

Changes in Public Perceptions of Child Abuse and Neglect (1994-2010)

Singapore Children's Society
We bring relief and happiness to children in need

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Why do perceptions of child abuse and neglect (CAN) matter?

Help us identify areas of improvement in:



1. Parenting practices



2. Public education



3. Reporting of suspected abuse

Study background

Research Question

How have public perceptions of CAN changed over the years in Singapore?



401 participants



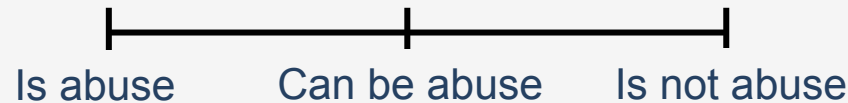
400 participants



Perceptions of CAN

Which behaviours do they consider as being abusive?

18 behaviours



Example of behaviours



Attitude towards reporting CAN

Do you think cases of child abuse and neglect should be reported?

Perceptions of
CAN



Attitude towards
reporting



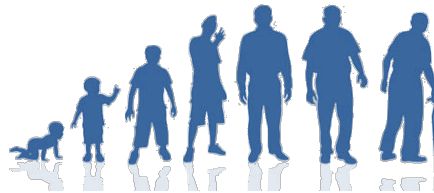
Demographic differences

Demographic profile differed between 1994 and 2010.

Statistical analyses accounted for:



1. Education level



2. Age



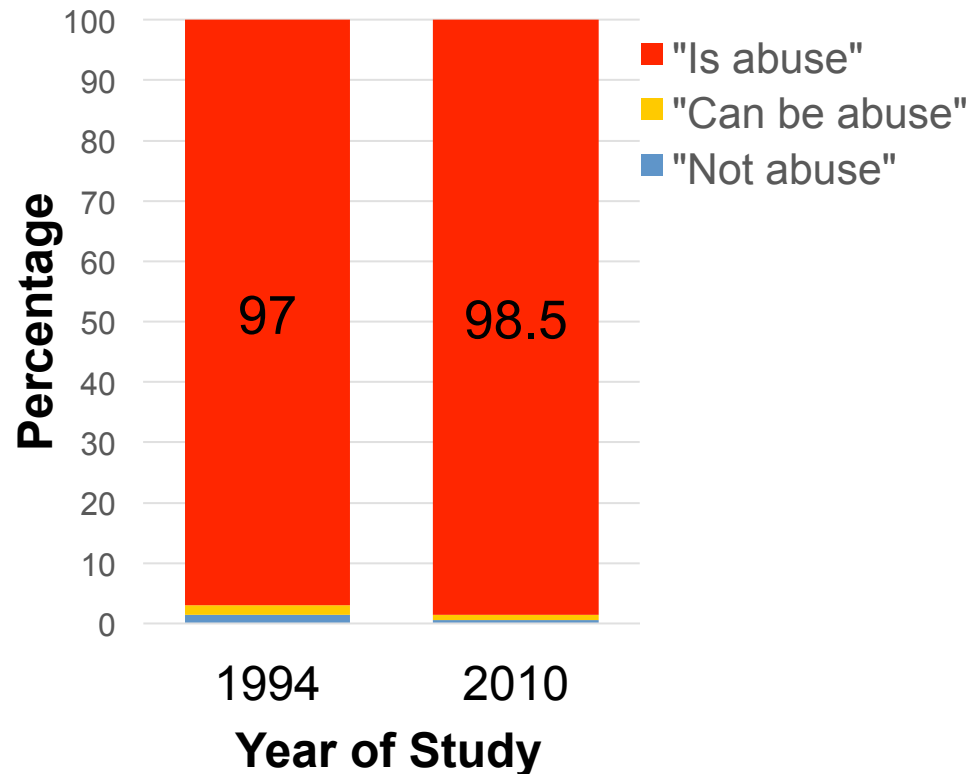
3. Parenthood status

Findings – Abusive behaviours

No change over time

- E.g. burning child, having sex with child

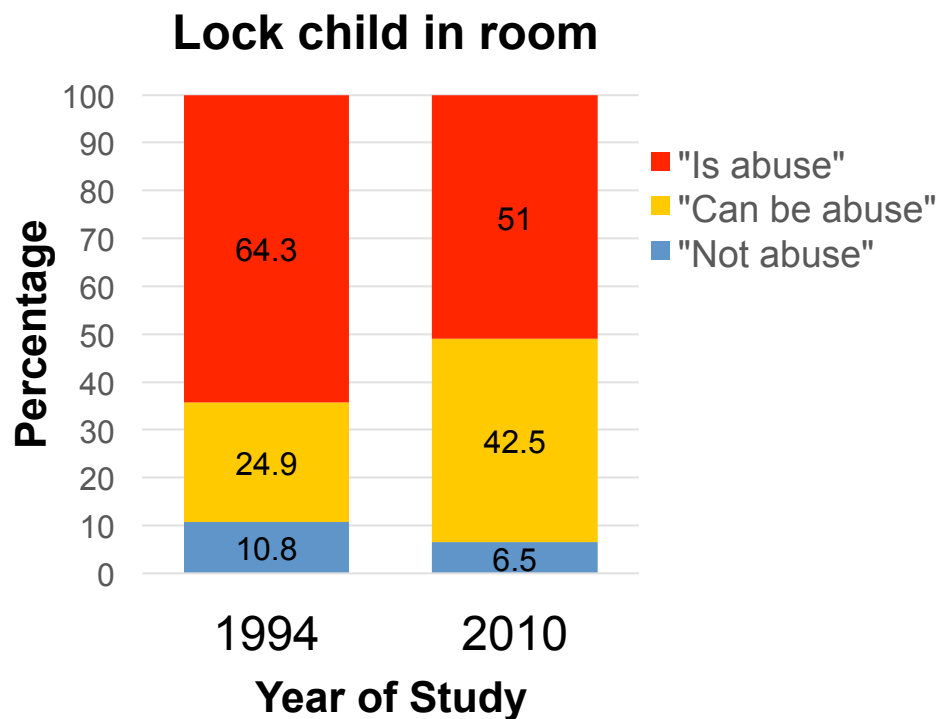
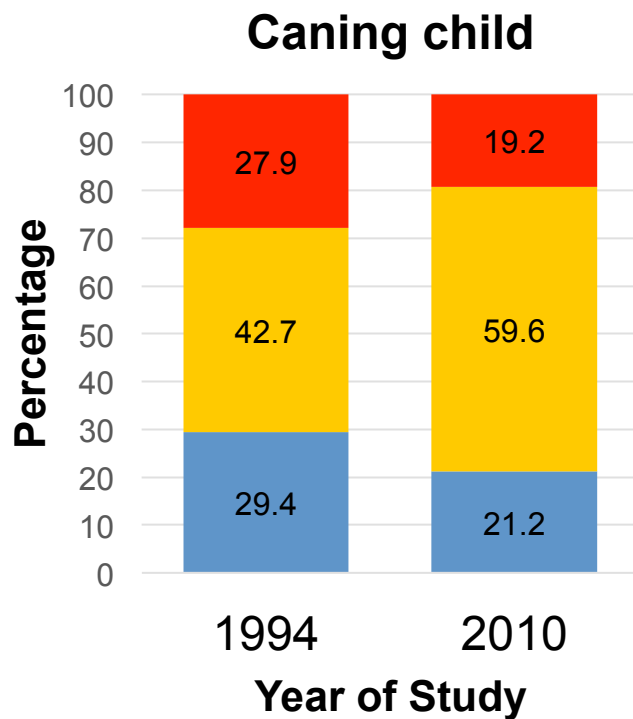
Having sex with child



Findings – Ambiguous behaviours

Public were more tentative about labelling the behaviours as abusive over time

- E.g. locking child in room, saying others are better, caning child

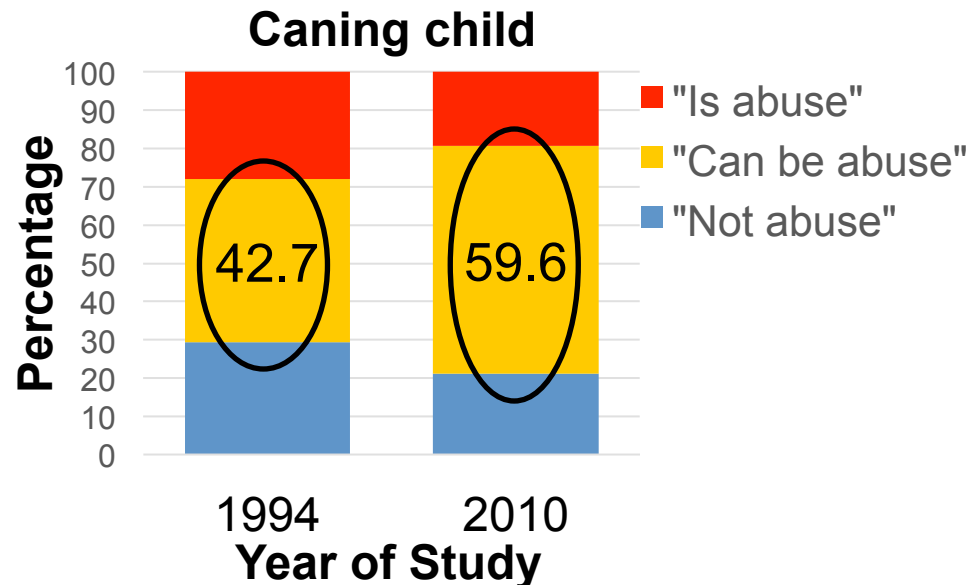


Potential explanations

Asian parenting practices

E.g. caning child, never hugging child

- Corporal punishment is part of Asian parenting practices
- Variation in parenting practices exist in Singapore – globalization? Modernization?
- These variations could explain our findings

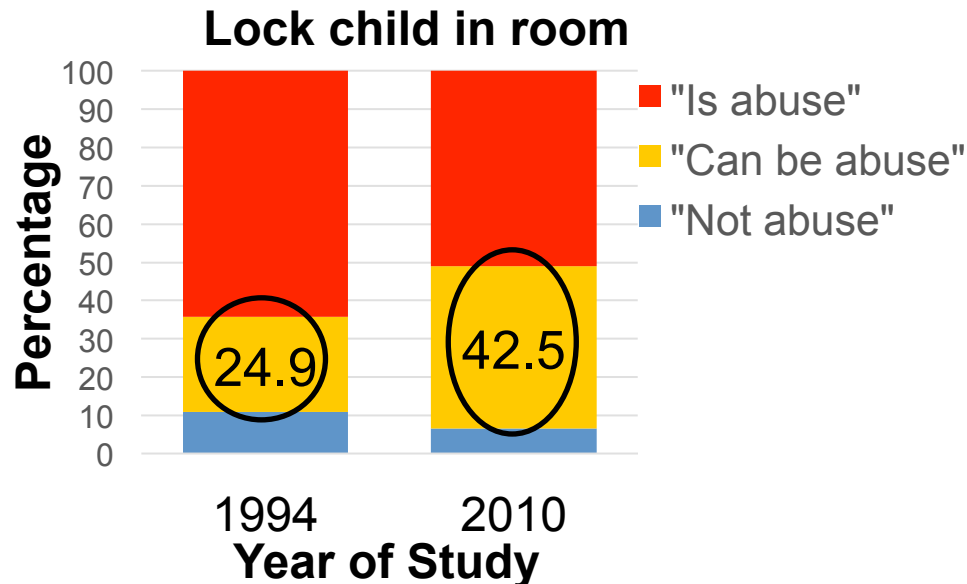


Potential explanations

Emotional maltreatment

E.g. lock child in room, never hugging child

- Emotional maltreatment presents no visible/ outward signs of harm
- Difficult to quantify the harm
- Difficulties in recognizing emotional harm results in ambiguity



Implication

- Singapore acceded to UNCRC in 1995.
- Children and Young Persons Act was amended to include emotional maltreatment in 2001.

Gaps remain between legislation/ policies and public awareness and perceptions



Attitude towards reporting CAN

No significant change in attitude towards reporting CAN

Most reported that they agree with reporting CAN

- 95.3% (2010 study)
- 93.8% (1994 study)

Perceptions ↔ Attitudes

The more public perceived behaviours as abusive, the more likely that they agreed with reporting CAN

Implication

Ambiguous cases of CAN might be underreported.

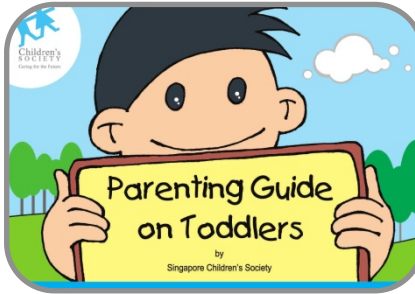


Our Public Education Initiatives

1 Parenting guide series



Babies



Toddlers



Pre-schoolers
(English, Chinese & Malay)

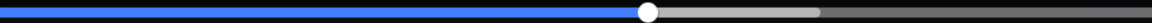





2 CAN prevention talks

3 CAN prevention microsite

< Back



Now he has even started beating his son.

▶  -0:45     

Moving forward

More public education effort needed

1

On knowledge of CAN behaviours

- Emotional maltreatment and its negative consequences
- Physical punishment and its risk of abuse
- Improve parenting practices

2

On reporting suspected CAN

- Translating knowledge into practice
- More guidance and resources on reporting context-specific instances could be provided for the public
- Public guide to reporting CAN



Moving forward

Future research

- Regular surveys on public perceptions of CAN and attitude towards reporting CAN
- Evaluation of the effectiveness of public education campaigns in improving awareness of CAN
- Relationship between public perceptions of CAN and the actual rate of reporting of suspected instances of CAN



THANK YOU

For more information:
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