

**Marie-Ève Clément, Ph.D.**

Assistant Professor

Département de psychoéducation et psychologie

Université du Québec en Outaouais

**Major findings from the 1999 and 2004  
cycles of the Quebec Family Violence  
Surveys**



# **PART I**

## **Methodological issues**

# Survey's objectives

---

- To establish Quebec's annual prevalence rates of psychological and physical violence towards children aged 0 to 17 years old by an adult living in the same house;
- To document the five-year evolution of parental practices and attitudes;
- To identify some associated conditions;
- To offer rigorous information to the general population and to organizations and services;
- To inspire preventive initiatives.

# Survey's methodology

## ➤ **Participants:**

- Representative sample (Random Digit Dial procedure);
  - **One sample in 1999:**
    - N = 2 469 Quebec females, mostly mothers;
  - **Two independent sample in 2004:**
    - N = 3 148 Quebec females, mostly mothers; and
    - N = 953 Quebec males, mostly fathers.
- Living at least 50% of the time with a child aged 0-17 years old.

## ➤ **Procedure:**

- Telephone survey (computer-assisted) by professional interviewers;
- Interviews lasted about 15 minutes;
- Mostly In French (92%), also in English (8%);
- Ethical concerns and confidentiality.

# The questionnaire - 2004

Seven themes covered (71 items)

---

## 1. Parental attitudes :

- a) General attitudes regarding discipline and corporal punishment
- b) Violence justification index
- c) Perceived impacts of the use of psychological and physical violence

## 2. Parental Stress associated with child's temperament

## 3. Parental violence:

- a) Psychological aggression
- b) Minor physical violence
- c) Severe physical violence

# The Parent-Child Conflict Tactics Scales (PCCTS)

---

## ❖ **Psychological aggression:**

- ❖ *Shouted, yelled or screamed at the child*
- ❖ *Threatened to spank or hit the child*
- ❖ *Swore or cursed at the child*
- ❖ *Called the child “stupid” or “dumb” or some other name*
- ❖ *Said to the child that he/she will be send away or be kicked out of the house*

## ❖ **Minor physical violence (corporal punishment):**

- ❖ *Shook the child (child age 2 and older)*
- ❖ *Slapped the child on the hand, arm or leg*
- ❖ *Spanked on the bottom with bared hands*
- ❖ *Pinched the child to punish him/her*

# The Parent-Child Conflict Tactics Scales (PPCTS)

---

## ❖ Severe physical violence:

- ❖ *Shook the child (child under age 2)*
- ❖ *Hit the child on the bottom with a belt, a stick or other hard object\**
- ❖ *Hit the child some part of the body other than the bottom with a belt, a stick or other hard object*
- ❖ *Punched or kicked the child*
- ❖ *Beat up the child, that is hit him/her over and over as hard as an adult could*
- ❖ *Grabbed around the neck and choked*
- ❖ *Slapped the child in the face, or on the head or ears\**

# The questionnaire - 2004

Seven themes covered (71 items)

---

## **4. Recollection of childhood violence**

- a) Psychological aggression
- b) Corporal punishment
- c) Severe physical violence
- d) Witness of domestic violence (psychological and physical)

## **5. Domestic violence**

- a) Psychological
- b) Physical

## **3. Social support**

## **4. Socio-demographic informations**



# **PART I**

## **Prevalence and five-year trends of parental violence**

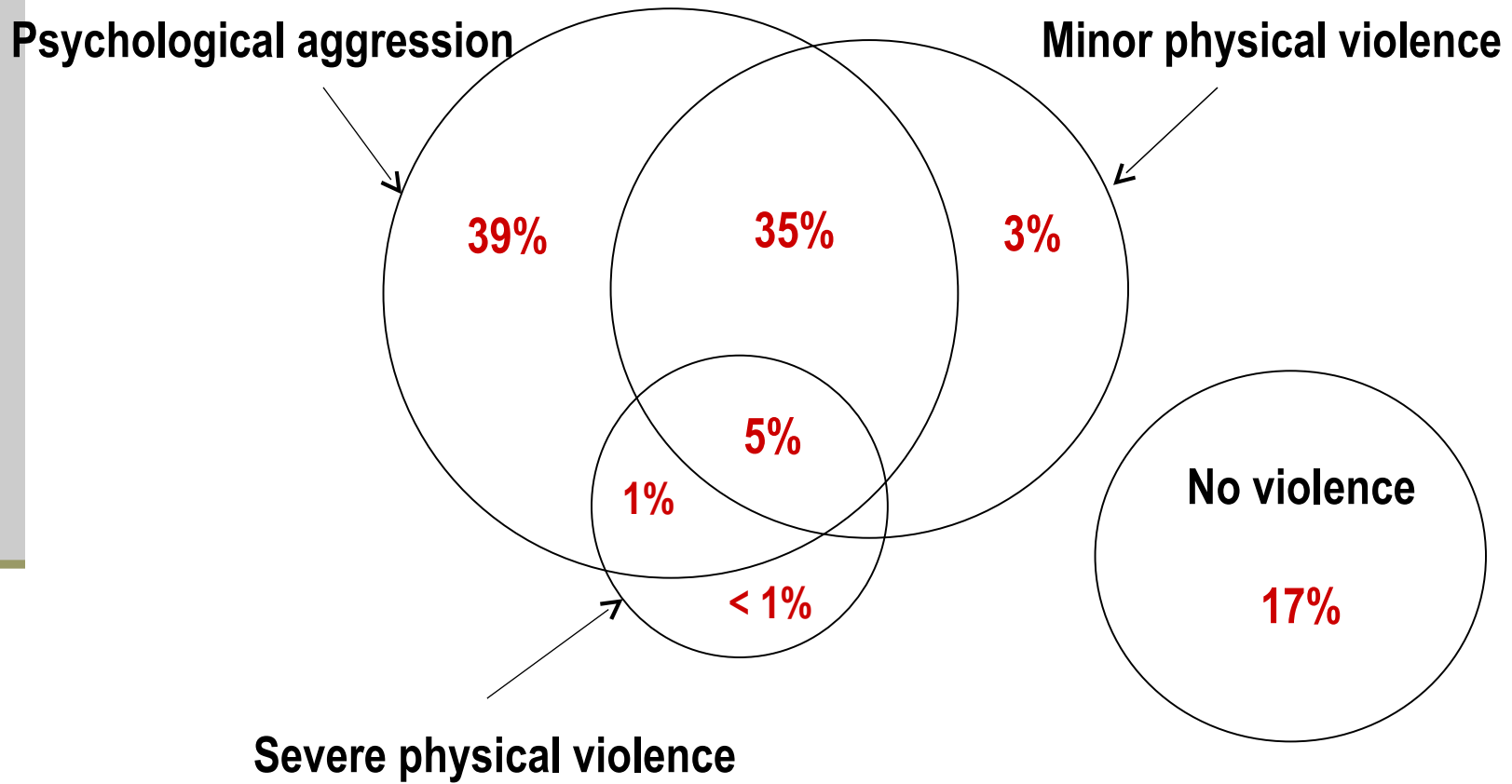
# **The 2004 Survey**

## **Annual prevalence rates on PCCTS**

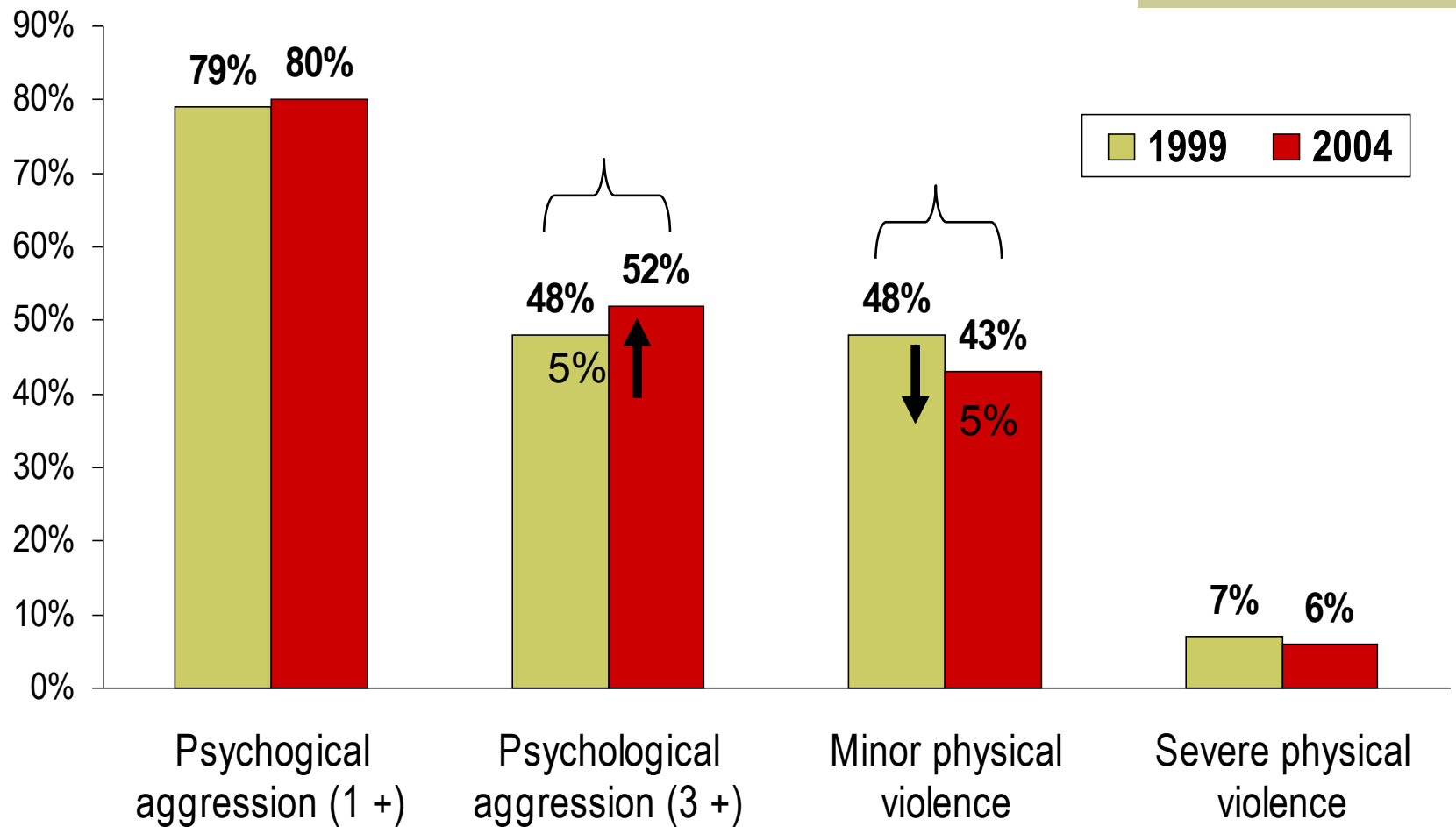
---

	<b>At least once (%)</b>	<b>Three times or more (%)</b>
<b>Psychological aggression</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>52</b>
<b>Minor physical violence</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Severe physical violence</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>2</b>

# Co-occurrence of psychological and physical violence, 2004



# Five-year evolution of parental practices (1999-2004)



## Five-year evolution of parental attitudes (1999-2004)

	1999 (%)	2004 (%)	<i>p</i>
<i>“Children can develop psychological problem when parents repeatedly yell or swear at them”</i>	36	41	,001
<i>“Children can be physically injured as a result of corporal punishment”</i>	73	76	,05

## Five-year evolution of parental attitudes (1999-2004)

	1999 (%)	2004 (%)	<i>p</i>
<i>“In general, Quebec’s parent are too soft on their children”</i>	77	81	,001
<i>“It's wrong for parents to slap their children”</i>	40	45	,001
<i>“Some children need to be slapped so that they will learn a lesson”</i>	29	26	,006
<i>“There should be a law allowing parents to use force to discipline their children”</i>	--	16	--
<i>“Spanking is an effective way of disciplining children”</i>	--	12	--



# **PART I**

## **Discussion on prevalence and trends**

# Annual prevalence rates – 2004

## Alarming results?

---

### ■ Repeated use of violence

- 1 out of 2 children experienced repeated psychological aggression
- 1 out of 6 children experienced repeated corporal punishment

### ■ Combined use of violence

- 41% experienced some combination of psychological aggression and physical violence

### ■ Severity of violence

- **2 children out of 100** are victims of three or more incident of severe physical violence in past year.



# Five-year evolution of minor physical violence

## A real decrease?

---

### 1) Possible explanations

- Decrease in parental beliefs about the virtue of hitting children for educational purpose
- Result of social debates, public pressure and awareness
- Result of other structural factors

### 2) Alternative explanation

- Social desirability

# Five-year evolution of psychological aggression

It is bad news or good news?

---

- More parents report three or more incident of psychological aggression

First hypothesis:

- Does the use of psychological aggression compensate physical violence practices?

Second hypothesis:

- Does it reflect higher capacity of recognition of psychological aggression in the population?



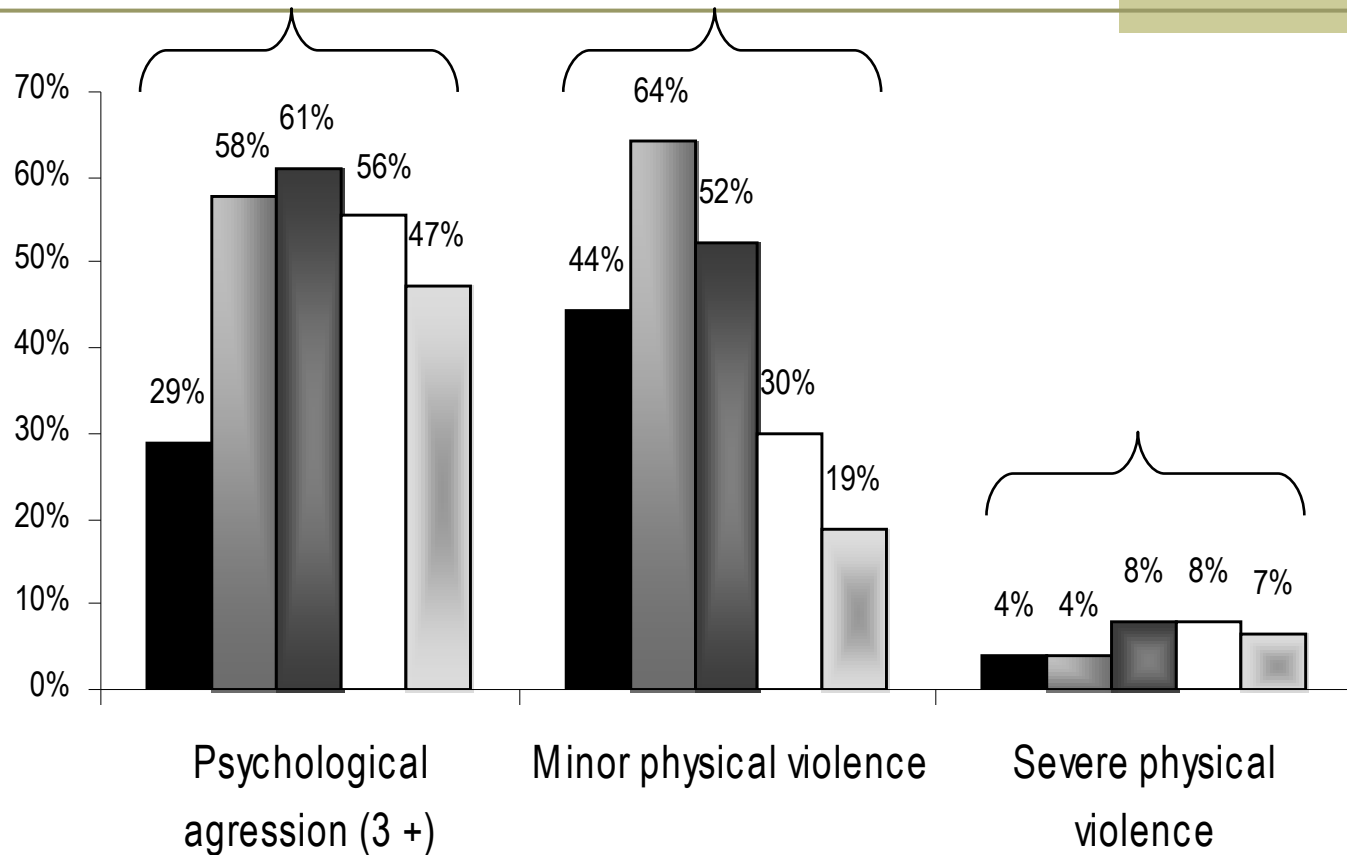
## **PART II**

# **Correlates of parental violence**

## Summary of bivariate analysis

RISK FACTORS	Psychological aggression (3 +)	Corporal punishment	Severe physical violence
Children's age	-+	-+	-+
Children's gender (male)	+		
Agreement with CP	+	+	+
Mother's childhood violence	+	+	+
High parental stress	+	+	+
Low level of education	-	-	
Unemployment			+
Family type (single-mother)	+		
Domestic violence	+	+	+
Number of children in household	+	+	+
Poverty			+
Low social support	+	+	+

# Annual prevalence and children's age



■ 0-2 years old

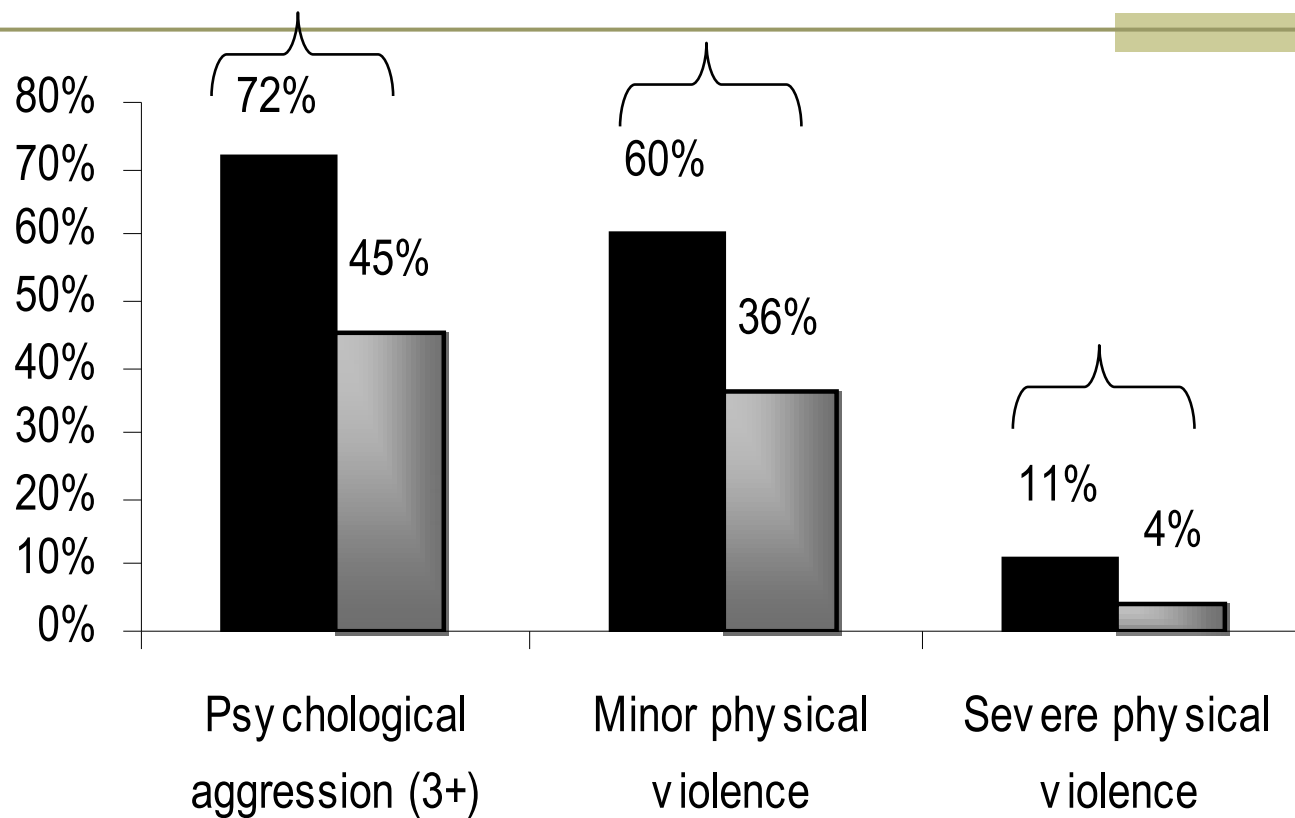
■ 3-6 years old

■ 7-10 years old

□ 11-14 years old

■ 15-17 years old

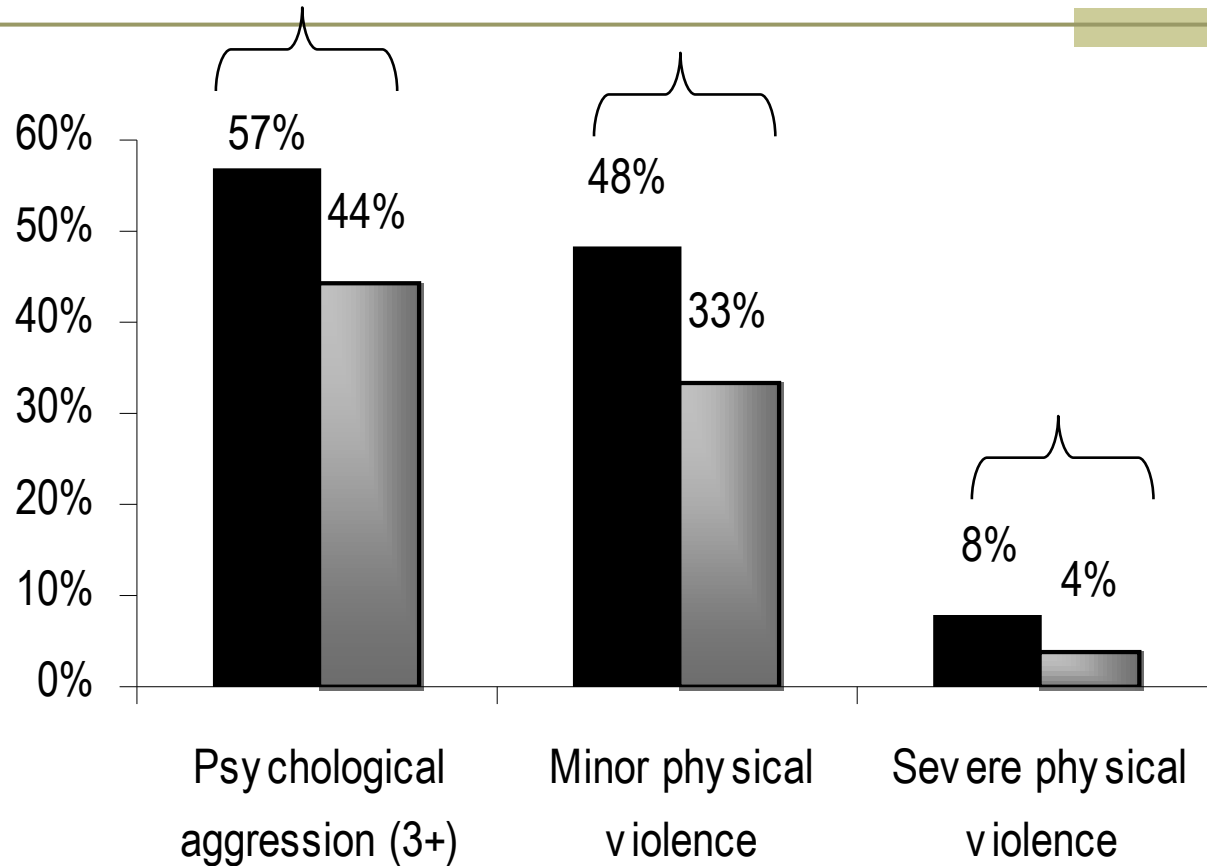
# Annual prevalence and parental stress



■ High level of parental stress

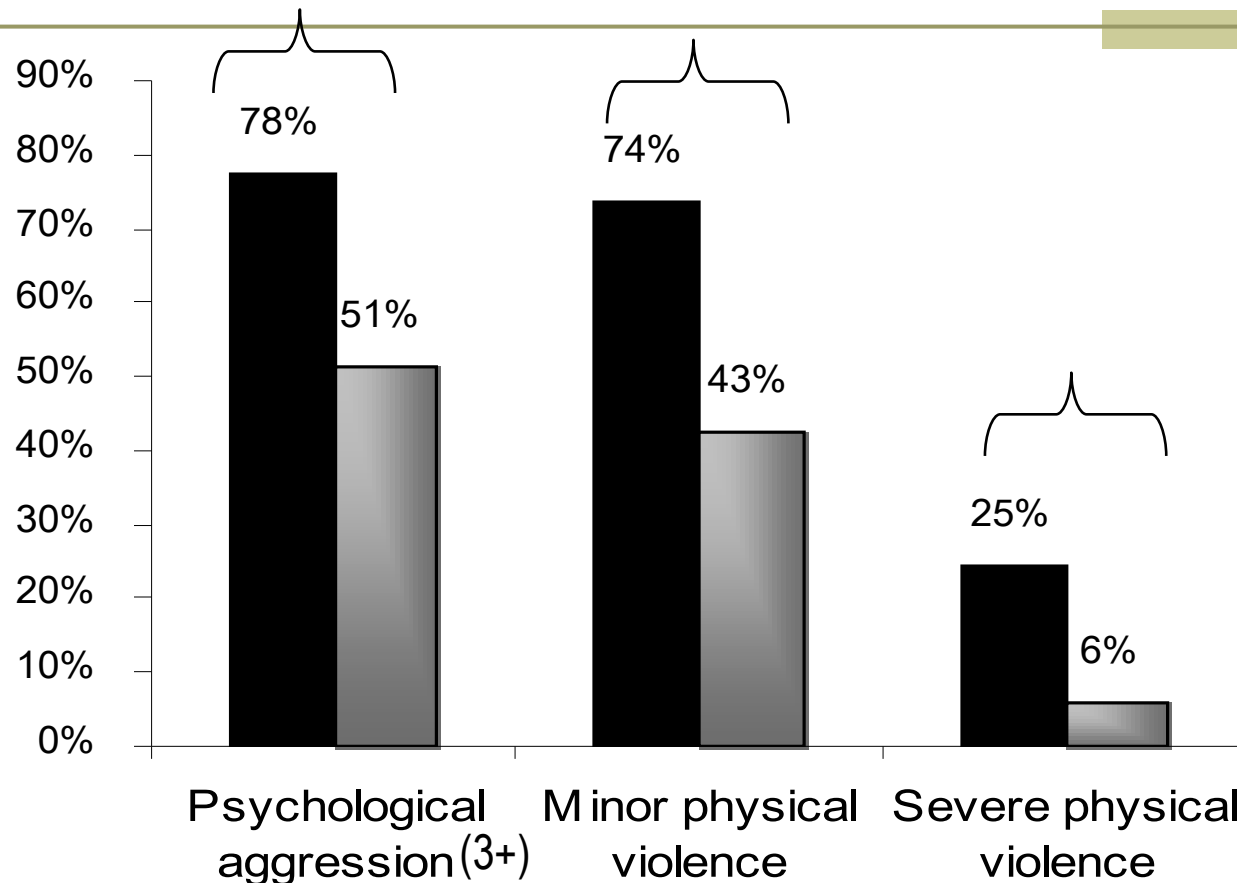
■ Low level of parental stress

# Annual prevalence and mother's childhood experience of minor physical violence



■ Presence of childhood violence    ■ Absence of childhood violence

# Annual prevalence and physical domestic violence

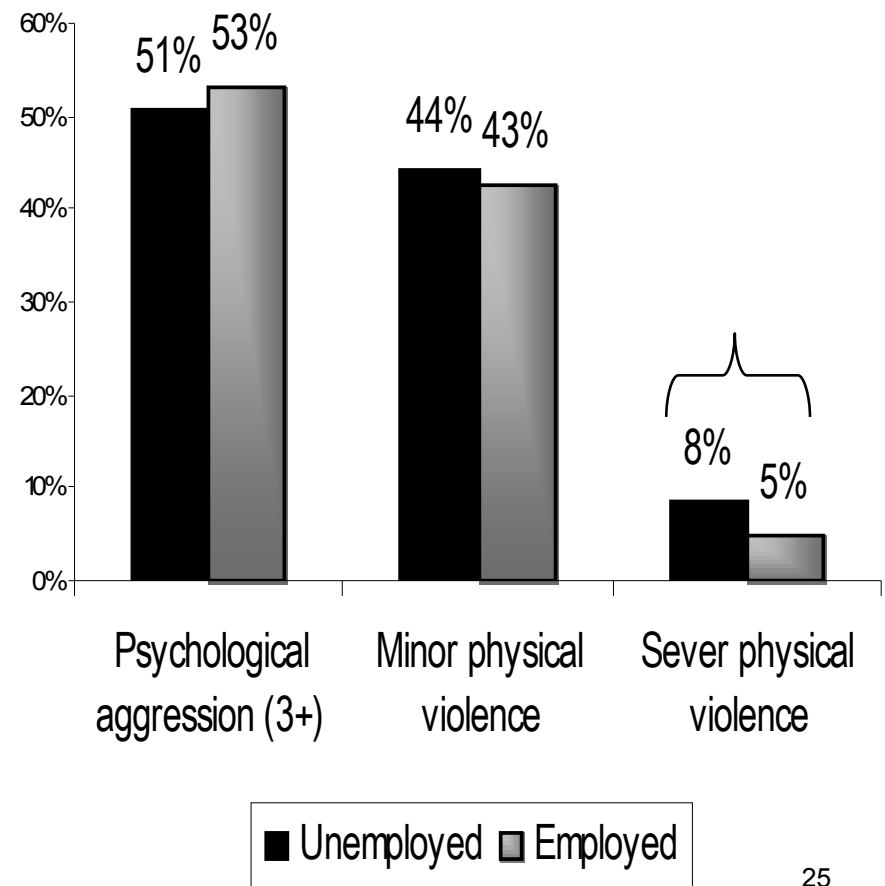
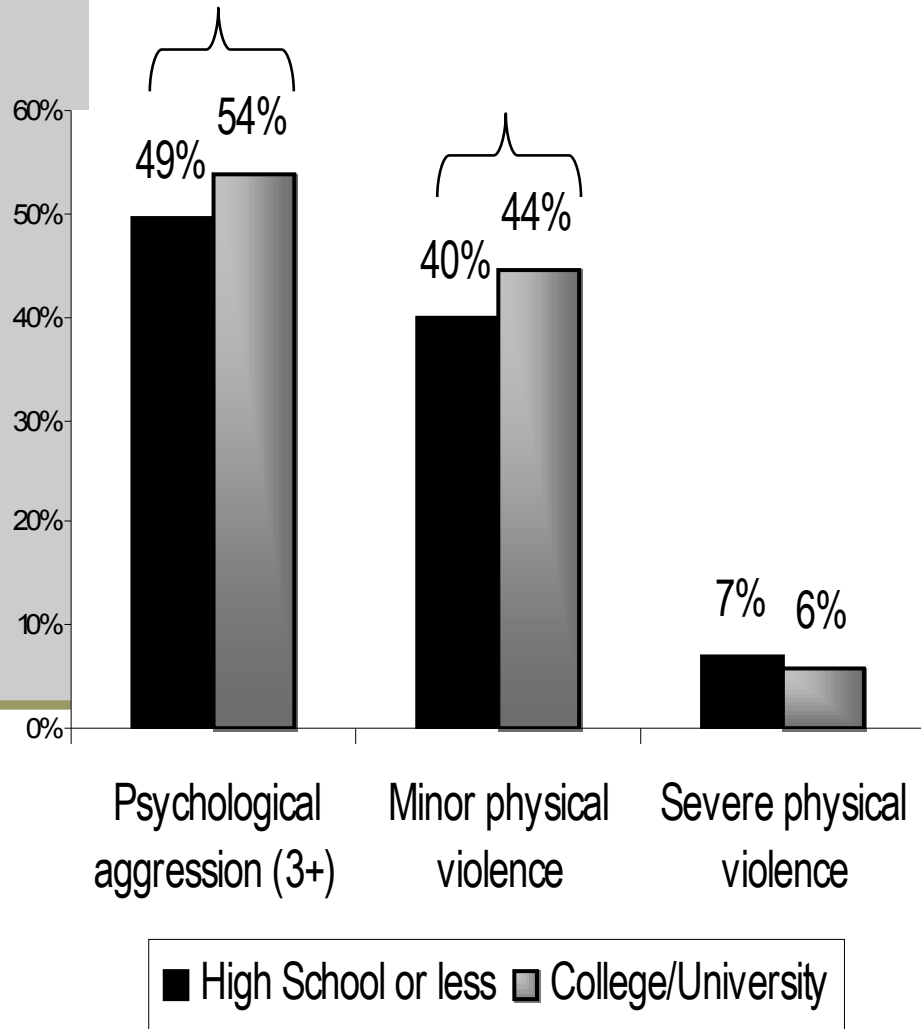


■ Presence

■ Absence



# Annual prevalence and mother's education and employment



# Repeated psychological aggression

## Logistic regression model

<b>Children's gender:</b>	Male	<b>1,48</b>
	Female	1,00
<b>Children's age:</b>	0-2 years old	1,00
	3-6 years old	<b>3,92</b>
	7-10 years old	<b>4,36</b>
	11-14 years old	<b>3,43</b>
	15-17 years old	<b>2,38</b>
<b>Attitudes towards violence in disciplining children</b>		<b>1,28</b>
<b>Parental attribution</b>		<b>1,35</b>
<b>Perceived consequences of physical and psychological violence:</b>	Very often/often	<b>1,53</b>
	Occasionally	<b>1,87</b>
	Rarely/never	1,00
<b>Mother's childhood violence:</b>	Presence	<b>1,48</b>
	Absence	1,00
<b>Parental stress index:</b>	High level of parental stress	<b>2,93</b>
	Low level of parental stress	1,00

\*p < ,05

# Minor Physical Violence

## Logistic regression model

<b>Attitudes towards violence in disciplining children</b>		<b>1,42</b>
<b>Perceived consequences of physical and psychological violence:</b>		
	Very often/often	1,07
	Occasionally	<b>1,62</b>
	Rarely/never	1,00
<b>Mother's childhood violence:</b>		
	Presence	<b>1,77</b>
	Absence	1,00
<b>Parental stress index:</b>		
	High level of parental stress	<b>2,67</b>
	Low level of parental stress	1,00
<b>Domestic violence:</b>		
	Presence	<b>1,73</b>
	Live alone (n. a.)	1,10
	Absence	1,00

\*p < ,05

# Severe Physical Violence

## Logistic regression model

<b>Children's age:</b>	0-2 years old	1,00
	3-6 years old	1,30
	7-10 years old	<b>2,85</b>
	11-14 years old	<b>2,88</b>
	15-17 years old	<b>2,24</b>
<b>Attitudes towards violence in disciplining children</b>		<b>2,69</b>
<b>Parental stress index:</b>	High level of parental stress	<b>2,12</b>
	Low level of parental stress	1,00
<b>Domestic violence:</b>	Presence	<b>2,07</b>
	Live alone (n. a.)	1,08
	Absence	1,00

\*p < ,05



# **PART II**

## **Discussion on correlates**

# Parental violence

## Discussion on correlates

### ■ Parental stress (*child demandingness*)

- Linked to parental attitudes towards violence in disciplining children : *what comes first ?*
- Linked to childhood violence or domestic violence

### ■ Socio-economics conditions

- Differential effects of stress :
  - Chronic stress associated with more severe violence
  - Transitory stress associated with less severe forms of violence

# Transmission of parental violence

## Discussion on correlates

- **Transmission of a parental conflict tactics mode**
  - Clearly established in both surveys
  - Predominance of psychological aggression?
- **Mediating role of parental attitudes**
  - Perceived impact of violence on children
  - Agreement with violence in disciplining children
- **Finally: what exactly is transmitted?**

# Practices implications

---

- Universal approaches:
  - Promoting positive discipline strategies
  - Public awareness and attitudes modification :
    - on the negative impact of violence in disciplining children
    - on the perceive effectiveness of corporal punishment
  - Public and family policy
- Specific approaches:
  - Screening for childhood abuse and attitudes
  - Ecological approaches
- Funding for the coordination and evaluation of violence prevention efforts