

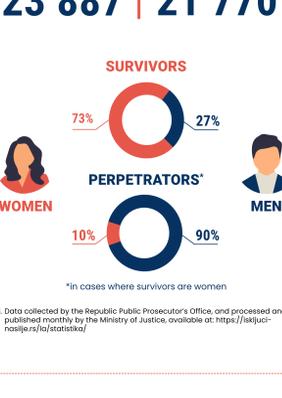
# Reduce Risk - Increase Safety II

## Domestic Violence and Firearms Misuse

REPUBLIC OF SERBIA



### REGISTERED SURVIVORS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE<sup>1</sup>



**THE PRESENCE AND ACCESSIBILITY OF FIREARMS AND THEIR MISUSE IN VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN INCREASES THE RISK AND LIKELIHOOD OF A FATAL OUTCOME IN THE CONTEXT OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE.**

**FIREARMS ARE ALSO MISUSED TO INTIMIDATE SURVIVORS, KEEPING THEM IN FEAR OF SEEKING INSTITUTIONAL PROTECTION OR REACHING OUT TO SUPPORT SERVICES**



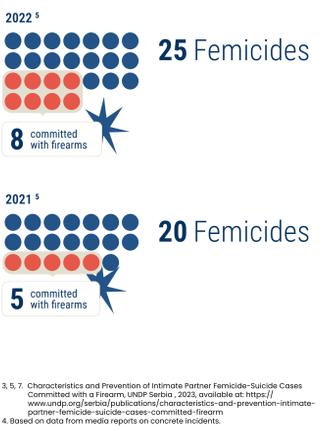
**FIREARMS' LETHAL POWER INCREASES THE LIKELIHOOD OF REPEATED ASSAULTS AND SEVERE INJURIES THAT PERMANENTLY CHANGE SURVIVORS' LIVES.**

1. Data collected by the Republic Public Prosecutor's Office, and processed and published monthly by the Ministry of Justice, available at: <https://skjicp-nasjg.rs/ta/statistika/>

2. Annual quantitative – narrative report on femicide for 2021, Women against Violence Network, available at: [https://www.womenagain violence.org/en/images/femicid\\_2021\\_kvartalni\\_vivo\\_-\\_narrativni\\_godisnji\\_kvartalno\\_2021\\_godina.pdf](https://www.womenagain violence.org/en/images/femicid_2021_kvartalni_vivo_-_narrativni_godisnji_kvartalno_2021_godina.pdf)

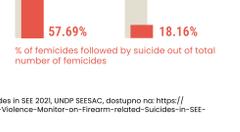
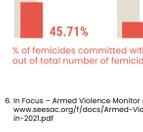
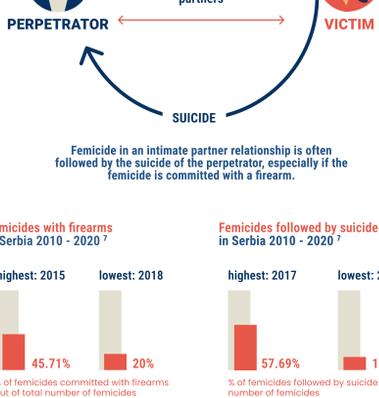
### FEMICIDES

On average, about 30 women are killed each year in Serbia in a domestic-intimate partner context, and the share of misuse of firearms for these femicides ranges from 20% to 45%.<sup>3</sup>



### FEMICIDE-SUICIDE IN INTIMATE PARTNER RELATIONSHIPS

Perpetrators of murder-suicide in 2021 in South East Europe were all men. In the majority of cases, these events occurred in a domestic violence context, involving family members and intimate partners as victims.<sup>6</sup>



3, 5, 7. Characteristics and Prevention of Intimate Partner Femicide-Suicide Cases Committed with a Firearm, UNDP Serbia, 2023, available at: <https://www.undp.org/serbia/publications/characteristics-and-prevention-intimate-partner-femicide-suicide-cases-committed-with-a-firearm>

6. In Focus – Armed Violence Monitor on Firearm-related suicides in SEE 2020, UNDP SEEAC, designo na <https://www.seeac.org/f/docs/Armed-Violence/In-Focus-Armed-Violence-Monitor-on-Firearm-related-Suicides-in-SEE-in-2021.pdf>

4. Based on data from media reports on concrete incidents.

### MASS SHOOTINGS IN SERBIA 2000 - 2023

The majority of mass murders in Serbia in the previous years were committed with firearms, and their backgrounds were either tied directly to domestic violence or involved the killing of family members of the man's partner, ex-partner or wife.<sup>8</sup>



The beginning of May 2023 was marked by a school shooting in Belgrade, the most devastating event in the country's recent history.

Bringing his father's firearm to school, the minor perpetrator killed nine classmates and the school guard and injured five more pupils and a teacher.

Following this mass shooting, the Government of Serbia adopted a series of measures to tighten the conditions for keeping and carrying firearms and prevent their misuse.<sup>9</sup>

**IN EACH OF THE MASS SHOOTINGS THE PERPETRATOR WAS MALE, WHILE WOMEN AND GIRLS ACCOUNT FOR THE MAJORITY OF THE VICTIMS OF THESE INCIDENTS.**

8. Gender and Small Arms in Serbia: Fact Facts, SEEAC, 2019, Gender and SALW in South East Europe, UNDP SEEAC, 2018, available at: [https://www.seeac.org/f/docs/Gender-and-SALW/Gender-and-SALW-Arms\\_SERBIA\\_Eno\\_WEB.pdf](https://www.seeac.org/f/docs/Gender-and-SALW/Gender-and-SALW-Arms_SERBIA_Eno_WEB.pdf), [https://www.seeac.org/f/docs/Armed-Violence/Gender\\_and\\_SALW\\_publication\\_eng\\_web.pdf](https://www.seeac.org/f/docs/Armed-Violence/Gender_and_SALW_publication_eng_web.pdf)

9. Ministry of Interior press releases available at: <http://www.mup.gov.rs/vsp/portal/serbia/medijne/komunikacije/09052023-0751-4031-b0d8-b9594270bb>

### CONSEQUENCES

The impact of femicide is far-reaching and devastating.



### PYRAMID OF PREVENTION<sup>10</sup>



10. Based on Characteristics and Prevention of Intimate Partner Femicide-Suicide Cases Committed with a Firearm, UNDP Serbia, available at: <https://www.undp.org/serbia/publications/characteristics-and-prevention-intimate-partner-femicide-suicide-cases-committed-with-a-firearm>

### LEGAL FRAMEWORK

Several laws in Serbia regulate institutional response to domestic violence, while some recognize the correlation between domestic violence and firearms misuse.<sup>11</sup>

#### Law on Weapons and Ammunition

Regulates purchasing, possession and carrying of firearms.

Conviction for domestic violence is an obstacle to obtaining a permit to hold and carry a weapon under the Law on Weapons and Ammunition.

Many cases of domestic violence are still not reported, while 60% of criminal charges for domestic violence are dismissed due to lack of evidence or willingness of survivors to participate in proceedings.<sup>12</sup>

Thus, cases of violence remain invisible and limit assessment during weapon permit issuance.

<sup>12</sup> Domestic Violence and Firearms Misuse, UNDP, 2021, available at: <https://www.undp.org/serbia/publications/domestic-violence-and-firearms-misuse>

#### Law on Prevention of Domestic Violence

Regulates the emergency protection against the immediate danger of domestic violence escalating or repeating.

The law envisages mandatory coordination and cooperation of competent institutions.

Main participants: public prosecutors, police, social workers.

risk assessment of violence repeating or escalating

individual protection and support plan development for violence survivors

daily information exchange

mandatory reporting of any suspicion of violence

**POSSESSION OF A FIREARM is defined as a RISK FACTOR for domestic violence escalating.**

#### Family Law

Envisages protection measures (up to one year with possibility of prolongation) in cases of domestic violence that are decided on by the court. These include:

- Moving out of the perpetrator from the common home
- Accommodation of the survivor in the common home
- Prohibition of access to the survivor at a specified distance
- Prohibition of access to the place of accommodation/work of the survivor/family member
- Prohibition of further harassment

#### Criminal Code of the Republic of Serbia

Envisages penalties for different criminal acts, including those related to domestic violence and firearms misuse.

**PUNISHMENT**

- Imprisonment
- Fines

Criminal acts related to illicit production, possession, carrying, and trafficking of firearms and explosive.

Criminal acts of domestic violence and other forms of gender-based violence such as sexual harassment, stalking.

11. Law on Weapons and Ammunition, available at: <https://www.pravno-informacioni-sistem.rs/SlodiskPortal/eli/rep/fg/rs/kupstina/zakon/2015/201>

Law on Prevention of Domestic Violence, available at: <https://www.pravno-informacioni-sistem.rs/SlodiskPortal/eli/rep/fg/rs/kupstina/zakon/2016/94/1/eng>

Family Law, available at: <https://www.pravno-informacioni-sistem.rs/SlodiskPortal/eli/rep/fg/rs/kupstina/zakon/2005/107/1/eng>

Criminal Code, available at: <https://www.pravno-informacioni-sistem.rs/SlodiskPortal/eli/rep/fg/rs/kupstina/zakon/2001/181/1/eng>

Law on Healthcare, Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia, no. 116/19, available at: <https://www.pravno-informacioni-sistem.rs/SlodiskPortal/eli/rep/fg/rs/kupstina/zakon/2019/225/eng/>

Special Protocol of the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Serbia for protection and treatment of women exposed to violence, available at: <https://www.sigpravo.rs/medijne/komunikacije/09052023-0751-4031-b0d8-b9594270bb>

## OUR FOCUS

**DECREASING THE CONSIDERABLE NUMBER OF FIREARMS MISUSE FOR DOMESTIC VIOLENCE THAT IS STILL RECORDED IN SERBIA THROUGH FINDINGS SOLUTIONS TO:**

1. REACHING SURVIVORS WHO DO NOT REPORT VIOLENCE.
2. LOWERING RISK OF FIREARMS MISUSE BY CIVILIANS, AS WELL AS PERSONS WHO CARRY FIREARMS.

### THE HEALTHCARE SYSTEM<sup>13</sup>

Healthcare is a system which a great number of citizens come into contact with at various stages of their lives, regardless of their education, social status, or whether they come from rural or urban areas, etc.



13. Role of the healthcare system in the prevention of gender-based and domestic violence committed with firearms, UNDP Serbia, 2022, available at: <https://www.undp.org/serbia/publications/role-health-care-system-prevention-gender-based-and-domestic-violence-committed-with-firearms>

### CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

#### CHALLENGES

Procedures for health assessment of weapon permit applicants are not standardized, nor are the doctors' forms informative enough. Psychologists are not members of health assessment teams.

There is constant lack of time due to work overload of medical professionals, hindering the recognition of risks and providing relevant information that would support prevention of violence.

There is lack of communication between medical professionals within the system and there is no communication nor data exchange between private and state health institutions that would allow for insight into relevant information recorded by different healthcare institutions the patient turned to.

If applicants do not receive a positive assessment from one doctor, they can turn to another healthcare center and receive a favorable assessment there.

There is lack of information exchange between healthcare institutions and Ministry of Interior regarding weapon permit applicants' withdrawal from the health assessments, or in case of issuance of negative health assessment, such as the practice in case of driver's license issuance.

60% of healthcare providers have not attended any lecture, workshops or training regarding gender-based violence and the majority of them have a low self-assessment level of readiness to detect and respond to gender-based violence in their practice.<sup>14</sup> Healthcare teams for prevention of violence have not been established in all out-patient clinics.

#### OPPORTUNITIES

The healthcare system is a key entry point for tracking changes in mental health, family dynamics and personal circumstances. With standardized health assessment procedures and participation of psychologists, triggers and risks for committing domestic violence could be better recognized.

The role of the healthcare system is important in the prevention of gender-based and domestic violence committed with firearms, as healthcare professionals participate in the assessment of the medical fitness of a person to possess and carry firearms. Besides the standardization of the assessment procedure, more flexible work organization of health professionals would allow for more time for health and risk assessment.

Digitization of healthcare is an opportunity for better networking and data cross-referencing of all relevant healthcare procedures.

Healthcare professionals could be more involved in providing information on specific cases and planning of protection and support measures through multi-sectoral action against domestic violence.

Healthcare institutions have the potential to be safe spaces for reporting violence and awareness raising about domestic violence and protection mechanisms, either through direct communication of patients with staff or through available informative materials.

14. Research on assessment of capacities of healthcare workers and healthcare institutions to respond to gender-based violence, UNFPA, 2022, available at: [https://serbia.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/081\\_publicacija\\_sisa\\_izrazovne-vit.pdf](https://serbia.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/081_publicacija_sisa_izrazovne-vit.pdf)