



IN FOCUS

Armed Violence Monitor

Issue No. 3

WEAPON SEIZURES **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 brings into focus **weapons seizures** in South East Europe (SEE) from **1 January to 31 December 2020**, being the most frequently reported type of incident in the mentioned period. Weapon seizures represent a powerful law enforcement response to combating the use, proliferation and trafficking of FAE. In this report, weapons seizures refer to all cases in which law enforcement agencies took hold of firearms, ammunition, and explosives (FAE) for numerous reasons, including illegal possession, lack of proof of ownership, voluntary surrender, or as crime scene evidence.

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 [EU Council Decision \(CFSP\) 2016/2356](#) and [EU Council Decision \(CFSP\) 2019/2111](#).

HIGHLIGHTS

1,235

cases of weapon seizures were recorded on the AVMP in 2020.

688

reported cases in which **ammunition** was seized.

1,316

perpetrators were reported in connection to weapon seizures.

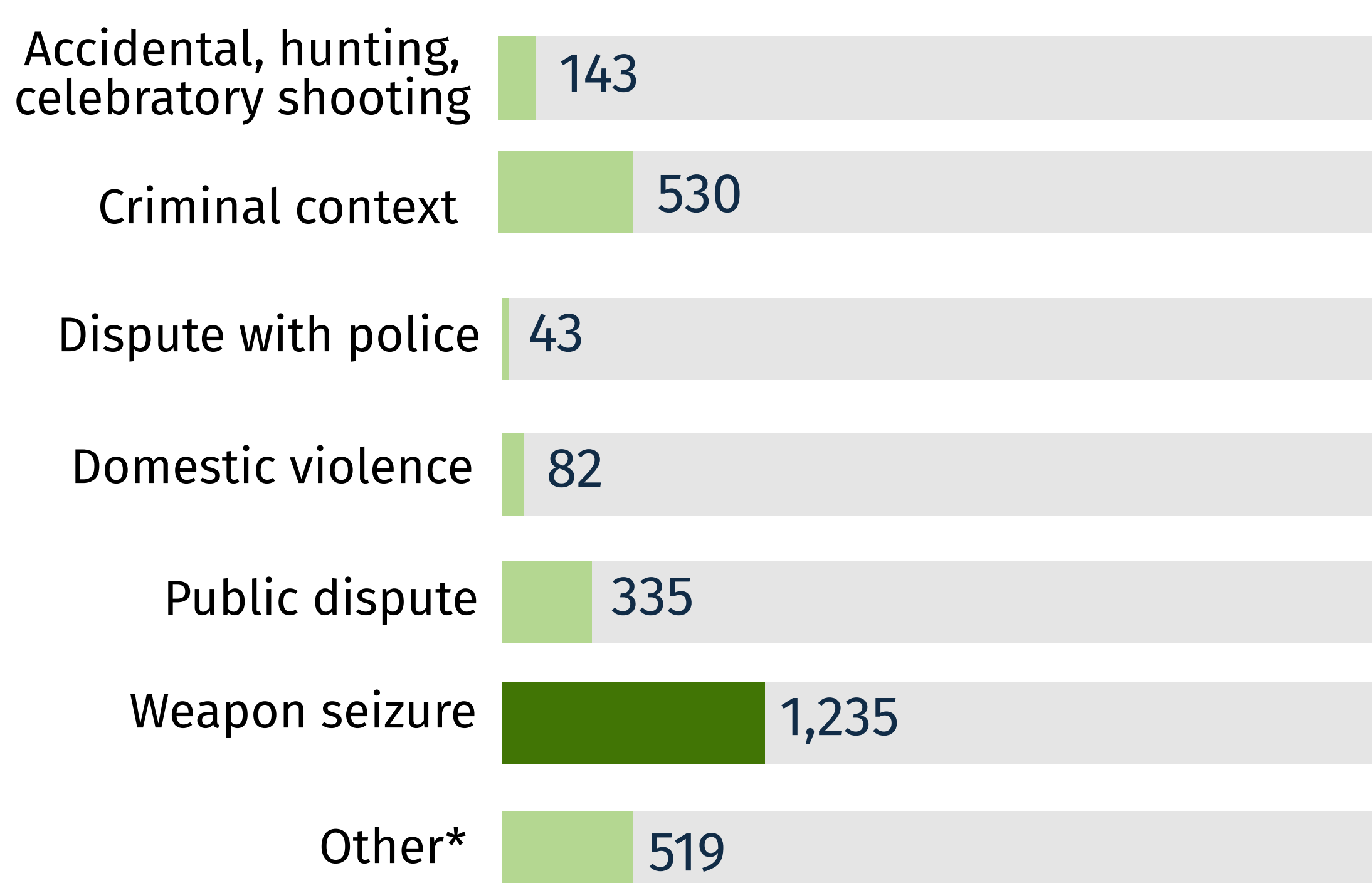
*References to Kosovo shall be understood to be in the context of Security Council Resolution 1244 (1999).

1. GENERAL OVERVIEW

In the AVMP, weapons seizures are recorded as a separate type of incident category that includes all cases in which a seizure was the main event. Weapon seizures arising from other types of firearm incidents are not included in this category. Thus, a total of 577 weapon seizures, reported in connection to criminal context, public disputes, domestic violence and other types of incidents are not covered in this report.

1.1. Weapon seizures vs other types of firearm incidents

The graph shows the share of types of firearm-related incidents in SEE as captured by the AVMP in 2020. With 1,235 cases, weapon seizures were the most frequently reported type of incident in the region, accounting for nearly half of all recorded firearm incidents.

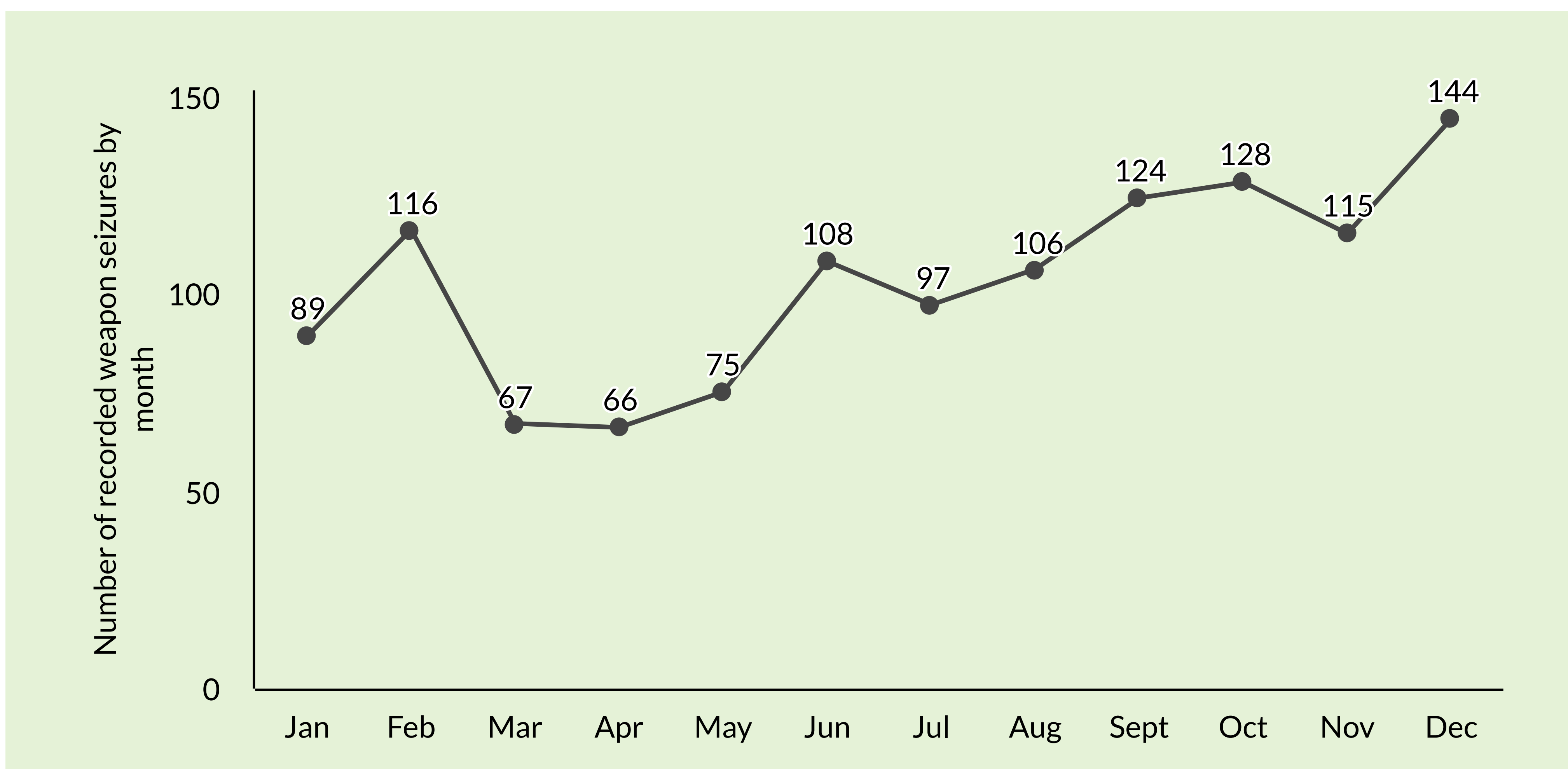


2,887
firearm incidents were recorded on the AVMP in 2020.

*Other as a separate category under the Types of Firearm incidents refers to suicides, shootings under undetermined circumstances, non-hunting related shooting of animals, explosions, weapons used for defence, weapon surrender, and all other incidents that cannot be classified under any of the categories above.

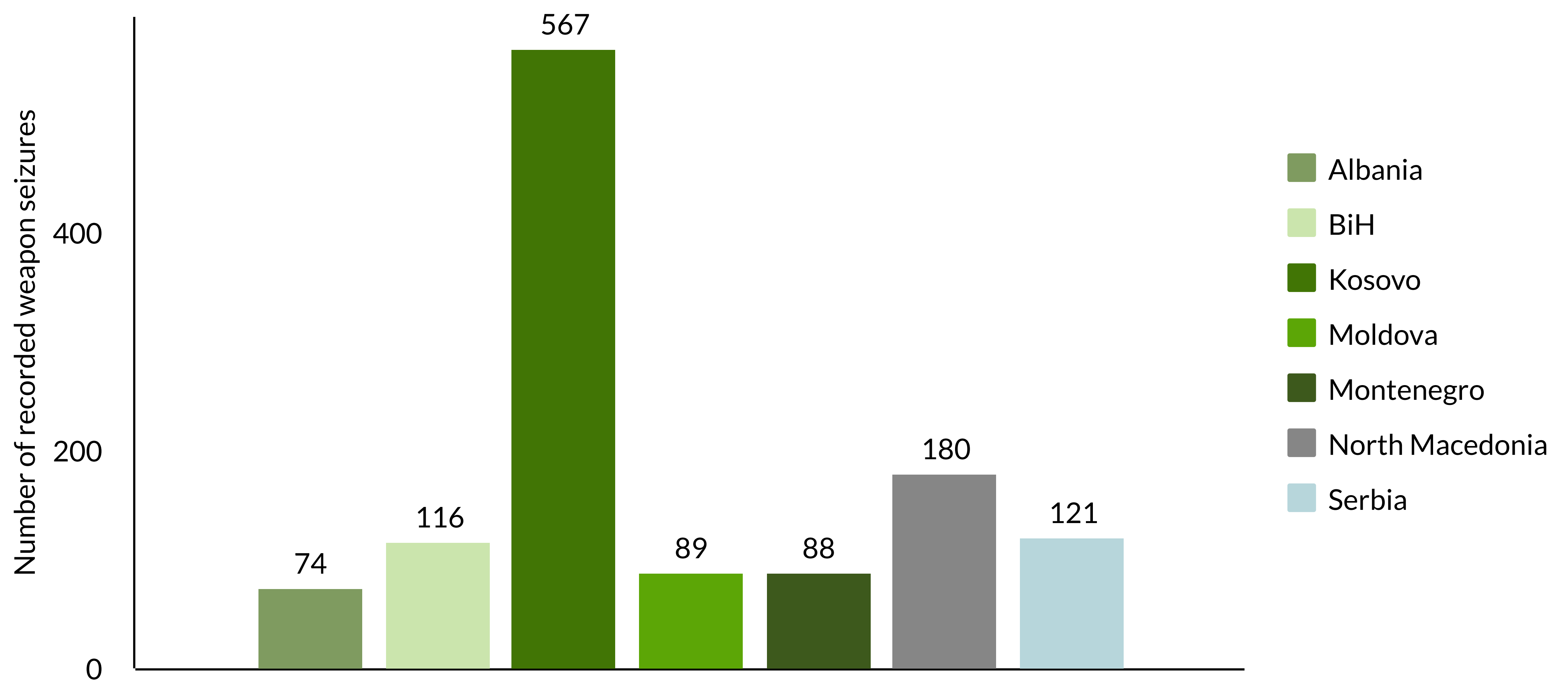
1.2 Weapon seizures throughout 2020

The number of weapon seizure cases fluctuated throughout 2020, with a significant drop observed in March and April, correlating with the onset of the COVID-19 outbreak. This pattern began to pick up in May and peaked in December (144).



1.3 Weapon seizures in jurisdictions

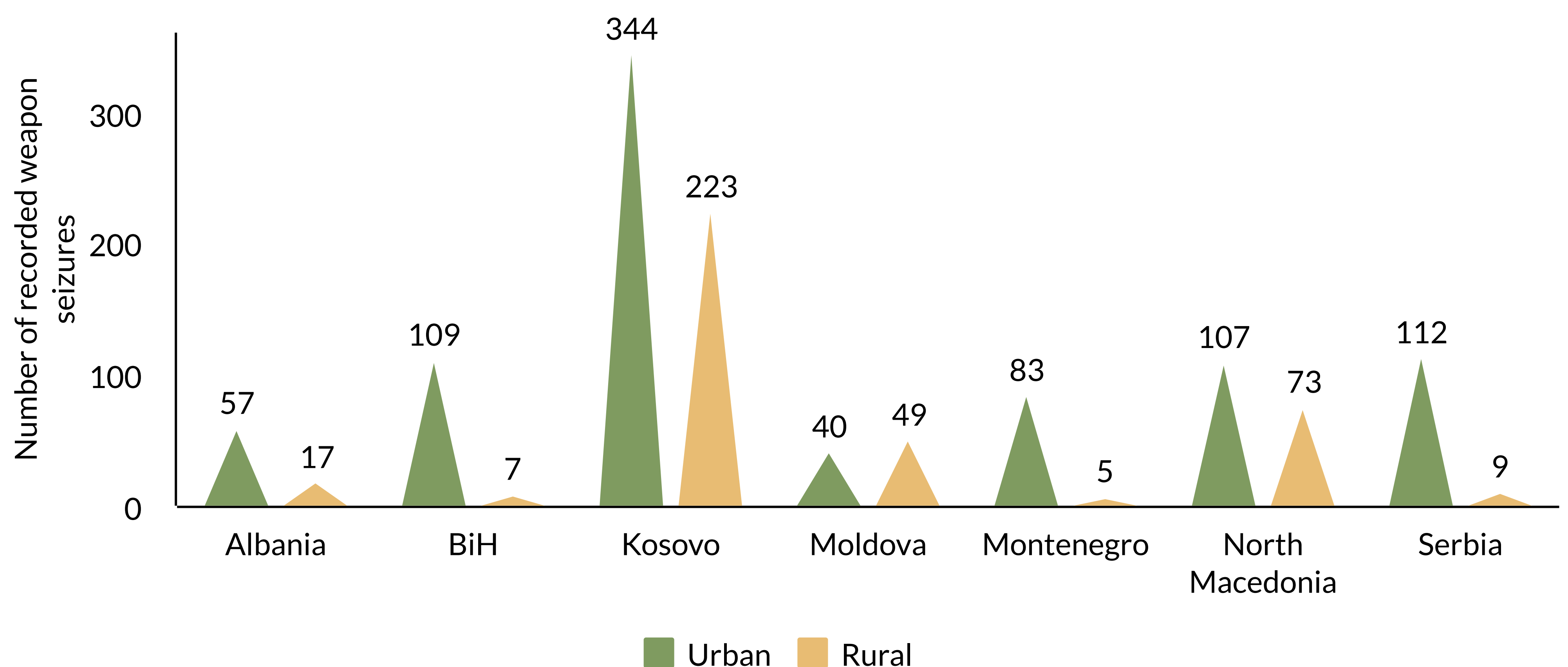
The highest number of cases was recorded in Kosovo, with 567 cases accounting for 46% of all reported seizures, followed by North Macedonia (180), Serbia (121), and Bosnia and Herzegovina (116). The remaining weapon seizures (259) were distributed almost evenly among Moldova, Montenegro and Albania.



1.4 Weapon seizures by macrolocation

Weapon seizures in urban areas (852) significantly outnumbered those in the rural area (383). This pattern was documented across the region, with the exception of Moldova, which recorded a higher number of weapon seizures in the rural area. The majority of weapon seizures took place at home and in the street.

Weapon seizures by jurisdiction and macrolocation



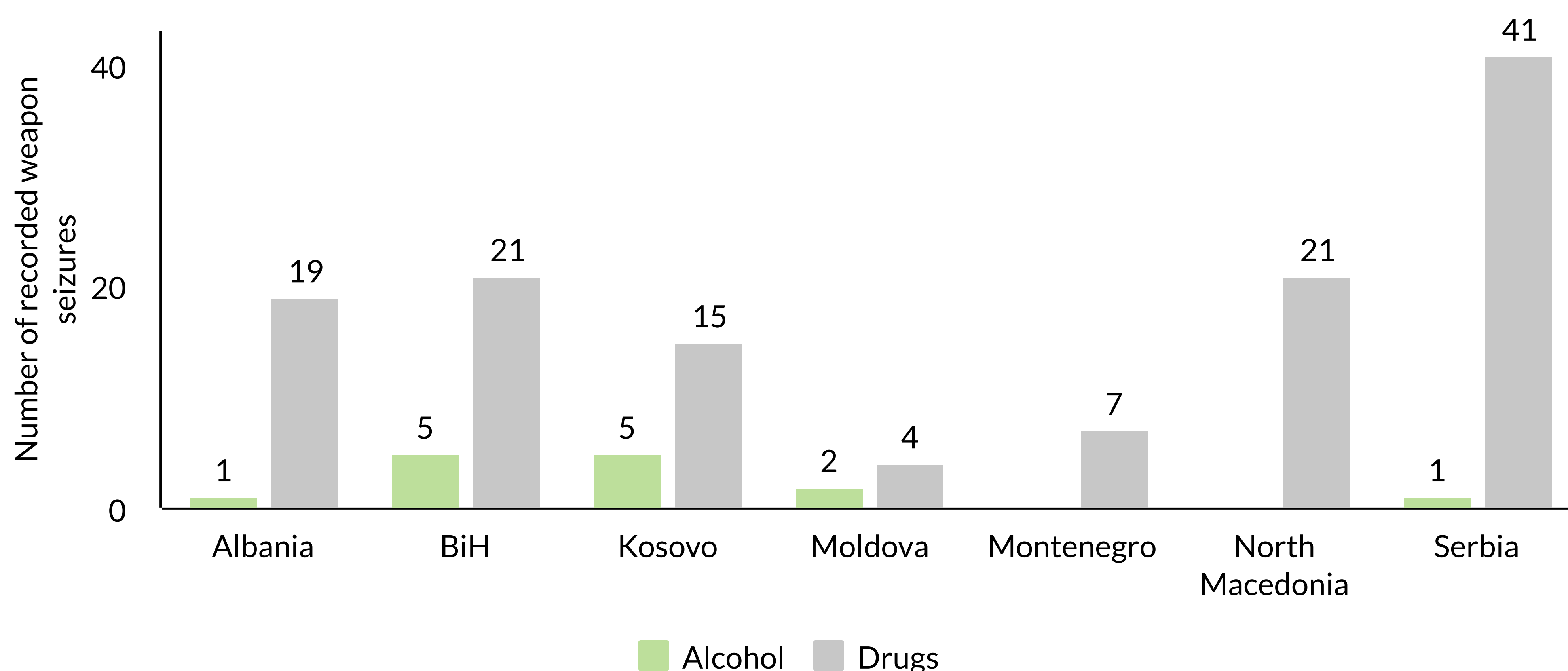
1.5 Weapon seizures by microlocation

In cases for which the microlocation of weapon seizures was reported (856, i.e. 69.4%), more than half took place at home (442 or 51.6%), 209 (24.4%) in the street, while 48 (5.6%) took place in the fields. A total of 21 (1.7%) weapon seizure cases were reported at border areas. For 378 (30.6%) weapons seizures, no information on microlocation was reported.

Location	Home	Street	Field	Yard	Forest	Border
Albania	19	28	0	0	2	3
BiH	50	17	1	0	2	1
Kosovo	148	88	11	10	10	1
Moldova	31	7	22	7	8	6
Montenegro	60	7	0	0	1	3
North Macedonia	54	54	12	17	3	3
Serbia	80	8	2	0	0	4
Total	442	209	48	34	26	21

1.6 Presence of drugs* and alcohol in weapon seizures

Among the cases in which weapon seizure was the main event, the presence of drugs was reported in 129 (10.4%) cases. The highest number of such cases was recorded by Serbia (41), almost double compared to other jurisdictions that follow, namely Bosnia and Herzegovina (21), North Macedonia (21) and Albania (19). In 14 (1.1%) cases, the perpetrators were under the influence of alcohol.

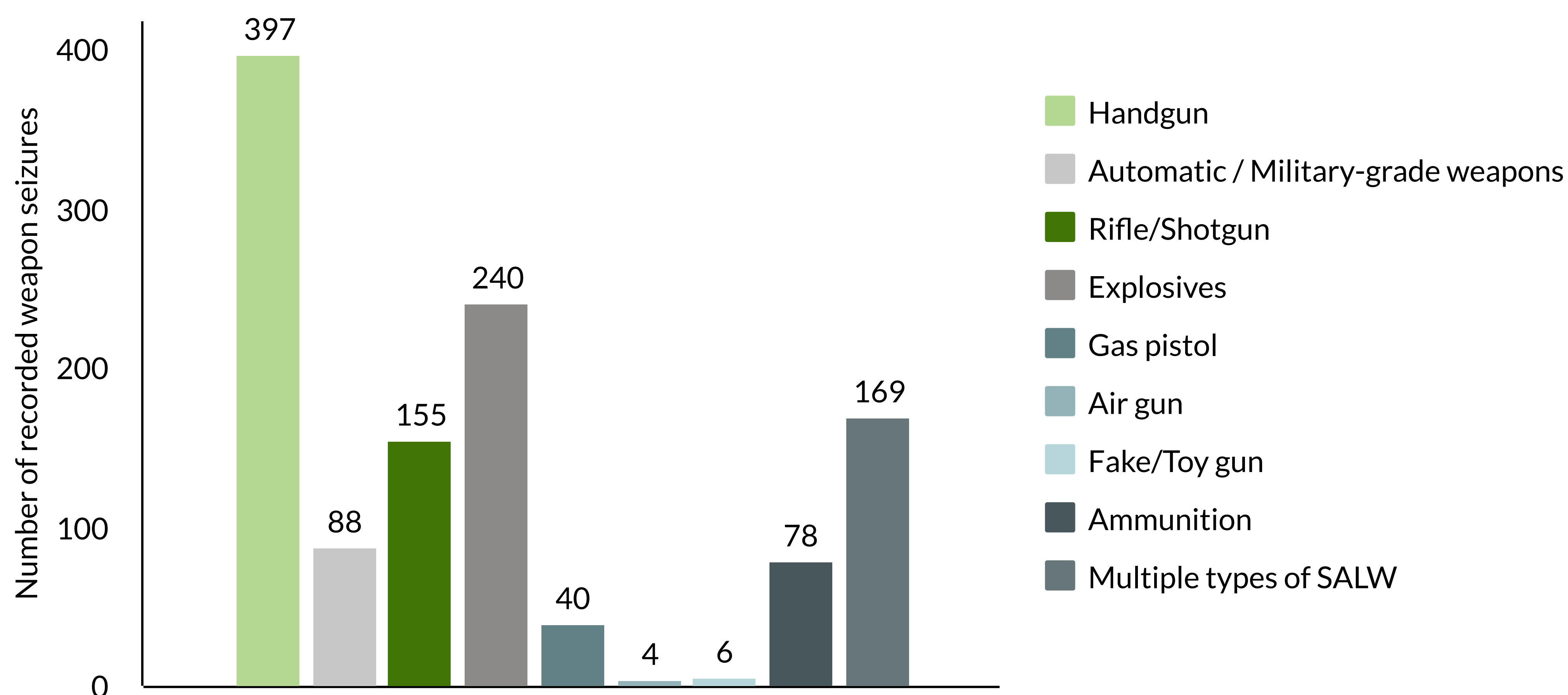


*Seizures of drugs in the context of organized crime involving the presence of FAE are recorded under the criminal context category.

2. TYPES OF WEAPONS

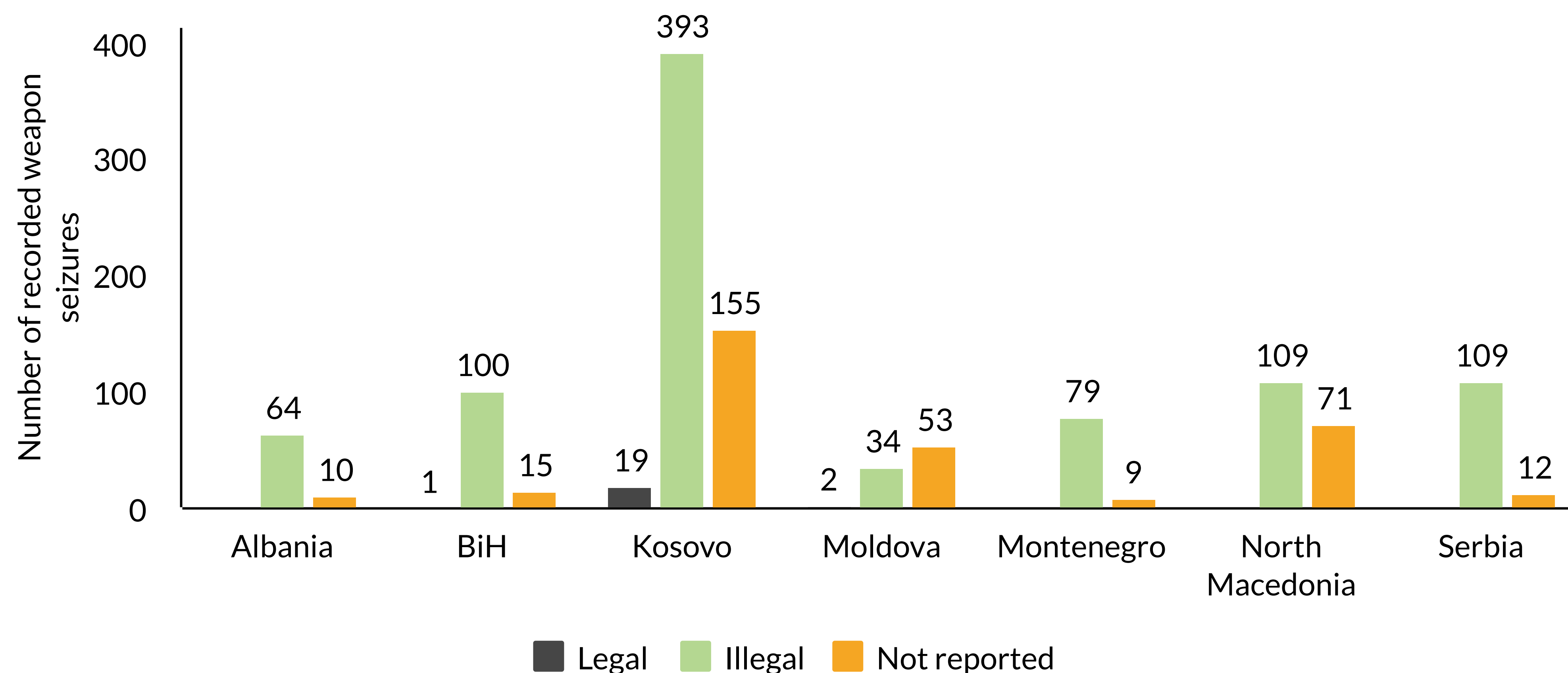
2.1 Weapon seizures by type of weapon

In cases involving the seizure of a single type of weapon, handguns were the most seized weapon, followed by explosives. The seizure of multiple types of SALW involves taking hold of more than one type of weapon. In 2020, 169 such cases were recorded, with Kosovo (55), Bosnia and Herzegovina (33), Serbia (28) and Montenegro (27) reporting the highest number of seizures of multiple types of SALW. The type of weapon was either unknown or not reported in 58 (4.6%) cases.



2.2 Weapon seizures by type of possession

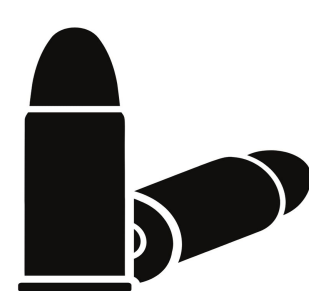
Among cases in which the status of possession was specified, in 888 (97.5%) cases, the weapons were reported to be in illegal possession, while in 22 (2.5%) cases, the weapons were in legal possession. The seizure of weapons in legal possession was reported in Kosovo (19), Moldova (2), and Bosnia and Herzegovina (1). In 325 (26.3%) weapon seizures, the type of possession was not reported. Seizure of weapons with an expired permit was reported in 25 (2%) cases, mainly in Kosovo (19).



2.3 Ammunition seizures

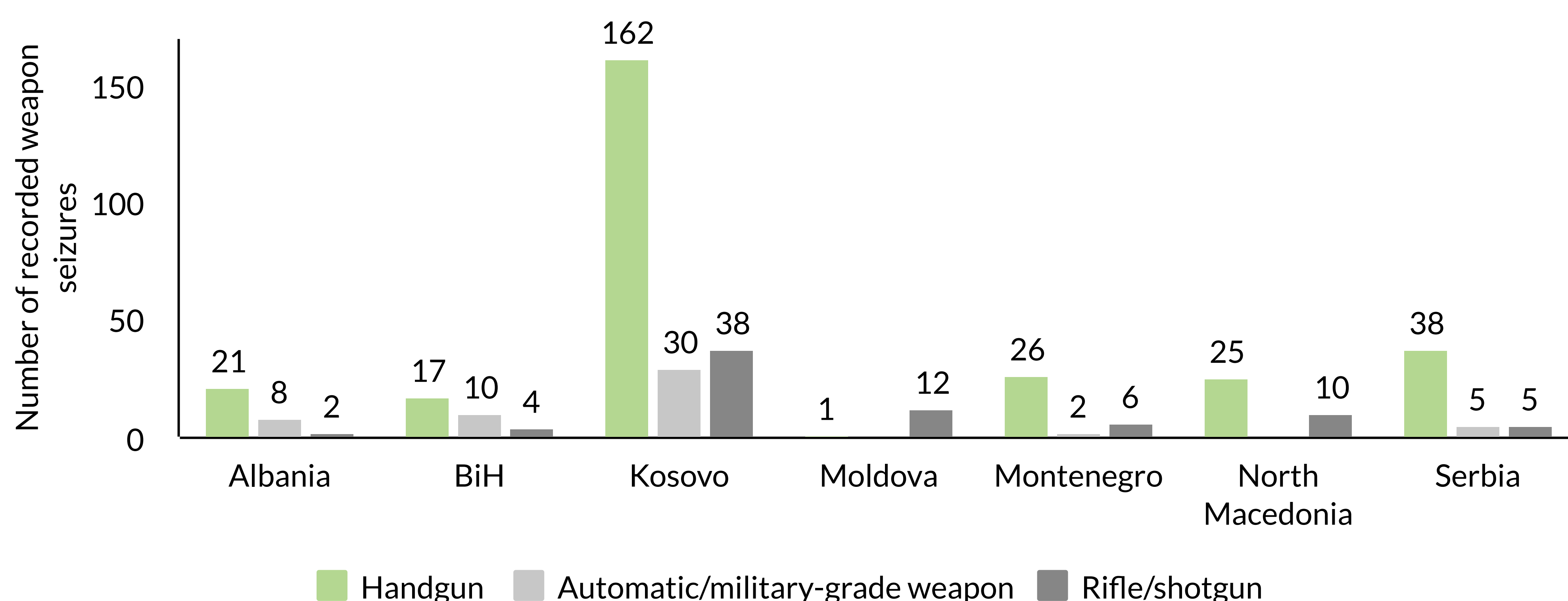
Ammunition was seized in a total of 688 (55.7%) cases. However, ammunition was rarely seized separately, i.e. in 78 (6.3%) cases. It was mainly seized in combination with another type of weapon, namely in 461 (37.2%) cases. In 149 (12%) cases, ammunition was seized with multiple types of SALW.

Location	Number of cases in which only ammunition was seized	Number of cases in which ammunition was seized with another type of weapon	Number of cases in which ammunition was seized with multiple types of SALW
Albania	2	31	13
BiH	2	36	29
Kosovo	21	245	32
Moldova	16	17	10
Montenegro	7	34	25
North Macedonia	19	42	13
Serbia	11	56	27
Total	78	461	149



Among cases in which ammunition was seized in combination with another type of weapon (461), it was primarily seized with handguns (280 cases), with the exception of Moldova where ammunition was mainly seized with rifles/shotguns, i.e. in 12 cases. It was seized with rifles/shotguns in 77 cases, while in 55 cases, it was seized along with automatic/military-grade weapons.

The most common types of weapons seized with ammunition



2.4 Handguns

Handguns were the most frequently seized type of weapon, being reported in 480 (39.6%) cases. As the only type of weapon, handguns were seized in 397 (32.1%) cases, while in 93 (7.5%) cases handguns were seized along with multiple types of SALW. Kosovo reported the highest number of incidents in which handguns were seized both as a single type of weapon (222) and in combination with other types of weapons (22). Moldova, on the other hand, recorded a small number of weapon seizures involving handguns.

Location	Number of cases in which only handguns were seized	Number of cases in which handguns were seized with multiple types of SALW
Albania	29	4
BiH	27	17
Kosovo	222	23
Moldova	3	2
Montenegro	33	16
North Macedonia	35	10
Serbia	48	21
Total	397	93



- According to the data on seizures of multiple types of SALW, handguns were mainly seized in combination with rifles/shotguns, i.e. in 38 cases, and 24 cases with automatic weapons. In 12 cases, the seizure involved all three mentioned types of weapons. The seizure of handguns and explosives was reported in 12 cases.
- Out of 397 cases in which handguns were seized as a single type of weapon, they were in illegal possession in 355 cases, and in legal possession in five cases. In 37 such cases, the type of possession was not reported. The data on the microlocation of handgun seizures show that they were mostly seized at homes (111) and streets (108).
- A total of ten weapons were seized with a removed/obliterated serial number, seven of which were handguns.
- The most seized type of handgun was "CZ", which was seized in 27 cases. A pistol Zastava M-57 was reported as seized in 13 cases, while Beretta was seized in 11 cases.

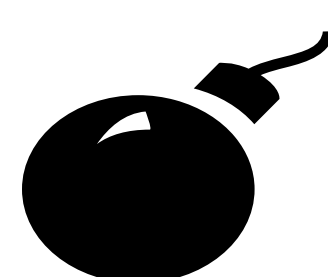
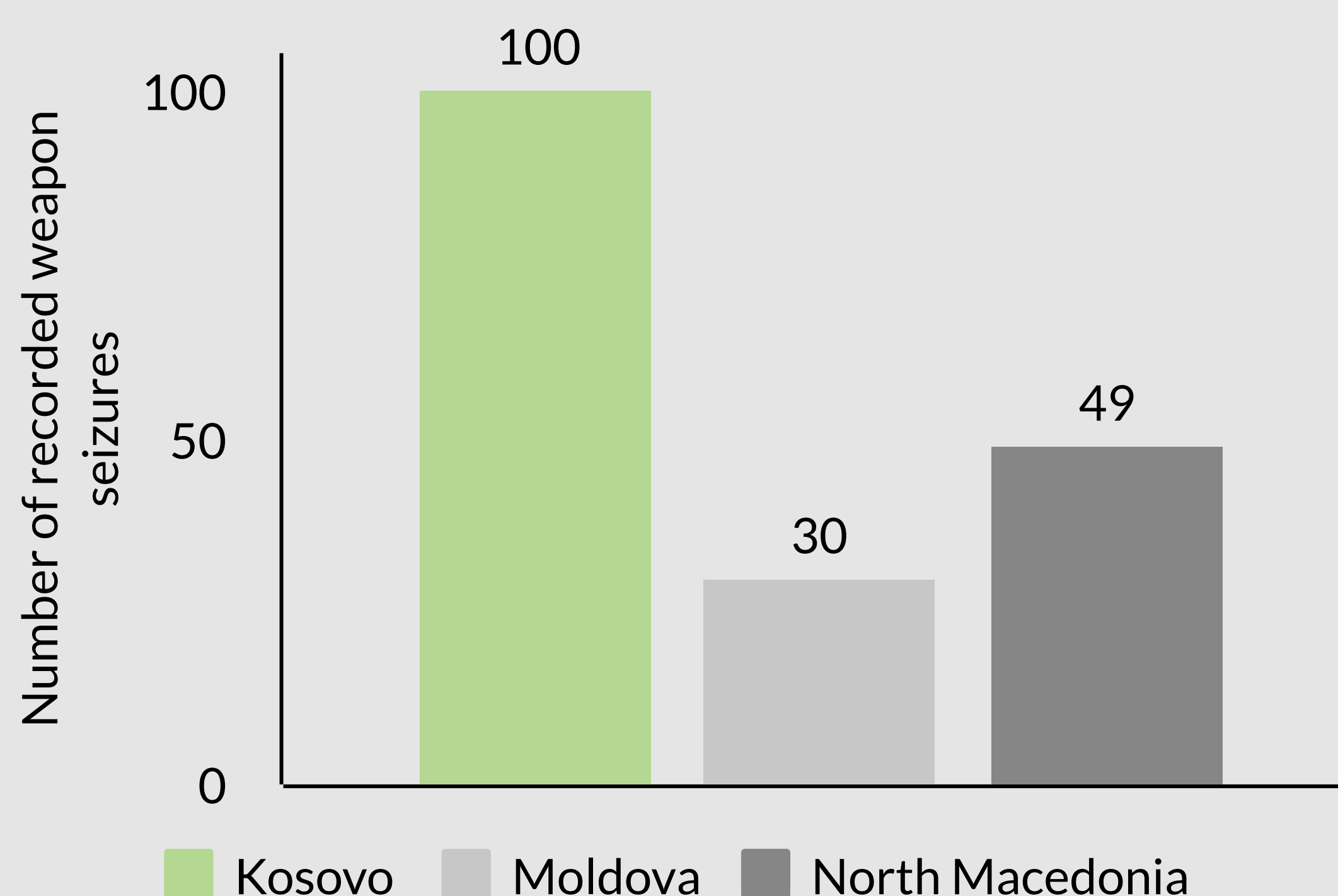
2.5 Explosives

The seizure of explosives, as the second most seized type of weapon, was reported in 306 (24.7%) cases. As the only type of weapon, explosives were seized in 240 (19.4%) cases, and in 66 (5.3%) cases, with multiple types of SALW.

Location	Number of cases in which only explosives were seized	Number of cases in which explosives were seized with multiple types of SALW
Albania	3	6
BiH	11	17
Kosovo	106	9
Moldova	27	7
Montenegro	4	15
North Macedonia	74	2
Serbia	15	10
Total	240	66

Three jurisdictions recorded a high number of cases in which citizens reported that they had found explosives during construction works, in their yards, fields, homes, on the road, etc. The majority of such cases were reported in Kosovo (100), North Macedonia (50) and Moldova (30).

In 44 of such cases, the found explosive devices were remnants of war/conflicts, i.e. 21 in North Macedonia, 10 in Moldova and three in Kosovo.



- Hand grenades were seized in 66 cases. In 40 such cases, hand grenades were accidentally found by citizens and reported to the competent authorities, mainly in Kosovo (20) and North Macedonia (16). In 26 cases, hand grenades were seized during police raids, for example, in Bosnia and Herzegovina (7), Kosovo (6), while Serbia and Montenegro reported five each. One such case was reported in Albania, Moldova and North Macedonia.
- Pyrotechnic devices were seized in 32 cases, 24 of which were reported in North Macedonia, mainly in December 2020. The seizure of pyrotechnics was also reported in Montenegro (4), Bosnia and Herzegovina (2), Serbia (1) and Albania (1).

2.6 Rifles/Shotguns

Rifles/shotguns as the third most seized type of weapon were reported in 242 (19.5%) cases. As the only type of weapon, rifles/shotguns were seized in 155 (12.5%) cases, while in 87 (7%) cases this type of weapon was seized along with multiple types of SALW.

Location	Number of cases in which only rifles/shotguns were seized	Number of cases in which rifles / shotguns were seized with multiple types of SALW
Albania	7	7
BiH	8	19
Kosovo	76	16
Moldova	22	2
Montenegro	11	21
North Macedonia	24	8
Serbia	7	14
Total	155	87



- In weapon seizures involving multiple types of SALW, rifles/shotguns were seized with automatic/ military-grade weapons in 30 cases and with explosives in 27 cases.
- Rifles were reported as seized in 26 weapon seizures that were made in the context of illegal hunting, more precisely in 21 cases in Moldova, three in North Macedonia and two in Kosovo.
- Rifles account for the majority of seized weapons with an expired permit, being reported in 20 out of 25 such cases.
- Voluntary surrender of rifles was recorded in five cases.
- A hunting rifle type M-48 was reported in 14 seizures, i.e. nine such cases were recorded in Montenegro, three in Kosovo, and two in Bosnia and Herzegovina.
- The seizure of a TOZ rifle was reported in six cases, five of which took place in Moldova and one case in North Macedonia.

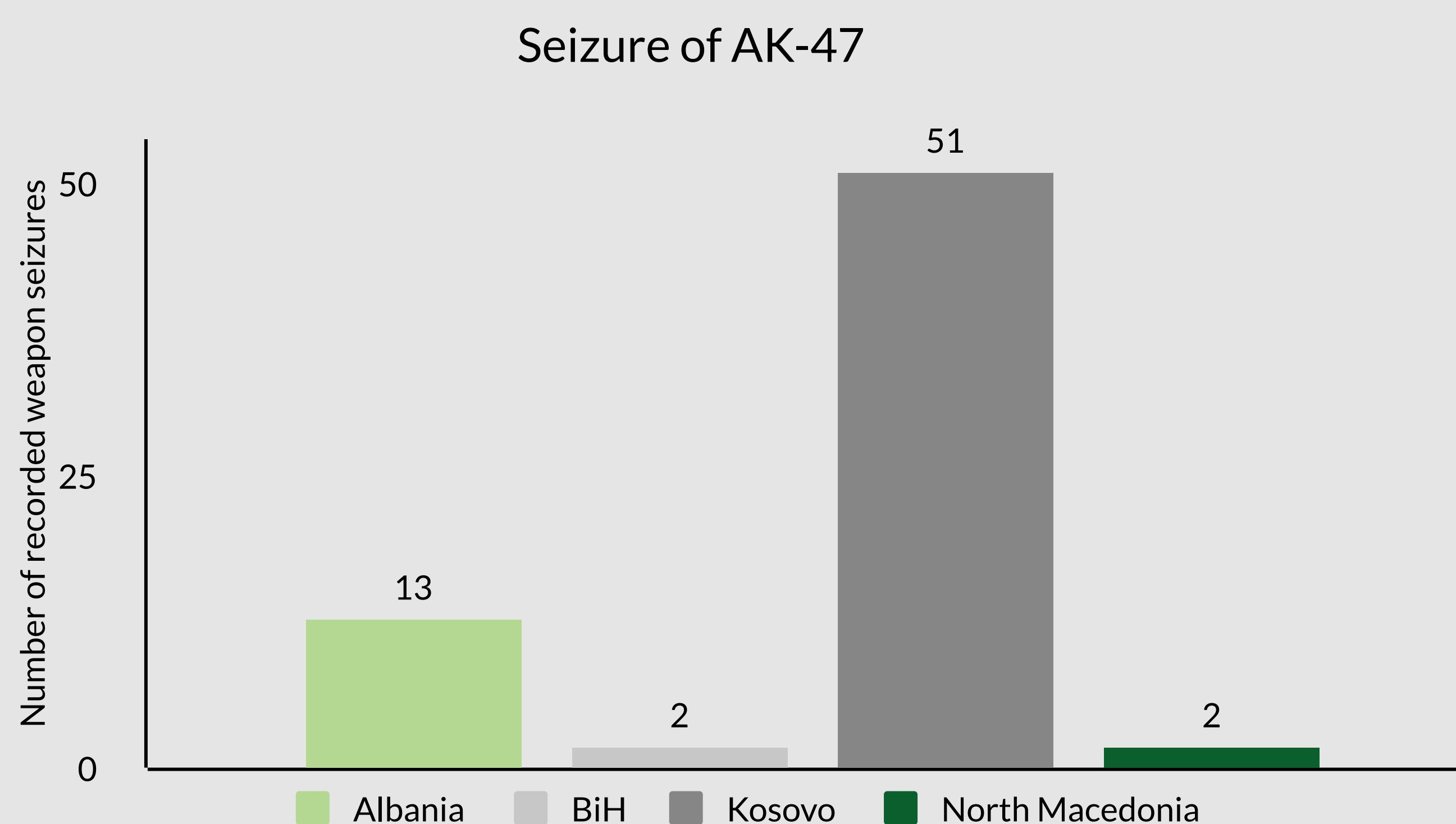
2.7 Automatic/Military-grade weapons

Automatic/Military-grade weapons were seized in 161 cases. As the only type of weapon, automatic / military-grade weapons were seized in 88 (7.1%) cases as a single type of weapon, and in 73 (5.9%) cases involving seizure of multiple types of SALW.

Location	Number of cases in which only automatic / military-grade weapons were seized	Number of cases in which automatic / military-grade weapons were seized with multiple types of SALW
Albania	12	11
BiH	19	16
Kosovo	44	23
Moldova	3	1
Montenegro	3	6
North Macedonia	1	5
Serbia	6	11
Total	88	73



The seizure of an AK-47 was reported in 68 cases, as shown in the graph below. The highest number of such cases was reported in Kosovo (51), followed by Albania with 13 cases. The authorities also took hold of AK-47 in four cases after the perpetrators had posted photos of firearms on social media. In more than half cases (39), the AK-47 were seized at homes.



2.8 Gas pistols, air guns and fake/toy guns

- Gas pistols were seized in 58 cases. As a single type of weapon, gas pistols were seized in 40 (3.2%) cases.
- Ekol pistol, as the most seized gas pistol, was reported in 13 cases, while Zoraki was seized in five cases.



- The seizure of air guns was reported in 19 cases.
- Four seizures of Makarov air gun were recorded.

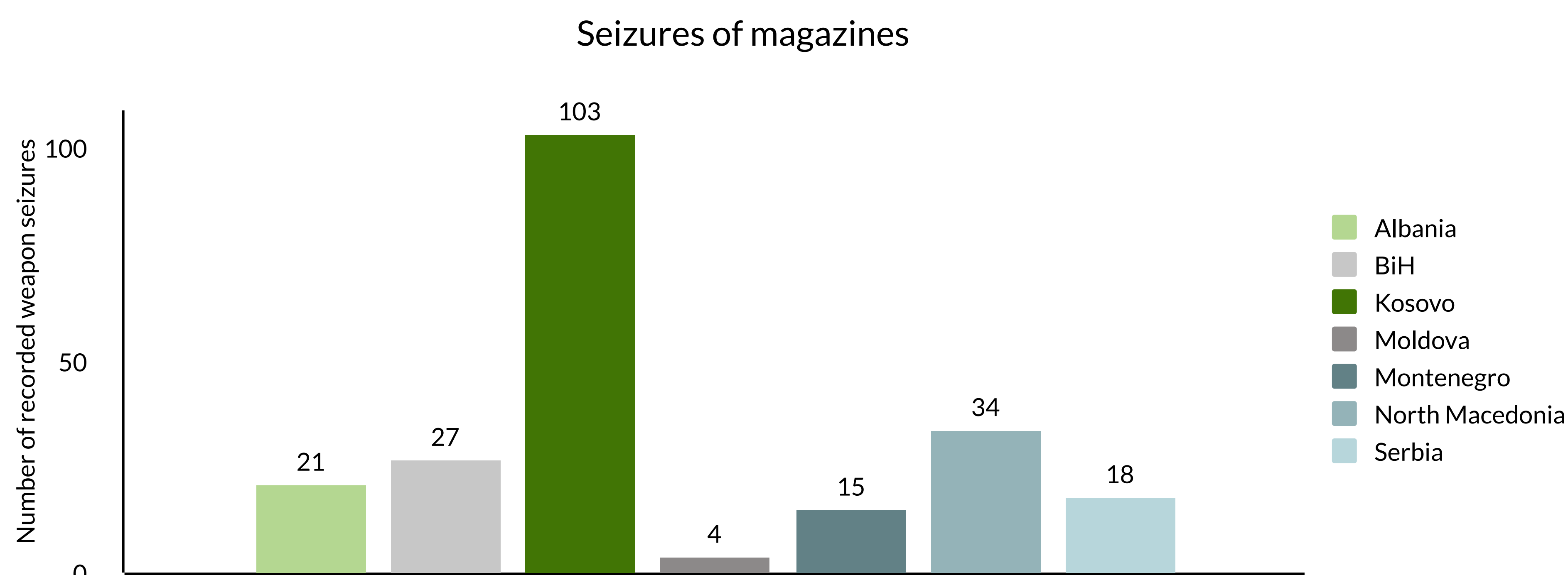
- Fake/toy guns were seized as a single type of weapon in Kosovo (5) and Bosnia and Herzegovina (1).
- Albania and Serbia each recorded one case when such weapons were seized along with other types of weapons.



2.9 Seizure of weapon parts and components

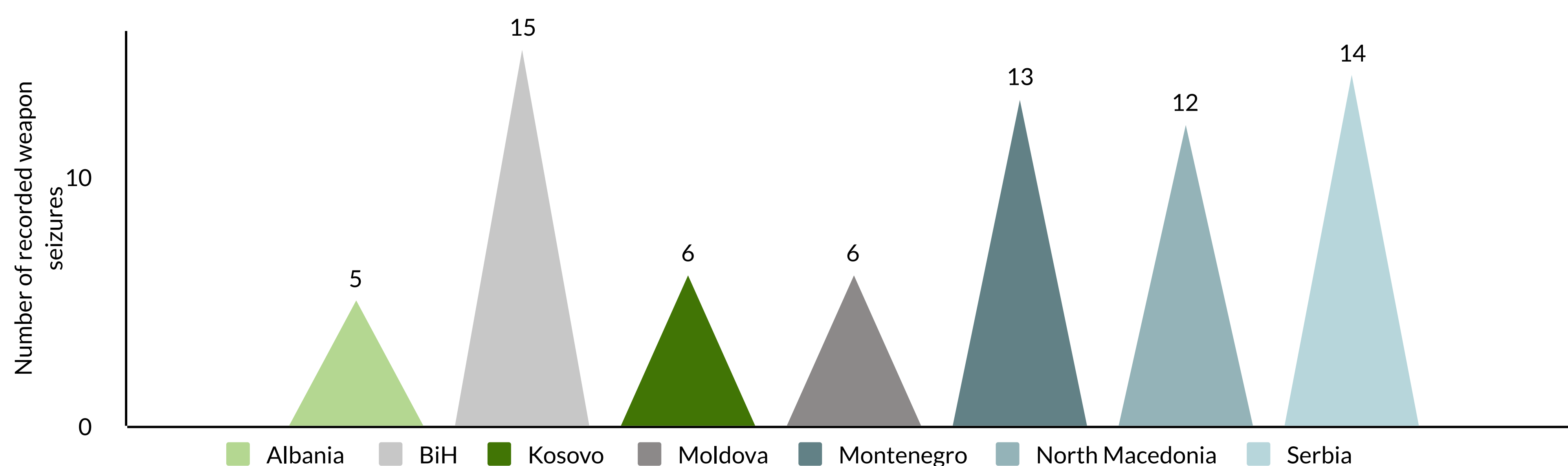
Magazines were the most frequently seized weapon component, being reported in 222 instances, with Kosovo recording the highest number (103) of such cases.

Sights, seized in 15 cases, and silencers, seized in ten cases, were the next most commonly seized weapon parts.



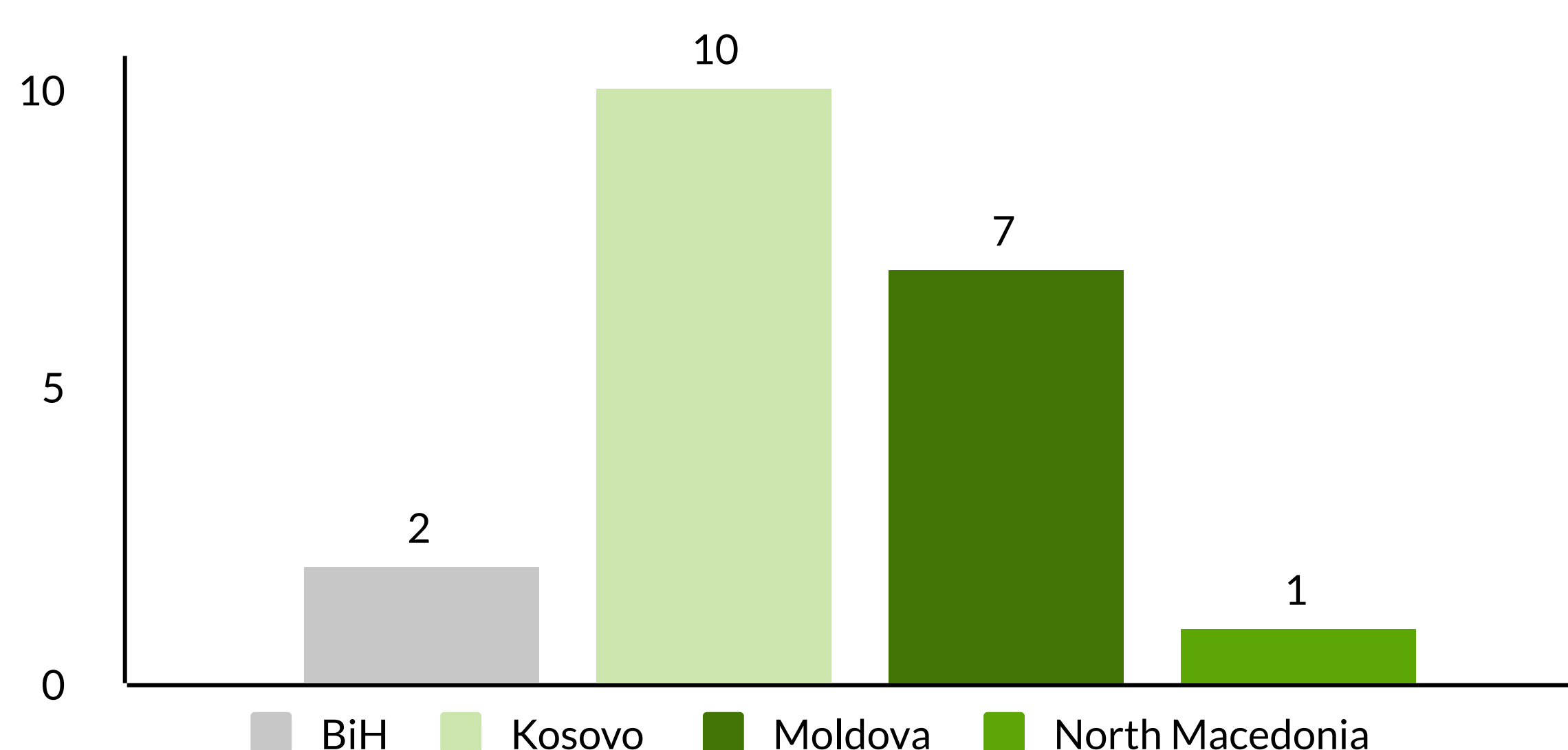
2.10 Large weapon seizures

In 2020, 71 cases involving the seizure of five or more weapons (with or without ammunition) were recorded across the region. Bosnia and Herzegovina (15), Serbia (14), Montenegro (13) and North Macedonia (12) reported a similar number of such cases. An almost equal share of the rest of the large seizures was observed in Albania, Kosovo and Moldova.



2.11 Weapon and ammunition surrender

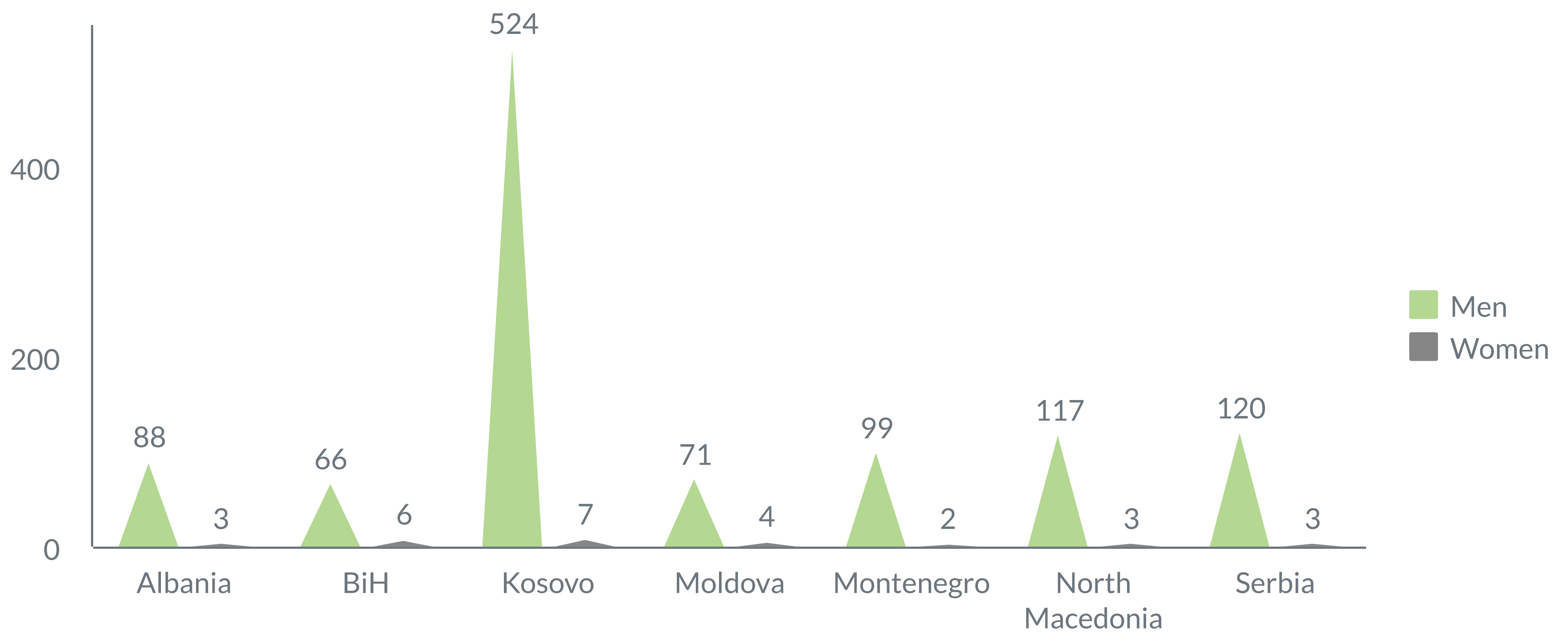
Voluntary weapon surrender was recorded in 20 cases, half of which were reported in Kosovo. Four cases involved the surrender of multiple types of SALW. More than half of voluntary surrenders in Moldova involved ammunition. An AK-47 was surrendered in three cases.



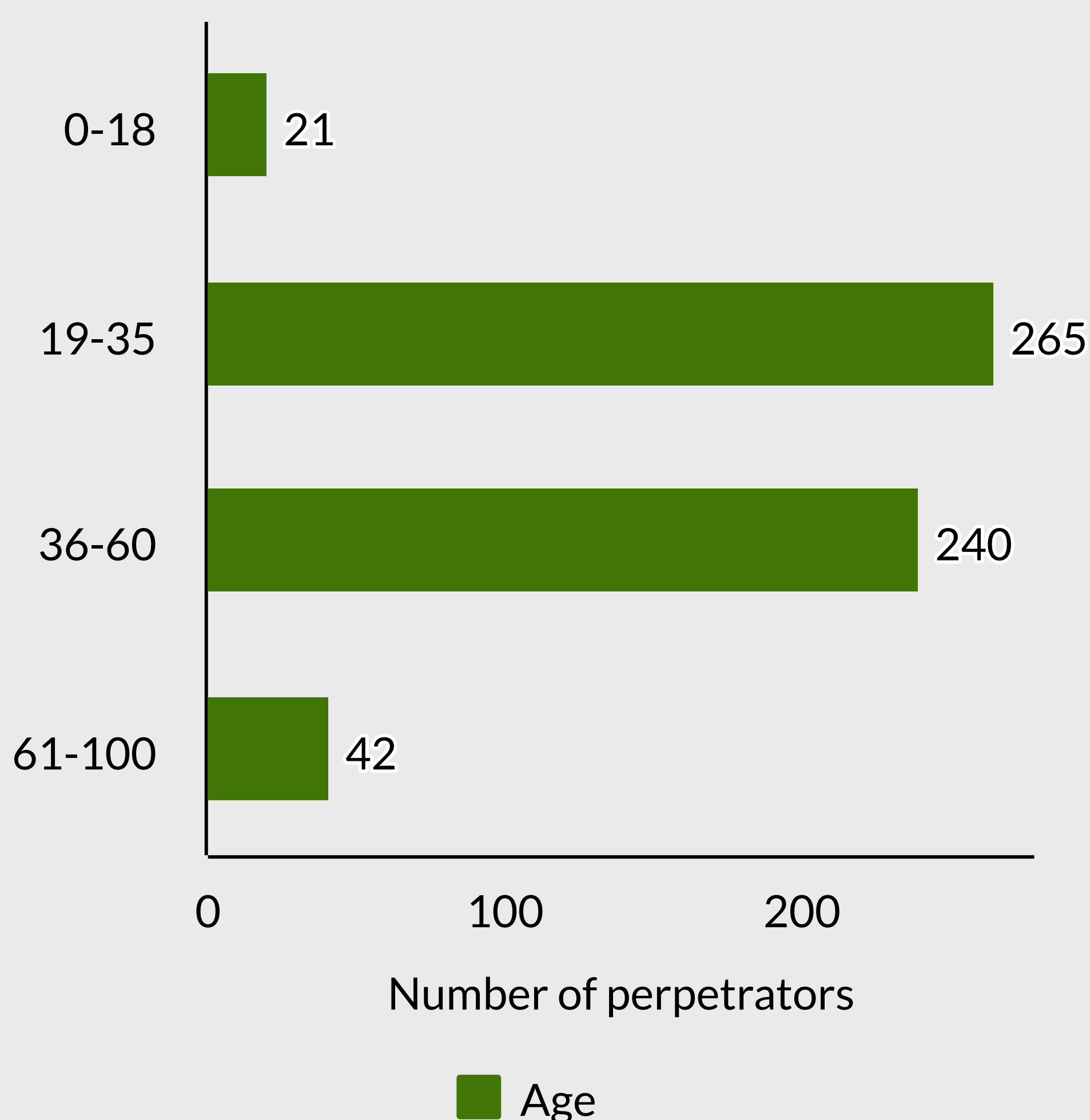
3. PERPETRATORS* IN WEAPON SEIZURES

A total of 1,316 persons were reported as perpetrators in weapons seizures in 2020. Perpetrator refers to any individual from whom a firearm/explosive/ammunition was seized by law enforcement owing to illegal possession, lack of proof of ownership, voluntary surrender, or as crime scene evidence. The AVMP data shows a highly gendered aspect of weapon seizures, considering that the majority of perpetrators whose sex was reported were men.

Perpetrators by jurisdiction and sex



Perpetrators by age

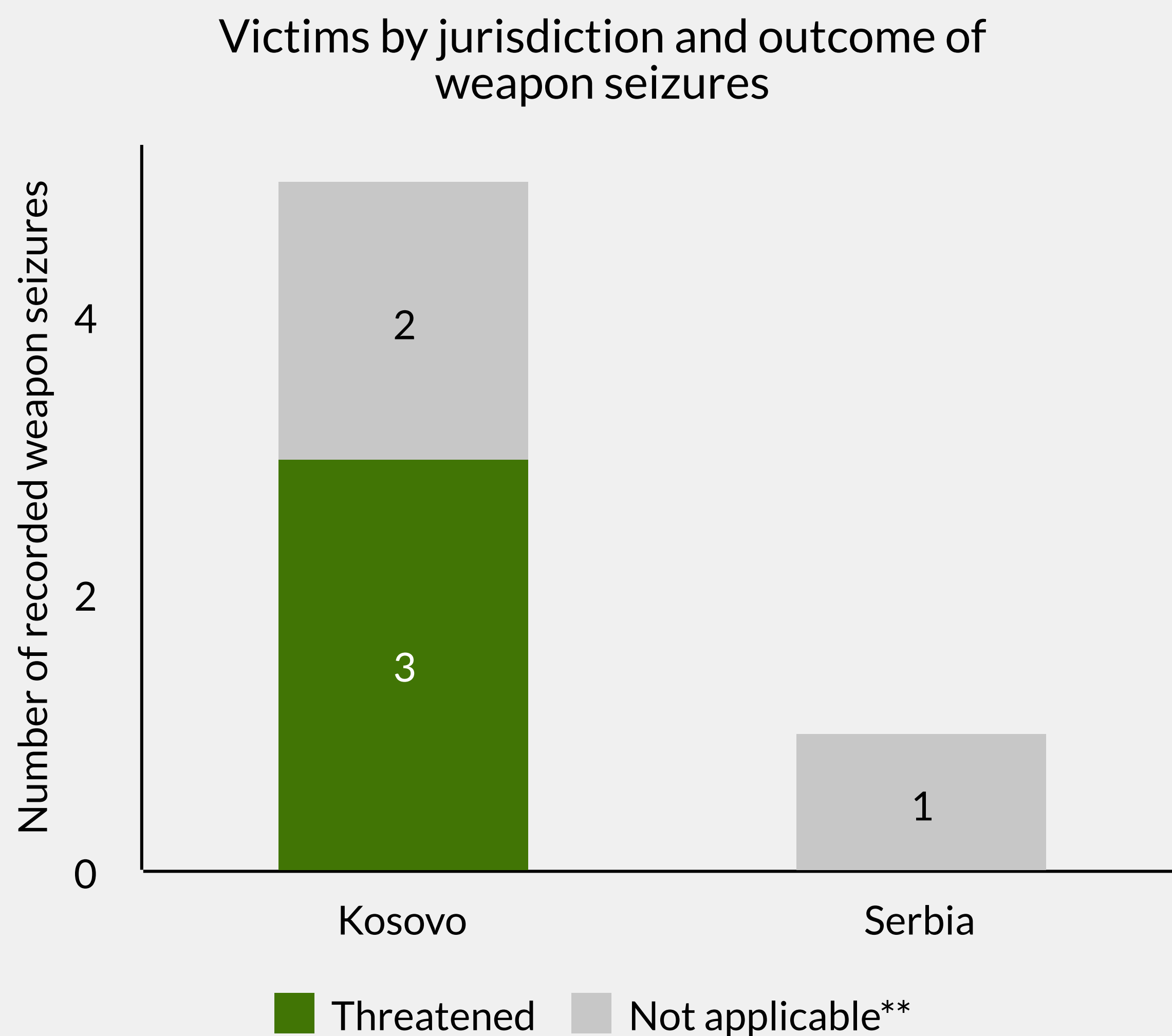


- Out of 1,316 perpetrators, sex was reported for 1112 (84.5%) perpetrators, of whom 1,085 (97.5%) were men, and 28 (2.5%) were women. The sex was not indicated for 204 (15.5%) perpetrators.
- Men dominate as perpetrators in weapon seizures. Women were the sole perpetrators in 18 weapon seizures, while in nine cases both men and women were involved. Handguns were seized in one-third of cases (9) involving women, and automatic/military weapons in four. The majority of seizures with women perpetrators took place at homes (16).
- Age was reported for 569 (43.2%) perpetrators. The majority of perpetrators whose age was reported are in the 19-35 age group (265), and 240 in the 36-60 age group. A total of 21 minor perpetrators were reported and 42 older than 61. Age was not reported for 748 (56.8%) perpetrators.
- The correlation between the perpetrators' age and the type of weapon show that handguns were more frequently seized from perpetrators aged 19-35 (103) than those aged 36-60 (62). The use of explosives was more common among perpetrators in the age group 36-60 (24) than in the age group 19-35 (11).
- Half of the perpetrators older than 61 were reported in seizures of multiple types of firearms, while minors were mostly reported in connection to seizures of handguns (5) and gas pistols (5).
- In 78.7% of cases (972), the perpetrators were reported as caught, while in 18.7% of cases (231) the perpetrators remained unknown. The perpetrators were known but not caught in 31 (2.5%) cases.

*Refers only to incidents for which the number and sex of the perpetrators were reported.

4. VICTIMS* IN WEAPON SEIZURES

Six persons, three men and three women, were reported as victims in weapon seizures in 2020. Victim refers to any individual who has been threatened, injured or died as a result of the use of a firearm/ ammunition/ explosives in the context of weapon seizures.



- Six victims were reported in a total of five incidents.
- As for the outcome for victims, three victims were threatened (one woman and two men), while for three victims (two women and one man), the outcome was not applicable, i.e. the weapon was present but not used or discharged.
- Victims' age was not reported.

*Refers only to incidents for which the number and sex of the victims were reported.

**Not applicable refers to all incidents in which a weapon is present but not used or discharged (for example, a theft of a firearm).



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