



*Issue No. 7*

# **FIREARM INCIDENTS in the context of DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**

## **in South East Europe in 2020**



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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 addresses **firearm incidents in the context of domestic violence** in South East Europe (SEE) from **1 January to 31 December 2020**. The Monitor presents an overview of firearm-related incidents committed by intimate partners and other close family members. The Monitor sheds light on firearm misuse in the domestic context and its disproportionate effects on women, particularly in the context of intimate partner violence.

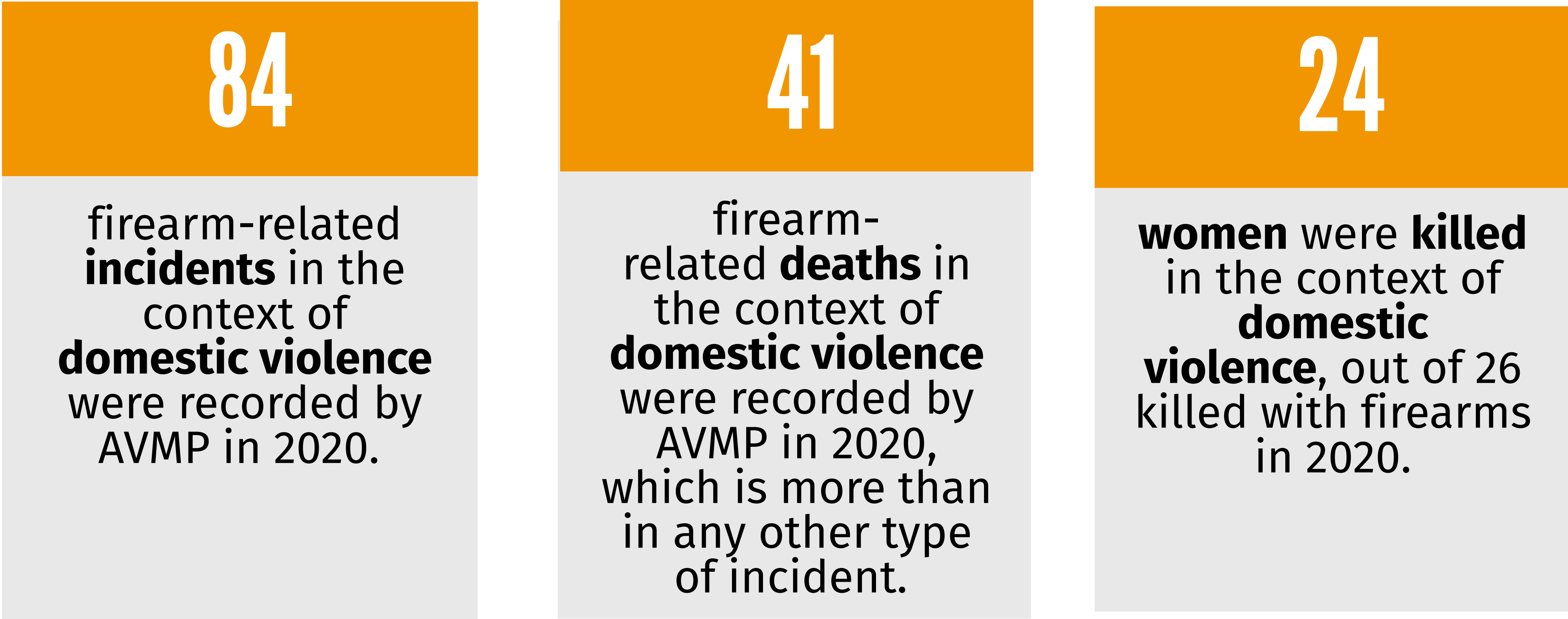
## METHODOLOGY

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 the 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](#).

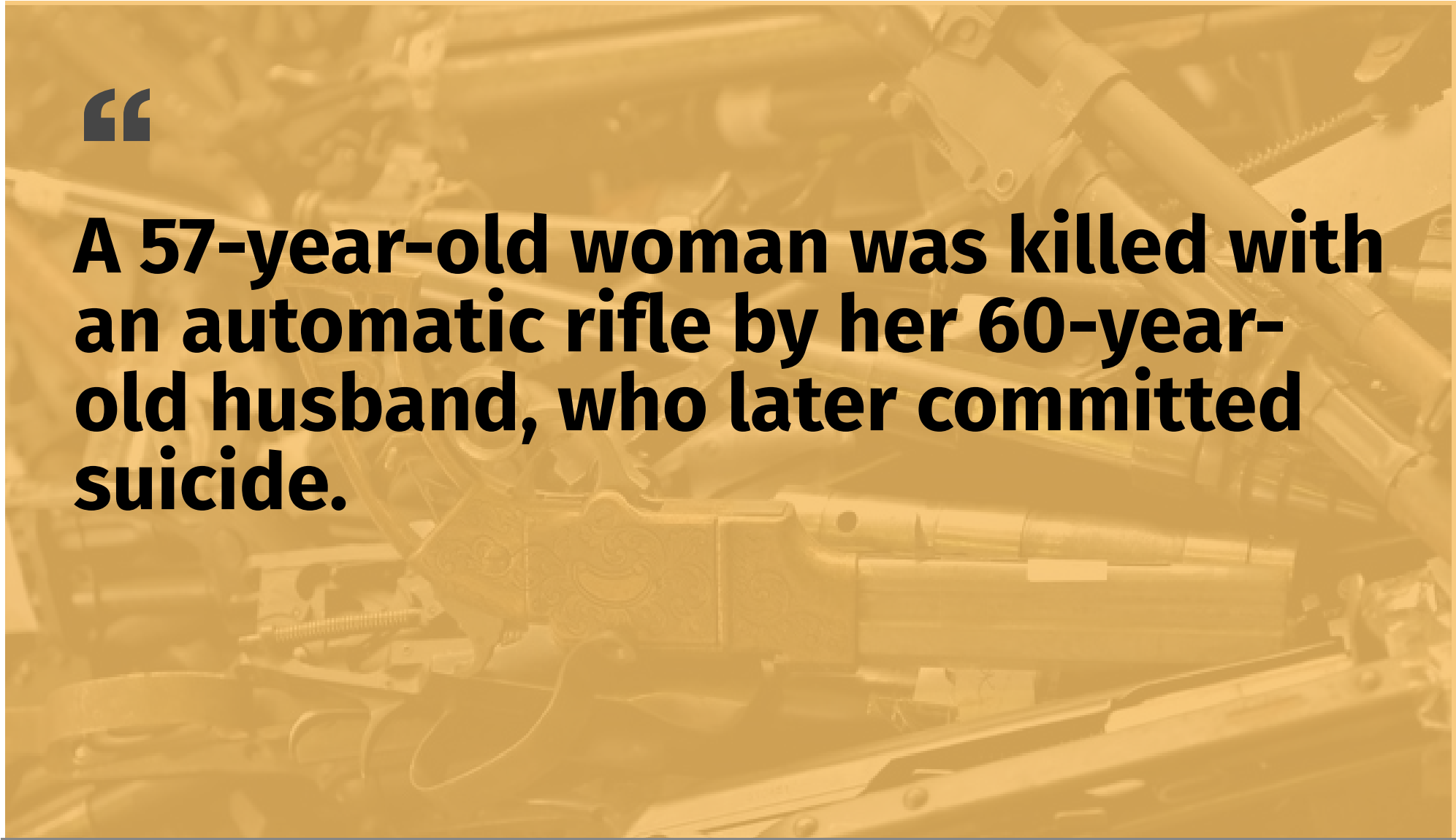
## HIGHLIGHTS



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



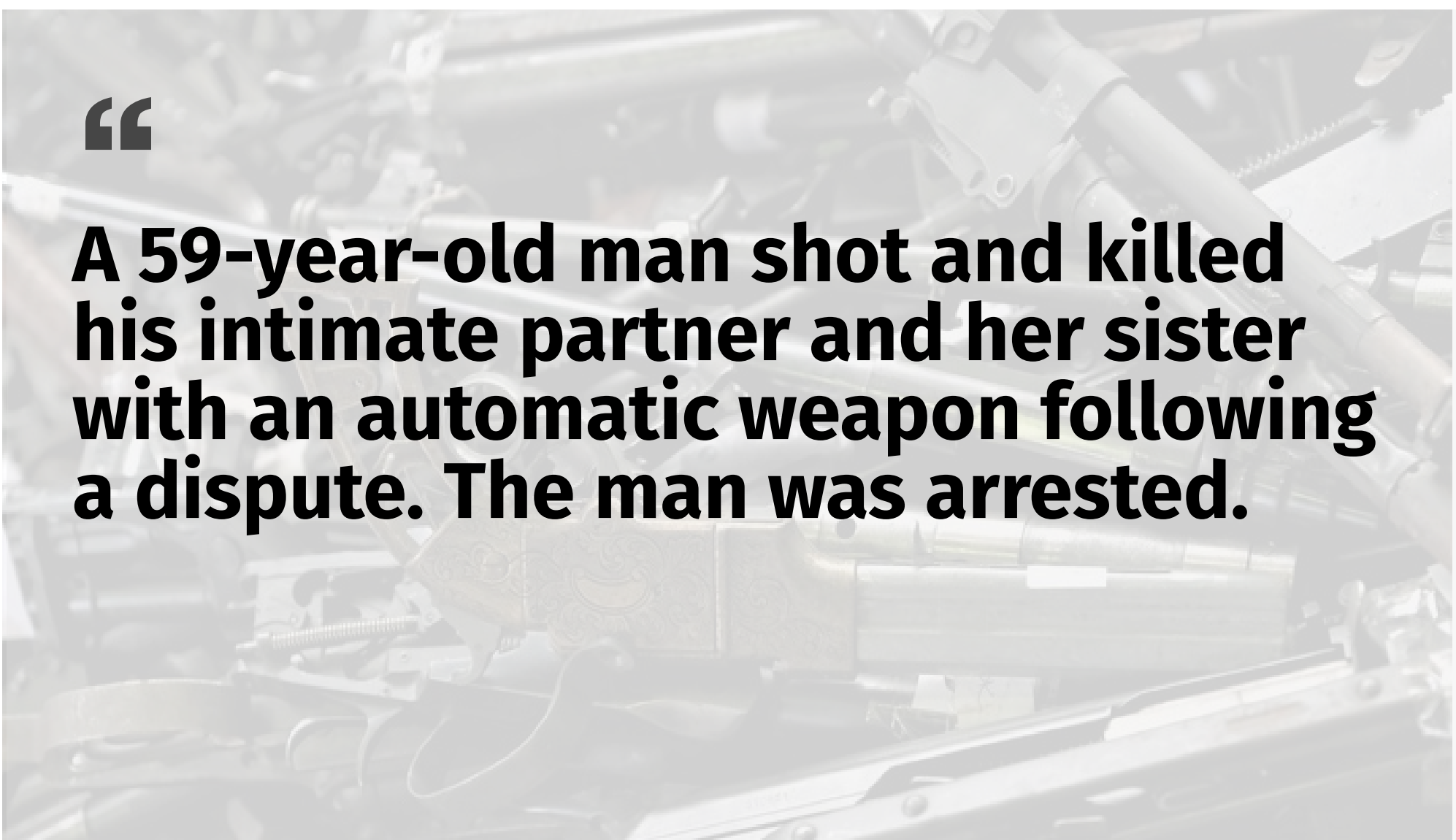
# NOTABLE INCIDENTS



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**A 57-year-old woman was killed with an automatic rifle by her 60-year-old husband, who later committed suicide.**

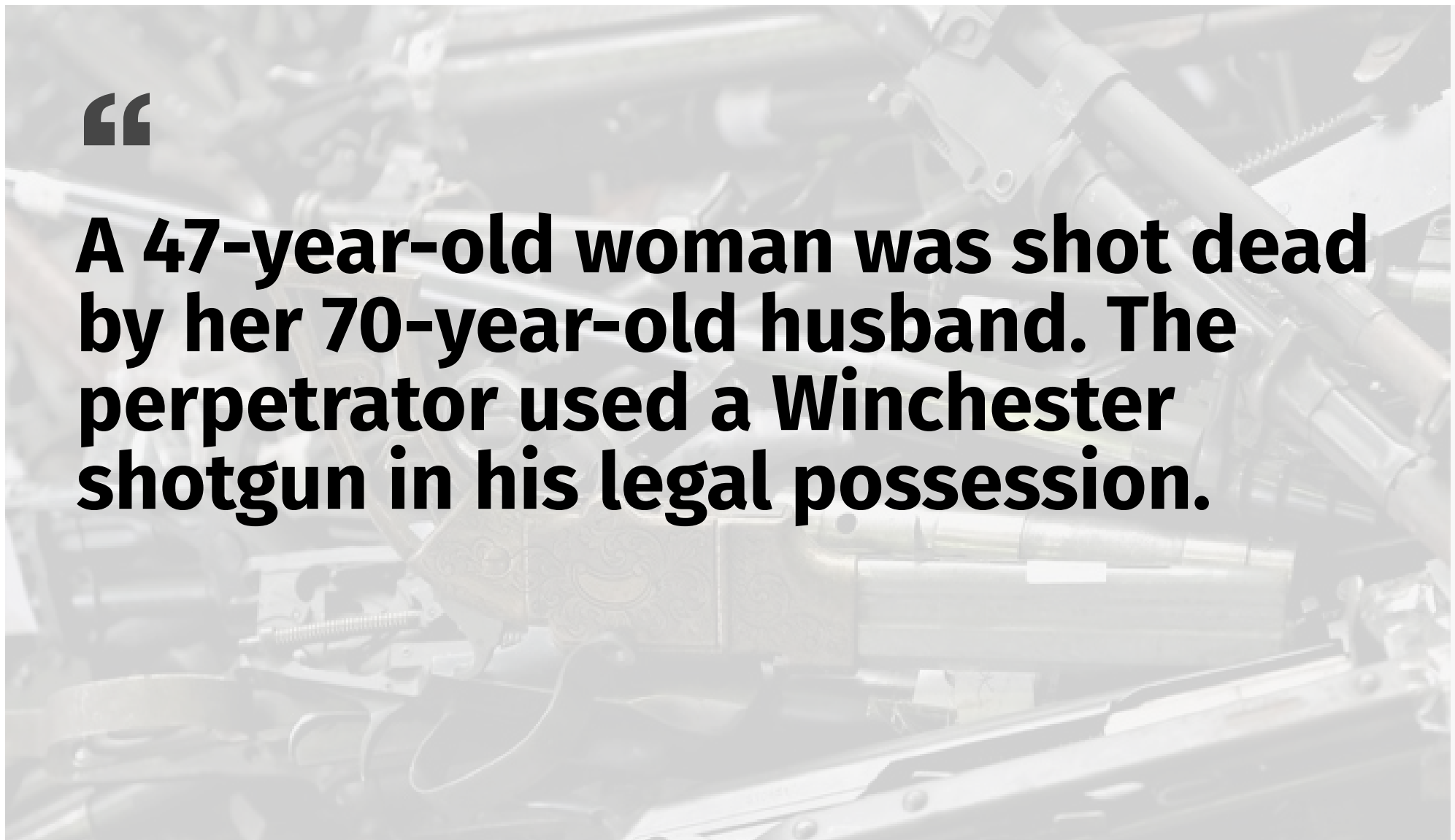
*22 August 2020  
Mostar, Bosnia and Herzegovina*



“

**A 59-year-old man shot and killed his intimate partner and her sister with an automatic weapon following a dispute. The man was arrested.**

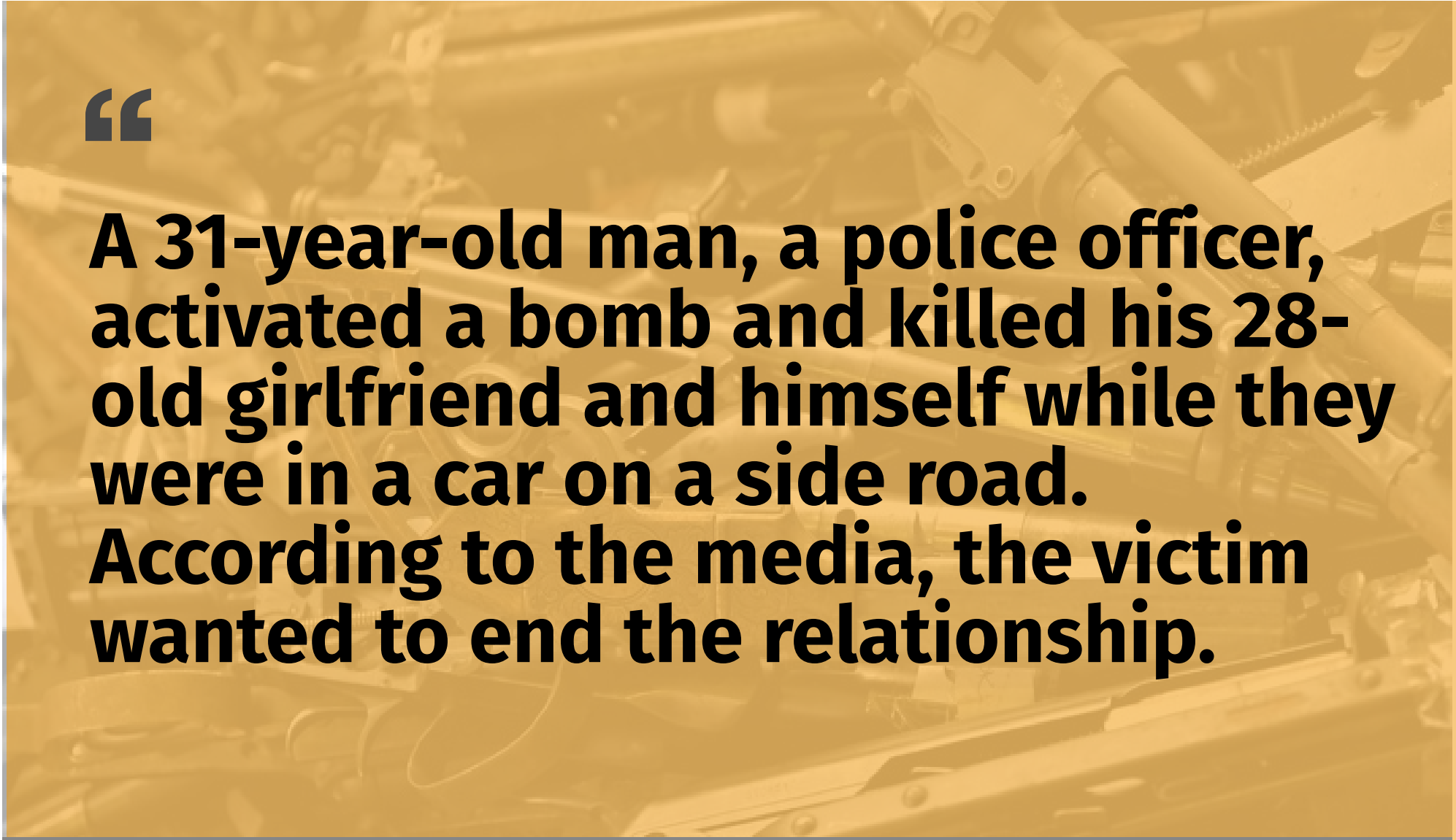
*31 December 2020,  
Tiranë, Albania*



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**A 47-year-old woman was shot dead by her 70-year-old husband. The perpetrator used a Winchester shotgun in his legal possession.**

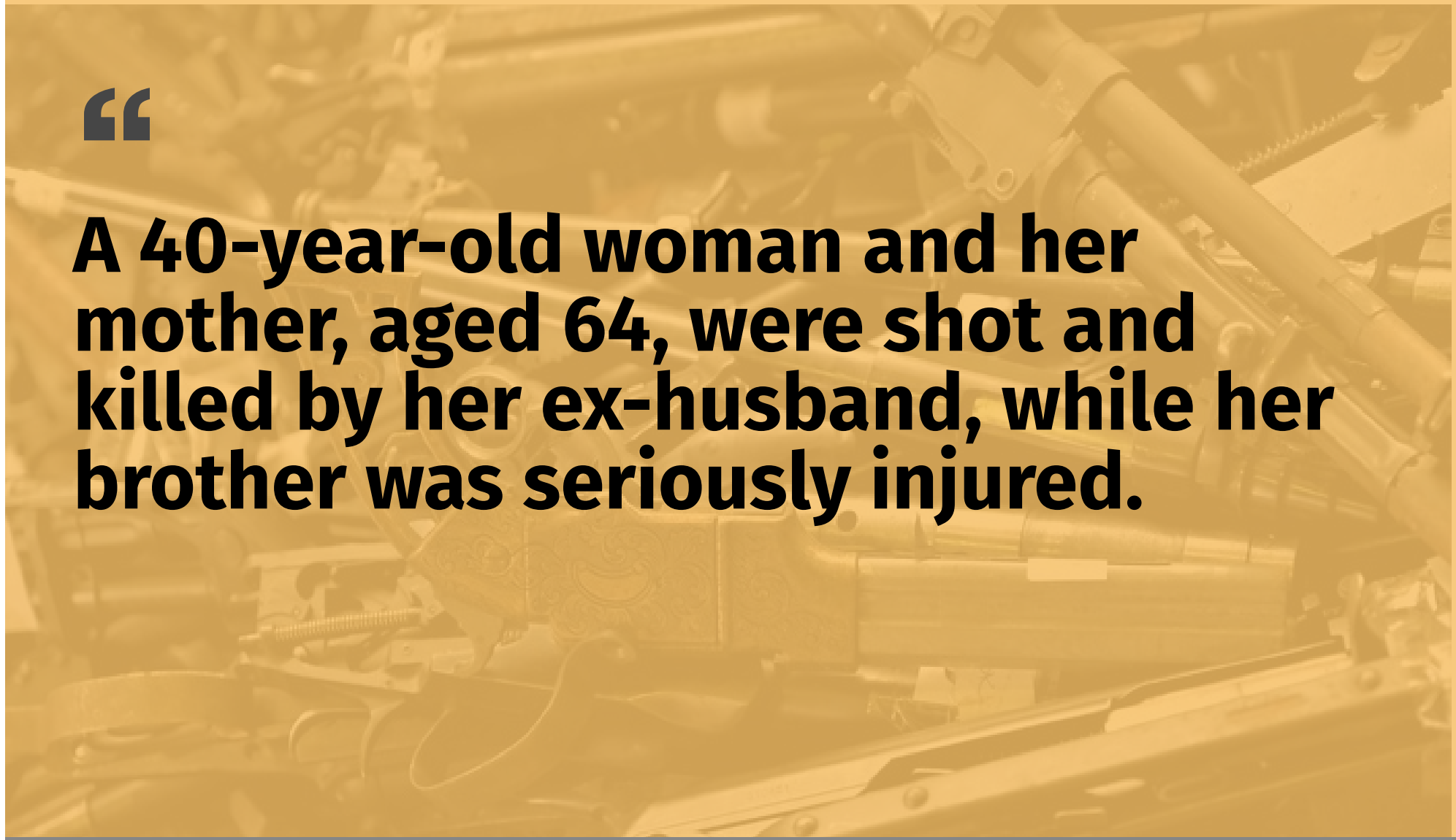
*2 April 2020,  
Chişinău, Moldova*



“

**A 31-year-old man, a police officer, activated a bomb and killed his 28-old girlfriend and himself while they were in a car on a side road. According to the media, the victim wanted to end the relationship.**

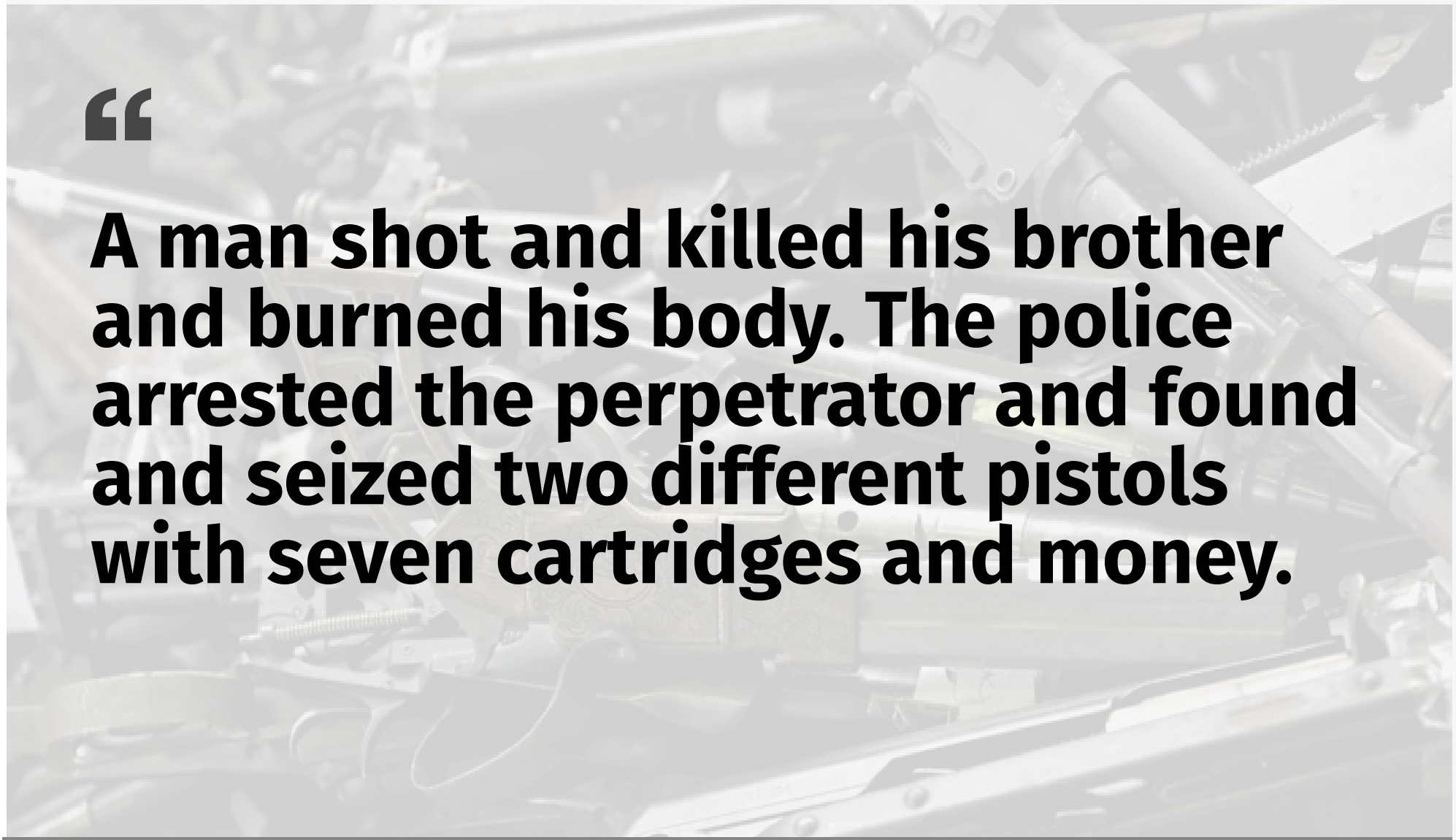
*21 January 2020  
Nova Pazova, Serbia*



“

**A 40-year-old woman and her mother, aged 64, were shot and killed by her ex-husband, while her brother was seriously injured.**

*11 January 2020,  
Prilep, North Macedonia*



“

**A man shot and killed his brother and burned his body. The police arrested the perpetrator and found and seized two different pistols with seven cartridges and money.**

*11 February 2020,  
Rahovec / Orahovac, Kosovo*



## 1. Key definitions

Domestic violence<sup>1</sup> means all acts of physical, sexual, psychological or economic violence that occur within the family or domestic unit or between former or current spouses or partners, whether or not the perpetrator shares or has shared the same residence with the victim.

Violence against women<sup>2</sup> is understood as a violation of human rights and a form of discrimination against women and shall mean all acts of gender-based violence that result in, or are likely to result in, physical, sexual, psychological or economic harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.

Gender-based violence against women<sup>3</sup> shall mean violence that is directed against a woman because she is a woman or that affects women disproportionately.

In its broader sense, domestic violence relates to violence against intimate partners, children, parents, and family members.

Intimate partner violence refers to physical, sexual, or psychological abuse by a current or former partner or spouse that can occur among heterosexual or same-sex couples and may not imply sexual intimacy.

While domestic violence can affect everyone, regardless of race, age, sexual orientation, religion, social status or educational level, it disproportionately affects women and girls who account for the majority of victims.

Domestic violence manifests itself as a pattern of behaviour through which the abuser intends to obtain or retain power and control over a partner or other family member.

<sup>1</sup> [Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence](#), Article 3. p.3.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid

<sup>3</sup> Ibid

<sup>4</sup> Family members, in the context of this report, refer to: 1. spouses or former spouses; 2. children, parents and other blood relatives, in-laws or adoptive relatives, and persons related by foster care; 3. persons who live or have lived in the same family household; 4. cohabitees or former cohabitees; 5. persons who have been or still are in a mutual emotional or sexual relation, or have a common child, or the child is to be born, although they have never lived in the same family household. An intimate partner can refer to: husband/wife, former husband/former wife, partner/former partner, boyfriend/girlfriend, former boyfriend/ former girlfriend.

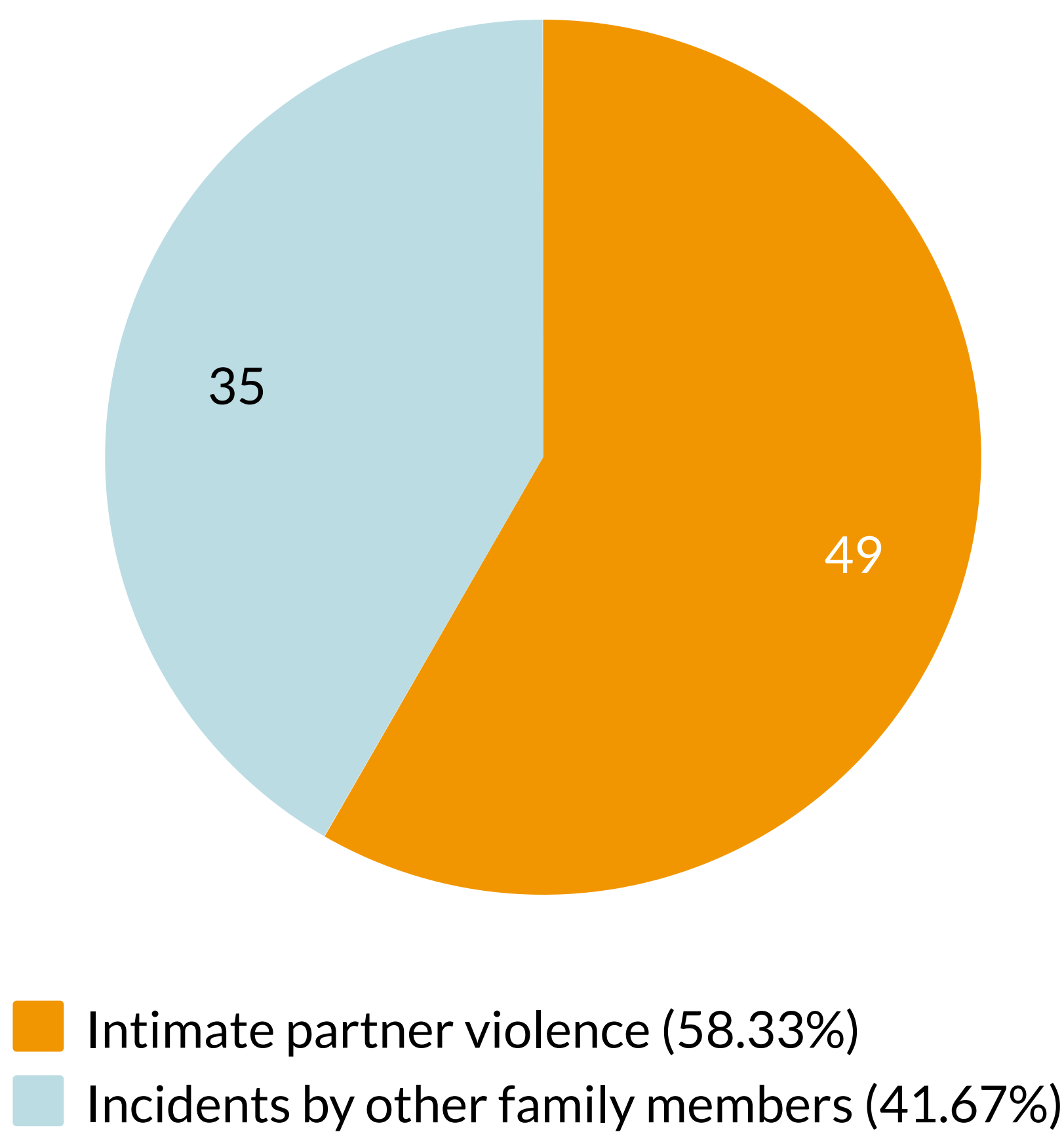


2. Firearm incidents in the context of domestic violence

In 2020, AVMP documented 84 firearm incidents committed in the context of domestic violence, of which 49 were committed by intimate partners and 35 by other family members.

Compared to the situation in 2019, when 72 incidents were reported, a 16% increase in the number of domestic violence cases with firearms was observed in 2020. This may suggest that COVID-related lockdowns may have created an environment conducive to increased domestic violence. It should be noted that the number of such incidents may have been significantly higher, but the victims' confinement with the abuser made reporting the violence difficult. The rise was reflected in all jurisdictions, with the exception of Moldova.

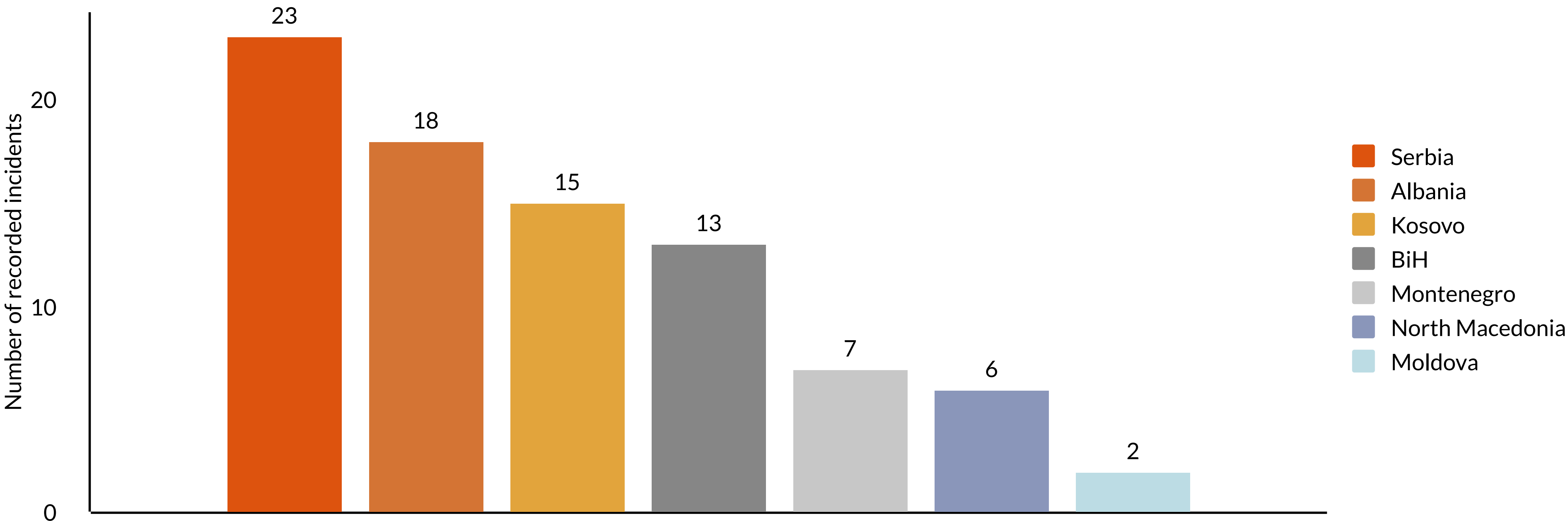
Firearm-related incidents in the context of domestic violence



2.1 Firearm incidents in the context of domestic violence by jurisdiction

Serbia (23) accounted for nearly one-fourth of all firearm incidents in the context of domestic violence. Albania (18) followed closely behind, as well as Kosovo (15) and Bosnia and Herzegovina (13). Fewer than ten such incidents were documented in all other jurisdictions.

Firearm incidents in the context of domestic violence by jurisdiction

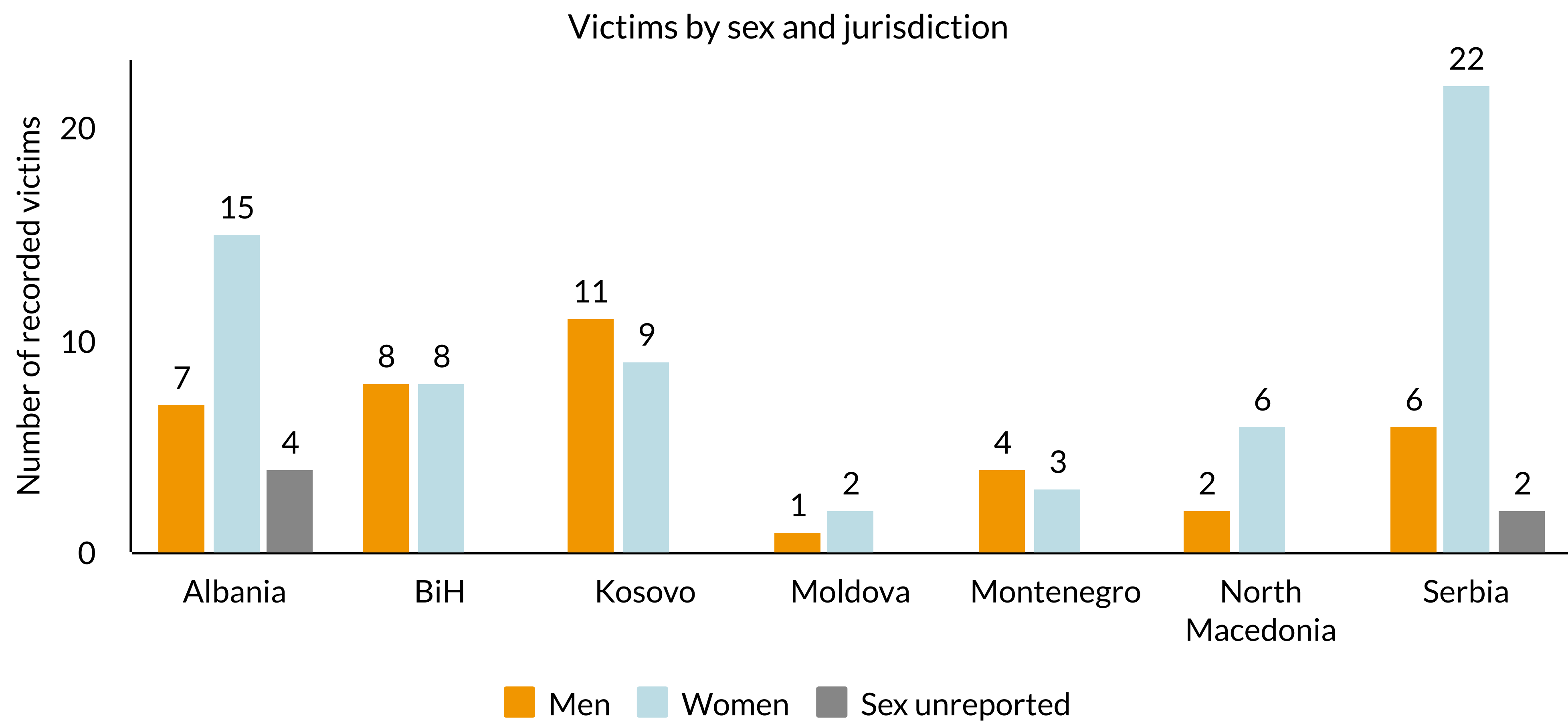


1 [Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence](#), Article 3. p.3.  
Ibid  
2 Ibid  
3 Family members, in the context of this report, refer to: 1. spouses or former spouses; 2. children, parents and other blood relatives, in-laws or adoptive relatives, and persons related by foster care; 3. persons who live or have lived in the same family household; 4. cohabitees or former cohabitees; 5. persons who have been or still are in a mutual emotional or sexual relation, or have a common child, or the child is to be born, although they have never lived in the same family household. An intimate partner can refer to: husband/wife, former husband/former wife, partner/former partner, boyfriend/girlfriend, former boyfriend/ former girlfriend.  
4



3. Victims

Out of 110 victims<sup>3</sup> of firearm misuse in the context of domestic violence, sex was reported for 104 (94.5%), of whom 65 (62.5%) were women and 39 (37.1%) were men. The sex of six victims was not reported.



3.1 Age of victims

The age-related data was known for 52 (47.3%) victims, of whom 25 (48.3%) victims were in the age range 36-60. Sixteen victims (30%) were reported among those aged 61 and older, while 10 (19.2%) victims were aged 19-35. One victim was under 19 years of age. The data on both age and sex suggests that victims were mostly found among women aged 36-60.

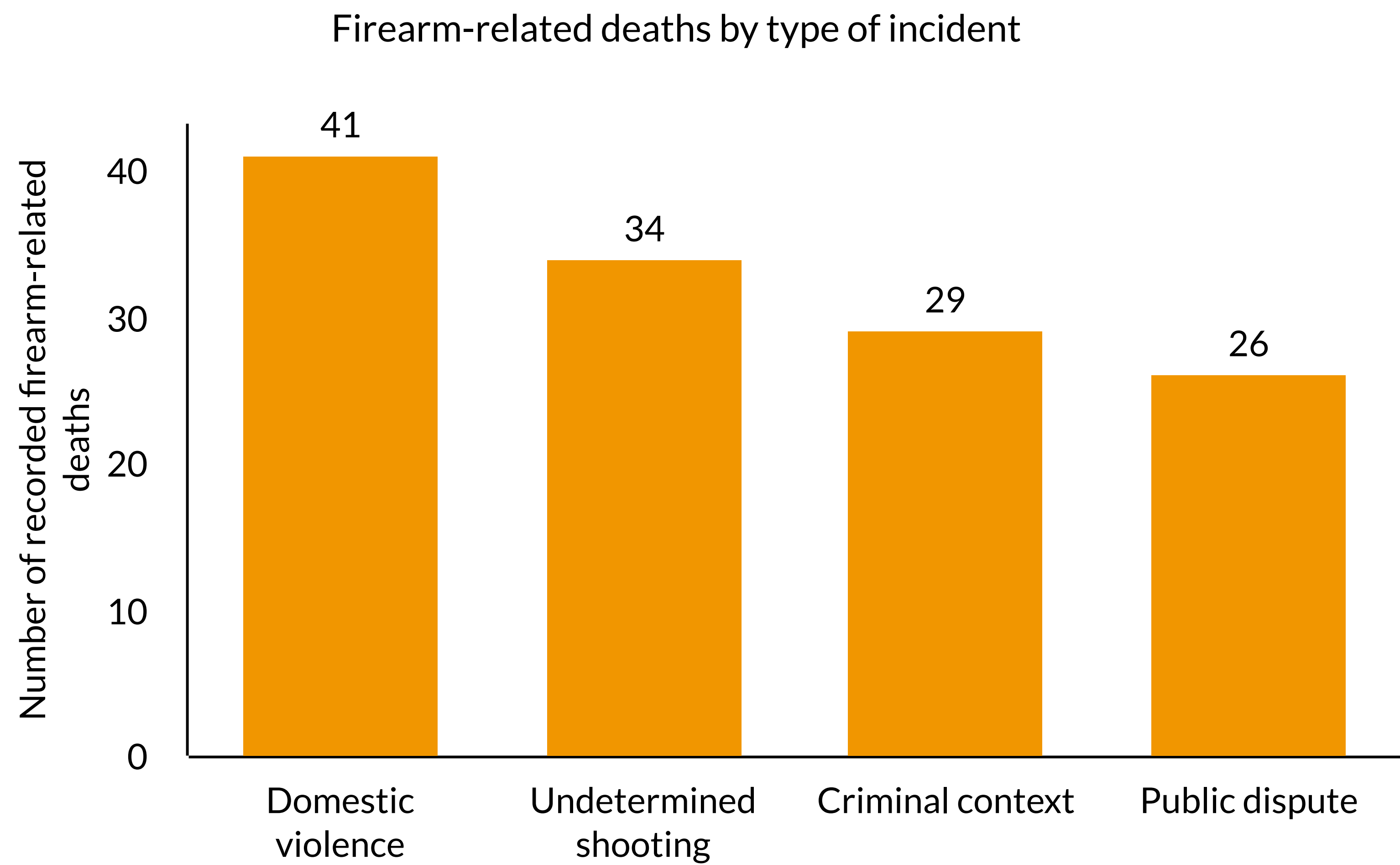
Age	Sex			Total
	Men	Woman	N/A	
0-18			1	1
19-35	5	5		10
36-60	7	18		25
61+	7	9		16
Unknown	20	33	5	58
Total	39	65	6	110

<sup>3</sup> The above number of victims does not include one man who attempted to kill himself after killing his intimate partner and 11 men and one woman who died in murder suicide pattern, i.e. they died by suicide after killing their intimate partner or family member.



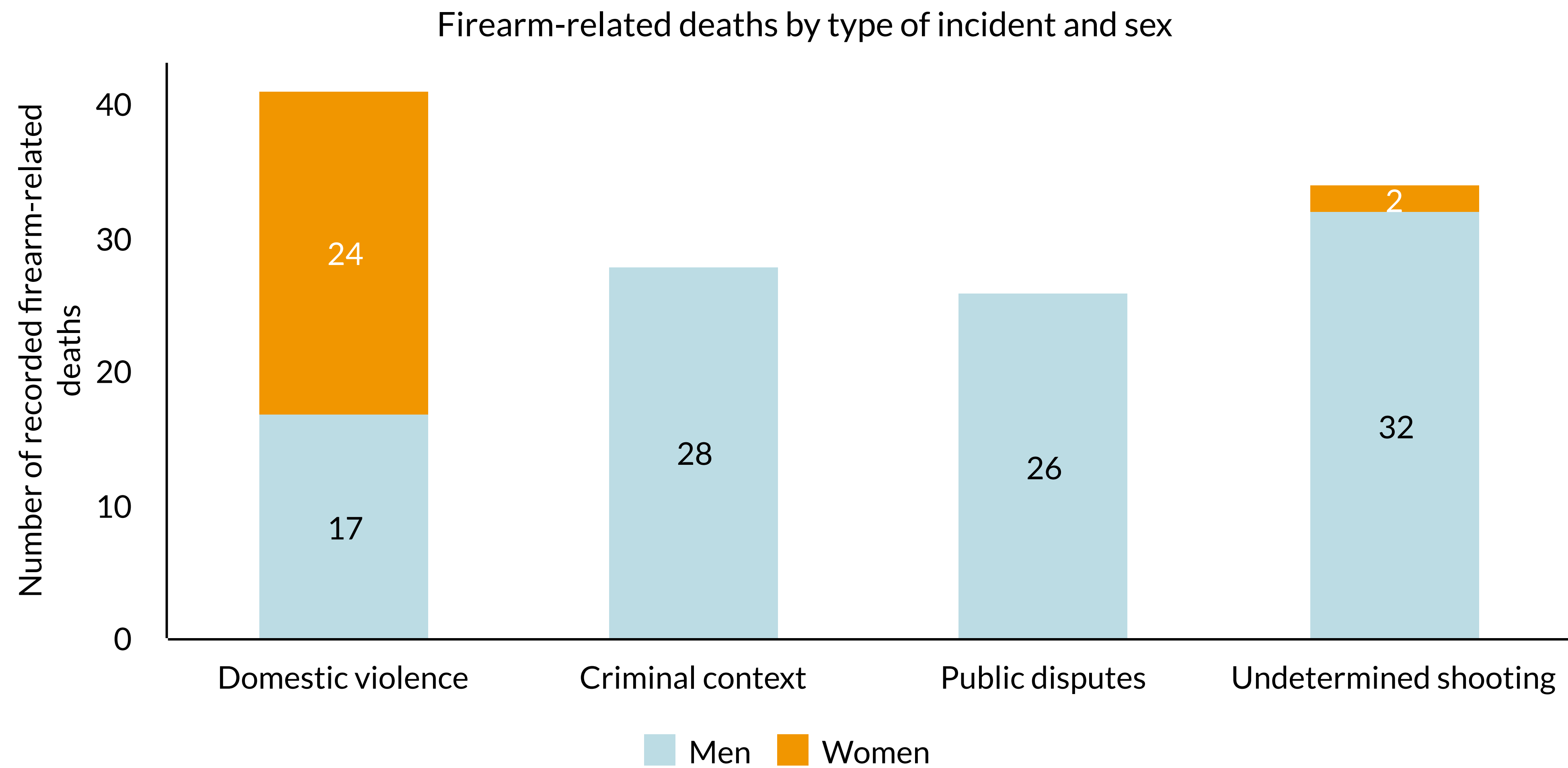
4. Fatality of firearm incidents in domestic context

The severity of domestic violence is reflected in the number of fatalities documented by the AVMP in 2020. Firearm incidents in domestic settings were the cause of the highest number of deaths in 2020, outnumbering those reported in all other types of incidents covered by the AVMP, including criminal context, public disputes, and undetermined shootings.



The graph does not show the fatal outcomes resulting from accidental shootings in 2020.

It is evident that domestic violence disproportionately affects women since they were more likely to be killed in domestic violence than in other types of incidents. Men, on the other hand, were more likely to be killed in other types of incidents such as undetermined shootings, criminal context and public disputes.



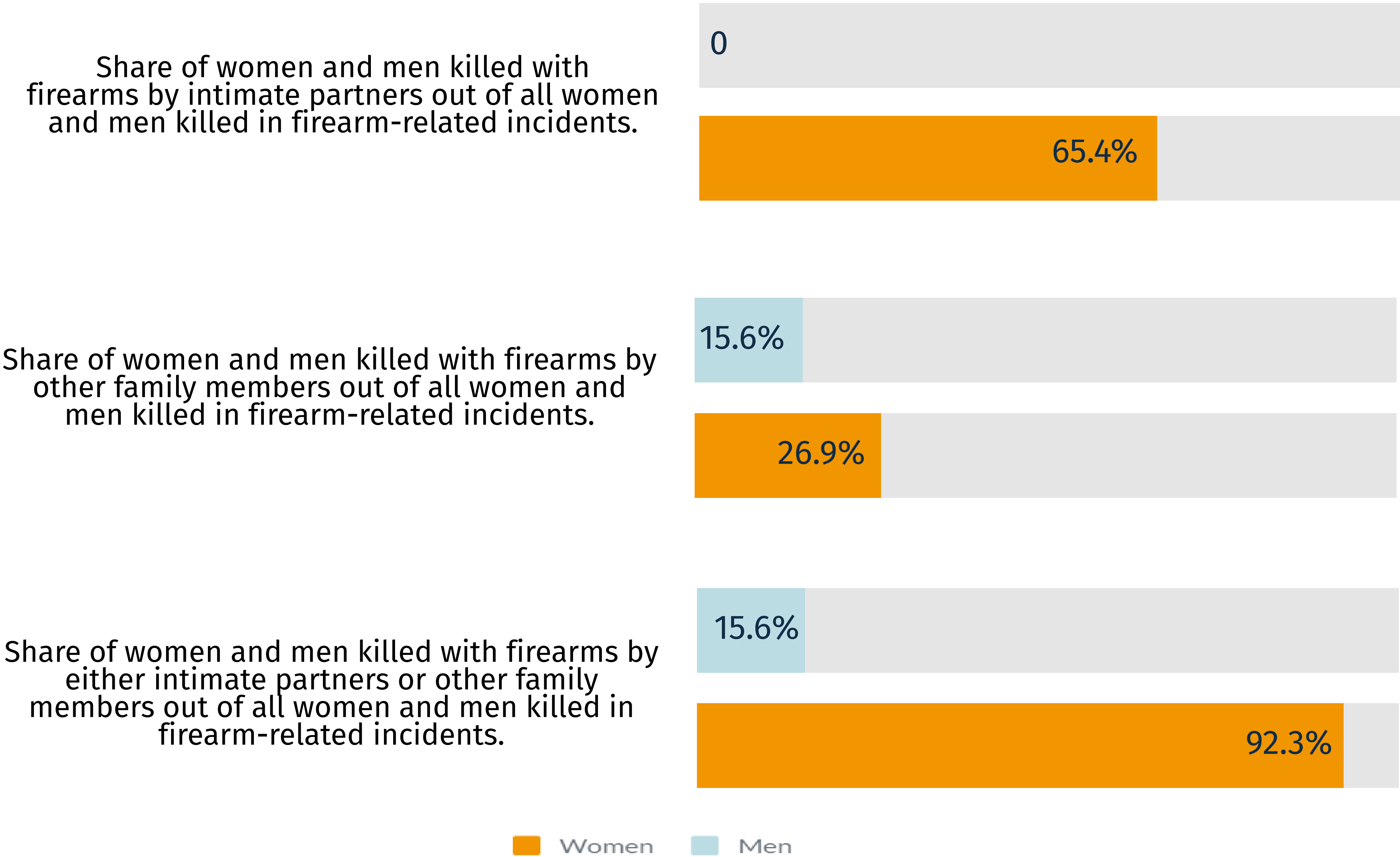
The graph does not show fatal outcomes resulting from accidental shootings in 2020.



Twenty-four (92.3%) out of 26 of all women killed with firearms in SEE were killed in the context of domestic violence, while the same holds true for 17 (15.6%) men out of 109 all men killed with firearms.

Within the context of domestic violence, women were most at risk of firearm use from their current or former intimate partners. Seventeen (65.4%) of all women killed with firearms were killed by their intimate partners. In the same period, no men were killed with firearms by their partners.

In addition, seven (26.9%) women and 17 (15.6%) of men killed with firearms, were killed by other family members, predominantly men.



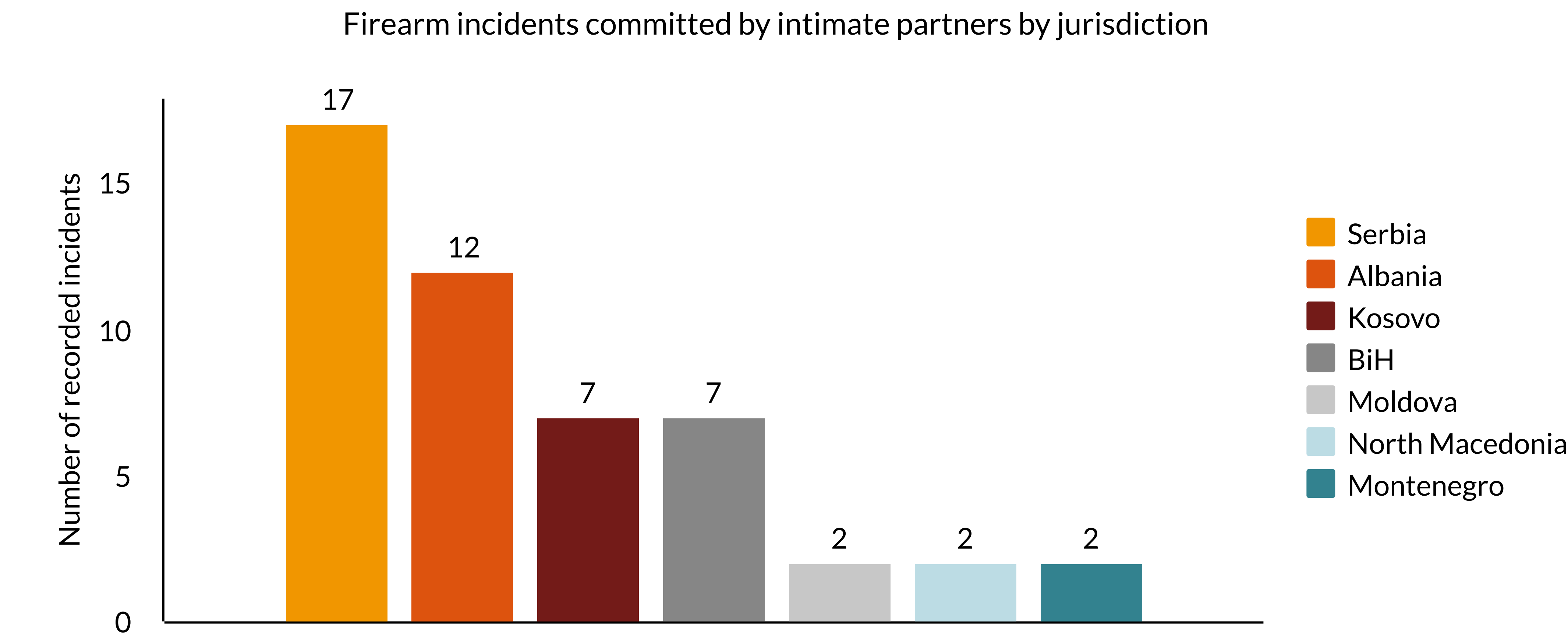
The graph does not show the fatal outcomes resulting from accidental shootings in 2020.

5 The numbers include two women and five men who were killed with firearms while being present during intimate partner violence.



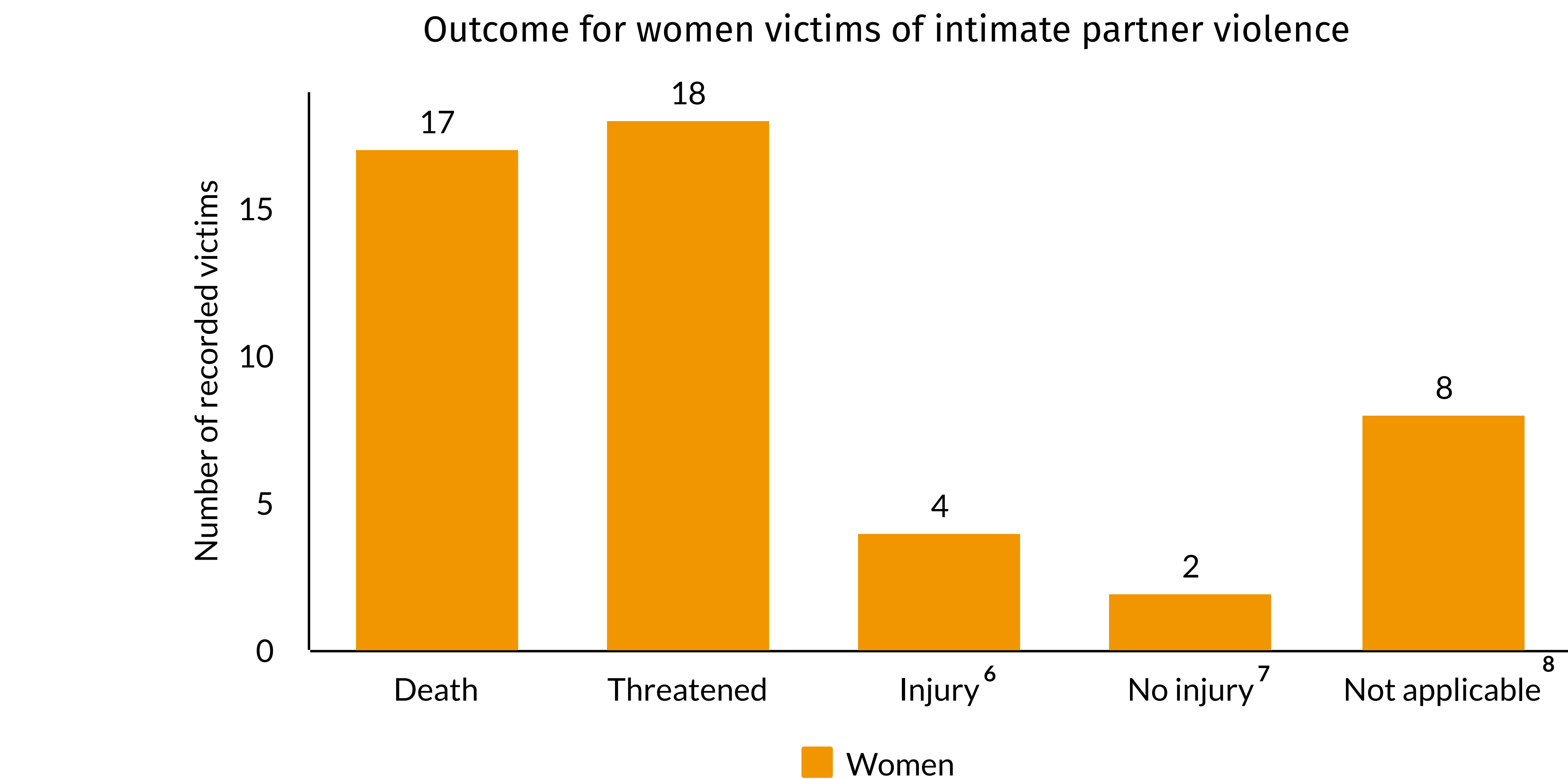
5. Firearm incidents in the context of intimate partner violence

According to the AVMP data for 2020, 49 (53.3%) out of 84 of firearm incidents in domestic settings were committed by male intimate partners. Slightly more than one-third of the incidents took place in Serbia. Albania follows with the second-highest number (12) of such incidents; Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo each reported seven, while the remaining jurisdictions each had two incidents.



Women, a total of 49 of them, were victims in all reported firearm incidents committed by intimate partners, while no cases of men victims of their female partners were reported. Seventeen women were killed, four were injured, and 18 were threatened with a weapon by their intimate partner. In two cases, women were did not sustain a gunshot injury when their intimate partner shot at them with a firearm. The weapon was present during eight intimate partner violence incidents, but no information on whether it was used was provided.

When the age was known, women (10) were mainly aged 36-60.



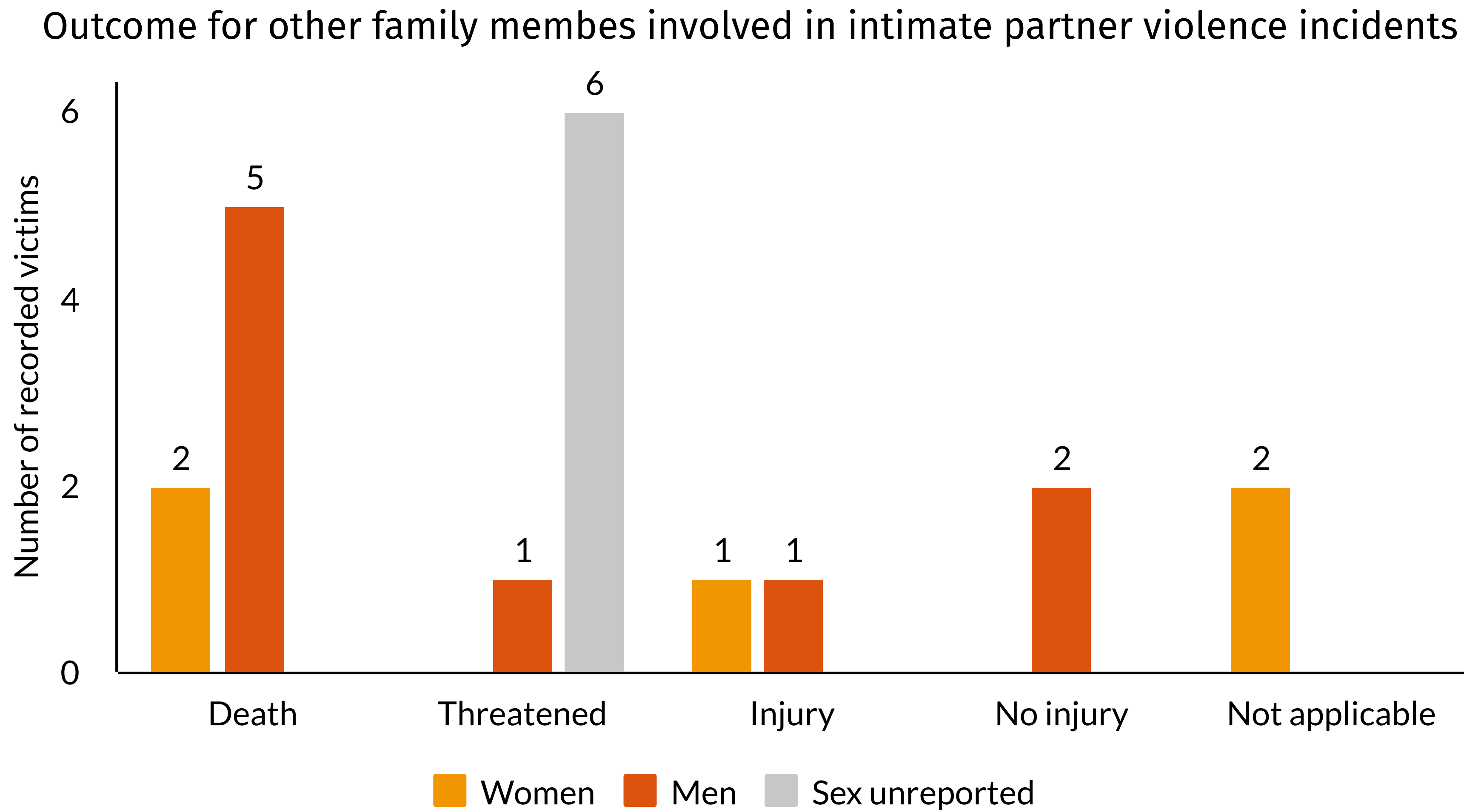
<sup>6</sup> Injury refers to all incidents in which an individual sustained an injury due to the use of a weapon.

<sup>7</sup> No injury refers to all incidents in which a weapon was discharged, but the victim did not sustain a gunshot injury.

<sup>8</sup> Not applicable refers to all incidents in which a weapon is present but not used or discharged (for example, theft of a weapon).



The use of firearms in intimate partner violence poses a risk to other family members as well, often resulting in a lethal outcome. Furthermore, even when a weapon is not discharged, its mere presence may be perceived by a victim as a means to coerce, threaten, and intimidate, inflicting enormous psychological damage. As such, apart from 49 women victims, these cases involved 20 other victims who were present during the incident.



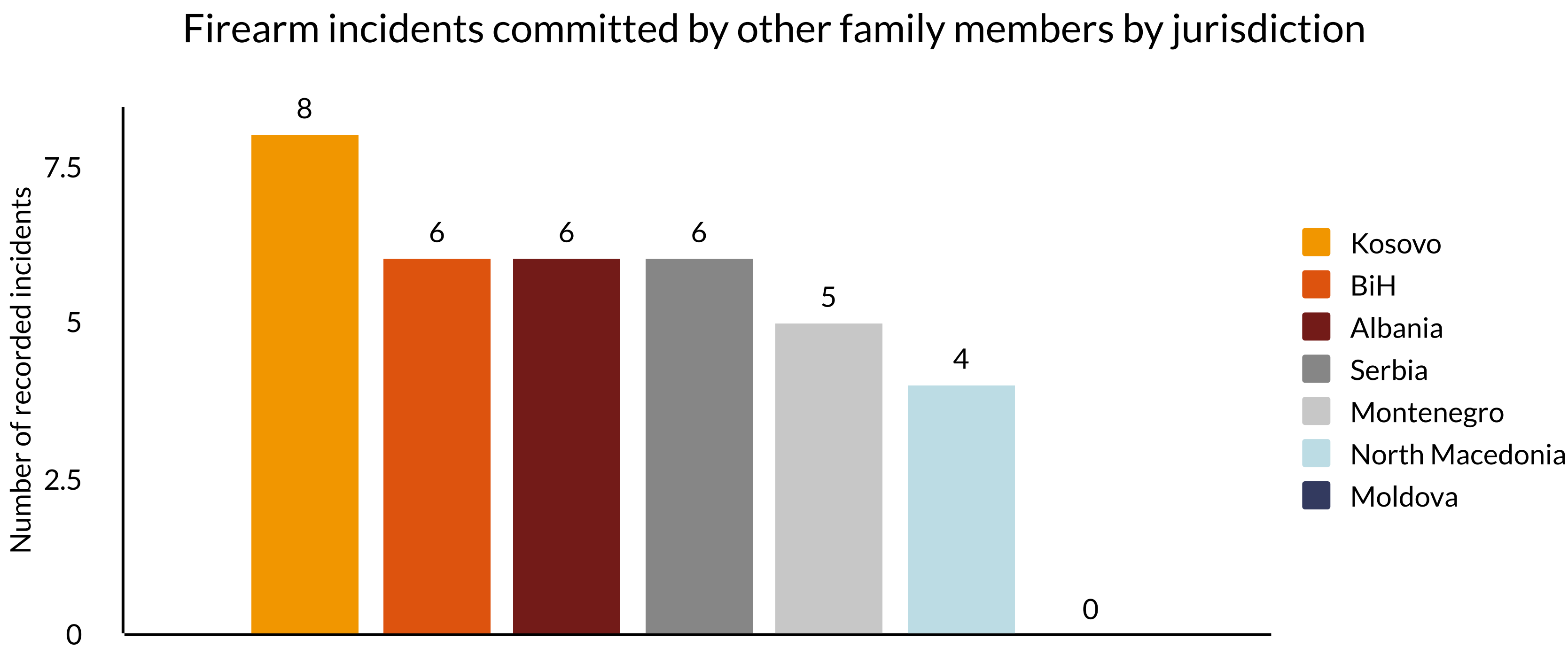
- Men, 49 of them, committed all intimate partner incidents involving firearms. When the age was known, 76.9% of men were aged 36-60. Five perpetrators were 61 or older, and four were 19-35 years old. In 36 cases, men were caught by law enforcement agencies after the incident.
- Intimate partner violence against women was committed by 39 current and ten former partners.
- The history of domestic violence is rarely reported. Only two men were reported to have previously committed domestic violence.
- In two cases, the perpetrators were law enforcement officers, one of whom used his service weapon to kill his intimate partner.
- Intimate partner homicides are often followed by suicides of perpetrators. In the reporting period, one man attempted suicide, and nine men died by suicide using a firearm or explosives following the murder of their intimate partner.



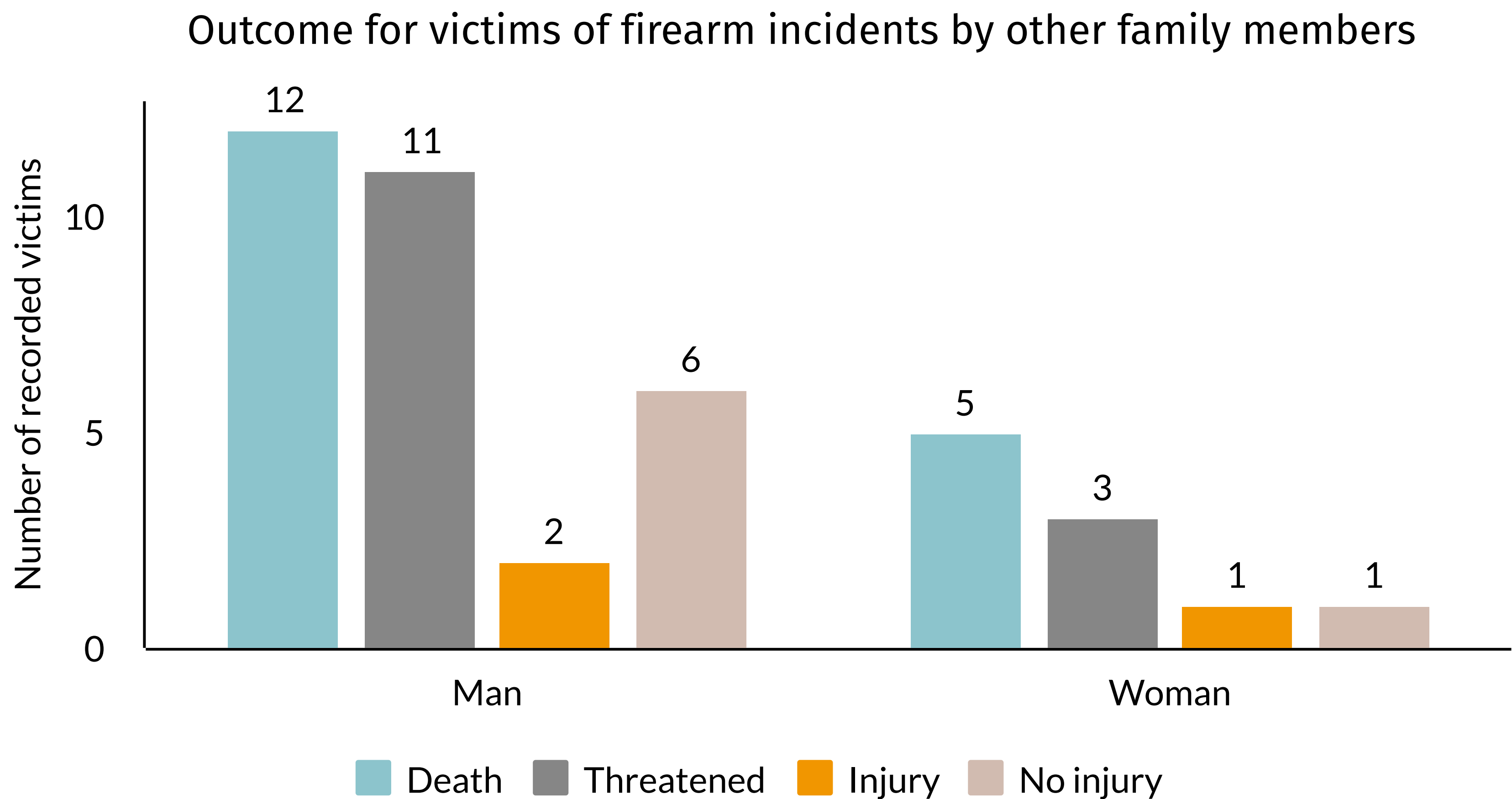
6. Firearm incidents committed by other family members

Domestic violence encompasses incidents committed by other family members in addition to intimate partner violence. Such cases cover occasions in which perpetrators used firearms against members of their nuclear or extended family.

A total of 35 incidents of domestic violence by other family members were reported in the region in 2020. Other jurisdictions recorded a similar number, with Kosovo having the highest (8) while no such cases were reported in Moldova.



There were 41 victims of other family members, of whom 31 were men and 10 women. Among victims whose age was known (27), nearly half (12) were aged 61 and older, nine were aged 19-35, and six were 36-60.



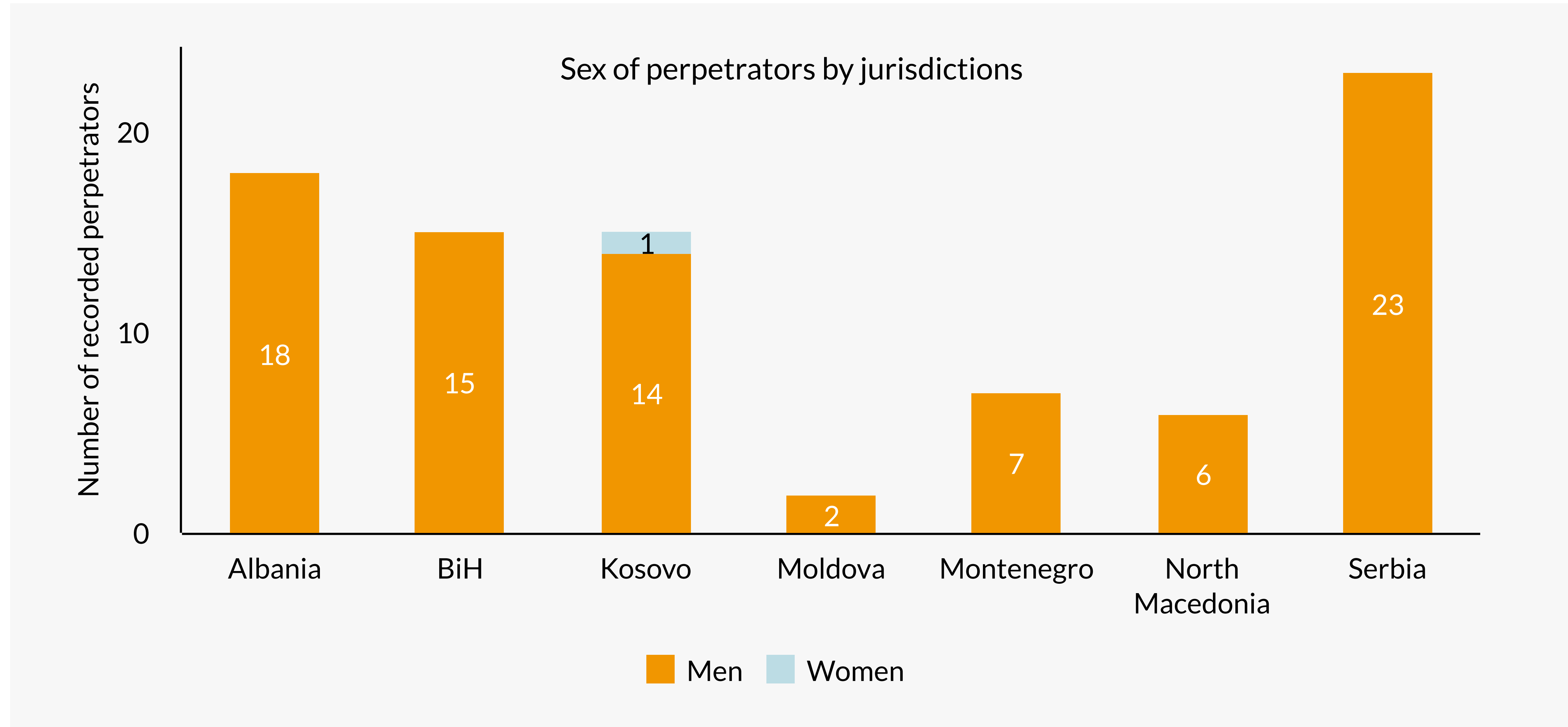
- In the majority of cases, men and women were victims of their extended family members but also of their brothers, fathers and sons, and a daughter in one case. The incidents were usually preceded by family disputes.
- Thirty-seven perpetrators, of whom 36 were men and one woman, used firearms against their family members other than intimate partners. The age of 29 (78.4%) perpetrators was known, and more than half of them (16) were aged 36-60, six were in the 19-35 age group, while five were 61 and older. Two perpetrators were under 19 years old. In 32 cases, the perpetrators were caught following an incident.
- Three perpetrators, two men and one woman, died by suicide after killing their family members. One perpetrator, a woman, was a law enforcement officer.



8. Perpetrators

8.1 Sex of perpetrators

The sex was specified for all 86 perpetrators of domestic violence incidents involving firearms, of whom 85 (99%) were men compared to only one woman (1%), clearly indicating highly gendered patterns of firearm misuse in the domestic violence setting. This pattern was evident in all jurisdictions, with men being the predominant perpetrators. Given that almost all incidents had only one perpetrator, the number of perpetrators matches the number of events recorded in the jurisdictions.



8.2 Age of perpetrators

The age was reported for 68 (79%) perpetrators indicating that men aged 36-60 (45) most frequently committed domestic violence with firearms. Ten perpetrators (14.7%) were reported among those aged 19 to 35 and those aged 61 and older, while two (8.9%) perpetrators were under 19 years of age. The data shows that a tendency towards misuse of firearms in domestic setting peaks in mature age, especially among men.

Age	Sex		Total
	Men	Woman	
0-18	2		2
19-35	10		10
36-60	45	1	46
61+	10		10
Unknown	18		18
Total	85	1	86

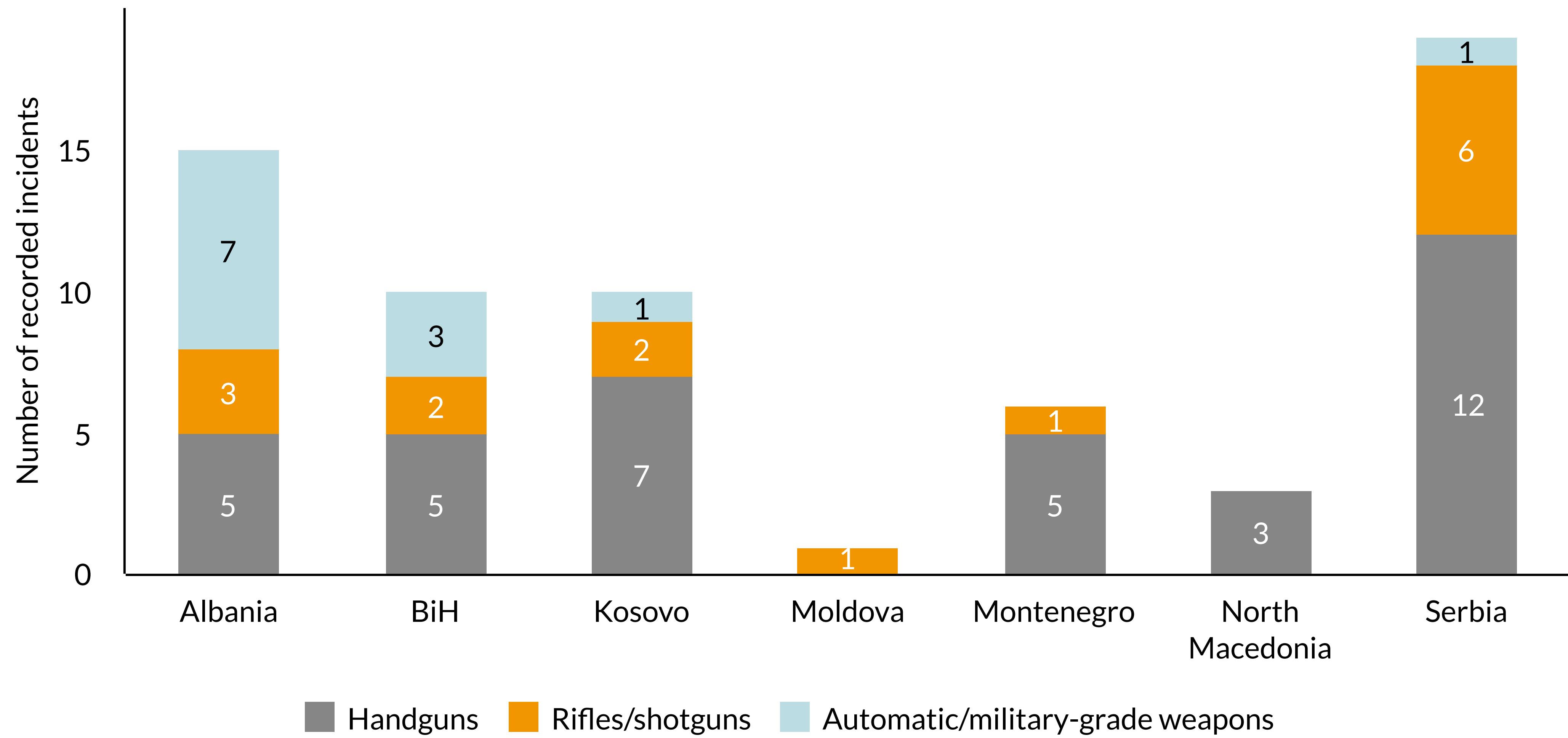


9. Type of weapon

The type of weapon was specified in 78 (92.8%) incidents. According to the available data, handguns were the most used weapons, being reported in nearly 50% (37) of all incidents. In particular, handguns were used in 21 incidents committed by intimate partners and 16 incidents committed by other family members. Rifles/shotguns (15) and automatic/military-grade weapons (12) follow. More than half of incidents involving automatic/military-grade weapons occurred in Albania (7). Explosives were reported in three incidents, while air guns and gas pistols were used in two incidents each. Multiple types of SALW were documented in six cases.

In 47 (55.9%) incidents, the law enforcement officers seized the weapon from the perpetrator following the incident.

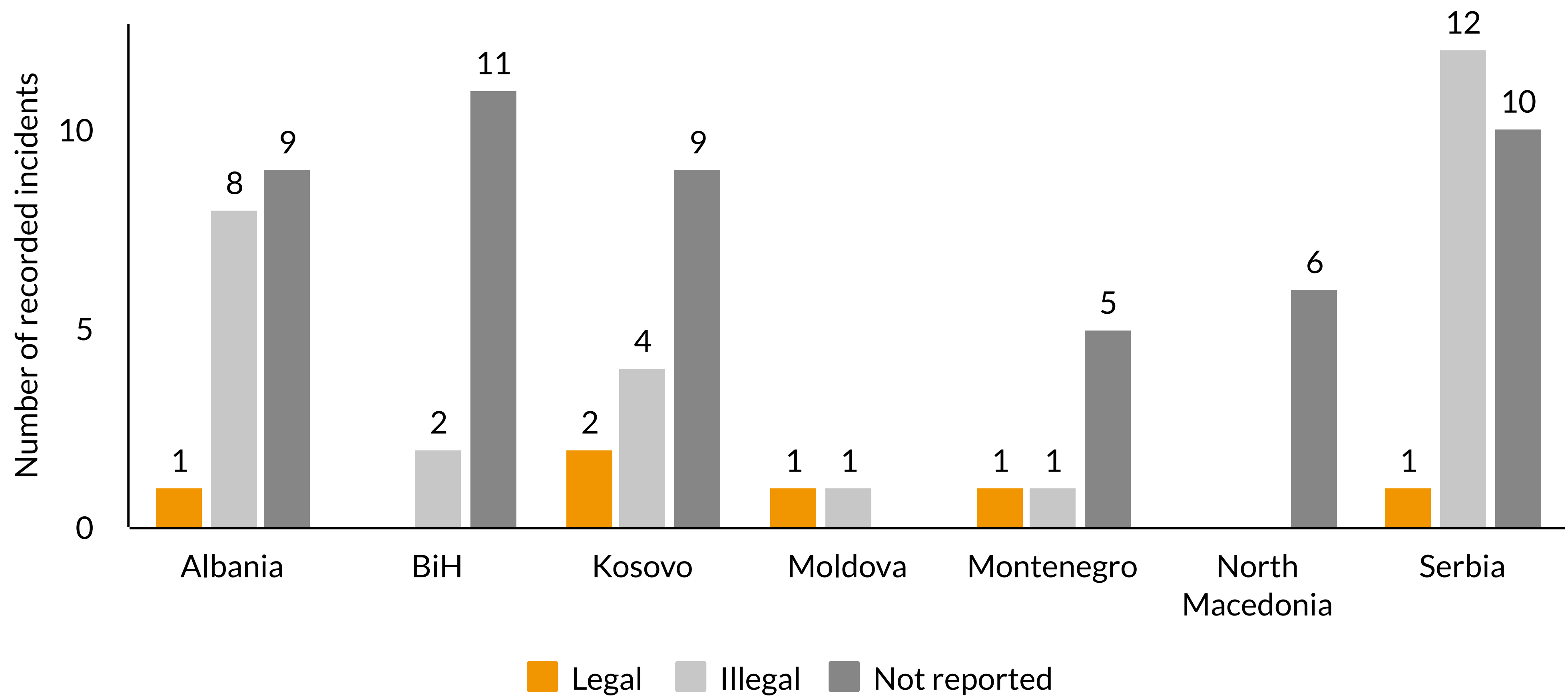
Three most reported types of weapons used in the context of domestic violence by jurisdiction



9.1 Legal status of weapon possession

Among incidents in which the status of possession was specified (34 or 40.5%) in 6 (17.6 %) cases, the weapons were reported to be in legal possession, while in 28 (82.4%) cases, the weapons were in illegal possession. The weapons in legal possession were handguns (3) and rifles/shotguns (3). In two incidents, the perpetrators were law enforcement officers who used their service weapons.

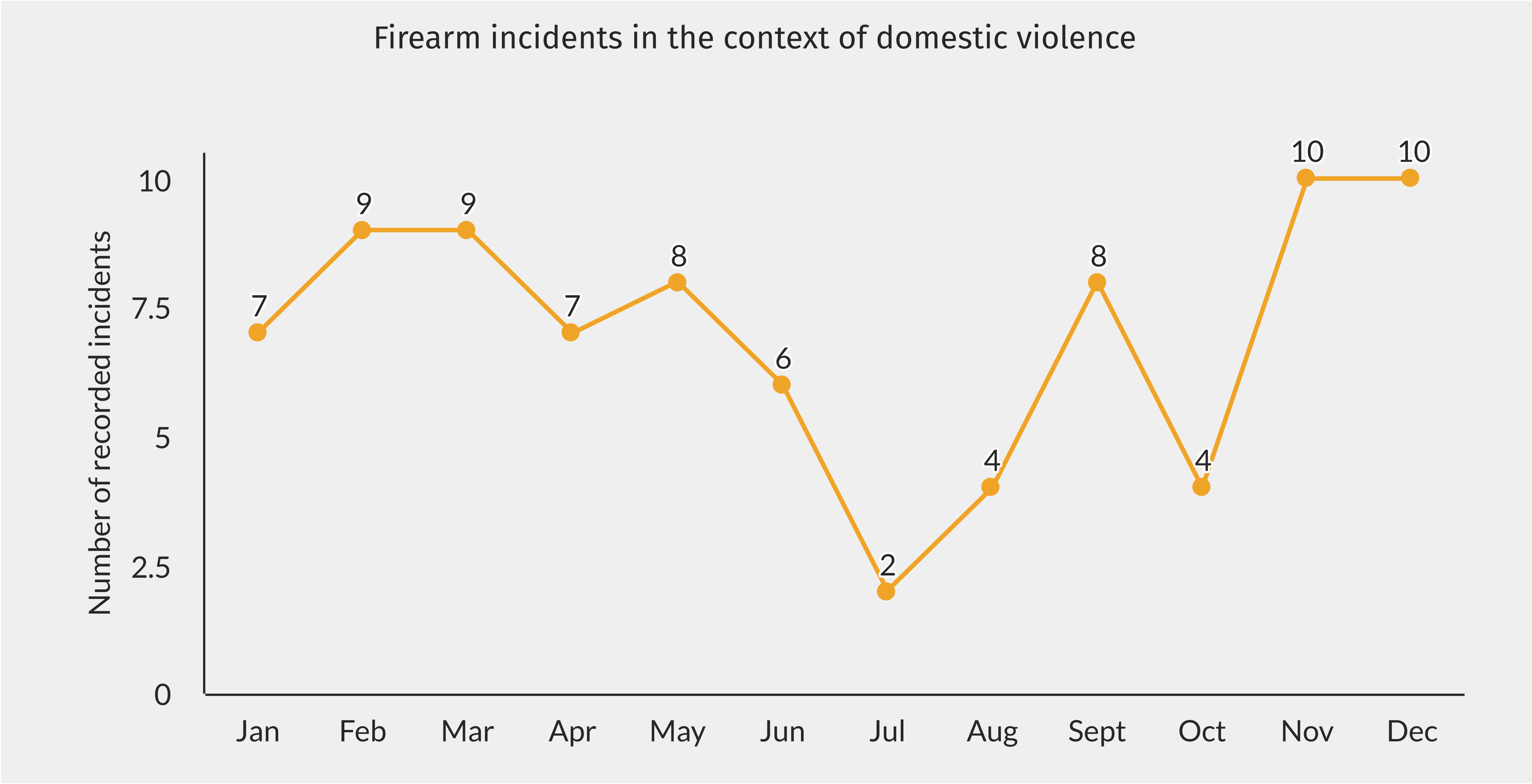
In 50 (59.5%) incidents, the legal status of weapon possession was not reported.





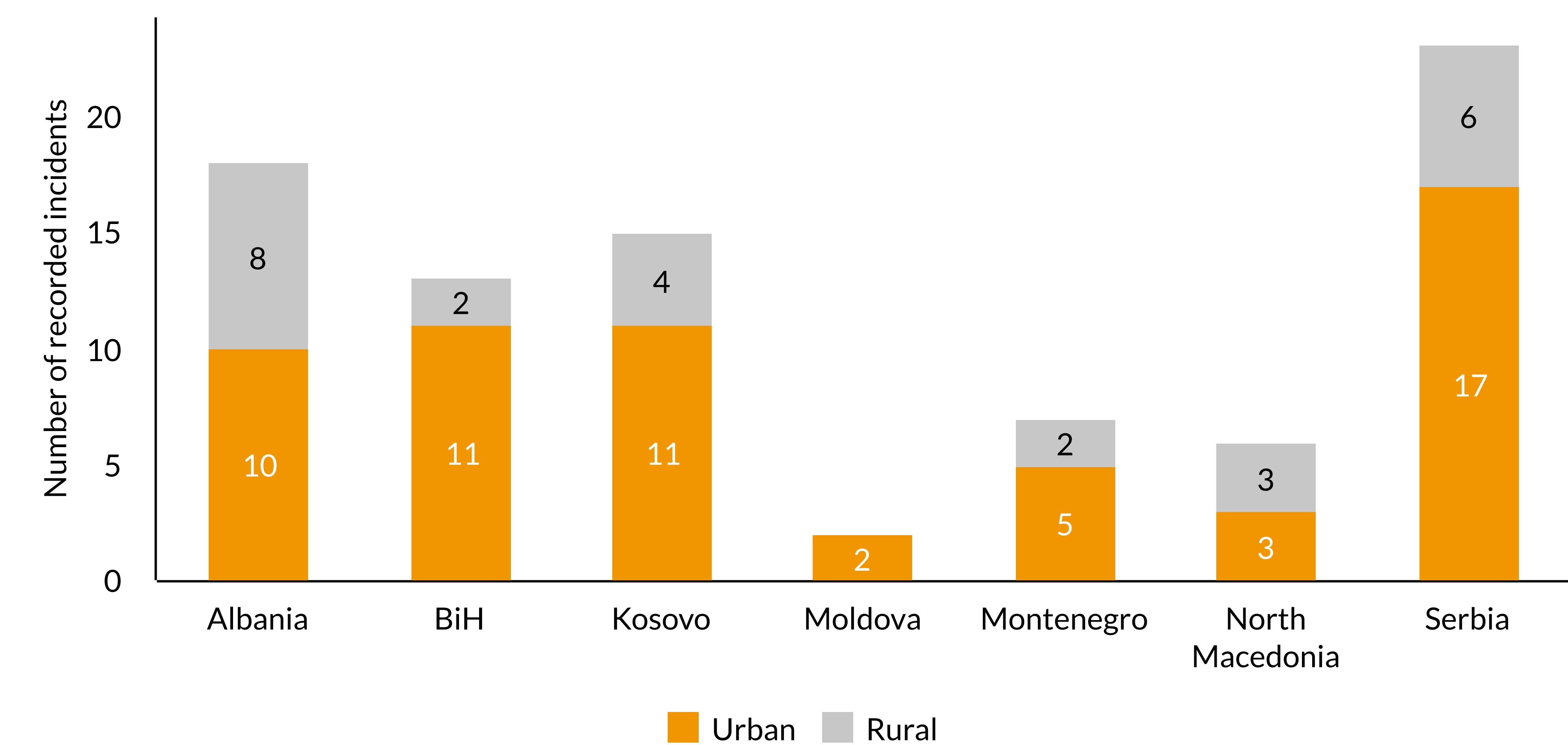
10. Firearm incidents in the context of domestic violence by months

The number of incidents averaged seven incidents per month, with the lowest number occurring during summer, i.e. in July (2). The trend began picking up in August and with some fluctuations peaked in November and December.



11. Macro- and micro-location

Firearm incidents in domestic settings in urban areas (59 or 70.2%) were more frequently reported than those in rural areas (25 or 29.8%). This pattern was observed throughout the region, with the exception of North Macedonia, which had an equal share of incidents in these two areas. Microlocation was known for 65 (77.4%) incidents, with 53 incidents (76.8%) occurring at homes.







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