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WEAPON SEIZURES IN THE WESTERN BALKANS: 2019-2024 TRENDS

Source: Armed Violence
Monitoring Platform - AVMP





Weapons seizure refers to all cases where law enforcement authorities removed one or more pieces of firearms, ammunition or explosive devices from civilian possession due to various reasons such as illegal possession, lack of proof of ownership, voluntary surrender, or as evidence. In some cases, weapon seizures may be conducted as part of a larger operation

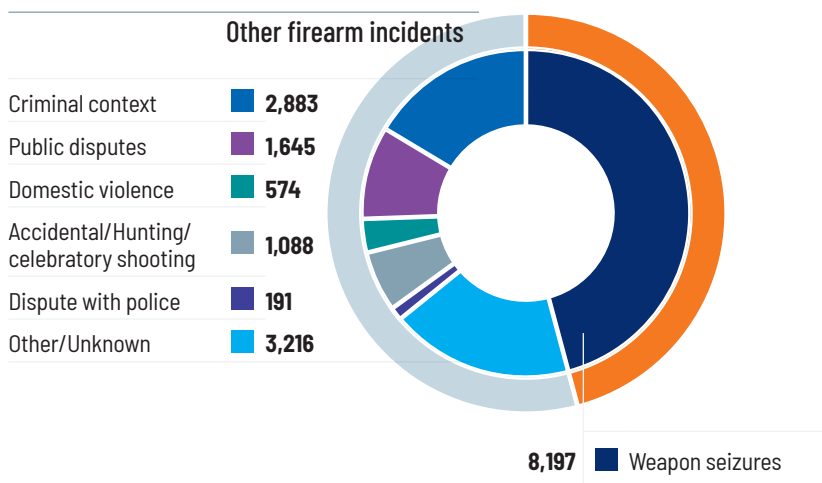
to reduce crime or to disrupt illegal activity.

The AVMP data is collected daily from a combination of official sources, including websites of law enforcement institutions and ministries of interior, online and print media, and police reports.

Weapon Seizures in Relation to other Firearm Incidents

46%

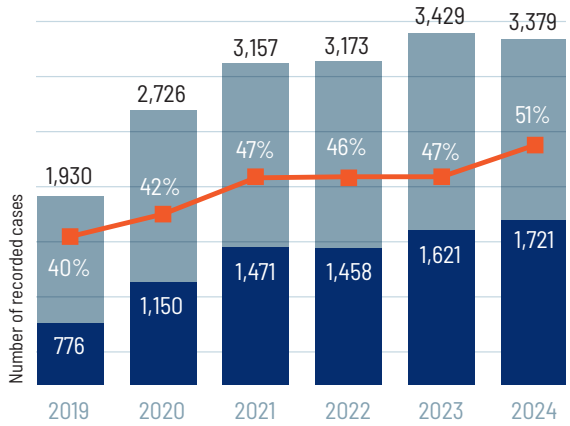
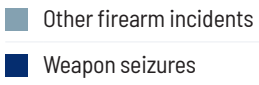
Share of weapon seizures in the overall number of firearm incidents in the Western Balkans, 2019-2024



From 2019 to 2024, weapon seizures made up a growing share of all firearm incidents recorded across the Western Balkans, rising from 40% in 2019 to 51% in 2024.

From 776 cases in 2019 to 1,719 cases in 2024, number of weapon seizures

MORE THAN DOUBLED.



▲ WEAPON SEIZURES VS OVERALL NUMBER OF FIREARM INCIDENTS BY YEAR

Breakdown of Weapon Seizures

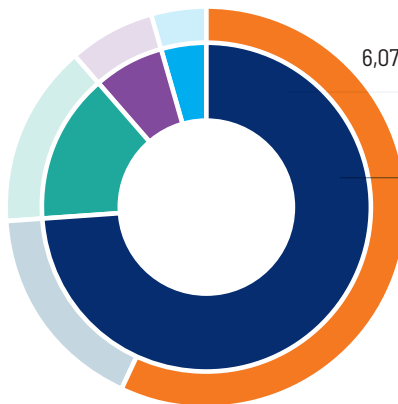
Single type of weapon - these cases involve the seizure of only one type of weapon in an incident, for example handguns or rifles only, regardless of how many pieces of weapons were seized.

Multiple types of SALW - these cases involve two or more types of weapons seized together in an incident, such as handguns, explosives, and air guns.

Unknown type of weapon - in these cases, the type of weapon seized was not specified or could not be determined.

Ammunition-only - these refer to cases in which only ammunition was seized, with no weapons present.

AMMUNITION ALONE was seized in **7% OF CASES.**



74%

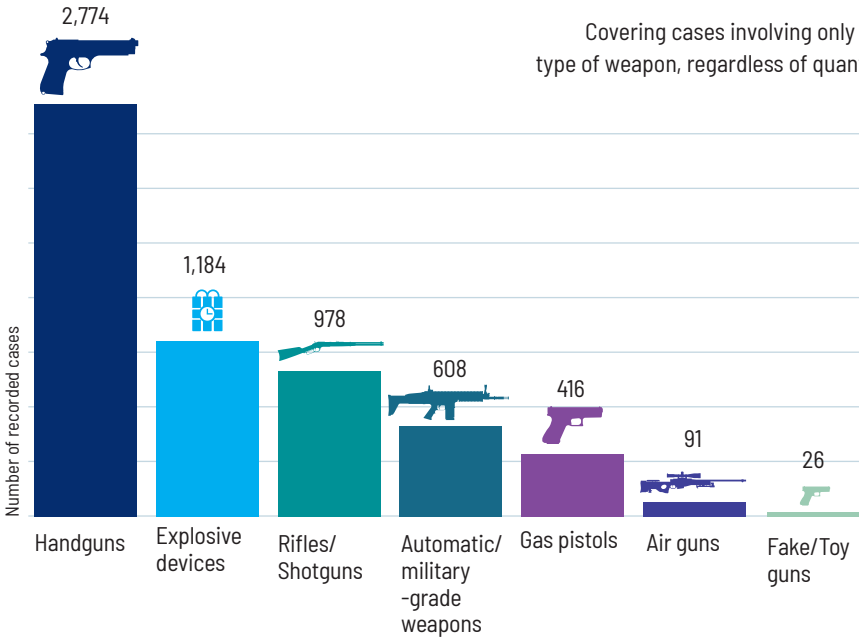
of cases involved seizures of a single type of weapon.

Additionally, ammunition was **SEIZED IN 57%** of all single-weapon seizures.

▲ BREAKDOWN OF WEAPON SEIZURES, 2019-2024

Seizures of a Single Type of Weapon

Covering cases involving only one type of weapon, regardless of quantity.



▲ SEIZURES OF A SINGLE TYPE OF WEAPON, 2019-2024

Seizures of the most reported types of weapons

HANDGUNS

Seizures of handguns represented

46%

of all seizures of single type of weapon.

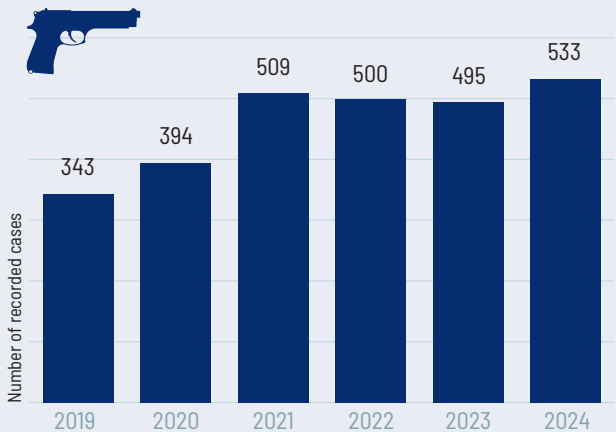
Sharp rise in handgun seizures:

52%

since 2019.

HANDGUNS were the **MOST FREQUENTLY SEIZED** type of weapon in **ALL JURISDICTIONS.**

Handguns were reported in nearly half of all single type of weapon seizures – in 2,774 incidents, far more than any other type of weapon.



▲ CASES OF SEIZURES OF HANDGUNS BY YEAR

EXPLOSIVE DEVICES

More than 1,180 incidents involved explosive devices as the only type of weapon seized, making them the second most frequently reported weapon type.

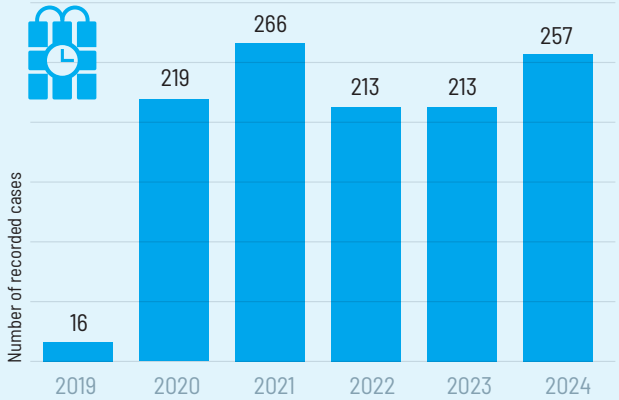
Seizures of explosive devices accounted for

19%

of all seizures of single type of weapon.

20%

of all seizures of explosive devices in 2019-2024 were Seizures of pyrotechnic devices.



64%

of all seizures of explosive devices in 2019-2024, were accidental findings of explosive devices. In many cases, the explosives were remnants of World War I and II.

▲ SEIZURES OF EXPLOSIVE DEVICES BY YEAR

* Data on the seizures of explosive devices in 2019 is unavailable.

RIFLES/SHOTGUNS

Seizures of rifles/shotguns represented

16%

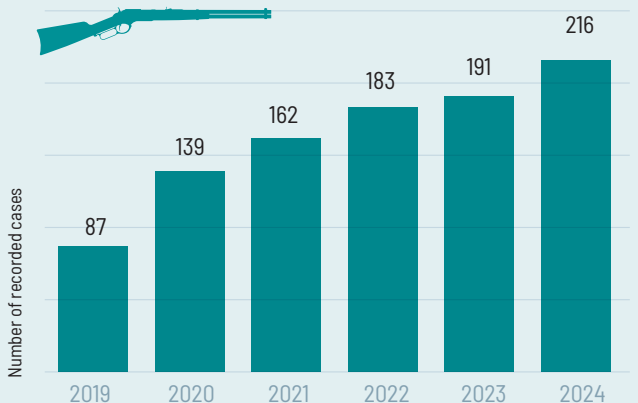
of all seizures of single type of weapon.

15%

of all seizures of rifles/shotguns were linked to hunting.

From 2019-2024, seizures of rifles/shotguns **MORE THAN DOUBLED**, showing a steady rise.

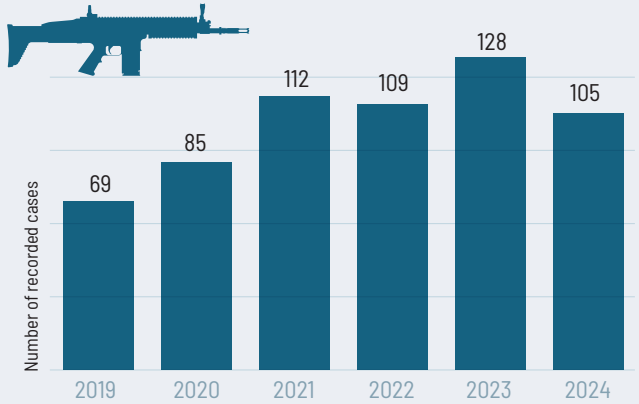
Rifles/shotguns were documented in 978 seizures of a single type of weapon — the third most frequently reported weapon type.



▲ SEIZURES OF RIFLES/SHOTGUNS BY YEAR

AUTOMATIC/MILITARY-GRADE WEAPONS

A total of 608 cases involved the seizure of automatic / military-grade weapons.



52%

rise in seizures of automatic/military-grade weapons in the 2019-2024 period.

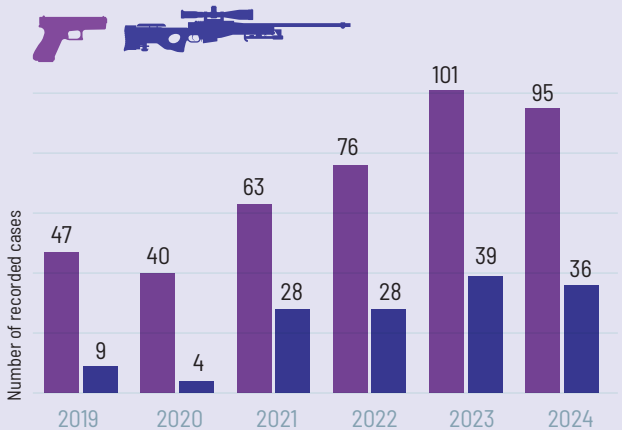
36%

of all automatic/military-grade weapon seizures involved **AK-47-TYPE OF WEAPONS.**

▲ SEIZURES OF AUTOMATIC/MILITARY-GRADE WEAPONS BY YEAR

GAS PISTOLS AND AIR GUNS

Gas pistols were seized in 416 cases across the Western Balkans. Air guns were seized in 91 cases, indicating a rising trend.



Between 2019 and 2024, gas pistol seizures **MORE THAN DOUBLED**, while air gun seizures quadrupled.

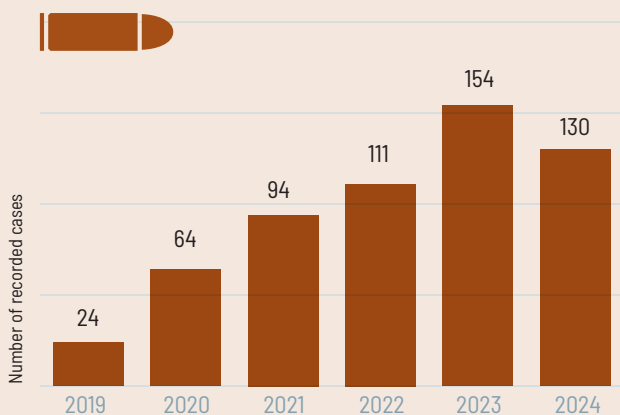
▲ SEIZURES OF GAS PISTOLS AND AIR GUNS BY YEAR



AMMUNITION ONLY

577 cases involved the seizure of ammunition without accompanying weapons.

The number of **AMMUNITION-ONLY SEIZURES** increased **MORE THAN FIVEFOLD** from 2019 to 2024, peaking at 154 cases in 2023.



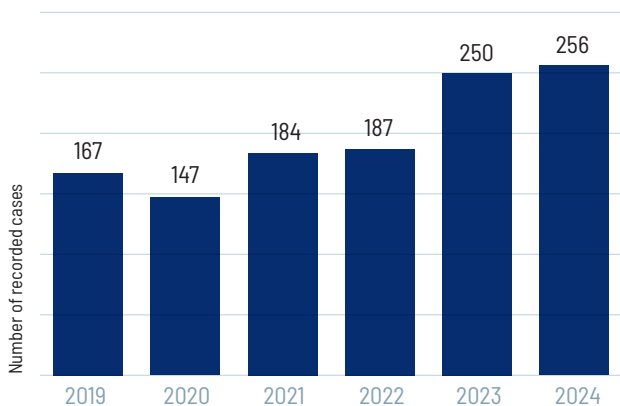
▲ SEIZURES OF AMMUNITION ONLY BY YEAR

Seizures of multiple types of weapons, 2019-2024

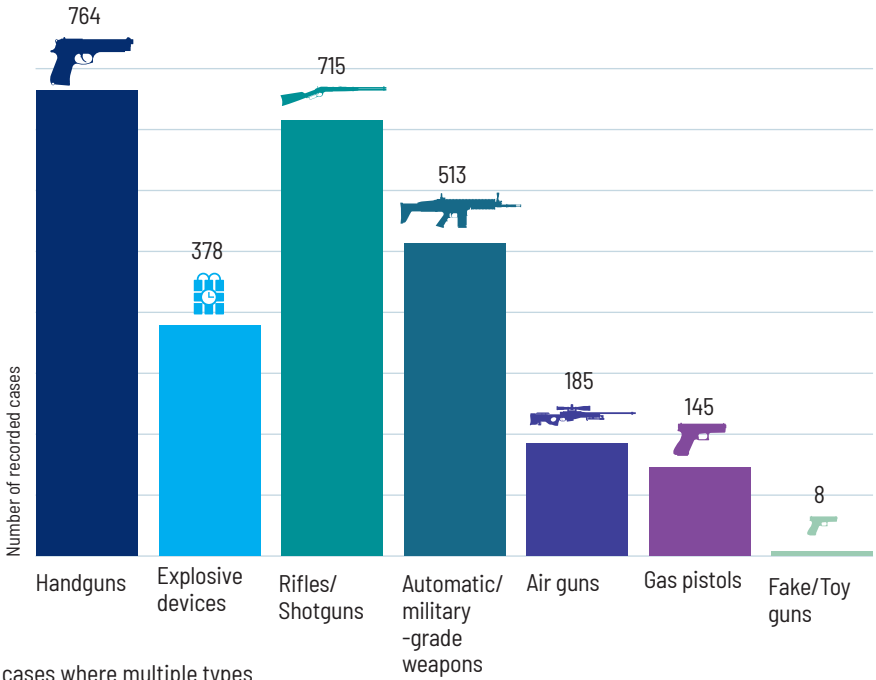
1,191 cases involved the seizure of multiple weapon types.

53%

increase in the seizures of **MULTIPLE TYPES OF SALW** from 2019 to 2024.



▲ SEIZURES OF MULTIPLE TYPES OF SALW BY YEAR



In cases where multiple types of SALW were seized:

53%

involved handguns

32%

involved explosive devices

60%

involved rifles/shotguns

43%

involved automatic/military-grade weapons

87%

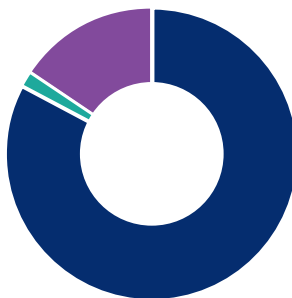
involved ammunition

▲ TYPES OF WEAPONS SEIZED IN CASES INVOLVING MULTIPLE TYPES OF SALW, 2019-2024

Legal status of weapon possession

Legal status of weapon possession was indicated in 85% of cases, while in 15% it remained unknown. When legal status was known.

Illegal **6,793**
 Legal **136**
 Not reported **1,268**



98%

of incidents involved weapons in illegal possession

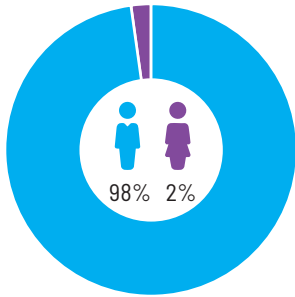
2%

involved weapons in legal possession

▲ LEGAL STATUS OF WEAPON POSSESSION, 2019-2024

Perpetrators

A total of 8,807 perpetrators were reported in connection to weapon seizures. Data on sex of the individuals from whom weapons were seized reflect a strong gendered pattern in weapon possession.



MEN DOMINATED IN SEIZURES ACROSS ALL TYPES OF WEAPONS, particularly handguns (2,595 cases) and multiple types of SALW (940 cases), and rifles/shotguns (866 cases).

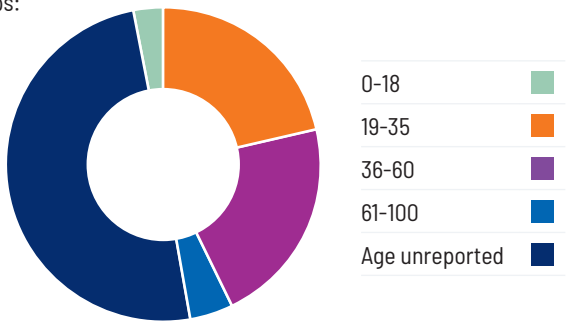
WOMEN were **MOST OFTEN** linked to the seizure of **HANDGUNS** (47 cases) and multiple types of SALW (26 cases).

▲ PERPETRATORS BY SEX

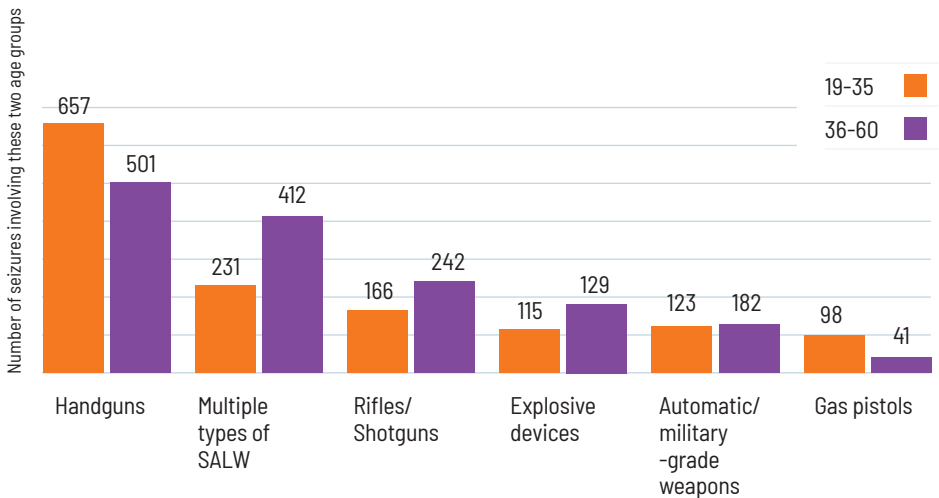
When the age was known, most perpetrators fell under two age groups:



The remaining age groups accounted for smaller shares:



▲ PERPETRATORS BY AGE, 2019-2024



▲ WEAPON SEIZURES BY THE MOST REPORTED AGE GROUPS OF PERPETRATORS (19-35 VS. 36-60) AND TYPE OF WEAPONS, 2019-2024

Weapon seizures by the most reported age groups of perpetrators (19-35 vs. 36-60):

- **Handguns were the most seized weapons in both age groups**, but they are especially **dominant** among perpetrators aged **19-35**.
- **Multiple types of SALW** were more **commonly seized from the age group 36-60**.
- **Rifles/shotguns** and **explosive devices** also showed **higher seizure numbers** among the **36-60 age group**.
- **Automatic military-grade weapons** were seized in **similar numbers** across **both groups**.
- **Gas pistols** were more **prevalent** among **19-35-year-old perpetrators**.

Perpetrators aged up to 18 mostly linked to seizures of:

- **Handguns** (77 cases)
- **Gas pistols** (36 cases)
- **Multiple types of SALW** (21 cases)
- **Automatic/military-grade weapons** (20 cases).

Most seizures of Fake/Toy guns involved perpetrators of this age group.

Perpetrators aged 61 and older primarily associated with seizures of:

- Multiple types of SALW (134 cases)
- Handguns (80 cases)
- Rifles/shotguns (69 cases)

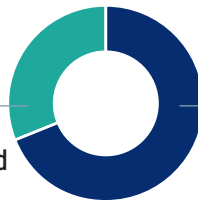
Macrolocation and Microlocation

Weapon seizures occurred in both urban and rural areas across the region, with significant differences between these two areas.



31%

of weapon seizures occurred in **rural** areas.



69%

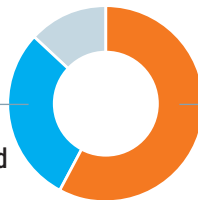
of weapon seizures occurred in **urban** areas.

When the microlocation was known



29%

of weapon seizures occurred in **streets**.



58%

of weapon seizures occurred in **homes/yards**.

Disclaimer: The data for the preparation of the infographic was retrieved on 27 May 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.