

Violence Against Children

Reported in the Media for December 2024

In an extensive review conducted by our media monitoring team, 131 incidents involving violence against children were initially collected from various media sources. After thorough checking and cross-checking, the team confirmed and documented 42 specific cases reported in December 2024. This careful analysis highlights a concerning yet noteworthy development: a reduction in the number of reported incidents compared to previous months. While the decline is a positive sign, the persistence of such cases underscores the ongoing challenges we face in protecting our most vulnerable populations.



Teachers play a crucial role in protecting children from sexual exploitation and abuse, both offline and online, serving as the first line of defense in identifying and addressing risks. Recognizing this, ECPAT Sri Lanka collaborates with the Ministry of Education to equip teachers and principals with the necessary knowledge and skills to create safer learning environments. Through specialized training programs, educators learn to recognize warning signs, respond effectively to disclosures, and implement preventive measures within schools. With the increasing threats of online child sexual exploitation and abuse, the initiative also focuses on digital safety, helping teachers guide students on responsible internet use and protect them from online predators. By strengthening the capacity of teachers, this initiative ensures that children receive the protection and support they need, fostering a culture of safety and awareness in educational institutions across the country.

The Analysis:

- The predominant form of abuse was sexual violence, which constituted 42.86% of reported cases, followed by negligence at 23.81%.
- Reports indicated that online child abuse, particularly involving girls, was prevalent, with the Telegram app associated with 2% of all reported cases in December. Concerns have been expressed regarding Telegram's insufficient cooperation in removing harmful content.
- Both boys and girls are equally vulnerable, with 54% of victims being female and 46% male. The most affected age group is 15-18 (32.69%), followed by younger children aged 6-10 (25%).
- Most cases were attributed to individual offenders (54.76%), while group offences also represented a considerable portion (40.48%). Violence predominantly took place in communities (36.54%) and victims' homes (23.08%), highlighting the risks children encounter in familiar surroundings.
- The Kegalle District recorded the highest number of victims at 15.38%, followed by Kalutara at 13.46% and Colombo at 11.54%. Despite regional differences, the data highlights the widespread nature of child abuse.

December 2024 stands as a stark reminder that violence against children remains a pressing issue. In just one month, 42 recorded incidents of child abuse were reported across 18 districts in Sri Lanka, affecting a total of 52 victims. These distressing cases involve various forms of violence, including sexual exploitation and abuse. We highlight these incidents and emphasise the urgent need for enhanced protective measures for at-risk children. Raising awareness and implementing practical actions are essential for preventing such tragedies. We adhere to UNICEF's International Classification of Violence against Children (ICVAC) standards for collecting and documenting information on violence against children.

Type of Violent Incidents

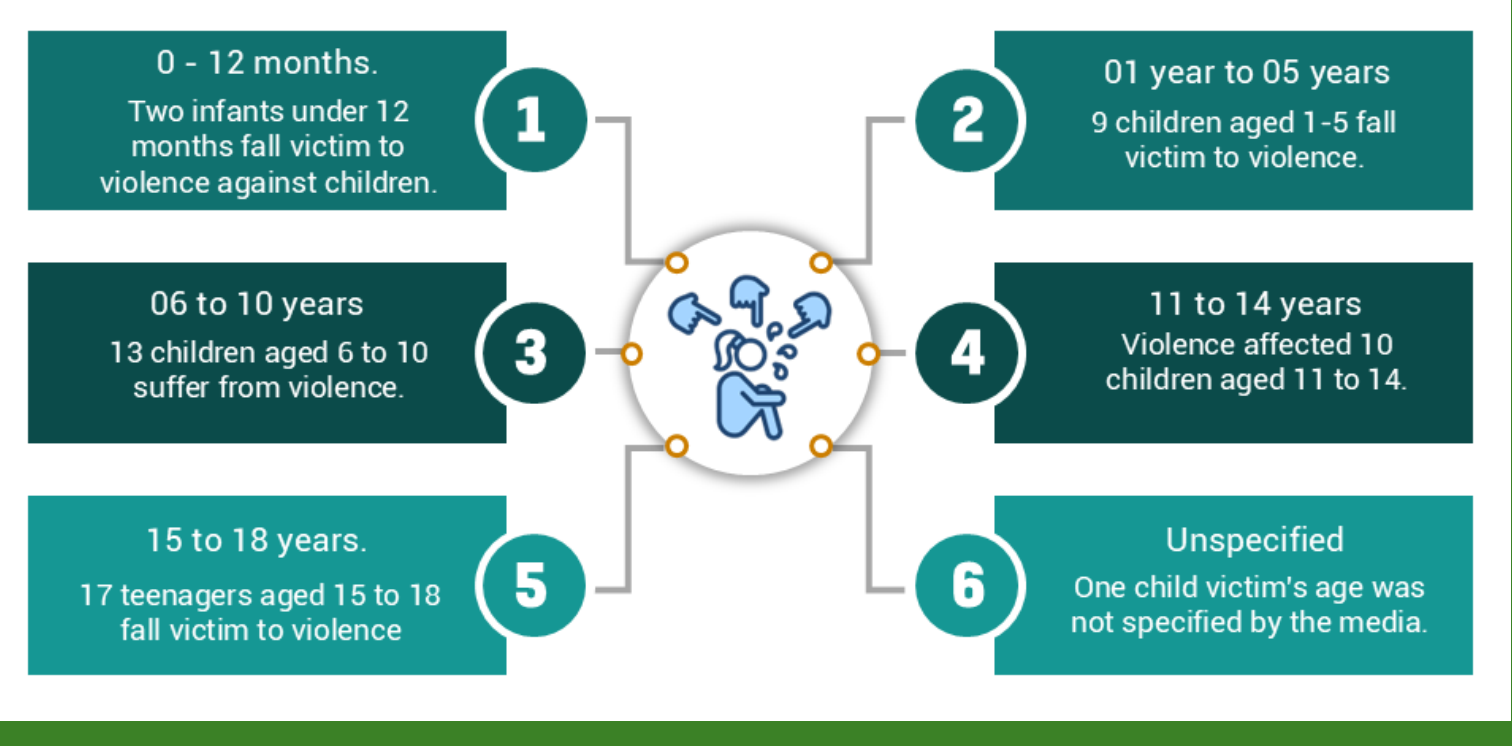
Perpetrated against children



Sexual abuse is the most prevalent form of child abuse, accounting for 42.86% of all reported incidents. A total of 20 children, representing 38.46% of all victims, were affected, highlighting the alarming frequency of this type of violence against children. Neglect follows closely, with 10 reported cases involving 17 children, making up 32.69% of all victims. This underscores the urgent need for increased attention to child welfare and care. Furthermore, although homicide cases were fewer, with 4 incidents, they are particularly tragic, resulting in the deaths of 4 children and constituting 7.69% of all victims.

Gender Distribution of the Victims

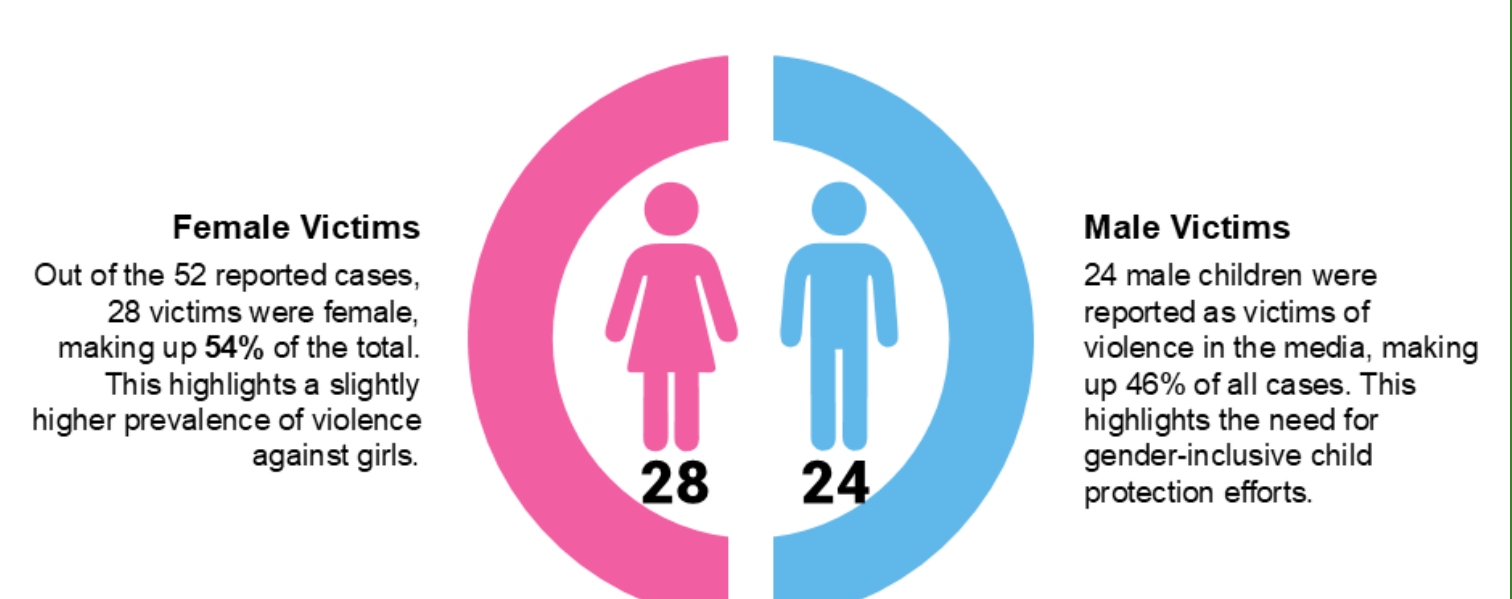
as reported in the media



The age distribution of victims in December reveals a concerning level of vulnerability among children of various age groups. The largest group of victims was aged 15 to 18, totalling 17 cases (32.69% of all victims). Children aged 6 to 10 comprised 13 victims (25.00%), while those between 11 and 14 accounted for 10 victims (19.23%). Disturbingly, even the youngest were affected, with 2 victims (3.85%) being infants under 12 months and 9 victims (17.31%) aged between 1 and 5 years. Furthermore, the age of one victim remains unknown.

Gender Distribution of the Victims

as reported in the media



The gender distribution of child abuse victims in December further highlights the widespread nature of this issue. Of the reported cases, 28 victims (54%) were female, while 24 victims (46%) were male. These figures reinforce the reality that both girls and boys are vulnerable to such acts of violence.

Perpetrators Trend

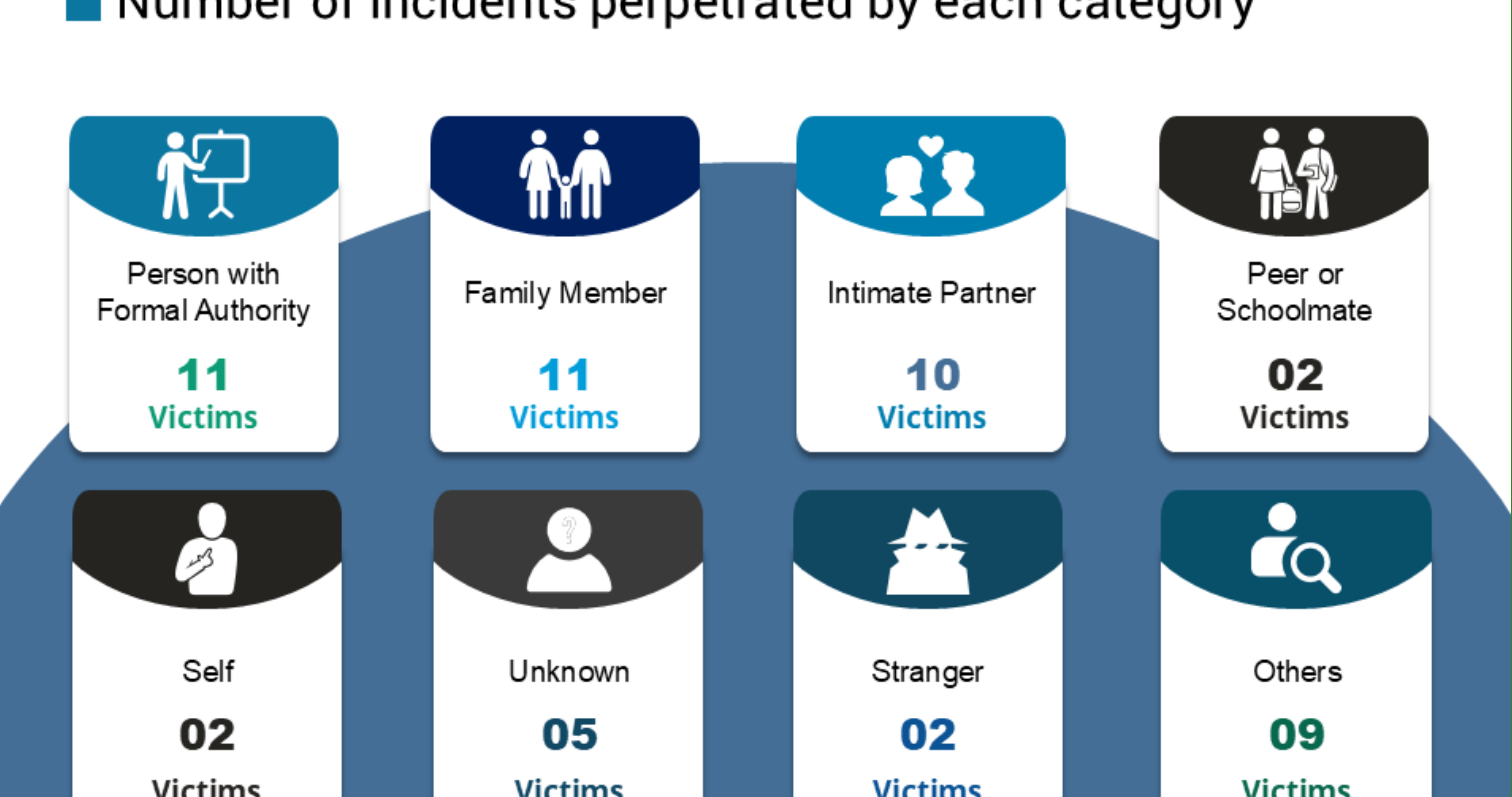
In reported incidents



Most cases involved individual offenders, totalling 23 incidents, which accounted for 54.76% of all reported cases. These incidents affected 23 victims, representing 44.23% of the overall number of recorded victims. Group-related offences closely followed, with 17 incidents comprising 40.48% of the total. However, these cases resulted in more victims—27 in total—amounting to 51.92% of those affected. Furthermore, there were two distinct self-inflicted incidents involving children, constituting 3.85% of all reported victims.

Perpetrator's Specific Classifications

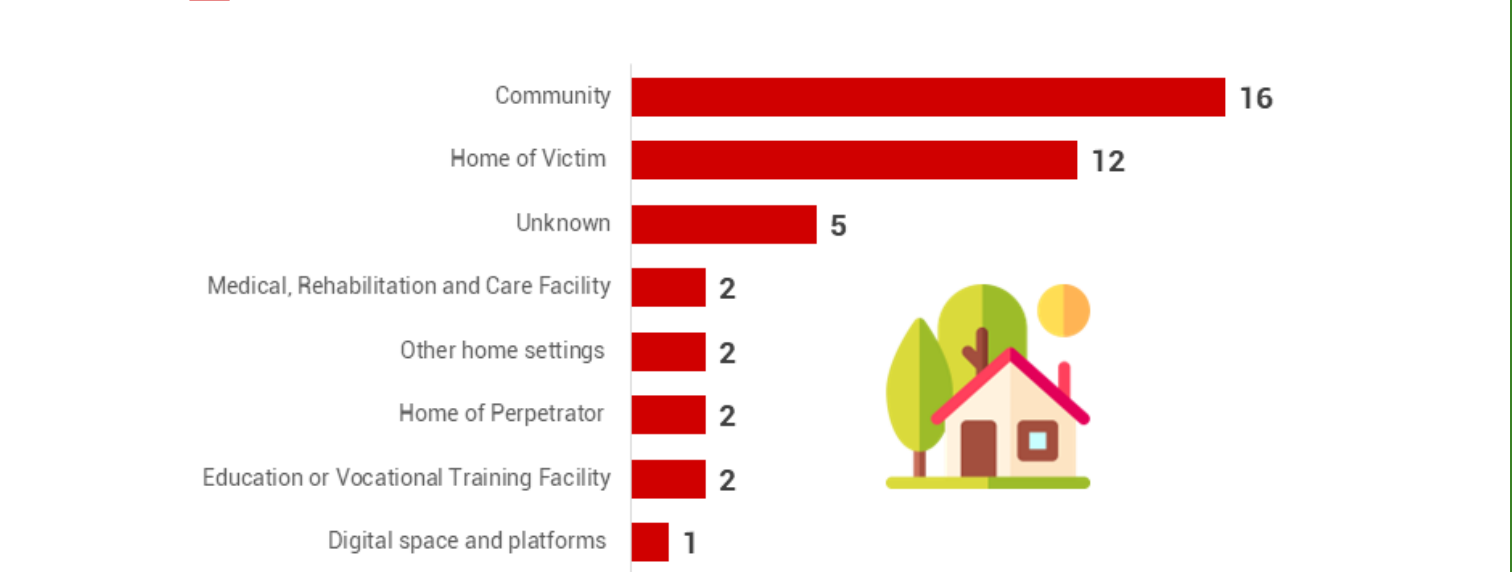
Number of incidents perpetrated by each category



The acts of violence against children were perpetrated by a diverse range of offenders, emphasising the troubling reality that abuse often originates from those entrusted with a child's safety. Family members and individuals in formal authority roles were the most common offenders, with each group accounting for 11 victims (21.15%). Intimate partners were responsible for 10 cases (19.23%), while peers or schoolmates and strangers were implicated in 2 cases each (3.85%). Moreover, self-inflicted harm accounted for 2 victims (3.85%). The 'Other' category included 9 victims (17.31%), and 5 victims (9.62%) were harmed by unidentified offenders, highlighting the ongoing challenge of identifying those responsible for these crimes.

Settings

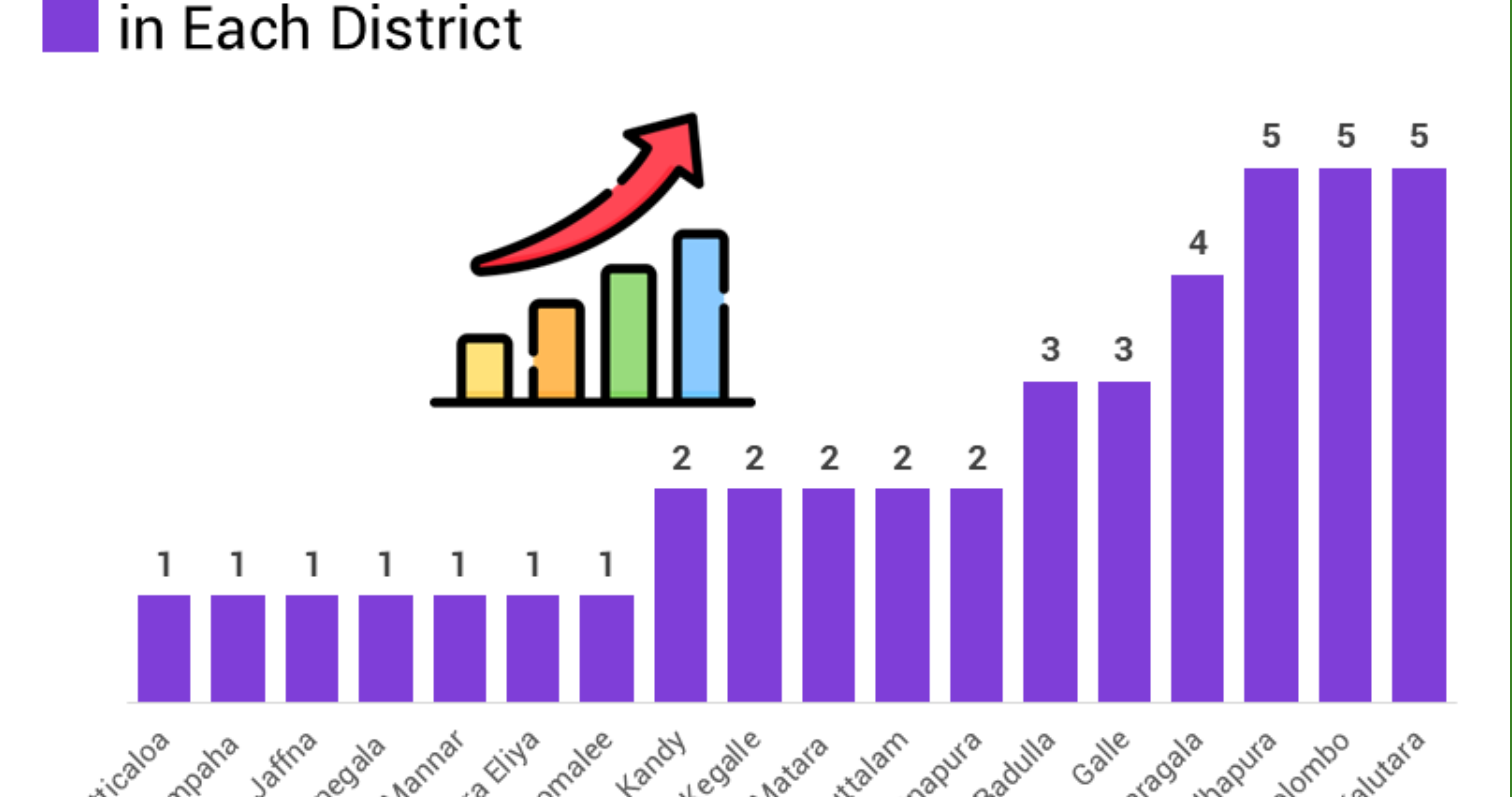
Where the violence occurred



Communities were the most common location, with 19 victims (36.54%) involved in 16 incidents (38.10%), highlighting the risks associated with public spaces. Homes ranked as the second most frequent setting, accounting for 12 incidents (28.57%) and 12 victims (23.08%). Educational and vocational settings followed, with 2 incidents affecting 9 victims (17.31%), emphasising children's vulnerability in these environments. Other locations, including the perpetrator's home, medical facilities, and online platforms, also experienced smaller impacts. Due to gaps in media reporting, 5 incidents and 5 victims (9.62%) were classified as "unknown."

Number of Incidents Reported

in Each District



The Kegalle District had the highest number of victims, totalling 8 (15.38%) from only 2 incidents. Following closely, Kalutara recorded 7 victims (13.46%) from 5 incidents, while Colombo reported 6 victims (11.54%) from the same number of incidents. Monaragala, which once had higher figures, noted 4 victims (7.69%) across 4 incidents. Meanwhile, Batticaloa, Gampaha, Jaffna, Mannar, and Trincomalee reported the fewest incidents, each with just 1 victim (1.92%), suggesting minimal violence in these areas during December.