

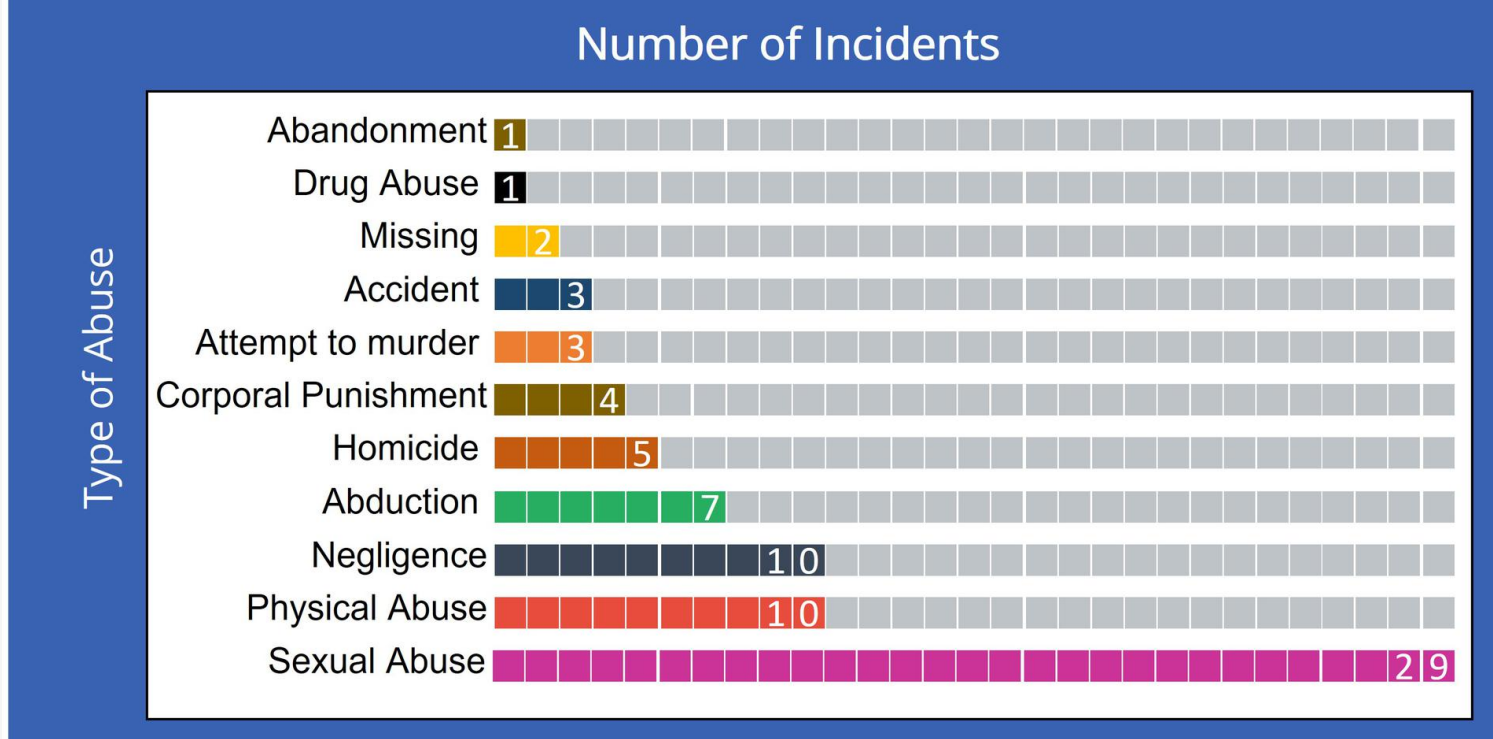


Child Abuse Incidents

Reported in Media for March 2023

In March 2023, we saw a sharp increase in violence against children, with 75 incidents of abuse reported in the media, compared to 53 in February. Of the 89 children identified as victims of these 75 incidents, 53 were female. The majority of the 81 abusers were either relatives of the victims or known to the victims. The incidents occurred in 21 different districts. Sexual abuse continues to be the leading form of violence against children. In light of this disturbing trend, immediate measures must be taken to curb such crimes against children and provide necessary protection and support for victims. During this month we also observed that the Balapitiya High Court has sentenced a former principal to 30 years in prison and a fine of one hundred thousand rupees for abusing a child 19 years ago.

Child Abuse Categories

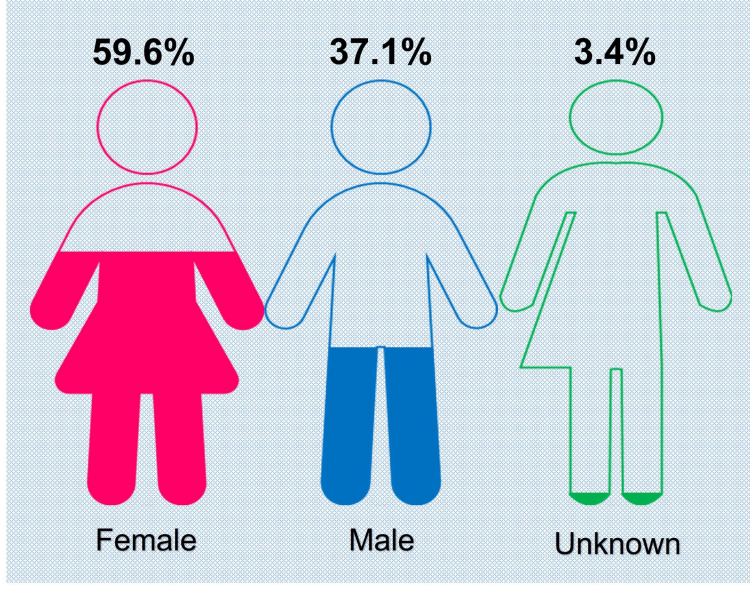


The data provided shows that child abuse incidents committed in March 2023 were high in number. Sexual abuse accounted highest at 38.7% of the incidents, with negligence and physical abuse coming in at 13.3% each. Homicide and abduction were also significant with 5 and 7 cases respectively. There were comparatively fewer instances of corporal punishment, attempted murder, drug abuse and missing children. From the data, it is evident that sexual abuse is the leading types of child abuse. Sexual abuse have a major impact on children's physical and mental health. It is important for the duty bearers including communities to take concrete measures to curb all types of abuses.



There were 89 victims involved in the 75 child abuse incidents that were reported in the media in March. 36% of them experience sexual abuse. The next highest number of victims was from 10 incidents of physical abuse, with 19 victims (21.3%), which is a much higher percentage. Negligence has 10 victims or 11.2% of the total victims. 7.9% of victims were abducted, and 5.6% were killed. Overall, the data show that sexual abuse and physical abuse are the two most prevalent types of child abuse, accounting for almost 60% of reported incidents.

Victims by Gender



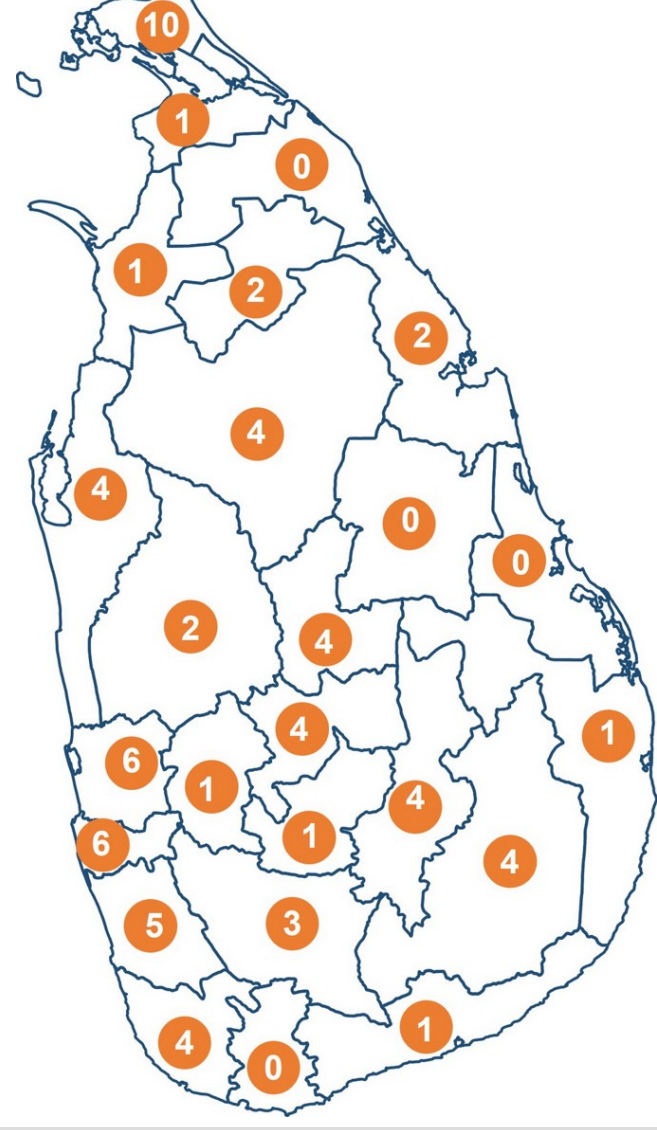
The data provided by the media monitoring team shows that out of the total 89 reported victims, 59.6% were female, 37.1% were male, and 3.4% were unknown. This suggests that girls are more vulnerable to abuse than boys, with a significantly higher number of female victims. Furthermore, the data reveals that sexual abuse is the most common type of abuse reported, with 35% of the total reported cases being sexual abuse. Out of the 25 victims who reported sexual abuse, 84% were female and 16% were male. This highlights the disproportionately higher incidence of sexual abuse towards females. However, it is important to note that male victims also suffer abuse, with physical abuse being the most common type reported, accounting for 42% of the total reported cases. Out of the 15 victims who reported physical abuse, 66.7% were male.

Age Group of Victims



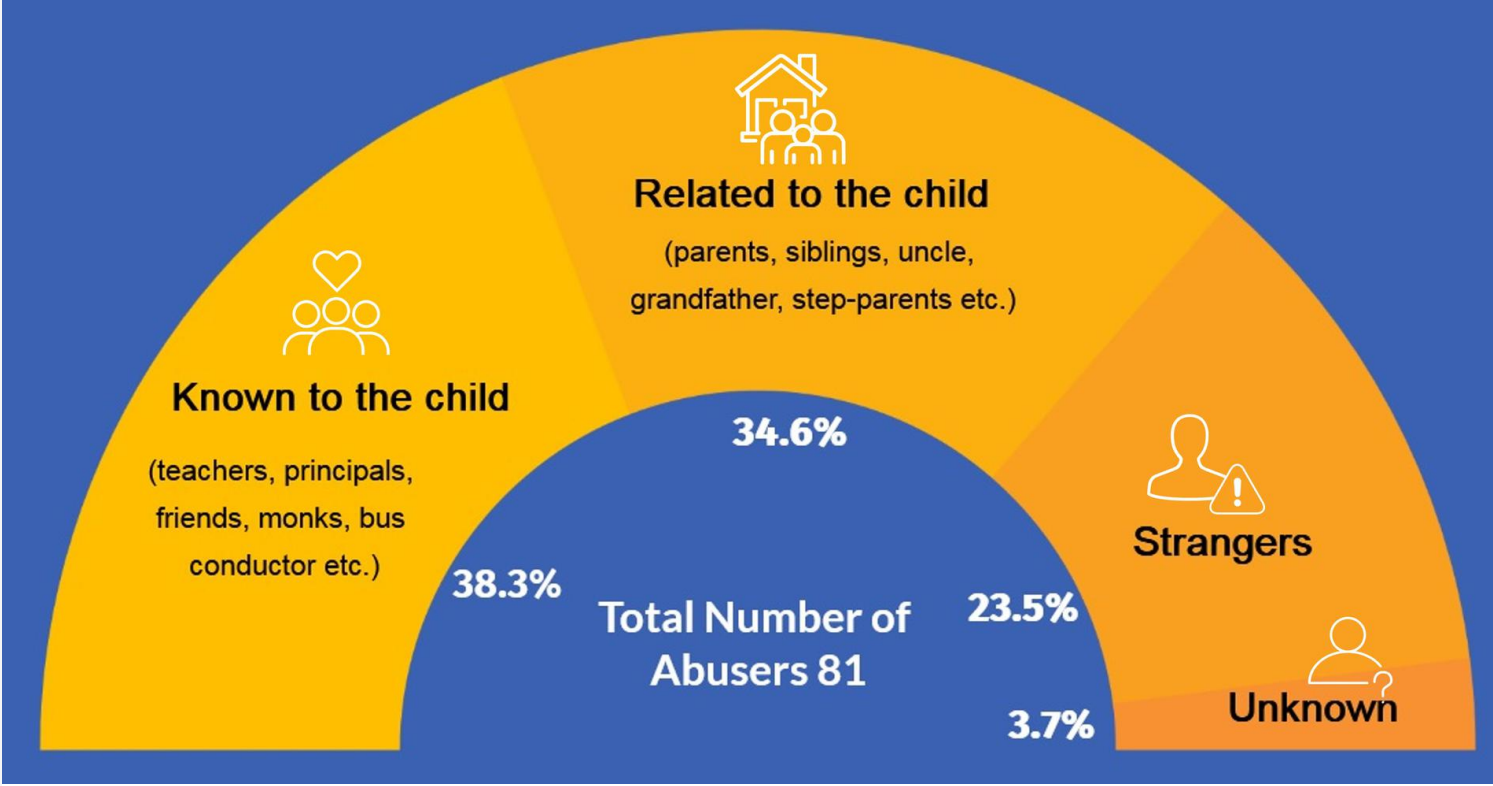
According to the data, children between the ages of 15 and 18 account for 33.7% of all victims of child abuse, making them the age group most likely to experience it. Sexual abuse is more common in this age group. The next age range, comprising 21.3% of the victims, is between 11 and 14 years old. They are mainly subject to physical abuse. 18% of the victims is aged 6 to 10, while 8% is under the age of 5. Infants and toddlers under the age of one make up 6% of all children. The remaining 13% are unspecified age groups.

Geographic Distribution



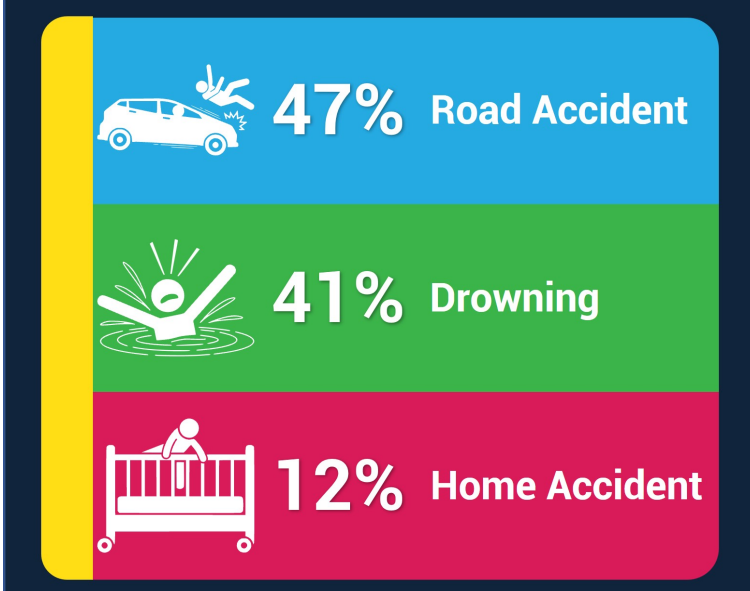
This data shows that Jaffna is the district with the highest reported rate of child abuse, at 14%. Colombo and Gampaha districts have the next highest rates, at 9%. Kalutara and Galle have the third highest rate, at 7% and 6%, respectively. The remaining districts have a rate of 6% or lower, with the lowest rate being 0%. These figures suggest that child abuse is most prevalent in the northern part of Sri Lanka, with Jaffna having the highest rate. It is important to note that the data only shows reported cases of child abuse and not actual cases. In many areas, child abuse is still under reported due to a lack of awareness and understanding of the issue. Additionally, many cases of child abuse go unreported due to fear or shame. It is essential that more efforts are made to increase awareness of the issue and ensure that victims feel comfortable reporting abusive situations. Overall, the data shows that child abuse is an issue that needs to be addressed in all parts of the country. It is important to note that some areas are more affected than others, such as Jaffna. It is essential that efforts are made to improve the reporting of cases and seek assistance for the victims.

Child Abusers



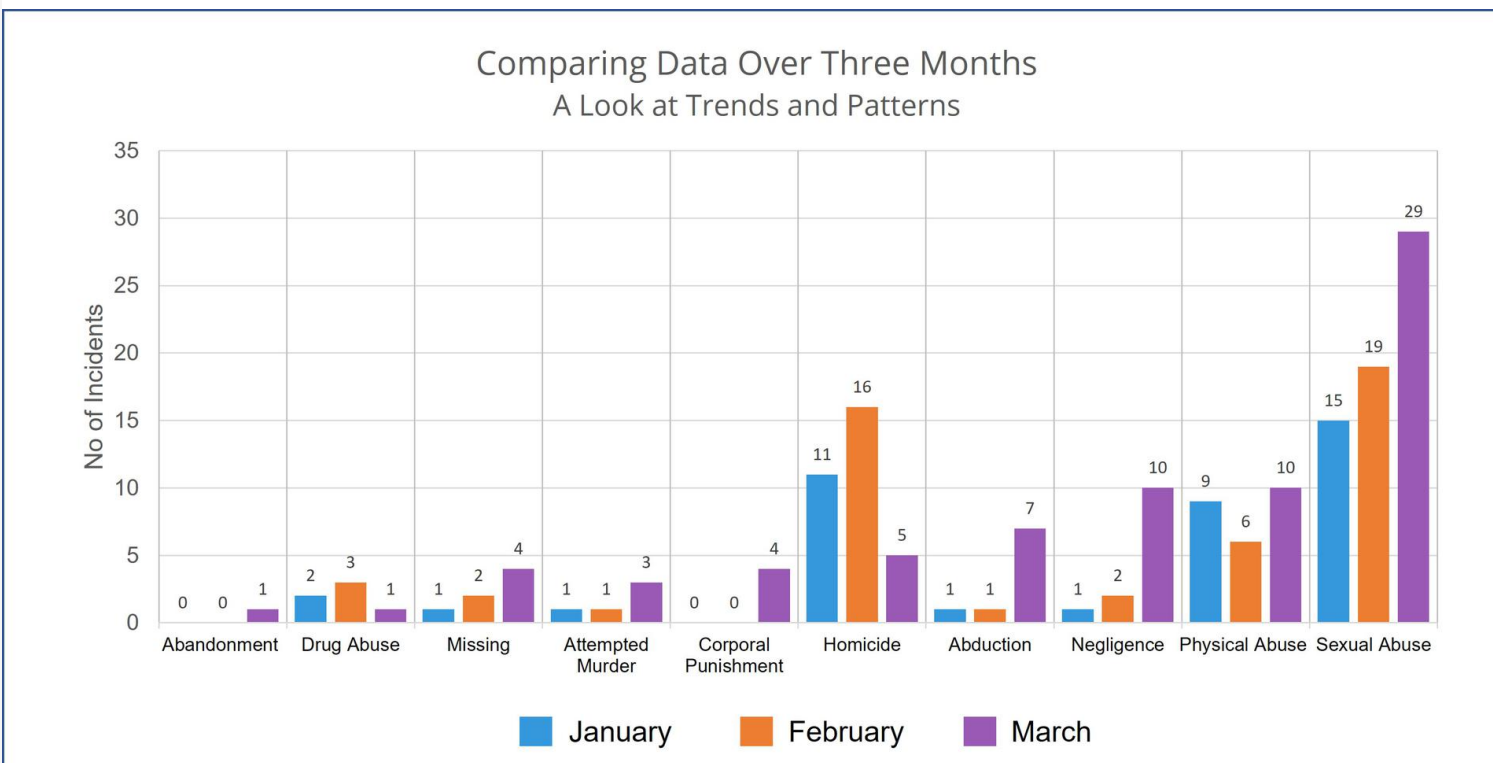
This analysis is based on the reported incidents of child abuse in the month of March. The total number of incidents reported in the media was 75, with 81 perpetrators involved. Of those perpetrators, 28 were related to the family of the victim, 31 were not related but close to the victim or the family, 19 were strangers, and 3 were unknown. From this data, we can see that the majority of abusers (73%) of child abuse are those who are close to the victim, whether they are related or not. This is concerning, as it implies that children may be more at risk of abuse when they are in close proximity to their abuser. It also indicates that in the vast majority of cases, the perpetrator is someone known to the victim, which could make it more difficult for the victim to report the abuse. The fact that 22 (27.2%) of the abusers were strangers and unknown to the child is also a cause for concern.

Child Deaths in Accidents



Child abuse is any action, whether intentional or unintentional, that threatens or impedes a child's physical or emotional development. This definition does, however, make a distinction between abuse and accidents that kill a child or result in injury, damage, or loss. This section covers tragic accidents related to the deaths of children. In March, the media reported that there were 17 child deaths due to various accidents. The primary cause of death was traffic accidents, which resulted in 8 fatalities, closely followed by drowning with 7 fatalities. There was also one death from electrocution and one death from a home accident. The death of a 7-month-old female infant who died after becoming trapped in a wooden fence surrounding a bed is the saddest news of all the tragic deaths. An 18-year-old boy also died from electrocution. These tragic deaths remind us of the value of protecting children and providing them with adequate supervision.

Incidents of Child Abuse in the Past Three Months



This comparison examines the coverage of child abuse in the news in the months of January, February, and March of 2023. This shows a worrying trend of rising abuse. The data shows that sexual abuse incidents increased the most in March, with 29 incidents reported, compared to 15 cases in January and 19 in February. The number of reports of physical abuse also went steadily, from 9 in January to 6 in February to 10 in March. In January, there were 11 homicides that were reported, but in February, there were 16. Sadly, the good news is that the number of cases has now dropped to 5 in March. One negligence case was reported in January, two in February, and nine incidents in March, representing a marginal increase in the number of cases. The number of reported abduction cases also sharply rose, from one in January and one in February to seven in March. Additionally, there were three cases of attempted murder reported in January, one in February, and two in March. With 1 case in January, 2 cases in February, and 2 cases in March, the number of missing children increased as well. One and two cybercrime incidents, respectively, were reported in each of the months of February and March. Additionally, two cases of drug abuse involving children were reported in January.

Justice Served After 19 Years Former Principal Receives 30 Years in Jail for Sexually Abusing a Child

The former principal of Godahena Kanitu College in Ambalangoda received a sentence of 30 years in prison and was also ordered to pay the victim Rs 100,000 by Balapitiya High Court Judge. In addition, the judge imposed a fine of Rs 15,000. The Attorney General filed this case against him under 3 charges, primarily for sexually abusing a minor girl. Prosecutors proved charges against the perpetrator beyond a reasonable doubt, but it cannot take away the trauma caused to the victim. The judgement came after 19 long years due to lengthy delays in the hearing case. Child abuse cases are increasing in Sri Lanka, leading to a nationwide crisis. Delay in justice is harmful to everyone, including victims, perpetrators, society and the judicial system, and can lead to re-victimisation and anxiety. The judicial system should ensure that children are better served and protected, and special attention should be given to victims of child abuse to ensure their mental and physical well-being. We call on the legal system to move child abuse cases along as quickly as possible. The future of the child will be negatively impacted by prolonging these cases. It is crucial that these cases are resolved as soon as possible for the victims to recover and move on with their lives. We recognise the value of due process, but it's also critical to keep in mind that children are especially defenceless and must be safeguarded.

