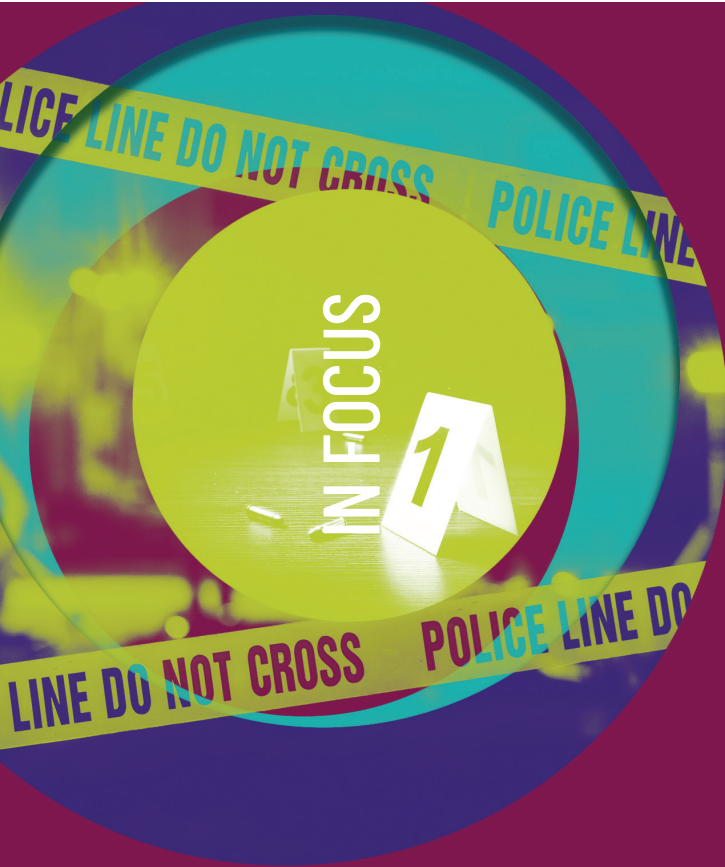




Funded by
the European Union



FIREARM INCIDENTS IN THE WESTERN BALKANS 2019-2024 TRENDS

Source: Armed Violence
Monitoring Platform - AVMP





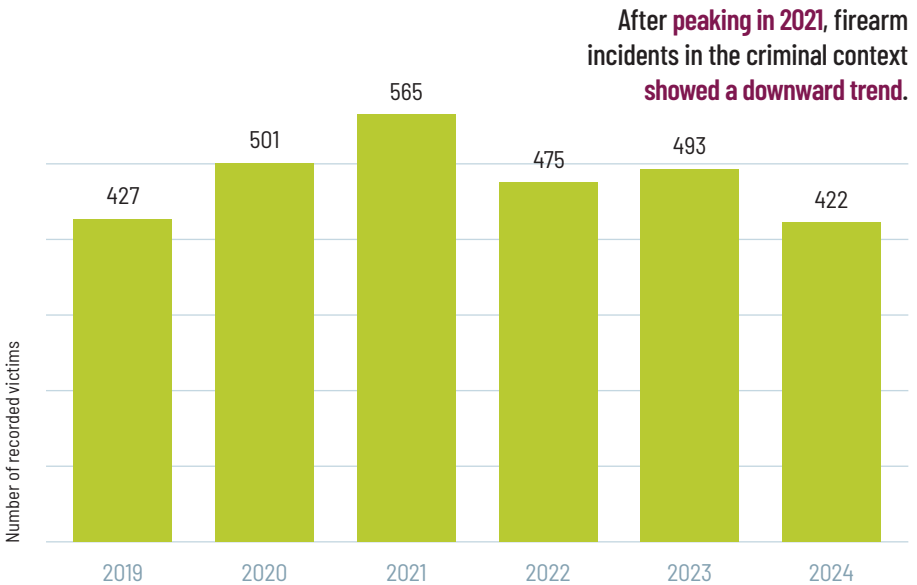
General Overview: Firearm Incidents in the Criminal Context



Firearm incidents in the criminal context made up nearly 1 in 5 of all reported firearm incidents in the Western Balkans between 2019 and 2024.

- 2,883 Firearm incidents in the criminal context
- 14,913 Other firearm incidents

▲ SHARE OF FIREARM INCIDENTS IN THE CRIMINAL CONTEXT COMPARED TO ALL REPORTED FIREARM INCIDENTS IN THE WESTERN BALKANS, 2019-2024



▲ FIREARM INCIDENTS IN THE CRIMINAL CONTEXT BY YEAR

Breakdown of Firearm Incidents in the Criminal Context

The AVMP differentiates four subcategories under the criminal context category:

Armed robberies subcategory captures thefts that involve the use of firearms, ammunition, and explosives.

Organized crime subcategory covers firearm incidents related to human, drug and weapon trafficking, as well as organized criminal groups' clashes, among others.

Firearm thefts subcategory records incidents in which a firearm, ammunition or explosives (FAE) were stolen.

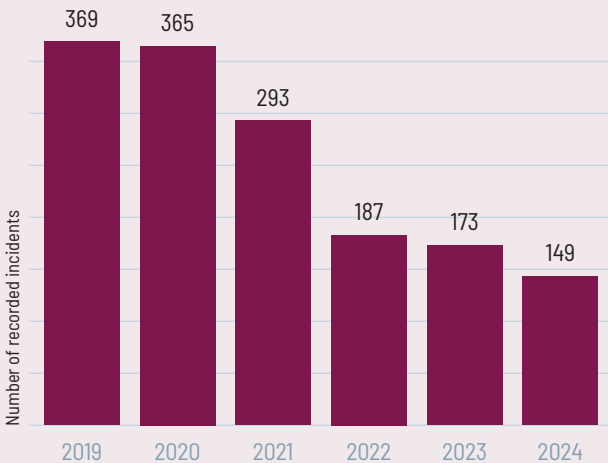
Other incidents in the criminal context subcategory includes firearm incidents with a criminal background that do not fall under the above subcategories. It primarily covers the use of FAE for planned assaults, usury, racketeering and extortion, intimidation, threat or warning, and kidnappings, among others.

Armed robberies	1,536
Organized crime	731
Firearm thefts	299
Other criminal incidents	317



▲ BREAKDOWN OF FIREARM INCIDENTS IN THE CRIMINAL CONTEXT, 2019-2024

ARMED ROBBERIES



Armed robberies accounted for **over half** of all firearm incidents in the criminal context.

A steady **decline** in armed robberies:

60%

decrease from 2019 to 2024

▲ ARMED ROBBERIES BY YEAR

Most Reported Microlocations of Armed Robberies:



371

cases in
Shops



233

cases in
Gas stations



170

cases in
Private
homes



152

cases in
Gambling
facilities



135

cases in
Streets

Other frequently targeted locations:



76

cases in
Pharmacies



55

cases in
Banks



43

cases in
Post offices



42

cases in
Exchange
offices



38

cases in
Restaurants

When the Type of Weapon Was Known:

HANDGUNS were used nearly



80%

of armed robberies (896 cases).

FAKE/TOY GUNS were used in 65 cases

– more than **automatic/military-grade weapons** (42 cases) and **rifles/shotguns** (38 cases).

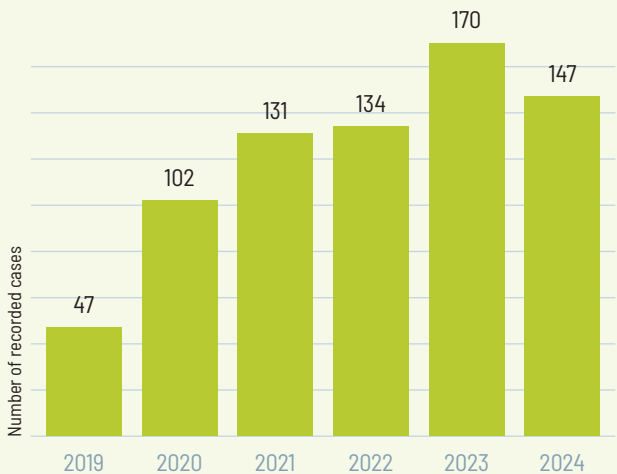
FIREARM INCIDENTS LINKED TO ORGANIZED CRIME

Firearm incidents linked to **organized crime** accounted for

25%

of all incidents in the criminal context.

Firearm incidents associated with **organized crime increased** between 2019 and 2023, but **declined** in 2024.



▲ FIREARM INCIDENTS LINKED TO ORGANIZED CRIME, 2019-2024

DRUG TRAFFICKING was the most reported activity, accounting for

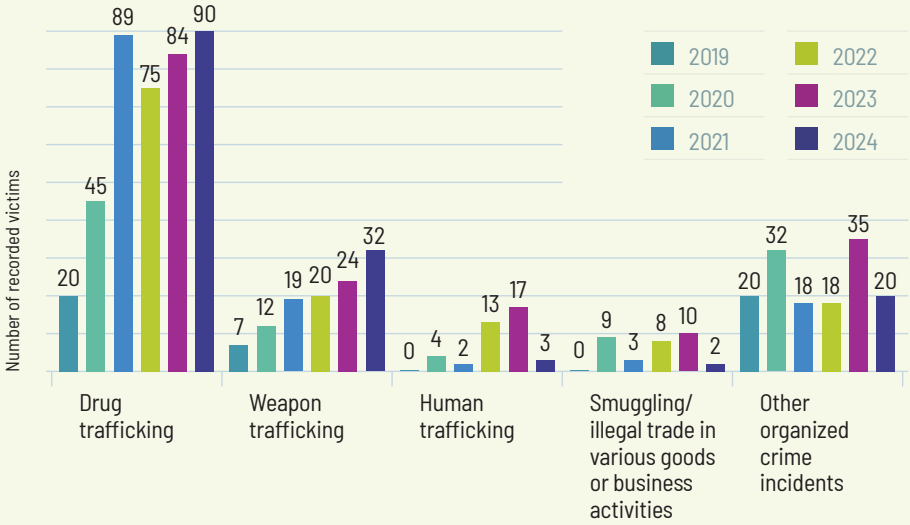
55%

of all incidents in this subcategory.

Cases increased between 2019 and 2024.

WEAPON TRAFFICKING incidents steadily **INCREASED** – from 7 cases in 2019 to 32 in 2024, reaching a total of 114 reported cases over six years.

HUMAN TRAFFICKING-RELATED INCIDENTS (39 cases in total) **peaked** in 2023, but **dropped sharply** in 2024.



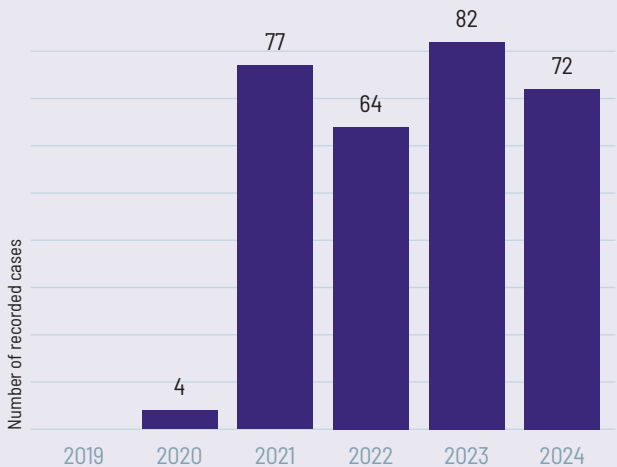
ILLEGAL ACTIVITIES RECORDED IN THE ORGANIZED CRIME SUBCATEGORY BY TYPE AND YEAR

FIREARM THEFTS

299 firearm theft cases were reported across the Western Balkans.

Firearm theft cases **surged sharply** in 2021 and have **remained consistently higher**.

Information on firearm thefts was unavailable for 2019



FIREARM THEFT CASES, 2019-2024

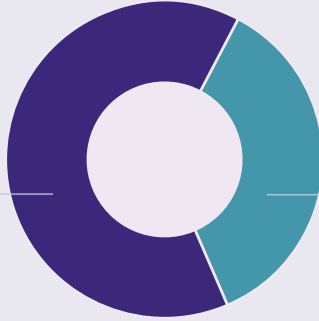
In some of the thefts, legal entities were targeted, including firearm shops, a weapon factory, companies, police and security agencies, and museums.

In **71%** of the cases, weapons were reported stolen from private residences.

In **70%** of the 161 cases where status of legal possession was known, the weapons were stolen from legal owners.



Handguns **137**



76 Rifles/Shotguns

▲ MOST FREQUENTLY REPORTED STOLEN WEAPONS, 2019-2024

OTHER CRIMINAL INCIDENTS

317 cases reported across the region.

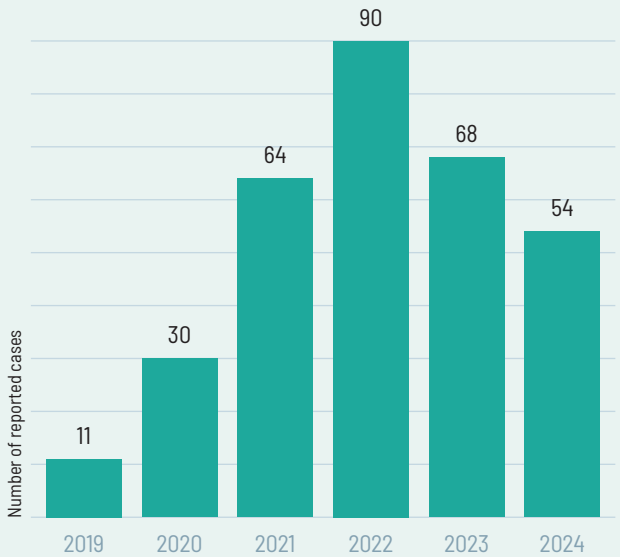
The number of these incidents **increased** from 2019 to 2022 before **gradually declining**.

More than half of the cases were **targeted shootings** or **planned assaults**.

The rest of the cases involved **kidnapping, armed extortion, threats with firearms / property damage** to send a **warning**.

Nearly **30%** of these cases were reported in 2022.

Around **20%** of the cases involved the use of weapons to **intimidate others**, including rivals, businesses or officials.



▲ OTHER CRIMINAL INCIDENTS, 2019-2024






Perpetrators of Firearm Incidents in the Criminal Context

5,232 perpetrators were recorded in the criminal context.

For

42%

of perpetrators, the sex was not reported.

Men		3,005
Women		54
Sex unreported		2,173

MEN accounted for

 57%

of all perpetrators, while

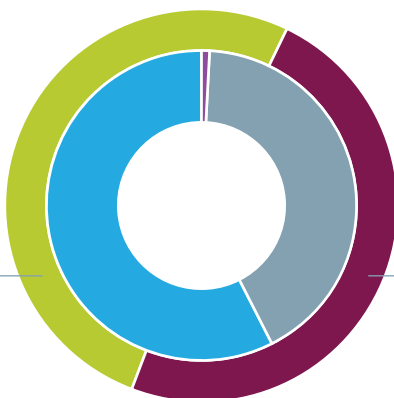
WOMEN represented

 1%.

WOMEN were most frequently reported as perpetrators in incidents related to organized crime (28 cases) and armed robberies (19 cases).

49%

Perpetrators were caught in 1,405 cases



51%

Perpetrators were not caught in 1,479 cases

Victims of Firearm Incidents in the Criminal Context

Firearm incidents in the criminal context resulted in 2,176 reported victims.

Age was unreported in

78%

of victims (1,701)

Most common age group among victims:

19-35 years ■ **205** victims

36-60 years ■ **190** victims

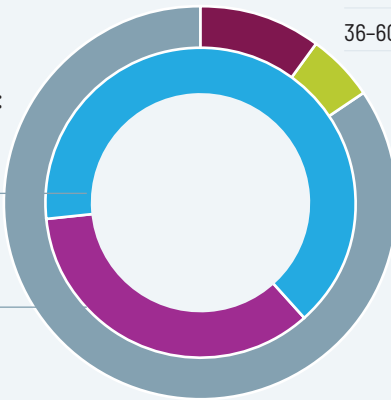
When the sex was known:

65%

of victims were men

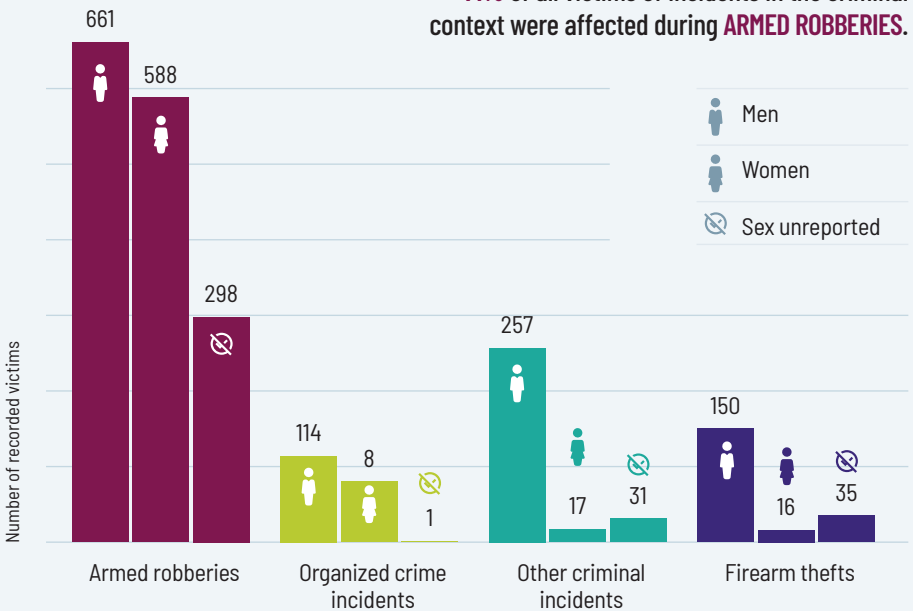
35%

were women



▲ PERPETRATORS BY SEX, 2019-2024

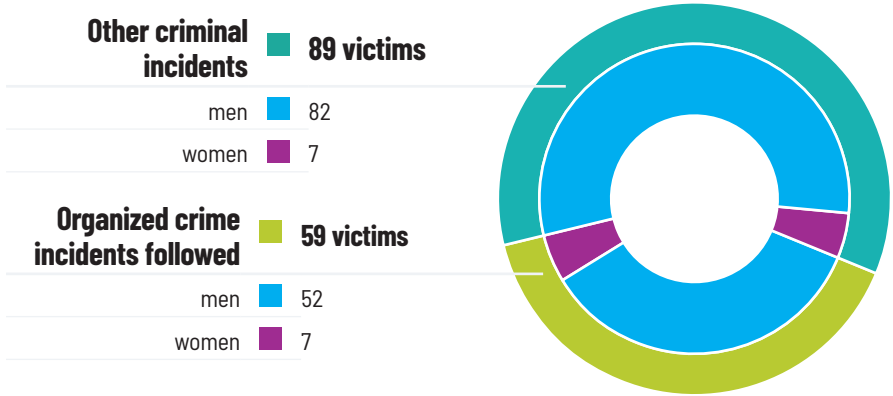
71% of all victims of incidents in the criminal context were affected during **ARMED ROBBERIES**.



▲ VICTIMS BY TYPE OF FIREARM INCIDENTS IN THE CRIMINAL CONTEXT AND SEX, 2019-2024

Firearm incidents in the criminal context recorded the **second-highest number of fatalities**, following those in the **domestic violence context**.

The highest number of fatalities was reported in the context of

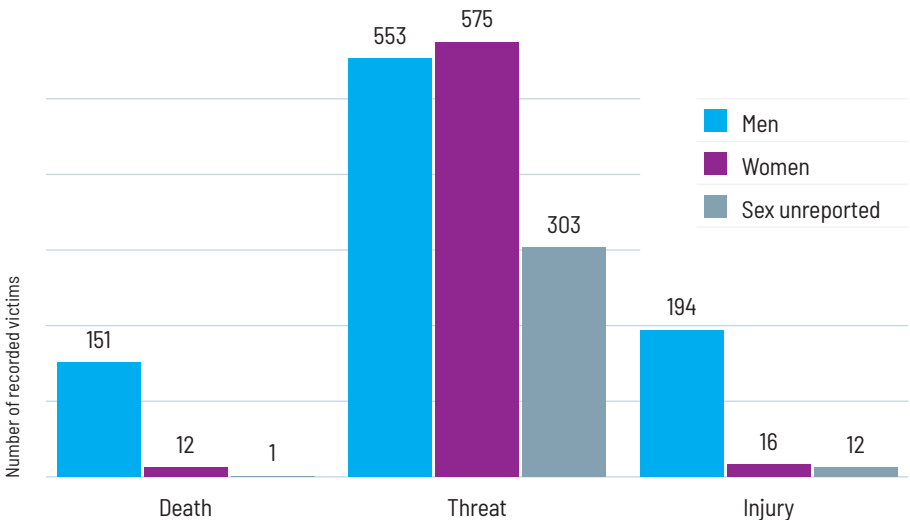


Firearm-related injuries were mainly reported in, **“other criminal incidents”**, with **101 victims injured**, closely followed by **organized crime incidents (52 victims)**.

Armed robberies accounted for the **highest number of victims threatened** - **1,366 people** (514 men and 570 women when the sex was indicated).

201 people reported that their **firearm was stolen**.

91% of **women victims** reported in firearm incidents in the criminal context were **threatened in armed robberies**.

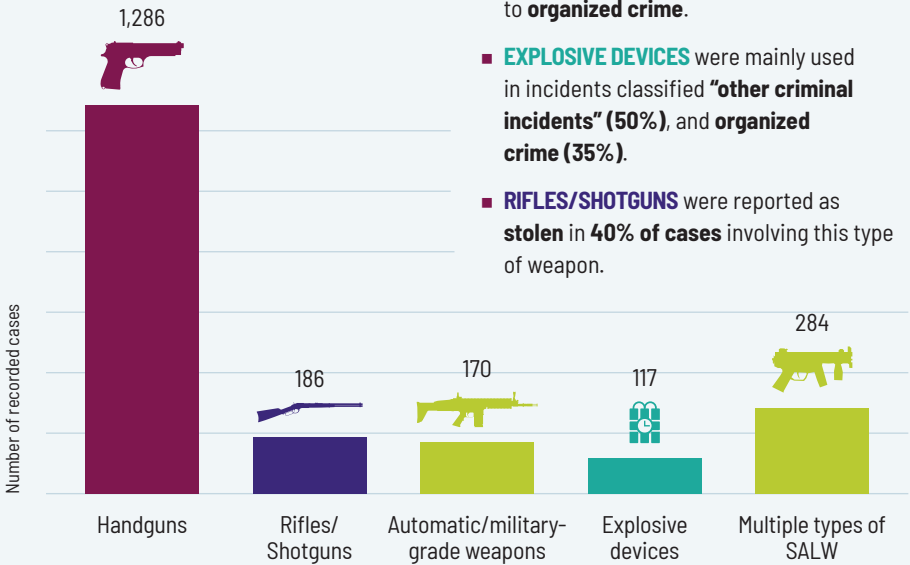


▲ MOST REPORTED OUTCOMES FOR VICTIMS OF FIREARM INCIDENTS IN THE CRIMINAL CONTEXT

Type of Weapons in Firearm Incidents in the Criminal Context

■ **HANDGUNS** were the **most commonly reported** type of weapon in the criminal context, appearing in over **59% of cases**. The majority (70%) of handgun-related cases occurred during **armed robberies**.

- **72% of cases** involving **MULTIPLE TYPES OF SALW** were associated with **organized crime**.
- **Half of all cases** with **AUTOMATIC/MILITARY-GRADE WEAPONS** were also tied to **organized crime**.
- **EXPLOSIVE DEVICES** were mainly used in incidents classified as **“other criminal incidents” (50%)**, and **organized crime (35%)**.
- **RIFLES/SHOTGUNS** were reported as **stolen in 40% of cases** involving this type of weapon.

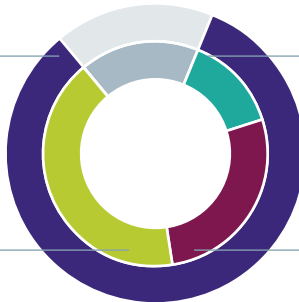


▲ MOST REPORTED TYPES OF WEAPONS, 2019-2024

Macrolocation and Microlocation

83% 
of cases occurred in **urban areas**.

47% 
of cases occurred in **public buildings**
- primarily armed robberies.



16% 
of cases occurred in **streets**
- mostly armed robberies and incidents classified as “other criminal incidents”.

31% 
of cases occurred in **homes**
- mainly firearm thefts and incidents linked to organized crime.

Disclaimer: The data for the preparation of the infographic was retrieved on 29 April 2025. Since news articles/statements can be published days or months after incidents occur and recorded cases may be updated as new information becomes available, the statistics presented here are subject to change and may differ from reports already published on the same topics.