



Child Abuse Incidents Reported in Media for August 2023

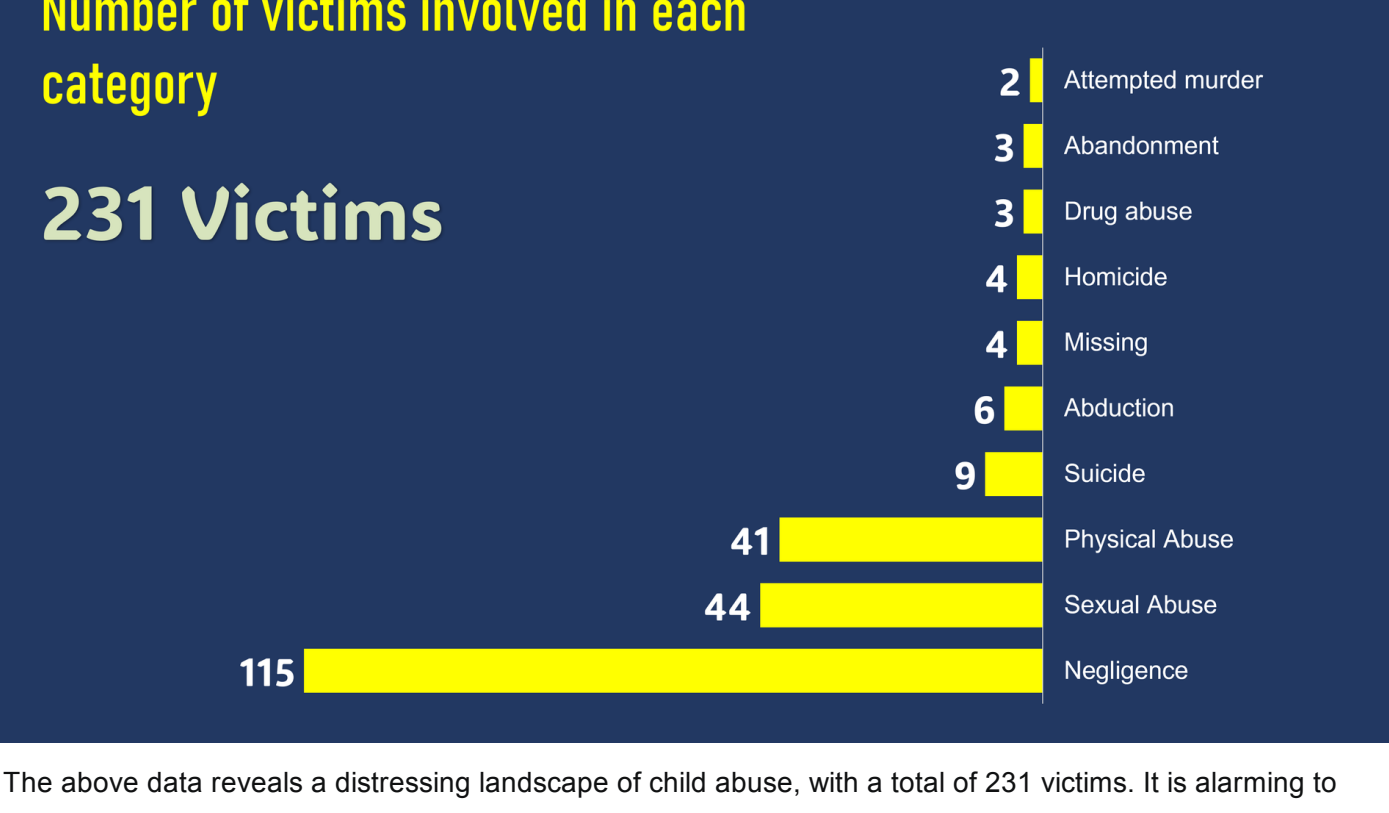
This information is the result of the aggregation and verification of reported cases of violence against children in the media for the month of August 2023. Since January 2023, PEaCE/ECPAT Sri Lanka has been sharing similar information in the form of a monthly newsletter with a range of stakeholders.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

The reported cases of child abuse in August 2023 are concerning, with a total of 112 cases being reported. What is even more distressing is the fact that a staggering 231 children were affected in these cases. Of the direct victims, 75 were female and 35 were male. It is disheartening to see that in 90 percent of these cases, the perpetrators were either relatives or known to the victims. This highlights the importance of educating children and their families about the signs of abuse and the need to report any suspicious behaviour. The district of Gampaha had the highest number of reported abuse cases, accounting for 15 percent of the total. In another unfortunate incident, a fire in a factory located near three schools resulted in 102 children being hospitalised due to inhaling toxic fumes.

Child Abuse Categories

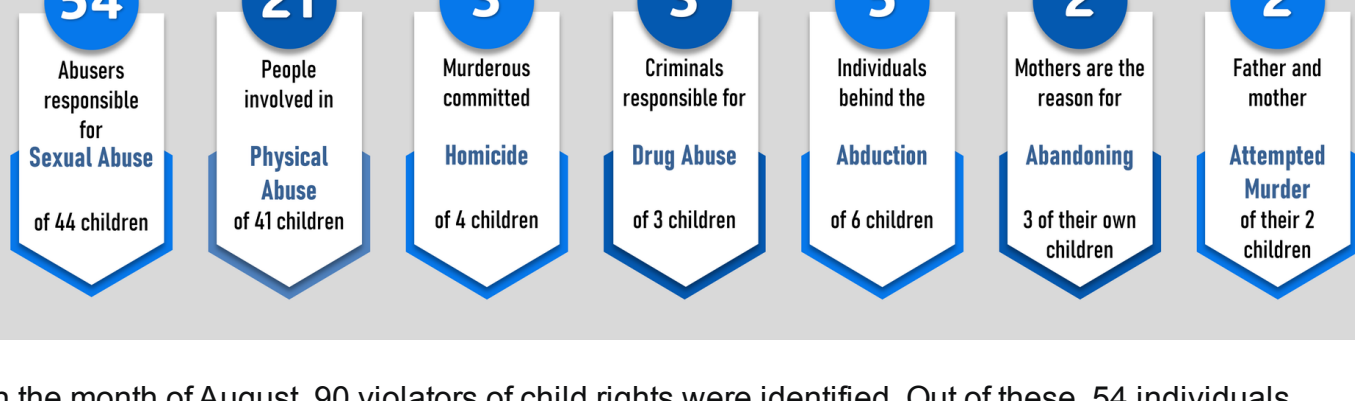


In August, a total of 112 incidents of child abuse were reported in the media. The most prevalent forms of abuse were sexual abuse, with 44 reported incidents; physical abuse, with 23 reported incidents; and neglect, with 14 cases. These three forms of abuse accounted for over 75 percent of the total incidents reported, highlighting the alarming extent of violence and harm that children are facing in our society. Additionally, there were 9 reported cases of suicide among children, indicating a lack of proper care and attention given to their mental well-being. Homicide and missing were reported 4 times while abandonment, and drug abuse each accounted for 3 incidents and 2 attempted murder. These figures underscore the urgent need for effective measures to protect and support children, ensuring their safety and well-being.



The above data reveals a distressing landscape of child abuse, with a total of 231 victims. It is alarming to see such a high number of victims across various forms of abuse. Among the most prominent and disturbing types are sexual abuse, with 44 victims, and physical abuse, with 41 victims. These numbers highlight the blatant violation of children's rights and their vulnerability to harm from trusted individuals. Additionally, the high number of victims affected by negligence, which amounted to 115 due to an unexpected fire in a factory where children were forced to inhale toxic fumes. The fact that 9 children committed suicide is a deeply concerning matter. The inclusion of other abuses, such as attempted murder, abandonment, drug abuse, homicide, missing and abduction, further accentuates the gravity of the situation.

The number of individuals responsible for the abuse of children falls into each category



In the month of August, 90 violators of child rights were identified. Out of these, 54 individuals were responsible for sexually abusing 44 innocent children, while 21 cases of physical assault affected 41 children. Additionally, there were 3 murderers who were responsible for the killing of 4 child victims, and 3 criminals were apprehended for involving 3 children in illicit substance abuse.

Gender distribution of victims



According to the statistics, there have been a total of 231 child victims of violence. Out of this total, 32 percent are female children, while 15 percent are male children. Children who have experienced acts of violence make up the remaining 52 percent victims, both male and female.

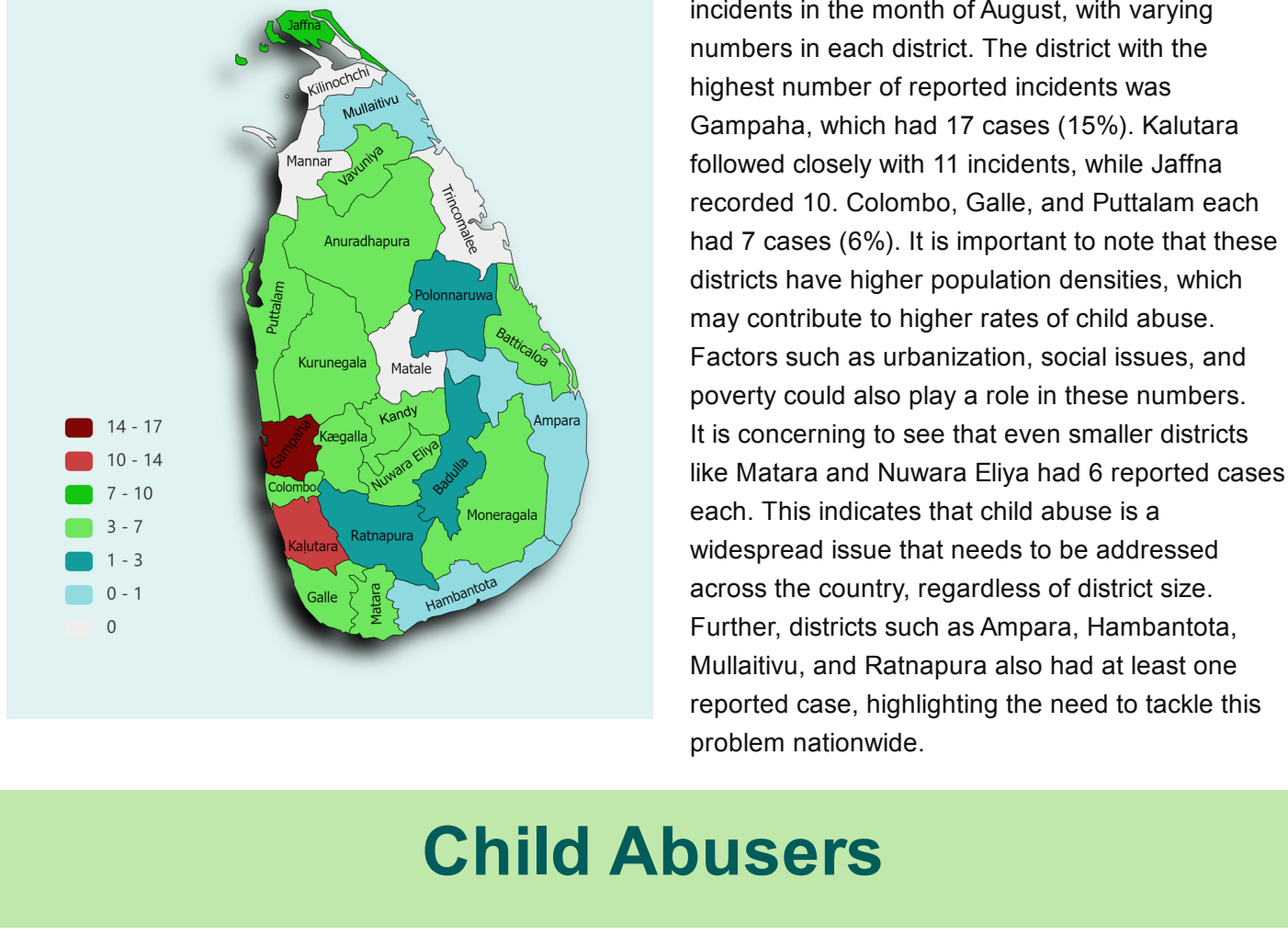
Age breakdown of the victims at the time of the abuse



A large number of children's ages were not specified due to the hospitalisation of 102 children. This was a result of inhaling toxic fumes from a fire that broke out inside a factory in the Kandana area.

According to the numbers provided, the majority of the victims are between the ages of 15 and 18 years, accounting for 42 individuals. The next largest group of victims are between the ages of 11 and 14, with 27 reported incidents. Children between the ages of 6 and 10 years also make up a significant portion, with 19 reported incidents. Interestingly, the age groups of 1 to 5 years and infants under 1 year old both have 8 reported incidents each. Among the victims, there were 5 newborns. Out of the five, two were murdered, and one was abandoned by their parents. These statistics highlight the alarming prevalence of child abuse across various age groups, emphasising the need for effective prevention and protection strategies to safeguard the well-being of children at all stages of their development. Additionally, the high number of unspecified cases suggests the possibility of under reporting or difficulty in accurately determining the ages of some victims.

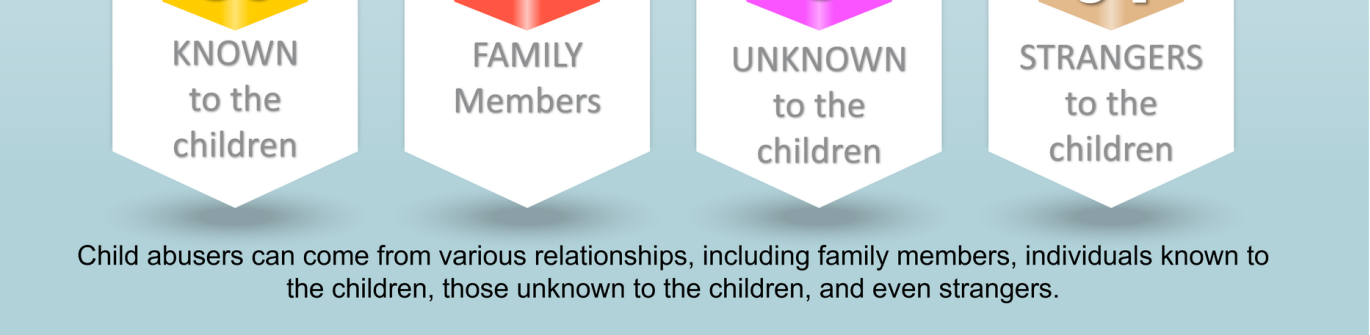
Geographic Distribution



The media reported a total of 112 child abuse incidents in the month of August, with varying numbers in each district. The district with the highest number of reported incidents was Gampaha, which had 17 cases (15%). Kalutara followed closely with 11 incidents, while Jaffna recorded 10. Colombo, Galle, and Puttalam each had 7 cases (6%). It is important to note that these districts have higher population densities, which may contribute to higher rates of child abuse. Factors such as urbanization, social issues, and poverty could also play a role in these numbers. It is concerning to see that even smaller districts like Matara and Nuwara Eliya had 6 reported cases each. This indicates that child abuse is a widespread issue that needs to be addressed across the country, regardless of district size. Further, districts such as Ampara, Hambantota, Mullaitivu, and Ratnapura also had at least one reported case, highlighting the need to tackle this problem nationwide.

Child Abusers

Relationship between the abuser and the victim while the abuse was happening



Child abusers can come from various relationships, including family members, individuals known to the children, those unknown to the children, and even strangers.

In the majority of cases, child abusers are known to their victims. As per the media reports of August 2023, approximately 42 percent of child abusers are acquaintances or individuals known to the children, while 30 percent are relatives or family members. However, it is alarming to note that 24 percent of child abusers are unknown to the children, 4 percent of child abusers are complete strangers to the victims. These statistics highlight the importance of educating children about personal safety and implementing measures to protect them from potential harm, both from known and unknown individuals.

Critical Cases

Mother forces her daughter into prostitution.

A mother of four was accused of inviting men to her home, charging them Rs. 2,000 per person and forcing her daughter to have sex with them. It was revealed during the police investigation that the daughter of the family had been subjected to sexual exploitation within her own home.



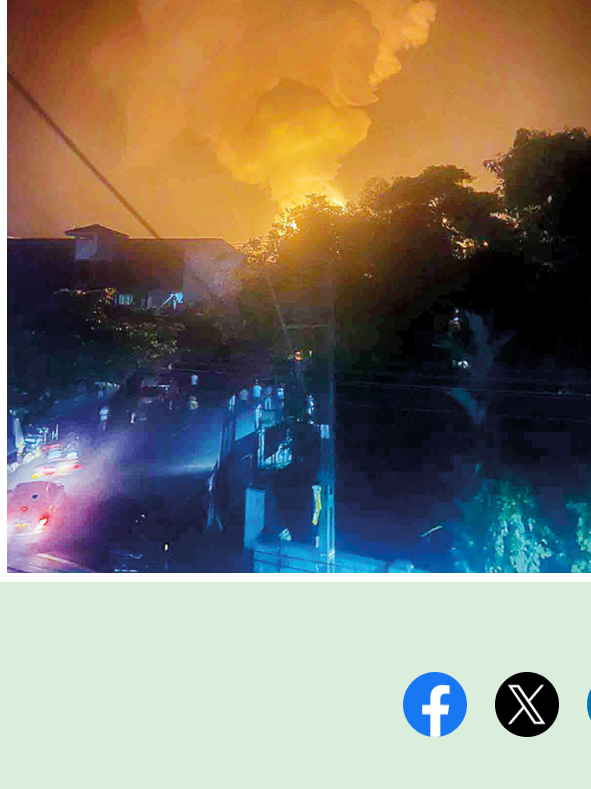
Accidents involving children

During the month of August, a total of 26 child-related accidents were reported in the media, involving 43 children. Tragically, these incidents resulted in the loss of 23 young lives.

The accidents are categorised as follows:



- Road accidents: 8 cases
- Drowning incidents: 5 fatalities
- Falls into unsafe wells: 4 fatalities
- Lightning electrocution: 2 fatalities
- Snake bites: 2 occurrences
- Building accidents: 2 incidents
- Falling off a cliff while fleeing from bees: 1 case
- Train accident: 1 fatality.



102 students were hospitalised after toxic smoke inhalation

Over a hundred students were hospitalised on August 8 after inhaling toxic smoke from a fire that broke out at a chemical factory in Kandana. The smoke spread across a wide area surrounding the factory, causing several students from three nearby schools to become ill from smoke inhalation. Reports indicate that students from St. Sebastian's Balika Maha Vidyalaya, St. Sebastian Girls' Primary School, and St. Sebastian's Boys Primary College were admitted to the Colombo North Teaching Hospital in Ragama.