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## Approval of Violence towards Women and Children in Guatemala

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**Main Findings:**

- Ranking highest in the region on tolerance for domestic violence, 58% of Guatemalans indicate that to some degree (either approving or "understanding") they condone a husband hitting an unfaithful wife
- There are no gender differences with regard to approving of or rejecting violence towards an unfaithful wife
- Less than 5% of Guatemalans believe that physical punishment should always or very frequently be used against children who disobey their parents. Nonetheless, 40.5% consider that such punishment is sometimes necessary, while 27.3% believe that it is almost never necessary
- Approximately 15% of Guatemalans report that their parents frequently resorted to physical punishment while 41.7% indicate that they suffered such forms of punishment sometimes
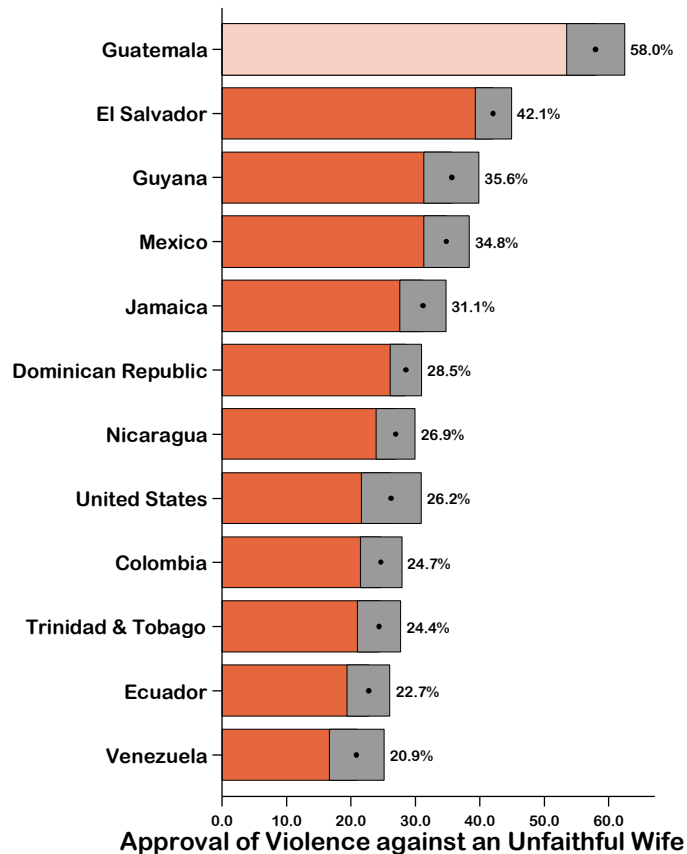
Domestic violence in Guatemala is a serious problem with consequences that reach far beyond the affected family. In fact, such violence has been mentioned as one of the factors that have driven women with young children to flee the country and emigrate to the United States or other countries.[1] Domestic violence also impacts levels of poverty and can have repercussions on national-level violence by contributing to an environment in which Guatemalans become accustomed to resorting to violence as a means of solving problems.

While the AmericasBarometer has asked about violence at the national level for many waves, the 2014 wave for the first time asked about violence at the family level in Guatemala. This *Insights* report focuses on the case of Guatemala and presents an assessment of answers to some of these probing and difficult questions.[2]

Intrafamily violence is a topic that has increased in salience in recent years. In 2012, the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) released an extensive report concerning violence against women in Latin America. The authors of the report (Bott, Guedes, Goodwin, and Adams) note that violence against women has been recognized as a health issue, a violation of human rights, and a barrier to economic development. They point out that the United Nations, in its Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, and the Inter-American system, by way of the 1994 Convention on the Prevention, Punishment, and Eradication of Violence Against Women, have significantly raised the visibility of the issue.



**Figure 1. Percent Who Condone (Approve or Understand) Violence against an Unfaithful Wife, by Country, 2014**

Guatemala — 58.0%
El Salvador — 42.1%
Guyana — 35.6%
Mexico — 34.8%
Jamaica — 31.1%
Dominican Republic — 28.5%
Nicaragua — 26.9%
United States — 26.2%
Colombia — 24.7%
Trinidad & Tobago — 24.4%
Ecuador — 22.7%
Venezuela — 20.9%

**Approval of Violence against an Unfaithful Wife**

95 % Confidence Interval (with Design Effects)

Source:© Americas Barometer by LAPOP, 2014; v.GUA14_0912

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[1] Nonetheless, it remains difficult for asylum to be granted in these cases. Esther Yu-Hsi Lee (2015) points out that as of January 2015, the great majority of asylum requests by Central American women with children who illegally crossed the U.S. border in the summer of 2014 had been denied. The rate of denial for women who did not have legal aid was 98.5% and it was slightly better for women who had legal aid, 73.7%.

[2] This report is based on Chapter Seven of "The Political Culture of Democracy in Guatemala," (eds) Dinorah Azpuru and Elizabeth J. Zechmeister. Which can be found here: http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/guatemala/AB2014_Guatemala_Country_Report_V4_Print_2_W_041515.pdf

Survey questions such as the ones asked in the 2014 AmericasBarometer are an important conduit through which to assess and raise awareness of societal approval of domestic violence. Given that this is such a prevalent issue in Guatemala, further study into the causes and pathways to prevention of domestic violence is necessary. Asking questions such as if a respondent was themselves the victim of abuse as a child can be helpful in understanding how violence can manifest in future generations.

## Violence against Women

The 2014 AmericasBarometer included the following question, which asks about attitudes (but not direct victimization) on the subject of violence against women. The question poses a scenario and then asks for the individual's opinion.

**DVW2.** Now I am going to read some situations in which some people think that it is justified that the husband hits his wife/partner and I will ask your opinion…..His wife is unfaithful. Would you approve of the husband hitting his wife, or would you not approve but understand, or would you neither approve nor understand?[3]

Troublingly, 10.2% of Guatemalans explicitly approve of hitting a wife in cases where she has been unfaithful. Additionally, 47.8% said they would disapprove but understand. Taken together, this means that 58% of Guatemalans are, to some degree, willing to condone domestic violence under these circumstances. On the other hand, 42% indicate that they would neither approve of nor understand this type of aggression. As demonstrated in Figure 1, Guatemala leads the ranking in the region in tolerance for violence against an unfaithful wife.

## Who Approves of Domestic Violence in the Case of Marital Infidelity?

Regression analysis allows identification of the variables that predict approval or disapproval of aggression against women who have been unfaithful. Included in the regression model are basic sociodemographic characteristics: gender (and separately, whether a woman fulfills the role of a housewife), age, education, ethnic self-identification (Indigenous or Ladino), size of the locale in which a respondent resides, socioeconomic level, marital status (married or presence of a domestic partnership), and whether the respondent has children. Additionally, the level of religiosity and the respondent's perceptions on his or her family's economic situation are included.[4]

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[3] This question was asked of both men and women.

[4] Importance of religion: **Q5B**. "Could you please tell me how important religion is in your life?" [Read options] (1) Very important (2) Rather important (3) Not very important (4) Not at all important. Perception of economic situation: **Q10D**. "The salary that you receive and total household income: [Read the options} (1) Is good enough for you and you can save from it (2) Is just enough for you, so that you do not have major problems (3) Is not enough for you and you are stretched (4) Is not enough for you and you are having a hard time. **Wealth**: The wealth measure is a five category variable that is generated using a series of items about household possessions; for more information see Córdova 2009 (http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/insights/I0806en.pdf) Have children: **Q12**. Do you have children? How many? [Include all respondent's children] Married: **Q11n** "What is your marital status?" (1) Single (2) Married (3) Common law marriage (living together) (4) Divorced (5) Separated (6) Widowed (7) Civil Union. Size of place of residence: **TAMANO**. Size of place: (1) National Capital (Metropolitan area) (2) Large City (3) Medium City (4) Small City (5) Rural Area. Quintile of wealth: wealth measure is a five category variable that is generated using a series of items about household possessions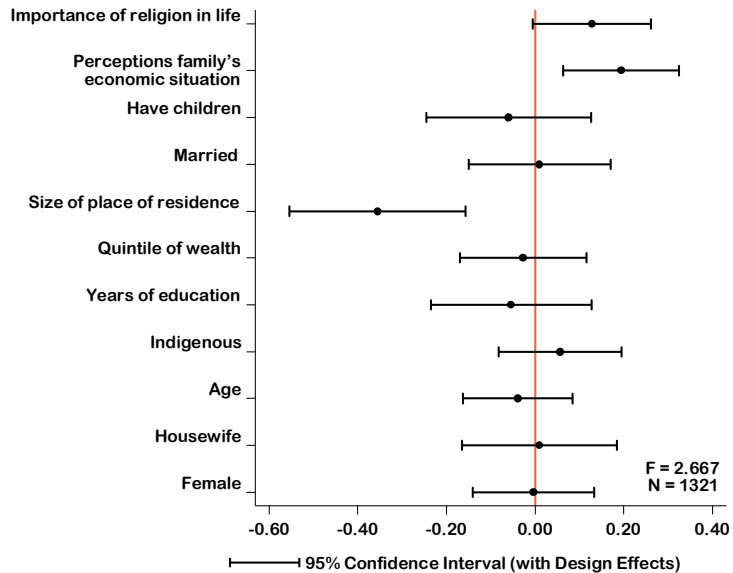; for more information see Córdova 2009 (http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/insights/I0806en.pdf) Years of education: **ED**. "How many years of schooling have you completed?" Indigenous: **ETID**. Do you consider yourself ladino, indigenous, or other? (2) Ladina (3) Indigenous (7) Other Age: Age is divided by cohort with respondents grouped into the following categories: 16-25, 26-35, 36-45, 46-65, and 65+. Housewife: **OCUP4A**. How do you mainly spend your time? Are you currently [Read options] (1) Working? [Continue] (2) Not working, but have a job? [Continue] (3) Actively looking for a job? [Go to PR1] (4) A student? [Go to PR1] (5) Taking care of the home? [Go to PR1] (6) Retired, a pensioner or permanently disabled to work [Go to PR1] (7) Not working and not looking for a job? [Go to PR1] (88) DK [Go to PR1] (98) DA [Go to PR1] Female: The gender dummy variable takes the 1 value if the respondent is female.

The dependent variable, approval of physical violence against women in cases of infidelity, groups together cases in which respondents would approve of said actions (10.2%) and in which they would not approve but, nonetheless, understand (47.8%). The logistic regression analysis and the related discussion thus compares those who select either of these options in response to the question, to those who say they would neither approve nor understand.[5]

**Figure 2. Approval of Violence against a Wife in the Case of Infidelity by Demographic Factors**



Source:© Americas Barometer by LAPOP, 2014; v.GUA14_0801

The results of the logistic regression for this question are presented in Figure 2. Of all the variables, only two — size of a respondent's locale of residence (coded so that higher values mean larger locales) and perception of the family's economic situation (coded so that higher values correspond to a better perception of the economic situation) — are clearly associated with the probability of approval (or not) to use of violence against a wife (in the case of infidelity).

Guatemalans who live in rural areas and in small or medium cities are more likely to condone violence against a wife who has been

*Across levels of education, there are no statistically significant differences in opinion regarding violence against an unfaithful wife.*

unfaithful. When we examine this by simply looking at the raw data, the percentage of acceptance among residents of medium-sized cities is extremely high at 73.5%, although it is also markedly elevated in small cities and in rural areas. In comparison, the percentage of residents of large cities who approve of such actions is 50%, with levels dropping to 39.4% for those living in the metropolitan area. The difference between these latter two categories and all others is statistically significant.

There is also a statistically significant difference between those who indicate that income is not enough and that they face difficulties, and those who report that they have just enough income[6]

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[5] As is LAPOP standard, the coefficients in this analysis are standardized.
[6] When we look at the descriptive statistics of this particular variable, the only statistically significant difference arises between those who report a good economic situation and those respondents whose family income is insufficient and

are faced with large difficulties. It is worth noting that only 2.35% of respondents reported finding themselves in a favorable economic situation, a level that reduces the extent to which these results can be generalized for this segment of the population. For more information see Figure 7.6 in

and do not face large difficulties.[7] Those who perceive their economic situation as good, are more likely to condone violence against an unfaithful wife.

Something to note is the fact that there are no gender differences with regard to approving of or rejecting violence against an unfaithful wife. This might be surprising to those who would expect that women would have a less favorable view of this behavior given that they are the victims; however, in the case of Guatemala, women and men see this issue similarly.

## Violence against Children

Another form of domestic violence is aggression towards children at home. At the extreme, this type of aggression can have repercussions at the national level to the degree that it creates a vicious cycle in which those who have been physically reprimanded as children display violent tendencies as adults. That said, there is still a relative dearth of studies linking intra-family violence to violence at the national level.
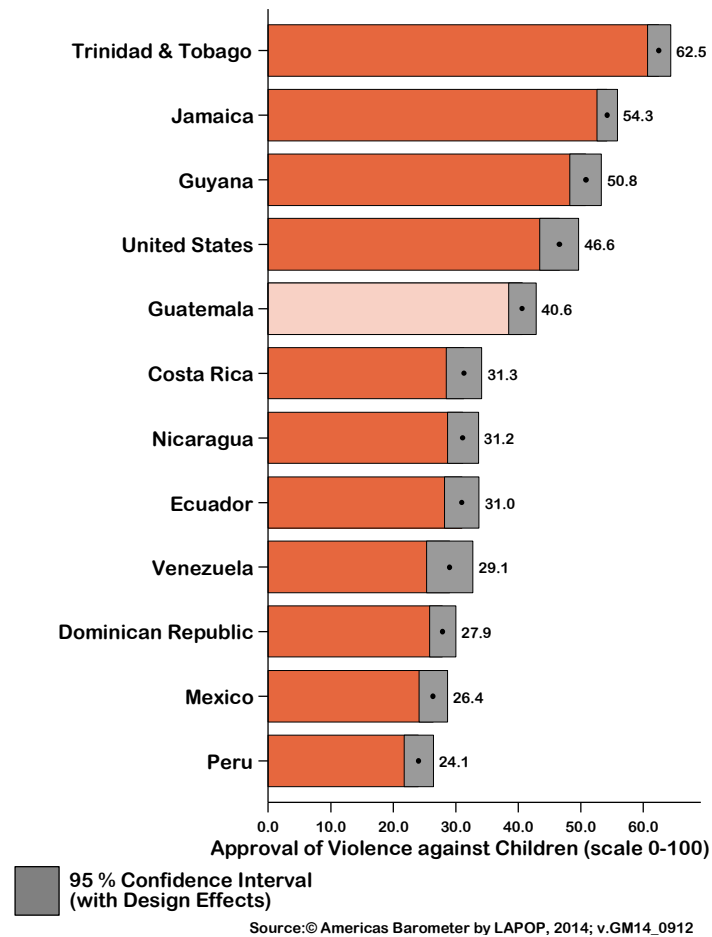
The 2014 AmericasBarometer questionnaire included questions related to the topic of aggression directed at children. The specific questions asked were the following:

**VOL207n**. Do you think that to correct a child who misbehaves it is necessary to hit or



Figure 3. Degrees of Approval of Violence against Children by Country, 2014

physically punish them? [Read options] (1) Always (2) Most often (3) Sometimes (4) Almost never (5) Never

**VOL208n.** When you were a child, your parents or guardians would hit or physically punish you in some way to correct your misbehavior? [Read options] (1) Always (2) Most often (3) Sometimes (4) Almost never (5) Never

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http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/guatemala/AB2014_Guatemala_Country_Report_V4_Print_2_W_041515.pdf.
[7] When we look at the raw data, the only statistically significant difference with respect to religiosity arises between those who indicate that religion is very important and those who say that it is somewhat important. Here,

those who indicate that religion is very important are more likely to condone violence against a wife who has been unfaithful. For more information see Figure 7.5 in http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/guatemala/AB2014_Guatemala_Country_Report_V4_Print_2_W_041515.pdf.

Figure 3 displays mean degrees (on a 0 to 100 scale) of approval of using violence to punish children by country for 2014 (higher numbers indicate more approval).[8] As can be seen, Guatemala is among the top five most approving countries.

The percent of respondents who believe that disobedient children should always or very frequently be physically punished is less than 5%. But it is concerning to see that 40.5% of Guatemalans share the belief that such forms of punishment are sometimes necessary. However, 27.3% of respondents believe that physical punishment is almost never necessary, and 27.3% reject said aggression entirely.[9]
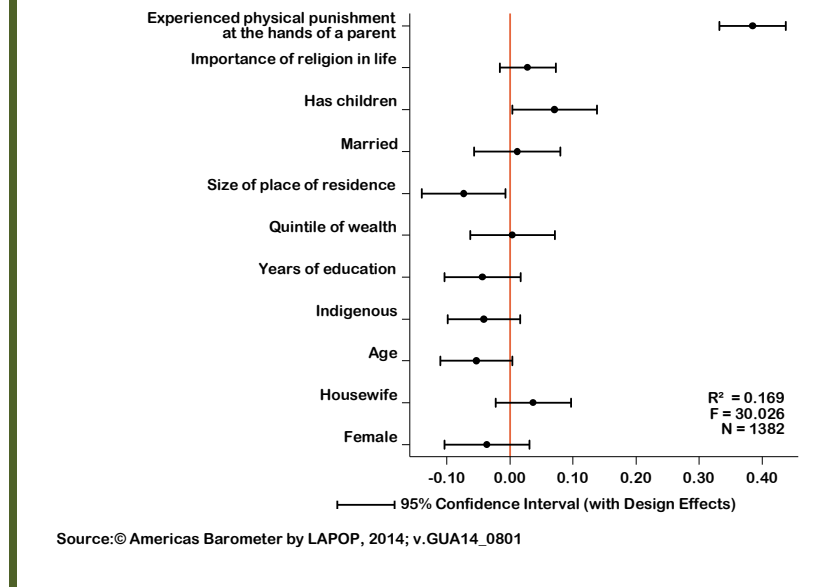
Regarding question VOL208n, close to 15% of respondents indicate that their parents either always or very frequently resorted to physical punishment in order to reprimand them. Meanwhile, 41.7% and 26% indicate that they sometimes or almost never experienced physical punishment, respectively. Only 16.8% of respondents state that physical punishment was never used against them.[10]

## Who Approves of Violence against Children?

Regression analysis once again allows for identification of the factors that are most closely associated with approval of physical punishment as a way of reprimanding children.



**Figure 4. Approval of Violence against Children by Demographic Factors**

R² = 0.169
F = 30.026
N = 1382

95% Confidence Interval (with Design Effects)

Source:© Americas Barometer by LAPOP, 2014; v.GUA14_0801

In addition to measuring whether a relationship between having experienced physical punishment and using said punishment against one's own children exists, the regression also includes several important control factors. These are whether a respondent has any children, whether he or she is married or residing within a domestic partnership, and other standard sociodemographic variables. The regression also tests whether the importance of religion in the daily life of a respondent is also a relevant factor.

The results for this OLS regression can be seen in Figure 4. There is a significant correlation between a respondent having experienced physical punishment at the hands of a parent and that same respondent approving of physical punishment against children. It is also worth noting that the size of a respondent's locale of residence, as well as whether or not he or she has

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[8] The definition of corporal punishment used herein is the definition used by the Committee for the Rights of Children and includes all punishment that involves physical force and has as its objective to cause any degree of pain or discomfort. In the majority of cases, children are hit with either the hand or an object such as a whip, stick, belt, or shoe. However, physical punishment may also include kicking, shaking or pushing, scratching, pinching, biting, pulling the hair or ears, or forcing a child to remain in uncomfortable positions.

For more information see http://www.endcorporalpunishment.org/assets/pdfs/reports-technical/Legal-reform-handbook-2009-SP.pdf.
[9] For more information see Figure 7.8 in http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/guatemala/AB2014_Guatemala_Country_Report_V4_Print_2_W_041515.pdf.
[10] For more information see Figure 7.9 in http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/guatemala/AB2014_Guatemala_Country_Report_V4_Print_2_W_041515.pdf.

any children, are two additional factors that prove to be statistically related to levels of approval of physical punishment towards children.

Respondents who indicate that their parents either always or very frequently used physical punishment are much more likely to accept the use of that type of punishment against their own children. Those living in larger areas (cities) are less likely to accept this type of punishment.[11] Finally, those who have children are more likely to condone physical punishment as a way of reprimanding children. The average acceptance among those who are parents is of 42.2 points on a scale of 0-100, which compares to an average of 34.7 points among respondents who are not parents. The difference between the two categories is statistically significant.

## Conclusion

Although only 10% of Guatemalans would explicitly approve of a husband hitting a wife when she has been unfaithful, 47.8% of them indicate that they would not approve but, nonetheless, understand. In all, this means that 58% of respondents condone – to some degree – this type of violence against women. In comparison to other countries of the Americas, Guatemala is the country with the highest percentage of approval of physical violence against an unfaithful wife.

For those who would believe that education can change domestic violence norms, it is important and alarming to note that (in analyses not presented here) the study finds that between men and women, regardless of level of education, there are no statistically significant differences in opinion regarding violence against an unfaithful wife. That is to say, women with no education as much as those with some higher education appear to condone marital

violence at similar rates than men in Guatemala.[12]

With regard to physical violence against children, even though less than 5% of Guatemalans consider it necessary to always or very frequently reprimand their children through physical punishment, 40% are of the opinion that such actions are sometimes necessary. Only less than one-third believe that physical punishment should never be used against children. In comparison with other countries of the Americas, Guatemala is in a mid-to-high position with respect to the use of corporal punishment against children. As the size of the town, city, or area in which a respondent resides increases (from rural areas up through the metropolitan area), the level of support for corporal punishment towards children drops. The statistical analysis also finds a very high correlation between approval of physical punishment against one's own children and having experienced such punishment during childhood.

## Reference

Bott, Sarah, Alessandra Guedes, Mary Goodwin, and Jennifer Adams Mendoza. 2012. Violence against Women in Latin America and the Caribbean: A comparative analysis of population-based data from 12 countries. Pan American Health Organization and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Washington, D.C.

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[11] In the raw data, the metropolitan area displays the lowest levels of approval for physical punishment against children. And although the differences in percentages among all areas are small, they are, nonetheless, statistically significant.

[12] For more information, please see Figure 7.7 in the Guatemala report: http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/guatemala/AB2014_Guatemala_Country_Report_V4_Print_2_W_041515.pdf.

# Appendix

**Determinants of Approval of Violence against an Unfaithful Wife**

| Approval of aggression against unfaithful wife (dvw2rdico) | Coef. | Std. Err. | t | P>\|t\| | [95% Conf. Interval] | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Woman | -.0040894 | .0683245 | -0.06 | 0.952 | -.1408558 | .1326769 |
| Woman housewife | .0098522 | .0871764 | 0.11 | 0.910 | -.1646503 | .1843547 |
| Age | -.0392075 | .0619263 | -0.63 | 0.529 | -.1631666 | .0847515 |
| Indigenous | .0562854 | .0693599 | 0.81 | 0.420 | -.0825535 | .1951243 |
| Education | -.0539146 | .0902282 | -0.60 | 0.552 | -.234526 | .1266968 |
| Wealth | -.027065 | .0713316 | -0.38 | 0.706 | -.1698507 | .1157207 |
| Size of place of residence | -.3552528 | .0990847 | -3.59 | 0.001 | -.5535924 | -.1569133 |
| Married | .010234 | .0798161 | 0.13 | 0.898 | -.1495353 | .1700034 |
| Has children | -.0601141 | .092853 | -0.65 | 0.520 | -.2459795 | .1257513 |
| Economic situation at home | .1935256 | .0650962 | 2.97 | 0.004 | .0632214 | .3238299 |
| Importance of religion | .1280901 | .0664994 | 1.93 | 0.059 | -.0050229 | .2612032 |
| Constant | .3463849 | .1039695 | 3.33 | 0.002 | .1382673 | .5545025 |
| F -  2.67 | | | | | | |
| No. Cases 1,321 | | | | | | |
| Regression-standarized coefficients with t statistics based on standard errors adjusted by sample design * p<0.05 | | | | | | |

**Determinants of Approval of Physical Punishment against Children**

| Approval of physical punishment against children (vol207nr) | Coef. | Std. Err. | t | P>\|t\| | [95% Conf. Interval] | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Woman | -.036573 | .0335493 | -1.09 | 0.280 | -.1037292 | .0305831 |
| Woman housewife | .0369999 | .0299141 | 1.24 | 0.221 | -.0228796 | .0968795 |
| Age | -.053661 | .0285611 | -1.88 | 0.065 | -.1108322 | .0035102 |
| Indigenous | -.0416948 | .0287305 | -1.45 | 0.152 | -.0992051 | .0158155 |
| Education | -.04371 | .0302364 | -1.45 | 0.154 | -.1042348 | .0168148 |
| Wealth | .004071 | .0335386 | 0.12 | 0.904 | -.0630638 | .0712058 |
| Size of place of residence | -.0734737 | .0332191 | -2.21 | 0.031 | -.139969 | -.0069783 |
| Married | .0114989 | .0341138 | 0.34 | 0.737 | -.0567872 | .0797851 |
| Has children | .0707091 | .0334765 | 2.11 | 0.039 | .0036986 | .1377196 |
| Importance of religion | .0281259 | .022036 | 1.28 | 0.207 | -.015984 | .0722358 |
| Parents used physical punishment with respondent | .3847894 | .0263635 | 14.60 | 0.000 | .3320172 | .4375617 |
| Constant | -9.18e-09 | .0328507 | -0.00 | 1.000 | -.0657578 | .0657578 |
| F – 30.03 | | | | | | |
| No. Cases –  1,382 | | | | | | |
| R-Square - 0.1691 | | | | | | |
| Regression-standarized coefficients with t statistics based on standard errors adjusted by sample design * p<0.05 | | | | | | |