of abuse

This section includes a discussion of respondents' reports of abuse within the home or homeschool environment, abuse outside of the home or homeschool environment, and abuse among the respondents' homeschooled acquaintances.

Abuse within the home or homeschool environment

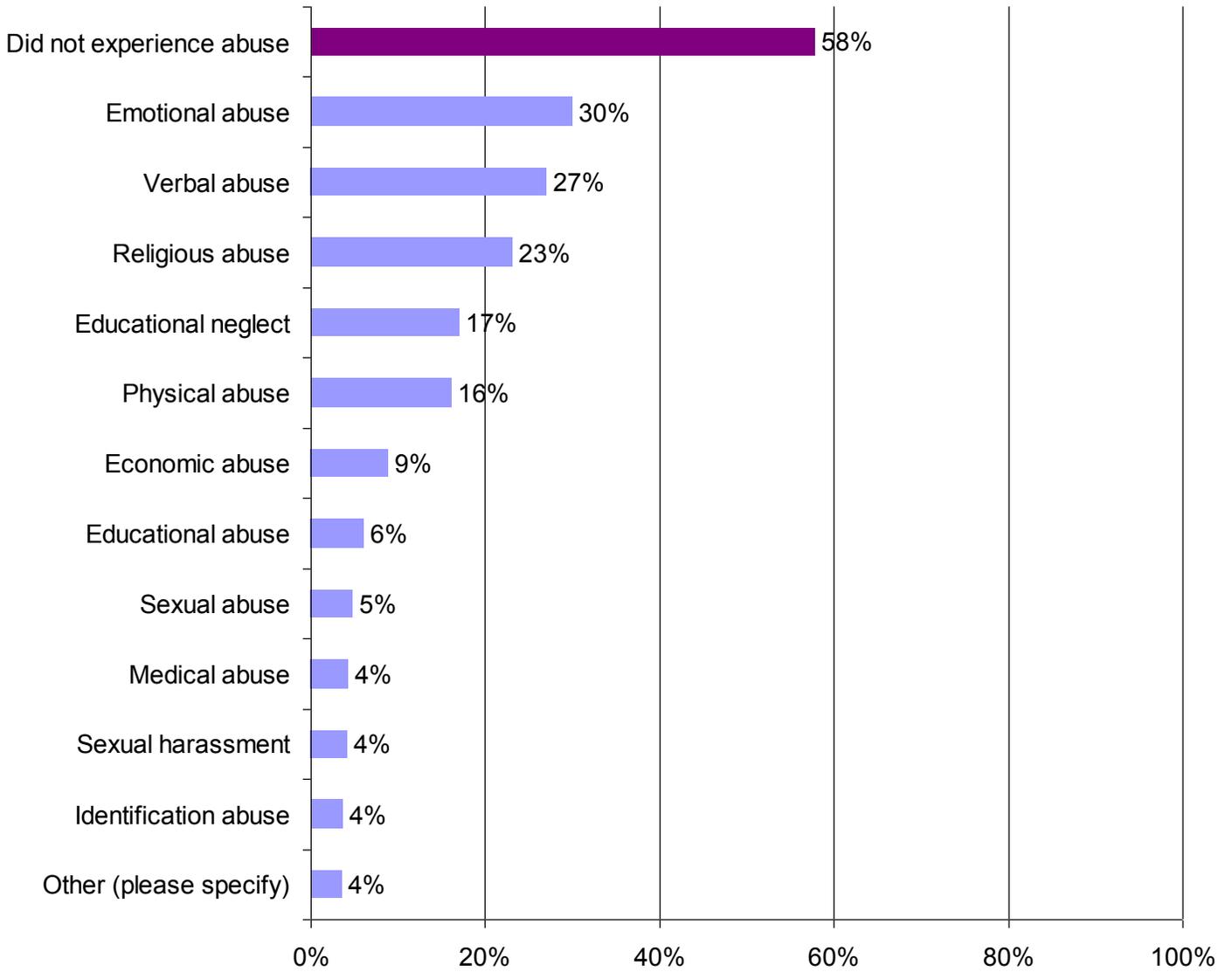
The majority of the respondents to this survey did not experience abuse within their home or homeschool environment—58% of respondents reported that they had not experienced abuse in this environment. The most frequently reported type of abuse was emotional abuse—almost one in three respondents reported experiencing emotional abuse in their home or homeschool environment. Figure 1 shows the percentages for the types of abuse most frequently defined in state law (where 'educational neglect' refers to violations of the compulsory education statute and 'economic abuse' refers to violations of child labor laws).

Figure 1: Frequency of types of abuse typically defined in state law

	% of respondents who experienced this type of abuse in their home or homeschool environment
Emotional abuse	30.0%
Educational neglect	17.0%
Physical abuse	16.2%
Economic abuse	8.9%
Sexual abuse	4.8%
Medical abuse	4.3%

Figure 2 shows the comparative frequencies of respondents' reports of abuse (note that some respondents reported more than one type of abuse, so the numbers do not add up to 3,702). The types of abuse are defined in Appendix A.

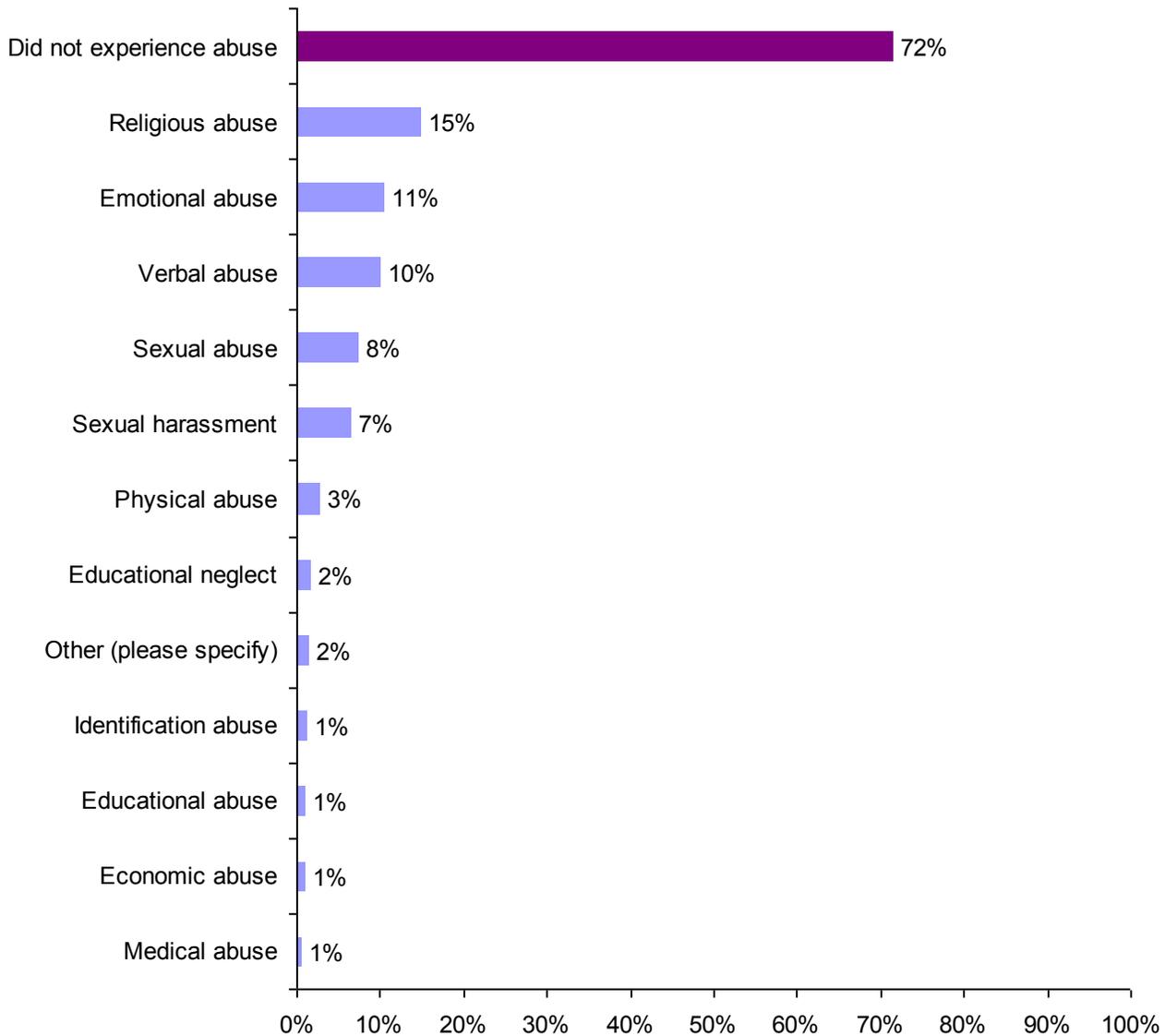
Figure 2: Did you experience abuse WITHIN either your home or your homeschooling environment?



Abuse outside the home or homeschool environment

Almost three-quarters of respondents (72%) reported that they did not experience abuse outside of their home or homeschool environment (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Did you experience abuse OUTSIDE either your home or your homeschooling environment? (For example: in your extended family; in your church, if that was distinct from your homeschooling environment; in your neighborhood; etc.)

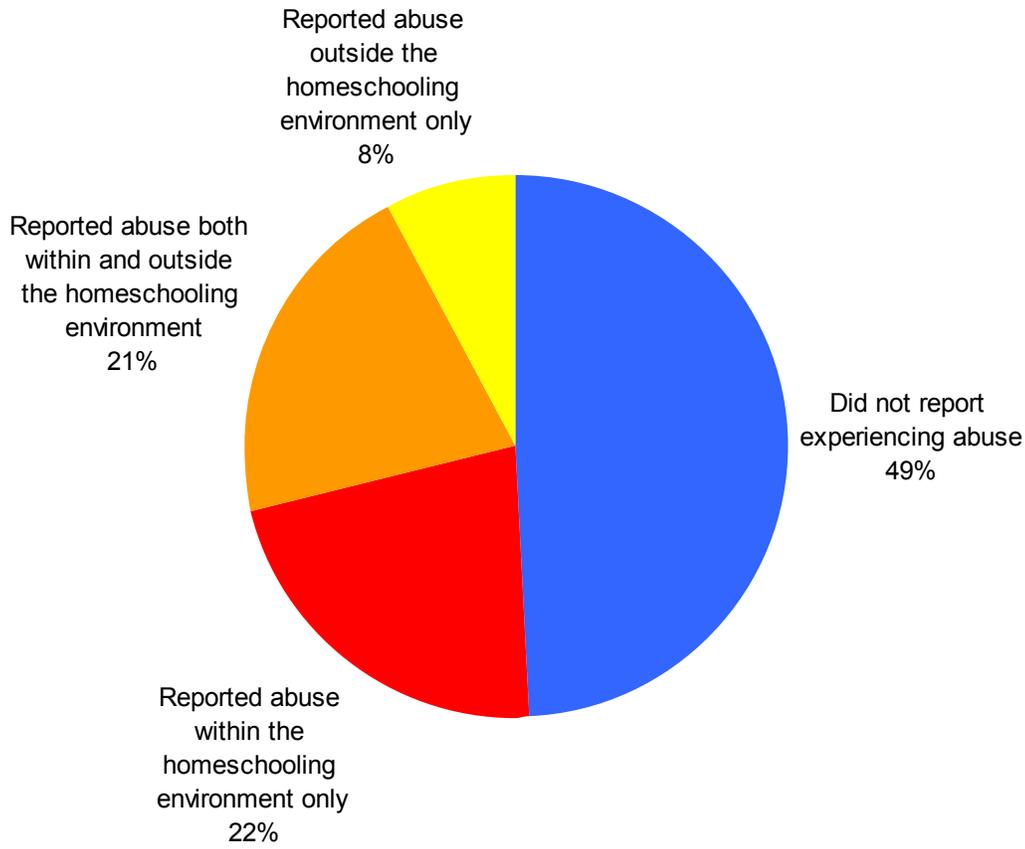


The types of abuse respondents reported most frequently outside their home or homeschool environment were religious abuse (15%), emotional (11%) and verbal (10%) abuse, and sexual abuse (8%) and sexual harassment (7%).

Trends in abuse reports

There was some overlap between those who experienced abuse within their homeschool environment and those who experienced abuse outside their homeschool environment (Figure 4). Around half (49%) of respondents reported that they did not experience abuse in either environment; 8% experienced abuse outside the home only; 22% of respondents experienced abuse within the home only; and 21% of respondents experienced abuse both within and outside the home.

Figure 4: Respondents' reports of experiencing abuse



As the survey originated in the homeschool abuse survivor community, it was expected that these respondents would compose a large proportion of those reporting abuse in the survey. However, this was not entirely the case (Figure 5).

Figure 5: Percentage of each category who heard about the survey from a website in the survivor community (Homeschoolers Anonymous/Homeschool Alumni Reaching Out, Love Joy Feminism, No Longer Quivering)

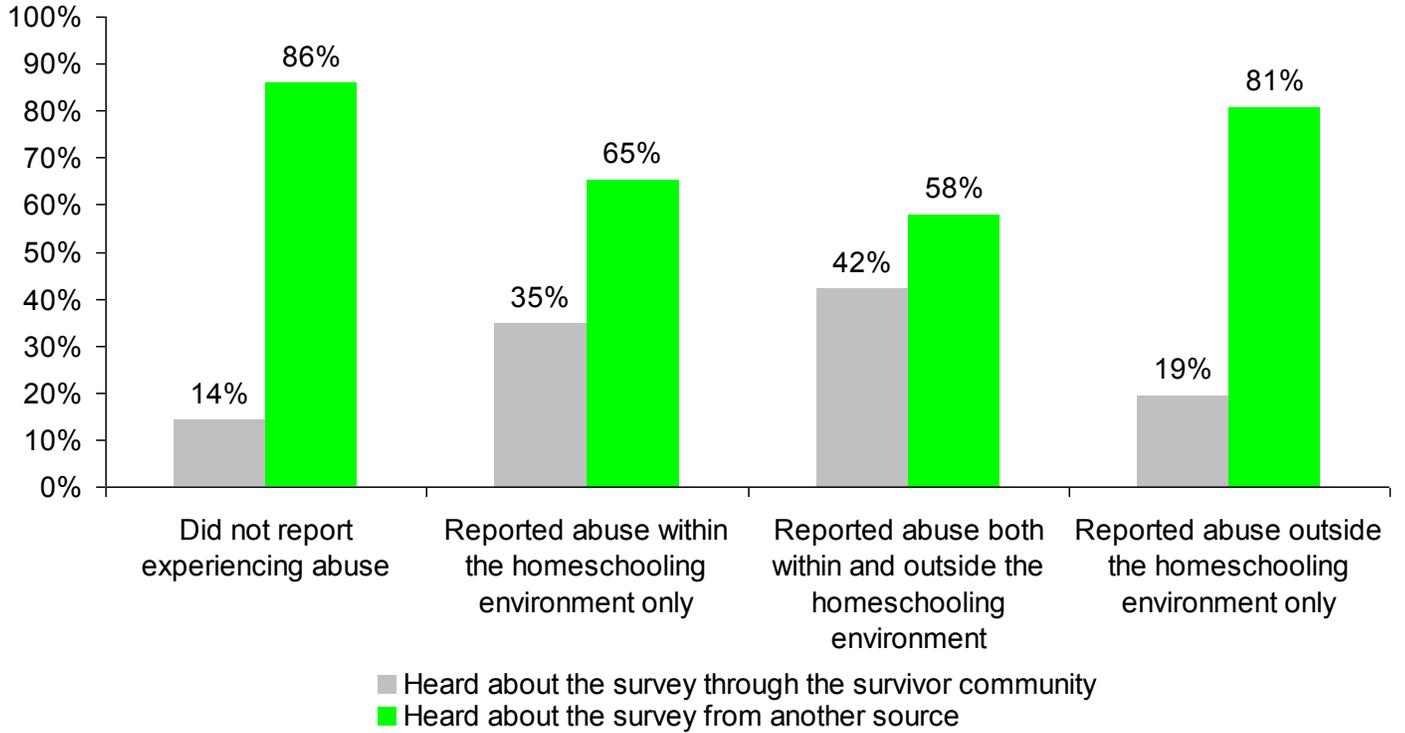
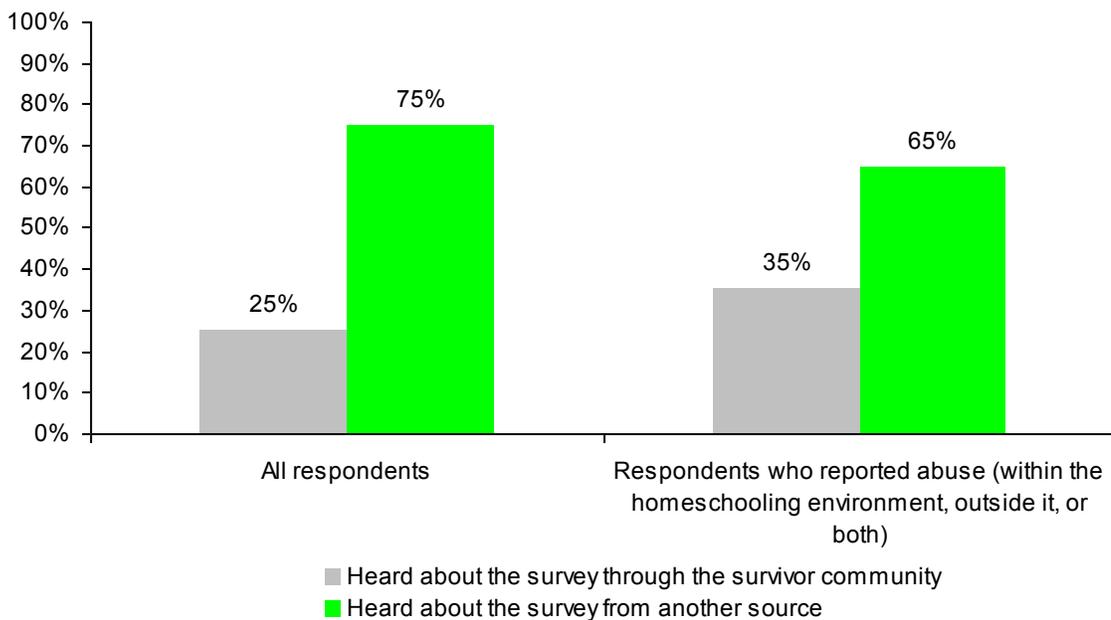


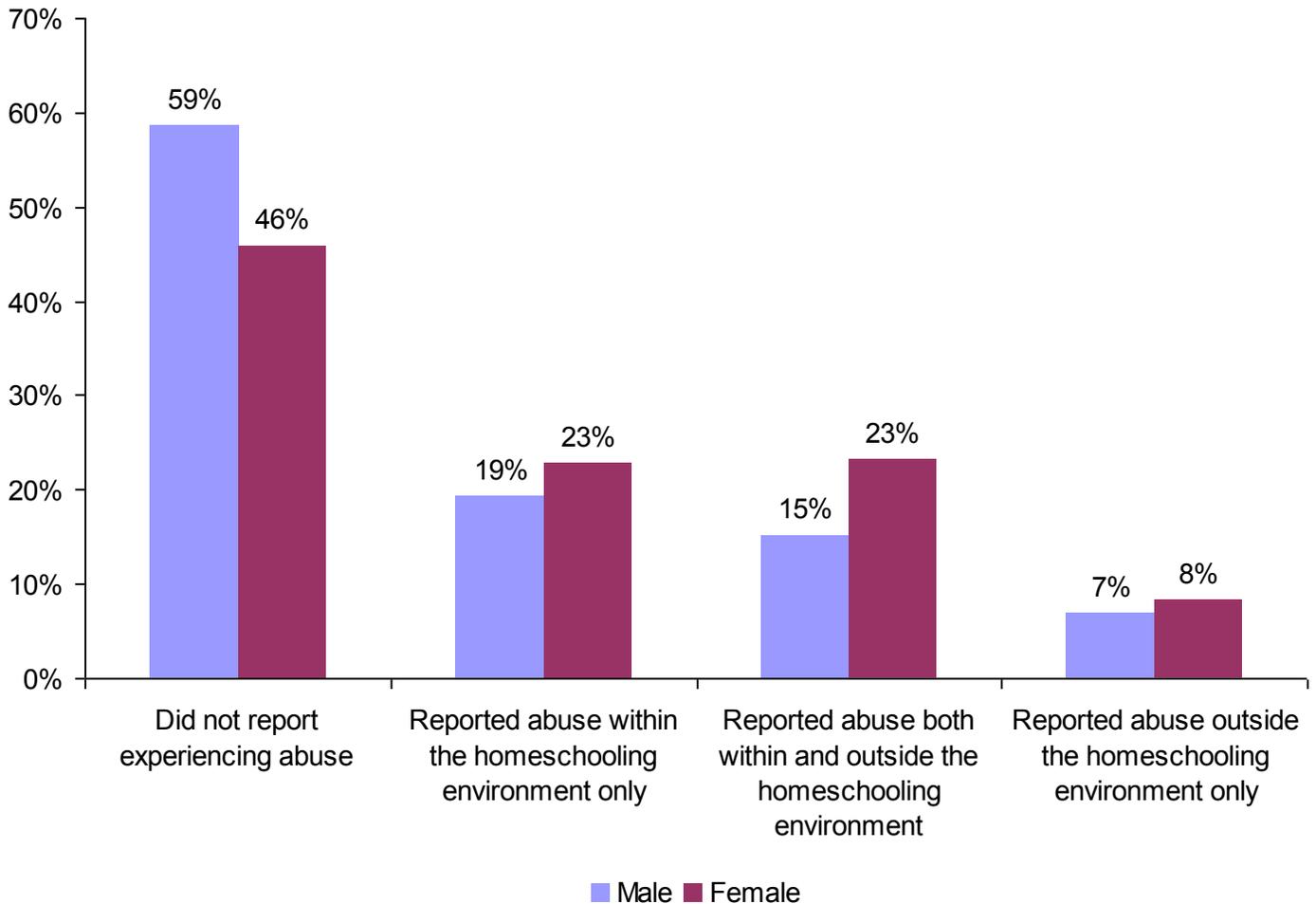
Figure 5 and Figure 6 show that only around one-third (35%) of the reports of abuse came from respondents who heard about the survey through one of the websites in the survivor community (Homeschoolers Anonymous/Homeschool Alumni Reaching Out, Love Joy Feminism, and No Longer Quivering). However, this percentage was still higher than the proportion of all respondents who heard about the survey through these sources (25%), demonstrating some amount of self-selection bias.

Figure 6: Percentage of respondents who heard about the survey from a website in the survivor community (Homeschoolers Anonymous/Homeschool Alumni Reaching Out, Love Joy Feminism, No Longer Quivering)



Female respondents were more likely than male respondents to report abuse, both within and outside the homeschool environment (Figure 7).

Figure 7: Abuse reports by gender (assigned at birth)

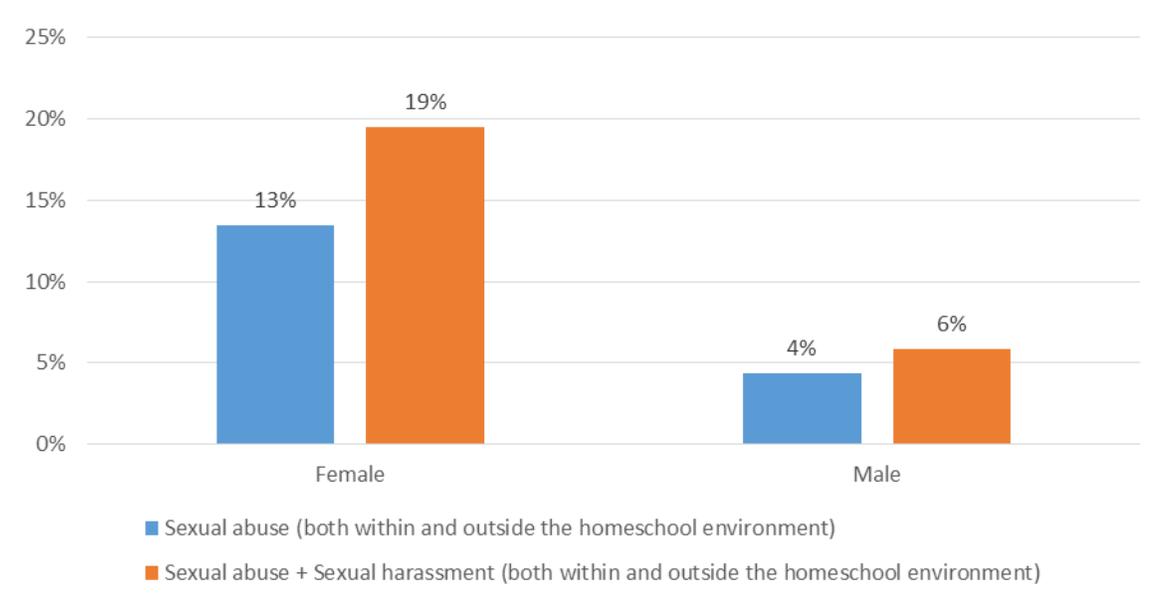


Sexual abuse

As shown in Figure 2, 5% of survey respondents reported experiencing sexual abuse within the home or homeschooling environment, and 8% reported experiencing sexual abuse outside the home or homeschooling environment (note that there is some overlap between these categories). Altogether, 13% of female respondents reported experiencing sexual abuse and 4% of male respondents reported experiencing sexual abuse. [Ray \(2016\)](#) reported that the homeschool alumni he surveyed were less likely to experience sexual abuse than his control group. Statistics on the national rate of child sexual abuse vary widely, ranging from [1 in 4 girls and 1 in 6 boys](#) or [1 in 7 girls and 1 in 25 boys](#), depending on the source for the figures. The numbers in this survey are in line with the lower end of these estimates, and thus may be lower than the national average. However, this study did not control for any background factors that may affect child sexual abuse rates and the survey's definition of sexual harassment included "verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature", meaning that some respondents may have selected this option instead of the 'sexual abuse' option in cases of less severe abuse. For these reasons it may be useful to combine the figures for sexual abuse within and outside the homeschooling environment with the figures for sexual harassment within and outside the homeschooling environment. Figure 8 shows that 19% of female respondents (around 1 in 5) and 6% of males (around 1 in 15) reported that they had been sexually abused or sexually harassed, either within or outside of the

homeschooling environment. On average, 16% of all respondents reported they had been sexually abused or sexually harassed.

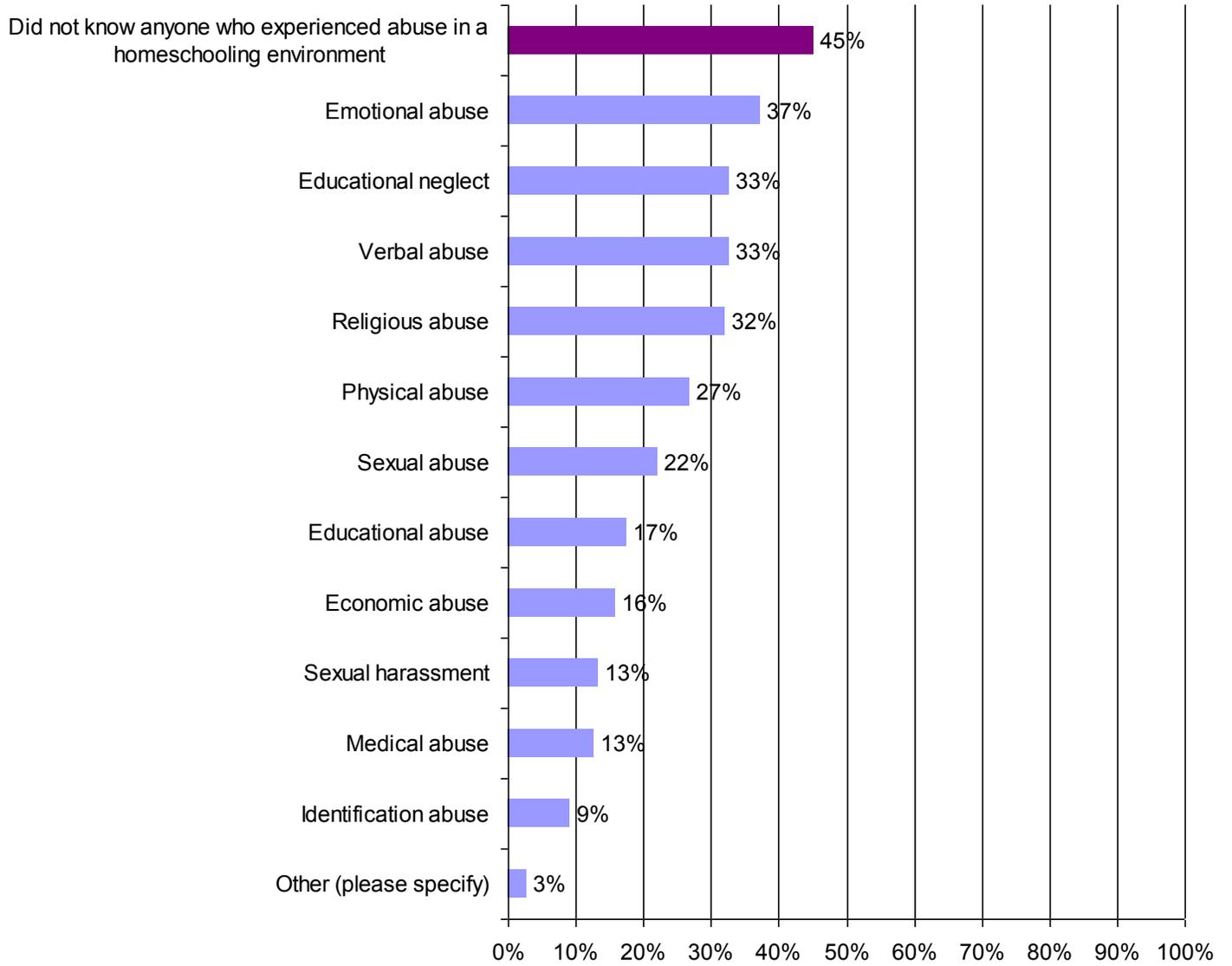
Figure 8: Sexual abuse and sexual harassment (both within and outside the homeschool environment) by gender (assigned at birth)



Abuse among acquaintances

The majority of respondents (55%) knew someone who had experienced abuse within a homeschool environment (Figure 9). The most common types were emotional abuse (37% of respondents reported knowing someone who was emotionally abused in a homeschool environment); educational neglect (33%), verbal abuse (33%), religious abuse (32%), physical abuse (27%), and sexual abuse (22%).

Figure 9: Did anyone you know experience abuse within a homeschooling environment?



There was some overlap between those who reported experiencing abuse and those who reported knowing someone else who was abused in a homeschool environment (Figure 10).

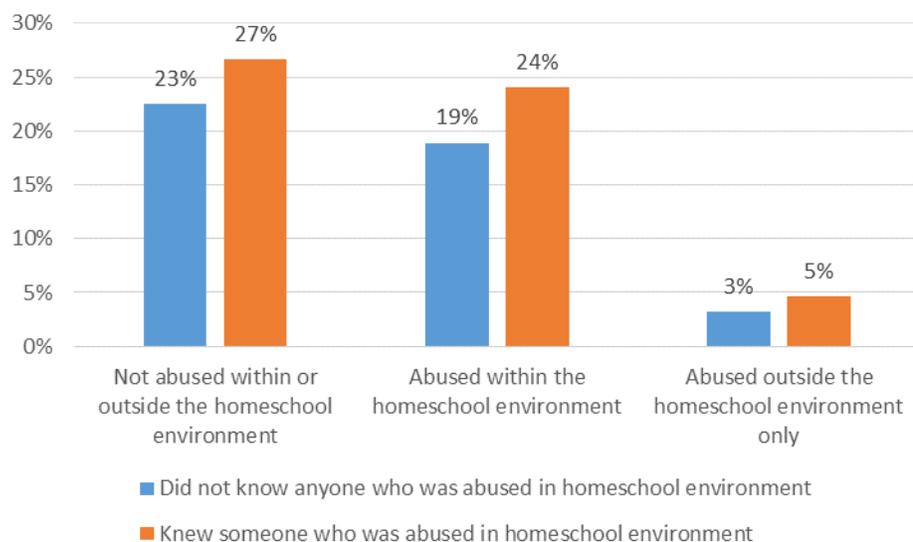
Figure 10: Experiences of abuse and knowledge of acquaintances' experiences of abuse

Figure 10 shows that less than one-quarter (23%) of all respondents were neither abused nor did they know anyone who was abused in a homeschool environment.

2. Corporal punishment

Overall, respondents were less enthusiastic than their parents about the use of corporal punishment as a disciplinary technique. Almost half (44%) of respondents reported that their parents had used corporal punishment to discipline them 'Often' or 'Always' (Figure 11); however, only 14% agreed that corporal punishment was an effective discipline technique 'Often' or 'Always' (Figure 12).

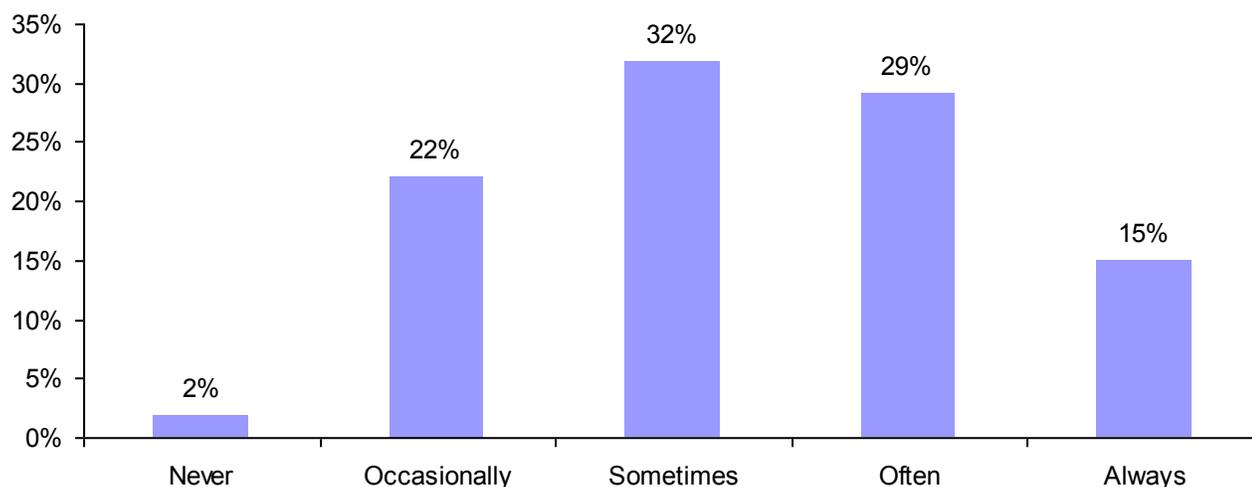
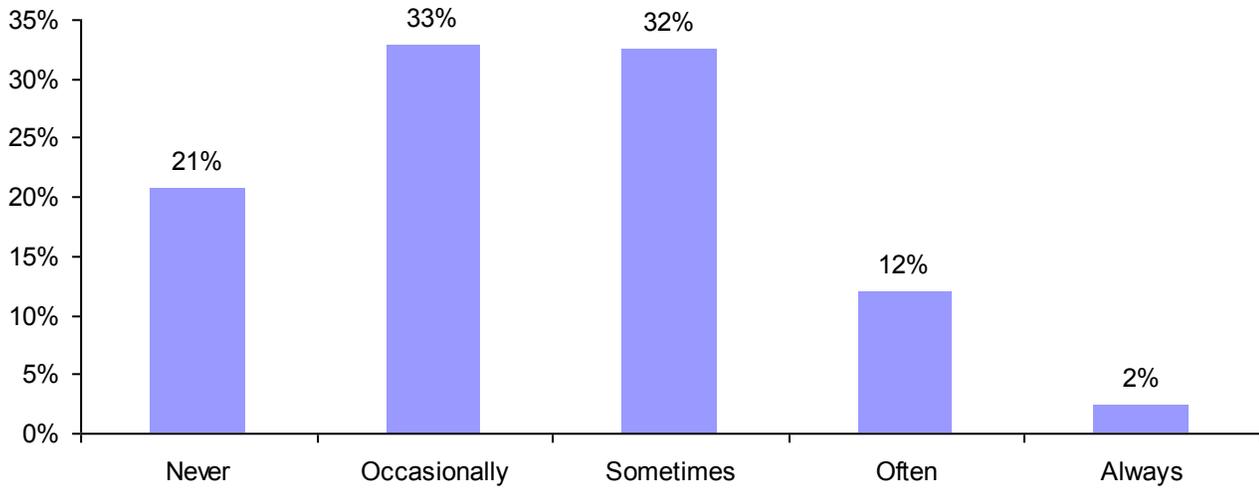
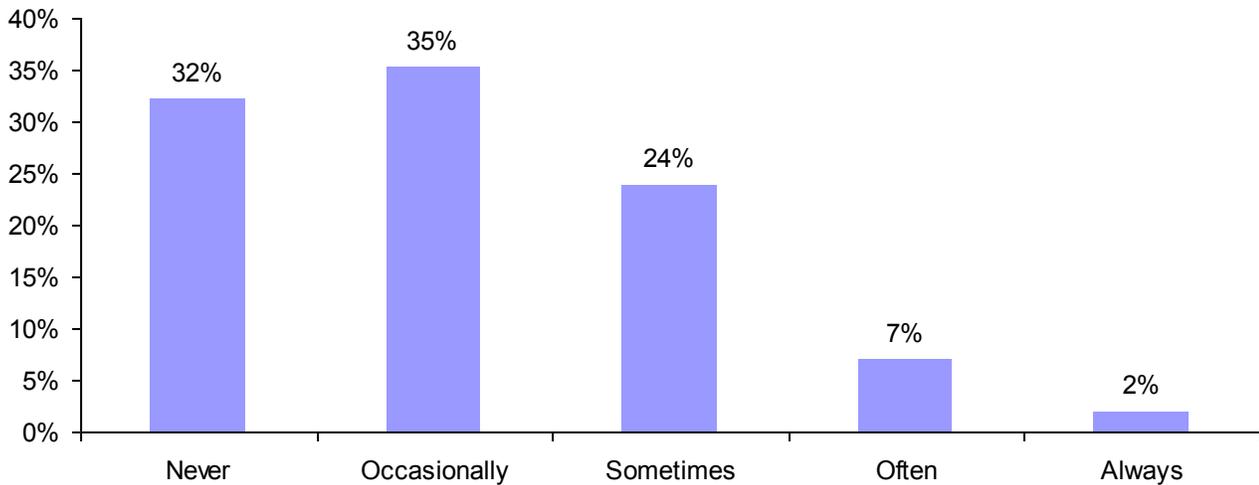
Figure 11: My parents used spanking/corporal punishment to discipline me and/or my siblings.

Figure 12: Spanking is an effective discipline technique.



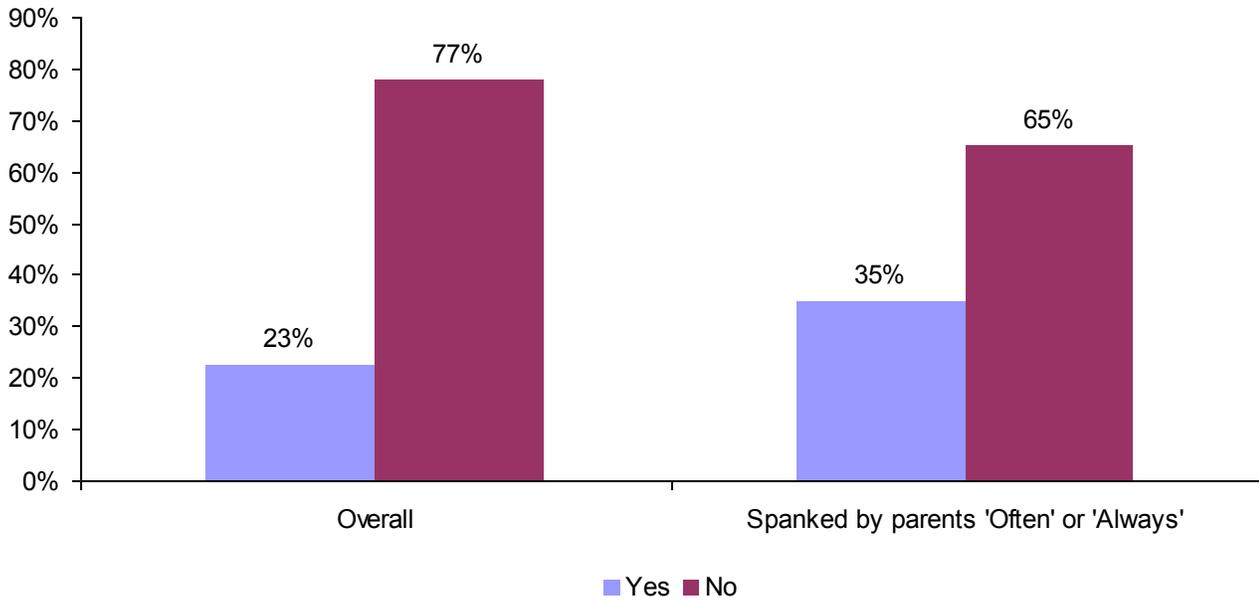
Only 9% reported that they do or would use corporal punishment to discipline their children 'Often' or 'Always' (Figure 13).

Figure 13: I do/would spank my children.



In fact, Figure 13 shows that about one third of respondents (32%) stated that they would 'Never' use corporal punishment on their children. This attitude is borne out in Figure 14, which shows that about a quarter of all respondents (23%) consider spanking a child to be inherently abusive. This figure rises to more than one-third (35%) when only those who reported being spanked 'Often' or 'Always' by their parents are considered.

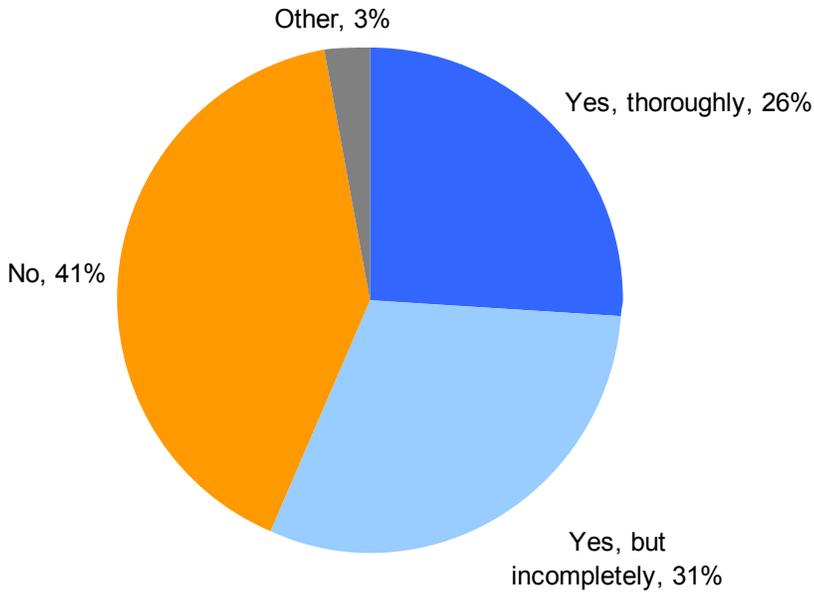
Figure 14: Do you consider spanking a child to be inherently abusive?



3. Knowledge of child services

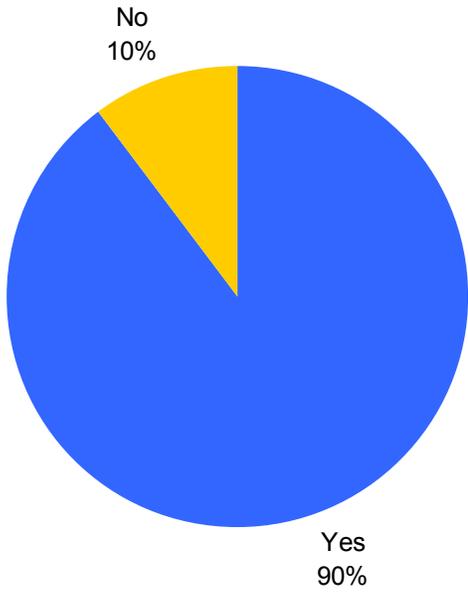
In this section we discuss respondents' awareness about and knowledge of child abuse and child protective services. Around two-fifths (41%) of respondents reported they were not taught how to recognize child abuse (Figure 15).

Figure 15: Did your parents teach you how to recognize abuse?



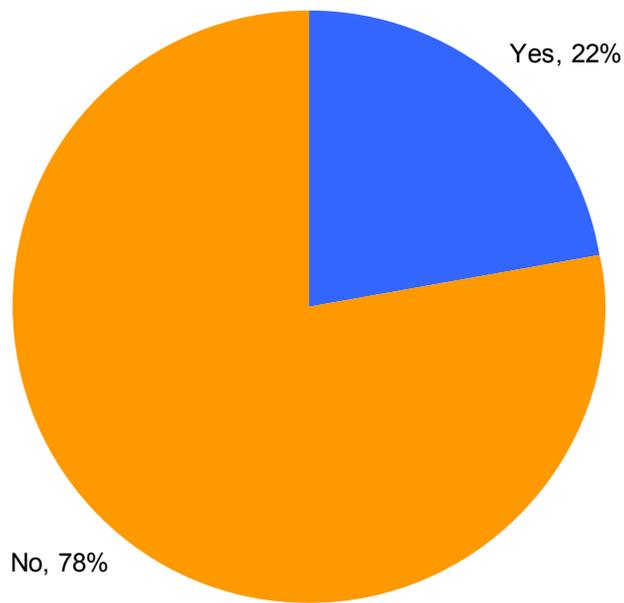
One in ten respondents (10%) were not aware that child protective services existed (Figure 16).

Figure 16: Growing up, were you aware that child protective services (CPS) existed?



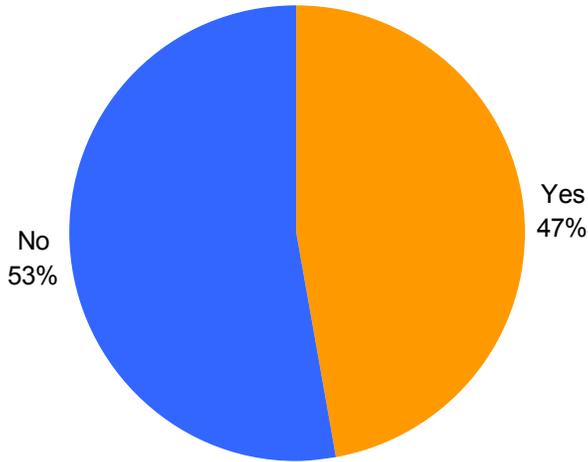
Less than one-quarter of respondents (22%) knew how to report child abuse to child protective services (Figure 17).

Figure 17: Did you know how to report abuse to CPS?



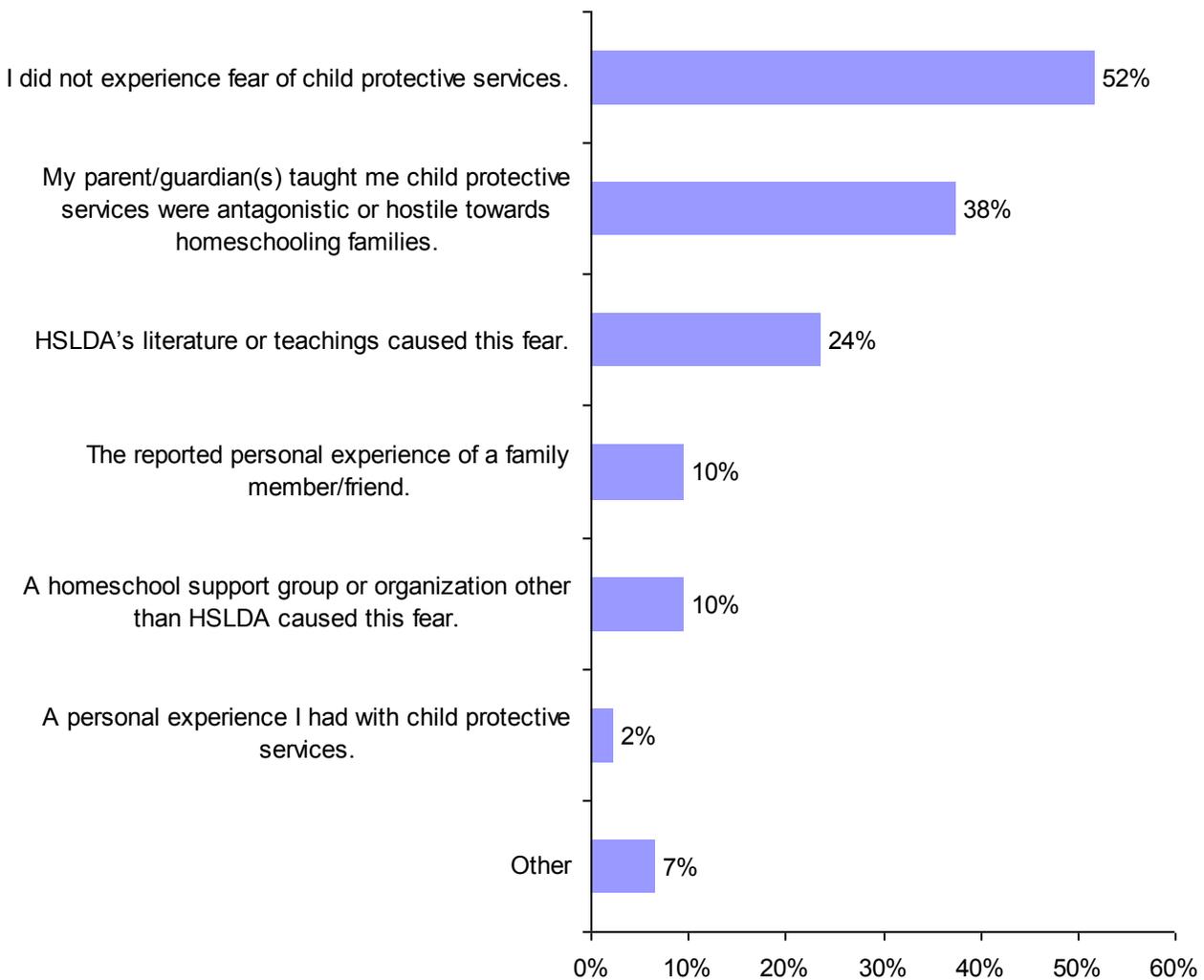
Nearly half of respondents (47%) experienced fear of child protective services at some point (Figure 18).

Figure 18: Growing up, were you ever afraid of child protective services (CPS)?



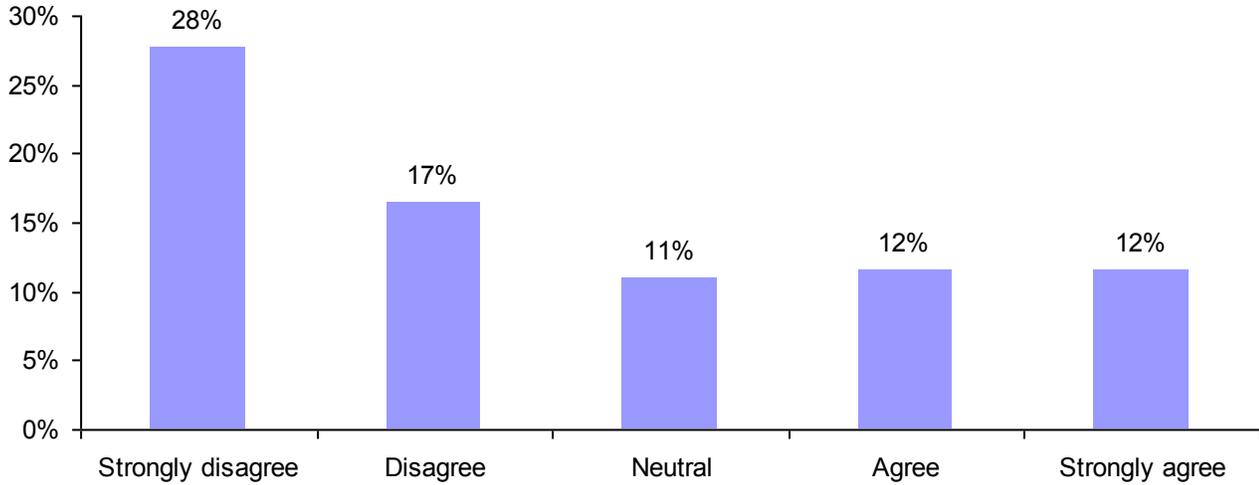
As shown in Figure 19, the most common causes of respondents' fear of child protective services were their parents' warnings (38%) and literature produced by the Home School Legal Defense Association (24%). Note that the percentages sum to greater than 100% because respondents could select multiple options.

Figure 19: If you experienced fear of child protective services, what was the cause?



Nearly one-quarter (24%) of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that their childhood fear of child protective services did or would have prevented them from reporting child abuse to the authorities. (Note that this question was posed to all respondents and was not limited to those who reported a childhood fear of child protective services.)

Figure 20: My fear of child protective services would have prevented/did prevent me from reporting abuse.



Approximately 15% of respondents reported that their parents used their fear of child protective services to intimidate them into obeying (Figure 21).

Figure 21: Did your parent/guardian(s) ever try to intimidate you into obeying or doing something by mention [sic] child protective services taking you away, whether as a joke or as serious intimidation?

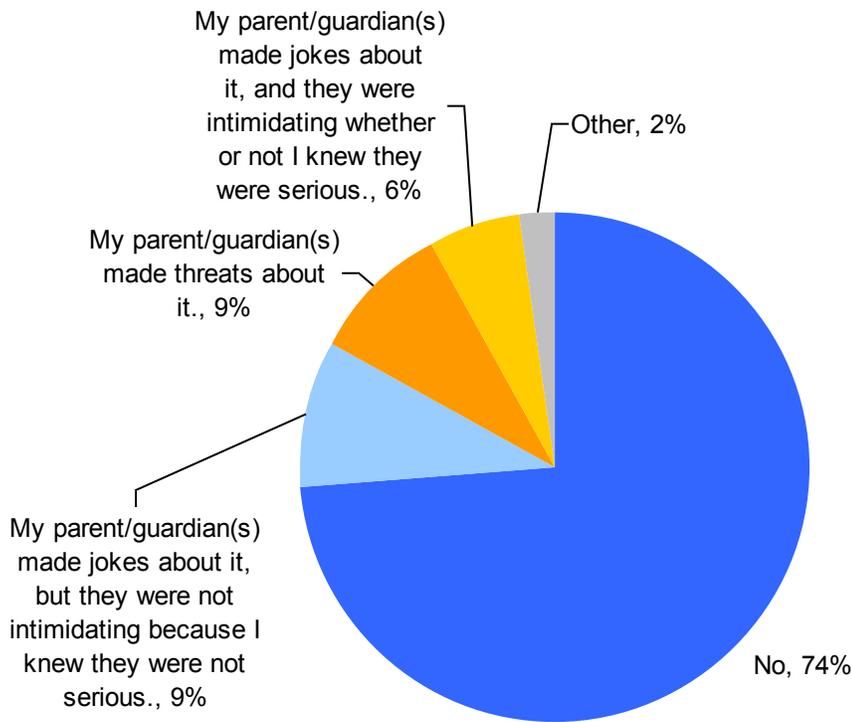
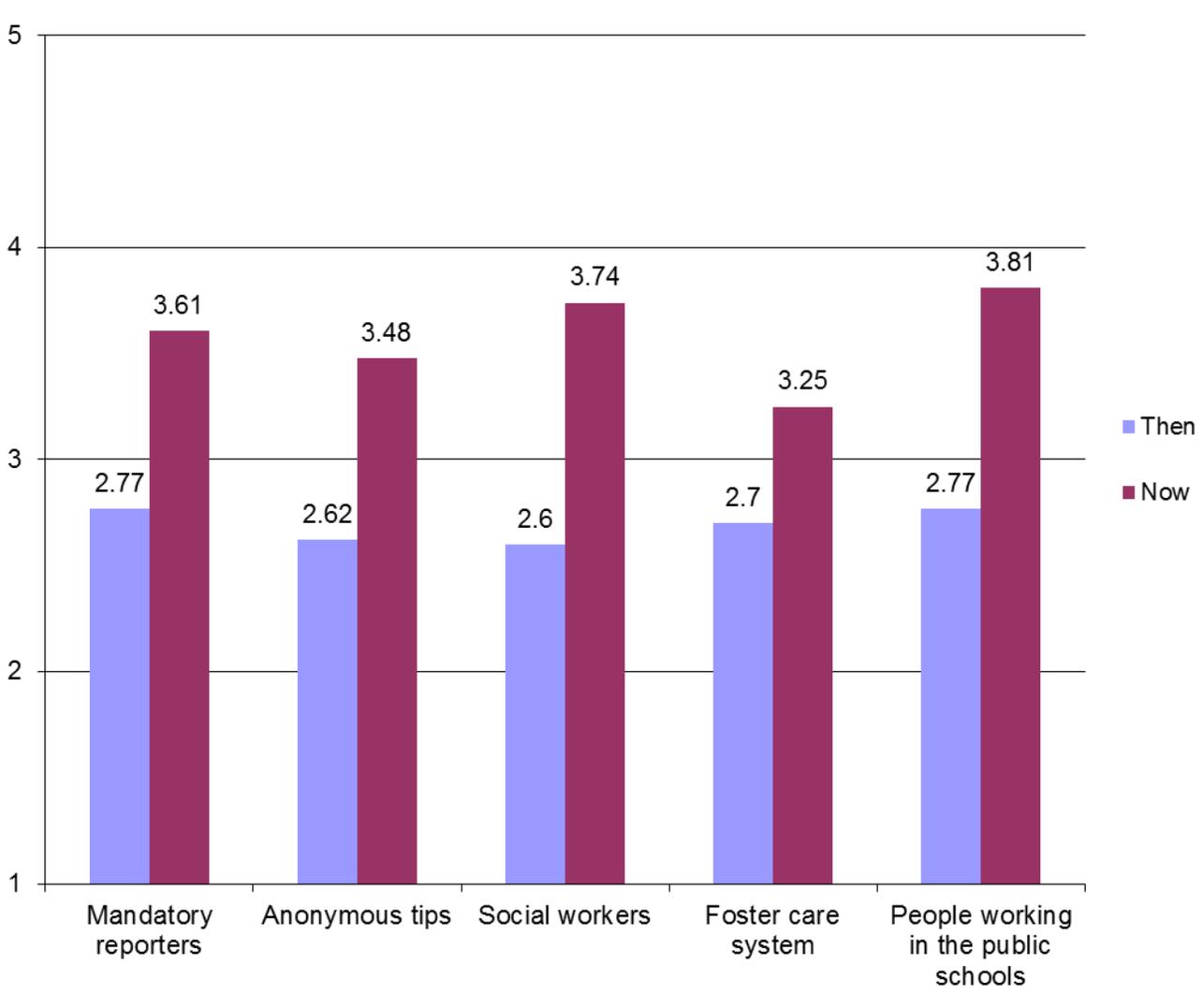


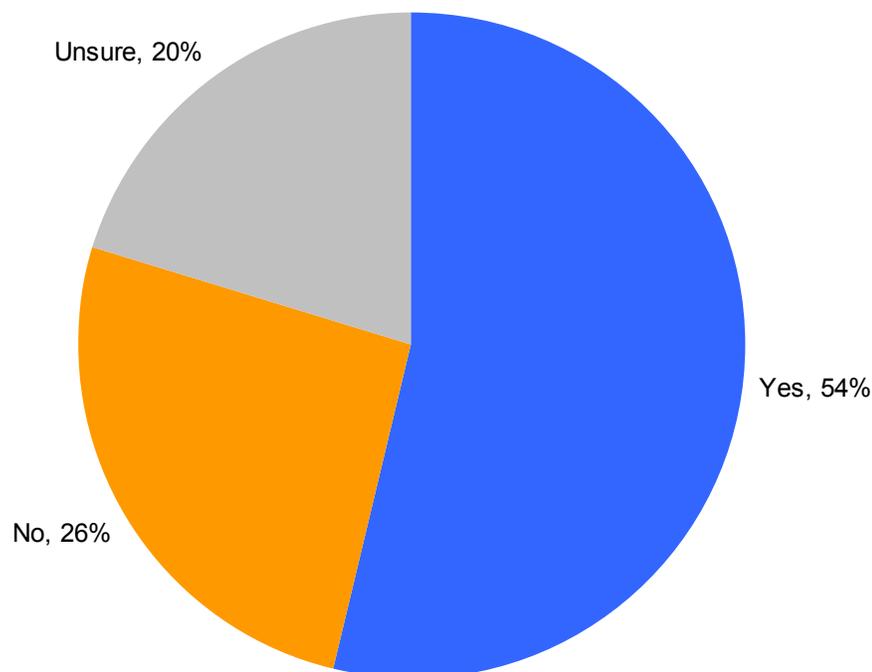
Figure 22 shows that overall, respondents’ opinions of various social services became much more positive in adulthood than they had been in childhood. On average, there is a 133% increase in positive attitudes toward social services.

Figure 22: Changes in respondents' impressions of social services, from childhood to the present (where 1 is 'Strongly negative' and 5 is 'Strongly positive')



More than half of respondents (54%) believed that their caregivers would have been receptive to education about child abuse (Figure 23).

Figure 23: In your experience, would the adult(s) in your homeschooling environment (your parents, co-op leaders, etc.) have been receptive to education about recognizing and addressing abuse?



4. Conclusion

Approximately half of respondents (51%) reported experiencing abuse either within or outside their homeschooling environment, and a further 26% reported knowing another homeschooler who was abused. Within the home, the most common types of abuse reported were emotional/verbal abuse, religious abuse, educational neglect, and physical abuse. Outside of the home, the most common types were religious abuse and emotional/verbal abuse. Among respondents' homeschooled acquaintances who were abused, the most common types were emotional/verbal abuse and educational neglect. More female respondents reported being abused than males, and only around one-third (35%) of those who reported abuse heard about the survey through the survivor community. With regard to corporal punishment, 44% of respondents reported that their parents used this method of discipline 'Often' or 'Always'; however, only 14% believed corporal punishment was 'Often' or 'Always' an effective disciplinary method, and only 9% reported that they do or would use corporal punishment to discipline their children 'Often' or 'Always'. Those who were spanked 'Often' or 'Always' were more likely to consider spanking inherently abusive. Overall, respondents reported that as children they had little knowledge of child protective services and abuse reporting procedures—nearly half experienced fear of child protective services—although more than half believed their caregivers would have been receptive to education in this area.

Appendix A

The definitions of abuse used in the survey are given [here](#). We reproduce them below.

Economic abuse:

Economic/financial abuse “occurs when someone controls a person’s financial resources without the person’s consent or misuses those resources. Financial abuse includes, but is not limited to: not allowing the person to

participate in educational programs; forcing the person to work outside the home; refusing to let the person work outside the home or attend school; controlling the person's choice of occupation; illegally or improperly using a person's money, assets or property; acts of fraud; pulling off a scam against a person; taking funds from the person without permission for one's own use; misusing funds through lies, trickery, controlling or withholding money; not allowing access to bank accounts, savings, or other income; giving an allowance and then requiring justification for all money spent; persuading the person to buy a product or give away money; selling the house, furnishings or other possessions without permission; forging a signature on pension cheques or legal documents; misusing a power of attorney, an enduring power of attorney or legal guardianship; not paying bills; opening mail without permission; living in a person's home without paying fairly for expenses; and, destroying personal property." (Source: [Violence Prevention Initiative](#))

Educational neglect:

"Educational neglect involves the failure of a parent or caregiver to enroll a child of mandatory school age in school or provide appropriate home schooling or needed special educational training, thus allowing the child or youth to engage in chronic truancy. Educational neglect can lead to the child failing to acquire basic life skills, dropping out of school or continually displaying disruptive behavior." (Source: [American Humane Association](#))

Educational abuse:

Actively trying to prevent you from getting a college education, not allowing you to get a college education, withholding transcripts, diplomas, or FAFSA information to keep you from going to college.

Emotional abuse:

Emotional abuse "includes actions such as engaging in chronic or extreme spousal abuse in the child's presence, allowing a child to use drugs or alcohol, refusing or failing to provide needed psychological care, constantly belittling the child and withholding affection. Parental behaviors considered to be emotional child maltreatment include:

- Ignoring (consistent failure to respond to the child's need for stimulation, nurturance, encouragement and protection or failure to acknowledge the child's presence);
- Rejecting (actively refusing to respond to the child's needs — e.g., refusing to show affection);
- Verbally assaulting (constant belittling, name calling or threatening);
- Isolating (preventing the child from having normal social contacts with other children and adults);
- Terrorizing (threatening the child with extreme punishment or creating a climate of terror by playing on childhood fears); and
- Corrupting or exploiting (encouraging the child to engage in destructive, illegal or antisocial behavior)." (Source: [American Humane Association](#))

Identification abuse:

Not providing you with, withholding, or destroying any of your identification documents: driver's license, social security card, etc.

Medical abuse:

“Medical neglect is the failure to provide appropriate health care for a child (although financially able to do so), thus placing the child at risk of being seriously disabled or disfigured or dying... Concern is warranted not only when a parent refuses medical care for a child in an emergency or for an acute illness, but also when a parent ignores medical recommendations for a child with a treatable chronic disease or disability, resulting in frequent hospitalizations or significant deterioration.” (Source: [American Humane Association](#))

Physical abuse:

Physical abuse is “defined as non-accidental trauma or physical injury caused by punching, beating, kicking, biting, burning or otherwise harming a child.” (Source: [American Humane Association](#))

Religious abuse:

Religious abuse, sometimes called spiritual violence, “occurs when someone uses a person’s spiritual beliefs to manipulate, dominate or control the person. [It] includes, but is not limited to: not allowing the person to follow her or his preferred spiritual or religious tradition; forcing a spiritual or religious path or practice on another person; belittling or making fun of a person’s spiritual or religious tradition, beliefs or practices; and, using one’s spiritual or religious position, rituals or practices to manipulate, dominate or control a person.” (Source: [Violence Prevention Initiative](#))

Sexual abuse:

The forcing of unwanted sexual activity by one person on another, as by the use of threats or coercion — this can include molestation and/or rape. Child sexual abuse is defined as “all offences that involve sexually touching a child, as well as non-touching offenses and sexual exploitation.” (Source: [American Humane Association](#))

Sexual harassment:

Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature. Such unwelcome actions can include: “sexual pranks, or repeated sexual teasing, jokes, or innuendo, in person or via e-mail; verbal abuse of a sexual nature; touching or grabbing of a sexual nature; repeatedly standing too close to or brushing up against a person; repeatedly asking a person to socialize...when the person has said no or has indicated he or she is not interested; giving gifts or leaving objects that are sexually suggestive; repeatedly making sexually suggestive gestures; making or posting sexually demeaning or offensive pictures, cartoons or other materials...” (Source: [U.S. Department of State](#))

Verbal abuse:

“Verbal abuse occurs when someone uses language, whether spoken or written, to cause harm to a person. Verbal abuse includes, but is not limited to: recalling a person’s past mistakes; expressing negative expectations; expressing distrust; threatening violence against a person or her or his family members; yelling; lying; name-calling; insulting, swearing; withholding important information; unreasonably ordering around; talking unkindly about death to a person; and, telling a person she or he is worthless or nothing but trouble.” (Source: [Violence Prevention Initiative](#))