

NATIONAL

Reports of child abuse up 20-fold in decade

KYODO

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Police reported abuse cases involving a record 21,603 children to child consultation centers last year, up 31.8 percent from a year earlier and marking a 20-fold increase over a decade, the National Police Agency said Thursday.

An agency official attributed the increase to “growing public awareness” of child abuse, saying that an increasing number of neighbors as well as hospitals and schools are now trying to report potential incidents.

Reports on children age 18 or under were made in line with the Child Abuse Prevention Law. The sum topped 20,000 for the first time since 2004, when the agency started collecting data and reported 962 abuse victims.

Mental abuse accounted for the largest number of cases, up 49.3 percent with 12,344 child victims.

In this category, domestic violence between spouses, considered emotional abuse, has drawn strong attention from the agency in recent years due to its rapid increase.

Last year, 8,059 children were reported as victims of this form of abuse, up from 5,431 in 2012.

Other forms of mental abuse include verbal attacks, such as a mother saying she wished she had not given birth to her child.

Physical violence affected 6,150 children and 2,960 suffered neglect, the agency said.

The police made arrests and took other law-enforcement steps in 467 cases, down five from the previous year but still the second-highest on record. The cases include 334 involving physical abuse as well as 16 involving mental abuse. The latter category is considered hard to prosecute.

The cases involved 475 children, 25 of whom died, a record low, according to the agency.

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