



INSTITUTO NACIONAL DE ESTATÍSTICA  
STATISTICS PORTUGAL

DGPJ DIREÇÃO-GERAL  
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press release



# DIISTAQUE

29 November 2024

VIOLENCE IN CHILDHOOD: WHAT THE FIGURES SAY  
2023

## VIOLENCE IN CHILDHOOD: WHAT THE FIGURES SAY

In a joint publication, Statistics Portugal and the Directorate-General for Justice Policy present official statistical indicators for the characterisation of the reality of violence against children in Portugal<sup>1</sup>.

This publication includes an analysis of the results on violence during childhood from the Survey on Safety in Public and Private Spaces (ISEPP), carried out by Statistics Portugal in 2022, as well as the administrative statistics on crimes recorded by the police forces, and the characterisation of criminal cases in the first instance judicial courts, relating to crimes in which minors are part of the type of crime, which are under the responsibility of the Directorate-General for Justice Policy.

This publication is structured in three main parts:

- Part 1 analyses the results of the prevalence and characterisation of the phenomenon of violence during childhood, in its different aspects, based on the results of the ISEPP, the first European Statistical System survey on the subject of violence.
- Part 2 and Part 3 complement this statistical portrait with available administrative statistical indicators on crimes recorded by the police forces affecting minors (Part 2), as well as on cases completed, defendants and convicts in the first instance judicial courts on criminal cases (Part 3).



<sup>1</sup> In this respect, the 18<sup>th</sup> of November is the European Day on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse, and the 20<sup>th</sup> is a double anniversary that aims to raise awareness of the rights of children around the world: the proclamation of the Declaration of the Rights of the Child (1959), and the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) by the United Nations General Assembly.

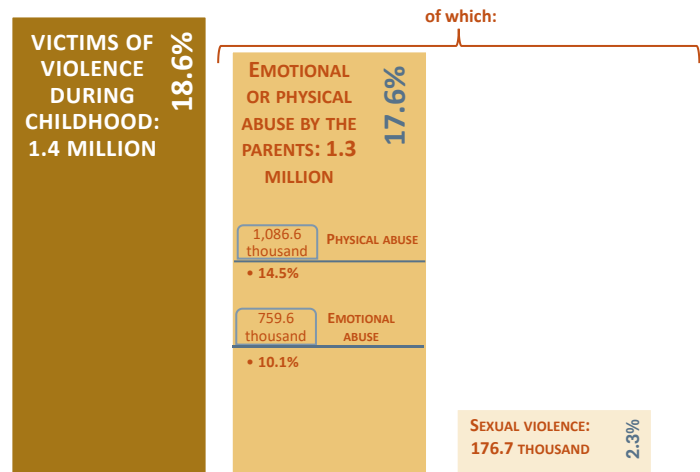


## 1 PREVALENCE AND CHARACTERISATION OF VIOLENCE DURING CHILDHOOD IN PORTUGAL: ISEPP RESULTS

The ISEPP results show that more than 1.4 million people aged 18 to 74 (18.6%) have experienced violence during childhood (up to the age of 15):

- More than 1.3 million people (17.6%) with both parents have experienced some kind of emotional or physical abuse from their parents:
  - More than 759 thousand (10.1%) experienced emotional abuse.
  - Around 1.1 million (14.5%) experienced physical abuse.
- More than 176 thousand (2.3%) have been victims of sexual abuse by someone during childhood.

People aged 18 to 74 who have experienced some type of violence during childhood (up to 15 years) by type of violence, 2022



Source: Statistics Portugal, Survey on Safety in Public and Private Spaces, 2022.

- Women (19.4%), people aged 55 to 74 (21.9%) and those with health limitations (27.1% of those severely limited) have higher proportions of violence during childhood.
- Regarding violence perpetrated by parents, which is higher in the older and less educated population, 12.2% of people say that the emotional or physical abuse they experienced in childhood was perpetrated by their father/paternal figure and 11.8% by their mother/maternal figure.
- As for victims of sexual abuse during childhood (2.3%), prevalence is higher for women: 3.5% of women were victims of this type of violence (136.8 thousand), compared to 1.1% of men (39.9 thousand).
- Being touched on their private parts was the violent sexual act most frequently mentioned by victims of sexual violence during childhood: around 156 thousand people (2.1%), a higher proportion among women (3.2%) than men (0.9%).
- The perpetrators of sexual violence identified were mainly men, by 3.3% of women and 0.9% of men.
- Most of the victims were aged between 11 and 15 when the acts of sexual violence happened: of the 2.3% of people who reported having been victims of sexual violence during childhood, 1.2% were aged between 11 and 15 and 0.9% between 6 and 10.
- Victims of sexual violence during childhood remained silent about their experiences: only 29.4% spoke to someone or some organisation about what happened. The situations experienced were mostly reported to family and friends (26.8%).



- A family context of violence between the parents is more common for victims of violence during childhood than in the general population: 58.5% of victims of childhood violence (emotional, physical or sexual) witnessed situations of physical or psychological violence between parents, compared to 19.1% for the general population.
- Almost two thirds of victims of violence during childhood (65.4%) have also experienced at least one other type of violence throughout their lives (44.8% in the total population).

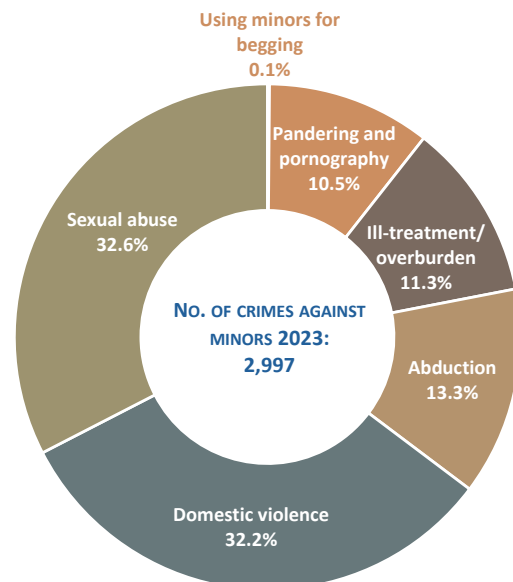
## 2 CRIMES AGAINST MINORS RECORDED BY POLICE AUTHORITIES

In the 2014-2023 decade, the highest number of reports recorded by police authorities was in 2023, both in the total of crimes (371,995) and in offences against minors (2,997).

In the same year, the crimes of sexual abuse of children, adolescents and dependent minors or those in a particularly vulnerable situation (976 reports) and domestic violence against minors (964 reports) were among the most represented in crime against minors: 32.6% and 32.2%, respectively.

Over the decade, the offence of sexual abuse was the one with the highest share in all crimes against minors.

Proportion (%) of offences against minors recorded by police authorities by type of crime, 2023



Source: Directorate-General for Justice Policy.

- In terms of agents/suspects, there was an increase in the relative weight of agents/suspects identified in domestic violence offences against minors in the 2014-2023 period, from 28.3% in 2014 to 51.1% in 2023.
- Overall, more men than women committed crimes against minors: in 2023, 56.9% of the agents/suspects identified were men, compared to 43.1% of women.
- There is a higher proportion of male agents/suspects in most crimes, particularly sexual abuse (93.4% male to 6.6% female) and domestic violence against minors (56.3% and 43.7% respectively).
- Crimes of domestic violence are, among all crimes against minors, the ones with the biggest increase in offended persons in the 2014-2023 decade, rising from 29.0% in 2014 to 49.7% in 2023.



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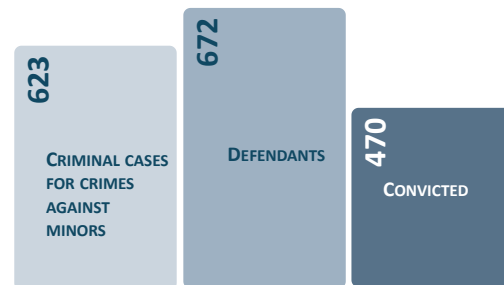
- In the same year, more than half of the offended persons identified in crimes against minors were female (57.4% were female and 42.6% male), particularly in the case of sexual abuse, where 81.4% of the offended persons were female.

### 3 COURT CASES FOR OFFENCES AGAINST MINORS

Criminal cases, for offences against minors, accused and convicted (No.), at the trial stage ended in the 1st instance courts, 2023

In 2023:

- 623 criminal cases for offences against minors were concluded in the first instance judicial courts.
- 672 defendants were constituted.
- 470 people were convicted of this type of offence.



Source: Directorate-General for Justice Policy.

- In the decade 2014-2023 there was an increase in the total number of criminal cases for offences against minors in the first instance judicial courts, from 410 to 623.
- In 2023, almost half of the criminal cases (49.8%) for crimes against minors concerned the type of crime of sexual abuse; more than a quarter of the cases (26.5%) related to the crime of domestic violence against minors, and approximately a fifth (19.9%) to crimes of pandering, trafficking and pornography of minors.
- In the decade 2014-2023 there was an increase of 212 defendants in criminal cases for offences against minors, representing an increase of 46.1%. In 2023, the number of defendants in criminal cases for offences against minors was 672.
- In the same year, most of defendants were tried for sexual abuse offences (49.0%).
- The defendants in criminal cases for offences against minors were mostly men, aged between 30 and 49.
- In 2023, the number of people convicted of offences against minors registered in the first instance judicial courts was 470, 155 more than in 2014, representing an increase of 49.2% over the decade. Crimes of sexual abuse are the most prevalent among those convicted of offences against minors.
- Nine out of ten people convicted of offences against minors are men: in 2023, 90.2% of people convicted of offences against minors were men and 9.8% were women.



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- Suspended imprisonment with probation is the most common final sentence for offences against minors, accounting for 60.0% of final sentences in 2023.

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See the publication at [www.ine.pt](http://www.ine.pt), under the option Products, Publications, Justice theme.

More detailed statistical information is available at [www.ine.pt](http://www.ine.pt), under Products, Statistical data, Database, Justice theme and on the [Justice Statistics Portal](#).

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