



# Violence Against Children

## Reported in the Media for January 2024

As another year begins, the harsh reality remains unchanged: children continue to be victims of abuse, exploitation, and violence. Every reported instance serves as a sobering reminder of the challenges they face. This newsletter aims to highlight the various forms of violence against children that persist in our society. Sadly, these situations often reduce children to mere statistics. To ensure these incidents are not overlooked, our Media Monitoring team has diligently tracked reports across multiple platforms, compiling a total of 161 incidents in January 2025. After verification and filtering, the team identified 52 distinct incidents of violence against children. This report aligns with UNICEF's International Classification of Violence against Children (ICVAC) criteria.



PEaCE/ECPAT Sri Lanka is increasing its efforts to raise awareness and prevent child exploitation and abuse. In 2025, the organisation is expanding its awareness and training across all 25 districts, targeting parents, teachers, youth, children and other duty-bearers to promote awareness and protection.

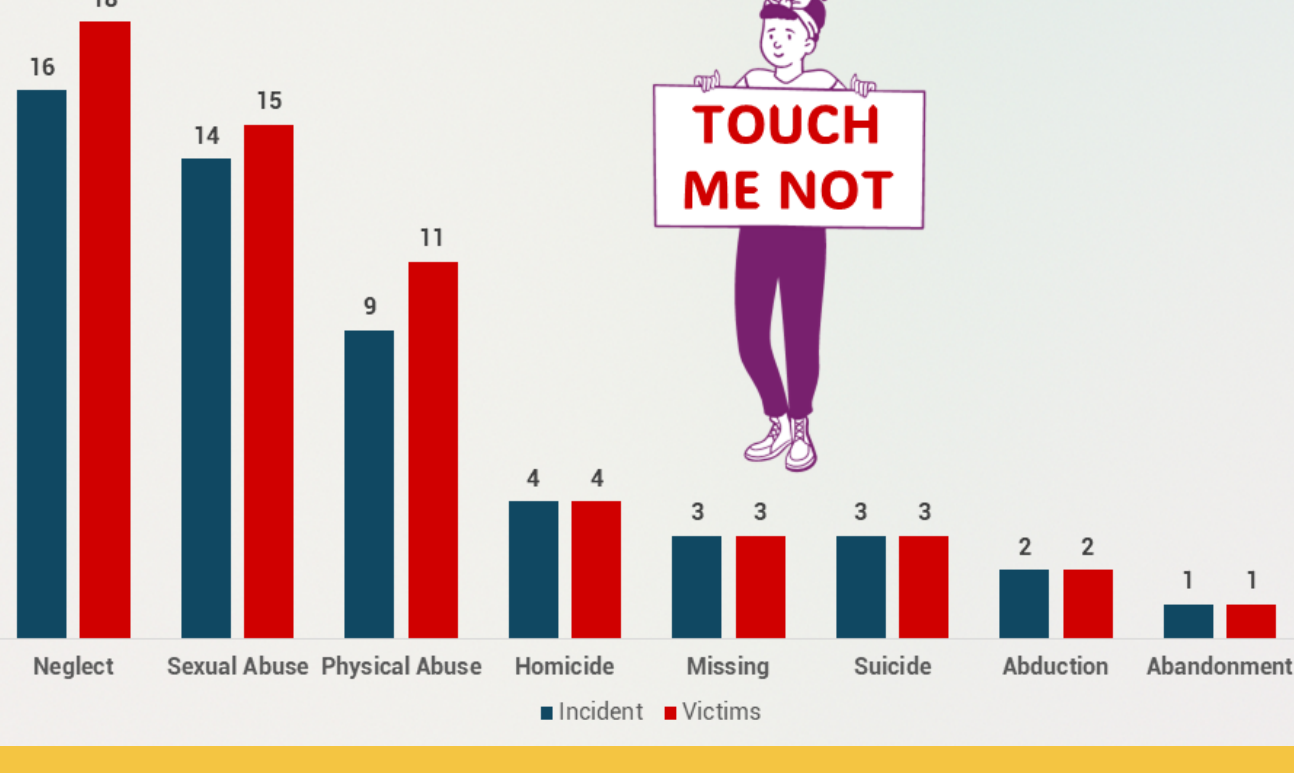
In collaboration with the Kalutara District Secretariat, Child Rights Promotion Officers, and the Children and Women Bureau Desk of the Sri Lanka Police, organised a public awareness campaign in Kalutara town on 18 January 2025. The event saw the participation of over 200 children and their parents. Recognised as a high-risk area, Kalutara District reports a significant number of child abuse cases annually. This campaign aimed to raise public awareness of the issue. The event featured several engaging activities, including informative sessions on child sexual abuse and exploitation, both online and offline. As part of a broader series of public awareness initiatives across multiple cities, the highlight of the event was a street walk. Children and their parents marched through Kalutara town, distributing informative leaflets to residents and passersby. To add to a powerful visual element, children brought their own placards, expressing their views on child abuse and reinforcing the campaign's message.

### Detailed analysis of child abuse cases reported in January 2025.

- Out of 57 logged cases, there were 52 reported incidents of child abuse, with neglect being the most prevalent, affecting 18 children in 16 cases. Sexual abuse was reported in 14 cases involving 15 victims
- Of the 57 victims, 26 were female (45.61%), while 16 cases involved 17 male victims (29.82%), highlighting that both genders are affected, with 14 victims categorised as "not specified" (24.56%).
- The age group of 15 to 18 years had the highest number of victims, totalling 20 (35.09%). Both children aged 1 to 5 years and those aged 11 to 14 years accounted for 10 victims each (17.54%). 9 victims (15.79%) had their ages classified as "not specified."
- Individual offenders were accountable for 53.85% of the incidents, affecting 34 victims (59.65%). Group incidents comprised 32.69% of cases, impacting 16 victims (28.07%). Additionally, there were reports of self-harm in 3 incidents (5.77%).
- Family members were the most common offenders, accounting for 17 cases (32.69%) and 19 victims (33.33%). Those in formal positions of authority represented 12 cases (23.08%), affecting 10 victims (17.54%).
- The victim's home was the primary location for abuse, with 21 incidents (40.38%) affecting 21 children (30.84%). Community settings followed with 12 occurrences (23.08%), impacting 17 victims (29.82%), whilst digital spaces reported 4 incidents (7.69%).
- Monaragala reported the highest number of cases for the first time, with 8 incidents (15.38%) affecting nine victims (15.79%). Anuradhapura had 7 events (13.46%) impacting 4 victims. Colombo recorded five incidents (9.62%), with five affected.

## Type of Violent Incidents

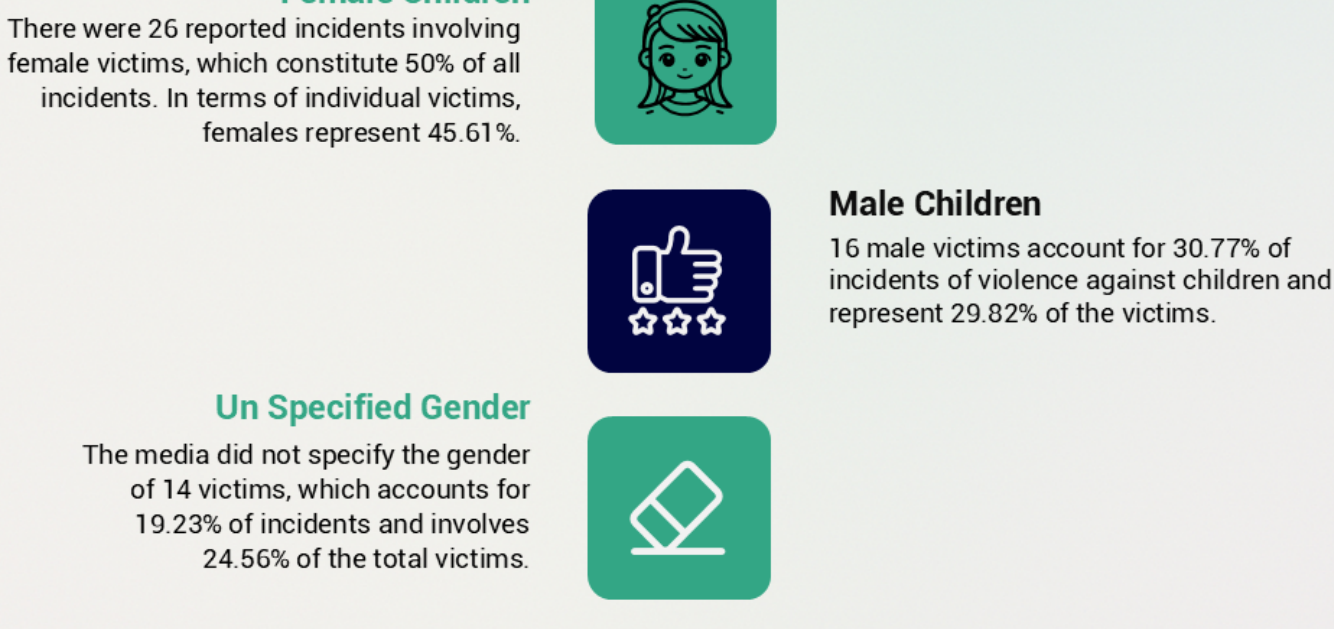
Perpetrated against children



According to media reports, 52 cases were logged, affecting 57 children. Unfortunately, neglect was the most reported issue this month, with 16 cases impacting 18 children, which vividly illustrates how little is done for children's welfare. Children were sexually abused in 14 cases, with 15 victims. Physical violence was recorded in 9 cases involving 11 children, while homicide claimed the lives of 4 children. Additionally, 3 other children were reported missing and abducted. Furthermore, there were also 3 reported cases of suicide during this period in January.

## Gender Distribution of the Victims

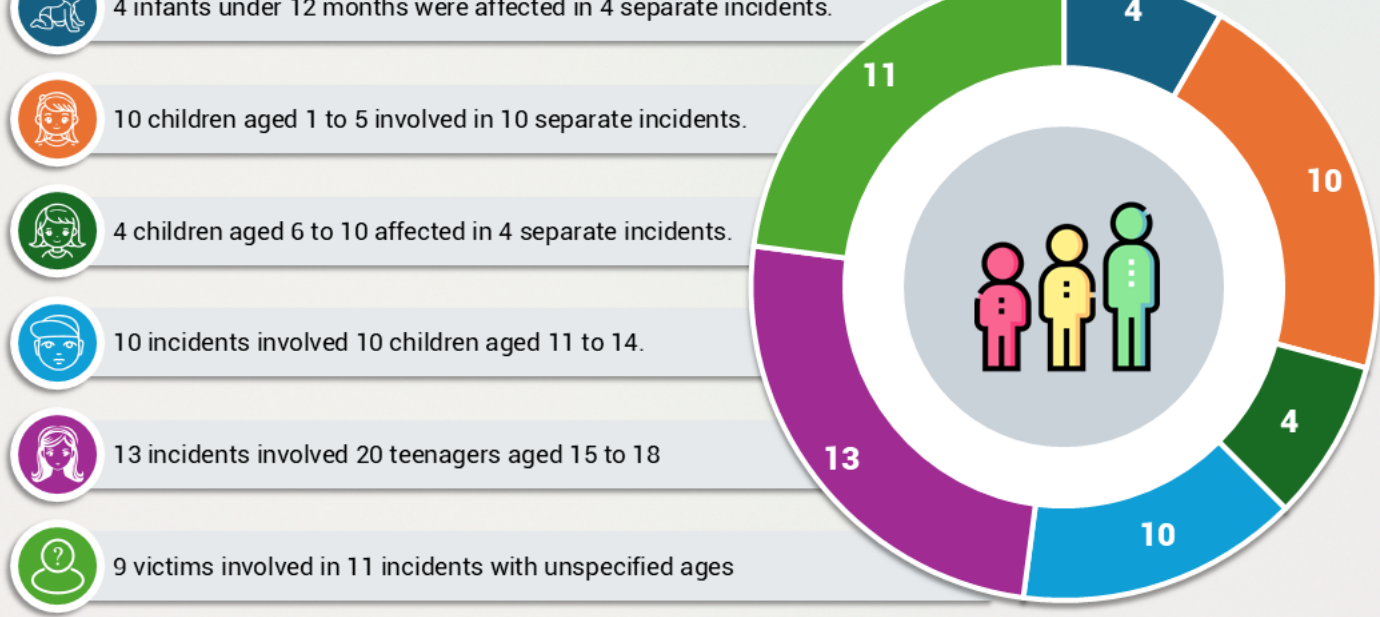
as reported in the media



A gender analysis of child abuse cases reported in January 2025 reveals significant differences in the impact of abuse on children. Among the 57 reported victims, females constituted the majority, with 26 cases (45.61%). However, boys were also notably affected, with 16 reported cases (29.82%). This highlights that male victims also face unique challenges or are less likely to report abuse due to cultural and societal barriers. 14 victims (24.56%) had their gender not mentioned in the media, so they were categorised as 'not specified'.

## Age distribution of Victims

At the time of violence



Among the 57 documented victims, adolescents aged 15 to 18 accounted for the highest proportion, with 20 cases (35.09%). Younger children were also significantly affected, including 10 victims (17.54%) aged 1 to 5 years and another 10 victims (17.54%) aged 11 to 14 years. Additionally, infants under 1 year and children aged 6 to 10 years each accounted for 4 cases (7.02%). The remaining 9 victims (15.79%) were categorised as "not specified."

## Perpetrators Trend

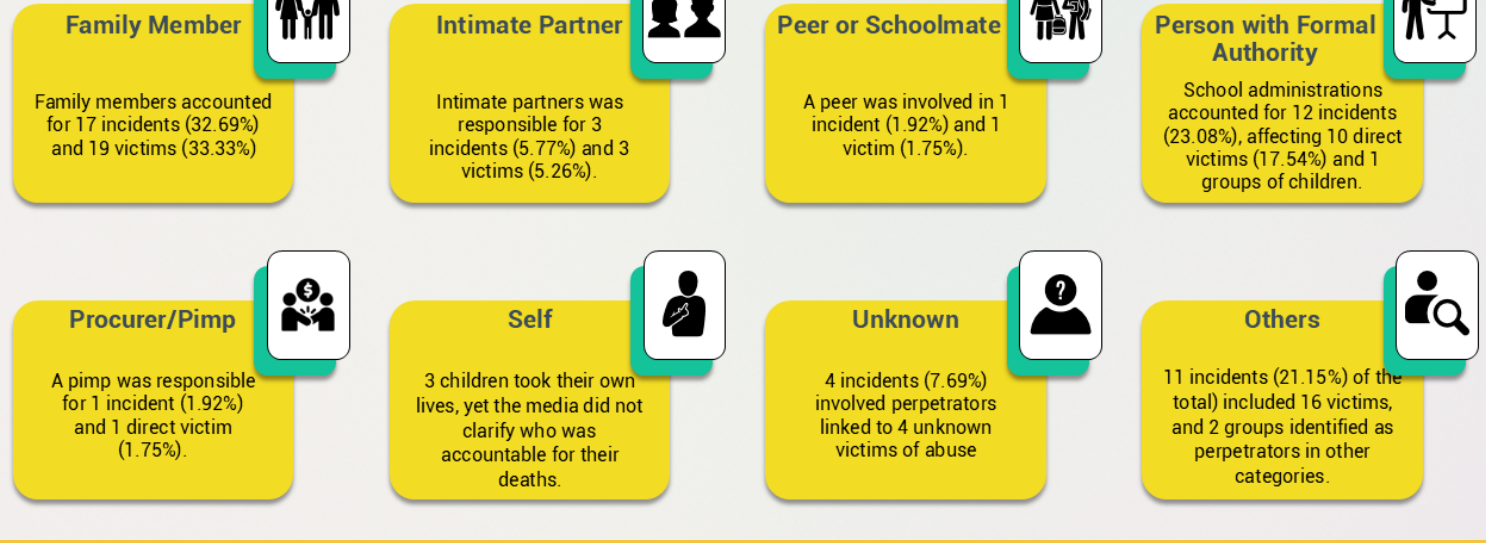
In reported incidents



The patterns among offenders reflect the nature of these crimes. The majority of cases (53.85%) were committed by individual perpetrators, affecting 34 victims (59.65%). Incidents involving groups accounted for 32.69% of cases, impacting 16 victims (28.07%). Additionally, self-harm incidents caused harm to an equal number of victims across three cases (5.77%). Lastly, four victims (7.02%) were affected by four incidents (7.69%) involving unidentified perpetrators.

## Perpetrator's Specific Classifications

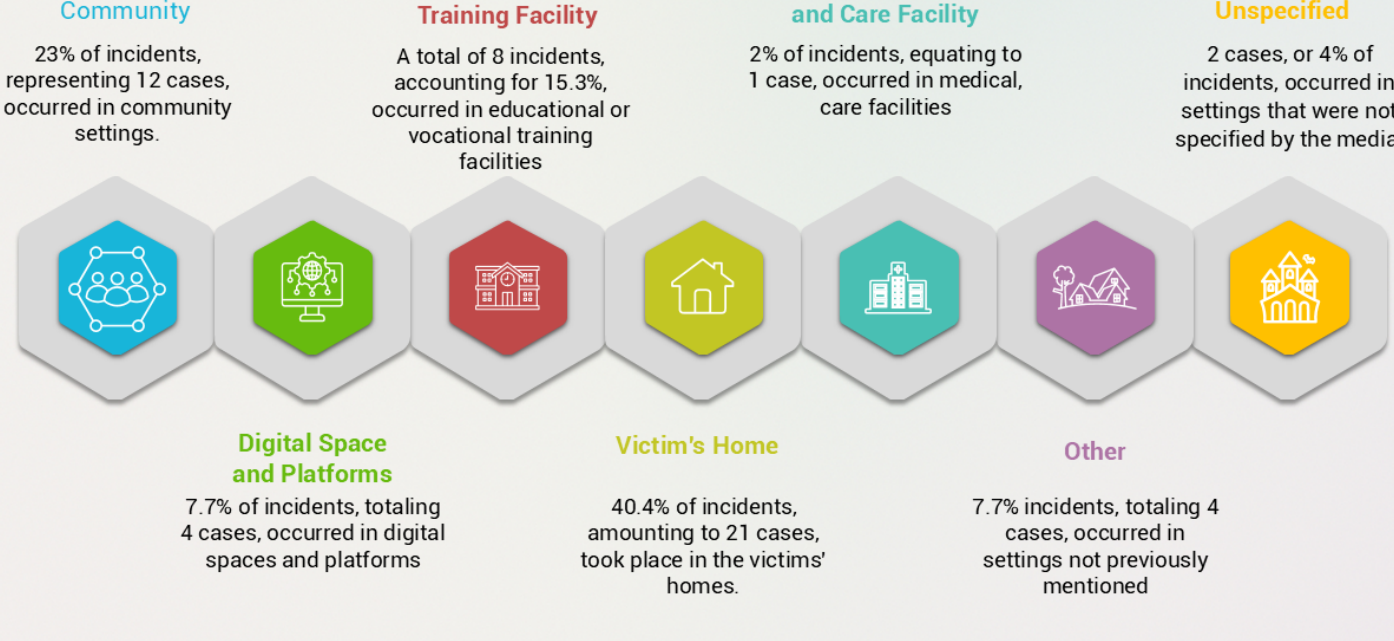
Number of incidents perpetrated by each category



The relationships between perpetrators and victims reveal significant trends. Family members were the most frequent offenders, responsible for 17 cases (32.69%) and affecting 19 victims (33.33%). Individuals in positions of formal authority accounted for 12 cases (23.08%), impacting 10 victims (17.54%), whilst intimate partners were linked to 3 cases (5.77%). Friends or classmates were identified in 1 case (1.92%), and self-harm was reported in 3 cases (5.77%), highlighting the severe emotional toll of abuse. Additionally, 4 cases (7.69%) involving 4 victims (7.02%) had unidentified perpetrators, while 11 cases (21.15%) categorised as "Others" affected 16 victims (28.07%).

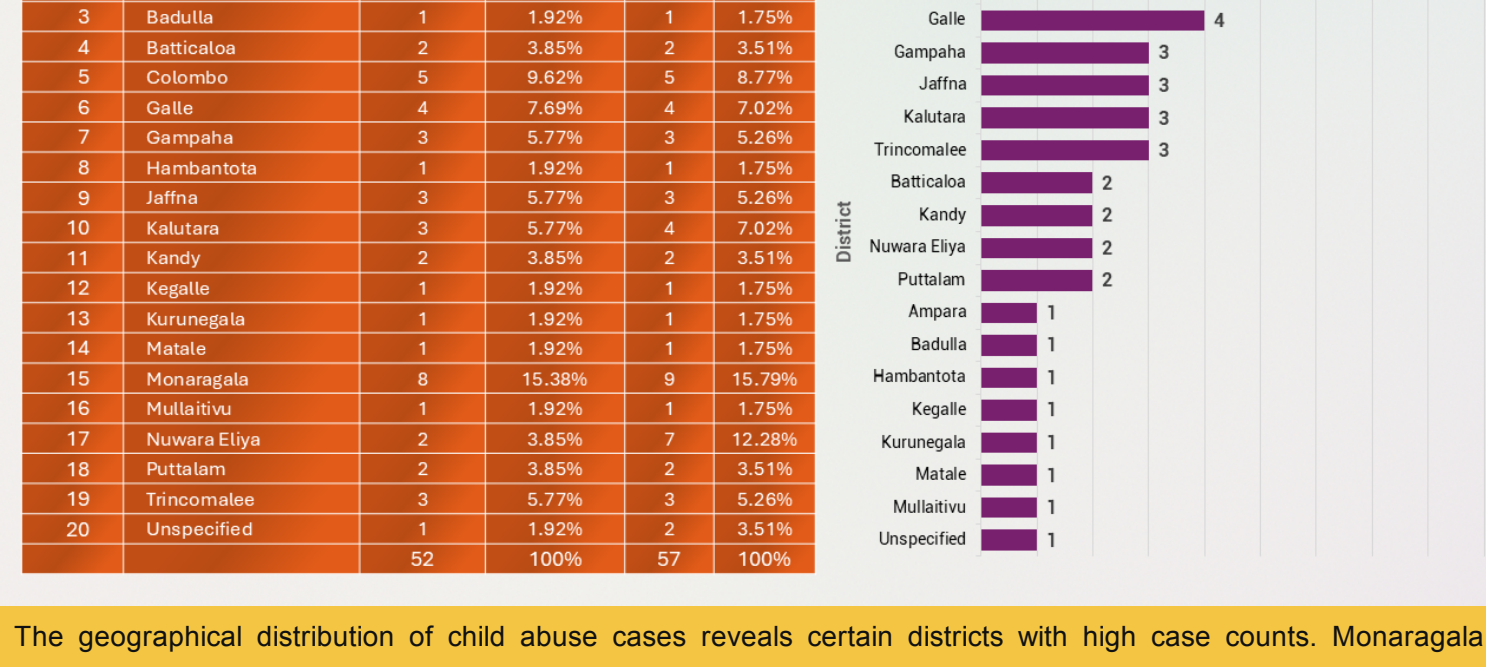
## Settings

Where the violence occurred



The persistent prevalence of child abuse across various settings highlights the vulnerability of children in different environments. The most frequently reported location was the victim's home, with 21 incidents (40.38%) and 21 victims (30.84%), emphasising the alarming reality that many children endure abuse in spaces intended to be safe. The community was the second most common setting, accounting for 12 incidents (23.08%), affecting 17 individuals (29.82%). Notably, abuse also occurred in digital spaces and online platforms, with four reported cases (7.69%) involving four victims (7.02%). Educational and vocational training facilities were associated with eight cases (15.38%), impacting six victims (10.53%). Meanwhile, incidents of abuse in medical, rehabilitation, and care facilities were less frequent, with one reported case. Additionally, four cases (7.69%) involving six victims occurred in other unspecified settings. Two cases were reported in unidentified locations.

## Number of Incidents Reported in Each District



The geographical distribution of child abuse cases reveals certain districts with high case counts. Monaragala recorded the highest number, with eight incidents (15.38%) involving 9 direct victims (15.79%), followed by Anuradhapura, which reported 7 cases (13.46%) affecting 4 victims (7.02%). Anuradhapura also documented three groups of child victims, although specific numbers are not available. Colombo, a densely populated urban centre, reported 5 cases (9.62%) with 5 victims (8.77%). Although Nuwara Eliya recorded only 2 incidents, the number of victims was disproportionately high at 7. Gampaha noted 3 cases, each affecting a separate victim, while Galle reported 4 cases involving 4 victims.



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