



**In Focus Armed Violence Monitor**

# **Accidental shootings**

**In South East Europe in 2022**

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# About the Armed Violence Monitor

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*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 report addressed accidental shootings happening in South East Europe from 1 January to 31 December 2022. An accidental shooting refers to any unintended, unforeseen and unexpected event resulting in an injury, damage, or death of the individual(s) involved caused by the use of firearms. This may also include causing property damage. These incidents can have a profound impact on the victim, their family, and their community.

## Methodology

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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](#).

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

# HIGHLIGHTS

65

**accidental shootings** were reported in 2022, **17% less** than in 2021.

13

accidental shootings involved **weapons in legal possession**.

10

**people died** in accidental shootings, a **31% drop** from 2021.

57

**victims were injured** in accidental shootings.

12

**victims were 18 or younger**, in accidental shootings, **31% drop** from 2021.

19

accidental shootings involved the use of **handguns**.



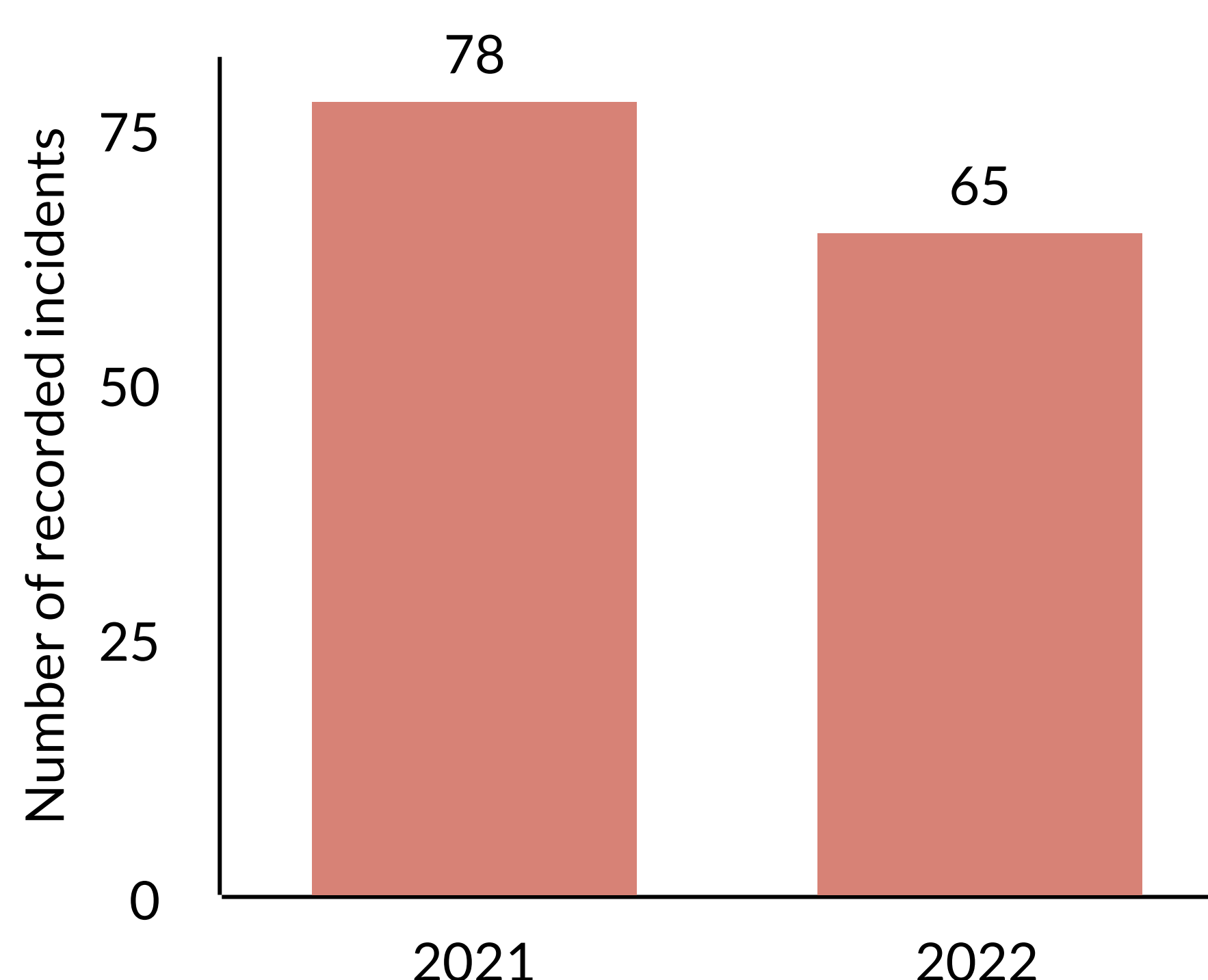
# 1. General overview

Accidental shootings refer to incidents in which a firearm/ammunition/explosive device is discharged or activated unintentionally, causing injury or death to oneself or others, but also property damage.

These events can occur as a result of human error, weapon malfunction, or other unforeseen circumstances. Accidental shootings can have serious consequences and are often preventable.

In 2022, there were 65 accidental shootings recorded in South East Europe, which is 18% less than in 2021 (79). A total of 76 accidental shootings were reported in 2020.

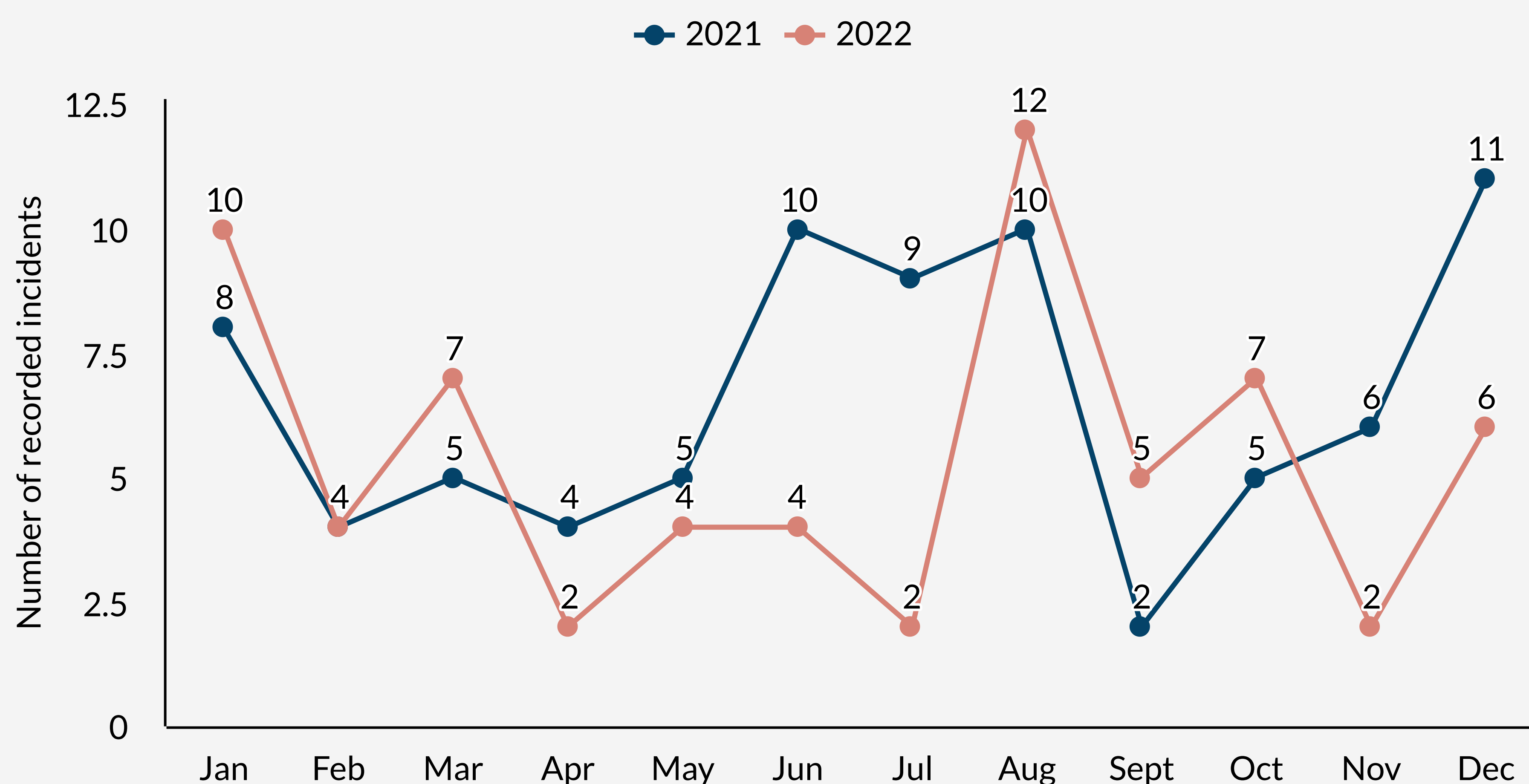
Accidental shootings by year



There were fluctuations in the number of accidental shootings throughout 2022, and the highest number was reported in August, which was also a month with a high number of accidental shootings in 2021. Half of the accidental shootings (6 cases) reported in August 2022 resulted from improper handling or cleaning of weapons, while in August 2021 five cases involved minors as either as victims or perpetrators.

The months with the lowest number of accidental shootings in 2022 were February, April, July, and November, with four each.

Accidental shootings by month and year

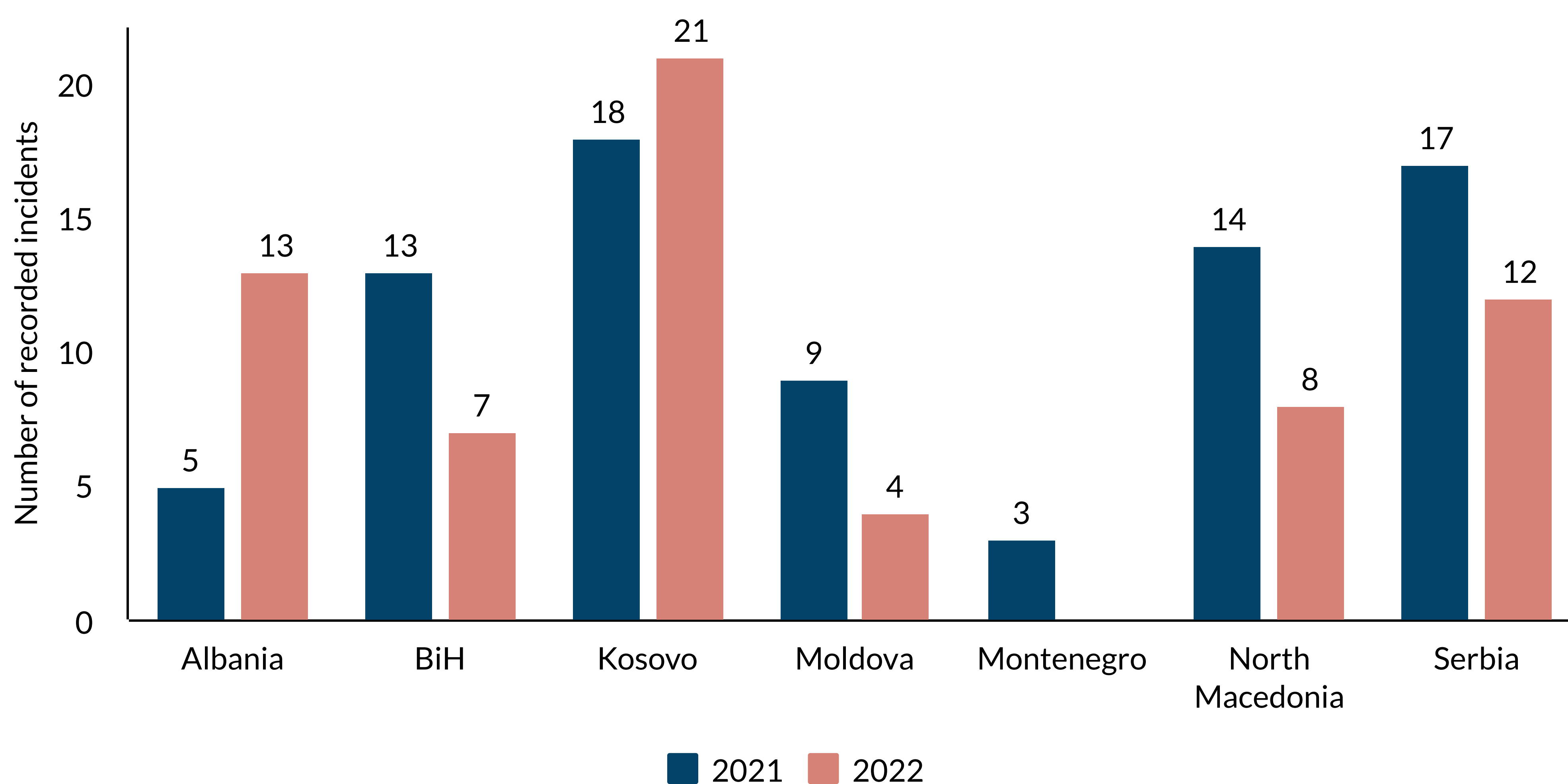


## 1.1 Accidental shootings by jurisdiction

The overall drop in accidental shootings observed from 2021 to 2022 was reflected in Moldova (46%), Bosnia and Herzegovina (46%), North Macedonia (43%), and Serbia (29%). On the other hand, an increase was seen in Albania (160%) and Kosovo (17%). No accidental shootings were reported in Montenegro in 2022.

In 2022, the highest number of accidental shootings was reported by Kosovo (21), which accounted for 1/3 of all such incidents. Albania and Serbia followed with 13 and 12 incidents, respectively. A roughly similar number of these incidents were reported in North Macedonia (8) and Bosnia and Herzegovina (7).

Accidental shootings by jurisdiction and year



## 2. Victims

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Victims of accidental shootings refer to individuals who have been unintentionally shot and injured or killed with a firearm/ammunition/explosives. Victims of accidental shootings can include people of all ages and backgrounds, while children are particularly vulnerable to these incidents.

### 2.1 Context of accidental shootings

- Out of 65 accidental shootings in 2022, in 30 cases, victims sustained self-injuries with firearms/explosives and ammunition, of whom 29 were men and two were women. An almost identical number of these cases happened in 2021 (33).
- Accidental shootings were caused by someone other than the victim in 31 cases in 2022 and 39 cases in 2021.
- Accidental shootings have a considerable impact on minors (younger than 18), as demonstrated by the significant number of minors who become victims of such incidents. Specifically, in 2022, eleven boys were injured, and one boy lost his life due to accidental shooting. Similarly, in 2021, seven boys were injured, and three boys and one girl lost their lives in accidental shootings.
- In four accidental shootings in 2022, victims involved law enforcement officers who sustained self-inflicted gun injuries. In 2021, one law enforcement officer died, and three were injured in accidental shootings. In both years, the accidents occurred during on-duty training, drills or cleaning/handling service weapons.
- In 2022, five men were accidentally injured when the fired bullet ricocheted.
- Four men died, and four were injured in accidental shootings during hunting in 2022. In 14 accidental shootings related to hunting in 2021, eight men died, and seven were injured.
- Accidental shootings occurring during celebrations resulted in the death of a man and a woman and two injured men in 2022. In 2021, three men and three women were accidentally injured during celebratory shootings.
- In 2022, eight men and two women were injured, while a woman and a boy were killed in accidental shootings while firearm cleaning or handling. In 2021, nine men and a woman were injured in such circumstances.

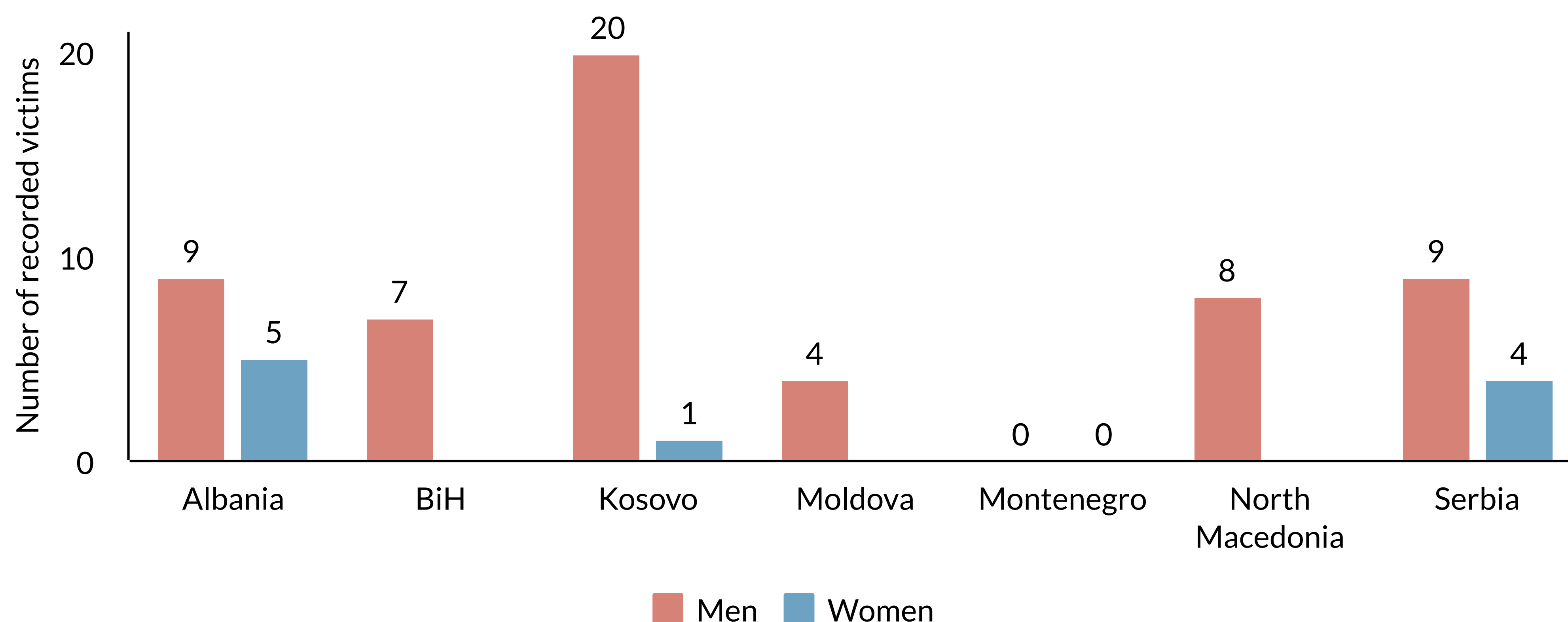


## 2.2 Victims by sex and age

In 2022, there were 67 reported victims, which is a 16% decrease from the 80 victims reported in 2021. Out of the total victims, 57 (85%) were men, and 10 (15%) were women. The number of women victims remained almost constant, with nine victims in 2022 compared to ten in 2021, while the number of men victims declined by 17%, dropping from 69 in 2021 to 57 in 2022.

The highest number of victims was reported by Kosovo (21) and Albania (14), followed by Serbia (13).

Victims by sex and jurisdiction



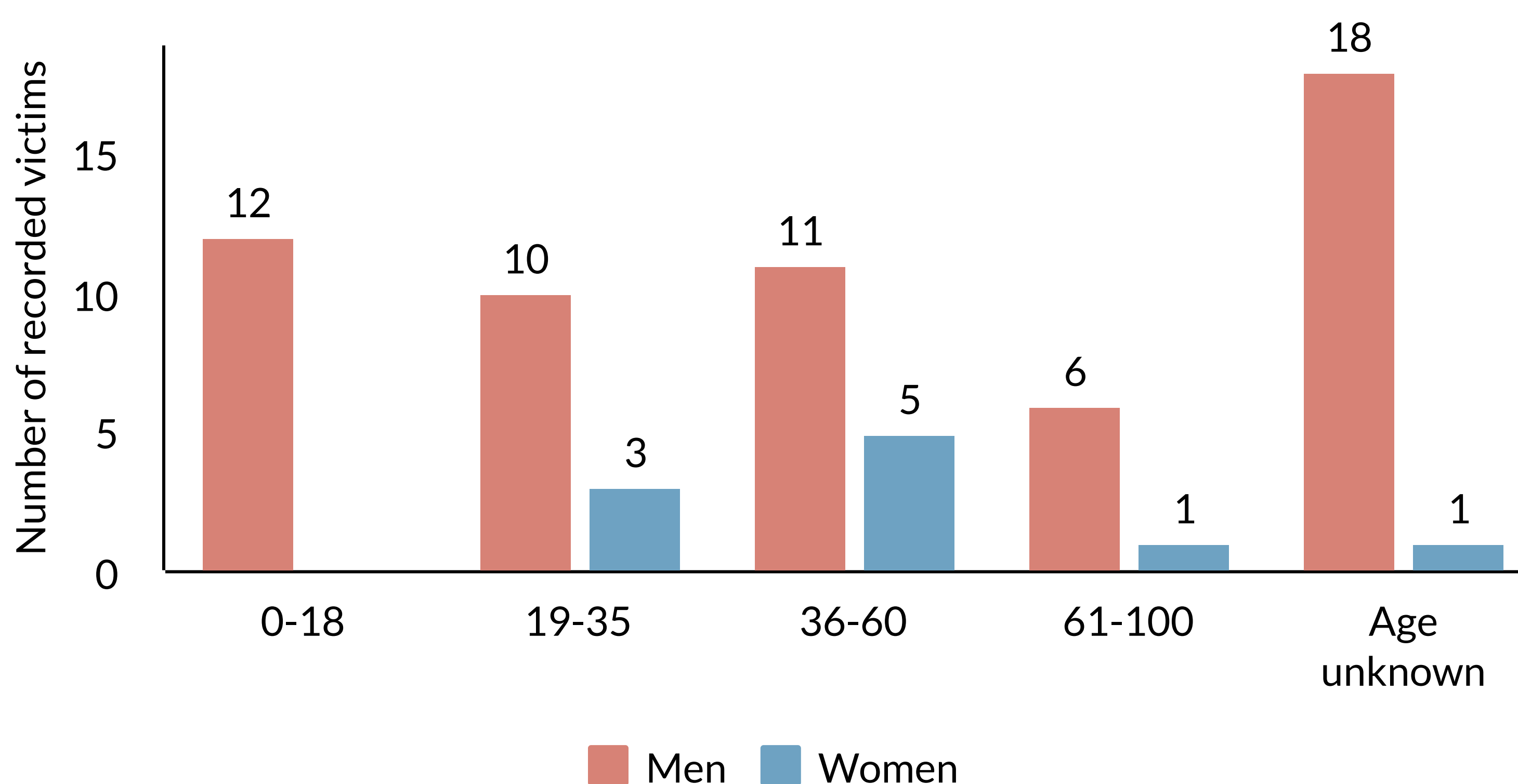
The data on age was provided for 48 (71%) victims, while for 19 (29%), it was not indicated. The most prominent age group, for both men and women, was 36–60 years old, with 16 victims. Over half of the victims in this age group (9) sustained self-inflicting gun injuries with firearms. Accidental shootings involving victims of this age group happened mainly due to hunting, routine maintenance of weapons, and celebratory shootings.

Victims aged 19–35 followed, with 13 victims. In 2022, accidental shootings with the victims of this age group occurred mostly during the hunting or handling of weapons.

In contrast, in 2021, most victims were in the 19–35 age group, with 17 victims, and the 36–60 age group had 16 victims.

In 2022, there were 12 victims aged 18 or younger, all male, which is a 25% decrease compared to the 16 victims of that age group in 2021. In 2022, minors caused self-inflicted injuries in cases, while in two, they were shot and injured by other minors. Additionally, there were seven victims aged 61 and older, similar to 2021. Most accidents involving victims of this age were caused by improper handling of weapons.

Victims by age and sex in 2022





## 2.3 Outcome for victims

The overall decline in the number of accidental shootings in 2022 was mirrored in a drop in the number of victims, especially in fatalities, which decreased by half compared to 2021 (from 20 to 10).

A notable decline in the number of accidental firearm deaths from 2021 was reported by Bosnia and Herzegovina, followed by Moldova and North Macedonia, which did not report fatal injuries in 2022. Albania saw a minor decline in fatalities.

In contrast, no accidental shootings resulted in death in 2021 in Kosovo, while four were reported in 2022. Serbia reported the same number of fatalities in both years.

Outcomes for victims by jurisdiction and year

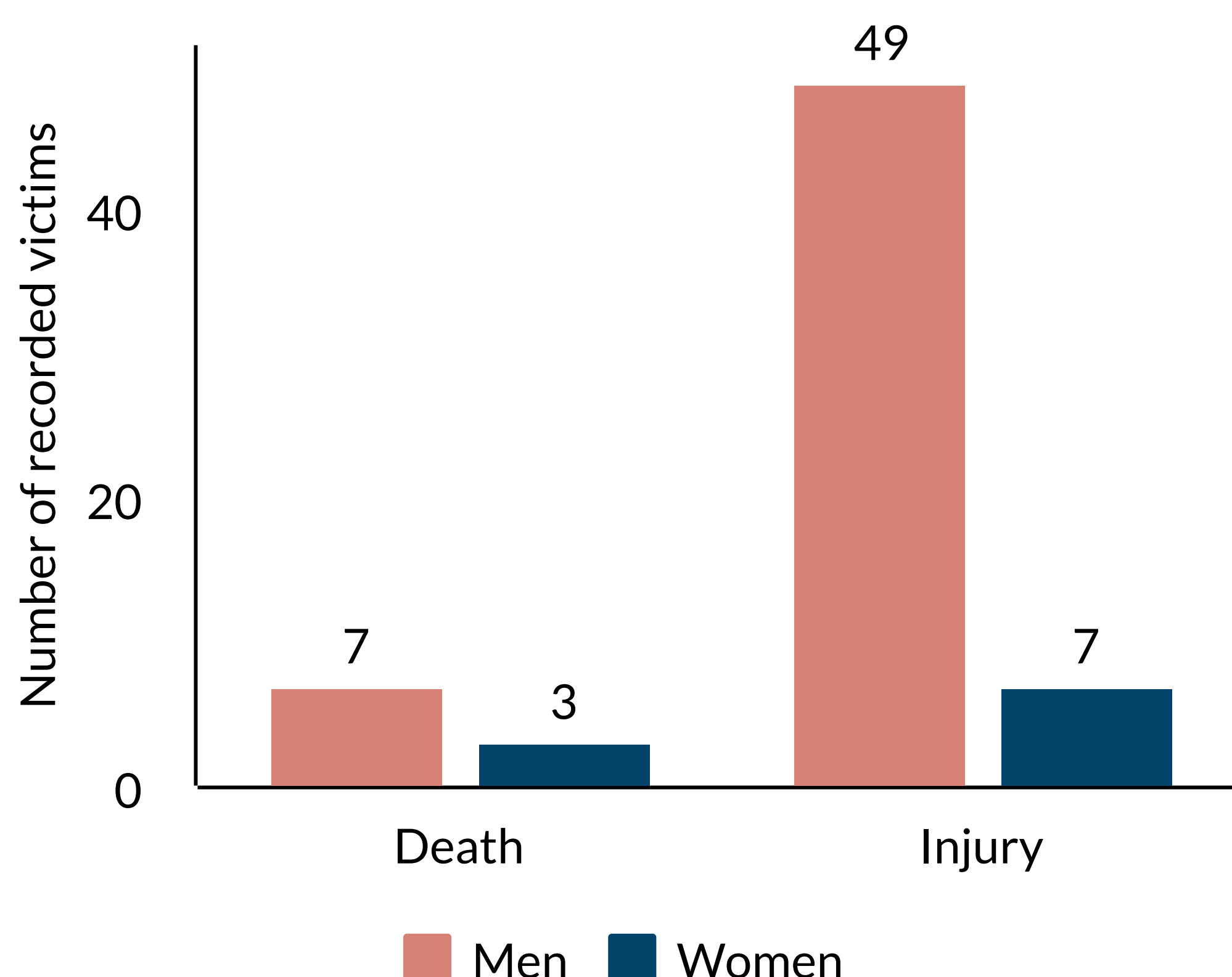
Location	Death		Injury	
	2021	2022	2021	2022
Albania	3	2	2	12
Bosnia and Herzegovina	7	1	7	6
Kosovo	0	4	19	17
Moldova	4	0	5	4
Montenegro	0	0	3	0
North Macedonia	3	0	11	8
Serbia	3	3	12	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>57</b>

In 2022, there was a 10% reduction in the number of people who sustained injuries from accidental shootings compared to 2021 (from 59 down to 57).

The decline in the number of injured victims was seen in all jurisdictions, except for Albania, which observed a significant increase, rising from 2 injured victims in 2021 to 12 in 2022. The most injured victims were reported in Kosovo (17) and Albania (12), closely followed by Serbia (10).

## 2.4 Outcome for victims by sex

Outcomes for victims by sex in 2022



In 2022, out of ten victims who died, seven were men, and three were women, while 19 men and one woman died in accidental shootings in 2021.

In 2022, 46 men and seven women were accidentally injured with firearms. Similar numbers were reported in 2021, with 49 injured men, eight women and two persons whose sex was not reported.

## 3. Perpetrators

Perpetrators of accidental shootings refer to any individual who has unintentionally discharged a firearm or activated ammunition or explosive device, causing an injury or death to themselves or others.

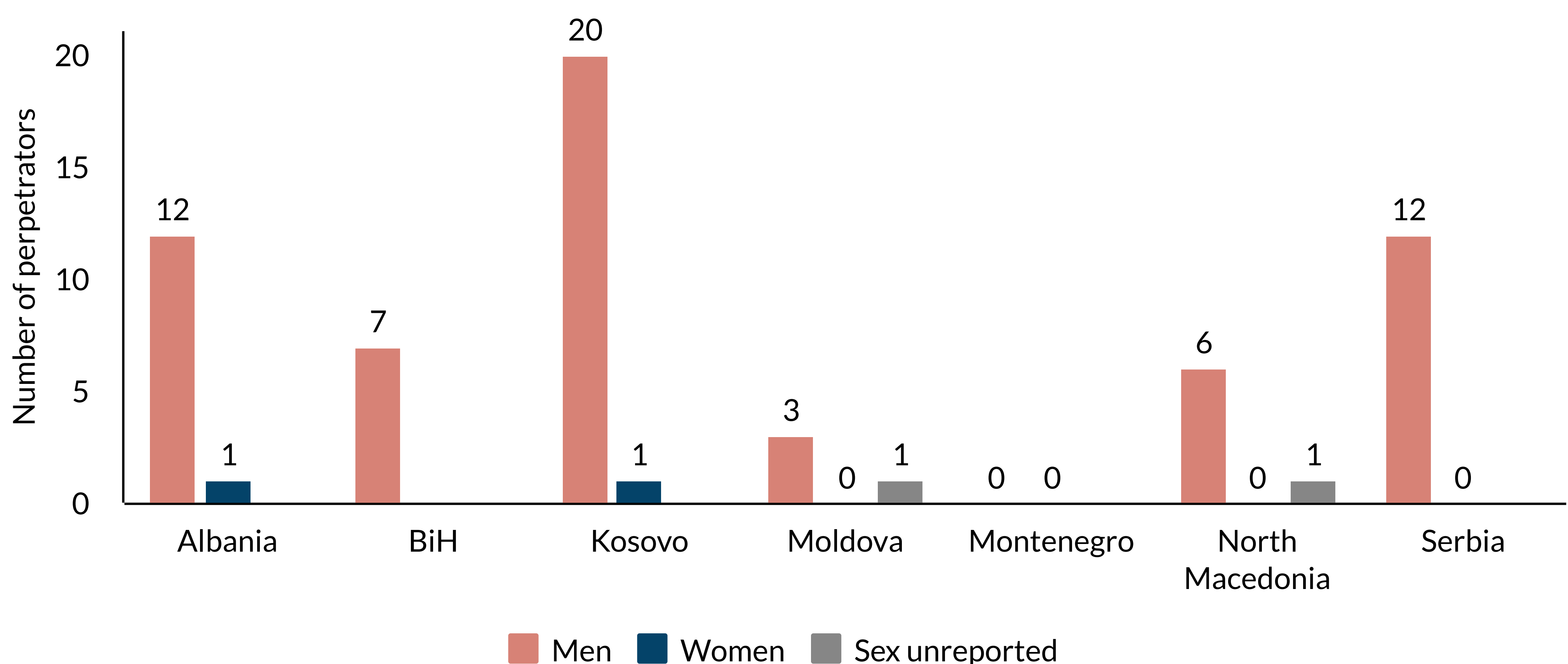
### 3.1 Perpetrators by sex and age

Out of 64 perpetrators, sex was reported for 62 (97%), of whom 60 were men and two were women. Similar statistics were seen in 2021, with 69 men and two women perpetrators, when the sex was known.

In 30 cases (46%), the perpetrators caused self-inflicting accidental injuries, while in 31 cases (54%), the perpetrators caused death or injury to others. In four cases, it was not indicated how the accidental shooting occurred.

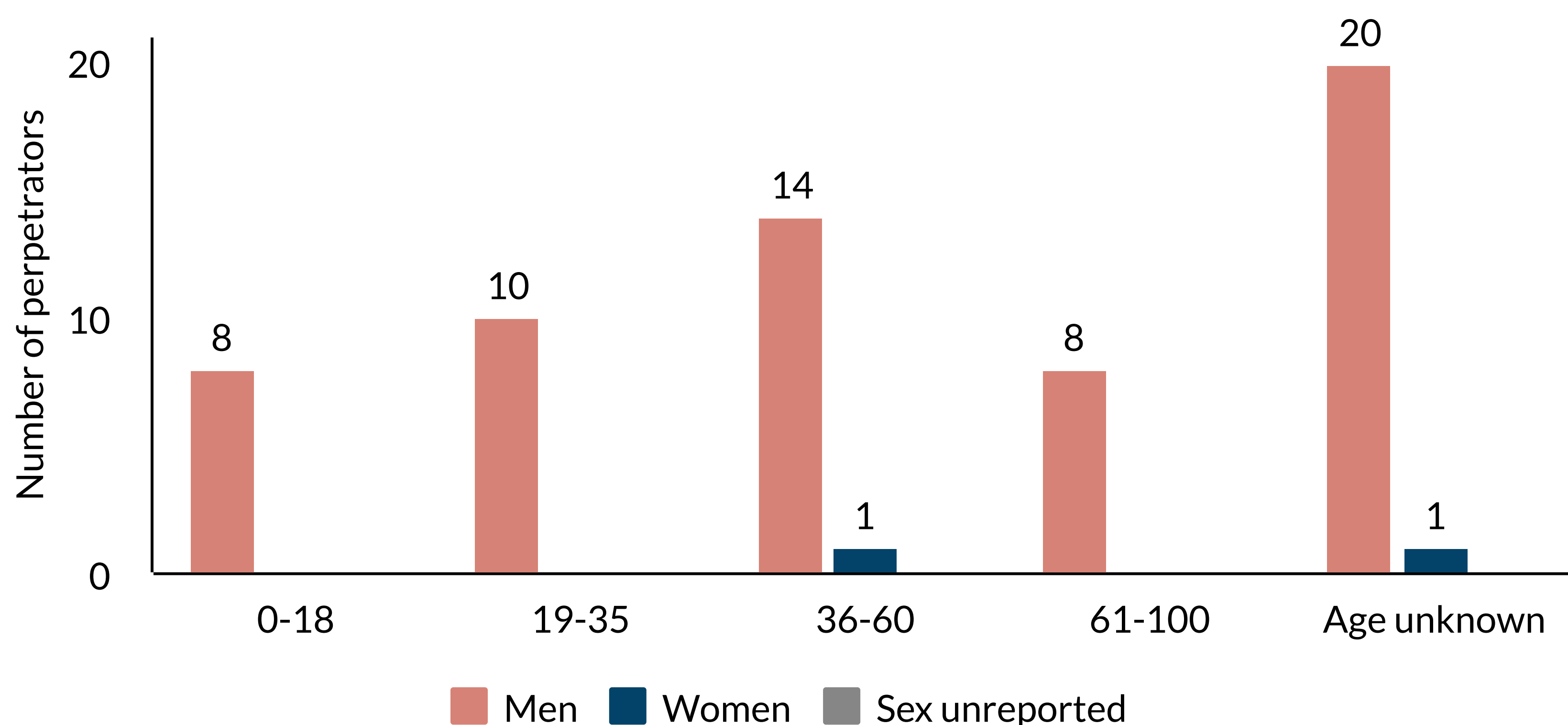
Men dominated as perpetrators of accidental shootings in all jurisdictions, with Albania and Kosovo reporting one woman perpetrator each.

Perpetrators by sex and jurisdiction in 2022



The age of 41 (64%) perpetrators was indicated, while for 23 (36%), it remained unknown. Among the perpetrators whose age was known, the age group 36–60 stands out with 15 reported perpetrators. Those in the age group 19–35 followed, with ten reported perpetrators. A similar age pattern was documented in 2021.

Perpetrators by age and sex in 2022



The correlation between the age and type of weapon showed that perpetrators aged 36–60 caused accidental shootings mostly with handguns (5 cases) and rifles/shotguns (5 cases). A total of eight perpetrators aged 18 and younger were reported. They mainly caused accidents by using handguns (3 cases) and air rifles (3 cases).

Eight perpetrators were also reported among those aged 61 and older. Perpetrators in this age group were mainly associated with the use of rifles/shotguns (5 cases).

- When the relationship between the perpetrators and victims was known, accidental shootings were caused mainly by friends/acquaintances/neighbours – eight cases in 2022 and 14 in 2021.
- In four cases in 2022 and five in 2021, perpetrators and victims were extended family members.
- In both years, one case of accidental shooting was caused by intimate partners.

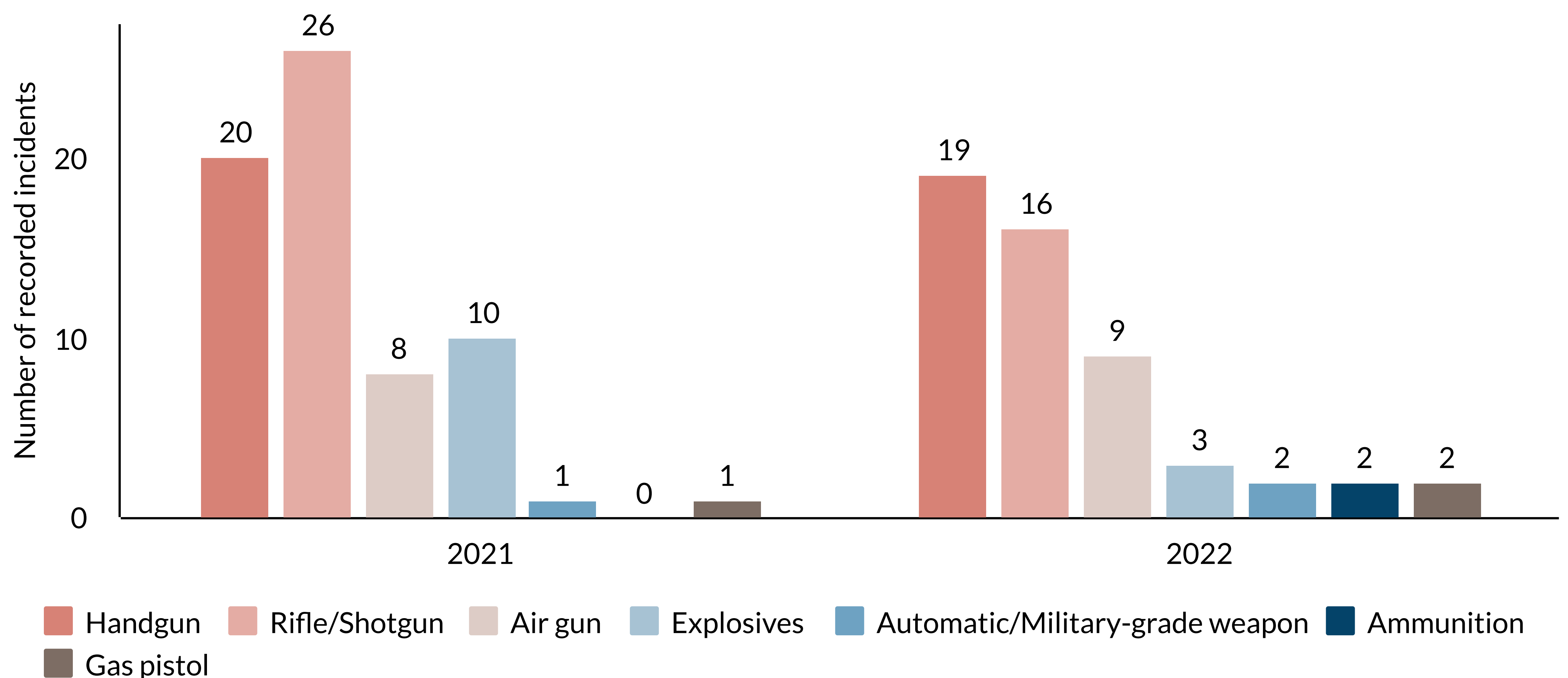


## 4. Type of weapon

### 4.1 Type of weapon

In 2022, handguns were the most frequently reported weapon in accidental shootings, being reported in 19 incidents, closely followed by rifles/shotguns with 16 incidents. The opposite pattern was observed in 2021, with 26 accidental shootings involving rifles/shotguns and 20 involving handguns. There was a significant decrease in explosive-related accidents from 10 in 2021 to 3 in 2022. Accidental shootings caused by the use of air guns slightly increased in 2022.

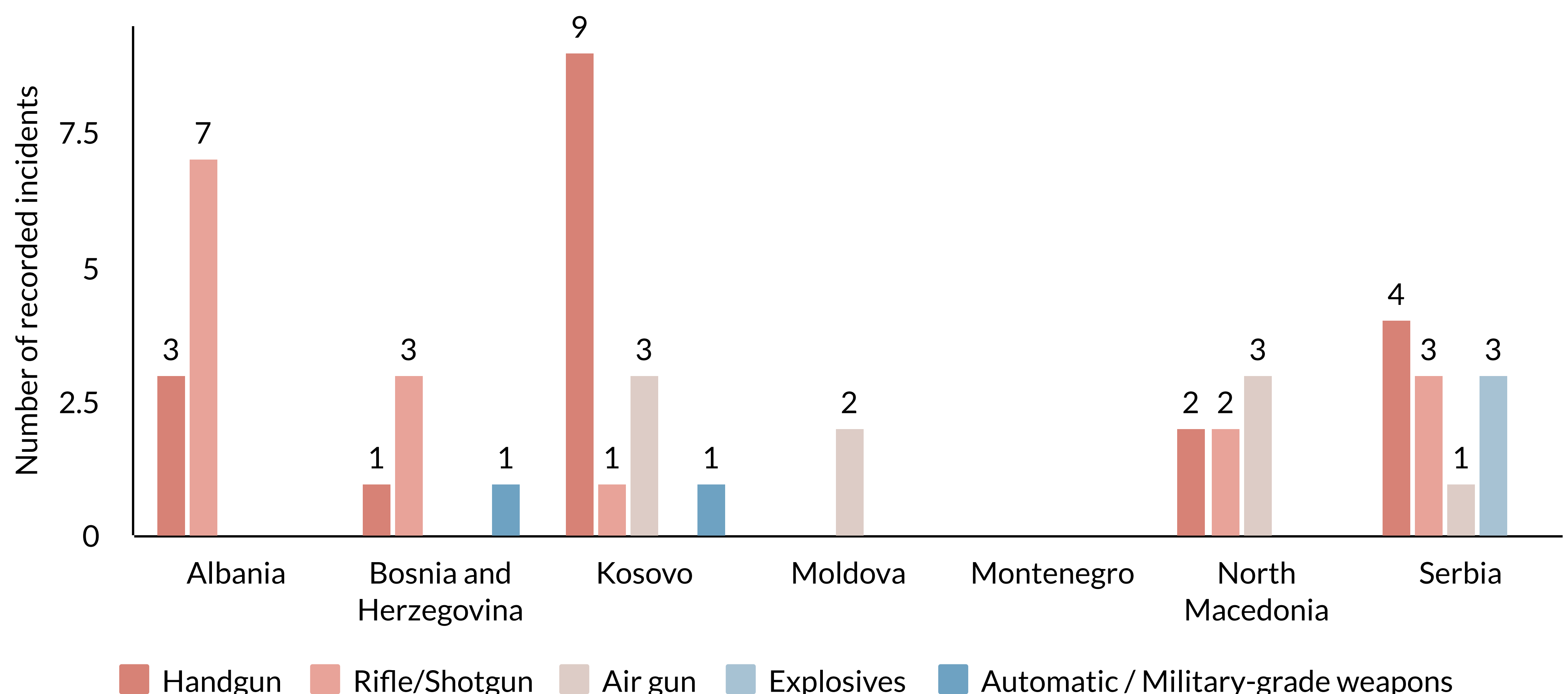
Types of weapons by year



### 4.2 Type of weapon by jurisdiction

Kosovo reported half of the accidental shootings involving handguns (9) in 2022. Accidental shootings with rifles/shotguns were mainly reported in Albania (7), Bosnia and Herzegovina (3) and Serbia (3). There were no reports of accidental shootings with handguns or rifles/shotguns in Montenegro and Moldova in 2022. The majority of explosion-related accidents were reported in Serbia (7 in 2021 and 3 in 2022).

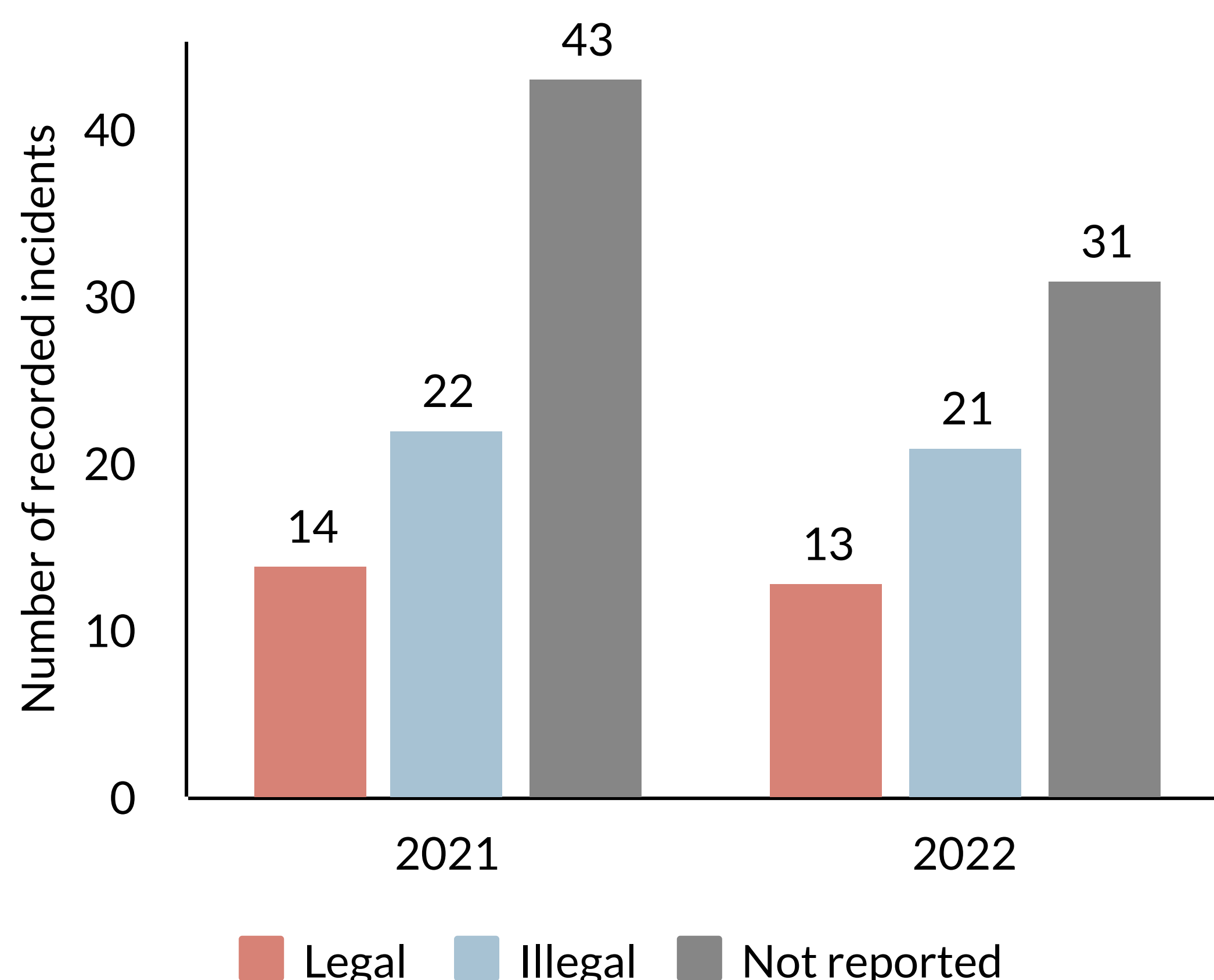
Most reported types of weapons by jurisdiction



### 4.3 Legal status of weapon possession

In 2022, the legal status of weapons was reported in 34 cases (52%), while in 31 (48%) it was not specified. In cases when the legal status was specified, weapons were in legal possession in 13 cases, while in 21 they were reported to be in illegal possession.

Legal status of weapon possession by year



When the data on the legal status of weapons was provided, it showed that in both 2021 and 2022, nearly 40% of accidental shootings were caused by weapons in legal possession.

In 2022, the majority of the legal weapons were rifles/shotguns (6), while handguns were reported in two cases. A similar trend was seen in 2021, with five cases involving rifles/shotguns and three with handguns. In 2022, four accidental shootings with weapons in legal possession were caused by law enforcement officers while on duty. Accidents with weapons in legal possession caused by civilians occurred when cleaning or handling weapons.

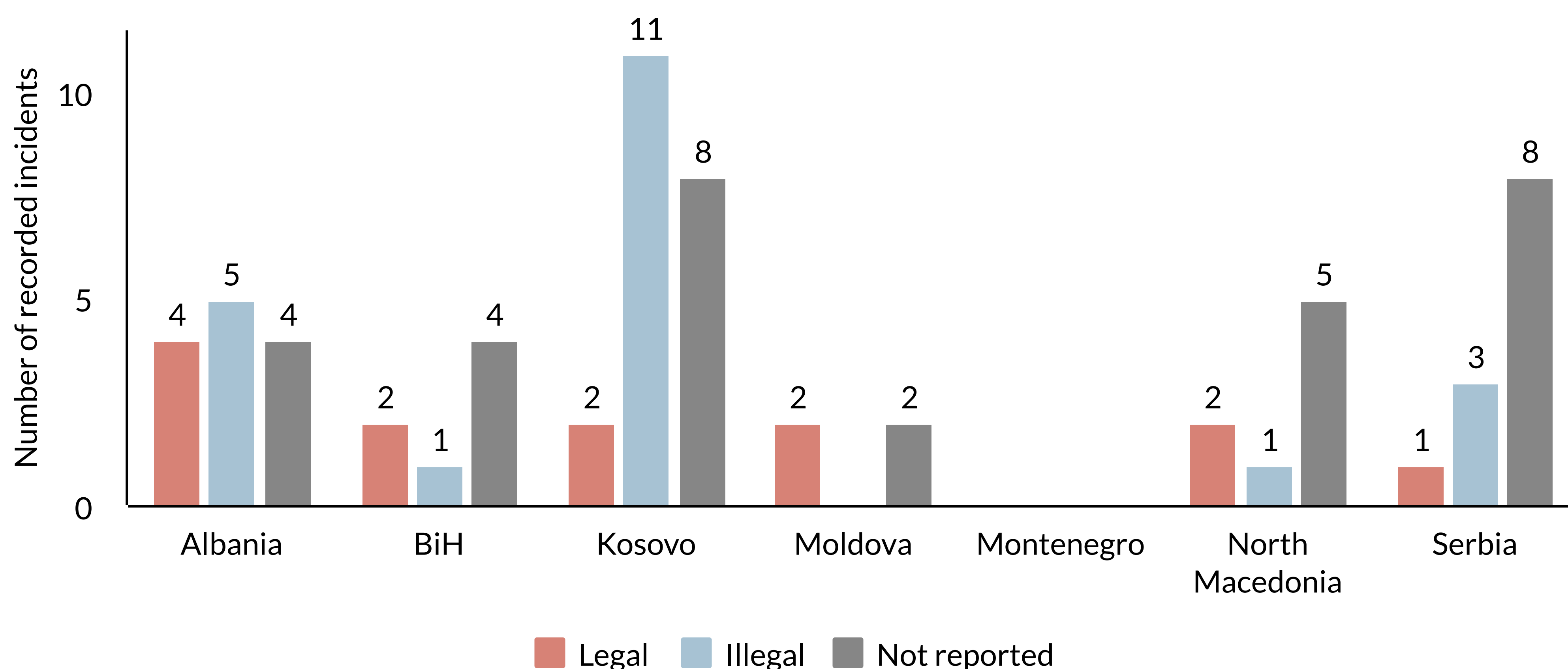
In 2021, explosives in legal possession caused three accidents, while in 2022, these cases dropped to one. In both years, explosive-related accidents occurred in legal entities authorised to deal with explosives.

When the type of illegal weapons was indicated, handguns were reported in 60% of accidental shootings (11 cases). In contrast to 2022, rifles/shotguns in illegal possession were more commonly reported in accidental shootings (7 cases) compared to handguns with six cases.

### 4.4 Legal status of weapon possession by jurisdiction

Weapons in legal possession were mainly reported in Albania (4 cases), while Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Moldova and North Macedonia each reported 2 cases. The highest number of accidental shootings involving weapons in illegal possession was reported in Kosovo (11 cases).

Type of weapon possession by jurisdiction

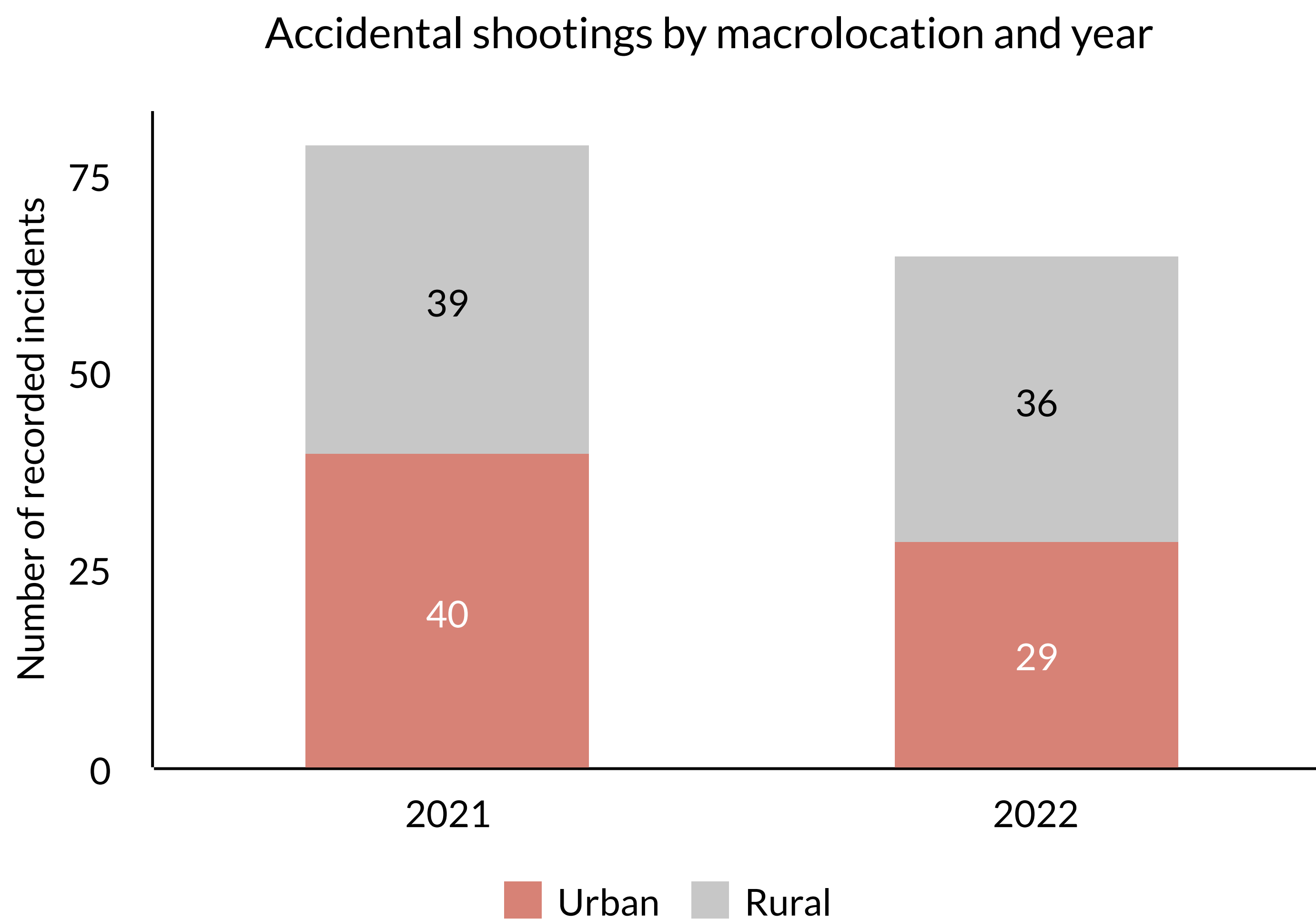




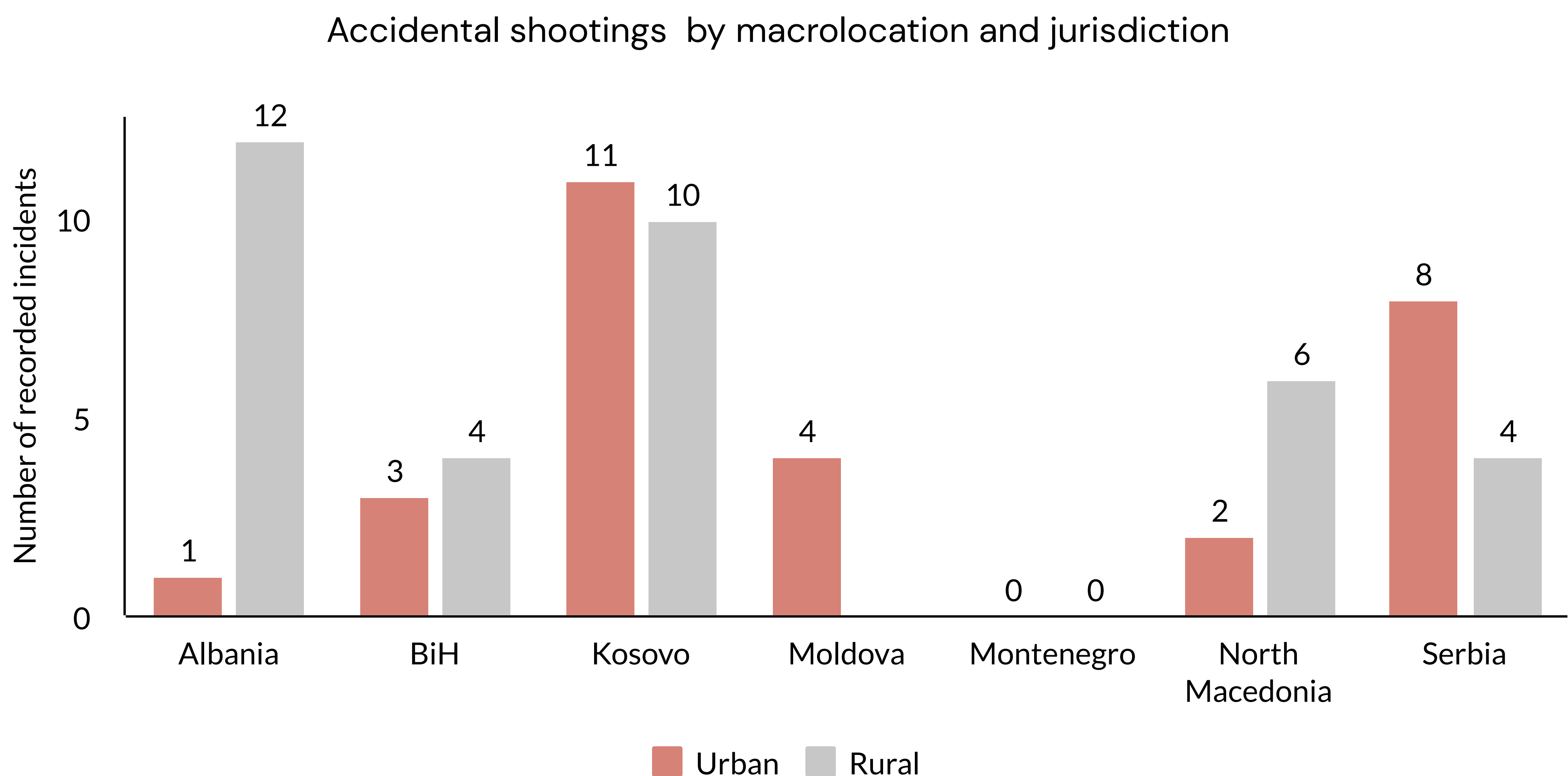
## 5. Marco and micro location

### 5.1 Macrolocation

The macrolocation statistics for 2022 indicate a shift from the trend observed in 2021. In particular, in 2022, accidental shootings in rural areas occurred more frequently than in urban areas, whereas the number of accidental shootings in rural and urban areas was almost the same in 2021.



In 2022, the discrepancy between incidents in urban and rural areas was most pronounced in Albania, where nearly all accidental shootings happened in rural areas, as opposed to 2021, when the difference was negligible. In North Macedonia, accidental shootings in rural areas were three times more common than in urban areas, similar to 2021. In Serbia, accidental shootings in urban areas were reported twice more than in rural areas, while all reported accidental shootings in Moldova occurred in urban areas.





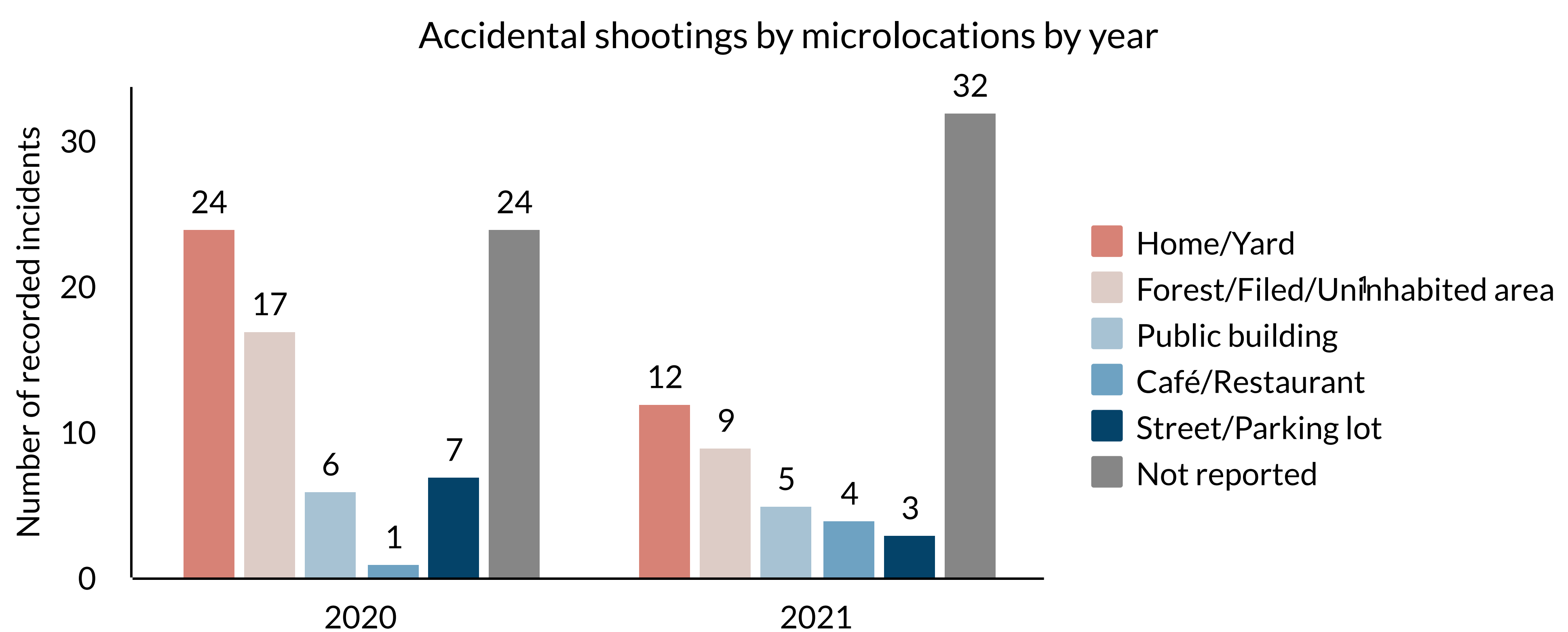
## 5.2 Microlocation

In 2022, the data on microlocation was specified for 33 cases (51%), while no such information was provided for 32 (49%) accidental shootings.

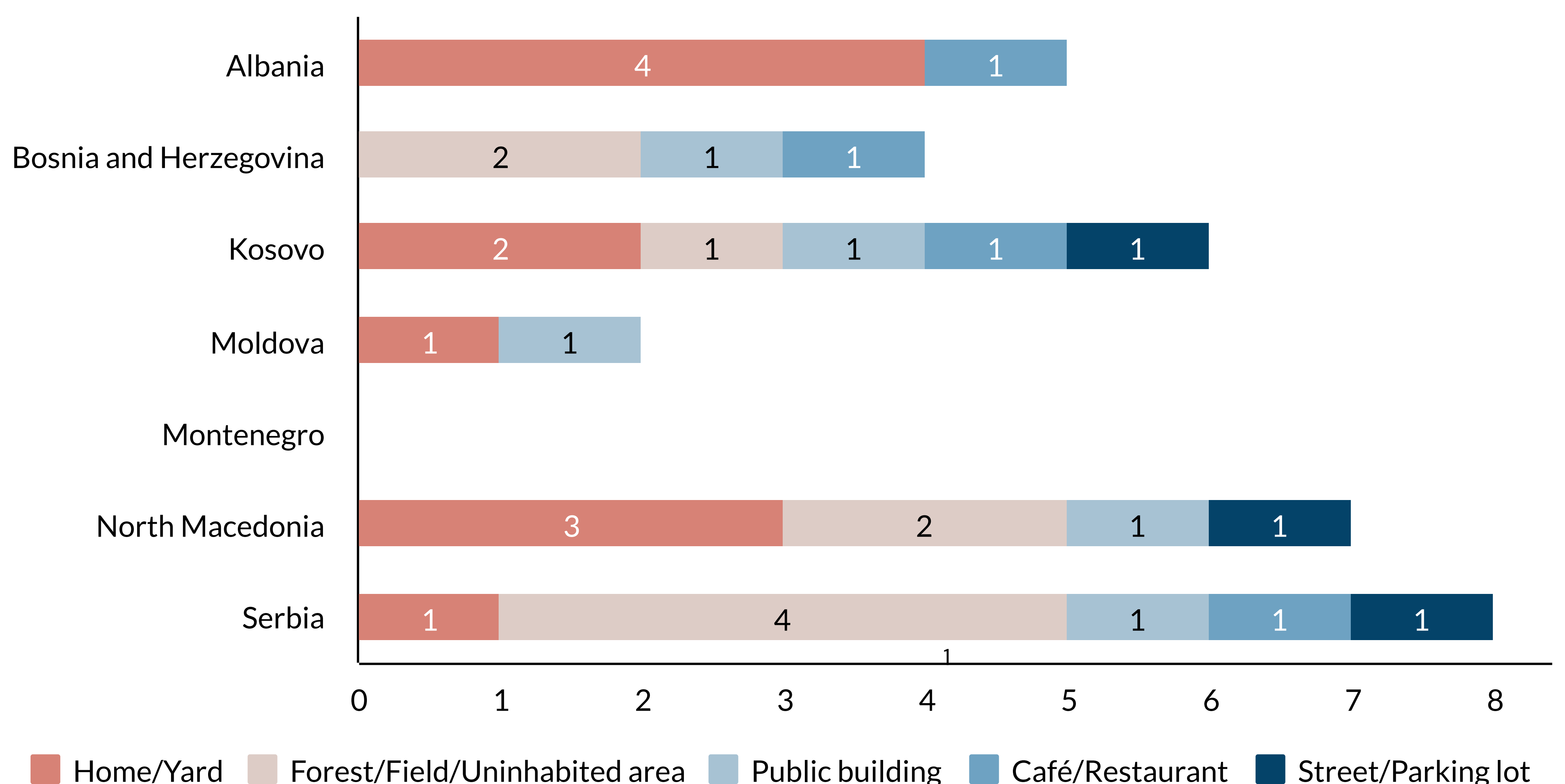
The prevalent trend regarding microlocation observed in 2021 continued in 2022. Thus, 36% of accidental shootings took place at homes/yards in both years, although this number halved in 2022 (from 24 in 2021 to 12 in 2022). Accidents occurring at homes/yards in both years were mainly caused while cleaning or improper handling of firearms, with at least seven such cases reported in 2022.

Forest/fields were the second most reported microlocation in both years, but the number dropped to 9 compared to 17 cases in 2021. These accidents were primarily associated with hunting, with 13 cases in 2021 and seven in 2022.

A similar number of accidental shootings happened in streets/parking lots in both years. In 2022, an increase was seen in accidental shootings happening in cafes/restaurants (from 1 in 2021 to 4 in 2022). In two accidental shootings in cafes/restaurants in 2022, the perpetrators were under the influence of alcohol, while one case happened due to bullet ricocheting.



In 2022, accidental shootings most commonly happened in homes/yards (12), with Albania (4) reporting one-third of such incidents. North Macedonia (3) followed closely. Nearly half of the accidental shootings occurring in forests/fields were reported in Serbia (4), followed by Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo, with two cases each.



<sup>1</sup> Public building refers to a building open and accessible to the public or building used as a place for commercial, professional work.



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