



Issue No. 8

CELEBRATORY SHOOTINGS

in South East Europe in 2021

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ABOUT IN FOCUS - ARMED VIOLENCE MONITOR

In Focus - Armed Violence Monitors provide information on the specific types of firearm incidents and the related topics to illustrate the magnitude of firearms' adverse impact on civilians.

This issue deals with **celebratory shooting** incidents in South East Europe (SEE) from **1 January to 31 December 2021**, including a comparative overview to 2020. The celebratory shooting is an act of discharging a firearm into the air during celebrations, festivities, sports, religious or other public events. Celebrating and marking the occasion with loud gunfire is a tradition that has prevailed in many cultures and geographic regions, including SEE. There are, however, a number of risks and consequences associated with this practice, from accidental death and injury to property damage caused by stray bullets.

METHODOLOGY

The information provided in this report is gathered from the [Armed Violence Monitoring Platform \(AVMP\)](#), which captures data on firearm-related incidents happening in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia, North Macedonia, Kosovo* and the Republic of Moldova.

The data is gathered daily from the relevant authorities' official websites, as well as print and online media. Data for Kosovo is also gathered from police daily incident reports. Quality assurance is conducted rigorously by SEESAC. The platform has seen significant improvements in recent years in terms of data collection and categorization.

The AVMP has been established by SEESAC and funded by the European Union within the framework of the [EU Council Decision \(CFSP\) 2016/2356](#) and [EU Council Decision \(CFSP\) 2019/2111](#).

HIGHLIGHTS

125

celebratory shooting incidents were documented on the AVMP in 2021, nearly **double** the number from 2020.

52

celebratory shooting incidents were reported in **August**, making it the month with the highest number of such incidents.

84

celebratory shooting incidents took place during **family celebrations**.

**References to Kosovo shall be understood to be in the context of Security Council Resolution 1244 (1999).*

NOTABLE CELEBRATORY SHOOTINGS IN 2021

“
An unidentified person discharged a rifle into the air during a celebration. The fired bullet hit a power cord and the electric shock killed two men, aged 38 and 32. The police suspect that one of the victims discharged the firearm.

*11 May 2021
Zmajevo, Serbia*

“
A woman was shot and injured by a stray bullet while she was standing on her balcony during the New Year's Eve celebration. The woman received medical treatment.

*1 January 2021
Viti / Vitina, Kosovo*

“
A 39-year-old man was arrested after posting a video on social media showing him teaching a young boy how to shoot with a pistol.

*1 January 2021
Bogovinje, North Macedonia*

“
Four police officers were arrested and suspended from duty after they had shot with their service guns into the air during a birthday celebration and posted a video about it on social media. No victims were reported.

*25 March 2021
Lezhë, Albania*

“
A police officer discharged a gas pistol "Bruni MOD 92" cal. 9 mm four times during a family celebration. The perpetrator surrendered the firearm, which was in illegal possession.

*19 June 2021
Bar, Montenegro*

“
A 32-year-old male musician was accidentally shot and injured in the leg with a rifle by a 24-year-old man during a celebration. The perpetrator was arrested and was charged with causing general danger.

*18 July 2021
Povelič, Bosnia and Herzegovina*

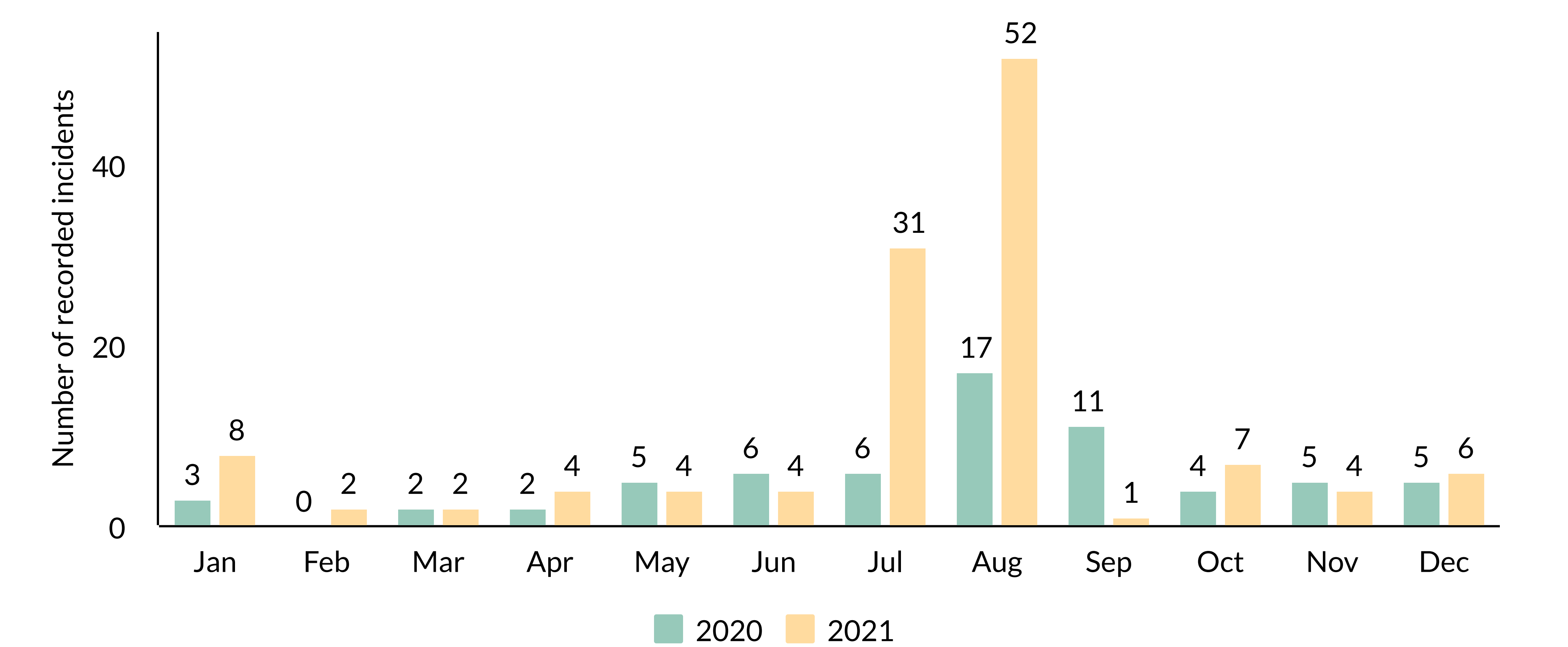
1. CELEBRATORY SHOOTING INCIDENTS

1.1 General overview

1.1.1 Celebratory shooting incidents throughout 2021

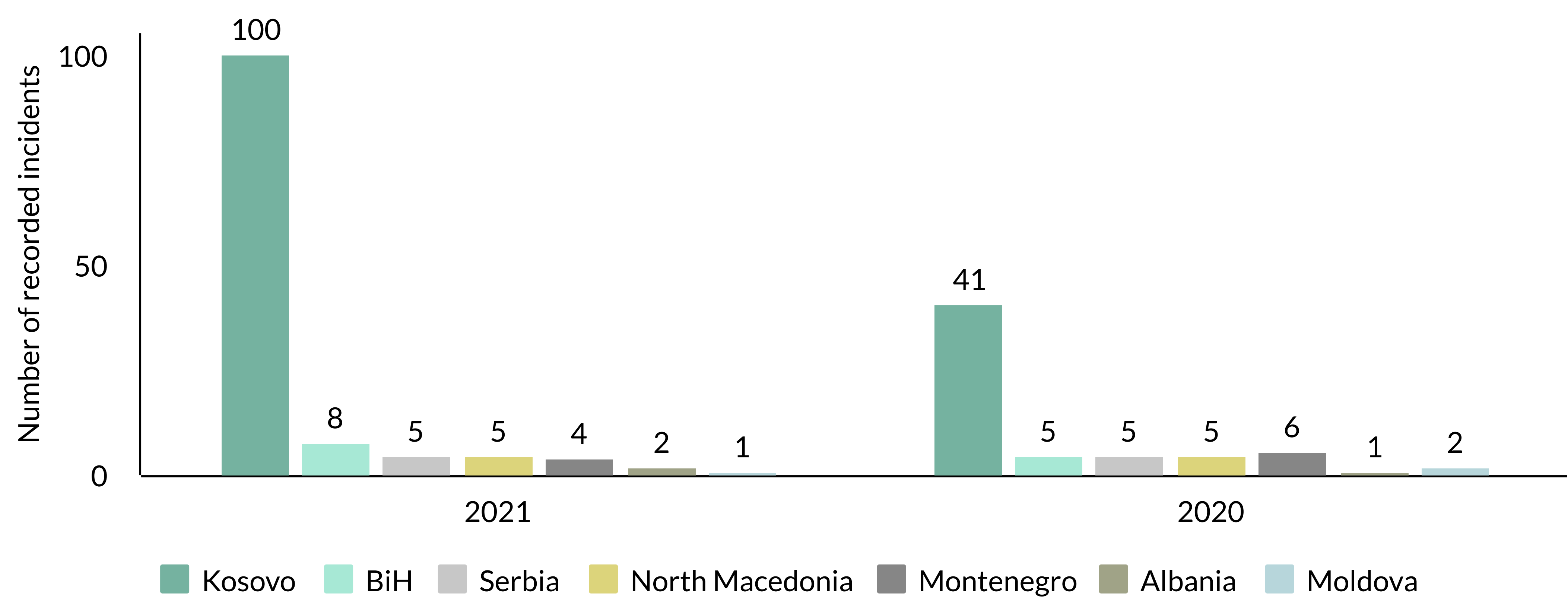
The monthly number of recorded celebratory shooting incidents was consistently low during the first half of 2021. However, the number increased in July (31), peaking in August with 52 celebratory shootings. The trend fell in September and remained relatively constant during the last quarter of 2021.

It should be noted that the high number of celebratory shootings in the summer months followed the same trend from 2020. Compared to the same period in 2020, though, the number of incidents tripled in August 2021. Similar to 2020, the majority of these shootings took place at family celebrations.



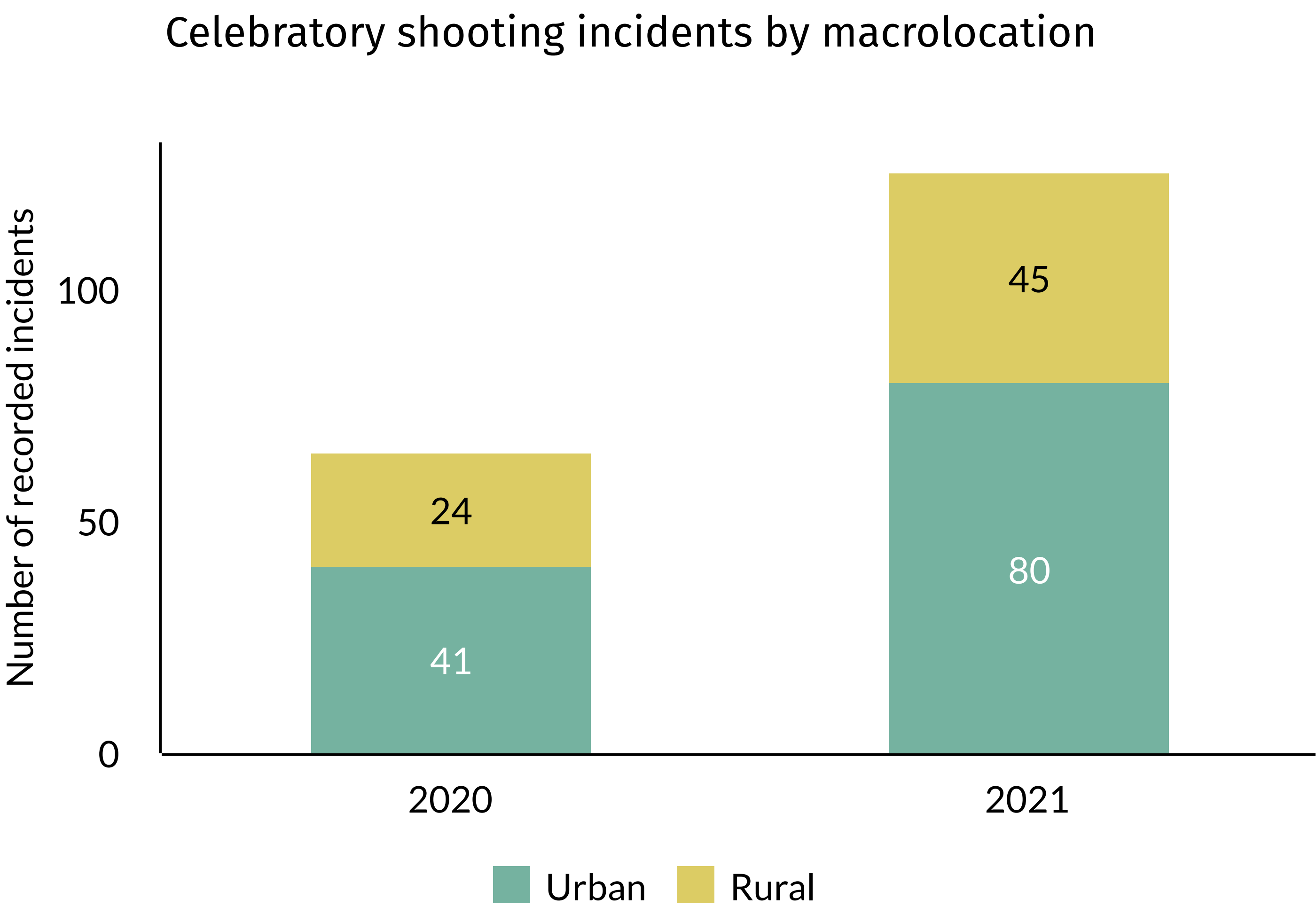
1.1.2 Celebratory shooting in jurisdictions

Like in 2020, the highest number of all recorded celebratory shooting incidents in 2021 were reported in Kosovo (100). The comparative data show that the number of incidents in Kosovo more than doubled in 2021. A slight increase was observed in Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina, while a decrease was seen in Moldova and Montenegro. The number of these incidents in North Macedonia and Serbia remained the same in 2021.

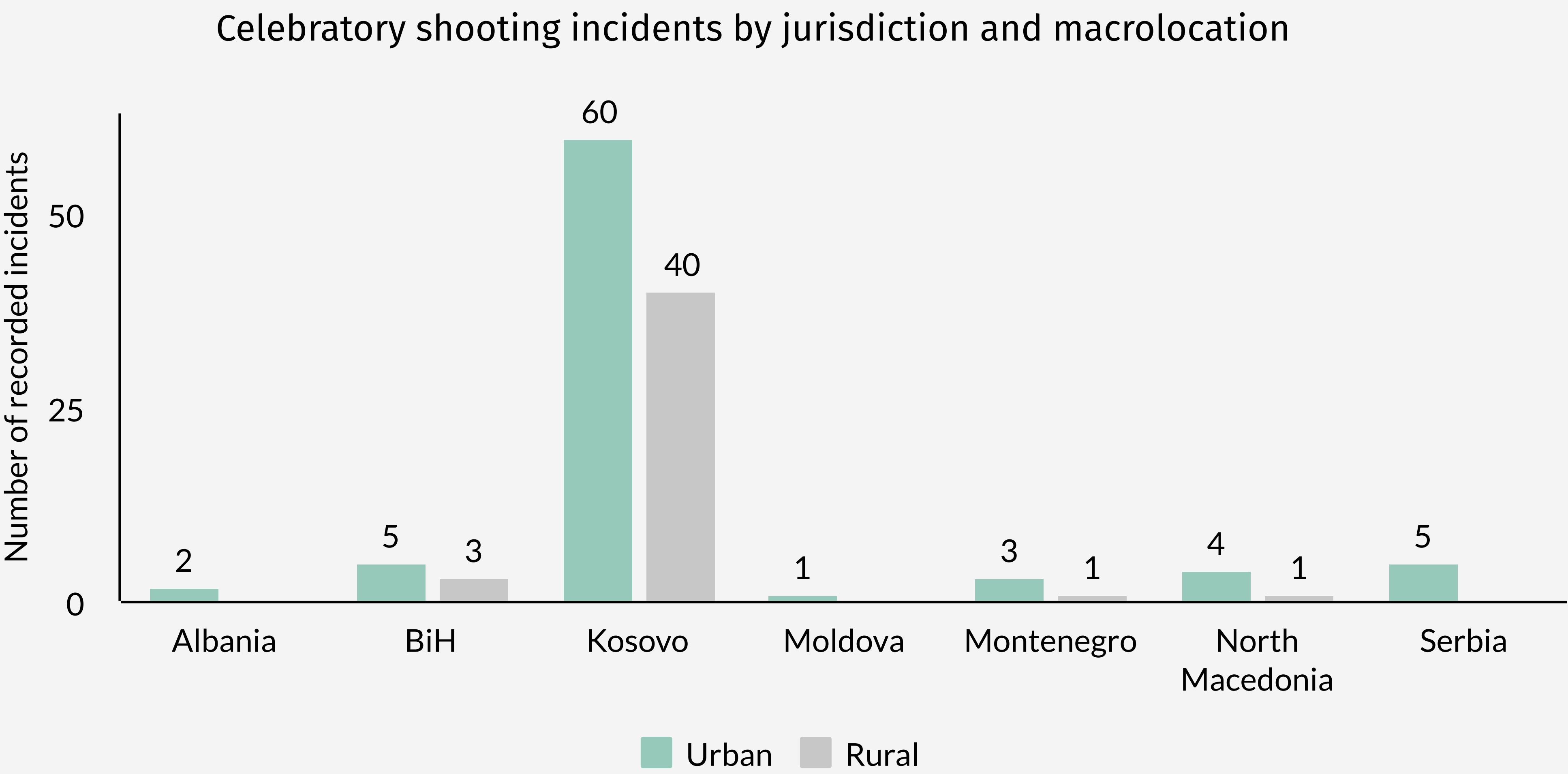


1.1.3 Celebratory shooting incidents by macrolocation

According to macrolocation statistics, in both 2020 and 2021, incidents occurring in urban areas were about twice as frequent as those occurring in rural areas.



In Albania, Moldova, and Serbia, the reported celebratory shooting incidents occurred in urban areas in 2021.



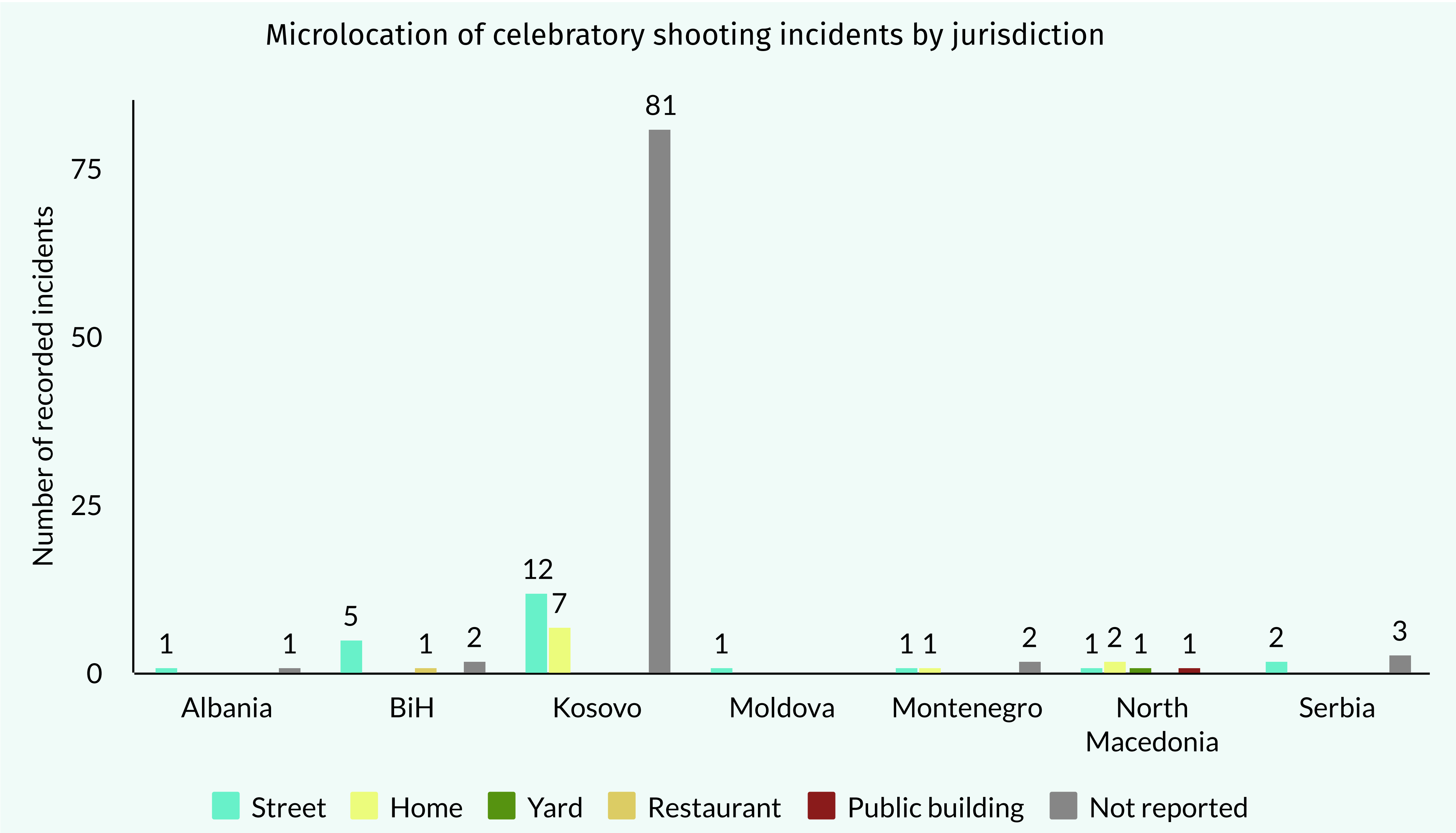
1.1.4 Celebratory shooting incidents by microlocation

The microlocation was not reported for 89 (71%) celebratory shooting incidents. When microlocation was reported (36 incidents or 29%), the majority of incidents took place either in the streets (23 or 64%) or at homes (10 or 28%). Similar data was reported in 2020, with 15 incidents occurring on the streets and 13 at homes.

The data on both macro and micro location indicate that all celebratory shooting incidents that took place on the street were reported in urban areas, seven of which occurred at homes.

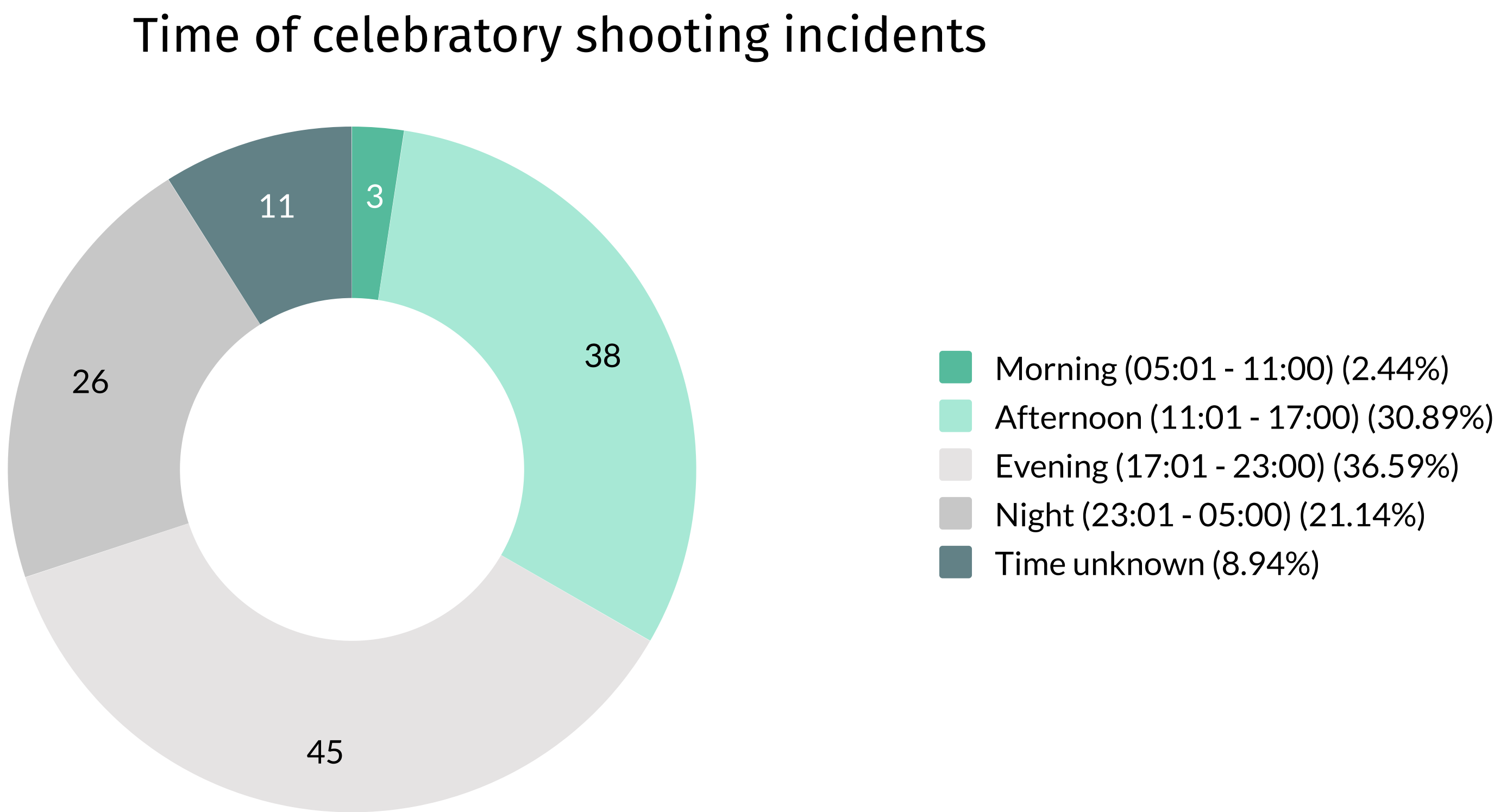
Microlocation for the incidents in rural areas was reported for only four incidents, of which three happened at homes and one in a restaurant.

A very similar trend was observed in 2020.



1.1.5 Celebratory shooting incidents by time

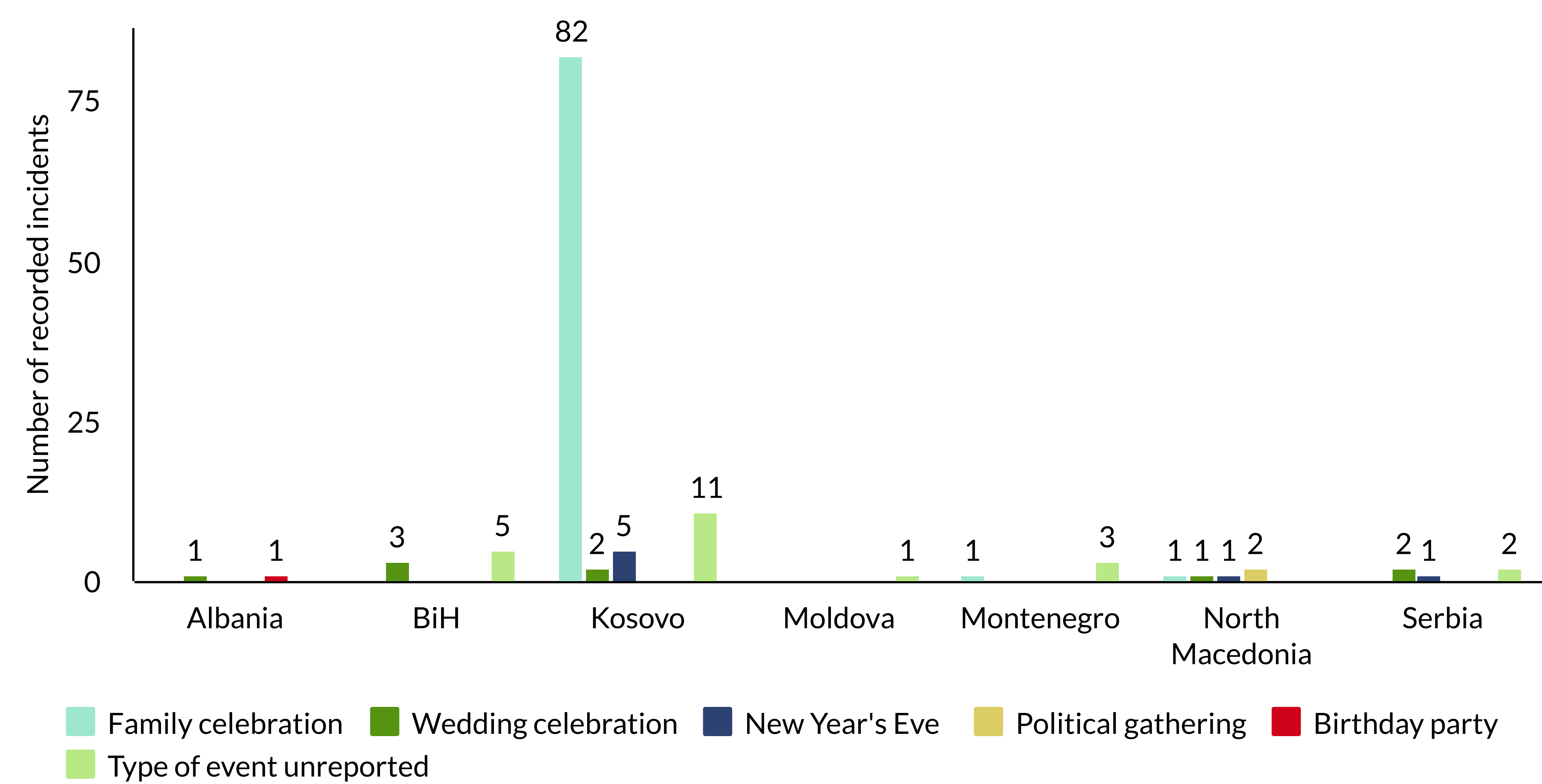
The reported incidents occurring in the evening (45) and in the afternoon (38) were clearly more prevalent than those happening during the night (26) and in the morning hours (5) – when such data was provided in the reports. Compared to 2020, there was a rise in the number of celebratory shootings occurring at night.



1.1.6 Celebratory shooting incidents by type of event

The type of celebratory event was reported for 103 (82%) incidents, while in 22 (18%) incidents the type of event was not specified.

Celebratory shooting incidents by type of event and jurisdiction



The data for both 2020 and 2021 indicate that family celebrations were the most commonly reported type of event at which celebratory shooting incidents occurred. In 2021, these incidents more than doubled compared to a year earlier, accounting for 82% of incidents when the type of event was known.

It should be emphasized that the media and police reports do not provide precise information on the occasion behind these family gatherings, which may include, among other events, weddings, birthday parties, childbirth celebrations, engagements.

In both years, Kosovo reported most celebratory shootings at family celebrations, i.e. 32 in 2020 and 82 in 2021. Montenegro and North Macedonia each reported one such incident in 2021.

During both years, the majority of celebratory shootings at family celebrations occurred in the summer months. In 2021, the majority of such incidents took place in August (38) and July (29), mainly in Kosovo.

In rural areas, 97% (35) of celebratory shootings took place at family celebrations.

In 2021, the remaining celebratory shootings when the type of event was clearly indicated, took place at weddings (9), New Year’s Eve celebrations (7), political gatherings (2) and birthday parties (1).

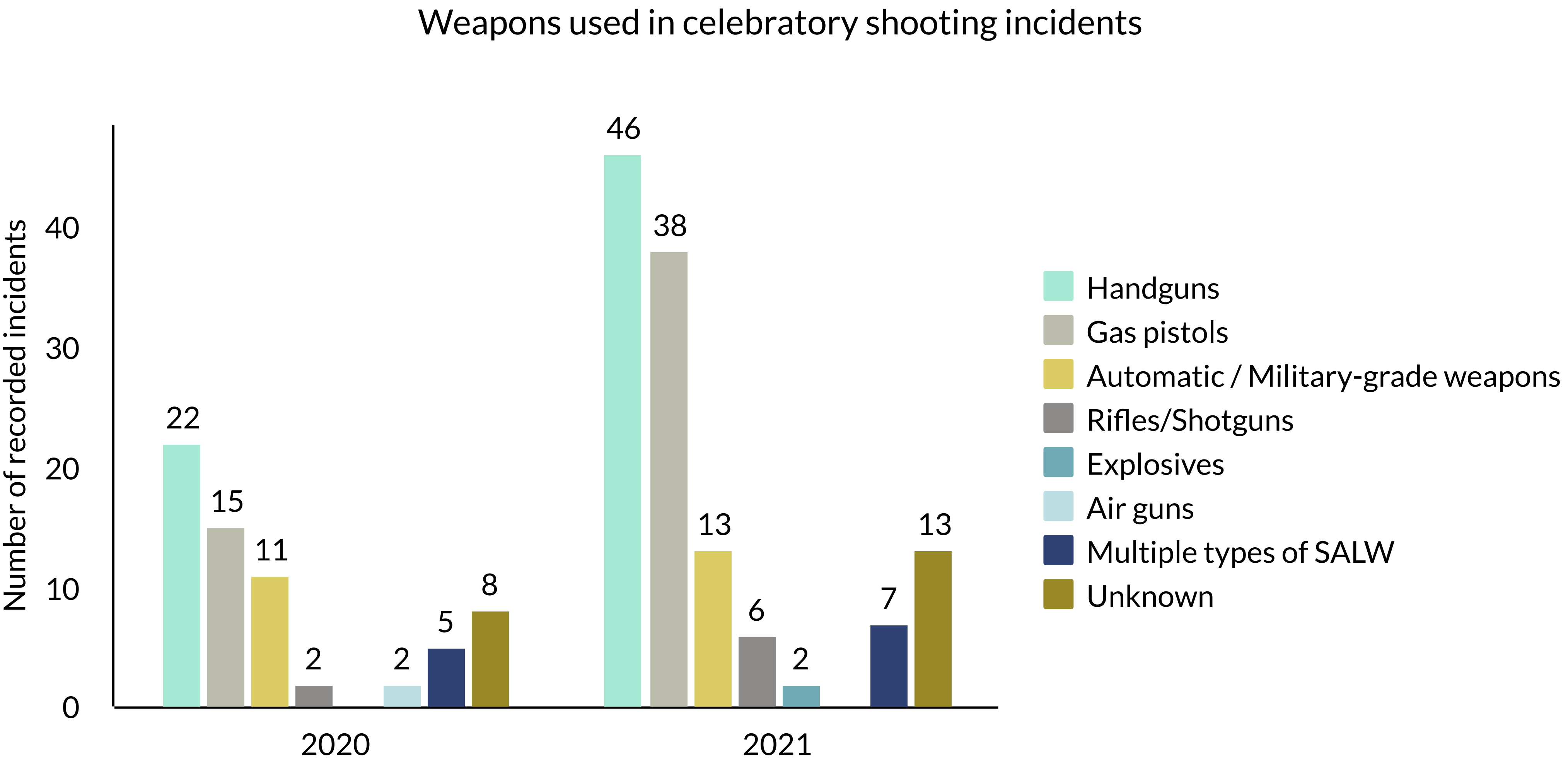
All celebratory shootings at weddings were reported in urban areas. In 2021, there were eight celebratory shooting incidents connected to the New Year's Eve celebration, unlike in 2020 when no such incidents were documented.

2. TYPES OF WEAPONS USED IN CELEBRATORY SHOOTING INCIDENTS

2.1 Celebratory shooting incidents by type of weapon

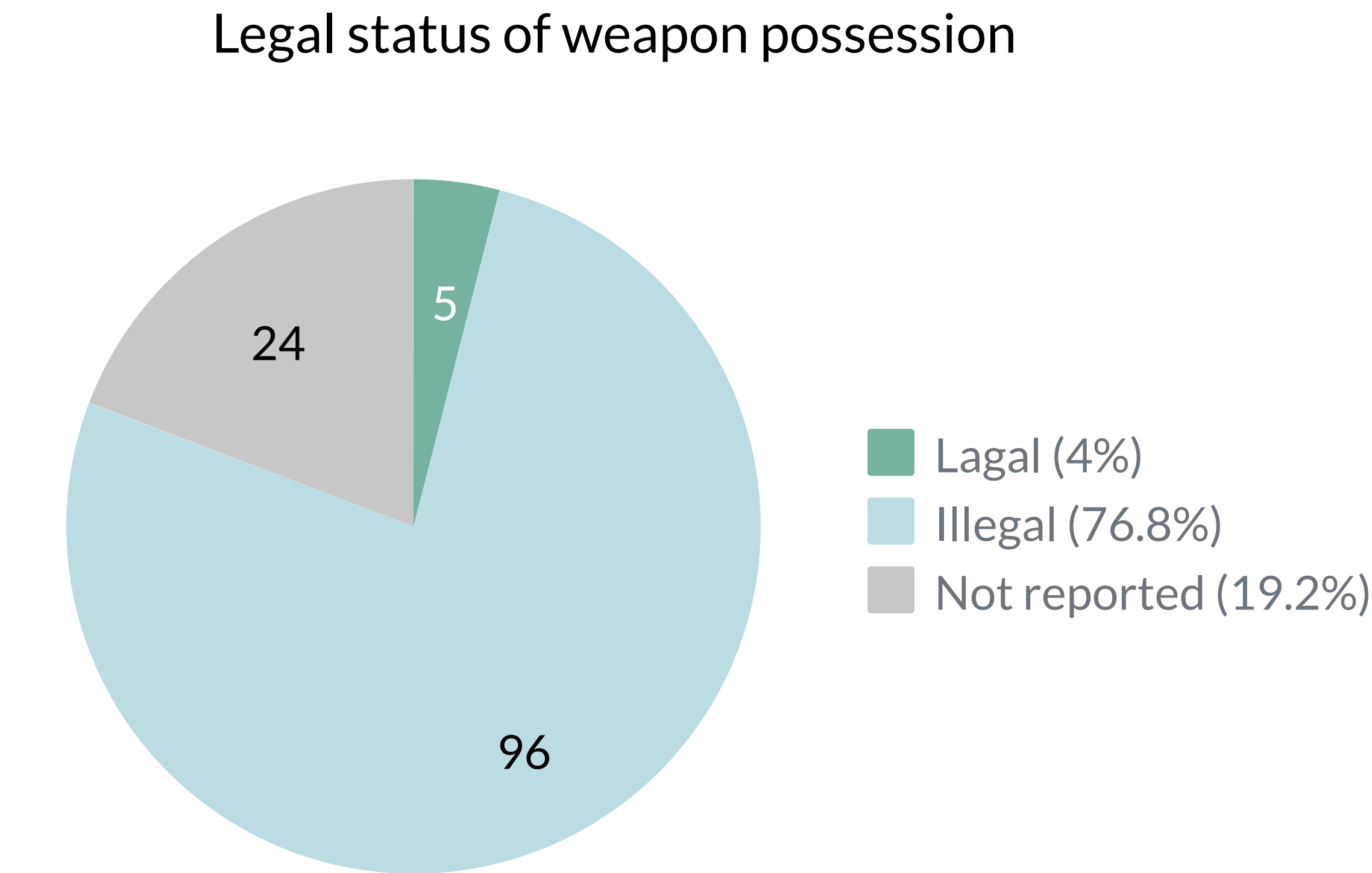
The type of weapon was reported in 90% (112) of incidents in 2021, while in 10% (13) of cases, it was either unknown or not reported. In 6% (7) of cases, the use of multiple types of SALW was reported. An almost identical trend was observed in 2020.

Handguns remained the primary weapon of choice in both years, with an evident 48% increase in the use of handguns in 2021, corresponding to the overall rise in the number of celebratory shooting incidents. The year 2021 saw a more than double increase in the use of gas pistols. No reports on the use of air guns in 2021 were documented, contrary to 2020.



2.2 Legal status of weapon possession

In 96 (77%) celebratory shooting incidents in 2021, the weapons used were reported to be in illegal possession, while in 5 (4%) of them, the weapons were reported to be in legal possession. The type of possession was not reported in 24 (19%) cases.



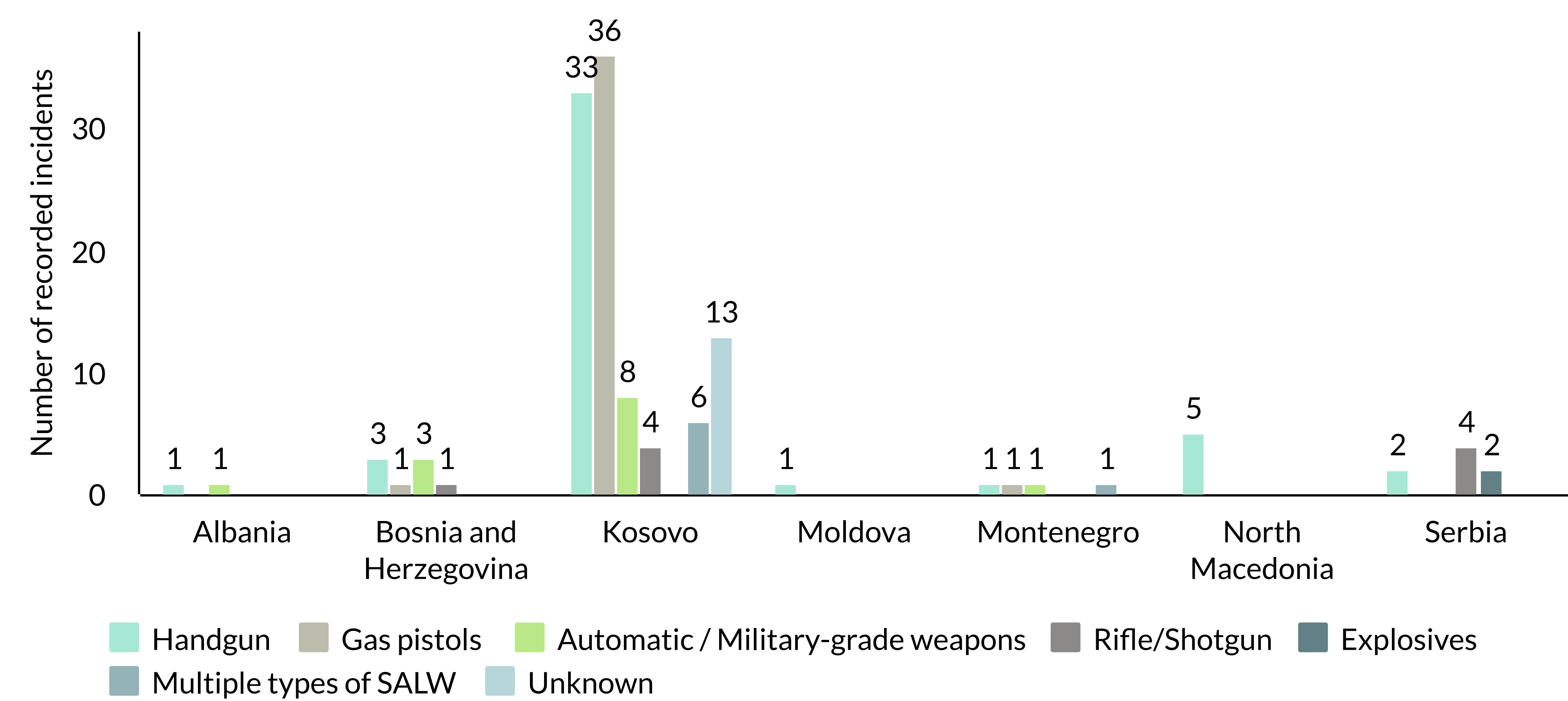
In relation to 2020, a rise in the use of weapons in illegal possession was seen in 2021. Gas pistols (35 cases), handguns (33 cases) and automatic weapons (13 cases) were the most commonly used weapons in illegal possession in 2021.

Weapons in legal possession in 2021, were mainly handguns (five cases) followed by rifles/shotguns (one case).

In 90% of cases (113), the law enforcement officers seized the weapons when responding to the celebratory shooting incidents.

2.3 Type of weapon by jurisdiction

The year 2021 saw the continuation of the trend from 2020 in terms of the types of weapons used in celebratory shooting incidents. The three primary weapons used in 2021 were handguns, gas pistols, and automatic/military-grade weapons.



- Handguns were the most used type of weapon in celebratory shooting incidents, with 46 (41%) reported incidents involving this type of firearm.
- Handguns were the second most reported type of weapon used during family celebrations (29 such incidents). Five incidents involve the use of handguns at weddings, mainly in Bosnia and Herzegovina (2) and Serbia (2).
- Handguns were most commonly used among men aged 36-60, when the age was known.



- Gas pistols were reported in 38 (34%) incidents, thus being the second most reported type of weapon in celebratory shooting incidents. Nearly all incidents with gas pistols were reported in Kosovo (36).
- Gas pistols were the primary weapon of choice at celebratory shooting incidents related to family celebrations, with 33 such incidents reported.



- Automatic/Military-grade weapons were reported as used in 13 (12%) celebratory shooting incidents, eight (7%) of which took place in Kosovo, followed by Bosnia and Herzegovina (3).
- This type of weapon was mainly used at family celebrations.
- The use of an AK-47 was reported in seven (9.2%) incidents, most of which occurred in Kosovo (6).

3. PERPETRATORS IN CELEBRATORY SHOOTINGS

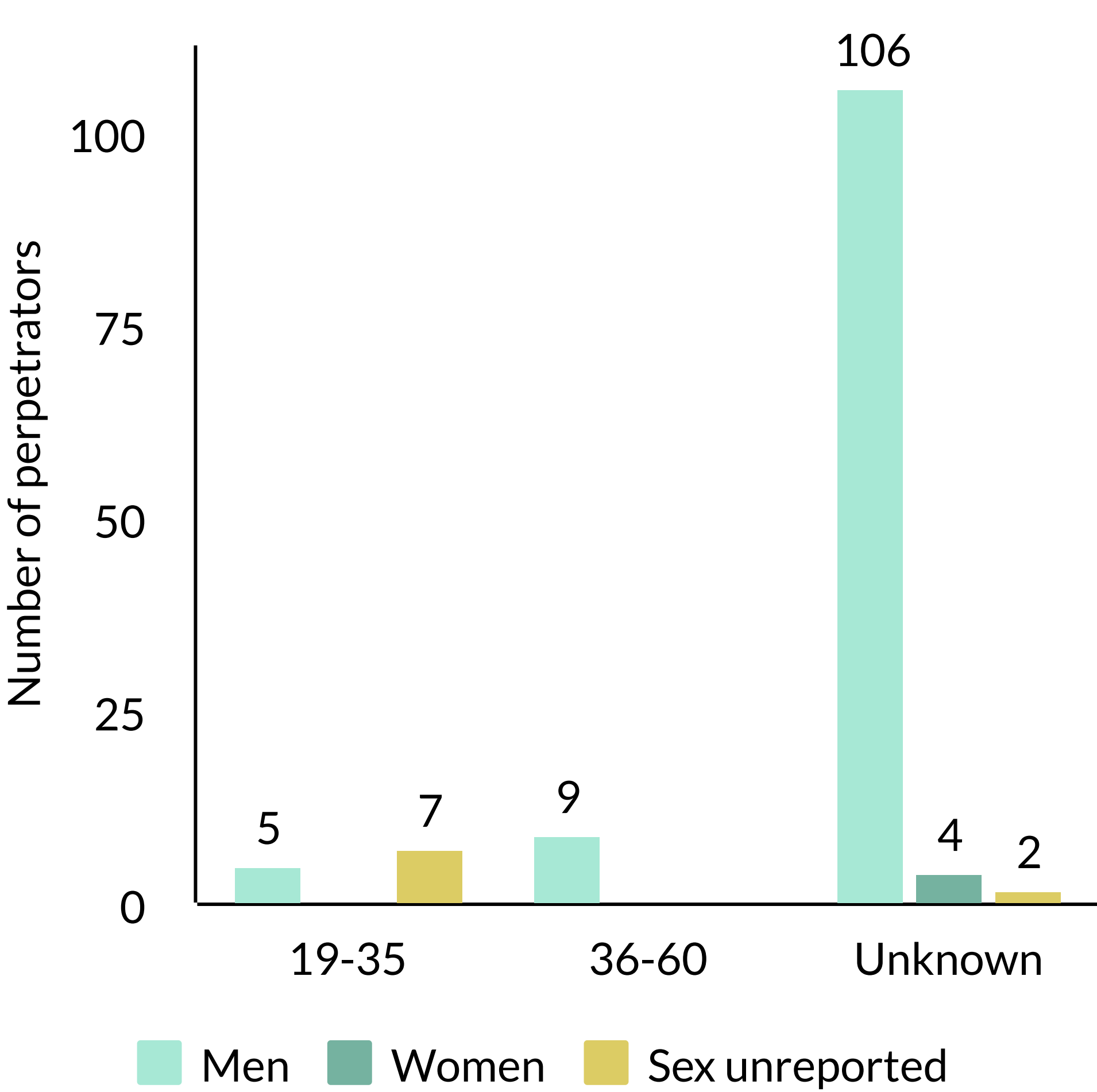
A total of 133 persons were reported as perpetrators of celebratory shooting incidents in 2021. Perpetrator refers to any individual who has used a firearm/ammunition/explosive to commit any of the types of incidents covered by the AVMP. The AVMP data suggests that the phenomenon of celebratory shooting is strongly gendered, considering that nearly all perpetrators whose sex was reported were men.

Perpetrators by jurisdiction and sex

Location	Sex			Total
	Men	Women	Sex Unreported	
Albania	5			5
Bosnia and Herzegovina	8	1		9
Kosovo	97	2		99
Moldova	1			1
Montenegro	3		7	10
North Macedonia	4		1	5
Serbia	2	1	1	4
Total	120	4	9	133

- Out of 133 perpetrators, 120 (90%) were men, four (3%) were women, contrary to 2020 when no women perpetrators were reported. The sex was not indicated for nine (7%) perpetrators.
- The age was not indicated for 112 (84%) perpetrators, of whom 106 were men and four were women. The age was reported for 21 perpetrators. More than half of them (12) were in the 19-35 age group, and nine in the 36-60 age group. Unlike 2020, there were no perpetrators aged 0-18 or those 61 and older.
- 74% of perpetrators were reported in Kosovo.
- Among perpetrators are five police officers, four of whom used their service weapons.
- In 94% of cases (116), the perpetrators were reported as caught, while in 5% of cases (6), the perpetrators remained unknown. The perpetrator was known but not caught in one incident.

Perpetrators by sex and age



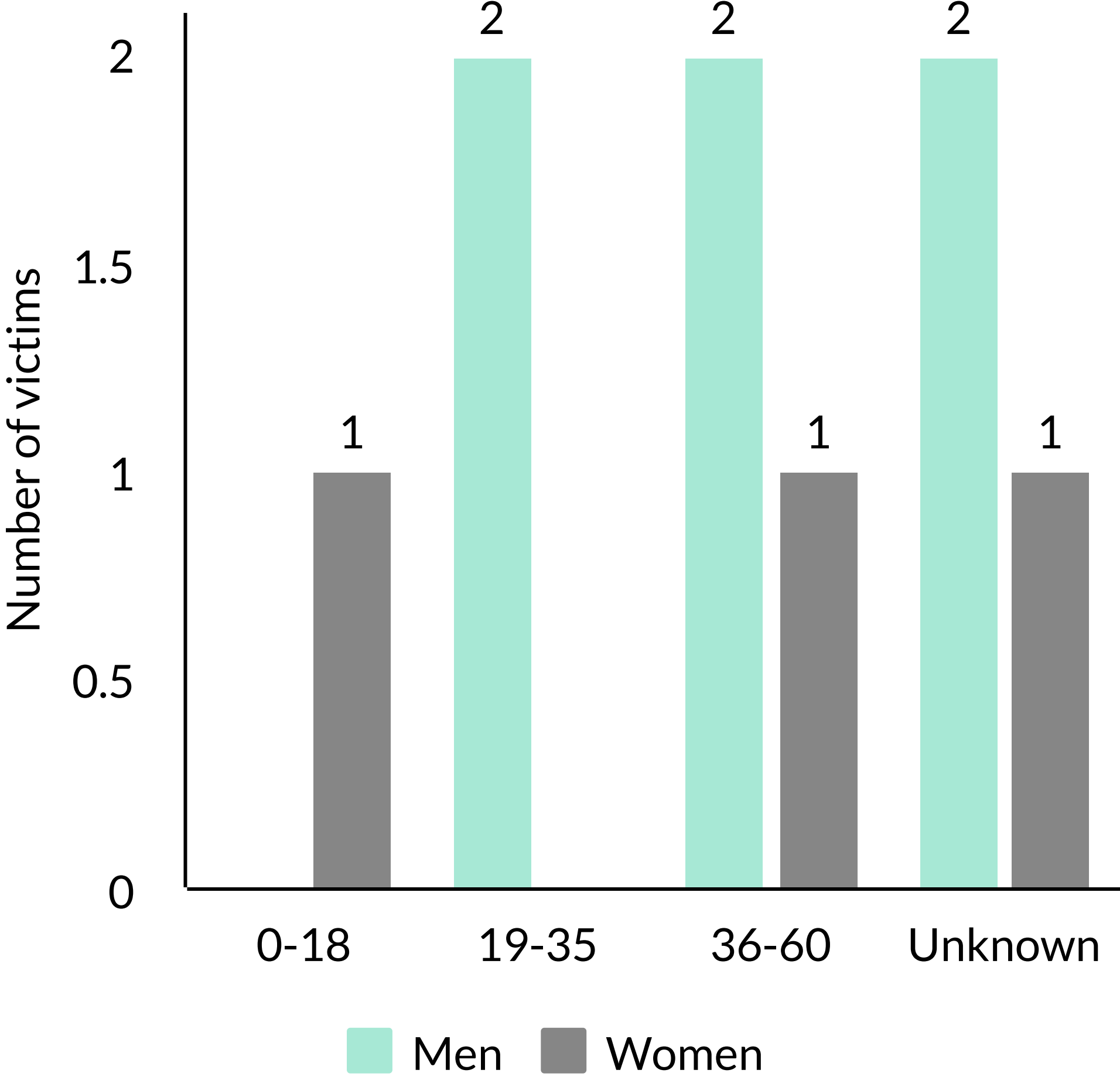
3. VICTIMS IN CELEBRATORY SHOOTINGS

Nine persons, six men and three women, were reported as victims of celebratory shooting incidents in 2021. In 2020, the number of reported victims was five. Victim refers to any individual who has been threatened, injured or died as a result of the use of a firearm/ ammunition/explosives.

Victims by sex and outcome of incidents

Location	Death		Injury		Total
	Men	Women	Men	Women	
Bosnia and Herzegovina			3		3
Kosovo				1	1
Serbia	2		1	2	5
Total	2		4	3	9

Victims by age



- The victims were reported in eight (6%) celebratory shooting incidents. In 117 (94%) of such incidents, no victims were reported. Out of nine victims, six were men and three were women.
- Celebratory shooting incidents resulted in two fatal outcomes (both men) and seven injuries (one man and two women). Incidents with fatal outcomes were reported in Serbia.
- Two persons, including a minor girl, sustained self-inflicted injuries while handling firecrackers/fireworks.
- For incidents for which the type of event was specified, two persons were injured at weddings, and two during the New Year's Eve celebration.
- Among victims whose age was known, one victim was younger than 18, two were aged 19-36, and three were in the 36-60 age group.
- No victims were reported in Albania, Moldova, Montenegro and North Macedonia.



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