



## Child Abuse Incidents

### Reported in Media for July 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 July 2023. Since January 2023, PEACE/ECPAT Sri Lanka 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.

In July 2023, Sri Lanka witnessed 90 incidents involving 107 perpetrators and 108 victims of child abuse reported in the media.

Among these cases, 57% affected female children, 40% impacted male children, and the remaining 3% were unspecified in gender.

The highest affected age group was teenagers aged 15-18 years, accounting for 36% of the total incidents.

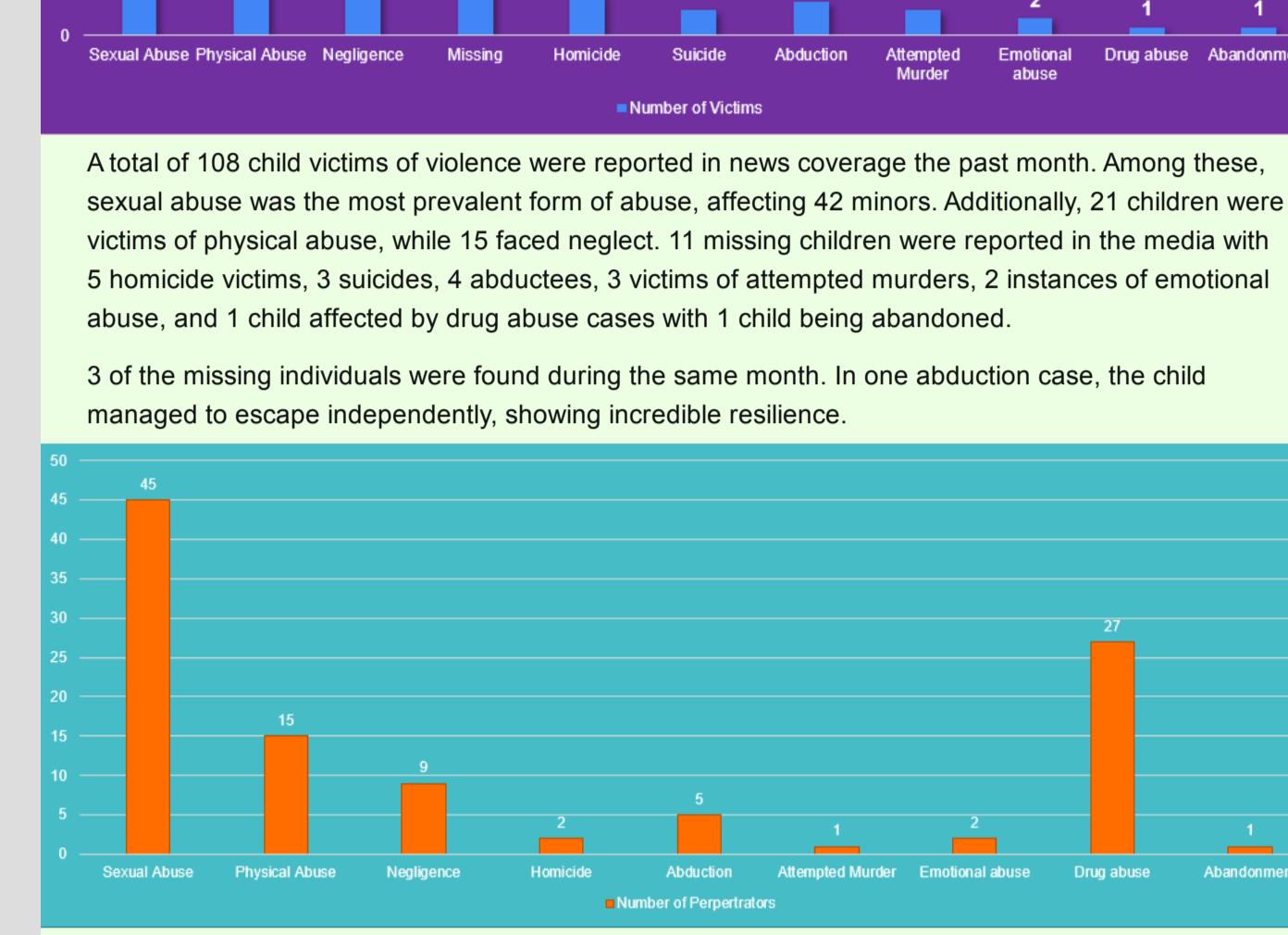
Kurunegala emerged with the highest number of reported cases, accounting for 14% of the total reported cases.

In our observation, we noted several critical cases

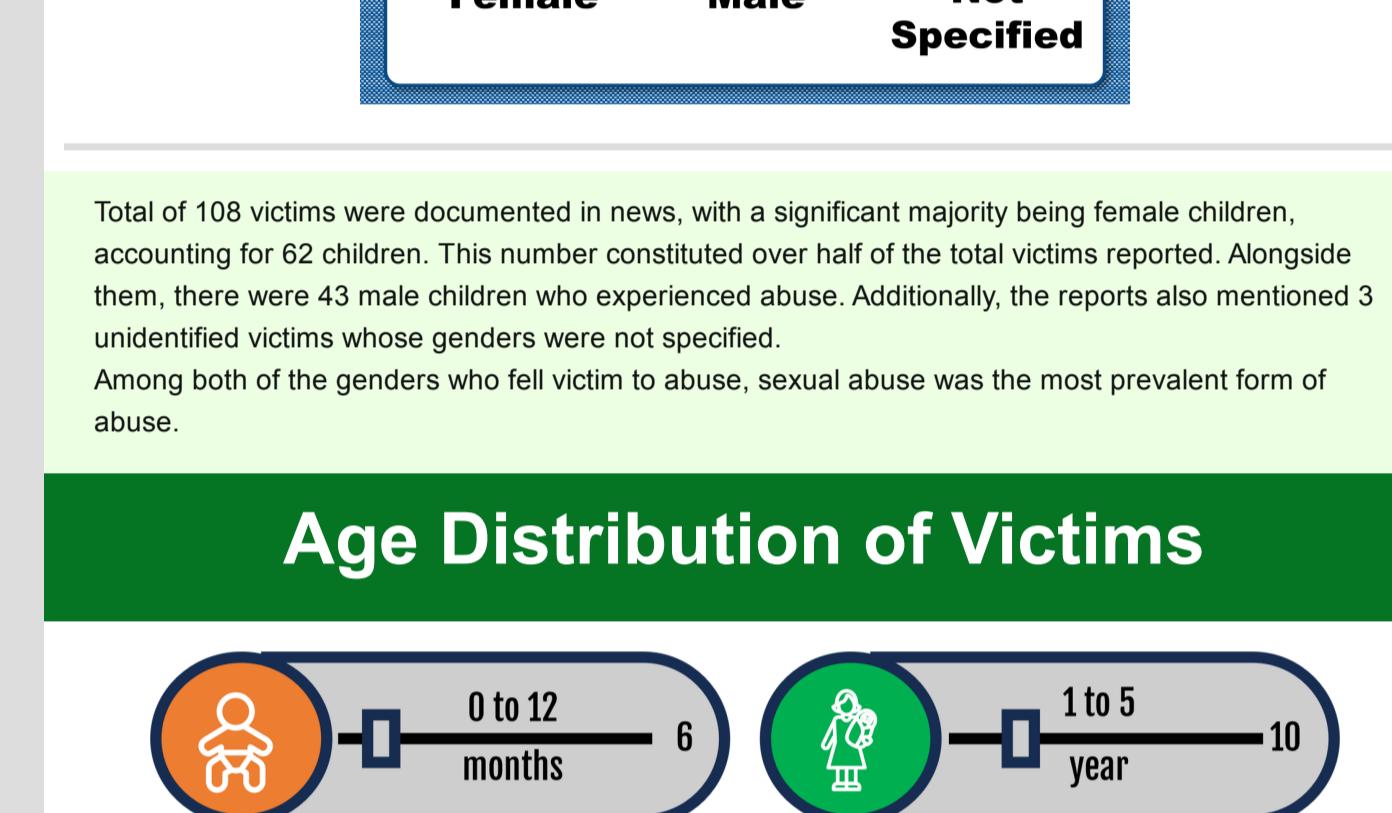
- Drug dealers targeting school children
- A significant number of child suicides
- Monks sexually abusing children
- Sexual exploitation of school boys
- Fathers sexually abusing children
- Physical violence by school teachers and principals against students
- Several accidents impacting children

Keep reading to find out more.

### Categories of Child Abuse

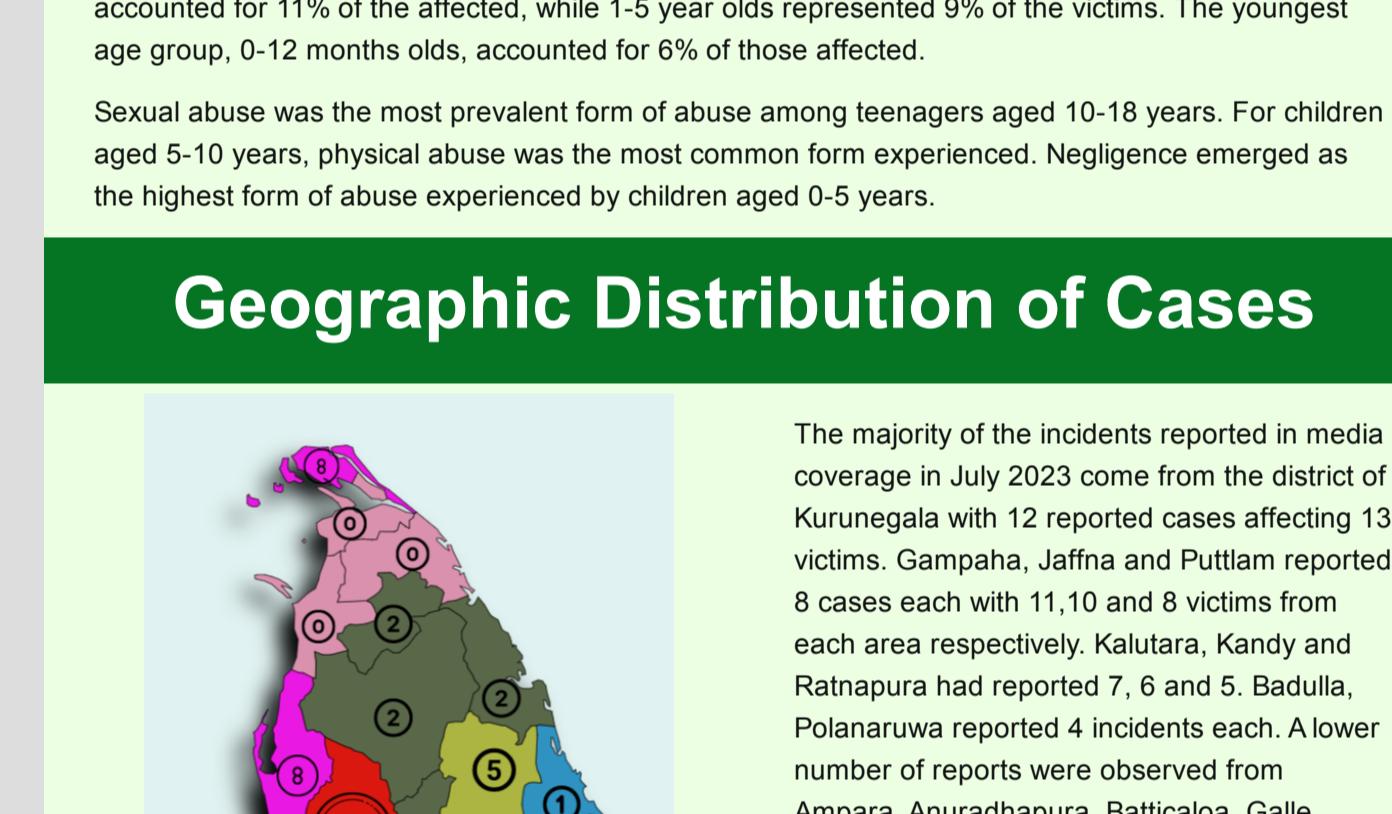


In the month of July 2023, 90 reported abuse incidents against children were observed in the media. Among these instances, sexual abuse accounted for 31 occurrences, representing more than one-third of the violence experienced. Additionally, there were 16 cases of physical abuse and 14 cases of negligence reported. Combined, these three types of abuse make up nearly 70% of the total reported cases against children in July 2023. It is noted that there has been an increase in reports of missing children (7 cases) and abduction (5 cases) compared to the previous months. One incident of sexual abuse was paired with abduction. There were a total of 5 homicides, with 2 of them being death by hanging. There were 3 suicides and 2 attempted murders. The media also reported 3 cases of drug abuse and a single case of child abandonment.



A total of 108 child victims of violence were reported in news coverage the past month. Among these, sexual abuse was the most prevalent form of abuse, affecting 42 minors. Additionally, 21 children were victims of physical abuse, while 15 faced neglect. 11 missing children were reported in the media with 5 homicide victims, 3 suicides, 4 abductions, 3 victims of attempted murders, 2 instances of emotional abuse, and 1 child affected by drug abuse cases with 1 child being abandoned.

3 of the missing individuals were found during the same month. In one abduction case, the child managed to escape independently, showing incredible resilience.



Reported media revealed 107 individuals as perpetrators in cases involving children. Of these, 45 were accountable for sexual abuse, 15 were found responsible for physical abuse, and 9 adults responsible for negligence. The month also witnessed 2 attempts of homicides, 5 abductors, 1 attempted murderer, 2 emotional abusers, and 1 case of an abandoning parent. Furthermore, the media reported 27 individuals engaged in drug trafficking during July. Notably, a single police operation resulted in the apprehension of 21 drug traffickers who targeted school children.

Note: Some of the cases in consideration had multiple victims and some had multiple perpetrators.

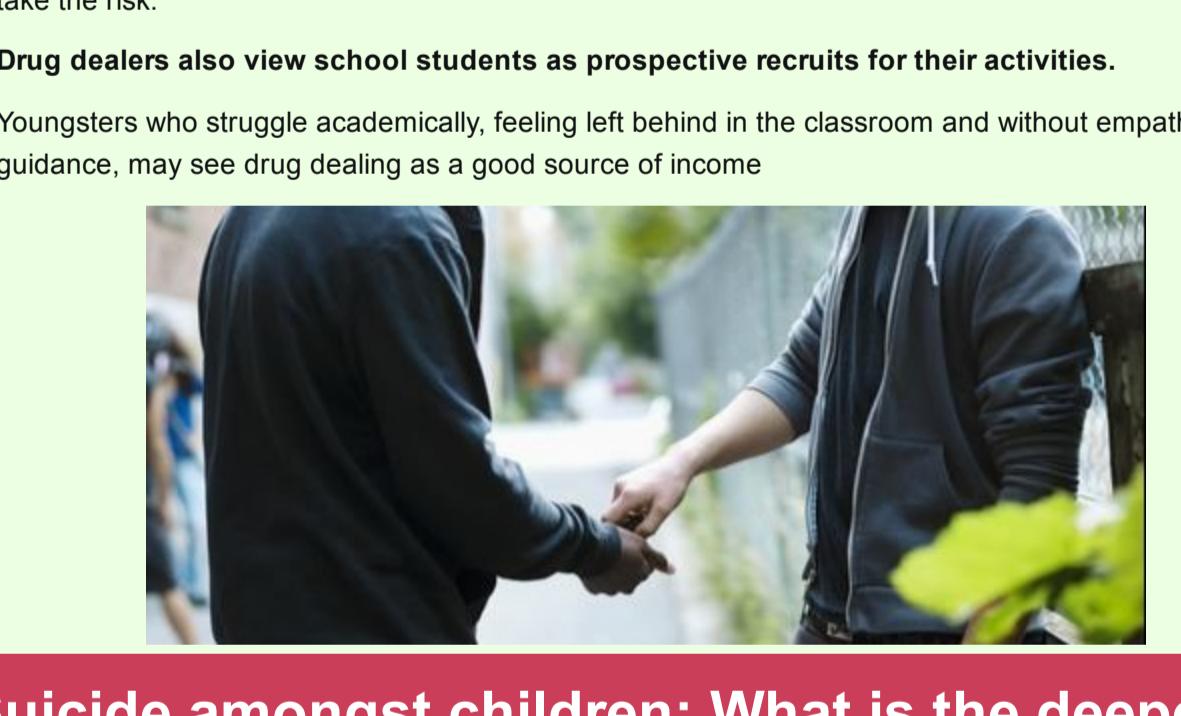
### Gender Distribution of Victims



Total of 108 victims were documented in news, with a significant majority being female children, accounting for 62 children. This number constituted over half of the total victims reported. Alongside them, there were 43 male children who experienced abuse. Additionally, the reports also mentioned 3 unidentified victims whose genders were not specified.

Among both of the genders who fell victim to abuse, sexual abuse was the most prevalent form of abuse.

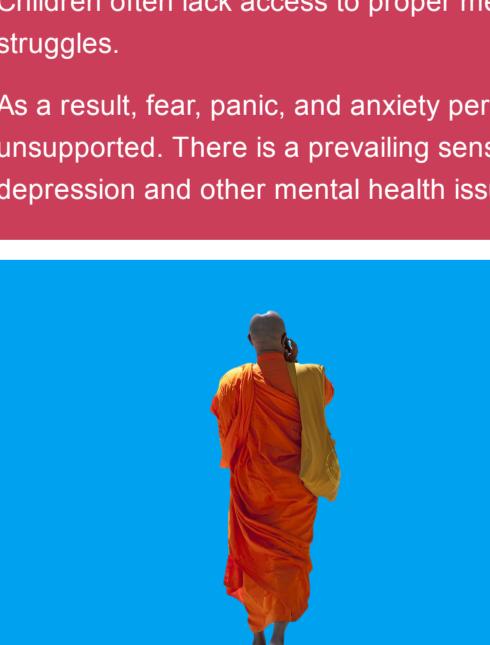
### Age Distribution of Victims



Teenagers (15-18) comprise the highest age group affected by violent acts against children in the reported media, accounting for 37% of the victims in the month of July 2023. Following closely are children aged 10-15, with 28% being affected by acts of violence. The age group 6-10 year olds accounted for 11% of the affected, while 1-5 year olds represented 9% of the victims. The youngest age group, 0-12 months olds, accounted for 6% of those affected.

Sexual abuse was the most prevalent form of abuse among teenagers aged 10-18 years. For children aged 6-10 years, physical abuse was the most common form experienced. Negligence emerged as the highest form of abuse experienced by children aged 0-5 years.

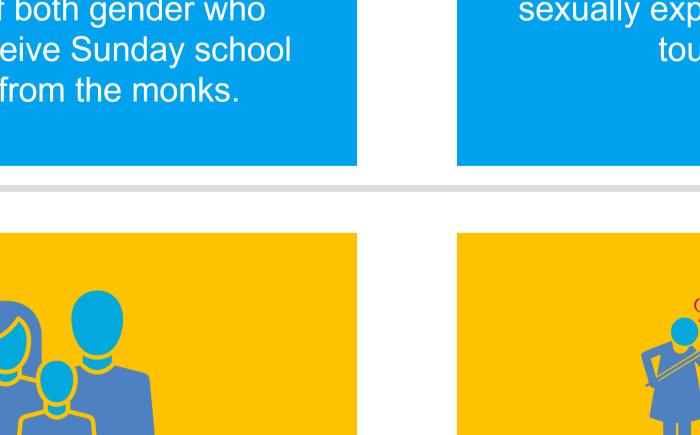
### Geographic Distribution of Cases



The majority of the incidents reported in media coverage in July 2023 come from the district of Kurunegala with 12 reported cases affecting 13 victims. Gampaha, Jaffna and Puttalam reported 8 cases each with 11, 10 and 8 victims from each area respectively. Kalutara, Kandy and Ratnapura had reported 7, 6 and 5. Badulla, Polanaruwa reported 4 incidents each. A lower number of reports were observed from Ampara, Anuradhapura, Batticaloa, Galle, Matale, Matara, Monaragala, Nuwara Eliya, Trincomalee and Vavuniya. Zero reports were observed from Kilinochchi, Mullaitivu, Mannar, Kegalle, and Hambantota.

The highest density of victims were reported from the Western Province at 30 victims.

### Abusers Relation to Victims



A total of 90 cases were covered by the press, involving 107 perpetrators. Notably, 46% of these perpetrators were individuals directly known to the child victims. Another 21% were identified as family members. Additionally, 9% of the perpetrators were strangers to the child, and 24% were noted as unidentified.

### Accidents Involving Children

In the month of July 2023, media reports brought to light a total of 17 accidents, impacting 31 young lives.

Among these accidents, 8 precious lives were lost in drowning incidents, while 7 young souls met their unfortunate fate in road accidents.

Additionally, a wasp attack left 16 students injured.



### Critical Cases

#### Drug Dealers Target School Children

In recent times, the police arrested 22 drug dealers in 2 cases specifically targeting school children. In

July 2023, one suspect was arrested in Badulla with a staggering 1793 drug capsules, while the other 21 were rounded off in Matale. This trend has persisted since June when 4 suspects were arrested for similar offenses.

This trend sheds light on several crucial factors.

**Drug dealers view school pupils as easy targets due to their vulnerability and susceptibility.**

The allure of a potentially long-lasting and profitable customer base makes drug traffickers willing to take the risk.

**Drug dealers also view school students as prospective recruits for their activities.**

Young students, especially those in the classroom and without adult guidance, may see drug dealing as a good source of income.

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#### Monks Abuse Children Sexually

7 child victims in 4 cases. The

monks were at times novice

children of both gender who

came from the Sunday schools.

#### Sexually Exploited Boys

Incident occurred in Kalutara

involving 4 who were repeatedly

sexually exploiting the boys at a

tourist resort.

#### Fathers Sexually Abusing Children in the Absence of Mother

The fathers sexually abused their

children who had gone to work

abroad.

#### Violence against Students by Teachers

Five cases and principals who

assaulted five students, causing

physical harm to the students

in the month of July 2023.

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