



Corporal Punishment is Losing Ground — But Some Still Favor It for Certain Kids

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Every day, approximately 600 students across the U.S. are physically punished at school — hit with wooden paddles or struck by objects by adults charged with their education and care. While corporal punishment may seem like a relic of the past, it remains legal in 17 states, including Mississippi, where it remains especially common.

While the practice itself is troubling, new research I conducted reveals something even more troubling: Corporal punishment isn't just disproportionately used on Black and gender-expansive students — those whose gender identity falls outside traditional norms — it's also disproportionately condoned by the public when it's used on these children.

I surveyed more than 600 Mississippi residents to understand their attitudes about school discipline. Most disapproved of corporal punishment in general, but that feeling weakened when the child being punished was Black or gender-nonconforming. In short: Who a child is imagined to be affects whether that child is believed to deserve protection — or punishment.