

ANALYSIS OF CASES OF FEMICIDE COMMITTED WITH FIREARMS

(JUNE 2017 - JUNE 2020)



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ABOUT THE ANALYSIS

Violence against women is one of the most prevalent social problems at the global level and has serious consequences for individuals, states, and society as a whole. Every third woman in the world has experienced physical and/or sexual violence from an intimate partner or other person (WHO, 2013). More than half of women in Serbia have experienced some form of violence after the age of 15 (OSCE, 2019). Violence against women most often occurs in the family and in an intimate partnership.

The most drastic form of violence against women is femicide - the murder of a woman by a man, motivated by hatred of women and done out of contempt and a sense of superiority, with the perpetrator believing he has the right to take the life of a woman. The presence and availability of firearms and their misuse for violence against women increases the risk and likelihood of death in the context of gender-based violence.

Women are the most common victims of firearm violence committed by their husbands and partners, while men make up the majority of the perpetrators of such murders. The probability of death due to the misuse of firearms is highest in cases of domestic violence - over three times higher than when firearms are misused in a criminal context (Božanić, 2019). Since in most such cases this violence takes place in the intimate, closed space of a household, the victims have fewer chances of taking refuge, escaping, avoiding attacks, and surviving. The misuse of firearms is not limited to homicides; firearms are often used as a means of intimidation, threats, psychological and sexual violence, control, and other forms of violence, while, in addition to death, such violence often results in serious repercussions for the victims, such as permanent disability due to injuries and deep psychological trauma. It is estimated that the armed conflicts in the former Yugoslavia have contributed significantly to the increased violence against women, as a large number of weapons ended up in the possession of civilians during and after the armed conflicts (OSCE, 2019).

The connection between violence against women, firearms misuse, and femicide is also indicated by the data of the "Women Against Violence" Network, according to which partners and other family members have killed at least 334 women in Serbia over the past decade, with one in three with firearms.¹

¹ Annual reports and announcements of the Women Against Violence Network on femicide from the previous 10 years can be found at <https://www.womenngo.org.rs/publikacije/izvestaji-o-femicidu-u-srbiji>.

In this previous 10-year period, important steps have been taken to enact laws, strategies, and measures to prevent and protect women from violence. Several laws in Serbia recognize the connection between the misuse of firearms and domestic violence and there has been a decrease in the number of murders committed through misuse of firearms, yet clear obstacles remain, preventing effective and complete protection. The number of cases of domestic violence reported to institutions has grown from year to year, but this number is insufficient and does not provide a true picture of the scale of the problem. The mere presence of a weapon in the house or a weapon available to a perpetrator often keeps victims in fear and prevents them from contacting competent institutions. It also inhibits possible witnesses of violence from reporting the crime or assisting the victim.

The Law on the Prevention of Domestic Violence, which came into force in 2017, introduced the obligation of institutions in the Republic of Serbia to perform a risk assessment of whether a victim is in immediate danger of violence. The possession or presence of a weapon is one of the risks that the law recognizes. Data from institutions on the number of firearms used to commit domestic violence in partnerships, on the perpetrators and victims, and on the outcomes of such cases are currently not publicly available.

Despite important legislative and institutional changes, murders of women in family and partnership contexts continue to occur. This analysis of cases of femicide with firearms seeks to enhance the understanding of the phenomenon of femicide by considering the circumstances and factors that precede it, as well as the adequacy of existing risk assessment practices, with the goal of improving institutional practice and preventing further gender-based killing of women. The establishment of a regular system of monitoring and analysing femicide is also an initiative of the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, which calls on States to publish such data annually, to establish a body to monitor femicide, that will carefully analyse each case for deficiencies in the protection of victims, and, on the basis of this knowledge, to further improve and develop preventive measures.²

In the absence of publicly available institutional data, this analysis relies on media reports as the only relevant publicly available sources of information that can provide some insight into the characteristics of femicide cases, as well as risk factors that indicate the possibility of a fatal outcome of violence against women. The analysis focuses on the period beginning in June 2017, when the Law on Prevention of Domestic Violence came into force, initiating new institutional practices in protection against violence, mandatory risk assessment, and institutions' operations in accordance with assessed risks. Therefore, a special priority of this analysis is to highlight the necessity of monitoring the implementation of legislative solutions, their application in practice, and their capacity to stop violence and prevent femicide.

²Femicide Watch Initiative: <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Women/SRWomen/Pages/FemicideWatch.aspx>.

The analysis was conducted within the project “Reduce Risk - Increase Safety - Towards Ending SALW Misuse in the Context of Domestic Violence,” which is part of the implementation of the Roadmap for a sustainable solution to combat the illicit possession, misuse, and trafficking of small arms and light weapons (SALW) and related ammunition in the Western Balkans by 2024.³

The project is realized by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Serbia, with the financial support of the Federal Foreign Office, Germany. The goal of the project is to reduce the risks and impact of the misuse of firearms and provide protection for victims of domestic and partnership violence. The project seeks to answer a range of questions regarding the misuse of firearms for domestic violence, particularly for gender-based violence. The most specific purpose of the project is to improve the legislative and strategic framework and institutional practices in order to effectively respond to the complexities of domestic violence, strengthen the prevention system, and increase awareness among women and men, and girls and boys, of the dangers of firearms.



³ The Roadmap for a sustainable solution to combat the illicit possession, misuse, and trafficking of small arms and light weapons and ammunition in the Western Balkans by 2024 was jointly developed by the six Western Balkans jurisdictions, under the auspices of Germany and France, in coordination with the European Union and with technical support from the South Eastern and Eastern Europe Clearinghouse for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons (UNDP SEESAC).

The Roadmap is the most comprehensive arms control exercise in the region, covering all key aspects, from securing the stockpiles of weapons and ammunition to mainstreaming gender in firearm control and countering firearms trafficking. The Roadmap was adopted at the London Summit in 2018. The text of the Roadmap is available at the following address: <https://www.seesac.org/f/docs/publications-salw-control-roadmap/Regional-Roadmap-for-a-sustainable-solution-to-the.pdf>.

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KEY FINDINGS

Firearms are often used to commit violence against women, and threats using weapons and threats of murder are two recognized predictors of a woman's murder by an intimate partner. Because of the lethality of firearms, there is a much higher probability of a fatal outcome and injuries with lasting consequences, and since violence against women most often occurs in private space, victims have less chance of avoiding attacks. The danger of the misuse of firearms for committing domestic violence is also recognized in the Law on the Prevention of Domestic Violence. For this reason, where the law stipulates the obligation to assess the risk of domestic violence, one of the factors is the possession of a firearm by a potential perpetrator. This analysis examines the period from June 2017, when this law came into effect, to June 2020, to assess its impact on reducing violence committed with firearms, including femicide.

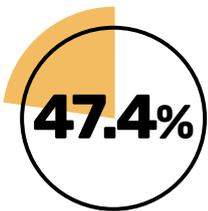
- **From June 2017 to June 2020, 52 cases of domestic violence against women with the use and/or threat of firearms were recorded: 19 femicides with firearms, 19 attempted femicides, and 14 cases of domestic violence against women with the threat of firearms.**
- **Femicides committed in this period took a total of 21 lives (19 women and two people close to them), and the perpetrators attempted or threatened to kill 4 additional persons. Every third recorded case of femicide was committed in a public space. Femicides in public places were witnessed by colleagues and friends of the victim, passers-by, and in some cases (minor) children, indicating the threat this social problem poses to the safety of the entire community.**
- **Femicides with firearms make up one fifth (21.1%) of the total number of femicides in the observed period, which is a decrease in the number of femicides with firearms compared to the previous period. However, the total number of femicides in Serbia remains almost unchanged, which indicates that the perpetrators realized their intention to kill a woman using other means.**
- **There is a much higher risk that a woman will be a victim of violence involving firearms perpetrated by a partner than another family member. Almost 95% of the cases of femicide that were analysed, 84% of attempted femicides, and 86% of firearms threats, were committed in a partner relationship context.**
- **Misuse of firearms to commit femicide was shown to be more common in urban areas. Two thirds of femicides were committed in cities (63.1%), twice as much as in rural areas (31.6%).**
- **The greatest presence of danger for women from this type of violence was found in the City of Belgrade and its surrounding areas.**

- **The majority of the women killed were between the ages of 46 and 55 (57.9% of cases). The average age of the victim was 50 years.**
- **The most common perpetrators of this type of violence were men aged 46 to 55 (36.8%) and those older than 65 (31.6%). The average age of the perpetrator was 58 years.**
- **One fifth of the perpetrators (21.1%) were persons who had access to firearms and carried firearms on the basis of their work. Relevant reports by the media on such instances documented the following occupations - field guard and gamekeeper (2 cases), police officer (2 cases).**
- **A pistol was the most common means of committing femicide with firearms (68.4% of cases). In almost a third of cases, firearms were legally owned by the perpetrator (31.6% of cases), while every fifth weapon used was possessed illegally (21.1% of cases).**
- **In about a quarter of cases (26.3%), persons in the perpetrator's and victim's environment likely would have known that he possessed a firearm because he was either engaged in a job involving access to and/or the carrying of a firearm or possessed it in connection with a hobby.**
- **In only every fourth case (26.3%) did the media report on the criminal past of the perpetrator (abuse of official position, traffic accidents, misdemeanours, robberies, etc.).**
- **Every fifth perpetrator (21.1%), according to media reports, had been previously reported to the competent institutions for committing domestic violence. In almost a third of cases, there was no relevant data available, while in slightly less than half (47.4%) of the cases, the media stated that there were no such previous reports.**
- **Factors commonly present in these instances of murder and thus indicative of high-risk situations for femicide, especially if the perpetrator has access to firearms, include: fear on the part of the victim, the victim leaving the perpetrator, jealousy on the part of the perpetrator, and stalking and tracking of the victim by the perpetrator.**
- **After the murder of the victim(s), 78.9% of the perpetrators attempted or committed suicide.**
- **In one of the 4 cases in which the perpetrator did not commit or attempt to commit suicide in the observed period, the case received a court "epilogue." This one instance is particularly worrying, however, as in this instance the crime was reclassified as a lesser offense (instead of aggravated murder the perpetrator was convicted of murder). Moreover, the perpetrator was released until the verdict became final, during which time the family of the murdered woman was in constant fear for their safety, as they lived in the immediate vicinity of the perpetrator.**

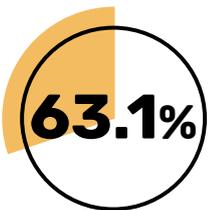
The most commonly present factors of danger preceding the committed femicides:



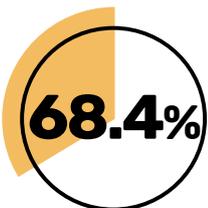
In a quarter of cases, the perpetrator persecuted and followed the victim.



Almost half of women had felt fear of the perpetrator of violence and/or fear of being killed.



In two thirds of cases, the perpetrator was jealous.



In two thirds of cases, the murder occurred when the victim announced that she would leave, tried to leave, or had already left the abuser.

1. INTRODUCTION



Violence against women is one of the most prevalent social problems worldwide and one that carries serious consequences for individuals, the state, and society as a whole. Globally, every third woman has experienced physical and/or sexual violence by an intimate partner or other person. This does not include sexual harassment (World Health Organization, 2013: 2). Studies show that in the United States, 70% of women have experienced physical and/or sexual violence by an intimate partner (UN News, 2019), while in some European Union countries this has been indicated as true for every second woman, e.g., 52% in Denmark, 47% in Finland (OSCE, 2019: 21). The global cost of violence against women (health care, justice, childcare and welfare, lost wages) in 2016 was estimated at \$ 1.5 billion (UN Women, 2016). In Serbia, more than half of women (62%) have experienced some form of violence after the age of fifteen, while almost half have experienced psychological violence (44%), and more than every fifth (22%) physical violence by an intimate partner (OSCE, 2019).

The most common perpetrators of violence against women are men, primarily intimate partners (current or former, marital or extramarital). Data from the Ministry of Justice show that women are twice as likely to be victims of domestic violence as men, and that in over 90% of cases they have suffered violence from men (Ministry of Justice, 2021).

Firearms are often used to commit violence against women, and threats of firearm use and threats of murder are two identified predictors of murder of a woman by an intimate partner. If a violent partner possesses a firearm, the probability of a woman being killed increases fivefold (Campbell et al, 2003). Possession of or access to firearms is also used to intimidate, threaten, and commit other forms of violence, such as psychological violence. This is supported by data from the United States, according to which about one million women reported that their intimate partner had shot them or hit them with a gun, while about four and a half million testified that their intimate partner had threatened them with a gun (Sorenson and Schut, 2018). In about two-thirds of cases where a gun was present in a house where a woman lived with a violent partner, the perpetrator was indicated to have used it against the victim, threatening to injure or kill her (Sorenson and Wiebe, 2004). Due to the lethality of firearms, there is a much higher probability of a fatal outcome or permanent injuries causing disability, especially as these forms of violence occur most often in private space, where victims have less chance to avoid attacks.

Femicide, or the gender-based murder of a woman by men motivated by hatred towards women, contempt, and a sense of superiority, in which the perpetrator believes he has the right to take the life of a woman, is usually the ultimate and most extreme consequence of the continuum of violence. During 2017, 87,000 women were violently killed worldwide, and more than half were killed by intimate partners or family members. On average, partners or family members kill 137 women every day. More than a third of the women killed in 2017 were killed by their then current or former intimate partner (UNDOC, 2018). The precise prevalence and characteristics of femicides are difficult to determine due to differences in its definition, in the sources and methods of data collection, and in the lack of official and publicly available records. Due to the seriousness of this social problem, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on violence against women called on states to establish a Femicide Watch (UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women, 2015), reiterating this call in 2020 (UN Special Rapporteur on violence

against women, 2020). The goal of establishing a femicide monitoring authority is to systematically and accurately monitor femicide so as to create a greater understanding of the phenomenon, including its characteristics, prevalence, causes, and risk groups, with the aim of developing interventions that will contribute to its control and prevention.

In Serbia, reports and announcements of the Autonomous Women's Center⁴ and other women's organizations offer a general picture of femicide during the last decade. The reports of the Autonomous Women's Center rely primarily on media reports, as official publicly available sources of data on gender-based murders of women in Serbia are currently lacking. The data obtained clearly indicate the connection between domestic violence against women, femicide, and the use of firearms, as well as the danger of firearms and the seriousness of the consequences of their misuse. This is confirmed by research indicating that five of the six deadliest massacres that have occurred in Serbia since 2000 were a direct result of the misuse of firearms in the context of domestic violence or involved the murder of a family member or former/current partner. In all these cases, the perpetrator was a man. In total, 40 people were killed, 28 were injured, and more than half of the victims (55%) were women (Božanić, 2016: 29). Half of the cases of domestic violence in the period 2014–2018 in which firearms were used resulted in death, and the probability of death due to misuse of firearms for domestic violence was three times higher than in incidents in a general criminal context (Božanić, 2019: 21). In Serbia, partners and other family members have killed at least 334 women over the past decade, one in three shot dead with a firearm. Three cases of femicide followed by mass killings were also reported (in Velika Ivanča, Kanjiža and Žitište); in all three, firearms were used as the means to commit the killings. In one case, the killer was a participant in the war events in the former Yugoslavia in the 1990s, while in another case it was assumed that the weapons used had been sourced from these battlefields (Lacmanović, 2020a: 63).

There are no official reliable estimates on the prevalence of illegal weapons in Serbia, and the absence of such data raises concerns, as earlier research has indicated that illegal weapons left over from war conflicts are still being used today to commit violence against women. In addition, it is estimated that large quantities of weapons remain in the illegal possession of citizens in the Western Balkans, which has destabilizing potential and poses a constant threat to communities, societies, and institutions. Therefore, all governments and regions have adopted the Roadmap (SEESAC, 2018: 19), which requires the collection of small arms and light weapons as one of the key control measures. When it comes to legal firearms, the latest research shows that in Serbia, 618,061 firearms are legally in the possession of individuals, and that 23,539 are in the possession of private legal entities (Božanić, Naidoo, 2019: 21). According to recent research, there are 60 companies in the Republic of Serbia that produce firearms and military equipment; no cases of illegal production have been reported (Božanić, Naidoo, 2019: 30). However, in light of the armed conflicts in the former Yugoslavia, which have led to easier access to illegal firearms, this problem is not negligible. The entire region of the Western Balkans is particularly affected by this problem considering that Yugoslavia had a developed military industry and weapons production (Spasić, Tadić 2017: 14) and that firearms could be easily, quickly, and cheaply procured on the (black) market.

⁴ Details: <https://www.womenngo.org.rs/publikacije/izvestaji-o-femicidu-u-srbiji>.

The armed conflicts in the former Yugoslavia, which resultantly made firearms widely available to civilians, has been identified as one of the factors contributing to the increased violence against women. The availability of firearms during and after armed conflicts is a factor that was indicated by women in qualitative research as a key factor that has contributed to the escalation in the number of cases of violence against women in Serbia. The women who participated in this research also pointed out that a significant portion of the weapons that the soldiers had brought with them upon their return from the battlefield were kept at home or passed on to others, and that they are now used against women (OSCE, 2019: 43). Women are more likely to be exposed to domestic violence if their partner has been involved in armed conflict (refers to most forms of physical and sexual violence) (OSCE, 2019: 41). Although there is no precise data on how many people in Serbia suffer post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) as a result of their involvement in armed conflicts in which Serbia has participated, OSCE research indicates that there are many potentially exacerbating tendencies towards violence against women present in the country. (OSCE, 2019: 12). This finding is confirmed by an earlier study the Victimology Society of Serbia conducted on the territory of Vojvodina, which asserts the connection between perpetrators' participation in war conflicts and the use of weapons or tools for committing domestic violence. The experience of "warfare" affects one's willingness to, or likelihood of, use of firearms or any available weapon in a violent act (22.2% of perpetrators who participated in the war had used a lethal weapon, compared to 8.8% of those who were not participants in the conflict) (Nikolić Ristanović, 2010: 82). It is additionally worrying that there is no relevant organized systemic assistance provided to war veterans in this area. Psychotherapist and veteran Vladan Beara, who deals with war traumas, points out that there is a connection between PTSD, alcohol and drug abuse, and broken family and friendly relations (Tončić, 2018). Part of the context is the cultural aspect of the "cult" of weapons, in which it is identified with maturity and masculinity⁵ (Spasić, Tadić 2017: 14).

Despite the adoption of numerous laws, strategies, and measures related to the protection of women from violence and attempts to harmonize these documents with the ratified *Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence*, which represents the most advanced international document in the field of prevention and combating violence against women, the frequency of violence against women and the number of murders of women in a domestic context and partnership relations in Serbia remain almost unchanged. The latest available research shows that in 2016, 96 firearms were revoked on the basis of domestic violence, 0.8% of the total amount of revoked firearms (12,470), while the misuse of firearms in the context of domestic violence from 2012 to 2016 was reported 25 times, 0.1% of all reported cases of domestic violence (22,709) (Božanić, Naidoo, 2019: 48). For the reporting period under review (June 2017 - June 2020), there are no data of this type, nor are there publicly available official statistics on the number of homicides in the context of domestic violence. In addition to being of public interest, these data would help enable the monitoring of the effects of relevant laws, practices, and actions of institutions, as well as the analysis of the pre-existing circumstances that lead to femicide. This in turn could guide subsequent revision of practices and policies towards preventing future murders of women.

⁵ The regularity and normalization of armed violence (towards intimate partners) during celebrations in our society and culture is evidenced by the song "The Great Wedding," which appeared on last year's Beovizija, and which explicitly called for the murder (bombing) of a woman who said "no." The song was withdrawn from all platforms of Serbian Radio and Television, and its text was changed after the reaction of the Autonomous Women's Center. More details are available at: <https://cutt.ly/yjplzbE> (accessed on January 2, 2021).

2. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE PROTECTION OF WOMEN FROM VIOLENCE AND THE PREVENTION AND COMBATING OF FEMICIDES



The creation of an international framework for the protection of women from violence and accompanying policies began in the 1970s with the adoption of international documents criminalizing it and establishing mechanisms and standards for its prevention and combating. In this regard, these are the most important international instruments: *the 1979 UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) with the Optional Protocol; General Recommendation no. 19 of the 1992 Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women; the UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women (DEVAW) (1993); Declaration on Policies for Combating Violence against Women in a Democratic Europe (1993); The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action of 1995; Recommendation 5 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on the protection of women against violence (2002); Recommendation 1582 on domestic violence against women (2002); The 2011 Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (the so-called Istanbul Convention) and General Recommendation no. 35 of the CEDAW Committee in 2017.* By ratifying these documents, the signatory states are obliged to build a national system of protection of women from violence.

In the Republic of Serbia, the protection of women from violence includes criminal and family law regulations. The crime of domestic violence was first established by amendments to the Criminal Code in 2002, the result of many years of commitment by women's organizations. At the national level, these are the most relevant documents aimed specifically at combating and preventing domestic violence: *the Criminal Code, the Family Law, the Law on the Prevention of Domestic Violence, the General Protocol on the Conduct and Cooperation of Institutions, Bodies, and Organizations in Situations of Violence against Women in the Family and Partner Relationships and Special Protocols on the conduct of police officers, professional workers in social work centres, health care workers, and judicial representatives (adopted in the period from 2011 to 2014), as well as cooperation agreements between all competent services signed in all municipalities.*

As the legislation concerning the combating and prevention of domestic violence is very extensive, below is a brief overview of the provisions and measures that are most significant in preventing femicide (committed with a firearm) in the family and partnership contexts. In this regard, the *Law on the Prevention of Domestic Violence* is especially important, as it introduced a completely new form of preventive protection for victims of domestic violence into the legal system of the Republic of Serbia - emergency protection involving the police, prosecution, and the courts (Macanović 2018: 43). Safety risk assessment, which is crucial for the prevention of femicide, has become mandatory. It implies assessing the degree of vulnerability of persons who are in immediate danger of violence, and the planning and implementation of measures based on the assessed degree of risk, to minimize or completely eliminate any relevant risks.

This safety risk assessment is based on the information that the competent police officer is to obtain for each report of violence and this assessment is to take place as soon as possible. Article 16 of the *Law on the Prevention of Domestic Violence* states that the following indicators regarding the potential perpetrator must be taken into account when assessing the risk:

- whether he/she has committed domestic violence before or immediately before the risk assessment and whether he/she is ready to repeat it,

- whether he/she has threatened to kill or commit suicide,
- whether he/she possesses a weapon,
- whether he/she has a mental illness
- whether he/she is abusing psychoactive substances,
- whether there is a conflict over custody of a child or about the manner of maintaining personal relations with a child,
- whether an emergency measure or a certain measure of protection against domestic violence has been imposed on him/her,
- whether the victim experiences fear and how he/she assesses the risk of violence.

The security risks established by the *Special Protocols for the conduct of police and health care workers* that need to be addressed include: the criminal history of the perpetrator (which need not be related to acts of domestic violence); unemployment and financial problems (of the potential perpetrators of violence); coercion into sexual intercourse; problems in partner and family relations (any announcement of leaving the potentially violent partner, any leaving of and returning to the potentially violent partner, divorce, threats to the victim's family and friends); a history of the perpetrator's jealous behaviour, persecution, or harassment; knowledge of persons from the victim's environment that the victim is suffering violence; information on whether the abuse began or increased during pregnancy; other indicators, e.g., social or geographical isolation of the victim, certain types of disabilities or chronic diseases of the victim, etc. (Ignjatović, Ileš, 2016: 36).

If the risk assessment determines that there is an immediate danger of domestic violence⁶, the competent police officer shall issue an order imposing an urgent measure on the perpetrator who was brought to the competent organizational unit of the police (Article 17 of the *Law on the Prevention of Domestic Violence*). The police officer has at his disposal the following measures provided by this law and he/she can impose them on the possible perpetrator without the victim's consent: 1) a measure of temporary removal of the perpetrator from the apartment, and 2) a measure of temporary prohibition of the perpetrator to contact and approach the victim. These measures shall last for 48 hours, and the police officer is to submit the order with evidence to the competent public prosecutor immediately after the pronouncement, who has 24 hours to decide whether to request an extension of the emergency measure to 30 days. The court shall make a decision within 24 hours on the prosecutor's proposal, without the presence of the parties. In the event that the perpetrator violates the imposed emergency measure, a prison sentence of up to 60 days may be imposed.

⁶ The immediate danger of domestic violence exists when it is determined, based on the behavior of a possible perpetrator and other circumstances, that he/she is ready to commit domestic violence in the time ahead (Article 3, paragraph 2 of the *Law on Prevention of Domestic Violence*).

Once emergency protection of the victim is provided, the competent institutions should have sufficient time to gather evidence and decide whether there is a need for further protection through the use of criminal, misdemeanour, and/or family protection measures against domestic violence. The *Law on Prevention of Domestic Violence* will not be applied towards imposing protection measures if immediately after the report of violence it is established that there are sufficient grounds for initiating criminal proceedings and providing protection to the victims by the provisions of the Criminal Code, which moves the case from the domain of prevention to the domain of repression and punishment (Macanović, 2018: 43).

A new measure introduced in the *Law on Prevention of Domestic Violence*, which raises the protection of victims of domestic violence to a higher level, is the obligatory coordination between institutions that provide assistance and support to victims by appointing persons designated for liaison within these institutions (Article 24 of the *Law on the Prevention of Domestic Violence*). In particular, the obligation of a specially trained prosecutor for domestic violence to convene meetings of the group for coordination and cooperation in the territory of its competence at least once in 15 days was established as part of this law (Article 25 of the *Law on Prevention of Domestic Violence*). These meetings discuss newly reported cases, i.e., those that occur between two group meetings. Also, already existing cases for which a new risk assessment should be performed are considered, with protection measures evaluated and revised as necessary and in accordance with new risks. The same is done for cases in which court proceedings need to be accelerated. Victims and individuals and organizations that support them in this process have the right to participate in these meetings. The victim's opportunity to participate in meetings at which his/her case is considered is of particular importance, especially given that the victim's assessment of his/her own safety and his/her fear are among the best predictors of the risk of a fatal outcome of violence. However, it must be mentioned that there are cases in which the victim does not show fear, yet experts do determine the existence of a high risk, making it necessary to take measures to eliminate that risk.

The intended result of the coordination and cooperation group efforts is an individual plan for protection and support of each victim (Article 31 of the *Law on Prevention of Domestic Violence*), which is developed for cases in which the existence of an immediate danger of violence has been established. This plan contains comprehensive and effective measures to protect and support the victim, but also other family members who need support. On the one hand, protection measures are aimed at ensuring the safety of the victim and stopping violence, and, on the other hand, support measures are aimed at psycho-social and other types of support to foster the recovery and empowerment of the victim. The plan also details the implementers of specific measures, deadlines for their undertaking and monitoring, and assessment of the effectiveness of planned and undertaken measures. All perpetrators are potentially life-threatening for the victim, but some indicators (already discussed) may indicate a high risk of death from violence and help identify them. Therefore, the risk assessment and the individual protection and support plan are of special importance for the victim and his/her children, as well as for the professionals employed in the competent institutions.

In the context of this analysis, the possession of firearms (including hunting and sport weapons) stands as one of the key indicators of the danger of a fatal outcome of violence. Examining potential perpetrators' access to firearms, use of firearms, or threats to use firearms is one of the risk factors that police officers are required to consider in each reported case of violence. If it is determined that a firearm has been used for violence or that the suspect possesses it, the police officers are obliged to confiscate it with a warrant to temporarily seize items. This task was given to police officers in 2013 by the *Special Protocol on the Conduct of Police Officers in Cases of Domestic Violence against Women* and established as an obligation by the *Law on the Prevention of Domestic Violence*, which entered into force in 2017 and recognizes the possession of, and access to, firearms as one of the risks of imminent danger of domestic violence, requiring preventive action by relevant institutions. Despite this recognition, there is no record or publicly available data on the number of cases of domestic violence with elements of possession/access to/misuse of firearms, and there is no record of the actions and measures taken by competent authorities in such cases.

The procurement, possession, carrying, collecting, repairing, remaking, trade, mediation, and transportation of weapons and ammunition in the Republic of Serbia are regulated by the *Law on Weapons and Ammunition*. According to Article 4 of this Law, weapons are classified into four categories:

- 1) category A - mines and explosives, automatic short and long firearms, weapons hidden in other objects and firearms with a silencer;
- 2) category B - all firearms (short, long, semi-automatic, repeating, single-shot, double-barrelled, hinged and smooth barrels), except those from categories A and C and convertible weapons;
- 3) category C - disabled firearms, traditional weapons and their modern copies that do not use bullets with central or edge firing, air weapons whose kinetic energy is 10.5 J or higher or whose projectile speed is 200 m/s or higher, with a caliber greater than 4,5 mm, and weapons with a chord or spring having a string tensioning force greater than 450 N or a tensile weight exceeding 101 pounds;
- 4) category D - non-ballistic weapons, gas sprays, devices for causing electric shocks, air weapons whose kinetic energy is less than 10.5 J or the projectile speed is less than 200 m/s with a caliber of 4.5 mm or less, as well as weapons with a chord or spring whose tensile force is up to 450 N, or whose tensile weight is up to 101 pounds.

Furthermore, Article 5 defines that weapons from category A cannot be procured, kept, or carried by natural persons, legal entities, or entrepreneurs (except in cases provided by law), that weapons from category B are to be procured, held, and carried only on the basis of a relevant document from the competent authority, that weapons from category C can be freely procured with a report to the competent authority, and that weapons from category D can be procured and held without any necessary document from, or report to, the competent authority.

This law recognizes the link between the crime of domestic violence and possession of a firearm. Namely, according to Article 11 of the *Law on Weapons and Ammunition*, a sentence of imprisonment for the crime of domestic violence is one of the reasons for not issuing a permit for the acquisition and possession of category B firearms, which includes small arms such as pistols (the most commonly used firearms in cases of femicide in Serbia).

With regard to the acquisition and possession of hunting firearms, a person must submit proof that he/she meets the conditions for the possession of a hunting license, while a sporting weapon requires a certificate of active membership in a sports shooting organization.

One of the conditions that a person must meet in order to obtain a permit for the acquisition and possession of firearms is a certificate of medical fitness issued by the competent health institution, which must be renewed every five years. In the event of a change in health status that affects the person's ability to hold and carry weapons, the respective doctor is obliged to immediately inform the nearest organizational unit of the Ministry (Article 12 of the *Law on Weapons and Ammunition*).

If a natural person possesses at least 5 registered weapons from category B and has the spatial and technical conditions for safe storage and keeping of weapons (prescribed by the Minister), he/she may be issued a collector's permit for the acquisition of weapons that is valid permanently (Article 18 of the *Law on Weapons and Ammunition*).

Thus far, this report has addressed preventing violence against women and femicide. Starting here, a brief review of its prosecution and punishment will be presented. In the world, the criminal justice response to the gender-based murder of a woman (femicide) differs depending on the country of jurisdiction, but countries can be classified into three groups: the first, in which the largest number of countries (including the Republic of Serbia) are included, do not recognize femicide as a distinct criminal offense (it is not considered necessary to single out victims by sex and incriminate the murder of a woman as a special form of murder); the second, in which gender-based murder and gender motivation are taken into account as an aggravating circumstance when sentencing; and the third, in which femicide is defined as a distinct criminal offense (Konstantinović Vilić, Petrušić and Becker, 2019: 89–90).

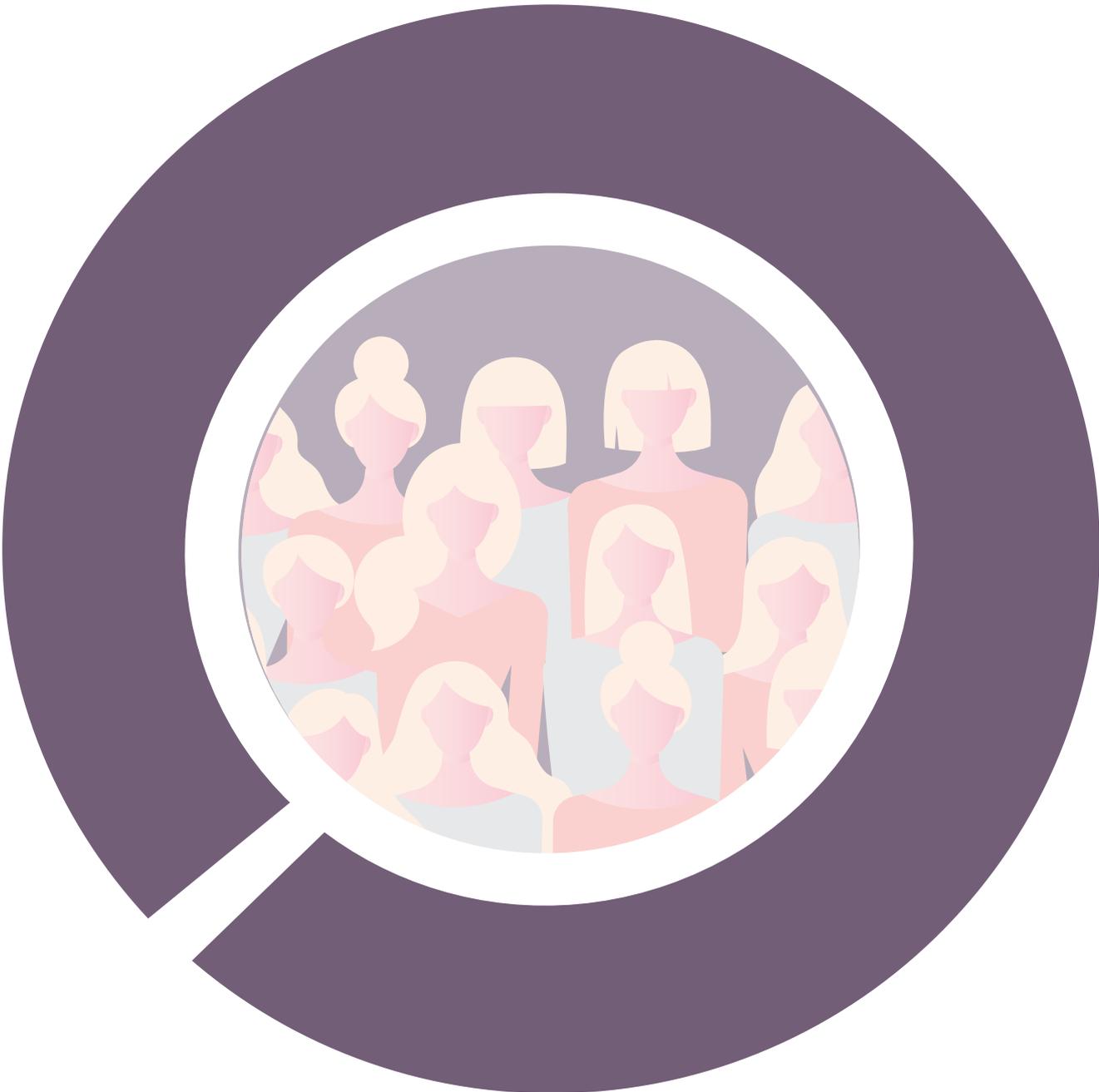
The *Criminal Code of the Republic of Serbia* defines various forms of murder, of which the following forms are significant in terms of the qualification and prosecution of femicide: the criminal offense of **murder** (Article 113), which, depending on the established circumstances, can also be regarded as **aggravated murder** (Article 114) – if found guilty, depending on the established circumstances, the perpetrator can be issued a sentence of at least 10 years in prison and a maximum of life imprisonment; the criminal offense of **inducing suicide and assisting in suicide** (Article 119), for which, depending on the established circumstances, sentences range from a minimum of 6 months to a maximum of 5 years in prison; and the criminal offense of **domestic violence resulting in the death of a family member** (Article 194, paragraph 4) for which, depending on the circumstances, it is possible to impose a sentence of 5 to 15 years in prison, while if the perpetrator is a minor, of at least 10 years in prison. It is important to note that during the period covered by this analysis, there was an earlier provision of the *Criminal Code of the Republic of Serbia* according to which the maximum sentence for the crime of aggravated murder was 40 years in prison.

Regarding the prosecution of murder in a family or partnership context, under current regulations it can be treated as aggravated murder of a family member if the victim was previously abused (Article 114, paragraph 1, item 10 of the Criminal Code) and categorized as an act of base motives (Article 114, paragraph 1, item 5 of the Criminal Code); the same applies to femicide, as the murder of a woman committed out of hatred towards women, where hatred based on misogynistic and sexist motives can be treated as a base motive (Konstantinović Vilić, Petrušić and Beker, 2019: 97) .

The problem of femicide was first prioritized on the international political agenda at the highest level when, in 2013, the UN General Assembly adopted *Resolution 68/191 - Taking action against gender-related killings of women and girls*. This resolution expresses concern over the various manifestations of the murder of women and girls and the impunity of this crime, and calls on the Member States to prevent and investigate these crimes and their impunity with due diligence. The UN Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women on the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women on November 25, 2015 called on states to establish "Femicide watch," i.e., a supervisory body to monitor femicide (UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women, 2015). Data on femicide are an important indicator of the lack of success in eradicating violence against women. The call to action emphasized that in collecting, analysing, and publishing such data, states should cooperate with non-governmental organizations and independent institutions working in the field, representatives of victims, and other relevant international organizations and stakeholders. This call was repeated in 2016, when it was emphasized that genocidal killings of women and girls (femicide) represent a widespread and persistent violation of human rights, as well as signify the lack of implementation of global and regional instruments to protect women from violence and shortcomings both in national legislation and in prevention systems, often accompanied by a tolerance of violence against women, all of which often occurs due to a lack of reliable data (UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women, 2016). The call was repeated once again in 2020, noting that reliable data on violence against women and femicide were lacking in "normal" times, and that in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, their collection has been made ever more difficult due to quarantine measures. States were called on to establish or improve the work of existing femicide observatories, conduct research and studies on femicide, and collect data on the total number of murders of men and women from 2018 through 2020, classifying them into three categories: 1) total number of murders by intimate partners (both for men and women, disaggregated by sex of victim and perpetrator); 2) murders by other family members (both for men and women, disaggregated by sex and the victim-perpetrator relationship); and 3) other gender-based murders of women or murders of women with sexual motives (women only) (UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women, 2020). One of the global initiatives for a more comprehensive determination of the prevalence, forms and characteristics of femicides is the Femicide Watch platform.⁷ It is aimed at collecting key information on femicide (definitions, data, statistics), developing an interactive knowledge base on good practices in several areas (data collection, legislation, competencies), monitoring current national and regional data, and enabling direct access to experts dealing with this topic.

⁷The platform was founded in 2017 as a joint project by the UN Studies Association (UNSA) Global Network and UNSA Vienna's Femicide Team. Details: <http://femicide-watch.org/content/about-us#overlay-con> text (accessed on 2.2.2021).

3. METHODOLOGY



The source and subject of the research carried out for the purposes of this study were media reports on cases of femicide committed with firearms in the territory of the Republic of Serbia in a three-year period (June 2017 - June 2020).

The aim of the research was to determine the prevalence, and describe in more detail the characteristics of femicide committed with firearms in the territory of the Republic of Serbia in a three-year period (which coincides with the beginning of the implementation of the *Law on the Prevention of Domestic Violence*) and to generate guidelines for solving this problem.

The timeframe of the research (covering the period from June 2017 to June 2020) was chosen as June 2017 marked the beginning of the implementation of the *Law on the Prevention of Domestic Violence* and the three-year period would provide a suitable, and contemporarily relevant, duration to monitor its implementation and its impact on the prevention and combating of violence against women and its most extreme form - femicide.

The research process comprised:

- 1) the development of a research matrix and a list of monitoring indicators,
- 2) a review of the three years of media press clippings on violence against women and women's rights in general (June 2017 - June 2020) and selection of articles on cases of femicide committed with firearms,
- 3) surveying media articles on cases of femicide with firearms and the resultant data entry and processing,
- 4) the discussion and interpretation of the results and the writing of the (analytical) report.

The research matrix consisted of indicators that included:

- a) data on each victim and perpetrator - the relationship between each victim and perpetrator, and the age, occupation, and other (identified through research) relevant data related to each victim and perpetrator;
- b) data on each case - the place and time of the femicide, data on the femicide being followed by the murders or suicides of other people, data on the type, legality, availability, and ownership of weapons involved in the act, data on the criminal behaviour of the perpetrator, history of violence, and the presence of other risk factors; data on institutional actions taken and sentences imposed.

These indicators were selected to determine whether and in what way the mandatory risk assessment and risk indicators defined by the *Law on the Prevention of Domestic Violence* have impacted the prevention of violence against women and its most brutal outcome - femicide - since its entry into legal force on June 1, 2017. In addition to the indicators listed in this law, other indicators and indicators defined by the *Special Protocols* on the Conduct of Police and Health Workers in Cases of Violence against Women in the Family and Partnership Context (listed in Chapter 2) were also considered. Accordingly, the following were investigated: whether and to what extent these indicators were

present in the considered cases of femicide in Serbia, whether and to what extent they were recognized by the competent institutions and those in the victim's environment, and whether and what was done to minimize and completely eliminate them.

After reviewing the media content published in the observed three-year period, 59,937 media articles⁸ on violence against women and women's rights in general were recorded. From this lot, 472 media articles on cases of femicide with firearms (comprising 178 PDF documents and 617 pages) were selected from a total of 79 print media, electronic media, and internet media portals. In addition to these articles, 720 media articles (comprising 233 PDF documents and 924 pages) related to attempts at femicide with firearms and domestic violence against women with the threat of firearms or the misuse of firearms were separated and reviewed.

The data were then entered and processed in the program for statistical processing and analysis of data SPSS (The Statistical Package for the Social Science 25.0), after which quantitative-qualitative methods (classifications, comparisons, and descriptions), as well as the inductive and deductive method, were applied to enable the writing of the analytical report.

The limitations of the research are largely due to issues with the data itself. The data collected from the media reports are sometimes contradictory. Additionally, some of the data intended for collection could not be collected because the media articles did not contain them (for example, there is no data on whether the victims or family members possessed firearms). Finally, some of the data were not explicitly stated, but could be indirectly inferred, yet such data are subject to different interpretations.

Regarding the identified cases of femicide with firearms and other types of domestic violence in which firearms were used or involving the threat with firearms, another limitation present is the variable attention given to individual cases, with some cases represented by a large number of media articles and others by only a small number of them. Thus, for certain individual cases of femicide, there were only a few articles, while for cases of attempted femicide in which the perpetrator is associated with criminal groups, there is a very large number of articles.

Furthermore, for cases that have occurred only recently, it has not been possible to collect data on the epilogue (judgments, sentences, prosecutions) as court proceedings had just begun or were ongoing at the time of the writing of this report. In addition, in only a small number of cases did the media report on the epilogues of the cases (verdicts, sentences, etc.).

⁸ In total, 4698 PDF documents and 81,912 pages.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION



An overview of the results and discussion divided by topic is provided here:

4.1. Prevalence

4.2. General data on femicide in Serbia

4.3. Data on the perpetrators and victims of femicide in Serbia

4.4. Data on type of firearm used to commit femicide in Serbia

4.5. History of violence and risk factors for femicide

4.6. Epilogues of femicide cases in Serbia

4.7. Discussion of results

4.1. PREVALENCE

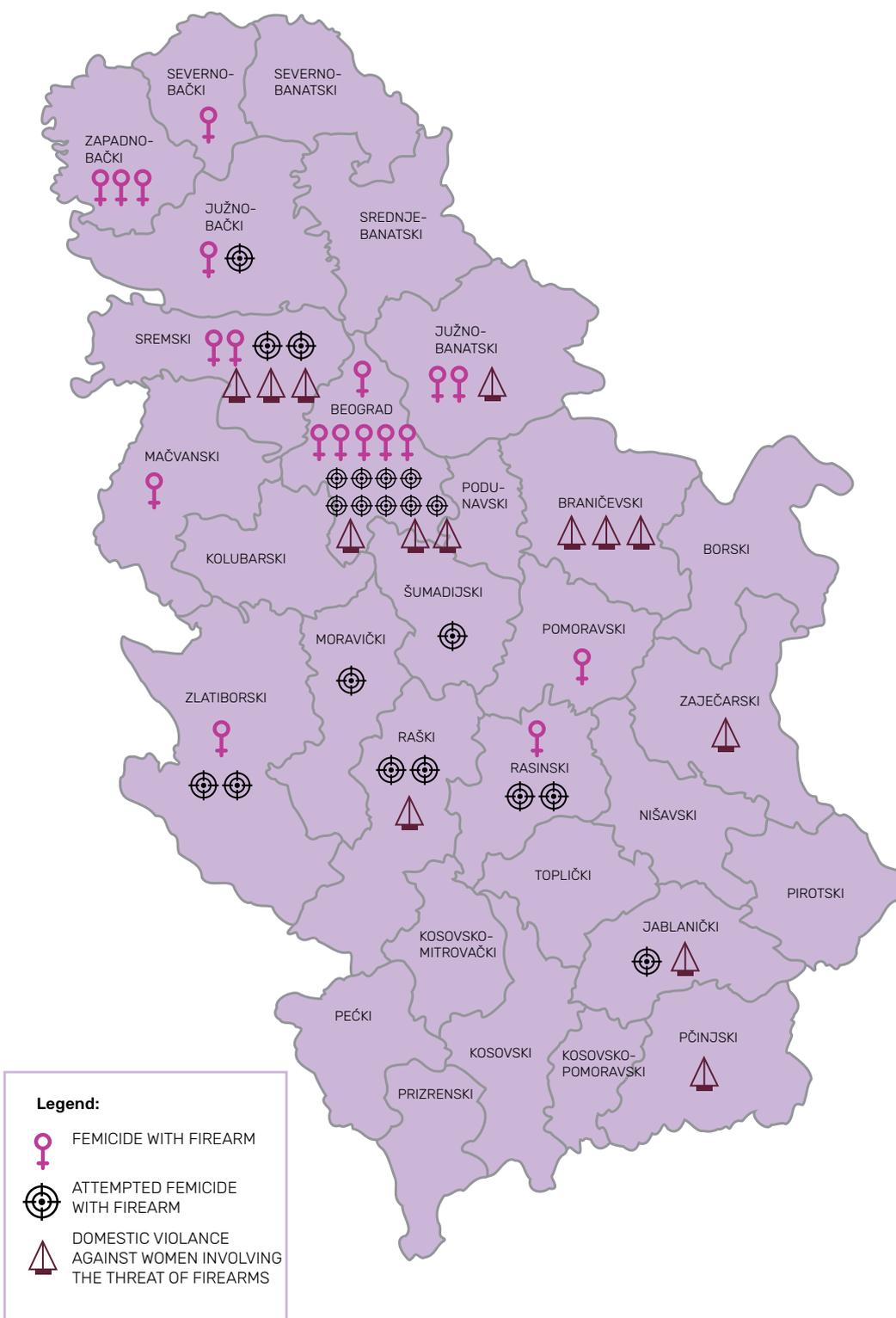
In the reviewed media articles in the observed period, a total of **52 cases of domestic violence against women with the misuse of firearms were identified (either with a fatal outcome, without a fatal outcome, or firearms misused for threats)**; a more detailed overview is given in Table 1. In addition, 6 more cases of violence against women with the use of firearms were found (3 with a fatal outcome and 3 without a fatal outcome), but they could not be classified as femicide or attempted femicide due to the lack of one or more types of key categorization data (for example, the identity of the perpetrator, his/her gender, the number of femicides, the motive) and thus will not be discussed in any further detail.

Table 1. Type of violence committed involving firearms (June 2017 – June 2020)

Type of Violence	No.	%
Femicide with firearm	19	36.5
Attempted femicide with firearm	19	36.5
Cases of domestic violence involving the misuse of a firearm	14	27
Total:	52	100

The following image presents these cases by district on the map of the Republic of Serbia.

Map 1. Cases of femicide, attempted femicide, and domestic violence against women involving firearms by district (June 2017 - June 2020)



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

Map 1 and the cases it presents provide a more comprehensive picture of the territorial distribution, severity, and danger of violence against women with the misuse of firearms. These data imply that the greatest danger of violence against women with the threat of firearms (with or without a fatal outcome) exists in the City of Belgrade, which is parallel with a large part of the population of the Republic of Serbia living in Belgrade. In addition, it can be seen that violence with the threat of firearms (with or without death) is more present in Vojvodina and in the west of central Serbia, as well as in the regions territorially closer to Belgrade, than in other parts of the country, though these areas are also more densely populated than other parts of Serbia. Any conclusions should here be taken with caution as there is also a possibility that the media in these areas are more sensitized or expansive and/or that in parts of Serbia closer to Belgrade it is easier to get information because the headquarters of most large and national media are in Belgrade.

Table 2. The share of femicides with firearms in the total number of femicides (June 2017 - June 2020)

	By other means		With firearm		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Femicides June 2017 - June 2018	25	75.8	8	24.2	33	100
Femicides June 2018 - June 2019	17	81	4	19	21	100
Femicides June 2019 - June 2020	23	76.7	7	23.3	30	100
Total:	65	77.4	19	22.6	84	100

In the period from June 2017 to June 2020, a total of 84 femicides were recorded by a partner or family member, with approximately **one in five committed with a firearm**. At the annual level, this number was slightly higher during the first year under review (June 2017 - June 2018, almost a quarter of cases), while in other reporting years it was nearly uniform and accounted for one-fifth of the total number (Table 2).

Before the results concerning cases of femicide with firearms are presented in more detail, key observations concerning attempted femicides and threats with the use of firearms will be considered (bearing in mind the limited amount of data on these cases).

Most attempts of femicide with the use of firearms **were committed in a partnership context**: sixteen women were killed by a former or then current, marital, or extramarital partner, while in two cases the perpetrator was a son and in another the father-in-law. Leaving a perpetrator or divorce from a perpetrator is confirmed as a risk factor in a partner context, and in most examined cases the perpetrator committed suicide or attempted suicide after an attempt to kill a woman (in cases where there is information about it). The most common means of execution is a gun (twelve cases), followed by a rifle (in four cases), unspecified firearms (in two cases), and a bomb (in one case). The media usually did not report whether the weapon was in legal or illegal possession.

Examination of these cases leads to the conclusions below, with representative cases included as examples.

Relevant institutions failed to respond adequately and in a timely manner to reports of violence in order to stop and prevent the escalation of violence.

Attempted femicide with a firearm, 28.2.2018. (Zemun Polje): *The perpetrator fired a gun at his ex-partner at her workplace, and then at himself. He had been banned from approaching, but he continued to harass and persecute the victim, about which she had informed the police. The perpetrator was only warned, and the consequences of this injury for the victim are dependent living in a wheelchair, left to attempt to collect money to go abroad for surgery.*⁹

A perpetrator's association with criminal groups allows him easier access to firearms, increases the risk of violence (in the family), and reduces the victim's capacity to escape violence.

Attempted femicide with a firearm, 10.6.2019. (Novi Beograd): *The perpetrator fired several shots from a gun at his wife, and then at himself, in the parking lot in front of a building, in the presence of their baby and passers-by. The victim had left him some time ago and reported him for violence. On that occasion, he was issued an urgent restraining order, which, as it is stated, he respected until its expiration in April. The victim's friend testified about the victim's fear for her own life in the media, stating that she had suffered violence before, but that she was afraid to report it. It was also documented that they lived in a house surrounded by high walls, under constant video surveillance, and that the perpetrator's father had long been known to the police for possession of illegal weapons, extortion of money, and connections with criminal circles. The media also reported that the perpetrator had killed one man and the man's mother and aunt based on material debts. He was allegedly helped to cover up the crime by a friend who "failed a polygraph," but all this was later denied.*

Regarding threats carried out with firearms, most cases were also committed in a partnership context (twelve out of fourteen). Among the perpetrators were a police officer, a mayor, and a priest. In these cases, the media explicitly mentioned the perpetrator's occupation, indicative of the perpetrator's position of relative power and access to firearms, which contributes to an increased risk of death when women are abused. When it comes to the means of the threats, a rifle was most common, alongside the type of firearm not having been specified (five cases each), in two cases a pistol was used, and in two cases a bomb.

Cases in which perpetrators threatened women with firearms demonstrate that entire families and communities suffer from this problem, and that weapons pose a danger to both women and the wider community.

⁹The descriptions of the reconstruction of all representative cases were made by combining relevant information from all the collected media articles about them.

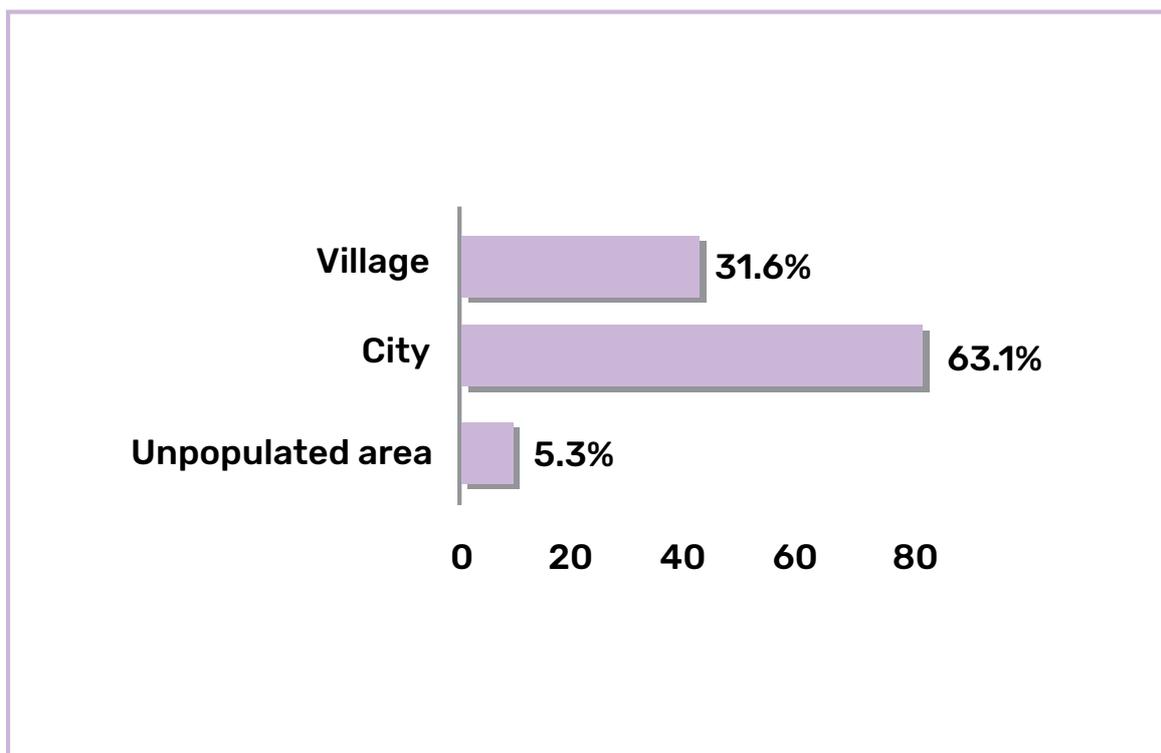
Threat with a firearm, 24.7.2017. (Novi Pazar): *Already known to the wider community for having beaten women, the perpetrator, after beating a woman, held the whole family hostage for hours and threatened to blow them up with a bomb, then surrendered. According to the media, the police seized from this perpetrator: a rifle with a telescopic mount (sniper), two pistols, several knives, dozens of pieces of ammunition of various calibres, a communications radio, and a gas mask.*

Threat with a firearm, 18.11.2019. (borough of Braće Jerkovića, Belgrade): *The policeman barricaded himself in the apartment, threatened his wife with an official firearm, and when she managed to leave, he threatened to kill himself and anyone who tried to approach him. The entire building and the settlement were witnesses and hostages of this violence, and the media broadcast police negotiations lasting for hours before the perpetrator surrendered. According to the media, the trigger had been a request for divorce which had been filed by the victim.*

4.2. GENERAL DATA ON FEMICIDE IN SERBIA

In the observed period, **femicides with firearms** were committed in the following nineteen **locations**: Bačko Petrovo Selo, Erdevik, Jagodina, Karaburma (Belgrade), Karavukovo near Odžaci, Kotež (Belgrade), Kruševac, Kula, New Belgrade, Ostružnica (Belgrade), Pančevo, Požega, the roadway between Batajnica and Stara Pazova, Sombor, Stojnik near Sopot, Subotica, Svilueva near Koceljeva, Zagajica near Vršac, and Zemun Polje.

Graph 1. Location of execution of femicide with a firearm by type of settlement (June 2017 - June 2020)



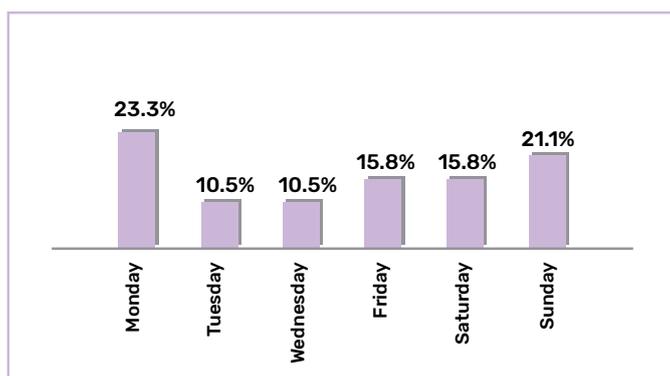
As can be seen in Graph 1, two thirds of femicide cases were committed in the city, almost every third in a village, and only every twentieth in an unpopulated area.

Table 3. Femicide with firearm by month of execution (June 2017 - June 2020)

Month of Execution	No.	%
January	2	10.5
February	1	5.3
April	3	15.8
May	1	5.3
June	2	10.5
July	3	15.8
August	1	5.3
September	3	15.8
November	2	10.5
December	1	5.3
Total:	19	100%

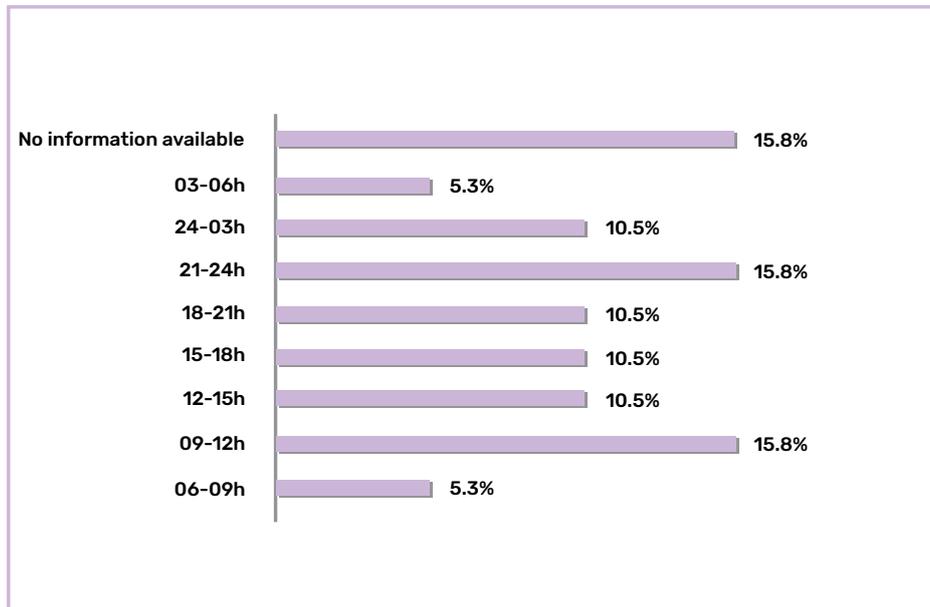
A breakdown of execution by month (Table 3) shows that femicides occur to a similar extent during different calendar months and seasons. The highest number of femicides with firearms in one month was 3 (recorded in April, July, and September), while in March and October no femicides with firearms were recorded (during the observed period).

Graph 2. Femicide with firearm by day of execution (June 2017 - June 2020)



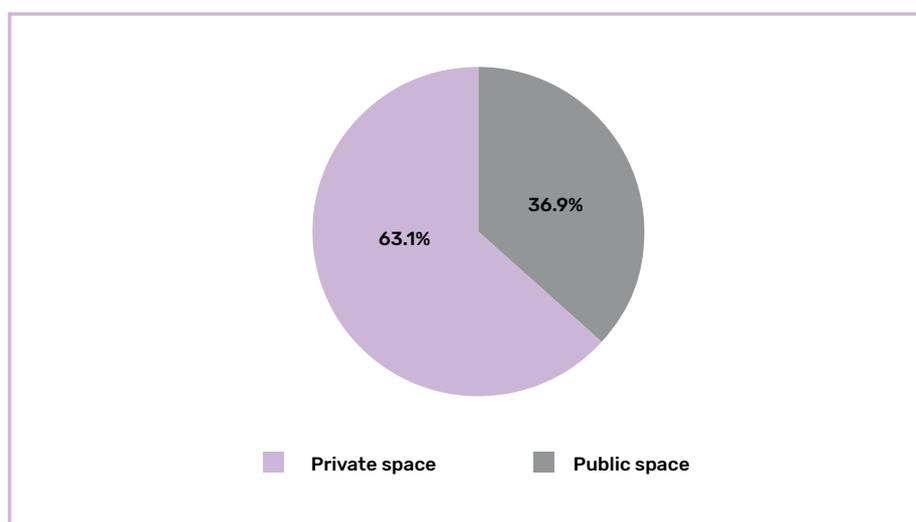
A breakdown of **femicide execution by day** shows that Monday (in every fourth case) is foremost, then Sunday (in every fifth case). On average, every sixth case happened on Friday or Saturday, and every tenth on Tuesday or Wednesday. No femicides with firearm were reported on Thursday. From the graph above, it can be concluded that femicide with a firearm most often occurred on Mondays and Sundays, and during weekends, which could suggest that during the weekend, the days of rest and following the days of rest (during which perpetrators of violence are more often at home), domestic violence against women, especially in the form of femicides with firearms, is more likely to occur.

Graph 3. Femicide with firearm by time of day of execution (June 2017 - June 2020)



Regarding the **time of day of the execution of femicide with firearms**, it should be emphasized that for some cases the time of execution is precisely stated, for some it is given approximately (for example, between three and five o'clock in the morning), and for some cases no such data is available (for example, in cases where the victim died several days after the perpetrator shot her). Every sixth femicide was committed between either 9 and 12 o'clock in the morning or between 21 and 24 o'clock in the evening; in the same number of cases there is no data on the execution time. Every tenth femicide occurred between 12 and 15 o'clock, 15 to 18 o'clock, 18 to 21 o'clock, or between midnight and three in the morning. Every twentieth case was committed between 6 and 9 a.m. or 3 and 6 a.m.

Graph 4. Place of execution of femicide with firearm by level of privacy (June 2017 - June 2020)



Almost two thirds of the recorded femicides were committed in a **private setting** (most often the space where the victim lives with the perpetrator, his/her apartment/house or the apartment/house of his/her primary family). Every third recorded case of femicide was committed in a **public setting** (these include: in a car, on the street, at the entrance to the building where the victim lived, in a cafe in the city centre, on the road, and at the school where the victim worked). That femicides were witnessed in public places by colleagues and friends, passers-by, and in some cases (minor) children, underscores the wider impacts of this social problem, which not only represents a direct threat to the safety of the entire community, but also implies likely mental trauma and other repercussions in the wider community.

No case in the observed period escalated into mass murder, though the risk for such escalation is clear and has been widely noted.

In two cases, the femicide was followed by the murder of other persons (in one case it was the victim's brother, and in the other her new partner).

In two cases, the **perpetrator either tried to kill or threatened to kill other people**. In the first case, it was the mother and sister of the victim, who found themselves in the room while the perpetrator was shooting and who when trying to stop him were shot at as well. In the second case, these were the son and daughter of the perpetrator and the victim. The media reported that the son stood between his father and mother and tried to prevent her murder, and that his father put a gun to his temple.

The example below illustrates how femicide with firearm can be fatal to other people and be a threat to the safety of the entire community.

Femicide with firearm 14.9.2019. (Kruševac): *The victim (accompanied by her brother) and the perpetrator, were sitting in a cafe in the city centre. According to the media, his wife (the victim) had left him a month or two before that, returned to her primary family and decided to initiate divorce proceedings. The woman asked her brother to go with her to talk to the perpetrator. After she refused to return to him, the perpetrator pulled out a gun and, in front of the reportedly full cafe, shot at the woman, and then at her brother. The guests of the cafe ran away and called the police. In the meantime, the perpetrator fled through the entire city armed, and then got into a car and tried to return to Lazarevac, where he was from. When he realized that the police patrol was following him, he tried to escape, and in that attempt he caused a collision on the highway. He then jumped the highway fence and committed suicide in a nearby forest.*

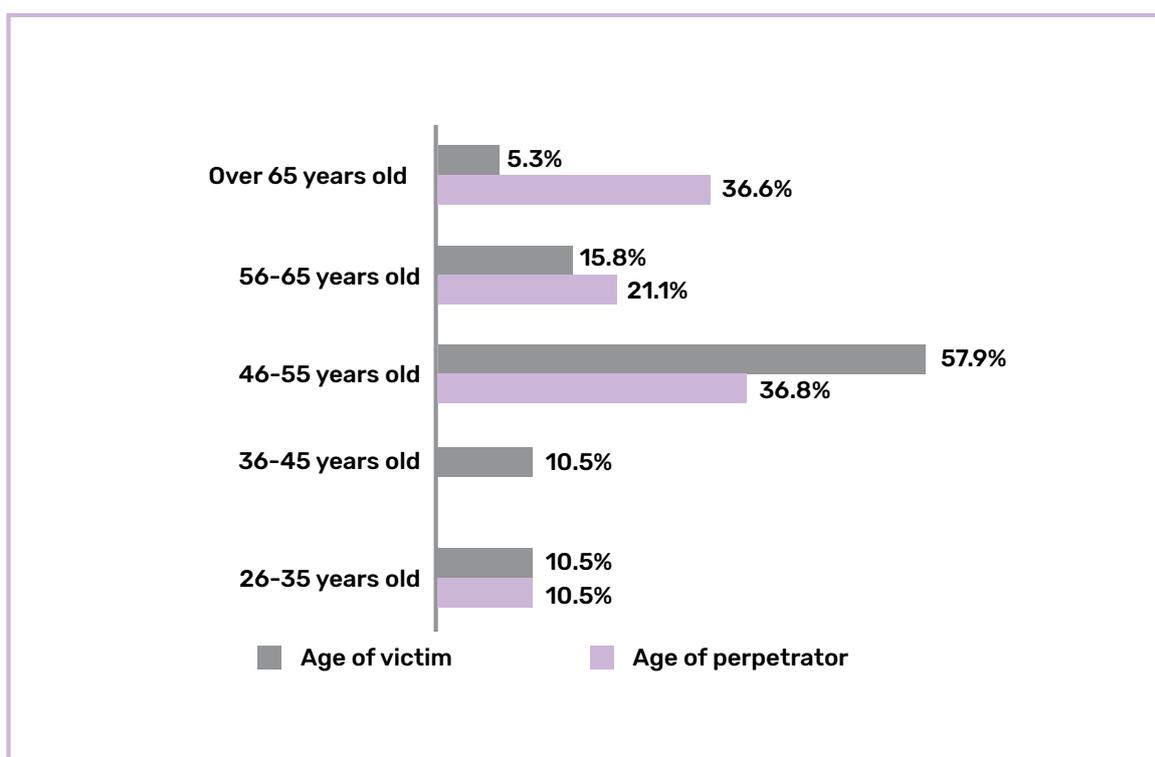
The woman died on the spot, and her brother a few days later. There is no information in the media reports on whether or how many people were injured and/or killed in the traffic accident caused by the perpetrator.

4.3. DATA ON THE PERPETRATORS AND VICTIMS OF FEMICIDES IN SERBIA

More than half of the **women killed** were between the **ages** of 46 and 55. Every sixth woman killed was between 56 and 65 years old, and every tenth between 26 and 35 years or 36 and 45 years old. The lowest percentage of victims was in the age category over 65 (every twentieth). The youngest victim was 28 years old, and the oldest was 78 years old. The average age of the victims was 50 years.

From this data, women aged 46 to 55 appear to be at a far higher risk of femicide with firearms than women from other age groups. The results presented in Graph 5 below show that cases of femicide with firearms were rarest among women over 65, suggesting that they are less likely to be killed with firearms, but this does not rule out the possibility that perpetrators of femicide in this age category may have simply chosen other means to commit murder.

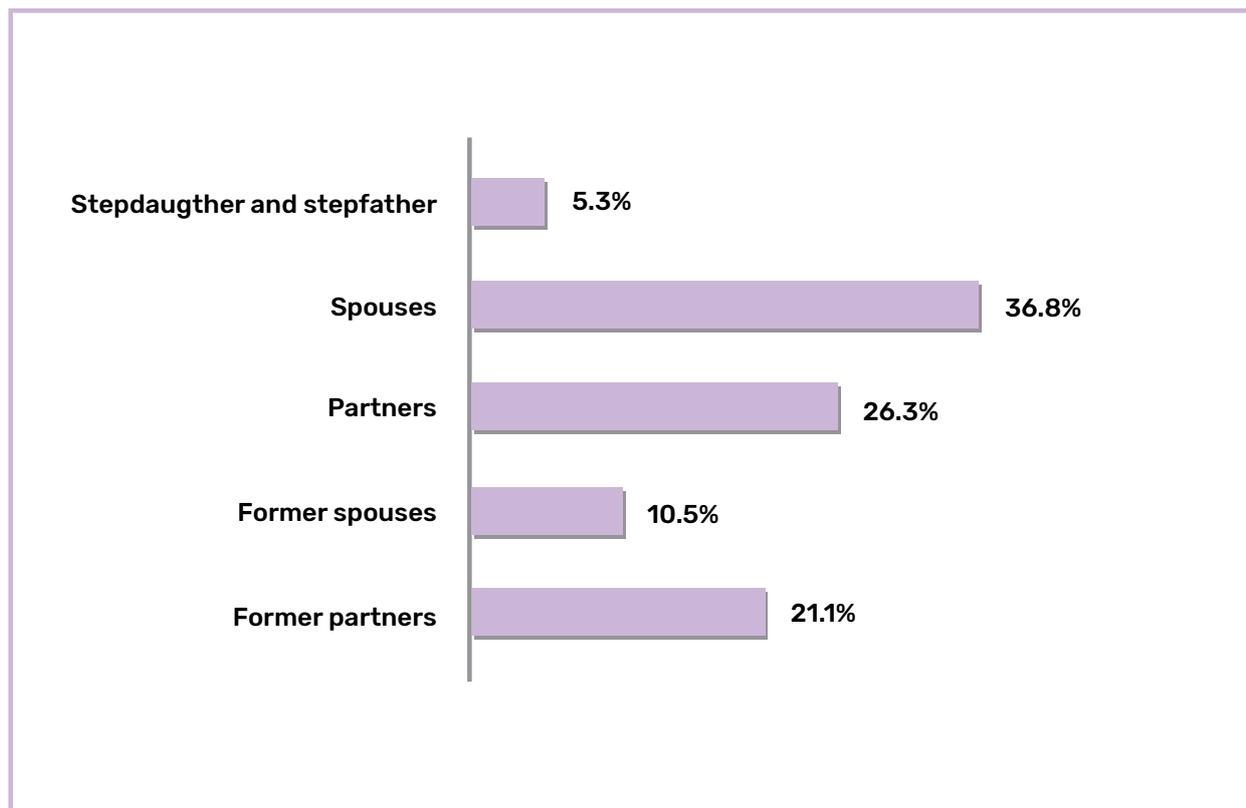
Graph 5. Victims and perpetrators of femicide with firearm by age (June 2017 - June 2020)



Graph 5 shows that about every third perpetrator was between the ages of 46 and 55, and almost as many were over the age of 65. Every fifth perpetrator was between 56 and 65 years old, and every tenth between 26 and 35 years old. There was no perpetrator in the age group between 36 and 45. The youngest perpetrator was 31 years old, and the oldest was 84 years old. The average age of the perpetrator was 58 years. It is notable that the perpetrators were most often men aged 46 to 55, followed closely by those older than 65.

While the media did not provide precise information on the education and occupation of each perpetrator, in most cases they did indicate what the perpetrator does and the breakdown of their professions is: private entrepreneur - cafe, bag production, construction, plastic production (6), pensioner (3), no data (3), security - field guard and a gamekeeper (2), a traffic policeman and gendarmerie (2), a speech therapist and pedagogue (1), a postmaster (1) and a lawyer (1).

Graph 6. Relationship between the victims and perpetrators of femicide with firearm (June 2017 - June 2020)

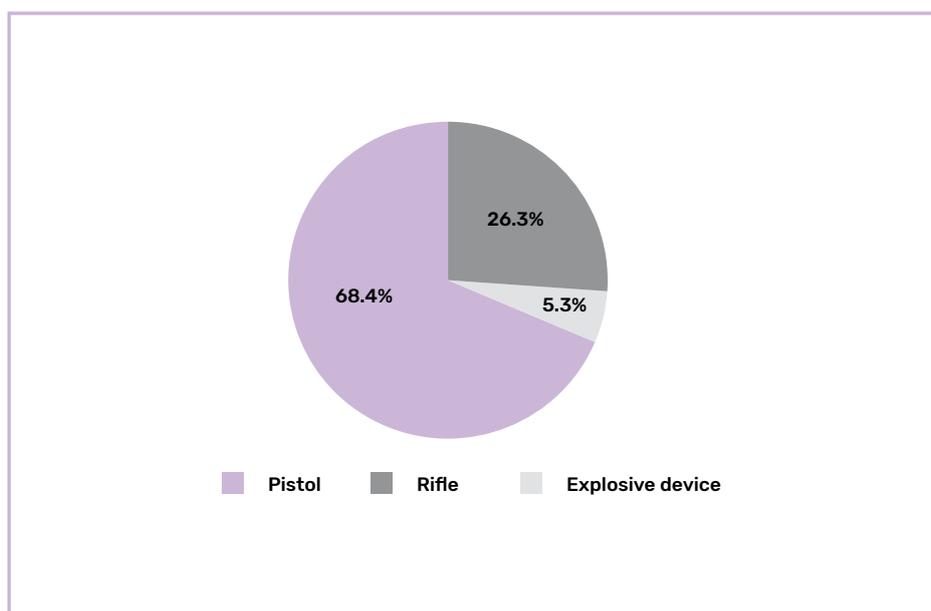


Data on the **relationship between the victims and perpetrators** shows that in every tenth case those involved were ex-spouses, and in every fifth case ex-partners. Every fourth woman was killed by a partner, while the largest number of women were killed by their husband (on average, every third). Only one woman was killed outside the partner relationship context - by her stepfather. In general, these statistics, as well as the statistics of attempted femicide and firearms threats, indicate that women are at a much higher risk of being victims of femicide with firearm committed by a partner/spouse than by other family members.

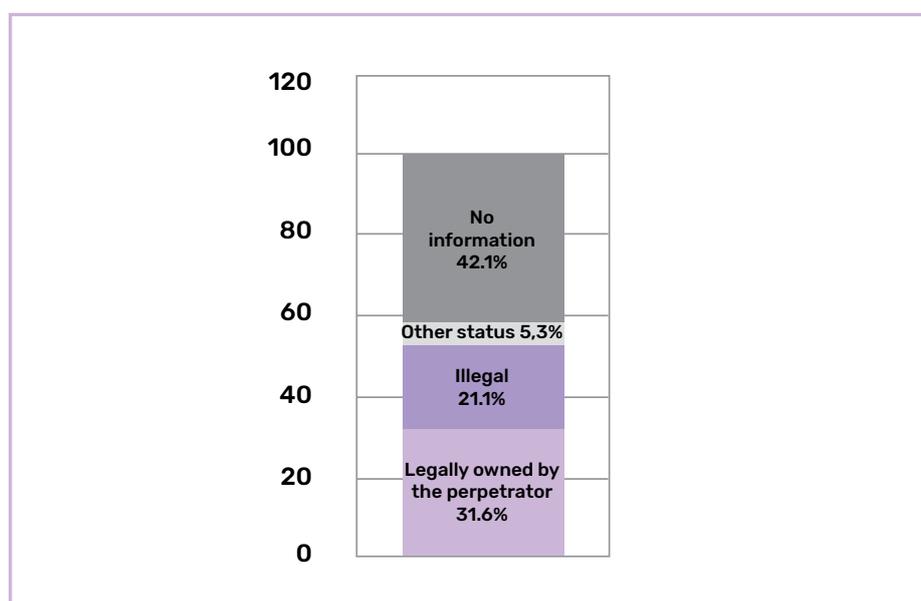
4.4. DATA ON TYPE OF FIREARM USED TO COMMIT FEMICIDE IN SERBIA

Regarding the type of weapon used to commit femicide in Serbia, it is obvious that the perpetrators most often chose a pistol as the means of execution - 7 out of every 10 cases. A rifle was used in every fourth case, while an explosive device (bomb) was used in every twentieth.

Graph 7. Femicide with firearm by type of weapon (June 2017 - June 2020)



Graph 8. Femicide with firearm according to firearm ownership status (June 2017 - June 2020)



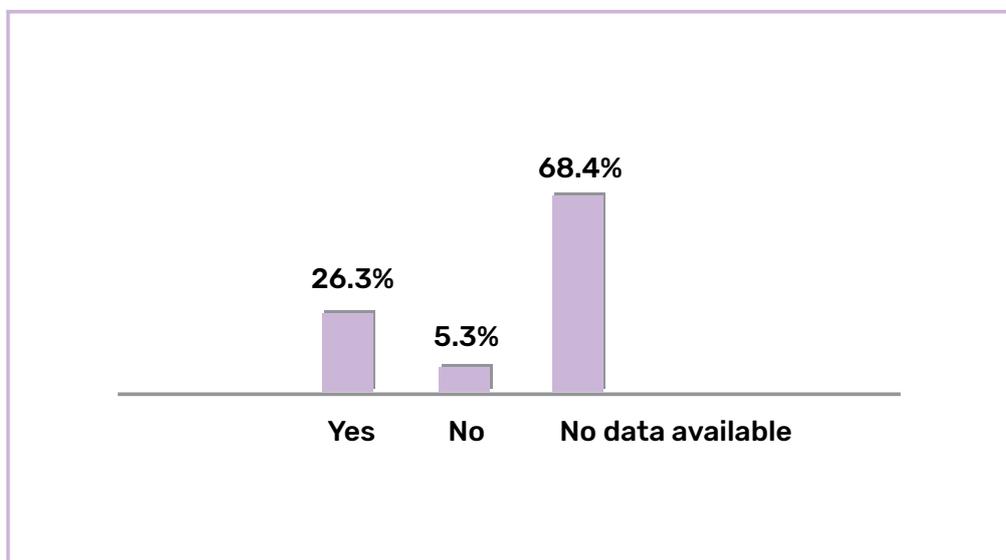
The results of the analysis according to the **ownership status of the weapon** with which the femicide was committed, show that for a large number of cases there was no data available (42.1%). Almost a third of the firearms were legally owned by the perpetrator, while every fifth firearm was illegally possessed. In one case, the gun with which the perpetrator killed the victim was an official, i.e., state pistol, the perpetrator being a traffic policeman.

In nearly all cases (94.7%), there was no data on whether the perpetrator's family owned a weapon. Only in one case (5.3%) did the perpetrator's brother tell the media that he did not know where his gun had come from since to his knowledge no one in their family possessed such a weapon.

In not a single case was information documented on whether **the perpetrator had previously misused a weapon**.

In almost 90% of cases, there was no information on whether the perpetrator had previously threatened the victim with a weapon. For only two cases (10%) did the media report that the perpetrator had previously threatened the victim with a weapon (in one case, it was indicated that the perpetrator was a hunter who legally possessed a weapon, and in the other a traffic policeman).

Graph 9. Femicide with firearm according to the neighbours' knowledge of perpetrator possessing a firearm (June 2017 - June 2020)



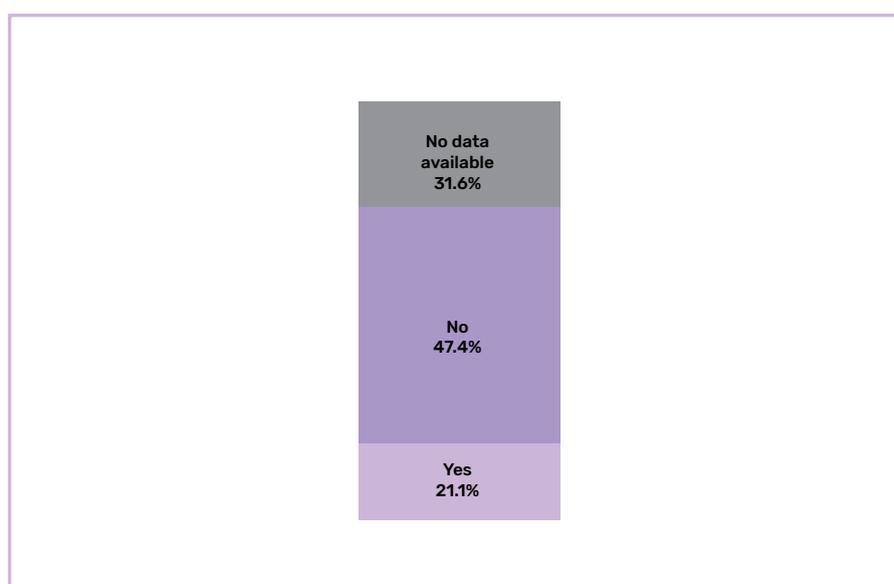
Based on the surveyed media, in every fourth case at least one of the **neighbours had known that the perpetrator possessed a firearm**. Some perpetrators were passionate hunters, went to competitions, and were known in their communities for this hobby. It should be noted that in two cases, in addition to hunting as a hobby, the perpetrators also had access to official weapons because they were guards. These two perpetrators were police officers, which means that they had access to and carried official firearms, and they were trained in their use. Neighbours almost surely had knowledge

in these occasions because such professions imply carrying and using firearms. Only in every twentieth case was it reported directly that the neighbours were unaware of the perpetrator possessing a weapon, while most often such data was not documented - in 68.4% of cases.

4.5. HISTORY OF VIOLENCE AND RISK FACTORS FOR FEMICIDE

Regarding the **perpetrators' criminal past**, in two thirds of cases the media was not found to have reported on whether the perpetrator had been previously convicted of a criminal act. While no information on whether perpetrators had been reported, prosecuted, or punished could be found, in a quarter of cases there was information on the perpetrator's behaviour that could be qualified as illegal: in one case it was stated that the perpetrator abused his official position and was suspended from work; in one case, the perpetrator allegedly caused a car accident a month before the murder; in one case the perpetrator was associated with the semi-legal resale of mixed goods and fruits; in one case, the media reported that the perpetrator had long ago been linked to robbery, but that it had never been reported, prosecuted, or proven, and that the perpetrator had relatives in important political positions; in one case, the media reported that the perpetrator's private factory had made unbearable noise, that the neighbours had made complaints without his responding, and that labour inspection had often visited.

Graph 10. Femicide with firearm according to the perpetrator's history of domestic violence (June 2017 - June 2020)



Analysis of data on the **history of domestic violence by the perpetrator** indicates that a fifth of perpetrators, according to media reports, had been reported to the

competent institutions. For almost a third of cases, data could not be found, while for almost half of the cases (47.4%) the media stated that no previous reports had been filed. It is important to emphasize that in some cases neighbours testified that they could often hear “quarrels” or “noise” between the perpetrator and the victim from their place of residence or that they thought the perpetrator had gone “over the line,” but they had not been sure or not perceived it as domestic violence. In such cases, neither the victim, family members, nor knowledgeable persons had submitted reports to the competent institutions.

Femicide with firearm 3.8.2018. (Jagodina): *The media point out that neighbours testified that the perpetrator was never reported for domestic violence, but that clamour could often be heard from their apartment, yet they did not know whether it was “arguing or having fun.”*

According to media reports, the **competent institutions** had acted on **reports of violence filed against the perpetrators** in four cases. The following are synopses of the institutional responses to the reports that preceded each of the four femicides with firearms.

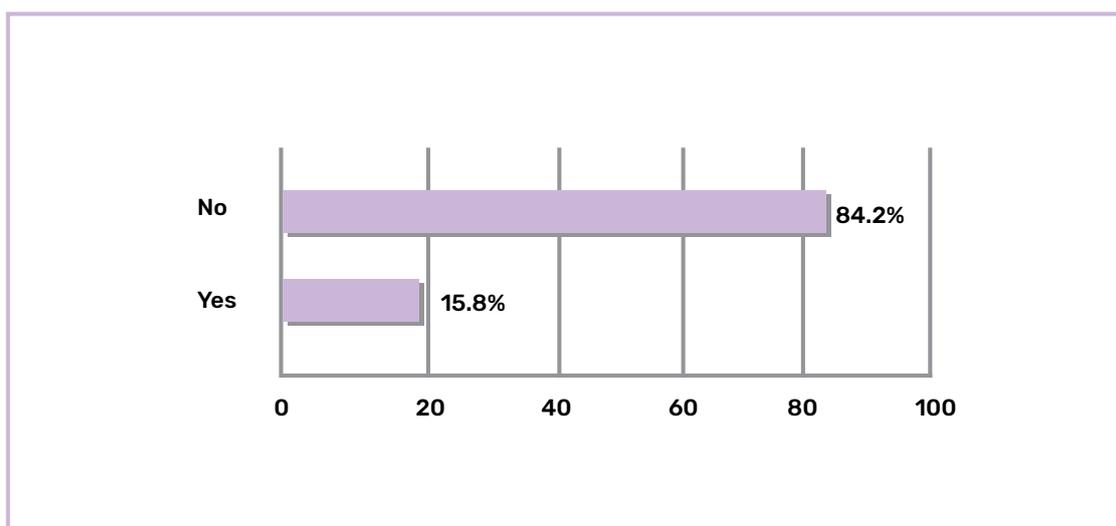
Femicide with firearm 6.11.2017. (Stojnik near Sopot): *The victim had reported the perpetrator to the police for violent behaviour and harassment (about a month before the murder). On that occasion, the police had taken the perpetrator’s statement and he had been warned that his firearm (which he legally possessed as a passionate hunter) would be confiscated if he was reported again. After the murder of the victim, the perpetrator’s brother gave statements in the media that the report was “false”, which they had managed to “prove.” There is no other data on the institutional response or as to whether the police exchanged information with other services.*

Femicide with firearm 3.12.2017. (Zemun Polje): *The media reported that the victim had reported the perpetrator several times, who was a traffic policeman, and complained that he was harassing and beating her. She first reported him in 2014 for endangering her security, but he promised to stop abusing her, so she withdrew the report. She reported him for the second time in January 2017 (approximately 10-11 months before he killed her) because he had threatened to kill her. On that occasion, the police took statements from the victim and the perpetrator. The perpetrator denied the victim’s claims and gave the name of a witness who could confirm that. The Basic Public Prosecutor’s Office called on the perpetrator to plead to the report in May 2017, and he responded in October of that year, while the victim was intended to be questioned only at the beginning of 2018, which she never did because the perpetrator murdered her in December 2017 (with a service weapon). Although the media alleged that the perpetrator had been suspended from work several times (allegedly due to abuse of office and other acts - it was not specified which ones), there is no information on whether this happened, nor details of the last reports of death threats to the victim, nor as to why his official weapon had not been confiscated. The articles noted that the victim and the perpetrator had also been involved in legal disputes regarding her house as he had claimed that he had helped her financially in the construction, but no more detailed information about this could be found. The media stated that the perpetrator was also violent towards his legal wife.*

Femicide with firearm, 23.9.2019. (Kotež): *There were no reports of domestic violence against the perpetrator by the victim, but information could be found in the media that a previous female partner had reported him for domestic violence. There is no more detailed information on the institutional response in this regard. He did not have a weapon in legal possession, nor did family members possess one, and it was believed that he had acquired the gun illegally in order to kill the victim.*

Femicide with firearm, 13.1.2020. (Karavukovo): *Media reports mentioned that from the beginning of the marital union "everything was not as it should be" and that the perpetrator had mentally and physically abused the woman, which she had suffered because of the children. On one occasion, she reported him for domestic violence, but no information on the outcome of that report could be found. The firearm with which he killed the victim was illegally procured.*

Graph 11. Femicide with firearm committed in the presence of minor children (June 2017 - June 2020)



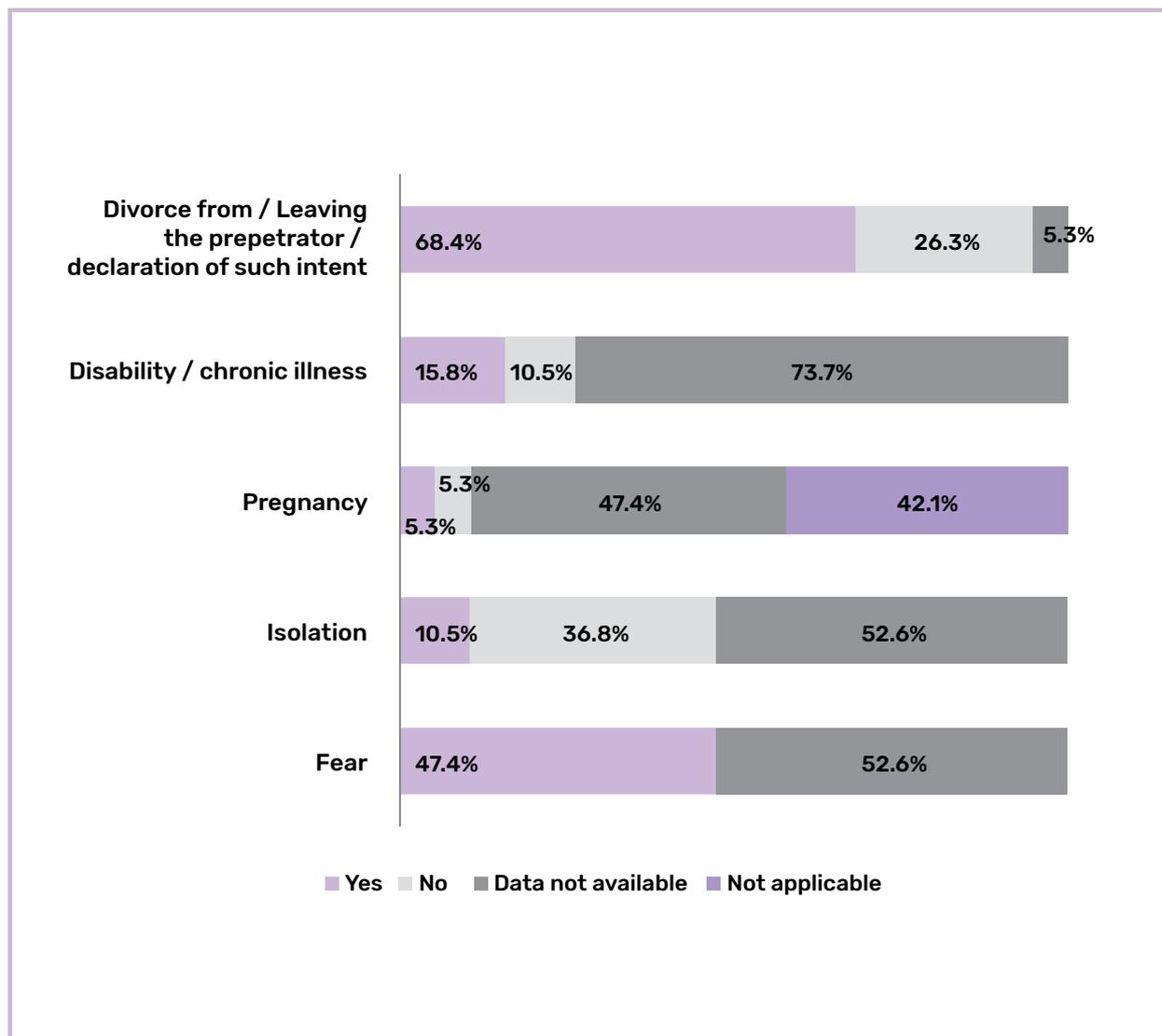
Every sixth case of **femicide** with a firearm was **committed in the presence of minors**, according to media reports. In two such cases, the femicide was committed in a public place (cafe and street), while in the third case the femicide was committed in front of two (out of their four) teenage children.

As for other **risk factors and risk indicators of the fatal outcome of violence** regarding the victim, little significant data could be collected from the media, but could be collected from competent institutions. In some cases, the data were not explicitly stated, but could be inferred based on the content of the articles. Therefore, the emphasis will be on the data that could be obtained, and it should be borne in mind that the percentages may be higher, given that some data are not available.

Fear was confirmed to be present for almost every other victim (virtually every victim where relevant information was reported), while in half of the cases there was no available relevant information.

Every tenth victim was found to be **isolated**, in every third case the victim was not reported to be in isolation, while for almost half of the cases no relevant information was available.

Graph 12. Presence of other risk factors and indicators of a fatal outcome regarding the victim (June 2017 - June 2020)



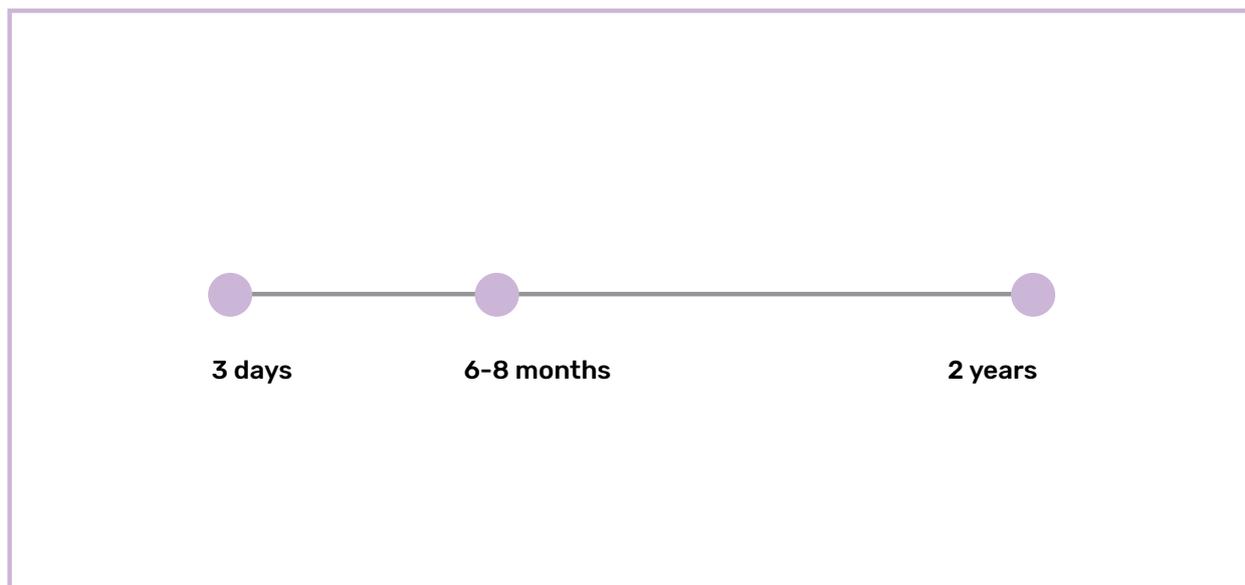
No information was documented about **pregnancy** for almost half of the women, and for a large number of women this was not applicable on account of their age. Only in one case was it stated that the victim was not pregnant, while in one case the victim was assumed to be pregnant, but this has not been confirmed with certainty.

Regarding **disability or chronic illness of the victim**, every sixth woman had some form of disability or chronic illness, every tenth did not, while for almost three quarters of cases no relevant information was documented.

In a quarter of cases, information about **the victim leaving perpetrator, divorce from the perpetrator, or a declaration of such intent** is missing, while in one case

it was not applicable because the victim and the perpetrator were not in a partnership. The majority of women of the remaining cases (7 out of 10) had either announced their intention to leave /divorce from the perpetrator, left the perpetrator, or divorced him.

Image 1. Time period between the moment of leaving the perpetrator and femicide by firearm (June 2017 - June 2020)



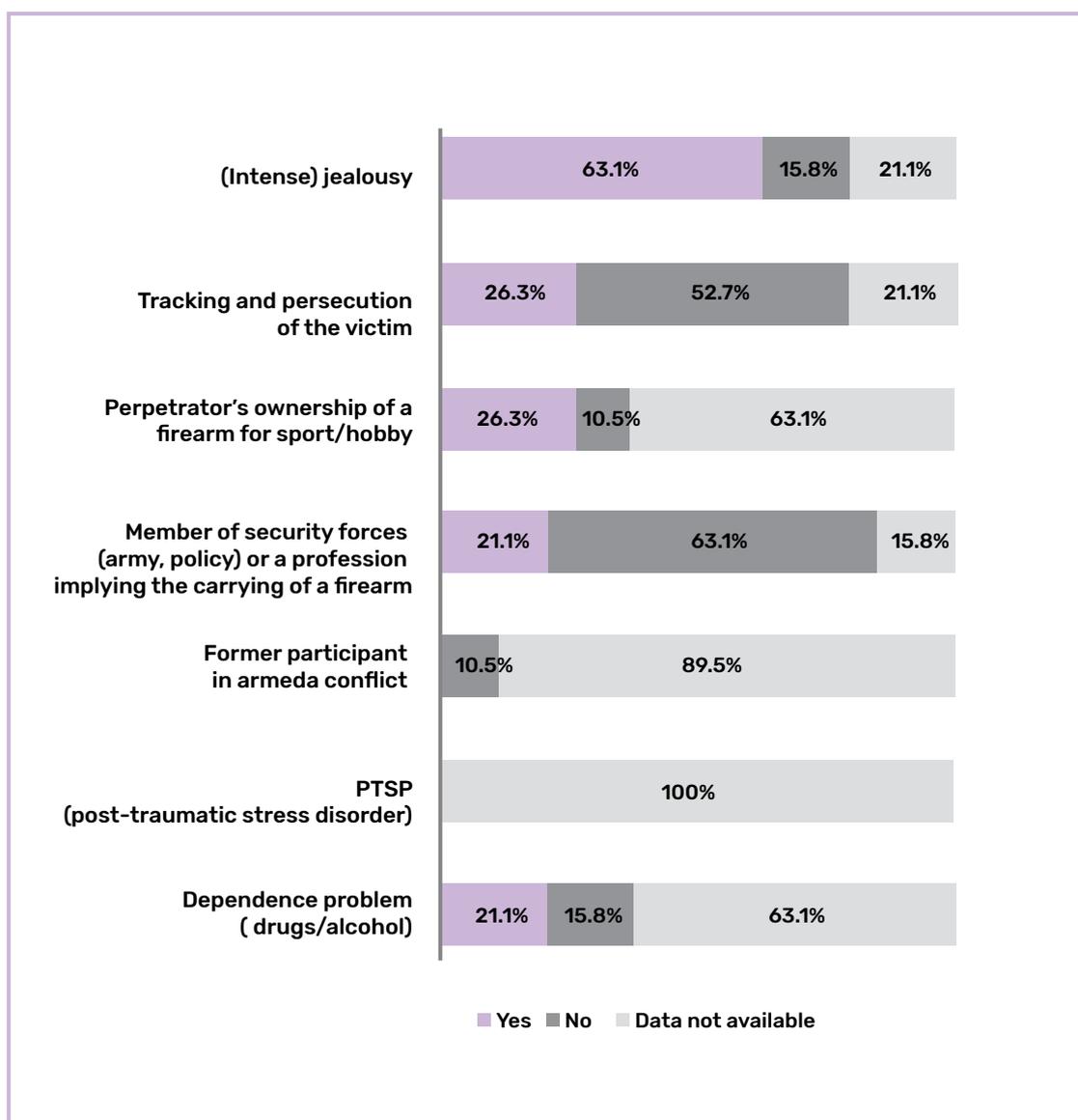
The period between the moment of leaving the perpetrator and the respective femicide varied from only a few days to two years. This is shown by the analysis of cases for which there were data on the moment of leaving the perpetrator. However, it should be emphasized that in most cases there was some contact between the victim and the perpetrator; for example, that the perpetrator had requested that the victim return to him, or that they were in the process of divorce or the division of property.

Femicide with firearm 13.1.2020. (Karavukovo): *An analysis of the case in which the perpetrator killed a woman who left him two years before the murder shows that she had initiated divorce proceedings a year after leaving the perpetrator, that they divorced in court six months before the murder, and that he could not accept that half of their common property (house) belonged to her.*

As regards **other relevant data related to the victim's vulnerability**, it was documented that one woman had been abusing alcohol and treated twice, and that she had suffered from mental health problems after her first husband died in an accident. In all other cases, the media did not investigate or write about such data in more detail.

No information on whether **the victim possessed a firearm** could be found in the media for any of the cases considered.

Graph 13. Other risk factors and risk indicators of a fatal outcome on the part of the perpetrator (June 2017 - June 2020)



Based on media reports, every fifth **perpetrator** was documented as addicted (to alcohol), in every sixth case the perpetrator did not **abuse alcohol or psychoactive substances**, while for two thirds of the perpetrators no relevant data was presented.

No information could be found in the media reports about whether any perpetrator suffered from **post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)**.

There was also no information found in the media reports about whether any of the perpetrators was a **former participant in armed conflicts**, but due to their age, it can be concluded that two of them were not participants in wars, because they were too young to take part in them.

Every fifth perpetrator was a **member of security forces (police) or a service that carries weapons (guards)**. More than half of the perpetrators were not members of such forces/services, while for every sixth no relevant data was documented.

To every fourth perpetrator **firearms were available based on a hobby** (hunting). Every tenth perpetrator did not engage in this type of hobby. For two thirds of perpetrators (63.2%), no relevant information was documented. Here, it should be emphasized that the media reported that one perpetrator had competed in clay pigeon shooting, and for another that he was a passionate hunter and had participated in competitions in imitating deer calls, as well as that he spoke about his hobby on national television. In one case, the media reported that the perpetrator had killed street dogs with a hunting rifle (which many in the village had witnessed).

Every fourth perpetrator was documented as having **followed and persecuted the victim**, while for every fifth there no relevant data was documented. More than half of the perpetrators (52.7%) were not documented as having persecuted their victims. The serious consequences of this behaviour on the victims are clearly evidenced by one case, in which the victim had changed her job twice in order to get away from the perpetrator, as she had worked in a kindergarten attended by his children. The media reported that he would come and sit in a car in front of her house and monitored who she met, as her friends and family testified.

Almost two thirds of the perpetrators were reported as having exhibited (**intense**) **jealousy** (63.1%), every sixth was not jealous, while for every fifth there is no relevant data documented. Such jealousy expressed by a perpetrator was often witnessed by the victim's family and friends, as well as the wider community. For example, in one case, the media reported that the perpetrator forbade the victim from using Facebook and having male friends. Although this indicator of high risk of death from violence was often present, it was rarely taken seriously, and too often the media has reported it as an expression of love, actually justifying the perpetrator. Comments of some readers, who often justify the murder in this way, have also demonstrated the presence of such a problematic interpretation in the broader social environment.

In slightly more than a third of the cases, the media reported that the **perpetrator had threatened (to kill) the victim**. In one case, it occurred a year before the murder, as witnessed by neighbours, but they did not take it seriously because he said it "jokingly" (the perpetrator is reported to have said that as he had become ill, he would kill his wife before he died so that she would not be with another man). In another case, the perpetrator threatened to kill the victim (six months before the murder) when they were at the court hearing which ruled that half of their common house belonged to her. There were also cases in which family members and the victim's acquaintances testified that the victim had stated: "One day he will kill me." No relevant data could be found for other cases.

In examining the 19 cases of femicide with firearms, and based on information from media reports, 2 to 10 risk factors or other indicators per case were documented (listed in Table 4) that could indicate that violence could lead to death. Most frequently, there were an announcement of leaving/divorce or the leaving/divorce of the abuser, (intense) jealousy, and fear on the part of the victim.

Here a few indicators will be mentioned which have not been considered in other parts of the analysis. Apart from (permanently) leaving the perpetrator, i.e., divorce from the perpetrator, in some cases a **pattern of leaving and returning to the perpetrator** was documented, about which the wider community and those around the victim and perpetrator often had knowledge.

In the media, some perpetrators were documented as having been **in conflict with their families** (for example, they had not spoken to their closest family members for ten years or were not speaking with them at all or had no contact with their families) and/or **the wider community** (for example, because they saw him as a “troubled” man). In one case, the media stated that the perpetrator had the nickname “Pig” and that all colleagues at work avoided him.

In a small number of cases (especially those in which the perpetrator and the victim were elderly), the onset of a **serious illness** (cancer, diabetes, etc.) of the perpetrator and/or the victim had occurred several months prior to the murder.

In a small number of cases, **depression** of the perpetrator had been indicated, either by the victim or by those around the perpetrator, and/or that the perpetrator had withdrawn into himself, had been behaving strangely, etc.

Table 4. Identified risk factors and other indicators present in cases of femicide by firearm (June 2017 - June 2020)

R. No.	Identified risk factors and other indicators present in cases of femicide by firearm (June 2017 - June 2020)	% presence in total number of cases
1.	Announcement of leaving / divorce from, leaving /divorce from the abuser, leaving / return to the abuser	68.4
2.	(Intense) jealousy	63.1
3.	The victim’s fear of the perpetrator	47.4
4.	History of violence (regardless of whether the violence was reported to the competent institutions)	36.8
5.	Threats (of death) to the victim	36.8
6.	Perpetrator’s legal possession of firearm	31.6
7.	The perpetrator was known to be in conflict with the wider community (regarded as a "troubled" person)	31.6
8.	The perpetrator followed and persecuted the victim	26.3
9.	The perpetrator abused alcohol	21.1
10.	The perpetrator was a member of security forces or services that carry weapons	21.1
11.	The perpetrator had a criminal history	21.1
12.	Serious illness present (perpetrator’s and/or victim’s)	21.1

13.	Depression of the perpetrator	21.1
14.	Inadequate and/or untimely institutional response to earlier reports of violence by the victim	15.8
15.	Isolation of the victim	10.5

The following is an example in which multiple risk factors were present, though violence had not previously been reported to the competent institutions, nor had certain factors that could indicate a fatal outcome been formally observed, recognized, recorded, and/or reported prior to the incident.

*** Weapons in legal possession available through hobbies**

*** The perpetrator worked in a service that carries a weapon**

*** Intense jealousy**

*** The victim had left the abuser**

*** Fear of the victim**

*** History of violence (violence had never been reported to the competent institutions)**

*** Failure to comply with the legal obligation of a doctor to submit a report to the nearest organizational unit of the Ministry of the Interior on a change in the health condition of a person who has a permit to carry and hold a firearm.**

Femicide with firearm 16.5.2020. (Erdevik): *The perpetrator walked into the school where the victim worked, with an automatic rifle in his hands. According to the media, he first killed her colleague, and then went to the office where the victim worked and fired 20 bullets at her. All this happened in front of the employees who were in the school at that time and passers-by. Fortunately, underage children were not present at the school due to the measures that were in force related to the coronavirus pandemic, otherwise this crime could have had multiple underage victims.*

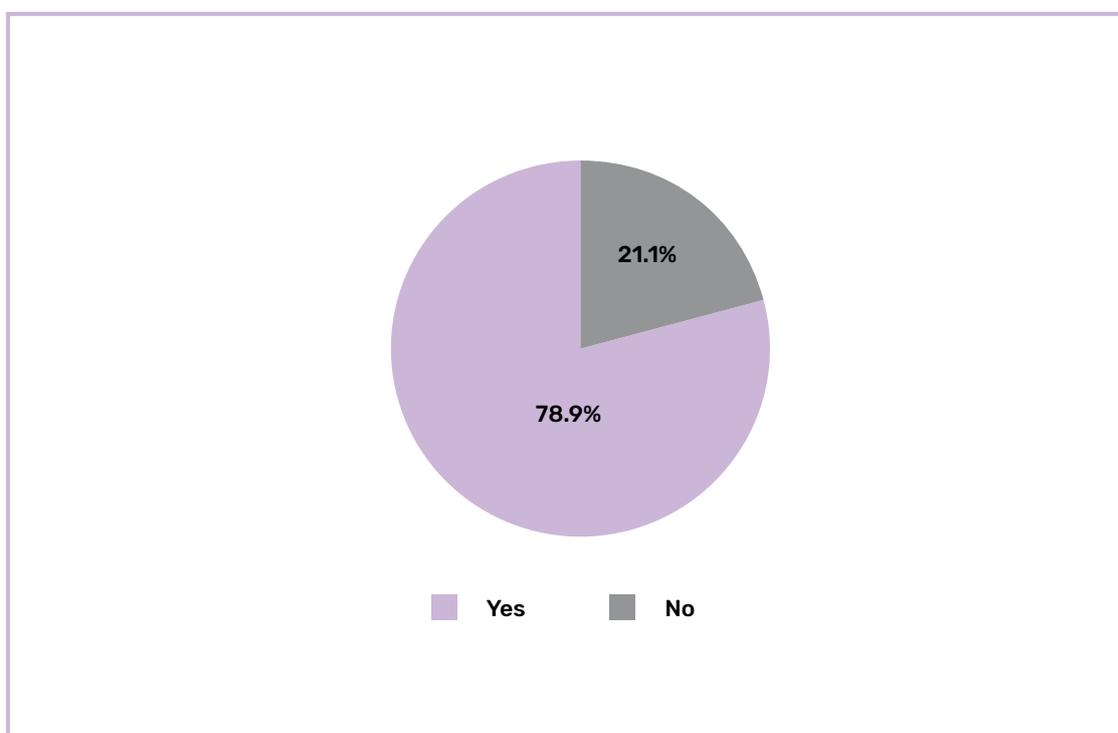
According to the media, there were no earlier reports against the perpetrator, but there were indicators of a potentially fatal outcome: the perpetrator possessed a firearm (both hunting and official) and knew how to use it; he had shown intense jealousy of the victim; according to her mother, he had abused her for years, but she had suffered it for the sake of their children; a few days before the crime, the victim had left the abuser and when he came by seeking reconciliation, the victim told her mother "Don't open it, he will kill me;" that the perpetrator appeared ready/likely to commit murder is also indicated by the fact that their son had told the mother not to open the door to the father if he was not present (so that he could prevent the father from continuing if violence escalated). The perpetrator stated in his defence that he had gone to the health centre for two days in a row (before the crime) because he could not calm down and accept that his wife had left him. His cousin working at the centre had suggested sedatives, but they gave

up because then he would not have been able to continue working as a gamekeeper at a military facility. All of these risk factors have been ignored and, although it could be assumed that murder could occur, efforts to prevent it were not taken. The media stated that the perpetrator was in legal possession of 10 weapons.

4.6. EPILOGUES OF FEMICIDE CASES IN SERBIA

Before an examination of the institutions' response and prosecution of the perpetrators of femicide, it must be stated that for cases in which there was no institutional proceedings, the perpetrator **committed suicide after killing the victim**.

Graph 14. Femicide with firearm followed by the suicide of the perpetrator (June 2017 - June 2020)



Three-quarters of perpetrators committed suicide or attempted suicide after femicide. Of the three cases in which the perpetrators tried to kill themselves after committing femicide, in one case the only information was that the perpetrator was in a serious, life-threatening condition, for one perpetrator there was no further information found, while in the third case, the media stated that the perpetrator had recovered and remained in custody.

In cases where **the perpetrators did not commit suicide** (4 cases), the **institutional response** immediately after committing femicide was the arrest and detention of the perpetrator for 48 hours, which was extended to 30 days. Only in one case was there a court outcome documented. According to the media, this perpetrator was sentenced to 10 years in prison (nine years for murder and one year for illegal carrying of weapons).

The murder was changed from aggravated to ordinary, and the perpetrator was released until the verdict became final. The media reported that the victim's daughter feared for her safety since she lived near the perpetrator.

4.7. DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

In the period under review, 19 cases of femicide with firearms were identified, but **a more comprehensive picture of the prevalence and danger of this social problem is found in a total of 52 cases of domestic violence against women with firearms and/or with the threat of firearms (with or without death).**

Territorially and numerically, the greatest danger for women from this type of violence was shown to be in the City of Belgrade and its surroundings, which is correlated with a large part of the population of the Republic of Serbia living in Belgrade. This conclusion must be taken with reserve, however, as there is a possibility that the media in these areas are more sensitized and/or that it is easier for them to obtain data as the headquarters of most national media outlets, as well as state institutions, are located in Belgrade.

Femicides with firearms accounted for one-fifth of the total number of femicides in the observed period, suggesting a relative decrease in the number of femicides with firearms, as earlier reports showed that femicides with firearms accounted for one-third of total femicides.¹⁰ However, the annual report for 2020 shows that femicides with firearms again accounted for a third of the total number of femicides (Lacmanović, 2020b), which suggests that this number is increasing again (perhaps in correlation with the pandemic). **However, the total number of femicides in Serbia (i.e. those documented in media reports) remains almost unchanged from year to year, which may lead to the conclusion that from the entry into force of the Law on the Prevention of Domestic Violence until the pandemic, the confiscation of weapons from perpetrators of domestic violence may have been more effective, but that they achieved their intention to kill a woman using other means.** These assumptions should again be taken with reserve and determining the cause of the relative decrease in the number of femicides with firearms in the total number of femicides in the analysed period requires further, more in-depth research and more comprehensive and precise data.

Regarding the location where the femicide was committed, twice as many femicides were documented in urban settlements, with every third in a rural area. These data could suggest that firearm misuse is more common in cities than in villages, or that the media report more cases of firearm misuse abuse in the city, while those in the countryside remain undetected. It should also be borne in mind that over 60% of the population of Serbia lives in cities and the numbers of femicides simply mirror, relatively, the population distribution. That almost two-thirds of women were killed in a private setting breaks down the perception of home as a place of love and protection for women; in cases of femicide, home becomes a crime scene.

¹⁰ Annual reports on the prevalence and characteristics of femicide in Serbia during the last 10 years are available at: <https://www.womenngo.org.rs/publikacije/izvestaji-o-femicidu-u-srbiji>.

Regarding the **specific timing of execution, based on the collected data, it is not possible to claim that a certain period of the year or month carries greater danger of femicide with firearms, as the data on the number of cases of femicide differ slightly by month. Regarding the day of execution, femicides with firearms were shown to occur most frequently on Mondays and weekends, which suggests that during “the day of rest” or after a day of rest (when perpetrators are more often at home, or have spent more time at home) domestic violence against women and femicides with firearms occur more often. In terms of the time of day of execution, it is not possible to establish patterns on the basis of the collected data because the information available in the media is very accurate for some cases, while for others the hour of execution was stated inconsistently.** In order to identify potential patterns in terms of execution time (months, days, and hours), a larger number of cases over a longer period of time would need to be examined and as much accurate data as possible collected from all available sources.

Regarding the number of victims of femicides, no instances resulted in mass murder, but we must not forget that in the previous 10 years three femicides were recorded in Serbia and followed by mass murder, all three cases involving misuse of firearms. **Femicides committed during this period took 21 lives (19 women and 2 people close to them), and perpetrators tried to kill or threatened to kill 4 more people, while entire groups and communities (including minor children) were forced to witness these crimes (at school, cafe, on the street).**

Regarding the **age structure of the victims of femicide in Serbia, the analysed data show that women between the ages of 46 and 55 are at the highest risk of femicide, as more than half of those killed were in this age category.** The largest number of perpetrators, every third, was older than 65. A large age difference between the perpetrator and the victim (significantly younger or significantly older partner) was identified as a risk factor for femicide in an intimate partnership context (Office of the Chief Coroner Domestic Violence Death Review Committee, 2019: 30). **This pattern was also observed in the examined cases of intimate partner femicide with firearms in Serbia, where in a fifth of cases the age difference between the partners was greater than 9 years.** The smallest difference was in a case involving partners of the same age, and the largest when the perpetrator was 31 years older than the victim.

While regarding the **educational profile of the perpetrator,** no evidence was documented in the media reports examined, the perpetrator’s profession was noted. **Perpetrators’ occupations varied greatly, which confirms that anyone can be a perpetrator of violence, regardless of occupation. Of greatest concern is the fact that one-fifth of the perpetrators were members of security forces (police officers) or persons employed as security guards. This type of occupation poses an additional risk of death because those involved have access to service weapons, are trained to use them, and have the task of providing security and protection from violence.** In Serbia, it is possible to obtain data on the number/percentage of perpetrators from the ranks of members of the security forces who have been reported for domestic violence (in the total number of reports of domestic violence), but based on these data it cannot be concluded whether members of the security forces commit domestic violence less frequently, more often, or as often as the general population, as this data would have to be cross-referenced with the total number of members of the security forces. Research data from the United States show that police officers there

are 2–4 times more likely to commit domestic violence than members of the general population (Friedersdorf, 2014).

In terms of the victim-perpetrator relationship, the greatest risk of femicide with firearms was documented in an intimate partnership, as evidenced by almost 95% of femicide cases analysed, 84% of femicide attempts, and 86% of firearms threats committed in this partnership context. This data correlates with statistics that show that every second woman in Serbia experiences some form of violence by an intimate partner during her life (OSCE, 2019: 21).

Data on firearms used in femicides in Serbia showed that the most common means of execution was a pistol; the weapon was legally owned by the perpetrator in almost a third of cases. It is not negligible that a fifth of femicides were committed with illegal weapons. One femicide was committed with a legal weapon that was not owned by the perpetrator but owned by the state, as he was a traffic policeman. In the case of a femicide in which a mine-explosive device was used, there is no data on its origin, but according to the Law on Weapons and Ammunition, it is classified as a category A weapon (which cannot be procured, held, or carried by individuals, legal entities, or entrepreneurs). The perpetrator in this case was a member of the gendarmerie, it was concluded that he had obtained it illegally (either on the basis of the access he had as an official, or he had bought it or took it from a third party). **Cases in which a member of the police commits femicide with a service weapon to which he has access on the basis of the work he is engaged in are particularly worrying, and one such case was documented.** A service weapon was also used by a police officer who barricaded himself in the apartment and threatened his wife, and the entire building and neighbourhood were forced to witness this violent episode, which according to police and media communications lasted for hours. In both cases in which the media reported that the perpetrator had previously threatened the victim with a weapon, they were persons who had access to service weapons (traffic policeman and security guard). **This data raises issues of (in)adequate control over access to and the use of service weapons, as well as security checks and suspensions of persons in possession of service weapons who are suspected of committing domestic violence.**

In every fourth case, persons in the perpetrator's and the victim's surroundings may have known that **he had a firearm because he was engaged in a job involving access to a firearm and carrying a weapon or possessed a firearm in connection with a hobby**, yet it remains unknown whether they had perceived this as a danger, or suspected that the perpetrator might use it or commit domestic violence.

Regarding potential danger, it should be borne in mind that, according to recent research, in the Republic of Serbia, 95% of persons documented as having illegally possessed firearms were men (Božanić, Naidoo, 2019: 21). In addition to personal safety, which was most commonly stated as the reason for owning a firearm (more than half of the cases), the two next most common reasons for acquiring firearms were hunting (more than a third of cases) and sports (every seventh case) (Božanić, Naidoo, 2019: 23). Persons who procure and keep hunting firearms (category B) must submit proof that they meet the conditions for holding a hunting license, while for sporting weapons a certificate of active membership in a sports shooting organization is sufficient (Article 11 of the Law on Weapons and Ammunition).

In the examined cases there were documented perpetrators who legally possessed more than 5 (hunting) firearms; the relevant law allows the issuance of a collector's license for such purposes, which is valid permanently (Article 18 of the Law on Weapons and Ammunition), but it was not indicated whether these perpetrators possessed this license.

It is evident from the reports examined that the media did not provide information on previous misuse of firearms by perpetrators, and that, therefore, the media is not a suitable source for significant data related to the previous threat with weapons by the perpetrator or to the legality and ownership of weapons; for a more comprehensive analysis, data from the police and/or other competent institutions would have to be collected.

Regarding perpetrators' criminal history, in every fourth case, the media reported on behaviour of the perpetrators that could be qualified as illegal (abuses of official position, traffic accidents, misdemeanours, robberies, etc.). These data suggest that there is a correlation between the criminal behaviour of perpetrators in general and domestic violence against women. In order to examine this connection in more detail, additional data from the competent institutions (primarily from the police, prosecutors and courts) would have to be collected, especially given that for most cases (two thirds), the media did not provide information on the perpetrators' criminal history, and even in cases where there were reports of previous criminal behaviour, data on whether they were reported, prosecuted, and/or punished, or on the institutional response to the (criminal) acts they had committed was lacking.

A history of domestic violence by the perpetrator was recorded in every fifth case. In almost half of the cases the media reported that there were no previous reports of violence, but in certain cases, based on the comments of people from the victim's and perpetrator's environment about frequent "quarrels" or "noise," it can be concluded that the perpetrator likely used violence. A certain degree of non-recognition, tolerance, and downplaying of violence against women in the community appears prevalent, as does a tendency of people around the victim to sometimes, out of fear of the perpetrator, not report the violence of which they are aware.

Analysis of **the institutional response to previous reports of violence is extremely worrying and points to an inadequate assessment of security risks and untimely handling of submitted reports.** Institutions, judging by the data from media reports, did not react with due care in multiple cases to protect the victim: in one case they failed to confiscate a weapon from a person reported for violence a month before committing femicide, neglecting to act against this person trained to handle firearms because hunting was his hobby, while at the same time allowing the perpetrator and his brother to put pressure on the police, claiming that the victim's report was false; in another case, they failed to suspend a police officer reported for violence and deny him access to service weapons, neglected his special training in the use of weapons, and overlooked the existence of a history of violence against the same victim (the first report was filed three years prior to the murder) and that the victim had expressed fear and testified that the perpetrator threatened to kill her and instead conducted proceedings on another report filed by the victim 11 months earlier - this procedure was never completed because the perpetrator killed the victim with a service gun.

While for half of the cases in which there were previous reports of violence no data on the institutional response was documented, the presented data show that **the institutional response to the reports that had preceded these cases of femicide was grossly and fatally inadequate; and that institutions in Serbia failed to appropriately respond to even a tenth of the total number of femicides committed with firearms recorded in the analysed period, which they had knowledge of (2 out of a total of 19).**

In one case, no information was documented on the institutional response to the report filed against the perpetrator by the previous partner, but it is noteworthy that **reports of violence by previous partners were identified as one of the risk factors for a fatal outcome of violence** (Office of the Chief Coroner Domestic Violence Death. Review Committee, 2019: 33).

Regarding other **risk factors and risk indicators of a fatal outcome of violence concerning the victim and showing her vulnerability**, in almost half of the cases such relevant information was not documented in the media and thus direct conclusions cannot be made. **The fear of the victim and leaving the perpetrator (i.e., the announcement of leaving the perpetrator) were confirmed as the most present predictors of the danger of a fatal outcome of violence.** Regarding risk assessment and identification of factors that may indicate a high risk of death from violence, a woman not documented as experiencing fear should not be automatically interpreted as the absence of risk. Psychological assessments show that some women “do not feel fear” (despite all circumstances indicating a danger of violence) due to either defence mechanisms or a misinterpretation of the perpetrator’s violent behaviour (for example, jealousy). **Therefore, it is important that the victim’s fear never be interpreted as an isolated indicator, but always in combination with other indicators, and that professionals in such situations are guided by professional knowledge and act in accordance with the assessed risks, regardless of the victim’s experience (Ignjatović, Ileš, 2016: 37–38).** The analysed data showed that **the leaving perpetrators or the announcement of leaving the perpetrators increased the risk of death from violence by almost 70%. When assessing, professionals should keep in mind that the period from such leaving to the act the femicide itself can be very short (3 days) and relatively long (2 years)** and that in cases where the process of the victim’s leaving of the perpetrator’s occurs over a long time, the perpetrator and the victim may be drawn into contact; for example, due to the divorce proceedings. In the context of this indicator, it is necessary to collect additional data and conduct a more detailed analysis that should take into account the date of marriage or partnership, the date of leaving the abuser, and the date of divorce from the abuser to determine possible patterns and predict which periods may be most dangerous for the victim.

Based on the obtained results of the analysis, we can say that in the Republic of Serbia there is likely an increased risk of femicide by firearms for women survivors of violence who: a) fall into the age category between 46 and 55 years of age; b) who have reported violence to competent institutions or where knowledge about it has been documented in her environment; c) who have a fear of the perpetrator and/or fear that the perpetrator will kill them; d) who have been isolated by the perpetrator; e) who have announced their intention to leave or have left the perpetrator; f) who have a chronic illness; and d) who live in Belgrade or its surrounding areas.

Regarding **other risk factors and risk indicators of a fatal outcome of violence related to the perpetrator and demonstrative of the danger of his behaviour, most alarming is the complete absence of data concerning participation in armed conflicts and on post-traumatic stress disorder.** It is critical that such data be collected from all other relevant available sources, as previous research has shown that testimony by women survivors of violence indicates that a person's participation in armed conflicts greatly contributes to an increased risk of violence against women (OSCE, 2019: 43). **The most prominent indicator of the danger of a fatal outcome of violence regarding the perpetrator's behaviour was (intense) jealousy, present in two thirds of cases.** It is important to note that jealousy in cases of violence against women is actually a strategy used by the perpetrator and does not represent a loss of control, but a way to establish control. Jealousy is reflected in such behaviours as the abuser accusing the victim of infidelity, testing her fidelity, seeking evidence of it, or forbidding the victim's contact and communication with other men. **Jealousy often correlates with other risk indicators, which leads to violence becoming more severe and dangerous. Research shows that if jealousy and control are present in the relationship, the risk of murder increases nine times when the perpetrator owns a firearm and the victim decides to leave or leaves him** (Ignjatović, Ileš: 2016: 37). If this behavior of the perpetrator is not recognized as dangerous, but is rather interpreted as an expression of love with the belief that the perpetrator cannot control his own behavior, space is created for empathy towards the perpetrator and antipathy towards the victim, further increasing the risk of death. **The next most significant indicator of the risk of a fatal outcome of violence was the presence of the perpetrator's monitoring and persecution of the victim, occurring in every fourth case, and which is often associated with jealousy.** In the considered cases, this took the form of monitoring the victim, spying, continuous calling on the phone and/or on social networks in a short period of time, and a large number of gifts that the victim received from the perpetrator. The risks related to the availability of firearms through hobbies (a quarter of cases) and perpetrators who are members of the security forces (a fifth of cases) have already been discussed. It should be added here that it was established that in one fifth of the cases, the perpetrators showed problems of addiction (to drugs or alcohol), which are factors that contribute to an increase in the volume and intensity of violence.

The following are indicators of an increased risk that a person who commits violence will commit a femicide with a firearm: he shows intense jealousy; is a partner of the victim; follows and persecutes the victim; threatens with murder or suicide; legally possesses a firearm or can acquire it illegally; is a member of a security force or personnel authorized to carry firearms; has firearms available to him in connection with a hobby; has previously been reported, prosecuted and/or convicted of domestic violence; is associated with criminal groups or has a criminal past; abuses alcohol; has some form of depression, whether noticed by people from the environment or professionally diagnosed; has conflicts with the family or the wider community; and that the institutional response to earlier reports of the same or another victim was inadequate and did not result in an appropriate risk assessment, the cessation of violence, and/or the conviction of the perpetrator.

The epilogues of the examined cases of femicide reveal that a very large number of perpetrators (three quarters) committed suicide or attempted suicide after the murder of the victim, and that in most cases there was no prosecution and conviction of femicide. With this in mind, the connection between suicide announcements and the risk of violence against women and femicide should be emphasized, as well as appropriate reactions be prioritized. **For the considered cases, it is not possible to specify the extent to which this connection occurred, but the perpetrator's suicide threats were documented in certain cases.** Relevant literature documents that suicide threats are seen as a pattern of intimate partner abuse, especially when the victim leaves the abuser and he uses manipulative suicide threats to regain control of her (Burden, 2020). This is reflected in the following behaviours of the perpetrator towards the victim: he tells her that she is his reason for life; threatens to kill her if she tries to leave him or divorce him; he poses statements such as why would he live if she does not return or if she does not stay with him; threatens suicide to force her to "prove" her love for him by doing whatever he demands; suggests that the woman will be guilty if he ends up dead (Burden, 2020). **If the victim or someone close to them recognizes such patterns, it is critical that they seek the help of mental health services, i.e. institutions and organizations that deal with suicide prevention. Bearing in mind that threats are also part of the manipulation of perpetrators, they should be reported to the competent institutions (primarily the police) in order to react in time, before the violence escalates.**

For cases that had an institutional epilogue, the media generally reported only on the beginning of the prosecution, i.e., on the arrest of the perpetrator and his detention.

As for the cases in which the perpetrator did not kill himself (one fifth of the total number of cases of femicide with firearms), it is evident that the media should write more about the trials and court outcomes. It must be mentioned, however, that for the most recent case of femicide with firearms (which happened in May 2020) collecting data on the verdicts was not possible at the time of writing of this report as the proceedings were still ongoing, and media reports only prior to the end of June 2020 were considered.

In only one out of 4 cases in which the perpetrator did not kill himself was information documented in the media about the outcome of the procedure. It is extremely worrying that in this one case the criminal charge was reclassified from more serious to lighter (instead of aggravated murder the perpetrator was convicted of murder), while he was given freedom until the verdict became final, during which the family of the murdered woman was in fear for their safety because they lived in the immediate vicinity of the perpetrator. It would be pertinent to make a retrospective of this case and collect data from all available sources, analyse the extent and presence of risk indicators, what was taken into account when reclassifying the crime and where omissions occurred to ascertain why it was reclassified from aggravated to ordinary murder, what aggravating and mitigating circumstances were established, and whether the perpetrator has been proportionately punished. It is especially important to guarantee the safety of the victim's family after the crime has been committed.

5. CONCLUDING REMARKS AND RECOMMENDATIONS



The analysed data indicate that at least a fifth of the examined femicides could have been prevented, as, according to the media, in this share of cases the relevant institutions had been informed about the violence that preceded them. For cases in which, according to the media, there were no previous reports of violence to the relevant institutions, the presence of violence and risk for its escalation to a fatal outcome could be assumed based on documented risk factors or other indicators. It is apparent that such signals often go unrecognized and/or are ignored; this leaves the victim “silent and suffering” because there is not enough awareness of what the risks are and because the media often misinterpret the risks and fail to inform the public about them (thus, comments like the following were documented in the media: “they often argued, but no one could have guessed that this would happen”). Some indicators appear to be noticed by people in the victim’s environment, but they either do not recognize them as violence or do not report them to the competent institutions and so are disregarded and go untreated.

For the murdered women, it is too late, but so that such cases are prevented from happening in the future, it is crucial that we answer the questions of what can be done and how. To achieve this, it is necessary that activities related to data collection, prevention, and intervention in cases of femicide with firearms be carried out and directed to different target groups - potential victims, family, friends, the environment of the victim and perpetrator, professionals employed in relevant institutions, organizations, experts and academics, relevant bodies, the general public, and the media.

The general recommendations and needs arising from the findings of this study, other available research, and the recommendations of the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, all point to the necessity of an established and maintained body for monitoring femicide (Femicide Watch). This body should include professionals from all relevant institutions, representatives of organizations, international institutions, and independent bodies, and the families of the victims. Its role should be to comprehensively collect data for the purpose of systematic and detailed recording of femicide (its prevalence, characteristics, and causes), to direct intervention and prevention measures, and to monitor the effectiveness of implemented measures and strategies aimed at eradicating femicide.

5.1. RECOMMENDED MEASURES OF INTERVENTION

- **Create a unique list of risks (with a more detailed description of each individual indicator) which, in addition to the indicators defined in the Law on the Prevention of Domestic Violence, should contain indicators, circumstances, and signals (confirmed in this and other studies) that may indicate a risk of femicide with a firearm.** In addition to guiding police officers, who are required to conduct a direct security risk assessment, this list should serve as a tool for coordination and cooperation groups, and should be introduced to all professionals in the violence protection system so as to enable them to respond in a timely manner if directly interacting with the victim or if her family members have recognized that there is a risk of her being killed.

- Consistently apply the provisions of the Law on Weapons and Ammunition and **ensure that relevant doctors comply with the law regarding their obligation to submit a report to the nearest organizational unit of the Ministry of the Interior immediately upon learning of a change in the health of a natural person licensed to carry and hold firearms.**
- **Improve and ensure control of access to service weapons to prevent and sanction the misuse of service weapons** and all explosive devices by members of the security forces (police and army) and other persons who have access to and carry firearms in connection with their profession. Service weapons must be stored and kept safely so that they cannot be used to the detriment of family members of persons suspected of violence, i.e., reported as having committed violence, or recognized as having done so by the wider community.
- **Carry out regular security checks and, through to the end of any relevant (court) procedures, suspend persons who carry service weapons (police, army, private security, etc.) and have been reported as committing violence or are suspected of domestic violence.**
- **Adhere to the legal obligation to perform a security assessment on whether the person suspected of violence, i.e., reported to have committed domestic violence, possesses a firearm and confiscate it until the end of any relevant (court) procedures. In such assessments, any history of domestic violence must be taken into account, and interviews with the partner and/or ex-partners, family members, and neighbours must be conducted as an essential element of the relevant operational and institutional proceedings.**
- **Establish the obligation of applicants for the acquisition of firearms to obtain the consent of former partners with whom they were in a relationship in the previous two years, as well as of current partners.**
- **Prevent the issuance of a collector's permit for firearms to persons suspected of violence or reported for committing domestic violence; ensure that persons to whom such a permit has already been issued cannot misuse that firearm to commit domestic violence.**
- **Develop a set of practical procedures aimed at detecting firearms in illegal possession in reported cases of domestic violence (searches, intelligence work, etc.).**
- **Prescribe that a permit for the acquisition, possession, and carrying of firearms, including collectibles, cannot be obtained by: a) persons convicted of criminal offenses committed in their line of work, as well as of criminal offenses pertaining to elements of violence; b) persons whose criminal prosecution has been postponed under the Criminal Procedure Code or who have applied against the decision of the Public Prosecutor's Office; c) persons against whom an urgent measure was imposed under the Law on the Prevention of Domestic Violence and/or as a measure of protection from domestic violence under the Family Law.**

- **Ensure consistent application of the law in the field of protection against domestic violence and the coordinated response of the competent institutions for each submitted report of violence or suspicion of violence against women** and ensure that the procedure is expedient to the extent applicable.
- **In cases of femicide with firearms where previously violence had been documented, it is necessary to monitor the actions of the competent institutions** in order to identify weaknesses and strengths within the system for the protection of women from violence and determine where omissions have been made in protecting the lives of the murdered women. In addition to taking appropriate measures for omissions in the procedure, after such assessment recommendations for action in the future should be made and implemented, and the effects of their implementation should be monitored.
- **Develop procedures and protocols for relevant professionals on how to engage with persons close to the case after a femicide with firearms so that when communicating and interacting with family members of murdered women, their most adequate treatment is ensured, with respect for the personality and dignity of the victim.**
- Develop, fund, and provide **systemic therapeutic and other support services for children who have witnessed violence and/or femicide (with firearms)**, with special focus on children whose mothers have been killed. These services should also include support for relatives or other persons who will have taken care of the children after losing their mother or both parents, most often grandparents or other members of the extended family.
- **Provide and fund psychological, legal, and other assistance to family members of murdered women** in accordance with identified needs.
- **Ensure that family members of victims and injured parties receive adequate legal support** (victim and witness support services in prosecutor's offices and courts), and that their safety is taken into account when releasing perpetrators.
- **Focus on specific and targeted communities and carry out activities in order to draw attention to the problem of misusing firearms for violence against women in the immediate environment and possibly provide support for addressing traumas caused by the consequences of femicide.** This should primarily be aimed at members of the security forces (police and army) and other services that carry service weapons, i.e., hunters' associations and shooting sports associations, as well as at communities that have been specifically affected (for example, primary school staff and people of the village of Erdevik in which one of the femicides was committed with a firearm on the school premises).
- **Ensure an efficient and speedy trial for perpetrators of femicide with firearm**, and in particular that all relevant evidence is collected and considered appropriately during the investigation and prosecution of the act to ensure that the proceedings are conducted fairly and that the perpetrator is punished proportionately.

- The Press Council, the Regulatory Body for Electronic Media, journalists' associations, and self-regulatory media bodies **should monitor, respond to, and sanction violations of established journalistic ethical and legal standards regarding respect for the personality and dignity of victims and their family members when reporting on femicide and violence against women in general in order to prevent stereotypical and sensationalist reporting on these social problems and to create an atmosphere of support for victims and condemnation of violent behaviour in society.**
- **Secure and allocate budget funds for the implementation of all proposed and adopted measures and strategies aimed at preventing and prosecuting femicides by firearms** in terms of necessary human, technical, and financial resources.
- **Continuously monitor and evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of applied laws, strategies, measures, policies, and practices aimed at preventing and combating femicide**, with the active participation of institutions, women's organizations, and relevant independent bodies of international and domestic experts.

5.2. RECOMMENDED MEASURES OF PREVENTION

- Provide **continuous education and training of professionals** in institutions responsible for combating and preventing violence (police, prosecutors, centres for social work, health and educational institutions), especially those in coordination and cooperation groups, **on risk assessment, on circumstances that may indicate a fatal outcome of firearms violence (using the data and patterns identified in this and other research), and on the measures available to professionals to minimize and eliminate the identified risks, with a special focus on prevention.**
- Provide **quick and easily accessible consultations to acting professionals** working in the field (primarily police officers) when dilemmas and doubts arise in identifying the presence or absence of risk indicators and help them identify them; also, they should also be assisted in the application of adequate measures in specific individual cases in order to prevent a fatal outcome.
- Bearing in mind the extremely high rate of suicides of perpetrators of femicide with firearms, it is important to work on improving the mental health of the at-risk population, to **develop suicide prevention programs, and to inform the population about which institutions and organizations are working to solve this problem. In the context of suicide threats, they often appear as a form of manipulation and abuse of intimate partners and as an indicator of a high risk of a fatal outcome of violence; thus, it is imperative to educate and encourage potential victims and others in the environment to recognize such behaviours and to address the authorities in a timely manner.**

- In the **training programs for professionals employed in educational, health, and social protection institutions, a section on the effects of domestic violence and child abuse on the social, emotional, physical, and academic development** of children must be included and it must be ensured that children left without a mother and/or who have witnessed a femicide with firearm are adequately supported and cared for.
- **Include non-violence programs in the education system**, which should include the prevention of firearms misuse for gender-based violence, highlight the dangers of the cult of firearms as a symbol of masculinity and power, raise awareness of the risks associated with firearms proliferation and misuse, and foster discussions on gender equality and ways to prevent gender-based violence committed with firearms. Young people should be informed about healthy relationships and support services for those who survive gender-based violence and those who commit it, as well as about who they can turn to for help in these situations.
- **The media should strive to inform, educate, and raise awareness on the dangers of violence against women and firearms by applying the Guidelines for Media Reporting on Violence against Women, as well as other materials developed by international and domestic women's organizations, institutions, and professional associations of journalists.**¹¹ In the context of femicide with firearms, it is especially important for the media to provide information in their reporting on which institutions and organizations women survivors of violence can turn to, as well as to avoid spreading prejudices and stereotypes about violence against women. It is also crucial that they avoid relativizing violence and justifying the perpetrator (for example by interpreting jealousy as a sign of love) while looking for guilt in the victim's behaviour and appearance. Editorial policy and moderation of comments on media portals must ensure respect for the personality and dignity of the victims and their families and prevent any posthumous secondary victimization of the victims.
- **Provide continuous education of journalists who report on cases of femicide with firearms** (especially those involved in writing crime news or other synopses of deaths) in order to sensitize the reporting on this problem; for this education, the understanding of the very phenomenon of violence against women is crucial, as well as the prejudices and stereotypes that accompany it, the prevalence of firearms, and the danger of their misuse, especially in committing violence against women.
- **Continuously conduct, at the national and local level, education and informational efforts for potential victims, families, friends, and those in the environment of victims and perpetrators, as well as for the general public, so that they can recognize violence and factors that indicate a high risk of death from firearms** (such as the perpetrator's violence expressed in jealousy, the threat of suicide if the victim has announced that she will leave or has left him,

¹¹Other manuals and guidelines for media coverage of violence against women can be found via the following links: https://www.womenngo.org.rs/images/publikacije-dp/2018/Vodic_za_novinarke-nasilje_u_porodici-2018.pdf; <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5f20814f6783ff58ba78666c/t/5f24208b-863fcd3d1c784bad/1596203438085/Fenomena-Moc-Promene.pdf>; https://www.zeneprotivnasilja.net/images/pdf/literatura/Kako_vas_zene_citaju.pdf.

abuse of the victim for years or abuse of previous partners, and/or conflicts with close family members, relatives, or the wider community) and **so that they know which institutions and organizations they can and should turn to in such situations** (through the media, on social networks, through awareness raising campaigns, creating and distributing pamphlets, leaflets and other materials, taking into account the specific needs of representatives of marginalized groups).

- **Conduct in-depth research** on violence against women committed with or without firearms (prevalence, characteristics, risk factors, methods, and measures to address this problem and monitor the effects of applied laws and measures). Ensure that research and recommendations are distributed to all institutions in the system of protection of women from violence and institutions in charge of firearms control, to professional public and academic institutions in the country and abroad, to domestic and international organizations, and to other bodies and individuals involved in the system of protection of women from violence or which would have a relevant interest in this topic.

5.3. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DATA COLLECTION

- **In future investigations of femicides (with firearms), data on cases of femicides with firearms that were not documented in media reports should also be sought from the relevant competent institutions that could, and should, have such data in official records** (police, prosecutors, social work centres, health and education institutions), from various organizations and from the families, friends, and those in the surroundings of the victim and the perpetrator. Noteworthy was the nearly complete lack of data in the media about perpetrators' previous involvement in armed conflicts, about the existence of PTSD co-perpetrators syndrome, about whether the perpetrator had previously misused firearms, about the institutional response to the perpetrator's previous criminal behaviour, or about whether the victim possessed weapons.
- Experts in relevant institutions, organizations, and academic bodies should conduct a joint comprehensive analysis of the existing practice of collecting and recording data on femicides (with firearms), any violence that preceded the incident, prosecution, and punishment of these offenses in order to identify deficiencies in the quality and availability of data and maps and towards establishing good practices in their collection. Based on such an analysis, **a special data collection methodology should be developed that will generate relevant and comparable data.** In the implementation of this activity, care should be taken to use the resources that already exist, so that women's organizations and experts who have been dealing with this topic for years are involved.

- **Establish a single formal record of all murders of women in the territory of the Republic of Serbia**, which should include, at the very least, data on the number of cases classified by gender, the relationship between the perpetrator and victim, their age, and the motive and means of execution. These data can be collected from existing sources, and after being made anonymous and processed appropriately, should be made publicly available in the form of annual reports.
- Bearing in mind that the **media** have been the only publicly available source of data on femicide in Serbia for ten years, the recommendations for the media relate to **improving reporting on these cases so that such reports are more comprehensive and contain relevant data**. In the context of femicide with firearms, it is particularly important for the media to investigate whether there have been previous reports of domestic violence and what the institutional response has been, whether the perpetrator possessed the firearm legally or illegally, threatened the victim or misused the firearm in general, was a previous participant in armed conflict, or suffered from PTSD, as well as to monitor femicide trials from start to finish and report on their outcomes (judgments and sentences).¹²
- **Family members, friends, and those in the environment of the victim and perpetrator could be engaged, if willing, to support** professionals and researchers in **collecting data** on cases of femicide committed with firearms to foster better recognition of indicators of a high risk of death from violence and the presence of such indicators. If family members, friends, and others in the victim's environment are involved in this type of activity, they should be provided with psychological support during this process, and data gained from them should be collected by trained, sensitized professionals.

¹² On the role of the media, including general and specific recommendations for reporting on cases of violence against women with firearms, see *A PORTRAIT AGAINST A LANDSCAPE: Analysis of media coverage of firearm misuse in violence against women committed by men*, by the group Journalists Against Violence: https://www.rs.undp.org/content/serbia/en/home/library/womens_empowerment/medijsko-izvestavanje-o-zloupotrebi-vatrenog-oruzja.html.

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ANNEX A. TABLE PRESENTATION OF THE GRAPHS

Table of Graph 1. Location of execution of femicide with firearm by type of settlement (June 2017 - June 2020)

Location Type	No.	%
Uninhabited Area	1	5.3
City	12	63.1
Village	6	31.6
Total	19	100

Table of Graph 2. Femicide with firearm by day of execution (June 2017 - June 2020)

Day	No.	%
Monday	5	26.3
Tuesday	2	10.5
Wednesday	2	10.5
Friday	3	15.8
Saturday	3	15.8
Sunday	4	21.1
Total	19	100

Table of Graph 3. Femicide with firearm by time of day of execution (June 2017 - June 2020)

Time of day	No.	%
No.	1	5.3
09-12	3	15.8
12-15	2	10.5
15-18	2	10.5
18-21	2	10.5
21-24	3	15.8

24-03	2	10.5
03-06	1	5.3
No data available	3	15.8
Total	19	100

Table of Graph 4. Place of execution of femicide with firearm by privacy level (June 2017 - June 2020)

Privacy level	No.	%
Private space	12	63.2
Public Space	7	36.8
Total	19	100

Table of Graph 5. Victims and perpetrators of femicide with firearm by age (age 2017 - June 2020)

Age	Perpetrator		Victim	
	No.	%	No.	%
26-35 years old	2	10.5	2	10.5
36-45 years old	/	/	2	10.5
46-55 years old	7	36.8	11	57.9
56-65 years old	4	21.1	3	15.8
Over 65 years old	6	31.6	1	5.3
Total:	19	100	19	100

Table of Graph 6. Relationship between the victims and perpetrators of femicide with firearm (June 2017 - June 2020)

Relationship type of Victim and Perpetrator	No.	%
Former Partners	4	21.1
Former Spouses	2	10.5
Partners	5	26.3
Spouses	7	36.8
Stepdaughter and Stepfather	1	5.3
Total	19	100

Table of Graph 7. Femicide with firearm by type of weapon (June 2017 - June 2020)

Type of weapon	No.	%
Pistol	13	68.4
Rifle	5	26.3
Explosive Device	1	5.3
Total	19	100

Table of Graph 8. Femicide with firearm according to ownership status of the weapon (June 2017 - June 2020)

Status of weapon ownership	No.	%
Legally owned by perpetrator	6	31.6
Illegal	4	21.1
Other	1	5.3
No data available	8	42.1
Total	19	100

Table of Graph 9. Femicide with firearm according to the neighbors' knowledge of perpetrator possessing a firearm (June 2017 - June 2020)

Neighbors' knowledge of perpetrator possessing a firearm	No.	%
Yes	5	26.3
No	1	5.3
No data available	13	68.4
Total	19	100

Table of Graph 10. Femicide with firearm according to the perpetrator's history of domestic violence (June 2017 - June 2020)

Perpetrator's history of domestic violence	No.	%
Documented History	4	21.1
No Documented History	9	47.4
No Data Available	6	31.6
Total	19	100

Table of Graph 11. Femicide with firearm committed in the presence of a minor child (June 2017 - June 2020)

Femicide with firearm in the presence of a minor child	No.	%
Yes	3	15.8
No	16	84.2
Total	19	100

Table of Graph 12. Presence of other risk factors and indicators of a fatal outcome for the victim (June 2017 - June 2020)

Presence of other risk factors and indicators of a fatal outcome (June 2017 - June 2020)	No.	%	
Fear	Yes	9	47.4
	No data available	10	52.6
	Total	19	100
Isolation	Yes	2	10.5
	No	7	36.8
	No data available	10	52.6
	Total	19	100
Pregnancy	Yes	1	5.3
	No	1	5.3
	No data available	9	47.4
	Not applicable	8	42.1
	Total	19	100
Disability/chronic illness	Yes	3	15.8
	No	2	10.5
	No data available	14	73.7
	Total	19	100
Leaving the perpetrator/divorce from/declaration of such intent	Yes	13	68.4
	No data available	5	26.3
	Not applicable	1	5.3
	Total	19	100

Table of Graph 13. Other risk factors and risk indicators of a fatal outcome on the part of the perpetrator (June 2017 - June 2020)

Other risk factors and risk indicators of a fatal outcome on the part of the perpetrator		No.	%
Dependence problem (drugs/ alcohol)	Yes	4	21.1
	No	3	15.8
	No data available	12	63.1
	Total	19	100
PTSD	No data available	19	100
Former participant in armed conflict	No	2	10.5
	No data available	17	89.5
	Total	19	100
Member of security forces (army, police) or a profession implying the carrying of a gun	Yes	4	21.1
	No	12	63.1
	No data available	3	15.8
	Total	19	100
Perpetrator's ownership of a firearm for sport/hobby	Yes	5	26.3
	No	2	10.5
	No data available	12	63.1
	Total	19	100
Tracking and persecution of the victim	Yes	5	26.3
	No	10	52.7
	No data available	4	21.1
	Total	19	100
(Intense) jealousy	Yes	12	63.1
	No	3	15.8
	No data available	4	21.1
	Total	19	100

Table of Graph 14. Femicide with firearm followed by the suicide of the perpetrator (June 2017 - June 2020)

Femicide with firearm followed by the suicide of the perpetrator	No.	%
Yes	15	78.9
No	4	21.1
Total	19	100

