



Violence Against Children Reported in the Media for April 2025



PEaCE / ECPAT Sri Lanka has long recognised the pivotal role of community leaders in protecting children from sexual exploitation and abuse. By working closely with religious leaders, village officers, women's groups, youth representatives, and other grassroots influencers, the organisation ensures that awareness, prevention, and response efforts are rooted in the realities of each community. These leaders serve as trusted voices and first responders, often identifying risks early and mobilising collective action. Without their active involvement and commitment, it would not be possible to effectively combat child sexual exploitation and ensure safer environments for children across Sri Lanka

Categories of Child Abuse

This newsletter presents a comprehensive analysis of incidents of violence against children reported in the media during April 2025. The findings stem from a systematic monitoring and documentation process carried out by our media monitoring team. A total of **43 incidents** involving **72 victims** were recorded across diverse regions and settings in Sri Lanka. This narrative aims to unpack the data under key thematic areas: gender and age distribution, types of abuse, perpetrator characteristics, settings, and geographical patterns.

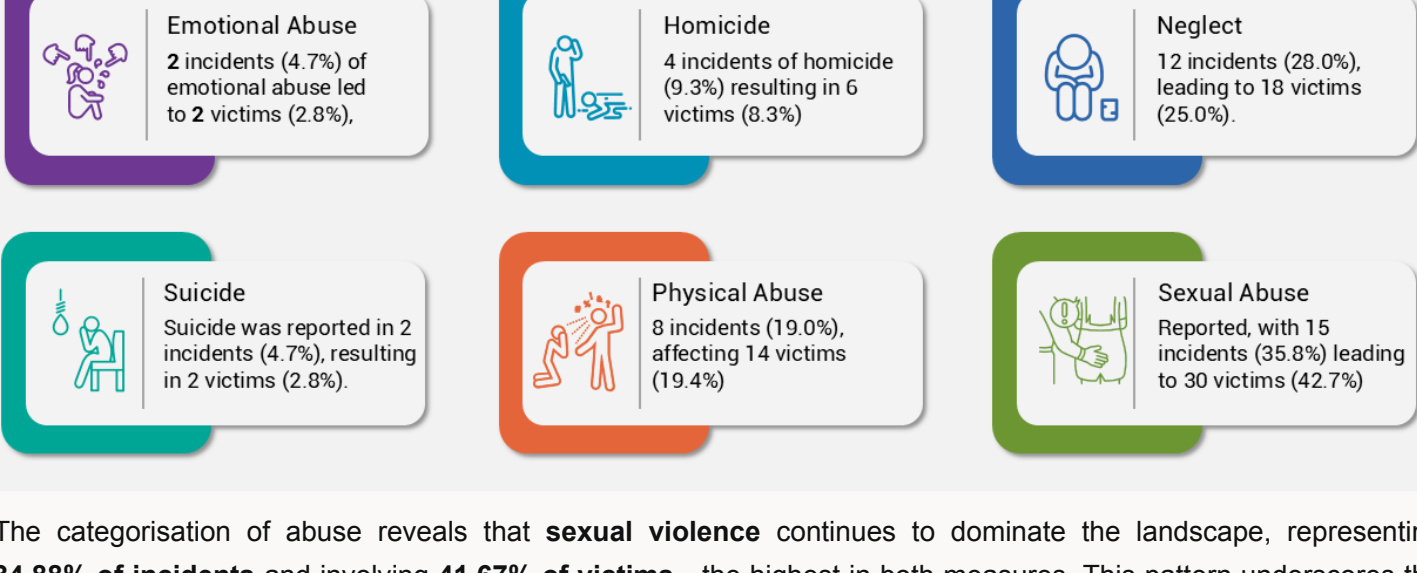
Summary

The data from April 2025 reveals critical insights into the evolving nature of violence against children in Sri Lanka:

- **Sexual violence remains the gravest threat**, necessitating urgent cross sectoral interventions.
- **Adolescent boys are a particularly at-risk group**, often overlooked in prevention efforts.
- **Abuse by authority figures** challenges the assumption that institutions inherently offer protection.
- **The range of perpetrator identities**—from family to strangers—calls for community-wide awareness and accountability.
- A significant proportion of incidents are **preventable**, given that many stem from neglect, oversight, or lack of support.

Type of Violent Incidents

Perpetrated against children



The categorisation of abuse reveals that **sexual violence** continues to dominate the landscape, representing **34.88% of incidents** and involving **41.67% of victims**—the highest in both measures. This pattern underscores the urgent need for more robust safeguards, particularly in institutional and domestic settings where many of these incidents occur.

Neglect follows closely, accounting for **27.91% of incidents** and affecting **25.00% of victims**. This form of abuse, often linked to poverty, lack of parental care, and systemic failures, is difficult to detect and often under reported unless it results in severe harm or death.

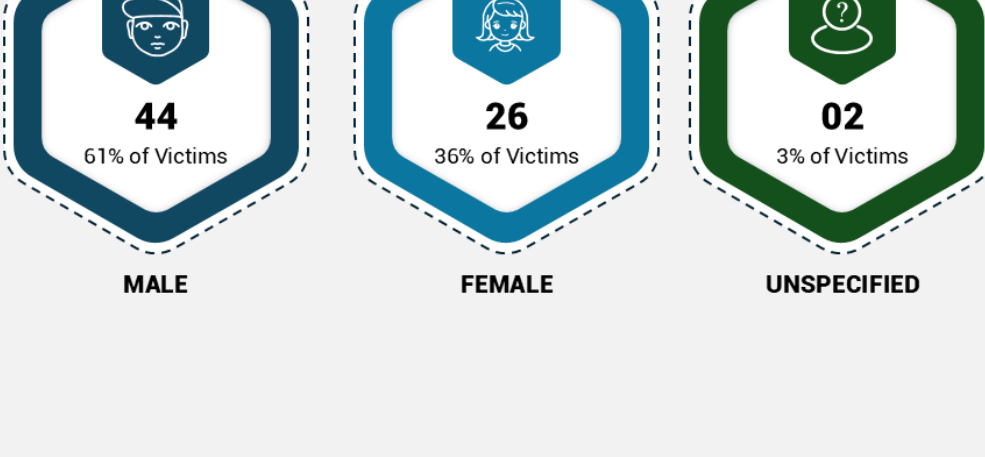
Other forms include:

- **Physical abuse** – 18.60% of incidents
- **Homicide** – 9.30%
- **Suicide** – 4.65%
- **Emotional abuse** – 4.65%

These figures indicate a multidimensional nature of child victimisation, where children often face overlapping risks and suffer from multiple forms of harm.

Gender Distribution of the Victims

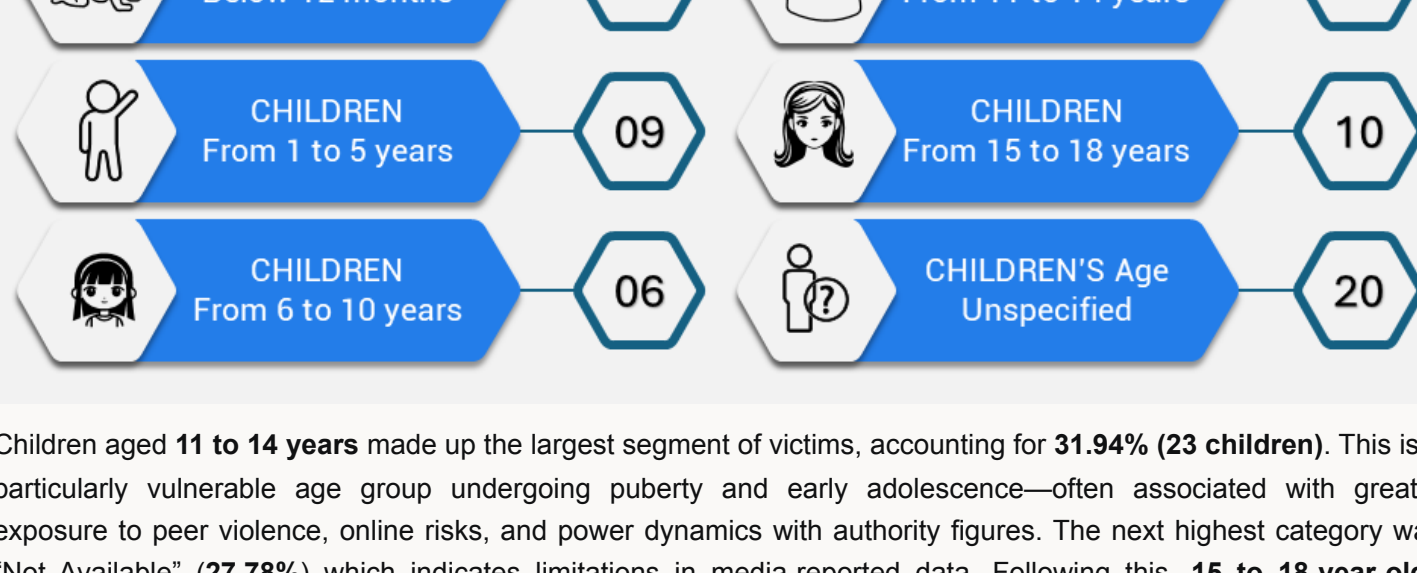
as reported in the media



Out of the 72 victims identified, **61.11% were male** (44 individuals), while **36.11% were female** (26 individuals). A minor proportion, **2.78% (2 victims)**, had unspecified gender details. The prominence of male victims is consistent with recent reporting trends in Sri Lanka, particularly in incidents involving sexual violence and institutional abuse, where boys often represent a silent and under-acknowledged group.

Age Distribution of Victims

At the time of violence

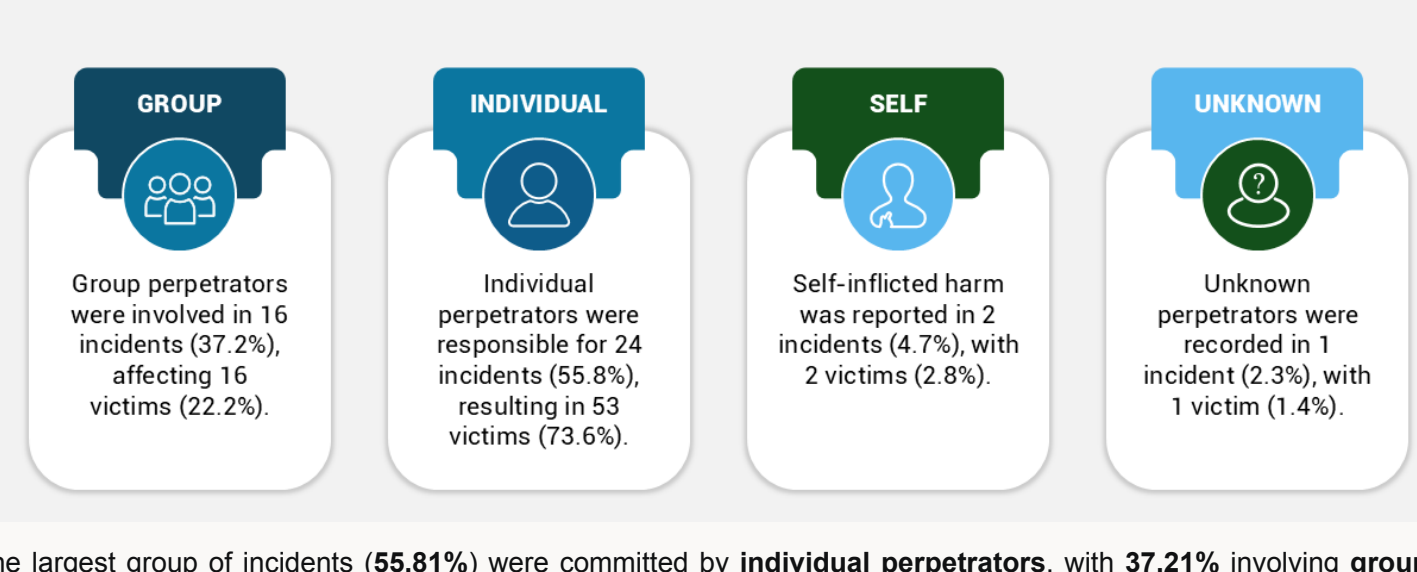


Children aged **11 to 14 years** made up the largest segment of victims, accounting for **31.94% (23 children)**. This is a particularly vulnerable age group undergoing puberty and early adolescence—often associated with greater exposure to peer violence, online risks, and power dynamics with authority figures. The next highest category was "Not Available" (**27.78%**) which indicates limitations in media-reported data. Following this, **15 to 18-year-olds** comprised **13.89%**, and children **1 to 5 years** comprised **12.50%** of the total.

Only **5.56%** of cases involved **infants under one year**, while **8.33%** were aged **6 to 10 years**. These figures highlight that children of all developmental stages are at risk and reinforce the importance of early prevention and protection strategies across childhood.

Perpetrators Trend

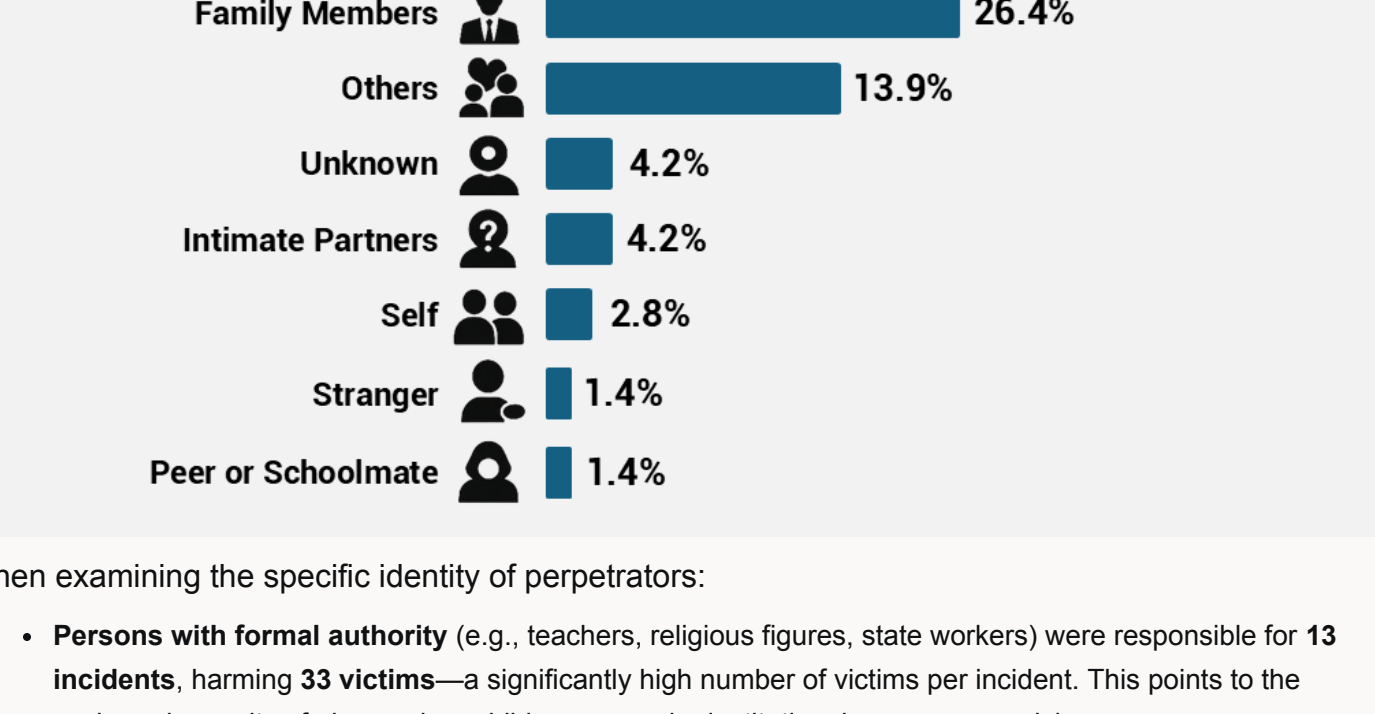
In reported incidents



The largest group of incidents (**55.81%**) were committed by **individual perpetrators**, with **37.21%** involving **groups**, and a few marked as **self-harm (4.65%)** or **unknown (2.33%)**. The dominance of individual perpetrators suggests that targeted, interpersonal harm remains the most common pattern in child abuse.

Perpetrator's Specific Classifications

Number of incidents perpetrated by each category



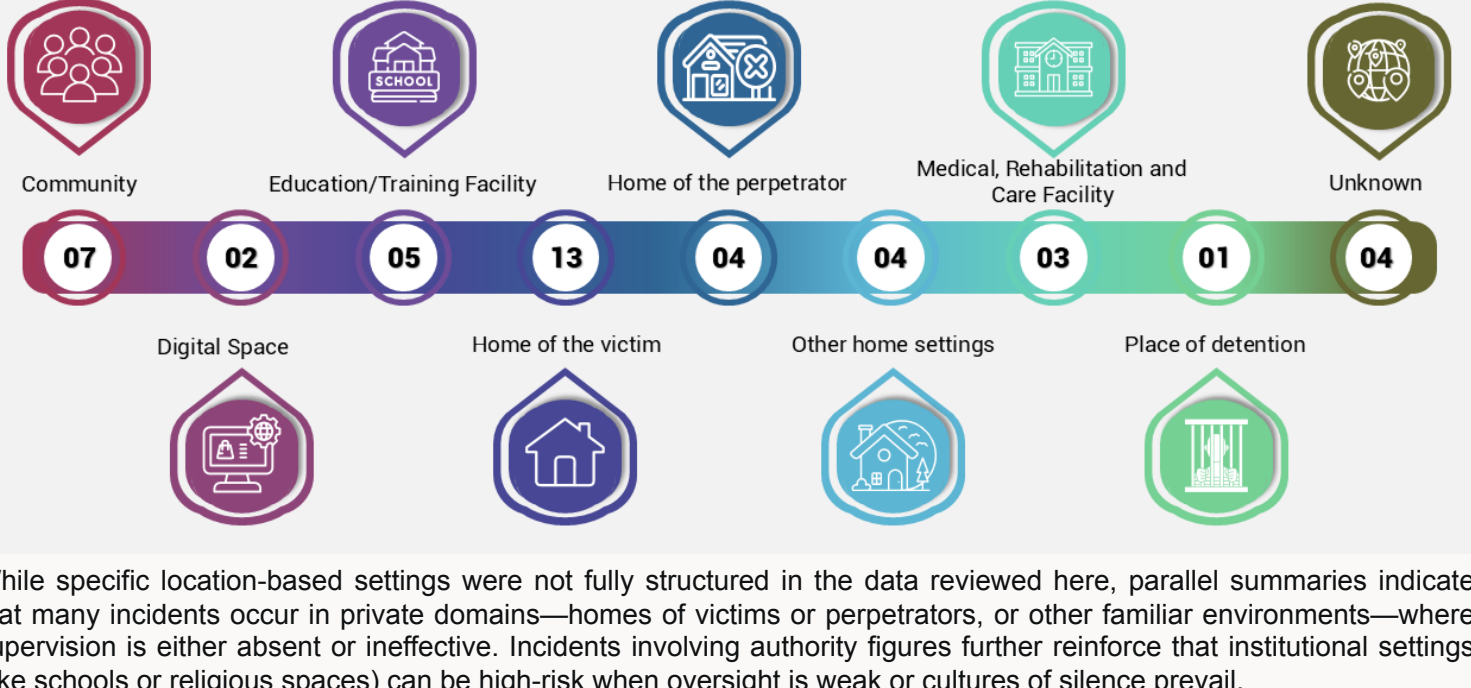
When examining the specific identity of perpetrators:

- **Persons with formal authority** (e.g., teachers, religious figures, state workers) were responsible for **13 incidents**, harming **33 victims**—a significantly high number of victims per incident. This points to the scale and severity of abuse when children are under institutional care or supervision.
- **Family members** were involved in **15 incidents**, causing harm to **19 children**.
- **Intimate partners** of victims (often in adolescent relationships) were responsible for **4 cases**, and **peers or schoolmates** accounted for at least 1 case.
- **"Others"** and **"Strangers"** also featured, albeit in smaller numbers.

The involvement of trusted adults and authority figures in over half the cases reported is deeply concerning. It emphasizes the need for strengthened child safeguarding protocols, especially within households, schools, religious institutions, and custodial facilities.

Settings

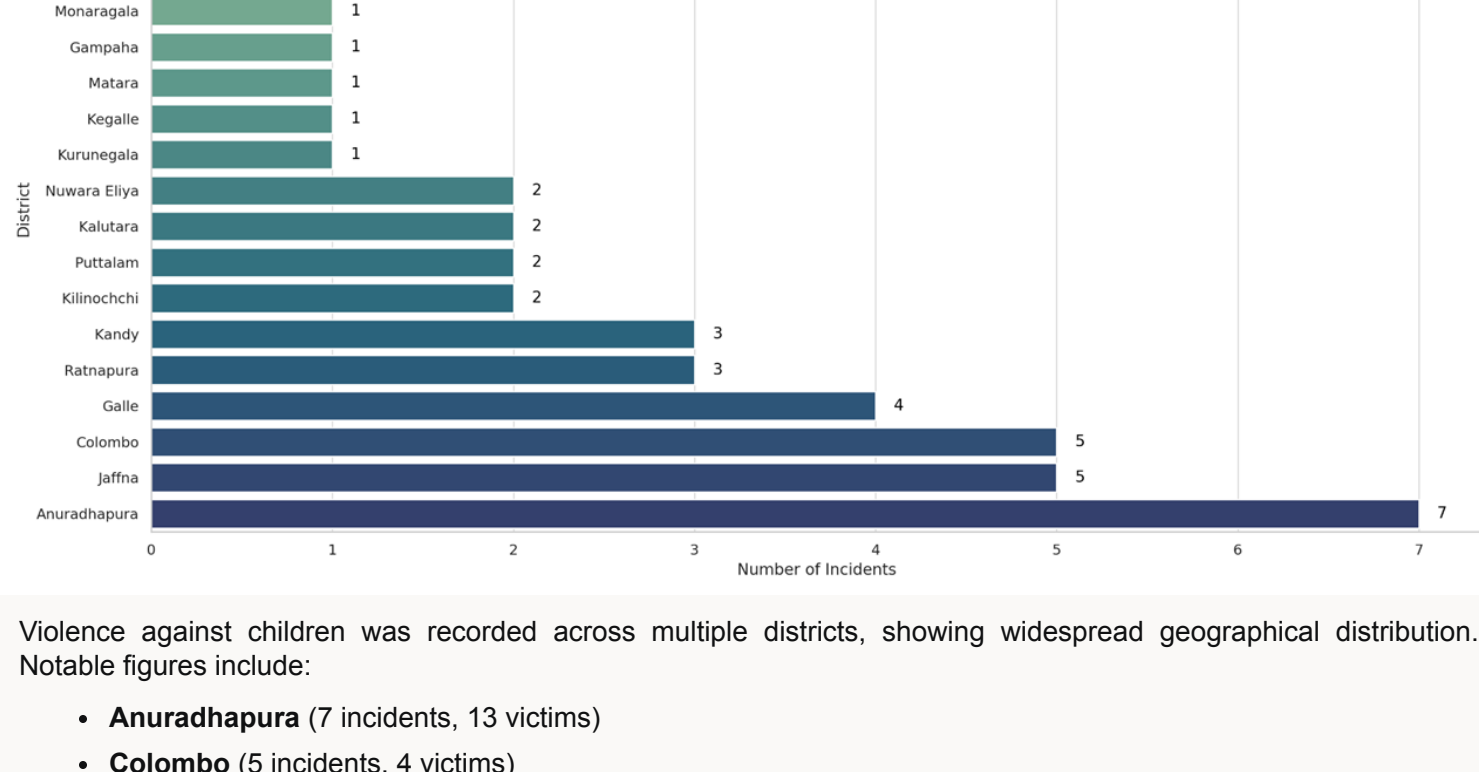
Where the violence occurred



While specific incident-based settings were not fully structured in the data reviewed here, parallel summaries indicate that many incidents occur in private domains—homes of victims or perpetrators, or other familiar environments—where supervision is either absent or ineffective. Incidents involving authority figures further reinforce that institutional settings (like schools or religious spaces) can be high-risk when oversight is weak or cultures of silence prevail.

Number of Incidents Reported

in Each District



Violence against children was recorded across multiple districts, showing widespread geographical distribution. Notable figures include:

- **Anuradhapura** (7 incidents, 13 victims)
- **Colombo** (5 incidents, 4 victims)
- **Jaffna** (5 incidents, 5 victims)
- **Galle** (4 incidents, 5 victims)
- **Kalutara and Puttalam** (2 incidents each)

While no single district shows an overwhelming spike, the consistent spread points to a national-level concern, cutting across urban, rural, and post-conflict settings. Anuradhapura, with a higher number of victims relative to incidents, may reflect more severe or group-based violations. On the other hand, underreporting in districts with low numbers should not be interpreted as lower risk; rather, it might indicate weaker local media presence or cultural silence around child abuse.

Recommendations

Based on the analysis, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. **Strengthen child safeguarding in institutional settings**, especially religious and educational institutions.
2. **Scale up reporting channels**, including child helplines and confidential complaint systems.
3. **Enhance media engagement** to ensure ethical, complete, and sensitive reporting of all incidents.
4. **Invest in family and community-based prevention**, especially in high-risk districts.
5. **Focus on adolescent boys in awareness campaigns**, acknowledging their vulnerabilities.

This April snapshot provides more than just a summary of harm—it is a call to action for all child protection actors to enhance surveillance, expand prevention efforts, and respond with compassion, urgency, and commitment to every child's right to safety and dignity.