

# THE MISUSE OF FIREARMS IN DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN SOUTH EAST EUROPE

**EUROPEAN COMMISSION**  
**: FAST FACTS**

The South Eastern and Eastern Europe Clearinghouse for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SEESAC) is a joint initiative of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) aimed at strengthening national and regional capacities to control and reduce the proliferation and misuse of small arms and light weapons, thus contributing to enhanced stability, security and development in South Eastern and Eastern Europe.

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**For further information contact:**

SEESAC Project Manager  
Bulevar Zorana Đinđića 64, 11000 Belgrade Serbia  
Tel: +381 11 415 5300 Fax: +381 11 415 5359  
[www.seesac.org](http://www.seesac.org)

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**The Misuse of Firearms in Domestic Violence  
in South East Europe: Fast Facts**

This report was written by Dragan Božanić, SEESAC Gender and Research Project Officer. Further support in the development of the report was provided by Dušan Đukić, Junior Consultant.

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# THE MISUSE OF FIREARMS IN DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN SOUTH EAST EUROPE

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# FAST FACTS

The *Misuse of Firearms in Domestic Violence in South East Europe: Fast Facts* provides an overview of data on firearm-related homicide committed by family members and intimate partners, the characteristics of the firearm-related incidents committed within the domestic context, women's and men's perception of safety with the presence of firearms at home, as well as the institutional response to the misuse of firearms in domestic violence.

In doing so, *Fast Facts* documents the risks linked to firearm misuse in the domestic context and its disproportionate effects on women, particularly in the context of intimate partner violence.

Due to restricted availability, the data presented in this report is primarily focused on family-related homicide committed with firearms and does not capture the full complexity of the misuse of firearms in domestic violence. Firearms are also used as a tool to inflict other forms of gender-based violence such as physical, psychological, and sexual violence including rape and sexual abuse, emotional harm, intimidation, coercion as well as economic violence. Although these forms of violence usually precede fatal events, data remains scarce.

*Fast Facts* strives to increase knowledge and awareness of both professionals and the general audience of the specific risks related to misuse of firearms in domestic and intimate-partner violence. In addition, it aims to support policy makers in South East Europe (SEE) in strengthening the evidence-based approach in combating domestic violence and violence against women and effectively meet the goals set in both international standards as well as in legal frameworks in their respective jurisdictions.

For more detailed insight into jurisdiction-specific data, please visit the SEESAC website and consult the *Gender and SALW Fast Facts series*, *SALW Surveys* as well as the table in the annex of this report.

Data used in *Fast Facts* is extracted from multiple sources:

**1. Distribution and Impact Survey:** In cooperation with governments in SEE, SEESAC collected and analyzed data in order to identify trends in the distribution of small arms and the impact of their misuse on the citizens in the region, both on women and men. The data was collected for the period 2012-2016. Unless indicated otherwise, data presented in this report refer to this source. In this specific publication, data collected in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo\*, Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia is presented.

**2. Perception Survey:** In November and December 2017, SEESAC conducted an online survey to obtain a better understanding of the public perception of safety and security, on the use and possession of firearms, and on the exposure to firearm violence in SEE. A total of 53,936 respondents participated in the online survey throughout South East Europe.

**3. Armed Violence Monitoring Platform (AVMP):** The AVMP monitors firearm-related incidents that have occurred in SEE since 2014. Data is collected daily using local media clippings, online search engines and reports by public institutions of relevant firearm-related incidents, where available. For the purpose of this analysis, 3,970 incident reports spanning from January 1, 2014 to December 31, 2018 were analyzed.

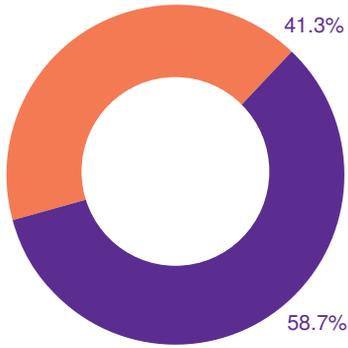
\* For the United Nations Development Programme, references to Kosovo shall be understood to be in the context of Security Council resolution 1244 (1999).  
For the European Union, this designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

## MAIN FINDINGS

- Homicide committed by a family member<sup>1</sup> is the most common form of femicide in SEE. 61% of all killed women were killed by a family member, compared to 12.4% of all killed men;
- 38.6% of all killed women and 1.2% of all killed men were killed by an intimate partner;
- 37.7% of homicides committed by family members were committed with firearms;
- 36.5% of women and 39.6% of men killed by a family member were killed with firearms;
- 43.5% of all women killed by an intimate partner in SEE were killed with firearms;

- 60.6% of women and 47.1% of men feel that a firearm at home makes them less safe;
- 68.9% of women killed with firearms were killed in their homes, apartments or yards;
- 37.4% of reported domestic violence incidents which involved firearms had a lethal outcome;
- Only 8.5% of rejected applicants for new licenses were rejected on the grounds of domestic violence;
- Only 2.3% of all revoked firearms/firearm licenses were revoked due to domestic violence;
- The misuse of firearms was reported in only 0.3% of registered criminal offenses of domestic violence.

1 Family members, in the context of this analysis, 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. cohabittees or former cohabittees; 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.



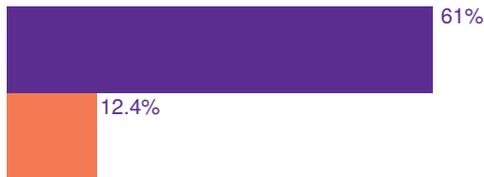
Victims of homicide committed by family members, by sex, 2012-2016

• Women • Men

## FAMILY RELATED HOMICIDE<sup>2</sup>

Women account for **58.7%** of homicide victims killed by family members, compared to **41.3%** men

524 people, 318 women and 224 men, were killed by a family member in SEE from 2012 to 2016<sup>3</sup>.



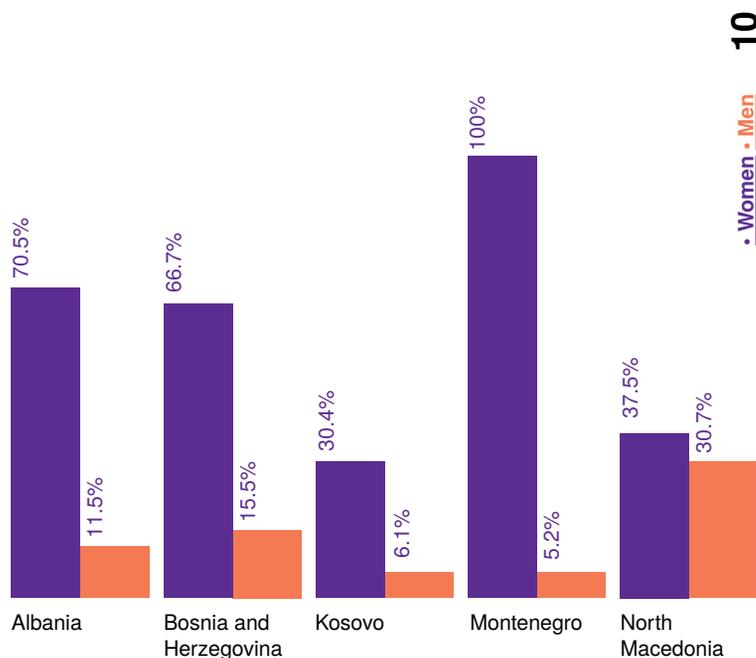
Victims of homicide committed by family members out of total homicide victims, by sex, 2012-2016

• Women • Men

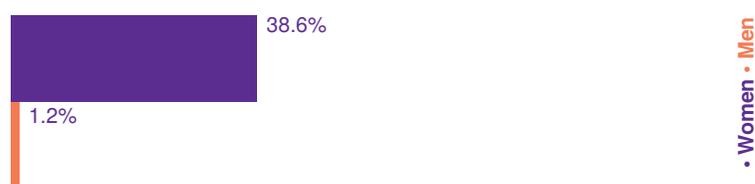
Family-related homicide is the most common form of femicide in the region. **61%** of all killed women were killed by a family member<sup>4</sup>, compared to **12.4%** of all killed men

The share of family-related homicide in the overall number of male and female homicides documents that women are five times more likely to be killed within a domestic context than men.

- 2 Family-related homicide refers to homicide committed by a family member, including intimate partners.
- 3 Based on the data for Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro and North Macedonia and Serbia. Due to the specific patterns of the misuse of firearms both in domestic violence and in general, data for Moldova is not included in this analysis and is provided separately.
- 4 Based on data for Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro and North Macedonia. Due to different methodologies applied in data collection in Serbia, data collected on the total number of homicides was not comparable with data on family-related homicide and therefore has not been included in the analysis of the share of family-related/intimate partner homicide out of total homicides, but it is included in the rest of analysis.



Victims of homicide committed by family members out of total homicide victims, by sex, 2012-2016



Victims of homicide committed by intimate partners out of total homicide victims, by sex, 2012-2016



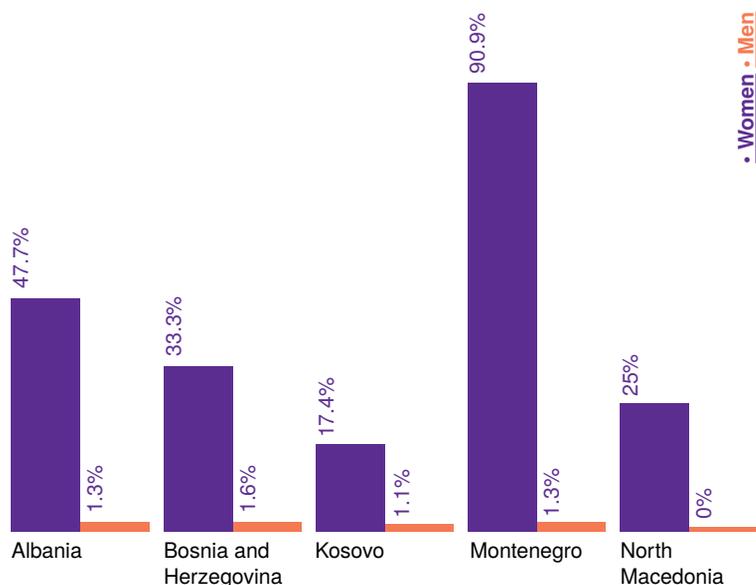
While women significantly outnumber men as victims of family-related homicide in each jurisdiction in the SEE, trends varied significantly across the region. The share of women killed by a family member out of the total number of killed women, ranges from 30.4% as recorded in Kosovo to 100% in Montenegro. As for men, the shares span from 5.2% in Montenegro to 30.7% in North Macedonia, which was the only jurisdiction where the share of women and men killed by a family member out of total victims of homicide converged.

The patterns of women's and men's victimization in the domestic context differ greatly. Within the domestic context women run the greatest risk of being killed by intimate partners, while men are primarily at risk of being murdered by other predominantly male family-members<sup>5</sup>. From 2012 to 2016, the majority of women killed within a domestic context in SEE were killed by an intimate partner (192 out of 318), while intimate partner homicide accounted for a minor share of men's homicide (26 out of 224).

The disproportionate risk of being killed by an intimate partner faced by women is even more evident if intimate partner homicide is considered as a share in total female and male homicide.

**38.6% of all killed women and 1.2% of all killed men in SEE were killed by an intimate partner**

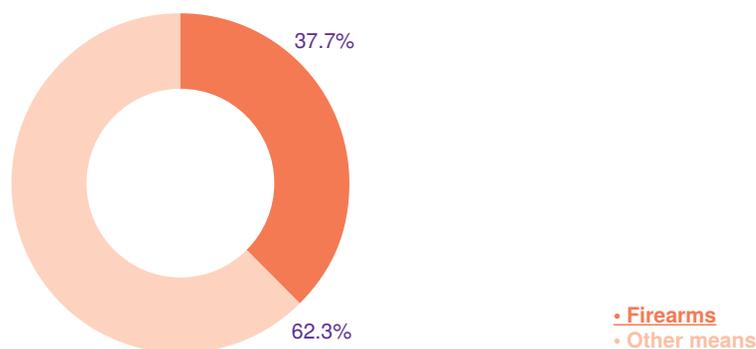
5 For instance, 98% of firearm-related homicides in SEE from 2012 to 2016 were committed by men.



Victims of homicides committed by intimate partners out of total homicide victims, by sex, 2012-2016

## Women in SEE are more than **30 times** more likely to be killed by an intimate partner than men

The prevalence of intimate partner femicide out of total femicide varies greatly across the region - from 17.4% in Kosovo to 90.9% in Montenegro.



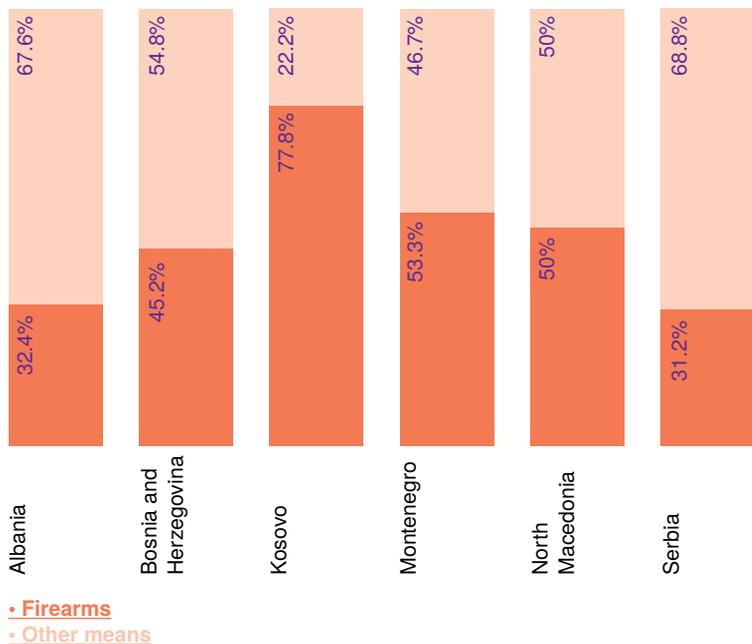
Family-related homicide by means, 2012-2016

## THE MISUSE OF FIREARMS IN DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

### 37.7% of homicides committed by a family member in SEE were committed with firearms

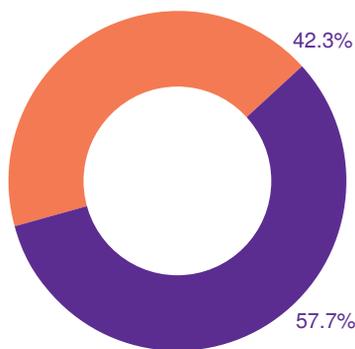
From 2012 to 2016, 175 out of 464 people killed by a family member for whom the means used to commit homicide was reported<sup>6</sup>, were killed by firearms.

6 In Albania data on the means used to commit family-related/intimate partner homicides was missing for 78 homicides committed within the domestic context in 2012, 2013 and 2014 and was available only for 2015 and 2016 (a total of 37 homicides committed in a domestic context). This means that the actual number of victims killed by a family member/intimate partner is higher than presented above.

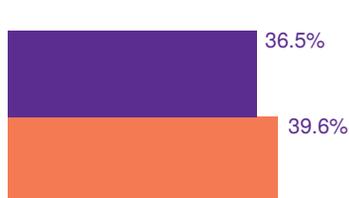


• Firearms  
• Other means

Family-related homicide by means, 2012-2016



Victims killed by a family member with firearms, by sex, 2012-2016



Victims of family-related homicides committed with firearms out of all victims of family-related homicide, by sex of the victim, 2012-2016

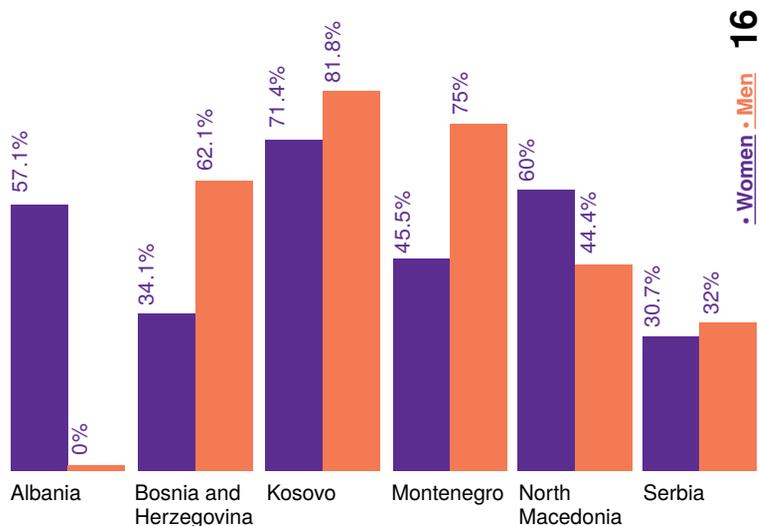
The frequency of the use of firearms to commit family-related homicide varies significantly across the region.

**Women account for 57.7% of victims killed by a family member with firearms, compared to 42.3% of men**

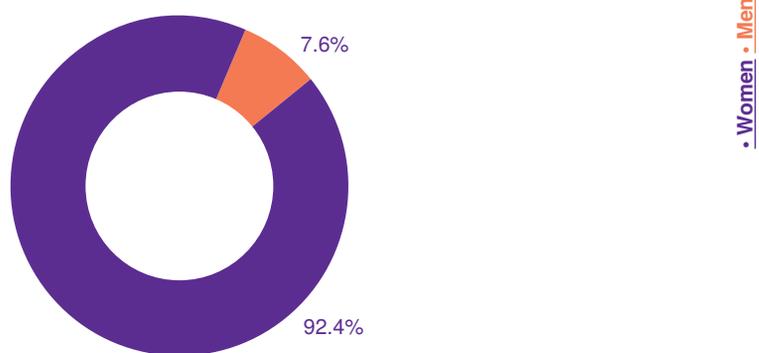
101 women and 74 men killed by family members from 2012 to 2016 in SEE were killed with firearms.

Still, in the overall structure of female and male homicide committed in a domestic context, the share of women and men killed with firearms in the total number of family-related death is fairly similar for both women and men.

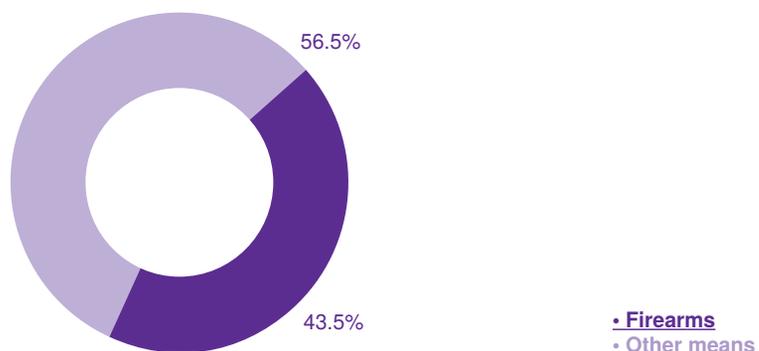
**36.5% of women and 39.6% of men killed by a family member in SEE were killed with firearms**



Victims killed by family members with firearms out of all victims killed by family members, by sex, 2012-2016 (Albania 2015-2016)



Victims of intimate partner homicide committed with firearms, by sex, 2012-2016



Women killed by intimate partner, by means

Significant differences were documented across the region.

While the misuse of firearms in family-related homicide affects both women and men, the misuse of firearms in intimate-partner violence predominantly affects women.

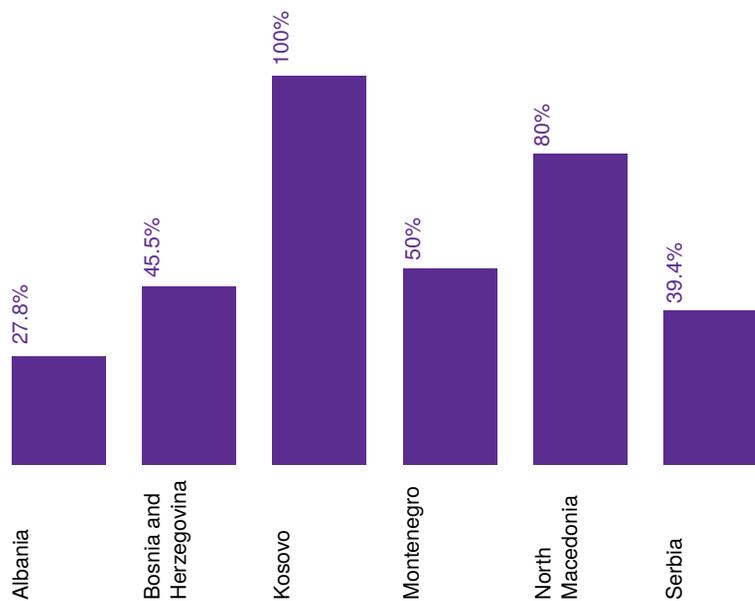
## Women account for 92.4% of victims killed by an intimate partner with firearms

73 women and 6 men were killed by an intimate partner with firearms from 2012 to 2016 in SEE.

## 43.5% of all women killed by an intimate partner in SEE were killed with firearms

73 of 168 women killed by an intimate partner, when the means used to commit homicide was reported, were killed with firearms. In the same period, 6 out of 24 men killed by an intimate partner were killed with firearms<sup>7</sup>.

<sup>7</sup> Data on the means used to commit homicide was missing for 24 women and 2 men killed in Albania from 2012 to 2014.



Women killed with firearms by intimate partners out of the total number of women killed by intimate partners, 2012-2016

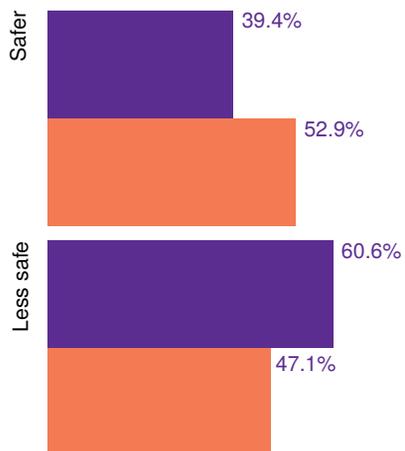
The prevalence of the use of firearms when intimate partner femicide is committed varies greatly across the region, from 27.8% in Albania to 80% in North Macedonia and 100% in Kosovo.

## The misuse of firearms in domestic violence in Moldova

As per the data provided by the Moldovan Mol, 72 out of 1,022 persons killed from 2012 to 2016 were murdered by their family members. Women account for the majority of victims of family-related homicides - 39 women (54.2%) and 33 men (45.8%) were killed by family members.

Data further documents that 15.1% of all women killed in Moldova were killed by a family member, compared to 4.3% of men killed by a family member. 39 out of 258 women and 22 out of 764 men killed in Moldova from 2012 to 2016 were killed by a family member.

Intimate partner violence with a lethal outcome disproportionately affected women, accounting for 63% of all persons killed by their intimate partner. From 2012 to 2016, 29 women and 17 men were killed by their intimate partner. As per official data, from 2012 to 2016, there was only one victim of firearm-related domestic homicide reported, a woman who was killed by her intimate partner. This suggests that firearms are not frequently used when family-related homicide is committed, but it may also reflect a case of under-reporting or misrecording of both domestic violence and the misuse of firearms.

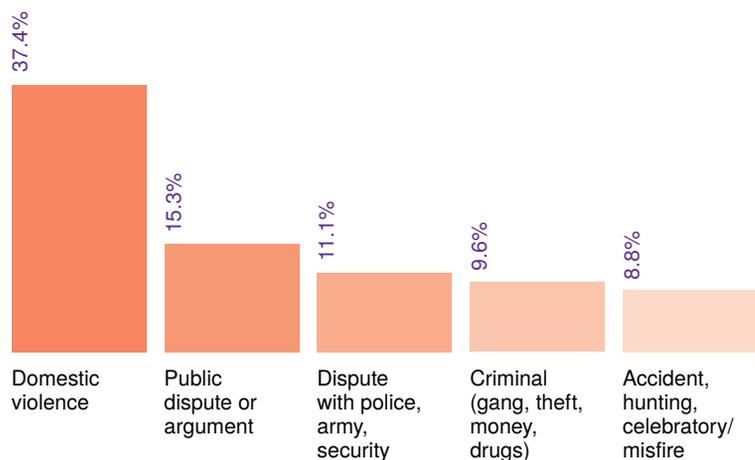


Would having a firearm at home make you feel safer or less safe?, by sex, 2017 (Source: Perception survey)

## PERCEPTIONS OF SAFETY WITH THE PRESENCE OF FIREARMS AT HOME

**60.6% of women and 47.1% of men in SEE feel that a firearm at home makes them less safe**

Connected with different experiences with firearms, women are significantly more likely than men to state that a firearm at home makes them feel less safe, while men are split over this.

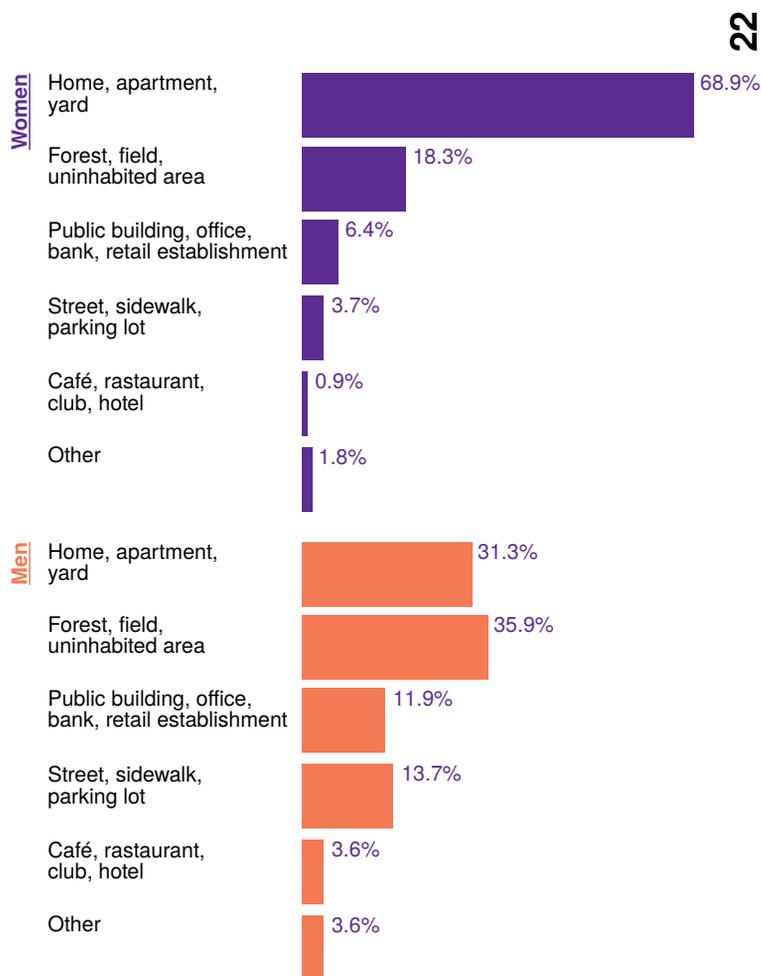


Frequency of fatal outcome according to type of incident, 2014-2018 (Source: AVMP)

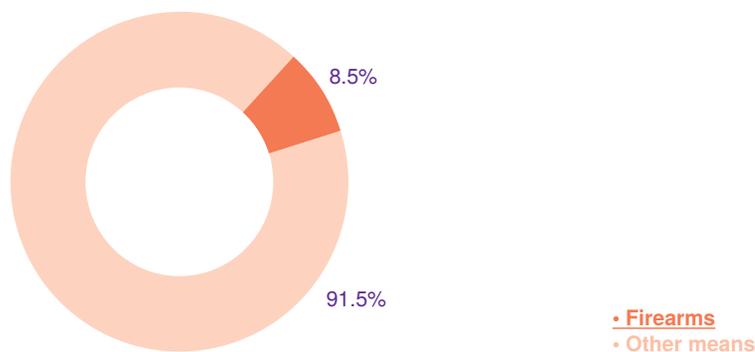
## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE INCIDENTS

**37.4% of reported domestic violence incidents in SEE which involved firearms had a lethal outcome**

Data collected through the AVMP documents show that the misuse of firearms in domestic violence is more lethal than any other type of incident, and it is almost four times more deadly than in criminal incidents.



Location of firearm-related homicides, by sex of victim, 2012-2016



Rejected applicants for new licenses, by grounds of rejection, 2012-2016

## 68.9% of women were killed in their homes, apartments or yards

Women in SEE are most frequently killed in a domestic context in their private spaces. Although almost one-third of men were also killed in private spaces, men were most frequently killed in public spaces such as streets, sidewalks or parking lots.

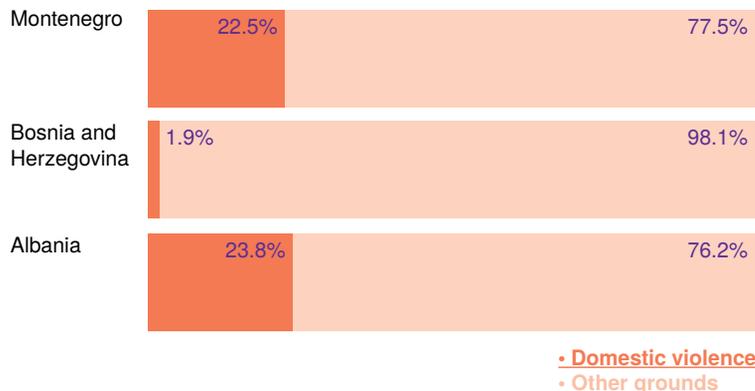
## INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSE

### The limited data available<sup>8</sup> indicates that only 8.5% of rejected applicants for new licenses were rejected on the grounds of domestic violence

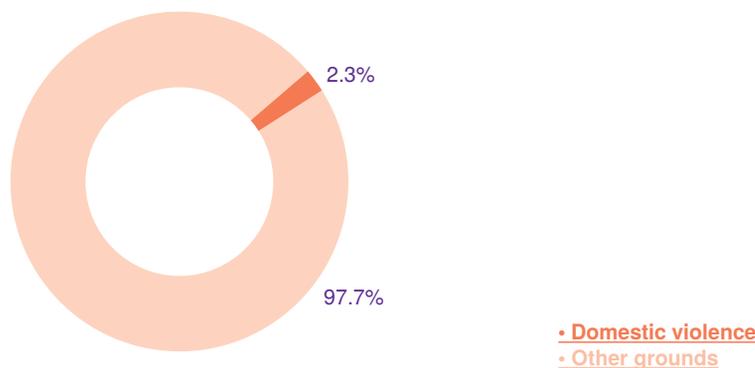
Despite widespread domestic violence and violence against women in particular<sup>9</sup>, applicants for new licenses are rarely rejected on the grounds of domestic violence.

8 Data was available only for Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro.

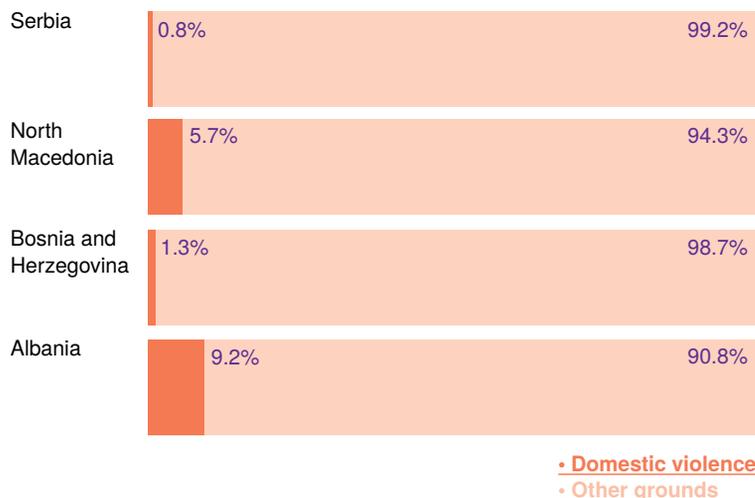
9 For most recent data on the prevalence of violence against women please consult the OSCE led survey on violence against women: Well-being and Safety of Women 2019.



Rejected applicants for new licenses, by grounds of rejection, 2012-2016 ↑



Revoked firearm licenses, by grounds for revocation, 2012-2016 ↙



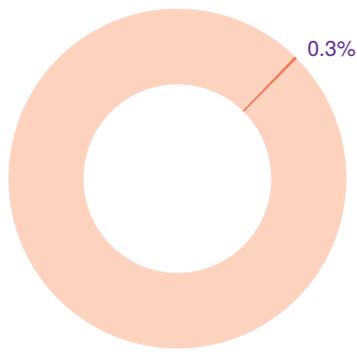
Revoked firearm licenses, by the grounds for revocation, 2012-2016 (Data for Serbia was available only for 2016) ↑

The available data also documents significant differences in practices across the region.

**Only 2.3% of all revoked firearms/firearm licenses were revoked due to domestic violence<sup>10</sup>**

Although the share of revoked firearm licenses is small across the region, differences in institutional response have been documented across the region.

<sup>10</sup> Data was available for Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia and Serbia. Data for Serbia was available only for 2016.



- Reported cases of criminal offense of domestic violence in which the misuse of firearms was reported
- Reported cases of criminal offense of domestic violence

Reported misuse of firearms in cases of the criminal offense of domestic violence, 2012-2016



Reported cases of criminal offense of domestic violence in which the misuse of firearms was reported out of total reported criminal offenses of domestic violence, 2012-2016

## The misuse of firearms was reported in only 0.3% of registered criminal offenses of domestic violence

The low level of reporting the misuse of firearms in criminal offenses of domestic violence was documented across the region. Further research is needed to determine whether data provided by authorities correctly reflects the reality of the situation or if there is a case of under-reporting or mis-recording of data.

## The misuse of firearms in criminal offenses against sexual freedom in SEE

The misuse of firearms in criminal offenses against sexual freedom (rape, sexual assault, sexual harassment, sexual intercourse with a helpless person, sexual intercourse with a child, sexual intercourse through abuse of position, mediation in prostitution) is even less frequently reported. In Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia there were no cases reported, while in North Macedonia it was reported in only 4 out of 460 cases, in Moldova in 1 out of 3,153 and in Montenegro in 4 out of 920. In Albania and Kosovo data was not available.

Table 1:  
Female and male homicides in SEE,  
2012-2016

	Total homicides		Total homicides committed with firearms		Family-related homicides		Family-related homicides committed with firearms		Intimate partner homicides		Intimate partner homicides committed with firearms	
	W	M	W	M	W	M	W	M	W	M	W	M
Albania 2012 -2016	88	462	354 total		62	53	NA	NA	42	6	NA	NA
Albania 2015-2016 <sup>11</sup>					21	16	12	0	18	4	5	0
Bosnia and Herzegovina	66	187	32	107	44	29	15	18	22	3	10	1
Kosovo	23	181	11	129	7	11	5	9	4	2	4	1
Montenegro	11	77	5	56	11	4	5	3	10	1	5	0
North Macedonia	40	88	18	57	15	27	9	12	10	0	8	0
Serbia <sup>12</sup>					179	100	55	32	104	14	41	4

NA - Data not available

11 In Albania data on the means used to commit family-related/intimate partner homicides was missing for 78 homicides committed within the domestic context in 2012, 2013 and 2014 and was available only for 2015 and 2016.

12 In Serbia collected data on the total homicides was not comparable with data on family-related homicide due to the different methodologies applied in data collection.

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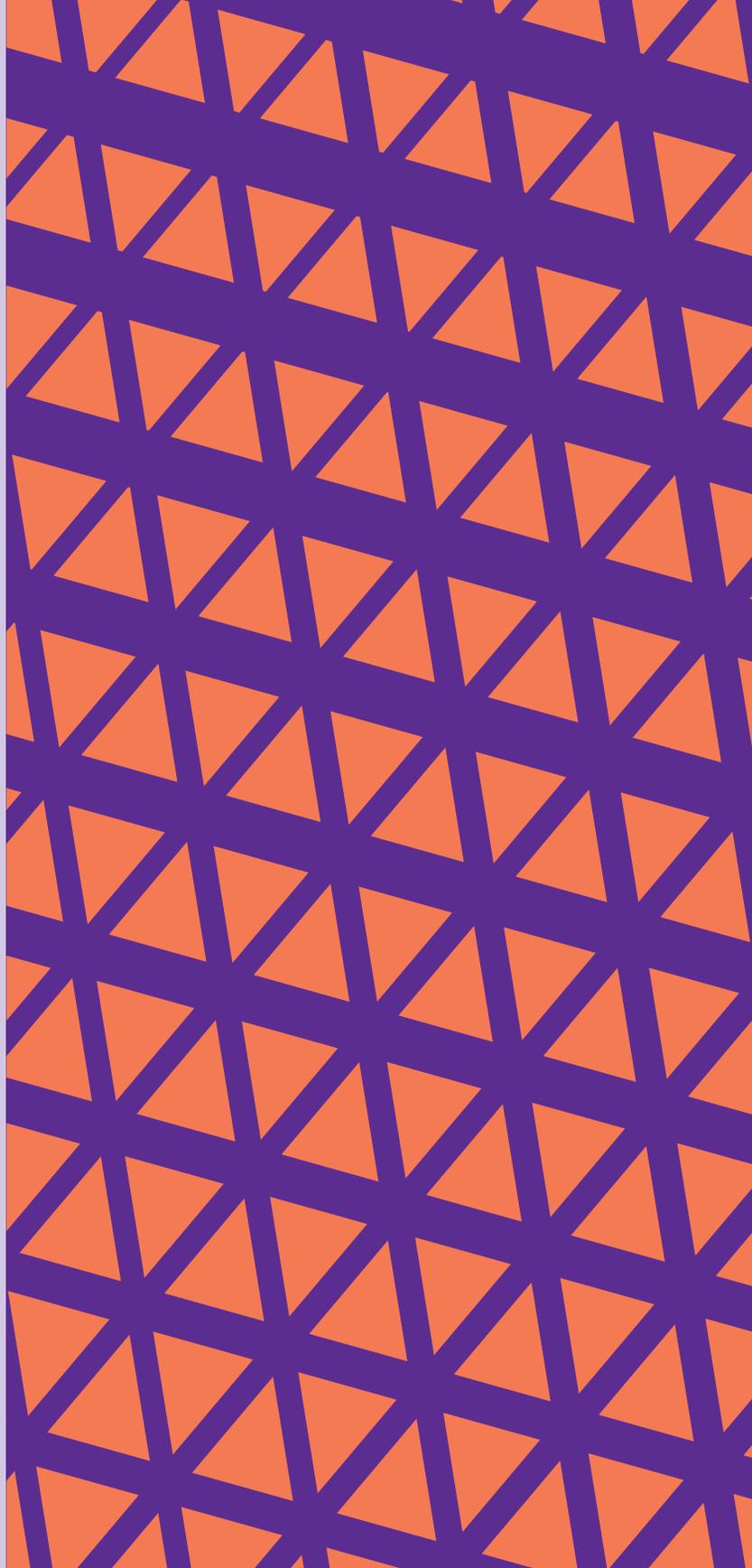
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South Eastern and Eastern Europe Clearinghouse  
for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SEESAC)

Bulevar Zorana Đinđića 64, 11000 Belgrade, Serbia

Tel: +381 11 415 5300

Fax: +381 415 5499

E-mail: [seesac@undp.org](mailto:seesac@undp.org)

[www.seesac.org](http://www.seesac.org)



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