

# CHILD HELPLINE INTERNATIONAL BRIEFING PAPER Girls' Voices Heard

On 17 May, Child Helpline International - the global network of child helplines - will celebrate the sixth annual International Child Helpline Day. This year's theme is: *"The role of child helplines and technologies in the protection girls from abuse and violence"*.

The first International Child Helpline Day was celebrated in 2007. With a growing number of child helplines participating every year, International Child Helpline Day has become an important occasion for child helplines around the globe to highlight the fundamental work that they do; to raise awareness with children and the general public; and to strengthen their cooperation with the telecommunication sector, child protection entities and other partners.

CHI aligns the theme of International Child Helpline Day as much as possible with the International Telecommunications Union (ITU) World Telecommunications and Information Society Day, also held on 17 May. This year, both organisation will highlight the important role technology plays in protecting girls from abuse and violence. As a group, girls and women are more vulnerable to various forms of violence - including sexual abuse, commercial exploitation and trafficking - than their male counterparts.

Data collected by CHI shows that girls and young women have traditionally always made up more than half of all those reaching out to child helplines for care and protection. Child helplines listen, provide counselling and if needed refer girls and young women to other child protection partners for comprehensive help. In countries with a weak child protection system, child helplines often also provide such additional services themselves - including shelters, education, legal services and rehabilitation. As first points of contact, referral mechanisms and service providers, child helplines play an essential role in national child protection systems.

Often, child helplines are a young persons' first point of contact with child protection services and the most trusted and accessible gateway for them to find much needed further support.

## Introduction

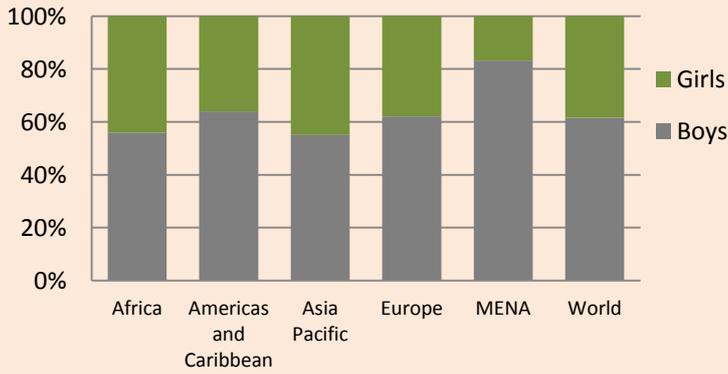
In 2010, child helplines worldwide received more than 13.4 million contacts from children and youth around the world. More than 55% of these contacts came from girls. Since CHI starting collecting data from child helplines in 2003 about the contacts they received from children, and adults on behalf of children, girls have consistently been the most common group of people to contact them.

One in five contacts for which the reason for contact was known in 2010 involved a case of abuse or violence. Six in ten of these contacts involved a girl.

**In 2010 an average child helpline received nearly four contacts about the abuse of a girl every day.**

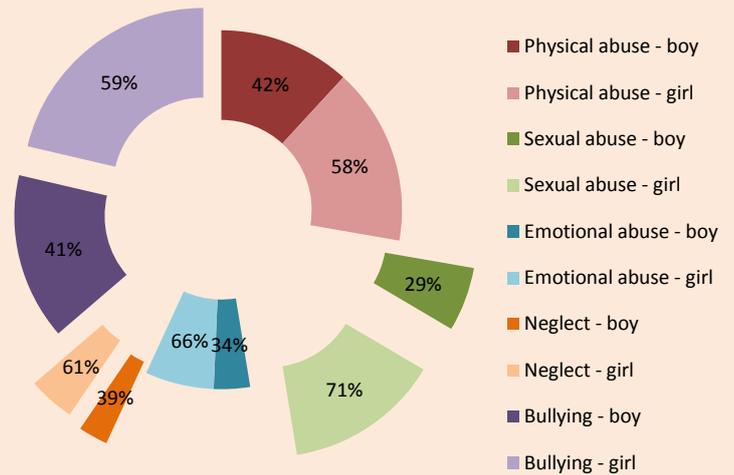
In this briefing paper Child Helpline International (CHI) will provide background statistics and information on the contacts that child helplines have received from girls and young women, and the role of child helplines in protecting them. This briefing paper builds on the information collected for CHI's *Violence Against Children Report*.

([www.childhelplineinternational.org/en/publications/VACReport](http://www.childhelplineinternational.org/en/publications/VACReport)).



Gender of victim per region

Gender and form of abuse



## Abuse and violence

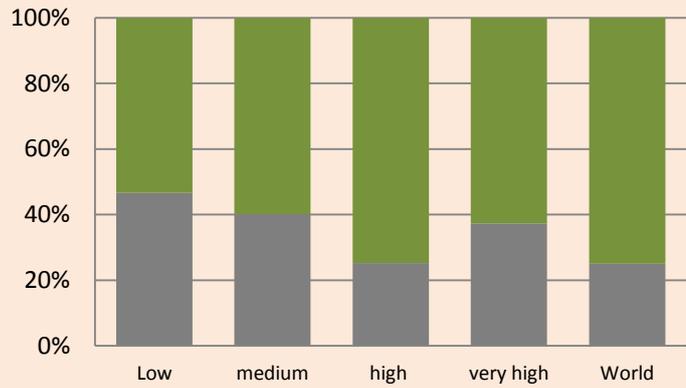
As stated, six in ten contacts on abuse and violence involved a girl. For every form of abuse recorded by child helplines the majority of contacts where the gender of the victim was known involved girls.

Nearly three quarters of all contacts on sexual abuse and two thirds of all contacts on emotional abuse involved a girl. Six out of ten contacts on physical abuse, neglect and bullying concerned girls. In general, the proportion of abuse involving girls that is reported to child helplines is higher in countries with a high Human Development Index (HDI) level than in medium and low HDI level countries. In 2010, the highest proportion of contacts involving girls were made in the MENA region, where eight out of ten cases of abuse and violence dealt with girls.

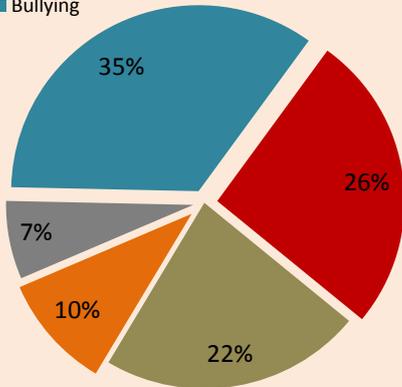
## Forms of abuse

In 2011, bullying was the most common form of abuse reported for cases involving girls in Europe and the Americas and Caribbean. In Africa, sexual abuse, and in MENA and Asia Pacific, physical abuse was the most common form of abuse in contacts made by girls to child helplines. Bullying was the most common form of abuse in contacts involving girls made to child helplines in very high HDI level countries. In all other countries, physical abuse was the most common form of abuse reported about for contact where girls were concerned.

Gender of victim by HDI level

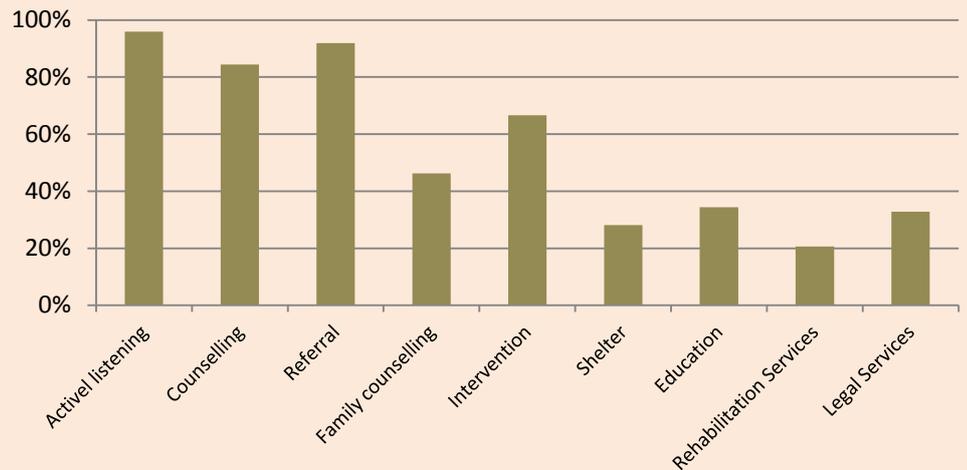


- Physical abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Emotional abuse
- Neglect
- Bullying



Forms of abuse

World



## Child helpline services

Child helplines provide core services such as active listening, counselling and referral to children - both girls and boys - who contact them. Exceptions are those child helplines which have had to change the manner in which they provide services and information to children and adults due to the financial crisis, or those which are specialised in online services. The provision of additional services such as intervention, shelter, family counselling, education, rehabilitation and legal services varies across HDI levels. In countries with high to very high HDI levels, most child helplines do not provide these services themselves as ample referral opportunities are available. In countries with a low or medium HDI level many of the supplementary child protection services do not exist elsewhere. As a result, child helplines often have to step in and provide these services themselves. The MENA region is an interesting case, as most of the child helplines belong to a government structure that provides child protection services as part of its mandate.