



# Violence Against Children

## Reported in the Media for February 2025



This picture depicts the immense dedication and effort put forth to educate, inform, and spread awareness on sexual exploitation and the online safety of children. Our work involves children, youth, and influential authorities to bring about real changes in the system in terms of preventing and eradicating child exploitation and online harassment. These ongoing trainings across the country provide knowledge and create spaces for young people to interact with peers and authorities, promoting youth advocacy and participation. We believe these young people are the future voice of our mission. We equip them with adept knowledge, enhancing their leadership capabilities through capacity-building activities and preparing the next set of change-makers in their communities.

## Incidents in Details

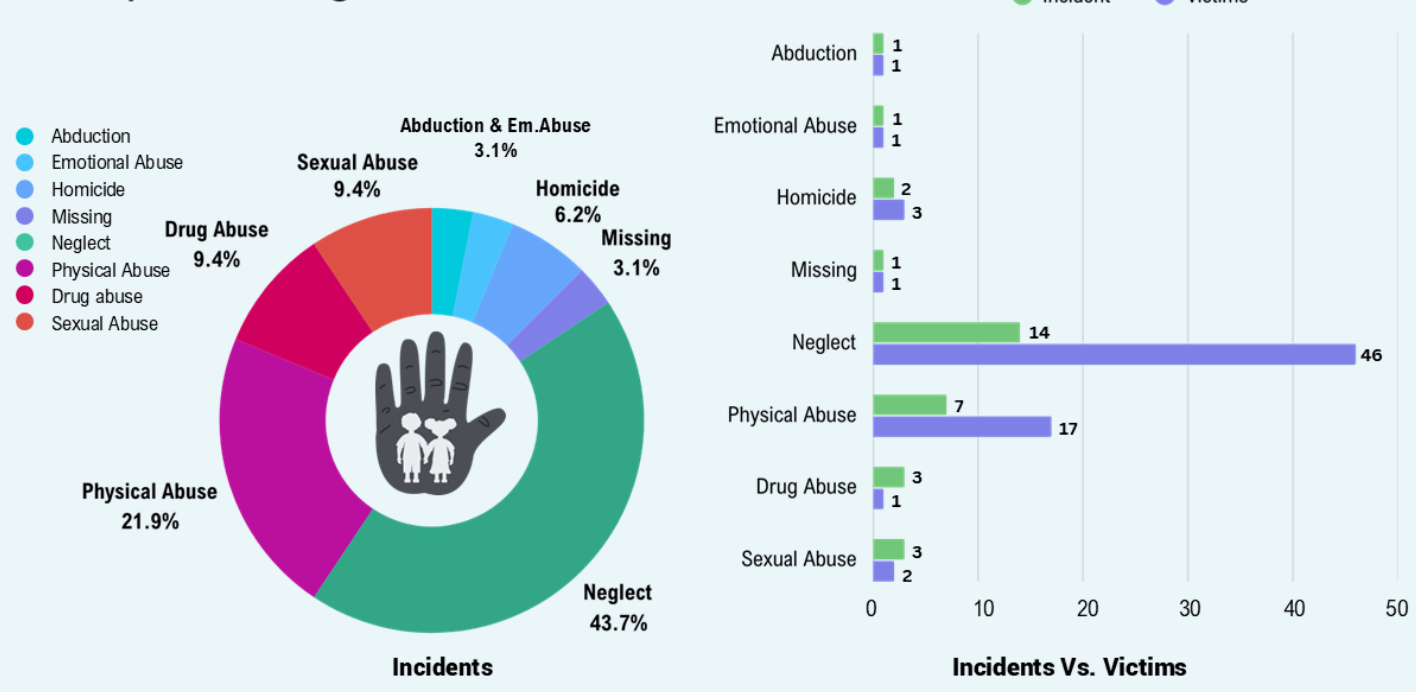
In February 2024, a total of 32 cases involving 72 victims were reported through a detailed media analysis conducted by the monitoring team at ECPAT Sri Lanka. We ensure our data collection and analysis are in line with UNICEF's ICVAC standards, allowing us to present this in-depth report on cases of violence against children across Sri Lanka. This report covers various aspects, including the types of incidents, gender, perpetrator trends, settings, and district analysis. We have organised the findings in a way that is both easy to understand and visually represented through clear graphs.

### Analysis

- **Negligence** is the most reported issue, accounting for 43.75% of cases, impacting 46 victims.
- Physical abuse follows as the second-highest reported incident, making up 21.88% of cases and 23.61% of victims.
- The **11-14 age group** stands out as the most affected, representing 30.56% of the total victims.
- The gender breakdown includes **20 female victims** (27.78%) and **13 male victims** (18.06%), with a significant portion (54.17%) of cases lacking gender specifics.
- Shockingly, **group offenders** are responsible for 56.25% of the incidents, affecting 83.33% of the victims, highlighting the severity of group-related violence.
- A significant portion of these incidents happened in **education and vocational training facilities** (37.50%), with community spaces (25%) also showing high vulnerability.
- **Anuradhapura** district leads with the highest number of incidents (15.63%) and victims (26.39%), indicating the need for increased attention in the region.

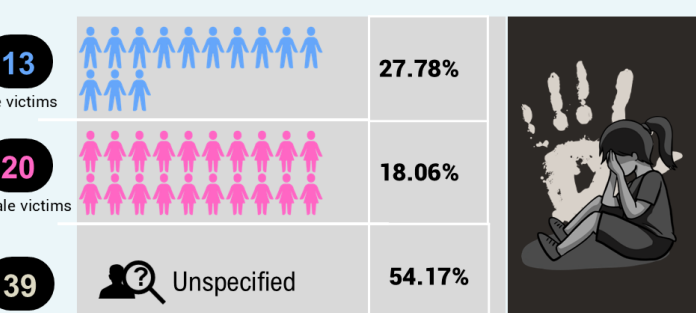
## Type of Violent Incidents

Perpetrated against children



The distribution of violent incidents reveals that Neglect remains the most pervasive form of abuse, affecting a staggering 63.89% of victims, comprising 43.75% of cases. Physical abuse follows as the second-most common abuse type, affecting 23.61% of victims and making up 21.88% of reported incidents. Homicide represents 6.25% of incidents, impacting 4.17% of victims. Sexual abuse and drug abuse each account for 9.38% of incidents, affecting 9.72% and 6.94% of victims, respectively. Other incidents such as abduction, emotional abuse, and missing cases each account for 3.13% of incidents, but their respective victim percentages are lower. These findings highlight the pressing need for immediate interventions to protect children from all forms of abuse.

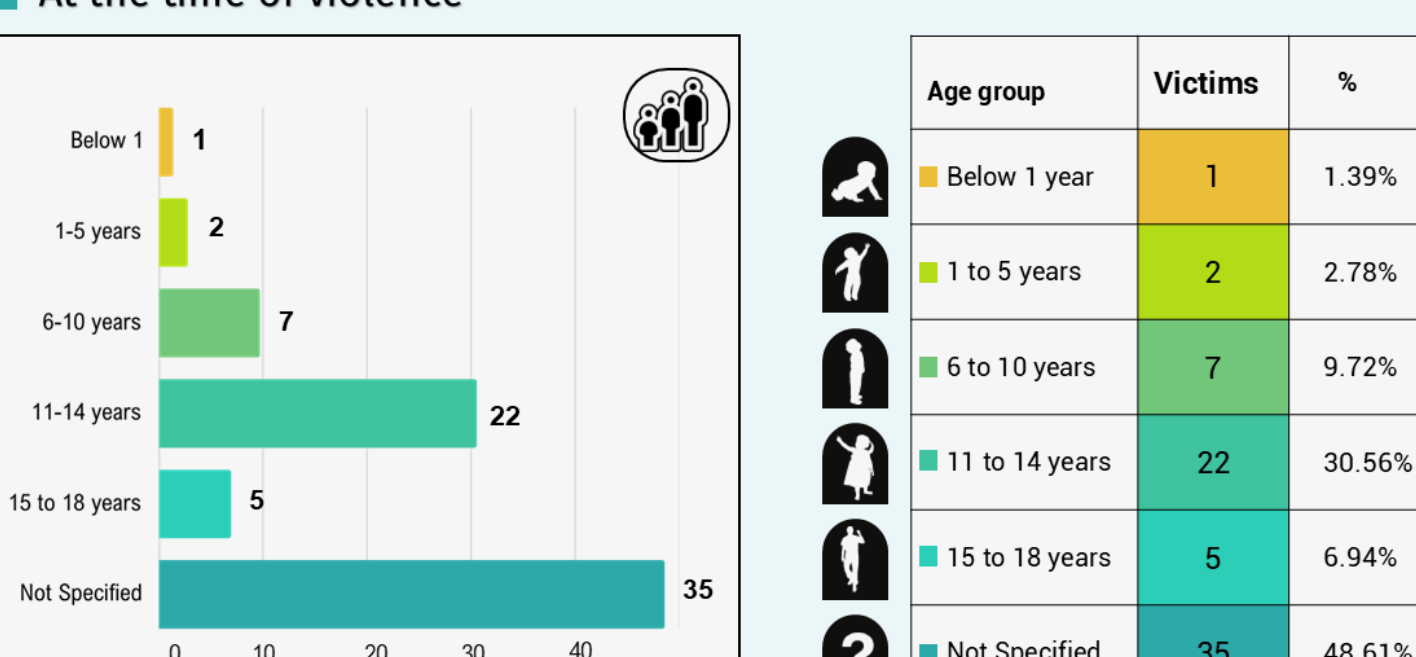
## Gender Distribution of the Victims



The gender distribution of victims in the reported incidents offers important insights into the scope of victimisation. Among the total victims, 20 are female, accounting for 27.78% of the cases, while 13 are male, representing 18.06% of the victims. In terms of gender, the data highlights a particularly troubling reality. While girl children appear to be the most affected group, 54.17% of cases do not specify the gender of the victims. This gap in reporting stresses the need for more comprehensive media coverage, ensuring that gender-specific trends are better understood and addressed.

## Age distribution of Victims

At the time of violence

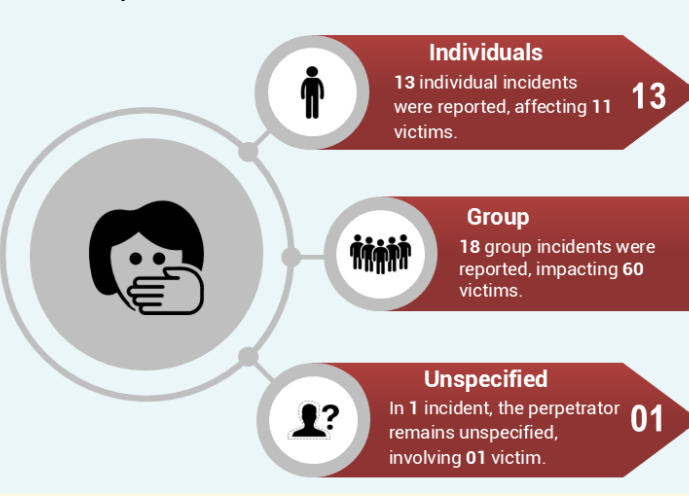


The age distribution paints a troubling picture, with the 11-14-year-old group suffering the highest rate of victimisation at 30.56%. Disturbingly, even younger children aren't spared—1 victim was reported below the age of 1, and 2 others were in the 1-5 age group. There are also 5 cases in the 15-18 years category, and 35 cases remain unspecified. These figures underline how vulnerable children are across all stages of their development and the urgent need for protection at every age.

The analysis of perpetrator trends shows a significant difference in the nature of incidents and the number of victims involved. Group perpetrators are responsible for the majority of incidents, accounting for 56.25% of the cases and affecting 83.33% of the victims. This highlights the overwhelming impact of group-related offences. Individual perpetrators account for 40.63% of incidents, impacting 15.28% of victims, indicating that while individual offenders are still prevalent, their overall victim impact is smaller. Unknown perpetrators are linked to 3.13% of incidents and 1.39% of victims, emphasising the need for further investigation. This trend underscores the considerable role of group-based offences, suggesting a need for targeted prevention and intervention strategies aimed at reducing such collective forms of abuse.

## Perpetrators Trend

In reported incidents



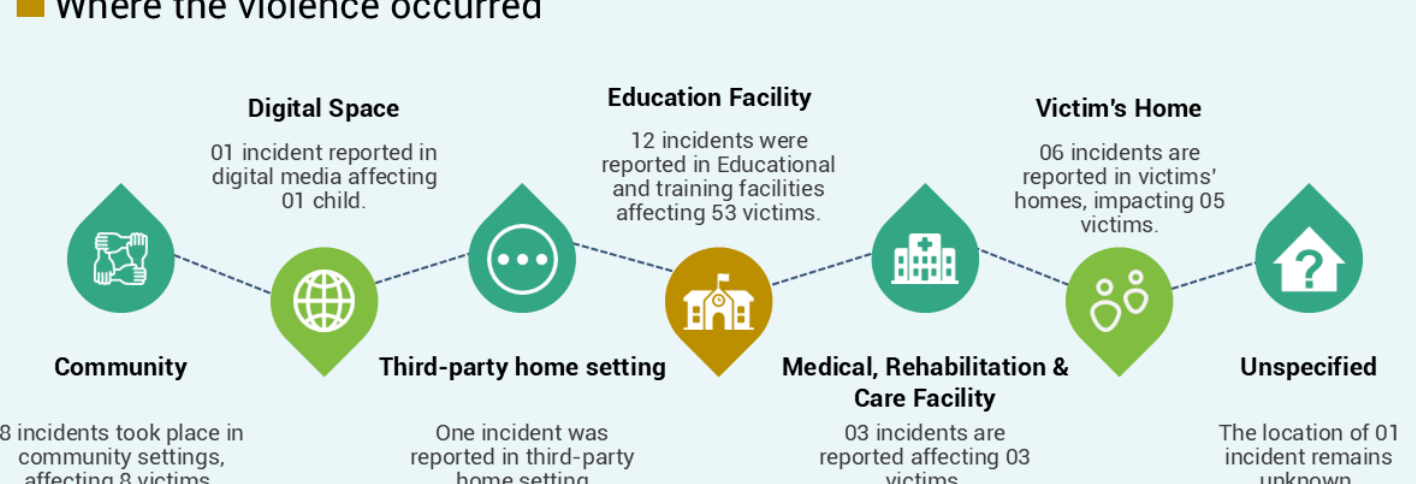
## Perpetrator's Specific Classifications



When looking at the specific categories of perpetrators, the findings are stark. Persons with formal authority, such as teachers, caregivers, and others in positions of power—are involved in 40.63% of incidents and affect 59.72% of the victims. This suggests a significant issue of abuse or exploitation by individuals in positions of power, such as educators, caregivers, or authority figures. Family members are responsible for 25.00% of incidents but only affect 11.11% of victims, pointing to the serious nature of familial abuse despite its lower victim count. Peers or schoolmates account for 3.13% of incidents but impact 15.28% of victims, indicating that while the frequency of peer-related incidents is lower, their impact is disproportionately higher on victims. Intimate partners and strangers are less frequently involved, each responsible for 3.13% of incidents, affecting 1.39% and 1.39% of victims, respectively. Unknown perpetrators are linked to 15.63% of incidents, affecting 6.94% of victims, underscoring the need for more thorough media reporting where the identity of the perpetrator remains unclear. Apart from the above-mentioned perpetrators, others account for 9.38% of incidents, impacting 4.17% of victims.

## Settings

Where the violence occurred

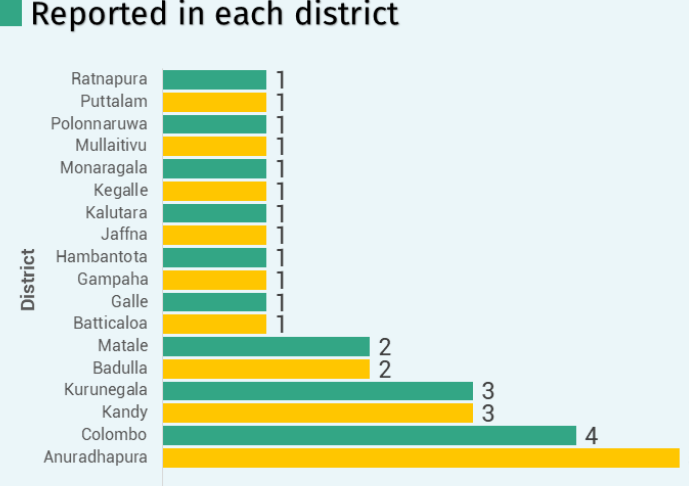


Where do these incidents occur? The analysis of settings reveals a clear pattern. The most alarming finding is that 37.50% of incidents occurred in education and vocational training facilities, where children should feel safest, impacting 73.61% of the total victims. This indicates an urgent need to address safety concerns within educational settings. Community settings account for 25.00% of incidents, impacting 11.11% of victims, suggesting that community spaces are still places where children face significant risks. Victim's homes represent 18.75% of incidents, affecting 6.94% of victims, pointing to the prevalence of abuse within domestic environments. Medical, rehabilitation, and care facilities accounted for 9.38% of incidents and 4.17% of victims, showing vulnerabilities even within institutional care settings. Other settings represent a smaller proportion of incidents but still demonstrate that children are at risk in multiple environments.

Breaking down incidents by district shows that Anuradhapura stands out with the highest number of reported incidents (15.63%) and victims (26.39%), suggesting that more resources and attention are needed in this area. Other districts with notable incidents include Badulla, which reported 6.25% of incidents and 16.67% of victims, and Colombo, with 12.50% of incidents and 18.06% of victims. Kandy and Kurunegala each reported 9.38% of incidents, affecting 15.28% and 2.78% of victims, respectively. Smaller numbers of incidents and victims were reported in districts like Batticaloa, Galle, Gampaha, and Matale, each contributing 3.13% of incidents. Mullaitivu, despite having 3.13% of incidents, reported no victims. This distribution highlights that certain districts, particularly Anuradhapura, Badulla, and Colombo, have higher levels of victimization, indicating the need for more focused efforts in these regions. It also points to the importance of continued monitoring and support in less affected areas to prevent further incidents.

## No. of Incidents Reported

Reported in each district



## Children as Perpetrators

In February, alarmingly, incidents were reported where children had become perpetrators of various crimes.

A 12-year-old boy from Gampola filed a complaint falsely claiming that he was abducted by a group of men while coming back home after a class. However, after checking the footage of twelve CCTV cameras and conducting a thorough investigation involving about thirty police officers from three different Police stations in the area, it was revealed that the child was roaming around the city with a friend and his mother and had fallen asleep in the bus on his way back home. The child then decided to come up with a lie out of fear of being beaten up by his father, leading the police officers to investigate for two days against a fabricated allegation. This incident underscored the profound psychological impact of parental abuse on children, from the extent that even national resources had to be mobilised to address a false accusation.

The other incident was reported to Kegalle on the 26th of February, where a child was knelt on the road and beaten up by a group of five 16-year-old peers while he was waiting for the school bus. The incident was also video recorded by the perpetrators and was shared on social media platforms. It was reported that the officers of the Children and Women's Bureau of the Kegalle police arrested three out of the five perpetrators and are conducting further investigations to arrest the rest as well. In the recent past, there has been a noticeable rise in cases of children facing abuse from their peers in Sri Lanka, and this highlights the urgent need for effective intervention and preventive measures.