

# When States Can't: Protection from Child Sexual Abuse beyond State Capacity and Will

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V1. 19.12.2024

**Abstract:** When 193 nations committed to end child sexual abuse through Sustainable Development Goal 16.2 by 2030, they confronted a puzzling pattern: countries with the strongest protective frameworks often report higher abuse rates than nations with minimal safeguards. This study examines how non-manipulable factors - from demographic structures to cultural dynamics - systematically constrain governments' protective abilities. Through hierarchical multilevel modeling and latent class analysis across 366 gender-disaggregated observations from India, Canada, Australia, and South Africa, we uncover how these constraints shape policy effectiveness. Our findings reveal complex interactions between household characteristics ( $\beta = 1.34, p < 0.001$ ), rural-urban dynamics ( $\beta = -0.36, p < 0.01$ ), and cultural-religious factors ( $\beta = -0.24, p < 0.01$ ) that significantly impact protective outcomes. These results demand a reconceptualization of how we understand and measure children's right to protection, suggesting that effective child protection requires nuanced, context-sensitive approaches rather than standardized solutions.

## 1 Introduction

When 193 nations committed to end child sexual abuse (CSA) through Sustainable Development Goal 16.2 by 2030, they reinforced a fundamental human right grounded in principles of human dignity and child protection. The *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights* (United Nations (1966) Article 10) enshrines these principles, requiring states to progressively realize children's right to protection through maximum available resources.

Yet a puzzling pattern emerges: countries with the strongest protective frameworks often report higher abuse rates than nations with minimal safeguards (Economist Impact (2022)). While ICESCR acknowledges varying national capacities through its progressive realization principle and emphasis on protectiveness, SDG 16.2's specific targets of 'ending all forms of violence' (including CSA) could lead us to assume that all states can achieve similar outcomes given sufficient political will and resources.

Consider Finland, Germany, and the United Kingdom — global leaders in child protection measures. Despite their robust systems, they consistently report higher rates of child sexual abuse than countries with fewer protective frameworks. This tension reveals a critical gap in how we understand state obligations to protect children, suggesting that factors outside direct government intervention may fundamentally shape a state's capacity to protect its children.

This study examines how these *non-manipulable factors* systematically constrain governments' ability to protect children from sexual abuse. I proceed by reviewing CSA risk factors (2), analyzing protection frameworks and measurement (3), examining progress indicators (4), and empirically testing

non-manipulable factors through multilevel modeling (5). Findings and limitations (6) inform policy recommendations for realizing this fundamental right through context-sensitive approaches.

## 2 Literature Review

Child sexual abuse (CSA) transcends all societal boundaries, affecting nations regardless of their development, culture, or geography (UNICEF (2024)). While existing research has extensively examined **controllable factors** in child protection — from legislation to judicial systems (Arkadas-Thibert (2022), Bruning and Doek (2021), Economist Impact (2022))— it largely overlooks how **factors beyond government control** shape policy effectiveness. These non-manipulable elements, ranging from demographic to conflict-related factors, can significantly undermine protective measures for certain population groups.<sup>1</sup>

*Demographic factors* shape CSA vulnerability through household structure, size, and urban-rural dynamics (Barth et al. (2013)). Single-parent households face supervision challenges and exposure to unsafe environments due to resource constraints and competing responsibilities (e.g., nannies, friends, or partners having unsupervised contact with the lone parent’s children) (Finkelhor et al. (1990), Laird et al. (2020), Younas and Gutman (2023)). Household size impacts vary culturally — from increased risk in Western overcrowding (Cant et al. (2019)) to protective extended families in African settings (Lalor (2005)). Geographic location presents distinct challenges: rural isolation and limited services (Maguire-Jack and Kim (2021)) versus urban anonymity and population density (Fu et al. (2023), Wang et al. (2020)).

*Cultural and conflict-related dynamics* shape CSA vulnerability through hierarchical religious institutions that enable abuse through unquestioned authority (Hunt et al. (2024), IICSA (2021), John Jay College of Criminal Justice (2004)) and harmful cultural beliefs. Gender-based interpretations, from patriarchal structures in sub-Saharan Africa to the South African “virgin cleansing myth,” create additional risk factors (Jewkes et al. (2002), Lalor (2005)), while fundamentally influencing parenting approaches and protective behaviors (Beyers et al. (2024), Johnson et al. (2013)).

*Conflict zones and societal disruptions* amplify these vulnerabilities. *Save the Children’s* study (Save the Children (2021)) demonstrates persistent elevated CSA risk in post-conflict environments across multiple countries. Similarly, pandemic lockdowns revealed through geospatial and temporal analysis how crisis conditions can exacerbate abuse risks (NSPCC (2020), Ochieng et al. (2022)), particularly in already vulnerable households (Carrillo-Brenes and Vilches-Blázquez (2024)).

*Research validity* faces challenges from data scarcity, methodological differences, ethical limitations with minor surveys, and adult retrospective reporting bias (Barth et al. (2013), Latzman et al. (2017)). While research identifies non-manipulable factors affecting CSA prevalence, understanding their constraint on government protective capacity remains unexplored.

To address this gap, I propose a conceptual framework for the right to protection from CSA and introduce *percentage reporting increases* as intervention effectiveness proxy measures. This approach allows us to isolate how non-governmental factors impact post-intervention outcomes.

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<sup>1</sup>Importantly, retrospective prevalence studies reveal that CSA’s reach extends across *economic boundaries* (Browne and Finkelhor (1986), Finkelhor (1984, 1994)).

### 3 Conceptual Framework - Measuring What?

Measuring children's right to protection from sexual violence presents a fundamental paradox. While SDG indicators rely solely on prevalence rates among 18-29 year olds, this teleological approach — which simply equates occurrence with rights violation (Figure 1) — fails to capture the complexity of state protection efforts. A more nuanced *teleological-deontological framework* is needed to evaluate both actual violations and protective measures (Figure 1). This distinction becomes critical when examining current metrics, which paradoxically rank countries with robust monitoring systems (Germany, Finland, UK (Economist Impact (2022))) worse than those with inadequate reporting methodologies (Zimbabwe, Senegal (Chibango and Chibango (2022), Mantula and Saloojee (2016), World Health Organization (2023))). Such rankings fail to distinguish between states that lack protective frameworks entirely and those whose higher reported rates reflect more effective detection systems.

The second challenge centers on CSA's cascading impacts beyond the initial violation. Research reveals a devastating array of long-term consequences: PTSD, stigmatization, feelings of culpability, shame, recurring trauma, heart disease, and elevated suicide risk (Alix et al. (2020), Boumpa et al. (2024), Leander (2010), Underwager et al. (1990)). This trauma cycle is perpetuated by alarmingly low reporting rates — just 2% for boys and 6% for girls in Western countries (CIIVISE (2023), Scurich (2020)). Moreover, the reporting process itself often inflicts additional trauma through harsh interrogations and invasive medical examinations, deterring victims and families from seeking help (Figure 1).

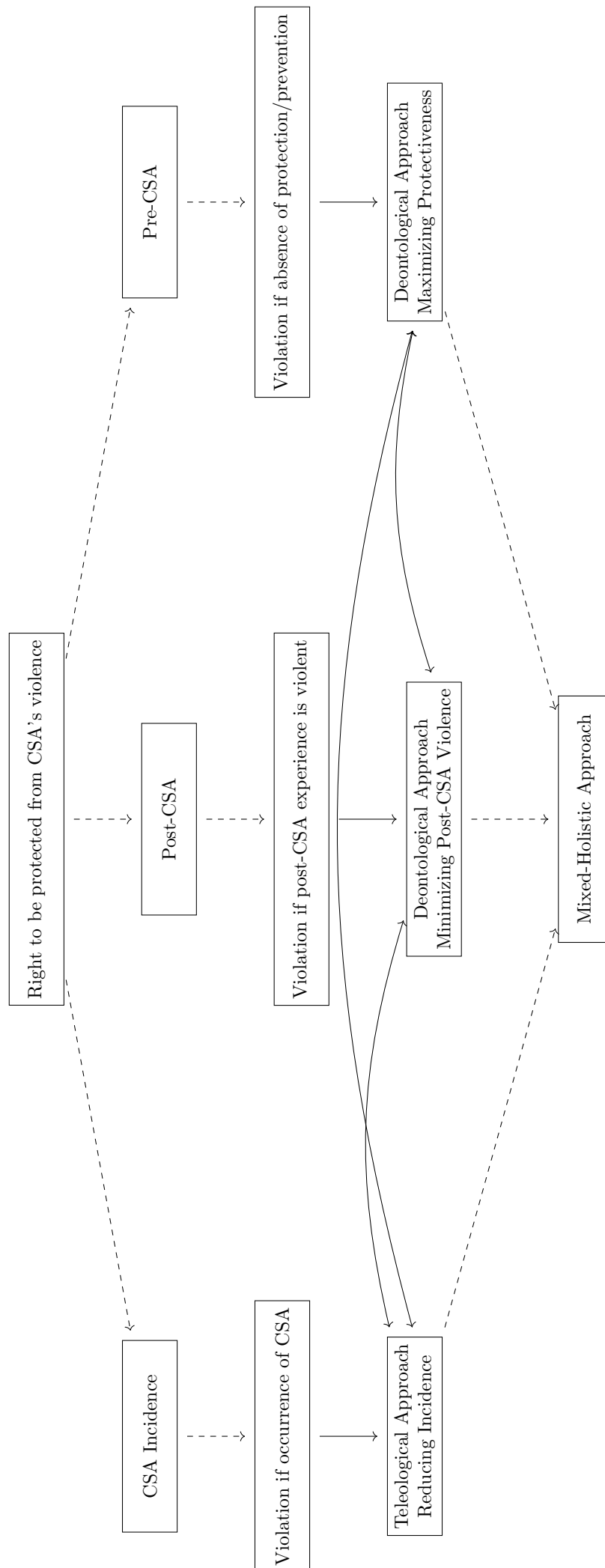
While some innovations like Canada's Youth Advocacy Centers offer more trauma-informed approaches by centralizing trained professionals (Hickey (2015)), most countries' reporting systems continue to re-traumatize victims, effectively transforming the protection process into another form of violence (World Health Organization (2004)).

The cyclical nature of CSA is fundamental to conceptualizing children's right to protection. Medical and psychiatric studies reveal a devastating pattern: experiencing CSA significantly increases the risk of subsequent victimization, particularly when victims lack access to medical and psychological support (Classen et al. (2005), Mazzarello et al. (2022)). This evidence demands a broader understanding of the right to protection, one that encompasses both prevention and appropriate response across multiple spheres (Figure 1). The right is violated not only when initial abuse occurs, but also when environments fail to provide non-violent responses across familial, police, judicial, and social systems. This expanded framework recognizes how systemic issues - from cultural taboos to stigmatization to persistently low trial success rates - constitute rights violations by creating an unprotective environment. CSA protection does not end in informing parents and children, it happens in court as well (Figure 1): decades of criminal behavior studies confirm that perceived certainty of punishment creates deterrence - a certainty notably absent given the minimal success rate of the few CSA cases that reach police and lead to criminal charges (Apel (2013, 2022), Nagin (2013), Office of Justice Programs (2011), Robinson and Darley (2004)).

This cyclical vulnerability demands understanding protection through three interconnected stages: prevention failures create initial risk, inadequate responses constitute secondary violations, and systemic failures perpetuate future vulnerability through reduced reporting and impunity.

This interplay between stages demonstrates why children's right to protection must be conceptualized holistically, encompassing both preventive frameworks and response systems, with failures in any stage undermining the entire protective structure.

Figure 1: **Conceptual Framework for Protection from CSA**



Justified by this conceptual framework, **two key indicators** emerge: lifetime CSA prevalence among 18-29 year-olds provides a teleological measure of protection outcomes, while the Out of the Shadow Index (OOSI) captures states’ deontological commitment through evaluation of prevention and response mechanisms (Table.1). Its 60 indicators across prevention (legislation, policy capacity) and response (support services, recovery, justice) dimensions, providing standardized scores from 0-100 and the possibility to weight differently indicators so as to be sensitive to cross-national components’ importance enable meaningful cross-national comparisons of child protection efforts.

**Table 1: Indicators of Citizens’ Protection Under SDG16.2.3**

Indicator Name	Description	Source	Time Period
<b>Out of the Shadows Index</b>	Index of Governments’ efforts in regard to prevention and response to Child Sexual Abuse – scale of 0-100 for overall and each component	<a href="#">Economist Impact (60 countries)</a>	Annual 2022-2023
<b>Proportion of Young Women and Men Aged 18-29</b>	Proportion of young women and men aged 18-29 who experienced sexual violence by age 18 (% of the 18-29 population)	<a href="#">World Health Organization (66 countries)</a>	No frequency (covers 2005-2021)

While combining these metrics would offer a more complete picture of states’ protective capacity, significant methodological challenges emerge. The SDG prevalence data merges disparate UN sources with inconsistent gender disaggregation, which [Chapman \(2007\)](#) and [Apodaca \(2007\)](#) warn can mask gender-specific vulnerabilities and lead to discriminatory policy responses. Its 29-year retrospective window introduces temporal confounding, as current measurements reflect historical conditions that may no longer exist. Meanwhile, the OOSI’s single year of data makes it statistically unsuitable as a standalone measure.

To overcome these limitations, an alternative approach is proposed: examining how non-manipulable factors affect increases in CSA reporting rates.

## 4 Non-Manipulable Factors – Research Design

### 4.1 Dependent Variable

Despite underreporting, increasing CSA police reporting rates serve as valid state indicators of policy effectiveness, supported by studies from Canada’s CYACs ([Department of Justice Canada \(2018\)](#)), Chile’s recent reforms ([Clarke et al. \(2023\)](#)), and the Australian [Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse \(2017\)](#).

This measure captures the impact of both direct interventions (like enhanced police resources) and indirect efforts (such as mandatory reporting laws), acknowledging that reporting barriers affect victims,

parents, and professionals alike (NSPCC (2024)). While this metric offers valuable insights into policy effectiveness, we acknowledge its limitations – it primarily reflects governments’ success in response mechanisms rather than their complete protective framework (Figure 1).

## 4.2 Independent Variables

Chosen independent variables focus on three key categories of non-manipulable factors that may constrain reporting rates.

**Demographic Factors.** Demographic factors present a complex dynamic: while larger households and single-parent families are traditionally studied as risk factors for CSA occurrence, we hypothesize their inverse effect on reporting. Studies reveal how family ties often suppress disclosure, particularly when abusers are known to the family (McTavish et al. (2019), Rathidevi et al. (2019), Tashjian et al. (2017)), with strong family-centric cultures or “familismo” further deterring reports (Kenny et al. (2022)).

**Rural-Urban Dynamics.** Rural-urban dynamics shape reporting through distinct mechanisms. Rural areas’ characteristics – high acquaintance density, physical isolation, and strong informal social control – combined with rural police officers’ preference for informal resolution (Decker (1979)), may significantly impede formal reporting processes.

**Cultural and Religious Factors.** Cultural and religious factors create powerful barriers to disclosure. Religious institutions’ unquestioned authority and emphasis on family honor (IICSA (2021), Mathews and Bross (2014), RCIRCSA (2017)), status preservation in conservative communities (Kouchner (2021), Metzger (2022)), caste dynamics (Cheguvera and Arur (2024)), and post-conflict institutional distrust (Nyangoma et al. (2019)) can all override child protection imperatives.

## 4.3 Sample

Given limited international data on CSA reporting — the UN Office on Drugs and Crime’s database only covers 2003-2008 — a focused sample of four countries with robust regional data was chosen. The accuracy of this dataset, compiled from government sources between October and December 2024, is contingent on the official statistics publicly available during the collection period.

The selection prioritized nations demonstrating strong child protection commitments through high OOSI rankings, comprehensive national strategies, and active reporting policies. Data requirements ensured methodological rigor: government-sourced police data with gender and regional disaggregation, consistent crime type classifications, English accessibility, and clear documentation.

**The resulting sample encompasses:**

- **India:** 31 states, 2018-2023
- **Canada:** 13 provinces, 2018-2023
- **Australia:** 8 regions, 2014-2023
- **South Africa:** 9 provinces, 2010-2022

Using country districts as our unit of analysis, this yields 860 gender-disaggregated observations and 430 combined-gender observations, providing substantial statistical power for examining how non-manipulable factors affect reporting rates across diverse contexts.

## 4.4 Study Designs

To analyze the effects of non-manipulable factors on government efforts, 12 policies were identified and selected based on observable increases in CSA reporting rates post-implementation, reporting incentivization aims, and implementation timing outside COVID-19 lockdowns. This yielded 366 gender-disaggregated observations (183 combined-gender).

I employed a three-stage analytical approach to examine how non-manipulable factors influence the impact of government policies, while addressing potential methodological challenges and COVID-19-related distortions.

### Stage 1: Hierarchical Multilevel Model (HMR)

To account for the nested structure of the data (regions within countries), I first specified a hierarchical multilevel model (HMR):

$$\Delta R_{ij} = \alpha + \beta_1 X_{1ij} + \beta_2 X_{2ij} + \dots + \gamma Z_{ij} + u_j + \epsilon_{ij}$$

where:

- $\Delta R_{ij}$ : Percentage change in reporting rates (CSA reported to the police per 100,000 children) for region  $i$  in country  $j$  10-12 months after treatment compared to post-treatment, excluding 2020 data to avoid COVID-19 distortions.

- $X$ : Non-manipulable factors.
- $Z$ : Control variables.
- $u_j$ : Country-level random effects ( $u_j \sim N(0, \tau^2)$ ).
- $\epsilon_{ij}$ : Residual error ( $\epsilon_{ij} \sim N(0, \sigma^2)$ ).

A high intra-class correlation (ICC = 0.57) indicated substantial between-country variation, justifying the use of Stage 2.

### Stage 2: Latent Class Analysis (LCA)

The latent class analysis (LCA) model was specified as:

$$P(Y_i = y \mid C_i = c) = \prod_k \theta_{ck}^{y_{ik}} (1 - \theta_{ck})^{1-y_{ik}}$$

where:

- $Y_i$ : Observed variables for region  $i$ .
- $C_i$ : Latent class membership.
- $\theta_{ck}$ : Probability of a positive response to variable  $k$  in class  $c$ .

For each region  $i$ :

$$P(C_i = c) = \frac{\exp(\gamma_c)}{\sum_k \exp(\gamma_k)}$$

Class membership was determined using maximum likelihood estimation:

$$L = \prod_i \sum_c P(C_i = c) \prod_k \theta_{ck}^{y_{ik}} (1 - \theta_{ck})^{1-y_{ik}}$$

### Stage 3: Bayesian Validation

To validate that observed changes in reporting rates were attributable to policy interventions rather than confounding factors, and given the importance of quantifying uncertainty in the estimates, I specified a Bayesian hierarchical model:

$$\Delta R_{ij} \sim N(\mu_{ij}, \sigma^2)$$

$$\mu_{ij} = \alpha + \beta T_{ij} + \sum_u \beta_u X_{uij} + \sum_v \gamma_v Z_{vij} + u_j$$

$$u_j \sim N(0, \tau^2)$$

with priors:

- $\alpha \sim N(0, 10)$
- $\beta \sim N(0, 10^2)$  (Current)
- $\beta \sim N(0, 5^2)$  (Skeptical)
- $\beta \sim N(0.5, 2^2)$  (Informative)
- $\sigma^2, \tau^2 \sim \text{InvGamma}(0.01, 0.01)$

Implementation used 4 chains with 2,000 iterations (1,000 warmup), assessed via the Gelman-Rubin diagnostic.

## 5 Results and Discussion

Hierarchical multilevel modeling (HMR, see Appendix 7.1) revealed that household characteristics significantly impact governments' protective efforts. Average household size emerged as the strongest positive predictor ( $\beta = 1.34$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), supporting literature suggesting enhanced detection capacity in larger households. Lone-parent households showed a substantial negative association ( $\beta = -0.66$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), indicating that increases in reporting are less pronounced in districts with higher lone-parent households. Rural population demonstrated a significant negative effect ( $\beta = -0.36$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), suggesting structural barriers in rural areas.

Significant interaction effects between conservatism-religious affiliation ( $\beta = -0.24$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) and rural population density ( $\beta = -0.25$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) indicated compounded reporting barriers, with high ICC (0.57) confirming substantial country-level variation.

LCA results (see Appendix 7.1) identified four classes: Urban Balanced regions ( $n = 108$ ,  $\Delta R = +9.20\%$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) with low rural population (21.2%) and conservatism (31.3%), showing higher male reporting (24.4%); Rural-Conservative regions ( $n = 48$ ,  $\Delta R = +1.35\%$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) with high rural population (82.4%) and conservatism (64.2%), showing low male reporting (4.1%); High-Risk regions ( $n = 73$ ,  $\Delta R = +0.74\%$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) with high post-conflict presence (64.1%), religious affiliation (53.2%), and conservatism (56.0%). Mixed Regions ( $n = 137$ ) achieved moderate gains ( $\Delta R = +6.94\%$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), suggesting that balanced non-manipulable factors enable more effective policy outcomes.

Validation confirmed policy effects (posterior mean = 0.598, 95% CI [0.112, 1.137], (see Appendix 7.1), robust under skeptical priors (posterior mean = 0.492, 95% CI [0.046, 0.984], *ibid*), validating that



reporting variations reflect genuine differences in government capacity.

Study limitations include selection bias towards countries with strong protection systems, authoritative classification of 'conservative' parties, simplified cultural measurements, varying reporting procedures, limited temporal scope (10-14 months), and COVID-19-related exclusions. These constraints suggest a need for longer-term studies with broader geographic coverage and more nuanced cultural measures.

Based on the empirical findings, Table 2 presents four key non-manipulable factors with the respective confidence levels we can assign to their influence on states' capacity, given statistical significance and limitations:

1. **Rural population percentage interacted with density.**
2. **Lone-parent household percentage.**
3. **Cultural conservatism-religious affiliation interaction.**
4. **Post-conflict status.**

Rural population becomes particularly significant when interacted with population density, suggesting the importance of understanding comprehensive geospatial dynamics rather than isolated rural metrics. For lone-parent influences, the percentage of total households was selected over total family metrics, as it better captures parental fatigue, resource constraints, and supervision challenges. This approach also offers greater data availability across countries, as most measures of household resources are household-level metrics. The UCDP/PRIO Armed Conflict Dataset offers optimal post-conflict measurement through city-level and monthly resolution, as its high disaggregation captures conflict impacts on institutional trust and reporting patterns.

For measuring the religion-conservatism interaction, World Values Survey indicators are recommended over conservative voter data. Particular focus should be placed on indicators of religious importance, obedience values, and social class perceptions.

Given gender's impact on policy effectiveness, data collection should maintain gender disaggregation to ensure non-discriminatory findings and better understand factors driving male underreporting despite government efforts.

Table 2: Non-Manipulable Factors Indicating States' Capacity to Achieve SDG 16.2.3

Concept	Description	Indicator Source	Nbr Countries/Time	Confidence
<b>Rural Population Interacted with Population Density</b>	Percentage of total population interacted with persons per sq. km. Population density measured as people per sq. km.	( <a href="#">link</a> ) United Nations Statistics Division ( <a href="#">link</a> )	266 countries (1990-2023, Annual) 270 countries (2010-2024) 234 countries (Every five years)	High
<b>Lone Parents</b>	Percentage of households in a country that are single-parent households. Share of single-parent households relative to all households.	World Population Review ( <a href="#">link</a> )	129 countries (2010-2018, Annual - estimated from census data)	Medium
<b>Religious Values</b>	Measures importance of religion and conservative values through survey questions. Key questions include: 'Is religion important in life?' and 'What is the meaning of religion?'.	World Values Survey ( <a href="#">1981-2022</a> )	119 countries (1981-2022, Every Four Years)	Low
<b>Class Culture and Indicators of Conservative Class</b>	Measures social class perception and conservative class indicators. Survey questions on class mobility, including 'The class your family will belong to after 5 years' and 'Social Class'.	World Values Survey ( <a href="#">1981-2022</a> )	119 countries (1981-2022, Every Four Years)	Low
<b>Post-Conflict Area</b>	Dataset covering disaggregated organized violence, geo-coded to village level and daily temporal granularity. Events of lethal violence coded spatially and temporally.	Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP) ( <a href="#">link</a> ) Davies et al. (2024), Sundberg and Melander (2013)	All conflict and post-conflict impacted countries (1989-2023, Annual)	Medium

## 6 Implications

This study addresses critical gaps in understanding how structural factors constrain governments' CSA protective capacity. Three key contributions were made: theoretically quantifying how non-manipulable factors affect policy outcomes, methodologically innovating through the use of reporting rates as effectiveness measures, and empirically demonstrating the need for context-specific interventions. However, while increases in crime rates served as a methodologically necessary but limited proxy measures for only one aspect of CSA protection, this study identified and proposed quantifiable indicators for other dimensions, despite their limitations.

The substantial country-level variation ( $ICC = 0.57$ ) suggests differentiated resource allocation strategies, while persistent gender disparities indicate the need for male-specific approaches. These findings point to reconceptualizing religious and rural institutions as implementation partners and tailoring interventions to local structural constraints, advancing both scholarly understanding and practical policy design in child protection systems.

More importantly, the stark disconnect between the international community's commitment to end child sexual abuse and the deeply flawed indicators used to measure progress - characterized by fragmented data collection, incompatible methodologies, and insufficient disaggregation - raises fundamental questions about the feasibility of SDG 16.2.3. We cannot claim to end any form of violence we do not understand, and measurement is contingent on understanding the depth, scope and impact of CSA.

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## 7 Appendix

This appendix contains supplementary information.

### 7.1 Appendix.A Model Results

Table 4: Hierarchical Multilevel Regression Results for Non-Manipulable Factors and Their Association with Regional Variations in CSA Reporting

	Estimate	Lower CI	Upper CI
(Intercept)	1.12 (3.15)	-5.06	7.29
Rural Population (%)	-0.36** (0.013)	-0.38	-0.33
Average Household Size	1.34*** (0.199)	0.95	1.73
Lone Parent Households (%)	-0.66*** (0.015)	-0.69	-0.63
Cultural Conservatism	-0.03 (0.046)	-0.09	0.09
Religious Affiliation	0.03 (0.064)	-0.11	0.14
Conservatism:Religion	-0.24** (0.074)	-0.39	-0.10
Rural:Density	-0.25** (0.059)	-0.36	-0.13
Post-Conflict Region (1=Yes)	-0.15* (0.069)	0.01	0.28
GSP per Capita	0.75*** (0.140)	0.48	1.03
Gini Coefficient	-0.28** (0.094)	-0.47	-0.10
Police Capacity	0.66*** (0.089)	-0.83	-0.48
Gender: Male	-0.68*** (0.102)	-0.88	-0.48
Gender: Persons	-0.18 (0.260)	-0.69	0.33
Observations	366		
R <sup>2</sup>	0.47		
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.42		
$\sigma^2$	7.02		
$\tau_{00}$ (Country)	12.43		
ICC	0.57		

Note: \* $p < 0.05$ ; \*\* $p < 0.01$ ; \*\*\* $p < 0.001$ . Note:  $\tau_{00}$  represents group-level variance (Country), and  $\sigma^2$  is the residual variance. A high ICC (0.57) indicates substantial between-group variance.

Latent Class	Sample Size (n)	% Post-Conflict Regions	Religious Affiliation (%)	Male Victim Reporting (% of all reported cases)	Rural Population (%)	Cultural Conservatism (%)
<b>Class 0: High Risk</b>	73	64.1 ± 7.2%	53.2 ± 3.6%	15.4 ± 1.8%	72.3 ± 4.8%	56.0 ± 3.7%
<b>Mean <math>\Delta R</math> (%)</b>	+0.74** ± 0.35%					
<b>Class 1: Rural-Conservative</b>	48	13.4 ± 6.8%	49.3 ± 5.7%	4.1 ± 2.5%	82.4 ± 6.9%	64.2 ± 5.8%
<b>Mean <math>\Delta R</math> (%)</b>	+1.35* ± 0.55%					
<b>Class 2: Urban Balanced</b>	108	22.4 ± 4.9%	33.5 ± 3.5%	24.4 ± 1.7%	21.2 ± 4.7%	31.3 ± 3.8%
<b>Mean <math>\Delta R</math> (%)</b>	+9.20* ± 0.32%					
<b>Class 3: Mixed Regions</b>	137	24.1 ± 4.6%	38.1 ± 3.9%	24.2 ± 1.9%	44.2 ± 4.5%	41.7 ± 3.6%
<b>Mean <math>\Delta R</math> (%)</b>	+6.94*** ± 0.37%					
<b>Total</b>	366	—	—	—	—	—

Note: \*  $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*  $p < 0.01$ ; \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

Table 5: Bayesian Hierarchical Model Results of Policy Effects on CSA Reporting

Predictor	Posterior Mean	95% CI	$P(\beta > 0)$	$\hat{R}$	ESS
<i>Fixed Effects</i>					
Intercept	0.342	[0.017, 0.629]*	0.91*	1.03	1478
Policy Treatment	0.598	[0.112, 1.137]*	0.88*	1.04	1395
<i>Regional Characteristics</i>					
Rural Population (%)	-0.213	[-0.488, 0.062]	0.12	1.03	1289
Religious Affiliation (%)	0.078	[-0.048, 0.225]	0.81	1.04	1237
Post-Conflict Status	-0.097	[-0.402, 0.197]	0.31	1.05	1314
Cultural Conservatism	-0.052	[-0.294, 0.157]	0.42	1.04	1248
<i>Household Characteristics</i>					
Average Household Size	0.247	[0.013, 0.543]*	0.86*	1.03	1412
Lone Parent Household (%)	-0.312	[-0.704, 0.048]	0.11	1.04	1297
<i>Interaction Terms</i>					
Conservatism × Religion	-0.146	[-0.393, 0.103]	0.22	1.04	1225
Rural × Density	-0.176	[-0.447, 0.084]	0.19	1.03	1209
<i>Control Variables</i>					
GSP per Capita	0.348	[0.045, 0.692]*	0.91*	1.03	1423
Gini Coefficient	-0.201	[-0.508, 0.044]	0.14	1.04	1304
Police Capacity	0.194	[-0.107, 0.459]	0.76	1.03	1218
<i>Gender Effects<sup>a</sup></i>					
Male	-0.453	[-0.861, -0.215]*	0.04*	1.03	1321
Persons (Aggregate)	-0.118	[-0.397, 0.052]	0.24	1.04	1398
<i>Variance Components</i>					
$\sigma^2_{\text{Region}}$	1.137	[0.621, 1.832]	—		
$\sigma^2_{\text{Country}}$	1.472	[0.719, 2.521]	—		
$\sigma^2_{\text{Policy}}$	0.683	[0.312, 1.189]	—		

<sup>a</sup> Reference category: Female

Note: \*  $p < 0.05$ ,

All continuous predictors are standardized.

$\hat{R} > 1.1$  indicates model convergence.

ESS: Effective Sample Size

N = 366 observations across all regions

Prior specifications: Half-Cauchy(0, 2.5) for variance components;  $N(0, 10^2)$  for fixed effects

Table 6: Prior Sensitivity Analysis for Policy Effect

Prior Distribution	Posterior Mean	95% CI	$P(\beta > 0)$
<i>Current Prior: <math>N(0, 10^2)</math></i>	0.598	[0.112, 1.137]	0.88*
<i>Skeptical Prior: <math>N(0, 5^2)</math></i>	0.492	[0.046, 0.984]	0.84*
<i>Informative Prior: <math>N(0.5, 2^2)</math></i>	0.543	[0.213, 0.897]	0.92*

Note: The policy effect was tested with three priors: a weakly informative prior  $N(0, 10^2)$ , a skeptical prior  $N(0, 5^2)$ , and an informative prior  $N(0.5, 2^2)$  as per recommendation.

## 7.2 Appendix.B - Selected policies

Country	Policy	Year	Source
South Africa	Effective implementation of mandatory reporting law for professionals	2010	<a href="#">Link</a>
South Africa	Extension of mandatory reporting requirement	2022	<a href="#">Link</a>
South Africa	NCPP: Comprehensive child care strategy (child-friendly investigations, strengthened FCTs, national prevention campaign)	2014, 2019	<a href="#">Link</a>
India	Fast Track Special Courts (FTSCs) and POCSO courts: child-friendly police stations, 1000 FCTs implementation	2018, 2019	<a href="#">Link</a>
India	POCSO Act Amendment: Introduction of more stringent punishments with incentivization aims	2021	<a href="#">Link</a>
Australia	National Redress Scheme: compensation and legal counseling for institutional abuse victims	2018	<a href="#">Link</a>
Australia	Amendment of Crime Legislation Act: stricter penalties and extended mandatory reporting	2021	<a href="#">Link</a>
Canada	Supreme Court landmark case calling for tougher CSA punishment and CY-ACS opening in all provinces after CSA fighting national strategy	2018, 2020	<a href="#">Link</a>

### 7.3 Appendix.C Ind. Variables by Country and Sources

Variable	Country	Source	Source URL	Note	Estimated
Rural Population (%)	IND	DHS-5/DHS-4; World Administrative Boundaries dataset	<a href="https://dhsprogram.com/pubs/pdf/FR375/FR375.pdf">https://dhsprogram.com/pubs/pdf/FR375/FR375.pdf</a> , <a href="https://dhsprogram.com/methodology/survey/survey-display-355.cfm">https://dhsprogram.com/methodology/survey/survey-display-355.cfm</a> , <a href="https://public.opendatasoft.com/explore/dataset/world-administrative-boundaries/export/">https://public.opendatasoft.com/explore/dataset/world-administrative-boundaries/export/</a>	-	Yes
Rural Population (%)	AUS	Australian Bureau of Statistics; World Administrative Boundaries dataset	<a href="https://www.abs.gov.au">https://www.abs.gov.au</a> , <a href="https://public.opendatasoft.com/explore/dataset/world-administrative-boundaries/export/">https://public.opendatasoft.com/explore/dataset/world-administrative-boundaries/export/</a>	-	Yes
Rural Population (%)	CAN	StatCan; World Administrative Boundaries dataset	<a href="https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/type/data?MM=1">https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/type/data?MM=1</a> , <a href="https://public.opendatasoft.com/explore/dataset/world-administrative-boundaries/export/">https://public.opendatasoft.com/explore/dataset/world-administrative-boundaries/export/</a>	-	Yes
Rural Population (%)	ZAF	Stats SA; World Administrative Boundaries dataset	<a href="https://www.statssa.gov.za/?page_id=595">https://www.statssa.gov.za/?page_id=595</a> , <a href="https://public.opendatasoft.com/explore/dataset/world-administrative-boundaries/export/">https://public.opendatasoft.com/explore/dataset/world-administrative-boundaries/export/</a>	-	Yes
Average Household Size	IND	DHS-5/DHS-4	<a href="https://dhsprogram.com/pubs/pdf/FR375/FR375.pdf">https://dhsprogram.com/pubs/pdf/FR375/FR375.pdf</a> , <a href="https://dhsprogram.com/methodology/survey/survey-display-355.cfm">https://dhsprogram.com/methodology/survey/survey-display-355.cfm</a>	-	No

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Variable	Country	Source	Source URL	Note	Estimated
Average Household Size	AUS	Australian Bureau of Statistics	<a href="https://www.abs.gov.au">https://www.abs.gov.au</a>	-	No
Average Household Size	CAN	StatCan	<a href="https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/type/data?MM=1">https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/type/data?MM=1</a>	-	No
Average Household Size	ZAF	Stats SA	<a href="https://www.statssa.gov.za/?page_id=595">https://www.statssa.gov.za/?page_id=595</a>	-	Yes
Lone Parent Households (%)	IND	DHS-5/DHS-4	<a href="https://dhsprogram.com/pubs/pdf/FR375/FR375.pdf">https://dhsprogram.com/pubs/pdf/FR375/FR375.pdf</a> , <a href="https://dhsprogram.com/methodology/survey/survey-display-355.cfm">https://dhsprogram.com/methodology/survey/survey-display-355.cfm</a>	-	No
Lone Parent Households (%)	AUS	Australian Bureau of Statistics	<a href="https://www.abs.gov.au">https://www.abs.gov.au</a>	-	No
Lone Parent Households (%)	CAN	StatCan	<a href="https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/type/data?MM=1">https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/type/data?MM=1</a>	-	No
Lone Parent Households (%)	ZAF	Children Count; Stats SA	<a href="https://www.statssa.gov.za/?page_id=595">https://www.statssa.gov.za/?page_id=595</a> , <a href="http://childrencount.uct.ac.za">http://childrencount.uct.ac.za</a>	-	No
Cultural Conservatism	IND	Election Commission of India	<a href="https://www.eci.gov.in/statistical-reports">https://www.eci.gov.in/statistical-reports</a>	BJP, RSS, VHP, Shiv Sena	No
Cultural Conservatism	AUS	Australian Electoral Commission	<a href="https://results.aec.gov.au/27966/Website/HouseDefault-27966.htm">https://results.aec.gov.au/27966/Website/HouseDefault-27966.htm</a>	Liberal Party, National Party	No
Cultural Conservatism	CAN	Elections Canada Agency	<a href="https://www.elections.ca/content.aspx?section=res&amp;dir=rep/off&amp;document=index&amp;lang=e">https://www.elections.ca/content.aspx?section=res&amp;dir=rep/off&amp;document=index&amp;lang=e</a>	Conservative Party, People's Party	No

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Variable	Country	Source	Source URL	Note	Estimated
Cultural Conser- vatism	ZAF	Electoral Commis- sion of South Africa	<a href="https://results.elections.org.za/home/">https://results.elections.org.za/home/</a>	Freedom Front Plus, ACDP	No
Rural Popu- lation (%)	IND	DHS-5/DHS-4; World Adminis- trative Boundaries dataset	<a href="https://dhsprogram.com/pubs/pdf/FR375/FR375.pdf">https://dhsprogram.com/pubs/pdf/FR375/FR375.pdf</a> , <a href="https://dhsprogram.com/methodology/survey/survey-display-355.cfm">https://dhsprogram.com/methodology/survey/survey-display-355.cfm</a> , <a href="https://public.opendatasoft.com/explore/dataset/world-administrative-boundaries/export/">https://public.opendatasoft.com/explore/dataset/world-administrative-boundaries/export/</a>	-	Yes
Rural Popu- lation (%)	AUS	Australian Bureau of Statistics; World Administrative Boundaries dataset	<a href="https://www.abs.gov.au">https://www.abs.gov.au</a> , <a href="https://public.opendatasoft.com/explore/dataset/world-administrative-boundaries/export/">https://public.opendatasoft.com/explore/dataset/world-administrative-boundaries/export/</a>	-	Yes
Rural Popu- lation (%)	CAN	StatCan; World Administrative Boundaries dataset	<a href="https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/type/data?MM=1">https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/type/data?MM=1</a> , <a href="https://public.opendatasoft.com/explore/dataset/world-administrative-boundaries/export/">https://public.opendatasoft.com/explore/dataset/world-administrative-boundaries/export/</a>	-	Yes
Rural Popu- lation (%)	ZAF	Stats SA; World Administrative Boundaries dataset	<a href="https://www.statssa.gov.za/?page_id=595">https://www.statssa.gov.za/?page_id=595</a> , <a href="https://public.opendatasoft.com/explore/dataset/world-administrative-boundaries/export/">https://public.opendatasoft.com/explore/dataset/world-administrative-boundaries/export/</a>	-	Yes

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Variable	Country	Source	Source URL	Note	Estimated
Average Household Size	IND	DHS-5/DHS-4	<a href="https://dhsprogram.com/pubs/pdf/FR375/FR375.pdf">https://dhsprogram.com/pubs/pdf/FR375/FR375.pdf</a> , <a href="https://dhsprogram.com/methodology/survey/survey-display-355.cfm">https://dhsprogram.com/methodology/survey/survey-display-355.cfm</a>	-	No
Average Household Size	AUS	Australian Bureau of Statistics	<a href="https://www.abs.gov.au">https://www.abs.gov.au</a>	-	No
Average Household Size	CAN	StatCan	<a href="https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/type/data?MM=1">https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/type/data?MM=1</a>	-	No
Average Household Size	ZAF	Stats SA	<a href="https://www.statssa.gov.za/?page_id=595">https://www.statssa.gov.za/?page_id=595</a>	-	Yes
Lone Parent Households (%)	IND	DHS-5/DHS-4	<a href="https://dhsprogram.com/pubs/pdf/FR375/FR375.pdf">https://dhsprogram.com/pubs/pdf/FR375/FR375.pdf</a> , <a href="https://dhsprogram.com/methodology/survey/survey-display-355.cfm">https://dhsprogram.com/methodology/survey/survey-display-355.cfm</a>	-	No
Lone Parent Households (%)	AUS	Australian Bureau of Statistics	<a href="https://www.abs.gov.au">https://www.abs.gov.au</a>	-	No
Lone Parent Households (%)	CAN	StatCan	<a href="https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/type/data?MM=1">https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/type/data?MM=1</a>	-	No
Lone Parent Households (%)	ZAF	Children Count; Stats SA	<a href="https://www.statssa.gov.za/?page_id=595">https://www.statssa.gov.za/?page_id=595</a> , <a href="http://childrencount.uct.ac.za">http://childrencount.uct.ac.za</a>	-	No
Cultural Conservatism	IND	Election Commission of India	<a href="https://www.eci.gov.in/statistical-reports">https://www.eci.gov.in/statistical-reports</a>	BJP, RSS, VHP, Shiv Sena, Hindu Mahasabha, ABVP, Bajrang Dal	No

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Variable	Country	Source	Source URL	Note	Estimated
Cultural Conservatism	AUS	Australian Electoral Commission	<a href="https://results.aec.gov.au/27966/Website/HouseDefault-27966.htm">https://results.aec.gov.au/27966/Website/HouseDefault-27966.htm</a>	Liberal Party, National Party, One Nation, Australian Conservatives, Christian Democratic Party, Family First Party	No
Cultural Conservatism	CAN	Elections Canada Agency	<a href="https://www.elections.ca/content.aspx?section=res&amp;dir=rep/off&amp;document=index&amp;lang=e">https://www.elections.ca/content.aspx?section=res&amp;dir=rep/off&amp;document=index&amp;lang=e</a>	Conservative Party of Canada, People's Party of Canada, Christian Heritage Party, National Citizens Alliance, Maverick Party, Social Credit Party	No
Cultural Conservatism	ZAF	Electoral Commission of South Africa	<a href="https://results.elections.org.za/home/">https://results.elections.org.za/home/</a>	Freedom Front Plus, African Christian Democratic Party, National Party, Conservative Party, United Christian Democratic Party	No

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Variable	Country	Source	Source URL	Note	Estimated
Religious Af-filiation	IND	DHS-5/DHS-4	<a href="https://dhsprogram.com/pubs/pdf/FR375/FR375.pdf">https://dhsprogram.com/pubs/pdf/FR375/FR375.pdf</a> , <a href="https://dhsprogram.com/methodology/survey/survey-display-355.cfm">https://dhsprogram.com/methodology/survey/survey-display-355.cfm</a>	Yes, data were disaggregated per religion	Yes
Religious Af-filiation	AUS	Australian Bureau of Statistics	<a href="https://www.abs.gov.au">https://www.abs.gov.au</a>	-	No
Religious Af-filiation	CAN	StatCan	<a href="https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/type/data?MM=1">https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/type/data?MM=1</a>	-	No
Religious Af-filiation	ZAF	Stats SA	<a href="https://www.statssa.gov.za/?page_id=595">https://www.statssa.gov.za/?page_id=595</a>	Yes, data were disaggregated per religion	Yes
Post-Conflict Region	IND	UCDP Dataset	<a href="https://ucdp.uu.se/downloads/">https://ucdp.uu.se/downloads/</a>	-	No
Post-Conflict Region	AUS	UCDP Dataset	<a href="https://ucdp.uu.se/downloads/">https://ucdp.uu.se/downloads/</a>	-	No
Post-Conflict Region	CAN	UCDP Dataset	<a href="https://ucdp.uu.se/downloads/">https://ucdp.uu.se/downloads/</a>	-	No
Post-Conflict Region	ZAF	UCDP Dataset	<a href="https://ucdp.uu.se/downloads/">https://ucdp.uu.se/downloads/</a>	-	No
GSP per Capita	IND	DHS-5/DHS-4	<a href="https://dhsprogram.com/pubs/pdf/FR375/FR375.pdf">https://dhsprogram.com/pubs/pdf/FR375/FR375.pdf</a> , <a href="https://dhsprogram.com/methodology/survey/survey-display-355.cfm">https://dhsprogram.com/methodology/survey/survey-display-355.cfm</a>	-	No
GSP per Capita	AUS	Australian Bureau of Statistics	<a href="https://www.abs.gov.au">https://www.abs.gov.au</a>	-	No
GSP per Capita	CAN	StatCan	<a href="https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/type/data?MM=1">https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/type/data?MM=1</a>	-	No

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Variable	Country	Source	Source URL	Note	Estimated
GSP per Capita	ZAF	Stats SA	<a href="https://www.statssa.gov.za/?page_id=595">https://www.statssa.gov.za/?page_id=595</a>	-	No

## 7.4 Appendix.D - CSA reported offenses sources

**Figure.1. Country-Specific CSA Data and Population Age Structure**

Country	Variable	Source	Source_URL
IND	CSA Police-Recorded Offenses *	NCRB (National Crime Records Bureau)	<a href="https://www.ncrb.gov.in">https://www.ncrb.gov.in</a>
IND	Population Age Structure	DHS4-5	<a href="https://dhsprogram.com/pubs/pdf/FR375/FR375.pdf">https://dhsprogram.com/pubs/pdf/FR375/FR375.pdf</a> <a href="https://dhsprogram.com/methodology/survey/survey-display-355.cfm">https://dhsprogram.com/methodology/survey/survey-display-355.cfm</a>
AUS	CSA Police-Recorded Offenses *	Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS)	<a href="https://www.abs.gov.au">https://www.abs.gov.au</a>
AUS	Population Age Structure	ABS	<a href="https://www.abs.gov.au">https://www.abs.gov.au</a>
CAN	CSA Police-Recorded Offenses *	Statistics Canada (StatCan)	<a href="https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=3510017701">https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=3510017701</a>
CAN	Population Age Structure	StatCan	<a href="https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/type/data?text=age+structure">https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/type/data?text=age+structure</a>
ZAF	CSA Police-Recorded Offenses *	SAPS	<a href="https://www.saps.gov.za/services/crimestats.php">https://www.saps.gov.za/services/crimestats.php</a>
ZAF	Population Age Structure	Stats SA - Demographic Reports	<a href="https://www.statssa.gov.za">https://www.statssa.gov.za</a>

*Note: Only similar type of CSA offenses data were collected to ensure compatibility of the dependent variable across countries. Online offenses were excluded as differently classified and counted between countries. Data were disaggregated per gender and at the district level or police area. In the case of police area disaggregation, data were aggregated and mapped to region level to ensure comparability with other data at the region level. Data collection ensured numbers and counts referred to victim counts, and not cases numbers, as multiple victims can be involved in a cases. CSA crime rate was calculated using population age structure, to ensure crime rates reflected crime rate per 100.000 children, where children age is <19.*