



Child Abuse Incidents

Reported in the Media for October 2023

This information is the result of the aggregation and verification of reported cases of violence against children in the media for October 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 this information with a wider audience is to everyone's benefit.

The Media Monitoring Team of ECPAT Sri Lanka has collected and collated information on all forms of incidents of violence against children during the month of October 2023. We gathered information on 86 such incidents by reviewing various media outlets, which fall under 11 main categories of violence against children.

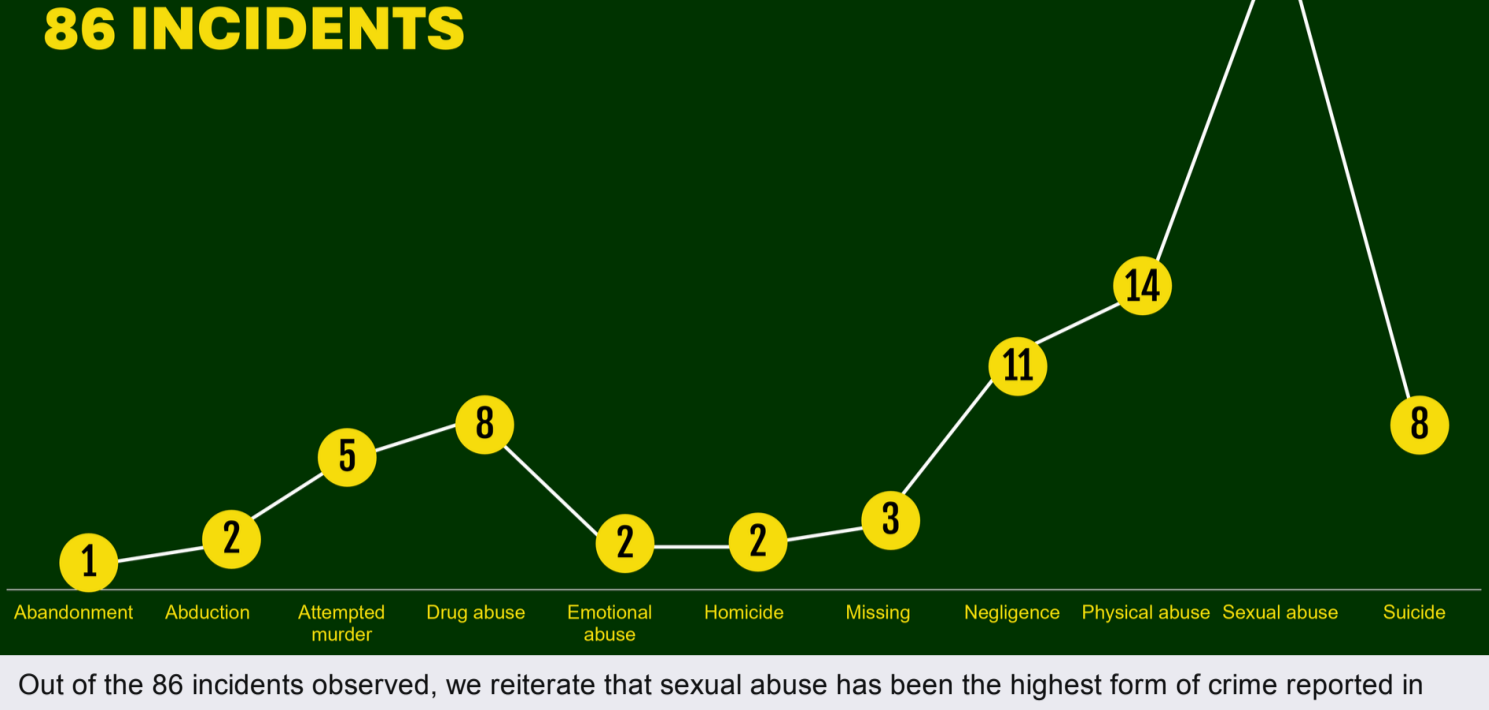
According to our data, the highest number of reported incidents are related to sexual abuse, accounting for 35% of all reported cases of violence against children in October 2023. Thirty-one individuals of the total 93 were accountable for this violation. Forty-four percent of incidents affected the female child, while 33% affected the male child. The age category of 15-18 years old was the most affected with 27 cases. Colombo reported the highest number of child abuse incidents with 10 cases. The relationship between the victim and abuser was not available in 30% of the cases.

For more in-depth analysis of the processed data, please continue reading.

Child Abuse Categories

TYPES OF CHILD ABUSE INCIDENTS REPORTED BY MEDIA IN OCTOBER 2023

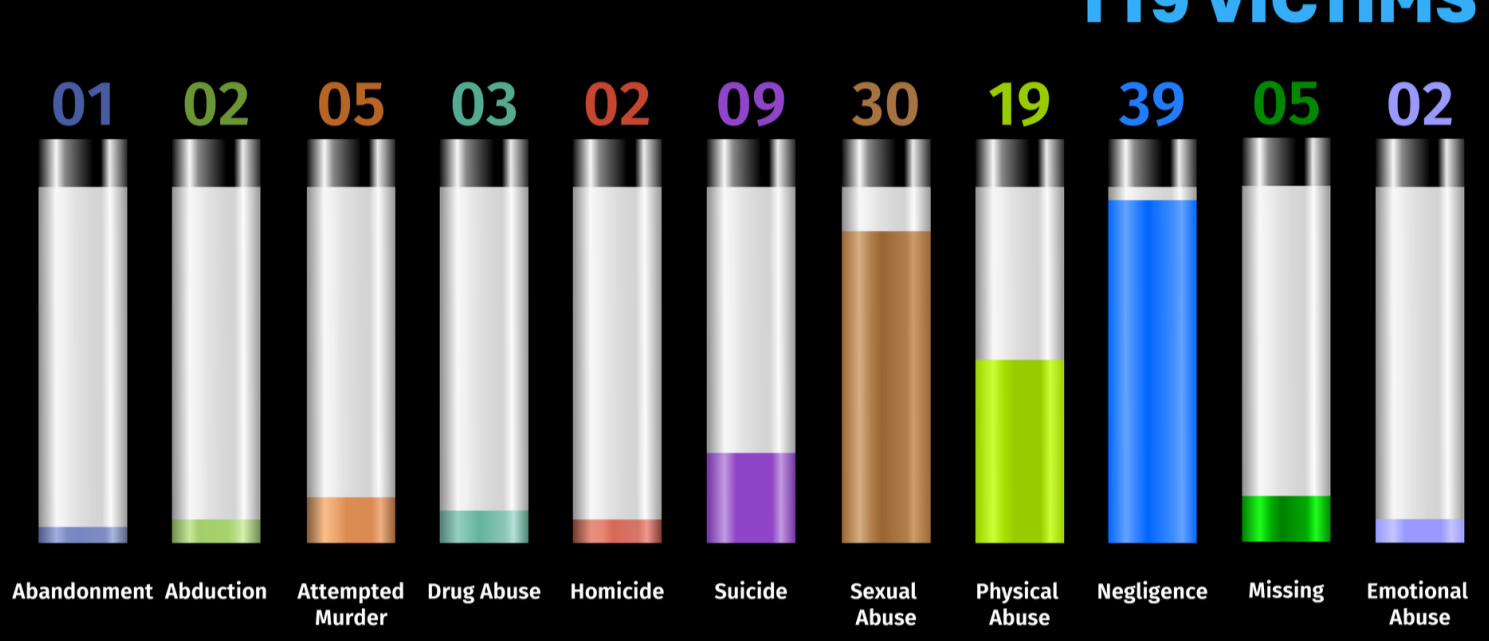
86 INCIDENTS



Out of the 86 incidents observed, we reiterate that sexual abuse has been the highest form of crime reported in media against children in the month of October 2023, at 30 incidents. Second, in its place is physical abuse of children, recording 14 incidents, and third is negligence towards children, with 11 incidents. According to data collated for this violation, we also find that the number of children being introduced to addictive drugs is on the rise. This menace needs immediate attention from authorities, standing at 9% of the total number of incidents. The rate of suicide among children is also on the rise at 9%. Research states that the majority of children and adolescents who attempt suicide have a significant mental health disorder. 7% of incidents indicate attempted murder of children. According to the reported data, three children have gone missing. Two incidents of child homicides, which represent the extreme form of violence against children, have also been reported. Additionally, two cases of abduction, two cases of emotional abuse, and one case of abandonment have been reported.

NUMBER OF VICTIMS INVOLVED IN EACH CATEGORY

119 VICTIMS



The data presented above highlights the various forms of victimisation that children have experienced. A concerning trend that emerges is the high number of cases involving neglect, with 39 victims recorded. Sexual abuse is another distressing category, with 30 cases reported. The next victims of physical abuse stand out with 19 children. There were 09 reported victims of suicide, 05 targets each of attempted murder and missing. Additionally, there were 02 children affected by emotional abuse, homicide, and suicide as well as reported. It is alarming to see instances of attempted murder, homicide, and suicide affecting children, emphasising the urgent need for intervention and support systems to protect vulnerable children.

NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS RESPONSIBLE FOR EACH CATEGORY

93 INDIVIDUALS

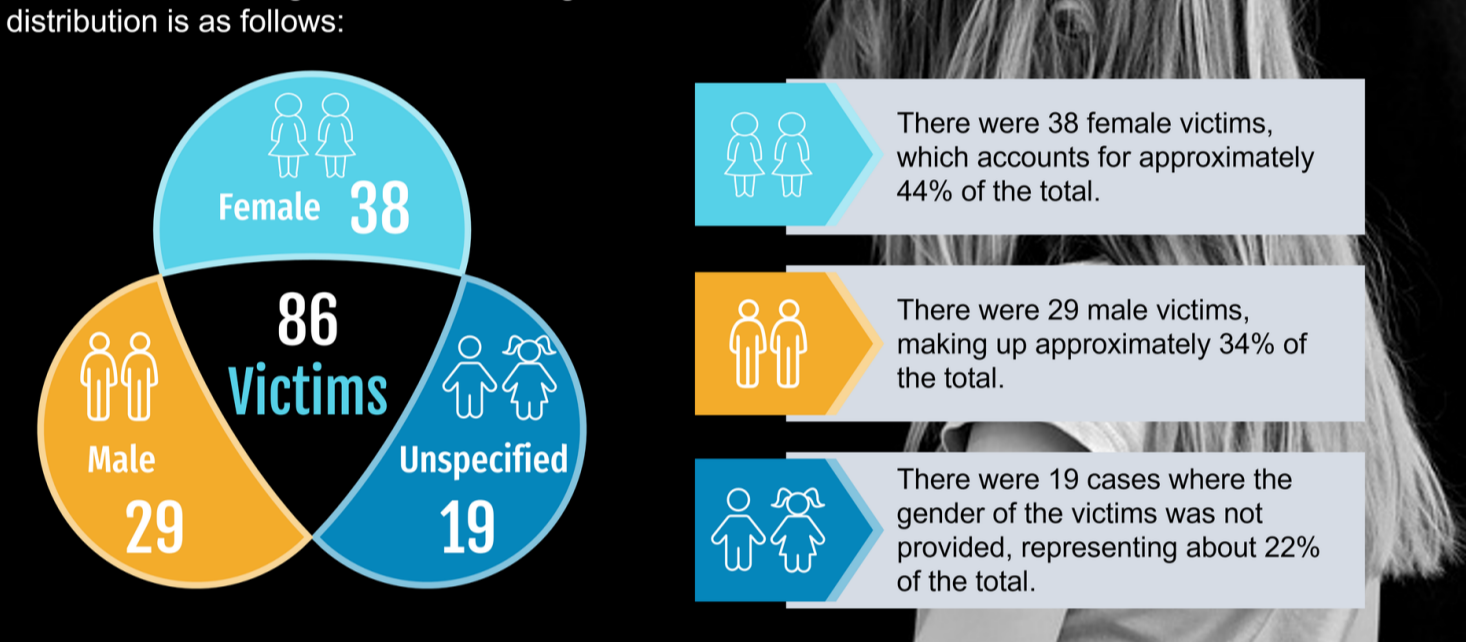


The processed data shows that 32 perpetrators were responsible for the sexual abuse of children. 17 perpetrators were responsible for the physical violence against young ones. 11 perpetrators accounted for the abuse of the child through negligence. There were 8 perpetrators involved in drug abuse, while 8 children tragically took their own lives. 7 attempts of murder against children, 3 responsible for missing, 2 offenders each responsible for the emotional abuse, homicide and abduction of children.

The sad part is that almost all of these child abusers are products of the education system in Sri Lanka. The impact of abuse especially sexual abuse on children is much greater as they do not possess the capacity to process their traumatic experiences and as such it is bound to reflect later on in life.

GENDER DISTRIBUTION OF VICTIMS

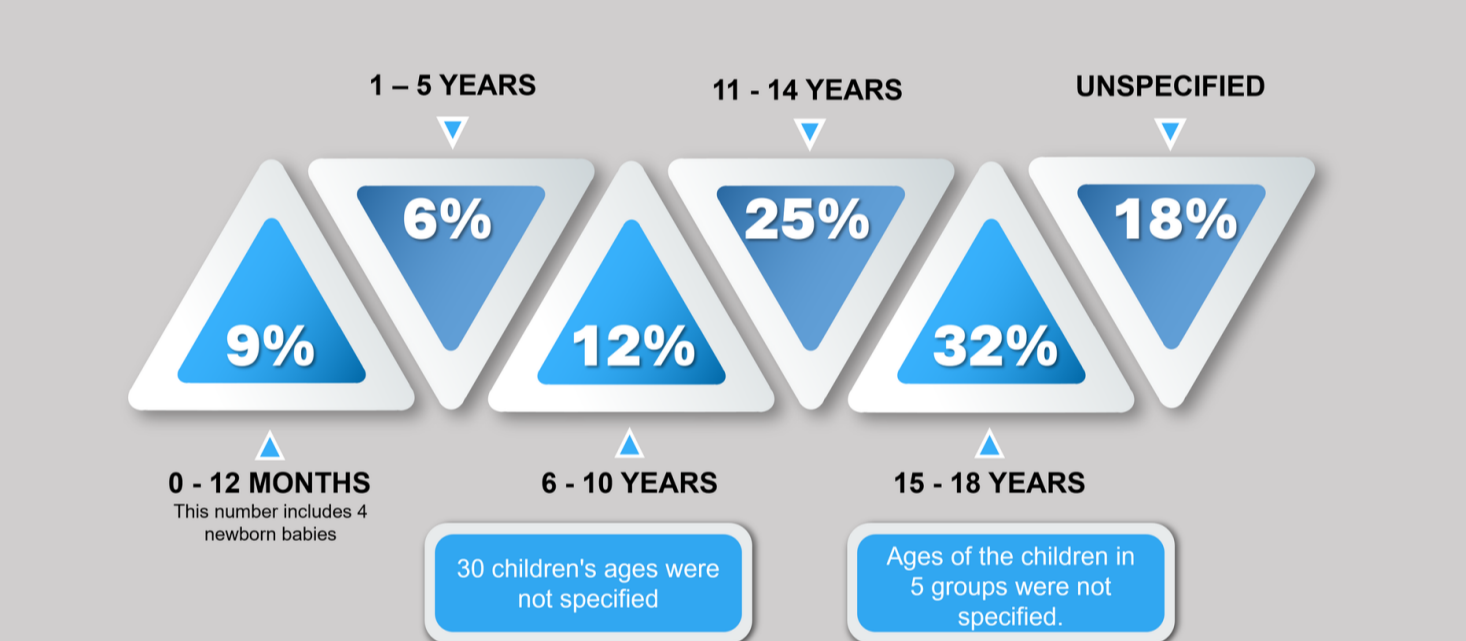
The analysis reveals that out of the total 86 individual victims of violence against children, the gender distribution is as follows:



Based on reports from media outlets, the girl-child has been subjected to the most abuse, accounting for 44% of all abuse incidents, while cases involving the boy-child stand at 34%. The gender of 22% of child abuse incidents has not been specified in the media.

AGE BREAKDOWN OF THE VICTIMS AT THE TIME OF THE ABUSE

86 VICTIMS



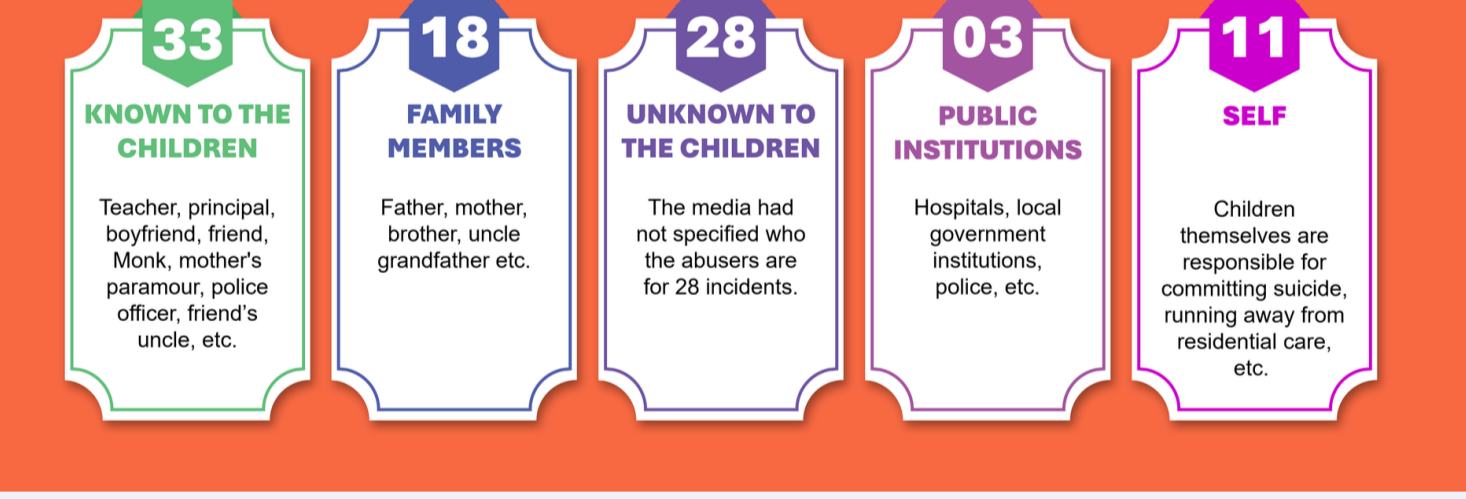
Teenagers between the ages of 15 to 18 years were the most affected age group by violent acts against children, accounting for 32% of the total victims in the month of October 2023. The next age group, 11 to 14 years, accounted for 25%. The age group of 6 to 10 year-olds followed, accounting for 12% of the affected, while the youngest age group, 0 to 12 months old, accounted for nine percent of the victims. The age group of 1 to 5 years old accounted for 6% of the victims.

Sexual abuse was the most prevalent form of abuse among teenagers aged 15 to 18 years. Unfortunately, the age group was not specified in reports of 17% of the media-reported incidents.

An unknown number of children between the ages of 2 to 7 years old were exploited in an incident of Child Sexual Abuse Material (CSAM), commonly known as Child Pornography.

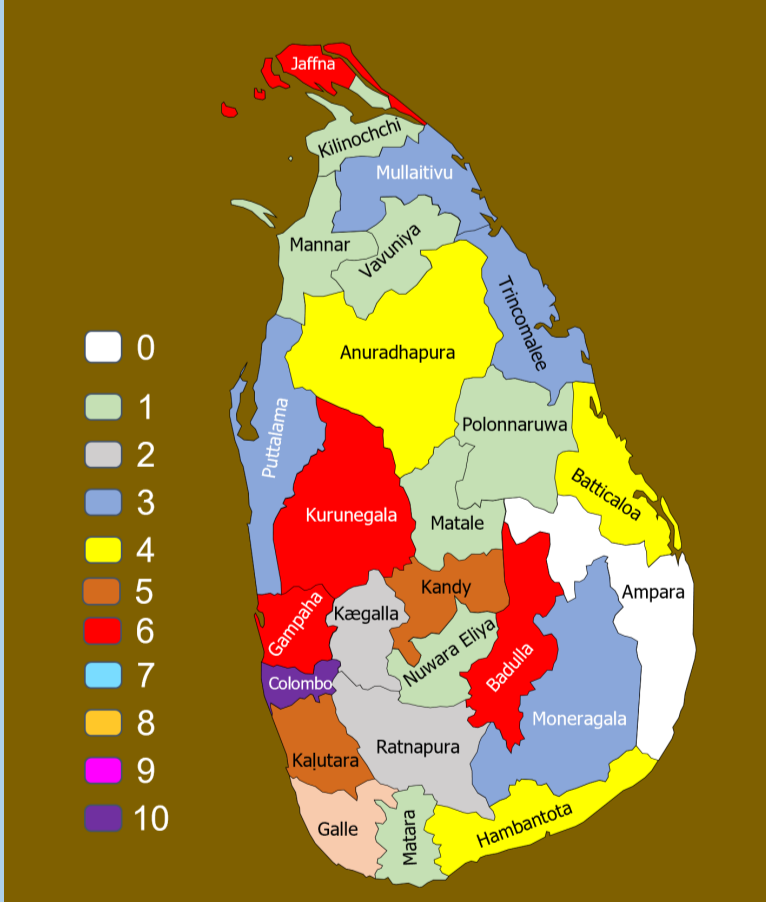
RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE ABUSER AND THE VICTIM WHEN THE ABUSE WAS HAPPENING

93 RESPONSIBLE



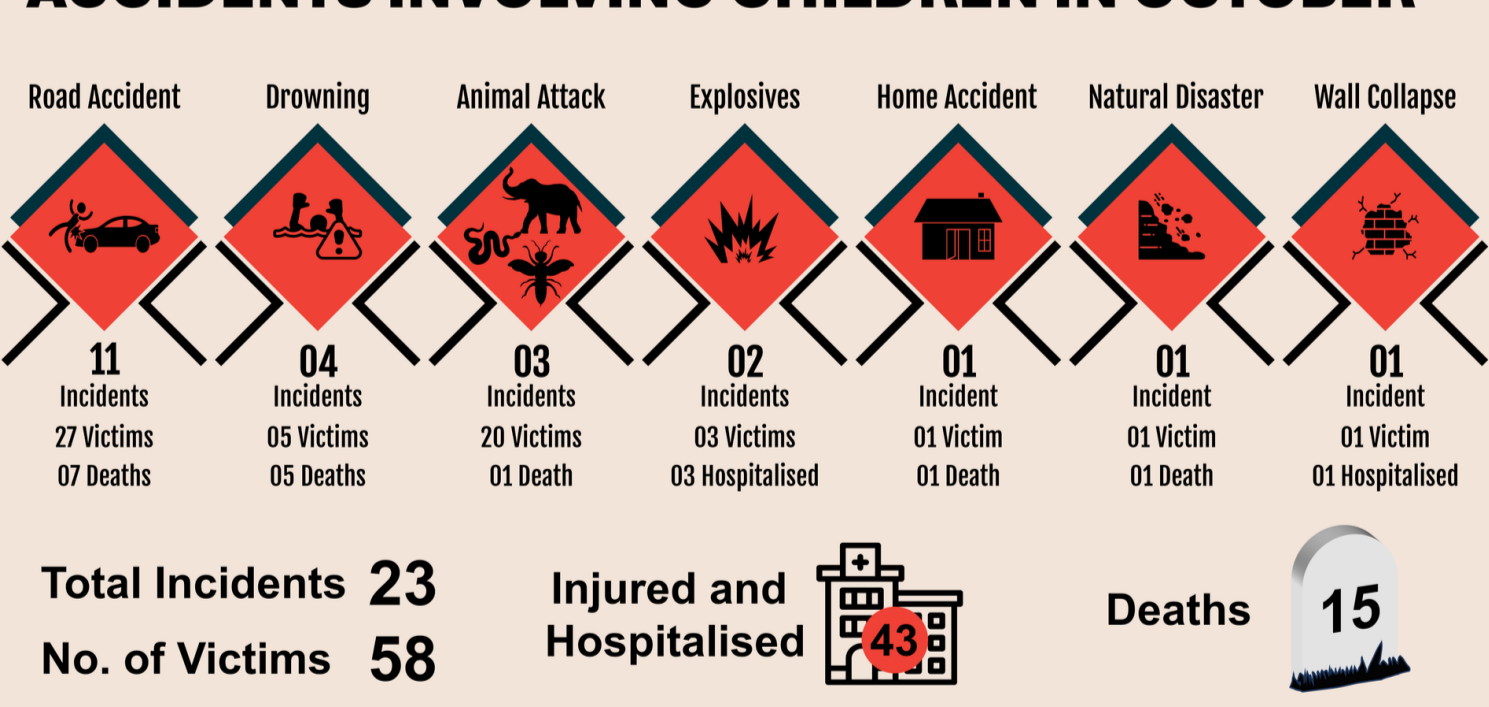
Among the total of 86 cases involving 93 individuals, 20% of these perpetrators were relatives of the children, while 33% were individuals directly known to the children. Two percent of the perpetrators were strangers, and 44% of the perpetrators were not specified in the reports. The lack of data on perpetrators in ongoing cases may stem from a combination of factors, including legal constraints, privacy considerations, and the sensitivity of child abuse cases.

Geographical Distribution

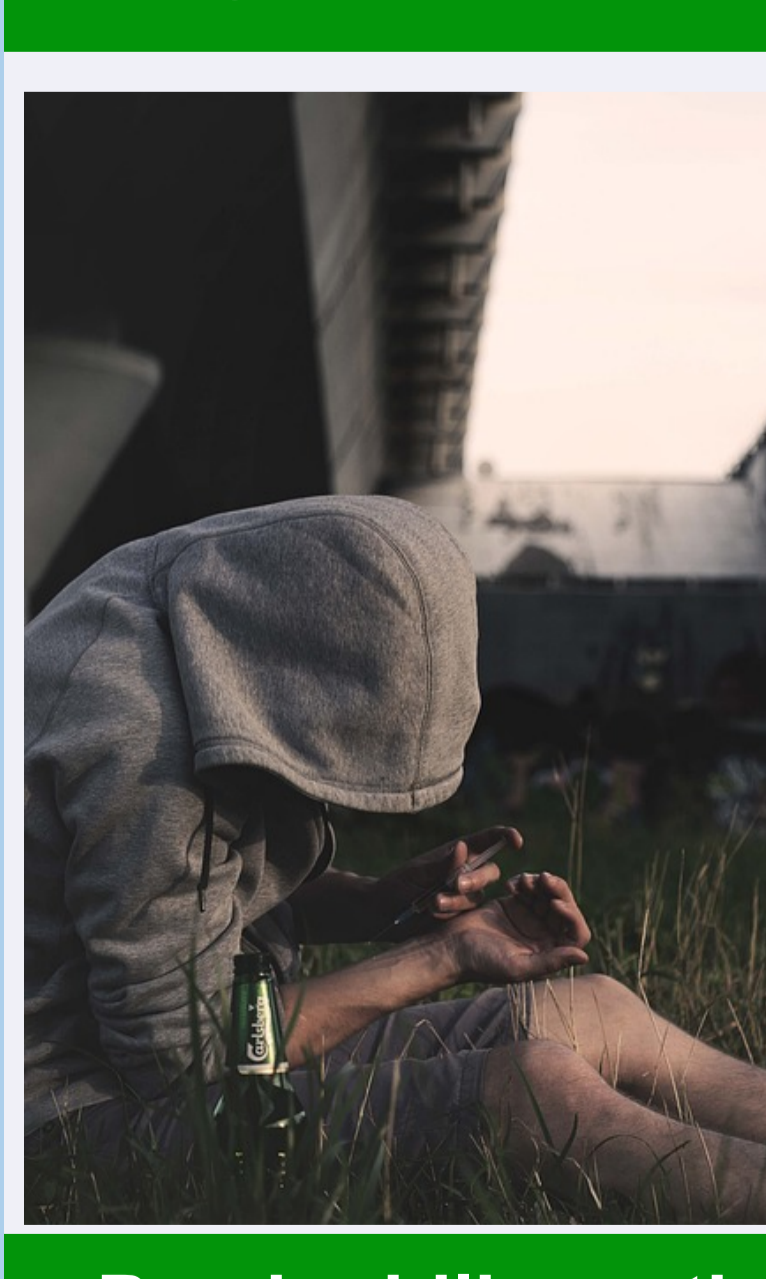


According to our aggregated data, Colombo has recorded the highest number of crimes against children, constituting 12% of the total reported incidents, while Galle has recorded the second-highest at 9%. Despite Gampaha publicising the highest number of crimes against children in previous months, it has now shifted to the third position in October 2023. Jaffna, Badulla, Kurunegala, Kandy, Kalutara, and Hambantota districts have significantly high numbers of reported incidents, each accounting for 5% to 7% of the total incidents. Monaragala, Mullaitivu, Puttalam, Trincomalee, Ratnapura, and Kegalle districts have a moderate number of reported incidents, each representing 2% to 3% of the total incidents. Polonnaruwa, Nuwara Eliya, Matale, Mambalgoda, Mannar, and Kilinochchi districts have the lowest number of reported incidents, each with only 1% of the total incidents.

ACCIDENTS INVOLVING CHILDREN IN OCTOBER



Drug Abuse and Addiction by Children



- On October 8th, 2023, a Psychiatrist from Kandy National Hospital revealed alarming statistics about the increasing trend of teenagers in Sri Lanka, aged 16 to 18, abusing drowsy medicines. According to him, approximately 28% of children in this age group have developed a habit of intoxicating themselves with excessive doses of these medications. He placed blame on pharmacies for issuing these drugs to teenagers without proper prescriptions.
- Shortly after, on October 9th, the Air Force Investigations Unit arrested a man for selling drug-laced toffees to children at schools and tuition classes. The suspect was handed over to the Mulliyawalai Police Station.
- The Kalutara South Police apprehended a 41-year-old individual who had been selling drug capsules targeting schoolchildren. The suspect was taken into custody for further investigation and prosecution.
- On October 16th, the Police Special Task Force arrested an employee associated with the Kotte Municipal Council for their alleged involvement in drug trafficking. The individual was allegedly engaged in the sale of illegal substances.
- On October 19th, police discovered a drug distribution network that specifically targeted schoolchildren and tutoring classes in Colombo. These criminals utilised sophisticated methods, such as hiding narcotics.

Paedophilia on the Rise in Sri Lanka

The Deputy Inspector General of the Women and Child Abuse Investigation Division of the police expressed deep concern over 131 reported cases of child sexual abuse in October 2023. Of even greater concern, 10 of the victims are currently pregnant. She also expressed concern that in these cases most of the perpetrators were also under the age of 16 years. She further stated that in October 32 girls and 16 boys have been victims of grave sexual abuse. She also mentioned that 18 children are below the age of 11 years and 29 victims are between the ages of 12-16 years.

The National Child Protection Authority (NCPA) provided similar statistics for September 2023, reporting 168 cases of underage girls being raped, with 22 of them becoming pregnant in 30 days.

The State Minister of Women and Child Affairs has also emphasised the urgent need for effective measures to address this grave issue. Overall, the rising number of child rape cases is a deeply concerning trend that demands immediate attention from the authorities, religious leaders, community leaders and society at large.

In Sri Lanka, the rise of paedophilia can be attributed to both substance abuse and the widespread circulation of obscene pictures and videos on social media platforms. Hence, unless the authorities acknowledge this fact and bring in measures to combat and treat the perpetrators with long-term individual or group psychotherapy and medications this issue will end up in another menace.

