



Child Abuse Incidents

Reported in Media for May 2023

This information is the result of the aggregation and verification of reported cases of violence against children in the media for the month of May 2023. Since January 2023, we have been sharing similar information in the form of a monthly newsletter with a range of stakeholders. We believe that sharing the information with a wider audience is to everyone's benefit.

During the month of May 2023, 105 incidents of child abuse were reported in the media, involving a total of 145 child victims in Sri Lanka.

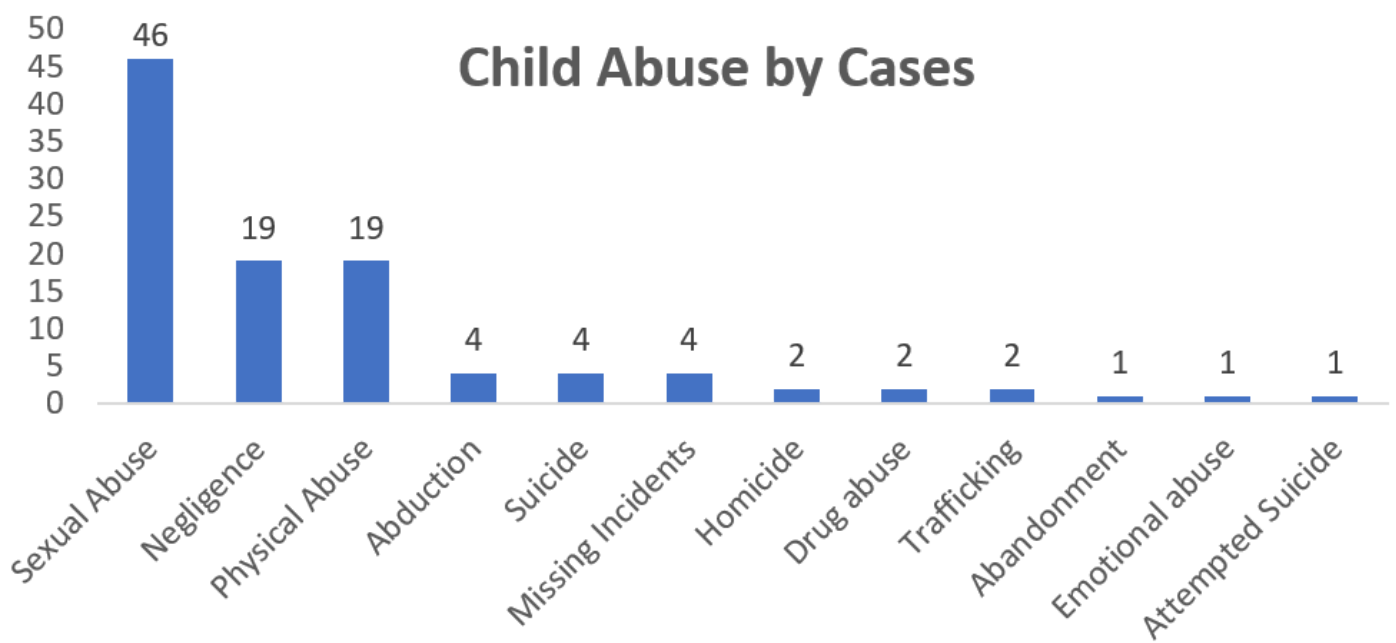
68% of victims were female, while 32% were male. 29% of the abusers were found to be acquaintances of the child but not related to them. 28% of the perpetrators were members of the child's family.

At 11%, Colombo and Gampaha districts had the highest reported rate of child abuse, followed closely by Kalutara district at 10%. The most reported victims were from Kalutara, with 32 victims, followed by 25 from Gampaha.

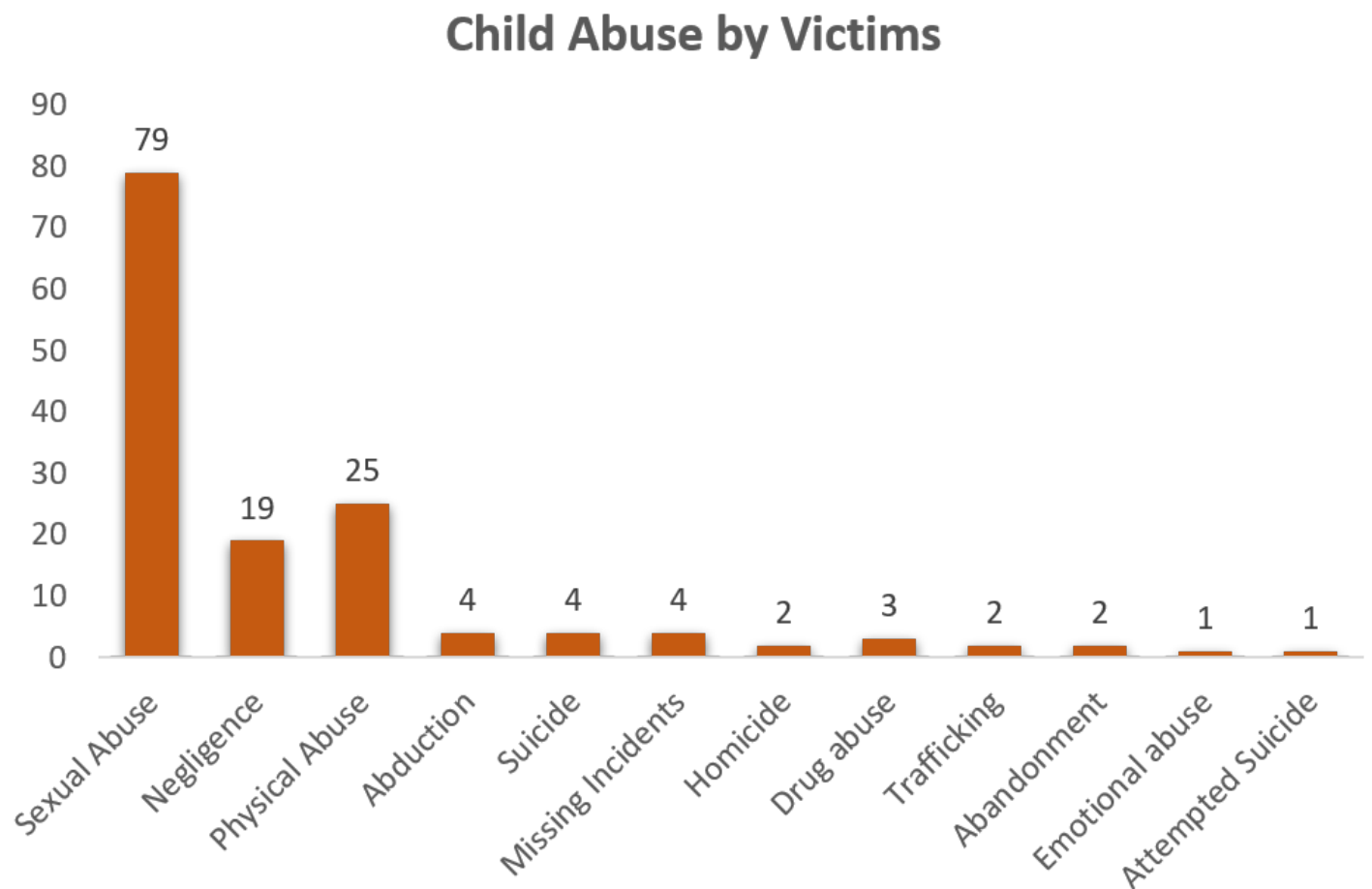
44% of the reported cases were sexual abuse violations against children, making it the highest form of abuse reported in the media. Physical abuse and neglect represented 18% of the incidents.

A trend of negligence is seen to continue by primary school caregivers. The hospitalisation of 40 school children due to suffering from food poisoning in Hikkaduwa. The previous month also had such a case with 27 primary school children in Nuwara Eliya taken to hospital due to food poisoning.

Child Abuse Categories

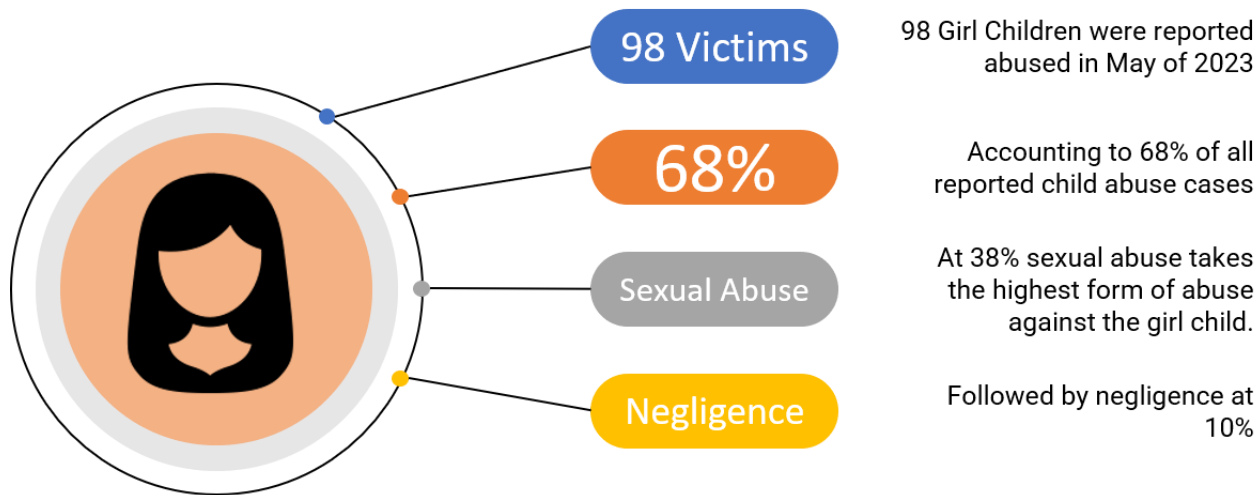


Sexual Abuse was the most prevalent form of abuse out of the 105 reported cases constituting 44% of all the cases. Neglect and physical abuse followed closely, accounting for 18% of each of the reported incidents. Four cases of abduction, missing incidents, and suicides were reported in each category. One attempted suicide was reported in the media in May.



Amongst the 145 child victims, more than half experienced sexual abuse at 54%. Physical abuse was experienced by 17%. Whilst Negligence accounted for 13% of the experienced abuses. Victims of sexual abuse, physical abuse, and negligence make up 84% of all reported cases.

Victims by Gender

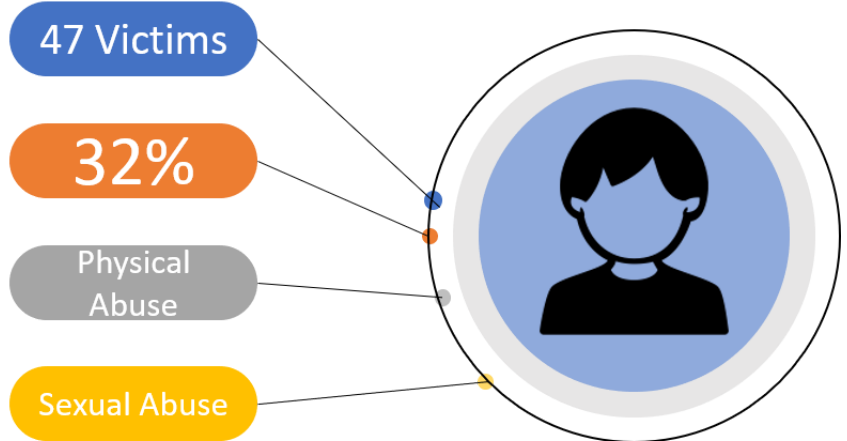


47 Boy Children were reported abused in May of 2023

Accounting to 32% of all reported child abuse cases

At 38% physical abuse takes the highest form of abuse against the boy child.

Followed by Sexual Abuse at 21%



98 female children (68% of the victims) and 47 male children (32% of the victims) made up the total of the reported victims by the media in the month of May 2023. More than one in three girl children experienced sexual abuse (37 victims), making it the most prevalent form of violation against the girl child in May 2023. Negligence affected 10 female children. Among the boy children, the most prevalent form of violation was reported to be physical abuse, with 18 victims (38%). 10 male children were forced into sexual abuse.

Age Group of Victims

From 0 to 12 months

3 New-borns and toddlers.

2%**From 1 to 5 Years**

10 Children between 1 and 5 years

7%**From 10 to 14 Years**

41 Children between 11 and 14 years

28%**From 15 to 18 Years**

44 Children between 15 and 18 years

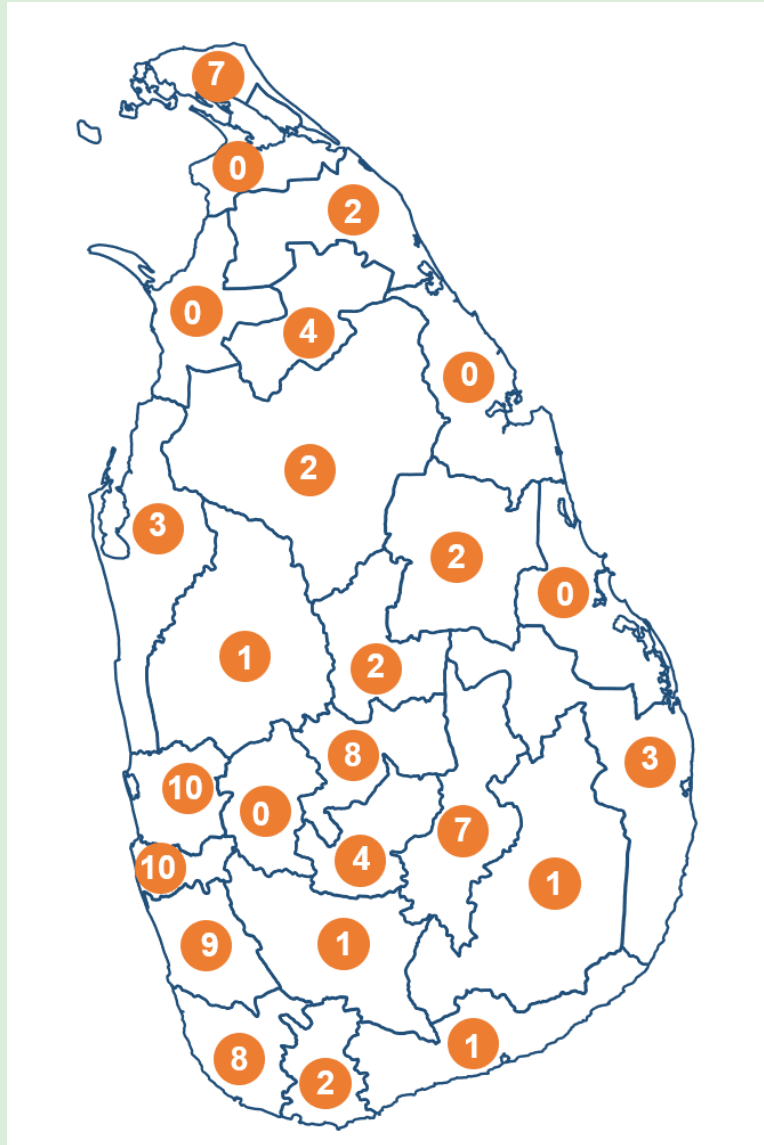
30%**Unspecified age**

36 Children's age not specified.

25%

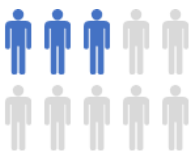
Teenagers between the ages of 15 and 18 constituted the highest victim age bracket, accounting for 30% of all reported cases. With 11 child victims in the middle childhood age range, the age group of 10 to 14-year-olds came next. The most prevalent form of violation in these age brackets was sexual abuse, at 41%, 50%, and 45%, respectively. Additionally, 10 victims aged 1–5 years and 3 infants were reported in the month of May, with negligence being the most common form of abuse. 25% of the victims fell within an unspecified age group.

Geographic Distribution



Among the districts, Colombo and Gampaha stand out with an equal reported rate of 12%, each accounting for 10 cases. Following closely, Kalutara reported a rate of 10%, representing 9 incidents. Similarly, Kandy and Galle districts recorded rates of 9%, with 8 incidents each. In contrast, districts such as Hambantota, Kurunegala, Monaragala, and Ratnapura reported the lowest rates of child abuse, with only one case reported in each respective district during the month of May.

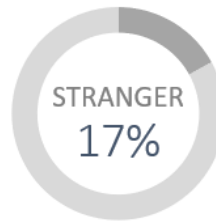
Child Abusers



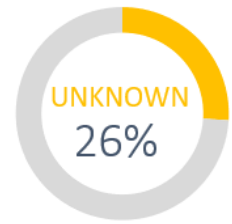
29% of perpetrators were known to the child. This is someone who's within the child's social circle. Like a school master, van driver etc.



28% of perpetrators are related to the child. This is someone who's related to the child like their parents or cousins.



17% of perpetrators are strangers to the child. This is someone the child encounters for the first time.



26% of perpetrators are Unidentified. This someone that has is completely unknown to the child.

The reported incidents of child abuse in the month of May revealed a total of 105 incidents documented in the media, involving 110 perpetrators. Among these perpetrators, 32 individuals were known to the child, while 31 were identified as relatives. The majority (57%) of abusers belonged to the child's immediate social circle. Nineteen (17%) were strangers to the child, while 28 perpetrators (26%) were unidentified.

Continued Negligence of the Most Vulnerable

In May, an alarming incident of food poisoning caused the hospitalisation of 40 innocent children. Even more concerning is that two similar occurrences transpired in April, with a total of 39 children falling victim to this illness. Evidently, there is an urgent need to take corrective measures to prevent such events in the future.



The failure of caregivers to implement essential precautionary measures, such as food testing and adhering to stringent food quality standards, is an issue. Such oversights expose children to unnecessary risks, jeopardising their health and well-being. It is imperative that the responsible institutions take immediate action and assume the necessary accountability to ensure that both private and government primary schools implement robust measures to prevent similar incidents in the future.

Safeguarding the welfare of our young and vulnerable citizens is a fundamental responsibility of the government, demanding swift and decisive action.

Broken Trust by Mathematics Teacher

In May, a 30-year-old Mathematics tutor, was arrested for sexually abusing 16 female students. The arrest came after the suspect surrendered to the Children and Women's Desk of the Kalutara Police to provide a statement. The arrest has sent shock waves through the community, shedding light on the disturbing reality that sometimes lurks behind closed doors. The wife of the suspect took a step and filed a complaint with the Kalutara North Police, alleging her husband's extramarital affairs.

Her suspicion grew when she discovered video footage on her husband's laptop, revealing the horrifying acts committed against young girls. The police acted swiftly and found 16 video recordings that captured the suspect sexually assaulting his victims. With the suspect now in custody, the focus shifts to locating the victims depicted in the recorded videos. The authorities are committed to identifying and reaching out to these girls to provide them with the support and care they desperately need. Investigations have revealed that the suspect conducted private classes on Galle Road in Kalutara North. It is suspected that the abuse may have extended beyond these classes, as the suspect also conducted sessions in small groups in other locations.

As part of the ongoing investigations, the authorities will delve into whether any of the girls attending these additional classes were also subjected to abuse by the suspect. This incident calls for a collective response from society, urging us to address the issue of child abuse more effectively. It serves as a reminder that the safety and well-being of our children should always be a top priority. The incident also highlights the crucial role that parents and guardians play in being vigilant about the activities and interactions of their children, both online and offline. By promoting open dialogue, education and awareness, we can work towards creating a safer environment for our young ones.



PEaCE (Protecting Environment and Children Everywhere)
ECPAT Sri Lanka
39/4 Jayasinghe Road
Colombo 00600
Sri Lanka