



Violence Against Children Media Coverage in September 2025

Media monitoring for September 2025 revealed a continued pattern of violence against children (VAC) across Sri

Lanka, with 49 incidents affecting dozens of victims nationwide. The data once again point to family-based abuse, sexual exploitation, neglect, and physical assaults as recurring issues. Worryingly, these incidents span all parts of the country—from Colombo to Batticaloa, Kurunegala, and Monaragala, showing that violence against children remains a pervasive and deeply entrenched national crisis.



can protect or endanger the dignity and safety of children. **Highlights from September 2025 Media Reports** Most incidents were perpetrated by individual offenders, primarily parents, relatives, or teachers, while a notable portion involved groups or peer networks. Homes, communities, and educational settings were the main environments

sensitive reporting, encouraging participants to approach stories involving children with responsibility, empathy, and respect for their rights. The interactive discussions helped strengthen journalists' understanding of how media narratives

exploitation and online grooming was also evident, signalling an evolving form of risk in both urban and rural areas. In September, ECPAT Sri Lanka's media monitoring team reviewed 49 media-reported cases of violence against

where abuse occurred, highlighting persistent gaps in child supervision and safety. The growing presence of digital

children, analyzed under UNICEF's ICVAC framework to ensure reliability and consistency in classification. The data shed light on both individual tragedies and broader structural issues that contribute to the cycle of abuse Key Findings from the September 2025 Data Gender: Girls accounted for 52% of reported victims, primarily affected by sexual abuse and neglect. Boys

represented 41%, facing more physical assaults and peer violence. Age: Adolescents aged 15–18 years were most at risk, often targeted through sexual exploitation, peer harassment, and online grooming.

• Settings: Nearly 40% of incidents occurred in homes, followed by community spaces (18%), schools (15%),

and digital environments (7%).

Physical Abuse

Prevalence

Incidents were reported

Key Highlights

Overview

within homes and communities.

Age group

Police and Legal Proceedings

Overview

There were 6 child-

related drug abuse

incidents. Young

children aged 6 - 10

and teens aged 15 - 18

are mainly affected,

with half the victims

Community

Community and family

connections were

significant among

perpetrators, revealing

that trusted

relationships can

sometimes contribute

to abuses.

Victim Demographics

in September

By Gender

12 cases accounted for 66 victims,

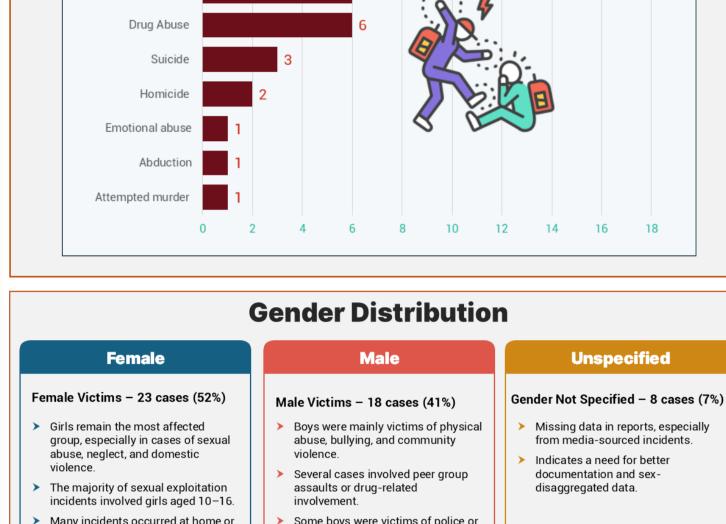
Mostly male (42%) and female (33%)

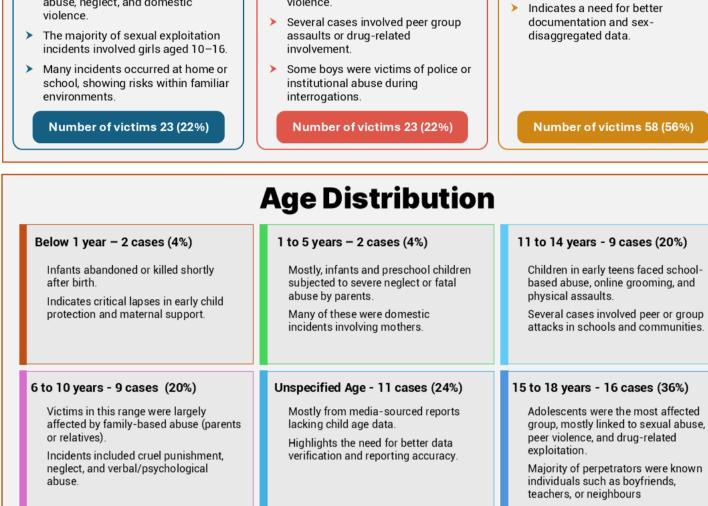
Around 6-10 years, though a few older

children, with some unclassified

representing 63% of the total

- Perpetrators: In 60% of cases, the abuser was an individual—often someone the child knew; 38% involved groups or collective acts of violence. • Districts with highest incidents: Colombo (6), Kalutara (5), Kurunegala (5), and Batticaloa (4) led the count,
- with additional reports from Gampaha, Jaffna, Monaragala, and Puttalam (3 each). • Forms of violence: Sexual abuse, neglect, and physical punishment were the dominant forms, cutting across all social and geographic boundaries.
- **Type of Violent Incidents**
- Sexual Abuse Negligence





Neglect

Patterns observed:

Illustrative case:

Children left unattended near unsafe

locations, cases of abandonment, and prolonged deprivation of care or food

A 6-year-old child died after falling into an uncovered well near the family home – a clear instance of parental neglect.

Children died due to

negligence

Gender

The leading perpetrators were family members

Common forms included rape, statutory rape, sexual harassment, and attempted sexual assault, many involving repeated exploitation and coercion.

and relatives, followed by neighbours and

90% victims are females

Gender Split

Females made up

approximately half of

the affected children,

highlighting a balanced

gender distribution in

these distressing

events.

Police Acts

In every reported case,

authorities responded

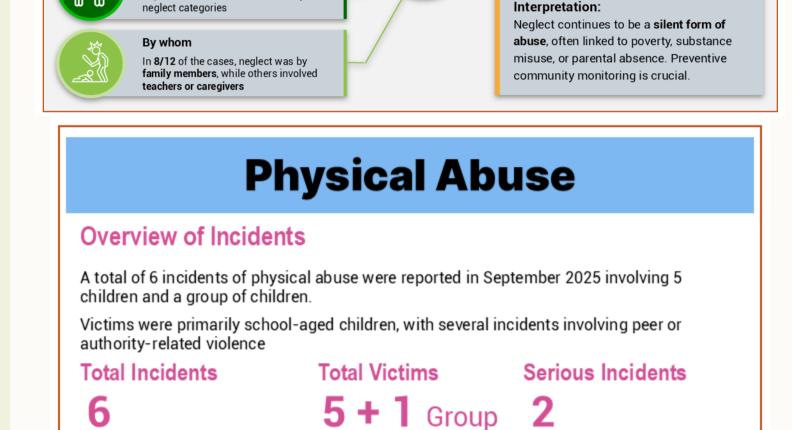
with either arrests or

ongoing police

investigations,

emphasizing a strong law enforcement

presence.





5 victims and a group involved across country

80% Male – 4 cases involved male Community or public spaces (2 cases). victims Care or rehabilitation centres (1 case). 10% Female – 1 case involved female

victims 10% Not Specified – 1 case involved a group Police Action All cases were investigated by local police. Most cases are under investigation, with a few Age Distribution suspects already arrested. Victims ranged from 6 to 14 years, mostly within 6-14 years, indicating vulnerability among younger schoolchildren.

Physical abuse continues to appear within educational and community settings. Many incidents involve authority figures or peers, reflecting both disciplinary violence and The need for school-based violence prevention and stronger child monitoring systems remains urgent.

Sexual Abuse Incidents

In September 2025, sexual abuse was the most reported form of violence against children, with 17 cases involving multiple victims and recurring abuse

11-14-year-olds are most Types of Perpetrators

environments, with a notable number linked to educational

The majority of cases were reported to the police and remain under investigation, while a few have led to arrests

Locations of Incidents Most cases occurred within family homes and community

institutions. **Incident Types**

acquaintances

Drug Impact on Children

Age Groups

The incidents primarily

impacted two age

groups: young children

between 6 and 10

years old, and

teenagers aged 15 to

18, showing

and further legal proceedings.



Incident Sites

Most cases took place

within community

settings, indicating that

these environments are

critical areas for

intervention and

awareness

Perpetrators – Group Vs Individuals Individuals Group Responsible for 29 incidents Responsible for 18 incidents Sexual Abuse by Trusted Adults: Fathers, stepfathers, relatives, and neighbours Peers, boyfriends, or groups of men exploited minors, mostly girls under 15. collaborated to sexually assault minors. Parental and Guardian Violence: **Drug-Related Crimes:**

Parents, especially mothers and fathers, Youth groups or couples engaged in trafficking physically assaulted or neglected children, or using drugs in the presence of children. leading to severe harm or death. Community and Collective Violence: School-Based Abuse: Groups of villagers, relatives, or mobs Individual teachers or officers punished or physically attacked or humiliated children harassed children under disciplinary pretexts. School & Peer Aggression: Students or youth gangs assaulted classmates, **Neglect and Abandonment:** Several incidents involved mothers abandoning showing peer-driven violence trends. infants or failing to provide care. Family or Household Groups: Individual Offenders in Uniform: Multiple family members jointly neglected or abused children, including fatal neglect. Police officers and officials committed or enabled abuse through authority misuse. **Perpetrator Specific Family Members** Teachers, Police, Religious Figures Represented a significant portion of reported Includes parents, stepparents, and close relatives. offenders. Many incidents occurred within the home, Cases included sexual abuse, corporal showing persistent domestic risk factors. punishment, and misconduct within schools or official settings. Mothers and fathers were both implicated, particularly in neglect and physical abuse Highlights the misuse of power and trust in

institutional environments.

Peers and Schoolmates

Increasing reports of child-on-child violence,

especially among boys aged 11-16.

Common settings include schools,

playgrounds, and social gatherings.

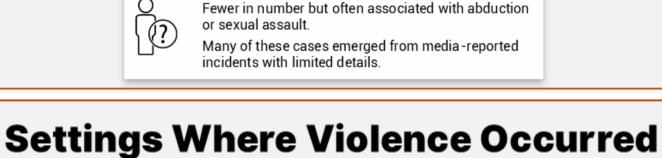
Home of Victim

Child harmed within their

own household, mostly by

parents, relatives, or

guardians.



Education or Vocational

Training Facility

Violence occurred in

schools, tuition classes, or

training centres

Strangers and Unknown Perpetrators

Intimate Partners and Spouses

Several incidents involved adolescent girls

(15-18 years) abused by boyfriends or

partners.

Often linked with sexual exploitation,

coercion, or online abuse.

Community

Includes public areas,

neighbourhoods, and social

gatherings.

Common incidents: peer

Colombo (6

cases)

Districts with

5 Reported

Cases

Districts with

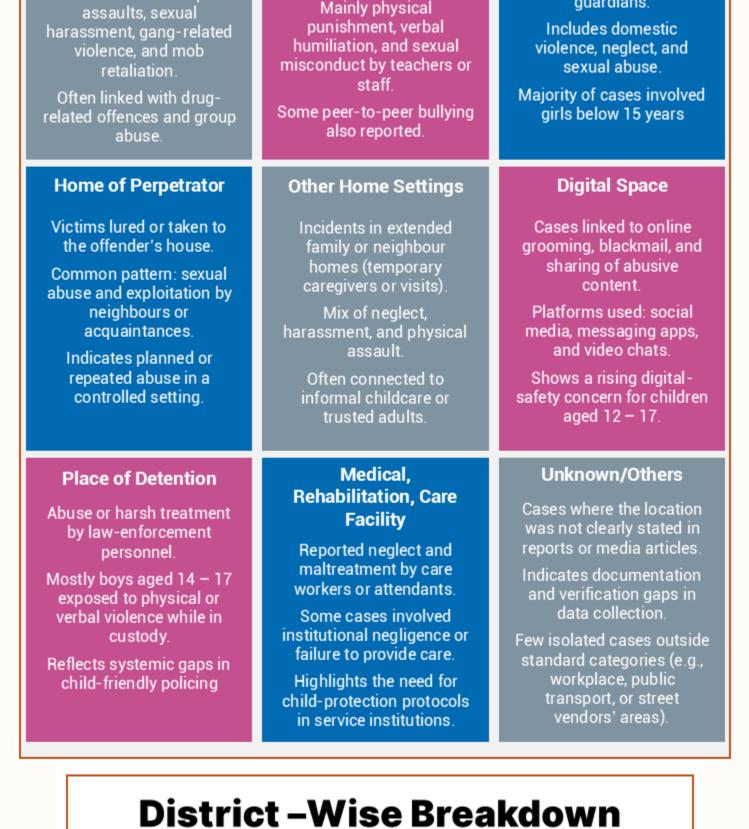
3 Reported

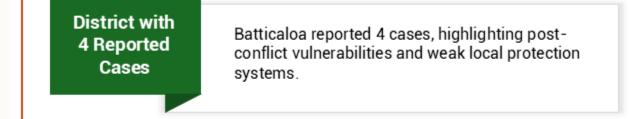
Districts with

1 Reported

Cases

investigated cases by ECPAT Sri Lanka.





community neglect patterns.

settings.

Colombo recorded the highest number of

family-related violence and neglect in urban

Kurunegala and Kalutara reported 5 incidents

each, reflecting continued family conflicts and

Puttalam, Gampaha, Jaffna, and Monaragala

each reported 3 incidents, indicating persistent risks from parental abuse, sexual misconduct,

Anuradhapura, Badulla, Galle, Mullaitivu, Matara.

In Matara, 1 case was reported during the month.

incidents (6) involving 21 victims, mostly linked to

Cases and community neglect. Districts with Polonnaruwa, Nuwara Eliya, Matale, Ampara, 2 Reported Kegalle, and Kandy reported 2 incidents each, Cases mostly family or community-based violence.

The September data point to a troubling link between poverty, migration, and family stress as key drivers of child exploitation and abuse. Shifting family structures continue to heighten risks for children, especially in areas with limited protection services. In districts such as Jaffna, Batticaloa, and Nuwara Eliya, low awareness and weak safety nets further contribute to underreporting—highlighting the urgent need for stronger community-based interventions.

This newsletter summarises incidents reported by Sri Lankan media sources and does notrepresent verified or

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